Leena Holmström: *On the Rock's Skin*

When I first looked through Leena Holmström's series, some of whose works I had already seen before, I was truly delighted. The photographs immediately reminded me of a scene from a film that I would like to share with you.

Do you remember *The English Patient*? In the film, László Almásy discovers a cave with ancient rock paintings in the Sahara, the so-called Cave of Swimmers. Later, when Katharine is seriously injured in a plane crash, Almásy takes her to this cave to find shelter. Before leaving to get help, he gives her a flashlight and warns her to save the batteries.

In the words she leaves behind, Katharine reflects on the beauty of the cave paintings and the precious light that allows her to see them. For me, this is one of the most moving moments in the film. Here is a person who knows that her survival may depend on how long the light lasts, yet she cannot resist illuminating and looking again and again at these images created thousands of years ago.

There is something very special in this scene about the nature of aesthetic experience. It reminds us that experiencing beauty and art is not always a conscious decision, and that it does not necessarily follow our practical interests. Sometimes, we simply cannot stop looking at something.

For me, Leena's series evokes precisely this experience. The rock surfaces, ancient traces, light, and shadows create a visual world in which observation gradually turns into imagination, and natural forms become images full of meaning.

This connection also opens up several fascinating questions from the perspective of the philosophy of art.

First, photography appears here as a double trace. It preserves not only traces of what was in front of the camera, but also something of the photographer's gaze, attention, and choices.

Second, the series explores the boundary between perception and imagination. Seeing is not a passive process. Our memories, cultural experiences, and associations continuously shape what we recognize and how we understand it.

Third, photography can also be understood here as a process unfolding over time. The meaning of a photograph does not end at the moment of exposure. Later artistic interventions and encounters with viewers can reveal new layers of meaning.

Beyond these philosophical questions, I would also like to emphasize the extraordinary visual beauty of the series. The natural environment, the colours, the surfaces and patterns of the rocks, and the multiple layers of the images create a remarkable aesthetic experience in themselves.

At the same time, this visual layering becomes a beautiful metaphor for the conceptual complexity of the works. Just as rocks carry the traces of time within their geological layers, photographs can make visible the different layers of perception, memory, and imagination.

In Leena's photographs, human presence becomes part of the natural environment through observation, attention, and the fleeting appearance of shadows. This encounter is then transformed into an artwork through the photographic process.

This is why it is such a great pleasure for me that we can present Leena Holmström's work at PH21 Gallery.

And perhaps, like Katharine in the cave, we may find ourselves looking at these images longer than we originally intended, simply because there is always something more to discover.

I would like to warmly congratulate Leena on this beautiful and thought-provoking series, and I hope that our visitors will also discover the many visible and invisible layers that make these photographs so special to me.

Photographic Visions – Autumn 2026

I am also delighted to welcome you to *Photographic Visions – Autumn 2026*, our biannual exhibition at PH21 Gallery. This exhibition brings together fourteen international photographers, each presenting a mini-series of three works. Although their artistic approaches are very different, they all explore new possibilities of photographic expression, challenging how we see, interpret, and understand the world around us.

Rod Bland creates carefully staged photographs that resemble scenes from imaginary films or stories. His work explores the relationship between memory, dreams, and constructed narratives.

Elsa Faudé moves between dreams, memory, and identity, using photography and mixed media to explore questions of resistance, emancipation, and personal experience.

Janelle Freiman discovers unexpected beauty in the geometry of Tokyo's urban environment, capturing fleeting moments when architecture, patterns, and human presence come together.

Katya Grapes transforms ordinary natural materials, such as dried leaves, branches, and petals, into surprising visual compositions, giving new life to objects that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Susanna Hagström explores the constantly changing reflections on water, where light, colour, and movement create images between reality and abstraction.

Kylo-Patrick Hart reconstructs images from his dreams, combining photographic techniques with influences from Surrealism, Expressionism, and other artistic movements.

Friederike Hoffmann focuses on subtle moments when reality seems to shift, inviting viewers into a contemplative space between perception, memory, and imagination.

Kaz Kondo creates photographic diptychs from fragments of English text found on clothing and everyday objects in Tokyo, transforming ordinary words into unexpected visual conversations.

Lou Liska investigates identity, power, and self-empowerment, questioning established social categories and hierarchies through a fluid and personal artistic perspective.

Robert Morrissey uses staged compositions with dolls and symbolic objects to examine masculinity, particularly its tensions, contradictions, and aggressive impulses.

Nikita Pasynkov (Nesterenko) explores the geometry of coastal landscapes, using dramatic black-and-white contrasts to reveal the constantly changing relationship between natural and human-made forms.

Salvatore Privitera creates carefully constructed black-and-white scenes that address contemporary American political and social tensions, often combining critical commentary with irony.

Derek Ronald examines urban architecture through thresholds, barriers, and passages, exploring how built environments shape our experiences of access, restriction, and movement.

Marlene Tukur Scheurlen investigates the uncertain boundary between everyday life and performance, creating photographs in which reality, theatricality, and imagination become difficult to separate.

Together, these fourteen artistic perspectives demonstrate the extraordinary diversity of contemporary photography. They remind us that photography is not simply a way of recording the visible world, but also a powerful means of questioning, reconstructing, and reimagining it.

I would like to warmly congratulate all the participating artists and thank them for sharing their work with us. It is a pleasure to present their photographic visions here at PH21 Gallery.