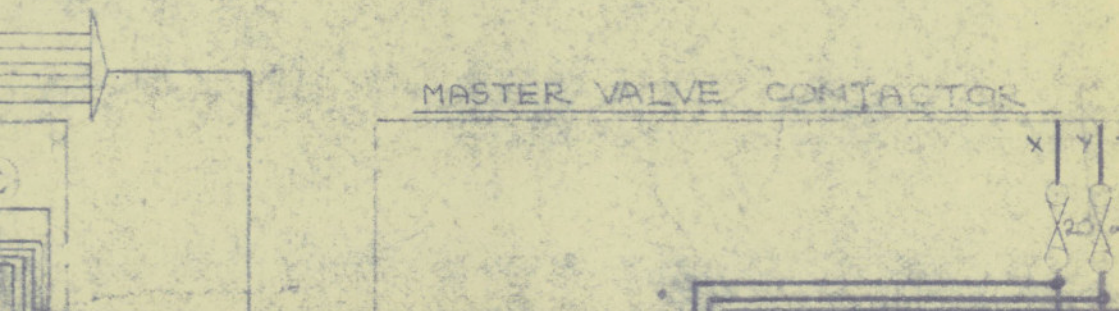


Something that happened





Something that happened but never took place

Anatol Pitt

Bus Projects 10 July – 3 August 2019

Unless otherwise marked text and images by Anatol Pitt

Essay by Danni Zuvela

; *Cuevas del Miedo (Caves of Fear)*, Venezuela.
Credit: Carldpaz 2014.

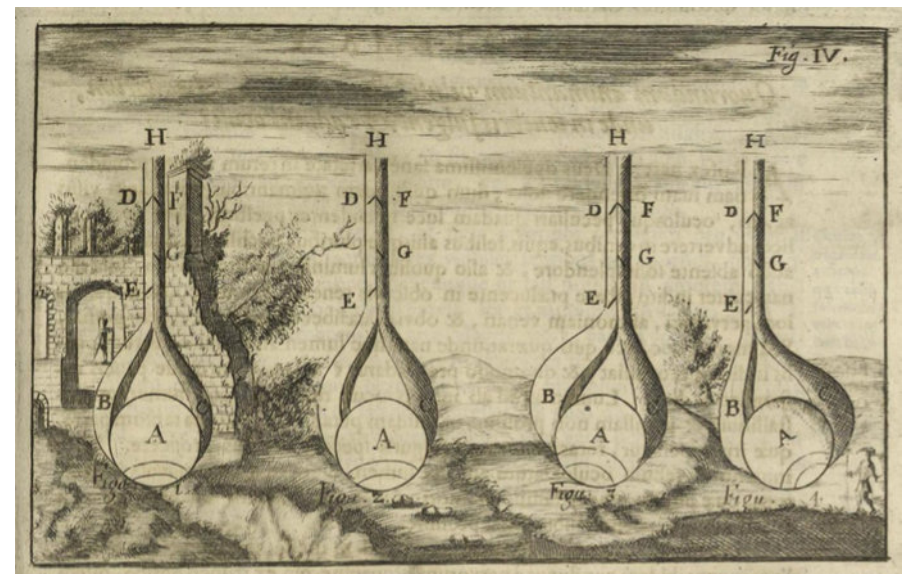
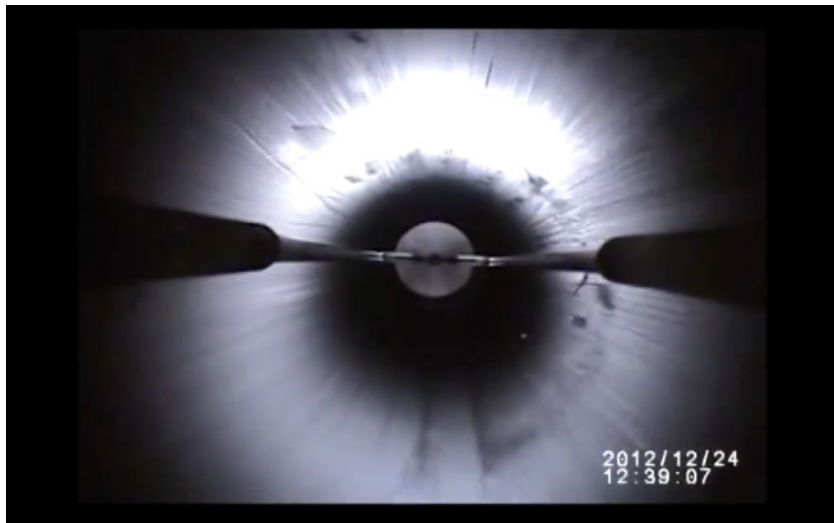
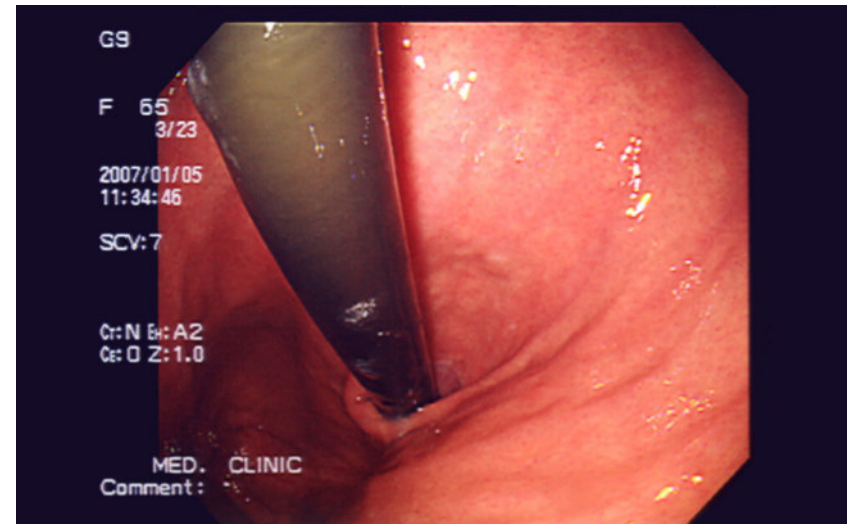


Diagram from *Oculus Artificialis Teledioptricus Sive Telescopium (The Long-Distance Artificial Eye, or Telescope)* by Würzburg cleric Johann Zahn 1685.



