

## COMMENT

susanburnstine.com

All images  
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Nikolova

## AMERICAN CONNECTION

**Nadezda Nikolova's** conceptual work straddles the divide between representation and abstraction and translates her experiences of being 'present' in the landscape into experimental tintype photograms. Susan Burnstine reports.



Elemental Forms, Landscape no. 142



Elemental Forms, Landscape no. 162

After a two-year absence, the Photography Show presented by AIPAD made quite an impressive return to New York City this past May. There was a fantastic mixture of contemporary and vintage work exhibited by 49 galleries from nine countries and 23 cities. While it was an honour to have my own work on the walls, I spent a great deal of time viewing the work of so many other talents. One standout was that of Nadezda Nikolova, who exhibited selections from her newest series, *Elemental Forms: Landscape Rearticulated*, in the HackelBury Fine Art booth.

Nikolova lives in Oakland, California, was born in the former Yugoslavia and spent her childhood between Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Austria and the United States. She began as a painter and started using photography as a medium to express her ideas. She studied art history and alternative photo processes in college and later at the George Eastman Museum.

Nikolova's work is rooted in her relationship to the surrounding landscape, her fascination with the photo-

based object, daily walks in the redwood forest overlooking the San Francisco Bay and road trips along the California coast. She describes her work as, 'an aesthetic response to geological forms, atmospheric and light conditions, and forces that are more felt than seen.'

Additionally, she says, 'I create fictional compositions

that convey what it feels like to be present in the landscape and experience it with the senses, reflecting on both the physical and the ineffable aspects such as a sense of awe, mystery, energetic imprint, etc.'

Nikolova studied ecology, conservation and environmental issues related to the Anthropocene, which had a

great deal to do with the initial inspiration for her work. 'Since the inspiration for the work originates in my observations of nature, of the landscape, I choose to witness the entire experience, including the human footprint in the landscape, rather than romanticise the experience.'

Her process begins with the observation of nature and being

present in the landscape. She then translates her experiences into sketches, which she uses as a guide to decide composition, size and arrangements as single or multiple panels, in addition to deducing which properties to utilise in each piece. When creating her experimental tintype photograms in the darkroom, she uses a variety of materials including cut or torn paper, wet collodion chemistry, engraving aluminium, light, brushes and occasionally cliché verre. Final pieces are born from multiple exposures, and at times, can take up to 30 attempts to build compositional elements through selectively exposing sensitised collodion emulsion.

Nikolova's previous series, *Elemental Forms: Landscape*, was first featured

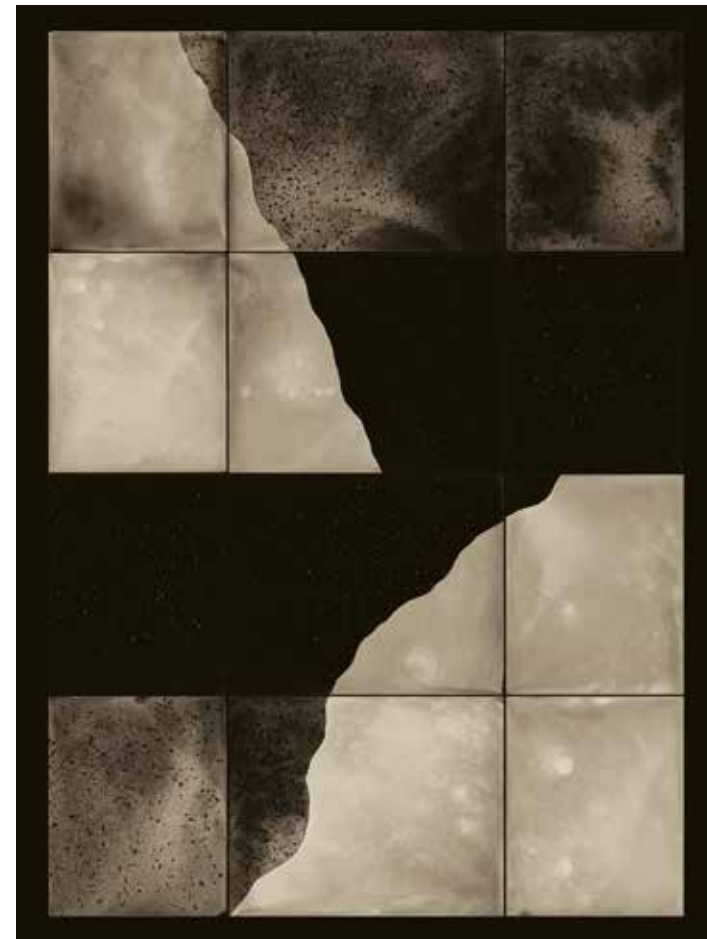
in the December 2018 issue of this magazine. While that series remains ongoing, she has expanded on the initial concept in her latest work. 'I started *Elemental Forms: Landscape* in 2018 and *Elemental Forms: Landscape Rearticulated* in late 2019,' she says. 'I feel that they are not necessarily distinct "series", but part of a larger series, *Elemental Forms*. However, they are grouped separately because the *Landscape Rearticulated* work, which is newer, is less representational, more abstract than the majority of *Landscape* works, although there is some overlap and certainly the *Landscape* body of work straddles representation and abstraction. *Landscape Rearticulated* feels like a natural progression from the *Landscape* work, which departs even further from representation.'

