

ULLENS

LUOMA

CALDICOTT

DE HAAN

OTTEN

KNOT

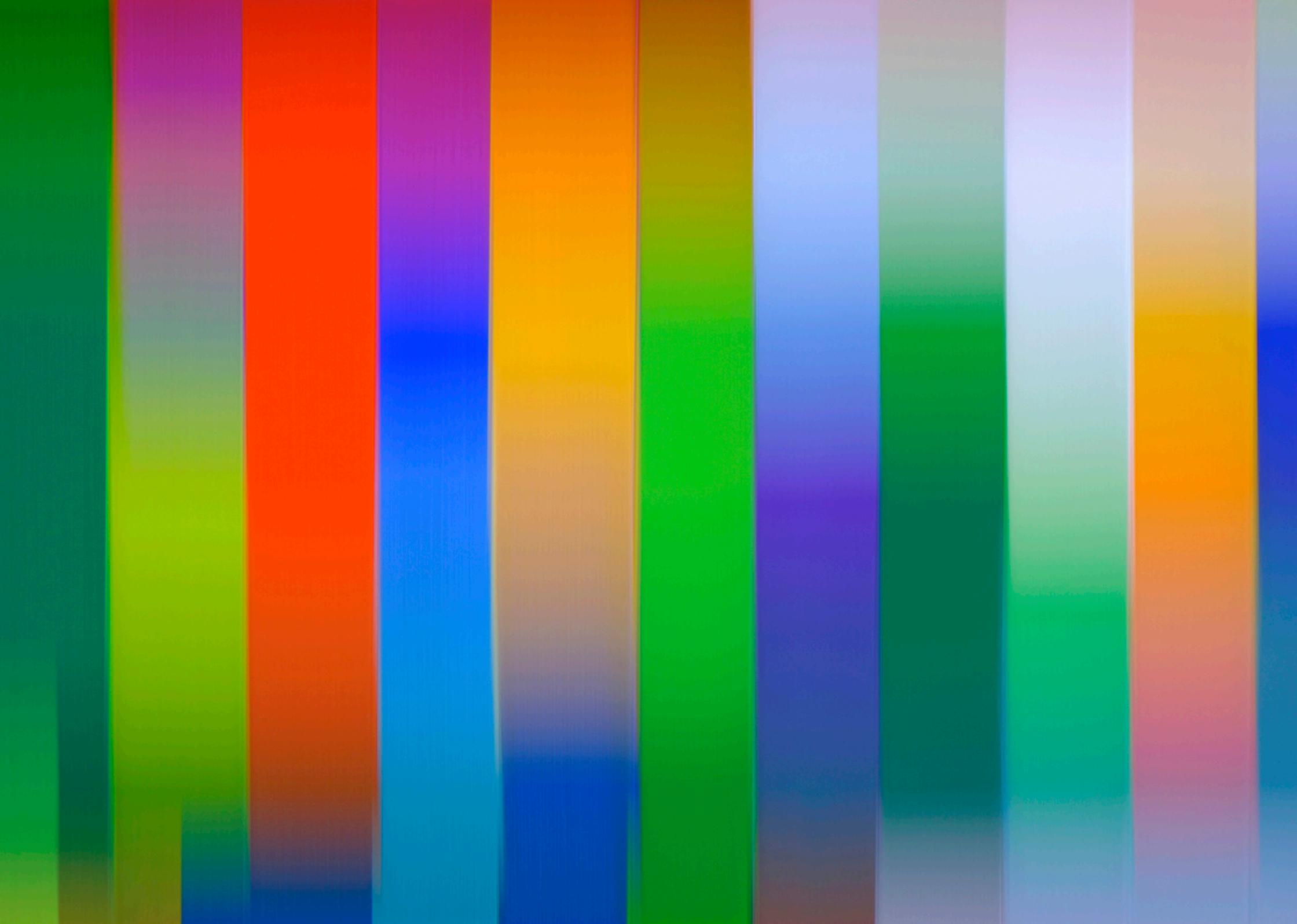
NIELSEN



The  
Borders

May 11 – June 17, 2023





## The Borders

I dream of a period when artists met, took the time to have lunch together and shared their ideas, and sometimes even their knowledge.

I dream of a more open artistic world. A world where galleries dare to defend emerging artists once again, where collectors take pleasure in discovering young talents, where art fairs proudly display their top picks, where museums plan exhibitions bringing all generations of artists together.

I dream of a more positive world, where beauty once again finds its place in art, and where emotions are shared.

## Birth of The Borders art movement

Abstraction has been the main subject of my work since the very beginning of my career as an artist. My idea has always been to go beyond the limits of photography. It is an approach that can be found in my positioning from my first creation. This approach has become more and more concrete, structured, and conscious with the very practice of painting and the creation of the LikeAPainting series in 2020, during the very particular period of the global Covid-19 pandemic, when everyone was locked down. This series served me as a starting point to create a movement that brings together other artists with joined-up thinking. This project of a new art movement was first announced in my work LikeAPainting in 2021, then in the collective exhibition The Colour of Light at the Mark Rothko Centre in Daugavpils, Latvia, the same year.

The movement was born in Belgium, but the roots will definitely be European and may later spread to the whole world.

## The Borders

The Borders is used in English. In the Larousse dictionary, the word 'border' is defined as "a delimitation, a limit between two different things". The theme of borders is strongly linked to the current events of our era. An era marked by the geopolitical fragmentation of the world (territorial disputes, strengthening or closing borders, significant migration flows, etc.). By analogy, this title invites artists to go beyond their comfort zone, to take one step further, to open and widen their borders, to avoid being afraid of the other as a stranger.

The goal of The Borders movement is to question and test the limits of abstract photography with other forms of art: play with these limits, cross them, transgress them, experiment with them, make a link with painting, sculpture, etc., encourage exchanges, bring artists together. This movement aims to bring together abstract photography artists whose main work is clearly related to non figurative painting. The resemblance is such that it can sometimes lead the spectator to confusion and loss of reference points.

## Create an art movement today

I have been learning about abstract photography for 25 years and collecting abstract artwork by meeting artists, visiting exhibitions and art fairs. This research gave me a fairly global vision - even if incomplete - on abstraction in photography, but also on other forms of art.

My first observation is that abstraction has been a subject on its own since the beginning of photography. From the start, photographers have experimented with this process through deconstructed images. Afterwards, photographic abstraction became a subject on its own and had its time of glory during the first half of the 20th century, notably with Man Ray and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and then continued after the war. Moholy-Nagy is one of my mentors for his artistic reflection. The evolution of the image is often linked to the rise of new technologies, but what can also be noticed, is a desire of the artists to move away from reality and to experiment.

My second observation is that, in recent years, there have been very few new art movements bringing together artists with a common vision. The last clearly defined major European art movements or currents are the following: the Düsseldorf School of Photography in the 80s, The Young British Artists in the 90s, and the artists of the Helsinki School of Photography in the late 90s and in the early 2000s.

