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A Photographic Ontology: Being Haunted Within The Blue Hour And Expanding Field

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Graduate Program in Visual Arts
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of
Philosophy
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A Photographic Ontology
Being Haunted Within The Blue Hour And Expanding Field

Monograph

by

Colin Enric Miner (BFA, MFA)

Graduate Program in Visual Arts

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Art and Visual Culture

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
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London, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

What are the current boundaries of the photographic and how can an ontology of photography take form as a material and conceptual program of research? Responding to the difficulty inherent in any definitive attempt to *grasp* photography, this dissertation places emphasis on the less determined act of *evoking* as a model of dialogue, and engagement, with the photographic. This dissertation is composed of two parts that engage both the question “What is photography?” and the ontological anxiety that shadows it. These lines of questioning are pursued in two ways: directly through considering the qualities of the photographic as elucidated by the subjects of the *blue hour* and *the expanding field*, and indirectly through the author’s own artistic practice. Part One of this dissertation is a written thesis; Part Two presents a selection of work from the author’s material practice developed during his doctoral program: two solo exhibitions, two group exhibitions, an artist publication, and an artist project. Since photography, as the imagistic and material, produces meaning through conjunction and paradox, the author identifies it as a compelling field in which to situate his own artistic practice.

Keywords: Eduardo Cadava; Geoffrey Batchen; Walter Benjamin; Rosalind Krauss; Jeff Wall; photography; blue hour; expanding field; imagistic space; constellation; haunting; absence and presence; material and conceptual; contemporary art; practice-based research.

In lightness and darkness you are the glimmer in my eye

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Preface

Often, I am asked, “Why photography?” As in, “Why do you want to do photography, or engage with a photographic practice?” But I can hardly remember a time without photography, and I don’t mean this in the abstract way it is often stated in photographic theory. Photography started for me in an attic. Ascending a narrow staircase, dizzy spots would develop and, inevitably after glancing at the bare bulb in the ceiling, afterimages would form when I closed my eyes to regain composure. Looking back, perhaps what was required was a slowing down, a longer pause as reflection in the duration between spaces.

At great distance in space and time, there was a second space of lightness and darkness: a black, undulating field stretched out to the horizon. This relatively fresh volcanic landscape was composed of rough and jagged outcrops set among smooth and flowing surfaces. Descending a narrow passage, traces of mist spectrally floated in the air. A transition had been made from scorched molten terrains, recently cooled, to a depth of space long since cold. Inside this lava-ice-cave there was light—three lights, to be exact—red, green, and blue. The lights flashed and in fleeting durations formed brilliant white. Within this subterranean space, I was dazzled by starlight and constellations, as light refracted and reflected in crystalline arrangements of ice.

I still reflect on these spaces of lightness and darkness, and the potential of the photographic to reveal that there is more to seeing than meets the eye. This dissertation, as a project of research, is a reworking and investigation of the ontological possibilities of photography that offers a discourse on how I have built my artistic practice, what a photographic practice means today in academia, and how my material and theoretical research can be conjoined.

Introduction

What are the boundaries of photography in both material and conceptual terms? And, how can a conversation on the ontology of photography as haunted, proceed and take form as a material and conceptual program of research? In pursuing these lines of questioning, this dissertation will elucidate the qualities of an ontology of photography through the subjects of the *blue hour* and the *expanded field*.¹ These subjects are directly entwined within the photographic and offer access to a conception of being-as-haunted that exists in relation to borders, or rather, as embodiments of the space between borders. I conceive this interstitial space, which photography makes visible, by drawing Derrida's term *haunting*, as the contradictory experience of presence, into relation with the issue of time as no longer linear, but rather formed from a multitude of overlapping and competing temporalities.² The present challenge is to re-think meaning in response to a reality as constituted by a multiplicity of temporalities, as well as to learn how to both live with the ghostly (as being-haunted) and let them speak.³ In this respect, the photographic will be conceived through Walter Benjamin's concept of *space-crossed-time* and the corresponding idea of *imagistic space*, in which time has the potential to become spatial. Theorist Eduardo Cadava provides a helpful guide on these matters by distilling them into the photographic event that interrupts the present and occurs *between* the present and itself, that is, between the movement of time. To paraphrase Cadava, the power of the photograph, as with light, is to evoke what can no longer be there.⁴

¹ The blue hour is defined as the duration within twilight when the indirect sunlight takes on a blue hue. "This effect is caused by the relative diffusability of short blue wavelengths of light versus the longer red wavelengths. During the blue 'hour' (typically the period is about 40 minutes in length), red light passes straight into space while blue light is scattered in the atmosphere and therefore reaches the earth's surface." (See "blue hour," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_hour).

² Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 21.

³ Jan Verwoert, "Living with Ghosts," in *Tell Me What You Want, What You Really, Really Want*, ed. Vanessa Ohlraun (Berlin: Stenberg, 2010), 133.

⁴ Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1997), 13.

This written dissertation is composed of two parts, each of which seeks to engage both the question “What is photography?” and the ontological anxiety that shadows it. Following Geoffrey Batchen’s assertion that “What is photography?” is an unanswerable question, I offer here an engagement that conceives of photography *not* as a static medium but, rather, as a space of conjunction. The emphasis is not on a binary of “photo” or “graphy,” but on a space that produces meaning through composition and movement. The expanded field of contemporary photography makes it possible to engage conflicting positions, while promoting and facilitating states of transition—both from one thing *to* another, and as the thing *between* one thing and another.

The first part of this dissertation is composed of two chapters. In the first chapter, I contemplate the haunted qualities of the photographic by bringing it into conversation with the subject of the *blue hour*. The *blue hour* is understood as existing in an analogous ontological state to photography because it shares the general mechanisms of light, space, time, and imagistic space. In addition, the *blue hour* relates to photographic qualities of liquid, frame, and composition. I thus use the *blue hour* as a way of making visible an absence in our understanding of time as a process, a transition, and a state of becoming in time and space. Within this chapter, a section on “liquid” takes, as its starting point, the fog evoked by Walter Benjamin in his oft-cited “Short History of Photography” to position the shifting and unstable ontology of photography. Building from this perspective, I engage Jeff Wall’s “Photography and Liquid Intelligence” to illustrate fluidity’s sway on photographic being. In the next section, I consider the “frame” and the concepts of division, separation, and context. In relation to the frame, I position the *blue hour* and photography within a place of transition where overlapping and shunting space-times are brought together and composed into conversation. Afterwards, I focus on Derrida’s concept of “composition” and Geoffrey Batchen’s positioning of that term in connection with the power of haunting. I end the chapter by addressing the general concepts illuminated in each section while reflecting on three works: Anne Atkins’ cyanotype photogram, *Porphyra Laciniata* (c. 1843–1853), Eileen Quinlan’s framed photograph *New Directions #2* (2010), and Erin Shirreff’s photographic video installation *Moon* (2010).

In the second chapter, I reflect on photography and its qualities as an expanding field. I argue that the photographic is not fixed; rather, it operates within paradoxical states and processes of transformation. The chapter begins with a section that uses Wall's essay "Frames of Reference" to question the concept of hybridity and develop an alternative model in the form of a constellation. Starting from this point, I consider Rosalind Krauss's formulation of "medium" and George Baker's response to her model of an expanded field. I further engage Baker's theoretical work to propose the analogous models of the constellation and the rhizome, which allow for the comprehension of photography in relation to the varied concerns of its divergent methods, technologies, materials, and practices. Two short sections follow that position, concepts of the interstitial and transition within the photographic. I then use Tom Gunning's grasping of the haunted space of photography to consider the ways it exists between the constant tension of the past and the future. Building on these ideas, a section on the Hyphen considers Batchen's "photo-graphy" before exploring Cadava's reflections on the photographic relation of lightness and darkness. Finally, in "An Expanding Field of Photography" sub-chapter, I contemplate the photographic in relation to its engagement with materials, technologies, and processes, contending that a "vocabulary" and "logic" has developed, is developing, and will continue to develop. Specifically, my approach is a discussion of recent photographic practices and works produced by artists Christopher Williams, Thomas Demand, Pascal Grandmaison, Liz Deschenes, Owen Kydd, and Erin Shirreff.

The second part of this dissertation presents visual documentation of and written context for my practice-based research. I position this form of research as relating to the complex labor of the poem as a metaphor for the unity of intellectual (conceptual) and manual (studio practice) labor.⁵ In this part of the dissertation, I focus on solo exhibitions, artist projects, and group exhibitions produced during my doctoral program. The solo exhibitions discussed are *the evil are not really there, they have a problem with being present*, at the Art Lab Gallery in 2012; and *the illuminated becoming blind*, at the

⁵ John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art after the Readymade* (New York: Verso, 2007), 64.

McIntosh Gallery in 2013. The group exhibitions include shows at DNA Gallery and Art Metropole, while the artistic projects consist of *Moire* and the artist research group Immersion Emergencies and Possible Worlds.

The documentation of my artwork as presented in this dissertation seeks to make visible an artistic practice mediating “the abstract” as a poetic response to the world, which acknowledges “the real” beyond mere instrumentality.⁶ This position is a response to the difficulty inherent in any definitive attempt to *grasp* photography, and places emphasis on the less determined act of *evoking* as a model of dialogue, and engagement, with the haunted. As Jan Verwoert states, “[a]bstract thought and work insists on the latency of meaning not because it won’t disclose its immediate meaning (i.e., out of a coquettish flirtation with opacity) but because it can’t. If it could, it would lose its capacity to address the potential reality of all that is presently not given in actuality (i.e., all the possibilities that lie beyond those already actualized within the dominant mode of thinking and acting).”⁷ In response to the unanswerable question, “What is photography?” that drives this dissertation, my artistic practice seeks ways of performing an evocation, that is, photography becomes a question of practice.

⁶ Lyle Rexer, *The Edge of Vision* (New York: Aperture, 2009), 192.

⁷ Jan Verwoert, “Exhaustion and Exuberance,” in *Tell Me What You Want, What You Really, Really Want*, ed. Vanessa Ohlraun (Berlin: Stenberg, 2010), 29–30.

Part One

Blue Hour

Being in transition—its duration neither fixed nor predictable—the *blue hour* resists the stable and static.⁸ Rather, it can be conceived as fluid and in a state of becoming that occupies a temporality and spatial relation between day and night, night and day. Within the *blue hour*, both these frames (day and night) are simultaneously absent and present. Composed, space and time are brought close together while opening up the potential resting between them. It is like how the hyphen in photo-graphy is a space-time of transition and becoming. With the coming together of lightness and darkness, there is a crossing of time and space as *imagistic space*. The importance of the *blue hour* is as an *imagistic space* that we can experience. With further consideration, it also offers valuable insight into the haunted qualities of the photographic as in the question “What is photography?”⁹ I use the *blue hour* as a concept that takes form through its particular relations to, and areas of overlap with, photography. Specifically, they ontologically share the mechanisms of light, space, time, and imagistic space, as well as the more specific qualities of liquid, frame, and composition. Following my discussion of these qualities and areas of contact, I reference photographic work by Anne Atkins, Eileen Quinlan, and Erin Shirreff to further develop the analogous ontological state of the *blue hour* and photography.

Light

In the *blue hour*, a significant absence of direct light means that relations of reflection and refraction are essential in the visibility of things. The light of the *blue hour* is such that shadows struggle to assert themselves and so, half-formed and uncertain of where to take hold, they tentatively touch upon everything. The contrast between light and dark is muted—brought closer together—and in this way, subjects become simultaneously

⁸ See Michael Taussig’s consideration of blue in *What Color is the Sacred?* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 2009), particularly 144 & 149.

⁹ For a consideration of this question as statement, see James Elkins, *What Photography Is* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

concealed and revealed. What is evoked is the potentiality that lies in abstraction—for the poetics of latent relations to *come out of the blue* and into frame and context. These relations are possible due to the *blue hour*'s quality of refracted light in space and time. It is a space-time between the passage of light from source to destination—as in between lightness and darkness—that connects the *blue hour* and photography. This space between lightness and darkness is a focal point of Eduardo Cadava's reflections on Walter Benjamin's writing and theoretical work. In *Words of Light*, Cavada writes, "The light of photography never arrives alone. It is always attended by darkness. We might even say that the relay between light and darkness that names photography also gives birth to it."¹⁰ Considered differently, this concept of Cadava's conjoins photography's spatial field with the *blue hour* as named through their shared "relay between light and darkness".

Space

It is rare to find tangible blue in nature, and where it exists intangibly—as in the sky and water—the color suggests to our eye the depth of space.¹¹ This is especially enticing for the traveling eye, which is thus afforded the freedom to wander within a depth of blue and without the strain of focus. The depth of this space expands in time as the eye roams while developing the light—a light mirrored in the physiognomy of the eye—a pooled surface receding inwards, a sort of black hole where photons are reflecting and refracting. The eye of photography has learned to become patient; it takes its time, working and conversing with the latent potential that rests dormant in the blue depths of space.

So, what is the space and the depth of flatness? The flatness of the photographic print is echoed in the flatness of the *blue hour* suggested by the horizon's relation to the Earth depicted in Figure 1: a circle that two-dimensionally represents the sphere of the world. The upper half is light blue and signifies sky; the lower half is black and the darkness of

¹⁰ Cadava, *Words of Light*, 66.

¹¹ See Taussig, specifically the chapter on blue as a difficult concept. "Redeeming Indigo," *What Color is the Sacred*, 141–158.

material marks the absence of light. To the left and right of the circle are two slivers, two flattened conical levers, that bracket the in-between of lightness and darkness into “twilight.” The color given is a medium blue, and yellow orbs—like multiple glowing eyes—delineate its reach and depth.

As the *blue hour* rests within twilight, it is a space-time positioned precariously between day and night (or night and day). Too much light, or too little, bring it out of itself and into the space-time of day or night. These boundaries delineate a depth of time, which can be thought of in relation to flatness as a surface that signifies a depth of space resting both above and underneath.



Figure 1. “Twilight Diagram.” The caption for it reads, “A schematic depicting the daily periods of twilight and the difference between sunrise/sunset and dawn/dusk. The angles and the size of the sun are not to scale.” From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twilight>.

Time

Within the *blue hour*, a fixed grasp of space and time becomes elusive—is it closer to dawn or sunrise? Sunset or dusk?¹² Between these times, the potential of space and time opens. This potentiality can be conceived in terms of a seeming absence of fixed linear time as, for the *blue hour*'s duration, time does not appear to move, or rather to progress. In reflecting on the relation of time—of the past, present, and future—Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow offer an alternative to the pre-dominant conception of a fixed and linear time:

[w]e might pin down a buckyball's location [used in the double-slit experiment and] by observing it, but in between our observations, it takes all paths. Quantum physics tells us that no matter how thorough our observation of the present, the (unobserved) past, like the future, is indefinite and exists only as a spectrum of possibilities. The universe, according to quantum physics, has no single past, or history. The fact that the past takes no definite form means that observations you make on a system in the present affect its past."¹³

Thus, in this un-fixed state, time can be understood to span the past, present, and future while allowing for potential access to, and being in, each simultaneously.

The *blue hour* can be understood as existing in an ontological state that is analogous to photography and is the closest we can get to the moment of experience, a *now*. It is within this (un-fixed) state that anxiety is located. As Søren Kierkegaard, in his seminal text *The Concept of Anxiety*, writes:

If time is correctly defined as an infinite succession, it most likely is also defined as the present, the past, and the future. This distinction, however, is incorrect if it

¹² Even these examples present a bias to the progression of time from dawn to sunrise, sunset to dusk. Rather, the possibilities should also include the movement from sunrise to dawn, dusk to sunset, and all other possible relations.

¹³ Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (New York: Bantam Books, 2010), 82.

is considered to be implicit in time itself, because the distinction appears only through the relation of time to eternity and through the reflection of eternity in time. If in the infinite succession of time a foothold could be found, i.e., a present, which was the dividing point, the division would be quite correct. However, precisely because every moment, as well as the sum of the moments, is a process (a passing by), no moment is a present, and accordingly there is in time neither present, nor past, nor future. If it is claimed that this division can be maintained, it is because the moment is *spatialized*, but thereby the infinite succession comes to a halt, it is because representation is introduced that allows time to be represented instead of being thought. Even so, this is not correct procedure, for even as representation, the infinite succession of time is an infinitely contentless present (this is a parody of the eternal).¹⁴

The *blue hour* and photography do not possess a space-time relation different from that which we experience. Rather, they make visible, through condensation, an absence in our understanding of the meaning of time as a process, as a transition, as a state of becoming in time and space. Time, as Kierkegaard proposes, is contentless. It is to this absence, this lack of content, and this nothing, that the *blue hour* and photography find themselves unable to speak. It is a space-time relation that haunts their being (and ours) as the question without an answer. Outside of the entrapments of past, present, and future, a relation of time with space can be conceived that does not negate the potential offering of duration. As an autonomy from the expectations of linear time, progress, and advancement, this freedom, offers the potential of becoming set in resistance to anxiety.

Imagistic Space

As the brief spell between day and night, the *blue hour* signifies a break in reality that establishes a frame (space-time relations) in which a state of being rests in the potential gap provided between space and time. This position of the *blue hour* can be brought into

¹⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety* (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1981), 85–86.

contact with photography through Cadava's claim that, "the photographic event interrupts the present; it occurs *between* the present and itself, between the movement of time and itself. This is why nothing can occur in either the continuous movement of time or the pure present of any given moment."¹⁵ We can also think of this quality of space-time in relation to Benjamin's idea of *space-crossed* time, in which time-becomes-space and space-becomes-time.¹⁶ As Cadava notes, "time is no longer to be understood as continuous and linear, but rather as spatial, an imagistic space...."¹⁷ This imagistic space connects the *blue hour* to photography as being between time in the advancement and withdrawal of light, between the past and the future. For both the *blue hour* and photography, time presents itself to us as this "spacing," and it is this continual process of becoming and disappearing that, for Benjamin, characterizes the movement of time.¹⁸ This movement, as duration, can be found most evocatively in the space and time when the ephemeral sky mirrors the material earth, when space is offered up as a fluid atmosphere that envelops all surfaces and depths in blue.

Liquid

As a liquid, photography rests within the "fog" that Benjamin conjures at the beginning of his "A Small History of Photography."¹⁹ He used the idea of a fog to evoke the shifting, and unstable, form of photography's early development as a medium. This "foggy" state of photography was a moment in which the photographic continued its transitional state of being. In a short passage written by Cadava on Benjamin's thoughts on photography, the former considers how the latter, "[a]rguing according to the logic of the photographic image...affirm[s] a movement of interruption that suspends the continuum of time. By retaining the traces of past and future—a past and future it

¹⁵ Cadava, *Words of Light*, 61.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁹ Walter Benjamin, "A Small History of Photography," in *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings Vol. 2 1927–1934*, trans. Edmund Ephant and Kingsley Shorter (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard U P, 1999), 240.

nonetheless transforms—the photograph sustains the presence of movement. . . . Within this condensation of past and present, time is no longer to be understood as continuous and linear, but rather as spatial, an imagistic space. . . .”²⁰ Similar to Benjamin’s conception of the photographic image, the *blue hour* condenses time and space into imagistic space by retaining traces of the past (for example the remnants of daylight) and glimpses of the future (the darkness that is mingling with the light signifying the night to come). The *blue hour* is thus a moment of interruption and is brought into being as a suspension in the continuum, or progress, of time. It is space condensed in time, and also time condensed in space. This thickness is in direct relation to its feeling of depth, of space and time that recedes into the depths while not moving—duration without progression.

Liquidity in the form of vapor was significant in the photographic processes used during the early years of photography that Benjamin discussed. There were a number of wet emulsions in use: the cyanotype was an early successful example and the wet plate collodion process was another. In addition, liquid was important to photography through the chemistry of processing and preparing photographic negatives and plates. The daguerreotype, for instance, employed iodine vapor and mercury fumes to coax delicate images onto silver plates while a gold chloride solution was used to reinforce them. Seminal proto-photographer William Henry Fox Talbot makes reference to these processes in a poem about the early failed attempts at fixing a photographic plate. A section of his poem, “The Magic Mirror,” published in 1830 in *Legendary Tales and Prose*, reads:

*The distant hills: then rolling up the vale
Shrouded it o’er with Vapours wan and pale.
The Lake, the Mountains, fade in mist away,
And lurid Darkness overspreads the day.*²¹

²⁰ Cadava, *Words of Light*, 60.

²¹ An extract from William Henry Fox Talbot’s 1830 poem “The Magic Mirror,” in *The Art of Photography*, ed. Mike Weaver (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1989), 15–17.

In this passage, the “wan and pale” time of the *blue hour* and the time of the photographic image are both evoked as moments of undetermined duration set between the physicality of space and the passage of time. A transition from seeing in light to feeling in darkness is offered. The feeling is one of desire for fixity within a transitional object that, for a certain period, remained ungraspable.

Liquid haunts photography as a reminder of the aforementioned processes, and other, historic processes. It is not just a reference to the specific past, as noted above, but to our own moment and the steady decline of modern photographic film processes and usage. In his short 1989 essay “Photography and Liquid Intelligence,” Jeff Wall illustrates the relations between water, as a fluid liquid, and the photographic. For Wall, “water—symbolically—represents an archaism in photography, one that is admitted into the process, but also excluded, contained, or channeled by its hydraulics.”²² By using the term “archaism,” Wall is referring to the ancient production processes that water embodies, and to how “the echo of water in photography evokes its prehistory.”²³ Significantly, he directs our attention to the new displacement of water in photography with the present-day prominence of digital and electronic technology and processes that are replacing photographic film. In these new systems, water is removed altogether from the immediate production and processes. It is still indirectly involved, though, set at a distance, in such spaces as the generation of electricity, which enables these very technologies and processes.

In the 25 years since “Photography and Liquid Intelligence” was published, the importance of liquid as a fluid has become less visible but remains essential. The hydraulics have become even further integrated. Fluid remains an elemental aspect of digital photographic processes and technology, in the ink that is now used to make photographic inkjet prints, in traditional printing processes that are combined with digital

²² Jeff Wall, “Photography and Liquid Intelligence,” in *Jeff Wall Selected Essays and Interviews* (New York: MOMA, 2007), 109.

²³ Wall, “Photography and Liquid Intelligence,” 109. The processes given as examples of archaism and as embodying ancient productions are washing, bleaching, dissolving, and the separation of ores in mining.

technology, and in the batteries that power portable photographic technology and upon which the digital camera is fundamentally most reliant.²⁴

The *blue hour* and photography share an ontological connection in a “sense of immersion in the incalculable” that is associated with “liquid intelligence.”²⁵ Like Benjamin’s fog and the *blue hour*, there is contraction and expansion, a flowing into new spaces and the taking on of ever shifting shapes and forms. Curator Matthew Thompson notes that, “[t]he constant tension between fixity and fluidity embodied in photography produces a fundamental anxiety.”²⁶ Therefore, like the *blue hour*, photography is defined by the struggle between differing states in transition. As such, change, particularly technological transformation, is an inherent characteristic of photography. The fundamental anxiety that this constant flux creates can be found in the spilling, leaking, splashing, and seeping of the fluid nature of photography, which Wall describes as “[a] natural form, with its unpredictable contours, [it] is an expression of infinitesimal metamorphoses of quality.”²⁷

Frame

Photography, as with the *blue hour*, involves so much *coming out of the blue*, which here means not to be surprised but to be positioned, or to position oneself, in relation to a frame, or to a mat.²⁸ It happens through processes that enact a transition from one space-time to another, which brings boundaries of division into question. The *blue hour* is a duration existing out of time, when the near and the far are in close proximity. Therefore,

²⁴ Chromogenic photographic prints are now primarily made using digital image files outputted through LED lights onto traditional photographic paper, which is then processed with photographic chemicals.

²⁵ Wall, “Photography and Liquid Intelligence,” 110.

²⁶ Matthew Thompson, “The Object Lost and Found,” in *The Anxiety of Photography* (Colorado: Aspen Art Museum, 2011), 75.

²⁷ Wall, “Photography and Liquid Intelligence,” 109.

²⁸ Cinematically, the phrase references the filmic process of chroma keying, or matting, in which blue screens were traditionally used to matte out areas of the filmic frame. The colour green is also now used due to its digital sensitivity since digital camera sensors are more sensitive to “seeing” green and differentiating it from other colors. See Jalal Toufic, *Vampires: An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film*, (Sausalito: Post Apollo, 1993).

in this process—when time is removed from a linear frame—duration and depth are radically transformed as un-timely. “Coming out of the blue” is a direct challenge to the frame that seeks to hide and separate, and thus control from a distance.

Given its role in bringing the concept of division into conversation, the frame is disruptive. Yet it does not simply divide, its very existence materializes the space of division. John Tagg observes that, “[m]arking a limit between the intrinsic and the extrinsic, it is neither inside nor outside, neither above nor below. Its thickness and depth separate it both from the integral inside of the so-called work itself and from the outside, from the wall or the space in which the work is sited....”²⁹ The frame is part of both things that it divides. Essentially, it offers itself as context, as a form of stability or buffer between one space and another. It does this while positioning itself to acknowledge the presence within while creating the fiction of an absence without. As Tagg notes, “[t]he frame thus stands out against the two grounds that it constitutes—the work and the setting—and yet, with respect to each of these, it always dissolves into the other. This oscillation marks its presence and effaces its effect.”³⁰ I am interested in the moment at which the frame becomes the focus of attention, in the ways it might “stand out,” not as a structure that seeks to trap the gaze, but rather as a thing that is vulnerable, as a frame that dissolves and is anxious in its oscillating existence. The frame’s strength is in what it is able to make both absent and present, as an opening to both a position *in the blue*, and also a (be)coming out of the blue.

The frame is in front of us and yet often escapes being seen. It takes a moment to concentrate on seeing the frame’s shape, to acknowledge its presence. In slowly presenting itself—in unfolding before our eyes—the frame might ask, “What is aura actually?” This is a question that Benjamin asked, and his response can be engaged to place aura both within the frame of the *blue hour* and photography as “[a] strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close

²⁹ John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame, Photographic Truths and the Capturing of Meaning* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 2009), 246.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

the object may be.”³¹ The frame and the mat, as well as the *blue hour* and photography, can be said to generate a certain aura by intermingling different temporalities, spaces, and closeness as depth between the near and the far.³²

In spacing temporalities, both the *blue hour* and photography relate to the blink: the *blue hour* as between the darkness and lightness of the world; and, photography as making visible the moments we cannot see in the duration of a blink.³³ An impossible experience of time is positioned in relation to the frame as a blink, and the time between past and present (or between the present and itself). Providing a reference in space and time, the blink-as-mat frames (before or after the blink, inside or outside of the frame). However, during the blink-as-frame (eg. within itself), there exists a quality of space-time in which duration wanders since it is no longer held in strict relation to anything but itself. In relation to the frame, the *blue hour* and photography position a place of transition where overlapping and shunting times and spaces are brought together to become composed into conversation.

Composition

Composed of day and night, the *blue hour* exists as the conversation of space-time between the two. It offers a place of latent potentiality between dialectics—in this case, between darkness and light. Photography can also be considered a composition in that it composes the imagistic space-time made in the path of light between lightness and darkness. Derrida undertakes the question of composition in relation to photography and provides an interesting articulation of the term. He writes, “[w]hat is to be understood by composition? Two things, which compose together. First, separated by an insuperable

³¹ Benjamin, “A Short History of Photography,” 250.

³² Toufic, *Vampires: An Uneasy Essay*, 49.

³³ Conversely, we can conceive of photographic blinks as when the camera’s shutter curtain falls and then rises; the lens’ aperture collapses and expands; and, the moment when an image is rendering or refreshing on a screen. There is then a moment of darkness, a moment even photography cannot see.

limit, the two concepts exchange compromises; they compose together, the one with the other... This concept of the photograph photographs all conceptual oppositions, it traces a relationship of haunting which perhaps is constitutive of all logics.”³⁴ Furthermore, for Derrida, composition never inscribes itself in the framed space, but instead it inhabits, or haunts.³⁵ I am drawn to Derrida’s use of the term “inhabit.” Given the “insuperable limit” that composition faces, as a relationship of haunting after Derrida, would it not be more pressing and apt for the haunted to “occupy?” The haunted make their existence between one place and another, one time and another, and as such, must exist antagonistically. Their movement or transition between spaces and times is a form of composition.

Writing in response to Derrida’s concept of composition, and the power held within the term in relation to haunting, Geoffrey Batchen asserts that, “[t]he failure to recognize this same haunting, and to transform it into an enabling politics, ultimately limits the prevailing Anglo-American view of photography. Postmodern criticism would simply reverse a given economy of oppositions and thus move from one side of a duality to the other.”³⁶ In light of Batchen and Derrida, I consider space-time as existing between opposition, and I am interested in the significant transformative power the photographic has to develop economies of transition. I am suggesting that meaning is not binary, or even multiple. Rather, meaning is the quality of relations that are composed and thus it should be considered a conversation, as existence within a continual act of becoming.

