

PHOTOGRAPHY AND INSTABILITY: RHYTHMS OF REFLECTIONS AND REPETITIONS IN SPACE

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EXEGESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE MASTER OF ART AND DESIGN, AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, NOVEMBER 2010

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or another institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.”

Gemma Skipper

2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This exegesis gratefully acknowledges the generous support of Fiona Amundsen and Monique Redmond as the most impeccable supervisors that I could have asked for. With the support of Lisa Rayner, Phillip Good and the entire visual arts studio, this thesis has come about. I also appreciatively acknowledge the support of Mum, Dad, James and Tamara for providing an environment in which this could occur. This research would not have been possible without the generous support of the Tai Tokerau Maori Trust and Maori Education Trust.

ABSTRACT

This visual arts project constructs multiple series of individual, but intimately related, analogue photographs that describe public 'natural' environments, located amongst residential and light industrial areas. As such, this research is concerned with how a site can be depicted in an individual image and across a series. Specifically through the differing and deferring ways that the photographic medium is language and experienced as nature, culture, time, space, representing and presenting. Each of these concepts occurs endlessly and interchangeably and thereby activates a viewing encounter by the mediums instability. This research accordingly investigates a range of spatial relationships – the actual site, the spatial depth created across and within a series, as well as the spacing and distancing that occurs between and through images – amid multiple photographic series. These establish continually shifting experiences, with both the medium and represented sites. By means of these constructed spaces, formal rhythmic relationships of reflections, repetitions and reoccurrences provoke encounters with individual images, into active engagements, within and across spatial depths of series'. These interventions serve to guide, pause and block viewing experiences, thereby continuously reflecting photography itself in every formally negotiated encounter

This thesis is comprised of 80% practical and 20% exegesis.

INTRODUCTION

Always the photograph *astonishes* me, with an astonishment which endures and renews itself, inexhaustibly (Barthes, 1981, p. 82).

In the early nineteenth century, when writing a letter to a fellow experimenter of the photographic medium, Nicephore Niepce¹ mentioned his intent to “devote myself exclusively to copying views from nature” (Gernsheim & Gernsheim, 1956, p. 54/55). Without yet a name for this method of mimetically tracing light to establish a permanent image, Niepce refers to the medium in such a way that intertwines natural elements into the process itself. This description of analogue photography suggests that the views imprinted are produced *by* the natural environment. In linking a mechanical (and therefore ‘objective’) medium with an entity (light) that was considered to be outside of human control, photography brings together “an undecidable marking” (Batchen, 1997, p. 179).

This instability of the medium as both a natural and a cultural process is reflected in the way photography is language, experienced and henceforth examined through this research: the exegesis which is titled *Photography and Instability: rhythms of reflections and repetitions in space*. Accordingly the research is undertaken through the series of

photographs within a final thesis exhibition, these take their name from Niepce’s proclamation - *Views from Nature* (Gernsheim & Gernsheim, 1956, p. 54/55). This is compiled of multiple series of individual but related sites each described across a sequence of images². Within numerous series, natural environments (ie: parks which function as sanctuaries) amongst residential and industrial areas are photographed and arranged in such a manner that suggests a ‘new space’, within and across the multiple images. In doing this, the research investigates how formal interventions of reflections, repetitions and reoccurrences can enact shifting rhythms in and amongst these spatial relationships, thereby questioning how such movements are activated through a photographic experience.

This exegesis is therefore divided into three chapters which each present a theoretical position, from which this practice-based research is discussed. In the first chapter, *Photography Itself: Looking by means of reflections and repetitions*, the medium is examined as being concerned with a continual shifting between opposing binary terms, such as nature and culture. Accordingly the chapter questions how photography can be enacted in an image, specifically in relation to how decisions around subject matter and approach can establish an encounter with the medium itself. This chapter refers to art historian Geoffrey Batchen and theorist Roland Barthes, as a means of exploring how photography

operates or in other words, how it *means*. This therefore positions the research in such a way which identifies the medium's binaries (and the instability surrounding them) as being persistently moving. Through investigating such terrain, this chapter subsequently discusses how a relationship between various photographic forms (subject, reflections, repetitions and reoccurrences - all of which are rhythms) can create an experience of deferral.

Consequently chapter two of this exegesis, *Spacing and Temporalising: That which occurs in and amongst photography*, will extend this dialogue into how such deferral (and difference) can activate a viewer's encounter with a series of images. This is particularly indebted to philosopher, Jacques Derrida, whose notion of *différance* deals with "the unresolved deferral of the identity one might have ascribed to a particular term....meaning endlessly 'differs'....meaning endlessly 'deferred'" (Deutscher, 2005, p. 31). In other words, *différance* addresses the ways in which concepts, or their representations, continuously differ (from others) and defer (between them) in a ceaseless construction of meaning. These theories of *différance* are used to further explore how terms such as nature, culture, time and space can occupy shifting and interchangeable positions in both photography itself, and the way in which it is employed in *Views from Nature*. As such this chapter explores how various understandings of space (the site itself, the spatial depth of a

singular image and the constructed relationships between them) can offer an encounter which extends and prolongs each individual photograph into the next. Images thereby respond to one another and construct an experience, which is a focus of this research, of movement or activation.

Accordingly chapter three, *Shifting and Extending: A practice-based approach* widens this analysis by outlining the decisions that lead to the development of the research. Therefore this discussion describes how a consideration of nature³ has progressed alongside the subject matter, specifically in regards to the presentation and installation of each series. Subsequently this chapter addresses the formal relationships between photographs as a building or extending of space, with particular reference to the whole project. By reflecting on the practice based research in which *Views from Nature* has evolved, this chapter further positions the project in the context of method related concerns.

Therefore this exegesis functions as a written discussion of the key theoretical positions which inform *Views from Nature*, and the larger project. As an extension of this relationship the following writing contains photographs from the working journal which accompanied this research, as well as digital photos of pre-emptive explorations of sites. These images of how contact sheets or photographs are edited together, and 'processed' through drawing and writing are a way of further thinking

around the spatial relationships of an entire series. They are included within this exegesis as a way of extending a reader's understanding of such relationships, but are not to be considered as articulate responses to the work. Rather, the journal functions as an intimate look into the thinking implicit within this practice-based research.

Through a series of shifting spatial concerns, *Views from Nature* explores photography itself as a way of further extending, prolonging and activating a viewer's experience. This exegesis reflects this through looking at the research itself (subject, method and approach to installation, as considered by the pertaining theoretical frameworks) as a means of pushing and pulling a discussion of visual practice.



Figure 1: From left to right; *View from Mt Albert Road* and *View from Margan Avenue*, 400x500 mm and 300x400 mm respectively, Type-C Photographs, September, 2010.

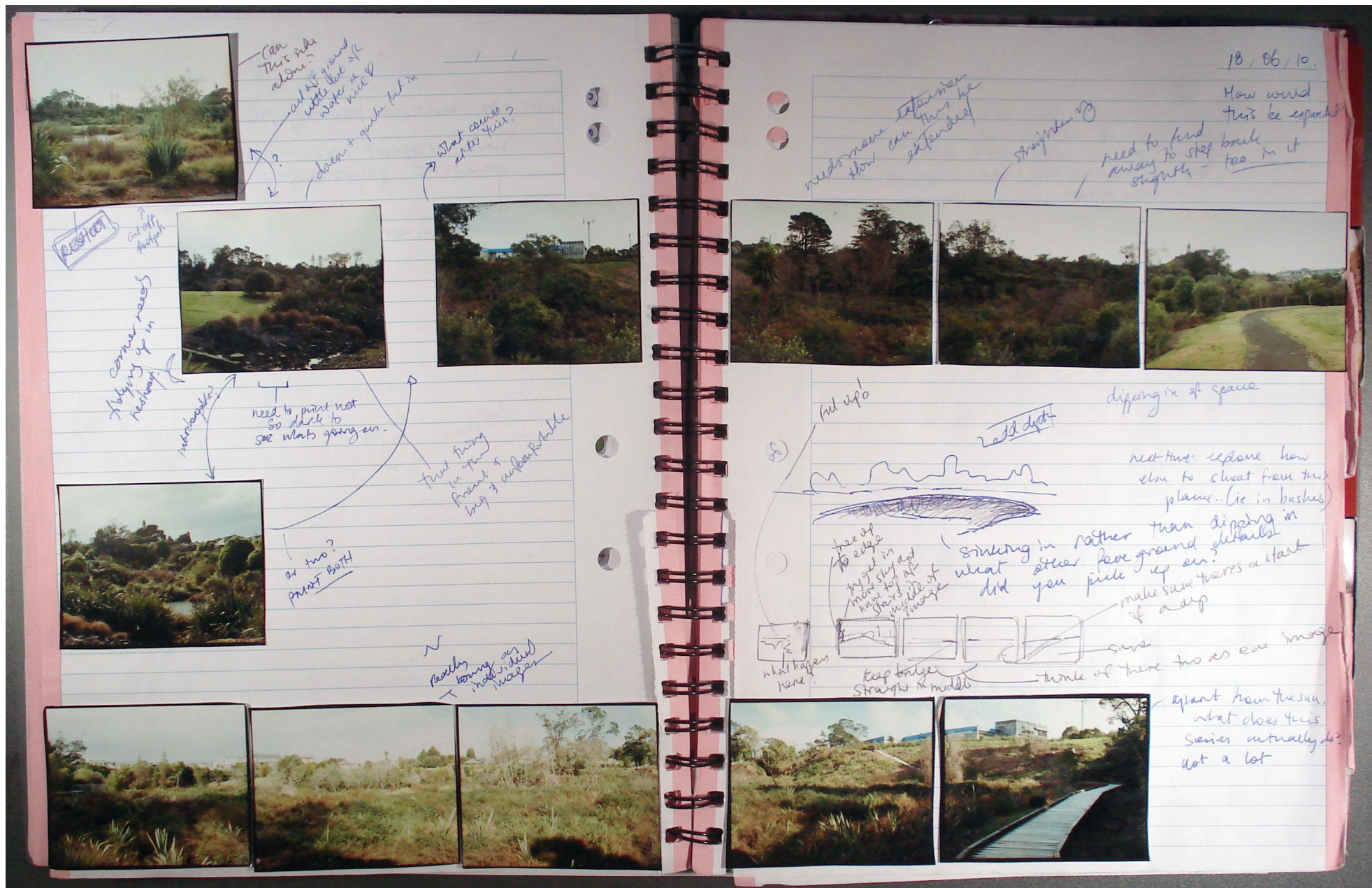


Figure 2: View from Margan Avenue, Journal, June 2010

CHAPTER ONE

PHOTOGRAPHY ITSELF: LOOKING BY MEANS OF REFLECTIONS
AND REPETITIONS.

As Talbot pointed out in his *Account*⁴, a photograph explicitly directs attention to the temporal implications of its own process of representation. It depicts a set of objects in fixed spatial relations at a given moment in real time. It fixes in place that moment lived before the camera (Batchen, 1997, p. 93).

Analogue photographs do not invent what they represent; rather they confirm an existence in the world (Barthes, 1981, p. 87). This notion is linked to “the myth of photographic ‘naturalness’: the scene is there, captured mechanically not humanly (the mechanical is here a guarantee of objectivity)” (Barthes, 1977, p. 44). By capturing the reflected light off the surface of a subject, into the film of a camera, photographs become faithful recollections of time and space. As such, this chapter will discuss the complex position that photography holds (or is unable to hold) as the research constructs images that pivot between representing *and* presenting. This discussion is in relation to *Views from Nature*, which uses analogue processes to visually enact photography; thereby establishing a discourse concerning the instability of the medium itself. In other words, photography is embedded within this project in such a way that goes beyond a simple mimetic imprint of the world. The images themselves are concerned with the very nature of the medium, its indexical recording of light, space and time. Therefore this chapter addresses how photography

and its socio-cultural rhetoric (of ‘objectively’ presenting a subject) are enacted in a viewing experience; thereby releasing a consideration around the ways in which the medium operates and is experienced. Although all photography has this ability, this research is primarily concerned with revealing and extending the medium itself. Hence questioning, how individual images, or series of works, ‘speak’ photographically; what parts of an image point to the medium itself?

This discussion is thereby directed by what the camera is looking at, the sites depicted. These locations are imprinted onto film, and accordingly direct viewers’ experience and languaging⁵ by being what is literally seen (ie: whatever subject-matter is actually represented). Specifically, within *Views from Nature* there are various series constructed by multiple images, of individual but similar places. All these locations involve an abundant amount of ways to occupy each site. These can include; public parks, wetlands, quarries, waste terrains, playgrounds, wildlife sanctuaries, ‘green spaces’, light industry zones, residential housing relating to a specific economic group, as well as public landscaping or art (Figures 3-6). In short, each location carries with it multiple social, economical, political and environmental positions which are embedded into the sites themselves. The locations that are included within *Views from Nature* therefore hold multiple ways of being used and described, the most obvious of which rests in a relationship amid natural and constructed forms.



Figures 3-6: Various sites, pre-emptive digital exploring/drawing. 2010



This affiliation between the natural and the cultural, both in the site and in an image, has been explored in New Zealand photographer Wayne Barrar's series, *An Expanding Subterra* (2010). These images consist of underground living and work spaces crossing commercial, industrial and residential uses. Each photograph presents carved out interiors and transformed landscapes, which appropriate ex-mining cavities into a spatial commodity of office and home areas. The 'natural' space (soil, rocks, and sedimentary matter) is burrowed out in the act of mining for goods; there is literally a new space by means of excavation. The disparity in Barrar's photographs, natural in their original state but converted into constructed spaces of cultural use, comes from a basis of dualisms⁶. In *Male underground bathroom, Carlsbad Caverns, USA, 2006* for instance (Figure 7), "the sleek white modernist porcelain curves of the urinals, the reflected light of the florescent tubes and the looming mass of brown rock exuding over the top of the tiling" (Pike, 2010, p. 14) construct an odd discontinuity of a known type of space. Institutional in design, the bathroom imposes into the underground site, leaving an overhanging rock as the only indication of what had occupied the space previously, or even where the room is geographically located.

Therefore *An Expanding Subterra* contains sites which shift between the natural and the cultural; each standardised space (university libraries, offices, lunch rooms, and factories) is continually displaced by

the rugged scraped out walls and ceilings. This reminder (of both the location and means of creating each room) is furthered by other photographs in the series, such as *Twin Tunnels, Manapouri Underground Power Station, New Zealand, 2005*, (Figure 8) where jagged cuts into the surrounding rocks are lit up by fluorescent tubes.

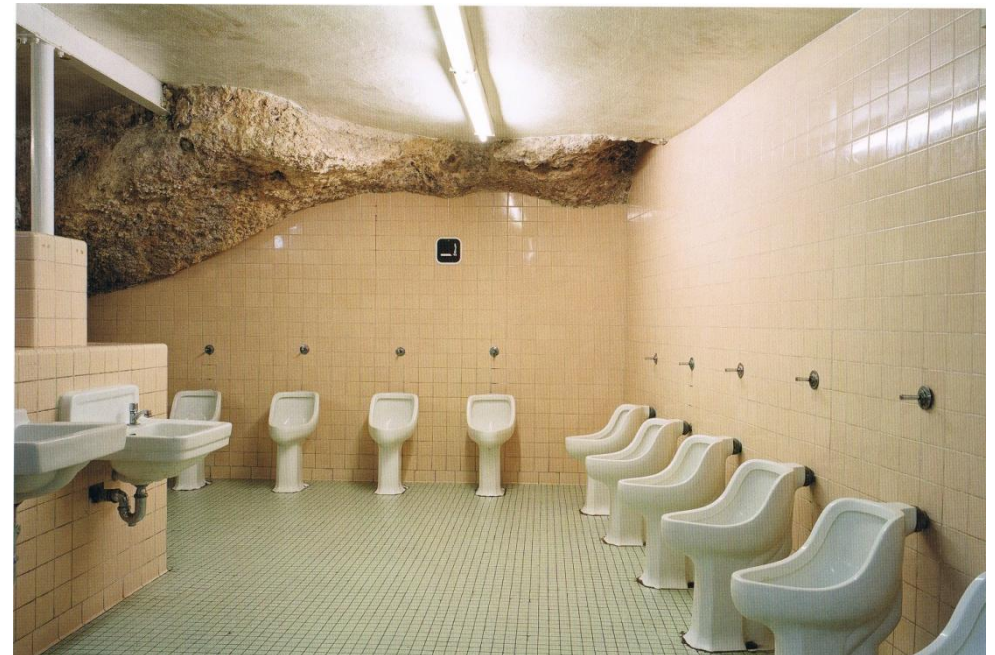


Figure 7: *Male Underground bathroom, Carlsbad Caverns, USA, 2006*. Type-C Photograph. Wayne Barrar. (Barrar, 2010, p. 14).

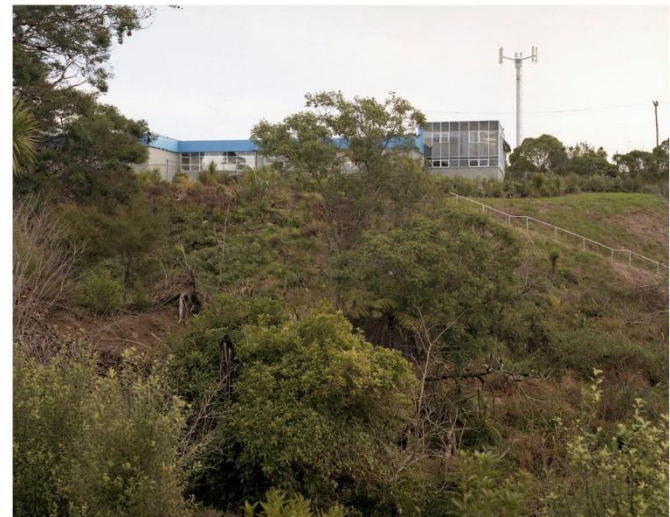


Figure 8: *Twin Tunnels, Manapouri Underground Power Station, New Zealand, 2005. Type-C Photograph. Wayne Barrar. (Barrar, 2010, p. 69)*

This examination of a 'natural' site being informed by cultural interjections is further developed in the present research, in particular through the park-like locations photographed. These are designated as culturally designed experiences with the natural environment; visitors walk through, directed by the pathways, around selected areas of shrub growth. In the photographs themselves, this experience is seen in the abundance of plant forms which are regulated by subtle interventions, such as black plastic eco-covers or mown lawns, and more dramatically

with actual cuts into the land and uniformed planting. At the same time, in the images, the sites themselves are full of foliage which moves about in directions that aren't always controlled; this locates each as being a 'natural' environment in their abundance of plant life.

View from Margan Avenue (Figure 9) for instance, has branches of trees, twigs and shrubs, jutting into the photographic space⁷ at seemingly inappropriate moments. This can be seen in the foreground of the series, with shrubs popping out of the bottom of the frame, or in the mid-ground, where trees act as a hum of repeated branches, moulding into the surroundings. These happenings of natural forms⁸ disrupt both the order of the actual site and that of the composition of the photograph, revealing the unstable and shifting position that nature and culture have in the multiple sites of this project. For example, each location photographed is not simply one or the other, but a continual negotiation of both: neither holds precedence continuously. The constructed, and therefore cultural, aspects of the sites are altered by the actual nature (the foliage) as it presents itself in the photograph. The trees and shrubs of *View from Margan Avenue* thereby represent a disparity between natural and cultural forms as each, is at some points, displaced by another.





This experience is extended through photography, which even as a word is “a compound of two Greek components- phos (light) and graphie (writing, drawing, and delineation)..., it posits a paradoxical coalition of ‘light’ (sun, God, nature) and ‘writing’ (history, humankind, culture), an impossible binary opposition ‘fixed’ in uneasy conjunction only by the artifice of language” (Batchen, 1997, p. 101). In particular, this relates to how photography is neither solely a natural process (as it requires human presence), nor only a cultural one (as the photograph, at the same time, draws itself with light). Analogue photographs therefore avoid being defined by either concept; they are neither created within themselves, nor solely produced by human means. Photography’s coming together of these two opposing forces situates it as undecided, it is neither one nor the other but both; this is reflected in the naming of the medium but is also extended in other ways. More specifically, this can be seen in theorist Geoffrey Batchen’s book, *Burning with Desire. The Conception of Photography* (1997) which “rewrite[s] the traditional history of photography’s origins” (Batchen, 1997, p. viii). In doing this, Batchen “argues that the received and opposed accounts of photography’s ‘identity’ (what photography is)...turn on an...alternation between nature and culture” (Snyder, 1999, p. 541).

Within this discussion of what it means for a photograph to be both natural and cultural, Batchen also proposes that the medium

occupies interchanging positions of time and space. In particular, how an image takes “the most transitory of things, a shadow, the proverbial emblem of all that is fleeting and momentary... [so that it] may be fixed forever in the position which it seemed only destined for a single instance to occupy” (Batchen, 1997, p. 91). In other words, the medium pauses time for a delayed inspection; it holds passing light (and its effects) up for examination. Within each image, the transitory is *held*; a way of being in time (continuously) becomes spatial as it is measured between and amongst relationships of subjects. The spacing or distancing that each image has of a represented moment designates an encounter with time.

Photographs are therefore both temporal moments, but also prolonged ones, as the medium pauses time and space, as well as the represented subject indefinitely. This shifting of binary structures (in that time and space are separate binary concepts) occupies a slipping of positions within each and every photograph. These movements between time and space are extended by the way that the medium both depicts and describes each subject. In this sense, the spatial relationships before the camera are presented but through a two-dimensional medium – a representation. Hinged between both, photography is continually shifting in the way that spatial relationships of the subjects are experienced. Accordingly, it is the medium itself, in its process (the way it captures light) and way of being language(d) (as proposed in Batchen’s text), that is

unstable and undecided. The disparity or instability of photography (as it refuses to settle in a binary structure) allows an image to be mutable as it continuously changes in the way it is understood and experienced. Each image occupies an ever moving array of positions, nature, culture, time, space, represented and presented, where the medium cannot be continuously defined in the way it is language and encountered.

Within this research, photography's instability is explored through the sites of *Views from Nature* which reflect a similar shifting between nature and culture. By means of a specific approach to photographing, these sites expand the mediums rhetoric of unsettled concepts (in language and experience). This occurs by activating the mediums mechanical and therefore 'objective' view on a subject⁹ which has a consistency through representing multiple series of similar subject matters. *Views from Nature* thereby works towards removing any sentimentality that may be associated with a subjective or personal relationship with the site depicted. Instead it focuses on amplifying the way in which photography is an "imprint of nature" (Batchen, 1997, p. 66), a process in which the mechanics of the camera allow a scene "the power to reproduce" itself (Ibid). This kind of neutral view is used as a means of providing a 'space for looking' for a viewer, a way in which to look at site without the apparent subjective interjections of the photographer.



Figure 10: *View from Margan Ave*, 300x400mm each, Type-C Photographs, 2010.

As such, the kind of method employed in this research stems from German artists, Bernd and Hilla Becher. The highly influential pair¹⁰ pushed neutrality in their practice by typologically exploring certain industrial architectural forms, (such as water towers, blast furnaces, and gas tanks) through black and white photographs arranged in a grid. Each series consists of a singular kind of subject matter, found in a variety of geographical locations. These are repeatedly photographed and brought together into one viewing experience, "...taken with a technical camera, early in the morning on overcast days, so as to eliminate shadow and distribute light evenly. The subject is centered and frontally framed, its parallel lines set on a plane as close to an architectural elevation as possible. No human beings and no clouds or birds in the sky interfere with the starkness. Not a mood is conveyed in the image, not the slightest touch of fantasy disturbs its ascetic neutrality" (de Duve, 1999, p. 7). Each resulting series of images are highly detailed and unfailingly uniform (Figure 11). In seeing these subtly different, but similar objects, a continuous repetition of forms, occurring in regular rhythms, emerges. Every photograph encountered by a viewer, reflects and repeats the forms, lighting and composition of the others around it. By looking at the architectural structures as forms or objects (rather than symbols or signs for anything else happening outside of the frame), the approach taken shows the camera (and the photographers) at work. This happens within

a series where each type of structure is simultaneously preserved, recorded and presented, as well as every nuance of control executed by the Bechers. In doing both, photography is rendered as the means of description but, also what is shown.



Figure 11: *Water Towers*, 1980, Bernd and Hilla Becher.

This same sensation happens in a similar but different way in *Photography and Instability*, where the medium itself becomes enacted through both the subject matter and form of the image. *Views from*

Nature employs methods similar to the Bechers in that across every scene there are no people, the light is overcast and the site itself is rendered in consistent detail. In this way *Views from Nature* is held together as one viewing experience by a consistency in approach, which allows the works to operate in a particular manner. Each series consists of a sequence of individual photographs from the same location (as evidenced by the inescapable similarities of subject) arranged in a way that demands that the images are experienced in relation to one another. This happens by the photographs being placed so close to each other that to encounter one is to see the next. Within this experience, formal relationships are constructed by the method of photographing. For instance, this can be seen in *View from Wolverton Street* (Figure 12), where the photographic approach means that there is an earthy orangey-brown hue that is present throughout the six images, as seen in the branches of trees, muddy waters and exposed areas of ground. This regularity in colouring and tone brings the photographs together in such a way that means they all exist at once, rather than being a series of discrete moments encountered one after another.

Views from Nature therefore constructs a new time and space by removing the traces of a particular 'photographic moment', found mostly when humans or dramatic lighting are present. This 'new space' extends out over a series in such a way, that various images are held in a collective

experience for the viewer. However, within this newly constructed space, the recorded movements of plants locate a photograph back to a clichéd 'decisive moment', as seen when wind affects some foliage at a very particular instance. This disruption pulls a viewer out of the new space and time constructed and back into an *individual* image, rather than with a cumulative series. As such, there are compositional repetitions, reiterations and reflections which serve to point to the constructed (and therefore cultural) elements of each photograph. In *View from Wolverton Street* the horizon line carries on continuously throughout the series, indicating the end of the spatial depth and constructing a contained area in which the 'new space' exists. Within this, a large tree reflects the weight and form of a bridge in another image through the amount of space taken up in a frame(s); these balance each other so that no one formal element is given preference. This same sense can be seen in the way the planting of small shrubs mimics further botanically developed – but equally distributed – plants in another photograph; the sprouts of foliage repeat similar planting patterns. In other words, the reoccurrences and reflections in form and composition happen as the series is experienced all together, by means of the method of photographing.





Figure 12: *View from Wolverton Street*, 400x500 mm each, Type-C Photographs, 2010

These rhythms (reflections and repetitions of form) occur in a different way from the Bechers series of photographs, where flatness plays a key role. Within the Bechers' practice, sequencing happens in such a way that is almost linear; one after another in the encounter of every image. In *Views from Nature* however, there are spaces constructed by the composition of each photograph and the relationships between them, as well as their installation method. Thereby, amid these spatial relationships, rhythms occur in and through the depth of each series. In this way, this project indulges the faithfulness of the medium (its supposed truth), and the way in which it can potentially act as an experience to 'fall' in to. This occurs in the way that photography both shows and describes, or presents and represents. As French theorist, Roland Barthes says in his influential text, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* (1981), "a photograph is always invisible, it is not it that we see" (1981, p. 6). In other words, photographs are intrinsically tied to their referents (the subject) in an unavoidable manner; it is implausible to see 'around' them at the medium itself. Rather, "the referent adheres" (Ibid) in viewer's encounters, they cannot not see the subject. Henceforth, within this research project, the approach to photographing as well as the installation method work together to look at the subject, which, as this chapter has discussed, enact the medium. In each series of images, a sense of depth constructs a particular experience with subject

where there is a "spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority" (Barthes, 1977, p. 44). This allows a viewer to experience the subject within multiple, mutable, and unstable¹¹ senses of time and space. In doing this *Views from Nature* uses formal relationships between images and what occurs within them, to construct an experience where viewers can be spatially (and temporally) indulged; this is furthered still by analogue printing methods.

In the *View from Nature* series, colour and tone sit in the paper in such a way that viewers can 'fall in'. This experience is uninterrupted by the glossy surface, which serves to induce viewer's with its richness and depth. The reaction of light and chemicals means that the tones imprinted into the paper also reach inwards. The deepness of blacks or density of mid-tones are only halted by the photographs two dimensional surface, pulling a viewer back into the 'here and now', removed from the 'there and then'. This push and pull into the photographic space furthers the already shifting relationships surrounding spatial depth within a series. For instance, in *View from Meola Road* (Figure 13), the new constructed space (and time) involves a dipping in of landforms as the line of a gully slides between the three photographs. Within this spatial depth, there is a huddle of trees grouped in the centre of the two images; they slip across and into one another, creating a form of foliage. In a similar way, a spill of light covers the grass of both foregrounds, enacting

the space as continuous. This is further extended by the relationship of reflection between the sweep of a path and the occurrence of a branch diagonally across from it. These 'frame' the grouping of trees in such a way that holds a continued pause, the sweeps of land surrounding them all seem to come into this constructed huddle. The tension, or pausing, that the trees construct are altered by a third image. Within this, the same sweep of a gully is continued, but as a scene in sequence, it doesn't fit; thereby disrupting the construction of a 'new space' within the series. The spatial relations continue (in the line of the land and moulding together of foliage) but also they are incomplete as the branch of a tree isn't fulfilled. In this way the series steps away from becoming a panoramic of a scene, pulling viewers back from falling into the images referent. Therefore both the site and the placement of photographs constructs the space presented/represented; there is a tension between the two as neither gives way, nor claims priority.

Accordingly, the editing together of each series furthers the paradoxes found in the subject matter and photography itself. It isn't simply a series of constructed scenes; in some photographs the site is given room to be *as it is*, both in individual images and across a body of work. In other words, the choice in subject matter, approach to photographing, and means of constructing a series, work to further a slippage between binaries within a viewing experience. Each site is

presented (and represented) into a new space and time captured by a mechanical process. Neither of these positions, nature or culture (which relate to being real, constructed, temporal or designated) are resolved through photography itself. As such, they are extended, pushed and pulled within *Views from Nature* as a means of enacting a movement amongst photographic discourse through a viewing experience. In a constant slipping of space, time, nature and culture, there is an activation amid and between these terms. In particular by the way in which they are seen in the photographs as reflections, repetitions and reoccurrences. These continually defer viewers from any one point of focus in an experience of *Views from Nature*, by means of a series of continual rhythms.



Figure 13a: Installed, from left: *View from Meola Road*, *View from Wolverton Street*. AUT Foyer, 400x500 mm each. Type-C Photographs, 2010





Figure 13: View from Meola Road, 400x500 mm each. Type-C Photographs, 2010

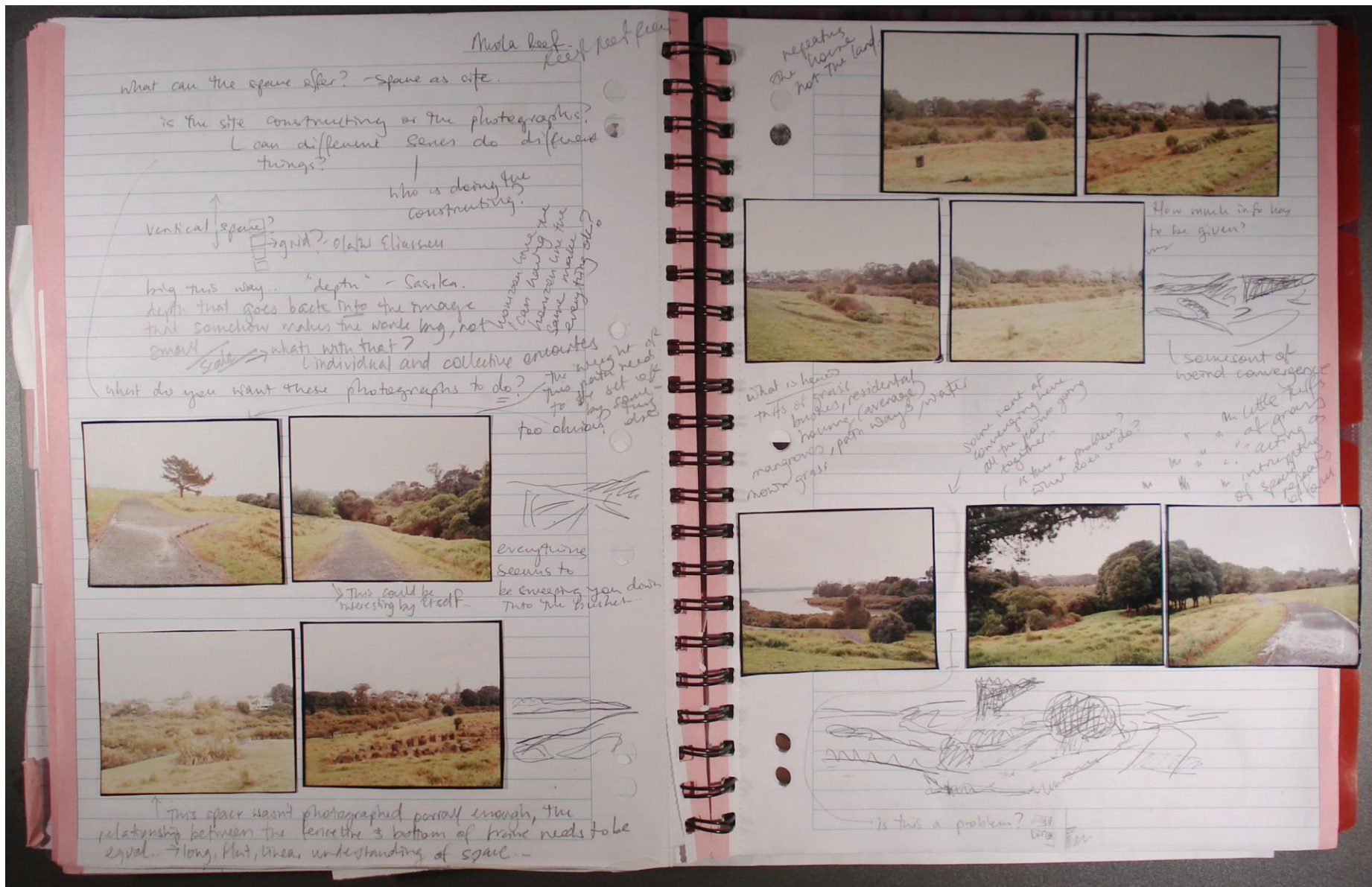


Figure 14: View from Meola Road, Journal, August 2010

CHAPTER TWO

SPACING AND TEMPORALISING: THAT WHICH OCCURS IN AND AMONGST PHOTOGRAPHY

Representation mingles with what it represents...one thinks as if the represented were nothing more than the shadow or reflection of the representer. A dangerous promiscuity and a nefarious complicity between the reflection and reflected which lets itself be seduced narcissistically. In this play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable...The reflection, the image, the double, splits what it doubles (Derrida, 1974, p. 36).

Within *Views from Nature*, encounters with photographically represented spaces provide viewers with a different experience to actually being present within the depicted site. This comes about in a photographic image as the subject is held still for examination¹². However, by experiencing individual photographs of the same location presented as a series, the represented spaces become extended and prolonged by the relationships that are formed between images. As such, each series builds upon the forms, lines and depth occurring within each photograph. For example, every additional image experienced within a sequence, renegotiates the encounter of the last, building and shifting the spatial depth of a series. This occurs through a photographic depth that isn't contained to one image. Rather it slips between and through a series, by means of formal interventions of light, colour, compositional

depth and the differing intervals between images. Through this continually changing experience of site and space within *Views from Nature*, this research questions how intervals (or interventions) in a series can induce an encounter where the photograph is no longer only paused but also activated, whilst also anticipating the effects of such activation. This chapter therefore takes up the position that everything, photographically, has the potential to be set in motion thereby questioning what a rousing of fixity¹³ can provoke.

Within this discussion, meaning (a viewer's encounter with a series) is in a constant and continuous state of shifting, forever mobilised in the way it is understood in language¹⁴ and experience. This is explored through series of individual, but intimately related, images which construct a spatial depth that reaches across an entire breadth of photographs. For instance, throughout these created spaces, there is a building, extending and prolonging of forms through reflections, repetitions and reoccurrences. This is seen in, *View from Wolverton Street* (Figure 12), where a sense of spatial depth is pushed back and brought forward by the compositional elements such as a large tree elongating over two photographs. This creates a block of foliage that is further extended by the density of shrubs that occur in the foreground of both images, deterring any sense of place for a viewer to be. In the next image, the contracted sense of spatial depth is extended by a receding stream

and opening out of sky after the underside of a bridge. This is reflected by earlier photographs in the series which construct an open and expansive space, pushing the intensity of foliage in the other images forward and prolonging their spatial effect.

These formal relationships between images, reflections and repetitions 'unfix' and activate a photograph. Each continually displaces a viewer's experience from any one point of focus in the series, and thereby creates multiple understandings of space. These include the literal space of the site itself and the 'new space' constructed through formal compositional elements in individual images. At the same time, there is also the spacing or intervals between photographs. These allow for an extending and delaying across images or series encountered; a spatial pause in a viewer's experience. In this way, the intervals between images further extend spatial relationships in each individual photograph but also act as a way of halting a viewer in the experience of an entire series. For instance, in *View from Margan Avenue* (Figure 9), the three middle images continue seamlessly with horizon and pathways connecting; the encounter with this aspect of the site is disrupted by intervals. These create a temporary halt which prolongs and decentres a viewer's focus from any one image. This sense of deferral is furthered by a wider gap between the second and third images of the series: the site is extended. Accordingly, the photographs suggest a traversing of the

pause in between images by the continuing of formal elements such as the horizon line and subject matter. In this sense the construction of spatial depth isn't contained to one image, but slides into others across a series. There is a new space that can only be experienced in front of all the photographs collectively: the series.

Within this research, such spatial slipping is constantly undergoing negotiation; each encounter with an individual image becomes temporal, as it becomes unfixed from a specific moment in time (the decisive 'click' of photography). Rather, the photographs collectively hold, by means of construction, a new time where formal rhythms occur in relation to one another; in the same time and space, even if not the same image. Therefore this research engages with the potential instability of photography, as the medium is "more than that, it [is] emblematic [of] something/sometime, a 'space of a single minute', in which space becomes time and time space" (Batchen, 1997, p. 91). Within this relationship of time and space, there is a photographic recalling of the subject (the site) that offers a 'space for looking', one that allows everything to be seen and not just once but again and again. In other words, *Views from Nature* specifically constructs a new space (a different experience from physically being in the site itself) for an experience of prolonged looking; this extends out the static fleeting nature of photography, thus holding a sense of temporalised space. This happens in

the way that the actual space of the site is contracted to pieces of time, both physically and in the experience of it: time itself takes on an actual physical space in the photograph. These shifting experiences of time and space are further emphasised by the continuous and systematic colour and tone of *Views from Nature*. The inability to distinguish between individual photographs, in terms of one happening before another in linear time, means that they all exist as one instance. The absence of a pinpointed time keeps the work, as a whole, in potential action; they are unstuck from their particular moments of inception and placed into rhythmic relationships within a series. In this way, *Views from Nature* is held in temporalising motion; multiple photographs hold a collective place in time that is unfastened and furthered by the gaps between photographs.

These intervals within a series allow images, in a Derridian sense, to differ (Derrida, 1973, p. 129). In this way “it is necessary that interval, distance, [and] spacing occur among the different elements and occur actively, dynamically. And with a certain perseverance in repetition” (Derrida, 1973, p. 134). Accordingly, there needs to be spacing amid individual photographs and within the compositional depth described in each image, for the difference within a series to become apparent. In pushing together or pulling apart the photographs from a series, images of similar subject-matter, such as the representation of a gully in *View*

from Margan Avenue (Figure 9), can step away from the continuation of horizon lines and forms (such as the lay of the land existing across the other works). Differentiating between individual images involves “not being identical...[but] being other” (Ibid). In this way, the intervals among images provide a space in which differences can occur, for instance *View from Margan Avenue’s* specific gully is represented across three photographs. The singular experience of this particular part of a larger site is disrupted by the intervals and subsequent distancing. The photographs become individualised within their place in a series through their separate viewpoints; this shifts when the images comes together to represent a spatial depth. This research’s engagement with spacing is furthered by the intervals that occur within each photograph. For instance, in *View from Mt Albert Road* (Figure 15), the direction of the footpaths and remnants of the mown lawn create a distance between the large rock, edges of the image and horizon line. There is a pause here, a distancing of time is ‘held’ in that empty space of lawn. This is prolonged by the large gap that happens prior, separating out and extending the pause to come, thereby constructing a particular sense of time, and reflecting the gaps in a series: here “space becomes time and time space” (Batchen, 1997, p. 91).



Figure 15: (Detail) *View from Mt Albert Road*, 400x500 mm. Type-C Photographs, 2010

This kind of playing with photographic experience by means of intervals is also evident in Scandinavian artist, Olafur Eliasson's photographic practice. His two-dimensional grid-based works of subjects such as paths, rocks and bridges, amplify the way that spatial relationships are considered by means of sequencing, repetition and immersion. The *Bridge Series* (1994-95) for example (Figure 16), is organised "...with two spaces left open at the bottom, to refuse closure or containment" (Drutt, 2004, p. 12). In this way Eliasson leaves his series consciously unfastened.

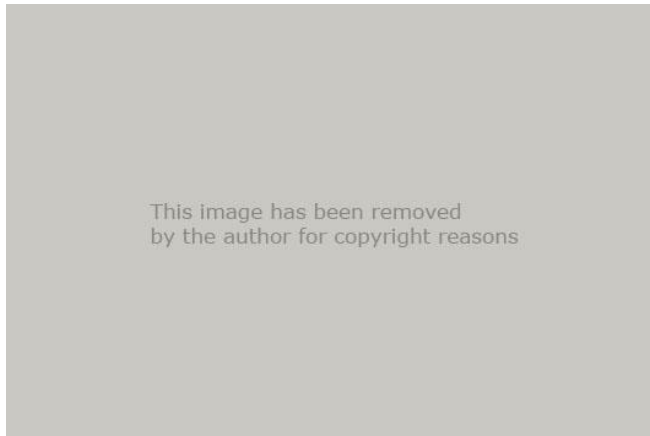



Figure 16: *Bridge Series*, Type-C Photographs, 1994-95, Olafur Eliasson. (Drutt, 2004, p. 10)

They are in a state of flux for both him and the viewer in the sense that they both hold the potential to broaden the reading of the works, with yet unfound images or imagined ones. In the sequencing of a regularly occurring event, seeing one bridge after another, viewers are disrupted by the empty spacing which continuously defers completion.

This happens in a different way in Eliasson's *Petrun's Garden Series* (1993), where the vertical qualities of the paths being photographed become so strong that the last two images change orientation (Figure 17). These offer another view of the subject matter, which both suggests and demands a reconsideration of all the images that came before. In this way, the subject is literally shifted and moved by means of the formation of a grid. In Eliasson's practice, this method of installation is used as a means of developing a kind of rhythm which is disrupted when images shift as a result of their own subject. These change the way which a viewer encounters the subject, or series, as a whole. In this way, the form of the photograph and the relationships among them can act as a means of activation within a viewing experience. A sequencing of forms builds in a continuous motion, activating a viewer as they are made accountable to imagine un-presented images, or shift with them in the flow of a series overall.



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Figure 17: *Petrun's Garden Series*, Type-C Photographs, 1993, Olafur Eliasson. (Drutt, 2004, p. 15)

In a similar way, *Views from Nature* allows viewers to traverse the ground between photographs (the prolonged intervals) by means of connecting suggested line, form and consequently spatial depth. For instance in *View from Mt Albert Road* (Figure 19) there is a continuous horizon line and multiple flowing landforms; these construct a sense of depth by marking space and stretching it over the series of five photographs. This sensation is disrupted by the dimensionality of a particular tree to the left of the second image (Figure 18), not only its mass and breaking of the interrupted horizon line but also through the captured motion. In this way, the pushing of the viewer doesn't just happen as they traverse across the photographs in a linear way (in that each image slips into one another) but also when they try to penetrate the photographic depth: the tree denies both actions. In an effort to further extend the delight and frustration that this tree provides, it is simply not allowed to be the 'full stop' or natural edge of the series, rounding it off in a complete manner. Instead the previous photograph has a similar composition of a mass of foliage along the right hand side of the image, which extends out the effect of the tree. This shifts the viewer's experience of the site itself, not only in being forced in and through the density of trees and shrubs, but also by drawing that experience out through a larger interval thereby disrupting the visual depth of space. In this way, the movement that the lines of land provide

are interrupted by both the event of the tree *and* the larger interval before it, widening its effect into the entire series.

In his essay *Différance* (1973), Derrida discusses the way in which intervals (both between and with each image) function involves an "...action of postponing until later, the taking-account of time and forces in an operation that implies a detour, a respite, a delay, a reserve, and a representation" (Derrida, 1973, p. 134). This thereby describes a deferring or temporalising, a putting off of complete meaning by the disruption of intervals in a series. In other words, the potential entirety of a new space and time constructed across a body of work is continuously delayed by the gaps among photographs. Within *Views from Nature*, the 'meaning' of each site, or the entire series, is deferred in and amongst a series of binary concerns, such as nature, culture, time and space. This is reinforced by a temporalizing, where meaning is only fleetingly held and always being deferred, by means of reflections, repetitions and reoccurrences in and amongst *Views from Nature*. Therefore what each image, or series, 'means' is continually being deferred in the experience of a site which presents, and represents, spatial concerns (the site itself, the new space and the spacing in between). Within this, each body of work evokes a socio-cultural discourse pertaining to photography itself as well and the new time and space experience.



Figure 18: (Detail) *View from Mt Albert Road*, 400x500 mm each, Type-C Photographs, 2010



Each of these separate elements which work to construct 'meaning' does not dominate a viewer's experience indefinitely: they occur momentarily. There is always a delay, a deferral, by some other element, which changes the way the first component was approached. For instance, the three middle images of *View from Margan Avenue* (Figure 9) are photographed and situated in such a way that they create a flattened sense of spatial depth. This is altered by the outside photographs where there is a suggestion of falling which pulls the viewer out from being in amongst the depicted trees, to sitting above them. In these works, there is a slippage between images which act as an expansion of space. This also happens in smaller ways, specifically in the vertical shifts which extend each photograph out in a new direction. Each image is positioned in such a way that puts the emphasis back on the space, rather than the represented site. Therefore the spatial relationships of the images aren't confined to the frame, but 'move' through the photographs. As a result, any understanding of the site described in the images is only compiled by 'joining' all the photographs, and the elements contained within them. Meaning as such, is always deferred and differs, in and amongst the images by way of a continuation of a viewer's shifting experience. Specifically in that deferment occurs as individual works are encountered in relation to one another; meaning

(photography itself – nature, culture, light, space and time) is delayed *in* the photographic space and *through* the intervals of a series.

These two previously discussed words, deferral and difference, come together into what Derrida coins as *différance*, with an 'a' (1974, p. 129). He alters the word only in its written form as a means of referring to both terms and as an extension: a spacing and temporalising. Spacing relates to difference (with an e) in that for representations to differ from one another there needs to be intervals between and amongst them. Similarly, to defer meaning there needs to be a delay or temporalising; the silent change of 'e' to 'a' shifts and "thwarts the... desire to reveal obscure truths inscribed in a text" (Ormiston, 1988, p. 43). *Différance* is therefore language based and is concerned with disrupting the ways in which meaning is encountered. In this way, *Views from Nature* explores temporalising (delaying) and spacing (intervals and distancing) as a means of activating, and creating an unfixed photographic experience. By altering the word only in its written form, Derrida subtly shifts the assumed power of speech (being present to both giver and receiver) to the written word which is absent from both. This undermines the binary opposites that make up and stabilise understandings of the world by unfixing structured relationships. In this way, *différance* can be understood as "a structure and a movement" (Culler, 1983, p. 97): it is both active and passive.

These Derridian terms construct a concept in language through being what the other is not, thus creating a structure of differing terms. Each concept then enacts itself by continuously deferring meaning amongst that structure. Différance speaks of the space surrounding words, traces and marks; it reaches out in all directions in a manner which activates language by being unable to simply pinpoint any one concept or word. In this research, différance is explored by enacting the photographic medium (through engaging with nature, culture, light, space and time) and then shifting, changing, extending and prolonging the experience of these concepts *in* each body of works. Every series moves in and through photography itself by means of formal relationships that are repeated and reflected and then extended through intervals.

Henceforth, spacing and temporalising in *Views from Nature* function in two ways. Firstly in the new space and time constructed, and then within this, the distancing or depth where pauses and interruptions happen. In this experience viewers are continuously shifting as photographic discourse is activated by being both the structure and the movement of each series. This occurs by photography being both the method of representation, but also the subject. Accordingly, each series constructs a new time and space which becomes a structure and way to experience the images. Within this, rhythms of forms and relationships of spatial depth enact the medium itself by continuously deferring concepts

of photography: nature, culture, time and space. This is extended by the experience of intervals; resulting in each photograph functioning as an individual image (as a piece of structure) but also as an active participant within a continuation of a series of images: part of a shifting encounter with photography itself.



Figure 20: Installation of *View from Mt Albert Road*, 400x 500 mm each, Type-C Photographs, 2010. AUT Foyer.

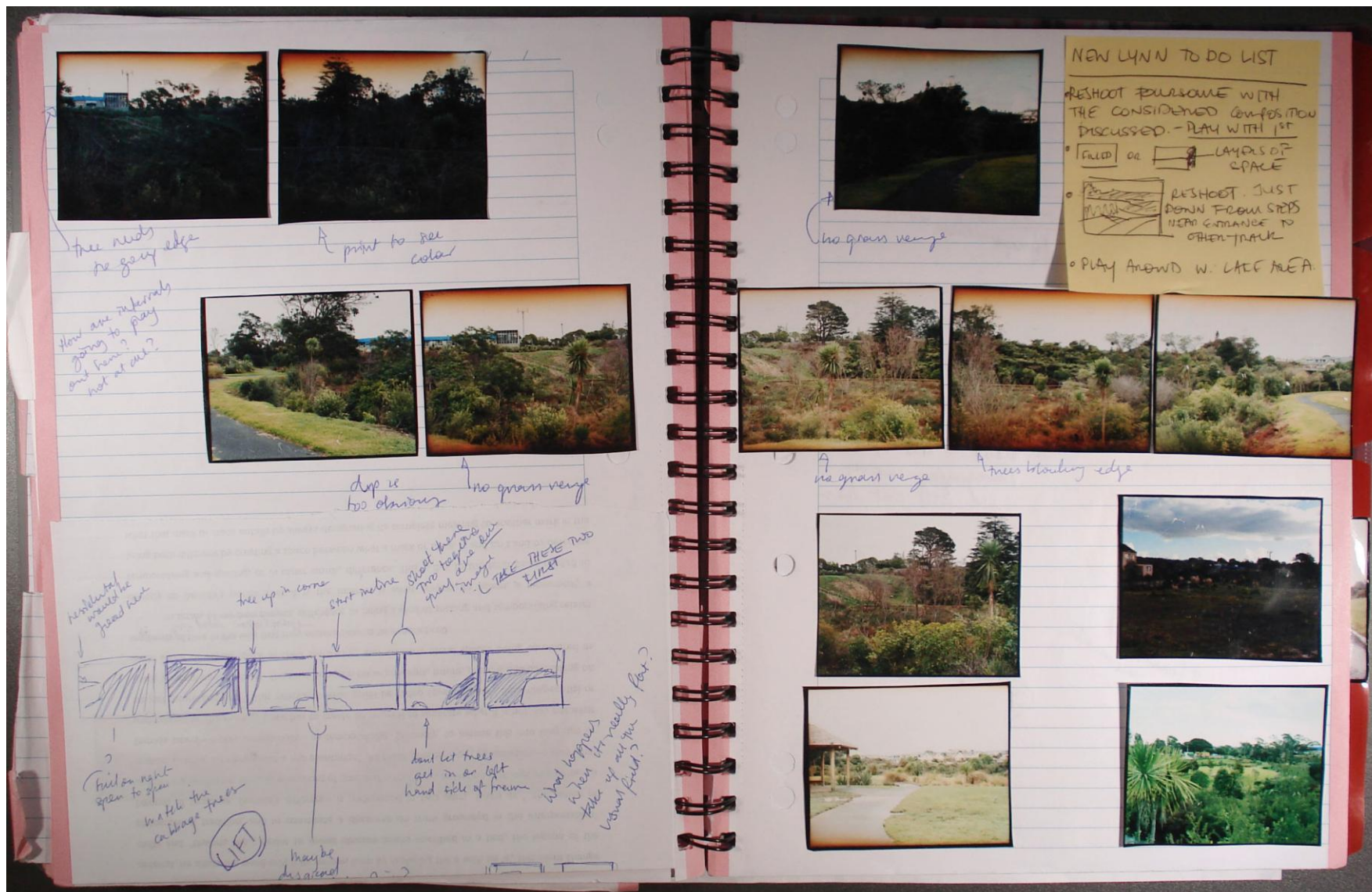


Figure 21: View from Margan Avenue, Journal, June 2010

CHAPTER 3

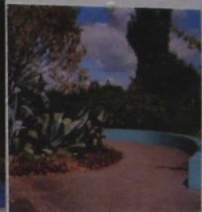
SHIFTING AND EXTENDING: A PRACTICE BASED APPROACH

It continues to rain intermittently but there are some ideal light situations in between, which, however, are then spoiled by the wind...The shot is not easy – from a tilting window – and we have to wait a long time for the light (Becher, 2005, p. 181)

As this exegesis has discussed, *Photography and Instability* is concerned with the very nature of the medium – how it operates in various socio-cultural discourses – and the way in which it can be enacted through a series of images, thereby activating the viewing experience. Specifically, this occurs through formal rhythms constructed by reflections, repetitions and reoccurrences, which are extended and prolonged in the suggested spatial depth of each photograph and series. This positioning of *Views from Nature* within the exegesis has come about through a variety of shifts in research, which will therefore be examined in approximately chronological order. This practice based project has explored, both collectively (as a series) and individually (within an image), what the camera is pointed at (ie: the depicted site), the approach to photographing, and subsequent editing of a body of work. Through this research, the project has focused on how each of these aspects can come together to construct new space and time experiences, ones that are built, guided and extended by formal and presentational relationships

between images. Accordingly, this chapter will discuss how shifts in the project's formal approach have influenced current decisions in *Views from Nature*.

Over the course of this project, what the camera has been pointed at has made three distinct movements, these trace how nature and culture have been understood and what role they play as subject matters. This exploration initially began with gardens as even in their most basic form they propose an experience of respite, reflection and relaxation through offering controlled pieces of the natural environment. In this way, gardens attempt to connect viewers with an unprocessed and 'natural' state of being, despite their own construction. As a means of revealing and investigating this binary relationship, a variety of sites contained in the *Hamilton Gardens*¹⁵ were explored. Within one geographical location, there is a very literal constructing of 'natural environments' by the multiple gardens of 'types', such as Italian, English, Indian, Japanese or American (Figure 22). The overly manicured sites are unavoidably cultural places. This can be seen in the plants, shrubs and trees which provide a link to an exterior natural environment; both the dislocated society (Figure 24) and the imagined unprocessed place of nature.



16/03/09

American Modernist

- Make use of the sculpture but not a feature.

- What about Marilyn Foster?

- plants in relation to site -

- focus on the curves -



Japanese - limited ways to approach subject on viewing platform

How repetitive can that building be?

What are the characters of the space I'm wanting to create?

These two would particularly need

not appropriate way to photograph but could be useful...

Repetition of ground elements in the street not creating a space

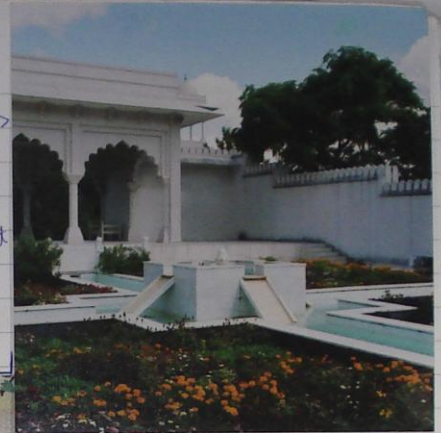
16/03/09

Indian Char Bagh Garden

overview shot

problems with location: can only walk around it / reorienting architecture

How to photograph with out repeating



Need to focus on relationship between plants & structures.

view of Italian garden in background / scaffolding

Visual cues of its construction

⇒ wall interesting

ask to go in garden.

lower camera to include less sky wait till flowers die a bit?



Figure 22: Hamilton Gardens, Journal, March 2009.

However, while each garden is offered as an encounter with something natural, it is overwhelmingly handled by human intervention at every turn. This positioning of the site was extended by an approach to photographing, which was highly concerned with how structural lines (inherent in the sites walls and plant edgings) were formally realised within the square format. This six-by-six inch sized negative also reinforced the compositional tension, as 'lines' within each image were compressed together as short pieces of diagonals. Within each series of three photographs, the spaces represented were awkward as the relationships amongst images involved domineering perspective lines coming together. Subsequently, the *Hamilton Gardens Series* (Figure 23) functioned as a visual demonstration of the binary relationship between nature and culture, with the gardens completely submitting to a rational order of culturally produced design. This was reflected in the approach to photographing that rigidly and formally constructed spaces, by means of relationships between foliage forms. Within this, the understanding of how dualisms function was simplistic in that it assumed that each (nature/culture) are fixed¹⁶ and was therefore separate concepts. In the photographs, this was demonstrated by categorising and identifying what was natural and what was cultural.



Figure 23: Installation of *The Italian Garden* and *The English Garden*, 500x500 mm each, Type-C Photographs, May 2009



Figure 24: *The Italian Garden*, 500x500 mm each, Type-C Photographs, May 2009

As a means of examining this binary relationship, the research expanded to explore sites where the natural foliage was more 'wild', filling up the frame with its abundance of variety and mass. This allowed a relaxing of the subject matter into being less structured and was furthered compositionally, by a shift to a six-by-seven inch format. The slightly elongated square (into a rectangle) allowed the composition to open up and take on an understanding of space that was concerned with how a site was constructed for a viewer, rather than in relation to the photograph's frame. Within the *Hamilton Garden Series*, for instance, each compositional line 'bounced' around the edges of the square image, rather than constructing a depth that reached beyond the frame (Figure 24). This shift is evident in photographs such as *The Fernery* (August, 2009) (Figure 26) where there is a durability of the vegetation by means of it being made up of multiple small parts, that mould together in organic ways (Figure 27). This kind of subject matter allowed the formal relationships of images to be more mutable as lines of structure (like walls and paths) were softened, particularly in relation to other photographs in the series. In other words, the lushness of the garden site filled up the frame and visually overwhelmed the structural interjections (such as paths and seats) in each photograph.



Figure 25: Re-visited installation of *In Nature We Trust*, 700x800 mm each, Type-C Photographs, 2009



Figure 26: *The Fernery* from *In Nature We Trust*, 700X800 mm, Type-C Photograph, 2009





Figure 27: *In Nature We Trust*, 700x800 mm each, Type-C Photographs, 2009

In this way, *In Nature We Trust* (Figure 27) was interested in repositioning a viewer's relationship to both the actual space, and the natural environment. More specifically, the project had shifted in its emphasis from overtly cultural constructed gardens, to attempting to look at how more 'lush' sites could release an experience with something that felt natural. In other words, this project became concerned with how a garden could potentially fulfil what it proposes (an engagement with a displaced nature), through the photographic medium. The formalised environments that culminated into *In Nature We Trust* (November, 2009) were interested in how gardens are produced to be instinctive, real and natural, and the ways that a photograph could potentially construct an encounter for that to occur. Each image was composed in such a way that further reflected the garden itself, both in its intimacy and the way in which viewers encounter it. In particular these earlier images 'photographically' constructed spaces which had clear boundaries; they ended but also created a contained space for a viewer to be. Through the foliage of this photographic space, pathways and seats occurred in such a way that guided an experience, as they would in the actual site. These directed an encounter with an image by means of the cleared ground which provided a place for viewers to occupy, and way to move through the photograph.

These structured ways of socially understanding how to act in 'natural spaces' has also been investigated by German photographer, Beate Gutschow. In the series, *LS* (2003), she digitally stitches together multiple photographs from a store bank of images, to reconstruct the composition and mood of seventeenth and eighteenth century paintings. In doing this, viewers temporarily fall into the constructed scenes based upon an already known socio-cultural understanding of this specific kind of representation of the natural environment (by means of referencing traditional landscape painting). The seamless editing together of each image, through digital photography, means that these places appear as cultural conceptions of what landscape is, and subsequently are not read as being humanly created. Hence, *LS* explores the relationship between an actual construction and the social structure of understanding such a subject matter, thereby mutating photography's inherent mimetic ability to both present and represent.



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Figure 28: *LS # 3*, 1999. Beate Gutschow.

In comparison, *In Nature e Trust* (Figure 27) attempted to use the photographic medium as a means of verifying the proposed 'naturalness' of each site. By presenting the subject, the project had hoped to mimetically link a viewer to the experience of being in such a garden. In other words, the images tried to fulfil an encounter with nature suggested in the actual sites (moving around the foliage through the paths etc), through formally reflecting the ways in which a viewer would engage with the literal site if there. This project considered photography as a medium which could enable this experience by 'taking' a viewer to each site through a Becher-like approach, one that seems to show the subject without subjectivity. What this negated was that photography can never deliver what it actually means to be physically in those garden spaces, or in the 'natural' environment that they suggest. This is due to each image always being constructed, as the scene is framed and represented by a series of choices around viewpoint, lighting and composition.

As a result, this research explored how the 'natural' environment operates photographically through examining other ways in which greenery is presented. This was to shift beyond simply looking at 'nature' itself, and consider what the subject actually offers. More specifically, the project looked at edgings of motorways, sports fields, quarries and parks to scrutinize what the camera was looking at beyond grass, trees or plants. In other words, this project changed to instead consider the spaces which contextualised 'natural' elements and how they built an understanding of various kinds of environments. For example, *Mt Roskill* (May, 2010) offered multiple ways of photographically defining a space. Each site had public park areas, housing and roads; these were mediated by forms of nature such as trees and grass verges. Accordingly, the multiple spaces in each photograph were brought together by the interventions of foliage. In looking at such sites, the project moved away from not only considering the relationship *between* nature and culture, but to also thinking around how each operates within specific spatial relationships.



Figure 29: Installation of *Mt Roskill*, 200x300 mm each, Type-C Photographs, May 2010

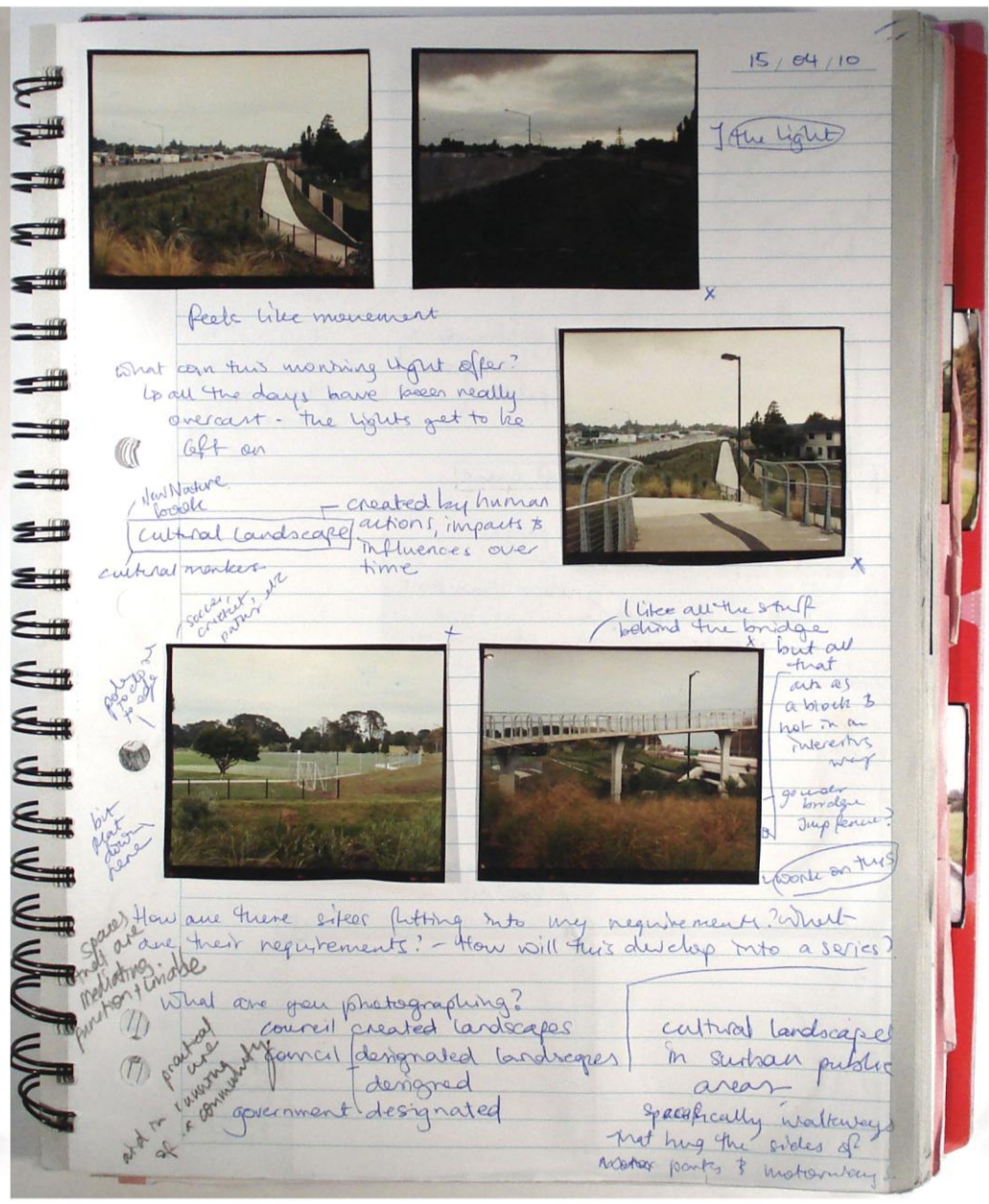
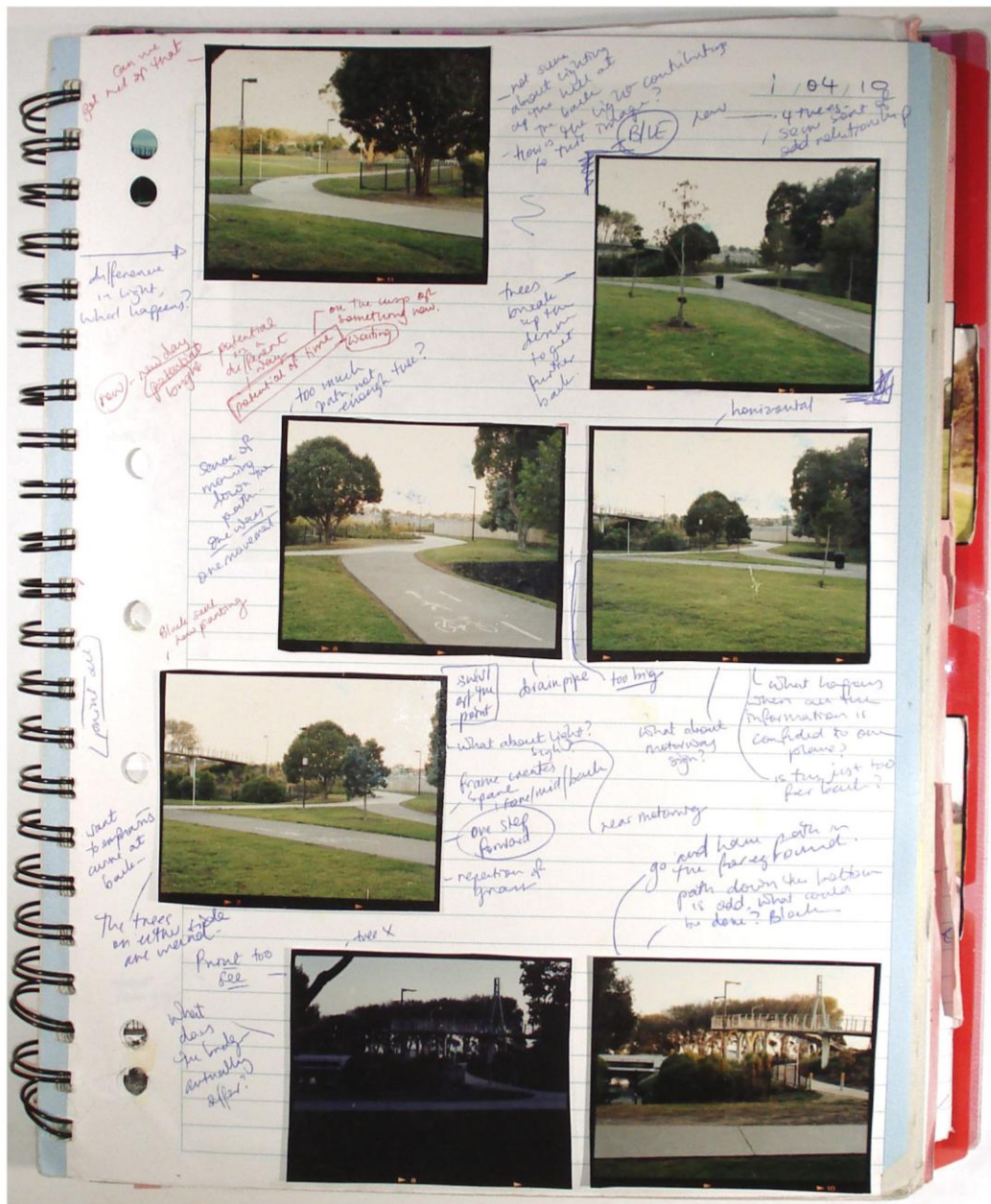


Figure 30: Mt Roskill, Journal, April 2010

This shifting around subject matter had its most significant development in the series, *View from Mt Albert Road* (July, 2010) (Figure 19). Here the subject became public 'natural' environments amongst residential and factory areas; nature and culture in relation to society, rather than 'floating' concepts, dealt with individually. In other words, the experience of the photograph became dependent on where the site was located, rather than just what it was. The subject matter was no longer only nature reacting against (or being there as a result of) culture; instead the body of work engaged with the site itself and the physical space it occupies. In doing this, *View from Mt Albert Road*, served as a way of opening out into exploring other similar sites, where the natural environment sits in relation to a complex variety of socio-cultural concerns.



Figure 31: Installation of *Views from Mt Albert Road* at AUT Foyer, 400x500 mm, Type-C Photographs, July 2010.

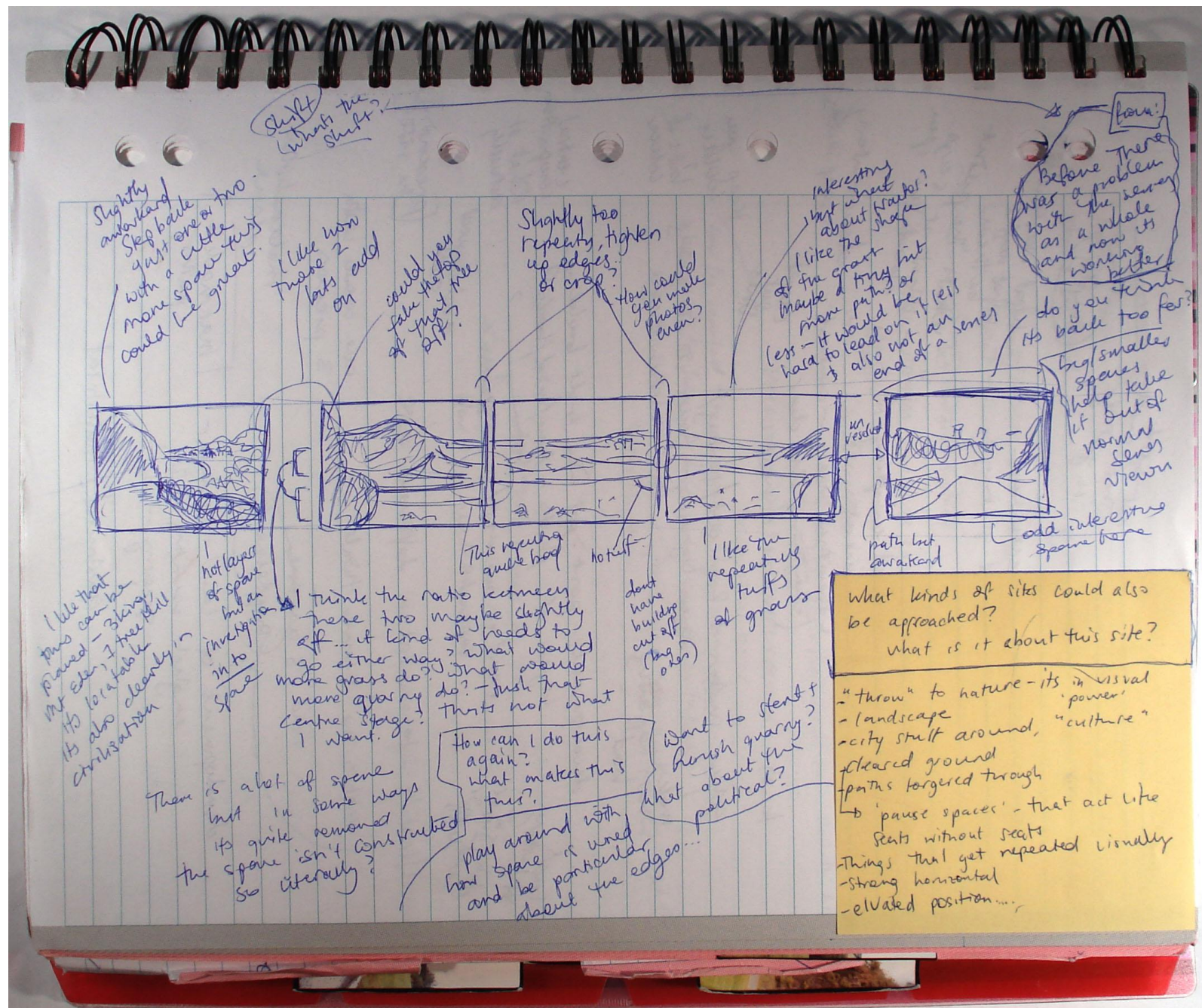


Figure 32: View from Mt Albert Road, Journal, 2010

Alongside this project's refining of subject matter has been an ongoing exploration of spatial relationships and how they can potentially 'move' viewers through a photograph, or across a series. Previously, this project had considered that each image described a particular kind of space, which then afforded a movement by the viewer, namely in the paths or cleared area that were dotted throughout a series such *Hamilton Gardens*. These were used as a way to position and direct a viewer around the site depicted, as if they were in a real garden. Across a triplet of photographs, like *The English Garden* (April, 2009) (Figure 23) for instance, areas of plants and shrubs were used as 'blocks' to create a sense of space for the viewers to navigate themselves around. This specifically occurred through combined images being centimetres away from one another. Within these works, areas like grass or paved regions followed on to other open spaces (or vice versa with closed areas such as blocks of foliage) as a way of bringing together a repositioning of the space of the site itself. Each site was literally reconstructed and redistributed through the creation of a new space, assembled by relationships between formal 'blocks' such as walls, garden boxes and structures.

This navigation of forms is also explored in contemporary Australian artist Louis Porter's photographic series of suburban landscapes. In *Footscray* (2006) a yellow sign, an empty blue billboard and

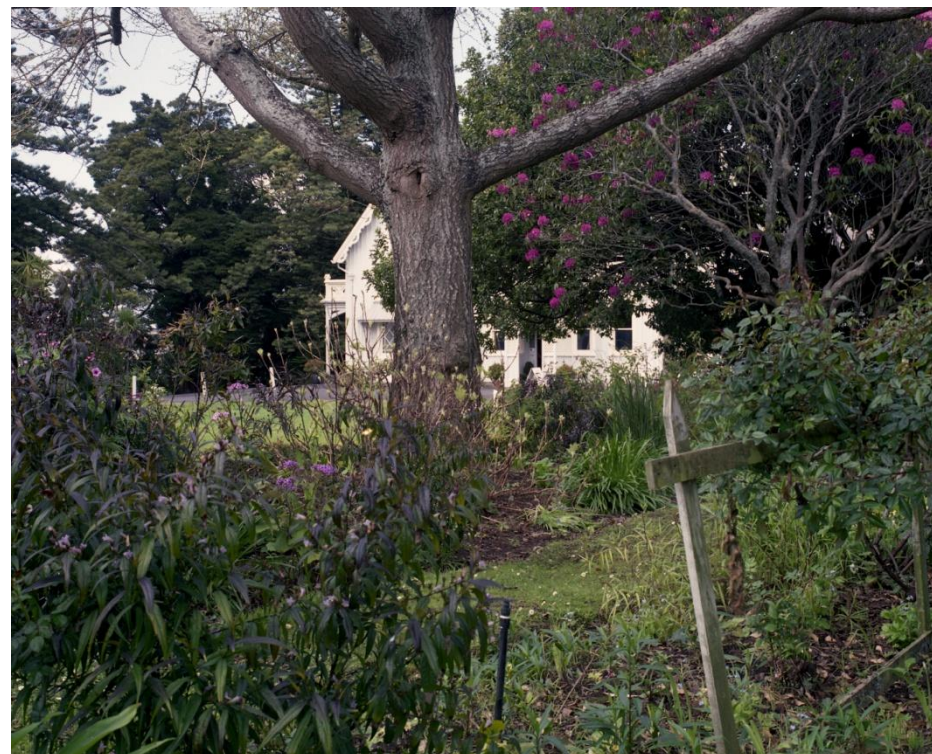
the back of a man's red vest, all begin to act as shapes or forms, two-dimensional elements that sit in a three dimensional space (Figure 33). This happens when road markings act as measures of depth, where forms of colour sit at various points in space. The relationships between blocks of colour act as a means of measuring distance and duration; this constructs a sense of movement for viewers, who shift between the forms. To see one block in relation to another is to recognise spacing between them, within the suggested depth of the photograph. To experience each form of colour individually, and in relation to one another, a viewer must *move* between them. In this way, Porter uses relationships between these elements as a way of activating viewers in an image.



This same sense of traversing a photographic space was developed through this research as a means of shifting beyond how pathways within a represented site progress viewers in recognised and known ways. For instance, *In Nature We Trust* (Figure 27) explored how using sweeps of cleared ground or natural foliage could pause, guide and block viewers through a spatial depth constructed in the images. As a series of work, this was extended into considering the relationships between the photographs; every additional image experienced acted as a way of renegotiating the spatial encounter of the last. *In Nature We Trust*, involved individual photographs of a variety of locations; the series wasn't tied to one specific site. Rather it was interested in a kind of space, one that exists in various forms. This created an endless re-composition of how the natural environment was positioned in relation to the viewer; they were constantly 'moved' through the body of photographs by suggested lines of composition in paths, walls and the edgings of foliage. With larger but regular gaps between the images, the visual demand to have specific types of paving or plants carry on became less important. With this, the series as a whole shifted to becoming much more concerned with relationships amongst constructed senses of space. For instance, in *Highwic* (July, 2009) (Figure 34), masses of plants in the foreground of two individual images relate to one another as forms which move between photographs. In the continuation of similar, but different

shrubbery, spatial relations (or lack of in the blocking of depth in *Highwic's* foreground forms) occur in the flowing of open and closed spaces. In this way, the interactions amongst photographs were extended as each individual image 'moved' into another across the series.

This understanding of how spatial depth operates in photography has shifted throughout this research. Accordingly, individual series of different sites are constructed based upon the spatial concerns of the location itself. The photographs of *Views from Nature* reconstruct landforms such as gullies and lawns across multiple images, as well as creating new spaces that differ from being in the actual site. The presentation of each series operates in such a way that the site is presented, represented and constructed over multiple sequential images, with varying sizes of intervals between them. The shift to pulling together or pushing apart, photographs within a series, came about through wanting to further explore the formal relationships amongst them. This opened a way of working in a series that was concerned with the way that images slipped into one another, and how their subsequent presentation could encourage or extend a viewer's experience.





These varying horizontal shifts in the construction of a series also occur vertically as the photographic frame gives way to the image (the subject depicted). Therefore, in having the works physically shift up and down for the horizon line to continuously meet up, the spatial depth across a series is uninterrupted by the actual photographic object. In this way, *Views from Nature* revisits earlier research concerning the slippage of forms such as paths and shrubbery, through the site extending out in another way. This occurs by means of more information from the sky and ground sliding in, pointing to what happens outside of the frame. Along with the intervals between the images, these horizontal and vertical movements open up each site to exist beyond the image. In this way, viewers are engaged with unimagined, or yet unfound photographs of these sites, suggested by the physical shifts of the images installed.



Figure 36: *View from Meola Road*, 400x500 mm each, Type-C Photographs, August 2010

The vertical disparity in *Views from Nature* is used in a different yet formally related way to New Zealand photographer, Mark Adams, who splits scenes over a multitude of images to document them without distortion. In presenting spaces as they are found in front of the photographer, Adams positions each image according to how the subject continues on from one to another. For instance, in *Interior, Rauru, Museum für Völkikunds, Hamburg, Germany, 8.5.2002* (Figure 37), the two outer images are slightly above the middle one. In doing this, the lines of the meeting house connect as the space flows between the photographs; the method of presentation prioritises the subject.

In a similar way, Japanese-born New Zealand photographer, Haruhiko Sameshima also deals with spaces that cross various images. In re-looking and reconstructing socially known tourist imagery and scenery,



Figure 37: *Interior, Rauru, Museum für Völkikunds, Hamburg, Germany, 8.5.2002*, Mark Adams, Type-C Photographs, 2009. (Thomas, 2009, p. 118-119)

Sameshima photographically explores the way landscapes are presented. In describing shorelines and mountains for example, he creates all encompassing views of various 'natural' places. The placement of images therefore emphasises the subject depicted, any disruption (of say the horizon line) would jolt a viewer from this experience.

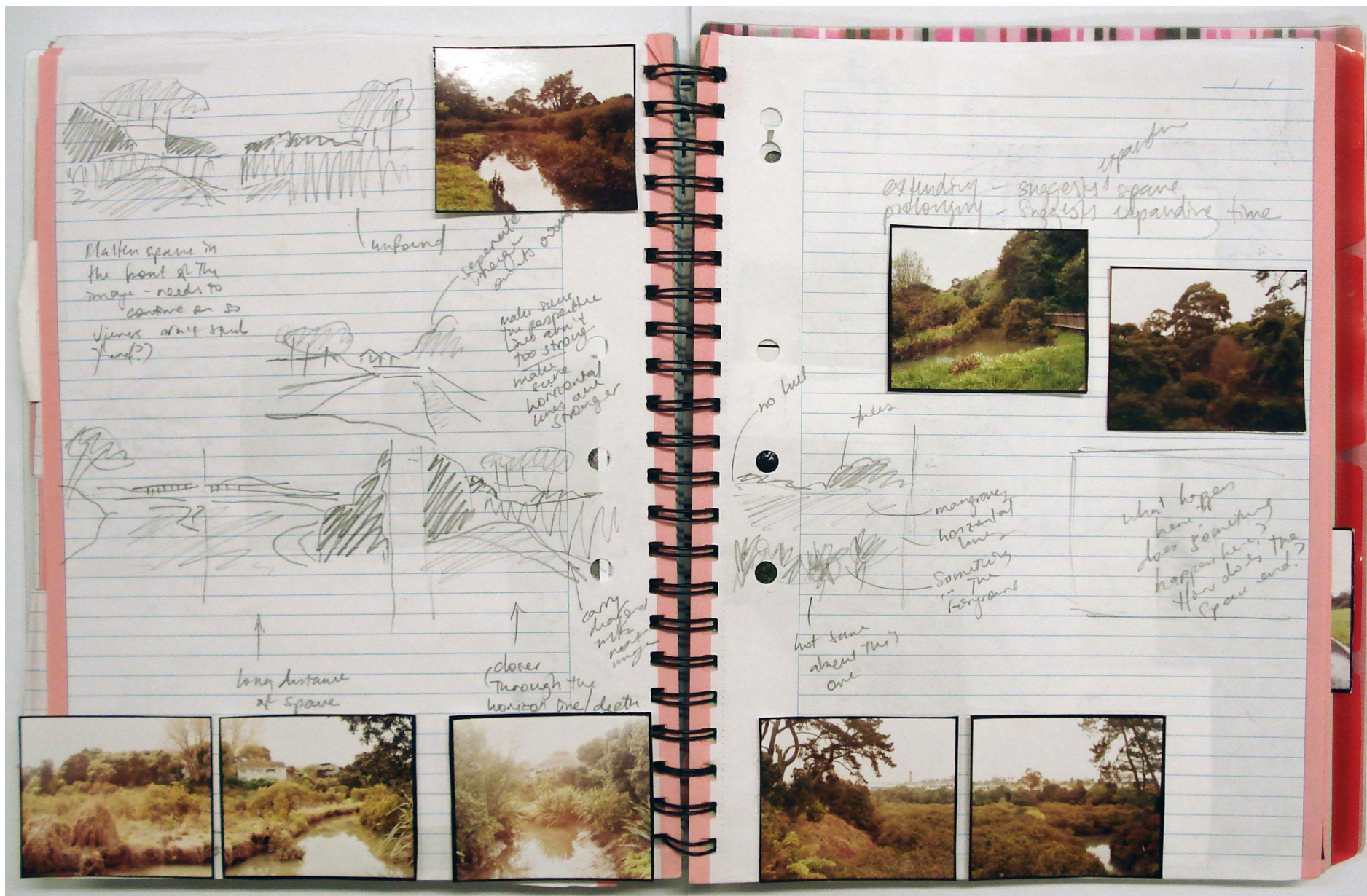
Within *Views from Nature*, this project presents sites in such a way that make spatial sense, 'resisting' unsettling viewers through the installation of images. Rather it is involved in 'jolting' a viewer in the space depicted with such aspects as moving trees and reflected forms. This research diverges from Adam's and Sameshima's in that the way a space is distributed over a series isn't only reflecting what occurs in the actual site. At some instances within a body of work, the photographs are



Figure 38: *Paparinga (Tikirau) and Whangaparaoa Bay, a view from Waihou Bay*, Haurhiko Sameshima, Type-C Photographs, 2007. (Sameshima, 2009, p. 29)

edited and installed in such a way that constructs spatial relationships. Each site therefore engages with both the actual location and the newly represented one.

Accordingly, this project has made shifts to create these varying encounters with space. This involved taking on both modes of installation previously explored – for instance how photographs can be hung in close proximity to one another to further visually meld together a subject, such as in the very early work of *Hamilton Gardens*. In addition, the research revisited how photographs being placed with a larger gap between them can extend out forms (such as trees) or kinds of space (such as open and closed), into a longer viewing duration, such as with *In Nature We Trust*. Consequently, the focus of this research has shifted to exploring how a space (or site) is created within an individual image, and across a series. Thereby directing attention towards constructing a relationship between how sites literally are, and the way in that they are presented within a series. In this way, the means in which space, and spatial depth is experienced is continual; both encounters (and this research) persist in being moved, reconfigured and reconstructed.



