



COSTAS PICADAS



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## COUNTERPOINT

**ODON  
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CONTEMPORARY

# COUNTERPOINT: THE CLARITY OF COSTAS PICADAS

By Donald Brackett

*“The photograph is a secret about a secret. The more it tells you the less you know.”*

Diane Arbus

The magic lantern we know as the camera first delivered a shockingly real reproduction of reality as early as 1827 by the French artist Joseph Niepce. Over almost two centuries, its startling conveyor belt of aesthetic growth (from glass to tin plates to paper prints) continued apace to include depictions of actual movement in cinema, then the cathode screen and eventually today’s digital computer terminal. Enter Picadas.

Welcome to the future history of photography: a utopia of pure images, a somewhat surreal realm in which our presumed yet arbitrary borderlines between the real and the imagined are deftly erased by the aesthetic prowess and technical skill of the artist. These splendidly pale gems are chromogenic prints, colloquially known as c-prints, but they are digital c-prints, where the image content is exposed through lasers rather than chemicals. Created in limited editions of five, with variable scales, and face-mounted to plexiglas, they are also invitations to a fresh kind of visual experience, one consisting of crystal clear clarity.

What Arbus did for faces and figures, the Greek-born and New York-based Picadas seems to do for places and buildings: he reveals their inner essence by rubbing gently on their surface qualities to unearth from beneath their architectural facades either their secret countenance or their psychic landscape. His dream-like vistas, with portions either fading into or out of diffused optical focus, offer the viewer a whole new and vastly expansive dimension of hidden significance. They are retinal balms that soothe the weary eyes of our digital age, and yet they too are also digital gifts, pulling us into the otherworldly architectonic realm of the everyday world we inhabit.

Picadas, who grew up in Athens before studying in Paris and eventually gravitating to the ultimate conceptual country of America, has wholeheartedly embraced the work of art in the age of digital reproduction, to update Walter Benjamin’s fine study of the visual aura. He masterfully uses technology, including photoshop techniques, to push photography towards its next frontier: the photograph as a seductive phantom in a meticulously designed zone of precisely calibrated ethereal visions. The subtle power of their visual charms is often quite breathtaking: they evoke the very core phenomenology of photography itself.

The three principal bodies of work presented here, the *Aether*, *Hyperbola* and *Voids* series respectively, all beckon us into a totally familiar and yet utterly alien nexus of humanly inhabited netherhoods. They explore a domain reconstructed *from* the raw materials of our world yet transmuted through the artist’s imagination into new world, one at once inviting and forbidding in its austere elegance. He unveils a sequence of mysteriously lux-collaged urban landscapes whose inhabitants seem to have abandoned their dwelling places and vanished into time.

His oneiric (from the original Greek word for dream) vistas provide literal expression of the original meaning of the word photo-graphis: writing or drawing with light, in this case, with hyper-precise laser light. These three bodies of work are veritable celebrations of clarity itself as content. Being what I might call an *imagineer*, an engineer of images, his aesthetic agenda is a very straightforward one: “I like to create emotions in the viewer, which are then followed by their asking of certain questions. While considering these questions, the viewer can experience a kind of *stopping of time*: it is when time stops that magic starts, and with it, the open opportunity for enlightenment begins.”

*Aether*, a classical element in Greek mythology, was thought to be a material filling the lofty regions of the universe above the terrestrial sphere, an upper sky which also filled every speck of matter in both space and throughout time. It personifies the universal substance. The great thing about enlightenment is the fact that it can also often be so damn entertaining, as in the calm splendour of “Aether 3” and “Aether 6” for instance, with their mysterious dolmen-like stone and ghostly shed with no entrance. These are *liminal*, or threshold experiences par excellence.

*Hyperbola*, in classical mathematics, is a type of smooth curve lying in a plane and is one of three kinds of conic sections formed by the intersection of a plane and a cone. The original Greek word means over-thrown or excessive, as in extremis or at the very limit of potential encounter. “Hyperbola 3” and “Hyperbola 11” each register a cool-headed variety of extremity however, with their box-like structures confounding the concept of interior or exterior and also offering up a perplexing riddle of reflections.

