

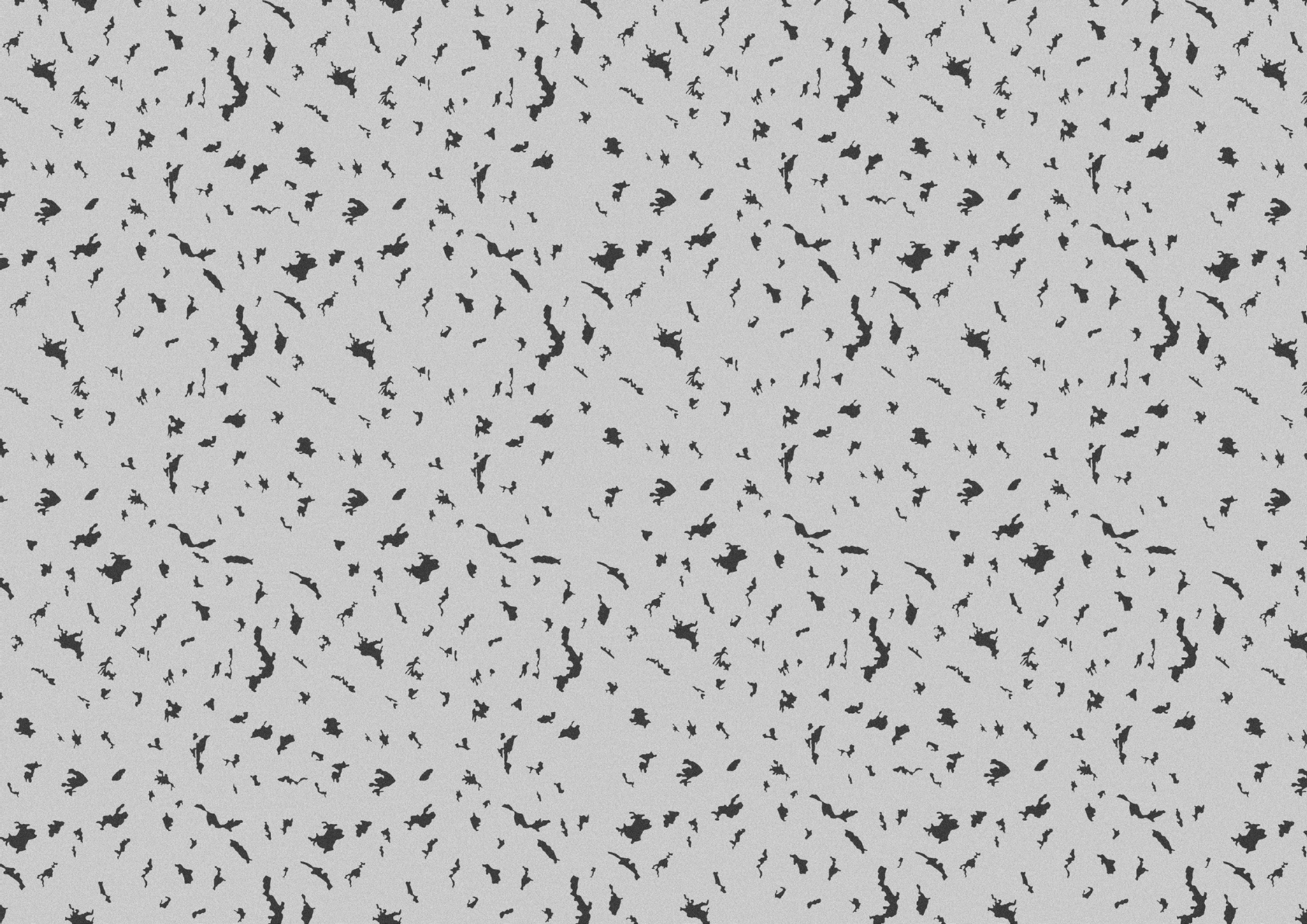
SHADOWLANDS

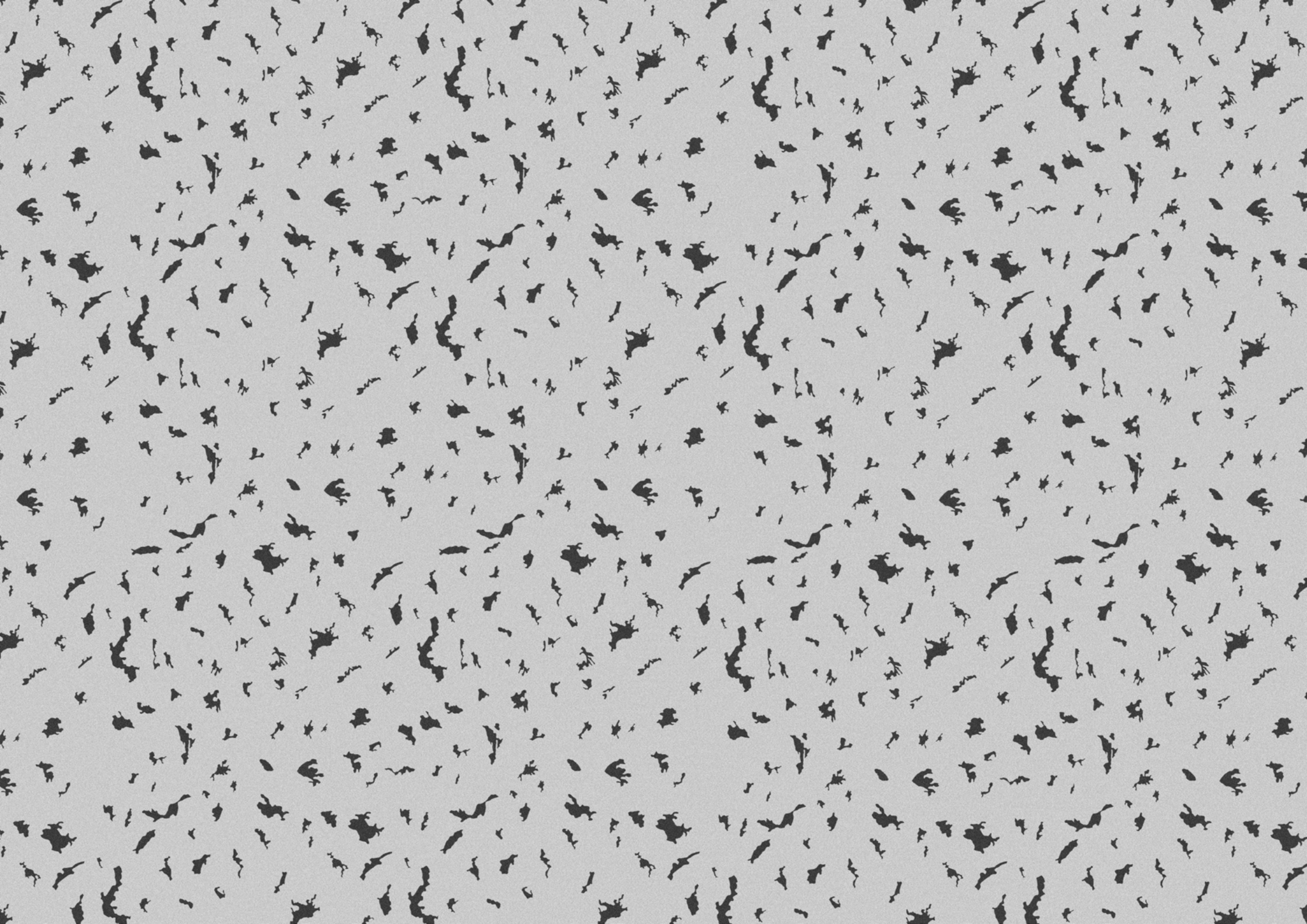
A SEARCH FOR THE UNSEEN

TORI MOK • 2019 • SCHOOL OF ART & DESIGN

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE
MASTER OF DESIGN (MDES)







ABSTRACT

Beneath the quotidian world is a parallel universe of dim and shapeshifting forms. They are easy to overlook, difficult to see, and mesmerising to behold — like black holes collapsing, pulling into themselves an infinity of lost fragments. Here, on a journey to challenge the perceptual limitations of my habituated ways of seeing, I have searched for the unseen and discovered visual failure. This work is a collection of the strange curiosities and souvenirs I have unearthed in flipping my world over, hunting for darkness, and wandering through the Shadowlands.

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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 published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the Acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tori Mok', with a stylized, flowing script.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Behind this project is the unseen magic of many who have helped me on my way. My deepest thanks goes to:

My supervisors Sue Jowsey and Andrew Denton, for all the time and effort you've put into guiding this project to completion— helping me to see and unsee when I needed to. Thank you for your kindness, and for always believing in my work.

AUT, for granting me the Research Masters Scholarship (Art & Design) to cover the fees for this degree. I am truly honoured and grateful for this privilege.

All the AUT staff and technicians who have assisted me in some way — you are all amazing at what you do.

Tara, Tessa and Dillon for your patience, laughter and friendship. You show me wonderful new things every day.

My incredible parents, for all the love, support and understanding you've shown while I immersed myself in another world. Thank you for always being there for me.

Finally I thank the Lord for being my compass, ever guiding me through light and shadows.

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A NOTE ON THE TEXT

This exegesis contains a shadow text that runs parallel to the main text in a side column. It is a supplement to the official content and provides another layer of meaning. The shadow text contains the ‘unseen’ ideas, forks in the road, leaping-off points to new places, speculations, and unresolved thoughts from this research — extending my web of exploration.

This document is an interactive PDF that contains hyperlinks. Some of them cross-reference related content across pages, and others link to additional content documented on my research blog — creating a non-linear experience. To allow for easy navigation between pages, clicking on the page number of any page will navigate back to the previous view. To ensure all links are accessible, download the PDF and view it with Adobe Acrobat.

Citations and footnotes are also found within the side column, but these are directly related to the main content and are indexed numerically unlike the shadow text. (See Key to the right).

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How might a speculative¹ photographic practice employ shadows to disrupt visual perception, in order to critique seeing and open up new ways of perceiving through dwelling with the unseen and unknown?

The visual world is an ever-changing collection of things limited only by its curator. This thesis narrates a personal journey to open up new ways of perceiving through a speculative exploration² of what is unseen. I have used shadows as a conceptual lens in my search for alternative visual landscapes — the Shadowlands of seeing.³ In order to subvert the mundane, my creative practice merges the photographic with other image-making methods to capture the shadows found in my everyday world. Through this shadow hunt I encountered cyclic themes of discovery, loss, and failure as the cornerstones of perception, suggesting the notion that to see more fully is to see less through embracing the elusiveness of the visual. This enabled me to reflect on the perceptual blindness engendered by routine seeing, and establish a wider ongoing dialogue on the relationships between perception and the unseen.

This exegesis has three parts. In part 1 I have developed a contextual framework, examining philosophical notions of shadow as the condition of visual perception. Underpinned by the German fable of Peter Schlemihl, the shadow embodies all that is overlooked, mysterious and wonderful, suggesting the unseen as an integral part of seeing and being.

Part 2 establishes the design of my research. The cabinet of curiosities serves as a methodological framework for reclaiming shadows. I have developed an experimental photographic practice consisting of wandering, hunting, archiving, and fragmenting shadows,

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1. speculative | **'spekjulətɪv** | adj. 1: engaged in, expressing, or based on conjecture rather than knowledge

The second definition of speculative is “(of an investment) involving a high risk of loss,” something highly relatable to the paths this journey has taken. Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “Speculative,” accessed May 2, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/speculative>.

2. I have defined my research as speculative, drawing on the ideas of speculative design developed by industrial design and education duo Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby. Here creating speculatively focuses heavily on imagining fictional worlds that provoke dialogues about possible futures, and the outcomes of such a practice can be thought of as the props for these worlds – as with my search for the Shadowlands. Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2013), 92

3. a conceptual framework that defines what is seen by what is left unseen (the shadows), the Shadowlands is a mysterious space for speculation and emotional engagement. See [contextual review](#)

creating a storehouse of image-based curiosities. Disrupting the image through a layering of methods and mediums, I have explored shadows in various ways in order to reimagine my everyday.

The final part of this exegesis documents my wandering journey through the Shadowlands and what I found there.

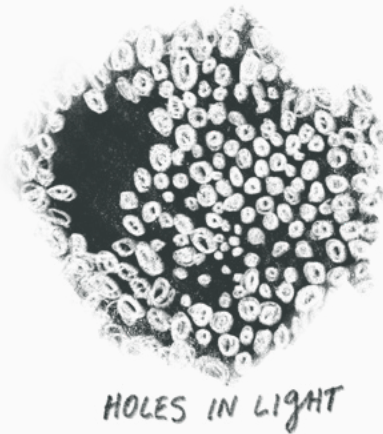


FIGURE 01. Tori Mok, Visualising Shadow as Light Holes, 2019, sketch.

THE UNSEEN

This research defines the unseen as integral to the fabric of the visual environment, woven through the everyday⁴ in ways and places that are deeply entwined with the nature of visual perception. Using visual and conceptual metaphors, this project reflects on the everyday unseen through a speculative study of shadow. Drawing on multidisciplinary contexts to illuminate aspects of the unseen, I have considered the shadow as a portal to an area of perception marked by uncertainty, failure, and ultimately the experience of wonder. Delving into its dark doors, we might begin to unravel the vast realm that lies beyond the seen and known.

To set off with a mere shadow feels much like beginning with nothing.

Examining shadow from a scientific standpoint, art historian Michael Baxandall defined the phenomena as literal holes in space created by gaps in light photons.⁵ In this sense a shadow is also an absence of sight, providing an ideal metaphor for the unseen. Its darkness makes the shadow a negative value within societies structured around the presence and value of light.⁶ Embodying the unseen, shadows are not only the “dregs” of light but the dregs of the everyday.⁷ Routine surroundings depleted of novelty, trivial things overlooked through familiarity and boredom— shadows are found everywhere on the peripheries of vision. +

Adelbert von Chamisso’s classic German novella *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* (Peter Schlemihl’s Miraculous Story) is a striking illustration of this relationship to unseen shadows and their place in the everyday. A 19th-century morality tale originally written for children, it spread into general popularity for its thought-provoking ideas on the valuing and devaluing of

4. In this research, I have used “everyday” to refer to the things and places that support daily life – the quotidian and mundane. Norman Bryson uses the term rhopography to describe visual works of this kind: “Rhopography (from rhopos, trivial objects, small wares, trifles) is the depiction of those things which lack importance, the unassuming material base of life that ‘importance’ constantly overlooks.” Norman Bryson, “Rhopography,” in *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (London: Reaktion Books, 1990), 61.

5. Michael Baxandall, *Shadows and Enlightenment* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 2.

6. Victor I. Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 8; Barbara Maria Stafford and Frances Terpak, *Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2001), 67.

7. Stafford and Terpak, 67.

the human shadow.⁸ In the story, Peter Schlemihl is a young man who possesses a “beautiful, beautiful shadow” he never acknowledges for all his focus on physical splendours, and willingly sells his seemingly worthless shadow in return for infinite wealth.⁹

In doing so, Peter exemplifies what art historian Norman Bryson explored in an essay on the overlooked objects of the everyday. Bryson suggested that everyday vision is like an automatic screening and scanning of the world. Easily attuned to focus on heroic moments rather than the mundane, it falls short of the wonder and “constant surprise of things seen for the first time.”¹⁰ In the pursuit of novelty and attention, Peter fails to attend to his own world just as in the rush of everyday life the world recedes from our field of vision. It becomes background noise, blurring out into shadows in our consciousness much like the unrecognisable subjects in Alexey Titarenko's photographic series *City of Shadows*. (Fig.2)

By selling ostensibly ‘nothing,’ Peter soon discovers that he had something, for without a shadow his life becomes miserable and isolated.¹¹ The overlooked shadow becomes not only substantial but priceless, for what is existence without its shadow? In a speculative art theory book *A Short History of the Shadow*, Victor Stoichita touches on Peter Schlemihl's tale while noting that although shadows are themselves an absence of physical substance, they signify the presence of something other than themselves.¹²

Framed another way, shadows embody the loss or lack of seeing but leave traces that lead to new ways of perception, and in this way, I have used everyday shadows as a starting point for visual engagement. As with Peter, what is lost propels the search for something deeper.

