



wonderings

expanded notions of light, space + time in photomedia

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introduction.

Photography, and its expanded practices, has the unique, and seemingly magical ability to make light, space and time tangible.

Until recently I identified exclusively as a photographer, defining all aspects of my practice through the lens of the camera. However, access to colour darkroom facilities and postgraduate studies have provided me with a broader palette from which I create work, introducing me to new methods and ways of thinking. Consequently, I have come to define myself as a *photomedia* artist. This repositioning creates space for new temporal and spatial explorations, through moving image and installation work for example; as well as alternative approaches to works on photosensitive surfaces. I now have space in which my practice can evolve and grow. Today, the title 'photographer' leaves little room for an expanded exploration of light; excluding a range of camera-less processes and media that have made, and continue to make, significant contributions to the field of expanded photography.

If popular contemporary notions of what classifies as photography encompassed the historical definitions or etymological origins of the term, I would deem such a repositioning unnecessary. The word 'photography' stems from the Greek *photos* meaning 'light', and *graphos*, meaning 'writing, delineation, or painting' (Wilder, 2006); and thus translates literally as 'light writing'. The first two editions of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED)—published in 1888 and 1989—define 'photography' as '[t]he process or art of producing pictures by means of the chemical action of light on a sensitive film on a basis of paper, glass, metal, etc.' This definition is notable for its absence of any involvement of a camera in the process.

Today, the OED (2006/2020) defines a 'photograph'¹ as 'a picture made *using a camera*² in which an image is focused on to sensitive material and then made visible and permanent by chemical treatment; (later also) a picture made by focusing an image and then storing it digitally.' This definition attempts to account for the introduction of digital

1.
The dictionary entry for 'photograph' has been cited instead of 'photography' as the latter's definition is self-referential. i.e. Photography: 'The process, practice, or art of takings photographs; the business of producing and printing photographs.' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2020)

2.
my italics

technologies, however the most radical shift is that use of a camera is now integral to the definition. Interestingly, camera-less processes, which previously fell under the umbrella of photography, have now been relegated to another term: the photogram³. Owing to the proliferation of digital and rapidly developing AI technologies, and the countless cross- and interdisciplinary possibilities of the medium, it is feasible (if not probable) that, in the future, the dictionary definition of 'photography' will change yet again.

In *Light and Photomedia: A New History and Future of the Photographic Image* Jai McKenzie (2014, p.1) proposes 'that the history and future of photomedia are fundamentally connected to light' arguing:

... that, regardless of technological change, light is a constant defining characteristic of photomedia intrinsically coupled with space and time to form explicit light-based structures and experiences (ibid.)

... or 'light-space-time structures' (McKenzie, 2014). Photomedia practices are defined by their use of light *in combination with* media rather than through the exclusive use of the camera:

The photographic devices that fall under the term photomedia are as broad as the etymological scope of the words photographic and media. Essentially I consider all devices that use light and media as photomedia including photography, cinema, video, television, mobile phones, computers and photocopiers. (McKenzie, 2014, p.1)

As an artist I am guided by a fascination with the physical properties and ethereal qualities of light through which I explore concepts of journey, place and notions of time. I approach this thesis as a process of unpacking this statement, which I feel defines my practice. McKenzie's term 'light-space-time structures', which has proved highly resonant for me, forms the starting point of this thesis. What follows is a critical enquiry and personal reflection into how expanded notions of light, space, and time influence and define photomedia

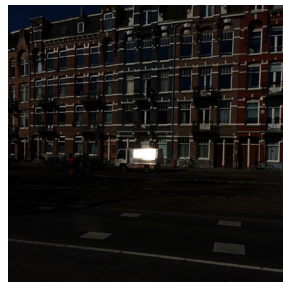
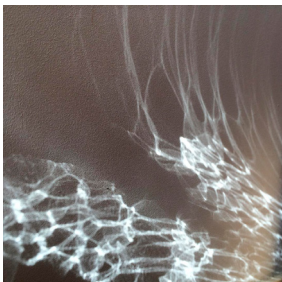
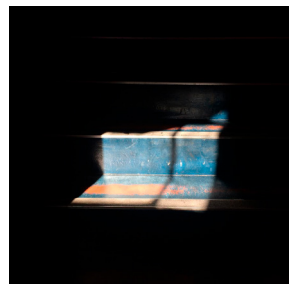
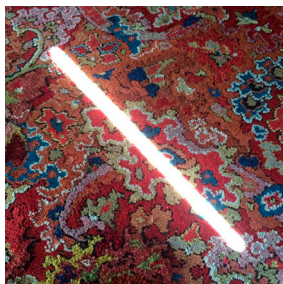
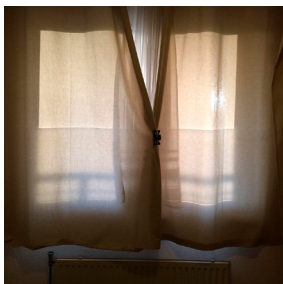
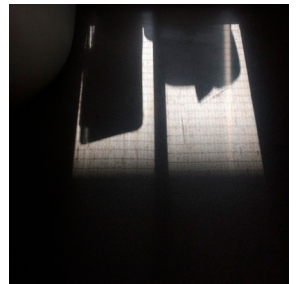
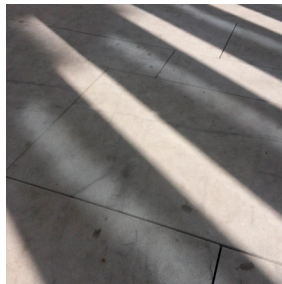
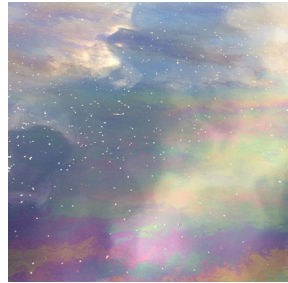
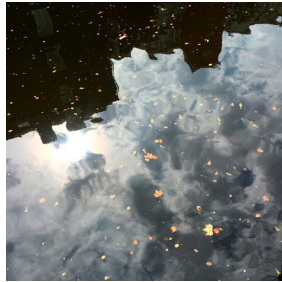
3. Photogram: 'A photographic picture produced with photographic materials but without a camera.' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2020) It should be noted that the OED does make the following disclaimer as a footnote in the entry for 'photograph': 'Sometimes, esp. in early use: an image made directly on to a light-sensitive surface without the use of a camera (now called a photogram)'. (ibid.)

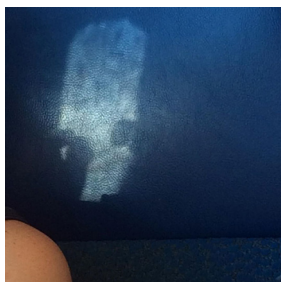
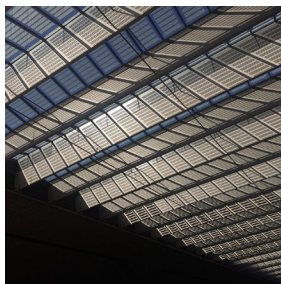
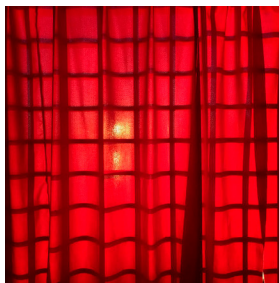
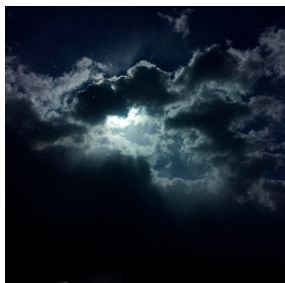
as well as my own creative practice. I attempt to interrogate and deconstruct my methods, processes and motivations as an artist, situating myself within a broader critical, social and artistic context.

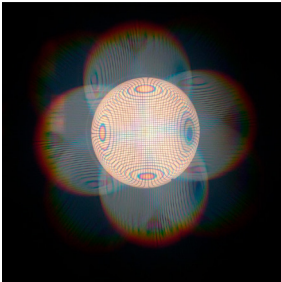
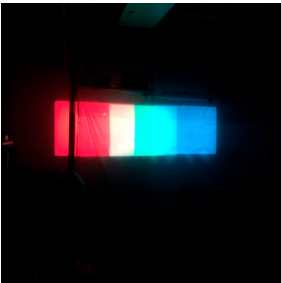
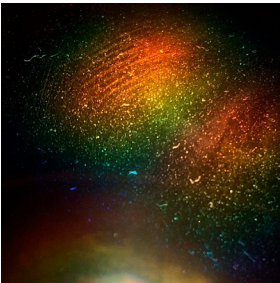
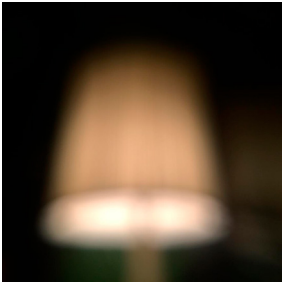
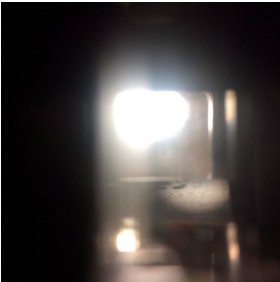
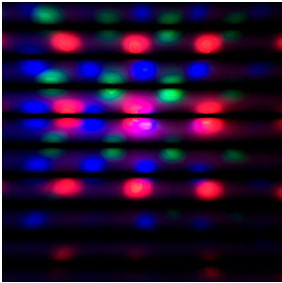
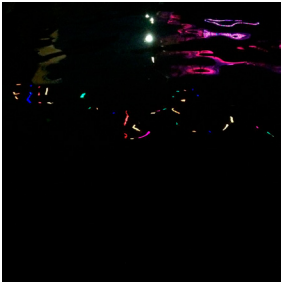
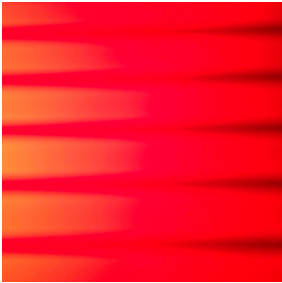
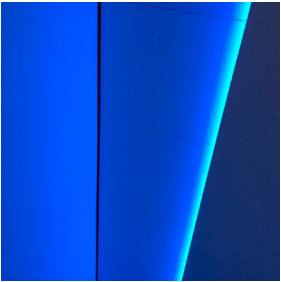
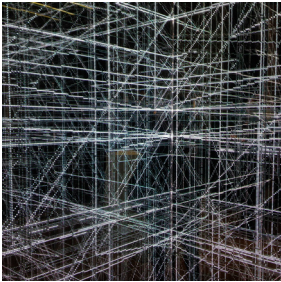
In the first chapter, 'Light' I explore the history of photography as light-writing and related forms of impressioning, drawing on texts by Jai McKenzie and Joanna Zylińska. I look at the use of light as raw material through the work of Susan Derges, Garry Fabian Miller and Gottfried Jäger; relating their approaches to my own practice. I also explore notions of magic in photomedia and reflect on my own fascination with light.

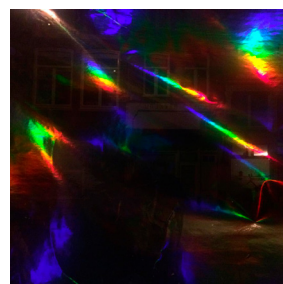
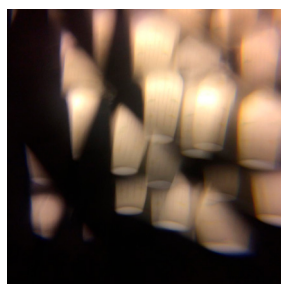
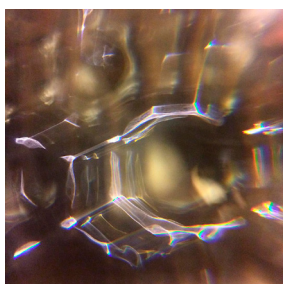
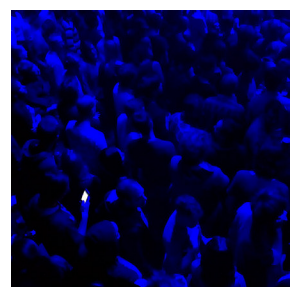
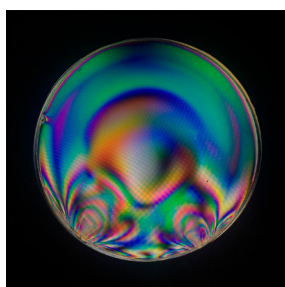
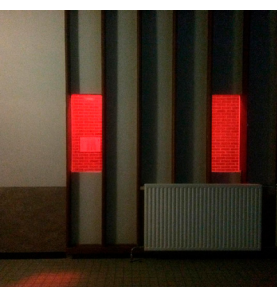
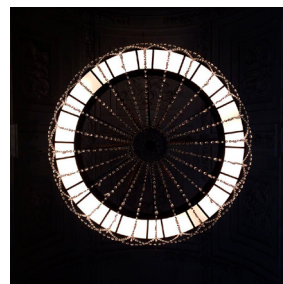
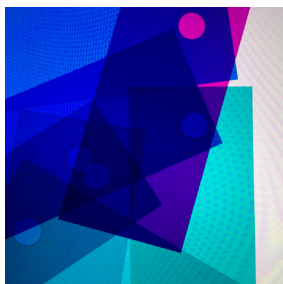
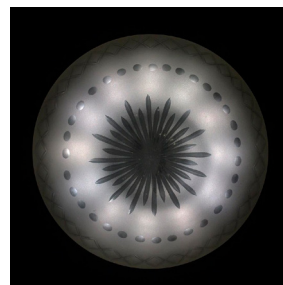
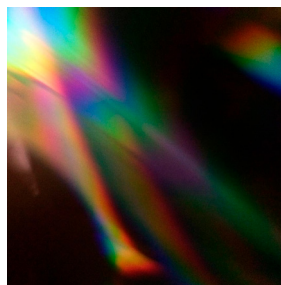
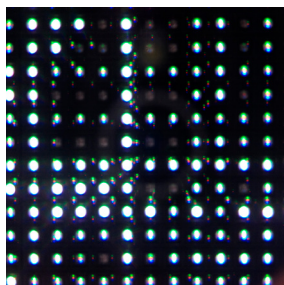
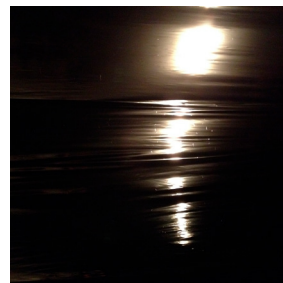
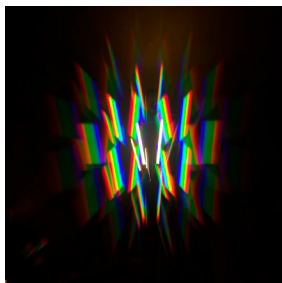
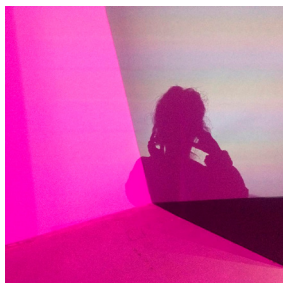
In 'Space' I approach the concept of space as movement through geographical spaces (i.e. travel) together with the comparable psychological spaces that are an effect of this movement. Journey and the state of being elsewhere are recurring themes in my work. I will recount the journeys I undertake in *real* life, discuss photography's relationship to tourism, the problematic connotations of the sublime, the philosophical significance of the Claude Mirror, and reflect on landscape and nature as cultural constructs. I draw on the work of contemporary theorists including Genevieve Lloyd, Timothy Morton, Liz Wells, John Urry and Jonas Larsen.