It is difficult to hold onto a transition, the position that rests between. As Cadava writes in reference to the fog that Benjamin posits at the beginnings of photography, and in the photographic event itself, “[i]n the twilight zone between seeing and not seeing, we fail to get the picture.”³⁷ Releasing the desire to grasp, the meaning and purpose of photography can be re-positioned in relation to the anxiety of whether or not we will “get the picture.” The picture, as image, will remain and offer potential through the act of evoking. While

³⁴ Jacques Derrida, “The Deaths of Roland Barthes,” in *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy since Merleau-Ponty*, ed. by Hugh Silverman, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Routledge, 1988), 266.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 267.

³⁶ Batchen, *Burning With Desire*, 194.

³⁷ Cadava, *Words of Light*, 7.

never graspable, the photographic will continue to make visible the possibility of being between composition as becoming.

Porphyra Laciniata

Anne Atkins' cyanotype photograms show a collection of botanical material and its transformation through photographic processes. These materials were arranged, composed on a page, and framed in book form to be published and distributed. Atkins' *Porphyra Laciniata* (ca.1843–1853) (see Figure 2) is one cyanotype that seems to carry liquid residue of Benjamin's fog. As with the *blue hour*, this fog establishes an uncertainty of depth in relation to space and time. Within Atkins' photogram, the variability of liquid intelligence was present during the time in which the slippery seaweed (*porphyra laciniata*) was gathered from the sea-shore, when the paper absorbed its iron solution and slowly dried, when the photogram was washed to develop its image, and when, during its exhibition, it was distributed as a printed book page in order to flow into circulation.

Atkins' photogram has a 1:1 scale, which makes visible in the image the reality of contact between the material and the photographic emulsion. The shards of varying lightness and darkness exist in contrast to the varying density of the material that rested upon it. The areas of shallow depth and highest transparency become dark while the areas of thickness and opacity remain light. The photographic print, mirroring the seaweed in thickness, is presented awry to the liquid nature of photography—dried, pressed, flattened—as is a seaweed specimen preserved without its own liquid blue medium.

The flat and smooth surface of the sea allows light to flicker and glare at an angle. This flatness is silent about the depth that rests beneath it, a depth throughout which thin sheets of seaweed waver and oscillate undercover. This surface is an image, or at least can be visualized as such. Seaweed is found in the intertidal zone between high and low tides. Atkins likely encountered the seaweed at low tide when the light was not filtered through water but instead fell directly on the flattened forms that were draped and tangled

over rocks. The shapes of these forms hint at spatial depth and at an existence in relation to an ebbing and flowing.

A deep and luminescent blue piece of paper was laid down, and two strands of seaweed were placed on it. The seaweed was neither flat nor tidy. Likely dry, or perhaps damp, Atkins would not have wanted water to smudge or draw out the blue surface of her photosensitive paper. An arrangement of the seaweed material was composed. A longer piece curled, and another bit was bunched up and placed in the corner. The objects occupied themselves on the space of the paper—on the surface of the flatness. They underwent a transition, through texture and density as material, into image. The sun and the liquid of the ocean were transformed in depth. In order to become visible, the image relied on lightness and darkness and a blue surface as photographic emulsion. What Atkins' photogram continues to offer contemporary viewers, through the processes of photography and the photogram, is a re-composition of the seaweed with the liquid blueness that sustains it.

This blue cyanotype has vibrancy, and also texture. On the surface, there is a slight uniform roughness of the paper on which the image sits. Go deeper and there is a layering of material (paper, emulsion, seaweed, chemicals) and processes that engage the image as space-crossed-time (gathering of seaweed, making of the paper, photogram printing, publishing, and viewing). These materials and processes are made visible in the sharpness of the geometric shapes, in the thin delicate lines that run through the forms, and in the wavering edges of the photo emulsion on the paper that mirror the contours of the seaweed. There is a framing of light that develops in the image and results in a spatial transformation. The space of the seaweed in *Porphyra Laciniata* is flattened, at least in terms of a measurement of thickness. However, its depth relative to its surface, as the space-crossed-time of the image, is not only retained but expanded.



Figure 2. Anne Atkins, *Porphyra Laciniata*, ca. 1843–1853. Cyanotype negative. 10 3/8 x 7 7/8 in. (26.2 x 20.3 cm).

New Directions #2

The strobes flash and bounce—light reflects and refracts—across an arrangement of mirrors and some form of cloth board with a triangle of blue painted across a bottom corner. Blinking (between lightness and darkness) the photographer, in her studio, looks through the framed viewing glass at the composition. This arrangement contains mirrors, board, and surfaces that lean on and against each other, balanced into contact. All angles are composed towards the center of the print, yet not all angles meet. A crystalline shape is developed, of lines slightly askew that converse to build a puzzling blue depth. This depth both collapses into its angles, and expands outwards as shape and form. The photographic border as frame gives this imagistic space the tension it requires to enact transitions, to shift between rigid relations of space and time.

Eileen Quinlan's *New Directions #2* (2010) (Figure 3)—a blue photographic eye made of mirrors and intricate surfaces of reflected and refracted lightness and darkness—creates a composition not unlike a picture of an eye. Yet, although we are shown mirrors, things are askew—there is neither an image of the camera nor any tangible subject positioned before it.

The work conjures the passage from Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* in which he writes, "I decompose, I enlarge, and, so to speak, I *retard*, in order to have time to *know* at last."³⁸ With its mirrors that are composed to impede the passage of light, our attention is called to the delayed position of the imagistic space. A space-time is offered in which we can see at angle and are made aware of the presence of sides, backs, and fronts. Caught in reflection, these positions are made known to us—made visible to us, to our eye—as space that is both imagistic and in relation to the physical material of the photographic print and frame itself. That is, there is a mirroring of imagistic and physical space; the image makes visible what the physical materiality of the photograph cannot. This work seeks scrutiny while it attempts to challenge the situation that Barthes finds himself in when he states, "...I live in the illusion that it suffices to clean the surface of the image in

³⁸ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), 99.

order to accede to *what is behind*: to scrutinize means to turn the photograph over, to enter into the paper's depth, to reach its other side (what is hidden is for us Westerners more 'true' than what is visible)."³⁹

How might we turn the photograph over, enter its depths through an attempt at conversing with its other side? We must start at the border, which is positioned between front and back in the space that is composed. The edge of glass in *New Directions #2* is seen partially off-center, its reflection subtly wavering. Both the edge of glass and its reflection catch attention as they direct the sharpest light. The edge is not thick; it possesses depth like a tear. This is space shown, and therefore described, between back and front. A confirmation of this space, as depth, is repeated in the angle of the mirror that offers a multiplicity of views, and as such, opens up space through reflection. The luminosity of the mirror is understood through the light that is in it, in the glass that sits on the flat face of metallic, traditionally silver, foil. The depth in Qunlinan's image comes from darkness, from the spaces the light fails to illuminate and instead falls off, unable to proceed.

There are fronts, backs and sides that are mirrored both up and down, left and right. The one edge between the front surface of the flat board (with the blue triangle) and the mirrored ground lead us out of the photographic image space and into the material space of the frame. Here, we find a gap that expresses a within and without of the composed space-time of the imagistic and the physical. This area between photograph and frame allows for an additional composition of depth and flatness to be offered. Here, outside of the image, between the photograph and the material frame, we cannot see behind the surface (of the print). The mounted photographic print floats near the inner surface of the physical frame. The depth of the material on which the print is mounted remains hidden due to the narrowness of the gap between it, and the inside edge of the frame. But the shadows of light hint and suggest that there is interstitial space as depth within the physical frame, not only around the photograph but also behind it (not to mention between us and the work). This imagistic and material depth causes our understanding of

³⁹ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 100.

the flatness of photography to waver. We are offered a relation to vision that is both within and without, between both surface and depth.



Figure 3. Eileen Quinlan, *New Directions #2*, 2010. Chromogenic print mounted on acrylic glass, 24 x 20 in. (61 x 50.8 cm).

Moon

In the studio, the artist prepares photographic images: a selection is made and printed in slight variation.⁴⁰ Then, one at a time, the prints are placed on a wall. A camera is set up with an auto-timer and a photograph is taken every 5–10 seconds. The lighting process begins and is simple and intuitive. The intention resides in the development of an array of lighting effects through the use of handheld pot lights. Light shines through the image from behind, above, below, or at a severe side angle. In relation to reflection and refraction, the light is at times caught—stuck in or on the photograph—and at other times, it simply slips by. As the analogue lights proceed, and wander in hand with the photographer, the image of the print transforms. The photographs of the variously lit prints are imported and choreographed—the two surfaces of the image and the print are composed. Past. Present. Future. The work wants us, the viewer, to be mesmerized by the dancing play of light across surface.⁴¹ There is something sculptural in this process—in the language of light and its conversation with the material of the photographic print.

How might the photograph, as imagistic space, compose surface and depth? Erin Shirreff's *Moon* (2010) (see Figures 4 and 5) engages this question by offering duration as light that is reflected and refracted in the re-photographing of the photograph. Imagistic space is used as the ground onto which the crossing of time and space are explored in duration. Evoking the space-time of the *blue hour*, Shirreff's *Moon* is a photographic work that composes transitions.⁴²

Moon is projected as light and cast onto a material support that reflects it into view. The reflecting support is triangular in shape. It is a large form attached seamlessly to a wall that hangs off the ground while jutting out at an angle. This triangular form makes visible

⁴⁰ Approximately twelve different photographic images were used in the making of *Moon* (2010). Each image was printed on different surface textures and material, such as mat, semi-mat, glossy, and transparent paper.

⁴¹ See “Erin Shirreff Takes Her Time,” *Art 21: New York Close Up* video, 7:14, released October 12, 2012, produced Wesley Miller and Nick Ravich, <http://www.art21.org/newyorkcloseup/films/erin-shirreff-takes-her-time/>.

⁴² The moon, as within the *blue hour*, appears in the work briefly. During 7:04–8:04 as the time between the *blue hour* and daylight; and, at 12:07–12:38 as the time between the *blue hour* and dusk.

the relation necessary for the image to occur, as a surface that needs to be askew in order for light to be redirected to our eye. Eduardo Cadava writes that the relation between light and deflection, “is essential to the possibility of an image’s emergence. Light can in fact only give way to an image when its path is impeded, when it is turned away from its course.”⁴³ The quality of light reflecting off the Moon is mirrored in the reflecting of light off the wall. Further, the photographs used to make this work draw their image from reflected light and offer a poetic relation to the Moon they seek to represent. This third relation relies on the studio photographs as surfaces to reflect studio light back into the camera. They are used in this way in order to reflect light back into the apparatus that had sought to compose the space between it (the camera) and the Moon—not to flatten the space but, rather, to bring it into closer proximity.

The concept of proximity brought into relation with *Moon* evokes Italo Calvino’s short story “The Distance of the Moon.”⁴⁴ Calvino’s story is set in a time when the Moon was in much closer proximity to the Earth, having been recently been made from it. The characters in the story venture out onto the sea during a full moon, when the water’s surface is like a mirror. This flatness allows them to balance a ladder within a boat so as to climb up and transition from the Earth’s atmosphere into that of the Moon’s. The space above becomes the space below once the characters travel into the Moon’s atmosphere—up becomes down, and down becomes up. The surface of space is crossed while a transition is made between one image and another, as between one depth of surface and another. Looking up from the Moon, the surface of the water on Earth hangs above the characters and becomes an image, an image that was only a moment before a depth of space. Within the story, the space between the Earth and the Moon is brought together and composed, making space transition between surface and depth.

In Shirreff’s photographic video works, such as *Moon*, surface is made subject and framed as the primary material quality of photography. The surface of a surface, as a

⁴³ Cadava, *Words of Light*, 93. Also see chapters “Matter” and “Reflections.”

⁴⁴ Italo Calvino, “The Distance of the Moon,” in *The Complete Cosmicomics*, trans. Martin McLaughlin, Tim Parks, and William Weaver (New York: Penguin Classics, 2009), 3–19.

doubling of surface, creates contrast where flatness is no longer flat but composed of depth. A depth that was always there, as between the surfaces, but is only now made visible and given presence. Within the *blue hour*—as space where depth cannot rely on the contrast created by direct light—an absence of contrast exists. This absence of contrast brings the near and the far together, it immerses the space-time in the depth of surface as imagistic space. In similar fashion, *Moon* seeks to make visible the depths of the surface of the photograph by expanding the space of flatness associated with photography. This is done through the composition of surfaces, a position that questions the veracity of the flatness of photography as surface without depth.

In considering *Moon*, what is the relation to the photographic frame inside which the composition takes place? In a frame that does not move, duration can be conceived as a composition of time and space. Within this frame, movement takes place, especially in the eye that wanders about it. Eduardo Cadava provides an important theoretical relation between movement and photography when he writes, “[b]y retaining the traces of past and future—a past and future it nonetheless transforms—the photograph sustains the presence of movement, the pulses whose rhythm marks the afterlife of what has been understood, within the movement it gorgonizes.”⁴⁵ If photography is not in any singular sense then, now, or in the future, it must still have a form of duration, as a space-time relation that is not fixed but rather is in transition and in the process of becoming. *Moon* represents photography in duration as a pulsing rhythm composed from still photographic images taken one at a time. The camera does not move, nor does the frame shift or alter. The photographs are transformed through the presence of movement as a transition between lightness and darkness. It is useful to consider Shirreff’s work in relation to the “durational photograph” as a concept of photographic time that is “mobile” and located in the idea of duration as “incomplete time.”⁴⁶ Movement, as transition, is created through duration. But photography, as a process of transition and becoming, has never been

⁴⁵ Cadava, *Words of Light*, 60.

⁴⁶ “Interview with Owen Kydd,” in *Aperture* (blog), Spring, 2013, <http://www.aperture.org/blog/interview-with-owen-kydd/>. For more on “durational photographs” refer to my discussion in the “Studio Framing Floor” section of this dissertation.

“still.” This is a foggy space, an atmosphere thick with uncertain depth.

In Shirreff’s work, the space between photography and video has become increasingly porous. The processes, technology, and subject engaged in the production of *Moon* place it in relation to a photographic discourse. The current overlap and oscillation between processes develops a weaving together. By questioning this work in relation to specific discourses, it is used as a lever to open further investigations into the fringe areas of what photography is, and of what it is becoming. For Shirreff, her photography-video work has no beginning or end; rather, “every moment within it contains it.”⁴⁷ This is synonymous with the space-time of photography and the *blue hour*, in which time detaches from a linear progression and the experience of space unfolds in duration.

⁴⁷ See the video “Erin Shirreff Takes Her Time.”



Figure 4. *Top*, Erin Shirreff, video still from *Moon*, 2010. Color video, silent, 32 min. loop.

Figure 5. *Bottom*, Erin Shirreff, *Moon*, 2012, installation view, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, Ontario.

Expanding Field

The previous chapter considered photography through the idea of the *blue hour* and positioned it in relation to fluidity, transition, and an unfixed state of becoming. Keeping these ideas in mind, I will now consider the photographic as expanding field. Two concepts that I will question—hybridity and medium specificity—provide context for the re-positioning of photography as not simply set within an expanding field, but ontologically reliant on continual expansion. This situates photography as a process of transitions and transformations that I term *becoming*. For the purposes of this dissertation, Deleuze's term is conceived as the continual return of difference contained within the movement present in changes *between* particular events (or states), in which the very dynamism of change is located between heterogeneous terms in an interstitial space that has no end-state.⁴⁸ Becoming, as a process “is not one of imitation or analogy, it is generative of a new way of being that is a function of influences rather than resemblances.”⁴⁹ I consider this *becoming* process of the photographic in relation to a conception of “being haunted” as the state of being and existing interstitially, much like the hyphen found hidden within “photo-graphy” itself. Following this, I use a selection of photographic works to develop a conversation with photography's expanding field. These works and practices affirm not paths out of photography, but conversely, movements leading deeper within the photographic.

From Hybridity to Constellation

Within Wall's seminal text, “Frames of Reference,” two key points develop that deserve consideration. Namely, the term “hybrid forms,” which references a mixing of photography with other mediums, and the notion of the “confines of photography.” With respect to the first point, the blending of photography with things outside of itself often

⁴⁸ Cliff Stagoll, “Becoming,” in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. Adrian Parr (New York: Columbia U P, 2005), 26.

⁴⁹ David Heckman, “Gotta Catch 'Em All: Glossary,” *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge*, No. 5 (Fall 2002), <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue5/poke/glossary.html>.

leads to unconvincing hybrids, which are unconvincing due to the loss of autonomy when one thing is made hybrid with another and subsequently made reliant on the other.⁵⁰

Photography's strength is not located in its ability to merge oppositions into a singular position or state, but rather in its ability to exist interstitially between conflicting, and often paradoxical, positions and states. Wall notes:

Photography...had a very specific nature as an art form and a medium, and combining it with other things resulted in nothing new as photography but only the reduction of photographs to elements in a collage aesthetic that was not subject to judgment in photographic terms....⁵¹

A more fitting model of photographic relations can be found in the form of the *constellation*. I use the term constellation to designate a non-linear system that offers the potential for a simultaneous specificity and multiplicity to exist through an allowance for separation and contact between constituent parts. What is kept through the transition between the singular states (such as stars) to assemblages of parts (such as celestial spheres) becomes an essential quality to being, while the potential of unity and separation allows for autonomy in the qualities of relation between the part and the whole.

I first encountered the concept of a “constellation” in relation to photographic theory in Mark Godfrey’s essay on Christopher Williams.⁵² Of particular interest in this text is how Godfrey places emphasis not only on the traditional photographic print, but also on what was untraditionally photographic in Williams’ work: his process of production and installation. To this end, constellations are formed through the specific placement of images and other artworks in order to develop conversations between works within the space of exhibition. Allowing for a situation of separation, autonomy is maintained while

⁵⁰ Jeff Wall, “Frames of Reference,” in *Jeff Wall Selected Essays and Interviews* (New York: MOMA, 2007), 175.

⁵¹ Wall, “Frames of Reference,” 175.

⁵² See Mark Godfrey, “Cameras, Corn, Christopher Williams, and the Cold War,” *October*, No. 126 (Fall 2008): 137–139.

also offering the potential of overlap and seepage that presents questions and challenges to photography and the language with which it constructs meaning.

The second point of consideration in “Frames of Reference” is a framing of photography that would limit it from things outside of itself in order that it stay within the “confines of photography.” From this, the positioning of “something new for photography,” and all the potential that might expand from it, closes to become fixed within a boundary. Wall adopts a specific approach to thinking through the relations that photography can have as a medium, and it is important to recognize his efforts to bring photography into conversation with mediums that he believed had interrelated and shared aesthetic criteria.⁵³ As he reflects, “[t]o consider photography only within its own frame of reference, within the context of the standards established by the documentary tradition, seemed to condemn it to a restricted status given the ‘expanded field’”⁵⁴

By conceiving photography through a theoretical position that opens it up to relations outside of itself, the proposition is made that this is specifically how photography operates—through indexical relations that are based within the photographic as a looking outwards in order to bring, and transition meaning, within. In support of this view, curator Matthew Thompson notes, “[p]hotography has always borrowed liberally from other disciplines. ... There has never been a singular act or process, just *one* type of photography.”⁵⁵ An ontology of photography emerges from the questioning of qualities of being and the development of meaning, which is achieved within the photographic when it extends and overlaps in relation to the concerns of divergent methods, technologies, materials, and practices.

Photography is neither contained, nor a medium of hybridity. Its autonomy exists in an ability to fluidly compose itself through adaptation to the antagonisms of its environment. In relation to this, we can consider the two points Rosalind Krauss provides in her meditation on mediums in the “post-medium” condition:

⁵³ Wall, “Frames of Reference,” 175.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁵⁵ Thompson, *The Anxiety of Photography*, 67.

First, that the specificity of mediums, even modernist ones, must be understood as differential, self-differing, and thus as a layering of conventions never simply collapsed into the physicality of their support.... Second, that it is precisely the onset of higher orders of technology...which allows us, by rendering older techniques outmoded, to grasp the inner complexity of the mediums those techniques support.⁵⁶

To comprehend photography's field, it needs to be understood as immensely varied and constantly changing—in part, this is due to a direct relationship with technology.⁵⁷ Photography is rooted in both a drawing from the outside in and a deepening, along with condensing, of its own archive of past processes, methods, technologies, and materials. Why would something outside a contemporary conception of photography *not* be able to provide valid questions and positions to challenge it? Through interactions with things that exist apart from photography—and subsequently become internalized, meaning recomposed and positioned into relation from within—the expansion of the photographic is made possible.

In a photograph, a smooth surface—a small field, if you will—is represented as supported by rigid beams of wood (as seen through a square hole cut through the surface). The beams are set in an ordered geometric pattern that demonstrates the structured nature of the hidden support system.⁵⁸ This is the example Krauss uses to open her essay, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” in which she exposes the underlying structure of sculptures’ expanded field while positioning the medium of sculpture as

⁵⁶ Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 53.

⁵⁷ There are numerous texts that deal with the relations between photography and technology. Notable amongst them in the development of this research are Johnathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT, 1992); Batchen, *Burning With Desire*; Elkins, *What Photography Is*; Krauss, “Photography’s Discursive Spaces,” in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton (Cambridge: MIT P, 1989); and, Thompson, *The Anxiety of Photography*.

⁵⁸ This is a description of Mary Miss’ *Perimeters/Pavilions/Decoys* (1978), which is depicted in a photograph at the beginning of Krauss’ “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” *October*, Vol. 8 (Spring 1979).

having an internal logic, and a set of rules as a historically bounded category.⁵⁹ The model that Krauss establishes and applies is exceptional for its logic, rationalism, and clarity of mapping a highly complex subject. Structuralist in nature, Krauss' mapping of the expanded field takes form through the expansion of a set of binaries, transformed into quaternaries, that establish the "field" symmetrically. A visual order is offered as diagrammatic plan for the medium of sculpture, its movement planned and controlled (*predetermined*) through the static model.

Photography exists today in a very different moment than it did some 35 years ago.⁶⁰ However, we can take away the great lessons of Krauss' expanded field: that mediums will *expand*, marking out movement in which art and world will exist in new and recently unimaginable relations to each other.⁶¹ For Krauss, the domain of the expanded field is in direct relation to the practice of individual artists. This takes place in the acknowledgment that artists occupy different places within the expanded field, and, while I do not think it was Krauss' direct intention to make such a statement, I believe the methodology of her essay offers a consideration of artworks that press boundaries in order to access, "a deeper set of questions which pertain to something more than mapping and involve instead the problem of explanation."⁶²

The particular difficulty I have with applying Krauss' expanded field model to photography is that I do not position or conceive the photographic as static. Photography's ontological strength is specifically located in its fluidity, its potential to disrupt, challenge, and antagonize structural categorization. In a more recent essay, "Reinventing the Medium," Krauss revisits her concept of the expanded field in combination with medium specificity and relates them to the photographic as "the site of

⁵⁹ Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," 33.

⁶⁰ Baker wrote almost exactly the same statement 10 years ago, and surely someone will write this statement again in the future (with an adjustment to the quantity of time). See George Baker, "Photography's Expanded Field," *October*, no.114 (Fall 2005): 122.

⁶¹ Baker, "Photography's Expanded Field," 136.

⁶² Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," 44.

so many ontological cave-ins.”⁶³ The medium of photography is further posited as “theoretical object,” as losing its medium specificity to become, and set forth, the power of transformation.⁶⁴ The trouble, it would seem, is that photography’s logic is continually expanding and moving into interstitial spaces that position it in paradoxical relations to various rules and categories.

There have been a number of significant writings on photography and the expanded field since Krauss’ seminal text, but George Baker’s “Photography’s Expanded Field” is notable for the way it brings Krauss’ theoretical work on mediums into direct conversation with photography. As Baker states, photography:

...inherently resists the structural order and analysis of what Krauss called the expanded field. Perhaps, indeed, photography’s expanded field, unlike sculpture’s, might even have to be imagined as a group of expanded *fields*, multiple sets of oppositions and conjugations, rather than any singular operation.⁶⁵

For Baker, the issue here is to think through the medium of photography, and what he terms the “photographic effect,” in relation to a deconstruction rather than a de-centering that is based on a structuralism (and thus leads to urges of re-centering) implicit in Krauss’ expanded field model.⁶⁶ In response to Krauss’ model, Baker offers a conception of photography that exists without a center so that a photographic structure relying on centering and de-centering can be supplanted. Considering the qualities of the model that Baker has conceived, there are forms that appear to offer the space for questioning structures with centers that he seeks. Two such forms, which I consider as potential models for photography, are the constellation and the rhizome. As analogous models, they exist paradoxically to one another, the former floating and connected to the sense of sight in the light of stars, and the latter resting in the subterranean underneath

⁶³ Rosalind Krauss, “Reinventing The Medium,” *Critical Inquiry*, no.2 (Winter 1999): 290.

⁶⁴ Rosalind Krauss, “Reinventing The Medium,” 292.

⁶⁵ Baker, “Photography’s Expanded Field,” 124.

⁶⁶ Baker, “Photography’s Expanded Field,” 138.

and tied to the sense of touch in roots that spread in darkness. They have similarities in structure that draw them together and contradictions of relation that push them apart. This interstitial space mirrors the paradoxes of photography: immateriality, lightness, and the optical versus materiality, darkness, and the tactile. The constellation as rhizome, and rhizome as constellation, can be used as a metaphor for the organizational activity of a photographic ontology.⁶⁷ Of importance is that we do not retreat from the expanded field of photography, but rather question its potential closures in order to further open the medium's multiple logics as a field with extensions in every direction.⁶⁸

Interstitial

Photography is positioned, for as long as there has been light, as having always existed. As two prominent theorists on photography note, there has “[n]ever been a time without the photograph, without the residue and writing of light.”⁶⁹ And, “[f]ollowing the logic of difference, in one sense photography has indeed always been; there has never not been a photography. What is photosynthesis, after all, but an organic world of light writing?”⁷⁰ How is it that photography, something positioned as always having existed, retains what Baker calls its “notorious epistemological slipperiness”?⁷¹ The issue at hand is a question of meaning and its construction in photographic terms. Baker finds an answer in the placement of the photographic—as a medium in relation to an expanding field—in the “tearing of photography between oppositional extremes.”⁷² When we focus on photography and try to pin it down, its fluidity necessitates the consideration of a scattering of time and space in relation to lightness and darkness. For philosopher Vilem Flusser this consideration of the photographic becomes a questioning that must develop

⁶⁷ For more on the rhizome as process ontology and form of organization see Scott Lawley, “Deleuze’s Rhizome and the Study of Organization: Conceptual Movement and an Open Future,” *Tamara* 3, No.3 (2012): A43.

⁶⁸ Baker, “Photography’s Expanded Field,” 138.

⁶⁹ Cadava, *Words of Light*, 5.

⁷⁰ Batchen, *Burning With Desire*, 183.

⁷¹ Baker, “Photography’s Expanded Field,” 124.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 125.

while understanding that “the act of photography is like going on a hunt...for new states of things, situations never seen before, for the improbable, for information. The structure of the act of photography is a quantum one: a doubt made up of points of hesitation and points of decision-making.”⁷³ The act of questioning photography is a process, a space in which there is no fixity but only transitions at angle to the various photographic states of becoming that unfold in time.

The concept of an expanded field has been used to delineate the boundaries of the photographic, its structure, and potential for expansion. It is important to re-position photography as existing as a questioning that makes possible conversation and relations between separate (often conflicting) points. Photography is frustrating for its oppositions, for its paradoxes. Yet, it provides an interstitial space for difficult conversations and relations to take place, such as the reworking and reconceiving of relations of separation. Within this position, photography is able, “to recast the categories of things, to see and group them differently according to more fugitive principles of analogy and affinity.”⁷⁴ Developing from this action is the ability to reflect upon photography as a questioning of relations and positions of being.

Transition

Reflecting on the term “medium,” I will now relate it to the photographic as implying an intervening stage: a transitional space.⁷⁵ This conception of medium as connected to transition is elucidated in Tom Gunning’s “To Scan a Ghost: The Ontology of Mediated Vision.” He focuses his attention “on the term *medium* itself, in all its polysemy and historical divagations, its very materiality, and its paradoxical aspiration to immateriality.”⁷⁶ On the subject of medium, Gunning finds an apt metaphor in the

⁷³ Vilem Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 39.

⁷⁴ Rexer, *The Edge of Vision*, 190.

⁷⁵ Thompson, *The Anxiety of Photography*, 68.

⁷⁶ Tom Gunning, “To Scan a Ghost: The Ontology of Mediated Vision,” *Grey Room*, No. 26 (Winter 2007): 97–98.

ghostly, which he relates to the haunted space of photography. He does this while remarking, “The essential aspect of a ghost, its terrifying presence, comes from this uncertainty, this problematic relation to the senses and therefore to our sense of the world. One can, of course, discuss this uncertainty in terms of the ontology of the phantom itself, its mode of existence ambiguously perched between the living and the dead, the material and the incorporeal, rather than its mode of being perceived.”⁷⁷ In short, a grasping of photography and the phantom can be located in their uncertainty—the ways in which they exist interstitially—understood as both incorporeal and material. In drawing further on the metaphor of the ghostly, Gunning writes that “seeing through a phantom does not mean overlooking a ghost, instead the transparency of vision terrifies the viewer. They appear to us, but they also elude us as they do not let us grasp them.”⁷⁸ The medium of photography as phantom and ghostly appears while eluding the grasp that would hold it in place.

