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Embodied **Shadow**

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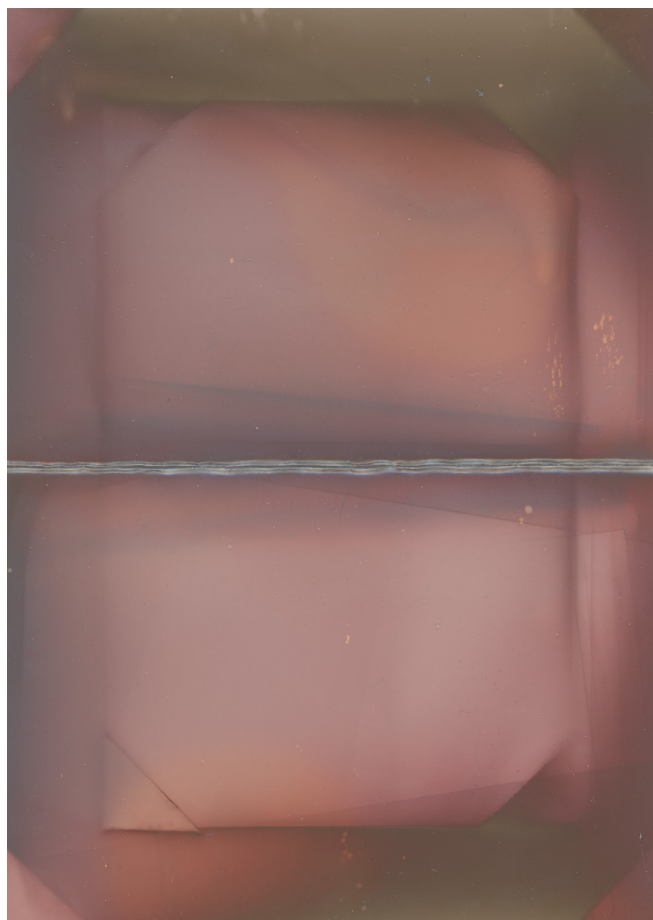
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Abstract

Embodied Shadow engages with cameraless and archaic modes of photographic making. It documents experiences of collaboration as my bodily surface folds against light-sensitive emulsion on expired photographic film and paper. Imprinting my touch suggests time's ephemerality in remembering through the medium of photography. Exposed as lumen prints, left without chemical fixtures, these personal recollections gradually fade. As this fugitive diary is revealed in the light, the impermanent archive will cascade to be only an afterimage.

Embodied Shadow is a whisper that suggests how archaic modes of photographic making bring an intimate conversation between maker and artwork. Investigating lumen printing; touch and contact printing alongside images of personal encounters, this work is focused on slowness in creating a personal archive of moments.

In this exegesis, my experimental installations are positioned in relation to artists and writers who return to materiality in experience and examine the movement of time through photographic practice. As I stray from how these materials were originally intended to be used, I focus on the subtleties and imperfections, as the work lives before and after me.



Introduction

Fig. 1. *A Year Apart*, Personal Photograph by author, 2022-2023.

Scans of gelatin silver paper, exposed for 24 hours in 2022, found a year later (Unfixed).

Embodied Shadow begins with two prints I reconnected with after a year apart (Fig.1). These prints were exposed against my body over a day, before being tucked between pages without chemical fixture. Meeting them again, I see where they have embraced one another, a year of light marked on their surface. It feels like I have rekindled a relationship with an old friend, sharing stories of change since we were last together.

The instant, this strange nature, is something inserted between motion and rest, and it is in no time at all. But into it and from it what is moved changes to being at rest, and what is at rest to being moved. (Plato qtd. in Ollman)

Growing up in a digital world, I have become frightened by the heaviness that comes with carrying my life's archive on multiple devices. Through the extended duration of making, *Embodied Shadow* explores how returning to handmade photographic methods allows for intimacy to occur between maker and image. As Plato suggests in the quote above, the instant has a strange nature, neither movement nor stillness, but a combination of the two, leaning on and enhancing one another. In a photographic medium that is known for stilling time, I question the possibilities of how humans document quotidian moments. How am I able to capture daily interactions and movement through material engagement that reinforces organic growth and movement? Cameraless photographic techniques can evoke the vulnerable nature of time and the disappearance of experience.

This research focuses on lumen printing, which catches a residue of light and human touch over the duration of an exposure. Lumen prints are exposed in direct sunlight and while sometimes fixed, they are never developed. Images are made both through contact prints with black and white film negatives and as photograms, where an object touching the surface leaves a shadow cast onto the emulsion. Returning to the essential ingredient, time, these inscriptions deepen as the sun moves, engaging with the world slowly. Through photographic exposure I use my body's tempo, drawing myself away from an inescapable digital world. Lumen printing becomes an umbilical cord in connection to personal artifacts; rendering between myself and capturing.

In the chapter ‘Sun Inscriptions Exploring the Darkness: On Cameraless Photography and Archaic Processes’ I unpack why I return to alternative photographic techniques. I borrow language from writers and historians, such as Lyle Rexer and Geoffrey Batchen, to discuss the re-emergence of hand-processing in an ache to untether from the digital world.

‘A Change of Tempo: On Photography and Time’ investigates my understanding of time within photography and the duration it takes to make these images. How do we describe the durations between taking and viewing photographs, does this alter the tense that the moments situate? I begin feeling an organic passing of time in my experiences that is mimicked in the development of images and their display.

‘Brushing the Wings of Butterflies: Fugitivity in the Decaying Archive’ talks about the decaying archive, in response to storage and deterioration of photographic emulsion. As images move further into the past and elements oxidise the surface, these prints stay alive, changing as time moves forward. I celebrate the farewell of the image in a poetic response, giving and letting go of everyday interactions.

‘Folding into One Another: When Surfaces Touch’ discusses the potential collaboration between the material surfaces in photographic supplies, and how this moves with touch and light. As I work together with light-sensitive emulsion, we begin mirroring each other in the residue left. I reflect on artists; Justine Varga and Lotus Laurie Kang, who work with photographic surfaces to give the material its own life alongside the makers. Folding into one another, my surface and the photograph’s skin hide stories within the unseen crevices.

Embodied Shadow:
A Description

Embodied Shadow exists within a black box, a dark room (Fig.2). An analogue slide projector lights up photographic prints on the wall with a regular duration but irregular illumination. The scale of the prints forces the viewer to move closer to the images. Some are recognisable as photographs, while others have abstract markings and folds on their surface, and some contain text. It becomes apparent that some of the images are paper, while others are sheets of photographic film. The colour and surface quality of the paper and film vary across the work. The sequence which at first appears random eventually repeats. If we wait long enough, the images will eventually disappear.



Fig. 2. *Embodied Shadow*, Personal Photograph
by author, Installation Image, 2023.



Fig. 3. *Embodied Shadow*, Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Detail image, 4x5 sheet film exposed as lumen print against author's body over 24 hours (Unfixed).

Some of the images are recognisable as quotidian photographs. Pulled from the artist's life, we see details of closeness (Fig.4). A man and a woman appear alongside trees, a bed, a garden and other objects encountered during the artist's day. Other prints are abstract, we see fingerprints and smears across their surface (Fig.3). In larger pieces the surface is broken, cracking and peeling (Fig.5). A poem punctuates the images:

I stay between moments.
I describe a photograph
that is no longer there,
which comes alive in the sun.
I fold into you as you do to me.

The slide projector guides our gaze, just as our attention jumps from one moment to the next throughout the day, capturing the intervals of daily life. We are forced to look closely and the duration of our attention is fixed for us by the projector. This mirrors the physical closeness required to make the work where paper and film sit against the artist's body, or the negative is pressed against the light-sensitive paper. The darkened room emulates both a darkroom containing an enlarger, and a box of photographic paper emerging into the light. The light from the projector causes an afterimage as it shuts off, the residue of the previous image blending into the next within our vision.

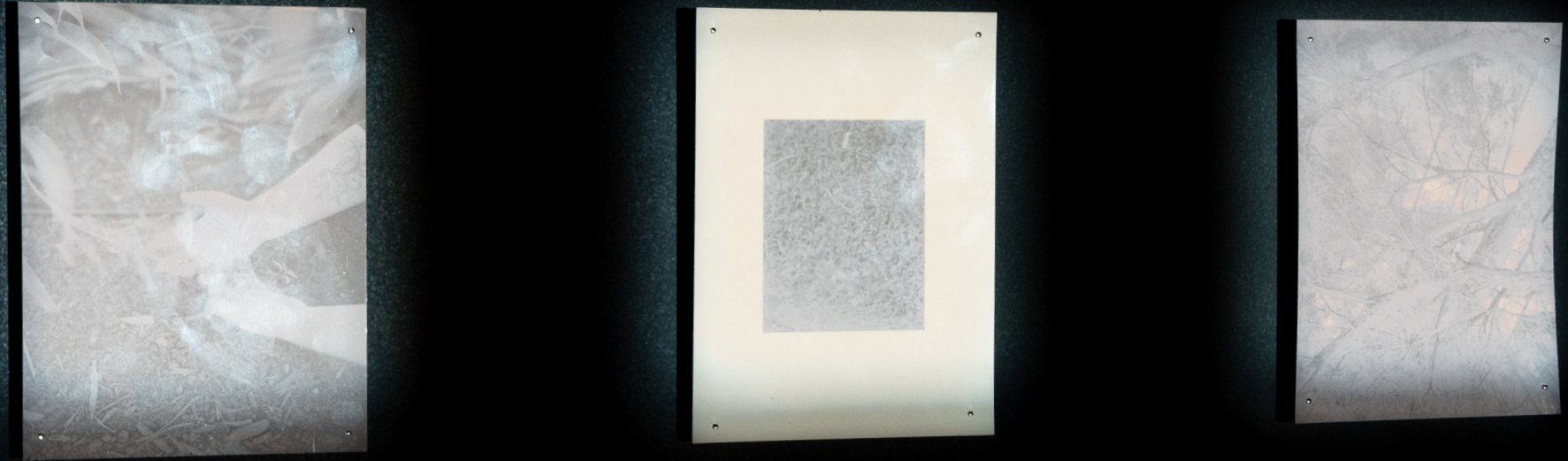


Fig. 4. *Embodied Shadow*, Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Detail image, sequence of 3 contact prints using large and medium format black and white film exposed as lumen prints (Unfixed).



Fig. 5. *Embodied Shadow*, Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Detail image, body obscuring the projector light beam.

Sun Inscriptions Exploring the Darkness:
On Cameraless Photography and Archaic Processes

In 2019 I developed a roll of 35mm film and entered a photographic darkroom for the first time. Instantly I felt an intense connection to the darkness in witnessing a photograph appear or disappear in the dim red lighting. The meditation became a re-experience of moments that had passed as there was an emotion in experiencing them again. As I moved forward in my own processes, darkroom techniques became a strict routine of movements that I began to challenge. Film is usually wound in cans or light-sealed tanks to prevent unraveling of frames when emerging back into the light. Suited up in gloves with the constant murmur of extraction fans to reduce dust, the developing process aims to hide physical labour of human contact that worked to capture these images on the surface of the emulsion. I have developed a process that is deliberately careless with the procedures around light-sensitive material, I want my touch marks to appear and disappear during my investigations into lumen printing. This chapter unpacks a resurgence in archaic and cameraless methods of photographic making in a space which is increasingly digital. I begin personally untethering to allow a bond between myself and photographic objects.