*Voids*, especially the cosmic kind, are vast spaces between filaments which contain very few or no galaxies, and as such they have come to be associated with vacuums or emptiness and space without matter. Far from actually being empty however, they form the supporting basis for which anything at all can ever exist. As such, his “Voids 11” and “Voids 4”, throb with the paradox of offering more than one void: a tree, rock and wall interacting with their surroundings and baked by a sunlight so intense it scorches our vision. Likewise “Voids 6” and Voids 1” also create a theatrical stage set feeling where a recurring character in his works, “the wall”, is an actor in a dramatic monologue for silent stone voices.

For Roland Barthes, each photograph was a veritable “certificate of presence”, one which embodies time in a spatial manner. Equally true of Picadas is the mesmerizing fact of being a *document of absence*, in which any trace of habitation is willfully withheld. I suspect this is because we ourselves, as the viewers, are the only dwellers in this serene and spooky reverie-soaked domain. Besides, all the potential human dwellers of these agora-like spaces appear to have collected together all at once into one spectacularly funneled crowd scene in the figure-filled “Hyperbola 2”.

The stillness in these exquisite images makes it difficult for me not to be reminded of the poet Goethe’s charming definition, that music is liquid architecture and architecture is frozen music. This artist appears to be exploring what is known as the architectural uncanny, structures both very familiar yet alien, witnessed as in a waking swoon using the *polysensorial gaze*: a visual experience that stimulates both the senses and the intellect simultaneously. Thus, his photographs feel to me like melting timescapes, since they so clearly examine what Bachelard called the poetics of space.

These three principal bodies of work also convey to us the allure of three other ancient Greek concepts: *Apeiron*: that which is limitless, boundless, indefinite, and without boundary; *Aletheia*: a personification of the unconcealed, a symbol of disclosure and truth; and *Kairos*: meaning the right, critical and opportune moment, there being two words for time, *chronos* (sequential time) and *kairos* (the right time for action).

Picadas images are all about the poised magic of *kairos*, perhaps especially the boldly quiet interlopers in this curated selection, the sudden bursts of colour contained in two pieces referencing *Tachyons*, hypothetical particles that move faster than light and contravene the known laws of physics, and *Quarks*, a type of elementary particle making up the constituency of all matter everywhere.

Thus “Tachyon 13” and “Quark Tunneling 14” both bring us back by circuitous navigation to the realm of the optical unconscious: a subtle place where



2

VOIDS 6

c-print facemounted to plexiglass, edition of 5  
54 x 36 in. / 137 x 92 cm

painting first intersects with technology, and they do indeed resemble theatrical painterly excursions into an alternate reality. As I see it, his primary artistic interest is how to bridge the gap between inner and outer reality by reestablishing the dynamic equilibrium that governs their relationships.

As he himself puts it so very well, “In my photographs I examine and reveal the ways in which one can *freeze* both space and time by re-contextualizing different parts of reality and recombining them in new ways. The result is that both objects, and even situations, can be transformed into a kind of *sculpture*, providing us access to new knowledge about the nature of our reality.”

In keeping with that basic photographic tenet but also uniquely distinguished from it, in the case of Costas Picadas, his photographs are still secrets about a secret, except the less they show us, the more we know.