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FIGURE 02. Alexey Titarenko, *Untitled (City of Shadows)*, 1991, gelatin silver print. | *City of Shadows*, by Russian photographer Alexey Titarenko, documents the effacing of individual identities during the collapse of the Soviet Union. I think to some degree these kinds of shadows exist everywhere, in our minds, our surroundings, in sight, in sound.

8. Stoichita, 169.

9. Adelbert von Chamisso, *Peter Schlemihl* (Project Gutenberg (2007), 1861), 31, accessed Jan 19, 2019, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/21943/21943-h/21943-h.htm>.

10. Bryson, in *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting*, 65.

11. von Chamisso, 35.

12. Stoichita, 45.

MYSTERY & WONDER

In this sense, a shadow's negativity is also its source of potential. Literary scholar Marina Warner suggests that in being but a trace of the thing itself — therefore incomplete — shadows provide the space for imaginative engagement as "...the beholder fleshes out the image in the light of personal knowledge and fantasy..."¹³ The capacious darkness of shadows is an open-ended invitation to question and promptly invites mystery, uncertainty and vulnerability into the picture. +

Japanese author Jun'ichirō Tanizaki praises these qualities of the shadow, which for him are the source of its value. In this train of thought, Schlemihl gave up the meaning and beauty of his life in parting with his shadow. Likewise, Tanizaki observes that the world continues to lose shadows as well-lit and clearly visible spaces and things are increasingly valued. He believes that the clarity of light in excess comes at the expense of the wonderful mystery that shadow offers.¹⁴ ++

Thus without a patch of darkness to follow him around, Schlemihl still found himself displaced in the light and failed to become 'somebody', much to his surprise and dismay.¹⁵ In studying the phenomenon of uncertainty and error, journalist and author Schulz notes that it is the dark patch of doubt, not the feeling of knowledge, that gives rise to the imagination: "...the doubt of curiosity, possibility and wonder."¹⁶ "The ability to live comfortably in the presence of mystery and the absence of certainty"— in other words, the space of a shadow—is a space of becoming.¹⁷ Tanizaki echoes this sentiment in his poetic writings on the value of

+ IT IS AN INTERESTING PARADOXICAL NOTION,
SUGGESTING THAT EMPTINESS IS A NECESSARY
CONDITION FOR BECOMING SOMETHING.

++ THIS IS INCREASINGLY TRUE AT A TIME WHEN
THE WORLD FEELS MORE ACCESSIBLE THAN EVER.
I SOMETIMES FIND MYSELF CONFLICTED OVER
WHETHER TO SEARCH FOR THINGS AT THE SWIPE OF A
FINGER. I ONCE OVERHEARD SOMEONE VOICE THESE
THOUGHTS PERFECTLY, OBSERVING THAT FOR ALL THE
GRATIFICATION OF THE INTERNET, LIFE BEFORE IT
SEEMED MUCH MORE EXCITING. WHILE IT OFTEN MEANT
BEING IN THE DARK, IT WAS NOT KNOWING EVERYTHING
THAT ALLOWED THE MIND TO FANTASISE AND SPECULATE,
CREATING MAGIC OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

WHAT IS CLARITY? PERHAPS THERE IS CLARITY FOUND
IN MYSTERY. SHADOW SEEMS TO BRING WITH IT
SILENCE, AND SO WHAT (APPEARS TO) LACK VISUAL
CLARITY COULD PROVIDE CLARITY IN ANOTHER SENSE.

13. Marina Warner, "Darkness Visible," CABINET, 24 (2006-7), accessed Oct 30, 2018, <http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/24/Warner.php>

14. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, trans. Thomas J. Harper and Edward G. Seidensticker (New Haven, CN: Leete's Island Books, 1977), 42.

15. von Chamisso, 43; Stoichita, 173.

16. Kathryn Schulz, *Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error* (New York: Ecco, 2010), 319.

17. *Ibid.*, 329.

shadow. The way it hides, evoking mystery and withholding definitive knowledge as opposed to the all-seeing clarity of light, is not a fault but its essence and virtue. Shadows inject into mundane emptiness the “depth and richness like that of a still, dark pond.”¹⁸ This idea penetrated my practice with a challenging negotiation between seeking out the overlooked and shrouding the everyday in mystery, aiming ultimately for the space between discovery and revelation.



FIGURE 03. George Cruikshank, The Man in Grey Seizes Peter Schlemihl's Shadow, 1827, engraving for Peter Schlemihl.

PERHAPS SHADOWS COULD BE A WAY TO SLOW DOWN TIME?

MAYBE SHADOWS ARE A WAY TO ESCAPE FROM THE NOISE
OF THE WORLD - A BIG BLANKET TO SHIELD LIGHT AND
SOUND, IN ORDER TO SIT ALONE WITH ONE'S THOUGHTS?

18. Tanizaki, 12-3.

SHADOWLANDS

This idea leads to the conception of a shadowland of seeing. Defined as the “indeterminate borderland between places or states,” the Shadowlands is a realm of the unseen, a terrain defined by uncertainty.¹⁹ Here on the threshold things don’t fit neatly into boxes, nor necessarily meet expectations. To explore this space of the unseen is to take off the “opaque glasses of assumption” and open our eyes and minds to wonder, for it is through not presuming to know that we can open up to the world and truly discover it.²⁰

Thus shadow brings mystery to the visual, and so opens the way to wonder. To wonder is both to feel amazement and to feel doubt, to recognise that there is more than meets the eye. As Warner suggests, the shadow’s loss of visual certainty engages the senses in the act of completing. It is a vessel for the imagination: darkness made visible.²¹ To see a shadow for all that it entails is to flip a switch and enter a new world, disrupting the visual everyday and accessing another more extraordinary dimension of the environment.

This way of seeing is transformative and powerful. I believe it is the ability to perceive the world, not as it seems but as it could be, that makes the world meaningful. Shadows can function as a visual tool to show us another way of seeing the world. Conceptual artist Daniel Buren stated: “the visual tool is no longer a work to be seen... but is the element that permits you to see or behold something else.”²² Through an image-based exploration of shadow, my work dwells in this space, beholding incomplete visual fragments in order to provoke wonder. As Schulz suggests, answers invariably shrink the world; to wonder entails surpassing the

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FIGURE 04. Christian Boltanski, 7 Bougies - les ombres (in 7 parts), 1987, oxidized copper, wire, tin, clay, aluminium, candles and wax.

19. Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “Shadowland,” accessed May 2, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/shadowland>.

20. Stephen Pattison, *Seeing Things: Deepening Relations with Visual Artefacts* (London: SCM Press, 2007), 227.

21. Warner.

22. “Daniel Buren: One Thing to Another, Situated Works,” Lisson Gallery, accessed May 1, 2019. <https://www.lissongallery.com/exhibitions/daniel-buren-one-thing-to-another-situated-works>.

boundaries of what is known, suspending disbelief and engaging in self-doubt that opens one up to the world and the infinite stories within it.²³

With wonder, shadows come alive. This happened when Peter Schlemihl's neglected shadow assumed a life of its own, appearing to wander off in search of its original owner. Similarly, the shadow projections created by artists Christian Boltanski and Ralph Kistler are larger than life. Boltanski's work features portable, 'pocketable' models that grow and take on another dimension in shadow form. (Figs.4&7) Kistler uses cheap everyday objects that create magical shadow worlds, spaces of immersion and encounter with the imagination that are entirely another dimension from the one that holds the plastic trinkets. (Figs.5&6) Like Schlemihl these installations give symbolic and literal presence to shadows — and that is where they truly begin to become something more. Suddenly what was nothing is everything.



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FIGURES 05 & 06. Ralph Kistler, *Cuentos Chinos* (Chinese Stories), 2009, overhead projectors, microcontrollers, motors, mixed media. | The world on the walls strikes an interesting contrast to the mechanical one below.

23. Schulz, 169.

24. Stoichita, 200.

25. Ralph Kistler, "Cuentos Chinos @ Kade Kunsthal Amersfoort, Netherlands," Subtours, accessed May 3, 2019. <http://www.subtours.com/cms/node/75>.

HUNTING, CATCHING & LETTING GO

Losing ourselves in and being held captive by the world of shadow, we find ourselves on a journey of shadow chasing. Peter Schlemihl does this quite literally as he spots his detached shadow wandering in a desert and scrambles after it in an attempt to reclaim this priceless, now elusive part of his life.²⁶ Likewise, this research seeks mystery and wonder in the everyday through the creative process of shadow hunting: a disruption of seeing through seeking out unseen curiosities.

On catching a shadow, what does it reveal? When Schlemihl pounces on a runaway shadow he is simultaneously thrown backwards in a magnetic-like repulsion, unable to seize control while able to pursue.²⁷ In wondering about the world, we also wander around in it, and this process is an end in itself. Ephemeral and shifting, shadows provide a way of connecting that does not control. In an anthropological study on lines, Tim Ingold compares this process to wayfaring: the act of finding one's way as opposed to navigating, which entails travelling to set destinations.²⁸ This draws a parallel to predetermined seeing versus seeing defined by shadow.+ Ever a mystery, shadows are simply fragments of a much larger whole. These clues, which I have collected in image-fragments, lead us onward in an ever-evolving journey of (un) seeing.

Ultimately with every shadow found there is another left behind. Art historian and critic James Elkins suggests that the shadow is the essence of seeing, contemplating how visual perception is largely incomplete like pinpricks of stars in the night.²⁹ The unseen is the realm in which visual perception happens, and to see is to simultaneously not see — to lose

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FIGURE 07. Christian Boltanski, Untitled (Les Bougies, Lessons of Darkness), [detail], ca. 1985–1989, figurine made from cut oxidised copper sheet, aluminium bracket. | Stoichita notes how Boltanski's figurines evoke the Grey Man collecting Peter Schlemihl's shadow. I find it also resembles Cruikshank's engraving. Stoichita, 1997, 201.

26. von Chamisso, 78.

27. Ibid., 79.

28. Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (London: Routledge, 2016), chap.3, ProQuest eBook Central.

29. James Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 206.

something else. All we really know are shadows: “a great deal of our world around us is blank without our noticing,” and yet “when we begin to notice them, we also notice how little we can ever see.”³⁰ +

Tanizaki would delight in this, for to him this is where the richness of life comes from: “If light is scarce then light is scarce; we will immerse ourselves in the darkness and there discover its own particular beauty.”³¹ To love the shadows is to empathise with the world and delight in it, and paradoxically it is through shadows that we also discover light. As Schlemihl discovers, shadows are half the world, perhaps more. We can see and find light only because we can also be blind and in the dark. Thus this wayfaring journey leads us in a perennial cycle of give-and-take, discovery and loss, seen and unseen. Every moment in time presents a new and constantly shifting perception of the world, and in this kaleidoscope of perception, we grasp only fractions at a time.



+ PATTISON WRITES HOW WESTERN SOCIETY IS VERY MUCH BUILT AROUND THE VISUAL AND THE OPTIC HAS BECOME COMPLACENTLY UBIQUITOUS AS CLARITY ABOUNDS IN THE VISUAL DOMAIN. IT FEELS MUCH MORE ENCOMPASSING AND INDEPENDENT THAN IT REALLY IS, FOR THE OPTIC IS JUST ONE LEVEL OF SENSORY ENGAGEMENT INTERTWINED WITH MANY OTHERS AND ONLY ONE MODE OF KNOWING ENMESHED IN A COMPLEX PROCESS OF PERCEPTION. IN UNDERSTANDING THIS DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP WE CAN THEN CONSTRUCT A CONCEPT OF SEEING BASED ON ITS LIMITS, DEPENDENCIES, AND CONNECTEDNESS IN THE SENSORIUM - AS A PART OF A BIGGER PICTURE. THIS RESEARCH IS BUT A FRAGMENT. PATTISON, 26.

I THINK OF SEEING IN TERMS OF WHAT I SEE BUT THE ACTUAL PROCESS OF SEEING—A FEELING YOUR WAY AROUND— HAPPENS IN A LIMINAL SPACE BEFORE THAT. THE UNSEEN SHOWS HOW SEEING IS A JOURNEY.

30. Ibid., 96, 63.

31. Tanizaki, 31.

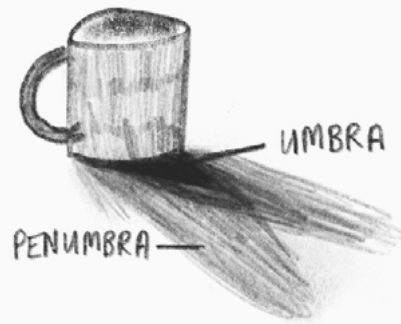


FIGURE 08. Tori Mok, Umbra and Penumbra, 2019, sketch.

LIKE THE SPECTRUM BETWEEN UMBRA AND PENUMBRA, THE UNSEEN IS NOT BLACK AND WHITE BUT SHADOWY SHADES OF GREY.

PERHAPS THE UNSEEN GIVES US A CHANCE TO REFLECT ON OURSELVES (AND THE OTHER) WHEREAS LIGHT EASILY BECOMES A DISTRACTION (AS TANIZAKI BELIEVES), AND THE GREATEST FORM OF UNSEEING IS WHEN WE BECOME OBLIVIOUS TO THE UNSEEN AND SO OBLIVIOUS TO OURSELVES.

THE KALEIDOSCOPIC

The land of shadow has the potential to open up a dynamic world of the everyday unseen in ways that beckon us to explore it. That a shadow can be lost is the central premise of Schlemihl's story, one that has fascinated its readers for centuries and points to the role shadow plays in shaping the world beyond the physical.³² As the shadow that is tied to our feet, the unseen is integral to the world like a shadow attached to it. It is there we discover the fragmented experience of perceiving the world, an ongoing process of groping, wondering, seeing and falling short. This paradigm of the shadow led to the realisation that everyday seeing happens in the process, not the end result. It is the act of perceiving—the negotiation with the unseen— that defines what it is to see, and the vastness of perception transforms the most mundane into a kaleidoscopic array of possibility.

These ideas, entwined with mine, have supported curiosity-driven interventions through a landscape of shadows. These contexts scaffold this research, opening up paths to explore a range of image-making methods that instigate discovery and engagement with the conceptual and material aspects of shadows. Through a series of conceptual shadow studies, my practice has formed a framework for visually engaging with the unseen in the everyday, and finding a different way to see the world.



32. Stoichita, 170.



FIGURE 09. Tori Mok, Seeing through Shadow, 2019, sketch.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How might a speculative photographic practice³³ employ shadows to disrupt visual perception, in order to critique seeing and open up new ways of perceiving through dwelling with the unseen and unknown?

METHODOLOGY: A CURIOSITY CABINET FOR HUNTING & COLLECTING

My practice has established a conceptual understanding of shadows as integral to being, as exemplified in Peter Schlemihl's morality tale. Turning to my own blind spots, I have carried out a shadow hunt in my visual surroundings. As I sought to reclaim the discarded and lost, I wandered into a domain of perception that both reveals and obscures. To understand this terrain, my methodology draws on the concept of the curiosity or wonder cabinet³⁴ as the embodiment of a personal, autoethnographic search for the unseen. Here I assembled my Shadowlands, making sense of the murky figures that lurked beneath the seen world "as in the analogical Wunderschrank, which constantly defers access to its precious holdings by means of locked doors, triggered drawers, and narrow passages tunnelling from shadowy pigeonhole to illuminated niche..."³⁵

This labyrinth housed my methods and practice as an eclectic collage of fragments underpinned by themes of searching, collecting, fragmenting and (re)framing. The displaced contents of a wonder cabinet are much like Peter's detached shadow — separated from their origin they take on new meanings left open to the imagination. This space beckons the

33. I have used photographs and experimental photographic methods as a means of creating conceptual understandings of perception. This work suggests alternate and imaginative ways of seeing, using some of Dunne & Raby's B list of speculative design keywords. (Fig.10)

34. Curiosity cabinets (also known by many German names, including Wunderschranke) were personal collections of a diverse nature limited only by the imagination of its curator. A sixteenth-century predecessor of the museum, they prompted rampant curiosity of the world with collections comprising a fusion of science and art, fact and fiction. By blurring boundaries and including the seemingly disparate, they are a place to speculate and form new ideas. The zealous pursuit of marvellous cabinet-collections was also one of obsessive and lavish consumption. In this sense the cabinet embodies a hunting mindset, demonstrating that to collect is to extract, remove, even steal or destroy as the Grey Man does to Peter's shadow. | Stafford and Terpak, 60, 148.

35. Ibid., 60.

beholder to participate in an interactive, theatrical performance as perception rearranges itself in endless ways.³⁶

At the same time, hoarding curiosities tempted me to uncover shadows almost to the point of destruction. Creating specimens of the Shadowlands, my speculative image-making consciously referenced the aesthetics of museum artefacts and scientific samples — props from another world.³⁷ These captured fragments, often viewed as isolated specimens, supported my pseudo-forensic approach to hunting for shadows. Like the Wunderschrank, my work has been a paradoxical fusion of wondering and compartmentalising, that enabled me to reframe seeing. Through the methods discussed below, I have established an archival storehouse of shadows, a cabinet of wondrous things that have enabled me to reimagine the everyday.

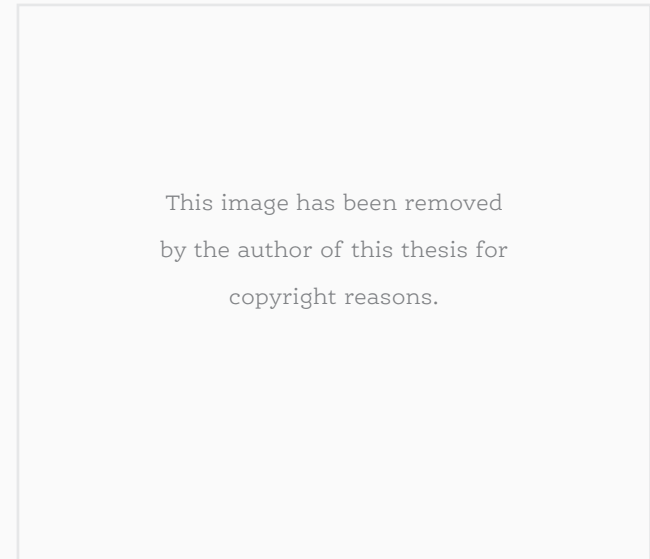


FIGURE 10. Anthony Dunne & Fiona Raby, A/B, [2013?]. | Speculative Design lives on the right.

RATHER THAN A LINEAR SERIES OF ITERATIONS, MY DISCURSIVE MUSINGS AND FINDINGS MINGLED LIKE THE CONTENTS OF A CURIOSITY CABINET, AS WITH THIS SHADOW TEXT. THIS OFTEN 'MESSY' PROCESS REFLECTS THE ELUSIVENESS OF BOTH PERCEPTION, OF KNOWING, AND OF RESEARCH.

36. Ibid., 6.

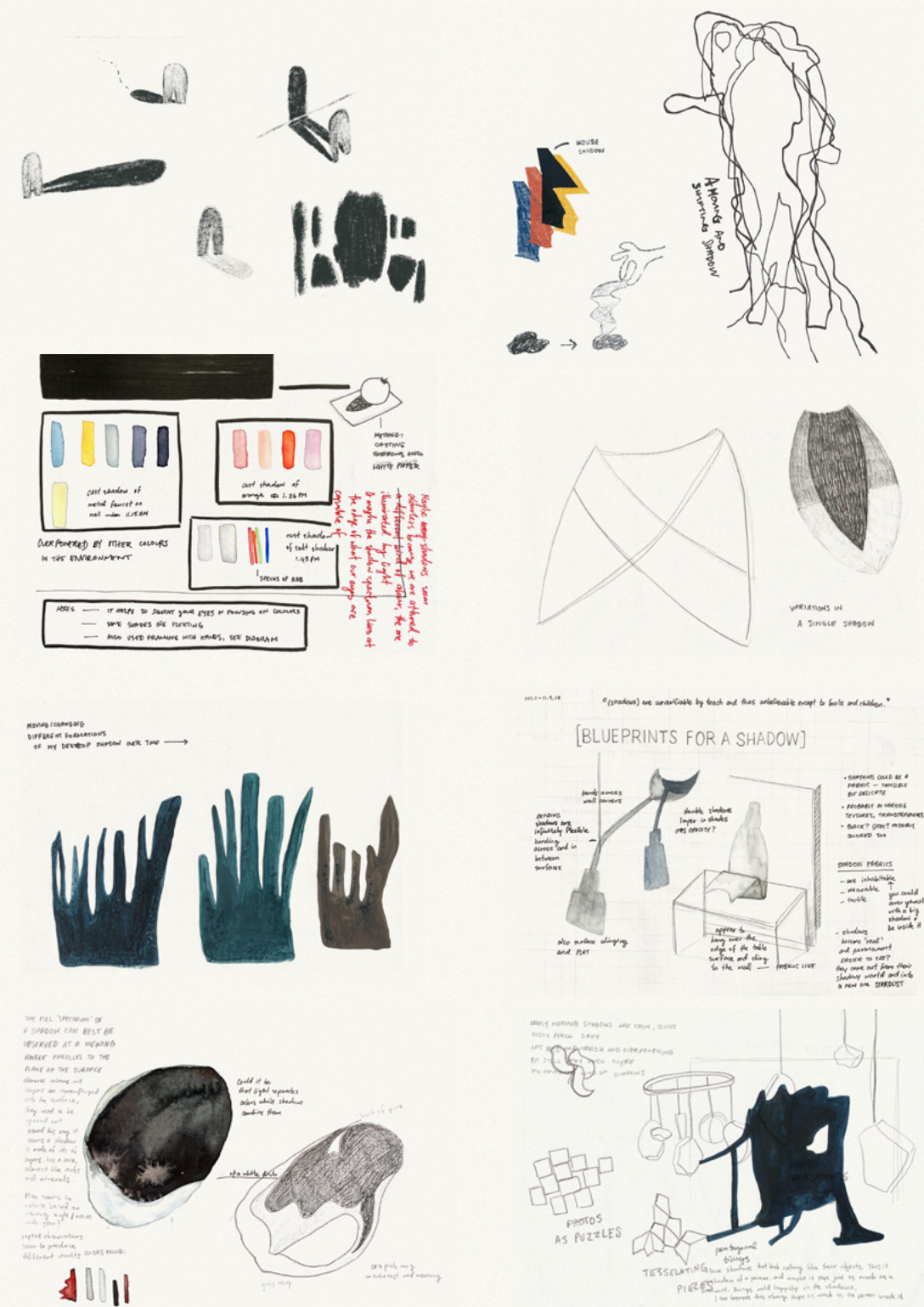
37. See [footnote 2](#)



FIGURE 11. Tori Mok, Field Notes Process, 2019, photograph. | I drew inspiration from both naturalistic and anthropological field journals.

FIGURE 12 (right). Tori Mok, Shadow Notes, 2018, drawings.

+ DRAWING ALSO PROVIDED A DIVERSION FROM THE PHYSICAL, GIVING THE IMAGINATION FULL REIGN. I COULD ILLUSTRATE CONCEPTS AND EXPERIENCES THAT EXTENDED BEYOND THE PURELY VISUAL. I COULD FOCUS ON ASPECTS OF SHADOWS THAT THE CAMERA COULD NOT EASILY CAPTURE, LIKE COLOUR AND SHADING NUANCES, OR FOCUS ON VERY SPECIFIC THINGS. IN BEING RICHLY SUBJECTIVE DRAWING ALSO FELT MORE PRECISE THAN PHOTOGRAPHY AT TIMES — IT CAPTURED THE FIELD WITHIN.



DIARISING WALKING
OBSERVING SKETCHING
SEARCHING - HUNTING
VISUAL / SPATIAL WANDERING SPECULATING

FIGURE 13. Tori Mok, *Fieldwork Methods*, 2019.

FIELDWORK

A diaristic practice enabled me to seek out and collect shadow curiosities, through experimental fieldwork methods that included walking, visual and spatial wandering, observing, and tracing. My journals accumulated the sketches, thoughts, samples and notes from these explorations, storing them for future inspection and contemplation.

Anthropologist Michael Taussig suggested that the field journal merges external and internal experience in order to reach “a world beyond...that does not have to be explicitly recorded and is, in fact, all the more complete because it cannot be completed.”³⁸ This process enabled me to record traces of my visual and spatial meanders through quotidian spaces, using drawings both observational and speculative. (Fig.12) Speculative image-making allowed me to explore and imagine alternative ways of seeing—an incubator-cabinet of ideas. +

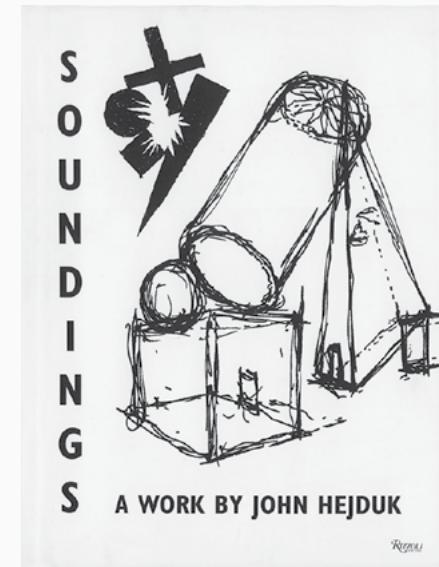


FIGURE 14. Hejduk, John. *Soundings*. Edited by Kim Shkapich. NY: Rizzoli International Publications Inc, 1993. Book cover. | Architect John Hejduk used speculative drawing in his creative process, incorporating drawing, photography, and collage to explore the poetics of architecture and its dependence on the imagination, creating insight into architecture's affective relationship with the world.

FIGURE 15 (on page 22). Tori Mok, *Shadow Trails*, 2018, paint sketch.

FIGURE 16 (on page 23). Tori Mok, *Shadow Trails 2*, 2019, photographs.

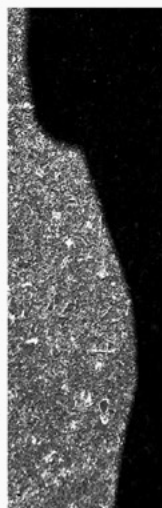
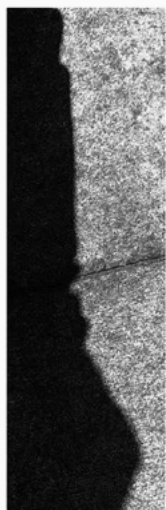
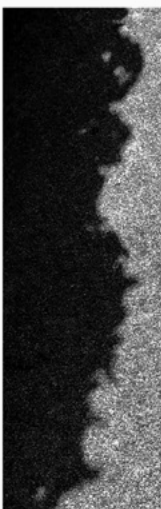
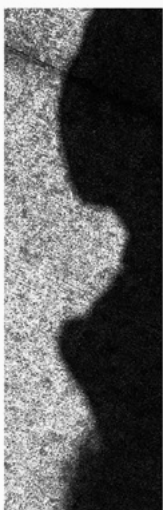
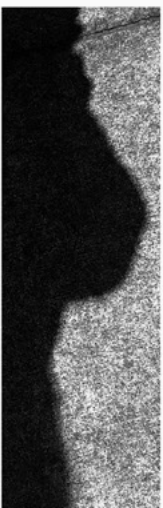
38. Michael Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This: Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely My Own* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 13.

IN PHYSIOGNOMY, SHADOW PORTRAITS WERE READ AS PREDICTORS OF THE PERSON'S
CHARACTER. SOMETHING ABOUT THESE OUTLINES
AND CONTOURS CONTAINS SPECIAL INFORMATION,
THE ESSENCE OF THE OBJECT.

THESE LINES ARE A SECRET LANGUAGE.
OR SPECIMENS.

BORDERS
TERRITORIES





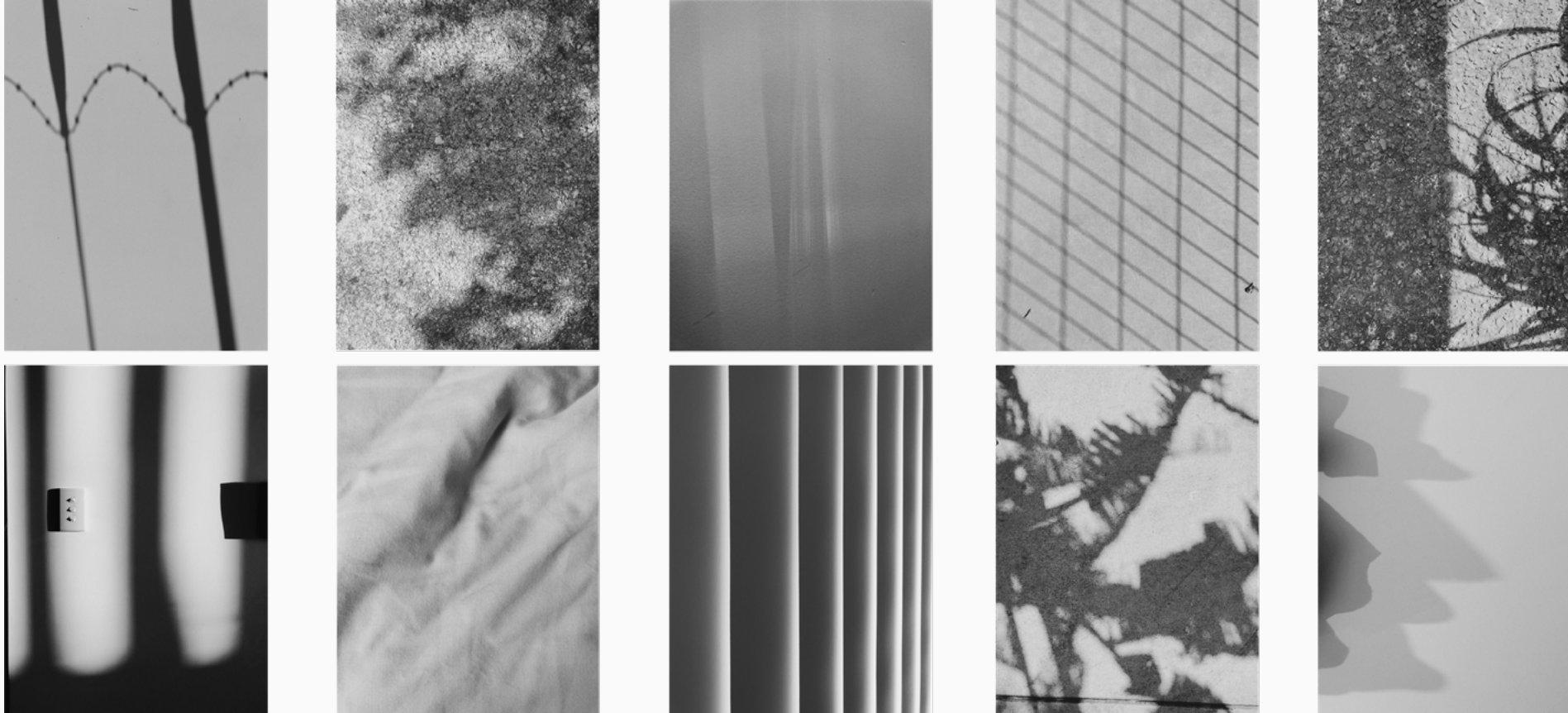


FIGURE 17. Tori Mok, *Collecting Light and Shade*, 2018, photographs.

IF PHOTOGRAPHS ARE LIGHT DRAWINGS, THEY ARE ALSO SHADOW DRAWINGS. IN THAT SENSE, THE CAMERA LITERALLY CAPTURES A SHADOW THROUGH ITS LENS AND IMMORTALISES IT IN ITS NEGATIVE. A REVERSAL OF BOLTANSKI'S MUSINGS ON SHADOW: SEE PAGE 73

COLLECTING PHOTO/VIDEO
 FRAMING CURATING SNAPSHOTS
 DOCUMENTING
 CAPTURING
 ORGANISING - CATEGORISING

FIGURE 18. Tori Mok, Archiving Methods, 2019.

