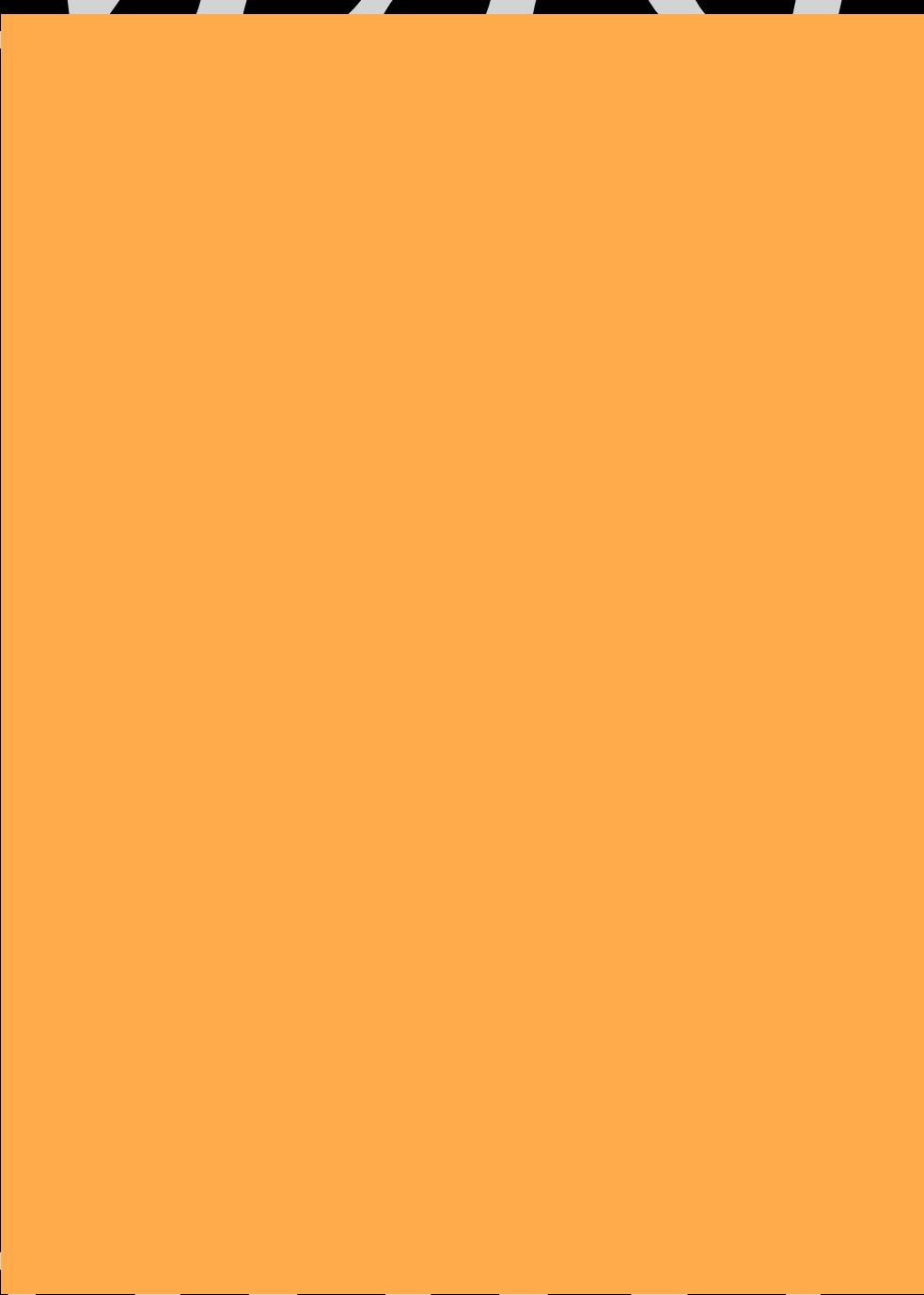


IMAGE



SUPPORT

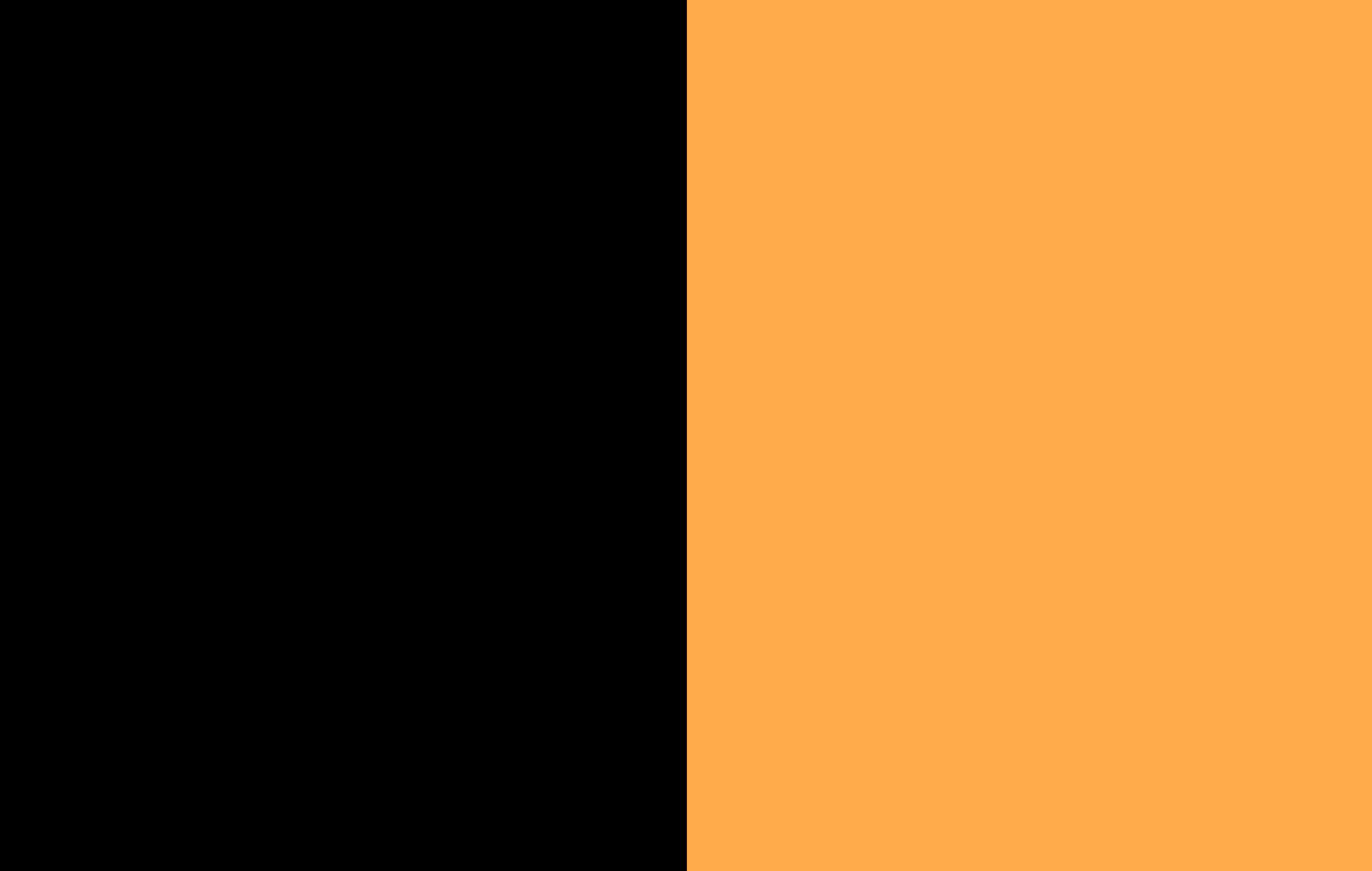


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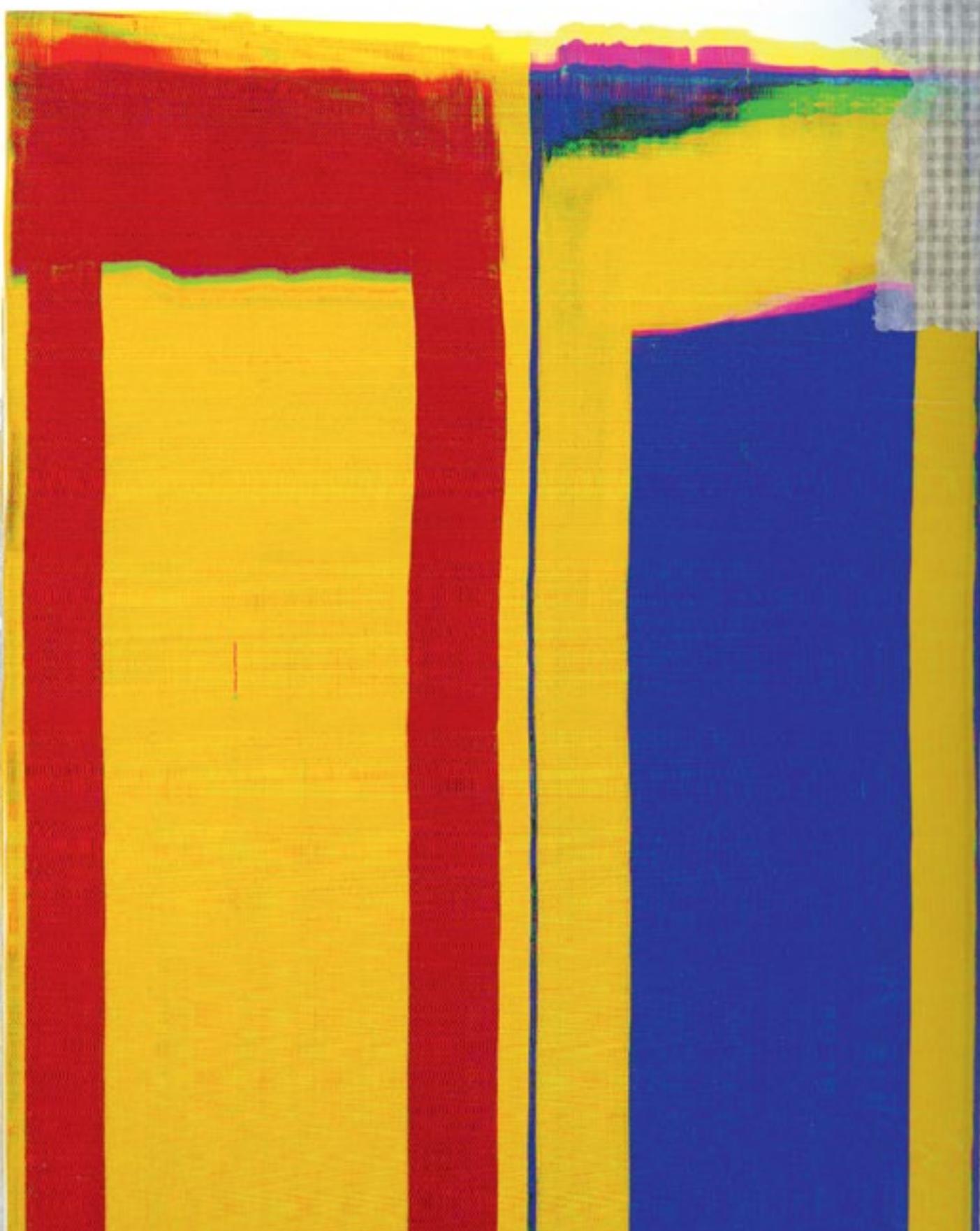
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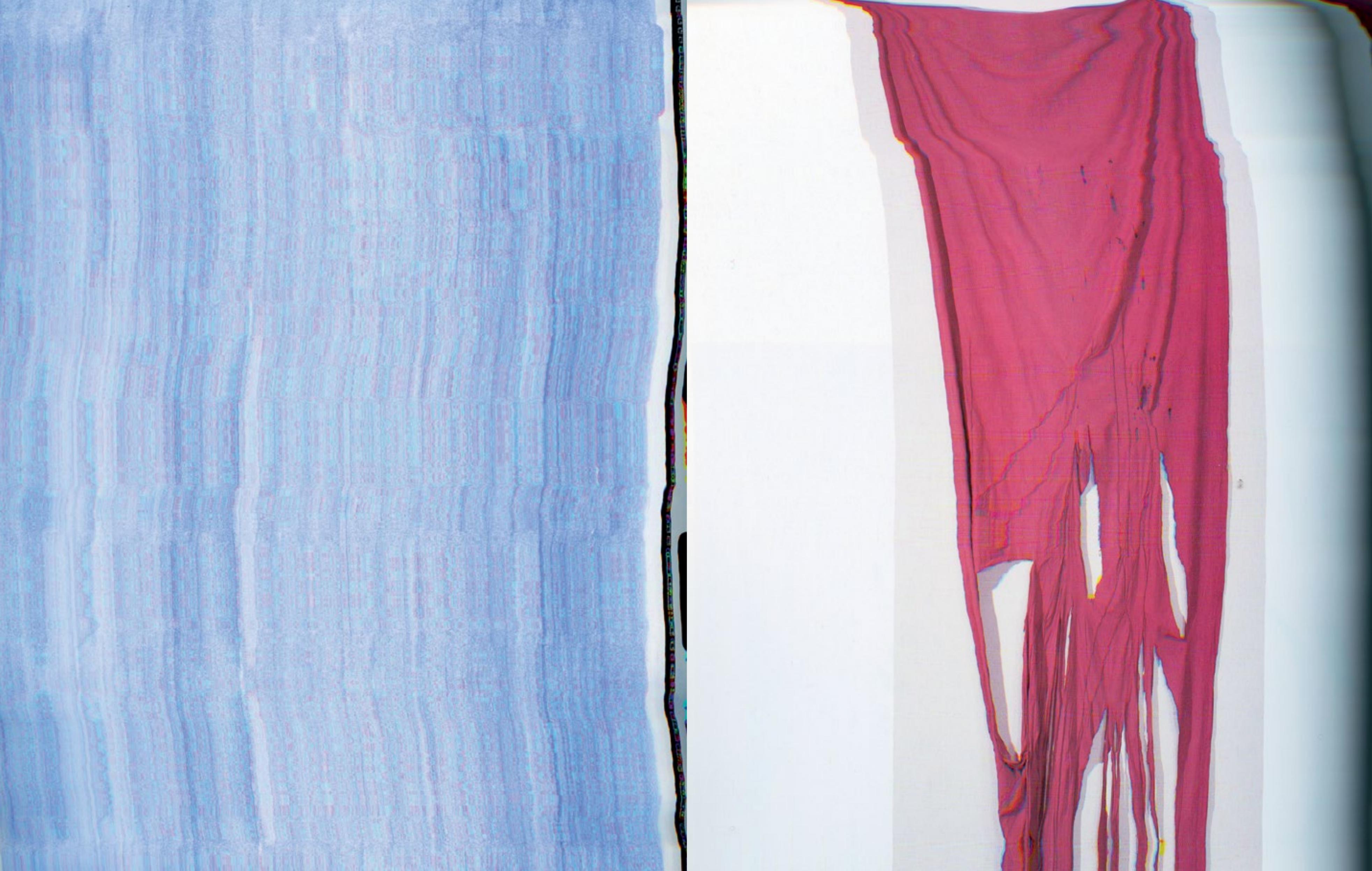
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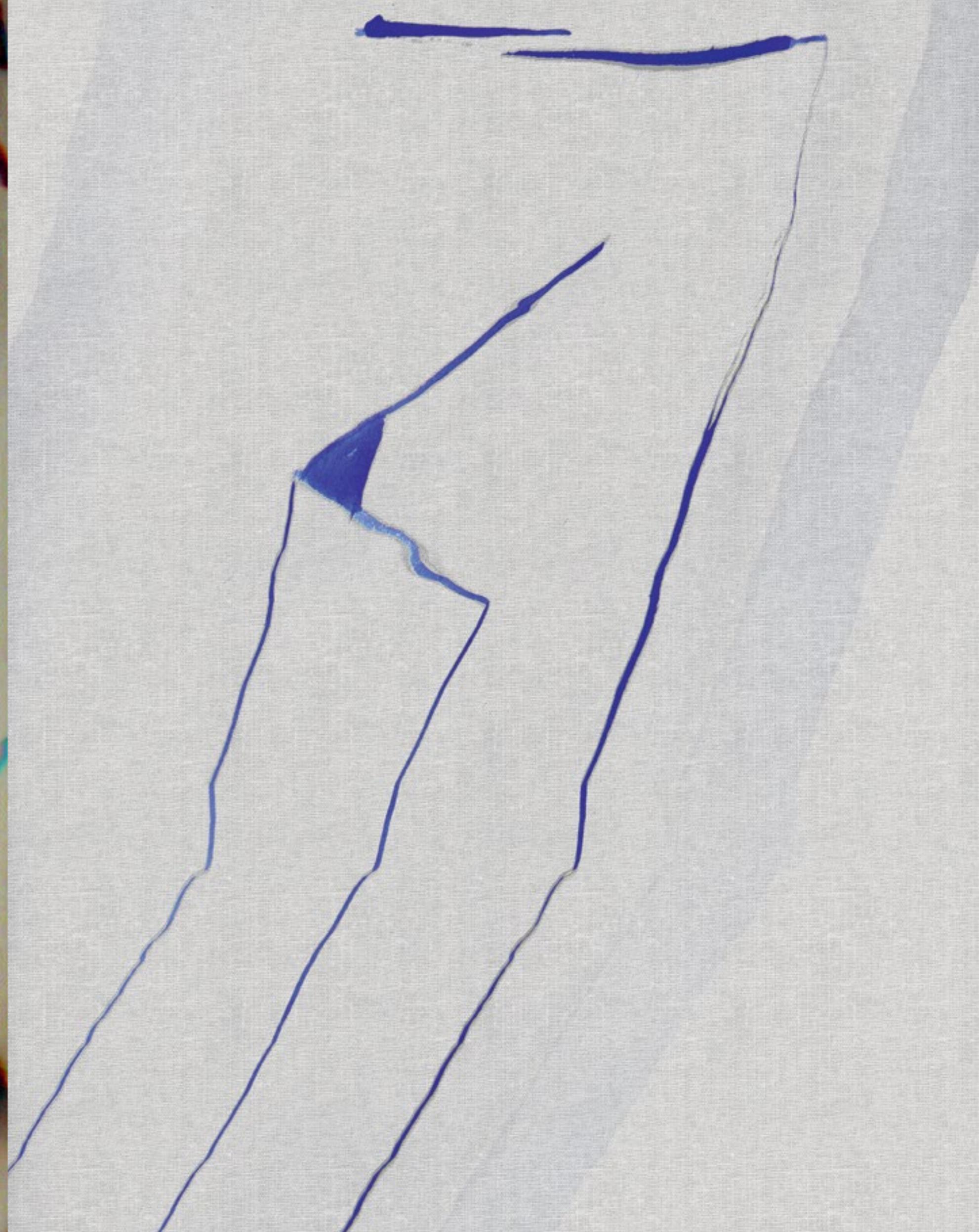
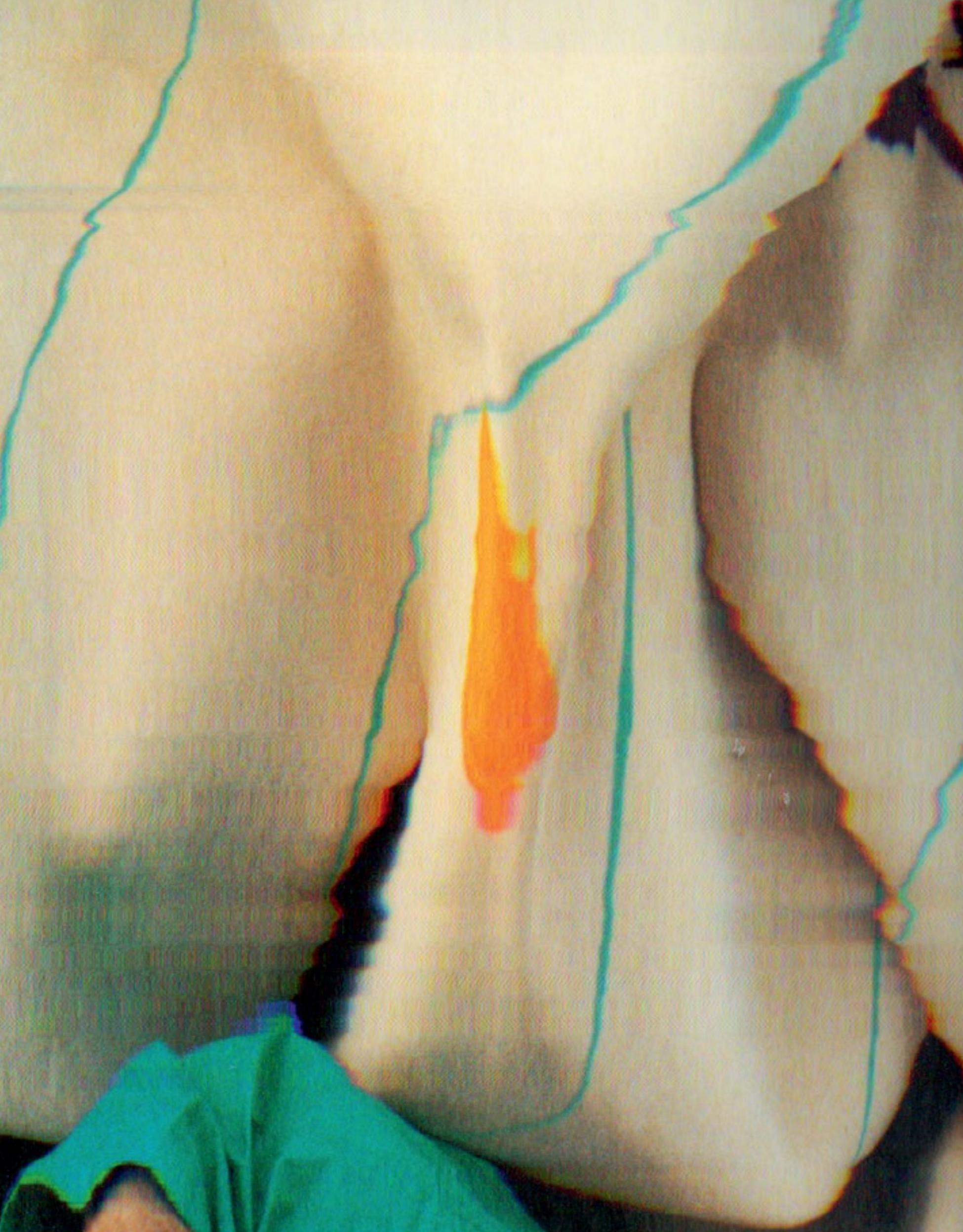
MARIETA CHIRULESCU