In the final chapter 'Time', I reflect on the journeys-through-process I undertake in my practice. I explore ideas relating to Henri Cartier-Bresson's 'decisive moment' and propose an alternative to the photographic image as snapshot. Finally, I look at the theoretical significance of the latent image, building upon Daniel Rubinstein's theories of photographic durations through my own concept of 'sustained exposure'.









light

Without light—and the action of light onto a receptive surface—there is no photography. The ubiquity of photographic imagery today, together with the fact that most people in advanced economies have easy access to a (smartphone) camera means that, like many other technologies, we take it for granted. As Robert Shore (2014, p.7) observes ‘not only can everyone take photos; in the digital era more or less everyone *does*.’ Technology is now so complex that the general user can no longer access, much less understand, the workings of a camera. For the amateur photographer today, the role of light in the process of photography is scarcely considered; light has become truly invisible.







photography as light-writing.

The invention of photography is generally marked not by the moment an image first made an impression onto a receptive surface by the action of light, but by when such an image could be fixed. The ‘earliest known surviving’ (McDonald, 2019) durable photographic image was produced by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce in circa 1826. It depicts the view from a window on his estate in Burgundy, France and required an exposure time of eight hours to several days (depending on the reference). Prior to this, photographs had existed but faded with continued exposure to light. 1839 is often cited as the birth year of practical photography, when Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre and William Henry Fox Talbot officially presented their separate discoveries to a broad public. Permanent positive photographic images achieved through exposure times of just a few minutes were now possible.

When we consider photography as ‘light writing’—that is ‘light that inscribes itself into a light sensitive material’ (Gamauf, 2016, p.9)—we can look *much* further back in history. As early as the first century AD, the light sensitivity of silver halides is mentioned by Roman scholar Pliny the Elder (Clegg, 2007, p.20). In the eighth century, ‘Arab alchemist Jabir ibn Hayyan ... recorded that silver nitrate – the essence of the light-sensitive emulsion of photographs – darkened in the light’ (Barnes, 2012, p.13). Further notable advancements were made by Georg Fabricius in 1556, Johann Heinrich Schulze in 1725, and Thomas Wedgwood in 1802; yet none of them were able to preserve (or *fix*) the results of their observations. (ibid.)

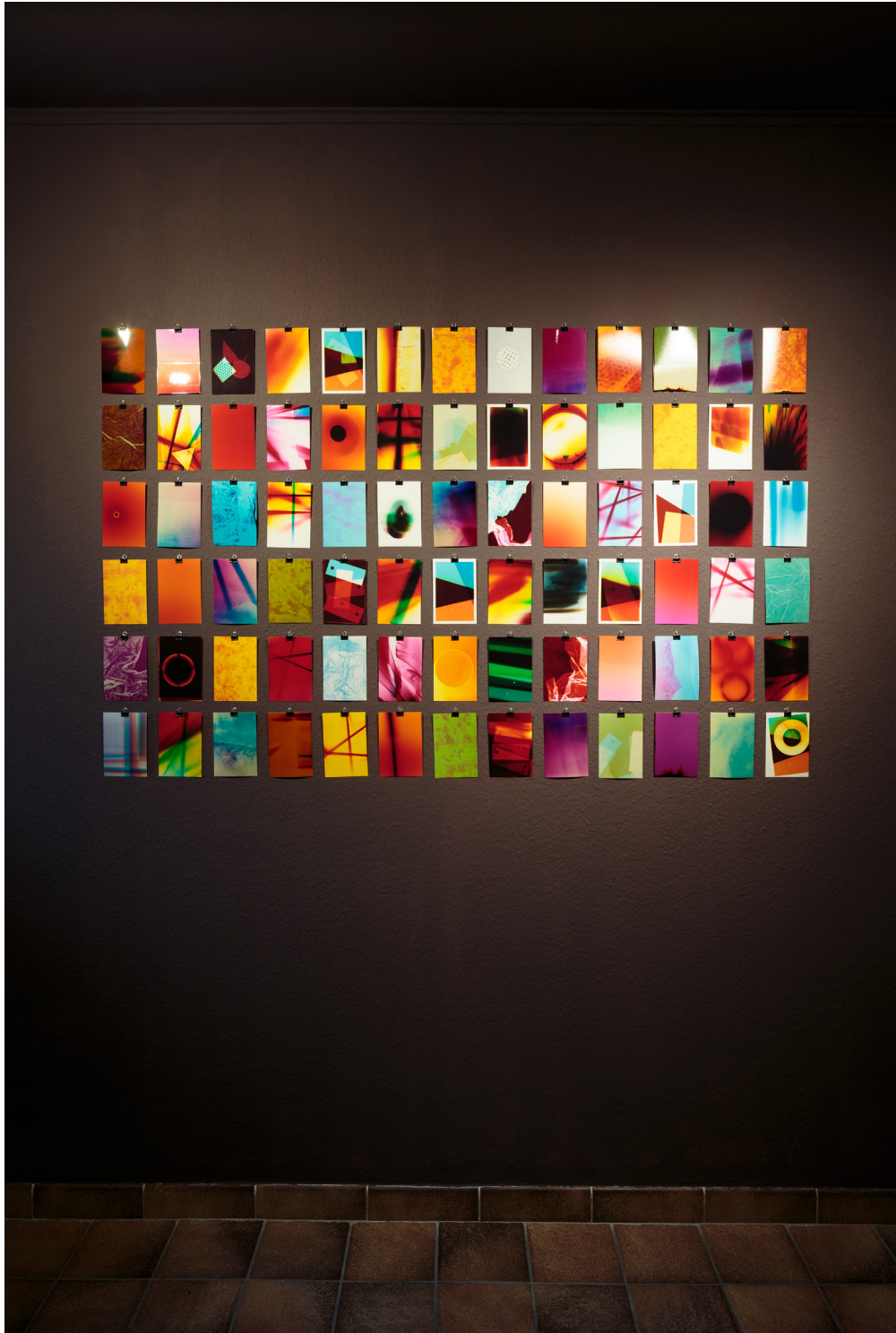
Light-writing, or light impressioning has existed for, at the very least, millennia. William Jerome Harrison (1887) viewed impressioning as:

... a process as ancient as tanning of human skin under the sun, or the bleaching of wax under the sun. In each case, the sun created an impression on a body. For Harrison, this was the earliest and most basic form of photography. (Bobbette, 2013 cited in Zylinska, 2017, p.110)

Similarly, photosynthesis can be considered a form of light impressioning. Photomedia artists Ackroyd & Harvey employ this natural process, producing complex images by harnessing the light sensitive properties of chlorophyll in grass (Antonini, 2015, p.184). In stark contrast to the lifegiving associations of photosynthesis, the permanent inscription of shadows of human bodies onto concrete surfaces, as a result of the atomic blast in Hiroshima, provides an horrific example of light impressioning. Perhaps it is in these inscriptions that photography's long-held associations with loss and death find their ultimate expression.

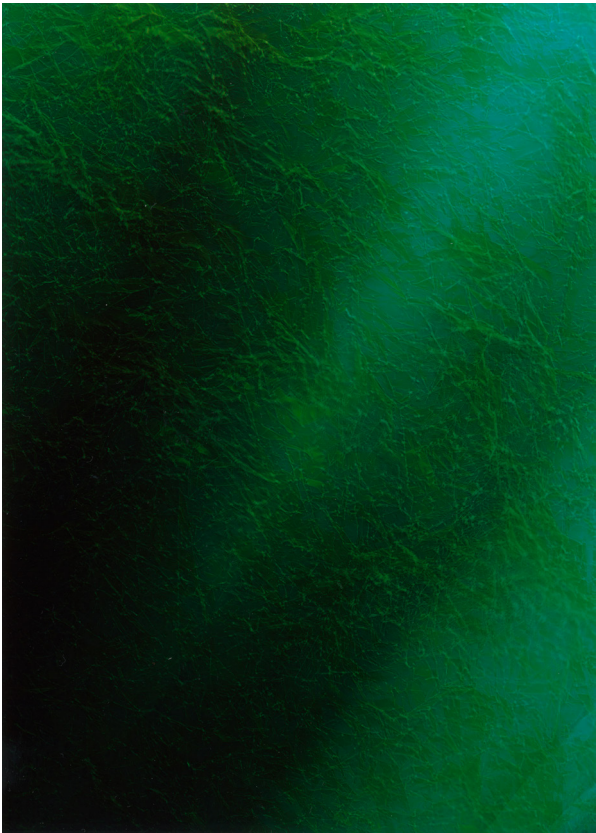


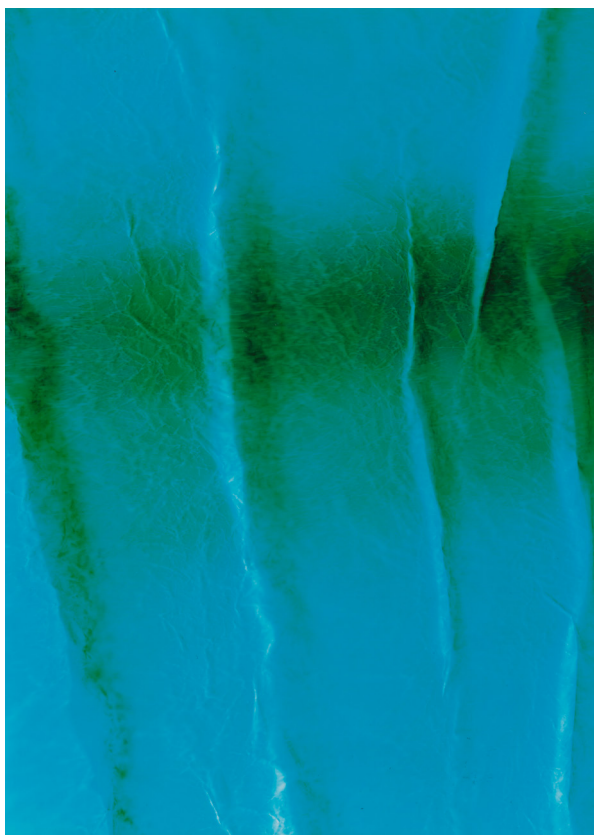
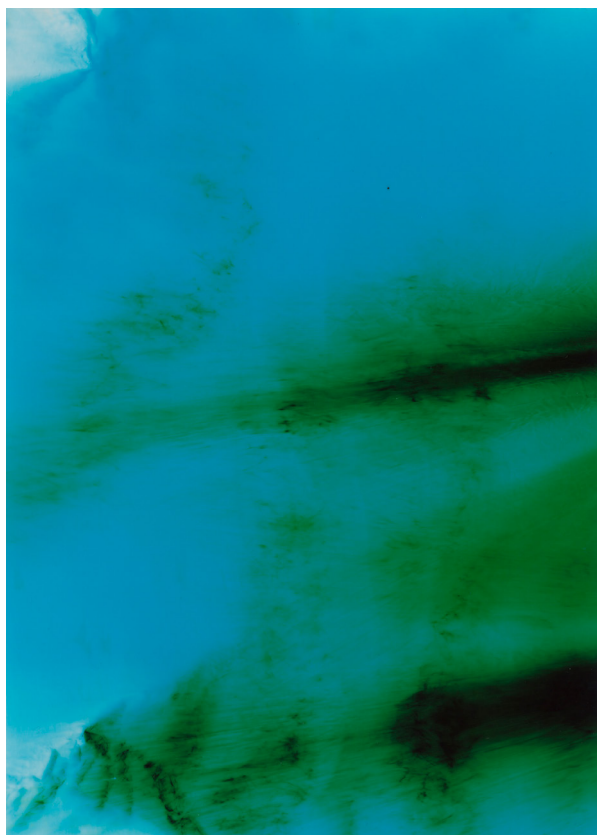


