

FROM THE SAME WORLD: RE-MAKING SELF, WITH A CAMERA

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ABSTRACT

This project investigates personal lived experience and the construction of identity through exploring photo-filmic methods both analogue and digital. Being with particular photo-filmic processes and the natural phenomena that appear in front of the camera can ignite affective experiences through embodied knowing. Using a camera can both prompt and enable a disconnection from the noise of the world by providing a focus on the experience of the present. I am interested in the connection between the object, the camera, the film, the artist and the viewer, and the notions of temporality and chance that exist within these relationships.

My approach to my practice is viewed through a lens that considers Laura U. Marks' haptic visuality, Geoffrey Batchen's tactility and the image and Pema Chödrön's teachings on meditation. My project questions how photo-filmic processes, with their reliance on real-world material objects, can be used to explore the non-materiality of meditative engagement, memory, embodied experience and personal subjectivity. My exploration of these processes and practices have also helped me to articulate the very bodily experiences and their benefit that manifest through transformation and change within my art practice and my life. This exploration feels both important and deeply engaging because it is providing for me a means to be in the world and contribute to that world.

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ii. ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of another degree or diploma or a university or institution of higher learning.

Signed

10th October 2019

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1 INTRODUCTION

The first step in crossing this river is discovering the nature of its process, and appreciating its vastness and depth. (Cope 2006, 29)

I used to work in the capitalist corporate world. It broke me. I came back to life through embarking on a focused engagement with nature and my camera. My research project has emerged through these experiences. Specifically, my love of photography has its beginnings when I was deeply embedded in the world of banking and finance. As I was the third generation in my family to work in banking, a lot of my thinking around how to be a person in the world had been shaped before I had understood and assimilated my own personal experiences within that corporate world.

By my late twenties, I was in a senior role on a nationwide help desk, answering questions from bank staff regarding lending policy. I observed that what I had self-identified as intelligence, my ability to remember and recall large amounts of information quickly and accurately, was really simply a facet of having a great memory. I derived a lot of what I perceived as my value to the bank, and society, from being able to make use of this asset. However, while my seemingly great memory was building me up – providing a sense of agency – the environment I was working within was also breaking me down. My first questioning of what I understood myself to be came when I finally went on antidepressants that affected my memory. I couldn't recall facts as quickly, or as sharply, or as consistently. Without this memory asset, who was I? I started to question the stories that I had fed myself about my worth being tied to my memory and my employment. If my memory, my intelligence wasn't actually 'me', then what was? I started to question the validity of everything I believed about myself and my contribution to the world.

A few years later – having continued on a destructive path that eventually resulted in a break down – two life changing activities were introduced into my life. My yoga teacher¹, who I had been studying with for a few years, introduced me to meditation in the hopes that it would help me manage my depression and my work life in a more healthy way. At around about the same time, I was also re-introduced to film photography in a new way through wet darkroom processing. I hired out a community darkroom during weekends, and I would stand by myself in the dark, following my breath, while I watched images emerging on the paper. Time slowed, my senses withdrew inwards, and my focus was fully present in that space with those images. This level of inner peace and focused attention that began in the darkroom and on the meditation cushion was also realised and valued by me and the lens of my camera. I realised that the act of actually taking photographs also continued this sense of time slowing to a single point of focus: photographing, printing and meditation were embodied understandings and enmeshed together. I breathed through the lens as much as I did through meditation. Together, the camera and my breath became my investigation into what it means to be a *being* – as opposed to a *doing* – in the world. During the following years, my continuing observations of the world around me, the value of both photography and meditation to my sense of self and well-being, and the desire to leave the corporate culture led me to deepen my studies at art school. There I began to create new negotiations and relations between my affective body and the visual and affective language of photography. The undergraduate years served as a period of growth and enhanced life experiences that highlighted the differences between the corporate environment and the art school studio milieu. At art school I felt connected to others in a personal and creative way that produced positive and meaningful growth regarding my ideas and capabilities.

Although my project is not primarily focused on a critique of capitalism, it is driven by questioning the ways in which corporate capitalist structures fail to fully care for the well-

¹ My teacher, Jude Hynes, of Yoga Academy, is studied in the lineage of Sri Pratabhi Jois in the Astanga and Hatha Yoga traditions. These traditions are outside of my own culture, so while they have deeply informed my art practice and my research, I must acknowledge their lineage outside of my own.

being of people. My own experience was damaging to my sense of value, and I now recognise how prevalent these modes of working are and how societal value is tied to ideas belonging to production or *doing*. I am concerned with other kinds of well-being and nurturing of life that are very different from and absent within corporate capitalism. Working with photo-filmic methods, including 16mm film, digital video, Polaroids and still photography, my project asks: how can photography be used as a path to self-knowing, with a particular focus on connections to and with personal lived experience? How can photo-filmic methods generate a semblance of the stillness and peacefulness of meditation in the viewer? These questions have arisen out of my own experiences of self-knowing that have emerged through my meditation and photographic practices. Using a camera both asks me and allows me to disconnect from destructive outside influences that construct self. For example, I use photo-filmic methods to be present with the natural phenomena that I am photographing. This sense of learning to be present opens up the potential for forms of embodied experience that enable me to explore who I am, how I can contribute to the world and how I can be in the world as an authentic self-determining being.

I use my camera to explore places where I can become immersed in natural phenomena, particularly water and green flora. While exploring these places I use my camera to focus my attention on experience that is at once inwardly focused and at the same time connected with a sense of something bigger than myself. It is in this exploration that I aim to develop a greater understanding of self. My project also aims to explore how this experience of self-awareness may be enabled within viewers of the subsequent images. My research is concerned with how viewers may experience, even for a fleeting moment, a sense of the inner peace and stillness that I experience both when I use a camera and in meditation.

It is also very important to acknowledge myself as a Pākehā woman in Aotearoa New Zealand, and not only that the camera has been long used as a colonising tool, but I am also coming from a position of privilege in being able to undertake this research (Eggleton 2006). I am also using the things I have learned through meditation and yoga to inform my practice, but I acknowledge that this tradition also comes from a different culture than mine. This makes me much more conscious that while I have been able to leave the

corporate sector to follow my research, many are not able to do the same, regardless of their own wishes.

In the following chapters, I discuss how my current research methodologies have evolved from my experience of positivist and constructivist/ethnographic frameworks and my experience in the analytical roles I held within the banking and insurance industries, in particular the way human experience and well-being was considered only in how it might complete a checklist or effect the 'bottom line'.

My project is methodologically framed by Australian photography historian Geoffrey Batchen's and American film theorist Laura U. Marks's ideas concerning haptic experience, and how these relate to memory, the construction of self and lived experience. I discuss how these relate to meditation and photography for me and also connect artists who are working with embodied experience, such as moving image works by Tacita Dean and Joyce Campbell, along with the performative work of Kalisolaite 'Uhila. I have also been exploring how current research is also delving into what effects experience in nature might have on human well-being, through the writing of Florence Williams, and also talk about the yoga and philosophical writing of Pema Chödrön and Stephen Cope.

So, why does it matter whether I can understand myself through the means of a camera, and why does it matter that I can manifest the transformative qualities of meditation and offer the semblance of stillness or peace to a viewer, however fleeting it might be? I survived what became for me a very self-destructive experience within the corporate environment, and unfortunately these working conditions are still quite prevalent today. On the other hand, researchers are now beginning to understand what I have been fortunate enough to learn through my camera and meditation – that nature, stillness, and calm focus are very important, vital even, in this current capitalist world (Williams 2017). I do not see this work as therapy, but rather as a practice informing ways to live, ways to survive within capitalist consumer culture. If I did not have photography, I would not be mentally well. I am committed to exploring how photo-filmic methods can be used to generate a similar contribution for those who engage with my work.

2 KNOWING SELF STATES, WITH A CAMERA

At the beginning of my research project, I came to understand that photography and meditation practices had become integral to not only my art making and my own well-being. Because of this I knew that I needed to understand the complete narrative that led to me turning to these practices as a respite from my corporate environment.

From an early age, while I did a lot of making and creative things, such as story writing and drawing, I was recognised and praised for doing well in numbers, so much so that I was one of two students placed in the advanced maths group, and my mother told me that my then teacher had told her to steer me away from the arts. This pattern followed: nearly taking photography in high school but choosing economics instead, achieving first place in Accounting, and eventually following my mother and grandfather into banking. My first several years were spent in the central loans processing centre, a job which was focussed and incentivised around productivity, the number of loans processed, faxes delivered and calls answered. It was as a result of consistently high productivity scores that I progressed to the Personal Lending Help Desk role I described in my introduction. I had been with the bank ten years when I moved on from this role to become an analyst on a project team, where I was formally involved in researching and providing information for the organisation.

The project team and research environment I was part of had aspects of being very positivist. My role was independent of the system that was being analysed, and I was not based at the same location as those using that system in their jobs. As part of this research, aspects of particular personnel's roles were being analysed, and this made use of a more constructivist/ethnographic framework, as I spent time with the staff in their own environment. While engaged with these staff in their environment, I made observations as they performed the tasks necessary for performing their roles.

It was during these sessions on site with staff that I began to particularly question the environment we were all working in, as it was becoming apparent to me that my qualitative observations were not given value other than to meet the criteria that it must be carried out

and documented. Greater value was placed on the quantitative measures that could result in a greater profit margin and greater productivity. While in my previous roles I had observed that priority was given to quantifiable outcomes, it became even clearer to me that human qualitative factors of the job were only taken into consideration to satisfy the reporting aspect of the research. The information that could be taken into account when calculating the bottom line was given a much higher priority.

