

**SCHOOL:
OF FINE ART
THE GLASGOW
SCHOOL OF ART**



Kaiying Qian, Fine Art Photography, 2024

UNDERGRADUATE APPLICATION GUIDELINES

FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY

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ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

STANDARD ACADEMIC ENTRY REQUIREMENTS TO YEAR 1

- **Scottish Highers** — ABBB including a literate subject*.
- **A Levels** — ABB, plus GCSE English at grade A/7.
- Other equivalent qualifications at SCQF Level 6 (EQF Level 3) such as UAL Level 3 Diploma.
- **International Baccalaureate (IB)** — 30 points overall in the Diploma, including 18 at Higher Level, normally including English and Maths. Students not presenting English at grade 5 or above at Higher Level will be required to submit an IELTS.
- **Irish Leaving Certificate** — Four Highers at H2 or above, subjects required as per Scottish Highers.
- **International qualifications** — People with qualifications from outside the UK should contact admissions@gsa.ac.uk for more information.

MINIMUM ACADEMIC ENTRY REQUIREMENTS TO YEAR 1 (FOR ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS ONLY)

- **Scottish Highers** — BBCC including a literate subject*
- **A Levels** — BBC, plus GCSE English at grade A/7.

NOTE For applicants whose exam results are pending, conditional offers will be made at the standard or minimum tariff where eligible.

*literate subjects include English, Business Management, Classical Studies, Economics, ESOL, Geography, History, Media Studies, Modern Studies, Philosophy, Politics, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology.

The Glasgow School of Art (GSA) is committed to working to widen access, including fair admissions for applicants from a wide range of backgrounds.

The minimum entry requirements apply to applicants from Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 20/40 postcodes, as well as applicants who declare via UCAS that they are care experienced, estranged from their parents or legal guardians, have caring responsibilities, are a refugee or currently receive free school meals.

More information is available at www.gsa.ac.uk/wp

DIRECT ENTRY TO SECOND OR THIRD YEAR

This is an Undergraduate Honours Degree programme at The Glasgow School of Art comprising four years of study. Most applicants apply to start in Year 1. If you have completed, or are studying a relevant higher education qualification, you can apply to start in 2nd or 3rd year. This is known as 'Direct Entry'. Accepted qualifications include a foundation diploma in art and design, an HNC or HND or a year or more of university study. The year you apply to depends on the level of the qualifications you already have, or what you're currently studying. You must be able to satisfy us that you have undertaken a period of study equivalent to the first, or first and second year, of the degree programme. You can find more information on our website [here](#).

Important: If you are applying for direct entry to second or third year, we will consider your application from your highest desired entry point and work backwards from there. That means that you do not need to put in an application for each potential year of entry - if you apply for Year 2 direct entry and we feel you do not meet the requirements for direct entry we will automatically consider you for Year 1 entry instead.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

We expect all students to demonstrate proficiency in the English language, which for UK students is normally evidenced by a pass in Higher or GCSE English or other literate subject*.

Applicants who require a Student Visa, and who are not a national of, nor have obtained a degree in one of the countries on the approved UKVI exemption list, will need to provide evidence of their English language ability through the use of a standardised test.

The GSA's preferred test is the IELTS for UKVI (Academic) test taken at a UKVI approved test centre. A full list of English Language tests that may be presented can be **found here**.

Applicants who successfully enrol and complete GSA's Pre-Sessional English for Creative Disciplines programme can also use those test results to satisfy English language conditions.

Our current requirement for School of Fine Art programmes is IELTS for UKVI (Academic) with 6.0 overall and no less than 5.5 in each component.

For guidance, please email admissions@gsa.ac.uk or call +44 (0) 141 353 4512.



The Reid Building

COST OF STUDY

FEES, FINANCE & HELP

The annual cost of your study will depend on a range of factors including your tuition fee status, programme of study, accommodation arrangements and lifestyle. We understand, however, that for your effective planning it is really important that you have a good idea of how much studying at art school is likely to cost, and what kinds of costs you are likely to incur over and above tuition fees.

Have a look at the GSA's Total Cost of Study Guide for more help with your financial planning. You'll also find information on other costs associated with your chosen programme (called 'Indicative Programme Costs') on each programme page on the website.

TUITION FEES

Your annual tuition fee will depend on whether you are a Scottish student, Rest of the UK student or international student, as well as the subject (programme) and level (undergraduate/postgraduate) of study.

You can find current information on Fees and Finance pages on the GSA website [here](#).

APPLICATION TIMELINE

In order for your application to be considered complete, you must complete the two steps outlined by the relevant deadlines:

STEP 1

UCAS APPLICATION FORM

DEADLINE - 18:00 (UK Time) JANUARY 14, 2026

The first step is ensuring you complete your UCAS application via www.ucas.com

We suggest that begin the UCAS application form as soon as possible and don't wait until minute as there's a lot of information required to complete the form. You don't need to complete the UCAS application form in one sitting. You can save your progress and return to the form as often as you need to. However, please ensure you submit this before the deadline.

Read the advice from UCAS to help you through their application process, step by step, [here](#).

STEP 2

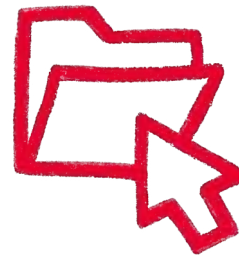
DIGITAL PORTFOLIO & PORTFOLIO STATEMENT

DEADLINE - 13:00 (UK Time) January 21, 2026

After the GSA receives your completed application form from UCAS, you will receive an email from the Admissions team at the GSA with an acknowledgement of your application and instructions on how to upload your Digital Portfolio and Portfolio Statement to the GSA Digital Portfolio Site. You can find Digital Portfolio examples at the end of this guide.

You are welcome to upload your Digital Portfolio as soon as you receive your invitation email from Admissions, but no later than the deadline given to you.

APPLICATION TIMELINE



DIGITAL PORTFOLIO

Your Digital Portfolio is a selection of images of work that you have made, laid out clearly. It demonstrates your skills, ideas, interests and your suitability for the programme you are applying to.

The Digital Portfolio must include no more than 15 slides and should be in PDF format. Remember, you can include more than one image on each slide.

The Digital Portfolio site will open to new submissions from the end of October each year.



PORTFOLIO STATEMENT

In addition to your Digital Portfolio, you are required to submit a Portfolio Statement, which is in addition to your previously submitted UCAS Personal Statement. The Portfolio Statement you submit should not be the same as your UCAS Personal Statement.

Your portfolio statement must not exceed 3000 characters (approx. 500 words). Please do not include links to external websites within the Portfolio Statement as they will not be reviewed.

APPLICATION KEY DATES

01

1
SUBMIT APPLICATION
FORM TO UCAS

14 JANUARY 2026
18:00 (UK Time)

Apply via UCAS at
www.ucas.com

UCAS Code **G43**

02

2
UPLOAD DIGITAL
PORTFOLIO

21 JANUARY 2026
13:00 (UK Time)

GSA Portfolio
Deadline

You will receive instructions on how to upload your digital portfolio and accompanying portfolio statement after you have submitted your UCAS application. You are welcome to upload your digital portfolio as soon as you receive your invitation email from admissions, but **no later** than the deadline given to you.

03

3
INTERVIEWS

FROM EARLY FEB TO
MID APRIL 2026
(via Zoom)

GSA Staff will assess your application. If you are shortlisted, you may be invited to Interview.

See Interviews.

04

4
FINAL DECISIONS

13 MAY 2026

The outcome of your application will be communicated through UCAS.

05

5
REPLY TO OFFER

When you have received decisions from all of your UCAS choices, UCAS will send you an email to let you know all your decisions have been received and you can now reply to any offers you've been given.

If you receive your last decision on or before 13 May 2026, your reply date is 3rd June 2026.

HOW WE ASSESS YOUR APPLICATION

ASSESSMENT

Admissions staff access your UCAS Application Form, Digital Portfolio, and Portfolio Statement all together.

Your application will be numerically scored against your chosen programme's specific assessment criteria (see OUR CRITERIA). The scoring is between 1-7 (7 being 'excellent evidence of' and 1 being 'unsatisfactory evidence of').

On the basis of your application score, you will either be:

Unsuccessful

- This decision will be processed as a 'Rejection' via UCAS

or

Offered an Interview

- You may be invited to an interview by email (see Interview)

OUR CRITERIA

It is important to know what the assessment criteria are for your programme.

You should try to respond to these criteria when creating your Digital Portfolio, writing your Portfolio Statement, and preparing for Interview.

SEE FOLLOWING PAGES FOR CRITERIA.

STAGE ONE: CRITERIA DIGITAL PORTFOLIO & PORTFOLIO STATEMENT

DIGITAL PORTFOLIO AND PORTFOLIO STATEMENT

1 Demonstration of practical skills

- We expect the Digital Portfolio to represent your experience with materials, methods and making. This can be demonstrated in a variety of ways including photography/drawing/filmstills/painting /objects/ sculpture/installation etc. We would expect your portfolio to contain a substantial amount of work made in the media specialism/department you have made your application to. However, we also understand that many applicants will work across a broad range of media.