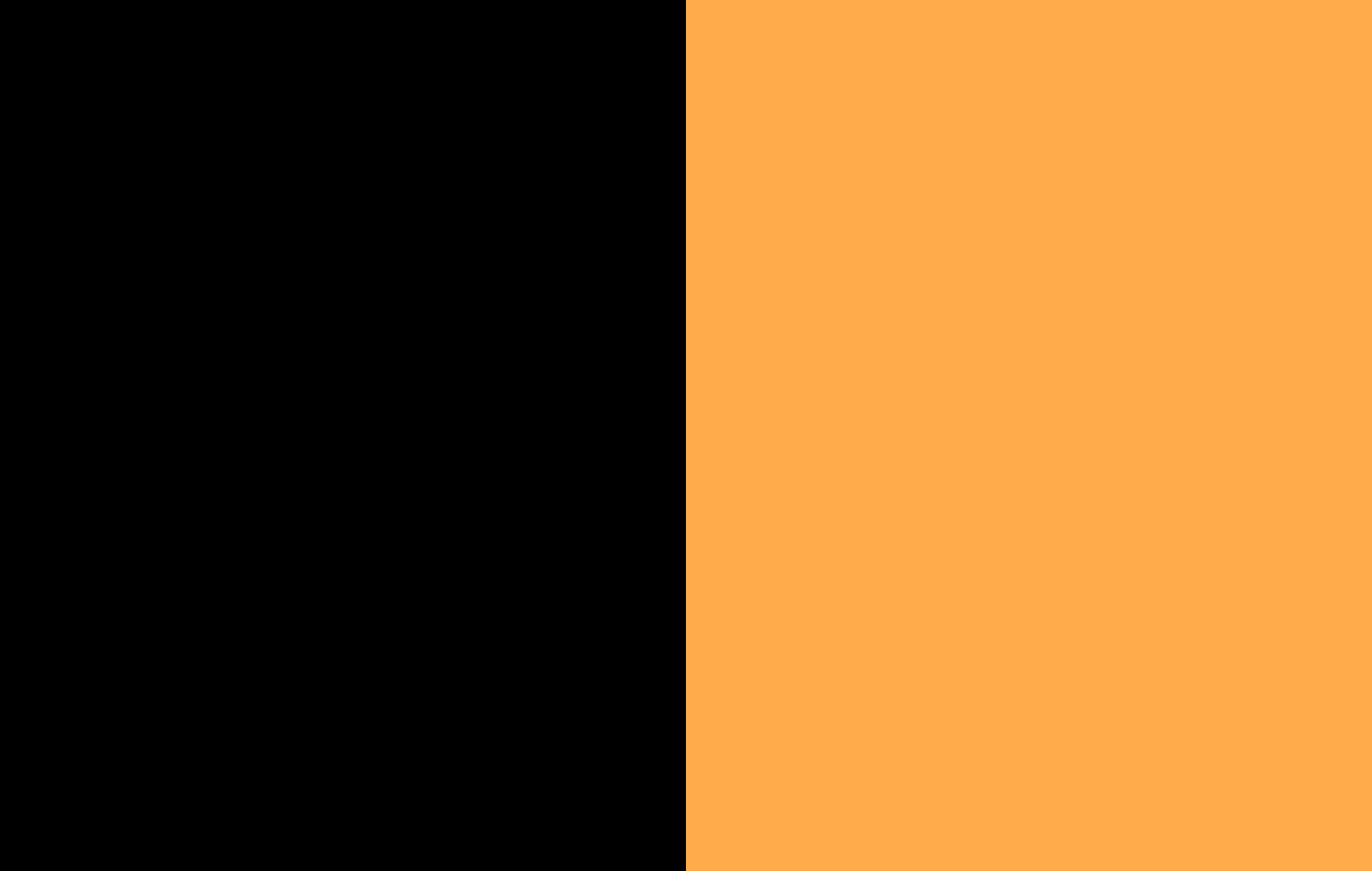


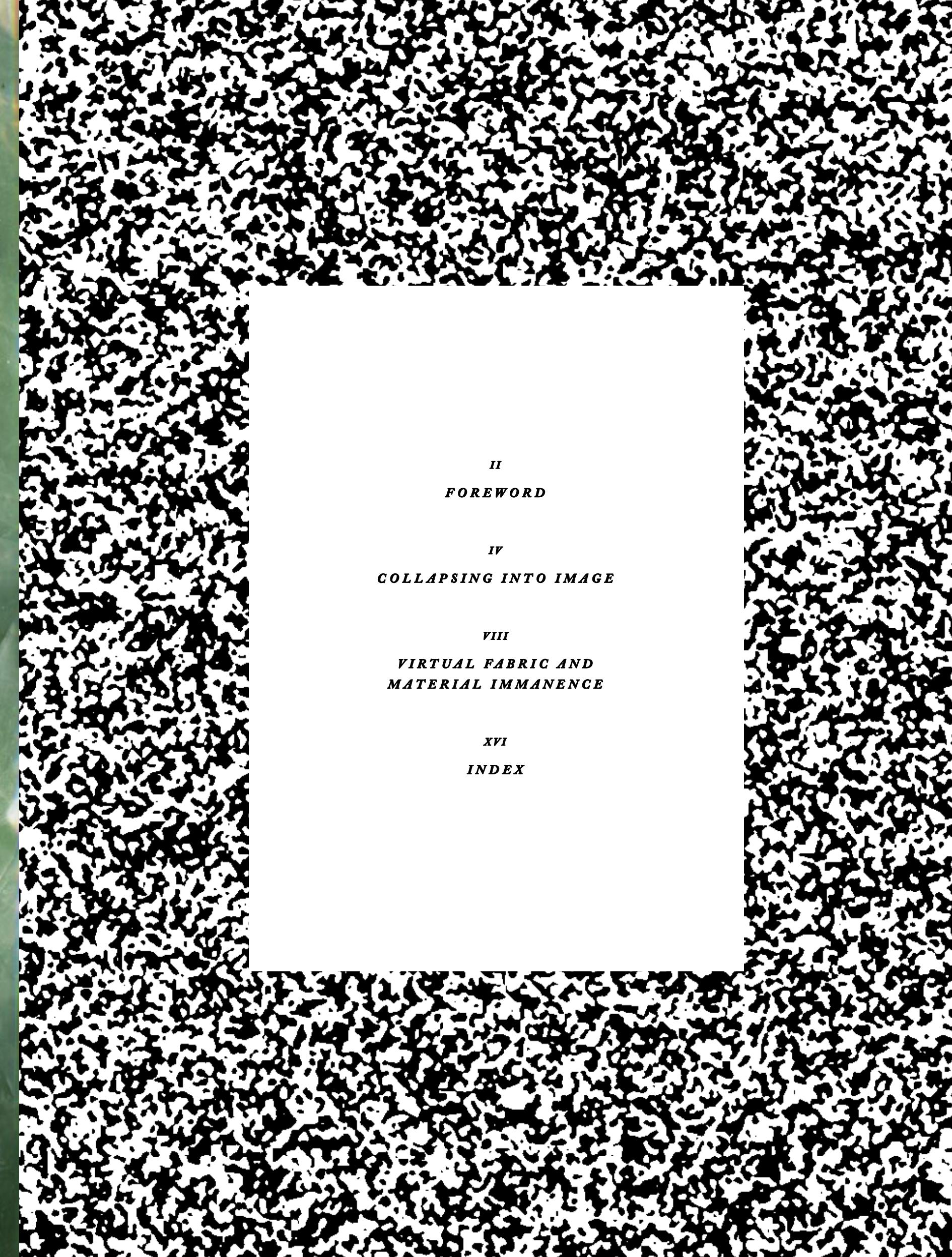












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FOREWORD

"Image Support" presents the work of four international artists across the four main galleries of Bergen Kunsthall. Taking as its starting point ideas around the image and its construction, the show goes on to explore the processes of production, reception and reproduction that objects and artworks both actively engage with and are subject to. Across a range of different media, all of the artists in the exhibition demonstrate a recurring interest in the 'manufacture' or making of the artwork, as well as the various contemporary and historic discourses that surround it. Through each of their diverse and distinct practices they explore the relations between technology and production (both industrial and craft-based), employing discrete and often incisive interventions into the specificities and conditions of various media. In this way, they reveal that the material of an artwork operates not just as a physical foundation or support for an image, but in many cases can be seen to constitute and create both the image itself, and the meaning or content of the work.

What we have called 'support' in the title of the exhibition, refers most obviously to the works purely material, underlying substance – its medium, nature or object-hood – but it might also be read as the way in which the artwork's self-reflexivity is still embedded in modernism's legacy of formalism, something that continues to be explored by a number of artists working today. In addition the 'support' of the image might also include the institutional or theoretical framework that surrounds and produces the work. Common to all of these artists is an understanding of, and involvement with, the multifarious systems of circulation – economic, intellectual, and increasingly digital or 'social' – of which the artwork forms a part at any given time.

In the work of Eileen Quinlan and Lucas Blalock, photography is used not only to document a reality beyond the camera lens, but also as a technical process through which the image is created or situated by means of its chemical or digital apparatus. In Quinlan's work she directly manipulates negatives, often by scratching them or subjecting them to corrosive chemicals or processes. In a new series, made especially for this exhibition, she employs a flatbed scanner to create intangible, seductive, but entirely indexical 'anti-abstractions' – produced using mirrors and other objects that she places or moves across the machine's lens. Blalock's work often begins with a staged, studio set up – a kind of 'still life' – that he photographs with a medium format camera and then manipulates, using Photoshop and digital post-production techniques, to create provocative and complex analogue/digital hybrids.

Marieta Chirulescu and Ann Cathrin November Høibo's works are located in painting, sculpture and textile, but they too engage in similar processes of manipulation, production and reproduction. Chirulescu also employs scanners, copiers and post-production tools in order to produce her canvases, which involve a complex layering of real and virtual materials and spaces, whilst continuing to allude to a tradition of drawing and painting. Høibo's work is perhaps the most sculptural, exploring the inherent materiality and acquired cultural currency of various found and altered textiles, fabrics, and objects. Often these objects are assembled in a kind of spatial collage, deployed and activated

through association, or cast and replicated in bronze. For "Image Support", Høibo has worked for the first time with coconut matting, as well as showing a group of new salt paintings and tapestries. In all of her works elements of chance and intuition are encouraged – her salt paintings 'develop' chemically with time, like photograms or rayographs, and her hand-woven tapestries demonstrate just such an improvised, deeply personal, but at the same time almost mechanical production – again referring directly to the technology of the loom, but now through this more explicitly 'craft' based technique.

Through each of their practices, all four artists occupy that interstitial, uncertain, but richly productive zone, situated between the *creating* of images and the *locating* of images. Their work emerges out of a self-reflexive investigation of the materiality and technicity of the medium itself, a process that opens the way for indeterminacy, experimentation and exploration, and which often allows for glitches and errors to become a crucial part of the image-making process. In this exhibition we have very deliberately attempted to detach this self-reflexivity from a discussion that is exclusively about medium specificity – of the painting, the photograph or the tapestry, for example – and to look instead at the points of contact and conversation between these diverse and highly developed positions and practices.

This exhibition has evolved over a number of years, principally through conversations between myself and Bergen Kunsthall's curator, Steinar Sekkingstad. I want to thank him for the insight, inspiration and rigour he has brought to the development and realization of this project.

Exhibitions like this require the assistance and support of many individuals and organizations. We would like to thank all of the staff here at Bergen Kunsthall who have worked on the show, as well as the artists' galleries for their help and support – for Lucas Blalock: Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels and Ramiken Crucible, New York; for Marieta Chirulescu: Micky Schubert, Berlin, Kurimanzutto, Mexico City and Meessen De Clercq, Brussels; for Ann Cathrin November Høibo: STANDARD (OSLO) and Carl Freedman, London; and for Eileen Quinlan: Campoli Presti, London/Paris and Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York.

This publication is conceived not as a catalogue, but as a collaborative document that might extend and expand on the show itself. All of the artists have provided new visual material for the book, and we are very grateful for the insightful and illuminating new essays by Monica Westin and Steinar Sekkingstad. The book itself has been beautifully designed by Petri Henriksson at Blank Blank, Berlin and we thank him for his commitment and creativity.

Bergen Kunsthall is generously funded and supported by a number of organizations, without whom these exhibitions and publications would not be possible. We would like to thank in particular The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Culture, The City of Bergen, Hordaland County, and Sparebanken Vest.

Finally, our profound thanks go to the artists themselves: Lucas Blalock, Marieta Chirulescu, Ann Cathrin November Høibo and Eileen Quinlan, each of whom responded so generously and so thoughtfully to the invitation to participate. This exhibition has been shaped through a constant process of dialogue, as well as an enquiring and responsive methodology to which each of the artists has contributed in a fundamental way. The resulting show is the product of the unique interaction of these four very different and highly resolved practices. That all of them have engaged with us, and with each other, in such an open, trusting and intelligent way is a testament to the strength and the significance of their work.

Martin Clark
Director
Bergen Kunsthall

COLLAPSING INTO IMAGE

Steinar Sekkingstad

The exhibition "Image Support" has been organized as much on a 'hunch' as with a strictly defined theoretical starting point. The four artists Lucas Blalock, Marieta Chirulescu, Ann Cathrin November Høibo and Eileen Quinlan were invited on the basis of an idea that they might share certain affinities in their work and their individual investment in what we tentatively tried to formulate as the artwork's image-support relations. Each of the artists was asked to respond to these loosely formulated ideas by proposing a group of existing works or by making new works especially for the exhibition. The final outcome of the exhibition has thus been unknown to everyone until a very late stage. This essay is an attempt to formulate some of the ideas that formed a starting point for our discussions prior to the show, and to reflect on the process of working on the exhibition and getting to know the four artists' various positions in greater depth.

THE IMAGE AND ITS SUPPORT

When contrasted with the concept of 'art', the 'image' has a conflicted position as an integral part of the history of visual art, but also as something that somehow lies outside it, belonging as much to the sphere of popular culture, media or some version of spectacle. In academic discourse, the image has in recent years been the domain of so-called image studies or visual studies, investigating how the products of visual culture relate to the world as signs that

can be decoded, interpreted and analysed – politically, socially and aesthetically. Images are defined by the way in which they represent or symbolize the world in a visual sign.¹

The artworks in this exhibition seem to fall outside such an understanding of the image. These works are abstractions, compositions and creations that very often have no direct relation to an outside world as visual documents or indexical witnesses. Closer perhaps to a renewed interest in formalism within the artistic practice of recent years, many of the art-historical references that these works bring to mind belong to movements and practices that have in fact attempted to avoid or even eliminate the image completely. Modernist abstraction, minimalism and conceptualism are, in many ways, iconoclastic movements where the image (as such) has no place. Abstract art avoided direct depiction or representation of an outside world, while much Conceptual Art attempted to rid itself of the aesthetic or formalist qualities of the artwork.²

What we are left with in both instances is the image's substrate or support: the pigment on the plane surface of a stretched piece of canvas, understood as the primary version of a modernist painting, or the dematerialized art object of Conceptual Art, where the artwork is understood primarily to consist of an idea – completely devoid of a material substrate, but rich in theoretical or philosophical support.

The artworks in this exhibition place themselves in a productive position in between these ways of thinking and making. The investment in image-making is at the core, while at the same time material and theoretical self-reflection is equally integrated into the understanding of the image. The dialectic negotiation of the past 60 years between these positions seems to be naturally internalized in much contemporary art practice. There is perhaps no longer any need to be programmatic, and this opens up a dialogic position where the historical positions can be navigated and deployed simultaneously within one and the same work.

In a way we can see these artworks as a continuation of the formalist 'purification' process – where the artwork is preoccupied with investigating the qualities of its own medium.

IMAGE

SUPPORT

However, these artists are also deeply engaged in the distribution and meanings of the image – as an unstable semiotic sign located in various viewing contexts. It is both image and support. And, more often than not, the support is as much the image as a carrier of the image.

These works critically incorporate the tools of image production into their own image constructions. The often art-historically charged media of painting, tapestry/textile or photography are invested here with another tradition of image-making through their means of production and post-production, the labour involved and their reproduction – all of which are left visible and tangible in the works in the form of traceable glitches and remnants from the technical apparatus used (scanning, digital post-production, weaving or canvas). The language of aesthetic formalism proves adaptable to an investigation of the substrate of image production in a broad sense.

THE EXHIBITION AS IMAGE SUPPORT AND IMAGE-MAKING DEVICE

Contemporary art finds itself situated deep within a digital, or so-called post-digital, age, as it emerges from analog to digital media. This is not to say that digital media are the only relevant means of production, or that the resurgence of analog 'material' and craft-based practices needs to be seen as a (conservative) reaction to this 'shift to digital'. However, this shift is such a defining condition of our everyday use of communication tools that every image-making practice (including contemporary art) seems to find itself steeped in this commonality.

One of the defining characters of this shift is the ease and speed with which images are

disseminated. There seems to be no real need for a photographic image to be physically printed, produced, mounted or framed in order to be shared with others. Any image can be shared – on a global scale – within an instant. Even the moment of an artwork's defining materialization (today very often the moment of display in an exhibition, rather than the moment of completion by the artist in the studio) quickly dissolves into a simultaneous existence as a material presence here and now and in a digital plurality of contexts, shared by way of carefully planned installation photos on websites like Contemporary Art Daily, or various visitors' Facebook or Instagram accounts.

This situation also raises questions around the ontological status and autonomy of the artwork – questions which, if we uphold a distinction between art and image, have been a primary concern for the disciplines of aesthetics and art history, but which have now been given a slightly shifted emphasis within a digital culture. The fluid state of an artwork's way of coming-to-life, through its process of creation and its conditions as a completed, fixed and autonomous work, seems to have undergone an endlessly growing succession of transitions. Photos of 'works in progress' can be shared directly with a large number of viewers from within the artist's studio, and artworks can take on numerous different shapes and conditions in the course of being exposed to changing conditions of display. Lucas Blalock speaks of how this "shift into digital" has had direct implications for the practice of art photography: "photography quit needing a substrate, as new pictures could be seen and shared on the screen, and, in turn, object-hood (the photographic print) came to feel like an intentional act instead of a necessary step in looking at what you had made".³

One possibility for an image to actually materialize and become solidified as an (art) object can be located at the moment of display within an exhibition structure. This is where the image takes on a distinct materiality in its own right and becomes an object in space (and time). The scale, materiality, surface, framing and placements of these image-objects are essential to how we view them as artworks, and thus operate as a "counterpoint to the haptic refusals of both photography's surfacelessness

and the dematerialization of the digital", as Blalock puts it when writing about the medium of photography.⁴ The exhibition is also where a group of works come together and enter into a direct dialogue with one another. The bodily and spatial relations among works in various materials, with varying degrees of image-relations, speak to one another through the conscious awareness of their own physical present-ness as objects.

This aspect is key to all of the artists in this exhibition. Considering the scale of the images, the material properties of their physical support and their careful placement within the exhibition space are integral parts of the art-making process – not only afterthoughts or purely curatorial decisions. These works manifest an understanding of the art object's physical presence in an exhibition space.

However, in contrast to the minimalist 'specific object', the presence of an *image* within these works precludes the possibility of pure objecthood. When artists like Frank Stella turned the canvas into an object in the 1960s, there was an attempt to make the two and three dimensions of the artwork equally present. These works make their objecthood felt in a comparable way, but are simultaneously fully invested in 'the grain' of the image.

The encounter between the materialized image/object and a viewer can only happen in this particular way through the institutional structure of the exhibition. This gives the exhibition the quality of yet another layer of material support for the image. Interestingly, the exhibition space itself turns the art objects within it into a new set of possible images. The spatial configuration of art objects 'on display' is in fact the image that strikes you first when you visit

an exhibition. This is the image that we have now learned to know and to 'read' as much through a screen presence as in 'real' encounters. In this way the image-as-art-object is once more detached from its physical autonomy when it is re-photographed as 'installation shots'.

ADDING HUMAN INTUITION TO A TECHNICAL APPARATUS

These in-betweens of the contemporary image, and the highly intentional artistic act of deciding to produce an image materially and unleash it on the world, function as an underlying sounding-board for the works in this exhibition. The artworks on display are exactly this: artworks that have been carefully composed, crafted, produced and displayed. However, their very materiality seems to point to the instability and mutability of the artwork as image. Each work seems to inhabit its potential to become something else. The works have a certain not-yet character: materially present, while keeping one foot in the seamless and scaleless world of the screen, where versions and duplications of the same image have the endless intrinsic possibility of one day becoming another object.⁵

The works absorb, and make visible, their own material and the underlying substrate of image production – exposed within the materiality of the work itself. This is the core of what we have tried to summarize as the relation between the *image* and the *image support*. All of the four artists are concerned in different ways with the creation or 'construction' of images. The medium of photography, for example, is used less to depict or document an outside world than to create or 'discover' images within the material and technological parameters of the medium. This is evident, although in very different ways, in the photography of Eileen Quinlan and Lucas Blalock. Something similar can also be said of the artists working with painting, textile or sculptural works: the materiality and process of construction are laid bare in the image itself in many of the works by Ann Cathrin November Høibo and Marieta Chirulescu.

One could perhaps say that the works in the exhibition explore these various image-object relations by way of two simultaneous strategies: first by turning the image into an object, and

secondly by turning objects into images. This takes place in a dialogic relationship between the capacity of the image to hold a world within itself and its simultaneous physical existence in the world as an object that in turn becomes part of another image by virtue of its display. Writing about the artist Wade Guyton, Scott Rothkopf has located this object-image relation as the "gaps between how spaces and objects are recorded in two dimensions and experienced in three".⁶ This indeed seems to be a primary concern for all four artists in the exhibition.

The recording, capturing or creation of the image takes place through a succession of different techniques and methodologies across the works in the exhibition. Technological recording devices such as photography, scanning and printing are frequently used, whereas more traditionally hand-crafted or painted images reveal close proximity to the technologies of analog and digital media. Essential to most of the works is the way the materials themselves operate as both image and support. Whether they weave or print, photograph or sculpt, what seems to be a common feature to these four artists is the way in which they insert a human intuition into the world of technological apparatus. By using the built-in characteristics, faults and insufficiencies of the technology as an image-making possibility, they in turn make image into object. Blalock's own description of photography as a "limited mimesis" might offer a way of thinking about the works in this exhibition as a whole: "the photographer is not a cataloger of fact, nor purveyor of reportage, but instead is participating in this centuries-old activity of drawing the world closer, attending to its conditions, to the terms of our looking, and, in turn, trying to keep the picture from collapsing into image".⁷

¹ Decades after Visual Culture, Visual Studies and Image Studies have been institutionalized as academic subjects, these ways of understanding and relating to the image have also been absorbed by contemporary art practices. Still, a certain discrepancy between image studies and the more traditional fields of art history and aesthetics seems to remain. A recent issue of *Texte zur Kunst* took this enduring opposition as its theme under the title *Art vs. Image*, and pointed out how the need for a better understanding of the image in contemporary art theory is still a highly relevant issue. See *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 95, September 2014.

² Thus, while aesthetic formalism had excluded the image on the grounds of its essentially representational character (be it naturalistic, metaphysical, or theological), canonical Conceptual Art's anti-aesthetic aspired to remove its material support". Peter Osborne, "Art' versus 'image'?", *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 95, September 2014, p. 50.

³ Lucas Blalock, "Drawing Machine", *Foam Magazine* #38, 2014.

⁴ Lucas Blalock, note from a working document shared with the author, September 2015.

⁵ The selection of images in this publication comments on this shifting ontology of the image as artwork. These images are not necessarily documentation of the works as seen in the exhibition, but relate to one another in a more fluid and intimate manner. The reproductions in the book are sometimes versions of the artworks in the exhibition, sometimes source material or sketches, or in other cases images of works at various stages in their production process. The installation photos of the works, when finally displayed in the exhibition, will exist elsewhere, in a more fleeting but no less efficient system of image circulation.

⁶ Scott Rothkopf, *Wade Guyton: OS*, exh. cat., Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2012, p. 13.

⁷ In his article "Drawing Machine", Blalock also makes a deliberate distinction between the terms *picture* and *image*, as a means of pointing to different understandings of the photograph, either as a truth-telling device of documentation, or as an act of pictorial creation. Blalock, op. cit.

VIRTUAL FABRIC AND MATERIAL IMMANCE

Monica Westin

"Image Support" is organized dialogically rather than theoretically, grouped around four artists who raise analogous questions about image construction across media in contemporary art. The curatorial interest in 'image' and 'support' refers to both image-making and image-locating – the relationship between the technological apparatus that produces an image and the way that this apparatus leaves physical traces in the visual language of the image itself, sometimes dominating the image entirely. To articulate this relationship, the material of the image becomes the primary focus; and errors, glitches, and traces of the apparatus that processes this material are subjected to formal investigation. The works that make up "Image Support" are particularly self-reflective about their own modes of production, which in this exhibition span photography, textiles, printmaking and painting.

One of the strongest points of contact among the works in "Image Support" is the exposure of the status of the image as a product of fabrication – both in the literal sense of fabrication, the manufacture of an actual material product, and in the more metaphorical sense: the invention of a simulation or fiction. Each artist utilizes processes of fabrication that cross media and technologies: capturing, flattening, splicing, stretching, weaving, preserving, ripping apart, threading together,

opening up, editing and post-production. None of these artists cover their tracks; in fact they often go out of their way to expose how their fabrications are made. Yet in almost every case the work remains mysterious, even as the artists rip and shred the fabric of the real and virtual in order to reveal the inner workings of their own systems.

PROVISIONAL IMAGES, (UN)STABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Three of the four artists in "Image Support" present works that include photography, the use of an image scanner, or photo-editing software as primary tools, and at first glance the exhibition might be seen largely as an exploration of the constructed photograph in the age of Photoshop.¹ Ann Cathrin November Høibo's fibre art, in contrast to the works of the others, offers an entry point into the show that at first seems to be a deviation; her tapestries are almost exaggeratedly corporeal and tangible, and are about their very realness. Almost always handwoven and combining natural, traditional loom-weaving materials like silk and wool with artificial mass-market materials like nylon and plastic, her deconstructed textiles embody the history of fibre arts from their origins in domestic crafts through contemporary practices of hyperproduction.

Høibo's weavings often resemble abstract paintings, with variegated, mottled swaths of colour spilling across their surfaces. Yet Høibo goes out of her way to make her process explicitly and immediately legible as weaving, by leaving bare long sections of the warp – the lengthwise threads that create the underlying support for the weave. The support, or very framework that the 'technology' of the loom sets up, creates a stable infrastructure that enables Høibo to be very loose and playful in her treatment of the image that appears within it. Moreover, the spaces that Høibo leaves open also operate as gaps and literal ruptures in the image thus created. These effects are symptoms of pixelation, which is often more closely associated with digital images – where pictorial information is broken down into discrete units of colour – but which of course is also a term for the way one creates texture by physically weaving strips of colour together.



Ann Cathrin November Høibo, *Untitled*, 2014.
Handwoven wool, nylon and jersey.
209.5 x 182 x 16 cm. Photo: Vegard Kleiven.

While Høibo's weavings are seductive, tactile, and appealing, the unfinished look of the work can also be read as glitchy, deconstructed and contingent. Often displayed next to Høibo's sculptures or paintings – her diverse practice includes two- and three-dimensional works – the weavings appear by comparison to be sagging, abandoned, decomposing or deteriorating: utterly vulnerable to decay. Høibo's work is, among other things, concerned with its own infrastructure and making it both visible and affecting. For example, the handwoven wool, nylon, and jersey weaving *Untitled* (2014), with its hanging strings and bald patches, evokes in equal measure a well-loved blanket and the skin of a decomposing carcass. This anthropomorphism extends to Høibo's series of laundry bags containing cotton towels, which combine sculptural language with themes of transience, pliability and the assailability of the body.

In this way, Høibo's work is in close dialogue with the most seemingly dematerialized works in the show: the photographs of Eileen Quinlan. The provisional, even degraded forms of weaving and photography that Høibo and Quinlan offer present an image/support relationship where the substrate, or underlying apparatus, is a source and root cause of representational instability. Quinlan is also deeply interested in the image as a provisional product that must be understood in relation to its material substrate. Both she and Høibo generate information about this relation by exploring material fed through the apparatus and places where this operation fails or produces errors and gaps.

