

An artist book as an essay and an object

Peter Norrman
Department of Fine Art at Konstfack
MFA Essay

An artist book as an essay and an object

I am using the text as a vehicle to both make an object - a new piece of work - as well as an expansion and continuation of my solo show *The Guards Have Folded*.

The essay as an object is also my attempt at creating both textworks and photobased elements that together seek to create a probe into the structures of cinematic language via non-linear presentations, and the printed publication as another a form of *montagéd cinema*. It's an experimentation in word and image.

This essay functions on several levels:

- As my master essay text.
- As an artist book and stand alone object.
- As a way to distill my artistic production during my time at Konstfack into new work and as a way to locate a working process: *that in which existing work can be dissembled, re-thought and re-configured into new bodies of work.*

The book/box is designed and conceptualized around the notion of the A4 format:

Folded A3 into three parts becoming A5.

Still images (A5) and text and image work as both A4 and folded A3 into A4.

The box consist of three parts:

1. ***Time/Code/Drift*** - A text work in essayistic form that attempts a non-linear writing on *time* and *the expanded document* as a way of investigating both a place and beyond – mixing small stories, magic connections, artistic propositions, MFA presentations, parenthood and process to reflect on this notion. Its a way of translating time and multiple narratives. Each text is presented as a standalone A4 print, making a predefined sequence inconsequential.
2. ***Folded Time*** - It's a small gesture about duration, a creative process, questioning film and trying to fold time. Presented as a standalone work inside a slipcase which in turns is part of the box.
3. ***remove earth carefully***. A slipcase-within-the-box, with still images from my visual excavations, the collecting and the process of my encounter with the site and with daily life. Re-photographed and re-processed. Or sometimes left as is. I want the images to be taken apart, to be held, to further make visible the images as my own artifacts, to degrade through time. Part of a forgotten archive. A forensic presentation.

Part 1

TIME/CODE/DRIFT

A text work in essayistic form that attempts a non-linear writing on *time* and *the expanded document* as a way of investigating both a place and beyond – mixing small stories, magic connections, artistic propositions, MFA presentations, parenthood and process to reflect on this notion. Its a way of translating time and multiple narratives.

Each text is presented as a standalone A4 print, making a predefined sequence inconsequential.

Far away in Gothenburg

I am sitting in a room at Valand in Gothenburg, surrounded by what seem to be an endless row of people, all looking at me. It's an interview. And it's not going well. Years of questioning my work has led me to this room. Still, parts of a text stays with me, resurfaces and seems to become the ground work for an exploration years later.

In other rooms. Far away from Gothenburg.

I'm interested in collecting fragments as a form of documentary, exploring places, history, relationships, landscapes and capturing their details in the camera as a form of notes. Exploring the space - the small and often forgotten but significant moments of everyday life, history and meeting between people, or even the small, easily overlooked details of landscapes that appear on the surface uninteresting, but when you look closer you can open up with emotions, rhythm and meaning. These visual notes then become the material used to create a cinema. Something is transformed and clarified, but is not necessarily included in a clear story or categories.

Negative space

I find myself stripping my photographs of the Mexican mythological night into less and less information. I am supposed to be shooting more classic documentary work: people and portraits and scenery but fall in love with the almost non-existent yellow street light, the barely lit corners of evenings and the nights. People who I meet and create deep connections with on a human level become fragments in my photographs, separated and only hinting at the real situation, an exploration of the minimalism of the night landscape where there is a presence of people but not necessarily seen. It's a poetic void. My images become about what we don't see, what's outside of the frame, what just happened right before and after. The negative space. The moment(s) right before the moment. Or after. I am younger and shooting these human landscape poems from the heart. It's the only work that still resonates with me from that period. It's about fragility and space and abstractions and reacting the subtle atmospheric light. A clue or a suggestion of something beyond the constrained photographic frame and time device. Now, much later, I can see that I was already shooting a variation of expanded photographic time, wanting a viewer to stay longer within the images, disconnecting myself from the notion of traditional documentary work. I was creating fine art docu-poetry in disguise. Hiding under the pretense of the great loud male photographers but really only wanting to make quiet work. Stripping away information with images that almost start to break apart, each piece needing one another other and asking to be sequenced to be read correctly. I see now that it was a way of translating my wish for movement.

Hometown paranoia

I started the project *The Guards Have Folded* out of necessity to speak about urban development, land loss, a natural landscape slowly changing into bright streetlights, more asphalt, street signs, speeding cars. I felt I could act, intervene through an artistic response. The human interaction of the project has been complicated, creating a major change in how I have decided to approach the work, slowly altering my perception of what I could and couldn't do in this place. Paranoia, or simple disinterest, made itself abundantly clear. The raging wife of the farmer I know too well kicking me and my family off of the farm premises once owned by my own grandmother, undeterred by my long history connecting to the site, only acting on her own personal suspicion and contention to the transition and changes, the same forces I am working with/against. It seemed strikingly absurd, but yet I was fully present, clear that this moment also became another transition in that very brief period of time. Sometimes the magic of connection also shows the brokenness. The endings. The inbetween space that asks you to leave. Literally as well as in the larger story. My biography changed that moment. Or simply became clear. My narrative is a different one and I don't belong to this, still only a passerby. A visitor. A time traveler.

Or, the owner of the hair salon in my studio building, running after me, wondering why I am photographing what she is interpreting as her vehicle. *Was there something with her car? I saw your leaning in and photographing under my car. There has been some oil spill before... Is that what...?* I tell her no, I am an artist, I have no reason to photograph her imagined oil spill. I was only looking at puddles and reflections. I feel myself getting annoyed, angered. Projections run both ways and my own paranoia is present as well, thinking I could be a person to try to convey the complexities of this shift in locality. But the cracks and dissolves made me change directions. I continue to roam the streets for image-making or object-collecting despite my complicated relationship to this very photographic street dance I once gave up out of an existential feeling of not wanting to be the other. The quick observer. The one that takes and never gives back. The confrontation that creates suspicion.

I still practice a way to be out in the world.



“You have managed to provide an atmosphere in the room that is interesting, an insistence on the materiality, as I mentioned, the account of an ongoing excavation or unveiling where there is a great deal of uncertainty about the layers of time. A form of contemporary archeology that somehow in an ambiguous way coincides with and resists the mark of the exploitation.”*

* *Magnus Bærtås, from an email exchange.*

Magic as an activator of the inbetween

The leader of the local conservative party accidentally knocks on my studio door on Sågvägen in Åkersberga. The studio sits slightly behind a large yellow building close to the road itself, the last enclave of small local car shops and garages and maritime stores and the odd lunch restaurant. He is looking for a graffiti artist and was pointed my way. I am amazed that there would be another artist close by and entertained by the notion of this improbable lapse. Turns out we had met, years earlier on the barricades, fighting against the Täljöviken developments, the very same cause I am attempting to respond to through an art project. He tells me, that before politics, he used to work in the printing industry. And that he went to New York in the early 90s to visit one of his clients, the Swedish artist Olle Bonnier. I gasp. My own story lands with Olle a few years after that, invited to his home by a friend and where Olle's warmth and magic aura was the beginning of a friendship that lasted for some years until his building was torn down and he permanently moved back to Stockholm, ditching both Mexico and New York as lifelines. The politician continues by telling me that five of Olle's prints were sold to this father & son printing shop down the road on Sågvägen, a shop I know fairly well. I am startled as I understand all the impossible dots that are being connected, on that day, on that small wooden stairwell in nowheremans Åkersberga.

Weird wonder and magic synchronizations.

Time and place and three humans.

One stretched narrative.



It begins with the still image

(A presentation for the class ***On the Shortness of Life***)

I am showing two pieces.