Ice coring footage. Screenshot of Youtube video: *IDDO Replicate Ice Coring* by UWSSEC (Space Science and Engineering Center), University of Wisconsin-Madison 2013.



Stomach endoscopy. Credit: Ignis 2007.



Selime Cathedral, Ihlara Valley, Cappadocia, Turkey 2010.

I

Standing there, one can't help but think about
giant ground sloths.

Carving out their burrows, their claws turn the porous rock into walls of texture. As they dig deeper into my past, what seemed solid to the touch dissolves in dendritic possibility.

Memories stutter, recovered, dug up,
digested,
buried again,
waiting for another chance.

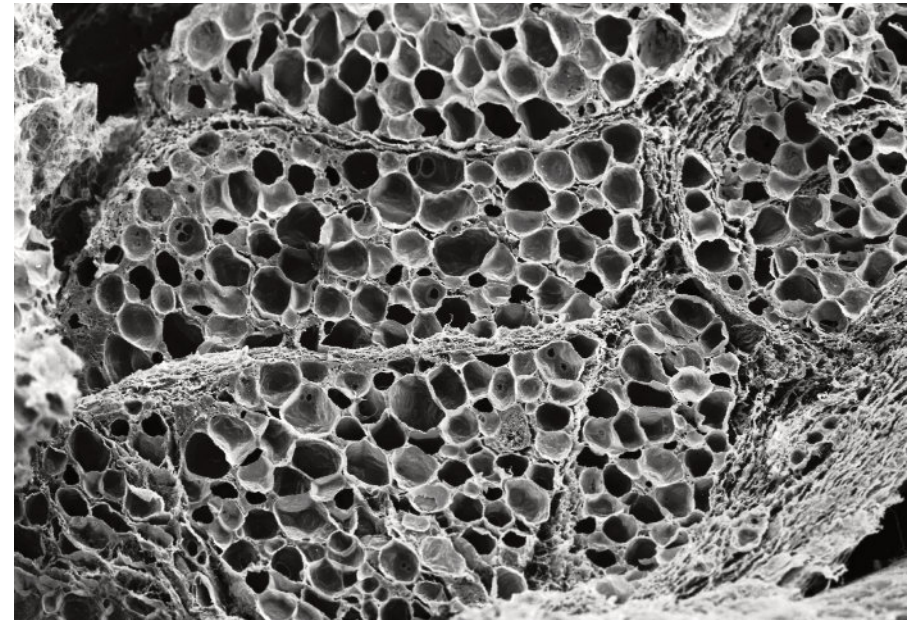
Tracing out their evolutionary tree, I don't have the guts to tell these sloths how it all ends. Not that I really know. All I have are a few bones and my threadbare theories to go by.



Artist's bed, Peri Cave Hotel in Göreme, Cappadocia, Turkey 2010.

How long do these ancient creatures sleep for? Was it out of necessity that they burrowed down, carving out a life, before realising they preferred the surface, the canopy, their algae?

Of over fifty species of sloth, only six remain. The large majority were ground-dwellers, some as big as elephants.



SEM (Scanning Electron Microscope) image of an adipose tissue lobule, freeze fracture.
Credit: David Gregory & Debbie Marshall CC BY.

A camera snakes past, searching, retracing its own path,
documenting everything—even if it sees little. Not that it matters,
it's the principle of it, the process.

My voice echoes down the chambers
of this Anatolian city, papered over.
No response.

: Underground chamber, Göreme, Cappadocia, Turkey.
Credit: Kati Thamo (thanks mum) 2010.

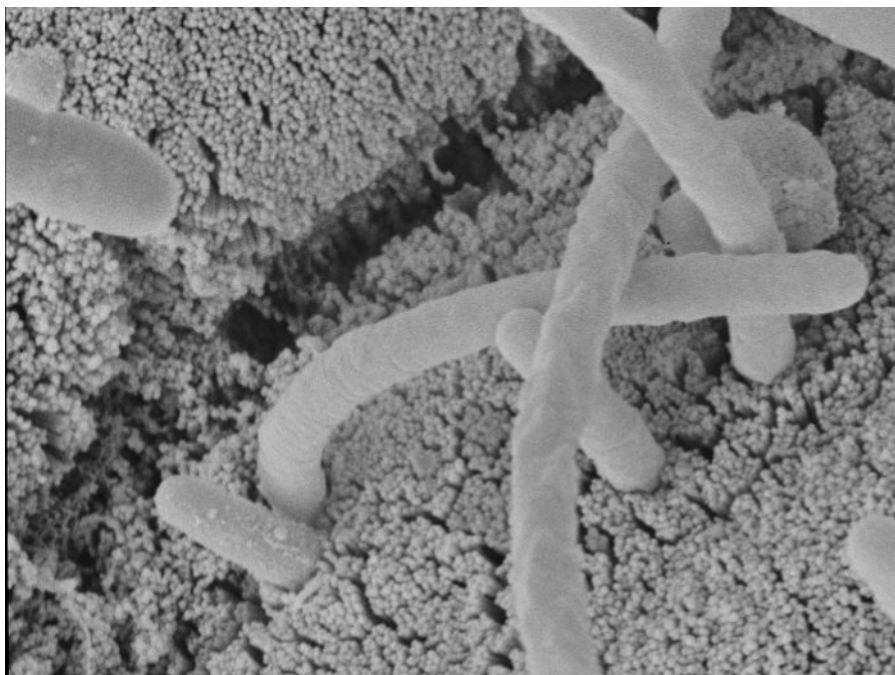


I remember, crawling underneath Budapest.
Clambering down into my new home below the suburbs.

