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An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
PhD Fine Arts

at Massey University, Wellington
New Zealand

Susanna Bauer
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*

Abstract

This creative practice research proposes a *fictional archaeology* as a conceptually and methodologically distinct mode of inquiry into the traces of human engagement with the material world, and as an exploration of alternative, non-linear notions of temporality.

The research is situated within a contemporary context, one characterised by its heavily mediated environment and associated shifting experiences of materiality, space and temporality, which linear, chronological narratives seem increasingly inadequate to capture.

An *archaeological imagination*, following Michael Shanks, captures a 'sensitivity' towards material traces, that is applicable across disciplines. It becomes articulated in this research through a material encounter based on physical proximity and a spatial articulation of time.¹

Fictionality, besides indicating the shift of archaeology into art practice, situates this inquiry within a fictional realm, in distinction from other projects anchored in actual archaeological objects and sites. Fictionality further designates an affinity with narrative, as a meaning-making connectivity, which this research explores in non-linear ways, through an emphasis on transformations of material traces.

This affinity becomes also articulated through a conversation with Max Frisch's novel *Man in the Holocene* (1979), and interspersed biographical notes, that accompany this research, and which tether the fictional and abstract character of the project to the particularity of individual narratives. The structural configuration of the exegesis is aligned with the processual, interweaving unfolding of the creative practice.

The project sets out to construct traces referencing architectural remnants, artefacts, inscriptions and fossils, through art processes that employ found materials, model assemblages and spray-painting, combined with photography, video and animation.

The research employs a mode of *material thinking*, which indicates a practical and conceptual development based in processuality, and a direct engagement with materials. Transformational processes form the methodological centre of this project; initiated through material thinking, they are the main strategy by which a non-linear temporal journey of material traces is articulated in the practical work. These

1. Michael Shanks, *The Archaeological Imagination* (Walnut Creek, Calif: Left Coast Press, 2012).

transformations generate pathways across media and dimensions resulting in a suite of art works with different material states, that are indexically linked, but resist direct, linear comparability—they are instead suggestive of a connectivity beyond chronological sequentiality.

A selection of material outcomes of this research has been presented in an installation titled *The Quarry*, at Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand, which is also discussed in this document.

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Prologue

Hardly a breath of wind, quite unusual, bees buzzing around the ‘pollinator attracting’ flowers spread through the vegetable plot. I must have looked up from the garden beds, towards the open back door leading into the kitchen, a rectangle of darkness. There was an otherworldly glare reflecting off the bright green foliage, the bleached out garden chairs, the grey metal roof. It was one of these strangely glistening days that I have only ever encountered in New Zealand, where the sun can be too bright. Ominous the still air. The black interior looming, the backyard suddenly turned, it felt like something had begun to slide; a rift, a vertical tear that was splitting the picture in two. In Haruki Murakami’s 1Q84, the second moon had risen, visible as a pale green silhouette against the sky.² Its presence the sign of a shift, of a parallel reality superimposing, while nothing else appeared altered, at least not visibly.

On the opposite side of the earth, in a remote Swiss alpine valley where nothing much appears changed from the stone ages, a persistent storm rages. Geiser, who is retired and lives alone in a small mountain house, remains cut off from the outside world. He listens to the sound of thunder, and the incessant rain, day after day. As fog obscures the view, his imagination fills in the gaps. Damaged trees, washed out roads, the ground possibly subsiding, a landslide immanent? No escape route out of the valley. The extreme weather event sets shifts in Geiser’s increasingly catastrophising mind in motion, and anxiety and existential fear are gradually infiltrating his well rehearsed isolation.

This is the setting of Max Frisch’s novel *Man in the Holocene*, first published in 1979, a narrative that has been the companion to this art and research project.³

‘A lake, the colour of brown clay, gradually filling the valley, a lake without a name, its water level rising day by day and also during the nights, joining up with the rising lakes in the other valleys until the Alps become an archipelago, a group of rocky islands with glaciers overhanging the sea, impossible to imagine that.’⁴

Such visions could be argued to have become part of a collective imaginary, as apocalyptic scenarios that our minds readily colour in, as prophecies sourced from

2. Haruki Murakami. *1Q84*. (Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, 2009).

3. Max Frisch, *Man in the Holocene: A Story*, 1st Harvest ed, A Harvest Book (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981). First published in German under the title *Der Mensch erscheint im Holozän*, 1979.

4. Frisch, 21.

informational loops reiterating the effects of climate change, that accompany our physical and mental paralysis in the face of ecological disaster.

‘One must be prepared for everything,’ Geiser keeps telling himself.⁵ But how to prepare for the finiteness of one’s own lifetime? For old age and memory loss? How to prepare for one’s disappearance from the world? How to make sense of what happens in the world, in the past and in the present? How to grasp the possibility of the disappearance of the world itself?

Wrestling with the ‘human condition’ is not unique to modernity, or post-modernity, it has occupied the human mind since it has been able to reflect on its own existence. However, the contemporary moment influences how existential questions present themselves, within which contexts they are being experienced, and which frameworks of understanding might be available at that time. This research project seeks to retrace these questions, inflected by experiences of the current moment.

‘In London the sun is shining.’⁶ Tennis. Geiser has access to a single TV channel before the storm cuts the electrical lines. Only reading remains to occupy the mind. Encyclopaedias are being consulted, as Geiser searches within the various histories—human, natural, and geological—for answers to the meaning of human existence.

Encyclopaedias are not only online now, but they are also no longer accepted as the unquestioned authorities on matters. Since *Man in the Holocene* was first published, global connectivity has exponentially multiplied, and information from different and divergent sources characterises the media landscape.

‘The last news reports Geiser heard were bad, as usual, . . . but there is no real reason to suppose that today’s news would have been any better.’⁷ There is always a catastrophe, violence and destruction somewhere. An experience that has become intensely accelerated by the density of information, the immediacy of visual coverage and embedded transmissions that make us live witnesses as events are unfolding.

The contemporary experience of a quotidian ‘here and now’ is being reconfigured by the ‘elsewhere’ continuously merging with it. Geographical and temporal reference points are shifting within a stream of decontextualised information in simultaneous a-synchronicity; a blend of networked proximity and the geographically remote. As his appeal to rationalism, the sciences and history fails Geiser in 1979, more so today,

5. Frisch, 33.

6. Frisch, 20 and 21 (repeat).

7. Frisch, 26.

linear trajectories appear to have become overtaken by the shifting experiences of contemporary temporality.

Geiser's drystone wall has collapsed. 'Debris among the lettuces, lumps of clay under the tomatoes. Perhaps that happened days ago.'⁸ As the material world around him crumbles and erodes, Geiser's certainties in life are also unravelling. His sense of chronological time recedes, as his mind moves into a fluid temporal state, where memory and present seamlessly merge, where all time begins to exist simultaneously in a space of relationality.

This is the constellation that presented itself at the outset of this project.

It began with a sense of disquiet, and an increasing notion of historical vertigo. It began by tugging at the ripples running through everyday reality. And the restless humming of bees.

*

8. Frisch, 7.

I. Introduction: 'Only Humans Know Catastrophes'⁹

I. 1. Proposition

This creative practice research proposes a *fictional archaeology* as a conceptually and methodologically distinct mode of inquiry into the traces of human engagement with the material world, and as an exploration of alternative, non-linear notions of temporality.

Giorgio Agamben considers the *contemporary* in its 'contiguousness with the ruin,' as he proposes an historical conception of the contemporary, that recognises the past as within the present enduring.¹⁰ 'It is in this sense one can say that the entry point to the present necessarily takes the form of an archaeology.'¹¹

Making sense of our individual temporality, implies developing an understanding for the contemporary period lived in, as well as the past. In Te Reo Māori *ka mua, ka muri* signifies 'walking backwards into the future,' which acknowledges the continuity of the past in the present.¹²

In Agamben's interpretation of Nietzsche's notion of 'untimely,' grasping the contemporary however requires a 'non-coincidence' with one's own time,¹³ a being outside of time, in order to recognise the contemporary moment through 'a distance from it.'¹⁴ Agamben's choice of the terms 'ruin' and 'archaeology' furthermore suggests that it is through *material* histories that we might gain access to an understanding of time—both close and distant.

9. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 79.

10. Giorgio Agamben, 'What is the Contemporary?,' in Amelia Groom and Whitechapel Art Gallery, eds., *Time: Marina Abramovic, Giorgio Aamben, Emily Apter . . .*, Documents of Contemporary Art (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2013), 87.

11. Agamben, 87–88.

12. In Walter Benjamin's *On the Concept of History*, the 'angel of history' is getting blown into the future, while looking back at the past. However, other than *ka mua, ka muri*, the angel is blasted, involuntarily, catapulted into the future. Benjamin's image captures the effects of disaster and trauma in the past imploding into the present. Both metaphors, albeit in different ways acknowledge the importance of the past for an understanding of the present, and the future. Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History* (Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), Thesis IX.

13. Agamben, 'What is the Contemporary?,' 82.

14. Agamben, 83.

Agamben's thoughts frame the entry point of this research, which puts forward an art-archaeological approach that examines material traces of the past as repositories of temporality. Archaeology tends to artefacts of the past that have transmigrated into the present. These objects carry this temporal displacement as a strange *being out of time* within them. The research speculates whether by projecting oneself 'within the trace,' it might be possible to assume the trace's viewpoint, looking from a distance at the present, that was the future then. It explores, whether via the trace, such a state of non-coincidence with our own time might become accessible.

While *archaeology* as a scientific discipline is readily identified with the investigation of material traces of the cultural past, the proposition of the term within this research is more closely captured by Michael Shanks's definition of an 'archaeological imagination,' as a 'sensitivity towards traces and remains, memory, time and temporality'¹⁵ that works across disciplines.¹⁶

The archaeologist Laurent Olivier, who has been another influential reference throughout this research, writes that 'the sense of time that archaeologists draw from their conventional understanding of history has been shown to be in contradiction with the sense of time that they have found recorded in artifacts.'¹⁷ As the research progresses, it builds on the affordances of archaeology to channel material temporalities that move beyond the 'linear, . . . chronological continuity' recorded by historiography.¹⁸ The research explores alternative modes of temporal relationality in the art project through constructed traces, and conceptually through the consideration of various concepts of temporality.

Fictionality further specifies the archaeological term by indicating its transition from science to art practice, as well as situating the work explicitly within a fictional realm.

Fictionality also speaks to an affinity with literature that fulfils a particular purpose within this research. Excerpts from *Man in the Holocene* and interspersed biographical notes are threaded through this exegesis document, and intend to ground the project's fictional and abstract content within the particularity of individual spheres of

15. Michael Shanks, *The Archaeological Imagination* (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2012), 25. Shanks is an archaeologist and a proponent of postprocessualism; this will find further mention in chapter II. 6. The Archaeological Imagination.

16. Shanks, 17.

17. Laurent Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time: Archaeology and Memory* (Lanham, Maryland and Plymouth, AltaMira Press, 2011), 33.

18. Olivier, 8.

experience.¹⁹ These narrative threads are generative components within the material make-up of the project.

Furthermore, this project recognises that narrative connectivity is a key to making meaning of archaeological traces of the past. 'The reason people tell stories, and have told stories from the beginning of time [is] to find a shape, a form, in the turmoil of human experience,' in Umberto Eco's words.²⁰ This research proposes that this narrative connectivity is not reliant on linearity, but may build on alternative relationalities instead.

The research focus on *material* traces is contextualised by the current experiential shifts between the immediate physicality of the familiar everyday and the emerging materialities of digital and virtual spheres. The inquiry thus also tends to an evolving notion of what a contemporary materiality might consist of.

*

19. Considered in the sense of 'singular-generic,' where the experience of a particularity becomes expanded by an implicit 'likeness' to similar experiences that are relationally activated in readers/viewers. As suggested by Brian Massumi in Brian Massumi, 'The Thinking-Feeling of What Happens,' *INFLExions* 1 (May 2008): 1–40. http://www.inflexions.org/n1_massumihtml.html. This is explored further in chapter V. 2. 3. Artefacts in the Project.

20. Umberto Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 87.

I. 2. Methodological Overview

Beyond framing this research conceptually, *fictional archaeology* captures a processual methodology that becomes articulated in the project in the imagining, the constructing and the transforming of traces.²¹

Fictional traces are imagined and constructed through a process of *material thinking*, that departs from found objects and materials, and develops conceptual approaches through processes based in material exploration.²²

Transformational processes form the methodological centre of this research project, and initiated through material thinking, they are the main strategy by which a non-linear temporal journey of material traces is articulated in the practical work.

These transformations across media, scale and dimensions in the art work, traverse objects and videos, two-dimensional imprints and animated, time-based sequences. Referred to as *metamorphic transformations*, they describe abrupt, rather than gradual change between states. This discontinuity manifests in material states that, while still indexically connected, exist within different temporal registers, and thus resist linear chronological sequencing.²³ These changes capture the relationship between traces and their origins, as well as the pathways along which these traces might perpetuate.

The associated layering and interweaving of analog and digital processes in this project engages with, and acknowledges, contemporary materiality as in a state of amalgamation and interaction that is continuously evolving and non-static.

Material traces frequently suffer from a degree of unknowability regarding their origin in the past, while retaining a certain referential charge. For this reason they encourage speculative narratives. The research seeks to reproduce this particular affordance of traces and channel a similarly open-ended referentiality.

The project's positioning within a fictional realm, without confinement to any one particular period or site in the 'real' world, allows its constructed traces to purposefully

21. *Processual* as used here refers to process-based art practice, and not to *processual archaeology*, or *New Archaeology*, as a movement in archaeology developed in the 1960's.

22. The notion of *material thinking* as applied in this research is discussed in chapter VI. 2. Material.

23. Beyond the temporal register, the transformations also effect other fields of interpretation—i.e. aesthetic, semiotic—however in this context, the altered temporal rhythms are the primary focus and purpose of the strategy.

negotiate a space between abstraction and referentiality to this end. This particular strategy is intended to let a multiplicity of narrative interpretations arise in viewers.

*

I. 3. Practical Work Overview

A final exhibition titled *The Quarry*, and presented at *Toi Pōneke Gallery* in Wellington, New Zealand, gathered selected practical outcomes of this research. The works in the installation conjointly, rather than individually, explored material-temporal states within the categories of architectural remains, imprints, artefacts and fossilisation.

The Quarry presented four video projections on suspended and freestanding perspex screens, and a display of objects on a table. While the exhibited works aren't titled, I assigned the following working titles for ease of navigation:

Small Scenes—video projection

Sprayograph Scan—video projection

Sprayograph Warp—video projection

Artefacts—object display

Petrifacts—video projection



Figure 1. Susanna Bauer, *The Quarry*, 2018. Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington.
Installation view: *Sprayograph Warp* projection foreground left,
Small Scenes projection on right, *Artefacts* display in background.

Small Scenes is based on footage of sculptural assemblages, made from recycled model making materials, like MDF, Perspex, wood and plasticine on table-tops. Balanced, stacked, or alternatively in phases of collapse, their arrangement is mediated through tightly cropped and close-up camera perspectives. The projected video sequence consists of a montage of footage from a series of such model iterations that reference varying stages of architectural construction or ruin.

These model assemblages were intermittently exposed to applications of black or grey spray paint, which gradually accumulated on the objects and enacted various temporal processes of ageing, decay and destruction. The spray paint also left traces on the paper surfaces beneath and behind the assemblages. These imprints, generated as the shadow images of the three-dimensional objects, are referred to as *Sprayographs* in this project. *Sprayographs* form the basis of both, the *Sprayograph Warp* and *Sprayograph Scan* digital video animations, which transform the two-dimensional imprints spatially and temporally into moving image sequences.

A selection of material remains from the *Small Scenes* assemblages, covered in the layered patina of paint, were displayed on the 'topographical' surface of a large scale *Sprayograph* as *Artefacts* in the installation.



Figure 2. Susanna Bauer, *The Quarry*, 2018. Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington.
Installation view: *Sprayograph Scan* projection in foreground right,
Petrifacts projection in background.

The *Petrifacts* video projection presents a continuous camera pan across a fictional landscape, where boulder-like objects appear and disappear from sight. These irregular oval shapes have other, sharp-angled forms embedded in them that recall the materials visible in *Small Scenes* and in *Artefacts*. *Petrifacts* is a meditation on geological time and an attempt to capture fossilised states.

Visual documentation of these works can be found within the corresponding chapters, as well as in chapter VIII. 'Realm of Connectivity,' which contains additional images relating to the installation. Original versions of the video works, as projected in the exhibition are provided in the Appendix, as well as available online on <http://susannabauer.art>.

*

I. 4. In Conversation

Departing from the contextual constellation laid out in the *Prologue*, this research project developed in an organic manner that entwined materials, processes and conceptual terms, and progressed in cycles, layers, and along multiple trajectories in parallel. Accordingly, this exegesis document will discuss the research in clusters, which group thematic, conceptual and processual considerations into chapters around the particular focal points of the art works presented in the final exhibition.²⁴

Consistent with this approach, a positioning in relation to the field, both theoretically and in relation to art practice, will be integrated within these clusters. Incorporating the literature review in this way is based on the diverse range of works this project finds reference to, due to the various media and forms it engages with.

These clusters are woven together and enveloped by a conversation with the novel *Man in the Holocene*, and interspersed with biographical notes. These texts flow through this exegesis document, and have been part of this research project throughout.

As the research proposition identifies fictionality as one of its main modes of articulation, it seems appropriate that it proceed with a literary companion at its side. There is a connection to *Man in the Holocene*, in both content and form, that traverses the entire research project. As already indicated in the *Prologue*, Frisch's novel operates within a similar context as this research. Themes of human and material temporality, and the meaning that can be derived from the past, individually and collectively, are central to the novel. *Man in the Holocene* has also been relevant to my thinking about the current *contemporary constellation*, in comparison with Frisch's then *contemporary constellation* in 1979. An ambivalence regarding emergent mediated realities and informational flows, the tension between the temporal and historical particularities of spaces near and distant, and the unknowability of the future arising from ecological changes, are certainly nascent, and cast their shadow forward in the novel. It seems that an ominous premonition of the current moment emanates from the narrative.

Structurally the novel has inspired and influenced the development of this research, in particular in regards to its pursuit of temporal non-linearity, and the use of assemblage. Frisch's novel is loosely collaged together from short text fragments, interspersed with clippings from encyclopaedias and history books, handwritten lists

24. I considered, that superimposing a linearity in the document retrospectively would have misrepresented this research process.

and notes. Its temporal sequence is interrupted and non-chronological, as memory and narrative time become intermingled.

The integration of the three textual threads within this exegesis is a form of *assemblage* that echoes the novel's structure, and is linked to the use of assemblage as a mode also within the practical art project.²⁵ The temporal de-construction of the novel has acted as a useful example, relating how narrative might unfold along non-chronological pathways, by following associative, mnemonic trajectories instead.

The project focuses on the personal experience of temporality, and while this experience will be different for every individual, I am using my own story and Geiser's inner monologue as waymarks to anchor particularity in the work and capture a perspective from within, rather than a distanced, aerial view from above.²⁶ A further purpose of the biographical thread is to render some of the idiosyncratic choices and particular interests within this project intelligible, by putting them into the context of my personal history. It is important to note, however, that this project has not been conceived as an illustration of either the novel, or the biographical narrative.

*

This exegesis document proceeds by initially laying out its framework of a *fictional archaeology* in the respective chapters II. Archaeology and III. Fictionality, following this introductory section.

The following four chapters discuss the different clusters of practical explorations that pertain to the art works in the installation: Chapter IV. Ruins tends to notions of architectural remains and the *ruin motif*, as well as focussing on model assemblages, the making of the *Small Scenes* video and aspects of scale.

Chapter V. Fictional Artefacts concentrates on the *Artefacts* display and explores different categories of fictional artefacts in art practice—with a particular focus on cultural contexts.

Chapter VI. Trace and Inscription discusses the processes relating to *Sprayographs*, and their digital transformation into the *Sprayograph Scan* and *Sprayograph Warp* animations exhibited. This chapter is also dedicated to discussing the terms *trace* and *material*, as applied within the research.

25. Assemblage is discussed in chapter IV. 5. Assemblages.

26. The significance of perspective in the research is discussed in chapter IV. 3. Aerial Perspective.

Chapter VII. Metamorphosis and Erosion zooms in on methodological considerations that run across the project, in particular in form of *material thinking* and *metamorphic transformations*. The video work *Petrifacts* within the context of fossilisation and erosion is also discussed in this chapter.

The following chapter VIII. 'Realm of Connectivity' concentrates on notions of temporality, and how these might find articulation within the final installation of the work. This chapter also considers how the individual works operate together within the exhibition.

The final chapter IX. The Quarry: Conclusion presents a summary of this research project, with a particular focus on original contributions to the field.

The main part of the document concludes with the *Epilogue*.

*

II. Archaeology

II.1. *Personal Ruins*



Figure 3. Riegelberg with foundations of *Römerhof* in foreground, 2017.
Digital photograph Susanna Bauer.

Just a short walk from the village I grew up in, is the historic site of a Roman farm house, a Villa Rustica from around 100 CE. It is situated at the foot of the Riegelberg, a low, oblong hill, covered in heather, wild thorny hedges and exposed limestone rock. Looking up from the excavated and restored foundations of the Roman villa, one can see the dark openings of the caves above. They were used as both living spaces and ancient burial grounds—an archaeological dig in 1908 uncovered skulls buried in the floor of the two caves. During my childhood we used to light campfires on the little plateau in front of the cave. The bats never returned after someone smoked them out by burning rubber tyres inside the cave.

The limestone rock is still perfect for scrambling and climbing, the distinct smell of the heathland unchanged, so strangely familiar. Just over the crest of the hill, a fence spans the spur running from north to south, then circling around to the eastern side, at the edge of the deep cavity of the limestone quarry, now decommissioned. An uneasy sensation standing right up close to the fence, a cool draft rising up from below, always chilling. It is a beautiful view from up here, swallows' acrobatics, circling and diving, kites flying high. I wonder whether I might be standing at the exact same spot—I can never not think about it. In the village the quarry is called the Fox Hole.

The small village is only a few kilometres outside a provincial South German town. The circular medieval town wall encloses the colourful dolls houses and the gothic cathedral in the centre, right in the middle of the crater. This sounds fictional and romantic, a hyperbolic fable, but life on the ground is mundane, mentalities are stooped, and the clouds hover in a halo-like circle in the hills, carved out by the meteorite explosion. The most action this place has ever seen. The old fashioned coffee house next to the cathedral proudly displays a signed photograph of Neil Armstrong and his team, who 'trained' in the area in preparation for their trip to the moon.

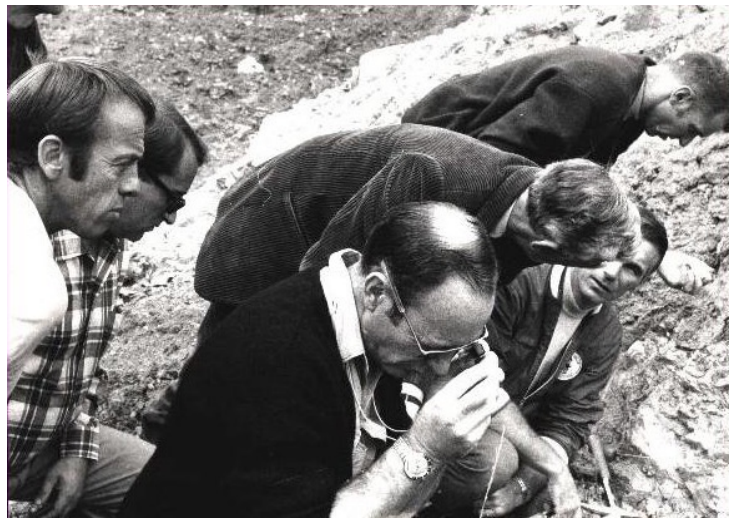


Figure 4. Quarry at Otting / Nördlingen Ries, Germany, 1970.

From the left: Al Shepard, Dr. Fred Hörz (NASA), Ed Mitchell, Prof. Wolf von Engelhardt, Gene Cernan, and Joe Engle. Photograph by Dr. Dieter Stöffler.

(Image reproduced from 'Training at Nördlingen Ries Crater,' in Eric M. Jones, ed., *Apollo 14 Lunar Surface Journal*, <https://www.hq.nasa.gov/alsj/a14/a14ries.html>.

Courtesy of Eric M. Jones and Dr. Dieter Stöffler.)

*

II.2. Archaeology and Art

*The archaeological imagination is rooted in a sensibility,
a pervasive set of attitudes towards traces and remains,
towards memory, time and temporality.*

—Michael Shanks²⁷

Archaeology, according to its most generic definitions, occupies itself with the physical traces of past human cultural activity, present, for example, in form of artefacts, architecture and their ruins.²⁸ To intuit *this* artistic investigation of material traces as a type of archaeology is then not a far-fetched thought. There are however some immediately obvious reservations that need to be taken into consideration. The research is considered as *archaeological* within the context of an art project. This project is not intending to investigate and excavate *actual* cultural artefacts, but instead seeks to artistically imagine and construct such material traces.

The use of the term *archaeological* in this research implies its transfer into the specific art space of the project, and thus necessitates a definition of the conditions and parameters of this transfer. What may be the divergences between archaeology as a scientific discipline and an archaeological approach within art practice? How may the fictional nature of the material traces in this project fit within an archaeological approach? More importantly, what in particular can the archaeological term afford within this research project? This chapter, and the immediately following chapter II. Fiction, will seek to outline the general aspects relating to the proposition of a *fictional archaeology*, as they apply across the research. Subsequent chapters will be dedicated to discussing how this archaeological notion articulates itself in specific ways within the different manifestations of the art project.

As a scientific practice, archaeology is a multifaceted discipline, with its associated institutions, its particular history, and its various internal discourses.²⁹ Throughout this

27. Shanks, *The Archaeological Imagination*, 25.

28. *Dictionary.com*, based on the *Random House Unabridged Dictionary*, 2019, s.v. 'Archeology', <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/archeology>.

29. Ian Alden Russell in his essay 'The Art of the Past: Before and After Archaeology' provides an overview of the history of archaeology from antiquarianism to contemporary archaeology, and its parallels and intersections with art history and art practice. Rather than being exhaustive, it presents a tangible overview of the broad spectrum of practices and positions involved. Russell also describes how archaeology has developed self-critical positions over time, culminating in what is referred to as *postprocessual archaeology*. Ian Alden Russell, 'The Art of the Past: Before and After Archaeology,' in

research, archaeology as science is considered as a point of reference and departure, as far as it informs an archaeological notion within art practice. I will, however, not assume any position in relation to the discourses within the archaeological discipline itself beyond this specific purpose. The research will instead seek to trace the archaeological term through a consideration of relevant art practices, as well as theoretical texts from sources that are vested in expanded and interdisciplinary archaeological perspectives.

A number of exhibitions have positioned themselves at the intersection between art and archaeology in recent times: The exhibitions *Arqueológica* at the Matadero in Madrid 2013, *The Way of the Shovel* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago 2013, and *The Materiality of the Invisible* in Maastricht in 2017, for example, seem to indicate a certain currency of the archaeological topos in contemporary art.

In the leading essay to the exhibition *The Way of the Shovel*, curator Dieter Roelstraete describes the emergence of archaeological processes in art practice as couched within an increasing historical focus becoming articulate in contemporary art.³⁰ He puts forward some specific reasons for this ‘historiographic turn,’³¹ and speaks of a ‘current crisis of history, both as an intellectual discipline and a fundament of contemporary culture more generally.’³² Roelstraete denounces a ‘cultural pathology of forgetting,’ ‘post-ideological fatigue,’ and the ‘depoliticisation of academia,’ as some of the catalysts for the current artistic focus on history.³³ As a consequence artists have felt the need to fill these gaps by taking on the role of chroniclers and memory keepers. Roelstraete further points to a number of significant events that he considers as having dramatically affected contemporary artists’ relationship to the notion of history,—for example, ‘the fall of the Berlin Wall,’ which became the symbol of the collapse of the Eastern Bloc,³⁴ and the attacks of 9/11.³⁵

Dieter Roelstraete, curator, *The Way of the Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary in Art* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 2013). Published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title, organised by the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, November 9, 2013–March 9, 2014, 296–313.

30. Dieter Roelstraete, ‘Field Notes,’ in Roelstraete, *The Way of the Shovel*, 14–47. Roelstraete has been engaged with archaeological tendencies in contemporary art for some time, as for example with the exhibition *The Archaeologists*, Kraichtal, Germany 2009, and Dieter Roelstraete, ‘The Way of the Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary in Art,’ *e-flux journal*#4 (March 2009), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/04/68582/the-way-of-the-shovel-on-the-archeological-imaginary-in-art/>.

31. Roelstraete, *The Way of the Shovel*, 39.

32. Roelstraete, 31.

33. Roelstraete, 31,33.

34. Roelstraete, 33.

35. Roelstraete, 37.

In 1989, in this small provincial town in the south of West Germany, far away from the divided city, I was sitting out my final year at high school, as a history major. My brother, who lived in Berlin at the time, was one of the first to venture across the rubble over to the other side. My grandmother had fled from Dresden in Eastern Germany in the 1960's, hiding with her two children inside a couple of crates, just months before the Wall was built. My mother and her were crying on the phone over the news. It was the most surreal experience, I could not make any sense of it. As long as I had been alive the Wall had existed, my grandmother's stories had been distant mythologies.

Laurent Olivier, who re-interprets archaeology as a form of *memory practice* in *The Dark Abyss of Time*,³⁶ frames the historical crisis,³⁷ triggered 'by the cataclysms of the twentieth century,' in slightly different terms: 'the past has become unintelligible, and the promise of progress that the future supposedly held has fallen away.'³⁸ He describes our contemporary moment as a 'generalised present . . . , with neither a "before" nor an "after".'³⁹ Shanks speaks of 'the loss of the past, associated with changes in the way history itself is conceived and experienced.'⁴⁰ What both Olivier and Shanks express here, is that the traditional modes of historiography's relating to past events do no longer hold the meaning-making power they commanded throughout earlier periods of modernity.

As archaeologists, both Olivier and Shanks position archaeology as an alternative mode for an investigation of the past, that differs distinctly from historiography.⁴¹ Archaeology's focus is from the outset of a material, not a verbal nature, which Olivier frames appropriately: 'Whereas history gathers first-hand accounts that are often contradictory and compares them, archaeology brings and fits together *matter* that has often been scattered far and wide.'⁴² The material trace, as the object of archaeology, exists through a direct physical contact with a past temporal event, and thus presents a state *still unmediated* by historical narrative. While the material record may appear

36. Memory practice is also a term used by Shanks, see Shanks, *The Archaeological Imagination*, 36.

37. Roelstraete, *The Way of the Shovel*, 33.

38. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 76.

39. Olivier, 76. This resonates with the postmodern notion of the *End of History*. For a further discussion of this topic, see Simon Malpas, 'Postmodernity and the "End of History": Fukuyama and Baudrillard,' in *The Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 2004), 89–96. Malpas quotes Keith Jenkins: 'the peculiar ways in which the past was historicised (was conceptualised in modernist, linear and essentially metanarrative forms) has now come to an end of its productive life; the all-encompassing "experiment of modernity" . . . is passing away into our postmodern condition,' 89.

40. Shanks, *The Archaeological Imagination*, 32.

41. Shanks, *The Archaeological Imagination*, 36, and Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 18.

42. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 17–18.

(more) authentic, whether and how these traces might speak for themselves, and whether histories might become implicated in this 'speaking,' will form part of the investigations of this research. This research certainly proposes an archaeological methodology in pursuit of a strategy different from historiography.

*

Despite sharing this general contextual background with the art practices exhibited, I could gather only limited insight from the curatorial positions in the above mentioned recent exhibitions, in regards to determining the particular parameters of the archaeological term within art practice. *The Way of The Shovel* casts its net of reference wide and assembles a broad range of practices, loosely connected by a shared interest in the past.⁴³ Archaeological strategies appear thus subsumed within a general historical pursuit, which eclipses the differences between an historical and an archaeological approach.

The exhibition *The Materiality of the Invisible* was dedicated to archaeologically oriented art works, including collaborative initiatives between archaeological institutes and artists.⁴⁴ Curator Lex ter Braak's introductory essay, however, is testimony to a limited conceptual framing of the exhibition. He writes that 'the contemporary archaeologist and the contemporary artist . . . are concerned with making hidden things visible,'⁴⁵ and that both 'dig beneath the familiar surface to expose hidden layers.'⁴⁶ Ter Braak misses the point, however, that as materially anchored practices, for both art and archaeology, visibility is not the primary focus. He employs the metaphor of 'digging' as a main pathway of correlation between art and archaeology, but doesn't use the opportunity to explore meaningful connections, or contradictions, beyond the metaphorical.

Similarly, while Virginia Torrente's introduction to the exhibition *Arqueológica*, elaborates on numerous projects and art practices, it unfortunately provides little more

43. This will become more apparent with the discussion of some selected works further along in this chapter, and throughout the document.

44. The exhibition was an expansion on a longterm collaboration between six artists and several archaeological institutions under the title NEARCH.

45. Lex ter Braak, curator, *The Materiality of the Invisible* (Maastricht, Netherlands: Van Eyck, Marres and Bureau Europa, 2017), 3. Published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title, organised by and presented at Van Eyck, Marres and Bureau Europa, Maastricht, August 30, 2017–October 29, 2017.

46. Ter Braak, 4.

clarity on the particular nature of a transfer of an archaeological term into art.⁴⁷ Overall, the curatorial essays, while informative, barely touch on the fact that a shift of terminology from science to art might require a moment of reflection.

In summary, a review of the curatorial concepts of these recent exhibitions provided relevant contextual framing that finds resonance in this research. However, any sufficiently precise definition of the archaeological term in art appeared inhibited by the broad range of strategies the various art works exhibited. I considered, that more insight might be gained by examining individual projects, and by comparing them with the research interests, thereby gradually circling in on the particular notion of archaeology pursued in this art project.

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47. Virginia Torrente, curator, 'In Debt to Archaeology,' in *Arqueológica* (Madrid: Roto Madrid, 2013), 3–9. Published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title, organised and presented at the Matadero, Madrid, January 25, 2013–May 9, 2013.

II. 3. Anne & Patrick Poirier

While Roelstraete underlines the currency of contemporary art practices' historical (and included within it archaeological) focus, it would be erroneous to see these works in isolation. Just as the origins of the historical discontent are to be found deeply seated within modernity, in particular the second half of the twentieth century, so do archaeological notions in art begin to articulate themselves already in the 1960's and 70's.

The exhibition *Spurensicherung. Archäologie und Erinnerung* at the Kunstverein in Hamburg from 1974, gathered a range of artists with a shared focus on traces and remnants from this period. The title translates to 'Securing of Traces. Archaeology and Memory.'⁴⁸ The exhibition sought to introduce the term of *Spurensicherung* as a new and original concept that introduced an archaeological notion within art.⁴⁹

The exhibition's curator Günter Metken mentions a number of conditions that resonate with those put forward by Roelstraete as defining factors of the contemporary moment. Metken speaks of a loss of historical memory, in particular within the industrialised countries, to which the participating artists react by zooming in on the marginal, overlooked aspects of history.⁵⁰ He also comments on the absence of an historical consciousness⁵¹ and the effects of an increasingly mediated environment on artistic production.⁵² Gathered by what Agamben described as 'the destruction of experience' in 1978, these sensibilities must be considered as certainly emergent in the 1970's.⁵³

48. *Spurensicherung* is also the German term commonly used for forensics. This will be touched on in chapter II. 6. Material Testimony.

49. The works were not uncontroversial at the time. See for example the reviews Gottfried Sello, 'Kunstkalender,' *Die Zeit*, 26 April 1974, <https://www.zeit.de/1974/18/kunstkalender/komplettansicht>; and 'KUNST: Erinnerung in der Kiste,' *Der Spiegel*, 16, 1974: 120–121, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-41722123.html>.

50. Günter Metken, *Spurensicherung: Kunst als Anthropologie und Selbsterforschung* (Köln: DuMont, 1977), 11 and 17–18. Published in conjunction with the exhibition *Spurensicherung: Archäologie und Erinnerung*, organised and presented by the Hamburger Kunstverein, 1974.

51. Metken, 64.

52. Metken, 16.

53. Giorgio Agamben, *Infanzia e storia. Distruzione dell'esperienza e origine della storia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1978), cited in Georges Didi-Huberman, *Überleben der Glühwürmchen*, trans. Markus Sedlaczek (Paderborn: Fink, 2012), 68. As already mentioned earlier, also *Man in the Holocene* echoes these concerns in 1979.

As artists have continued to respond to these conditions, I contend that the means by which they do so have changed over time, however. Among the artists exhibited in *Spurensicherung*, I found most relevant Anne & Patrick Poirier, whose practice has had an enduring involvement with archaeology, architecture, ruins, and models.

One of the Poirier's early projects in 1972 was based on the archaeological site of the ruined city of Ostia Antica in Italy. In response to the site, the artists created hand drawn plans and an expansive clay model of the ruin.⁵⁴ The work traces a psychogeography of personal experience as a form of 'private archaeology,' as it fluidly merges the actual ruin and the imaginary world of the artists' memory.⁵⁵

The ancient sites initiate an internalising process, that expresses itself throughout the Poiriers' oeuvre. By expanding an archaeological methodology of recording cultural artefacts to tracing personal experience and memory, archaeology becomes a means for an investigation of self.⁵⁶ Such introverted perspectives articulate themselves in similar ways in other art works exhibited in the *Spurensicherung* exhibition—for example, in Charles Simonds's fictional mythologies of a *Little People* that stage a similarly quiet and personal poetic of ruins.⁵⁷

Metken identifies this inward journey as an act of withdrawal from the external world of the present,⁵⁸ and Roelstraete observes similar tendencies in today's practices: '[the] historiographic turn in contemporary art, then was also a turning away from a present that art, as a whole, felt utterly powerless to change—or, more prosaically, a present that art was utterly uninterested in being a part of.'⁵⁹ Does this mean that the archaeological in art is both a compensatory measure and a form of escapism?⁶⁰

I am aware of the potential pathos of personal memory, which combined with

54. Dimensions of the model were 11.4 x 5.75 meters.

55. Metken, *Spurensicherung*, 62.

56. Metken, 12 and 62.

57. See the series *Dwellings* (1975). It is probably not by accident that both the Poiriers and Simonds work with miniature models—a format which according to Susan Stewart is an expression of an internalising perspective. See Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2007). This is discussed in depth in chapter IV. 6. *Small Scenes*.

58. Metken considers this tendency at the time as a reaction to the disillusionment after the 1968's failed to achieve real change, as well as a counter movement to the extroverted articulations of pop art at the time. Metken, *Spurensicherung*, 11.

59. Roelstraete, *The Way of the Shovel*, 39.

60. Metken in fact claims that the art works in *Spurensicherung* presented a critical stance against escapism. Metken, *Spurensicherung*, 18.

romanticised notions regarding the past can become exactly that—an introspective mode that seeks to exchange the fraught present with an evocation of a past that appears still authentic and whole. While this project incorporates some personal experiences, they fulfil a very particular role, as explained earlier, and the art work is not conceived as a materialised version of my own memory.⁶¹

The projects exhibited in *The Way of the Shovel*, in my view, present a noticeable distinction to the introverted and contemplative mode of the works exhibited in *Spurensicherung*. These more recent artistic positions appear to present the private as integrated within the public.⁶² Derek Brunen, for example, in the work *Plot 2007*, is filmed while digging his own graveyard plot—a potentially very intimate gesture that is framed as a public performance with the audience being cast as witnesses. Contemporary artists lay their investigative paths open, and present their work in a non-hierarchical manner that seems to suggest that anyone could have taken the same route. Many of these works intentionally demystify the unique agency of the artist and address their audiences in explicitly egalitarian ways, which in my view is an important shift that breaks with the pathos of some of the works from earlier periods.

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In an interview recorded in the context of the large retrospective exhibition *Danger Zones* at the Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne in 2017, Anne Poirier described their early practice: 'Nous avons commencé à travailler sur les ruines antiques mais seulement comme métaphore et non comme modèle.'⁶³

A metaphorical interpretation is often the obvious pathway of a transference of the archaeological term into an art context. Both through its characteristically expressive activities and the exoticism of the objects of its investigations, archaeology provides an imagery that affords metaphorical associations. 'The archaeological process,' as Shanks describes it, 'has long proved evocative, lending itself to many fertile associations and metaphors: the archaeologist as detective, fieldwork and discovery, digging deep to

61. See chapter I. 4. In Conversation.

62. I am merely identifying a tendency here, as a generalisation, which is easily contradictable by singling out particular examples to the contrary, of course. It is worth considering here, that the distinctions between private and public have become blurred in recent decades through reality TV shows, blogs and social media in general.

63. 'We began to make work about antique ruins, but solely as a metaphor, not as a model' (my translation). MAMC Saint-Etienne Métropole, *Rencontre Avec Anne et Patrick POIRIER*, interview from November 27, 2017, video, 11:30. On occasion of the exhibition *Danger Zones* at the Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Saint-Étienne Métropole, July 2, 2016–January 29, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WW20EsioE3s>.

find what may provide a key to contemporary concerns.⁶⁴ Ian Alden Russell considers the archaeological metaphor as a particularly modern phenomenon, as it provides an ideal vehicle for modernity's search for authenticity and 'depth.'⁶⁵

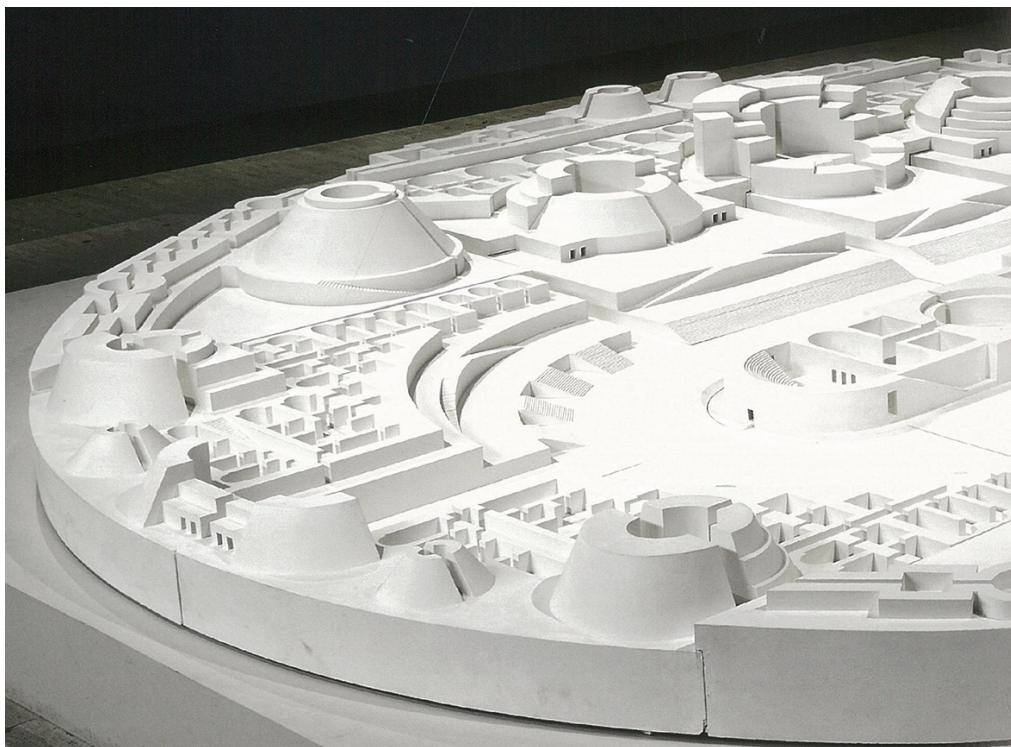


Figure 5. Anne & Patrick Poirier, *Mnemosyne*, 1990. Detail.
Wood, acrylic paint, 7 x 5.5 meters. Collection of the artists.

(Image reproduced from Anne Poirier, Patrick Poirier, and Lóránd Hegyi, *Anne & Patrick Poirier: Danger Zones* [Paris: Éditions Dilecta, 2016], 150–151.

© Anne Poirier/ADAGP. Copyright Agency, 2019.)

The association of the archaeological site with the human mind is another recurrent metaphorical thread. In the series *Mnemosyne* from 1990–91, the Poiriers superimpose the archaeological site with the topography of memory, by casting ruin models in the shape of the human brain.⁶⁶ Memory, as a generative aspect of the mind and the

64. Shanks, *The Archaeological Imagination*, 22. The romantic connotations of archaeology converge and overlap at times with those of a *ruin aesthetic* popular in the eighteenth century, which will be explored in chapter IV. Ruins.

65. Russell, 'The Art of The Past,' 306.

66. The *Mnemosyne* series consists of small plaster and bronze sculptures, where the ruins are set in an open oval shape corresponding to the scale of a human skull. Other versions, like the one shown in figure 5, are constructed at much larger scales, but follow the same principle.

subconscious, thus links the archaeological and the psychological terrain.⁶⁷

Olivier, who attends to the connection between archaeology and memory in depth, subtly reverses the direction of the metaphorical trajectory. The author draws a parallel between the constituent processes of human memory and the physical inscription of traces into matter, which he describes as a form of 'material memory.'⁶⁸ Artefacts are thus interpreted as 'memory objects . . . in which time is inscribed,' or 'the memory of a moment in time is recorded.'⁶⁹

Walter Benjamin, whose writing is rich in metaphor, and who is also an important source for Olivier, is often cited in the context of history, archaeology and art. In a much referenced quote, Benjamin writes: 'Memory . . . is the medium of that which is experienced, just as the earth is the medium in which ancient cities lie buried. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging.'⁷⁰

Sigmund Freud, himself an avid collector of artefacts, elaborated on the correlations between the archaeological process of stratigraphic exploration and psychoanalytic investigation into submerged layers of the subconscious.⁷¹ From the late nineteenth century archaeology 'provided an innovative representation of "topography" . . . that offered the layered site as an analogy for psychic processes,' the artist Pedro Barateiro explains.⁷²

The well established nature of this metaphor is illustrated by the fact that several artists, whose works involve the history of psychoanalysis, were included in the exhibition *The Way of the Shovel*. Shellburne Thurber's photographic series captures analysts' practice rooms in ways that evoke comparisons with Freud's original rooms as the 'archetypal' site of psychoanalysis.⁷³ Jason Lazarus's work, also photographic, *Above Sigmund Freud's Couch*, 2008, depicts the space where ceiling and wallpapered wall meet, thus shifting the emphasis—from the familiar view of the couch from the

67. A notion that the artists explicitly mention. MAMC Saint-Étienne Métropole, *Rencontre Avec Anne et Patrick POIRIER*.

68. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 3. *Material memory* is a term commonly referring to a permanent alteration of material characteristics, or appearance effected by physical force.

69. Olivier, 132.

70. Walter Benjamin, 'Excavation and Memory,' in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 2*, part 2 (1931–1934), 'Ibizan Sequence,' 1932, ed. by Marcus Paul Bullock, Michael William Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 576.

71. Russell, 'The Art of The Past,' 305–306.

72. Pedro Barateiro, 'Why Wearing a Hat,' in Torrente, *Arqueológica*, 22.

73. Thurber's series (2000) captures consultation rooms in New England and in Buenos Aires. Roelstraete, *The Way of the Shovel*, 232–237.

analyst's perspective—to the perspective of the patient.⁷⁴ I wonder however, whether Thurber and Lazarus themselves consider their work as situated within an archaeological field of reference, or whether this is an interpretation placed on the work by the curator.

The metaphorical power of the archaeological trope is part of its attraction and cannot be ignored, however, popular metaphors can become reductive equations that eclipse multifaceted interpretation, or in this context the open-minded experience of an art work. In distinction to the Poiriers' and many other art practices, this research seeks to dilute these established metaphorical connotations with the implicit and unexpected affordances of a fictional archaeology instead.⁷⁵

Danger Zones also included several of the Poiriers' more recent projects. I was particularly interested in two works that capture ruins of an imagined present, or future past, in contrast to the earlier works which delve into antiquity. *2235 Apr. J.-C.* and *Exotica* are futuristic, post-apocalyptic visions of urban architectural scenes. Both works consist of large floor model displays in monochrome black of eclectic modernist and futurist architecture, modelled in great detail. *2235 Apr. J.-C.* is a scene that appears abruptly frozen in time, with planes suspended in mid-air, and cars abandoned in the middle of the road. Moss growth and small amounts of rubble are the quiet signs of decay that indicate a passage of time.⁷⁶

74. Roelstraete, *The Way of the Shovel*, 164–165.

75. The different ways in which archaeology is interpreted in this research will be discussed further in this chapter, as well as in the context of the individual artworks produced.

76. A quote by Herman Broch is installed in neon writing above the model: 'Un monde qui se fait sauter lui-même ne permet plus qu'on lui fasse le portrait' (a world that is blowing itself up can no longer be portrayed). According to the artists, this quote is used to 'evoke our contemporary suicidal world' (evoque notre monde suicidaire). (My translations). MAMC Saint-Étienne Métropole, *Rencontre Avec Anne et Patrick POIRIER*.

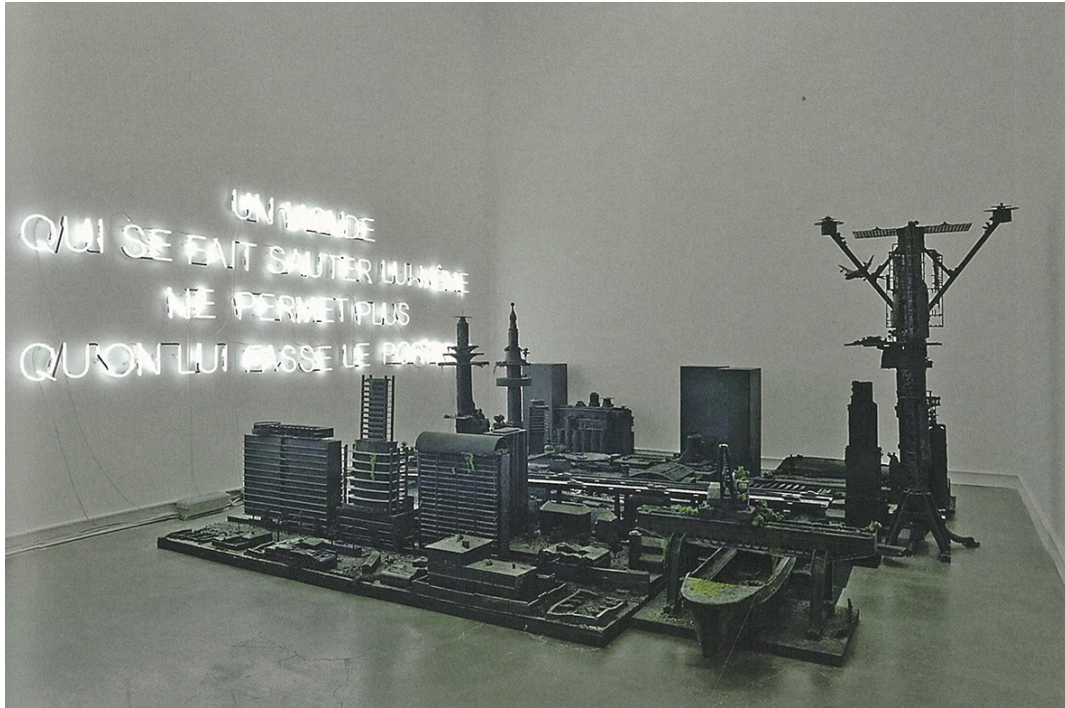


Figure 6. Anne & Patrick Poirier, *2235 Apr. J.-C.*, 2001.
 Reclaimed materials and black paint, variable dimensions. Collection of the artists.
 (Image reproduced from Poirier, Poirier, and Hegyi, *Anne & Patrick Poirier*, 17.
 © Anne Poirier/ADAGP. Copyright Agency, 2019.)

Exotica, by contrast, captures a moment of action. While the Poiriers' earlier models are uninhabited, this work depicts a 'civil war,' with toy guerrilla fighters engaged in combat across the cityscape.⁷⁷ The scene is not so much a ruin, as it is a site of destruction unfolding. Archaeological connotations recede, as the artists' focus shifts in this work from the materiality of traces towards the narrative potential of the tableau vivant.

