

Galerie Buchholz

17 East 82nd Street
New York, NY 10028
Tel +1(212) 328 7885
Fax +1(212) 328 7886
post@galeriebuchholz.com
www.galeriebuchholz.com

Alix Cléo Roubaud

Correction of perspective in my bedroom

Curated by Hélène Giannecchini

4 September – 25 October 2025

Galerie Buchholz is pleased to present *Correction of perspective in my bedroom*, an exhibition of the work of Alix Cléo Roubaud (1952–1983) curated by the art historian and writer Hélène Giannecchini. This is the first solo exhibition of Alix Cléo Roubaud's work outside of France and follows her inclusion in "Forks & Spoons," a group exhibition organized by Moyra Davey at Galerie Buchholz New York in 2024.

Born in Mexico City in 1952, Roubaud grew up between Egypt, Portugal, Greece, South Africa, and Canada before settling in France in 1972. She studied philosophy at Paris 8 in Vincennes–Saint-Denis, writing in depth on Wittgenstein. From the summer of 1979 on, Roubaud devoted herself to the pursuit of photography, concentrating her writing efforts into her journal and a number of short theoretical texts on photography. That year marked the beginning of her relationship with the writer and mathematician Jacques Roubaud, whom she married in 1980.

Working primarily in a bathroom darkroom in her apartment at 64 rue Vieille-du-Temple, Roubaud deployed experimental printing techniques, producing high-key prints built from multiple exposures (sometimes as many as 10 per print), abstract manipulations of light, extensive burning and dodging, the use of a light pencil, and, more rarely, colored pencil, staining, and tinting. She destroyed her negatives, writing in 1979 that "the negative should only be kept for as long as the result of processing it retains something of the living memory of the intended image." Each print is unique.

This exhibition takes as a point of departure her work at the intersection of writing and photography. Throughout there is a fragmentary, oblique, expanded sense of self-portraiture at the heart of much of her work, in both her photographs and writing. She described her practice as akin to keeping a diary, with photography as a way of inscribing the days, and writing offering another form of capturing images. Roubaud's photographs move between intimate representations of her romantic, emotional and psychological interests and a rigorous articulation of different conceptual strategies inherent in photography itself.

In a number of works, Roubaud made use of negatives from her parent's photographs taken in the 1950s, printing fragments that evoke the tenuous unreliability of remembered childhood. Her 1980 series "non-contact theory" makes visible the material edges of the photographic negative, prioritizing the space between exposures, treating the medium itself as a subject and emphasizing the physical object of the photo print. A work like "untitled (Fifteen minutes at night to the rhythm of breath)" exploits a long exposure time, here taken in a cypress forest at night, with the (asthmatic, troubled) breath of the artist registering in the image's blurred abstraction. Together with Jacques Roubaud, she produced the series "Protohaikus", photographing his short poems as verbal propositions reimagined in visual form. Works like "Correction of perspective in my bedroom" hinge on her use of repetition, overlaying fragments from the same negatives again and again on a single print, creating a kind of photographic stutter. Of particular interest in this exhibition are works in which Roubaud incorporated fragments of writing—notes, letters, and journal entries, both handwritten and typed—layered atop figures or interior spaces. Often revealing an inner torment, the poetics of the texts she incorporated into her photography complicate and torque her often serene-seeming images. And throughout her work, her interest in self-portraiture runs alongside her portraits of friends and lovers. Beds recur as a persistent motif, with recumbent figures hovering between sleep and death, or between desire and mortality.

Roubaud was part of a milieu of writers, artists, and filmmakers in Paris, among them the post-New Wave filmmaker Jean Eustache, whom she photographed. In 1981 Eustache made the short film *Les Photos d'Alix* (*Alix's Pictures*), in which Roubaud introduces her work to Eustache's son, Boris, describing one photograph with words while presenting him with a different photograph in a kind of Wittgensteinian play about the gap between word and image. Completed shortly before Eustache's death by suicide, the film won the 1982 César Award for Best Short Film.

Long plagued by asthma, depression, and personal turmoil, Alix Cléo Roubaud died of a pulmonary embolism in 1983 at the age of thirty-one. She was known to the public primarily through her posthumously published *Journal 1979–1983*, released by Jacques Roubaud in 1984. Over the past 15 years, Hélène Giannecchini's research, scholarship, and writing has offered a profound reconsideration of Roubaud's photographic work, situating her as a singular figure working across photography, literature, and philosophy in the early 1980s. The exhibition is accompanied by a correspondence between Hélène Giannecchini and Moyra Davey.

Solo exhibitions by the artist include "Alix Cléo Roubaud: Photographies. Quinze minutes la nuit au rythme de la respiration" at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (2014), "Alix Cléo Roubaud: Quelque chose noir & autres photographies" at the Centre International de poésie Marseille (2010), "Alix Cléo Roubaud. Si quelque chose noir" at the Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie, Aurillac (2009). Group exhibitions include the recent "Corps à Corps. Histoire(s) de la photographie" at the Centre Pompidou, Paris (2024); "Love Songs. Photographies de l'intime" at the Maison européenne de la photographie, Paris (2022); "L'étreinte du tourbillon" at the Mulhouse Photography Biennial (2018); "Les Spectres du surrealism" at the 2017 Rencontres de la photographie d'Arles (2017); Biennale de la photographie de Mulhouse; "Les Fragments de l'amour" at the Centre d'art contemporain La Traverse, Alfortville (2016); the 2016 French Pavillion at the Dubai Photo Exhibition; "Les Années 1980, l'insoutenable légèreté" at the Centre Pompidou, Paris (2016); "En bordure d'une humanité ordinaire. Collection de Madeleine Millot-Durrenberger" at galerie In Extremis, Strasbourg (2015); "Accrochage des collections contemporaines des années 1960 à nos jours" at the Musée National d'Art Moderne at Centre Pompidou, Paris (2014); "Les Gens de l'éphémère / People of Transience" at the 1983 Rencontres de la photographie d'Arles; "Textographie(s)" at the Plessis-Robinson Centre culturel communal, Paris (1982), and "Une Autre photographie" at the Maison des arts et de la culture André Malraux, Créteil (1982).

Works by Alix Cléo Roubaud are in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris; Bibliothèque de Lyon; Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal; Maison Européenne de la photographie, Paris; and Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine, Normandy.

Galerie Buchholz commissioned Thea Petrou to provide new translations of writing by Alix Cléo Roubaud and Jacques Roubaud for this exhibition; additional translations were drawn from published works by Jan Steyn, Dominic Di Bernardi, and Rosemary Waldrop.

Hélène Giannecchini's biography *Alix Cléo Roubaud: A Portrait in Fragments* (Sylph Editions, 2024; translated by Thea Petrou) is available at Galerie Buchholz.

With very special thanks to Hélène Giannecchini, the Fonds Alix Cléo Roubaud, Pascal Siskin, and Moyra Davey.