

used water and steam to draw on a slate panel, accompanied by the artist Hans Witschi on the piano.

Jakob, who was born in Switzerland in 1954, has lived in New York since 1983. He charted his approach to painting—its reduction to a mental realization—long before recent debates over purely speculative economies or virtual worlds. In 1999 he made a work titled *Philosophy Escaped (Invisible Painting) The Peoples Energy (Still Collecting)*, whose materials are described as “energy on primed green canvas.” Time and again, turns of phrase such as “still collecting” let Jakob defer a resolution of the process of interaction between painting and perception, between individual act and collective understanding—and so the quietly nagging question of whether some sublime humor might be mingled with such insight into the invisible is left unanswered.

—Hans Rudolf Reust

Translated from German by Gerrit Jackson.

## MILAN

### Linda Fregni Nagler

GALLERIA MONICA DE CARDENAS

“My work is based on the analysis, recouping and recontextualising of pre-existent images,” Linda Fregni Nagler writes in her 2013 monograph *The Hidden Mother*. Its subject is a homonymous body of work for which the Italian artist focused her gaze on the iconographic conventions found in a certain genre of early daguerreotypes, tintypes, and *cartes de visite*. All these images depict young children held by their mothers, who remain hidden, outside the frame, or shrouded in blankets,

steadying their babies during the slow exposure times required by early photographic technologies. Fregni Nagler built an expansive archive of roughly one thousand of these pictures by persistently seeking out and acquiring them from diverse sources over the past few years. She then arranged the images into a narrative sequence that uncovers, through iteration, themes of alienation, tropes of portraiture, and the ways in which technological constraints inform representation.

In her second solo show at Galleria Monica De Cardenas, the artist revealed the series “*Pour commander à l'air*” (To Lead the Air), 2012–, another obsessive and poetic chapter in her analysis of the early development of the photographic medium. The work’s subject—in no small debt to Sarah Charlesworth

and Yves Klein—is drawn from a recurrent image in late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century photojournalism: a person, poised to jump. At the brink of a cornice, at the ledge of a highway bridge, or on a balcony with arms spread wide, these anonymous tempters of fate appealed to public interest when their apparent final moments were caught by photographers and featured in newspapers. Suspended between earth and sky, the jumpers here formed a silent army on the gallery walls.

Fregni Nagler has been collecting these fragments since 2013, rephotographing some of them with a large-format camera, enlarging them in the darkroom, and printing them on telex paper. The resulting

blown-up images expose the manual retouchings done with ink or paint by newspaper editors to the original prints, to heighten the drama of the images. By reproducing these pictures, the artist has found herself in dialogue with a history not only of photographers who once captured the tragic and revelatory moments that would summarize, in the public eye, the meaning of an entire life but also of photo editors and their gestures and amendments. She continues a trajectory of production that builds stories from a fraction of a second—a single shot.

Fregni Nagler’s interventions are driven less by an ideological impulse than by a practice of interpretation—they seem to offer a way for the artist to navigate the relationship between art and life. Her search for images and her staging of narratives have, in fact, taken on the rhythm of a daily practice. Yet this routine is also a considered reflection on the amorphous and expansive community of image producers to which each of us belongs—in today’s media-saturated era more than ever. This compendium of black-and-white, often grainy snapshots offered a compact sequence that raised questions about authorship, the concept of an original, and notions of time. Together, the images possess an expressive and evocative power, much like that of silent films. What is the voice like of this man standing at the brink of a cornice? What is the woman at the ledge of the bridge feeling? What can we really perceive in these photographs, which inexorably speak to us of death and yet, in the extreme actions they depict, grasp life in the fullest sense? Fregni Nagler’s work reminds us that seeking truth in images is an old exercise, and that we can’t learn enough by reconfiguring those that have long been available to us.

—Paola Nicolini

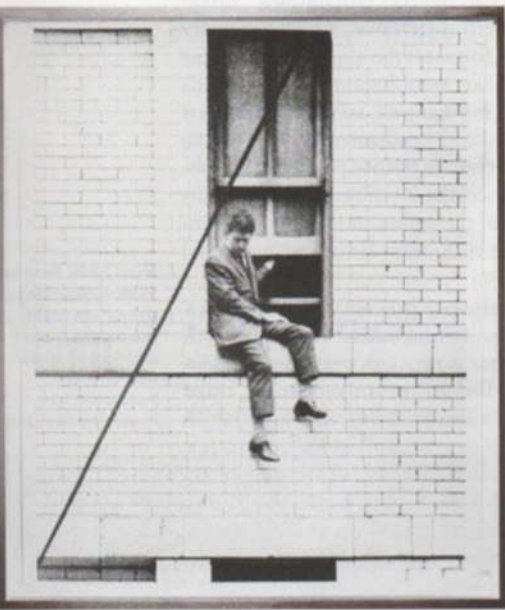
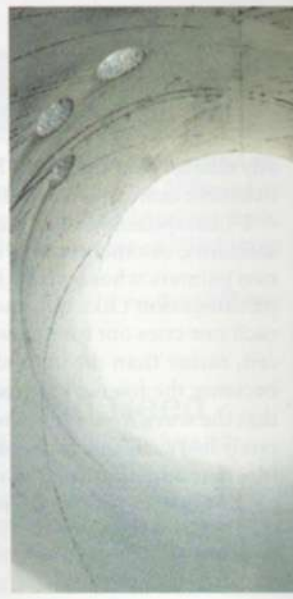
Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

### Luisa Lambri

STUDIO GUENZANI

After years of photographing modernist domestic architecture, Luisa Lambri has turned her lens to works by artists of the same era, from Donald Judd and Lucio Fontana to Lygia Clark. She shoots her new subjects from the same perspective with which she has long approached her vivisection of architecture, treating the artworks as if they were places. It is no accident that she has chosen to interpret the efforts of artists who have likewise built their practices around investigations of space and architecture, artists who revel in the counterpoint between solid and void, the dialectic between interior and exterior, and the interconnected values of surface and light.

“Sun Tunnels,” 2014, the series of eight photographs that was on view in her recent exhibition at Studio Guenzani, is dedicated to Nancy Holt’s eponymous earthwork, 1973–76—four eighteen-foot-long concrete tunnels built on forty acres in the Great Basin Desert in Utah. In these images, as in her earlier series, Lambri treats the enormous sculptures like architectural spaces, focusing on the interior. The pictures were taken from the innards of Holt’s tunnels, six of them shot from a vantage point facing their openings. The resulting views are abstract—they would be impossible to



Linda Fregni Nagler, *Contemplation of Death*, 2014, selenium-toned gelatin silver print on telex paper, 47 1/2 x 41". From the series “*Pour commander à l'air*” (To Lead the Air), 2012–.