

Installation view from *Rovhistorier | Histories of Predation*  
4K, 32mins loop, in "Rovhistorier," solo exhibition, 2022  
O - Overgaden, Copenhagen, DK  
Photo © Laura Stamer





Rovhistorier | Histories of Predation,  
3-channel video installation, 4K, 32mins  
"Rovhistorier," O – Overgaden, 2022  
Photos © Laura Stamer



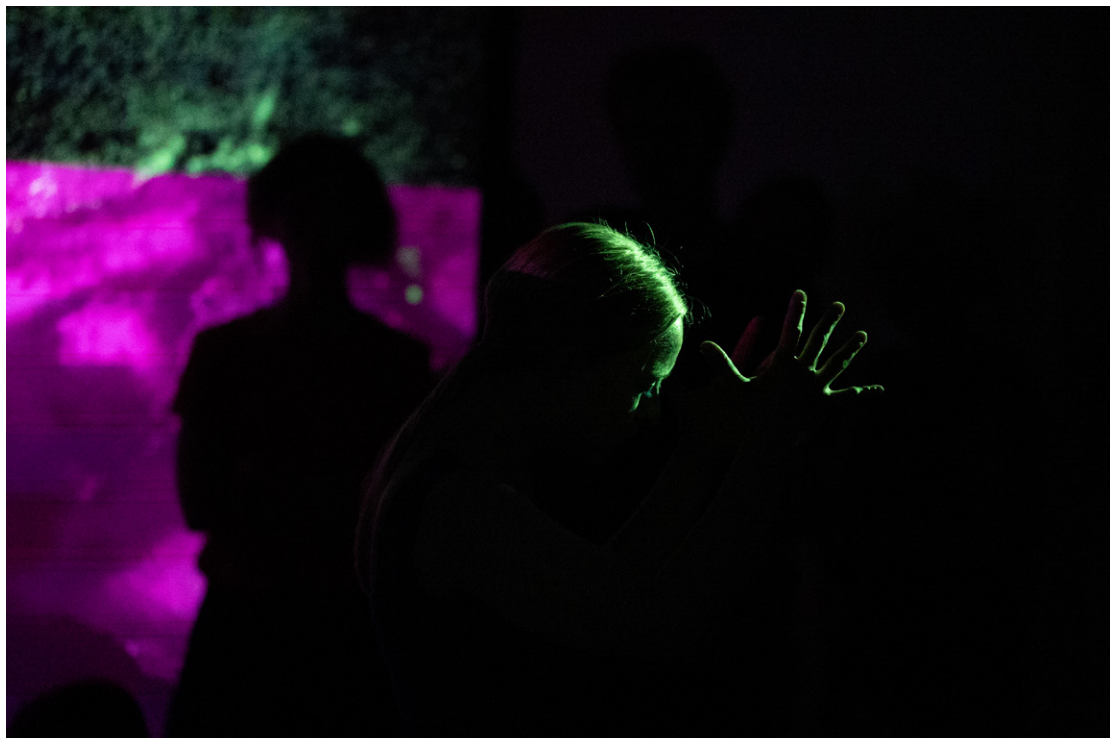
**ROVHISTORIER | HISTORIES OF PREDATION, 2022**  
solo exhibition, O - OVERGADEN

With her exhibition *Rovhistorier | Histories of Predation*, Marie Kølbaek Iversen traverses time, borders and cultures when traveling into the eye lens nuclei of the gurry shark, an ancient deep-sea fish also known as a Greenland shark. Across the Nordic-Germanic languages, the gurry shark has historically been referred to as merman or mermaid, a mythological creature with anthropomorphic features. Via carbon-14 dating of the animal's eye lens nuclei, marine biologists have recently estimated its longevity to be between 272 and 512 years. Thus, the gurry shark is the longest-living known vertebrate. *Rovhistorier | Histories of Predation* interweaves art, folklore and modern science to reflect on the more than 500 years of colonial, imperial and environmental struggles playing out in the Northern Atlantic region, where Danish influence has been and continues to be central.

Three monumental projection screens show hypnotic and brightly colored images in shades of pink and green. The images are microscopic recordings of the thousands of stratified fibers that are created inside the shark's eye lenses in the course of its long life. In its simultaneously abstract and ultra-concrete appearance, the artwork is a filmic time travel through the 'historic' gaze of the predator, granting us an opportunity to see and experience at radically different temporal and spatial scales. In this sense, Marie Kølbaek Iversen invites us to turn our gaze inwards and also consider our own histories of predation and exploitation. Just as the gurry shark, with its long life expectancy, will experience futures we will never know, it has also lived through the centuries that have delivered us to our late capitalist and Anthropocene present.

As contextual framework for *Rovhistorier | Histories of Predation*—and as part of her music project *Donnimaar*—Kølbaek Iversen activates subjugated folk-songs about merpeople from her East Atlantic home region in Western Jutland. *Donnimaar* is based on 19th-century folklore collector Evald Tang Kristensen's collection of songs, including examples from Kølbaek Iversen's great-great-great-grandmother Johanne Thygesdatter, who was one of Tang Kristensen's informants. *Donnimaar* is included in the exhibition in the form of a series of performances and a subsequent album release.

The exhibition is produced in collaboration with Henie Onstad Kunstsenter; Jonathan Brewer / DaMBIC (Danish Molecular Biomedical Imaging Center, University of Southern Denmark), and Julius Nielsen / Greenland Institute of Natural Resources.



*Donnimaar*, autumn equinox performance  
Sept. 23rd 2022, in "Rovhistorier"  
O – Overgaden, Copenhagen, DK  
Photo © Christian Brems





*Donnimaar, autumn equinox performance*  
Sept. 23rd 2022, in "Rovhistorier," solo exhibition  
O - Overgaden, Copenhagen, DK  
Photo © Christian Brems





O Tili, solo exhibition, 2022  
Drawing- and wool installation  
Ebeltoft Kunsthall, DK  
Photos © Kasper Palsnov





O Tilli, solo exhibition, 2022 (detail)  
Drawing- and wool installation  
Ebeltoft Kunsthall, DK  
Photos © Kasper Palsnov



**O TILLI, 2022**

Marie Kølbaek Iversen with Pettersen&Hein and Lystbækgaard  
at Ebeltoft Kunsthall

The Danish queen Dagmar captures a mermaid. She wants the mermaid to tell her fortune. The mermaid concedes, but throws a curse in revenge: The Dane will mother three sons, but will soon die for them. The first will be the Danish king, the second wear a crown. The third become the wisest man, receiving news from distant towns. Now Dagmar begs the Danish king to let the mermaid live. But he rejects her plea: "She has sunk my seven ships!" Dagmar faints, the king gives in. They return her to the sea. The mermaid sits atop a wave, the queen is crying woefully. The mermaid says: "Listen, queen, don't cry for me, for I have opened heaven's gates for thee. The bells of heaven are ringing for thee, and my little children are longing for me. The angels of heaven are longing for thee, and the depths of the sea are open for me."

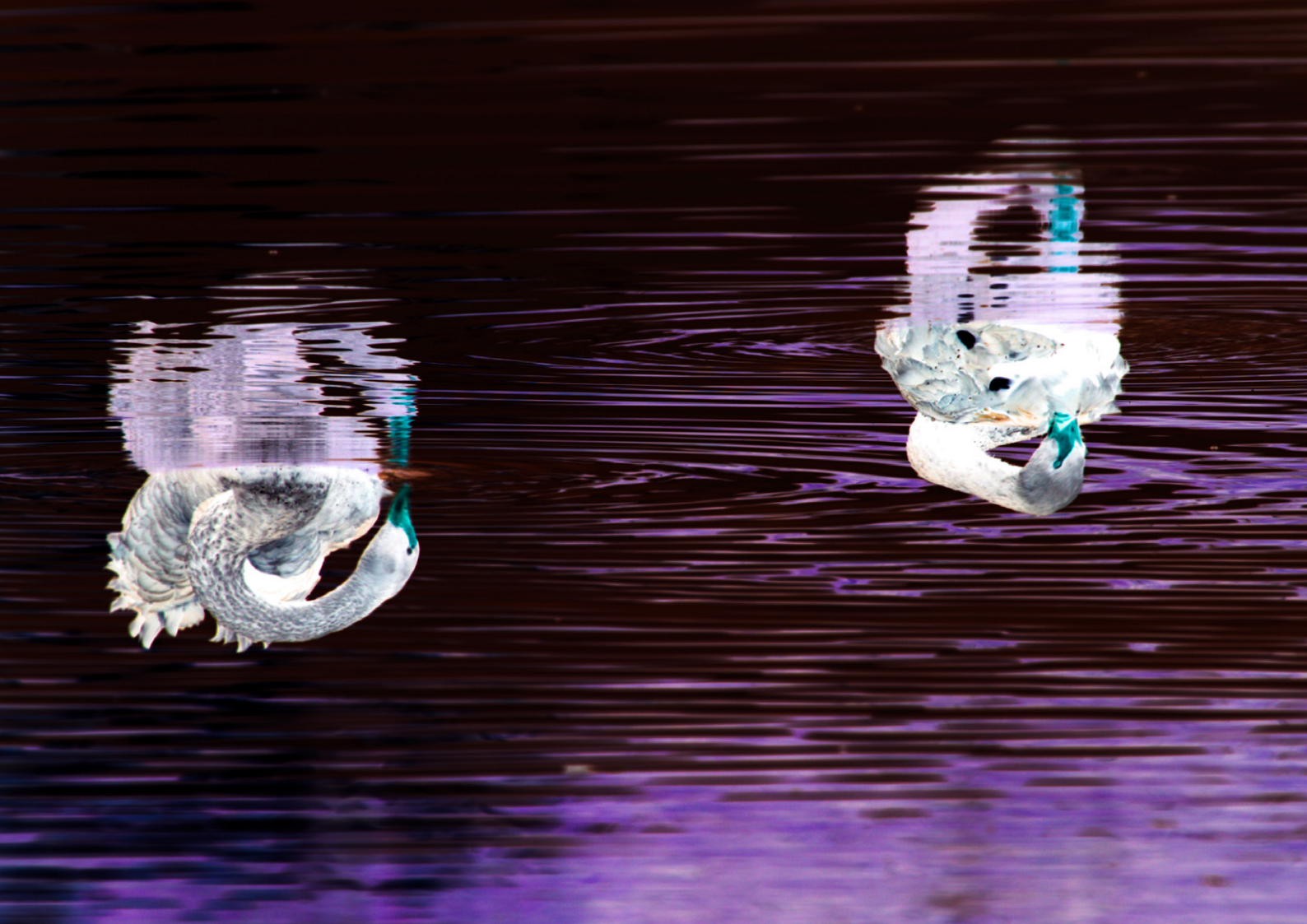
For *O Tilli* at Ebeltoft Kunsthall, Marie Kølbaek Iversen engages the idea of merpeople as humans' ontological others: As representatives of those natural environments that are immediately uninhabitable to humans—underwater, underground—and of cultures and peoples that have been barred from entering the present. In this latter modality, merpeople represent the spirits of the physically or culturally 'dead,' who—from their subjugated position in the netherworlds—continue to haunt the living in their desire for life and revenge.

Kølbaek Iversen carries out her explorations in dialogue with folklore and mythic heritage from the West Jutlandic heathlands gathered by Evald Tang Kristensen in the late 19th century, among others from Marie Kølbaek Iversen's great-great-great-great-grandmother Johanne Thygesdatter, e.g. the above-referenced song about the mermaid dancing 'o tilli,' that is: wriggling on the floor like a fish.

According to West Jutlandic folklore, an angered mermaid or -man may be appeased, if you knit and gift them a pair of socks. Kølbaek Iversen has therefore collaborated with Lystbækgaard to hand-knit woolen socks that will form part of her installation of pencil drawings mounted on the glass stretchers produced by art and design duo Pettersen&Hein.



*O Tilli*, solo exhibition, 2022 (detail)  
Drawing- and wool installation  
Ebeltoft Kunsthall, DK  
Photos © Kasper Palsnov



Stills from *Portents*, two-channel video installation  
4K, 15mins loop, in "NÅR," solo exhibition, 2021  
Gether Contemporary, Copenhagen, DK





"NÅR," installation view, solo exhibition, 2021  
Gether Contemporary, Copenhagen, DK  
Photos © David Stjernholm

NÅR, 2021

solo exhibition, Gether Contemporary.

When all women are widows  
When all men are dead  
When house and farm are deserted  
When we see white ravens  
When we see black swans  
When we see feathers sinking  
When we see stones floating  
When we see oceans burning  
When we see the end of the world

With the black swan as a starting point, the exhibition NÅR (the Danish word for 'when') focuses on apocalypse as a transhistorical motif. In the book *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* from 2007, the mathematical philosopher and probability theorist Nassim Nicholas Taleb explains how history has never been predictable, but is instead consistently driven forward by what Taleb with the ancient Roman poet Juvenal refers to as 'black swans': positive or negative events that are considered highly improbable before they occur, but which are nonetheless realized with far-reaching consequences in turn. The COVID-19 crisis is a classic black swan.

Similarly, an old Danish folk song employs the black swan as a portent of apocalypse. The young man, Svend of Rosengård, must go into exile after having killed his brother. When his mother asks when he will return home, Svend answers: *When all women are widows / When all men are dead / When house and farm are deserted / When we see white ravens / When we see black swans / When we see feathers sinking / When we see stones floating / When we see oceans burning / When we see the end of the world.*

Referencing Taleb's theory as well as the song about Svend of Rosengård, the video work *Portents* is based on footage of white swans in the Danish lake Damhussøen and black swans in Parque Ibirapuera in São Paulo. The respective shots appear negative—the white swans black, the black swans white—while the background assumes a psychedelic character.

Additionally, the exhibition features a series of ink drawings and serigraphic UV prints that stretch the image surface beyond the color spectrum visible to the human eye. The work series borrows its circle of motifs from art historical depictions of dead men as well as recent ecological disasters and collapses, including satellite and drone footage of 2020's Arctic wildfires. As for the arrival at the end of the world, the question is not if, but when.



*Portents* (2021), two-channel video installation, native 4K, 15 minute loop  
"NÅR," installation view, solo exhibition, Gether Contemporary  
Copenhagen, DK, 2021, Photos © David Stjernholm





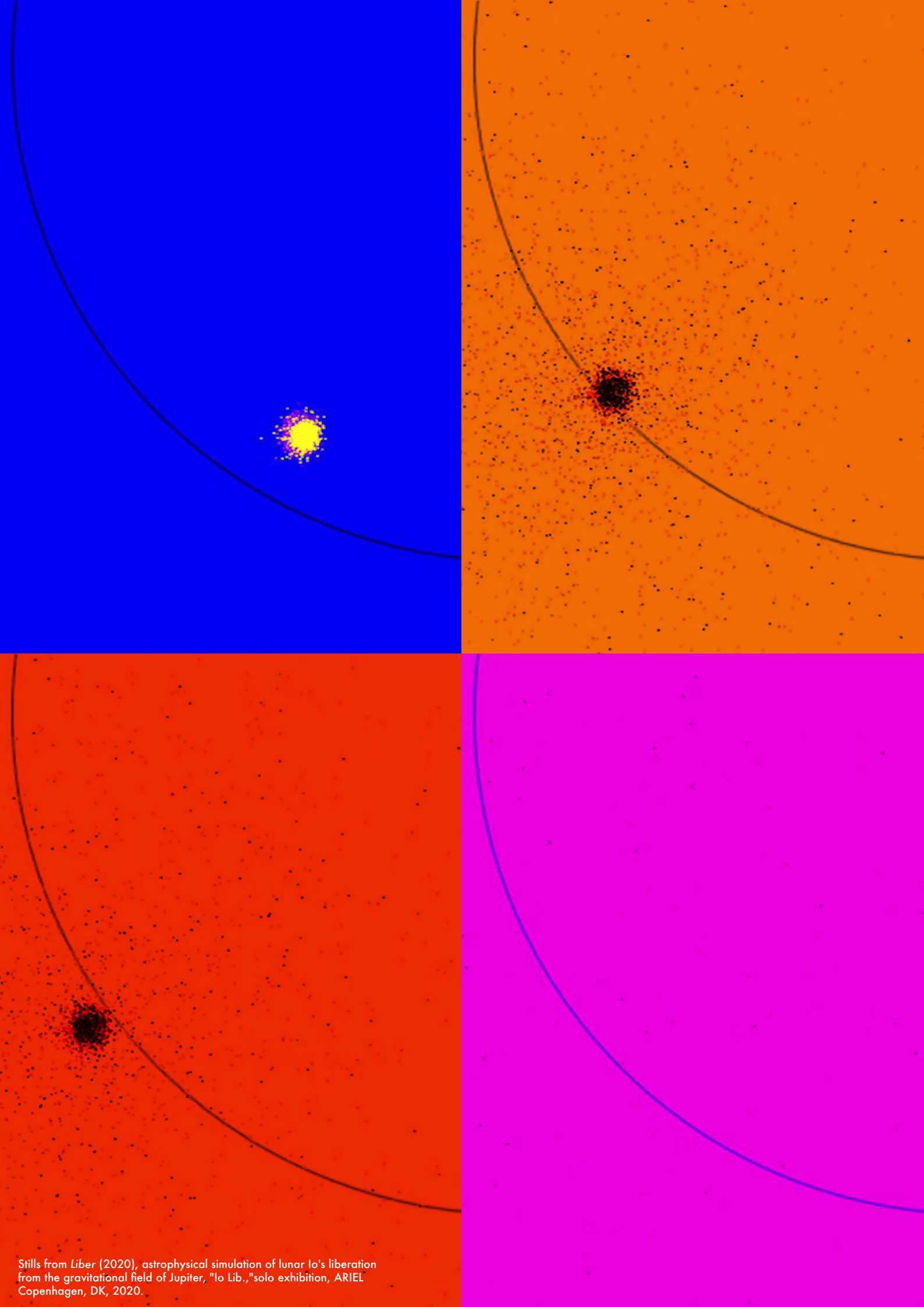
Hvide Ravne (2021), ink drawings of dead men from art history  
 "NÅR," Gether Contemporary, Copenhagen, DK, 2021





*Liber* (2020), astrophysical simulation of lunar Io's liberation from the gravitational field of Jupiter, "Io Lib.," solo exhibition, ARIEL—Feminisms in the Aesthetics, Kvindernes Bygning, Copenhagen, DK, 2020







**Io Lib., 2020**

ARIEL, Kvadrat, and South into North, exhibition complex spanning:

Liber, astrophysical simulation facilitating lunar Io's liberation from Jupiter.

n-body crash, digital commission translating Io's liberation into binary code.

Gravitational Shift, choral composition based on time-stretched recordings of women's affective birthing sounds.

The simulation *Liber* expands on the plight of the mythological cow-woman and birthing figure Io from Greek-Roman mythology, who has been locked in orbit around her rapist Jupiter since the German astronomer Simon Marius named Jupiter's innermost moon after her in 1614.

Through her name's relation to binary code—zeros and ones, 0-1, IO, Io—and with modern astrophysics as doula and intermediate, Kølbaek Iversen facilitates lunar Io's escape from the gravitational pull of Jupiter by way of collectivity: hit by an asteroid cluster, the moon dissolves and is simultaneously released from her orbit. The simulation is based on Kepler's laws and produced in collaboration with astrophysicist Ole Busborg Jensen. In November 2020 the simulation was launched on the website <http://www.n-body-crash.io>

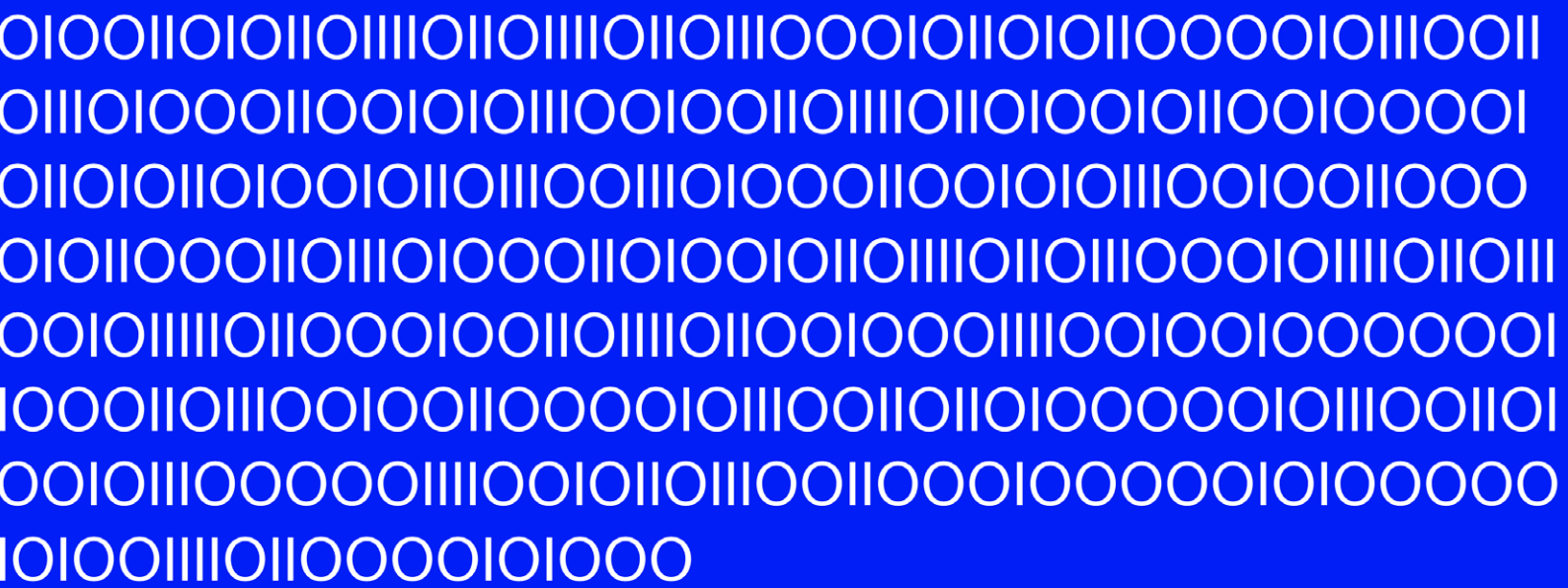
In addition to the astrophysical computer simulations presented on the website and at locally at ARIEL, *Io Lib.* also features *Gravitational Shift*—a participatory choral work and performance piece based on time-stretched recordings of women's affective birthing sounds. The aim of the composition is to explore the transformative and liberating potentialities of collectivity to resignify what might in its outset have been a lonely and isolating experience for Io: Passing through pain, fright, doom, and shame, to ultimately arrive at her child.

*Gravitational Shift* is a work in progress composed in collaboration between electroacoustic composer and classical singer Katinka Fogh Vindelev, and visual artist Marie Kølbaek Iversen.



*Gravitational Shift*, performance on the occasion of "Io Lib."  
ARIEL—Feminisms in the Aesthetics, Copenhagen, DK, 2020  
Photo © Malle Madsen

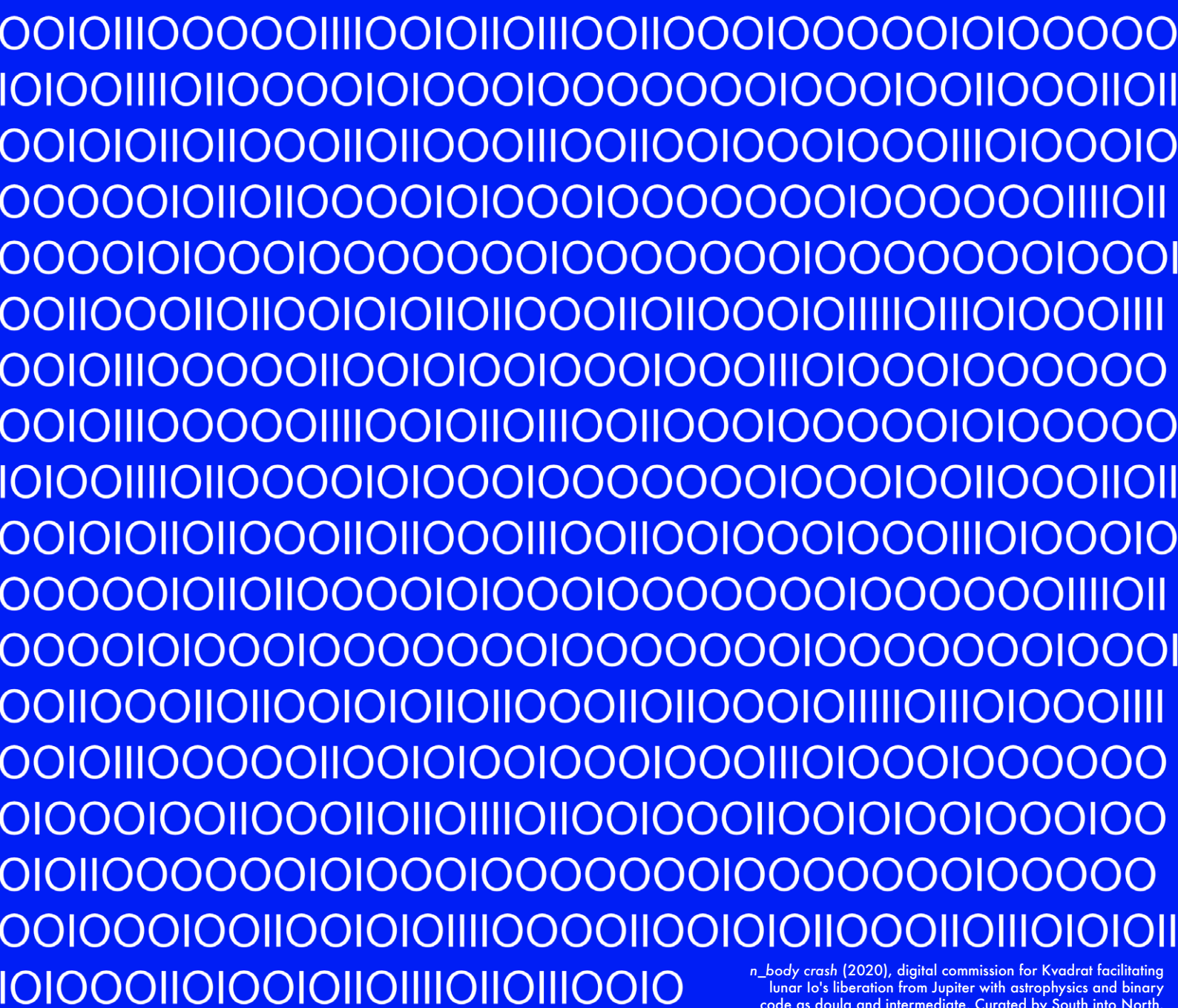




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"# Now is the time to break free. \n",
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Imprint







*Gravitational Shift* (2019 - ), choral composition developed in collaboration with Katinka Fogh Vindelev on the basis of women's affective birthing sounds. Performance with public choir and soprano Nina Brewer. ARIEL, Copenhagen, DK Photos  Mille Madsen





Stills from *Io/I* (2015–), 3D-animations of NASA imagery,  
solo exhibition, PARMER, New York, USA, 2017



## Io/I, 2015 - ?

Continuous series of 3D video installations based on NASA's footage of Jupiter's innermost moon Io; duration and dimensions variable.

"Io is at once very distant and very close; by way of mistranslation from the Italian, 'Io' is me. But like any Self, Io is inconsistent because continuous volcanic activity collapses mountains and valleys and other components of her surface to give rise to new configurations. Io was discovered in 1610 by Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei and named after the mythological figure Io; one of Jupiter's many amorous conquests, whom he later transformed into a cow in an attempt to hide her from his jealous wife Juno. Juno called the bluff, however, and sent a gadfly to bite Io every time she would stop to rest. Io was thus doomed to wander restlessly across the Earth just like the moon circles its planet.