2 Range and approaches to work

- We are also interested in the range of ideas you are exploring and different approaches to making. It's often useful to break your portfolio down into 3-5 larger projects so that you can show both sustained focus on an idea whilst still having some breadth/versatility of approach.

3 Application of analytical and conceptual skills

- We are interested in how critical analysis and reflection of your work allows it to develop and evolve. This will be evident in the sophistication and resolution of the work itself, but is also evidenced through how you write about your work in your statement.

4 Communication of interest in Fine Art and specialist area

- You will be expected to show that you understand the course you are applying to and communicate why you consider the course is the appropriate one for you. This can be demonstrated through the Digital Portfolio and also in the statement.

5 Portfolio Statement

- We would like a clear and coherent reflection on why you have chosen to apply for this particular institution and this specific programme. Use it to demonstrate that you have researched and understand the programme you are applying to, and why you think you would be a suitable candidate for it.



STAGE TWO: INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW

If shortlisted, you may receive an e-mail inviting you to attend an interview. Interviews are held via Zoom. They last 20 minutes or so and are usually with two members of staff.

This is a chance for staff from the programme to meet you, hear you talk about the work in your portfolio and find out more about your readiness for the programme. It is also a chance for you to get a clearer sense of the programme, find out more about the facilities available and ask any questions that you may have.

Staff will score your interview using our interview assessment criteria below. The outcome of your interview will be communicated to you via UCAS.

If you are invited to interview (see Interview) the following criteria apply:

1 Ability to show development of your work and ideas

– Practical skills are important for creative subjects We will use the Stage 1 evaluation for this as part of the Stage 2 assessment.

2 Ability to discuss your ideas and development of your work

– We want to find out more about the ideas and development of the work in your portfolio. We are interested to know about initial inspiration and starting points, how your ideas evolved and how you explored and developed your work.

3 Ability to reflect on your work; challenges, successes and potential

– At interview, we will discuss the journey of your work. What did you learn and what areas did you find to be the most successful or challenging and what you might do next? For work-in-progress you could describe what you hope to achieve, what sources you will be looking at, and how you hope to explore these.

4 Ability to demonstrate your interest and knowledge of the subject area

– We want you to demonstrate your interest and knowledge in your chosen subject area, who or what inspires and motivates you, your personal and individual interests. This might include artists, designers, architects, mentors, exhibitions, online events, documentaries, books, journals, archives, podcasts etc.

5 Ability to demonstrate an understanding of the programme applied for at The Glasgow School of Art

– You should demonstrate that you have researched your chosen programme, discuss why you have chosen to apply to this programme, communicate why you consider the programme is the appropriate one for you and why specifically at The Glasgow School of Art.

MORE INFORMATION

Start Early

Give yourself plenty of time to prepare your UCAS application, your Digital Portfolio, and refine your Portfolio Statement.

The Digital Portfolio site will open to new submissions from the end of October each year.

Reach Out

Don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions. If you need help with your application:

- For any queries about the application process or issues with our application site, contact admissions@gsa.ac.uk or call +44 (0) 141 353 4512.
- Remember if you're in education currently, you can speak to your teachers or lecturers for support with your application.
- If you are interested in applying to the GSA as a Study Abroad student (single semester or one year study) you can contact international@gsa.ac.uk for information.
- If you are interested in attending one of our on-campus or online events you can sign up on Eventbrite or join our mailing list for updates on events, exhibitions and more here.

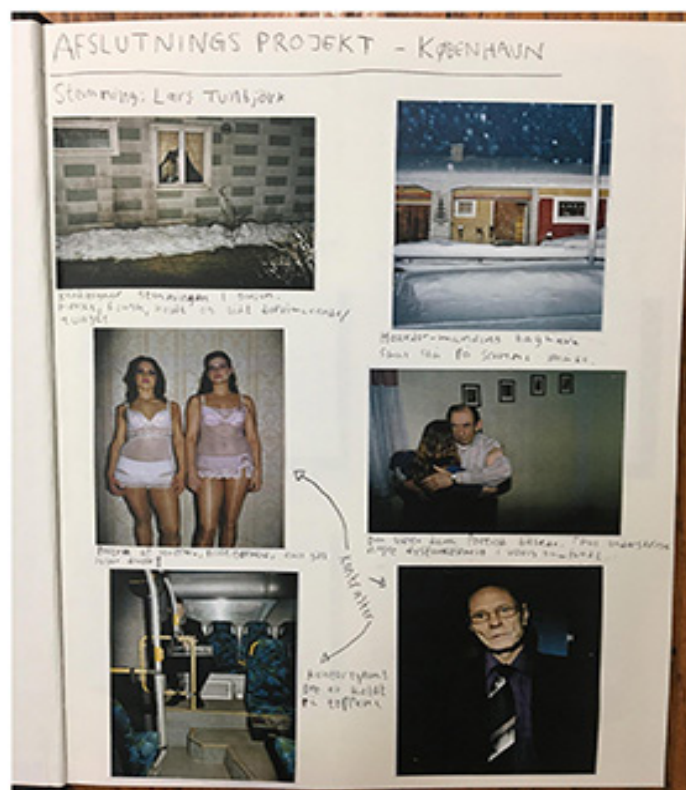
A large, thick, red brushstroke graphic that starts from the left edge and curves downwards and to the right, partially obscuring the text 'DIGITAL' and 'PORTFOLIO'.

DIGITAL PORTFOLIO EXAMPLES

SCHOOL OF FINE ART

The following pages are sample portfolios by our current students, taken from their original application to study at the GSA.

You shouldn't use these as examples to follow in terms of style but do look at how they've presented their work and their making process.



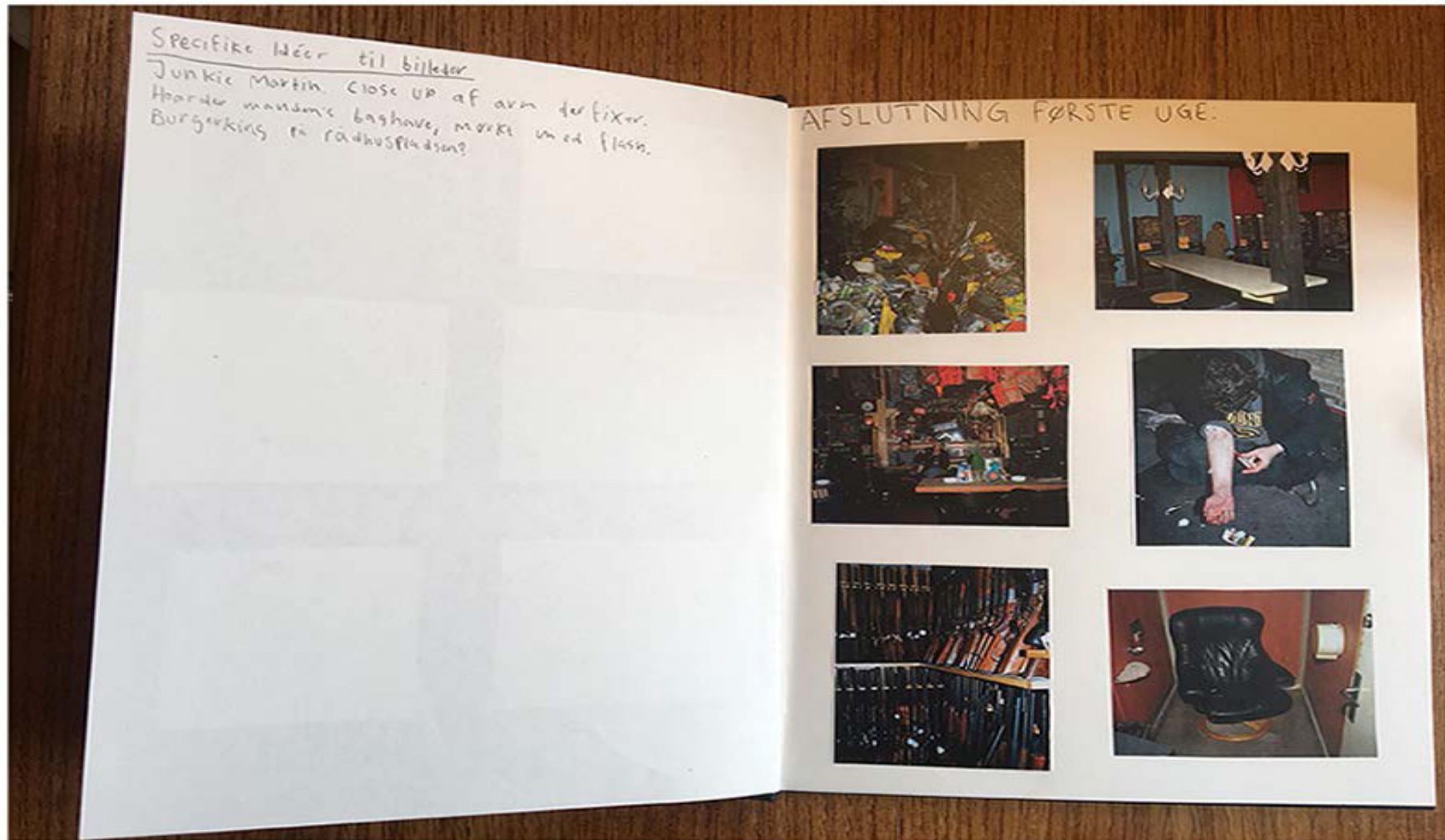
Sketchbook pages on Lars Tunbjørk



Process of sewing book.