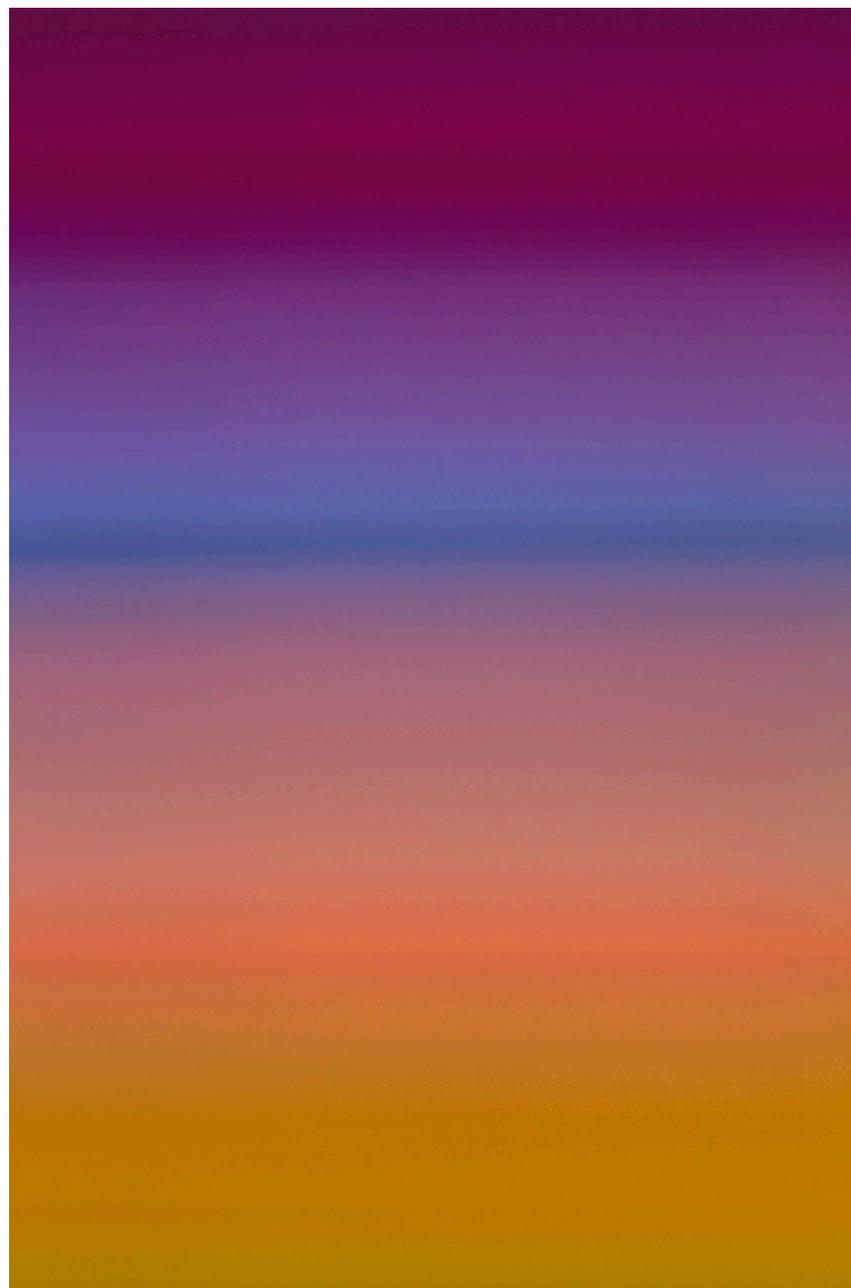
Today, it is time to unite artists around a common interest and theme. Because I realised that a certain number of confirmed or emerging photography artists are still interested in abstraction and clearly challenge the boundaries between photography and painting; this is actually an approach similar to mine. As a result of this observation, I wanted to bring artists together in order to claim this common vision to defend it together and disseminate it as best as possible to cultural institutions through exhibitions and publications. Artists are often isolated in their studios, especially in the current context, and they are probably unaware or little aware of the work of other artists with the same approach as theirs. This feeling of isolation is reinforced by social media which tend to drown and dissolve everyone's creations in this ocean of images. Each artist is of course different, but the diversity of their works brought together could be a richness and would allow a greater impact through the movement.

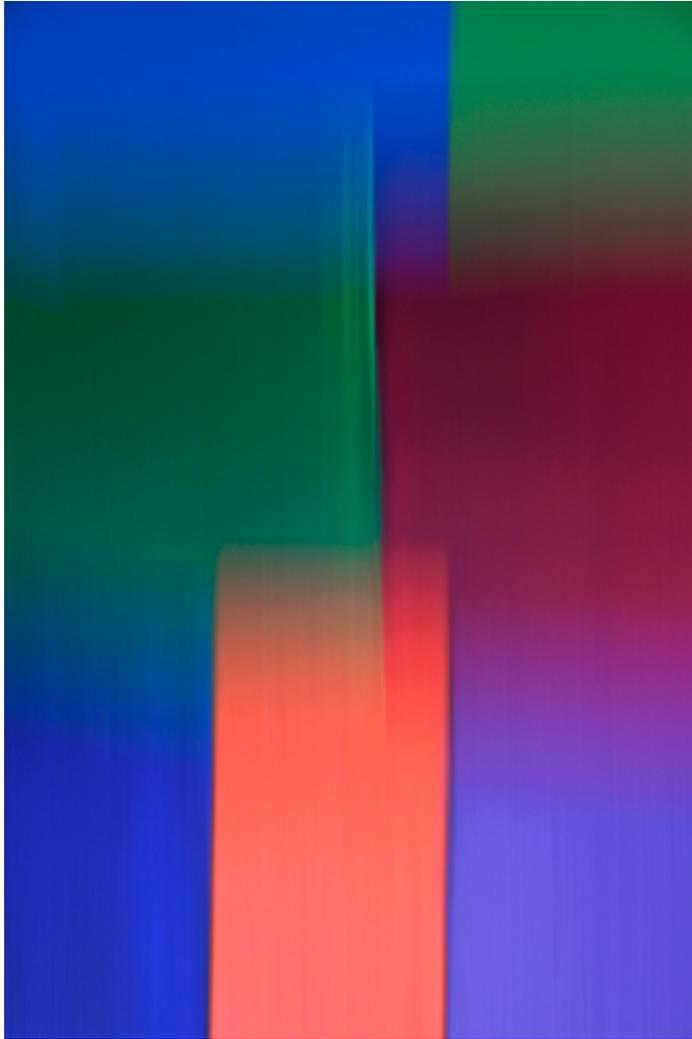
The movement could be a beacon serving as a landmark for artists, collectors, galleries, art centres and museums. It could also raise public awareness and interest in photographic abstraction. And finally, it could allow photography to be seen differently.