SHADOW ARCHIVE

The snapshot proved a convenient tool for collecting, serving as my primary means of catching shadows as I encountered them. + Susan Sontag discussed photography's role as a form of collecting the world and constructing experience as we encounter it — a means of “note-taking.”³⁹ Through my snapshots and occasional short videos (moving snapshots) I filled my curiosity cabinet with visual notes of various kinds of shadows. Over time I accumulated an ‘archive of emptiness’ that served as a reservoir of working materials I could revisit and rearrange as needed. This personal curation is a limited view of the endless variety of umbra and penumbra, reflecting only the fragments I chose to assemble and the ways in which I interpreted them.

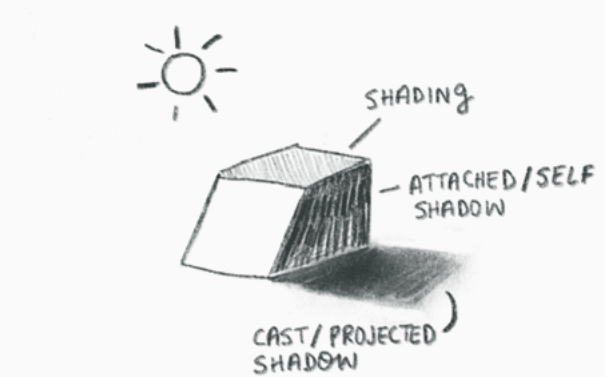


FIGURE 19. Tori Mok, Kinds of Shadow as Described by Michael Baxandall, 2019, sketch.

25

+ SNAPSHOTS ALSO PROVIDED AN INFORMAL WAY TO EXPLORE THE MUNDANE ENVIRONMENT AND SEARCH OUT ITS POINTS OF INTEREST THROUGH SHADOWS. HOWEVER BRIEF, THEY STILL REQUIRED STOPPING TO SHOOT AND CONSIDERING HOW TO DO SO.

FOR ME PHOTOGRAPHY IS BOTH ARTISTIC MEDIUM AND DOCUMENTING TOOL - IN THE CASE OF SNAPSHOTS, THE PURPOSE WAS TO RECORD.

39. Susan Sontag, On Photography (New York: Penguin, 1979), chap.6, Overdrive eBook.



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DOUBLE STORY HOUSE
@ 3:36PM

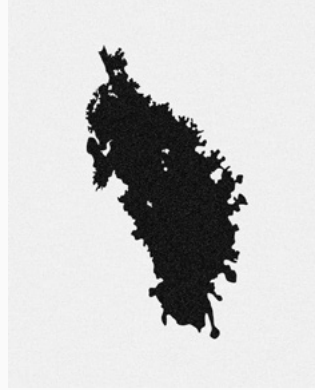




FIGURE 20 (opposite). Tori Mok, *Extracting (Process for An Archive of Emptiness)*, 2018, mixed media.

FIGURE 21. Tori Mok, *An Archive of Emptiness*, 2018. | Collecting was an instinctive process and satisfying process.



FIGURE 22. Tori Mok, *A Scattered World of Fragments*, 2019, photo collage.

FRAGMENTING

Pattison suggests that we see the world in fragments, the eyes merely picking up shards of detail in a given scene while the mind fills in the blanks with a bricolage of its own.⁴⁰ Vision is a constant exchange of fragments, and Roland Barthes believed that the fragment, being but a detail of the whole, has the ability to penetrate the subject rather than merely sweeping across in a broad gesture of completion.⁴¹ To perceive more richly it is necessary to pause and stray from the path.

Having captured shadows I extracted them, from their castors and contexts. Through this act of removal, they became fragments — embodiments of perception and its elusiveness. Barthes

40. Pattison, 28.

41. Roland Barthes, “The Third Meaning,” in *Image, Music, and Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 65-8. | This notion also applies to my struggles with photographic representation

DIGITAL / LASER / HAND
 TRACING CUTTING - DISSECTING
 VISUAL MEDIATING TRAILING JUXTAPOSING
 COLLAGING INTERVENING - DISRUPTING
 RE-ARRANGING RESITUATING
 SCATTERING

FIGURE 23. Tori Mok, *Fragmenting Methods*, 2019.

found fragments in film stills.⁴² In my photographic practice, I used images as snippets, traces of the things they portray. A key part of my visual process has been fracturing what seemed to be complete. Showcasing only pieces of the whole has revealed both a more dynamic perception and a less cohesive depiction. I dissected my world to discover entirely new images of scattered glimpses. (Fig.22) These kaleidoscopic arrays of pieces allowed me to continually rearrange my world as if each new construction was a cabinet of curious souvenirs — always missing something.



FIGURE 24. Tori Mok, *A Lens for All Occasions*, 2018, photographs. | An early experiment involved using common objects as optical devices. Shown here is a view through the lens, or shadows, of a fork.

29

FIGURE 25 (next spread). Tori Mok, *Dissecting Photographs* (*Shadows on a Windowsill & Bottles*), 2018, mixed media.

42. Ibid.





SHADOWS ON A WINDOWSILL



FIGURE 26. Tori Mok, *Shadows Adumbrated*, 2019, light and shadow projection.

IMAGE MAKING & DESIGN

Because photographs extract the split-second shards of moments, they have the ability to capture the otherwise unnoticed. While the act of seeing isn't still, I found that in pausing specific moments in time my photographs revealed unseen shadows. (Fig.28) In this way, photographic images reify the transient.

As a lens-based medium, photography captured my physical environment in ways that could be manipulated before and after the shot, in order to disrupt my habituated ways of seeing.

PHOTOGRAPHY LAYERING
 MIXED MEDIA
 PROJECTING HANGING
 GRAPHIC DESIGN 3D OBJECTS
 PAINTING PRINTING

FIGURE 27. Tori Mok, Image Making Methods, 2019.

Reworking my default photographic processes, I merged photography with methods such as diarising, drawing, tracing, fragmenting, object-making, and projecting. This included experimenting with the dimensionality of images as I translated intangible shadows into objects that I turned back into shadows. (Fig.26)

Working across mediums has offered a multilayered process of speculative image-making, which resonated with my thinking about perception. + Each method was a lens that enabled me to see and re-see the mundane.

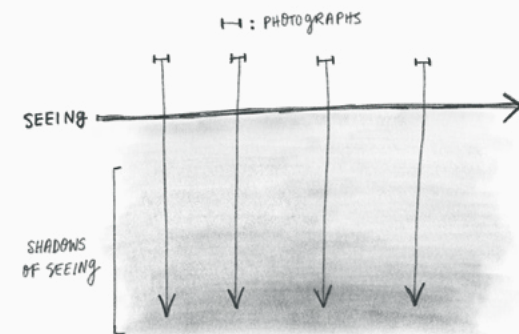
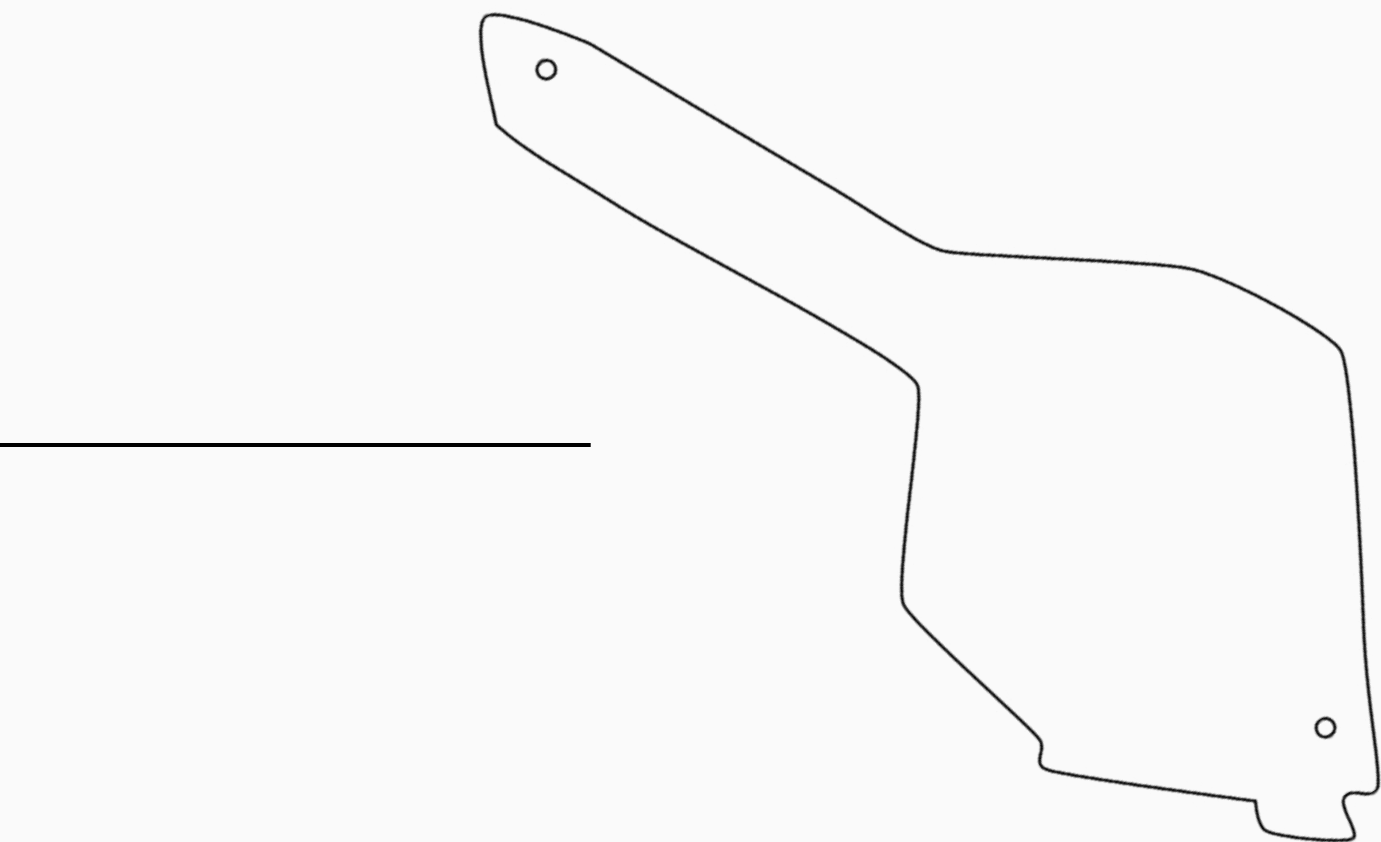


FIGURE 28. Tori Mok, Using Photographs to Catch Slices of Consciousness, 2018, sketch. | This idea led to an experiment with film stills.

+ AN EXAMPLE IS MY OVERHEAD PROJECTION WORK WITH TRANSPARENCIES, COMBINING THE PHOTO ARCHIVE, DIGITAL COLLAGE, GRAPHIC DESIGN, PROJECTION, AND PHOTOGRAPHY.

FIGURE 29 (next spread). Tori Mok, In and Out of Materiality, 2019, process.





DOCUMENTATION OF PRACTICE

37

Chapter I : Shadow Hunting
Chapter II : Failing to See
Chapter III : Shadows Unsolved

[SHADOW HUNTING]

FLIPPING THE WORLD OVER

I embarked on this project with the aim of uncovering the unseen in the everyday, that I might encounter another dimension of the visual world - the Shadowlands. In an age when technology continually reveals more of the world, I wanted to find the unfamiliar in the familiar and overlooked, to discover more by looking at less, and to bring a sense of fragility to the act of seeing and perceiving.⁴³

Searching for the unseen in the seen created a duality that I extended with shadow and light, leading me to wonder if there might be a right and wrong side to seeing. Visual artist and academic researcher Elinor Light suggests that “built into our cities, our imaginations, and our discourse are structures for seeing and not seeing the world.”⁴⁴ These “architectures of seeing” mean that perception is not an act we have complete freedom over.⁴⁵ Taking this idea I considered the way in which objects have fronts and back, tops and bottoms, insides and outsides — constructs that determine which parts are visible.

Pursuing this idea forensically, I flipped over and photographed the hidden undersides of various objects. (Fig.30) These were Shadow Dwellers, things often found in shadow — holding them up to the light revealed a familiar yet strange collection of artefacts. (Fig.31) The underside of seeing highlighted unimportant segments that were masked by object-relations. In the architectures of seeing, these nothings were also the foundations that kept objects standing, thus they were fundamental to the structure of the thing.



FIGURE 30 (above left). Tori Mok, Process: Flipping Seeing on Its Head, 2019.

FIGURE 31 (above right). Tori Mok, Shadow Dwellers: A Chair Leg, 2019, mixed media.

43. Here I am thinking particularly of the ease of illuminating, documenting and sharing visually, especially through photographs (smart devices), the internet and social media.

44. Elinor Light, “The Rhetoric of Visual Play: An Analysis of Postsubject Voice in New York City,” *Visual Communication Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (2017): 41.

45. Ibid.



FIGURE 32. Tori Mok, *Underneath: Initial Exploration*, 2018, photographs. | An early version of the series.

ARE THERE ONLY TWO SIDES TO SEEING? IT ISN'T
DUALISTIC...

HOW HAS THE IDEA OF A BACK OR BOTTOM OR WRONG
SIDE AFFECTED THE WAY WE SEE THINGS? HOW IS THIS
DETERMINED AND WHAT HAPPENS TO THINGS ON THIS
SIDE OF THE VISUAL SPECTRUM?

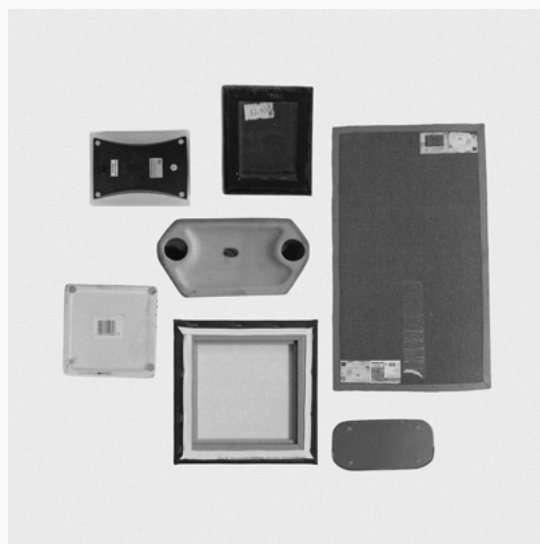
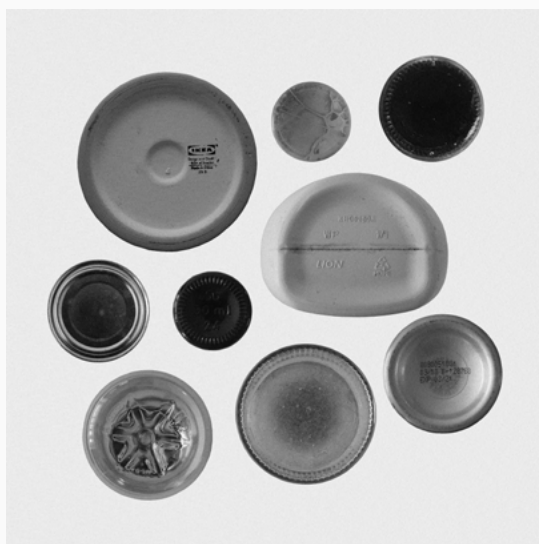
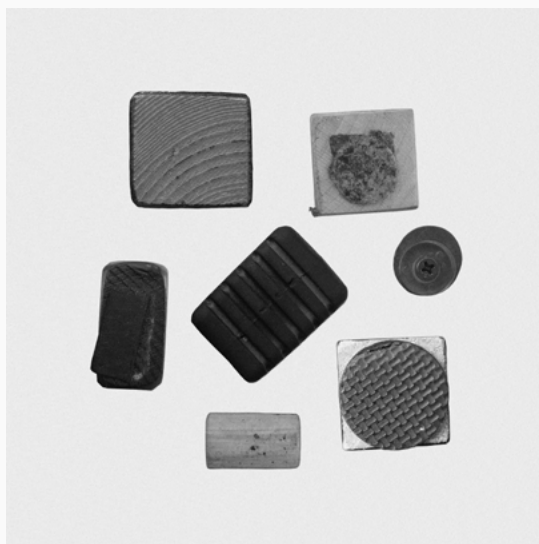
46. Bryson, in *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting*, 65.

