

Press Release

Alison Bradley Projects is pleased to present *TERRAIN*, unique works by Chuck Kelton (b. New York, 1952).

TERRAIN presents 22 recent works by Chuck Kelton, a culmination of his lifelong experimentation with chemicals, light and paper. The exhibition includes six distinct, yet related, series of chemigrams, some with elements of photograms: *SEARCH FOR A WORLD*, *A NIGHT SKY*, *MOONRISE*, *TERRAIN*, *A HISTORY OF THE WORLD*, and *PARADISE*.

Kelton demonstrates what the photographic medium is capable of in absence of the camera. Rather than capturing an image, Kelton constructs it himself. Manipulating his media with an almost painterly abstraction, Kelton creates otherworldly landscapes. This reference holds onto some aspect of reality, but the work simultaneously moves away from the traditional bounds of photography. However, these works are still deeply entrenched in this heritage.

In terms of technique, Kelton gestures to the history of the dark room, employing aspects of the chemical formulas dating back to the 19th century and making them his own. He reignites this disappearing craft by using its tools to create work independent from the camera but indebted to the photographic process. This use of traditional media grounds the work in the physical world, but the landscape itself is utterly abstracted. While much of the reaction between chemicals, light, and paper are up to chance, Kelton controls these interactions and, as such, his compositions. His nod to the landscape gestures toward a long history of the subject within photography, even nudging the master negatives that have passed through Kelton's hands, such as Ansel Adams' *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*. Instead of emulating these masterworks, Kelton challenges photography's traditional relationship between author and subject. In this sense, Kelton both embraces and eschews tradition, enabling him to create something entirely new. *TERRAIN* exhibits that Kelton is not just a master of his craft, but an artist who has taken it forward into new ground.

TERRAIN is accompanied by an online catalogue featuring texts by art historians Allison Pappas and Larry List.

Allison Pappas is currently a doctoral candidate at Brown University, focusing on the history of photography. She previously worked at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, where she was the Assistant Curator of Photography. She has also held positions at the J. Paul Getty Museum, the RISD Museum, and the David Winton Bell Gallery; in addition to being an accomplished writer, contributing to important publications such as *For a New World to Come: Experiments in Japanese Art and Photography, 1968–1979*. Pappas is also the co-director of Framing the Field: Photography's Histories in American Institutions.

Larry List is a New York-based independent curator and writer. He has organized exhibitions and written essays about Dada, Surrealism, modern and contemporary sculpture, painting, and photography for the Noguchi

Museum, The Tate Modern, The Menil Collection, The Warhol Museum, Reykjavik Art Museum, DOX Center for Art, Prague and others. List's 2005 Imagery of Chess Revisited exhibition and book were nominated for the College Art Association's Alfred H. Barr Award. He is currently part of the Man Ray Catalogue Raisonné project.

This exhibition will be on view from September 8th through November 5th, 2022.

Biography

Born in New York, Chuck Kelton graduated from Kansas City Art Institute in 1975 and then received an MFA in Photography from Ohio University in 1977. Kelton went on to work with some of the greatest photographers of the era with the foundation of Kelton Labs, including Lillian Bassman, Danny Lyon, and Mary Ellen Mark. However, Kelton's own work has as much in common with the abstract expressionists as it does with these photographic legends. Chuck Kelton is a virtuoso artist creating chemigrams, an artwork involving a complex alchemy of darkroom chemicals, toners composed of precious and semi-precious metals, combined with unconventional methodologies such as the folding of the light sensitive paper itself. He is also a master of photograms, using light to create form. These techniques are combined in his unique cameraless works to evoke imagined landscapes. Through his manipulation of chemicals and light, Kelton creates worlds much like our own, however touched by ethereality and enigma. In these planetary compositions, he explores the reproduction of landscape and nature, as well as the vast possibilities of photographic printing.