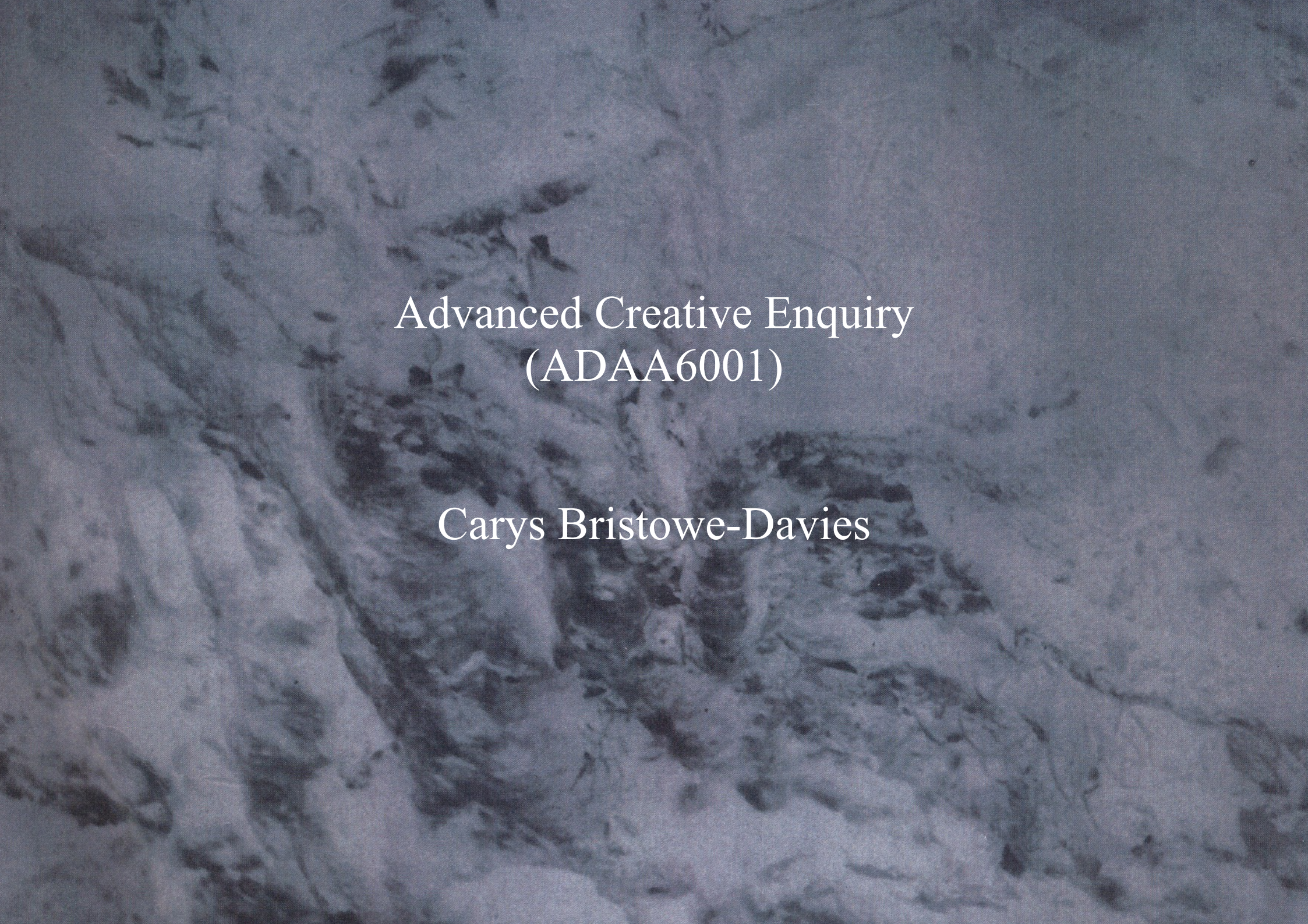


Advanced Creative Enquiry (ADAA6001)

Carys Bristowe-Davies

Proposal Form

About the Project

Name - Carys Bristowe-Davies

Proposed Project Title - Water Recedes to The Crying of Spiders

Describe project using 5 key words -

- Decay
- Occult
- Memory
- Haunting
- Nature

Provide a short summary of the proposed project:

Within this project I want to explore humanity's innate fears. Death and what comes after, loss, decay, the passage of time, nightmares and the paranormal. I am not so concerned with literal depiction, I want to extract emotion from the viewer, be that quiet stillness or an unsettling stir. This work exists in the in-between space, emerging from uncanny nostalgia and false memory. By using primarily analog mediums, I embrace decay and imperfection, letting process reflect mortality itself.

Provide a detailed description of the proposed project:

This project explores humanity's enduring primal fears, focusing on mortality, decay, loss, time, and the uncertainty of what follows death. It investigates the emotional and psychological spaces that emerge when confronted with impermanence, childhood fears, sickness, and the paranormal. Rather than offering literal or documentary representations, the work aims to evoke feelings, a quiet unease, stillness, or a subtle, visceral disturbance, thereby allowing the viewer to inhabit an in-between space where meaning is uncertain.

The imagery lives in a dreamlike, weird state shaped by enduring fears and the unknown. Landscapes, organic forms, and traces of what once was become sites where memory and the earth intertwine. Photographing locations connected with death years after the event, or documenting decay as transformation, frame decay not as an end point, but as a continuous state of becoming. These moments act as reminders that what has passed continues to remain, tied between place and matter. The project is based within analog processes. The utilisation of Polaroid, 35mm film, and darkroom experimentation allows for distortion, chance and imperfection to surface. Cracks, chemical failure, and material breakdown become physical manifestations of the tension between what was and what will come. Through this decay and material transformation, the work represents memory as the haunted, spectral entity that it is. It persists, erodes, and returns, never truly disappearing.

Structure

START DATE	END DATE	ACTIVITY OR TASK DETAIL
04/10/2025	N/A	Begin initial research into topic
06/10/25	06/10/25	Write and submit initial project proposal
07/10/25	07/10/25	Group meeting to discuss initial proposal - refine direction
08/ 10/25	09/12/25	Start creating visual diary
09/10/25	09/10/25	Further research key texts / inspirations - mood/ reference boards
10/10/25	15/10/25	Start analysis on key influences
12/ 10/ 25	16/10/25	Start planning test shoots and gathering equipment - buy own dev tanks for soups, darkroom paper?
21/10/25	27/10/ 25	Start base shooting some imagery on 35mm & taking some polaroids
16/10/25	16/10/25	Tutorial meeting w/ Ryan
18/10/25	20/10/25	Start collating research and work made for rolling crit presentation
20/10/25	21/12/ 25	Research more about film souping - ask staff about logistics & limitations
21/10/25	21/10/25	Rolling Crit (Presentation)
24/10/ 25	28/12/25	Gather / buy materials for emulsion lifts - whole process
27/10 / 25	28/10/25	Process negatives and review initial outcomes
28/10/25	02/11/25	Reflect on imagery - fragility, rot, and boundary collapse
30/ 10 / 25	05/11/25	More film experimentation - what is / isn't working
07/11/25	25/11/ 25	Consider any reshoots
07/11/25	25/11/ 25	Reflect on darkroom outcomes - materiality and tone
11/11/25	13/11/25	Project mid point - what techniques represent the theme best
14/11/25	25/11/25	Revisit theory and how the project relates overall
15/11/25	07/12/25	Document process and consider presentation strategies for assessment
18/11/25	21/11/25	Test different print scale and type - larger vinyl prints
25/11/25	25/11/25	Tutorial w/ Ryan
28//11	05/12	Reflect / summarise project
01/12	07/12	Finilising processes
05/12	09/12	Finalising documentation
9/12/26	05/01/26	Loan equipment for experimentation over xmas break
16/12/25	16/12/25	Submission
18/ 12/ 25	04/01/26	Large format camera - re familiarise
19/ 12/ 25	04/01/26	Polaroid Lifts - re familiarise
20/ 12/ 25	04/01/26	Soak film in soup, to dev when back after break
05/01/26	20/04.26	Further experimentation
20/04/26	03/05/26	Finalised work - post exhibition proposal
04/05/26	07/05/26	Install
15/05/2026	15/05/2026	Swansea Exhibition Opening

