

ART

H A B E N S

CONTEMPORARY ART REVIEW

MARTA DJOURINA

CARLES PAMIES

NATALIE L

SHU-JUNG CHAO

DANHUA MA

MELISSA SPICCIA

SERCAN GUNDOGAR

DARCIA LABROSSE

MERITXELL AUMEDES MOLINERO

Untold Stories, multimedia installation

a work by Meritxell Aumedes Molinero

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Contemporary Art Press



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Meritxell A. Molinero

Spain / United Kingdom

Aumedes Molinero uses a bed as a metaphoric space of encounter for birth and death, pain and pleasure, a place where life can often start and end.

*This "silent space" works in juxtaposition to the memories and sounds it is connected to. In a cycle without a beginning or an end, *rûah* reflects upon primal feelings of the human condition. Aumedes has been working in the field of performing arts over the past 15 years.*



Marta Djourina

United Kingdom

My artistic focus lies within natural traces of light and their reminiscence captured with each exposure. My experiments with this theme have led to different ways of dealing with the approach of "painting" with light. By questioning the characteristics of light and using traces in order to express them, I've discovered photography to be the optimum medium. One of my most recent projects deals with filtering of light through such objects.



Carles Pàmies

United Kingdom/Spain

I would not define me as a Creator, as an intentional generator of a reality and a language. Omnia Vertuntur. The dizziness of reality and the fleeting step of time takes me in the air. I am unable to assimilate it completely and the only solution, my own reaction, is to drop my poetical ballast, in the shape of words, images, or actions without transcendancy. But "verba volant, scripta manent", that's why this anxiety for elaborating milestones in this brief vital path.



Natalie L

USA

Natalie L. fascination with the Impressionists led her to create her first paintings under their influence. As her tastes evolved towards contemporary art, she has gradually moved away from figurative painting to a style between realism and abstraction. Her form of abstraction is not disconnected from nature but reflects its imperfect beauty. Her inspiration comes from the organic world. After several years of experimentation, she now focuses her creative energy on exploring the abstract patterns.



Shu-jung CHAO

France

A person with simultaneity and multi-culture, a foreigner, a stateless person, or a traveler... How does she sharpen her points of view on the world and question her situation in this world, at a given moment. I grew up in Taiwan, the country which I left five years ago. When I first arrived in France, I had a huge culture shock, which originated from the unfamiliar language, habit, and history. I experienced relationship and self break-through during these years.



Darcia Labrosse

USA

In this era of transhumance and deterritorialization, my work is a trace left by a performance in a factory setting, far from the habitual painting studio space. In contrast to an actual ritualistic praxis, I use a highly sophisticated medium: electrostatic paint, also known as powdercoating, on sheets of aluminum, copper or Corten steel. The process is fast and conducive method that facilitates immediacy of thought and feeling, challenging a fine line between figure and abstraction.



Sercan Gundogar

Turkey

Main focus of my intended approach is human supremacy on nature and I call this the domestication of nature. The approach also refers to holocene and its successor anthropocene. Domesticated or reshaped landscapes depicted in my photographs represent human supremacy towards nature in other words subjectivity of human and objectivity of nature. This documentation also aims at highlighting ego-centric approaches of humans by showing the human made in other words unnatural landscapes.

Danhua Ma

USA

I have been struggling with clarifying "working" and "not working" by myself for a long time before I jumped into the contemporary art world. I went through the process of avoiding "not working" artworks to accepting them. I was a painter and the effort I put into my creation process was far beyond my final visual effect. Then I turned to an unconventional art medium. I am happy about those "not working" projects. In this personal analysis, I will discuss my main focus: sound.

Melissa Spiccia

United Kingdom

Melissa Spiccia has a deep interest in the detailed physicality and organisation of the body stemming from a career as a contemporary dance artist.

Drawing from past experiences in dance choreography and improvisation, her processes are non linear and in constant transition, allowing ideas to shift, respond and materialise in their most suited form, unconstrained to one practice. Intrigued by identity and experience, configuration and disassociation.

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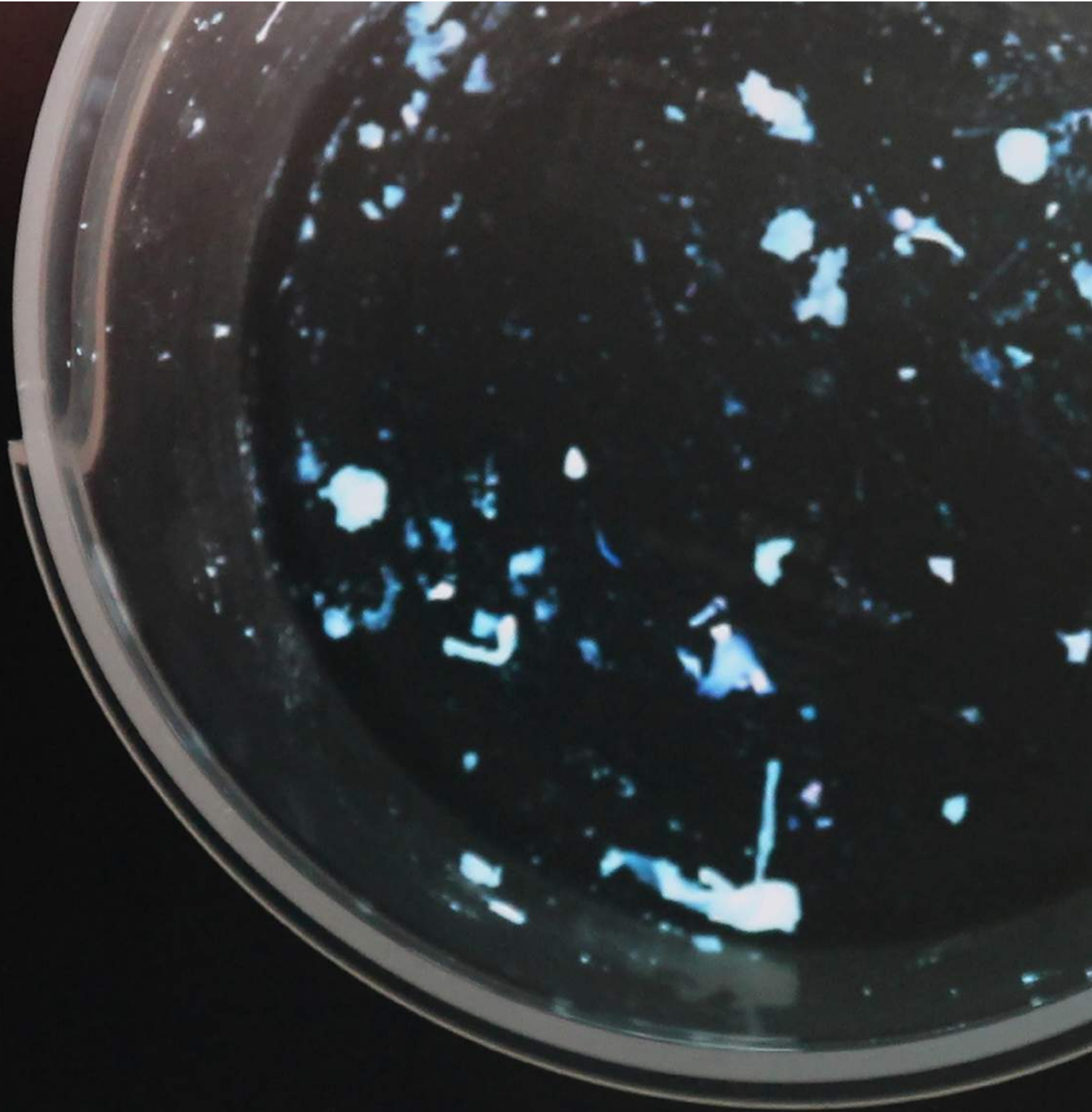
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Marta Djourina

My artistic focus lies within natural traces of light and their reminiscence captured with each exposure. My experimentations with this theme have led to different ways of dealing with the approach of “painting” with light.

By questioning the characteristics of light and using traces in order to express them, I’ve discovered photography to be the optimum medium. A reoccurring subject matter has always been the examination of natural objects and finding out more about them through zooming into their surface. One of my most recent projects deals with filtering of light through such objects and raises questions about the presence and absence of it.



An interview with

Marta Djourina

An interview by **Dario Rutigliano**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

arthabens@mail.com

Marta Djourina centers her practice on analogue photography with a strong focus on the photo paper: her experimental approach leads her to accomplish an insightful investigation about the characteristics of light to bring to a new level of significance the notion of trace. In *The Dematerialization of Everyday Life* that we'll be discussing in the following pages, she questions the ephemeral nature of an object after having purified it from its tactile nature, inviting the viewers to cross the liminal area between perception and abstraction. One of the most convincing aspect of Djourina's practice is the way it challenges the hierarchies of significance, drawing the viewers into a multilayered experience, to explore the notions of identity and memory: we are very pleased to introduce our readers to her multifaceted artistic production.

Hello Marta and welcome to ART Habens: to start this interview, would you like to tell us something about your background? You have a solid formal training and few years after having earned a B.A. of Art History and Culture Studies, you eventually received a M.A. of Art Theory from the Technische Universität Berlin. You also had the chance to study at the Glasgow School of Art: how have these experiences influenced your evolution as an artist? And in particular, does your cultural substratum as a Bulgarian artist inform the way you relate yourself to art making and to the aesthetic problem in general?

Yes, I started my art education with theory and after that continued with a degree in Fine Art which I am still pursuing. The training in art theory definitely opened my eyes up a lot, and living in Berlin allows me to access an incredibly diverse art scene.



Marta Djourina

Being at the Glasgow School of Art was one of the most productive times I've had. The atmosphere in the city and the art school are very inspiring and the time spent in Glasgow helped me to come out of my comfort zone. A big difference between Berlin and Glasgow was the course I was undertaking there, which was Fine Art Photography, so it was a lot more defined.

The most concrete part of my skill training was during private lessons in Bulgaria as a teenager. There was a concentrated focus on traditional learning methods such as

portraiture and still life, so naturally I started developing through the medium of pencil drawing.


Your preferred medium is analogue photography without a camera: the way you put into practice the notion of painting with light reveals a systematic research around the themes of memory and identity, that you combine together into a consistent harmony. Before starting to elaborate about your production, we would suggest to our readers to visit <http://martadjourina.com> in order to get a synoptic view of your work: in the meanwhile, would you like to tell to our readers something about your process and set up? In particular, what has lead you to centre your practice on this kind of technique?

My interest led me to the subject matter of light and from there organically moved to analogue photography. Lately I've been working with videos but in a similar way as I do with photography.

I don't use a camera because I'm not trying to capture a moment, but rather a process or an experience. One project I undertook involved placing a pinhole camera in my studio every day which ultimately acted as a make-shift CCTV-camera. I feel the artistic medium should reflect the subject matter and by that I mean work in harmony. I am mostly interested in the analogue process and the physical qualities of the photo paper. The transition between drawing and photography started with 'drawing' directly on to the photo paper by using different light sources (flash light, laser pen etc.). This is also the moment I started to describe the work as painting with light. Some of my projects have the aesthetic qualities of a painting and are often perceived like such.







For this special edition of ART Habens we have selected *The Dematerialization of Everyday Life*, that our readers have already started to get to know in the introductory pages of this article. What has at soon caught our attention of this series is the way you have subverted the perceptual categories related to the tactile physicality of the objects you used to filter light through: as you have remarked once, your primary aim is to raise the question of how an image can be created by using light itself as a medium. But it goes without saying that the starting point of your process is an existing object that goes through a process of transfiguration: how would you define the relationship between the initial information that lies in the objects and the final results?

I am very interested in the relationship between the artist and the artwork. The physical connection between an object and the artist - it being through the gaze while drawing an object or through the hands while forming one - is being questioned. To what extent am I present in my own artwork? I take a step back as an artist and question my own presence.

The sense of touch is erased because there is no immediate contact between the object and the photo paper. The physicality of the object is delivered through the light reflecting and breaking onto and through its surface. Thus we are left with an imprint of an object. We also don't know anymore if we're dealing with a soft or a hard, a small or a big, a heavy or a light object.

The way I chose the objects was very intuitive. They are all from my immediate surrounding and also are very conventional everyday commodities: lunch boxes, plastic bags, rolls of toilet paper. They might not seem to be exciting but rather banal but their translation into an image makes them look even more beautiful. In a nutshell I would say that the core of the relationship

between the initial information and the final result lies within the process of transformation: while some of it gets lost, other parts come into being or are being highlighted. This can be seen as a sort of x-ray of the object.

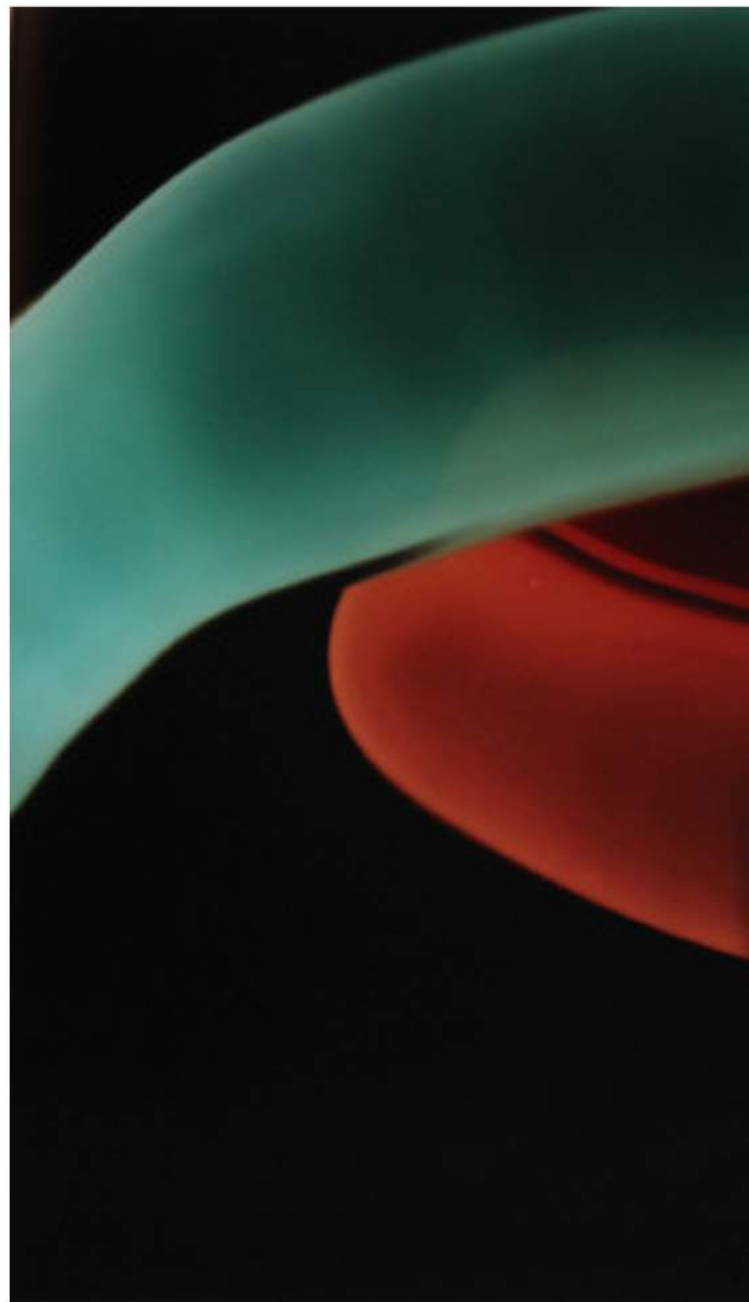
The process of dematerialization could be also considered as a translation, in which the inner nature of the object is purified from its tactile feature: in this sense, your works condense the bare minimum that still belongs to the history of the object itself and are the arrival point of a process of multilayered deconstruction between different levels of significances. Is challenging this kind of hierarchy important to you?

A big part of my practice involves experimenting with different light sources, materials and objects. Thus, me being surrounded by many objects while working in the photo lab is a normal thing.

There is no hierarchy but the opposite because they are all undergoing the same process. The process of transformation is what is important and not the order to which they supposedly belong.

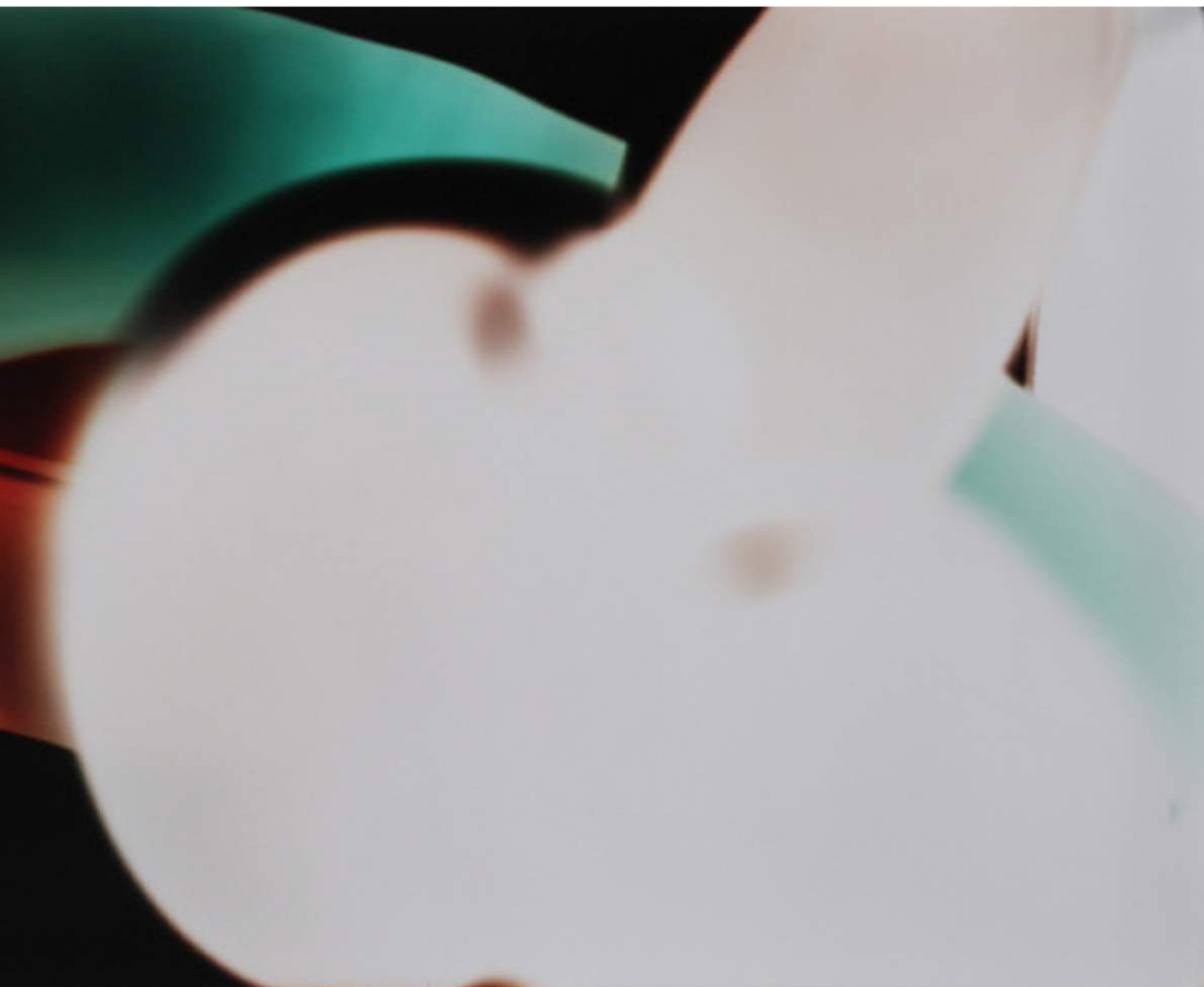
Certain features are being translated into new ones and the inner nature of the object is been made visible. I like the idea of a condensed bare minimum because it illustrates very well the notion of decoding a lot of information and at the same time flattening it onto the surface of one image.

Contrary to usual trends in contemporary Photography, in an age deeply marked with a pervasive serialization of images, the notion of uniqueness and not repeatability plays a crucial role in your approach, and seems to address us to rethink the nature of mechanical reproduction, not only in the field of Photography. Why is so important for you to bring to the level of uniqueness a wide variety of anonymous everyday



objects, to provide them with a precise and complex identity?

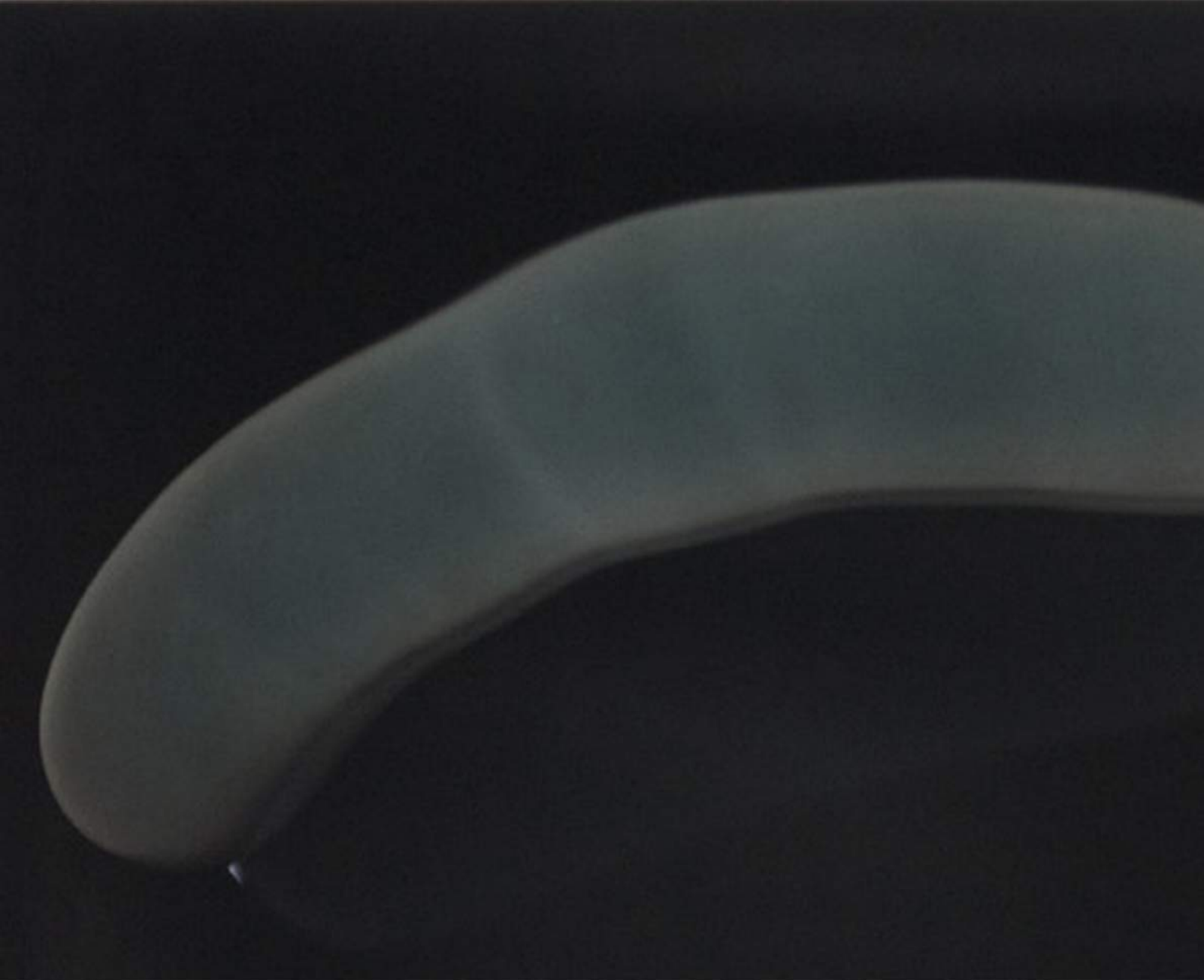
Platforms like Instagram process over hundreds of thousands of photos per minute. We live in an age where everybody has access to a camera and being able to



mechanically reproduce an image happens on the tip of a finger. It is not my intention though to comment on the reproduction of images or the overload of visual stimuli.

I am interested in the process and the experience. Sometimes working in the

photo lab without a concrete plan leads to one thing that I can never repeat again. I see my actual process of production of an image almost as a performance sometimes. Another aspect of the uniqueness comes from my background in drawing. Also not using a camera means that there are no



negatives from which you can make hundreds of copies. As soon as the objects come into my realm they're just as significant as any other tool. A brush or a simple straw from a 1-Euro-shop are equally important to me. I gather

hundreds of commodities and store them for years.

My aim in ***The Dematerialization of Everyday Life*** is not to provide the objects with identity but to take their materiality away. By stripping them of their physicality I



condenses a sense of permanence to the intrinsic ephemeral nature of light. Moreover, the natural traces of light can lead us to consider your works as maps, as attempt to decipher the elusive nature of objects: in this sense, you seem to suggest that one of the roles of an artist could be to reveal hidden sides of the environment we inhabit, urging us to a process of introspection: do you agree with this analysis?

