

alexander iezzi
2024

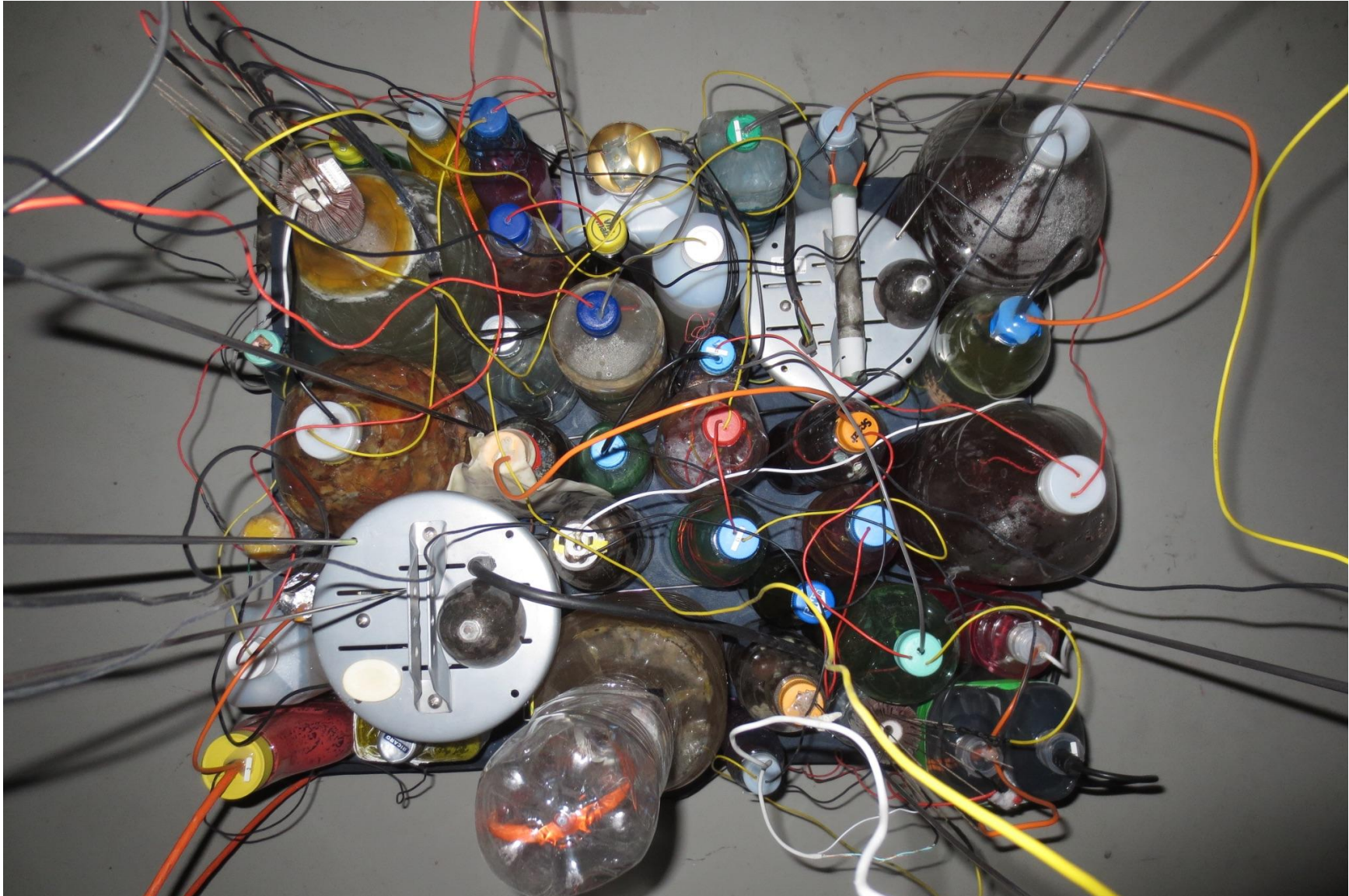
plant plant





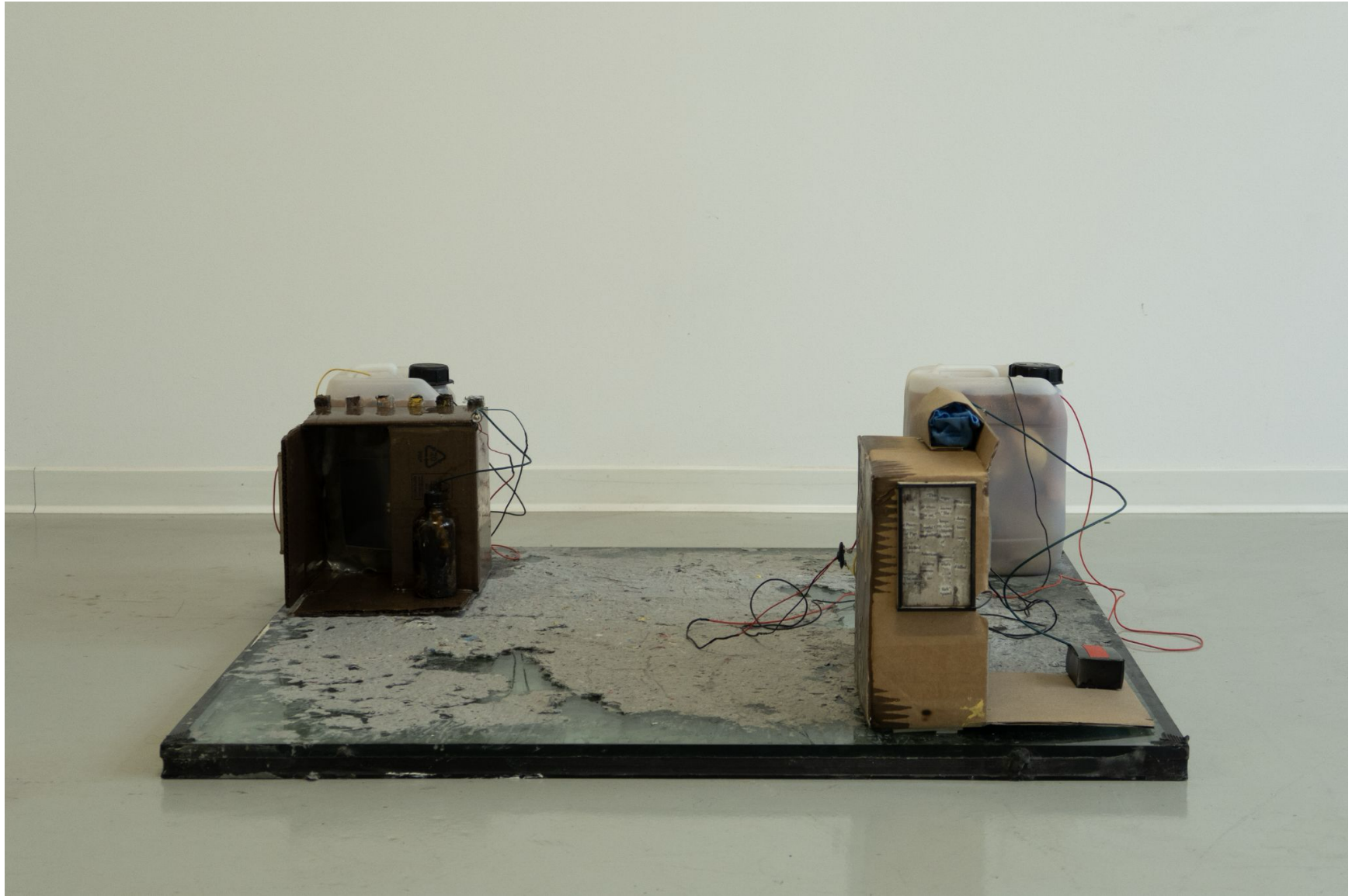




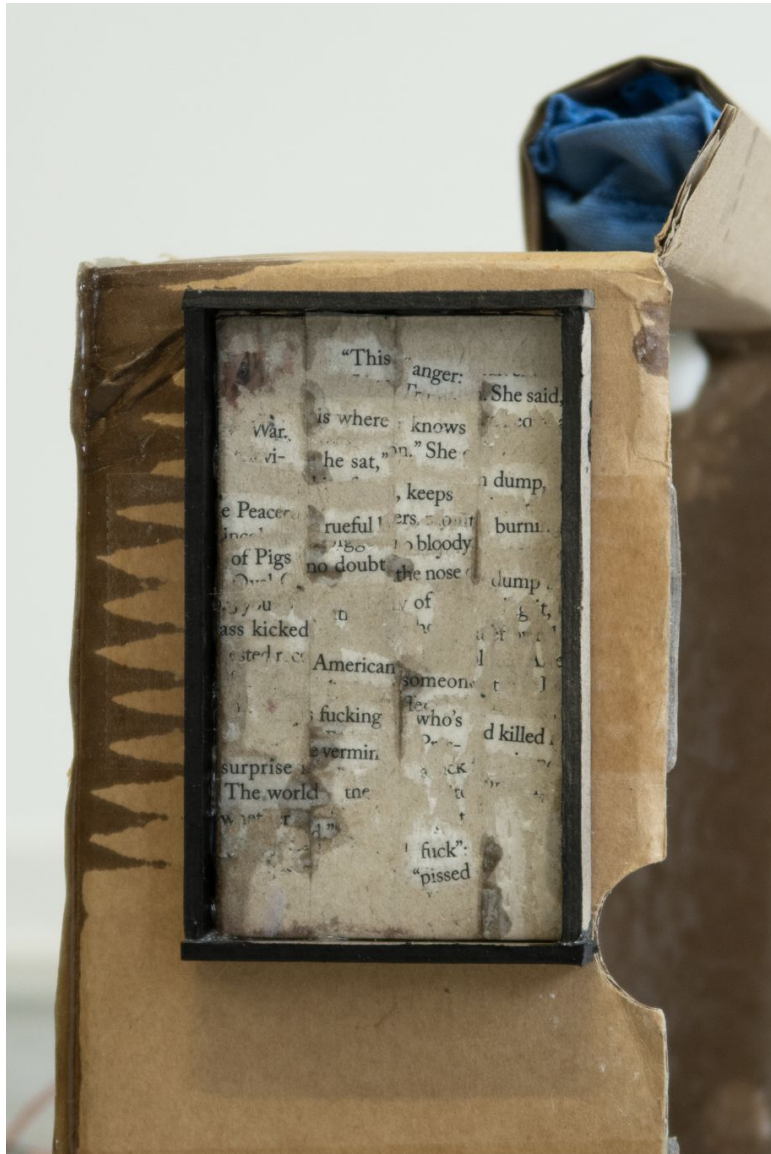














plant plant reflects an artistic inquiry that operates across two interconnected lines: The history of the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) which I reframe and interpret as an "Improvised Emotional Device," and its potential to synthesize notions of violence, religion, and politics in a material form. I am interested in investigating the aesthetics of the IED to reveal its poetic registers, exploring its ability to transform narratives of conflict, and question cultural myths surrounding ingenuity, weaponry, and violence. In other words, *who is allowed to build and use a bomb?*

Through the building of very small "bombs" in a self-contained chamber within my studio, I create a context that attempts to understand the material and psychological processes that propel the making of an explosive device. In doing so, I have produced sculptural material (the remains and residues of certain explosions) which are integrated into mixed-media artworks. These artworks utilize plastic objects including