Yves Ullens  
Founding Member The Borders  
January 2022

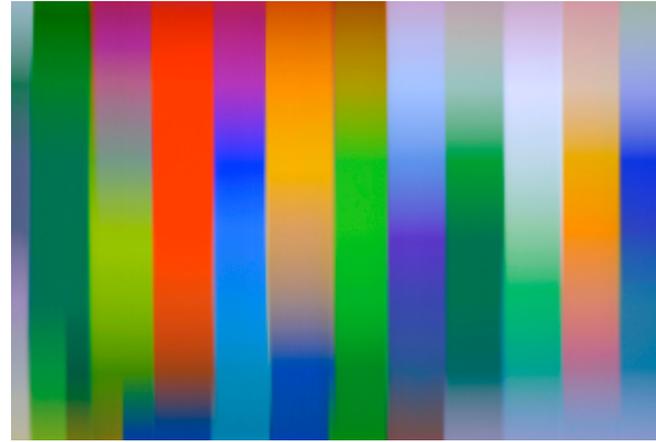
Yves Ullens

Coloured Meditation #6, Cape Town (South Africa), photograph





I



II

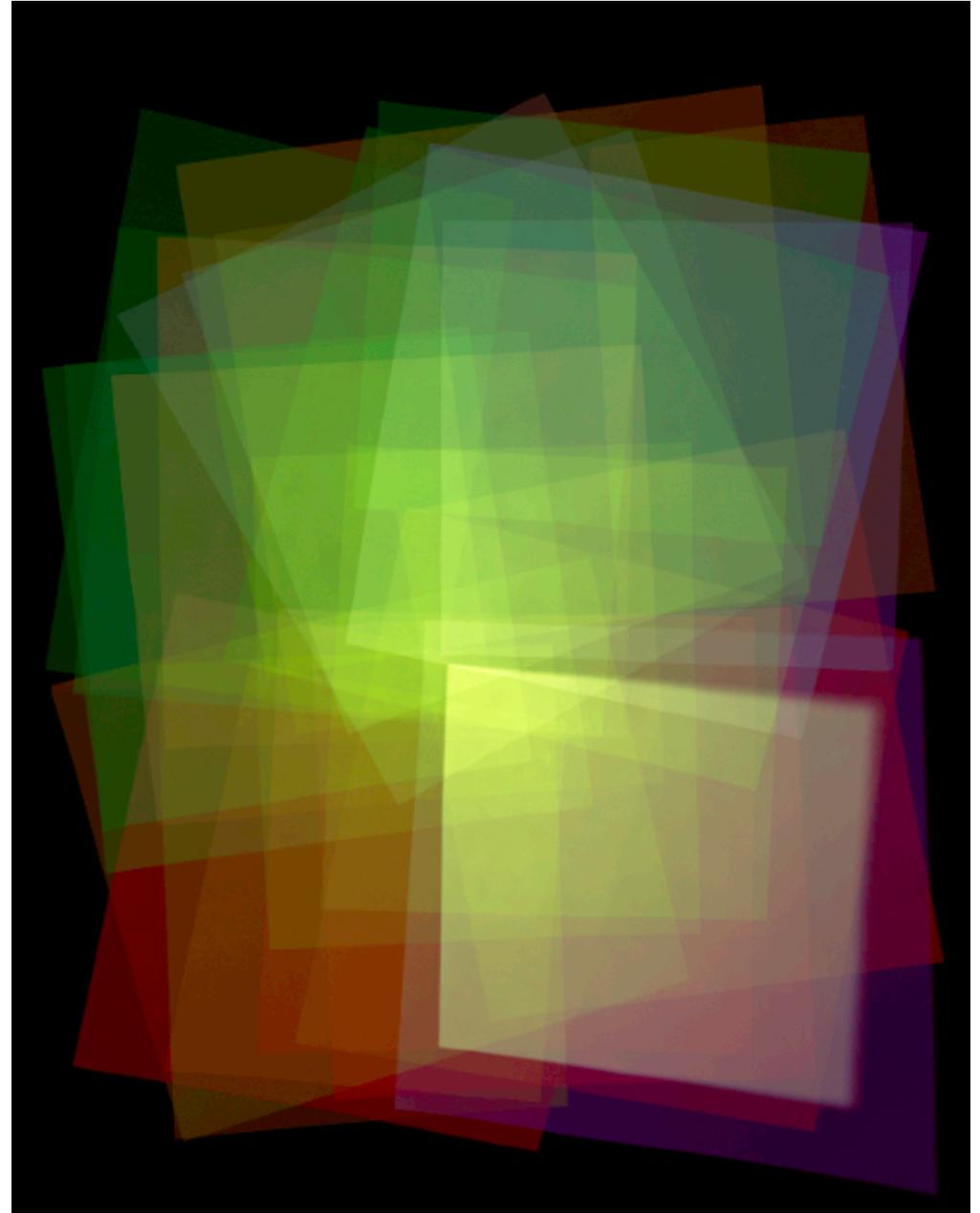


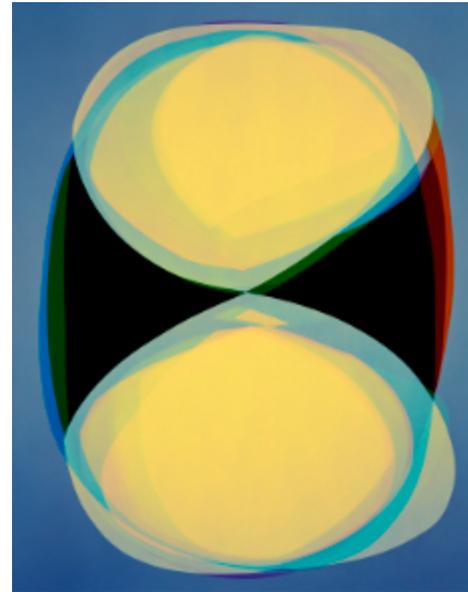
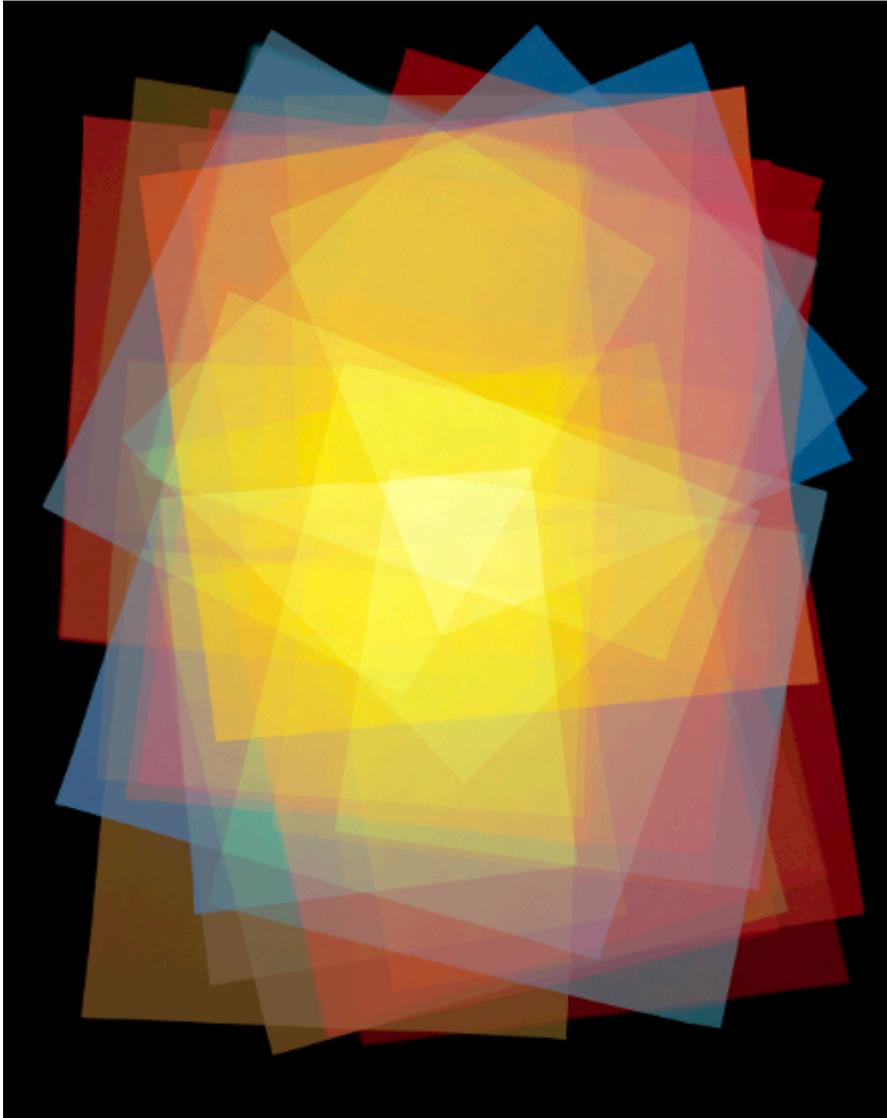
III

- I Matrix 05.04, Brussels (Belgium), photograph
- II Matrix 15.08, Brussels (Belgium), photograph
- III Matrix 15.08, Brussels (Belgium), photograph

