

JKG

Hanako Murakami
Past Future

29 October 2022 - 4 February 2023

Jean-Kenta Gauthier *Odéon*

Jean-Kenta Gauthier

Vaugirard
4 rue de la Procession
75015 Paris

Odéon
5 rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie
75006 Paris

info@jeankentagauthier.com
+33 1 42 49 69 56
www.jeankentagauthier.com

Le Jour de voir

Hanako Murakami

Past Future

“By exploring the ancient processes of photography, I discover what photography could have been, that is to say, possible scenarios that have not been exploited.”

— Hanako Murakami

The exhibition ***Past Future*** presents a group of recent works resulting from the research and reflections undertaken by **Hanako Murakami** (born in Tokyo in 1984, lives and works in Paris) on the conditions of the advent and existence of photography. An archaeological undertaking of the medium, this vast project invites everyone to question both what photography is and what it could have been, and thus to question our desire to see and re-experience the world.

“At the beginning of a new season, I stood in Niépce’s garden with my camera called Retina, hoping to capture what did not get into the square image he produced on that summer day, 200 years ago, at the birthplace of what was not yet called photography.” If Le Gras, in Saint-Loup de Varennes in Burgundy, is the house in which the inventor Nicéphore Niépce (1765-1833) created, on 26 June 1827, the *View from the Window at Le Gras*, the oldest photograph known to date, Hanako Murakami reminds us that the context of the birth of photography already lies in the nature that surrounded the house of its inventor. The first work to be seen from outside the gallery, ***Niépce’s Garden (2022)*** consists of a curtain on which a photograph of the trees surrounding Le Gras is printed. The work is to be placed in front of a window, so that each window becomes a metaphor for the point of view of the first photograph, and the image of the rays of sun invites the light of the world to enter the exhibition.

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Wednesday - Saturday, 2 - 7 pm

If the multiple developments of photography lead our societies today to be inundated with images, it is because it is a question of our will to know and our desire to see. A possible metaphor for a world which, by dint of wanting to see, even ends up surveilling, the large red neon sign with its handwritten letters has its origins in a quote. On 3 February, 1828, the artist and entrepreneur Louis Daguerre wrote to Nicéphore Niépce about his latest discoveries and acknowledged to the latter that his discoveries seemed much

more promising; he then concluded his letter with these words: “*I cannot conceal from you that I am burning with desire to see your essays from nature*” [*Je ne puis vous dissimuler que je brûle du désir de voir vos essais d’après nature*]. With **Louis Daguerre to Nicéphore Niépce, 3 February 1828 (2022)**, Hanako Murakami ignites Daguerre’s words while offering them an autonomy that seems both to recall the reasons for what at the time was not yet called photography, the yearning to be able to see and re-experience the world, and to indicate what, two centuries later, still seems to obsess our society.

In 1829, Nicéphore Niépce wrote by hand a small treatise entitled *Notes on Heliography* [Notice sur l’héliographie]. If Hanako Murakami had already recalled in her work *Nomenclature* (2019) that in the years 1820-1830, twenty-seven words or groups of words were potential candidates to designate what would later be called photography, Nicéphore Niépce had concentrated most of his efforts on the realization of heliography or “writing of the sun”, the first photographic process, a technique of fixing an image on a support. The treatise consists of eleven pages bound in a marbled cover. The stack of prints ***Invention (after Nicéphore Niépce, Notice sur l’héliographie, 1829)*** (2016/2022), recreated for the exhibition, refers to this manuscript. By reproducing on both sides of the paper an image of the cover and the back cover of this booklet, Hanako Murakami makes the treatise on the invention of the first photographic process fit into the thickness of a single sheet of paper, reminding us through its erasure that the history of photography is full of absences, like Niépce’s 132 other experiments, of which little tangible evidence remains except for a set of notes - the subject of the work *The Boxes* (2019) presented at the gallery a year ago in the group exhibition *Niépce: The Origin of the World* and which today is part of the collections of the Musée Nicéphore Niépce in Chalon-sur-Saône. The prints, placed on the floor of the gallery, are offered freely to visitors, like photography, an invention acquired in 1839 by France, which, in the words of Louis Arago in his speech to the Academies of Science and Fine Arts, “*was proud to be able to freely provide the whole world with it.*”

Niépce’s heliography, for the development of the image, required the combination of two ingredients, lavender oil and turpentine. On entering the gallery, visitors will have noticed the strong scent of ***Air de l’image*** [Air of the Image] (2022), an olfactory work recreated by Hanako Murakami by reproducing Niépce’s mixture. If Niépce had spent a long time working on heliography, his entire studio and home were perfumed with the scent of a natural laboratory. The context of the beginnings of photography is also this smell which, filling the air of Le Gras, is like the scent of victory for the brilliant inventor. A work of

Duchampian inspiration, *Air de l’image* is a quasi-readymade, like other works in the exhibition - and perhaps even all photography.