[T]he question is whether science does, or ever could, present us with a picture of the world which is complete, self-sufficient and somehow closed in upon itself, such that there could no longer be any meaningful questions outside this picture. It is not a matter of denying or limiting the extent of scientific knowledge, but rather of establishing whether it is entitled to deny or rule out as illusory all forms of inquiry that do not start out from measurements and comparisons and, by connecting particular causes with particular consequences, end up with laws such as those of classical physics. This question is asked not out of hostility to science. Far from it: in fact, it is science itself ... which forces us to ask this question and which encourages us to answer in the negative. (Merleau-Ponty 2004, 43)

I was beginning to realise that while these more scientific methodologies and methods of cataloguing, recording and accounting were given importance in the research I was involved in, they were being prioritised at the expense of the knowledge that is gained through our experiences and our senses.

While I was continuing to work in these corporate roles in the very capitalist culture of banking and insurance, I was still struggling with depression and growing anxiety. The failures of my own previously strong memory were not only making me question my worth to my employers and society at large, this struggle was also making me question who *I* was.

While I was questioning what role memory plays in the construction of self, I also found the same questioning appearing in thought-provoking popular culture that I was attracted to. Two video/film works from that time were of particular interest to me: the American science fiction television series *Dollhouse*, created by American writer and director Joss Whedon, and *Memento*, a movie by English-American film maker Christopher Nolan. In the case of *Dollhouse*, memory is the key component that the series revolves around. The leading characters in the series are people who have sold years of their lives to a corporation that hires out human beings to the specific requests of wealthy clients. In order

to do this, the corporation removes the memories of the “actives”² so that a new temporary personality and set of memories can be imprinted. In this scenario of “programmable people”², memory is the key building block of making these imprintable personalities. Over the course of the series, the actives begin to exhibit signs of having their own unique personalities, despite having their memories continually wiped. Whedon uses this idea of an emerging self as a key plot device. *Memento* also considers a failure of memory as it plays out the idea of a person who cannot make new memories, and so uses Polaroid photographs as a memory substitute, leaving notes to himself on the borders of the photographs. *Memento* also shares a connection with Kerry Tribe’s work *H.M.*, in that they were both inspired by the patient who was known as H.M., who suffered with this same condition and lived, unable to create new memories, for more than 50 years. Tribe utilises dual projections of 16mm film in this work and also utilises auto-ethnographic elements in her methodology. By asking H.M. to “act like her grandfather” (Herbert 2010, 29), she was also evoking her own memories of her grandfather, who suffered from memory loss. For me it was the questioning of the failure of memory that led me to embark on an exploration of what makes a true and authentic self.

More recently I also found another connection, in the second episode of the *Century of the Self*, by British documentary filmmaker Adam Curtis. Curtis tells of attempts by the Nazi Germans to create programmable people by first wiping the memories of experimental subjects, and then trying to implant new memories. This experiment was never able to achieve its desired result, because although the patient was never able to retrieve any of their previous memories, they did have a personality of their own emerge, rather than the personality desired by the experimenters.

These observations within my own life and in the media I was engaged in drove my continuing questioning of whether there is an underlying sense of self that is at the core of all the thoughts and memories, the experience and knowledge we manifest and accumulate.

² Whedon, Joss. 2009 - 2010. *Dollhouse*. United States: Mutant Enemy Productions; 20th Century Fox Television

In Tribe's artwork *H.M.*, in the Nazi experiments, and in Whedon's *Dollhouse*, a core of a person still existed despite failures of memory.

This was also the time I was incorporating meditation and photography into my life as a way of coping with and ultimately surviving this environment. I was first introduced to meditation by my yoga instructor, who had a long history of both meditation and yoga practice, both here and in Mysore, India. She shared teachings of American Tibetan Buddhist nun Pema Chödrön and American psychotherapist and yoga instructor Stephen Cope's book about meditation *The Wisdom of Yoga* (Cope 2006). This immediately connected to the idea that I had been interested in regarding memory, that within the practice of meditation, the individual will find their centred self underneath all the thoughts and internal chatter. As my ongoing depression and anxiety had manifested as an unbreakable cycle of circular thinking, meditation became an important strategy for surviving the environment of my corporate workplace. It also enabled me to start observing myself from a new perspective, which in turn enabled me to view the world in different ways.

My search for ways to survive and thrive was not just confined to my yoga and meditation practices. As I wrote earlier, I had been interested in creative practices from a young age. In a serendipitous turn of events, at the same time I was being introduced to meditation, I was also learning black and white darkroom photography. I had access to a community darkroom and would book it out on my own at the weekend, and spend hours in the dark, developing film and printing photographs. I would use those minutes of each exposure, or time spent with the paper in each chemistry tray, taking the time to be present to my surroundings, following my breath. As I was in the practice of training my mind to observe my thoughts, these moments in the darkroom provided the opportunity to do exactly that, and the two processes became slowly enmeshed.



Figure 1: Gillian Green, untitled, 2012, hand-printed film photographs, each 22cm x 15cm.

The close attention needed in analogue film processing changed the way I used my camera and, through that change, the experiences I had when taking photographs, and I carried my camera with me everywhere I went. I was also listening to Pema Chödrön on my mp3 player while walking to and from work.³ One evening, having walked past a pōhutukawa twice a day for several months, I stopped to photograph some of its roots on a boundary wall. From this series of images came the first photographs I ever exhibited (**Figure 1**), and more importantly, I was now using this meditation and photographic process to create a practice for myself that would help me not only survive, but thrive. This also led to what is now my current research project.

Characteristic of artistic research is that art practice (the works of art, the artistic actions, the creative processes) is not just the motivating factor and the subject matter of research, but that this artistic practice ... is central to the research process itself. Methodologically speaking, the creative process forms the pathway (or part of it) through which new insights, understandings and products come into being.
(Borgdorff 2010, 45 - 46)

My research project is not just about how my experiences in the corporate culture became *why* I make art and influenced *how* I make art, but also explores how my photographic meditative art-making practice saved me. My project has asked me to explore and revisit very private experiences, which have informed and driven my work. Perhaps most important is that the camera does not just assist; it is integral to my psychological and spiritual well-being. My methods come from this explorative process, and I will discuss in the next chapter.

³ Chödrön, Pema. 2005. *Getting Unstuck: Breaking Your Habitual Patterns and Encountering Naked Reality*. ISBN 159179238X/978-1591792383. Sounds True, CD.

3 YOU CAN BE THERE, TOO

In the previous chapter I discussed how my experiences have led to the emergence of a methodology which connects photography and meditation. While my methodology may have aspects of the more widely known auto ethnographical and heuristic methodologies, my methodology is neither of those entirely. My methodology operates in tandem with my self-knowing of the affective relations *felt* between me and my immediate environment. These qualities of felt affect are particularly present when I'm meditating and engaged in taking photographs. They form the basis of my methods. Methods which are also framed by Laura U. Marks' writing of haptic visuality, Geoffrey Batchen's thoughts on tactility in photography and Henri Bergson's writing regarding duration. Alongside these philosophers, I also refer to Stephen Cope and Pema Chödrön's writing regarding yoga and the philosophy of meditation. My methods combine meditative and photo-filmic practices (Streitberger 2010) , with a particular by not exclusive interest in analogue processing.

Within my art practice, I use meditation as a preparatory act. It focuses my attention on the present, helps me narrow my focus to right where I am, slows and centres my mind so that I am fully in my intelligent body. This opens me up to experience the world, which I do using my camera lens, and the act of being in nature to make these photographs. British Buddhist teacher and author Stephen Batchelor writes of this same experience of the connection between meditation and photography.

In order to take photographs, I need to get into a certain frame of mind. This is similar in feel to the process of starting a mediation session. For the first few minutes in meditation you have to discipline yourself to shift into another perspective, another way of being with your breath, or whatever object you choose. This has a somatic quality to it—you feel in your body that you're somehow framing the world in another way. The same is true in taking photographs. One needs to get into a contemplative frame of mind in order to have that sharpness of attention, that focus, that precision. And this requires a willingness to see thing other than the way we see them habitually. (Batchelor 2004, 142)

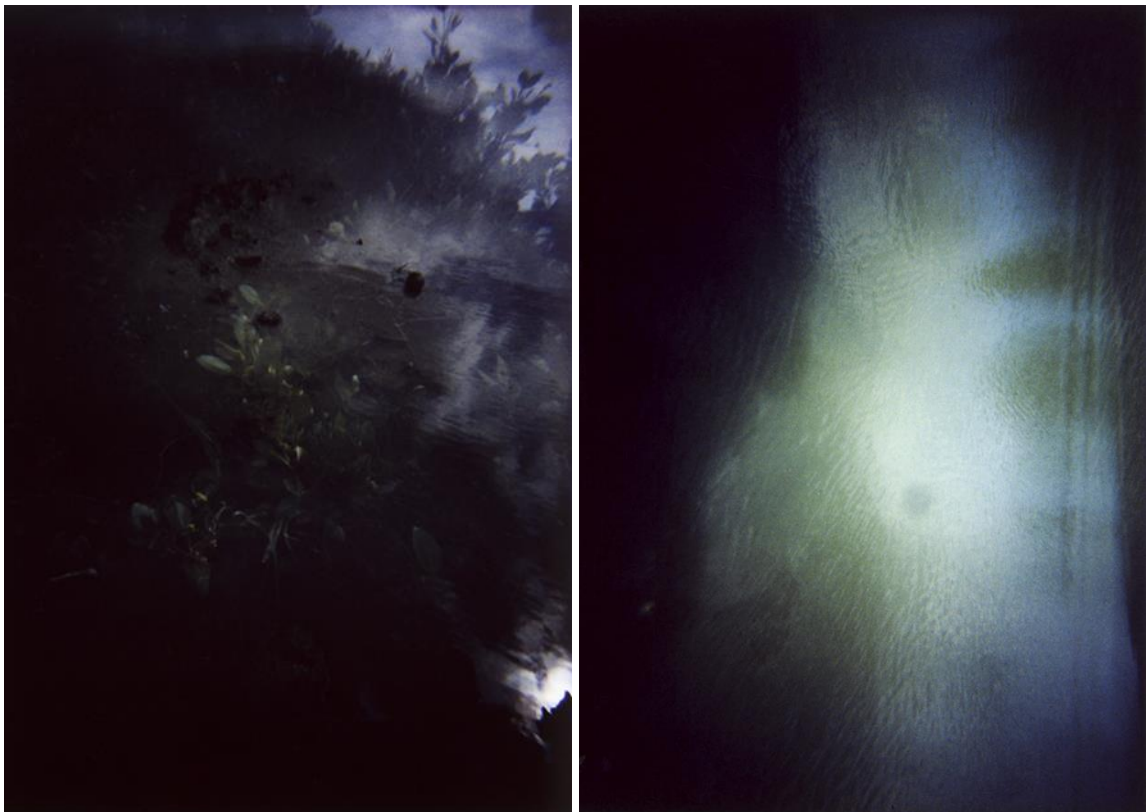


Figure 2: Gillian Green, untitled, from the From the Same World series 2018/19, shown in Estuary Ecology Art Awards, 2018, each 60cm x 42cm.

Early on in my project I explored a place that I have never been to before, Te Kopua Kai a Hiku/Panmure Basin with the purpose in mind to make work for the Estuary Ecology Art awards. Artists were encouraged for this award to explore the Tāmaki Estuary, and I was drawn to the combination of pōhutukawa and the deep waters of the Panmure Basin which I would capture in multiple exposed photographs. I used my instant camera, working with instant photographs as my negatives, which I would tuck into my clothes to carry them as they developed. The surface of the negatives would inevitably end up scratched and marked from the experience.

While intelligence treats everything mechanically, instinct proceeds, so to speak, organically. If the consciousness that slumbers in it should awake, if it were wound up into knowledge instead of being wound off into action, if we could ask and it could reply, it would give up to us the most intimate secrets of life. For it only carries out further the work by which life organizes matter – so that we cannot say, as has often been shown, where organization ends and where instinct begins. (Bergson, *Creative Evolution* 2008, 165)

Bergson writes regarding different experiences of time, and of particular interest to me is his description of duration (*la durée*). Duration differs from the physical time which is quantifiable and evenly structured. Duration, as described by Bergson, is that which experienced individually and unconsciously. It may be experienced in an individual as a stretching out, perhaps a sense of being bored (for example a long car journey through unchanging scenery – which Barthes might refer to as a situation having no punctum) (Barthes 1981, 27). A different individual might experience the same journey passing very quickly (Bergson, *Matter and Memory* 2010, 103). My engagement with the natural world through my camera, seems to ignore structured time. Bergson's concept of duration therefore, becomes relevant to my project as it allows me space in my experience of making images to be open to what happens regardless how much time is spent.



Figure 3: Kalisolaite 'Uhila, 5 Minutes, 2019.

The meditative aspects of being present and opening space for observation are also elements that can be found in Tongan-born artist Kalisolaite 'Uhila's work, *5 Minutes* (**Figure 3**). This work is a recent work presented in conjunction with AUT's St Paul Street Gallery for the 2019 exhibition *How to Live Together*. For this work, 'Uhila gives an invitation to observe silence for five minutes every Monday during the three months the exhibition runs, at the Rotunda in Auckland Central's Albert Park. Being present and spending time are aspects 'Uhila often uses in his performance art works.

Time is very significant. Time, consciousness and existence are very important in my practice. I introduce time in my performance, because time is lived and experienced in everyone's rhythms of life...time becomes timeless. For my own understanding of time, time exists differently; when I perform I enjoy the process of preparing even if it takes night or day just sitting and observing, meditating and 'wasting' a lot of time. ('Uhila 2016, 12)

While 'Uhila's performance of time is the foundation of this artwork, *5 Minutes* takes this further, asking the audience to participate in the spending of time. This weekly action is performed for the entire duration of the exhibition, even when the artist himself is no longer present in the same physical location. This period of silence asks the audience to appreciate their thoughts and feelings in order to find their own explanations of this art work, particularly as the artist is not inhabiting the space with his work, voice, or presence. For the designated period of five minutes, the artist asks that the participants stay with whatever they find within themselves in order to bring meaning to the time spent and, as a consequence, the work.



Figure 4: Gillian Green, *untitled*, from the *From the Same World* series 2018/19. Enlarged film photographs, each shown 60mm high.

I also use this mindfulness of being regarding how I spend my time, which is driven by my own need for self-care and mental well-being. I began working on a series of new images in May of 2018 (**Figure 4**). While this was a continuation of the work I made at the start of my project, I was freshly back from an inspiring trip overseas, but this had been closely followed by the unexpected death of my father. I was still full of creative fire, but also felt numb emotionally. I wrote at the time that I felt like I was “walking through mud with cotton wool in my head” – in other words I had a profound sense of moving in slow motion, and my mind seemed numb of feelings or deep thought. I was drawn into picking up my camera, following my gut instinct, finding those places that felt important to me, those places that prompted feelings of safety and nurturing. I did not mentally plan the photographs that I wanted to take – I just knew that I needed to be present to the environment I was in; I knew I wanted to just be. My processes regarding my photographic practice are not only working toward the decisive moment of the camera click, but also encompass all of the moments belonging to the processual acts along the way: load the film, wind it back by hand in the dark bag to prepare it to be re-exposed, take it out carefully in the dark bag after the second exposure to ensure I don’t get light leaks onto the film. A lot of this is time spent sitting on location with my hands in a dark bag, with my mental point of focus entirely on something outside of my vision. When I return to action again, I am refreshed and refilled, but with that refined single point of focus. I am mindful that this type of cognitive focussing can also happen through meditation. I hand process the film the same day at home in my kitchen, using my dark bag and processing tank. In any of the procedural stages, I encounter the possibility that I might contaminate the film with unintended marks from dust or scratches or that I might fog the film through light contamination.

In keeping the glitches, scratches, fogging, and failures that happen in the making of my work, I am not so much claiming that there is an absolute truth in having them remain. Rather, to edit them out or remove them is to compromise the integrity of the process of making. An important part of my making is to create double exposures that lie partway between completely intentional and completely chance. This does also introduce the chance for failure of the process, whether that be the film getting scratched, damaged, or simply misaligned. When capturing the separated moments of experience and joining them together on one piece of film, the errors are as much a part of what happened as the pure

visual information. What happened then must be retained in the now. This is the beauty in failure – everything is part of the whole, and the processual acts of bringing everything together are important in their entirety.

When I am using my camera in these natural places I photograph and film in, I am not just having the experience with my eyes; I am having it with my whole body. While I might also be receiving the experience into my body through my eyes, I am also feeling it through my skin, taking it into my body through my breath. In the same way that my body is making sense of the visual experiences with my whole self, my camera is also recording the experience, using the film not just as the equivalent of a retina, but also like my lungs and my skin. This is an idea that Laura U. Marks writes about, and has become very important for my project. “Because haptic visuality draws upon other senses, the viewer’s body is more obviously involved in the process of seeing than is the case with optic visuality.” (Marks, *Video haptics and erotics* 1998, 332) What we know is more than what we see purely with our eyes or think of discursively in our mind.

Scratches and marks on the film are like marks on its skin, the salt spray on my face at the beach, the chill from the wind which makes my whole body respond, that calming centring peace that comes from just sitting. Meditation, learning to stay, is to be with what arises within ourselves, to be with what can be found there, awaiting acceptance regardless of pre-existing expectations and/or desires. However, what manifests for me when I’m immersed in a meditative state comes from my whole body of knowledge, including the failures, the strange connections and the unexpected.

It is never too late for any of us to look at our minds. We can always sit down and allow the space for anything to arise. Sometimes we have a shocking experience of ourselves. Sometimes we try to hide. Sometimes we have a surprising experience of ourselves. Often we get carried away. Without judging, without buying into like and dislikes, we can always encourage ourselves to just be here again and again. (Chödrön, *When Things Fall Apart: Heartfelt Advice for Difficult Times* 2005, 37)



*Figure 5: Tacita Dean, *The Green Ray*, 2001, 16mm colour film still, 2.5 mins.*

This in turn can help me identify what I am doing because I have been conditioned to do so and what I can change in order to survive in the corporate capitalist world that I am still living within. To be trapped in a discursive narrative in one's head is to contain experience and knowledge to that as mediated by thought, which is in turn mediated by cultural contexts, upbringings and environments. Using photography and meditation to expand my thinking is what has helped me break out of that trap of discursive narrative thought, to start observing myself and the world in different ways.

Perhaps also the cataloguing nature of science, that is the favoured research methodology in our western society, has contributed to our separation of the optical qualities of vision from the haptic sensory experience of vision. Science promotes thinking, discourse, but excludes many non-quantifiable aspects of the visual experience. I contend that it is precisely that haptic experience that we need to be mindful of, in order to not just fully experience the world, but to also understand the self, and to maintain mental stability. It is this mindfulness with a camera that has also helped to reveal aspects of myself and the fullness of my response to the world that would not be apparent otherwise.

An artist working with these ideas of revealing something with a camera is British visual artist Tacita Dean, specifically her 16mm film *The Green Ray* (**Figure 5**). In her film Dean describes the phenomena produced by the last ray of light refracting around the curve of the earth, from the sun, which in the right conditions, appears as a green ray of light. To make this film, Dean returns to the same piece of coastline evening after evening, in the hope of not only seeing the green ray, but also filming it on 16mm film. Within my art making, and 'Uhila's practice as described earlier, waiting, returning, and spending time are deemed very important. Dean describes at the end of the film (through the voiceover), her own uncertainty as to whether she had actually seen the phenomena of green ray with her own eyes. She was not alone in filming that particular evening. Others who were filming on digital cameras claimed that she could not have seen the green ray, as they had not collected any evidence in their digital videos. However, when the film was processed, she found evidence on her film of the green ray's existence that evening. I am interested in this same process of discovery when making my own work, which reveals retrospectively that I was subjected to something *more than*.

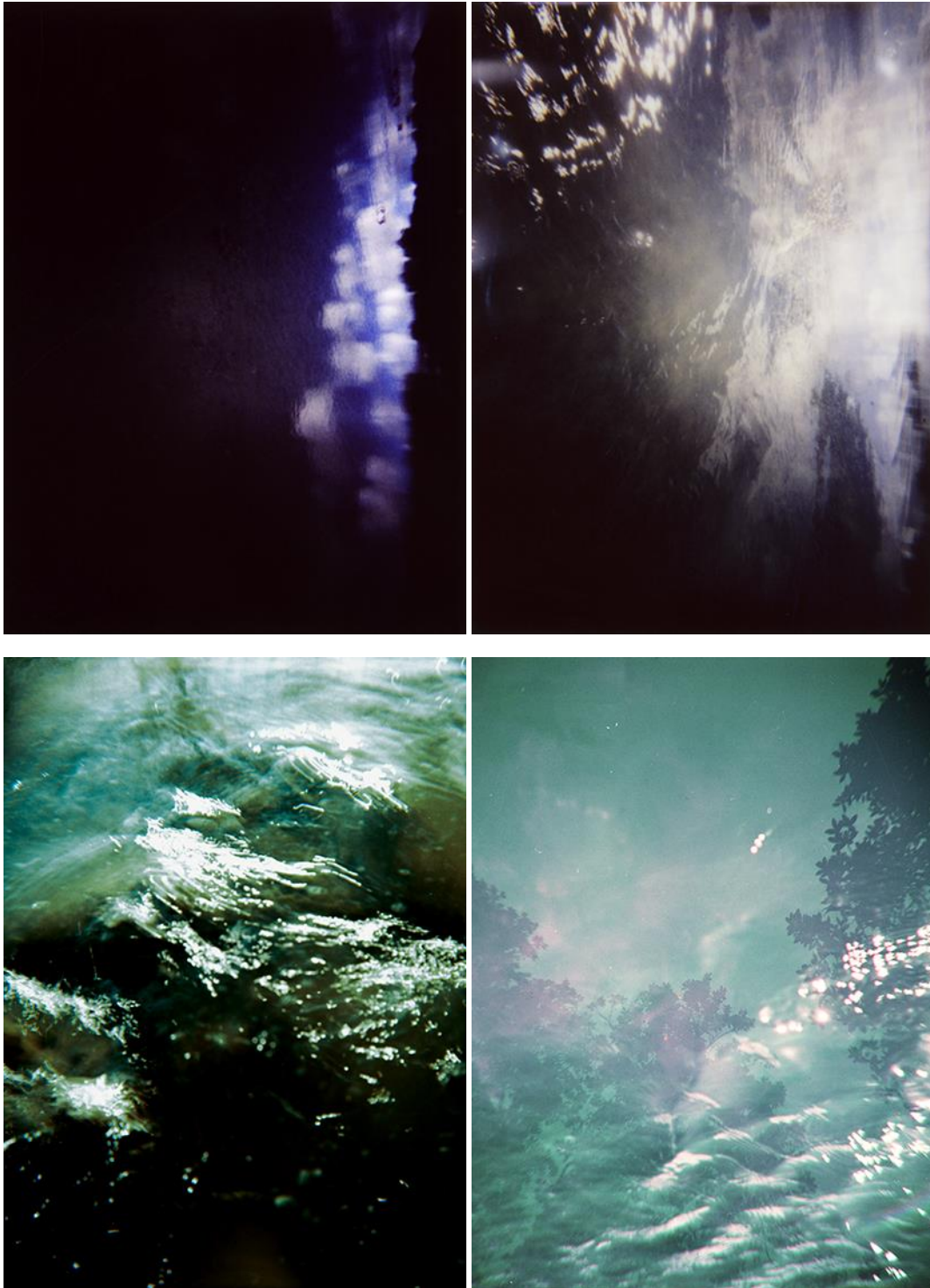


Figure 6: Gillian Green, untitled, from the From the Same World series 2018/19.

Multiple exposures on Instant film (top) and 120m film stock (bottom), each shown 60mm high x 44mm wide.

An example of experiencing *more than* in my own work was the set of works I made in August 2018 (**Figure 6**). These works revealed a very different inner state of being than the one that I was aware of in my conscious mind. Through perceiving these images, I understood through my affective body, the presence of turbulence in my life due to the death of my father. I was still feeling the same feelings of being numb, and moving slowly, but I was also starting to feel like there might be the beginnings of something else. I took these photographs on a combination of instant film, and 120mm film stock. When taking images with the instant film, I take the images that made up the final multiple exposure sequentially. In contrast, using the 120mm film I would rewind the whole film then reload it so that I could expose it again. This method means that the images that make up the final exposure are not taken sequentially and I have less conscious control over the final outcome. This is akin to the process of meditation, where I train my point of focus on the breath. Thoughts might arise, but the practice is to not engage with them, to let them wash over you. In giving up conscious of image making control I can open up the process to give opportunity for other connections and juxtapositions to take place. Instead, those images became more about the collection of moments that felt important, and making connections across two instances of time.

In Batchen's writing in regard to Barthes, he describes the light waves travelling from the photographed object to the film, and that again happening as the image travelling from the film to the eye. "Photography has never provided us with the truthful appearance of things, but it has guaranteed, through the sympathetic magic of contiguity, the possibility of a direct *emotional* empathy across an otherwise insurmountable abyss of space and time." (Batchen 2015, 194). While his discussion is framed in relation to memory, this also connects for me to the haptic visuality and haptic perception that Marks writes of. We recognise the connection from us to the photographed object in our bodies. As the multiple exposure becomes less recognisable as a specific thing, it allows for our understanding to be more expansive.

This expansive understanding is something I explore in the presentation of my work, and will discuss this further in the next chapter.

4 EMBODIED UNDERSTANDING OF NATURE

Throughout my project, I have also experimented with different modes of presentation. In June 2018, I was part of a group photography exhibition *Landscape and Memory* with fellow Auckland-based artists and contemporaries Chervelle Athena and Nicholas Monks. A key area of importance we explored in the exhibition was how to present images in relationship to each other, whether that be within our own works or how we might make connections between each other's work. As discussed in earlier chapters, I have an interest in how self can be constructed through memory, and I used this idea of connection to explore how images might operate like the layers of memory, bringing different pieces together to create an experience albeit fleeting, vague or hesitant. For this exhibition, and with ideas regarding memory in mind, I presented my work in lightboxes. These works were made up of layers depicting multiple instances of time through multiple exposures, but could also be seen as adding a layer onto the surface of Athena's large, framed works through the transference of image due to reflective surfaces (**Figure 8**). This gave weight to my ideas and further enhanced contextual understanding of Athena's work.

I also explored this reflective element using my two large, framed works, which were set behind minimally reflective glass (**Figure 7** and **Figure 8**). While the viewer experienced the layers in the photographs, they were also able to see a very subtle reflection of themselves becoming part of the layering of the work. My intention for this reflection of the viewer was to create affect relations through the work that not only connected the viewer with themselves, but also held them in direct body communication with the work itself. Elements of this exploration were successful, allowing the viewer to see themselves reflected on the surface of the work did, however also gave, a visual reminder that the viewer was outside the work, viewing from a distance rather than completely connected to it. I observed that the horizon line appearing at the very top of the image in *Then-Now, Rock Tumbled through Time* heightened this disconnection, and instead opened up a questioning of where the photograph had been taken.



Figure 7: Gillian Green, *Then-Now, Rock Tumbled through Time* and *Then-Now, Blue* framed enlargements from instant film photographs, 60cm x 80cm.



Figure 8: Gillian Green, installation images from *Landscape and Memory* exhibition, 2018.

Clockwise from top left: Handmade lightboxes with prints from scans of instant film double exposures 61 x 45cm each. Framed enlargements from instant film photographs (**Figure 7**), 60 x 80cm each (back wall) with two of Chervelle Athena's framed photographs on the right hand wall. Two framed enlargements from instant film photographs 15 x 20cm each (on mantle); in the background and reflected on Chervelle Athena's work, one of the framed lightboxes. see also **Figure 21** and **Figure 22**

In later experiments, I continued to work with the double exposure method that I had used in still images, now using 16mm analogue film (**Figure 9**). This exploration worked to remove any recognition of the exact whereabouts of the subject matter. I was intent on creating a visual experience of nature that can't be located in the natural world, but could still be recognised as nature in its combined effect. This recognition can only be located in internal feeling processes, by an internal embodied understanding of experience, our own slowing mind. I used this work as a different experience of being with nature, and as a way to create the meditative state I discussed in previous chapters as being part of my method. This method enables me to explore visually an experience that could be akin to the meditative state while the work is being viewed. My work explored the effect of images that have some feeling of being grounded while at the same time being outreaching. This is much like the meditative state I experience, which is both completely inward looking and also outward looking in order to be present to the outer

Like 'Uhila's *5 Minutes of Silence*, which I discussed in the previous chapter, where the audience had the opportunity to take five minutes to *be*, my work opens up the possibility of a similar experience. I explore in this work layered visual constructions, continual motion of the images in the work and the lack of clear narrative, culminating in an encounter that might initiate an experience similar to that of meditation.

Christopher Pavsek writes in his article *Leviathan and the Experience of Sensory Ethnography* about how a layered, sensory narrative work rather than a linear one can open up the possibility for an embodied experience within the viewer. By refraining from using the typical explanatory devices in moving image work, such as voiceover, intertitles or dialogue, the work instead draws on depiction, layers and sequencing. (Pavsek 2015, 5). Deleuze also writes of these non-narrative, layered moving image works in *Cinema 2: The Time Image*:

[H]e has gained in an ability to see what he has lost in action or reaction: he SEES so that the viewer's problem becomes 'What is there to see in the image?' (and not now 'What are we going to see in the next image?'). (Deleuze 2013, 279)



Figure 9: Gillian Green, untitled, video stills from the From the Same World series 2018/19, video projection of 16mm film, 4m32s loop, shown 3m x 2.25m high.