The paradoxical position between absence and presence, as pertaining to material constructs and immaterial desires, produces a fundamental anxiety within the photographic. As Thompson notes, “Jean-Louis Gault explains... ‘[t]hat impossibility to give an ultimate answer to the question about desire maintains desire as a question. That question without answer is the cause of anxiety.’ Photography’s anxiety stems from the fact that photography becomes this question without an answer.”⁷⁹ In transitioning through continual movement, photography struggles with never reaching nor finding an answer to the desire of knowing, of grasping a fixed meaning that, if obtained, would gorgonize it in place and time. The power of photography thus lies in its potential to remain a question. It achieves this status through its ability to reside in the deferral of providing an answer *now* in order to open possibilities in the future. In relation to these thoughts, I turn to Cadava, who writes, “The photograph is always related to something

⁷⁷ Gunning, “To Scan a Ghost,” 103.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁷⁹ Thompson, *The Anxiety of Photography*, 73. Quoting Jean-Louis Gault, “The Option of Anxiety,” *International Lacanian Review*, No. 2 (October 1995), <http://www.lacanianreview.com.br/n2/pdf/artigos/JLOption.pdf>.

other than itself. Sealing the traces of the past within its space-crossed image, it also lets itself be (re)touched by its relation to the future.”⁸⁰

Hyphen

Within photography, there is a simultaneous separation and connection. It exists invisibly, touching upon two things, light and graphing, acting as the bridge between them. Is it in this bridge that we can find photography’s desire to exist interstitially? Is it even appropriate to ask such questions, knowing photography’s silence and the difficulty it has in providing graspable answers?⁸¹ Speaking to desire, while positioning it at the inception of the photographic medium, theorist Geoffrey Batchen turns to founding proto-photographer William Henry Fox Talbot, writing:

It seems that [Talbot] was able to describe the identity of photography only by harnessing together a whole series of binaries: art and shadows, the natural and magic, the momentary and the forever, the fleeting and the fettered, the fixed and that which is capable of change. Photography was for Talbot, the desire for an impossible conjunction of transience and fixity. More than that, it was an emblematic something/sometime, a “space of a single minute” in which space *becomes* time, and time space.⁸²

In these thoughts, relations are sought that pose questions as *impossible conjunctions*, deconstruct binaries, and reject reductive positioning. It is important to consider the essential connection that Batchen makes when he states; “‘Photo-Graphy’ marked not only the interval between two things but also the operation of continually setting those

⁸⁰ Cadava, *Words of Light*, 63.

⁸¹ For more on the mute and silent state of photography, refer to such texts as Victor Burgin, “Looking at Photographs,” in *Thinking Photography*, ed. Victor Burgin (London: Macmillan, 1982); Vilhelm Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*; Rosalind Krauss, “Photography’s Discursive Spaces;” and, John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capturing of Meaning*.

⁸² Batchen, *Burning With Desire*, 91. (Author’s emphasis)

things aside. As Derrida describes such an operation, ‘It marks what is set aside from itself, what interrupts every self-identity, every punctual assemblage of the self, every self-homogeneity, self-interiority.’⁸³ We might further conceive this position of the hyphen that rests within photography as an aperture—the passage between non-linear and linear—in the dual actions of scattering (light) and structuring (graph). The hyphen is not at the center of photography—in the same way that the aperture is not at the center of the camera—and yet it stabilizes a tumultuous relation. With no center, the hyphen becomes photography while photography, folding back on itself, becomes the hyphen. What if, following Batchen and his positioning of photography in desire, an ontology of photography is not located in a fixed point, but rather understood as interstitial space in which a quality of relationships and associations move us from understandings of structural forms relying on binaries and static opposition, to being within the space of conjunction that takes its form in the post-structural.⁸⁴

The hyphen provides a mode to graph the light, and can be used to position light as punctured by darkness while illuminating photography’s position as set between absence and presence.⁸⁵ It is useful to situate this concept in relation to Eduardo Cadava’s reflections on Walter Benjamin’s writings on photography, and specifically on the relation of lightness and darkness. In doing so, we can consider the photographic and its questioning of the world as, “[a]sking us to think of the rhythm between likeness and unlikeness, being and nonbeing, seeing and not seeing, the question registers the rhythms at the heart of photography.”⁸⁶ In *Words of Light*, Cadava beautifully evokes this question

⁸³ Batchen, *Burning With Desire*, 102. Quoting Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1981), 106.

⁸⁴ Geoffrey Batchen, “Camera Lucida: Another Little History of Photography,” in *Photography Degree Zero: Reflection on Roland Barthes’s Camera Lucida*, ed. Geoffrey Batchen (Cambridge: MIT, 2011), 268.

⁸⁵ When speaking of punctures in relation to photography, a reference must be made to Roland Barthes and his seminal text *Camera Lucida* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), in which the concept of *punctum* is introduced. Due to the exceeding amount of attention this term has received in photographic theory, and the number of texts devoted to the term, I will not delve into it here. An insightful and engaging consideration of these topics can be found in Batchen, *Photography Degree Zero*.

⁸⁶ Cadava, *Words of Light*, 127.

of meaning by positing photography's quality of relations in an understanding of light itself. To this effect, Cadava writes:

This similarity that emerges only in order to vanish, this oscillation between appearance and disappearance, can be read in the light of a star. This light, which in a flash travels across thousands of light-years, figures an illumination in which the present bears within it the most distant past and where the distant past suddenly traverses the present moment. This emergence of the past within the present, of what is most distant in what is closest at hand, suggests that, like the flash of similarity, starlight appears only in its withdrawal. It also suggests that the star constellation is another name for the experience of aura. Like the photograph that presents what is no longer there, starlight names the trace of a celestial body that has long since vanished. The star is always a kind of ruin. That its light is never identical to itself, is never revealed as such, means that it is always inhabited by a certain distance or darkness.⁸⁷

Photography, after Benjamin and Cadava, can be located in the simultaneous illumination (lightness) and blindness (darkness) of a space-time between the advancement and the withdrawal of light. This *space-crossed-time* of the photographic proposes an ability to exist interstitially, as in the potential conversion from one thing to another.⁸⁸

What is this darkness within photography, its blindness? We can look at photography as full of closures—the aperture, the shutter, the positions of singular ontologies and histories—but also as an eye that is simultaneously shut and open.⁸⁹ In relation to darkness, to obstructions, light forms an echo. Light deflects askew, and as such, has the potential of not appearing in the moment and re-appearing through an alternate passage at an alternate time (see Figure 6). This quality of relation allows for the advancement and withdrawal of light in which meaning is simultaneously fixed and in the potential process

⁸⁷ Cadava, *Words of Light*, 29–30.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

of becoming. This concept of deflection is essential for the understanding of photography and the possibility of both seeing and comprehending the image. As Cadava makes clear, “...this moment of deflection and interruption also names the condition of perception in general: like the light that would make it possible, perception can occur only to the extent that it is interrupted, that it cannot pursue its way.”⁹⁰ Cadava, continuing his contemplation, remarks that this deflection of light “...is essential to the possibility of an image’s emergence. Light can in fact only give way to an image when its path is impeded, when it is turned away from its course. In other words, to be what it is, to be revealed, light must be interrupted.”⁹¹ Cadava’s reflections on Benjamin offer photography in the form of a simultaneous illumination and blindness. In this form, it has the ability to haunt, through the oscillation of starlight that speaks to both a pertinent “nowness” and a distantness of the past. These stars, as constellation, demand an understanding that acknowledges starlight as an appearance in withdrawal, as trace over time and space.⁹² After Cadava (and Benjamin through refraction), it will be useful, going forward, to think of light as the matter of the photographic and that this matter is displaced. The “—” is present, even when visibly absent in the term “photography.” It does not mark a straight path of relation between binaries, paradoxes, and oppositions. Rather, it traces a quality of relation as existence, as being—not fixed, but in the transition that is becoming—both advancing and withdrawing between lightness and darkness.

⁹⁰ Cadava, *Words of Light*, 93.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, 30.

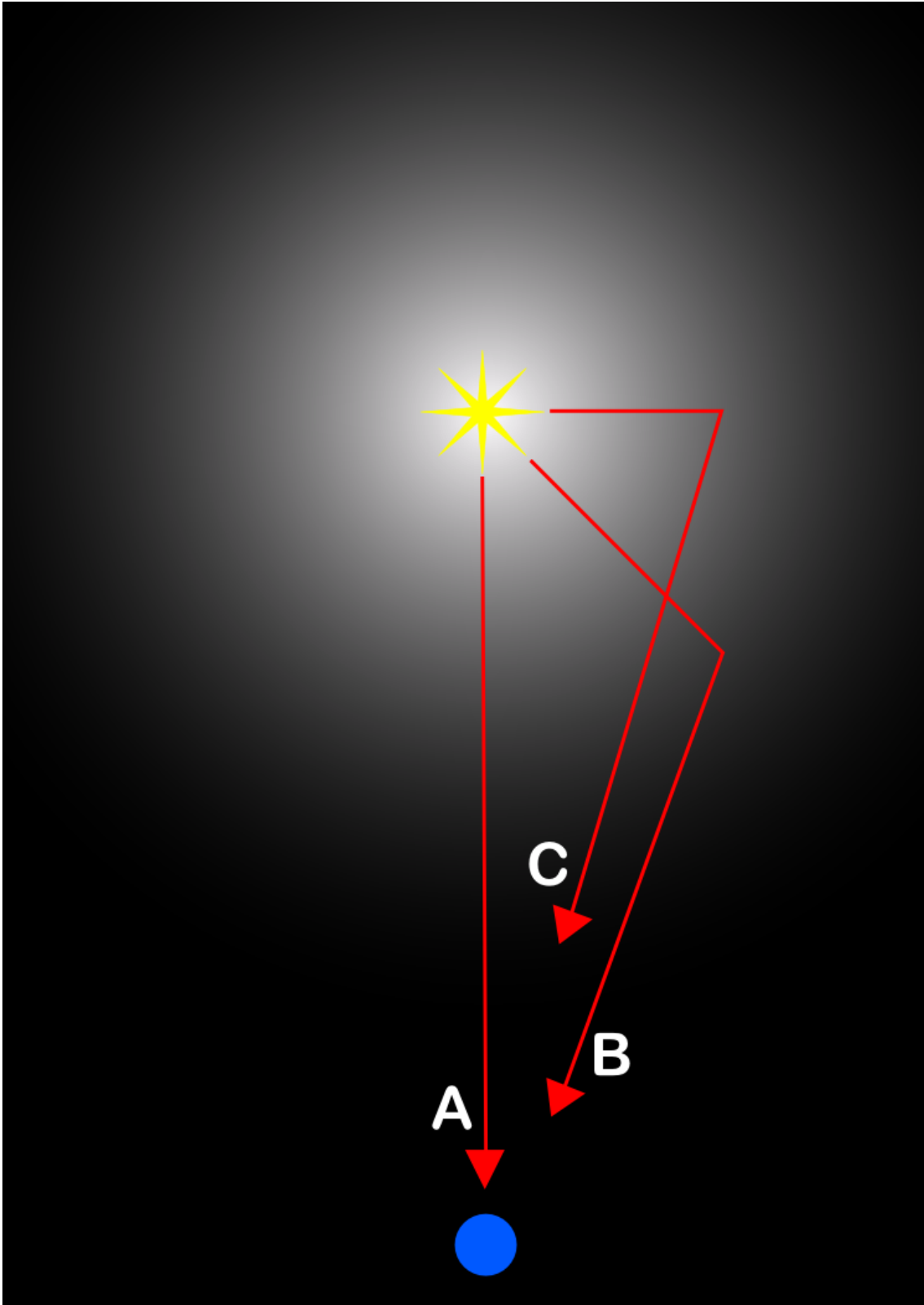


Figure 6. “Light echo.” A phenomenon observed in astronomy and produced when light is reflected off a source, such as intervening interstellar dust, to arrive at the viewer some time after the initial flash. (See “Light echo,” *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Light_echo)

An Expanding Field of Photography: Works and Practices

Photography exists in a state of continual transition and transformation (as *becoming*), which is made possible through the constant shifting and adjustment of its boundaries. To comprehend an ontology of photography *as* an expanding field, it is useful to reference Batchen's observation that:

...the boundary between photography and other media like painting, sculpture, and performance has been made increasingly porous, leaving the photographic residing everywhere but nowhere in particular...Like a ghost, the apparition of the photographic continues to surprise us with its presence...In other words, even if photography as a separate entity may be fast disappearing, the photographic as a vocabulary, of conventions and references lives on in ever-expanding splendor. Photography is a logic that continually returns to haunt itself. It is its own 'medium.'⁹³

The photographic is not fixed to one form but rather engages materials, technologies, and processes as a "vocabulary" and "logic" that has developed, is developing, and will continue to develop.

In light of this past-present-future relation, and in an attempt to keep open the questions of photography (as contained in the question "What is photography?"), I will reflect on a selection of contemporary works that engage the expansion of photographic meaning.⁹⁴ This selection of works relates in form to that of the constellation, conceived in connection to how Eduardo Cadava describes the term as consisting of differences of force and meaning that depict heterogeneous inscriptions and transcriptions as well as a blast that discloses the breaks, within history, from which history emerges.⁹⁵ These

⁹³ Batchen, *Burning with Desire*, 216.

⁹⁴ Within this dissertation, there is a bias towards a consideration of photography's intersections with sculpture and video. The purpose here is to build a vocabulary and discourse that provides context for the author's artwork as practice-based research, which will be discussed at greater length in the second part of this dissertation.

⁹⁵ Cadava, *Words of Light*, 60.

breaks create interstitial areas—spaces between one position and another—as a field in which photography resides and expands paradoxically, both inwards (to become denser and clear) and outwards (to become scattered and opaque).

Cutaways

With these thoughts in mind, we can consider a pair of photographic works by Christopher Williams. The first (see Figure 7), *Cutaway model Switar 25mm f1.4 AR. Glass, wood and brass. Douglas M. Parker Studio, Glendale, California, November 17, 2007–November 30, 2007, (2008)*; and the second (see figure 8), *Cutaway model Nikon Em. Shutter: Electronically governed Seiko metal blade shutter, vertical travel with speeds from 1/1000 to 1 second, with a manual speed of 1/90th. Meter: Center-weighted Silicon Photo Diode, ASA 25-1600, EV 2-18 [with ASA film and 1.8 lens]. Aperture Priority automatic exposure. Lens Mount: Nikon F mount, Al coupling [and later] only. Flash: Synchronization at 1/90 via hot shoe. Flash automation with Nikon SB-E or SB-10 flash units. Focusing: K type focusing screen, not user interchangeable, with 3mm diagonal split image rangefinder. Batteries: Two PX-76 or equivalent. Dimensions: 5.3" x 3.38" x 2.13" [135mm x 86mm x 54mm], 16.2 oz [460g]. Fotostudio Axel Gnad, Düsseldorf October 17, 2008 [b&w], (2009)*. These titles provide a context of their making—the location, the time, and notes on information pertinent to the production of the image. The titles are burdensome in length, weighing and slowing down the quickness of photography. Additionally, titles are often not placed in close proximity to the works; they must be sought, carried around (as a gallery's title list for instance). This gesture makes tangible the burden of the photograph's muteness—its inability to fully speak for itself or provide its own context.

In Williams' work, I am interested in the way he questions the quality of relations between photographic image, the installation of the photograph, and the viewer. He does this not only by producing technically seductive photographic prints but also by developing strategies that engage, through careful consideration and precise execution, the situations in which photography is viewed and experienced. As we have considered,

the choice of title is one such element; another, is the particular placement of photographs, not only in singular exhibitions but also in their movement from one exhibition to another. Williams places photographs in shifting relations, their context solidifies in the space-time of their viewing within a specific exhibition, while allowing for the possibility and potential of change through future iterations. Meaning, and the importance of photography, is not situated solely within the photographic print itself. Instead, it is located in the spaces of separation that are a primary quality of photography. Curator Mark Godfrey connects Williams' practice to the concept of the constellation by expressing how works exist apart from each other while being connected and grouped through the gaps between them, which form relations of separation that are an essential quality of photography and its potential to develop meaning.⁹⁶

These two works of Williams' visually point to photography's relations of separation—its qualities of deconstruction and dissemblance. The lens, as the cycloptic eye of photography, is cut away to expose—through itself as apparatus and photographic print—the internal workings and the gaps between parts. By doing so, it is possible to see that the parts are extremely close-fitting, but include spaces of varying distances. The setting of a gray, neutral background invites our eye to focus and take its time to navigate the imagistic space. We are looking at photography within these photographs. The context of photography is framed and engaged in order to question the photographic by revealing the quality of organization it proposes and materializes. The distance of separation is both far and near. We see inside photography not only through the image as a material photographic print, but also, through the immaterial interactions that establish the context of photography as it is being viewed. These photographs make visible, in the subject of their image, the invisible, and through their making visible, they address the separation of our view from an understanding of photographic relations.

⁹⁶ See Godfrey, "Cameras, Corn, Christopher Williams," 139.



Figure 7. Christopher Williams, *Cutaway model Switar 25mm f1.4 AR*. Glass, wood and brass. Douglas M. Parker Studio, Glendale, California, November 17, 2007–November 30, 2007, 2008. C-print, 20 x 24 in. (50.8 x 61 cm).



Figure 8. Christopher Williams, *Cutaway model Nikon Em*. Shutter: Electronically governed Seiko metal blade shutter, vertical travel with speeds from 1/1000 to 1 second, with a manual speed of 1/90th. Meter: Center-weighted Silicon Photo Diode, ASA 25-1600, EV 2-18 [with ASA film and 1.8 lens]. Aperture Priority automatic exposure. Lens Mount: Nikon F mount, Al coupling [and later] only. Flash: Synchronization at 1/90 via hot shoe. Flash automation with Nikon SB-E or SB-10 flash units. Focusing: K type focusing screen, not user interchangeable, with 3mm diagonal split image rangefinder. Batteries: Two PX-76 or equivalent. Dimensions: 5.3" x 3.38" x 2.13" [135mm x 86mm x 54mm], 16.2 oz [460g]. Fotostudio Axel Gnad, Düsseldorf October 17, 2008 [b&w], 2009. Gelatin silver print, 20 x 24 in. (50.8 x 61 cm).

Constellation, Grotto, and Wallpaper

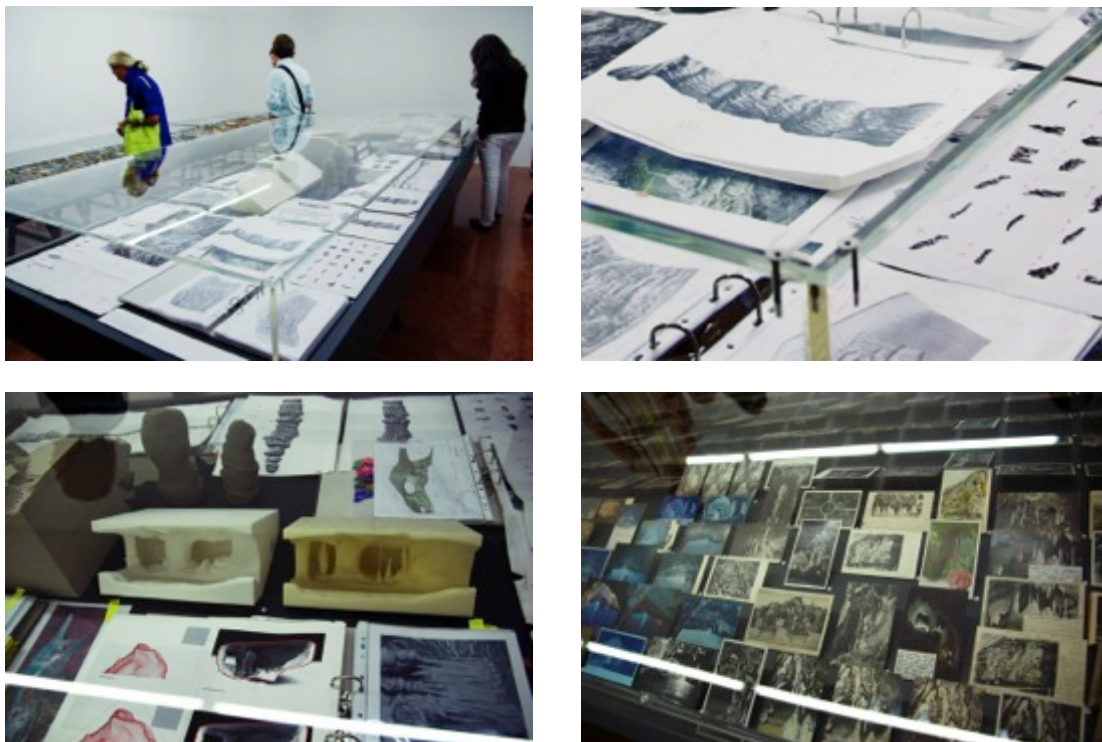
An expanse of sky stretches before the eye. Slightly off-center, dark blue coalesces and, through its vibrancy, gradually withdraws. In contrast, stars as small pinpricks of light puncture the darkness that is depth. Wavering, the starlight is unsure whether to reveal the flatness of a surface that obscures depth. The depth is not only in the image, but also in the photographic practice that developed it as photography. *Constellation* (2000) (see Figure 9) is an intriguing example of Thomas Demand's work in which life-sized sets, made entirely from paper, are produced in order to be made into large photographic prints. Given his method of producing paper models at life scale, the question arises of how could he have achieved this for the night sky. It seems an impossibility, a work set in relation to his body of work that acts as the cut-out stars in the image—a puncture leading to the acknowledgement of the translation of his subjects into the imagistic space of the photograph. In *Constellation*, perspective is relative to the situation in which the sky is viewed. As such, the scale can be adjusted, just as the sky varies in size dependent on the angle and distance from which it is viewed—for instance, through the viewfinder of a large format camera at 8x10 inches versus the frame of an observatory dome at say 8x10 feet. The scale of the sky can be set by Demand in any relation of his choosing.

In this work the highlights, as white stars, are holes made into the foreground paper's surface that is a stand-in for the night sky. The actual background behind the paper, made from white surface and glaring lights, paradoxically appears to sit on the surface of the sky. Or, does the advancement and withdrawal of the white light position it *in* the sky, as in the image, while occupying the thin space between foreground and background? In any case, the background is made foreground, conflating the distance and depth between them. Further disrupting distance and depth, the work positions the sky as paper, used materially to shape an imagistic space, within the photographic image set upon the material support of photographic paper. The materiality of photography folds into itself as a support of both the photographic image and as a support of the subject depicted within the imagistic space of the photograph. Demand not only takes photographs, he shapes them; in doing so, his process questions the photographic space between the material/immaterial and object/image.



Figure 9. *Top*, Thomas Demand, *Constellation*, 2000. Digital Chromogenic print mounted on Diasec, 51 7/8 x 70 7/8 in. (130 x 180 cm).

Figure 10. *Bottom*, Thomas Demand, *Grotto*, 2006. Chromogenic print mounted on Diasec, 80 x 173 in. (198 x 440 cm)



Figures 11, 12, 13 and 14. Thomas Demand, installation views of *Processo Grotto* (research materials for *Grotto*, 2006), Fondazione Prade at Isola S. G. Maggiore in Venice, 2006.

Demand's *Grotto* (2006) (see Figure 10), takes us through the punctured holes in *Constellation* to make visible the depth of photographic space on the other side of flatness. The cave in this work depicts a rupturing of space by showing a view from within that leads without. It positions the viewer in the darkness standing in the path of light that illuminates from the outside in. Space, in *Grotto*, appears very physical; constructed from the flatness of material fixed upon its self, it forms both a density and depth. The relation of light to physical space is tangible to the eye through highlights that represent surfaces and shadows that represent depth of material. In this photograph, it is not an illusion of space that captures our attention, but the scale and construction of the space illuminated by the reflection of light falling into it.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Demand produced the form of the cave not in “correct” proportion but so that it appeared in proportion to the camera and as a photograph. Also, it is notable that Demand had the cave built with layers of paperboard that mimicked the pattern of digital pixels. For more on this technique,

The image is fascinating because of the processes by which material space translates into imagistic space. That is by the relation between image and material, which is highlighted in the physical processes Demand undertook in the making of the space for the photograph. Further complicating the relationship between image and object is Demand's integration of these processes into the exhibition of the work (see Figures 11, 12, 13, and 14) through the inclusion of vitrines containing test images of the cave-set both finished and in the process of construction; models for the cave; digital renderings; and a variety of other documents. Demand positions photography not as singular image and moment, but as a project of durational process. Standing before his very large prints, a viewer sees the seams of construction, of the subject and the photograph. As such, the illusion is not total; if it were, the images would not succeed, as they would not capture our eye by inviting it inside for a closer review. Demand's photographic image and subject are not confined to an existence in the past that no longer exists. On the contrary, they form a connection between the image and its material in the past, present, and future tense of viewing.

In Demand's work, he uses paper—traditionally a support material for a photograph—in a variety of sculptural and installation processes. Notably, his photographic practice has recently expanded through the production of animations (made with life-size paper sets) and the installation of photographs as wallpaper (see Figures 15 and 16).⁹⁸ This decision to fold image and support material (paper) into itself and then back out again (by creating the physical object of the depicted image) further complicates this relationship. In comparison to his framed photographs, the wallpaper brings the gap between the material and image spatially closer to the viewer. The photographs of subjects made from paper

see Tamara Trodd. "Thomas Demand, Jeff Wall and Sherrie Levine: Deforming 'Pictures'," in *Photography After Conceptual Art*, eds. Diarmuid Costello and Margaret Iversen (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 141.

⁹⁸ Demand's wallpaper works are large photographic prints mounted directly onto a gallery wall. He has used them both on their own as solitary photographic works for an exhibition – Thomas Demand installation "Saal," at Stadel Museum, Frankfurt, 2011; and, as a backdrop onto which his framed photographic prints are exhibited – "Thomas Demand: Animations," at DHC/ART, Montreal, 2013.

allude to this complication between the material and immaterial, which is inherent within photography. Demand's straight photographs, works like *Constellation*, visibly *conceal* this complication within imagistic space; whereas, the works developed directly as installation visibly *reveal* it.



Figure 15. *Top*, Thomas Demand, installation view of “Saal,” Stadel Museum, Frankfurt, 2011.
Figure 16. *Bottom*, Thomas Demand, installation view of “Thomas Demand: Animations,” DHC/ART, 2013.

Desperate Island

Desperate Island (2010), a series of works by Pascal Grandmaison, is perhaps not photography. Nevertheless, it challenges how photography is understood. The works within this series are made using the process of shaping photographic backdrop paper into forms (see Figure 17). The blue-green backdrop paper is propped up with photographic equipment including light stands and tripods. It is then sealed, reinforced, and used as a mold for thin plaster casts. The end result (see Figure 18) is a material form that depicts the negative space of the backdrop while retaining the trace of the surface of the paper. The casted physical shape that we see makes present the absent nature of the photographic backdrop; its endless recession of depth in imagistic space is shattered into a fragmented and near paper-thin surface. This photographic object exists as petrified material, in a position awry to the photographic image; and yet, I have only seen this work as an image on paper and screen. *Desperate Island* provides an interesting opportunity to consider the fringe areas of photography's potential expansion, particularly when positioned in relation to recent, camera-less photographic practices that produce work heavily reliant on photographic materials and—often-physical—processes for its production.



Figure 17. Pascal Grandmaison, production detail of *Desperate Island*, 2010.



Figure 17. Pascal Grandmaison, *Desperate Island* (detail), 2010. Hydrostone plaster, fiberglass, series of four, dimensions variable (each approx. 42 x 34 x 24 in. (106.7 x 86.4 x 61 cm)).

Blue Screen, Green Screen Series, and Tilt/Swing

Liz Deschenes' *Blue Screen #1* (2002) (see Figure 19) is made without a camera, the paper exposed to produce a uniform blue tone. Mounted on a solid sheet of Plexiglas and supported off the wall in order to appear like it is floating in space, it becomes a blue screen. It was produced during the transition from analogue to digital imaging processes and the subsequent move from blue to green screen technology. Both the blue and green screens operate as backdrops in which physical space and the material placed in front of it can be reconfigured within imagistic space. What were physical/material layers of surface and depth are now, in the digital realm of photographic processes, immaterial layers set on the surface and in the depth of virtual space.