Darkroom processes create an intimacy through experiencing the touch of photographic materials and the duration it takes to make an image. When thinking of language around archaic processes, I turn to writer Lyle Rexer. In his discussion in *Photography's Antiquarian Avant-Garde: The New Wave in Old Processes*, ideas of memory, decay and accident have a resurgence in the present day. Rexer suggests that a sensual/slow practice is becoming more appealing due to the individuality in the outcome. The bond between maker and image tether together to document visible touch in an exchange (Rexer, *Photography's Antiquarian Avant-Garde: The New Wave in Old Processes* 26). This is evident when Rexer references photographer Mark Osterman as he talks about the unpredictable atmosphere of printing on wet plates. In a physical process such as wet plate collodion, you see how the glass is held in the maker's hands, fingerprints leaving a trace within the image (Rexer, *Photography's Antiquarian Avant-Garde: The New Wave in Old Processes* 26). The darkroom allows the medium to be humanized, as you get to experience the faults in the making as the artist's touch and presence is in an image that may otherwise not appear.

Connecting with archaic and cameraless modes of photography, my research sits within a contemporary abstract aesthetic. To expand on Lyle Rexer's research through excerpts from *The Edge of Vision, the Rise of Abstraction in Photography*. Particularly relevant is the chapter 'This is [not] a Photograph' in which Rexer discusses showing and withholding in photography, setting out how the medium is breaking through assumptions in its description. As we return to the physical object itself, photography's two-dimensional limits blur. This abstraction of experience allows conversation between what fills the frame or surface, extending to what moves outside/beyond it. The embracing of a photograph then becomes an experience of revisiting historical time and continuing to move forward in this timeline (Rexer, *The Edge of Vision: The Rise of Abstraction in Photography* 192-193).

I am interested in cameraless photography as it returns to essential components that give photography its definition; written by light, shadow, and time. In ‘Ectoplasm: Photography in the Digital Age’ art historian Geoffrey Batchen defines photography as existing within a culturally relevant economy:

The concepts inscribed within this economy would have to include things such as nature, knowledge, representation, time, space, observing subject, and observed object. Thus, if we do have to define it for a moment, we might say that photography is the desire, whether conscious or not, to orchestrate a particular set of relationships between these various concepts. (Batchen, Ectoplasm: Photography in the Digital Age 19)

When thinking of these elements I am drawn to American artist Alison Rossiter whose practice heavily revolves around the materiality of gelatin silver paper. Rossiter is compelled by expired photo-sensitive paper, unpacking and developing it in the darkroom to show the paper’s accumulation of decay from staying hidden for decades. These monochromatic constellations show change in the past experience of the paper and an intention in the action of the artist with the chemistry and in the darkroom (Gal 31). Images that investigate time through highlighting the fragility of the photographic emulsion. Throughout my own research, I have become captivated by gelatin silver light-sensitive paper, celebrating packages that are deemed expired in their production use. Opening a new package is always an introduction, as the paper has all been subject to unknown elements, creating unique reactions when emerging from their dark packaging.

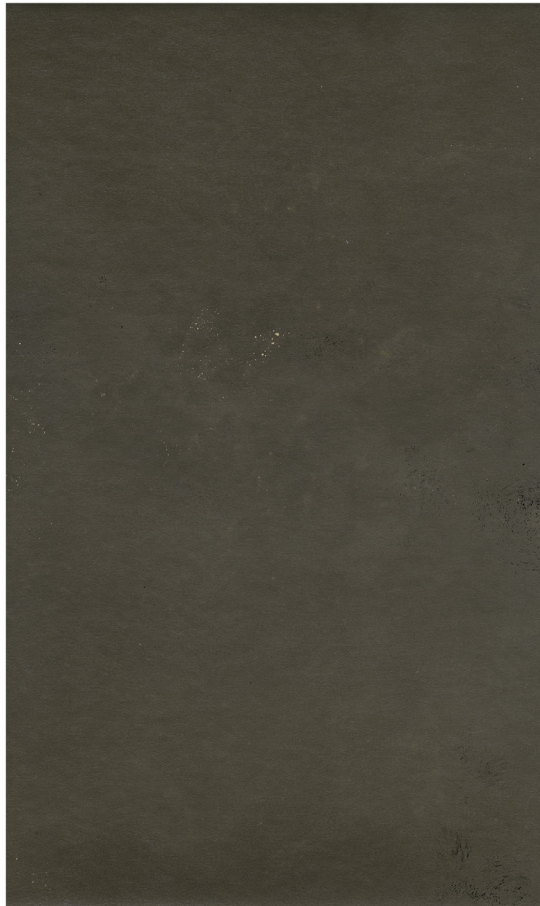


Fig. 6. Alison Rossiter. *Density 1922*, 2019.
Two Gelatin Silver Prints. © Alison Rossiter,
Courtesy of the Artist and Yossi Milo, New York

In the essay 'Between What is and What Else' writer Leah Ollman poetically moves us through the tangible and intangible emotions felt when viewing Rossiter's ominous material landscapes. Ollman states how Rossiter's images are written by time and touch, where failure and change challenge the gap between photograph and photographic (Ollman). I interpret this idea to push what the terms mean in the medium, and question where Rossiter's work sits, thinking of photograph to relate to the indexical vision and photographic to discuss the physical material qualities of the surface. I connect this blurring of definitions to exhibition *Substance of Density 1918–1948* where Rossiter displayed sequences of developed expired paper that dated from the end of World War I through World War II until the creation of Israel as an independent state (Sheets). As this work is hung accompanied by a historic timeline, Rossiter suggests the viewer is put into the history that the papers lived through.

The work *Density 1922, 2019* (Fig.6), consists of a small black sheet of paper alongside a larger off-white sheet that has a tilted imprint of the smaller print it accompanies. The lines are from the two papers touching in the depths of the sealed bag that they have been bound in for decades; where the white sheet has been put through fixture to keep the light tones, the black test print has been developed to show the light that has seeped into the package over this duration. There is a slowness in these works that embody photographic materiality. I think about the term expired in Rossiter's work, and what this means in the photographic space; as these pieces of paper bear witness to time they escape the commercial intent.

For stills, these images speak improbably, additionally, of duration, of the extended interval, that gap between the paper's stated expiration date and the date of its reemergence into use. Within that interval pulses the energy between Do Not Use Past This Line and Past the Line, Using Anyway.
(Ollman)

Ollman suggests there is a defiance in using expired materials. Ultimately these paper's stories belong to the past in Rossiter's investigation (Gal 32). Coming from a different perspective in my own work, I am adding to the inscriptions embedded in the obsolete surface, writing with my own stories over old inscriptions that lie latent. Using expired papers gives new purpose to materials that have been forgotten, I think of the hands that have held the boxes of the paper I now own and how my time will stay in the materiality of the photograph.

This use of paper that has been deemed unusable seems metaphorically linked to the built-in obsolescence of ever-adapting digital developments. Geoffrey Batchen touches on how digital modes of photographic capture create uncertainty. Returning to 'Ectoplasm: Photography in the Digital Age' Batchen suggests that digital images lack origin away from their programming compared to the material properties that lie in a physical print. Digital images become timely in their progressions and instantaneous capturing of events, yet the images are not of time in the way a tangible piece of film or paper is (Batchen, *Ectoplasm: Photography in the Digital Age* 18-19). Similarly, writers Mette Sandbye and Jonas Larsen suggest there is a change in photography by the way digital outputs are altering the social quality of how images are circulated and communicated (Larsen and Sandbye xvii). From digital slipping a boundary in its material quality, we are drawn to return to physical photographs and negatives as mementos to give us a sense of control over time/our lives and memories. I am interested in how photographic capture has become a part of most people's everyday lives, with phones becoming an immediate extension of their bodies. While digital methods have become mobile and public, there is an ephemerality to the technology where new and better models are always being advertised. I return back to the photograph in physical form as the original extension of my body, in hopes of creating remnants of a more tactile presence.

The use of the term analogue is important to *Embodied Shadow*. I borrow Sarah Lea's language when reflecting on artist Tacita Dean's description of the word *analogue*; describing the way that Dean:

...returned to the word 'analogue' to describe her practice, not merely in distinction to digital, but as a 'word that means proportion and likeness'. An analogue is 'a representation of an object that resembles the original; not a transcription or a translation but an equivalent in a parallel form' (Lea 32).

These handmade techniques expand the physicality of photography where elements of *Embodied Shadow* are contact prints from direct negatives, or the original negatives/photograms are put on display. I am returning to an analogue space to make room for haptic making. Seeing the materiality of a lumen print on paper or negative becomes a direct conversation, which may be lost in the digital realm.

A Change in Tempo:
On Photography and Time

Though it is fairly instant firing the shutter on the film cameras I use, there is a duration moving from looking through the viewfinder to seeing the developed image, what I have begun calling the space between. I am there for the entirety of the process, waiting in my own thoughts while agitating the tank that holds images from the day before. This process lasts from when I load the negative, to the time of revealing the latent image in development. Within the darkroom there is a calmness of knowing where everything is, knowing where I need to be, and having no interruptions. The darkroom allows time to pass without the awareness of its speed. All the clocks I use to time the process give inaccurate time, yet I can't escape the notion of seconds to minutes to hours.

I feel the need to slow down in a world that is forever in motion, wanting to control the unstoppable pressure of time passing. I question what time consists of and how this is shown in photography, as a medium that is intricately linked with the notion. Advocating for slow movement I turn to the concept of slow scholarship, where ideas are reflective and ruminative. These thoughts are supported by academic article 'For Slow Scholarship: A Feminist Politics of Resistance Through Collective Action in the Neoliberal University', arguing for slowness to be acknowledged and implemented through institutional outputs. Alison Mountz et al. quote Judith Halberstam who suggests 'failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, and not knowing', offers creativity in ways not otherwise possible (Halberstam qtd. in Mountz, et al. 1244). Through an obsession with productivity I feel a loss in the organic connection to time/movement. In untethering and losing a grip on intervals there is a thrill in *Embodied Shadow* being made, seen and undone over extended durations.

In the book *Photography, Narrative, Time: Imaging Our Forensic Imagination*, author Greg Battye touches on how time is something that we all know so well, yet struggle to explain in the spaces we are experiencing. Our experience of the present is described using the term 'specious present' which is the existing moment of which we are consciously aware (Battye 71). When photographing we aim to capture moments to return back to, imaging slices that then slip behind the present, and are no longer with us. I am interested in how we attempt to capture time through image-making and then move back and forth through time experiencing these images again.

Battye further explains how there is a shortness of the duration we actually experience in the present. I feel caught between the moments of forming, extending, and returning to the images that I am making.

The present, then, lacks duration because it is no more than the interface between the future and the past; the past has neither duration nor any other property since it has ceased to exist, and by extension, a similar problem afflicts the future, since it does not yet exist (Battye 71).

Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his discussion ‘Temporality’ in *Phenomenology of Perception*, also discusses the idea of the present. Merleau-Ponty advocates a slowness in how images are made; the tense they are situated in leaks into one another. “...I see that my present always passes by, that I can anticipate this passage, treat my near past as if it were long ago, and treat my actual present as if it were past: the future, then, is this hollow that takes shape put in front of me” (Merleau-Ponty 475). I have been feeling anxious surrounding new change ahead, however by embracing ephemeral making I am connected to my own aging, movement and grounding in the days that pass by.

Embodied Shadow challenges instant photography, through a tenderness in image-making through extended durations. The photograph’s journey is not complete after releasing the shutter, as the lumen prints are left without chemical fixturing and are still sensitive to change from light’s touch (Fig.7-10). Therefore, the image continues to make itself through its viewing and ultimately its own destruction. The work extends the specious moment because all the light that hits the surface of the photographic emulsion builds up over time and is held within the paper itself.



Left: Fig. 7. *Untitled (Lily at Community Gardens)*,

Right: Fig. 8. *Untitled (Bed)*, Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

120 Medium format black and white film, digitally scanned, used for contact lumen prints.



Fig. 9-10. *Developmental Contact Lumen Prints*, Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Exposed with 4x5 black and white negatives.

In questioning photography's 'here and now' relationship with time I grasp for language to describe how images produce or respond to time in Sègio Mah's discussion *Between Times Instants, Intervals, Durations*. As Mah suggests; photography depicts a calibration yet dissection of the fluency of reality due to both discontinuing and continuing movement of the image (Mah 10). How can an image move with the flow of time whilst paradoxically bound to stilling a moment? I suggest this research connects both what is embedded in the photographic paper with the wider movements that surround the physical frame. "...the between times is the place in which inside and outside, mind and body, factual and fictional, imaginary and reality cease to be separable notions" (Mah 17). *Embodied Shadow* sits in this between space where stillness occurs in the images made or marks left. They become both inside and outside in the way the lack of fixtures on the print creates an organic movement of viewing.

What we, or at any rate I, refer to confidently as memory-meaning a moment, a scene, a fact that has been subjected to a fixative and thereby rescued from oblivion – is really a form of storytelling that goes on continually in the mind and often changes with the telling. Too many conflicting emotional interests are involved for life ever to be wholly acceptable, and possibly it is the work of the storyteller to rearrange things so that they conform to this end. In any case, in talking about the past we lie with every breath we draw.

– William Maxwell (Maxwell 27)

I have found myself caught in this need to document my own life to remember how time moved with fluidity. William Maxwell suggests photography acts as a fixative in the novel *So Long, See You Tomorrow*, yet in terms of storytelling and returning back, our subjective minds gradually change with the telling. *Embodied Shadow* is going flat from the lack of a fixture, slowly sinking into the paper, as it swallows them whole. Is this perhaps a physical description of Maxwell's accusations? I often ponder on how you can experience something with someone and they would recite the experience differently. Is this the same with images? If so how do we determine the ones we keep or show and the moments that hang hidden in the shadows? These are my photos, yet move on their own journey as they are taken through this steady tempo of exposure.

As I continued to show work that deteriorates with light's touch, I began installing in a dark space to prolong the images (Fig.11). The dark space feels natural in how these papers are removed from light-sealed packages to their intended exposures in the darkroom. I work with a carousel slide projector as a light casting technology to illuminate the lumen prints that float on the wall (Fig.12). Using technology that became obsolete in 2004¹, through performance, sound and the carousel I can push the boundaries in how the archaic forms in *Embodied Shadow* defy their intended use. Through the "rhythmic oscillation between light and darkness" (Ross 65) *Embodied Shadow* mirrors how these images were made and how they will eventually fade. Julian Ross instills some of the language that supports my understanding of the technology, in chapter 'Intermediality and the Carousel Slide Projector' from the book *The Moving Form of Film: Historicising the Medium Through Other Media*. There becomes a resurgence in archaic technology to resist the capitalist movement towards what is new. Whilst I have mentioned that digital acceleration frightens me, I turn to the slide projector for the way it sits between both moving and still. Felt through its ephemerality, the slow speed of the projector also gives an intermission in the darkness, allowing a punctuation between the frames displayed (Ross 66).

1 In 2004 Kodak announced it was stopping production of slide projectors (Ross 65).



Fig. 11. *Slide Projector Detail*, Personal

Photograph by author, 2023.

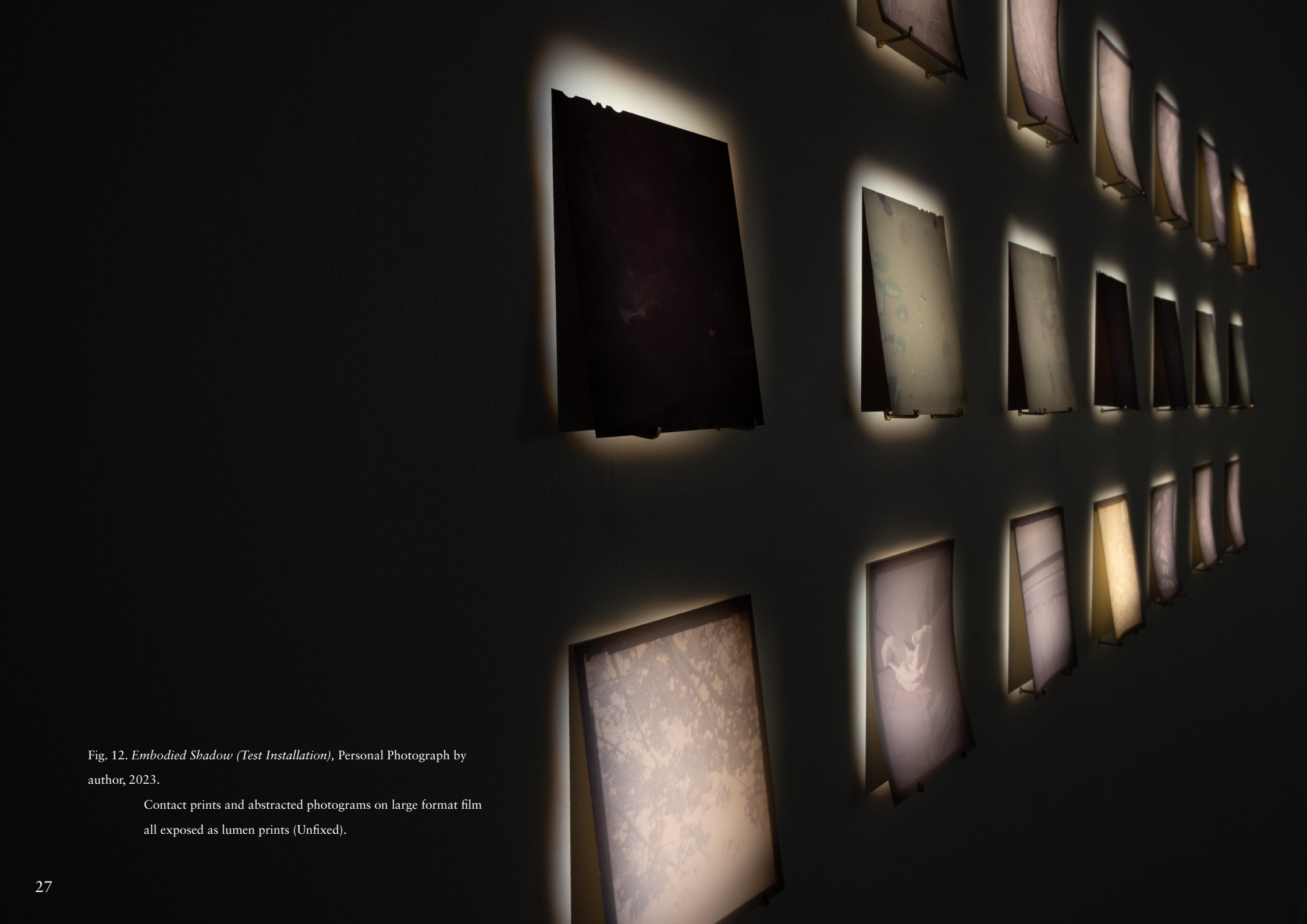


Fig. 12. *Embodied Shadow (Test Installation)*, Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Contact prints and abstracted photograms on large format film all exposed as lumen prints (Unfixed).

Alongside these ideas, I am drawn to how Ross describes the inherent loop of the carousel movement. When entering the room viewers are unattached to the beginning or end of the performance, suggesting that one always inhabits the present moment (Ross 67). There is a pace to the projector, and comfort in the repeating sequence which deteriorates the photographic work while simultaneously revealing it².

Jacinto Lageira suggests in 'Tempus Fugit' that as time becomes embedded within an artwork, "time passes, flows, happens and disappears, but the artwork, while similarly subject to these temporal laws, also produces its own time within generic, objective time" (Lageira 18). Lageira expands on this by describing how memories that an image evokes don't necessarily connect to what we see in the image. As this lived time connects with the photograph but may not be what is captured, the moments felt when looking at the image cannot exist without the material object (Lageira 18). Time then becomes experienced in all aspects from the making, scanning and viewing of the photographic object (Lageira 20). I see my own images as interminably long, in the duration it takes to make an exposure, but also in considering the life of the paper before and after the time I spend with it.

2 Ross acknowledges that slide projectors do have association as pedagogical tools and that nostalgia is not the only perspective in slide based artwork, I am wanting to acknowledge these histories however this is not the main focus of this research (Ross 68).



Fig. 13. *Latent Perimeter*, Personal Photograph by author, 2022.

Performance image, 24 sheets of gelatin silver paper hung on
fence over 5 minute intervals



Fig. 14. *Latent Perimeter*, Personal Photograph by author, 2022.

Sheet of gelatin silver paper, image 24, 5 minute exposure (Fixed)



Fig. 15. *Latent Perimeter*, Personal Photograph by author, 2022.

Sheet of gelatin silver paper, image 1, 120 minute exposure (Fixed).

Latent Perimeter, 2022 is a developmental work that made me aware of the visuality of time passing. A durational performance that I undertook to become aware of minutes passing as I occupied my mother's home during a visit. I was uneasy with how time seemed to be passing without my direct awareness of it. A material and spatial investigation, I questioned how I facilitated collaboration between light, space and photographic surface. During this performance I created a routine of hanging a sheet of expired photographic paper every five minutes over the span of two hours (Fig.13). I chose the back fence to pin the paper into as this was the property's perimeter, which I felt metaphorically suggests how this methodology sits at the edges of the photographic medium. As time moved forward I began to tire from not being able to leave the site. I felt aching in my legs as I stood still in between the five-minute intervals. I began seeing my reflection in the lustre of the paper. As we mirrored one another, we both aged in the sun, yet this is more apparent in the gradient being embedded in the paper's memory. Returning to Te Whanganui-a-Tara I fixed the images and had to order them through negligible changes in gradient (Fig.14-15). A task that I have come to realise feels like I am returning to recollections of my past. Now as this performance stands further away from the present, I can only describe the moments that surround the paper, and didn't leave a physical imprint. I can only offer a description of a photograph that isn't there.

I question the temporality that sits within the photographic frame, in response to how Stella Baraklianou references the overlap of immanence and being in chapter ‘Pasearse: Duration and the Act of Photographing’ from the book *Bergson and the Art of Immanence: Painting, Photography, Film, Performance*. The durational act operates in relation to the maker and her actions, in a space where the camera is already bound to capturing time. I am interested in how Baraklianou challenges the linear understanding of time in photography, suggesting that an image is neither before or after a singular moment, rather always sits in the present tense.

