

GITTERMANGALLERY

KLEA McKENNA

Klea McKenna uses the photogram process innovatively to create unique gelatin silver prints that contain both vivid detail and ethereal abstraction. She pays homage to her subject's histories while re-animating them through her engagement, revealing nuance, depth and energy. Unlike a photograph created with a camera, a photogram is a one-of-a-kind object that involves physical contact between a subject and the light sensitive printing surface, representing the mark of that interaction.

McKenna's early subjects – plants, rain, spider webs, wood and rock – reflect her ongoing dialogue with nature, which has always been an emotional force in her life. She is the daughter of renegade ethnobotanists, Kathleen Harrison and Terence McKenna, and was raised in the wilds of Hawaii and Northern California. *Rainstorms & Rain Studies* are an ongoing series of unique gelatin silver photograms of rain made outdoors at night. McKenna began making these on the big Island in Hawaii, where rain is plentiful, but continued them back home in California. As California has sunk deeper and deeper into periods of severe draught, the constant anticipation of rain and the act of documenting it on the rare occasions that it comes has become McKenna's own sort of rain dance. *Web Studies* are unique gelatin silver photograms of rain caught in the webs of orb-weaver spiders. Remarkable feats of engineering built each day to catch prey, the webs are also delicate and damaged and feel like artifacts of a magical realm. Like the patterns found inside trees and in our own lives, the webs follow a particular form yet each is unique and exquisitely flawed, marked by a specific series of complex interactions. With *Automatic Earth* McKenna emphasizes the physicality of the photogram process and builds on it by forcing the paper to record texture as well as light. Working in near darkness she applies pressure on the center cut of a tree to physically imprint the texture into the photographic paper and then selectively exposes the paper to light creating what the artist calls a "photographic relief."

In 2018, soon after McKenna's daughter was born, McKenna began making work that referenced her daily life as a woman, artist and mother as well as her place in a continuum of generations. With her work, *Generation*, McKenna applies this method to textiles and women's clothing from different cultures that are rich in the legacy of touch: from the labor of their making, to the textures of the designs, to the marks of continual wear. Her choices are guided by the histories of these textiles and the stories they reveal of migration, cultural appropriation, and women's labor and sexuality. For McKenna, her process "is driven by my desire for haptic communication with women from a time and place different than my own...With each alteration, mending, and use, someone has inscribed themselves onto these textiles. Just as each garment was made through the patient labor of one woman's body, so is it undone that way, worn-down slowly, deconstructed, or cannibalized to make something new."