bags, bottles, boxes, bundles of wires, pipes, and explosive powder that, altogether, give shape to the structural politics which animate the works. Put differently, this body of work resists the impulse to elevate plastic waste into the realm of an aesthetic ideal (i.e. the Artwork). Instead, I'm interested in investigating the ontological properties of plastic objects-turned-waste, destabilizing their original, intended purpose as single-use vessels through pulling into focus their myriad uses and reuses. This brings up questions around the concept of "waste," the climate crisis, and containment, as well as low-budget/DIY aesthetics as a political choice.

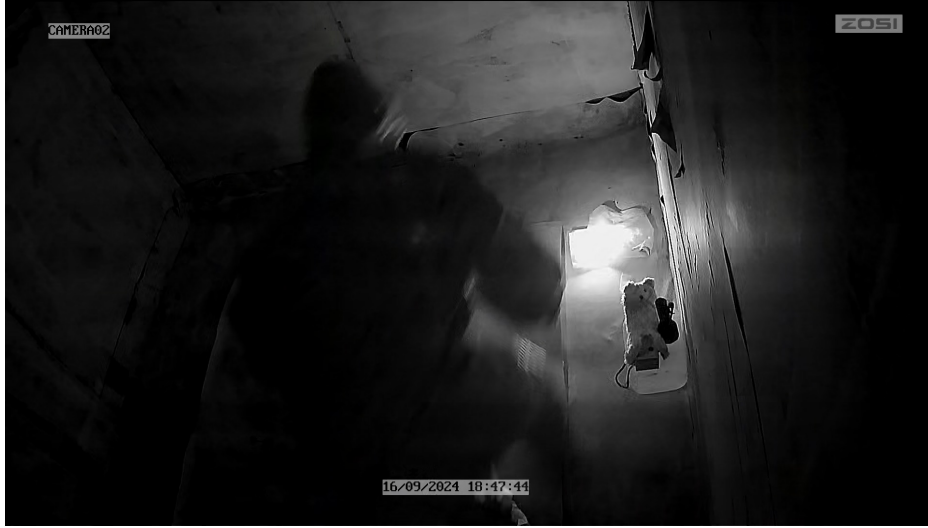
What is particular about this body of work is that plastic boxes holding contaminated fruit grown downstream from a large plant of petrochemicals, nuclear wastewater, and expired soft drinks, work together as functional batteries that ignite the explosives. The contaminated fruit is thought of, here, as literal sustenance that cannot be ingested; a wasted energy. It, too, is thought of as a proxy for capital, and gestures toward a poetics that ruminates on the endless production of waste within regimes of consumption.