The aesthetic of both architecture and figures recalls popular sci-fi games, comics and films, and, through this appropriation, in my view, the work seems to quote these sources rather than presenting an original vision itself. Due to the figurative style and minute detail, both works do not leave much room for ambiguity. By contrast, the conscious use of abstraction in this research, is intended to enable a multiplicity of readings, without dissolving referentiality entirely. Thus, despite working with contemporary and fictional, rather than actual, antique ruins, these works have less in common with my own approach to archaeology after all.

77. MAMC Saint-Étienne Métropole, *Rencontre Avec Anne et Patrick POIRIER*.

In the 'Salle des mémoires englouties' (Room of Engulfed Memories), viewers encounter a landscape of charred and partially submerged ruins, that appear to float on black liquid like islands.⁷⁸ In this work titled *Construction IV*, the charcoal model triggers dark connotations.⁷⁹ Nothing disturbs the ruins' mirrored reflections on the inky liquid surface, a scene deadly still—extinguished. This is not the site of gradual decay over time, but one of violent annihilation. A firestorm ravaged this landscape, with singeing hot winds and billowing smoke blinding the sight. The material presence of charcoal and liquid fuse in the affect of this work, and despite experiencing this work solely through images, I can *smell* the wet ashes.



Figure 7. Anne & Patrick Poirier, *Construction IV* (*Domus Aurea* series), 1977.
Water, wood, charcoal, 17 x 6 meters. Collection FRAC Bretagne.
(Image reproduced from Poirier, Poirier, and Hegyi, *Anne & Patrick Poirier*, 127.
© Anne Poirier/ADAGP. Copyright Agency, 2019.)

The liquid between the ruins creates a spatial interruption that metaphorically signals the absences inherent in the material remains. A sedimentary layer of discontinuity covers the seafloor between the ruins, suggestive of the temporal non-linearity characteristic of archaeological traces.⁸⁰

78. Translation from Poirier, Poirier, and Hegyi, *Anne & Patrick Poirier*, 126.

79. This work was originally made in 1977 and reinstalled for the retrospective.

80. This notion of discontinuity will be discussed in chapter VIII. 5. Discontinuity.

Anne Poirier explains the work as ‘a mixture of architectures from our memory of the past.’⁸¹ Reduced to generic, abstract shapes of block walls, arches, and cylindrical towers, the work thus becomes an *archetype* of a ruin. An underlying archaeological sensibility foregrounds materiality and traces, without fixing an unequivocal referential relationship to a distinct historical period in time. The temporality emergent in the work is free floating and encourages speculative interpretations. In *Construction IV*, the artists’ interests in the metaphorical potential of memory and ruin, appear to entwine into a poetic reflection on temporality itself. This work is closest related to this research project, where the use of abstraction is intended to work in similar ways towards open-ended temporal possibilities, that are not reducible to a sequence of ‘before’ and ‘after.’



Figure 8. Susanna Bauer, *Heart of Darkness*, 2007. Video still.⁸²

81. MAMC Saint-Étienne Métropole, *Rencontre Avec Anne et Patrick POIRIER*.

82. In 2007, I built a model labyrinth from charcoal as a film set, through which the camera travelled at ground level, in a continuous motion. In the installation *Heart of Darkness*, this video was projected onto a tarred canvas, hung from the 4m ceiling to the floor. Impossible to forget the pungent smell of tar in the space. *Heart of Darkness* is a work which I now understand as a precursor to this research project. It also shows some shared sensibilities, both materially and aesthetically, with Poiriers’ *Construction IV*.

In summary, while there are explicit convergences between the Poiriers' practice and this project—the interest in archaeology, ruins, and models, for example—the differences pointed out are also numerous. I will here additionally mention two that appear significant. Despite their fictionalising tendencies, the Poiriers' early projects are anchored in actual archaeological sites, like Ostia Antica, which is an important distinction to this art project that constructs scenes that are entirely fictional.

The Poiriers' model reconstructions suggest a certain monumentality through their expansiveness and great amount of detail, however, they remain ultimately contained, as the audience can observe them in their entirety as objects. The viewers' physical position in relation to the models remains stable, and their perspective is constructed as a privileged, omnipotent overview—from the outside and from above. By contrast, in the *Small Scenes*, the model assemblages are mediated purely through images that avoid to fix the scenes' boundaries and scale. In this way the research intends to capture perspectives from *within* that render viewer positions ambiguous.⁸³

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83. Image mediation and viewer perspective will be discussed further in chapter IV. Ruins.

II. 4. Robert Smithson

Robert Smithson's practice has been a recurrent point of reference as the research has moved through various phases.⁸⁴ His practice is relevant through materially oriented site interventions that are referencing archaeological processes, as well as through his excursions into industrial hinterlands, abandoned quarries and wastelands as the sites of contemporary ruins.

I will in the following focus on selected art works by Smithson in the context of archaeology, while exploring his writings on ruins and quarries later in this document.⁸⁵ Many of his projects during the 1960's and early 1970's expressed an archaeological sensibility at a time when most art practices were elsewhere engaged.⁸⁶ His practice constitutes an interesting comparison to the perspectives exhibited in *Spurensicherung*, which it precedes.

Smithson's engagement with archaeology is not focussed on archaeological metaphors, or on channeling personal memory—as Anne and Patrick Poirier enact it. It is instead conceptually driven by Smithson's interest in time,⁸⁷ which he perceives as expressed through materiality: 'Smithson understood history as material residue, an ever-accumulating remainder of time.'⁸⁸ In this way his thinking is more closely aligned with this research, which also considers temporality as it is incorporated within the material world.

Smithson's *Yucatán Mirror Displacements*, a series of pseudo-archaeological field works from 1969, consisted of several site-specific temporary interventions, involving natural materials, the placing of mirrors, and photographic documentation in Yucatán. The project references a nineteenth century archaeological excursion by John Lloyd

84. Robert Smithson (1938–1973).

85. See chapter IV. 9. 'The Monuments of Passaic' and chapter IX. Conclusion.

86. In Minimalism, for example. Smithson could be situated within Post-Minimalism, and Processual Art instead. Other artists who also engaged in Land Art, like Michael Heizer, for example, do not relate to archaeology like Smithson does.

87. Time is addressed over and over, 'not only as theme . . . but also as medium . . . in Smithson's writing.' Jack Flam, introduction to Robert Smithson and Jack Flam, *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), xix.

88. Jennifer L. Roberts and Robert Smithson, *Mirror-Travels: Robert Smithson and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 5.

Stephens, a well-known travel writer in his time.⁸⁹ Stephens, who wrote about Mayan ruin sites in Yucatán, is also known to have extracted a large number of artefacts from the ancient sites which later ended up in North American collections.⁹⁰

The locations Smithson chose for his experiments in Yucatán, were within ordinary and non-spectacular landscapes that intentionally avoided the famous Mayan ruin sites that Stephens's excursion had focused on. Smithson also employs what Flora Vilches calls 'consciously evasive documentation,' in a way that fictionalises his activities.⁹¹ His idiosyncratic appropriation of archaeological fieldwork methodologies stages a subversion of scientific empiricism that interprets archaeology as ultimately contingent and subjective.⁹²

By declaring his project an 'anti-expedition,' Smithson clearly positions it as a critique of the colonial legacy of archaeological excursions like Stephens's.⁹³ However, Smithson equally fails to explicitly acknowledge the indigenous population of Yucatán, and thus similarly reiterates an external perspective.⁹⁴ Archaeology's entangled relationship with notions of cultural ownership and colonial histories will be given further attention in chapter V. Fictional Artefacts.

Smithson's site-specific projects like the one in Yucatán found their counterparts in the *Non-sites* installations (1968–1969) inside the gallery space. These usually consisted of containers filled with mineral specimens from selected sites, exhibited in conjunction with photographic documentation and maps. Smithson's *Non-sites* put into focus the archaeological investigation as operating through a methodology of displacement: from the disturbance of artefacts in the ground, and the removal of objects from their local cultural context, to the museum or gallery displays, organised according to imposed systems of classification and ordering. Olivier articulates this critique by describing

89. The title of Stephens's account of his expedition in Yucatán is *Incidents of Travel in Yucatán* (1843), while Smithson's ficto-documentary essay about his interventions is titled 'Incidents of Mirror-travel in the Yucatán.'

90. See Jennifer L. Roberts, 'Landscapes of Indifference: Robert Smithson and John Lloyd Stephens in Yucatán,' *The Art Bulletin*, no. 3 (2000): 544–567; and Flora Vilches, 'Mirrored Practices: Robert Smithson and Archaeological Fieldwork,' in Paul Bonaventura and Andrew Jones, eds., *Sculpture and Archaeology* (Farnham, Surrey, UK, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 97–112. Both essays discuss Smithson's work in the context of Stephens's expedition and travel writing.

91. Vilches, 'Mirrored Practices,' 100.

92. Vilches interprets Smithson's project in relation to postprocessualism, which acknowledges subjectivity as part of archaeology. Vilches, 103.

93. Smithson, quoted by Roberts, 'Landscapes of Indifference,' 544.

94. Roberts's essay 'Landscapes of Indifference' focuses mainly on this aspect.

archaeology as 'a process of dissociation'⁹⁵ and by denouncing 'extracting artifacts from the ground and uncovering sites . . . [as] exercises in destruction.'⁹⁶

In this research, I am particularly interested in the loss of context and information through such displacements—in my understanding a perpetual process that moves artefacts continuously further away from their *origin* and renders interpretations increasingly speculative. Inevitably, this also leads to questions regarding the presumption of a singular origin, a question that becomes reformulated more meaningfully if it approaches traces as objects of temporal fluidity that incorporate change as an ongoing process.⁹⁷

The different material-temporal states in the project seek to incorporate this notion of dissociation and temporal fluidity through transformations across multiple stages—for example, from *Small Scenes*, to *Sprayographs*, and further to the *Sprayograph* animations. What information is retained and what is lost across these transformations?

In *Partially Buried Woodshed* from 1970, an intervention on Kent State University campus, Smithson had masses of earth poured onto a shed until it partially collapsed.⁹⁸ This performative act of *ruin making* seems to imagine the present's dereliction in the future by simulating a fast-forwarding of time. Smithson's project relates to the ways this art project is actively constructing ruins—in form of models however, rather than from actual architecture.⁹⁹

95. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 181.

96. Olivier, 45.

97. This is expressed in the consideration of the temporality of the trace itself, which is reiterated in chapter VI. Trace and Inscription.

98. The work gained additional political significance after the shooting of four protesting students on campus not long after. The date of the incident was anonymously graffitied onto the shed: 'May 4 Kent 1970.'

99. This relates to Smithson's famous notion of 'architecture rising into ruin' from his essay 'The Monuments of Passaic,' (originally published in *Artforum*, December 1967, 52-57), as well as his interest in entropy. Robert Smithson, 'A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey (1967),' in Smithson and Flam, *Robert Smithson*, 72 . Both aspects will be revisited in chapter IV. 9. *The Monuments of Passaic*.



Figure 9. Robert Smithson, *Partially Buried Woodshed*, 1970.

One woodshed and twenty truckloads of earth, 18'6" x 10'2" x 45'. Kent, Ohio.

(© 2019 Holt/Smithson Foundation / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.)

This work has found a later re-working in Mike Nelson's project *Triple Bluff Canyon* from 2004, a response that zooms in on the archaeological sensibility in Smithson's original project through an idiosyncratic re-enactment that expands the work beyond the reference. Nelson is attune to Smithson's material poetic, which integrates with the interests in the materiality of residue and artefact in his own practice. Nelson's installation is 'reimagining the *Woodshed* in a desert environment, as though emerging from shifting sands,' as Jeremy Millar describes it in the exhibition catalogue.¹⁰⁰

The structure, situated inside another building and half-buried in sand, is evocative in its material presence, the play with colour and light, and the tension between inside and outside spaces. The work captivates a feeling of fleeting temporality, of a continuity of becoming and disappearing that seems to respond materially and metaphorically to Smithson's interests in monuments and entropy.¹⁰¹

100. Jeremy Millar in Mike Nelson et al., eds., *Mike Nelson: Triple Bluff Canyon* (Oxford: Modern Art Oxford, 2004).

101. See Robert Smithson, 'Entropy and The New Monuments,' in Smithson and Flam, *Robert Smithson*, 10–23.



Figure 10. Mike Nelson, *Triple Bluff Canyon*, 2004.

Installation view, Modern Art Oxford.

(© Mike Nelson © Modern Art Oxford. Image courtesy of the artist and Modern Art Oxford.)

While clearly differing from this research through its monumental scale, Nelson's installation is relevant in its archaeological sensibility, its interest in the architectural remains, and its attention to notions of temporality. It is a fictional re-enactment of

Smithson's project, and Nelson's employment of materials like sand emphasise poetic meanings that resonate with this research's fictional orientation.¹⁰²

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102. A mention of Smithson's practice in relation to archaeology in art is also relevant, as both his work and his persona continue to be referenced by contemporary artists, as for example by several of the works in *The Way of the Shovel*. Tony Tasset in *Robert Smithson (Las Vegas)*, 1995, stages a photograph of himself posing as Smithson in the desert, in a performative reenactment that superimposes the heroic myth of both artist and archaeologist figure. Zin Taylor's *Wrong Way to Spiral Jetty*, from 2006, describes a journey in pursuit of Smithson's famous land art project, which also seems to emerge from a mythologising of both art work and artist. However, similar to the works referencing psychoanalysis discussed earlier, these projects make only a weak claim on archaeological practice, in my opinion. The fact that they are referential of an artist who investigated archaeological practice himself, doesn't make them archaeological by proxy. Of course, it might be argued, that these works still fit within the larger bracket of a historical orientation, as described by Roelstraete in his curatorial essay, mentioned earlier.

II. 5. Archaeology of the Contemporary

Archaeology as a discipline has only slowly moved from its prehistoric origins to gradually including the material study of more recent periods. Originally, archaeology derived its *raison d'être* from filling in the gaps in historical narratives where limited verbal or written record existed.¹⁰³ However, traces of the past need not originate from a chronologically far distant moment in time.

Mark Dion's practice has since the 1990's specifically focussed on the remains and detritus left by the immediate past as a form of contemporary archaeology.¹⁰⁴ 'No survey of the archaeological impulse in contemporary art would be complete without the work of Mark Dion,' Roelstraete claims, and undeniably, archaeology is an explicit and ongoing concern in Dion's work.¹⁰⁵ Working *from within* the contemporary present, Dion approaches ancient artefacts and mass produced remnants of contemporary culture as equal in contributing to the materiality of the past.¹⁰⁶

Usually, Dion selects project sites that offer a temporal depth through long-term cultural use and thus render a broad array of finds. A dumping ground below the city wall of Fribourg in Switzerland, a canal in the Venice lagoon, and a section of the river Thames's shore in central London, for example, are sites that bear testimony to the physical proximity of material deposits originating from vastly distant historical periods.¹⁰⁷

Dion's *Tate Thames Dig* from 1999 involved two sites along the river Thames, where the artist and a team of volunteers beachcombed for objects deposited along the river bank. In a secondary phase all found material was cleaned and sorted, and finally exhibited at the Tate Modern. Due to the changeable nature of the river that constantly shifted objects and sediments with the current and tides, a mix of materials that

103. Shanks, *The Archaeological Imagination*, 34.

104. Much earlier than Dion, the *Boyle's Dig* from 1966 explored an archaeology of the contemporary, along with the invention of the 'Institute of Contemporary Archeology'—at a time where archaeology as a science was only just beginning to consider the recent past as part of its investigative scope.

105. Roelstraete, *The Way of the Shovel*, 100.

Dion also features in *Arqueológica* with the project *Lost Property Office* (2013).

106. This is a noticeable difference to the Poiriers' interpretation of archaeology, whose work often remains engrossed in an reverie of antiquity and the distant past of bygone cultures.

107. See Dion's projects *History Trash Dig* (1995) in Fribourg, *Raiding Neptune's Vault: A Voyage to the Bottom of the Canals and Lagoon of Venice* (1997/98) in Venice, and *Tate Thames Dig* (1999) in London.

followed no chronological order was found scattered along the banks.¹⁰⁸ These material deposits collectively formed a portrait of the structural nature of the river itself, besides indexing the periods that the individual objects originally pertained to.

Volunteers and the general public had the opportunity to be involved in all stages of the project—the collection, the cleaning and sorting, including the museum display which allowed direct audience engagement. Dion's participatory model contrasts with the usually restricted sites of archaeological excavations. The project can thus be understood as a critique of the exclusive authority of the archaeological discipline controlling access to the material traces of the past. By exhibiting his artefacts in the context of an art gallery, Dion's work might be making a similar comment on the exclusivity of art and its institutions.

In the words of Colin Renfrew, an archaeologist who has been involved in the interdisciplinary conversations between art and archaeology for a long time, *Tate Thames Dig* enacted 'an extreme of postprocessual method,' as all phases of the project were influenced by the subjective interests and affinities of the amateur collectors and the artist.¹⁰⁹ While supported by teams of experts in analysing the finds, there was no final attempt to construct chronological trajectories between objects. Instead, they were put into categories based on similarities of shape, colour or material. This alternative methodology reveals traditional classifications as systems of bias, rather than being based on essential and universal categories.

108. The project gathered surface deposits instead of digging, as the artist only had permission to gather material up to a depth of six inches, as the river banks are classified as conservation sites.

109. Mark Dion and Alex Coles, *Mark Dion: Archaeology* (London: Black Dog, 1999), 94.



Figure 11. Mark Dion, 'London's Foreshore,' *Tate Thames Dig*, 1999.

Photograph by Andrew Cross.

(Image reproduced with permission from Dion and Coles, *Mark Dion: Archaeology*, 74.)

It is important to recognise the desire in both, artist and participants, to establish systems of relationality at all.¹¹⁰ I think, establishing such connectivities is a way of relating to the world that also lies at the basis of narrative.¹¹¹ Archaeology provides material riddles that we seek to decode, which is part of its fascination. This research project aims to explore this connective instinct that imagines relationships between artefacts. However, it uses material traces that are sourced and presented very differently to Dion's projects, as it transposes this imaginary potential from the real into a fictional world.

Dion presents the assorted finds in custom-built vitrines, that imitate the idiosyncratic taxonomies of nineteenth century cabinets of curiosities, as well as antiquarianism as a form of pre-archaeology. This form of display is consistent with Dion's strategy to elevate contemporary detritus to the level of archaeologically valuable artefacts, a status that in this case is not determined by rarity or artisanal skill.

110. Dion could have decided, for example, to present anything that was found indiscriminately in form of a non-hierarchical spread. Instead, his project imitates archaeology's methodologies of classification.

111. This 'narrative instinct' is explained further in the next chapter III. Fiction, in particular by Umberto Eco.

Instead, these objects provide purchase for a self-inquiry of contemporary society and its effects on the material world. The project may also critique the history and conventions of museological practice—both of museums of art and of natural history.¹¹²

There is always a risk when shifting terminology from the sciences to art of slipping into pseudo-scientific mimicry and a production of art that merely illustrates science. The Poiriers' investigations are a reaction to empirical rationality, in Metken's view, by providing alternative perspectives, that seek to foreground what science eclipses.¹¹³ Dion's work challenges empiricism through other means: by establishing subjectivity as a valid participant within a scientific inquiry, he blurs the boundaries between art and archaeology. Ian Alden Russell describes Dion's work appropriately: 'The project proposed that the epistemic structures of archaeology could form an aesthetic and that the performance of archaeology as event could constitute artwork.'¹¹⁴



Figure 12. Mark Dion, *Tate Thames Dig*, 1999.

Detail. Photograph by Lenka Clayton.

(Image reproduced with permission from Dion and Coles, *Mark Dion: Archaeology*, 93.)

112. However, I question Dion's adoption of archaeology's paraphernalia—tools, attire, and display modes— as an aestheticising gesture that courts rather than critically questions the romantic notions associated with archaeology.

113. 'Es soll etwas über den Menschen ermittelt werden, das die Wissenschaft wegen ihrer Spezialisierung und beweisabhängigen Rationalität nicht erarbeiten kann: eine Schärfung des Sinnes für die Zusammenhänge von Leben, Zusammenleben, Zeit und Imagination.' Metken, *Spurensicherung*, 16.

114. Russell, 'The Art of the Past,' 311.

Dion's participatory public project changes the artist's role from creator to co-participant and facilitator, a very different mode of audience engagement to both Smithson's and the Poiriers' projects. Dion's strategies should be seen in the context of an increasing popularity of participatory models of art making and a focus on the materiality of the everyday, prevalent during the last decade of the twentieth century.

While Dion's project explores the entanglement of all historical periods and their relevance to contemporary concerns, overall, the direct appropriation of archaeological methodology by art practice in Dion's practice remains distinctly different from this research's interpretation of archaeology.

While Dion's postprocessual emphasis of subjective positions is relevant to this research, as it also focuses on individual perspectives, it does, however, not seek to directly appropriate archaeological methodologies and avoids imitating the tropes of searching, digging and collecting. It also does not explicitly focus on the politics of classification or museum displays.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, while Dion's projects are entrenched in the actual deposits of day to day material life, this project is involved in a decidedly fictional world of imagined traces and artefacts instead.

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115. As do projects like Elizabeth Price's, *A Restoration*, 2016. This work is attentive to the history of archaeological expeditions, museums and collections. The focus is in particular on the Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers museums in the UK. The work animates artefacts digitally into an alternative narrative. While an exceptional work, I chose not to discuss it in more depth here, as it leads further away from the research interests as Price's focus is on museum collections and actual artefacts.

II. 6. Material Testimony

Other than the notion of ‘securing of traces,’ as it has been interpreted by most of the artists in the 1974 Hamburg exhibition, ‘Spurensicherung’ can also be interpreted as a forensic process, based in the recovery of physical evidence.

The investigations of Forensic Architecture, an interdisciplinary collective of researchers based at Goldsmiths University, London, for example, retrieve evidence from urban architectural zones of conflict, predominantly afforded through the use of advanced digital technologies.¹¹⁶ ‘The combined urbanisation and mediatization of conflict’ provide the ‘real-time’ material testimony recovered and mediated by Forensic Architecture.¹¹⁷

Forensic Architecture aims to ‘expose history’ by employing ‘methods of contemporary archaeology.’¹¹⁸ Archaeology is thus conceived as an avenue towards uncovering *evidentiary traces*, as a methodology that ‘provides privileged access to historical truth—one that is entangled in the messy business of matter, of stuff, the ever returning “real”.’¹¹⁹

The collective does, however, also engage in self-critical discourses concerning the problematics of such demands of archaeology. In the project *Material Witness*, researcher Susan Schuppli, for example, examines ‘how objects become agents of contestation between different stakeholders and truth claims.’¹²⁰

116. *77SQM_9:26MIN*, a work I saw at Documenta 14, is a ‘counter-investigation’ in relation to the murder of Halit Yozgat in Kassel, 6 April 2006. Aided by digital animation that meticulously reconstructs movements and lines of sight, it seeks to retrace events and interrogate witness testimony in alternative ways to the investigation conducted by the state.

117. ‘Available in real-time, these sources challenge the traditional evidentiary practices of human rights law and IHL, grounded in witness interviews often conducted well after the fact.’ 3D-modelling and reenactment techniques are used to ‘present information in a convincing, precise, and accessible manner,’ which reflects the informational post-internet era that contextualises Forensic Architecture’s activities. Forensic Architecture (website), <https://www.forensic-architecture.org/project>.

118. Quoted from Forensic Architecture’s website, in context of the project *Living Death Camps*, which investigates the material traces of two former concentration camps in ex-Yugoslavia. <https://www.forensic-architecture.org/case/living-death-camps>.

119. Roelstraete, *The Way of the Shovel*, 43. The use of digital *matter* as evidence is also a notable symptom of the changing nature of materiality.

120. This research is situated within what Forensic Architecture describe as ‘historical and theoretical investigations of the history and present status of forensic practices in articulating notions of public truth.’ <https://www.forensic-architecture.org>.

Forensic Architecture's work is certainly politically relevant and their interdisciplinary positioning affords access to art institutional spaces, as zones that guarantee a certain freedom of expression, while also enabling their projects to reach an attentive public. However, I am questioning what qualifies their projects as decidedly artistic, or distinguishes them from well presented investigative journalism—apart from the art context of their chosen platforms of publication and display?

I have observed a wider tendency in recent contemporary art—evident, for example, across Documenta 14 in 2018—towards a prevalence of work where political, social, and ethical intentions emerge as primary, versus aesthetic and artistic aims only as secondary concerns. This is problematic in my view, when it becomes the requirement for *any* artistic expression that considers itself current and engaged in a politics.

Jacques Rancière considers the political imperative in art as an effect of a vacuity that exists in contemporary politics through the absence of dissent, which art is attempting to fill.¹²¹ Art thus aims to be 'directly political' through 'real actions in the real world rather than merely "artistic" installations. Political commitment thus is equated with the search for the real.'¹²² However, as Rancière continues to argue, 'art does not do politics by reaching the real. It does it by inventing fictions that challenge the existing distribution of the real and the fictional'¹²³—a thought that should be kept in mind as this exegesis will argue for the purpose of fictionality in this research project.¹²⁴

While this research is informed and motivated by historical and political concerns, I concur with Brian Massumi, who considers it misguided to equate 'being political as having political content.'¹²⁵ Instead he defines art as being 'aesthetically political' through its 'dynamic form,' and an inventiveness that creates experiential potential.¹²⁶ This mode of being 'aesthetically political' means 'not only to make sense but . . . to make the making-sense experientially appear.'¹²⁷ I would propose that this research is working in precisely this space—departing from its contemporary context it shifts these

121. Jacques Rancière, 'Contemporary Art and the Politics of Aesthetics,' in Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung, eds., *Theory in Contemporary Art since 1985*, 2nd edition (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 85.

122. Rancière, 85–86. As in the evidentiary trace, for example, as a real tangible proof.

123. Rancière, 86.

124. See chapter II. Fictionality.

125. Massumi, 'The Thinking-Feeling of What Happens,' 14.

126. Massumi, 14–15. 'I would go as far as to say that it is the exception that art with overtly political content is political in the sense I'm talking about here' (Massumi, 15).

127. Massumi, 15.

concerns into an aesthetic space where viewers may experientially explore modes of 'making-sense' in unexpected, self-reflective ways.

In this context, it might be pertinent to consider two other archaeologically oriented art works, which, I believe, achieve a 'dynamic form' in their firm anchoring within art practice, despite political objectives of exposing suppressed histories, similar to Forensic Architecture.

Hito Steyerl's project *Der Bau* (The Building) from 2009 examines histories of displacement during the National Socialist regime in Linz, Austria. The surface layer of the Finanzgebäude, a building, for whose construction the prior Jewish residents had been forcefully removed, was hewn off in a pattern tracing their geographical displacement.¹²⁸ This gesture literally and metaphorically reveals the material traces of violence and terror that reside at the architecture's core.



Figure 13. Hito Steyerl and Gabu Heindl Architecture, *Der Bau* (The Building), Linz, Austria, 2009. Photograph by Gabu Heindl. (Courtesy of Hito Steyerl and Gabu Heindl.)

128. Additionally, in display windows on the ground level of the building, the fragments were exhibited together with visual and textual documents and personal narratives relating to this historical context. *Archello* (website) features some more details about the project: <https://archello.com/project/the-building>.

Steyerl's project recalls Hans Haacke's work *Germania* at the Venice Biennale in 1993. In this installation, the stone floor of the German pavilion was torn up, thus similarly exposing the historic foundations of a building designed and constructed during the National Socialist rule in Germany. Viewers walking across the broken tiles, encountered the visceral, embodied experience of a ruin field as a vision of past and future collective histories.

While departing from physical facts, both works are not exclusively reliant on the evidentiary aspect of the trace, but additionally engage its other affordances: metaphorical and poetic trajectories, and aesthetic and embodied experiences, that operate beyond a predominantly cognitive transfer of information.¹²⁹

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129. While Haacke and Steyerl are grounded in actual historical contexts, this project remains different through its decidedly fictional orientation. This positioning will be further analysed and argued as the exegesis proceeds, in particular in chapter II. Fictionality.

II. 7. 'Archaeological Imagination'

After considering the differences and affinities with each of the art practices explored above, how might the transfer of an archaeological term into art practice become defined in a way that is meaningful to this research?

Michael Shanks has been a prominent proponent of a redefinition of archaeological practice that is referred to as *postprocessualism* or *interpretive archaeology*.¹³⁰ *Postprocessualism* questions 'the epistemic authority of archaeology over the past and the primacy of scientific method for the production of the past.'¹³¹ Instead, Shanks, Christopher Tilley and other archaeologists have sought to open the discipline towards a self-reflective position that acknowledges contingency, subjectivity and the validity of non-scientific explorations.

Shanks has also had a long-term interest in, and an involvement with interdisciplinary projects between archaeology and art.¹³² He proposes the concept of an *archaeological imagination*, as a particular 'sensibility' towards the traces of the past that works across disciplines:¹³³ 'The archaeological imagination is rooted in a sensibility, a pervasive set of attitudes towards traces and remains, towards memory, time and temporality.'¹³⁴

Shanks further suggests that this sensibility will articulate itself in varied, possibly idiosyncratic ways pertinent to the field.¹³⁵ This means when archaeology shifts into an art context, for example, it undergoes a *degree of transformation* in order to adapt it as an art strategy. Shanks's archaeological imagination thus establishes a pathway for the transfer of the archaeological term into other disciplines, that is neither dependent on an imitation of the methodologies of archaeology as a science, nor on a metaphorical interpretation. This notion is significant for this research, which seeks to avoid both aspects. It allows for a unique archaeological expression within an artistic strategy that isn't merely a borrowed gesture. The archaeological imagination maps out a shared

130. This approach is the basis of Michael Shanks and Christopher Y. Tilley, *Re-Constructing Archaeology: Theory and Practice*, 2. ed, New Studies in Archaeology (London: Routledge, 1992).

131. Russell, 'The Art of the Past,' 305.

132. For example, some projects involving theatre and archaeology, see Michael Shanks's website <http://www.mshanks.com/theatrearchaeology>.

133. 'By sensibility I mean ways of perceiving, awareness, cultural and cognitive, across all the senses; an emotional consciousness and recognition of a fact or a conditions of things.' Shanks, *The Archaeological Imagination*, 24.

134. Shanks, 24.

135. Expressed in his accounts of collaborative, interdisciplinary works. Shanks, 15–16.

terrain, in Shanks's words a 'bridging field connecting different ways of working on remains of the past.'¹³⁶

Proposed in this way, an archaeological imagination can be identified as running across all of this research and all of its material expressions. It defines all making as a form of archaeological process, and all of the installation as a form of archaeological display. Sculptural objects are approached as artefacts, material fragments as architectural ruins, stencils as imprints, drawings as tracings, and images as archaeological mediations and transformations.

Initially, I wondered whether this proposition of an archaeological imagination might not be too broad a definition. Over the course of this research, however, I have come to appreciate it as in fact a workable and accurate articulation of the archaeological reference in this project. This does not preclude a further narrowing of *how* this archaeological imagination expresses itself in particular ways in the art work, which is in the first instance suggested by the combination of *archaeology* with *fictionality*, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

As this document proceeds, I will address in greater detail how this archaeological mode manifests itself practically within the different parts of the project. In chapter VIII. 'Realm of Connectivity,' I will seek to gather what the archaeological imagination affords to viewers in their encounter with the exhibition.

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136. Shanks, 15 and 17.

II. 8. 'Artefacts Mean Nothing'

While many art projects engaged within an archaeological context depart from factual historical contexts, not all would consider material traces as carriers of indisputable facts, as touched on in the context of Forensic Architecture. Artefacts are not simply transmitters of authentic testimonies of the past. Despite being linked to past events through direct physical contact, traces can play a merely mediating role in relation to the events that caused them:¹³⁷

As Olivier explains, 'archaeology is not a field that can study the past *directly*, . . . it is a field wholly dependent on inference to the past from things found in the contemporary world.'¹³⁸ We 'will never be able to know anything about the past "in the past," when it was the present unfolding.'¹³⁹ It is important to acknowledge this inevitable temporal gap.¹⁴⁰

Postprocessualism therefore considers its own discipline as inherently contingent, as archaeology can only generate meaning by establishing relationships from *within* its context of the present:¹⁴¹ 'Given this situation, the interpretation of vestiges becomes problematic. The only knowledge of ancient times that we can acquire through them is *relational*; that is, a knowledge based on our particular relationship, here and now, with the remains of the past.'¹⁴² Thus anything that archaeology might disclose about the past is limited by the traces' indirect nature, and refracted by their observation in the present.

The archaeologist John Barrett makes this point explicit: 'Artefacts mean nothing. It is only when they are interpreted through practice that they become invested in

137. This refers to *indexicality*, which will be discussed in chapter VI. 3. 1. *Sprayographs, Photograms, Indexicality*.

138. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 50.

139. Olivier, 30.

140. Shanks reiterates that in distinction from historiography's focus upon the past, archaeology examines the 'past-in-the-present.' Shanks, *The Archaeological Imagination*, 36. Olivier takes this thought up as he refers to an 'archaeology of the present' in a Benjaminian sense. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 34.

141. 'The archaeological record is here with us in the present. . . . It is very much part of our contemporary world and the observations we make about it are in the here and now, contemporary with ourselves.' Olivier, 50.

142. Olivier, 30 (my emphasis).

meanings.¹⁴³ Cornelius Holtdorf, in his essay 'Archäologie als *Spurensicherung*: Vehikel der Selbsterkenntnis,' goes as far as arguing that archaeology continuously invents its own object of research.¹⁴⁴ He proposes that archaeology, in fact, reflects on the *meaning of the present* by generating a relationship to the past.¹⁴⁵ He considers art works like the Poiriers' to be means of self-reflection and a commentary on their contemporary present.¹⁴⁶ Metken, in the catalogue to the *Spurensicherung* exhibition echoes this interpretation: 'Ultimately, these ruins, remains and traces are an incentive for a positioning of the self . . . in a fast changing present.'¹⁴⁷ This supports an archaeological approach as a valid strategy for an examination of contemporary conditions and human existence in the present, which links back to the research context laid out in the introduction.

Furthermore, 'because it must constantly deal with what is incomplete, uncertain and unknown, archaeology is fundamentally given to fabrication.'¹⁴⁸ In this sense a fictional tendency is already inscribed *within* archaeology. If we are to agree with this train of thought, then a fictional world could be proposed as an equally valid terrain for archaeology's reflection on the present. Or, in other words, if archaeology's true aim is an examination of self, and the present moment, then it might not matter whether this is achieved through a fictional or a factual catalyst. The proposal of a fictional archaeology can thus be understood in the first instance as making this particular understanding of archaeology explicit.

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143. John C Barrett, *Fragments from Antiquity: An Archaeology of Social Life in Britain, 2900–1200 BC*, Social Archaeology (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: B. Blackwell, 1994), 168.

144. Cornelius Holtdorf, 'Archäologie als *Spurensicherung*,' *Forum Archaeologiae*, 30/III/2004, 5, <https://homepage.univie.ac.at/elisabeth.trinkl/forum/forum0304/main.htm>.

145. Cornelius Holtdorf, 5.

146. Cornelius Holtdorf, 4.

147. Metken, *Spurensicherung*, 14. 'Letztlich sind diese Ruinen, Reste, Spuren ein Anlaß zur eigenen Positionsbestimmung. Die Suche nach dem scheinbar Vorgegebenen wird vor allem eine Suche nach sich selbst, nach einem Standpunkt in der rasch wechselnden Gegenwart' (my translation).

148. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 31.

III. Fiction

III. 1. *Vaults*

There is a grey figure shuffling through the vault, moving obscure objects from here to there, shifting them around on the shelves and racks and in drawers. Yellowed labels, slightly curled up on the sides, some lie loose where the glue has deteriorated over the years. Documentation has gone missing, fragments have been misplaced. Artefacts disassociated. Hours of observation, the comforting moulding of replicas. Classifications are being re-invented, labels over labels. While unobserved, imaginary scenes are assembled, new genealogies aligned. This vault is anywhere and nowhere, its network servers secluded in high security heterotopias, the 'real' world receding in the distant haze beyond its gates.

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III. 2. 'Man Remains an Amateur'¹⁴⁹

'Knowledge is reassuring,' Geiser keeps telling himself, while he struggles to remain rational in the face of chaos, outside and inside.¹⁵⁰ Much of his angst remains unspoken, suspended between the lines, as he tries to keep his emotions in check.¹⁵¹ He begins to obsessively collect facts from encyclopaedias and history books, and pins the clippings to the walls all over the house: scientific data about the evolution of the human species and the geological periods of earth history, also facts about the geology and history of the region. Geiser seeks to inscribe his personal history within the bigger flow of natural and cultural history—it seems in an attempt to find meaning in his own, finite existence.

As mentioned earlier, a quest for historical fact also informs many of the art practices that employ archaeological methodologies. However, while Geiser is sifting through the vast expanse of geological and earth history, contemporary art practices are more often in pursuit of historical particularities, micro-histories, or the untold details of the past, in an attempt to uncover alternatives to the master-narratives of traditional historiography.¹⁵²

Geiser's limited selection of reference toms—in the isolation of his mountain house—stands in stark contrast to the density of information that characterises today's informational landscape. The degree of factuality is however often difficult to discern amongst leaked documents, doku-fictions, and 'fake news,' and their continuous loops of reproduction and recirculation. This data no longer transmits the reassurance and reliability that books represent for Geiser.

149. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 80.

150. Frisch, 12.

151. As Susanne Munz argues, Geiser 'is looking for reassurance in the world of facts, and avoids thinking about his emotions' (sucht Selbstvergewisserung in der Welt der Tatsachen und vermeidet Gedanken an seine Gefühlswelt) (my translation). Susanne Munz, 'Die Alpen im Buch. Ausblicke auf eine Topographie in der Gegenwartsliteratur der deutschsprachigen Schweiz (1970–2000),' (master's thesis, University of Porto, 2001), 94.

152. Roelstraete, *The Way of the Shovel*, 21,23. An example is Ann Shelton's, *A Library to Scale*, 2007, which is a portrait and an excavation of the idiosyncratic archive of Frederick B. Butler, which consists of a large collection of scrapbooks, containing clippings of newspaper articles, advertisements and images, ordered and assembled by Butler over a period of sixty years. There is also a resonance here with Geiser's collection of book clippings and notes. Ann Shelton (website), *A Library to Scale*, <http://www.annshelton.com/works/a-library-to-scale-part-1>.

Geiser's task soon turns into a Sisyphean undertaking, as with every section cut from the books, he inadvertently destroys the facts printed on the back of the page, equally relevant. He loses knowledge at the same speed as he accumulates it! When the door to his house is forced open, the draft blows all the clippings off the wall, and his attempts at ordering end up in a meaningless chaos. Geiser is frustrated: 'Man remains an amateur.' Humanity can ultimately not reach the level of wisdom that would provide the answers to its existential questions, or alter the course of destruction it is so clearly on—no matter how much knowledge is amassed.¹⁵³

The finiteness of both, memory and life-time turn Geiser's efforts into a race against time.¹⁵⁴ Christoph Wulf in his essay 'The Temporality of World-Views and Self-Images,' argues that modernity is characterised by an exaggerated focus on 'growth' as 'the only way to cope with the finiteness of life and the limited time available for learning as much about the world as possible.'¹⁵⁵ Lübbert Haneborger in his analysis of *Man in the Holocene* interprets Geiser's desperate accumulation of facts as a parable of the limits of an encyclopaedic, and information-based society.¹⁵⁶ A fact by itself means nothing, just like an artefact by itself means nothing—unless it is interpreted and contextualised.¹⁵⁷ The 1979 novel is visionary in this sense, as it anticipates a situation that is acutely relevant today.

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153. The omnipresent availability of the internet, which appears to have rendered memorising an unnecessary task today, is in tension with the observation that the public is in a state of generalised historical amnesia. As already cited earlier see Roelstraete, *The Way of the Shovel*, 31.

154. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 35.

155. Christoph Wulf, 'The Temporality of World-Views and Self-Images,' in Jean Baudrillard, Dietmar Kamper, and Christoph Wulf, eds., *Looking Back on the End of the World*, Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents Series (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), 53.

156. 'Am Ende weicht der Ordnungswille der Moderne dem Gleichmut der Postmoderne, die Grenzen des Enzyklopaedischen, der Informationsgesellschaft werden aufgezeigt.' Lübbert R. Haneborger, *Max Frisch—das Prosa-Spätwerk: Montauk, Holozän, Blaubart*, Studienbuch Germanistik (Books on Demand, 2008), 66–71.

157. As explored above in Chapter II. 8. 'Artefacts Mean Nothing,' quoted from Barrett, *Fragments from Antiquity*, 168.

III. 3. 'Novels Are No Use at All on Days Like These'¹⁵⁸

'Novels are no use at all on days like these . . . as if . . . the earth [were] for all time earth, the sea level fixed for all time.'¹⁵⁹ Geiser dismisses fiction as irrelevant in his time of crisis, as being caught up in inter-human relationships, while eclipsing the 'real' existential issues affecting the world as a whole.¹⁶⁰

Paradoxically, his voice speaks from within a novel itself, however. *Man in the Holocene* creates a fictional world within which Geiser's existential turmoil and the inescapability of the human condition are set. It captures a personal and emotional experiential sphere that sits in contrast to the assemblage of facts that Geiser extracts from his encyclopaedias. Frisch's novel traces the limitations of rationality, as the reader witnesses the path of knowledge ultimately failing Geiser. The author thus de facto positions fiction as an alternative mode, capable of capturing a unique perspective on existential questions.

What can be understood as *fictional* however? Within literature, fictionality finds very diverse expressions; it may, for example, purely reside in the narrator's perspective, or consist in an entirely impossible world being conjured up by an author. Umberto Eco, in his book *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, presents a very accessible excursion into the ways in which fictionality may articulate itself within different texts, and the effects they may induce in readers.¹⁶¹ Eco explores imaginary worlds through selective examples, that show how closely they are interwoven with what we commonly take for reality.

Fictionality also plays a role beyond the textual sphere. In 'Fictionality Reconsidered,' Anne Enderwitz speaks of 'the double meaning of fiction as referring, on the one hand, to imaginative prose texts and denoting, on the other, more generally that which is "imaginatively invented."¹⁶² I am consciously using 'fictionality' to signpost this 'double meaning': the notion of an imaginary content, as well as referencing aspects of narrativity in my art project.

158. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 8.

159. Frisch, 8.

160. Frisch, 8.

161. Umberto Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1995).

162. Anne Enderwitz, 'Fictionality Reconsidered' (Conference Proceedings of: Fictionality Across the Arts and Media. Annual conference of the Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School of Literary Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, October 13-15, 2011), Freie Universität Berlin: *Journal of Literary Theory online*, 2011), <http://www.jltonline.de/index.php/conferences/article/view/461/1153>.

The definition of fictionality across media continues to be the subject of discourse, with various different interpretations proposed by theorists.¹⁶³ These discussions have fostered my understanding of how deeply entangled the notion of fictionality is with cultural activity, but also how broad the terms of reference are. Discourses on fictionality expand into phenomenological, aesthetic, cognitive, and narratological fields, for example, most of which are specialised well beyond the scope of this research. I will therefore focus on the specific articulation and purpose of fictionality within *this* research, including references to theory and art works where relevant, in order to contextualise my positioning.

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163. 'Whereas the rhetorical theory of fictionality has extricated fictionality from fiction, investigations of fictionality within many different media and discourse types still remain to be explored: fictionality in pictures, films, plays and everyday conversation.' Simona Zetterberg Gjerlevsen, 'Fictionality,' in *The Living Handbook of Narratology* (Hamburg: The University of Hamburg Press, 2016), 9, <http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/fictionality>. Zetterberg Gjerlevsen provides a very useful overview of a range of approaches to fictionality, including her own position, in this essay.

III. 4. Fictional World

Initially, fictionality is pointing towards the non-factual content in the project, as it evokes an imaginary, or invented *fictional world* in its images, artefacts and the installation. This fictionality indicates an alternative methodology to the art-archaeological practices engaged in documentary and historiographic projects, some of which have been described above.

Frank Zipfel, as part of his proposition of a ‘transmedial concept of fictionality,’¹⁶⁴ explains what is referred to as the *fictional world theory*: ‘Fictionality is a concept that designates phenomena that in some way deal with fictional worlds,’¹⁶⁵ and need to present some ‘deviation when compared to the real world.’¹⁶⁶ It is therefore more useful to describe fictionality as a question of *degree* of this divergence, rather than as an absolute other to the real world.¹⁶⁷

As Umberto Eco writes: ‘In reality, fictional worlds *are* parasites of the actual one, but they are in effect small worlds which bracket most of our competence of the actual world and allow us to concentrate on a finite, enclosed world. . . . Since we cannot wander outside its boundaries, we are led to explore it in depth.’¹⁶⁸ A fictional world provides the possibility to explore something with a selective focus, as it can peel away everything that it doesn’t want to distract from its main thread. Like a theatre stage it can exclude the ‘noise’ of everyday ‘reality.’

The *Small Scenes* in *The Quarry* literally generate such a space—limited, close-up and fictional. The video depicts what appear to be ruins and piles of debris, but it is footage of a model rather than of actual architectural ruins.¹⁶⁹ The video projection *Petrifacts* does not show actual fossils, but fantastical pebbles shaped in plasticine. There may be moments in the work that are ambiguous, however, overall the fictional, artificial nature of these images will be fairly obvious.

164. Frank Zipfel, ‘Fiction Across Media,’ in Marie-Laure Ryan and Jan-Noël Thon, *Storyworlds across Media: Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology* (University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 103.

165. Zipfel, 104.

166. Zipfel, 105.

167. See also Henrik Skov Nielsen, James Phelan, and Richard Walsh, ‘Ten Theses about Fictionality,’ *Narrative* 23, no. 1 (January 2015): 67.

168. Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, 85. This is related to Marie-Laure Ryan’s *principle of minimal departure*, developed in Marie-Laure Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991). It posits that ‘readers fill in the gaps in a fictional world with knowledge from the real world,’ Zetterberg Gjerlevsen, ‘Fictionality,’ 6–7.

169. The chapter IV. 6. *Small Scenes* describes this part of the project in further depth.

Audiences and readers will generally be made aware of the fictional nature of a work they are experiencing, as opposed to an encounter of a fake, or a lie.¹⁷⁰ Instead there is an implied understanding that the content—partly, or entirely—is made up. Fiction thus relies on a buy-in of the reader, or audience, to go along with the story told—which is what Kendall Walton has framed as a ‘game of make-believe’ in his much referenced book *Mimesis as Make-Believe*.¹⁷¹ Novels, and equally art works, according to Kendall, play the role of ‘props,’ as they facilitate a scene, or set a story in motion, and the reader’s or audience’s imagination fills in the rest.¹⁷² Samuel T. Coleridge famously coined the notion of ‘the willing suspension of disbelief,’ when readers choose to engage with a work of fiction, and immerse themselves into an *aesthetic illusion*.¹⁷³ It is his notion of ‘poetic faith,’ however, that resonates most with me, as it captures a mindset open to imaginative possibilities.¹⁷⁴

Important for this research is that immersion is not dependent on the audience believing a story to be real. The emotions we experience in a fictional world can be powerful, and affect how we feel, and even act beyond the fictional realm.¹⁷⁵ Nielsen, Phelan and Walsh ‘contend that fictionality is founded upon a basic human ability to imagine and that it operates as a “double exposure” of the imagined and the real: the paradox that fictionality is not meant to be understood as true and yet is meant to shape our beliefs about the actual world.’¹⁷⁶

Fictional worlds can be understood almost like a laboratory, a ‘safe’ space to

170. Fictionality is often revealed in the paratext—if the book is titled ‘a novel,’ or the film is advertised as a ‘feature film,’ rather than a documentary, for example. There are also certain textual formulations, referred to as *signposts*, that will reveal the fictional nature of a text. See Zetterberg Gjerlevsen, ‘Fictionality,’ 4–5.

171. Kendall L. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 51. This book has been very influential, as it seeks to define fictionality in general terms, independent from literature.

172. Walton, 51.

173. ‘That willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.’ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. G. Watson (London: Dent, 1817, 1965), 169. See also *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, s.v. ‘Illusion (Aesthetic),’ (Hamburg: The University of Hamburg Press, 2016).

174. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 169.

175. ‘The stories transmitted by media do not have to concern the real world to produce real behaviours.’ Ryan and Thon, *Storyworlds Across Media*, 2.

176. Thus summarised by Zetterberg Gjerlevsen, ‘Fictionality,’ 9.

For original references, see Nielsen et al, *Ten Thesis about Fictionality*, 64 and 68.

explore 'emotions,' separate from the real world.¹⁷⁷ In Eco's words, 'to read fiction means to play a game by which we give sense to the immensity of things that happened, are happening, or will happen in the actual world. By reading narrative, we escape the anxiety that attacks us when we try to say something true about the world.'¹⁷⁸ While Eco is referring to literature here, I believe his ideas equally apply to fictionality in other disciplines.

The fictional world this art project is constructing from ambiguously charged references, abstract forms and imagined temporalities, seeks to provide a purchase for the viewer's imagination to further expand this world, continue the fictionalising process and generate open-ended narrative outcomes. 'A fictional universe doesn't end with the story itself but extends indefinitely.'¹⁷⁹

My intention in this research is to capture the temporality of material traces and investigate how we might relate to them, independent of historical specificities. Fictionality allows for a generative ambiguity that widens the referential scope and sets up the conditions to explore a meta-level of connectivity.

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177. Johan De Smedt and Helen De Cruz, in an essay comparing 'speculative fiction and philosophical thought experiments,' state that 'some cognitive scientists (e.g. Goldstein 2009) have suggested that fiction can elicit emotions by providing a safe, risk-free environment, where readers can experience emotions without these having a significant impact on their actual lives.' Johan De Smedt and Helen De Cruz, 'The Epistemic Value of Speculative Fiction,' *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 39 (1 September 2015): 62.

178. Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, 87.

179. Eco, 85. 'A fictional universe can be seen as a small world infinitely more limited than the actual one. On the other hand, insofar as it adds . . . to the whole of the actual universe . . . it can be considered as greater than the world of our experience' (Eco, 85).

III. 5. Fiction as Narrative

I chose the term fictional not only to describe this imaginary world, but equally to situate narrativity in this project.¹⁸⁰

This research responds to the context of a contemporary post-internet everyday, where disjunction, displacement, and repetition result in the most distant, discordant events shaping everyday reality. How do we relate to these different temporalities?

To quote Eco once more, ‘the reason people tell stories, and have told stories from the beginning of time [is] . . . to find a shape, a form, in the turmoil of human experience.’¹⁸¹ The notion of narrative fiction as supporting a meaning-making process in our experience of the world is motivating its use in the research.

This narrativity, I propose, need not be linear, and neither of a verbal nature. The way it is interpreted in this research is as a type of *narrative connectivity*, arising from an assemblage of material traces—in form of objects and images in the installation—that operates beyond chronological or causal sequentiality. The work is exploring the liminal areas of such a meaning-making connectivity, across gaps and discontinuities, and based on association, memory or imagination instead. This *alternative relationality* reflects, but also seeks to resist the contemporary mediated and circulated reality. Chapter VIII. ‘Realm of Connectivity’ explores further, how a narrative potential is conceived to find expression within the viewer experience of the installation.

Over the course of the research, it became apparent that archaeology brings a very particular perspective to this search for an alternative relationality. Its underlying temporality revealed itself as already inherently non-linear, but as structured spatially instead. Archaeology thus prepares the ground for a connectivity between material traces that articulates itself in unexpected ways.¹⁸²

Fictionality and archaeology are thus mutually conditioning: while fictionality renders archaeology’s claim to science and truth contingent, archaeology in turn is infusing fictional narrative with elements of discontinuity, interruption, and non-linearity, aspects I will discuss further in chapter VIII. ‘Realm of Connectivity.’

180. As already mentioned in chapter I. 4. In Conversation, fictionality also acknowledges an affinity with literature in this research.

181. Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, 87.