The connections that form from these intersections of material/immaterial and physical/virtual are polygonal. This conception can be developed further through Batchen's positioning that, "[a]s the name suggests, digital processes actually return the production of the photographic image to the human hand (to digits)."⁹⁹ If photography has always been associated with gestures and movements of the hand—taking of the picture, processing of the print, preparing the photograph for exhibition, etc.—then the expansion of photography into digital processes and practices only reinforces this connection. The relation between hand and material, through gesture and action, is essential to keep in mind when considering the connections between photographic practices in relation to both sculptural and installation processes. At what point do gestures and actions with the hand stop being photographic? By taking up these issues, Liz Deschenes' *Green Screen Series* (2001–2002) offers a space in which subtle distinctions between photography and other media begin to blur.¹⁰⁰ This is evident from the ways in which works in this series formally and conceptually relate to installation. For example, *Green Screen #5* (see Figure 20) depicts a green screen within the imagistic

⁹⁹ Batchen. *Burning with Desire*, 211.

¹⁰⁰ For each installation, the *Green Screen Series* is comprised of a selection of individual works, including, but not limited to: *Green Screen #1*, *Green Screen #2*, *Green Screen #3*, *Green Screen #4*, and *Green Screen #5*.



Figure 19. *Top*, Liz Deschenes, *Blue Screen #1*, 2001. UV laminated Fujiflex on Plexiglas, 19 x 26 x 1 in. (48.3 x 66 x 2.5 cm).

Figure 20. *Bottom*, Liz Deschenes, *Green Screen #5*, 2002. Fujiflex on Plexiglas, 54 x 40 1/8 x 1 in. (137.2 x 102.2 x 2.5 cm)

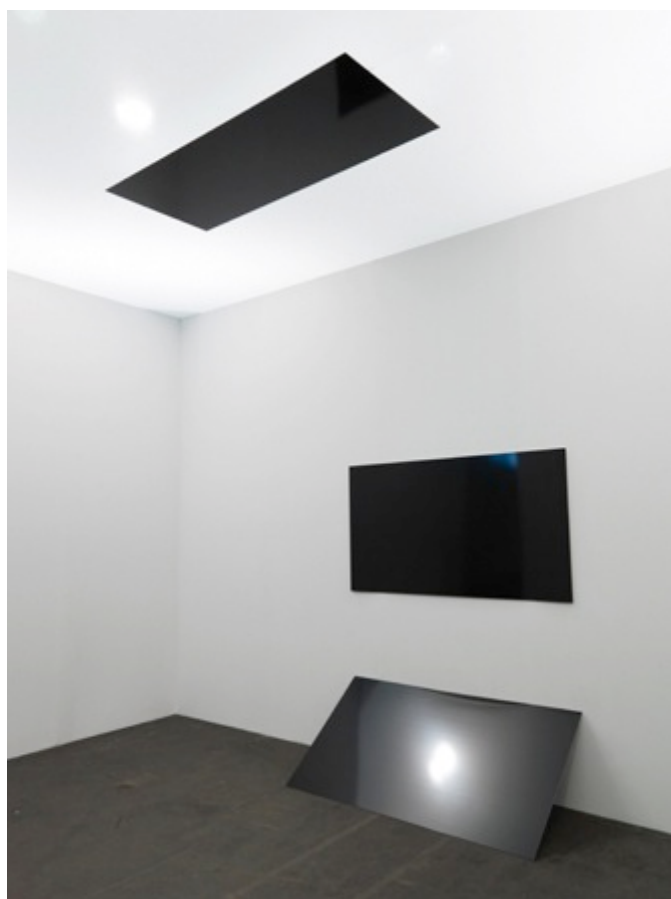
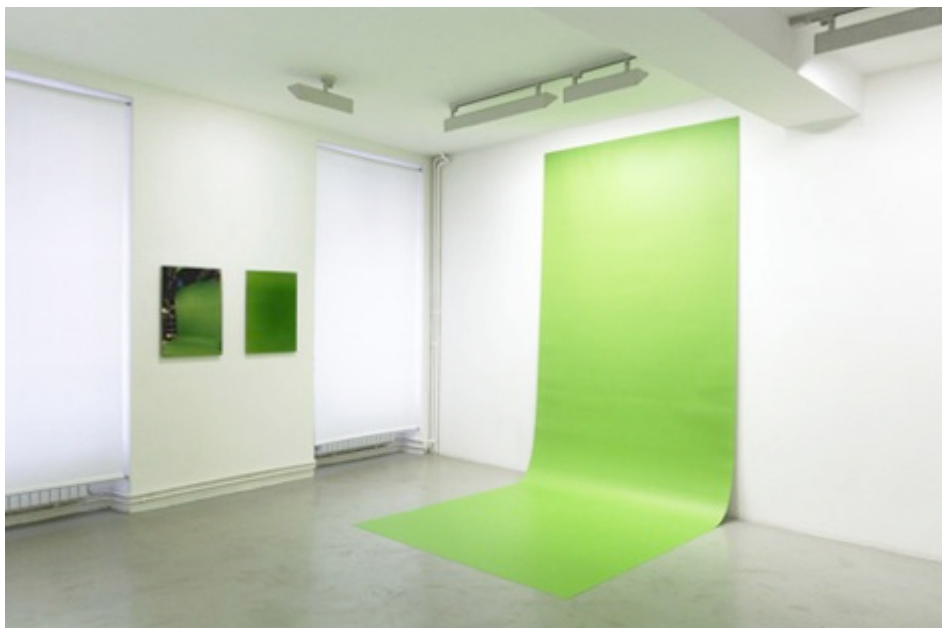


Figure 21. Liz Deschenes, (left to right) *Green Screen #1, #3, and #4*, 2002, installation view, “Back Grounds,” Galerie Nelson, Paris.

Figure 22. Liz Deschenes, *Tilt/Swing Version 2 (360° field of vision, version 2)*, 2010, installation view, Art 41 Basel.

space of the photographic print, and it is placed in contrast next to *Green Screen #1* (see Figure 21), which is a large, monochromatic green photograph that becomes a literal green screen through the scale of the print and its method of display—it is hung from the wall in such a way that it flows onto the floor. *Green Screen #1* simultaneously enacts both analogue photographic print and sculptural prop for digital video processes. It becomes what it depicts. Or, put another way, the material becomes the image and the image becomes the material, which is achieved succinctly by closing down the space between them.

Deschenes' work positions photography between the material and the immaterial; the object and the image; and the analogue and the digital. Additionally, her practice is situated both inside and outside of the camera.¹⁰¹ For the *Green Screen Series*, images were taken with a camera and also made without one. The subject of the images reference photography's interaction with the camera and the production of images. In Deschenes' more recent work, this connection between camera and photograph is made more distinct. In *Tilt/Swing (360° field of vision, version 2)* (2012) (see Figure 22), seven unique black and white photograms are installed in a circular—from-floor-to-wall-to-ceiling-to-wall-to-floor—installation. Each photogram is produced by exposing it to moonlight, developing it, and finally treating it with a silver toner to produce a mirror-like surface.¹⁰² The prints—like the moon from which they were developed—reflect light and when seen at angle, this light mirrors the form of a pale orb. Installed as they are, the photographs are reminiscent of the glass surfaces of view-cameras that tilt and swing, flip and sway, to bounce and refract the light in order to present an image. Except, no image is found in the photographs themselves; rather they form an image through their position in relation to one another in the space and time of the installation. Oddly, by evoking the space within the camera while not actually using one, the work establishes a paradoxical situation both within photography and outside of it.

¹⁰¹ Liz Deschenes and Bettina Sporr, "Interview," in *Liz Deschenes: Secession*, eds. Bettina Sporr and Tina Lipsky (Vienna: Secession Gallery, 2012), 26–32.

¹⁰² Matthew Witkovsky, "Another History (On Photography and Abstraction)," *Artforum* 49, No.7 (March 2010): 214.

Studio Framing Floor

Situating photography in relation to the digital camera and developing a close affiliation to the screen, Owen Kydd's practice takes a different approach than many of the artists discussed thus far. What Kydd terms "durational photographs," for example *Warner Studio Framing Floor* (2012) (see Figure 23), pose challenging questions about photography and the expanded field. Installed in the white space of a gallery, *Warner Studio Framing Floor* could be mistaken for a backlit photograph hung on the wall.¹⁰³ With the work carefully framed, and power cord hidden, it is exhibited as if it were a photographic print. The illumination of the work catches the eye and provides an obvious feature that distinguishes it from a traditional photograph. However, this visual cue is complicated by the fact that screens are becoming an increasingly ubiquitous technology to display pictures both inside and outside the gallery context. As such, seeing a photograph on an illuminated screen is less startling than might be expected. What unsettles its relation to the photographic is the work's duration. The term "durational photograph" calls attention to the complexity of time within photography—it is fixed within the image and yet, conversely, flows in the course of viewing the photograph. The movement in *Warner Studio Framing Floor* is subtle; therefore, it is not always clear that it has duration. In order to achieve this, the camera does not move and as such, the framing of the image is unmoving. *Warner Studio Framing Floor* is an example of Kydd's earlier work, which displays one "durational photograph" on one display monitor. That is, no transitions between "scenes" are used in the work. However, in recent works Kydd has used transitions to produce one work composed of multiple "durational photographs."¹⁰⁴ This begins to frame the work as composed of scenes, which brings the work back into closer conversation with the filmic and cinematic. Equally essential for these works is that, as loops, no narrative or action unfolds to conclusion; their

¹⁰³ Owen Kydd's works are not installed in dark spaces. This is a considered decision to distance it from the space of cinema, film and video projection. For more on this refer to, "Interview with Owen Kydd." Also, for more on the subject of white versus dark room and the effects on viewers and installation of artwork see Boris Groys, *Art/Power* (Cambridge: MIT, 2008), and Claire Bishop, *Installation Art* (London: Tate P, 2005).

¹⁰⁴ See for example *Blue Studies* 2013. See https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/22129284/Blue_Studies_482x778.mov.

“beginning” and “end” is not clearly defined. With the temporal markers associated with the medium of cinema being absent, the time within the work is situated in the present time of viewing. The only time existing in these “durational photographs” is the becoming of time—the being in time. The viewer is transported into the space-time of the taking the photograph itself, while being transitioned into the screen of digital photography. Owen Kydd’s practice in the photographic is tied directly to the digital camera. His experiments in “durational photographs” started in 2006 when this technology began to offer video functions.¹⁰⁵ Presently, a new photographic technology termed “4k” is starting to take hold. This particular technology, of which there are more advanced versions not readily accessible, captures moving images (video) at such a high resolution that photographers are using this process to select individual stills. The advantages to this technology are significant. With this advancement, photography has moved a long way away from the capture of a “decisive moment” to selections of moments from duration—images not selected *in* the moment but *after* the moment. To paraphrase Batchen, photography has never been one technology and we still need to recognize photography as a *digital* process.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ See Lucas Blalock, “A Conversation with Owen Kydd,” *Lavalette*, January 3, 2012, <http://www.lavalette.com/a-conversation-with-owen-kydd/>; and, “Interview with Owen Kydd,” in *Aperture* (blog), <http://www.aperture.org/blog/interview-with-owen-kydd/>.

¹⁰⁶ Batchen, *Burning with Desire*, 213-215.



Figure 18. Owen Kydd, *Warner Studio Framing Floor*, 2012. Video on digital display with media player. To view online see <http://nicellebeauchene.com/artists/owen-kydd/>.

Shadow/Glare

Shadow, Glare (2010) by Erin Shirreff, is a work that relies on digital processes while conversing with qualities of digital photography in relation to light, darkness, and the screen. Collaborating with programmer Seth Erickson, Shirreff developed *Shadow, Glare* as a software program that operates on computer desktops (see Figure 24). The program renders shadows of differing transparencies, shapes and sizes that flow, morph, and ebb in their intensity across the screen at varying angles and speeds. While the work itself is completely immaterial, its significance is in the material connection it forms with the screen, on which an increasing proportion of photography is now viewed. *Shadow, Glare* exists within the space of a boundary between desktop and material screen. It is interesting to compare this space to the photographic image that rests between material supports and printed surface. In this case, the screen shares a similarity to the glass in the frame that is positioned in front of the photograph.

Often existing invisibly, yet sitting prominently between the photograph and the viewer, glass/screen adjusts the way photography is seen, experienced, and understood. In its production of digital shadows, *Shadow, Glare* focuses the eye onto the screen on which it is viewed by highlighting the glare, dust, scratches, smudges and all manner of traces existing at both the surface and in the depth of the screen on which the work is viewed. The digital shadow flows across layers of surfaces in the digital field. Pixels glimmer on and off—evoking starlight in their advancement and withdrawal—to perform photographic interactions between lightness and darkness. Photography is always in the process of expanding as it restlessly seeks out new ways of being, while relating to and drawing from, the processes, materials, and technology of contemporary photographic practices.

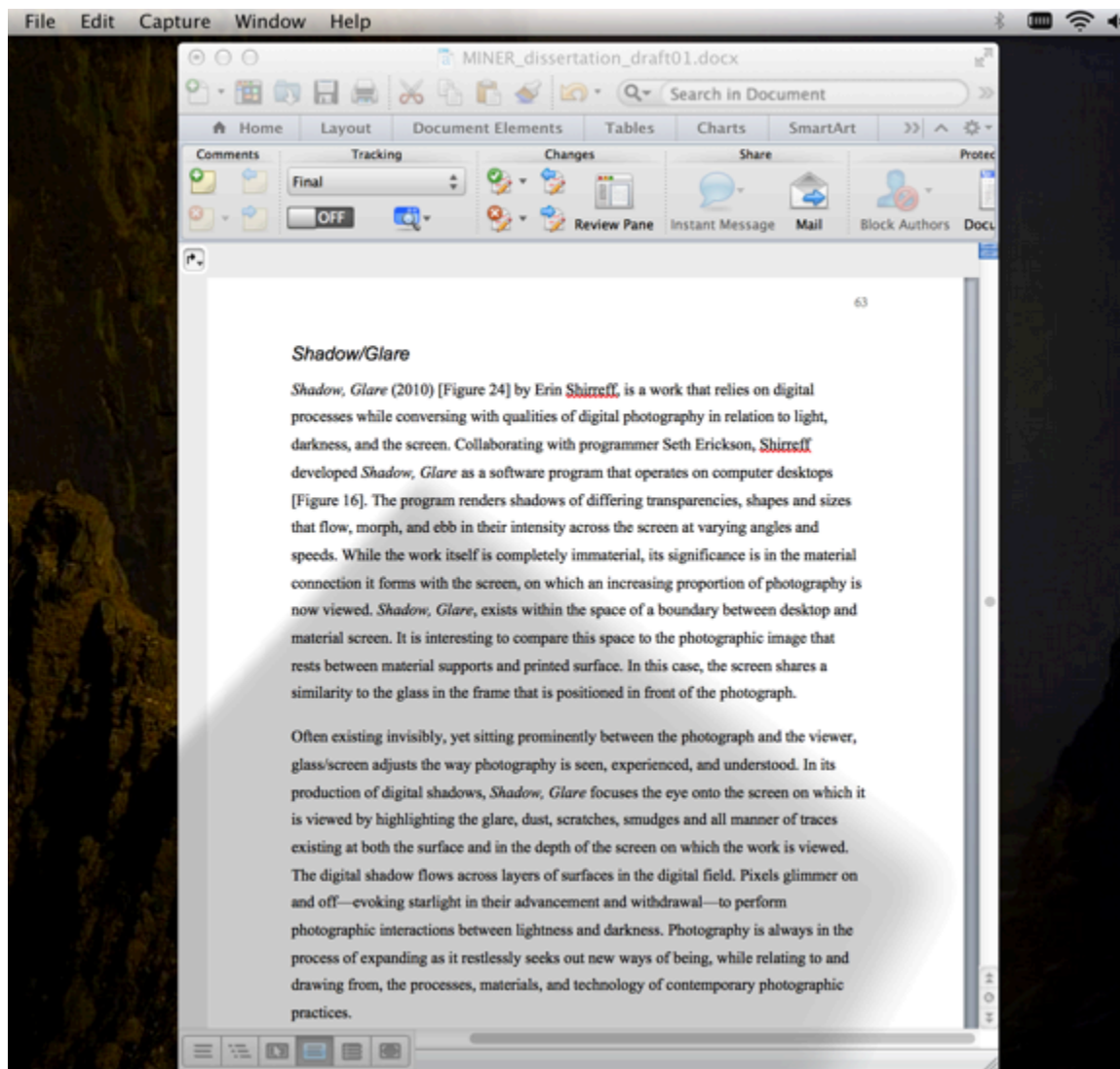


Figure 24. *Shadow, Glare*, 2010, screen grab from author's computer (Spring 2014).

Part Two

Exhibitions and Projects

This part contains three chapters. The first two chapters provide visual documentation and brief written context for two major projects of research presented as solo art exhibitions. The third chapter outlines artwork in group exhibitions and artist projects undertaken during the course of my doctoral program.

First Major Project – Solo Exhibition: the evil are not really there, they have a problem with being present

The first solo exhibition of my doctoral program occurred in October 2012 at the ArtLab Gallery, Western University. The title for this exhibition comes from Terry Eagleton's book *On Evil*.¹⁰⁷ In his text, evil is conceived as, "...a condition of being as well as a quality of behavior."¹⁰⁸ Eagleton argues that this condition of being as evil is synonymous with a state of transition, the eternal return, and the cyclical. Building on these concepts, I also considered Slavoj Žižek's idea that, "Evil is...a spectral dimension which magically survives its physical annihilation and continues to haunt us."¹⁰⁹ My interest was to bring the photographic into conversation with these concepts, while specifically positioning evil as a haunting that takes form between the material object and immaterial image. Also important to the project was my consideration of the space of the cyclical and the anxious (both qualities of photography and "evil"), so that *evil* can be thought not as a valuation of "good" or "bad," but as a state of *being anomalous*.¹¹⁰

In the gallery, the main fluorescent "house" lights were used and the gallery spotlights were turned off, which made the space somewhat gloomy and produced a form of

¹⁰⁷ Terry Eagleton, *On Evil* (New Haven: Yale U P, 2010), 51.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁰⁹ Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (London UK: Picador, 2008), 56.

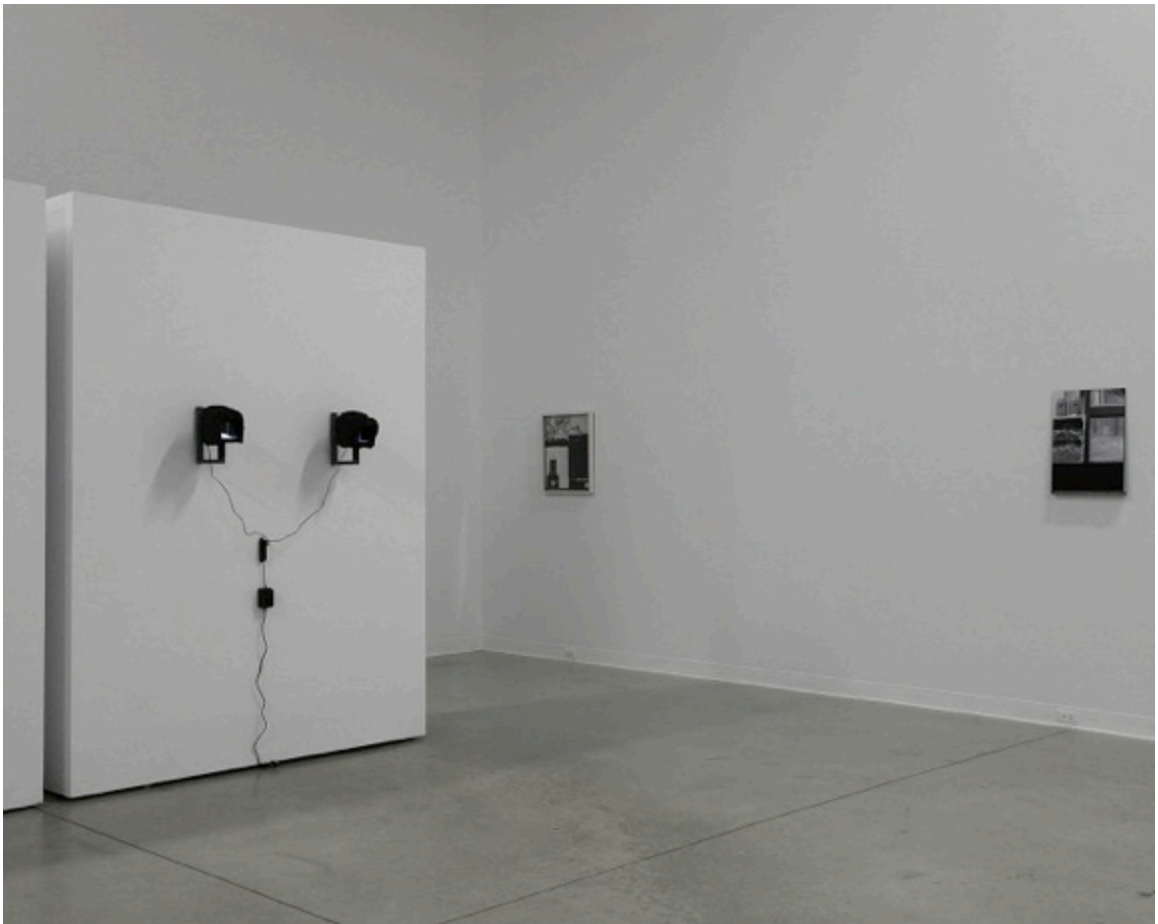
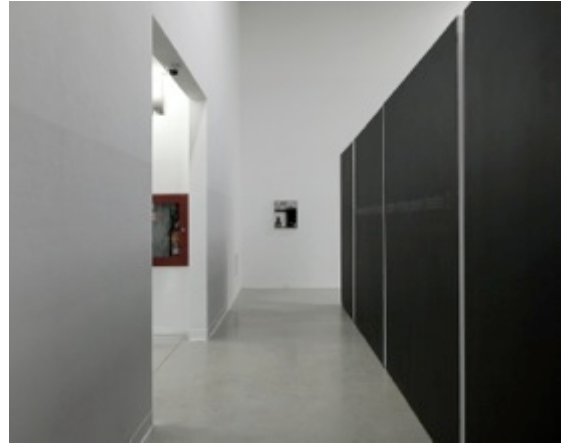
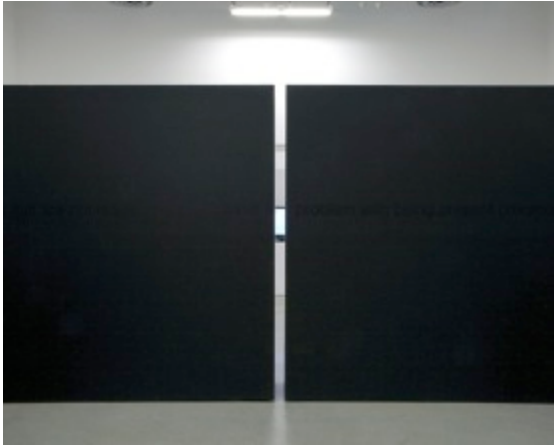
¹¹⁰ Anomalous is used here as a position in relation to photography as an expanding field. In this sense, sculpture and video can be brought into relation with photography while conversely being in a position anomalous to it.

twilight inside the exhibition space. The exhibition consisted of photographic material and imagistic engagements: velum photocopied poster prints, vinyl lettering text work, traditional and digital photographic prints, sculptures, and one video piece. Titles were arranged on a singular document/card placed on a wall at the entrance to the gallery. This is a practice that I have maintained in subsequent exhibitions. This exhibition offered multiple relations between material and light, which was engaged to develop conversations between qualities of lightness and darkness. For example, upon approaching the exhibition, the first work presents itself while remaining close to absent. The work is an eight-foot long text piece in matt black vinyl spanning two same-toned black painted walls that reads, “the evil are not really there, they have a problem with being present.” In addition, there was a focus on the space and the transition between photographic material and image, and the qualities of clarity and opacity that related to the space between what can be termed “representation” and “abstraction.”

The following is a brief text that I wrote to provide an introduction for viewers of the exhibition: “*the evil are not really there, they have a problem being present* seeks relations and connections between the absent and present that provide access to the political. The evil eye approaches while keeping distance, signifying a boundary of the in-between. Coal becomes Aniline: chemical of alchemical properties that bring forth all color. Taken together the brilliant white light, of reflection and refraction, shunts back to darkness through blindness and overexposure.”

Please note the following installation images for this exhibition may appear dark. This is not an error but rather reflects the actual light quality in the gallery during the course of the exhibition.

To view the video work from this exhibition, visit www.colinminer.com, and specifically the subpage “work” and then “fog grid mist reflection.”



Installation views of *the evil are not really there, they have a problem with being present*, 2012.



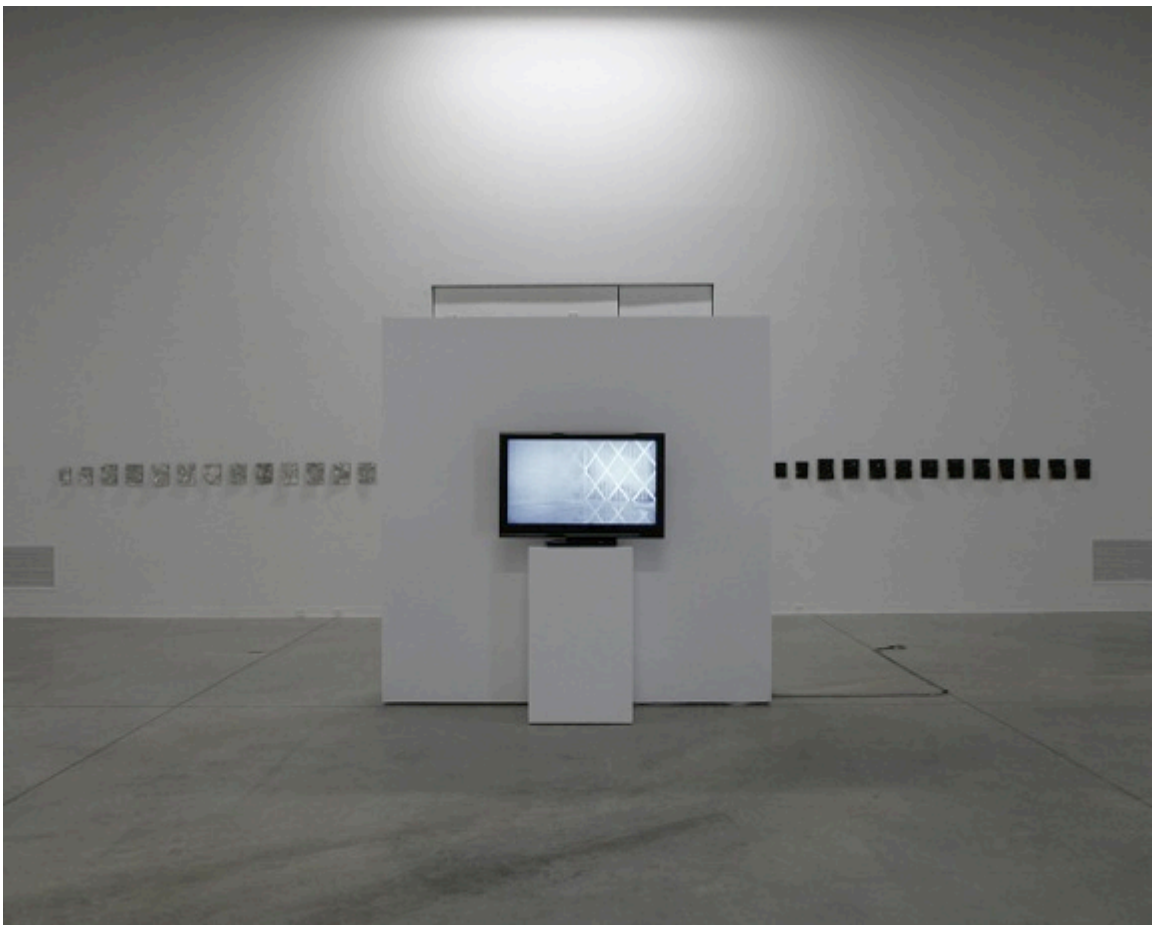
Untitled (Details), 2012. Acrylic, Cinafoil, felt, glass, LED light, mirror, paint, silver, wax, wood, each approx. 18 x 13 x 16 in. (45.7x 33 x 40.6. cm).



Untitled (glass shelf), 2012. Archival pigment print, acrylic, paint, wood, 21 x 16 x 1.5 in. (53.4 x 40.6 x 3.8 cm).



Untitled (London) (Detail), 2012. Archival pigment print, artist frame, 13 x 11 in. (33 x 28 cm).



Installation views of *the evil are not really there, they have a problem with being present*, 2012.



Video still from *fog grid mist reflection*, 2012. HD color video, silent, 4:32 min. loop.

fog grid mist reflection brings together many components of the exhibition, especially the space between representation and abstraction. There is foil, surfaces with reflection, at angle grids, and plays of light and shadow along with depth and space. The video is in color but has very little vibrancy and as such appears “black and white.” The fog enters, dissipates, re-enters, and builds until it briefly occupies the screen, turning it into a sort of photographic gray card—the neutral gray that sits between the darkness of black and the brightness of white. This gray is an illusion as the fog is not uniform in tone but rather made of swirling particles in the air that create shifting spaces of various darker and lighter tones.