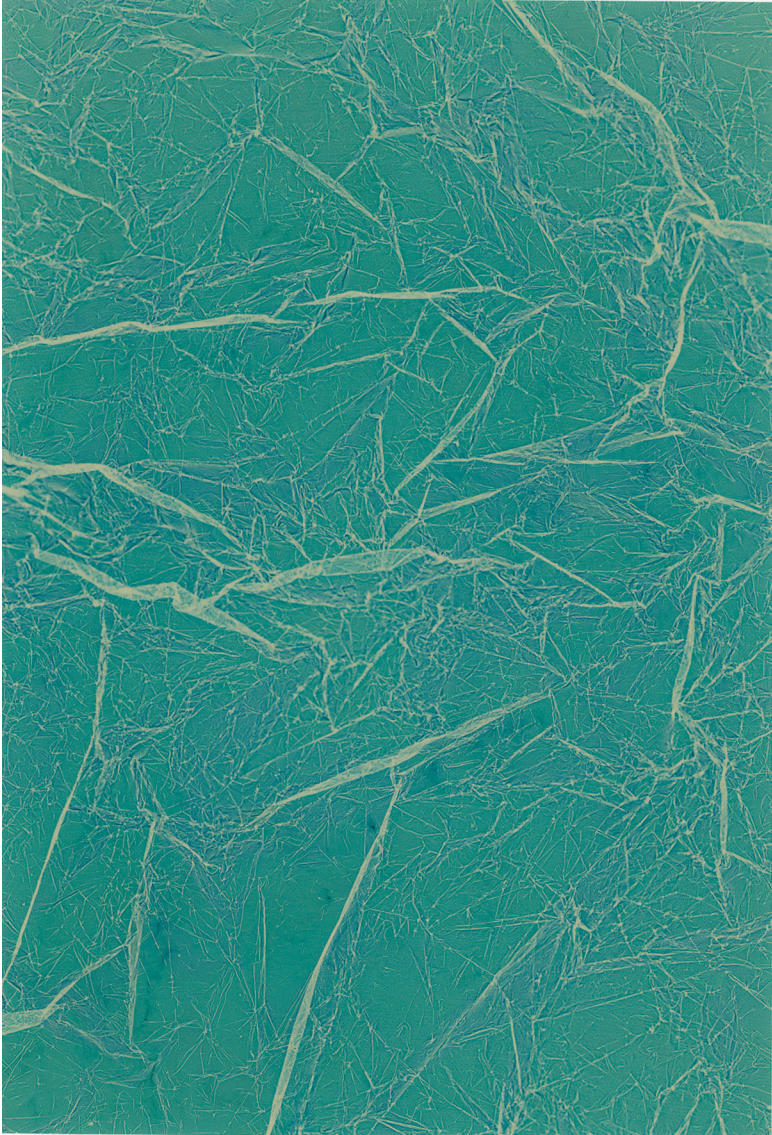


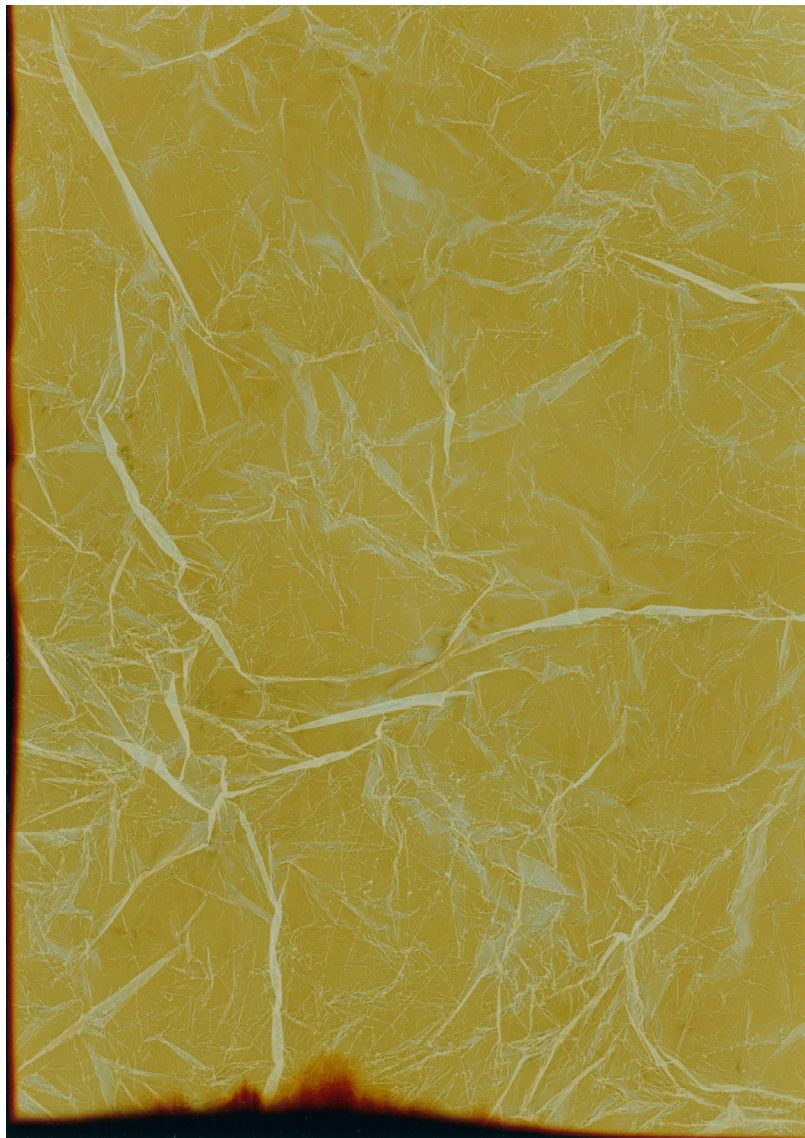


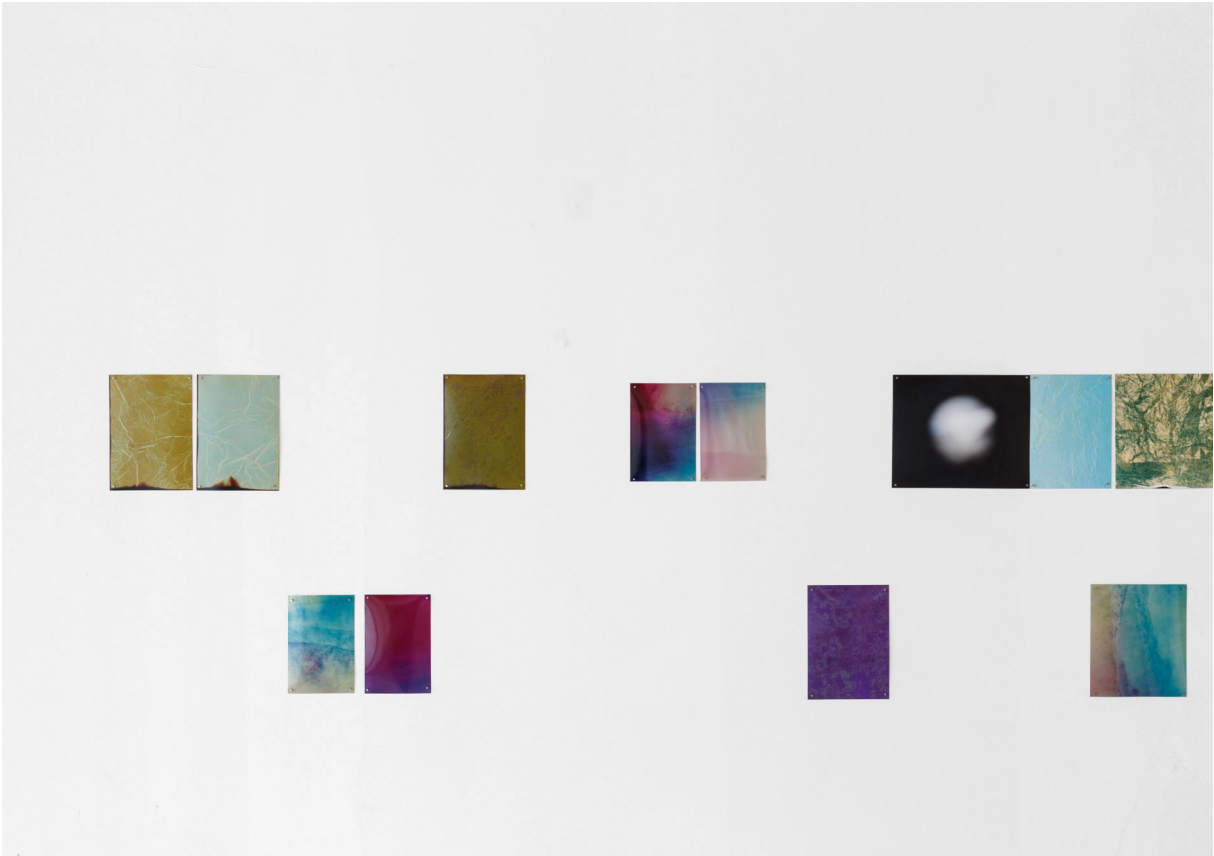












light as raw material.

Artists can play an important role in re-asserting light as central to photo-based processes. Experimental photography and camera-less photomedia practices remind us of the constructed nature of photography and its intrinsic link to light. Artists Susan Derges, Garry Fabian Miller and Gottfried Jäger incorporate light as a raw material in their work employing mainly analogue camera-less techniques, addressing the physical properties and metaphysical qualities of light while urging us to engage with the materiality of photomedia.

Susan Derges' and Garry Fabian Miller's respective practices are informed by their local landscape in south-west England. Known for their camera-less images which often take the form of unique Cibachrome⁴ photographic prints, both artists place emphasis on the emotional, spiritual and metaphysical possibilities of photomedia. According to Martin Barnes (2012, p.8) Derges and Fabian Miller 'highlight two contrasting yet overlapping approaches: a Continental European "Concrete" school of photography; and a Romantic, metaphysical tradition.'

Susan Derges' work deals with ideas around alchemy and the (often invisible) forces of nature. For her *River Taw*, *River Bovey* and *Shorelines* series Derges produced large scale photograms by submerging unexposed photographic paper *in situ*—in a river or at the seashore—at night, freezing the water's movement with the aid of flash. The abstract images maintain the natural tonal qualities of her subject matter and can thus be linked to a tradition of representation and abstraction.

Garry Fabian Miller explores expanded notions of light and time drawing inspiration from the countryside where he lives. Although the landscape informs his camera-less work, it does not feature in it; instead Fabian Miller uses the ethereal qualities of light to present an idea of what the landscape means to him. Like Derges, he works with light directly onto photographic paper, however his production process occurs exclusively in the darkroom, and his subject matter consists of non-representational elements of pure colour and form.

Gottfried Jäger is a German artist, theorist and founder of the Concrete Photography movement. Concrete Photography works must be non-objective and self-referential to the apparatuses of photomedia, bear no relation to reality and light should appear as an 'independent and self-referential, characteristic element' (Reese, 2005, p.143) of the work. Jäger is interested in the mechanical

4. The Cibachrome (also known as Ilfochrome or dye destruction) printing process was unique as it employed a colour positive-to-positive process. Sadly, Ilford discontinued production of Cibachrome materials in 2011.

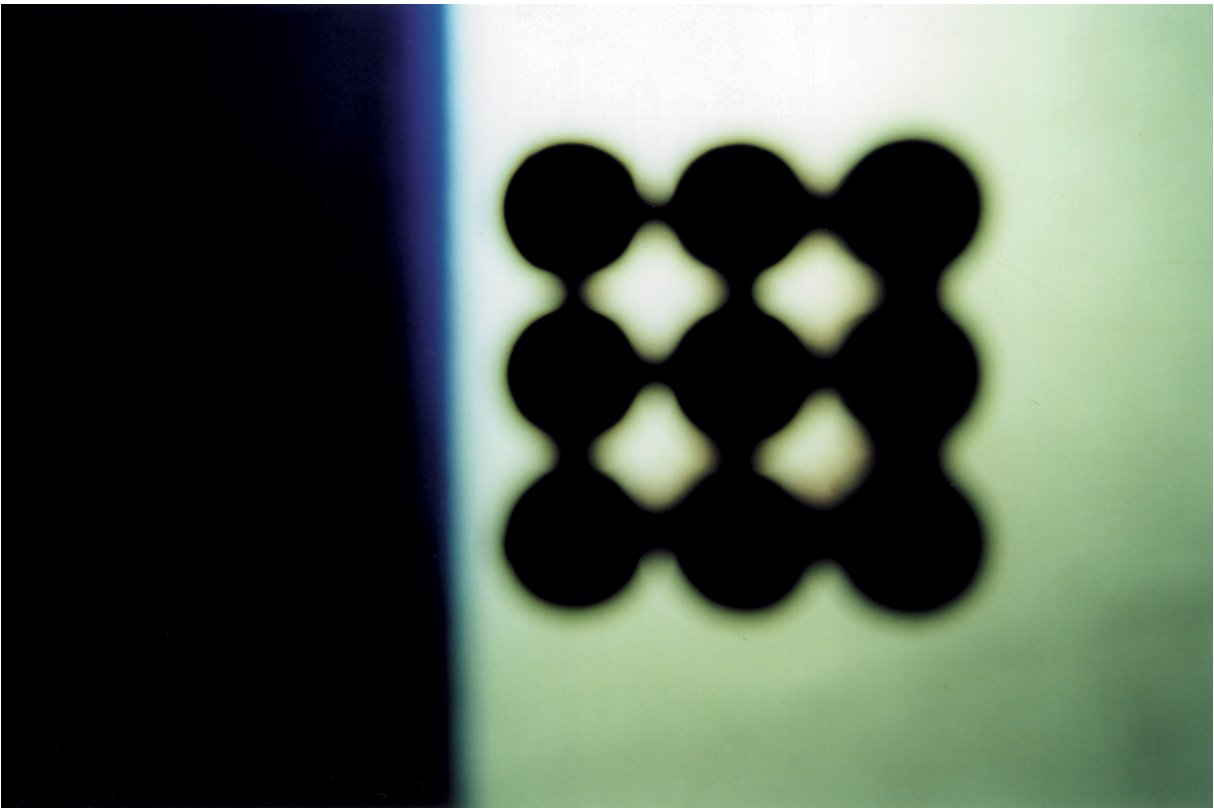
aspects of the apparatuses and processes of photomedia, and any metaphysical or emotional readings of the work are incidental.