182. Temporality in the context of archaeology will be discussed in depth in chapter VIII. 3. Archaeological Time.

In summary, this research proposes and investigates a fictional archaeology that constructs material traces as objects of temporality—both conceptually and practically—and that explores processes of meaning-making that acknowledge the non-linearity of our contemporary experience.

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III. 6. Adrián Villar Rojas

In the following sections I will introduce artists whose works engage with both, notions of fictionality *and* archaeology, and bring them into conversation with the strategies of fictional archaeology pursued in this project.

The artist Adrián Villar Rojas's practice focuses on materiality, architecture and the traces of cultural production. His installations construct wildly fictional worlds—infused and entangled with the materiality of reality, they catapult the viewer into a parallel temporality.

In *The Innocence of Animals* at MOMA PS1 in New York (2013), Villar Rojas uses unfired clay to construct a fictional ruin site resembling an antique temple, with broad steps, collapsed columns and toppled capitals inside the gallery space. The artist transposes an architectural space inside another, smaller architectural space that can hold only parts of it. This interior/exterior paradox combined with an incommensurability of scales, carries through Villar Rojas's entire practice and emphasises the aspects of monumentality in the installation.

While scale is also an important parameter in this research, it expresses itself in the *Small Scenes*, for example, through close-up views that are decidedly sparse and unmonumental. Image mediations additionally render scale ambiguous as part of constructing a fictional space. Both practices, I believe, are aimed at challenging a stable viewer perspective, however by very different means.¹⁸³

The temporal signature of *The Innocence of Animals* is ambivalent, seemingly futuristic and ancient at the same time.¹⁸⁴ Villar Rojas explains: 'What I wanted to do was work as if I was not human. As if the human species didn't exist anymore.'¹⁸⁵ The artist is seeking to capture an imaginary, non-human perspective and a time from whence the temporalities of earth's past and future might have collapsed into synchronicity. Material temporalities of possible pasts and futures that exist outside chronology, also define this research. This point of convergence, however, finds articulation in much less expressionist, non-figurative ways in my art work.

183. Scale and perspective is discussed further in chapters IV. 3. Aerial Perspective and IV. 6. *Small Scenes*.

184. Moma PS1, New York (website), 'Adrián Villar Rojas: La Inocencia de Los Animales,' documentation of the exhibition, <http://www.momaps1.org/expo1/module/adrian-villar-rojas/>.

185. Villar Rojas quoted on Moma PS1, New York (website), 'Adrián Villar Rojas: La Inocencia de Los Animales.'



Figure 14. Adrián Villar Rojas, *Mi Familia Muerta* (My Dead Family), 2009.

Wood, rocks, soil and unfired clay, 300 x 2700 x 400 cm.

Ushuaia's End of The World Biennale 2nd Edition, Yatana Forest, Ushuaia, Argentina.

(Courtesy the artist, kurimanzutto, and Ruth Benzacar Art Gallery. Photo credit: Carla Barbero.)

Villar Rojas's fictional archaeology is concerned with the materiality of an alternate universe, a world behind the world we consider real, made visible by the artist. Displacement and re-contextualisation, like ruins inside galleries, or whales stranded in the mountains, are recurrent strategies in his work.¹⁸⁶ As archaeology removes artefacts from their place of origin, and organises them according to imposed taxonomies into displays, the artist wrests objects and cultural references from different temporalities and contexts, and brings them together in unexpected, eclectic constellations.

Villar Rojas, part archaeologist, part fabulator, constructed a vault in *Today We Reboot the Planet* at the Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London (2013), that resembled an overflowing ethnographic archive, filled with mangled and morphed objects, clones and techno-chimera. Readymade objects and found materials of the most diverse origins pass through the artist's laboratory: an iPod, a soap bar, a copper solenoid. They are dissected or mended, amalgamated, or revived with the use of one constant

186. *Mi Familia Muerta* (My Dead Family), 2010.

material: wet, unfired clay. Some sculptures are entirely shaped from this *ur-matter* that is at once ancient and contemporary—while linked to the earliest forms of pottery, it also resembles the cast concrete slabs of contemporary architecture. It connects the most dissonant objects, materials and references in Villar Rojas’s practice. It covers and joins, it grafts itself onto fragments like a parasitic growth; barnacles of clay encrust all surfaces. As the magic substance, clay induces us to transition from reality into a fictional world. A fictionality that is not absolute, but in Villar Rojas’s case very much an entanglement with the ‘real world.’



Figure 15. Adrián Villar Rojas, *Today We Reboot the Planet*, 2013.
Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London, United Kingdom.
(Courtesy the artist, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris/London and
kurimanzutto, Mexico City/New York. Photo credit: Jörg Baumann.)

Different from previous projects, the artist also introduces organic material in *Today We Reboot the Planet*. Germinating potatoes and onions are pressed into clay sculptures, orange peel becomes part of *Jewelled Objects*, and sprouting plants are grafted onto inorganic objects. Are these attempts at re-animation, or a search for new life forms as part of the 'rebooting' after a collapse?¹⁸⁷

The works in *The Quarry*, by contrast, exclude any obvious organic materials.¹⁸⁸ I conceived of scenes that would appear frozen and deserted, with a sense of time unfolding at a pace different to that of any organic existence. Inorganic matter may capture traces that 'outlive' the temporality of human, animal or plant life, thus bridging the temporal distance to events which we are unable to witness directly.¹⁸⁹

Villar Rojas's fictional universe is a place of a timeless becoming and disappearing. As the clay dries out over time, and begins to crack and disintegrate, an entropic quality enters the work. The evanescent temporality of the art work itself lingers in the background of Villar Rojas's practice.¹⁹⁰

187. The installation also captures a sense of post-digital chaos, where after a global computer meltdown, all objects and information appear to have been scrambled. Metaphorically, this might be a picture of the jumble of content, references, times and locations that characterise the contemporary networked world.

188. The hardboard and MDF off-cuts used in the *Small Scenes*, especially once over-sprayed, do not really convey an organic, or wooden character.

189. In Villar Rojas's mixed media installation *The Theater of Disappearance* at MOCA, Los Angeles, (2017/2018), the combination of animal carcasses, skeletons, and art objects pushes the installation towards the graphic and grotesque, its overabundance of matter lending a baroque aspect to the work. Villar Rojas's increasing incorporation of organic materials means that rot, decomposition and the process of entropy over the course of the exhibition feature much more explicitly than in previous exhibitions. While the artist's earlier practice seemed to focus on the slow unfoldings of geological time, his emphasis has now decidedly shifted towards the faster organic processes that the viewers may witness in real time.

190. An inner temporality of the art work itself —comparable to Rojas's —is introduced through processes of transformation, the gradual layering of traces occurring through repeated sessions of spray painting, and the use and reuse of certain objects in this project.



Figure 16. Adrián Villar Rojas, *Today We Reboot the Planet*, 2013.
Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London, United Kingdom.
(Courtesy the artist, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris/London and
kurimanzutto, Mexico City/New York. Photo credit: Jörg Baumann.)

My use of plasticine in some ways corresponds to Villar Rojas's use of clay, as it is also used to support, prop up and interact with found objects in the *Small Scenes*. However, my intention for plasticine is to be of a less artisanal and expressive character, but to convey a sense of artifice and remove instead. Like Villar Rojas's clay, plasticine may be the substance that can be linked to fictionality most explicitly in the work. Amorphous and pliable, it can act as many things. It embodies an ambiguity that, I believe, subtly channels the *unaccountable*, that which is beyond function, rationale or identifiable meaning.

The objects and iconography Villar Rojas works with, reference variably cinema, comics and fairy tales, art history and popular culture; he includes mass produced items of technology, domestic household objects, and abstract geometrical forms without any discernible preference of style or era of provenience. Villar Rojas's installations are exhaustive gestures, that confront the viewers with a *Gesamtkunstwerk* that erases singular cultural specificities through its encyclopaedic character.¹⁹¹ Instead it presents as a universal statement about matter, cultural traces and time.¹⁹²

191. Sophie O'Brian, curator, in Adrián Villar Rojas, Sophie O'Brien, and Serpentine Sackler Gallery, *Adrián Villar Rojas: Today We Reboot the Planet* (London; Köln: Serpentine Sackler Gallery; Koenig, 2013), 42.

192. O'Brian, 39.

This art project employs a reverse strategy in order to blur cultural or temporal specificity. Where Villar Rojas uses highly representative forms and an overabundance of superimposed references, I have selected a limited number of forms and materials that manoeuvre carefully between abstraction and representation. A restrained referentiality is intended to evoke associations of architecture, ruins and artefacts, without inhibiting cultural, geographical or temporal fluidity. The work seeks to generate an abstract fictional space that is suggestive, but remains ultimately ambiguous.

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III. 7. Nicholas Mangan

Nicholas Mangan is an Australian artist whose practice is vested in material histories, the circulation of cultural objects and the economy of resources. His foregrounding of material histories places his practice within an art-archaeological context. Mangan's projects often seek to reveal the political and social entanglements involving material economies in a particular site. Speculative aspects in his practice are usually embedded within this site-specificity and his focus on *actual* material histories.¹⁹³



Figure 17. Nicholas Mangan, *A1 Southwest Stone (3)*, 2008.
Type C print, 88 x 87.5 cm.
(Image courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.)

193. See, for example, *Notes From a Cretaceous World* (2010), a project about the exploitation of natural resources on Nauru.

In *A1 Southwest Stone* in Santa Fe (2008), Mangan however pursued a more fictional approach, that is relevant in the context of fictional archaeology. In this project, the artist staged a fake archaeological excavation at the site of a former stonemason's business. He marked out and excavated pits in and around the building, which he suggested to be the site of an ancient 'pre-columbian pueblo complex.'¹⁹⁴ Display cases presented 'recovered' artefacts and official looking documentation relating to the archaeological dig and the history of the site. The fictional narrative the artist constructed made it appear as if the stone mason had sold off stone from the ancient ruins as building material.

In Mangan's own words the 'archaeological dig reveals clues about the past, while retaining enough holes to produce a narrative that can sometimes move beyond plausible speculation into realms of fiction.'¹⁹⁵ The project plays on a tendency of archaeological sites: 'The ruin encourages the construction of a cohesive narrative . . . formed through an elaboration on fragments of material remains.'¹⁹⁶ *A1 Southwest Stone* can be understood as a criticism of archaeology and the narratives it perpetuates in the service of varying ideologies, where traces of the past can become selectively suppressed, or marketed as traditional heritage.

The combination of archaeology with fiction certainly relates Mangan's intervention to this research. However, there are also important differences to note: Mangan's installation illustrates the distinction between fiction and the presentation of a fake, with his work leaning towards the latter, it would seem. While viewers might speculate on the reliability of the facts presented, it is not made explicit that the archaeological evidence is fabricated. Additionally, like many of Mangan's works, this work is site-specific and intended to explore the 'unconscious dimensions of Santa Fe's history,' according to Shelley McSpedden's review.¹⁹⁷ This research, by contrast, consciously avoids any ties to specific sites and situates the work in an entirely fictional locale.

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194. Nicholas Mangan and Shelley McSpedden, *Nicholas Mangan: Notes from a Cretaceous World* (Mebourne: The Narrows in association with Sutton Gallery, 2010), 38.

195. Mangan and McSpedden, 43.

196. Mangan and McSpedden, 43.

197. Mangan and McSpedden, 39.

IV. Ruins

IV. 1. Ruination

Architectural remains have always been one of the main areas of archaeological investigation. They represent an important part of the material-cultural history of past societies, and provide tangible information on how people lived day to day. As an exploration of the traces of human engagement with the material world, architecture featured from the outset as an important area of investigation in this research project.

Inevitably, with the mention of architectural traces comes a reference to *ruins*—a term that is not a neutral description but instead signals a topos, as a form of cultural construct that merely takes the traces as a departure point.¹⁹⁸

Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle, editors of the anthology *Ruins of Modernity*, describe ruins as very broadly identifiable by a loss of function, which could be of a social, economical, structural or aesthetic nature.¹⁹⁹ They suggest that anything from an abandoned, but intact building, to a pile of rubble, could potentially fall within this category, and conclude that ruins are therefore 'uniquely ill-defined.'²⁰⁰

However, Hell und Schönle appear to conflate the ruinous object, as the actual material remnants, with the motif of the ruin in this case. While this motif may attach itself to a broad range of objects, it is however specifically characterised by its use of the architectural traces as a catalyst and a channeling device, that unlocks a meaning that points beyond the object, elsewhere.

I would argue, that the necessary requirements for an association of ruin as a motif, can be captured by a slightly narrower approach. Brian Dillion in the introduction to his anthology *Ruins*, hints at this, when he muses that 'there must be a certain (perhaps indeterminate) amount of a built structure still standing for us to refer to it as a ruin and

198. From *koinos topos* (Greek) = common place. *Merriam Webster*, s.v. 'topos (n.),' accessed 8 January 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/topos>.

199. Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle, eds., *Ruins of Modernity*, Politics, History, and Culture: A Series from the International Institute at the University of Michigan (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), 6.

200. Hell and Schönle, 6.

not merely a heap of rubble.²⁰¹ And more explicitly in his later comment on Rose Macauley's description of a bombed-out domestic house: 'Can such a structure properly be considered a ruin, with all of the Romantic and even nostalgic feelings the word implies?'²⁰² Rather than defining the outer nominal edges of *the ruin* as a term, it might be more meaningful to trace the core of a cultural construct that has been framing the way architectural remnants signify since the Renaissance.²⁰³

This motif takes shape with the rise of humanism at the beginning of a modern era that seeks to define itself in comparison with, and by distinction from, the classical period.²⁰⁴ The topos of the ruin channeled idealisations of Greek and Roman antiquity, contemplations on the rise and fall of civilisations, and as a form of *vanitas* symbolised the finiteness and fragility of all human existence. Thus architectural remnants became objects of contemplation and self-reflection during Romanticism in the eighteenth century, and beyond.²⁰⁵

Magali Arriola, in *Ruins*, summarises thus: 'In the modern era the picturesque ruin works to establish an historic and aesthetic distance that promotes a contemplative nostalgia for a "better" past, while simultaneously legitimising a present that looks forward to a visionary future.'²⁰⁶ There is a correlation between ruins and the modern era, according to Andreas Hysen, as it is accompanied by an 'imaginary of ruins' from the outset, as the 'dark side of modernity.'²⁰⁷

The ruin motif's particular expressions become inflected by contemporary contexts, as it is revisited, for example, in the period after the Second World War, after the decline of the Eastern Bloc post 1989, or again after 9/11.²⁰⁸ However, I don't see any persuasive evidence, that contemporary thinking and art are any more occupied with

201. Brian Dillon, ed., *Ruins*, Documents of Contemporary Art (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2011), 11.

202. Dillon, 13. What becomes obvious here is, that what is considered a ruin also depends on the individual relationship to the object. *Who* is it that is looking at the bombed-out house?

203. Hell and Schönle, *Ruins of Modernity*, 5.

204. Dillon, *Ruins*, 12.

205. See Hell and Schönle, *Ruins of Modernity*, 1–14, and Dillon, *Ruins*, 11–13.

206. Magali Arriola, 'A Victim and a Viewer: Some Thoughts on Anticipated Ruins,' in Dillon, *Ruins*, 174. Arriola continues: 'This idea of the ruin found its culmination in the notion of 'ruin value' (Arriola, 174). Ruin value found its extreme expressions in architecture that was planned with a view towards its aesthetic function as a ruin in the future.'

207. Hell and Schönle, *Ruins of modernity*, 22. Various perspectives on this correlation are presented in this book, but also in Dillon, *Ruins*.

208. A range of art works addressing these contexts is presented in *Ruins*. These events influencing artists' concerns has already been mentioned in chapter I. Archaeology.

ruins than during other periods of modernity, contrary to what Brian Dillon suggests.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, it is important to clarify within which geographical or cultural-political backgrounds this tendency is claimed to be detected.

The use of hyperbolic and emotive language by Hell and Schönle illustrates that current discourse continues to be infused by the pathos of ruins: 'When history piles wreckage upon wreckage, ruins evoke not only the buildings from which they hail but also a transhistorical iconography of decay and catastrophe, a vast visual archive of ruination.'²¹⁰ Romantic projection, melancholy contemplation and ideological instrumentalisation continue to reside within the context of ruins, despite contemporary art practitioners having exchanged classical antique ruins for the abandoned architectures of industrial production and modernist high-rises.

As a consequence of this long tradition, it is difficult for any art work engaged with architectural remnants to disassociate itself from the topos of ruins, including my own project. Cyprien Gaillard, for example, while declaring himself as 'not being Romantic,' still remains very much indebted to the ruin motif.²¹¹ His gestures reenact the ruin as a contemporary, spectacularised version in works like *Desniansky Raion* (2008), but do not explicitly construct a counter-position, in my view.²¹²

In negotiating this terrain, it is important to recognise that there are reasons for the collective and individual imaginary attaching themselves so persistently to architectural remnants. The 'historical distance,' that Arriola refers to above, in conjunction with the fragmentary character of ruins, leads to a 'loss of meaning in the present,' a key point that Hell and Schönle make.²¹³ This 'vacuity of meaning,' based on a loss of information, is rooted in the ruin's partial and defunct nature, as well as in the temporal gap to its prior, functional state.²¹⁴ At the same time, the ruin is 'retaining a suggestive, unstable semantic potential.'²¹⁵ This particular constellation makes the ruin an ideal vehicle for projections and 'compensatory' interpretations—in other words for the *ruin gazer*, or the viewer, to fill this gap with imaginary meaning.²¹⁶ This, it is worth noting,

209. Dillon, *Ruins*, 10–11. While Dillon highlights a contemporary pre-occupation with ruins, he does at the same time grant its situatedness within an ongoing tradition of ruin thinking throughout modernity.

210. Hell and Schönle, *Ruins of modernity*, 1.

211. Cyprien Gaillard, 'New Romantic,' interview by Jonathan Griffin, *Frieze*, April 2010, 85.

212. *Desniansky Raion* (2008) is a three channel video work, that includes footage of the spectacularly staged demolition of a building in Paris.

213. Hell and Schönle, *Ruins of modernity*, 6.

214. Hell and Schönle, 6.

215. Hell and Schönle, 6.

216. Hell and Schönle, 6.

is a general characteristic of material traces from the past. Their fragmentary, but referentially charged character, gives rise to narrative speculations in the present—which is the reason for the widespread fascination with ruins and artefacts beyond the archaeological field.

This is an affordance that this project very consciously works with—by seeking to tap into a speculative, meaning-making process, triggered by material traces. However, it also intends to move against the grain, and avoid the familiar connections that have characterised the motif of the ruin. Thus my reservations do not rest with the object of the ruin itself, but instead with the stereotypical perspectives of looking and projecting it has become identified with.

This research attempts to define itself in alternative ways to the ruin gazing position, which, I would argue, manifests as the external perspective of an onlooker. The present becomes located outside the past, if considered through the lens of linear rationalised chronology. This project seeks to find ways to shift this exteriority, and construct an encounter with ruins and other material remnants, that moves the viewer *within*. It proposes to bypass the chronological situatedness, that defines the relationship to this material past as a static, insurmountable distance, by basing it on the physical proximity to material traces within a shared present instead.



Figure 18. Kloster Limburg, Bad Dürkheim, Germany, 2014²¹⁷.

Digital photograph by Chris 06.

(Image reproduced from Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Limburg_\(Bad_D%C3%BCrkheim\)_\(18\).JPG?uselang=de.](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Limburg_(Bad_D%C3%BCrkheim)_(18).JPG?uselang=de))

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217. *During my time as a stone mason apprentice I was involved in a restoration project at the ruin of Limburg, in Germany. The former monastery's main church, originating from the eleventh century, mainly retained its exterior walls. Only small fragments of the tall columns that had once held up the vaulted ceiling remained. As a group of apprentices, we produced a replica column of the same size, material and style as the original columns, which was subsequently erected inside the ruin. I wonder, wether one day, the replica column will remain standing while the rest of the building will have disappeared.*

IV. 2. *The Rings of Saturn*

Winfried G. Sebald's novels constitute an important contribution to the literature on ruins of the post World War II period. In *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald traces a walking 'pilgrimage' through Suffolk in Southern England in equally meandering and associative prose.²¹⁸ The deserted landscape and its derelict landmarks trigger the narrator's thoughts to wander off to temporally distant events and geographically remote locations of other sites of destruction—ranging from the war and its effects in Europe, to the history of British colonialism in Africa.

Todd Samuel Presner, in his essay 'Hegel's Philosophy of World History Via Sebald's Imaginary of Ruins,' describes the author's project as a 'geographically inflected philosophy of history, which is radically contiguous with its places of exploitation, ruin, and destruction.'²¹⁹ He proposes to consider 'Sebald's modernist geography . . . as the contiguity of the noncontiguous, to emphasise the spatial coexistence and connectedness of these noncontemporaneous and noncontiguous geographies.'²²⁰ In other words, Sebald develops an approach to history that is non-chronological, and neither based on a geographical continuity, but instead structured by association and mnemonic connectivity. In the way that Sebald opens up non-linear trajectories that connect material traces fluidly to experience, memory and the imaginary, his literary work is related to how non-linear connectivity is approached in this art project.

Max Pensky, in his essay 'Three Kinds of Ruin: Heidegger, Benjamin, Sebald,' develops a rather critical argument regarding the role that sites of ruination play in Sebald's mindspace and oeuvre.²²¹ Pensky argues that Sebald instrumentalises the Suffolk ruins, purely as a means to channel preconceived narratives and melancholic contemplations;²²² that he uses in effect 'the ruin as an empty vessel to contain and reflect the intentions of the self-reflecting subject.'²²³ While a fair observation, this does

218. Winfried Georg Sebald and Michael Hulse, *The Rings of Saturn* (New York: New Directions, 1999).

219. Todd Samuel Presner, 'Hegel's Philosophy of World History Via Sebald's Imaginary of Ruins,' in Hell and Schönle, *Ruins of Modernity*, 195.

220. Presner, 203–204. Presner develops this in analogy to Ernst Bloch's notion of the 'contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous,' (Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen). See Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), 97–116.

221. Max Pensky, 'Three Kinds of Ruin: Heidegger, Benjamin, Sebald,' *Poligrafi* 16, no. 61/62 (2011): 65–89. <https://www.binghamton.edu/philosophy/people/docs/pensky-kinds-of-ruin.pdf>.

222. Pensky, 84.

223. Pensky, 85. Moreover, I would add, Sebald disassociates these architectures from a continuity with the rest of Suffolk, and the particular contexts that shape the ruins' meanings.

not only hold true for Sebald, indeed, as the author is also aware, the ‘constructed nature of the ruin’ is part of the territory.²²⁴ The reason ruins solicit such projections lies precisely in the aforementioned gap of signification that is effected by the loss of original meaning.²²⁵ Hell and Schönle expand on this: ‘The ruin is often a playground of speculative strategies that tell us more about the beholder than about the ruin or its original environment.’²²⁶ That the ruin operates as a set motif, which in fact fails to engage with the materiality of a particular site at an immediate, physical level, has certainly troubled me in terms of an association of this research with ruins.

Pensky continues: ‘Sebald’s emotional repertoire—see ruin, become ruminative and sad—evinces a rote simplicity that is often disguised by the pellucid elegance of his prose.’²²⁷ Pensky’s scathing critique overlooks how deeply affected Sebald was personally by European history, and how this experience congealed into a persistent melancholic pessimism that at a minimum strikes me as authentic. As he writes in *The Rings of Saturn*, ‘on every new thing there lies already the shadow of annihilation. For the history of every individual, of every social order, indeed of the whole world does not describe an ever widening, more and more wonderful arc, but follows a course which, once the meridian is reached, leads without fail down into the dark.’²²⁸ Sebald was only a small child at the end of the war, but as a German, he couldn’t escape the post-war trauma and guilt, which at the same time was only accessible to him through traces, indirectly.²²⁹ As it is impossible to alter this past, every encounter ultimately reveals the same, deep desperation as its inevitable end point to him.

The material remnants in this research are certainly also intended to channel associations and imaginary connections in the viewer. In contrast to Sebald’s use of actual ruins, however, the intentionally fictional nature of the traces prevents any original connections to specific sites or eras to be erased or overwritten by such projections.²³⁰

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224. Pensky, 84–85.

225. As has been outlined above in chapter IV.1. Ruination.

226. Hell and Schönle, *Ruins of Modernity*, 7.

227. Pensky, ‘Three Kinds of Ruin,’ 84.

228. Sebald, *Rings of Saturn*, 24.

229. Sebald writes: ‘Those horrors I did not experience cast a shadow over me, one from which I shall never entirely emerge.’ Winfried G. Sebald, ‘A Natural History of Destruction,’ *New Yorker*, November 4, 2002, 66. Born a generation later, also as a German, this experience of the German past continues to resonate.

230. While residual meanings reside in the found materials used, these are concomitant with the referential aims, as will be discussed in the chapter IV. 4. Field Work.

IV. 3. Aerial Perspective

In the course of this research, I have come to think that much of what defines any contemporary approach to ruins may already be shaped by the ways architecture in general is viewed at the time. I would suggest that the dominant perspectives of architectural vistas that are currently perpetuated medially, influence our response to architectural form and materials in a way that extends into our experience of dereliction.

As this project continues to be contextualised by the medial representations of its subject matter, some of my initial thoughts on architecture arose from what I perceived as an imagery of the urban sublime transmitted by mass media.

In recent decades, through the privatisation of TV channels and TV-on-demand becoming the norm, I have noticed that the percentage of programming originating from the United States is increasing, and that the same crime, drama and sitcom series circulate across European networks and New Zealand.²³¹ From what I could observe in the daily programming, much of this content is located within North American metropolitan centres, with New York featuring prominently.

In many of these series, widely recognisable iconic vistas are being used to situate the readily exchangeable narratives within particular metropolitan centres.²³² The dominance of an albeit geographically distant, however medially omnipresent urban dreamscape, also forcefully inscribes the status of my own living context in suburban New Zealand as a decidedly peripheral zone, as an outside, a distant elsewhere.²³³

231. This is based on what I have observed myself, both in Europe and New Zealand. For a statistic of the percentage of overseas content on NZ free-to-air TV channels by the Ministry of Social Development in 2016 see: <http://socialreport.msd.govt.nz/cultural-identity/local-content-programming-on-new-zealand-television.html>. National content has been falling from 43 % in 2004 to 36 % in 2014. This however only refers to the hours from 6-10pm. I would expect overseas content to rank even higher outside prime time hours.

232. These strategies can be observed in series like *CSI New York*, *CSI Miami*, *Law and Order*, *Blue Bloods*, *Suits*, *Billions*, to name but a few.

233. This is and has been the reality of the colonial experience in Aotearoa, not only in recent decades, where maybe only the provenience of the external content has shifted from previously predominantly British content, to now US American. I have however also had this impression in Europe, where local content used to feature more prominently, and which now also seems over-exposed to a universal Western/American/Metropolitan visual hegemony.



Figure 19. 'Hide Sight,' *CSI NY*, Season 7, Episode 7, 2010. Screenshot.
Director Alex Zakreowski, created by Ann Donahue and Anthony E. Zuiker,
Jerry Bruckheimer Television, CBS Television Studios.

These visual representations of places like New York focus on the iconic monumentality of metropolitan architecture, characterised by vertical ambition and defiance of gravity. The silhouettes of glass and steel towers enact a glistening spectacle of the technological sublime that is contrasted by a gritty and raw portrait of the street level.²³⁴ Distinct perspectives are being used to enhance these effects: camera pans across the skyline and helicopter fly-over shots highlight the familiar landmarks and architectural profiles. These disembodied, birds-eye views of Manhattan's skyline, rising in the delicate pink haze of dawn, seem to transfer a pastoral gesture onto an idealised urban landscape.

Marc Augé in his book *Non-Places* makes a similar observation: 'the dominant aesthetic is that of the cinematic long shot. . . . Photos taken from observation satellites, aerial shots, habituate us to a global view of things. High office blocks and residential towers educate the gaze, as do movies and, even more significantly, television.'²³⁵

The contemporary experience of verticality and the proliferation of *aerial views* is interpreted by Hito Steyerl in her essay 'In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective,' as a consequence of 'new technologies of surveillance, tracking and

234. In particular in crime and detective series.

235. Marc Augé, *Non-Places*, 2nd English language ed (London; New York: Verso, 2008), XIII.

targeting.²³⁶ According to Steyerl, this results in a subject, that has lost its grounding, and that instead finds itself as a 'distanced, superior spectator' with a 'disembodied and remote-controlled gaze, outsourced to machines and other objects.'²³⁷

These representations of architecture find their counterpart in the *significant* architectural ruin that out-scales human temporality through its material endurance.²³⁸ This difference in scale permits the ruin to become elevated and assists its sublimation into a motif. In Augé's words 'the large-scale contemporary urban architecture reproduces in reverse the relation with time expressed by the spectacle of ruins.'²³⁹ As the aerial perspectives of metropolitan cityscapes look towards a utopian future, the ruin gaze is directed at an idealised past. Furthermore, as Hell and Schönle suggest, an experience of ruins today is further characterised as a predominantly visual and medial encounter.²⁴⁰ In this way, ruins like the World Trade Center, in my view, do not offer a contrasting view to the monumentality of the urban sublime and its romantic projections, but are consistent with it.

Works like *The Rings of Saturn* seek out alternatives to the 'objective, or transcendental perspective' of an 'historical overview,' according to Presner.²⁴¹ 'Instead, the narrator wanders on the ground among the ruins.'²⁴² Departing from a similar premise, this art project attempts to create an engagement with architectural traces the runs counter the dominant views of distance, control and overview. Instead, the work seeks to move the viewer within the traces, reveal the processual aspects of ruination versus a monumentality of ruins, and work with scale in a way that engages the viewer's imaginary through an experience of immediacy in the material encounter.²⁴³ This expresses itself materially in the use of small fragments of non-precious, everyday materials, as the analogous counterparts to monumental architectural remnants, combined with viewing angles at ground-level, that enhance material specificities in close-up proximity.

236. Hito Steyerl, 'In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective,' in *The Wretched of the Screen*, E-Flux Journal (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 14.

237. Steyerl, 24.

238. And of course, in some cases also through its physical scale. It is here that it may become clear why a pile of rubble will not trigger the ruin motif.

239. Augé, *Non-Places*, XVII.

240. Hell and Schönle, *Ruins of Modernity*, 5.

241. Presner, 'Hegel's Philosophy,' 205.

242. Presner, 205.

243. These considerations are explored and accumulated in particular in the *Small Scenes* video. It is through an ambiguation of scale, as a result of using images generated from models, that the video projection seeks to affect viewer perspective to this end. See chapters IV. 5. Assemblages and IV. 6. *Small Scenes*.

IV. 4. Field Work

During the early phases of this practical research project, I collected and trialled different materials, looking for notions of material traces in my everyday environment—with artefacts, architecture and ruins in mind. This period of reconnaissance was like a first survey of the terrain in archaeological field work. An extended ‘dig’ recovered a rich array of interesting materials, in particular from the waste bins at the School of Design workshop. I recognised that these left-overs had a preexisting historical layering with particular potential for this research.

The design students use the workshop to make scale models for their projects and use resources that are affordable, easy to manipulate and non-permanent. I collected pieces of wood, MDF and plywood, Perspex and other plastics, and a few steel offcuts. I chose carefully with my ‘brief’ in mind: As I found geometrical shapes, straight lines and sharp angles dissecting smooth planar surfaces, for example, I imagined struts and beams, sleek reflective sheets of high rise construction material. Many of the pieces were fragments, roughly broken off parts with sharp, jagged edges. There was pencil code, glue residue and paint splatter—signs of past events, of damage, of deconstruction, of abandon.

My choices were considered. These objects were the mockups for the material culture that might surround us in the future, the forms and structures that may one day become the artefacts of our contemporary time. Moreover, the pieces I found in the bins were the *negative* shapes that remained after the *positive* form had been extracted, the failed versions and abandoned trajectories. They already belonged to a past tense, left behind as residue and refuse. I was intrigued to channel this draft phase as a material stage of potentiality, as it contained the multiplicity of past failures and future possibilities, rather than singular actualisations in the present.

Beyond this general knowledge, I could not access the *actual* design contexts that these objects had previously pertained to. Just like other traces, there was a gap, and information had been lost. As fragments of trials and sketches, their shapes and content hadn’t fully formed, but had been arrested before it could harden out. This *soft* historical layer was perfect for my purposes.

I chose shapes and materials that could be interpreted in multiple ways, but which carried enough *suggestive potential*, to enable certain connections to be made in the right setting. As I constructed possible contexts and speculative stories in my mind, I pioneered to an extent how the eventual viewer might respond to these materials.

IV. 5. Assemblages



Figure 20. Susanna Bauer, *Small Scenes* assemblage, 2017.
Poster image for test exhibition, 70 x 100 cm.

I laid the recovered pieces from the work shop this way and that, stacked them, arranged them. I used paint, and made *companion pieces*—from paper and plasticine. As an intuitive conversation between textures, shapes and colour, it focused on any one of these existing characteristics by contrasting it, by repeating it, by exaggerating it. I was carefully placing one hardwood rectangle over, and on top of another, sliding a Perspex fragment underneath, arranging offcuts side by side. Plasticine for joinery, propping up a thin steel pinnacle.

The workshop 'rejects' took on new roles by coming together in assemblages. These experiments built on their prior history as design models by incorporating these remnant embedded characteristics into the sculptural constructions I made. I felt that they would continue to simulate a larger scale, and that combined with the structural preconditioning that resided in their linear and geometrical shapes, their assemblage could be read as a model scene, a *landscape* of architectural semblance as a fictional vision of their denied future.

In the further development towards the *Small Scenes* video, assemblage became a main process of working. As a method of loose arrangement, it enables the combination of various objects, found and made, analog and digital, in a provisional manner, rather than aiming at permanent manifestations. It is a mode of heterogeneity, that brings different materials and forms into a dynamic relationship. Assemblages can keep being reconfigured, changed, dismantled and started over again; all aspects which suited this project.

In the beginning, I was working on two different scenarios in parallel. One series leaned more towards still functional architectural environments, had a degree of vertical expansion, and was characterised by balancing, stacking and arranging objects into a scene. These displays weren't spray-painted and also included some coloured items.



Figure 21. Susanna Bauer, *Small Scenes* assemblage, 2016. Working process.

In parallel, I was also working on scenes of demolition and dereliction, sites of architectural destruction and abandon. These arrangements resembled unordered piles of construction materials, or the un-monumental stacks at recycling and transfer centres. Intermittent phases of over-spraying with black paint added a simulated *accelerated temporality* to these assemblages.²⁴⁴ Monochrome black accumulated on the materials like black charring, and arrested the pliability of plasticine, while grey 'ashes' gradually blinded the transparent Perspex struts and panes. The scenes began to develop a layered optic, as objects from earlier iterations re-entered the scenes and brought an already acquired patina with them.



Figure 22. Susanna Bauer, *Small Scenes* assemblage / *Sprayograph*, 2016. Working process.

244. This process was part of the development towards the *Sprayographs*. See chapter VI. 3. *Sprayographs*.



Figure 23. Susanna Bauer, *Small Scenes* assemblage / *Sprayograph*, 2018. Working process.

The various phases of these assemblages, were filmed by using static video shots, that framed the scenes close-up and at ground level. In the final *Small Scenes* video, the two initially separate stages have become amalgamated, through a selection and montage of footage that resides in ambivalent spaces between intact and derelict. These images capture in-between stages of gradual collapse or subsiding, or of yet to be finished construction. This seeks to reenact the temporal ambiguity between construction 'rising into ruin,' and architecture 'falling into ruin' drawn up by Robert Smithson.²⁴⁵ The *Small Scenes*' narrative vistas are assembled in non-chronological sequences on a time line. This considers the temporal fluidity of traces, and seeks to capture a notion of ruination as a process, as opposed to a conception of ruins as static objects that endure over time.²⁴⁶

245. Smithson and Flam, *Robert Smithson*, 72. Smithson's perspective on ruins will be discussed in chapter IV. 9. *The Monuments of Passaic*.

246. See also Hell and Schönle, *Ruins of Modernity*, 6: 'Is a ruin an object or a process?'



Figure 24. Susanna Bauer, *Small Scenes*, 2018. Video still.

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IV. 6. *Small Scenes*

I made my first shoe box model at primary school, and in all its limited realism—the cardboard was still visible and the glue had bled through the fabric—it triggered a captivating fantasy: the clumsy paper trap door became a worm hole transporting me into a fictional world.

I reenacted this memory much later in a video filmed inside a shoe box as a first year art student.²⁴⁷ The final video projection titled *Room* upscaled the scene back to ‘life size,’ in an installation that retained a strange and uncanny effect from this two step transformation of miniaturising, and enlarging. *Room* established a rather enduring engagement with small scenes and their mediation through images, as a means to manipulate scale in my projects.

Susan Stewart in her book *On Longing. Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, explains why small scale environments are so intriguing: ‘That the world of things can open itself to reveal a secret life—indeed, to reveal a set of actions and hence a narrativity and history outside the given field of perception—is a constant daydream that the miniature presents.’²⁴⁸ The model’s suggestive potential is derived from its physical ‘inaccessibility,’ as viewers can only enter the space of the miniature via their imagination, by leaving their bodies behind.²⁴⁹ This means that the model always remains at a physical remove, and this unattainability is part of the immersive fascination encapsulated by ‘small object worlds.’²⁵⁰

The domain of miniatures is permeated by a tradition of craft: dollhouses and model railways impress through their maker’s ability to replicate reality at small scale. It is no mere coincidence that these traditions became popular at a time when mechanical mass fabrication increasingly took over from handmade craft: ‘Whereas the industrial labour is marked by the prevalence of repetition over skill and part over whole, the miniature object represents an antithetical mode of production: production

247. The model for *Room* was an interior living space constructed inside a shoebox. I used a tiny, cheap digital camera to film the video footage in the box. At a rate of six frames per second, and a camera memory that relied on two AAA batteries—this seems almost unimaginable today. The video was then projected onto the opaque, semi-transparent walls of a mobile room-like structure.

248. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, 10th ed. (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2007), 54.

249. Stewart, 65. And further: ‘The observer is offered a transcendent and simultaneous view of the miniature, yet is trapped outside the possibility of a lived reality of the miniature’ (Stewart, 66).

250. Stewart, 70–71.

by the hand, a production that is unique and authentic.²⁵¹ According to Stewart, the dollhouse represents a nostalgic longing for a complete, ordered and domestic life.

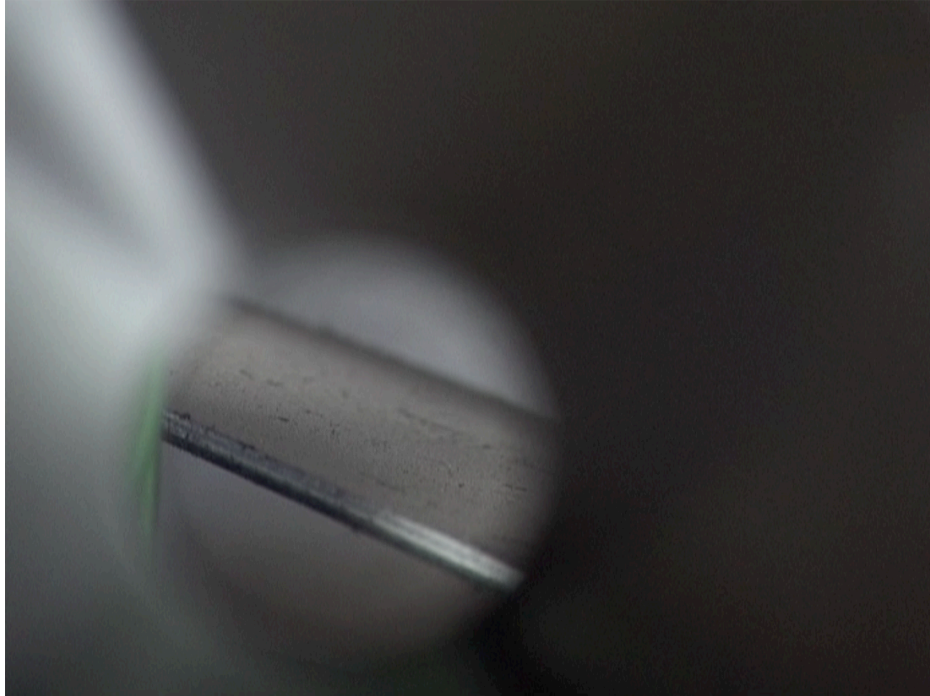


Figure 25. Susanna Bauer, *Small Scenes*, 2018. Video still.

I feel hesitant to associate my assemblages with this tradition of miniatures, but I have to acknowledge that there is a trajectory of small scenes that spans my entire practice.²⁵² Stewart describes it as a world of ‘infinitely profound interiority,’ and sometimes I am wondering, whether there is an underlying desire in my own project to make the world containable, and thus comprehensible.²⁵³ At the beginning of *Man in the Holocene*, Geiser is trying to block out the world by looking inwards: ‘It should be possible to build a pagoda of crispbread, to think of nothing, to hear no thunder, no rain, no splashing from the gutter, no gurgling around the house. Perhaps no pagoda will emerge, but the night will pass.’

While most ‘traditional’ model makers seek to replicate reality as closely as possible, the miniature can never be mistaken for reality, as it remains securely situated within the experiential realm of the ordinary world of the viewer. It is still a miniature

251. Stewart, 68.

252. Other examples after *Room* were for instance *Heart of Darkness* (2007), *Psychogeography* (2010), *Mind over Matter III* (2010).

253. Stewart, *On Longing*, 61.

house within a 'real house', or a diorama on a display table in front of the person looking at it. The attraction of the model derives from this inbuilt paradox of emulating reality through the creation of an obvious fiction. In doing so, it surpasses reality, and becomes a form of hyperreality.

By contrast, throughout my practice, including this research, models have never been conceived as standalone sculptural objects, but exclusively as 'sets' to create images from. Mediation through photography or video is part of the concept from the outset, and essential in the process of making the work. The presentation of the *Small Scenes* assemblages as images, alters their effect on the viewer such, that some of the typical characteristics of miniatures no longer apply or become overlaid by other aspects:

The images are carefully constructed in order to obscure the original scale of the assemblage. Zoom effects bring the model close up and enlarge it, while the outer boundaries of the scene and any external points of reference are intentionally avoided.²⁵⁴ Rather than looking from the outside in, the chosen perspective moves the viewer amongst the piles of debris, at ground level. This mediation has the paradoxical effect of a drawing closer through introducing an additional layer of remove. The camera enables an animation of the scene by simulation a physical *entering*, as it zooms in and projects a view from the interior of the scene. This transportation *within*, however, remains exclusively visual, and its trade-off is the now absolute intangibility of the object 'behind' the projection screen.

254. Like the edges of the table, surrounding walls, or any clearly identifiable objects within the scene.



Figure 26. Susanna Bauer, *Small Scenes*, 2017. Digital photograph.

Through the transformation into images, the scene's size in relation to the viewer's body can no longer be determined with certainty. An impression of being towered over by the material in a boundless environment may superimpose the miniature effects of the assemblage. In Stewart's words 'we know the gigantic only partially' as 'we are enveloped by the gigantic, surrounded by it, enclosed within its shadow.'²⁵⁵ This describes the viewing position constructed in the *Small Scenes* video more accurately, and as in fact the opposite of the transcendent perspective staged by the miniature object viewed from the outside.²⁵⁶ An experience of miniature or the gigantic is thus dependent on perspective, and on the relationship between viewer and the object viewed.

Throughout the research, I continued to be questioned about my resistance to displaying the assemblages as objects rather than images. However, enabling viewers to behold a miniature scene in its entirety, would simply be a repetition of the gods-eye overview, perpetuated by the aerial views discussed above. My objective in this project was to generate perspectives that would allow for a more immediate encounter with material traces. At the same time, as this *transportation within* remains virtual, it also expresses the limitations of direct, unmediated encounters with materiality and

255. Stewart, *On Longing*, 71.

256. Stewart, 66. As well being opposed to the already described aerial view.

acknowledges that traces can only ever grant indirect access to the past.

Transformations of scale and the jeopardising of stable positions, which are also pursued in other parts of the project,²⁵⁷ need to be considered in the context of an experience of a world at large in tension with an immediate environment of physical proximity. The superimposition of one onto the other, and the absence of universal points of reference might reflect the hybrid nature of how we relate to and live in a material world today.



Figure 27. Susanna Bauer, *Small Scenes*, 2016. Video still.

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257. For example in the *Sprayographs* (see chapter VI. 3.) and the *Sprayograph* animations(see chapter VI. 4).

IV. 7. Otherworldly

The exhibition *Otherworldly: Optical Delusions and Small Realities* at the Museum of Arts and Design, New York in 2011, showcased a broad range of art works that employ model worlds.²⁵⁸ As artist practices engaged in this field are hugely diverse, I have been looking for additional correlations beyond the use of models.

I have thus concentrated primarily on artists who work with models as *sets* for photography, or video, as most relevant to this project, as this mediation affects scale and perspective such, that many aspects related to miniatures no longer apply.²⁵⁹ These practices, including my own, work at the intersection of object and image, through the two-step transformation, where initially a scene is miniaturised in the model, and then upscaled again in the images.²⁶⁰ As these processes aren't necessarily revealed to viewers, the resulting art works often generate uncanny effects.²⁶¹

While 3D modelling and digital animation could possibly create images that appear similar, images made from models retain a tactile notion of material proximity, that lends them a very particular aesthetic and feel. Moreover, I couldn't have *conceived* of the views and perspectives visible in *Small Scenes*, without a process anchored in the handling and manipulating of physical matter. The embedded *material thinking* is a working process that differs from a methodology of entirely digitised image generation.²⁶² This working across object and image, analog and digital media, is a recurring method in my practice, and is also intended to articulate a tension between proximity and distance in the final work.

Oliver Boberg, who was exhibited in *Otherworldly*, and who works across object and image, is additionally relevant through his focus on abandoned and ruinous scenes, as in the photograph *Trümmerplatz* (2006), for example.

258. The accompanying catalogue provides a historical overview of the tradition of models and miniatures, the evidence of which reaches as far back as ancient Egypt. Martina D'Alton, ed., *Otherworldly: Optical Delusions and Small Realities* (New York: Museum of Arts and Design, 2011). Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title, organised and presented by the Museum of Arts and Design, New York, June 7, 2011–September 8, 2011.

259. As has been discussed in chapters IV. 3. Aerial perspective and IV. 6. *Small Scenes* above.

260. In the research, this applies to the *Small Scenes*, but also to *Petrifacts*.

261. Jonas Dahlberg's video *Vertical Sliding* (2001), for example, while presenting seemingly realistic images, works with a curious, impossible camera effect that reveals the scene's artificiality. See Jonas Dahlberg's website, [http://www.jonasdahlberg.com/untitled-\(vertical-sliding\).html](http://www.jonasdahlberg.com/untitled-(vertical-sliding).html).

262. I will tend to the term *material thinking* in chapter VI. 2. Material.



Figure 28. Oliver Boberg, *Trümmerplatz - Nacht*, aus Seite 5, 2006. Lamda Print, 128 x 266 cm.
(© Oliver Boberg. Courtesy of the artist and L.A. Galerie—Lothar Albrecht, Frankfurt.)

Despite the visible parallels, the realism of this scene illustrates a distinct difference between the works in *Otherworldly* and this art project more generally. Whether they depict entirely fictional scenes, or are tethered to historical facts and events, these works are dependent on their *emulation of reality*.²⁶³ By operating in a highly figurative and representational realm, the models directly reference common reality. In other words, the scenes that appear fantastical or strange, only do so *because* of their representational realism. The fiction that all miniatures are, becomes only legible in comparison with, as the imitation of, and through the difference to the larger world of the real.²⁶⁴

The material assemblages and the resulting *Small Scenes* video explore a relationship to reality that operates on several layers. There is an interpretational space within which the objects in the models act, and are acted upon, as exactly what they are—as small pieces of found material. They can legitimately function within this sphere as sculptural objects in their own right.

However, the *Small Scenes* are also intended to suggest notions of construction, ruination, or archaeological sites. While they employ *some degree of referentiality*, this is however held in tension by their abstract aspects. This ambiguity contrasts with the very obvious representational character of works like *Trümmerplatz* above. Staged in a

263. Joe Fig reconstructs the studios of famous artists in minute detail, as in Joe Fig, *Jackson Pollock*, 2008. By contrast, Gregory Euclide's models depict entirely fictional scenarios. For examples of both artists' works see D'Alton, *Otherworldly*.

264. This reiterates the relationship between fictionality and reality, as discussed in chapter III. Fictionality.

fictional space that contains no unequivocal reference to any actual locations or historical points in time, they elude direct connections to a *particular* reality. This is intended to channel the abductive and associative engagement of viewers, while avoiding the instrumentalising of actual historical objects and sites.²⁶⁵



Figure 29. Susanna Bauer, *Small Scenes*, 2018. Video still.

It is also important to acknowledge, however, that the referential connotations in the *Small Scenes*, and beyond this, across this art project, albeit abstracted, are not culturally neutral. The forms and materials used do not channel ‘universal’ architectural references, but reside within the wider context of a contemporary, western, urban, post-industrial and modernist cultural sphere.²⁶⁶ This flows from the project responding to the previously articulated medial dominance of images and forms from this cultural context, and its engagement with the contemporary moment. The referential and aesthetic location of the project is also inevitably inflected by my personal socio-cultural, as well as biographical context.²⁶⁷

265. In contrast to Sebald’s approach for example, as discussed above. Abduction and indexicality will be discussed in chapter VI. 3. 1. *Sprayographs*, Photograms, Indexicality.

266. Instead of referencing architecture of the classic antiques, or contemporary, or past indigenous modes of building outside the Western context, for example.

267. The context of being born in the 1970’s in Germany, having grown up in a middle-class provincial environment, my education, my experiences travelling, living in Italy and my transition to

While acknowledging this situatedness, the projects's particular treatment of this context is not intended to further perpetuate cultural hegemony, but instead seeks to enable critical reflection on the contemporary situation through the suggested routes of deterritorialisation and difference.²⁶⁸

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New Zealand. My being Pākehā and female. As much as they are accurate, and I have been encouraged to name them, I feel however overdetermined by listing these facts, as it obfuscates everything else I am, and the multitude of reasons behind the choices made in this project.

268. As laid out earlier, through the various strategies that challenge dominant perspectives, and which pursue alternative modes of engagement with material traces and their temporalities, in order to open up alternative modes of historical relationality and reflection.

IV. 7. 1. Daniel von Sturmer

Daniel von Sturmer's practice has been of interest to me in its exploration of the everyday material world of small things, and their mediation through photography and video. I found a comparison with an artist who works with small objects in abstract ways in some ways more useful than a discussion of the tabletop assemblages in relation to traditional model makers. The image series *Productions Stills (Improbable Stacks)*, that was presented as part of the 'Courtenay Place Park Light Box' project in Wellington 2013/14, shows similarities in process and materials with the *Small Scenes* assemblages.

