

# PHOTOGRAPHY & CONTEMPORARY COLLECTIONS

**Evon Streetman**

***Homage to Henry Holmes Smith***

1983

Silver-dye bleach print (Cibachrome) with acrylic

23½ × 19 ⅜ in. (59.7 × 49.2 cm)

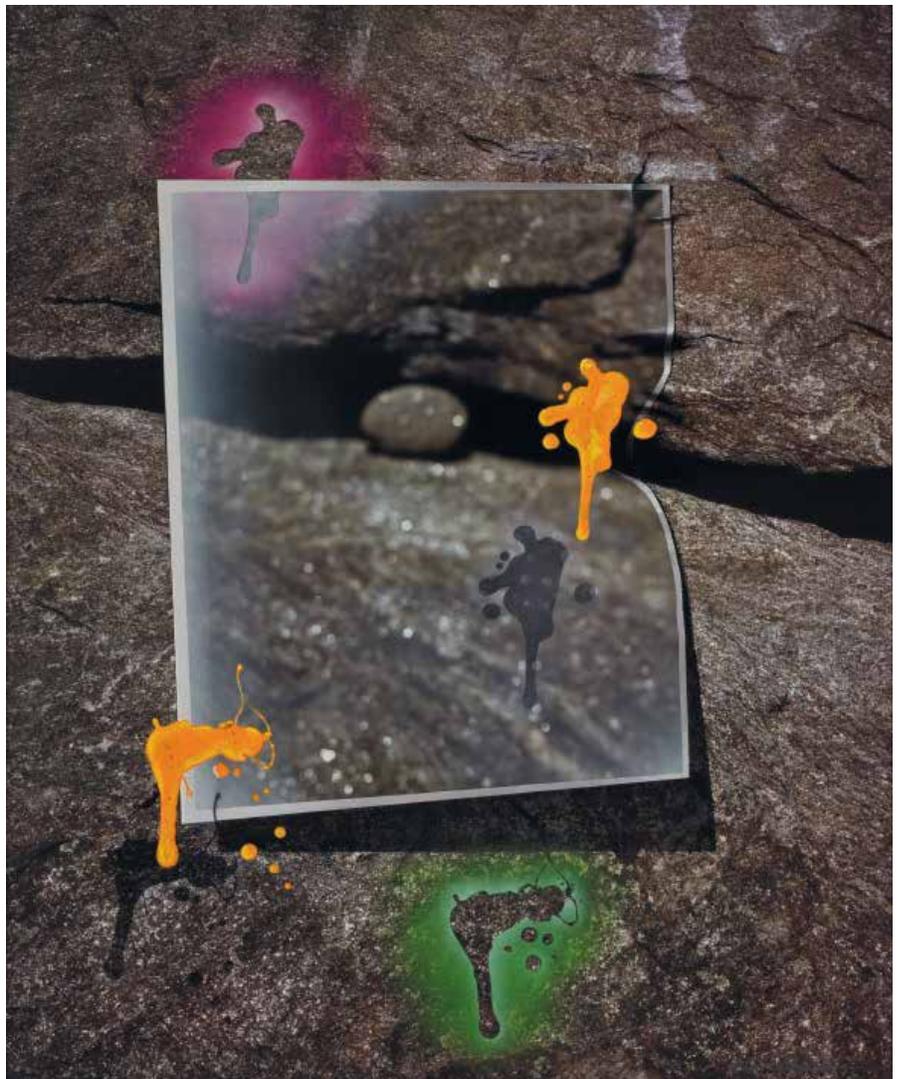
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Evon Streetman has a strong down-to-earth, practical side that is evident in her art, her career path, and even her lifelong attachment to fishing and her native Florida environment. Her undergraduate and graduate studies at Florida State University were focused on painting and the traditional arts, but she supported herself in the late 1950s and 1960s as a commercial photographer. Her personal artwork grew into a blending of media and styles that defies easy categorization but is unified by her central concern with the relationships found in nature and how one visually perceives its simple and complex forms. This passion for the rewards of active seeing made her an inspiring teacher and imbues her work with playful and profound visual surprises.

*Homage to Henry Holmes Smith* is a seductive piece filled with witty visual illusions and ironies. On top of the seemingly realistic photograph of a rock wedged in a crevice, Streetman challenges the viewer to decipher the incongruous floating rectangle and splats of paint strangely frozen in time, as if they had landed on a surface impossibly suspended in space, yet casting illogical shadows that make us question what surface they are on—or whether they are still moving. The work immediately draws our attention to a variety of issues of perception and representation including scale, surface, space, focus, and time. While blurring the line between the seeming realism of photography and the malleability of painting, she challenges viewers to truly see.

This 1983 work is from an ongoing series Streetman made of this unassuming rock in a crevice, a landscape feature that she found near the Penland Workshop in North Carolina where she was teaching, and that



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she returned to annually for more than a decade with the self-imposed assignment of making a new work each year. Most works in this extended series explore different aspects of perceptual illusion and the play between mechanical photographic rendering and handwork.

This homage to Henry Holmes Smith, the noted photography teacher and writer, is especially focused on the deliberate and the accidental, the conscious and the subconscious. Streetman's expressive paint splatters can be compared to Smith's experiments with color and photographic prints made from glass plate "negatives" covered with poured syrup. Like Smith's drip images (or Clifford Still's abstract expressionist paintings), Streetman's work has a powerful suggestion of action and spontaneity yet is the product of total control and deliberate planning. It is especially appropriate that Streetman would feel an affinity to another teacher who shared her goal of defying traditional boundaries of photography within the arts and who inspired students to see, not just look.