Niko Luoma

Self-Titled Adaptation of Gauguin's Chair (1888), photograph





II



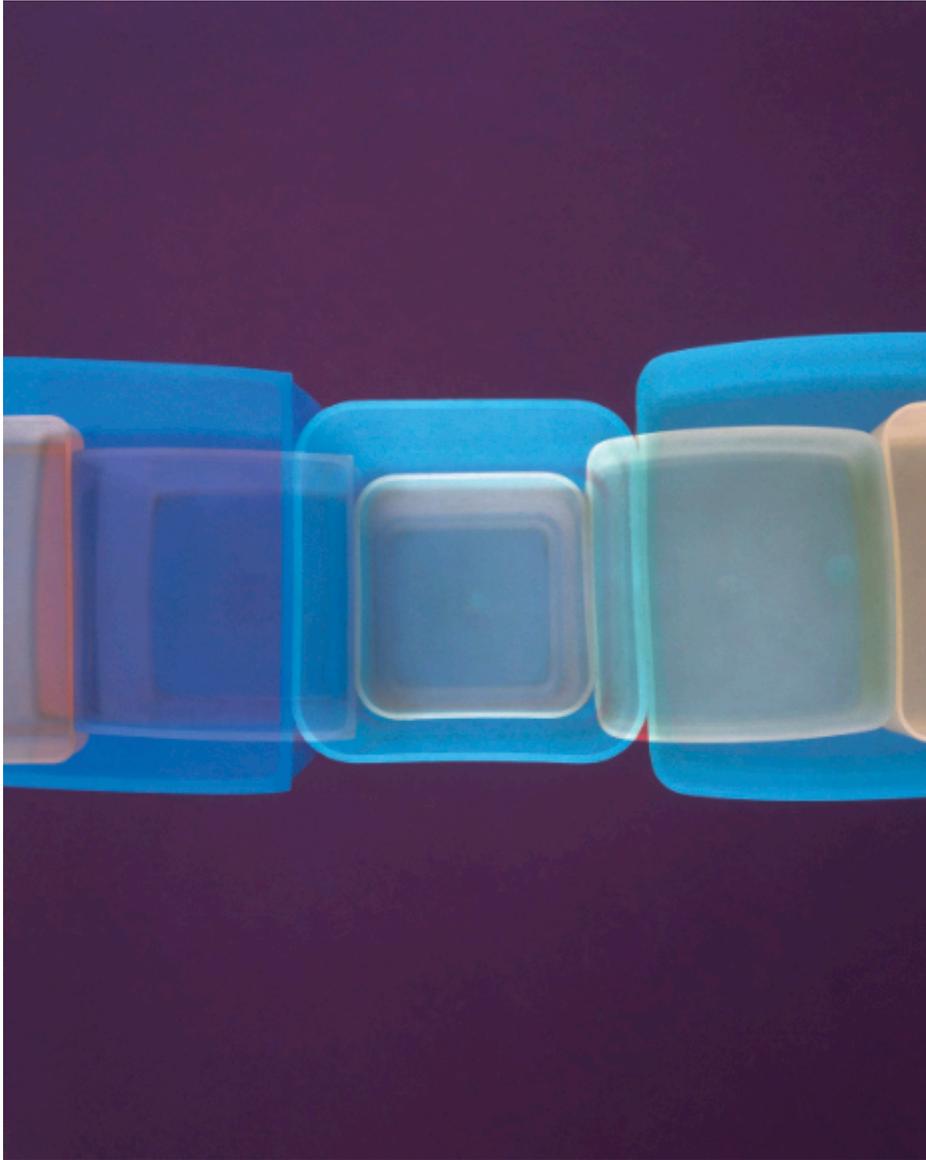
III

- I Self-Titled Adaptation of Van Gogh's Chair (1888), photograph
- II Self-Titled Adaptation of Caryatid (1913), photograph
- III Self-Titled Adaptation of Nude Sitting on a divan (1917), photograph

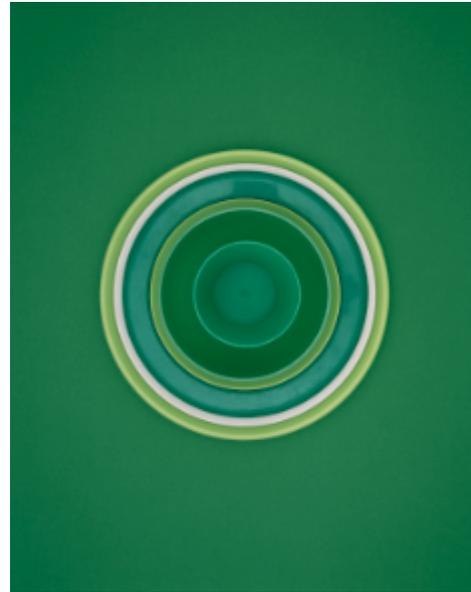
Richard Caldicott

Untitled #176, photograph





I



II

- I Untitled #167, photograph
- II Combination Green, photograph
- III Untitled #15, photograph



III

The exhibition *The Borders* presented at the Mob-Art Studio gallery in Luxembourg is an important event bringing together for the first time all the artists of a new European art movement founded in 2022 by the artist Yves Ullens. *The Borders* currently gathers seven international artists: Richard Caldicott (United Kingdom), Luuk De Haan (Netherlands), Sebastiaan Knot (Netherlands), Niko Luoma (Finland), Liz Nielsen (United States), Hanno Otten (Germany) and Yves Ullens (Belgium).

*The Borders* was born from Yves Ullens' desire to federate artists around a reflection on abstract photography. The common work of these artists is focused on light, colour, composition, erasing the representation of the subject and coming as close as possible to painting. The movement is an invitation to share reflections related to the very medium of photography by artists in search of a new aesthetic vocabulary, while each having a singular creative approach.

In art history, abstract art is mostly associated with painting. And yet, abstraction is present in the form of experiments from the very early days of the invention of photography. In the nineteenth century, the notion of abstraction was still not very representative nor concrete in the approach of photographers<sup>1</sup>. Photography was mostly recognized as a medium of representation and recording of reality.

Without going into detail into the individual practices of the artists on the margins of the codes of classical photography, essentially commercial, scientific, and documentary, there are two periods during which abstract photography embodies a new and modern vision in Europe: the interwar years, with the Surrealists<sup>2</sup> in particular, and the formal experiments of the Bauhaus<sup>3</sup>. Then from the 50s, the avant-garde of post-war German photography (subjective<sup>4</sup> and generative<sup>5</sup> photography), among others. The emergence of these new experimental and artistic approaches in photography led to its recognition in the history of art in the 70s.

The artists of *The Borders* are part of a generation that saw analog photography gradually replaced by digital techniques in the 2000s. Many of them questioned the very medium in the abstract image at a moment of its alleged disappearance. In reaction to the new images, some artists return to the old processes with the use of the analog chamber (Niko Luoma and Richard Caldicott) or the creation of photograms with the enlarger (Hanno Otten and Liz Nielsen). Others turn to current digital tools to play with the very materiality of the image (Luuk De Haan), compose built spaces (Sebastiaan Knot) or use the movement of the camera as a brush (Yves Ullens). These different practices nevertheless share common features: escaping any representation or diverting the subject to make it disappear, the use of a rich palette of colours, and the key role of light. Here, abstract photography becomes a "pictorial" and virtual space, and no longer a trace of reality in space-time. The boundary

with painting is thus deliberately blurred, creating a visual confusion with the image created by artists who, for some of them, also practice painting (Richard Caldicott, Hanno Otten and Yves Ullens).

Also, for the artists of *The Borders*, "the idea of abstraction in photography goes hand in hand with questions which go beyond the singular aesthetics that it generates to raise fundamental issues about the history of the medium, its nature, its future, its overlap and kinship with other domains and, more broadly, about the status of the image<sup>6</sup>."

Caroline Bouchard

Curator  
Coordinator of *The Borders*

<sup>1</sup> For example: William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) and Anna Atkins (1799-1871).

<sup>2</sup> These include the photograms of Man Ray (1890-1976).

<sup>3</sup> The School of Architecture and Applied Arts, founded in 1919 in Weimar by Walter Gropius (1883-1969), where László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946) is a teacher.

<sup>4</sup> Around the photographer Otto Steinert (1915-1978).

