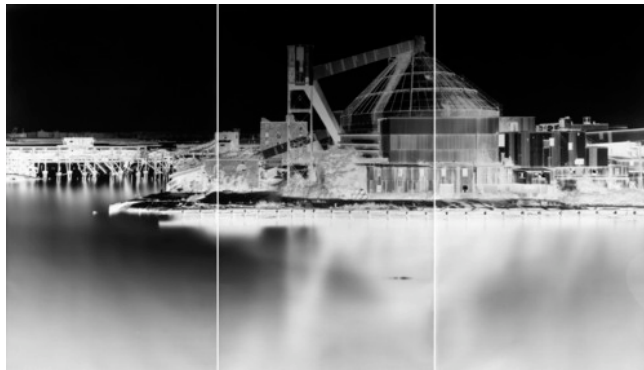


In Darkest Light**by Georgia Fee****vera lutter****Galerie Xippas****108, rue Vieille-du-Temple, 75003 Paris, France****12 September 2009 - 24 October 2009**

The initial impression is of a cold world, a stark, black and white vision that has been trapped and pinned like a dream just before it fades from consciousness. Soft and blurred around the edges, light pouring through nooks and crannies, a surreal flatness in which all things carry the same weight, Vera Lutter's monumental black and white photographs present a reality turned inside out. Hallowed and haloed, these negative images pulse in high contrast. Haunting.

Vera Lutter's current exhibition at [galerie Xippas](#), her first solo show in Paris, presents work from the last 10 years. Noted for her use of pinhole camera, or camera obscura, techniques, Lutter's "camera" could be a cargo container, her studio, or a room that she has constructed atop a New York apartment building. Within these structures she works in darkness, adjusting and monitoring the amount of light rays being allowed to pour through a pinhole and stain the photographic paper mounted opposite it. Over minutes, hours, or days Lutter tends to her work like an alchemist patiently waiting for that moment of magical transmutation in which lead becomes gold. The time, energy and effort necessary to produce these phantom memories are considerable and fraught with chance and happenstance.



Within 5 minutes, I know I like what I am seeing. Wandering through the long, rectangular salon at galerie Xippas, I am beguiled by the gorgeousness that pervades her work, a luxuriousness that coexists with the almost brutal formality of the monochromatic palette. Drained of the minutiae and detritus of every day life (a result of the camera obscura technique), Lutter's scenes take on a dreamlike timelessness in which the mundane becomes symbolic and narrative gives way to myth. A lure pulls us into the work again and again through the experience of light. The source is often ambiguous, illogical. At times it seems to emanate from outside the frame like a movie set where huge banks of halogen lights flood a night-time scene to create a new kind of day. At other times, the light glows from within the objects, whether they be buildings or water or industrial machinery, as if there was some inexplicable source of energy deep from within. The illusion in either case is disorienting and disquieting and suggests an OZ-like hand operating beyond our understanding.

In *Erie Basin, Red Hook, I: July 25, 2003*, a factory looms at water's edge muted and abandoned like some forgotten behemoth. Gone is the clanking of machinery, the roar of production, and in its stead is an iconic echo to industrialization. There is a smoothness to the gritty industrial wasteland, like a stone worn sleek by the ocean. In *Ca del Duca, Venice, XA: Decembre r8, 2007*, the foreground presents a seamless expanse of gunmetal luminescence punctuated by smudges of shadow or reflected light on its surface - the canal, of course. This silvery mirror is both weightless and dense. I am seduced by its beauty and drawn into its depth. We experience this watery mirror again in *Costa Rumpf, Luerssen Werft, Lemwerder: August 22, 1997*; the corner of a walkway or platform juts from the lower right edge of the image suggesting a jumping-off point from which one could dive into this ethereal void. In the background, an industrial crane stands etched against the blackest of skies - like some construct on the moon searching for life in the outer reaches of outer space.