Spread from book "32 Pictures of Men".



Sketchbook after first week working on “All in”



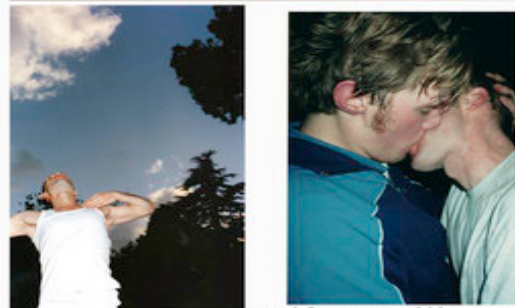










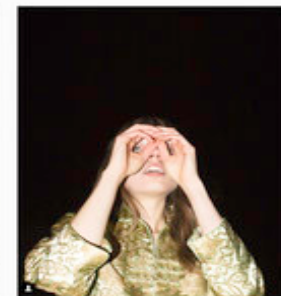
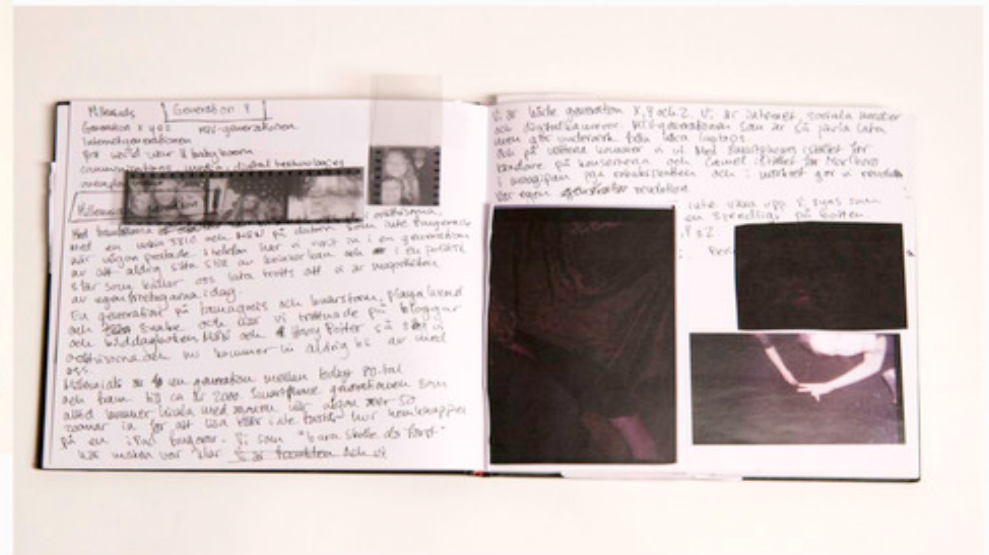


Wolfgang Tillmans



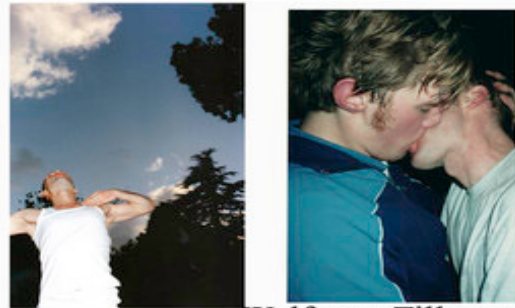
PROCESS AND INSPIRATION

Generation Y



Victoria Salomonsen

Martin Parr

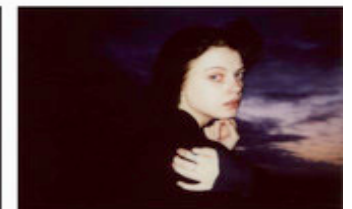
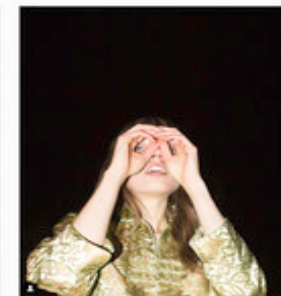
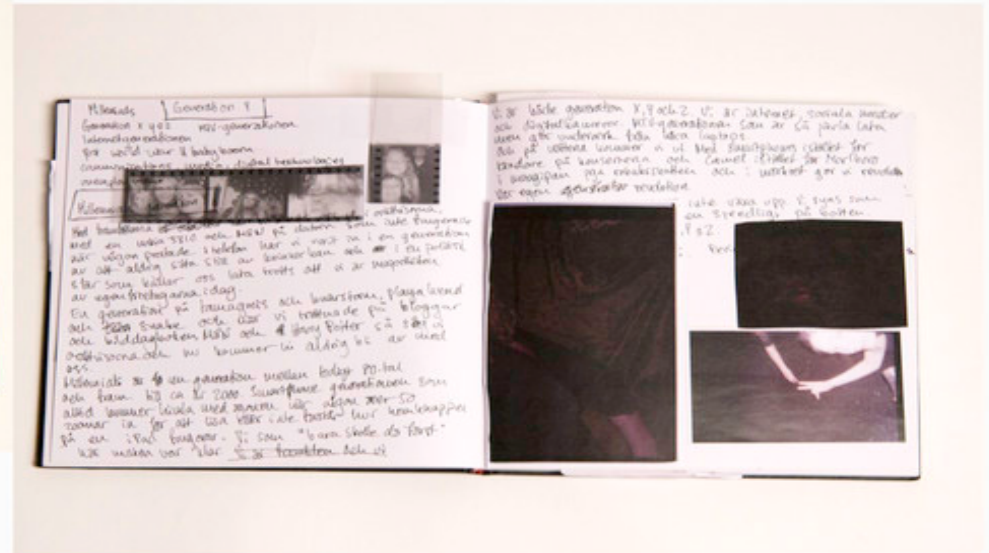


Wolfgang Tillmans



PROCESS AND INSPIRATION

Generation Y



Victoria Salomonsen

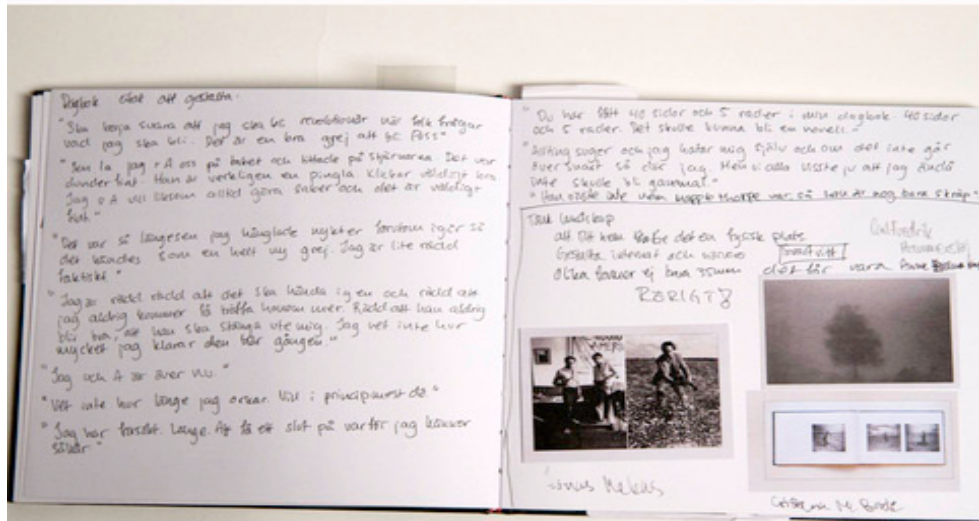
Martin Parr



Generation Y
Independent work
Analogue photography
36 images, no specific order
2017



Generation Y
Independent work
Analogue photography
36 images, no specific order
2017



First draft of pictures and texts together

PROCESS AND INSPIRATION

Every day without tears is a good day, right?