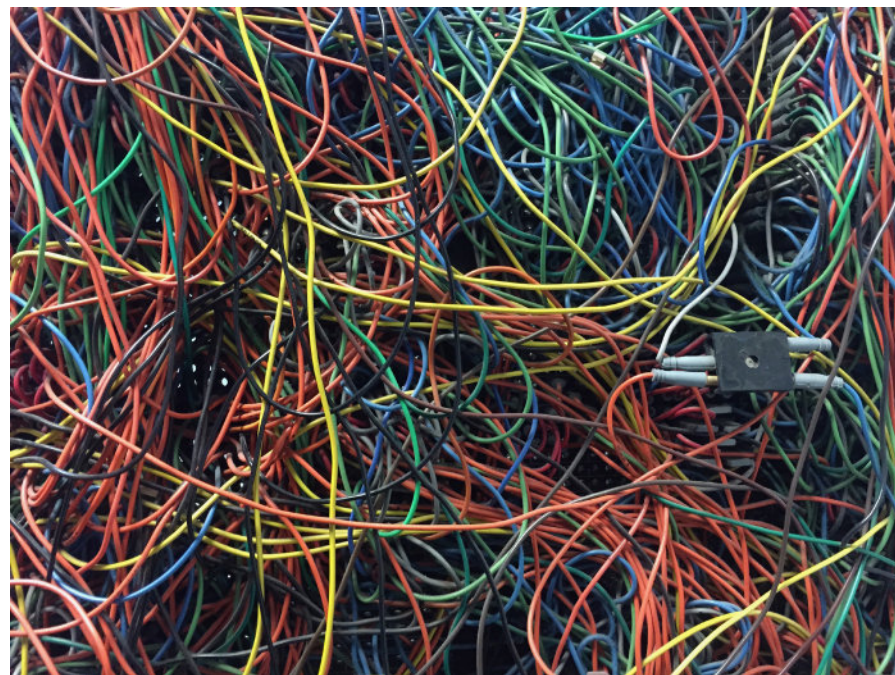
The guide just in front of me turns off his light and disappears
into the darkness. Everyone stops.

Where next?

Not really equipped for this,
we wait, directionless.



Intestinal bacteria. Credit: Mark Jepson CC BY.



Vintage patching cables, University of Melbourne 2017.

Crawlspace Danni Zuvela

All that he does seems to him, it is true, extraordinarily new, but also, because of the incredible spate of new things, extraordinarily amateurish, indeed scarcely tolerable, incapable of becoming history, breaking short the chain of the generations, cutting off for the first time at its most profound source the music of the world, which before him could at least be divined. Sometimes in his arrogance he has more anxiety for the world than for himself.

—Kafka, “He” (Aphorisms)

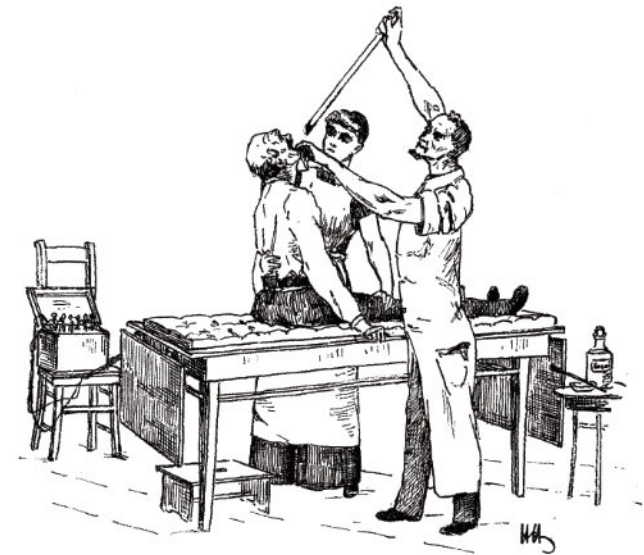
The z-axis, in classical film studies, refers to the axis of screen space that runs from foreground-to-background, or background-to-foreground, in the frame. (X being the horizontal and Y being the vertical). The z-axis provides depth of field. The Z axis helps the X and Y make sense in space; it's what makes a 2D image three-dimensional.

Composition along the z axis – in the “depth” of the picture – is considered a hallmark of some of the most sophisticated and sensitive films in human history. We can analyse screen space – the mise-en-scene (literally, ‘what’s in the frame’) – in terms of what’s in the foreground, middle ground and background. Of course, where classical film studies comes a bit unstuck is with gaming, where not only is the mise-en-scene constantly changing and the camera movement point of view, but the action habitually oriented around z-axis travels. This z-movement doesn't just affect but rather shapes mise-en-scene-based compositional analysis, redrafting the rules around the psychological and phenomenological experience of spectatorship with the viewing self centred.

Anatol Pitt takes this mobile first-person perspective as a method to question consciousness. The back-and-forth z-axis tracking shots are the core of the exhibition, featuring in the two video works, *Carrying a stone in each eye* (2019) and *To fall in the void as I fell* (2019). In *To fall in the void as I fell*, the movement tracks a continuous stream of the artist scrolling through open tabs on his phone. We rifle through things saved for later, burrowing into an artist's present-to-hand working memory and prevailing obsessions – but at a pace that prevents close consideration. Everything is shown, but only glimpsed. Pitt's relentless registration and replacement of each tab in *To fall in the void as I fell* is a kind of guarded self-performance, a disclosure followed by a caveat;

revealing but withdrawing, a moving but confined perspective that recurs throughout the exhibition.

Carrying a stone in each eye utilises a specific optical instrument known as a borescope – a small camera fitted to a flexible tube, designed to non-destructively investigate and report on otherwise-inaccessible areas, such as the interior of turbines, the bore of a rifle or plumbing mysteries.



After a series of trials, Dr. Adolph Kussmaul of Germany succeeded in taking a look inside the stomach of a living human body for the first time in 1868. This was tested on a sword-swallower, who could to gulp down a straight, 47-centimeter long metal tube with a diameter of 13 millimeters.

– The Olympus Museum, ‘Origin of Endoscopes’

Introducing Kussmaul's gastroscope demonstrated by Dr. Hecker, author unknown 1896.

This kind of device produces a vision of things we aren't able, or supposed to be able, to see. (In some ways, despite its similar surveillance function, it is the opposite of the all-seeing eye-in-the-sky; in contrast to the drone's lofty all-encompassing view, the borescope/endoscope inches incrementally towards its target along the poky confines of walls, tubes, pipes and canals). It infiltrates, and in its reporting, provides a perspective that is constitutively different to everyday vision.

Carrying a stone in each eye explores this perspective with a medical cross-section of an imaginary underground city. Lasting impressions of a teenage visit to Cappadocia, in present-day Turkey, and a fascination with the Chris Marker film *La Jetee*, whose ruthless experimenters inhabiting Paris' underground catacombs inform the artist's model, custom-built to echo the intricate interconnecting networks of passages and rooms of subterranean societies found across the globe.