But while Høibo addresses this relation by literally exposing the back of the machine, laying bare the structure of filaments that creates a graphic image, Quinlan creates disorienting photographs that use the chemical behaviour of film and optical properties of light



Eileen Quinlan, *Coming of Winter*, 2015.
Gelatin silver prints hinged on museum board.
154.9 x 121.9 cm each (diptych).

as the substrate. Quinlan explores the 'push and pull' between photographic representation and abstraction, often created by acting on the materials or tools themselves. The resulting surface frustrates our expectations of the image by distorting the recognizable elements of the photograph as a document that fixes the world. By doing so, she makes the material properties of film – and the behaviour of light as it reflects, refracts, and interacts with matter – the focus and the actual material substrate of the contingent image.

Quinlan exposes a certain materiality embedded in the heart of apparently non-material practices in photography. In her practice, she questions photography as a mimetic document of something seen by inserting another kind of indexical trace in the image. By introducing her own 'hand' in the otherwise seamless process, she explicitly addresses the constructed nature of any photograph. For example, her painting-like chemical works interact with the unstable material of the photograph directly, by creating conditions of decay and eradication on the negative itself. Her scanner works involve a tabletop scanner, mirrors, and objects moved across the scanned surfaces. The machinery

of the scanner interprets the movement of the object across its lens and creates streaky, ghostly images of refracted and reflected light, while leaving traces of these ambiguous objects: ceiling tiles, colored plexiglass or metal mesh. Analogously to Høibo's weavings, Quinlan's scanner works approach levels of pure abstraction, yet also show evidence of the optical machinery inside the image scanner, the reflections of the mirrors as they interact with the scanner, and the presence of objects that absorb and refract light. Even in this seemingly incorporeal process, the image is a provisional result of largely invisible physical systems that interact at the level of hardware.

Quinlan often explicitly challenges our default, inherited ways of viewing photographs. In the diptych *Coming of Winter* (2015), she takes advantage of our impulse to read streaks of grey and white mimetically as weather patterns and icy smears. The actual source material, an image of an icy landscape from the Disney film *Frozen*, found in a children's sticker book, is eroded by her chemical and physical treatment of the negative. This treatment results in a new material image, whose decay strangely mimics

the wintry weather in the source picture. It is almost as if the support was haunted, coerced by the image into replicating itself, despite the artist's physical effort to obliterate it.

In her large grid pieces, Quinlan repeats two negatives, each printed in an edition of six, to make up a grid of twelve photographs.² Within this simple structure, she visualizes the concept of reproduction as one of the basic understandings of the photographic medium. The two original negatives are reproduced in a strictly limited set of printed editions, so that the final grid becomes a unique work – an installation showing every existing edition of the printed photograph.

VIRTUALITY AS SUBSTRATE

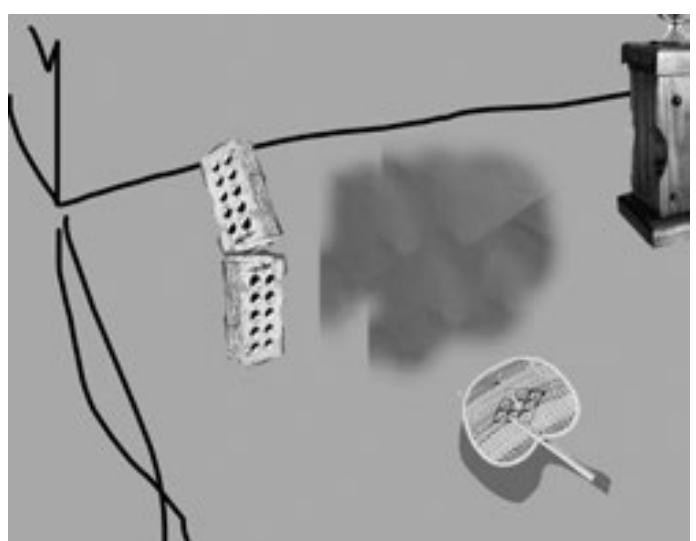
The works of Lucas Blalock and Marieta Chirulescu in "Image Support" involve Photoshop-based practices, making use of a smoothing, perfecting editing program and introducing variables that focus attention on the behaviour of a technology designed to be invisibly present. Analysis of Photoshop-based photography and painting can sometimes lead too quickly to conversations about the qualities of the technology itself; and it can at times be almost too easy to read this kind of work as merely being about the digital turn, either in photography, as with Blalock's work generally, or in painting, as with much of Chirulescu's work in the show. One concept that helps to anchor the works of both Blalock and Chirulescu and offer an opening into them as they deploy Photoshop here is 'virtuality', not as an alternative to the real (as in our everyday understanding of the Photoshopped image as 'synthetic') but as a precondition of actuality out of which the real emerges. Chirulescu's and Blalock's works reveal respective fields of virtuality that act as the substrate for their images, although both artists often seem not to have any kind of underlying material at all.³

The philosophy of virtuality has a long history, in which the process of memory often serves as an analogue for the virtual experience; Proust famously described a memory as virtual in that it is "real but not actual, ideal but not abstract." Taking up this idea, as well as Bergson's work on memory, Deleuze describes virtuality as a "cloud" that surrounds all actual objects and the

perception of those objects. Everything that is actual carries with it a sort of orbit or ghost of all this possibility that exists virtually. The actual crystallizes or is precipitated out of these clouds of virtuality, or what Deleuze calls "planes of immanence" where the virtual and the actual exist at the same time. The virtual is thus a kind of raw potential, out of which the actual, for Deleuze, "falls from the plane like fruit".⁴ In this model, virtuality is an unconscious source of as well as a precondition for the actual. Or to put it another way, rather than waiting to be created from the actual, the virtual is already real before the actual exists.

If this all sounds unnecessarily heady as an introduction to these last two artists, it nevertheless helps us to conceive the Photoshop process as not merely altering, erasing, or adding to images taken from reality, but actually as drawing from the storehouse of the virtual, where a swath of Photoshop colour or line is as substantive a source material for a photograph as the scanned image of an object.

While Lucas Blalock's photographs usually begin with traditional, large-format analog photographs of objects that are then re-worked in Photoshop, others begin in the space of Photoshop itself, where a monochrome background acts as the substrate for image construction. This is the case with *Good Id* (2014), where the image is dominated by a

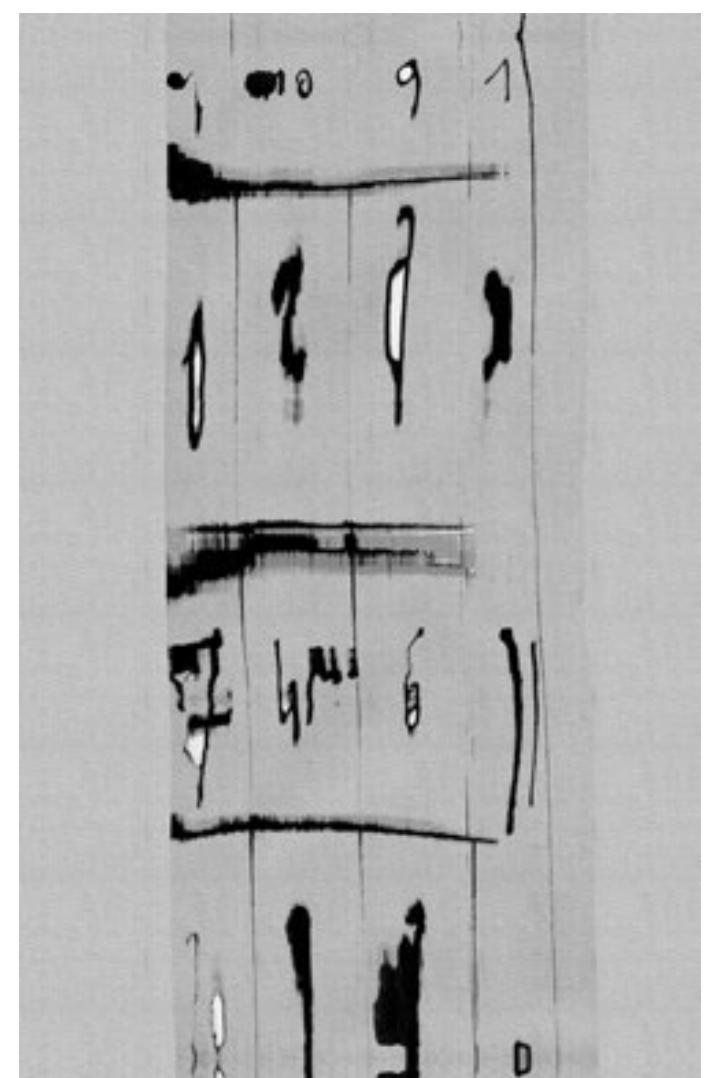


Lucas Blalock, *Good Id*, 2014.
Archival inkjet print.
119.4 x 153.7 cm framed.

collapsed, hyper-flattened, orange-coloured digital background space that seems to be sucking small photographs of several scattered objects into itself like a vacuum. Blalock's ongoing series of 'erased' pictures often begin with still-life images and then progress, through processes like repetitive stamping, to near-abstractions, as in *Night Decisions I* (2015), whose crumpled pink surface suggests the ghosts of former objects replaced by uncanny, intentionally jarring edges of material. Blalock's radical splicing and reconstruction take the world apart and put it back together again in an utterly defamiliarizing way, constantly toying with flattened, illusionistic space.

The scope of Blalock's photographic project, which takes place among the multiplicities of the screen and its potential for manipulation, illuminates something like the field of immanence itself as a virtual possibility for digital photography. Without reducing his work to a kind of example of Deleuze's model of virtuality, it is helpful to see this process in terms of a similar two-way operation that expands understanding of what it means to construct a photograph, beyond merely using Photoshop as an editing machine. Blalock's images are slippery, elusive, and uncanny, and they open up the field of manipulation itself as a tool that is as viable and productive for making a photograph on a screen as for capturing an image in the wild.