Baraklianou goes on to explain that the photographer situates themselves in relation to the unfolding of time through the present moment. “The act of photographing remains immanent to itself and this is a movement made of light and time. Photographing is the being with, being through and within that I am after” (Baraklianou 136). As a photographer who works in the dark, her work belongs to the nature of light – I feel this suggests my relationship with processes and the defiance against the intended use of photographic materials. “More light; less light. One has to know when to stop. I control the light. I am in charge of the moment. I take the image and alter it at will. Yet the image runs back to me; breaking away, it slides, tosses, crumbles, reacts, breathes air and absorbs light” (Baraklianou 137).

I feel connected to how Baraklianou discusses this back and forth of whether the artist or the image is making the photograph, specifically expanding on the image having personified traits of breathing air and absorbing light. In my own work I feel there is a constant tension of giving and receiving when marking the paper and making contact prints using sunlight. There is an awareness in what I give to the photographic surface, of where I touch the emulsion or place the material, yet I cannot control the speed of light and how the image absorbs the information.

Brushing the Wings of Butterflies:
Fugitivity in the Decaying Archive

Often when displaying my work I am questioned on how I would show these images again once they have disappeared completely. However the archive I am creating of my daily movements documenting my life, both through touch and encounters, is not fixed forever to be seen by others. I am content with this, as there is becoming a flow with how the moments are cascading through time with me. My body is not still, it is forever evolving, growing and decaying, so it makes sense for these past encounters to adapt along this timeline. From abandoning chemical fixtures, time corrodes the image creating an impermanent archive, where elements of loss and bodily trace add to the way I return to these moments. Even in its original usage, a slide projector would slowly fade the slides (Weidner). Through a medium that promises a stilling of the real, how will these personal archives last over decades?

British pioneer in photography William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) used the phrase ‘The art of photographic drawing’ to describe his discoveries from exposing silver nitrate solution directly in the sun. What he called ‘fairy images’ depict the marking of a moment through the agency of light (Batchen, William Henry Fox Talbot 6). Yet before he discovered chemical fixers these images would disappear in the time it took to view them. While Talbot continued to experiment to create a fixative, I feel connected to the early experience of both Talbot and his antecedents before they succeeded in fixing images. In the fleeting images Talbot mimicked the very aura of a shadow, destined to pass. I question whether we can find a balance between that which is fixed and that which is transient, and relishing the conceptual and visual beauty of something that is as fleeting as humans are. I am searching for the same direct and personal intimacy that I imagine emerges when someone views one of Talbot’s fading images; every time they are viewed they grow closer to not existing. It is this tenderness that *Embodied Shadow* seeks to generate.

In Batchen’s presentation *New Power: Photography in Britain Between 1800-1850*, he touched on the early process of daguerreotypes. I was taken by a phrase he used when describing the deterioration of the copper plate surface when touched physically. Leaving fingerprints, dust scratches, and tonal shifts, these imperfections were said to be like brushing the wings of butterflies, so delicate you should be gentle and discrete (Batchen, *New Power: Photography in Britain Between 1800-1850*). Photography is known for its exchange of time passing, physically and metaphorically, and it becomes intriguing that in order to archive early processes they need to repel the materiality of touch when through necessity we pick them up to view them.



Fig. 16. Joan Fontcuberta. "Trauma" Series.
2022, Courtesy of the Artist.

Embracing blemishes lies at the centre of writer David Company and curator Francesca Fabiani who both discuss the photographic archive and its fragility in response to Joan Fontcuberta's work in *Cultura Di Polvere*. Fabiani suggests that Fontcuberta's found images from the *Prince Francesco Chigi Albani della Rovere (1881-1953)* archive show material agony from decay over time in storage (Fig.16). As photography is undoubtedly bound to memory, through the failure of archival storage the medium's presumed immortality is questioned (Fabiani). Yet Fabiani hints that images are living beings, as photographs breathe and hold elements such as moisture in their material skin. Longing for physical engagement these prints that are hidden for preservation, wait for moments of social encounter outside of storage (Fabiani).

The promise of photography, born at the onset of a rapidly changing modern world, was immortality in the form of the frozen image that would last forever and lend itself to the mastery of history, and of process. But this is a promise that could not be kept. It is a cruel if poetic irony that photography, a medium tasked so often with the fixing of appearances and the preservation of history, should turn out to be so materially susceptible. (Campany, *Definitively Unfinished*)

In David Campany's writing however, I grasp his discussion on the poetic irony that the material components of photography are fragile and refuse the medium's intended philosophy of longevity. Through my installations I aim to challenge the intention of photography, making the medium more accepting of ephemerality and deterioration. Should we be allowing the photograph to last forever in a frozen form? When I think of how often I return back to my electronic archive, I reflect on how long my physical images are left unnoticed and untouched.

Between Batchen, Fabiani, and Campany there is a need to talk about how the materiality of photography is inevitably unstable. The physicality of archaic techniques moves more with time than staying still. This is what I find interesting in Campany's reflections on Fontcuberta's reproductions of the decaying archive; as Campany is attentive to where deteriorating imagery is attempting rescue or deemed unusable, Fontcuberta accepts and interprets the photographic skins for what they are now in their altered state (Fig.17). There becomes an organic beauty of life shown where the mould forms on the photographic plates time (Campany).

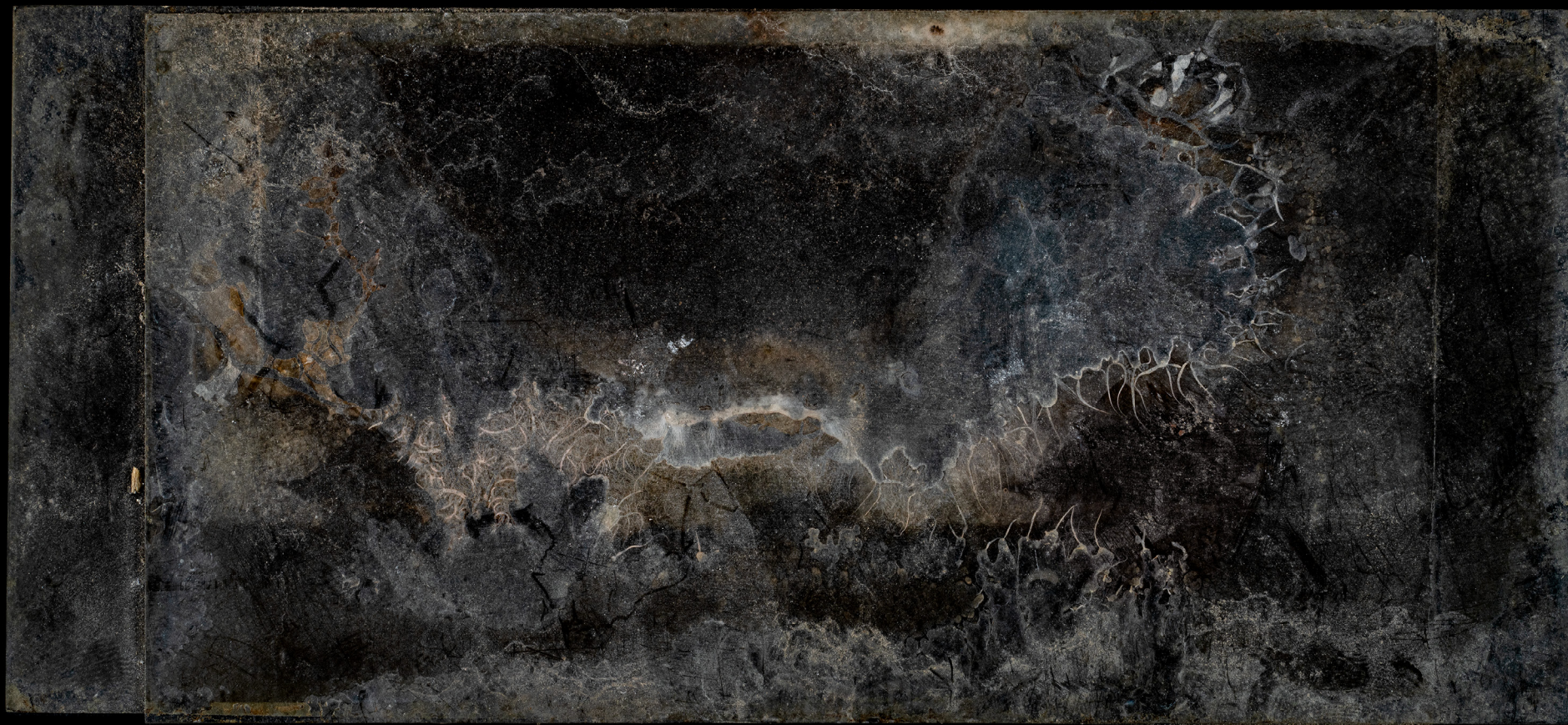


Fig. 17. Joan Fontcuberta. *"Trauma" Series*.
2022, Courtesy of the Artist.

Reflecting on the term ‘archive’, there becomes a hierarchy of possessing one in order to support your personal movements. We are constantly taught methods of preservation to save our images and backups creating an archive that is intended to be eternal. Writer Julietta Singh questions the term ‘archive’ in the book *No Archive Will Restore You*. Simplistically, the context of the word archive suggests a ‘physical place where a collection of documents is housed’ (Singh 22). There becomes troubling connotations surrounding public and private, yet what I connect to in what Singh is unpacking is the intimate reality of the archive being between oneself and the recording photographic object. “If the archive is a remnant, it is one that keeps whispering to me, insisting on its place in my everyday life. What I might have said to her instead is this: ‘I am a disquieted archive that fumbles in words. A thing made up of infinite, intractable traces’” (Singh 26).

Singh illuminates touch and physicality that I transfer behind the making of *Embodied Shadow*. This work feels subtle, whispering to me that she is there but soft. Imperfect, the lumen prints take on traces whilst exposed by my hands, yet marks have come before and will come after I hold the individual pieces. As Singh suggests the archive is hard to control, she connects to her body as its own archive (Singh 27). Impossible and deteriorating, I am trying to show a physical dwelling on the one archive we cannot detach from, our bodies, which move at their own rate. These moments feel like they are slipping away, yet when I view the temporal prints in the darkness I can feel a change in my form as I move towards tomorrow.



"Something touching another, touching another, touching another..." (Kang)

Fig. 18. Lotus Laurie Kang, *In Cascades* (2023). Installation view, Chisenhale Gallery, London, 2023. Commissioned and produced by Chisenhale Gallery, London and the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver. Photo: Andy Keate.

This is how artist Lotus Laurie Kang defines the word ‘cascades’. From a continuous repetition of touch, there is a change made by an encounter. Suggesting that with all you touch comes alterations that essentially make a change in yourself (Kang).

Kang’s recent exhibition *In Cascades*, 2023, held at Chisenhale Gallery, London, displays large rolls of light sensitive photographic paper suspended from industrial steel beams attached to the roof. Punctuating the large photographic sheets are intimate drawings and sculptures that create tender subtleties of collaboration with time, light and space in questioning personal archives and histories¹ (Fig.18). When reflecting on Kang’s work I turn to writers Amy Jones and Victoria Sung who have all contributed essays in the artist’s catalogue that has been published alongside the exhibition. Through these writers’ reflections, I borrow language whilst expanding the descriptions in my lumen prints; regarding their relationship to archival documentation.

