money as hard cash) are actualized by their function as pictorial specifics, just as, conversely, the nostalgia of a formalist idiom is forced out of its habitual complacencies by being tasked with conveying broader critical narratives. The personal diaristic vein that runs through her films has a similar function, tying photography's impersonality to the intimate details of her daily life.

Perhaps it is Davey's recent black-and-white photographs of horses that best synthesize these dichotomies. Like Richard Prince's repurposed Marlboro ads, their evocation of US trad culture values is critical, but they arrive at their ambivalence by different means. If they summon a lost, pastoral America, their documentary specificity—which Prince's appropriations elide—acts as a guarantee of her disillusionment with that myth, an anchor in the present.

Mark Prince is an English writer and critic, based in Berlin (DE). He writes about contemporary art for various publications.

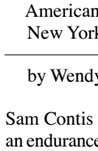
Sam Contis: Phases

American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, 27. 9. 2025 – 8. 2. 2026

by Wendy Vogel

Sam Contis is a photographer of endurance and an endurance photographer. Since the early 2010s, she has documented her subjects' transformations under conditions of extreme exertion. She displays a similarly exhaustive commitment to her own practice. Two of her earlier projects, *Deep Springs* (2013–17) and *Duet* (2016–ongoing), involved athletic levels of close observation, sustained collaboration, and technical prowess. *Phases*, Contis's recent exhibition at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, evidences no less rigor: her portraits of teenage runners took seven years to produce.

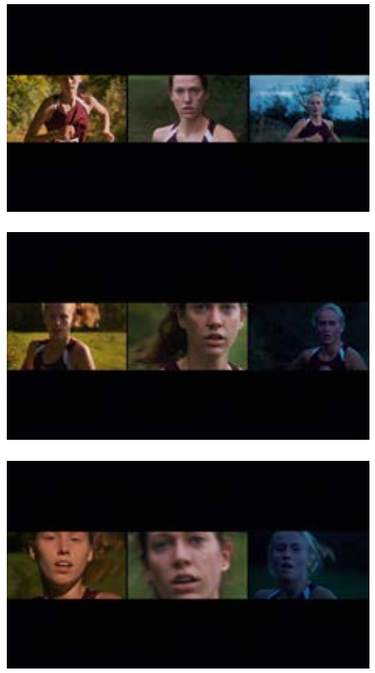
The artist's durational practice injects the lineage of nineteenth-century photography with twenty-first century feminist values. In *Deep Springs*, a study of a historically all-male college in the California high desert, Contis reworked conventions of classic American West photography to "relate the male body to the landscape, which is often gendered as female,"[1] In *Duet*, a series of close-up portraits of the singer Inbal Hever, she drew from precedents like Eadweard Muybridge's motion studies and Jean-Martin Charcot's photographs of hysteria patients. *Phases* (2025) picks up where these projects leave off, creating a visual and sonic typology of young female athletes *enduring* through laborious movement. Here, Contis reveals adolescents as we rarely see them: unselfconscious and thoroughly embodied.



Your Time Is Your Time.
Ed. by Jenny Jaskey and Noa Wesley.

With a text by Kathryn Scanlan (eng.).
With works by Sam Contis.
American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York 2025.
24 pages, 9.6 × 14.7 cm, 48 color illustrations.
For free

From 2018 to 2025, Contis photographed the girls' cross-country team at her high school alma mater in central Pennsylvania. This tightly curated exhibition demonstrates the artist's interest in translating athleticism into moving pictures. The series *Phases* is a group of twenty-four gelatin silver prints, showing teenage runners finishing a race. Closely cropped to the girls' faces, the pictures are printed in the size of daguerreotypes and matted in expanses of white paper. The number of photographs references the motion-picture standard of twenty-four frames per second.



Sam Contis, stills from: Five Kilometers, 2025. 3-channel video (color, 5.1 sound), 26´. Courtesy: the artist.

The heads of the twenty-four girls seem to turn in a circle, each adolescent's face rotated in incremental degrees from a left side profile to the right. These finish-line portraits reveal a spectrum of emotion through the subtlest of expressions. Sometimes a girl's face is obscured by the whip of a ponytail; sometimes she sets her face in a countenance of stony determination; sometimes she appears heavy-lidded and placid. Sometimes her mouth is agape in a grimace; sometimes her head is thrown back in ecstasy; sometimes her determination turns her forehead into a tangle of thorny "elevens."