Pitt leads the spectator along a tunnel whose lumpy corridors resemble those hewn directly from the rock above. Down inclines and around corners, along narrow passages which open out into rooms and common areas; like an archaeologist, we venture in media res into Pitt's catacombs, seeking evidence, chasing artefacts, noting clues.

Imagine you were a burrowing animal like a mole. Your world would consist of corridors and chambers rather than artefacts and monuments. It would be a world of enclosures whose surfaces surround the medium instead of detached objects whose surfaces are surrounded by it.

—James Gibson

As Stuart Elden says, our surface-dwelling existence tends to predispose us to conceptualise the world in a particular way, and how we think about the politics of space changes when we think in terms of 'height and depth instead of surfaces, three-dimensions instead of areas'. These interiors are not carved from within but rather sculpted from without, from armatures covered by papier-mache walls with a masticated texture. Like a gastroenterologist on the fibre optics, we enter the mental space of digestion, travelling deep into a body, searching for the undigested, the obstructions, the still-processing; for stories in these entrails.

With photographs embedded in the tunnel walls, Pitt plants narrative clues along the way. But we never pause long enough, or get a good enough view to examine each image closely in this gallery. As with *To fall in the void as I fell*, the suggestion is that the work is less concerned with the degree to which individual images should be read as indices of the self than it is their weight as a collective proposition about the non-singular self.

Pitt creates a world which centres an enclosed perspective, a physical environment knowable only through a certain kind of augmented vision producing states of deep-diving, rabbit-holing: things understood through motion. This technologised, medicalised perspective is first-person, but with reserve, since for every revelation there is a withholding; the detail necessary for a confessional account is missing. For all the reflexivity of what would appear to be a guided tour of Anatolia, the inwardness of this exploration is limited to mining his own metadata for answers that may not be there – except, perhaps in the incessant motion of the point of view, crawling, scrubbing, scrolling.

Without self-disclosure, then, there is less actual introspection than there is reflection on the act of introspection itself. What Pitt is offering us is a model of an extended and distributed mind, curated, redigested and tracked. It's a somewhat circular track, since it is the artist's own archive that is pressed into service in considering the distinction between the self and the sum of one's digital existence.

But the self-critical part of ourselves, the part that Freud calls the super-ego, has some striking deficiencies: it is remarkably narrow-minded; it has an unusually impoverished vocabulary; and it is, like all propagandists, relentlessly repetitive.