Quotes from journals 2011-2016



Jonas Mekas

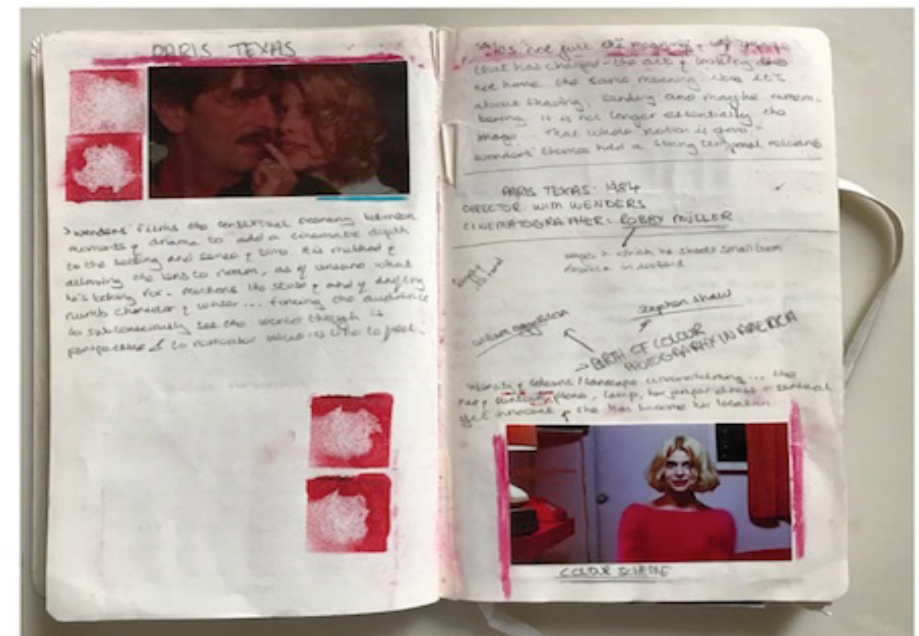
Annika von Hausswolff

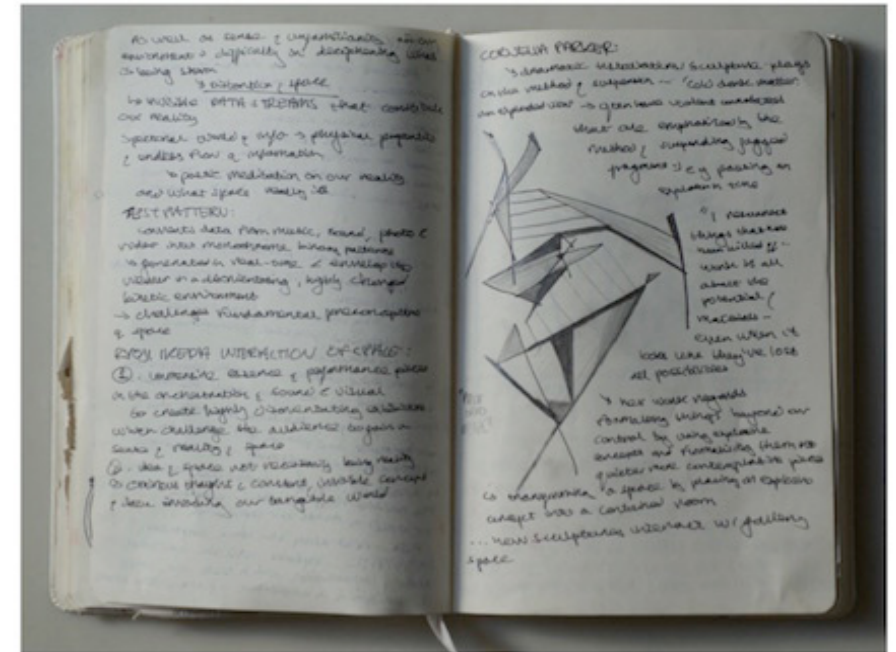
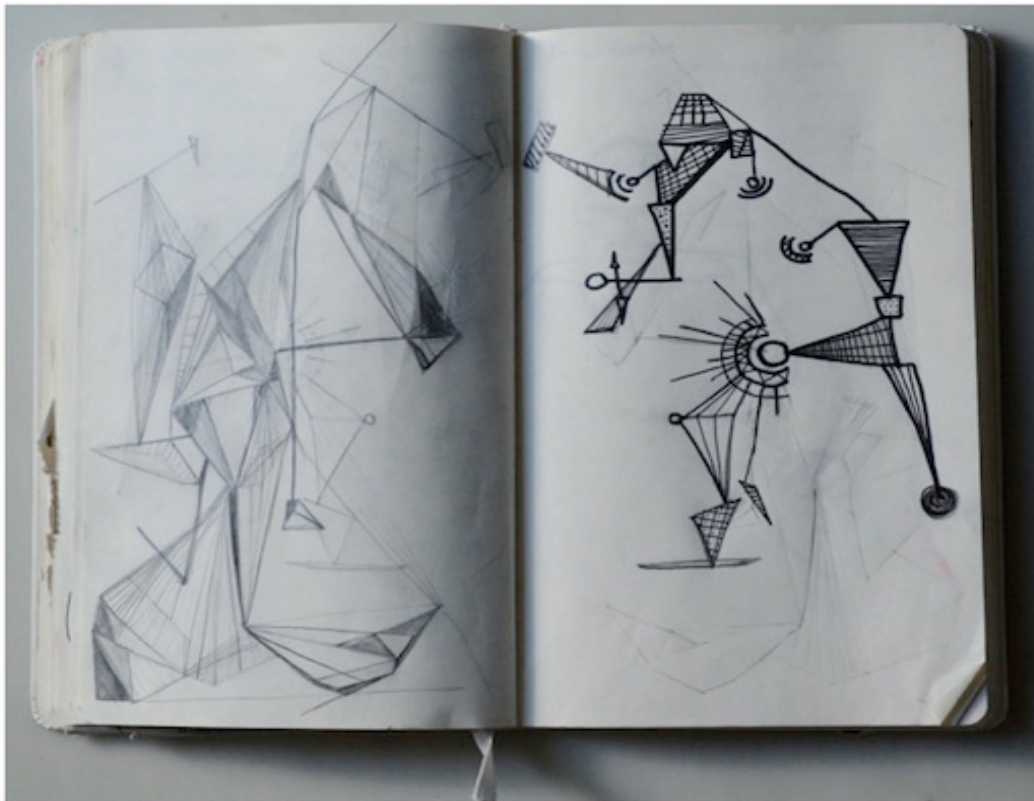


6675 Days
Analogue photography, tread and paper.
School assignment.
2017

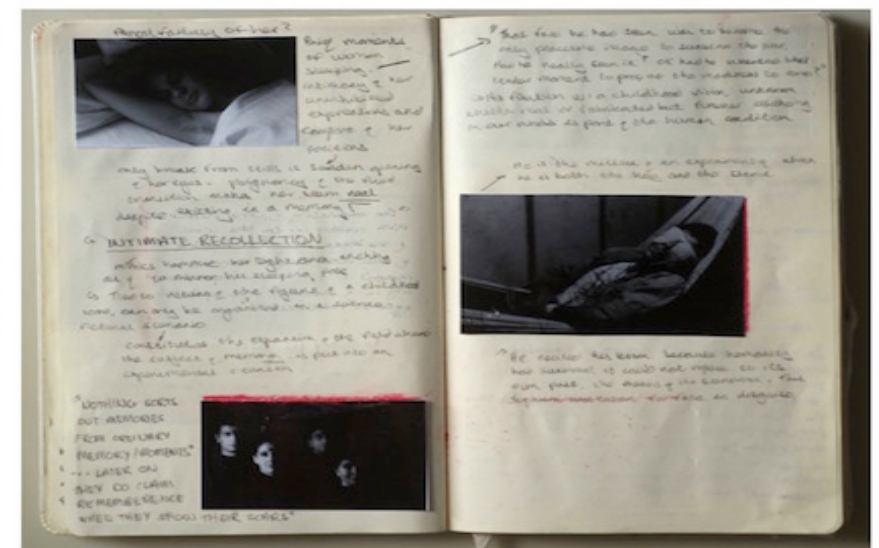
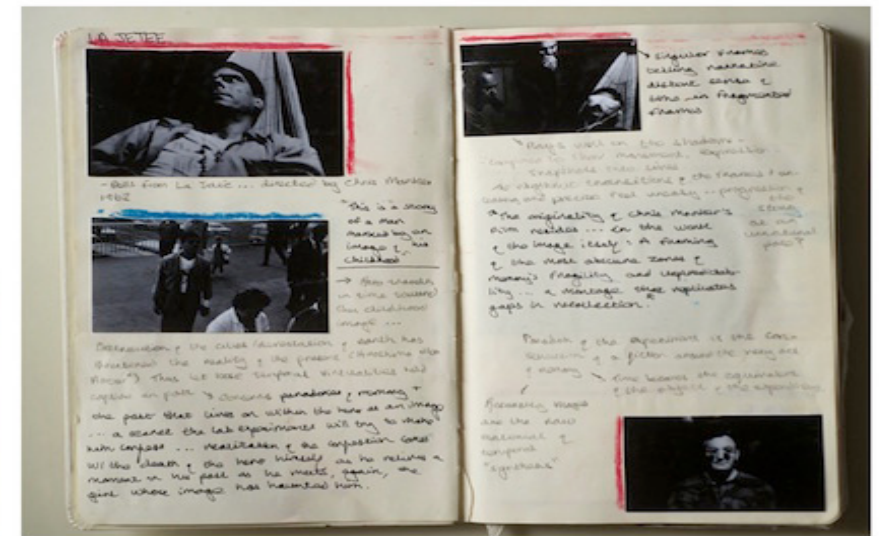