If *Phases* nods to the origins of motion-picture technology, the three-channel film *Five Kilometers* (2025) attests to the immersive qualities of cinema through the introduction of sound. The twenty-six-minute film depicts three girls running the same course, in the Appalachian landscape. The girl on the left (race #360) runs in golden morning light, the center (#373) in midday, and the right (#365) in the early evening. In full color, we watch their faces transform under the duress of running. The complexion of #365 glows redder against the blue of twilight. The sweat of #360 catches the sun. The zits on #373's face darken as a flush creeps across her cheeks. But it is the sonic landscape that really draws us in: gasps, sniffles, grunts, and low moans, amplified and tweaked for drama. Around seven minutes into the film, a buzzing sound—akin to bees or feedback—fills the background of the girls' respiration. At sixteen minutes, a quiet, high-pitched drone accompanies their running. At the twenty-minute mark, the volume of the girls' breathing rises to an action-film level; it is then replaced with a low tone (an instrumental composite of their breathing). As they reach the finish line, the sound drops out completely. We watch their recovery in silence.

In this series, Contis accomplishes no small feat: a new way to view young female athletes. This is all the more urgent in the US today. In an ugly political climate that would bury evidence of young women's exploitation and politicize women's sports to restrict the participation of trans athletes, Contis's quiet, sustained attention is a defiant act.

1 Sam Contis in an interview with Drew Sawyer, in *Document Journal*, 18. 8. 2017, https://www.documentjournal.com/2017/08sam-contis-studies-male-seclusion/.

Wendy Vogel is a writer and a faculty member at Parsons School of Design in New York (US). In 2018, she won an Arts Writers Grant from the Andy Warhol Foundation, New York.

Nat Faulkner: Strong Water

Camden Art Centre, London, 16. 1. – 22. 3. 2026

by Orit Gat

The first thing a viewer encounters at Nat Faulkner's exhibition is a golden, orange light flowing in from the skylight. The artist has laid an acrylic frame over the glass panels of the window, fitting into it small vessels that look like drops and contain iodine, a chemical used in early daguerreotypes. *Aperture (Iodine)* (all works on view are from 2026) is an apt introduction to this exhibition, which is about images but is experienced as matter.

Strong Water is the outcome of Faulkner having won the Camden Art Centre's Emerging Artist Award at Frieze in 2024, which comes with a solo exhibition. The title is a reference to the artist's interest in chemistry and transformation—so the iodine refers to the chemicals used in early photography; and a series of three frottage sculptures, *Analogue (Window)*, *Analogue (Studio Floor)*, and *Analogue II (Corridor)*, were made with silver salvaged from X-ray machines used by the National Health Service.

These works duplicate Faulkner's studio, overlaying it on the exhibition space. The floor piece sees a long strip of silver bearing the traces of herringbone floors, laid atop the wooden floor of the gallery, which has a similar pattern. The studio's window has two panes and is hung on a wall in front of the art center's huge glass casements. The corridor shows a pattern of bricks and is placed by the gallery window, which opens to a view of the building's exterior brick wall. One meaningful private place—the studio, the zone of contemplation and creation—is laid atop another context: the public exhibition space. The three sculptures, made in frottage, which is a process of image-making through rubbing, trace the world, or an imprint of it, and make it material. They are an example of Faulkner's attitude throughout this exhibition, where the artist examines the subjects of photography—image-making, representation, reality versus depiction—by exploring its materiality, in this case the silver left behind by a medical photographic process. It's sculpture made like photos, and made of the matter of photos.

Nat Faulkner, Aqua Fortis, 2026. Installation view at Camden Art Centre, London, 2026. Photo: Rob Harris.

Then there is the other part of the photographic process: time, exposure. In *Moth-catcher*, multiple chromogenic prints are laid on top of each other, documenting the light Faulkner used to catch the moth he then photographed in *Untitled (Biston Betularia)*. The *Biston Betularia*, or peppered moth, is an example of evolutionary mutation: in the nineteenth century, dark-bodied moths began to outnumber the more common white moths by a huge percentage, as darker moths could blend into the soot created by pollution from the Industrial Revolution. The moth's evolution is a response to conditions of light and color, a black-and-white process that happens in parallel to the history of photography. And in the show, the moth is captured with light, then photographed using, well, light. The moth's image is printed in huge scale on plywood, the black insect so enlarged that it almost fades to the white-painted support, in another act of color shifting in response to light.