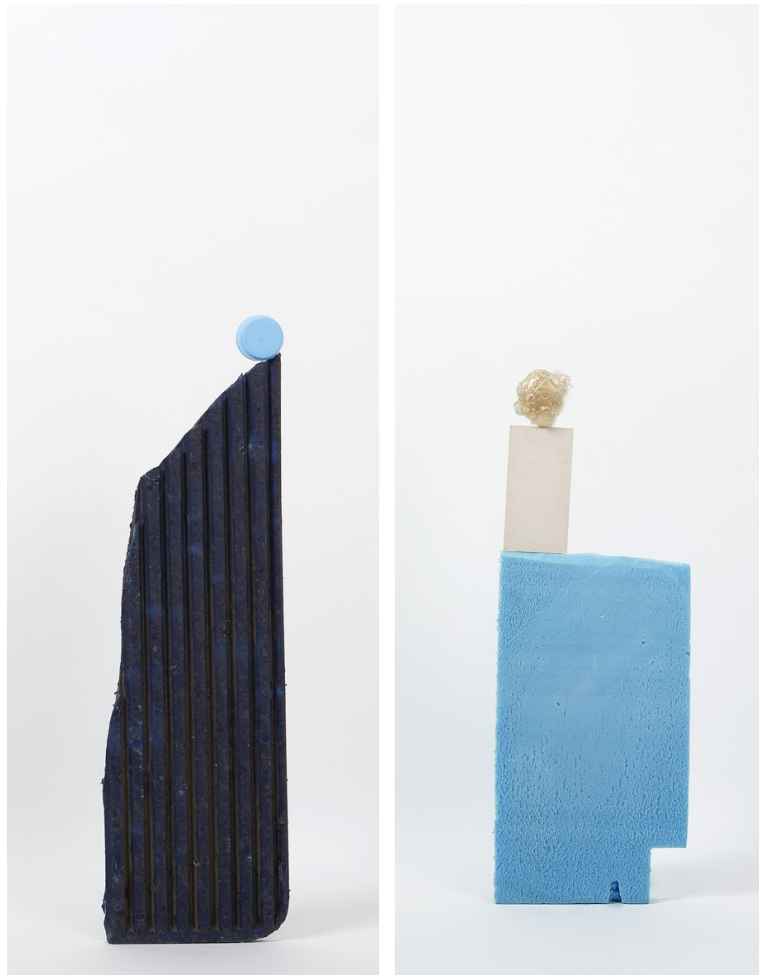


Figure 30. Daniel von Sturmer, *Production Stills (Improbable Stacks)*, 2013/2014.

'Courtenay Place Park Light Box' project, Wellington.

(Images reproduced from Daniel von Sturmer's website, <http://www.danielvonsturmer.com/Blog/gallery/production-stills-improbable-stacks-20132014/>. Courtesy of the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery.)

The first part of von Sturmer's title *Production Stills* speaks to aspects of provisionality in the work that resonate with this project. Von Sturmer's arrangements are also 'improbable,' as these *Stacks* are playful balancing acts that are unlikely to uphold much past the exposure time of the camera. This staging of a gravity defying precarity is reminiscent of Fischli & Weiss's *Equilibrium Works* (1984/85), a series of most outlandish arrangements of everyday ephemera from house and workshop, staged as temporary sculptures, that have also been of interest in this research.



Figure 31. Susanna Bauer, *Small Scenes*, 2017. Digital photograph.

The *Small Scenes* assemblages echo those practices in their methods of loose stacking, propping up and balancing, as well as through the use of craft materials, like plasticine and styrofoam. However, rather than seeking to embody vertical aspirations, like von Sturmer's stacks, they emulate phases of slow collapse, by arranging objects in a way that suggests an arrested sliding down, a slow motion of splaying out, a quiet drifting to the ground. In contrast to von Sturmer's work that responded to the vertical format of the light boxes, the directional force of the assemblages points downwards rather than up, implying a process of deconstruction rather than a notion of building up. Moreover, the *Small Scenes* assemblages operate within a spatial expanse, where any object stacks are integrated within a larger scene, rather than existing as individual objects like von Sturmer's *Improbable Stacks* do.

Von Sturmer's improbability incorporates notions of a future failure. Just like a house of cards, or Geiser's cracker stacks, the *crash* is not a possibility, but a certainty and merely a question of time. While both practices actively undermine notions of monumentality, and share in the spirit of collapse, they capture it at different temporal moments—von Sturmer just before, the *Small Scenes* by suggestion, during, or after the event. A further, more significant point of difference resides in the fictional and metaphorical trajectories the *Small Scenes* pursue, as they operate within the terrain of a fictional archaeology, with its implications of ruins and archaeological sites—a set of connotations that do not exist in von Sturmer's work.

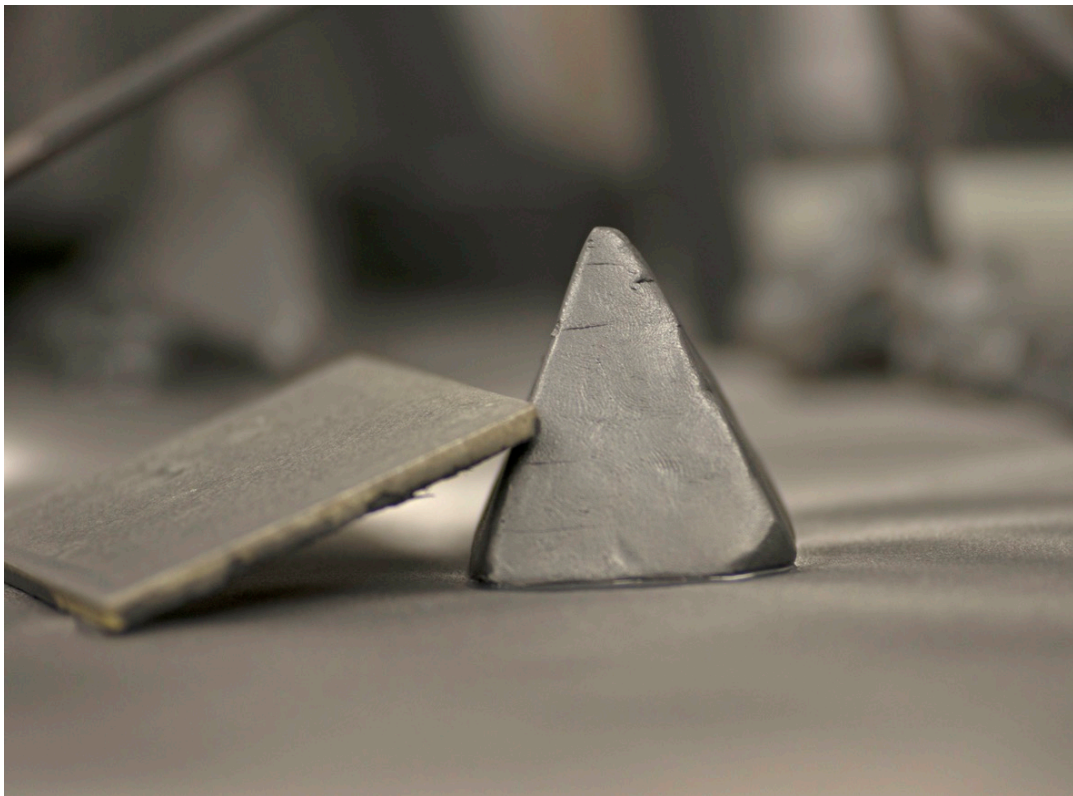


Figure 32. Susanna Bauer, *Small Scenes*, 2017. Digital photograph.

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IV. 7. 2. Leonid Tsvetkov

Leonid Tsvetkov's practice is generally concerned with the rejected and discarded, both materials and sites, and their historic legacy over time. Tsvetkov participated in the exhibition *The Materiality of the Invisible* with an installation that finds resonance in my research in the context of ruins and models.



Figure 33. Leonid Tsvetkov, *Untitled*, 2015. Installation view.
Discarded circuit boards, pigments, plaster, dimensions variable.
(Courtesy of the artist.)

This particular project consists of a series of model landscapes, made from discarded computer parts, plaster and pigments. The scenes are evocative of post-industrial landscapes: electronic switches and resistors have been transformed into stretches of derelict architecture, the motherboard appears covered in snow, annotated in the fluorescent colours of leaching chemicals and toxic puddles. This ongoing series seeks to critically comment on the short-lived nature of consumerist culture, with its effects on natural resources and the associated ecological implications.²⁶⁹

269. Leonid Tsvetkov (website), <https://leonidtsvetkov.com/portfolio/298/>.

The artist's use of digital waste materials relates to the use of offcuts recycled from the design workshop in the *Small Scenes*. There are also obvious parallels in the references made to dereliction and ruin in both projects, and of course through their employment of models. However, Tsvetkov's methodology differs, as he melts all the electronic components together into a landscape of permanent amalgamation rather than lose assemblage. By contrast, in the various phases of the *Small Scenes* models, the individual construction pieces remain mobile and take on multiple roles over the course of the project. The scenes remain provisional and in a process of perpetual change.



Figure 34. Leonid Tsvetkov, *Untitled*, 2015. Detail.
Discarded circuit boards, pigments, plaster, dimensions variable.
(Courtesy of the artist.)

Moreover, Tsvetkov's models are presented to viewers directly as a floor display, which is a rather significant distinguishing aspect between the practices. The viewers can establish a clear reference to scale as they behold the boundaries and entire expanse of the display.²⁷⁰ The physical experience of proximity to the work is combined with a panoptic overview from above, which is a familiar quality of miniatures that corresponds to the aerial perspectives discussed earlier.²⁷¹ Instead, the

270. As also discussed in relation to Anne & Patrick Poirier's work.

271. See chapter IV. 3. Aerial Perspective, regarding miniatures refer to chapter IV. 6. Small Scenes.

Small Scenes models are mediated through the video footage, which renders scale and spatial delineations elusive, in a conscious move to subvert these dominant views.

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IV. 7. 3. Hiwa K

My encounter with the artist Hiwa K's video *View From Above* (2017), shown at *Documenta 14*, at Kassel's City Museum, was very influential in my ongoing thinking about models, ruins and the treatment of perspective in this art project.



Figure 35. Hiwa K, *View From Above*, 2017. Installation detail.
Documenta 14, Kassel, Germany. Digital photograph Susanna Bauer.

In this video the camera pans across the ruins of a city scape—destroyed buildings, streets rendered impassable through debris, crumbling monuments and devastated parks. It soon becomes obvious that the video is based on a model rather than on a real city scape. In a voice-over conversation, two speakers discuss the official categories of ‘safe’ versus ‘unsafe places,’ and their criticality to obtaining refugee status. In order to meet the criteria, they consider creating a false identity and to claim as place of provenance the city K, which is officially recognised as an ‘unsafe place.’ The viewer readily associates the ruinous and deserted city scape in the video with the city K. In the desperate and paradoxical desire for this ‘unsafe place,’ the city K becomes an almost mythical and timeless symbol—a fictional location.



Figure 36. Hiwa K, *View From above*, 2017. Installation detail.
Documenta 14, Kassel, Germany. Digital photograph Susanna Bauer.

In order to convince the officials of his authenticity, the refugee seeker has to memorise the layout of the city by using the only perspective the authorities know—based on a map where the city is ‘viewed from above.’ In contrast, the personal experiences *on the ground*, which cannot be measured against anything ‘official,’ are considered insufficient proof, so that in many cases ‘authentic’ refugees are being declined. This story documents the privileging of a disembodied globalised overview over localised, lived experience. As touched on earlier, the panoptical aerial perspective is representative of superiority, power and control, a perspective from the outside, and from a distance.

In the adjacent room the permanent exhibition of the city museum had remained on display during the Documenta. A large and detailed *Trümmermodell* (rubble model) of Kassel showed the city in an almost completely bombed-out state after World War II. I felt a strange familiarity looking at the diorama, and then realised that this was in fact the model that Hiwa K had used to film his video *View From Above*.



Figure 37. Trümmermodell (rubble model) Kassel, City Museum Kassel, Germany, 2017.
Digital photograph Susanna Bauer.

In the ruined city K different places and times interlace: It is Kassel during the war, superimposed with the sites of political conflict today. The parallels between Kassel's past and the ruined cities in the Middle East now become strikingly tangible in the work. As a 'safe' country for millions of current refugees, Germany now finds itself on *the other side*. *View From Above* overlays two distinct historical and temporal particularities via the model as a vehicle.

As a viewer, my experience of the work had traversed a range of assumptions—from considering the images as depicting an actual ruin, to recognising it as a model and assuming it to be fictitious, to later realising that the video was based on a replica of Kassel. A real place, but not the one referred to in the narrative, and not at a corresponding temporality. This complex layering creates connections between 'non-contiguous' geographies and 'non-contemporaneous' temporalities, as described by Presner in the context of *The Rings of Saturn*.²⁷²

272. Discussed in chapter IV. 2. *The Rings of Saturn*.

View From Above relates to the transformational methodology applied in *Small Scenes*, where the model scenes are mediated through images, and reassembled in a non-sequential video montage.²⁷³ It is also an interesting example in its superimposition of reality and fiction.

More importantly, this work articulates the tension between personal lived experience versus machine generated information. *View From Above* links directly to the proliferation and dominance of vertical perspectives and their effects, as discussed by Hito Steyerl above. Hiwa K's work exposes how these undermine and devalue the immediacy of a physical proximity, which in this case is judged as less authentic than the machine generated, 'objective' overview from a distance. The works in *The Quarry* respond to this problematic by developing perspectives that explore a more direct encounter with material traces.

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273. Transformation will be discussed in chapter VII. Metamorphosis and Erosion.

IV. 8. Real Ruins

Brian Dillon, who has contributed to, if not led, the recent discourse on ruins in art, curated the exhibition *Ruin Lust* at the Tate Modern in 2014. The exhibition presented an historical overview of art in the context of ruins, from the eighteenth century until today, and explored, among others, the works of Tacita Dean, John Savage, Rachel Whiteread, and Jane and Louise Wilson. The exhibition was testimony to the fact that more artists appear interested in real sites of ruination than in fictional ruins, consistent with the observations made earlier in relation to historical and archaeological tendencies in art practice more generally.²⁷⁴ These projects tend to be vested in site-specificity and documentary-style methodologies. I will in the following briefly discuss some examples of work from artists in this group.

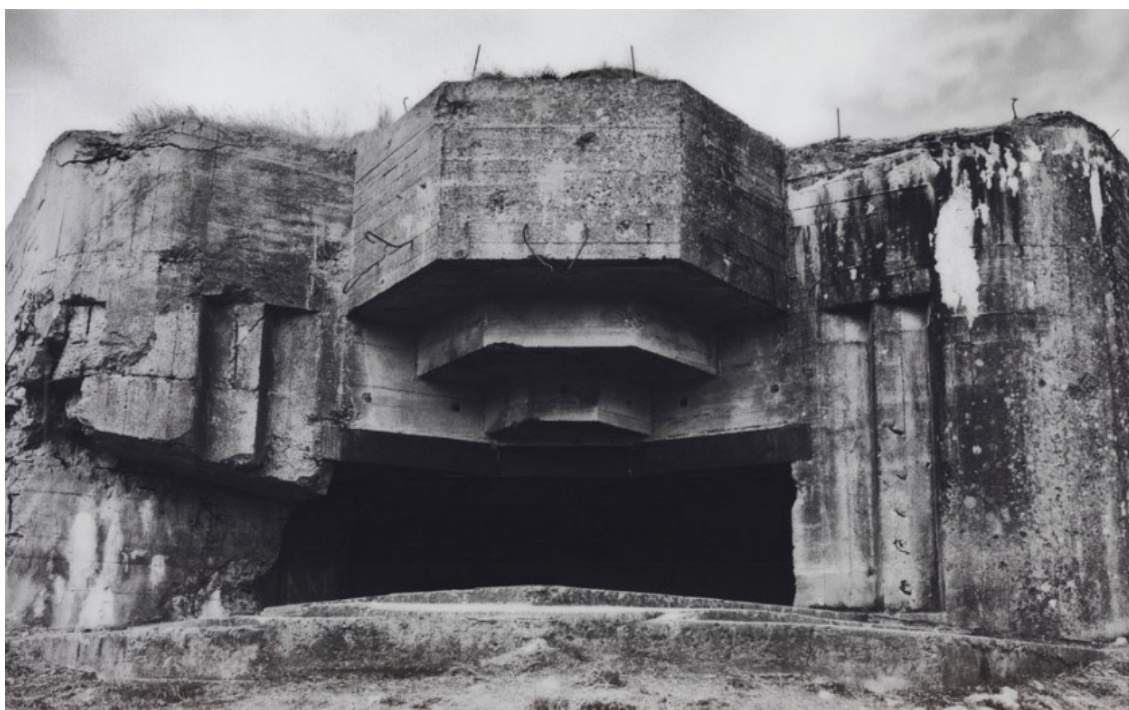


Figure 38. Jane and Louise Wilson, *Azeville*, 2006.

Gelatin silver print on paper, 180 x 290 cm.

(© Jane and Louise Wilson and 303 Gallery, New York.

© Tate Collection, London.)

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274. See chapter II. Archaeology

IV. 8. 1. Lara Almarcegui

Lara Almarcegui works at the intersection of urban construction and urban decline, and employs a meticulous methodology of research and analysis in her projects.²⁷⁵ While her focus on actual existing sites distinguishes her projects from this research from the outset, there are a number of useful observations to be made in the comparison of both practices.

Almarcegui's 2013 installation for the Spanish Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale investigated the architecture of the pavilion building itself. The artist staged its transformation into mounds of rubble, that corresponded in amount and scale exactly to the different kinds of materials used in the building's construction. The broken bricks, wood chips, ground cement and glass displayed inside the pavilion, had been sourced from demolished buildings in the area. The installation traced the building back to its raw materials, and equally staged a vision of its eventual future demise.



Figure 39. Lara Almarcegui, *Spanish Pavillion*, 2013.

Installation view. Photograph by Ugo Carmeni.

(Image reproduced with permission from Public Delivery. https://publicdelivery.org/lara-almarcegui-installations/#Exhibition_at_Spanish_Pavilion_at_Venice_Biennale_2013.)

275. Octavio Zaya, 'Lara Almarcegui. Digging My Way Out to Possibility,' 1–2, https://www.academia.edu/7067971/Lara_Almarcegui._Digging_My_Way_Out_to_Possibility.

Almarcegui's careful attention to the physical materiality of urban architecture expresses itself in her installation, as it meditates on the extreme beginning and end points of this materiality. By contrast, this research project seeks to capture in-between states, that are ambiguously situated between ruination and construction. Almarcegui's rubble mounds render scale visible and physically experiential through their immediate proximity. In this embodied encounter, viewers become aware of their own scale in relation to the building and its materiality, past and future. Scale also plays an important role in this project, although it is intentionally undermined as a stable measure of size, position and distance, as already discussed above.²⁷⁶ There is also a distinct difference in Almarcegui's transformational process that is focussed on exact quantities, whereas the research is vested in metamorphic transformations defined by qualitative differences instead.²⁷⁷

Initially, the difference between Almarcegui's documentary-based approach and the fictionality of this project seems to be very clear cut. Indeed her application of a strict set of rules in a scientific manner seems to indicate a purely fact-based inquiry. However, I would suggest that the installation's full effects unfold by also inviting responses on the level of the imaginary and metaphorical. In the face of mass and scale of the material piles, viewers need to reconfigure their own physicality. The touch of the rubble might give rise to imaginary reconstructions, while the vision of the pavilion might begin to crumble around them at the same time.

Almarcegui's projects expand beyond the particularity of *this* building and *that* site, and a pure presentation of facts. The material mounds themselves are complex constructs—simulated in relation to the building they are seeking to evoke as a future ruin, while at the same time constituting the real, translocated ruin of the buildings the materials originate from. In this way Almarcegui at once works with the particularity and singularity of one building, but extends the scope of signification towards the contemporary and historic contexts within which architecture and site are situated in more general terms.

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276. See chapter IV. 6. *Small Scenes*.

277. This will be discussed in chapter VII. *Metamorphosis and Erosion*.

IV. 8. 2. Cyprien Gaillard and Rachel Whiteread

Cyprien Gaillard's projects seek to create connections between ancient ruins and contemporary architecture, as well as engaging references to archaeology and artefacts.²⁷⁸ Gaillard describes himself as a 'field artist,' who follows sites of abandon, dereliction and demolition around the globe.²⁷⁹ He considers himself in the tradition of 'suburban odysseys,' a notion the artist has taken from Robert Smithson's description of his excursions into New Jersey in the 1960's.²⁸⁰

While Gaillard's main focus rests with abandoned urban architectures of the twentieth century, he also retraces ancient ruins and their interconnectedness with contemporary architecture, as well as the the social environments they frame—as for example in the video *Cities of Gold and Mirrors* (2009). The artist is interested in aspects of anachronism in sites where different times become tangibly overlaid: 'I think of all these layers as one great, expanded archaeological site.'²⁸¹

In a series of etchings from 2005, Gaillard introduces modernist architecture into traditional romantic landscape depictions from the eighteenth century, as for example in *L'arbre incliné / étape VI*, 2005, or in *Harlem 2005*. While these works undertake a simple operation of splicing, they segue into Gaillard's later video projects. The title of the video work *Pruitt Igoe Falls 2009*, connects the demolition of a building in Glasgow from 2008, with Pruitt-Igoe, a housing project in St.Louis from the 1950's, that was demolished in 1972. The artist splices the dramatic images of the demolition with views of the artificially lit up vistas of the Niagara Falls at night. The work reproduces both, the demolition and the falls, in a hybrid space between staged spectacle and natural phenomenon.²⁸²

278. Gaillard has made a number of works that are situated in the context of artefacts and archaeology—for example, *What it Does to Your City* (2012), featured in *The Way of The Shovel* exhibition; *Today Diggers, Tomorrow Dickens* from 2013–14, an installation that displayed large digger shovels like artefacts. The project *Dunepark* (2009), consisted of a temporary unearthing of a WWII bunker in Scheveningen, in the Netherlands.

279. Cyprien Gaillard, 'New Romantic,' 85.

280. Smithson, 'The Monuments of Passaic,' 72.

281. Cyprien Gaillard, 'Cyprien Gaillard: Memory, Nostalgia, and Anachronism,' *Tate Shots*, produced by Tate, London, August 21, 2009. Video 5:23. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqTGtLZeoCY>.

282. Several other of Gaillard's projects feature demolitions as performative, spectacular events—for example, *Desniansky Raion 2007*, and *Colour Like No Other*, 2007.



Figure 40. Cyprien Gaillard, *Pruitt Igoe Falls*, 2009. Film still.
Video 6min 55 sec.
(© Cyprien Gaillard. Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery.)

Gaillard's demolition works recall Rachel Whiteread's *Demolished* (1996), a series of screen prints that capture three tower blocks of public housing flats in the East End of London, and their subsequent demolition. Whiteread's famous project *House* (1993), a cast of the empty interior of a house before its demolition, resides within a similar context. The solidified interior space functioned as a temporary monument that enacted a physical time delay, before its own demolition about a year later. Whiteread's work captures tangibly the material and mnemonic remnants of domestic living spaces, and traces their eventual physical disappearance.

The focus on demolition in Whiteread's and Gaillard's projects, is inevitably linked to very specific *real world* sites and contexts, and therefore both practices, despite their interest in notions of the ruin, ultimately remain of limited relevance to this project.

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IV. 9. 'The Monuments of Passaic'

Robert Smithson's writings have been very influential in their consideration of industrial ruins and suburban abandoned landscapes. Most significant in this context was probably the *Artforum* essay 'The Monuments of Passaic' from 1967.²⁸³

Smithson's excursion into the urban hinterland of New Jersey's nameless spaces unfolds in juxtaposition with the metropolitan monumentality of New York City, where the artist departs from. His chronicling of Passaic's bridges, car parks, and other mundane infrastructure as 'monuments,' is an ironic stocktake of what are in fact characterless transitional zones, where dereliction and new constructions are indistinguishable in the spacious expanses that exist at urban fringes.²⁸⁴ These indeterminate and deserted spaces, in Smithson's words, form 'monumental vacancies that define, without trying, the memory-traces of an abandoned set of futures.'²⁸⁵

This landscape appears in stand-still, frozen in time, similar to the *Small Scenes* that seek to occupy an indeterminate temporal moment of the past, or future, or both. The 'machines were not working, and this caused them to resemble prehistoric creatures trapped in the mud, or better, extinct machines—mechanical dinosaurs stripped of their skin.'²⁸⁶ These imaginary anthropomorphing associations take actual form in Cyprien Gaillard's project *What it Does to Your City* (2012), which presents a series of 'excavator bucket teeth' in display cases as if they were prehistoric fossils.²⁸⁷

Smithson's field trip is a visual exploration, driven by his Instamax and the visual metaphors the artist brings to this encounter. The landscape is treated as a vista, a motif, that is considered as a representation, rather than a physical presence in itself.²⁸⁸ For Smithson, it operates as a sign that references time, and its entanglement with matter and site: 'That zero panorama seemed to contain *ruins in reverse*, that is—all the new construction that would eventually be built. This is the opposite of the "romantic ruin" because the buildings don't *fall* into ruin *after* they are built but rather *rise* into ruin before they are built.'²⁸⁹ A temporal interpretation of landscape runs through

283. Smithson, 'A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey (1967).'

284. Smithson and Flam, *Robert Smithson*, 70.

285. Smithson and Flam, 72.

286. Smithson and Flam, 71.

287. The display of 'digger teeth' in glass vitrines according to Roelstraete resembled 'dinosaur teeth . . . that exude the ominous aura of destroyers of worlds.' Roelstraete, *The Way of the Shovel*, 117.

288. Smithson describes seeing in photographic terms—for example, 'the landscape was no landscape, but a particular kind of heliotypy.' Smithson and Flam, *Robert Smithson*, 72.

289. Smithson and Flam, 72.

Smithson's essay, where it is variously described as a space where all time has stopped or *is* simultaneously:²⁹⁰ 'Reality was behind me.'²⁹¹

Smithson employs his encounter with the landscape as a vehicle for a metaphorical pondering on the temporality of material remains. He does not see the landscape and its architectures directly, but as symbols, as relics and signs that speak of other realities. As Magali Arriola notes that 'by collapsing notions of past and future in what he called "an objective present,"' Smithson develops a temporal approach that is no longer linear and sequential, but one where all temporalities unfold simultaneously within a site.²⁹²

While this notion of temporal folding within a site is relevant to this research's investigation of non-linear temporality, the art project does however seek to engage with material traces as presences, rather than representations. At the same time, I remain sceptical to what extent this may be possible. The relationship between physical proximity and distance, articulated through the object/image mediations in the *Small Scenes* responds to this tension.

Ruins can be interpreted to signify different kinds of temporal concepts, as for example, the decline of architectural structures is often interpreted as part of a *natural cycle*, in which nature will eventually claim back its territory. Gilda Williams in 'It Was What It Was: Modern Ruins,' ironically captures this tradition of thought: 'Of course, any problem plaguing humankind . . . would be washed away under a powerful carpet of weed vegetation, wild dogs and spectacular rodents.'²⁹³ Both Williams and Gaillard refer to the vegetation that has overgrown the abandoned structures of Chernobyl in the last few decades. But, as Gaillard adds, the new forests are also the areas that remain most contaminated by radioactive radiation.

For Smithson 'The Monuments of Passaic' are instead signs of 'entropy',²⁹⁴ and thus symbolise the 'irreversibility of eternity.'²⁹⁵ Everything is inevitably part of this process, monuments, ruins and models: 'The last monument was a sand box or a model desert. . . . A map of infinite disintegration and forgetfulness' that 'suggested the sullen

290. Smithson speaks of a 'discredited *idea* of time', 'out-of-date things', 'no past', 'false future.' Smithson and Flam, 72.

291. Smithson and Flam, 72.

292. Smithson quoted by Arriola, 'A victim,' 176.

293. Gilda Williams, 'It Was What it Was: Modern Ruins,' in Dillon, *Ruins*, 99.

294. Entropy is a core concept in Smithson's thinking, see for example the essay 'Entropy and the New Monuments,' (1966), in Smithson and Flam, *Robert Smithson*, 10–23. Smithson describes entropy as follows: 'energy is more easily lost than obtained and . . . in the ultimate future the whole universe will burn out and be transformed into an all-encompassing sameness' (Smithson and Flam, 11).

295. Smithson and Flam, 74.

dissolution of entire continents, the drying up of oceans—no longer were there green forests and high mountains—all that existed were millions of grains of sand, a vast deposit of bones and stones pulverised into dust.²⁹⁶

‘There will never be a pagoda—Geiser knows that.’²⁹⁷

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296. Smithson and Flam, 74. These trajectories find re-iteration in the notion of the *Anthropocene*, a term that proposes that human activity on earth has reached a point where it has caused geological changes that are irreversible by natural cycles. See also chapter VI. Trace and Inscription.

297. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 107.

V. Fictional Artefacts

Object

It must have been an odd object to begin with.
Now the ghosts of its uses
Whisper around my head, tickle the tips
Of my fingers. Weeds
Reclaim with quick silence the beams, pillars
Doorways. Places change, and a small object
Stands defiant in its placelessness.
Durable because it contains intensely meanings
Which it can no longer pour out.

—Jimmie Durham, 1964²⁹⁸

Jimmie Durham describes an object from the past, something that has endured and that is carrying the encoded traces of another time—an artefact. Artefacts have always been a main object of archaeology, and are naturally one of the categories of material traces considered by this research. Most generically, an artefact is defined as an ‘object made by a human being, typically one of cultural or historical interest.’²⁹⁹ This definition allows for a rather wide field of reference. Relevant to the research is in particular the combination of artefacts with fictionality, consistent with the fictional world the project has set up and places its inquiry in. I will in the following touch on some of the different interpretations that *fictional artefacts* have found in art practice, and bring these into context with the notion of artefacts in *The Quarry*.

298. Dirk Snauwaert et al., *Jimmie Durham* (London, New York: Phaidon Press, 2017), 78.

299. *Oxford Dictionaries English* (online), s.v. ‘artefact,’ accessed 13 February 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/artefact>. As a secondary meaning the dictionary offers this description: ‘Something observed in a scientific investigation or experiment that is not naturally present but occurs as a result of the preparative or investigative procedure.’ I will in this chapter, however, mainly concentrate on the meaning of artefact in a cultural, archaeological context. Other dictionaries definitions are very similar, i.e. Cambridge, Collins.

V. 1. Personal Ethnographies

There is a certain tradition of artists whose artworks are deeply entangled in a project of personal ethnography, in which artefacts create a visual history whose object is the artist, and his or her personal life.³⁰⁰ These works often reference museological practices, where the personal artefacts are presented as pseudo-archaeological traces from elsewhere and another time, in a kind of auto-primitivist gesture. Joseph Beuys comes to mind, in whose practice found and constructed objects undergo highly idiosyncratic codifications through their amalgamation with selected materials, which the artist claims to be biographically significant.³⁰¹ While there is no deeper connection between Beuys and this research, his work is, however, interesting in its constructed nature.³⁰² His artefactual objects create a symbolic, fictional narrative in support of the mythology of the artist. In Beuys's case there is an additional fictional aspect, as it is well known today, that significant parts of his biographical narrative were fabricated, including the original significance of the materials felt and fat, to which he had attributed such symbolic significance.

New Zealand artist Christine Hellyar is an example for a practice that presents a type of amalgamation of cultural and personal ethnography, and is also deeply engaged in the construction of artefacts. Since the 1980's until today, she has been making display cabinets and collections, wall displays and installations of fictional, prehistoric looking hand-tools, woven kete,³⁰³ aprons and other fabric works, that included materials like cord, shells, bones, clay objects and more.³⁰⁴ Her practice employs a rich array of materials, and bridges cultural, in particular colonial, and natural, domestic and feminist histories, that flow from her living context in New Zealand. While being a Pākehā artist, Hellyar also engages with Māori customary objects and traditions, in a critical reflection on Aotearoa's colonial past.³⁰⁵

300. This is a side trajectory to the *ethnographic turn* in art, where art examines cultural difference and its representation. See Hal Foster, 'The Artist as Ethnographer,' in *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 171–204.

301. For example in Beuys's various iterations of vitrines.

302. The exhibited items aren't actual objects from the artist's past, but instead constructed artefacts. By contrast compare, for example, a work like Tracy Emin's *My Bed*, 1998.

303. Kete (Māori) = basket.

304. For example, *Keeps and Folds*, 1981; *Tool Trays: Womens Work 1 and 2*, 1982; *Collector's aprons* 2001; *Mrs Cook's Kete*, 2002; *Red Cloud*, 2012.

305. Pākehā (Māori) = New Zealander of European descent, see Māori Dictionary (online), s.v. 'Pākehā', accessed February 14, 2019, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&keywords=pakeha>.



Figure 41. Christine Hellyar, *Clutch, Brood and Echo*, 1990.
Bronze, ceramic, plant fibre, wood, glass, 100 x 350 x 300 cm.
Collection of Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand.
(Courtesy of the artist and Te Papa Tongarewa.)

While the construction of fictional ethnographies is not the aim of this research, cultural signification is so deeply associated with the notion of artefacts, that it warrants a more extensive discussion in order to define the positioning of this project accurately.

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V. 2. Artefacts and Abstraction

Artefacts, as human-made objects from the past, are considered meaningful in archaeological terms generally due to their cultural relevance—as objects that might transmit information about the customs and belief systems of a collective of people.

In this context archaeology's problematic legacy needs to be acknowledged. The history of archaeology converges with the histories of exploration and colonisation,³⁰⁶ most explicitly in the displacement of cultural objects from their places of origin.³⁰⁷ This has been touched on earlier in the context of Smithson's work in Yucatán, which sought to critically highlight this history. European museums are filled with cultural artefacts from all over the world—whether gifted, traded, or stolen—that have been severed from their original contexts and meanings.³⁰⁸ Current demands of Indigenous peoples for the repatriation of cultural objects are met with a complex set of politics and the actual relocation of artefacts is a slow process.³⁰⁹ Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga (New Zealand's Māori Centre of Research Excellence) runs an interesting research project called *Virtual Repatriation: A Database of Māori Taonga in Overseas Museums*, which is dedicated to locating and recording Māori artefacts abroad.³¹⁰

306. The main period of European exploration initiates in the 15th century with Portuguese explorations to America. An animated map by Andrei Nacu shows the 'territories colonized by European, Russian, Turkish, American, and Japanese powers since 1492.' Animation from Wikimedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_colonialism#/media/File:Colonisation2.gif.

307. Archaeology has also been used to support various ideologies—i.e. the evolution of civilisations, superiority of certain cultures over others—as for example by the National Socialist regime in Germany in the 20th century. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 23.

308. 'These taonga left an ancient Pacific culture of reciprocity and belonging, and entered a foreign system of legal title and museums.' Cited from 'Māori and Museums—Ngā Whare Taonga,' *Te ARA. The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, accessed March, 2, 2019. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/maori-and-museums-nga-whare-taonga/page-1>.

309. In New Zealand, for example, *Te Karanga Aotearoa* at the National Museum Te Papa Tongarewa is responsible for the repatriation of Māori and Moriori ancestral remains. See <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/about/repatriation/karanga-aotearoa-repatriation-programme>. The repatriation of taonga, cultural artefacts, appears to be less centrally organised and more a case by case basis. The lengthy process involved in the return of the *Motonui* panels, a series of 18th century Māori wood carvings, to their place of origin in Taranaki, is an example of the difficulties Tangata Whenua face reclaiming cultural artefacts from overseas. Ali Ikram, 'Art Matters: Stolen Taonga Returned to Taranaki after 40-Year Fight,' *NZ Herald*, October 17, 2015, sec. Entertainment, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/news/article.cfm?c_id=1501119&objectid=11530812.

310. Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga (website), <http://www.maramatanga.co.nz/project/virtual-repatriation-database-m-ori-taonga-overseas-museums>.

As my project is sited in Aotearoa New Zealand, its colonial history will in the context of artefacts inevitably also reference these historic and enduring grievances. I will therefore make a brief excursion to discuss some artists' practices, where this problematic plays out in particular ways, and following this discussion will describe the position this research occupies in this context.

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V. 2. 1. Jimmie Durham

Jimmie Durham's practice frequently involves the creation of objects that reference Native American tribal artefacts. His sculptural projects employ the iconography and some of the materials of traditional American Indian culture, and combine it with contemporary mass produced objects and found materials, with language always playing a very important role in his practice.



Figure 42. Jimmie Durham, *Bedia's Muffler*, 1985.

Mixed media, 86.4 x 115.2 x 12 cm.

(Image courtesy of the artist and kurimanzotto, Mexico City.)

There's Plenty More Where These Came From (2008) is a collection of small found objects from the artist's studio, that are presented like a museum display of artefactual fragments. This work conflates the notion of the artist as a heroic, quasi sacred figure, where whatever he touches turns into a relic, with the fact that as a Native American, the artefactual traces of Durham's domestic everyday, might automatically have ethnographic significance. The work functions as an ironic statement on authenticity and the symbolic value of things.



Figure 43. Jimmie Durham, *There's Plenty More Where These Came From*, 2008.
Mixed media, 101.5 x 70 cm,
(Image courtesy of the artist and kurimanzotto, Mexico City.)

In response to the Smithsonian Institute's plans for a 'National Museum of the American Indian' in 1985, Durham made *On Loan from the Museum of The American Indian* (1985), a mixed media installation of objects and images from the artist's life, displayed in vitrines and on walls. 'Fake artefacts,' according to Durham, employed as part of an act of institutional critique.³¹¹

311. Jimmie Durham and Anne Ellegood, *Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World* (Munich London New York: DelMonico Books/Prestel, 2017), 22–23.

In what way does fictionality emerge in these works? Certainly, the objects Durham produces are imitations or fakes, if compared to traditional tribal artefacts, however, I would propose that they are not intended to be taken as such. They might be better understood as pertaining to an archaeology of contemporary Indigenous life, which becomes thus framed in the context of mass production, the alteration of natural and traditional landscapes, and the appropriation of traditional art as tourist objects. The work can be seen to imagine fictionally objects that capture this reality and generate narratives that whisper an alternative history of 'The American Indian.' Hal Foster in *The Artist as Ethnographer* describes Durham's 'hybrid works' as 'preemptively auto-primitivist,' thus enacting 'a reversal of ethnographic roles,' which in Foster's opinion 'resist further primitivising and anthropologising.'³¹²

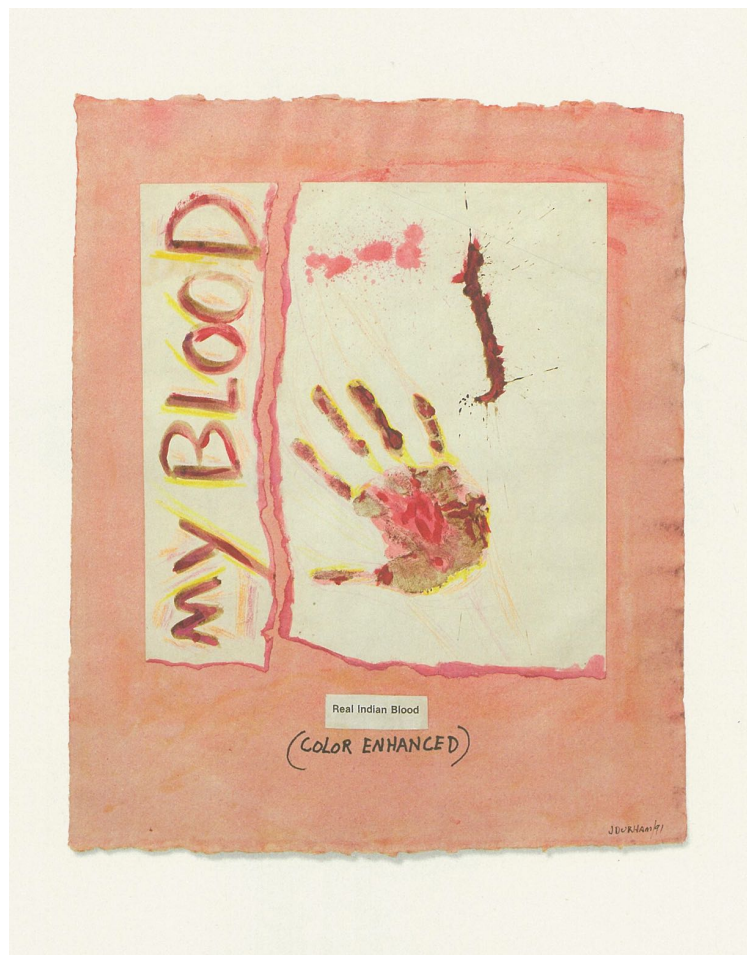


Figure 44. Jimmie Durham, *My Blood*, 1985/1991.
Acrylic paint, artist's blood on paper, 57 x 46.8 cm
(Image courtesy of the artist and kurimanzotto, Mexico City.)

312. Foster, 'The Artist as Ethnographer,' 199.

The situation is however more complicated in Durham's case. The recent retrospective *At the Center of the World*, Durham's first exhibition in America since the 1990's, reignited a heated controversy around the artist's 'true' cultural and ethnic identity. While in the exhibition catalogue Durham is described as 'of Cherokee descent',³¹³ the artist has been accused of 'ethnic fraud,' and of pretending to be Cherokee without having any verifiable connection to any of the Cherokee tribes.³¹⁴ Being recognised by a Native American tribe is a complicated process, reliant on historic documentation and various other factors, which are not undisputed. The website of the *First American Art Magazine*, where the controversy found extensive coverage, states: 'Self-identification is insufficient in determining Native identity,'³¹⁵ and that 'the important issue is not who you claim but rather who claims you.'³¹⁶

Anne Ellegood, the curator of the retrospective, frames the controversy in these terms: 'If Durham was raised to believe that Cherokee ancestry is part of his family history despite the lack of official registration—as he was—the question becomes whether he has any right to engage with that subject position.'³¹⁷ John G. Hampton, a Native Canadian Indian, in the essay 'Uncertain territories. Jimmie Durham's contradictions of identity,' presents another perspective on the topic. He argues that the 'institutional decision to sidestep the controversy . . . misses an opportunity to engage in a deeply relevant discussion of the complexities of self-identification, institutional validation and racial mobility within internationalist Indigenous

313. Ann Philbin, foreword to, Durham and Ellegood, *Jimmie Durham*, 8.

314. America Meredith, 'Ethnic Fraud and Art,' *Art in America* (August 15, 2017). <https://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazines/issues-commentary-ethnic-fraud-and-art/>.

315. Faazine, 'Facts and Resources: Jimmie Durham,' *First American Art Magazine*, June 8, 2017. <http://firstamericanartmagazine.com/facts-resources-jimmie-durham/>.

316. Steven Russell, 'Rachel Dolezal Outs Andrea Smith Again; Will Anybody Listen This Time?,' *Indian Country Today*, March 2, 2015. <https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/rachel-dolezal-outs-andrea-smith-again-will-anybody-listen-this-time-h7m2k-3PP0qPj7n0fH5Pcw/>. Native American tribes ultimately decide their citizenship autonomously. This has further significance in connection with the *Indian Arts and Crafts Act* from 1990, which regulates that only 'a member of any federally or officially State recognised Indian Tribe, or an individual certified as an Indian artisan by an Indian Tribe' is eligible to sell and market his work as Native American. 'Tribes determine their own membership—not the federal government—and can designate anyone they want as a tribal artisan.' Faazine, 'Facts and Resources: Jimmie Durham.' Durham has opposed this legislation which hinges on tribal registration, and which excludes him.

317. Anne Ellegood, 'Curator Anne Ellegood on Understanding the Complexities of Jimmie Durham's Native Identity,' *Artnet News*, August 2, 2017. <https://news.artnet.com/opinion/anne-ellegood-jimmie-durham-1033907>. Ellegood considers the campaign to expose Durham as not Native American as an act to 'to strip him of his life experiences and sense of identity and present him as something he does not understand himself to be: a white man.'

discourse.³¹⁸

I thoroughly agree with Hampton, as throughout his career, Durham has in fact continued to probe precisely the tensions involving categories, classifications and authenticity, and an awareness of the controversy provides audiences with a deeper understanding of the complexities his practice addresses. The tension between self-identification, and recognition by a collective, underscores that questions of cultural identity do not exist in isolation, but within communities, and affect who is entitled, or seen, to be speaking for whom, and about what cultural heritage.

Hal Foster writes: 'As the artist stands *in* the identity of a sited community, he or she may be asked to stand *for* this identity, to represent it institutionally. In this case the artist is primitivised, indeed anthropologised, in turn: here is your community, the institution says in effect, embodied in your artist, now on display.'³¹⁹ This observation captures well the contention, and the reasons for the adversary reactions from parts of the Native American community, who contend that indeed these mechanisms are at play in this instance.³²⁰

In the field of archaeological artefacts the counterpart to *fictional* is possibly *authentic*. Maybe Durhams's works are fictional artefacts, due to the fictional identity they construct, that oscillates and eludes final fixation. Fictionality might also indicate that an *authentic* cultural identity is something that might objectively not exist.

318. John G. Hampton, 'Uncertain Territory: Jimmie Durham's Contradictions of Identity', *Border Crossings* 37, no. 2 (June 2018): 58–64.

319. Foster, 'The Artist as Ethnographer,' 198.

320. See for example, America Meredith, 'Why It Matters That Jimmie Durham Is Not a Cherokee,' *Artnet News*, July 7, 2017, <https://news.artnet.com/opinion/jimmie-durham-america-meredith-1014164>.



Figure 45. Jimmie Durham, *Death*, 1991.
Bone, plastic, wood, metal, photograph, 66 x 50.8 x 7.6 cm.
(Image courtesy of the artist and kurimanzotto, Mexico City.)

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V. 2. 2. Francis Upritchard

Nicholas Mangan produced a series of grafted pseudo-artefacts in the installation *Mutant Message* (2006), that mixed Australian Aboriginal iconography with forms that referenced the colonial history of Australia. The resulting installation of 'brutish objects' contained, for example, a tripod-like sculpture, fashioned from native banksia plant, hair and spikes.³²¹ The object evoked the instruments of surveyors and photographers, used to capture, classify and subject both land, and Indigenous people of Australia in the name of the British Empire. Mangan's work raises critical questions about Australia's colonial past, souvenir economies and cultural ownership, which are 'problematized by his own identity as a non-indigenous Australian artist.'³²²

For artists who actively engage in these topics, questions around cultural identity and ownership remain critically important. Francis Upritchard is a Pākehā New Zealand artist, who works with fictional artefacts, and to whose practice these considerations seem very pertinent.

Her work *Traveller's Collection* from 2003 shows parallels with some of Mangan's concerns in the work *Mutant Message*.³²³ The work's aesthetic resembles that of a cabinet of curiosities, with its display of faux artefacts from a range of cultural references, side by side: animal heads grafted onto European pottery, referencing ancient Egyptian urns; a bandaged figure, looking like a miniature mummy; and strange riffs on Māori bone carvings, combined with other trinkets. The objects are tactile and detailed, captivating, but also slightly creepy. Upritchard cleverly re-stages the mixed affects of desire and fear triggered by looking at the strange *Other*—just as it might have been experienced by early collectors when gazing at their Wunderkammer.³²⁴

321. Mangan and McSpedden, *Nicholas Mangan*, 24.

322. Mangan and McSpedden, 60.

323. See also Mangan's *The Colony*, 2005.

324. Cabinets of curiosities appear from the Renaissance onwards in Europe.



Figure 46. Francis Upritchard, *Traveller's Collection*, 2003.
Mixed media, 91 x 153 x 61 cm. Saatchi Gallery Collection.
(© Francis Upritchard, 2003. Image courtesy of Saatchi Gallery, London.)

Traveller's Collection seems to reiterate the Western collector's gaze, critically associated with exploration, colonisation and dominance, however this perspective is not consistent across Upritchard's practice. In the exhibition *Doomed, Doomed, all Doomed* (2005), Upritchard appropriates the Māori customary practice of mokomokai (preserved heads). Among assorted fake Māori artefacts, the display cases also hold *Pākehā Heads*, fake preserved heads of white people—which raises the question of who is looking at whom here?

Upritchard's position remains ambivalent. It may be the case that Upritchard intentionally re-stages hierarchical systems of classification and cultural dominance, and by messing with the materials, objects and taxonomies, her work seeks to expose the *dominant gaze* to itself. From a Māori perspective however, in particular in the face of historic and contemporary grievances, Upritchard's work might be perceived as irreverent of the cultural significance of indigenous artefacts and customs. Upritchard's position cannot easily be pinned down as either explicitly critical of New Zealand's colonial history, or as directly reproducing and further perpetuating the appropriation of Māori cultural heritage by others, given that Upritchard is Pākehā. The tension that

resides in these ambiguities makes her work a relevant source for discussions around artefacts, authenticity and cultural identity.³²⁵

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325. There has been much controversy about Upritchard's work, and the politics and discourses around cultural issues in Aotearoa continue to shift over time. Two recent articles illustrate the discussions her work still engenders: Jessica Douglas, 'Push and Pull: My Internal Debate with Francis Upritchard's Work,' *Contemporary Hum*, 25.10.2018. <https://www.contemporaryhum.com/francis-upritchard-wetwang-slack>, and Lani Lopesi, 'The Moral Argument: A Review of *Jealous Saboteurs*,' *The Pantograph Punch*, 18.10.2017. <https://www.pantograph-punch.com/post/review-jealous-saboteurs/>.

V. 2. 3. Artefacts in the Project

Before launching into the discussion of cultural referentiality in the objects presented as artefacts in this project, it might be useful to describe, how they emerged out of the art making process.³²⁶ In the initial experimentations with object assemblages and their over-spraying with paint for *Small Scenes*, there was no intention of creating artefactual objects. However, through the repeated use of the *same* materials over the course of multiple iterations and cycles of over-spraying, repurposing and re-deployment, I found myself suddenly looking at a collection of artefactual traces: bits of Perspex encrusted with plasticine, MDF triangles covered in multiple layers of paint, and various plasticine objects that had retained the deformations, 'suffered' from their repeated use. These objects emitted the temporal layering of archaeological traces, and had also in a strange way become meaningful to me as 'memory objects.'³²⁷

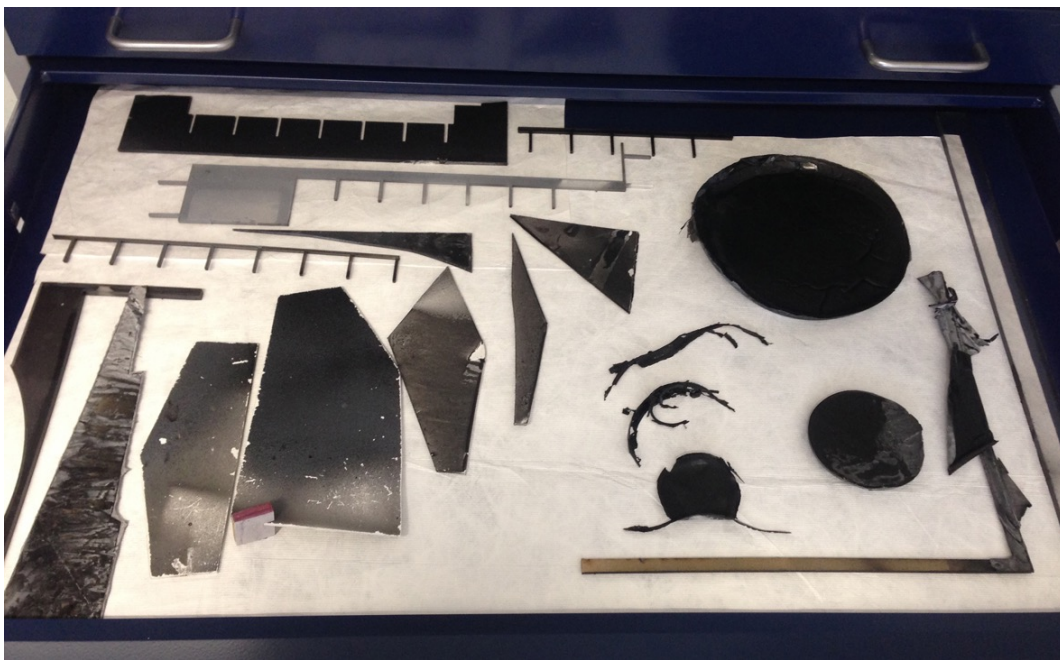


Figure 47. Susanna Bauer, collection of artefacts from *Small Scenes* assemblages, 2018.

The fictional character of these objects is evident, if they are interpreted as imitating ancient archaeological artefacts. However this is only one facet of their *story*. They are

326. I will focus here solely on the objects within the *Artefacts* display, and will discuss the installation set up in more detail in chapter VIII. 6. 'Realm of Connectivity.'

327. As cited earlier, Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 132.

also objects that I dug up from the debris of the industrial design workshop; materials and shapes that spoke to me as artefactual objects already—even if the trace was rudimentary, partial and blurry. The objects are also indexical of the art making process itself, and are ‘real’ artefacts in relation to it. They make tangible how fictionality and reality intermingle in this project and are at times difficult to separate with certainty.

While both, Upritchard’s and Durham’s fictional artefacts are mostly figurative and representational, charged with distinct cultural references, the character of the artefactual objects in this project is much more abstract.