Considering the work further, *Landscape Rearticulated* deconstructs the landscape into abstract formations that retain the organic shapes of nature while questioning perception and proposing that the landscape (literal and metaphorical) can be reconceived as an idea and therefore reimagined, she says.

Creating a unique, one of a kind image ostensibly has



Elemental Forms, Landscape Rearticulated no. 7



Elemental Forms, Landscape Rearticulated no. 18

positives and negatives for many artists, but Nikolova admits that before she completes an image, she has already accepted that the pieces are meant to be shared with the world. 'Therefore,' she says, 'I do not feel possessive of

it and it is easy to part with it.'

Currently, she has a picture book in the works with Nazraeli Press and both series in *Elemental Forms* remain ongoing. [nadezdanikolova.com](http://nadezdanikolova.com)

EXHIBITIONS  
USA

## ANDOVER

Addison Gallery  
of American Art

1 September to 31 December

Rosamond Purcell: Nature Stands Aside

[addison.andover.edu](http://addison.andover.edu)

## ATLANTA

## High Museum of Art

7 October to 19 February 2023

Deane Lawson

[high.org](http://high.org)

## CHICAGO

Museum of Contemporary  
Photography

Until 30 October

Beyond the Frame

[mocp.org](http://mocp.org)

## DENVER

## Denver Art Museum

Until 6 November

Georgia O'Keeffe, Photographer

[denverartmuseum.org](http://denverartmuseum.org)

## HOUSTON

## Catherine Couturier Gallery

10 September to 15 October

Henry Horenstein: Speedway 72

[catherinecouturier.com](http://catherinecouturier.com)

## NEW YORK CITY

## Bruce Silverstein Gallery

22 September to 5 November

Sarah Sense

[brucesilverstein.com](http://brucesilverstein.com)

## Deborah Bell Photographs

Until 5 November

Wijnanda Deroo:

Behind the Walls of the Hermitage

[deborahbellphotographs.com](http://deborahbellphotographs.com)

## New York Historical Society

Until 15 January 2023

Kwame Brathwaite: Black is Beautiful

[nyhistory.org](http://nyhistory.org)

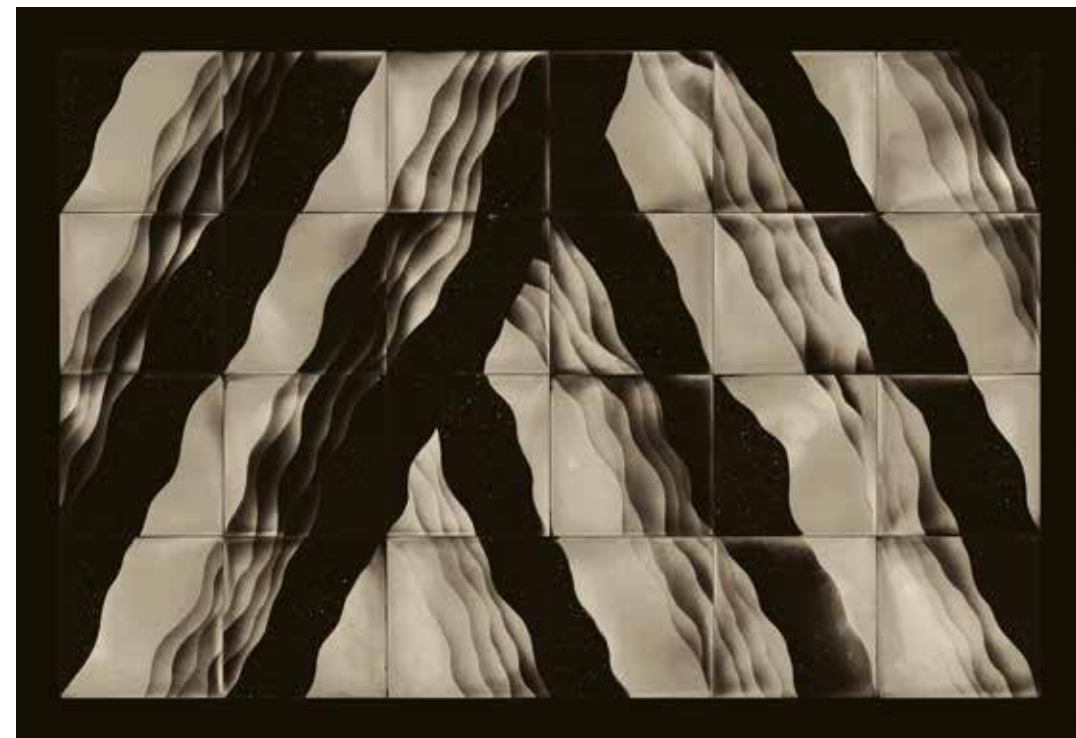
## RENO

## Nevada Museum of Art

Until 29 January 2023

American Silence:

The Photographs of Robert Adams

[nevadaart.org](http://nevadaart.org)

Elemental Forms, Landscape Rearticulated, Plurality