Budget

Vivitar V3800N (bought on Ebay)	£40.02
Batteries for camera (Vivitar)	£2.75
Polaroid camera rental (8 weeks)	£240.00
Charging cable	£3.49
35mm film Kentmere 400 (6 rolls)	£30.00
Polaroid Film (9 packs)	£108.98
Sketchbook	£6.00
Silver leaf	£5.75
Glass Square Plates x 16	£9.00
Cutting Knife	£2.00
Craft paintbrushes	£5.00
Museum Entrance Fee	£10.00
80×80cm vinyl printing x 3	£40.63
Adobe Photoshop & Lightroom (8 months)	£119.92
Developing Tank + 2 reels	£31.00
Large format camera kit rental (6 weeks)	£500.00
Film negative bags (20 pack)	£10.00
Tripod rental (6 weeks)	£150.00
Hasselblad 500cm rental (6 weeks)	£562.50
Medium format film Kentmere 400 (3 rolls)	£18.00
Medium format film Kodak Portra 400 (1 roll)	£20.00
ILFORD MULTIGRADE ART 300 (50 in pack)	£104.44
Darkroom rental (5 days)	£250.00

Total - £2, 269.4

Practise Based Experiments (Short Overview)

Within this development period I have been working through experimentation, mistakes and broken processes. I have returned to using a Polaroid camera, but this time with expired film. Through this medium I encountered cracks in the emulsion, light refraction, faulty rollers and accidental exposure. These images feel unstable and fragile which I believe best represents the themes running through my work. Revisiting this medium felt important as it already holds a history of loss, time and remnants.

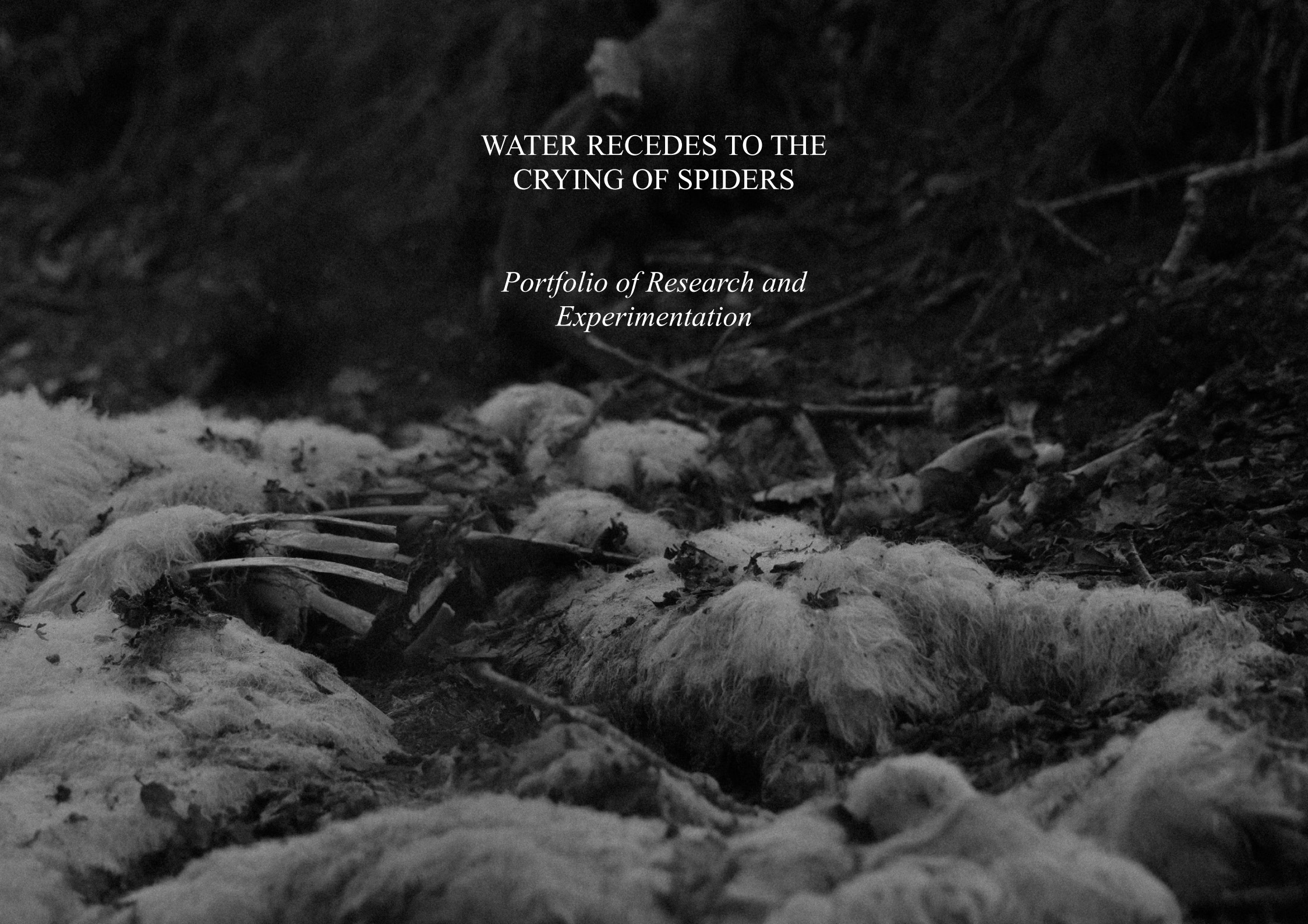
Alongside this I began exploring poetry as part of my research. Writing short haikus allowed me to move away from the literal and into something more strange, surreal and affective. This way if working became a form of self expression and acceptance, and helped me further detach from direct meaning.

Working with 35mm film also reinforced this approach. Jamming film, overlapping frames and accidents in the developing room, such as leaking chemicals disrupting the images in unexpected ways. In the darkroom I experimented with solarising prints after looking at Daisuke Yokota's work.

I have also been testing scale through larger vinyl prints and working with acetate negatives made from Polaroids. This project has slowly become about embracing imperfection, where imperfection and broken processes are welcomed.

Main Risks and Challenges (Mitigation)

Though the project is based in unpredictability, I believe a potential risk relates to the inconsistency of analogue and chemical processes. There is a chance that film or prints may completely fail to produce usable or desired results. This will be managed through repeated testing, working with multiples and allowing time for failure within the schedule. Access to and travel between locations may also present challenges of their own, which will be mitigated by flexibility in site selection and adapting the work to available and accessible environments. Time management is also another risk and will be addressed through clear planning, regular check ins with staff, and maintaining a realistic and organised production timeline.