Working as an artist naturally means reflecting on your surroundings and also often commenting on it. The way we all see is modified depending on what we have seen before and what we can use as a comparison. We only know that we know something if we can put it into context which makes us blind for the unseen and the unknown. Especially in *The Dematerialization of Everyday Life* the viewer has a lot to decipher. As an artist one observes more in depth the own surrounding which makes seeing hidden details or the urge to unveil them even bigger.

Another interesting project from your recent production is entitled Sol and we found particularly compelling the symbiosis between the idea of nature in relation with its destructive force. While walking our readers through the genesis of this work, would you like to shed light about the aspects related to the creative potential of chance in your process? How do your ideas change in the while you conceive your works and you finally get the final results?

give them a new life. They get a bigger meaning.

We find really fascinating your use of photo paper's sensitivity to unveil such a secret story of an object, enriching it with your own presence in the creative process: this is particularly captivating since it

Happy mistakes can be good! As I already mentioned the work happens mostly directly in the photo lab. This is one of the reasons why I often surprise myself or aim for one thing but end up somewhere else. In *The Dematerialization of Everyday Life* the concept gave the project a solid frame. *Sol*

on the other hand was difficult to control although I was the one who holds the magnifying glass and decides how long the photo paper should burn under the force of sunlight. Isn't everything as much a chance as it is subconsciously decided? If I would be a painter and by mistake push a bottle of paint on the canvas, is it a chance and do we use it? In my work there is a certain amount of playfulness and pushing the medium to it's limit, as it is the case with *Sol*.

And we couldn't do without mentioning o.T. (Doppelbelichtung): this piece has reminded us the concept of non-lieu elaborate by French anthropologist Marc Augé: as the late Franz West did in his installations, your approach seems to reveal unconventional aesthetics in the way you deconstruct and assemble memories, to draw the viewer into a process of self-reflection. What is the role of memory in your process?

Augé's non-lieu refer to urban places that lack of identity or history which is not the case in *o.T. (Doppelbelichtung)*. If you mean memory in the sense of a trace left behind, than I can say this is what photography means for me. When I say trace, I don't mean an immediate one (like a brushstroke) but more an abstract interaction between light and paper which is what this projects documents.

Over your career you have exhibited internationally, showcasing your work in several occasions, including your recent show: Heimspiel at Kommunale Galerie Berlin. One of the hallmarks of your practice is the capability to create a direct involvement with the viewers, who are urged to evolve from a condition of mere spectatorship. So before leaving this conversation we would like to pose a question about the nature of the relationship of your art with your audience.



