

UNCOMMON

ELIZABETH MATHESON

PHOTOGRAPHS 1970-2018



October 6, 2022 - January 29, 2023
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

CASSILF
HAUS

THANK YOU

Welcome to the uncommon world of Elizabeth Matheson! The decision, early on, to attach the title UNCOMMON to this exhibition and the beautiful catalog that accompanies it, was prescient. Everything about this show and the inaugural publication of the newly birthed Cassilhaus Projects imprint has been just that—uncommon.

The photographers Lori Vrba and Kent Corley have been equal parts curators and archeologists, plumbing the depths and corners of Elizabeth Matheson’s photographic life and work. Yes, the work that has established her as one of North Carolina’s preeminent photographers is here, but Lori and Kent also take glee in offering up lagniappes from her previously unexhibited work, such as her early self-portraits and color work from Italy, where her wry sense of humor spills out of the frame. Their decades of time both in traditional and digital darkrooms and their genuine reverence for the artist inform this singular selection and its sequence.

Molly Renda, our gimlet-eyed editor, designer, and bookmaker, has generously given her time and expertise to the making of the companion catalog and Elizabeth, along with a generous band of patrons, have made it possible for it to be made available to the public at no cost.

We are indebted to Wojtek Wojdyski for his masterful production of the pigment prints in the exhibition and invaluable assistance in file preparation for the publication. A special thank you to Mark Sloan for his insightful essay and Ippy Patterson for her poetic afterword in the catalog that broaden our appreciation of this extraordinary artist.

Few things happen at Cassilhaus without the thoughtful and skilled efforts (or most UNCOMMON fashion sense) of our Gallery Czarina Christina Wytko Marchington. Her hand is everywhere in this project. A special thanks also to Natasha “Tash” Lehner, our Cassilhaus intern, for her invaluable help mounting the exhibition.

Cassilhaus itself exists because of the extraordinary skill, vision, and love of my co-founder and partner in everything, Ellen Cassilly.

For Elizabeth, who infuriates all of us by making it look so easy every time she clicks the shutter, a deep bow of gratitude for making each of our lives uncommon.

Frank Konhaus
September 2022

FROM THE CURATORS

Every photograph, every work of art, is an invitation to see the world as the artist sees (or perhaps dreams) it. Elizabeth Matheson's photography is a rare invitation, indeed—one that comes from a time and place that is kinder, gentler, and more refined than the world most of us inhabit.

Frankly, we invited ourselves to curate this survey of the lifelong vision of Elizabeth Matheson. After some quiet hesitation on her part, we eventually were granted unconditional access to a stunning archive that revealed a broader visual landscape than we could have imagined. From her stellar first roll of black-and-white film (processed in an Irish drugstore circa 1970) to her utterly contemporary digital captures in colors all her own, we were consistently rewarded with elegance and a cutting wit that unfolded as if by magic with every print.

And then we saw the self-portraits.

Tucked away in an archival box was a single vintage gelatin silver print of a young woman photographing her own reflection, mostly in silhouette, her stance as bold and regal as her surroundings. The "Versailles" self-portrait (taken from that same first roll of black-and-white film) immediately and unanimously became the anchor of the exhibition and the cover of this publication. More self-portraits illuminated an oh-so-quiet vulnerability and gave us what felt like a stolen glimpse of young Matheson as an emerging artist. That same adventurer who as a young woman had wandered the streets of Paris, now seated across the table, offered us a cold lemonade on a hot Southern afternoon.

"How could anyone be interested in this?"

"Trust us."

And she did.

From there, our curatorial process was driven by instinct, narrative, and our shared sensibilities. Rather than approaching the work with an academic mindset, we allowed ourselves to respond emotionally to Elizabeth's rich vision. Early edits of this show exceeded 130 photographs, but it became apparent that featuring every glorious nook of Matheson's oeuvre wasn't logistically feasible. To be clear, for every image here, there are countless others that also surprise and confound in their quiet majesty.

