

Abelardo Morell: Ideas of Order

March 21 - May 9, 2026

"My artistic tendency is to make pictures that suggest strangeness. I like showing things from an angle so that the subject can remain mysterious but in the clearest and most beautiful way possible."

– Abelardo Morell

Abelardo Morell has been using a camera since 1969. Having received acclaim for over thirty years for captivating, innovative, and illuminating projects using photography, this current exhibition serves as a tight survey of Morell's last six years of explorations and their results. Most works were created in the artist's studio and explore issues of reproduction, perception, materiality, scale, and history.

While each work represents a distinct line of inquiry, their juxtaposition in the show offers a throughline that is both consistent and unexpected. Morell's studio photography engages and heightens a sense of wonder through the artist's careful attention to the transformative potential of light and scale on common materials. In this exhibition, Morell enters into conversation with historic still-life painting, yet his practice remains firmly grounded in a contemporary context.

"Flower Painting Reproduction Under a Large Glass Dome" (2019) uses a book plate of a Jan Bruegel the Elder floral painting, enclosed under a bell jar, as its nominal subject. However, the secondhand nature of the flower arrangement is clearly signaled by a visible halftone pattern in the print that has been photographed. The surface that takes on primary importance is the glass covering, whose highlights reflect the image of the artist and his studio. In this way, Morell points to both the artificiality of aesthetic arrangement—a bouquet, a painting, a book page, a still-life—and very tactile and immediate pleasure in the interplay of light and surfaces.

"Still Life: In Tennessee" (2025) and "Through the Looking Glass: Humpty Dumpty #3" 2020 construct sculptural relationships using only flat surfaces and shadows. The tensions and resonances among wood grains, paper, and shadows cast by unseen objects set up fantastical narrative situations from recognizable objects. "Dictionary Thumb Indices," "Colored Paper Abstraction #1," and "Rectangle #2" (all dated 2025) further pursue the transformative power that the photographer's subtle use of scale and light finds in the everyday, enlarging minuscule material details to the size of geological strata.

"Some pictures here are outcomes of my deepening interest in crossing boundaries between painting and photography. I am a photographer who remains continually astonished by the ways cameras and lenses transform the world but lately, in my attempt to make something new, I have been bringing painterly ideas into my pictures."

Abelardo Morell (b. 1948, Havana, Cuba) immigrated to the United States with his parents in 1962. He received his undergraduate degree from Bowdoin College and his MFA from The Yale University School of Art. Morell has received an honorary degree from Bowdoin College in 1997 and from Lesley University in 2014. He was professor of Photography at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Boston from 1983 to 2010.

The artist's publications include a photographic illustration of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" (1998) by Dutton Children's Books, "A Camera in a Room" (1995) by Smithsonian Press, "A Book of Books" (2002) by Bulfinch Press, "Camera Obscura" (2004) by Bulfinch Press, "Abelardo Morell" (2005) by Phaidon Press, "The Universe Next Door" (2013) by The Art Institute of Chicago, "Tent-Camera" (2018) by Nazraeli Press, and "Flowers for Lisa" (2018) by Abrams Books, among numerous others.

Morell has received a number of awards and grants, which include a Guggenheim fellowship in 1994, and an Infinity Award in Art from ICP in 2011. In November 2017, he received a Lucie Award for achievement in fine art. His work has been collected and shown in many galleries, institutions and museums, including Museum of Modern Art, New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Art Institute of Chicago, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Victoria & Albert Museum, and many other museums in the United States and abroad. A retrospective of his work was organized jointly by the Art Institute of Chicago, The Getty in Los Angeles, and the High Museum in Atlanta. His Tent-Camera work made in U.S. National Parks was included in the traveling exhibition "Ansel Adams in Our Time" at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the de Young Museum in San Francisco, and Crystal Bridges in Bentonville. Most recently, in the fall of 2024 a selection of his Tent-Camera work made in England and France was shown at the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts.