

Daniele Genadry

The Fall

12 February — 18 April 2016

Spread across the Twin Galleries, *The Fall* brings together recent work by Daniele Genadry exploring the subtle relationship between visual perception, migration, memory, and place. Living for many years between Rome, New York, and Beirut, Genadry's relationship to place may be familiar to those sharing a contemporary nomadic lifestyle, where scenes we hold from one space and time fuse with another.

Painting from photographs and memory, and often returning to the same mountain view, she works and reworks the same scene, each time with subtle changes, as if excavating for a truth to be found only through the persistent re-viewing of the recurrent image. Yet the more we look at something, the less familiar it becomes. With each reworking a new spatial memory is generated, until the once familiar becomes strange and the once strange familiar, blurring the line between a photograph, a painting, and an individual memory.

Photographs here are more than reference material; reality as mediated through technologies, including photography, cinema, and phone screens is a recurring theme in Genadry's work, evidenced both through her working process and in the finished works themselves. Bright color blocs and deliberate gaps in the image evoke the distortion characteristic of the way we receive, process, and recall information. Memories are generated from a jumble of our lived experience as well as from moments we may have only watched or dreamt, what some call "prosthetic memories." The rendering of the same view through multiple media points to the unsteadiness of vision, and an inability to fully grasp the real.

Taken from her grandmother's house and through the windows of moving cars, there is an inverse relationship to time in Genadry's photographs and in their translation into paintings. The slowness in the act of painting, and the layering of time inherent in its process, contrasts with the quickly snapped images. Time as history is also present here, in the form of the landscape as a witness and repository of collective memory and identity. A landscape is never silent; through its careful study, we glean small clues that give way to larger narratives, both joyous and violent.

Nora Razian

Head of Programs and Exhibitions, Sursock Museum

Missing Real

Stefan Tarnowski

Daniele Genadry finds a pile of snapshots, most of which depict a mountain she's been photographing repeatedly for the last decade. Among the familiar view from her grandmother's house in Kartaba is an image she can't place. She recognises the old camera she must have used to take the photographs, so she knows that it had been taken before a particular date.

In order to remember the image she doesn't recognise, she asks her mother to look at the pictures. Together, they decide that the photographs, taken with her old camera and its disconcerting zoom, must have come from a particular trip.

Both mother and zoom play strangely parallel roles: they help her examine a landscape more closely, to become more familiar with it, while also revealing, the closer she looks, the more she is told, its unfamiliarity; both the technology and her mother mediate her perception of the view. They render, counterintuitively, a particular perspective less graspable, less the result of her own agency.

She returns in an attempt to rediscover the view. The act of searching for a missing perspective, formed at the juncture of time and technology, is an impossible task. Like the blot of recently-built houses on the mountainside, the passing of time builds a barrier, blocking off her ability to find the original perspective, to re-enact the original act of photographing. With the absence of any memory of taking the photograph, with only a vague inkling of certain circumstances and a trace of the perspective shown in the image, she is left with a tangible sense of absence, of the missing view.

Etel Adnan, a painter and poet born and raised in Lebanon, but who joined the ranks of its diaspora, repeatedly paints Mount Tamalpais, a view that rises up near her home in California. She often does so from memory, and in her small canvases, the mountain "summoned and summarised," to use Simone Fattal's meticulous phrase, can't help but also evoke other mountains she left behind.¹ That's to say, there is something implicitly diasporic about her paintings.