47. Flora Lichtman, "Priming the Mind's Eye" (video), 2011, accessed Mar 28, 2019, <http://ec2-23-21-117-9.compute-1.amazonaws.com/video/02/23/2011/priming-the-mind-s-eye.html>.

Norman Bryson suggested that we often feel assured of what we are looking at and so scan rather than see.⁴⁶ In scanning we don't fully see things but pick out the parts that seem important, filling in the rest with an assumption of what is there. This draws an analogy to how the eyes function, constantly skipping around a scene collecting selections of data, so that much of the final perceived image is composed of mental guesses based on visual fragments.⁴⁷

Picking up and flipping over things was a novel experience, disrupting both seeing and the usual handling of the things. It brought the anticipation of discovery, creating a reverse guessing game to the mind's eye. Collecting the unassuming parts of objects invited me to complete the picture in a reverse way, using what was disregarded to trace the whole. Like Peter Schlemihl eyeing the glittering things in his world, Bryson suggests that we tend to focus on the novel, climatic or valuable.

FIGURE 33 (at right). Tori Mok, *Shadow Dwellers*, 2019, mixed media.



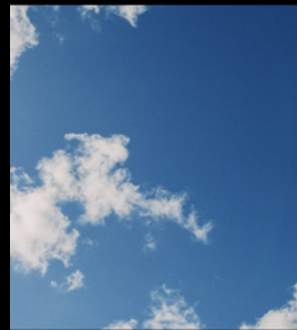


FIGURE 34. Tori Mok, Stills from a Dream, 2018, photographs.

SHADOWS CAUGHT

In flipping the world over, I uncovered metaphorical shadows of the visual world. That beneath my perception might exist a series of shadows evoked Alexo Titarenko's *City of Shadows*, where still frames transform passers-by into shadows. (Fig.35) I created a series of photographs exploring the mundane as one long daydream of things we physically see but don't fully comprehend. From this ever-moving timeline of sights, I extracted in-between moments like unnoticed frames in a film. These commonplace scenes formed tenebrous Titarenko-like shapes in my daily consciousness. (Fig.34)

My images exhibited an affinity with Roland Barthes' ideas on the film still as a fragment that subverts ordinary seeing and perception, in order to produce a more vivid meaning.⁴⁸ Each photograph was a pause, stilling seeing to lure out the penumbrae.⁴⁹ Like Peter Schlemihl my intent was to pounce on and take possession of perception's shadowy edges but herein lay my problem — could I still call them shadows if I had 'seen' them as images, in order to capture them?

48. Barthes, in *Image, Music, and Text*, 65. | Deleuze's theory of the optic image describes a similar method. For him, the optic image is a film scene that pauses the chronological in order to submerge the viewer in a singularly intense experience, like viewing a singular blade of grass rather than a field. | Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 46-48

49. penumbra | **pi' nambə** | noun (plural penumbrae | **pi' nambri**: | or penumbras) 1: the partially shaded outer region of the shadow cast by an opaque object. 2 a peripheral or indeterminate area or group. Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "Penumbra," accessed May 2, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/penumbra>.



I quickly realised that truly catching a shadow was far less straightforward than it had first appeared. If these were pieces of a larger landscape that I could recognise, they also offered me a sense of familiarity that made seeing too simple. Taking a photograph resolved the issue of the unseen because it provided a means to look and comprehend. While the static frame of photograph crops out, it also packages the world neatly into a viewpoint — limited yet seemingly definite. I found viewing photographs a form of breathing in the way that Elkins notes seeing is like breathing so that we assume it will be as simple.⁵⁰ Despite this, a shadow-image is never the whole story. As Elkins suggests, every photograph is only a version of something, and no amount of photographs could complete the puzzle, which is a completely fluid thing.⁵¹ I realised that the stilled image had only captured the surface and simplicity of the unseen, whereas seeing into shadows demanded that I go deeper into the unknown. While I had managed to pause the linearity of seeing, I also wanted to scramble it. Just as Peter parted with his shadow, I decided to separate the shadow from the owner in order that it might be lost and found again in new, mysteriously complex ways.

This image has been removed
by the author of this thesis for
copyright reasons.

FIGURE 35. Alexey Titarenko, *City of Shadows: Sredniy Prospekt*, 1992 (Crowd 3), 1992, gelatin silver print.

50. Elkins, 18.

51. *Ibid.*, 28.



A TOURIST OF THE SHADOWLANDS

With Shadow Dwellers, discovering the Shadowlands in my quotidian encounters with the world required breaking from Bryson's notion of visual scanning, where the eye constantly informs our assumptions about what is meaningful: "The enemy is a mode of seeing which thinks it knows in advance what is worth looking at and what is not..."⁵² With this idea, I decided to look at the shadows of my world. This involved practices that forced me to stare down at the ground, peer behind things and into corners in order to observe and record shadows and how they behaved. Just as Peter Schlemihl lost sight of his own shadow — figuratively at first, then literally — in his longing for worth, the familiar everyday is filled with things and spaces that remain unseen, that are forgotten or overlooked. These dark puddles embody the absence of value and meaning in my research, like the absence of light.

Documenting things in reverse, from the bottom up, was a strange notion. I saw the world by looking at the spaces things cast behind. + Here I was, archiving a world that challenged me with its elusiveness. I could not wholly grasp shadows with my visual notes, losing something in the translation and always falling short of knowing, even while transcribing the apparent.⁵³ In disconnecting shadows from the world, I was left with clues I couldn't decipher.

44

FIGURE 36. Tori Mok, *A Visual Wandering into New Places*, 2019, sketch. | This is like Tim Ingold's notion of wayfaring, which entails setting off on a meandering journey that feels its way forward rather than steering from one destination to another.

I EXPANDED MORE ON THE CONNECTIONS I FOUND
BETWEEN DRAWING AND WANDERING HERE

+ IF A SHADOW IS AN EMPTY SPACE, WAS I
DOCUMENTING NOTHINGNESS? CAN YOU RECORD NOTHING?

52. Bryson, in *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting*, 65.

53. See [page 60](#).

FRAGMENTS OF MYSTERY

I wondered what might happen if I could disrupt the photograph so that seeing became a process of wandering, wondering, collecting and re-connecting the fragments back together. Unpacking an archive of photographs (photographs I had taken over the past decade), I identified the shadow areas in each image and extracted them. (Fig.37) This involved dissecting and rearranging the shadow fragments, orchestrating them into new contexts that revealed the unfamiliar in the familiar. I immediately felt drawn to the idea of only using parts of a photograph to form an image. This was the perceptual process I was after: not taking things as they are, but fragmenting and reconfiguring in order to open up the visual world in different ways.

These pieces were, quite literally, the blind spots of my recorded world - my own City of Shadows. They resembled scraps, remnants, the lost parts of personal photographs. The array of shadow remnants I had discovered reiterated Elkins suggestion that the act of seeing shatters what it sees into infinite versions as time, space and emotion constantly evolve the experience of perception.⁵⁴ Pattison echoes this idea of an assembled seeing and notes furthermore that it is possible to “subvert the visually obvious in order to open up the wonder and instability of the visual.”⁵⁵



FIGURE 37. Tori Mok, Cutting Process, 2019. | Working digitally allowed me to speed up this lengthy process. This way I found extracting shadows quite relaxing — a curious notion.

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REMNANTS, OR SOUVENIRS? MAYBE ALL WE CAN SAVE
FROM OUR EXPERIENCES ARE SHADOWS...

54. Elkins, 38.

55. Pattison, 36.



FIGURE 38. Tori Mok, *Traces (An Early Iteration)*, 2018, mixed media.

My newly composed shadow collages formed their own rendition of what had been a carefully documented scene from my life. With fragments the possibilities of constructing anew are left open, as Pattison explains:

a certain openness can be more attractive and evoke attentive desire more successfully than complete representation. Incompleteness, shadows, darkness and hiddenness in an object create a kind of space which the human viewer can imaginatively inhabit. In making viewers work hard this way, images and objects create a space in the human mind and sensorium that engenders attachment. To pursue this thought haptically, space and hiddenness give viewers more to hold on to, and in working to grasp, they are grasped.⁵⁶

Examining these hiding places, I began to think of the visual world as a puzzle comprised of shadows. Stripped of all but darkness, they provoke the unknowing and questioning that Junichiro Tanizaki champions - suggesting that there is more to seeing than meets the eye.⁵⁷ The parts we cannot see show us what we have and what we've lost, and these sight-holes give us the reason to look, search, hope, and dream.



FIGURE 39. Tori Mok, *The Left Behind (Fragmenting Process)*, 2019, video. Here I used an image taken from a farewell visit to a relative's home.

PERHAPS THE DARK SPACES OF THESE DOCUMENTED MEMORIES HOLD THE THINGS I SEEK TO GRASP FROM THEM, OR THINGS I FAILED TO GRASP...

BEING A PHOTOGRAPHER OFTEN MEANS EXPERIENCING LIFE THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS. 'DESTROYING' MY PHOTOGRAPHS THIS WAY DISRUPTS MORE THAN JUST THE IMAGE AND MY PERCEPTION OF IT. IT QUESTIONS WHAT I DO (DID).

56. Ibid., 134.

57. Tanizaki, 19.

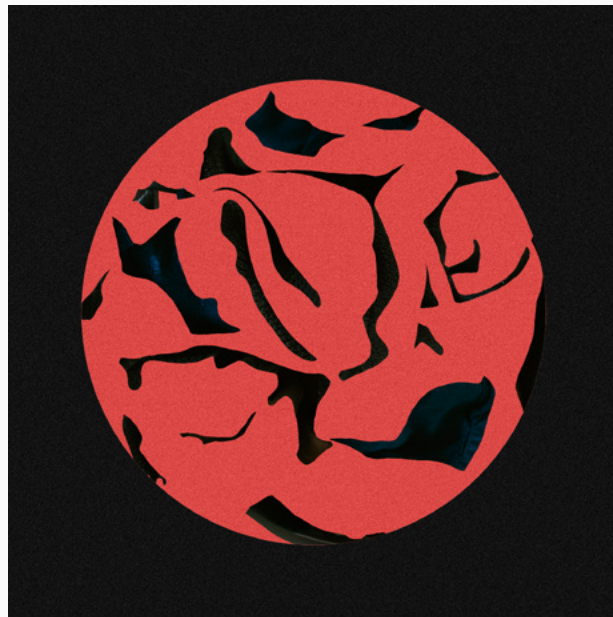
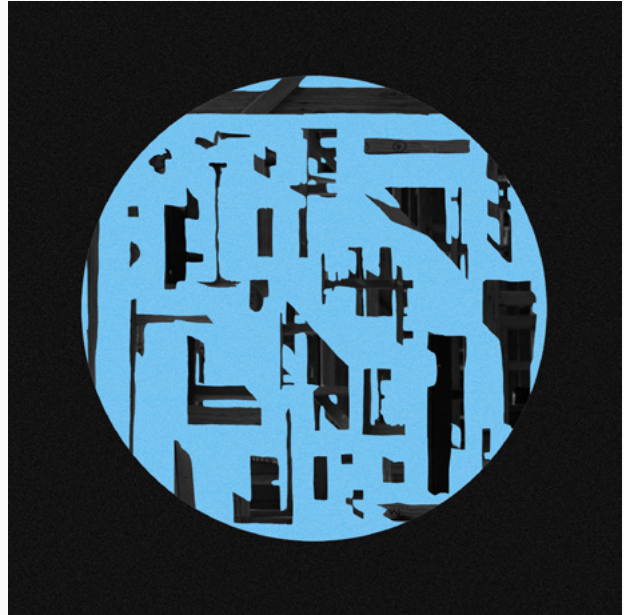


FIGURE 40. Tori Mok, *Traces: A Visual Eclipse*, 2019, mixed media.



VISION SHATTERED

Examining historical accounts of shadow, Victor Stoichita described the ancient Roman legend of a maiden who traces her lover's silhouette on a wall as a token of remembrance before he leaves for war.⁵⁸ In this way, the shadow signified both the loss and presence of its castor.⁵⁹ Following this notion, the loss might produce something new in the way that a shadow might reveal to us something else about the world. I decided that a shadow could act as an optical device, enabling me to see the world through it like a lens. Like X-ray glasses, it might reveal the shadowy dimension of the everyday, offering me a means of moving in and out of the Shadowlands.

FIGURE 41. Tori Mok, Shadow Lenses, 2019, laser cut board.

IS A SHADOW REALLY 'EMPTIER' THAN A LIT SPACE?
MAYBE, LIGHT IS A LACK OF SHADOW PARTICLES RATHER
THAN THE OTHER WAY AROUND. IF A SHADOW IS A
BLACK HOLE THAT ABSORBS ALL COLOURS INTO ITSELF
AS PHILOSOPHER EUGENE THACKER SUGGESTED, THEN
WOULDN'T THAT MAKE SHADOW INFINITELY FULL OF THE
STUFF OF LIFE? EUGENE THACKER, "BLACK ON BLACK,"
THE PUBLIC DOMAIN REVIEW, ACCESSED MAR 15, 2019.
[HTTPS://PUBLICDOMAINREVIEW.ORG/2015/04/09/BLACK-ON-BLACK/](https://publicdomainreview.org/2015/04/09/black-on-black/)

58. Stoichita, 11.

59. Ibid., 15.





FIGURE 42. Tori Mok, Using a Shadow Lens, 2019.

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+. THUS A DOUBLE MEDIATION. THE CAMERA ALSO HAS ITS OWN VOICE MAKING THIS A MORE COMPLEX NEGOTIATION.

+. THE IMAGES PRODUCED WERE BUT FRAGMENTS FROM MY EVERYDAY, PERSONAL GLIMPSES OF A SCENE. BEING INTERPRETATIVE, WHAT THESE LENSES HAVE TO OFFER DEPENDS UPON THEIR USER.

PERHAPS SEEING IS, NOTHING MORE THAN GLIMPSES.

Using the forms of found cast shadows, I cut these shapes into black frames to create Shadow Lenses, viewing devices for seeing. (Fig.41) I was immediately attracted to the cutout forms in these frames — they reminded me of Michael Baxandall's notion that shadows are spatial holes in light particles.⁶⁰ This too was a type of loss: an absence of light, and at the same time it's prerequisite. Here they reduced my ability to identify what was before me (loss), and in doing so created glimpses of another world. Each lens shape created a unique delineation of the sight in front of me, a multitude of ways in which to frame and understand the same subject.