Untitled (silver) (Detail), 2012. Silver Gelatin print, silver leaf, mirror, paint, wood, set of 13: each approx. 10 x 8 x 1 in. (25.4 x 20.3 x 2.5 cm).



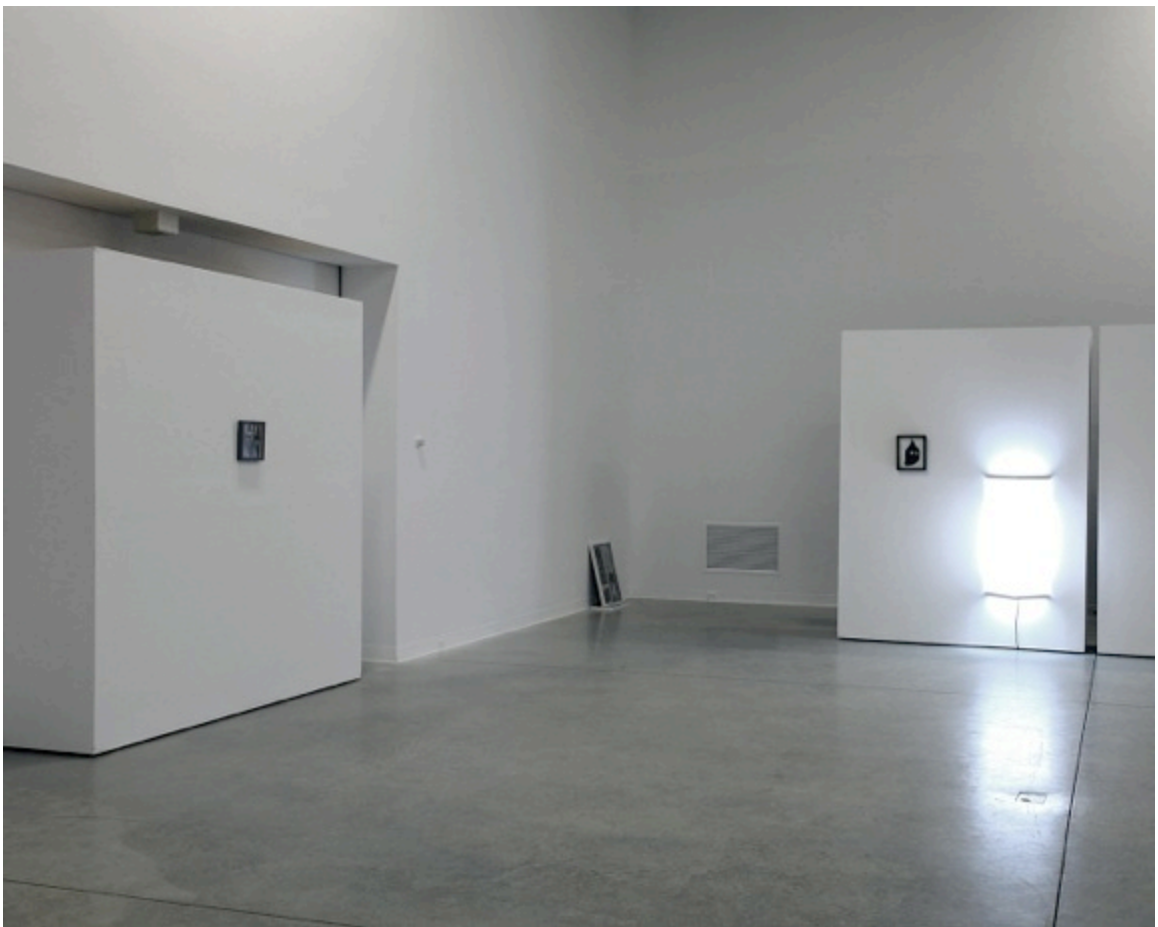
Untitled (silver) (Detail), 2012. Silver Gelatin print, silver leaf, mirror, paint, wood, set of 13: each approx. 10 x 8 x 1 in. (25.4 x 20.3 x 2.5 cm).



Untitled (gold) (Detail), 2012. Solarized silver gelatin print, gold leaf, mirror, paint, wood, set of 13: each approx. 10 x 8 x 1 in. (25.4 x 20.3 x 2.5 cm).



Untitled (gold) (Detail), 2012. Solarized silver gelatin print, gold leaf, mirror, paint, wood, set of 13: each approx. 10 x 8 x 1 in. (25.4 x 20.3 x 2.5 cm).



Installation views of *the evil are not really there, they have a problem with being present*, 2012.



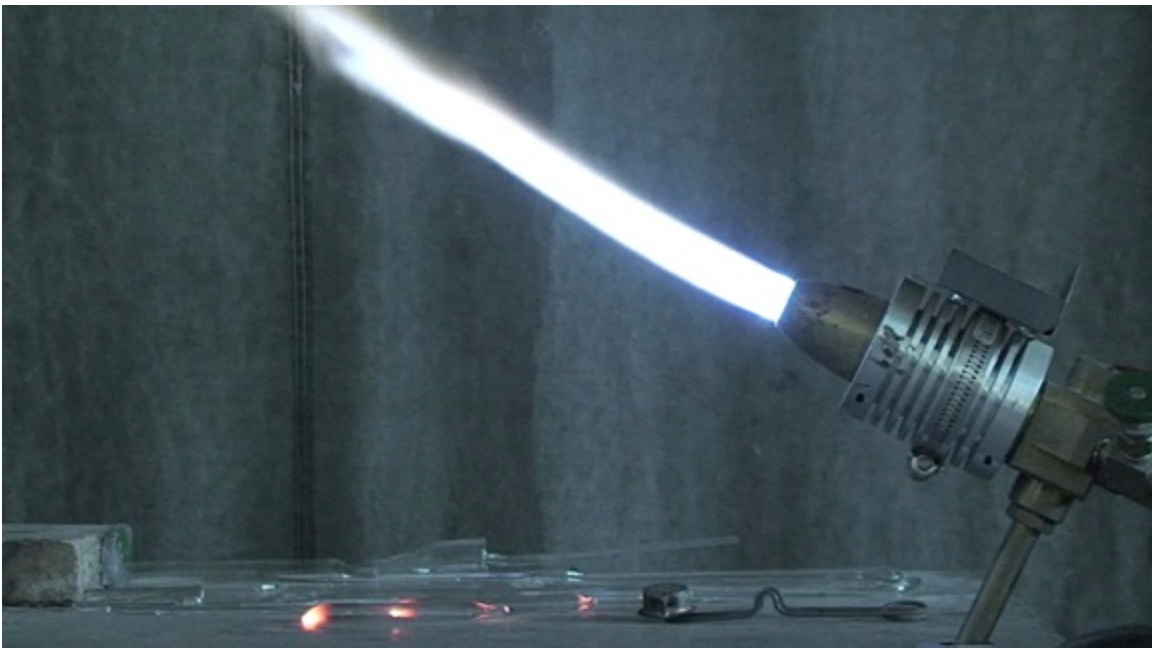
Untitled (coal bins), 2012. Archival pigment print, acrylic, paint, wood, 21 x 16 x 1.5 in. (53.4 x 40.6 x 3.8 cm).



Untitled (Vancouver) (Detail), 2012. Archival pigment print, artist frame, 9 x 8.5 in. (22.9 x 21.6 cm).

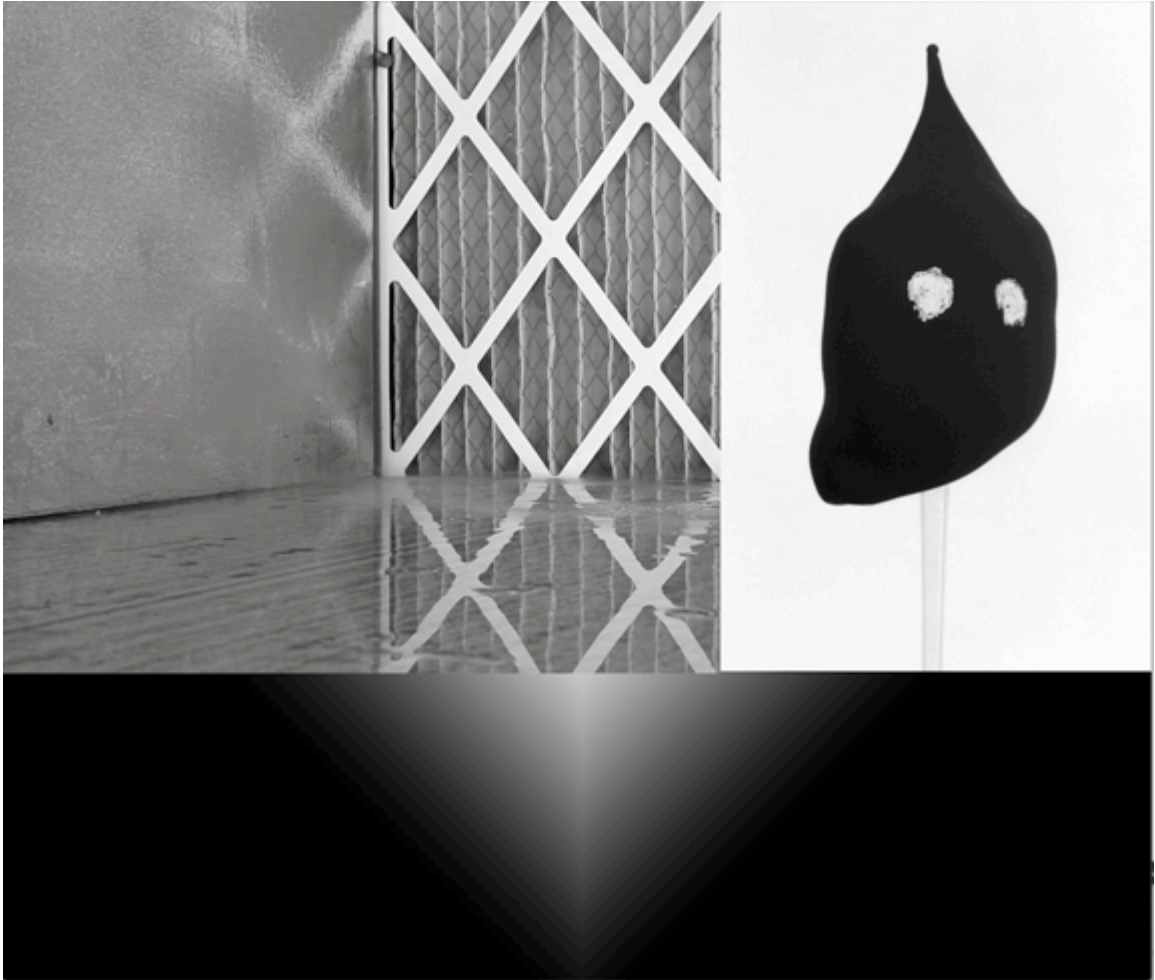


Untitled (soot and light), 2012. Silver gelatin print, acrylic, wood, daylight fluorescent light, print 8 x 10 in. (20.3 x 25.4 cm) and light 30 x 14 x 10 in. (76.2 x 35.6 x 25.4 cm).



Top: Video still for *Untitled (forge)*, 2011. HD color video, silent, 11:31 min. loop.

Bottom: Video still for *Untitled (torch)*, 2011. HD color video, silent, 6:59 min. loop.



the evil are not really there, they have a problem with being present, 2012, exhibition poster and handout.

Second Major Project – Solo Exhibition: the illuminated becoming blind

The second solo exhibition of my doctoral program took place at McIntosh Gallery, Western University. The exhibition consisted of two bodies of work, along with individual pieces that filled out the exhibition and were related to the processes of developing the larger bodies of work. Part of my practice is developing connections, as lines of sight, from one exhibition to another. This is literally accomplished by re-introducing a limited selection works (often just one or two) as a gesture to bridge the space, and continue the conversation, between past and present exhibition.¹¹¹

The works in this exhibition conversed with an expanding field of photography and are considered to be “photographic” in that they were constituted from and/or exist as various compositions of photographic materials, images and technologies. The West gallery room was lit with bright, even lighting, while the East gallery was dimly lit so that the video works established a greater prominence within the space. The video work *fog/mist (lava ice cave, fall 2012)* 2013 was placed in the hallway leading to the two galleries; and at the entrance to each gallery, there was one part of a two-part text work. Both texts constituted a singular work, and were made of white vinyl set on walls painted with a white that exactly matched the vinyl. The wall leading to the West gallery read “the illuminated,” and the second wall leading to the East gallery read, “becoming blind.” A viewer standing in the small foyer between the two galleries would have been able to read the text on each wall through the glass-paned gallery doors. A simple black and white photocopied publication, bound in a thin vellum cover with black linen tape, was made available for the viewer to take around the exhibition. The publication for this exhibition contained floor plans for each gallery room that provided the locations and titles of each work; and, print/design work in the form of a front cover (black photographic backdrop paper pin-pricked in the form of stars in the sky) and back cover

¹¹¹ For example, in the exhibition *the illuminated becoming blind* (2013) the work *Untitled (#2)* (2012) was re-exhibited from the exhibition *the evil are not there, they have a problem being present* (2012).

(three colored horizontal stripes, one each of red, green, and blue). The strategy of not placing labels next to works was done for two reasons: firstly, to call attention to the relation of separation between caption and image; and secondly, to offer a viewing environment in which the works can be experienced on their own, separated (for a time) from the context that is provided through a title and description.

I wrote the following as a brief introduction and press release for the exhibition:

“the illuminated becoming blind evokes the blue hour, a haunting and anxiety resting within the photographic as a shimmering cloak of silver. The space-time qualities of the constellation and subterranean are explored through an artistic practice that seeks to converse with, rather than seize, a photographic state of being. This takes form in the production of photographic prints, assemblage and video work that investigate the material and conceptual nature of photography. Essential to this investigation is a consideration of the qualities of lightness, darkness, reflection, and refraction. In asking how photography might be, Miner's work proposes a conversation based on relations of the anxious, cyclical, and askew.”

To view the video works in this exhibition, please visit www.colinminer.com, and specifically the subpage “work” and then “lava ice cave (rgb).”

West Gallery



Installation views of *the illuminated becoming blind*, 2013.



Untitled (#2), 2012. Silver gelatin print, Isolant Foam, artist frame, 26 x 22 x 7 in. (66 x 55.9 x 18 cm).

Untitled (#2) is a framed photographic print placed upon a thin sheet of Isolant Foam resting on the ground. Isolant Foam is a white foam with an extremely thin silver metallic foil on one side and a protective green plastic barrier sheet on the other. Foil-side up light is reflected onto the work, and conversely, light from the glass of the frame reflects onto the foil. Depending on what angle the work is viewed, there can exist a speckling pattern of light that shimmers onto the frame. Five elements occupy the photographic image: a

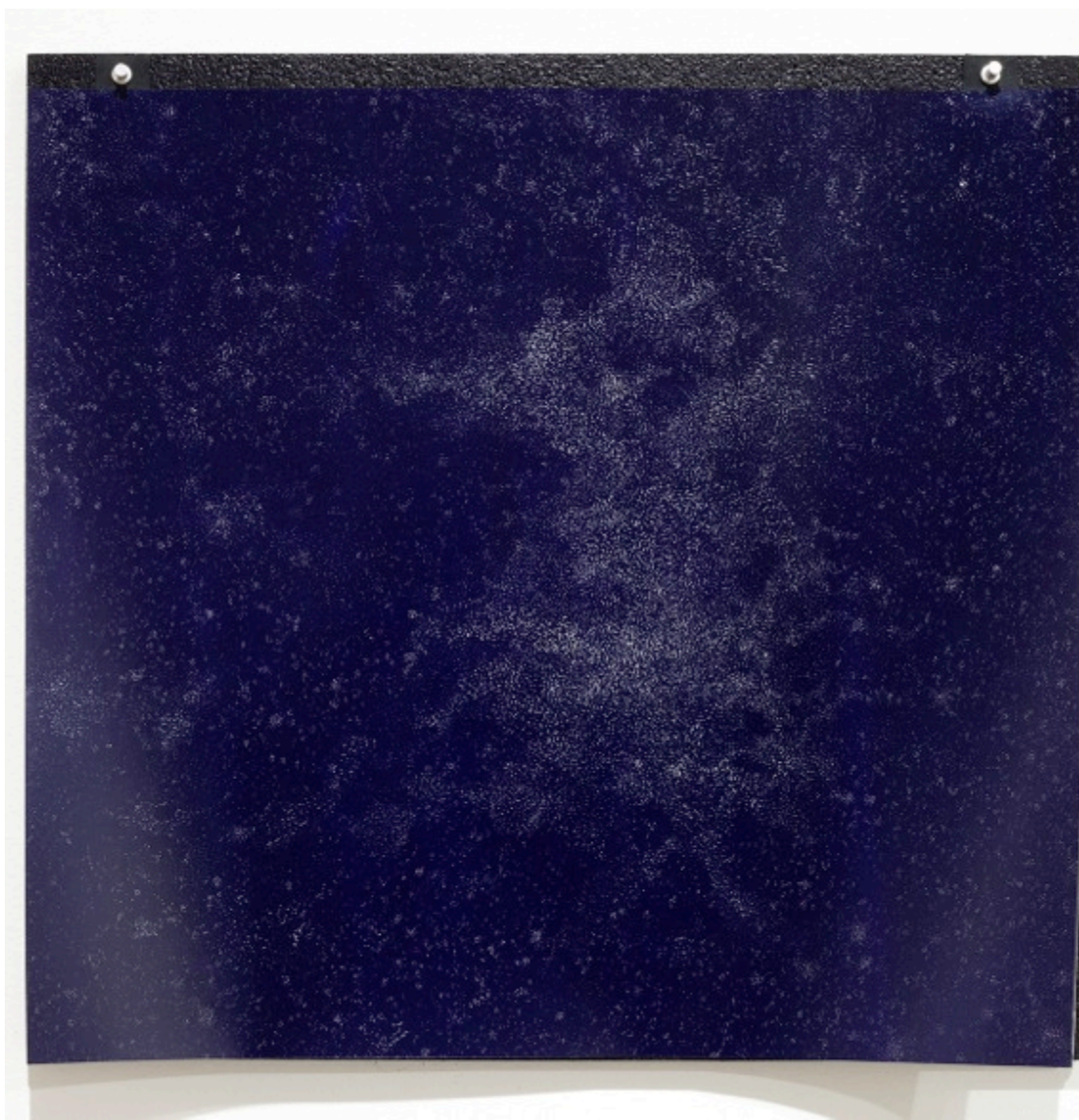
small sheet of reflective tin, an image of riot police and a protest that moves out of frame, an image of a celestial form, a sheet of Isolant Foam with the impression of a celestial form, and a sheet of photographic film upon which is taped the film backing that protects it from light. In addition, there are tapes with various matt, gloss, and metallic finishes, which were used to assemble the composition on a studio wall.



Untitled (#2) (Detail), 2012. Silver gelatin print, Isolant Foam, artist frame, 26 x 22 x 7 in. (66 x 55.9 x 18 cm).



gray scale hexagon, 2013. Archival pigment print, photographic paper envelope, artist frame, 13 x 10 x 1.25 in. (33 x 25.4 x 3.2 cm).



Untitled (heart of darkness), 2013. Unique chromogenic color print, aluminum push-pins, paint, cork board, 19 x 21 x 1.5 in. (48.2 x 53.3 x 3.8 cm).

Untitled (heart of darkness) is a unique chromogenic print, pinned on to corkboard. The color photographic paper was exposed to the sun for a long duration, which caused it to turn past black and into the blue spectrum (the process is termed “reciprocity failure”). The *Sagittarius A* constellation was pin-pricked into the sheet of paper using thousands of marks in three different lengths corresponding to red, green, and blue light wavelengths.

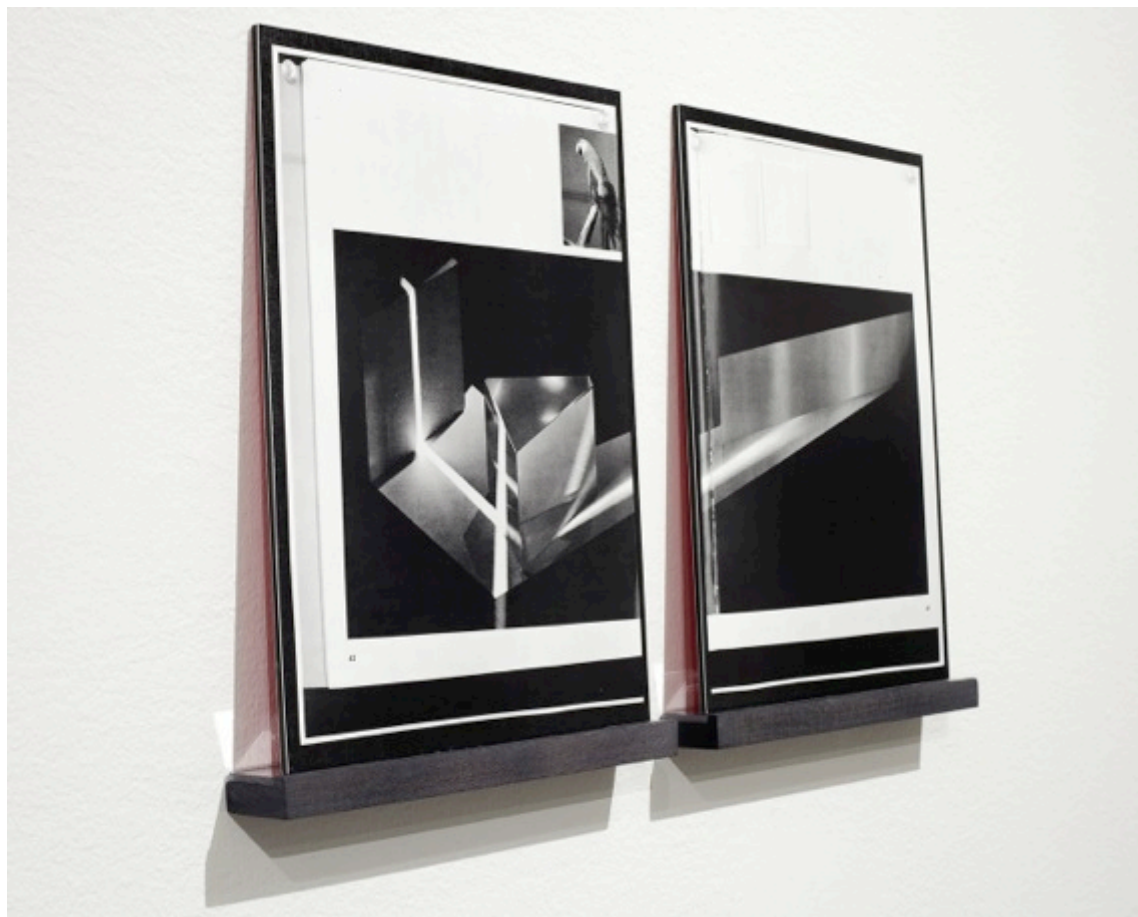


Installation views of *the illuminated becoming blind*, 2013, and the *available light* series of work.

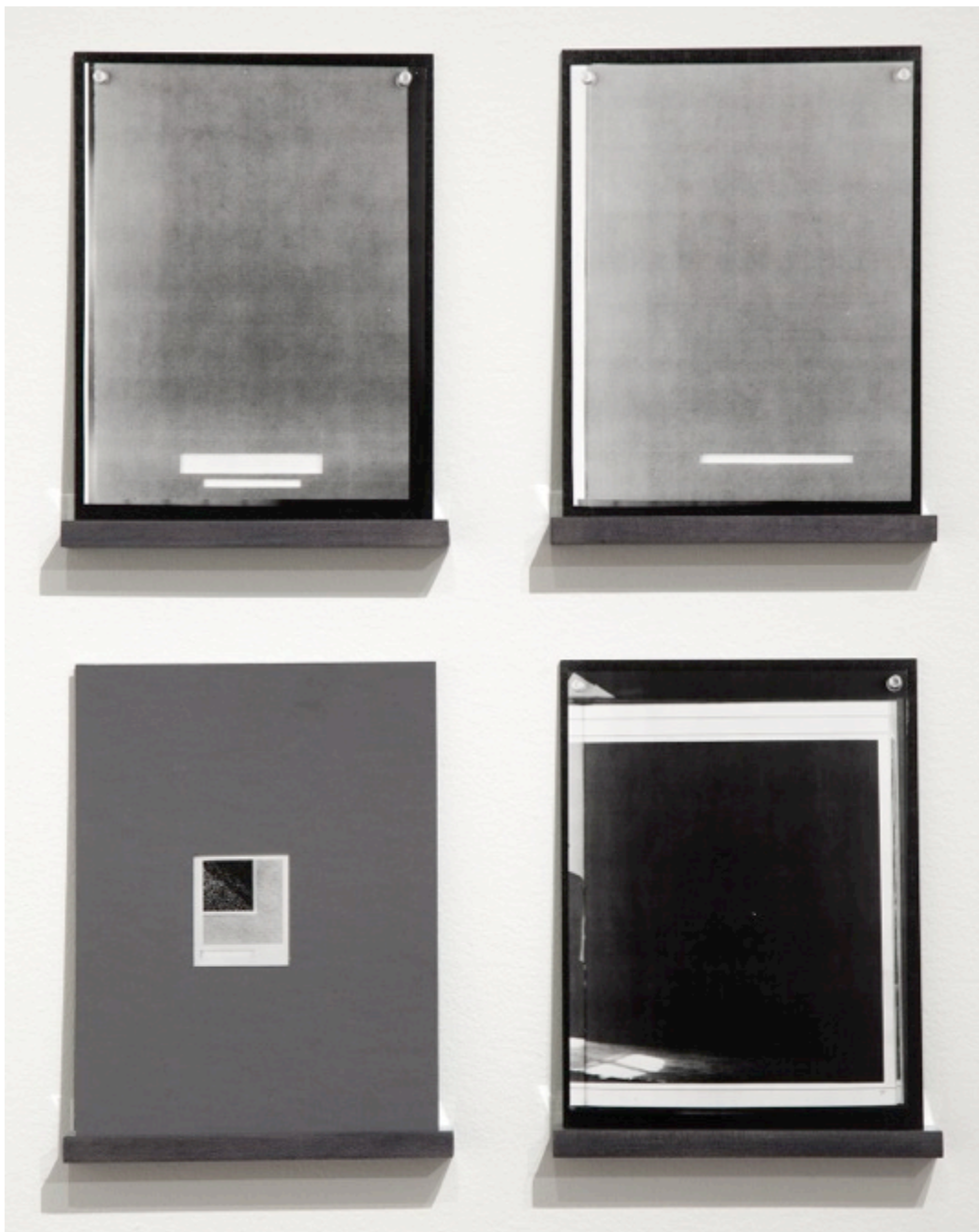


Installation view of *the illuminated becoming blind*, 2013, and the *available light* series of work.