I am interested in how Deleuze's ideas of the experience of non-narrative images may also function in my moving image work. When using the the lack of narrative, the work can return the viewer to themselves, and as in 'Uhila's *5 Minutes*, this perhaps allows the viewer or participant to create their own narrative or affective state while viewing my work. Laura U. Marks also writes about how film work can emphasise durational experience without giving a linear narrative to the viewer, instead asking the viewer to draw out their own narrative through the given image, rather than an unfolding sequence of images. 'Such works actualise the experience of the "'dureé' by not permitting images to extend into action, by cutting off all causal relationships.'" (Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Emodiment, and the Senses* 2000, 63) This is an important connection for me, as in this way, I explore notions of haptic visuality.

Rather than have a narrative, the constant thread in the work is a continual movement. In every shot, at least one of the layers of imagery is in constant motion, but also invites the viewer to be still and let the movement wash over them. This for me is a connection to the practice of using your breath as a single point of focus in meditation, while at the same time not trying to control it or hold it too tightly. While it may seem to be a passive practice, meditation is not a necessarily passive state.

In contrast to my moving image works, Aotearoa New Zealand artist Joyce Campbell's *Company Stream* (2017) (**Figure 10**) uses constant movement and uncertainty to unsettle and disorient the viewer. Campbell's video is shot completely underwater and follows the movements of an eel as it erratically swims through a murky stream. In the first half of the film, Campbell keeps the object of the film (the eel) hidden from clear view. It is only after about five minutes that the figure of an eel becomes apparent, providing a sense of relief as viewers are finally able to comprehend the creature they have been watching and become familiar with in the shadowy underwater murk. This decision enhances rather than dilutes the bodily experience viewers have of the work. As the viewer is forced to duck, dive and weave through the water with the resident of *Company Stream*, tension and anxiety are viscerally created in the body – the connection is made to this eel on its terms. The viewer is not trying to observe the eel from the outside, nor categorise or catch it; they are *with* it, and only when Campbell gives images of the eel itself is there a thinking, and understanding of the underwater creature that shares their experience. However by then there is well and

truly a bodily connection that becomes a connection with the eel (Circuit Artist Film and Video Aotearoa New Zealand 2017).

The constant movement in *Company Stream* is an element shared with my work *From the Same World*. In Campbell's work, this method gives rise to a feeling of anxiety and tension; however, in my work, the constant movement is used as a tool to help facilitate a stillness, both internal and external, in the viewer. Through Campbell's filmic methods, we are connected to a being that is generating the movement, with the camera also generating a similar movement in order to track the eel. In my work, the viewer may be able to recognise that the viewing comes from a place of stillness suggesting the viewer finds something of their own to hold, while the movement washes over and through them.

In exploring how movement can facilitate a stillness, I have also considered how moving image and still images can operate together. In reading the existing literature regarding photo-filmic practice, it outlines the relationship between moving imagery and still imagery regarding the notion that one was a trigger for the other. This often is given as an example where one operated in service to the other (such as a still image from a moving image work displayed in order to trigger the moving image work) (Green and Lowry 2006) and (Streitberger 2010). However, in my project, I position the moving image and the still image work together to create a space between where either could be the trigger for the other. The works each have their own weight and presence. This also reflects different aspects of meditation practice. In my art practice, the meditative breathing is referenced through breathing of the moving image works. The still image can then become a point of focus. These two different media work in tandem to assert these qualities.

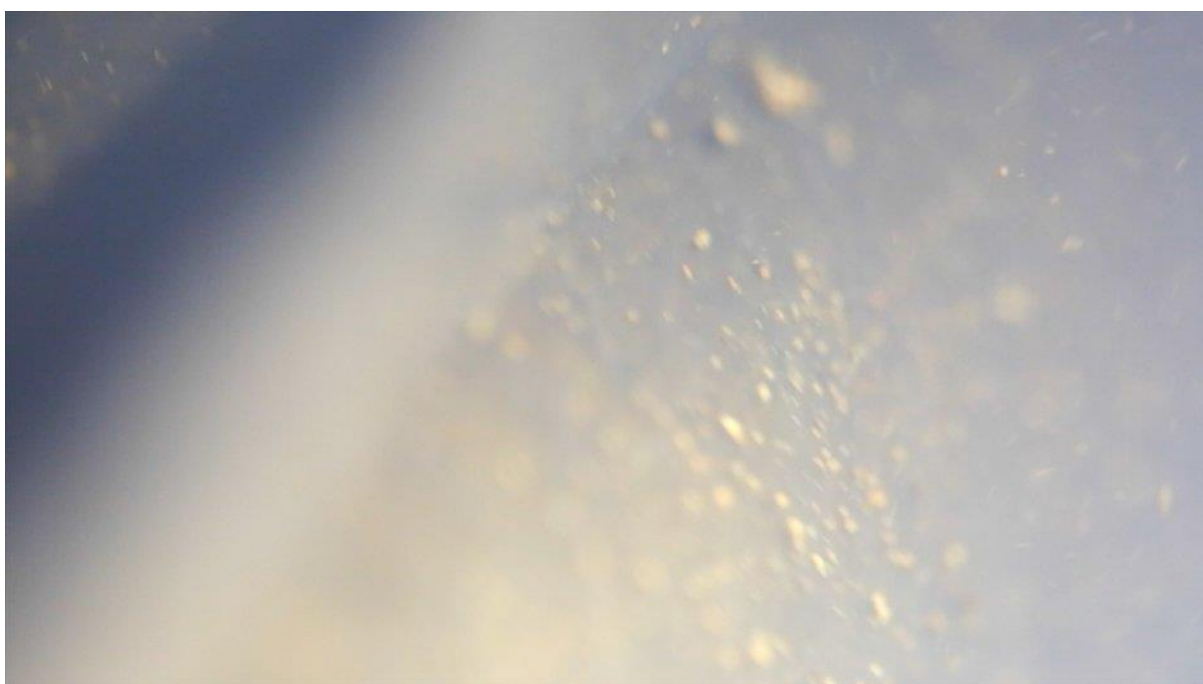


Figure 10: Joyce Campbell, Company Stream 2017, 10m23s, video still.

I am continuing my explorations and considering how two works can be installed so that each is visible in the peripheral vision when looking at the other – how works can hold ground for each other. My recent dual projection installation consisted of a digital projection placed at right angles to the analogue projection, and also separated from it at the other end of the room. This digital projection was a single exposure take, from a fixed point, of continual small waves rolling in on a pebbled shore. Each film was set up so that when viewing one, the viewer could also see/experience the other film in their peripheral vision. The digital work acts as a constant grounding for the viewer when watching the analogue footage. I am planning to explore this idea further for my final presentation, including still images in proximity to the as dual projections.



Figure 11: Gillian Green, untitled, from the From the Same World series 2018/19.

5 INSTALLATION AND EXHIBITION

The images that follow were taken at the exhibition *From the Same World: Re-making Self, With a Camera*. The exhibition was held in St Pauls Street Gallery 1, the WM building of the AUT City campus. In total there were two moving image and five still photographic works exhibited. The duration of the exhibition was November 7 – 10, 2019. The moving image works were in two forms, both looped projections on suspended screens. The first was made up from footage shot from August and September 2019, and a reworking of the film used in my previous explorations of moving image in this project (see **Figure 9**) on 16mm analogue film, a mixture of Lomochrome colour and Lomochrome Purple 16mm film stocks, using a Bolex H-16 Rex 5. The second film was a shorter loop shot digitally in a single take, using a Canon 6D. In addition, five Di-Bond mounted digital prints from scans of analogue medium format film negatives, shot with a Lomochrome Diana F+ camera on Lomochrome Purple and Lomochrome colour 120mm negative film as well as some expired Agfa 120mm colour film. All still images were shot as in-camera multiple exposures. All works were originally shot in analogue format, and then subsequently processed digitally to produce the final artworks.

The two suspended screens were set at right angles to each other and as far apart as installation would allow in order that they could be seen together, but able to be experienced as separate but connected works. Each screen was made to the format of the work being projected on it: the left hand screen being 4 x 3 for the 16mm analogue work; the right hand screen being 16 x 9 for the digital work.

Forming a semi spiral out from the moving image works, the five mounted photographs were placed in two groups so that the images could be seen and draw you into the space on one side, and could be seen and draw you back out when seen from the moving image.

5.1.1 Works Shown

1. *untitled, From the Same World* series, 2019, 2m x 1.5m video projection on suspended screen of 16mm film, 4m51s loop Link: https://youtu.be/P7WV_wflwLo

2. *untitled, From the Same World* series, 2019, 2.67m x 1.5m video projection on suspended screen of digital video, 1m10s loop Link: <https://youtu.be/vM2wbU-t-2I>
3. *untitled, From the Same World* series, 2019, scan of 120mm hand-processed Lomochrome Purple film negative, mounted on Di-Bond 1m x 1m
4. *untitled, From the Same World* series, 2019, scan of 120mm hand-processed expired Agfa colour film negative, mounted on Di-Bond 1m x 1m
5. *untitled, From the Same World* series, 2019, scan of 120mm hand-processed Lomochrome colour film negative, mounted on Di-Bond 1m x 1m
6. *untitled, From the Same World* series, 2019, scan of 120mm hand-processed Lomochrome colour film negative, mounted on Di-Bond 1m x 1m
7. *untitled, From the Same World* series, 2019, scan of 120mm hand-processed Lomochrome colour film negative, mounted on Di-Bond 1m x 1m

5.1.2 Installation Images

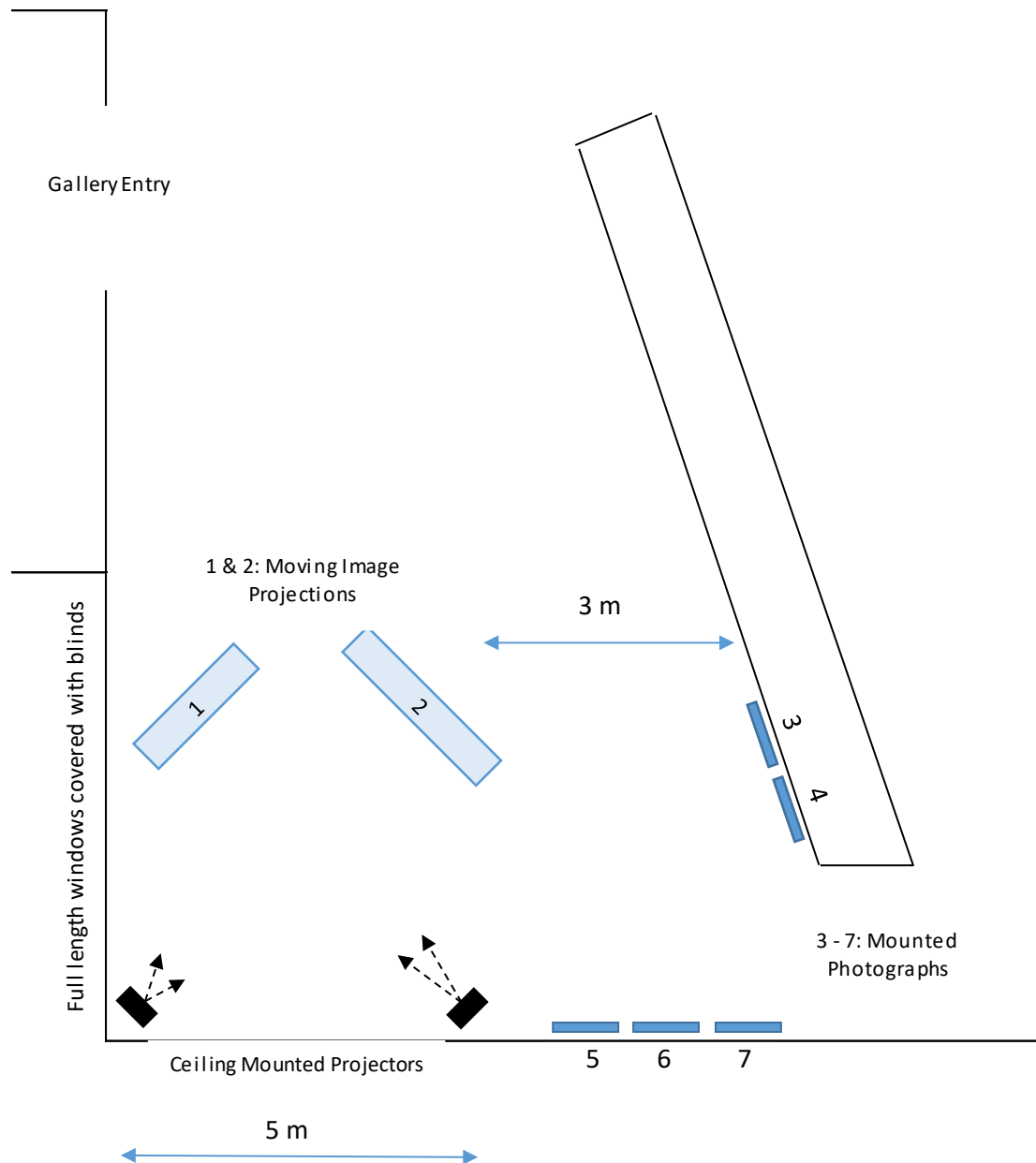


Figure 12 Installation Diagram AD19.

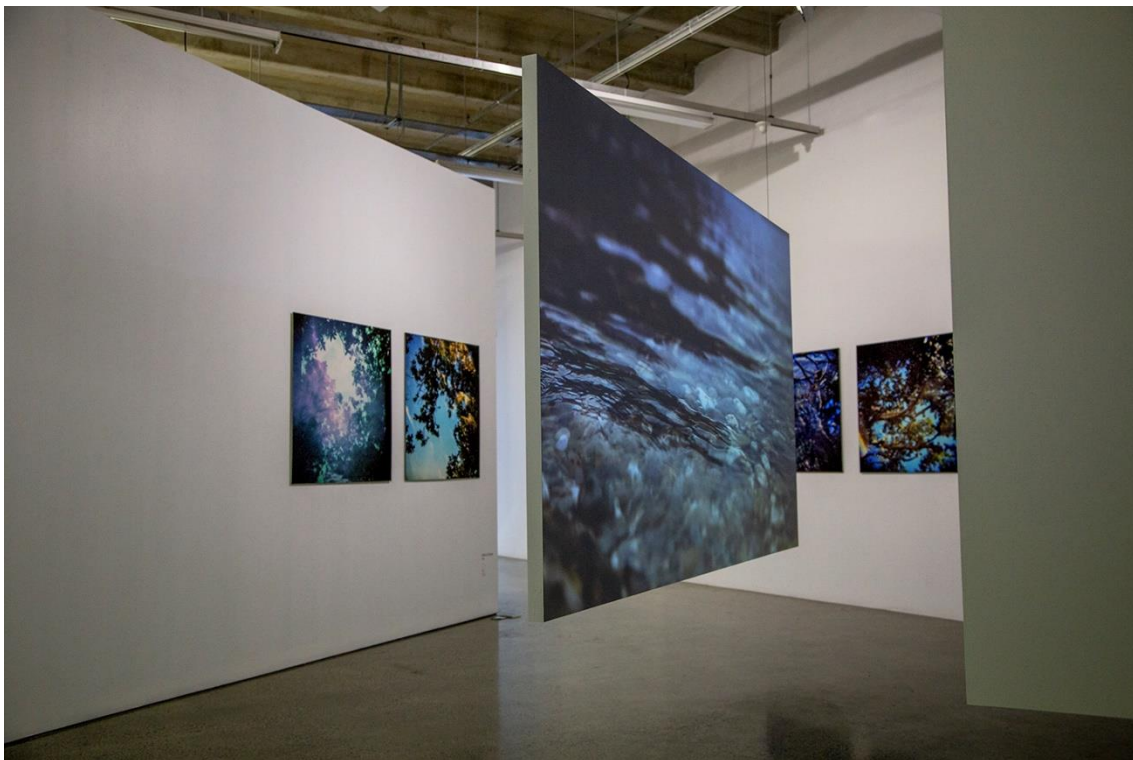
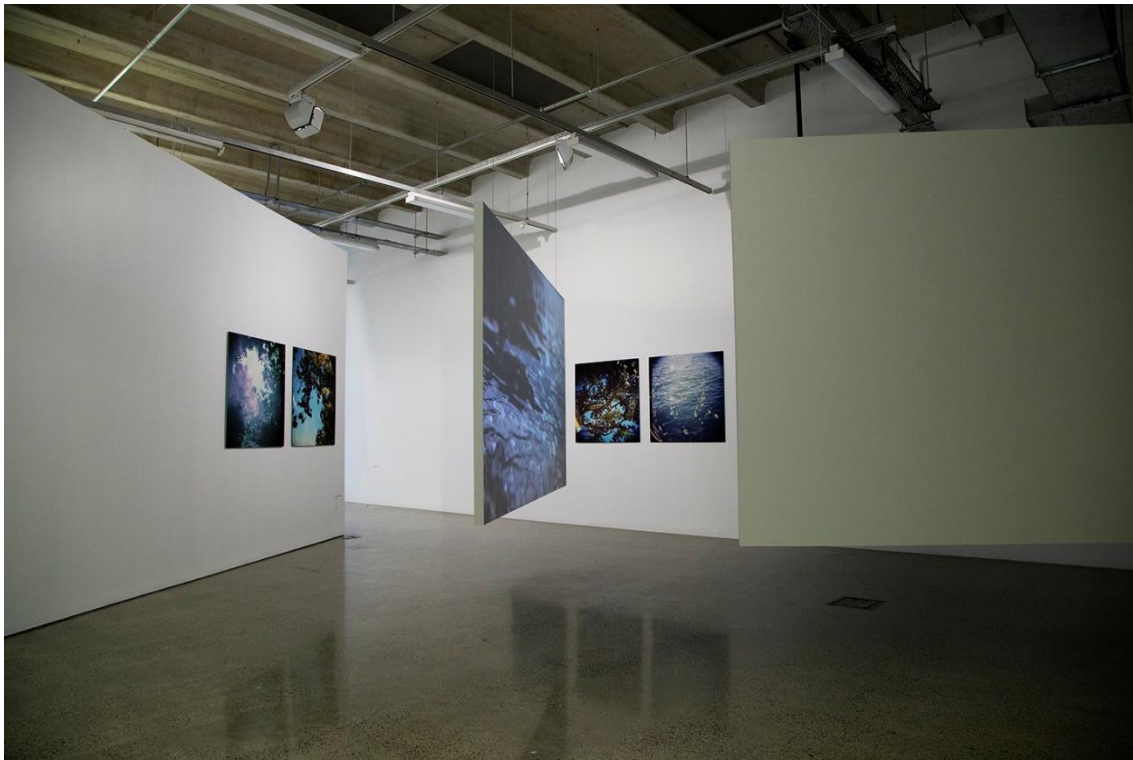


Figure 13 AD19 Installation views from Gallery entry, works 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and part of 7.

Entry into installation space, showing projected digital moving image work, *untitled*, *From the Same World* series, 2019, 2.67m x 1.5m video projection on suspended screen of digital video, 1m10s loop, and mounted still images.