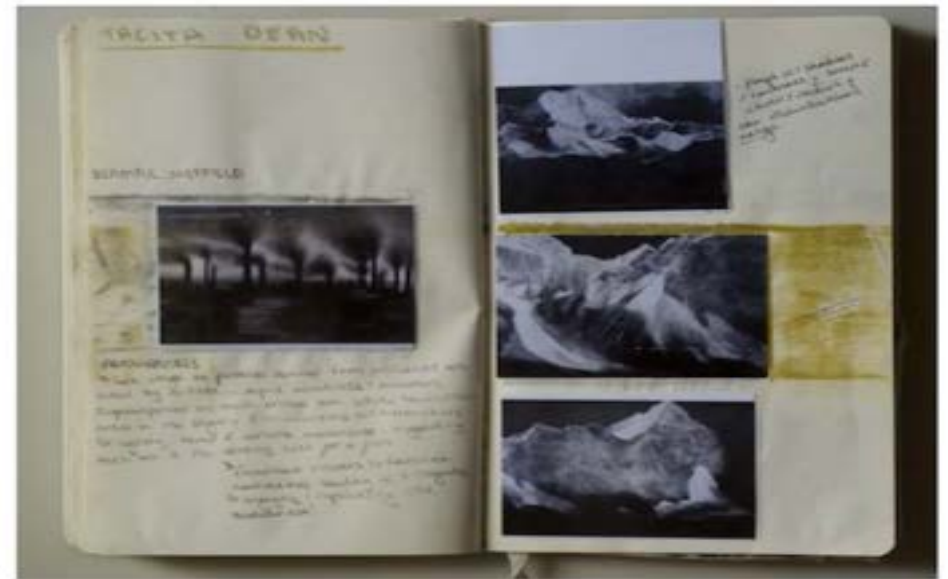
Isobel Lovekin

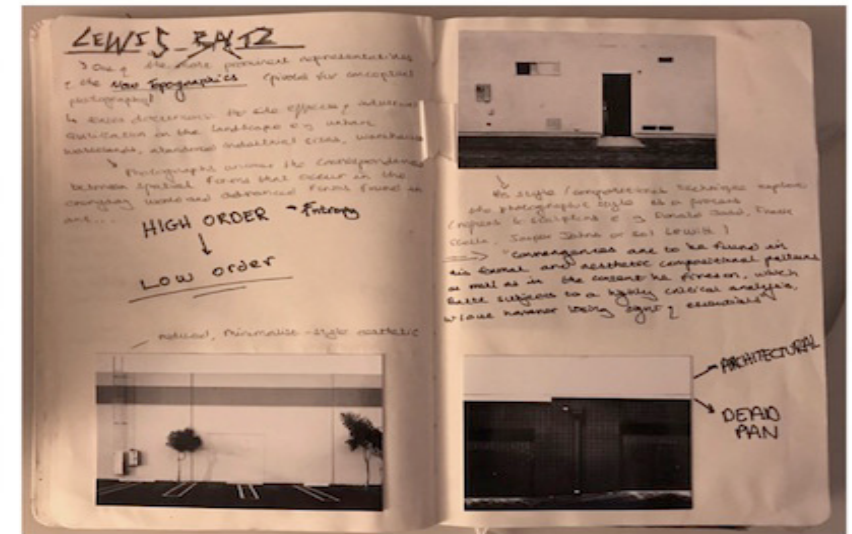




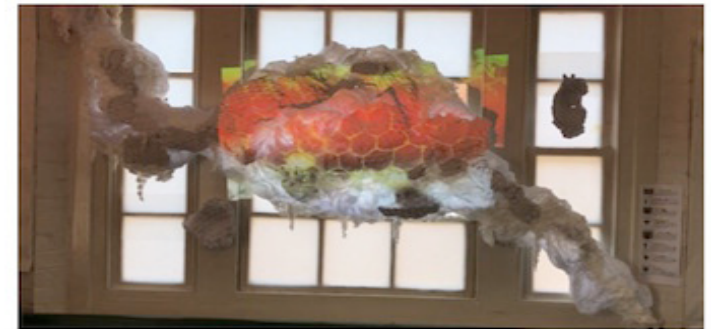


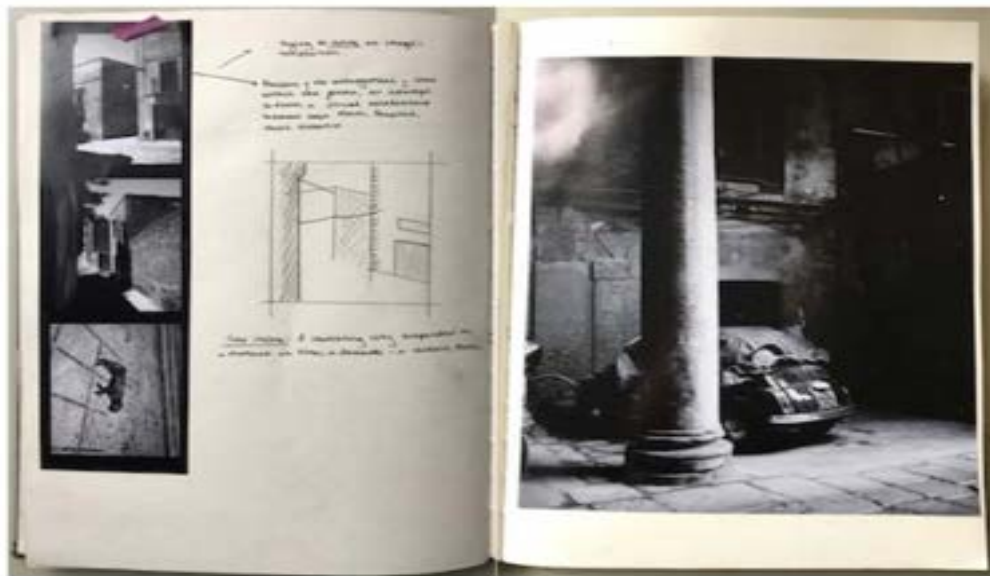
















Lim Yun Yi

Portfolio

Glasgow School of Art BA (Hons) Fine Art - Photography



Working Hands

A documentation of the weathered hands of
hawkers and wet market vendors in Singapore

Film Photography







Research

KENTMERE PAN 400 - TEST SHOTS
MANUAL CAMERA + FILM DEVELOPMENT STUDY



F5.6-F8, 1/130, NANLIGHT TO 7.-80% + OVERHEAD BRIGHT LIGHT
* PORTRAIT MODE, CONSIDER 200 ISO FOR MARKET LIGHT



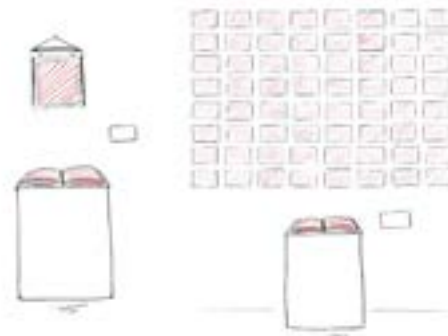
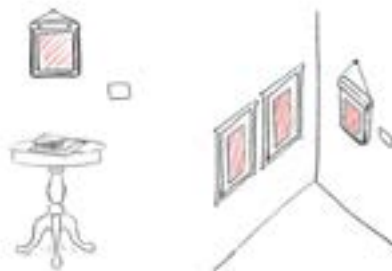
By JAMUNA (SHOTS INSPIRATION)