3 AETHER 6, c-print facemounted to plexiglass, edition of 5, 54 x 36 in. / 137 x 92 cm

4 HYPERBOLA 2, c-print facemounted to plexiglass, edition of 5, 54 x 36 in. / 137 x 92 cm





5

HYPERBOLA 11

c-print facemounted to plexiglass, edition of 5  
36 x 54 in. / 92 x 137 cm



6

HYPERBOLA 3

c-print facemounted to plexiglass, edition of 5  
48 x 72 in. / 122 x 183 cm



7

VOIDS 5

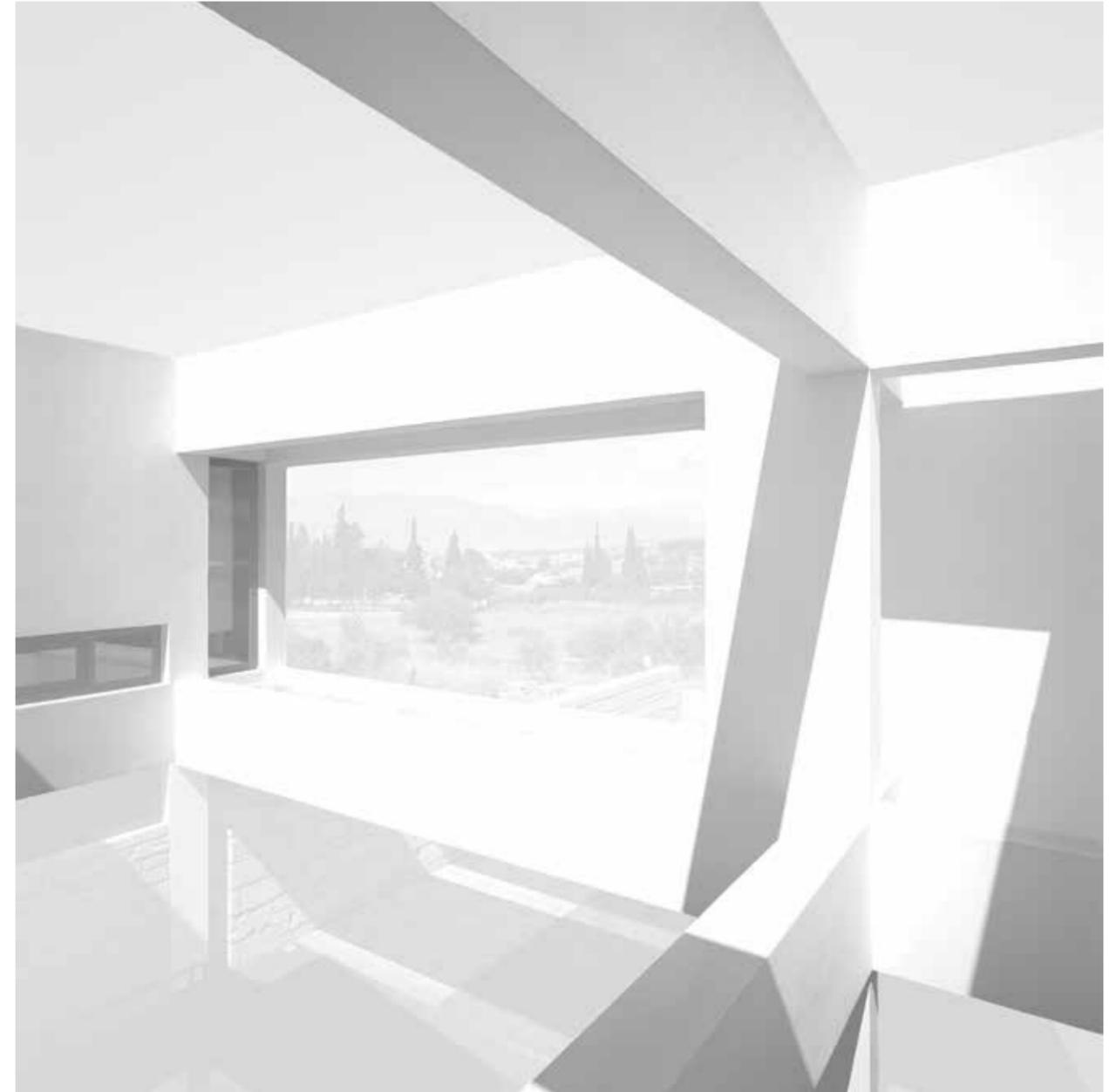
c-print facemounted to plexiglass, edition of 5  
48 x 72 in. / 122 x 183 cm