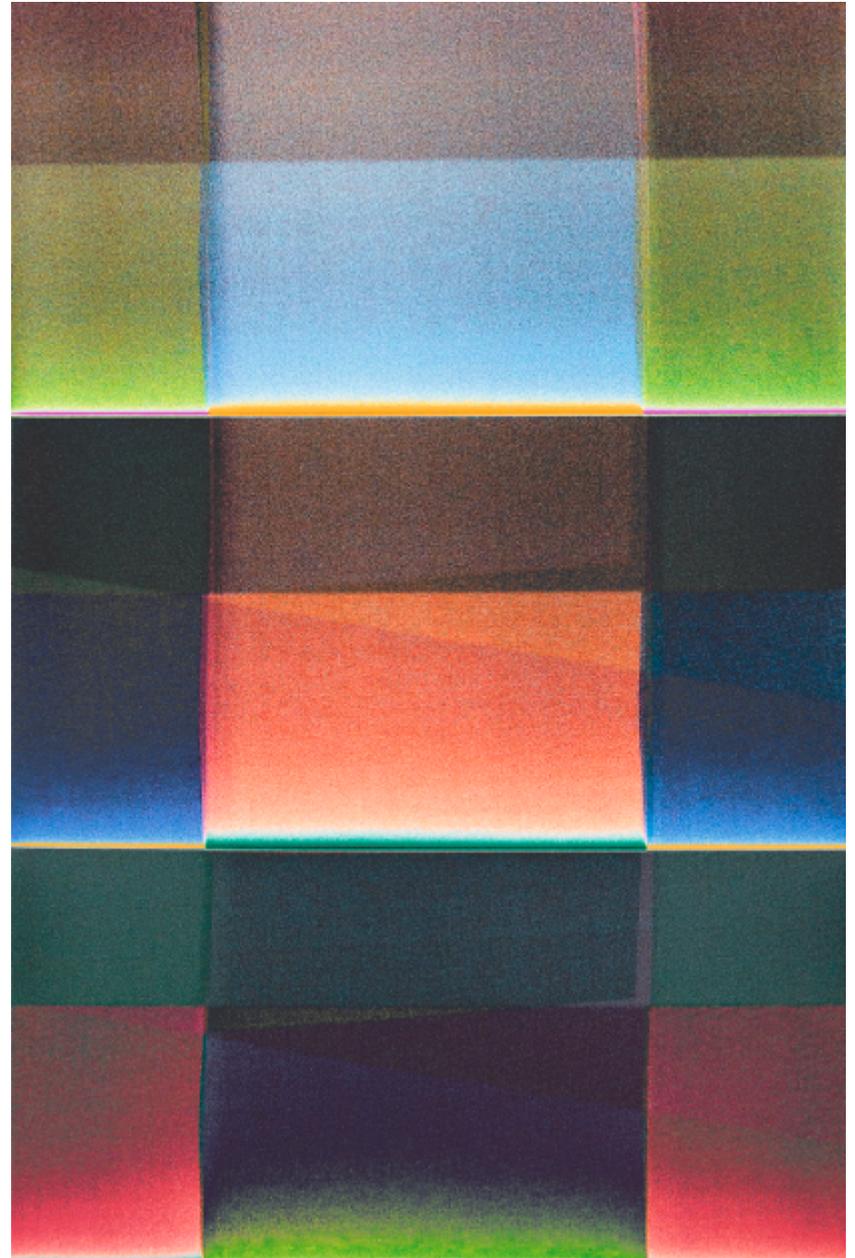
<sup>5</sup> "Generative Photography" is a manifesto exhibition bringing together mostly abstract photographs, held at the Kunsthhaus of Bielefeld in 1968. Gottfried Jäger (1937) is one of the artists exhibited and the theoretician of this movement.

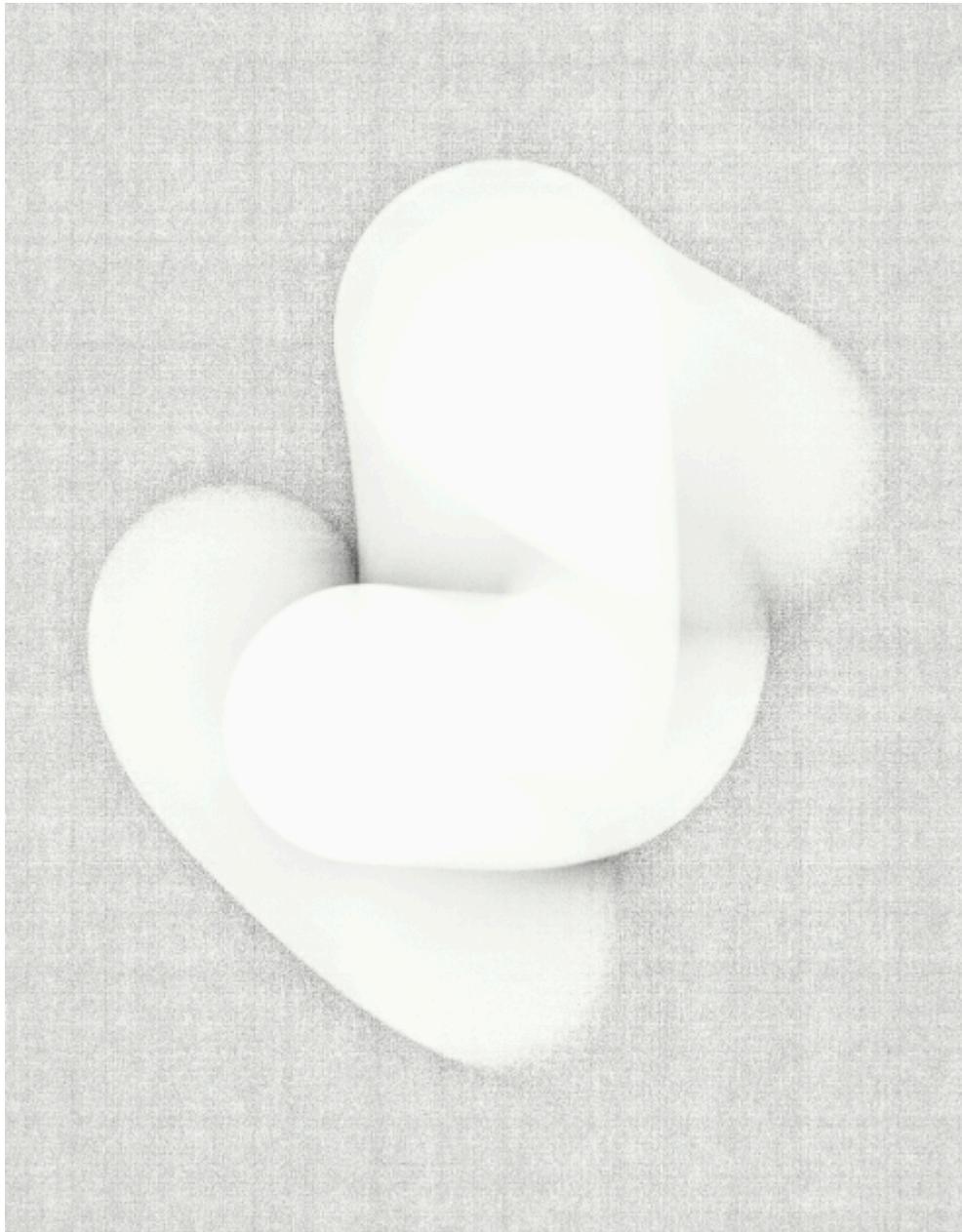
<sup>6</sup> Véronique Souben, *Photography to the Test of Abstraction - La Photographie à l'épreuve de l'abstraction*, Berlin: Hatje Cantz, Rouen: FRAC Normandie, 2020, page 6.

The references come from two publications focused on abstract photography: *Shape of Light. 100 Years of photography and abstract art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2018) and *La Photographie à l'épreuve de l'abstraction*, (Berlin: Hatje Cantz and Rouen: FRAC Normandie, 2020).

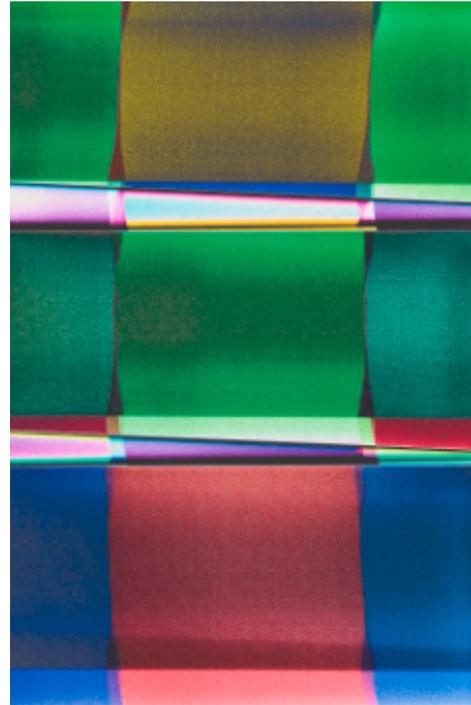
Luuk de Haan

color field 1, photograph



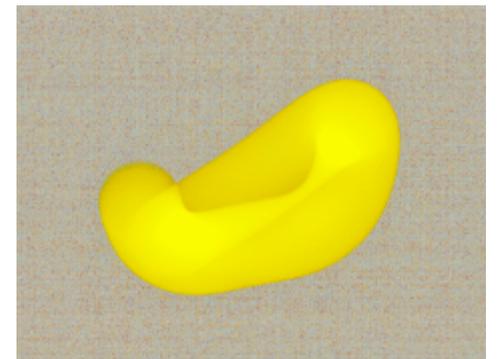


I



II

- I big nothing 77, photograph
- II color field 5, photograph
- III a long way from purple 4, photograph



