

Memory, Erasure and Appearance

Isabelle Delvallée & Claude Cahun

200 YEARS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

**PREVIEW EVENING
DRINKS RECEPTION
FRIDAY 15 MAY 5PM – 8PM**

OPEN MONDAY – SATURDAY
12PM – 6PM UNTIL 29 MAY
BY APPOINTMENT UNTIL 5 JUNE



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Photography emerged from a blend of artistic curiosity and scientific discovery, with roots stretching back centuries before the first successful photograph. One of the earliest key concepts was the camera obscura, a device known since ancient times and described by figures like Aristotle. It projected an inverted image of the outside world onto a surface inside a darkened room, but the image could not yet be permanently recorded.

The breakthrough came in the early 19th century. In the 1820s, French inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce created the first permanent photograph using a process called heliography. His image, '*View from the Window at Le Gras*,' required many hours of exposure. Niépce later partnered with Louis Daguerre, who refined the process after Niépce's death. In 1839, Daguerre introduced the daguerreotype, the first commercially viable photographic method, producing highly detailed images on silver-coated plates.



View from the Window at Le Gras by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, Heliographic Print, 1826

'View from the Window at Le Gras' by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, Heliographic Print, 1826
Photography continued to evolve rapidly through the 19th century with improvements in exposure times, portability, and image quality. By the late 1800s, innovators like George Eastman popularised photography with roll film and user-friendly cameras, making it accessible to the general public.

These early innovations transformed photography from a scientific experiment into a powerful artistic and documentary medium.

The bicentennial of photography marks 200 years since the earliest successful permanent images, most often associated with the 1820s experiments of Joseph Nicéphore Niépce.

This milestone is important because it highlights how profoundly photography has shaped modern life, artistically, scientifically, and socially.

First, it provides an opportunity to reflect on photography's evolution - from fragile, one-of-a-kind images like the daguerreotypes to today's instant digital photography. This transformation mirrors wider technological progress and changing ways of seeing the world.

Second, the bicentennial underscores photography's cultural impact. It has documented historical events, shaped public opinion, and influenced art movements across centuries. From war reporting to family snapshots, photography has become central to how people record memory and identity.

Finally, it encourages renewed discussion about the future of images. In an age of smartphones, artificial intelligence, and image manipulation, photography's role is more complex than ever. The bicentennial invites both celebration and critical reflection, honouring its origins while questioning authenticity, truth, and ethics in visual media.

And so it with great pleasure, in this the bicentennial year of the founding of photography, that Private & Public Gallery presents new works by the highly acclaimed French photographer and artist Isabelle Delvallée whose return to the slow, fragile and uncertain techniques of the pioneering photographers of the 19th century offers a radically different experience in a world saturated with instantaneous images and endless social media where everything appears readily visible and endlessly circulating.

Isabelle Delvallée's work uses traditional techniques where the image never fully reveals itself and unfolds as a three-part journey, in which photography is no longer understood as a means of capturing reality, but as an unstable space, a threshold where memory, erasure, and appearance continuously intersect.

Through the use of gum bichromate printing, an early photographic process inherited from Pictorialism, Delvallée situates her practice within an artisanal and temporal dimension. Each image is built through layers, gestures, and successive alterations. Far from mechanical reproduction, the print becomes a living surface, shaped by water, pigment, and time. This process grants the image a fundamental quality: it remains in a state of balance, never entirely fixed.

Rather than documenting a landscape, Delvallée presents a fragmentary and intimate experience. Quiet interiors, open windows, simple objects, these motifs evoke not so much a place as a lived presence. Yet this presence is already marked by distance. Forms soften, textures blur, as if time had already begun its work.

What is shown is not a document, but a trace. Landscape becomes less a territory than a condition: a world still present, yet already fragile, already on the verge of becoming memory. The second movement introduces a decisive shift. While the first part still holds onto the real, here the image begins to dissolve. Forms waver, figures emerge only to withdraw, absorbed by light and material. At times, a presence seems to surface, a silhouette, an organic shape, a trace of a body, yet it never stabilises.

In some works, a diffuse yellow tone acts as a luminous veil, obscuring rather than revealing. Elsewhere, blur and layered textures create a visual instability that resists fixation. Photography no longer reveals; it erases. To see becomes an experience of loss. The image does not grant access to presence, it accompanies its disappearance.

A section of the exhibition takes place in darkness, where the image initially seems absent. Only under ultraviolet light do forms begin to emerge: a flower, a figure, a fragment of a scene. Here, the image exists only under certain conditions. It depends on light, on time, on the viewer's attention. The spectator is no longer presented with an image but participates in its appearance.

This experiential dimension extends the very logic of the gum bichromate process. As in early photographic development, the image is first latent, embedded within the material. Yet unlike a fixed revelation, it remains unstable, always on the verge of vanishing again.

Across these three movements, memory, erasure, and revelation, the exhibition proposes a sensitive reflection on the contemporary condition of the image. No longer a fixed object, but a fragile phenomenon, shaped by time, loss, and the uncertain possibility of appearing.

Rather than offering images to be consumed, Isabelle Delvallée creates situations in which visibility itself becomes uncertain. What we see is never fully given, never entirely stable. It emerges, withdraws, and transforms under our gaze.

