

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

matter of time

An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at
Massey University Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Essi Airisniemi

2018

abstract

matter of time sets out to examine the temporal and physical conditions of prospective mining sites in Finland and Aotearoa New Zealand to question natural resource use in the context of contemporary landscapes and changing ecologies. Photographic records of the two sites map out microcosms of natural matter in its temporal and physical state of flux, suggesting an intimacy that is not grounded in the traditional representations of a landscape.

Photography and its position in contemporary image culture is investigated in this exegesis through physicality and materiality of the photo object. While seeking analogies between the physical environment and its photographic presence, *matter of time* attempts to challenge the cultural construct that a landscape photograph constitutes through challenging the surface of a photographic print. The objects and installation methodologies continue to question the finality of a photograph and the conditions of its physical presence in installation space by presenting a site that suggests impermanence and navigation through a terrain with multiple trajectories.

acknowledgements

Kiitos äiti ja isä kaikesta, mitä olen teiltä saanut. Kiitos siitä, että olette avanneet maailman minulle.

I would like to thank my mentors and supervisors, Associate Professor Ann Shelton and Lecturer Caroline McQuarrie, for their ongoing support and guidance.

Thanks to my fellow MFA students and the School of Fine Arts faculty for their support throughout my degree. Special thanks to Julieanna Preston, Jane Wilcox, Shaun Waugh and Mike Bridgman for their advice and assistance.

I would also like to thank my friends, my family in Aotearoa New Zealand, for keeping me sane and fed.

The loud waters
Can petrify wood:
Old oars and posts
Over the years
Harden their grain,
Incarcerate ghosts

Of sap and season.
The shallows lap
And give and take:
Constant ablutions,
Such drowning love
Stun a stake

To stalagmite.
Dead lava,
The cooling star,
Coal and diamond
Or sudden birth
Of burnt meteor

Are too simple,
Without the lure
That relic stored –
A piece of stone
On the shelf at school,
Oatmeal coloured.

Relic of Memory, Seamus Heaney (1969)

table of contents

abstract	ii
acknowledgements	iii
<i>Relic of Memory</i>	iv
preface	1
1. in anticipation	5
2. the paradoxical object	8
3. language and matter	18
4. out in the world	29
5. in the event of an object	37
time and surface	49
list of images cited	50
list of works cited	52