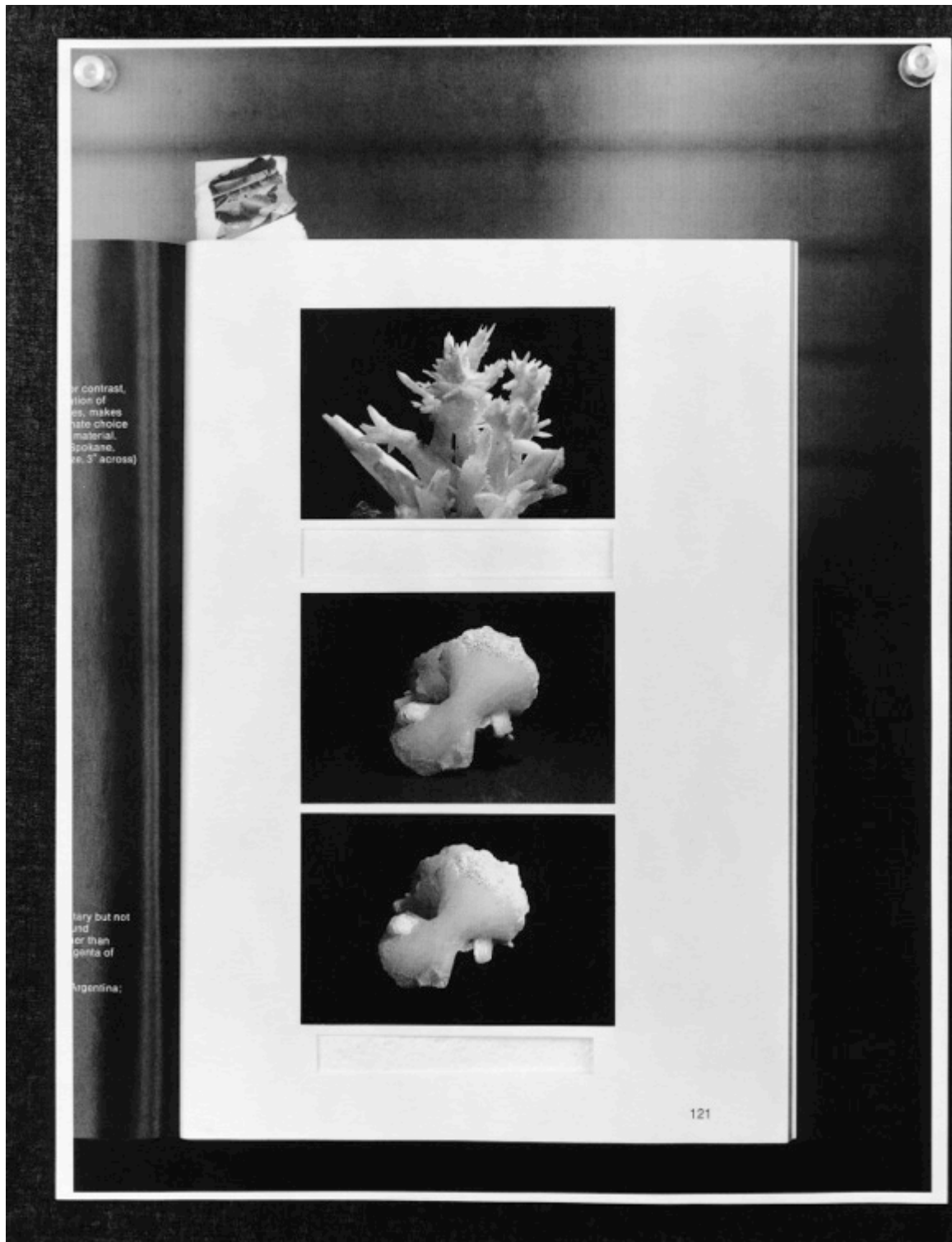
The *available light* body of work is the product of extensive research into photographic technical manuals from the 1980s to present. Photocopied pages of manuals were scanned and printed as photocopies, with image captions physically removed (which became the titles of the works). These pages were then re-photographed to produce traditional black and white 8x10 inch silver gelatin contact prints. These prints were mounted on rigid sheets of Dibond, which had one side painted to cast colored shadows behind them. Set on thin shelves, the images were installed in arrangements to formally converse with the underlying system and logic of the manual pages. The ongoing series is currently comprised of 39 individual works organized into various groups and pairings.



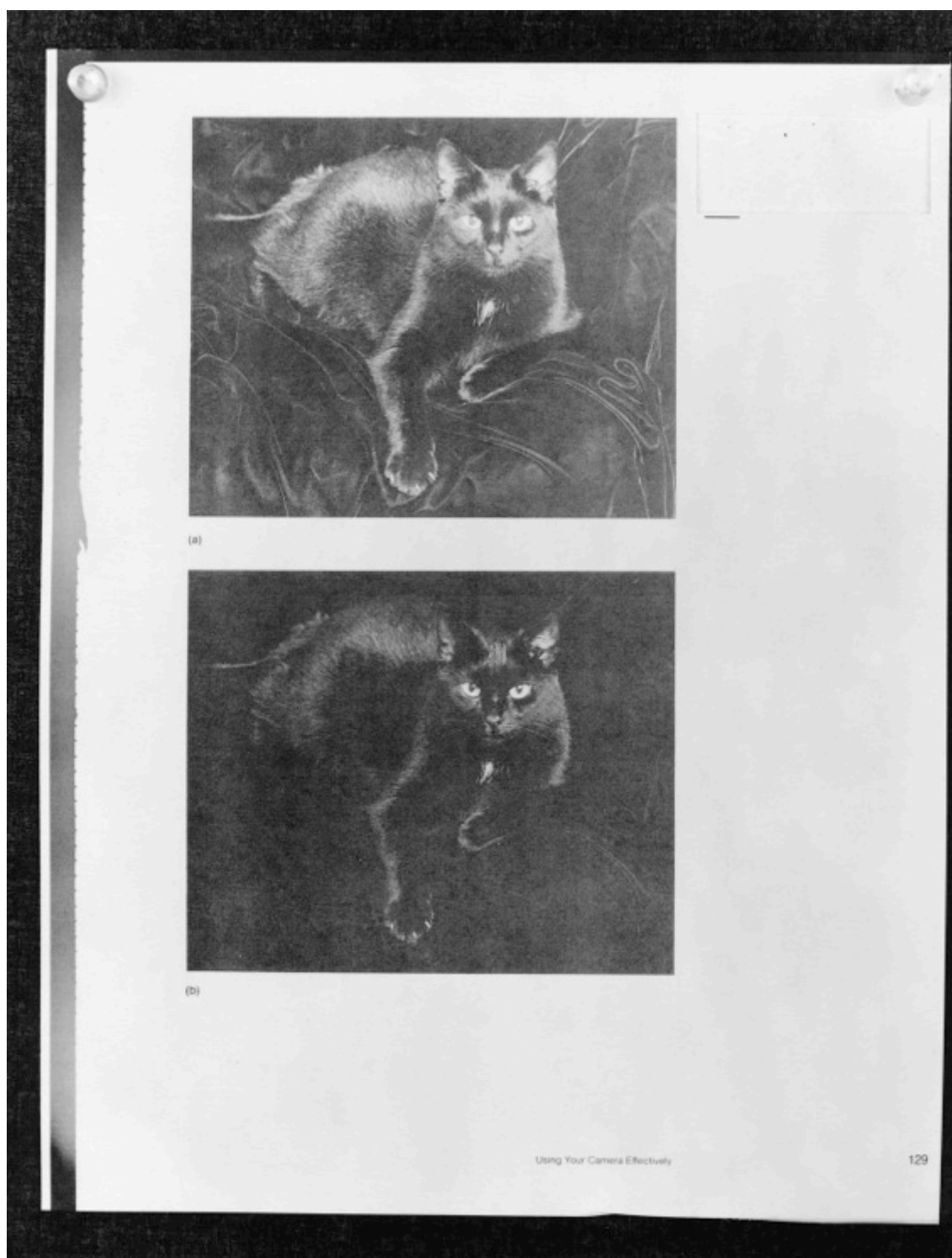
Installation view of *available light* (#10-11), 2013. Titles from left to right: *See light as the source of all color (1)*. (#10); and, *Light is the source of color. Pure white is composed of all the visible colors. When light hits a surface, some colors are usually absorbed while the others are reflected. The colors that we and our cameras see are those that the surface reflects. An object appears white when its surface reflects all colors and black when its surface absorbs them. See light as the source of all color (2)*. (#11). Each: Silver gelatin contact print mounted on painted Dibond, dyed shelf with mirror, 10.5 x 8 x 1.5 in. (26.7 x 20.3 x 3.8 cm).



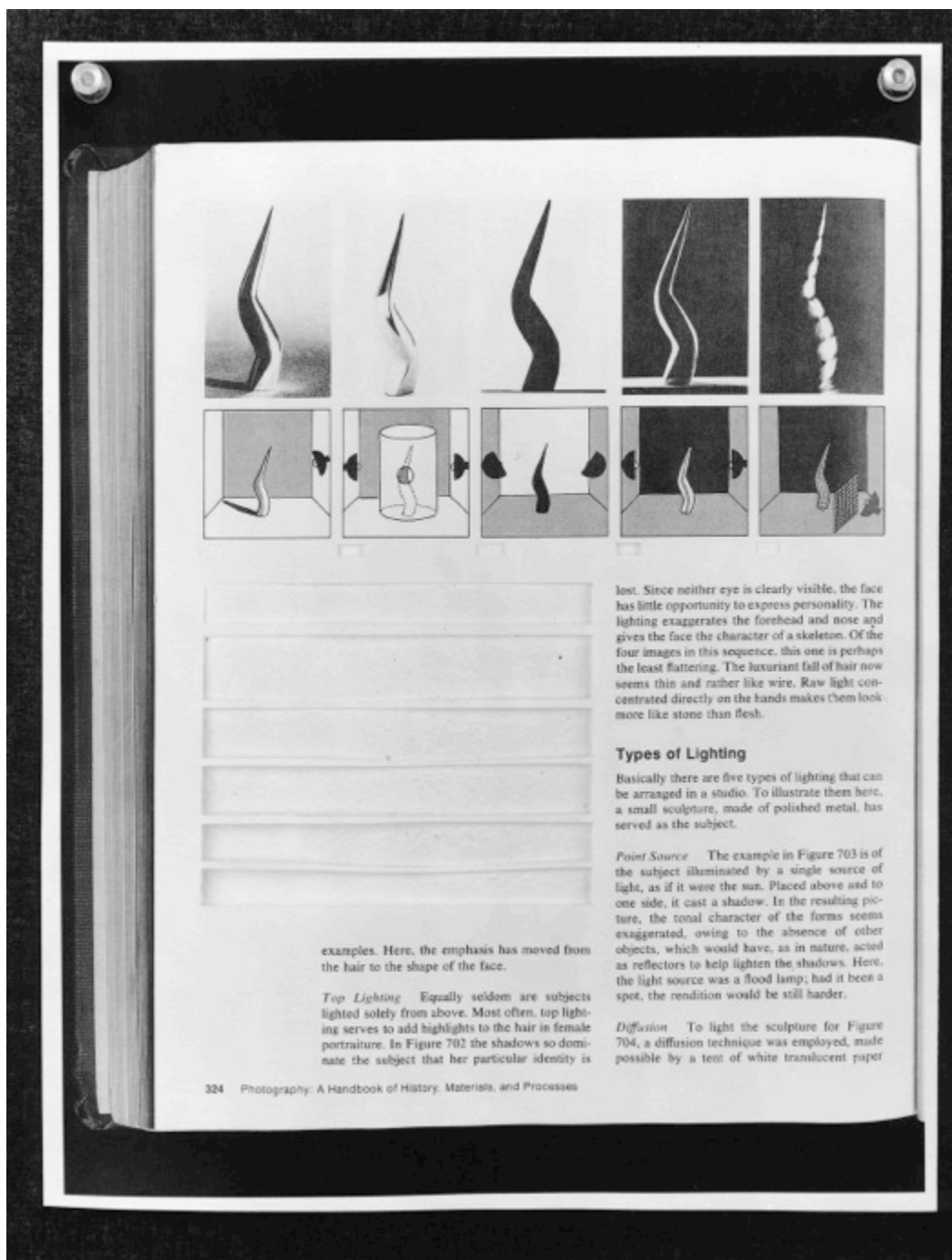
Installation view of *available light* (#18-21), 2013. Titles top left to bottom right are as follows: *This Gray Card can be used with a reflectance meter as a substitute for an incident meter. It approximates an 18% gray scale.* (#18); *This 18% gray card approximates a Zone V value.* (#19); *A finished mat corner.* (#20); and, *In visible light.* (#21). Each: Silver gelatin contact print mounted on painted Dibond, dyed shelf with mirror, (#20 has a photographic gray card), 10.5 x 8 x 1.5 in. (26.7 x 20.3 x 3.8 cm).



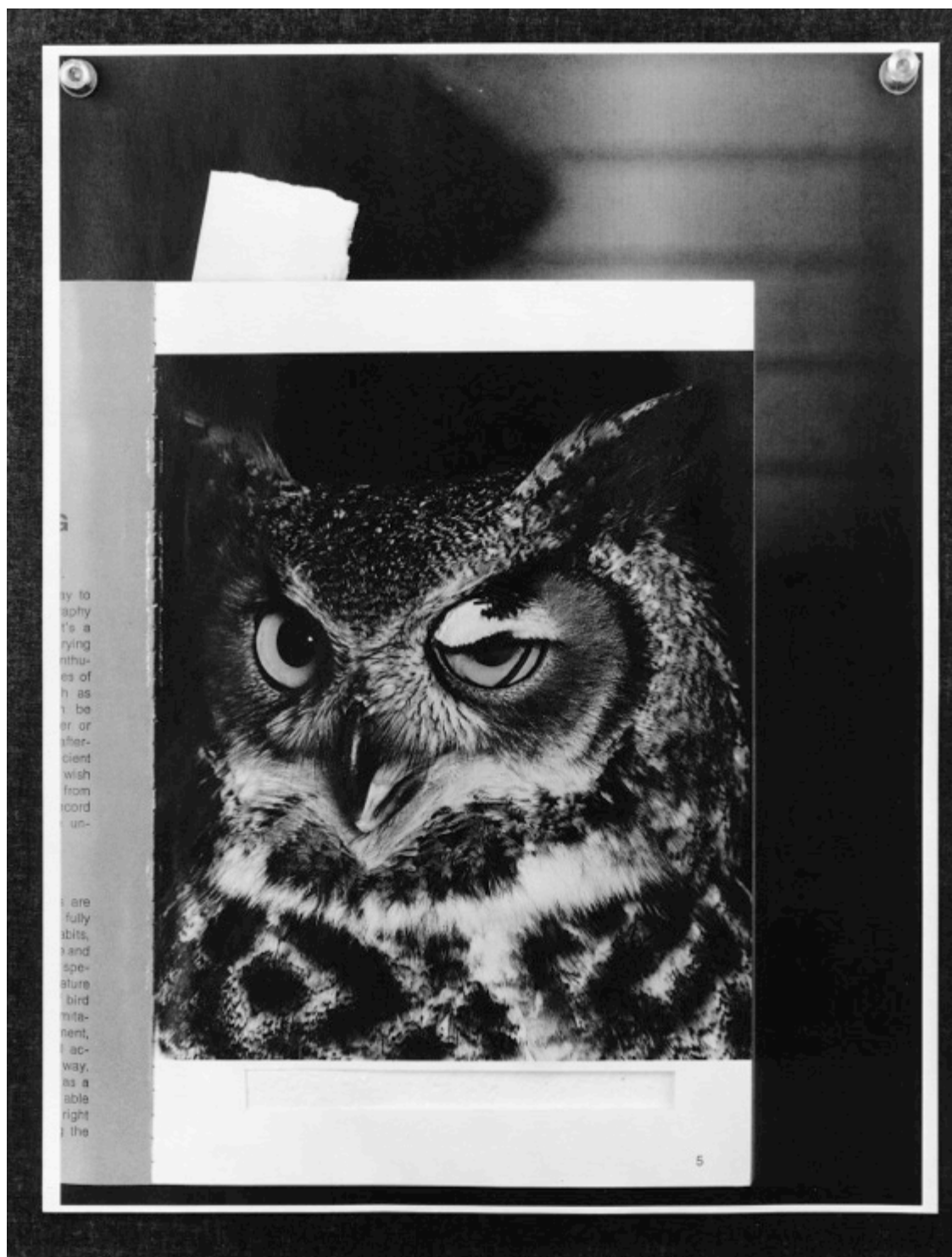
Many white specimens will appear strikingly three-dimensional against a black background. (#14) (Detail), 2013. Silver gelatin contact print mounted on painted Dibond, dyed shelf with mirror, 10.5 x 8 x 1.5 in. (26.7 x 20.3 x 3.8 cm).



The meter “saw” this black cat on black velvet as a gray subject in very poor light, and “overexposed” to compensate. Setting the override control on -2 adjusts the camera to photograph the cat more realistically. (#15) (Detail), 2013. Silver gelatin contact print mounted on painted Dibond, dyed shelf with mirror, 10.5 x 8 x 1.5 in. (26.7 x 20.3 x 3.8 cm).



Five basic types of lighting can be arranged for illuminating subjects posed for photography in a studio. Point source means illumination from a single source. Diffusion means directionless light that does not reveal its source or permit a shadow to be cast. Silhouetting results when light is projected upon a white background so that no light falls on the subject. Edge lighting derives from sources on either side of the subject. Cast-shadow lighting imposes on the subject the appearance of changed form. (#23) (Detail), 2013. Silver gelatin contact print mounted on painted Dibond, dyed shelf with mirror, 10.5 x 8 x 1.5 in. (26.7 x 20.3 x 3.8 cm).

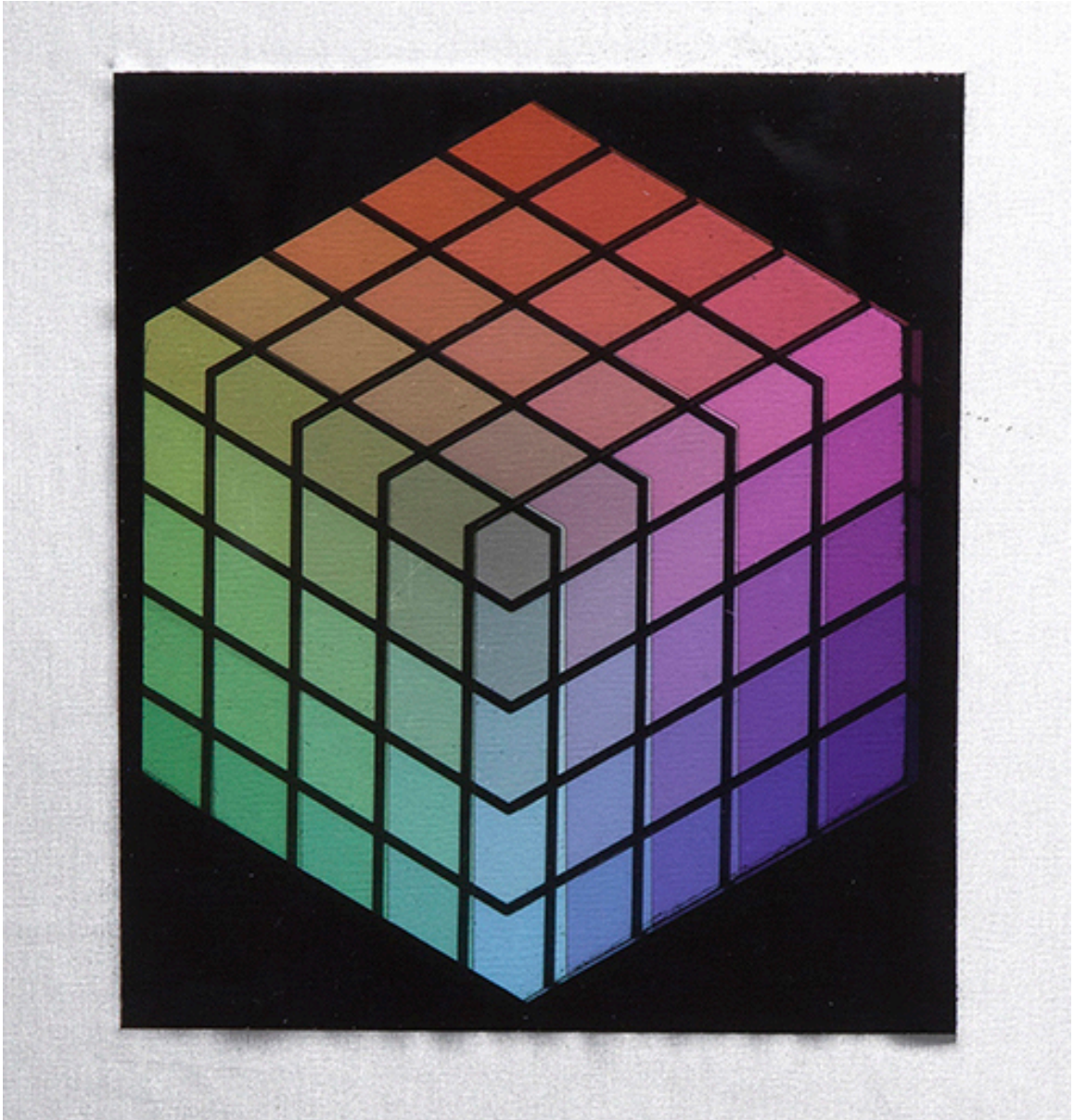


Using a lens from a nearby blind, it was possible to get a tightly cropped portrait of this great horned owl. Note that what appears to be a blinking eye is actually the nictitating membrane which gives protection to the eye. (#39) (Detail), 2013. Silver gelatin contact print mounted on painted Dibond, dyed shelf with mirror, 10.5 x 8 x 1.5 in. (26.7 x 20.3 x 3.8 cm).

East Gallery



Installation views of *the illuminated becoming blind*, 2013.

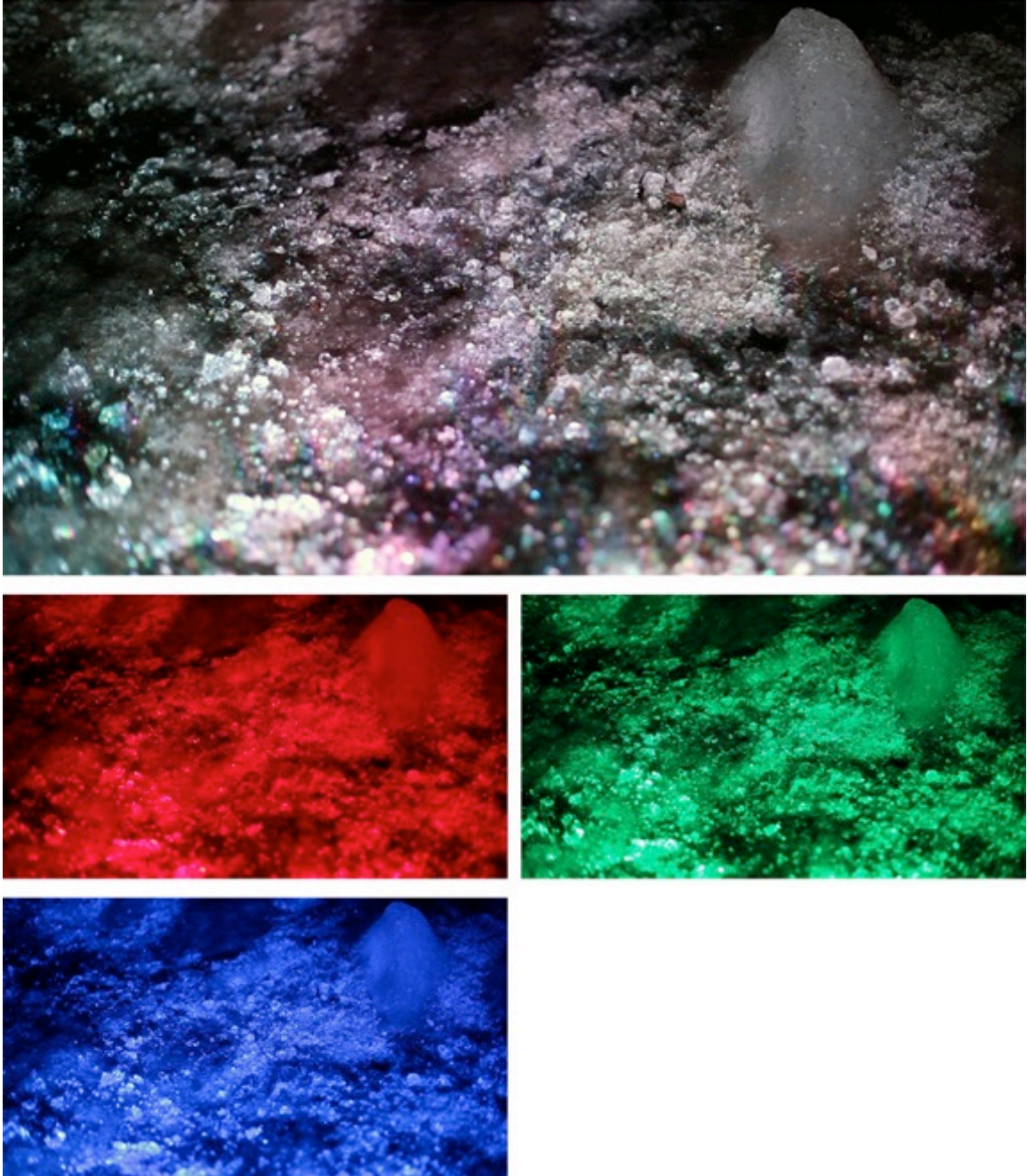


color cube (Detail), 2013. Archival pigment print, color photograph bag, artist frame, 13 x 10 x 1.25 in. (33 x 25.4 x 3.2 cm).



Installation view of *RGB #1-3 (lava ice cave, fall 2012)*, 2013. HD video, silent, various length loops.

This body of work, *Lava Ice Cave*, is comprised of the video works *RGB #1-4* and *fog/mist*. It is a series of looped videos made on site at a lava ice cave in Northern China during a research trip I took in the late summer of 2013. I was interested in engaging the photographic image to evoke, and collapse, the space between the subterranean and a constellation of stars in space. There is also the shift between representation and abstraction, along with stillness and motion as it unfolds in duration. I see this work as conversing with “photo-graphy” (light – graph) while introducing fiction as a way to question “space-time” through fictional stars that are the result of various compositions of red, green, and blue lights on various forms of ice and rock that emerge from the literal darkness of the subterranean. There were very brief moments in which one monitor was red, one was green, and one was blue. During this very brief time frame, the intersection of these three colors of light produced a dull white light sensation within the gallery.



Video stills from *RGB #1 (lava ice cave, fall 2012)*, 2013. HD color video, silent, 1:47 min. loop.

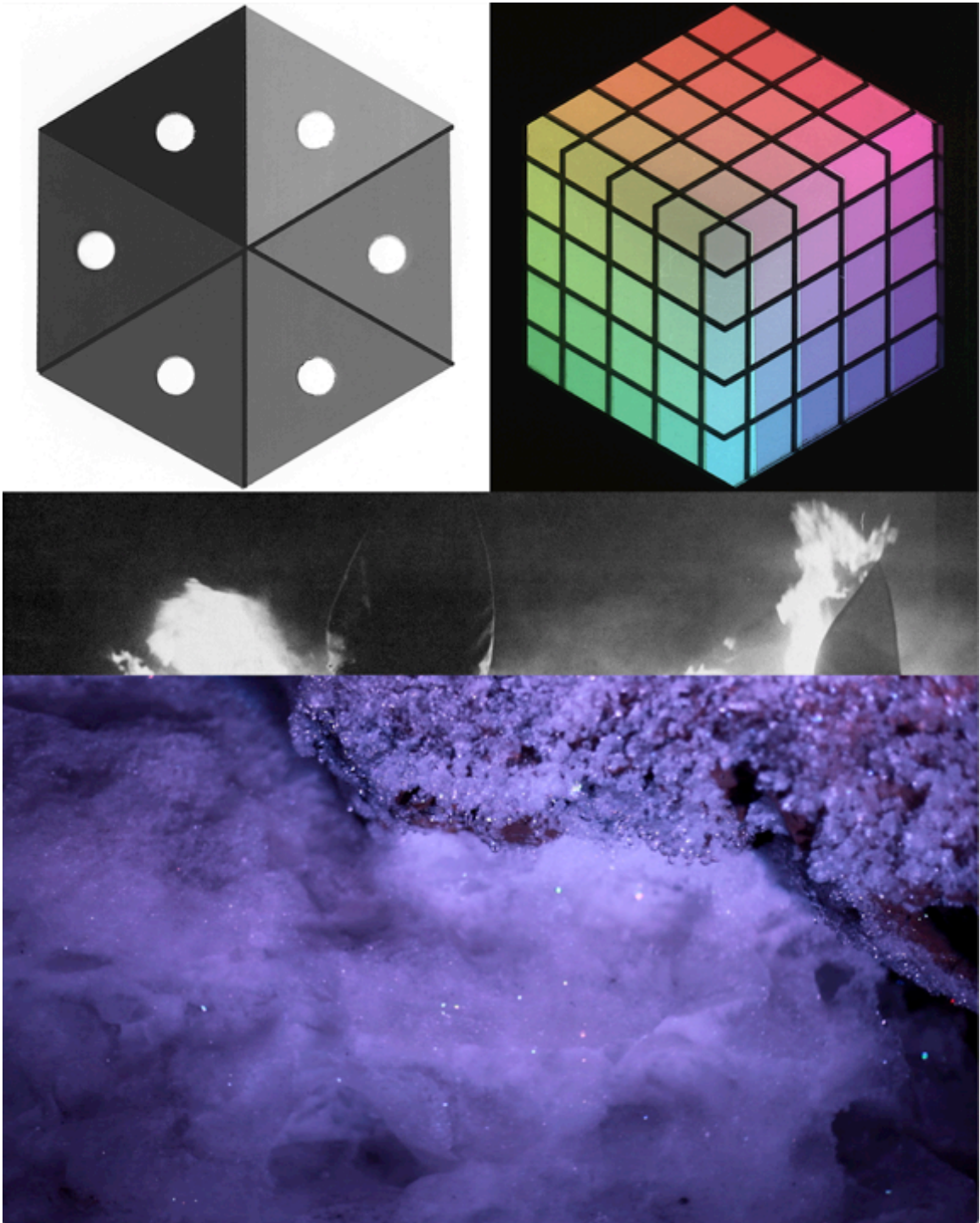


Top: Video still from *RGB #2 (lava ice cave, fall 2012)*, 2013. HD color video, silent, 1:15 min. loop.