While abstraction blurs specificities, certain aspects in the work inevitably flow from my own personal context, as already mentioned in the context of *Small Scenes*.³²⁸ By working from within my personal sphere of reference, which is my own cultural identity, I am also working from within Aotearoa, where I have spent a significant part of my life, and am thus part of its contemporary cultural particularity, however hybrid and blurred that may be.

The research, to be clear, does not imply that cultural specificity is irrelevant, nor is abstraction employed to deny the importance of these specificities. However the project’s aim is not the construction of ethnographies—personal or other. Instead, it seeks to trace a meaning-making process, flowing from an experience of material traces more generally. Through fictionality and abstraction the research creates a possibility to circumnavigate local and historical particularities, in order to afford the inquiry a specific focus.³²⁹

328. Chapter IV. 7. Otherworldly. Additional to references of their past as design refuse, and their indexicality of the art making process, already mentioned above.

329. Fictionality affords selected focus, as discussed in chapter III. Fictionality.



Figure 48. Susanna Bauer, *The Quarry / Artefacts*, 2018.
Installation detail. Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington.

The aesthetic, formal and material choices made in the art project seek to work within a concept of *semblance*, as described by Brian Massumi.³³⁰ In the perception of an object, semblance gives rise to relational trajectories that expand outwards from this encounter. Massumi's understanding of an art object, or an aesthetic motif, as a 'singular-generic,' means that beyond the object's particularity, a 'certain genericness' arises that 'points towards others "like it".'³³¹ From its 'dynamic form' flows a 'virtual potential,'³³² which is 'abstracting from the form actually seen.'³³³ This more readily occurs in aesthetic perception, than in ordinary life, where perceptions are manifold, and become immediately overlaid by others, before such 'abstractions' can take shape. Through choosing forms and materials, that might have a greater potential to channel this abstracting dynamic, by being less fixed within particularity from the outset, the work seeks to access a wider range of connectivities to emerge.

The other considerations that drive the relationship between abstract and referential elements in the work are informed by a thinking extrapolated by Georges

330. Massumi, 'The Thinking-Feeling,' 1–40.

331. Massumi, 10.

332. Massumi, 3.

333. Massumi, 5.

Didi-Huberman in his essay 'The Detail and the Pan.'³³⁴ This text has been very influential for my practice, as it captures and conceptualises the liminal space shaped by the tension arising from the superimposition of representational regimes of abstraction and regimes of referentiality, which my work has been probing for some time.

Didi-Huberman, who develops his argument in the context of painting, discusses the relationship of small areas of intense material presence within an overall pictorial, figurative framework.³³⁵ Within an overarching established referential scheme, even areas of marginal mimetic quality will be interpreted in consistence with this regime. However, upon zooming in on these localised areas, 'representational vacuities' become obvious,³³⁶ and the viewer experiences 'an effect of painting as coloured material, not as descriptive sign.'³³⁷ As non-semiotic, abstract aspects take over, these areas begin to reveal the 'material cause' of the image,³³⁸ and the 'opaque materiality of paint' itself.³³⁹

334. Georges Didi-Huberman, 'The Detail and the Pan,' in *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 229–310.

335. Didi-Huberman discusses several works of Vermeer as examples.

336. Didi-Huberman, 'The Detail and the Pan,' 257.

337. Didi-Huberman, 248.

338. Didi-Huberman, 254. Didi-Huberman refers to the index, instead of an iconic dimension, in Peirce's sense, prevailing in the small patches. For discussion of indexicality see chapter VI. 3.1. *Sprayographs, Photograms and Indexicality*.

339. Didi-Huberman, 240.



Figure 49. Susanna Bauer, *Artefacts*, 2018. Working process, detail.

In *The Quarry*, referentiality is anchored within the overall installation—through its title, as much as through the forms and images that retain mimetic qualities, by connoting ruins, fossils, and artefacts. Simultaneously, magnified partial vistas instead of global overviews, cropped frames, and close to the ground perspectives, all tend to dissolve mimesis and exert a gravitational force towards abstraction.

Just like a global ‘mimetic economy’ can solicit the referential interpretation of an otherwise abstract materiality,³⁴⁰ so can a tiny ‘patch’ of paint ‘infect . . . the entire picture,’³⁴¹ according to Didi-Huberman, as an effect of the ‘expansive force of the local in the global.’³⁴² *The Quarry* attempts to foray into this border territory, where the referential schemes dissolve in favour of an experience of materiality itself.

I have been captivated by the entanglement of these two regimes, and their mutually destabilising forces, and would propose that this tension in an art work, if

340. Didi-Huberman, 254.

341. Didi-Huberman, 256. This calls up notions of *the minor* and *deterritorialisation* (Gille Deleuze), and *creolisation* (Eduárd Glissant), as the dynamics of the margin exerting influence on the centre.

342. Didi-Huberman, 257.

successfully captured, retains a level of self-reflectivity by withholding total abandon within either of the two spheres.

In summary, while referential interpretations are enabled in the work through a suggestive potential residing in the materials and images, these are not fully formulated and have to be interpreted by the viewers. This is aimed to enable a multiplicity of narrative connections. Simultaneously, the work seeks to enable a degree of immediacy in the encounter with a material world, that is for a moment imagined as unmediated and direct.



Figure 50. Susanna Bauer, *The Quarry / Artefacts*, 2018.
Installation view, Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington.

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V. 3. Contemporary Artefacts: Refuse

Leonid Tsvetkov, whose practice has already found mention in the context of models and ruins, is also worth mentioning in the consideration of fictional artefacts. I see particular relevance in his attention to everyday refuse as an archaeology of the contemporary, which relates to the use of discarded materials in this art project.³⁴³ His investigation of refuse also recalls the *Dump Dig* projects undertaken by Mark Dion.

His installation *Downfall* (2013), in Rome, constructs a link between contemporary society and antiquity via their respective objects of waste. This project evolved in response to Monte Testaccio in Rome, an artificial hill formed from oil amphora fragments during the second and third century CE.



Figure 51. Leonid Tsvetkov, *Downfall*, 2013.
Cement casts of household packaging, dimensions variable.
(Image courtesy of the artist.)

In *Downfall*, Tsvetkov presents a series of ‘cement casts of household packaging’ that are at random inserted amongst the permanent display of antique artefacts at the exhibition site.³⁴⁴ There is something counter-intuitive in this reproduction of refuse that increases its visibility and permanence—Tsvetkov casts monuments to waste.

343. Predominantly the use of recovered materials from the design workshop.

344. Leonid Tsvetkov (website), *Downfall*, <https://leonidtsvetkov.com/portfolio/468/>.

In a follow-on project the artist secretly deposited the cast packaging at different archaeological sites and ruin fields. This infiltration questions the established categories of interpretation and evaluation of artefacts and ruins. The insertion of the *fake* undermines one of the most crucial values of archaeology: authenticity. Visitors are awed by the breath of history from an ancient past that becomes physically tangible in the authentic artefact. The undisclosed fake renders this auratic experience a fraud, revealing it as an act of the imaginary, a romantic desire located in the subjectivity of the viewer.³⁴⁵



Figure 52. Leonid Tsvetkov, *Downfall*, 2013.
Cement casts of household packaging, dimensions variable.
(Image courtesy of the artist.)

345. See chapter II. Archaeology, which interprets the encounter with artefacts as a process of self-reflection rather than a gathering of factual knowledge about another time.



Figure 53. Leonid Tsvetkov, *Downfall*, 2013.
Cement casts of household packaging, dimensions variable.
(Image courtesy of the artist.)

Tsvetkov's *contaminating* intervention challenges the presumption of temporal and material order at archaeological sites, by pointing towards notions of palimpsest and heterogeneity instead.³⁴⁶ What once were ordinary blocks of stone, are now treasured as ruins, and contemporary archaeology gains the most valuable insights from prehistoric rubbish pits. Seen from a temporal distance, Tsvetkov's cement casts might acquire similar *historic value*; as fictional artefacts they enact an anticipated future temporality.³⁴⁷

There are parallels in the construction of artefacts between Tsvetkov's practice and this research, in the use of discarded materials which become transformed into artefacts through the art making process. As a point of difference, Tsvetkov's project remains tightly entangled with the actual archaeological sites with which it enters into a conversation.

346. Palimpsest will find further mention in chapter VIII. 'Realm of Connectivity.'

347. In this sense his work is related to works like Villar Rojas's in its anticipatory perspective of the future.

Downfall speaks to the layering of time and cultures, as he shifts viewer perspective from the present moment, to an imagined present in the future. The same mechanism simultaneously superimposes today's viewer with their antique counterpart, and their (im)possible imagining of their contemporary refuse in its future artefactual role. Tsvetkov's fictional artefacts splice present, past and future and, for an uncanny moment, disrupt the continuity of *here and now*.

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VI. Trace and Inscription

VI. 1. Traces

As per my proposition, this research defines itself as an inquiry into the temporal trajectories of objects and materials affected by human engagement. I will in the following outline how the notion of *traces* has been approached in this research project.

The first definition of *trace* in the online *Oxford Dictionary* is: 'A mark, object, or other indication of the existence or passing of something.'³⁴⁸ Couched within this initial notion, and crucial to this project, is the fact that the trace relates to a *past tense*, as the time when it was generated. The material trace is the physical *presence that is the sign of an absence*; the absence of the past when the causal event occurred.

Besides other meanings relating to scientific or mathematical contexts, I also found relevant 'a procedure to investigate the source of something,' in the sense of putting a trace on something, tracking, following it—which speaks to archaeological interests and will be relevant in chapter VI. 4. 1. *Sprayograph Scan*.³⁴⁹

While Jacques Derrida is often referred to in this context, his use of the term *trace* fulfils a distinct, strategic purpose, inextricably tied to his project of deconstruction, and his definitions should therefore not be lifted out of context. Nevertheless, Derrida does build his use of the term on the notion of *absence* inherent in the presence of the trace.³⁵⁰

Paul Ricoeur sustains this notion of the trace when he instructs to 'think it both as an effect of the present and a sign of its absent cause.'³⁵¹ However, Ricoeur considers

348. *Oxford Dictionaries English*, s.v. 'trace,' accessed 3 December 2018, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/trace>. Additional definitions of trace: 2. 'A very small quantity, especially one too small to be accurately measured.' 3. 'A procedure to investigate the source of something.' 4. 'A line which represents the projection of a curve or surface on a plane or the intersection of a curve or surface with a plane.' For full record see *ibid*.

349. *Oxford Dictionaries English*, s.v. 'trace.'

350. 'Derrida's trace [erasure] is the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present, of the lack of the origin that is the condition of thought and experience.' Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, translator's preface to, Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), xvii.

351. Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 552.

this to be the case only for immaterial traces like memories.³⁵² In his discussion of Ricoeur's book *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Abdelmajid Hannoum describes memory as 'the representation of the past which is . . . the issue of the presence of something absent.'³⁵³ Memory can be considered as a trace of the past that is non-physical.

However, rather than positioning memory as a counterpart to the material trace, Olivier interweaves both terms when he speaks of 'material memory.'³⁵⁴ He elaborates that 'a memory object is one in which time is inscribed, or better stated, a material entity in which the memory of a moment in time is recorded.'³⁵⁵

Memory and material traces also interweave, when memory is triggered by objects, or other physical traces of the past.³⁵⁶ The biographical segments within this document testify to this. Memory is always at hand, influencing what becomes meaningful to us, and how we relate to the materiality of the past.

For Geiser, as his grasp on chronological time vanes, gradually memory and present merge into one. As he relives the events of his distant past again, they begin to overlay and displace the experiences of the present. At the same time, Geiser is terrified by the increasing absences in his recollections: 'It is not so much the bad weather— . . . What would be bad would be losing one's memory— . . . No knowledge without memory.'³⁵⁷ Geiser's fear of memory loss is less about forgetting facts, than it is a recognition that memory gives meaning to our lives by threading the connections that shape our personal narratives. 'Memory,' Umberto Eco writes, 'both individual and collective, forms our understanding of the world.'³⁵⁸

While I recognise the strong impact memory has on any kind of meaning-making we engage in, I need to constrain the focus of this research to remain with physical traces, as its scope is insufficient to expand into another expansive and complex area of discourse. However, memory might remain as a topic and pathway towards further research within my practice in the future.

352. As Ricoeur goes on to say: 'However in the material trace, there is no otherness, no absence, everything in it is a positivity and a presence.' Ricoeur, 552.

353. Abdelmajid Hannoum, 'Paul Ricoeur on Memory', *Theory Culture & Society* 22 (1 December 2005): 124. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276405059418>.

354. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 34. He also speaks of 'the memory things hold' (Olivier, 28).

355. Olivier, 132.

356. For the different types of memory see *The Human Memory* (website,) <http://www.human-memory.net/types.html>.

357. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 5–6.

358. Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, 130–131.

The research project set out to consider several main categories of traces, in part derived from the archaeological field. One obvious group of traces are artefacts, as purposefully constructed objects of functional or aesthetic purpose.³⁵⁹ Rome's antique amphora remnants, or a recovered piece of jewellery on the Thames shore, both fall into this category, as do the extinguished satellites that continue to orbit around the earth.³⁶⁰

On a larger scale, architectural structures and their remnants shape another category of anthropogenic traces, often subsumed under the rubric of ruins. While the classic ruins of antiquity are characterised by a simplicity of materials—predominantly wood and stone, the high-rises, air ports and factories of the industrial era, are complex assemblages of diverse materials and hybrid objects, that characterise the ruins they leave behind in distinct ways.³⁶¹

I am further proposing a category of *collateral traces*, as subsuming the inadvertent material byproducts of human activity. They are the scratches, chips and cracks, the scuff marks and the chafing, the shards and crumbs, the accidentally left thumb- and footprints on, or within any kind of material entity or surface. They are the fallout objects from all kinds of production, the off-cuts, and the rejects, they are the altered landscapes of mines and quarries, and the oily sediments that wash up on acidic ocean shores. In an expanded sense these could be considered as the unintended ecological consequences of human-material engagement.³⁶²

Traces may be dramatic or minor, of short duration or enduring. While they contain a record of another temporality, they also contain temporality in themselves; however the trace has an altered duration to its source event. This project is concerned with the trace itself, as an entity beyond its indexical connection to a source event.

Geiser can't really see anything through fog and rain, but he visualises slips and the sight of toppled over trees: 'Its trunk will then be lying with its smashed crown pointing down the slope, the black roots spread out in the air and the rock exposed, gneiss or schist, elsewhere nagelfluh.'³⁶³

359. Or a combination of both.

360. See Leonid Tsvetkov's project *Downfall*, chapter V. 3.; Mark Dion, *Tate Thames Dig*, chapter II. 5.; Hito Steyerl, 'In Free Fall,' 25.

361. For example, consider the ruin of the Twin Towers—glass, steel, cables, etc.

362. Not limited to the *natural* or bio-organic environment, rather in the sense that ecology describes 'the set of relationships existing between any complex system and its surroundings or environment.' *Dictionary.Com*, s.v. 'ecology,' accessed February 13, 2019, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/ecology>.

363. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 13.

While the research is focused on the traces of human engagement with the material world, rather than with those of natural events, in practice, the histories of culture and nature become often entangled within traces. The archaeological distinction between the *anthropogenic* trace and the 'natural accumulations in which they lie' cannot always be made reliably.³⁶⁴ At a site like Pompeii, for example, the traces of human activity and natural catastrophe are literally amalgamated in the archaeological remains. In fact, so-called 'natural events' may also be triggered by human activity. Severe weather events like storms and floods are becoming more frequent, for example, as human agency is affecting climate change.

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364. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 181. See also 'foraging the ground to extract "antiquities" is not at all a simple affair, for the artifacts that they are trying to draw out have fused in part with the sediment in which they lie' (Olivier, 44).

VI. 2. Material

Material remnants have the ability to make physically tangible what remains otherwise at a remove from direct human experience. As some forms of matter vastly outlast human temporality, they are able to transmit traces from distant pasts.³⁶⁵ The research is an inquiry into material temporalities that are *other* than human temporality, that *differ* in the way they register time.

My gravitation towards an investigation based on materiality finds its background in an art practice defined by *material thinking*, where materials and their experience have driven artistic processes, and have been channelled into conceptual considerations.

The term *material thinking* is often referenced back to Paul Carter's book of the same title, which puts forward an analysis of the *Theory and Practice of Creative Research*.³⁶⁶ Carter argues broadly for the recognition of creative practice, in particular collaboration, as an active form of research, that is discursive, localised and political. Carter's initial notion of material thinking, and his emphasis on processuality, has inspired a wider field of practitioners to explore the original and varied research pathways emerging from creative practice.³⁶⁷ Laurene Vaughan, in the online research platform *Studies in Material Thinking*, interprets material thinking as 'the materialisation of thinking, the material of thinking, or thinking that takes place through material which may or may not result in a materialised, realised or made thought.'³⁶⁸

Material thinking, in my understanding, designates two things: that an art inquiry take its departure point from a material state—be it physically tangible, or virtual, or imagined. Secondly, that the processes of working with and manipulating these material states constitute a mode of thinking that emerges *through* these processes, and

365. These materials might be best captured as inorganic, non-human materials.

366. Paul Carter, *Material Thinking: The Theory and Practice of Creative Research* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Publishing, 2004).

367. The online research communication platform *Studies in Material Thinking*, hosted by the Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies, Auckland University of Technology from 2007–2017, gathers many different positions from creative research practitioners. <https://materialthinking.org/smt-research-communication-platform>.

368. Laurene Vaughan, 'Material Thinking as Place Making', *Studies in Material Thinking* 1, no. 1 (April 2007): 2, https://www.materialthinking.org/sites/default/files/papers/Laurene_0.pdf. The online research communication platform *Studies in Material Thinking*, hosted by the Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies, Auckland University of Technology from 2007–2017, gathers many different positions from creative research practitioners. <https://materialthinking.org/smt-research-communication-platform>.

thereby facilitate the exploration of whatever concept or idea is pursued.

Material thinking is to hold an object and prod it, to sniff it and turn it, to move it, up and down, side to side. It means deliberate slowness and patience to observe. It means working through conceptual questions while covering a piece of found Perspex with a thin layer of blue plasticine. At times it means putting things together, at times it is through cutting apart, that relationships become clear.³⁶⁹ Material thinking in this project expresses itself as an interplay between intuition and conceptual pursuit.

The research is also responding to a material experience of tension and change. The tangible things around me seem strangely at odds with the images flooding in from everywhere and every-when, delivering close-up views of the nominally distant. Notions of what is considered material versus immaterial are also changing; approaching materiality as limited to the sphere of tangible things, as 'the quality of being composed by matter' hasn't been a comprehensive definition at least since the Theory of Relativity.³⁷⁰ Alfred Einstein certainly made it clear that the distinction between matter and non-tangible entities, like energy, was temporary at best. As Bertrand Russel summarised:

'Matter, for common sense, is something which persists in time and moves in space. But for modern relativity physics this view is no longer tenable. A piece of matter has become, not a persistent thing with varying states, but a system of inter-related events. The old solidity is gone, and with it the characteristics that, to the materialist, made matter seem more real than fleeting thoughts.'³⁷¹

New technologies produce new material states that require adaptations of the term materiality.³⁷² Digitally composed virtual objects are capable of effecting traces in the form of digital artefacts, for example, just as much as objects in the tangible world are. This affects disciplines like archaeology as a flow-on effect.³⁷³ This inquiry seeks to acknowledge the continuous reshaping of the material world. In the project, analog material states are thus interwoven with, and mediated through images, as well as being transformed through manipulations that extend materiality into the digital and virtual fields.

369. In chapter IV. 4. Field Work this process of material thinking is central.

370. According to google dictionary, s.v. 'materiality,' accessed February 15, 2019. <https://www.google.com/>.

371. Bertrand Russel 1961, quoted in P. C. W. Davies and Niels Henrik Gregersen, eds., *Information and the Nature of Reality: From Physics to Metaphysics* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 328.

372. This finds further mention in chapter VI. 3. 1. *Sprayographs*, Photograms and Indexicality.

373. Media archaeology, for example, has emerged as a relatively new field within archaeology.

In German, the word *Material* specifically refers to physical matter intended for a productive purpose. The use of the term materiality in this research, thus also contains a reference to an implied critique of capitalist societies, that consider the physical environment effectively as free to be consumed for production, to be traded as an economic asset, and disposed of when no longer useful.

The project inhabits this critique metaphorically, where ruins act as symbols of destruction, piles of debris draw an image of boundless consumption and waste, and where the gaping voids of quarries become the absent monuments of resource exploitation. The dogged persistence of traces in the project, sustaining themselves across transformations and mediations also speaks to the enduring effects of human actions on the non-human environment.

New Materialism, and post-human philosophies in particular, make attempts to reconsider the ontology of the material world through new perspectives that move away from anthropologically centred world views. Part of the New Materialist discourse defines itself against a backdrop of anthropogenic ecological crisis associated with the notion of the Anthropocene.³⁷⁴ New Materialisms seek to consider the agency of the material world from a perspective that emphasises our entanglement with, rather than difference from, the non-human world.

Over the course of the research I have made several attempts to engage with the field of New Materialisms and bring its theories to bear on the project, compelled by its strong presence in the philosophical contextualisations of contemporary material practice. I also recognised that—apart from the *material* connection, there might exist some shared contextual terrain, through the research's concerns with the 'contemporary condition,' globalisation and digital mediality, ecological concerns and the experience of a changing material world.

374. 'The Anthropocene defines Earth's most recent geologic time period as being human-influenced, or anthropogenic, based on overwhelming global evidence that atmospheric, geologic, hydrologic, biospheric and other earth system processes are now altered by humans. . . . The Anthropocene is distinguished as a new period either after or within the Holocene, the current epoch, which began approximately 10,000 years ago (about 8000 BC) with the end of the last glacial period. *Welcome to the Anthropocene* (website), <http://www.anthropocene.info/>.

This is not an uncontested approach, critiqued as in fact reinforcing an anthropocentric view, albeit a negative one, as well as reiterating the exceptional position of modernity. See Claire Colebrook, 'We Have Always Been Post-Anthropocene: The Anthropocene Counterfactual,' in Grusin Richard, ed., *Anthropocene Feminism* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 1–20. https://www.academia.edu/12757260/We_Have_Always_Been_Post-Anthropocene.

Within the broad field of New Materialism, theorists have developed a number of theoretical approaches which seek to overcome the binary divides between human and non-human, matter and knowledge, nature and culture, which, according to New Materialism, have been defining an anthropocentric world view. Instead, Karen Barad, for example, proposes the notion of 'intra-action,' where a presumption of individual entities, that 'interact,' is replaced by a system of performative relationalities, in the sense of 'phenomena,' where 'observer and observed,' cannot be separated, and 'distinct' objects only emerge within, and contingent to, their mutual relationships.³⁷⁵

New Materialism overall, however, has remained a parallel trajectory in this research, as it hasn't led to specifically productive intersections with the research proposition and its practical explorations. While I didn't want to close myself off to this field of current discourse, I had to recognise that re-reading, or circling wider within the field still didn't render any positions that presented as substantially related enough to become truly relevant in this project.

In the first instance, the research is not an investigation of the *ontology* of materiality itself—despite noting the symptoms of a contemporary materiality that is fluid and changing.³⁷⁶ It is here relevant to recall the disciplines from which New Materialisms predominantly arise. Karen Barad, for example, describes her proposition of 'agential realism' as an 'epistemological-ontological-ethical framework'³⁷⁷ and her subject matter as 'questions of science, politics, ethics and epistemology.'³⁷⁸ Because it emerges predominantly from the fields of philosophy, science and social studies, New Materialist discourse can, in my view, overdetermine the tangible experimental and processual pathways within art practice. I think it needs to be considered carefully, whether, and in what capacity, these theories are transferrable, and whether their use as a primary theoretical framing within art practice is productive.

The deeper reason why I didn't find a necessary correlation with New Materialisms, emerged clearly, once I had begun to grasp my own research process more acutely, and New Materialism presented as ultimately outside the focus of this research. It became apparent, that the research inquiry is more pertinently defined by other terms, which frame the project more accurately in relation to its particular concerns.

375. Karen Michelle Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, 2007), 33.

376. It is instead interested specifically in the experience of temporality that might flow from an encounter with material traces, as articulated by the research proposition.

377. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 26.

378. Barad, 5.

As a precursory comment, my own thinking *through* and *with* materials in art practice—a notion I choose to describe as *material thinking*, as defined above, seems to already enact the intra-action between matter and knowledge production Barad suggests, maybe in more practically oriented ways. *Material thinking* is describing the processual and productive engagement with material, undertaken by this project.³⁷⁹

Besides this, through the proposition of a *fictional archaeology*, I identified a more meaningful trajectory to capture the particularity of this making and thinking. Archaeology gathers notions of non-linear temporality in ways most pertinent to the research aims.³⁸⁰ Furthermore, and I will emphasise this, the encounter with material traces is constructed as a *fictional* event. This fictionalising in the work, aims at an experience of temporality articulating itself in narrative ways; a narrativity that extends into alternative universes of imagining, that flow, however, from the material traces. This might appear paradoxical, but it captures the project's inner workings and conception accurately.

Encountering materiality here does not mean encountering *the real*, neither is it about defining the nature of the material trace *in reality*. The research understands reality fictionally, as a layered imaginary potential attached to the encounter with material traces. The project pursues a *poetic* of this encounter with material traces and their temporality, considered as an aesthetic experience.

*

379. Notwithstanding that someone else might seek to analyse this project via philosophical terms anchored in NewMaterialism. However, in my view, this would bypass the parameters of thinking and making I responded to and which were crucial to the outcomes of this inquiry.

380. See chapters VIII. 3. Archaeological Time, and VIII. 5. Discontinuity.

VI. 3. *Sprayographs*

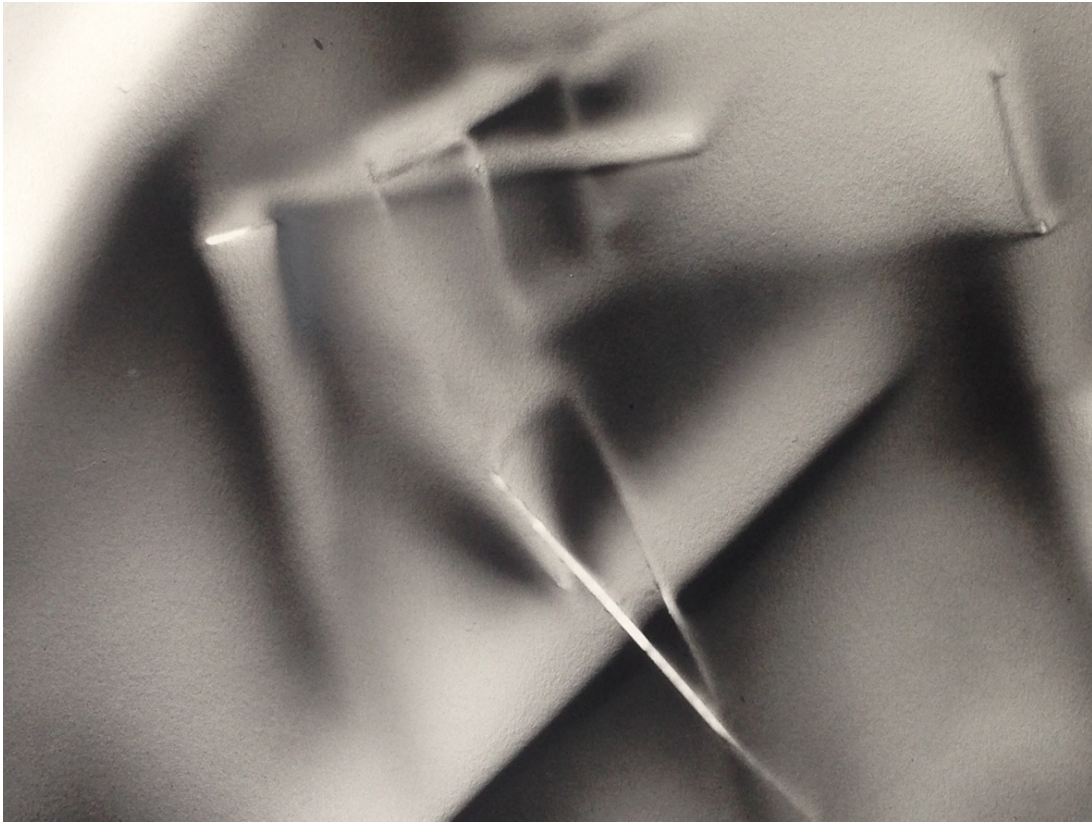


Figure 54. Susanna Bauer, *Sprayograph* from *Small Scenes* assemblage in Figure 55 below, series 3, 2018. Acrylic on paper, detail.

Picture frames or pieces of furniture often leave halos on walls, when they are being moved after a long period of time. Shadow silhouettes have become imprinted by the exposure to light, dust, or smoke, as traces of the object's former presence, but also as testimony to the durational aspect of this presence.

I have applied a similar process in order to record the model assemblages of the *Small Scenes*. I began to experiment with over-spraying the model scenes with paint, which leaves imprints on paper placed underneath and behind the assemblages.³⁸¹ Depending on spray direction and intensity, this form of 3D stencilling results in varied combinations of painted areas, negative spaces, and gradient shadows on the paper.

381. The choice to employ spray paint at this stage flowed naturally from prior experiments with stencilling that were focused on the tension between negative and positive spaces.

These imprints are referred to as *Sprayographs* throughout the research.³⁸²

By capturing the traces of the model assemblages, the *Sprayographs* establish the mediation of temporal events and three-dimensional objects in form of two-dimensional imprints. Due to the change in dimension, the way they capture time differs from the temporal registers of the *Small Scenes*.³⁸³



Figure 55. Susanna Bauer, *Small Scenes* assemblage spray painted, 2018. Working process.

On a fictional level, where the *Small Scenes* might resemble architectural traces, the spray paint enacts a time lapse, by simulating the fictional events that the ruins would potentially be exposed to over time. The sprayographs are in some way analogous to the silhouettes of archaeological sites, sunken below the ground surface and retraced

382. I have chosen this title, in analogy to the way that in cameraless photography names were often derived from the artist's name or from the processes involved—for example, *Schadographs* were made by Christian Schad, who started this tradition of naming around 1919. See also Man Ray's *Rayographs*; otherwise there are chemiograms, sungrams, etc.

383. The purposes and effects of these transformations across media will be discussed in depth in chapter VII. Metamorphosis and Erosion.

by aerial photography: 'Viewed from above, the tracings of levelled foundations and filled-in trenches appeared as large light or dark linear shapes that seemed engraved upon the earth's crust.'³⁸⁴ After the disappearance of the ruin, the *Sprayographs* mark both, its physical absence and its temporality.

The development of this process was an important step towards the methodology of transformation that is core to this project. While the *Sprayographs* are an in-between stage and find further transformation through digital animation, they warrant consideration in the context of related art practices by themselves.



Figure 56. Susanna Bauer, *Sprayograph* from *Small Scene* assemblage in Figure 55 above, series 3, 2018. Acrylic on paper, 110 x 115 cm.

384. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 129.

VI. 3. 1. *Sprayographs*, Photograms, Indexicality

Indexicality is a concept that is crucially relevant to how traces are understood, and intended to operate in this research project. While it is particularly relevant to discuss this aspect in the context of the *Sprayographs*, indexicality has implications across this project as a whole.

I will use a comparison between *Sprayographs* and photograms in order to elucidate my interpretation of indexicality and its role in the project.

The *index* and *indexicality* are terms that were originally defined by Charles S. Peirce in the context of semiotics, and as part of his 'classification of signs.'³⁸⁵ Indexicality describes the part of the sign-function that relates the sign 'existentially' to an 'object,' in a relationship of causality.³⁸⁶

This makes clear, why indexicality is so pertinent to traces, as what defines a trace as a trace, is precisely an existential link to whatever caused it. Importantly, by referring to a trace as an index, one emphasises the ability of the trace to indicate, or *to point* towards this cause *because* of this existential connection.³⁸⁷

Peirce's concept is readily applicable beyond language, and has in particular become associated with photography's ability to record images as the physical traces of the world, transmitted 'directly' by light. It is through photography in turn, it appears, that indexicality has become associated with the automatic assumption of a *physical contact*. However, this is not an essential feature, as will be shown.³⁸⁸

385. Martin Lefebvre, 'The Art of Pointing. On Peirce, Indexicality, and Photographic Images,' 14. https://www.academia.edu/192769/The_Art_of_Pointing._On_Peirce_Indexicality_and_Photographic_Images. See also Charles Sanders Peirce, 'Logic as Semiotic: A Theory of Signs,' in Charles S. Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York, Dover Publications 1955), 98–119.

386. See Lefebvre, 'The Art of Pointing,' 1. According to Lefebvre, Peirce's 'symbol,' 'icon' and 'index' are part of a 'trichotomy' that expresses '*how . . . the sign represent[s] its object,*' (my emphasis, Lefebvre, 2). In case of the 'symbol,' this connection is defined by convention, in case of the 'icon,' it is defined by resemblance. The 'index' describes a sign that is 'existentially' linked to what it stands for (Lefebvre, 2). See also Charles S. Peirce and James Hoopes, *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

387. Lefebvre, 'The Art of Pointing,' 5. 'Anything that is affected by something else may serve to represent, by contiguity, that which affects it.'

388. Kris Paulsen, 'The Index and the Interface', *Representations* 122, no. 1 (1 May 2013): 94, <https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2013.122.1.83>. Pointing, for example, is one of the actions Peirce describes as indexical, and here no physical contact exists.

Sprayographs share a processual analogy and a similarity in appearance with photograms, a form of cameraless photography. Photograms result from objects being placed on photosensitive paper, which is then exposed to light. The areas shaded from light remain white, as the negative spaces that demarcate the silhouette of the objects.³⁸⁹ The shadow imprints of the *Sprayographs* are caused in a similar way, except that here the exposure is to paint spray instead of light rays. A comparison between *Sprayographs* and photograms thus suggested itself from early on in the research.

The exhibition *Emanations* in 2016 at the Govett-Brewster Gallery in New Plymouth, New Zealand, displayed a very comprehensive historical overview of cameraless photography. Similarities between Man Ray's *Rayographs*, or Lázló Moholy-Nagy's photograms, for example, to the *Sprayographs* are easily identifiable. In the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, curator Geoffrey Batchen emphasises photograms' 'indexical capacities,' as a result of their 'direct contact with the world,'³⁹⁰ which he therefore considers as an 'art of the real.'³⁹¹

389. The field of cameraless photography is varied and broad, including chemical and mechanical manipulations of photosensitive paper. From this field, photograms are most closely related to *Sprayographs*. For an historic overview of practices of cameraless photography see Geoffrey Batchen, introduction to *Emanations: The Art of the Cameraless Photograph* (Munich; London; New York: DelMonico Books, 2016), 4–51. Published on the occasion of the exhibition of the same title, organised and presented by Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand, April 29–August 14, 2016.

390. Batchen, *Emanations*, 46. Batchen proposes that cameraless photography makes 'permeable the division between reality and its representation' and describes the images as 'an emanation of that world rather than its copy' (Batchen, 47). This seems to suggest that cameraless photography consists of an essential connection to event and object that is non-representational.

391. Batchen, 5.



Figure 57. Poppy Lekner, *Huygen's Jewels*, 2017.
Sungram on silver gelatin, 31 x 42 cm. (Courtesy of the artist.)³⁹²

392. From the exhibition Poppy Lekner, *Horizons—Meta Scientific Explorations With Cameraless Photography* at Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand, 2017. 'The process of making a sungram, or lumen, involves a much longer than usual exposure to sunlight (or other UV light source) of the photosensitive paper (to achieve the desired areas of shadow and light) before carrying out the traditional darkroom based photographic processing, with the exception of the developer stage, i.e. the print is only treated with the fix, then washed. The resulting image is subtle shades of pink/grey and varies according to length of exposure, intensity of the light, and the type and age of the paper.' Poppy Lekner, 2019.

Certainly, photograms sustain an existential relationship to the objects placed on them, while other affordances of photography, like iconically capturing a panoramic scene, or evoking a narrative, might be less prominent. However, in my view, Batchen's triangulation from physical 'contact,' to 'indexicality' and 'reality,' conflates the three terms in a way that limits indexicality's scope. As Kris Paulsen, in her essay 'The Index and the Interface,' argues: 'The qualities of pastness, permanence, truth, and resemblance resulting from physical contact have come to be seen, inaccurately, as defining characteristics of indexicality rather than as the specific condition of the analog photograph.'³⁹³ The overemphasis of the indexical character of photography is also limiting to photography itself, as Martin Lefebvre, in his essay 'The Art of Pointing. On Peirce, Indexicality, and Photographic Images,' argues from a photographic point of view.³⁹⁴

The exhibition *Emanations* also included photograms by Thomas Ruff, which are based on an entirely digital process, and therefore introduce an interesting position to consider in this context. In Ruff's series of digital photograms from 2013/14, computer generated virtual objects are placed into a virtual darkroom and exposed to virtual light sources.³⁹⁵ Photographic exposure time is replaced by the rendering process that the software requires to generate the images.

How does Batchen's triangulation apply to Ruff's work in terms of materiality, indexicality, and reality? And how might Ruff's work relate to the processes applied in the *Sprayographs*?

Laura U. Marks, whose book *Touch* examines digital media through a materialist approach, probing its physical and tactile properties, affirms the material status of digital art like Ruff's.³⁹⁶ Marks, however, also retains the association of indexicality with physical contact—which she goes to great lengths to prove as sustained within analog electronic media by tracing the path of electrons.³⁹⁷ The transformation of analog images into digital data, in her view, breaks the indexical 'chain', as the binary system of 1 and 0 cannot capture, and thus obfuscates in-between states.³⁹⁸

393. Paulsen, 'The Index,' 87.

394. Lefebvre, 'The Art of Pointing,' 1–2: 'Confining photographs solely to indexicality without any other consideration than the medium's ability to record.'

395. A comprehensive selection of photograms is presented in Thomas Ruff, Wenzel S. Spingler, and Valeria Liebermann, *Thomas Ruff, Photograms and Negatives* (Beverly Hills: Gagosian Gallery, 2014).

396. Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

397. Laura U. Marks, 'How Electrons Remember' in *Touch*, 161–165.

398. Laura U. Marks, 171.

I feel that Marks's exercise of tracing electrons' 'memory' speaks more to the materiality of digital media than to indexicality. The loss of information through the encoding of analog information into 0s and 1s, does not automatically mean the loss of indexicality. The analog source is still the existential cause of this particular articulation of digital code.

The index is not identical with what it references, and it does not represent the object in its entirety, nor through semblance; the transition from object to index is not lossless. This becomes explicit in the consideration of traces like *Sprayographs* or photograms. While they index the object, the information the trace transmits always remains partial, fragmented, or 'truncated,' as discussed in the context of archaeological traces.³⁹⁹

Paulsen confirms that 'undecidability' and 'multiple explanations' are the conditions of the index,⁴⁰⁰ as it is often at a 'spatial or temporal remove' from its cause.⁴⁰¹ The index is therefore 'always open to interpretation and doubt.'⁴⁰²

Physical contact is just one possible articulation of indexicality, and Paulsen emphasises that 'materiality is not a necessary feature of the index.'⁴⁰³ A narrow association of indexicality with the notion of direct, physical contact limits the indexical in a way that Peirce didn't intend: 'An index represents an object by virtue of its connection with it. It makes no difference whether the connection is natural, or artificial, or merely mental.'⁴⁰⁴

I therefore find Lefebvre's pragmatic approach most useful, who argues that 'a real existential connection' exists between objects and images, in photographs, paintings and CGIs alike, even if one is *direct*, physical, and the other of an *indirect* nature.⁴⁰⁵ This allows indexicality to describe an essential connection between things,

399. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 31, see also chapter II. Archaeology.

400. Paulsen, 'The Index,' 95.

401. Paulsen, 97.

402. Paulsen, 89.

403. Paulsen, 89.

404. Peirce, as quoted by Lefebvre, 'The Art of Pointing,' 7–8, note 8. For original quote see Charles Sanders Peirce and Arthur Burks, ed. *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 8. 368, n. 23.

405. Lefebvre, 'The Art of Pointing,' 7–8. Lefebvre proposes a distinction between direct and indirect indexical relations. Direct indexicality results from 'a direct contact between object and sign,' where 'the object acts as the efficient cause of the sign.' This is distinguished from situations where 'the sign is only indirectly affected by the object.'

CGI = computer generated image.

independent of physical contact, which, in my view, makes indexicality a more productive term. Understood in this way, as Ruff transposes cameraless photography into virtual reality, indexicality transfers with it, emerging now from the existential connections of data and code.



Figure 58. Thomas Ruff, *r.phg.06*, 2014. C-Print, 240 x 185 cm.
(© Thomas Ruff/VG Bild-Kunst, Copyright Agency, 2020.)

Paulsen grasps the crucial point of indexicality, however, when she insists the index to be above all reliant on its relationship with the receiver.⁴⁰⁶ According to Paulsen, the significance of the index doesn't arise from the material 'touching' between objects,

406. Paulsen, 'The Index,' 92. Also Lefebvre indicates this when he deduces from Peirce's pragmatism the importance of 'interpretation' and 'use', instead of seeking to determine the 'essence' of a sign. Lefebvre, 'The Art of Pointing,' 6 and 14.

but more importantly, from the fact that it ‘touches the viewer.’⁴⁰⁷ Paulsen aligns indexicality with Roland Barthes’s famous proposition of the *punctum*, which equally ‘reaches out to the receiver’:⁴⁰⁸ ‘The *punctum* causes a sensory encounter (from ground to the sign to the receiver), which then starts a chain of associative and exploratory thoughts. The *punctum*, then, “expands” and points to something “beyond” what is merely represented.’⁴⁰⁹

This interpretation of the ‘beyond’ of an indexical sign is reliant on what is called *abduction*.⁴¹⁰ ‘By providing an explanatory theory for what was not directly witnessed, . . . abduction makes the index intelligible.’⁴¹¹ Interestingly abduction is described as a ‘phenomenal’ and ‘embodied kind of thought’⁴¹² that contains an ‘emotional charge.’⁴¹³ In summary, ‘the index must, then, be understood not as a mark of resemblance, proof, or truth, but rather as an instance of relationality, interpretation, and decision.’⁴¹⁴

The importance of Paulsen’s perspective lies in its attention to the viewer, which captures the way that traces are intended to operate in the exhibition—as indexes that become activated by the *abductive* powers of the viewer. The project endeavours to engage viewer response on an experiential, associative, rather than a purely cognitive, rational level. This harks back to Massumi’s notion of semblance;⁴¹⁵ it is also consistent with the suggestive aspects of ruins, and the speculative nature of traces more generally, which let the viewers’ imaginary expand outwards from them.⁴¹⁶

407. Paulsen, ‘The Index,’ 92.

408. Paulsen, 93.

409. Paulsen, 93.

410. Paulsen, 97. Paulsen continues to interpret Peirce here.

411. Paulsen, 97.

412. Paulsen, 99.

413. Paulsen, 99.

414. Paulsen, 95.

415. Semblance gives rise to relational meanings initiated by an aesthetic encounter, which reach beyond the particular of the thing encountered. Massumi refers to this process as a ‘thinking-feeling’ that is different from pure cognitive deduction. Massumi, ‘The Thinking-Feeling.’ See also Chapter V. 2. Artefacts and Abstraction.

416. Paulsen further elaborates on the temporal relationship of the index to the viewer. She emphasises their shared encounter in the present: ‘Regardless of when it was produced, the index establishes a forceful present-tense connection with its receiver.’ Paulsen, ‘The Index,’ 85.

This resonates with the previously explained notion that artefacts are always encountered in the present, and therefore may say more about the present the viewer is currently experiencing, than the past. See chapter II. Archaeology.

The project does so in a fictional setting, as indexicality is not restricted to factuality, as Lefebvre confirms: 'The requirement of indexicality also holds when painting or CGIs show us beings that have never existed.'⁴¹⁷ This is indeed relevant to the *Sprayographs*, as they are at once clearly indexical, but at the same time their relationship to reality is less self-evident. The *Sprayographs* are directly existentially connected to the model-making materials and the art process itself.⁴¹⁸ However, they do also operate on a fictional level, where further abduction is enabled. Consistent with the fictional world set up by the model, the *Sprayograph* imprints also index the traces of ruins, for example, if so interpreted by a viewer.

As one-off prints *Sprayographs* and photograms channel the aura of the authentic trace of a specific moment in time, described by Barthes as the notion of "'this has been," whether or not we can identify . . . what "this" refers to.'⁴¹⁹ In case of the *Sprayographs*, and many photograms, this means that despite their abstract nature, their indexicality as traces of *something* is evident, which is not dependent on recognition or a resemblance between trace and cause.

Batchen grants that photograms 'offer an often-immaterial style of image, translucent and abstract in form and impossible to identify with the world they inhabit.'⁴²⁰ The *Sprayographs* are of a similarly abstract nature, which has two main effects, in my opinion. Firstly, as in the case of abstraction generally, the materiality of the medium itself moves into the foreground and becomes the object of consideration.⁴²¹ Secondly, the tension between positive and negative spaces, between absence and presence, emerges as an overarching characteristic, independent of its specific, undisclosed causes. Therefore, rather than representing a *particular* object-trace connection, real or fictional, the *Sprayographs*—and many photograms—embody the nature of traces more generally.

Discussing the *Sprayographs* in the context of photograms has been productive in contextualising the role of indexicality, however, beyond analogies, there are also distinct differences. Importantly, *Sprayographs* do not intend to simulate photograms,

417. Lefebvre, 'The Art of Pointing,' 8.

418. Lefebvre, 1.

419. Barthes cited and contextualised by Lefebvre, 13. The *Sprayograph* animations undermine this 'authenticity' through digital reproduction.

420. Batchen, *Emanations*, 22.

421. See chapter V. 2. Artefacts and Abstraction.

nor are they mere derivatives of photography.⁴²² *Sprayographs* operate as a metaphor of the durational inscription of time, caused by exposure to an energy or substance, waves or particles, not limited to light. Furthermore, additional fictional and metaphorical trajectories flow from the *Sprayographs*, because they operate in connection with the other components in the installation and not as standalone images.

As 'distant images' the *Sprayographs* are at a remove from both object and event.⁴²³ As ficto-archaeological artefacts, they retain the tension between immediacy and distance, between physical presence and the effects of remove.

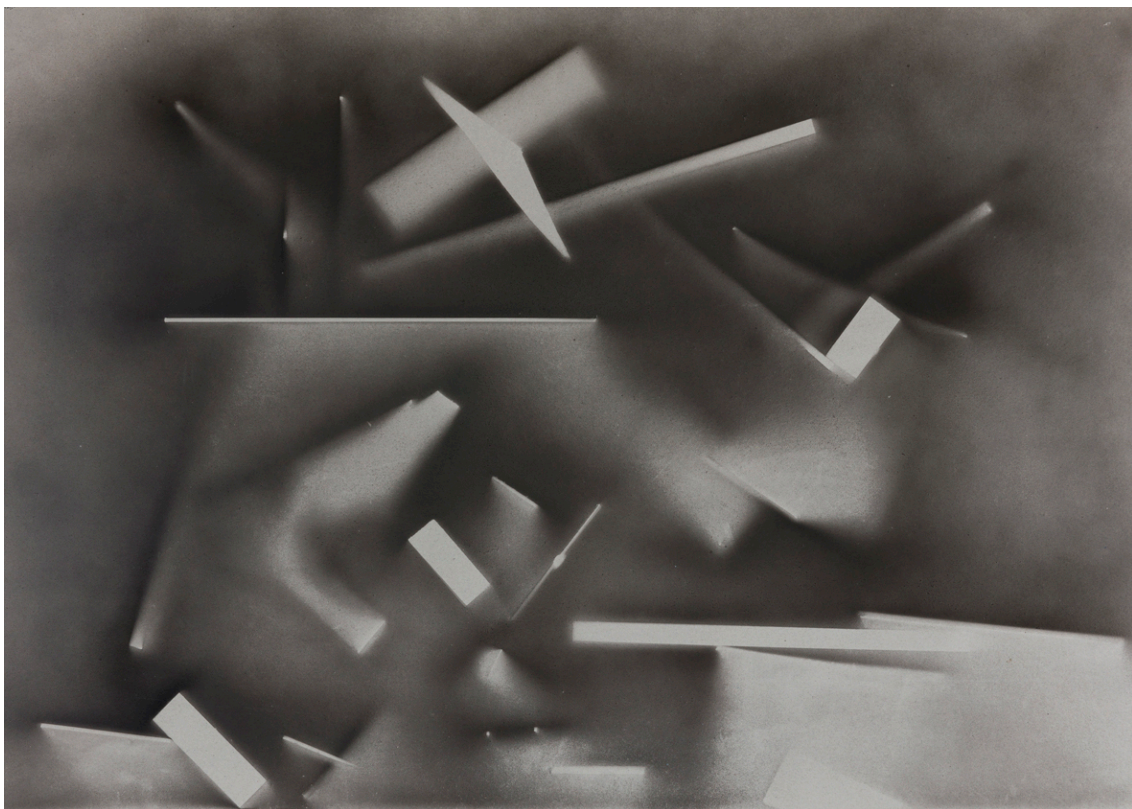


Figure 59. Susanna Bauer, *Sprayograph*, series 2, 2016.
Spray enamel on cardboard. 90 x 60 cm.
(This *Sprayograph* is the basis of the *Sprayograph* Scan animation.)

422. John Corbett, in the context of the exhibition *Sprayed* (2015) describes spray painting as an 'adjunct' to photography. He emphasises spray painting's indexical characteristics, and its relatedness to light. John Corbett, 'Conjugating Spray,' in Jona Lueddeckens et al., eds., *Sprayed: Works from 1929–2015* (London: Gagosian Gallery, 2015), 10. Published on the occasion of the exhibition of the same title, organised and presented by Gagosian Gallery, London, June 11–August 1, 2015.

423. Paulsen, 'The Index,' 97: 'distant images (in space or time) . . . need interpretation that goes beyond the directly observable.'

VI. 3. 2. 'The Projection From a Spray Gun . . . Produces a Trace and Not a Gesture'⁴²⁴

The association between spray painting and trace, and the use of it to mark the presence of a three-dimensional object, has its origins in the earliest forms of parietal art.⁴²⁵ It takes us back into the cave, the quarry, to approximately 30.000 BCE., where the silhouette of a hand was fixed to a rock wall by blowing pigment over it.⁴²⁶ Paradoxically, the fragility of human life is highlighted by the incredible persistence of its trace. Chronologically vastly distant, but physically tangible, these prints oscillate between being instinctively familiar and cognitively incomprehensible.⁴²⁷

The exhibition *Sprayed. Works from 1929 to 2015* at the Gagosian Gallery in London most recently assembled a broad range of art works employing spray paint. In his introductory essay to the catalogue, John Corbett iterates the broad usage and associations of spray paint.⁴²⁸ From a very diverse field of artists, John Latham's practice is of particular interest, as he associated the act of spray painting with notions of temporality.⁴²⁹ Based on the stipulation of a *least event*, he proposed an alternative cosmology that conceived of the entire universe as originating from a smallest unit of time.⁴³⁰ Latham continued to work on this non-linear concept of temporality throughout his career.⁴³¹ Many of his art works were intended to make time visible in

424. Martin Barré, quoted in Lueddeckens, *Sprayed*, 33.

425. *Parietal art* is another term for rock art in archaeology. Timothy Darvill, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology* (Oxford University Press, 2009), <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199534043.001.0001/acref-9780199534043>.

426. The oldest hand stencil found is in Sulawesi, Indonesia, and originates from approximately 37900 BCE. For research on hand stencils and theories regarding their possible use as an early communication system, see 'Hand Stencils in Upper Palaeolithic Cave Art,' a research project at the Department of Archaeology, Durham University, UK. <https://www.dur.ac.uk/archaeology/research/projects/all/?mode=project&id=640>.

427. This thought will be taken up again in chapter VIII. 'Realm of Connectivity.'

428. Corbett in Lueddeckens, *Sprayed*, 10.

429. John Latham (1921–2006). Additional reference to Latham and his approach to temporality is made in chapter VIII. 4. Spatial Narrativity.