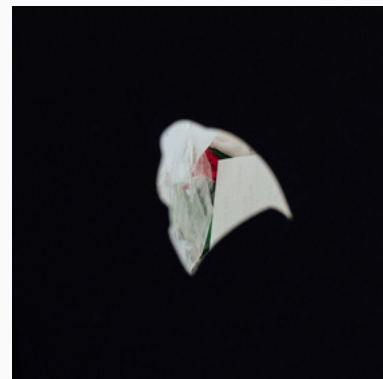
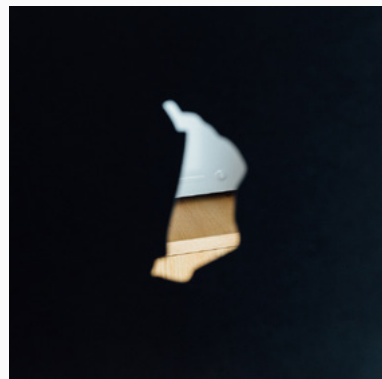
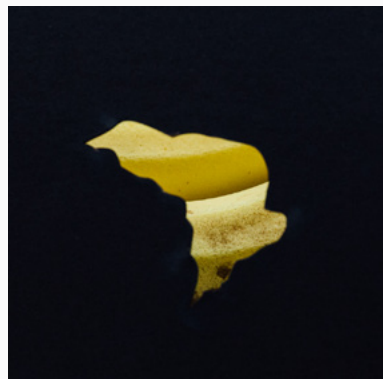
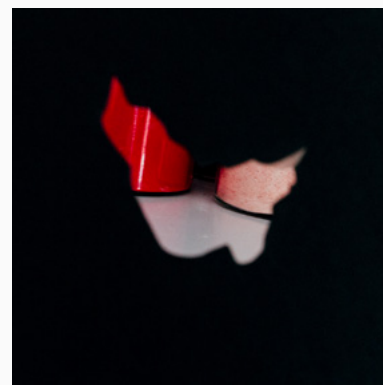
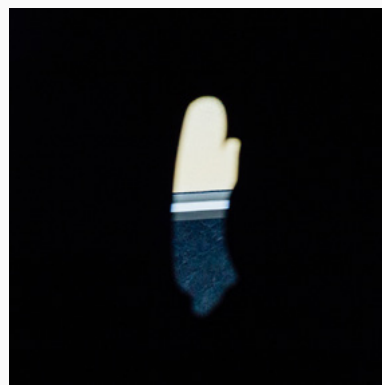
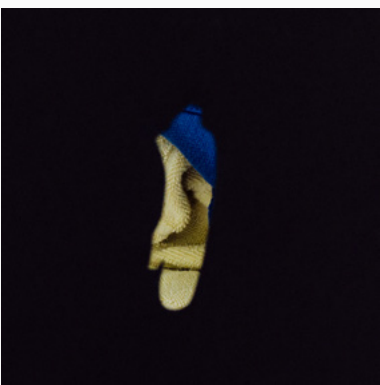
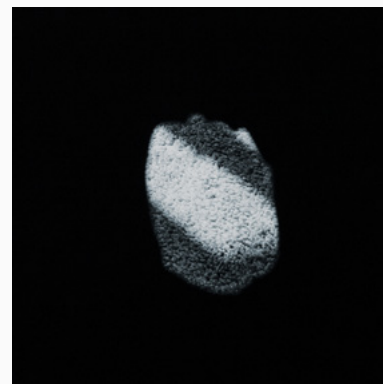
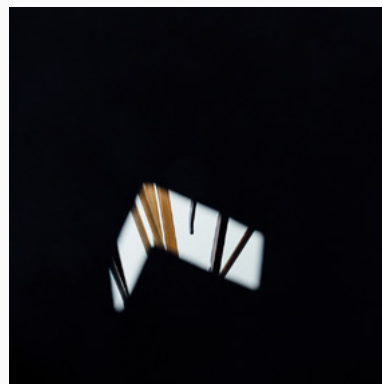
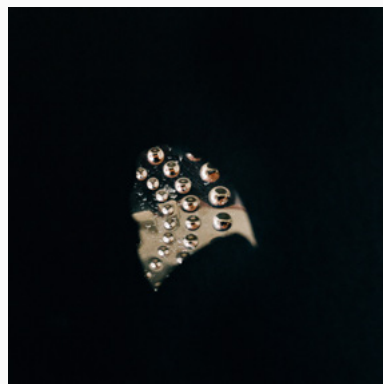
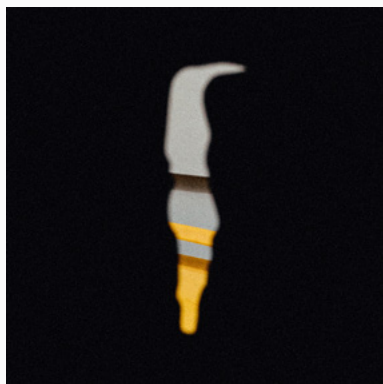
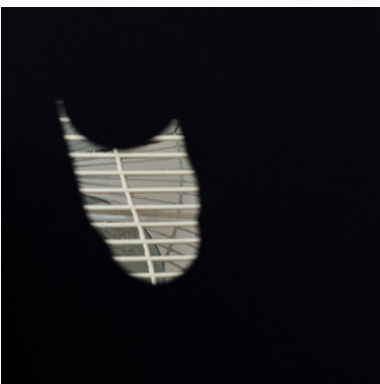
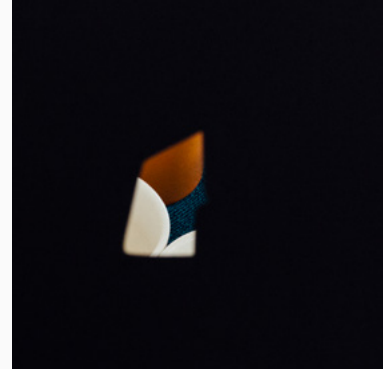
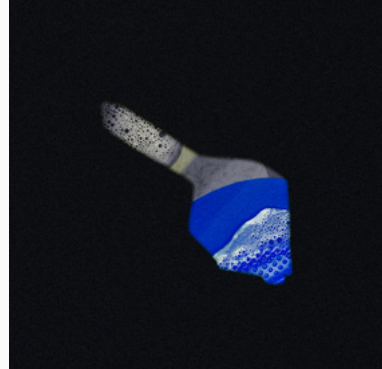
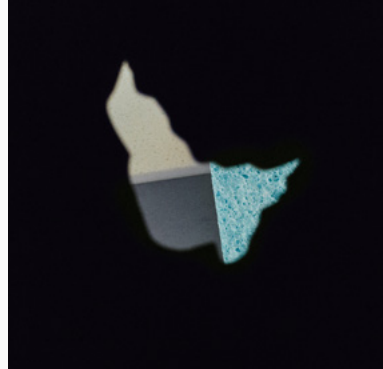
The lenses made seeing difficult and strange, requiring a conscious deciphering of the mystery of recognition - similar to Elkins description of vision as "... more like the moments of anxious squinting than the years of effortless seeing."⁶¹ The shadow lenses challenged me to approach the world without assumptions — to wander around without knowing what I might see except by peering and squinting.

I visualised this process through a series of images created with shadow lenses. Using them as photographic framing devices, I placed them over the camera lens, dissecting photographs prior to their creation. + This generated an array of abstractions, compressing distances, flattening depth, and merging the quotidian into shards of texture and colour. +

60. Baxandall, 2.

61. Elkins, 18.

FIGURE 43. Tori Mok, Shadow Lens Vignettes, 2019, photographs.





PRESERVING SHADOWS

From the leftover pieces of the cutting process came the inverse of the shadow lenses. Intriguingly, these specimen-like Objects were tangible manifestations of shadows. (Figs. 44&45)

The notion of shadow as a distinct object was interesting to me. If shadows were holes, a condition of non-existence, then here they were taken from one dimension into another, where they became substance — a literal interpretation of turning nothing into something. + I was reminded of a sentiment concerning shadows expressed by art scholar Barbara Maria Stafford, that they were “...unverifiable by touch and thus unbelievable except to fools and children.”⁶² Did the materiality I’d achieved make shadows more real? ++

Strangely, in doing this I was like the grey man who buys Peter Schlemihl’s shadow, removing it from his feet before pocketing it.⁶³ My objects were collectable, pocketable, and detached from their owners. In my quest to enter the Shadowlands, I had instinctively sought to preserve the shadows I’d found, to keep them and take them with me everywhere. It seemed for the moment that I had succeeded in catching shadows.

Trying to perpetuate the Shadowlands had left me with abstract silhouettes I found visually, tactually and conceptually provoking - a reified collection of visual dregs. As Marina Warner believed a shadow, embodying loss, commands its viewer to recreate the image, so these new and strange objects became a world both filled (with material substance) and emptied (of contextual meaning).⁶⁴ +++



FIGURE 44 (opposite left). Tori Mok, Objects: Unpainted on Wall, 2019, laser cut wood. | These were specimens of the elusive species I had recorded earlier in field notes.

FIGURE 45 (opposite right). Tori Mok, Objects, 2019, laser cut board.

FIGURE 46 (above). Tori Mok, Shadow Puzzle, 2019, laser cut board.

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+ HOWEVER PHYSICAL SUBSTANCE IS NOT THE ONLY KIND OF SUBSTANCE...

++ AND YET THE REAL OFTEN SEEMS AT ODDS WITH THE IMAGINATIVE....

+++ NOW IT WAS POSSIBLE TO TRIP ON THEM, WHICH FELT MORE REAL IN A SENSE. SO CAN WE TRUST THESE OBJECTS MORE THAN INTANGIBLE SHAPESHIFTERS? TURNING A SHADOW INTO SOMETHING PHYSICAL SEEMED APPEALING, EXCITING, BUT DID I TRAP OR KILL IT BY TURNING IT INTO A SPECIMEN? I HAD SUCCEEDED IN CATCHING A SHADOW, OR SO IT SEEMED. WAS THAT A GOOD THING?

62. Stafford and Terpak, 78.

63. von Chamisso, 32.

64. Warner.



FIGURE 47. Tori Mok, *A Curio for Hiding, Keeping and Displaying*, 2019, photograph.

[FAILING TO SEE]

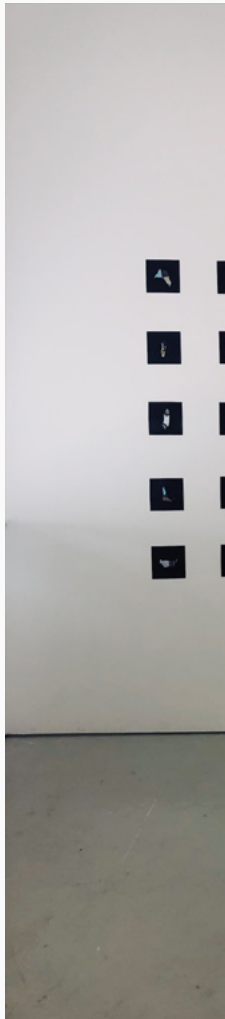




FIGURE 48. Tori Mok, Shadow Studies in Exhibition, 2019. | On Display: Shadow Lenses, Shadow Dwellers, Traces and Objects.

SHADOWS ON DISPLAY

Bringing all the pieces together in a rudimentary exhibition allowed me to gain invaluable external perspectives. (Fig.48) The feedback was insightful, highlighting themes I had overlooked, and articulating ideas and issues which I had not been able to clearly define. +

Instinctively I had documented scientifically and structurally, gridding and compartmentalising my displays as specimens. However, I realised that capturing the magic of shadows in these vignettes had inadvertently stilled the world. + My frozen shadows lacked the wonder I was seeking to portray. The challenge I faced was that unlike an image, seeing is not fixed and readily controllable. Elkins suggested that no two moments of perception are ever the same, and Pattison echoed this saying that vision “takes time to assemble” and so “our incremental creation of representations is historical.”⁶⁵ Time and change are key factors both in seeing and the similar transient experience of shadows, something I had not fully realised until this point.

I had suddenly become aware of how necessary it was to address the temporal nature of seeing in order to capture its shadowy ephemerality, like Tim Ingold’s wandering line.⁶⁶ Ingold’s wayfaring routes embodied a magical movement in a way that a fixed line didn’t. It had its own way, an element of surprise, mystery, and liminality that spoke to the Shadowlands.

If the photographic was my primary means of expressing my experiences, how could I capture a shadow and keep it alive? I wondered if it might be possible to meander around the limits of photography, photographing shadows while allowing them to move in a different way.

+ FOR ONE PERSON’S PERCEPTION CAN ONLY SEE SO FAR
AND IN A VERY SPECIFIC WAY, AS I LEARNED FROM
THIS SESSION.

+ AS OPPOSED TO THE WAY OF SEEING I WANTED TO
PORTRAY: AN EVOLVING, KALEIDOSCOPIC JOURNEY, MUCH
LIKE RALPH KISTLER’S MAGICAL SHADOW WORLD OF
MOVING OBJECTS.

I REALISED THAT THIS DIGITAL DOCUMENT WOULD BE
PAGES OF GLARING LIGHT COMING FROM A SCREEN. I
DECIDED TO ADD SHADOW BY OVERLAYING A TINT OF
GREY ON EVERY PAGE - IT’S HARDLY NOTICEABLE, BUT
IT’S THERE.

65. Pattison, 28-29. 28-29

66. Ingold, chap.3.

SHADOWS LOST

In catching shadows I had lost something, for in trying to see the unseen I had concomitantly failed to see. Every new discovery brings with it a loss, and at this point, I understood my work not only as a collection of discoveries but a narrative of loss as well. My found shadows became proof of the holes in my vision, and each found fragment pointed out the incompleteness of my perception. This was exactly the space I needed to be. To use Pattison's words — through trying to grasp at the unseen, I had to let myself be grasped by it.⁶⁷

Consequently, the purpose of collecting shadow is not to observe and know; rather, reclaiming the lost fragments of seeing created a space in which to dwell in not knowing. Reflecting on the various collections I had gathered, I was drawn to the strange forms of the shadows I had traced and extracted from photographs, both as objects and collages. In these fragments, I had found a “City of Shadows” comprising what was lost to my own perception.⁶⁸ Engaging with these, created tension as I felt rather than saw something held within these images. Perhaps these were the portals to the Shadowlands.

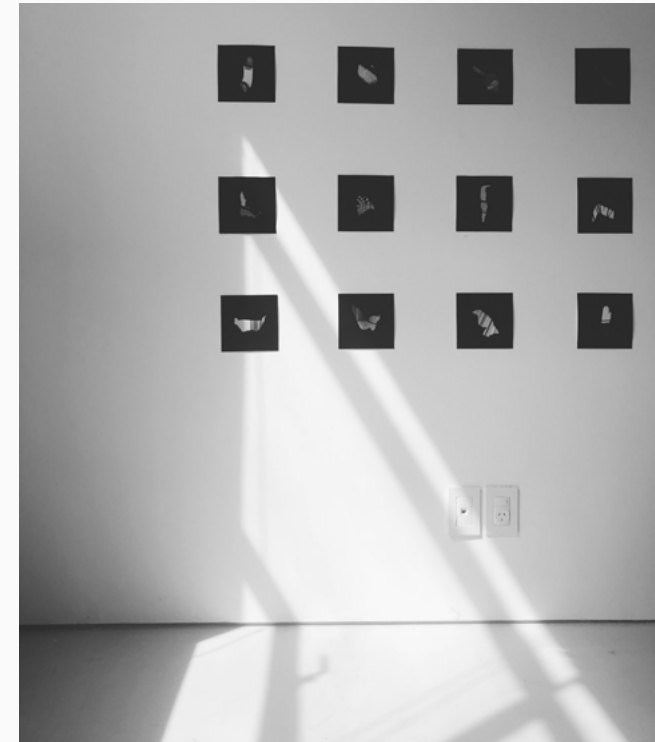


FIGURE 49. Tori Mok, Exhibition in Shadow, 2019. | Tanizaki would have found brightly lit images too readily seeable and easily understandable. Tanizaki, 19.

67. Pattison. 134

68. Alexey Titarenko, City of Shadows, 1992, gelatin silver print series, accessed May 3, 2019, <http://www.alexeytitarenko.com/cityofshadows/>.



FIGURE 50. Tori Mok, *Thinking in Circles (Traces & Objects)*, 2019.

[SHADOWS UNSOLVED]

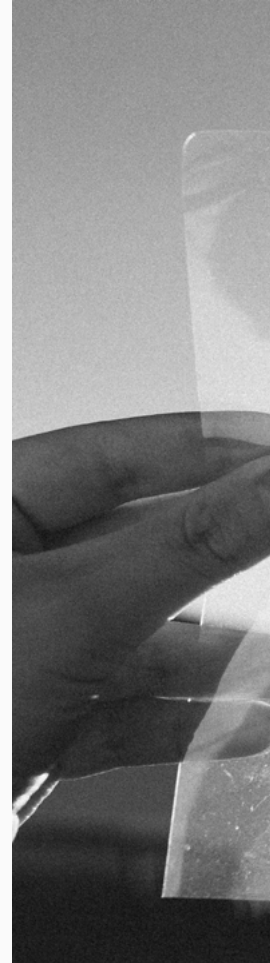




FIGURE 51. Tori Mok, *Against the Sun*, 2019. | These remind me of photo negatives.