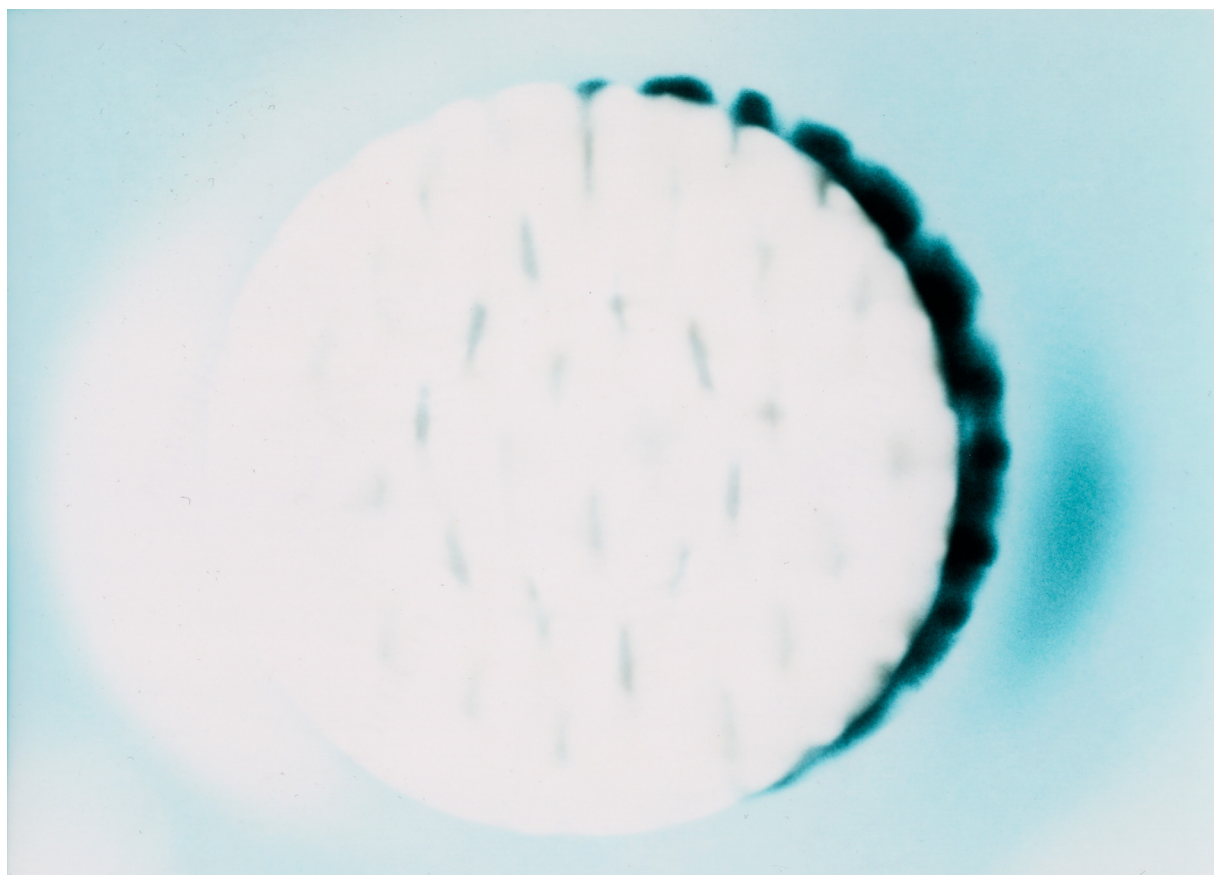
Jäger (2005a, p.15) insists that Concrete Photography works are 'pure photography: not abstractions of the real world, but rather concretions of the pictorial possibilities contained within photography.' The distinction between abstraction and concretion as 'different modes of perception and representation' (Jäger, 2005b) is central here. Where abstraction starts from a situation of complexity, it simplifies or minimises *deductively* to achieve an abstract result (ibid.). Derges' photograms are abstractions, as they simplify, but still represent elements from objective reality. In contrast, 'concretion' is an *inductive* process; it starts from an invisible idea that manifests into a presentation of that idea, employing media that makes no reference to anything outside of itself. Essentially, Concrete photomedia works 'are not represented, but presented, not reproduced, but produced.' (Jäger, 2005a, p.15) Fabian Miller's work is an example of concretion, reinstating the central role of light in photomedia; it is photography as light-writing.

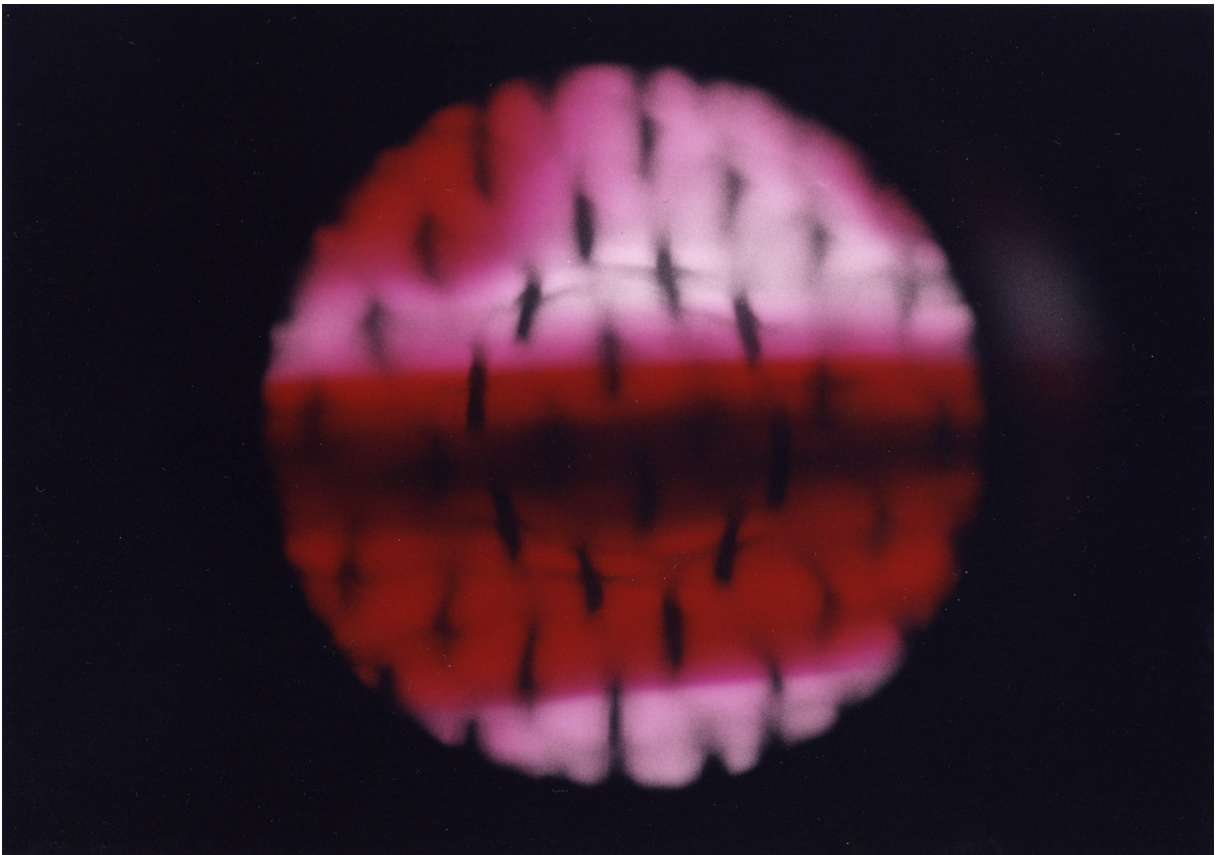
Like Jäger I consider photomedia to be a productive, as opposed to reproductive, process, in which an intuitive and experimental approach is a core component. However, like Derges and Fabian Miller I seek to connect my process to a more poetic and expressive tradition, where mechanical and chemical processes provide the means to explore concepts that transcend the concrete aspects of the medium. My work features a combination of representational and abstract photography in combination with concrete camera-less methods. I employ methods of abstraction and concretion separately, or in conjunction with each other, during production. I combine both approaches by disrupting photographic images during post-production through what I call 'darkroom interventions': in the darkroom during exposure of a negative image onto photographic paper I use coloured filters, transmissive objects, light sources or other light modifiers, to create a hybrid image produced partly in camera and partly in the darkroom.

I use photomedia foremost as an impressionistic rather than documentary tool, using the world around me to try to express something of my inner world. Vilém Flusser (1983) says the photographic *apparatus* is programmed for a particular outcome: a technically sound (sharp, well-focussed, with naturally rendered colour) representational image of the world. In the absence of discernible subject matter in a photo-object the viewer must reflect on the maker's production process and contemplate the (art)work as an object. Freed from representation, abstract and concrete imagery expands our focus from the objective and rational to more subjective, poetic and magical spheres.









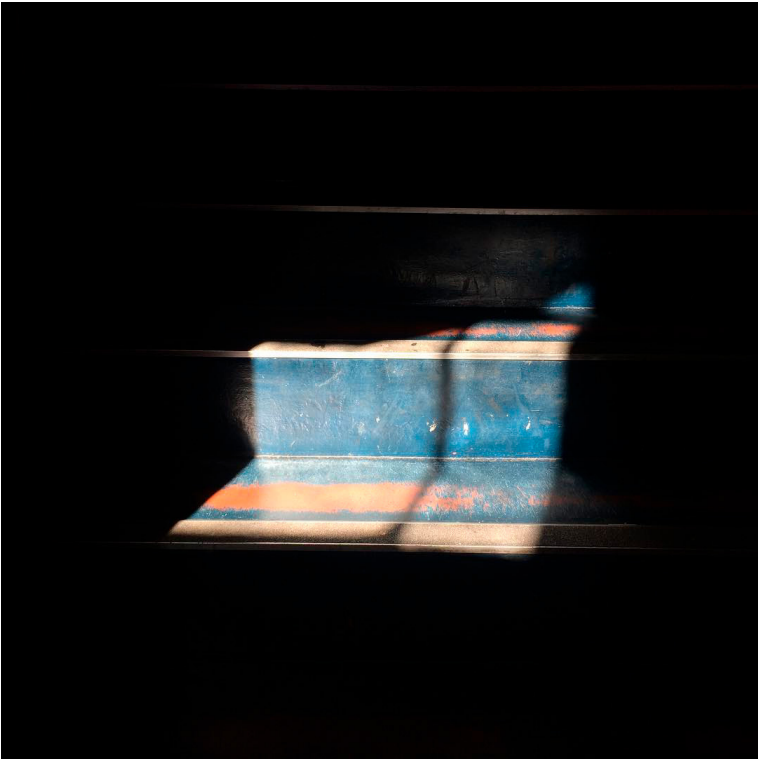




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It wasn't always the light that I was attuned to. At first it was composition within the camera's viewfinder, driven by a formalist tendency toward balance and harmony. During one of my early outings with a camera I remember being drawn to sunlight reflecting off surfaces. In one particular image I recall the dazzling effect of the sun as it reflected off metallic objects, the way it translated into a high contrast black and white image afterwards, looking *better* in the final photo than it had in real life. I've always loved it when a photograph didn't turn out as I expected. The element of surprise in photography remains a source of delight for me.





The bright and high contrast light throughout Australia—the country of my birth and residence for most of my life. In photos the shadows are black; no detail. The difference between sunlight and shadow, especially during the summer months, spans up to several exposure stops. Around the summer solstice the sun shines fiercely directly overhead—it stings my skin, I must wear sunglasses, I must wear sunscreen, I am reminded that too much light is dangerous for my pale skin.

The softness of light in The Netherlands, where I've resided since 2012. In the 1970's German artist, Joseph Beuys postulated that the *Zuiderzee* (now the *IJsselmeer* and *Markermeer*), the large bay in the country's north, acted as a giant reflector, bouncing light back into the atmosphere, creating the quality of light that captivated Dutch landscape painters of the so-called 'Golden Age'⁵. Even on the sunniest days I get good detail in the shadows in my photos. The sun doesn't come out often enough.

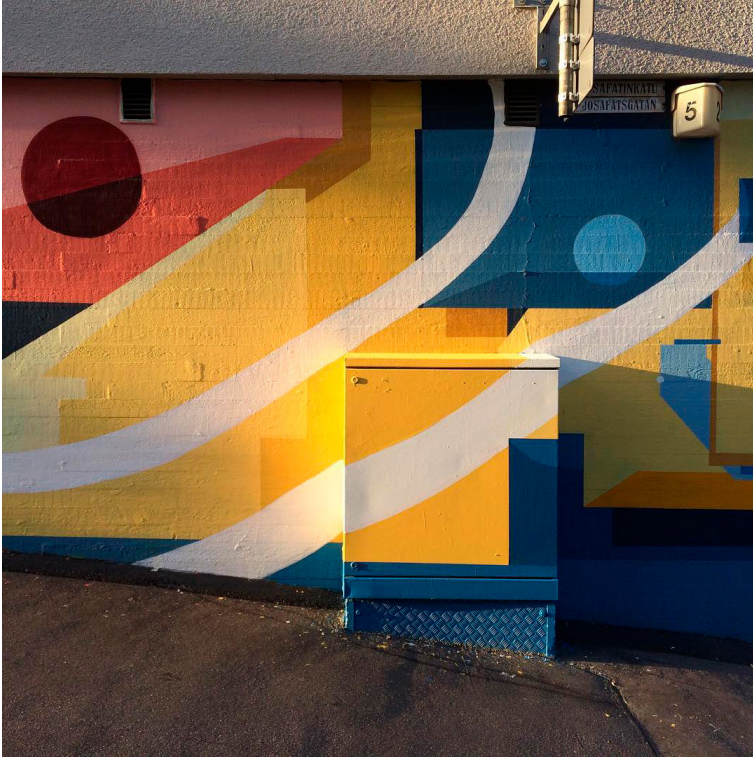
5.

However, Joseph Beuys believed that this radiance had been lost from the mid-1950's when a large part of the inland sea was lost to land reclamation activity. Beuys 'described the Zuyder Zee as a vast mirror of light. He called it the eye of Holland. And he concluded that by draining it to create polders, the Dutch had ended up blinding themselves.' (Dutch Light, 2020)

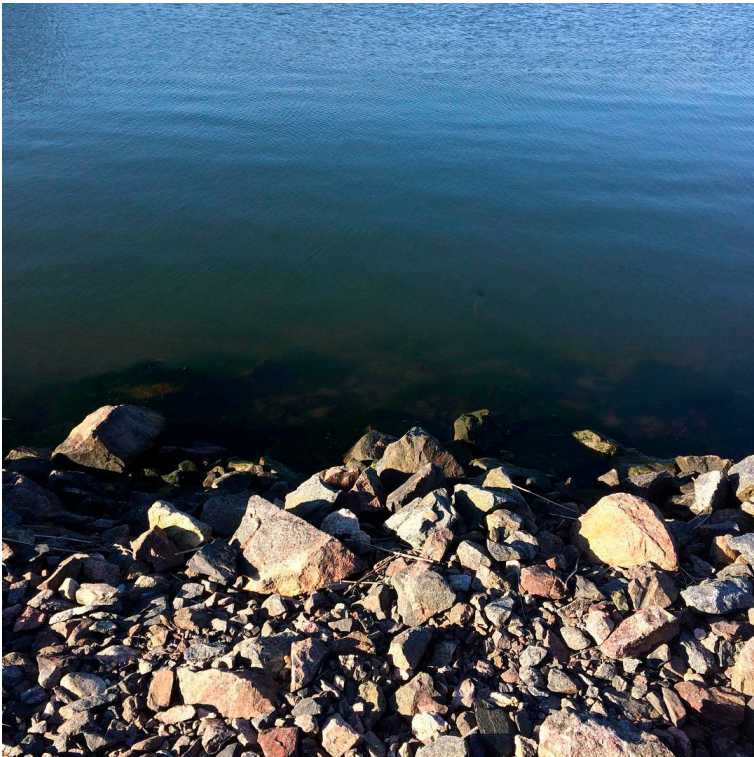








During a short visit to Finland in September 2017 I marvelled at the bright, clear, low light of the sun. The lack of atmospheric haze, the almost horizontal shadows during the late afternoon, the piercing brightness combined the contrast of the Australian sun with the low light of Northern Europe. It was something else.