We arrived at the title "Uncommon" from multiple angles, but perhaps most importantly because everything about Elizabeth Matheson is uncommon: her timeless, refined vision; her effortless visual language; and her sense of humor and humility . . . all wrapped up and ever-present in this elusive, extraordinary, and prolific human being.

There is no greater gift than access to an artist's mind and heart. We thank Elizabeth for her trust. We are forever changed because of our time with her and her life's work. It has been an honor and an education to be part of this generous and capable team. Frank Konhaus and Ellen Cassilly of Cassilhaus are uncommon patrons. Their only agenda is to support artists, elevate the photographic medium, and selflessly instill a commitment not only to the arts but to the greater good. We are hugely grateful to Frank and Ellen, and to Christina Wytko Marchington, Mark Sloan, Ippy Patterson, Wojtek Wojdyski, and Molly Renda for their dedication and persistence in bringing this exhibition and book to fruition.

Consider yourself invited.

Lori Vrba & Kent Corley
Curators
May 2022

ELIZABETH MATHESON

Elizabeth Matheson is a native of Hillsborough, North Carolina. She began photographing in 1969, studying with John Menapace at the Penland School of Craft in 1972.

One-person exhibitions of her work have been mounted at Hollins University; Virginia Polytechnic Institute; the North Carolina Museum of Art; Duke University; St. John's Museum, in Wilmington, North Carolina; Western Carolina University; the National Humanities Center; and the Gregg Museum of Art & Design, at North Carolina State University. Her work is in the collections of the Nasher Museum of Art, at Duke University; the Ackland Art Museum, at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Cassilhaus; the North Carolina Museum of Art; and the Do Good Fund, in Columbus, Georgia.

Among her publications are books about Edenton and Hillsborough, North Carolina; *To See*, with poems by Michael McFee (North Carolina Wesleyan College Press, 1991); *Blithe Air: Photographs of England, Wales, and Ireland* (Jargon Society, 1995); *Quartet: Four North Carolina Photographers* (with Rob Amberg, Caroline Vaughan, and John Rosenthal) (Safe Harbor Books, 2005); and *Shell Castle: Portrait of a North Carolina House* (Safe Harbor Books, 2008).

In 2004, Matheson received the North Carolina Award for Fine Arts, the state's highest civilian honor.

MAIN GALLERY



Kitty Hawk, North Carolina 1973
Archival Pigment Print



Aberystwyth, Wales 1986
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



North Wilkesboro, North Carolina 1982
Archival Pigment Print



Wilson, North Carolina 1982
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print

Sète, France 1970
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Versailles, France 1970
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Cape May, New Jersey 1975
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Annapolis, Maryland 1978
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Durham, North Carolina 1975
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print





Yorktown, Virginia 1974
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Whitby, England 1978
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Kitty Hawk, North Carolina 1973
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Versailles, France 1970
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Winston-Salem, North Carolina 1975
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print

Enfield, North Carolina 1996
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print
On loan from the Cassilhaus Collection



Durham, North Carolina 1972
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Edenton, North Carolina 1978
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Oakland, California 1984
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Edenton, North Carolina 1982
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print





Blackpool, England 1986
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia 1981
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Québec, Canada 1977
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Abbotsbury, England 1989
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Caswell Beach, North Carolina 1987
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print

The Veneto, Italy 1999
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Dawlish, England 1989
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Kew, England 1978
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Beaufort, South Carolina 1987
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Deal, England 1988
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print





Edenton, North Carolina 1982
Archival Pigment Print



Québec, Canada 1977
Archival Pigment Print



Abbotsbury, England 1989
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print

EAST GALLERY/ GIRL POWER ROOM



Chapel Hill, North Carolina 1974
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print

Lake Garda, Italy 1999
Archival Pigment Print



Norfolk, England 1988
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Chapel Hill, North Carolina 1974
Archival Pigment Print



Chapel Hill, North Carolina 1974
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Edenton, North Carolina 1982
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print





Cornwall, England 1989
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Chapel Hill, North Carolina 1974
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Chapel Hill, North Carolina 1974
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Chapel Hill, North Carolina 1974
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print

