

*So, there was a stack of photos in the studio...*

*To me, these photos are like sentences that might get pulled into a paragraph, not exactly a story but something with a structure and syntax, though no narrative. They remind me of writing projects where I have a document that gets worked on over the course of several years. It is added to and edited repeatedly and sometimes forgotten, only to be opened up again later...*

*It's like strands of thinking that may come together at some point and make sense but for now simply dangle around each other... they belong in the same folder, I want them together, and there is a thought process that threads them together. Are these works like that?*

*Slippages*

*Or the way cards slip between each other and get reshuffled*

*Is the project diaristic? It follows you over time...over the places you go, it traces your thoughts, it traces the self and I wonder how much of yourself is in the work?*

*But you are doing it, you are constantly taking pictures and they become cards in a deck that gets shuffled. Some shift forward while others stay hidden. Something I've noticed in your work: you are never giving it all away. I have written about that to*

(...) over the course of a couple of months they just started accumulating. I remember getting asked several times what my editing process was like and I would answer that I had no editing process. But that was only what I imagined at the time as I was printing in fairly large quantity. Looking back now I realize that this strange smelly paper, found on the street, discolored, discarded, and grey served as a frame or a prompt to print only certain images. So, in fact, the editing process was happening all along.

That's how I feel about my piles of negatives.

Absolutely. Fragments.

(...) like playing cards. When I was at a point where decisions had to get made about installation and sequencing they felt like fragments but as you say, a family. So they could almost be ordered playfully like shuffling cards in a deck and letting the images fall where they may.

Like your fragments of texts

When pressed, my knee jerk reaction is not much! Although, if this project is diaristic at all it is despite my intentions to remain hidden. Having said that there are photos here, like the portraits that document my life directly. For example there is a portrait of the filmmaker Tala Hadid. We were in the Sahara and I had actually carted a 4x5 camera out into the middle of the desert. I was living out a fantasy about what a real photographer is supposed to do...

*some extent but what I meant is that you put it all on the line and that's different from giving it all away. There's not exactly withholding, but certainly something is hidden...a glimmer of it comes forward and shines through from behind and you get this little glimpse of it and then it flitters away.*

*Absolutely*

*Maine is an unfathomable landscape. I always feel when I am up there that, you are not supposed to be there.*

I believe in the format of the fragment and I realize there must be part of me that has the ambition to keep things hidden or left as an undercurrent to be revealed in unexpected ways. In this sense, it might be better to think of them as a film, lined up on the wall they certainly read like film stills.

Also, the implication of something going on outside the frame, as if the story continues.

The best moments I have had as an audience member, are those moments that feel like chance encounters. Or when things erupt spontaneously. We were talking about fragments or your folders on your computer with a narrative you pick up again and again over time. And we have been talking for a long time...even a conversation between two friends over the years is like that...

(...) the way conversations break only to be picked up again at a much later date. Like this past summer when we both, by chance, found ourselves in Maine at the same time. We began a whole new thread about the strange landscapes up there. I even made a joke about how Stephen King's books are more like documentaries. Behind what you see at first glance—lobsters, boats, sunsets—there is always something a bit sinister. It is the same with landscapes as it is with architecture or even portraits—corners, hallways, forests—where you can easily discern the subject but there is always something behind...

You are not supposed to be there. That's exactly right

I was invited to stay in Morocco and there are some images from the sahara, that at first glance are the complete opposite, shadowless and vast. They convey that feeling of trespassing where you don't belong. You can't really see anything despite the sunlight, you can't see past the next dune. But there are people living out there in handmade structures and tents and I had the feeling that this is where we are all heading...

*Desertification. The earth will eventually become one big desert and then there will literally be no place we are supposed to be.*

*We were talking about the impossibility of representing something, like the Maine landscape, and you had asked what it means to even represent anything at all.*

*And at the time I had been thinking about this in a philosophical sense, what it means to pin something down. That categorization is something you have elided. Now we are seeing the discontents of identification over and over again and people are feeling a sense of whiplash, like being called out for not being “radical” enough...*

*But that's the endgame, you get sucked into a whole prison yard complex of identity that you can never escape. But in your work, even as we talk about the diaristic, very little comes through, and when it does, it's like a glimmer...if I didn't know you, I might think, this guy lives in the woods somewhere...*

*That is a lot like apophatic mysticism, where you are chipping away at something by saying what it is not—the via negativa. I bring up mysticism because some of your photographs remind me of it—I don't know if it is a spirit force, but something feels unhuman, as if it's coming forward from behind or outside.*

*To what?*

The unknowable thing which is not for you. I like talking about Maine with you because we were just there and I feel like you picked up on this peculiar thing..

That's right!

(...) or not gay enough.

Perhaps this takes us back to the fragment—the defining characteristic is always having to talk around the thing itself...

If you are asking me if it is there—I think it is there. But I never thought to put in it those terms. I definitely think it's about letting something in from the outside. Perhaps that is why I call them Portholes.

Something. We keep dancing around something. For example, the photo of the tree—it's totally ruined by light leaks but I still included it because it was a spontaneous and beautiful moment. It was a dead tree in the middle of the desert at night with the full moon. An impossible thing to capture, it was meant to be a long exposure and I just messed it up technically. I included it because I thought it was important be part of the series even though it is almost an entirely unreadable image.

*but I keep thinking about the unhuman...*

*a hidden ritual that we don't get to see.*

*The fragmented body. I think about people communicating in some way with the divine, like a Christian mystic worshipping the fragment of a holy saint. There is a doubling, and a standing outside of oneself. It's called ekstasis where the other self comes in contact with the divine.*

*The sensation around the edges is where it's the strongest. At the time, I was writing about Jo Baer's paintings, and this is one of her central ideas. The elephant in the room throughout this conversation has been an idea of abstraction—is there a different way to do abstraction? Does it have to be an abstract painting to invoke that sensation at the edges?*

I'm looking at the image with the shroud thrown over myself and it was performative but I think I was daring something—like bringing something into existence just for the moment of taking the picture.

Something primal happens in that performative space of taking a photograph where it feels like I am doubling myself. I used to think about it in the following way: a performance was a way of making a double of yourself and putting that out in front of an audience while you stay behind the double.

The ritual part of it is not a ritual but more of a process I go through in order to make an image or an artwork. I want to see something I haven't seen before, so that could also be this thing you are picking up on. I don't want to see something that is familiar or recognizable. I mean that in a really deep way. Of course, there is no escaping references to the past or that things always refer to other things and nothing is ever new, but I just think that there can be moments... even while printing these I started looking for something. Even when working with well-worn tropes like smoke machines or a disembodied arm...

You once said something to me a long time ago in my studio about how you had the impression that I was working at the edges of something, as if there was a foggy mass you could only make out at the edges. Like a silhouette.