¹ The rolls of paper are situated within a wider installation of Steel Joints, Sculptures, Tatami Mats and Drawings, referencing aspects of Kang’s culture/familiar histories. The Lotus root becomes a continuous motif in the steel joints and sculptures to reference holes in Kang’s personal history (Kang). However I will only discuss the photographic elements of her work as they are the most pertinent within this research.

Both Kang's and my photographic bodies of work become vulnerable to their surroundings through being deliberately unfixated. The paper's surface changes over the duration of the exhibition, altering the marks Kang exposed in New York, Los Angeles, Toronto and in a greenhouse in Milton before the exhibition (Kang). Amy Jones suggests that Kang's research is a reminder of an uncontrollable aging in material in the essay 'Full of Holes: Thoughts on Process'. As the surfaces are shaped and reshaped, it becomes clear that these objects as material surfaces exist before us and will be here beyond us (Jones 50). As Jones unpacks this process and presentation, I think back to my use of expired paper. For a brief moment, there is the offer of seeing the image, which questions the relationship between public and private in photographic processes. Through the refusal of substrate fixture, Kang and I connect on these inscriptions not being permanent, commenting on what is retained or not as a physical history.

This discussion of an ephemeral experience in the photographic medium is enhanced in Laura Marks' 'Loving a Disappearing Image'. "The emulsion itself remembers the passage of time, when the image attempts to live in an eternal present. Loving a disappearing image means finding a way to allow the figure to pass while embracing the traces of its presence, in the physical fragility of the medium" (Marks 96). Marks synthesizes how I connect to my images both through abstract touch and image transfer that live and disappear during installation. Embodied Shadow embraces the figure upon the paper's emulsion physically and through time/light allowing for its departure. It feels continuous in relation to Kang's and Fontcuberta's imagery, exploring how photography can document time and its passing.

Folding into One Another:
When Surfaces Touch

I have found myself in a haptic collaborative relationship with photographic surface to consciously and unconsciously document the duration of my individual days. In a space where myself and active sheets of photographic film or paper travel together in an act of companionship. As I carry photographic materials alongside my body, they capture moments of touch, sweat and shadow giving an abstract reflection of my physical movement. These works push ideas of looking by spending my days engaging my senses beyond sight, which usually proceeds photography. I am unsure if these inscriptions reflect accurate windows onto my life or if they merely become mirrored reflections of my portrait, ageing as I do. I hide within the folds, cracks and gradients. I see my reflection in these abstracted markings where I know I have been.

These photograms/photographs begin with James Elkins' concept *just looking*. Elkin expands on the phrase as a point of departure, where the observer observes (Elkin 18). The phrase *just looking* has become weighted; usually intending that this is a space that should not be touched, I have begun looking through a more carnal and bodily interaction. To me just looking is no longer only seeing, it's feeling, touching, spitting, holding. To look hard until the image is gone. Building a practice around a medium where looking is essential and assumed, I feel the need to touch and experience in hopes that then I will see. I leave a surface residue of touch and time as markers of my looking.

My images aren't that of vision but of sight. It is an internal unconscious way of seeing, utilising the wider scope of senses (Elkin 19). There becomes an intimacy in the quietness of observing; I lose track of time, in the dark, where there is only myself and the photographic object. I don't know who is hypnotised by whom. These mirrored reflections on the skin of the paper or film begin mimicking me as *just looking* is no longer looking back at one another but becoming one another. "Just looking is like dreaming, but dreaming fitfully, tossing and turning not quite knowing what's happening" (Elkin 20). As I mark paper or film, I feel like we are looking at one another not knowing what the next day will turn into, yet there is a comfort in this as we move together.

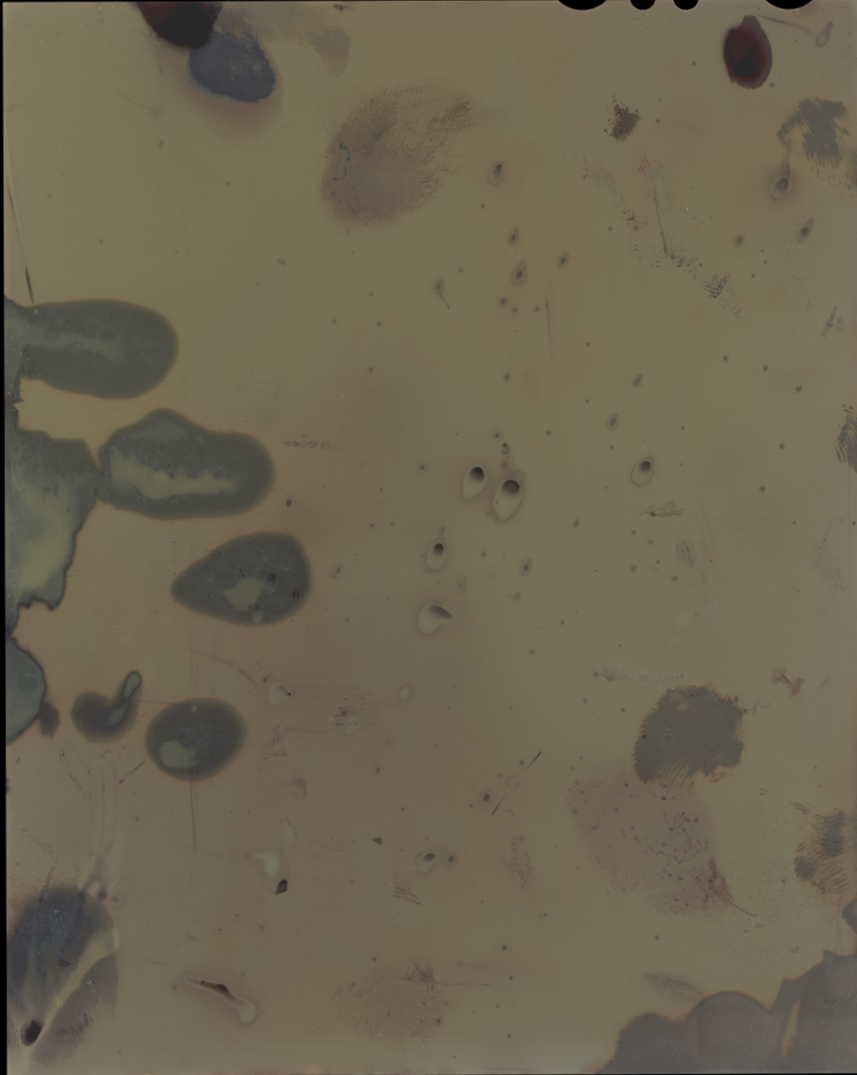


Fig. 19. *Pocket Lumen Print: Body Detail*, Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Emulsion side, large format film exposed as lumen print against author's body over 24 hours (Unfixed).

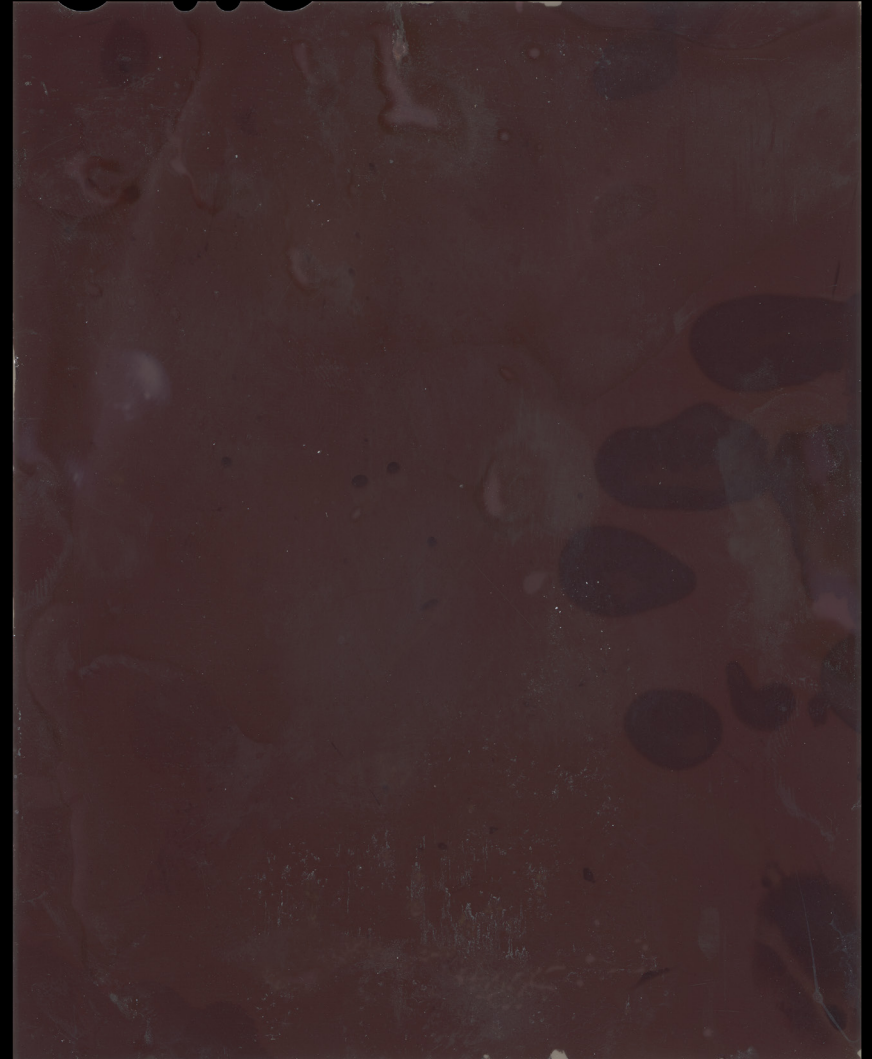


Fig. 20. *Pocket Lumen Print: Body Detail*, Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Backing, large format film exposed as lumen print against author's body over 24 hours (Unfixed).



Fig. 21. *Untitled (Garden)*, Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Contact print using large format black and white film exposed as lumen print, before installation of *Embodied Shadow (Unfixed)*.



Fig. 22. *Untitled (Garden)*, Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Contact print using large format black and white film exposed as lumen print, after installation of *Embodied Shadow (Unfixed)*.

Revisiting *Photography, Narrative, Time*, Greg Battye refers to photographs sitting within the categories of windows and mirrors. Windows often show descriptive qualities that deal with a direct and identifiable connection to the physical world, whereas mirrors suggest a more elegant simplicity in abstraction, where self-expression comes into the frame (Battye 79). I connect to this dichotomy within the different techniques I investigate in image making. Yet I can't physically categorise the images as they blur between the two descriptions. I consider the abstracted lumen prints in *Embodied Shadow*, when light imprints my bodily markings onto the photographic skin, as mirrors (Fig.19-20). Enriched with an unseen detail, these images become abstracted diary entries of 24-hour durations. Yet my work also includes photographs of the sites and people in my personal world (Fig.21-22). Contact printed, with large and medium format negatives, I think of these as windows, as the frame slowly darkens due to no chemical fixer, they move into an unidentifiable state; the distinction between a window and mirror blurs (Fig.23-24). The photograph becomes a sort of umbilical cord between the thing photographed then and our gaze now. I am interested in how these analogue technologies embrace an unknown atmosphere, that moulds into the experience between photograph and artist, further extending the collaboration with space and viewer.