8

AETHER 3

c-print facemounted to plexiglass, edition of 5  
48 x 72 in. / 122 x 183 cm



9 AETHER 11, c-print facemounted to plexiglass, edition of 5, 54 x 36 in. / 137 x 92 cm

10 AETHER 12, c-print facemounted to plexiglass, edition of 5, 36 x 36 in. / 92 x 92 cm



11

VOIDS 11

c-print facemounted to plexiglass, edition of 5  
48 x 72 in. / 122 x 183 cm



12 VOIDS 4, c-print facemounted to plexiglass, edition of 5, 36 x 54 in. / 92 x 137 cm

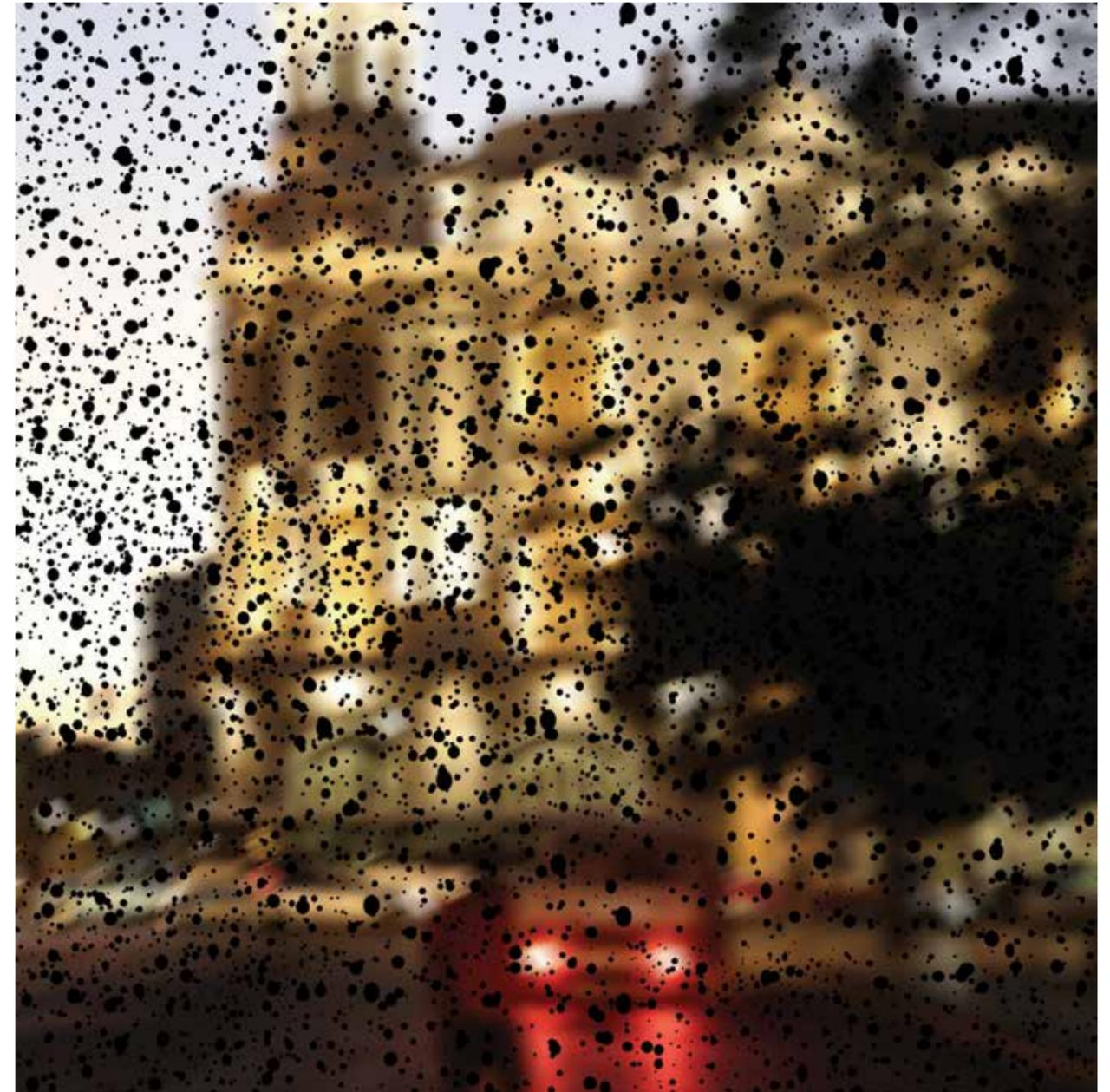
13 AETHER 16, c-print facemounted to plexiglass, edition of 5, 54 x 36 in. / 137 x 92 cm







