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BODIES OF WATER

*Photographic Encounters of Resistance, Ruin and Memory on the
River Paraná*

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PHD Practice/Theory

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I declare that this PHD thesis and practice has been written and created by
Victoria Margaret Ahrens

ABSTRACT

This research is centred on the notion of landscape as a construct of marginal and multiple dialogues. It is a project that originates from a rediscovered family album of photographs of the Latin American landscape at the turn of the 20th century. In particular those that centre on the Paraná River in Argentina, a place where myth, recent history of the *Desaparecidos* (those 'disappeared' by the military junta 1976-1983) and memory collide. These early analogue photographs of the river have sparked a series of creative interventions that explore the interstices between photography and printmaking, fragmenting the initial image in order to create new hybrid photographic prints using photo-etching and photo-transfer processes. The return of the material to the flat surface of the digital is of critical concern, as the 'uncanny' surface is turned into a haptic object more in keeping with printmaking practices and early pictorial photographs. This leads to questions about their affective resonance, as touch and 'noise' return to the surface of the print as a resistance and response to discourses of acceleration and forgetting.

The theoretical and practical methodology is cyclical, and the layers of discourse appear both in the printed outcomes and in the multiple voices I use to discuss the project in writing. In the ruined surface of the analogue image, therefore, a new ruination occurs, as I develop my photographic plates in situ, in the waters of the river itself. In the encounter with the landscape, the forensic traces of Argentina's political disappeared, now part of an on-going forensic anthropological investigation, create latent marks on the surface of the photographic plates. These invisible fragments serve to embed disruptive historical narratives into the print outcomes, as the river acts as the site of convergence for these multiple histories. These geographical and metaphorical **bodies of water**, distorted, disappeared and 'ruined' both by a history of dictatorship cover ups and the failings of memory, are able to reappear in this research, as latent and liminal image-objects in an open-ended encounter with the multiple narratives of the river.

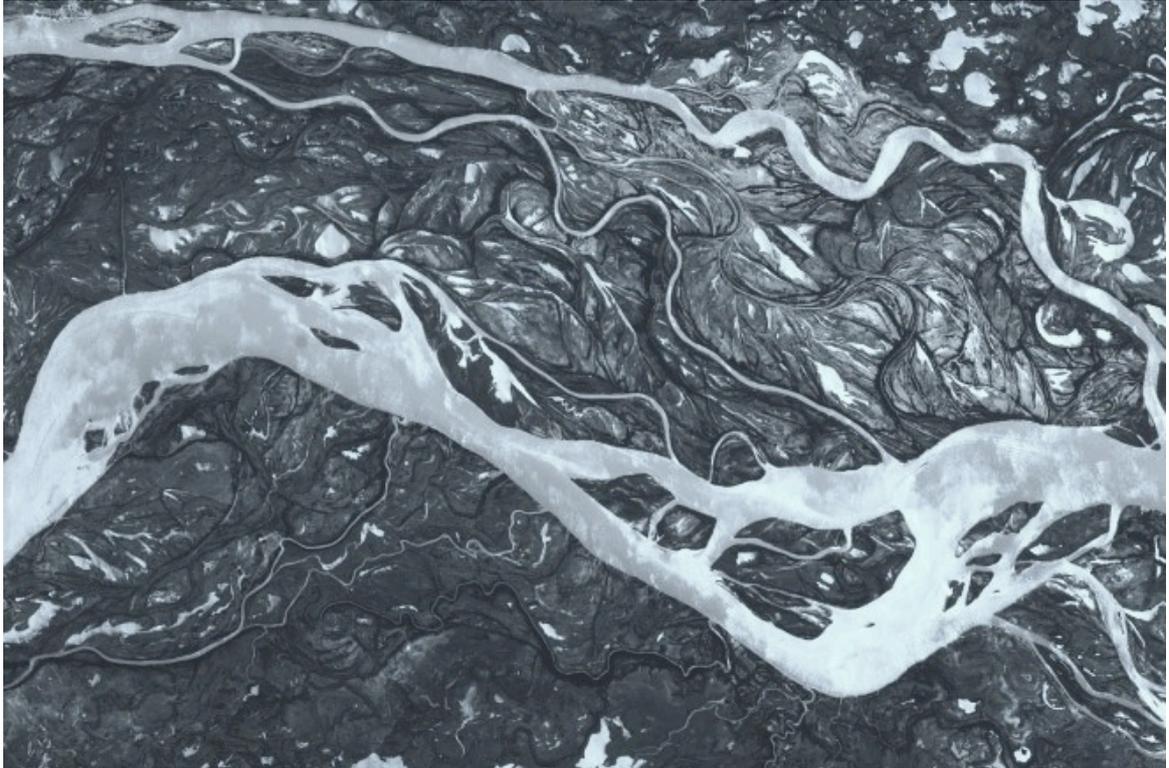


Figure 1, Victoria Ahrens, *Aerial photograph of the Paraná River*, photo etching of positive acetate taken from Google earth, 2016

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INTRODUCTIONS: PARAMETERS OF PRACTICE

It is a compelling thought that ‘if the chromosomes in one of our cells were uncoiled and placed end to end, the DNA would be about six feet long,’ making the DNA of one cell the size of a human body.¹ This infinitesimal marker, or *huella*, is what forensic anthropologists use today, extracted from bone or other matter, to turn the disappearance of thousands of people from the dictatorship years in Argentina (1976-1983) into identifiable remains.² Eugene Thacker traces the link between informational codes and DNA where ‘information [...] is seen as constitutive of the very development of our understanding of life at the molecular level – not the external appropriation of a metaphor, but the epistemological internalization and the technical autonomization of information as constitutive of DNA.’³ Each of us, then, contains a code, an identity marker that is replicated throughout our bodies, and digital advances have meant this information can be easily obtained and de-codified through the extraction of a single cell. Here, I am looking for the implications of this code, for a reading and siting of these markers contained in a river: the River Paraná. Through *oriri*, or photographic sources that hold in them the promise of an origin (a visible ‘becoming’, a lineage of descent) and affect, I make photo-etchings and hybrid prints in the River Paraná itself, site of disappearance, site of my childhood, site of my grandfather’s photographic archive of positive silver prints, that form the parameters for this research project.⁴ I am investigating the common ground as well as the fissures between ways of making, using photography and its traditions to inform what I term the auratic translations of analogue concerns to haptic digital prints, photo-etchings and photo-transfers⁵; translations that create slippages in surface, materiality and touch, and in time, bring the past and the present to bear on the ruin, resistance, and memory of historical discourses.

¹ **Genetics Home Reference**, ‘What is DNA?’ *Handbook of Cells and DNA*:

² **Huella**, is Spanish for ‘a mark or sign, an imprint or impression’, <<http://www.wordreference.com/definicion/huella>> [accessed 10/04/12]

³ **Eugene Thacker**, *Biomedía* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004) p. 40

⁴ **Oriri** is the Latin etymological root of the word ‘origin’, and means to ‘rise, arise, become visible, appear or be descended from, born.’ See <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=origin> [accessed 01/02/16]

⁵ **Common ground** refers to both the crossover practices of photography and printmaking, but also the literal ground (site of the Paraná) that this research is examining.

My writing is divided into four sections, each of which details a particular set of concerns in relation to the research. The first chapter introduces the source material and the forensic antecedents that create a convergence of propospoic narratives in the site of the river Paraná, thinking through notions of absence and presence, uncanny memories and material disturbances on the corrupted surface of the analogue imagery. My second chapter examines the practical concerns of these initial ideas, through the corporeal enactment of new imagery at the site of the river itself. I discuss at length the auratic translations of each phase, using Victor Turner's anthropological stages of separation, liminality and incorporation to understand how the material imprints left on the photographic plates can bring back a sense of agency and voice in the 'infra-mince' surface of the material.⁶ In my third chapter, these material concerns are discussed in relation to the contemporary context of photographic practice, with an analysis of other practitioners whose work is also concerned with parallel themes. My final chapter, however, is dedicated to how this research has culminated in multiple renditions and perspectives that confront and ground the material outcomes and written analysis, to create a new attempt to see in the protrusion and projection of images into the space of the gallery.

The multiplicity of outcomes is echoed in the multiple registers I use in my writing, with personal and poetic interjections, in which the river Paraná is the principle protagonist. This creates an ebb and flow of interruptions in relation to the academic and theoretical evaluations I make by interweaving an experimental personal ethnography, an ethnographic heteroglossia, into these intimate reflections, which collide with the other types of writing, and make present my experiences at the site/ sight of the river.⁷ These enactments as I term them, become the pivotal point in which the material experimentation and the theoretical discussion find their common ground, and ground resist⁸.

⁶ 'infra-mince' is a word that was used by Duchamp to describe the infinitesimal distance between warmth and touch or gun and bullet. I use it here to refer to the ultra-thin layer of barely visible residue on the surface of the print. See **Thierry Davila's**, *De L'inframine, Breve Histoire de L'Imperceptible, de Marcel Duchamp á Nos Jours* (Paris: Éditions du Regard, 2010); **Victor Turner**, 'Liminality and Communitas', in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969), p. 125

⁷ **Mikhail M. Bakhtin**, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, edited by Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981)

⁸ **Ground resist** is a reference to the light resistant layer that resides on the photo-etching plates I use, while playing with the notion that the landscape itself, the river, can provide the site of theoretical and visual resistance through the photographic imagery I create.

PROLOGUE: HATS ON THE PARANÁ

Truth can only be read, if it can be read at all, in the traces of what is no longer present. That history is to be read in its transience, means that truth comes in the form of ruins⁹



Figure 2, *Hats on the Paraná*, c. 1930, Henry Richard Ahrens,
3.5 cm (h) x 8 cm, faded silver print

There is a photograph that I discovered some years ago, a photograph in ruins, that can be read only in the ‘traces of what is no longer present.’¹⁰ I will call this photograph ‘Hats on the Paraná’, as it has triggered an investigation into the network of dialogues that address narratives of place in contemporary printmaking and photographic practice. This photograph, taken circa 1930, along the River Paraná in Argentina (according to a caption on the back) is a snapshot found in a forgotten family album and belonged to my grandfather, Henry Richard Ahrens. I never knew my grandfather, as he died when I

⁹ Eduardo Cadava, ‘Lapsus Imaginis: The Image in Ruins’, *October*, Vol. 96, Spring, 2001 (Massachusetts: MIT Press), pp.35-60

¹⁰ Cadava, 2001, p.35

was only two years old. All that remains of him in my mind's eye is a vague recollection of a tall man in a hat, at the margins of my vision, as well as a handful of stories of him handed down by my family. Certainly, I had no idea that he was a keen photographer and, as so many of his time, collected his photographs in the pages of a now worn and weathered photographic album. The image itself (figure 2) is an analogue, silver based print and captures a faded shot of the river, trees running up both sides in a triangular composition, sky mirroring the water and a bird flying out of the image. On closer inspection, in the bottom right hand corner of the photograph, cut off by the edge of the print are two gentlemen in what appears to be a rowing boat (the end of an oar cuts the photographic plane): they are both wearing a hat, each one is different and distinct - one belonging to the man whose face we see, is a captain's white naval hat with a visor, the other, firmly positioned on the head of a man whose face is turned and obscured, is a fedora. Both men in their hats inhabit the print at its margins, as incomplete figures, torso-less, limbless, and now, lifeless and still. They represent the only human presence visible in the image, together with the knowledge of the presence of my grandfather through this photographic record; two strangers whose existence remains partially engrained on the surface of a print, yet unknown to me. The surface of the print is beginning to deteriorate, creating superficial distortions on the left side, and across the bottom of the image. These are chemical erasures that are reacting to time and atmospheric conditions, eating at the print and peeling away at its coating. Where the river fades into a vanishing point in the centre of the photograph and the trees that frame it on both sides collide with the sky, the faintest shadow of a white sun hangs low on the horizon. The man wearing the captain's hat is positioned, it would seem, in the centre of the boat, mouth poised open mid speech, while the second man sits behind him, looking away from the photographer, only his right ear and the dark socket of his right eye below his hat are visible. A tear in the right hand corner of the print creates a line culminating in a void, which runs through the captain's eyes, scratching them from visibility, and impeding our view and, in a sense, the captain's ability to see 'us'. He is blinded by the sun, as he squints at the photographic lens, and twice blinded by the fragile scratches. The print is in ruin, compromised by time and alchemy, and its meaning is being lost with it. The photograph is fading, yellowing and tearing, as its transient history marks its passage through time: it is of the past, but seen in the present and disappearing into its future.

METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the material encounter with practice and situate this in a theoretical discourse of disappearance and traumatic history, it is important to define the methodology behind this research, and the way fieldwork has informed these ideas. On four occasions over a four-year period (November to December of 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015) I spent three weeks at a time living on a small inlet in the upper reaches of the Paraná where it meets the province of Entre Rios. Firstly, the site was chosen as the place where forensic anthropologists had started to look for the remains of the political disappeared of the 1976-1983 military dictatorship, in accordance with various written and oral sources that described where bodies were thrown into the Paraná from military planes at that time. I had on several occasions worked closely with the EAAF (the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team) in 2010 and 2011 in Buenos Aires, assisting their photographers and archival team in their laboratories and offices in the Once, so was familiar with their methods and practices, and had the opportunity to see their work in situ (see figure 5). As a result I was informed of the places they would be searching for bodies in subsequent years. Secondly, it also indicated the most practical place from which to conduct photographic and photo-etching work in the landscape without interference from outside factors (speed boats, tourist boats, areas of protected flora and fauna) as these upper reaches of the river remain fairly isolated, while also allowing for a certain amount of acid pollution from the factories along its shores that would help in the etching process. Thirdly, the terrain provided the closest aesthetic references to the images that my grandfather had taken in the 1930s and became the perfect backdrop to this photographic research in which finding equivalent source imagery was an important factor in creating a dialogue through time with these absent, familial memories. It would have been a place my grandfather would have sailed through regularly on his shipping travels upstream to farmsteads in Paraguay and Brazil.

Therefore this fieldwork in situ created a site of convergence for both the theoretical and physical encounter with the landscape. The historical and political discourse embedded in the Paraná is one that has only recently been explored by journalists such as Fabian Magnotta, as well as the EAAF, while the traumatic memories live on through survivors

who are still called upon as witnesses in the on-going court cases against the military junta that were started thirty years ago.¹¹ My aesthetic approach to the material through the photographic rather than solely through the literary was informed both by the discovery of my grandfather's photographs of the Paraná, as well as this new forensic evidence, which served to disrupt and dislocate my own childhood encounters with the river as a place of innocence and play. This indicated the need for a personal ethnography in order to provide a layer of narrative to the research that would be based on the physical experience of my fieldwork research. Having taken with me Haroldo Conti's *Sudeste (Southeaster)* originally published in 1962, in order to read about his now infamous literary encounter with the Paraná (before he himself was disappeared by the military junta in 1976- his body never found), I took up an ethnographic and diaristic practice of my experiences, which I include in this research writing, together with poetic interventions I wrote while on my fieldwork trips.¹² The work of Argentine photographer Alejandro Chaskielberg also informed my research, in particular his photographic series *La Creciente (The High Tide)* from 2007-2010, of dwellers on the Paraná, which he shot at night, after a long period living on the river and gaining the confidence of those who work and live there today. His images, although set in the contemporary landscapes of the Paraná, do not, however, respond to the traumatic memory of the layered history of the place during the military dictatorship years (1976-1983), which became such a key narrative to my fieldwork there.¹³ These written and visual investigations, in conjunction with the academic writing, and the practical outcomes, form a multi-layered account of the theoretical and practical approach I took to this research.

The fieldwork itself consisted of living in a small stilted cabin that functioned as my forensic laboratory: a place where the fragility of my surroundings and the encounter with the landscape was made possible with the use of a small boat, in relative isolation. My tools included paper, pre-prepared photo-etching plates, a small portable press, inks,

¹¹ **Magnotta, Fabian**, *El Lugar Perfecto* (Argentina: Editorial, 2012),

<<http://www.fabianmagnotta.com.ar/web/?sector=libro&idnot=25>>, [accessed 20/03/13]

¹² **Haroldo Conti**, *Southeaster*, translated from the Spanish by Jon Lindsay Miles (Los Angeles, High Wycombe, And Other Stories, 2015). Conti's body was never found after his disappearance by the military junta in 1976.

¹³ **Alejandro Chalkiesberg**, *La Creciente* (2010); see *The High Tide* by Alejandro Chaskielberg, Agnostica <<http://agnostica.com/the-high-tide-by-alejandro-chaskielberg> > [accessed 04/10/16]; Goa Photo Festival [online]- *An Interview with Alejandro Chaskielberg*, <<http://goaphoto.tumblr.com/post/111387173409/interview-with-alejandro-chaskielberg>> [accessed 04/10/16]

scrim, photographic stochastic acetate screens and photographic positives, brushes, and other paraphernalia (which I had brought with me from Buenos Aires) for working to expose and develop my plates in the waters of the river and develop the photographs and etchings in the cabin which doubled as my studio (see figures 17 and 18). On these four occasions, I took my digital SLR camera with me and a digital video camera in order to capture the scenes of the river at a moment's notice, while looking for the places depicted in my grandfather's photographs from the precarious position of my boat. The investigation was fraught with difficulties, as the landscape was not always cooperative, heat and other environmental factors often interfering in the timings of my processes, while making it difficult to distinguish places that had been photographed eighty years before. I searched for these aesthetic resonances through a kind of haunting, as images such as *Hats on the Paraná*, and other photographs from my grandfather's album, offered afterimages in my mind's eye for sourcing these. The processes I describe in my second chapter (photo-etching and transfer prints) rely on positives that I took with me of my grandfather's photographs, but also in my second and third residencies on the river, positives of the digital imagery that I had gathered and collected on each of my research trips. To produce the final images that translate analogue and digital into hybrid print objects, four stages of translation were required (which I describe at length in chapter two), some of which took place in the studio, and others, the liminal or most important stages, which took place at the shores of the river and in the studio cabin I lived in. I chose to use a digital camera (as well as acetate positives of analogue imagery) in order to capture a contemporary translation of the place, and to accelerate this translation for the photo-etching processes I was interested in using. This meant using minimal equipment in a hostile environment. I used the brushing and revealing techniques I had seen used by forensic anthropologists in Buenos Aires at sites of torture and disappearance in the city, to brush and reveal the images in the water, leaving the notion of a latent trace of the disappeared on its surface, as well as imbuing the plates with the memory of this encounter as past and present converge in this research through touch. My methods in situ, therefore, find their counterpart in the theoretical readings of affective theory, forensic practice and my encounters with traumatic memory.

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE SCENE

1.1. CONVERGENCE

Working with binary codes to translate analogue silver based prints into toner inks, intaglio prints and digital formats, this practice based research seeks to create a dialogue between a material encounter and a theoretical encounter, where the print and the process converge in the fragmentation and 'ruin' of the image of the past and its transformation, and convergence with new imagery in the present. This research is timely, as digital photographic practices move images into a new era of ever more speedy representation, I am looking to slow down these processes through the craft and hand-made aspects of photo-etching and photo-transfer, while acknowledging contemporary concerns through the creation of digital hybrid print installations. In this way the circulation of images across digital and paper substrates in the print room and in the gallery, informs my negotiation of new experimental techniques, combining these to question what is gained and what is lost in the process. Much has been written on the craft aspects of the handmade surface in printmaking¹⁴, while the intrusion, as some would see it, of the digital has been 'addressed with emotions ranging from trepidation to zeal [...] and still provokes a great deal of defensiveness'.¹⁵ As Kevin Haas sees it:

Digital technologies are now embedded within much of artistic practice [...] Regardless of these changes, traditional practices exist alongside newer methods informing one another and contributing to more pluralistic approaches. Rather than divide, or reinforce territorial boundaries, digital technology within a printmaking curriculum can allow for interconnections and broadening dialogues¹⁶

¹⁴ See **Paul Coldwell**, *Printmaking: A Contemporary Perspective* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2010); **Pelzer-Montada, Ruth**, 'The Attraction of Print: Notes on the Surface of the (Art) Print,' *Art Journal*, Summer (2008); **Griffiths, Anthony**, *Prints and Printmaking: An Introduction to the History and Techniques* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); **Gilmour, Pat**, *Understanding Prints: A Contemporary Guide* (London: Waddington Galleries, 1979) and **D'Oench, Ellen G.**, *Block, Plate, Stone: What a Print Is*, with contributions by Susan Salzberg Rubin (New York: Katonah Museum of Art, 1994)

¹⁵ **Kevin Haas**, 'Embedded Practices', presented at the SGC Panel at the annual CAA Printmaking Conference in Dallas: *Digital Printmaking, A knight in Shining Armour, A Death Sentence, or Another Tool in the Toolbox for Traditional Printmaking?*, 2008

¹⁶ *ibid*

This practice-based research, therefore, aims to broaden these dialogues, and slow them down, in order to look more closely at what happens in the interstices between photographic printmaking theories and practice. It is a space inhabited at present by historiographies of technical overlaps, which have looked at mechanical processes as a way of contributing to historical and contemporary debates. Here, I aim to address the material and theoretical overlaps, as haptic and optic surfaces converge to create a new 'noise' in the making process¹⁷: as photographic plates are exposed and developed in situ on the River Paraná I look to 'address [the] physical actuality' of the photo-printing process as well as the 'impressionistic perceptions that transform [that] actuality into a pictorial allusion.'¹⁸ Alois Riegel first theorized the notion of the optic and the haptic in 1964, when he wrote that 'art moves from the haptic, where artists - including photographers - are motivated by a sense of touch [...] and reaches [...] the optic, where artists focus on the painterly and impressionistic perceptions [...] One is tactile; the other impressionistic.'¹⁹ These material interventions in the landscape, as tactile and impressionistic objects, allow for interconnected *theoretical* considerations within the written research. In order to discuss these ideas then the use of multiple registers in my writing will echo the multiple outcomes in practice, where the personal, and poetic will be interwoven into the fabric of an academic discussion. This methodology serves to record more personal thoughts and add a more poetic intervention in order to explore notions of voice and agency as one of the central themes to the work. According to Patricia Ticineto Clough, experimental writing techniques in academic texts which address difficult and traumatic memories such as the ones that inhabit the Paraná river, have the ability to 'capture a shift in thought happening to the writer [...] thrown backwards and forward to find the self that is turned into parts, [...] of a new assemblage: [as] an autobiographical-

¹⁷ **Charles Kriel**, (2004) describes noise in an image as the 'grains [...] of the signal [that when] [...] tightly packed and evenly distributed [...] [give out] information [...] about the image reproduced. The more space we see between them, given the same image, the more noise is transmitted in the information', p. 29 *Noise* here refers to both the surface materiality of the digital translations I create, where digital 'image noise' (the equivalent of film grain for analogue images) or random specks degrade the quality of the image, and to the 'audible' references in the writing and making to the history of the Disappeared in Argentina.

¹⁸ **Western J. Naef and Joan Morgan**, *Counterparts: Form and Emotion in Photographs* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, 1982), p. 74

¹⁹ **Alois Riegel** first writes about the haptic in his *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*, (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964 (*Late Roman Art Industry*, translated from the original Viennese edition with foreword and annotations by Rolf Winkes (Rome: Bretschneider Editore, 1985) in relation to the change that occurs in Western art after Roman depictions of space are reawakened during the Renaissance.

techno-ontological writing block.²⁰ These personal fragments I introduce to the writing then, adhere to a shift in thinking through some of the experiential processes I encounter on the river and in the print room. This pluralistic approach will test some of the troughs and fissures that are brought to the surface in these multiple layers of thought, while allowing the photomechanical printmaking processes, and digital prints to oscillate between an encounter with surface (haptic) and an encounter with the subject matter (optic).

Using this analogue photograph *Hats on the Paraná* as a starting point, then, the practical research centres on the details of erasure and legibility of the faded landscape and those who inhabit it, providing a diving board from which to bridge the gap that exists between written and visual knowledge of photographic printing techniques and practice, as well as histories and narratives of the Paraná itself. Although photography and printmaking have been intertwined since the invention of photography in 1839, they have had a history of push and pull, where printmaking processes that initially tried to 'immortalise the image from nature by printing in stable carbon ink' were superseded by the speed of new photographic processes and darkroom techniques for 'fixing' the image.²¹ Yet, as Charles Newton suggests, 'this close relationship [was] mutually advantageous, resulting in the contin[ue]d expansion of photo-mechanical printing techniques.'²² Since Newton wrote his book, 'Photography in Printmaking', in 1979 there have been lightning speed advances in both photographic and printmaking processes, in particular with the invention of digital photography and photo-polymer etching plates, yet the techniques that bind them (photographic techniques of exposure, development and printing) lack convergent theoretical contextualisation, often solely discussed within the context of their discrete medium.²³ According to Kevin Haas, these debates have meant

²⁰ **Patricia Ticineto Clough** in *The Affective Turn, Theorizing the Social* edited by Clough with Jean Halley (Durham and London: Duke University Press 2007), p.14

²¹ **Charles Newton**, 'Photography in Printmaking', *Victoria and Albert Museum* (Tisbury, Wiltshire: Compton Press London: Pitman Publishing, 1979), p. 5

²² *ibid*, p.6

²³ Although **Steven Sasson** 'invented' the digital camera in 1975, Kodak who he worked for at the time said they 'were convinced that no one would ever want to look at their pictures on a television set', even 'resisting' Sasson and Robert Hill's first DSLR Camera in 1989, according to **Nathan McAlone**, business insider for **TECH Insider** [online] on 17th August, 2015 at: <<http://static2.techinsider.io/image/55d24cf3dd089592378b45ff-3408-2320/patent.png>> [accessed on 20/11/15]. It wasn't until the late 1990s, early 2000's that digital cameras started to take over the photographic market. Photogravure and photoetching plates date back to the 1950, and were used for relief printing of electrical circuit boards. See **Manilal Savla's** History and Technology of Photopolymer Printing

that 'despite the significant role printmaking has played in art throughout the 20th century and currently, it has not shared the outpouring of theoretical writing which has been devoted to photography in the last several decades.'²⁴ This research aims therefore, to work *within* the traditions of both photography and printmaking, as well as *outside* it, and these material experimentations lead the charge for a new vocabulary for these prints at the intersection of the two practices. The print outcomes become what I term 'object-screen memories' and address the context of the multiple narratives of the Paraná, as well as the multiple theoretical iterations I explore.

However, a considered approach to the *source* of the imagery is the subject of this initial discussion in order to *set the scene* for these material and theoretical considerations: the analogue photograph provides the backdrop for a wider discussion, with a number of important questions that need to be addressed in the first instance. These questions set up the first layer of discussion, and determine where this photograph (and a set of others that my grandfather took) comes from and where it sits within the historical and cultural context of this research project; what its purpose is, given its arbitrary nature and familial connection, and how its subject matter and material concerns reveal the nature of its function in the project.

Plates (Manalapan, New Jersey, 2008) at: <www.radtechmembers.org/archive-proceedings/2008/papers/121.pdf> [accessed 21/01/16]. Solar photopolymer plates (which are the type of photoetching plates I use for this project) were invented by Dan Welden in the 1970s, but were only adopted by printmaking studios in the 80s and 90s. See **Dan Welden's** Solarplate Etching website at <<http://www.solarplate.com>> [accessed 12/02/15]

²⁴ **Kevin Haas** refers to the lack of theoretical debates in printmaking in his 'Convergent theories: Printmaking, Photography and Digital Media', session proposal for *CAA Annual Conference*, Boston, February 22-25, (2006) <www.accumulated.org/special_projects/CAA2006.html> [accessed 10/10/14]. Other writers who have referred to the lack of theoretical debate and the contextualization of techniques in discreet mediums are **Ruth Pelzer-Montada**, in 'The Attraction of Print: Notes on the Surface of the (Art) Print,' *Art Journal*, Summer (2008) and **Kathryn Reeves** in her 'The Revision of Printmaking', first Impact International Printmaking Conference, Bristol, UK, September 22-25 (1999), published in *Impact Proceedings 1999*, a CD by the Centre for Fine Art Prints Research, Faculty of Art, Design and Media. The CD is available from the Centre at the University of the West of England, Bower Ashton Campus, Kennel Lodge Rd., Bristol BS3 2JT, UK.



Figure 3, Henry Richard Ahrens, *River Paraná ii*, circa 1930, exact location unknown,
Analogue silver print from photographic album,
3.5 cm (h) x 8 cm (w)

1.2 DISTURBING ENTITIES

Clutching the photographic album in my hand, it feels fragile, its pages unfolding and cascading, its photographs dislodging from the decades long slumber under the tissue paper that has preserved them. I was handed this album, I had never seen it before. Brown paper pages hold the yellowing and fading photographs on them, hanging on for dear life as the glue dried up some time ago. I flick through the album, and am struck by a single image at first. The two rowers on the Paraná take me back in an instant to my childhood playground along its banks. It looked nothing like this, but more a holiday resort, a place where you could swim and sunbathe, in relative safety: the waters are not particularly deep, and retain the warmth from the sun, that is inviting. This is where I will go again, where I will start this project. The photograph calls to me through time, to a place that I now know holds other more disturbing histories in its wake. But it is a form of home; I can look at the photograph and feel the heat, smell the water, and hear the birds.

The photograph in question, *Hats on the Paraná*, is part of an album of snapshots H.R. Ahrens created and collected before he met and married my grandmother, in 1939. What this means is that it exists in a time before the family I am a part of had come into being, at the liminal edges of my grandfather's bachelorhood.²⁵ Although there is no detail of the date when this image was taken, we can deduce from others in the album that it must have been circa 1930, at an age when snapshot photography was becoming widespread with the proliferation of the Leica camera. This portable camera was originally invented in the 1920s 'as a device for testing samples of film that were to be exposed in the long reels necessary for moviemaking'²⁶ and I know from family conversations that my grandfather used a Leica, which he would carry around with him

²⁵ The ethnographer **Arnold Van Gennep** first uses the word 'liminal', meaning threshold, in 1909, in relation to the transitional phases an individual goes through in life, from childhood to parenthood, in his *Rites of Passage*, translated by M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960); Liminal here also translates as the threshold between the visible and invisible (from limen in Latin meaning threshold, see <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=liminal> [accessed 12/03/14])

²⁶ **Richard Benson** details how the Leica camera was used for early photographic albums as it was '[t]he first popular still camera to grow out of the film trades [...] which came on the market in the 1920s. It used the same 35mm-width film as the movies did, and used the sprocket holes along both sides to control the position of the film as it was advanced through the camera [...] These little cameras directed the photographer's attention to form rather than detail, and a whole new type of picture structure grew out of their use', in *The Printed Picture*, (Museum of Modern Art: New York, 2008), p.166

and take out at the opportune moment for a quick and timely shot, such as the one in question. This photograph, then, is invested with a filmic quality (I have been told that my grandfather was interested in both still and moving images) as it forms part of a longer narrative of the river and of his life. Though the subject matter of this snapshot is (in part) known to me, a landscape shot of the river Paraná in Argentina where I spent *my* childhood, the people in it are no longer identifiable, there being no one left alive to tell me who they are. Yet, 'we can confidently assume, like the subjects of our own snapshots, they are not strangers [...] [but] the precious photographic trace of a cherished person, moment, or thing.'²⁷ The faces in the shot, mysterious figures at the edges of the river, thus become poignant reminders of human presence in the scene (other than the eye of the photographer), 'material traces of the past preserved for posterity' and yet, in their acquired anonymity, 'provide a physical stand-in for the inherent absence that the image implies.'²⁸ These spectral traces from another era, still visible in the corners of the print, set up the paradoxical contradictions of photographic imagery:

It is only through the vacillation between the presence of what is and was there, and the absence of what is vanished or unattainable, that the snapshot truly engages its viewer's subjective, emotional response. And never is the sense of absence in the snapshot image more visceral than when the subject of the image has died.²⁹

The absence/presence dichotomy, then, is one that takes a front seat in this photograph (as well as in this research project) as an acknowledgment that 'presence [...] is traced into the very materiality of photographs [...] [as] a moment [...] someone lived through,'³⁰ while absence lies in what is vanished or unattainable. It is, therefore, both in its ephemeral, physical presence and its eternal vanishing that the photograph is able to touch me through time, affectively and literally. As Giuliana Bruno suggests, 'reciprocity

²⁷ Catherine Zuromskis *Snapshot Photography: The Lives of Images* (Cambridge, Massachusetts / London: MIT Press, 2013), p.30

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 47

²⁹ *ibid.*, p.44

³⁰ Elizabeth Edwards, 'Anthropology and Photography: A Long History of Knowledge and Affect', *Photographies*, 8:3, 235-252 (2015), p. 240

is a quality of touch. There is a haptic rule of thumb: when we touch something or someone, we are, inevitably, touched in return [...] Touch is never unidirectional [...] it enables an affective return.’³¹ Touching this photograph therefore, with its subjects disappearing from view, its memories evaporating untapped, means that its haptic qualities remain ever more visible, as it bends and disintegrates before my eyes, its surface corrupted and cracked.³² The haptic surface of the photograph consequently creates an affective reciprocity between the object and the subject-viewer (myself), which meet through the sense of touch. This means by touching it, in turn it touches me, so that this affective return is ‘what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects,’ the affective glue that sticks so-to-speak, while the glue on the back of the image has all but disappeared from it now. In this way, its affective return can be said to reside both in its optical vanishing and in its tactile, haptic qualities.³³

As Catherine Zuromskis states, ‘perhaps more than any other photographic genre, the snapshot trades on its tactile, concrete materiality [...] [as] a thing to be looked at, but also a thing to be kept, touched, passed around, and written on.’³⁴ If presence can thus be defined as a way of ‘being in touch, either literally or metaphorically with people, things, events and feelings,’ then the concrete materiality of this snapshot provides a link to the stories of my past, a way of *keeping in touch*, as it touches me through time, is passed around in this research and can be written about.³⁵ This photograph can, therefore, be considered ‘to be a kind of portable monument’, both in terms of the lost memories it holds, and the tactile nature of its form: on the one hand absent, on the other present, real, and tangible.³⁶ If monuments are ‘durable *lieux de mémoire* [that] also function as ‘anchors’ to talk about personal memories and specific moments in history’

³¹ **Giuliana Bruno** *Surface Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2014) p. 18. See **Constance Classen**, *The Deepest Sense, A Cultural History of Touch* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012); **Laura U. Marks**, *Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) and **Daniel Heller- Roazen**, *The Inner Touch: Archaeology of a Sensation* (New York: Zone Books, 2009)

³² The **corrupted surface** refers to its physical, surface ruptures, from the Latin word for *cor*, meaning ‘altogether’, and *rompere*, ‘to break’. See <<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=corrupt>> [accessed 21/03/15]

³³ **Sara Ahmed** in ‘Happy Objects’, edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth in *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 31

³⁴ **Zuromskis**, 2013, p. 44

³⁵ **Eelco Runia**, ‘Presence’, *History and Theory* 45 (2006) 1-29, p. 5

³⁶ **Zuromskis**, 2013, p.47

then this photograph provides the anchor to this research, as it serves to locate my personal memories and the historical narratives of the River Paraná as a site of memorial.³⁷ This small, hand held monument as memorial, therefore, addresses the subject matter of the Paraná, while in its physical form, providing a 'ruin' of the past, both a fading and disintegrating rectangular object with frayed edges and a buckled surface, and all that remains of a place that no longer exists (if it ever did) as we see it here. It is both physically disappearing as a printed object, as a place that existed before mass tourism, before mass pollution, changed it into a vastly different view; while at the same time, reappearing as a document through history, as a portable monument that relies, as memory does, 'on the specificity of the trace, the materiality of the vestige, the concreteness of the recording, the visibility of the image.'³⁸ It sets up a 'nostos algos', a nostalgia and longing, which, as Susan Stewart asserts, 'remains ideological [as] the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, [...] continually threaten[ing] to reproduce itself as a felt lack [...] [as] a longing for an impossibly pure context of lived experience at a place of origin [...] [it is] distinctly utopian [and turned] toward a future-past.'³⁹ The sense of loss it contains within its frame, therefore, belongs to another time, a time I cannot claim as my own lived experience, yet conjures up my own memories of place and other histories in its sepia tinged surface, anchoring the affective return in its own archive of memories that I call upon in this project to 'accumulate [in] fragments [...] as evidence before who knows what tribunal of history.'⁴⁰

³⁷ **Leen Engelen & Marjan Sterckx**, 'Remembering Edith and Gabrielle, Picture Postcards of Monuments as Portable Lieux de Mémoire', *Imaging History, Photography after the Fact*, edited by Bruno Vandermeulen and Danny Veys (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2011) p. 93; See also **Pierre Nora's** *Lieux de Mémoire*, Vol. I (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), translated by Arthur Goldhammer, *Realms of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) which locates memory within particular historical frameworks, as well as **Andreas Huyssen's** *Present Pasts, Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) where he discusses the notion of monuments and memory.

³⁸ **Pierre Nora**, *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, Vol. I (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), translated by Arthur Goldhammer, *Realms of Memory* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1996) p. 5

³⁹ **Susan Stewart** *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 23

⁴⁰ **Nora**, 1996, p. 6. Here I am referring obliquely to the fact that this photograph provides the springboard for an enquiry into the landscapes of disappearance of the Paraná, and is called upon in this research as a kind of personal 'evidence' for the historical narratives the river contains.

*The photograph longs to be read,
yet belongs to a past that is slowly becoming illegible.
This is someone's personal history lost in the ether of its making,
my history evanescent in my hands.
The men in its wake no longer belong there (they have long passed),
and I cannot take their place (though the longing remains).
The longed for conversation with its protagonists merely a silent encounter,
as the river, long and wide, speaks of long ago.
We have come a long way from the days of this picture, yet what we know for sure,
is that it holds the secrets of a long story.
It belongs to this world, yet goes back a long way.*

These vanished memories give way to silent protagonists, who, nevertheless, hold the clues to their story at the margins of the print. They were, we can deduce, meaningfully included, and the river landscape deliberately interrupted by their presence. Having recently found out that my grandfather also enjoyed printing his photographs himself, it is clear then that their inclusion is far from arbitrary and their role in the print, a deliberate act. The faces are intentionally entombed in the frame of the print, encrypted in the image as ‘the living dead [as] the photograph kills [while] [...] [also giv[ing] life, or at least a strange kind of afterlife to its subjects.’⁴¹ As afterlives, therefore, they live on within the photographic frame as ‘objects [that] triumph over time and mortality [...] only to be mortified by it,’⁴² ghosts in a suspended moment, turned to paper instead of stone, yet engraved on the surface of the print as fragile markers, squinting at the present, yet blinded by their past. The photograph is one I cannot turn a blind eye to, as it becomes the site/sight of memorialization (of the river, of the moment, of my grandfather’s touch), and as such serves as the site of recognition: the recognition of its ‘potentiality’ in the vanishing ‘act of remembrance.’⁴³ As Joan Gibbons asserts, ‘memory is [...] the apparatus that allows for recognition (re-cognition) without which the powers of cognition itself remain transient and unframed.’⁴⁴ Yet even as it frames this project in the light of its transience, this analogue photograph provides only a ‘fragmentary and incomplete utterance,’ as it immortalizes its subjects on its surface as marginal figures, and only in part articulates its significance within the written and visual encounter.⁴⁵ At the same time, as a fragment it turns these presences into ‘disturbing entities,’⁴⁶ that ‘like our mortal bodies, [are] subject to ageing and desuetude’ and are ‘liable to decay or wear out [...] as the surface [...] accumulates scratches,’ the more it is touched and passed around.⁴⁷ As Camelia Elias defines, the fragmentary nature of this photograph then, ‘mediates between its state of being and its state of becoming’⁴⁸ :

⁴¹ **Charles Kriel**, *Noise, Artifact and the Uncanny in Large Scale Digital Photographic Practice*, unpublished PHD thesis, (London: University of the Arts London, 2004), p. 39.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 42

⁴³ **Michael Newman**, ‘Analogue, Chance and Memory,’ in Tacita Dean, *Film*, ed. Nicholas Cullinan (London: Tate Publishing: 2011) p. 102

⁴⁴ **Joan Gibbons** in *Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007) p. 1

⁴⁵ **Allan Sekula**, ‘Reading an Archive: Photography between Labour and Capital’, in Evans, J. & Hall, S., ed. *Visual Culture* (Sage: London, 2013) p. 184

⁴⁶ **Camelia Elias**, *The Fragment: Towards a History and Poetics of a Performative Genre* (Peter Lang: Bern, 2004) p. 397

⁴⁷ **Michael Newman**, 2011, p. 103

⁴⁸ **Camelia Elias**, 2011, p. 55

[These fragments] play upon the imagination by promising or at least suggesting more than what they are, while reminding the viewer [...] that this putative “more” can never be recovered or fully experienced. Fragments thus simultaneously raise and resist the possibility of totality and wholeness, exhibiting a presentational force that can never be exhausted.⁴⁹

The photograph, then, is activated and given a presentational force by my research. In its resistance to the possibility of totality and wholeness, it nevertheless disturbs; the fragmented faces, the stillness of the water, disturb the composition and play upon my imagination, resisting completeness, suggesting more than what they are, while, as incomplete utterances, revealing little of themselves: these ‘traces are retained [...] [in] an afterlife in the present, but may also disturb it,⁵⁰ disturb me. The river, the water, on the other hand, so often symbolic of a constant flow of life, or the stagnant current of death, here becomes both and in its intentional framing represents a further ‘ruin’ of the past, which ‘traffic[s] with the [present] [...] in ironic and devious ways [...] [and] points to a deep and vanished past whose relics merely haunt the present.’⁵¹ This body of water then, a vestige of its material afterlife in the photograph, cut off from its full current, stilled by the camera and severed from its source, becomes a disturbing and unsettling sight/site, which haunts the present and sets the scene for acts of remembrance that do not even pertain to it: the deviant and devious history of Argentina’s political ‘disappeared’. As a portable ruin with a photographic afterlife, ‘it is not yet stable, but fleeting, in flux, and hence interrelating,’ claiming an ironic presence despite its material

⁴⁹ **Camelia Elias**, 2004, p.397

⁵⁰ **Michael Newman**, 2011, p. 103

⁵¹ **Brian Dillon**, ‘Decline and Fall’, *Frieze Magazine*, April (2010); It was **Jacques Derrida** who coined the term ‘hauntology’ in *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning & the New International* (Galilée Editions: France, 1993) to express the way Marx and Marxism still pervades so much of our contemporary theorizing. This idea has been applied to other areas of cultural theory, and is described by **Barbara Gabriel** in ‘The Unbearable Strangeness of Being; Edgar Reitz’s *Heimat* and the Ethics of the Unheimlich’, *Postmodernism and the Ethical Subject*, edited by B. Gabriel and S. Ilcan (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004) as the notion of the haunted subject longing for a lost or utopic homeland.

vanishing, in a spectre-like here-ness.⁵² This haunting image, therefore, in a state of 'being and non-being' reveals presence in its absences, and absences in its presence.⁵³ As liminal objects, Susan Sontag asserts, '[photographs] do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it.'⁵⁴ So this splintered piece of the world still works to create personal meaning despite itself, and reminds us that in the selection of its form and content it '[suggests it is] something worth remembering.'⁵⁵ It comes to represent a 'moment [...] of history [...] plucked out of the flow of history, then returned to it- no longer quite alive but not yet entirely dead, like shells left on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded.'⁵⁶ It is a shell which carries with it disturbing entities, vestiges of time, in a memory that is no longer its own, and which I trace with my fingers and put to my ear, in an attempt to listen to the echoes of the past.

⁵² **Camelia Elias**, 2004, p. 68

⁵³ **Lisa Gye**, *Halfives: A Mystory* (LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, January, 2010)

⁵⁴ **Susan Sontag**, *On Photography* (Penguin Group: London, 1979), p. 4; here the word liminal once again refers to the ability of these photographs to sit on the threshold of 'being and non-being'

⁵⁵ **Zumoskis** (2013), p. 52

⁵⁶ **Nora**, 1996, p. 4

*After life,
This is where they go: down the river Styx, to their watery demise
Afterlives of the life after the photograph, they live after the fact, as after thoughts on a
current of loss
What are these people doing rowing
towards their photographic death?*

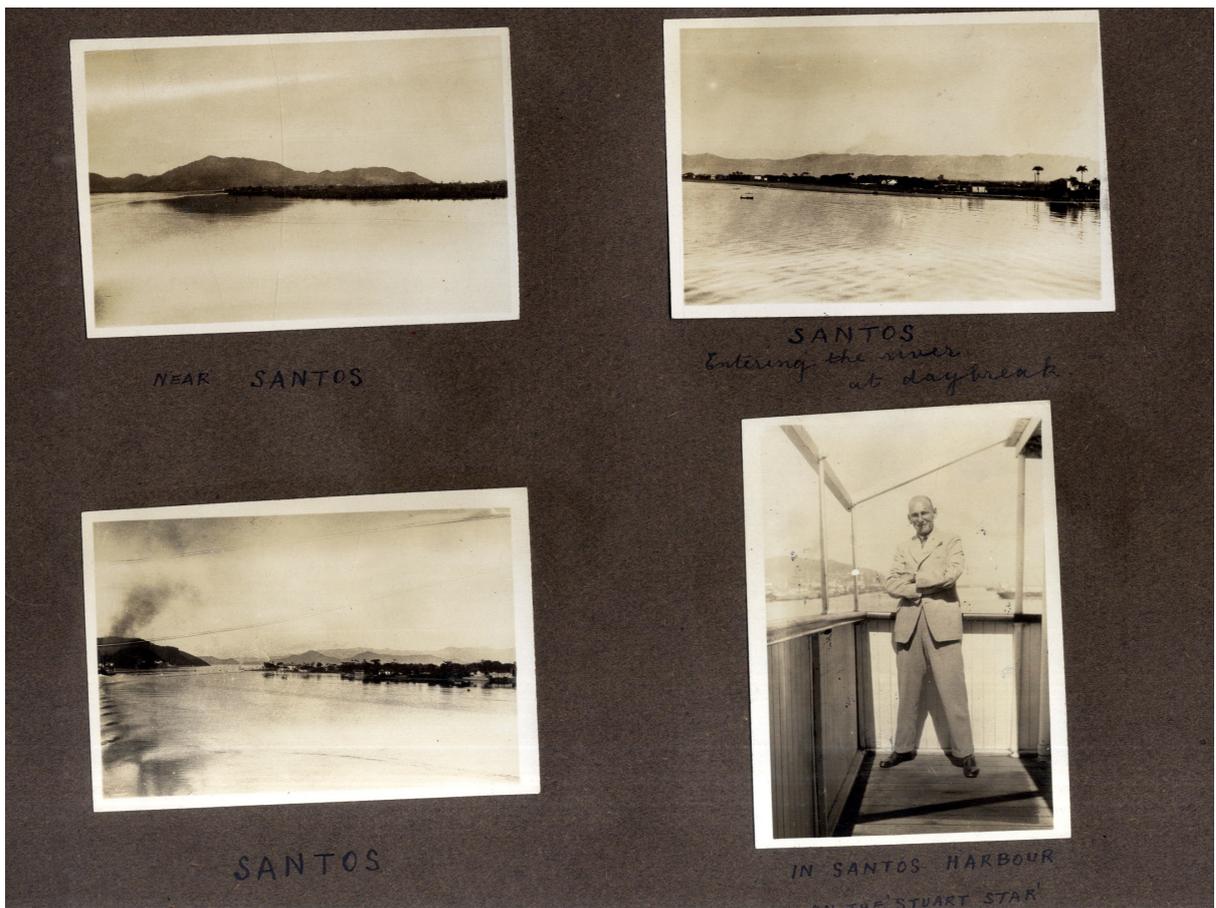


Figure 4, Scanned page from Henry Richard Ahrens's photographic album,
c. 1930s, 40 cm(w) x 28 cm (h)

1.3 FORENSIC ANTECEDENTS

I used to pick up small shells on the banks of the river. I don't know where they came from, as I don't think the Paraná itself has any conches or molluscs in its waters. They were probably thrown overboard by the fishermen, when they came back from their voyages on the Atlantic Ocean. I would hold them up to my ear to hear the whooshing sound, and my mother would tell me that by doing this you could hear where they came from. The sandbanks of the Paraná are dark yellow, tinged by the iron rich brown of the river, dense and humid. I would burn my feet sometimes as I walked down to the water's edge from the cabin. Tree branches and other debris would accumulate along the edges as the water ebbed and flowed in the tide. Sometimes you would find branches dragged right up to the gate, other times they would just float along as the river flowed passed, floating vestiges of the wood that was once exported from the riverbanks.

The Paraná, depicted in this photograph (figure 3) has always been more than just a river, as it is often portrayed as a mythological and political space in Argentina; both as the setting for nation building sea battles against its colonial aggressors in the 18th and 19th centuries, and forming part of an important historical discourse of independence and survival, as it serves as a natural boundary between Uruguay and Argentina where it meets the Rio de la Plata delta in the south, and Argentina and Brazil in its upper reaches at the Iguazú basin. It is the second longest river (after the Amazon) in South America and is the widest in the world at its mouth, where the estuary meets the Atlantic Ocean. Its name, in Tupi-Guaraní, the indigenous language of the region, means: as big as the sea.⁵⁷ The country's first settlements were founded along its banks as well as its first agricultural practices harvesting mate, the local herbal tea sipped from gourds to this day. The river, then, is the central protagonist of the photograph, and in my grandfather's day, it would have been the backdrop for travel and leisure, with rowing regattas in the delta region near Buenos Aires for its growing population of wealthy Europeans, and local communities living along its shores in wooden stilted houses, trading in fish. To my

⁵⁷ The geographical and historical details of the origins of the name and use of the Paraná river are described in <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Parana_River> [accessed 26/02/13]; Recorriendo 25, El Rio Paraná: Sus Características in collaboration with the Faculty of Engineering and Water Science at the National Coastal University (UNL), the Physical Limnology Laboratory at the National Limnology Institute at the National Coastal University, and the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research <http://www.unl.edu.ar/recorriendosantafe/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/ficha_25.pdf> [accessed 30/ 11/ 13]

grandfather (see figure 4) the river would become the most important body of water both for his work, and for his leisure time, as the meat refrigeration business he managed had their factories based in the southern port of Buenos Aires, in La Boca. The Anglo Frigorífero company owned by the Liverpoolian Vestey brothers, not only meant trips up the Paraná to cattle ranches in Entre Ríos and Santa Fe provinces in the upper Paraná on company owned cargo ships, but also to Santos in Brazil and Frey Bentos in Uruguay to bring meat and hides back to Buenos Aires⁵⁸. It was the principle water highway of its time in the early twentieth century and tributaries of the Paraná would mean that he became familiar with the river in a way that is unimaginable today (now quiet backwaters). These trade routes brought great wealth to the city and turned the meat and hide market into an international and wealthy export for Argentina. Sailing up and down these upper reaches in his own small yachts would also have meant engaging with the landscapes of the Paraná for pleasure and it was on these frequent trips that my grandfather took most of his photographs. It is still considered an important holiday destination for city dwellers and other tourists today, who go there to see its unique flora and fauna, and build new boathouses along its shores, while many of Argentina's most important industries (wood, leather, fertilizers) still have their factories based on its riverbanks. These industries, however, no longer use the Paraná as their main trade route, but rely on other means, so that the once bustling river is now, at least in its southern regions, a genteel and pleasurable place to visit, albeit one that in its upper reaches is often blighted by pollution from factory outlets. So the uses of the river today have put a strain on the once pristine nature of the region, with waste acids now being legislated against, and national wildlife reserves among the green policies looking to resolve these environmental issues.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, as with all rivers, the Paraná has always been the harbinger of life to the region, and is still considered an important economic resource. As J.E. Cirlot notes, the symbolism of rivers often 'corresponds to the creative power of nature and time. On the one hand it signifies fertility and the

⁵⁸ See **The Guardian newspaper** [online], *Heirs and Disgraces*, Wednesday 11 August 1999 at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/1999/aug/11/features11.g2>> [accessed 23/03/16]; See also **Blue Starline** [online], Biography of William Vestey at: <http://www.bluestarline.org/william_vestey.htm> [accessed 13/03/16]

⁵⁹ **Dana Valdano's** monograph on the contamination of the Paraná, 'La contaminación del Paraná,' *Monografias.com*, [online] at: <<http://www.monografias.com/trabajos17/contaminacion-parana/contaminacion-parana.shtml>> [accessed on 25/09/14], and the article *Preocupa Probable Polucion del Paraná* on ABC Color News, 23rd November 2014 <<http://www.abc.com.py/edicion-impresa/locales/preocupa-probable-polucion-del-parana-885296.html>> [accessed 23/11/14] which discusses pollution levels in the Paraná as a result of paper factories discarding residues directly into the river without treatment.

progressive irrigation of the soil; [while] also stand[ing] for the irreversible passage of time and, in consequence, for a sense of loss and oblivion'.⁶⁰ These notions of loss and oblivion have more recently come to the fore once more, as other more unsettling revelations of its use during the dictatorship years (1976-1983), as the deathbed of potentially thousands of so-called left-wing subversives or 'disappeared', are documented, while new stories are beginning to emerge of bodies hanging from trees and floating in the upper Paraná as journalists and families of the disappeared investigate new evidence⁶¹. These bodies, thrown out alive from military planes over the river, form a mass grave at the bottom, though very few of their remains have ever been found. It has long been known that these so-called 'death flights' occurred over the Rio de la Plata and in the early days of the dictatorship bodies were often found washed up on the shores of Uruguay. A local river dweller, Marcos Quiapo, describes how he 'remember[s] seeing these military planes throwing these strange packages over the area [...] But [he] then saw these packages floating on the riverbanks. When [he] opened them [he] was aghast. The packages were dead bodies.'⁶² In 1996, Horacio Verbitsky, a well-known investigative journalist who has specialized in writing about the atrocities committed by the military junta, published a book called *The Flight, Confessions of an Argentine Dirty Warrior* in which he interviews an ex-pilot from the Navy, who confesses to flying the tortured and disappeared in military planes and witnessing them being thrown out alive (though unconscious) to meet their death in the waters below.⁶³ In a new book written by the journalist Fabian Magnotta *El Lugar Perfecto (The Perfect Place)* in 2012, people he interviewed who live in communities deep into the Paraná delta spoke of bodies hanging from trees and rotting on the river banks next to their homes much further upstream than previously thought⁶⁴. Since the dictatorship years, during which time 30,000 young people are estimated to have been 'disappeared', the CONADEP Commission (National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons) was set up and in 1984, the *Nunca Más* (Never Again) Report was published to reconcile this national trauma and give survivors and families of the disappeared a voice. Trials against

⁶⁰ J.E. Ciriote <<http://www.symbolism.org>>(2013) [accessed 12/11/13]

⁶¹ Vladimir Hernandez, *Painful Search for Argentina's Disappeared*, BBC World News, Latin America & Caribbean, 24/03/13, [online], <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-21884147>> [accessed on 10/04/14].

⁶² Vladimir Hernandez, *Painful Search for Argentina's Disappeared*, BBC World News, Latin America & Caribbean, 24/03/13, [online], <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-21884147>> [accessed on 10/04/14].

⁶³ Horacio Verbitsky *The Flight, Confessions of an Argentine Dirty Warrior* (The New Press, 1996)

⁶⁴ Fabian Magnotta, *El Lugar Perfecto (Argentina: Editorial, 2012)*, [online] at: <<http://www.fabianmagnotta.com.ar/web/?sector=libro&idnot=25>>

the surviving military officers have been taking place after several amnesties and interruptions to the judicial process as a result of government interventions in the 80s and 90s, with some cases coming to trial only thirty-five years after the events. These trials continue to this day, shown on televisions and screens live outside the courthouse in central Buenos Aires. This new development, however, which exposes a more extensive network of aerial disappearances, to include parts of the upper Paraná near Entre Rios and Santa Fe, changes the perception of the landscape of this region once again, adding yet another traumatic narrative to the already tainted history of the dictatorship years and turning the brown, murky depths of the river into a graveyard of loss and oblivion. As Magnotta states in his book on the subject, it was one of the islanders who described the Paraná as the 'perfect place', perfect for hiding the crimes of disappearance, both as a result of the vast expanse of the river and its thousands of islands tributaries which make it difficult to navigate, and the dense foliage of its river banks that obscure the scene, but also because the islanders are notoriously reticent in the face of strangers, living in isolated communities, keeping their lives to themselves. Magnotta himself refers to numerous threats he received from ex- military officers over the nine years that he investigated and wrote his book on the subject and describes the islanders as the potential 'first silent witnesses' of these aerial disappearances.⁶⁵

The river depicted in this photograph, therefore, cannot be viewed without the weight of its history, framed by its narratives of disappearance, haunted by their absent presence. In addition, according to Mahesh Sharma, 'borders are important thresholds, full of contradictions and ambivalence. They both separate and join different places, and by doing so provide an immense possible site of representation which allows the subaltern to speak.'⁶⁶ The Paraná, then, as the geographical and metaphorical borders of this research, becomes the site of representation through which multiple subaltern narratives can be articulated. Just as the faces disturb the photographic plane of the source imagery, so the river and its traumatic history, perturbs the site of research, leaving forensic antecedents in its wake. As a site of representation it provides contradictions

⁶⁵ **Fabian Magnotta**, *El Lugar Perfecto* (Argentina: Editorial, 2012), <<http://www.fabianmagnotta.com.ar/web/?sector=libro&idnot=25>>, [accessed 20/ 03/13]

⁶⁶ **Mahesh Sharma**, 'The Liminality of Contemporary Culture', *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 6 (1), 2013, pp. 109-119 at: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.3126/bodhi.v6i0.9247> Bodhi Vol.6 2013: 109-119> [accessed 12/03/16]

and ambivalences, however, which can be teased out by the forensic aesthetic or making processes of this research.



Figure 5, Victoria Ahrens, DNA being extracted from bone
Headquarters of the EAAF in El Once, Buenos Aires, Argentina
(2015) Transfer print on Fabriano paper,
20 cm (h) x 30 cm (w)

The Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team or EAAF, *Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense*, mobilised since the 1980s to ‘reveal’ the final resting place of thousands of Argentina’s ‘disappeared’ through ossified remains and DNA fragments, are being called to scrutinize this landscape and bring it to forensic visibility⁶⁷ (figure 5). This team was the world’s first ‘professional war crimes exhumation group’ that used forensic identification methods pioneered by Dr. Clyde Snow (renowned American forensic anthropologist) to uncover the remains of thousands of disappeared.⁶⁸ According to Eyal Weisman, they ‘conduct[ed] the first large-scale and systematic exhumations in the context of war crimes investigations, producing important evidence in the trials of the junta leaders and developing pioneering professional expertise in forensic anthropology.’⁶⁹ The historian Anne Hufschmid details at great length how on ‘a day in April 2012 in Buenos Aires, in a court room set up to judge crimes and perpetrators of the last military junta’, [she] witnesses for the first time, a forensic discourse in action:

on the stand there was a middle aged woman, with a soft and pausing voice, who was narrating how she had found a set of bones on the banks of the Rio de la Plata, and how the marks on these fragments disclosed the destiny of a human being – how he had fallen from a great height – and how, as a result of a complex set of readings and contexts, it was possible to recover the name of these remains: it’s Pedro, the expert finally named them, and it’s Cristina, who were thrown out, still alive, from one of the so-called death flights. This witness, I was later informed, was a member of the famous EAAF, the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ The **EAAF** (Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense), Argentina Forensic Anthropology Team, See ‘History of EAAF’ at <http://www.eaaf.org/founding_of_eaaf/> [accessed 20/ 10/115]; See also Christina Bellelli and Jeffrey Tobin’s ‘Archaeology of the Desaparecidos’, SAAS Bulletin 14, no.2 (March/April, 1996).

⁶⁸ **Eyal Weisman** in *Mengele’s Skull, the Advent of a Forensic Aesthetics* (Frankfurt am Main: Sternberg Press/Portikus, 2012) p. 57; He goes on to state that since the 1990s, osteobiography as a means of identifying the disappeared has ‘largely been replaced by DNA analysis.’ Weisman, p. 58.

⁶⁹ *ibid*

⁷⁰ **Anne Hufschmid**, ‘Bones and Humanity: On Forensic Anthropology and its Constitutive Power facing Forced Disappearance’, *Athenea Digital*, 15(3), 195-214 (Freie Universität Berlin, November 2015), p. 192

These forensic methods, that involve scraping, digging, sampling, analysing and interpreting, can reveal every detail of that body's identity and demise. In its attention to microscopic features or DNA, it is the *latent or invisible* traces that are uncovered, the traces of those who would not be found.⁷¹ In 2011 I had the opportunity to work with the photographers of the EAAF, under Anahí Ginarte, and was introduced to their practices and laboratory in the Once in Buenos Aires at that time. The methods and tools of their trade were laid out in front of me, yet the only photograph I was allowed to take was of the extraction of a piece of bone to be used for DNA analysis (see figure 5). What I was privileged to then, was the first hand experience of forensic anthropology as a site of mediation, as the team progressed in their search for remains both at sites around the city and in the wider landscape, and were used as expert witnesses in the cases against the military officers, offering evidence and decoding scientific information to bring closure for families, and aid the prosecution of perpetrators.

If forensic anthropologists then are the mediators who look to uncover death among the living, 'because [objects and places] do not speak for themselves, there is a need for translation, mediation or interpretation between the "language of things" and that of people'⁷², then I am looking to mediate these spaces of photographic death that teeter on the edges of memory and history. As Tina Wasserman explains, 'history and memory are inextricably linked [...] both are constituted through a process of transcription from an original occurrence in the past, and yet each returns to the past in a different way. History is the transcription of public events connected to the external world, and memory is an internal, subjective transcription of experience connected to the individual self. But the distinction between the two is often more porous and slippery than this straightforward definition would imply [...] Past events that produced personal memory for one generation may, in fact, affect the next generation in deep and personal ways.'⁷³

⁷¹ **Latent image**, 'in photography, the invisible configuration of silver halide crystals on a piece of film after exposure to image-bearing focused light; it is distinguishable from unexposed silver halide only by its ability to be reduced to metallic silver by a developing agent' from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [online] at: <<http://www.britannica.com/technology/latent-image>> [accessed 12/12/15]. The latent image is that of the invisible traces left on the surface of the plate.

⁷² **Eyal Weisman**, 2012, p.28

⁷³ **Tina Wasserman**, 'Constructing the Image of Postmemory' in *The Image and the Witness, Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture*, edited by Francis Guerin and Roger Hallas (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2007), p. 160

History and memory converge in this research, therefore, to uncover new perspectives of the photographic depiction of the river Paraná, as the two merge on porous new surfaces, and use processes that slip from one pictorial depiction to another. The Paraná then provides the site of *photographic mediation*, both in the traumatic history it holds, and in its location as the 'sight' of familial narratives in this photographic source material. Where forensic science uses 'photography [as] a critical component [...] to document, examine, analyse, and communicate forensic evidence,' I look to examine and analyse the visual material of my grandfather's images of the Paraná, and, in turn, my own photographs of the river, in order to investigate an 'intertextuality' between past and present renditions.⁷⁴ Using the 'ancient Greek sense [...] of logos in 'analogue' [as] 'word' or 'gathering' [...] to gather the different layers of time', I aim to gather a visual and theoretical analysis of the history and memories of the river.⁷⁵ This 'intertextuality' combines 'textual and visual forms of communication [to] create a seamless narrative', in the same way that forensic anthropologists 'frequently present [photographs] [...] in court to support the evidence of a witness [...] as a way of telling and offer[ing] further suggestions.'⁷⁶ However, if, as Simon Taryn proposes, 'photography's ability to blur truth and fiction is one of its most compelling qualities,'⁷⁷ then it is at this intersection between the two that these memories, corrupted, unreliable, unavailable, yet nevertheless 'intensely retinal,'⁷⁸ become subjected to my fictional interpretation. Where photographs in forensic investigation work as 'exchange objects [...] [that] bear witness to brutal histories,'⁷⁹ this analogue photograph and its subsequent use as the source of this research, bears witness as a compelling and dynamic site of exchange, conjuring up the 'affective at a personal [...] level [...], literally and metaphorically mov[ing] the project [...] and [its potential visual configurations] into new dimensions.'⁸⁰ This object of exchange, (the analogue image) which sits between the site of familial and forensic discourses, and crosses generational boundaries, provides the anchor for this research both in its haptic

⁷⁴ **Glenn Porter and Michael Kennedy**, 'Photographic Truth and Evidence', *Australian Journal of Forensic Science*, Vol. 44, No. 2, June 2012, 183-192 (University of Sydney (Taylor & Francis): Richmond, Australia and London) p.187-188

⁷⁵ **Newman**, 2011, p. 103

⁷⁶ **Porter and Kennedy**, 2012, p. 187-188.

⁷⁷ **Taryn Simon**, *The Innocents* (Umbrage Editions: New York, 2003) p. 7

⁷⁸ **Nora**, 1984, p.11

⁷⁹ **Elizabeth Edwards**, 2015, p. 243

⁸⁰ *ibid*, p. 246

surface, its optic allusions and now, to add a further narrative, in this traumatic and latent history.

The site of memorial, then, as site of exchange, can 'recuperate alternative historical narratives [...] across space and time,'⁸¹ and like the bodily remains that have stratified the landscape, create the conditions for a new multi-layered dialogue with alternative photographic practices. Although 'disappearance' remains the condition of those bodies lost in the water, it is ironic that for forensic anthropologists the notion of disappearance cannot and does not exist: 'what exists are fragmented bodies, unpunished assassins and the brutal uncertainty of the living,'⁸² as the concept of disappearance 'generate[s] mythological paralysis and as such [can only be] opportune for the perpetrators.'⁸³ Forensic anthropologists, therefore, choose to 'materialize' and 'rescue and locate [...] fragments, however miniscule they may be,'⁸⁴ from the oblivion of myth and concealment, working with the notion of reappearance instead. In so doing, they transgress the 'boundaries between the living and the dead, between memory and history, to create 'noise' where there was only silence, and disinter that which was buried - literally and socially.'⁸⁵ By *re-exposing* this photograph to visual analysis then, as a source for disinterring the traumatic histories of the river, this research becomes 'about making things visible [...], but equally dedicated to the evocation of the invisible. [...] [as It] affirm[s] the close proximity of life and death, and attempt[s] against common sense, to use one to deny the finality of the other'.⁸⁶ The photographic source material, while depicting the river as a fragmented and incomplete utterance, straddles both, therefore, affirming one while denying the other, and exposing its materiality and surface to the vicissitudes of time and memory.

If as Weisman has pointed out, 'the bones of a skeleton are exposed to life in a similar way that photographic film is exposed to light [...] like a palimpsest or a photograph with multiple exposures,'⁸⁷ then this research looks to create palimpsests of the river in the

⁸¹ Edwards, 2015, p. 240

⁸² Huffschnid, 2015, p.199

⁸³ ibid

⁸⁴ Huffschnid, 2015, p.199-200

⁸⁵ ibid, p.199

⁸⁶ Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not – Photography & Remembrance* (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum and New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004) p. 96.

⁸⁷ Weisman, 2012, p. 20

light of these historical and personal narratives, as this analogue photograph is re-exposed to alternative stories. It is the liminal nature of this image then, on the threshold of being and becoming, that *speaks to me* through time, that *touches* me, that *affects* me, as it sits on the edge of existence/ extinction as an object, and portrays spaces at the subliminal borders of my memory; As a liminal and disturbing entity, therefore, the image and its (his) stories sit 'betwixt and between [...]', abstracted and faded, yet revealing hidden narratives on the threshold of presence and absence.⁸⁸ The subject matter and stories it purports to tell, sinking under the threshold of our perception, can only be revealed as small clues that allude to origin, process and place.⁸⁹ The added discourse of 'disappearance' subliminally hidden beneath the waters of the Paraná, means the forensic anthropologists look for answers *below the surface* of the river, while I look for answers on the surface of the photograph. The photographic DNA, and bodily DNA is transfigured from document to memorial, to a space witnessed (by my grandfather, by the disappeared and by me), and, adhering to the spirit of its medium and to its present condition is literally evaporating into thin air.

⁸⁸ **Victor Turner**, 'Liminality and Communitas', in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969), p. 125

⁸⁹ **Sub-liminal** refers to 'sub- below' and '*limen or limis*' meaning below the threshold, See Etymology online at: http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=subliminal [accessed 12/03/15]

The river flows, curiously still and empty, it flows with blood.

In its undercurrents an unsettling tranquility forebodes.

*It forbodes the forbidden stories of those who remain here, whose remains are here.
Forbidden life, they were drawn towards the triangular horizon, where oblivion awaited
them.*

The river flows, it flows with blood.

*They say it is a river full of iron, an iron curtain, an iron shackle to weight them down,
iron, one eye on their past, another on their future, but no one to keep an eye on them.*

The river flows, murky brown, eyes firmly shut, eye, I, ay!

1.4 UNCANNY DIALOGUES

James Elkins states that 'like the body, landscape is something we feel ourselves to be inside. It's our subject, but we're also part of it: we help make it; we live it.'⁹⁰ In extracting this photograph, I am re-living it and re-inhabiting it then, with a set of inherited memories. By using this as my source, the image becomes imbued with a 'multi-layered present-ness,' and as a 'stubborn survivor of death' forms the basis of a new articulation.⁹¹ Marianne Hirsch refers to inherited memories or 'post-memories, [...] as the [memories] that later generations or distant contemporary witnesses bear to the personal, collective and cultural trauma of others – to 'experiences' they 'remember' or know only by means of stories, images, and behaviours.'⁹² Here I apply it to the second hand memories I am exploring through the photographic image, memories I am aware of both in familial and national terms, but that I did not experience first-hand, except by proxy.

By forensically deconstructing the analogue photograph, however, and re-inhabiting its landscapes as an affective record of these generational dialogues, I am able to narrate a multitude of presents at the same time: the present-ness of the photographic object, the present-ness of the theoretical discussion around it and the present-ness of the artistic endeavour. Through this photograph, therefore, I construct a 'self-narrative' and in its appropriation, I look to a new audience outside the limitations of the family album (see figure 4), 'willing to hear and to understand [it] as [I] intend it.'⁹³ As Andreas Huyssen posits, we need memories and objects through which to tell our stories as witnesses, but also witness-others, or a new audience, in order to hear them. Without this dialogue the story cannot be articulated in the present.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ James Elkins, 'The Art Seminar' in *Landscape Theory* edited by Rachael Ziady de Lue and James Elkins (University College Cork, Routledge: New York and London, 2008) p. 88

⁹¹ *ibid*

⁹² Marianne Hirsch, 'Projected Memory, Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy' in *Acts of Memory, Cultural Recall in the Present*, edited by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer (University Press of New England: Hanover and London, 1999) p. 10. Hirsch applies the notion of Post Memory to the memory of children of Holocaust survivors, who have not experienced trauma first hand but whose lives are imbued with the memories of their predecessors. Marianne Hirsch, *Connective Histories in Vulnerable Times*, Presidential Address, 2014, PMLA 129.3 (Modern Languages Associations of America), p.339.

⁹³ Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995) p. 46.

⁹⁴ *ibid*

It moves from its past belonging in the private pages of the album, to the public space of inspection and re-contemplation in the research project, both as an object of print and as an object of thought. As an encounter with the landscape, the Paraná is 'rendered as a kind of cadaver laid out for the viewing pleasure of the explorer'⁹⁵, a 'surface against which the self poses itself, and a screen, [...] against which it projects its fears and desires'⁹⁶. These fears are bound up in the traumatic history of its past, yet in its desire to speak to a new audience, the photograph works as a tiny, portable screen on which to project the self. As it haunts the present in my mind, and becomes the landscape image through which this research is conducted in practice, the image of the river is reconfigured with a new gaze- *mine*, which longs to create a dialogue with it in a present imaginary, while the river pictured remains as yet unpolluted and unsullied by these later ecological and historical discourses; not yet contaminated by the political violence of the regime. Yet as it is exposed once more in a contemporary context as the source material for this research, it becomes imbued with this history, viewed as it is through the affective return of its future trauma.

In this way, the landscape is at once re-perceived, through the lens of the past and the scrutiny of the present, and a new engagement with its pictorial plane provokes a return to the Benjaminian 'optical unconscious'.⁹⁷ Just as the camera is able to 'come [...] into play, with all its resources for swooping and rising, disrupting and isolating, stretching and compressing [...] enlarging or reducing an object', so this photograph itself becomes the metaphorical screen or apparatus with which to stretch and disrupt, compress and sequence a new narrative space 'informed by the unconscious,' or in this case, the invisible histories of disappearance.⁹⁸ The photographed river can be made visible again, as 'the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be', and is brought back from the brink of its oncoming invisibility in the pages of the album to be laid out for public

⁹⁵ Kriel, 2004, p. 53

⁹⁶ *ibid*

⁹⁷ The *optical unconscious* is what **Walter Benjamin** terms the 'otherness' of the camera which makes visible that which the eye cannot see itself. As he explains, 'whereas it is a commonplace that, for example, we have some idea what is involved in the act of walking (if only in general terms), we have no idea at all what happens during the split second when a person actually takes a step [...] This is where the camera comes into play [...] It is through the camera that we first discover the optical unconscious.' **Walter Benjamin**, *Selected Writings*, 1938-1940, Volume 4, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Reproducibility' (Third Version), translated by Edmund Jephcott, et al., edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA and London, 2003) p. 266

⁹⁸ *ibid*, p.266

viewing once more.⁹⁹This invisibility is rescued through a re-engagement with its subject matter, which, though distant historically (in terms of the events that took place at the site of the river) and visually (the photograph was taken decades before the dictatorship years), envisions the Paraná in terms of its nearness, 'gain[ing] from its substance [that which] does not impair the distance it retains in its apparition.'¹⁰⁰ As a spectre of the past, it therefore still retains relevance today, as discourses of disappearance and reappearance continue to be debated as a result of the ongoing forensic investigations there. In this way, it becomes the object of a re-exhumation, its bones exposed: the chemical erasures giving away its time of death and the blunt instrument of its murder brought to light. The clues can be found on the surface of the image, inhabiting its corners, as evidence of a disappearing artifact, proof of death held within its frame; a 'gravestone in a field of gravestones'.¹⁰¹ This cadaver, this strange yet compelling photograph, is now open for thorough investigation, as the subject and surface can be dissected and reviewed.

⁹⁹ *ibid*, p. 272

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*,

¹⁰¹ **Martha Langford**, 2008, p.34

*The river is far from home, far from homely.
On the contrary, it is uncanny.
Far from my home now, from the homes of those whose bones lay bare,
and from any home,
as its homely borders fall off the edges of the print in small waterfall like tears.
And yet, like a homing pigeon, it recalls me to a home from home
in the uncanny landscapes of the past, a home-base
and a strange yet fitting homecoming.
I feel homesick, a nostalgia,
as the fading inks and fragile edges bring back all my fears of a return to home.*

As this landscape, therefore, is depicted through the lens of the past, it engages with notions of its own belonging: both in terms of its identity as a document of the history of the river, and as the backdrop to ‘a cross-generational exchange and cultural continuity’¹⁰² in its reference to place. Furthermore, the landscape is further fragmented and separated from its context by the *singular focus* I give this work: in choosing it, I am taking it away from its potential intended narrative in the album and throwing open these other latent stories, stories that trespass from the past to the present in entirely new ways. It is nevertheless, ‘tinted by nostalgia and shaped by our knowledge of subsequent events’ which satisfies our ‘immense need for a story [...] which, for lack of written documents [...] haunts each [photograph].’¹⁰³ In other words, this photograph holds the potential to depict and narrate more than the pictorial subject matter it portrays, as it conjures up a ‘protracted gaze and an extended experience, however short its component vignettes; it is itself a journey,’¹⁰⁴ and consequently, ‘dismantle[s] the workings of time.’¹⁰⁵ As Martha Langford affirms, ‘to enter the private photograph, even as a spectator, is to alter its meaning,’¹⁰⁶ so to use it for a research project implies saturating it with my own narratives, and giving it *agency* through an ‘oral- photographic [encounter].’¹⁰⁷ In the absence of a ‘pure past’ I can reactivate a ‘suspended conversation’ and ‘reawaken the actors.’¹⁰⁸ The photograph, then, can speak to me as part of this new narrative, as a new conversation in the making. On the one hand its context in the album, where it forms part of a ‘hybrid novel – a saga, a chronicle, a life story, an autobiography, a legend, a photo romance – all these things at once’ is severed;¹⁰⁹ on the other, by appropriating the image for this research project, I give voice to the object, re-narrating it and rescuing it from its potential oblivion within the pages of this familial narrative. It is nevertheless uncanny (in its original meaning, *unheimlich*, unhomely) as the pictorial plane provides a familiarity that is unfamiliar, near me, yet far

¹⁰² For sociologist **Richard Chalfen** in *Snapshot Versions of Life*, Bowling Green (OH: Bowling Green state University Popular Press, 1987), p.5, the family album is being usurped by what he terms a ‘Kodak culture’, saying that memory “is being aided and reorganized in new way’ as it helps to create a new kind of storytelling. **Martha Langford** reiterates this in *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2008). p.4

¹⁰³ **Martha Langford**, *Suspended Conversations, The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (McGill- Queen's University Press: Montreal & Kingston, London- Ithaca, 2008), p 5, 20

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*, 2008, p. 78

¹⁰⁵ **Langford**, 2008, p. 190

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*, p.36

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*, p. 20

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*,

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*, p. 20

from home, strange yet ordinary.¹¹⁰ If, as Susan Sontag has stated, ‘all memory is individual, un-reproducible – it dies with each person,’¹¹¹ then the uncanny memories trapped inside this photograph remain mute and un-reproducible. Yet it is the traumatic memories of the disappeared that I adopt ‘as experiences one might oneself have had [...] inscribing them into one’s own life story [...] by conceiving oneself as multiply interconnected with others of the same, of previous, and of subsequent generations, of the same [...] proximate or distant cultures.’¹¹² I was a child when the military junta was disappearing its victims, yet in my childish imagination I could never have conceived of these acts that were occurring around me, lost as they were to my playground memories and the adult politics of subterfuge. They live in me, though, through the sights and stories of later years, of previous generations, and find an outlet here at the site of this photographic encounter. In its framing, therefore, it allows for a ‘contemplation [...] (real and imagined) that neither erases nor cancels [the] site [...] of longing, but continuously revisits [it] in a moving present.’¹¹³ It is here, in this moving present that the site of convergence can be found, as my memories and experiences merge with the post memories of those whose recollections I inhabit through the image.

Where forensic anthropologists, as intermediaries and interpreters, ‘know how to listen to the dead [...] [how to] translate, read the [...] bones that speak of a shared humanity that was broken,’¹¹⁴ I become *the medium*, the intermediary, for this project, the interpreter of these spectres, and the agency I give this photograph (and others in the album) is therefore present as an ‘alternative form of action’ where that ‘agency is entirely denied the disappeared.’¹¹⁵ As Buchli and Lucas have stated, ‘subaltern and ‘silent’ [...] abject voices are disturbing indicators of the contradictions and painful effects of twentieth-century experience [in which] [...] [some] voices are silenced and do not speak, or more

¹¹⁰ **Sigmund Freud's** essay ‘The Uncanny’ in the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1955), p.340.

¹¹¹ **Susan Sontag**, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Penguin Books: London, 2003), p. 76

¹¹² **Marianne Hirsch**, ‘Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy’, *Acts of Memory, Cultural Recall in the Present*, edited by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer (University Press of New England: Hanover and London, 1999) pp. 8-9

¹¹³ **Martha Langford**, (2008) p. 61. Langford contradicts this idea of nostalgia, by saying that it is in the very ‘storytelling of an album [that] lived experience’, resides and closes this gap between the spectator and the photographs.

¹¹⁴ **Anne Hufschmid**, 2015 p. 200

¹¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 242

accurately, are not able to be heard.¹¹⁶ In this silence then I look to give voice to these dialogues as a trans-generational witness to past traumatic events. Where the photograph cannot speak for itself, the agency I give it in this research, like the bones of forensic investigation, speak through me as *'prosopopeia'*.¹¹⁷ As Weisman explains, 'the trope of prosopopeia' refers to the 'practice and skill of making an argument [...] [where] objects address the forum. Because they do not speak for themselves, there is a need for translation, mediation or interpretation [...] in which a speaker artificially endows inanimate objects with a voice.'¹¹⁸ This image, as all images, which 'struggle[s] to "give voice" [...] because seeing is a passive activity whereas saying is active',¹¹⁹ through my intervention, therefore, is endowed with an agency of its own: 'when the object of analysis lies outside the field of vision, erased from the official record [...] one must employ "radical new methods of seeing" such as "focusing on personal memories [...] on the unconscious aspects of looking.'¹²⁰ By re-contextualising the image in the light of this research and imbuing it with a history of disappearance (and the memory of my grandfather), the photographic material can recall and address these memories as a 'trans generational haunting,' where the 'ghosts [or the haunted subjects are given] an agency in that silence.'¹²¹ The traumatic memories that are passed down from one generation to another as events which cannot be voiced by those who witnessed them (either because they are no longer alive or too traumatised to do so), can, therefore, be heard through the voice, post-memory and actions of those who remain, often, as Brian Massumi affirms, articulated through affective means, such as images, performances, artworks¹²². Here then the affective engagement with the photographic material means that the post-memory of the disappeared can be articulated through a new looking at this analogue image, and re-visualised through a new engagement with print methods to revive it.

¹¹⁶ **Victor Buchli and Gavin Lucas** (eds.), *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past* (Routledge: London/ New York, 2011) p. 14

¹¹⁷ **Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weisman**, *Mengele's Skull, The Advent of a Forensic Aesthetic* (Frankfurt am Main and Berlin, Sternberg Press/Portikus, 2012) p. 28

¹¹⁸ **Eyal Weisman**, 2012, p.28

¹¹⁹ **Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas** (eds.), *The Image and the Witness, Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture* (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2007) p. 7

¹²⁰ **Grace M. Cho**, 'Voices from the Teum', *The Affective Turn, Theorizing the Social* edited by Patricia Ticineto Clough with Jean Halley (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007) p. 156

¹²¹ *ibid* 157-158, 165; See also **Cathy Caruth**, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1996

¹²² **Brian Massumi**, in his *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Duke University Press: Durham, NC, 2002)

As Grace Cho states, 'The paradox of trauma is that the closest encounter with it often results in a "belatedness" of seeing or in not seeing at all, so that the imperative of witnessing is passed along to another as trauma's legacy.'¹²³ As an agent of a new narrative, therefore, I encounter the river and its history three decades later, yet through this research project, this traumatic legacy is brought to the fore. If, as Cho goes on to discuss, 'a ghost can express itself in the form of a voice that comes through the wound [...] disembodied, but one that has witnessed something that the hearer has not,' then, the ghost fragments, traces left on the corrupted surface of the image as disembodied afterlives, can be 'heard' through their material presence, even though absence remains their visual and political condition.¹²⁴ The official record of disappearances in Argentina has changed over the decades, with political discourses of appearance as a result of forensic discoveries and legal cases brought before the courts, so that objects, bones, DNA results and photographs of the missing have become communicative interfaces, or prosopopeia in the forum of the trials against the military junta.¹²⁵ Weizman refers to the link between the disappeared and forensic anthropology when he states that 'the agency of the missing person and the practice of forensics [...] are intimately connected [...] it is in the gestures, techniques, and turns of demonstration, whether poetic, dramatic or narrative, that a forensic aesthetic can make things appear in the world.'¹²⁶ In this research then, the gestural, the technical and the demonstrative are all used to express this reappearance on the surface of the print, as new witnesses and agents of a contemporary conversation with these traumatic histories. According to Clyde Snow bones and traces of DNA 'make good witnesses [...] although they speak softly, they

¹²³ Cho, 2007, p. 165

¹²⁴ Marco Somigliana- Anthropologist at EAAF: 'La Reconstrucción contra la Ausencia' in *Memory under Construction*, Marcelo Brodsky (ed.) (Buenos Aires, Editorial, 2005) : '
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/mar/24/argentina.genetics>> [accessed 21/04/15].

¹²⁶ Weizman, 2013, p. 63-65; See also Richard Gott, 'Architects of the new Argentina', *The Guardian*, 2 April 2008 [online]<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/02/argentina->> [accessed 30/03/15]. Silvia R. Tandecriarz- 'Mnemonic Hauntings: Photography as Art of the Missing, *Social Justice*, June 22, 2006- Access my library
<<http://www.accessmylibrary.com/article-1G1-155751147/mnemonic-hauntings-photography-art.html->> [accessed 20/04/10]; Alexandra Ulmer- 'Argentina identifies Junta victims', *Reuters*, 28th July 2010 [online] <<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE66S00Z20100729>> [accessed 13/08/15]: a family member who was finally able to bury his brother says: Their executioners did not think bones would talk thirty four years later [...] Disappearance is worse than death for family members [...] but now I'm relieved we have found him'; Nafeesa Syeed- Lab IDs Argentine 'Dirty War' victims by DNA, *Associated Press*, *Newsvine.com* [online] <http://www.newsvine.com/_news/2009/12/26/3680683-va-lab-ids-argentine-dirty-war-victims-by-dna?threadId=754021> [accessed 21/03/14]; Bill Cormier- 'New DNA technology to identify Argentina's disappeared, *The Guardian*, 24 March 2008 [online] <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/mar/24/argentina.genetics>> [accessed 21/04/15].

never lie and they never forget', which means that their 'prosopopeia is more than the typical gesture of anthropomorphism [...] This act of personification - the one that treats inanimate things as if they were human – also renders them more than human. Humans, after all, do forget and they do lie.'¹²⁷ Despite the photographic content, which 'carries absence of moments, places and people gone or unknown,' I am bringing back, therefore, a kind of softly spoken presence from a history of forgetting, and a history of lying, by exposing this photographic source imagery to a trans-generational mourning.¹²⁸ This mourning is three-fold as the photograph reflects a generation before the existence of my family, before the disappearances occurred, and before the narratives I scaffold it with could be articulated around it. This portable monument, imbued with its prosopopeic agency, reveals the forensic aesthetic of the research, reappearing in the world only to mourn the loss of its own his-tory.

Disembodied, ripped from the pages of its home in the album, therefore, the photograph loses its initial mnemonic purpose, to re-collect the past, 'giv[ing] material form to the ancient art of memory [...] remembering by visual association,'¹²⁹ and requires a 'dual role' of the viewer, as 'teller and listener.'¹³⁰ Here, any memories associated with the image, any mnemonic purpose it might have had in the album, once decontextualized from the possibility of an originary narrative, my grandfather's narrative, can only be prescribed by my interventions into it. Its codes of reference disappear and only I can reactivate its story – *as teller and listener* – with the photograph articulating its dialogue through me. The image can then *enact* a new narrative through a material encounter, and give voice to a series of photographic objects and theoretical discourses that take their form from the dialogue it has founded.¹³¹ Freed from the constraints of the album, the site of longing is transposed onto the image itself. No longer carrying its explicit cartographic references and identification markers, its unhomely or uncanny nature displaces it from its site of belonging, to become a landscape 'loud with dialogues [and

¹²⁷ Eyal Weizman, 2012, p. 66

¹²⁸ *ibid*

¹²⁹ *ibid*

¹³⁰ *ibid*, p. 190

¹³¹ *Enact and enactment* are what I term the physical reworking of the printed photographic source material through an encounter both at the site of the Paraná and in the print room where this source material can be re-presented, reproduced. See **Kathy Kubicki**, Reinventing History: Warren Neidich, Photography, Re-enactment, and Contemporary Event Culture, *Visual Resources, An International Journal of Documentation*, Volume 26, No. 2, June 2010

not simply] the passive backdrop to human theatre.¹³² The visual conversation I imagine, penetrates the silence and stillness of the photograph, locating the river, the place my grandfather took a photograph of, as the principle site of my research practice and theoretical discussion. As I inherit this post memory of the image, therefore, as the inheritance of past events or experiences not belonging to me, this in turn carries an 'obligation to continue that process of [remembering by] working through or over the event'¹³³, and invites me to speculate on a conversation that is open ended, 'and is not yet a process of reply'.¹³⁴ My own gaze upon it then, 'has no fixed duration', while the moment captured in the image [...] is located in an ever receding 'then'.¹³⁵ As a poignant reminder of a place that has been subjected to constant and traumatic interference over the years, the photograph 'bears witness to the enigmatic relation between death and survival, loss and life, destruction and preservation, mourning and memory [...] [while] also tell[ing] us that what dies, is lost, and mourned within the image – even as it survives, lives on, and struggles to exist – is the image itself.'¹³⁶ As a fragment of the past, 'incomplete, always imperfect'¹³⁷ it can nevertheless still act as '[my] guide to situating [myself] in a landscape of time,¹³⁸ as a moving elegy to my grandfather and his witnessing of a place tainted by its much later history of disappearance; an elegy that motivates: 'We are moved by things. And in being moved, we make things.'¹³⁹ The Paraná depicted then, converges with the Paraná I depict: as past and present collide in a *new gaze*, a *new home* can be found in the silent encounter, its empty shell now filled with new particles that create the site of exchange for another story, that, when touched, make noise. These particles can be found in the translations of the image into digital and etched fragments, and like the echoes in the shell, use their material alterations to speak of the past, while living on as afterlives in a new configuration in the present. These material translations form the discussion of my following chapter, as the source

¹³² *ibid*, p. 54

¹³³ **Joan Gibbons**, *Contemporary Art and Memory, Images of Recollection and Remembrance* (I.B. Taurus: London and New York, 2007) p. 73

¹³⁴ *ibid*

¹³⁵ **Peter Wollen**, 'Fire and Ice' in *The Photography Reader*, edited by Liz Well, (London and New York,: Routledge, 2003) p. 76

¹³⁶ **Rose Macaulay** in *Pleasure of Ruins* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1953) p. 454-55

¹³⁷ **Rebecca Solnit**, 'The Ruins of Memory,' in *Storming the Gates of Paradise* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007, p. 351

¹³⁸ *ibid*

¹³⁹ **Sara Ahmed**, in 'Happy Objects', *The Affect Theory Reader* edited by Melissa Gregg, Gregory J. Seigworth (Duke University Press: Durham, NC, 2010) p. 33

photograph becomes the matrix on which to base a series of further interventions of the landscape, and bring to light the territories of practice of this research.



Figure 6, Henry Richard Ahrens, *Self-Portrait in the Paraná Delta*,
Analogue silver print from photographic album,
c. 1930, 3.5 cm (h) x 8 cm (w)

CHAPTER TWO

TERRITORIES OF PRACTICE

2.1 AURATIC TRANSLATIONS

*Taking the train from Buenos Aires, the station is throbbing with people. I get on the train and I remember I am in Argentina, looking out the window to confirm this realization. The landscape changes gradually from high rises, run down shantytowns, to open stretches of flatlands. The air is stifling, and though the air conditioning is on, I feel sticky and hot. I have my bag at my feet, and all my photo-etching materials weigh it down. I get to the last stop, Tigre and get out to find a storm brewing. The raindrops are bigger here. They splash against me as the storm takes hold. It's a summer shower, and thunder and lightning are not far behind. My first view of the Paraná delta is of choppy waves on the river, driving rain, grey and heavy clouds that oppress. I grab my things and make my way to the quay where a boat is waiting for me to take me to the island. A cheery local helps me into the boat and it takes off noisily down the river to my isolated destination. I have Haroldo Conti's novel, *Southeaster* to keep me company over the next few weeks. Novelist of the river is how he is referred to. He disappeared in 1976 at the start of the dictatorship, and his body has never been found. His book, however, is a constant reminder of what lies ahead. 'The river', he writes, 'has its ways. When you least expect it, it remembers you, or seems to.'¹⁴⁰ I am beginning to remember too.*

'To the printmaker, the point-by-point resemblance between the final print and the thing represented was not essential. Technologically – at least until photography came along – a high level of resemblance was impossible, anyway'.¹⁴¹ In the history of printmaking, the precise nature of the subject of the print was less important than the fact that it could be reproduced cheaply and easily for a wider audience. This meant that prints were 'suggestive and schematic, rather than optically precise [...] [which] call[ed] for a temporary suspension of credulity'.¹⁴² As Crawford suggests, it was not until the invention of photography that optical precision was considered important. However, the historical differences between the two mediums lie in this distinction, as the photograph

¹⁴⁰ **Haroldo Conti**, *Southeaster*, translated from the Spanish by Jon Lindsay Miles (Los Angeles; High Wiccombe: And Other Stories, 2015) p. 67. Conti owned would often stay on the river where he owned a house and a boat. He has always been described as 'el novelista del río', novelist of the river. See <http://conti.derhuman.jus.gov.ar/> >[accessed on 12/03/16]

¹⁴¹ **William Crawford**, *The Keepers of Light: A History and Working Guide to Early Photographic Processes*, (Morgan & Morgan, 1979) p. 1.

¹⁴² *ibid*

acquired what David Levi-Strauss has termed 'the aura of believability' in its early history, 'materializ[ing] seeing in a new way.'¹⁴³ If 'photographic and photomechanical prints have different characteristic "looks" [however], as objects themselves and thus different ways of communicating information'¹⁴⁴, what happens in the interstices between the two in the photo etch and transfer print of contemporary practice? As Kevin Haas has stated, digital photographs are 'unable to reveal the craft of their making'¹⁴⁵, while prints distinguish themselves because of their visibly hand crafted feel. Crossover techniques, however, form the basis of my research, as the process and the subject matter of the printed object converge in a new material presence, 'bring[ing] both the traditional and contemporary expressions of print together', and following a trend that [...] [can be seen] more and more among [...] printmaking colleagues'¹⁴⁶. Loss of this 'aura of believability' in digital photography and the networked image, means that numerous ruptures have occurred in the theorization of photographic processes as the digital image 'tears apart the net of semiotic codes, modes of display, and patterns of spectatorship in modern visual culture [while] at the same time, weav[ing] this net even stronger'.¹⁴⁷ The printed object then can take on many forms, and is now no longer distinguished by a single medium, in as much as it can exist within the space of an exhibition or a book, or online as imagery that is suggestive of place, person or thing without the need to define its medium specificity or its location. This has occurred as the photograph and the photomechanical print have begun to converge once more in contemporary concepts of the expanded field, with digital practices overlapping the two. By using an early analogue photograph as the origin for my written and practical experiments, I am looking to question this intersection between a chemical product of its time and how it can unlock and form the basis of a contemporary print dialogue within these overlapping processes.

¹⁴³ David Levi-Strauss, *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics* (New York: Aperture, 2003) p.71-

¹⁴⁴ Crawford, 1979, p. 5; The different crafts of printmaking and photography contribute to their different 'looks' as printmaking traditionally has favoured the haptic surface and photography the optic.

¹⁴⁵ Kevin Haas in his 'Convergent theories: Printmaking, Photography and Digital Media', session proposal for CAA Annual Conference, Boston, February 22-25, (2006) <www.accumulated.org/special_projects/CAA2006.html> [accessed 10/10/14] discusses the way printmaking and photography shared an early history as the 'first photographs were made by printing metal plates etched with images captured by light', p. 1. Yet despite this, Haas goes on to argue that there are continued divisions in 'institutional structures [...] where photographs and works on paper such as drawings and prints, are dealt with by different departments within the museum or within academia [although] in actuality, both mediums have shared a struggle to be viewed as equal to other established and accepted forms of art.'

¹⁴⁶ ibid

¹⁴⁷ Peter Wollen, 'Fire and Ice', *The Photography Reader*, edited by Liz Wells, (London: Routledge, 2003) p. 241;

In order to understand how this works in practice, I will describe the processes of conversion in some detail here. These translations from medium to material, analogue to digital and photo-etch, expose an array of losses and gains in the printed outcomes that result from this series of mediated encounters.

In order to tease out the four stages of translation required to achieve a final printed outcome, I will refer to the three stages of liminality as detailed by the ethnologist Arnold van Gennep in 1909, and in turn, the British anthropologist Victor Turner, which mirror the ideas of mediation I work with in this practical research, while adding a fourth of my own. Turner, took up Gennep's notions of liminality by identifying that 'all rites of passage or "transition" are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or limen, signifying "threshold" in Latin) and aggregation [or incorporation]':

The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a "state"), or from both. During the intervening "liminal" period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the "passenger") are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated.¹⁴⁸

Although these terms were used to describe the transitional ritual phases an individual subject endures in the anthropology of their lives and communities, they can nevertheless be applied to the territories of practice of the photo-etching and transfer process I use in this research, as notions of separation, margin or liminality, and aggregation or incorporation, serve to distinguish and define the theoretical translations between ideas and material surfaces in the digital conversions, transformations in situ and enactments, as I call them, in the print room. The fourth term I will use for a fourth

¹⁴⁸ Turner, 1969, p. 94

stage, between the liminal phase and incorporation is, what Marcel Duchamp termed the 'infra-mince', or the 'pellicle-like interface at which signification is mediated.'¹⁴⁹ This stage will detail the translation from latent image to inked surface and paper substrate of the printing process, where the plate and hand, or plate and paper touch to create a momentary 'infra-mince', or infra-thin skin on the surface of the plate.¹⁵⁰

Step One: Separation

Initially, the material surface of the analogue photograph provides the first practical transformation: unstuck from the family album, it is scanned into the computer, the surface of the photograph touching the surface of the scanner screen, where, through the action of light sensors, it is converted into a digital file (see figure 7). Here it becomes a de-materialized object, dislocated and separated from its analogue matrix, as the image disappears into binary code, and is relocated in the spaces of the virtual. This image file then, as Boris Groys suggests, 'is invisible. Only the heroes of the movie Matrix could see the image files, the digital code as such.'¹⁵¹ The analogy is, however, pertinent in this case, as *a matrix does exist*, not as an image file itself, but, as a receiver or container, ready for this coded information to be transferred onto its metal surface: the photo-etching plate.¹⁵² These plates I use are made of aluminium or steel, and are coated with a photo-sensitive liquid polymer that, once exposed to the sunlight, a UV source or an exposure unit, engrave the photographic image on the surface of the plate, washing off the liquid emulsion to leave the areas of the plate that were exposed to light

¹⁴⁹ **Susan Lawson** in Joan Gibbons, 'Traces: Memory and Indexicality', in *Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance* (London & New York: IB Taurus, 2009) p. 32; Duchamp suggested the infra-mince was undefinable except through examples, such as the warmth left on a chair once someone has moved from it.

¹⁵⁰ **Thierry Davila's**, *De L'infra-mince, Breve Histoire de L'Imperceptible, de Marcel Duchamp à Nos Jours* (Paris: Éditions du Regard, 2010)

¹⁵¹ **Boris Groys**, 'From Image to Image File – and Back: Art in the Age of Digitalization', *Art Power* (MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 2008) p.91

¹⁵² **McClain's Printmaking Supplies**, *Basic Instructions for Printmaking with Solar Plates* (King City, OR, USA), 2014, <<http://www.imcclains.com/productinfo/documents/BasicInstructionsforPrintmakingwithSolarplates.pdf>> [accessed 10/ 09/ 14]; See also *Printmaking Plates, Film, and Chemistry* (Takash Press Corporation, 2014) <<http://www.takashpress.com/access/plates.htm>> [accessed 21/03/14] Also **Dan Welden's** Solarplate Photopolymer Printing, Nontoxicprint, Nontoxic Printmaking, Safe Painting and Printed Art <<http://www.nontoxicprint.com/solarplate.htm>> [accessed 21/09/14]; **Barbara Maloney's** Photo Intaglio- an overview in *Alternative Photography*, 2014 <<http://www.alternativephotography.com/wp/processes/photogravure/photo-intaglio-an-overview>> [accessed 30/ 09/14]; For image transfer techniques, see **Rebecca Modrak with Bill Anthes' Reframing Photography, Theory and Practice** (London: Routledge, 2014) <<http://www.reframingphotography.com/content/image-transfer-rubbing-techniques>> [accessed 20/09/14]

etched with the image. This matrix therefore, will eventually make the invisible file visible once more, as the image is etched onto its metal surface and is exposed and developed in the acid waters of the Paraná, inked up by hand, and printed under the weight of the rollers on a printing press.¹⁵³

As its etymology suggests, however, the matrix (mother, womb, origin) births a new version of the image from an initial, technological site of exchange (and separation), turning the materiality of the analogue photograph into a series of digitally coded versions that can produce a number of original prints.¹⁵⁴ In order to produce the image that will be etched, a second transformation is required, however, through the photocopy machine, which fragments and enlarges the image, to convert it into an acetate positive for transfer or etching onto the metal matrix (see figures 9 and 10). I am interested in these conversions that employ the opposite process to the one used to print the original photograph: where the obscure chambers of the film camera and the darkroom are used to reveal the contents of the image with slivers of light, here the print room is in permanent light and the image is formed in the hidden chambers of the photocopy machine and under the shadows of the blankets of the press. It can become, in this way, a new object, less attached to and separated from its original form, with a new history imbued in it through the making process. There is an investment in the physical engagement with the material, as I crop, cut, photocopy, scan, while the digital provides the initial site of translation; this first step towards the immateriality of the digital version is akin to the first step in a rite of passage, as described by Turner. Here the subject is detached from its 'fixed point [and] [...] set of cultural conditions', to become a 'tabula rasa, a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group', or in this case, the new information of this research, that will be inscribed on the metal photo-etching plate. Here the analogue image, then, sits at the liminal edges of its existence.¹⁵⁵ These new versions I am creating, speak of the phoenix, but with new feathers.

¹⁵³ A matrix is described as 'an object upon which a design has been formed and which is then used to make an impression on a piece of paper, thus creating a print. A wood block, metal plate or lithographic stone can be used as a matrix.' The Philadelphia Print Shop, Ltd., Reference, Dictionary of Printmaking Terms [online] at: <<http://www.philaprintshop.com/diction.html#M>> [accessed 12/01/16]

¹⁵⁴ *Matrix*, from 'mater', or 'mother, the womb, the origin' - See Etymology online <<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=matrix>> [accessed 12/03/16]

¹⁵⁵ Turner, 1969, p. 94-113

The photo-etched matrix, then, as receiver and container, can in this way become the new site of origin, site of *reterritorialization*, as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have termed it¹⁵⁶. I apply the term here not to a philosophical critique of capital and territory, but as a metaphor for an anthropological use of the term, where '[it is] understood as a proliferation of translocalized cultural experiences [...] [which] imply the growing presence of social forms [that] go beyond the limits of a specified territory, [...] generat[ing] closeness in distance, and [...] a relative distancing from what is close.'¹⁵⁷ The transformation to a digital file, and later, to a photo-etched print, means that the source material can go beyond the limits of its specified territory to generate this oscillation between closeness and distance, while proliferating new cultural experiences through the print process. 'Deterritorializ[ed therefore] [...] and remov[ed] from its site of [origin]' in the pages of the album and the surface of the analogue, these new print translations can find their own 'auratic authenticity'¹⁵⁸, as 'nothing has more aura than the Invisible [made visible].'¹⁵⁹ As Boris Groys explains:

The fate of [...] contemporary art can by no means be reduced to the "loss of the aura". Rather [it] enacts a complex play of removing from sites and placing in (new) sites, of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, of removing aura and restoring aura.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated from the French by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); and Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). They apply the term to a critique of the capitalist model.

¹⁵⁷ Gil Manuel Hernandez I Martí, *The Deterritorialization of Cultural Heritage in a Globalized Modernity*, University of Valencia [online] at: <http://lull.cat/IMAGES_175/transfer01-foc04.pdf> [accessed on 12/02/16]

¹⁵⁸ Walter Benjamin first used the term 'aura' to describe 'the unique appartition of [an object] at] a distance, however near it may be [...]', explaining that 'even the most perfect reproduction [lacks] the here and now of the work of art- its unique existence' in his seminal text, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility.' (Third Version) in Eiland, H & Jennings, MW (eds.) *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings vol.4 1938-1940* (Mass: Belknap Press, 2003). With new technological advances in the digital and networked image online, notions of reproducibility and aura have resurfaced.

¹⁵⁹ Groys, 2008, p.86;

¹⁶⁰ Groys, 2008, p. 71

Here, while displacing the 'aura' of the analogue photograph through reproduction, fragmentation and mediation, and separating it from its analogue template, I imbue the new original with its own 'aura' by reconfiguring and reterritorializing it on the surface of the photo-etched matrix. It can, in this way, 'enact the play' of removing information from one surface and placing it onto another physical site, thus restoring aura in a permanent oscillation of terms. This print matrix then literally brings the photographic *to the surface*, while at the same time drawing our attention to a new territory for the image to inhabit, at a distance from its origins, yet closer to the contemporary expression of a 'decoded site' that exists in this deterritorializ[ed] encounter [with] place.¹⁶¹ It is at this stage that the liminal or marginal phase of the making process can begin.

¹⁶¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) p. 224

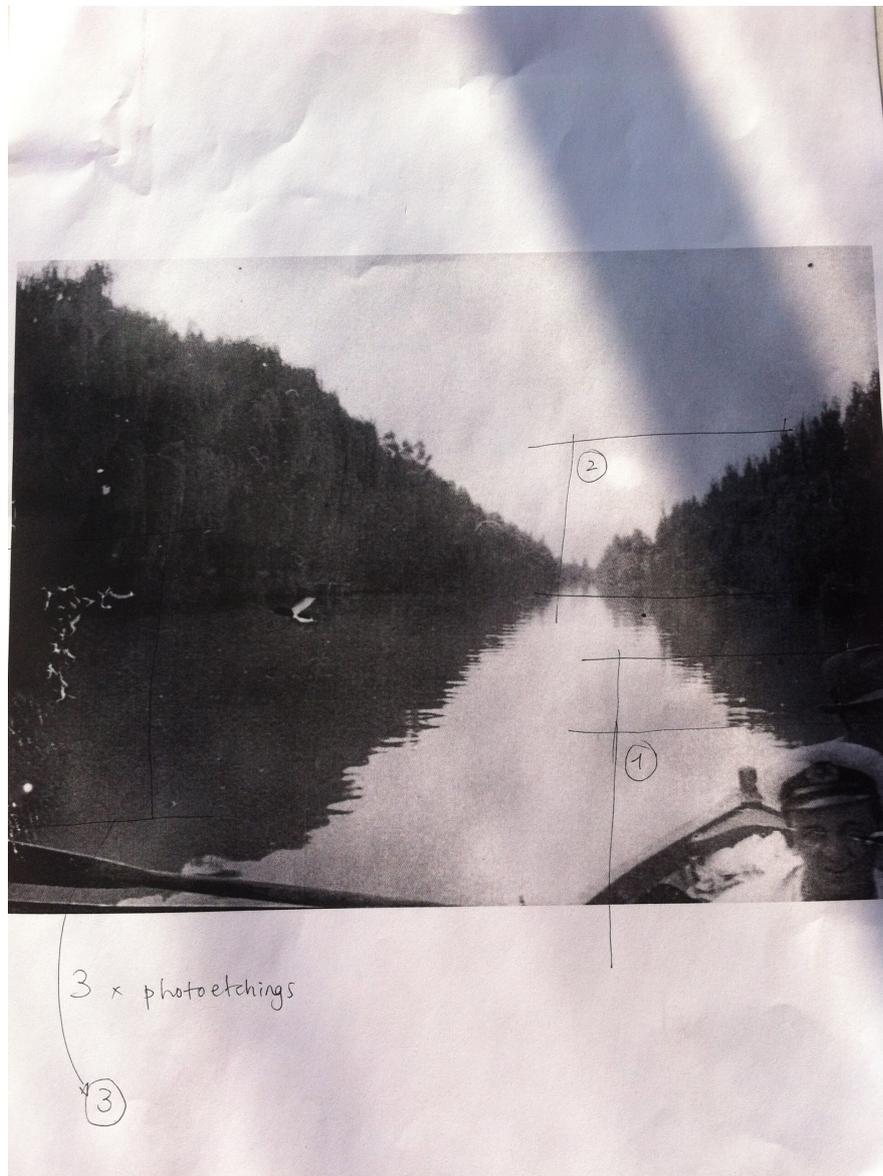


Figure 7, Victoria Ahrens, Photocopy in large scale of Henry Richard Ahrens' analogue silver print 'Hats on the Paraná', Fragmenting the image for photo etchings, 2014

2.2 LIMINAL CORPOREITY

The cabin is rudimentary, made of wooden slats, on stilts, as most of the houses are along the river; its architecture a reaction to the floods that often bring water up from the river banks into the green undergrowth. Moths, mosquitos and spiders crawl up the walls at night and the air stultifies. Outside the sound of the cicadas drones on, while dogs bark in the distance. Here I prepare my plates for the next day's work. I sit on the small balcony and read Conti's book. As the sun comes up I take the plates, the positives, gloves, weights, clips, brush and jars with me down to the riverbanks. I take the boat out, and row some way down the river to a deserted spot where a small inlet exposes a sandbank. Here I begin my work, with Conti's words in my head: 'Beyond the wall of green, out towards this River [...] which the folk here call the open sea, they heard the water murmur as it rolled tirelessly across the sandbank.'¹⁶² My plate in hand, positive clipped to the surface, I place it in the sun, timing the exposure under its scorching rays. Once the exposure has taken place, a ghost or latent image appears, barely perceptible, as I place the plate into the water, delicately brushing the surface free of the light sensitive emulsion. There it is, I can feel it, but hardly see it. As I dry the plate I feel the fissures and troughs on the surface, like braille, I read the latent image.

The site of reterritorialization is however, not merely a technological one, but an actual site of translation on the waters of the River Paraná. The copy as origin then, takes its place as the first site of dislocation and reterritorialization, but is given a *new territory of practice* at the site of its original pictorial terrain, the river itself. Here, the translations and convergences of the digital and photomechanical processes can be *relocated* to the site of its exposure and development in situ.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Conti, p.12

¹⁶³ This word 'in-situ' refers to an object or work of art that has been left in 'its original place' according to *the Online Etymological Dictionary*, from the Latin, *situs* (position or situation), 'in position': <<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=in+situ>> [accessed 12/04/16]. Here the photographic imagery is therefore, being created 'in its place of origin', on the river Paraná.

Step Two: Marginal or Liminal period

Mahesh Sharma has described this phase as ‘characterized by ambiguity, openness and indeterminacy. One’s sense of identity dissolves to some extent bringing about disorientation. It is a period of transition during which the normal limits of thought [...] are relaxed, opening the way for something new. It may be a land of recognition for someone, at the same time it may be a land of oblivion for the others.’¹⁶⁴ Where an individual is taken through a transformative rite of passage that will determine their ‘essence’ in a moment which is ‘in and out of time’, so it is at the site of the river Paraná that this research finds its essence, in the place of recognition and oblivion.¹⁶⁵ Once the images have been fragmented and reconstructed as positives through the scanner, computer and photocopy machine, and before the ink droplets can be transferred onto the paper substrate through the press or plotter, they need to be transposed onto the metal photo-etching plate through a process of light and water (see figures 14 and 15). It is this phase, the liminal phase that brings the most important convergences of historical and personal narrative together: the site of the river is where subject, material and process merge. Furthermore, the auratic translations are set in motion at this site, through the latent and mostly invisible traces and fragments left on the plate from the chemical (and alchemical) displacements of water, silt and sand, where it is left to form in the blur of the murky, brown river water. In taking the plates, the positives, my camera, a video recorder, ink and bits of cloth to the banks of the Paraná, the transformation and reterritorialization of the imagery can begin, in the very place, the source, of the initial pictorial rendition. This siting of the material translation on the surface of the photo-etching plate ‘reveals’, in its Spanish translation ‘*revelar*’ (meaning both clarifying and developing) the role the river plays in understanding the cyclical nature of this research.¹⁶⁶ As the positives touch the plate and are converted with the help of sunlight into latent images on its surface, the waters of the river become its developing fluid¹⁶⁷. Here a moment of entropy intrudes, as the accidents or traces of the water are left to act on the development of the image, while devolving a certain agency to the river.¹⁶⁸ This

¹⁶⁴ Sharma, 2013, p.111

¹⁶⁵ Turner, 1969, p. 126

¹⁶⁶ **Revelar** in Spanish translates as both to reveal but also to develop. Here both are pertinent as the process of immersing the plates in the waters of the river reveal and develop the image. See <http://www.spanishdict.com/translate/revelar> [accessed 21/02/16]. See also Appendix 1 Glossary of terms

¹⁶⁷ The photo-etching plates and transfer print methods I employ work with water and light to expose and develop the image.

¹⁶⁸ See **Patricia Ticineto Clough’s** introduction to *The Affective Turn, Theorizing the Social* edited by Patricia Ticineto Clough with Jean Halley (Duke University Press: Durham and London, 2007) p. 17 for this description of entropy; See also **Marguerite Feitlowitz, A Lexicon of Terror, Argentina and the Legacies of Torture** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) and **Jorgelina Corbatta’s Narratives of the Dirty War in**

intervention of water in the process means that certain losses and gains can be spotted on the surface of the plate, certain ambiguities and indeterminacies. These suggestive blurs leave their mark, as the liminal corporeity of the water interrupts the exposure and fixes the image. In its unpredictability, the smallest change in light or density of the water mean that the plates could easily be over or under exposed, leaving ambiguous and barely visible images at times, even at the point of printing. It is no small irony that this difficult rendering process, with all its pictorial implications, its meticulous and forensic appropriation of material practices, acknowledges similar repercussions in the search for the disappeared: as 'forensic anthropology, like every other empirical science, is a matter of probability [...] the predicament that characterizes the witness, [...] (faulty memory and ambiguity) [...] now appears as the state of the material object as well.'¹⁶⁹ The liminality of those bodies lost to history in this watery terrain then, blurs the conditions of life and death in this site of translation and reterritorialization, as, with no proof of disappearance, no material corpus found in these distant waters as yet, their forensic traces are presumed to exist, providing a potential, yet latent, corporeity in the face of their disappearance. If entropy can also mean a "turning towards" or "transformation" in its Greek etymology, then I am turning towards the landscape as an agent of transformation, as a space of liminal transition, to turn the surface of the plate into the site of potential reappearance. As Giuliana Bruno has suggested, the surface is 'understood as the [place for] material [...] relations between subjects and [...] objects [...] viewed as the site of mediation', so it is on the surface of these plates that the convergence of subject, pictorial plane, and materiality can occur, creating this new entropic 'ruination,' as I mediate these concerns by hand, immersing the plate in the river water.¹⁷⁰ This displacement of the 'original' source material then, the auratic translation, becomes the material at source, the process itself, a disorder of codes and fragments that create their own order, their own troughs and fissures, etched across the photo-etching plate. Just as the liminal self 'passes through a cultural realm that has [...] few attributes of the past and [of the] coming' [...] [while being] structurally, if not physically 'invisible'¹⁷¹, then, it could be said that this phase in the making of the plates, reveals a translation that at the same time eludes 'optical truth', as the matrix is etched with the ambiguous, the invisible and the accidental, the marks and traces of the river itself. In its lack of optical clarity then, it mimics the blurred and competing discourses of political disaccord, as notions of remembering and forgetting have been constantly renegotiated

Argentina (Corregidor: Buenos Aires, 1999) for further descriptions of the Dirty War years (1976-1983) in Argentina.

¹⁶⁹ Eyal Weisman, 2012, p.22

¹⁷⁰ Bruno, 2014, p.18

since the dictatorship years in Argentina.¹⁷² The entropic disorder of this translation then, echoes the ‘turbulence or disorder in [the] closed system’ of Argentina’s military junta, who made it impossible to predict who would be disappeared next¹⁷³. Where the bodies of those disappeared remain ‘non-identifi[able] [then] [...] the missing person [begins] to possess a sort of ghostly agency,’¹⁷⁴ which is translated onto the plates through the process of full immersion and dispersal in the waters of the river, and could still be said to reside microscopically, in the traces etched onto the surface of the plate. These traces mark the image, mark the rite of passage of this research, so-to-speak, and reterritorialize these traumatic narratives to the site of disappearance in the waters of the Paraná. The river becomes, therefore, the ultimate site of auratic translation, potential location of DNA traces, and sight of a new kind of permanence on the etched surface of a metal plate, ready for printing and distribution in another location altogether. Each plate then, carries the potential trace of the disappeared, a liminal corporeity, etched into its matrix, as a reminder or latent memory of the history of that place, while remaining ambiguous, and invisible, awaiting its ‘consummation’ and aggregation in the final print outcomes of this research.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Turner, 1969, p. 95

¹⁷² Corbatta, *Narratives of the Dirty War in Argentina* (Corregidor: Buenos Aires, 1999). Since the dictatorship came to an end after the Falklands War in 1983, there have consistently been denials from military leaders and others implicated in the torture and disappearances that anything untoward took place. It is only in the last 15 years or so that impunity and negation have turned to affirmation through forensic proof and judicial processes.

¹⁷³ *ibid*

¹⁷⁴ Eyal Weisman, 2012, p.22

¹⁷⁵ Turner, 1969, p. 95

2.3 ENTROPIC INTERRUPTIONS

The reconfiguration of the territory of the image in situ necessitates certain material 'sacrifices' in the transformation process, and once brought back to the print room, certain post visualisations in the studio where these photographs and photo-etchings taken of the Paraná and those of the original source material can be combined, translating them from an optic rendition to a haptic transposition in the hand-made print. These 'sacrifices' that occur when the image is printed onto different substrates, mean an additional loss of detail and resolution occurs, a further entropic interruption, which addresses a complex narrative of responses in taking a photograph beyond the purely mechanical promise of early photographic techniques, and beyond the binary code and flat surfaces of the digital. Hubert Damisch writes in his *Five Notes for a Phenomenology of the Photographic Image* that analogue images were thought of as being 'theoretically speaking, [...] nothing more than a process of recording, a technique of inscribing, in an emulsion of silver salts, a stable image generated by a ray of light'.¹⁷⁶ This simple mechanical description may seem at first to underline photography's phenomenological roots, yet it undermines the idea of the 'truthful[ness of that] recording' by leaving the image vulnerable to the vicissitudes of chemical post production and printing processes, known to photographers from the earliest attempts to capture images with light.¹⁷⁷ These post-production techniques that allowed for the possibility of the 'accident', and the need for a certain 'deception' to achieve the visual results required, were pioneered by photographers such as Gustave le Gray and Henry Peach Robinson in the late 19th century¹⁷⁸. They wrote extensively about the use of double negatives and combination

¹⁷⁶ **Hubert Damisch**, 'Five Notes for a Phenomenology of the Photographic Image', *October*, Vol. 5, Photography (Summer, 1978) (MIT Press) pp. 70

¹⁷⁷ **Catherine Pagani**, 'Visualization and Combination Printing: The Influence of Photographic Process on Contemporary Photography, Kerri Harding' (*The University of Alabama McNair Journal*, 2008) p.63 <<http://lib.ua.edu/sites/default/files/mcnair/journals/2008/Harding.pdf>> [accessed 02/02/13]

¹⁷⁸ **Crawford**, 1979, p.51. **Gustave le Gray**, a leading pictorialist in the 19th century, also developed a theory of 'sacrifices', using methods of combination printing in the darkroom to print his seascapes. See **Eugenia Parry**, *The Photography of Gustave Le Gray*. (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago and University of Chicago Press, 1987); For an overview of Le Gray's work see also **Sylvie Aubenas**' in *Gustave LeGray, 1820-1884*, edited by Gordon Baldwin (Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2002). His work was written about in the *Journal of the Photographic Society*, February 21 (London: Photographic Society, 1857) as a reviewer remarked, 'We stop with astonishment before M. Le Gray's "Sea and Sky", the most successful seizure of water and cloud yet attempted. The effect is the simplest conceivable. There is a plain, unbroken prairie of open sea, lined and rippled with myriad smiling trails of minute undulations, dark and sombrous and profoundly calm, over the dead below – smooth as a tombstone'; Also **Martin Barnes**, *Sea and Sky: Photographs by Gustave Le Gray, 1856-1857* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2013) 8 May and 3 August 2003, <<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/s/gustave-le-gray-exhibition/>> [accessed 30 April 2013].

prints to 'achieve tonal balance between sea and sky in the final print [...] [to give] a more truthful sense of how the eye, rather than the camera, perceives nature'.¹⁷⁹ Le Gray 'set out a 'theory of sacrifices' [...] [which] suggested that in a work of art detail could be sacrificed in the interests of the overall impression of light and shade'.¹⁸⁰ In the digitalization of the analogue photograph then, and subsequent reterritorialization of the imagery on the surface of the print, a vast array of 'sacrifices' occur, losses and gains in the materiality, the light and shade of the print, resolution and discernibility of the image. Where the digital overturns and interrupts the indexical codes of the analogue, by 'sacrif[ic]ing' colour, [and] spatial and temporal resolution,¹⁸¹ bringing new codes to bear, the development of the plates in the river when brought back to the print room, allow for a series of further actions, and further multiply the possible sacrifices, outcomes and narratives of this research.

Step Three: The Infra-mince

As Fred Ritchin muses, 'in the digital story of creation not only can the sequence be reshuffled at will, or randomly, the story can be cross-referenced, mutated, linked, laid over with numerous other media, responded to in 'real time', and evolved in an infinite number of ways'.¹⁸² This reshuffle that the digital presupposes, in this research works *in conjunction* with the processes of etching and hand printing, to create abstractions and mutations allowing for multiple iterations in 'real time'. As we know, prints were never employed for their ability to be faithful reproductions of visible realities, rather, as crude ways of reproducing imagery, conferred meaning through their multiplicity and distribution. Therefore in the print room multiple press-transferred prints can be created from a single etched matrix, transferring ghostly remnants of the river onto each paper copy. These spectral remains, invisible and liminal, can here be translated onto the paper substrate where they become infra-mince, or ultra-thin, yet palpable and tactile, surfaces of the print. Where basic distinctions between the analogue and the digital

¹⁷⁹ **Martin Barnes**, (2013) <<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/s/gustave-le-grey-exhibition/>> [accessed 30 April 2013]

¹⁸⁰ See **Gustave Le Gray**, *A Practical Treatise on Photography, Upon Paper and Glass*, translated by Thomas Cousins (London: T & R Willats, 1850); also **Gustave Le Gray**, *Photographic Manipulation: The Waxed Paper Process of Gustave Le Gray*, translated from the French (London: George Knight and Sons, 1853)

¹⁸¹ **Lev Manovich**, 'The Paradoxes of Digital Photography', in V. Amekunxen, Stefan Iglhaut, Florian Rotzer (eds) *Photography after Photography*, Exhibition Catalogue (Munich, Verlag der Kunst, 1995) p. 1

¹⁸² **Fred Ritchin**, *After Photography* (China: South China Printing, 2010) p.18

process refer to the way the analogue image ‘emanates from the world of the palpable [...] ages and rots, diminishing over generations’, while the digital ‘abstract[s] from [its] source [...] [in] an architecture of infinitely repeatable abstractions in which the original and copy are the same’¹⁸³, the process of engendering each new image then, produces these ‘infinitely repeatable abstractions’ in the *loss of resolution* that occurs when the image is mediated through these multiple screens to achieve a photo-etching or a transfer print on paper. This multiple site of mediation means that the haptic pellicule, or infra-mince strata allow the print to gain in materiality what it has lost in detail. In the use of the hand to print the photograph, the haptic can be returned to the surface of the optic, sacrificing detail to align more readily with the ‘deceit’ of these early combination prints and post-production techniques. As Ruth Pelzer-Montada notes, ‘within printmaking there is an awareness of the importance of surface, especially in the light of printmaking’s intersection with digital media.’¹⁸⁴ As opposed to the ‘flat’ surface of the purely digital then, prints made by hand appear to ‘yield a tactile, “fleshy” surface [an infra-mince] in comparison to the mean slimness of the digital print.’¹⁸⁵ It is often true, as Montada suggests, that at ‘printmaking exhibitions [...] viewers press up close to the prints, their eyes roaming the surface, scrutinizing its concatenations, delighting in its variegated fabric, puzzling as to its sensuous fusion.’¹⁸⁶ This haptic quality is one that I am looking to create on the surface of a digital transfer or photo-etching print, fusing, in this way, the optic emphasis of the photographic with the interruptions, and texture of what Montada calls ‘the surface in excess’ or the ‘microhaptic’ surface of the print, what I am calling here the ‘infra-mince’ surface.¹⁸⁷ I do this by saturating inks onto the surface of the plate, which are then translated through the press onto the thin surface of the paper, to create dapples and barely visible creases, in this way reterritorializing, once again, the auratic translation of the print matrix, onto the printed paper itself. The result is an image on paper or on metal that as a result of its loss of precision, and its textured surface, reveals its craft, while exposing the ‘poor image’, as Hito Steyerl has termed it.¹⁸⁸ In order to ‘interrogate notions of perception’, and remind ourselves that

¹⁸³ Fred Ritchin, 2010, p. 9

¹⁸⁴ Ruth Pelzer-Montada, ‘The Attraction of Print: Notes on the Surface of the (Art) Print’, *Art Journal*, Summer 2008, p. 75

¹⁸⁵ *ibid*, p. 78

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*, p. 85

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*, p. 86

¹⁸⁸ Hito Steyerl, In Defense of the Poor Image, *e-flux Journal*, no. 10, (New York, 2009) [online] at: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/> >[accessed 12/02/16]

photography '[lies] somewhere between fact and fiction – or perhaps hovering slightly above either one – [in] the province of metaphor, where the truth is approximated in renderings of a more poetic or symbolic nature,'¹⁸⁹ this low resolution image with its loss of precision, does not return to these early photographic concerns, rather here, as a result of the pixilation and 'noise' produced by these mediated encounters with the digital and etched outcomes, exposes the 'poor image' as a *pictorial consequence*. The nature of these print translations then, is more akin to a poetic rendering of the subject matter, an impressionistic image, with an 'infra-mince' surface that 'mock[s] the promises of digital technology' subverting its evidential qualities and the purported optical truth of its ancestral photographic lineage.¹⁹⁰ The digital element of the transformation of the image is, however, crucial to my process, as 'only digital technology could produce such a dilapidated image in the first place'¹⁹¹ and as a 'copy in motion [...] as it accelerates, it deteriorates [...] tend[ing] towards abstraction: it is a visual idea in its very becoming'.¹⁹² Here then, the auratic translations, and reterritorializations of practice create new photographic prints that become visual ideas as new haptic objects in the infra-thin surface of the photo-etching or transfer print, as ink is transferred from plate to paper. By sacrificing the detail of the original then, these images can inhabit a new space on the photo-etching plates and the saturated surfaces of the transfer prints, which allow photography and printmaking to converge in this new skin, or momentarily touching surfaces of exchange. As they gain in material presence, they create a space of their own in the narrative of this research, a new infra-mince, or ultra-thin engagement with the surface created during the liminal phase. In this way, the image, re-visualised and translated onto the paper substrate, forms a new auratic encounter in the surface matter of the handmade print (figure 21).