WATER RECEDES TO THE CRYING OF SPIDERS

Portfolio of Research and Experimentation

RESEARCH

The main contextual body of this project came from researching theory and philosophical concepts for my thesis. It helped me to better understand the main ideas behind my work and, now with more understanding how I can harness them to produce more conceptual rich work.

Following are condensed notes on the 3 main concepts I have researched.

1. ONTOLOGY // *THE DISCOVERY*

Ontology → What is real? What exists?

PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT // The study if what exists (In general) - WHAT IS REAL

E.g., Are physical parts more real than immaterial concepts? For example, are physical objects, such as shoes more real than walking? (What is the relationship between shoes and walking? (In terms of what exits)

ONTOLOGY is used to discuss challenging questions to build theories / better understand the world

In a photographic context, Camera Lucida by Roland Barthes

ONTOLOGICAL MATERIALISM //

Material things e.g., chemical process, atoms, particles, energy are more real for examples than the human mind

REALITY EXISTS REGARDLESS OF HUMAN OBSERVATION

ONTOLOGICAL IDEALISM //

Immaterial phenomenon e.g., the human mind, consciousness are more real, for example than material things

REALITY IS CONSTRUCTED IN THE MIND OF THE OBSERVER

Roland Barthes 'Transparent Envelope'

- We see through representation to the thing that's been presented... this is problematic as the truth content of a photograph isn't just shaped by representation, but the contexts that surround it.







I began looking at old images of my grandparents, noting how each image naturally depicts who is there but inadvertently shows the passage of time. The aged colours, scuff marks and creased surfaces gives them life compared to viewing on digital screens.

2. PHENOMENOLOGY // *THE EXPERIENCE*

Phenomenology → How does reality appear to us? How do we *experience* what exists?

- The study of lived experience or understanding the lived, subjective experience of individuals rather than objective facts

EDMUND HUSSERL // INTENTIONALITY

Intentionally directing focus to describe reality

E.g. achieving deeper understanding of said subject - researcher could quarantine their subjects' personal judgements (Bracketing). So that preconceived notions do not impact with phenomenological investigation

MARTIN HEIDEGGAR // DASEIN

Meaning, a human in the world - consciousness is a product or construction of the historical context, which it arises.

Can never approach an object if study in a presuppositionless form - objects of study should not be separated from their context

Examples

- Listening to music
- Drinking tea (Flavour, temperature)
- Viewing hazards
- Swimming (Floating, water on skin)



Annabella. (2025, October 13). *Cinematic Photography*. Pinterest. https://uk.pinterest.com/pin/136374694962320272/

3. ABJECTION

A feeling of fear, horror or disgust (physical) caused by something threatening our sense of self or societal norm. The abject does not respect boarders, rules or positions – it is a threat to understanding our reality , it lives in the liminal space.

JULIA KRISTEVA // THE POWERS OF HORROR

" The abject refers to the human reaction (horror, vomit) to a threatened breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of distinction between subject and object or between self and other "

You may experience abjection because of -

- Open wounds
- Vomit
- Rotten food
- Sewage
- A Corpse
- Trypophobia



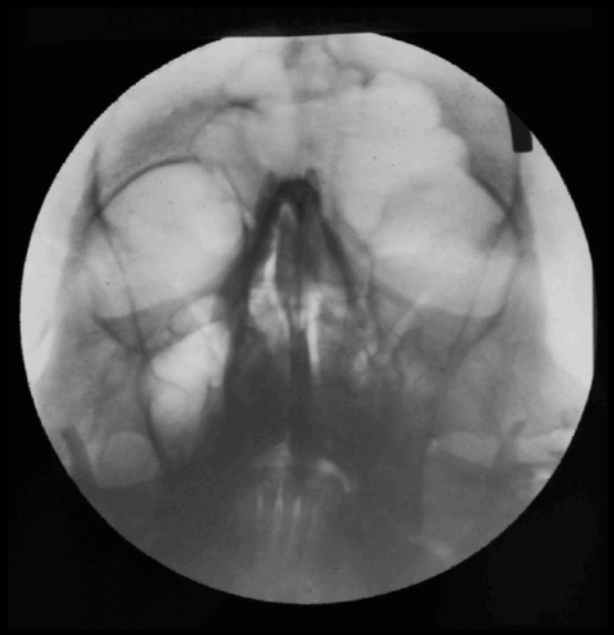
"The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. " // J, KRISTEVA (1980)

The corpse creates psychological dilemma as it is death infecting life, it confronts us with our own mortality. Our rejection of said corpse, helps to cement *"us"* in the living. This is why so many people are drawn to watching / reading / consuming horror – it allows us define what we are (borders, comfort)

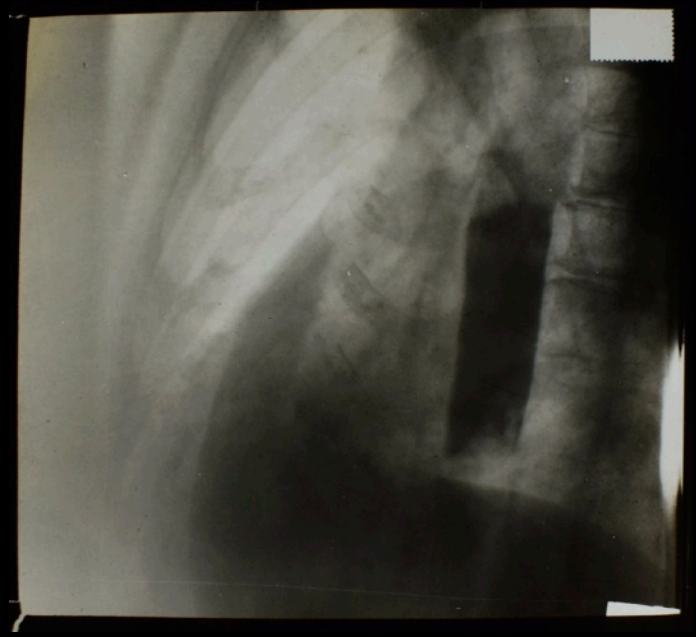
It also exists within spaces that lack meaning or familiarity (LIMINAL) e.g Waking up at 3AM – a space where nothing happens, when others are asleep

Aasim, M. (2025, August 8). Trypophobia research sheds light on human reactions to visual stimuli. *Medtigo*. https://medtigo.com/news/trypophobia-research-sheds-light-on-human-reactions-to-visual-stimuli/

This research lead me into discovering old medical ephemera. Specifically these magic lantern slides from 1910s-1950s of human x-rays. The square format has very obvious connections with polaroids and the inversion, cloudiness and abstraction of the plates is very aesthetically inspiring. Being able to see what is under the skin does cause reaction for me.