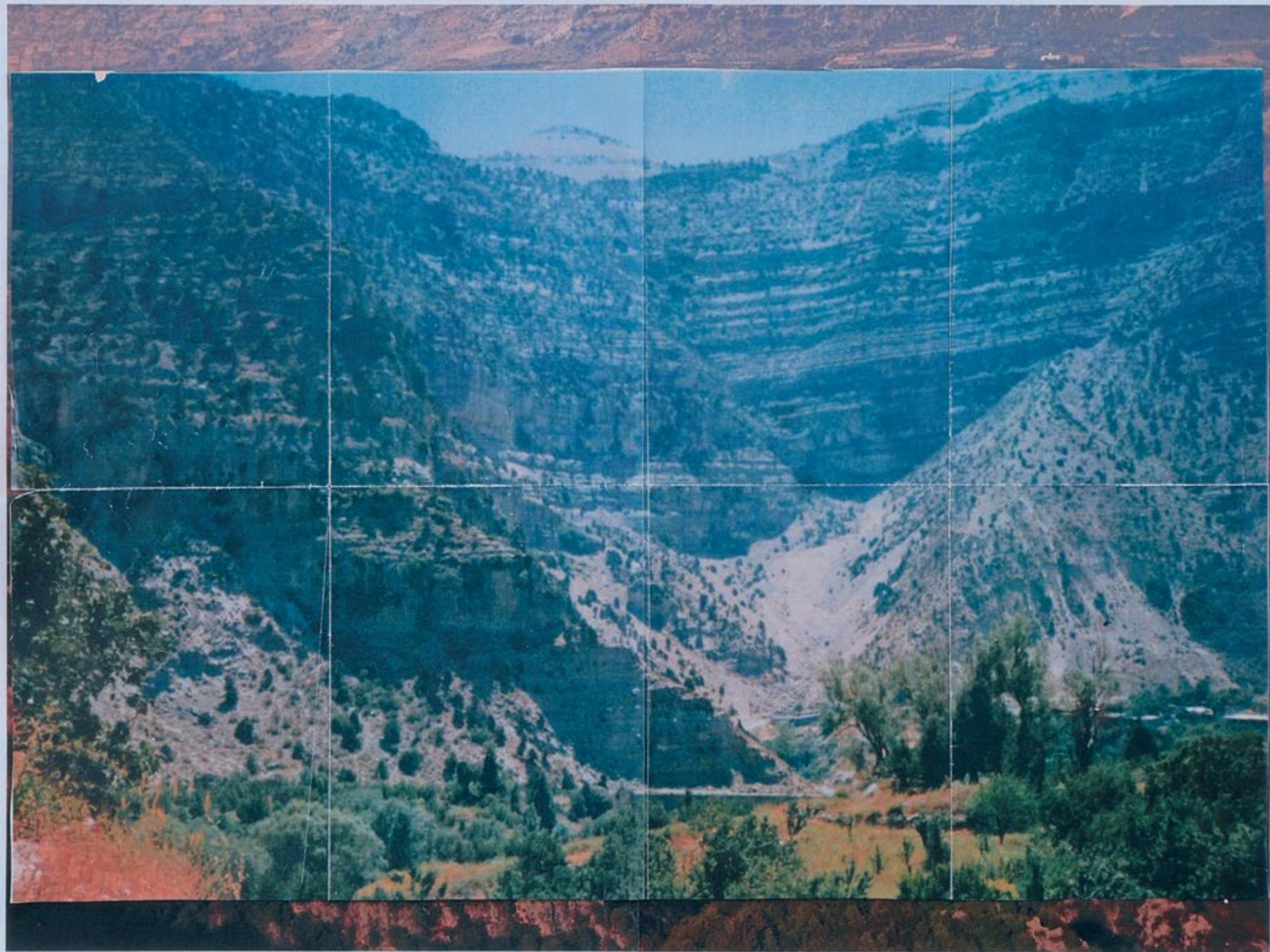
There's a difference, however, between the diasporic in the work of Adnan and Genadry. Adnan paints from her own memory, and it is because of this that she is able to summarise the mountain, while also summoning up the evocations of other mountainscapes from her past. Genadry, on the other hand, paints from photographs. And her memory of the landscape is fragmented, constantly infiltrated by her experiences of its representation, by images formed at the juncture between the private and public spheres.

The act of sketching, then painting the two landscapes, and finally turning them into installations, is an attempt to fix the fleetingness of her glance, while acknowledging its ephemeral nature. There's an underlying sense of doubt to the approach — Genadry does not claim to offer the definitive perspective of the mountain. The view inclines to the peripheral over the frontal, to the modest insistence that while the installations create an absorptive experience, the mountain itself cannot be consumed whole by viewer or artist.

Excerpt from an essay published in Missing Real (2015) in conjunction with the exhibition Missing Real at Taymour Grahne Gallery, 2015.

Stefan Tarnowski is a writer and researcher. Currently a Ph.D. candidate at Columbia University's Anthropology Department, he was previously assistant director of Beirut Art Center and a participant on Ashkal Alwan's Home Workspace Program (2012–13).

¹ Simone Fattal, "On Perception: Etel Adnan's Visual Art" in *Etel Adnan: Critical Essays on the Arab-American Writer and Artist* ed. Lisa Suhair Majaj and Amal Amireh (North Carolina: Macfarland & Co, 2002), p. 90.