Both are older works that still resonate with me. Both deal with displacement of time and space. My past in photography is the starting point for these two works which, on some levels, are a reaction and response to my own questioning of the still image. The *stopping of time* and *freezing of the moment*. I was deeply immersed and devoted to this for a short time in my life and I find it interesting to revisit this context and concept.

Repetition. Movement. Sequencing small books. Diptychs and triptych as a presentation form. Still images in a more contrapuntal dialogue with each other.

I was moving away from photography as a medium and questioning photographic time vs. filmic time. It felt like I didn't want to *stop* time anymore. *But to be with it. In it. Alongside of it.* I explored what three or five seconds of time could be instead of the somewhat claustrophobic 60th of a second. Shooting stills at night gave me reason to use my full body to steady the long shutters. It slowly became about breathing and slowness and more of a performative act, to let more light and movement into the stillness of the camera. Less *decisive* and with Michael Wesely's intensely long exposures of construction time and train time becoming more interesting. Temporality started playing a bigger role in my work.

This presentation itself has many layers of time.

1.

The *time* that has passed since the creation of the works (a distant past) as a way to frame and revisit ideas that I might want to re-introduce on some level into my current practice. How do I consider past works which seem old (timewise) but still personally relevant? How can the creative outputs we keep clinging onto inform a current practice?

2.

Both pieces only existed for short durations.

One for six hours.

The other one – a public piece – for two days.

3.

Both pieces deal with time and space.

There are levels of interactivity in both of these pieces, but my interest focused more on anonymous body interaction. In *fortyfivesteps* I also inverted my body/movement/placement as a photographer on the street with an urban movement that was stretched and repeated, creating a distortion and deconstruction of the photographic frozen moment. Time as well as perception is stretched. The live camera signal is processed in real time and expanded and to create glitched versions of pedestrian activity. The quick moment (of passing by) is extended into approximately eight seconds of time. In *m/index (m(ovement)/index)* I monitored the frequency of people's use of space. An index count triggered short videos at regular intervals that were superimposed on a real-time live-feed of the monitored space. Sound and light indicate discreet instances of one person's movements. Together they remotely recreate a presentation of the variations of inhabited space.

Farmer time

Historically, homesteading has been used by governmental entities (engaged in national expansion) to help populate and make habitable what were previously little-desired areas; especially in the United States, Canada, and Australia. Guided by legal homestead principles, many of these "homestead acts" were instituted in the 19th and 20th centuries in order to drive the populating of specific, national areas; with most being discontinued after a set time-frame or goal were achieved.

Looking for the familiar but estranged from my own sense of place.

A personal narrative filled with cracks and distortions.

Trying to keep something intact.

Letting go. A starting point.

To archive and analyze everything.

Homesteady.

Homeinstead.

A steady home. What is that?

Mending.

Objects.

The everyday.

The need to stop and breathe. And live. And see. And be.

Homesteading in reverse.

1933

*Stockholm City Child Care Board
Section 11
Ebba Åberg
Hornsgatan 78
Stockholm*

The undersigned hereby only wants to send the mother's resignation of little Ulla-Britt. I hope that the gentry like the little one and that she grows up big and strong out there in the lovely archipelago! My vacation starts on 9/8 but I hope everything runs smoothly while I'm away.

Jenny Erlandsson.

Certificate:

Upon request, I hereby certify that the spouses Per Hugo Emanuel and Ebba Elisabeth Åberg, Näs Gård in Österåker's parish of Stockholm County, whom I know well, are very suitable to take care of their foster child, Ulla Britt Stuxgren, whom they now adopt adopt and will give a continued upbringing.

*Merchant Thore Wickholm
Heleneborgsgatan 10
Stockholm
1933*



Twins

There were two twins. Fate and disease separated them at age two and they never saw each other again in life. The girl grew up outside the city, flew across the ocean back and forth and but died at age 54. The boy became an angry man, in constant flux until he finally ran away to sea at age 17 never to look back. I go looking for him, wondering if he looks like me. I find him in a dark apartment in Tensta, bound to a wheelchair, loudmouthed and flirty, with a wise guy's charm. I struggle with the thought that I don't really like him, but find myself calling him uncle nevertheless. It's an empty action, mainly played out as an act, to honor the little girl who never became a grandmother. There was a phone call, and then a hang up. *Why me he asks? Why now? I know she is dead and it's too late. Why didn't anyone care? Why didn't anyone wonder?*

I had a film in mind. In it I would ask him why there only existed three images of him from his 80-year-old life: There was the driver's license. The portrait of him as a lifeguard. And then the old newspaper clip: dark and handsome but worn looking, sitting in a row with fellow seamen just after the shipwreck right of Gotska Sandön that made headlines and gave him a few minutes of media attention back in the 50s.

Two diverging paths: She had a good life. He ran away at 14 never to look back. Felt no need to leave traces of a photographed human being behind. Never stopped. Until Tensta and the dark apartment and the wheelchair.

I brought over a photograph of the woman dressed in the SAS stewardess outfit and he obliged and put the framed image on the table. During later visits, he would always point to the portrait of the smiling woman and proudly say "that's my 'sis" in his wry local dialect. In my film, I had also wanted to investigate his biological father's near fatal wartime shipwreck of the coast of France and how incredible that these two maritime tragedies both existed within the family. When I called after a six month parental absence, finally ready to speak and discuss and listen and film, he was in the hospital. I never saw him again.

For five years the twins spent summers within only a few kilometers of each, every day unaware of each other's close proximity and presence. I know because he told me where he spent his summers as a kid.

In my film I would ask: Is it possible they did meet, somewhere, somehow?

I attempt a plan

(A response to a frustrating and exciting and ultimately failing method for making a presentation)

My solo show opens in two weeks and I am feeling the pressure of time. My plan was to present a dual projection or a single channel projection. Still might, but I haven't seen it myself. Rendered overnight (It's morning and I now know it failed). And it's only a test. Does it really make any sense to show? I don't know. Wanted to talk about my plans for the show, ideas around working with video, as well as sound, text and objects – a first for me – and get feedback. I feel like I have worked hard these past six weeks, steered by a vision of how activate the gallery space, interested in challenging myself with a more multidisciplinary approach to my art practice. To see if my work is work that ultimately needs an installation space. All of these separate work “fragments” – be it single channel films, projections, sculptural responses, objects, printed matter and sound – that together create something akin to a whole. At least that's been my approach in making the work for my solo exhibition. Yes, it's somewhat early in the second year to have the solo, but it was my choice as I did not want this rather large experiment to loom over me for too much of my last year. To make and to learn.

I think that I am using my time wisely but I still seem to fall short. Studio days 9-4. No weekends. Parenthood. Working on all the elements simultaneously. Trying to write the text fragments to make up the “script.” Lots of “new” thinking about new bigger formats of photographs, lots of experiments with presentation modes.

It all feels okay except that I failed badly to be ready for this studio presentation.

It's morning. Re-rendering from the night before on the subway. I am telling myself that I have it under control for the show and perhaps I do. But it still seems so fitting that when I write this I feel that more than anything I would like to speak about my process, my method, and why it doesn't seem to work for me.

How does one change method?

I always blame video. Processing takes too much time. The layering and collaging. The slow render times. But of course, that is not the truth. I simply can't manage my studio time in a better way. So even though the wish was to get feedback for my project before the show maybe it's more interesting for me to discuss studio time, studio discipline. It was after all another big reason I felt the need to be in school, to dig deeper and to understand why my work process needs a big shift. Better now than later.



The way we saw

I collect.

It can be objects, observations, stories that connect myself to life in some way.

Three distinct places become areas of excavation.