Bottom: Video still from *RGB #3 (lava ice cave, fall 2012)*, 2013. HD color video, silent, 4:20 min. loop.



Video still from *fog/mist (lava ice cave, fall 2012)*, 2013. HD color video, silent, 1:21 minute loop.



the illuminated becoming blind exhibition poster, 2013.

Group Exhibitions And Artist Projects

No Boys with Frogs (Group Exhibition, 2013)

For this group exhibition at DNA Gallery in London (ON), a selection of artists was invited to make site-specific work. It is important to note that this was an exhibition for a gallery that had just moved into a new space, and the exhibition occurred before any renovations took place. I was interested in two particular walls, the bulky lighting that hung above, and the shape of the patterns on them. The surface and depth of the patterns were intriguing, as was the opportunity to use various materials scattered around the gallery. I found light sources (tungsten lamps) and materials used in industrial lighting (backings and diffusers for fluorescent light fixtures) to compose two images. In these assemblages, the emphasis on composition, after Derrida's concept, was in the conversation between things. Specifically, I was interested in the differing patterns, the play between representation and abstraction, and the digital space of assembling in which separate images, as flat layers, could be brought together into one image with multiple surfaces and depth of space.



Installation view of *No Boys with Frogs*, 2013.



Untitled (squiggle) (Detail), 2013. Archival pigment print, vintage frame, 15 x 13 in. (38.1 x 33 cm).



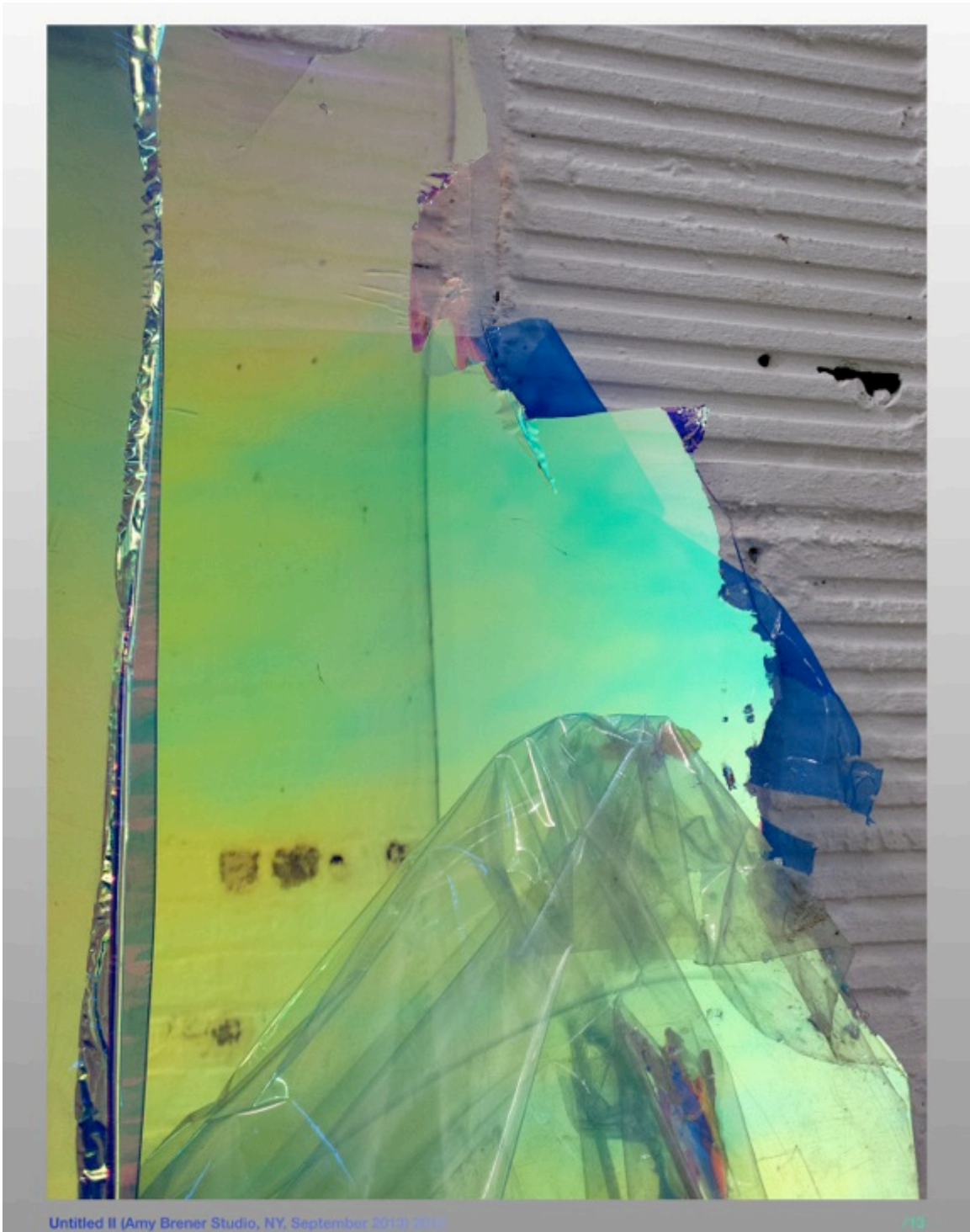
Untitled (splotch) (Detail), 2013. Archival pigment print, vintage frame, 15 x 13 in. (38.1 x 33 cm).

Grid Systems (Group Exhibition, 2013)

Grid Systems was a group show of curated artists' editions and multiples. For this exhibition at Art Metropole in Toronto (ON), I produced a pair of 11 x 14" chromogenic photographs. The work also represented the first material supplement for, and was made in conjunction with, the second issue of *Moire* (more on *Moire* following these images).



Untitled I (Amy Brener Studio, NY, September 2013), 2013. Chromogenic print, 14 x 11 in. (35.6 x 28 cm).

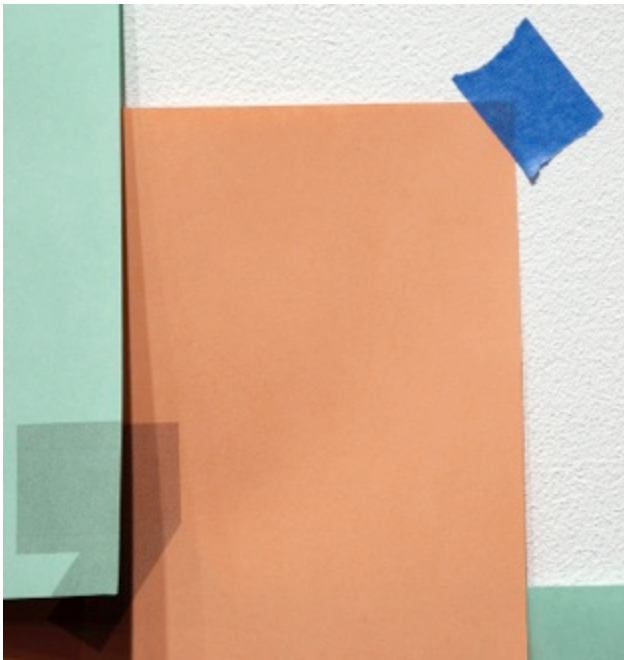


Untitled II (Amy Brener Studio, NY, September 2013), 2013. Chromogenic print, 14 x 11 in. (35.6 x 28 cm).

***Moire* (Artist Publication, 2012—Present)**

Moire is an artist publication that I first conceived in 2012, and produce in collaboration with artists Liza Eurich and Ella McGeough. Each issue focuses on a specific artistic practice through the production of texts, interviews, photographs, and collaborative projects. The content exists and is made available as a PDF for download at www.moire.ca. My involvement with the publication includes writing short texts that contextualize each issue (foreword or afterword) and producing photographic images. My collaborative work on this project includes developing the concept and selection of artist(s), design, layout, and editing. For our most recent publication, I produced two supplemental projects, which included a video work for the website and a pair of photographic prints that were exhibited at Art Metropole as part of its winter 2013 group exhibition, *Grid Systems*.

To date, there have been two issues of *Moire* published. Issue 1 of *Moire* (Spring 2013), “The Work that Work Leaves Undone,” focused on the practice of Vancouver-based artist Raymond Boisjoly. This issue came about in response to Boisjoly’s exhibition at the Forest City artist run center in London (ON), which I helped facilitate as the Program Chair of the gallery. Issue 2 of *Moire*, “Crusty Crunchy Roundy Smoothy,” focused on the practice of New York-based artist Amy Brener. For this issue, I traveled to Brooklyn to connect with the artist. Over the course of four days, I met with the artist to discuss her work and practice, while also spending time in her studio to produce photographic and video work. This video work can be viewed on the *Moire* website.

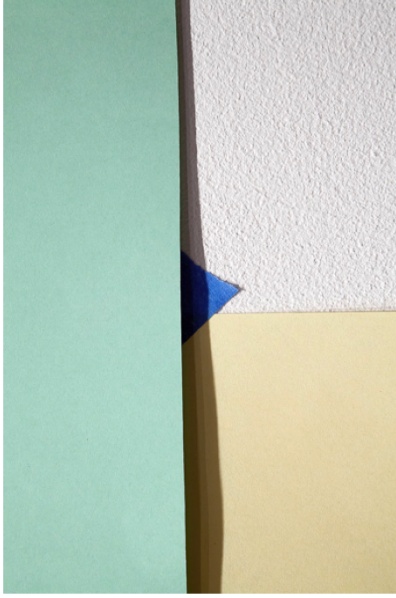


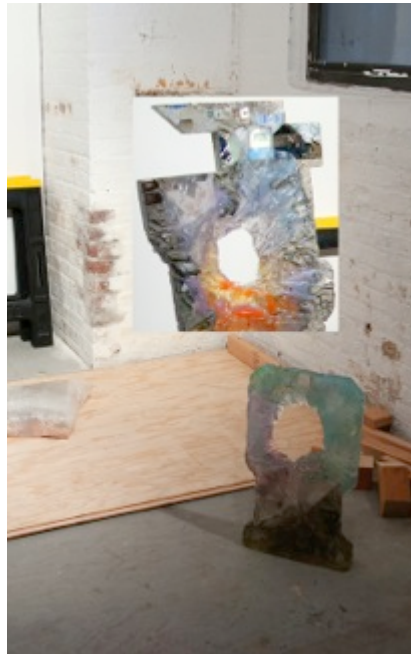
Photographs from *Moire* Issue 1, 2013. Top: Cover, Bottom: Page 10.

**Tape
Fade
Reveal**

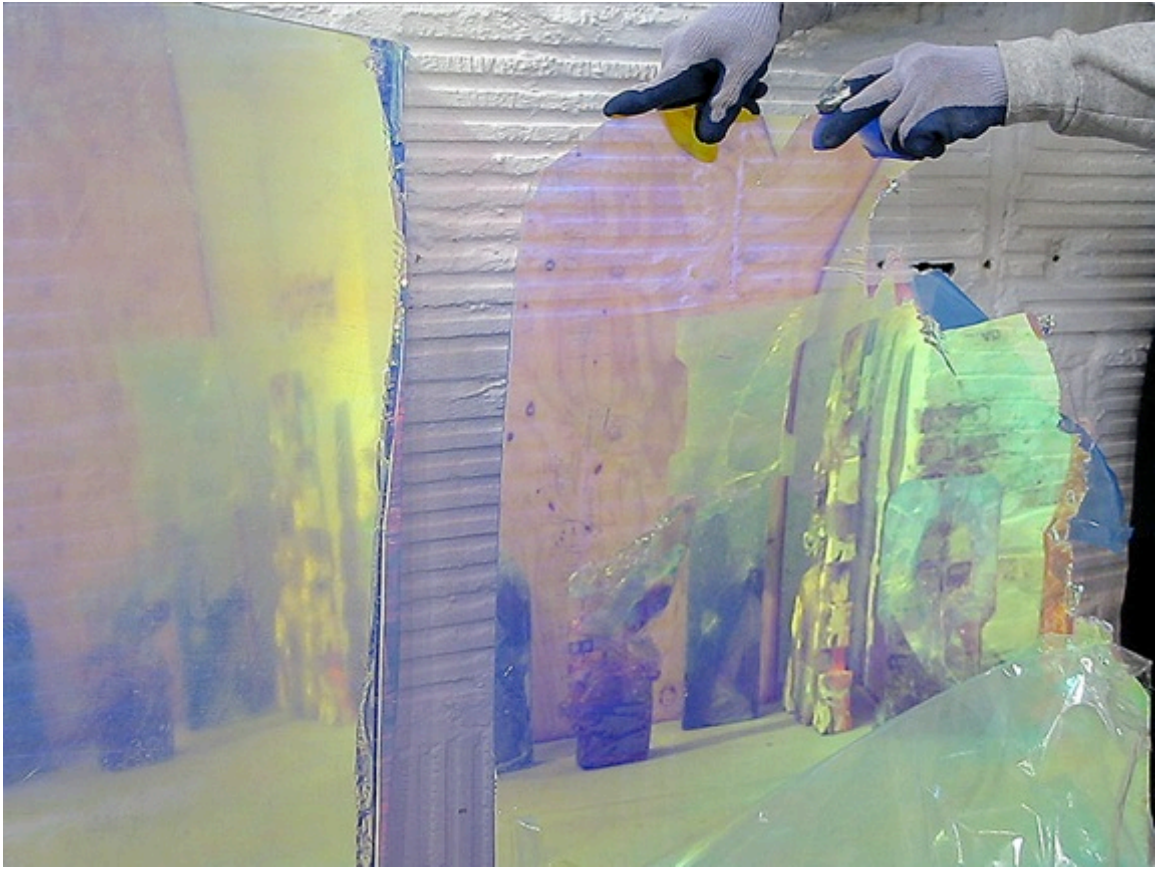
The works hang, taped sheets clinging tactilely to the wall. They are dialectical entities, made precarious through their constituent parts, which shunt us back and forth from wholes to fragments. A spectrum of tones, sheets fading in the light and fluttering in the breeze of its viewers – a shifting of space and position along with a subsequent gradation of colour and text. I find myself placed too much towards the ocular, a viewing that neglects the pitch of the work within itself. Re-positioned, a reflection occurs on the terms of a gentle insistence. *The Work That Leaves Work Undone* presents a sway that contests the violence of increasingly common and decisive forms of action. There is an existence here that exerts without aggression. Boisjoly's print and tape works are implicit, considered, and mesmerizing gestures that render themselves in material form. These pieces can be understood as caught between practice and concept, a collided space of the static and ephemeral. Here, language is developing to take on a shifting and deeply personal character, one that balances and refracts the individual with the communal. Within this abstract multi-structured form, power is being folded in upon itself, assembling to reveal the potentiality of the act within.

– Colin Miner





Photographs from *Moire* Issue 2, 2014. Top: Cover, Bottom: Pages 1 and 11.



Mirrored Tilt, 2014. HD color video, silent, 1:09 min.

Afterword

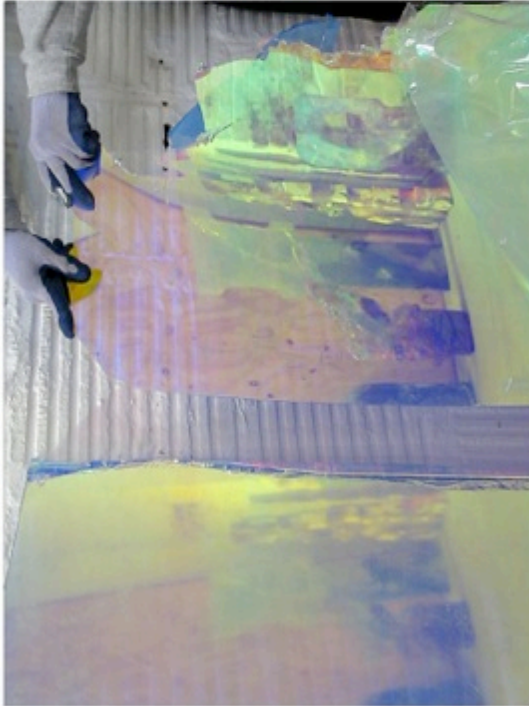
Colin Miner

There is a temporal curiosity within the space of Amy Brenner's sculptures in which surface layers are melted and at times barely discernable underneath. This is the matter of palimpsests, of material layered both transparently and opaquely to catch the light or hold the darkness. This space fascinates our eye with the time to comprehend the qualities of a discontinuous and fractured experience.

It is difficult to materialize this curious movement and duration of the passage of time and our place in it. These sculptures grasp at doing so in their transformation through illumination. They exhibit the unsteady position between past and future, as an ungraspable nowness in which light has substance as material. Enthralled, our eyes are illuminated in the tenuous act of seeing and knowing, of comprehending this transcendence of space in time. Struggling to discern depth from surface partially obscured Fresnel screens shaded in petrified folds of material, cause the eyes' focus to waver in and out. Light glimmers, pooling under layers, shimmering on edges, and ebbing within resin. The boundary of surface is sought out by the light and with this comes contrast. Surface becomes depth and depth becomes surface through the play of lightness and darkness within and without.

It takes time to work with these sculptures, to adjust *with* them. Each finds a place in space with light falling on, then in and off. In this movement a number of them tilt, coaxed by their off-center weight. In order to get the right angle it is necessary to adjust the lighting: in the darkened intervals something competes to take hold. Sculpturally, a material density of light is now absent in the presence of darkness. Pushed from my eyes the lightness (the illumination) is in complete disproportion to their weighty substance.

Mirrored Tilt (2014) was made in collaboration with Amy Brenner at her studio in Brooklyn, NY. It is a reflection as conversation of surface and depth in the space between material and light.



Mirrored Tilt (2014). HD colour video, silent, 1:09 min.

[VIEW]



Back cover photograph for *Moire* Issue 2, 2014.

Immersion Emergencies and Possible Worlds (Artist Project and Research Group, 2011-2014)

This section includes the following sub-sections: *Immersion Emergencies and Possible Worlds*, The Banff Centre for the Arts, (Thematic Residency); *It is impossible to take a photograph of a rainbow, isn't it?* *FUSE Magazine* (Artist Poster Project); and, *The Source: Rethinking Water through Contemporary Art*, Rodman Hall Art Centre, St. Catharines, Ont. (Group Exhibition)

From 2011–2013 I worked as a research assistant for Professor Patrick Mahon in the Visual Arts Department at Western University. During this time, I became involved as an artist with Prof. Mahon's Social Science and Humanities Research Council-funded visual arts research project.¹¹² A focus point for my engagement with this project stemmed from my interest in thinking about the liquid and fluid nature of photography. Even at the early stages I was considering Jeff Wall's "Photography and Liquid Intelligence" article, as well as Rosalind Kraus' consideration of medium specificity and a "post-medium condition" as found in *A Voyage On The North Sea*. I used this project and its numerous opportunities as a forum to question, both intellectually and materially, an ontology of photography as based on qualities of the liquid (*blue hour*) and post-medium (expanding field).

In the spring of 2013, I attended a two-week residency at the Banff Centre for the Arts with artists affiliated with Mahon's project, curator Stuart Reid from Rodman Hall Art Center, and internationally acclaimed artists Lucy and Jorge Orta. While at Banff, I started to develop work for the 2014 exhibition, participated in meetings and seminars, and conducted a number of visual research trips in the area (including a significant visit to the Columbia Icefield).¹¹³ The next opportunity with this group came about as an artist project published in *FUSE Magazine*, for which I contributed an artwork in the form of a

¹¹² My role in this project is as an artist and researcher/coordinator. More information at <http://immersion-emergencies.ca/>.

¹¹³ As a recipient of the Barbara Spohr Memorial Award in early 2014, I will return to Banff in fall 2014 to complete my proposed project while attending the thematic residency "Are we looking at dead birds" led by curator Celine Kopp.

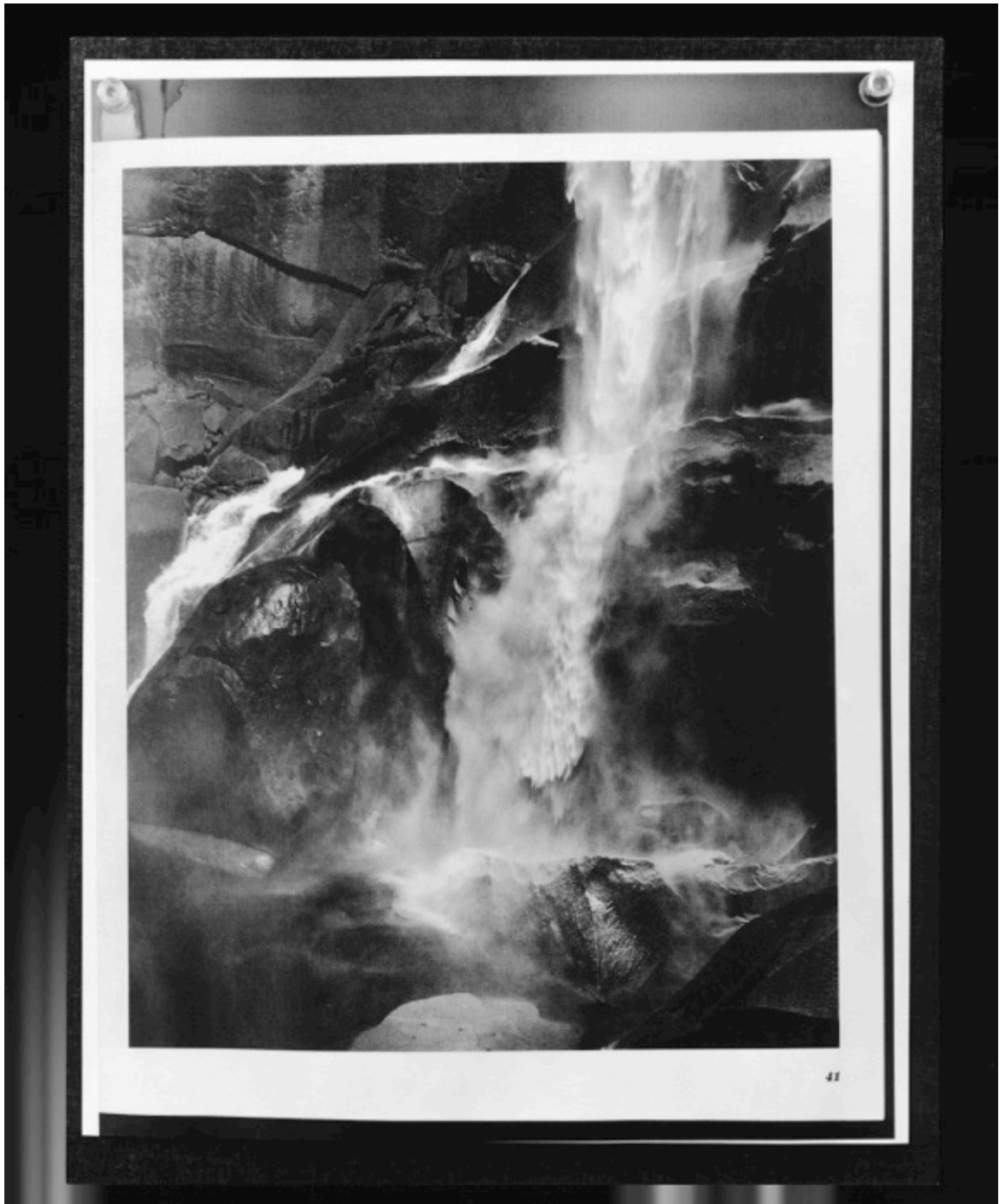
photographic image titled *It is impossible to take a photograph of a rainbow, isn't it?* (2013).

My involvement with this project culminated in May 2014 with the exhibition of artwork in the group show *The Source: Rethinking Water Through Contemporary Art*, and my participation in a panel discussion (May 24, Rodman Hall Art Centre). This exhibition was curated by Stuart Reid and held at the Rodman Hall Art Centre in St. Catharines (ON).¹¹⁴ For this exhibition, I produced works that allowed for a further exploration of the “constellation” in relation to installation. The works were exhibited in a long corridor that was painted to match a photographic gray card. In this space, five new works were exhibited: *Afterimage #21* (2014) and *Afterimage #22* (2014), two intricate neon works; *blue eye* (2014), a large metallic chromogenic print; *RGB#4 (lava ice cave, fall 2013)* (2013), an HD video; and *Untitled (Lynx constellation)* (2014), a work consisting of photographic backdrop paper pin-pricked with the form of the Lynx constellation (where the oldest mass of water in the universe is found orbiting a super-massive blackhole), and black anti-glare film. This final work, as an architectural intervention, was developed to darken the corridor in order to provide better viewing conditions for the video work installed nearby.

For more information on the Immersion Emergencies and Possible Worlds project, see <http://immersion-emergencies.ca/>¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ There are strong aspirations, and as yet confirmed plans, for the exhibition to travel to other galleries and museums across Canada.

¹¹⁵ I organized the website, produced the majority of images, and assisted with text.

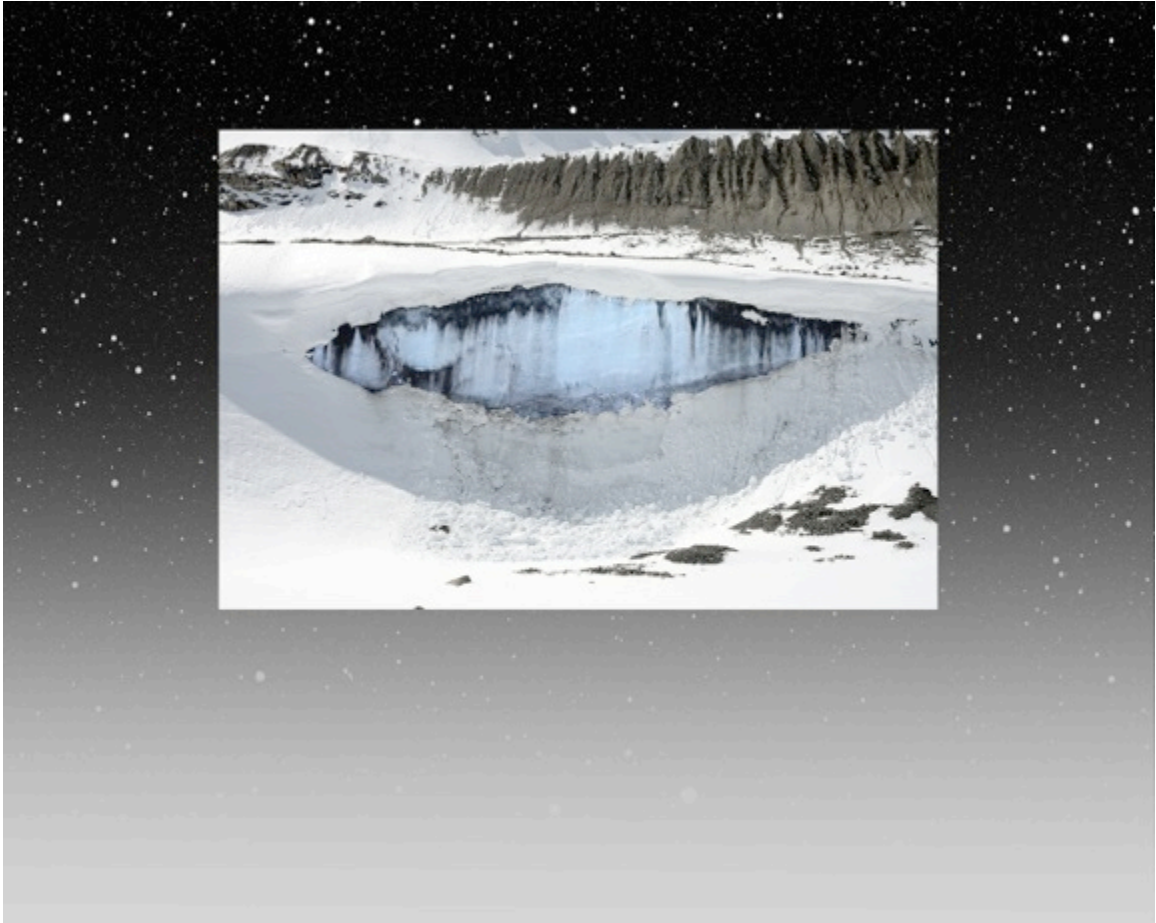


It is impossible to take a photograph of a rainbow, isn't it?, 2013. *FUSE* magazine poster inset (Winter Issue 2013).

This work takes as its source a photographic manual page, which depicts a color rainbow at the base of the waterfall. During the scanning, photocopying, and black and white re-photographing process, the color rainbow becomes absent.