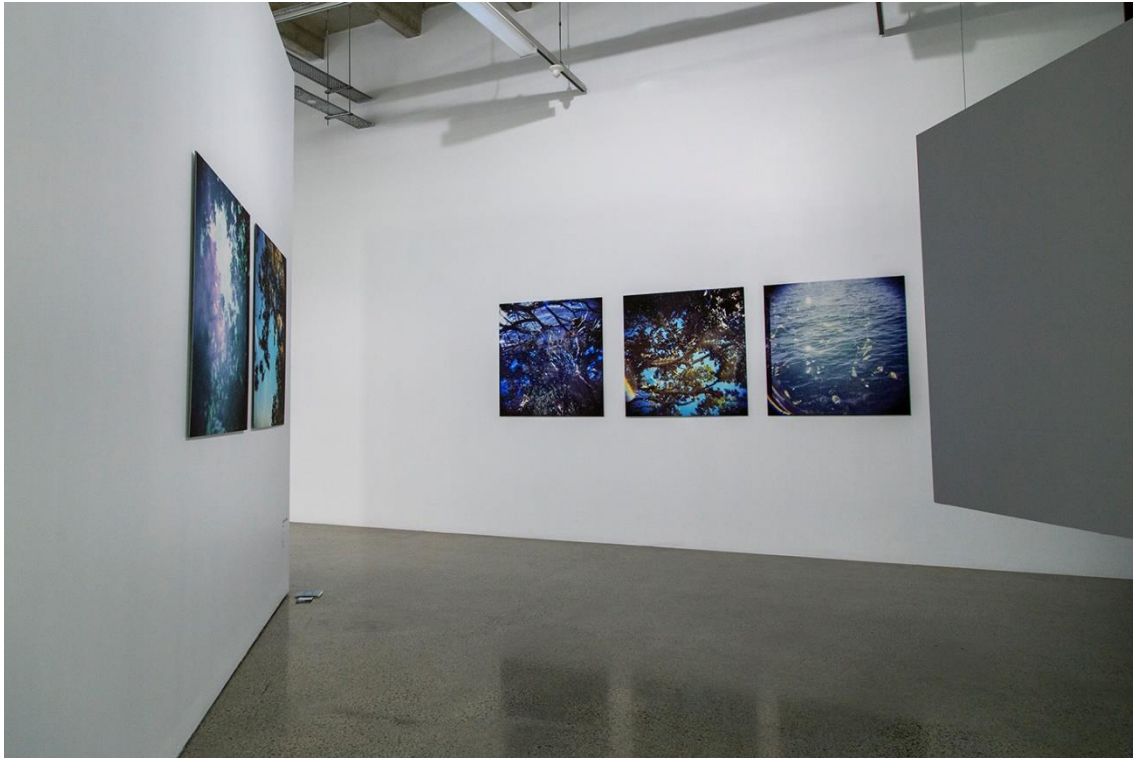


Figure 14 AD19 Installation view: mounted still images and back of suspended screen.

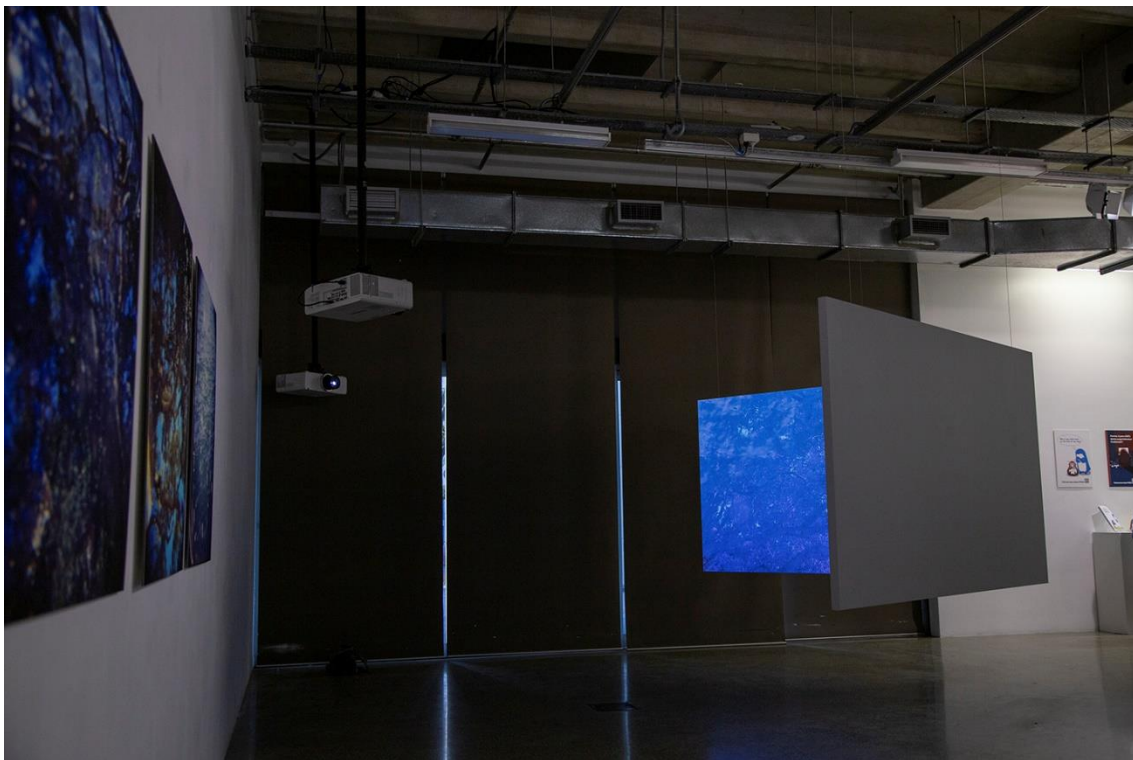


Figure 15 AD19 Installation view: entering into moving image projection space, mounted still images 5, 6 and 7 on the left.

Installation views showing relation of mounted still images to the suspended screens as the viewer enters into the moving image projection space.



Figure 16 Installation views: untitled, From the Same World series, 2019, 2m x 1.5m video projection on suspended screen of 16mm film, 4m51s loop and untitled, From the Same World series, 2019, 2.67m x 1.5m video projection on suspended screen of digital video, 1m10s loop.

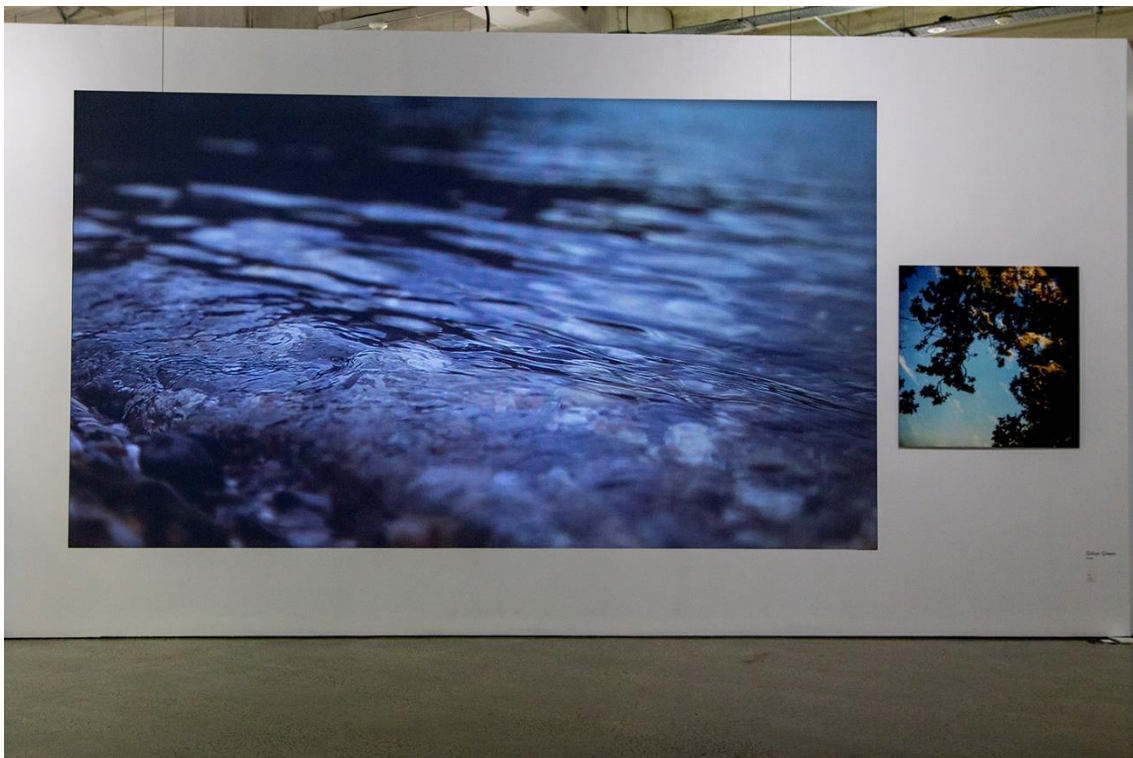


Figure 17 Installation views: untitled, From the Same World series, 2019, 2m x 1.5m video projection on suspended screen of 16mm film, 4m51s loop and untitled, From the Same World series, 2019, 2.67m x 1.5m video projection on suspended screen of digital video, 1m10s loop.



Figure 18 untitled, From the Same World series, 2019, scan of 120mm hand-processed Lomochrome Purple film negative, shown mounted on Di-Bond 1m x 1m and untitled, From the Same World series, 2019, scan of 120mm hand-processed expired Agfa colour film negative, shown mounted on Di-Bond 1m x 1m.



Figure 19 both untitled, From the Same World series, 2019, scans of 120mm hand-processed Lomochrome colour film negative, shown mounted on Di-Bond 1m x 1m.