I do wonder: did my fascination with light come first or did my fascination with photography lead to a fascination with light? When one grows accustomed to visually interpreting the world as a camera might, one begins to notice qualities of light differently. With practice comes nuance. As an architectural photographer—a professional activity of mine for over ten years—I have come to understand and predict how light interacts with physical structures; the way light *re*-presents three-dimensional reality in a two-dimensional image.

I am obsessed by light, by seeing it in all its manifestations—affected and mediated by its interaction with surfaces or particles—whether through its physical, optical, ethereal, psychological, life-giving or phenomenological properties. Is my fascination with light simply a case of the more one looks, the more one sees? Probably; at least in part. Sometimes I feel that through my work I'm trying to distil the essence of light, to find and expose that elusive thing at its core that makes it so magical.





magic in photomedia.

One need not look too hard to find references to magic in photomedia. From the outset photography has been linked to alchemy, the occult, the paranormal and supernatural. William Henry Fox Talbot (1839 cited in Barnes, 2012, p.9) described his discovery of the latent image as ‘a little bit of magic realised’. At the time ‘[t]he idea of images existing beyond the visible spectrum, unseen by the naked eye, was powerfully suggestive of supernatural forces.’ (Barnes, 2012, p.9)

In *Photography is Magic* Charlotte Cotton (2015, p.3) draws a parallel between the theatrical realm of close-up magic⁶ and what she calls ‘photographic magic’. She proposes that:

The connection of close-up magic to contemporary photography is in the idea that magic is something that happens in the viewers’ imaginations. ... Just as sleight of hand facilitates ... the magical experience that resides in the dynamic of our own imaginations, so too photography—when liberated from a pedestrian definition as the sum of its mechanics and materials, its chemistry and software—can spark the occurrence of magic in our minds.

I agree with Cotton’s assertion that magic is something that occurs in the viewer’s, but also the artist’s, imagination.

Something might be said to be magical when we don’t understand the mechanisms behind it, or when it produces a sense of wonder or moment of inspiration. Magician David Devant (1909 cited in Pringle 2006, p.50) defined magic as ‘the feeling that we have seen some natural law disturbed’. It’s what lies beyond or in-between, that which cannot be explained through language alone; the causes of which are not immediately apparent. It also finds a parallel in the concept of the sublime, which I explore further in the next chapter. It is this sense of magic that I hope to unveil in my own work.

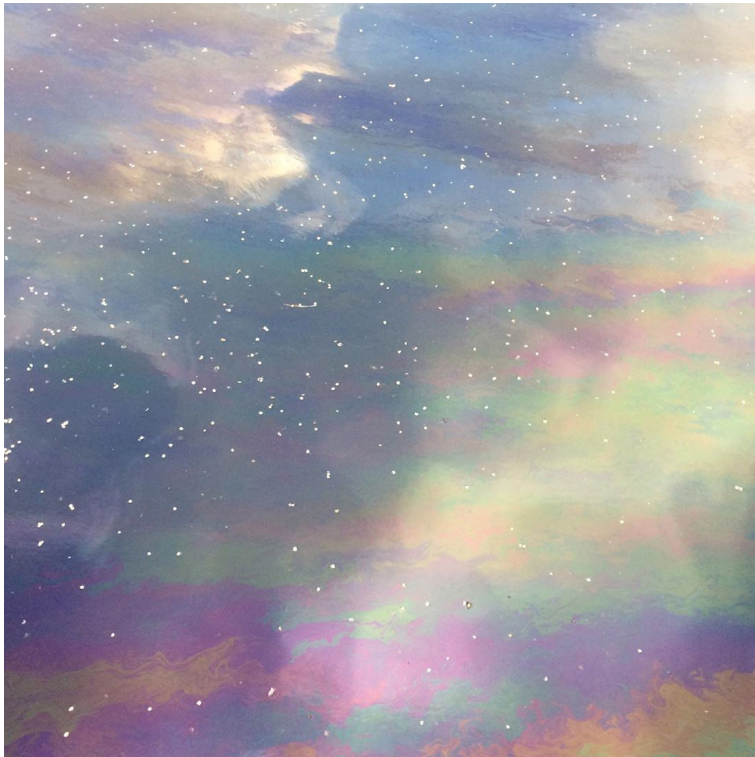
6. Sleight of hand tricks, using a deck of cards or a coin for example, performed in an intimate setting with the audience in close physical proximity to the magician.

7.

Link to view:

<https://vimeo.com/316164958>

Through the inherent trickery of photomedia (what you see is not always what you get!) I dabble in a form of magic which engages with naturally occurring phenomena, using representational and non-representational means—such as abstraction, concretion and other (temporal, spatial and optical) distortions. Sometimes I choose to reveal the mystery; such as in my experimental short film */// Pendulum*⁷ (2019) which features the slowed down movements of a triple pendulum. The kinetic apparatus responsible for the movement is hidden through the optical trick of polarisation, revealed only in the film's final seconds. At other times, the more performative aspects of my production process—photo-taking, analogue print production, camera-less experiments—constitute my own form of table-top magic: photomedia artworks can thus be seen as the remnant of a kind of performative magic. Like a close-up magician, my audience need not be privy to the trickery; I'm content for them to participate in the magic on their own terms. Imagination, after all, flourishes in the face of unknowns.











space

In this chapter, I broach the subject of space through concepts that relate to, but don't directly engage with photomedia; focusing instead on how my personal trajectories and obsessions—involving movement through (geographical and psychological) spaces—have formed the foundation of my process-driven artistic practice. My own concepts of journey, the 'natural' landscape, and art are interconnected: **a)** through their potential to inspire (*me* with) sublime experiences, **b)** as recurring motifs in my life and work, and **c)** in the historical use of the Claude Mirror, which I view as a metaphor for my own artistic methods. By recounting my personal journeys and probing cultural theories surrounding the sublime, tourism and photography, landscape, nature, and the Claude Mirror I have come to understand how these concepts inform my practice. What follows is an attempt on my part to understand why these subjects—which deal in concepts of space—matter to me. What got me started on this (artistic) journey in the first place?





towards a contemporary sublime.

Nineteenth century Romantic painters set out to evoke the feeling of the sublime through their dramatic depictions of the natural landscape, giving form to ideas previously put forth by Burke and Kant (The Art Story Foundation, 2020a/b). Today however, the term 'sublime' is out of vogue and 'no longer attracts serious theorising' (Lloyd, 2018, p.205), its use discouraged due perhaps to its problematic connotations: having been tainted through its association with sexist (Kant's and Burke's assertions that the sublime is masculine, the beautiful feminine), religious (the Romantic pantheistic view that the sublime in nature is divine), and political (appropriation of sublime aesthetics in Nazism and war rhetoric) ideologies.

In *Reclaiming Wonder: After the Sublime* Genevieve Lloyd (2018) attempts to renew the concept of the sublime through the lens of wonder. However, wonder falls short of the sense of awe and terror which coexist within the sublime. Anthropogenic climate change, and the consequent threat of human extinction, might be viewed as the ultimate manifestation of a contemporary sublime. Timothy Morton (2011, p.217) approaches this idea through his term 'hyperobjects', suggesting that we need a more '*speculative* sublime' that steps beyond an anthropocentric understanding of the concept, to one that also incorporates nonhuman entities.

Is there a word that can supersede the sublime? Is there a non-gendered, secular and apolitical (or at least progressive) contemporary equivalent; or has the concept itself become redundant? I don't think it has. I agree when Lloyd (2018, p.205) says, 'the idea of a form of wonder that reaches for the unattainable continues to fascinate and attract.' Perhaps, the inability to settle on an all-encompassing term exposes the limits of language. For me, this is the space where art flourishes. In my practice, I am increasingly obsessed with capturing the unseen, what lies beneath, in exposing hidden systems and layers of meaning. I am looking for a way to translate a sense of a secular, ungendered and contemporary sublime through my process and the work I produce. My art practice sees me on a quest to find it wherever I am, the irony being that I never do: the art is the search, the wish to grasp and contain it; and the perpetual failure to do so.





a tale of two journeys / part I: journeys through space.

I tend to take photographs in *other* places, in spaces away from my home space—elsewhere. Like most people who take photographs, I am driven by a desire to preserve (through the action of light) a particular moment (located in space and time); to possess an image that will take my mind back to that moment, person or feeling. *Taking* a photograph is, after all, a form of possession. I seek to prolong that moment, to extend the journey into the process of artistic production through a process of what I call ‘sustained exposure’. Through this notion—which I look at more closely in the next chapter—I investigate how images can give a sense of the psychological and emotional aspects of journey, through a combination of representational and non-representational imagery, camera-based and camera-less methods. Can I *make* work that looks like the *feeling* of going or being elsewhere?

Journey has been a part of my life from before I was born. My parents immigrated to Australia from Italy as children, riding the wave of 1960’s post-war mass migration. In Australia, if you’re of British or Indigenous⁸ descent you’re generally considered ‘Australian’; otherwise first-generation Aussies, such as myself, were often classified according to the country our parents came from. Culturally, I do feel Australian, yet have never been given licence to completely identify as such. Possibly as a result of this, a feeling of otherness has permeated my existence—being both and neither simultaneously, not ever feeling one or the other.

Throughout my childhood we went on family holidays reasonably often. Maybe I caught the travel bug then; or perhaps it was that growing up in Australia I had a sense that all the ‘good stuff’ was happening *very* far away. I now realise that this is the cultural cringe⁹, a particularly Australian malaise, in full effect. Australia is geographically situated in the Asia-Pacific region but, despite changing attitudes, Britain still maintains cultural and political hegemony, in spite of population diversification through multiculturalism and the overturning of the *terra nullius*¹⁰ doctrine. Today, this Anglo privileging persists in education, where high schools continue to privilege texts from Britain and North America (Davies, Truman and Buzacott, 2020); in politics, where in 2018 less than nine percent of serving Federal parliamentarians had a non-English speaking background (Tasevski); and in the media, where 82.7 percent of the entertainment and media workforce spoke only English at home in 2016 (PwC Australia).

8. While it is an indisputable fact that persons of Indigenous heritage are Australian—as well as the rightful custodians and owners of the land—Indigenous Australians do not enjoy the same privileges as Anglo-Celtic Australians and remain the country’s most disadvantaged community (AFP News Agency, 2019). Indigenous Australians only received the right to vote in 1962 and have a significantly lower life expectancy than non-Indigenous Australians.

9. Cultural cringe: ‘Originally *Australian* a national attitude characterized by deference to the cultural achievements of other societies’ (Oxford English Dictionary, 2020)

10. The 1992 *Mabo v Queensland (No 2)* Australian high court ruling ‘altered the foundation of land law in Australia by overturning the doctrine of *terra nullius* (land belonging to no-one) on which British claims to possession of Australia were based. This recognition inserted the legal doctrine of native title into Australian law. The judgments of the High Court in the *Mabo* case recognised the traditional rights of the Meriam people to their islands in the eastern Torres Strait. The Court also held that native title existed for all Indigenous people in Australia prior to the establishment of the British Colony of New South Wales in 1788. In recognising that Indigenous people in Australia had a prior title to land taken by the Crown since Cook’s declaration of possession in 1770, the Court held that this title exists today in any portion of land where it has not legally been extinguished.’ (AIATSIS Research, 2008)

Whatever the impetus, visiting the places I'd learnt about, craving the opportunity to get out of my suburban bubble—was an enormous priority for me. I wanted to see the world, and the world was *elsewhere*.

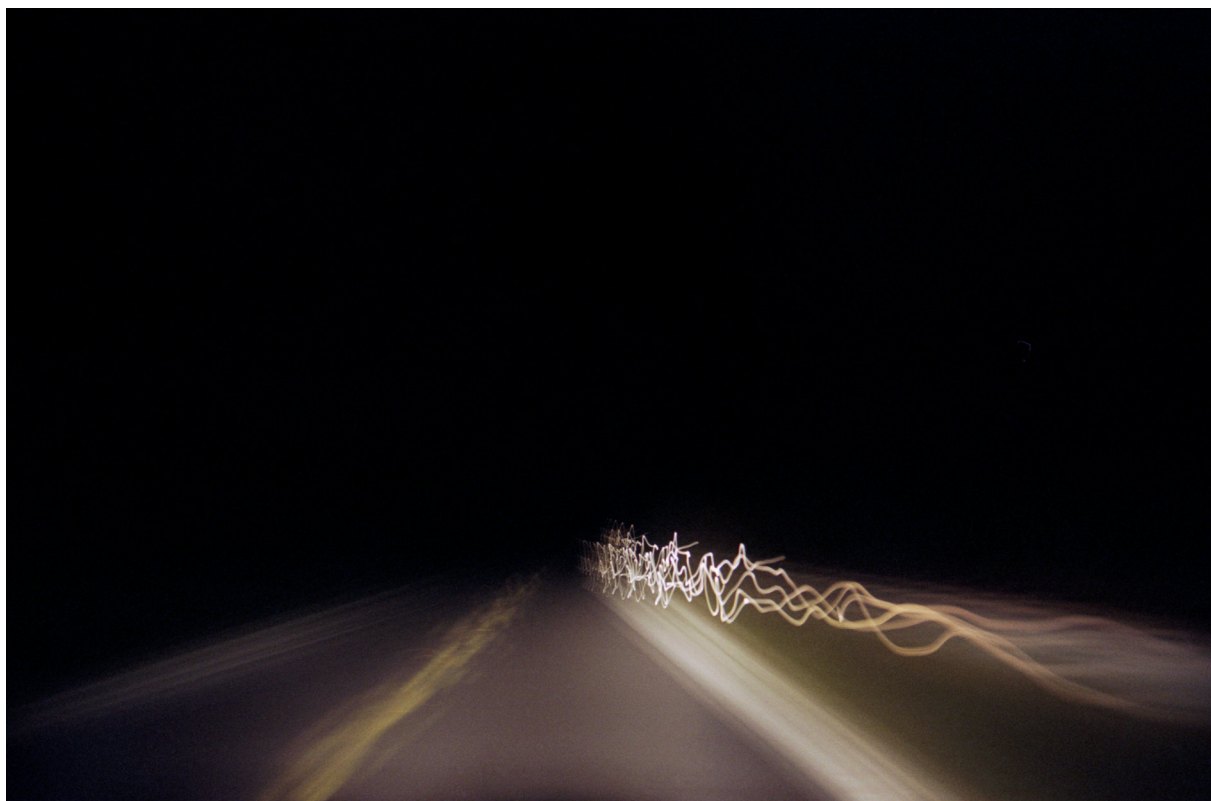
In 2012 I relocated from my native Melbourne to Amsterdam, The Netherlands. My grandparents had left their motherland in pursuit of a better life; I left mine because I... wanted to. I am aware that my choices have been facilitated by some privilege: I am a white, middle-class, educated, cisgender female who has had a stable upbringing. My experience of journey bears little relation to that of 'those other tourists— ... refugees, immigrants, and other displaced people' (Lippard in MacCannell, 2013, p.xi); I *choose* to travel. I admit to an internal struggle at times, in which I question if my art, which deals in concepts of journey, fails to address the wider socio-political issues surrounding mobility, and is merely a self-indulgence as a result. This is a gap I would like to address...