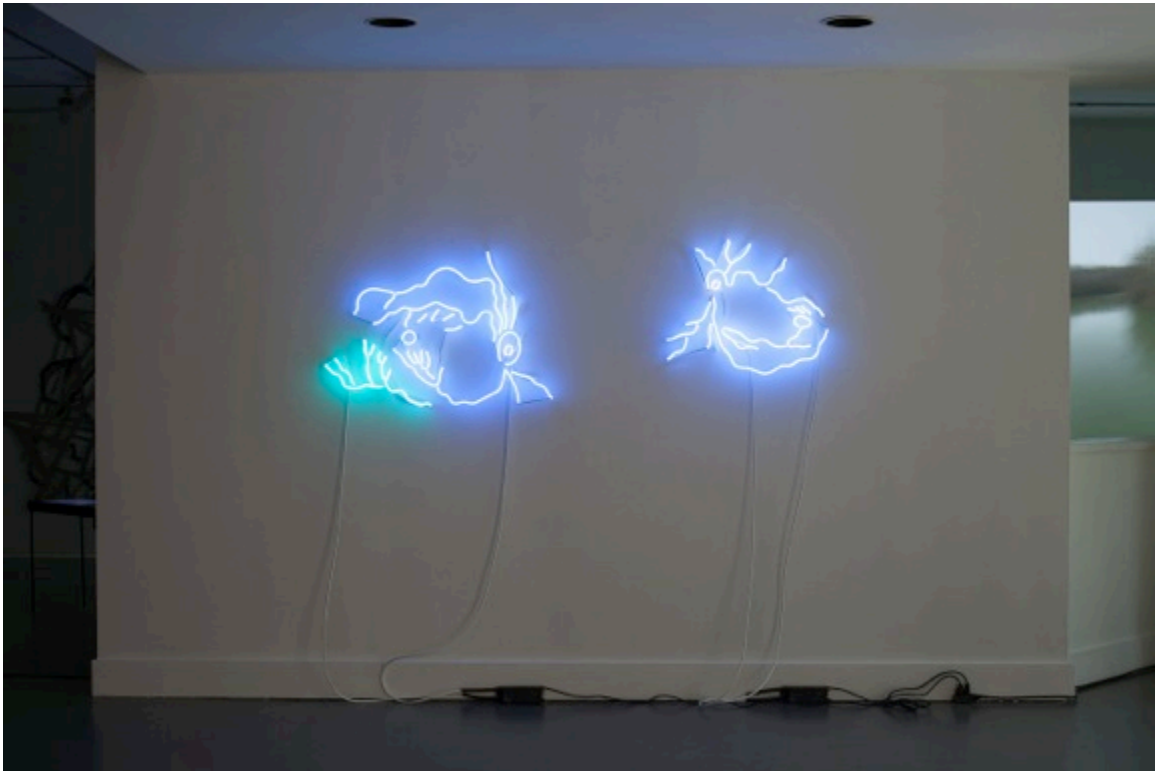
Installation views of *The Source: Rethinking Water Through Contemporary Art*, 2014.



Top: *blue eye* (Detail), 2014. Chromogenic metallic print mounted on Dibond, artist frame, 30 x 24 in. (76.2 x 61 cm). **Bottom:** Video still from *RGB #4 (lava ice cave, fall 2012)*, 2013. Color HD video, silent, 1:50 min loop.



Top: *Untitled (Lynx Constellation)*, 2014. Anti glare window film, photographic backdrop paper, dimensions 10 feet x 34 in. (304.8 x 86.4 cm). **Bottom:** *Untitled (Lynx Constellation)* (detail), 2014.



Installation view of *Afterimage #21* and *Afterimage #22*, 2014.

This work takes as its source Jan Purkinje's *Afterimage* diagram from 1823. The diagram depicts 26 drawings that Purkinje made after looking, for extended durations, at different qualities of light and then closing his eyes. These works reference lightning-like forms, and I am interested in the conversation that they develop with Benjamin's writing on photographic time and specifically the "flash of the moment." When staring at these works for extended durations the viewer, upon closing their eyes, should experience an afterimage as "lightning" where the purple, blue, and turquoise turn yellow, orange, and red, respectively.



Top: *Afterimage #21* (detail), 2014. Neon tubing, transformer, 2.5 x 3 feet (76.2 x 91.4 cm). **Bottom:** *Afterimage #22* (detail), 2014. Neon tubing, transformer, 2.5 x 2.5 feet (76.2 x 76.2 cm).

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Appendices

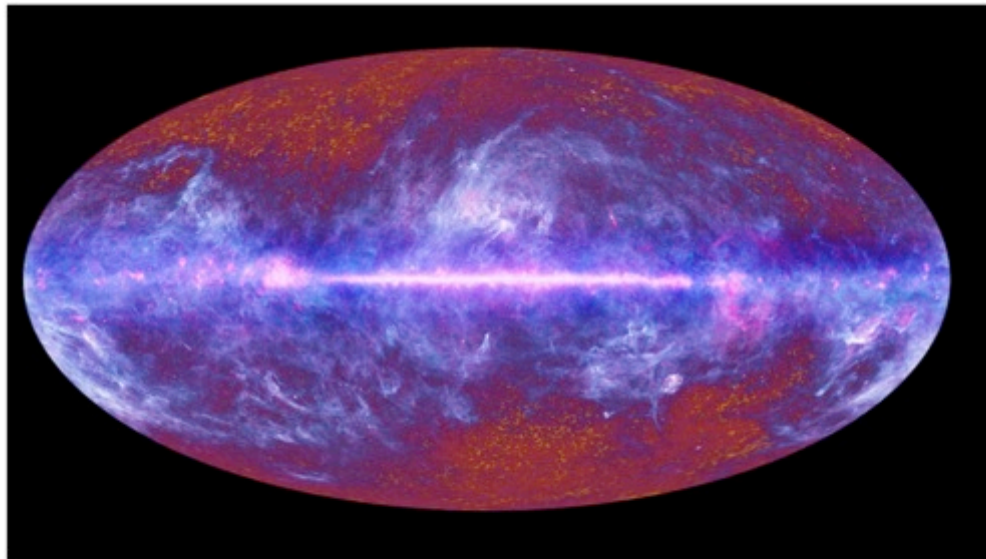
Two essays were written for my solo exhibition *the illuminated becoming blind* (2013). I worked closely with the writers through studio visits, discussing my research and the concepts behind the exhibition at length, and reviewing works that would be focused upon. The essays were developed as part of an artist book that due to unfortunate circumstances did not reach publication. The essays are provided here in their entirety, and it is hoped that they can be physically published at a future date as originally intended. In the meantime, they currently are available through the McIntosh Gallery website.

Appendix A: Trevor Mahovsky, “Behind the sky”.

Behind the sky

By Trevor Mahovsky

In March of 2013, the European Space Agency held a press conference to present scientific data gathered from the analysis of the All-Sky Survey, one of the most remarkable images in history. Undertaken by the ESA’s Planck spacecraft between 2009 and 2010, this microwave and radio wave survey produced what is essentially the first picture of the entire universe, described by ESA Director General Jean-Jacques Dordain as “integrating all the lights of the multitude of galaxies which have been formed from the origins until now”¹.



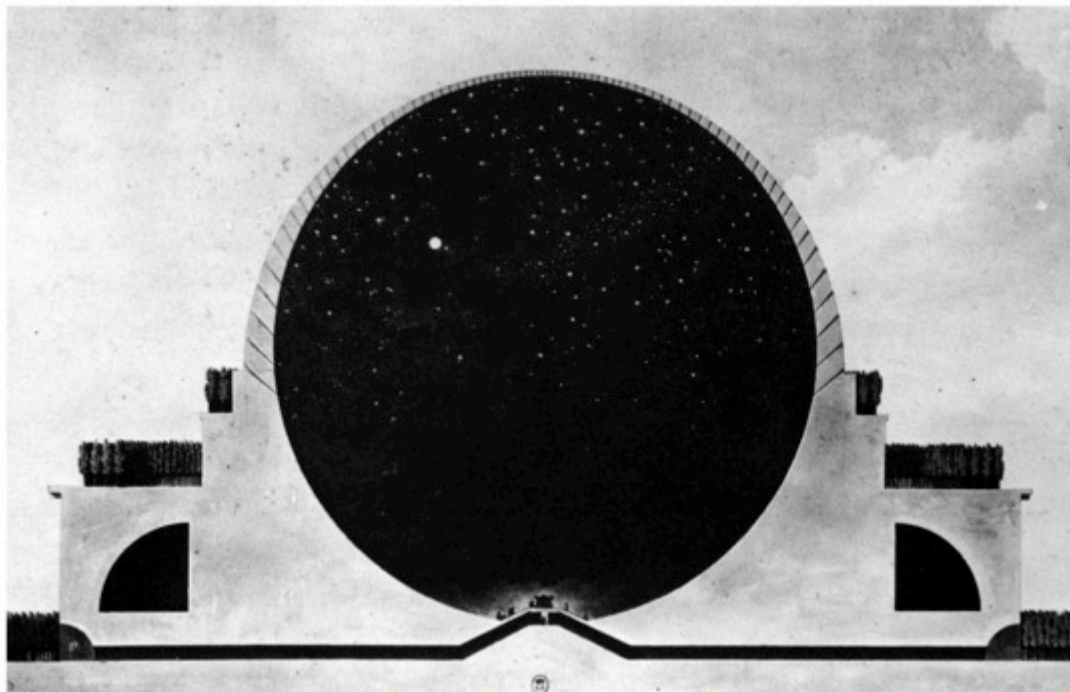
The microwave sky as seen by Planck, photo:ESA/ LFI & HFI Consortia

At first the image is disorienting, since it doesn’t correspond to standard images of space: beyond its trippy psychedelic colouration, it appears rather like a laser beam projected through fog. More confusing is the dynamic of the image’s edge. The stretched oval shape of the boundary dominates its contents, to the extent that viewing the Survey feels less like being swallowed up by the most expansive vista imaginable, and more like squinting through a squished tube. An ESA animation is helpful in understanding the shape of the Survey: it depicts the universe, as seen in all directions from Planck’s vantage point, if it were printed on the inside of a hollow sphere, and the sphere were then cut open and unrolled. Therefore, the boundaries of the image are to be understood as

¹ Video of the conference can be found at http://spaceinvideos.esa.int/Videos/2013/03/Replay_Planck_s_Cosmic_Microwave_Background_map_Media_Briefing

wrapping around until they meet. Being as close as possible to a picture of literally everything, the picture has no edge.

This format — the universe depicted on the inside of a globe, and viewed from the interior of that globe — is strongly reminiscent of Étienne-Louis Boullée's proposed design for Cenotaph to Sir Isaac Newton of 1784. The top half of Boullée's 490-foot-high hollow sphere would have been punctured so that, during the day, light could enter the interior in simulation of the firmament as seen at night. At night, lit by a simulacral sun in the form of a luminescent suspended armillary sphere, the interior of the Cenotaph would have taken on the appearance of day. To enter, viewers would traverse a long corridor at the base of the structure, climb a set of steps, and emerge at the bottom of the interior of the sphere. Not a walk to the foot of the sky, but a Journey to the Centre of the Earth.



Étienne-Louis Boullée, *Projekt for an Isaac-Newton-Memorial. Daylight with artificial starlight. Cross-cut, 1784*, Own scan from: "Klassizismus und Romantik. 1750-1848", Hrsg. Rolf Toman, Verlag Ullmann und Könemann, Sonderausgabe, ISBN 978-3-8331-3555-2

Despite the All-Sky Survey's reinforcement of a cosmology antithetical to Newtonian principles of absolute space and time, both the Survey and the Cenotaph exhibit another similarity, which is an association established between their respective primary vantage points and death. Boullée's building is a tomb, and it is designed so that the viewing area corresponds with the location of Newton's sarcophagus at the base of the sphere. In the ESA press conference Dordain describes the sensors on Planck, which he indicates are cooled to 0.1

degree above absolute zero to attain sensitivity to temperature fluctuations of a few millionths of a degree, as “the coldest spot in space”. Ironically, this profoundly dead spot — at absolute zero there is no motion beyond a minimal vibration at a molecular level — was constructed to observe the pattern of Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB) radiation that is the afterglow of the birth of the universe.

What is behind the sky? What is on the outside of that sphere, beyond the mottled magenta-colourized CMB that is the background of the All-Sky Survey? Even surrender to the most infinitesimal fluctuations of the universe does not show this. We can only detect photons that have had time to reach us, photons that pre-existed the birth of all the celestial bodies in the universe, their paths twisting and warping by virtue of gravitational lensing as they passed emerging galaxies on their way to Planck’s deathly sensors. To see further beyond the CMB would be to see even further back in time. Even if it were possible, beyond a certain point — 380,000 years after the Big Bang occurred almost 14 billion years ago — the universe would present nothing to the eye but the ultimate impenetrable fog.

For that first 380,000 years, the universe was opaque. As the Planck educational toolkit describes, it contained nothing but hot plasma primarily composed of protons, neutrons, electrons and photons. Photons could not travel very far due to a proliferation of free electrons which constantly interrupted their movement. With the expansion of the universe, the heat contained within it dispersed across a larger area; the universe cooled, allowing particles to form stable couplings. Electrons could combine with protons to form hydrogen, releasing photons from their imprisonment; the moment photons were free to travel long distances marked the birth of the fundamental conditions for sight. With an incredibly economical yet evocative phrase, the authors of ESA toolkit summarize this event as the point at which the universe “became transparent”.

Perhaps the older eye-confounding universe is what stretches beyond the virtual globe of the Survey, meaning that the globe’s membrane does not separate inside from outside, as does the Cenotaph’s shell. Rather, it marks the threshold of the visual.

The All-Sky Survey and the Cenotaph to Newton offer particularly fitting context for the art of Colin Miner: not only as extensions of its recurring metaphors of cosmos and cave, but also as a means to parallel its underlying logic. They refigure Miner’s art, at a remove: in the words of Miner, with the goal of evoking, not grasping. Their relation to Miner’s art doubles the relation Miner posits between his own work, which often amounts to what can be considered photography by other methods, and the ontological status of photography itself.

As with Planck's sensors, many of Miner's works set themselves against the edge of the visual: one thinks of a recent video work, *fog grid mist reflection* (2012) in which the screen slowly fills with smoke until it appears as if it were a photographic grey card. This work utilizes a recurring motif found in much of Miner's work: a movement in and out of the state of seeing nothing. As Planck demonstrates, the wonder of the opaque universe, a fog from which everything in existence emerged, is powerfully compelling. Miner is not directly referring to the ancient cosmos, but he is conjuring a similar sense of dissolution, of giving oneself over to a profoundly eradicating force. By definition this state eludes representation, and Miner has recourse to the metaphor of smoke, which also carries the allusion of the spectral: a phantasm that mysteriously approaches only to withdraw. Contained within the claustrophobic space of the spray booth in which the video is set, the smoke of *fog grid mist reflection* presents an allegory of the interior, transposing the Survey's cosmic mysteries to an inner world reminiscent of the Cenotaph. A universe opens up and collapses inside the confines of the air extraction unit, a marvel that is also nothing but an expelled breath.

For the seeing of 'nothing' to register as an experience at all, it must be placed in some kind of context, as a point in a journey or as a step in a process: for example, a movement from light to dark, or from transparency to opacity. The RGB videos taken by Miner in a complex of caves in northern Manchuria, (title), their subject colourized in an hallucinatory manner not unlike that of the CMB in the All-Sky Survey, take a slightly different tack to *fog grid mist reflection*. Where Miner's earlier video put the eye to rest in a comforting mist, here the eye is overtaxed by the demand to adjust to the constant cycling of the hyper-saturated hues of the RGB lights as they are cast upon the mineral and rock formations of the cave. The acclimatization of one's eyes to each new hue becomes the focus of the experience, as if one's vision was out of synch and behind the pace of the image. There is a parallel between the eye and the way the camera struggles to calibrate at certain points. The viewer's colour bearings are loosened as emerging hues exhibit an initial indeterminacy; Merleau-Ponty might say that our grip is briefly lost. It takes a moment to comprehend exactly what colour one is looking at; perhaps this moment affords a paradoxical look at the condition of not looking.

When thought of in relation to this thematic in Miner's art, the Survey and the Cenotaph are pulled in certain directions, in a form of gravitational lensing. The Cenotaph takes on the aspect of a cave, and the passage at its base signifies a journey from light into an hallucinatory darkness, to the place of the after-image. It becomes not unlike a camera obscura, albeit one constructed for the display of the aperture rather than the production of an image. The standard single aperture is expanded to a multitude; there is a correspondence with the way Miner has made work by repeatedly puncturing foil-faced foam sheathing to

produce a representation of the cosmos for subsequent photography. The giant eyeball that is Cenotaph is thus dazzled, shot through with a galaxy of pupils.

Thinking of the All-Sky Survey through the logic of Miner's approach likewise provides a means to consider photography at a distance. This distance is established by the fact that the All-Sky Survey, an image that represents readings of far-infrared, microwave and high frequency radio domains, is in fact not a photograph at all. Planck studies photography at the vastest of possible removes: what Planck does is make us aware of the photographic quality of the Cosmic Microwave Background radiation, an idea reinforced in the language of the ESA education package, which describes the CMB, being a relic of the Big Bang, as a "snapshot" of the birth of the universe. First there was blackness, then a flash of light. By virtue of a delay, light eventually meets us in the present as a trace of a distant time, in testimonial that this happened. Planck is not producing a photograph, but studying one.

Yet to think of this blackness, this flash, this delay, they are all on unimaginable scales. Their terrible beauty awakens a death drive in us, as they are things that cannot be understood but only given over to. Boullée's shielding cave offers an attempt at a defensive posture, though it takes on the aspect of a grave. This invites speculation as to the existence of a connection between the centre of the earth and the back of the sky, as if the edge of one somehow wraps and twists to meet the other; this idea is also suggested by the way that the rock and mineral formations of (video title), which have an uncanny similarity to images of space, present a seemingly celestial vista at the same time as they court blindness. The blackness, flash and delay that resulted in the vista studied by Planck are such ultimate examples of photographic principles that they destroy the idea of photography, stretching it to such an unimaginable vastness that it is torn asunder, to be folded back into the fabric of the universe.

Appendix B: Jacqueline Mabey, “Notes: on *Colin Miner: the illuminated becoming blind*”.

**Notes: on *Colin Miner: the illuminated becoming blind*
By Jacqueline Mabey**

Spooked

We should begin, then, with the ghosts.

Benjamin referred to the fog that obscures the beginnings of photography. Patrilineal anxiety around origins, about the one true Father. Sideways glances over kitchen tables—every child has a mother but one’s father is always in doubt. (The family, of course, is the institutional center of story-telling and myth-making, where we learn the worlding-function of the performative utterance.) Who was the first? What was their method? Quick, get the story straight, this is what it is, *this is what it was always meant to be*. Teleological narratives of photography come to dominate: the predestined progression to mechanical transcendence from a series of entertaining aberrations and failed science experiments.

TRANSCENDENCE! To leave the corrupt and corrupting body behind. Here, the origins of the modern scientific method. Objectivity and the anxiety of influence, objectivity as defined by our *lack*, our absence, the belief that we can only know the truth when we have no part in it.

But to have the light of truth reach the celluloid flesh unmolested by human desire? Rejoice, oh brothers and sisters! A conduit of uncompromised verisimilitude.

PHOTOGRAPHY IS ROOTED IN REALITY

Ah, yes, but reality is quite the production! Page upon page of technical prose delineating the laboriousness of conforming to the conventions of reality—the set up, the framing, the lighting, the equipment. Narratives of mastery and skill, so much *work*, so much effort and worry about getting it right.

What is the temporality of anxiety? To be anxious is to be paralyzed in the present by a plague of potential futures. To be anxious is to be haunted, to live with the ghosts of past and future (in)actions, iterations, lines of flight, the *would have, could have, should have*, the paralyzing thought: *what if?* Like a horse spooked rears back and dances, the anxious heart knows no quiet.¹

You can try to fix the image but it will never stick. The temporality of the photograph is not the “there then” but contains the kernel of potential futures, held in eternal yet-could-be.

A multitude of noisy ghosts call out to us, fill our waking hours with unease and our nights with restlessness. They remind us of other possible presents, and other whispers of the past. Like an afterimage they linger, belated, persistent, refusing easy reconciliation.

cf. Hippolyte Bayard's *Self Portrait as a Drowned Man* (1840). Bayard, playing the lonely suicide, offers himself up as a living ghost, sent to pester the State and the law of the Father.ⁱⁱ How that picture haunts me. The hat to the left, the "rotting" hands neatly folded. The body's posture as if dreaming. An avaricious image, a seductive, uneasy fiction, right from the very start.

But what, then, is a spook? A slur, a specter, a spy.

Spy satellites, the surveillance of stars, black ops and black holes. What is the opposite of surveillance? Recalcitrance, oscillation, play, dissembling. The phantasmagoria is not an aberration but in the genetic make-up of photography.

What would it look like if we embraced our household spirits?

Blue

Blue is a different kind of space, a space between, really. A kind of sudden, soft sinking that separates you from others, as if under a foot of water or a blanket of snow. Life is lived in echo and delay. Sorrow moves slowly, its limbs heavy with memory.

Blue is uncooperative. The blue hour, between light and dark, when the birds cease their singing, is a photographer's dilemma, difficult to capture. Non-photo blue, mark making that does not register on film. The opacity of sex, the other blue.

Indigo from aniline, they thought it could treat sleeping sickness. Blue to cure contagion, blue to cure the body swelling beyond its bounds (underneath the skin the ache incubates). But what to cure the blue?

From the outside, blue is near illegible, difficult to understand. Like Charcot's Augustine in her "normal" state, looking back at the camera, defiant. Her catatonia, her hysteria a product of photographic dazzlement as, from the darkness, comes the blinding flash.ⁱⁱⁱ

Blue knows all the stories but isn't one to tell.

Grisaille

On one end of the grayscale there's celestial silver, the color of the moon and the tinfoil ships we make to take us there as children. We turn our eyes up toward the silvery moon to wonder.^{iv} The color of camp, of glam, of grown up play. A site of fantasy, of fiction, silver reflects our desire back at us. It is the desire for the new, the different, the other.

But I could get lost in the ghostly gray of the scanner light.^v Giving form to digital materiality, with all the richness of a contact print. It's a kind of antagonism, you know, this space of speculation. Tear a page out of a book, cut it up, copy it, copy the copy. A form of disruption, of distancing. Push back, the abstraction of image and text in this new no-where space. It puts it back on me and you, brothers and sisters. This abstraction, a platform for interrogation, for question-asking, stock-taking.

Shedding titles and family names, moving forward in obscurity with the somatic and the spectral, a new worlding.

The point is to haunt the algorithm. The point is to not give up the ghost.

-Jacqueline Mabey, New York, May 2013

ⁱ "Alas," said the mouse, "the whole world is growing smaller every day. At the beginning it was so big that I was afraid, I kept running and running, and I was glad when I saw walls far away to the right and left, but these long walls have narrowed so quickly that I am in the last chamber already, and there in the corner stands the trap that I must run into."

"You only need to change your direction," said the cat, and ate it up." -Franz Kafka, "A Little Fable," 1931

ⁱⁱ On the back of the photograph is written: *The corpse which you see here is that of M. Bayard, inventor of the process that has just been shown to you. As far as I know this indefatigable experimenter has been occupied for about three years with his discovery. The Government which has been only too generous to Monsieur Daguerre, has said it can do nothing for Monsieur Bayard, and the poor wretch has drowned himself. Oh the vagaries of human life....! ... He has been at the morgue for several days, and no-one has recognized or claimed him. Ladies and gentlemen, you'd better pass along for fear of offending your sense of smell, for as you can observe, the face and hands of the gentleman are beginning to decay.*

ⁱⁱⁱ "The flash takes you by surprise, no matter how long in advance you have been warned. It cuts into a scene with the violence of the lightning bolt and yet instantly displaces attention from itself to the darkness of its surroundings. Presumably you recover, only momentarily blinded by an excess of artificial light, and try to regain your composure. The flash creates a physical disorientation that corresponds on an experiential level to the philosophical 'disturbance to civilization' produced by looking at the photograph, which signals 'the advent of yourself as other.' An excess of light that promises total (as we will see, illusory) visibility, and that goes out at the same moment that it goes on, the flash cannot be integrated into sensory experience, but only registered belatedly, incompletely, possibly as shock; too much light produces a loss of sight. The flash promises instant revelation of the truth. It occurs as accident, unexpected and impossible to anticipate or parry, even by someone trained to resist it. The resurfacing of cognition that follows, however, may achieve only partial recovery: the flash disorients you, and the subsequent cognitive effort may not fully integrate the moment of disorientation into

memory." Ulrich Baer, "Photography and Hysteria," *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), p. 34.

^{iv} "I believe in continually asking the questions that designing for extraterrestrials implies, because thinking about aliens is a way to think about ourselves and our relationship to the future... . Underlying the question of how to consider aliens is a deeply ethical question, namely what relationship do we want to have to the cosmos, to the stranger and to the future? Should our disposition be pregnant with the nihilism of silent indifference, or should we endeavour to develop an ethical relationship to those symbolic figures, and, by extension, ourselves?" Trevor Paglen, "'Friends of Space, How Are You All? Have You Eaten Yet?' Or, Why Talk to Aliens Even if We Can't," *Afterall* 32 (Spring 2013), p.19.

^v "The picture goes in for Marat's 'things,' as we know his devotees did in general. It insists on the specific forms matter took in this instance. And yet the single most extraordinary feature of the picture, I should say, is its whole upper half being empty. Or rather (here is what is unprecedented), not being empty, exactly, not being a satisfactory representation of nothing or nothing much - of an absence in which whatever the subject is has become present - but something more like a representation of painting, of painting as pure activity. Painting as material, therefore. Aimless. In the end detached from any one representational task. Bodily." T.J. Clark, "Painting in the Year 2," from *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 45.

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Colin Miner

Education

2010–2014 Western University, Ph.D. Candidate
 2007 University of British Columbia, MFA
 2002 University of British Columbia, BFA

Honours and Awards

2014 Barbara Spohr Memorial Award
 2010–2014 Western Graduate Research Scholarship
 2012 Faculty of Arts and Humanities Alumni Award
 2011 Lynn Lionel Scott Scholarship
 2005 Roloff Beny Foundation Award for Photography

Related Work Experience

2011–
Present Founder and Contributor, *Moire*
(Online international artist publication)
 2014 Teaching Assistant, Western University
ArtNow! (Contemporary Art speaker series and seminar)
 2010–2013 Instructor, Western University
Introduction to Contemporary Media Art; Advanced Photography; and,
Practicum (Graduating BFA studio course)
 2011–2013 Research Assistant
Patrick Mahon and Immersion Emergencies (artist group)
 2011–2012 Programming Chair and Board of Directors Member,
Forest City Gallery (London, ON)

- 2009–2011 Co-Editor
Instant Coffee National List (Canada)
- 2008–2010 Instructor, Beijing Concord College of Sino-Canada (China)
Cultural Studies and Digital Media
- 2006–2007 Teaching Assistant, The University of British Columbia
Studio One; and, Foundation Computing for the Visual Arts
- 2006–2007 Research Assistant
Artist Ken Lum

Residencies

- 2014 (Fall) *Are we looking at dead birds?*, The Banff Centre, Banff (AB)
Lead by curator Céline Kopp
- 2013 *Immersion Emergencies*, The Banff Centre, Banff (AB)
Guest artists Lucy and Jorge Orta

Solo Exhibitions

- 2013 *the illuminated becoming blind*, McIntosh Gallery, London, ON, Canada
- 2012 *the evil are not really there, they have a problem with being present*,
ArtLab, London, ON, Canada
- 2008 *Darkroom 14*, The Ministry of Casual Living, Victoria, BC, Canada
(+ publication)

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2014 (Fall) *Data Mine*, G44, Toronto, ON, Canada
- 2014 *The Source: Rethinking Water through Contemporary Art*, Rodman Hall
Art Centre, St. Catharines, ON, Canada (+ publication)
- 2013 *Grid Systems*, Art Metropole, Toronto, ON, Canada
- 2013 *No Boys with Frogs*, DNA Gallery, London, ON, Canada

- 2013 *Butterflies In My Studio Coming From Reality* (Curated by Renske Janssen), The Banff Centre, Banff, AB, Canada
- 2011 *Laborers, Dilettantes and Connoisseurs*, Lowry Signs Building, London, ON, Canada (+ publication)
- 2011 *Out of Practice*, ArtLab, London, ON, Canada
- 2009 *In the Making*, Beijing Center for the Arts, Beijing, China (+ publication)
- 2007 *Little Landscapes and Miniature Worlds*, Richmond Art Gallery, Richmond, BC, Canada
- 2007 *Green*, The Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada (+ publication)
- 2006 *Oh, What A Blow That Phantom Gave Me!*, The Belkin Satellite, Vancouver, BC, Canada
- 2005 *Common Room* (Curated by Jesse Birch, Liz Park, Sophie Brodovitch, and Kegan McFadden), The Belkin Satellite, Vancouver, BC, Canada (+ publication)
- 2000 *Heart: Sony Europe Art Awards*, Postdamer Platz (Curated by Owkui Enwezor), Berlin, Germany (+ publication)