

Elein Fleiss

Vent noir

Opening Thursday, 24 April, 2025, 6–9 pm

April 25 – May 17, 2025

Press release :

The exhibition *Vent noir* presents a selection of photographs chosen by Elein Fleiss from her archives and recent works. It responds to an invitation to compose a "photographic poem" based on an image showing a puddle and scattered petals on the ground. This photo was taken by Elein Fleiss in Japan, in the Yamanashi region, beneath blooming cherry trees. Before becoming the starting point for this project, it has been exhibited multiple times, most recently at Gallery Trax near the place where it was taken.

Revisiting over thirty years of archives and hundreds of slides, Elein Fleiss immersed herself in this memory, guided by a melancholic vision of a liquidated spring. She composed a collection of distant memories, rediscovering many forgotten images from encounters, travels, friendships that inspired her poetic vision. This process of remembrance unfolded over several days at the end of winter, while the Autan wind—nicknamed “the devil’s wind”—was blowing through the Rouergue region where she lives. The result is a series of "constellations" organized non-chronologically, as if all these images were happening in a current moment.

Darkness, dim light, and fog are frequent, as are low skies and a rarely seen horizon. The subjects are often alone or in small groups, contemplative or reading. They are standing or seated, static but never entirely inactive. While these themes and postures recur throughout Fleiss’s photographic work, here she paints a rather somber picture, permeated by a latent tension, despite a few more enchanted shots. A ruined house, a shattered globe, a spiderweb lit by a rare sunbeam evoke romantic, even gothic tones—especially when a caped figure appears in the middle of a forest.

These later images reflect more recent work, marking a shift in Elein Fleiss’s photography toward experimentation with staging and fictionalization. Since the 1990s, her photos have dialogued with a "realist" aesthetic exemplified by photographers such as Wolfgang Tillmans or Anders Edström. *Purple*—the magazine she co-founded and co-edited with Olivier Zahm for many years—became known for this approach, offering an alternative to the commercial standards of the previous decade. Nevertheless, she acknowledges other growing influences such as 19th-century Nordic painting, particularly the Danish painter Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864–1916) and his auratic interiors.

Her gaze lingers on seemingly insignificant aspects of everyday life, giving prominence to accidents and chance over total control of the photographic process. Her practice plays with the imprecisions of language and ruptures in meaning, portraying the failures of rational consciousness through a vision of reality that is fragmented and uncertain. In this vision, melancholy suggests less an attachment to a lost spring than a desire to keep open a multiplicity of possibilities—much like a career marked by breaks and forks, from her departure from the *Purple* Institute in 2004 then from the Parisian art scene in 2008, to the new directions she explores today as she moves away from the post-conceptual framework she once inhabited.

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Elein Fleiss (b. 1968) is an editor, curator, writer, and photographer. Her publications include *Elein's Diary* (Adachi Press, 2020), *Septembre* (One Star Press, 2008), *Fifteen Hours from Paris* (Poetry of sex, 2003). Her photographs have been published in *Purple*, *Big*, *Ryuko Tsushin*, *Here and There*, *Kurachi no Techo*, *Home*, *The Plant*, *Joseffine*, and others. With Olivier Zahm, she co-founded *Purple Prose* in 1992, followed by *Purple Fiction*, *Purple Fashion*, and *Purple Sexe*. Together, they also co-organized exhibitions such as *L'Hiver de l'amour* at the Musée d'Art Moderne in 1994 and *Elysian Fields* at the Centre Georges Pompidou in 2000. From 1998 to 2004, she co-edited *Purple*, then *Hélène* before leaving the Purple Institute. She later co-founded and co-edited *Purple Journal* with Sébastien Jamain until 2008, before moving from Paris the same year. In 2010, she published the sole issue of *Les Cahiers Purple*. In 2012, she launched the online daily *Les Chroniques Purple*, which became a book and exhibition in 2014 in Japan, where she also showed her work at Gallery Trax and the Top Museum. More recently, she has paired her photographs with curated selections of vintage clothing in solo exhibitions such as *Disappearing* (Center for Cosmic Wonder, 2018) and *L'Hiver* (Vacant, Elbereth, 2024). In 2023, she opened *Le Batèl* with artist Andie Wilkinson—a second-hand clothing and object shop in Saint-Antonin-Noble-Val, a village in the Rouergue region.