In 2001 I spent eleven months working and travelling throughout the United States. This trip marked a turning point in my life and has informed my relationship to journey since. It was a travel experience outside of mass tourism; travel as coming-of-age, as a liminoid¹¹ experience, and a time when my camera was my loyal companion. I shot more than seventy rolls of film on that trip; and ironically, one of the few times I didn't have my camera with me was while witnessing the events of 9/11 in New York City. I remember being struck by the fact that I had seen the uncontrolled demolition of a building—the collapse of the first World Trade Center tower—in *real* life: unmediated; not through a camera viewfinder or television screen, which might have subdued the sheer gravity—the *realness*—of this incomprehensible event. Sometimes, one needs to simply exist in the moment rather than try to capture it.

11.

'[Victor] Turner has examined the concept of liminality, the apartness characteristic of the central period of a ritual, and suggested that it is most appropriate for truly religious, or societally comprehensive phenomena, whereas the analogous phenomena in secular rituals and leisure activities may be called liminoid.' (Turner, 1977 cited in Graburn, 1985, p.14)















tourism + its relationship to photography.

The history of tourism and photography are inextricably linked. John Urry and Jonas Larsen (2011, p.14) mark 1840 as:

... one of those remarkable moments when the world seems to shift and new patterns of relationships become irreversibly established. ... [It] is the moment when the “tourist gaze”, that peculiar combining together of the means of collective travel, the desire for travel and the techniques of photographic reproduction, becomes a core component of western modernity.

In 1839 Talbot and Daguerre announced their photographic inventions, the first ocean steamship and stagecoach services began, the first railway timetable produced and in 1841 Thomas Cook organised the first package tour. (ibid.)

However, I argue that photography and tourism truly cemented their symbiotic relationship in 1888, when Kodak founder George Eastman released the *Kodak No. 1*, a handheld box camera. Significantly, in 1878 Charles Harper Bennett discovered that heating gelatine-silver bromide emulsion dramatically increased its sensitivity to light, allowing for faster exposure times and paving the way for the handheld snapshot. In 1881 he demonstrated this discovery, in appalling fashion, by staging and taking a photo of a standing mule the moment its head was blown off by dynamite! (Hughes, 2012, p.91)

Together with speed and portability, an equally significant aspect of this innovation was Kodak's separation of the picture-taking moment from the ‘smelly and difficult business’ of film development and printing—which would now be done at the factory (Wells, 2000, p.141); Kodak's slogan was ‘You press the button, we do the rest’. The *Kodak No. 1* was sold pre-loaded with recently invented roll film (replacing glass plate negatives), and once the film was used up, the entire camera had to be sent back to the factory for unloading, processing and reloading. The full democratisation of photography came in 1900 when the box *Brownie* camera was launched and sold for US\$1 (where the *Kodak No. 1* had sold for US\$25). Cameras were now affordable for ‘all but the poorest’ (ibid., p.143), and by 1905 a third of American households owned one (Thompson, 2014). This was the era of first-wave feminism and women now enjoyed *some* greater independence. Although largely absent from photography's recorded histories women played active roles in photography from its inception¹². Kodak capitalised on the changing times, appealing to

12.

Recommended further reading/viewing:

– *Women in Photography: A Story Still Being Written* (Oosterhoff, 2017)

– *Kodak Girl: From the Martha Cooper Collection* (Jacob, Nordström and West, 2011)

– *Before the Kodak Girl: Women in Nineteenth-Century Photography* (Felt, 2019)

this hitherto untapped market, through their Kodak Girl advertising mascot. Cameras were now simple enough (for a woman!) to use, ideal for capturing family snapshots and the perfect travel companion. (Oosterhoff, 2017) These marketing and technological developments brought photography out of the studio and into the world. The camera could travel easily; and travel the camera did...













I feel like the Kodak Girl; just a century later.









I believe in the transformative potential of travel and it remains an important part of my life. However, given the current ecological crisis I believe I have a moral obligation to engage in it conscientiously. What will become of wanderlust in the face of anthropogenic climate change? Are we fated to become post-tourists: those virtual nomads who 'travel' to other places through screen-based media? Questions like these are creeping into the public consciousness inviting us to (in the parlance of Australian government travel advisories) *reconsider (y)our need to travel*.*



13.
April 2020

*At the time of redrafting¹³—some weeks after writing the previous paragraph—non-essential travel is all but prohibited. In an unexpected turn of events it seems we were fated to become post-tourists after all, and sooner than expected; not in response to the climate emergency, but to a different and faster-moving threat altogether: the COVID-19 pandemic. Right now, I can't really travel elsewhere, nor can I access a darkroom for the foreseeable future. Faced with this new (albeit temporary) reality, deprived of my usual journeys through space and journeys through process (see next chapter), I ask myself: how can I make work that engages with *this* here, *this* now?





landscape + nature as cultural constructs.

The term landscape ‘dates from seventeenth-century Dutch painterly practices’ (Wells, 2000, p.295). This makes sense to me; The Netherlands has manipulated—reclaimed, diverted, dammed—land and water to submit to its own demands for centuries. Although a source of cultural pride, I can't help but view it as a tragedy; an insidious artificiality permeates any experience I have in the landscape here. Inherent in this reaction are certain ideas of nature I subscribe to. My yearning for wilderness, my wanderlust and even my interest in (the craft of) analogue photomedia processes can be traced to a deeper aspiration for authenticity, some elusive yet essential (and quite possibly non-existent) truth. Dean MacCannell claims that tourism is a secular form of pilgrimage, ‘a modern form of the essentially religious quest for authenticity.’ (Cohen, 1979, p.187) Indeed, at its core, my quest (as a traveller and artist) is essentially a spiritual one.

According to Wells (2000, p.296):

Landscape can be defined as vistas which encompass both nature and the changes which humans have effected in the natural. ... By the nineteenth century, 'landscape' also stood as an antidote for the visual and social consequences of industrialisation, offering a view of nature as therapeutic, a pastoral release from commerce and industry. Art movements such as Romanticism and Pictorialism reflected such changing attitudes: ignoring ways in which the industrial actually impacted on the visual environment, Romanticism in painting reified the rural idyll.

For Timothy Morton (2016) ‘the concept of Nature is a sort of anthropocentrically scaled concept, designed for humans, ... it separates the human from the non-human world’. He argues that everything outside of human social space:

... is Nature, and it's supposed to be somewhere else, other than this human space that we like to think of as exclusively human ... In other words, it's in my DNA, it's under the pavement, it's over there, over yonder ... Behind the mountain range, somewhere. (ibid.)

During research for this thesis I've come to learn that landscape and nature are in fact cultural constructs; thereby shattering the foundation on which I have built my own ideas of nature. In a way, I feel I've lost something; yet, when I look back at my photographs over the years, I intuited it somehow. In my landscape photographs there is often a clue to the human—to the scaping of land—even though human bodies rarely feature in them. I seek to simultaneously distil a personal experience of the Romantic sublime and—through the inclusion of a well-worn path,

a telegraph pole, a cable car or a complete representational ‘disruption’ of subject matter through abstraction and concretion—expose the inauthenticity of the ‘nature’ I situate myself in. The landscape in my photographs is a symbol of my *idea* of nature; yet I know it is a tamed, domesticated and manageable version of the real thing. All this time nature did feel like something over *there*, an ‘other’, a place I went to; but it’s the only version I’ve ever known. Maybe nature is the world before the Anthropocene, and the stuff that will remain in a posthuman world: the rocks, the waves, the sun and its light.















For centuries specular reflection was the faithful metaphor for truth; the mirror, its reflective surface mimicking whatever is placed in front of it, was the universal expression of the belief that truth is anchored in visual resemblance.

The photograph was received as the technologically advanced extension of the mirror, expanding the notion of truth for the age of the machine. The era of mass production required a way of establishing the authenticity of the copy not by reference to an original but by the internal logic of technological reproduction.

For its early practitioners, photography was a mirror with memory, prolonging and extending the instant of looking, overcoming by mechanical means the fickle and fleeting mirror image.

Understood as a reflection, photography was the crowning achievement of the philosophy of idealism that took light as the source of eternal wisdom, and reflection as the primary model of knowing the world.

—Rodolphe Gasché

the claudes mirror as metaphor.

The Claude Mirror¹⁴ was a pre-photographic optical device used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by artists and tourists to frame and simplify the visual qualities of the landscape; to make things look *better* than they did in real life. Named after French artist Claude Lorrain for the way its reflections resembled the luminous qualities of his landscape paintings, it took the form of a pocket-sized oval- or rectangular-shaped black-tinted convex mirror, sometimes enclosed in a fold-out case (see Figure 1). A closely related device, Claude Glasses were a set of circular coloured transparent filters designed to be looked *through* toward the landscape (see Figure 2).

To use the Claude Mirror one turned their back on the vista, viewing its reflection in the instrument. The mirror's convex shape compressed the landscape and its black surface softened and simplified the scene—fine details were lost, tonal ranges limited; an effect mimicked in a smart phone screen's reflection with the display off. The similarities to modern technologies don't stop there; Jen Rose Smith (2017) and Robert Willim (2013) liken the Claude Mirror and Glasses to social media platforms like Instagram which filter and mediate reality in a similar way.

The Claude Mirror can be viewed as a metaphor for the artifice of sightseeing. The unthinking, unengaged tourist observes vistas or sites mediated through an apparatus (camera) or constructed cultural idea; visiting a place just to 'see' it, taking a family snapshot or selfie for posterity, and moving on. The image from the camera, or Claude Mirror alike, *becomes* the memory; bypassing the embodied experience of actually *being there*. What matters most is the image, not the moment.

These devices came into fashion when Romantic concepts of the landscape, the sublime and the picturesque were popular in Europe; and although they pre-date the invention of photography, are nonetheless linked to the photographic gaze. Views of the daguerrotype—with its mirror-like surface—were described as 'nearly the same as that of views taken by reflection in a black mirror' (Robison, 1839 cited in Maillet, 2004, p. 177). Photography historians 'saw in the manipulation of the Claude mirror a foundational gesture of photography — namely, framing as a compositional feature' (Maillet, 2004, p.177).

In my recent work (which forms the basis of my graduation project) I explore the abovementioned ideas which intertwine my interests in optical phenomena, journey and the landscape. Through my photographs I employ abstraction as a method to address the constructed nature of

14.

It has also been referred to as the Claude Glass, Lorrain Mirror, Lorrain Glass, Claude Lorrain Mirror or Black Mirror.

reality inherent in photomedia's apparatuses and processes, and our culturally constructed concepts of nature and truth. I use photomedia as a way to mediate my surroundings and experiences in the same way that users of the Claude Mirror mediated their experience of the landscape. Sometimes I place prisms, or other optical modifiers, in front of the lens during in-camera exposure, distorting, fragmenting and abstracting the view. Later, I will subject some of these images to a second iteration of mediation through 'darkroom interventions'—such as light painting, lenticular distortions or dodging techniques using coloured filters—extending the *time-space* of the image beyond the moment of in-camera exposure (which I discuss in detail in the 'Time' chapter). No matter which methods I employ, I seek to expose process and the constructed nature of image-making, while simultaneously allowing for poetic expression (Rushton, 2020). Photomedia can not only disguise, but also highlight its own implicit failure to represent reality objectively. I seek to transcend this problem by acknowledging the fact that the representation of truth in photomedia is *always* subjective; as Timothy Morton (2009, p.116) says: 'Objectified subjectivity becomes the content and form of art.' There is a paradox at play here—my work is both sincere in its quest for authenticity and a contemporary sublime, and ironic, knowing that my goals are ultimately unattainable.

Figure 1. English 18th century Claude mirror.
© Science Museum Group,
used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 /
Minor alterations from original

Figure 2. Early 19th century set
of Claude glasses.
© Science Museum Group,
used under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 /
Minor alterations from original