I have always had an affinity for industrial areas. As an artist, hidden behind the heavy industry, I can access both anonymity and wood shops. Three distinct places become areas of excavation: Sågvägen, Kulla Vägskäl and Täljöviken. My studio address is Sågvägen 13. There I collect fragments and bits of the road, pieces separated from something I can't access, debris that I find interesting, unearth, and rework in my studio. When translating the name of the street it becomes "the way we saw." A nice sign for me look further. Kulla Vägskäl is where I spent an innumerable amount of time waiting for a bus. It's usually dark and empty, a place I can read as a crossroads of a past and future. It's an inbetween point, a transitional space like so many parking lots and bus stops; this one located on the outskirts of a town for the sole purpose of a quicker commute. It screams suburb and the wish to get ahead and the fight for parking space and the little time we seem to have for any given day, some cars left behind, abandoned for whatever reason people abandon their cars. The last place is Täljöviken, destroyed by money forces, a clash with a futurepast time. I collect and process these encounters with daily life. In these places I investigate how to give meaning to an otherwise anonymous space. They all become areas ripe for my own excavations from which I re-photograph, re-process and create connections with other work. It's another form of collision, an experiment with compressing, abstracting fragments of my fieldtrips and travels. To both grab on to and fight being connected to the present. I stack time as a way to carry with me the place. Terrified of stagnation, and constantly wishing to progress, I break with the now, make turns and even though usually in different modes of fear, I long to create the change my body and mind ask for.

I realize I need definitions. Of space and time. To rethink my abundantly complex process of creating that is stifling and exhaustive. The practicality of using my travels, my studio surrounding, my place of living is not lost on me. If I want to make art that on some level makes me be out in the world then this is what I can make work right now. The caring for a child and the caring for an artistic exploration and practice have to co-exist.

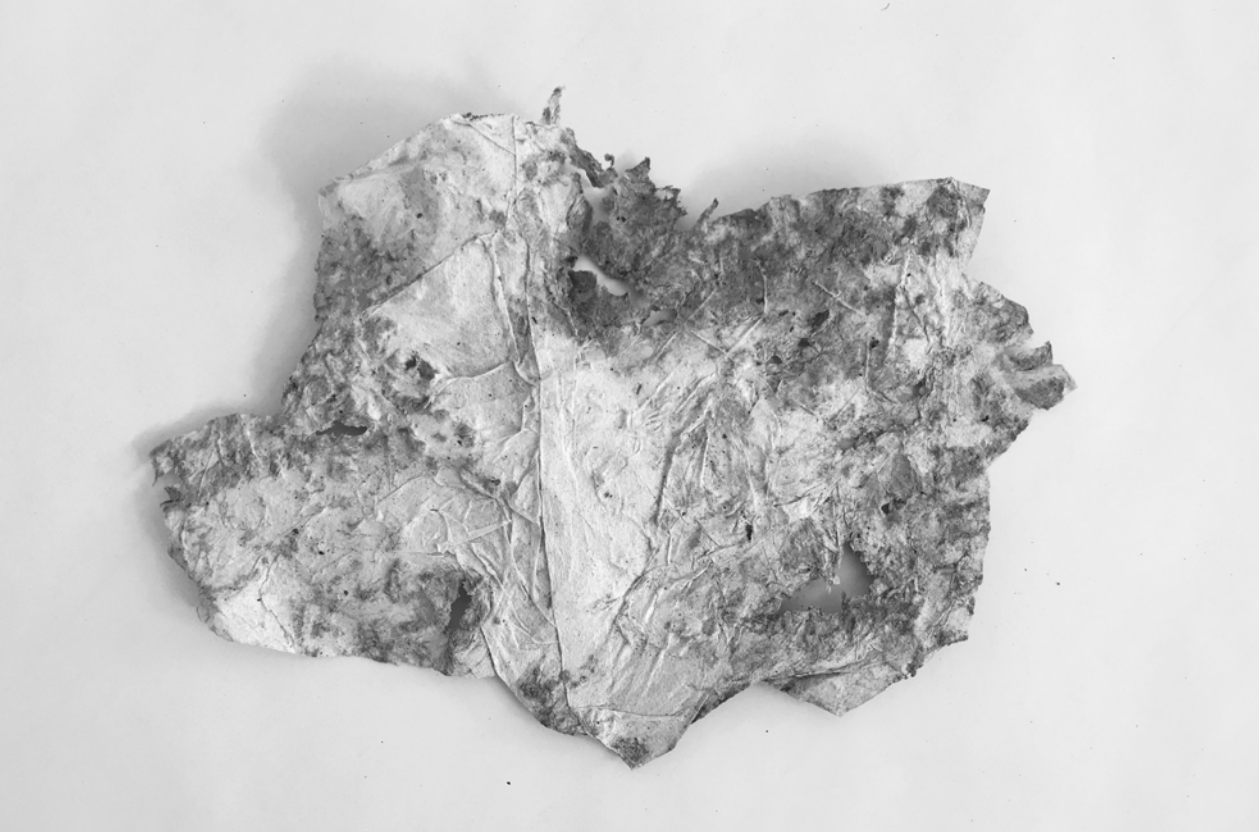
I take pictures. I break with. I make film works for theatre. I break with. I make experimental films. I break with (not quite).

I am circling back. There *is* more clarity now.

Different time scales running parallel

“What I try to express in my films is that time is based on individual and smaller collective histories and is a very malleable and flexible phenomenon. In my films there are usually different time scales running parallel. My perspective as an observer is non-judgmental. I assume reality is a fiction that is based on individual interpretations of real events. My movies mostly play with the idea that they could happen in the future as well as in the past and are trying to manifest as a utopian solution.”

(Rosa Barba in conversation with Mirjam Varadinis and Solveig Øvstebø, in Time as Perspective, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2013)





Distilling Time

Filmic time

Archival time

Photographic time

Stacked time

Folded time

Historic time

Interval time

Farmer time

Construction time

Time travel

Fieldwork time (as another way of reading time)