1 UNTITLED 46 c-print on canvas, 75 x 55 in. / 190 x 139 cm



15 TACHYON 13, c-print facemounted to plexiglass, edition of 5, 54 x 36 in. / 137 x 92 cm

16 QUARK TUNNELING 14, c-print facemounted to plexiglass, edition of 5, 48 x 48 in. / 122 x 122 cm

# COSTAS PICADAS

1966 Born in Ioannina, Greece  
1986-1990 Studied at the Division of Contemporary Arts at the École du Louvre of Paris  
1986-1990 Studied at École Des Beaux-Arts in Paris

Currently living and working in New York

## SELECTED SOLO AND GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2018 Anya and Andrew Shiva Gallery, New York  
Odon Wagner Gallery, Toronto  
2017 Gallery Paris Koh, New York  
Mykonos Biennial 2017, Greece  
Hellenic Initiative Auction, New York  
2015 The Blender Gallery, Athens, Greece  
Voce Di, New York  
2013 Mykonos Biennale, Greece  
Ithaka Art Festival "Ithaka Returned", Greece  
Muse of Modern Art-Crete Rethymnon, Greece  
2003 Denise Bibro Gallery, New York  
2002 Budman Gallery Of New York  
2000 Queens Museum Of New York  
2001 Gallery Michael Lombardi, New York  
1999 The Young Art Fair, Basel, Switzerland  
Gallery J&J Donguy, Paris  
Criss Cross: Some Young New Yorkers III At P.S.1, New York  
Kappatos Gallery, Athens, Greece  
1995 Graphic Arts Fair At Waldorf Astoria, New York  
Galerie Anatole, Chartre, France  
Galerie De Buci, Paris, France  
Salon De Mai, Paris, France  
1994 Salon De Montrouge, Montrouge, France  
La Ruée Vers L'Eure At Chartres, France  
Ex-Voto At St. Romain Space Of New York  
1993 Galerie De Nestle Of Paris, France  
Mini Print Slovenia At The International Exhibition, Slovenia  
Novembre A Vitry Of Vitry-Sur-Seine, France  
Itineraire At Levallois-Peret, France  
Amsterdam W.G., Amsterdam, Holland  
Biennal De Peinture, Issey-Les-Moulineaux, France  
Hospital Saint Louis, Paris, France  
Galerie Gransart, Paris, France  
1992 SPADEM - Associates Des Arts Plastiques, Paris, France  
Espace Michael Simon Of Noisy-Le-Grande, France  
Hotel Imperial Of Annecy, France  
Galerie Gransart of Paris, France  
New Medical Center of Orleans, France  
Musée du Grand Orient de France of Paris, France  
1991 Galerie De Nestle, Paris, France  
Exposition Internationale D'Arts Plastiques - Palais Des Arts, Nice, France  
Festival D'Avignon, Avignon, France  
Institute Espagnol De Paris, Neuilly-Sur-Seine, France  
1990 Galerie de Nestle, Paris, France  
International Art Competition, New York

## CREDITS

### CURATORIAL

Odon Wagner, Rafael Wagner, , Meghan O'Callaghan

### DESIGN

Danielle Park Wiseman, Meghan O'Callaghan, Angela Wagner

### PRINTING

Solisco Québec

For all works in exhibition, please visit [odonwagnergallery.com](http://odonwagnergallery.com)

Front Cover: HYPERBOLA 14, c-print facemounted to plexiglass, edition of 5, 48 x 48 in. / 122 x 122 cm

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