¹⁸⁹ Philip Gefter, 'Essay: Icons as Fact, Fiction and Metaphor', in *Lens*, Photography, Video and Visual Journalism, July 23 2009, adapted from *Photography After Frank*, (London: Aperture Foundation, 2009)
<http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/07/23/essay-4/?_r=0> [accessed 20/ 11/13]

¹⁹⁰ Steyerl, 2009

¹⁹¹ Steyerl, 2009

¹⁹² ibid

*The paper object in my hand is the original, the origin, the origo, oriri.
As I feel its material presence, its frayed edges and surface ripples,
I remember that it points me towards my ancestral past, my lineage,
my originary source, my grandfather.
Original image, it marks the start of something.
It creates a language, the language of Oriri.
Material, fragile, I hold it gently, fold it away, pack it and take it with me.
It travels as origo (birth) to the lands of its making,
to other pages not its own,
to another time along the river, to another material presence.
Translations of origin,
Its oriri barely visible under the water,
appears out of the invisibility of code, origo, oriri,
to be translated from here to there,
a new territory of practice, as the image unfolds.*

2. 4 ENACTMENTS

As printing from a photo-etched plate necessitates the wiping away of ink, and subsequently of information, in time the plate gets worn down, flattened, its details, its troughs and fissures, imperceptibly lost. Working on the premise that the original analogue image is already in a state of ruin, already at a loss to express its origins and wholeness, I am merely extrapolating from the debris, making sense of the fragments in order to return them to a new completeness, while the process itself creates a new ruin of sorts in its slow disintegration. Yet according to Derrida, the ruin is 'that which happens to the image from the moment of the first gaze'.¹⁹³ This means that the image has always been, since the photographer triggered the shutter and 'fixed' the image, a ruin of itself. My gaze on it, my own interpretation of it merely contributes to this ruination. Derrida goes on to assert that 'one can just as well read the pictures of ruins as the figures of a portrait, indeed, of a self-portrait'.¹⁹⁴ In using these images in ruins, and reinterpreting them through digital and printmaking processes, am I staring at myself in the face? If the ruin is 'not in front of us [and] is neither a spectacle nor a love object [...] It is experience itself [...] a memory open like an eye, or like the hole in a bone socket that lets you see without showing you anything at all, anything of this all,'¹⁹⁵ then how does this memory open like an eye, passed down through a ruin, allow for this new experience of it, as a new experience of oneself?

Step Four: Incorporation

Ritchin attests to the 'liberating effect' of photography, and the 'forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it' creating 'altered [...] reminiscences as well as confusions'.¹⁹⁶ The transfer of the image into a digital format and later into a hand-made print, therefore, permanently *alters* its original purpose, while creating new memories and reminiscences each time it is crafted, each time the image is incorporated into the ruinous process. This serves to remind us that 'memory [itself] is always incomplete, always falling into ruin,' so

¹⁹³ Jacques Derrida in *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, translated by Michael B. Naas, Pascale- Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) p. 68

¹⁹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁹⁶ Ritchin, 2010, p. 58

that the experience of working with an analogue image which is redolent of its own past, and converting it to a digital file, photo-etching or transfer print, means that the process itself, while creating something new, is also in a permanent state of self-ruination, as the prints record their own erasure, while erasing their own print matrix.¹⁹⁷ By constantly re-mining the information found in the analogue photograph, erasing it and reworking it through various translations, and combining these with my own water etched images of the river to reinterpret its meaning and form, these experiments in print can be said to become an affective enactment¹⁹⁸. This enactment, with its incorporation of the material of the river, 'draw[s on] personal motivation from [my] past [and] historical references' not as a set up nor a stand-in for these histories, but as a contemporary engagement with the physicality of the gesture and material of print practice in situ (see figure 15), and as a way of engaging with a 'transformation through memory, theory, and history to generate unique and resonating results.'¹⁹⁹ There is, therefore, a return to a physical act in making these prints that cannot be ignored (the hand held development of the print in water, the gesture of the hand in inking up the plate, the physicality of printing with a press) a sense of taking on time through a tactile, material presence and an appropriation of its concerns. In this enactment the gestures and techniques used create an new site of 'material relations',²⁰⁰ turning 'contact into the communicative interface of a public intimacy.'²⁰¹ The physicality of the process 'reveal[s] the craft of their making [...] maintaining the moment that has been snatched out of time' on their surface, and 'invit[ing] [...] looking to be a physical form of retracing touch.'²⁰² By enacting these prints, I re-engage with an embodiment or incorporation of the narrative of the river, where 'trauma is [...] incorporated memory, body memory or cellular memory [...] the body becom[ing] a memorial, a ghosted bodily matter'²⁰³ which leaves its traces on my

¹⁹⁷ Solnit, 2007, p.23

¹⁹⁸ By *enactment* I mean a restaging of the material processes in situ and in the print-room, a reproduction, where the material is created (reproduced) in multiple iterations. See footnote 127; I am not using enactment in its nostalgic sense of re-enactment, as discussed by **Katie Kitamura**, 'Recreating Chaos': Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave*, *Historical Reenactment: From Realism to the Affective Turn*, edited by I. McCalman, P. Pickering (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); she states that re-enactment 'contained and amplified' a sense of nostalgia, 'through its sentimental power.', p.49

¹⁹⁹ **Robert Backson** describes re-enactment as 'invit[ing] transformation through memory, theory, and history to generate unique and resonating results' in his essay 'Once More With Feeling: Reenactment in Contemporary Art and Culture', *Art Journal*; Spring 2007, p.66, 1 Research Library Core, p. 30

²⁰⁰ **Bruno**, 2014, p. 2

²⁰¹ *ibid*, p. 3

²⁰² **Kevin Haas**, 'Convergent Theories: Printmaking, Photography and Digital Media,' *CAA Conference Session*, 2006

²⁰³ **Patricia Ticineto Clough with Jean Halley** in *The Affective Turn, Theorizing the Social* (Duke University Press: Durham and London, 2007) p. 6

photographic plates and now, once again, as an infra-thin surface on the paper substrate itself. The landscape images I depict are not there as markers of environmental ruin (although this is implicated in the organic encounter, as the higher acidity levels of the river mean the development of the photographs is further corroded) but as literal markers of the bodies imprinted on the ground of the landscape, as remains, incorporated into the research practice and made body.²⁰⁴ This implicates *the hand as witness* in the making of the work, as the river marks the photo polymer plates with an indelible material trace: as I hold the plate in the developing fluid of the river, that trace is exposed through the agency of my hand. I therefore *hold and touch* the past, present (and future), as I work, slowly, to reveal the image. I commune with and meditate on the site where personal and national stories converge, and in the print room through the physicality of pulling a print, where all of these ambiguous and invisible notions materialize, or become incorporated. The work, in this way, becomes both historical and contemporary at once, through *touch*, as historical processes and contemporary material bind, and memories of place converge. This material touch is at odds with the way the digital has alienated the hand from the printing process in a disembodied incarnation;²⁰⁵ yet the hand-made aspect of the print, brings touch back, resurrecting the tactile nature of the image as it resurrects the bodies of the disappeared in an embodied incarnation. As Aristotle pronounced in 'De Anima', 'touch is the most universal of the senses [...] the most intelligent [...] because it is the most sensitive.'²⁰⁶ Touch implies exposure, the physical response to a primary sense, cognitive and real, the first sense before sight that a new born experiences, the sense that is of greatest import to a printmaker, that 'incorporates' the print in a bodily response. In its etymology the verb 'to touch', from the Old French *tochier*, meant to 'deal with,' and by bringing the hand to bear both on the making of the photographic plate and the printing of the print, it is my way of 'dealing with' the duality of

²⁰⁴ *Incorporate* from its etymological roots, in corpus, bodily or into the body. See Etymology online at: <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=incorporate> [accessed 29/04/16]

²⁰⁵ See **Fleming Jeffries**, 'Material Empathy: Making/ Un-Making/ Re-Making to Navigate the Undercurrents of Cultural Experience', *Impact 9 Printmaking Conference* (China Academy of Art: Hangzhou, 2015) p. 326, where he discussed the 'manual alienation' of the digital, and the importance of 'building empathy through hand/mind connections'.

²⁰⁶ **Richard Kearney**, 'Losing Our Touch', The Opinion Pages in *The New York Times* August 30 2014, online at: http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/08/30/losing-our-touch/?_r=0 [accessed 21/10/15]; See Aristotle's 'De Anima', translated by J.I. Beare in 'On Sense and the Sensible', provided by *The Internet Classics Archive*, <http://classicsa.mit.edu/Aristotle/sense.html> [accessed 18/08/15]: 'The organ of touch proper consists of earth, and the faculty of taste is a particular form of touch. This explains why the sensory organ of both touch and taste is closely related to the heart. For the heart as being the hottest of all the bodily parts, is the counterpoise of the brain.'

the personal and political encounter with the landscape that is at a loss to express the traumatic history it holds, a history progressively being lost forgotten in the politics of time.²⁰⁷

In dealing with these translations, the practices I adhere to in the print room and beyond mean I am constantly engaged with the transformation of the image as a physical presence beyond the screen: under the push and pull of the printing press, the weight of the metal rollers extract the ink from one surface and deposit it on another. The edges of the print are pulled back tentatively so as not to spoil the ink, and the incidental audience of the print room gathers round to look at the results, and comment on the successes or failures of the techniques. The measured marks and accidents of the transfer and etched print are gradually revealed, and notions of abstraction and legibility mean that the action of the press and the different amount of pressure applied each time the image is transferred, create their own enactment, aided by the printmaker and the quantity of ink on the surface. These practices are repetitive, enacted multiple times, as print rituals, as rites of passage, in order to arrive at a working print. The repetitive nature of the gesture not only imprints and incorporates an image on paper, but etching itself onto the memory of the plate, it produces less detailed prints each time. The enactment of the print, then, lies in this circular process of its reproduction, constantly distorted and abstracted to create a new tangible chronicle of a hand-made process. On the one hand, the print revives and rehabilitates an image that is in its death throws, giving it new life, a new 'act'; on the other hand, it contributes to a set of new memories and interpretations that become distanced from the intended narratives of the original version. Just as the anthropological subject is incorporated or re-aggregated into society, here the liminal making in situ, and its subsequent translation in the print room, has allowed this image to be aggregated into the subject matter of this research, by finding its visibility once more through the physicality of the printing process 'in a [new] system of [...] positions.'²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ **Online Etymology Dictionary:** 'touch (v.) late 13th Century, "make deliberate physical contact with," from Old French *tochier* "to touch, hit, knock; mention, deal with" (11c., Modern French *toucher*), from Vulgar Latin **toccare* "to knock, strike" as a bell (source also of Spanish *tocar*, Italian *toccare*), perhaps of imitative origin, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=touch&allowed_in_frame=0>[accessed 23/10/15]

²⁰⁸ **Turner**, 1969, p. 95

These new systems incorporate not only the physicality of pulling the print, but the inking process itself, as the colours that result in the final print also determine the state of transition from photograph to photo-etching. In tribal anthropology the subject of a rite of passage is often painted, depicted in a particular way as part of a ritual that results in this new position of aggregation or incorporation once more.²⁰⁹ In this making process in the print room, therefore, colours are altered, re-worked through the inking up process, while the colour of the paper used as the substrate will itself distinguish the final palette of the print outcome (see figure 16). The colours of the initial analogue image are sepia tinged and pink in places, with dark brown scratches that expose its time weathered paper weave underneath. As Crawford suggests, '[y]ou are led to believe among other things, in the existence of black and white photography [...] there is rarely such a creature as a black-and- white print, because nearly all photographic printing is printing in colour. It may only be monochromatic colour, or a delicate shift from cool blacks to warm ones, or colour applied by hand, but colour - in any form – has to be reckoned with because it is of real consequence in the way an image does its work'.²¹⁰ These colours, imbued on the surface of the analogue image, once transferred to the medium of printmaking through photo-etching practices, are completely lost, and cannot be reproduced in the same way. When the image is exposed onto a photo-etching plate, the extant form of the image, its shadows and highlights, its contrast, must be reduced to absolutes. This means converting it into half tone dots, which prepares the image for exposure onto the plate, and again mediates it by removing its visible colour coding. This half tone positive image is then recorded onto the metal matrix and when developed in water, appears as raised dots on the surface of the plate, or troughs that the ink can slip into. Once these are inked up, then, and the colours chosen and blended by the printmaker by hand, the ink adheres and incorporates itself only to the dotted areas (or embeds itself in the troughs) (see figures 18, 19). As Mick Moon writes, 'the interaction between ink and paper and the manifold ways it can be exploited underpin the long tradition of printmaking.'²¹¹

²⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 119

²¹⁰ Crawford, 1979, p. 15

²¹¹ Mick Moon, in the preface for Sylvia Turner, *About Prints- A Guide for Artist Printmakers* (London: Estamp in association with Camberwell Press, Camberwell College of Arts, 1994), p. 8. See also Sarah Suzuki, *What is a Print? Selections from the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: MOMA, 2011): 'intaglio techniques [...] inscribe [...] a system of grooves for the ink to fill' (p.49-50); Kathan Brown, *Ink, Paper, Metal, Wood: How to Recognize Contemporary Artists' Prints* (San Francisco: Crown Point Press, 1992); Ellen G. D'Oench, *Block, Plate, Stone: What a Print Is*, with contributions by Susan Salzberg Rubin (New York: Katonah Museum of Art, 1994); Beth Gabrowski and Bill Fick, *Printmaking: A Complete Guide to Materials and Process* (London: Lawrence King, 2009); Pat Gilmour, *Modern Prints* (London: Studio Vista, 1970 and her

However, these prints I am creating belie the 'traditional idea of a print as a flat, inked image printed on paper [...]' as they 'involve [...] innovations in techniques, [...] which blur traditional definitions.'²¹² The inking up process is key, however, as the amount of ink, the saturation, can determine the final look of the printed photo-etch or transfer print. According to Richard Benson:

to this day the task of converting a photograph into ink is fraught with problems – a seemingly simple chore, it almost never turns out correctly. [...] The fundamental problem – [...] impossible to overemphasize – is that photographs have tonal gradations that ink, when printed by relief or planographic processes, does not. Black ink is always black – it either goes down on the sheet and makes a black mark, or it is not there and the paper is white. The solution to this problem has always been to break the picture up into small particles and to vary the size or number of those particles to emulate tone²¹³.

The tonal gradations therefore of the analogue photograph, find a different surface to contend with on the photo-etched plate, and, as a result, the fine narrative of the image changes with every print, as the amount of ink, pressure and colour chosen play their part in establishing a final impression, and the infra-mince surface. This, although it could be said to be true for the printing of a photograph that depends on the hand of the photographer to develop the colours recorded on film in a darkroom, is no longer true of the printing of this photograph. Without a negative for the image, I am left with the positive as it is. In these print experiments I am interested in the positive alone as a

Understanding Prints: A Contemporary Guide (London: Waddington Galleries, 1979); **Anthony Griffiths**, *Prints and Printmaking: An Introduction to the History and Techniques* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); **Susan Lambert**, *Prints: Art and Techniques* (London: V&A Publications, 2001); **Donald Saff**, *Printmaking: History and Process* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1981) and **Claire Romano, John Ross and Tim Ross**, *The Complete Printmaker: Techniques, Traditions, Innovations* (New York: Free Press, 1990).

²¹² **Moon, in Turner, 1994**, p. 12-13; See also the introduction to **Alexia Tala's** *Installations & Experimental Printmaking* (London: A&C Black, 2009) for a history of how the print has merged disciplines since the 1960s, and **Paul Coldwell's** *Printmaking, Contemporary Perspective* (London: Blackdog Publishing, 2010) for further descriptions of the developments in printmaking over the last century.

²¹³ **Richard Benson**, *The Printed Picture* (New York: MOMA, 2008) p.214

source for printmaking, and what this means in light of the physical manipulation of the print through the press, and less interested in its chemical transfer through the darkroom. I want to expose the image in a contemporary light, not return it to the past through analogue processes of development. Yet the entire process *does converge* past and present as the analogue source imagery becomes the equivalent of a base material, which transmogrifies by my own volition into alchemical colour strata, as detailed in the *Magnum Opus of Alchemy: from citrinitas* (a yellowing) of the original analogue photograph, to a *nigredo* (blackening) in the digital scan and photocopy process, to an *albedo* (whitening) in its re-exposure through light, to a final *rubedo* (reddening or purpling) in its final transformation through hand applied inking and the pressure of the press.²¹⁴ Where colour according to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe emanates from darkness, and darkness from light, 'Yellow is a light which has been dampened by darkness; Blue is a darkness weakened by light'²¹⁵, in this research colour and its application by hand, as well as the saturated inks used in the digital printing process become paramount in establishing a link to both the darkness and light of the printing process (bringing the analogue photograph back into the light), as well as underlining the traumatic experiences that these photographs subliminally refer to. The reduction of colours in the prints to saturated rubedos and purples, dark blue hues and yellows (see figures 23, 24, 26 and 27) means that we rely on a suspension of disbelief and what Merleau-Ponty describes as 'the psychological construction of an inner life',²¹⁶ as colours determine our relationship to the work and subsequently to the narrative embedded in it. This alchemical transformation then, furthers the haptic encounter with the print as the reduction of tone and colour in the printmaking process moves the grey tones of the analogue print into saturated hues as a new encounter with the narratives of the research.

²¹⁴ These colour stages are described in the *Magnum Opus of alchemy* as described by **Joseph Needham**. *Science & Civilisation in China: Chemistry and chemical technology. Spagyric Discovery and Invention: Magisteries of Gold and Immortality* (Cambridge, 1974) p.23

²¹⁵ **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**, *Theory of Colours*, translated with notes by Charles Lock Eastlake (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2006)

²¹⁶ **Maurice Merleau-Ponty** *The Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Donald A. Landes (New York: Routledge, 2014)

The base material is always there to be mined, nevertheless, to extract the precious ore for translation onto the final print, and transform its colour and form. The technical word for an etching is 'Intaglio', from the Italian *intagliere*, to 'cut in' or 'carve', and describes 'the class of printing that uses grooves in metal to hold the printing ink'.²¹⁷ Therefore this intaglio process (of which photo-etching is a contemporary version) cuts and carves the image into the metal plate, while at the same time, slowly cutting ties with its own past. In other words, where the methods I use can be said to transmogrify the original image into a new alchemical ore on the surface of plate, and incorporate it into a certain collection of light and dark dots on paper, so the very act of producing these new versions slowly corrupt the matrix they were made from, and fade these (eventually) into oblivion once again. Although the photo-etching plates are durable, first used as electrical conductors, their edges and shallow depth mean that scratches and bends can easily mark and corrupt the surface of the plate. In addition, there are a finite number of prints that can be achieved from a single matrix, as the wear and tear of the process means that in each reproduction the result will be lighter prints, or less perfectly visible compositions through ink:

The abrasions of wiping and the pressure of printing can affect the plate quite rapidly: the edges of the incised grooves become rounded and the wiped plate holds less ink, so the print gradually becomes lighter through the successive impressions of an edition.²¹⁸

These abrasions ensure the subject matter on the surface of the photographic plate begins to disappear again, leaving behind 'ghost prints' with the successive impressions I create. As a print is pulled from the press, so another can be printed from the same inked matrix to create a lighter, less visible version. It is here then, on the paper surface, that the ghostly agency of the traces of the river, meet the ghostly traces of the print, where the separation, liminal and aggregation occur. This circular methodology then

²¹⁷ Benson, 2008, p.28

²¹⁸ *ibid*, p.35

creates a constantly evolving dialogue with the past in the present: from appearance to disappearance, disappearance to appearance.

In a final ironic twist, however, the analogue photograph, although persistently and invisibly fading from view, nevertheless, also provides a sense of stability and origin. This is where the images I am producing come from; where the narrative derives from. It provides a start, a basic module and matrix combination of light and shadows. The image I create from its ashes, responds to this by formulating a new version, a new image in dialogue with these origins. It responds, however, to this circular process of disappearance, through the continued enactment of the photographic print, through the making process: I scan, I print, I rescue, I recreate, I distort, I expose, I develop, I ink up and I print. Yet I must go back to the source (both the image and the river) for more experiments, for more information, for more questioning, to keep the dialogue alive, so-to-speak, while creating a continual evanescent, a haptic print that in itself and by the nature of its constituent parts, may or may not survive into a long future, except in these print matrices I can originate.

This combination of light, metal, paper, ink, hand and pressure, therefore, constitute the reterritorialization and subsequent deterritorialization, or ruination of the print. If the ruin can be defined as 'proof of human existence and past practices [these ruins then] become a measure of 'who we are now.'²¹⁹ This measure of who we are now becomes even more relevant, in the light of the traces left on the plate, traces of the 'disappeared', invisible remains, which with their own liminal code provide proof of human existence in the waters of the Paraná, albeit only in their latency. These microscopic fragments locate the affective encounter that 'more often transpires within and across the subtlest of shuttling intensities: all the miniscule or molecular events of the unnoticed.'²²⁰ It is here that these traces come back to bite us, as they bite into the metal surface of the plate.²²¹ In this way, the prints that are enacted in their wake 'become an agent of disruption,

²¹⁹ **Diana Taylor**, 'Performing Ruins' in *Telling Ruins in Latin America*, edited by Michael J. Lazzara and Vicky Unruh (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p.13.

²²⁰ **Melissa Gregg, Gregory J. Seigworth**, 'An Inventory of Shimmers', in *The Affect Theory Reader* (Duke University Press: Durham, NC, 2010) p. 2

²²¹ In printmaking, we discuss the 'bite' of the acid (or in this case the water) on the surface of the plate, as the 'action [...] on a metal plate to incise an image, also called an etching.' See *Magical-Secrets: A Printmaking Community*, <<http://www.magical-secrets.com/studio/glossary#biting>> [accessed 10/07/15]

changing our sense of space and time – of geography and history – as we become able to view the image,²²² while repeatedly being returned to the scene of their making as ‘material for [its own] interpretation [...] evidence, in that sense: to be solved, like a riddle; read and decoded, like clues left behind at the scene of a crime.’²²³ This forensic printing of the print is where the dialogue with the past can be found, where the crime scene is laid bare once more, where the rites of passage and rituals lie, while providing a ‘measure’ of possible creative interactions with it now. If you take a closer look at these hybrid prints, however, issues of legibility and erasure in the losses and gains of their surface materiality become paramount, clues even; yet they give little away, as the only evidence exists in the incomplete utterances; fissures that are left of another story; fragments of my presence at the site of the river Paraná. As Annette Kuhn states, ‘you will get nowhere, for instance, by taking a magnifying glass to it to get a closer look: you will see only patches of light and dark, an unreadable mesh of grains. The image yields nothing to that sort of scrutiny, it simply disappears.’²²⁴ Where the digital software ‘fills in the[se] gaps using its own intelligence to create the image,’²²⁵ the fissures and troughs in our memory, in the memory of a traumatic event, are also filled with half-truths and partial recollections. The remains of the bodies, what remains on the plate as it is developed in the river, are all part of the final outcome: what the artist Sarah Jones has termed, ‘the still and distilled image.’ The images are distilled by the processes I use: moving the prints from digital to the hand printed and hand made, and often back to the digital, where they lose information, something new is created in the gaps, which are filled in by the pixels and noise of the digital surface.²²⁶

It is nevertheless, in this close-up encounter with the materiality of the printed photograph, with the return of the haptic, that the reappearance of bodies, of family history, of image resides: in between the gaps and small voids of information, the unreadable mesh of grains on the surface of the print, in the incorporation of subject and matter. In this way, the images become a ‘prop, a prompt, a pre-text’ for further

²²² Liz Wells, introduction to *The Photography Reader* (Routledge: London, 2003) p. 13

²²³ Annette Kuhn, ‘Remembrance – The Child I Never Was’, in *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (Verso: London and New York, 2002) p. 13

²²⁴ Annette Kuhn, 2003, p. 13

²²⁵ David Moore in his talk on ‘the Pensive Image’ at Ambika P3, *Westminster University Photographic Studies MA Degree show symposium*, 5 September 2015

²²⁶ Stephen Mayes, ‘The Next Revolution in Photography is Coming’, *TIME*, Lightbox, August 25 2015 at <http://time.com/4003527/future-of-photography/> [accessed 02/09/15]

investigation, an elaborate enactment of personal and historical narratives; a new 'ruin' in the making, which, as all ruins, in the end ruptures history (in this case my own as well as the history of the photograph itself).²²⁷ These printed objects 'balance [...] always on the fulcrum of destruction and rescue due to the very nature of [their] alchemy.'²²⁸ Their alchemical ore and debris then, found at the site of the river water, and the haptic surface of the print, contribute to a state of *permanent impermanence*, sitting at the liminal edges of visibility and invisibility, and fluctuating between these states of ruination and enactment. As Katie Kitamura suggests, 'perhaps inherent in every gesture of enactment is the fact of its own failure: the melancholy [...] only emerges in light of a supposed loss, in the face of a perceived breakdown.'²²⁹ So these enactments conjure up a ruined past in their pictorial concern, working as a resistance to these difficult histories and the uncanny memories they provoke in the face of the perceived breakdown of history and reappearance. These resistances are part of a wider context of strategies that counteract the dominant discourses of historical and contemporary photography and print, and form the basis of my next discussion in chapter three.

²²⁷ **ibid**

²²⁸ **Derek Basant**, *Sightlines: Printmaking and Image Culture: A Collection of Essays and Images*, edited by Walter Jule (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1977) p. 151

²²⁹ **Katie Kitamura**, 'Recreating Chaos': Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave*, *Historical Reenactment: From Realism to the Affective Turn*, edited by I. McCalman, P. Pickering (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 45

*Touching the photographic paper and looking at it closely,
I scan it, print it, cut it, photocopy it.
Black and white, poor quality replicas, gently support the unstable toner inks
on the surface of the paper, transferred onto another substrate.
Subtract, subject,
the light, under the lid of the photocopy machine,
moves across the faded image and turns it into shadows,
subtract, subject, substrate,
no longer visible as a whole,
sounding out the copying process as it goes.
It whispers its presence in the fibres
subtract, subject
first stage of a transfer collage.
its sister fragments collide, collate into a single image,
scanned and printed onto acetate, the film, visceral and sticky,
ink deposits in halftone dots,
I place it in the sunlight with the photo-polymer plate sitting below.
Their surfaces copulate in the ultra violet light,
time for trace to transfer, to fertilize the matrix with its first tangible marks
The birthing process speeds up,
as the plate is plunged into the tepid water
wiping away the polymer coating
left to harden in the light*



Figure 8, Victoria Ahrens, *Digital photograph of the Paraná Delta, north Buenos Aires province*,
90 gsm copy paper, Research trip 2012,
29 cm (h) x 42 cm (w)



Figure 9, Victoria Ahrens, *Last Views* (2015) Photo etching of digital positive above
(See figure 7) on Fabriano Rosaspina paper, large book sculpture,
200 cm (w) x 110 cm (h), in Peltz Gallery, Birkbeck



Figure 10, Victoria Ahrens, *Inside the River Paraná*, middle Delta, near Santa Fe, Digital print on copy paper, photographic research 2014, 29 cm (h) x 42 cm (w)

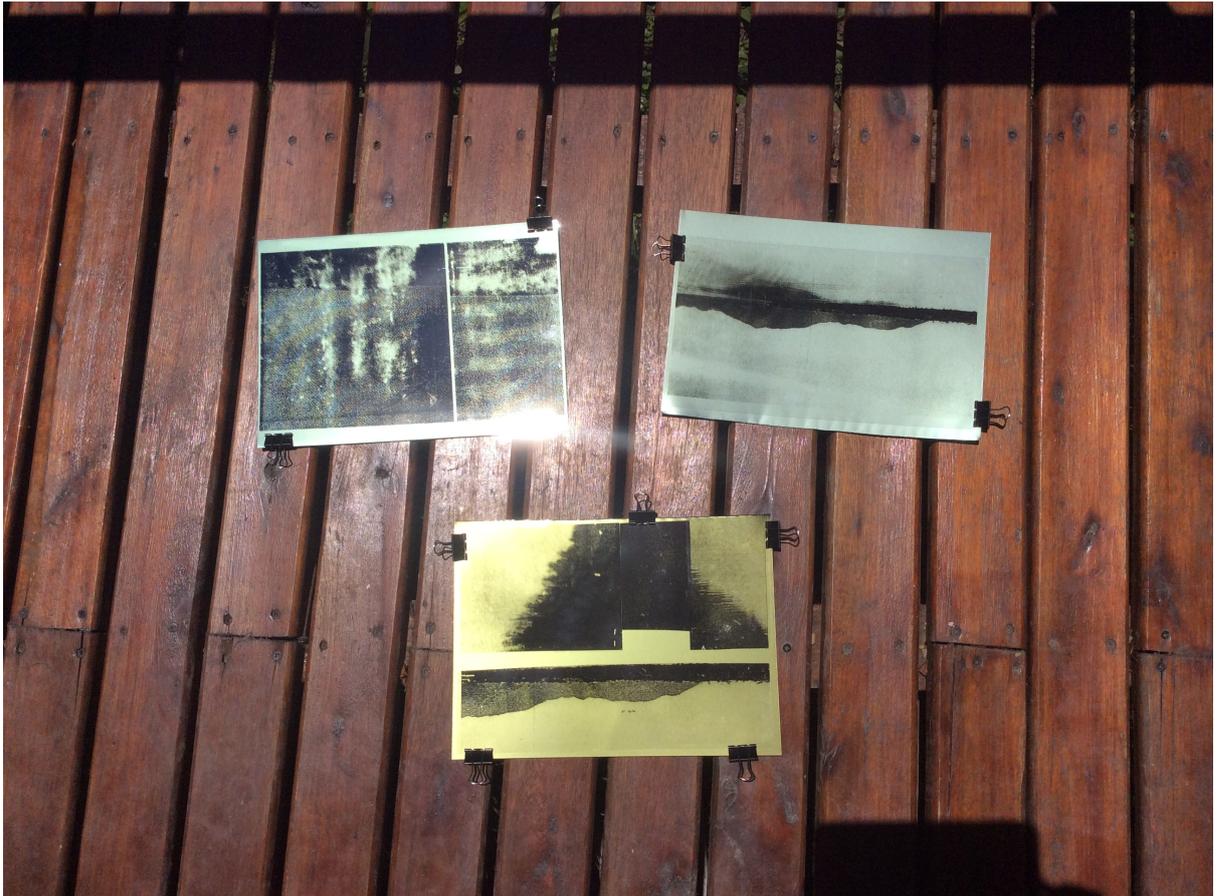


Figure 11, Victoria Ahrens, *Acetate positives of research photographs on photo etching plates being exposed to sunlight on the deck of the boat on the Paraná Delta, north Buenos Aires province documentation of process 2015, 21 cm (h) x 30 cm (w)*

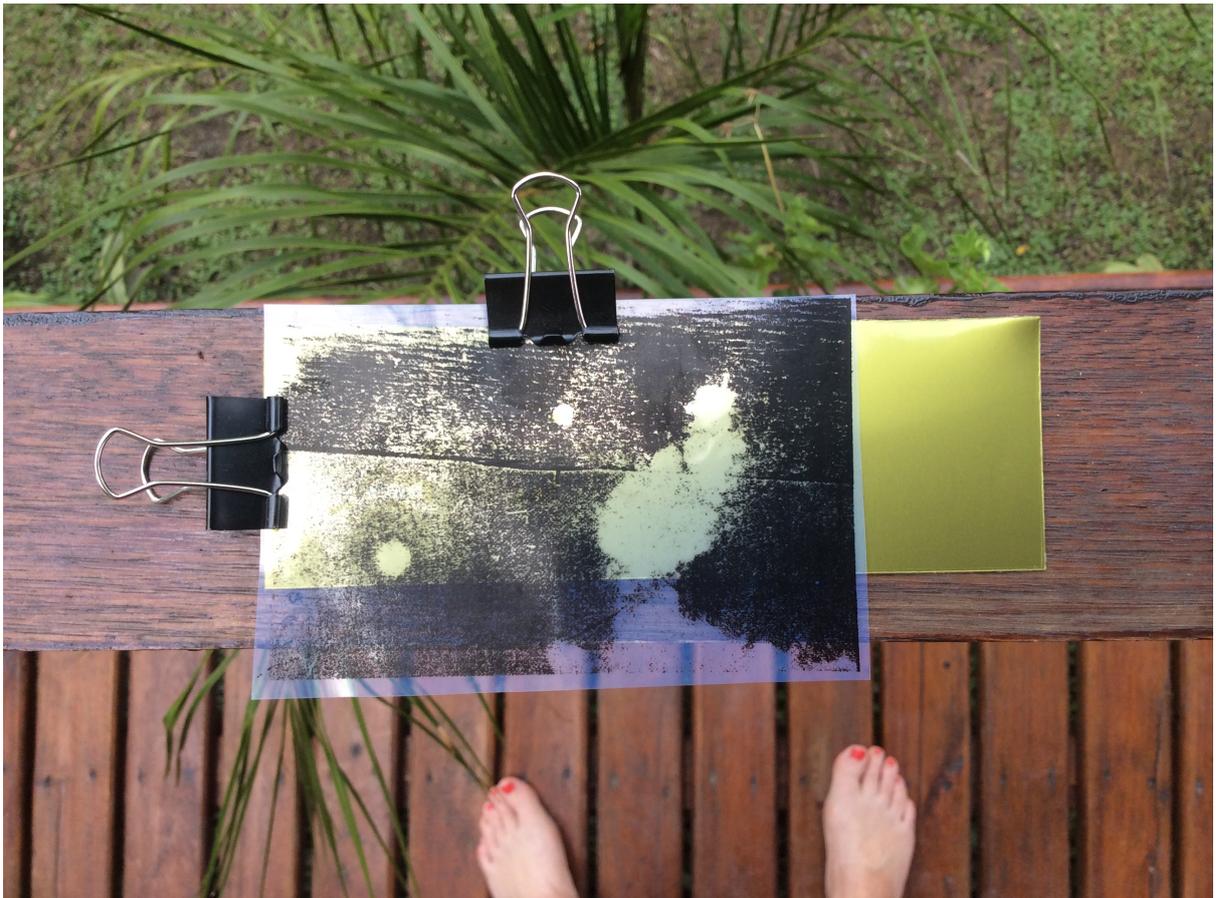


Figure 12, Victoria Ahrens, *Acetate of transfer print on photo etching plate*,
Exposed to the sunlight, documentation of test strips on deck by the river bank,
2015, 21 cm (h) x 30 cm (h)



Figure 13, Victoria Ahrens, *Exposing plates to the sunlight*,
Experiments on the banks of the Paraná Delta, north Buenos Aires province, allowing incidental
elements to interfere on the surface,
Documentation of research process 2015, 21 cm (h) x 30 cm (w)



Figure 14, Victoria Ahrens, *Final pieces being exposed on the banks of the Paraná Delta, north Buenos Aires province*

Positive acetate photograph on photo etching plate
Glass top on stone barrier, Documentation of practice (2015)
21 cm (h) x 30 cm (w)



Figure 15, Victoria Ahrens, *DNA*, *Film still of collection of river water (potential DNA samples) on the banks of the middle Delta Paraná*, Documentation of research process, 2015, 7 mins video, 3 “



Figure 16, Victoria Ahrens, 'Liminal Stage' *Film Still of photo etching plate*
Developed in the river Paran  Delta, north Buenos Aires province
7 min video, 4"



Figure 17, Victoria Ahrens, 'Enactments', *film still of inking up process in cabin on the Paraná Delta*, north Buenos Aires province
Experimental test strips, Documentation of practice,
2015, 21 cm (h) x 30 cm (w)



Figure 18, Victoria Ahrens, *inking up a photo etching plate in the studio* (2015), Buenos Aires,

Argentina

30 cm (w) x 42 cm (h)

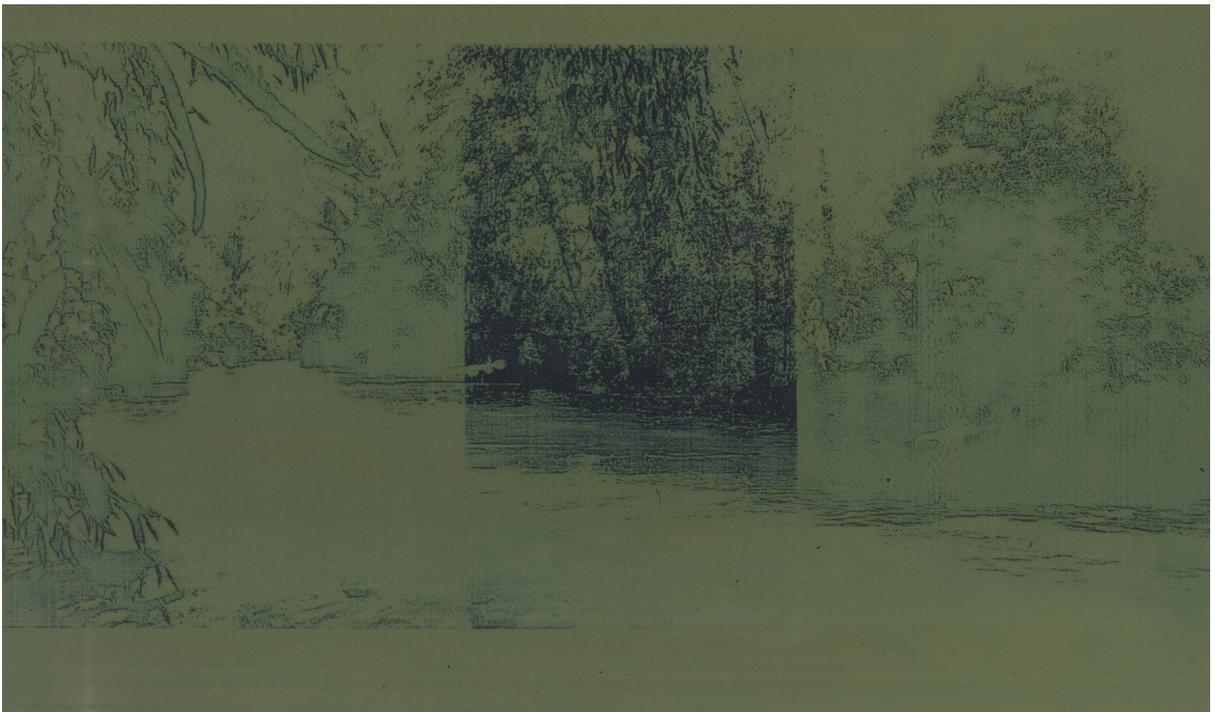


Figure 19, Victoria Ahrens, 'Infra mince', *Composite Photo etching plate*
Prussian Blue ink, 2015, of digital positive (see Figure 9), in the studio Buenos Aires, Argentina
30 cm (h) x 42 cm (w)



Figure 20, Victoria Ahrens, *Paraná Blues*, Photo etching Plate Matrix
Prussian Blue Ink, Exhibited at Hangzhou Academy of Art,
Hangzhou, China, 2015, 30 cm (h) x 42 cm (h)



Figure 21, Victoria Ahrens, *Paraná Blues*, press printed
Photo etching on Reeves paper, in the print workshop Thames Barrier, London
2015, 60 cm (h) x 45 cm (w)



Figure 22, Victoria Ahrens, *Paraná Blues*, C-type print of photo etching transfer, studio London, 90 Gsm copy paper, two sizes: 210 cm (w) x 80 cm (h)/ 120 cm (w) x 60 cm (h)



Figure 23, Victoria Ahrens, *Paraná Blues*, C-type Print on 90 gsm copy paper
Mounted on Dibond 3cm, Arte Laguna Prize, Venice Arsenale, Italy
2016, 210 cm (w) x 80 cm (h)

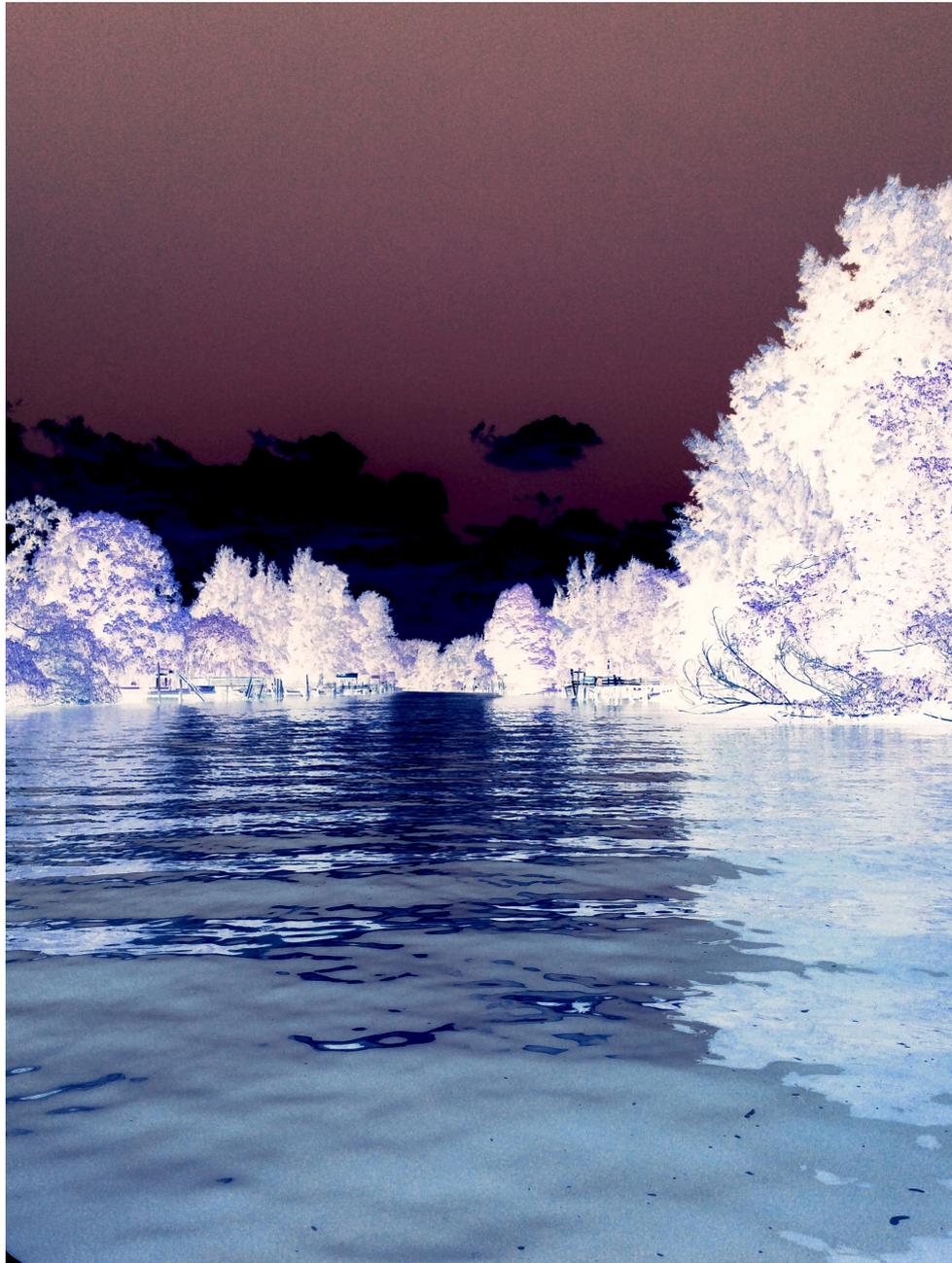


Figure 24, Victoria Ahrens, *They were Hanging There*,
C-type print of photo transfer
Japanese Awagami paper, 2015,
310 cm (h) x 180 cm (w)



Figure 25, Victoria Ahrens, *They were Hanging There*, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China, 2015, 320 cm (h) x 200 cm (w) framed; in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Beijing

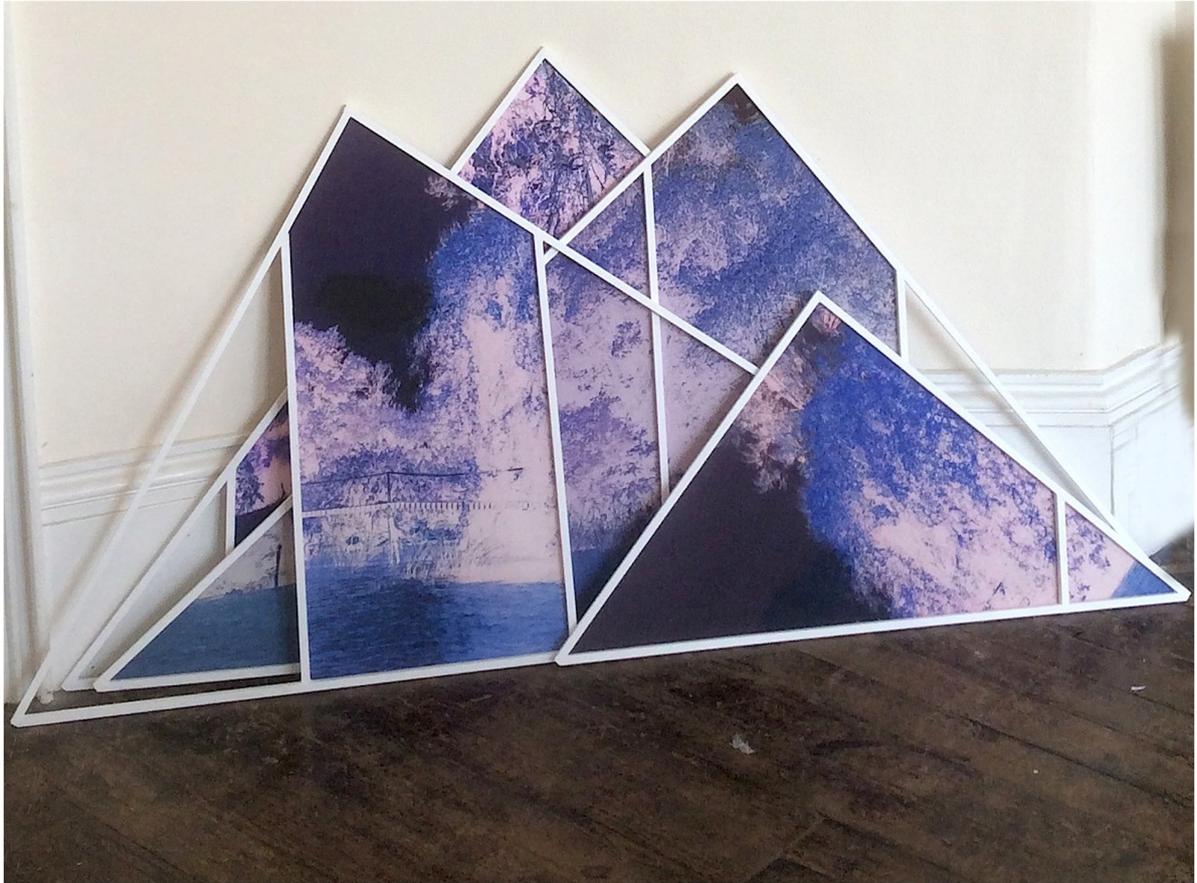


Figure 26, Victoria Ahrens, *Translado Trivergy*, transfer prints and saturated digital prints, 90 gsm copy paper in wooden frames, 2015, 280 cm (w) x 150 cm (h) x 12 cm (d), Wells Art Prize, Wells History Museum, Somerset



Figure 27, Victoria Ahrens, *Enactments* (2016), printing large scale digital photograph of combined transfer print (original transfer size 20 cm x 61 cm), digital print studio, London Bridge
90 gsm copy paper, 300 cm (w) x 110 (h)



Figure 28, Victoria Ahrens, Enactments (2016), C-type Print on 90 gsm copy paper,
300 cm (w) x 110 cm (h), in Peltz Gallery, Birkbeck School of Art, London

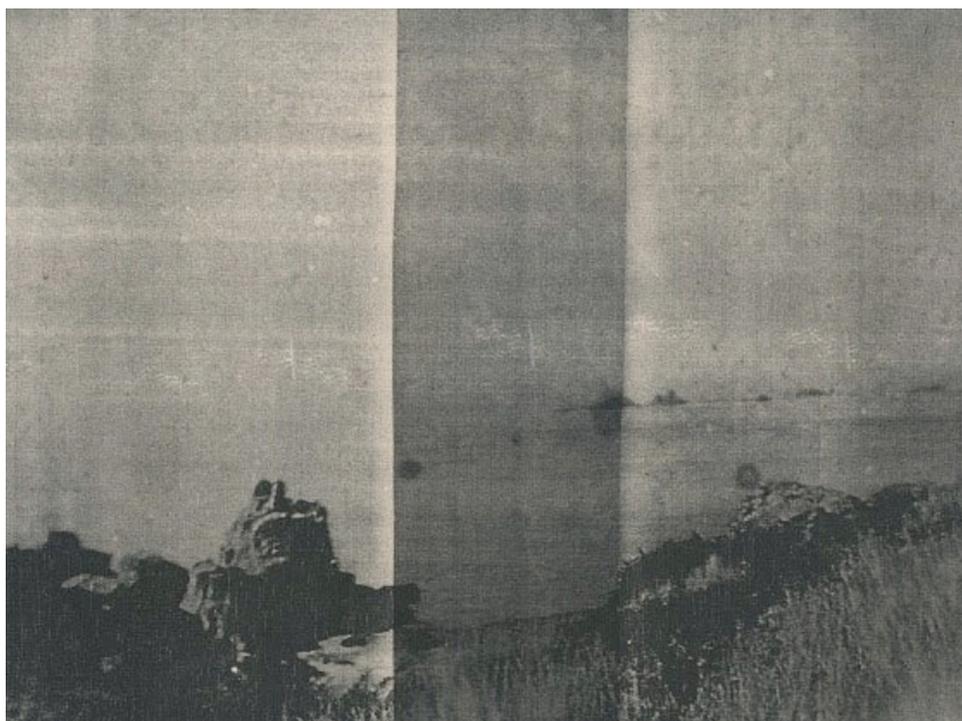


Figure 29, Victoria Ahrens, *In Limbo* (2015), Combined Photo etching of Grandfather's photograph and my own,
Fabriano Rosaspina paper
28 cm (h) x 39 cm (h)



Figure 30, Victoria Ahrens, *In Limbo* (2015), Transfer print on Fabriano paper,
Intermediate stage for large digital print, Peltz Gallery, Birkbeck School of Art, London
42 cm (w) x 30 cm (h)



Figure 31, Victoria Ahrens, *Ground Resist*, (2016) from transfer print (see figure 29),
Scanned, digitalized, large scale C-type print on Hahnemüle paper,
250 cm (w) x 110 cm (h), Peltz Gallery, Birkbeck School of Art, London



Figure 32, Victoria Ahrens, *The Perfect Place*, photo transfer from analogue positive,
Scanned and printed as a C-type print on Hahnemüle paper,
2016, 250 cm (w) x 110 cm (h), Peltz Gallery, Birkbeck School of Art, London



Figure 33, Victoria Ahrens, *Free Fall (Aerial)* (2016) Print Matrix
Developed in the river, latent, etched image in the light,
Aluminium photo etching plate,
30 cm (w) x 22 cm (h)

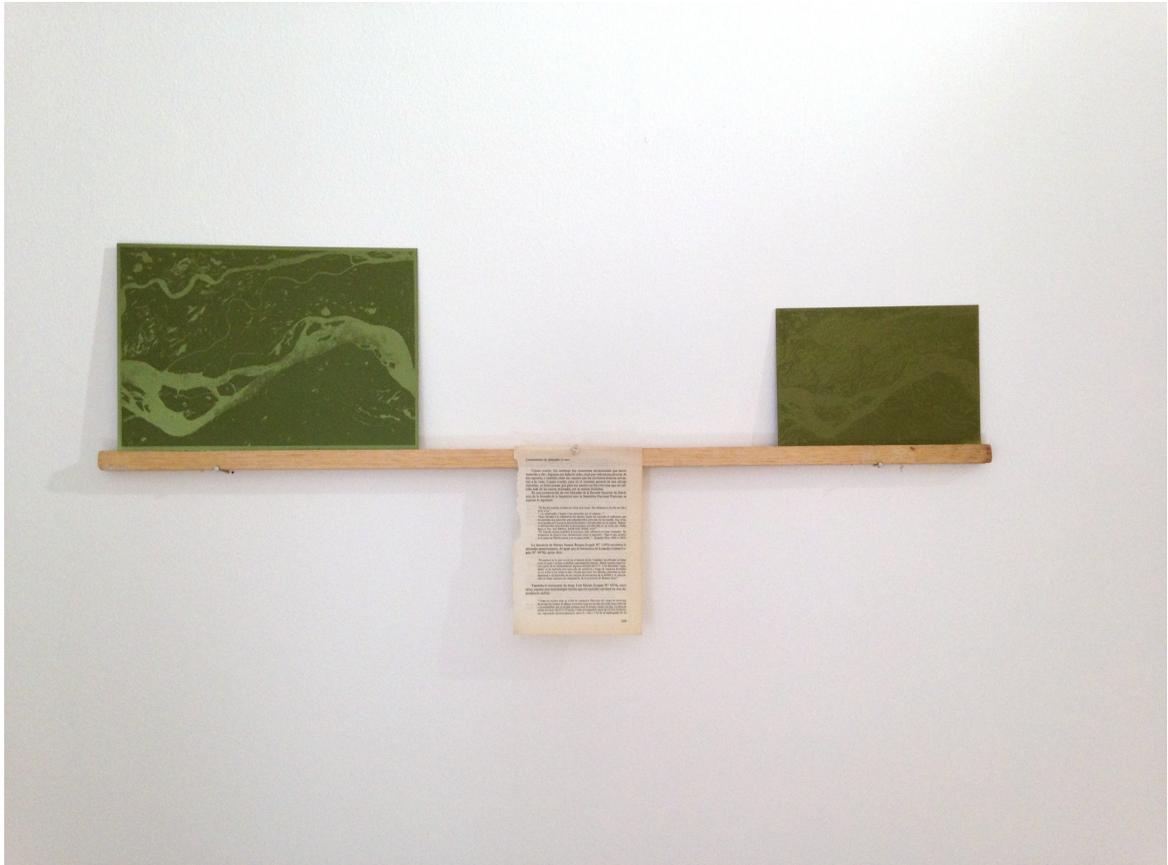


Figure 34, Victoria Ahrens, *Free Fall (in situ)* (2016), two photoetching matrices,
Etched images, wooden shelf, page from *Nunca Más*
CONADEP Commission Witness statement (1986)
120 cm (w) x 40 cm (h), Peltz Gallery, Birkbeck School of Art, London



Figure 35, Victoria Ahrens, *Free Fall* (2016), Aerial photograph of the Tigre,
Photo etching on Fabriano Rosaspina paper with black ink,
City on the lower Paraná, 45 cm (w) x 30 cm (h)
from original analogue photograph
Henry Richard Ahrens, circa 1930, in the print studio, London

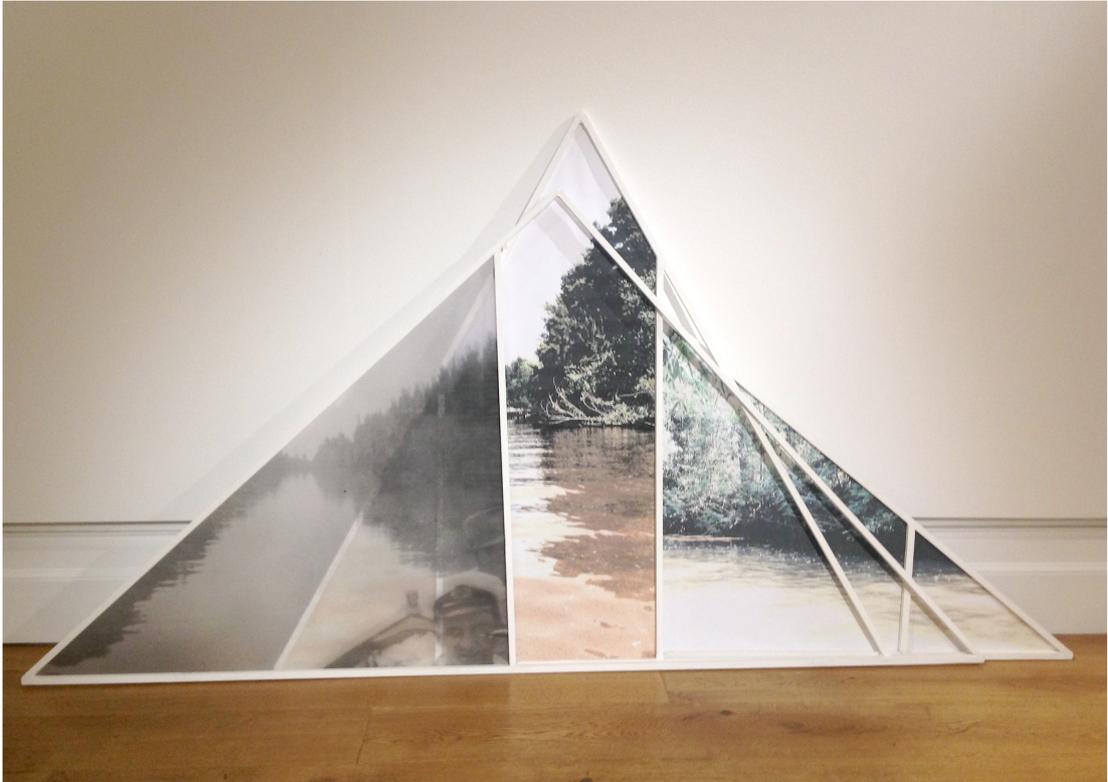
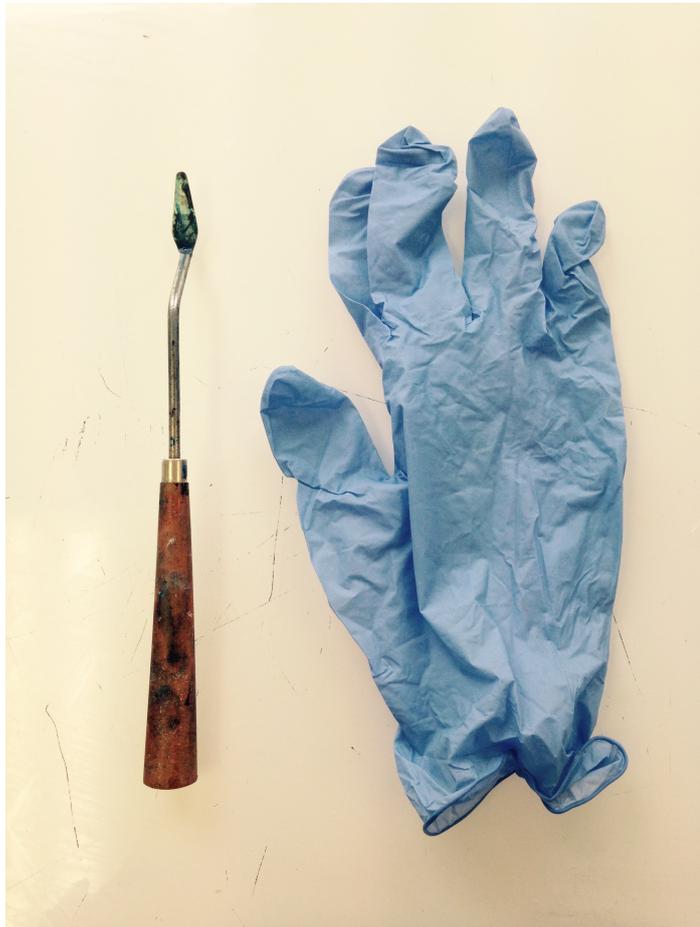


Figure 36, Victoria Ahrens, *River Trilogy*, photo transfers of analogue positives and Digital prints in wooden frames stacked, Peltz Gallery, Birbeck School of Art, London
2016, 210 cm (w) x 120 cm (h) x 25 cm (d)



Figure 37, Victoria Ahrens, River Trilogy ii, digital photographs in wooden frames
Peltz Gallery, Birkbeck School of Art, London, 2016, 150 cm (w) x 110 cm (h) x 90 cm (d)



Figures 38 a/b, Victoria Ahrens, *Forensic*, C-type prints on
90 GSM copy paper, 2016,
25 cm (w) x 35 cm (h) (a)
25 cm (h) x 35 cm (w) (b)

CHAPTER THREE

TIMELY RESISTANCE

3.1 PICTORIAL CONCERNS

Richard Hamilton once stated that, '[a] medium need not sit in isolated purity' but that it is 'achieving a compelling image' that must be the 'first objective.'²³⁰ This research looks to create compelling images then in the light of their liminality, auratic translations and reterritorialization on the surface of the print, and their subsequent outcomes in the gallery. These new print objects, as discussed, depend both on the speed and corrupting codes of the digital, as well as the haptic surfaces and substrates of more traditional printmaking processes. It is in *this crossover* that the cyclical nature of the research can be found, located in the losses and gains, absences and presences, disappearances and reappearances, and teased out of the entropic and affective encounter in situ. These dichotomies recall the age old debates of craft versus art that pictorial practices and early photographic renditions of the world in the 19th century grappled with, at a time when the differences between these two ways of making (the photograph and the print) converged to create a new conceptualization of photographic practice.²³¹ Early fine art photographers sought to disassociate themselves from the 'distracting details [of] vulgar photography,' openly rejecting, 'industrialization and mass-produced goods,'²³² while struggling to establish photographic practice as 'a creative medium, accessible to the mark of the hand and mind, [...] [with the] concerns of [a] poet.'²³³ The attention they paid to the hand-made quality of their photographs 'offer[ed] the opportunity to add "something of a man's soul", as they termed it.'²³⁴ Some of these pictorial concerns have now raised their head again in contemporary practice as photographic discourse lurches from crisis to boom, with the much anticipated 'death' of analogue film, and the proliferation of digital practice spurring a renewed interest in 'alternative' or historic print processes. Where photographers of the late 19th century actively pursued the 'intricacies

²³⁰ **Richard Hamilton**, *New Technology & Printmaking* (1998), Exhibition Catalogue (London, Alan Cristea Gallery, 1998)

²³¹ **Margaret Harker**, *The Linked Ring, The Secession in Photography 1892-1910*, A Royal Photographic Society Publication (London: Heinemann, 1979); **L.Rexer**, *Photography's Antiquarian Avant-Garde, The New Wave in Old Processes*, (New York, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002); See also **Mary Warner Marien**, in *Photography: A Cultural History*, 4th edition (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2014); **Coleman, A.D.** Return of the Suppressed: Pictorialism's Revenge', *Border Crossings*, November 2008, 27, 4

²³² **Mary Warner Marien**, 2014, p. 170

²³³ **Coleman, A.D.**, 2008, p. 27

²³⁴ **L.Rexer**, 2002, p. 13-14

of craft,²³⁵ in the face of ‘purists’ who believed in the ‘precision, clarity and supposed objectivity of images [...] in a regime of truth that valorised scientific precision,’²³⁶ in the 21st century, the dominance of the digital has ‘generated new reflections on how we might experience - and understand - materiality itself,’ while acknowledging ‘our obstinate desire, still, to consume photographs through both vision and touch.’²³⁷ As Riches, Plummer and Wooldridge assert in their essay *Photography’s New Materiality*, ‘the experimental and material photography that resulted from the practices of Pictorialism [...] reappear today in the form of new abstractions [...] that have become a staple of recent art practice.’²³⁸ In order to stand out from the digital crowd then, the ‘alternative’ or early photographic techniques of fixing the image on paper or film provide a return to the hand-made craft and singularity of the earliest photographic forms (the Daguerreotype and the Heliograph), ‘as with many early processes, the end result was a unique image. Photography was not multiple, but singular.’²³⁹ Nevertheless, in the face of multiple fluid iterations across multiple platforms (internet, social media, and digital exhibitions) the digital image has been invested with a flexibility of form and visualisation that belies the notion of the ‘still’ image, the permanence of the fixed photograph, as promised in its earliest incarnations.²⁴⁰ This suggests the craft element of printmaking and printing photographs/ films by hand, though medium specific in the sense that the techniques used require a commitment to the particularities of that craft from the artist (printmaking techniques and photographic techniques), today create a kind of *resistance*: the ‘resistance to high-speed culture.’²⁴¹ This resistance to technological acceleration, finds its counterpart in the artistic discourses of the 19th century, where, according to Margaret Harker, ‘artists and designers hoped that by banding together they could halt the accelerating decline in standards, combat the worst effects of industrialization, and educate people to an appreciation of imaginative art and fine craftsmanship.’²⁴²

²³⁵ **Abigail Solomon-Godeau**, ‘Conventional Pictures’, *The Print Collector’s Newsletter*, vol. 12, no. 5 (November-December, 1981) p.113-114

²³⁶ **Jack Thorndike**, ‘New Terrain’ in *Afterimage*, September/ October 2001, vol. 29, Issue 2, p. 3

²³⁷ **Harriet Riches, Sandra Plummer and Duncan Wooldridge**, ‘Photography’s New Materiality?’ *Photoworks* issue 18, 2011, p. 27

²³⁸ **Riches, Plummer and Wooldridge**, p. 26

²³⁹ *ibid*

²⁴⁰ **Pete Brook**, ‘Photographs Are No Longer Things, They’re Experiences,’ <www.wired.com> [accessed 10/ 07/15] in discussing the digital image with Stephen Mayes, attests that, ‘it is completely fluid [...] it exists in a perpetually fluid environment in which the context is never fixed.’

²⁴¹ **Caroline Kiell**, ‘Hybrid Practices’ *Symposium at Chelsea College of Art*, 2015

²⁴² **Margaret Harker**, *The Linked Ring, The Secession in Photography 1892-1910*, A Royal Photographic Society Publication (London: Heinemann, 1979) p. 42

Particularly in Britain, with the influence of the art critic and artist John Ruskin who ‘extoll[ed] the nobility of the artisan,’ photographers ‘formed new associations [to] [...] establish [...] fresh concepts and put revolutionary ideas into practice.’²⁴³ This meant finding new methods of printing the photographic image in order to move photography from its position as the ‘handmaid of the arts’ to its ‘promotion [...] as a Fine Art,’²⁴⁴ and in this way ‘displac[e] [...] science from its position as the sole source of knowledge [...] [in order to] appreciate pictorialist photos as valid expressions of human experience.’²⁴⁵ For those photographers who looked to pictorial approaches then, *resistance* came in various guises, principally through technical innovations, such as combination printing; impressionistic rendering through the use of ‘new printing papers [...] especially with extra rough surfaces;’²⁴⁶ and through eschewing clarity of focus and sharp contrast, in favour of grey tones and blurring effects: ‘artists should translate exactly how the eye sees [...] should focus on the main subject of a scene, allowing the periphery and the distance to become indistinct.’²⁴⁷ To this end they wrote in publications that had international audiences and came together in groups of like-minded photographers (The Linked Ring in the UK, Wiener Kamera Klub in Vienna, Photo-Club de Paris and the Camera Club of New York, all founded between 1891 and 1894)²⁴⁸, leading to ‘what was arguably the first serious critical and theoretical discourse around photography, with pictorial praxis as its primary reference point.’²⁴⁹ There is no doubt that this resistance led to four decades of pictorial dominance, photographic discussion and theory, and an enduring notion that landscape photography in particular could be always be seen as

²⁴³ *ibid*, p. 55

²⁴⁴ *ibid*, p. 68; As **Harker** states, ‘One of the most important uses of photography before photomechanical printing took over towards the end of the nineteenth century was for the reproduction of paintings’, p. 1

²⁴⁵ **Jack Thorndike**, ‘New Terrain’, in *Afterimage*, Sept/Oct, 2001, vol.29, Issue 2, p. 4-5; As **Henry Peach Robinson**, leading proponent of the Pictorialist movement (he coined the term) stated, ‘if photography is ever to take its proper position as an art it must detach itself from science and live a separate existence’, in Harker, 1979, p. 55

²⁴⁶ **Harker** describes a photograph that was exhibited at the Photographic Society of London’s annual exhibition by Gustav le Gray, which used combination printing for the rendering of the sky and sea. She states that soon after ‘combination printing (the printing in succession of a foreground negative and a cloudy sky negative on to one sheet of paper) was [widely] being practised.’ p. 2; See also **Paul L. Anderson**, *The Fine Art of Photography* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1919) and **Anderson’s Pictorial Photography: It’s Principles and Practice** (Genera Books, 2009 (Reprint of 1917 edition)

²⁴⁷ **Warner Marien’s**, 2014, p.169

²⁴⁸ **Robert Doty**, *Photo-Secession, Photography as Fine Art* (Rochester, New York, George Eastman House, 1960); See also **Peter Bunnell**, *A Photographic Vision: Pictorial Photography, 1889-1923* (Peregrine Smith: Salt Lake City, Utah, 1980); Also **Paul Spencer Sternberger**, *Between Amateur & Aesthete: The Legitimization of Photography as Art in America, 1880-1900* (Albuquerque: University of Mexico Press 2001) and **Claude Nori**, *French Photography from its Origins to the Present* (New York: Pantheon, 1979). See also Harker, 1979, p. 40

²⁴⁹ **A.D. Coleman**, ‘Return of the Suppressed: Pictorialism’s Revenge’, *Border Crossings*; Nov. 2008, 27- 4, p.73

part of an artistic tradition.²⁵⁰ Arguably, it is still loaded with pictorial notions of 'transcendence' and 'universal scope.'²⁵¹ This resistance to the scientific discourses of 'straight' photography and the 'machine aesthetic' of modernism, of 'illumination and sharpness'²⁵² eventually meant re-marginalisation of these ideas, as pictorialism was seen as incongruous with the new realism that emerged in the aftermath of the First and Second World Wars.²⁵³ Even then some practitioners remained active. By the 1960s and 1970s, however, the experimental drive behind art practices renewed interest in early photographic methods as a 'resistance movement [...] in reaction to the commercial dominance of "Kodakification"'.²⁵⁴ So-called 'alternative' techniques meant that artists at the time could experiment with 'the abstraction offered by cyanotype, the ephemerality of gum bi-chromate, and the paper fragility of the calotype, and develop camera-less techniques [...] [in order to] stag[e] critiques of photographic representation that looked forward to the concerns of postmodernism *and* retained a resolute commitment to the medium itself.'²⁵⁵ As Mary Warner Marien describes, pictorialism, therefore, 'introduced a visual fashion [that] [...] mixed painting and photography in a way that anticipated the hybridization of art media in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.'²⁵⁶ These multiple forms of material *resistance* over the decades, coupled with technical

²⁵⁰ **Jack Thorndike**, 2011, 'Pictorialists' romantic images eventually triumphed and, though their otherworldly themes would dominate art photography for four decades, they would never be free of the tension inherent in the project', p. 3

²⁵¹ *ibid*, 2011, p. 4; See also **Margaret Harker**. *The Linked Ring* (London, William Heinemann Ltd, 1979) and Harker's *Pictorial Photographs: Record of Photographic Salon 1895* (Chiswick, UK: Charles Wittingham and Co., 1895)

²⁵² **Peter Wollen**, 'Photography and Aesthetics', *Readings and Writings* (London: Verso and New Left Books), p. 180-181. See also, **Sophie Hackett**, in 'Beaumont Newhall and a Machine, Exhibiting Photography at the Museum of Modern Art in 1937', *Etudes Photographiques*, no. 23 May, 2009 online at: <https://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/3428> [accessed 12/03/16] where she describes the way the photographer [Paul] Strand 'equates the camera with the machine [...] a machine aesthetic [...] producing only one legitimate type of produce, or photograph'; See also the groundbreaking exhibition at MOMA, New York, in 1937, curated by the museum librarian Beaumont Newhall, and who wrote the exhibition catalogue, in which he referred to the 'machine aesthetic' of photography, and 'amassed 841 items to survey the first one hundred years of the medium and its aesthetic possibilities'. See also **Paul Strand's** article, 'Alfred Stieglitz and a Machine' in *America and Alfred Steiglitz*, ed. Waldo Frank, Lewis Mumford, et al. (New York: The Literary Guild, 1934) in which he details the key aesthetic principles of the machine aesthetic

²⁵³ According to **Margaret Harker**, 'From 1912 forward a marked change is apparent in the work of [leading pictorialists], who moved from the rendition of mood and atmosphere to heightened realistic content [...] [and] promoted the concept of the New Realism [...] after the war,' 1979, p. 134. The notion of sharp focus therefore and human interest stories were the dominant trend in the after war years. See also the MOMA website which states that 'America in the 1940s and 50s [...] saw the apotheosis of photojournalism and few photographers were unaffected by its rise,' http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/phev/hd_phev.htm [accessed 12/08/15].

²⁵⁴ **Riches, Plummer and Wooldridge**, 2011, p. 28

²⁵⁵ *ibid*

²⁵⁶ **Warner Marien**, 2014, p. 7

experimentation, have led to Postmodern discourses in the 80s and 90s and to the so-called *New Formalism* of photographic concerns in the 21st century. This term refers to the contemporary practice of photography ‘in the expanded field’, a practice that, according to Wesley Brown, ‘continues to lay the groundwork initiated by the prior generation, creating work that deals with the question, “What is photography?”’²⁵⁷ The pictorial turn is present and visible as ‘notions of indeterminate, circular meaning [have given] the blurred image a new lease of life as a multivalent symbol, alluding to transient and fragmentary moments, fuzzy or disfigured identities, or indistinct and ambiguous knowledge.’²⁵⁸ It is no small irony that these historical ‘resistances’ to the ‘machine aesthetic’ of photography have come full circle today: in light of new technological advances and the accelerated viewing of images, even pictorialist photographs of the 19th and early 20th centuries have seen an increase in market value and a new found presence in photographic writing as they are exhibited, collected and sold at auction for unprecedented amounts.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ **J. Wesley Brown**, 2015 in his website *We Can Shoot Too*:

<<http://wecanshoottoo.blogspot.co.uk/2011/04/ophotography-on-photography.html>> [accessed 12/03/15] MOMA, in their exhibition, *Photography 2013* describes this new concern with contemporary photographic practice as ‘porous practices—grounded in photography books, mass media, photomontage, music, film, and science—mark[ing] a shift in the understanding of what a picture can be. Photography, in this expanded discursive field, [...] underscor[es] the idea that there has never been just *one* type of photography; the artists in this exhibition explore dialectical reversals between abstraction and representation, documentary and conceptual processes, the uniquely handmade and the mechanically reproducible, and analog and digital techniques. They thus turn pictures into questions, creatively reassessing the meaning of image-making today.’ MOMA online: <<http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2013/newphotography/>> *Photography 2013*, September 14, 2013–January 6, 2014

²⁵⁸ **Marien**, 2014, p.444; **Jean-François Chevrier** discusses this pictorial turn in relation photographic practice in ‘The Adventures of the Picture Form in the History of Photography’, Douglas Fogle (ed.) *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography 1960-1982* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre, 2003); See also **Chevrier’s** *Photography After Conceptual Art*. Association of Art Historians panel, London, 4 April, unpublished, 2004

²⁵⁹ **Coleman, A.D.**, 2008, p. 72, ‘Recent events as far-flung as the record-setting 2006 sale at auction, in New York City, of *The Pond- Moonlight* from 1904, a gem of Edward Steichen’s pictorialist period, and the Vancouver Art Gallery’s 2008 mounting of “TruthBeauty: Pictorialism and the Photograph as Art, 1845-1945”, an extensive survey of pictorialist work from North America, the UK, Europe, Japan and Australia, demonstrate that the photographic ideas gathered under the loose heading of pictorialism have climbed out of the dustbin of history, brushed themselves off and stepped into the mainstream again.’ See also **Marien**, 2014, p. 444: ‘the art photography exemplified by Alfred Steiglitz did not lose its appeal for the public but considerably increased in monetary value.’

Let us be clear, however, that this is not to say that Pictorialism as a discreet set of photographic conventions based on the cultural currency of the 19th century has been resuscitated. As Riches, Plummer and Wooldridge assert, 'there is no simple return to the medium's early days here: it cannot simply be recovered, there is no going back'.²⁶⁰ Rather its influence on contemporary practices since the 60s and its ability to create *resistance through time* to other more dominant concerns in photographic theory and practice should be acknowledged. With the phasing out of analogue photographic darkrooms, materials and film on University photography courses and in studio practices across the globe, a thriving art scene has emerged which deliberately embraces these older materials and techniques as the 'seedbed for [...] the "alternative process" movement' creating images 'in the context of [...] "open photography", whose hallmarks include [...] the entire creative toolkit of the medium.'²⁶¹ Groups such as the *London Alternative Photography Collective* and *alternativephotography.com* online community are giving talks and curating exhibitions across London and abroad, with workshops on how to make photographs using salt printing, gum bi-chromate or cyanotype processes.²⁶² It is not that these processes were ever lost to the photographic community, rather that the material concerns of the hand-printed, which have persisted throughout the twentieth century practiced 'as a parallel, if sometimes hidden, tributary of the silver-based medium', are finding a new place in contemporary photographic discourse as 'transformations in the digital technologies [...] have provoked anxiety of the [...] loss of material presence [of the photograph] [...] encountered on screen, if at all.'²⁶³ In other words, where the digital has taken over as the dominant medium in

²⁶⁰ Riches, Plummer and Wooldridge, 2011, p.29

²⁶¹ A.D. Coleman, 2008, p. 74; Since July 2013, there has been a resurgence of interest in alternative photography processes in the UK and Europe, most notably at Unseen Photo Festival (Amsterdam), Paris Photo, and Brighton Photo Biennial. Michael Hoppen Gallery in London, London Analogue Festival, Analogue Mania (Romania), Nord Photography (Norway), Revelat Festival 2014 (Barcelona), Analog Photography Berlin and the Dutch Alternative Photography Collective. Alternative photography processes are also being used widely by organisations such as the Center for Alternative Photography and George Eastman House in New York City, the Goa Centre for Alternative Photography (GOA-CAP), Alternative Photography Symposium, Ontario, Gold Street Studios in Australia and Photo Gallery International, Tokyo. With organisations such as Silverprint, The Impossible Project, Lomography and Bostick and Sullivan supplying chemistry and kits across the globe this Interest looks set to continue.' as described on the website for the Shadows Symposium on photography at Camberwell College of Art, 18 May 2015, <<http://lapc.format.com/shadows>> [accessed 10/05/15]. This demonstrates the level of renewed interest in historic processes and their merging with digital and contemporary practices.

²⁶² London Alternative Photography Collective website states, 'The LAPC aims to make alternative photography techniques accessible, exciting and innovative. We regularly curate exhibitions and run affordable/free workshops and demonstrations', <<http://lapc.format.com/>> [accessed 10/08/15]

²⁶³ Riches, Plummer and Wooldridge, p.27-28

photography, and often is encountered in the immaterial world of online forums such as Facebook, Instagram and Flickr (with these photographic images rarely taking the form of a printed object), 'alternative' or historic photographic processes have, arguably, found their resurgence as a consequence of this material loss.²⁶⁴ It is no small irony that Instagram for instance offers an 'aging' filter; As Jörg Colberg asserts, 'photography has developed to such an extent that some of the most popular applications of cutting-edge technology make things look like what you would get before that technology existed. The very technologies that made film cameras obsolete are now being used to produce photographs that look like film cameras.'²⁶⁵ This resistance to the dominant trend has helped to re-contextualized pictorial concerns in light of discussions of its possible extinction, which has meant, ironically, its rebirth. This is not, however, merely a 'withdrawal into nostalgia [...]' but is more about 'taking a stand or making a statement against this modern, digital, disposable age of mass production and consumption',²⁶⁶ resisting the acceleration of the networked image and 'signal[ing] an intention to lead slower, more 'grounded' lives.'²⁶⁷ Where the pictorialists of the 19th century were often referred to as Secessionists, from the word *secession*, or *secede*, meaning 'a withdrawal, a break away from, a rejection', so this rejection of the full throttle of digital and online platforms that have dislocated the contemporary image and drawn it into the immaterial, mean that a new resistance can be found in the 'ground resist' of printmaking processes, as it locates itself at the centre of alternative photographic discourses once again, and reterritorializes the hybrid prints I am making within the parameters of these contemporary debates.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁴ **Peter Moseley**, in *Material Matters, The Aesthetic Potential of Surface and Texture in the 'Post-Print Age'*, Impact 9 Conference Paper, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China (China Academy of Art Press, 2015), states that 'Apparently over 1.5 billion new photographs are shared every day on Facebook, WhatsApp and Snapchat alone. In comparison, very few contemporary images take material form. Certainly, galleries and museums remain in business, newspapers, magazines and advertisements are still published and some visual artists sell physical work, but the overwhelming majority of images now are produced, viewed and distributed electronically.' p. 331

²⁶⁵ **Jörg M. Colberg** 'The New Pictorialism', *Conscientious Photography Magazine*, 2013-2014 <<http://cphmag.com/the-new-pictorialism/>> [accessed 09/03/15]. **Peter Brook** writes about the Instagram phenomenon for *Wired magazine* online, 'Photographs are No Longer Things, They're Experienced', online at <www.wired.com> [accessed on 20/05/15]

²⁶⁶ **Jo Waterhouse**, *Indie Craft* (London: Laurence King, 2010); See also Susan Luckman, *Craft and the Creative Economy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

²⁶⁷ **Goeffrey Craig and Wendy**, *Slow Living* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006) p. 2. Also **Susan Luckman**, (see above) p. 24

²⁶⁸ **Ground resist** is a term used in etching practice whereby a waxy substance is laid on top of the plate in order to provide a resistance on which to draw your image. Only the areas that have been removed by the drawing will receive the acid and create the mark on the plate. This is recreated in photo-etchings through the polymer coating on solar plates or the liquid light emulsion painted onto zinc, copper or aluminium plates.

Resist, ground, resist

*Light sensitive liquid or yellow polymer resist
on the metal plate becomes resistance.*

*The light touches the plate
obscured by the image, by the mark, resistance gives way to trace.*

*Latent image, barely visible on the surface - water and acid develops it
into a permanent state*

The water resists the river, the plate, the image.

Resist, ground, resist.

*The bodies of those lost in the river Paraná resist political repression, resists forgetting
the river, in its own way resists their disappearance*

microbial, microscopic: elements of their bodies fuse in a liquid resist of their own.

*The smallest particles resist total obscurity
in the brown waters,
as brown and yellow as the resist on the plate itself*

Ground down, grounded, the resist ground, resists oblivion.

*forensic resist, resisting closure, improbable microscopic particles
resist light, resist water,
resist, ground resist.*

This 'ground' as it is known, becomes the 'resist', the screen from which the plate is exposed to the light. See Tate online at www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/e/etching for an explanation of a ground in etching. See also **Griffiths, Anthony**, *Prints and Printmaking: An Introduction to the History and Techniques* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); **Maloney, Barbara**, 'Photo Intaglio- An Overview' in *Alternative Photography*, 2014
<<http://www.alternativephotography.com/wp/processes/photogravure/photo-intaglio-an-overview>> [accessed 30/ 09/14]

3.2 SLOW EMBODIMENT

Once back in the cabin, its shaky foundations and creaking wooden beams reminding me of its organic, perishable structure, the exposed and developed plates can be left to harden. Now that the surface has taken on its permanent marks, it can be inked up by hand. I use a piece of cardboard, folded up, as my brush and saturate the plate with the thick, viscous etching ink. It has to cover the whole surface. I apply pressure to it so that it falls into all its troughs and fissures. Then scrunching up a piece of softened scrim, I gently start to lift the excess ink off the plate, with a circular motion, making sure I am not applying too much pressure that would cause any abrasions to the soft surface. It is a meditative process, and takes time. My right arm gets tired and I have to pause. Slowly but surely the image appears, as the ink settles in the pitted marks and is wiped clean, now using tissue, from the rest of the plate. It is ready to print. In order to do this, the paper substrate I am looking to print it onto must be wetted, dampened. I place the paper into the river, to soak up more traces of the site in its fibres, and prepare it for the printing process under the rollers of the press. Twice wetted in the site of its material presence, the plate and the paper substrate touch under the blankets of the press under immense pressure. I push the handle round and force their surfaces to meet, in this way transferring the image from the plate to the paper, and giving it a site of permanence on the paper weave. I feel grounded in the process, grounded in the place of my childhood, as I grind the press, the process keeping me in touch with the history of the place. It touches me, as I touch the plate.

Where, then, does this research project sit in relation to this new resistance, this new grounding? If photographic practice, the hand made and experimental of what Geoffrey Batchen has termed 'after but not beyond photography,'²⁶⁹ now addresses these new concerns in relation to digital repercussions, how can both the use of craft practices as well as digital prints be reconciled as a resistance to dominant discourses? Where Jacques Rancière proposes that the art work is 'readily ascribed a virtue of resistance [...] [in that] it resists both time and the concept, and [therefore] [...] as a matter of

²⁶⁹ **Goefrey Batchen**, *Each Wild Idea: Writing, Photography, History* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT, 2002), p.109

course, [...] resist[s] forms of power,²⁷⁰ then the answer lies in the fluidity of responses that 'a post-conceptual hybrid investigation of the medium' implies, both as a resistance to the extinction of traditional photographic practice, the subject matter of the Paraná and to the displaced territory of the digital as the dominant trend.²⁷¹ These processes and prints can become part of the multiple contemporary responses printmakers and photographers are engaged with in relation to the changing face of these traditions that are increasingly being debated and discussed in the proliferation of symposia on the subject. Conferences such as the *Hybrid Practices within Printmaking* Symposium (24 April 2015) at Chelsea College of Art and Bergen Academy of Art and Design;²⁷² *Shadows: Traditional Photography Techniques in a Digital World*, Photography Symposium (18 May 2015) at Camberwell College of Art;²⁷³ and the *IMPACT 9* Printmaking Conference in China, *Printmaking in the Post-Print Age* (22- 27 September 2015) .²⁷⁴ All of these have addressed the role of the digital in contemporary photographic and printmaking discourses. Many artists and writers whose work is presented in these forums have their own notion of what the hybrid and experimental cross over means to them and to the medium, in particular in relation to hybrid print and photographic practices. Writers and artists such as Ralph Kiggell, in his 'Bio-Graphs: Wood Print as Memorial,' make a connection between craft processes and the age old communion of the hand with nature that goes back to the earliest types of mark-making, noting how 'the experience of working with one's hands slows the mind down' especially

²⁷⁰ Jacques Ranciere, *Dissensus, On Politics and Aesthetics* (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010) p. 169

²⁷¹ Riches, Plummer and Wooldridge, 2011, p. 30

²⁷² **Hybrid Practice within Printmaking**, Edwardian Rooms, Chelsea College of Art, 24 April 2015: <<http://events.arts.ac.uk/event/2015/4/24/Hybrid-Practices-within-Printmaking/&book=true->> [accessed 12/10/15] 'The symposium will explore a range of approaches to printmaking in which ideas and intentions are allied to process and technique, resulting in what can best be described as **hybrid practices**. Current practice draws upon a rich history of printmaking both in terms of technique and the means through which images, as vehicles for ideas, are distributed. With the advent of digital technologies, the opportunities for artists to combine processes and approaches has never been greater.'

²⁷³ **Shadows: Traditional Photography Techniques in a Digital World** at Wilson's Road Lecture Theatre, Camberwell College of Art, 18 May 2015- <<http://events.arts.ac.uk/event/2015/5/18/Shadows-Symposium/> > [accessed 10/ 05/15]; The Photography and the Archive Research Centre at London College of Communication and Camberwell College of Art worked together with the London Alternative Photography Collective to create a symposium exploring the use of traditional photography processes by contemporary artists and researchers, as part of the Moose on the Loose Biennale of Research in May 2015, programmed by Melanie King, Director of the London Alternative Photography Collective Project

²⁷⁴ **IMPACT** stands for 'International Multi-disciplinary Printmaking, Artists, Concepts and Techniques': 'The thrust of IMPACT has been to create an academic forum whilst maintaining a showcase for print practitioners. The Impact 9 International conference will be held in China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China from September 22nd – September 26th, 2015. The conference theme is 'Printmaking in the Post-Print Age', <<http://www.uwe.ac.uk/sca/research/cfpr/dissemination/conferences/impact.html>> [accessed 10/05/15]

in response to the speed of the digital,²⁷⁵ or Katarzyna Zimna, who argues that in the digital age 'a perfect edition of identical prints made in a traditional way appears unnatural, as if someone was trying to hide his or her human nature or challenge the machine, but also can be considered a sentimental act'.²⁷⁶ The debate oscillates between the resurgence of the hand-made and craft on the one hand as a nostalgic or sentimental response to the changes imposed by the digital and online image, and on the other hand, 'the [new] value that ways of making which require slow looking or intensive material explorations [can] have in this accelerated system' in which images are distributed 'at speed.'²⁷⁷ Certainly, as Peter Moseley expresses, the greater distribution of images online, for example, allows for the greater *visibility* of prints otherwise held in closed circulation, while adding greater value to them as 'rare' objects:

The digital and online image offer opportunities for printmakers: there is a much larger audience able to see representations of their work and – as the international strength of the art market suggests – there is at least the possibility that the fetishistic and aesthetic value of their, comparatively speaking, rare material objects may be enhanced.²⁷⁸

Where the print has benefited from this new collaboration, adding value to the hand made in the face of digital proliferation, bringing back the status of the photograph as a hand-made object and as a craft, so the digital has also benefited traditional print processes in its contribution to fast and accurate image making for positives and negatives, scanning and online imaging, bringing new hybrid prints to a global audience. These prints I make, therefore, are able to straddle both and all of these elements, being

²⁷⁵ **Ralph Kiggell**, *Bio-Graphs: Wood Print as Memorial*, Impact 9 Conference paper, Hangzhou (China: China Academy of Art Press, 2015) See also, **Fleming Jeffries**, 'Material Empathy: Making/ Un-Making/Re-Making to Navigate the Undercurrents of Cultural Experience', *Impact 9 Conference*, Hangzhou, (China: China Academy of Art press, 2015) p. 326.

²⁷⁶ **Katarzyna Zimna**, *Autographic, Play with the Graphic Medium in a Post-Print Age*, Impact 9 Printmaking Conference, Hangzhou (China: China Academy of Art Press, 2015) p. 154. The camera as machine is discussed in footnote 236

²⁷⁷ **Jo Stockham**, 'Negligent Eye', Impact 9 Printmaking Conference, 'Printmaking in the Post-Print Age', China Academy of Art, Hangzhou (China: China Academy of Art Press, 2015)

²⁷⁸ **Peter Moseley**, 'Material Matters: The Aesthetic Potential of Surface and Texture' in the 'Post-Print' Age, *Impact 9 Printmaking Conference* (China Academy of Art: Hangzhou, 2015) p. 331

fast and slow at the same time, material and ephemeral co-existing in different and multiple platforms at once. The image etched into the metal polymer matrix, therefore, is achieved by a mixture of digital and hand-made processes, from which I am able to produce a series of prints as tactile objects on the one hand, or even, if desired, present the plate itself (the matrix) as a final outcome. As Simna points out, '[where] some artists do show their matrices together with prints or as independent works [...] such activities [...] play with the proper function or role of a matrix. By doing so the artists change well-established rules.'²⁷⁹ In this way I resist the traditions of the medium, infringing on 'taboo[s] because [...] the presence of the plate confirms the suspicion that forms the invisible subtext of every printed image: that its roots are elsewhere, that it is the product of another.'²⁸⁰ The presence of the matrix then reminds us of this invisible subtext, of its roots in a ground resistant to history (figures 33, 34). On the other hand, these hybrid prints can also exist as photographic reproductions online (in a blog, on a website, in a PDF or jpeg, tiff or raw file), giving them visibility in a transient and global context. As Haas argues, 'hi-tech and the handmade are not intrinsically at odds with one another [...] Utilizing digital technology connects us [as printmakers and photographers] with contemporary culture in a way that applying a hard-ground cannot – it makes us participants in the present.'²⁸¹ This resistance means that this research can participate in the present, be part of the contemporary discourse through these crossover practices. Where the hybridity of the work formulates this connection, it is in the river itself that further resistance can be grounded. The resistance is therefore multifaceted, as the material encounter resists its own losses, to turn the landscape into a new contemporary pictorial narrative. In 'keeping in touch' with the hand-made elements of the process, while also applying digital translations to them in the slow embodiment of the hybrid print, I can address these contemporary debates, while at the same time incorporating the history of political disappearance as a resistant memory, and as a resistance to dominant political discourses that quickly 'lose touch' with these thirty-five year old narratives.

²⁷⁹ **Katarzyna Zimna**, 'Autograph, Play with the Graphic Medium in a Post-Print Age,' *Impact 9, Printmaking Conference* (China Academy of Art: Hangzhou, 2015) p. 153. The matrix is therefore a unique piece in itself, and plays its part in the fragmented narrative of the research.

²⁸⁰ **Ruth Pelzer-Montada**, 'Authenticity in Printmaking – a Red Herring?', *2nd Impact Conference*, 2001, p. 4, online at: <<http://www.uiah.fi/conferences/impact/pelzer/Pelzer-Montada.pdf>> [accessed 12/02/15]

²⁸¹ **Haas**, 2009

3.3 MAKING NOT TAKING

This reliance on the touch of traditional processes and the resistance to the purely digital in my work is part of a contemporary concern then, seen in the work of artists such as Ori Gersht, Susan Derges, Sally Mann and Chloe Dewe Mathews, whose photographic works engage with the material, analogue and traditional in the depiction of landscapes of loss and disappearance. In Sally Mann's *Deep South* series (2005) (figure 39), for example, she records photographs of the Mississippi using the wet collodion process in situ, chronicling the landscape through a pictorial interpretation of the place and engaging with the history of photography in the use of this early photographic method.²⁸² This process, which uses 'a solution of cellulose nitrate to coat a glass plate' and expose it while 'still wet', was one Mann began using in the 90s 'inspired by a cache of [...] glass-plate negatives she had discovered decades before.'²⁸³ Suzanne Schuweiler refers to them as 'resembl[ing] a nineteenth century tonalist painting with its subdued, misty light.'²⁸⁴ Drawing on pictorial notions of the late 1800s, Mann's 'images are soft focused, flawed and often dark, obscured.'²⁸⁵ The implication is that in her depiction of these places she creates, what Riches, Plummer and Wooldridge have termed 'a seductive encounter,' to draw the viewer in, while using collodion coated 8 x 10 plates to 'cultivate [...] *the look* of the outmoded, *the touch* of the hand-made, as the [...] collodion's pour quite literally traces the presence of the artist's hand.'²⁸⁶ This hand-made material encounter with the landscape binds with it the memory of place, of Southern tragedies, the violence of slavery, and of the civil war,²⁸⁷ as the plates 'memorialize [...]

²⁸² The wet collodion process was invented by Frederick Scott Archer in 1851, an involved adding a soluble iodide to a solution of collodion (cellulose nitrate) and coating a glass plate with the mixture. In the darkroom the plate was immersed in a solution of silver nitrate to form silver iodide. The plate, still wet, was exposed in the camera. It was then developed by pouring a solution of pyrogallic acid over it and was fixed with a strong solution of sodium thiosulfate, for which potassium cyanide was later substituted. Immediate developing and fixing were necessary because, after the collodion film had dried, it became waterproof and the reagent solutions could not penetrate it.' *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Wet Collodion Process, Photography online: <<http://www.britannica.com/technology/wet-collodionprocess>> [accessed 10/09/15];

See also the feature on Wet Collodion in <www.alternativephotography.com> [accessed 10/09/15]

²⁸³ L. Rexer, *Photography's Antiquarian Avant-Garde, The New Wave in Old Processes* (Harry Abrams Inc.: New York, 2002) p.8; <<http://www.tufts.edu/programs/mmal/fah189/2002/nmadahar/sallymann.html>> [accessed 02/09/15]

²⁸⁴ Suzanne Schuweiler, 'Sally Mann's South', *South Eastern College Art Conference Review*, Vol. XVI, Issue .3, p.325-336, 2013

²⁸⁵ *ibid*, p. 330

²⁸⁶ Riches, Plummer and Wooldridge, 2011, p. 29

²⁸⁷ David Levi-Strauss states in a review of Mann's work that, 'the land shown here is of the Civil War South', in Sally Mann: Edwynn Houk Gallery, *ArtForum* (February 1998), p. 31; Also Lisa Barnett in Sally Mann, *Art Criticism*

the[se] losses by presenting a vanishing and increasingly unrealistic images of the South,' obscured by the presence of the photographer and the fragile imperfections of the collodion process.²⁸⁸ In a recent interview Mann states:

Collodion is the ideal medium for such landscapes. It is contemplative, memorial [...] In the face of some extraordinary sight or place you do not just take a picture. It is ceremonial. I am not a religious person, but there is an experience of communion in wet-plate photography. It is not a drive-by shooting.²⁸⁹

In using this historic process then, Mann not only resists the digital in the 'making' of her images (she has stated the 'importance of the making of the analogue photograph rather than the taking of the digital image'), but also resists time: the collodion process not only comes from another time, but also *takes* time to use and master, time in which Mann is able to 'commune' with nature, contemplate the imagery in relation to the physical process of developing them.²⁹⁰ By only providing broad titles or in some cases, no titles, for her work, she does not 'specify the [exact] location [...] free[ing] the viewer to make associations that are unconstrained by specific site.'²⁹¹ Her photographs transcend 'a specific present [...] creat[ing] in the viewer a nostalgic longing – or perhaps a dread – for a mythical past,'²⁹² and deliberately blur: fusing the landscape of the past and the present in an uncanny (or unhomey) sense of dread and myth. These bind to create another resistance, the resistance to the determinate clarity of automated photography, of the machine aesthetic. Here time stands still, and yet, somehow 'the repeated visual references to splits, cuts, and fissures in the Southern topography [...] can be read as

14, no. 1 (1999), p. 29 describes Mann as 'a Civil War photographer [who] [...] is able to pack history into her photographs; affording a vision of the Deep South, literally through the lens of another era';

²⁸⁸ **Suzanne Schuweiler**, 2013, p. 328

²⁸⁹ **Sally Mann** in an interview with **Lyle Rexer**, from *Photography's Antiquarium Avant-Garde: The New Wave in Old Processes* (Harry Abrams Inc.: New York, 2001), p.80-81; See also **Mary Panzer** in *In with the Old*, American Photo, May/June 2002, p. 36

²⁹⁰ **Riches, Plummer and Wooldridge**, 2011, p. 29

²⁹¹ **Suzanne Schuweiler**, 2013, p. 328

²⁹² *ibid*, p. 328

part of a layered visual vocabulary capable of speaking to a specific traumatic history.’²⁹³ Her hand-made prints, therefore, can be said to create a dialogue with the past, which teases out a story that appears to lie beyond the pictorial plane, a narrative that plays out in the space of the viewer’s mind. As Simon Schama has written, ‘if our entire landscape tradition is the product of shared culture, it is by the same token a tradition built from a rich deposit of myths, memories and obsessions.’²⁹⁴ These myths and memories are there in Mann’s work, and also appear in my own. The landscape of the Tallahatchie river are described as, ‘a deep, muddy backwater [...] rising in north-western Mississippi before dropping into the dark, flat marsh lands known as “the Delta”[...] [is] a place of shockingly violent racial history.’²⁹⁵ This description is reminiscent of the Delta of the Paraná I work with in my images, though in my work the violence is of a different source, the pervasive sense of loss is much the same. The traumatic history is not explicitly referenced in Mann’s work, however, as the landscape creates its own subject matter in the fissures, splits and cuts, the collodion process ‘interfering’ with the surface texture of the print. Yet both work together to depict a melancholic materiality. Even the vague, yet poetic title ‘Deep South’, when used in conjunction with the material presence her use of historic processes imbues, provides the viewer with a tacit nudge to all the possible histories of the south, while specifying none. The collodion process Mann uses also serves to suggest another nuanced reading of the work: collodion liquid was used as a binder to heal wounds during the American Civil War.²⁹⁶ As Schulwieler suggests, the collodion she uses, then, can be said to ‘serve [...] a symbolic function in [her] photographs as a salve to heal the wounds of Southern history’, or as the liquid that provides the ‘magic touch’.²⁹⁷ It is as if she is saving the Southern landscape from itself, licking its wounds with the wet plate process, wetting her hands in the Mississippi Delta and touching the past to bind it, with collodion, to a palatable and pictorial scar, one that is beautiful, vanishing and tells the story of its violent past in an oblique manner. In my research, my processes do not have such a neat connection to material per se (the polymer coating is industrially made and was originally used in electronic circuits and

²⁹³ **Alison R. Hafera**, *Taken in Water: the Photographs as Memorial Image in Sally Mann’s Deep South*, Department of Art History MA thesis, Chapel Hill, 2007, p. 12

²⁹⁴ **Simon Schama**, *Landscape and Memory* (Vintage Books: New York, 1996 [1999]), p.140

²⁹⁵ **Alison R. Hafera**, 2007, p. 4

²⁹⁶ **Suzanne Schulweiler**, 2013 p. 334

²⁹⁷ *ibid*, p. 334

label printing),²⁹⁸ yet they are 'touched' by time and the hand, wetted in similar notions. However, unlike Mann, I do not eschew the digital, nor do I place the traditional in opposition to it, as this brings with it the danger of 'sealing it off from the evolution of photography,' as Richard West has stated.²⁹⁹

My research is, nevertheless, bound by some of the same connected resistances: as the polymer 'ground' binds to the surface of the plate, the water washes away the excess resist while etching the image indelibly to it, and binding it to the surface of the metal matrix. As Moseley suggests, 'prints are multi-dimensional – they have, amongst other attributes, texture, weight, tactility, surface and reflectance – their very materiality colours audience affective and cognitive response.'³⁰⁰ These attributes are present here, as Mann's seductive and textured surfaces provoke an affective reply. As Michel de Certeau observed, 'places are fragmentary [with] inward turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be folded but like stories held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state, symbolizations encysted in the paint or the pleasure of the body.'³⁰¹ So Mann's images remain ambiguous and enigmatic, though we are aware of the potential historical implications behind it, they turn inwards provoking this affective response. My prints use their infra-thin, textured surface to uncover a pictorial rendition of the landscape, while alluding in their titles (e.g. *They were Hanging There*, figure 24) to the trauma the landscape has endured in the past. These titles are taken from witness testimony of what happened there and as a result are imbued with the traumatic narratives through these references. In many ways, my research works with the opposite binaries to Mann's, however: where her work is fully committed to singular historical processes and the obscure surfaces and accidents of the hand-made, mine is bound by a hybridity that embraces newer processes while collaborating with the historical in a dialogue that speaks to the past yet finds its material outcomes in the present and the multivalent.

²⁹⁸ See **Diane Longley's** *Printmaking with Photopolymer Plates: Versatile Printmaking Technique for Artists/Students* (Illumination Press: Santa Monica, CA, 2003) and **Scott Barnes**, *Making Photogravures with Polymer Plates*, (ARTandWATER editions, 2013)

²⁹⁹ **Richard West**, The Pensive Image, talks as part of the MA Photographic Studies Degree Show, Ambika P3, Westminster University, London, 5/09/15

³⁰⁰ As **Peter Moseley** suggests in his essay Material Matters: The Aesthetic Potential of Surface and Texture in the 'Post-Print' Age', *Impact 9 Printmaking Conference* (China Academy of Art: Hangzhou, 2015), p. 331

³⁰¹ **Michel de Certeau**, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984) p. 108



Figure 39, Sally Mann, *Deep South*, 2003, wet collodion print, various sizes

Susan Derges' practice, on the other hand, depends on this sense of immersion, this dialogue with the landscape and its direct affective response. Derges 'captures [the] ebb and flow [of the river] in photograms³⁰² – one of the earliest forms of photography using a method of taking a picture that doesn't involve a camera or a lens.'³⁰³ It was her move to Dartmoor and walks by the River Taw that saw Derges make the decision to get rid of the camera as a tool, and work directly with light sensitized paper and the riverbed. As she details, 'I was fed up with being the wrong side of the camera. The lens was in the way. I was stuck behind it and the subject was in front. I wanted to get closer to the subject.'³⁰⁴ This closeness meant creating photograms from inside the water, by 'ma[king] light boxes out of sheets of aluminium, attach[ing] the light sensitive paper (Cibachrome, so it makes a positive negative) to the bottom sheet [...] with double-sided tape – the paper gets wet in the process – then fix[ing] a lid on top to protect the paper from light until exposure.'³⁰⁵ This process fixes an image of the water, from the standpoint of the water itself, pictorial perspectives turned on their head. Derges uses a flashlight to expose the paper to the riverbed for a few moments only, in this way, 'us[ing] photography to display the quality of the water which is not visible to the human eye and creat[ing] a new and exciting vocabulary for the medium [...] whilst calling to mind the earliest photographic processes.'³⁰⁶ Her work embodies the water, marks a bodily experience of that water, incorporates it (figure 40). Where Mann works in situ to capture the river landscape through a time consuming historic process, so Derges is able to capture it from within. She asserts that she had, 'long liked the idea of the river as a metaphor for memory [...] The river being the conscious thing containing memories – all

³⁰² **Photograms** are 'a unique art form requiring only the action of light on a photosensitive substrate.' According to www.photograms.org,> [accessed 12/08/15]. 'Photograms are made by placing an object in contact with a photosensitive surface in the dark, and exposing both to light. Where the object blocks the light, either partially or fully, its shadow is recorded on the paper. The term 'photogram' seems to have appeared around 1925. The photogram artist is not able to predict the results in the viewfinder of a camera, and often works in the dark. The final image is only apparent after physical and chemical manipulation or development,' *Camera-less Photographic techniques*, Victoria and Albert Museum, text originally written for *Shadow Catchers: Camera-less Photography* on display at the V&A Kensington between 13 October 2010 and 20 February 2011, [online] <<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/c/camera-lessphotography-techniques/>> [accessed 12/06/15] See also **Gordon Baldwin**, *Looking at Photographs: A Guide to Technical Terms* Los Angeles and London (J. Paul Getty Museum in association with the British Museum Press), 1991

³⁰³ **Annalisa Barbieri**, 'The Secret Life of the Riverbed, Susan Derges' photographs capture the exquisite organic patterns of water', *The Independent*, Arts and Entertainment, Tuesday 08 September 1998, [online] at <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/the-secret-life-of-the-riverbed-1196767.html>>[accessed 12/02/16]

³⁰⁴ **Susan Derges** in **Alistair Hicks'** s, Susan Derges: 'The whole night became my darkroom', *Deutsche Bank Art magazine* [online], at <<http://db-artmag.com/archiv/04/e/thema-london-derges.html> >[accessed 19/05/15]

³⁰⁵ **Annalisa Barbieri**, 1998

³⁰⁶ **Charlotte Cotton**, V & A assistant curator of photography, in **Annalisa Barbieri**, 1998

the things it carries with it such as rocks, pebbles, shale. It is nature's circulatory system.³⁰⁷ In this way, Derges is breathing lifeblood into this early photographic process, recording memory in the river, and returning photography to its origins of picturing or writing with light. As Ritchin discusses, the relationship with photography in the digital era has altered our relationship with memory,³⁰⁸ yet Derges, by using one of the oldest processes for recording an object with light, counteracts and resists the confusion and 'forgetfulness' of the digital, turning the landscape itself into her darkroom.³⁰⁹ The work is life size in its final outcome, which further magnifies the human scale of the environment, while the human and the landscape are brought together with 'no intermediaries.'³¹⁰ The resistance to using a camera, the automated machine itself, means Derges herself becomes the process, immersed in the river, knee high, placing the paper and exposing it in darkness, her hand on the material and the subject at the same time. This communion with her subject is 'internal, imaginative or contemplative [...] [while at the same time] external, dynamic, magical.'³¹¹ The work is direct, in situ, in the very meaning of the word, 'in its original place or position.'³¹² It is organic, it is touch: the paper itself that is on display has touched the water it depicts. In this way it parallels some of the working processes in my research, yet is, nevertheless, fundamentally different in one key way: where Derges uses light in the darkness of night to expose the paper, I use daylight, the light of the sun to expose the photo-etching plates, or the light of the scanner to translate these into digital jpegs.³¹³ Her use of scale nevertheless echoes the large-scale hybrid prints that form part of the translation of this research, as the enormous size of her prints gives an added dimension to the experience of its subject matter, the water: the viewer becomes immersed in the space of the piece and the literal vastness of the landscape, as an 'all-of-body activity.'³¹⁴

³⁰⁷ Susan Derges in Alistair Hicks, *Deutsche Bank Art Magazine*, 2015

³⁰⁸ Fred Ritchin *After Photography* (South China Printing: China, 2010)

³⁰⁹ Barbieri, 1998, 'effectively the environment becomes her darkroom'

³¹⁰ Susan Derges, in Alistair Hick, 2015

³¹¹ Victoria and Albert Museum, *Camera-less Photography: Artists* [online] at

<www.vamac.uk/content/articles/c/camera-less-photography-artists/> [accessed 12/06/15]

³¹² In situ, Online Etymology Dictionary, <<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=in+situ>> [accessed 08/09/15]
See footnote 159.

³¹³ It is important to me that where the disappearances and kidnappings in Argentina took place at night, in clandestine detention centres, obscured from ordinary life, my plates are being exposed and developed in the daylight- in this way, 'revealing' this history to a new audience.

³¹⁴ As Nicci Haynes 'In the Post-Print Age, What has the art of Printmaking Become? Print, Performance and Public Space', Impact 9 Printmaking Conference (China: China Academy of Art: Hangzhou, 2015) p. 217

The change of scale I impose on the imagery, also envelops and works with the enactment of the auratic translation by turning the microscopic into the macroscopic. In every case I scale up fragments of the image to create pools of light and dark, delving into the surface make-up of the print and exploiting the mesh of codes of the small-scale analogue or digital images with this important alteration in size. Once the prints have been transferred or etched, they can be rescanned and printed as two or three metre C-type prints that reveal patches of light and dark in the image by emphasizing these in the expanded sizes of the photocopier, scanner, printing press or plotter (see figure 27). As Andrew Fisher has stated, 'since its inception, photography harbored scalar promises, for instance, that it might bring small, large, distant and hidden things into the range of human perception'³¹⁵. These changes in scale contribute to the loss of detail in a fragile set of juxtapositions: randomness versus intention. Much in the same way Derges uses scale to imbue her prints with the actuality of the river, and use the entropic residues of the process to create the river patterns, in their scaled-up versions, then, my prints can envelop the space once again, taking on this new presence in the gallery (see figures 26, 36 and 37) that my grandfather's analogue images, in their portable hand sized proportions cannot in the same way. In their large scale then, they allow the viewer a close-up of the scene, yet fail to reveal anything more of the image, except the troughs and fissures of its surface in the sacrifice of veracity to pictorialism. Their scale therefore, embodies the auratic translation of this research both in its mediated surface and in the ruination of the 'scalar promise' of precision and perception, while showing the smallest traces and 'noise' of their making in close up. The totality of the image, however, can only be seen at a distance.

Just as in each of Derges's prints, she brings back an auratic translation, as 'each stretch of river is unique, each print becomes like an identifying fingerprint [...] that can never be repeated,'³¹⁶ so my large scale prints become translations of the imprints of the disappeared in their loss of surface. Derges's prints have touched the water they depict,

³¹⁵ **Andrew Fisher**, *Photographic Scale, Philosophy of Photography*, Volume 3, Number 2, (Goldsmiths College of London and Humbolt University Berlin: Intellect Ltd., 2012,) p.318 for a more complete discussion of scale and its complex relationship with photography, as used historically in 'disciplines such as cartography, ecology, ethnography, archaeology, microscopy and macroscopy' (ibid). In many ways my research touches on each one of these uses as the fissures and troughs of surface and subject matter (the Paraná) converge as documented fictions of place.

³¹⁶ **Barbieri**, 1998

as have my plates, and have recorded its 'presence' becoming one with their subject matter, as unique objects that trace a specific moment in the life of the river, literal watermarks of the ebb and flow. These traces provide the auratic translation, as watermarks in photography and film are 'designed to prevent counterfeiting [...] to show copyright,' so Derges takes possession of a singular moment in time 'copying it right' onto the paper substrate, as a water mark of its unique identity.³¹⁷



Figure 40, Susan Derges, *Shoreline*, 1998, photographic paper exposed in the river,
100 cm (h) x 245 cm (w)

³¹⁷ A watermark, according to **Wendy Russell** 'What is a Watermark?' in *About Tech*, online at: <http://presentationsoft.about.com/od/uvvw/g/080221watermark.htmwas> [accessed 10/10/15] 'originally, a faint imprint on paper that could only be seen at a specific angle. This process was designed to prevent counterfeiting and is still used today [...] Digital watermarks are also added to photos, films and audio files to show a copyright by the owner of the object.'

It is ironic to think that fingerprinting is still so prevalent a practice in Argentina (as a means of state control and identification), and dates back to the nineteenth century, when a Croatian born scientist, Juan Vucetich emigrated there, bringing with him the four finger print system 'to confirm the natural inference of 'presence' of the individual [...] as a literal, physical trace of the body', a '*huella*' at the scene of the crime (figure 41).³¹⁸ This '*huella*', from the Spanish word '*hollar*' (to fingerprint, to leave an imprint, to step on, to humiliate) comes from the Latin word '*follare*', to beat with one's feet, in the fulling of cloth to eliminate dirt and other impurities.³¹⁹ Where this fulling of the print, then, 'beaten' by the current, by the movement of impurities over its surface, tries to bring to light the evidence or traces of the river, during the dictatorship it was in its most barbarous application that fingerprinting, beating, humiliating was used to eliminate the bodies of those disappeared, as a 'killed self has no experiences, not to mention narratable memories.'³²⁰ These 'fingerprints' then, denote the touch of the hand on the print surface, and remind us of the 'forensic' depiction of the river, the hand-made, the tactile nature of the recording. This imprint is present in the images I am creating, as the mark of my touch and the touch of the river come together on the surface of the plate. The river is a crime scene, and the water exhumes the presence of the bodies lost in it, in a metaphorical fingerprint. Just as the forensic anthropologists from the EAAF (Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team) look for clues and imprints left by the disappeared on the banks of the river, crucial to the discovery of 'corpus habeo' to prove 'corpus delicti', (the body that proves the crime) these remains, however invisible, are incorporated, and marked on the surface of the plate.³²¹

³¹⁸ Jonathan Finn, 'Photographing Fingerprints: Data Collection and State Surveillance,' *Surveillance & Society* 3 (1), 2002, p. 27.

³¹⁹ A *huella*, is both a fingerprint and an imprint, a mark, in Spanish, and comes from the word 'hollar', to step on, imprint, even metaphorically, to humiliate. See definitions online at Dictionary.com; See footnote 2.

³²⁰ Ernst Van Alphen, *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature and Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) p.33

³²¹ Sean Sweeney, Ian Hodder's (ed.) *The Body* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002) in which they refer to the 'corpus delicti' (literally, the body of crime, or proof of crime) in the absence of corpus habeo (literally you can have the body, or legal proceedings to prove the crime of those arrested and kidnapped during the dictatorship) as crucial in Argentine crime investigations into the 'Disappeared', to prove the genocide that occurred: 'ironically [...] even the criminal generals who governed the Argentine could not quite abandon the nineteenth century prescription that everybody had to be accounted for [so] that the corpus delicti, the substance of their crimes, was discovered. Some bodies were thrown out of airplanes or simply dumped during the dirty war [...] On the basis of [...] record[s] generated by the state [...] this trove of information [...] allowed the teams of American and Argentine forensic pathologists and anthropologists to identify the bodies of hundreds of the 'disappeared'', p.85



Figure 41, Victoria Ahrens, *Thumbprint identification cards*, 2013

Argentina, screenshot online

Derges, therefore, marks the life of the river on her prints; Mann marks her prints with the indelible traces of the hand-made collodion process, while I mark the plates with watery and bodily remains. Nevertheless, despite the presence that the hand-made indicates, there is a palpable sense of absence, an absence in spite of or because of the presence of 'death' in their work. It is absence, then that we are dealing with (*tochier*): the absence of bodies, of detail, of history. Derges' boxes, that protect the paper from exposure before it is placed in the river, 'look [...] very like coffins' reminding us of the fragility of the process and its brush with death (the slow death of analogue processes, and of the environment).³²² It is the changing landscape that we are mourning in Derges' work,

³²² **Derges** in Alistair Hicks, 2015

specifically in relation to debates about the environment. Her prints mark the passage of time, but also, potentially, the disappearance of the river itself, in time. Sally Mann's pieces deal specifically with the loss of a landscape that is scarred by a history of racism and civil war, marked by the deaths of slaves, the deaths of soldiers, whose 'skeletons [lie] beneath the benign surface of the picturesque landscape' while giving away little of this history in the aesthetic outcome.³²³ Yet it is the absences of bodies, of marked graves, of human presence in both Mann's and Derges' landscapes (as well as my own) that we encounter, places of solitude and contemplation, of memorial and mourning. It is, however, the landscape that remains, while all else, the memories, the tragedies, the histories, are all but erased, blurred, fragmented.³²⁴ W.J.T. Mitchell describes the function of landscape as 'a medium not only for expressing meaning, [but] for communicating between persons.'³²⁵ It is the dialogue that is important, between artist and process, process and landscape, landscape and narrative history, narrative history and viewer. It is, nevertheless, a conversation held in suspense, as the life and death of the printed body is left in-between affect and word, in its liminal phase, as 'noise' on the surface of the plate, and as 'acts of memory' that create the start of a dialogue in the present tense and resist the audible silence of their condition.³²⁶

³²³ **Suzanne Schuweiler**, 2013, p. 328

³²⁴ **Charles Kriel**, *Noise, Artefact and the Uncanny in Large Scale Digital Photographic Practice*, (University of the Arts London: London, 2004)

³²⁵ **W.J.T. Mitchell**, *Imperial Landscape, in Landscape and Power* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p.15

³²⁶ **Turner**, 1969, p. 95

3.4 GROUND NOISE

On the river, there is no sign of any disturbance, no sign of anybody. It's silent, and the water ripples against the side of the boat. I remember a passage from Southeaster where Conti writes, 'The silence [...] and the waters overflowing and the loneliness of this river that was like a sea, all came to die around him.'³²⁷ I can't see anything beyond the leaves and flowers that fall from the trees as the water is opaque, brown, murky. It is impossible to see the bottom. I see my face reflected and the etching plate shines in the light. Listening to stories of the river, I know that pirates hid behind the reeds and would appear as sailors made their way to the open sea. You can feel the vastness of it all, despite the closed canopy of trees that border either side. The river is resisting its history now, as there is no one to see, and no bodies to be found. I collect some water in small jars to take back with me. As I hold the jar up to the light I can see particles in the yellow water, as the silt and sand settles on the bottom. Here they are, the residues and remains of its history, the nothing to be seen of the landscape.

Chloe Dewe Mathews' 'Shot at Dawn' (2014) (figure 42) looks to create this dialogue through time and reawaken a suspended conversation. A series of photographs shot 100 years after the end of the First World War, they record 'many of the sites where around 1,000 British, French and Belgian soldiers were executed for cowardice or desertion.'³²⁸ She was commissioned by the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford in 2014 and the Imperial War Museum to commemorate a forgotten history. Her photographs at first seem picturesque, foggy images of rural landscapes across Belgium and France. In reality, they are confrontations with a difficult and rarely discussed subject: the execution, at dawn, of young soldiers and on occasion, officers, of the Allied forces, who, often suffering from unrecognised post-traumatic stress disorders such as shell shock, had deserted, been found, and summarily shot by their own companies.³²⁹ Her photographs were shot 'at dawn, in keeping with the time that most of the men were executed, and, as

³²⁷ Conti, p. 57

³²⁸ Sean O'Hagan, 'Chloe Dewe Mathews's Shot at Dawn: a moving photographic memorial', *The Observer* online, 29 June 2014, at <<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/jun/29/chloe-dewe-mathews-shot-at-dawn-moving-photographic-memorial-first-world-war>> [accessed 20/05/15]

³²⁹ The Guardian online, 'Shot by their own side: Chloe Dewe Mathews on her photographic journey to first world war execution sites', *The Guardian*, video, [online] <<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/video/2014/jun/29/chloe-dewe-mathews-shot-at-dawn-first-world-war-video>> [accessed 12/06/15]

close as possible to the actual date that they occurred,' imbuing these images with a 'melancholic power.'³³⁰ Dewe Mathews herself acknowledges the tragic irony of the shots as she 'plac[ed] her tripod around the same spot where the firing squad had stood and look[ed] directly at the place where the victim was placed.'³³¹ The language of photography pre-empts this: 'shot', 'shoot', with the photographer as aggressor in the 'capture' of the image. The landscape shots then 'stamp [...] the presence of the soldier[s] back into the original scene,' as the captions underneath each of them underline the name, rank, date and place of each individual person executed.³³² The text that accompanies the photographs then becomes 'integral to the image,' providing the documentary narrative to the otherwise 'ordinary-looking landscape.'³³³ The stillness of the photographs then, provide the 'time and space to think about those people and what happened to them,' to bring each one back into focus.³³⁴ Here the 'overlooked' landscape in the hands of Mathews becomes the 'looked over,' the forensic clue to the suppressed and difficult realities of the First World War.³³⁵ Her images deal with loss and trauma, yet the landscape as in so many of these artists' work, hides its scars over time. The regrowth of the foliage, the restoration of the land to farming practices, the tree that has grown over the dip where the soldiers stood facing their fate are not able to preserve these memories long term. It is in the re-photographing of them and their re-contextualization that the images are able to evoke the horror, the tragedy of these losses, so long held silent.

This history, which is obscured by the very landscape she depicts, barely a trace of forgotten memory concealed there, may well have remained silent, had it not been for the emphasis on research, text and the affective imagery Matthews imbues it with. In my project, there is a similar latency to the process, as the infinitesimal markers, the genetic imprints on the material surface (which allude to the concealment of a different history) have been 'fulled' over time, beaten out of the river by its continual ebb and flow, by time.

³³⁰ O' Hagan, 2014

³³¹ Chloe Dewe Mathews in Sean O'Hagan, 2014

³³² Tate Shots: Chloe Dewe Mathews, 8 January 2015 [video online] <<http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/tateshots-chloe-dewe-mathews>> [accessed 12/07/15]

³³³ Chloe Dewe Mathews, video for the guardian online, 2015; See Sean O'Hagan, 2014

³³⁴ Chloe Dewe Mathews, video for the Guardian online, 2015

³³⁵ Sarah Jones in her talk 'Reading in the Dark' for *the Pensive Image*, MA Photographic Studies Degree Show 2015, *Ambika P3*, Westminster University, London, 05/09/15. Also, I will come to the meaning of different types of looking through or at in my last chapter when I detail the use of per-spective in my research outcomes.

The imprints then, reappearing through image and text, as well as through the materiality of the surface noise, create a new body of work through the body of water. The Paraná, like the landscapes of Belgium and France, where Matthews locates her project, is unable to show its traumatic memory except through forensic clues left on the plate, which resist visibility in the 'nothing to be seen' of the landscape. As Ulrich Baer discusses, in relation to other historical sites of trauma, it is in the 'nothing' that is left that resistance can be found:

It is 'through photographs [that] we enter into sites out of which only death was supposed to lead; we are confronted with spaces designed to destroy all memory of those who were brought there. The deliberate destruction of evidence that would reveal these sites' significance constitutes the event's historical truth and limits the possibility of telling. For nothing to be "translated" into sight, it must be shown as nothing, rather than as the absence of something we could know.³³⁶

As this 'nothing' of the landscape reappears on the print matrix, in the text and in the writing that contextualise this project, so it is in the enactment of touching the water, touching the plate and therefore touching history that I am forced to 'deal with' or find resistance to the 'deliberate destruction' of evidence in the Paraná. The invisibility of this site out of which only death was supposed to lead, can be re-exposed by showing the prints in the gallery, as the process of making, therefore, returns visibility to this history through the materiality of the objects. Like Matthews' work, however, the context and titles of my images are paramount, as the absences are often difficult to envision without the textual references, or theoretical discussion that accompany them.

³³⁶ Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence, The Photography of Trauma* (The MIT Press: London and Cambridge, MA, 2005) p. 75

*Remains in the landscape, remaining there
these remains remind us to remember
remainders of a history
remnants of a memory
remains that remain as remains*



Figure 42, Chloe Dewe Mathews, *Private Herbert Chase. 04:30 / 11.6.1915.*

Sint-Sixtusabdij, Proven, Westvleteren, 2014, 100 cm (w) x 85 cm (h)

Ori Gersht is a photographer whose images and films often address the 'scars created by wars on our collective and personal memories', through less than clear imagery often in the form of photographs that are deliberately blurred he looks to depict landscapes marked by historical trauma. He explores 'the dialectics of destruction and creation and the relationships between violence and aesthetics' in the land, often in relation to the history of the Holocaust.³³⁷ In his series *White Noise* (1999-2000), (figure 43) photographs taken from a train in Poland in 1999 portray 'semi-abstract[ed] images' that 'seem to capture the impossible – the passing of time.'³³⁸ They depict the journey between Krakow and Auschwitz, the same journey on an altogether more sinister train that Jews and others were forced to take to the concentration camp at Auschwitz and almost certain death. Yet in his photographs, the physical trace, the scars of this history can no longer be seen, as the image is blurred and unfocused, pictorial, the marks of these terrors invisible to the human eye. The allusion in the title to 'white noise' suggests the sound of a thousand voices, a frequency as gentle as 'the sound of wind rustling in the trees'.³³⁹ Yet the noise is insistent, as the 'noise' of the image, the white blur, interferes with a precise reading of the imagery and can be 'heard' more clearly in the texts that accompany the work, as well as the titles he gives the individual photographs, titles such as 'Liquidation.'³⁴⁰ This name provokes Adrian Searle to ask, 'What is being liquidated? Time, memory, people [...] the images, or reality itself?'³⁴¹ The answer might be, all of these things at once, as Gersht confronts these grand narratives in the semi-abstracted photographs he makes. As Gersht himself remarks, 'Photographs always struggle in places like these because the photograph is good at recording detail, but it cannot talk about the depth of emotion in the events that took place.'³⁴² This depth of

³³⁷ Ori Gersht quoted in the press release written for his exhibition 'This Storm is What We Call Progress', at the Imperial War Museum in London 25 January-29 April, 2012, available at <<http://www.iwm.org.uk/sites/default/files/press-release/OriGershtPressRelease2011-12-02.pdf>> [accessed 23/09/15]

³³⁸ Tate Britain online, Art Now: 'Ori Gersht: Afterglow', *Tate Britain* 25 May- 26 August 2002, <<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/art-now-ori-gersht-afterglow>> [accessed 04/08/15]

³³⁹ White noise is 'not a "noise" [...] It is actually a sound frequency or a signal that one hears as a gentle hiss, [...] to use a simple analogy, the colour white contains the whole spectrum of colours of light. Similarly, white noise is created by using the entire spectrum of frequencies the human ear can hear - 'Pure White Noise, 2015, <<http://www.purewhitenoise.com/t-faq.aspx>> [accessed 10/09/15]

³⁴⁰ See footnote 14 for an explanation of what 'noise' means.

