

ARTFORUM

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NEW YORK

October 8, 2018

John Chiara

YOSSI MILO GALLERY

245 Tenth Avenue

September 6 - October 27

John Chiara is mainly known as a West Coast photographer. His pictures of California elaborate a tradition nearly as old as photography itself, taking in the state's sublime expanses of earth and concrete. They carefully balance rich detail with compositional ambiguity, imbuing the more epic aspects of the landscape genre with a sense of poetic restraint.

In this show, Chiara trains his eye on the streets of Manhattan, revealing hidden surfaces that might otherwise escape notice amid the hustle of daily life. Like many of his nineteenth-century forebears, he is a polymath—the artist designed a custom camera more than four feet wide, which he mounted on the back of a pickup truck. The apparatus allows Chiara to produce color negatives at a colossal scale. The result is a body of tonally inverted images that amplify the mundane in both size and chromatic intensity—not too unlike dropping acid while wearing infrared goggles. Apartment buildings, such as those in *Henry Street near Rutgers Street, Variation 2, 2018*, crackle in hues of ultramarine and emerald, while its fire escapes glow radiant white. Trees, too, pervade these images, creating fields of hazy abstraction or hints of burns and bubbles in the frame.

At first glance, there is a roteness within the images. But Chiara resists the reduction of the photograph to mere pixels, demanding that the viewer linger. It's rare for a photographer to push the technical edge of the medium. And rarer still to reanimate corners of the world seen and forgotten by hundreds of thousands of eyes every day.



John Chiara, *Henry Street near Rutgers Street, Variation 2, 2018*, negative chromogenic photograph, 50 x 40".

— Ian Bourland