III

Hanno Otten

Colorblock 214, photogram





I



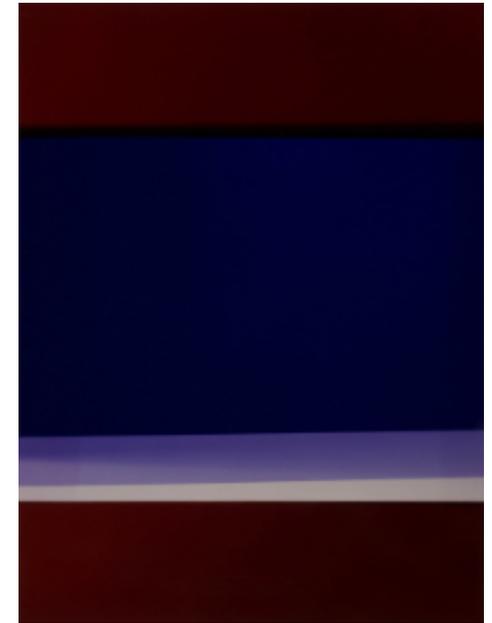
II



III



IV

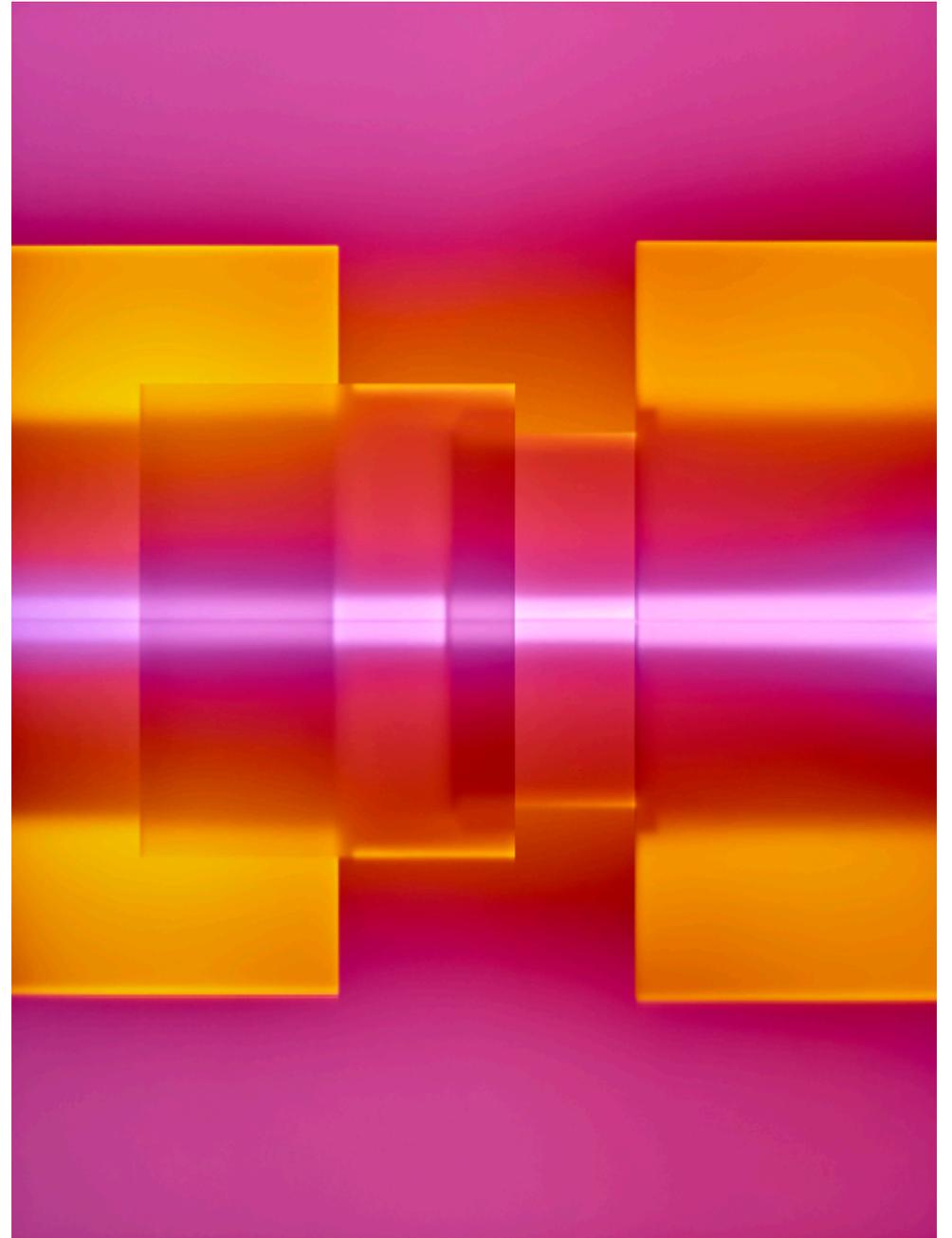


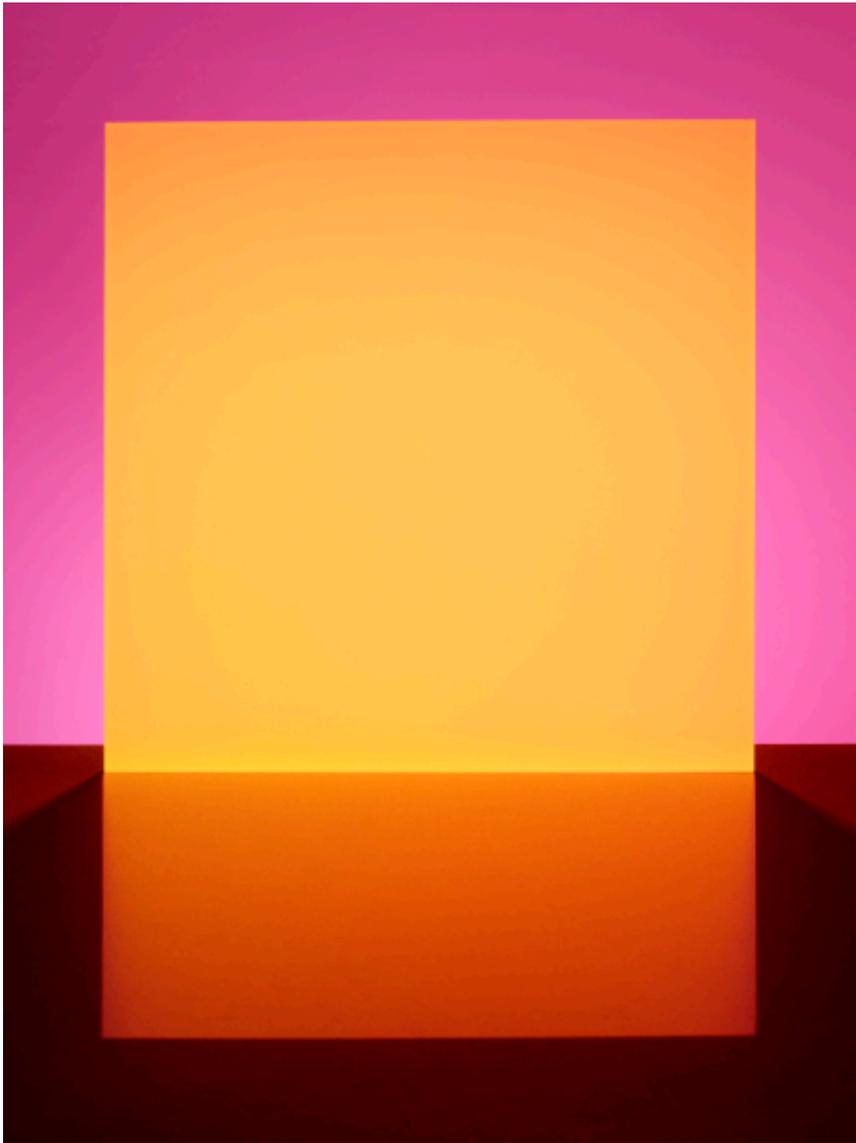
V

- I Colorblock 202, photogram
- II Colorblock 191, photogram
- III Colorblock 217, photogram
- IV Colorblock 97 / 23, photogram
- V Colorblock 256, photogram

Sebastiaan Knot

N58138, photograph



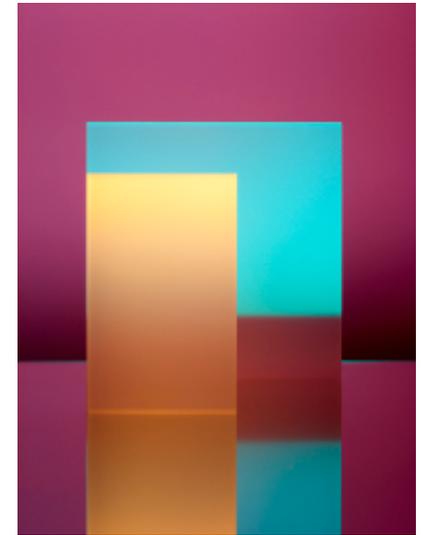


I

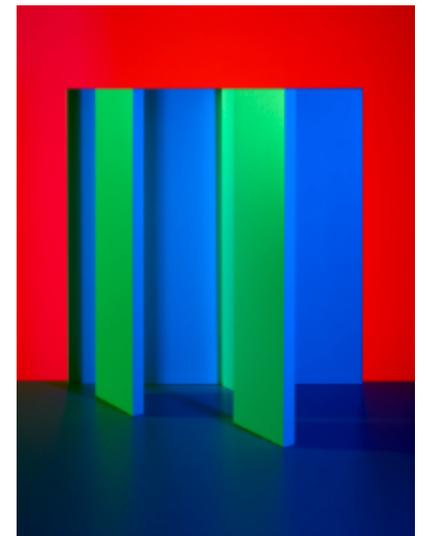


II

- I N52788, photograph
- II N58645, photograph
- III N57610, photograph
- IV N51802, photograph



III



IV

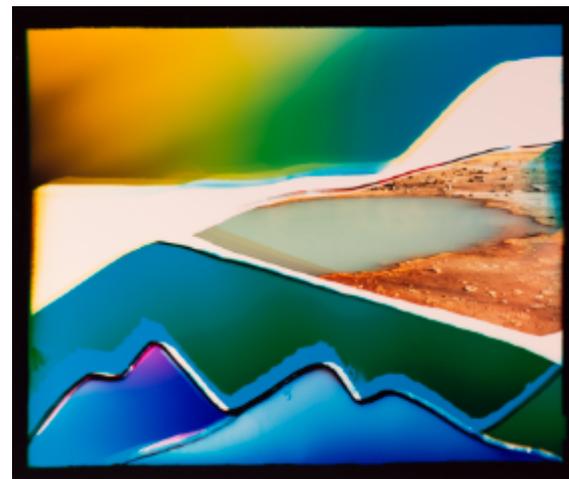
Liz Nielsen



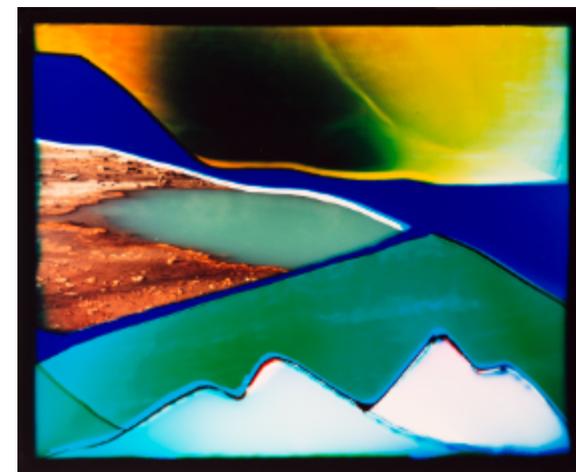
Cool Mountain Path, photogram



I



II



III

- I Cocktail Portal, photogram
- II Oasis, photogram
- III Oasis II, photogram

## Yves Ullens

9

Coloured Meditation #6, Cape Town (South Africa)

2012

chromogenic print, Diasec

edition 1/5 (+ 2 AP)

150 x 100 cm

10.I

Matrix 05.04, Brussels (Belgium)

2020

archival pigment print on canvas mounted on aluminium frame

edition 1/3 (+ 2 AP)

150 x 100 cm

11.II

Matrix 15.08, Brussels (Belgium)

2022

archival pigment print on canvas mounted on aluminium frame

edition 1/5 (+ 2 AP)

60 x 90 cm

11.III

Matrix 15.08, Brussels (Belgium)

2022

archival pigment print on canvas mounted on aluminium frame

edition 1/5 (+ 2 AP)

60 x 90 cm

Born in 1960 in Brussels, Belgium, Yves Ullens lives and works in Brussels.

Photography is and has always been for me the ideal medium to express emotions.

The particular energy brought by light and colour is vital both in my private and professional life. Light, as the only form of energy we can see, presents itself as colour.

My photographs allow the viewer and the creator to explore feelings through abstraction. I see photography very much like a painter and I use my camera like a brush. My world of photography has developed into six major themes: pictorial, kinetic, optic, urban traces, pure nature and LikeAPainting. Each body of work takes on its own rhythms. Progressively since 2011, I have become a more global artist; by extending - with the help of my team - the possibilities of photography and associating it to other media and design applications. Photography will always be at the very heart of my work. And, with the spirit of a scientist, I enjoy pushing its boundaries ever farther and further.

[www.traqueurdelumieres.com](http://www.traqueurdelumieres.com)

Represented by Marc Minjauw Gallery (Brussels), Art Rasson Gallery (Tournai & Knokke), the Mob-Artstudio (Luxembourg) and Mark Hachem (Paris, Beirut)

## Niko Luoma

13

Self-Titled Adaptation of Gauguin's Chair (1888)

2018

archival pigment print from 4x5 film original, Diasec, framed

edition 1/5 (+ 2 AP)

92 cm x 73 cm

14.I

Self-Titled Adaptation of Van Gogh's Chair (1888)

2018

archival pigment print from 4x5 film original, Diasec, framed

edition 1/5 (+ 2 AP)

92 cm x 73 cm

15.II

Self-Titled Adaptation of Caryatid

2018

archival pigment print from 4x5 film original, Diasec, framed

edition 3/5 (+ 2 AP)

85 x 65 cm

15.III

Self-Titled Adaptation of Nude Sitting on a divan (1917)

2018

archival pigment print from 4x5 film original, Diasec, framed

edition 4/5 (+ 2 AP)

85 x 65 cm

Born in 1970 in Helsinki, Finland, Niko Luoma lives and works in Helsinki and Trieste.