POURTA FOR SAMPLE
MARKET LIGHTING +
SLIM TONE ALUMINUM



Exhibition planning

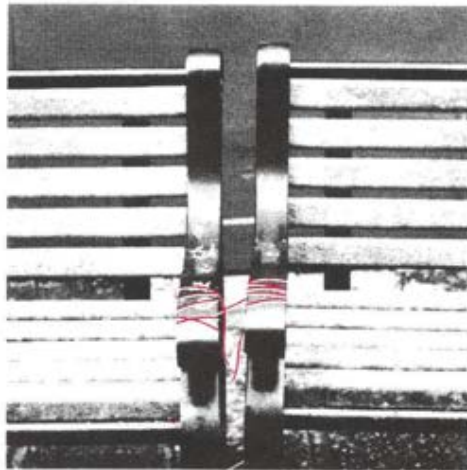
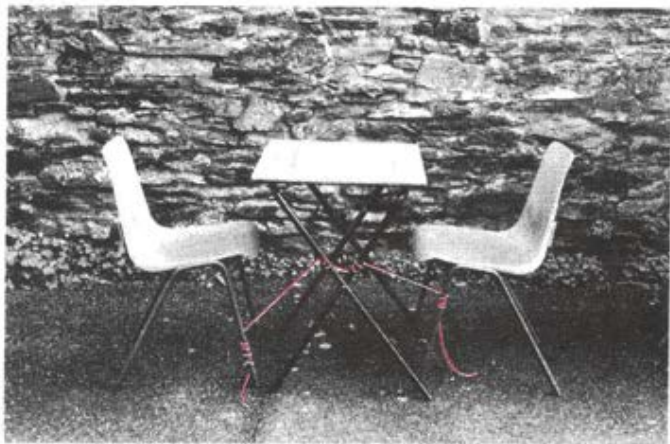




Working Hands: Experimental Study

*Video wall Projection,
looped indefinitely*

<https://youtu.be/5bc4HW-ZXFA>



Bind

Anthropomorphising found objects
in the exploration of fate

*Risograph prints,
Film Photography*



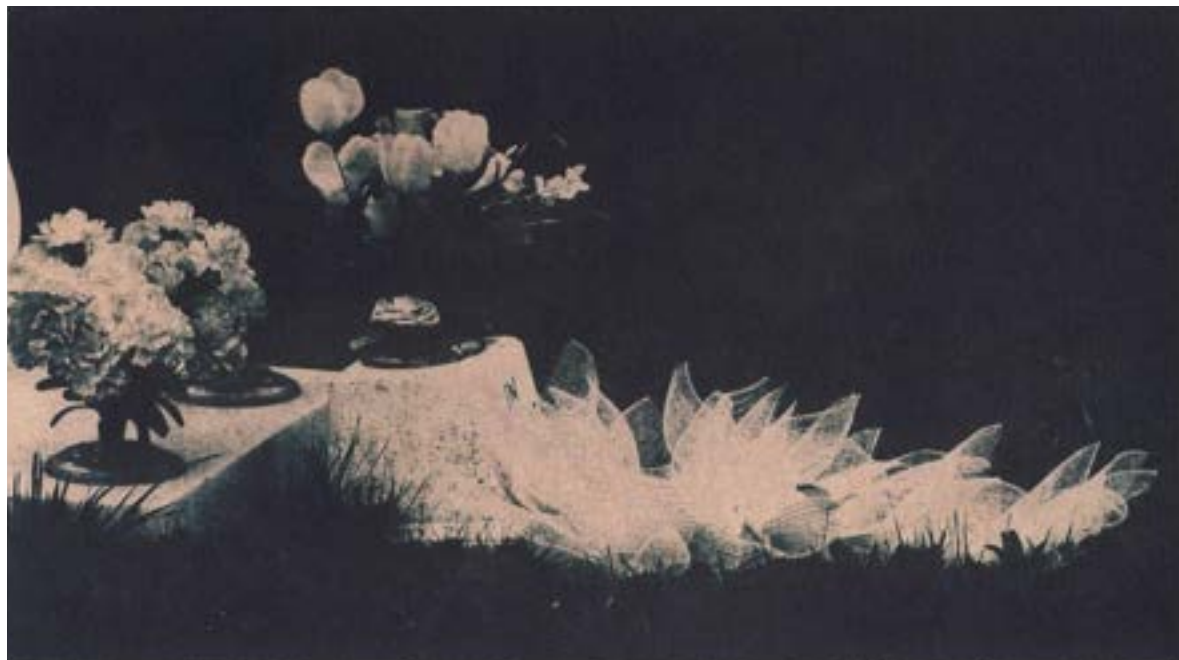


NDP 2023: Our Padang

Art Assistant (prop making, set building)

<https://youtu.be/WBRm5ZcrW9Y?si=CVzUTNbbm0KVZLsG>





In Time

An exploration of the expression of love
in grief and bereavement

*Tea toned Cyanotype prints,
Digital photography*







[Photograph] *Deer crossing*

I'm really drawn to creating images that are detached from reality, depicting the world through emotions that arise before thought.



[Artists film]

Music & Video by me—[Link to view](#)

Snippets of music created over the last few months. The video element is divided into two parts, with the first part of it being day-footage shot in with a camcorder in the summer of last year. The final part of the film shows footage of my exploring of the nocturnal landscapes where most of my photographs are taken.



[Photograph] *Oknytt*

Taken in Sweden last year. A day of heavy fog and snow.



[Photograph] *The Sister*

I find these nocturnal landscapes both strange and comforting in some paradoxical sense. In this solitary dark nothing feels as real as it was during the day. I think that has come to inform my images a lot.



[Photograph] *Bright Sun*

Both images were taken with my ISO set to it's highest value, hard-coding a grain that imbues the aesthetic effect of charcoal drawings



Pat Steir’s Waterfall compositions of paint dripping and streaming down the canvas in great organic forms produce abstractions that seem to speak to the unconscious in its silent, dream-like imagery. These waterfall compositions are “non-hierarchic”, flattening forms and emphasising texture, and focus on the dispersal of paint rather than a strict concentration towards a centre - a direct connection to Zen Buddhist thinking. Steir’s work often evokes a similar aesthetic to many of the great abstract expressionist painters of the 20th century. Painters such as Rothko, Newman and Still - who filled canvases with great blocks of colour and, like Steir, explored meditative processes of art-making.

Steir’s artistic world, where ‘gravity makes the image’, is one that is deeply informed by an aesthetic of non-intention, provenantial to the work of composer John Cage. Cage rejected traditional compositional frameworks by employing alleatory, or randomising, techniques in his compositions that he believed depleted any personal agency over its creation. What these artists both hold in common, beyond their relinquishing of artistic control, is an emphasis on the process of art-making rather than the end result itself. Not to say meaning isn’t deeply embedded in Steir’s great cascading layers of paint, rather that meaning isn’t prescribed during the process of its making.

“[T]here’s no sense of anything ‘not working together.’ Since I don’t plan the outcome, it can’t be different than my plan; whether it works together or not is not a question I ask myself. There’s no judging them immediately and in a way, there’s no judging them at all.”

Pat Steir: “I Avoid Struggle”, Interview by Emma Robertson

Chinese Literati paintings, which aimed to depict the ‘emotions’ of a landscape rather than its precise form, are also a founding source of inspiration for Steir. We see it most clearly in her Waterfalls; for each waterfall is all waterfalls, commanding some part of their essence through her organic, uncontained approach to their depiction.

“[The Chinese Literati painters] were not painting what they saw but what remained in their mind very much shaped by meditation and Zen practice.”