Being a distant astronomical body it is not possible for me to access Io on a material level; the only traces of her on Earth are pictorial. I am therefore using images of her from NASA's archives as the source material for a running series of 3D-animated loops of Io as a bulging, popping, and dissolving, celestial body. Every time I show the work, it is different: I add new loops and take others out to reflect the constant reconfigurations of the lunar subject of the work. Despite her distance and unavailability, however, Io weaves herself into me by way of the first person pronoun, just like she wove herself into Galileo."

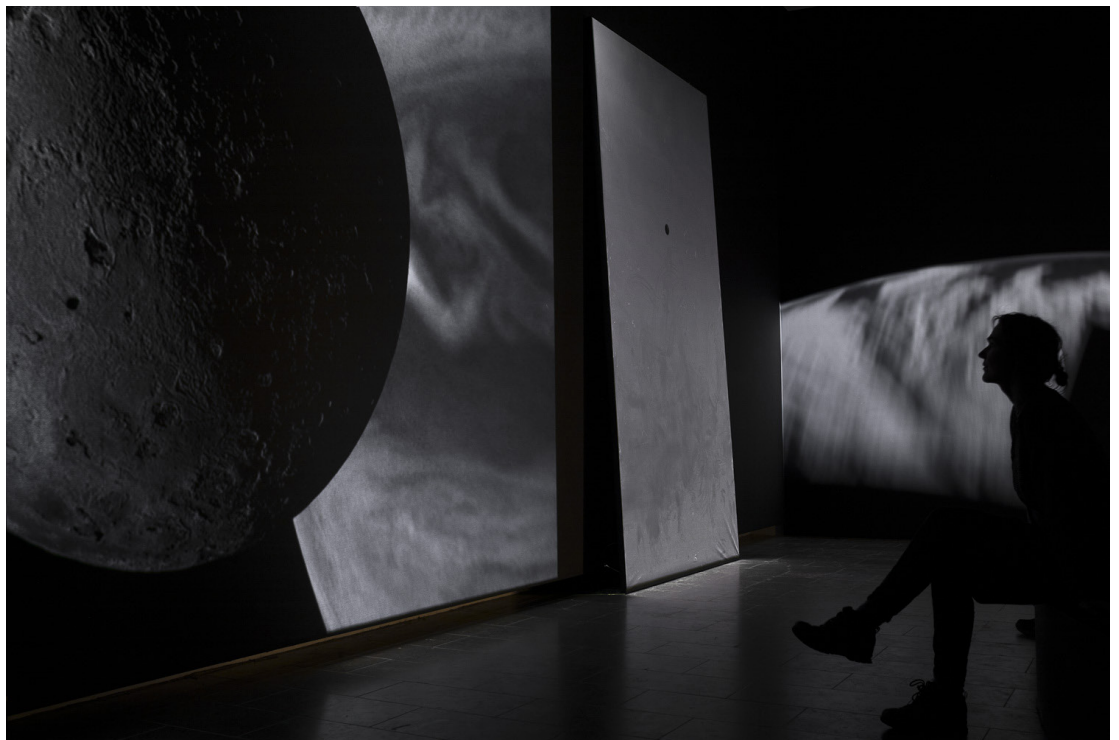
—Marie Kølbaek Iversen, from *Kaleidoscope*, 2016

Iterations of *Io/I* have previously been shown at Kai Art Centre as part of Tallinn Photomonth 2019, Tallinn, EE (2019); Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo, NO (2019); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (2018); PARMER, New York, USA (2017); NLHspace, Copenhagen, DK (2015); D7, Copenhagen, DK (2015); Kunstraum, London, GB (2015).

An artist book (edition of 50) was co-published with Ida Marie Hede by STEMMER and Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology in December 2015 on the occasion of the exhibition of the work at NLHspace.

In the late autumn of 2018, the opera *Moonologue. For our Suns*—based on Kølbaek Iversen's literary montage by the same name—premiered. The opera was commissioned by Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, DK, and is a collaboration between composer Katinka Fogh Vindelev and Marie Kølbaek Iversen.

On the occasion of the premiere on November 23rd 2018, *Moonologue. For our Suns* was released on vinyl by Antipyrine Records (edition of 250). On April 5, 2019, a monograph titled *IO I* (edition of 100) was published by Antipyrine on the occasion of the exhibition *PRESS PRINT!* at Overgaden, Copenhagen, DK. *IO I* features imagery from the whole project alongside the *Moonologue*-montage and texts by Yann Chateigné and Ida Marie Hede.



*Io/I* in "The Moon"  
Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, DK, 2018  
Photo © Frida Gregersen





*Io/I in Let the field of your attention.... soften and spread out*, Tallinn Photomonth.  
Multi-channel video installation, installation view, 2019, Kai Art Centre, Tallinn, EE.  
Photos © Hedi Jaansoo / Tallinn Photomonth biennial





Above: *Io/I in The Moon* at Louisiana Humlebæk, DK, 2018-19. Photos © Frida Gregersen  
 Below: *Moonologue* at KHiO Artistic Research Week Oslo, NO, 2019. Photos © KJ/KHiO





*Moonologue. For our Suns (2018)*  
 Idea, libretto and staging by Marie Kølbaek Iversen. Composition by Katinka Fogh Vindelev. Performed by Morten Grove Frandsen and Katinka Fogh Vindelev.  
 "The Moon," Louisiana, Humlebæk, DK, 2018. Photos © Uffe Weng





Above: I, II, III, IO, O, OI, installation view  
 Below: OI (full) in "Material Madness,"  
 Gether Contemporary, Copenhagen, DK, 2019  
 Photos © David Stjernholm





O (gibbous) in "Material Madness"  
Gether Contemporary, Copenhagen, DK, 2019





*The Way of Mu* (detail), installation view  
Gether Contemporary, Copenhagen, DK, 2018  
Photos © David Stjernholm



### **The Way of Mu, 2018**

Silvered metal leaf on float glass; site-specific, dimensions variable.

"I have come here to the prints of ancient feet, my mother's, and I ask of you to look benignly upon the women's cause. Look upon our race in history, and show that you remember all, you who laid your hands upon lo:

lo, the white cow. lo, the red, my green-eyed monster, my lunatic.

Earth cow, morns, wing, blood. Dead sisters—brilliant nudes—marching in a single line into her vagina, past the Low Mountain, past the High pointed Mountain, into the centre of the Flat Mountain, towards Mu's whirlpool.

When I rub my eyes with my fists, I see fantastic images: From the top of Mu's house threads of cloth are hanging, changing into gold; purple hallways decked with golden stars; colourful moving serpents in a chaotic knot; Mu's animal with claws like needles; a glass palace with snow steps; a rotating crown casting glittering rays into the night...

Rainbow-coloured curtains wave and flutter. The transformations spread from one to another, the rainbow passes across their faces while you—unchanging in the chestnut colour of your hair—you start to cry out while I regard you in your great ecstasy stung by the gadfly, radiating like orgasm. Round as a singing mouth at full stretch; round as a vagina when it makes; round as a full belly; round as a baby's head, you come to us. On your forehead you bear my crescents, your eyes hypnotic as my clockface disc, bleeding and peeling.

I am your poet, mother. The time of the child is a thing apart."

—Marie Kølbaek Iversen, from press release

The text synthesises Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*; Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven's *Body Sweats*; Monique Wittig's *The Lesbian Body*; Marge Piercy's *The Moon is Always Female*; Staffan Mjönes' *Shaman, Psychoanalyst or Obstetrician: A critical reading of Claude Lévi-Strauss' essay "The Efficiency of Symbols"*; Unica Zürn's *The Trumpets of Jericho*; Sylvia Plath's *Ariel*, and Mary MacLane's *I await the Devil's Coming*.



*The Way of Mu*, installation view  
Gether Contemporary, Copenhagen, DK, 2018  
Photos © David Stjernholm



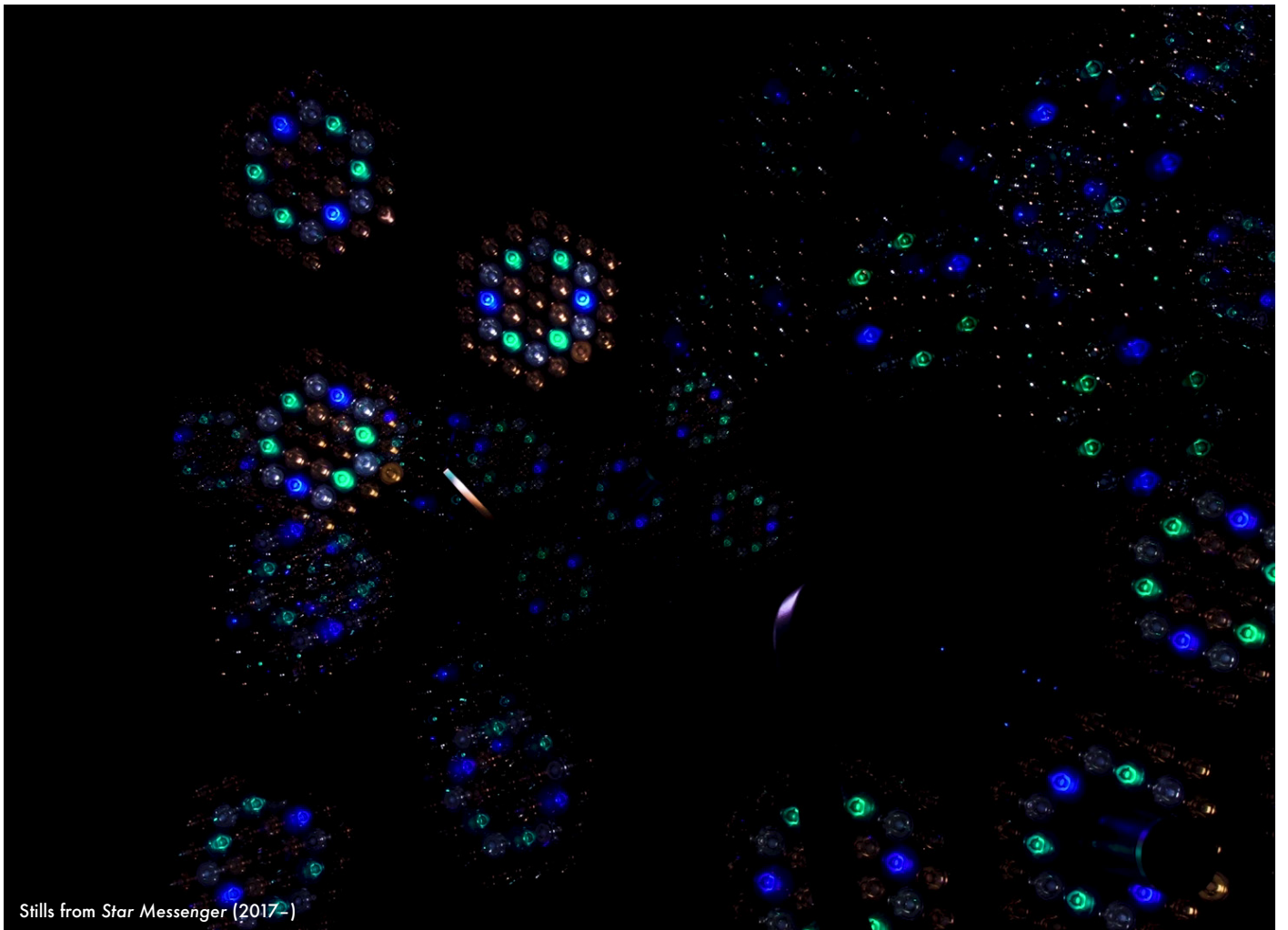


The Way of Mu, installation views  
Gether Contemporary, Copenhagen, DK, 2018  
Photos © David Stjernholm





*Birth of Muspelina*, literary fiction/text collage, handbound book, edition 1/1 (2018), and *Star Messenger*, work-in-progress, HD single-channel animated video loop; 11'53" (2017-). Installation views, "Birth of Muspelina," solo exhibition, Annual Reportt, CPH, DK, 2018.



Stills from *Star Messenger* (2017-)



### **Star Messenger, 2017**

Work-in-progress. HD single-channel animated video loop; duration and dimensions variable.

"Expanding the artist's research exploring the transformative potentialities of fright encountered through traumatic and ritual processes, *Star Messenger* proposes a softening of the historical western divide between the rational and the irrational, the material and the magical.

In 1610 Galileo Galilei published his accounts of discovering four of Jupiter's moons. He titled the publication "*Siderius Nuncius*"—star messenger—thus naming the book after Io, the innermost of the moons. Over the course of two months Io had visually—slowly, but consistently—conveyed her message to him: That she is orbiting Jupiter. That the Earth is not the centre of the Universe. Marie Kølbaek Iversen attributes the English translation of the title of Galileo's opus magnum to her dreamy video work *Star Messenger*, whereby she questions what we know and how we know it, and suggests a collapse of scientific vision with the spiritual/mythological visionary: Both draw on sightings obtained through extraordinary set-ups that may challenge habitual world-views."

—Mette Kjærgaard Præst, from press release

At PS/Y + LUX and at Kunsthall Oslo the video was shown to the accompaniment of Diana Policarpo and with Gaia Fugazza's *Other Ways*—a series of ceramic sculptures displayed in the mouths of visitors.

At Annual Reportt *Star Messenger* was flanked by Kølbaek Iversen's artist book *Birth of Muspelina*, which was read aloud to the public at the exhibition opening and every Saturday during the exhibition period.

Iterations of the work have been shown at PS/Y and LUX, London, GB (2017); Kunsthall Oslo, Oslo, NO (2018); Oslo National Academy of the Arts, Oslo, NO (2018), and Annual Reportt, Copenhagen, DK (2018).



*Star Messenger* with Gaia fugazza's *Other Ways* to the accompaniment of Diana Policarpo  
Performance views (CCTV), PS/Y + LUX, London, GB, 2017





*Star Messenger* with Gaia fugazza's *Other Ways to the* accompaniment of Diana Policarpo.  
Performance views, Kunsthall Oslo, Oslo, NO, 2018





*Autumn Equinox Celebration*, performance of magic songs to the accompaniment of Diana Policarpo.  
Performance views, PS/Y + LUX, London, GB, 2017  
Photos © Christa Holka

### **Autumn Equinox Celebration, 2017**

Time-specific performance of magic songs from Western Jutland to the accompaniment of Diana Policarpo. Autumn equinox during sunset.

"An outdoor celebration of autumn equinox led by Danish artist Marie Kølback Iversen and accompanied by Diana Policarpo centred around the performance of magical songs inherited by Kølback Iversen from her great-great-great-great-grandparents, who in 1873 were the ethnographic subjects of folklore collector Evald Tang Christensen. The songs (...) spring from a very different cultural source than the Protestant Christian time of their collection: They are largely (and in places explicitly) proto-feminist, apocalyptic, anti-Christian, anti-nationalist and anti-Danish.

In the Northern hemisphere autumn equinox marks the threshold into winter darkness – and symbolically into the dreams of an extended night. The performance therefore celebrates the power of dreaming to unsettle the fabric of reality by rendering weird—Wyrð—and contingent, the waking life of our troubled modernity."

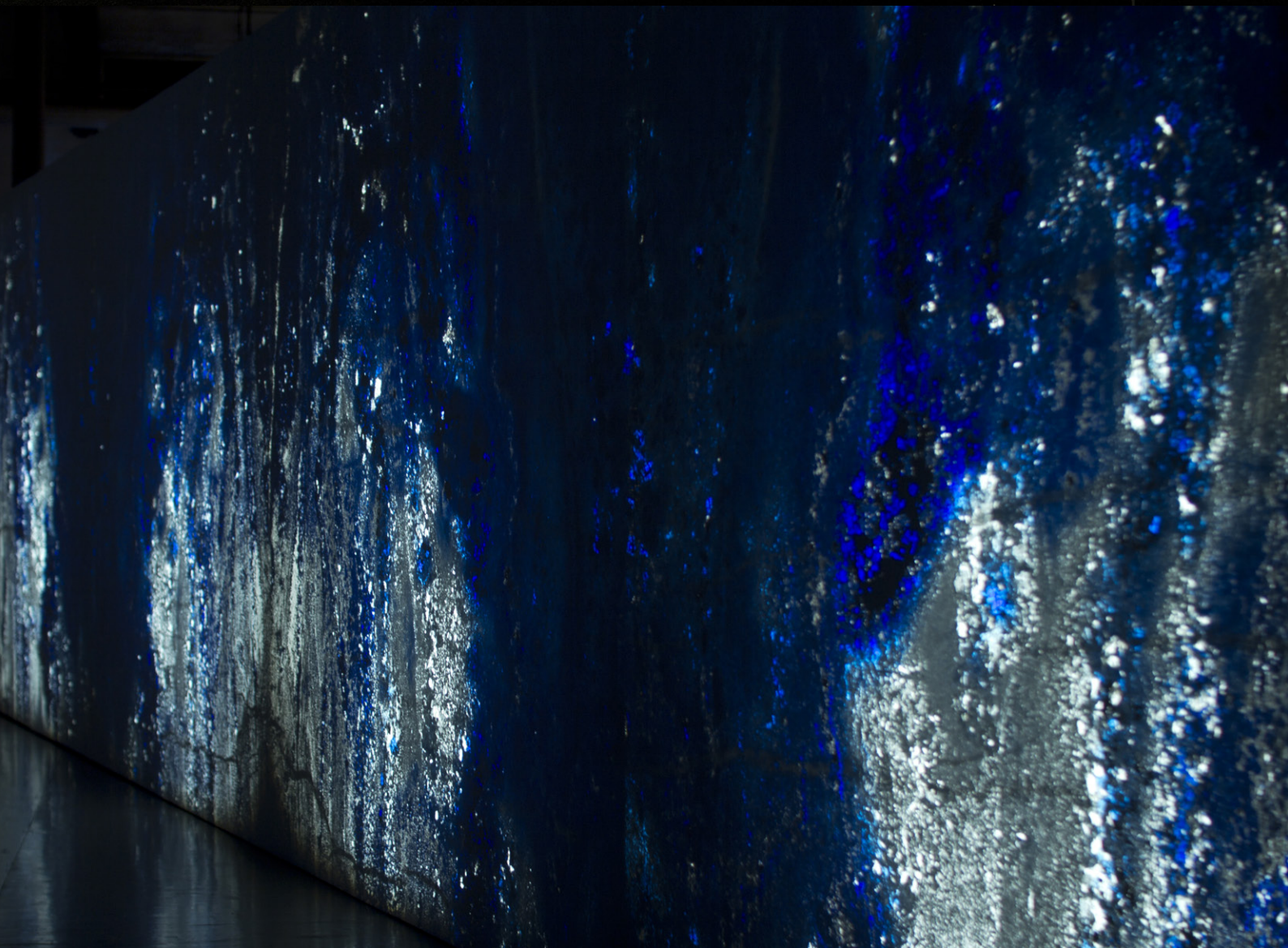
—Mette Kjærgaard Præst, from press release

Marie Kølback Iversen has later performed her songs at the Norwegian National Academy of the Arts in Oslo during the 2020 Artistic Research Week—again to the accompaniment of Diana Policarpo, where the artists played the *I, II, III, IO, O, OI*-masks with violin bows and soft drum sticks.



Autumn Equinox Celebration (Diana Policarpo's drum kit)  
Pre-performance, PS/Y + LUX, London, GB, 2017  
Photos © Christa Holka





*Mirror Therapy* at The 11th Gwangju Biennial "The Eighth Climate (What Does Art Do?)", lapis lazuli-slide installation, installation view, September, 2016, Gwangju, KR. Photos © Doyun Kim





*Mirror Therapy* in "*Mirror Therapy*", lapis lazuli-slide installation, solo exhibition, installation view, Fotografisk Center, Cph, DK, 2015



### **Mirror Therapy, 2015 - ?**

Stone slide installation (5 mirroring lapis lazuli slides, 5 slide projectors, free-standing wall; dimensions variable).

*Mirror Therapy* is a stone installation and an ongoing umbrella project for a series of derived productions: *Untitled*, HD-video demonstrating mirror therapy featuring Danish Afghanistan veteran Henrik Morgen and occupational therapist Kirsten C. Pedersen (duration: 04:36); *Europa*, collage series of 10 interlacing the geopolitical and art historical traces of the colour *ultramarine* (original collages: A3, cut-outs of digital print on tracing paper / edition of 400 for Den Danske Radeerforening: A3, screen-printed on Arjo Wiggins paper with ultramarine pigment); *Untitleds*, marbled works on canvas, various sizes.

"As we walk into the radiating blue light of *Mirror Therapy*, we dissolve in the cosmic-mineral dimensions of the presented imageries. The installation consists of five projected slices of a single lapis lazuli rock placed in abutting slide projectors, together illuminating a large freestanding wall. The light of each projector passes through a thin slice of lapis lazuli, replacing the slide, creating an enlarged projected image of the material stone. As we walk along the expanded whole generated by the assembled stone projections, we find ourselves confronted with Rorschach-like images of mineral hemispheres, which allude to our physiological circuitry and hypnotize us with their beauty.

Taking cues from object-oriented ontology, Marie Kølbaek Iversen's (b. 1981, Herning/ Copenhagen) installation nonetheless touches on a much darker reality, referring to modes of occupational therapy developed for amputees, and particularly applied in the treatment of war veterans from the 2001-14 phase of the war in Afghanistan, the place of origin of lapis lazuli. As we submerge into the blue fields of color we make a voyage through the actualization of affects, as the dual quality of the images suggests the East/West divide of war mirrored by our bodies, provoking the impossible hope of empathic transcendence through a reconciliation with mundane materiality. In this sense, inhuman fields become the basis for our amplified, posthuman bodies and a scenario for the outspring of material histories.

An affinity with the cosmic and the molecular runs through Iversen's oeuvre. Her large-scale installations are fields of ethereal density, where one is invited to delve into expanded planes of imagery emanating from artistic, natural, and astronomical realms. Can the physiological apparatus of sight work simultaneously as a philosophical trigger and as a prospective medium? What spatial revolutions populate our perceptive hierarchies, and how can we challenge them in a poetic way? Exploring the neuroplasticity of perception and proprioception, as well as the cultural and physiological imprint of particular histories and methodologies of scientific production, Iversen proposes a space for altered readings of reality, where our senses are provoked to infra-levels, and where macro-structures are analyzed."

—Margarida Mendes, from the8climate.org

The installation has previously been shown at the 11th Gwangju Biennial: "The Eighth Climate (What Does Art Do?)" (2016), on the occasion of which the monograph *If Earth Were a Body, Borders Would be Wounds* was published by Officin, and at Fotografisk Center in Copenhagen, DK (2015).



*Europa* (2016), collage series as the basis for print edition for Den Danske Radeerforening. Inkjet print on tracing paper. As of 2017, part of the collection of the Danish Art Foundation.





*Untitled* (2016), ultramarine pigment and oil on cotton canvas, 320 x 500 cm.





Untitled (2016), ultramarine pigment on cotton canvas, 167 x 105 cm.  
In 2017 acquired by the Danish Arts Foundation





Untitled (2016), ultramarine pigment on cotton canvas, 167 x 105 cm.  
In 2017 acquired by the Danish Arts Foundation





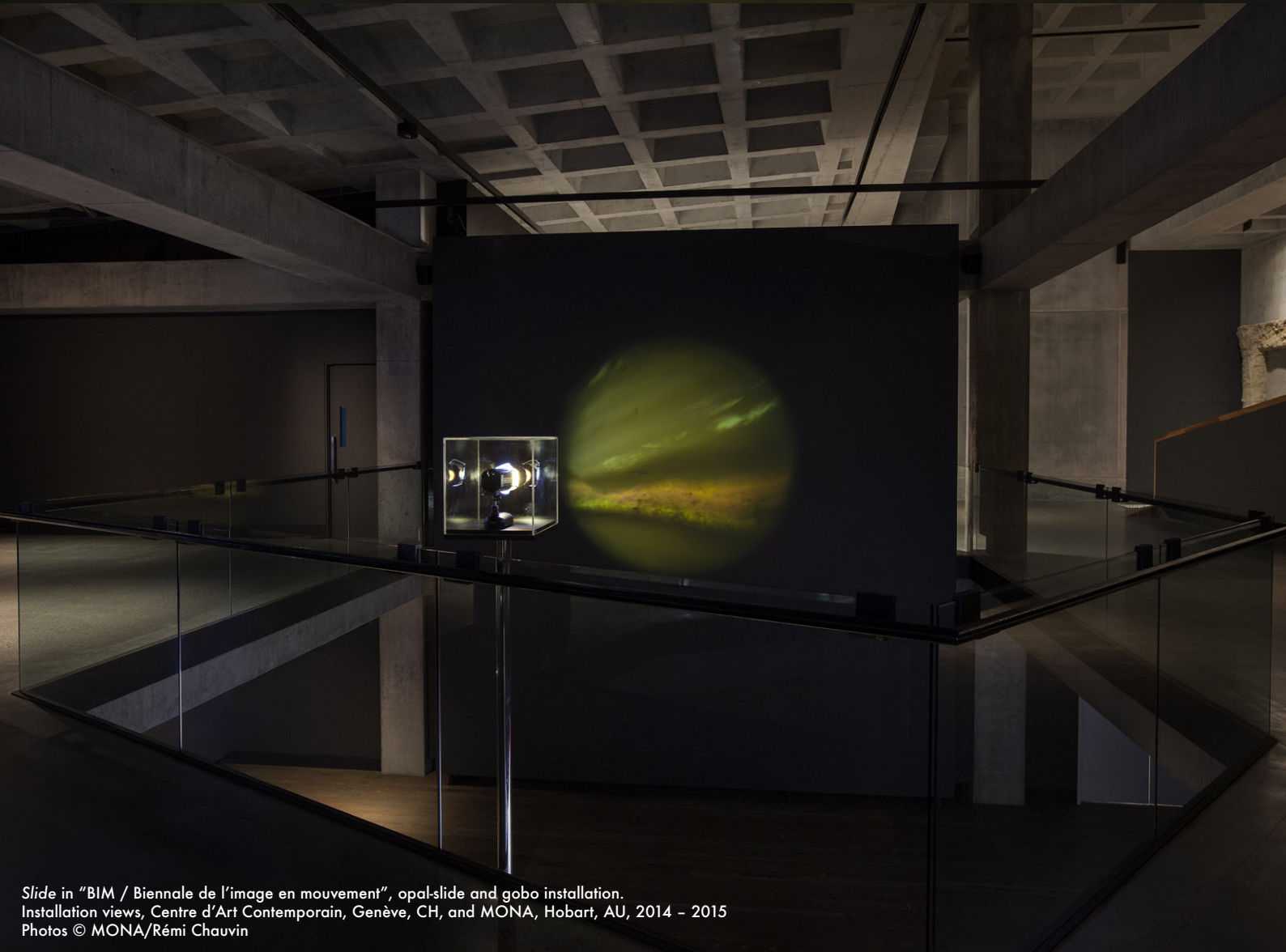
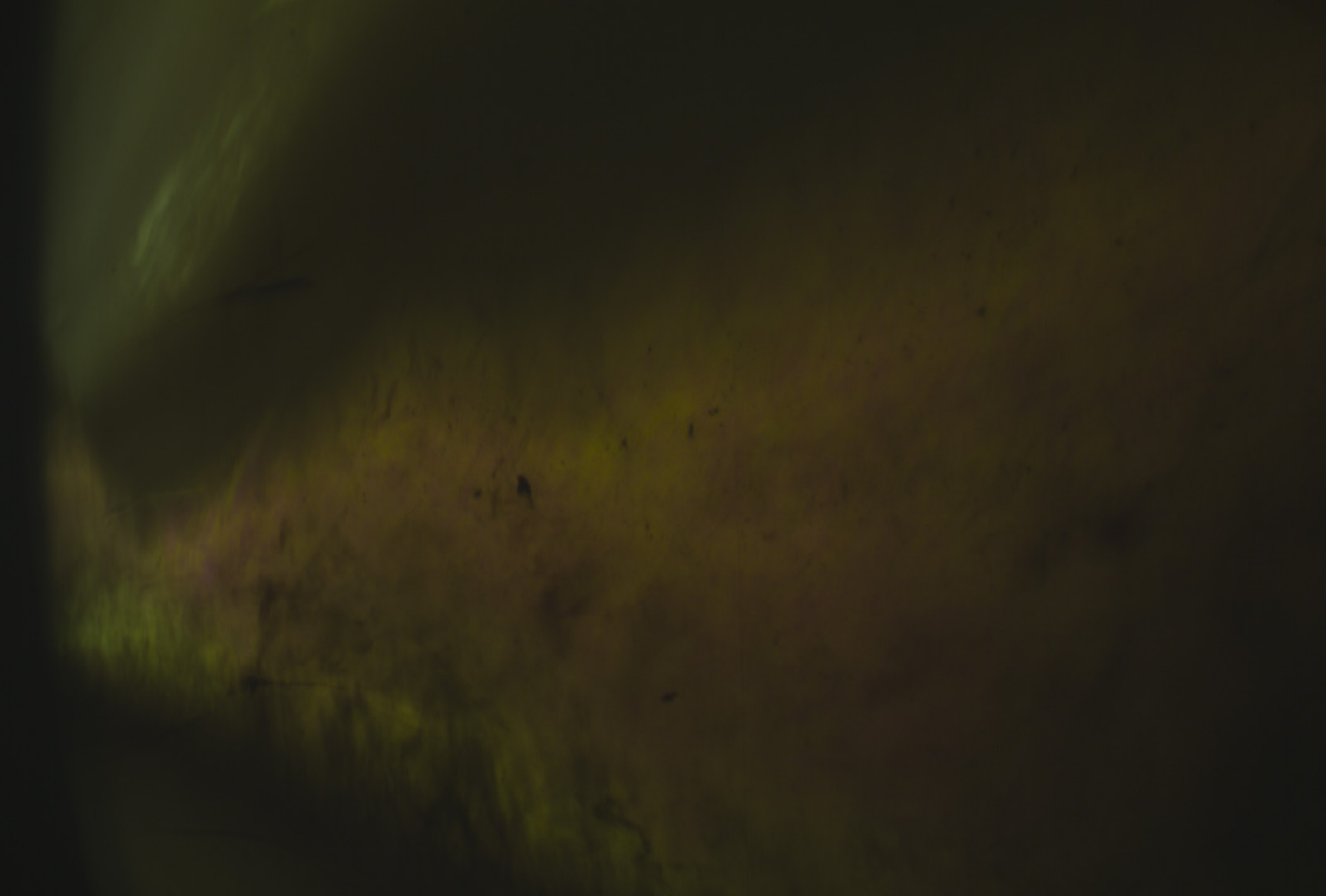
Untitled (2016), ultramarine pigment on cotton canvas, 167 x 105 cm.  
In 2017 acquired by the Danish Arts Foundation





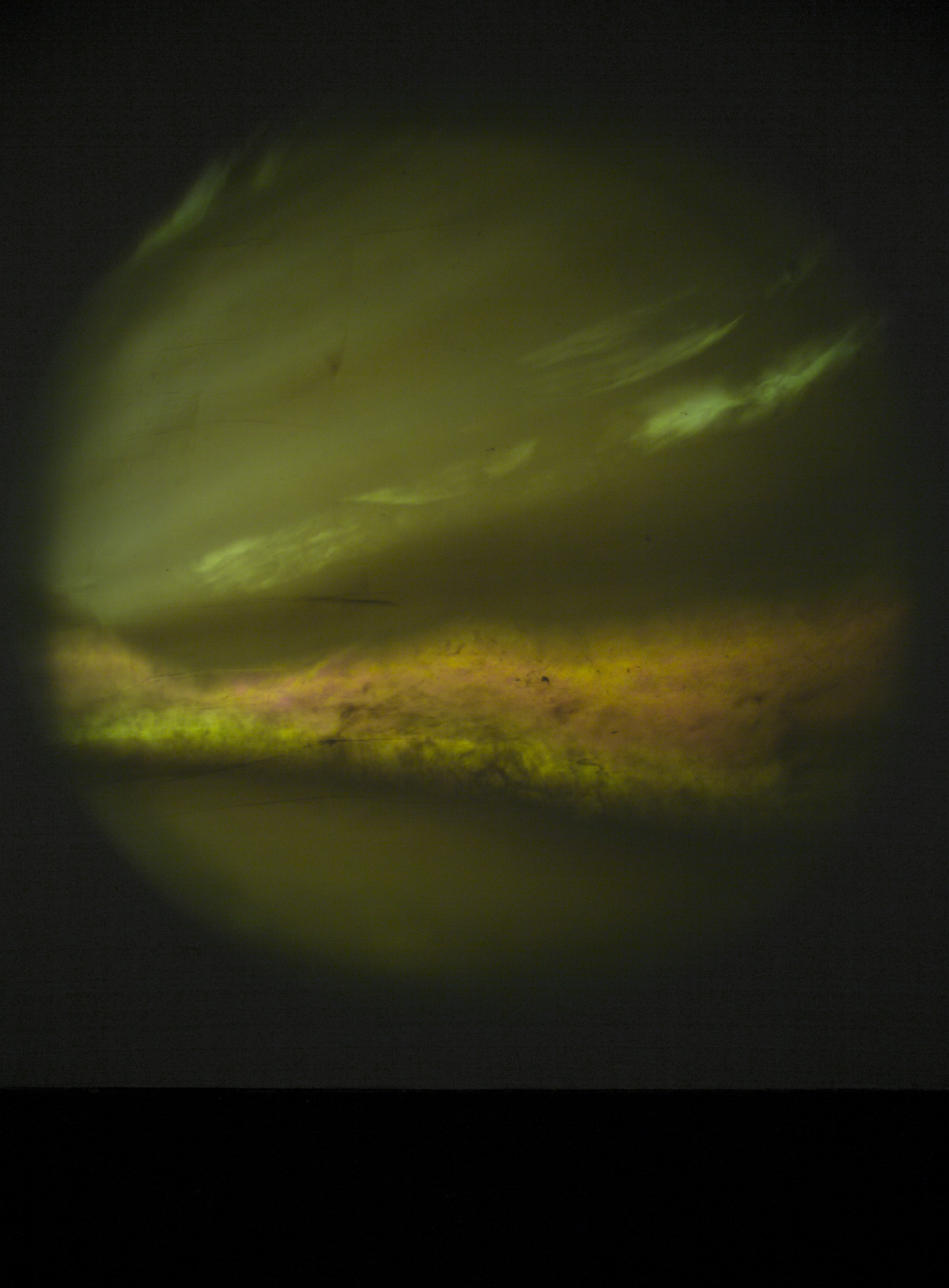
Untitled (2016), ultramarine pigment on cotton canvas, 167 x 105 cm.  
In 2017 acquired by the Danish Arts Foundation





*Slide in "BIM / Biennale de l'image en mouvement", opal-slide and gobo installation.*  
Installation views, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Genève, CH, and MONA, Hobart, AU, 2014 - 2015  
Photos © MONA/Rémi Chauvin





Slide in "BIM / Biennale de l'image en mouvement", opal-slide and gobo installation, group exhibition.  
Installation views, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Genève, CH, and MONA, Hobart, AU, 2014 – 2015



**Slide, 2014**

Stone slide installation (black opal slide, gobo projector; dimensions variable)

"Slide is an installation composed of a piece of black opal placed in a gobo projector. Opal is an amorphous solid lacking crystalline structure, so it flows and moves like a liquid, but on a time scale that extends eons beyond human life spans or comprehension. The projected image is thus a 'moving image' [referencing the exhibition title, "Biennale de l'image en mouvement"] even if we fail to perceive its movement. As such, the installation relativizes the properties of so-called time-based media, as the image appears to be perfectly still, while it is actually moving to the rhythm of geological time."

—Kevin McGarry, from BIM catalogue

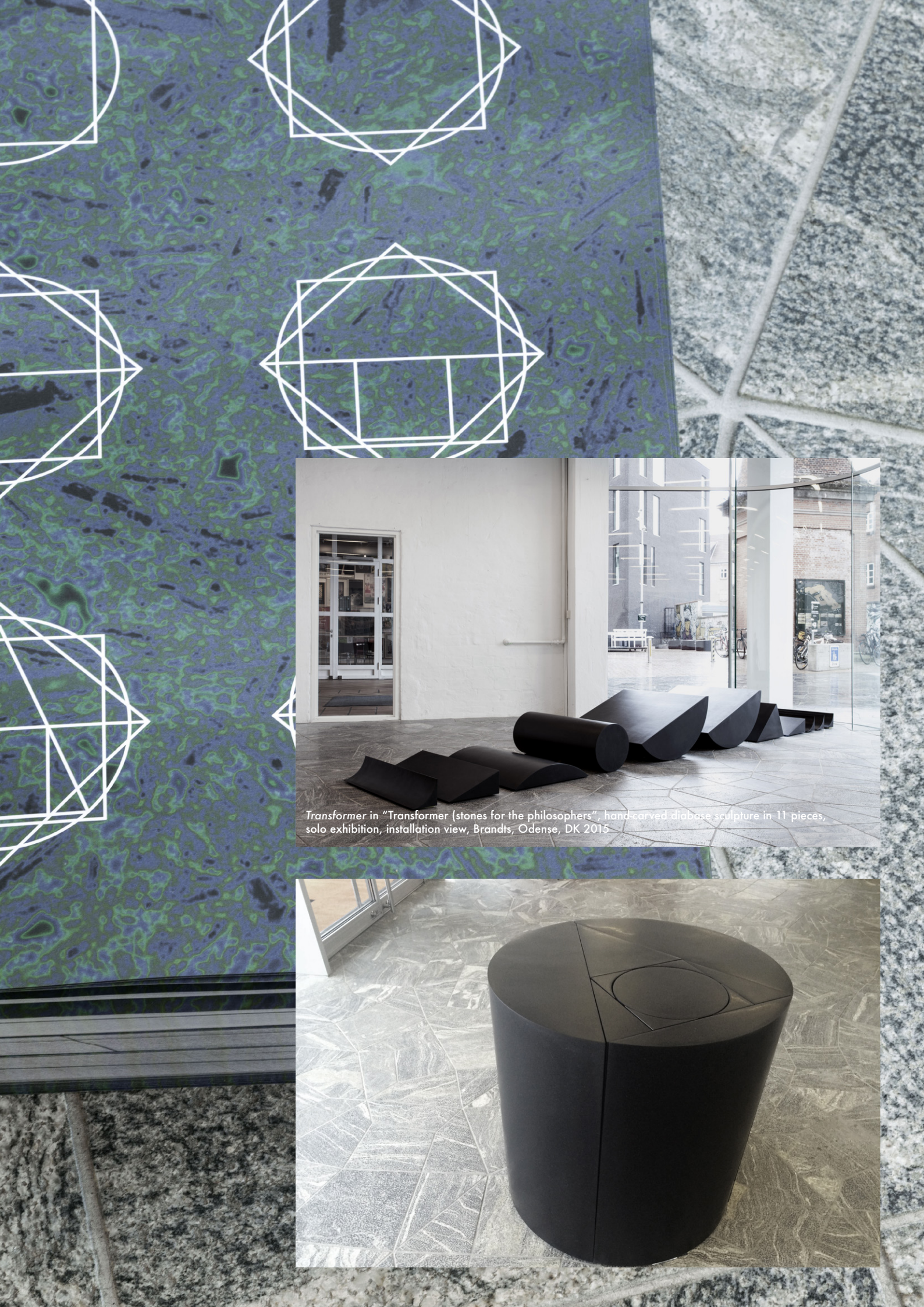
The installation has previously been shown at BIM at Centre d'art Contemporain in Geneva, CH (2014), the MONA Museum in Hobart, AU (2015); "Surfacing Earth" at Röda Sten Konsthall, Göteborg, SE (2016), and "Cosmic Existence" at Den Frie, Copenhagen, DK (2019).





*Transformer* in "*Transformer (stones for the philosophers)*", hand-carved diabase sculpture in 11 pieces, solo exhibition, installation view (detail), Brandts, Odense, DK, 2015





Transformer in "Transformer (stones for the philosophers)", hand-carved diabase sculpture in 11 pieces, solo exhibition, installation view, Brandts, Odense, DK 2015







*Transformer*, 11 unique flipbooks (one per stone) documenting the project, 2016  
Photos © Frida Gregersen







## TRANSFORMER, 2015-16

Public commission for the Danish Arts Foundation and Odense City Council comprising stone sculpture interred in the ground along Filsofgangen i Odense city centre and 11 unique artist books documenting the project.

"Geological porridge, magma. Across continental crusts, life flows in its primeval non-form, always in the process of forcing its way to the surface of the World. To look at the ground beneath our feet is to stick one's head into the boiling cauldron of creation: Once you allow for your mind's eye to see at the level of naked cosmic TRANSFORMATION, asphalt and flagstones melt like broken glass to reveal elemental mojo moving, in all directions and at all velocities. The philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis proposed that we consider the world as a ceaseless flow of magmas: "What is," he wrote in 1977, "is Chaos, or Abyss, or Without-Foundation. What is, is Chaos stratified in a non-regular manner."

TRANSFORMER (2015–?) precipitates its own forgetting. It knows that it will sooner or later fall out of history to become a part of the cosmic movement of matter that it came from. A large cylinder of diabase, it is a compact, dry and heavy lava stone that was once fugitive, globulating magma. If the cylinder was hollow, a man could crouch inside it. But scale doesn't really matter, only dimensions that include what is below and above culture and the human-made.

A biopsy of petrified Earth marrow, it is cut according to the geometry of the philosophers' stone, as depicted in Emblem 21 in *Atalanta Fugiens*, an alchemical treatise from 1618 that takes the *secretis naturae* as its subject. The result is eleven slivers of tall, slim, dark stone, cut following the lines that are formed by the impossible meeting of a triangle, a square, and two circles, and interred one by one along the half a kilometer of an inner city street, Filsofgangen, 'the philosopher's walk'. The work is physically indexed only by the narrow end surfaces of the individual pieces that remain visible in the road surface. Eleven books—one per stone, one per letter in the title, to be placed in archives in Denmark and abroad—document the making of the work and mark its flight and TRANScendence from its status as an object.

Once something is removed from the possibility of visual verification, the sluices of time have been opened. TRANSFORMER leaves the surface of the world to Monumentalists, Erectors and suckers du monde, those who try to master time from arbitrary points in space that mete out a municipal consensus of eternity. Next thing you know, the beholder is eliminated too. TRANSFORMER does not exist in the eye of the beholder, maybe not even in her mind. Inspired by the ghost of their coherence, it is up to some future eruption of the human psyche to decide that the homeless pieces of stone should be pieced together again, mentally or physically, in the face of their planned obsolescence. It is not stone that magically turns into its enchanting Other (gold), or culminates in mythology (immortality). Instead the inert matter of a genuinely alchemical process is part of TRANS-material dynamics that split and bend linearity without any terminus, cutting across realms of being, opening up to multiple material trajectories that may be inverted, inflected, grafted, deflated, pleased.

TRANSFORMER is a reply to the contemporary riddle of how to (dis)appear in an over-mediated culture. Instead of trying to appear in the middle of time it buries itself in it. This is what archaeologists call a ritual deposit: Here a significant object is taken out of the grasp of the present so it may reach the future, thrown into time like a message in a bottle. (TRANSFORMER short-circuits this premise, of course: as an archaeological object that is exhibited and documented before its deposition, it is amnesia—here rendered as productive as remembrance—that will trigger its authentication as an archeological object). The ritual deposition of TRANSFORMER also echoes in the symbolic economy of the city space, in which it is inscribed as a public work of art. You could say that it undoes the administrative desire for ritualizing public space with art. That is, when a city reserves a site for Public Art, the city employs this site for the representation of civitas and public good. Instead of taking up that site for itself, TRANSFORMER returns it to the everyday. In the place of a sculpture, millions of micro-events.

Relying on collective amnesia and somebody's capacity for re-discovery, TRANSFORMER is sent off into the future when TRANSFORMERS and other monsters could one day linger at traffic lights and make the roads of Funen shimmer with chrome and AI, and the Earth will eject the 11 elements like splinters from a sore finger, sending them high into the sky, ready for new reconfigurations."

—Lars Bang Larsen, from artist book

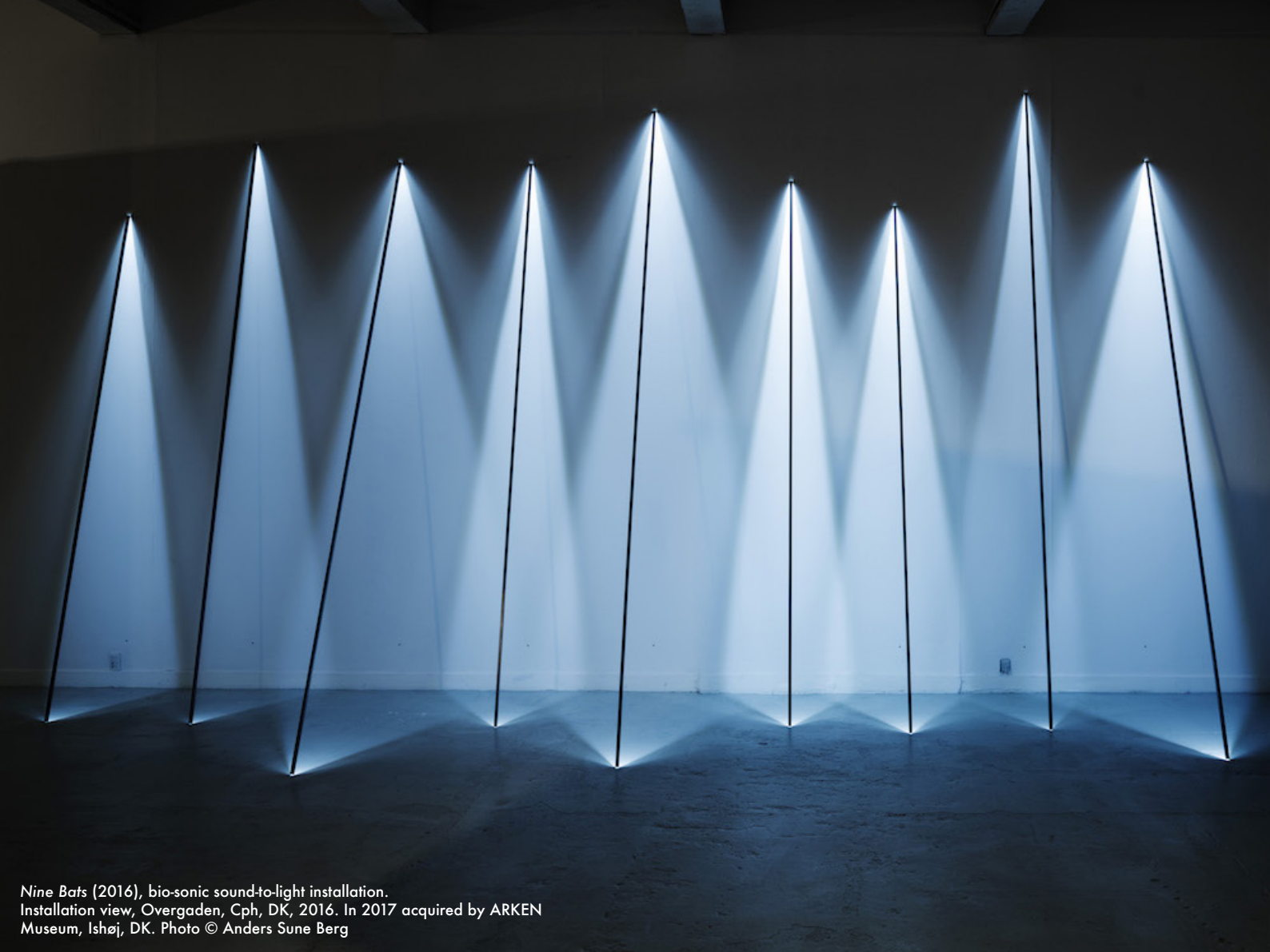
Before depositing the stones in the ground, the sculpture was exhibited in a solo exhibition titled "TRANSFORMER (stones for the philosophers)" at Brandts, Odense, DK (2015). The 11 books are archived for the future in selected national and international art book archives and collections, including Historiens Hus in Odense and the collection of the Danish Arts Foundation.





Bat.





*Nine Bats* (2016), bio-sonic sound-to-light installation.  
 Installation view, Overgaden, Cph, DK, 2016. In 2017 acquired by ARKEN  
 Museum, Ishøj, DK. Photo © Anders Sune Berg



*Les lumières et la chauve-souris*, bio-sonic site-specific installation transforming sound into light,  
 public commission, SDU, Odense, DK, 2014.



**Nine Bats, 2016**  
**Les lumières et la chauve-souris, 2014**

Les lumières et la chauve-souris: Public commission for BYGST, the Danish Building and Property Agency, installed at the University of Southern Denmark (SDU), Odense, DK (54 LED-panes, 54 microphones, 54 sound-to-light converters), and Nine Bats: bio-sonic sound-to-light installation (9 LED panes, 9 microphones, 9 sound-to-light converters).

*Les lumières et la chauve-souris* is a permanent installation at the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the University of Southern Denmark (SDU). Based on a bio-sonic visualization technique developed in Annemarie Surlykke's research team at SDU, the work sheds light on—'enlightens'—everyday life at the university by means of a line of sound-to-light converters translating live-recorded sound into light in the 54 LED-panes mounted on the wall. In the laboratory the technique is used to trace the movements of bats through the sounds they emit. In the installation the focus is shifted towards the people working and studying at the university.

The bats used for scientific research at SDU also reside in the forests nearby, and as they use the trees to navigate by, the original architectural drawings had to be altered to avoid taking down the woods and eliminating the bats' breeding ground. Thus, the architecture into which the installation is embedded is directly shaped by the living conditions of the local bats—a subtle shift in power, or emphasis, from Science to Nature.

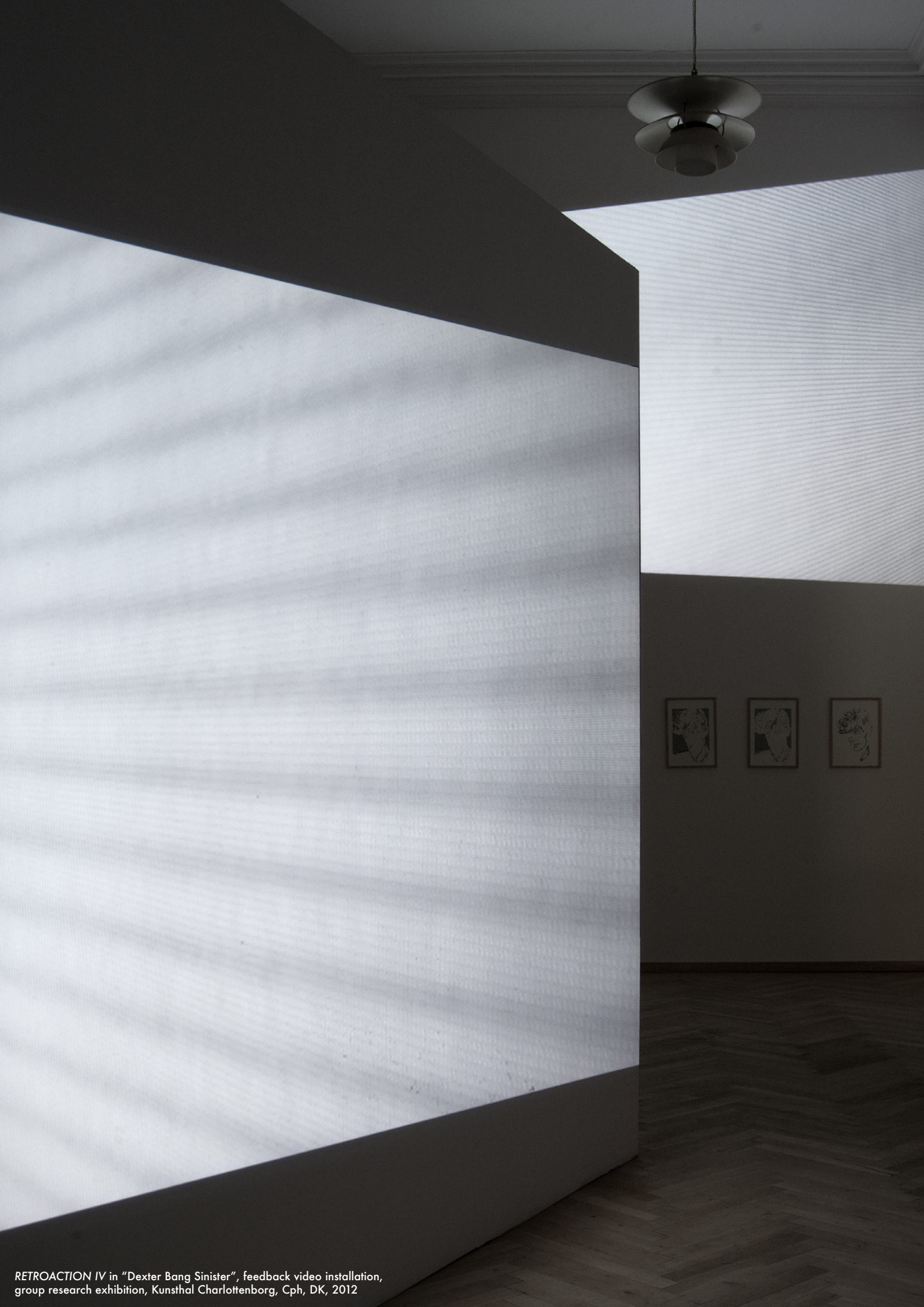
The title of the installation is borrowed from an article in *Le Monde Diplomatique* ("Du capitalisme et des chauve-souris") outlining the way in which nature is consumed by the recuperating powers of capitalism as an unintended outcome of Enlightenment: everything can be turned into money, even the contribution of bats to the world.

Replacing the word 'capitalisme' with 'les lumières' (Enlightenment in French), the title at once points towards the actual set-up of the piece (lights and bats), and the larger scientific and political history it is part of through its installment in academia.

*Nine Bats* abstracts the site-specificity of *Les lumières et la chauve-souris*, while maintaining a subtle reference via the title. Both works point beyond the limitedness of visual sight as the primary mode for science's relation to the world by responding to the sonic rather than the visual environment.

*Nine Bats* has been shown as part of the exhibition "Varulv" at Overgaden, Copenhagen, DK (2016). As of 2017, it is part of the permanent collection of ARKEN Museum.





RETROACTION IV in "Dexter Bang Sinister", feedback video installation, group research exhibition, Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Cph, DK, 2012



## **RETROACTION, 2008 - ?**

Feedback video installation; live feed cameras, video beamers, dimensions variable

"With the use of modern technical devices such as video and projectors, Marie Kølbaek Iversen sets out to investigate the empty space through her RETROACTION series. It could be considered a modern version of the famous Pascal experiments: *le vide dans le vide* or 'emptiness in emptiness'. The technical equipment, which is normally used for showing something, is fed with nothing in a closed circuit revolving around nothingness. The work can be perceived as a continuous strive towards resolution, but also as a way to try to materialize empty space, just as Pascal tried to point to the existence of a vacuum inside a glass tube.

In Kølbaek Iversen's version it becomes clear that even if you put in nothing, the technical equipment will always fill the gap with something—the continuous vibrations from the room and the people who interfere with the installation will have a direct impact on it. This, somehow, comes close to Aristotle's claim, that an empty space doesn't exist: it will immediately suck something in.

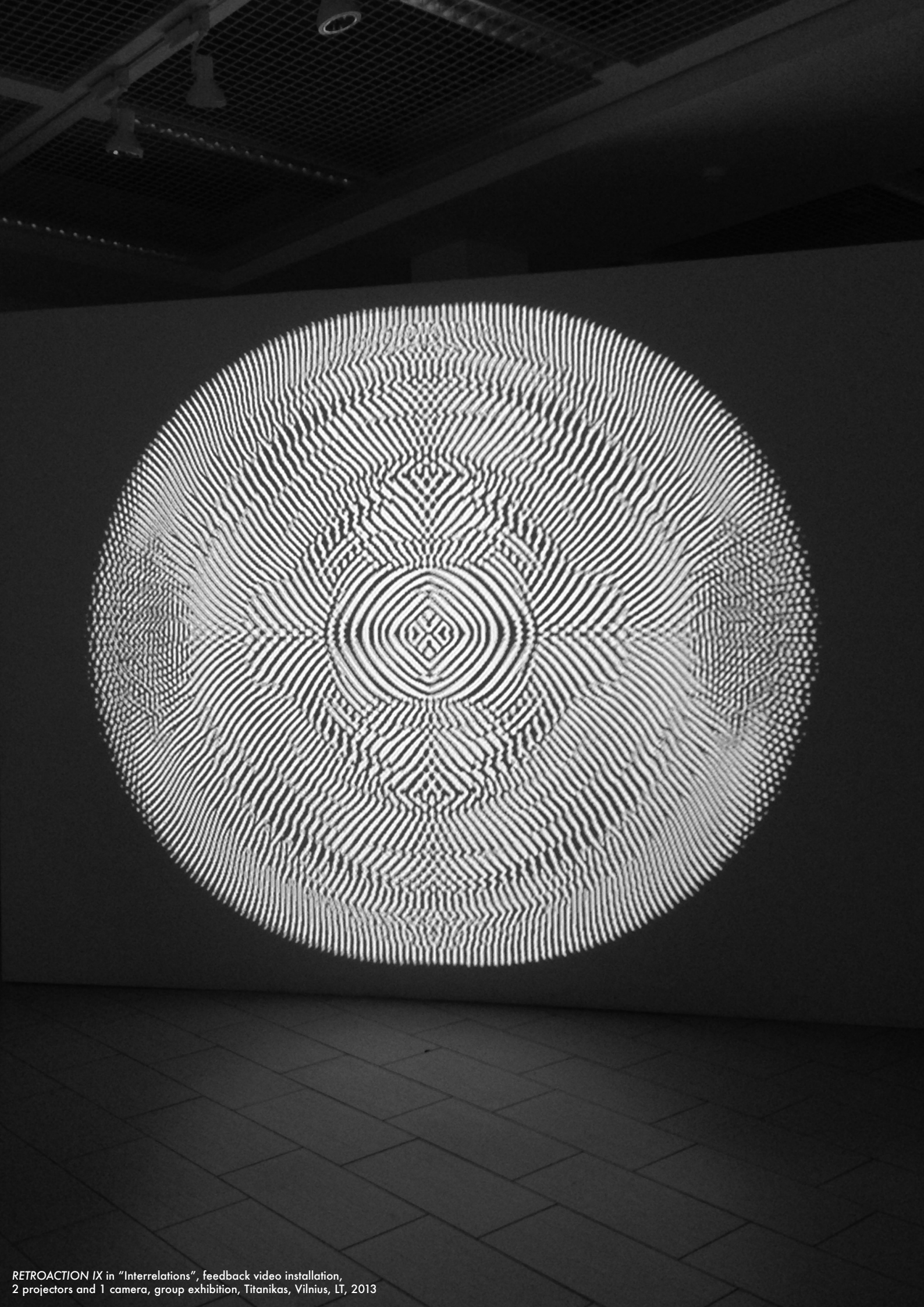
Pascal tried to disprove this claim with his experiments, and he even got to a point where he could show that a real vacuum was made in a glass tube. However, it was the vacuum of the heart – the longing for completeness—that eventually came to occupy his philosophical mind. In his *Pensées* (posthumously published in 1669) he writes: "For after all what is man in nature? A nothing in relation to infinity, all in relation to nothing, a central point between nothing and all and infinitely far from understanding either. The ends of things and their beginnings are impregnably concealed from him in an impenetrable secret. He is equally incapable of seeing the nothingness out of which he was drawn and the infinite in which he is engulfed."

In Kølbaek Iversen's RETROACTIONS, which consists of nothing other than the installment or 'empty' equipment itself, we also witness the paradoxical phenomenon that nothing is yet something and that the vibration of our existence will manifest itself in the installation as we observe it. The human fear and longing for empty space is somehow linked in a double quest for space while still being alive. The final nothingness equals death."

—Maria Kjær Thomsen, from exhibition catalogue, "Spatium," KUMU, EE, 2012

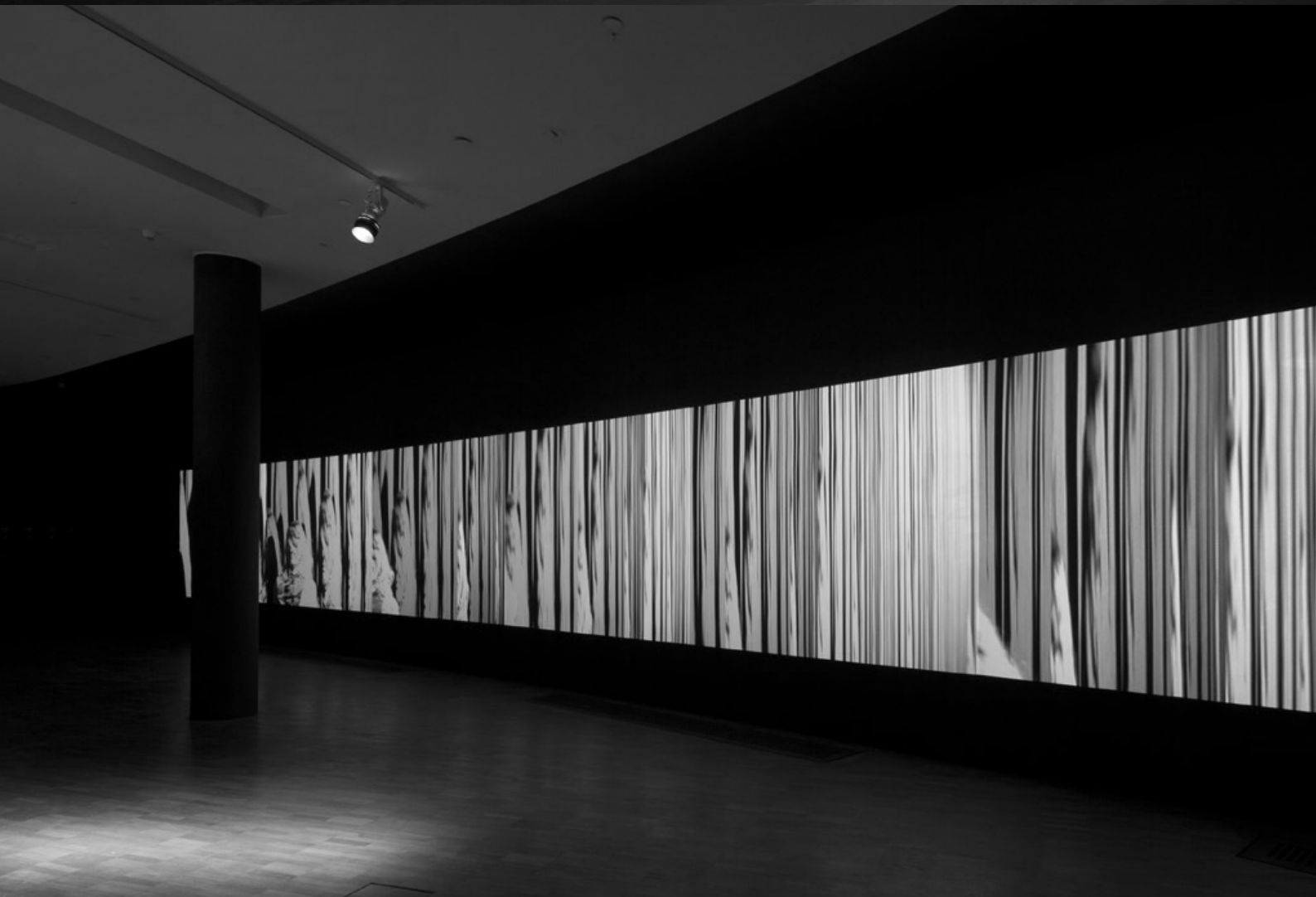
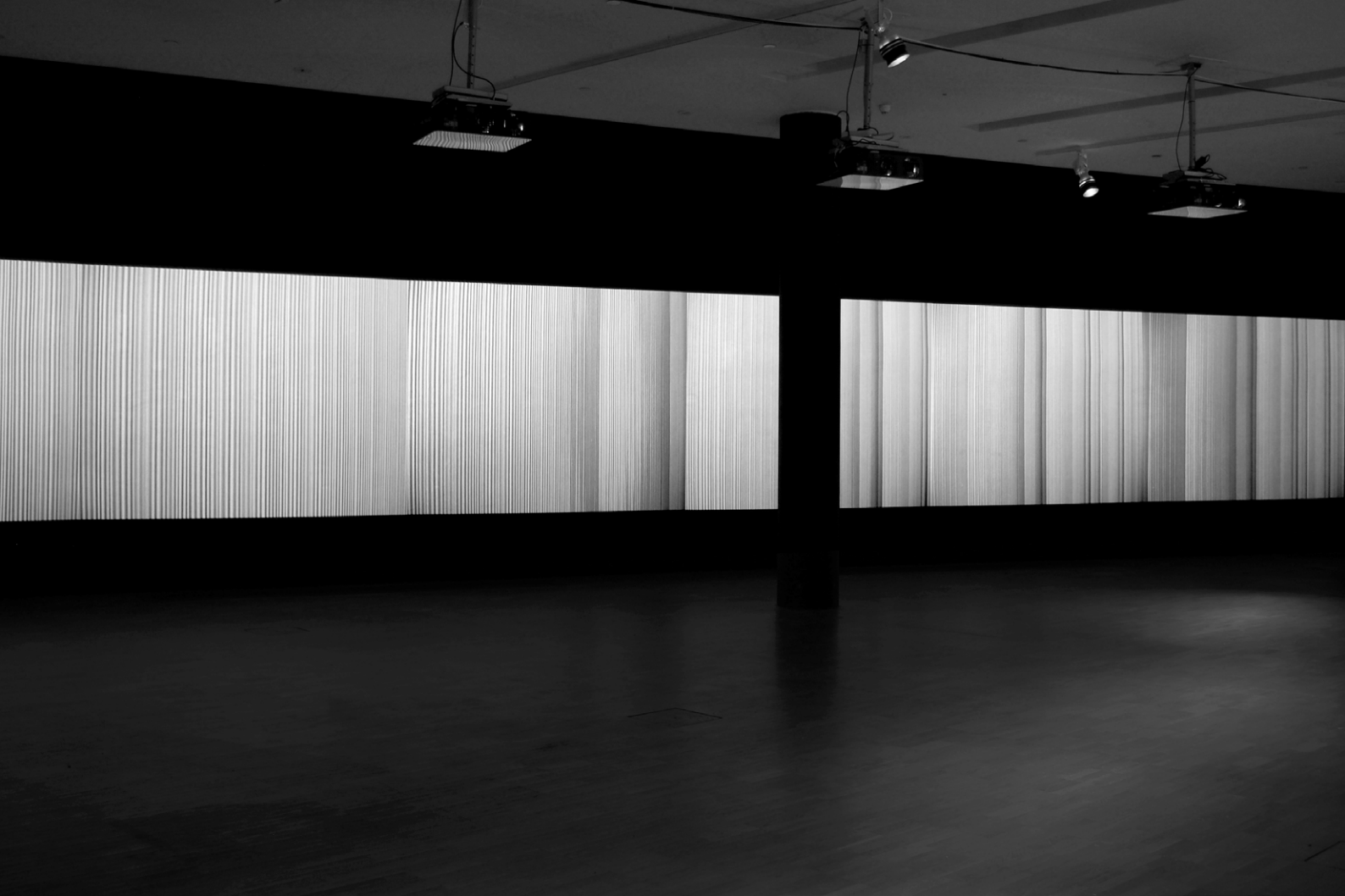
Works in the RETROACTION series have, among other places, been shown at Gasworks, London, GB; Drawing Room, London, GB; Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, DK; STUK Kunstenzentrum, Leuven, BE; KUMU Museum, Tallinn, EE; Titanikas, Vilnius, LT; West, The Hague, NL; Gl. Strand, Copenhagen, DK; Kunsthall Nikolaj, Copenhagen, DK, et.al.