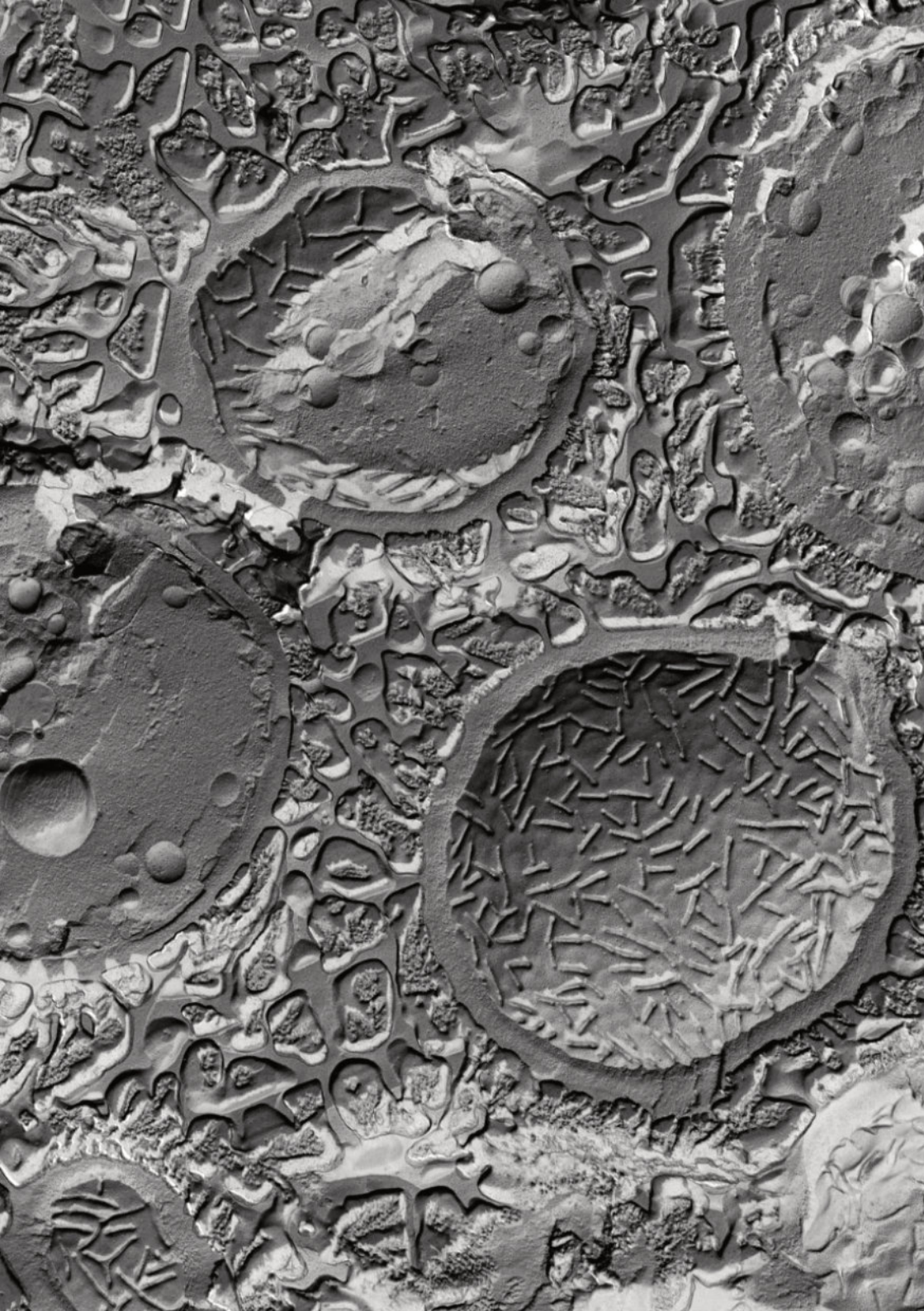
– Adam Phillips

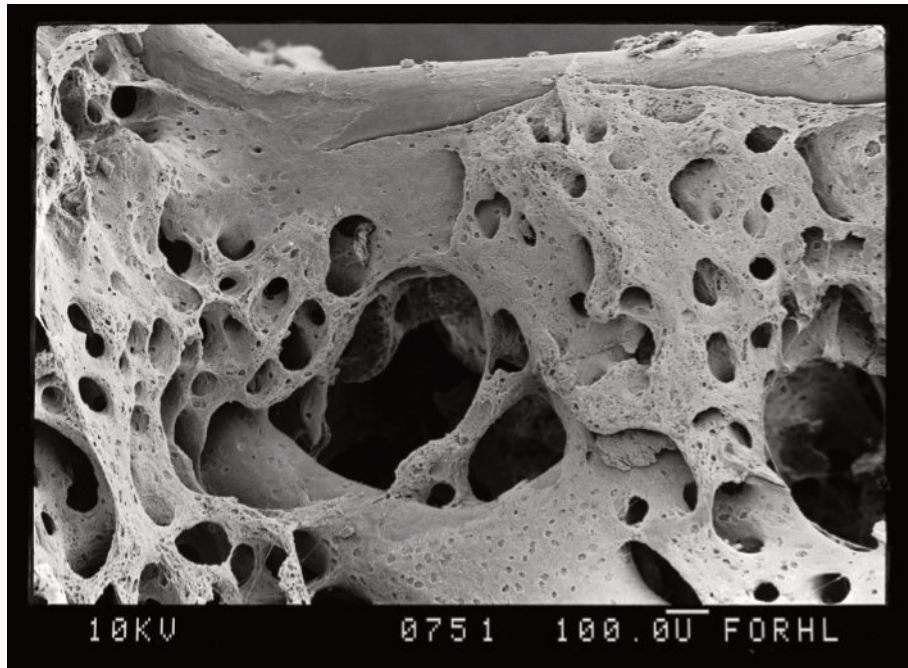
The artist offers us a journey into his memory palace as a proxy for the process of self-examination, of travelling into territories that are hidden for a reason; a rumination on the inevitable circularity of self-definition, and the questions that become harder the deeper we go.

: L-R

Unidentified ceiling, Istanbul, Turkey 2010.

Yeast cells plasma membrane, Freeze fracture and etching TEM.
Credit: Kevin Mackenzie, University of Aberdeen CC BY.





SEM (ScanningElectron Microscope) image of bone, new trabeculae connecting to old.
Credit: David Gregory & Debbie Marshall CC BY.



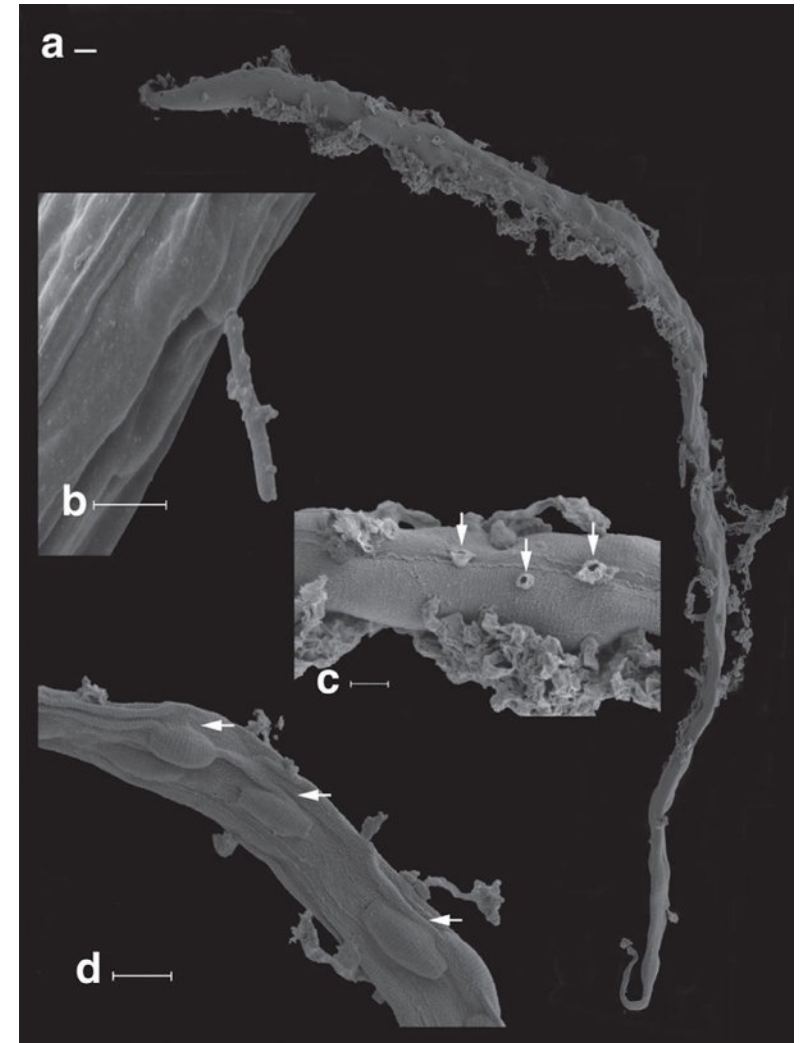
Terrace House archaeological dig, Ephesus, Turkey 2010.