430. Latham develops these theories from the early 1950's onwards, also in collaboration with the scientists Anita Kohsen and Clive Gregory. The artist begins his first experiments with spray paint in 1954. John Albert Walker, *John Latham: The Incidental Person; His Art and Ideas* (London: Middlesex University Press, 1995), 16.

431. Very insightful is the interview John Latham, 'John Latham: Extracts From an Extended Conversation in Flat Time HO 210 Bellenden Rd,' interview with Marianne Brouwer, Lisson Gallery, December 9, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ne-2yY309jg>.

The John Latham online archive by Ligatus and The University of Arts, London, is also a useful resource. <https://www.ligatus.org.uk/aae/>.

an attempt to illustrate his philosophical theories.⁴³²

Spray paint became a preferred medium for Latham, as he discovered the spray gun as a 'simple means by which . . . a least event . . . could be presented visually on a ground that represented state zero.'⁴³³ His series of *One Second Drawings* from the early 1970's was based on the fixed instruction of spraying paint against a flat surface for the duration of one second, one each day for sixty days.⁴³⁴



Figure 60. John Latham, *One-Second Drawing (17'' 2002) (Time Signature 5:1)*, 1972.
Acrylic and enamel on wood, 27.1 x 36.9 x 26 cm.
(© John Latham Estate, courtesy Lisson Gallery, London. © Tate, London.)

432. Latham considered 'art as a non-verbalised form of philosophy.' John Latham, 'John Latham,' interview.

433. Walker, *John Latham*, 20.

434. John Latham, *One-Second Drawing (17'' 2002) (Time Signature 5:1)*, 1972', on Tate website, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/latham-one-second-drawing-17-2002-time-signature-5-1-t02070>. Lawrence Weiner produced some works with spray paint that follow a similar set of instructions—for example, *Two Minutes of Spray Paint directly Upon the Floor From a Standard Aerosol Spray Can*, 1968. However Weiner's conceptual focus rests with the role of language which defines process and materials; thus the actual work 'need not be built.' Lueddeckens, *Sprayed*, 168.

The resulting series of images emphasised both difference and historical continuum.⁴³⁵ The *One Second Drawings* capitalise on spray paint's aspect of immediate, single-motion-action, which is foregrounded over any compositional considerations.⁴³⁶ The act of spraying captures an event, its duration and its trace, as in a single instant of paint expulsion process and effect seamlessly superimpose.

'An event—the act of painting—became a two-dimensional configuration,' as John A. Walker, explains, 'time was thus translated into a geometry of space.'⁴³⁷ The *Sprayographs* follow this logic of dimensional declination—with the added complication that material objects are inserted between a *spray event* and its inscription onto the two-dimensional picture plane. While in the *One Second Drawings* the canvas can also be regarded as an intersecting of the physical world with time, this research places explicit emphasis on the objects inserted, and on the temporality of the trace itself—whereas Latham's intentions tend towards visualisations of pure time.

Latham's work *Full Stop* from 1961 exhibits some particular affordances of spray paint that are additionally relevant to the *Sprayographs*. *Full Stop* oscillates between representation and abstraction, between an expression of the pure materiality of paint and a referential trajectory linking it to representational content.⁴³⁸ Latham considered this effect as inherent to spray paint: 'it destroys the picture plane. . . . It is both abstract and referential in "image."⁴³⁹ This dual characteristic flows from spray paint's distinct texture of minute paint spots. When applied densely and in multiple layers, they amalgamate into homogenous areas of paint, capable of pictorial representation. But spray paint can also dissipate into nebulous clouds effecting blur, or disperse into tiny individual dots that create optical illusions of spatial depth and infinite detail, when viewed close up.

435. Walker, *John Latham*, 110.

436. Corbett in Lueddeckens, *Sprayed*, 10. Spray painting was originally developed for practical reasons of efficiency and speed. It allowed Latham to replace the gestural aspects of painting with spray paint's industrial and mechanical character, which was aligned with his conceptual focus over a primacy of aesthetic concerns.

437. Walker, *John Latham*, 24.

438. This quality is useful in the project's considered relationship between abstraction and referentiality. See chapter V. 2. Artefacts and Abstraction.

439. Latham quoted in Walker, *John Latham*, 23.

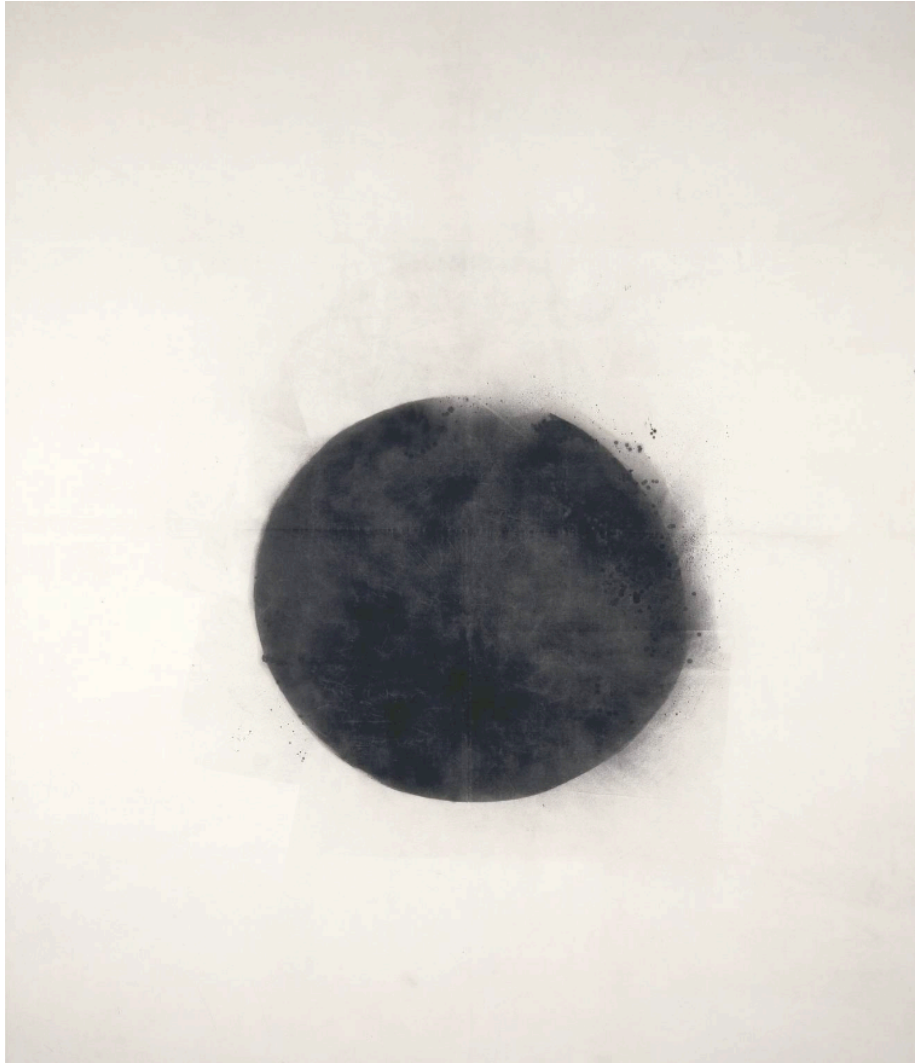


Figure 61. John Latham, *Full Stop*, 1961. Acrylic paint on canvas, 30.2 x 25.8 x 4 cm, (© John Latham Estate, courtesy of Lisson Gallery, London. © Tate, London.)

Full Stop combines these different aspects of spray paint within the simple geometrical shape of a circle, resulting in a depiction of ambiguous scale, which could refer to a planet just as much as to a punctuation mark.⁴⁴⁰ The object cannot stabilise in any referential space consistently, which feeds into the tension between abstraction and referentiality, which this research also engages with, as mentioned earlier.⁴⁴¹

440. Latham describes the characteristics of spray paint: 'It is anti-scale . . . it can be read in several ways, as, e.g. a mathematics and as a memory trace.' Walker, 23. Note the related notion of *material memory* proposed by Olivier, mentioned in chapter VI. 1. Traces.

441. See chapter V. 2. Artefacts and Abstraction, for ambiguity of scale see chapter IV. 6. *Small Scenes*.

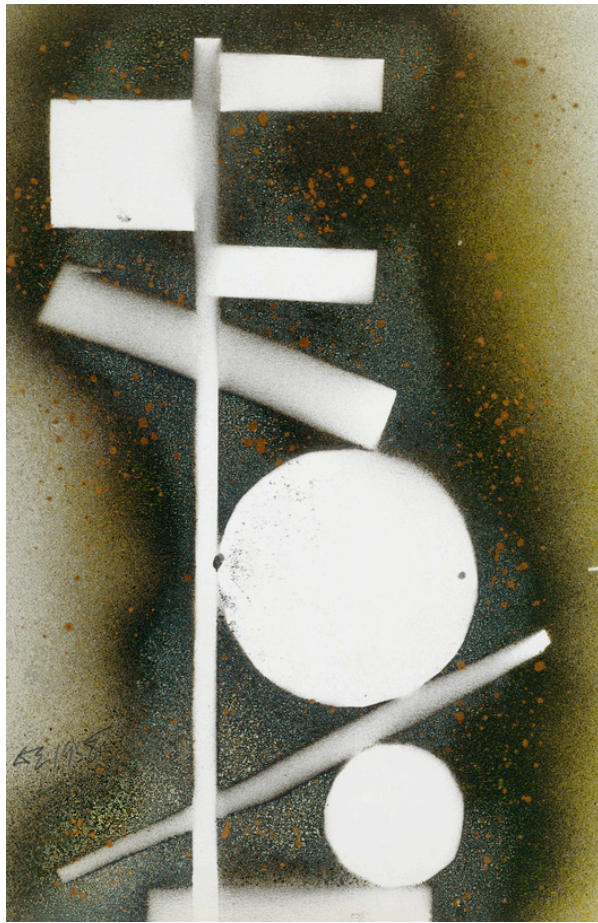


Figure 62. David Smith, *DS1958*, 1958.
Spray and stencilled enamel on paper, 44.5 x 29.2 cm.
Collection Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
(© Estate of David Smith and MET New York. Courtesy Estate of David Smith.)

The artist David Smith's spray paintings offer a distinct processual parallel with the *Sprayographs*, as they equally result from objects being over-sprayed with paint.⁴⁴² Interestingly, Smith had made photograms before using spray paint in the 1950's. The objects he used as stencils were very diverse—'nuts, bolts, . . . screws, . . . tree branches, . . . even food.'⁴⁴³ The exhibition *Sprays* in 2008 at the Gagosian Gallery, New York, featured a comprehensive selection of Smith's sprayed works.⁴⁴⁴ There is a tangible link to the forms and compositions that Smith explored in his sculptures—

442. David Smith (1906–1965).

443. Joan Pachner, *David Smith*, Phaidon Focus: Essential Introductions to Modern Artists (London; New York, NY: Phaidon Press, 2013), 90.

444. Peter Stevens, *David Smith. Sprays* (New York: Gagosian Gallery, 2008). Published on the occasion of the exhibition of the same title at the Gagosian Gallery, New York, January 7–February 23, 2008.

however the *Sprays* are not the imprints of his sculptural works on canvas, they are constructed separately. Despite the processual analogy, differences remain due to the *Sprayographs* distinctly fictional and metaphorical intentions, their direct link to the other material states in *The Quarry*, and their exploration of temporal concepts.

The spray-can distributes an aerosol, a solution transported by the gaseous molecules of air.⁴⁴⁵ Spray painting as an atmospheric event: a sea squall, a toxic evaporation, an ash cloud or a sand storm, are associations that come to mind.⁴⁴⁶ These metaphorical trajectories flow into the *Sprayographs*' intentions to capture exposure, and duration. At the same time, in their abstract aspects, the *Sprayographs* equally exhibit spray paint's particular materiality and the physical processes of inscription, beyond any referential content.

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Tauba Auerbach's works from the series *Fold* emphasise the materiality of spray paint as a directional force. As the spray jet encounters the surface of a creased canvas with some energy, the atomised paint is caught on the elevations of 'the folds' obstructing its linear pathway. The variably accumulated paint matter makes the topography of its support permanently visible, even after the canvas has been stretched flat.⁴⁴⁷ In a similar way, spray paint fixed areas of temporary unevenness into wavelike patterns in the large-scale *Sprayograph* that is part of the *Artefacts* display.

445. Nicholas de Monchaux, 'Aerosols,' in Lueddeckens, *Sprayed*, 181. Monchaux discusses the strange history of spray paint, as a byproduct of the invention of aerosols, which was part of a chemical weapons development during the Second World War.

446. Monchaux, 181.

447. The canvas is folded and creased, then loosely unfolded and sprayed before it is mounted on wooden stretchers. Auerbach describes her process in Tauba Auerbach et al., *Folds* (New York: Sternberg Press, 2012), 105. Published in connection with the exhibition *Tauba Auerbach, Tetrachromat*, organised and presented at Bergen Kunsthall, Norway.



Figure 63. Tauba Auerbach, *Untitled (Fold)*, 2012.
Acrylic on canvas, 162.56 x 121.92 cm. Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York.
(© Tauba Auerbach. Image reproduced with permission from Albright-Knox Art Gallery.)

Auerbach considers analogies to photographic processes in her series: 'The paintings develop over the "duration" of the spray; contrast builds with prolonged exposure to paint coming from a particular direction.'⁴⁴⁸ This re-iterates the temporal aspect of spray-painting, as well as its relationship to cameraless photography. The delicate effects of Auerbach's paintings extend beyond simple distinctions between shadow and light. Depending on their tonality, and the subtle blend of colours, they

448. Auerbach, 105.

appear to refract the range of light's spectral colours across their surface, or gather the rays of a sunrise or sunset occurring just off the terrain of the canvas. As spray paint becomes entangled with space and time it seems to combine both particle and wave functions.⁴⁴⁹

While relevant connective threads to the above art works emerged, the *Sprayographs* are closely tied into the overall network of images and objects in this art project, and not intended as standalone objects.⁴⁵⁰ None of the works I encountered—whether from the field of cameraless photography, or spray-painting—formed part of a similar overarching context.

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449. Auerbach's work will find mention again in chapter VIII. 4. Spatial Narrativity.

450. It should also be noted that *Sprayographs* as paintings are predominantly an interim stage that is further transformed through digital animation.

VI. 4. *Sprayograph* Animations

The *Sprayograph* animations are contemplations on the temporality of the trace itself, including the changes it might undergo in its journey across time. The two animations presented in the installation pursue this in different ways.

VI. 4. 1. *Sprayograph Scan*

In the *Sprayograph Scan* projection, the ‘camera’ tracks across the *sprayographic* terrain, scanning its surface along vertical and horizontal trajectories, in a continuous, persistent movement.⁴⁵¹ Programmed to follow an undisclosed regular pattern, it moves without interruptions or pause—a disinterested, machinic eye. The camera is ‘tracing’ the trace forensically, dissecting the image meticulously and thorough.⁴⁵²



Figure 64. Susanna Bauer, *Sprayograph Scan*, 2017. Video still.

451. The impression of a moving camera is in fact achieved through a digital animation path across the still image.

452. The notion of tracking, as one of the meanings of *trace* mentioned earlier is here articulated.

The animated scan resembles the tracking and targeting satellite images of military surveillance, or it could be the aerial reconnaissance of an archaeological site, surveyed for irregular surface patterns indicating underlying, buried structures.

With the camera view zoomed in on a set frame size, the video only shows a small section of the entire *Sprayograph* imprint, at any given point in time. As the scanning movement never reaches the edges of the image, no external reference points enable to determine its scale. This strategy echoes the perspectives chosen in the *Small Scenes* and serves the same goal of rendering scale ambiguous.⁴⁵³

Sprayograph Scan is a spatio-temporal exploration of the *Sprayograph*, as it dissects the picture plane into rectangular frames and reassembles these segments in sequence along a time line. Thus spatial expansion is transformed into temporal expansion, as a seemingly static, a-temporal global overview is transformed into partial, intimate vistas that move with time.⁴⁵⁴ The two-dimensional painting is transformed into a time-based moving image projection, which is in keeping with the strategy of transformation of dimensions and media employed across the project.⁴⁵⁵



Figure 65. Susanna Bauer, *Sprayograph Scan*, 2017. Video still.

453. See chapter IV. 6. *Small Scenes*.

454. This is consistent with the intention to move the viewer within the trace, as already iterated earlier in the context of *Small Scenes*.

455. Transformation will be discussed in detail in chapter VII. Metamorphosis and Erosion.

Even if the camera travelled the entire area of the *Sprayograph*, viewers would not be able to reassemble the global image from the parts. The visualised landscape, shaped from the memory of the passage across the image does not reconfigure into the original spray painted image. The experience of the details is different from the experience of the whole. While the close-up view enhances material aspects, like the filmic grain of paint-particles and the subtle detail of gradients, referentiality, including that to a global image recedes in this experience of proximity.

This train of thought reconnects with Didi-Huberman's thoughts explored in connection with abstraction.⁴⁵⁶ He contends that the sum of details does not lead back to the global image, as in close proximity referential meanings subside and the material aspects of the medium, in this case paint, move into the foreground: 'As form and matter fall apart close up, the detail undoes all meaning, so addition of parts produces chaos not the whole.'⁴⁵⁷

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456. See chapter V. 2. 3. Artefacts in the Project.

457. Didi-Huberman, 'The Detail and the Pan,' 236.

VI. 4. 2. *Sprayograph Warp*

In *Sprayograph Warp*, again, the spatial and temporal parameters of a *Sprayograph* are modified, but through a different method than in the *Scan*. Technically, the *Warp* sequence digitally animates the image's vertical and horizontal axes against each other over time.

This effects that individual spray points begin to shift within the picture plane, appearing to come forward or recede. This uncanny optical illusion gives the impression of three-dimensional depth and creates a pictorial space that expands and contracts.

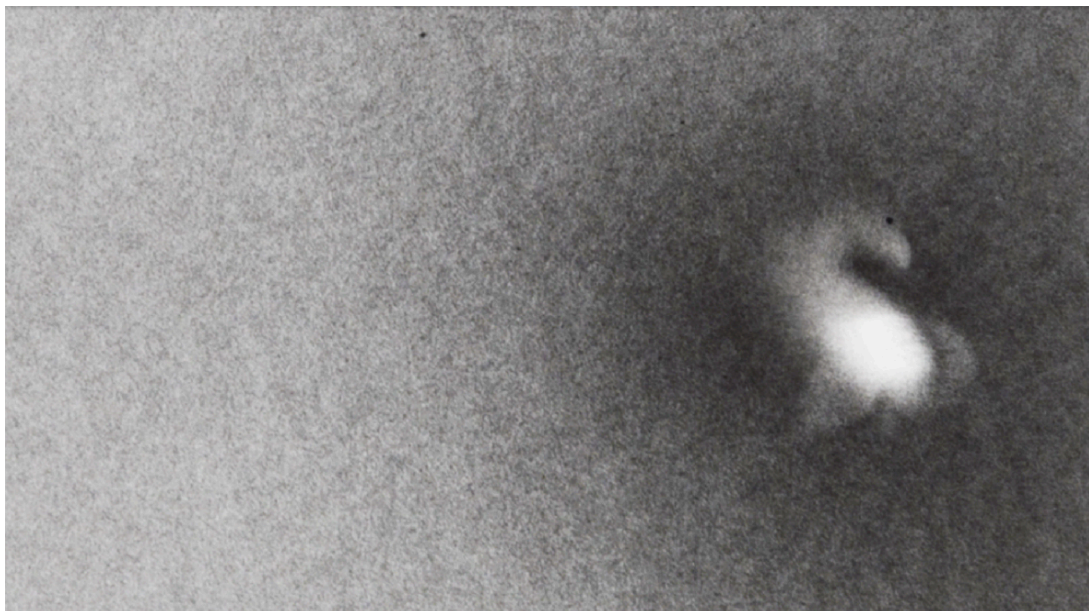


Figure 66. Susanna Bauer, *Sprayograph Warp*, 2017. Video still.

Gradually, as the sequence progresses, and the animated vertical and horizontal parameters move towards their extreme outer and inner limits, the image begins to flatten out again, eventually turning into the semblance of a spectral diagram, which eventually collapses into itself.

As noted before, due to the characteristics of spray paint and the abstract nature of the image, the scale of the video remains ambiguous. What the video displays could be the observation of a vast cosmic event or an infinitely small subatomic phenomenon.

As a contemplation on the pathway of the trace itself, *Sprayograph Warp* is of a more speculative nature; it perceives the material trace as continuously morphing and changing within a dynamic trajectory of its own. The work retains strong connections to its analog and material origins, while on the other hand seeking to open itself up to metaphorical interpretations.

How can this animation be interpreted in relation to its genealogical origin? It is here important to recall that *Sprayographs* capture the three-dimensionality of the *Small Scenes* and transfer them into a two-dimensional form. Thinking back to Tauba Auerbach's *Folds*, her method equally inscribes three-dimensionality onto a two-dimensional surface. She describes this as seeking to 'conjure four-dimensional space.'⁴⁵⁸ Auerbach goes on to explain: 'The *Fold* paintings are my effort to construct a portal through which to summon—or at least imagine—this inaccessible hyper-spatial territory.'⁴⁵⁹ She suggests that 'if these paintings can successfully efface the boundary between two- and three-dimensionality, then by analogy they imply the possibility of eroding the boundary between three-dimensional space and beyond.'⁴⁶⁰

Following this speculative logic, one could imagine that a *Sprayograph*, as the condensed, flat version of a three-dimensional space, once further transformed to express a new, virtual three-dimensional space, could represent the 'flattened' declination of such a four-dimensional spatial sphere. I have in previous research engaged with speculations into a fourth spatial, rather than temporal, dimension. Ursula Pahlans-Bühler's book *Gegeben sei die Gabe. Duchamps Flaschentrockner in der vierten Dimension* is an intellectual, as well as an intuitive exploration of Marcel Duchamp's attempts at bending mind and space, that continues to influence my thoughts on space, time and dimensionality.⁴⁶¹ Duchamp developed a whole body of thinking around the conundrum of a fourth spatial dimension, which intuited that dimensional declinations could potentially make such a space visible, indirectly, by means of a three-dimensional reflection, or a shadow, cast from the fourth dimension into ordinary three-dimensional space.⁴⁶² This strangely reverberates with the *Sprayograph* process, as a type of shadow painting that is acquiring a three-dimensional, virtual expansion in the *Warp* animation.

458. Auerbach, *Folds*, 105.

459. Auerbach, 105.

460. Auerbach, 105.

461. Ursula Pahlans-Bühler, *Gegeben sei: die Gabe: Duchamps Flaschentrockner in der vierten Dimension* (Hamburg: Philo Fine Arts, 2009).

462. In depth explored in Pahlans-Bühler, 'Gegeben sei.'

While I am not pursuing these esoteric trajectories to any further depth within this research, as its primary attention rests with temporality, I am interested in the terrain where space and time push into one another, and my methodology of metamorphic transformation is indirectly indebted to some of the practical and theoretical experiments undertaken by Duchamp in the above context.

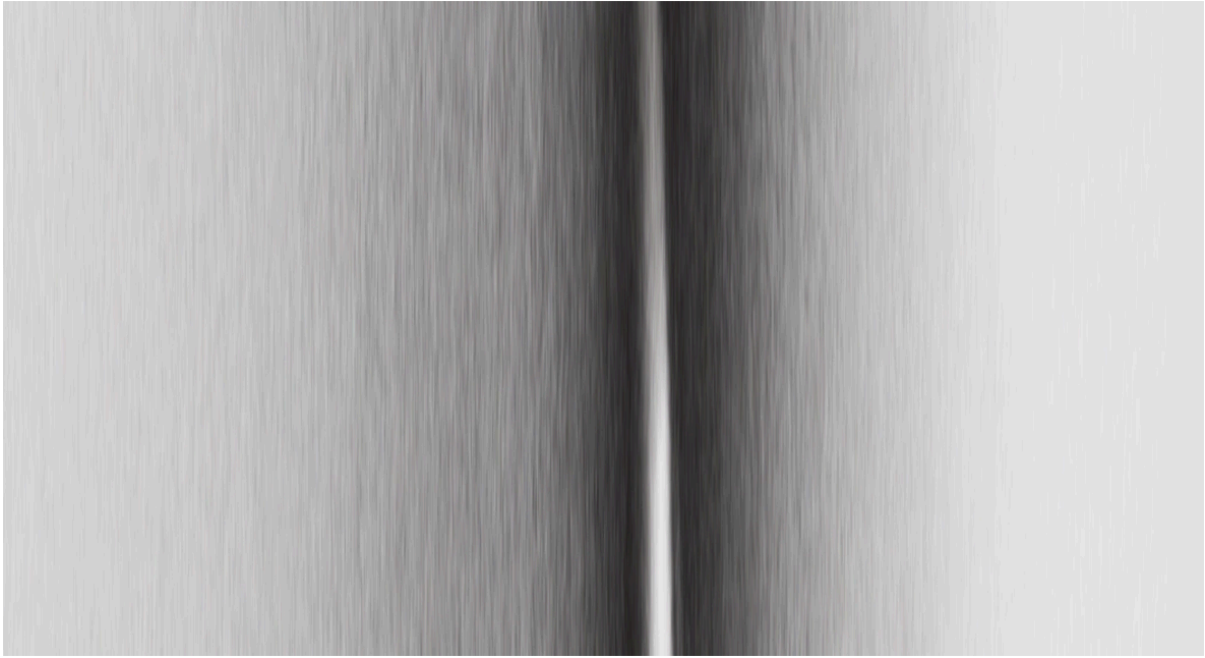


Figure 67. Susanna Bauer, *Sprayograph Warp*, 2017. Video still.

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VI. 4. 3. Moving and Still

'Time has never yet stood still just because a person . . . stands at the window, not knowing what he is thinking.'⁴⁶³

Amelie Groom, editor of the anthology *Time*, ponders in her introduction on the nature of time: 'Should we equate it with *change*, or is time, as the quantum physicist Richard Feynman has quipped, "'what happens when nothing else does"?'⁴⁶⁴

The focus in this research is explicitly not resting with the event, as the moment of change unfolding, but with what remains *thereafter*. It explores the physical remains at a time of seeming stillness, where 'nothing' appears to happen. However, this impression is deceiving, as time never stands still, so it is rather a case of the temporality of material traces unfolding at a rhythm that is difficult to perceive from within the familiar cadence of human time.

The tension between event and *aftermath* is interpreted by the relationship between movement and stillness enacted in this project. Both, *Sprayograph Scan* and *Sprayograph Warp* are animations of photographic stills, taken of *Sprayographs*.

In *Sprayograph Scan*, the animation directs the attention to local details, and their temporal relationships within the image, seeking to discover narrative potentials buried within a seemingly static picture. The slow scan across the surface of the still emphasises the durational aspect of viewing, as the *narrative time* emerging in the viewer imaginary. *Sprayograph Warp* abandons any notions of images as being static, by embedding an entire universe of becoming and disappearing within the still image.⁴⁶⁵

The *Small Scenes* video pursues a reverse approach, by using video, but with a camera that remains static. The video scenes resemble still images, however subtly quivering

463. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 66.

464. Groom, *Time*, 12.

465. Gilles Deleuze established a very useful distinction between 'movement-image' and 'time-image' in the context of cinema. In the 'movement-image', the passing of time is conveyed through movement in space shown by the images. The 'time-image,' in contrast, exists in time; the passing of time therefore happens directly within the image. Deleuze distinguishes thus the representation of time in images, from the presentation of time through images. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema: The Movement-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986) and Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema: The Time-Image* (University of Minnesota Press, 1989). This interpretation is taken from John Lechte, *Genealogy and Ontology of the Western Image and Its Digital Future* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 162–163.

moments, and the flickering, artefactual grain of video will make the attentive viewer aware that the image is not a still. These subtleties are intended to generate an experience of the passing of time, despite nothing changing overtly. Instead of assuming the ruin as an immobile, static object, the processes of ruination are here considered as active and ongoing.

The project seeks to blur the boundary between still and moving images in an attempt to subvert the representation of time associated with these media categories. By undermining these expectations, the experience of time is intended to become more conscious in the encounter with the work.

'Geiser goes back to the window to convince himself, by watching the slowly gliding raindrops.'⁴⁶⁶

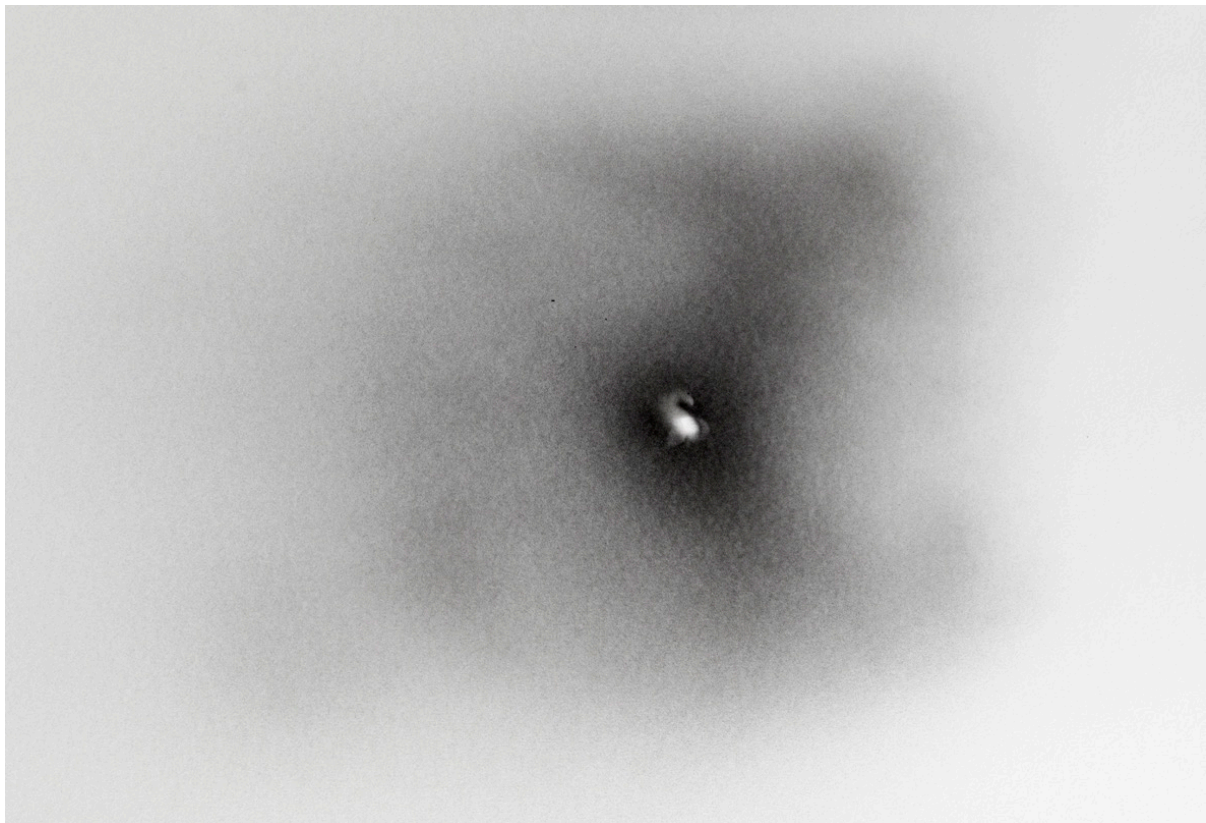


Figure 68. Susanna Bauer, *Sprayograph*, series 2, 2016.
Acrylic on paper, 55 x 40 cm.

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466. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 67.

VII. Metamorphosis and Erosion

VII. 1. Introduction

In previous chapters there have been repeated references to processes of transformation being central to the development of the work, as methods to transfer one material state into another, through changes of media, scale and dimension—for example from object to image, or from three-dimensionality to two-dimensionality, and further to time-based expressions.

Developed through material thinking, transformational processes are central to the methodology of this research project, as the main strategy towards anchoring non-linear temporality in the practical work.

This chapter will outline the rationale behind this methodology of transformation, how it is defined, and how it operates in the project. This will incorporate a conversation with other art practices that resonate with, but also differ from the way transformation is used in this research. Processes of transformation and references to quarries, rocks and fossilisation come together in the video *Petrifacts*, in a way that ties it closely to both the methodology and the main investigated references in this project, it will therefore also be discussed in this chapter.

Given that this chapter's focus rests with methodological considerations, I will provide some additional space here to the companion texts of *Man in the Holocene* and my biographical notes. This is intended to illustrate how this project is criss-crossed by these narrative and mnemonic trajectories. It is to be understood as an example, as the scope of the document didn't permit me to lay out these narratives to the same extent across all chapters.

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VII. 2. Solnhofen

At the bottom of the Fuchslotch, and other local abandoned quarries, we searched for fossils, mostly petrified shells. Dad had a special claw hammer that he would pack for these excursions. It was difficult to imagine how these oval stones could have ever been shells. I liked them anyway, smooth and delicate, they looked like little stone eggs. They weren't easy to spot, through petrification everything had morphed into the same material.



Figure 69. Steinbruch Solnhofen, 2004. Digital photograph by Abubiju.
(Image reproduced from Wikimedia Commons, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Steinbruch_Solnhofen_2004.jpg.)

The quarries of Solnhofen, famous for their perfectly smooth limestone slabs, were about an hours drive from home. People could go and collect their own material for free from the mounds of reject and broken slabs. I remember dad taking us along to get tiles for the back steps, and us kids spending time searching for fossils in the piles. The limestone layers were easily split with Dad's hammer, it's like slicing through a stack off paper with a knife. Once the layers are opened up they reveal their characteristic patterns of iron-manganese dendrites, a type of pseudo-fossils that look like plant imprints, or underwater coral silhouettes, but are in fact the result of a chemical crystallising process. The dendrites were magnificent, but there were also crystals and 'real' fossils to be found.

Geiser muses: 'If the Arctic ice were to melt, New York would be under water, as would Europe, except for the Alps.'⁴⁶⁷ About 200 million years ago the Jurassic Sea flooded Europe and for a period of about 50 million years the entire area was covered

467. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 79.

by water, except for a small number of islands.⁴⁶⁸ Sedimentary deposits later formed the distinct geological layers of the Swabian Alb in the region of Southern Germany, where we lived. Around the area of Solnhofen, the sea was warm and shallow, a landscape of archipelagos and lagoons. High in salt content and low in oxygen, they provided perfect conditions for the preservation of animals and plants in undisturbed layers of deposits and the formation of fossils of extraordinary clarity.

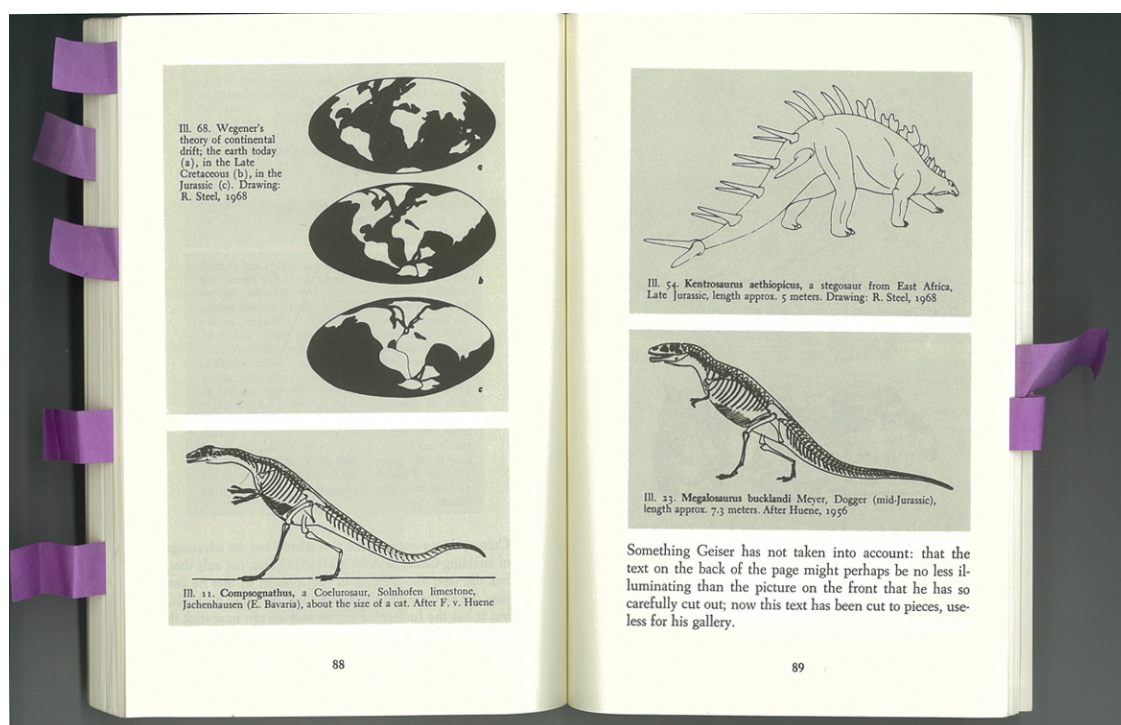


Figure 70. *Compsognathus*, Solnhofen limestone fossil.
Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 88–89. Digital photograph Susanna Bauer.

The stone tiling on the back steps is long gone now. Dad eventually demolished the cracked limestone slabs and replaced them with concrete pavers from the local home and garden supplier. Sturdy and even, they lasted the distance. The Solnhofen limestone didn't cope well with the frost, the melting and refreezing in winter, and each spring, flaked off shards of limestone would come away with the sweeping of the last snow. The material that had preserved fossils for 150 million years, didn't last a decade once extracted from the ground and exposed to the elements.

468. The exact period referenced in connection with the Jurassic Sea varies slightly for different sources: Geopark Alb website, <https://www.geopark-alb.de/en/geopark-wissen/geologie/schwarzer-jura.php/>; University of California Museum of Palaeontology, <http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/mesozoic/jurassic/solnhofen.html/>; Encyclopedia Britannica online, <https://www.britannica.com/science/Solnhofen-Limestone/>.

VII. 3. Archaeopteryx

Solnhofener Limestone not only provided ideal conditions for the preservation of fossils, it also gained importance with the discovery of the lithographic printing process at the end of the eighteenth century which relied on it as an exclusive resource for printing plates.⁴⁶⁹

In Simon Starling's work *Archaeopteryx Lithographica* from 2008, these two contexts specific to Solnhofen are brought to 'collide' at a particular historical focal point: the find of a unique feather fossil of the first birdlike species Archaeopteryx at the Solnhofen quarries in 1860, and its subsequent reproduction as a lithographic print superimposed these two narratives in a perfect 'Starling constellation.'⁴⁷⁰

Starling's practice is often termed as *research-based art*, as a crucial part of his projects consists in unearthing historical, economical, and ecological contexts related to the sites, objects and processes investigated.⁴⁷¹ His methodology could be considered archaeological, in the sense that he carefully *mines* the different contextual layers of a site or a material. Starling tracks material pathways back to an object's entry point into cycles of production, use and exchange—a photographic platinum print, for example, is traced to its elemental source of platinum ore extracted in a mine.⁴⁷² His projects focus on the different waypoints that index this material journey, and at which related narratives intersect. This *tracing* has a certain completeness about it, where circles of cause and effect appear resolved, and the otherwise invisible threads of connection are being revealed. In *The Quarry*, by contrast, the relationship between different material states is consciously constructed as a tentative connectivity that remains partial, ambiguous and reliant on the viewer's imaginary.

The contextual background of Starling's projects is usually communicated in the wall texts, or other accompanying written material. It needs to be considered as part of

469. The lithographic process was discovered by play write Alois Senefelder in 1798. Lithography became increasingly obsolete with the discovery of other printing processes in the early 20th century. See Encyclopedia Britannica online, s.v. 'lithography,' accessed February 14, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/technology/lithography/>.

470. Karsten Lund in Roelstraete, *The Way of the Shovel*, 212. Starling's work often departs from sites and historical contexts where economic processes, materials, value and representations entwine in unique ways. It is in this sense that I consider this correlation as a 'Starling constellation.'

471. See for example, Roelstrate *The Metamorphologist*, in Dieter Roelstraete, Francesco Manacorda, and Janet Harbord, *Simon Starling, Contemporary Artists* (London; New York: Phaidon Press, 2012), 42, 54, 81; and Karsten Lund in Roelstraete, *The Way of the Shovel*, 212.

472. Simon Starling, *One Ton II*, 2005.

the work, and is essential for the artist's interventions to come together in all their complex references and contextual entanglements.⁴⁷³ These facts acquire tangible meaning in conjunction with the physical experience of the material states investigated, reenacted and displayed to the viewer.

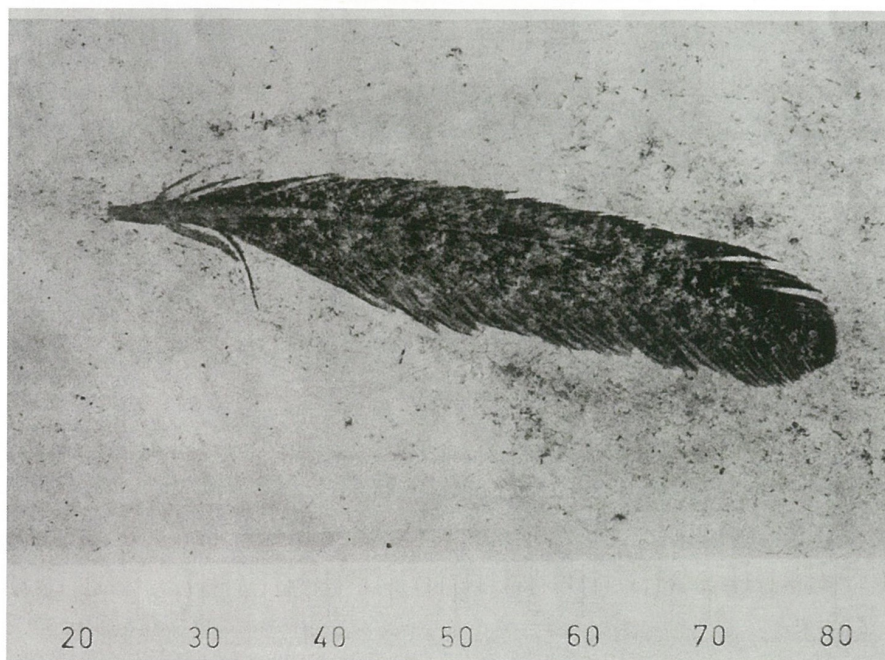


Figure 71. Simon Starling, *Archaeopteryx Lithographica*, 2008 (Detail).

Set of 6 lithographic prints on 250 g Velin d'Arches paper.

Paper: 22 x 30" / 56 x 76 cm, frame: 25 x 33" / 63.7 x 83.9 cm. Edition of 40.

(© Simon Starling. Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York.)

In *Archaeopteryx Lithographica*, the artist produces a series of six lithographs that further multiply the entanglement of object and representation by engaging both the original lithographic print and its limestone printing slab in multiple circles of reproduction. The work highlights the dual role of the limestone as both image carrier and as a material object, a dialectic that is recurrent in Starling's oeuvre.⁴⁷⁴

473. Taryn Simon's series *The American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar*, 2007, is an example of a similar kind of practice —her photographs remain abstract aesthetic contemplations until titles and/ or wall texts disclose their essential context. In fact the affective impact of the work, derives from the discrepancy between the aesthetics of the image and the often gritty, shocking, or abject context *behind* the images.

474. The artist repeatedly explores the relationship between photographic images and their material actuality. For example in *The Nanjing Particles* (2008), *One Ton I* (2005), and *Silver Salts, Platinum Salts* (2008). Mark Godfrey analyses Starling's relationship to photography and its materiality in the essay 'Prints, Particles, Palaces, and Planets: Simon Starling and Photography,' in Dieter Roelstraete and Simon

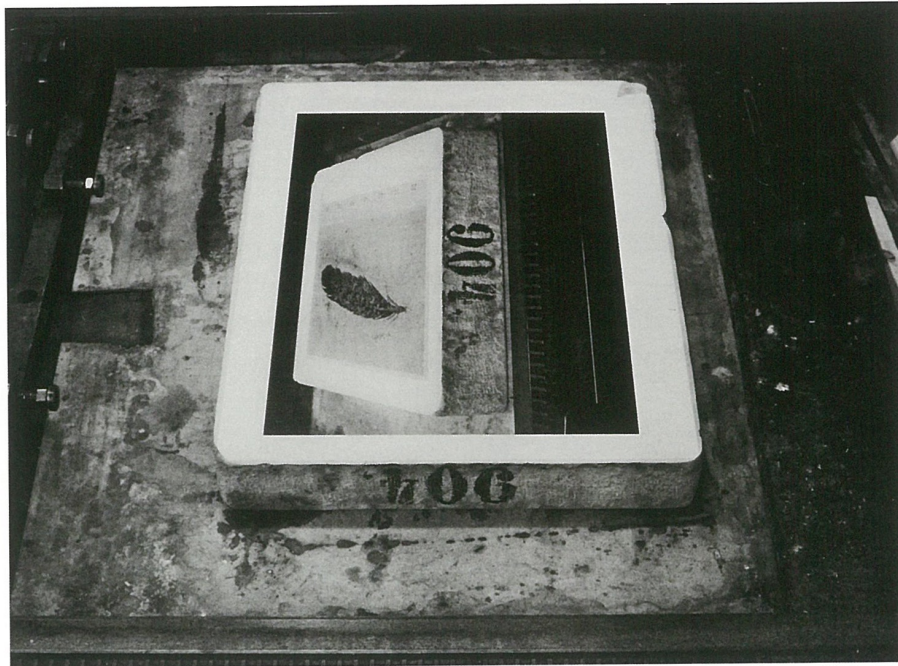


Figure 72. Simon Starling, *Archaeopteryx Lithographica*, 2008 (Detail).

Set of 6 lithographic prints on 250 g Velin d'Arches paper.

Paper: 22 x 30" / 56 x 76 cm, frame: 25 x 33" / 63.7 x 83.9 cm. Edition of 40.

(© Simon Starling. Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York.)

The feather itself, it is worth noting, remains intangible in this project, as the work initiates not from the actual fossil, but from the moment of its lithographic reproduction. The original specimen in fact consists of the two parts of the split limestone slab.⁴⁷⁵ Through its discovery, the feather has been split in half, but also doubled at the same time—an illustration of the invasive consequences that excavation may have on material traces.⁴⁷⁶

The absence of the fossil is revealing Starling's focus in this project. Karsten Lund muses that 'the work might be less about a famous feather than the rock quarry where it was found, an excavation site where different histories collide.'⁴⁷⁷ The artist considers the feather through its representation, and thus as a sign that points to the specific conditions of its visual mediation embedded within particular representational and

Starling, *Simon Starling: Metamorphology*, MCA Monographs (New York: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and Artbook D.A.P., 2014), 111–127.

475. As viewers, we do not get to know how the first lithograph from 1862 reconciled this fact.

476. As mentioned earlier in chapter II. Archaeology.

477. Lund in Roelstrate, *The Way of The Shovel*, 212.

economic processes. Starling multiplies the representational/reproductive cycle to highlight the tautological relationship between image and object—the object in this case being however the lithographic limestone slab and not the feather itself. Starling’s focus resides in the routes of material and economic transfer within a particular ‘ecology,’ not with an object in isolation.⁴⁷⁸

By comparison, my relationship to quarries and fossils is anchored in personal experiences in Solnhofen, in Carrara and in other quarries, through my actual being in the sites and my physical contact with stone. My material thinking in this art project remains linked to objects, and follows the metaphorical, geological, and temporal trajectories that depart from them.

The model assemblage as a physical object remains absent in the *Small Scenes* video, which exists at a remove from it. However this physical remove is countered by a visual zooming in, as a strategy of approximation that in fact seeks to transport the viewer *within* the traces. This illustrates how material thinking, and the transformation between objects and images operates differently in both practices.

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478. As Starling explains ‘I am interested in ecology in its broadest sense and in an expanded notion of an ecosystem as a realm of connectivity.’ Roelstraete, Manacorda, and Harbord, *Simon Starling*, 32.

VII. 4. Transformation

Material thinking in this research frames a process based practice, that develops the work through cycles of making, modification and reiteration. Reflection on, and review of, these explorations feed back into the next cycle of making. This is most prevalent in the different model stages that are montaged into the *Small Scenes* video, for instance.

However, the developmental step from the *Small Scenes* to the *Sprayographs*, is a radical change in appearance and media, and more importantly of *dimension*, as the three-dimensional assemblage leaves its trace in form of a two-dimensional imprint in the *Sprayograph*, in a way that is not a *re-making* of the model scene. In the *Sprayograph Scan* and *Sprayograph Warp* animations, medium and dimension of the *Sprayograph* undergo a further alteration. The two-dimensional prints become time-based expressions in the video projections. Not only is the still image given a duration, the animations also explore the spatial expansion of the *Sprayographs* in distinct ways. In the *Petrifacts* video, a change in medium and scale from the *Artefacts* and *Small Scenes* also results in a distinctly new formation.

Considering these processes as *iterative* falls short of capturing the particular relationships between the different material stages accurately. Iteration indicates the notion of sequential development, repetitive circles of making and re-making, with a focus on gradual improvement of the resulting outcomes, rather than the processes that connect them.⁴⁷⁹ Thus iteration does not even capture the different developmental phases of the *Small Scenes* model very accurately, as there was no intention towards improvement, instead each articulation functions as a temporal stage in its own right.

I propose that the process developed in this research project should be considered as a form of *transformation* instead. It is intended specifically to capture the evolution of traces across and in time.⁴⁸⁰ This, as already mentioned earlier, is based on the observation that material traces are not static, or exist in a temporal vacuum, but that they continue to change over time.

In particular, this research is less concerned with capturing the effects of gradual ageing, but rather with material-temporal stages that display a distinct, qualitative difference—and which therefore resist direct linear comparison. This echoes the

479. Merriam-Webster, s.v. 'iteration,' accessed January 3, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/iteration>.

480. Evolution is used here as indicating change across time, without connotations of progress, or refinement over time.

temporality of traces that might be found in physical proximity at an archaeological site, but which do not always fit within a chronological continuity. Through transformation the practice seeks to enact practically, through constructed traces, what archaeology indicates: a relationality of traces that exists outside chronology.⁴⁸¹



Figure 73. Susanna Bauer, *Small Scenes* assemblage, 2018.
Related to the *Sprayograph* in Figure 74 below. Working process.

481. See chapter II. Archaeology and chapter VIII. 3. Archaeological Time.

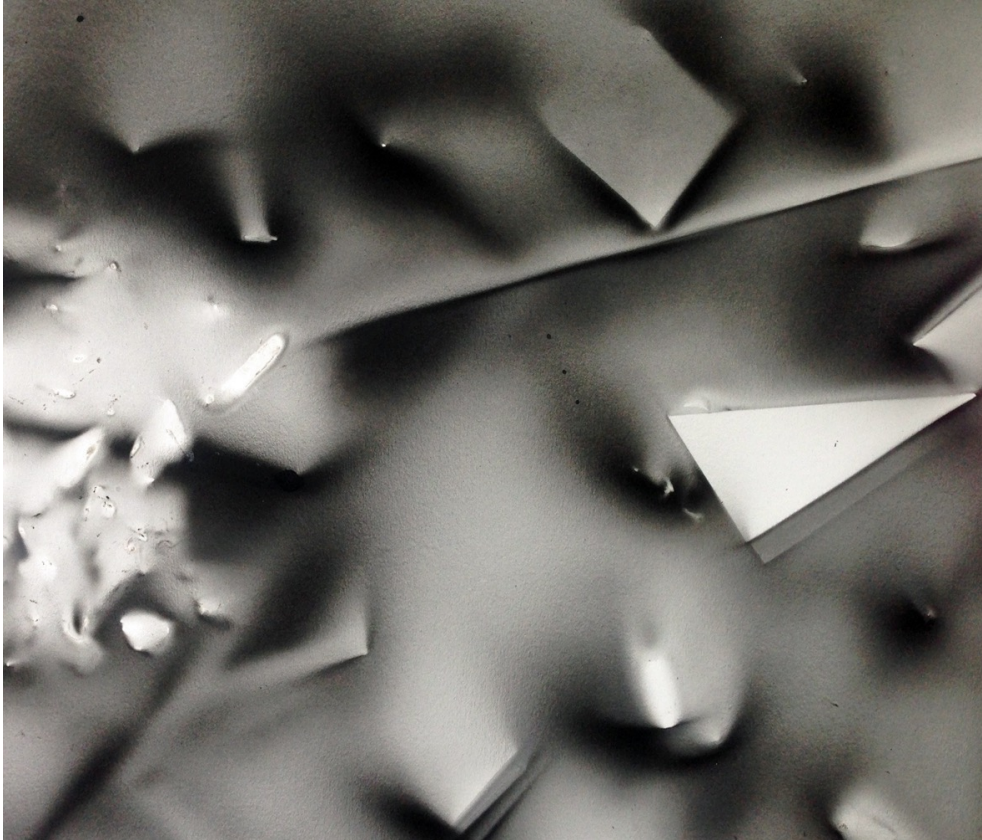


Figure 74. Susanna Bauer, *Sprayograph*, 2018. Detail.
Relating to the assemblage shown in Figure 73 above.