Short and long term city planning time

Folded time

Horizontal time

Time in relationship to change

Modernity time

Time in tradition

Different horizons of time

A futurepast time

The building as a marker of time

Time in relation to change

Deeptime

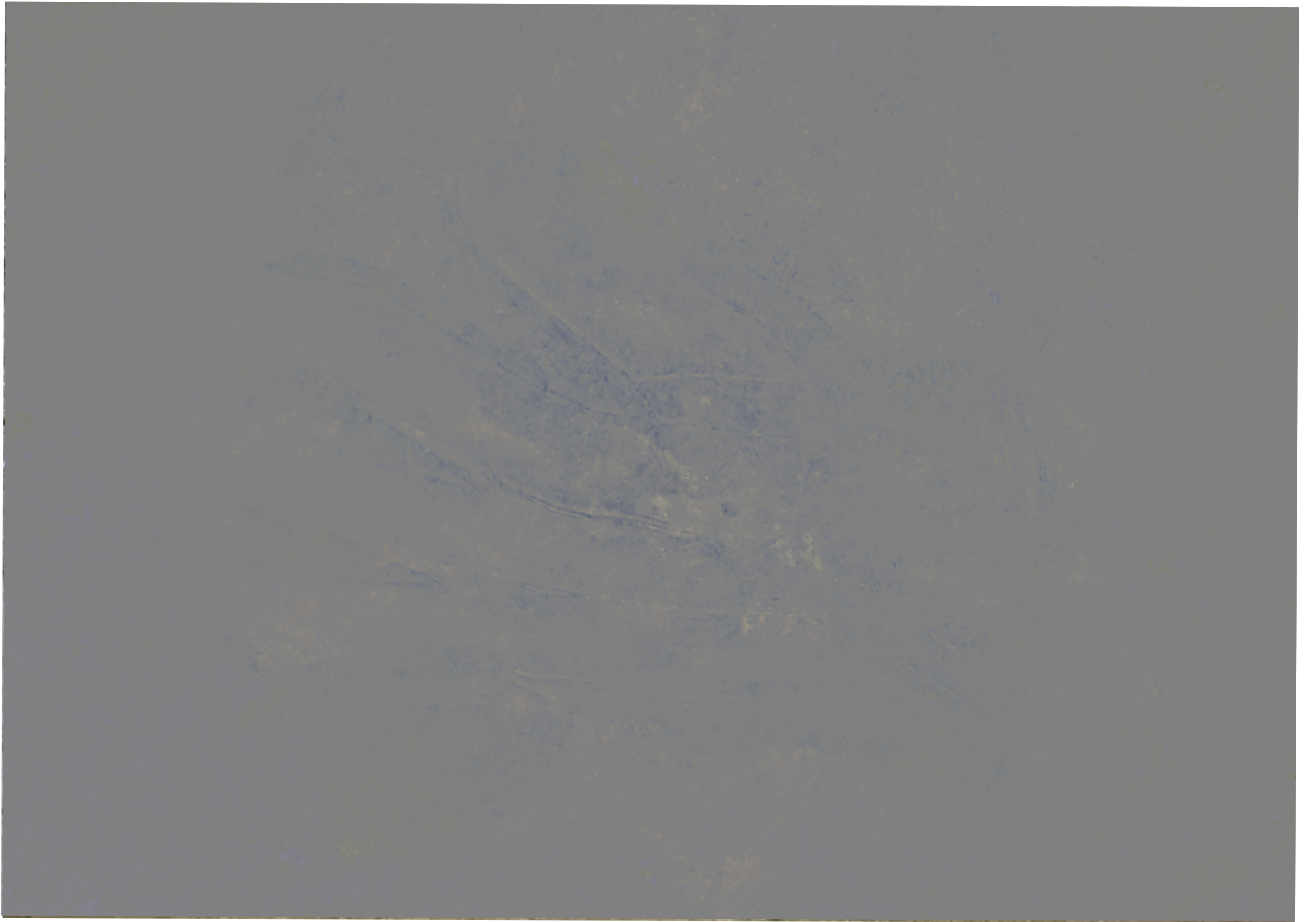
Every past was a future. Every future will be a past.

“In my work I don’t observe reality; I am reinterpreting it in a certain direction by making very personal decisions. I don’t pose critical questions; I am trying to invent a utopia by showing political and social mechanisms set against technical mechanisms which are themselves fragile. The paradox which results from such a tension is used to posit a utopian solution to the problem, a kind of magic which stops time and offers a slowed-down view of otherwise hidden aspects of reality. It offers an alternative reading of the past and also the future’. *

“The idea of “transformation” and “instability” is always tangible; films are transformed into texts and texts into films. Pauses, or intervals, are used in all the works, to express a sense of lost time in the interstices between the frames. This is critical for representing movement, but unseen – its “discontinuity” disappears into the continuous flow.” **

* Rosa Barba

** Writings about Rosa Barbas work



Land as an archive

The *environment-as-document* becomes the archive. It's an archive that you can't visit nor easily search. It's the land as an archive. I have been drawn to this idea of expanding what I view as an archive, especially in the context of my earlier wish to use our land to physically create an artistic response to the changes occurring around us: The proposition of a structure to be built on our land facing the street using recycled material from the discarded old barns from the farm, with multiple parallel identities and seen from the road – exhibition space, a tiny stage, a resting place, an in/outdoor cinema, a space for learning. In turning the land, its histories and its surroundings into an archive to pull from, everything becomes a document. Something from the real world. Bits and codes to collect and re-think and re-form into a work. It's not a unique proposition of a working method in any sense, but one that opened up the way I could more freely move around within my self-defined artistic residency, which is my life. It was also a way to process both the mundane and the more magical aspects of this human landscape in transition. I wanted the solo show to have elements of poetry and undecipherable codes, a sense that the archive I pull from is the land, or the place, and situated in the non-linearity, somewhere in the borderland of the real and the myth, a more dystopic universe perhaps, without precise temporal organization, further exploring methods of abstraction and fragmentation. The strategy to try to see what is already in the world that we are not engaging with, or thinking about, or making use of, or paying attention to. It's the idea of trying to look for things I haven't noticed before.

So maybe it's less a notion of expanded documentary that I am exploring. When used, it seems to refer to photography, and the ways to navigate the old and the new in documentary making i.e use the new digital possibilities, including new forms of storytelling. Even though I see the validity in this, it's not what I am currently interested in. My own thinking lies closer to *documentary art* perhaps but as I write this it strikes me as less interesting to start putting labels on a practice. I use the real world as material. Using document instead of documentary creates an opening for me to look beyond the associations to the documentary through filmmaking and photography traditions. I have broken with those traditions many years ago but still retain this one persistent and anchored foot in the real world. Etymologically speaking, a document is defined as something that serves to instruct. It may be a text, an image, an object either found or constructed that is used for purposes of identification, education, evidence or archival record. So, bits and stories from a land become the document which, in turn, become the foundation for the artistic response, translated into text and experimental cinema, as well as objects/sculptures all deconstructed and investigated through a non-linear presentation. I want to allow myself to be strange and beautiful at the same time. And submit to the fact that film photography and the importance of the filmic image is in me. As part of my art. As much as I strive to break from cinematography as a craft and to free myself from a visual repetition, it comes back and continues its nudging. Some days I can feel empowered by a certain degree of a creative past but other days I wonder if I simply hide behind this, confusing my practice, uncertain as what to make of it. I am not an artist that is turning to the documentary in my work, but the other way around. I come from this world. For good and bad.

Presence

I am interested in the idea of documentation – or more specifically, what we don't tend to document. Image making in today's digital world is in real hyper-mode with folders full of pixels getting lost deep in the void of hard drives. The durational aspect of the documentation also has a corresponding time: that of the act of viewing (or listening).

The video artist Bill Viola was gifted hundreds and hundreds of regular audio cassettes sometime in the 80s. He set up a recorder in his kitchen, recording the mundane time of the everyday, hour after hour of family kitchen time. It lasted for six months. Day in and day out. The anti-documentation in a sense, where all time was given equal importance. Six months of table talk and family cooking. And an additional record of a room with no presence. The uninhabited space. A tape records the nothingness of a kitchen and becomes a durational artifact, the only memory left of this nothingness. The act of working with the material for Viola also meant six months of listening. The extreme of this corresponding time ultimately meant an end to his idea. Can one sit down for six months and listen to six months of kitchen recordings? The work of Michael Wesely connects me to another durational extreme. His ideas around temporality and ephemera in the still image. Long exposures that literally embody the passage of time. In his documentation of the MOMA (New York) renovation, a two-year-long exposure was halted due to the re-planning of a new building, an unknown factor when he first started his pinhole exposure. The unfinished exposure is checked 18 months later and deemed underexposed. There wasn't enough time for the full exposure to be realized. In other work, train travel from station to station dictates the time of an exposure. A small glitch or subtle earthly movement becomes camera shake. "Time is more like the vehicle I use to arrive at images and photos."*

There is a perceptual shift, motifs more invisible than visible. These intense aspects and concepts of documentational time become a slice of life.

* Michael Wesely interview



I am a time machinist in worn-out clothes. I turn and search and listen to the radio signals and wireless messages. Listen to the desert and the fields and translate the writing of its stones.

*I am a time machinist and a Transmitting Apparatus.
I collect and I transmit messages into space and record my own imminent future.*

NARA residency: A proposition.