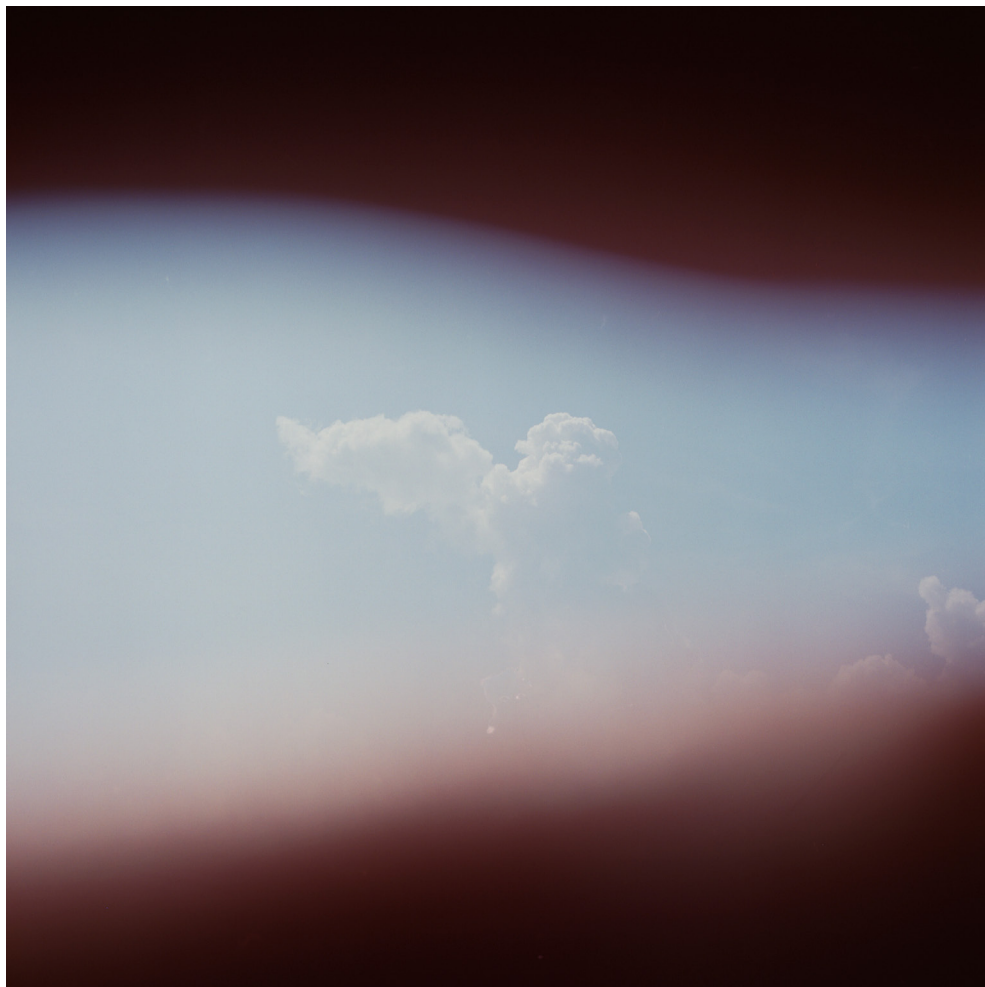


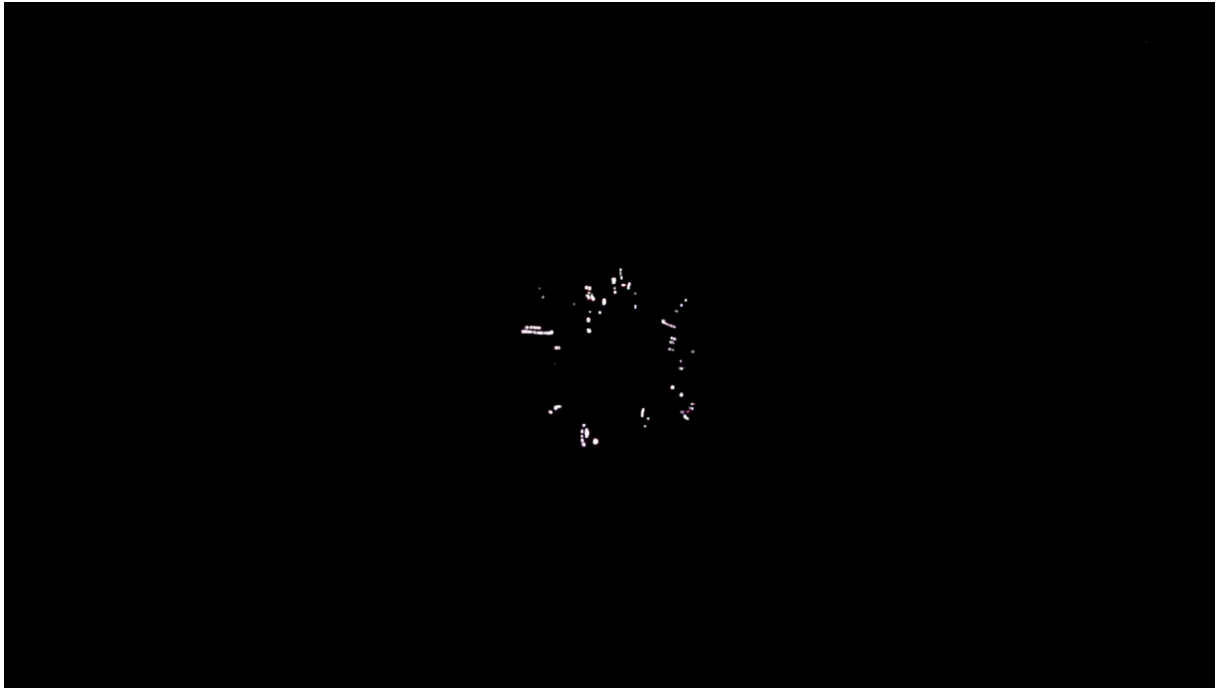












NTRNL RFLCTN (2020)—a moving image piece I recently produced and am expanding on at the time of writing—features slow motion sequences of streetlamp reflections on a water surface at night. The result is abstract, achieved through tight cropping, high contrast imagery and temporal distortion. It's difficult to make out if the subject matter is naturally occurring or digitally generated—I like this. Here the invisible black water surface has associations with that of the *Claude Mirror*.



time

a tale of two journeys / part II: journeys through process.

Traditionally, exposure time in photography has been defined as the temporal gap between the shutter opening and closing: when a photograph is ‘taken’. In my practice, I propose an alternative to this view; offering a counterpoint to Henri Cartier-Bresson’s ‘decisive moment’. Taking the photograph is just one part of my process; I consider the time the entire process takes—from the undertaking of a journey to the production of the final print—as the true exposure time in my work. This durational aspect feels important and speaks to the passage of time, as well as a passage *from, to* and *through* the physical and psychological spaces I discussed in the preceding chapter.

In a sense, I undertake two journeys in my practice. Firstly, the real-world physical journey, as a traveller, provides the conditions in which I often feel compelled to take photographs. Secondly, I undertake a journey-through-process during the production phase, which occurs mainly in the darkroom. Here my enduring fascination with light finds another form. This is a space in which I *make*, rather than *take* a photograph; a space for play, experimentation and thinking-through-making. As in my physical journeys there are comparable contemplative, magical and sublime moments here too.

A photograph not only captures a ‘moment’ in time, it *takes* time; and time creates the conditions for contemplation. Taking a photograph can in itself be a contemplative act—I choose what to frame, when to capture it and which images make the final cut. In contrast to digital workflows, analogue photomedia processes take *more* time—time to reveal the latent image, to develop the film, to produce a print. The physicality of *making* is important to me. Time spent making ‘with my hands’ is time I am aware of, time that I can track. I believe this use of the body in artistic production promotes awareness of the passing of time and the conditions for a contemplative practice.



beyond the decisive moment.

Photomedia practices are temporal in nature. Even though time is embedded into its DNA, in photography theory not all durations are created equal. Uriel Orlow (1999, p.178) highlights this bias: ‘Generally, the photograph is thought to extract a moment from the flux of time ... and thus to have no duration of its own.’ The only time that matters is the instance of in-camera exposure; and consequently, the processes embodied in a photographic object—such as the time of the latent image, processing, editing, post-production and gazing—have no temporal currency.

The notion that the only significant moment occurs in the snapshot perhaps saw its pinnacle in Cartier-Bresson’s concept of the ‘decisive moment’, which he presented in his 1952 book of the same name¹⁵. Featuring his writings and photographs, *The Decisive Moment* has been enormously influential; and has made him, deservedly, an icon of photojournalism and street photography. For Cartier-Bresson (1952 cited in O’Hagan, 2014) ‘[p]hotography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organisation of forms which give that event its proper expression.’ John Berger (2013, p.45) says, ‘[t]he photographic moment for Cartier-Bresson is an instant, a fraction of a second, and he stalks that instant as though it were a wild animal.’

Today, the notion of the ‘decisive moment’ feels decidedly outdated; it:

... no longer holds sway as it once did; staged photography, conceptual strategies and digitally manipulated images have all but rendered it old-fashioned except to purists, photojournalists and street photographers. (O’Hagan, 2014)

Furthermore, I contend that Cartier-Bresson’s view presupposes that the only significant time that exists within an image is the moment a photograph is taken, thereby failing to account for a whole range of temporal processes and *concepts* of time that fall outside of this narrow timespan. Although not all of these moments are visible, they still contribute to the *time-space* of an image-object. As Berger (2013, p.19) eloquently states, ‘[t]he true content of a photograph is invisible, for it derives from a play, not with form, but with time’; and the space for play is potentially limitless when we allow for a broader understanding of time.

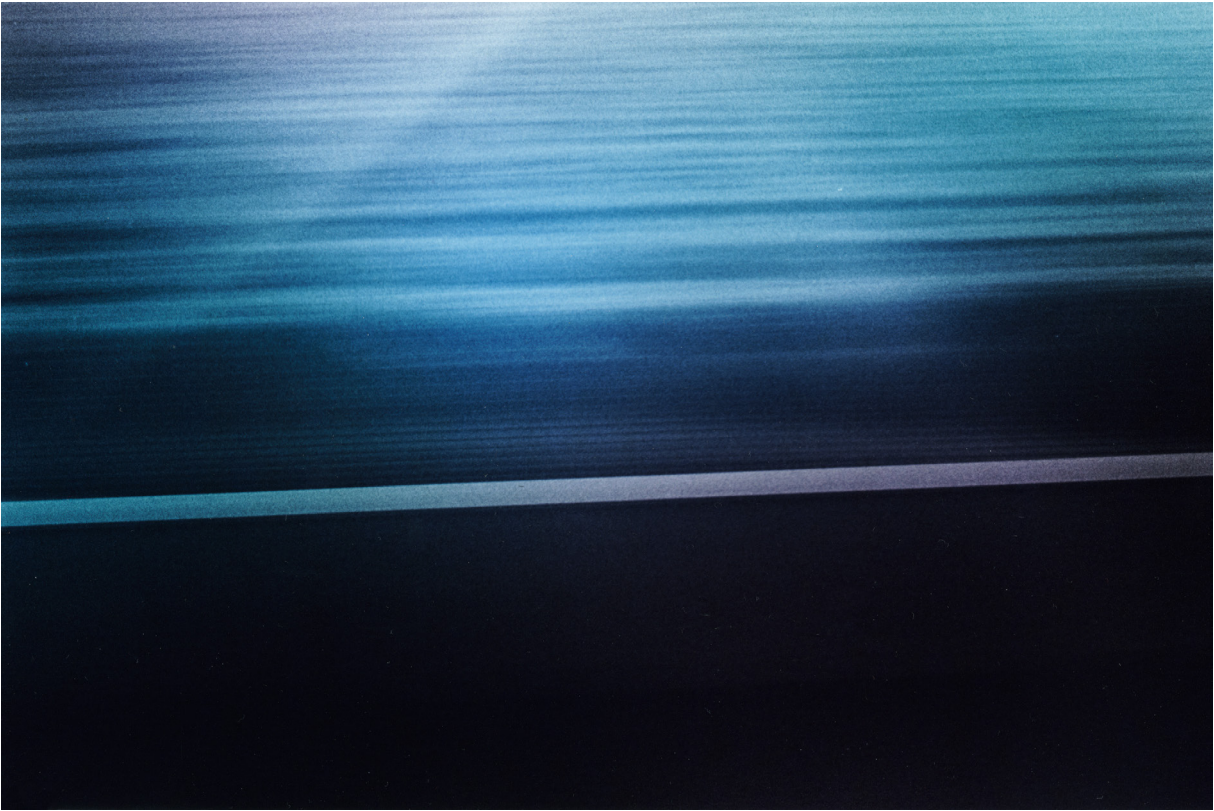
Thierry de Duve (1978, p.113) differentiates between photography taken as *snapshot*—an event or ‘frozen gestalt that conveys very little ... of the fluency of things happening in real life’—or as *time exposure*—a picture

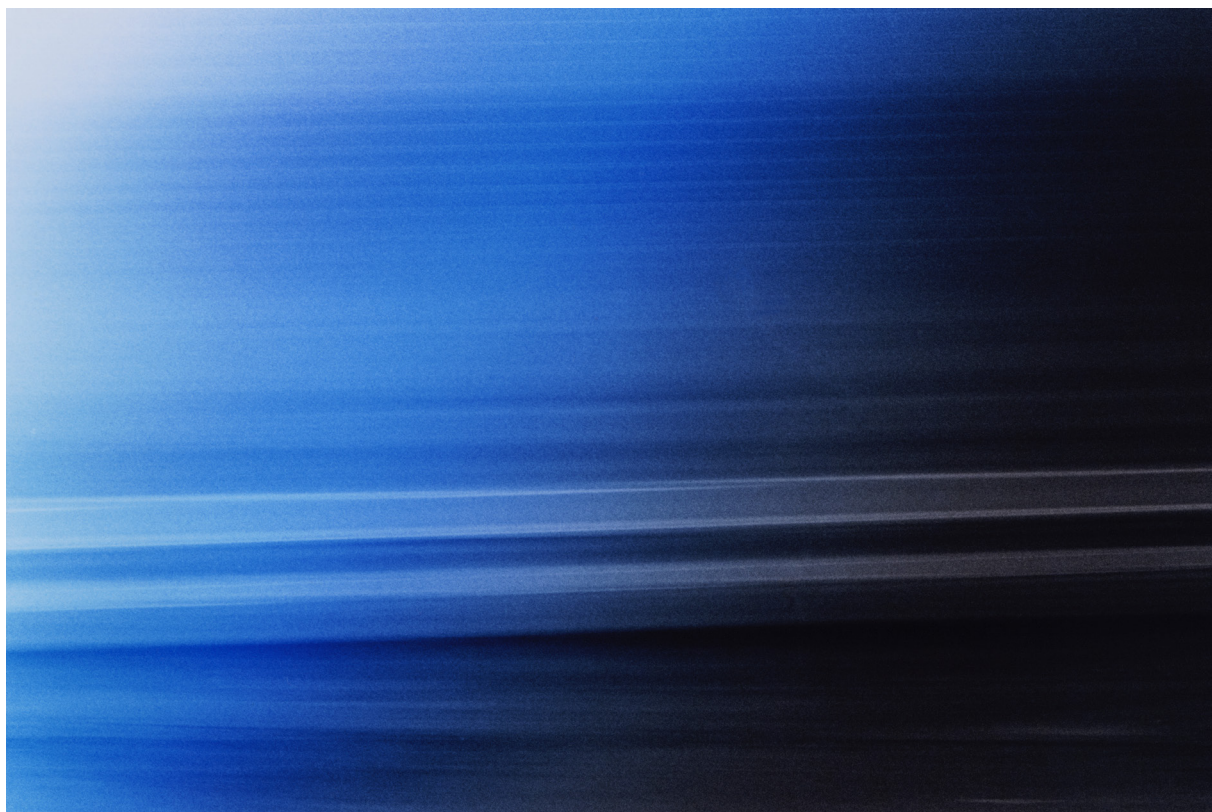
15.