Parallel to the aforementioned concerns is an interest in creating documentary evidence of the energy and violence these IEDs create. Using pinhole cameras, I have created a series of images made from the deploying—or, *becoming*—of my bombs in the studio, while also documenting the process and progress of the waste batteries; rotting, fermenting, and hosting other forms of life such as fruit flies and bacterial cultures.

—Alexander Iezzi

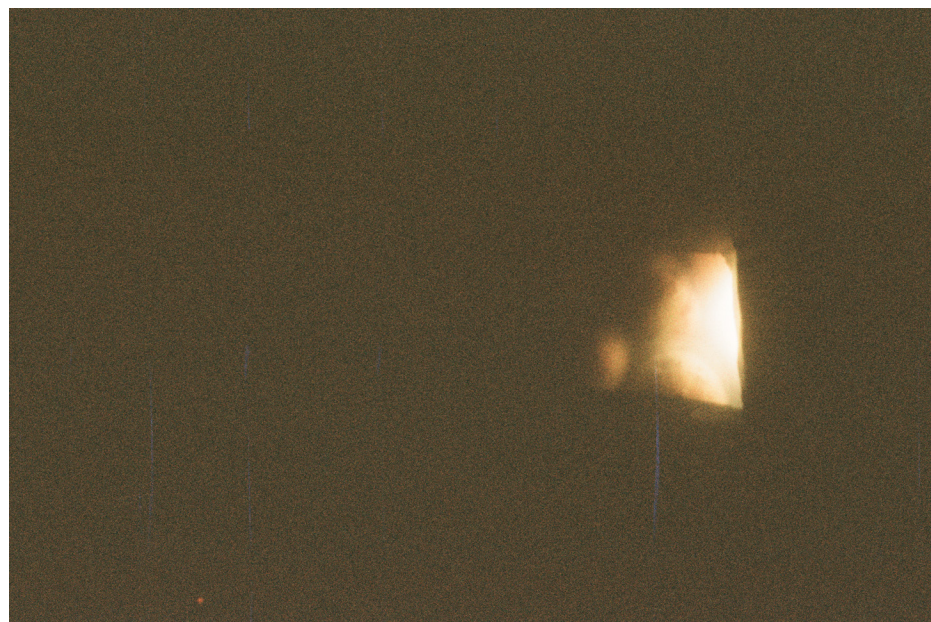
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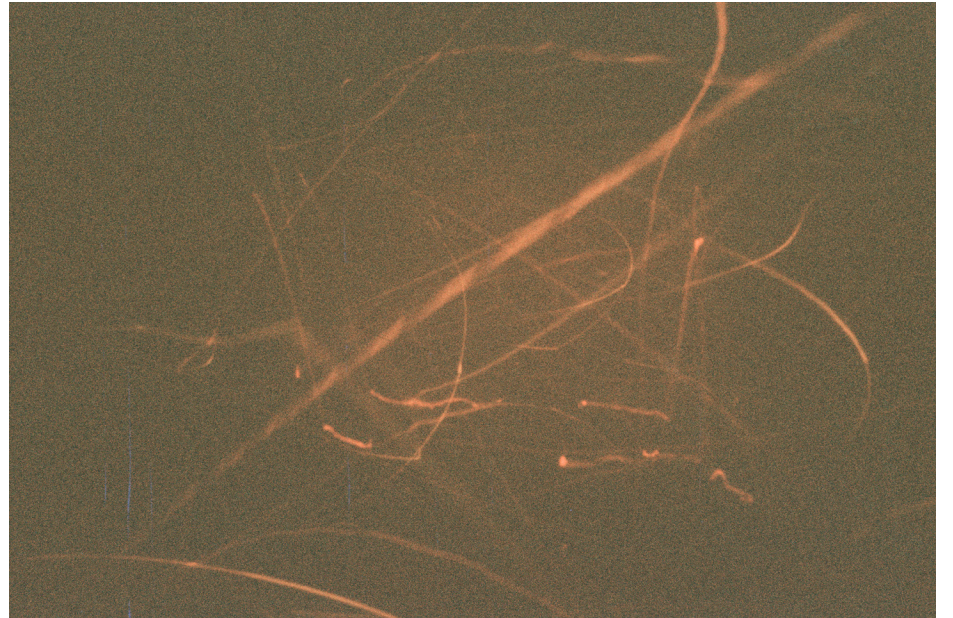
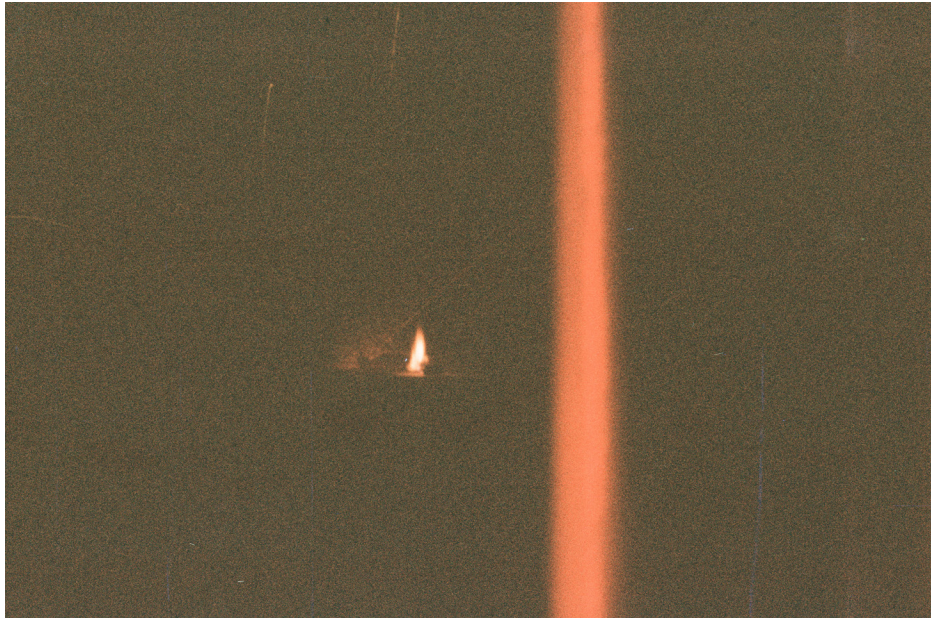
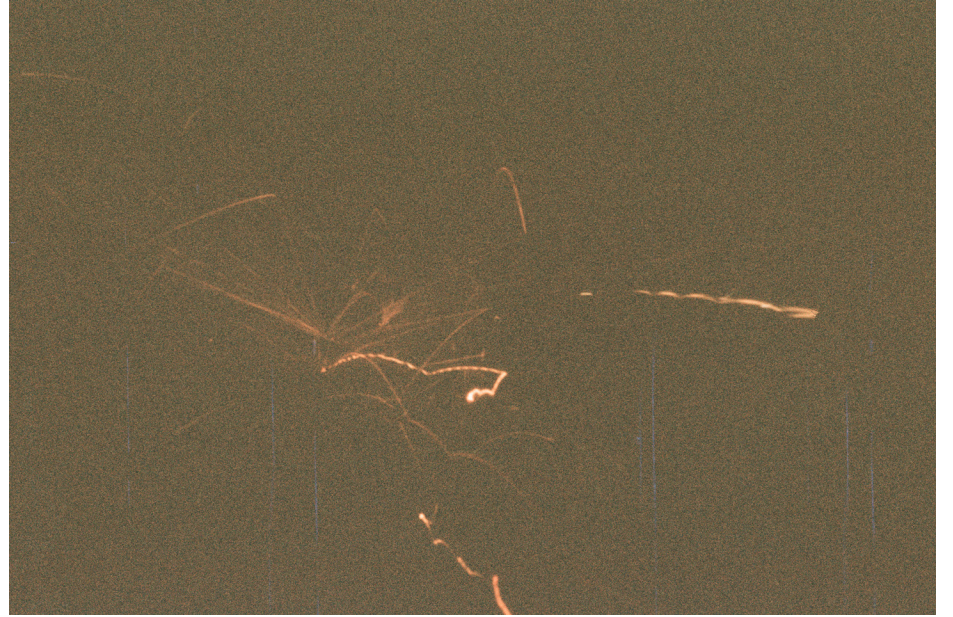