Pat Steir, in conversation with Patrizia Koenig



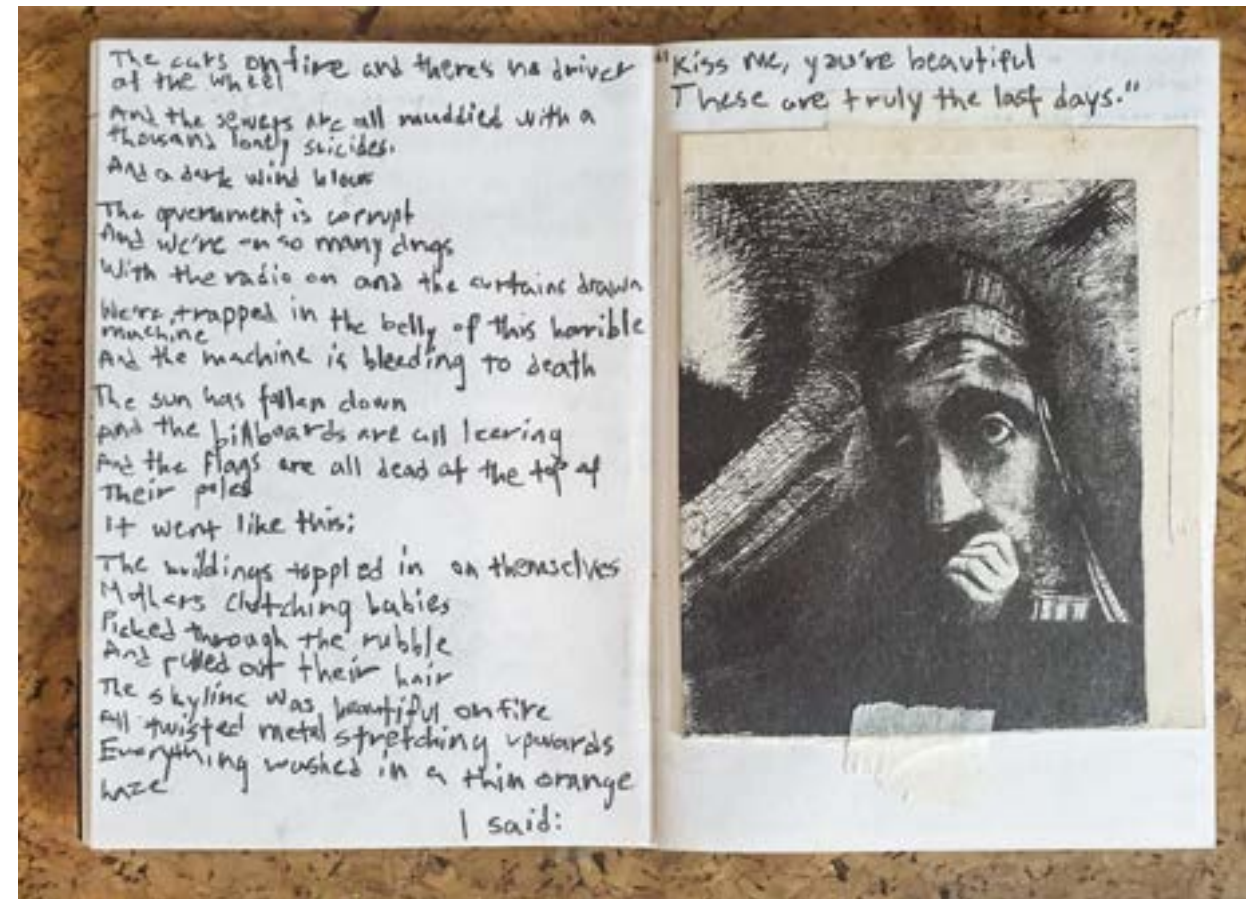
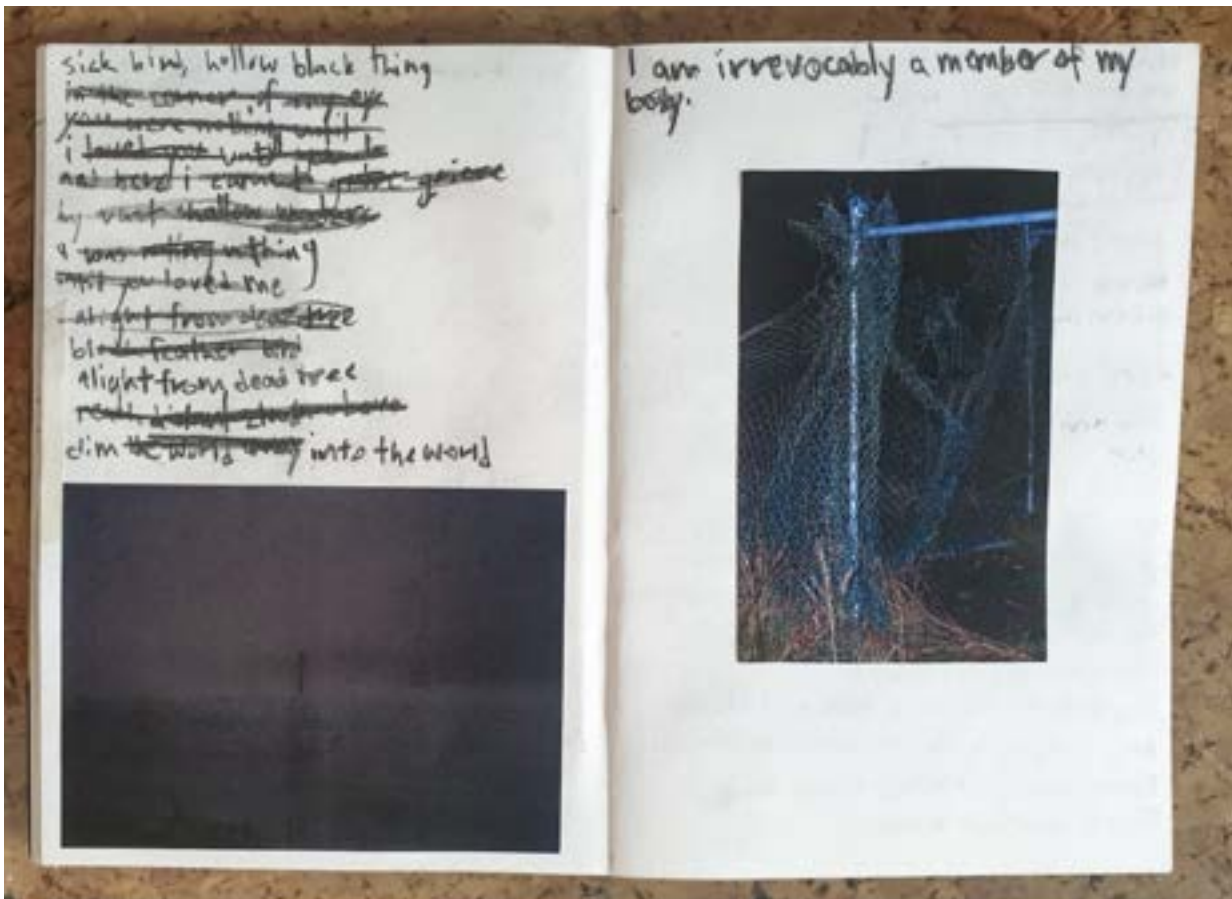
Flowers Drink the River is Pia-Paulina Guilmoth’s first published photobook post-transition. Being a transwoman in the reactionary, rural areas of Maine endangers you. Pia began taking photographs only where it felt comfortable; in a new world among friends and family, one that shimmers so beautifully under the moon and among the fields and trees, which is home to those who can only find it there. A nocturnal, fractured world of grief and transformation. Belonging and unbelonging. Reality and dream.



“The last portrait I made is of my mom last spring holding a spider web I gathered from an apple tree. She is staring at me in an anticipatory way. I held the shutter open so I caught her face glancing back down at the web. That weekend I spent with my parents I was hoping to tell them I was in the midst of transitioning, but never found the right moment. After developing the portraits of them, I saw how their gazes were attempting to figure me out: why was my skin so much softer, why did I suddenly look younger, was their offspring something other than what they had known her to be.”

—Pia-Paulina Guilmoth

Post-transition her work has become more delicately staged... She builds sculptures out of spiderwebs, flowers, etc. and leaves them to interact with the flora, fauna and natural elements—photographing that transformative cycle of nature which mirrors her own transformative cycle of self. It is no coincidence that we see the reoccurrence of the spiderweb. Transient moments become immortalised in the permanence of the image. To not forget. This is beauty as an act of resistance, beauty in defiance of decay.



[Notebook]

Experiments combining text and image to see how it affects meaning. All of my art tends to be about the same thoughts, the same feelings... beauty and decay, faith and melancholy, reality and dream... I have realised that when I collect it all into a single work, these fragments and ideas become something more significant, more coherent.

Left: Text and images by me

Right: Text from 'The Dead Flag Blues' by Godspeed You! Black Emperor
 Image sourced from second-hand artbook



[Collage]

A collection of work made under 2024 fastened with masking tape on a 1.5x2 meter board. I was exploring the ways to recontextualise and reconfigure a lot of the art that I had made (which were only quick sketches) into a single work, so that these fragments of ideas could become part of something greater and more clear.



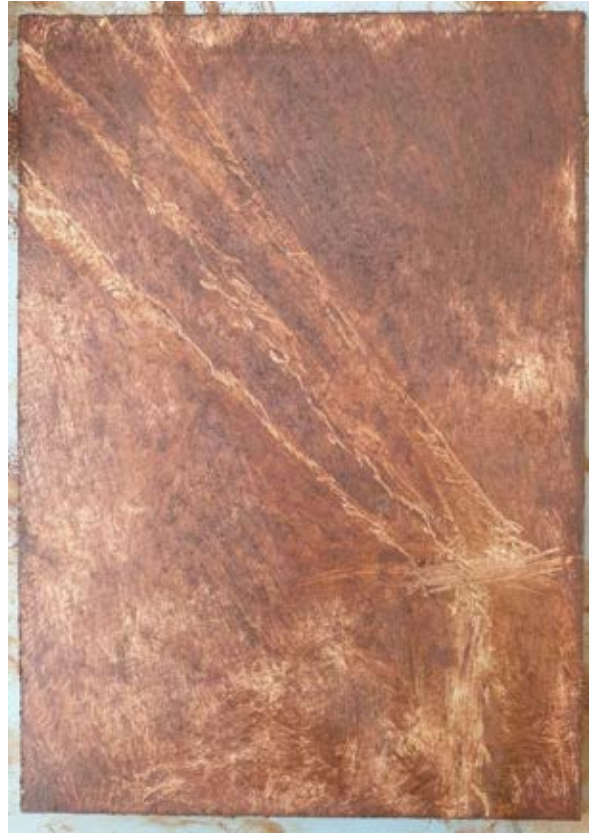
[Pastel & charcoal A4 drawings]

I find that in moments of sadness I become drawn to spirituality — there is something about melancholy and pain that makes it some kind of 'portal' to these things.