KALEIDOSCOPIC PUZZLES

Like Schlemihl's chase for his shadow, my shadow hunt ultimately led me from the open, brightly lit space of the plains into the dense and dark woods.⁷⁰ In order to let my shadow-clues lead the way, I had to unfix them from the starkness of the page. Rather than printing on opaque paper, I tried printing my images of shadow traces on transparency film. (Fig.51)



FIGURE 52. George Cruikshank, *The Pursuit of the Shadow*, engraving for Peter Schlemihl.

70. von Chamisso, 78.

FIGURE 53. Tori Mok, Floaters, 2019, photograph.

WHERE THE DARK MEETS THE LIGHT, AND THE PAST
MEETS THE PRESENT - MAYBE THAT IS THE CENTRE OF
EXISTENCE.



Printing on transparency suspended the shadows in time and space. This allowed them to act as optical devices, functioning as filters through which to view the world, similar to the shadow lenses I had made. Here instead of morphing my immediate view, they adumbrated⁷¹ the present with my past, and this interplay of time brought to mind Pattison's idea of perception as historical.⁷² (Fig.53)

Like photographic lens filters, each slide could be used in conjunction with other filters to create the final, albeit incomplete picture. + Shifting the pieces around to create new forms revealed an ever-transforming puzzle in which the pieces never completely fit. To put one thing into place — to reshape the fragments of seeing — opens up a gap somewhere else, and I felt this was the perfect kind of metaphor for the unseen.

The shadows I had caught and stilled had a transience of their own.



FIGURE 54. Tori Mok, CMYK Slides Hanging, 2019, photograph.

I ALSO EXPERIMENTED WITH THE IDEA OF COLOURS IN SHADOW, [CLICK TO VIEW](#)

71. adumbrate | '**adambreit** |verb. 1: represent in outline; indicate faintly 2: foreshadow (a future event), 3: overshadow. Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "Adumbrate," accessed May 2, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/adumbrate>.

72. Pattison, 28.

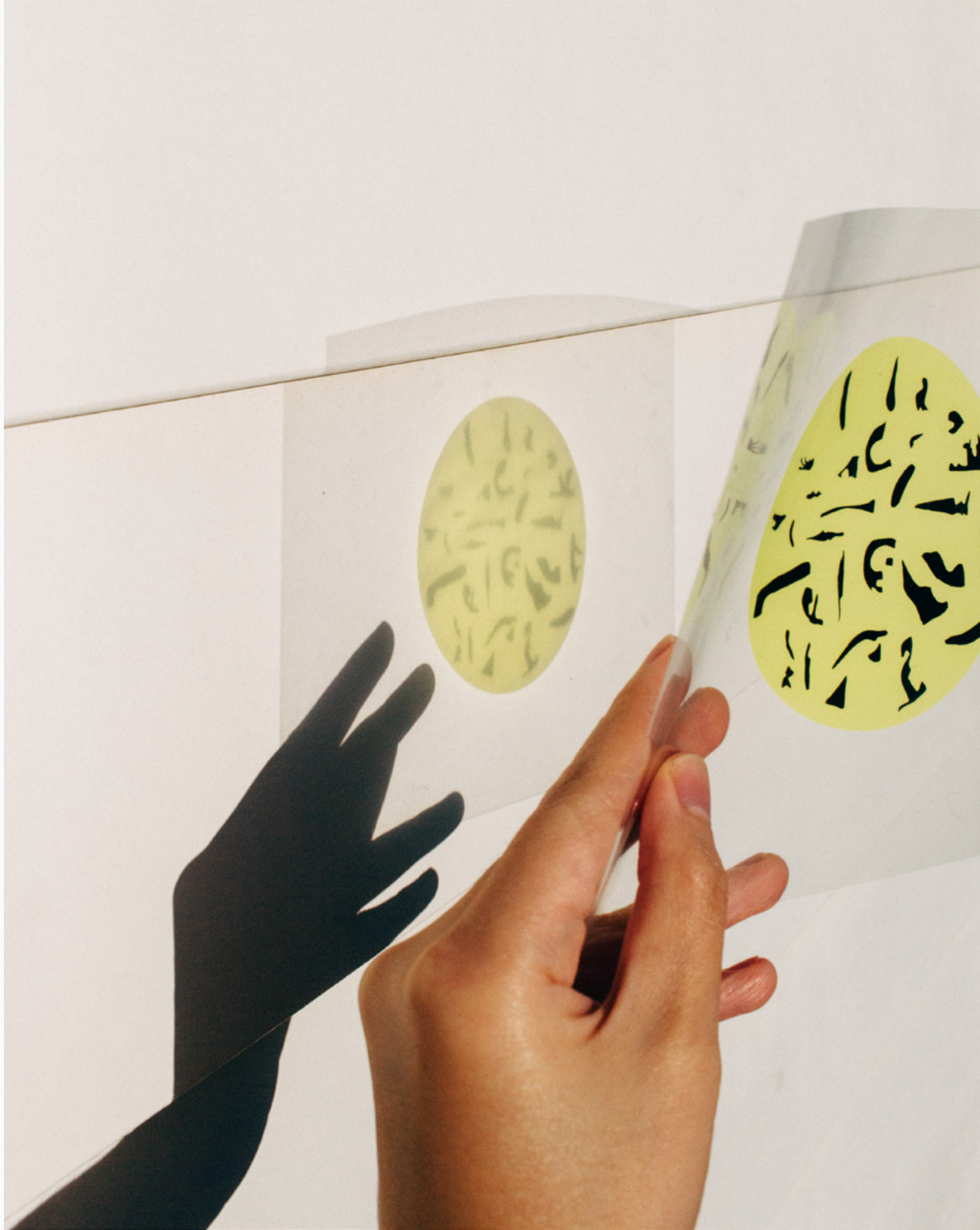


FIGURE 55. Tori Mok, *From Print to Projection*, 2019, photograph. | Is it possible to really analyse the shadow, when it seems to transcend the physical?

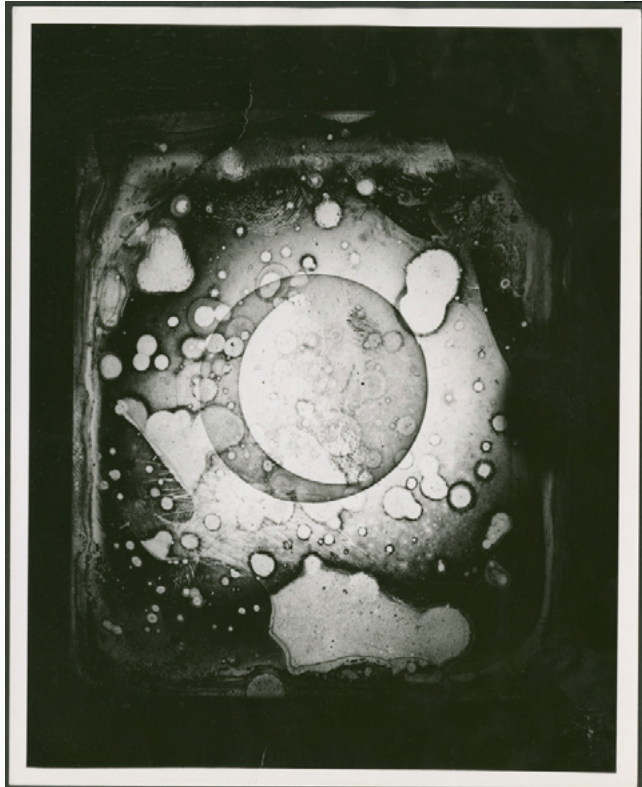


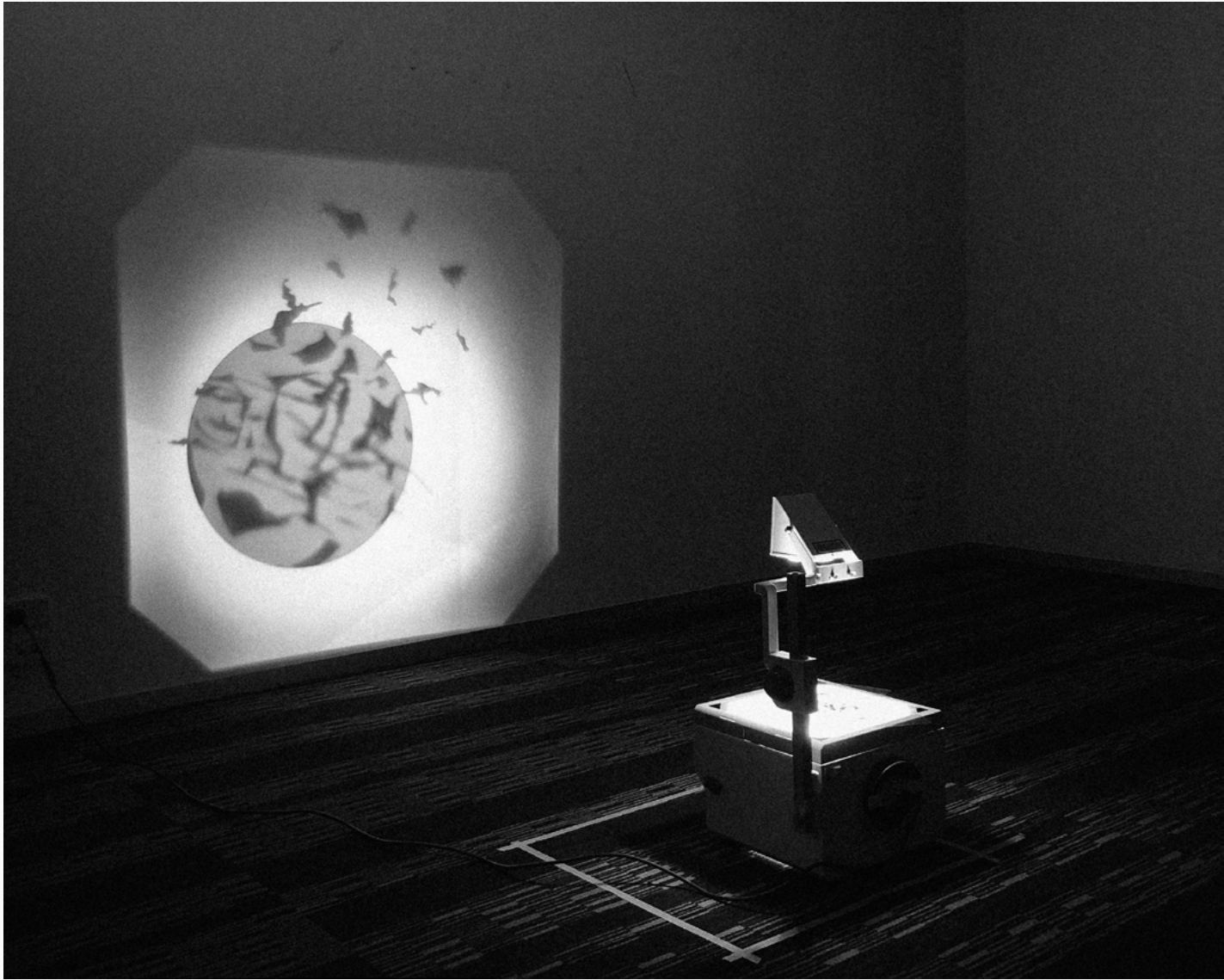
FIGURE 56. John William Draper, Moon Daguerreotype, 1840, daguerreotype.

+ THIS ALSO PRODUCED ANOTHER LEVEL OF SHADOWS, ANOTHER DIMENSION, GOING FROM SOLID BACK TO SHADOW, THE OPPOSITE OF THE SHADOW OBJECTS

IN THE THEATRE OF THE UNSEEN

Suspending shadows on transparencies let light penetrate my shadows in a way that didn't diminish them. This time using light magnified shadows by projecting them. Whereas my initial ways of magnifying through very focused vignettes had created a sense of stillness and finality, projecting these transparencies increased the transience, mystery, and sense of uncertainty inherent in these dark forms. + Using an overhead projector, the results evoked scientific imagery like microscopic images or early astronomical photographs, images not clinical but providing a novel experience of discovery. (Fig.56)

FIGURE 57. Tori Mok, Overhead Projection, 2019. | It was such a pleasant surprise to find that the OHP projected square images – just like my previous work. It felt like the stars were aligned.



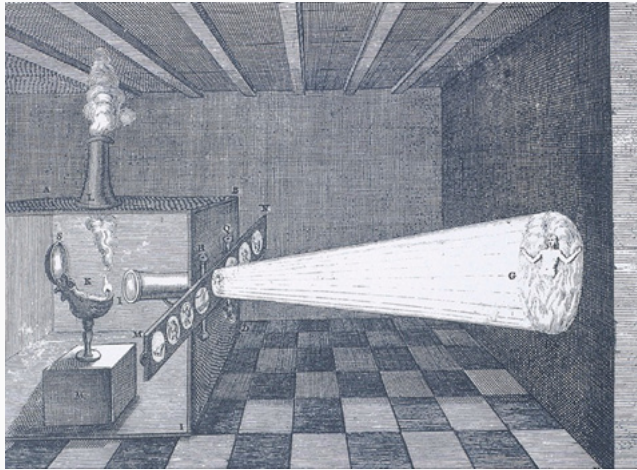


FIGURE 58. Athanasius Kircher, *Romani Collegii Societatus Jesu Musaeum Celeberrimum: Magic Lantern Projecting a Soul in Purgatory*, 1678.

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+. I FOUND IT EVOKED NINETEENTH-CENTURY OPTICAL DEVICES (TOUCHED ON WITH THE SHADOW LENSES), SUCH AS THE MAGIC LANTERN AND ITS ROUND SLIDES. AT THE SAME TIME, I THINK THE ROUND, COLOURFUL SHAPES AND SHADOW FRAGMENTS WERE SOMEWHAT EVOCATIVE OF THE KALEIDOSCOPE.

++. SOMEWHAT EVOCATIVE OF PROTO CINEMA?

In taking my solid, pocketable shadows to this ephemeral medium I had found a parallel to the shadow work of Christian Boltanski. (Fig.60) The little silhouettes he creates, almost like collectables, are strange and interesting works of art; cast through shadow, another layer of seeing is unleashed. In the same way, I found such a contrast between the solid world of things laying on the projector and the theatre of cast shadows. (Fig.59) Toying with shadows in real-time created a performance through the hands-on process of placing and arranging slides on the glass. + Being actively involved meant I could choreograph images to enact a narrative about the unseen. ++

FIGURE 59. Tori Mok, *Theatre of the Shadowlands* (process), 2019, photograph.



FIGURE 60. Christian Boltanski, *Théâtre d'ombres* (Theatre of Shadows), 1990, installation: metal, cardboard, wire, electrical tape, nails, pins, wood and leaves, light projectors, fan and transformer.

FIGURE 61. Tori Mok, *Shadow Mobile*, 2019, wood, string and metal.
| An alternate experiment I didn't ultimately pursue. See [page 32](#).

AFTER THESE EXPLORATIONS I DISCOVERED SOME THOUGHTS FROM BOLTANSKI WITH UNCANNY RESEMBLANCES TO MY WORK:

"I RELATE MANY THINGS TO SHADOWS. FIRST OF ALL, BECAUSE THEY REMIND US OF DEATH (DO WE NOT HAVE THE EXPRESSION 'SHADOWLANDS?') AND THEN, OF COURSE, THERE IS A CONNECTION TO PHOTOGRAPHY. IN GREEK, THE WORD MEANS WRITING WITH LIGHT. THE SHADOW IS, THEREFORE, AN EARLY PHOTOGRAPH. I ONCE SET UP AN EXHIBITION OF GIANT PHOTOGRAPHS... [BUT] I WANTED TO WORK WITH THINGS THAT WERE LIGHTER, THINGS I COULD PUT IN MY POCKET. I REALIZED THAT JUST BY PROJECTING A MICROSCOPIC PUPPET I COULD OBTAIN A LARGE SHADOW." CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI, *INVENTAR* (HAMBURG, 1991), 73-5, QUOTED IN STOICHITA, 200.