³⁴¹ Adrian Searle, in his 'Secrets of the Forest', *The Guardian*, 20 December 2005, <<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2005/dec/20/photography.secondworldwar>> [accessed 20/10/15],

³⁴² Ori Gersht, 'White Noise: Poland' [1999-2000], *Mummy and Schnelle Gallery* 2015 <<http://www.mummyandschnelle.com/pages/oriselector4.htm>> [accessed 20/08/15]

emotion is difficult to convey photographically, as a 'discrepancy [exists] between notions of the history of a place and its [visible] reality.'³⁴³ Yet the 'white noise', which in sound frequencies encompasses a proliferation of sounds, and the white colour, white as the sum of all colours, both evoke the multitude of stories and histories hidden in the landscape: stories of loss and displacement, mourning and survival. Gersht references, in the camera shake and blurred outcomes, 'the limitations of what the camera can record.'³⁴⁴ Yet what it does record is an impression of place, a place that seems innocuous, even picturesque, but is, on closer inspection a topography of trauma in a place that 'the camera can never deal with.'³⁴⁵ Here the camera does not 'touch' its subject (Gersht takes the photographs through a window on a moving train), yet the haptic results of the print create the metaphor for the invisible, for the unsayable, for the 'white noise' of the barely audible. Searle suggests that Gersht's images 'smear into a blur, or judder, or approach blankness', making it 'hard to know whether the cause of these aberrations was the hand that held the camera shaking uncontrollably, or the view itself [that] is being convulsed in some kind of seizure.'³⁴⁶ In this way, the blur reminds us of the author's presence, of the camera and of the inexorable movement of the train. Therefore, Gersht could be said to be using 'the imprint of time, light and phenomenon [to] [...] expose the capacity and limitations of human memory.'³⁴⁷ It is our infinite capacity to forget, then, that is alluded to and the camera that records what remains. Yet his work deals with another sense altogether: the sense of *sound*. Though the image is silent to look at, it is redolent with 'noise': of the brutal oral history that makes up the narrative and manifests itself as an internal dialogue in the viewer's mind, an incessant buzzing, as the implications of these images sink in. As Eduardo Cadava suggests, even when an image 'no longer show[s] anything, [it] shows and bears witness to what history has silenced, to what, is no longer here, and arising from the darkest nights of memory, haunts us, and encourages us to remember the deaths and losses for which we remain, still today, responsible.'³⁴⁸ Here, confronted with this audible silence, at one remove from

³⁴³ **Gersht**, *Tate Britain online*, Art Now: 'Ori Gersht: Afterglow', *Tate Britain* 25 May- 26 August 2002, Available at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/art-now-ori-gersht-afterglow> [accessed 04/08/15]

³⁴⁴ **Gersht**, 2002

³⁴⁵ **Gersht**, 2015

³⁴⁶ **Adrian Searle**, 2005

³⁴⁷ **CRG Gallery**, New York, Press Release for the exhibition *Ori Gersht: Liquidation*, 2015 online at: <http://crggallery.com/exhibitions/ori-gersht-liquidation/#> [accessed 2/07/15]

³⁴⁸ **Eduardo Cadava** in 'Lapsus Imaginis: The Image in Ruins', *October* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), no. 96, Spring 2001, p. 37

the landscape, we are able to take in, slowly, through the layers of blur, without sentimentality, the haunted memory it implies. This dislocation of the landscape, to the space of the gallery, nevertheless carries with it an affect, which 'remains implicit [...] even contrary at times; [experienced] in what can often be the most tranquil versions of places [...] [with] the most horrific past.'³⁴⁹ The affective encounter provokes an experience beyond the photographs themselves as a resistance that is sensual and visual, using the pictorial to resist the purely documentary, the evidential and historic of Holocaust memorials and museums. His engagement with the horrors is more personal and intimate (his father in law was a survivor) and it takes longer to understand it, while the time offered to contemplate them allows for a deep and powerful aesthetic meditation.³⁵⁰ As Fleming Jeffries suggests, 'to embark on an exploration of making is to learn about oneself as a maker, a powerful, [affective] experience. Building [affect] through hand/ mind connections has particular relevance in an age beset with rampant consumerism and manual alienation.'³⁵¹ Gersht exposes these difficulties, while conveying an affective residue, a sensibility for its subject matter in spite of (or because of) its abstraction, 'its pictorial turn'. If '[affect] recognizes the alterity of identification and the necessity of negotiating distance [...] [in order to] find [...] ways to inhabit other people's memories,' then Gersht's images create the conditions necessary to allow us to inhabit these traumatic memories whilst recognizing they are not our own.³⁵² The printed photographs are disembodied, yet the landscape speaks of an embodiment beyond the pictorial, (as Mann and Dewe Mathews's images do), resisting the need for a singular narrative and leaving space for other interpretations, alternative histories. It is another way to remember, another way to touch or 'deal with' the marks of the past on the contemporary landscape, another nuanced response. In my research practice, the haptic surfaces and white noise of the abstracted traces become subversive moments, and disrupt the visual plane in order to address the multiple personal and historical perspectives of the river Paraná. It is the personal, however, that marks the starting point for a deep communion with the material, and it is this dialogue with the past that, like

³⁴⁹ **CRG Gallery**, New York, Press Release for the exhibition *Ori Gersht: Liquidation*, 2015 online at: <http://crggallery.com/exhibitions/ori-gersht-liquidation/#>> [accessed 2/07/15]

³⁵⁰ **Adrian Searle** writes about the personal and documentary in Gersht's work, as he grapples with his father-in-law Gideon Engler's experiences of hiding from the Nazis for two years in the forests of Kosov, watching women and children who were forced to jump into a pit where they were shot or left to die (20 December 2005)

³⁵¹ **Jeffries**, 2015

³⁵² **Alison Landsberg**, *Prosthetic Memory, The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013) p. 24

Gerscht's images, voices the intimate and potentially affective engagement with the subject matter.



Figure 43, Ori Gerscht, *White Noise*, Poland, No. 8,
C-print mounted on Aluminium,
1999-2000, 80cm (h) x 100 cm (w)

I am aware, however, that many of these issues that exist in my own practice, can be obscured by the pictorial rendition and the 'white noise' of these political discourses about the disappeared. Like Gersht and Dewe Mathews however, the accompanying text, personal engagement, pictorial rendition and technical methods applied, all contribute to a multi-layered understanding of the work. It is not visible in the fragment perhaps, though I grapple with the image to imbue it with meaning, to create a compelling image, but the complete story can be found only in the multiplicity of the installation, as fragments that come together to express the many registers of this research and echo the inability of memory and photographic printmaking to offer 'the truth', only new and multiple perspectives. It is in looking at these works in the gallery, and looking through them to the wider context of the research, that these multiple perspectives can be deconstructed in my final chapter.

*White noise,
in the ripples of the water, in the river at night,
makes me drowsy.
I sleep a sleepless sleep
watching as the mosquitos and sun rise together
beginning another hot and sweltering day on the Paraná.
The ebb and flow of the water, the drone of a speed boat
passes behind the trees, invisible,
the white noise of the fan
drowns out thoughts of what happened here
Other noises, of the dogs barking, of the cicadas
of the birds in the trees at dawn and dusk
of the boats
as they speed between mainland and island
I work alone, in silence
revealing and developing, inking up and printing
no one but me to perform to.
The white noise
obscures the screams
the thud of the bodies as they fell
the chattering of voices
of those who saw them but could not speak
. The white noise
drones on, static on the radio
all some families have left now,
just the white noise.*

CHAPTER FOUR

FINAL PERSPECTIVES

4.1 LOOKING AT AND THROUGH LOOKING

The aerial photographs my grandfather took were of landscapes and cities west and south of Buenos Aires. I imagine him sitting precariously at the open door of a seaplane, leaning out with his camera, his eye on what he was looking at below. It would have taken some skill to shoot these images, with the judder of the plane and camera in hand. I think of these as I board my plane, looking out the window as we fly over the Paraná and onto the Atlantic Ocean beyond. Too high to make out anything but dots on the vast expanse, I visualise ships taking cargo from one place to another, and in even smaller dots, smaller boats wandering from one island to another. I am reminded of the last moments the disappeared were taken up into the sky. Flying at a much lower altitude, yet high enough to drop for several thousand metres, they would have been unaware, one hopes, of what lay ahead of them. The air up here is thin, above the clouds, and below the water snakes across the landscape, awaiting their return.

Having examined the resistance of my print experiments in the light of contemporary discourses of remembering, the noise that provides agency and the materiality that grounds the research, what are the *new horizons* that can be revealed by the final print outcomes? How do these multiple theoretical considerations manifest themselves in view of these discussions? As the research moves into the space of the gallery and the outcomes become formalised, the notion of *perspective* begins to emerge as a key concept in determining the aesthetic, theoretical and practical concerns. Analogue photographic images translated into hybrid photo-etchings and mediated through projection and video, photographic sculptural pieces, and other digital or transferred photographic interventions, inhabit the gallery space in multiple configurations and denote the ideas discussed. In their multiplicity and fragmentation, these pieces refer to multiple viewpoints (both in terms of ways of *looking* and *thinking* about them), as well as multiple interpretations of the landscapes in question. These numerous iterations work on the principle of *perspective*, in its original sense: *per*, 'through', *spicere*, 'to look at',³⁵³ which *through looking* at them, as well as *looking through* them, give the imagery a sense of context in light of the wider narrative.³⁵⁴ These perspectives then, move from

³⁵³ **Perspicere**, from Latin *Perspectus* "clearly perceived", from *Online Etymology* [online] at <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=perspective> >[accessed 11/12/15]

³⁵⁴ **Claire Bishop**, in her book *Installation Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005) argues that historically, installation art 'must be circumnavigated to be seen' which provides a 'direct analogy for the desirability of multiple perspectives on a single situation', p.35.

the particular (the single elements of each piece), the particle or fragment, to the universal (the concept as a whole) creating the intersection of encounters that bridge the potential material fissures between the digital and the photo-etch, the projected and the sculptural, the fragment and the whole. This sense of perspective is not confined to the material encounter with the installation, but is also present in the images depicted on the fragments themselves: aerial shots of the Paraná, negatives turned into sculptural digital prints of the river banks, that come together with new horizons in fragmented configurations, as well as corporeal projections of other visual elements that superimpose added layers of narrative and create another perspectival encounters with 'noise'. Where Gilles Deleuze refers to the encounter as a moment 'that forces us to think' the aim of the final outcome is to generate a dialogue, one that is both internal and external, written and material, which allows for the provocation of thought.³⁵⁵ The encounter is of objects that recall or reimagine the latent narrative between the landscape and my experience of it. In turn, in the gallery, this encounter is extended to the viewer, as images that encourage a visual dialogue with the personal, and historical. Taking each fragment in turn, however, means that I can tease out the aesthetic decisions in order to understand how this bringing together of material practices has culminated in this binary encounter with perspective: through-looking and looking-through.

Creating these mediated images through a considered experimentation with traditional and digital methods has meant the resultant installation pieces, images fragmented and attached to triangular frames (see figures 27, 28), attest to a reconsideration and a remembering of place, taking these wooden and uneven triangles as a sculptural support for this way of working. The relative flatness of the digital image is then counteracted by the protrusion of the triangular supports into the space of the gallery, configured in groups that reconstruct the landscape according to my own aesthetic and dialogical parameters.³⁵⁶ If the landscape 'sets up a subject-object distinction between the viewer and the viewed [...] institut[ing] visual perception as the sole sensory relationship between them [...] [as] a visual experience for the roaming eye/I which/who occasionally

³⁵⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London and New York: Continuum, 1994), p. 139

³⁵⁶ *The protrusion* indicates a 'pushing out' into the space of the gallery, as the landscape physically breaks out of its two dimensional rendering to inhabit (ground itself) within a new space as a new construct of place. The flatness here references two-dimensionality in relation to the three dimensionality of the way it is being displayed.

stops to take in the 'prospect' from a static viewpoint',³⁵⁷ the perspective of these fragments, casually stacked together or placed on the floor/wall in batches, sets up, in this instance, the prospect of multiple viewpoints, seen with the roaming eye/I as it engages with its protrusion into the space. It offers a new orientation, a new remembering, as 'there's no position from which you can actually see everything at once.'³⁵⁸ Where the fragmented pieces *dis-member* the original image, turning it into constituent parts, 'devour[ing] and [...] cannibaliz[ing]' the image³⁵⁹ (and the images themselves in a further fragmentation of their microscopic surface contain the barely visible dis-membered and fragmented traces of the dead), the sculptural grouping allows for an acknowledgement of this dissolution while also providing a site within which to piece together the narrative as a 'construct[ed] conversation.'³⁶⁰ The notion of 're-remembering' as applied to bereavement allows the grieving not 'to forget [...] or dismember [...] those who have died' – rather deconstruct the idea of closure, and finality through conversation- while 'weaving stories that include the dead.'³⁶¹ Here, the aesthetic 're-remembering' acts as a physical interweaving of the stories of the river, yet in its fragmentation, does not permit a singular discourse, rather allows for an open ended, varied perspective, to focus on a 'deliberate construction of stories that continue to include the dead in the membership of our lives,' or in this case, the unity of the installation as a lived experience.³⁶² As the prints protrude into the space of the gallery, and inhabit it, they work to both distance and draw the viewer in, thereby creating both an experience of 'centring and decentering', of looking at and looking through the work. These consist of stretching the photographic prints in the wooden frames to act as a screen, which is 'opaque and impenetrable', obscuring while bringing the narratives to light at the same time: mediating and immediating the images.³⁶³ As Claire Bishop notes installation art 'insists upon the viewer's physical presence precisely in order to subject it

³⁵⁷ Giblett, R. and Tolonan, J, *Photography and Landscape* (Intellect Limited: Bristol, 2012) p.53

³⁵⁸ Mary Kelly in Margaret Iversen, Douglas Crimp and Homi Bhabha, *Mary Kelly* (London: Phaidon Press,1997) p.29

³⁵⁹ Susan Sontag in 'Photography within the Humanities', in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (2003), p. 60

³⁶⁰ Lorraine Hedtke and John Winslade, *Re-remembering Lives: Conversations with the Dying and the Bereaved* (Amityville, NY: Baywood Publishing Co. Inc., 2004) from the abstract online <http://www.rememberingpractices.com/remembering_lives.html> [accessed 21/12/15]

³⁶¹ *ibid*, p. 5

³⁶² *ibid*

³⁶³ Kaja Silverman 'Fassbinder and Lacan: A reconsideration of Gaze, Look and Images', in *Visual Cultures: Images and Interpretations*, ed. Norman Bryson, Ann Holly and Keith Mixey (Hanover, 1994) pp. 272-301.

to an experience of decentring, a transition adequate to the context-dependent work.³⁶⁴ This decentring occurs through the literal lack of centre, the fragmentation of the pieces, but also through the multiple viewpoints which 'decentralis[e] our thoughts from the predominant and pre-existing consensus.'³⁶⁵ These pieces allude to historical and political dissensus then, in the form of new forensic evidence of the remains of the disappeared. If as Rancière describes, dissensus 'might signify a way of reconstructing the relationship between places and identities, spectacles and gazes, proximities and distances,' then here it is passed onto the images of place, as they reconstruct identity through absence, while challenging distances and proximities in the spectacle of multiple perspectives³⁶⁶. These remains, potentially etched into my plates, displace the idyllic view: we look through them, displacing our thoughts, to engage with the wider context.³⁶⁷ As the river negates the presence of bodies, disappeared through time and a collective forgetting, and negates the presence of my grandfather on its waters, lost to the vestiges of photographic time, it negates the presence of *anybody*. We look through the images and emerge the other side, looking for a corporeal presence as the depopulated landscape (a place without people and consequently a people without place) has once again disappeared the body in its contested terrain.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁴ **Claire Bishop**, *Installation Art* (Tate Publishing: London, 2005) p. 133

³⁶⁵ **Thomas Hirschhorn** cited in Okwui Enwezor's 'Interview' in *Thomas Hirschhorn: Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake* (The Art Institute of Chicago and The Renaissance Society: Chicago, 2000) p.27

³⁶⁶ **Jacques Rancière**, in an interview with **Fulvia Carnevale** and **John Kelsey** for *Artforum*, 'Art of the Possible' March 2007, p. 261

³⁶⁷ **Scalene** triangles are triangles where each side is a different length. They are unusual in that they are defined by what they are *not*. Most triangles drawn at random would be scalene.' from Math Open Reference [online] at: <http://www.mathopenref.com/scalene.html> [accessed 12/12/15]

³⁶⁸ **Jananne Al Ani**, 'View From Above: Latent Images in the Landscape', *Shadow Without Object Photography Symposium*, Chelsea College of Art, 4/12/15

4.2 ATTEMPTS TO SEE

It is in the 'dusting powder' of forensic anthropology and the traces left in the river itself that the body reappears: as a skin, or screen, latent even here in the space of the exhibition, as the projections create a further spectral encounter. Weizman describes how forensic anthropologists identified the remains of Dr. Mengele (Nazi doctor) in court by projecting an image of his face onto his found skull in the early 1980s, the same methods which were later used by the EAAF in Argentina to identify the remains of the disappeared: 'When [Mengele's skull] made its appearance on the stand and on the screen, as an object and as image, it became a hinge and on it our political aesthetic turned.'³⁶⁹ This latent image, this *per-spectre*, a more invisible perspective of the imperceptible trace, when projected, allows for an 'encounter, [which] occurs not in the photograph but somewhere else.'³⁷⁰ It is physical, corporeal, yet it is immaterial, as it hinges on this political and aesthetic turn. As the images developed in the river carry the etched landscape within them, so the latent image *exists*, as their indelible marks are left to speculation and reflection. Jacques Derrida describes this ephemeral state as '[that which] one imagines, [which] one thinks one sees and which one projects- on an imaginary screen where there is nothing to see [yet] a screen always has, [in the] background, [its reflection on] its structure of disappearing apparition'.³⁷¹ These projections and object-screen memories reiterate the disappearing apparition of the river, but also project its traces onto the surface of the image, as they allude to the reappearance of the 'disappeared.' The affective presence of the unrepresentable then, is not there to illustrate or point to the material as receptacle, but about facilitating an encounter, an affect, that is based on 'reflection as an activity,' as a 'critical force that appropriates and reassigns value.'³⁷² This means that the images and installation are *not* there to reveal but to 'attempt to see [...] the limitations of site/sight,' in light of this affective encounter³⁷³; *not* there as a naturalistic rendition of a scene or as an exposition of the facts, but as a complex personal engagement with making in situ, in a narrative that is

³⁶⁹ Keenan and Weizman, 2012, p. 63-65

³⁷⁰ Daniel Rubenstein, 'Fingering the Index: Photography after Heidegger, Bataille and Deleuze', *Shadow Without Object Photography Symposium*, Chelsea College of Art, 4/12/15.

³⁷¹ Derrida, 2003, p. 100

³⁷² Thomas Hirschhorn, in Okwui Enwezor's 'Interview', 2000, p.27

³⁷³ Duncan Wooldridge, 'Some Notes on a New Realism, Relocating Representation in the Technical Image', *Shadow Without Object Photography Symposium*, Chelsea College of Art, 4/12/15

interwoven with multiple points of view, and that comprises paradoxical representations of the present and absent, the latent and material at the same time. This 'attempt to see' is veiled rather than revealed further by the projections, as these ephemeral images of bones and aerial views of the Paraná, together with the photographic pieces, look to 'pull [the seemingly] disparate elements into a readable form [...] while leaving room [...] to feed the imagination'.³⁷⁴ I use the term veil deliberately then to denote the opposite of reveal, from 'velar' to veil or 'keep vigil' or 'expose'.³⁷⁵ Veiling the images in light, rather than revealing them, the projections, which further layer the story of this landscape, therefore keep vigil while exposing another narrative of the river in another attempt to see. As the projections dematerialize the images in light rays, they create alternative objects of study, and expose other reflective activities (figure 44). This is not, however, a call for the viewer to just 'be there, nor a place to dream about, but [rather] a fantasmatic belonging,' a form of 'inhabiting' the image, both by looking at it and looking through it, and allowing for 'a space for the spectator to pause, to think [...] a space [which] is not singular [...] but dialogic.'³⁷⁶ The nature of projection is to immerse the viewer and 'elicit fantasy: we see things that are not there,' while 'offering ways of joining a space, an image and a subject' together.³⁷⁷ Here the projections are both physically ephemeral but also metaphorical as, 'we see what is not there' in terms of the landscape displaced into the space of the gallery, but also in terms of the latent narrative of these bodies disappeared within it. The sound of the river water, part of the projected videos, also serves to further immerse the viewer in a displaced narrative, which conjoins and suffuses the space of the gallery in a soundscape of the place. The lapping waves denote the over-lapping stories, and provide the means to re-member the actuality of the landscape.

This multiplicity is underpinned by a twofold rationale: the aerial photo-etched projections of the Paraná and those of DNA being extracted from bone (macro and micro) refer to the 'projective geometry underpin[ing] perspectival rendering, cartography, and

³⁷⁴ **Michael Grieve**, 'Something in Nothing', *The Pensive Image*, MA Photographic Practice, Westminster University talks in Ambika P3 5/09/15

³⁷⁵ 'velar', meaning 'to mourn, veil, hold vigil' See *Diccionario de la Lengua Española: Edición del Tricentenario*, Real Academia Española [online] at: <<http://dle.rae.es/?id=bTFZNAf|bTJiBaz|bTJnxpM>> [accessed 12/12/15]

³⁷⁶ **David Bate**, *The Pensive Image*, MA Photographic Practice, Westminster University talks in Ambika P3 5/09/15

³⁷⁷ **Liz Kotz**, 'Video Projection, The Space between Screens', in *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*, edited by Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) p.102.

architecture [...] [while at the same time] carry[ing] old figural resonances of changing and transmutation.³⁷⁸ In a further alchemical allusion, the word projection was used as another term for transmutation, 'by casting a powder on molten metal'.³⁷⁹ Here then the powder is forensic, and the metal plate, and the print objects are where the transmutation of their reappearance is projected. According to Giuliana Bruno:

the subtle, complex process of material siting exhibited in the art of projection is a process that exposes different weaves of time and folds of history. A nonlinear sense of time and layers of temporal density emerge while traveling on the surface of media.³⁸⁰

The projections change and distort the photographic seeing, teasing the spectator with a presence that 'dissolv[es] solid matter' and breaks up the images further, while exposing the folds of history.³⁸¹ If 'the space of projection can sensitize us to the most basic passage of time, which is essentially 'a passage of light,' then the coming together of different time frames (1930s and my grandfather's photographs, the 1970s and the Argentine dictatorship, and the contemporary depiction of the Paraná and its waters) through the projection can facilitate a looking through 'light as it unfolds durationally, as a space.'³⁸² I would argue, however, that it provides the *immaterial* siting (rather than material siting) of the narrative, as it places a 'film' of light particles, an infra-mince skin, over the material objects. Moreover, the projections do not require a dark room, the more traditional domain of projection, as in all the making of the work, it is light once again and not dark that enfolds the imagery.³⁸³ Just as its Latin derivation suggests, the projections therefore, 'stretch out' time, and 'throw forth' light rays that interject into the quiet space

³⁷⁸ *ibid*

³⁷⁹ Projection, See *OnlineEtymologyDictionary* [online] <<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=projection>> [accessed 10/12/15].

³⁸⁰ **Giuliana Bruno**, *Surface, Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2014) p.8

³⁸¹ **Catherine Elwes**, *Installation and the Moving Image* (London & New York: Wallflower Press, 2015) p.180

³⁸² **Bruno**, 2014, p.8

³⁸³ See **Helen Westgeest**, *Video Art Theory: A Comparative Approach* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015) p. 105 where she discusses how the use of projection often presupposes the black box as a space in which to project rather than the white cube of the gallery space.

of the gallery.³⁸⁴ The aerial images in particular speak of this interjection into space and history, as they reveal the possible latent final views of the world that the victims of the dictatorship would have encountered: the aerial views of the Paraná as their bodies tumbled out of military planes.³⁸⁵ These final, and tragic moments, invisibly emblazoned on their mind's eye, their faces covered and blindfolded, would be their last sight/site of the landscape.³⁸⁶

My grandfather, working in the same place but at another time, had aerial photographs in his albums of the Paraná Delta, taken from water planes he used to go from one estancia (cattle ranch) to another. Aerial photography, increasingly popular after the First World War, when reconnaissance photographs were taken from military planes to map out and observe enemy ground, here are reconfigured as projected images, of the hidden ground on which enemies of the state were disappeared.³⁸⁷ The framed pieces therefore, respond to this early history by setting and siting the landscape from a fragmented perspective, with lines that break up the image and alter the horizon.³⁸⁸ The intersected pieces reformulate 'the view', turning linear horizons into verticals and diagonals, decentering the imagery, while juxtaposing them to create a new encounter with the landscape. They are not 'set', as they can be changed and reordered, altered to create different configurations (see figures 36, 37). The projections that collide with them on other material surfaces (see figure 44), further the disorientation, serving as a reminder or a re-remembering of the more sinister recording of these views over the Paraná: like Icarus, who tumbled out of the sky to a certain death,³⁸⁹ the disappeared fell

³⁸⁴ Project from *proicere*, 'to stretch out, throw out' from *Etymology Dictionary* [online] at: <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=project> > [accessed 12/12/15]

³⁸⁵ See footnotes 57-60 for more on aerial disappearances

³⁸⁶ There is some evidence to suggest the victims were blindfolded and their heads covered- the latent image of the river then, would have been only in their mind's eye, emblazoned on their retina as an imagined landscape of their demise. See footnotes 58, 59

³⁸⁷ For an in depth study of the history of aerial photography and its use in the military reconnaissance, see **Ron Graham and Roger E. Read's** *Manual of Aerial Photography* (London & Boston: Focal Press, Butterworth & Co.,Ltd. 1986) as well as Aerial Photography from Airplanes in 'the History of Aerial Photography' at *PAPA International: Professional Aerial Photographers Association* http://professionalairphotographers.com/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=80813 > [accessed 12/12/15]

³⁸⁸ **Hito Steyerl** in her 'Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective', in *The Wretched of the Screen, e-flux journal* (Sternberg Press: Berlin, 2012) p. 14 discusses the 'loss of a stable horizon', arguing that it is with this loss that 'also comes the departure of a stable paradigm of orientation'.

³⁸⁹ See **Ovid's** *Metamorphosis*, Book VIII translated by Anthony S. Kline for *Virginia Library* [online] <http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Ovhome.htm#askline>> [accessed 12/10/15]; See also **J. Pinsent's** *Greek Mythology* (New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1982) and *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman biography and mythology*, edited by **William Smith** (: Ann Arbor, Michigan, Michigan Library, 2005), who describes the myth of Icarus and Daedalus.

out of the sky (were projected in fact, thrown out), considered too ‘*subversive*’ to follow instructions (to behave as good Christian Argentines), and the military planes in this instance, rather than project and plot the topography of the river below, created an invisible body, the mass grave, by disappearing them *from above*, leaving no discernable, visible trace.³⁹⁰ Here they plotted to obliterate the body while leaving the landscape to subsume their crimes. As time folds in on itself once again, the aesthetic encounter in the gallery then brings out the etymology of the word ‘projection’, so pertinent to those who lost their lives here: to expel, reject or throw forth.³⁹¹ These bodies projected into the space of the river have, nevertheless, left their latent marks on it, as watermarks, and memories which, in time, forensic anthropology may be able to identify and bring ‘back from the dead.’³⁹² Yet, despite aerial photography and investigative techniques, no cartography or topographical survey has yet projected their exact whereabouts.³⁹³

³⁹⁰ **Marguerite Feitlowitz**, *A Lexicon of Terror, Argentina and the Legacies of Torture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) Chapter 1, p. 5: The disappeared were called ‘subversives’ by the regime.

³⁹¹ **Liz Kotz**, ‘Video Projection, The Space Between Screens’, in *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985* edited by Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) p.102

³⁹² **Weizman**, 2012, pp. 56-61. See also **Anne Huffs Schmid**, ‘Bones and Humanity, On Forensic Anthropology and its Constitutive Power Facing Forced Disappearance,’ *Athenea Digital* – 15(3), Freie Universität Berlin, (November 2015) p.203, who details the limited success of forensic anthropologists at the site of the river.

³⁹³ **Nafeesa Syeed**- Lab IDs Argentine ‘Dirty War’ victims by DNA, *Associated Press*, Newsvine.com [online] <http://www.newsvine.com/_news/2009/12/26/3680683-va-lab-ids-argentine-dirty-war-victims-by-dna?threadId=754021 - >(accessed 21/03/15); See also **EAAF**- ‘Latin American Initiative for the identification of the Disappeared: Genetics and Human Rights’, Argentina Section, *Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF)* (2008); See chapter 1 for context of anthropological research along the banks of the Paraná.

Remembering to look, looking to remember.

As I look at the Paraná through my viewfinder I wonder at the view I'm looking at.

The wooden stilted houses by the riverfront
The abandoned logging sheds,
I take the shot.

I look at the trees, as they rustle in the wind,
and place the plate in the shadow of their branches.

I take my rowing boat and float,
waiting for the perfect moment to film the river at dusk.

It never really comes.

My grandfather, positioned in his rowing boat,
his perspective down river perfectly poised
as the sun goes down,
turning in his grave at the knowledge of what was to come
on the banks of this place,
who would hang from the branches of these trees,
how many would be lost to the changing landscape.

Remembering to look, looking to remember.

The water is murky, brown and obscure,
carrying with it mementos of the past,
invisible to the eye/I which/who looks into its depths.

It does not reflect, it absorbs, it drowns.

Seen from above,
it appears winding, unimaginably long, unfathomably deep
looking out onto canopies of branches that embrace it on both sides.

On a quiet night, far up the distant tributaries,
where nobody lives anymore,
they say you can still hear the cries of lost sailors asking for help.

Remembering to look, looking to remember.

4.3 FALLING INTO LIMBO

As I look out onto the landscape from above, and the horizon fades, I cross continents, and remember my last encounter with the river, before making my way back to the city and altogether different horizons. It was there, where the limb of the archipelago, the island Delta, meets the less inhabited ends of the Paraná, that a promontory protrudes into the river, and the horizon opened up to me once more, beyond the line of the trees. I was being carried upstream, where the leaves cast shadows like specks, and closer to the stretch of river these early sailors navigated, where the muteness and silence resides, where they risked life and limb to trade upriver. As I contemplated what I was doing there, I wondered where I should draw the line? Closing an eye to look through the viewfinder and take my last shots of the place, I waited, observed, clicked, repeated. I had to keep checking where the position of the sun was, but every time I looked up and then down again, I felt dizzy. In a flash, I would blink, and be returned to myself, here, there, out on a limb.

The aerial images, juxtaposed with images from the ground, allude to the 'abstraction' of the landscape: 'Like a map, the abstraction of aerial photography reduces the heights and depths of the earth to surface, to line, pattern, form and colour. It abstracts local place [...] into space [...] [a] transformation of the pictorial plane from the vertical to the horizontal.'³⁹⁴ These abstracted images then reiterate the lines, patterns and forms of the river etched onto the photographic plates, acting as a metaphor for the printmaking process, as the ground (river and plate) is 'capable of producing multiple impressions.'³⁹⁵ Like Freud's mystic writing pad, the wax surface 'upon which that which is experienced or learned is inscribed, leaving an imprint below the surface, which may become more and more deeply buried, but is never completely effaced', the print residues that are left, take on multiple forms (as photo-etchings, projections and digital hybrid prints) as they are 'etched with [multiple] experience[s], like [memory] and the unconscious; [...] invit[ing] a symptomatic reading [of them] [...] that escape[s] to reach the surface.'³⁹⁶

³⁹⁴ R. Giblett and J. Tolonan, *Photography and Landscape* (Intellect Ltd.: Bristol, 2012), p. 51

³⁹⁵ Nicole Susonne Pietrantonio, *Encountering Landscape: Printmaking and Placemaking*, University of Iowa, Iowa Research [online] <<http://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/572/>> [accessed 10/05/14], p. 3

³⁹⁶ Dudley Andrew, *The Image in Dispute* (University of Texas: Austin, 1997) pp. x/xi. Also a reference to Freud's mystic writing pad, Sigmund Freud, 'The Mystic Writing Pad', *General Psychological Theory*, Papers on

These multiple 'representations of [...] encounters'³⁹⁷ with the river Paraná then, constitute 'the slippery nexus of place [and its] multiple points of view'³⁹⁸ that surface from the ground up, and are grounded down from above. The triangle prints and the projected images then both ground the work on the one hand, by unifying the fragments in their physical interconnectedness in the gallery space, as they are mapped and projected in light. On the other hand, the 'subversive' subject of disappearance encoded or transcoded onto the materiality of the installation presents a 'latent' disruption paradoxically decentring these through a re-remembered narrative.³⁹⁹ As Hito Steyerl describes:

[W]e cannot assume any stable ground on which to base metaphysical claims or foundational myths. At best, we are faced with temporary, contingent, and partial attempts at grounding. But if there is no stable ground available for our social lives and philosophical aspirations, the consequence must be a permanent, or at least intermittent state of free fall for subjects and objects alike.⁴⁰⁰

This state of free fall as she terms it, creates the kaleidoscopic view of the world, as 'while you are falling, you will probably feel as if you are floating - or not even moving at all.'⁴⁰¹ Like the disappeared, falling and floating represent the conditions of their last moments on earth, their stories 'suspended', ungrounded, the 'horizon quiver[ing] in a maze of collapsing lines [...] los[ing] any sense of above and below, of before and after, of [themselves] and [their] boundaries.'⁴⁰² It is in this maze of collapsing lines that the installation pieces serve to foreground, and reconfigure the encounter with the

Metapsychology (1925) (New York: Touchstone, 1997) as discussed in **Joan Gibbons'** *Contemporary Art and Memory, Images of Recollection and Remembrance* (London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 2007), p. 141.

³⁹⁷ **Pietrantonio**, p.3

³⁹⁸ *ibid*

³⁹⁹ **Lev Manovich**, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), p.45. Here it has the dual meaning of transcoding the analogue to the digital but also transcoding the microscopic remains of the disappeared onto the surface of the plate.

⁴⁰⁰ **Hito Steyerl**, 'In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective', *The Wretched of the Screen*, e-flux journal (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), p. 12

⁴⁰¹ *ibid*

⁴⁰² *ibid*

landscape, yet they also disrupt it from above and below in a present experience that is neither a before or an after. It is here, according to Steyerl, when the 'balance is disrupted [...] [p]erspectives are twisted and multiplied [that] [n]ew types of visuality arise,' where the viewer can no longer 'suppose a single unified horizon,' thereby questioning the implicit assumption that we 'need a ground in the first place.'⁴⁰³ As Steyerl asserts:

Modern concepts of time and space are based on a stable line: the horizon line. Its stability hinges on the stability of an observer, who is thought to be located on a ground of sorts, a shoreline, a boat – a ground that can be imagined as stable, even if in fact it is not [...] The horizon line was an extremely important element in navigation. It defined the limits of communication and understanding. Beyond the horizon, there was only muteness and silence.⁴⁰⁴

This research, therefore, is based on questioning this assumption on the ground, as ground resists, ground surfaces, inks ground into the plate, plates ground through the printing press and bodies grounded into the river banks, while creating *common ground*, in fact, reveal a state of *limbo*: a narrative in an indefinite state of the in-between, the interstices, the liminal, the fissures.⁴⁰⁵ Deleuze and Guattari refer to the in-between space of history and memory as the transhistorical state of 'becoming'. This limbo, or liminal area of research then, narrates the transhistorical through this oscillation between the experience of the here and now and the past. Where *limbo* was said to be a place 'set aside for souls that do not go to either heaven or hell,' it signifies here a place in a permanent state of transition,⁴⁰⁶ caught in the liminality of their condition. While the bodies of the disappeared (those still unidentified, and waiting in limbo for forensic resolution) remain in 'a state of indeterminacy' - neither dead or alive, just missing - they

⁴⁰³ Steyerl, 2012, p.12

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid, p.14

⁴⁰⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, See *Deleuze and the Contemporary World*, edited by Ian Buchanan, Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006) p. 129 ; See also Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) p. 296

⁴⁰⁶ This definition comes from *The Free Dictionary* : <<http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/in+limbo>> [accessed 12/10/15]

remain 'generic, faceless, all mixed up [...] maintain[ing] an obstinate opaque silence in the face of sympathetic scientists and waiting relatives.'⁴⁰⁷ This state of indeterminacy is 'part of their silence, and their silence determines their indeterminacy,' yet as Steyerl asserts, their bones (their fragments, their DNA) 'staunchly remain *things* [...] things that decline to be named or known – things that claim the state of potentially being both dead and alive [...] [t]hey thus transgress [...],' in this case, transgress their geographical borders, their historical narratives and spill over or *free fall* into the fissures between making photographic and printed work on the Paraná.⁴⁰⁸ Their remains remain in the gaps, the troughs and the crossovers, encoded in the material surfaces and digital translations, in a state of indeterminacy (limbo), yet as presences, nonetheless, *exist*.

The photographic material 'interpolates and decimates,'⁴⁰⁹ dispossessed of a horizon, of a border and free falling into its own surface voids. This decoding, and loss of information, as Liz Kotz states, 'entails distortion [...] [yet] this breakdown, reprocessing and information loss (which occurs across digital and analogue modes) is remarkably generative and productive.'⁴¹⁰ The losses expose the forensic clues, and generate the space for the projection of one's own internal voice, as 'a [productive] ruin in reverse.'⁴¹¹ The confrontation with this landscape in the gallery space, therefore, 'encodes, measures and reproduces the viewer's [disorientation and] alienation from nature '⁴¹² in its material fissures, while generating new 'mnemonic residues', or screen memories, as Freud describes them, in the post-memory of its traumatic encounters.⁴¹³ These screen memories then resist the recollection of trauma by projecting their fears and desires onto '[other memories] associatively displaced' from the original traumatic experiences.⁴¹⁴ Here then, the screens (both as photographic objects in frames, and the projected

⁴⁰⁷ **Hito Steyerl**, 'Missing People: Entanglement, Superposition, and Exhumation as Sites of Indeterminacy', in *The Wretched of the Screen*, e-flux journal (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012) p. 139, p. 151

⁴⁰⁸ *ibid*, p.151

⁴⁰⁹ **Louisa Minkin** 'Digitalizing the Material and Materializing the Digital', *Shadow Without Object Photography Symposium*, Chelsea College of Art, (4/12/15)2015

⁴¹⁰ In **Liz Kotz's** 'Video Projection, The Space Between Screens, in Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung (eds., *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985* (Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA, 2005), p.111

⁴¹¹ **Louisa Minkin**, 2015- here she uses this metaphor in relation to the translation from material analogue to digital dematerialization, as a way of addressing a 'ruin in reverse' in this translation.

⁴¹² **Giblett and Tolonan** (2012) p.55

⁴¹³ **Sigmund Freud** (1889) in **Rachel Funari**, The Screen (II), *The Chicago School of Media Theory* [online] at: <<https://lucian.unichicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/screen-2/>> [accessed 10/12/15]

⁴¹⁴ **Sigmund Freud's** 'Screen Memories' (1899) translated by **James Strachey**, reproduced in Gail S. Reed, Howard B. Levine, *On Freud's "Screen Memories"*, Contemporary Freud, Turning Points and Critical Issues (London: Karnac Books Ltd., 2015) p. 9

images) originate associatively displaced encounters, as *object screen memories*,⁴¹⁵ as I term them, while offering only 'constructed scenes rather than veridical ones [...] highlighted by the perspective from which they [are] viewed.'⁴¹⁶ The interpolated surface against which the self poses itself then, becomes the surface or site 'that will not fully accommodate our view of it' as it alludes to sites 'designed to destroy all memory of those who were brought there.'⁴¹⁷ They are places of absence, of gaps and voids, of ruination, which *resist* completion, '[as] our eyes, trained by habit, infer the space and perspective of the image – and thus our own position in relation to the site – [...] forced to enter the site that failed to accommodate human experience in the past and that will not allow itself, as a photographic site, to be completely filled in by the present viewer's imagination'.⁴¹⁸ This site that positions the viewer in relation to its absence, 'lure[s] [...] viewers to project themselves into an imaginary pictorial depth, by marshaling the melancholic dimension of photography.'⁴¹⁹ In the space of the gallery the viewer is lured into the installation and although there is a melancholic realization to bare once the context of the images are understood, the object screen memories and projections make space for a renewed engagement with this pictorial depth, looking through and looking at them, and allowing them to be filled in by imagination and recognition. In this way, the view is translated, yet the absences *remain*, as the language of the digital and the analogue collude to resist a totality of vision. In descriptions by survivors and the few official records found of the disappeared, the word officers used to describe the decision to send prisoners to their death was 'translado' (transfer).⁴²⁰ If they were 'transferred' from the clandestine detention centres they were being held in, it meant they would be moved to the site of their death: transferred from their hidden cells to their untimely demise. Language itself was used by the military to obscure this end result. The transfer of the images from one substrate to another in this research also creates a disappearance of its own: the vanishing of the landscape in the latency and lacunae of

⁴¹⁵ I am adding the word 'object' to screen memories to make an association between the object-screens of the photographic installation pieces and their allusion to traumatic memories that are displaced by the resistance of historical narratives.