I work at the studio. My photographic process is analogue. I use camera, light and film as my materials. As simply as possible, instead of one exposure, I use many overlapping exposures on one frame and one film.

I work inside of the camera rather than behind or in the front of it. The exposure itself becomes my content and the process itself manifests as images. Speed and decelerations are the seminal topics of my photography. Speed of seeing, speed of hearing, speed of working through the space. Space is speed decelerated into rhythm.

[www.nikoluoma.net](http://www.nikoluoma.net)

Represented by Persons Projects (Berlin), Bryce Wolkowitz Gallery (New York), Galerie Nikolaus Ruzicska (Salzburg) and Atlas Gallery (London)

## Richard Caldicott

17  
Untitled #176  
2000  
chromogenic print  
edition of 5  
127 x 101,5 cm

18.I  
Untitled #167  
2000  
chromogenic print  
edition of 5  
127 x 101,5 cm

19.II  
Combination Green  
1996  
chromogenic print  
51 x 61 cm

19.III  
Untitled #15  
1998  
chromogenic print  
51 x 61 cm

Born in 1962 in Leicester, United Kingdom, Richard Caldicott lives and works in London. Though he also produces drawings and prints, Richard Caldicott is best known for his photographs—abstract compositions of colors and geometric forms made from precise arrangements of Tupperware and other kitchen implements.

While his use of such a mundane consumer product as Tupperware to create his exquisite photographic images could be considered ironic, Caldicott seems more focused on formal considerations than conceptual hijinks. His photographs have been compared to the Color Field paintings of the Abstract Expressionists Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman.

His work is photographic, yet it is not figurative. By using the camera to record collages and constructions, Caldicott has carved himself a unique aesthetic niche that manages to reference iconic modernism without reverting to familiar forms.

[www.richardcaldicott.co.uk](http://www.richardcaldicott.co.uk)

Represented by Atlas Gallery (London), Sous Les Etoiles Gallery (New York) and Photo Edition (Berlin)

## Luuk de Haan

23  
color field 1  
2015  
archival pigment print on hahnemühle museum etching, framed  
unique  
100 x 72,5 cm

24.I  
big nothing 77  
2021  
archival pigment print on hahnemühle museum etching, framed  
unique  
100 x 82 cm

25.II  
color field 5  
2015  
archival pigment print on hahnemühle museum etching, framed  
unique  
100 x 72,5 cm

25.III  
a long way from purple 4  
2022  
archival pigment print on hahnemühle museum etching, framed  
edition 1/1  
42 x 52 cm

Born in 1964 in Vlaardingen, the Netherlands, Luuk de Haan lives and works in Bergen. Although in many ways resembling abstract painting, photographs of the kind made by Luuk de Haan celebrate and delight in exploiting photography's indexical grounding in a world of chemical and physical reactions to physical phenomena and, more recently, the optical potential inherent in digital, screen-based photographic manipulation.

They are documents of their own coming into being rather than the recording of a world outside the photograph. Despite their abstract, non-referential appearance, they are as 'realist' as photographs can get. Emphasising sequential processes and long durations rather than instantaneous exposure, they return photography to a unique and individualised practice and away from reproductive economies of mass production.

[www.luukdehaan.nl](http://www.luukdehaan.nl)

Represented by Sous Les Etoiles Gallery (New York), Kahmann Gallery (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Berlin) and Lightworks (Sydney)

## Hanno Otten

27  
Colorblock 214  
2007  
chromogenic print, photogram  
unique  
40,6 x 30,4 cm

28.I  
Colorblock 202  
2007  
chromogenic print, photogram  
unique  
40,6 x 30,4 cm

28.II  
Colorblock 191  
2007  
chromogenic print, photogram  
unique  
40,6 x 30,4 cm

28.III  
Colorblock 217  
2007  
chromogenic print, photogram  
unique  
40,6 x 30,4 cm

29.IV  
Colorblock 97 / 23  
1997  
chromogenic print, photogram  
unique  
40,6 x 30,4 cm

29.V  
Colorblock 256  
2007  
chromogenic print, photogram  
unique  
40,6 x 30,4 cm

Born in 1954 in Köln, Germany, Hanno Otten lives and works in Köln. Hanno Otten's work probes the nature of color through extraordinary photograms made only with light from a color enlarger onto photographic paper. He manipulates color and light to create a modern palette of vivid hues. Geometric patterns and shapes evoke a 1960s graphic sensibility. As in his earlier work, Otten insists on the primacy of color, forgoing any literal and narrative imagery. His subject matter is light itself.

[www.hannootten.de](http://www.hannootten.de)

Represented by Janet Borden Inc. (New York)

## Sebastiaan Knot

31  
Colliding Colors Light Painting N58138  
2023  
archival pigment print, mounted, facemounted acrylics, blockframe  
edition 1/1  
140 x 105 cm

32.I  
Colliding Colors N52788  
2022  
archival pigment print, mounted, facemounted acrylics, blockframe  
edition 1/1  
120 x 90 cm

33.II  
Perceptive Perspective N58645  
2023  
archival pigment print, framed  
edition 1/1  
60 x 45 cm

33.IV  
Colliding Colors N51802  
2022  
archival pigment print, framed  
edition 1/1  
60 x 45 cm

33.III  
Colliding Colors Light Painting N57610  
2023  
archival pigment print, mounted, facemounted acrylics, blockframe  
edition 1/1  
120 x 90 cm

Born in 1970 in Groningen, the Netherlands, Sebastiaan Knot lives and works in Rotterdam. He uses light as his primary material to create contrasting colors and forms that beautify a given space. He stages his camera-based photographs by constructing compositions of simple shapes with no representational value or color. Knot bounces colors of light into the space from different points and for different times, resulting in a shot that captures a unique moment with scattered light, shadows, and mixed colors. Notably, he refrains from any digital manipulation of the image. Knot's work invites a dialogue that questions the viewers' perception of what is real and what is not.

[www.sebastiaanknot.nl](http://www.sebastiaanknot.nl)

Represented by Project 2.0 Gallery. (The Hague)

## Liz Nielsen

35:  
Cool Mountain Path  
2018  
analog chromogenic photogram on Fujiflex  
unique  
107,95 x 76,2 cm

36.I  
Cocktail Portal  
2018  
analog chromogenic photogram on Fujiflex  
unique  
76,2 x 55,88 cm

37.II  
Oasis  
2019  
analog chromogenic photogram on Fujiflex  
unique  
40,64 x 50,8 cm

37.III  
Oasis II  
2019  
analog chromogenic photogram on Fujiflex  
unique  
40,64 x 50,8 cm

Born in 1975 in Ashland, Wisconsin, USA, Liz Nielsen lives and works in Brooklyn and Newburgh, New York, USA.

My artistic practice explores the boundaries of photography beyond traditional representation or documentary form. My analog photograms, or 'light paintings' are created using a technique developed over the years through experimentation. In complete darkness, I expose light sensitive material dozens of times through a system of layers, and then process it through traditional photographic chemicals. Each image created is unique.

My photograms reflect a fascination with light as a tangible yet ethereal phenomenon. My work is about harnessing its incredible power to shape space and eclipse/collapse time, merging a multiplicity of realities into a finite yet dynamic form.

[www.liznielsen.com](http://www.liznielsen.com)

Represented by Miles McEnery gallery (New York), SOCO Gallery (Charlotte), Black Box Projects (London), and Horizont Galerie (Budapest). She also has available works with David B. Smith (Denver)

## Program of the Borders

- Writing and signing of a manifesto that defines the bases and philosophy of the artistic movement The Borders.
- Group shows of artists from The Borders movement in museums and art institutions in Europe (\*).
- Group shows of artists from The Borders movement in contemporary art and photography galleries in Europe (\*).
- Organization of seminars and/or conferences on abstract photography in association with museums.
- Creation of a website for the movement.
- Creation of accounts on social networks to communicate the activities of the movement (Instagram & LinkedIn).

(\* ) When possible, a special publication will go along with the exhibitions.:

Colofon

The Borders

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