

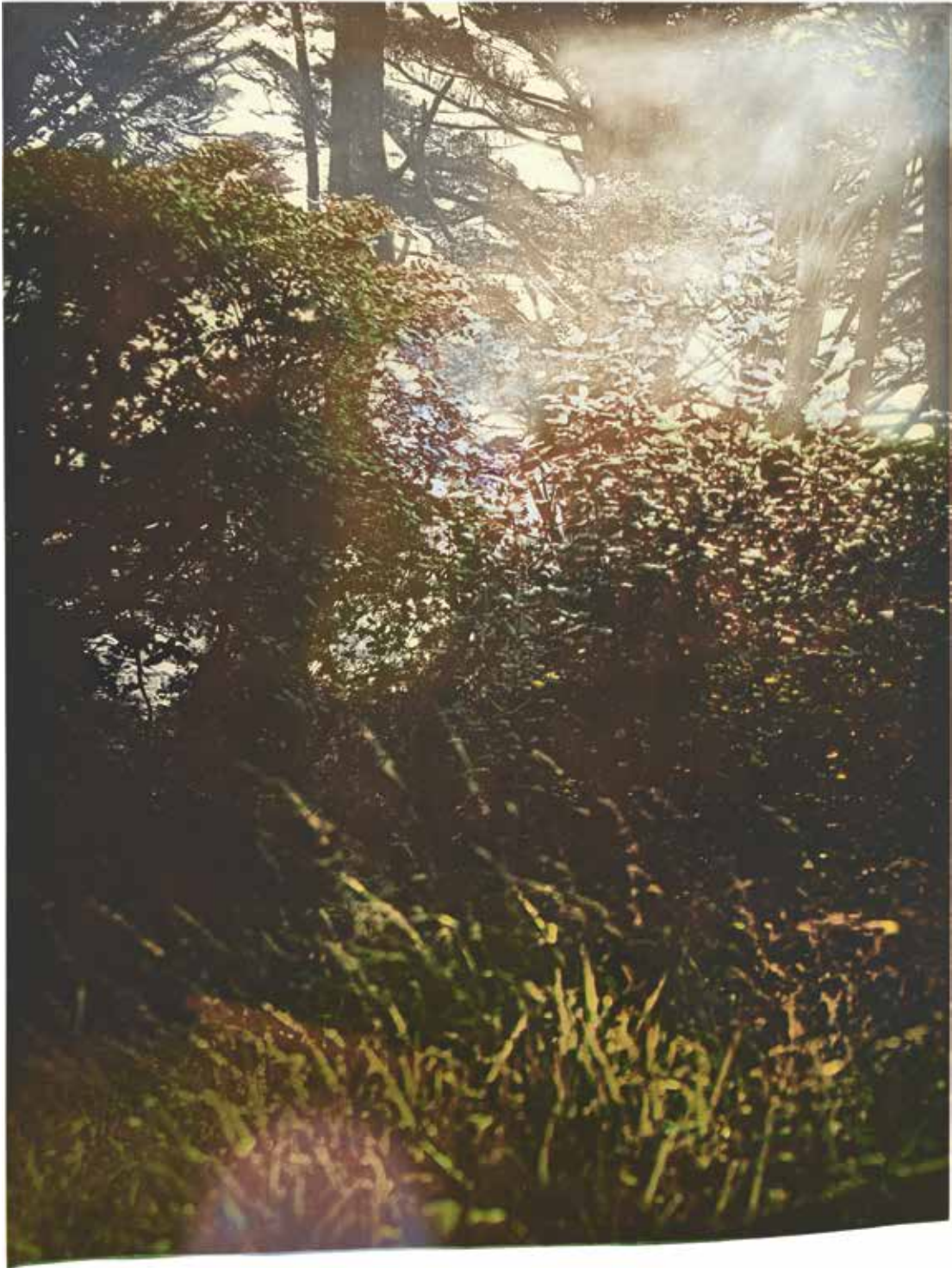
Crown Point Press
Newsletter
Spring 2017

Overview

JOHN CHIARA



Mission at 1st, 2016. Color photogravure. 39-x-27 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch image on 47-x-34 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch sheet, edition 15.
All images printed by Courtney Sennish. Visit crownpoint.com for prices and information.



Quintara at 14th, 2016. Color photogravure. 39-x-28 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch image on 47-x-35 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch sheet, edition 15.



Federal at Oak, 2016. Color photogravure. 39-x-28¾-inch image on 47-x-35¾-inch sheet, edition 15.



Mission at 1st (Variation), 2016. Photogravure on gampi paper chine collé. 39-x-27 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch image on 47-x-34 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch sheet, edition 15.