At some point in 2011 I find myself in Washington DC, or more specifically at the National Archives headquarters to do research for a multimedia play I am co-designing the video for. The play itself is slightly pompous, with three dead dictators convening in an afterlife. I am at NARA to do visual research on Hitler. It's emotionally heavy, taking in all the hours of this deranged man with a focus on his theatricality to project power. But after some time, I find myself getting numb, more attuned to the presence of being in this very specific archive, a powerful sensation of being in the middle of history. I go from archivist to ethnographer to artist and simply want to spend more time. The idea of not having any pre-conceived notion, no research idea, or concept strikes me as immensely alluring. To simply let the archive and my finds to steer me into a project or some hidden story to use as a seed. The 16mm reels, never digitized, still deep in the NARA vaults, become my dig. It's old school, with text slips and long waits for the reels to appear. An old Steenbeck become my viewing world. A tiny text fragment with a possible Nazi link leads me to something fully different, a world of documentation that is vaulted and unknown, a state of suspension. To be a witness to a silent encounter and where the unknown cinema is there both as memory and a dialog of continuation. In my head, I propose an artistic residency at NARA, geared towards the experimental filmmaker but open in its form, and not like existing ones geared towards text research and outlined projects.

Two weeks. Free access to the 16mm vaults. Make new experimental work from the NARA history.

I make the initial contacts. A few emails back and forth, but leave it there.

A list

I like to view everything around me as an archive.
I like to give the anonymous importance.
Celebration of the invisible or forgotten.
I am interested in the small stories. The overlooked.
The observational meets the non linear meets the magical.
I am not interested in sentimentality. Nor nostalgia.
Making site-responsive artwork.
Fragmentary notes from the past years to steer myself into new strategies and
workforms and therefor open my practice.
Intersection of Art, History and Individual Lives.
To bear witness.
Adoption and reinforcement of minimal events.
Still photography and its relationship with the moving image.
Allow mistakes and see what happens.
Lyrical narratives/essay films/text.
Interested in pointing to stories already in front of us.
A social action.
Pay closer attention to the world, bring fragments of it out of their regular contexts
and look for new connections.
Tactility.
Materiality.
Giving chance.
Found material (something borrowed, something new).
Something that refuses to take shape in words and clear stories and remains in the
area between emotions, underflows, rhythms.



Relationship with the real world

I think to a certain extent I have turned a project that I contextually have had questions about for some time into perhaps the beginning of something else. My agency towards the place, my cracked and broken biography, the politics of city planning and developments and loss of farmland are all important to me but I have less and less an interest in pursuing them within my work. One aspect of The Guards Have Folded project is that it shifted and clarified a wish to have a more poetic relationship with the real world. Where a work can challenge truth and fiction, myth and reality, metaphor and material to a more complex degree.

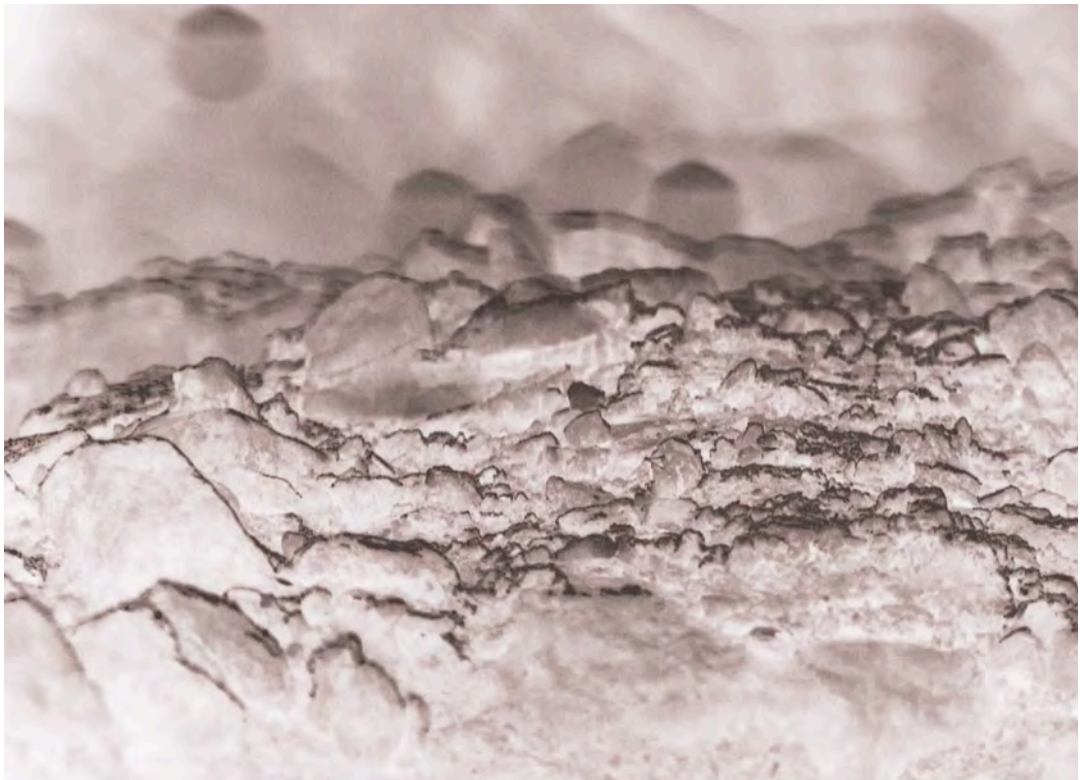
I am not interested in *this* place right now. The personal struggle has left me with a similar feeling as when kicked out of a home due to some unbeatable outside force. The wish to be out in the world, the old adage, or cliché of the documentarian wandering and roaming places far away, or the artist creatively surviving by hopping from one residency to another – this wish simply can't be. I long for it, but it can't be. So, I have been making my own residency in a sense, placed within the parameters of what can be accessed in the confines of my current life.

Going far away doesn't always make you go deeper.
The close by can be as revealing.
The digging where I stand so to speak.

It's clear that I still seemingly seem to aim at retaining the part of me as a documentarian, an experimental ethnographer, the artist that goes out into the world to collect material, is still part of me and my practice. It's like I need the real world to give me stories or ideas. The filmmaker Jem Cohen once spoke about not needing to make up new stories but to "point to the countless stories that are already in front of us". I think I definitely follow in this belief, albeit subconsciously, or by some undisputed reasoning. But I want to observe that reality more closely. It's there as material, for me to stroke and re-think and see what else it tells me. What else can be done with what's here? Discarded objects transmute into something filled with "hope and fantasy." (Gordon Matta-Clarke). New ways of perceiving space are explored. To circle around questions of image, inscription, history, and artifact. Perhaps even to create work that is a metaphor for the human condition, even though that could come off as a bit lofty. I let go of certain parts of a project whilst making other parts a bigger focus.

Writing about my practice is yet another mode of finding clarity.