XRAY SWALLOWED OBJECT
NO1 C1947



XRAY SWALLOWED OBJECT
NO1 C1947



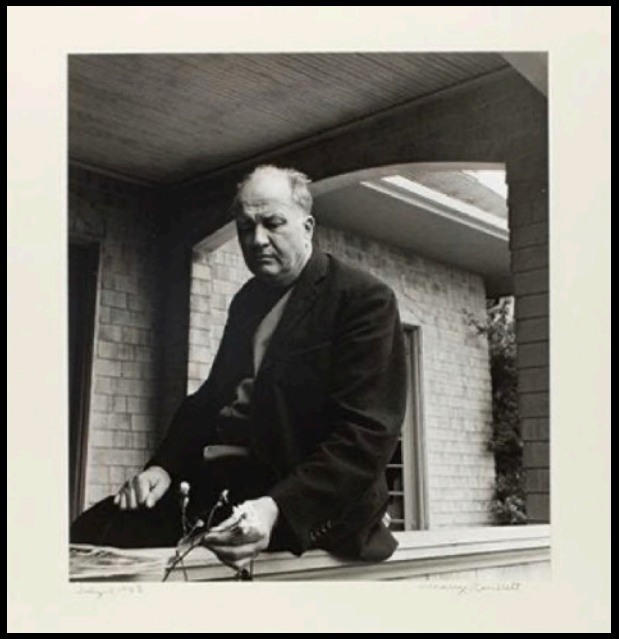
XRAY OF A HUMAN CHEST
NO13 C1950

The size and material reminds me of the glass plate emulsion lifts I made for the 1st year exhibition *(Carbon, 2024)* I think that materiality spoke to the themes of my work and still continues to do so. I would like to refamiliarise myself with that process but maybe later in the project so I have time to experiment with other techniques.



POETRY

THEODORE ROETHKE



I looked into Theodore Roethke for inspiration. Many of his poems carry surreal and visceral langue. I was drawn to these in particular because of their darker themes of the body, time passing, animals and nature.

THE SHAPE OF THE FIRE

What's this? A dish for fat lips.
Who says? A nameless stranger.
Is he a bird or a tree? Not everyone can tell.

Water recedes to the crying of spiders.
An old scow bumps over black rocks.
A cracked pod calls.

Mother me out of here. What more will the bones allow?
Will the sea give the wind suck? A toad folds into a stone.
These flowers are all fangs. Comfort me, fury.
Wake me, witch, we'll do the dance of rotten sticks.

Shale loosens. Marl reaches into the field. Small birds pass over water.
Spirit, come near. This is only the edge of whiteness.
I can't laugh at a procession of dogs.

In the hour of ripeness the tree is barren.
The she-bear mopes under the hill.
Mother, mother, stir from your cave of sorrow.

A low mouth laps water. Weeds, weeds, how I love you.
The arbor is cooler. Farewell, farewell, fond worm.
The warm comes without sound.

EPIDERMAL MACABRE

Indelicate is he who loathes
The aspect of his fleshy clothes, —
The flying fabric stitched on bone,
The vesture of the skeleton,
The garment neither fur nor hair,
The cloak of evil and despair,
The veil long violated by
Caresses of the hand and eye.
Yet such is my unseemliness:
I hate my epidermal dress,
The savage blood's obscenity,
The rags of my anatomy,
And willingly would I dispense
With false accoutrements of sense,
To sleep immodestly, a most
Incarnadine and carnal ghost.

The Shape of the Fire by Theodore Roethke. (n.d.). Famous Poems, Famous Poets. - All Poetry. https://allpoetry.com/The-Shape-Of-The-Fire
Epidermal Macabre by Theodore Roethke. (n.d.). Famous Poems, Famous Poets. - All Poetry. https://allpoetry.com/Epidermal-Macabre

JAQUES-BENIGNE BOUSSUET

All things summon us to death;
Nature almost envious of the good she has given us,
Tells us often and gives us notice that she cannot
For long allow us that scrap of matter she has lent ….
She has need of it for other forms
She claims it back for other works

- *On Death, A Sermon* (1627 - 1704)

Drawn to the idea that everything decays and is in a way recycled into something else . Gone but but there are still traces that remain - physically, or in memory.

Crossings - caring for our own at death. (n.d.-b). http://www.crossings.net/inspiration.html

SELF WRITTEN



Same hands different time

The bluebells and birch devour

Silver holds you now



ARTIST INSPIRATION

SALLY MANN - What Remains (2003)

What Remains (2003) is Sally Mann's meditation on death, decay, and what happens after the body gives up its form, made entirely using the wet plate collodion process. The book begins with the death of Mann's greyhound, Eva. Buried and later retrieved, Mann treats the body as a temporary carapace, a shell that once held life but is emptied of meaning after death. Decomposition is not framed as loss but a return to the land.

The project deepens at a forensic body farm in Tennessee, where human bodies are photographed in their slow, relentless decomposition. Wet plate collodion heightens this instability. Long exposures and chemical peeling allow flesh to collapse, merge and dissolve. These bodies occupy an strange middle state, where identity frays and the dead do not yet look dead. It is in this phase of soft collapse, the slippage of recognition, that carries the heaviest sense of abjection.

The book closes with intimate portraits of Mann's children, moving the tone from decay to quiet contemplation. The long exposures demand stillness, softening the body and revealing the architecture beneath the skin. Imperfections in the collodion such as blisters, stains and fogging physically relate to bodily fragility. Mixed with poetry, philosophical texts and sermons, *What Remains* ultimately asks what endures beyond the body, showing death as a tender, inevitable transformation rather than a shocking spectacle.

This body of work has inspired me to accept material mistakes and 'scars' within the image / chemical process as a way to further deepen my context. It has also helped me to find that place where the subject can be considered grotesque but it does not need to be so egregious in its depiction.







LIEKO SHIGA- Rasen Kaigan (2013)

Working with film, Lieko Shiga embraces its light sensitivity and chemical instability as a medium of threshold. She leans into this by cross-processing, using underexposure and distorted flash to produce sickly greens and blues that feel almost rotten, as if the image itself is decaying. The flash breaks the boundary between worlds, creating the unsettling sensation of seeing something that was not meant to be seen. These images are visually stunning but sometimes deeply unsettling, allowing feeling to take over certainty.

This tension if felt throughout Rasen Kaigan (Spiral Shore), produced before and after the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. Though not considered a direct record of the disaster, the work is clearly haunted by its aftermath, carrying a sense of rupture within Kitakama. Shiga frames the series as a poetic ode to the village's history, traditions and people. She even uses their recovered photographs washed back from the sea. These damaged images function as broken bodies of memory. Through weird portraits and altered landscapes, Kitakama becomes a place where the land remembers and the past quietly presses into the present.

I am inspired by her surreal poses and use of mist/ process to to conceal certain aspects, leaving her images floating in that in-between dream space where not everything that is depicted is real. I have also taken on that notion of the past haunting the future. This idea is evoked through the writings of Jacques Derrida and Mark Fisher, particularly their work on the concept of hauntology.








PRACTISE BASED
EXPERIMENTS

INITIAL IDEAS

To create a base of images/ negatives I could use to experiment with, I decided to take out an SLR and shoot around woodland, local and domestic spaces . As most of my work isn't staged or posed I thought taking photos on a walk would be a good place to start. I end up coming across some weird or unsettling things, such as random plastic tarps and animal wood carvings that fit my themes quite well.

The camera ended up jamming the film and not winding on properly leading to images overlaying each other. There were also various accidents in the developing room - I exposed the film to light and the tank didn't shut properly, which lead to chemicals leaking out, which then refilled with more chemicals to try and continue the process. This lead to a lot of images being half developed and having a strange ghostly effect, like someone had tried to remove them. Through this was not the desired outcome it definitely worked in my favour and its something I want to replicate / continue to use.



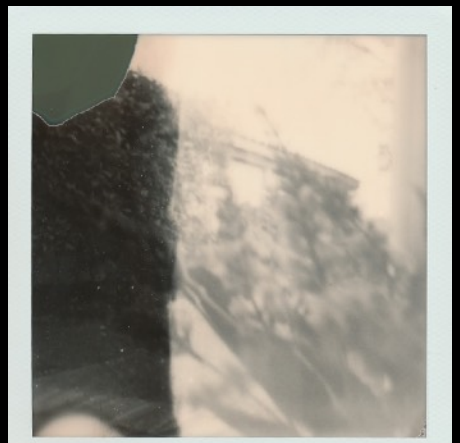


















I also took some polaroids in / around the same area. The camera already had some film inside which was expired and I accidentally exposed. I believe the rollers of the polaroid camera also have some issues. I just decided to shoot to see what came out.







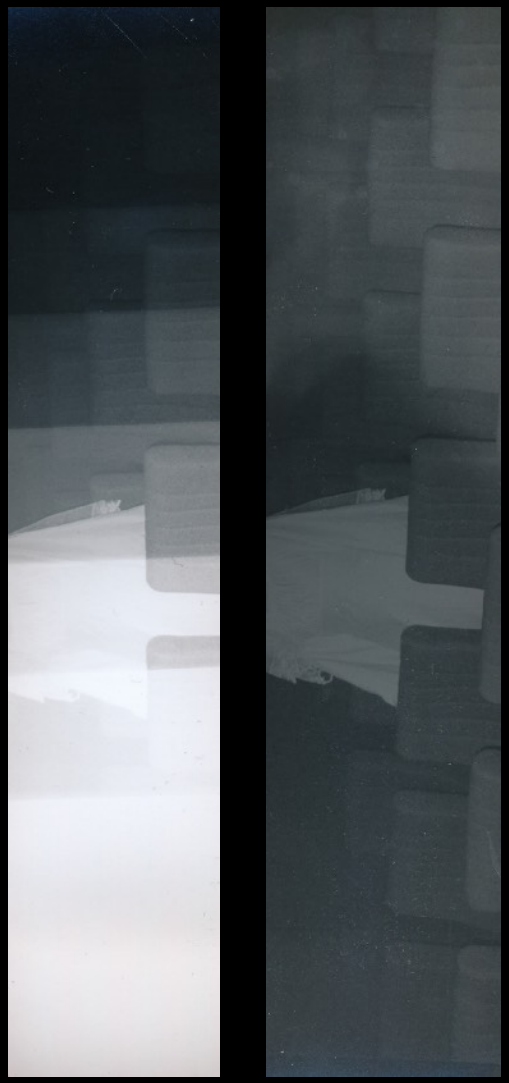





They almost have an essence of the occult and things being consumed or absorbed by nature. I even tried to bend some of the polaroids while they developed to see if any more cracks would appear. I somewhat worked but more so altered the colour more than anything. The rollers definitely have some kind of problem but I can use to my advantage.

SOLARISING DARKROOM PRINTS - WORKSHOP

I attended a workshop on solarising pants in the darkroom. I was interested in trying this after seeing the work of Daisuke Yokota. I needed to choose negatives that had a good range of contrasting tones and highlights to get the best results - therefore I used some from a ghostly shoot taken in the summer . Water was wiped off when exposing the slightly developed print - this created lines and patterns all over the images, even the borders. Almost like the chemicals where sliding around the paper. It created some weird effects and I revisited this techniques later in the project.



Test Strips









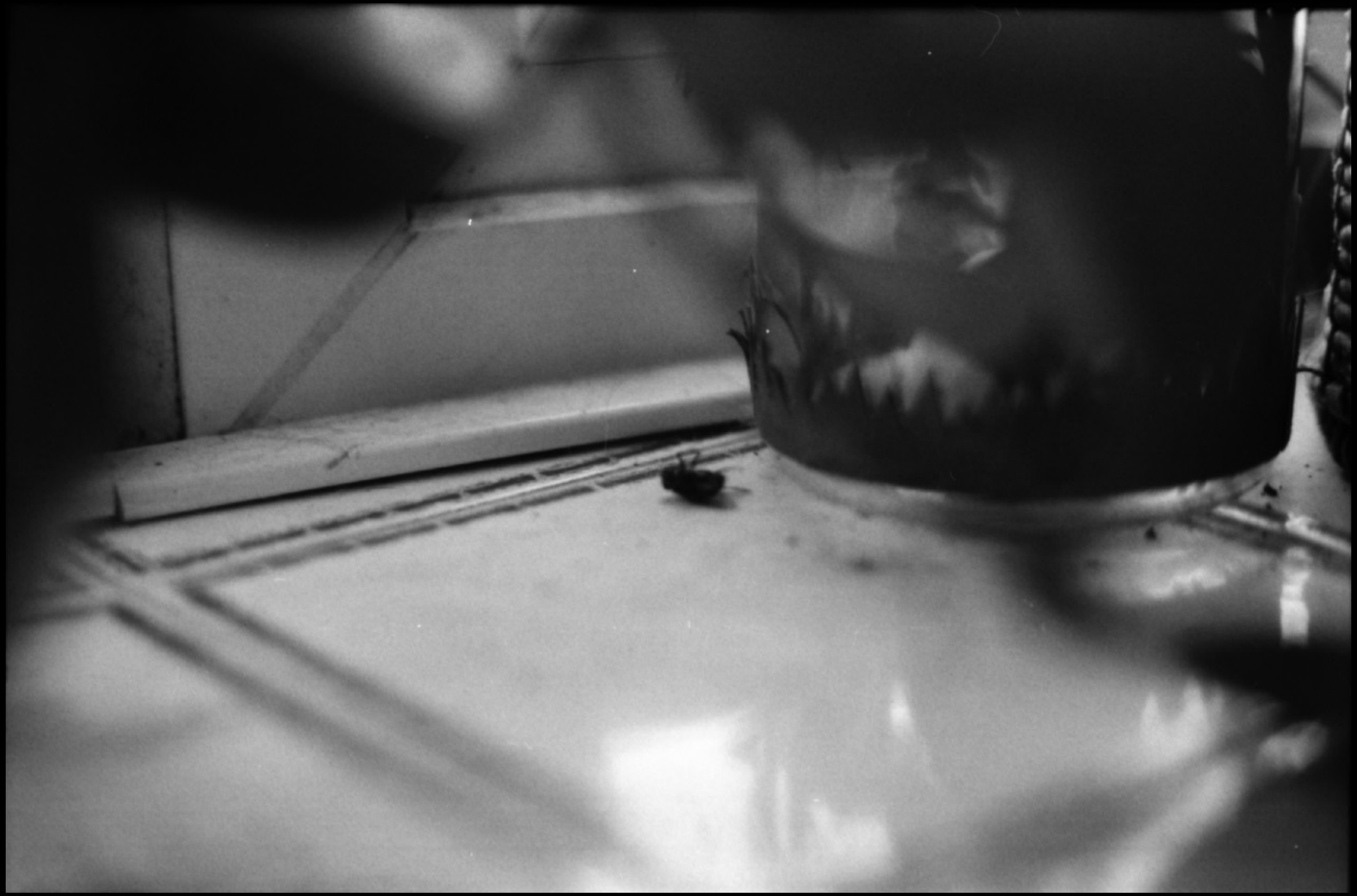
35 MM AND POLAROIDS - DIFFERENT LOCATIONS

I took more 35mm film images to have more negatives / images to experiment with. I decided to take these images around the land where I grew up. More specifically, the area where my Grandmothers ashes were scattered. I focused on strange natural occurrences, warped formations and mould / fungus.