⁴¹⁶ **Lucy LaFarge**, 'The Screen Memory and the Act of Remembering', Reed and Levine, 2015, p. 37

⁴¹⁷ **Ulrich Baer**, *Spectral Evidence, The Photography of Trauma* (The MIT Press: London and Cambridge, 2005) p. 66

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 65

⁴¹⁹ *ibid*

⁴²⁰ See *Nunca Más, Informe de la Comisión Nacional Sobre la Desaparición de Personas (CONADEP)* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1984), the National Report on the Disappeared, where survivor testimonies use this word continually to describe what had happened to other prisoners who were transferred to their death. See footnotes 57-60.

the image as the photographic language changes to create noise that resists a totality of vision and clarity, giving way to a new 'sensible' experience in the invisible. According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, this invisibility echoes 'the universe of thought [...] which is invisible and contains gaps, constitute[d] at first sight [as] a whole [...] [yet it's only] truth [rests] on condition that it be supported [by] structures of the sensible world.'⁴²¹ The sensible world, therefore, is that of the gallery space and our eye/I as it roams the surface of the fragmented prints trying to re-member them and reconstitute them as a whole, despite the unfeasibility of this endeavour. We are confronted with an impossible task, as there is no singular truth or perspective that can be supported by the sensible and fragmented material in the gallery space. The universe of thought it presupposes, as we look through them, is caught in the gaps and the fragments of the installation and projections, and echoed by the voice in our mind's eye. The appearance of these object screen memories sit in opposition to the disappearance of the subject, and like the kaleidoscopic view, which 'results from the interaction between hand and eye', multiplies the perspectival encounter⁴²². According to Boris Groys, 'the invisible shows itself in the world not through any specific individual image but through the whole history of its appearances and interventions [...] remain[ing] invisible precisely by the multiplication of visualizations.'⁴²³ These multiple visualizations, therefore, bring the narrative to a new visibility as a re-imagined site in the sensible world, setting up a contemporary engagement with them, while not allowing them to be completely filled in as they oscillate *in between* a present- past encounter and sensible world of the absences that remain.

⁴²¹ **Maurice Merleau-Ponty**, *The Visible and the Invisible*, edited by Claude Lefort and translated by Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968) p. 12

⁴²² **Aimée Boutin**, p. 15

⁴²³ **Boris Groys** in 'From Image to Image File – and Back: Art in the Age of Digitalization', in *Art Power* (The MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 2008), p. 84-85.

*My eyes squint at the light and shade,
at the photographic triangle,
the imagined perspective of the image,
as I look to 'enter' the photographic landscape.
Yet I know that I have arrived too late
to the scene of the crime,
I am not there at all, in fact, but elsewhere,
the event residing in a present as past-of-the-future temporality that eludes me.
I can imagine what it might have looked like years ago,
but my thoughts are in black and white, in sepia,
as they are clouded by the memory of my grandfather's photographs.
I imagine what he saw, but I cannot see it,
there are gaps I cannot fill.
I think it, but cannot verbalise it,
yet its becoming part of my own conversation.
I step back onto dry land, back onto the banks of the river
as I carefully balance over the boat with my plates.
They will dry now, as photographic images,
their latency slowly disappearing
as the presence of the image emerges from the water,
and the ink that fills the troughs
creates its own memory of place.*

As the photographs 'lack [...] any structure of tense,' the still images both projected and printed, which rely on 'these tensions – between the passing of time and the time of experience' do not in themselves set a scene of the past, and as 'photographs [...] have no voice to give back, but they can, nonetheless, signify.'⁴²⁴ By 'creating a distance,' these photographic screens, or object screen memories, 'permit [us] to reflect' on our 'specious present' as they inhabit the gallery space in an 'interval of indeterminate, but somehow subjectively observable, extension.'⁴²⁵ The specious present, 'a term given to the interval of time experienced as the present in consciousness' arises according to Greg Battye, from the conflict between, on the one hand, the apparent logical necessity that the present can have no duration [...] and on the other, our subjective experience of the present.⁴²⁶ If 'now [is] [...] on hold while we look at them properly,' then the moment of exposure (both photographic and perceptive) can be extended, as the spectator 'meet[s] up with [the image]'⁴²⁷ in order to acknowledge that 'here, in that sense, is not a place on a map, it is the intersection of trajectories, the meeting-up of stories; an encounter.'⁴²⁸ As Andrew Benjamin states, the encounter with the artwork, 'points away from [a] moment, backward to [...] an origin outside of time [...] [while] at the same time point[ing] forward to all its future recipients who will activate and reactivate it as a meaningful event.'⁴²⁹ Thus the installation becomes the site of a 'continu[ity] [...] of meaning' as the imagery 'founds and confounds' its recipients in its multiplicity⁴³⁰, activating their perspective (looking through and through looking), while at the same time revealing 'a world in which time is splintered, fractured, blown apart.'⁴³¹ It is a liminal space, on the threshold of becoming, in-between, 'a landscape in projective motion [which] [...] holds what we project onto it.'⁴³²

⁴²⁴ Alex Hughes and Andrea Noble (eds). *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003) p. 95 and 145

⁴²⁵ Raymond Belour, 'The Pensive Image, Photography at the Cinema', in Liz Wells (ed.) *The Photography Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003) p. 120

⁴²⁶ Greg Battye, *Photography, Narrative and Time, Imagining our Forensic Imagination* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2014) p. 71

⁴²⁷ Battye, p. 71-75

⁴²⁸ Doreen Massey, 'Some Times of Space', in Olafur Eliasson: *The Weather Project* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003) p. 118

⁴²⁹ Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010) p. 9.

⁴³⁰ Andrew Benjamin, 'Matter and Meaning: On Installations', *Installation Art, Art and Design*, Volume 8, 5/6 May-June (Academy Group Ltd, 1993) p. 33

⁴³¹ Ulrich Baer, 2005, p. 3

⁴³² Giuliana Bruno, 2014, p. 8; See also Catherine Grant, where she states that, 'the viewer fills in what the picture leaves out: the horror of looking is not necessarily in the image but in the story the viewer provides to fill in what has been omitted', p. 75 This landscape in motion is activated by the viewer and their experience of place.

The lived story of the 'disappeared' which constitutes one of these liminal time frames among the multiple and layered stories, can never be told in its totality, as the traces of their human remains can only tell us about a latent presence in an indeterminate landscape and history, this 'thing-in-itself, which is the memory, we can never have [...] [as] its very representation in "history" effaces it as memory.'⁴³³ It is a portrait of a river obscured, then, and not Heraclitian (continuously flowing from its origins to its mouth) but rather experienced and represented in 'bursts and explosions' across the space of the gallery, as 'the rainfall of reality, privileges the moment rather than the story, the event rather than the unfolding'⁴³⁴; a record of sorts, yet not evidence, but nonetheless object screen memories of 'luminous sediments [...] [of] that which is left after [...] [the] transformation.'⁴³⁵ It is a construct of landscape that is 'fabricated and shifting rather than pre-existing or 'natural,'⁴³⁶ yet part of a multiple encounter that 'address[es and] [...] see[s] the site not for its own sake but as a pointer back to our own position.'⁴³⁷ The negotiation of the space of the installation inevitably points back to us, as we face this fragmented landscape and recover an 'unremembered – rather than a forgotten – experience'⁴³⁸, and relies 'not upon a faith in the image's technological ability to furnish empirical evidence of the event, but upon a faith in the image's phenomenological capacity to bring the event into [...] presence and to mediate the inter-subjective relations that ground the act of [this encounter].'⁴³⁹ We are faced with a *faceless* topography, that in bursts brings to the fore the impossibility of grounding it in a single discourse and our incapacity to re-member 'the whole'. The installation pieces and other projected images and prints, do not establish a linear narrative or perspective, only interconnected moments that give voice to the stories and encounters within the material

⁴³³ **Elizabeth Cowie**, Traumatic Memories of Remembering and Forgetting, in *Between the Psyche and the Polis: Refiguring History in Literature and Theory*, ed. Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2000) p. 210

⁴³⁴ **Ulrich Baer** discusses the difference between 'Heraclitus's notion of history as a flowing river' and 'the Democritean conception of the world as occurring in bursts and explosions in *Spectral Evidence, The Photography of Trauma* (London and Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005) pp. 3-5.

⁴³⁵ **Giuliana Bruno**, p. 128. These luminous sediments refer both to the light particles of the projections that intersect the other images, but also the invisible sediments left on the photographic print plates, exposed to the sun and left to dry on the surface, that transform the latent into a visible printed image.

⁴³⁶ **Amelia Groom** (ed.), *TIME – Documents of Contemporary Art* (London and Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel Gallery, MIT Press, 2013,) p. 18

⁴³⁷ **Baer**, p. 68

⁴³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 78. Here although the history of disappearance is part of the layered narrative of the river, the bodies are invisible in the material outcome, therefore it is less an uncovering of the facts than a re-covering of the difficult narratives obscured in the landscape itself.

⁴³⁹ **Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas** (eds.) *The Image and the Witness, Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture* (Wallflower Press, London and New York, 2007) p. 12

outcome. This inter-subjective relationship is, however, grounded within the sensible space of the gallery where projections and sculptural photographs, photo-etchings and transfer prints meet, facing one another in multiple and variable configurations: we countenance the material outcome within these enacted parameters.



Figure 44, Victoria Ahrens, *Paraná Blues*, projection and prints, 2015,
110 cm (h) x 180 cm (w), CCW Space, Camberwell, London

4.4 INTER-FACES

It is nevertheless ironic that in much of the photographic material and artistic productions about the disappeared since the 1980s, it is the portrait as a form of identification (the passport image of the disappeared face) that is used to decry, protest and depict the disappearance of the body. As Catherine Grant states, 'identity cards and passport photographs are precisely the generic images the state requires of its citizens, to prove their status as citizens [...] The deployment of identificatory visual material in the context of protest is thus a highly symbolic assertion of presence in a public [...] performance of active memory.'⁴⁴⁰ Yet, in forensic anthropology, 'for the purposes of the identification of human remains, formal facial portraits [...] are not always the [...] most revealing form of evidence.'⁴⁴¹ This encounter then, does *not reveal* a face, as the individual identities of those disappeared in the river remain unknowable at this stage, meaning that the landscape is unable to offer a 'body' to encounter: the only body available here is that of a body in fragments, dismembered in the installation; it is only in the 'embodied perception' of the *viewer* who *faces* the installation that *any* body at all can be presupposed.⁴⁴² As Maurice Merleau-Ponty points out, '[We] do not see [space] according to its exterior envelope; [we] live it from the inside; [we are] immersed in it. After all, the world is around [us], not in front of [us].'⁴⁴³ So the landscape installation culminates in an encounter with perspective, a 'through looking' and 'looking through' it, as discussed, yet what we grapple with is the lived inside of the exterior envelope: the fragmented triangles as bursts and explosions of wood and paper, and the projection of 'unfulfilled pasts and unclaimed futures,' that make up the 'body' of this research.⁴⁴⁴ The

⁴⁴⁰ **Catherine Grant**, 'Still and Moving Images: Photographs of the Disappeared in Films about the "Dirty War" in Argentina', in **Alex Hughes and Andrea Noble** (eds.) *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), p.p. 71-75; See also **Silvia R. Tandecriar** 'Mnemonic Hauntings: Photography as Art of the Missing', *Social Injustice*, June 22, 2006 <<http://accessmylibrary.com/article-IGI-155751147/mnemonic-hauntings-photography-art.html>> [accessed 20/04/14] In the protests by the mothers and grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, passport photographs were photocopied and used; in sites of Memory Museums in Buenos Aires, these passport photographs are used in walled installations of victim's faces; in artists' work, such as Marcelo Brodsky, Fernando Traverso and Nicolás Guagnini, the portrait is the main artistic trope.

⁴⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 75

⁴⁴² **Claire Bishop**, *Installation Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005) p. 6: 'Installation art presupposes an embodied viewer whose [other] senses [...] are as heightened as their sense of vision'

⁴⁴³ **Maurice Merleau-Ponty**, 'Eye and Mind' (1961), in Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, edited by James E. Edie, translated by Carleton Dallery (Evanston, IL, Northwestern UP, 1964), p. 178

⁴⁴⁴ **Lutz Koepnick**, *On Slowness, Towards an Aesthetics of the Contemporary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014) p. 14

installation, nevertheless, can find its coherence in the slow mediation of its images, in a site 'charged with multiple durations, pasts and possible futures.'⁴⁴⁵ It is at this intersection, at the interface of this encounter in the gallery, that the temporal disjuncture finds its present moment . When Merleau-Ponty asserts that 'the inter-relationship between [ourselves] and the world is a matter of embodied perception, because what [we] perceive is necessarily dependent on [our] being at any one moment physically present in a matrix of circumstances that determine how and what it is that [we] perceive,'⁴⁴⁶ then the installation depends on the presence of the viewer and the material to determine what we make of the encounter. This relationship between the sensible and the eye depends, therefore, on the presentation of the material in the gallery space, 'the making- present', which allows these multiple perspectives to converge. The face may not be visible, yet it is present in the 'act of observation [which] breaks the state of indeterminacy' as we confront the fragments in an attempt to see and remember what this presence signifies.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁵ **Jan Beatens** (et al.) *Time, Narrative and the Fixed Image* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001); See also **Mieke Bal**, 'The Time it Takes', in **Marquard Smith** (ed.) *How to Construct a Time Machine* catalogue, Milton Keynes Gallery (2014) pp. 4, 34-50

⁴⁴⁶ **Merleau-Ponty**, 'Eye and Mind' (1961), p. 178

⁴⁴⁷ **Steyerl** (2011), p. 139

My own face
is reflected in the plate
as I watch the image emerge.
The metal plate,
though yellowed from the polymer resist
and contact with the brown murky waters of the Paraná,
absorbs my face onto its surface,
a shadow cast onto the lines and troughs that are forming there,
under the midday sun.
These,
in turn,
become part of my face
creating lines and marks on my skin in the reflected light,
patches of light and dark that at times blind me.
Their faces are not here, only mine appears in the water.
The captain who gazed at my grandfather all those years ago
twice blinded by the light in his eyes and the scratch on the surface of the photograph,
is also unable to see them,
submerged in an obscured future.
They are invisible here,
defaced,
like the captain
and twice blinded by their captors and history,
their site unrecognizable from the place they faced then.
There is no face I can encounter here,
only the countenance of what I must face.
It is my face I see, not theirs.

This faceless and fragmented landscape, consequently, 'dislocate[s] more traditional notions of time and space,' transferring images from the past into the present, while also leaving behind a kind of 'non-time.'⁴⁴⁸ This dislocation highlights the 'loss of loss itself,' where the loss here translates as a loss of centre, a loss of face, a loss of ground, and a loss of stable parameters: a free fall into this other, alternative perspective.⁴⁴⁹ These present-as-pasts create 'future remnants,' particles of a story that is 'both here, and there and nowhere' at once;⁴⁵⁰ they become vectors for making the 'permanent transitory and the transient permanent,'⁴⁵¹ oscillating between 'wholeness and fragmentation' in the layered surfaces of the material encounter with the river in the gallery.⁴⁵² Here the place (of the gallery and of the installation) becomes the site of an encounter with a *topos* and an *atopos*, 'at once a place and not a place [...] a space-time that is both- neither ordered and disordered.'⁴⁵³ The contested terrain of the Paraná, though a known place, is represented in such a way that 'it displaces the boundaries of our place with those of a surreal place that is placeless'.⁴⁵⁴ In the meta-modern sense of the word, the installation alludes to a 'territory without boundaries, a position without parameters,' a looking at and looking through at the same time.⁴⁵⁵ This encounter then lies in-between the two: looking at the landscape in its microscopic and forensic representation while at the same time looking through the material landscape of multiple narratives at once.⁴⁵⁶ As Miwon Kwon suggests, 'site specific art can lead to the unearthing of repressed histories, [and] help provide greater visibility to marginalized groups and issues, and initiate the re(dis)covery of "minor" places so far ignored by the dominant culture.'⁴⁵⁷ This research therefore oscillates between the site specificity of the making and the reterritorialization of the work in the gallery, which both resist dominant readings. This is not to say that it is

⁴⁴⁸ **Andrew Gallix**, 'Hauntology: A Not-So-New Critical Manifestation', *The Guardian*, 17th June 2011 [online] at: <<http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2011/jun/17/hauntology-critical>> [accessed 21/12/15]

⁴⁴⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁵⁰ **Owen Hatherley**, *Militant Modernism* (Hants, UK: John Hunt Publishing Ltd., 2008) p. 3

⁴⁵¹ **Timothy Velmeulen and Robin van den Akker**, 'Notes on Metamodernism', *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, Vol. 2 (Coaction Publishing, 2010) p. 6-7

⁴⁵² **Galerie Tanja Wagner**, 'Press Statement The Door Opens Inwards' (September 2010) <<http://www.tanjawagner.com>> [accessed 12/01/16]

⁴⁵³ **Topos**, from the Greek (koinos) topos (common) place, The Free Dictionary [online] at <<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/topos>> [accessed 12/01/16], and atopos, as a non-place, an unfamiliar place; **Velmeulen and van den Akker**, 2010, p. 12

⁴⁵⁴ **Velmeulen and van den Akker**, 2010, p. 12

⁴⁵⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁵⁶ **Contract or contractual**, from the Latin 'con', with' and tract from trahere, to draw: to draw together or arrange. See Online Etymology, <<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=contract>> [accessed on 12/03/16]

⁴⁵⁷ **Miwon Kwon**, *One Place after Another, Site- specific Art and Locational Identity* (London and Cambridge, MA: the MIT Press, 2004, p. 53

'emancipatory', however, but a means of 'reassigni[ng] value' to the material and narrative as a 'critical force [for reflection].'⁴⁵⁸ If art 'prepares the ground for new experiences and [opens] up spaces for new subjectifications,'⁴⁵⁹ then this research is concerned with teasing out the political through 'the nature of expressibility and what might remain 'unrepresentable' (both materially and metaphorically) while creating multiple encounters that relay affect through looking at and looking through the installation in fragments and bursts.'⁴⁶⁰

This installation is not intended, however, to be a nostalgic reconstruction, a 'microtopia', but a way of understanding the complexity of our relationship to contested terrains, places where often the traumas that scar them, are no longer visible, or tangible.⁴⁶¹ These traces of 'former lives are pressed into service in a never-ending process of making, remaking, making sense of our selves now,' as Annette Kuhn states, 'there can be no last word about my photograph, about any photograph.'⁴⁶² The photographic imagery then is merely a vector for a visual encounter with mark-making and surface/ground, as depictions of a contested terrain, a fragmented and recollected place, that is brought together inside the gallery, as a space within a space, a matrix or container for these multiple iterations and enactments, and not a 'last word' on the historical narratives they allude to. The pieces are merely a construct of surface tensions, anchored in the varied historical and familial narratives of the Paraná I have experienced, and brought together by the process of making and theorizing (*looking at* and *looking through*) this research. Where *thea*, 'a view', and *horan*, 'to see' make up the Greek word *theoria*, 'to be aware of, to contemplate or speculate', this implies an act of experiencing or observing and then comprehending through conscious perception, another way of

⁴⁵⁸ **Claire Bishop**, (2005) p. 54/ 127. She is referring here to an interview with Thomas Hirschorn with Okwui Enwezor, in 'Thomas Hirschorn: Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake', Chicago, 2000, p.27, where Hirschorn states that art is no longer emancipatory but should provoke reflection.

⁴⁵⁹ **Ben Highmore**, *Ordinary Lives: Studies in Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2011) p. 49

⁴⁶⁰ **Jacques Ranciere**, 2009 in **Anthony McCosker's** *Intensive Media: Aversive Affect and Visual Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p. 5

⁴⁶¹ **Nicolas Bourriaud** refers to the art of relational aesthetics as setting up not installations that respond to utopian agendas but 'microtopias', in this way they are 'learning to inhabit the world in a better way' in his *Relational Aesthetics*, (Les Presses Du Reel: France, 2002) p.13-14. I am not purporting to inhabit the world in a better way, but work with notions of reproduction as a means of confronting the absent narratives of place and produce a new encounter. See also footnote for a discussion on nostalgia.

⁴⁶² **Annette Kuhn**, 'Remembrance: The Child I Never Was', in Liz Wells ed. *The Photography Reader* (Routledge: London and New York, 2003) p. 399

looking at the issue.⁴⁶³ My writing on the subject, therefore, has led to theories about what the material practice of photography and printmaking can create in relation to the hand-made, in relation to slowness and craft, and their subsequent translation to digital, photo-etchings and transfer prints. Yet, more importantly, it contemplates, and works within and between the layered narratives of the river as a means of investigating both the contested 'terrain' of the photographic exposure in situ and the historical narratives of the ground itself. As Koepnick asserts, 'slowness negotiates today's desires for both memory and presentness by allowing us to reflect on the now in all its complexity.'⁴⁶⁴ It is not that through this experimentation with traditional and contemporary processes, turning fact into artefact, I have created a new singular encounter, rather that the making process in situ has interwoven both traditional and digital processes, hand and screen, haptic and optic on multiple surfaces, which have, as a result, *re-membered* and embedded, literally incorporating the invisible traces of this site in the material outcome itself. The plate and photographic prints represent this site of touch, site of trace, of water, of hand, as these marks while offering a new consideration of the photographic artefacts in the encounter with them in the gallery. Yet, as Duncan Wooldridge has stated, 'photography as an aid to memory is doomed to failure,' as these images 'denote the limits of photography [as they] meet the limits of its desire for the visible.'⁴⁶⁵ These are images, photographic and printed on paper and projected onto paper screens, that cannot be mementos or records of evidential memory, inadmissible in a court of law, and not acting as aide-memoires. As Andrew Jones affirms, 'artefacts cannot be taken as simple agents of memory and their ability to extend or preserve memory cannot be relied upon.'⁴⁶⁶ They are hybrid encounters, latent and unstable, that attempt to see and map a personal narrative of the place in fragments and fissures, surfaces that screen and criss-cross one another in triangular formations, hiding and exposing their imagery in the process. Juliane Rebentisch states that in spatial and time-based art:

⁴⁶³ According to **Sean Gaston** in his *Starting with Derrida: Plato Aristotle and Hegel*, (London and New York: Continuum International: 2007), the word *theoria* is derived from the Greek and defined as a 'king of contemplation, the action of a contemplative spectator [...] Theoria could be defined as merely looking [...] as a spectator of knowledge [...] as a looking at, as an examining or viewing' p.5. Certainly the word is linked to a knowledge derived from looking and observing.

⁴⁶⁴ As **Koepnick**, 2014, p. 4-5

⁴⁶⁵ **Duncan Wooldridge**, 2015, Shadow Objects symposium, Chelsea College of Art

⁴⁶⁶ **Andrew Jones**, *Memory and Material Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p.40

The life of the representation is not reducible to the imaginative bringing-to-life of what it represents. For the imaginative bringing-to-life of what is represented is only one side of that play of processes in which the imagination gets entangled in gazing at the representation. For, on the other side, the representation constitutively eludes, time and again, the totalities of meaning it provokes. This is, in fact, what sets it into aesthetic motion.⁴⁶⁷

As the gaze is entangled by the representation of multiple perspectives, so the imaginative 'bringing-to-life' is held in limbo, eluding a total and singular encounter. Just as non-linear perspective challenges 'the central viewpoint' and therefore dominant and controlling centre of vision by providing a multiplicity of views, the work here eludes any sense of linear time. There is a tension set up between the time of making, the temporalities alluded to in the historical and theoretical framing, and the viewing of the work, i.e. 'between the passing of time and the time of experience.'⁴⁶⁸ As we fall into the narrative, and free-fall towards our own perspectival encounter with the installation, this falling, as Hito Steyerl describes it, 'does not [...] mean falling apart, it can also mean a new certainty falling into place [as] [...] we may realize that the place we are falling toward is no longer grounded, nor is it stable. It promises no community, but a shifting formation.'⁴⁶⁹ This shifting formation then, resides in the quicksand of the silted bottom of the Paraná, which so far, is finding it difficult to give up its secrets. There are shifting positions, and different narratives that mean holding on to the boat is harder to do as the perspectives multiply. However, 'if whatever [these images] tr[y] to show is obscured, the conditions of [their] own visibility are plainly visible: [the images are] [...] excluded from legitimate discourse, from becoming fact,'⁴⁷⁰ as they serve to translate and fore-ground the experience of place through 'pause[s] and hesitat[i]ons], not to put things to rest and

⁴⁶⁷ **Juliane Rebentisch**, *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, translated by Daniel Hendrickson with Gerrit Jackson (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012) p.143

⁴⁶⁸ **Rebentisch**, 2012, p. 145

⁴⁶⁹ **Steyerl**, 2011, p. 28

⁴⁷⁰ *ibid*, p. 156

to obstruct the future, but to experience the changing landscapes of the present in all their temporal multiplicity.⁴⁷¹



Figure 45, Victoria Ahrens, *Projecere*, Projection of video, Peltz Gallery, Birkbeck School of Art, London, 2016, 200 cm (w) x 113 cm (h)

⁴⁷¹ Koepnick, 2014, p.9

CONCLUSIONS: FORUM FOR THOUGHT

In binding photographic and photomechanical printing processes to create hybrid print installations that both protrude and project images into the gallery space, this research has looked to create a *forum* for a new dialogue, inviting a protracted conversation between the dead and the living. This *forum*, the root of the word forensic, is neither judicial nor legislative, nor is it epideictic.⁴⁷² It is 'not a given space, but is produced through a series of entangled [enactments] [...] Forums are gathered precisely *around* disputed things – because they are disputed.'⁴⁷³ The entangled history of 'the disappeared' in the river Paraná is, of course, disputed by many who would rather these uncomfortable realities were left to dissolve in its murky waters permanently. Certainly there is a limit to what the forensic anthropologists of the EAAF can do today, even with the use of state of the art DNA extraction methods, as thirty to forty years later, it is the hi/stories of those who have come forward to say that they have *seen* these bodies hanging from the trees, disintegrating on the river banks, and sinking to the bottom of the river that make up the only 'evidential' narrative so far (in this upper section of the Paraná)⁴⁷⁴. In Chile, where bodies were weighted with railway tracks before they were thrown out of military planes, these tracks have survived, and all kinds of marks, traces and troughs left on their surface may produce the forensic evidence needed in court, even without the bones or the bodies of those disappeared.⁴⁷⁵ If forums, as Eyal Weizman has suggested, are 'not fixed, [...] [but] dynamic and contingent, temporary, diffused, and networked [...] sometimes combin[ing] with other forums', then here the gallery exhibition and the written analysis combine to produce a temporary, contingent and dynamic *forum for thought*. The site of the installation, brings the research to its visual conclusion, yet leaves its form and content open for further discussion, as site of

⁴⁷² The Greek philosopher **Aristotle** refers to these three types of rhetorical uses of the forum, in his *In the Rhetoric* text. See **Amelie Oksenberg Rorty**, 'Structuring Rhetoric', in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, edited by Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 1-33; From 'forensis': *in open court, in a public forum*, <<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=forensic> > [accessed 14/03/16]

⁴⁷³ **Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman**, *Mengele's Skull, The Advent of a Forensic Aesthetics* (Frankfurt am Main/Berlin: Sternberg Press/ Portikus), p. 29

⁴⁷⁴ I have detailed in previous chapters how early in its history the EAAF identified the bodies of two disappeared that washed up on the banks of the Rio de la Plata (the River Plate), but as yet none have been identified in the upper Paraná region. See footnotes 56-60.

⁴⁷⁵ **Patricio Guzmán's** latest documentary film, 'The Pearl Button' (El Botón de Nacar) (October 2015) refers to this possibility, in the wake of the extraction of several of these metal railway lines from the Pacific Ocean.

an in-between-ness⁴⁷⁶, of an auratic translation, where affect, resistance and object-screen memories can co-exist through ‘troughs and sieves of sensation and sensibility’⁴⁷⁷ and, in this way, create the ‘perpetual becoming (always becoming otherwise, however subtly, than what it already is)’⁴⁷⁸ that this body of water alludes to: the incorporeal, corporeal incorporated- the flesh of the digital screen image, the film of the projection and the haptic infra-mince surfaces of the photo-etchings and transfer prints come together as a body of visual research, yet allude to other latent stories, alternative histories beyond the screen. The perspectives have changed: they are kaleidoscopic, yet grounded, transparent yet decidedly opaque; we look through them and through looking at them find a sense of voice, as ‘these ghosts have an agency of their own in that silence shows itself to be inherently unstable as it becomes the background against which secreted words become audible.’⁴⁷⁹ However, although the forum of the gallery space is open, public and invites speculation, looking and thinking, the pages of this written piece, internalize the process and analysis, personalize it, to create a more intimate reading, as a disturbing entity and slow embodiment of the research. In making *and* taking photographs (both analogue and digital, hand-made and encoded), ‘noise’ reappears in the form of hybridized surfaces, which resist dominant discourses, yet address new contemporary debates about acceleration and slowness.⁴⁸⁰ The gains and losses, both visible and invisible, in the auratic translations of imagery from one code to another and one surface to another, and that which remains, become part of this protracted looking: as we are reminded that ‘remembrance is the reproduction [enactment] of an original experience, [and] forgetting [i]s its non-reproduction through the aberrant copy.’⁴⁸¹ This research, therefore, in its personal narrative and experience in situ of its making, has meant the oscillation between these aberrant copies and present

⁴⁷⁶ This *in-between state* (both of the lives and deaths of the disappeared and of the processes of photographic discussion), has been written about extensively by **Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth**, in *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010): ‘Affect is born in *in-between-ness* and resides as accumulative beside-ness. Affect can be understood then as a gradient of bodily capacity [...] that rises and falls not only along various rhythms and modalities of encounter but also through the troughs and sieves of sensation and sensibility.’ p. 2

⁴⁷⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁷⁸ *ibid*, p. 3

⁴⁷⁹ **Grace M. Cho**, ‘Voices from the Teum’, *The Affective Turn, Theorizing the Social*, edited by Patricia Ticineto Clough with Jean Halley (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007)

⁴⁸⁰ Here I refer both to the dominant discourses of disappearance, of digital photographic practice, as well as the debates around acceleration and slowness.

⁴⁸¹ **Victor Buchli and Gavin Lucas** (eds.) *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past* (London, New York: Routledge, 2001) p.79

enactments in the river, in the print room and in the gallery, which behaves as a non-site. What I am looking for, by looking at and looking through my grandfather's images, and transforming these into the basis for the creation of multiple printed images, is to confront the 'collisions and absences – and the haunting created by those collisions and gaps – [in the] presence' of new territories of practice, revealing and re-veiling at once, beating and fulling the material while leaving a permanent trace.⁴⁸² 'There exist what we call images of things, [writes Lucretius] peeled off from the surfaces of objects, [...] sent out from the surface of things.'⁴⁸³ These images, projected from the surface of the matrix, then, are 'distributed across bodies and generations' creating both personal and public confrontations, that collide across multiple perspectives, and like fingerprints, touched and affected, and revealed through dusting, emerge through the photographic encounter with resistance, ruin and memory of the *bodies of water* in the River Paraná.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸² **Ariel Ducey**, 'More than Job', *The Affective Turn, Theorizing the Social*, edited by Patricia Ticineto Clough with Jean Halley (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007) p. 210. See also footnote 311

⁴⁸³ **Titus Lucretius Carus**, *On the Nature of the Universe: A New Verse Translation* by Sir Ronald Melville (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) p. 102-3

⁴⁸⁴ **Grace M Cho**, 2007, p. 157

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Auratic translation

The translation of a unique image (analogue or hand-made etching) onto another printed surface, via a series of digital and traditional printing processes. The 'aura' is 'translated' from one surface to another creating a dialogue between the original and the final outcome. In this research this applies to the transfer of silver print positives to photo-etchings that have touched the waters of the Paraná, picking up surface debris and microscopic DNA particles of the disappeared, and their translation into digital hybrid prints in a large scale.

Affective Enactment

The act of (re)creating a print in the waters of the Paraná, using hand-made processes to translate imagery in situ. It does not refer to the auratic surface of the new image created, but of the action of creating it itself, as the hand/ body in the landscape becomes the moment of active and affective creation. It also refers to the performative aspect of pulling a print in the printroom, also a physical act that requires the presence of the hand. In these actions, memories and histories are enacted, or re-presented, made present again, which create an affective resonance.

Fulling

This is a term I have coined to refer to the translation of the Spanish word 'huella' (trace) and its etymology. To full was first used to describe the action of beating cloth with tenters or other instruments in order to mould it. In this research paper it is used metaphorically both to indicate the traces left on the plate and the fact that these traces (bodily remains) were obtained through beating at the hands of the military junta.

Ground Resist

A ground is applied to an etching plate in order to give it a resistant layer on which to create an image. This grounding will resist the acid that bites into the grooves that are revealed by marks on its surface. In this research, the photopolymer plates are pre-coated with a light sensitive layer (a ground) and the image can only be exposed onto its surface through the action of UV or natural light. I also use this term metaphorically to describe the way the landscape (the ground) has resisted its traumatic history.

Hybrid print

This is a print that has used traditional processes at the start (photoetching processes or transfer prints) and is then scanned and printed in a large format as a digital print on Japanese Awagami paper, or thin copy paper with saturated inks.

Infra-mince

A term first devised by Marcel Duchamp to mean the ephemeral or trace residue of an experience or action (the warmth left behind on a seat after someone has left it, for example). Here I use it to describe the third part of the making process, in which the surface of the water with its microscopic traces touches the surface of the plate or paper to reveal a latent image- an invisible and ephemeral micro- surface or infra thin trace below the threshold of our perception.

Matrix

This is the base metal plate (made of aluminium in this research) that is used in any type of etching.

Noise

This denotes the visual distortions that often occur on the surface of digital photographs, similar to grain found in film photographs. I use noise to denote these surface particles that are produced by the translation of the image through various screens (scanner beds, digital processes, transfer prints and photo etchings). At every stage noise intrudes. Far from trying to reduce this (it is often seen as a problem that needs to be eliminated in traditional photography) I embrace these particles as both a means of describing the distortions produced in response to traumatic memories and a way of bringing renewed lament (noise) to the forgotten history of that landscape.

Object Screen Memories

Hybrid prints in large-scale configurations that protrude or impose themselves into the space of the gallery

Photo (polymer) etching

Using an aluminium plate prepared with a light sensitive coating, a stochastic screen is placed on the surface initially in order to make it receptive to the subsequent positive image that is exposed onto it using light, either UV light in the studio, or sunlight under

glass. The plate is then developed in water and left to dry as an imprint of small troughs and fissures on its surface. The plate is then covered in ink, which is wiped off to leave only the ink in the grooves on the surface of the plate. This is then positioned on the printing press with a piece of damp paper on top, and pulled through the press to leave an impression of the image on the paper.

Transfer print

A photograph is printed onto paper and then scaled up or down in the photocopy machine. The photocopy or the digitally printed photograph is placed face up onto the printing press and a piece of paper is placed over the top. Another piece of absorbent paper is saturated with acetone, and placed on top of the paper in the press, pulled through the rollers where it transfers from one surface to the other.

Prosopopeia

From ancient Greek, meaning the personification of inanimate things, it is a term used by Eyal Weizman (2015) to describe the way forensic anthropologists speak for absent or deceased persons through DNA evidence, photographic evidence or osteopathology. I use it to describe how my photographic encounters in the Paraná personify the landscape and its hidden traumas and translate these into a new dialogue with the political disappeared, and my deceased grandfather.

Revelar

This is a Spanish term that means both to reveal something and to develop a photograph.

Stochastic screen

Also known as an aquatint screen, this is a specially prepared printed acetate screen created using a halftone process based on the random distribution of halftone dots distributed across the screen. It works on the etching plate to embed a fine grain on the surface of the plate in order to hold ink in the dark areas that would otherwise wash out completely when developed in water.

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Figure 1

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Figure 2

Henry Richard Ahrens, *Hats on the Paraná*, c. 1930, family album

Figure 3

Henry Richard Ahrens, *River Paraná _ii*, c. 1930, family album

Figure 4

Henry Richard Ahrens, *River Paraná_iii*, c. 1930, family album

Figure 5

Victoria Ahrens, *DNA*, EAAF Headquarters, Buenos Aires, 2015

Figure 6

Henry Richard Ahrens, *Self-Portrait in the Paraná*, c. 1930

Figure 7

Victoria Ahrens, Photocopy in large scale of Henry Richard Ahrens' analogue silver print 'Hats on the Paraná', fragmenting the image for photo etchings, 2014

Figure 8

Victoria Ahrens, *Digital photograph of the Upper Paraná*, Research trip 2012

Figure 9

Victoria Ahrens, *Last Views (2015) Photo etching of digital positive above on Fabriano Rosaspina paper, large book sculpture, 200 cm (w) x 110 cm (h)*

Figure 10

Victoria Ahrens, *Inside the River Paraná*, Digital print on copy paper, photographic research 2014, 29 cm (h) x 42 cm (w)

Figure 11

Victoria Ahrens, *Acetate of transfer print on photo etching plate*, exposing the plate to the sunlight, documentation of test strips on deck by the river bank, 2015

Figure 12

Victoria Ahrens, *Acetate of transfer print on photo etching plate*, exposing the plate to the sunlight, documentation of test strips on deck by the river bank, 2015

Figure 13

Victoria Ahrens, *Exposing plates to the sunlight*, Experiments on the banks of the Paraná, allowing incidental elements to interfere on the surface, Documentation of research process, 2015

Figure 14

Victoria Ahrens, *Final pieces being exposed on the banks of the Paraná*, Positive acetate photograph on photo etching plate with glass top on stone barrier, Documentation of practice, 2015

Figure 15

Victoria Ahrens, *Film still of collection of river water (potential DNA samples) on the banks of the Upper Paraná*, Documentation of research process, 2015, 7 mins video, "3 mins

Figure 16

Victoria Ahrens, 'Liminal Stage' *Film Still of photo etching plate, developed in the river Paraná*, 7 min video, 4"

Figure 17

Victoria Ahrens, 'Enactments', *film still of inking up process in cabin on the Paraná*, Experimental test strips, Documentation of practice, 2015, 21 cm (h) x 30 cm (w)

Figure 18

Victoria Ahrens, *inking up a photo etching plate in the studio* (2015)
30 cm (w) x 42 cm (h)

Figure 19

Victoria Ahrens, 'Infra mince', *Composite Photo etching plate, Prussian Blue ink*, 2015, of digital positive (see Figure 9), 30 cm (h) x 42 cm (w)

Figure 20

Victoria Ahrens, *Paraná Blues*, Photo etching Plate Matrix with Prussian Blue Ink, Exhibited at Hangzhou Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China, 2015

Figure 21

Victoria Ahrens, *Paraná Blues*, press printed, photo etching on Reeves paper, 2015, 60 cm (h) x 45 cm (w)

Figure 22

Victoria Ahrens, *Paraná Blues*, C-type print of photo etching transfers, 90 Gsm copy paper, two sizes: 210 cm (w) x 80 cm (h)/ 120 cm (w) x 60 cm (h)

Figure 23

Victoria Ahrens, *Paraná Blues*, C-type Print on 90 gsm copy paper, mounted on Dibond 3cm, Arte Laguna Prize, Venice Arsenale, 2016, 210 cm (w) x 80 cm (h)

Figure 24

Victoria Ahrens, *They were Hanging There*, C-type print on Japanese Awagami paper, 2015

Figure 25

Victoria Ahrens, *They were Hanging There*, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China, 2015, 320 cm (h) x 200 cm (w) framed; in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Beijing

Figure 26

Victoria Ahrens, *Translado Trivergy*, transfer prints and saturated digital prints on 90gsm copy paper in wooden frames, 2015

Figure 27

Victoria Ahrens, *Enactments* (2016) Printing large scale digital photograph of combined transfer print (original transfer size 20 cm x 61 cm)

Figure 28

Victoria Ahrens, *Enactments* (2016), C-type Print on 90 gsm copy paper, 300 cm (w) x 110 cm (h)

Figure 29

Victoria Ahrens, *In limbo*, combined photo etching on Fabriano rosaspina paper, 2015

Figure 30

Victoria Ahrens, *In Limbo* (2015), Transfer print on Fabriano paper, Intermediate stage for large digital print, 42 cm (w) x 30 cm (h)

Figure 31

Victoria Ahrens, *Ground Resist*, (2016) from transfer print (see figure 29), Scanned, digitalized, large scale C-type print on Hahnemüle paper, 250 cm (w) x 110 cm (h)

Figure 32

Victoria Ahrens, *The Perfect Place*, photo transfer from analogue positive, scanned and printed as a C-type print on Hahnemüle paper, 2016

Figure 33

Victoria Ahrens, *Free Fall (Aerial)* (2016) Print Matrix developed in the river, latent, etched image in the light, Aluminium photo etching plate, 30 cm (w) x 22 cm (h)

Figure 34

Victoria Ahrens, *Free Fall (in situ)* (2016), two photoetching matrices, etched images, wooden shelf, page from *Nunca Más* CONADEP Commission Witness statement (1986)

Figure 35

Victoria Ahrens, *Free Fall* (2016), Aerial photograph of the Tigre, Photo etching on Fabriano Rosaspina paper with black ink, City on the lower Paraná, 45 cm (w) x 30 cm (h) from original analogue photograph by Henry Richard Ahrens, circa 1930

Figure 36

Victoria Ahrens, *River Trilogy*, photo transfers and digital prints in wooden frames stacked, Peltz Gallery 2016

Figure 37

Victoria Ahrens, *River Trilogy ii*, digital photographs in wooden frames, Peltz Gallery, London, 2016

Figure 38a/b

Victoria Ahrens, *Forensic*, C-type prints on copy paper, 2016

Figure 39

Sally Mann, *Deep South*, 2005 [online]: <<https://apm65.wordpress.com/2010/10/31/the-deep-south-of-sally-mann/>> [accessed 10/10/15]

Figure 40

Susan Derges, *Shoreline*, 1998 [online] University of Warwick Art Collection, <<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/art/artist/susanderges/wu0798/>> [accessed 10/10/15]

Figure 41

Thumbprint identification cards, 2013, Argentina, **El Tribuno**- 'En los nuevos DNI no figuran Tierra del Fuego ni Malvinas', *El Tribuno*, 18th December 2009 [online] <<http://www.eltribuno.info/salta/diario/2009/12/18/salta/en-los-nuevos-dni-no-figuran-tierra-del-fuego-ni-malvinas>> (accessed 25/07/10)

Figure 42

Chloe Dewe Mathews, *Private Herbert Chase 04:30/11.6.1915*, 106, *Sint-Sixtusabdij, Proven, Westvleteren*, 2014, 'Chloe Dewe Mathews's Shot at Dawn: a moving photographic memorial', *The Guardian* [online] at: <<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/jun/29/chloe-dewe-mathews-shot-at-dawn-moving-photographic-memorial-first-world-war>> [accessed 10/10/15]

Figure 43

Ori Gersht, *White Noise*, No. 8 (1999-2000) [online] University of Chicago Booth Business School Art Collection: <<http://art.chicagobooth.edu/index.php?q=viewimage&ID=222>> [accessed 12/12/15]

Figure 44

Victoria Ahrens, *Paraná Blues*, 2015, projection and photocopies

Figure 45

Victoria Ahrens, *Projecere*, Projection of video, Peltz Gallery, 2016