CONCLUDING COMMENTARY





Figure 40: *View from Richmond Road*, 400x500 mm each, Type-C Photographs, 2010

CONCLUDING COMMENTARY

If we look closely at the texture of photography's parts, we find them constituted by an infinite partitioning of a sort that unravels all borders and all identities (Batchen, 1997, p. 102).

Primarily this research has explored photography's socio-cultural languaging (as nature, culture, time, space, presenting and representing) through the experience of viewing a body of images, which operate as a series. Through such encounters of both the medium's rhetoric and the viewing experience, photography itself is activated as both the subject and means of representation. Provoked through rhythms of reflections and repetitions, amongst and through a multitude of shifting spatial relationships this research extends spatial movements within a paused and fixed medium. Accordingly, this thesis suggests that by constructing various viewpoints of a site there is a new space in time where viewers are activated into a changeable experience of photography itself.

In this way, each concept within photography's languaging is necessary, but inaccurate (Spivak, 1974, p. xiv). Nature, culture, time and space cannot hold or define the medium indefinitely only momentarily as each is indispensable, but incomplete, as a way of discussing or encountering the medium. Instead, these elements flow into one another

in a continual slipping of interconnected relationships. This research therefore explores photography, by means of *différance*. The medium encapsulates binary terms that are unable to be explained without each other, as they shift amongst concepts endlessly deferring and are unable to hold precedence.

This sense of movement is reflected in the experience of the series that make up *Views from Nature*. Viewers traverse the spatial depths of each image, site and body of work in a way which enacts a prolonged encounter of looking. This occurs within particular relationships of space which guide, pause and block viewers as they pass amongst the images of a series. These instances of formal interventions (in wind affected shrubs, sweeping landforms or huddles of trees) are extended and continued by varying intervals between (and in) photographs. This thereby constructs a spacing (differing) and temporalising (deferring) within and across a body of encountered photographic works. Within *Views from Nature*, the medium's unstable and mutable identity is made both the structure which designates an experience, but also the means by which a viewer is activated. Accordingly, this research enacts photography through shifting relationships amongst series' of images. These continuously extend and reflect the medium itself: photography is both active and permanently unfixed in experience and language.



Figure 41: Installation from left, *View from Meola Road*, *View from Wolverton Street*, at St Paul St Gallery, 400x500 mm each, Type-C Photographs, November 2010.

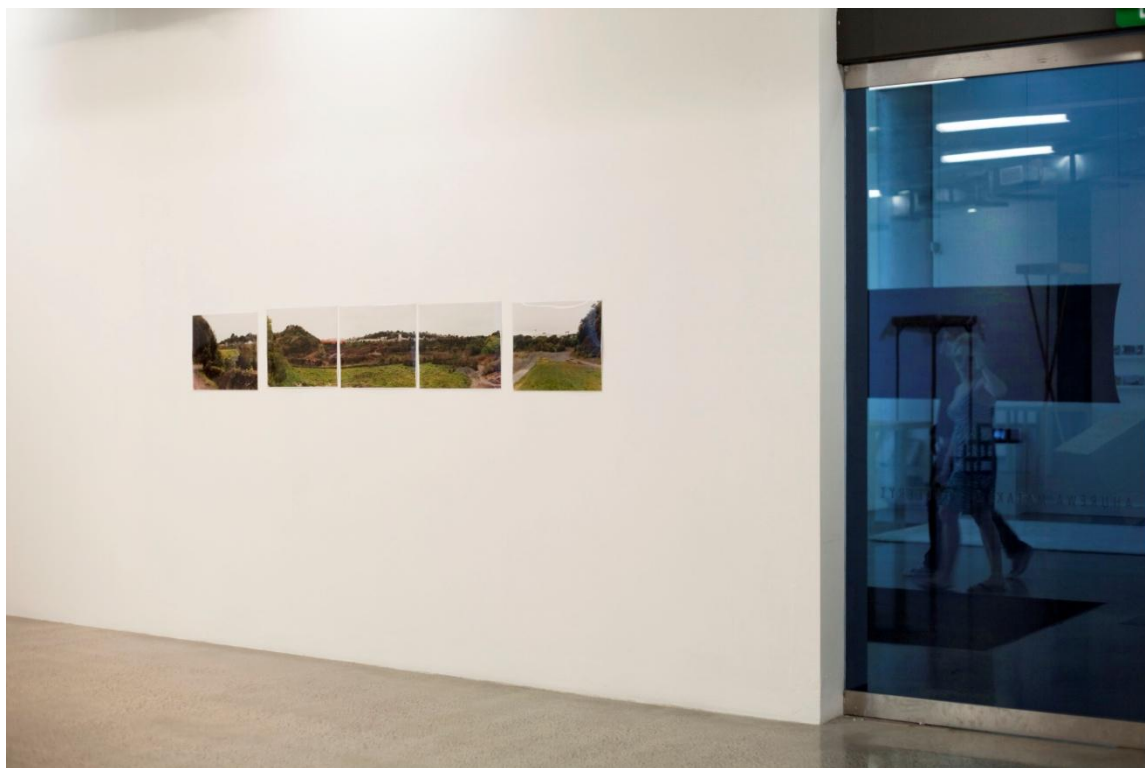


Figure 42: Installation of *View from Mt Albert Road*, at St Paul St Gallery, 400x500 mm each, Type-C
Photographs, November 2010



Figure 43: Installation of *View from Nature*, from left *View from Meola Road*, *View from Wolverton Street*, *View from Richmond Road* and *View from Margan Avenue*, at St Paul St Gallery, 400x500 mm each, Type-C Photographs, 2010

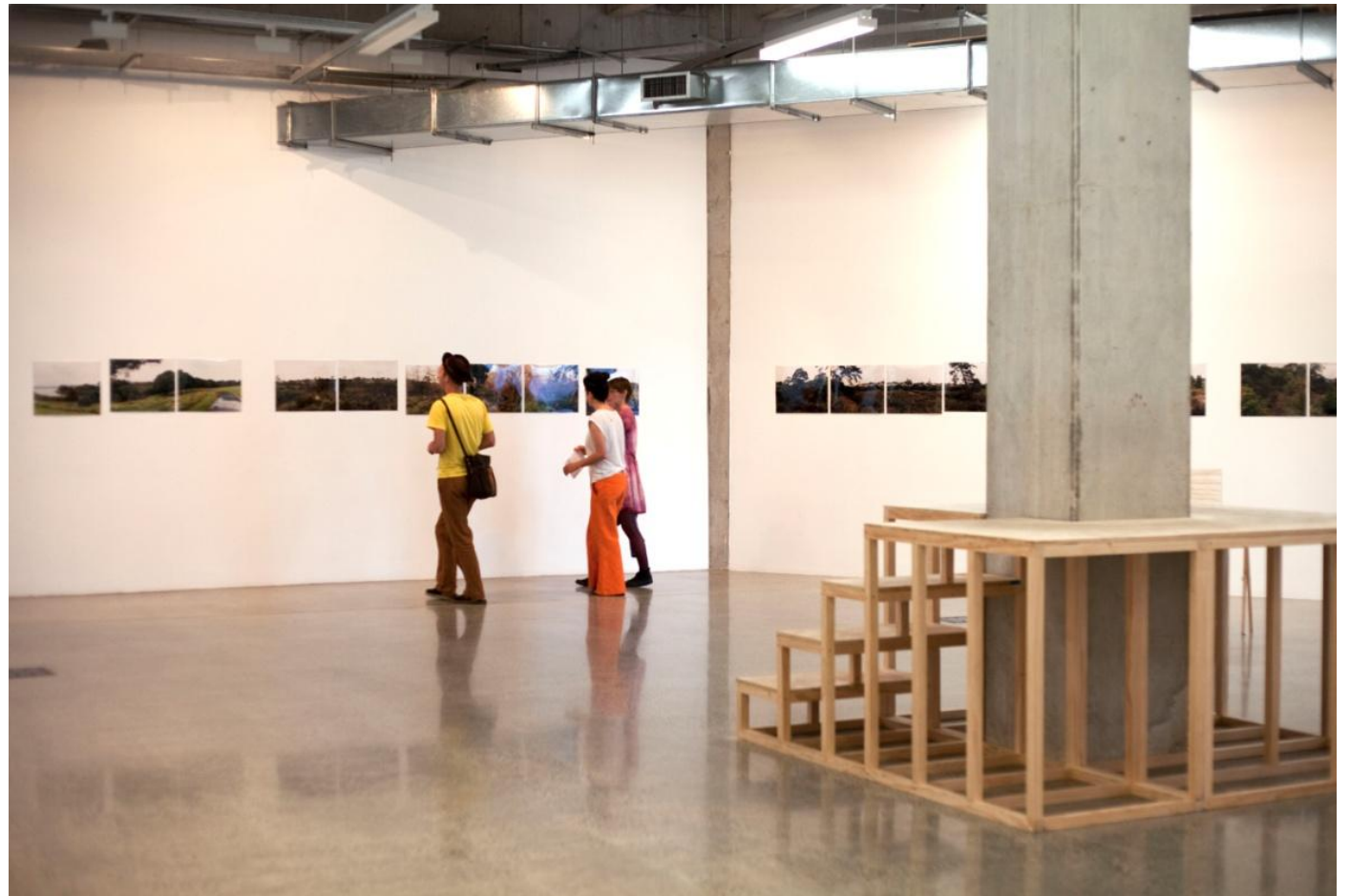


Figure 44-46: Installation of *View from Nature* at St Paul St Gallery, November 2010.

FINAL WORKS

Views from Nature, exhibited at St Paul St Galleries as a part of AUT Thesis exhibition, November 2010. From left to right,

View from Mt Albert Road, 5 x 400x500mm, Type-C Photographs, 2010.
(Found on p. 34 of this exegesis).

View from Meola Road, 3 x 400x500mm, Type-C Photographs, 2010.
(Found on p. 21-22 of this exegesis).

View from Wolverton Street, 6 x 400x500mm, Type-C Photographs, 2010.
(Found on p. 17-18 of this exegesis).

View from Richmond Road, 7 x 400x500mm, Type-C Photographs, 2010.
(Found on p. 60-61 of this exegesis).

View from Margan Avenue, 5 x 400x500mm, Type-C Photographs, 2010.
(Found on p. 11-12 of this exegesis).



Figure 47: Detail of *View from Richmond Road*.



Figure 48: Installation of *Views from Nature*

NOTES

¹ Niepce is credited with taking the first photograph and making significant developments in the medium (Gernsheim, & Gernsheim, 1956, p. 60).

² The exegesis employs the terms photograph and image interchangeably.

³ When nature is referred to in this exegesis it is making reference to the natural physical environment

⁴ Henry Talbot was an early experimenter with the photographic medium who published his results in a paper titled, *Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing of the Process by which Natural Objects may be made to delineate themselves without the aid of the Artist's pencil* in 1839.

⁵ Way of talking/thinking/understanding/experiencing.

⁶ Dualisms derive most notably from French philosopher, Rene Descartes who split the mind from the body (Leahey, 2003, p. 652). In doing so, he aligned the body with being messy and illogical, whilst the mind was ordered and rational. This created a structure in which one term, the subject (the one experiencing, the mind) is privileged over the other, the object (sitting outside, the body). Binary opposites extend into every day means of classifying and identifying, such as light/dark, male/female etc.

⁷ A spatial depth suggested by the formal composition of the image which seems to extend inwards.

⁸ Both the actual foliage and the two-dimensional forms/shapes in the image.

⁹ As the camera is a machine, supposedly without subjectivity.

¹⁰ For an in-depth discussion of the Becher's impact on contemporary photography see 'The Becher School – A Preliminary Attempt at Classification', in Susanne Lange's, *Bernd and Hilla Becher. Life and Work* (2005).

¹¹ As time and space are both singular to individual images, and collectively held as a series these two ways of being create an instability.

¹² In that analogue photographs are pieces of paused time, they are not *in* time (Batchen, 1997, p. 213). In this sense, the subject of any photograph does not change as time passes (as it would if experienced in the actual site); rather it stays still to be seen again and again; continuously consistent in what is analogically represented.

¹³ The process of 'fixing' an image involves imprinting it into the film of a camera. In this way, photographs are unable to be altered; they are paused pieces of time.

¹⁴ As discussed in the previous chapter, photography itself undoes binary structures present in language, through being both natural and cultural.

¹⁵ Hamilton Gardens is located in Hamilton, New Zealand and is made up of multiple kinds of gardens. This project specifically looked at the *Paradise Gardens*, which consists of separated, but connected spaces. Each contains 'rooms' or areas relating to a specific culture's understanding of paradise, reflected by the planting and structures; red bricks and roses for the English garden for instance.

¹⁶ Held in place, unable to move.

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