An expanded notion of virtuality also helps us to approach Marieta Chirulescu's works, which take up themes of virtuality and actuality at the level of perception and bring them to bear on problems of painting and translation between media. In the group of new works in "Image Support", Chirulescu's process is only slightly less transparent than that of the other artists in the show, though perhaps more complicated. In these pieces, Chirulescu often makes scans of real objects that are edited in Photoshop on a textured, chromatic canvas-like background (as opposed to Blalock's overtly artificial



Marieta Chirulescu, *Untitled*, 2015.
Inkjet print on thin cotton stretched over canvas.
170 x 100 cm.

monochromes), and then prints the resulting image on fabric with an inkjet printer that can itself produce tertiary smearing effects.

The editing that Chirulescu does in Photoshop on this group of works often involves using a background fill effect on small, enclosed sections around the images of scanned objects, creating flat, eerie shapes that resemble apertures or portals in a state of virtuality against the *trompe l'oeil* of the printed canvas. For example, in two images (both *Untitled*, 2015), Chirulescu scans small pieces of straw twisted into closed, irregular shapes. Once these are scanned on to the faux canvas background, a fill-effect is applied, covering certain parts of the total picture, which Chirulescu then fills in with a patterned, near-monochrome background imitating a canvas textile and leaving other parts blank – like holes in the illusionistic canvas.

account for the mysteriousness that continues to haunt the work of all four artists in "Image Support", even as they literally show us how they have achieved it.

Because this process is brought to bear in painting specifically, Chirulescu is sometimes described as bringing the conditions of virtuality into the language of painting, and bringing painterly abstraction created through line and pigment closer to technological, virtual abstraction created with optical machinery and pixels. These two kinds of abstraction are at play across all four artists' work. At various points Höibo's weavings resemble both swaths of paint and infographics, with intersections between her warp and weft creating data points that adopt the aesthetics of the pixel. Quinlan's optical abstractions play particularly with our confusion between reading these two forms of abstraction; and Blalock works to point out the strangeness of the technologies invented to mimic painterly devices in everyday photographic seeing.

When this is printed on actual cotton fabric, the relationships among these three textures – the realism of the straw, the ersatz background and the pools of digital colour in the 'real' material surface – are confusing and disarming, especially because what appears to be a space of layering material and cutting-away has again been collapsed into two dimensions that are difficult to parse out again. These different modes of representation also seem to fold into one another so that, for example, the 'real' image of the straw seems to be part of the same virtual world as the pseudo-textured canvas.

Other works utilize decontextualized images, like pixelated boxes for signatures on forms, and materials like concrete in the context of painting. More than the other artists in the show, Chirulescu consistently attends to translation across media as well as from physical to virtual then back to actual. This act of shifting between and substituting media creates effects that Jan Verwoert has recently articulated as a sort of magic of *mimesis*. Verwoert describes the *mimesis* of everyday life as the capacity to recognize likeness in unlikely places, and even as a dynamic that is immanent in the very relations that art activates.⁵ *Mimesis* at its most basic is the process of imitating one thing in another medium, attempting to represent through the rhetoric of substitution. In Chirulescu's works, *mimesis* is manifold and iterative; and, as in Blalock's works, it opens up the possibilities for what counts as a photographic image. Simultaneously, Chirulescu also creates a space where the ability to see one condition in another abounds. This expanded way of seeing might

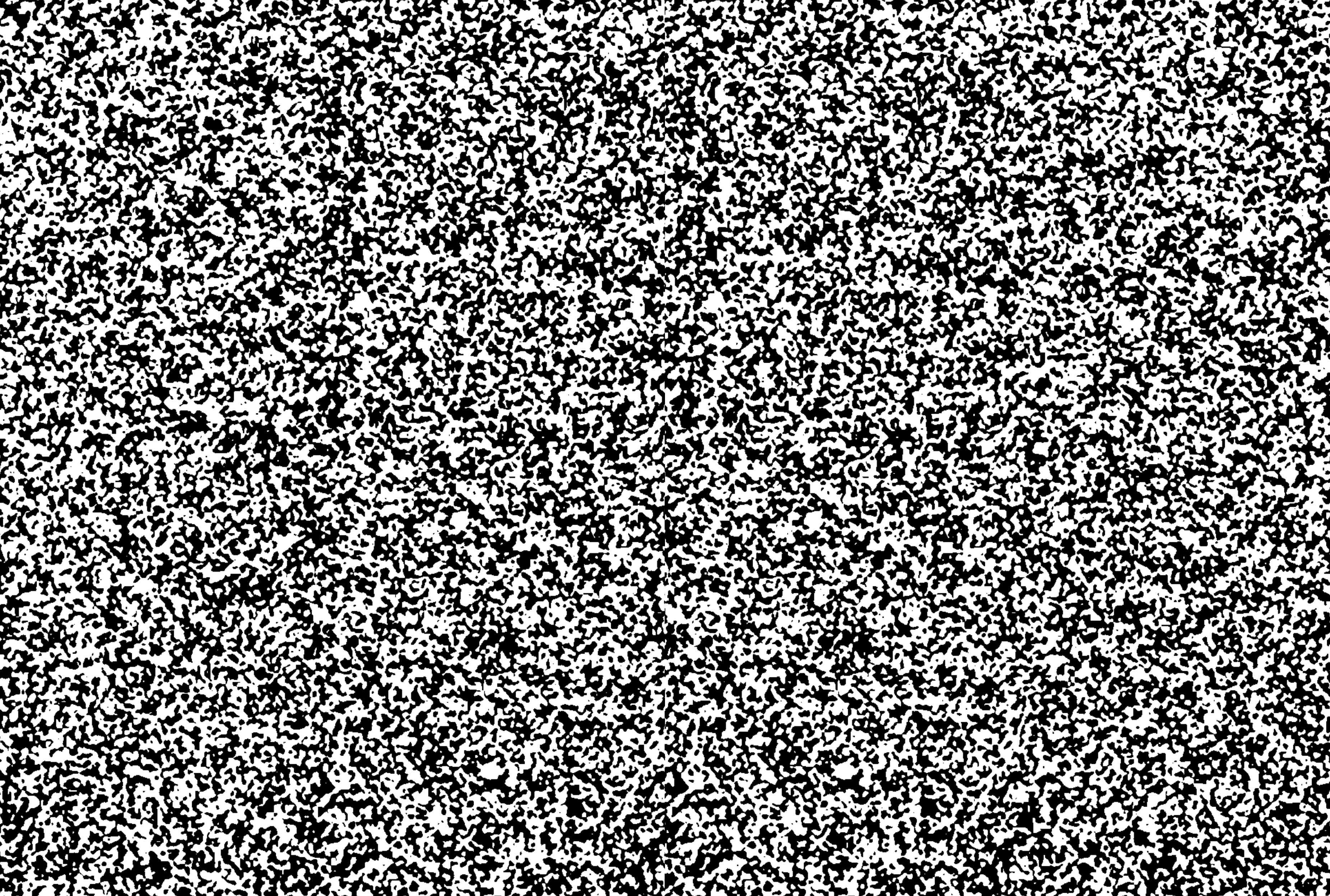
¹ One of several recently published books on this topic is, Charlotte Cotton, *Photography is Magic*, Aperture, 2015. In this book Cotton offers a sweeping overview of many photographers who are explicitly interested in emerging themes and visual languages related to automation, software tools and methods of circulating post-digital images such as versioning and repetition, and especially in the materiality of the photograph in the age of the screen.

² Two examples of such grid works could be seen in Quinlan's twin-exhibitions "Double Charlie" and "After Hours", taking place simultaneously in Paris and London at the gallery Campoli Presti in 2015. A new grid is included in "Image Support".

³ Artie Vierkant's essay "Image Object Post-Internet" is particularly useful in articulating this double removal of the status of the source object as a hallmark of the image in our current era. Vierkant characterizes the post-internet image object as marked by among other things the "collapse of physical space in networked culture", the infinite mutability (not just reproducibility) of digital materials, and the status of the source object as no higher than that of its copies – where there is often not only no original, but also no 'original copy'. Artie Vierkant, *The Image Object Post-Internet*, 2010, <http://jstchillin.org/artie/vierkant.html>

⁴ "The Actual and the Virtual" from Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, Columbia University Press, 2007.

⁵ Jan Verwoert, "Spellbound" in *Frieze* no. 173, 2015, and in *Cookiel*, Sternberg Press, 2014.



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Eileen Quinlan



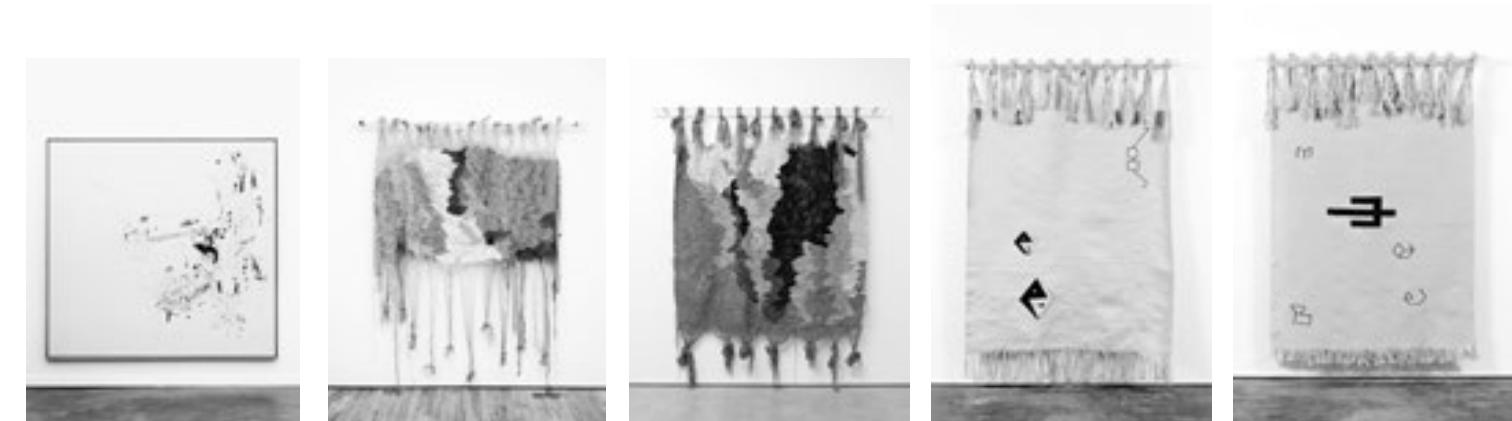
1
Agro, 2015
Digital C-Print on dibond.
Not yet printed.