*In my dream I seem to remember the rhythm of walking
like an embodied presence in motion.
An investigation and a ritual
Its a loss of a path and a passage through a landscape without an arrival*

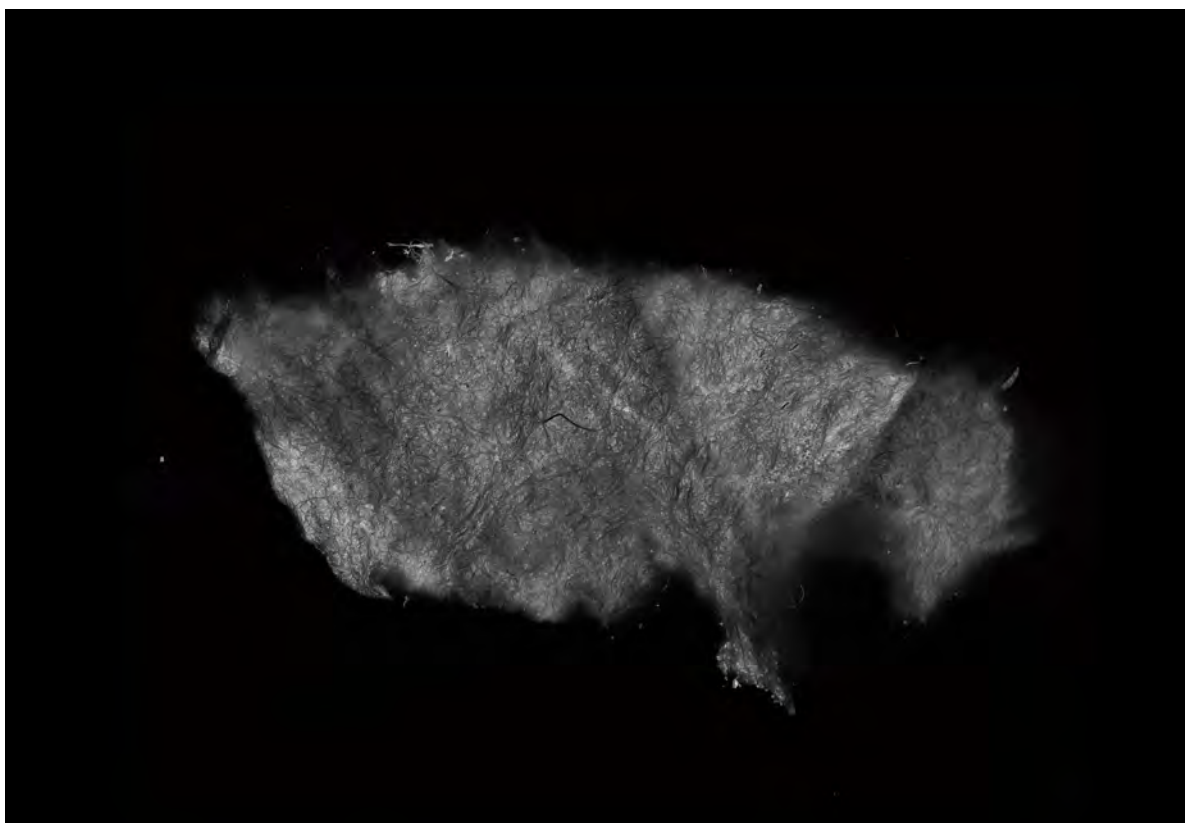


Konrad

It was owned by someone at Näs Farm, it was the church host Andersson and his wife. He was called that due to his goodwill towards the church. So, they had a son who came here. Just one son. He was named Konrad and he called himself Wiren.

There was a story told. Sometimes from a family member. Sometimes from the farmhand at Näs farm. The story of the great great uncle, every so often confused with the great great grandfather, a man who succumbed to the blood disease running in the family, the one that gave way to adoptions and alcoholism and raging husbands and family in-fighting, finally settling into financial disputes, cried over until the very last breath of a dying grandmother. There was this story, the most beautiful story that I can remember from this world, of this man, raging with the crushes of being in the wrong place, wanting a *somewhere else*, and using the technology of his time to spend hours and hours inside the tiniest cupola in an otherwise giant barn, trying to locate the *something else*. The radio and the signals becoming *the reveal*, the act of disappearing from the *now*, turning a relationship between the environment-as-document and the machine into a complex conception of time generated by the timelessness of soundwaves and geographical limits. I locate the similarities, knob turning and searching for lost sounds, new sounds, the uncharted sounds, in my studio only five minutes away by car from that very cupola. Or one minute if I could fly, conceivably the most appropriate way to get a glimpse of Konrad and his radio apparatus firsthand, if I only could slip through.

In my mind, this person could simply not only have existed in his own time.



“I wander between narratives and images. In layer after layer something new is revealed. And there are strings. And thicker and thinner layers. But I need to be left alone to be able to pull the pieces together and to truly hear. To put together this puzzle.

It is possible that this have been used as a tool to capture the viewers interest, as well as functioning as way to connect to the abstract world?

Found, collected and collective objects.
Readymades and plastic combined with nature.

Their physical presence relates most strongly to the aspects of ecological politics. They seem to not only have a dialogue but also a battle to be aloud to co-exist - or exist at all - together with, and in modernity, current society and destructive human behaviour.

Carefully picked and selected objects are just like treasures from a person, who perhaps is the artist, or perhaps someone else who the artist have given a voice for. That given voice might come from a human, but even from history or nature itself.

The more time I spend with getting to know them, the more deeply I see how they create their own little rooms and exhibitions, and are now placed together as a whole.”*

* AnnaLeena Prykäri, extract from crit response, The Guards Have Folded



“Radical for me has to do with returning to something that is very basic. From the term itself, the movement is that of going back to the unseen root, of stripping down to the very basic and changing there.” *

It lives too fast.

He says: its error upon error, and punch after punch That our lives are squandered by detail and our so-called national internal improvements, all external and superficial, are unwieldy, clumsy and become an overgrown construction.

We get tripped up by our own traps, ruined by luxury and reckless expense.

Its 1854 and he says we live too fast.



Small stories

Ultimately perhaps they are all different micro histories or small stories: The glove, found in multiples all over town like an amputated appendage, striking in its life-like form. The wounded animal, a piece of cloth, picked up from the street and re-photographed in my studio, only fully manifesting itself as this hurt little animal once through the printing machine, size accentuating form and reference points. The dream catcher – an abstract protective charm, a collage of found objects revealing itself by happenstance once on the wall in the exhibition space, appearing as a lovely spiritual token of the caretaking this land needs. The rust from old mattress springs found in an empty transitional lot just off the industrial road in town, swept off the floor in the studio, ready to be thrown out (agh, how much rust can one take) but instead re-shaped into a circle and formed by its own spring and turned into a small-scale studio installation, photographed as a new exploration of how to work with the still image, the real world once or twice removed. Conrad, the farmer from the century-old diaries, a balloon-travelling time machinist who records his future, listens to the fields and translates the writing of its stones. The array of small images, presented as a book stacked in time, to be touched and held and possibly put on floor, allowing for new sequences to unfold; a book as stacked images becoming another form of cinema. The ghost of Olof Palme and the mythical cement bunker nested in the middle of nature as from another planet. The soil and bits of metal from a burned car, re-shaped and re-introduced as a deconstructed image floating above the floor, a preserved small tree in a petrified form. A micro world of real grass from the actual farmed landscape and cement chards from the newly constructed carcasses of modernity, a 1000-year-old field and the destruction of the man-made colliding in a gentle and miniscule installation-within-the-installation format. Dreams of a path as a passage through a landscape without an arrival and the act of building with history and land, a formation of barn structures all from scratch told to me from the almost indecipherable pages of a century-old diary text. Of the still image becoming a film becoming a still image again and of folding and distilling time. And at last, a rejected referendum on whether to build on this cultural land, the 4000 signatures of real counterprotest and the present raw capitalism colliding and collapsing in some futurepast time.

“Between a balancing act and a magic trick.”*

* Rosa Barba



Part 2

Folded Time - A small gesture about duration, a creative process, questioning film and trying to fold time. Presented as a standalone work inside a slipcase which in turns is part of the box.

Folded Time

I am working with photographs I created during my 00.16 am night-walk from Täljö train station to home in Näsvisken on March 9 2018.

The walk is a 1.9 km distance. Takes about 20 minutes. During that time I made 597 images.