At the same time, the transformational processes developed and applied in this art project—and this is crucial—lead to material-temporal states that remain linked by the indexical thread of a trace relationship. The *Small Scenes* model is still existentially linked to the *Sprayograph*, as is the *Sprayograph* to the *Sprayograph* animations, just like the *Artefacts* are linked to the *Petrifacts* projection. The further the transformations progress, the more difficult it becomes to logically dissect the tangents between stages. For example, the relationship between the *Artefacts* display and the *Sprayograph Warp* projection is complex, as they are entangled across several stages, but also through having been developed within separate pathways of transformation.

Transformation is defined as ‘a marked change in form, nature or appearance,’ which is certainly applicable to the shifts described above.⁴⁸² However, it is also a very generic term, and the processes undertaken in this project might benefit from a narrower description. Transformation by itself doesn’t disclose the particular character

482. Oxford Dictionaries English online, s.v. ‘transformation,’ accessed 3 January 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/transformation>. Specific meanings of transformation are dependant on context: mathematical, linguistic, biological, etc.

of the *transformational process*—whether for example it is sudden, or protracted, or what degree of change is implied. I will attempt such a narrowing in the next chapter.

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VII. 5. Metamorphosis

In *Man in the Holocene*, the extreme experience of the natural catastrophe, combined with increasing symptoms of memory loss and ageing, trigger an almost Kafkaesque phase in Geiser, where he imagines himself gradually turning into a newt, or a dinosaur, soon to be extinct and eventually transformed into a mineralised fossil in a future time.⁴⁸³ Geiser seeks to make sense of the inevitable transformations that are taking place in his mental and physical being.

He writes on a piece of paper:

'CHANGING OF HUMAN BEINGS INTO
ANIMALS, TREES, STONE, ETC.
SEE: METAMORPHOSIS / MYTH.'⁴⁸⁴

The mystery of radical transformations of this kind has captivated human imagination for millennia. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are the classic literary reference to consider in this context.⁴⁸⁵ This collection of mythological stories of transformation sketches a universal history from the creation of the earth to the death of Julius Caesar, during the poet's contemporary present.⁴⁸⁶ Ovid begins his poem with '*In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas / corpora,*' which translates to 'I intend to speak of forms changed into new entities.'⁴⁸⁷

Important here is that the change leads to 'new entities,' objects or beings that are entirely different from their prior 'form.' In Ovid, this 'change of forms' encompasses all kinds of transformations, from humans to animals, to stone, and many other

483. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 96ff. The reference here is to Franz Kafka's novella *The Metamorphosis* (1915).

484. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 56.

485. Publius Ovidius Naso (43 BCE–17 CE), *Metamorphoses*, completed in 8 CE. For full text online see The Internet Classics Archive, <http://classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.html>.

486. *Encyclopedia Britannica online*, s.v. 'Metamorphoses,' <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Metamorphoses-poem-by-Ovid>. For an accessible summary see Classic Literature (website,) https://www.ancient-literature.com/rome_ovid_metamorphoses.html.

487. Roy Arthur Swanson, 'Ovid's Theme of Change,' *The Classical Journal* 54, no. 5 (1959): 201. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3295215>.

variations.⁴⁸⁸ Metamorphosis, in a literary and mythological context, thus describes an extraordinary transformation, a change that is total, that is unexpected, and possibly ‘abrupt.’⁴⁸⁹

This change of state is different to a scientifically transparent process of alteration, as it implies something inexplicable, that cannot be traced entirely by reason.⁴⁹⁰ Sudden transformations of humans into trees, or stones, don’t fit with empirical sciences, they are part of the religious or mythological world views that Geiser dismisses as superseded imaginations.⁴⁹¹ From a rational point of view, this kind of *metamorphic transformation* might entirely be attributed to *fabulation*.⁴⁹²

It is useful to return to Simon Starling in this context, and consider his working process: ‘In the work there are constant shifts from image to object, object to image. And from material to information, digital to analogue.’⁴⁹³ These ‘shifts,’ which are traceable throughout the artist’s practice, are certainly similar to the processes undertaken by this art project. The shifts between object and image—like in *Archaeopteryx Lithographica*—compare to the shift from model assemblage to *Sprayograph*. Shifts in scale, as discussed in the chapter *Small Scenes*, and which run across most parts of this project, compare to the upscaling of a silver particle from a photograph, by one million times, into a monumental sculpture in Starling’s *The*

488. Ian Johnston, a translator of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* provides a comprehensive list of all the varieties of transformations within the poet’s text. <http://johnstoniatexts.x10host.com/ovid/transformationshtml.html>.

489. *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. ‘metamorphosis,’ accessed 14.2.2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metamorphosis>.

490. Metamorphosis in a scientific context predominantly describes a biological process, while metamorphism is used in geology, and also fossilisation could be considered a scientifically explicable example for humans turning into stone. The transition from caterpillar to butterfly, or the encounter with fossilised remains, however, still retains notions of wonder. Etymologically, metamorphosis existed in its mythological sense prior, its scientific use followed later. I would suggest that its introduction into the sciences was precisely motivated by seeking to describe transformations of states that were unusual, unexpected and appeared miraculous. Metamorphosis remains an experience of rupture, also within science. The wonder, I propose, arises from an experiential incomprehension that scientific explanations may not always be able to shift. *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. ‘metamorphosis (n),’ accessed 14.2.2019. <https://www.etymonline.com/word/metamorphosis>.

491. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 9; see also chapter VIII. 2. Geological Time.

492. *Fabulation* is understood here in the sense of ‘relating invented stories,’ but also relating to fables, where often animals act as if they were human. *Oxford Dictionaries English*, s.v. ‘fabulate,’ accessed February 14, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fabulate>.

493. Starling in Roelstraete, Manacorda, and Harbord, *Simon Starling*, 25, in the context of *Silver Particle / Bronze After Henry Moore*, 2008, but applicable to Starling’s practice beyond this particular work.

Nanjing Particles, for example. It seems appropriate to consider these processes in the artist's work therefore also as transformations.⁴⁹⁴

However, Starling's projects are also inextricably tied to factual research and proceed in a pseudo-scientific mode, according to a strict inner logic. As Robert Leonard describes in his experience of Starling's work *Flaga* (2003): 'As soon as I read the wall text, *Flaga* clicked. . . . The work went from being puzzling, ambiguous, even opaque to being totally unambiguous and transparent.'⁴⁹⁵ The written narratives accompanying the work are the opposite of fabulation—they relay the factual contexts within which the art work operates. Once that particular context is disclosed, the processes of transformation become evident and comprehensible. Thus, in spite of the title *Metamorphology* of Simon Starling's exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago in 2014, I would contend that his process does in fact not fall within the connotations that metamorphosis suggests.⁴⁹⁶

By distinction, the processes of alteration in this art project, are less transparent, or predictable for audiences, for lack of a supplementary backstory—factual or fictional—that could logically explain the connections between the material states in the exhibition.⁴⁹⁷ They are driven by a material thinking from within the objects at hand, and developed along a restrained, open-ended referentiality. The actual physical making of the work is based in processes that are traceable, however, not made explicit to viewers. Moreover, these processual connections do not simply transfer into the fictional, referential level of ruins, artefacts, and fossilised traces—their relationality has no defined pre-articulated form in the work.

The transformations are intended to engender imaginative, associative narratives of explanation and connectivity in the viewers. This corresponds to the notion of metamorphosis, as an unexpected change, from which fabulation, as a form of

494. Transformations from object to image, and image to object, which are at the centre of *Archeopteryx Lithographica*, are also prevalent, for example, in *In Speculum* (2013).

495. Simon Starling et al., *Simon Starling, In Speculum* (Caulfield East, Vic: Monash University, 2013), 23.

496. References not only to metamorphosis, but also to *alchemy* have repeatedly been made in the context of Starling's work—by the artist himself, as well as by various other writers. (i.e. Roelstraete and Starling, *Simon Starling*, 18, n. 10.) Despite alchemy's implied notion of transformation, its romanticising connotation of a *dark art* is of limited relevance to a practice engaged in throwing into sharp light current economical, ecological and cultural entanglements. The term alchemy introduces a cauldron of colourful references, that seem to become much more metaphorical than the work itself.

497. This lack of *narrative plot* will be discussed further in chapter VIII. 5. Discontinuity.

speculative narrative, can emerge.⁴⁹⁸

Moreover, while transformation by itself does not indicate a temporal non-linearity between the different material stages, metamorphosis does imply such a *discontinuity*. The metamorphic change that results in a 'new entity,' describes a transition between different states that compares to a quantum leap: when a human being turns into a stone, it disrupts chronological continuity, as the geological time registers of stone differ from human temporality. This rupture, I sense, lies at the bottom of an incongruence between physical experience and the rationalised cognition of chronological time.

Similarly, when an object transmutes into an image, the two states *register time differently*, due to the associated shifts of media and dimensionality. Duration, for example, is experienced and referred to differently in the *Small Scenes* video, than it is in a two-dimensional *Sprayograph*. When this image in turn acquires a temporal expansion, as well as new spatial aspects in the *Sprayograph animations*, the individual stages can no longer be related within the same chronology, as each of them exists differently in time. The temporal sequence between states is therefore discontinuous, and I would propose, best described as non-linear.

I therefore suggest to consider the changes between media, scale and dimensions, as applied in this project, as *metamorphic transformations*, intended to capture the non-linear temporality of material traces, in accordance with the research propositions outlined in the introduction. It delivers to this condition and generates the opportunity for viewers to imagine and construct relationality between traces in alternative ways.

498. This narrative imagination is based in subjective experience, and thus differs from the explanatory pathways based in empirical fact that modern sciences pursue.



Figure 75. Susanna Bauer, *Small Scenes*, 2018. Video still.



Figure 76. Susanna Bauer, *Petrifacts*, 2018. Digital photograph.

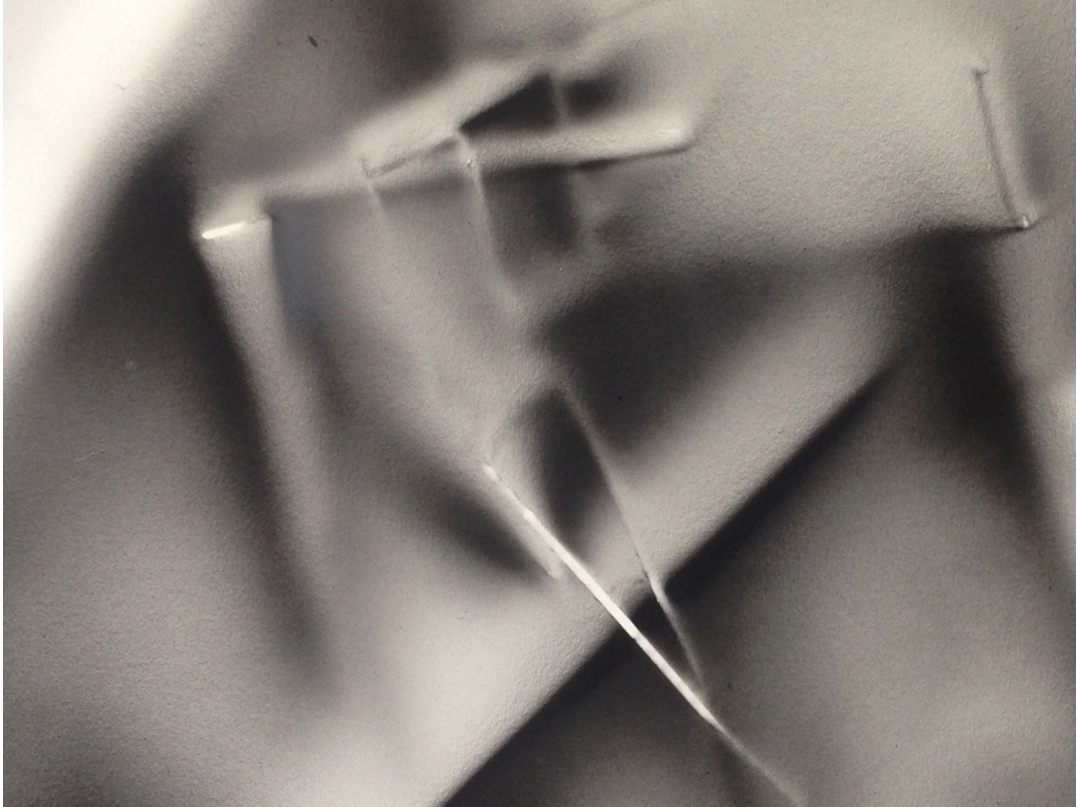


Figure 77. Susanna Bauer, *Sprayograph*, series 3, 2018. Digital photograph, detail.

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VII. 6. Carrara

From the Solnhofen Limestone quarries in the South of Germany the drive to Carrara in Italy takes about eight hours by car. The route traverses the Alps through Switzerland, and passes not far from the valley where Geiser lists the different types of rocks prevalent in the area, among them 'GRANULAR LIMESTONE (MARBLE).'⁴⁹⁹

Looking back inland from the sea, the mountains above Carrara, part of the Alpe Ligurie, appear covered in snow. It is the middle of summer, and there is something oddly out of place about these snow capped ranges. The drive from the beach of Marina di Carrara up towards the old township of Carrara and the mountains beyond follows a broad avenue of bygone grandeur, that feeds the anticipation.

The Viale XX Settembre traverses the busy, flat stretch of urban and industrial sprawl that follows the Riviera coast south-east towards Pisa. It passes a number of large industrial yards, jammed with rows upon rows of marble blocks and slabs, gigantic saws, trucks and cranes. The stone industry's looks are rough and mechanical—heavy machinery, diesel, grease. Flaked off paint, rust. Noise, dust and sludge. Male territory. Primeval.

In the workshops eccentric personalities are disguised by clouds of dust and protective gear, hunched over their stone blocks, hammering, chiselling, grinding, polishing. Carrara attracts a strange mix of people. Sculptors from all over the world come to work there, or to have their expensive commissions executed by the local artisan workshops. Some arrive for a single project and never leave. Carrara is a place prone to nostalgia, michelangelesque dreamings, and cold damp winters.

The walls of the quarries are smooth and look perfectly polished, like marble clad architecture. Most of the cave, as they are called in Italian, are surface quarries, where the blocks get sawn off along vertical and horizontal planes. Up close, the snow capped summits reveal themselves as torn open hill tops and mounds of marble debris from the quarries. There is slimy green algae in the river, plastic bags caught inbetween the marble river pebbles. The tar-seal of the road is broken from the huge weights the trucks transport down from the quarries to the port. Puddles shimmer in oily rainbows. At times the river turns milky white from the marble mill run off.

499. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 34.

Solnhofen limestone and Carrara marble are made up of the same mineral. The sedimentary limestone is formed from calcite remnants of predominantly algae, shells, and corals of the inland sea. Limestone is a preliminary stage to marble, which is generated through *geological metamorphosis*, a transformation by heat or pressure that alters limestone's structure as it recrystallises into marble.⁵⁰⁰ Any 'impurities' like clay minerals or metals, give the marble its various colours other than white. As strata, swirls, or mottles, they create a *marbled* effect.⁵⁰¹ In Carrara the most common type of marble is *ordinario*—the 'ordinary' marble, which is white with grey stripes, or *venatura* (veined). It is literally everywhere—from the pebbles in the river to the curb stones in the old city. *Statuario*, by contrast, is an almost translucent, milky white and fine-grained marble, that is highly priced and preferred for sculpture.

I left for Carrara after I had finished my sculpting apprenticeship. Finally abroad. I went on a vague promise of employment, that fell over after half a year. But it got me there, and got me started. As an artigiano (artisan), I made copies of models in the traditional way, through transfer of points, through measuring and equating. However, my own material thinking transformed in Carrara. The external rationale of accurate measurements and precise equations faded in favour of free form and my own ideas. The freedom of being a stranger is being unobserved.

I traversed the Alps with the seasons, north to south, and south to north, following the path of the migratory birds.⁵⁰² The transition of space became a transitional mode of life, led between here and there. Migration isn't a gradual transition, it is the experience of another kind of discontinuity—of language, of culture, of history, of belonging, of personality, of mind.

500. Limestone and marble consist of Calcite CaCO₃. For more in depth geological details see Geology.com: Geoscience News and Information, 'marble,' accessed February 14, 2019. <http://geology.com>, or Geology: Rocks & Minerals, the 'marble' page, hosted by the University of Auckland, accessed February 14, 2019. https://flexiblelearning.auckland.ac.nz/rocks_minerals/rocks/marble.html.

501. Geology: Rocks & Minerals.

502. In the mountains of northern Italy, traditional *Roccoli*, intricate architectural structures, covered in vegetation and netting, are still used to intercept and catch birds along their routes of migration to the south of Europe. Wikipedia; Italian Wikipedia's 'Roccolo' entry, accessed February 14, 2019. [https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roccolo_\(caccia\)](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roccolo_(caccia)). See also Committee Against Bird Slaughter (website), <http://www.komitee.de/en/projects/italy/northern-italy-brescia-and-lake-garda/>.



Figure 78. *Rocolo Pieve Tesino*, 2017. Digital photograph by Romina Ferrari.
(Image reproduced from Wikimedia Commons. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=57605029>.)

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VII. 7. *If You Find the Good Oil Let Us Know*



Figure 79. Maddie Leach, *If You Find the Good Oil Let Us Know*,
16 January 2014, 39deg 16' 36"S, 173deg 29' 42" E.
Photograph Shaun Waugh. (Courtesy of the artist.)

The block in this image is so deceptively white, it could almost be marble. It is, however, in fact a block of cast concrete that is plunged into the Tasman Sea, off the West Coast of New Zealand.

Maddie Leach is a New Zealand artist, whose practice is equally engaged in material transformations and processual frameworks. Her 2012–2014 artist's residency in New Plymouth, Taranaki provided the context for the multi-layered project *If You Find the Good Oil Let Us Know*.

I encountered this work in form of a little red book, the publication accompanying the project. It begins with a 'Letter to Companions' by the artist, that recounts the background of the work, and sets the scene for a project that explores expanded notions of site-specificity, authorship and participation. The narrative begins with the artist becoming the 'self-appointed guardian' of a liquid, suspected to be old whale

oil.⁵⁰³ Her intuition that “‘the whale” should be returned to sea,’ appears to be based on an instinct, or a superstition, that somehow the whale’s spirit remained entangled with the liquid.⁵⁰⁴

In the initial phase of the project, the identity of the oil needs to be verified—here the story prepares the ground of longing for the fabled, magical substance, that engages the reader’s material imaginary. When the oil is instead identified as of common mineral origin, we are disappointed, but just like the artist, too far along to back out. Leach’s yarn has cleverly entangled us to join the party accompanying the oil on its journey.

An alternative avenue for returning the oil to its sources is found through a recycling method that uses oil in the production of cement. The oil cum cement is then to be cast into a rectangular block, and subsequently to be sunk in the Tasman Sea, just off the coast of Taranaki, where major mineral oil extraction has been providing economic focus in an otherwise isolated strip of rural New Zealand.

Amounts matter in Leach’s project. The artist intends to ‘calculate how much’ the entire amount of oil will render in cement, and how big a block it will then become once cast: ‘My proposition is now one based in a process of equivalencies and transference.’⁵⁰⁵

Quantitative equations of this kind appear to suppose a transformation process that is imagined as lossless in its multiple exchanges between energy and matter. While such idealised accuracies echo scientific experiments in the abstract spaces of laboratory isolation, in Leach’s case they are applied to a metaphorical proposition.⁵⁰⁶

If You Find the Good Oil Let Us Know follows an ‘inexorable logic of substitution,’ that drives a metamorphic process in which the prior stage is consumed entirely in a transformation that brings about a new stage.⁵⁰⁷ The total amount of oil is consumed in the process of making cement. The resulting amount of cement powder is consumed fully in the casting process of a concrete block, which will be eroded by the saltwater currents until it will have dissolved and mingled with the sedimentary deposits of

503. Maddie Leach, *Maddie Leach: If You Find the Good Oil Let Us Know* (New Plymouth, New Zealand: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 2014), 12.

504. Leach, 12.

505. Leach, 17.

506. Projects like Starling’s *Shedboatshed*, 2005, take these assumption to their extreme in a real world test that seeks to ironically prove the fluidity between different *aggregate states*.

507. Peter Brunt in Leach, *Maddie Leach*, 33.

shells, coral and sand on the ocean floor. Which one day, might undergo another substitution through geological metamorphosis.

By contrast, the *credibility* of the fictional world of the *Small Scenes* is reliant on an avoidance of quantitative measurements and comparisons, instead it employs perspective and scale to undermine stable points of reference.⁵⁰⁸ This disregard for quantifiable parameters is carried through to other material states: The *Sprayograph* animations, for example, are equally boundless, and could refer to a macro- as well as a micro-universe, while *Petrifacts'* relationship to scale remains equally ambiguous.⁵⁰⁹

Furthermore, the different stages do not consume one another in the metamorphic process, as objects and materials disappear and reappear in the various transformations that *The Quarry* presents as temporal states side by side, simultaneously.⁵¹⁰

This is consistent with the project's focus on a *qualitative* rather than a *quantitative* inquiry that is concerned with the characteristics that might transition via a material trace, not the amounts. This aspect of 'transference,' that also Leach refers to, is an interesting point in this context.⁵¹¹ In *the Quarry* the traces, or traces of traces, continue to link the different transformations in an indexical way—even if this connection is no longer obvious, and temporally discontinuous. While a quantitative comparison between these medially and dimensionally different states is non-sensical, however, relationalities continue to exist. Something always transfers across in metamorphic transformation, it is just difficult to know exactly what.

In Leach's case an almost scientific gesture, outwardly concerned with measurements and equations, appears to be a guise for a material thinking that is in fact committed to a poetic journey. Her seemingly formal process of substitution is being complicated by metaphorical and relational trajectories that overlay the physical transformation.

The artist writes about the recycling process: 'It's not that the oil becomes cement, rather . . . it undergoes a disappearance within the process while supporting the emergence of another material.'⁵¹² This is a metamorphosis that sustains a mystical notion: while the oil might not *physically* become cement, it does so *metaphorically*. In

508. As discussed in chapter IV. 6. *Small Scenes*.

509. See chapter VI. 4. *Sprayograph* Animations and VII. 8. *Petrifacts*.

510. For instance, images of the model assemblages in *Small Scenes*, its traces in the *Sprayograph* animations, as well as in both *Artefacts* and *Petrifacts*.

511. As already quoted above, Leach, *Maddie Leach*, 17.

512. Leach, 17.

this metaphorical trajectory the whale resurfaces too—as the symbol of a species affected by economical and ecological exploitation, which is manifest in the oil platforms out in the Tasman Sea. The concrete block that *is* the whale is being refloated at sea before its disappearance for ‘good.’

In the material thinking of both Starling and Leach, site-specificity and context play a crucial role, however Leach’s integration of other voices additionally emphasises the relational aspect of her practice. *If You Find the Good Oil Let Us Know* has something of the spirit of a community project, as it is built from the relationships between people, site and material. In this way it constructs its very own particular ‘ecology,’ as a system of ‘connectivity’ structured by this relationality.⁵¹³

Leach’s work subtly occupies both the territories of fact and fiction. The speculative nature of the project emerges through the multiplicity of perspectives and narrators, and the lack of a tangible, verifiable outcome. The physical object, if it ever existed, has vanished, and this absence imbues the work with a mystique that reinvoles the initial fable of the whale oil. This elusiveness inspires musings on the reliability of this ‘speculative narrative,’ and as a reader we remain wondering what exactly, if anything, happened.⁵¹⁴

Interestingly, all three practices are vested in narrative: Starling’s projects rely on factual historic contexts to unlock their meaning, while Leach’s work projects outwards through collaborative storytelling. *The Quarry* seeks to negotiate a space between connectedness and discontinuity through its methodology of metamorphic transformation, in a way that generates a space for a multiplicity of imaginative narratives to be composed by viewers.

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513. Ecology as a ‘realm of connectivity,’ described by Starling, already quoted earlier in chapter VII. 3. Archaeopteryx.

514. Leach, *Maddie Leach*, 17–18.

VII. 8. *Petrifacts*

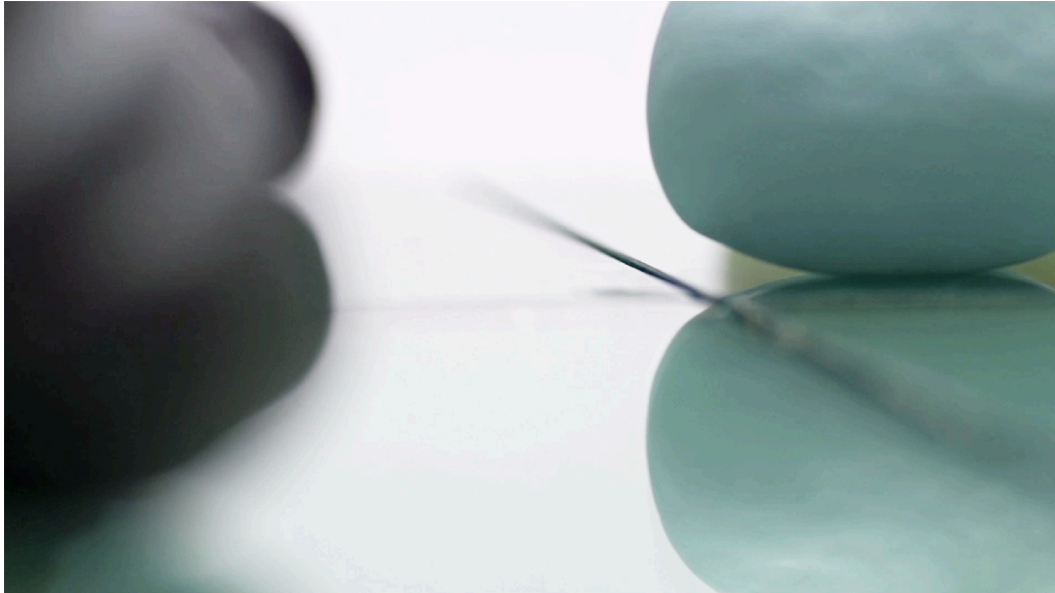


Figure 80. Susanna Bauer, *Petrifacts*, 2018. Video still.

The view opens up onto a fictional landscape, where boulder-like forms float on a glassy, reflective surface like on a perfectly still body of water. As the camera pans past in an uninterrupted, continuous shot, artificial shapes come into view, protruding from the organic masses. Some of these corners, sharp angles and straight lines are reminiscent of the objects in the *Artefacts* display or the *Small Scenes*. They are embedded in the boulders, amalgamated with them. Impossible to determine whether they are in the process of emerging, or whether they are becoming gradually more enveloped, sinking into, and dissolving within the organic form.

The reflective surface beneath is dissected by longitudinal and latitudinal lines, a cartographic grid that frames the boulders' mirage-like reflections. *Petrifacts* is imagined as an otherworldly fictional space, an alter-universe, where different rules might apply. Where the ground is not solid, gravity not a given, where stone is not stone, and where time unfolds differently.⁵¹⁵

515. The boulders in the video were formed from plasticine, at small model sizes, upscaled through the use of macro perspective and the size of the projection. Similar to the other material states in *The Quarry*, external reference points are avoided, so that the scale of the objects remains ultimately unknowable.

'Erosion is a slow process,' Max Frisch writes in *Man in the Holocene*.⁵¹⁶ The same currents that are slowly gnawing away at the concrete whale, are breaking over the foreshore seawall of New Plymouth, built from local andesite boulders. Andesite boulders aren't quarried in the traditional sense of being broken from a rock strata and extracted by blasting, drilling, or sawing. Taranaki andesite is of volcanic origin, cooled down lava from past eruptions of Mount Taranaki. On their way from the mountain towards the sea, the boulders have been milled slowly by the currents of the Taranaki waters into their typical smooth, oval shape.

I carved the exact same type of boulder on the foreshore next to that sea wall. Looking at the ocean extending out west—I always feel that's the direction I've come from. And when I think about home, I imagine across the earth westward, never out east. It was scorching hot, grey clouds of dust rose up from the howling grinders, like volcanic ash it settled everywhere. It marked the silhouettes of goggles and dust masks on our faces—we looked like coal miners, emerging from working underground at the end of the day. But that is another West Coast.



Figure 81. Susanna Bauer, *Transition*, 2002.

Taranaki Andesite on wooden base, foreshore walkway, New Plymouth, New Zealand.

516. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 48.

Things were changing, partly because of my migratory life, the non-permanence of my own existence. A car load became the limit of possessions I was comfortable with, and stone turned into a burden, an impossibility.

I exchanged hammer and chisels for screen and images. I wanted to make work that didn't focus all attention within the object, work that wasn't permanent for all times, but which would instead establish relationalities across space and time beyond itself. I became much more interested in the materiality of intangibility and remove.

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As the research evolved towards identifying the different categories of material traces it wanted to investigate, I conceived that one of them should focus on fossilisation.

Stone and geological aspects became more important, and my personal history more entwined with the project, so I considered shaping this fossilised state out of 'actual' stone. A volcanic boulder would be perfect, as it is not only a rock, but enclosed within this material is that volcanic force, the event of eruption, the fire and the ash. At the same time, its shape inevitably speaks of the *longue durée* of erosion in the rock's history.

At this stage of the research I was very vested in making a project that would not only expand temporally, but that would also be accessible across a number of sites, as a multi-platform installation. Additional to an inside space, like a gallery, there would be online content, as well as an outside location in the urban environment. The different sites would be physically linked, and were intended to provide equal access points to the project. The *Fossil*—as it was titled then—was planned as the outside sculpture component, at a public site, made from stone, and at a larger scale, meant to contrast the model materials and ambiguity of scale other parts of the work were attending to.

The planning phase was a somewhat strange experience, a weird sense of return. The sculpture was dependant on being granted access to the chosen public site, and reliant on a proposal for funding to be accepted. When it failed, it impacted on the entire multi-platform concept, as without this substantial anchor, the other parts were not going to be connected as I had envisaged.

This failure created a discontinuity, a pause, that required me to make changes, adapt, and rethread the different strands of the project. I decided to dispense with the

multiple exhibition platforms, and follow a pathway of internal layering and fictional expansion instead. Rather than extending the relational network outwards and articulate the different material-temporal states across the various media platforms, I decided to fold the entire project inwards, and superimpose these articulations within one location.

This effectively sited the project more rigorously within a fictional space, as any direct links to real physical sites fell away. In the abstract and artificial space that the white cube gallery constitutes, the inner relationality of the different states could in fact become intensified and more detailed.

It became clear that I didn't need to make the large fossil in order to anchor stone in the work—it was already within it. Instead, the plasticine boulders in *Petrifacts* enabled me to access a much wider sphere of meaning, through the infinite expansive possibilities of fictional worlds that Eco speaks about.⁵¹⁷ The step away from the external site meant a retreat from daylight, entering a twilight zone of semi-darkness, halfway between real world and imagination.⁵¹⁸



Figure 82. Susanna Bauer, *Fossil*, 2018. Plasticine model.

517. Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, 85; as referenced in III. 4. Fictional World.

518. The gallery space. In this way the project expresses itself distinctly differently to the art works that are manifestly engaged with particular sites, or that work in site-specific ways.

In *Petrifacts* I imagined material traces like ruins and artefacts, buried under layers of soil, ash, and debris. How metamorphosing pressure might transform them into stone in a process of slow petrification. Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, a nineteenth century German writer and poet, who spent much time fossicking in quarries, writes about experiencing a strange awe looking at fossils, as if she was witnessing plants and shells in their final death struggle.⁵¹⁹ In her poem *die Mergelgrube* (the Marl Pit), from 1844, the narrator imagines himself as a fossil in the future:

‘Es ist gewiß, die alte Welt ist hin,
Ich Petrefakt, ein Mammuthsknochen drinn!’
(It is certain, the old world is finished,
I am a petrifact, a mammoth bone within it!)⁵²⁰

Fossils, at first glance, might be considered outside the scope of this project, as it is focused on cultural rather than natural traces, whereas fossilisation is generally defined as a process that turns organic material into stone.⁵²¹ Olivier, however, argues that ‘strictly speaking a fossil is anything that is dug up from the earth,’ and places fossils within archaeology’s terrain.⁵²² He bases this notion on the generic meaning of the latin origin of the word *fodere* (to dig), as well as historic definitions of fossils.⁵²³

For the purposes of this art project, *Petrifacts* is intended to capture *fossilised states* in an expanded, metaphorical sense. In the overall conception of five different temporal-material articulations in the exhibition, *Petrifacts* seeks to relate a geological notion of time and enact metamorphic change from one material to another. This change amalgamates the embedded cultural trace with its enveloping material, as both slowly become one. Natural and anthropogenic traces, as explained earlier, can

519. Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, *Annette Von Droste-Hülshoff. Briefe* (Severus Verlag, 2012), 210. The discovery of geological ‘deep time’ in the 19th century sparked popular interest in the study and the collection of fossils, in particular among artists and writers. Georg Braungart, ‘Katastrophen kennt allein der Mensch,’ *Recherche – Zeitung Für Wissenschaft*, 2, October/November, 2008. <http://www.recherche-online.net/georg-braungart-geologie.html>. Geological time and its effects on a human experience of temporality will be discussed in depth in chapter VIII. 2. Geological Time.

520. Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, ‘Die Mergelgrube,’ in Margaret Mare, *Annette von Droste-Hülshoff*, trans. Ursula Prideaux (London and Southampton: The Camelot Press Ltd., 1965), 118–121 (german original), 296–298 (english translation). Unless otherwise noted, I am using this translation by Ursula Prideaux.

521. ‘The remains or impression of a prehistoric plant or animal embedded in rock and preserved in petrified form.’ Oxford Dictionaries English online, s.v. ‘fossil,’ accessed February 14, 2019. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fossil>.

522. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 31.

523. Olivier, 31. Olivier cites Élie Bertrand’s definition from 1763, who considered everything drawn from earth as a fossil.

become so entwined that they are impossible to separate, and *Petrifacts* responds to this aspect.⁵²⁴



Figure 83. Susanna Bauer, *Petrifacts* models—film set, 2018. Working process.

I chose the title *Petrifacts*, as it designates the fossil, but also indicates a possibility that these embedded objects are constructed, artificially made: a petrifact is defined as ‘an object made of stone; (also) an object formed by petrification.’⁵²⁵ The title *Petrifacts* thus captures the ambivalence between cultural and natural traces in this project.

The *Petrifacts* boulder field is a meditation on archaeological sites and their layered metaphorical meanings. It is a revisiting of my own history as a stone carver, and the fossil seeking excursions from childhood times. As a metamorphic transformation, *Petrifacts* originates from the recollections of quarries, stones, and life across three countries, from the ruminations of an old man in a novel, and from the remnants of the *Small Scenes* and their *Artefacts* companions. These traces and their indexical pathways connect all these elements uniquely to me, but I believe that they remain open for

524. ‘Foraging the ground to extract “antiquities” is not at all a simple affair, for the artifacts that they are trying to draw out have fused in part with the sediment in which they lie.’ Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 44, see also chapter VI. 1. Traces.

525. Petrifact is derived from *petra* (latin) = rock and (*arte*)fact = made. Oxford Dictionaries English online, s.v. ‘petrifact,’ accessed February 14, 2019. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/petrifact>.

other connectivities an individual viewer may intuit.

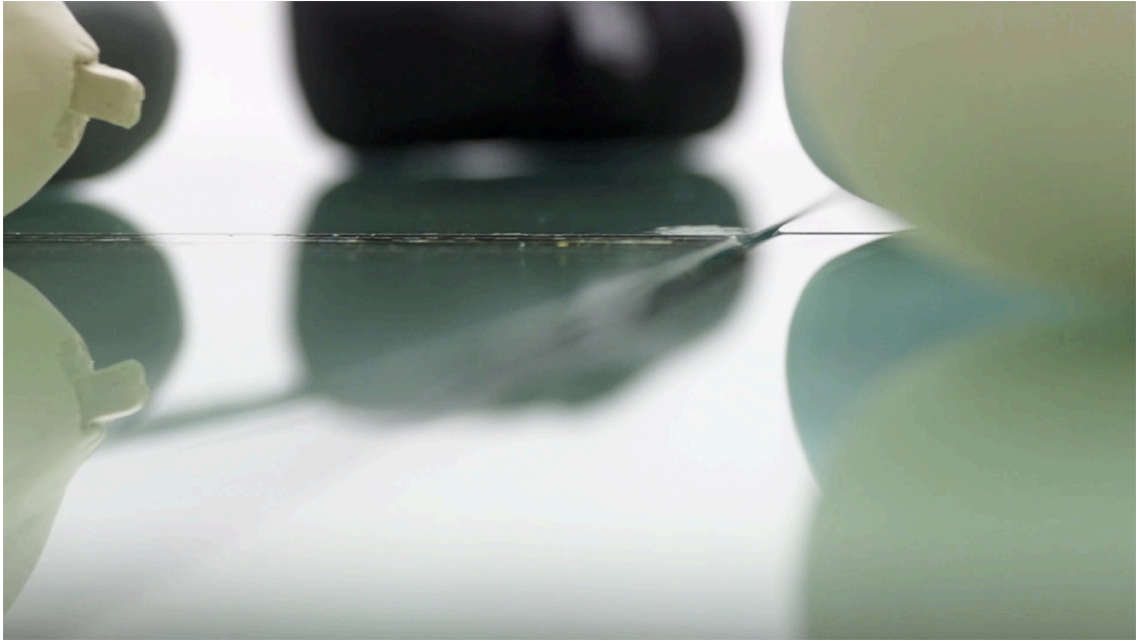


Figure 84. Susanna Bauer, *Petrifacts*, 2018. Video still.

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VIII. 'Realm of Connectivity'

VIII. 1. Introduction

This chapter will focus on the notions of temporality that inform both the research and the installation, in particular those where human time and material time interlace and entwine. The chapter will further describe how material temporalities are configured in the installation and how viewer experience is considered. In this way, the chapter connects back to the contextual setting, and the proposition of this research, as an investigation into a notion of non-linear temporalities channeled by material traces.

The question of temporality presented itself in the context of this research project right from the outset, associated with a contemporary experience that is characterised by an accelerated simultaneity of the a-synchronic⁵²⁶, and the reconfigurations of proximity and distance, partly effected by a globalised informational network. A concept of chronological time thus seemed increasingly inadequate to capture the current constellation of discordant temporalities.

Fictional archaeology was proposed as a concept and method to establish alternative, non-linear temporal relationalities through the explorations of fictional material traces. *The Quarry* assembles the practical explorations of this creative research project—gathered within the five material-temporal articulations of *Small Scenes*, *Sprayograph Scan*, *Sprayograph Warp*, *Petrifacts*, and *Artefacts*—into an installation.

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526. In analogy with Ernst Bloch's 'contemporaneity of the non-contemporary.' Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*; as already referenced in chapter IV. 2. *The Rings of Saturn*.

VIII. 2. Geological Time

Augustine of Hippo wrote in 397 CE in his *Confessions*: ‘What then is time? Provided no one asks me, I know. If I want to explain it to an enquirer, I do not know.’⁵²⁷ Intuitively, we are aware of its existence, but conceptualising time intellectually is difficult.

Philosophical, sociological and scientific discourses, among others, have proposed variously complex concepts that consider time and temporality within the particular contexts of their discipline and beyond. I will in this chapter, however, seek to remain very narrowly focussed on the particular aspects of time that are pertinent to *this* enquiry.

Relevant for this research is the distinction between time and temporality, which Augustine addressed by identifying temporality as the personal, subjective experience of time,⁵²⁸ which is the predominant focus of this research, versus what Edmund Husserl called ‘objective time.’⁵²⁹ As Emily Abbey notes in ‘Temporality and the Boundary Between Present and Future,’ ‘the irreversible nature of human life experience constitutes a core aspect of what is meant by temporality.’⁵³⁰

Much of Geiser’s existential crisis is triggered by thoughts about his own mortality and a feeling of time running out.⁵³¹ As he observes the various rock strata in the surrounding mountain ranges, he ponders on human existence in the scheme of the earth ages.

Geological time is derived from a material record of earth events, archived in mineral strata. Its layered time signature captures the expanse of a predominantly prehuman history of the earth. As a vast repository of material traces, it does also envelope all organic life, including human existence.

527. Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* 397–398 CE, reprinted in Groom, *Time*, 50.

528. Lívia Mathias Simão, Danilo Guimarães Silva, and Jaan Valsiner, *Temporality: Culture in the Flow of Human Experience*, *Advances in Cultural Psychology: Constructing Human Development* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc., 2015), 5.

529. Edmund Husserl, quoted in Sven Hroar Klempe, ‘Temporality and the Necessity of Culture in Psychology,’ in Simão, Guimarães Silva, and Valsiner, *Temporality*, 11.

530. Emily Abbey, ‘Temporality and the Boundary between Present and Future,’ in Simão, Guimarães Silva, and Valsiner, *Temporality*, 41.

531. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 35 and 68.

In *die Mergelgrube (the Marl-pit)*, the poem already mentioned in chapter VII. Metamorphosis and Erosion, the narrator takes shelter in a cave inside a quarry.⁵³² In this secluded space, while digging for stones and fossils, the outside world recedes. As a heterotopian space—within the world, but separate, *other*—the quarry's primeval environment becomes a portal into deep geological time that dislodges the narrator's temporal orientation. He imagines devastation, catastrophe, a world turned to rubble up above, while the quiet, slow flow of time inside the cave remains unaffected.⁵³³ 'War ich der erste Mensch oder der letzte?' (Was I the first human being or the last?).⁵³⁴

The poem dates from 1844, a time when the scientific establishment of deep geological time prior to any human existence, upended traditional concepts of earth temporality.⁵³⁵ While the theory of evolution dislodged the primacy of humans over the rest of the organic world during the same period,⁵³⁶ geological time exploded all human imaginable scales of temporality: 'Observations on the stratigraphy of rocks take us to the edge of an abyss of time, deep time beyond human comprehension,' as Michael Shanks writes.⁵³⁷ These scientific theories clashed with the ahistorical world views that up to eighteenth century had been predominantly based on the bible in the western cultural sphere, and had conceived of the 'world as being in essence the same as it was since its creation,' as Carlos Cornejo and Himmbler Olivares contend.⁵³⁸

As Georg Braungart in his analysis of Frisch's novel explains, the discovery of geological time 'relativises human existence' and introduces a 'trans-human perspective,' that leads to a temporal 'de-centring of the subject.'⁵³⁹ What is the significance of one's own finite life-span within the vastness of geological time? A human life time is less than a blip on the scale of earth time. Christoph Wulf's essay

532. Von Droste-Hülshoff, 'The Marl-pit.'

533. The assumption that the narrator is male is based on the shepherd's address: 'Sir, he's a liar!'

534. In Prideux's translation: 'Was I the first man or the last?' (Droste-Hülshoff, 'The Marl-pit,' 297). I have altered this to 'human being' in keeping with the gender neutral 'Mensch' in the German original.

535. In the period from 1750–1850 increasingly accurate calculations of geological time become established. See Braungart, 'Katastrophen,' 17.

536. The theory of evolution was formulated first by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace in the middle of the 19th century. See Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, published 1859.

537. Shanks, *The Archaeological Imagination*, 117.

538. Carlos Cornejo and Himmbler Olivares, 'Living and observing: Two Modes of Understanding Time,' in Simão, Guimarães Silva, and Valsiner, *Temporality*, 98. In *die Mergelgrube* the irreconcilability of the biblical creation narrative with the new scientific findings is tangible as a still unresolved conflict, whereas in *Man in the Holocene* religious world views have become mere residuals of a superseded belief system: 'Geiser wonders if there was still a god if there were no longer a human brain, which cannot accept the idea of creation without a creator.' Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 9.

539. Braungart, 'Katastrophen,' 17–18. 'Relativierung des Menschen' and 'transhumane Perspektive,' (my translations).

'The Temporality of World Views and Self Images,' contextualises the interconnectivity of world time and individual life time. The scale of nature time, as he polemically states, has 'thrust individual lives into meaninglessness.'⁵⁴⁰

The materiality of geological time is trickling from the genealogy of rocks and earth strata, fossils, and soils, and sands. 'Geological mutations are so amazingly slow that they deserve to be considered outside *our* human time; our "schemas" are deficient to capture the actual duration of these processes.'⁵⁴¹ As Wulf explains, the units that were historically established to measure distances, were directly derived from the human body, and correspondingly, the time units of hours, days and years make sense in relation to a human life span.⁵⁴² These units however are simply inappropriate for measuring geological time.

As we age, the relationship to years and decades changes as our referential points continue to drift into the distance. 'For every subject the end of *his* world is always the end of *the* world,' Edgar Morin writes in 'Approaches to Nothingness.'⁵⁴³ Projecting oneself outside one's own existence is an act of abstraction, rationalisation and reflection. It is an intellectual process, yet not instinctive. Thinking past one's own obsolescence is something of a mental paradox, as here the intimately known reference points of our personal experience drop away. Our relationship to time is relative, and it is one of the important propositions of this research, that 'temporality is experienced as a relationship rather than [an] essence,' as Luca Tateo writes in his essay on temporality and psychology.⁵⁴⁴

The word *Holocene* denotes the 'present epoch.'⁵⁴⁵ While the title *Man in the Holocene* can be seen as simply describing the contemporary geological era, in my view, it also speaks to our limited ability to grasp temporalities other than our immediate present.

540. Wulf, 'The Temporality of World Views,' 52.

541. Cornejo and Olivares, 'Living and Observing,' in Simão, Guimarães Silva, and Valsiner, *Temporality*, 100.

542. Wulf, 'The Temporality of World Views,' 52. Like paces, feet, or the german 'Elle' (ell, meaning ulna)

543. Edgar Morin, in 'Approaches to Nothingness' in Baudrillard, Kamper, and Wulf, *Looking Back on the End of the World*, 82.

544. Luca Tateo, 'Temporality and Generalization in Psychology. Time as Context,' in Simão, Guimarães Silva, and Valsiner, *Temporality*, 470.

545. Oxford Dictionaries English online, s.v. 'holocene,' accessed February 14, 2019. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/holocene>.

Katie Paterson's art works poetically focus on the tension between the enormous scales of cosmic time, earth time and human temporality. For *History of Darkness* (2010–), an ongoing project, Paterson takes slides of space, which Amelia Groom describes as 'imagelessness from around the cosmos.'⁵⁴⁶ She further writes that '*History of Darkness* poetically collides various incommensurable temporalities—cosmological time, which is inconceivably immense and always, for us, drastically tardy; geological time of our tiny planet, from which we look out to all this ancient darkness that predates it; and the biological time of a fleeting human lifespan.'⁵⁴⁷



Figure 85. Katie Paterson, *Light Bulb to Simulate Moonlight*, 2008.
289 frosted coloured halogen light bulbs, log book, crate, dimensions variable.
(© Katie Paterson. Image courtesy of the artist and James Cohan, New York.)

In *Light Bulb to Simulate Moonlight* (2008), Paterson transposes human temporality in a similar way into a cosmic context. The work attempts to translate the duration of an average human life span into amounts of moonlight a person will be exposed to during their life time. The installation consists of 289 light bulbs, with one single bulb illuminated at a time, until one by one, all bulbs will have burnt out their material life expectancy. By seeking to establish tangible links between them, these works are

546. Groom, *Time*, 16.

547. Groom, 16–17.

grappling with the disproportion between human and cosmic scale.

However, embedding oneself within the vast context of cosmic history, or earth history, as Geiser does, shifts the reference points so far out, that they move beyond any 'real' relationship to human existence. On such a scale, any human action will appear as of no significance, cosmic wind will just blow over. The encroachments of unresolved recent pasts and contemporary events, that might threaten the stability of the personal everyday, as they do for Geiser, become thus overwritten in the context of the time of aeons. There are limitations to an identification with, and a search for meaning in geological time.

Geiser's encyclopaedia states, 'Man is a *historical being*. . . . [While] animals display hopes and fears, only M. imagines a future.'⁵⁴⁸ Through our imagination and our memory, we have the ability to conceive of a past and a future time beyond our actual existence in the present. Maybe not instinctually, but intellectually we can occupy an external, reflective position in relation to our life time. Geiser's thinking arrives at a deadlock, at the conundrum of the *human condition*. While our imagination may seek to move beyond the confines of our immediate life time, ultimately, we cannot escape our biological existence. We cannot be wholly within nature, due to our self-awareness, but we can also not escape it.

'Nature knows no catastrophes,'⁵⁴⁹ as nature *knows* no history, 'only human beings can recognise catastrophes. . . . Nature recognises no catastrophes.'⁵⁵⁰ Nor language, nor memory. 'Nature needs no names. Geiser knows that. The rocks do not need his memory.'⁵⁵¹

This is not a a moment of reconciliation between Geiser and the world. It is rather an acknowledgement, conceding of the unreconcilable difference and separation between his self-awareness as a human, and nature's unconscious, timeless existence.

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548. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 53. In the English translation 'only man works towards a future,' translated for the German 'nur der Mensch hat Zukunft.' I think the translation is too limited in scope, as what is meant here is the ability to conceive of and visualise a future.

549. Frisch, 79.

550. Frisch, 79. In English translation 'recognise' is being used for the German 'kennt.' I think however that here 'knows' is more appropriate.

551. Frisch, 107.

VIII. 3. Archaeological Time

In the Summer of 2018 I return to the Solnhofen lime stone quarries, with hammer and chisel. A memory of the past becomes entwined with the present via the ancient lagoons of a vanished inland sea. It is an encounter with geological time channeled by the tiny ammonite spirals that we trace with our fingers. In the bright glare of the midday sun it feels nothing like the dark, vast abyss of time the years printed on the labels at the local museum seem to suggest.

Not obvious at first, it became clear to me over time, that the dislocating and diminishing effects of geological time are based on an interpretation of geology and time that is dominated by quantitative considerations. This way of thinking equates the Solnhofen fossils—fish, plants and archaeopteryx—with an *amount* of 150 million years distance and difference from today; an equation deduced from a measuring of time that considers all time *the same*, counted according to an absolute and impartial cosmological clock ticking.

This quantitative evaluation however fails to make sense as the *amount* of geological time is beyond our experiential reality. Grasping one's individual lifetime in relation to time spans of millions of years, or rather, as a microscopical fraction thereof, is met with an imaginative barrier.

By contrast, my (re-)encounter with the fossils, embedded in the thin slabs of limestone in the quarry, was an entirely different experience of temporality. It had nothing to do with chronological distance, but everything with the immediacy of these traces right under the soles of my feet, and the cold touch of the stone in my hands. What might sound like a romantic revisiting of a fossilised dream world, instead, was the realisation that the physical and affective experience of time is not always best captured by quantitative measurements. *Intuitively*, lead by the tactile experience of proximity, I actually *can* comprehend this fossilised world. There was an incongruence between the chronological time line, and the experience of a shared present between fossil, quarry and myself.