Figure 20 untitled, From the Same World series, 2019, scan of 120mm hand-processed Lomochrome colour film negative, shown mounted on Di-Bond 1m x 1m.

6 CONCLUSION

There's more than just the surface of life. The real thing is under the surface.
(Viola 2011, 2m35s)

When I embarked upon this research project, I thought I was making the connections between inner and outer experience. I was keen to understand bodily knowledge and its relation to discursive thought. I was also keen to experience the connections and relations that I intuitively knew could be appreciated through my engagement with photographic practices, particularly analogue and its indexical lure. While these aspects of the research are very much still key parts of the project, what emerged during this time was my recognition of how personal these experiences became; how I relished the challenge to think through my intelligent and affective body. My journey through this project turned out to be more than just considering and applying the processes necessary for my artmaking. I came to understand just how integral these photographic and meditation practices are to my sense of self and well-being, my mental stability, and how they serve and nurture my authentic, feeling self.

When I decided to leave the corporate world, and follow my passion for photography, it was a very long and difficult decision, however, once I made the decision I knew with every fibre of my being that it was absolutely *right*. I had realised that my own values were no longer compatible with those of the corporate world, where there had been little recognition of employee's emotional state. After I had resigned from this section I immersed myself in the interest and excitement of meditation and photography. The change in direction led me to embark on this project which has been relevant both for its creative acumen as an art practice, and also for its healing property. During the early months I struggled to fully commit myself to its intentions, however once I did decide to give it my all and to trust in the process I again felt that absolute rightness of my decision.

In engaging with this project I have found I have understood it as a practical, embodied experience that becomes affective and cognitive understanding. The project provided value and an outcome for the feelings that can be *felt* upon encounter (with nature). This engagement has given value to the human-ness of my experiences.

7 REFERENCE IMAGES

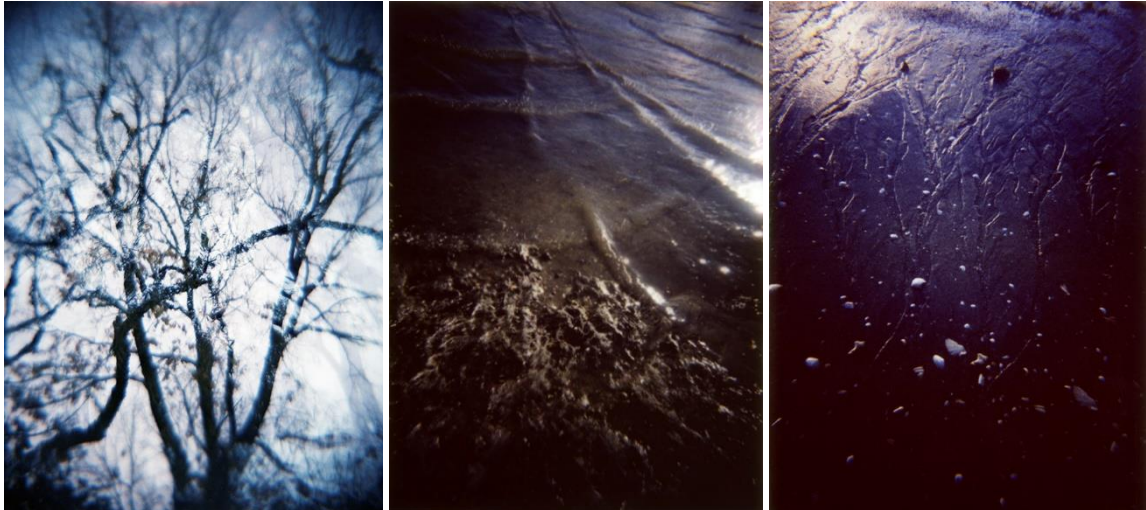


Figure 21: Gillian Green, images shown in handmade lightboxes with prints from scans of instant film double exposures, 61cm x 45cm each.

Shown in the *Landscape and Memory* exhibition 2018.

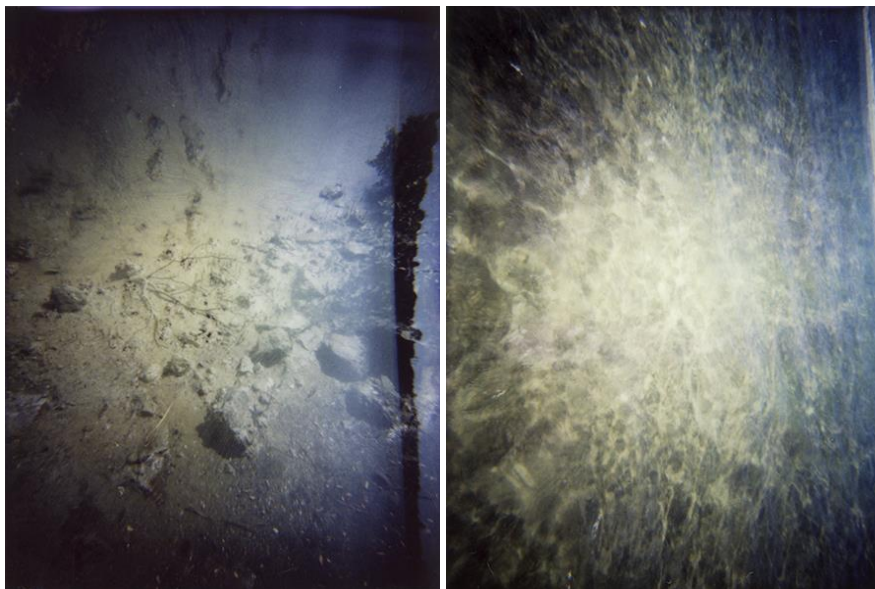


Figure 22: Gillian Green, images shown from instant film photographs, 15cm x 20cm each.

Shown in the *Landscape and Memory* exhibition 2018.

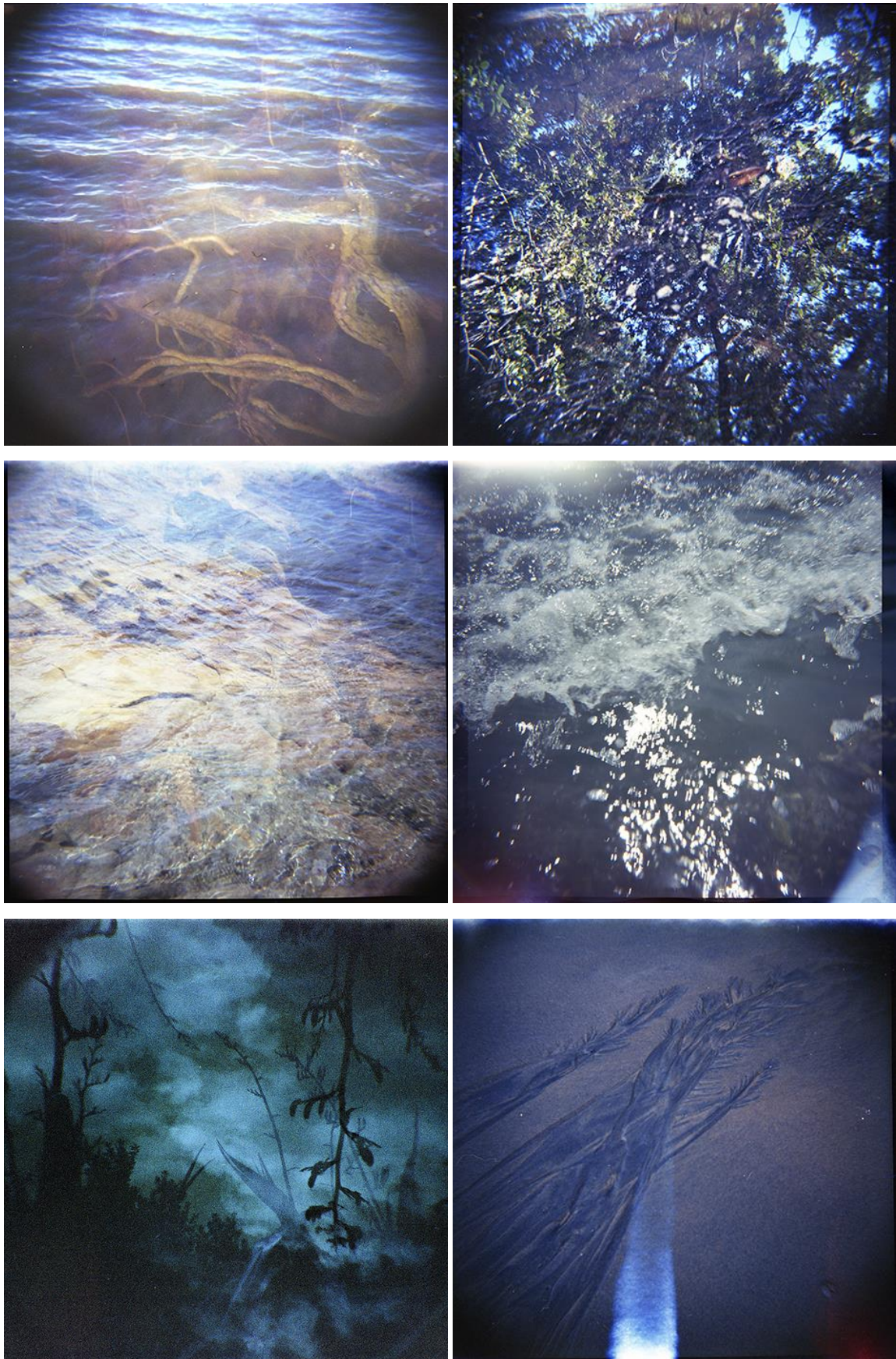


Figure 23: Gillian Green, *untitled*, scans of 120mm hand-processed film photographs from the *From the Same World* series 2018/19.

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