The closest work to a straightforward 2D photograph on view is actually a collage: not an image but an object. *Aqua Fortis* is compounded of gelatin silver prints on plywood panels, with aluminum tape, a photo of scrap metal taken outside a factory in Italy—metal here becomes both the image and the support in the photo paper. Again, the process is visible: the tape is the tape the artist used to secure the negative to the enlarger. Faulkner's fingerprints are still visible.

Faulkner's materiality is the materiality of analogue photography, but his approach is one of Conceptual Art. The iodine solution in the skylight will change its hue and texture with exposure to the sun over the run of the show, like a very slow exposure. The sculptures overlay one space on another, asking about how the world can be represented. The photographs are more object than image, more sculpture than picture, more time than capture. It's nuanced and elusive—not representation, but question. And it's fascinating and new: an exhibition where photography is the subject, if not the medium.

On the occasion of the exhibition, a catalogue will be published in spring 2026.

Orit Gat is a British writer and art critic living in London (GB).

Armin Linke: The City as Archive. Florence

Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max Planck Institute, 12. 11. 2025 – 15. 2. 2026

by Paul Mellenthin

The archive has left its home, but only to reappear as a guest. Photographs that have been operational tools for generations of art historians are now exhibited in microclimate frames. Details of Michelangelo's *David* appear reordered alongside museum interiors and topographical views. Together, these images form one of the oldest and most extensive photography libraries in the discipline: the Photothek of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence.

At first glance, some of the stories behind these pictures almost resemble fairy tales. In 1913, Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* was offered for sale to the Uffizi Galleries. The museum declined, and the painting ultimately returned to Paris, where it became the most famous artwork in the world. A photograph in the Photothek documents the *Mona Lisa*'s temporary presence in Florence following its theft from the Louvre. But look again: it also captures a group of men in polished leather shoes, white French-cuff shirts, and impeccably tailored suits. These are connoisseurs, trained specialists who bent over the Photothek's hundreds of thousands of photographs. In the Photothek, they studied iconographies, compared styles, and revised attributions—in short, through such practices, they *made* art history.

The exhibition *The City as Archive. Florence* takes this context as its point of departure. Over the course of a five-year research project, Berlin-based artist Armin Linke mapped the dense archival environment of Florence together with the curators Hannah Baader and Costanza Caraffa. Their role was that of cartographers, exploring institutions and infrastructures that usually remain outside public visibility, including the Photothek itself.

Another such site is the Arcetri Astrophysical Observatory, where Linke photographed a historical model of the moon. Produced around the time of the first lunar landing, the image depicts a glowing, meticulously structured surface that charts the moon's topography. Names such as *Galilaei* designate craters in the western *Oceanus Procellarum*, linking selenography to historiography. Galileo Galilei's former residence lies only a few meters from the observatory.

Linke's large-scale photograph underscores the model's peculiar aesthetic—poised between scientific instrument and romantic image of the full moon—while drawing attention to the assumptions embedded in the design of "the moon." The photograph precisely stages a representation of a representation and, in doing so, foregrounds the conditions under which knowledge and belief are made. The inscription of Galilei's name onto a celestial surface imagined as a potential habitat for future generations connects multiple temporal layers: early modern astronomy, Cold War space exploration, and speculative futures.

Armin Linke, The City as Archive. Florence, installation view at Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max Planck Institute, Florence, 2025–26. Photo: Bärbel Reinhard.

Hannah Baader, Costanza Caraffa, Armin Linke: The City as Archive. Florence. Ed. by Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max Planck Institute.

With contributions by Hannah Baader, Marco Benvenuti, Costanza Caraffa (eng.).
Viaindustriae, Foligno 2026.
576 pages, 19 × 26 cm, 550 b/w and color images.
€ 40.– / ISBN 979-12-81790-50-6

Formally, the exhibition's spatial arrangement recalls strategies developed within research-based art practices. As noted in Claire Bishop's 2024 book *Disordered Attention: How We Look at Art and Performance Today*, the accumulation and restructuring of information in exhibitions have been characteristic of interdisciplinary artistic collectives since the early 1990s. Operating between art and scientific research,