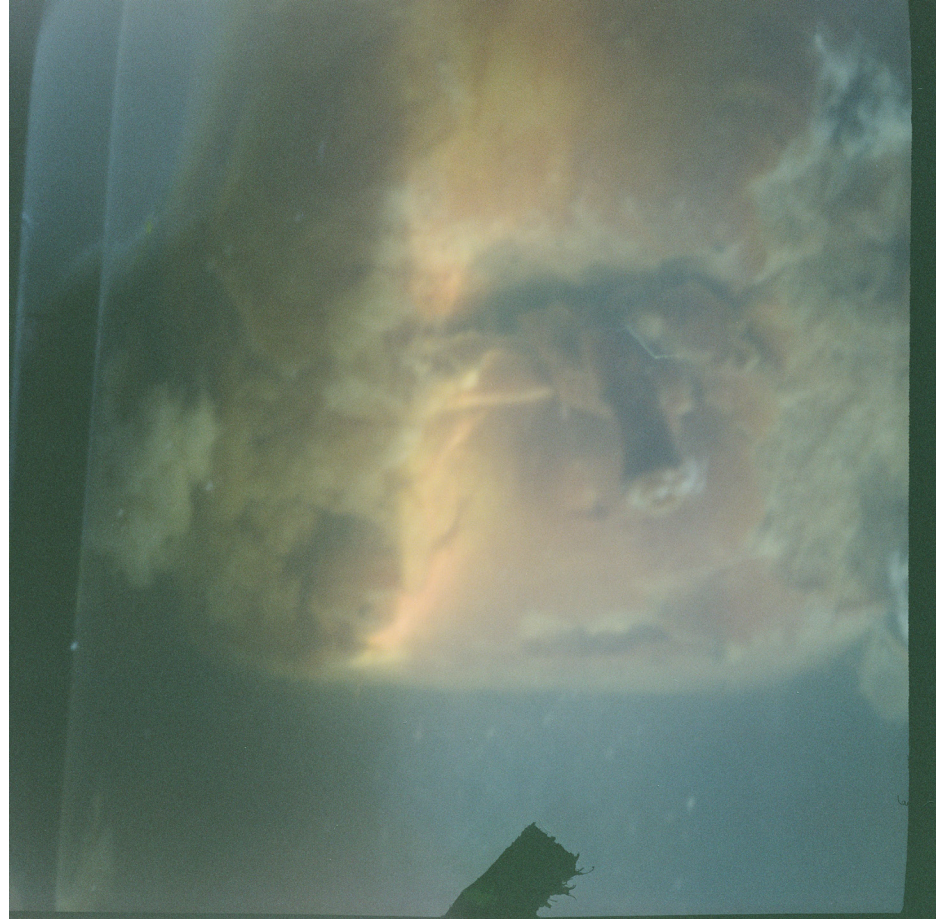
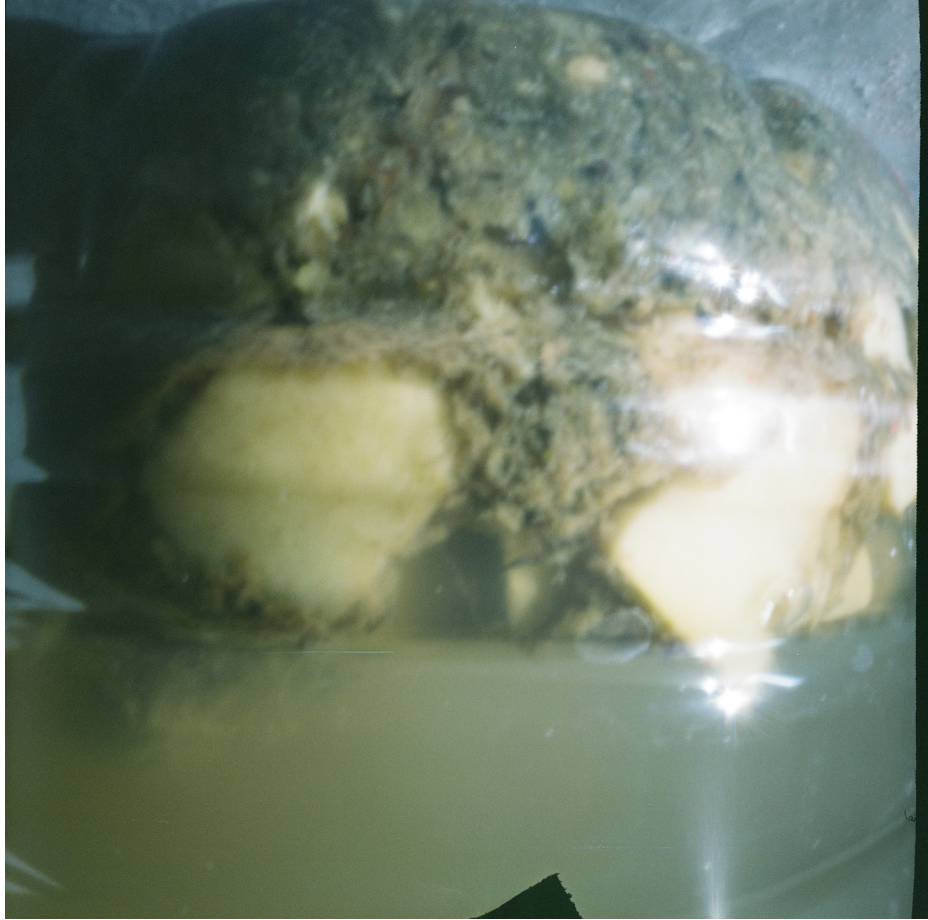
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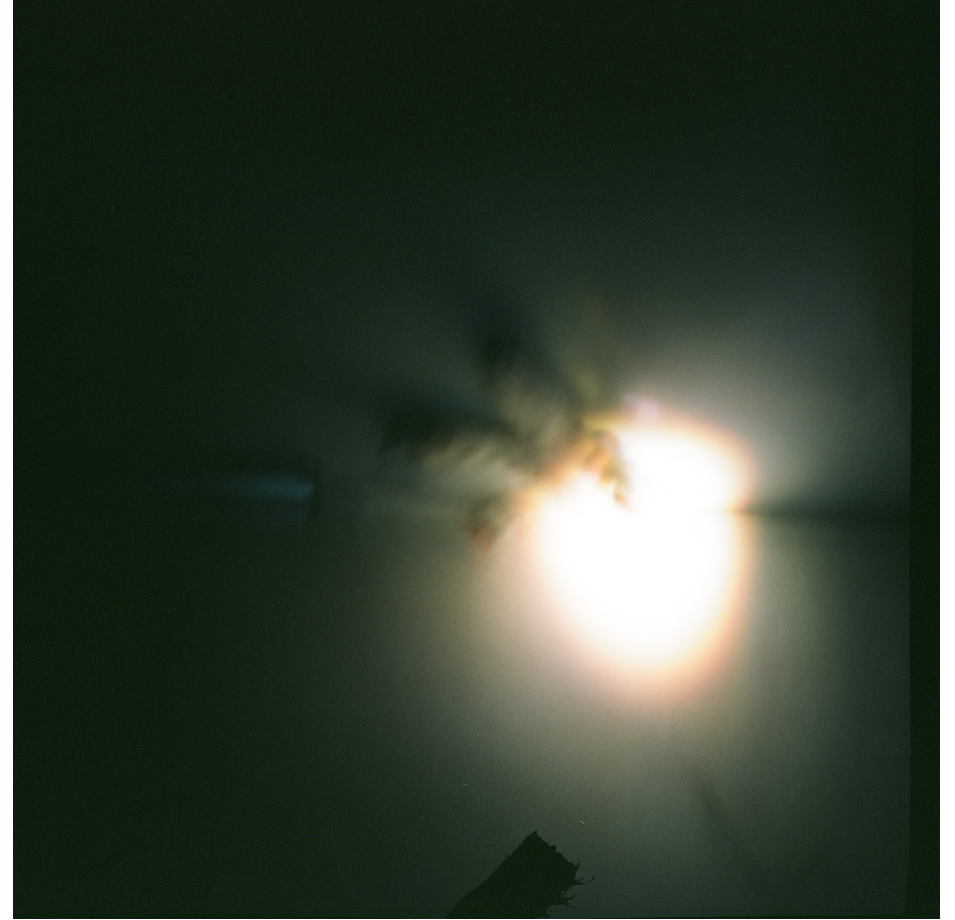
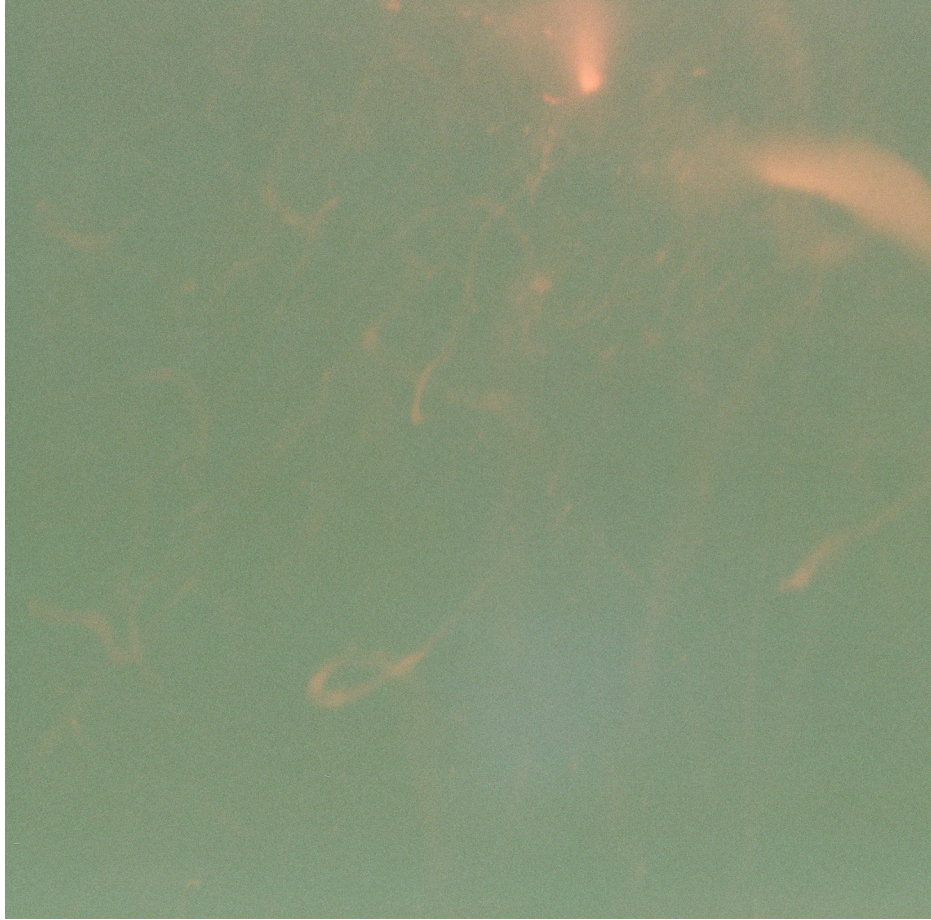