Throughout my walk I shoot continuously holding my iPhone camera to my chest shooting the dimly lit country road in front of me, without looking through viewfinder. It becomes rhythmical and quite random, my finger following my steps: sometimes in synch, sometimes not.

I was moving taking stills.

Most of the images are longer in exposures due the darkness. They are all random. Sources of light from houses along the road stretch into elongated forms of abstraction.

It's the camera seeing, not me.

As I started to think about what to do with the sequential photographs it seemed obvious to see how they would work as a film. But film can be enormously time consuming and I decided, simply, to let the process and flow and possible mistakes lead me.

An automated output of all the 597 images to a video file ended up having built in dissolves by mistake. Decided to use that very video file as a departure point rather than to remake.

Perhaps the dissolves could be interesting? A dissolve, after all, *is time*.

Start layering the video file on top of itself. Four layers in all, some with changed speeds, and some with reversed speeds. Different blends to make the dissolves become a new abstraction of time. Still, the collaged film seemed too big of a response – first the outputting and then finding an interesting way to present (a small projection? on screen?). I wanted something more quiet, akin to the sense of timelessness and almost *floating-in-the-near-darkness* feeling I had during the walk.

I started liking the very abstracted *landscapes* that appeared on screen as I was clicking my way through the timeline. Made screengrabs.

Remembered a printed foldout piece I had seen and felt the need to distill the length of the walk – or a portion of it - into a printed piece.

But with an included action (the foldout) and juxtapositions that - to me – create a non-linearity and a break in the flow of *filmic time* (the walk).

I like how the digital material starts to break down and how the contours of the collaged dissolves and long exposures almost become like an afterimage. (The dark road in front of me is now barely decipherable.)

It's about the still image becoming a film becoming a still image again.

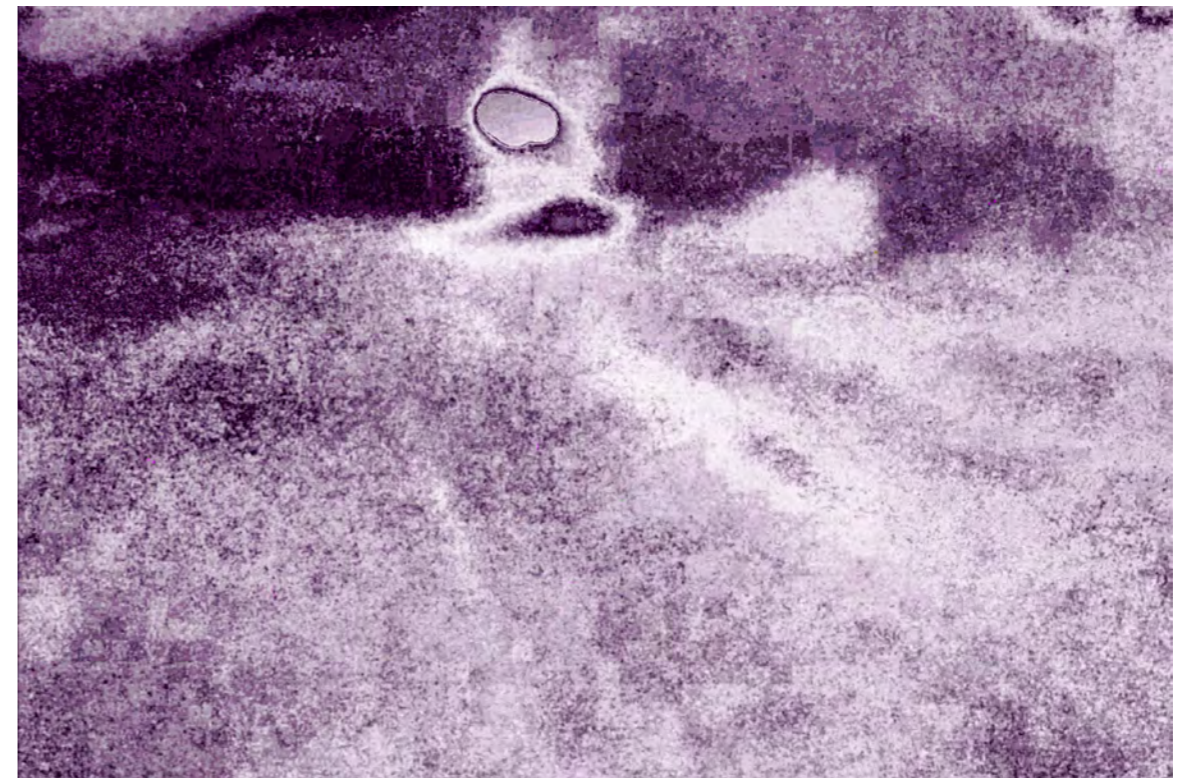
And it was about the creative process and the amount of time one has available at any given time.

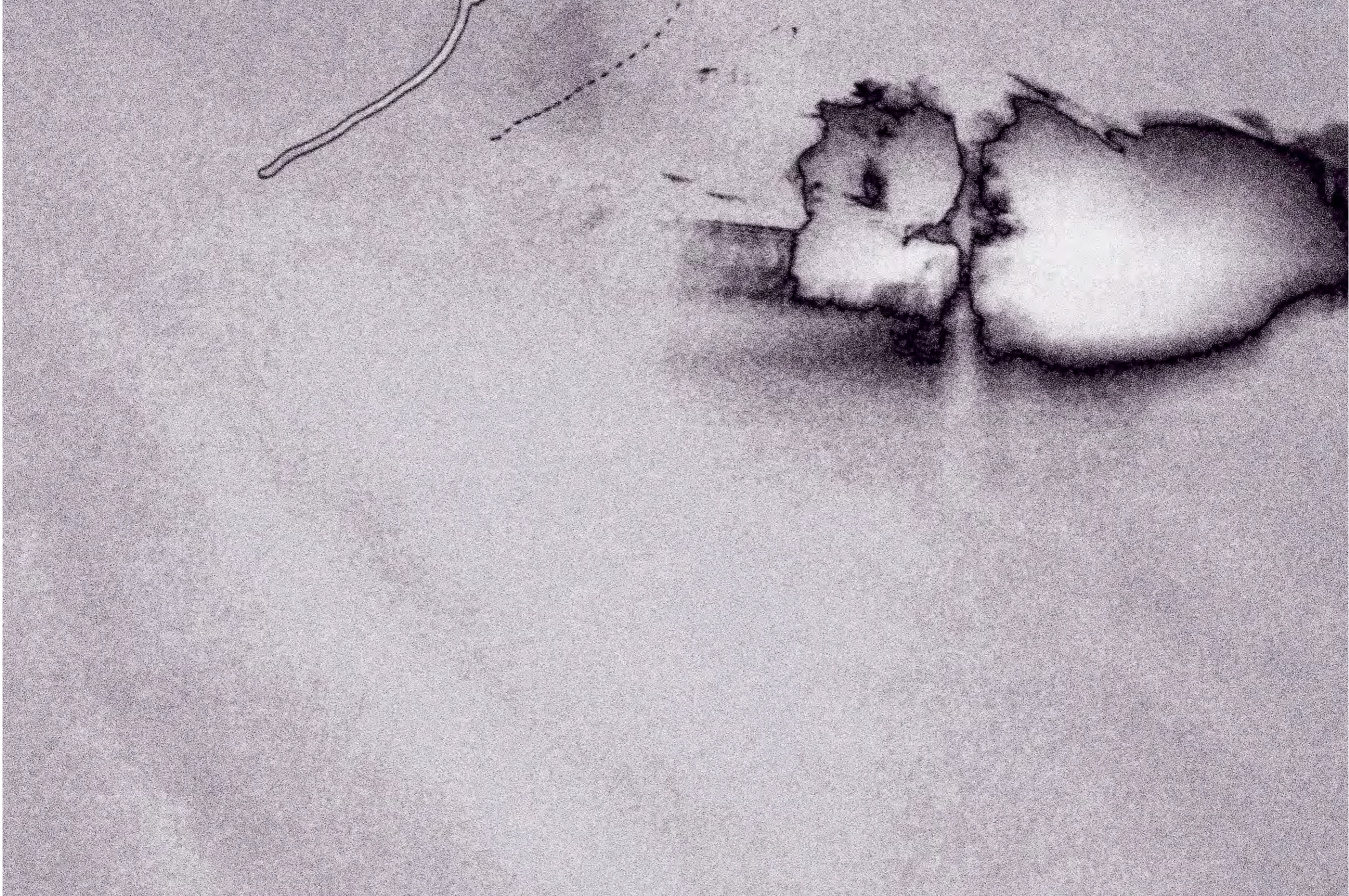
I had two days in the studio. 10-3.30..