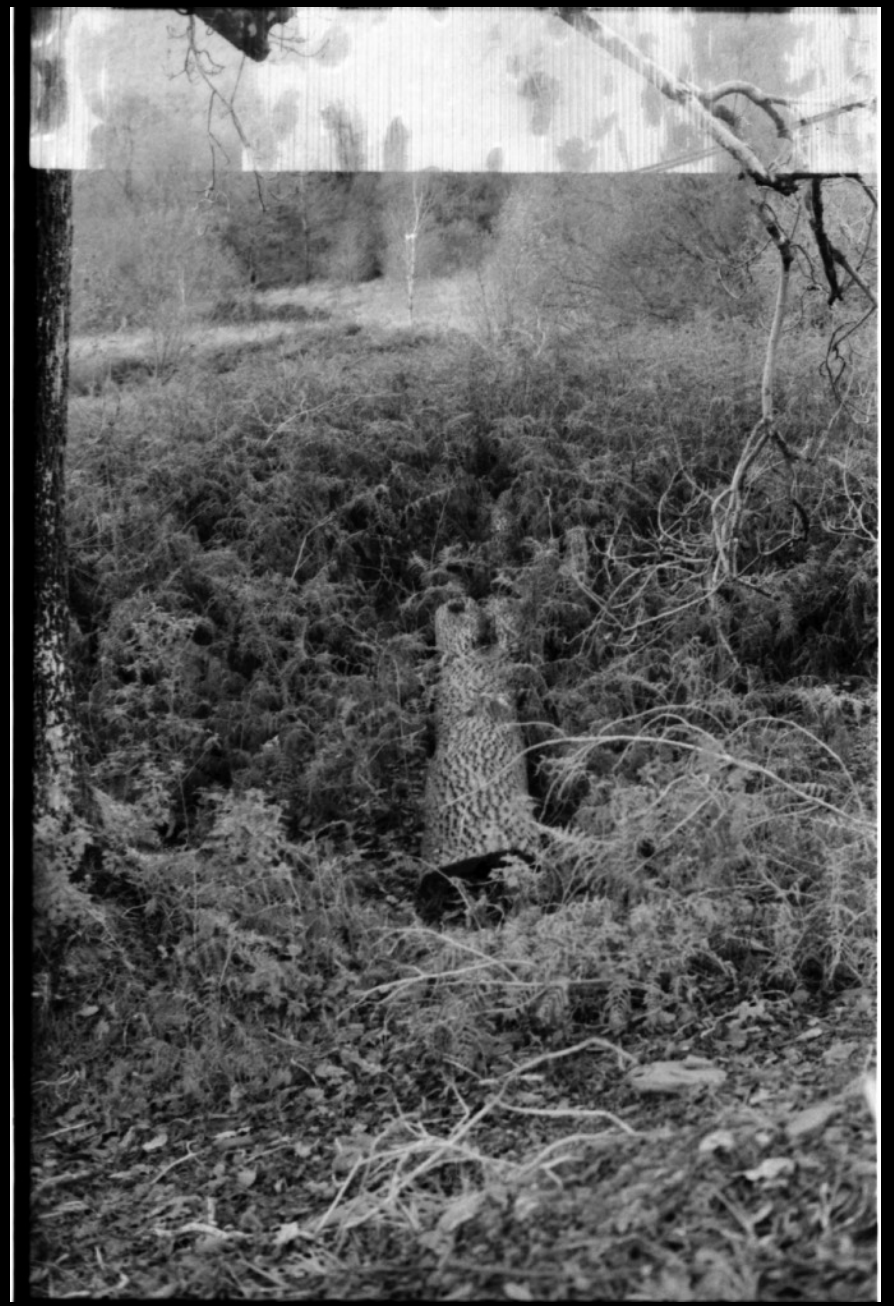
Some of these images are also taken at a graveyard. I looked to the Yew trees in the cemetery as according to history they were planted to absorb the gasses/ smells of putrefaction. The crooked grave stones also show the passage of time.

Showing the sanctification off the land by the presence of death.













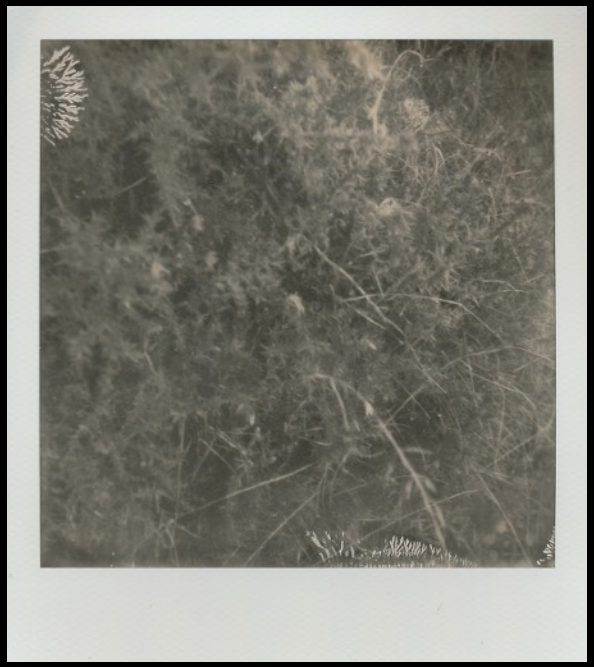






















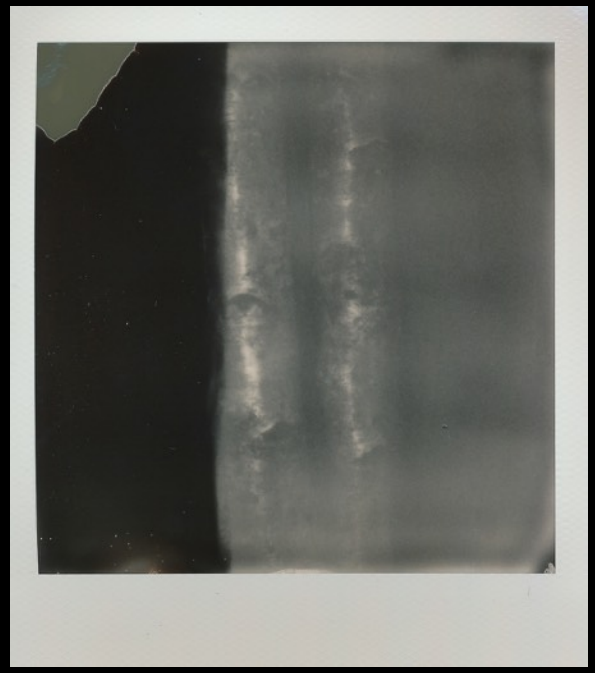




















ROWTON'S MUSEUM OF THE PARANORMAL AND SPIRITUALITY, CARMARTHEN MUSEUM AND CHURCHYARDS

More 35mm and Polaroid images taken in museums and church yards across Carmarthen.