Creating projections was a slightly confusing process, and improvisational like Ingold's wayfaring. The OHP required working in a vertical mirror-image, requiring me to look back and forth while trying to negotiate between what I moved with my hands, and what I saw on the wall. (Fig.63) I found this layered and complex negotiation to be an ideal enactment of perception as it was a process marked and driven by various imperfections. + The analogue projector created low-resolution images full of texture and character. Its technical idiosyncrasies produced colour leaks and inconsistent focus that changed according to the distances between the focusing lens, wall, and glass plate. Dust invariably marked the slides creating grain (and more shadows), as with anything that interposed the lamp and projected surface. ++ At one point my projector's focus adjustment came loose, gradually sinking over time from its original height. Consequently, this happy accident created a projection that gradually deteriorated, expanded, blurred, and faded out. (Fig.64) Such flaws and technical issues inherent in the nature of an old device resulted in a perfect demonstration of the failure of seeing — subtle, unintentional yet inevitable.

At first glance, it appeared as though I was creating still scenes but in reality, I had created collages in flux: mini worlds of loss entwining discovery with failure. Comprehending this I knew I had stepped into the Shadowlands at last.

FIGURE 62. Tori Mok, Projection: Fitting Pieces Together, 2019, video. [click here to view](#)



FIGURE 63. Tori Mok, Projection: Shadow Worlds, 2019, video. [click here to view](#)

+ THE CAMERA, PROJECTOR AND EACH SLIDE WAS A LENS. IN PHOTOGRAPHING THESE PROJECTIONS, I HAD CREATED YET ANOTHER LAYER OF MEDIATION OVER MY IMAGE. I FELT THIS MIXING OF MEDIA AND METHODS TO PRODUCE A FINAL IMAGE CREATED SOMETHING THAT WAS SO FAR REMOVED FROM THE ORIGINAL, AND BECAUSE OF THAT, IT CONTAINED THE TEXTURE OF THE TIME, MEMORY, PERCEPTION AND FAILURE.

++ MY FINGERS ADDED COLOUR DISTORTION WHICH WAS NICE VISUALLY, AND IT WAS ALSO A DIRECT INTERVENTION OF MY SEEING.



FIGURE 64. Tori Mok, *Failing to See*, 2019, video. | This is also a visual narrative about my research journey. [click to view](#)

SERENDIPITOUSLY LEARNING OF THE OBSERVER EFFECT IN PHYSICS CREATED A BRILLIANT PLOT TWIST TO MY IDEAS. ACCORDING TO THE OBSERVER EFFECT, THE ACT OF OBSERVING (IE. MEASURING) A PHENOMENON CHANGES IT — AN EVOCATIVE NOTION, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE IT'S TIED TO QUANTUM PHYSICS AND HOW WE PERCEIVE LIGHT (AS PARTICLES VS WAVES).

THAT PARTICLES CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOUR WHILE BEING WATCHED IS NOT ONLY TANTALISINGLY MYSTERIOUS BUT SUGGESTS THAT METAPHYSICAL IDEAS OF CONSCIOUSNESS ARE ENTANGLED IN THE MATERIAL. MAYBE WITHOUT REALISING IT, WE CREATE OUR OWN SEEN AND UNSEEN SIMPLY BY LOOKING. INSTITUTE OF NOETIC SCIENCES [DEAN RADIN PH.D]. "CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE OBSERVER EFFECT | DEAN RADIN PH.D | IONS". (VIDEO). 2017. ACCESSED MAY 7, 2019. [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=HB_2Qd5xNVE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HB_2Qd5xNVE).

Through a hunt for shadows, I had sought to make sense of them and put them on display. I wanted to see the unseen, but it was only in letting go that the Shadowlands was revealed. In order to reclaim my own shadow, like Peter Schlemihl, I had to leave behind completeness and knowing, and embrace a puzzle of infinite pieces. What began as an obsessive Schlemihl-like search for lost shadows, evolved into a meandering navigation of shifting landscapes.

Towards the end of Peter's story, he unwittingly purchased a pair of seven-league boots. These magic boots transported him all over the world, every step like a leap across great distances. Walking with the boots on, his surrounding landscape changed drastically as he moved across the entire globe, every other step bringing a completely new location.⁷³ Similarly, the shadow-fragments I collected from my life produced a magical theatre — the Shadowlands. Here I could perform ways of seeing that danced with each moment and were never the same.

In a time when seeing seems easier and more encompassing than ever, shadows question how much we really see or know through seeing. I could not decipher shadows without losing them and realised that the answer was not to see more but less — to feel more. It isn't seeing and knowing that makes perception rich and interesting, but the way that we wander along winding paths, trying to make sense of things of the clues we find and collecting souvenirs as we go. While Bryson urged for seeing the world deeply over scanning it, the Shadowlands implies that like an overhead projector, the most intense seeing produces only scans.⁷⁴

In the same way, I have taken one of many paths to exploring the Shadowlands. It was the roads not travelled that eventually defined my journey. I began by archiving shadows, things lost and left behind, and through this, I found that the visual isn't static; it depends on the

73. von Chamisso, 107-9.

74. Bryson, in *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting*, 65.

fragments we choose to collect. I am left wondering if, like Peter Schlemihl, shadows are things we can never wholly reclaim. Perhaps it is when the shadow becomes priceless yet out of reach, does the whole world open up to us. Perhaps this is where my archive must begin to move in a cinematic exploration like the experience of travelling with seven-league boots, turning outward from myself to the larger world. These and other ideas contained in this work open up a space for a much greater wondering in which there are endless ways to proceed and new questions to be asked. The next step will bring completely new territories.

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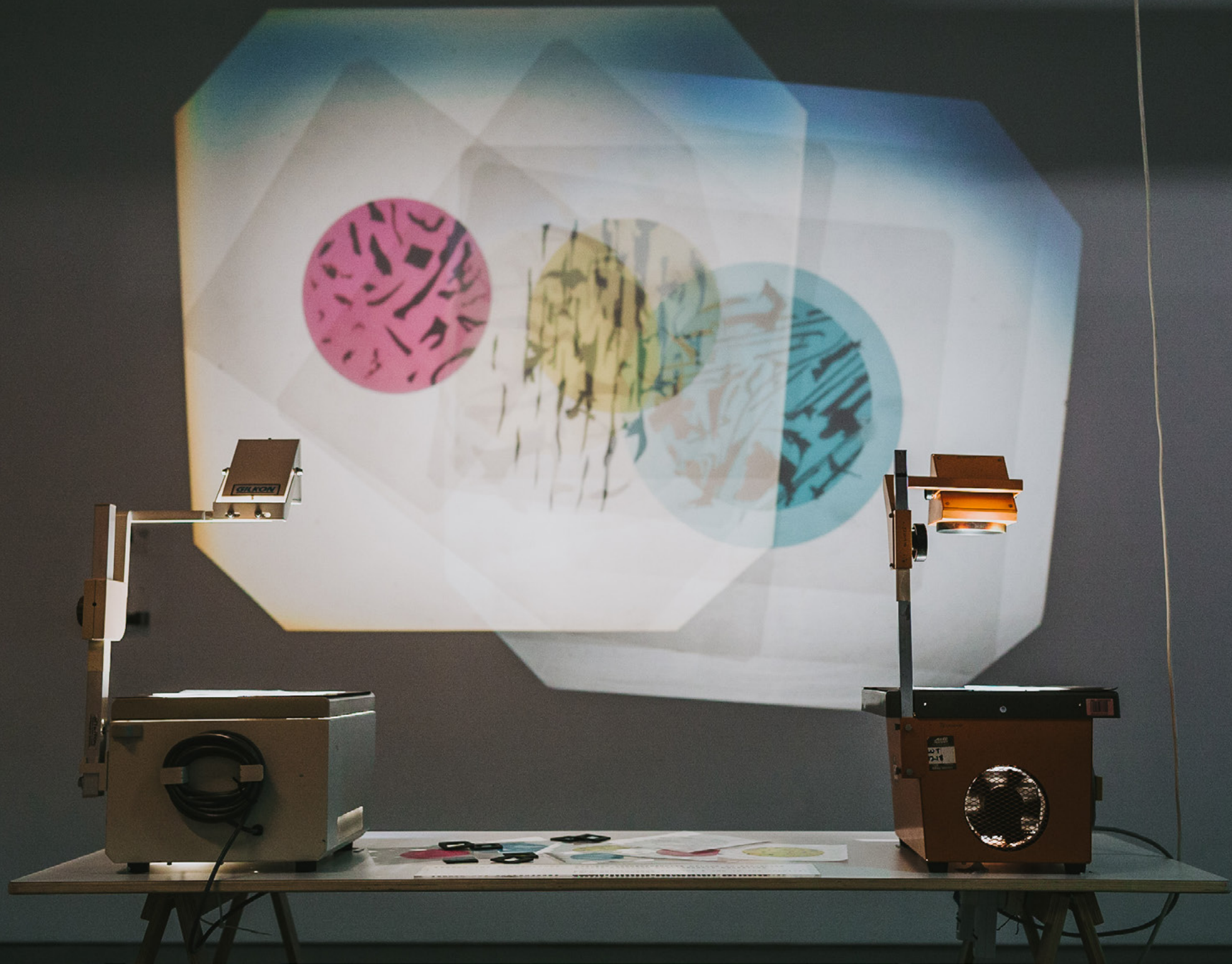


Figure 65. Tori Mok, Shadowlands, 2019, installation, St. Paul's Gallery, Auckland. My final research output took the form of an interactive installation. Viewers were invited to rearrange my shadow slides on overlapping overhead projections, and to document the results.



Figures 66a-d. Tori Mok, *Shadowlands: Details*, 2019, installation, St. Paul's Gallery, Auckland.

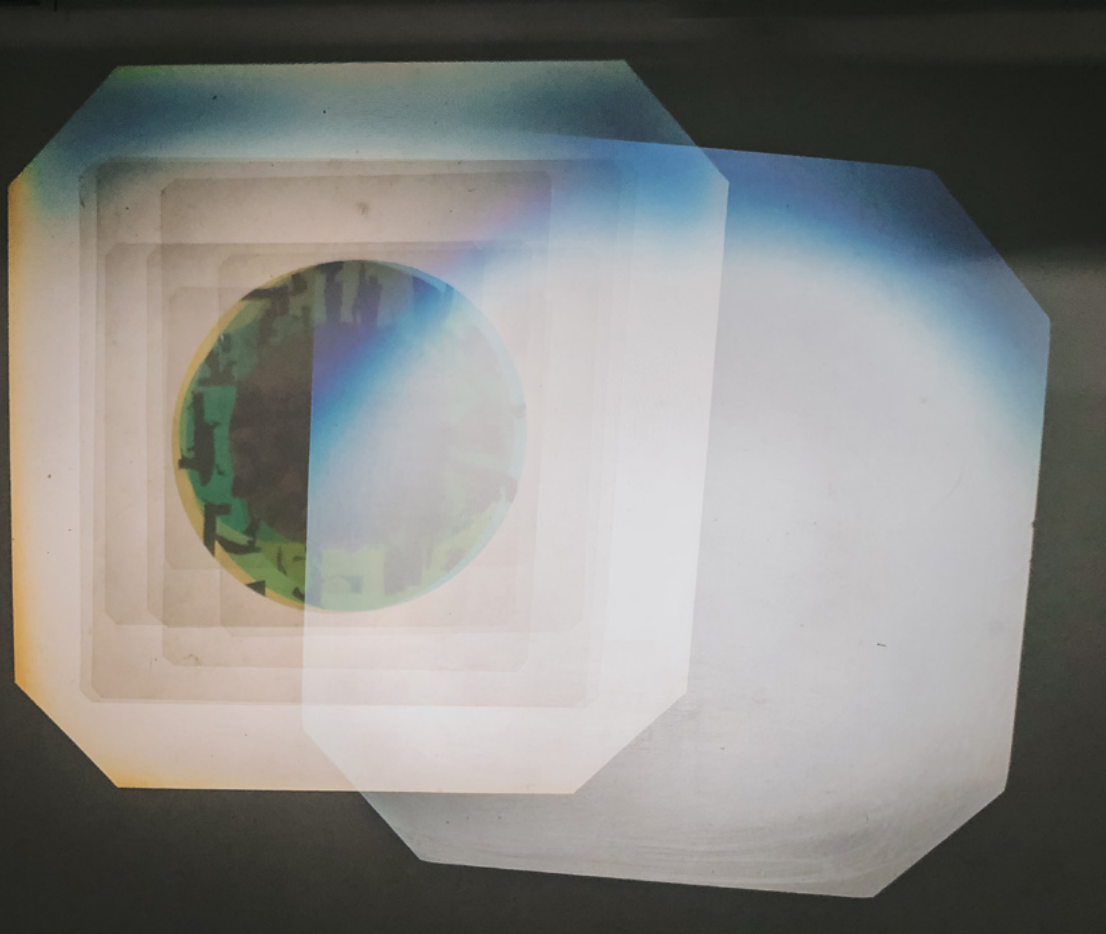




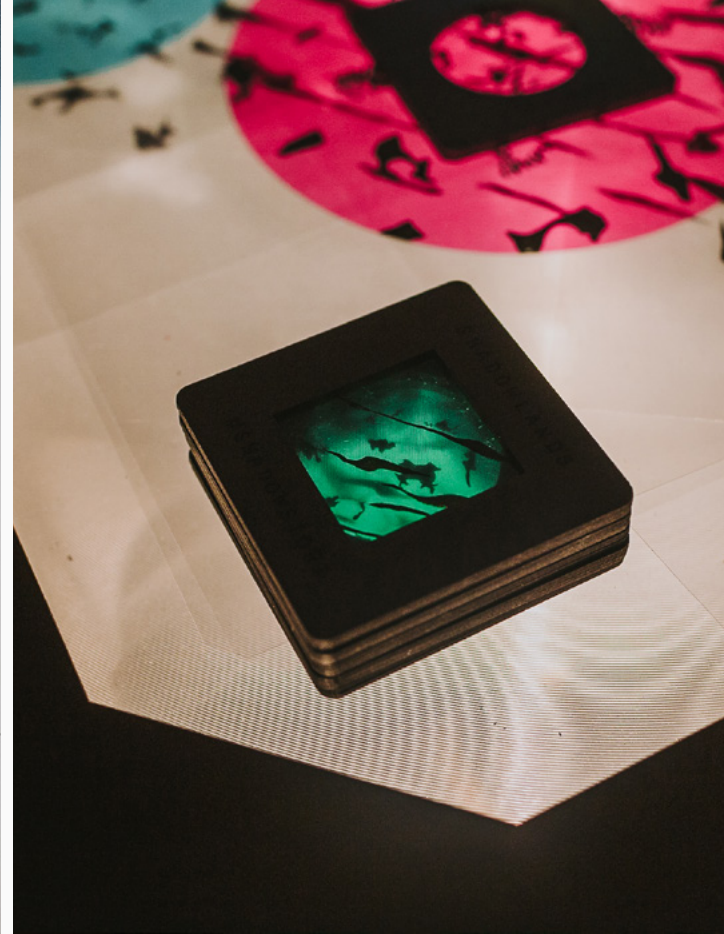
Figures 66e-h. Tori Mok, Shadowlands: Details, 2019, installation, St. Paul's Gallery, Auckland. I created slides fitted with my transparencies for viewers to collect and keep. They serve a double function as a name card, and an interactive optical device that can be used creatively in various ways.



The work in its entirety encourages viewers to play and experiment, while encouraging discussion around the seen and unseen through a metaphorical performative narrative.



Figures 67a-e. Tori Mok, *Shadowlands: Building an Archive*, 2019, installation, St. Paul's Gallery, Auckland. These images are a selection of projections created by visitors to the exhibition.





Figures 67f. Tori Mok, Shadowlands: Building an Archive, 2019, installation, St. Paul's Gallery, Auckland.