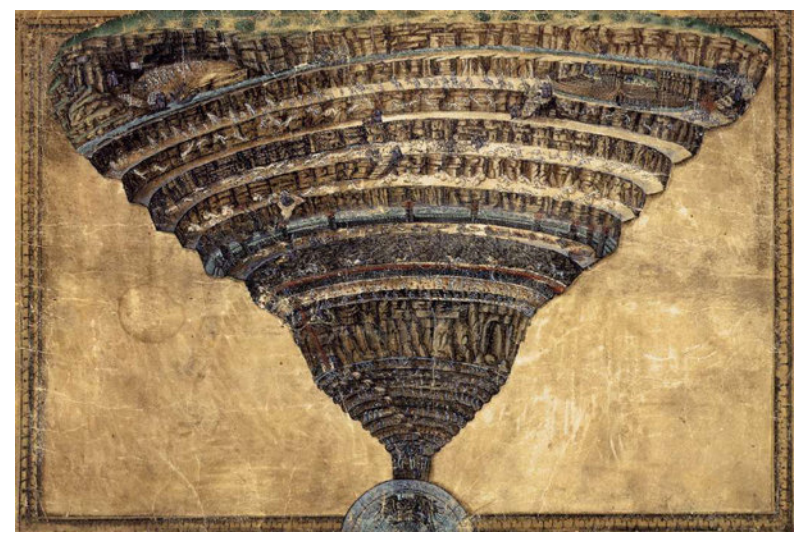
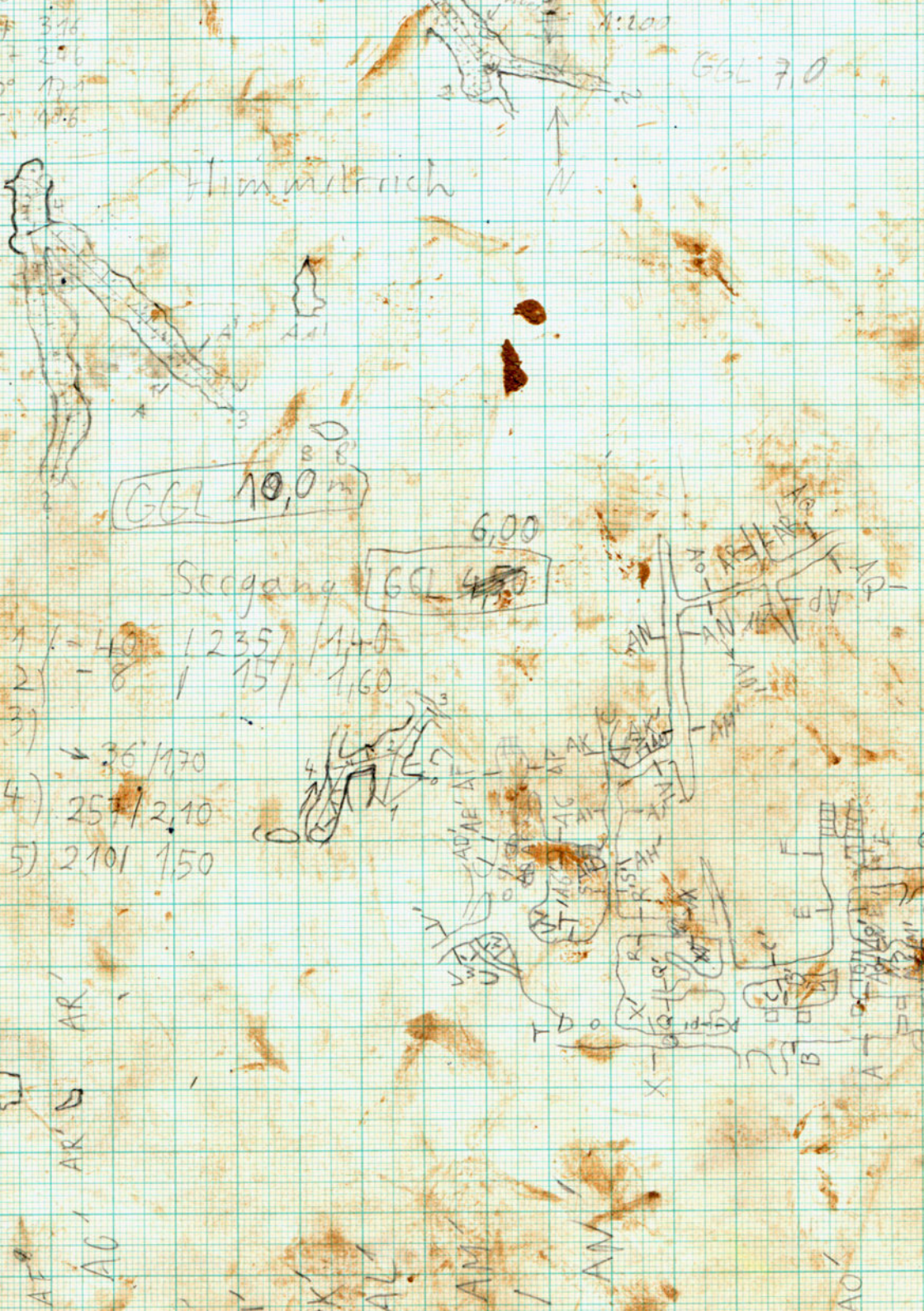
III

If I were not me and overheard me from below, as a neighbour, talking to him, I would say to myself how glad I was not to be her, not to be sounding the way she is sounding, with a voice like her voice and an opinion like her opinion. But I cannot hear myself from below, as a neighbour, I cannot hear how I ought not to sound, I cannot be glad I am not her, as I would be if I could hear her. Then again, since I am her, I am not sorry to be here, up above, where I cannot hear her as a neighbour, where I cannot say to myself, as I would have to from below, how glad I am not to be her.

From Below, as a Neighbor by Lydia Davis

: SEM (ScanningElectron Microscope) image of nematode infected with an unidentified fungus. Figure 3, 'Eukaryotic opportunists dominate the deep-subsurface biosphere in South Africa' by Borgonie et al. *Nature Communications* 2015.





; Sketch of the 'Kingdom of Heaven' in the Bismarck Cave in Ennepetal created during a cave survey of the Kluterthöhle working group. *Skizze Bismarkhöhle, Himmelreich*. Credit: MdornseifArbeitskreis Kluterthöhle 1985.

8 A chart of Hell as described by Dante. *The Abyss of Hell* by Sandro Botticelli 1480s, coloured drawing on parchment, 32 x 47 cm, Vatican Library.