As the medium is historically linked with spirit photography I wanted to see if anything unusual came up in the images e.g orbs, shadow figures etc. especially while around 'haunted' artefacts and paranormal investigators. Before this shoot I again exposed the polaroid film because it jammed in the camera. The rollers seem to be causing even more distortion to the images, flash and lighting also effects this.




S. RITA - CASCIA





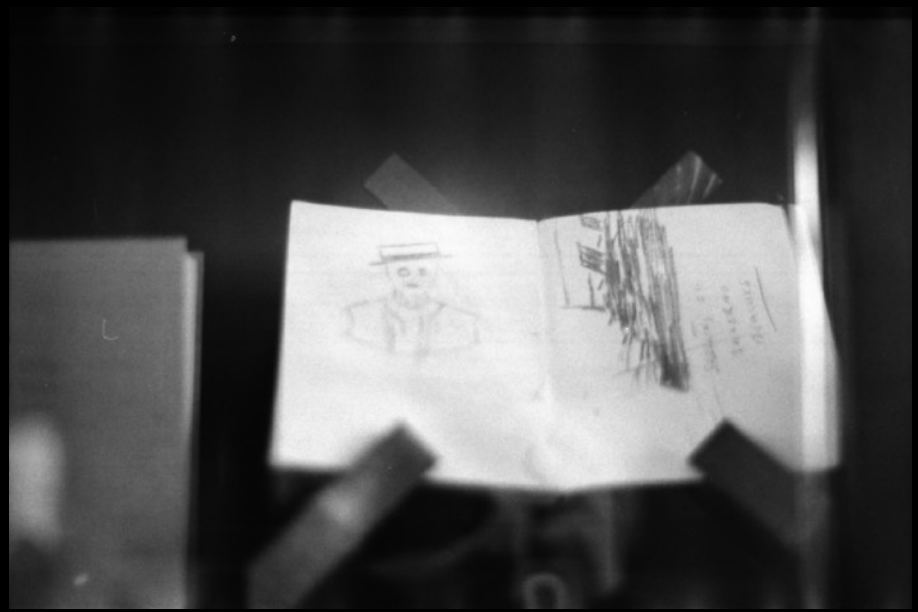






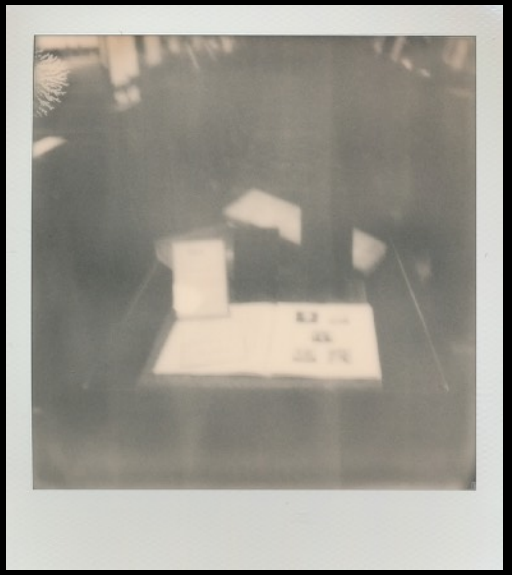

















TESTING OUT SCALE AND FORM- INSTALLATION TEST

I selected 3 Polaroids with the most interesting detail and decided to print them 80cm X 80Ccm on vinyl to be stuck on the walls in uni. This was to better view all the cracks and ruptures in the emulsion up close to see if I could do anything with these patterns in the future, when deciding on my final project installation idea. I have never tested my work on vital before, it looked a lot better than expected even though it is a fairly simple way of displaying work. I am not sure that I will take this approach for the final install.







MORE DARKROOM EXPERIMENTATION - PRINTING FROM ACETATE NEGATIVES
AND SOLARISATION

I created negatives with acetate to print with in the dark room, so I could use my polaroid images. When printing the acetate, the files kept printing on top of each other on 1 sheet of acetate, creating a kind of layered / double exposure effect. The ink was also being scratched way in random lines - echoing Mark Fishers notion of 'analogue ghosts' affecting digital technologies. I have completed various tests to get the best final print. I will take this technique further with the images I take in the upcoming semester.