Firsthand or Remembered New Photogravures by John Chiara

John Chiara has spoken of his art as “part photography, part event, part sculpture,” and this phrase subtitles his section of the catalog for *Light, Paper, Process: Reinventing Photography*, a 2015 exhibition at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. Seven living photographers were included. Curator Virginia Heckert wrote in the catalog that Chiara “has found the right balance between technical prowess and a willingness to relinquish control.” She described the room-size homebuilt camera he hauls on the back of his truck, and located him comfortably in California with Ansel Adams, Edward Weston and some younger photographers like Lewis Baltz—adding that, of course, his work “cannot be confused with their perfectly composed and developed prints.” Chiara’s unique contribution, she concluded, “is in capturing light.”

The complexity of Chiara’s light became especially clear to us at Crown Point Press in this, his second, project here. “John began by creating black and white negative films of his subject on location using his handmade large format camera,” his lead printer, Courtney Sennish, told me. At first, that didn’t seem particularly inventive—most photographers create negatives and print them to make positive images. In Chiara’s normal working procedure, however, he skips making negatives and shoots positive images in his huge camera directly onto color photographic paper, dodging, burning and using filters to create unique prints in (generally) somewhat muted colors. For this work at Crown Point he shot negatives instead.

Chiara photographed the images for these etchings in black and white, and then invented the color. In each single finished image he has incorporated more than one aspect of the same scene, he has said, and the work has become, in his words, “painterly.” His photography in general, he adds, has benefitted from his work on these etchings, mainly from the flexibility of his direct involvement in the process.

His negatives are big—39 by almost 29 inches, the size of the finished images. In his darkroom, he developed them and printed some of them to make positive contact films. He brought both positives and negatives to Crown Point, and combined them in the finished works. For example, in *Quintara at 14th*, the landscape scene, there are four plates. Two, the green grass and the sky, are negative images. The image has unusual density—the physicality of the foliage—contrasted with unusual light—the lightness of the drifting cloud.

Working with our printers, Chiara created these works by first transferring his images to photosensitized acid-resistant gelatin sheets. We adhered those sheets to copper plates and etched them in acid baths so they became part of the plates and could be printed by hand, in the same way we normally print etchings made in our studio.

The process, called photogravure, is as old as photography itself. In fact, one of its inventors was William Henry Fox Talbot who



John Chiara with printer Courtney Sennish in the Crown Point studio, 2016.

also was instrumental in the invention of photography. The texture that holds the ink in these prints is created with finely ground rosin grains, using a tonal process called aquatint that predated photography.

The density of texture in these works is particularly noticeable in the image called *Mission at 1st (Variation)*. The velvety quality is possible because in this printing process the ink is embedded in the paper. And here, the ink quality is subtly enhanced by printing on a layer of extremely fine thin paper mounted to a thicker sheet using a technique called *chine collé*.

The image titled *Mission at 1st* is the same as the one called *Mission at 1st (Variation)* but the art is not at all the same. Sunlight streams in. Silver light pushes up from a corner; caverns invade stability. Nevertheless, we know where we are.

Federal at Oak, the orange and yellow image in this body of work, takes a step beyond knowing where you are, a step into glowing light surrounding a walkway, a tower, trees. Its abstraction, nevertheless, is not a new approach for Chiara. Virginia Heckert in the Getty catalog I mentioned earlier describes “images that alternate between representation and abstraction, to the extent that many appear dreamlike.” In closing her essay, Heckert reminds us that Chiara’s photographs are “a testament to careful observation, previsualization, and a sound technical understanding of craft...(along with)... a will to imbue those images with a sense of place, whether experienced firsthand or remembered.”

—Kathan Brown

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IN THE CROWN POINT GALLERY

JOHN CHIARA: NEW CITYSCAPES

APRIL 7 - JUNE 3, 2017

Join us at a reception for the artist

Saturday, April 22, 4-7 PM

SUMMER CHOICES: A GROUP EXHIBITION

JUNE 6 - SEPTEMBER 2, 2017

FROM THE CROWN POINT BOOKSTORE

Browse in our gallery bookstore or online for artist catalogs, books about art, and our Magical Secrets series on etching techniques. We also sell printmaking supplies, one-of-a-kind handmade sketchbooks, and iPad covers.



*Light, Paper, Process:
Reinventing Photography*

Light, Paper, Process features the work of seven artists—including John Chiara—who investigate the possibilities of analog photography by finding innovative, surprising, and sometimes controversial ways to push light-sensitive photographic

papers and chemical processing beyond their limits. Published by Getty Publications, 2015. \$49.95



Vision #5: Artists' Photographs

This edition of VISION is a boxed set of artists' photographs printed on glossy individual sheets of heavy weight paper. An introduction by Conceptual artist (and editor of *Vision*) Tom Marioni makes clear the difference between photographs by artists and photographs by photographers. Artists include Vito Acconci, John Baldessari, Christo, John Cage, Joan Jonas, Sol

LeWitt, Richard Tuttle, Richard Long, and Dorothea Rockburne. 62 black and white photographs in a reinforced-cardboard box, 1982. \$50