



## LYNN STERN: *Echoes of Light*

*Lynn Stern has pushed the boundaries of photography during her 47-year career, creating works that are abstracted and filled with luminosity.*



*Quickenings #13-09, 2013*



*Passage #02-30, 2002*



*Unveilings #82, 1985*

Saturday, July 19, 2025

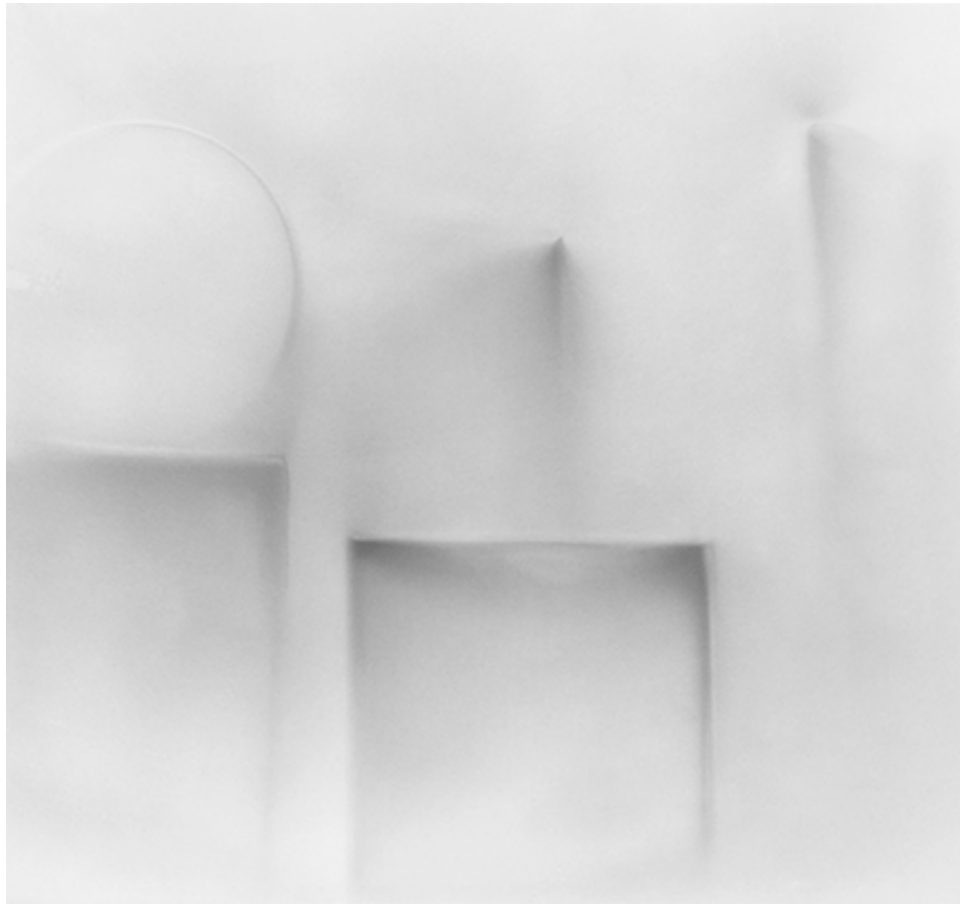
Book Signing: 4pm

Artist Reception: 5-7pm

Exhibition is on view June 27 through August 9, 2025

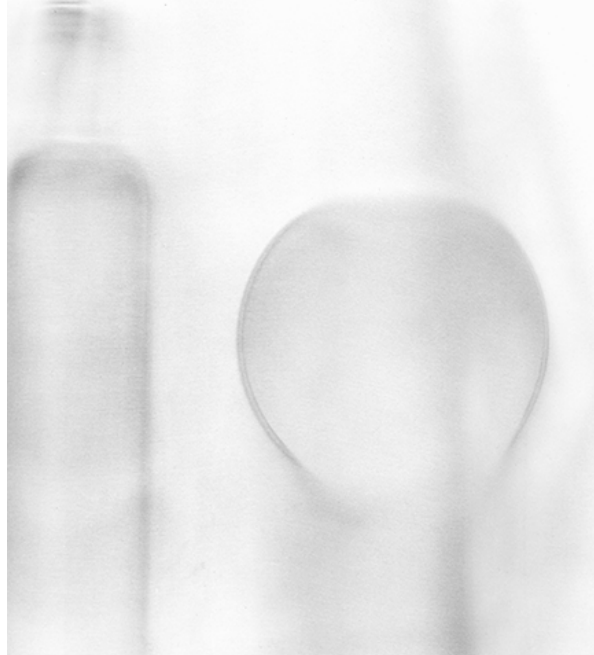
Lynn Stern, the convention-defying, New York-based, American photographer, has pushed the boundaries of photography during her 47-year career. Her work is intimately tied to the history of the photographic medium through her innovative use of natural light, still life, and large-format cameras and film. Stern's works in the Obscura Gallery exhibition, *Echoes of Light*, are luminous examples of her innovation. Using natural light and a scrim between the camera and her still life subjects, she veils her subject matter to create a translucence that fills her images with soft light. As a result, in both the *Quickenings* and *Force Field* series, Stern highlights only the edges of her objects with a stroke of a shadow on a white background. With this innovative use of light her images resemble charcoal drawings. Indeed, a viewer who doesn't understand that a camera made these images might assume Stern creates her work with pencil and paper.