If Hanako Murakami is able to develop this vast archaeology of photography, it is because she has set about reproducing in minute detail each of the experiments conducted by Niépce, which he called “heliography”, “physautotype”, or “paratauphyse”. ***The Field of Possibilities*** (2022) is thus a state of affairs and a portable laboratory. By gathering together under a glass case a series of attempts to reproduce the world on metal plates, paper and stone, the artist creates a sculpture that presents the different forms that photography could have taken. “*By exploring the ancient processes of photography, I discover what photography could have been, that is to say, possible scenarios that have not been exploited,*” she explains.

By envisaging futures that have not happened, Hanako Murakami turns research into poetry. Studying the “*premises of the beginning*”, as she likes to say, she creates a resolutely contemporary work that questions the conditions defined two centuries ago to satisfy our desire to see the world. Similar to an archaeology, Hanako Murakami’s undertaking is akin to Michel Foucault’s project. “*It is something like this that Michel Foucault must have had in mind when he wrote that his historical investigations of the past were only the shadow of his theoretical interrogation of the present,*” wrote the philosopher Giorgio Agamben in *What is the Contemporary?* (2007). Hanako Murakami’s work is both resistance and consciousness.

— Jean-Kenta Gauthier, October 2022

Installation views



Le Jour de voir

Hanako Murakami, *Past Future*
29 October 2022 - 4 February 2023
Installation view (detail), Jean-Kenta Gauthier *Odéon*, Paris



Hanako Murakami, *Past Future*
29 October 2022 - 4 February 2023
Installation view (detail), Jean-Kenta Gauthier *Odéon*, Paris

Le Temps de voir

Hanako Murakami, *Past Future*
29 October 2022 - 4 February 2023
Installation view (detail), Jean-Kenta Gauthier *Odéon*, Paris



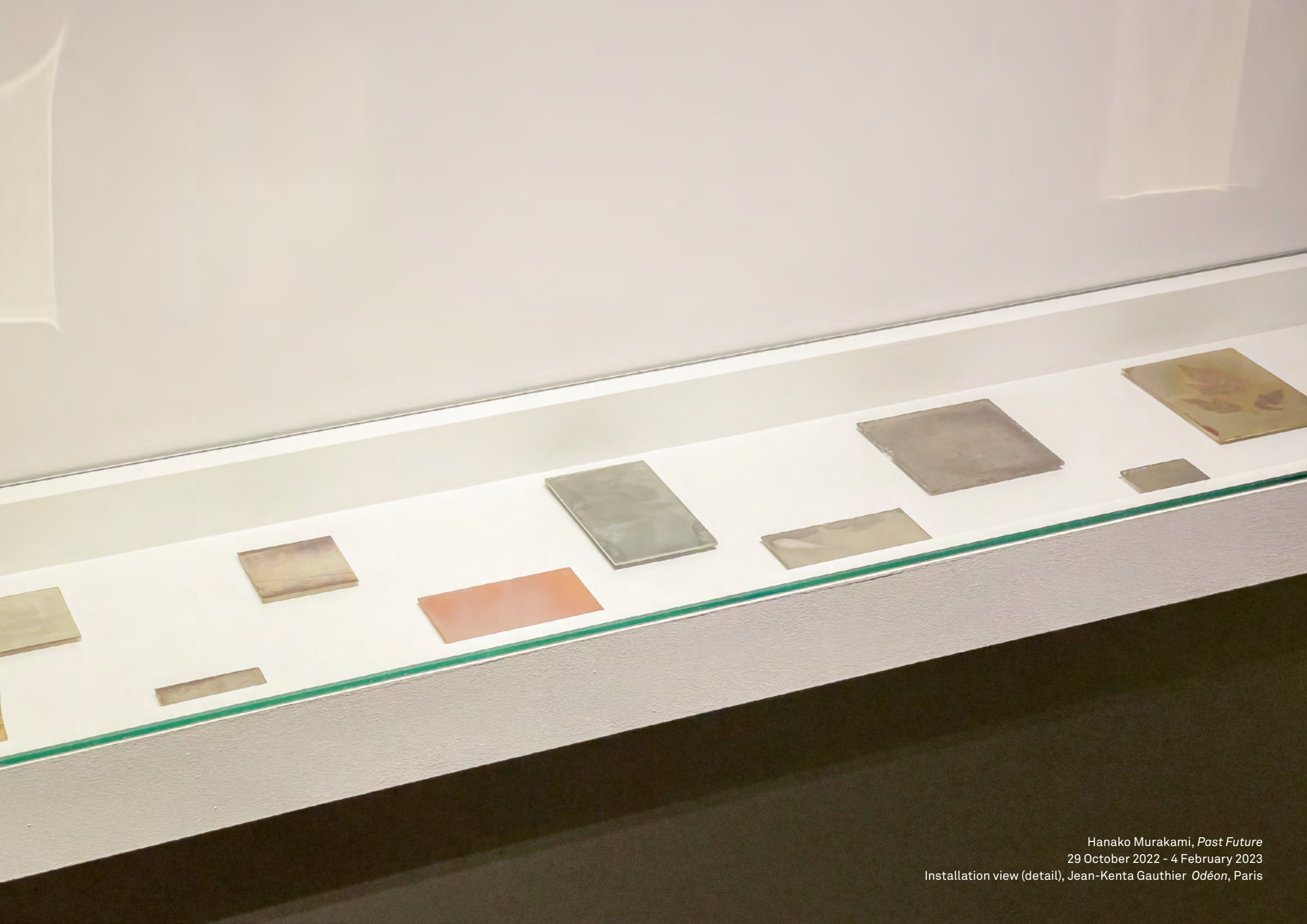
Hanako Murakami, *Past Future*
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Works