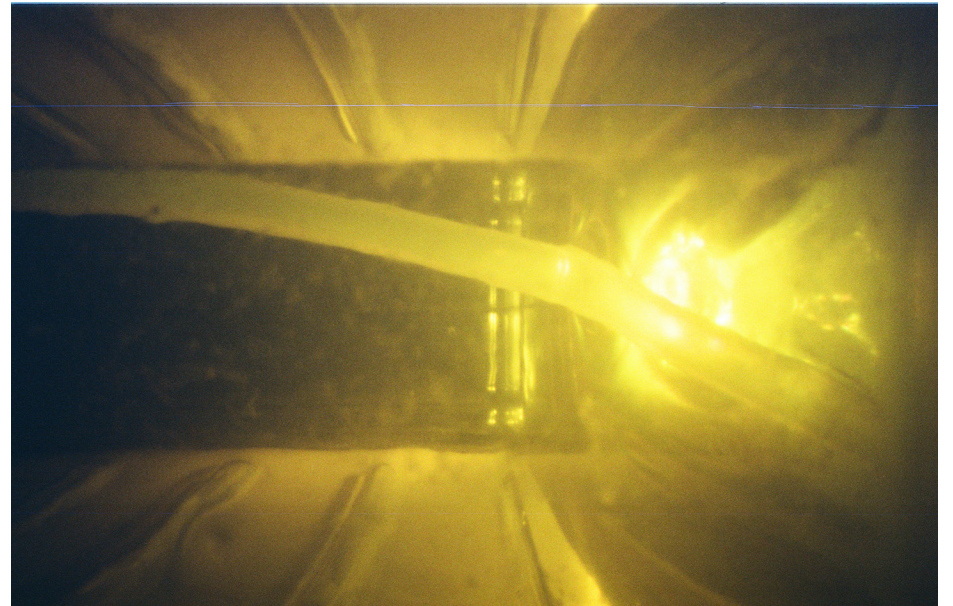
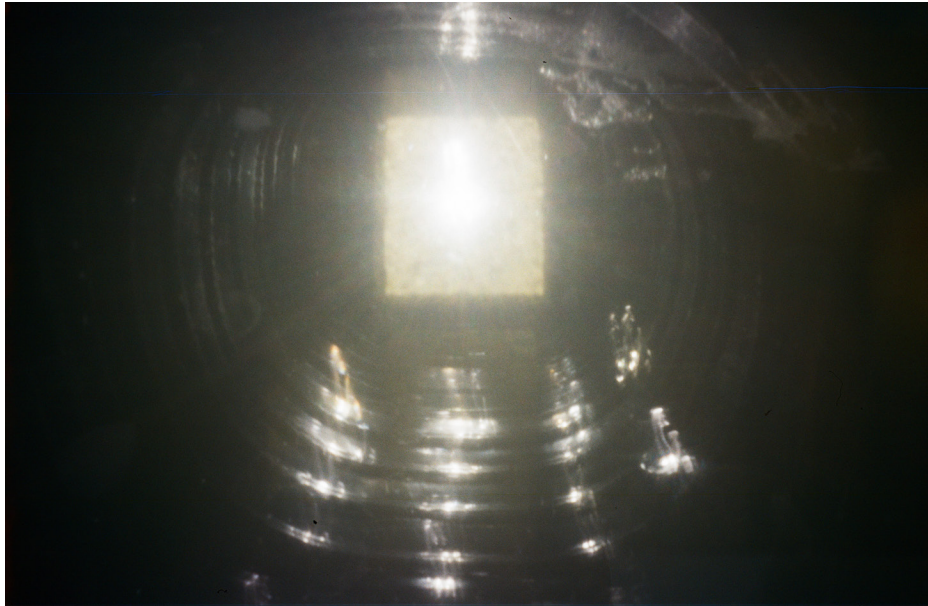
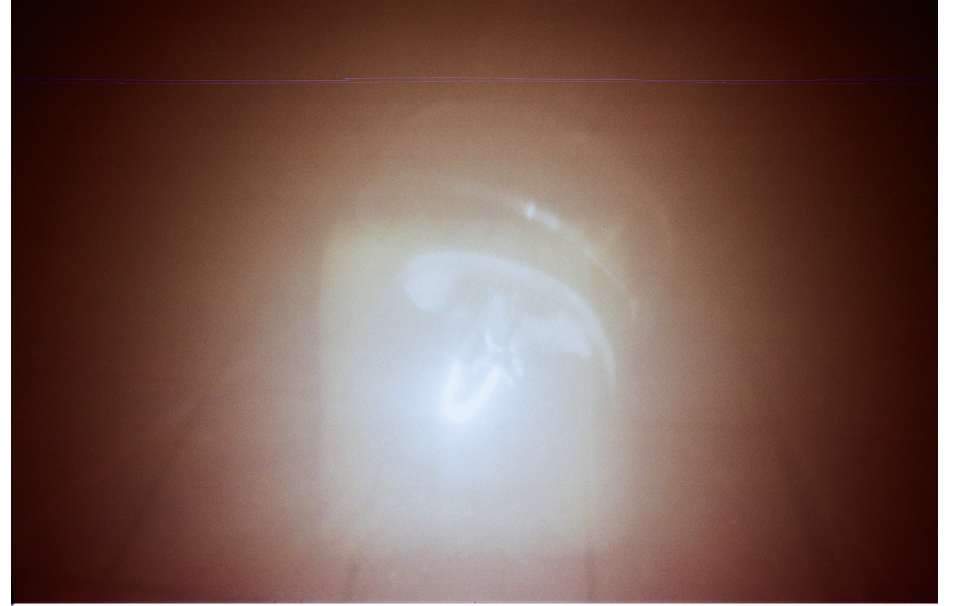


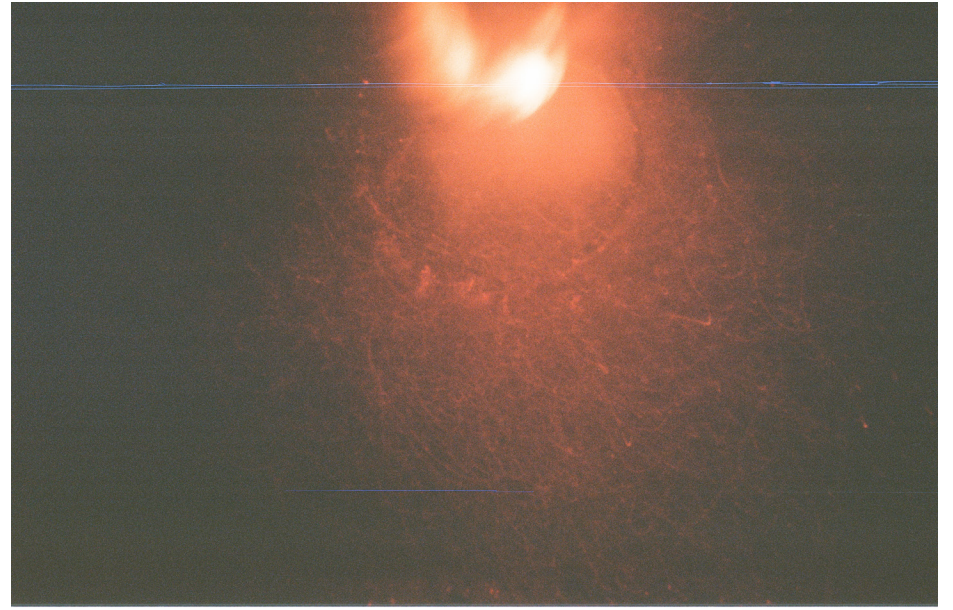
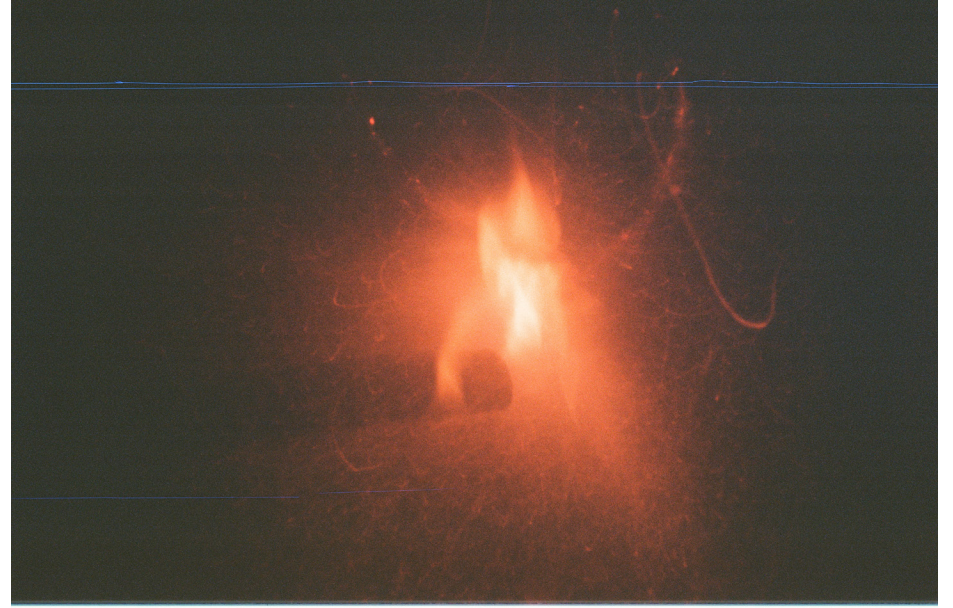
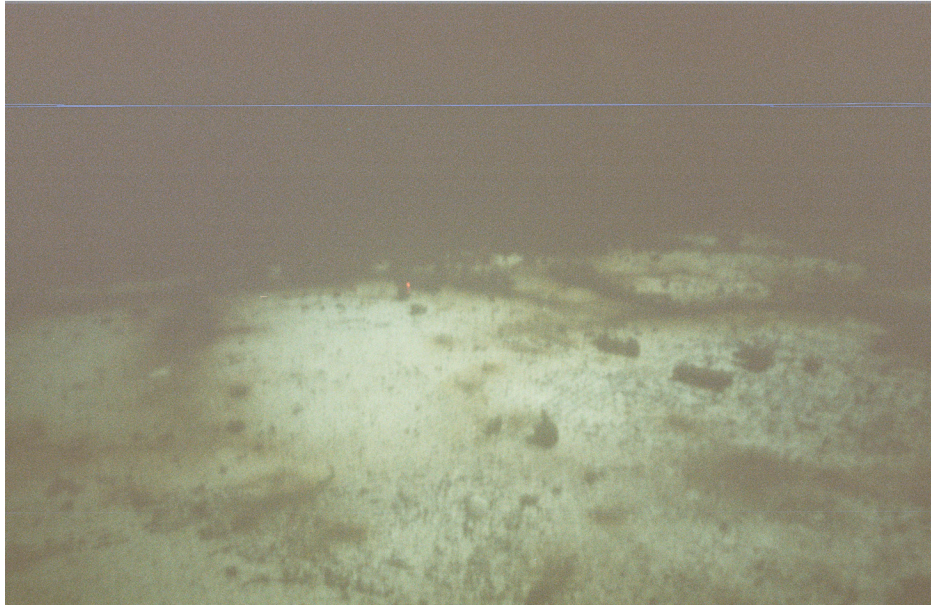
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JUS AD BELLUM