IV

Carrying a stone in each eye,
I imagine you
submerged in recollection
a tentacle, you slide through the blank spaces
—ever down—
displacing precious air

threading through the strata
of an unstable kingdom
fallen into disrepute
into disrepair
ever down
a core sample of the cross-section

we strike out in the general direction
of our collective ambivalence
running through underwater cables
emerging again
at an empty beach
breathless

we hold on to a ripple as it
fumbles its way across that underwater lake
sounding out its options
vowel by vowel

learning to speak a new language
one that you've discovered while piloting your anxiety
through the mycelial strands
reworked,
reformed:
a hippocampal success story

if I follow the exact same route
falling
ever down
I hope to stumble on a new path
one that brings me closer to other people
to you
and further from myself

even then I'm not sure I'd recognise you
standing there, dressed in my clothes
jumper and jeans
a bit cold this time of year
with that hole in the elbow
slowly expanding
at the rate of the universe

if I squint hard enough
its edges begin to redshift

fraying,
I hide underneath these thoughts

if you make an effort
you might learn to live like the other proteobacteria
mingling at the meet and greets
down here in the deep
subsurface
bonding over nitrate reduction and sulphur oxidation

be the biofilm that believe you can be
that you deserve to be
a thin sliver of shivering self moving through the aquifers
a mantis shrimp floats by
turns to you
and vomits

camped out here
you can hear the calcification
almost
the walls groan
as they sift through the mulch
of your memories

you begin
to learn
to see in the dark
outlines emerge

move forward,
before circling back around
to find yourself
sitting there
in that ditch
trying to take off your boot.

Waiting.
Breathing.

You hear a scraping noise
soil removed
hammers ring out
a general hubbub
gets closer

then suddenly sunlight pierces our ceiling
and your face looms above us
come back to collect yourself
to hold yourself
to remind yourself that it'll be ok
after, that is, taking meticulous field notes.





V

What presses in on you, what has always pressed in on you: the outside, meaning the air—or, more precisely, your body in the air around you. The soles of your feet anchored to the ground, but all the rest of you exposed to the air, and that is where the story begins, in your body, and everything will end in the body as well. For now, you are thinking about the wind.

Fragment from *Winter Journal* by Paul Auster

:: LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) image of Drama – medieval Dobrava (Gutenwerth).
Credit: Agencija RS za okolje 2018.

; Tree branch, Stacks Bluff, Northern Tasmania, 2019.



8 Entrance 2 of Underground City of Nooshabad, Iran. Credit: Bernard Gagnon 2016.

: Diagram from *Geometrical psychology, or, The science of representation: an abstract of the theories and diagrams of B. W. Betts* by Louisa S. Cook 1887.

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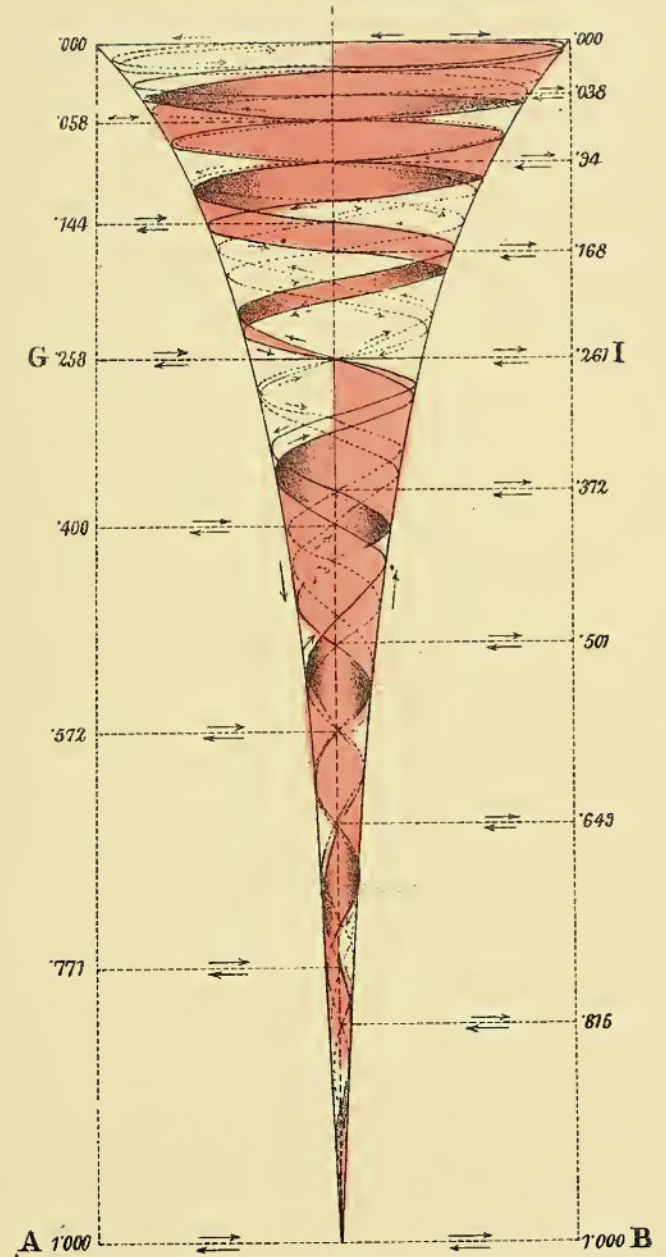


Fig. 16.

VI

One day he writes to me: description of a dream.
More and more my dreams find their settings in the department stores of Tokyo, the subterranean tunnels that extend them and run parallel to the city. A face appears, disappears... a trace is found, is lost. All the folklore of dreams is so much in its place that the next day when I am awake I realize that I continue to seek in the basement labyrinth the presence concealed the night before.

I begin to wonder if those dreams are really mine, or if they are part of a totality, of a gigantic collective dream of which the entire city may be the projection. It might suffice to pick up any one of the telephones that are lying around to hear a familiar voice, or the beating of a heart, Sei Shonagon's for example.

Fragment from *Sans Soleil (Sunless)* by Chris Marker

: Nerves of intestines. Credit: Prof Giorgio Gabella. CC BY.





Process image, *Carrying a stone in each eye*, single channel video, 2019.



Process image, *Carrying a stone in each eye*, single channel video, 2019.