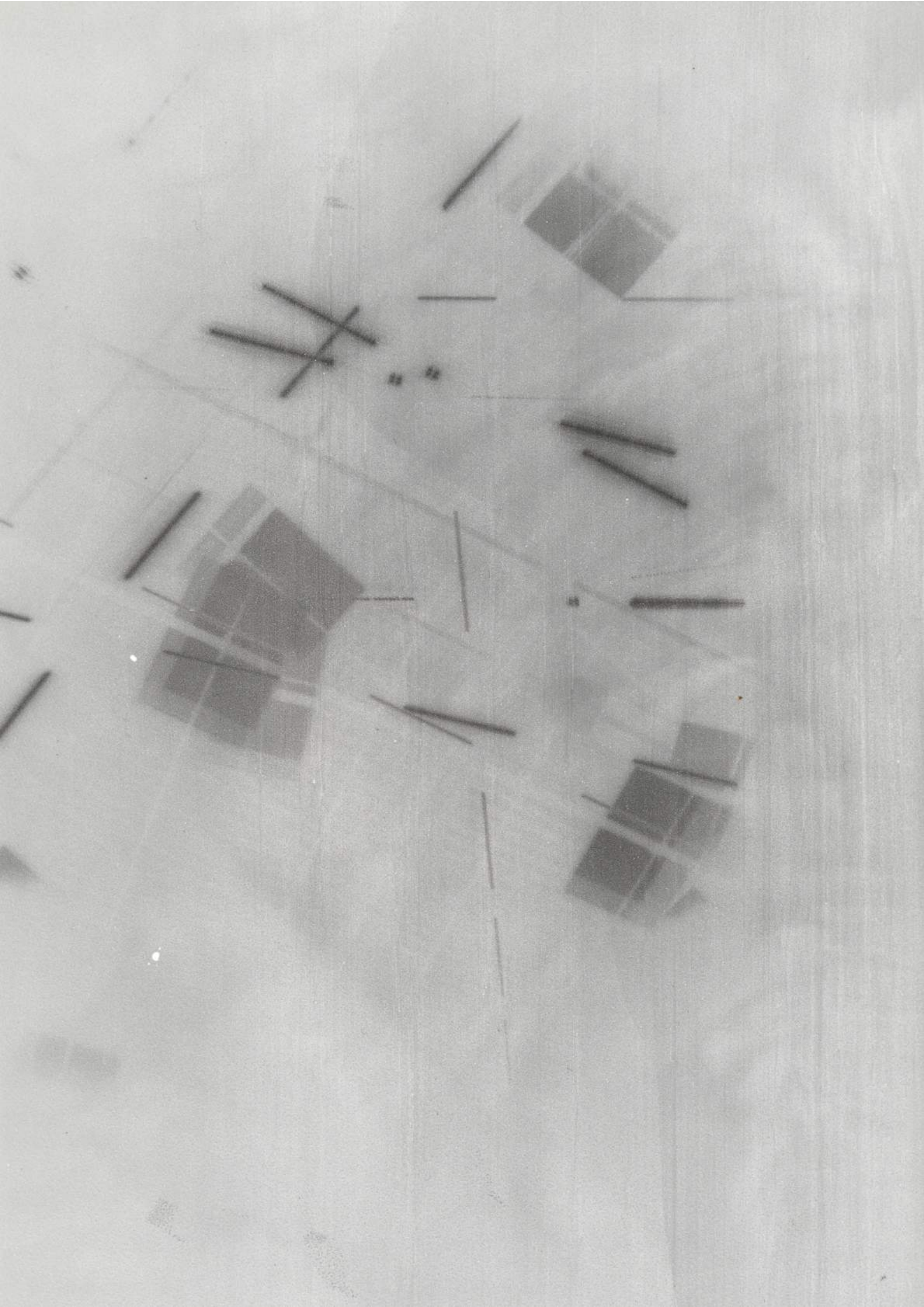
Do you consider the issue of audience reception as being a crucial component of your decision-making process, in terms of what type of language is used in a particular context?

I am a type of person who buries herself in work and in a way I sometimes surprise myself with the directions I take or the results I get. It's only after very intense sessions of work that I take a step back and analyse, and attempt to look at the work through the eyes of an outsider.











looking at one of the pieces from *The Dematerialization of Everyday Life* are different based on the own experience of the viewer. By leaving the work open, I like to also start a dialogue.

Thanks a lot for your time and for sharing your thoughts, Marta. Finally, would you like to tell us readers something about your future projects? How do you see your work evolving?

My newest video '12 o'clock' is based on 12 photo films for which I took a panorama of my surroundings everyday at 12 p.m. for 12 days. In a way this video works like the mentioned pinhole observation project. It is focusing on the theme of time and capturing events in a abstract way. I am very interested in the passing of time and trying to catch a moment. I've also started working a lot more with my own identity and my feeling of nostalgia which started with my project "From: me / to: me". I recently completed it by sending pinhole cameras from myself to myself and working with the idea of having two homes and two letter boxes in the world with my name on them: my parent's house in Bulgaria and my new home in Germany.

Over the past two years I've been working primarily with photography and my time in Glasgow has inadvertently pushed me out of my comfort zone and has drawn my interest in the direction of moving image, which makes me continue my constant experimentation and exploration. I do however apply the same principles on the different mediums, pushing the medium to their limits and testing their possibilities. I imagine being faithful to the analogue photo paper in the future and continuing to challenge it's physicality.

My interest in involving the audience is of a subtle kind. I don't often seek an intervention from the viewer, although I worked on a project with a colleague of mine (Marie Rief) recently that required the physical presence of the viewer who was asked to control a life size pinhole camera with a roll of paper inside.

One of my tutors put it very clearly once when he said that he sees a combination of different 'principles of seeing' in my work. I expect the audience to look for something deeper than the formal surface of a piece. The associations everybody has while