Influenced by abstract expressionist painting but working as a lens-based photographer, Stern defies the expectations central to photography by pulling away from the sharp focus, instead blurring, veiling, cropping, partially obscuring, and otherwise de-literalizing what is in front of her lens.



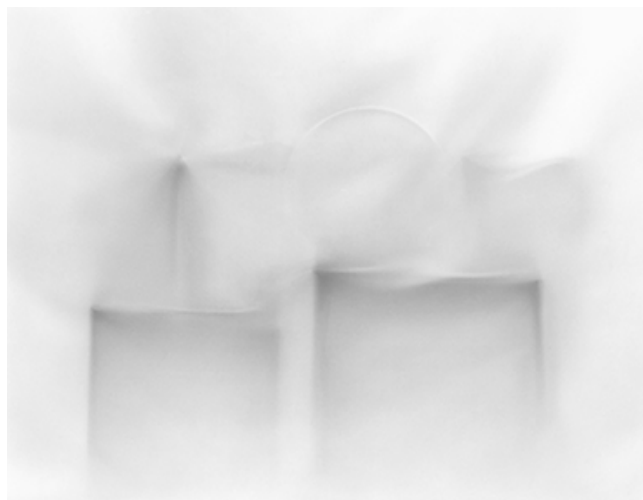
Lynn Stern, *Force Field #21-134a*, 2021, 34 x 36.5", archival pigment ink print, edition of 6

*"My photographs are not about what they are of.... I believe that photography is a medium of light, not representation. Light is to photography as paint is to painting. I think like a painter in that my concerns are largely formal: my aim is to create tension, plasticity, texture, and, especially, spatial ambiguity in which figure (or abstract form) and ground seem to merge with or emerge from one another. Above all, I want the image to feel alive and filled with energy."*



Lynn Stern, *Quickening #13-06a*, 2013 (printed 2019), 41 x 38", edition of 6

The exhibition includes works from three bodies of work: *Quickening*, *Passages*, and *Force Field*. In *Quickening*, Stern placed glass bottles and circles behind a scrim, then manipulated both the objects and the scrim to create a sense of quivering movement between the objects. "The images have a dramatic luminosity and feel fleeting – as if they have suddenly come to life and could disappear at any moment," says Stern. In *Force Field*, Stern placed cubes behind the scrim in such a way that the objects' edges touching the scrim were sharp, while their bodies blurred, seeming to emerge from indeterminate space. Framed more tightly than in *Quickening*, and with more densely juxtaposed forms, *Force Field* images produce a feeling of unified, soft structure, charged with light and energy.



Lynn Stern, *Force Field #21-131*, 2021, 34 x 43.5", archival pigment ink print, edition of 6

225 Delgado Street Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505 [obscuragalleryphoto@gmail.com](mailto:obscuragalleryphoto@gmail.com)

[WWW.OBSCURAGALLERY.NET](http://WWW.OBSCURAGALLERY.NET)



Lynn Stern, *Dialogues in Light #8*, 1985, 8 x 10", gelatin silver print, edition of 7

The exhibition also includes two earlier series, *Dialogues in Light* and *Unveilings* made in 1985. *Dialogues in Light* marks Stern's first experiments with the white scrim, using different types of natural light and various types of flowers. In this series, Stern noticed that the flowers' images were elegant and poignant, generating an emotional response. Pursuing this emotional feeling led Stern to a new series titled *Unveilings*, in which she sought to create a dialogue between figure and ground, manipulating the scrim to create what she calls a "charged" composition in light and shadow. The varying stances of the anemone - the curvature of the stem, the turned backs, profiles or fully open petals, their translucency or lack thereof -- become metaphors for vulnerability.



Lynn Stern, *Unveilings #80a*, 1985, 10 x 8", gelatin silver print, edition of 7

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Lynn Stern, *Passage #04-31a*, 2004 (printed 2011), 45 x 34", archival pigment ink print, edition of 6

Stern's work has been exhibited in numerous exhibitions in the United States and Europe, and is in such public collections as the Brooklyn Museum of Art; the Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Museum of fine Arts, Houston; the Portland Art Museum (OR); the Victoria and Albert Museum; the Whitney Museum of American Art; and the Yale University Art Gallery.

Six monographs of Stern's work have been published: *Skull* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2017); *Frozen Mystery: Lynn Stern Photographs 1978-2008* (Fundación Cristóbal Gabarrón / Center for Creative Photography: 2009); *Veiled Still Lives* (exhibition catalogue, 2006); *Animus* (Tucson: Nazraeli Press, 2000); *Dispossession* (New York: Aperture, 1995), "Highly Commended Book," 1995 Ernst Haas Awards; and *Unveilings*, with a forward by Paul Caponigro, (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1988).

Stern was co-editor of *Photographic INsight* from 1990-1993. She was the organizer and moderator of a two-evening symposium held at New York University in 1991 titled "Examining Postmodernism: Images/Premises" and in 2016 moderated a discussion titled "Perceptual/Conceptual: How Does Art Nourish Us?" in New York.

The Lynn Stern Archive is located at the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson.

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