In this shifting space, we also present works by the trailblazing French surrealist photographer Claude Cahun, who moved to Jersey in 1937 and whose images have been carefully chosen by Delvallée not for their well-documented transgressive, cross dressing or surrealist portrayals but for the technical printing processes which recognise Cahun as master of transformation who used the physical metamorphosis of the print as a wider metaphor.

On closing I would like to thank Isabelle for her kindness, creativity and good humour and also Rouen Ollivier, Museum Registrar at Jersey Heritage for placing her trust in this exhibition and facilitating the loan of these important works by Claude Cahun.



Claude Cahun
En Oceanie



Claude Cahun
Je Tends les Bras



Claude Cahun
Beauport Cahun



Claude Cahun
Claude and Moore, Marcel at La Rocquaise



Claude Cahun
German soldiers on the beach at St Brelade's bay



Glowing Away, 2025

106 x 78 cm

Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper

£3,500 +GST



The Photographer, 2025
106 x 78 cm
Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper
£3,500 +GST



Reflected Nature, 2024

106 x 78 cm

Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper

£3,500 +GST



Inner Mirror, 2024
106 x 78 cm
Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper
£3,500 +GST



Le Hocq, 2025

106 x 78 cm

Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper

£3,500 +GST



Solaris, 2026
106 x 78 cm
Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper
£3,500 +GST

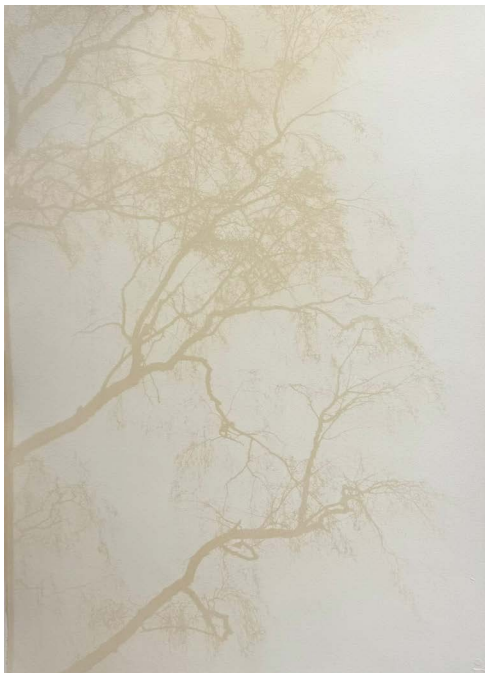


Thin Presence, 2026

106 x 78 cm

Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper

£3,500 +GST



Sand tree whisper, 2026
106 x 78 cm
Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper
£3,500 +GST



In Between, 2024

106 x 78 cm

Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper

£3,500 +GST



Transit, 2024
106 x 78 cm
Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper
£3,500 +GST



Fragile, 2025

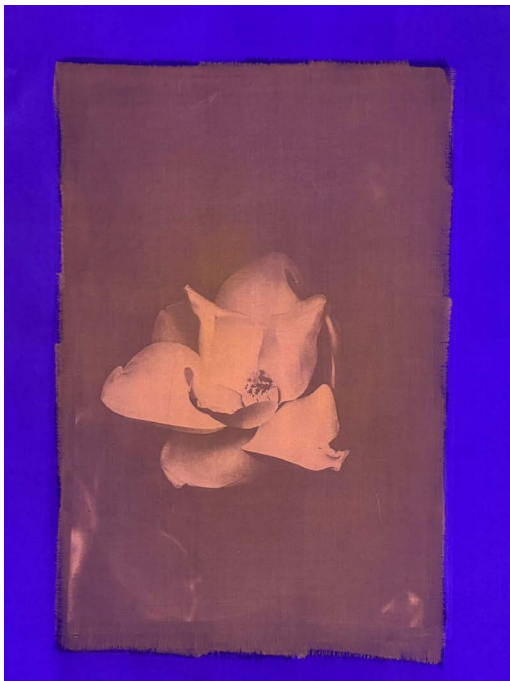
106 x 78 cm

Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper

£3,500 +GST



Viel, 2024
106 x 78 cm
Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper
£3,500 +GST



Velvet bloom, 2026

106 x 78 cm

Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper

£3,500 +GST



Duet, 2025
106 x 78 cm
Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper
£3,500 +GST



Breath, 2025

106 x 78 cm

Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper

£3,500 +GST



Azura, 2026
106 x 78 cm
Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper
£3,500 +GST



Neon deep, 2025

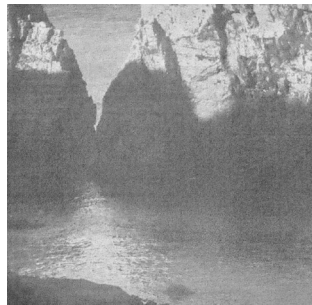
106 x 78 cm

Gum Bichromate on Hahnemühle 350 gsm Etching Paper

£3,500 +GST



Dawn's Veil, 2024
Gum Bichromate Etching
20 × 20 cm
£400 +GST



Glint of the Deep, 2025
Gum Bichromate Etching
20 × 20 cm
£400 +GST



Green Lull, 2025
Gum Bichromate Etching
15 × 20 cm
£400 +GST



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