Chapel Hill, North Carolina 1974
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



WEST GALLERY

James River, Virginia 1977
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Saint-Malo, France 1983
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Cornwall, England 1989
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print





Porthcawl, Wales 1986
Vintage Gelatin Silver Print



Knokke-Heist, Belgium 1983
Archival Pigment Print



Daytona Beach, Florida 1981
Archival Pigment Print

MAIN STAIRWELL



Lucca, Italy 2001
Archival Pigment Print

Venice, Italy 2011
Archival Pigment Print



Near Cheraw, South Carolina 1998
Archival Pigment Print



Milton, North Carolina 2011
Archival Pigment Print



ENTRY GALLERY

Milton, North Carolina 2011
Archival Pigment Print





Durham, North Carolina 2012
Archival Pigment Print



Southside, Virginia 2010
Archival Pigment Print



Nags Head, North Carolina 2010
Archival Pigment Print



Southside, Virginia 2010
Archival Pigment Print

Monreale, Sicily 2016
Archival Pigment Print



Varadero, Cuba 2015
Archival Pigment Print



Vincenza, Italy 2011
Archival Pigment Print



LOWER BATH

Fiesole, Italy 2007
Archival Pigment Print





Burano, Italy 2011
Archival Pigment Print



Calvi, Corsica 2000
Archival Pigment Print



Near Trinidad, Cuba 2015
Archival Pigment Print

KITCHEN



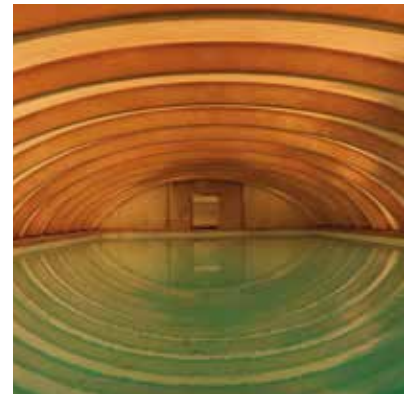
Venice, Italy 2011
Archival Pigment Print

DINING ROOM

Viareggio, Italy 2000
Archival Pigment Print



Durham, North Carolina 2004
Archival Pigment Print
On loan from the Cassilhaus Collection



Lake Garda, Italy 1999
Archival Pigment Print
On loan from the Cassilhaus Collection



LIVING ROOM



Venice, Italy 2002
Archival Pigment Print



Atlantic City, New Jersey 1998
Archival Pigment Print



Syracuse, Sicily 2016
Archival Pigment Print



Milton, North Carolina 2011
Archival Pigment Print

LIMITED EDITION PRINT PRICING

Color

12" x 12"	As framed	\$800	Loose print	\$600
16" x 16"	As framed	\$1100	Loose print	\$850
40" Long Side	As framed	\$2900	Loose print	\$2000

All prints are archival pigment prints and framed to archival museum standard in finish corner frames (except prints in lower bath), 8-ply 100% rag board, and Tru-Vu museum glass.

Black and White

Small Vintage Gelatin Silver Prints	As framed	\$2000
Large Vintage Gelatin Silver Prints	As framed	\$2500
Diptych Vintage Gelatin Silver Prints	As framed	\$4000
Archival Pigment Prints (nominally 12" long side)	As framed	\$750
	Loose Print	\$600
Archival Pigment Prints 27" x 18" (finish corner welded aluminum frame)	As framed	\$1800
	Loose print	\$1200

All prints are framed to archival museum standard in Nielsen extruded aluminum frames (except two 27" x 18" prints), 8-ply 100% rag board, and Tru-Vu museum glass.

The vintage gelatin silver prints in this exhibition were made by Elizabeth Matheson in her Chapel Hill darkroom. Many are the last remaining originals from the artist's archive. All images are also available as modern pigment prints.

Framing is only available on prints framed for the exhibition. We can recommend local framers to frame any purchased loose prints.

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WHERE ART + COMMUNITY MEET