[Painting]

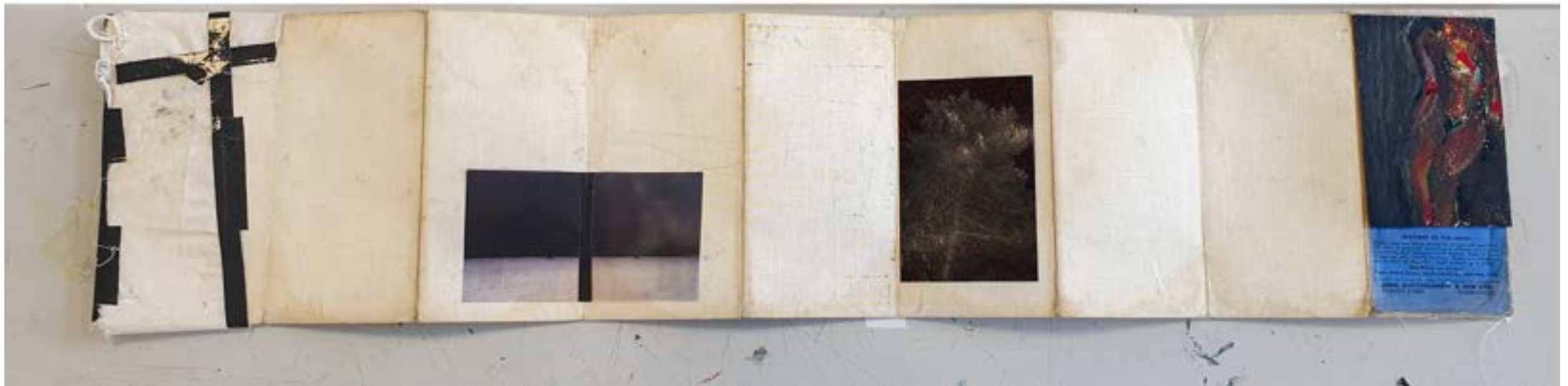
To bring the painting into further abstraction I used a sponge to create these soft, hazy tonal transitions.



[Painting]

Using my photograph as a reference I dispersed and scratched away paint with a scalpel.





[Experimenting with narrative storytelling]

It is to be read right-to-left, then left-to-right. Words accompany the piece:

*"a pool black and ancient shimmers so bright in the last of the light... like a glowing orchard of stars... like shining figs of dreams.
the moon carried naked in the black limbs of sycamore. their spreading and twisting in the pale sistersun like some old articulation from the longing earth... come to me once more.
sing to me once more.
the stars are so big the earth is so small... can you hear the wind blow? you are so beautiful my heart could stop.
its not your fault i love you. its not anybodys fault.. love is the only thought and pain is the only feeling... my mind expires in the heat of your palms. your Body and Blood."*

[Images]

Light shining through three found photographs.



Bleached photograph



Scratched around Christ's hanging figure



Covered figure in charcoal

Hailing from the Black Sun Suffering and the Divine in *Stalker*



Fig. 1: On the introduction of the Zone.

Stalker (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1979) is a film about a 'Stalker', guiding a 'Scientist' and 'Writer' through the incomprehensible Zone—a lush, solitary, mist-filled landscape that is the aftermath of otherworldly visitation. They aim to reach the Room, a physical and metaphysical space that promises to fulfil one's deepest desires—the ultimate longing of the soul which is ineffable and irresistible to the characters. The concept emerges from what Jacques Lacan calls 'the Thing', the ultimate object of desire, belonging to an order of the world—the Real, the all that 'is'—independent of human perceptual and conceptual understanding.³ The film navigates themes of existentialism and the Divine and mystical or ineffable qualities inherent in much of its imagery. This essay will explore suffering in the narrative and how it mediates understanding of divine truth and 'the Thing'. The full breadth of which is admittedly beyond my current understanding and outside the scope of a Foundation degree. Despite that, what I have learned has been truly revelatory to how I understand my art, the art of others and the world.

Christian thought in the middle-ages attributed Saturn with symbolic meaning as a planet of melancholy and thought; of suffering and the Divine.⁴ They considered the body to be governed by the stars and to submerge oneself in melancholy became an essential ascetic act among medieval monks in their path to enlightenment. That profound rupture in the psyche was said to reveal the 'true nature of Being', the ultimate 'knowledge of divine truth' (Kristeva, p. 5).⁵ These saturnian ideas lie core in the artistic and religious mind of Tarkovsky—who is an austere Orthodox Christian. For Tarkovsky, Art is a self-sacrificial act that serves a 'higher and communal idea'

(Tarkovsky, p. 39),⁶ with the cinematic image itself "stretch[ing] out to infinity, and lead[ing] to the absolute" (Tarkovsky, p. 104).⁶

"[E]ven though the word sacrificial (in the vulgar understanding of the term) has negative, outwardly destructive connotations, when it is applied to the individual who is sacrificing himself, the essence of that act is always love, that is—a positive, creative, Divine act." (Tarkovsky, p. 387)⁷

In his films suffering is not an obstacle for his characters to overcome, it is part of a greater, metaphysical confrontation with the Divine, reflecting the Orthodox Christian notion of redemptive suffering⁸—'as soon as he begins to feel something or suffer—he becomes a human being' (Tarkovsky, para. 9), Tarkovsky says in relation to Kelvin, the protagonist of his earlier film *Solaris*.⁹ In *Stalker*, The Zone performs this role of tribulation for the three characters who navigate it. It is now 'a place of uncompromised and unblemished value' (Dyer, p. 26)¹⁰ but had once been home to human settlement, representing some saturnian, Holy ideal of renewal and decay. Here we find a vast industrial wasteland: a legion of tanks which lay rusting and stooped in a field, burnt vehicles and charred remains, telegraph wires fading into the mist and the poles perilously sinking—as if the memory of mankind is being swallowed by a landscape so aggressively overgrown it might even be sentient.

"I don't know what's going on here in the absence of people, but the moment someone shows up, everything comes into motion."¹¹

The Stalker

The Zone is an actively hostile environment to those who navigate its world. Nature plays the role of an inexorable force and colours it with the qualities of a power beyond human comprehension. It conjures up an existential fear and unknowing that is the central undercurrent of *Stalker*.

"The Zone wants to be respected. Otherwise it will punish."¹²

The Stalker

Tarkovsky's measured pacing and long takes persist to a point of embodying hypnotic qualities, 'sinking us further into the arrested emotional and spiritual state of the three main characters, the Writer, the Scientist, and the Stalker.' (Totaro, p. 103)¹³ These long takes 'develop[e] a life of their own... [forming] a glimpse of the Thing at the threshold of meaning' (Belau and Cameron, p. 181).¹⁴

After having undergone several trials, most exemplified in their passing through the 'Meat Grinder', the three characters arrive at the Room

"You surely are a wonderful person! Of course, I didn't have any doubts, but you endured such a torture! This pipe is the most horrible place! The most horrible ... in the Zone! We call it "meat grinder", but it is worse than any meat grinder! So many people have perished here! And it was there Porcupine laid his brother."¹⁵

The Stalker

Though they choose to remain outside the Room—the Stalker and Scientist never intended to enter, and the Writer realises that his desire, 'inspiration', is dependant solely on his will and efforts. However, it can be argued that tragedy has cleansed them¹⁶ (Tarkov, para. 6) and formed a glimpse into the absolute truth. The Writer, who starts off 'as a cynic, just a pragmatist' (Tarkovsky, para. 56)¹⁷ marked by deep existential despair, has undergone a profound transformation and returns from the Zone 'as a man who speaks of human dignity' (Tarkovsky, para. 56)¹⁸. The Stalker, who saw in himself a prophet guiding those to 'a happiness independent of man's will and his efforts' (Tarkovsky, para. 9)¹⁹, loses his faith under the influence of those he leads in the journey to the Zone—'rediscover[ing] only his own idea of the happiness of men obtained with the help of a pure faith' (Tarkovsky, para. 10)²⁰. The Scientist who aimed to destroy the Room in fear of those who would abuse its powers realises that it is beyond human control and understanding. Here the rain then falls—a spiritual cleansing all of that has been left behind.



Fig. 2: On the interior of the Room.

"By means of a leap into the orphic world of artifice (of sublimation), the saturnine poet, out of the traumatic experience and object of mourning, remembers only a gloomy or personal tone. He thus comes close, through the very components of language, to the lost Thing. His discourse identifies with it, absorbs it, modifies it, transforms it." (Kristeva, p. 160).²¹



[Photograph] *Listening to water drip in the woods*
Taken at night with a camera and flash.



[Photograph] *My friend*

Taken with a flash at night after trespassing onto some farmland.



[Photographs]
Portraits of my mother.



[Photograph] *You are so clear in my mind, I wish you were here.*

I often include a lot of negative space in my images. Sometimes in that vast emptiness your mind can make connections that point to some quality you can't really put words to.