2
Wander, 2015
Digital C-Print on dibond.
Not yet printed.

3
Twin Galaxies, 2015
Digital C-Print on dibond.
Not yet printed.

4
Tomorrow Corp., 2015
Digital C-Print on dibond.
Not yet printed.

Index to Image Section
Ann Cathrin November Høibo



8
Boy, 2013
Acrylic and dextrin on
cotton canvas, wooden
stretcher, natural ash
frame.
198.76 x 189.86 x 4.06 cm /
201.8 x 192.91 x 4.57 cm
(framed).
Photo: Dawn Blackman.

9
Untitled, 2014
Handwoven unbleached
wool, grey jersey, nylon,
linen and cotton, plastic
pole.
Weave: 200 x 150 x 2.5 cm.
Photo: Andy Keate.

10
Untitled, 2014
Handwoven wool, nylon
and jersey.
210 x 182 x 15 cm.
Photo: Vegard Kleven.

11
Eyeball Control, 2014
Handwoven kilims in pure
wool, natural dye and
plastic pole.
200 x 118 x 5 cm.
Photo: Vegard Kleven.

12
Eyeball Control, 2014
Handwoven kilims in pure
wool, natural dye and
plastic pole.
140 x 97 x 5 cm.
Photo: Vegard Kleven.



5
Coming in Color, 2015
Color polaroid.
11.4 x 8.9 cm (print size).

6
Another Color Coming,
2015
Color polaroid.
11.4 x 8.9 cm (print size).

7
Archon, 2015
Digital C-Print on dibond.
Not yet printed.

Cover
Super Smash, 2015
Digital C-print on dibond.
Not yet printed.



13
Eyeball Control, 2014
Handwoven kilims in pure
wool, natural dye and
plastic pole.
163 x 99 x 5 cm.
Photo: Vegard Kleven.

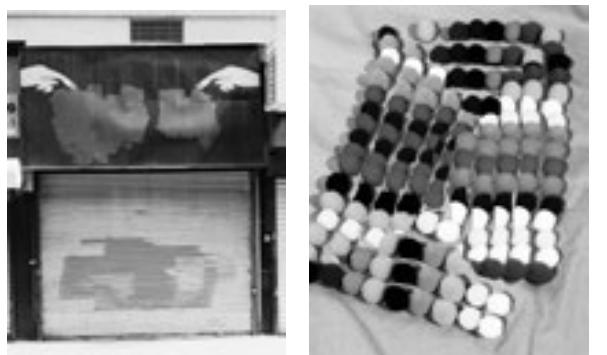
14
Work in progress. Image
from the artist's studio.
Photo: Ann Cathrin
November Høibo.

15
Five Fingers, 2014
Bronze cast of Five Finger
Vibram Shoes with insoles.
10 x 25 x 8 cm.
Photo: Vegard Kleven.

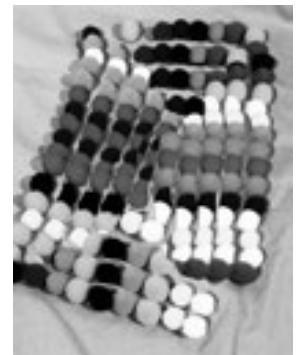
16
Girl, 2013
Acrylic and dextrin on
cotton canvas, wooden
stretcher, natural ash frame.
198.63 x 187.96 x 3.81 cm /
201.68 x 191.01 x 5.08 cm
(framed).
Photo: Dawn Blackman.

Cover
Untitled, 2014
Handwoven wool,
nylon and jersey.
209.5 x 182 x 16 cm.
Photo: Vegard Kleven.

Index to Image Section
Lucas Blaalock



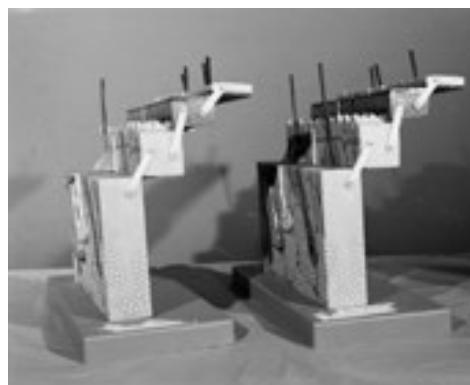
17
Touch This, 2014
Archival inkjet print.
45.7 x 35.5 cm.



18
gathering is a way to call looking, 2015
Archival inkjet print.
101.6 x 810.2 cm.

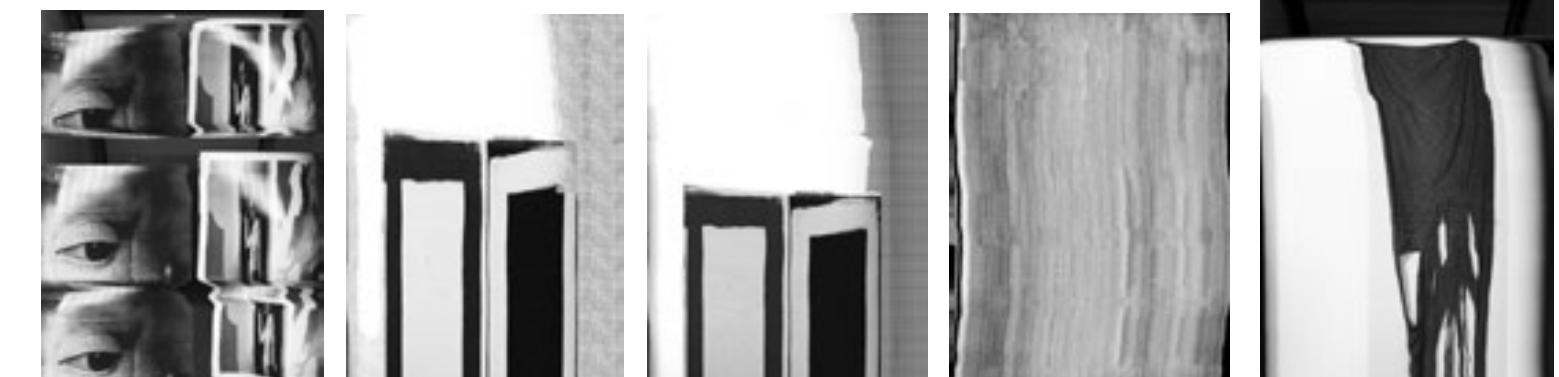


19
Arizona Thumbnails, 2015
Working document.
Archival inkjet print.

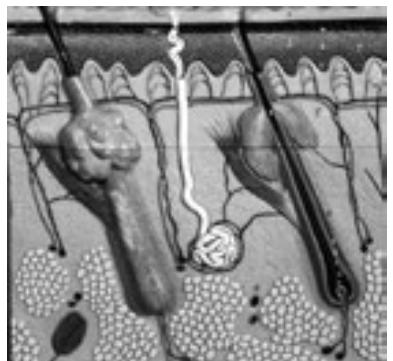


20
two times, 2015
Working document.

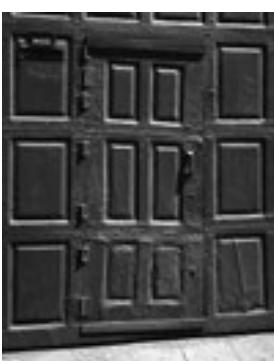
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Marieta Chirulescu



25
Sketch / source material.
26
Sketch / source material.
27
Sketch / source material.
28
Sketch / source material.
29
Sketch / source material.



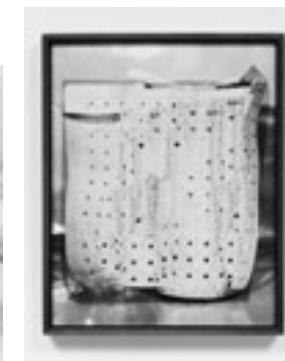
21
skin detail, 2015
Working document.



22
Door, 2013
Working document.



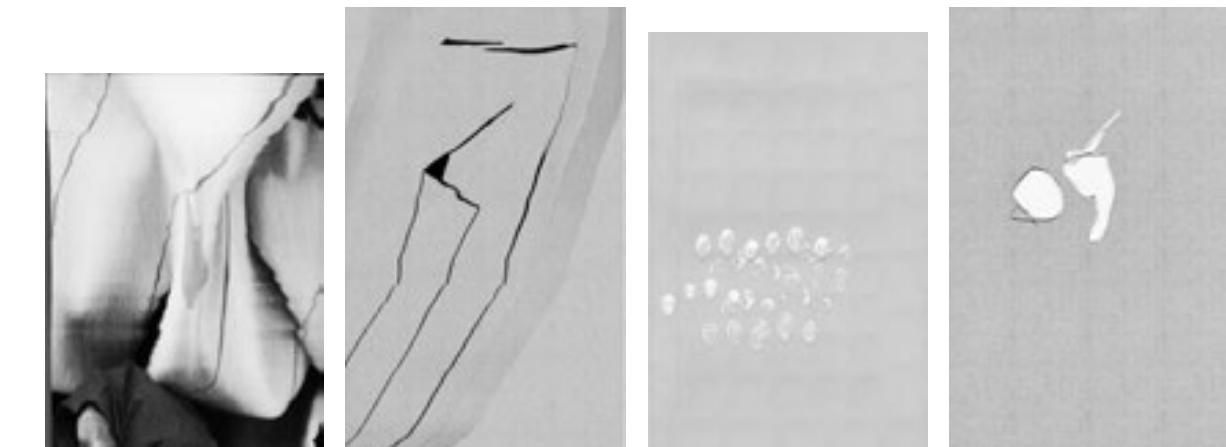
23
DIAGRAM, 2012 -2015
Archival inkjet print.
59 x 76.2 cm.



24
untitled with containers, 2013
Archival inkjet print.
63.5 x 50.8 cm (framed).



Cover
a physical feeling, 2014
Archival inkjet print.
40.6 x 55.8 cm.



30
Sketch / source material.
31
Untitled, 2015
Inkjet print on thin cotton
stretched over canvas.
170 x 105 cm.
32
Untitled (fingerprints),
2015
Inkjet print, gesso on
canvas.
160 x 100 cm.
Cover
Untitled, 2015
Inkjet print on thin cotton
stretched over canvas.
170 x 110 cm.

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