

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS - BRUXELLES

Laura Henno

June 10 – July 24, 2026

91, rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, Paris 8^e



Wiser, Slab City (USA), 2023
C-Print from negative, 120 x 150 cm (47^{3/16} x 59 in.)
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels.

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is pleased to present a new solo exhibition by Laura Henno, bringing together a selection of photographs from her long-term project *Outremonde* (2017–present). A finalist for the 2026 Prix Marcel Duchamp, the artist will present *Dark Thirty*, a new film work developed in resonance with this series, at the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris this coming autumn. The exhibition thus marks a pivotal moment in Henno's career, serving as a prelude to this major institutional presentation.

Produced over nearly a decade, *Outremonde* emerged from Laura Henno's prolonged immersion within a community living in Slab City, in the Californian desert. The series has already been the subject of several significant solo exhibitions, including presentations at the Vieille Église de Mérignac in 2026, the Musée de la Photographie de Charleroi in 2024, and the Rencontres d'Arles in 2018.

For more than twenty years, photographer and filmmaker Laura Henno has developed a body of work that, in the words of Marc Donnadiéu, "illuminates parallel realities relegated to the margins of our contemporary world." From Calais to the Comoros Islands and Slab City, her practice seeks to make visible "plural identities, existences, bodies", as the critic further notes.

The territory explored in this series embodies that same impulse. In the Sonoran Desert, near the Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range, the site appears as an enclave that shows on no map, built upon the ruins of an abandoned military base. Around one hundred and fifty inhabitants have found refuge there, living in extremely precarious conditions, without access to water or electricity. Lives are quietly rebuilt, day after day, under the unyielding presence of the desert.

The exhibition is notably inhabited by the figure of Wiser, who dreams of creating a vegetable garden for the most deprived residents of Slab City. Despite his rudimentary camp, two tents battered by desert winds, and the hostile conditions surrounding him, nothing seems to alter the utopian vision that drives him forward. Around him gravitate other characters: Zig, a former Iraq war veteran, and Annie, whose past has been marked by addiction and who finds in him a compassionate listener. These solitary existences intersect and intertwine, tracing through their interactions and shared ideals the contours of a deeply supportive humanity. The inhabitants of Slab City — dreamers and survivors — seem to find, in their everyday gestures, the means to go on shaping, against all odds, a world still worth inhabiting.

To render this territory as faithfully as possible, Laura Henno has returned regularly to Slab City since 2017, herself living in a trailer during these stays. This prolonged immersion allows her to maintain a critical distance from any miserabilist approach.

Her photographs, steeped in the light of dusk, envelop bodies and reveal gazes, restoring a presence to these lives that is at once grounded and tender — what photography historian Michel Poivert calls a “documentary fable.”

Laura Henno thus constructs several forms of portraiture: portraits of the inhabitants, but also of the desert itself. Within our collective imagination, the desert often appears as an original blank page, a territory of projection where everything still seems possible. Yet this vision quickly collides with the harsh realities of a world shaped by exclusion and precarity. Beneath the crushing heat and the vastness of the horizon, hostility permeates the landscape: every attempt at reconstruction remains fragile, constantly threatened by the echoes of reality, while the nearby Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range disrupts any illusion of permanence.

The title *Outremonde* borrows from Don DeLillo’s novel *Underworld* the idea of a world withdrawn from collective visibility. Through this series, Laura Henno offers a vision that is at once poetic and grounded in reality, entering into dialogue with the American documentary photography tradition, notably the work of Dorothea Lange. Her practice inscribes itself within a broader history of the margins, where migratory narratives, American mythologies, and contemporary trajectories of exile intersect, echoing in particular John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Through these photographs, Laura Henno reveals the contours of an invisible geography, restoring to these existences their full political, social, and profoundly human depth.

— Marie Chappaz, Editorial writer

Laura Henno is born in Croix (France) in 1976. She lives and works in Paris (France).

After studying photography at the ENSAV of La Cambre, Laura Henno completed film studies at the Fresnoy. Winner of the Prix Découverte des Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie d’Arles in 2007, the artist has since multiplied solo exhibitions in France and abroad, such as her exhibition *M’Tsamboro* at the Frac Auvergne (France) in 2024, *Outremonde* at the Musée de la photographie de Charleroi (Belgique), *Ge Ouryao! Pourquoi t’as peur?* at the Palais de Tokyo (Paris, France) in 2022, *Radical Devotion* at the Institut pour la Photographie de Lille (France) in 2019, *M’Tsamboro* at the Ryerson Image Center (Toronto Canada) in 2019, *Redemption* at the Rencontres de la photographie d’Arles (France) in 2018, *M’Tsamboro* at the BBB Centre d’Art in Toulouse (France) in 2017, as well as her exhibition at the Finnish Museum of Photography (Helsinki, Finland) in 2011.

Selected for the Villa Albertine, Laura Henno inaugurates the first selection of the new French artist residency in the USA. Laura Henno also participates in numerous group exhibitions such as *COLLECTION: 150 photographs from the Bachelot collection*, at the Villa Medici (Rome, Italy) in 2022, *Diaspora at Home* at the Centre for Contemporary Art (Lagos, Nigeria) in 2020, *Eldorama* at the Tri Postal (Lille, France) in 2018, *Persona Grata*, at the Mac Val and at the Musée National de l’Histoire de l’Immigration, (Paris, France) in 2018, and at the Fogelman Galleries of Contemporary Art (Memphis, USA) in 2017.

Laura Henno is the laureate of numerous awards, including the SAM prize for contemporary art in 2019, the Prix du Jury of the Festival des Champs Elysées 2019 for her film *Djo*, which was also awarded the Prix Camira at the Festival International du Film Entrevues Belfort in 2018. Her film *Koropa* received the Equality Diversity Award at the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival in 2017, the Librarians’ Award at the Angers Premiers Plans Festival 2016 and the Grand Prix at the Entrevues Belfort International Film Festival 2016.

Laura Henno’s work is included in a number of important private and public collections such as the Abattoirs (Toulouse, France), the Fonds Régionaux d’Art Contemporain PACA (France) and Saint Denis (Reunion, France), the MacVal, Musée d’art contemporain du Val-de-Marne (France), the BPS22 (Charleroi, Belgium), or the Kadist Foundation (Paris, France).

Paris Saint-Honoré

Laura Henno
June 10 – July 24, 2026

Wang Keping
Sculptures érotiques
September 11 – November 14, 2026

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri

Jérôme Zonder
Portraits du paradis
May 21 – July 18, 2026

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri - Espace II

Quentin Gouevic
Mélodie mortelle
May 21 – July 18, 2026

Brussels

Ebb & Flow : Perceptions de l’Été
May 30 – July 11, 2026

Sophie Kuijken
September 5 – October 25, 2026

For any further information, please contact : Eva Ben Dhiab
evab@nathalieobadia.com / + 33 (0) 1 53 01 99 76

To stay informed about Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Instagram (@galerieobadia), Facebook (@GalerieNathalieObadia), Twitter (@GalerieObadia) #galerieobadia