

THE POETIC IMAGE

Estéfani Bouza: e.bouza-arnoso@uwtsd.ac.uk/ October 2022

RECAP FROM PREVIOUS SESSION

Introduction to photographic art practice and contemporary documentary practice.

We discussed mainly:

- The fact that photographs are 'ambiguous' objects and their meaning largely depends on context.

- Some of the key transformations of our times and visual responses.

Re-thinking history: Mohamed Bourouissa and LaToya Ruby Frazier.

Race and representation: Deana Lawson.

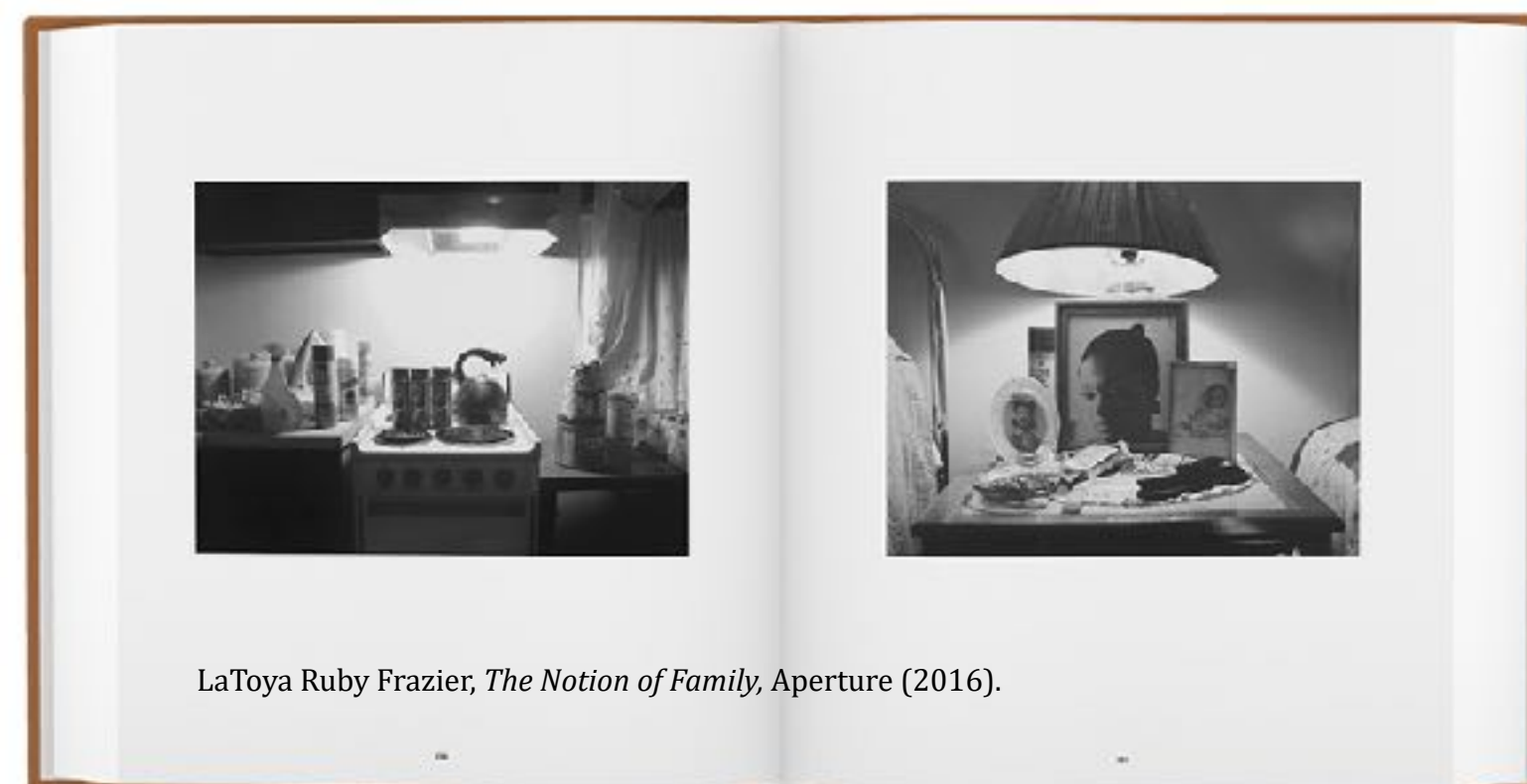
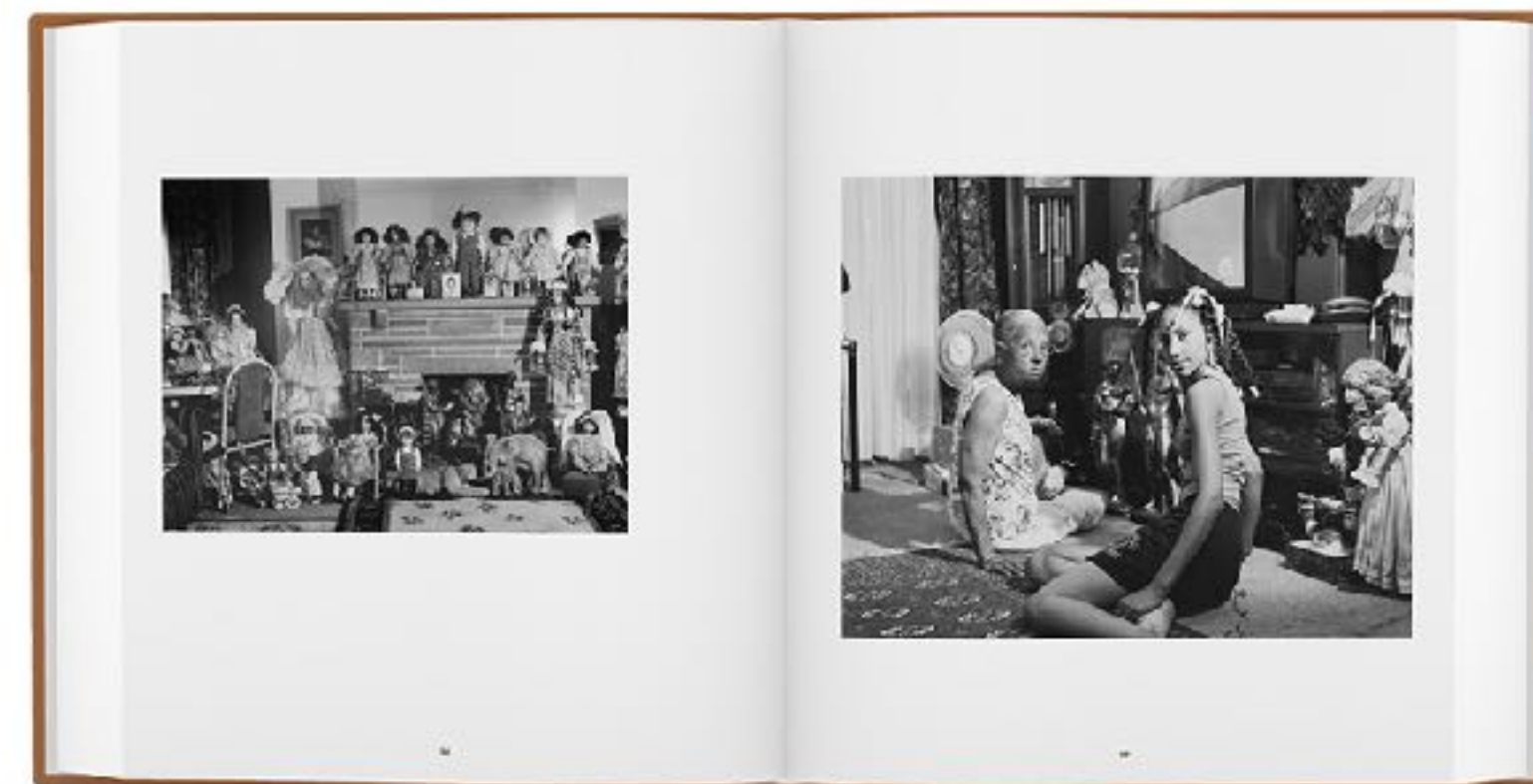
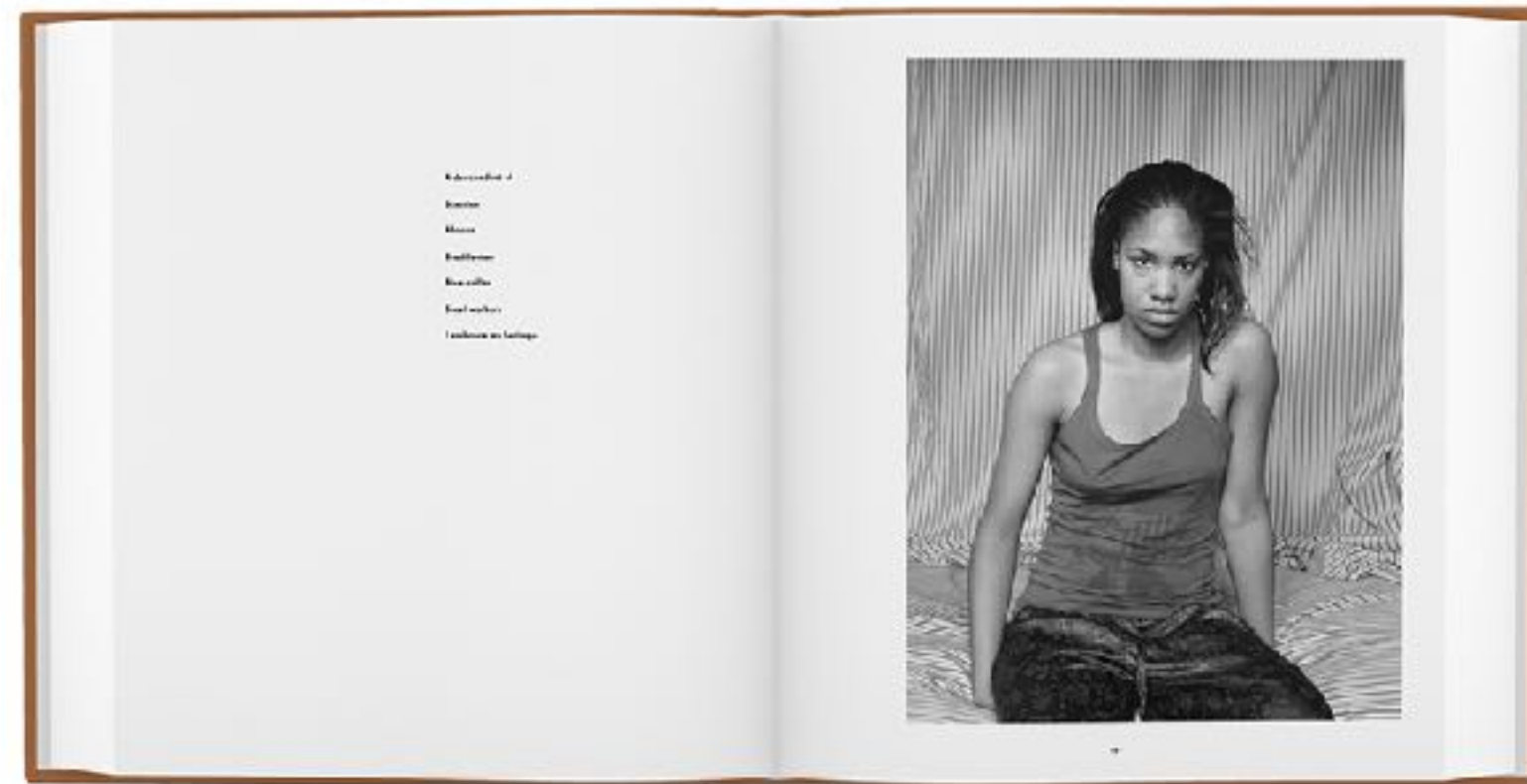
Immigration and borders: Zoe Leonard and Felipe Romero Beltrán.

Climate change: Richard Mosse, Arguiñe Escandón and Yann Gross.

LaToya Ruby Frazier/ *The Notion of Family* / 2001- 2014/

RECAP FROM PREVIOUS SESSION

RE-THINKING HISTORY



LaToya Ruby Frazier, *The Notion of Family*, Aperture (2016).



RECAP FROM PREVIOUS SESSION



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

200
1822 - 2022

Home





My Modules ▾

Moodle Archives ▾

Useful Links ▾

English (en) ▾

Announcements

Assignment Specification
Form and Introductions



Task One: The Poetic
Image



Task Two: The Cinematic
Image





Assignment Specification Form and Introductions

Introductory Slide Show 1

Introductory Slide Show 2

Assignment Specification Form

4

RECAP FROM PREVIOUS SESSION



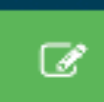
Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David



200 Home
1822 - 2022



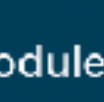
Home



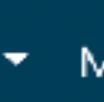
My Modules



Moodle Archives



Useful Links



English (en)



Assignment Specification
Form and Introductions



Task One: The Poetic
Image



Task Two: The Cinematic
Image

Task One: The Poetic Image

Task One

The Poetic Image

We live in the age of information. Unlike the literal image, which anchors meaning, the poetic image is instead open to multiple interpretations. This task encourages you not to seek answers, but instead to allow the meaning of your images to become porous. Think how you might use symbolism or metaphor and remember not to illustrate.

Assignment Specification

Respond to the text given to you in 3 – 5 digital images.



Excerpts from *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot

This is an edited fragment of text from *The Waste Land*.
You can stick to this text as a starting point or read the whole poem for inspiration.

THE LITERAL VERSUS THE POETIC IMAGE

A literal image is one that anchors meaning. As a result it draws our attention towards a specific meaning of a photograph. Examples of literal images are press photographs with captions.



Costco is one of the best-known cash and carry wholesalers. Photograph: Nathaniel Noir/Alamy

THE LITERAL VERSUS THE POETIC IMAGE

As opposed to the literal image, the poetic image is instead open to multiple interpretations and relies on figures such as metaphor, simile, symbol, hyperbole, and implication to say more than what the image might initially seem.



Sam Taylor-Wood
Still Life 2001
Film still

WHAT IS THE POWER OF THE POETIC IMAGE?

The power of the poetic image relies in having the capacity of suggesting/hinting at something else apart from what we have immediately in front of our eyes.

In that sense it has the capacity to IMAGINE and to connect things that initially might seem far apart.

To IMAGINE also relates to IMAGE and photography ability to suggest, extend and relate to different realities, feelings and experiences. In this sense photographs open up meaning and are fluid entities rather than being fixed objects. We will elaborate on this with examples.

WHAT IS THE POWER OF THE POETIC IMAGE?

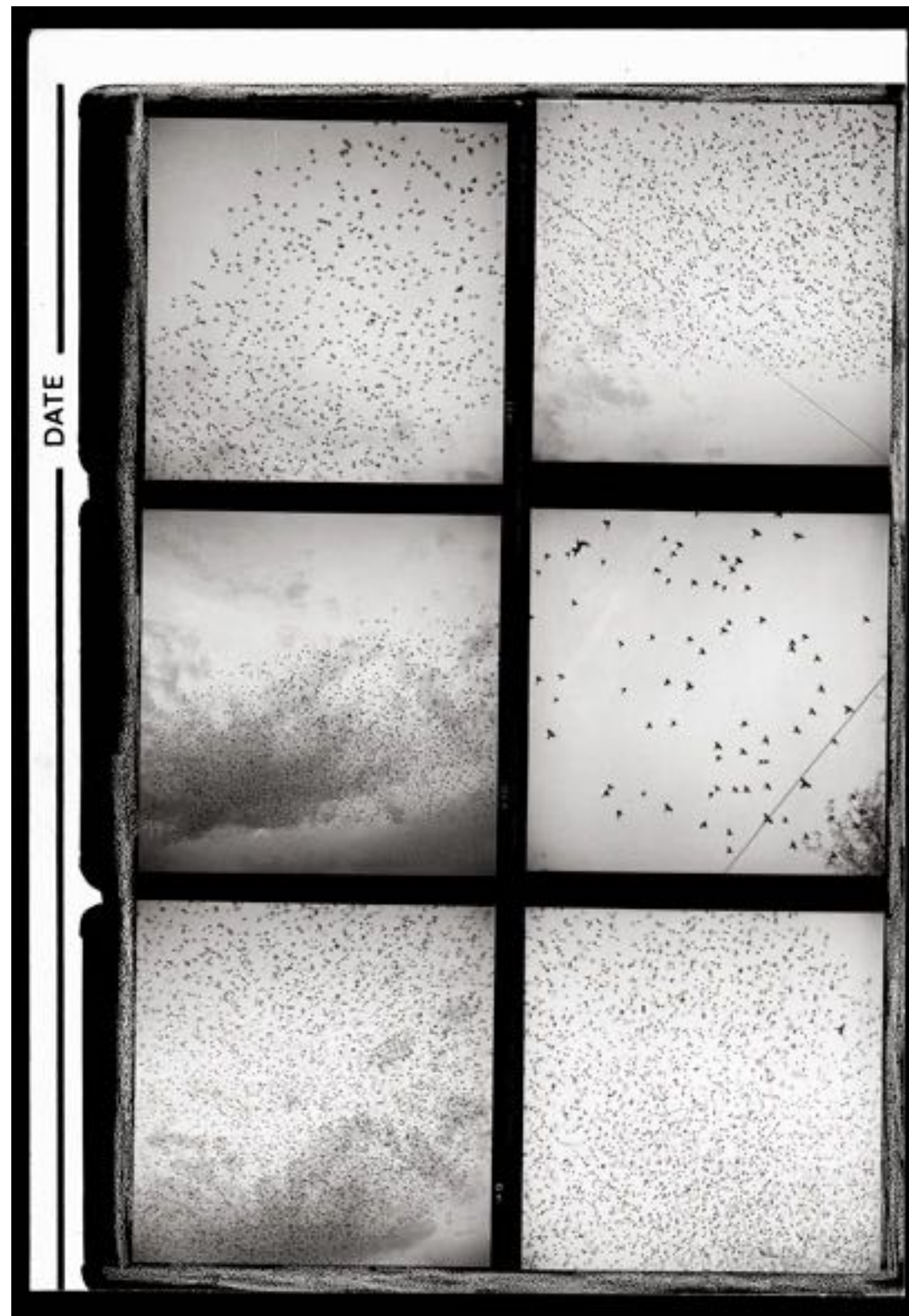
The point quite simply is that the poetic image help us to express our feelings or understanding of a situation in order to give them the power through photographs.

The beauty of the poetic image is that it opens up the photograph and creates a new way of seeing and experiencing the world. As Roland Barthes stated (2000, p.38) photographs '[...] made us reflect, suggested a meaning - a different meaning from the literal one. Ultimately, Photography is subversive not when it frightens, repels, or even stigmatises, but when it is *pensive*, when it thinks'.

Barthes, R. ([1981] 2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. London: Vintage Books.

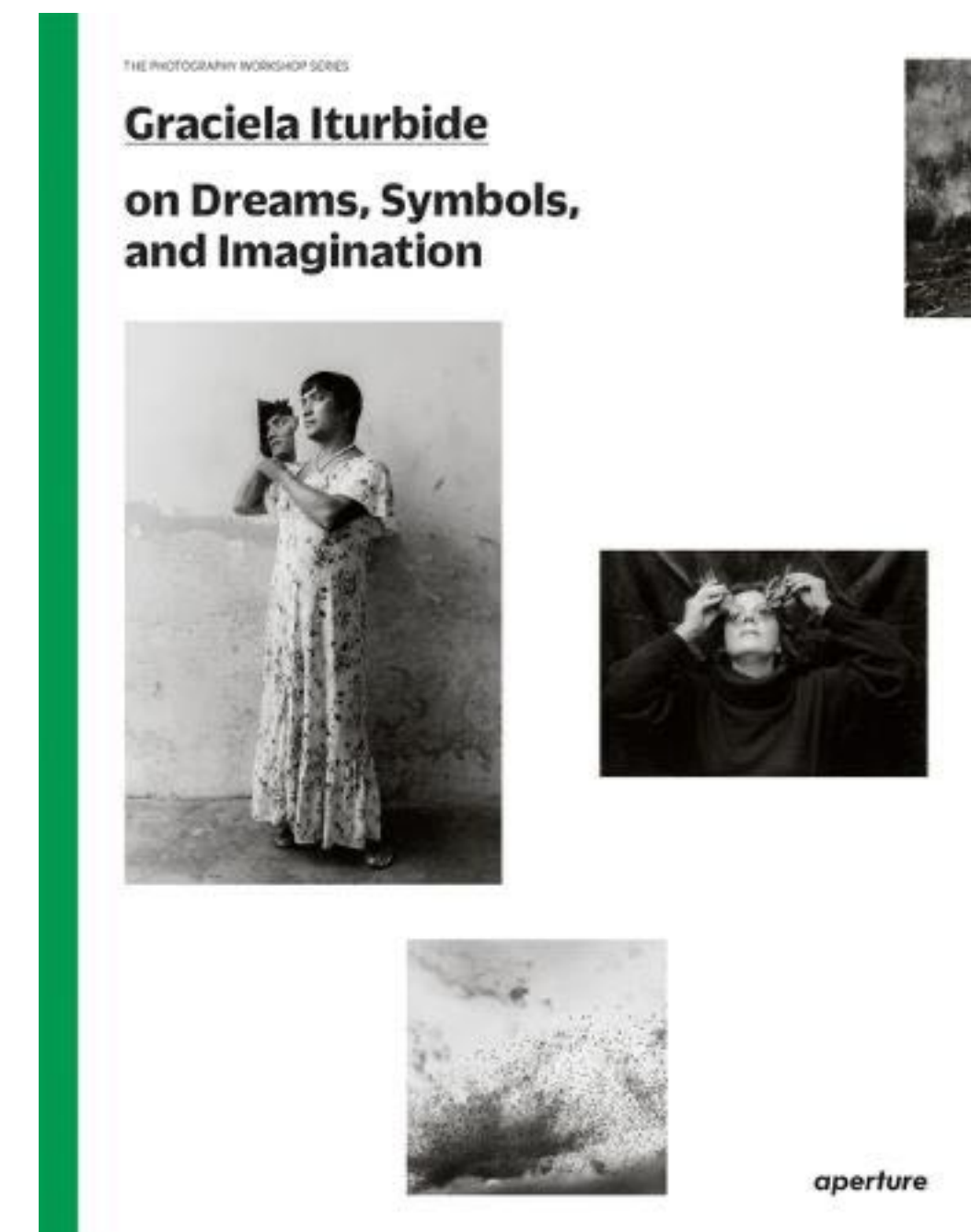
Graciela Iturbide/ *Birds of Death Dolores Hidalgo, Guanajuato, México/ 1978*

EXAMPLES



In regards to Graciela Iturbide relation to literature and particularly poetry, she has stated that: 'I actually wanted to become a writer and I wanted to study philosophy. But I come from a very conservative background, so I wasn't allowed to do that. What I essentially look for everywhere is poetry, be it in literature, be it music...'

Chobi Mela (2014) *An Interview with Graciela Iturbide*. Available at: <https://chobimela.org/an-interview-with-graciela-iturbide-munem-wasif-graciela-iturbide/>. Accessed: 9 October 2022.



Graciela Iturbide/ *Guanajuato, México*/ 1999

EXAMPLES



Graciela Iturbide, *Guanajuato, México*, (1999).

The literal meaning of this photograph by Graciela Iturbide (Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico, 1942) is a tree and birds flying in the sky.

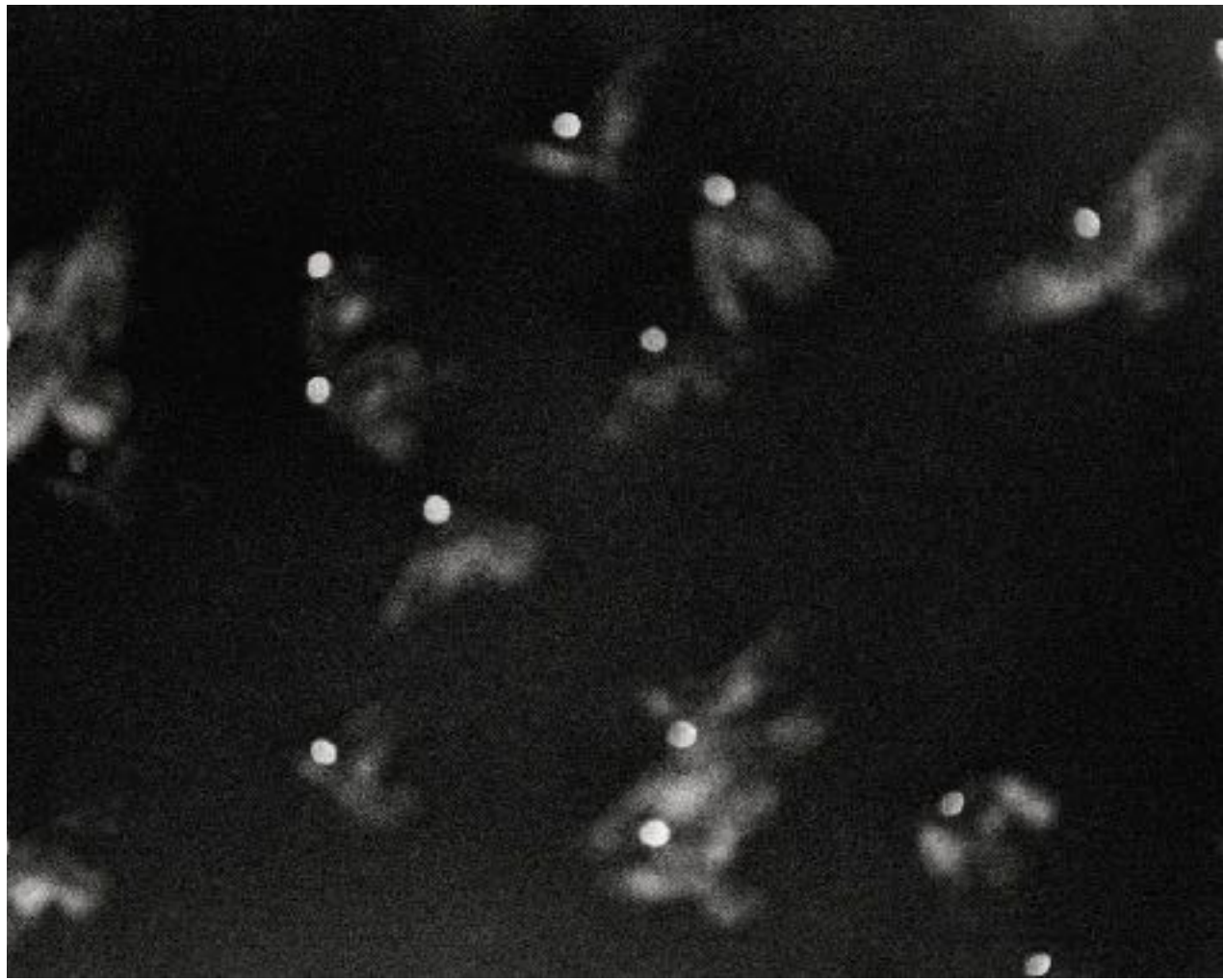
The poetic meaning of this image can be as follows:

Graciela Iturbide's photograph from 1999 is part of a series that the Mexican photographer made while mourning the death of her daughter. It is an arresting beautiful black and white photograph where the sky is compact, dark, heavy, dense. A tree alongside birds, those threshold creatures between sky and earth, form here a strong but ultimately fragile shape that not only is a metaphor of life, but also feels like a visceral gesture, an abstract brushstroke of sorts.

In that way the photograph becomes an extension of how Iturbide is feeling, her inner world. She finds clues in the outside world and records them through the camera. Therefore Iturbide uses photography to express herself.

Masahisa Fukase/ *Ravens*/ 1986

EXAMPLES



Masahisa Fukase/ *Ravens*/ 1986

EXAMPLES



Masahisa Ukase (Hokkaido, Japan, 1934; d. 2012)
published *Ravens*, aka *The Solitude of Ravens* in 1986.

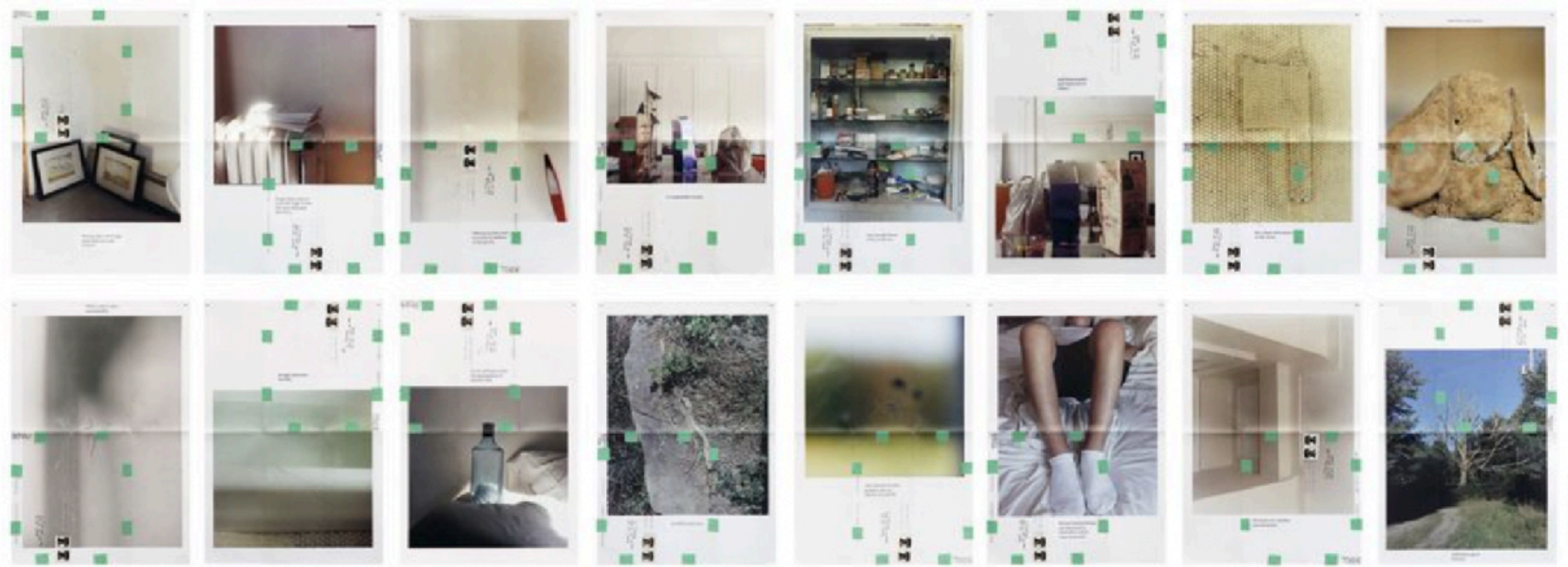
The work was made between 1975 and 1986 in the aftermath of a divorce and was triggered by a mournful train journey to his hometown. The photobook is a dark, and impressionistic journey and has also been interpreted as an insight into the postwar Japanese psyche. *Ravens* starts at the site of the Hiroshima bomb and ends in Hokkaido, focusing in on the ominous birds, cats, girls, a solitary homeless man and, finally, his estranged wife, who had left him after 13 years of marriage.



With *Ravens*, Ukase creates an impressionistic narrative that merges the deeply personal, the sorrow and loss of his wife, with the collective trauma of postwar Japan. What we sense in these images more than anything else is Ukase personality, the obsession with his ex-wife and the identification with birds.

Moyra Davey/ *Trust Me*/ 2011

EXAMPLES



← Back to Audio



Moyra Davey on Trust Me, 2011

Moyra Davey/ *Trust Me*/ 2011

EXAMPLES



Moyra Davey, *Trust Me* (detail), 16 prints, postage stamps, painter's tape and ink (2011).



Zoe Leonard/ *Arkwright Road*/ Exhibition view at Camden Arts Center/ 2012

EXAMPLES



Zoe Leonard, *Arkwright Road*, exhibition view (2012).



Zoe Leonard, *Arkwright Road*, exhibition view (2012).

Zoe Leonard/ *Arkwright Road*/ Exhibition view at Camden Arts Center/ 2012

EXAMPLES



Zoe Leonard, *Arkwright Road*, exhibition view (2012).

Zoe Leonard, (Liberty, New York, US, 1961) transformed one of the gallery rooms at Camden Arts Centre into a camera obscura.

Daylight filters in through a lens, projecting an image of the world outside onto the floor, walls and ceiling.

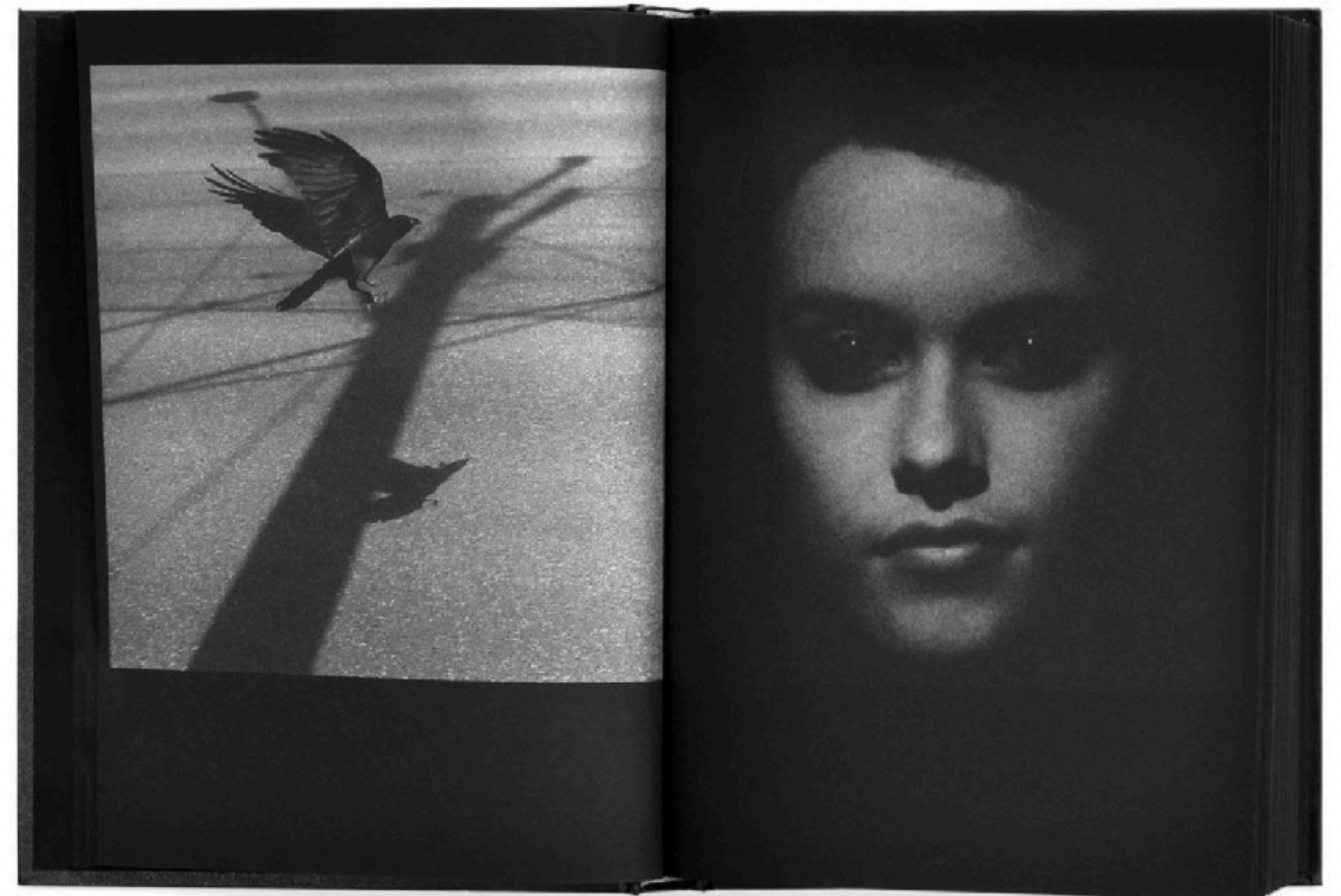
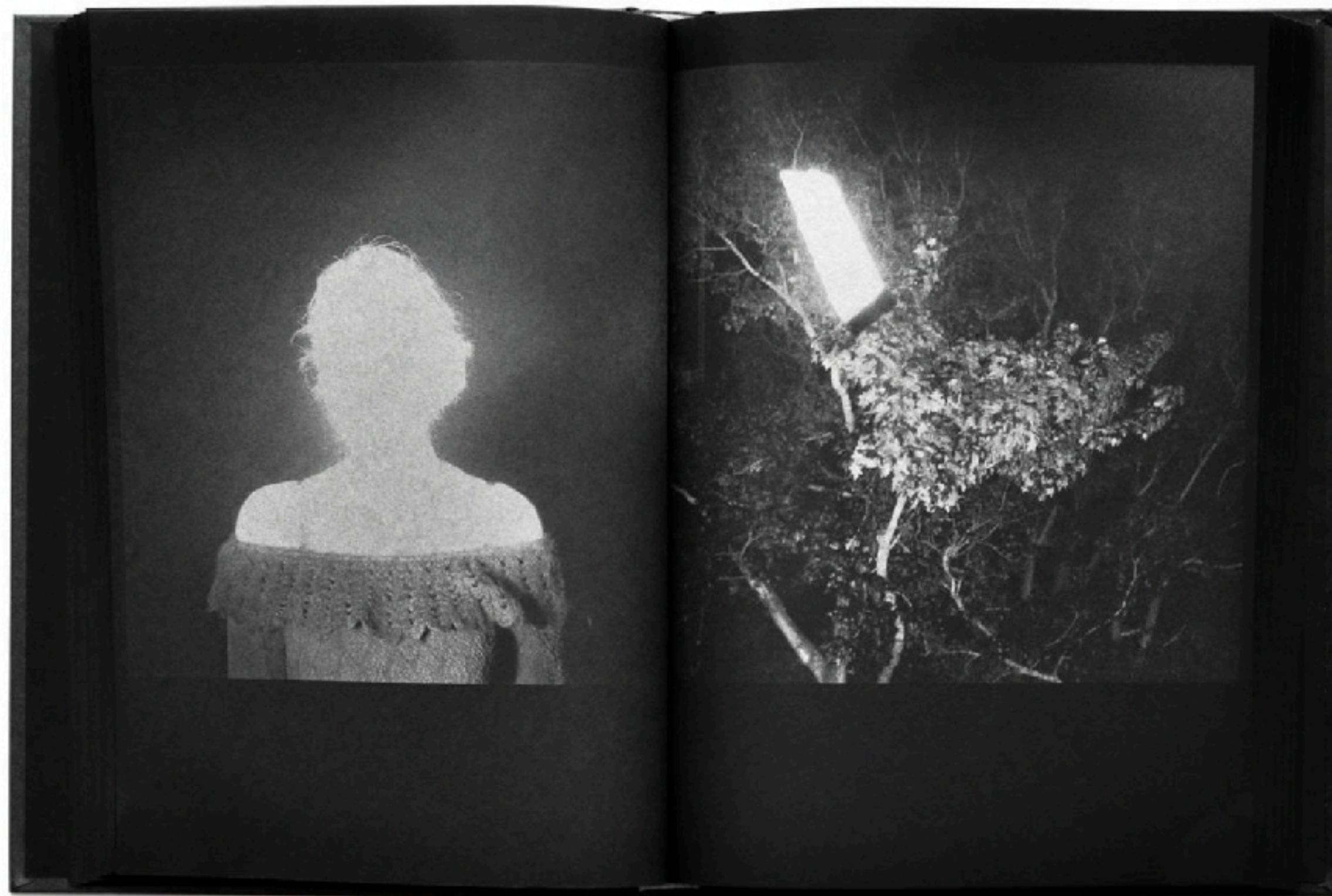
The camera obscura (dark chamber) is a naturally occurring phenomenon that has been used since antiquity as a tool to understand the behaviour of light.

Depending on the time of the day that you visit, for example in the morning or afternoon, you would have a completely different experience of the work. You almost feel like you are in a movie theatre, but in this case the images projected are just an upside-version of what is going on at the outside of the building.

Since what you experience with this work is the changing light, the meteorological conditions and the ebb and flow of life, it seems to imply that it can be a metaphor for life with its shifting patterns and fragility.