Eugene Yiu Nam Cheung

—WHICH WAY WILL YOU POINT YOUR GUN WHEN
THE OFFICERS ORDER YOU AGAINST THE
PEOPLE OF YOUR OWN TOWN?

—The Angry Brigade, *Communiqué 12* (1971)

Was Benjamin the first suicide bomber?
The thought crosses my mind as I read
the papers ... with their front-page news
of Israeli soldiers ... invading
Palestinian towns and refugee camps in
response to suicide bombers ... The
president of the United States and the
U.S. media insist the Palestinians are
to blame for the violence. There is
virtually no attempt to even try to
understand what it is that motivates
the Palestinians, no portrayal of their
everyday life in refugee camps and
prisons under “administrative
detention” imposed without trial ... They
say history is written by the victors,
but this seems unprecedented. It is as
if the Palestinians had no voice
whatsoever. They are not only
unrepresented but are unrepresentable.

—Michael Taussig, *Walter Benjamin's Grave* (2006)

To all landscapes there is a particular
configuration. The one I'm on is flat,
with no grass, just chairs. There are
no trees, just a blackboard. There are
no horses, only militia men. There are
no peasant-witnesses, only handicapped
children. There's no powder, no bombs,
just instruments of torture.

—Etel Adnan, *Sitt Marie Rose* (1982)

When Daniela Klette was apprehended in Berlin this year,
news outlets described her as having been “on the run”
for three decades. That this former member of the Red
Army Faction lived in plain sight was extraordinary
enough; more impressive is that she did so in public
housing (*in Kreuzberg!*) without a rental contract for
twenty years.

Klette stands accused of participating in an attack
on the US embassy in 1991 and for bombing Weiterstadt
prison in 1993. In a press conference following her
arrest, a politician who shares her given name with
Klette—though is otherwise unremarkable—announces that
even after protracted lengths of time, “no terrorist can
feel safe in Germany.”

Later: this same unremarkable politician who shares
her surname with the footballer Kevin Behrens, disgraced
for having made a homophobic comment to a fan, was
conveniently pulled into his controversy. Unrelated to
this homophobic comment, she had threatened to impose a
stadium ban on punters from a football club to
prevent “riots, violence, injuries and pyrotechnics.” In
response, a banner was unfurled: “Whether it's Daniela or
Kevin, Behrens shut up!” In a culture that seeks to
delight itself through the worship of brute strength,
sport is the only probable site where a German
politician will be told to shut up.

“No terrorist can feel safe in Germany.” These words—so
contemptuous toward the desires that propelled the Red
Army Faction—suggest Klette as having been exiled in a
state of nihilism, dejection, or despair. *Shut up!*

Klette's life on that unassuming street in Kreuzberg was not hopeless. Could it not be said that she found joy in her capoeira dance troupe at the Brazilian cultural center, meaning through helping Turkish immigrants handle their papers, and responsibility in walking her dog each morning? Is it possible to reduce these last few decades of her life into the shape of permanent anxiety; accurate to insist that she was "on the run" though she remained in the heartland of her persecutor?

