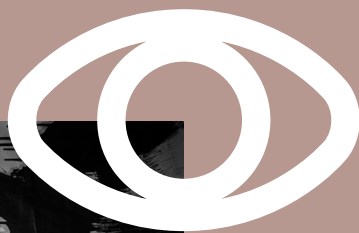


Gallery Guide
Dec 6, 2018–Jan 17, 2019

Silver Eye



Door Into the Dark

Lauren Semivan

About the Artist

Lauren Semivan received an MFA in photography from Cranbrook Academy of Art. Her work has been exhibited at the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Detroit Center for Contemporary Photography, The Griffin Museum of Photography, The Hunterdon Art Museum, Cranbrook Art Museum, Paris Photo, and The AIPAD Photography Show among others. She has taught photography at College for Creative Studies, The Ohio State University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Wayne State University.

Door Into the Dark

David Oresick
Executive Director,
Silver Eye Center
for Photography

There are parts of images in Lauren Semivan's exhibition *Door Into the Dark* are discernible: torn paper, paint, wire, fabric, a feather. In one picture there is even a body, moving mysteriously through the frame. Mostly, these photographs are not easily recognizable as anything we know. We experience them as pure compositions, a mixture of light, dark, shape, and form. These photographs are instense and captivating. Some are stark and static, others are dreamlike and full of motion. They are all beguiling. They resist straightforward explanation or interpretation. These pictures want you to enter them and get lost within them.

Yet, entering into Semivan's images is not always easy. The images in *Door Into the Dark* don't appear as doorways: they appear as walls. Their resounding flatness is layered thinly with the artist's preferred materials: paper, paint, wire, and cloth. In the photograph, *Gift*, Semivan shows a wall with black paint and a thin layer of paper towards the top. There are alternating bright whites and deep blacks. Some of the paint, applied thickly, has dripped, but the drips defy gravity, moving horizontally across the wall instead of downward. *Gift* is a world on a tilt, where things are strange. Towards the bottom right of the picture is a patch of deepest darkness, a hole absorbing everything around it. There is a mountain-like peek at the top of the frame. The site of revelation? Merely the viewers desire create a tidy meaning from the mess of abstraction? This dynamic composition is not simple flatness. It is not a doorway you enter through, it is a door you enter into, a world where you are wholly absorbed.

Semivan uses her studio like a theatre. There is a stage on which she constructs worlds with drawing, painting, and sculptural arrangements. Occasionally she enters onto the stage herself, adding a human performance, such as in *Velvet*, where she looks to be sailing through, holding a mast of fabric. While creating her stage sets her decisions are intuitive. Sometimes she will start with an abstract idea, but usually her decisions are made by interacting with her materials, then looking through the lens, then more drawing.











Above: *Velvet*, 2015, Silver Gelatin Print. Cover image: *Gift*, 2017, Silver Gelatin Print. All images by Lauren Semivan courtesy of the artist.







Although her process incorporates mixed media, Semivan is, at the core, a photographer. Her theatre is made for audience of one: her camera. In Semivan's case, it is an antique wooden eight-by-ten view camera. Her scenes are never built to last. After taking a photograph, she begins to edit and manipulate the arrangement, using the endpoint of one picture as the starting point for the next. The prints in *Door Into the Dark* were all made by Semivan in her darkroom. There is tremendous pleasure to be had in these expertly crafted, sumptuous silver gelatin prints.

Although Semivan uses her studio like a stage, the performance is not a narrative. She is less interested in saying something clear and specific to say than she is in letting space, material, and light emerge on their own terms. Perhaps they are signifiers for an emotion, or a mystery, or a subconscious place, that is for the viewer to decide.

Semivan is interested in the relationship between the photograph, the artist, and the viewer. Her work thrives on the unpredictable meanings that arise within this triangle. The essence of these photographs is not the camera, the staged scene, or even a specific idea, but the light itself coming from blackness, something that is beyond words. They are the emotions, imaginations, impulses, and urges for the spectator. The photographs hold a space for what cannot be said.

Imagining associations, allusions, and stories to compliment the forms within Semivan's seductive photographs is irresistible. *Letters* shows a stack of folded paper, cradled in dark transparent fabric. A series of dark cracks in the wall seem to emanate from the letters. The writer is long gone, so you must wrestle with their significance, their unknowable destinations, and their unreadable words. *Untitled (October 21)* evokes water's shimmering surface, a dark river with a slight roil along a sandy bank. Some images suggest something malevolent, almost violent. *Untitled (June 8)* depicts a tangle of wire in a ring, a crown, hanging on a nail. Behind the wire is paper pinned to the wall, creating a cross shape. *Untitled (September 9)* shows a thin cloth draped across the frame, shirt-like. It is stained and dripping a dark substance. Blood? Perhaps not. In these photographs there is myth and magic, things unknown and unknowable. Like the title suggests they are an open door into a wilderness that, if you choose, you may enter.

	<i>Untitled (June 1)</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print 8x10 inches, Edition 2/10	\$2,800
	<i>Untitled (June 8)</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print 8x10 inches, Edition 1/10	\$2,800
	<i>Untitled (June 15)</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print 8x10 inches, Edition 2/10	\$2,800
	<i>Untitled (July 18)</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print 8x10 inches, Edition 2/10	\$2,800
	<i>Untitled (September 9)</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print 8x10 inches, Edition 1/10	\$2,800
	<i>Untitled (September 26)</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print 8x10 inches, Edition 1/10	\$2,800
	<i>Untitled (October 21)</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print 8x10 inches, Edition 1/10	\$2,800
	<i>Flour, Chalk, Feathers</i>	2017 Silver Gelatin Print 8x10 inches, Edition 2/10	\$2,800
	<i>Glacier 2, 2017 #2/10</i>	2017 Silver Gelatin Print 8x10 inches, Edition 2/10	\$2,800
	<i>Untitled (January 1)</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print 8x10 inches, Edition 2/10	\$2,800
	<i>Lining</i>	2016 Silver Gelatin Print 8x10 inches, Edition 2/10	\$2,800
	<i>Letters</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print 8x10 inches, Edition 2/10	\$2,800

	<i>Untitled (June 2)</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print 27x35 inches, Edition 1/5	\$5,000
	<i>Velvet</i>	2015 Silver Gelatin Print 27x35 inches, Edition 1/5	\$5,000
	<i>Untitled (January 2)</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print 27x35 inches, Edition 1/5	\$5,000
	<i>Untitled (August 20)</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print 27x35 inches, Edition 1/5	\$5,000
	<i>Untitled (September 16)</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print 27x35 inches, Edition 1/5	\$5,000
	<i>Gift</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print 27x35 inches, Edition 1/5	\$5,000

**Silver Eye Center for Photography
Aaronel deRoy Gruber & Irving Gruber Gallery
4808 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15224**

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