Familiar Mountains (Kartaba), 2015
Acrylic and oil on wood panel, 45×61 cm

Familiar Mountains (sunset), 2015
Acrylic on wood panel, 45×61 cm

Notes on the Passion of Sun-Painting

Walid Sadek

When on March 19, 1952, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim submitted to *The Photographic Journal*¹ an article on the world's first photograph, it was already too late for most of us to see it and so for a very long time to come. The published photograph on page 118 was said to be a faithful photographic reproduction of Nicephore Niépce's heliograph fixed in 1827², and since its rediscovery by the Gernsheim couple, known as *View from the window at Le Gras*.³ In their 1952 article the Gernsheims included a note as to the supposed difficulty of generating an adequate photographic reproduction of Niépce's heliograph because of the plate's mirrorlike surface: "...after many trials [Mr. P. B. Watt of the Kodak Research Laboratory] successfully overcame the difficult problem of reproducing the picture."⁴ The resulting reproduction was later included in their widely read and repeatedly referenced *The Origins of Photography*⁵ and a slew of other books published before and after.⁶

Yet in 1977, Helmut Gernsheim published that same reproduction in an article entitled "The 150th anniversary of photography"⁷ along with another similar but relatively blotchy and much darker reproduction of Niépce's first which, he belatedly informs the reader, is in fact the one generated by Mr. Watt of the Kodak Research Laboratory.⁸ The latter's, the author holds, was such a "gross distortion of the original" that it had to be touched up with watercolor to bring it as close as possible to the original: "...dust particles and the unevenness of the pewter plate, not apparent to the eye, became grossly exaggerated features under sidelight. I was very disappointed, for the [Kodak] reproduction in no way corresponded with the original. I spent nearly two days trying to eliminate with watercolor the hundreds of light spots and blotches, and my spotting certainly resulted in a more uniform and clearly defined image. All the same,

¹ According to the Gernsheims, the reproduction was first published in *The Times* on 15 April 1952. See above-mentioned article, p. 118.

² Nicephore Niépce, *View from the window at Le Gras*, original positive only heliograph on polished pewter plate, Gernsheim Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

³ "Re-Discovery of the World's First Photograph", p. 118.

⁴ Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, *The Origins of Photography*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1982, p. 102.

⁵ For a list see Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*, MIT Press, 1997, note 47, p. 246.

⁶ Helmut Gernsheim, "The 150th Anniversary of Photography" in *History of Photography*, 1:1, 1977, pp. 3-8.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 5.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 8.

my reproduction was only an approximation of the original. Its pointillistic effect is completely alien to the medium, for the silver-grey surface of the Niépce photograph is as smooth as a mirror.”

Rather than attempt to reproduce the original Niépce, give information as to its whereabouts or, further, unequivocally discount his own retouched version as equally manipulated, Gernsheim is more concerned and clearly vexed by rumors surrounding the Kodak reproduction and his retouched version. He retorts: “Yet, because it became known that I had touched up Kodak’s reproduction some people, ignorant of the original plate, misconstrued my intention, believing I had been trying to improve upon Niépce, whereas I had merely been trying to improve upon Kodak, to restore Niépce!”⁹ In providing this additional, but digressive, information, Gernsheim not only attempts to clear his zealous act from blame but also, and more importantly, sets up his own loyal hand-corrected reproduction against a faulty Kodak reproduction. Accordingly, the original Niépce pewter plate is triangulated into two manifests and one latent: one distorted through Kodak’s “unnatural methods”, another true, made with care by a devoted researcher, and to complete the arrangement, the original plate is withdrawn from circulation and made latent in the closeted safety of the archive.¹⁰ In *Burning with Desire*, Geoffrey Batchen traces the minutes of this curious story of a lost, found, occulted and then triangulated original Niépce to propose that at the origin of photography one finds not a foundational embalmed moment but the elusiveness of a desire, “a strange economy of deferral, an origin always preceded by another, more original, but never-quite-present photographic instance.”¹¹

Today, amateur photographs, widely available on the Internet, of the exhibited original Niépce heliograph¹² invariably mingle with the other two. But what one finds in the shiny and faintly colored pewter surface of the original is not the foundational moment so diligently inflated and displaced by Gernsheim. Nor does one find a fitting counterpart to the anachronistic heavy-stone monument, installed at the entrance of Niépce’s village of Saint-Loup-de-Varennes by Chalon-sur-Saône in the region of Burgundy, imposingly, and erroneously, carved: “Dans ce village Nicephore Niépce inventa la photographie en 1822.” Rather, the diminutive heliograph is all fugitiveness. Pulsating between appearance and extinguishment for only visible when awry, this supposedly foundational incunabula is suggestive rather than evidentiary. Hardly a basis

for a science or an art history, Niépce’s first solicits the affectivity of transience as when encountering a phenomenon in nature “like a flower or a snowflake whose vegetable or earthly origins are an inseparable part of their beauty.”¹³ It is optical truth not evidence; a co-incidence of chemistry, lens and physical light that shows everything there was to be seen under the apparatus’ set of conditions, as it is also a co-incidence unprotected by that same apparatus. The heliograph so jealously protected by Gernsheim is in fact incapable of defending its own ontology and is therefore haplessly open to endless manipulations. As optical truth, the heliograph is nothing but a promise to be renewed, a rainbow for a living world (a reflection of a living world) that cannot be guarded but in its fragility keeps open the possibility of the encounter. Such is the passion of the heliograph.