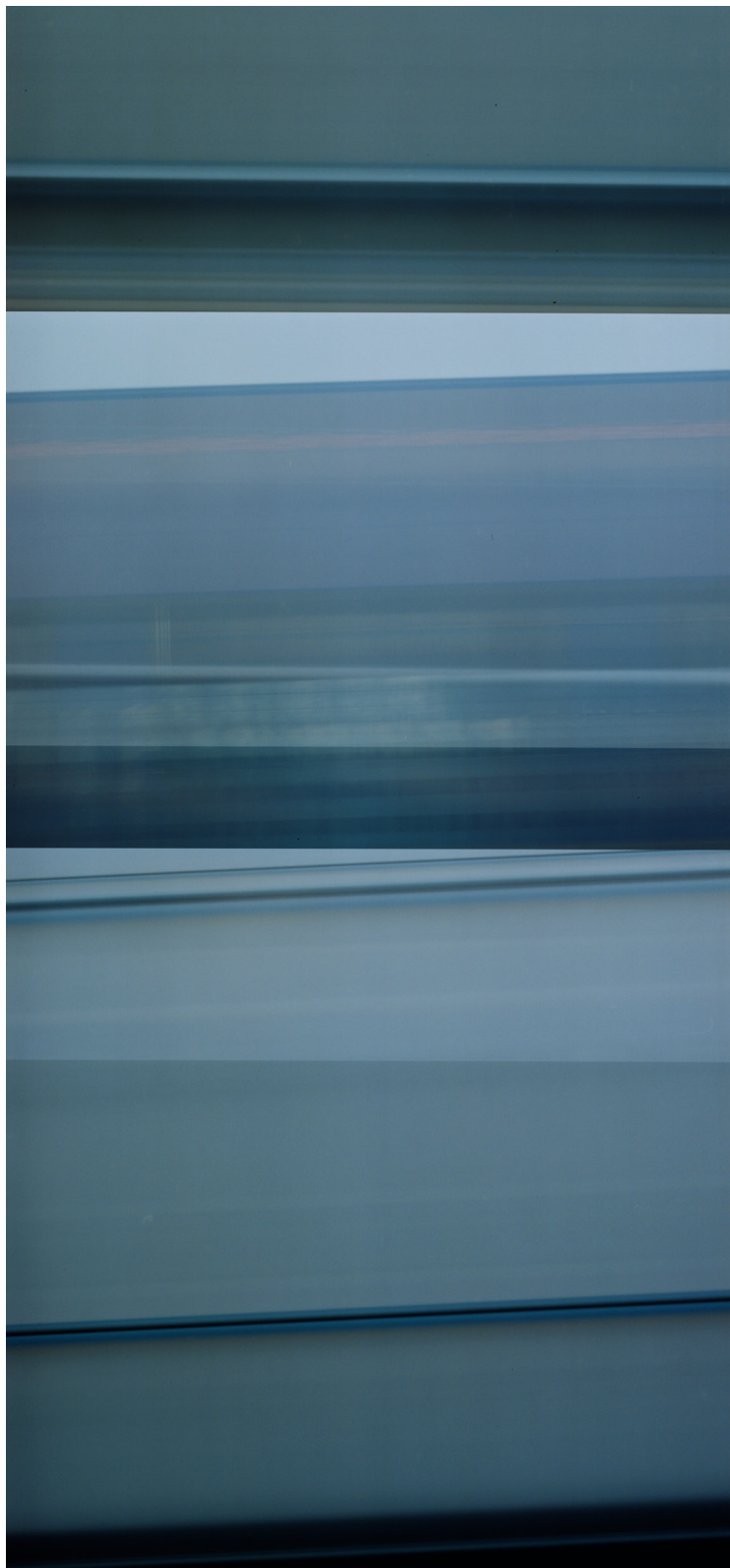
The original French version was entitled *Images à la Sauvete* which translates literally to ‘Images on the Run’, however the American publisher opted for the punchier sounding ‘The Decisive Moment’ (Magnum Photos, 2017), which despite being ‘a bit of a misnomer’ (Westerbeck cited in Thall, 1988) is the term that stuck.

or 'autonomous representation' which 'ceases to refer to the particular event from which it was drawn.' For me the distinction is highlighted most clearly in representational versus non-representational subject matter, and camera-based versus camera-less processes. Representational photographs generally refer to a specific moment or event; whereas, through abstraction and concretion in photomedia, time is drawn out over a continuum, the resulting image loses its indexical link to an event and starts to enter into a metaphysical realm. No single instant is represented: it is the presentation of a new kind of moment, one independent of chronological and historical time, which, through different forms of presentation can connect to *other* timescales—biological, geological and cosmic.









latent spaces + sustained exposure.

Unique to the apparatus of analogue photography is the latent image: the invisible image embedded into a light-sensitive surface by exposure to light, made visible only after chemical processing and development (Rubinstein, 2019, p.107). After a photograph is taken, a period of time elapses during which the image has been recorded to film or photosensitive paper but leaves no visible impression. In contrast, the time of latency in digital photography is imperceptible: a preview of the captured image is available almost instantly.

Daniel Rubinstein (2019, p.108) delves into the theoretical significance and implications of the latent image drawing on the philosophies of Heidegger, Deleuze and Lyotard. Claiming that it is generally overlooked in photography theory, he provides fascinating insight, demonstrating ways the 'latent image reconfigures photography's relationship with time' (ibid.) shifting it outside of chronological and historical time.

Rubinstein suggests that two 'temporal registers' (ibid.) exist in image production: –

1. The moment a photograph is 'taken': the chronological time of image capture, generally marked by the opening and closing of a camera shutter, which links the image to the past.

It is the biological time of living bodies and ticking clocks in which the image carries a time stamp of the past that marks its place along the straight line that stretches between the past and the future. (Rubinstein, 2019, p.108)

2. The time of the latent image:

This is the time of the event, the 'now' which is outside of representation ... [It is] the invisible, intangible exposure, which is motionless, where nothing ever happens, time of stasis and of surfaces without depth. ... [I]t is the 'now' that is neither form, nor content, but it is not without duration. (ibid.)

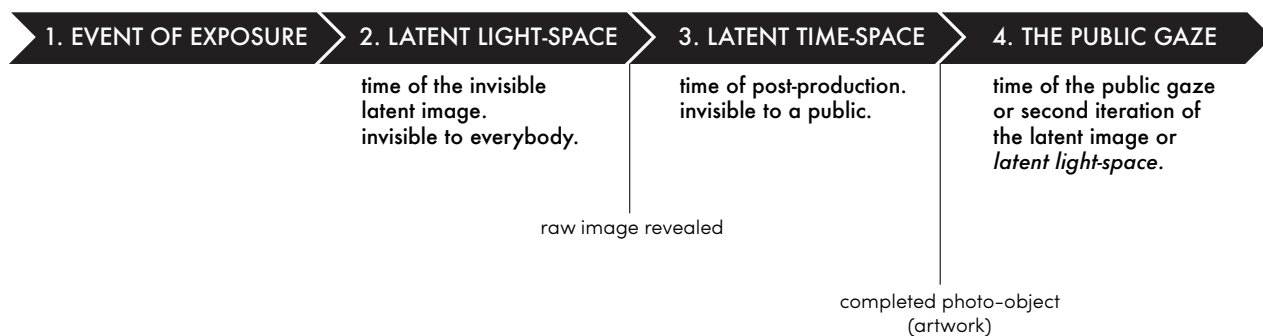
I refer to this temporal register as the *latent light-space* of an image. This register only occurs in analogue photography, as the *latent light-space* of the digital image is so fast as to be virtually imperceptible.

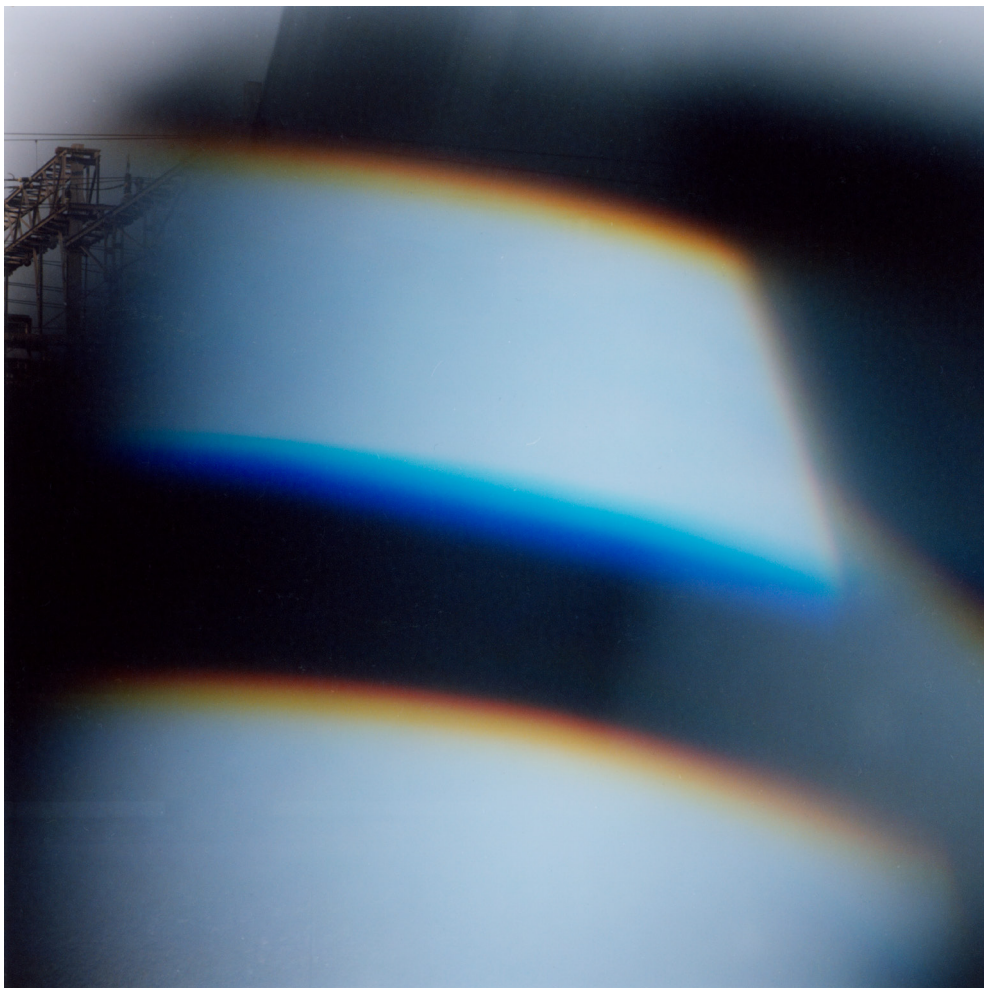
I propose that there are in fact two further temporal registers in photographic (i.e. camera-based) image production: –

3. The period of post-production: work carried out on a developed image. I refer to this temporal register as the *latent time-space*, as this time is invisible to a public, yet the process of making has a duration which is embodied in the final image-object e.g. photographic print. My own *latent time-space* often occurs in the darkroom. This part of my process remains invisible to a public—and often invisible to myself as a good deal of work in the colour darkroom requires complete darkness.

4. The final temporal register involves the gaze of others upon the completed image-object: ‘the time-consuming act of looking’ (de Duve, 1978, p.121). However, some finished pieces are never seen by a public, making this a *potential* temporal register. In this case, the time of an image-object that nobody gazes upon could be considered a second iteration of the latent image—it exists but is invisible to a public.

figure 3. timeline of sustained exposure in photography.





conclusion.

Writing this thesis has been an exercise in observation, deconstruction and decoding of my practice, helping me understand what lies at the core of my motivation to make art. Image-making through photography came to me very naturally and, until recently, I approached it with little intellectualisation of my motivations, letting myself be guided largely by intuition. In keeping true to the essence of this approach, this thesis can thus be viewed as a process of critically engaged reflection. Through this process I've found that the words of others are helping me create a space in which my practice can reside. The travel, the optics obsession, the process, the feelings; there *is* space for all of them. Philosopher Timothy Morton has given me an 'in' to concepts of nature and the sublime, and how I might incorporate those ideas in my work. Morton has been on my reading list for some time, but it wasn't until I saw him speak recently that his radical ideas resonated at a deeper level. What struck me most was how he promoted critical and emotional engagement as equally valid modes of enquiry—'Ideas are the past, emotions are the future. Emotions are future thought.' (Morton, 2020)—creating a space for art, philosophy and just *being* to coexist.

Through my research I've come to understand that all art is political. My practice is steeped in poetics and, until recently, I was at peace with its lack of critical engagement. However, my recent research has made it clear that there is no politically neutral gesture in any practice. I work with industrially manufactured media sourced from raw materials extracted from nonhuman bodies (gelatin) and the earth (Where does the silver come from?) Sexist and racist biases and inequalities are entrenched in the history and present of photomedia (Lewis, 2019). Can I continue to produce work from my travel experiences without addressing the privilege that facilitates such journeys; or the environmental impact of my choices in the face of anthropogenic climate change? Can I maintain a clear conscience if I'm aware of these entanglements yet choose not to address them? Right now, I honestly don't know. Looking forward, I have a desire to

engage with more complex notions of place and journey in the land of my birth, Australia—those surrounding indigenous heritage, land ownership, climate change and identity for example. I do believe I have a responsibility to situate my practice within a broader socio-political context, regardless of whether this is directly addressed in my work or not.

Till now I did a lot of learning through doing, a lot of intuitive learning or thinking-through-making. Now, through a process of critical reflection I'm learning through thinking—and writing is my thinking. And perhaps the words are what will sit alongside my work. Writing offers a space for critical engagement, while the aesthetic language of photomedia provides a more poetic space for exploration. Ultimately, my practice is a discursive one, borne out of curiosity and joy in making. I understand that analogue processes are a crucial part of my practice at present; working with materials that react organically to light, and pursuing an embodied practice steeped in time-consuming processes, feels important right now. While I do engage with newer technologies in aspects of my practice, I'd like to find a way to explore the things I find fascinating in digital processes. This would require a tearing apart of the seemingly impenetrable apparatus of digital photomedia. If I am interested in exposing that which is unseen or unseeable what better place to go than the big black box of modern digital technologies?



postscript.

At the drafting stage of this thesis, when the bulk of the text had been committed to (virtual) paper, COVID-19 held large areas of the world hostage. This situation has brought a renewed focus on the lifegiving and mood-lifting properties of sunlight particularly as Northern Europe emerges from an extended period of miserable weather and begins to enter Spring. I sit at home as I write this where I can see the sunlight acting upon surfaces outside, without ever entering the inside of my north-facing room. Now is a time when some of us are forced to slow down and go back to basics, a time to take pleasure in the constants in our life that we have taken for granted but which keep us buoyant in such times. Right now, sunlight is, literally and metaphorically, the specular highlight of this new reality.

–23 March 2020

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All images © Sonia Mangiapane

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