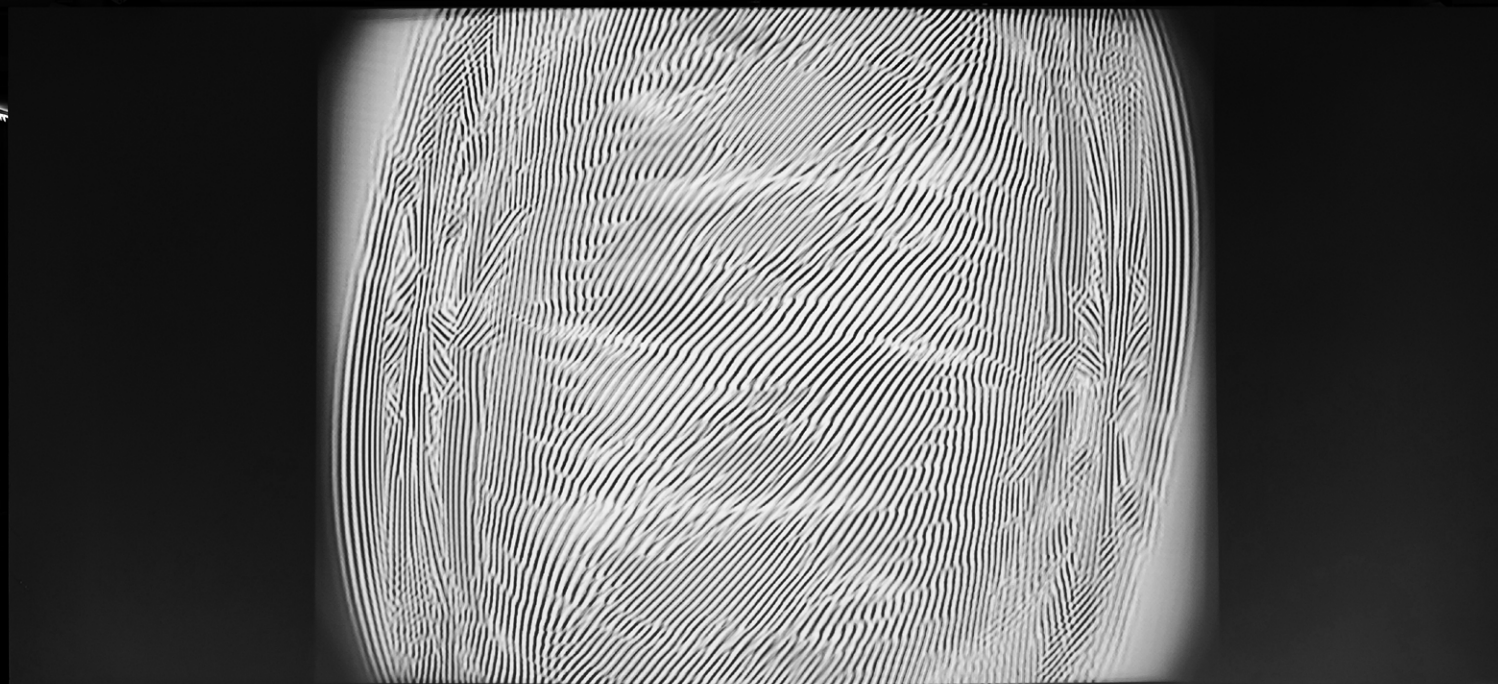
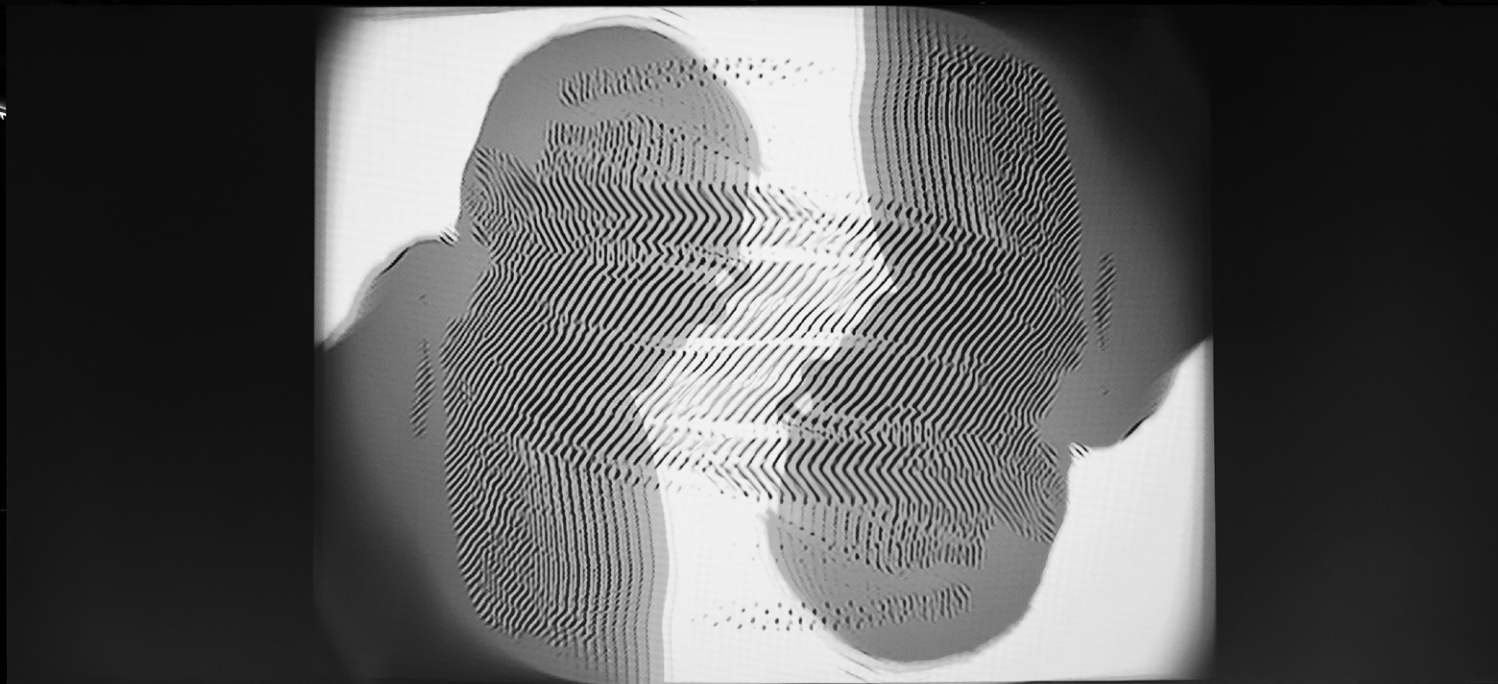
RETROACTION IX in "Interrelations", feedback video installation,  
2 projectors and 1 camera, group exhibition, Titanikas, Vilnius, LT, 2013





RETROACTION VIII in "Spatium", feedback video installation,  
6 projectors and 6 cameras, group exhibition, KUMU, Tallinn, EE, 2012  
Photos © Anders Sune Berg





RETROACTION X in "Consciousness," ARTEFACT '14, feedback video installation,  
2 projectors and 1 camera, group exhibition, STUK, Leuven, BE, 2014  
Photos © Pierre Antoine





*Autonambule* in "Execution (into decapital)", HD video,  
solo exhibition, IMO, Cph, DK, 2012  
Photos © Kristoffer Juel Poulsen



## **Autonambule, 2012**

HD-video featuring neurologist Henrik Stig Jørgensen and Ida Tietgen Høyrup performing a neurological test (in Danish: den objektive undersøgelse), (duration: 26:21).

"Where are we heading? That question might be difficult to answer because maybe we're not heading. Maybe we are just moving headlessly forwards or 'autonambulistically' around, just like Mike, the chicken that stayed alive for 18 months after having had its head cut off.

The autonambule is a being set in motion by an external cause independent of its own will and mind and without a clear goal. It is the inhabitant of a world shaped by a synthesis of science, technology and capitalism—a world which does not know where it is going whence going in all directions simultaneously. A world in which anthropologist Georges Balandier hears the same phrase over and over again: "It's under control." A phrase which leaves us to think that we see clearly in the dark—a phrase which reveals its real meaning as an antiphrase.

The airplane is a recurrent figure used in trying to grasp this present day condition—similar to Plato's use of the ship as a metaphor for society. In his book *99 francs*, Frédéric Beigbeder cultivates the airplane as a metaphor for the techno-scientific capitalist system. His description of the attempts at coming to terms with this machine, which connects the dots on the world map, draws a hopeless image: "The powers of today are so numerous and diluted that the system has become powerless. And here we are endlessly repeating our Gramscian credo: to hijack a plane, you start out by entering it. What irony! Now when we enter the cockpit with our grenades in our hands and get ready to give orders to the pilot with pointing machine guns, we discover that there was no pilot. We wanted to hijack a plane which nobody knew how to steer."

The plane is thought of as a machine, which we have created and which we are incapable of controlling. In this scenario heroism survives but not the hero. In the film *United 93* about 9/11 the heroes are the passengers who have stormed the terrorists who have stormed the pilot in the cockpit. Then the plane crashes. And one cannot help but thinking that we are all better off with neither man nor machine than both out of control.

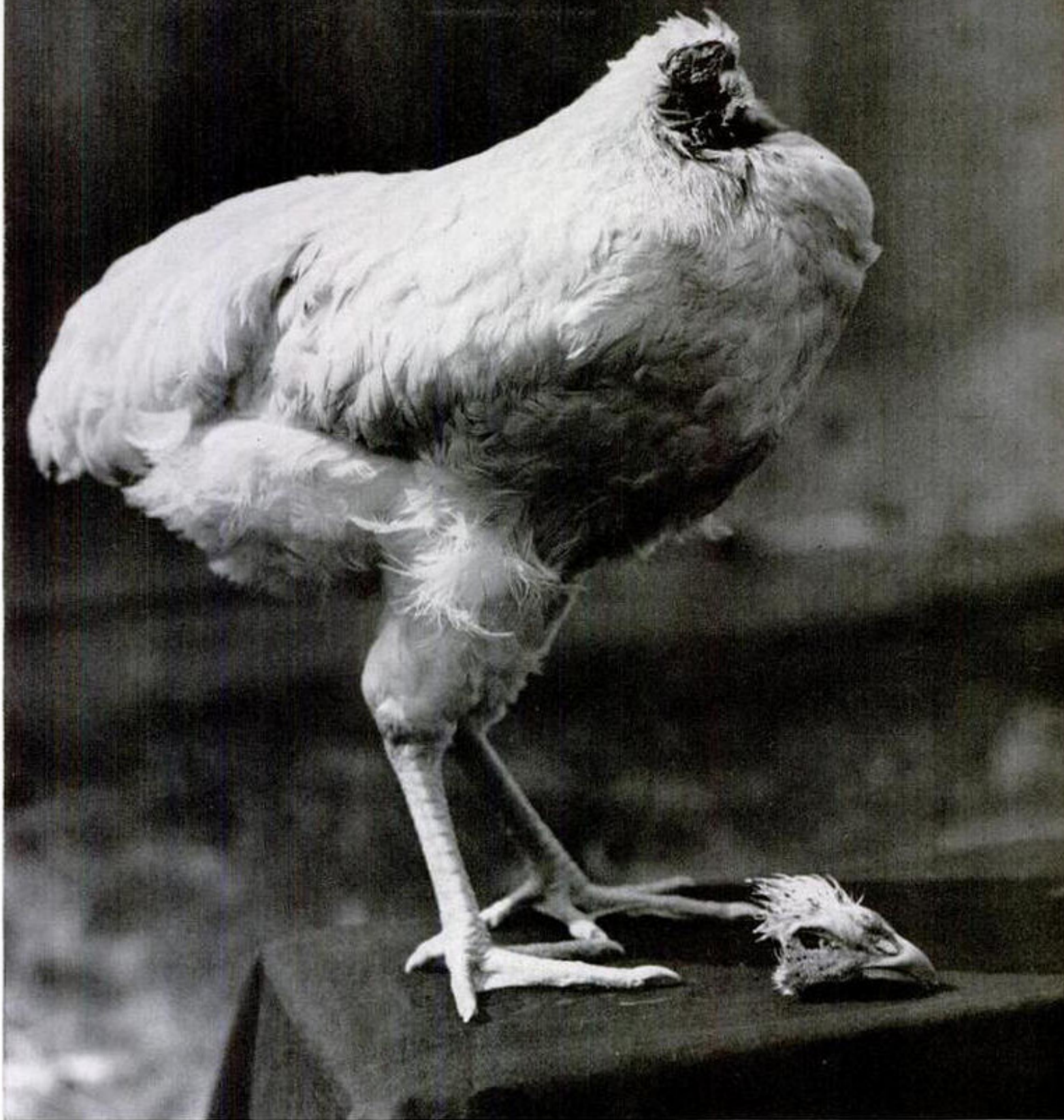
But instead of trying to control the plane, we can contemplate the plane. But not as an object, as Martin Heidegger points out. The plane which stands at the runway as an object conceals the fact that this plane is "standing reserve", something which unfolds in a larger global transportation system. A larger system, which we are part of. "As long as we conceive of technology as an instrument, we remain transfixed in the will to master it. We hurry past the essence of technology." The moment we think we can master technology, we fail to understand technology not to mention ourselves. We simply duplicate instrumental thinking, which shapes technology. Therefore, the true danger does not concern how to control the machine, who controls the machine, nor whether we should get rid of it or not. The danger, as Heidegger sees it, is that the current condition does allow for only one way of thinking. But in the midst of this danger, Heidegger also sees a "saving power"—in Greek, the word *techne* did once not only mean technology, but was also synonymous with the *poiesis* of the fine arts. And therefore art might offer us a special vantage point for contemplating technology: "Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it. Such a realm is art."

For artist Marie Kølbaek Iversen, the question of technology is likewise not simply a question about technology. In her work, we look at systems that seem to develop on their own from the body and up rather than downwards from an organizing 'capital' entity. We may not be able to make sense of it, and we may not know where it is heading. Truth is, it may be heading nowhere. Nonetheless these pages seem to suggest that there might be a head somewhere."

—Toke Lykkeberg

*Autonambule* were shown as part of Kølbaek Iversen's solo exhibition "Execution (into decapital)" at IMO, Copenhagen, DK (2012).





MINUS HIS HEAD, MIKE STANDS ERECT WITH EASE. HE IS 5½ MONTHS OLD AND WEIGHS ABOUT 3½ LB. HIS LATE HEAD (RIGHT FOREGROUND) IS QUITE DEAD

## HEADLESS ROOSTER

Beheaded chicken lives normally  
after freak decapitation by ax

Ever since Sept. 10 a rangy, Wyandotte rooster named Mike has been living a normal chicken's life though he has no head (see above). He walks, flaps his wings, preens his feathers and, when he hears other roosters crow, even answers with a few croaky gurgles. Only major function Mike has lost is sight.

Mike lost his head in the usual rooster way. Mrs. L. A. Olsen, wife of a farmer in Fruita, Colo., 200 miles west of Denver, decided to have chicken for dinner. Mr. Olsen took Mike to the chopping block and axed

off his head. Thereupon Mike got up and soon began to strut around. After decapitation, many chickens run around frantically before dying. Mike, however, kept going as if nothing much had happened.

What Mr. Olsen's ax had done was to clip off most of the skull but leave intact one ear, the jugular vein and the base of the brain, which controls motor functions. Still thriving and gaining weight, Mike has been on exhibition in Salt Lake City at 25¢ admission. And his owners have put a \$10,000 price tag on him.



## Contact

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