Katrin Koenning and Protick Sarker/ *Astres Noirs*/ 2016

EXAMPLES



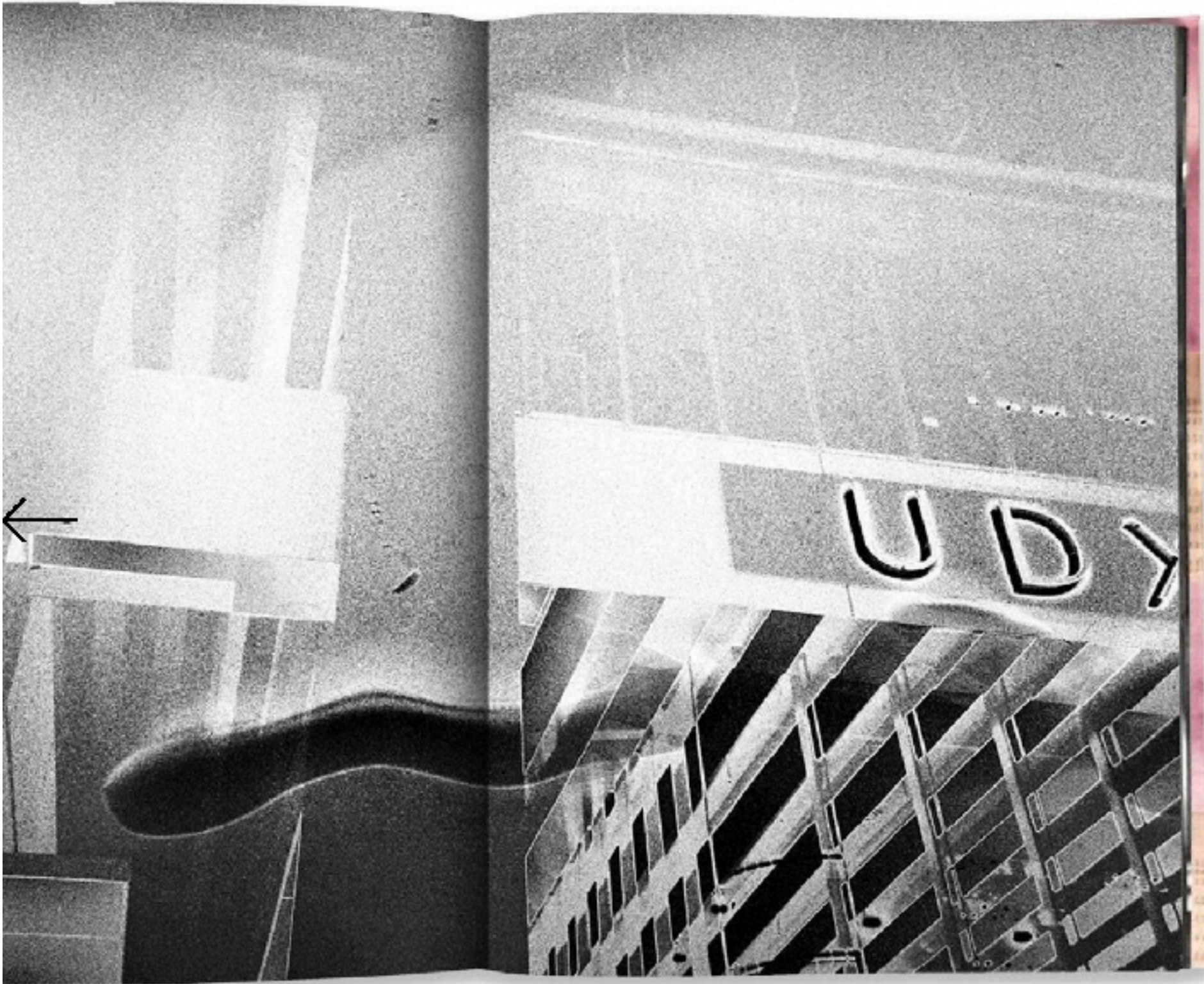
Katrin Koenning and Protick Sarker, *Astres Noirs*, Chose Commune (2016).

Antony Cairns/ CTY/ 2018

EXAMPLES

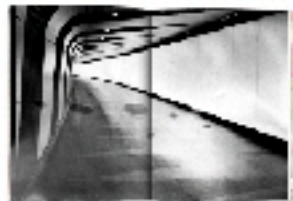
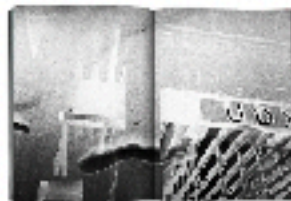


MÖREL



Antony Cairns

£59.00



Antony Cairns/ *CTY*/ 2018

EXAMPLES



Antony Cairns, (London, UK, 1981) is fascinated by the idea of the city at night and for his larger project entitled *CTY* he alludes to literary sources without making specific reference. For instance he draws on science-fiction and futuristic writing, like JG Ballard's *The Drowned World* (1962). Not only he uses that science-fiction literature as a source but he also employs the visual codes of genre.

In this book he uses a metallic paper to reinforce the almost abstract quality of the images. What he is doing is taking a broad topic, a classic within photography, urban spaces at night and finding collective resonances in that particular environment. In that sense his images become almost an extension of how he navigates and feels about the city. An abstract, complex, metallic, palimpsest like surface, where he seems to be exploring without a clear direction. In that sense it becomes not a 'real' city but an imagined one like for instance the surrealist Paris in Louis Aragon's *Paris Peasant* (1926).

In his work the artist reflects on the urban landscape by using techniques and technologies usually consider obsolete. This recourse to processes and supports which date from many decades ago - which could be considered a long time given the relatively short history of the photographic medium - permit Cairns to rethink and rework individual images.

Antony Cairns/ *London by Night*/ 2018

EXAMPLES



Dorothea Lange and Sam Contis/ *Day Sleeper*/ 2020

EXAMPLES



Dorothea Lange and Sam Contis, *Day Sleeper*, Mack (2020).

NEXT STEPS

- For the next session please bring your images for group and individual tutorials that will allow discussion and feedback to assist you in the evaluation of your progress,.
- Also you are all independent researchers/practitioners and as such it is your duty to do your own research into the artists/photographers discussed in the sessions.
- It is good practice to use a notebook and make annotations as the session progresses so after we finish here you can do your own investigations.

THANK YOU

Estéfani Bouza: e.bouza-arnoso@uwtsd.ac.uk/ October 2022