My presence in the quarry now, my childhood experience of it in the past, the memory thereof, the fossil in the present, the live organism in the past, the floating sediments and the slow formation of the enveloping lime stone layers—these constellations can be imagined as temporal bubbles, each carrying a different temporal particularity within. As discrete states, they coincide in the present of this encounter—irrespective of their position on a chronological time line. This contemporaneity

might demand an approach to temporality that suspends quantitative measures and instead seeks to interpret temporality in a *qualitative* way. A *qualitative* approach to temporality in this context implies *difference*, not in amount, but *in kind*.

I am intuiting that my experiences in the quarry and the different material states in this project installation, resonate with what Gilles Deleuze describes in relation to Henri Bergson's notion of duration: 'my own duration . . . serves to reveal other durations that beat to other rhythms, that differ in kind from mine.'⁵⁵²

If it is accepted that the linear relationality between points on a time line is not exclusive in capturing temporality, then connections between *different* temporal states can be interpreted in alternative ways.

I looked towards archaeology for such an approach. Taking up the thread laid out in the proposition, according to authors like Olivier and Shanks, an inherent a-chronology already resides in archaeology, in distinction from historiography. Olivier in particular argues that a non-chronological, non-linear 'sense of time' is transmitted through the archaeological trace.⁵⁵³

Also Michel Foucault used archaeology as a methodology that would disrupt teleology, as Bill Brown explains in his essay 'Anarchéologie: Object Worlds & Other Things, Circa Now': 'When Michel Foucault described his work as an archaeology (ca. 1966), he named a mode of excavating thought without recourse to the narrative forms of history, with their casts of leading characters, their causes and effects, their explanations of change over time.'⁵⁵⁴ Instead Foucault's process acknowledged discontinuities and ruptures between developments.⁵⁵⁵

There are several interrelated aspects to archaeological process and the nature of artefacts, that I consider reside at the basis of this assumption of non-linearity. The preservation of a particular artefact is often a consequence of an accidental dislocation from its habitual operational context: a tool lost and washed down into a cavity, a clay

552. Gilles Deleuze, 'Intuition as Method,' in *Bergsonisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), 31–2. Reprinted in Groom, *Time*, 102.

553. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 8 and 33.

554. Bill Brown, 'Anarchéologie: Object Worlds & Other Things, Circa Now,' in Roelstraete, *The Way of the Shovel*, 255. See in particular Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Routledge Classics (London: Routledge, 2002). Foucault's adoption of the archaeological term outside its discipline of origin sets a precedent for the transfer into other practices, and supports its interpretation in this research.

555. Foucault was criticised, according to Brown, for the 'absence of transition from one episteme to another' (Brown, 'Anarchéologie,' 255, n. 10).

figurine accidentally thrown out with waste. Objects can become buried next to each other without them having had any prior connection. These dislocations are added to by disturbances of deposits over time, as well as the archaeological process of excavation itself.⁵⁵⁶ Through this displacement, often much contextual information is lost, and thus the provenience of artefacts becomes speculative: 'With objects stripped of their original meaning, it is no longer possible for me to know exactly what period they belonged to,' Olivier writes.⁵⁵⁷ In his view, 'for vestiges, the sense of time is floating, pluritemporal. In truth it is uncertain and probabilistic.'⁵⁵⁸

'What you find at one depth and another,' Brown writes, 'indeed two cultures that you find at one depth or another—may or may not have a proper historical relation.'⁵⁵⁹ What however is a 'proper historical relation'? Manuel De Landa, in his book *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*, describes how different developmental stages coexist in history, often side by side, and that one stage is not always replaced by another entirely.⁵⁶⁰ He speaks about the misconception of a deterministic law of causality at the basis of historical process: 'Human history is a narrative of contingencies, not necessities, of missed opportunities to follow different routes of development, not of a unilinear succession of ways to convert energy, matter, and information into cultural products.'⁵⁶¹ The chronological sequence of events is not meaningful in itself, as De Landa argues, a notion of continuous development *towards* the future cannot be derived from it.

Moreover, archaeology will only ever be able to recover a minute portion of the cultural objects that were created and in use in the past. As Olivier writes, 'the remains it brings into the light represent but a fraction of what once existed. The vestiges it unearths are all fundamentally incomplete and truncated.'⁵⁶² The archaeological find is thus only ever a partial record, situated between absences.

556. The invasive character of archaeological excavation has already been mentioned in chapter II. 4. Robert Smithson.

557. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 8.

558. Olivier, 8. A project that became known as 'the Millie's Camp Experiment' highlights the contingencies of archaeological interpretation. In the 1970's a research group collected and examined the traces of Millie, an American Cree woman and her nomadic family, over a number of years. Later, the researchers had the opportunity to interview Millie and compare her accounts of the family's activities, the visited sites and the materials used with their findings. It became apparent how accidental aspects had influenced the archaeologists' interpretations, how numerous wrong conclusions had been drawn from the physical evidence, in fact how they had encountered 'failure at every turn' (Olivier, 26).

559. Brown, 'Anarchéologie,' 255, n. 10.

560. Manuel De Landa, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*, 1. paperback ed, Swerve Editions (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2000), 16.

561. De Landa, 99.

562. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 31.

In summary, an archaeological notion of temporality needs to take into account, firstly that cultural history is not a linear, ordered journey, secondly, that artefacts are affected by dislocation, and thirdly, the fragmented, incomplete nature of the archaeological record. This awareness of the shortcomings of its own methodology resides at the bottom of what Brown calls 'the archaeological diffidence.'⁵⁶³

This is not to say that the scientific datability of artefacts is disputed, but it suggests that chronology might not deliver the most useful outcomes regarding the *relational meaning* of material traces within archaeological contexts and sites.⁵⁶⁴ How can the temporality of material traces be thought of in alternative ways then? What positive affordances might archaeology contain, once it leaves linear models of time behind and seeks to concentrate on a qualitative notion of temporality?

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There is a tangible physical relation between artefacts buried in close proximity to each other. They are linked by a shared temporality *as traces* in the ground. This *reading*, however, requires an approach to temporality that doesn't assume the singularity of one original defining context for any object, but instead proposes to consider them as multilayered temporal constellations.⁵⁶⁵

Looked at closely, the archaeological site reveals a particular *spatial perspective* that, I believe, captures the physical relationship of artefacts as a form of non-linear temporal proximity. Archaeological process examines artefacts laterally within layers, but also layer by layer into the depth, thereby establishing a stratigraphic profile that extends vertically. In these stratigraphical crosscuts, chronologically distant objects, couched within their discrete layers, appear stacked on top of each other in close proximity. From this archaeological perspective, an entirely non-linear diagram of temporality emerges, as what is found locally adjacent, offers a relational interpretation, that literally cuts across the chronological flow of time.

563. Brown, 'Anarchéologie,' 255, n. 10.

564. Carbon dating, for example, is a well established scientific methodology that delivers reliable chronological data on many archaeological objects.

565. Here again Olivier has some insightful thoughts to offer: 'Once [objects] have been made, they live on usually well beyond the point when the moment in history that saw them come into being has faded into oblivion. . . . They end up incorporated . . . in the physical world of the presents that follow theirs.' Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 27.

Archaeology uses the term *palimpsest* to describe these ‘superimposed, stratigraphic layers.’⁵⁶⁶ Thus different periods can become overlaid in one particular site, but also one set of records can partially or totally erase a prior record.⁵⁶⁷ Stratigraphic layers are therefore not a spatial representation of temporal regularity, but couched within them is a ‘fundamentally discontinuous history.’⁵⁶⁸

As a view onto what is usually hidden, the stratigraphic perspective lends itself to artistic appropriation and exploration. Becky Brewis’s stratigraphic drawing, for example, expresses an approach to materiality and time that generates a spatial narrative of the past.

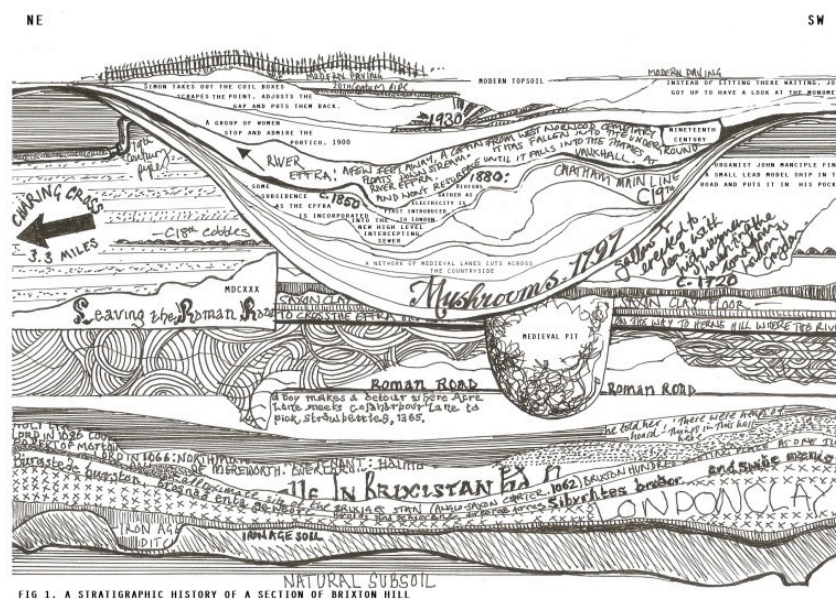


FIG 1. A STRATIGRAPHIC HISTORY OF A SECTION OF BRIXTON HILL

Figure 86. Becky Brewis, *Brixton Hill Stratigraphy*, 2014.
Illustration for *The New Wolf* magazine project ‘New Cartography.’
(Image courtesy of the artist.)

Adrián Villar Rojas also uses a stratigraphy to create fictional profiles of our contemporary, or future material environment in his work *Planetarium*. The tall, horizontally layered columns, dispersed throughout the exhibition space, appear from a distance like abstract sculptural works.⁵⁶⁹ Close up, however, the columns reveal themselves as assembled from diverse objects and materials, both inorganic and

566. Olivier, 129.

567. Olivier, 130.

568. Olivier, 130.

569. *Planetarium* was made for the 12th Sharjah Biennial, at the United Arab Emirates, 2015.

organic, compressed into material strata. The pillars resemble core samples from stratigraphic explorations, typical of archaeological excavation sites, where the temporal traces of cultural activity have accumulated into discrete layers of deposits.



Figure 87. Adrián Villar Rojas, *Planetarium*, 2015.
Installation view, Sharjah Biennial, United Arab Emirates.
(Image reproduced from Sharjah Art Foundation website,
<http://sharjahart.org/sharjah-art-foundation/projects/planetarium>.)

Villar Rojas's installation reveals the sediments of discarded everyday materials from an imagined excavation site. As an archaeology of the contemporary, there is a direct correspondence to Mark Dion's *Dump Digs*, however, with the important difference that Villar Rojas's stratigraphy is fictional—possible, and potentially probable—however these crosscuts are artistic compositions and not found.⁵⁷⁰

570. Dion's projects described above, for example *Trash Dig* 1995, or *History Trash Scan* 1996.



Figure 88. Adrián Villar Rojas, *Planetarium*, 2015.
Installation view, Sharjah Biennial, United Arab Emirates.
(Image reproduced from Sharjah Art Foundation website,
<http://sharjahart.org/sharjah-art-foundation/projects/planetarium>).

The stratigraphic diagram can be interpreted through Bruno Latour's metaphor of *spiral time*, outlined in his book *We Have Never Been Modern*.⁵⁷¹ While time proceeds along the path of a spiral chronologically, its coiling aspect means, that chronologically distant events come to rest laterally in close proximity to each other. This model doesn't dispute the chronological sequence of time, but it provides for an expanded relationality of temporal events, based on a spatial image, rather than a one-dimensional time line.

John Latham's work *Time Based Roller* (1972), is another attempt at visualising and materialising time. The roller articulates a dynamic diagram that defines temporality

571. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 3. print. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1994), 75.

non-chronologically: temporal events are organised into categories horizontally, marking different *spectral* sites along the roller, according to their durational aspects. Either unfurled or tightly rolled up, the roller represents all of time. Latham's work seeks to construct a dynamic representation of time and temporality. 'An event . . . became a two-dimensional configuration,' Latham explains, 'time was thus translated into a geometry of space.'⁵⁷²



Figure 89. John Latham, *Time Base Roller*, 1972.
Steel, canvas, acrylic paint, ink, motor. 185 x 637 x 66 cm.
(© John Latham Estate, courtesy Lisson Gallery, London. © Tate, London.)

Michael Serres's proposition of *topology* is another attempt to consider temporal relationality spatially, and moreover qualitatively.⁵⁷³ A topological approach to time, a concept borrowed from geometry, distinguishes itself from what Serres calls a 'metric,' that is a quantifiable model of time.⁵⁷⁴ Topology, instead, describes qualitative aspects

572. Walker, *John Latham*, 24. This statement was already quoted in the context of *Sprayographs*, but it also applies to the *Time Based Roller* and warrants re-iteration here.

573. Michel Serres and Bruno Latour, 'Conversations on Science, Culture and Time,' in Groom, *Time*, 161–165.

574. Serres and Latour, 164. Topology can be formally defined as 'the study of qualitative properties of certain objects (called topological spaces) that are invariant under a certain kind of transformation (called a continuous map), especially those properties that are invariant under a certain kind of invertible

that remain stable, even under transformation, or when relative positions change.

Serres illustrates his theory by using the image of a handkerchief as a metaphor. From edge to edge the fabric has measurable fixed distances across its surface (metric = chronological distances). Two metrically distant points can however become closely related when the handkerchief is crumpled—as occurs for example in the stratigraphic crosscut. Understood in this topological way, temporality's qualitative properties move into focus, and the relationality between temporalities becomes dynamic and changeable.

Thinking back to Tauba Auerbach's *Fold* paintings, it becomes apparent that these works illustrate this metaphor particularly well.⁵⁷⁵ In its stretched state the canvas recollects, references, and indexes the temporality of the folded state. In some of the *Fold* paintings, 'the process [of folding and spraying] is repeated several times, leaving conflicting, irresolvable topologies frozen on the surface.'⁵⁷⁶

If the contemporary informational landscape is considered as *topological* in this sense, the dynamic shifts that result in the proximity of the geographically remote and the simultaneity of asynchronic temporalities might become easier to grasp. Maybe its terrain can be understood as an accelerated, condensed iteration of an archaeological site: a decontextualised pit of simultaneities, flooded with layers and layers of images and traces, scattered, interrupted, and inconsistent—like the objects of archaeology have always been.

I propose to summarise these spatial, qualitative metaphors within the notion of *archaeological time*, as the temporality explored in the research and materially articulated in the installation.

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transformation (called homeomorphism).⁷ The motivating insight behind topology is that some geometric problems depend not on the exact shape of the objects involved, but rather on the way they are put together. Wikipedia, s.v. 'topology,' last modified January 25, 2019. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topology>.

575. Auerbach's work is discussed in chapter VI. 3. 2. 'The Projection From a Spray Gun.'

576. Auerbach, *Folds*, 105.

VIII. 4. Spatial Narrativity

Archaeological time established a first notion of a tangible *spatial* and *qualitative* approach to material temporality. How could this idea become articulated practically in the art project, and moreover, find expression in a narrative relationality between the temporal states on display?

In *Man in the Holocene* Frisch employs a narrative structure that is fragmented and non-chronological, as discussed earlier.⁵⁷⁷ The novel's skeletal structure and the restraint of the text direct readers' attention to what remains unsaid in the silence between moments of narration. The text strategically allots space to the readers' imaginary engagement to fill these *in-between* spaces.⁵⁷⁸ As Geiser's mental confusion advances, the novel's timeline is gradually becoming more and more scrambled. Memory and present begin to merge and become indistinguishable, as accounts of past and present are sequenced without transition.

As a physical book, which is generally read from beginning to end, the narrative remains restricted to a pre-determined sequential flow. However, its disjointed textual and temporal structure nevertheless echo the discontinuities and the dis-chronology of archaeological time. How may these observations become transferrable into a visual context of images and objects?

As a trans-disciplinary example, situated between literature and art, graphic novels shift narrativity successfully into a visual realm.⁵⁷⁹ In graphic novels, movement, as well as the passing of time, are broken down into a set number of images and the narrative is assembled by 'reading' the images in sequence. The page layout of these images is often based on a grid, but it can be organised in any other way, with frame sizes and shapes being variable. The space referred to as the *gutter* represents the space between images, that the reader has to *bridge* in order to complete the narrative.⁵⁸⁰

Images may be sequenced in order, following singular, and explicitly signposted pathways, or alternatively be indeterminate and include multiple story lines. Some contemporary graphic novel authors use the flexibility of the medium to deconstruct linear sequentiality and integrate a multiplicity of potential connections as

577. In chapter I. 4. In *Conversation*.

578. In similar ways the art work seeks to engage the viewer's imaginary in the installation.

579. This is valid for graphic novels, both with or without additional verbal narrative.

580. In graphic novels this is referred to as closure. Graphic novels thus echo the intermittent narrative structure of *Man in the Holocene*.

opportunities for the readers to individualise the narrative plot.⁵⁸¹ These works cleverly navigate the tension between established reading conventions and their conscious disruption.

The gutter, in particular, needs to be appreciated as a space that channels this imaginative potentiality, as the reader ultimately cannot know what happens in this interstice. Depending on the sparsity of images, in other words the temporal or spatial distance between them, the gutter both connects and interrupts the narrative to a greater or lesser degree.⁵⁸² The underlying structure of frame and gutter always facilitates a degree of interactivity as a basic affordance of the medium.

Due to the page layout, graphic novels operate on the premise of a spatial, rather than a linear relationality between images as the basis of their narrative structure.⁵⁸³ The visibility of all images on a page-spread at the same time, cannot be ignored, and is part and parcel of graphic novels' reader experience.⁵⁸⁴ They differ in this respect from other visual narrative media, like film, for example, which is more strongly determined by the linear sequence inherent in the medium.⁵⁸⁵

In summary, graphic novels literally illustrate that a spatial relationality between images can be the basis of a narrative structure, and that this relationality need not be linear. They also assert that gaps and disjointedness function as interactive spaces where the imagination of the readers can play a creative role.

581. 'In contemporary comics, in contrast, there is an innovative current characterised by a poetics of reticence, ambiguity, and indeterminacy. Some authors . . . are attracted to graph areas, images that are cut adrift, message-jamming strategies of all kinds, and, in general create connections between panels that work through harmonies, resonances, correspondences, eschewing the kind of relationships that are immediately decodable in terms of narrative logic and meaning.' Thierry Groensteen and Ann Miller, *Comics and Narration* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 30. Dependent on the author's use of the medium, within the institution of graphic novels, linearity or non-linearity both lie within the range of possible affordances rather than essential qualities.

582. 'But comics is not only an art of fragments, of scattering, of distraction; it is also an art of conjunction, of repetition, of linking together.' Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, 1st ed (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 22.

583. 'Comics is an art of space and an art of time: these dimensions are indissociable.' Groensteen and Miller, *Comics and Narration*, 12.

584. This aspect is argued comprehensively by Thierry Groensteen as the *theory of braiding*. He speaks of a 'conception of the page . . . as a panoptic field, where all the images enter into dialogue with each other in praesentia.' Groensteen and Miller, *Comics and Narration*, 147.

585. Some films seek to explicitly undermine this paradigm through the use of split screens, parallel narrative threads, flash forward and flash backs. However these exceptions have to go to great lengths to counteract the linear predisposition of the medium.

The structure of the installation is implicitly responding to both, the concepts of spatial organisation of the graphic novel, and the diagrammatic representation of the archaeological crosscut.

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VIII. 5. Discontinuity

Graphic novels' embedded narrative discontinuity echoes the discontinuity of material records, discussed in the context of palimpsests and archaeological time.⁵⁸⁶

Traces always denote an absence, and may often speak more urgently of what is missing than of what is present. The artefact found reminds of the many vanished, the fossilised bone is a witness to the life that once was. This is echoed in the *Sprayographs* where the unpainted, negative spaces index the absence of the fictional ruins of the *Small Scenes*. These voids attach themselves with greater urgency to the viewer imaginary than the areas that are coloured with paint.

The archaeological terrain is characterised by gaps and interruptions; a notion that is transferred to the installation. The objects on display seek to emulate the fragmented nature of material traces, and the incongruence of the temporal registers they pertain to. The discontinuous space between these stages can only be bridged by imagining what lies in between, as Olivier maintains, 'what is to be deciphered is located between the fragments.'⁵⁸⁷

In graphic novels, as explained earlier, the gutter is the space-time gap between images that is the terrain of interactivity, where the reader's narrative instinct can take hold. Similarly, in *Man in the Holocene*, the pauses between text fragments are the zones that the reader may occupy with speculation.

More generally, according to Olivier, 'we are able to create meaning between two moments precisely because there are gaps.'⁵⁸⁸ He refers to Jorge Louis Borges's story *Funè's the Memorius*, whose brain, after an injury, holds a 'picture of things and beings at every moment in time.'⁵⁸⁹ He is 'overwhelmed' by this flood of details, and completely unable to extract any meaning from this 'overabundance' of information.⁵⁹⁰ Olivier argues that by the same token, 'were archaeology to be complete, should archaeologists come to identify every stage of every site of every period,' the result would be 'some ever-changing yet always similar multifaceted turbulence, the vibration of matter thrust into time.'⁵⁹¹

586. See chapter VIII. 3. Archaeological Time

587. Olivier, *The Dark Abyss of Time*, 186.

588. Olivier, 186.

589. Olivier, 186.

590. Olivier, 186.

591. Olivier, 186.

It strikes me that these words could be readily applied in a description of the contemporary mediated environment—and I wonder whether some of the difficulties in orienting oneself is due to the incessant density of the stream of information which doesn't allow for distance or pause, and thus for reflection and meaning to arise.

How or what can the viewer imagine in *The Quarry*? In Shanks's words, 'to recreate the world *behind* the ruin in the land, to reanimate the people *behind* the sherd of antique pottery, a fragment of the past: this is the work of the archaeological imagination.'⁵⁹²

However, Marc Augé writes: 'What we perceive in ruins is the impossibility of imagining completely what they would have represented to those who saw them before they crumbled. They speak not of history but of time, pure time.'⁵⁹³ In this research this process is understood as fictional from the outset—as the ruins are not the consequence of decay, but 'rise into ruin before they are built,' thus cannot be linked back to pre-existing buildings (not even fictional ones).⁵⁹⁴ Instead they are charged with multiple, ambiguous notions of ruination. Possible narratives can only be intuited by imagining *backwards*, but it remains impossible to unlock the *one true story* behind these traces.

Grigorii Revzin, the commissioner of Mikhail Filippov and Ilya Utkin's installation *Ruins of Paradise* (2000) proposes that, 'any "classical ruin" bears in it two major themes: the ideal image that existed erstwhile and the time that destroyed it. Observing Piranesian ruins of Rome or a demolished temple pavilion in a park, the beholder immediately visualises what the debris used to be, and mentally reconstructs the original totality. . . . But if the first, "platonic" constituent of a ruin has been missing from the very beginning, then ruin's only theme is the destructive force of time.'⁵⁹⁵

The aim of this project from the outset was to engage with meaning-making processes, independent of specific real world scenarios, and to investigate imaginary connectivity more generally. The chosen fictional setting enables a limited world, removed from local or temporal specificities. While close up perspectives, a focus on material texture, and intimate details suggest particularity, which, I believe, is necessary

592. Shanks, *The Archaeological Imagination*, 25 (my emphasis).

593. Augé, *Non-Sites*, XVII.

594. Smithson and Flam, *Robert Smithson*, 72.

595. Quoted by Tatiana Smoliarova in her discussion of the Russian Pavilion at the Biennale di Architettura, Venice in 2000. Tatiana Smoliarova, 'The Promise of a Ruin: Gavrila Derzhavin's Archaic Modernity,' in Hell and Schönle, *Ruins of Modernity*, 376.

for an audience to engage, this particularity exists only within the artifice of the fictional realm. Charged with multiple, superimposed references, the different works in the exhibition are conglomerates of times that suggest connections, however their specific nature is not further defined.

There is no predetermined script running in the background of the work, not even a fictional one. No overarching plot unifies the traces within a singular narrative. Umberto Eco argues, that the absence of a narrative plot in a fictional work leads to a 'disjointedness' that invites interactive engagement.⁵⁹⁶ Referentially charged, but ultimately open works allow for readers or viewers to imagine and actively interact by completing the plots in multiple and individual ways.⁵⁹⁷

The works in the installation equally seek to remain in suspension, charged with a connective potential, that cannot be redeemed. Or rather, it may be redeemed as a potentiality, without the possibility of ultimately being resolved—as there is no underlying preexisting narrative to uncover. Any connective narratives divined by the audience will depend on the individual predilections, personal experiences and memory vaults, that these archetypes might tap into.

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In *Man in the Holocene*, Geiser at times appears strangely outside himself, looking back on his life from elsewhere. Frisch's novel traces Geiser's changing mind scape—its associative territory, his repetitive, circular thought patterns and the increasing stammer of his memory. Geiser's psychic landscape is shaped by the intertwined workings of imagination, thoughts and memory. The mind is unruly terrain; the ways in which an image, or sight, might trigger a connection to the memory store of voices, smells, and other images can be unexpected and strange. The associative capacity of the human mind is *naturally* working in a multi-layered, spatio-temporal way of connecting, which is non-linear, and in this way the psychic terrain and the archaeological site seem to become related again after all.

596. Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, 127–128. As an example, Eco cites Ingmar Bergman's Film *Casablanca*, which was shot without the final plot having been decided on. Eco suggests, that the mysterious vagueness in the actors' expressions, was in fact due to the unknown outcome of the film. Instead, *Casablanca* was assembled from 'cliches of cinematic and narrative history', and as such ideal to be used to 'assemble archetypes' (Eco, 127–128).

597. Eco, 128.

VIII. 6. 'Realm of Connectivity'⁵⁹⁸

One of Geiser's encyclopaedic clippings reads: 'Principle of coherence: *phil.* principle of the connection between all existing things.'⁵⁹⁹ Maybe,—but do connections exist independently, or rather do they emerge through being made? As already touched on earlier, Simon Starling describes the contextual environment of his works as 'ecologies, . . . in an expanded notion of an ecosystem as a realm of connectivity.'⁶⁰⁰ An *ecosystem*, as a space of dynamic multiplicity, seems an appropriate way to describe the relationalities explored by the material and temporal states in this project.

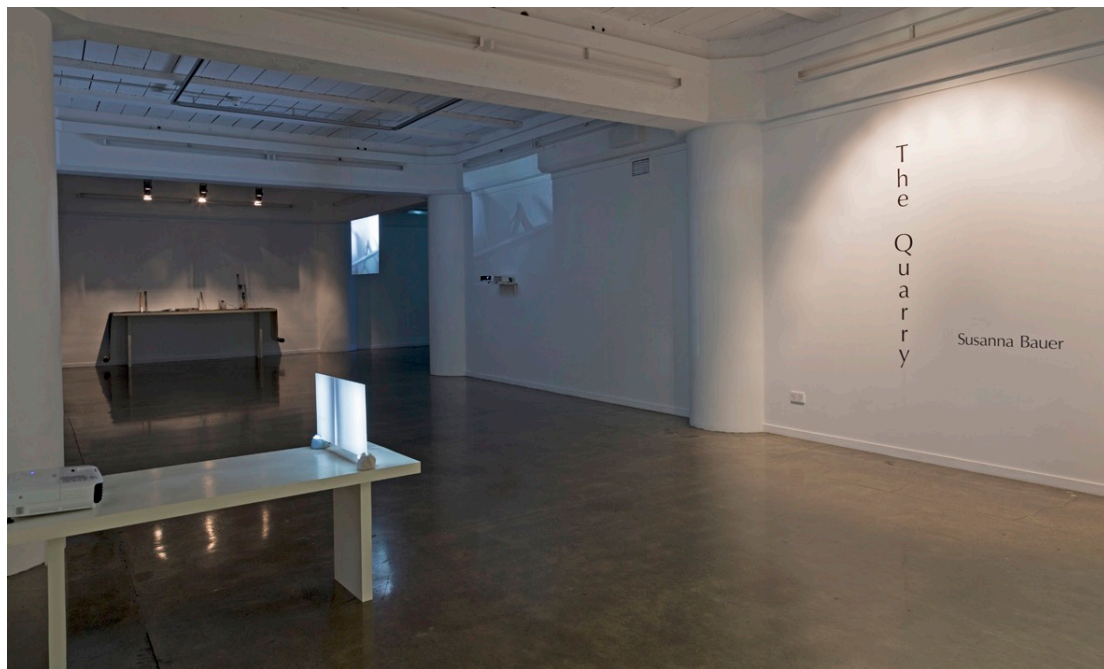


Figure 90. Susanna Bauer, *The Quarry*, 2018.
Installation view, Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington.

The Quarry is conceived as a spatio-temporal constellation, consistent with the notion of archaeological time, characterised by non-chronological, qualitatively different temporal states in a spatial assemblage.

598. Roelstraete, Manacorda, and Harbord, *Simon Starling*, 32.

599. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 108.

600. Roelstraete, Manacorda, and Harbord, *Simon Starling*, 32.

The five works in the installation all express a specific inner temporality—not necessarily as a singular moment in time indicating the trace origin, but rather as a distinct rhythm within which this particular trace, or set of traces, moves in and with time. In parts of the installation, most noticeably in *Petrifacts*, but also in *Sprayograph Warp*, for example, the evolution of the trace in time, has overwritten the primacy of the causal event that generated it.

The installation brings these different temporal articulations to coincide,— however, despite unfolding at the same time, in the same space, they are not in synchronicity. Where synchronicity implies unison through a shared temporal rhythm, the temporal states in *The Quarry* move in variable cadences, and moreover within different registers of time.⁶⁰¹ Coincidence in this case speaks more of a crossing over, or an intersecting of pathways.



Figure 91. Susanna Bauer, *The Quarry*, 2018.
Installation view, Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington.

The moving image aspect of the video projection *Small Scenes* is subdued through the almost motionless scenes captured. Queued in sequence, the video as a whole

601. As discussed, through the variation in scale, media and dimension.

inevitably unfolds along a linear temporal path. However, its timeline has been scrambled, as its montage doesn't follow a chronological narrative of before or after, consistent with a logical path towards either construction or ruin. Differences in scene duration, and gaps between clusters of scenes additionally interrupt continuity and create a distinct temporal rhythm within this work.

The objects arranged in the *Artefacts* display resonate with the *Small Scenes* without being identical. The large blue *Sprayograph* marks traces of objects much larger than the artefacts displayed on its surface. While it can be seen as functioning like a macrospherical cosmic envelope, it is also destabilising the scale of the objects it supports. As physically tangible objects in the installation, the immediacy of both objects and *Sprayograph*, transmits a sense of temporality that is experienced differently from the visually mediated durational time signatures of the projections. Through their repeated exposure to spray painting the objects have gathered a temporal layering that adheres to their surfaces. The physical depth of these layers is vertically indexing the temporalities that are assembled horizontally on the timeline of *Small Scenes*, albeit in a non-chronological way.⁶⁰²

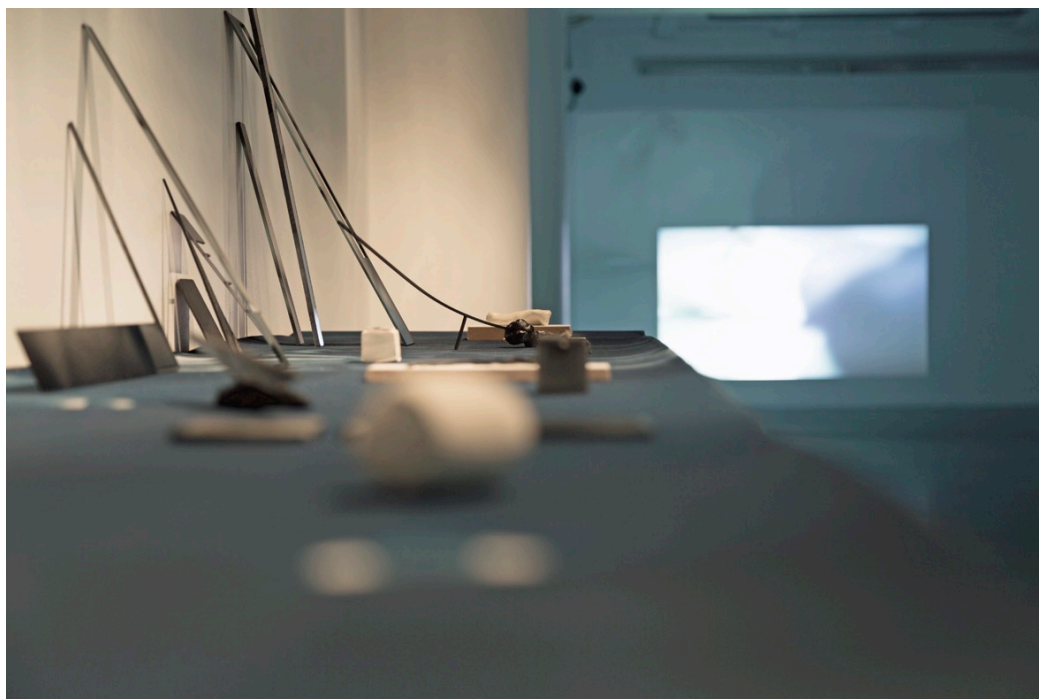


Figure 92. Susanna Bauer, *The Quarry*, 2018.
Installation view, Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington.

602. This is an articulation of the stratigraphical concept discussed in chapter VIII. 3. Archaeological Time.

Dispersed along the *Sprayograph* continuum, which extends beyond the table at each end, the artefacts appear captured as they are traversing time, as passing events, with a before, and an after, gathered in the rolled-up *Sprayograph*. While they appear *temporarily* in a sequential linearity, as they fade away again, they are being reabsorbed into spiral time.⁶⁰³

The *Sprayographs* trace the expansion of the *Small Scenes* assemblages horizontally and transform it from three-dimensionality into a two-dimensional space. The scene's temporal signature is thus collapsed, and condensed into a flat image, distilled into a graphically abstracted juxtaposition of absence and presence. Through the subsequent digital animation processes, the flat *Sprayographs* are further transformed into time-based articulations in *Sprayograph Scan* and *Sprayograph Warp*. Their newly acquired temporal expansions are not a return to the temporality of the original, generative spray event (which inscribed the traces of the assemblage onto the paper), but durational expressions of the traces themselves. Through the combination of two stages of transformation, they create a second degree declination, at a double remove from the *Small Scenes*.



Figure 93. Susanna Bauer, *The Quarry*, 2018.
Installation view, Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington.

603. Spiral time as discussed above in chapter VIII. 3. Archaeological Time.

It is also possible to imagine the *Sprayographs* not to be the result of the *Small Scenes* model being imprinted, but in fact to be the blueprint, the construction plans from which their architectural expression arises. It must be remembered that the viewers are not privy to the sequence of the art-making processes—they are left to speculate.



Figure 94. Susanna Bauer, *The Quarry*, 2018.
Installation view, Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington.

In the video projection *Petrifacts*, the audience encounters a closeup view of a dreamlike, contemplative space. As the camera pans past, the landscape unfolds at its own pace, sometimes more slowly, sometimes a little faster. This petrified, fossilised world presents as an altered material state, that might feel distant from the other works in *The Quarry*.

The large scale of the *Petrifacts* projection communicates different points of reference than those which might be brought to bear on the *Small Scenes*. High resolution and a different, more recent aspect ratio, compared to the Mini DV footage used in the *Small Scenes*, add to the difference in appearance and feel. The temporal signatures inherent in the technology also affect how viewers might construe a temporal reading of the objects in the installation.

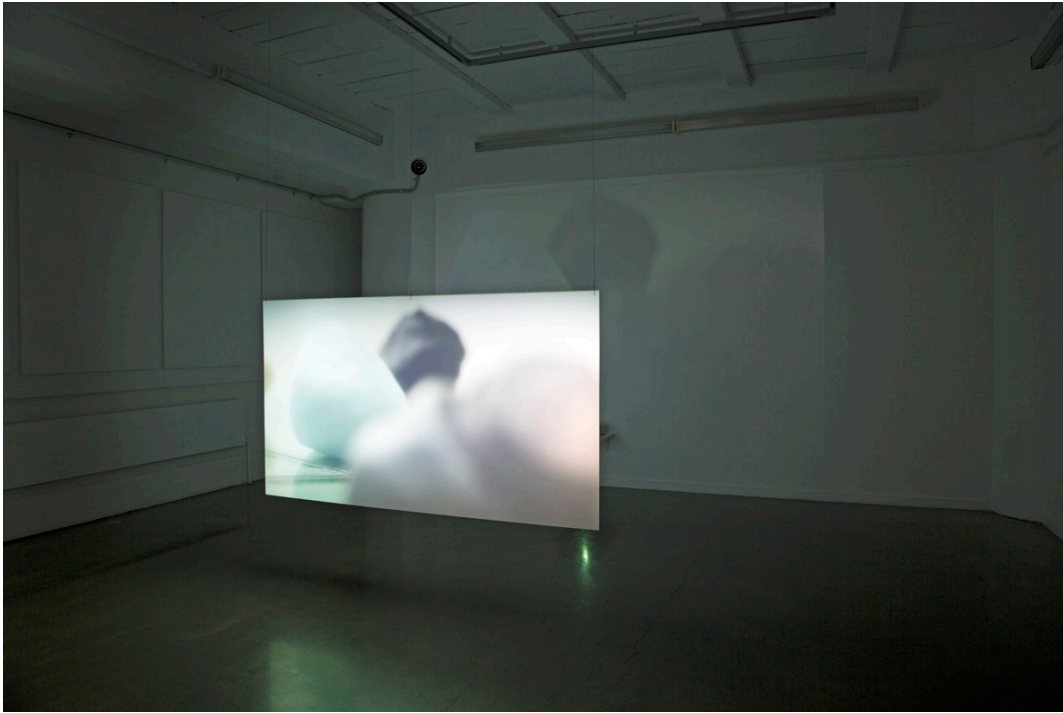


Figure 95. Susanna Bauer, *The Quarry*, 2018.
Installation view, Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington.

There weren't many art installations that I felt had a deeper affinity with *The Quarry* —except maybe for Paul Chan's *The 7 Lights* (2005–2007). The work is 'hallucinating the seven days of creation from dawn to dusk,' in a post-religious, post-apocalyptic vision.⁶⁰⁴ The installation consists of seven colour projections, with black silhouettes of people and contemporary objects travelling across in different directions, at different speeds of falling or rising. I feel that the notions of human finiteness and of absence and traces, combined with the tension between darkness and light in the work, resonate with my project in meaningful ways without being explicitly similar.

604. Serpentine Galleries London (website), 'Paul Chan: The 7 Lights,' accessed February 15, 2019, <https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/exhibitions-events/paul-chan-7-lights>.

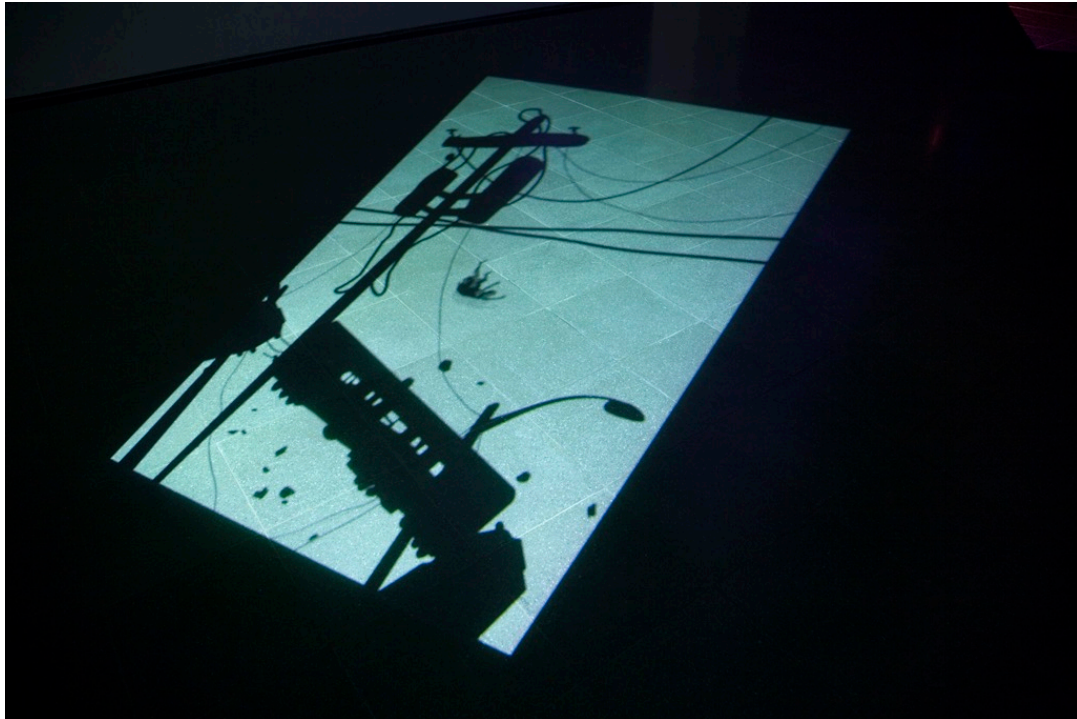


Figure 96. Paul Chan, *The 7 Lights*, 2007.
Installation view, Serpentine Gallery, London. Photograph © Sylvain Deleu.
(© 2007 Paul Chan. Courtesy of the artist and Serpentine Gallery, London.)

My art project has employed a strategy of metamorphic transformations, that has generated indexically linked material-temporal expressions, that extend across various scales, dimensions and media. As a result, the different works pertain to different temporal registers, that resist chronological, linear relationality, but that seek to enact a spatial connectivity instead. The spatial assemblage of these different temporalities in the physical proximity of the installation responds to notions of archaeological time.

This intention is supported by a distribution in the gallery space that is intentionally non-directional and suggestive of variable pathways. The display of the works at rectangular angles to one another is loosely based on the spatial grid structure of graphic novels transferred into three-dimensional space. As the videos loop at different intervals, their simultaneous projection continues to render different combinations of images, while the suspended screens allow for a range of viewing angles and viewer positions. *The Quarry* thus seeks to assemble the various temporalities of material traces in a fictional 'realm of connectivity,' for the viewer imaginary to explore.⁶⁰⁵

605. Roelstraete, Manacorda, and Harbord, *Simon Starling*, 32.



Figure 97. Susanna Bauer, *The Quarry*, 2018.
Installation view, Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington.

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IX. Conclusion: The Quarry

'At the end of the valley there are some quarries, now and again a blasting operation, a series of explosions, then a cloud of dust over the forest; shortly afterward, trucks drive down the valley, loaded with squared stones or slabs.'⁶⁰⁶

The metaphor of the quarry describes the locale of this inquiry as it gathers the different trajectories pursued within this project into a 'system of connectivity.'⁶⁰⁷

On the surface, a quarry marks an interruption in the continuity of a planar landscape. The quarry designates a gap, or chasm, that halts forward trajectories and intercepts journeys. Geography thus becomes 'non-contiguous' in a way that makes aware of proximity and distance, and of one's own position—'here,' versus 'over there.'⁶⁰⁸ The quarry disrupts the horizontal perception of landscape through its verticality that diverts the gaze into the depth. At the edge of the quarry, one feels the down-down-down pull of gravity, that abruptly makes one step back from the edge, dizzy with vertigo.

This is where the research set out from—a sense of disorientation and historical vertigo, deriving from an experience of discontinuity and the conflicting impressions between what can be seen in the distance and what can be felt close-by. Sentiments that are anchored in a contemporary condition as described in the introduction, and in experiences that affect the meaning of both present and past, which chronology seems no longer able to adequately capture.

As a place of research the quarry opens itself up to exploration and discovery, speculation and experiment, knowledge gathering and work, as the site within which the project sets out to examine the temporalities of material traces. The metaphor of the quarry unfolds into multiple facets, that are reflected by the material-temporal states that this art project has developed in response to the research proposition.

A quarry is an artificial, human-made incision into the landscape, defined by resource extraction and mining, a site of material and value production. It thus relates to the use of material resources in the construction of the cultural forms this research has set out to investigate.

606. Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*, 48–9.

607. As quoted earlier, Roelstraete, Manacorda, and Harbord, *Simon Starling*, 32.

608. Presner in chapter IV. 2. *The Rings of Saturn*. Presner, 'Hegel's Philosophy,' 203–204.

There is fallout. In 1966 Robert Smithson wrote about a visit to quarries in his essay 'The Crystal Land': 'The depositions of waste . . . formed the general condition of the place.'⁶⁰⁹ Decay and destruction dominate a desolate environment, that is 'cracked, broken, shattered. . . . Fragmentation, corrosion, decomposition, disintegration, rock creep, debris slides, mud flow, avalanche were everywhere in evidence.'⁶¹⁰ The research tends to notions of refuse, debris and wider ecological impacts—in its use of rejected materials in particular, and in its engagement with traces more generally. The use of recycled materials has been discussed in chapter IV. 4. Field work, while chapter VI. 1. focused specifically on traces.

As these resources become depleted, or economic focus shifts, abandoned quarries turn into forgotten places. Their cavities remain as earth monuments of absence. Fossil hunters, erosion, crumbling walls, and weed growth follow. However, once enough time has passed after the sound of mining has died away, plant and animal life may return, and often new ecosystems emerge on the ruins of the quarry.⁶¹¹ These images flow into the research's engagement with material traces, in form of inscriptions and artefacts, ruins and fossilisations. It also prepares the ground for a consideration of ruination as a process, and an approach to traces as fluid entities that move with time.

The quarry functions as an allegory of the archaeological excavation site, where instead of minerals, cultural traces are being extracted. The research has developed and proposed an archaeological approach as a distinct mode of inquiry that speaks to the material-based nature of the research, and indicates a temporal approach beyond chronology. Referring to an archaeological site as a quarry, with its connotations of production and exploitation, at the same time also implies a critique of archaeological methodology, in particular its invasive displacement of material traces and its historical association with imperialist and colonial 'projects.' Aspects pertaining to archaeology, as it is considered in the research, and the notion of an *archaeological imagination* were discussed in chapter I. Archaeology. Archaeology's historic legacy and questions around cultural ownership and appropriation were considered predominantly within chapter V. 2. Artefacts and Abstraction.

609. Smithson and Flam, *Robert Smithson*, 9.

610. Smithson and Flam, 9.

611. 'The quarries are admittedly an intrusion in the natural landscape, but after a while they are an important habitat for peregrine falcons, eagle owls and other rare animals and some of them have therefore even become protected nature reserves.' Geopark Swabian Alb (website), 'Upper Jurassic—Seashores and Juniper Heaths,' <http://www.geopark-alb.de/en/geopark-wissen/geologie/weisser-jura.php/>.

In von Droste-Hülshof's poem, the marl-pit is a place of remove from the ordinary world, a place of daydreaming, where reality recedes. The quarry as a portal into another world sites the fictional intentionality of this project. While most other contemporary art practices engaged with archaeology are investigating 'real world' sites, contexts and eras, this inquiry is vested in the meaningfulness of fiction. A general overview of the purpose and affordances of fiction in this research were discussed in chapter III. Fictionality, as well as being a particular focus throughout the literature review in the discussion of relevant art practices.

The research constructs a fictional world as a parallel space that allows the project to engage imaginary, associative and mnemonic capacities as the sources of individual meaning-making in the viewer. Besides being informed by theoretical texts and other artists' practices, the affinity with fiction specifically lead to the novel *Man in the Holocene* becoming a close companion to this research. This has shaped both content and form of the project in a unique way that I haven't encountered in other art practices. The particular role *Man in the Holocene* has played in this research has been laid out initially in chapter I. 4. In Conversation, and is further physically traceable throughout the exegesis document.

The research has positioned itself distinctly with the proposition of a *fictional archaeology* that captures both concept and methodology of this project. I have argued this original contribution in the context of literature, relevant to art and archaeology, as well as in comparison with art practices engaged in similar areas of inquiry, throughout this exegesis document.

Depending on what is appropriate for a particular site and the resource to be extracted, various methods of excavation are employed: surface or underground mining, blasting, drilling, or cutting technologies. Departing from the research proposition, I aimed to construct material traces that would exist within non-linear modes of temporal relationality. In response, this project has developed an original methodology of *metamorphic transformation* that generates traces through transformations of material states across scale, media and dimensionality. While these traces remain indexically linked, they are, however, not directly comparable in the way they register time. I have examined and discussed these strategies in relation to other art practices engaged in material transformations, but have found none that employ them in quite the same way, or towards similar purposes. While transformation finds repeated mention in the discussion of the practical development of the art works in the project, it has been the particular focus of chapter VII. Metamorphosis and Erosion.

Another methodological particularity of this project flows from the proposition of fictionality, which allows the work to occupy an ambiguous space between abstraction and referentiality. This distinguishes it from other practices, be they related through their model making, or their references to ruins and artefacts, for instance; I generally found limited investment in abstract trajectories within these projects.⁶¹² The specific rationale for the use of abstraction in conjunction with referentiality has been analysed in chapter V. 2. Artefacts and Abstraction.

The quarry also operates as a temporal metaphor in this project. As it cuts across the earth's geological layers, it reveals the material manifestations of time that otherwise remain invisible. The quarry's spatio-temporal arrangement corresponds to the stratigraphic layering of the archaeological excavation site, as both make *temporal depth* visible and open up an alternative perspective into time. The vertical cross-cut presents a physically tangible articulation of proximity and distance, that offers an interpretation of temporality that differs from chronological sequentiality. These perspectives funnel into the spatial concepts of temporality this research project eventually arrives at, and which it proposes as possible entrance points into non-linear modes of temporality. If this creative practice research can claim to have an 'outcome,' it is accumulated in these tentative forays into spatial concepts of temporality. In this context chapters VIII. 3. Archaeological Time and VIII. 4. Spatial Narrativity were most relevant.

Finally, the quarry is considered as a place of contact and a surface of exchange, through the installation of the same title. It is the space where the fictional traces, generated in this art project, are encountered by viewers, and where temporal discontinuities are intended to generate interactive gaps for speculative narratives and associative connectivities to emerge. Temporality in the exhibition and viewer experience were considered in chapter VIII. 'Realm of Connectivity.'

In summary, this exegesis document has presented an in-depth analysis of the research project's context, propositions, methodologies and outcomes. It has pointed out the unique aspects of this research's concept of a fictional archaeology, and the methodological strategies of material thinking and metamorphic transformation developed in the project. The research has further led to a considered installation that has uniquely gathered the material explorations and theoretical considerations gained throughout the project.

612. This was discussed across a range of chapters, for example in IV. 6. *Small Scenes*, III. Fictionality, and V. Fictional Artefacts.

The exegesis has sought to address the various facets of this research project within the relevant contexts of theory and practice through an expansive literature review. In particular, the document has reflected on, and identified distinct differences to other art practices situated within related fields of inquiry, which are discussed in detail throughout this document. These aspects collectively combine to the research's original contribution to the field.

*

Epilogue

We moved house in 2017. After working ourselves gradually through the overgrown gardens, we discovered that the large retaining wall facing the bush had been constructed from old car tyres, probably in the 1950's when the house was originally built. Most of the tyres are in a process of decay and disintegration, the rubber has become crumbly and porous over the years, the wall is overgrown with moss and ferns.

On my visit home in June 2018 I saw 'Glühwürmchen,' (fireflies) at the back of my parent's garden one night. It was early summer there and the little insects glowed like little pale fairy lights, moving delicately and silently amongst the leaves of the shrubs. I couldn't even remember when I had last seen some.

*It reminded me of Georges Didi-Huberman's book *Überleben der Glühwürmchen* (Survival of the Fireflies).⁶¹³ He describes them poetically as the weak lights of survival, a minor, but resisting force that may escape the blinding lights of the spectacle, a testimony that experience hasn't entirely disappeared yet.*

After returning from Europe, on a cold and wet night in August 2018, I am down at the bush line below the tyre wall, late. It is dark. Then I suddenly see the soft glowing lights, one after one they appear as my eyes get used to the dark. Glow worms are all over the tyre wall, emanating their pale light from inside their decaying, mossy caves.

*

613. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Überleben der Glühwürmchen*, trans. Markus Sedlaczek, Bild und Text (Paderborn: Fink, 2012).

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