Making one of my abstract lumen prints is not as simple and mechanical as pressing the shutter of a camera. The exposure explores the rapport between two objects as we move and fold into one another (Fig.25). Myself and the photographic emulsion become mirrored reflections of each other. Legibility is no longer a desire in these photos, as I reach into reciprocation of energy through touching and tracing the photographic skin.



Fig. 23. *Untitled (James)*, Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Contact print using large format black and white film exposed as lumen print, before installation of *Embodied Shadow* (Unfixed).



Fig. 24. *Untitled (James)*, Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Contact print using large format black and white film exposed as lumen print, after installation of *Embodied Shadow* (Unfixed).

Fig. 25. *Folded Pocket Print*, Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

8x10 inch gelatin silver paper, exposed as lumen print against author's body over a week, after installation of *Embodied Shadow* (Unfixed).

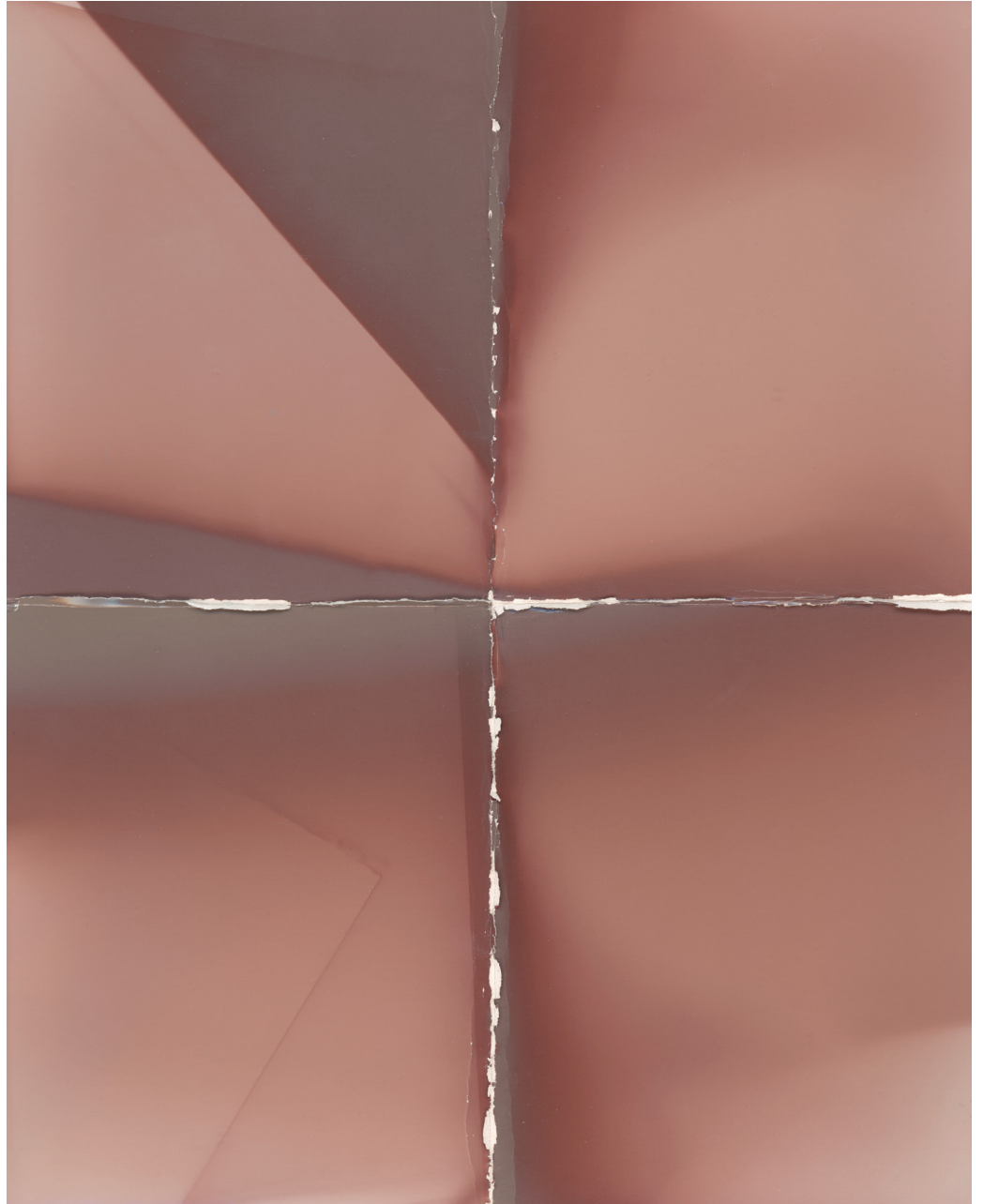


Fig. 26. Justine Varga, *Maternal Line*, 2017, Chromogenic Photograph, 157.0 x 122.0 cm. Courtesy the Artist, Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide, and Tolarno Galleries Melbourne.



Vulnerability and physical touch became accessible to me through first looking into Justine Varga's photographic practice. Justine Varga is an Australian artist who engages with cameraless images often made onto the surfaces of large format sheet film. There is a meditative quality to her description of time within the darkroom, and how long she spends with an image when printing it. Contemplating collaborative relationships I turn to the image *Maternal Line*, 2017 (Fig.26). *Maternal Line* questions the boundaries of photography in how we define a portrait (Varga). The image is documentation of an interaction between Varga's grandmother and a sheet of light-sensitive film. Varga guided her grandmother to continue the already existing movements of testing pens on paper, instead doing it on a piece of sheet film. Utilising fluid movements of her hand accompanied by smears of her saliva, this document became a portrait of Varga's grandmother through exchange and collaboration onto the emulsion. There was a comfort in how her grandmother could continue her automatic movements, rather than the confronting nature of sitting still in front of the lens (Varga). We feel the essence of a personality, and I admire the sense of autonomy in not showing the visual accuracy of the encounter. Leading me into my own collaborative relationship with photographic surface, I draw from Varga's discussion on how we document encounters in the relationships we make.

Varga speaks to the materiality in the photographic object, in photography we tend to view images as providing windows on a subject or place, however, *Maternal Line* depicts abstracted reality, blurring between the concepts of window and mirror. Combining looking through and looking with the photographic image, Varga spends long periods printing in the darkroom compared to the time the exposure is made, getting to know the image intimately and fully.

Within my own processes when working with photographic paper of folding, marking, and simply sitting with the print I begin to know the markings as the paper knows me; a continuous exchange that breaks boundaries of photography through slowness in making. Folds became the only viable way to carry large dimensions of gelatin silver paper against my form. Skin to skin, surface to surface, the paper and I give and withhold stories of our time spent with one another. Ana Paula Pais discusses folding paper in the section ‘Unfolding Potentials’ from the book *Slow Reader: A Resource for Design Thinking and Practice*.

I have been always amazed by how much transformation the act of simply folding a sheet of paper can generate. From a flat surface to a tridimensional body; An extended multiplicity of light being spread. ...From shade to shadow. From a dormant form to an active shape. From a noun to a verb. A premise turned into intent. A whole new breath of reality unfolding by a minimal, but full gesture of intentionality. (Pais 21-22)

In developmental work *Between Pockets*, 2022, three sheets of 20x24 inch gelatin silver paper, folded four times over, hang on a white wall (Fig.27). I find something rebellious in folding these sheets of paper, as this isn’t something that is encouraged to do while working in the photographic medium. As the paper becomes sculptural, I feel the fold allows the exposure to slow down due to the sheet not being able to completely touch the light at one singular time. I become in control of where the light touches the surface. As my body holds crevices, folds, curves and creases the intent of the fold brings an activeness to the otherwise two-dimensional shape. As my body is alongside the folded paper’s body, the emulsion cracks and kinks from movement, leaving a permanent scarring on the object.

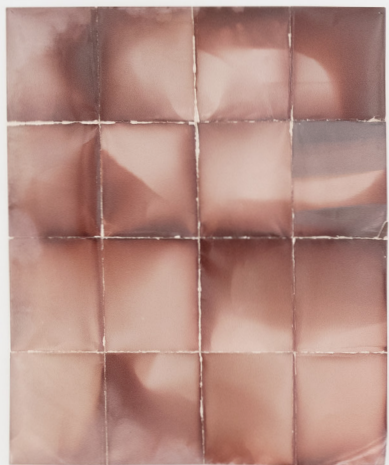


Fig. 27. *Between Pockets*, Personal Photograph by author, 2022.

Three 20x24 inch sheets of gelatin silver paper, exposed each for a weeks duration, folded to fit in artist's pocket during exposure (Unfixed).

Distant Moments, 2022, references the fold in an installation of thirty-four sheets of light sensitive paper, varying in sizes, hung on opposite walls in two tiers (Fig.28). The placement could not be aligned through time taken or day of exposure, as these prints were left undated (Fig.29). All wear marks made of deep touch in this abstracted diary of moments that have overlapped with one another. During this time I developed a routine of repetitively reaching for paper. In this installation the algorithm is inconsistent as I use paper as I encounter it, unpackaging a single sheet at a time. Estimating exposure times at twenty-four hours, some extend or fall short due to forgetting an exact timeframe. As the paper stays without chemical fixture we eventually part ways as the image darkens to a deepened purple. I see my fingerprints leave faster than they were made. Within this process of documenting the mundane movements of touch in my day, the repetition creates comfort.

When using larger sheets of paper in *Between Pockets*, the timing changes. Exposed for a week's duration the fold works with me to document the individual days, as I reopen and refold to have a new surface area directly visible to the sun's touch (Fig.30-31). As I struggle with this inner and outer dialogue of knowing yet not, I begin encountering myself, intertwines, and internal folds. Like Lotus Laurie Kang, my images rid themselves of the very thing I am trying to show. We let go of the collaboration and allowed the photographic process to continue to tell these stories on their own.