Scan of layered acetate negative

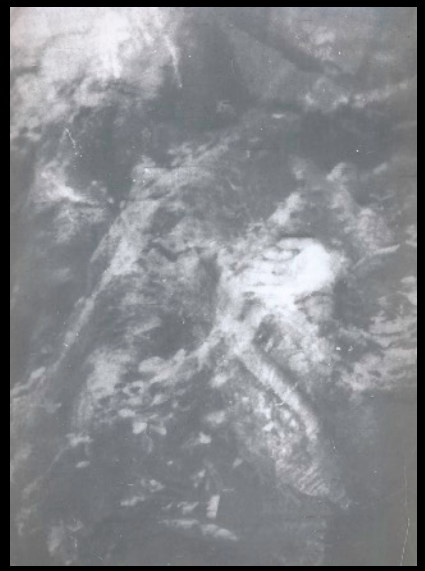


Test Strips

SMALL TEST PRINTS





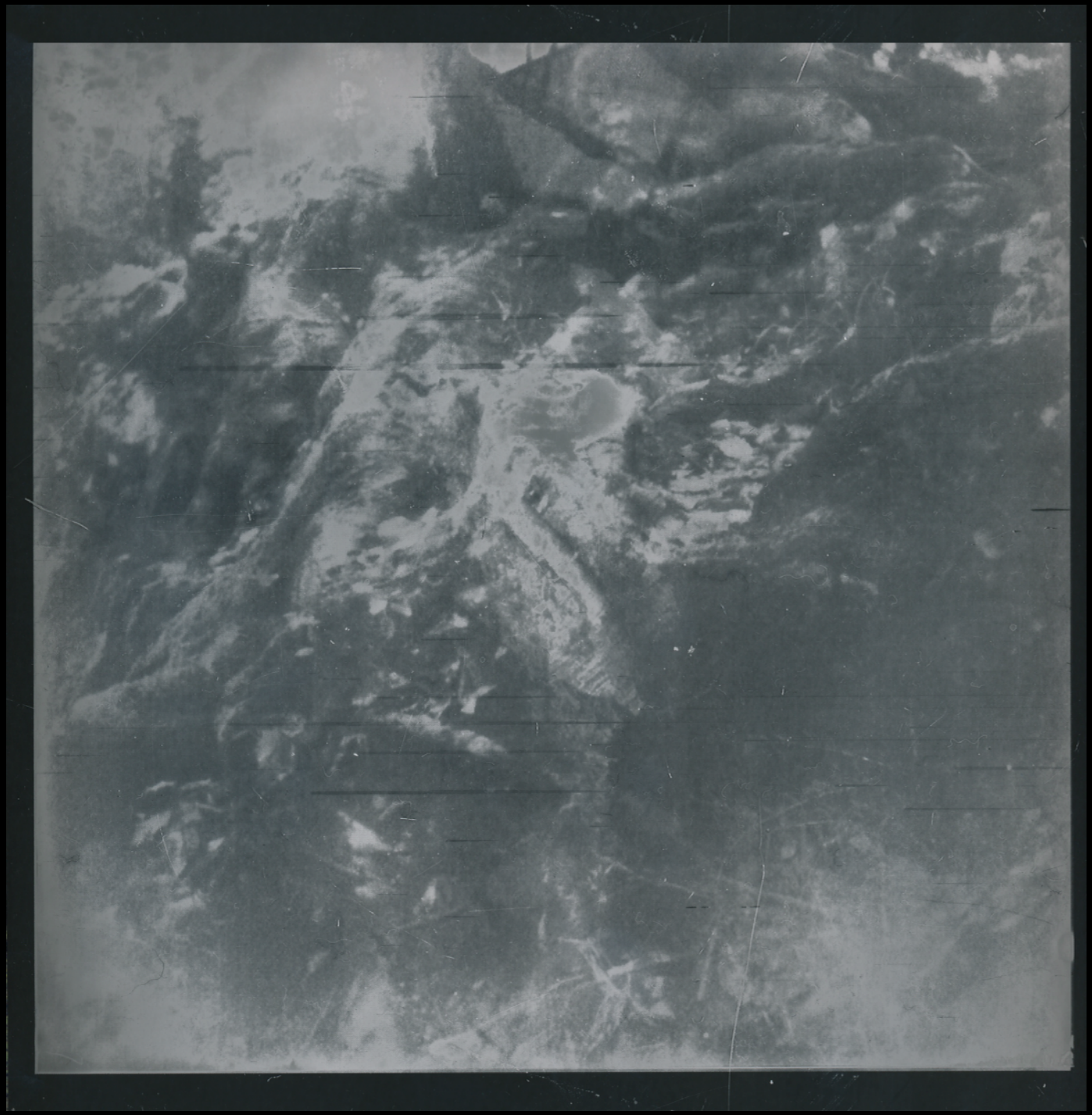


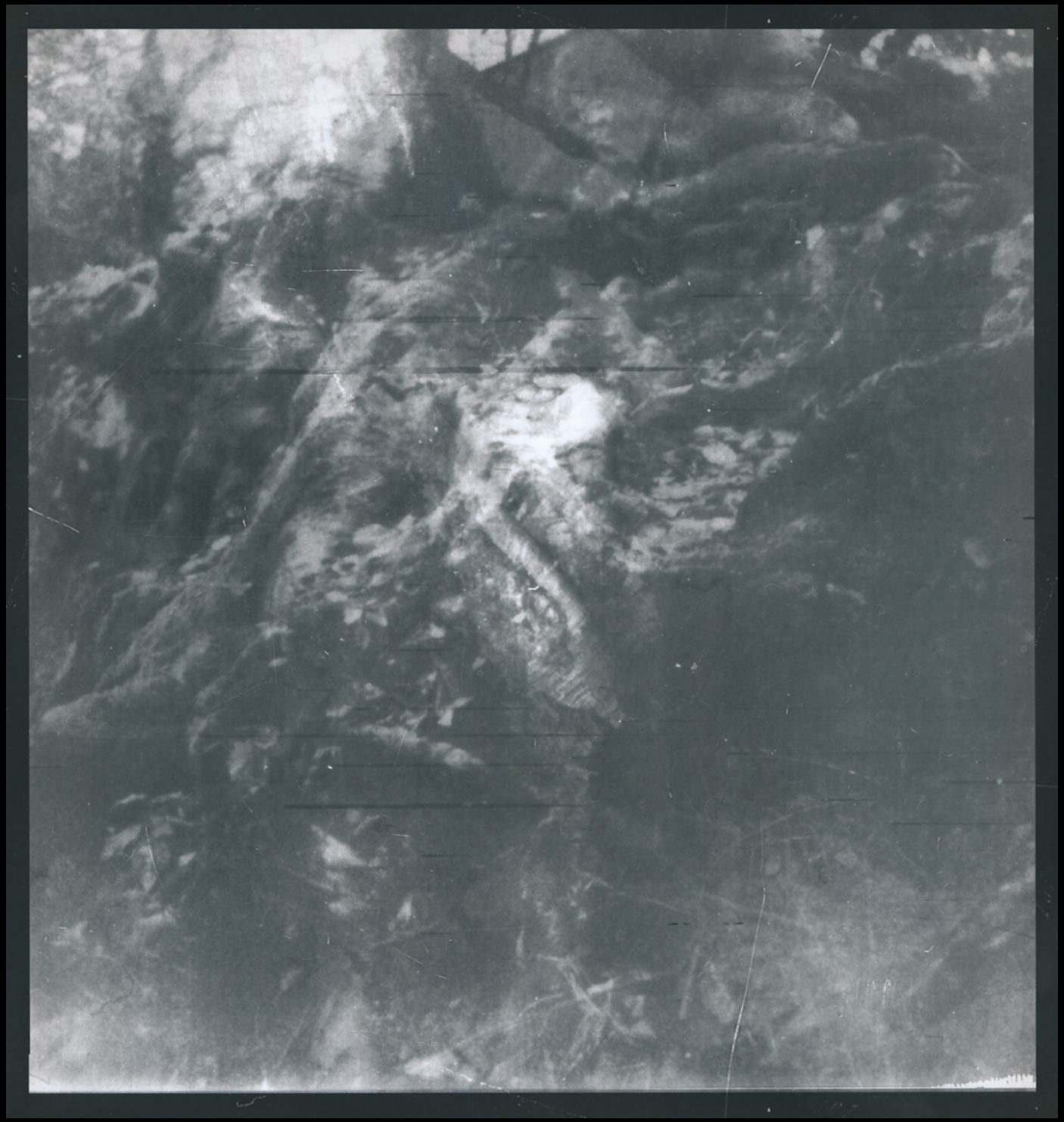


LARGE / FINAL PRINTS











This final print is the exact effect that I wanted. The more washed out yet slivery looking tones makes the more abstract. For the future I will ensure that the ink on my acetate negatives isn't stretched off. The harsh removal of ink doesn't really work with the more natural material failure or mistakes, it looks almost intentional.

To create this more desired effect, when re exposing the developing print to light, I kept the print submerged in a tray of water. I waited until the water was as still as possible after moving, it didn't add more effects / patterns to the image when exposed. I would also repeat this step - going back into the developer, washing, then exposing again.

FINAL NOTES

This project has become a way to accept/ embrace imperfection, mistakes and broken processes allowing for the act of process to become just as important as the subject matter . With decay at the forefront , these material ruptures encapsulate the projects ambition.

In terms of potential installation, i'm not really set on any ideas at the moment but I am definitely considering a more sculptural or hanging piece that incorporates the natural materials I have been collecting throughout the project. This includes dead insects, bones, teeth and human hair. Given more time I would have tried to realise this in smaller form before the end of this semester.

Over the break, I fully intend to experiment even more with a winder range of cameras and techniques. I want to broaden the range of format and materiality in this project therefore I have loaned a large format camera and a Hasselblad 500cm. I will be using darkroom paper for the large format negatives as well as testing out a pinhole lens.
I am also currently soaking some film reels in various chemicals and fluids e.g washing detergent, blood, mud and salt to erode the emulsion and alter the chemical state. I need to let them fully dry before developing so this will have to be completed next semester, to see its full effect. I will also complete further experiments with lifting polaroid emulsion on to silver coated glass, once I refamiliarise myself with this technique I worked with in 1st Year.