And that is precisely what is eradicated by art historiography as it is also by painters who employ photographs as instantiations of a discourse, as objects that do not exist outside the discourses of aesthetics, media communication, semiological signification, symbolic exchange and ideological machinations. A roster of such painters would be too lengthy to include here. But in as much as their works speaks critically of the utter exchangeability of photographs as connoted commodities, they nevertheless miss and dismiss the faint truth and fugitive opticality of the photo(*helio*)graph. It is therefore always unexpected to see the work of painters who looks at photo(*helio*)graphs for the appearance of an opticality that is true because helpless. For what one glimpses in their work is nothing less than the passion of sun-painting.

Walid Sadek is an artist and writer living in Beirut. He is an associate professor at the American University of Beirut in the Department of Fine Arts and Art History. His work has been shown in *What Hope Looks Like After Hope (On Constructive Alienation)*, HomeWorks7 Beirut (2015), *This is the Time. This is the Record of the Time*, AUB Art Gallery (2015), and in *Place At Last*, a solo exhibition at the Beirut Art Center (2010).

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 8

¹⁰ The Harry Ransom Humanities Center that keeps Niépce’s first heliograph is “bound by an agreement made with Gernsheim and therefore refuses to provide any reproduction of this heliograph other than copies of their benefactor’s watercolor.” Inz, note 47, p. 246.

¹¹ *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*, p. 127.

¹² See for instance http://agonistica.com/wpcontent/uploads/2013/06/first_photograph_home_trans.png or <http://unblinkingeye.com/Photographs/Misc/Niepce/FirstPhoto2T.jpg> or <http://www.wc-news.com/wc-news-content/first-photography-ever/high/oldest-photography.jpg>

¹³ André Bazin (1945), “The Ontology of the Photographic Image” in *What is Cinema?* University of California Press, 1967, p. 13.



Sketch for *If I Could Fly*, 2015
Acrylic on paper, 23×23 cm

Daniele Genadry

b. 1980 Baltimore, MD, United States

Lives and works between New York City, United States and Beirut, Lebanon

Daniele Genadry graduated with a B.A. in Mathematics and Studio Art from Dartmouth College in 2002 and earned her M.F.A. from the Slade School of Fine Art in London in 2008. In 2015, she was the recipient of the Basil H. Alkazzi Award for Excellence in Painting.

Genadry has participated in residencies at the Bronx Museum, Anderson Ranch Art Center (USA), Fondazione Ratti (Italy), Frans Masereel Centrum (Belgium), and in 2013-14 was the Abbey Scholar at the British School at Rome.

Recent exhibitions include:

Missing Real (2015), Taymour Grahne Gallery (2015), NYC; *Roman Remains* (2015), Transition Gallery, London; *This is the Time. This is the Record of the Time* (2015), SMBA, Amsterdam and AUB Galleries, Beirut; *There is No Place Like Home* (2015), Aurelia Antica 425, Rome; *Hard Copy* (2014), Fondazione Pastificio Cerere, Rome; *After Hours* (2013), Kunsthalle Galapagos, NYC; and *The Second AIM Biennial* (2013), The Bronx Museum, NYC.

Works on display

Twin Gallery 1

If I Could Fly (Jannah), 2015

Acrylic and oil on wood, 25 panels, 228.6×304.8 cm

Jannah, 2016

Digital print and collage on paper, 28×43 cm

Twin Gallery 2

The Fall (Afqa), 2015

Acrylic and oil on canvas, 221×345.4 cm

The Missing View, 2015

Acrylic on mylar, wire, light, 238.8×243.8×83.8 cm

7.14, 2016

Digital print on paper, 28×43 cm

With thanks to Taymour Grahne Gallery.

Daniele Genadry: The Fall is part of an ongoing series of exhibitions in the Twin Galleries, showcasing recent work by early-career artists.

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Greek Orthodox Archbishopric Street
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