Fig. 28. *Distant Moments*, Personal Photograph by author, 2022. (Unfixed)

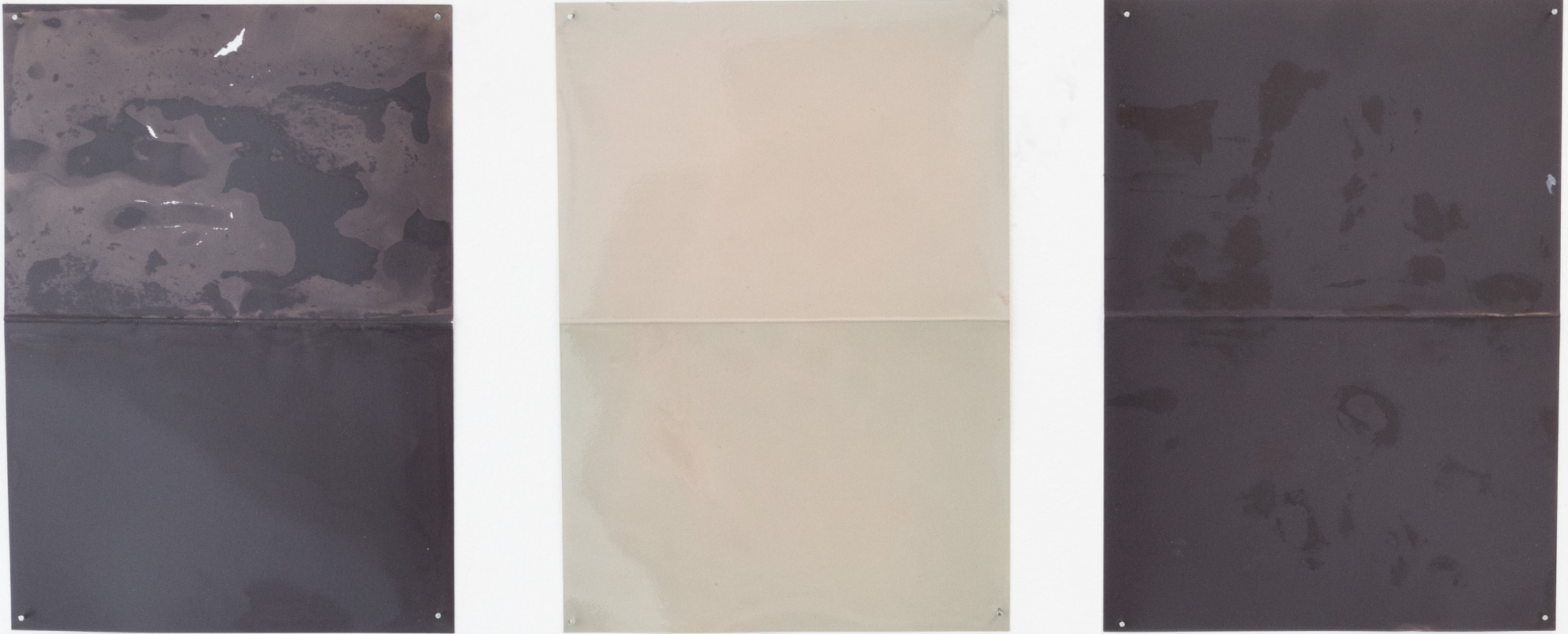


Fig. 29. *Distant Moments*, Personal Photograph by author, 2022.

Detail image, sequence of three sheets of gelatin silver paper
exposed against author's body for 24 Hours (Unfixed).



Fig. 30. *Between Pockets*, Personal Photograph by author, 2022
20x24 inch sheets of gelatin silver paper, exposed each for a weeks duration, folded to fit in artist's pocket, beginning of installation (Unfixed).

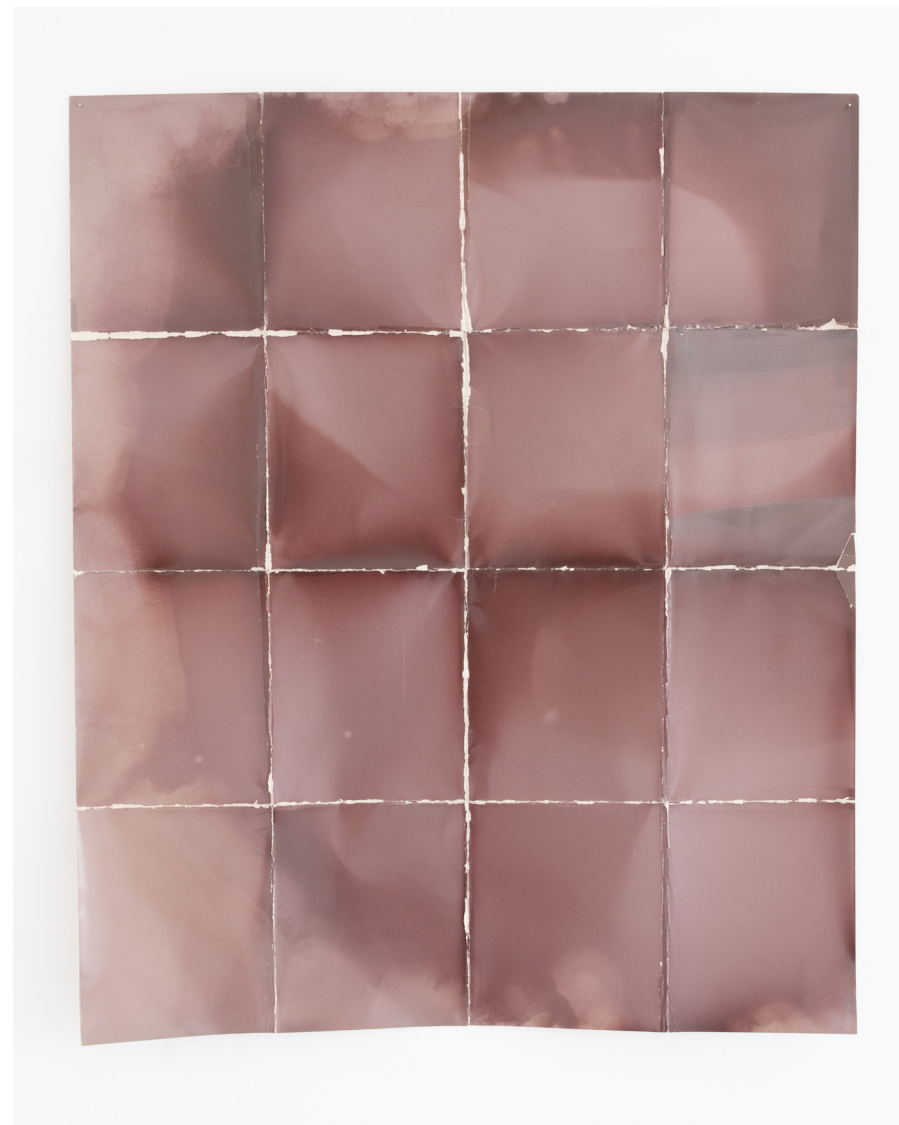


Fig. 31. *Between Pockets*, Personal Photograph by author, 2022.
20x24 inch sheets of gelatin silver paper, exposed each for a weeks duration, folded to fit in artist's pocket, end of installation (Unfixed).

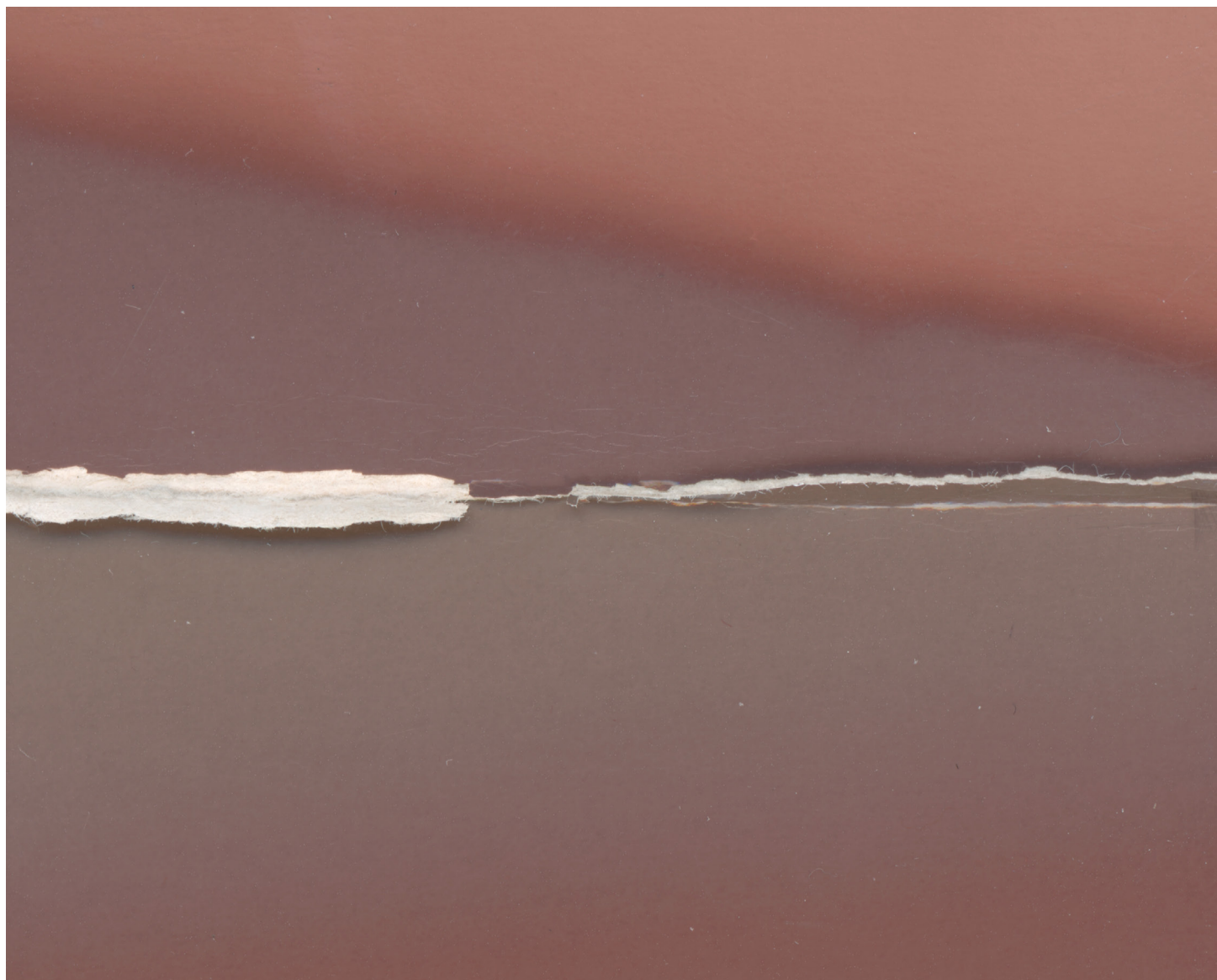


Fig. 32. *Embodied Shadow*, Personal Photograph by author, 2022.

Fold of 8x10 inch pocket exposure, detail of emulsion peeling (Unfixed)



Fig. 33. Lotus Laurie Kang, *In Cascades* (2023). Installation view, Chisenhale Gallery, London, 2023. Commissioned and produced by Chisenhale Gallery, London and the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver. Photo: Andy Keate.

Returning to Kang's exhibition *In Cascades*, I admire the writing around the photographic works. Kang refers to the photos as tannings, she suggests works are blushing and bruising as light and time marks their porous skin (Sung 155)(Fig.33). I see a connection to porous skin in my singular abstracted lumen prints. You can see the peeling in the emulsion of the large folded lumen prints in *Embodied Shadow* (Fig.32). As the inside fibers of the paper become visible, I see my own body in the crevices. As Victoria Sung writes about Kang's work in 'Human, Animal, Vegetable, or Atmospheric Circumstances: Lotus Laurie Kang's Durational Imprints', she references Susan Sontag as these prints are "something directly stenciled off the real" (Sontag qtd. in Sung). Sontag encapsulates Kang's tannings as well as my lumen prints made from both paper and film; stencils that come from physical touch and age.

Fogged:
A Conclusion

The duration of this research has allowed me to appreciate fleeting moments.