Something that happened but never took place

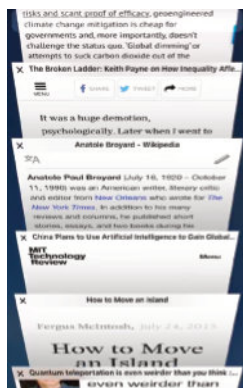
Carrying a stone in each eye
single channel video, 2019



Anatol Pitt is an artist and writer based in Melbourne. He works primarily with photography and video to think through relationships between perception, landscape, technology and history. Currently undertaking his Honours degree (Anthropology) at the University of Melbourne, he also holds a Bachelor of Arts (Art History and Anthropology) and a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Drawing and Printmedia). He has exhibited at Seventh Gallery, Margaret Lawrence Gallery, and Paradise Studios. In 2017 he was awarded a Fiona Myer Award at the VCA Graduate Exhibition, jointly won the fortyfivedownstairs Emerging Artist Award and was a finalist in the Majlis Travelling Scholarship. Anatol's writing has published by Kings ARI and un Magazine.

anatolpitt.com

To fall in the void as I fell
single channel video, 2019



Danni Zuvela is a writer, curator and organiser based in Melbourne and on the Gold Coast. With Joel Stern, she has been Artistic Co-Director of Liquid Architecture since 2013, and founded the collective OtherFilm in 2004. Danni's current research explores performances and questions of interspecies and non-human listening.

dannizuvela.com

Cuevas del Miedo (Caves of Fear)
found image, inkjet print, framed, 2014



Acknowledgments

I would like to pay respects to the traditional owners of Melbourne where I live and make art—the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation—and Albany where I grew up—the Menang Noongar people. And within an exhibition about landscape and depth I want to highlight that the continuing connection of First Nations people to their land runs not only horizontally (what we can see) over the landscape but also deep down into the rock, water and roots of their country.

I would like to thank my sister, Freya, for all filming assistance, the studio visits and the long discussions about the works. Ashlee Baldwin for her amazing work on this book. Danni Zuvela for her essay and for the thoughtfulness, incisive questioning and engagement with the work. Laura, ‘no rogue commas’, De Neefe for living up to her name. And of course, as always, to Kati and Peter (i.e. mum and dad) for their proofing, questioning and unwavering support from across the continent.

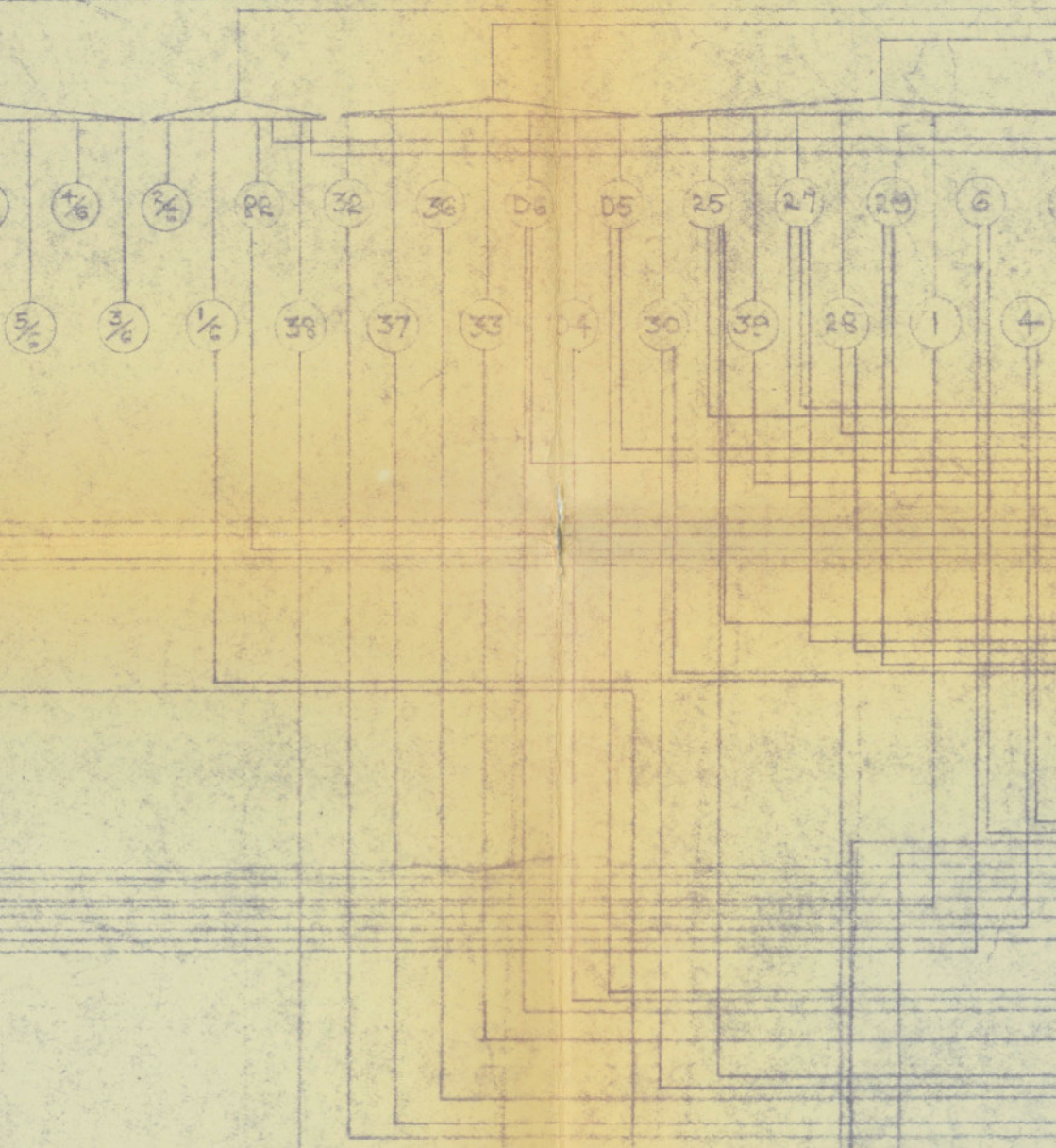
And finally, to Channon, Kathryne and Nina from Bus Projects for all their assistance and generosity.

Anatol Pitt and Bus Projects acknowledges and pays respect to the traditional custodians of the land on which the exhibition was made and exhibited: the Wurundjeri people and Elders past, present and emerging of the Kulin nation.

Cover image: scanned detail from a 1957 engineering wiring diagram for electrically operated sootblowers in the Spencer Street power station, Melbourne. The station opened in 1892, closed in 1982 and was demolished in 2008.

First Edition: 2019
Edition of 100
ISBN: 978-0-646-80537-5
Design: Ashlee Baldwin
Printing: Dinkums

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but never took place

