

Dans les plis du temps

12 Sep — 25 Oct 2025 at Les Douches la Galerie in Paris, France

17 SEPTEMBER 2025



Denis Roche, Atlantic hotel, chambre 301, Les Sables-d'Olonne, 24 décembre 1984. Courtesy of Les Douches la Galerie

Il n'y a rien de plus silencieux qu'une photo, il n'y a aucun autre art qui puisse être aussi silencieux que cela. En voulant arrêter le temps, ne serait-ce qu'une fraction de seconde, la photo émet du silence. ¹

(Denis Roche)

More than in any other artistic practice, every act in photography is a matter of choice. Over time, as Denis Roche revisited his contact sheets to select images or identify a place or date for a caption, he did so with hesitation and anxiety. He often said, “Every time, I feel like I’m stirring death.” I heard him say those words myself. But more than that, I had the privilege of listening to him as he stood before the final prints I had submitted for the exhibition put together by Gilles Mora in November 2015 at the Pavillon Populaire in Montpellier.

We were at his home, La Fabrique. He was going through the prints one by one, from box to box, when after a long silence, Denis Roche said, in a moment suspended in time: “What’s so remarkable about photography is everything that surrounds it.”

That was just a few months before he passed away, on September 2, 2015, ten years ago now. Since then, that sentence has never left me. And it was with those words in mind that we selected the photographs for this exhibition at Les Douches la Galerie—prints chosen from the folds of time, drawn from the boxes where Denis Roche had stored them. These boxes, along with others containing his negatives, were entrusted to the Nicéphore Niépce Museum collections in 2022.

This selection of forty photographs was made under the watchful and caring eye of his wife, Françoise Peyrot, who more than anyone else understands what “everything that surrounds it” truly means. But let’s not be deceived, after an artist’s death, it is always a different story that begins to be written.

The more I look at Denis Roche’s photographs, the more I find myself in direct confrontation with life—that life he knew how to relish intensely, describing his experiences of writing, photographing, or even editing as immense and profound joys. Looking at his work, for me, is much like looking at photographs by Bernard Plossu or Robert Frank: every single one gives me an irrepressible urge to live... and to photograph.

To discover or rediscover Denis Roche’s work is to step fully into life, to cautiously come to terms with death, to face the passage of time. And at the same time, through his writings, to reflect on what happens when the torrent sweeps the photographer into a single fragment of a second.

He knew more than anyone else about photography, and his greatest strength—as an intellectual, a writer, and a photographer—was to speak of it from the inside, offering a rare and essential counterpoint in the history of photography to theorists who may have been believers, but not practitioners.

To love Denis Roche’s photography is to gaze at the beauty of a body until all sense of space is lost but also to pause before a landscape that imposes silence. It is, always, to face the loss of the moment which, immediately after being captured, already belongs to the past, on the condition that one lives, lives a life full of love and freedom.

To appreciate the work of Denis Roche is to understand that it is at once formal and autobiographical, deeply intimate yet universal in its themes, where light is no more and no less than a metaphor for time—and time, a metaphor for light, as he so often liked to say.

Denis Roche’s photography tells us, powerfully, “I was there.” The “that-has-been” remains, by contrast, disarmingly banal.

(Text by Guillaume Geneste. Curator. Denis Roche's printer since 1991)

Notes

¹ ‘There is nothing more silent than a photograph. No other art form can be as silent as that. In its attempt to stop time, even for a fraction of a second, photography emits silence.’



Les Douches la Galerie

Since 2006, Les Douches la Galerie has promoted both contemporary and historical photography, formal experiments and current artistic endeavours that push the boundaries of the medium. While being the exclusive representative in France of the estates of Berenice Abbott, Arlene Gottfried, Ernst Haas and Vivian Maier, Les Douches la Galerie also assists living artists in enlarging their audiences in France and abroad.

Gallery profile



1. Denis Roche, Hotel Marınca, chambre 21, Propriano, Corse, 30 juillet 1972. Courtesy of Les Douches la Galerie



2. Denis Roche, Auberge de la scierie, chambre 26, Aix-en-Othe, 25 décembre 1987. Courtesy of Les Douches la Galerie



3. Denis Roche, Gasthof post, chambre 6, Zwiefalten, Allemagne, 8 mai 1996. Courtesy of Les Douches la Galerie

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