Through *Embodied Shadow* I have developed an understanding of the importance that alternative photographic methods hold in my own connection to photography. I have learned through touch and materiality that I can stray from the weight of the ever-growing digital world, grounding myself in encounters that move with fluidity.

Questioning the movements of time, I have become aware of its passing. Ephemerality of photographic materials becomes a metaphor for moving through my day whilst commenting on the stillness of quotidian photography. Every time I return to these photographs, both of touch and encounter, I hold onto what is different and what stays in the fleeting photographic frame.

Embodied Shadow advocates for a slowing down, in a world that seems to be forever in motion. Stepping away from the digital realm and seeing using haptic senses. These moments are human, not to be seen by everyone, the viewing becomes an embodiment of experience and exchange. Whilst engaging photography's poetic irony in its material fragility, the disappearing image alludes to what surrounds the photographic frame by returning back to an empty image.

I think about what these images will look like in a year when the images are completely gone, and I am left with the body of papers. How long will I have these moments of touch, and what iteration of form will the stories develop? The tense that these images situate themselves in is still grey, something up for interpretation. For now, I will say they are in the present, just as our bodies are holding an accumulation of previous marks, scars and stories.

The larger sheets of paper that I have folded and folded again are beginning to tear and fall apart. Their colours of red and beige have turned a deep maroon. The changes now are subtle, I have passed the most intense shift in the paper's skin. The only thing that leaves a notable trace is the fold, becoming and unbecoming of materiality and photographic surface. I connect to the imperfections, the kinks, crevices and cracks. I feel like the paper has opened up to me. This mirror is showing a distorted reflection, yet I continue feeling like I am in conversation with it.

I now have two shelves in my studio, one for photographic paper that is light sealed and one that is boxes of paper that have been opened directly in daylight. One holds significantly more packages than the other. I wonder once I move from this space if the packages will become mixed. Maybe all the paper will become fogged as I move forward in this timeline. I am scared of change, yet am ready to see the next shade of the paper's gradient form.

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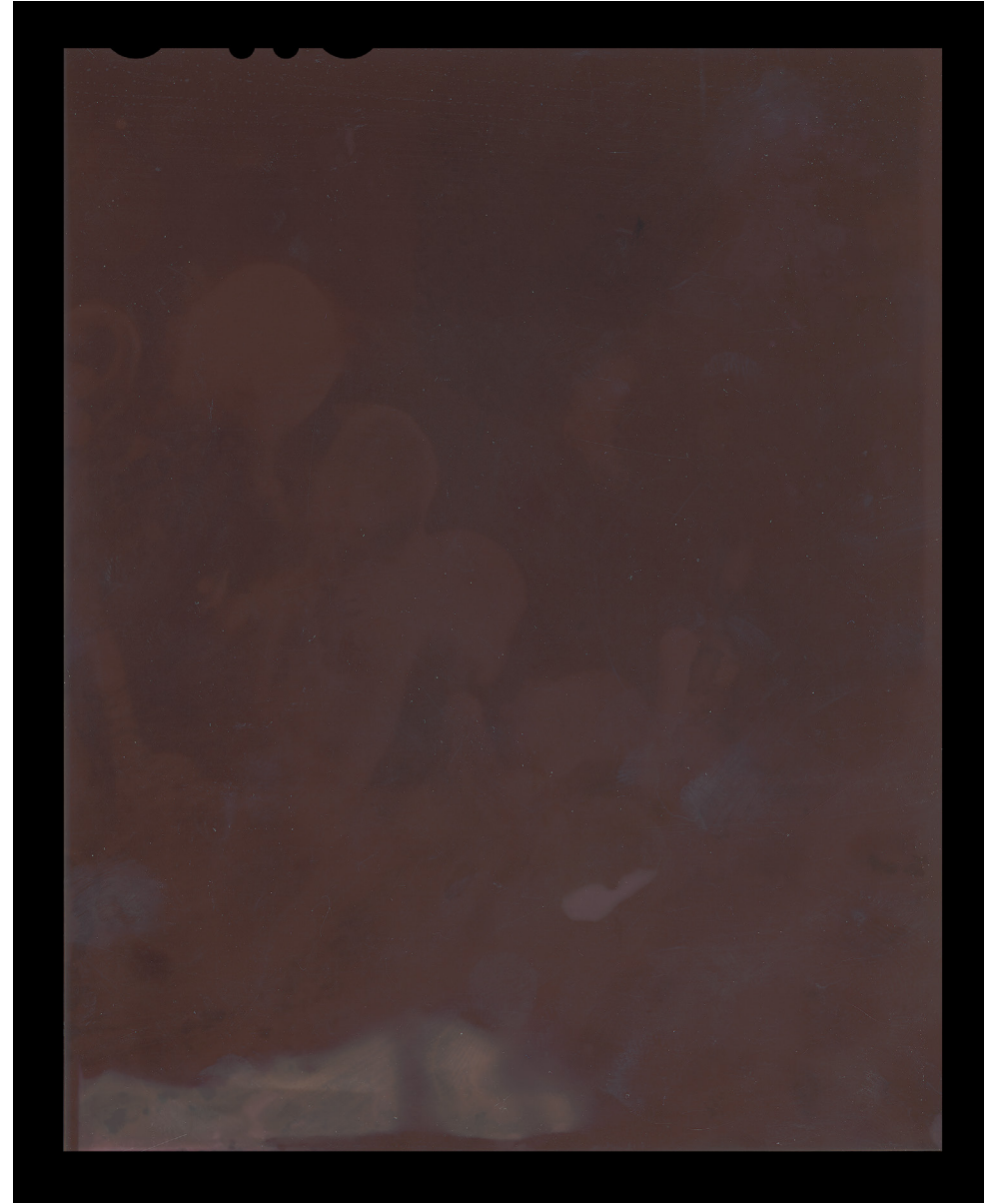
Caroline, thank you for showing me what a lumen print was for the first time in 2019

Additional Image Appendix



Pocket Lumen Print: Body Detail, Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Emulsion side, large format film exposed as lumen print against author's body over 24 hours (Unfixed).



Pocket Lumen Print: Body Detail, Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Backing, large format film exposed as lumen print against author's body over 24 hours (Unfixed).



Embodied Shadow (Test installation 2), Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

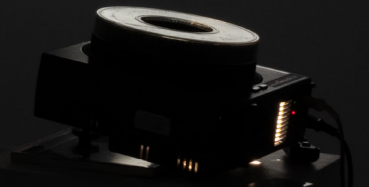
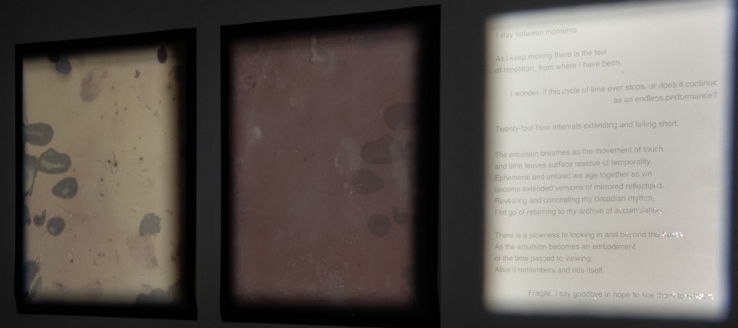
Installation Image.

Detail image, sequence of three contact prints using large and medium format black and white film exposed as lumen prints, text exposed as lumen print(Unfixed).



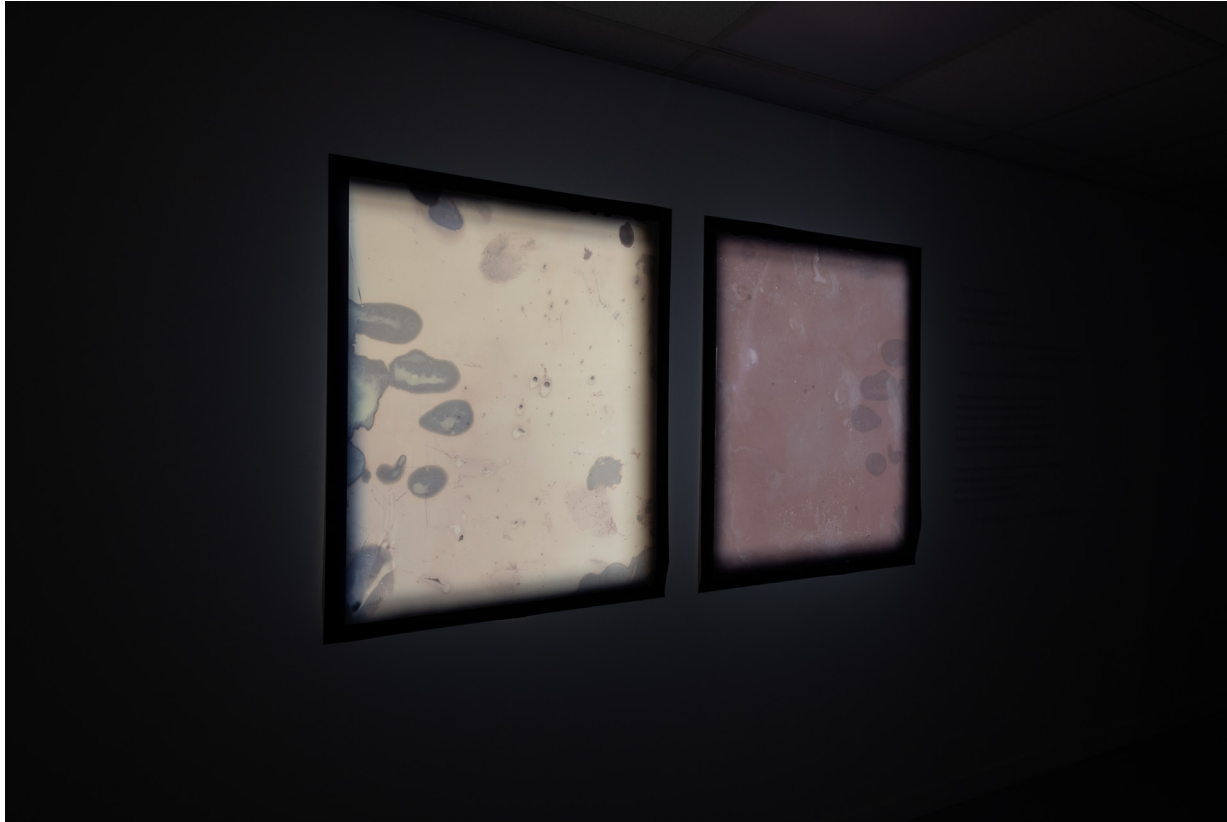
Embodied Shadow (Test installation 2), Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Installation Image.



Embodied Shadow (Test Installation), Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Install image, contact prints, and abstracted photograms on large format film all exposed as lumen prints lit by slide projector (Unfixed). Accompanied by two 44x36 inch inkjet matte prints of scanned pocket exposures on large format, Poetry on adhesive vinyl.



Embodied Shadow (Test Installation), Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Installation image, two 44x36 inch inkjet matte prints of scanned pocket exposures on large format.



Embodied Shadow (Test Installation), Personal Photograph by author, 2023.

Abstracted photograms on large format film all exposed as lumen prints lit by slide projector (Unfixed).