Hanako Murakami
Niépce's Garden (2022)

Photography began in Niépce's garden. At a time when photography did not yet exist, the place where he persistently endeavored to capture an image projected onto the back of a dark box, was surrounded by his garden. On the summer day when the first image began to emerge, the outside and the inside of the rectangular image must have been connected by a single shaft of sunlight.

— Hanako Murakami

Sublimation print on net curtain
In situ, overall dimensions variable
Edition of 3 + 1 AP





Hanako Murakami
Niépe's Garden (2022), detail


Sublimation print on net curtain
In situ, overall dimensions variable
Edition of 3 + 1 AP

Hanako Murakami
The Field of Possibilities (2022)

Photographic processes on paper, stone, silver-plated copper plates,
glass plates and copper plates
Twelve items of variable dimensions presented in a display case.
Size of the display case 29 x 144 x 7 cm
Unique

Photography began on pieces of paper impregnated with silver chloride, or on silver plates, or on polished and shiny limestone covered with pine tar, or on silver plates covered with rosin, or on sheets of silver exposed to iodine, or on heated copper plates, etc. At one time, the methods follow one another, and some are carried over to the next experiment. Others, on the contrary, are abandoned. It is in these experiments, now all lost, that the field of possibilities lies.

— Hanako Murakami



From left to right:

1 - Silver chloride on paper: 58x58 mm

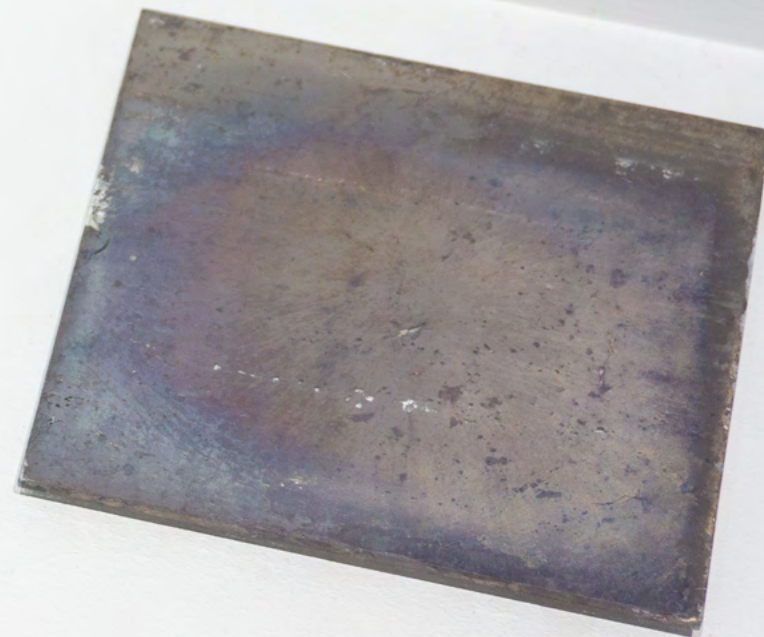
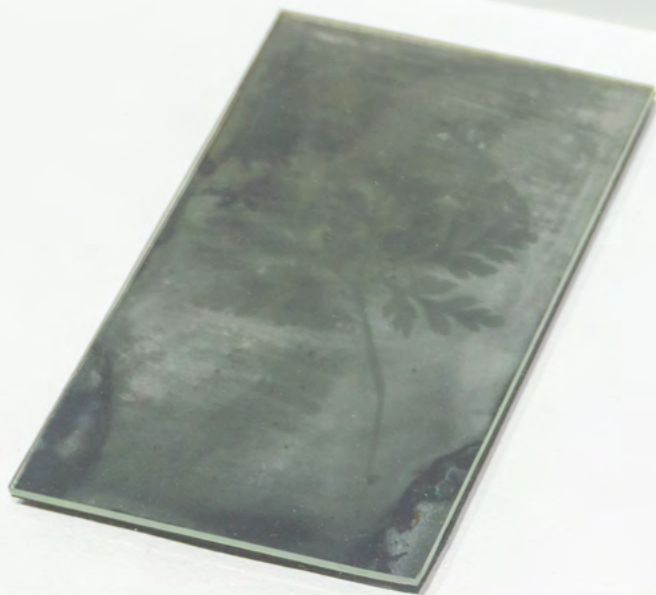
2 - Heliography: asphalt and lavender oil on limestone: approximately 80x190x15 mm

3 - Heliography: asphalt on silver plated copper plate: 61x61 mm

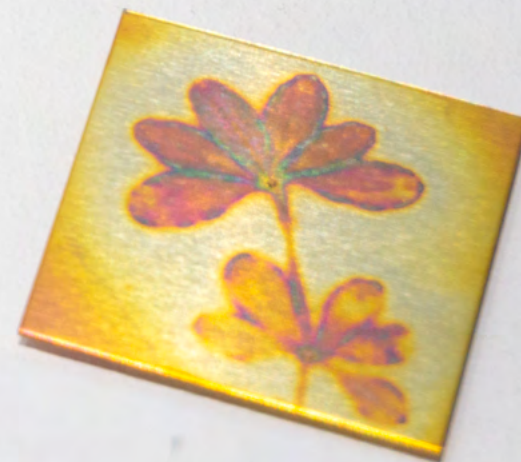
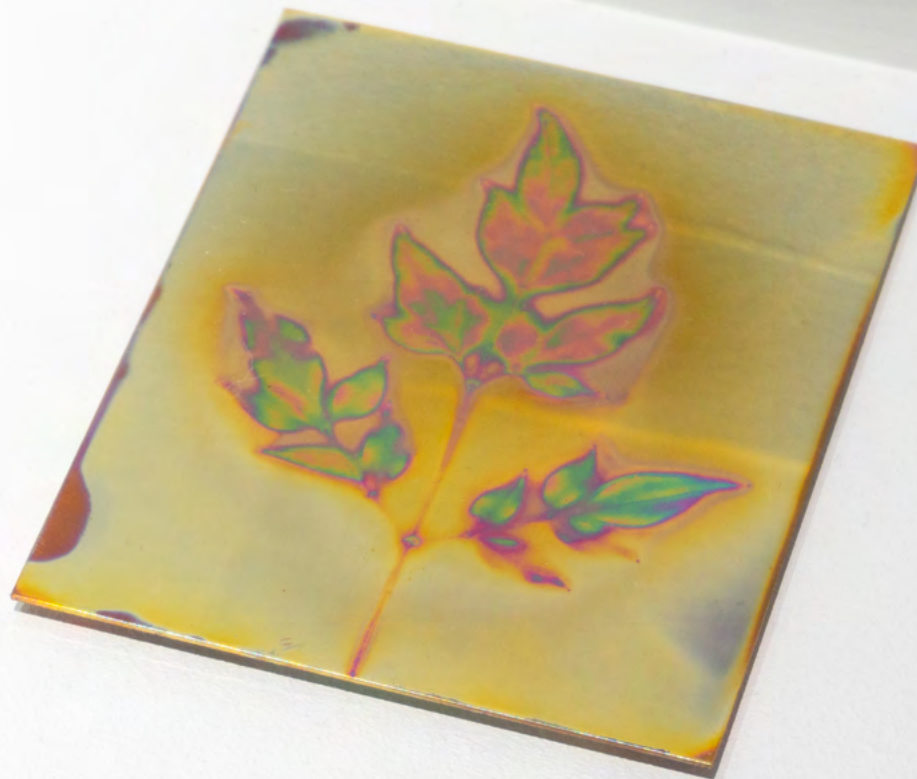
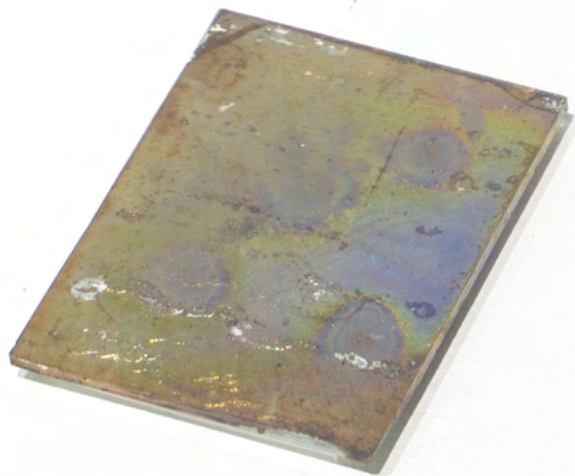
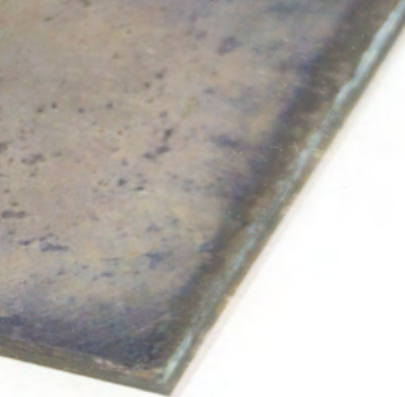
From left to right:

- 3 - Heliography: asphalt on silver plated copper plate: 61x61 mm
- 4 - Physautotype: pine resin on silver plated copper plate: 61x61 mm
- 5 - Physautotype: pine resin on silver plated copper plate: 61x61 mm
- 6 - Physautotype: pine resin on copper plate: 100x100 mm
- 7 - Physautotype: lavender oil residue on silver plated copper plate: 120x70 mm





From left to right:
7 - Physautotype: lavender oil residue on silver plated copper plate: 120x70 mm
8 - Daguerreotype: iodine on a silvered copper plate: 81x102 mm
9 - Iotype: iodine on silver leaf on glass plate: 103x103 mm



From left to right:

10 - lotype: iodine on silver leaf on glass plate: 64x50 mm

11 - Thermography: copper plate: 121x95 mm

12 - Thermography: copper plat: 50x50mm

Hanako Murakami

Louis Daguerre to Nicéphore Niépce, 9 February 1828 (2022)



Le désir de voir

Photography began in a letter addressed by Daguerre to Niépce, in which Daguerre wrote: “*I am burning with desire to see your experiments from nature*” [Je brûle du désir de voir vos essais d’après nature]. Daguerre was promising to co-invent what was not yet called photography, and the formula seems somewhat cliché. However, in a literal sense, this burning desire to see might be the origin of photography itself.

— Hanako Murakami

Hanako Murakami
Louis Daguerre to Nicéphore Niépce, 9 February 1828 (2022)



La Fête de nuit

Red neon shaped in Louis Daguerre's handwriting
13 x 90 x 7 cm
Edition of 3 + 1 AP

Hanako Murakami

Invention (Nicéphore Niépce's Notes on Heliography, 1829) (2016-2022)

Photography began between the front and back covers of Notes on Heliography, a manuscript that articulates Niépce's research and describes his invention. Niépce did not patent his invention and the contents of the notes were to be distributed freely to everyone, yet it was not a method that could easily be replicated from the manuscript. Nonetheless, the dawn of photography can be found in this document, wrapped in a cover of what appears to be animal fur.

— Hanako Murakami

Double-sided digital print, 33.5 x 27.9 cm

Endless copies

Edition of 3 + 1 AP



Hanako Murakami
Air de l'image [Air of the Image] (2022)

Photography began with aromas. The developing solution for heliography was lavender oil mixed with turpentine oil, and the photosensitizing solution for the physautotype was lavender oil or a solid obtained by boiling down pine resin. The very first photographic images emerged from a laboratory room pervaded by these aromas.

— Hanako Murakami

Scent, lavender oil and turpentine
Edition of 3 + 1 AP

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