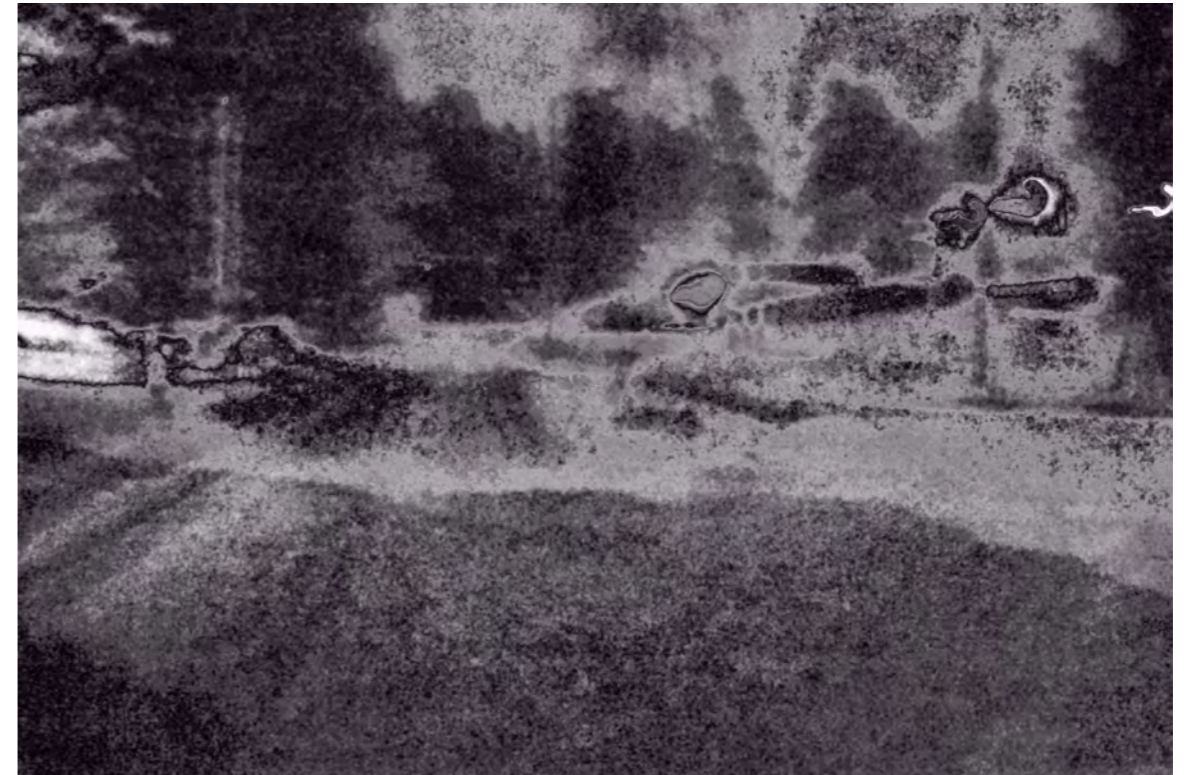
It felt more important to finish the exploration of this idea -- good or bad and to be ok with failing.

Ultimately it was an experiment in compressing, abstracting, and folding fragments of a 20 min walk into a new experience of time and movement (the viewing and the carrying of the printed matter).

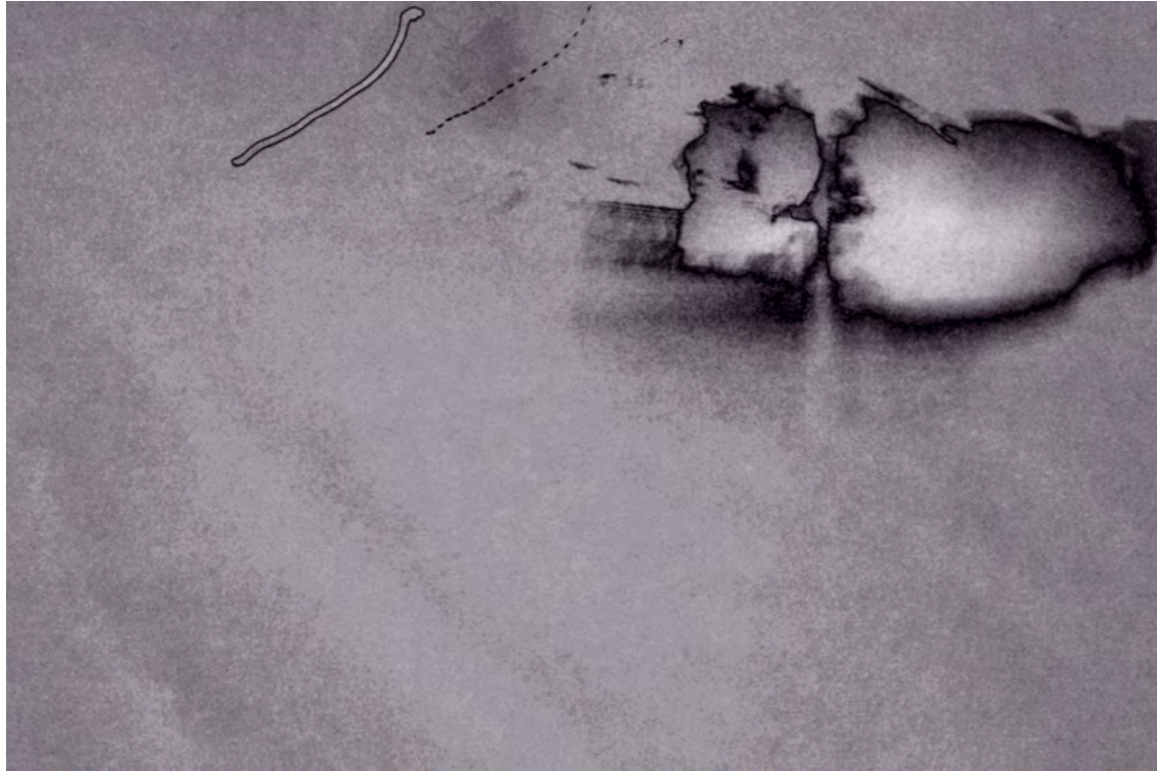
Its folded time.













Part 3

remove earth carefully

A slipcase-within-the-box, with still images from my visual excavations,
the collecting and the process of my encounter with the site and with
daily life. Re-photographed and re-processed. Or sometimes left as is.
I want the images to be taken apart, to be held, to further make visible
the images as my own artifacts, to degrade through time.
Part of a forgotten archive.
A forensic presentation.











