

## ParisPhoto 2017 Ebbs And Flows – by Zoltan Alexander



The Grand Palais always starts with the Mini Palais, the hidden corner café-bar-restaurant filled with friends, collectors, art lovers and the media. A double espresso and we were ready to enter the 21st edition of ParisPhoto on preview day, presenting more than 180 galleries and publishers. Florence Bourgeois, the director of the fair and the art director Christoph Wiesner, was our enthusiastic guides. The fair's Guest of Honour, Karl Lagerfeld has picked over 100 images presented at the fair and produced a limited edition book with German publisher, Steidl.

Despite the opening week of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the largest global event for cultural, geopolitical UAE, ParisPhoto counted on the participation of all major international galleries and museums. The fair highlighted the diversity and quality of the represented artists and works, also proposed satellite programmes, prizes, autograph sessions and discussions led by curators and art historians. It was a definite "liberté non négociable".

Each year there are unspoken waves of visuals at ParisPhoto that give a second meaning and character to the fair. Apart from the strongly emerging African contemporary art and photography in recent years, it struck me how much juxtapositioning, overlaid structures, staged architecture, and geometric reflections were in focus in parallel with wild and often melancholic nature. After a fine selection, here are the key and most significant artists and galleries of this year.



LES FILLES DU CALVAIRE / SMITH SATURNIUM Saturnium series, 2017 by Smith / Prix Swiss Life à Quatre Mains 2016-2017 Photo © Photo © Courtesy of ZOLTAN+

Founded in a former industrial workshop in the Marais, in Paris, the Galerie Les Filles du Calvaire quickly widened its programming and artists in contemporary art and photography. This year they showcased a solo show with the work of SMITH.

Dorothee Smith, known as SMITH, is a young conceptual photographer, studied at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de la Photographie in Arles. SMITH does not make mystery of her approach to the visible; the work is luminous and dark at the same time, and valid as an image of the uncertainty of gender roles. The gender issue, themed by philosophy holds a significant part in the intellectual development of her work. Her photographs have a significant echo of Renaissance paintings with a violent approach. Faces betray an inexpressible tenderness, and bodies surrendered in a heat-haze of intimacy sometimes crossed by melancholy and utopia. It is more of a question of metamorphosis than a metaphor.

Her current work "Saturnium" is a series of mesmerizing portraits, melancholic images, printed on aluminium sheets. A new chemical element baptized "Saturnium", in reference to its possible Saturnian origin and to Saturn, God of time, figure of melancholy.

SMITH photographs people she has strong connection with, showing a generation of young men and women who try to find an identity that surpasses the standard. They go outside of borders in who they are as people, but also in their sexual identity. The results are stunning portraits of undetermined, dissolved identities.