What we know of Klette's life in hiding indicates that the question of "safety" never turned on her ability or want to re-enter German society as "herself." Upon joining the RAF she saw her life in a different tense: Everything intolerable, which is to say everything antecedent, had to be forsaken. To forsake is to be volitional, and volition must be considered when looking at the devotional quality of Klette's hiding; as if biding time to strike back. She did not discard her revolutionary regalia: In her apartment, police found ammunition, a Kalashnikov rifle, a submachine gun, and a rocket-propelled grenade.

The voice of Gudrun Ensslin, co-founder of the RAF and great-granddaughter of Hegel: "This fascist state means to kill us all ... Violence is the only way to answer violence. This is the Auschwitz generation and there's no arguing with them."

*

The most literal adjective that could be applied to [war photographs] is *arresting*. We are seized by them. (I am aware that there are people who pass them over, but about them there is nothing to say.) As we look at them, the moment of the other's suffering engulfs us. We are filled with either despair or indignation. Despair takes on some of the other's suffering to no purpose. Indignation demands action. We try to emerge from the moment of the photograph back into our lives. As we do so, the contrast is such that the resumption of our lives appears to be a hopelessly inadequate response to what we have just seen.

—John Berger, "Photographs of Agony" (1968)

Israeli jets cleave through the sky, piercing Gaza with streams of bombs, striking Palestinian hospitals and refugee camps. Children are pulled from the rubble, many dead, and others—barely conscious—critically wounded. Footage of a boy whose entire family has been martyred, overcome with grief and wailing on a stoop, consoled by a man who was once his neighbor.

Inferno after inferno. Billowing smoke cross-cut with Israeli press conferences, whose officials make clear their intention to turn Gaza into a wasteland, first; then, a beachside town. The psychotic desire of Israel's leisure class, titillated by the world to come from the scorching of this earth. Pools of blood and screams of agony, disfigurements and festering wounds. Rain—

A perverse fixation on October 7 as a singularity or an aberrant violence. A refusal to see violence and insurgency as tactics of a people who have been colonized for three-quarters of a century. Indignity and fury as people take to the streets in each and every metropole, demanding an end to the genocide, and now, too, the war waged on Lebanon. In Germany, lawmakers enshrine the necessity of immigrants to pledge their allegiance to Israel in order for citizenship to be conferred. The humiliation of living within this so-called *Staatsräson*.

Anna Mendelssohn: "This was another perverted tactic to exonerate filthy racism, to conform. It isn't shocking, or even remarkable. It is Germanically inspired. What happened to me in Germany? I was advanced on by a nurse with a hypodermic needle. She was directing it to my skull. I ducked. It is stupid to write for so many people whose positions of authority now desensitizes their use of language."¹

In this present moment where I cannot focus on writing, Mendelssohn has come to haunt my dreams. In one of these we descend an iron staircase from the sky, finding ourselves in a circular garden which disappears upon our reaching it; flowers, rocks, and branches weaving themselves into glass, concrete, and steel. We tell each other this place is Berger's library. We walk inside and once there, I lose her; but we still hear each other clearly.

What do you make of these events?

"Landowners paint as though they had known the years of freedom, but they don't have to know anything about freedom, they live everywhere as though everywhere was theirs to ride their horses through streets & imagine the population cheering it makes me feel sick."²

1 From Anna Mendelssohn, 'basalt' in *Implacable Art* (2000).
2 Ibid.

People in Germany are brutalized by the police each time they organize for Palestine—

"But listen, this will drive you crazy. I don't talk to the police except never, the solicitor calls in the police because I do not want my house raided when I am alone with my children."³

There is never a time too early for ghosts, but why are you here?

"The Jew is the least protected. People simply start to speak in that mock-Jewish way. "If you can take being in quod, you can survive anything." Thanks."⁴

What of Israel?

She does not answer. I do not wake.

Predisposed to the making of another life, I weigh up what must be sacrificed.

Look outside your window and see the smoke. Place your ear against the door to hear the gunfire some mistake for poetry.

"How could I love you for reading me through Guernica?"⁵

*

3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 From Anna Mendelssohn, 'I also wish to refer to my loathing of conformism' in *Implacable Art* (2000).

**A COMMUNIQUE AGAINST CRUELTY OR A COMMUNIQUE FOR THESE
TIMES**

TO THOSE WHO FANCY THEMSELVES A LITTLE BIT LIBERAL:
DO NOT TRICK YOURSELF INTO BELIEVING THAT IT IS TOO
LATE FOR A MORE MEANINGFUL LIFE

ASK YOURSELF: MIGHT YOU BE REASONABLY CONSIDERED A
CASUALTY OF A SELFISH, ARROGANT LIFESTYLE WHOSE
COORDINATES ARE HEDONISM AND EXCESS, WHICH YOU
DRESS UP AND SUBLIMATE AS LIVING IN A QUEER
UTOPIA? THIS IS A TWO-STEP TEST: SELF-AWARENESS DOES NOT
EXEMPT YOU FROM THIS CATEGORY ... IT MERELY MAKES YOU
DISHONEST

IF YOU FIT THIS PROFILE, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:
KILLING A COP, HIJACKING A PLANE, OR BLOWING UP A
GOVERNMENT BUILDING RELEASES MORE ENDORPHINS FOR YOU
THAN ANY NARCOTIC ON THE MARKET (ALLEGEDLY!)—THIS IS
NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST, BUT IMAGINE IF YOU DID ALL THREE

LIVING IN A COUNTRY SO TREACHEROUS REQUIRES US TO NOT
FALL WITHIN ITS IDEOLOGICAL LINES

THE NEXT TIME A GERMAN TELLS YOU THAT YOUR POSITION ON
PALESTINE IS ANTISEMITIC TELL THEM TO FUCK OFF; IF A
ZIONIST TRIES THE SAME SHIT TELL THEM THE SAME THING
BUT MAKE IT MORE VENOMOUS (ENUNCIATE)

REMEMBER THAT NONE OF THIS WILL BE EFFECTIVE IF YOU DO
NOT ALSO STRIKE AT THE SOURCE

START LEARNING AND TEACHING EACH OTHER ABOUT
EXPLOSIVES AND PYROTECHNICS, PRACTICE GUERILLA
TACTICS THAT DESTROY THE PHYSICAL AND PSYCHIC
INFRASTRUCTURES OF THE NATION STATE THAT SEES
THE WHOLESALE SLAUGHTER OF THE OPPRESSED AS AN
IMMOVABLE CONDITION OF LIFE

MAKE WHEREVER YOU ARE THE HOMELAND FOR AN INDIGNANT,
MESSIANIC, AND INTRANSIGENT STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

LOVE EACH OTHER BUT NEVER THE ENEMY



