WHEN SUDDENLY THE LIMB DID QUIVER

SONYA FILMAN

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN VISUAL ARTS

YORK UNIVERSITY

TORONTO, ONTARIO

APRIL 2018

ABSTRACT

This support paper serves to outline the motivations, methods, and outcomes of the conjuring practice that is my graduate research. I am concerned with the notion of an encounter, a passing or touching between beings and objects — especially those that go unnoticed, or barely so. Utilizing materials that possess heightened sensitivities to touch, time, and light, I engage with objects and imaging technologies in order to conjure such imperceptible presences into a state of emergence through an intuitively-led practice of art. The material products of this research include objects and images that are assembled in my thesis exhibition *When Suddenly the Limb Did Quiver,* where the gallery serves as a creative space that enables some potential manifestations of this artistic practice to emerge.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisory committee, David Scott Armstrong, Marc Couroux, and Leslie Korrick. Thank you for your guidance in undertaking this project, and for both challenging and encouraging me throughout this process.

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the York University Graduate Scholarship, and the Annie Smith Graduate Scholarship.

This paper and the works described within have been developed on the traditional territory of Indigenous Nations including the Wendat, Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. This territory is the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Covenant and Wampum between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Three Fires Confederacy (the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Pottawatomie), and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources in and around the Great Lakes. Today, the meeting place of Toronto (from the Haudenosaunee word Tkaronto) is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. I am grateful for the opportunity to live and work within these territories.

Finally, thank you to the #Craftof2018, for giving me a safe space to be unsure.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

PREFACE:
Conjuring a practice of art

Recently, while reading a book on water divining, I came across an account by one man of his first dowsing experience. Initially skeptical of the practice, but nonetheless filled with curiosity, he had gone out into the field with an experienced practitioner by his side and a forked hazel branch held between his two hands. They were searching for groundwater (a vital but elusive resource) though the expert assured him that dowsing could be applied to any number of things one wished to find: oil, precious metals, gemstones, missing persons, gravesites, and more. For a time, they ventured across acres of the novice's farmland, when suddenly he felt the hazel rod begin to tremble in his hands, the forked end leaning down as though pulled toward the ground by some unseen force. His companion, calm and sure, heaved the shovel from his shoulder and began to dig the well. [1]

This anecdote resonates strongly with me as I survey the body of work I have developed as of late, in which the imperceptible presences that surround us are made visible, tangible, felt. I am continually enchanted by the notion of an *encounter,* a passing or touching between beings and objects — especially those that go unnoticed, or barely so. Immersed in a sea of wireless networks and vibratory energies, we are persistently making contact with *something*, though it is only occasionally that we are made aware of such connections. When this awareness does strike me, by intent or by accident, I find myself filled with curiosity and wonder, captivated by the strangeness of seeing, touching, and feeling these things in a conscious way. Through my

[1] Christopher Bird, *The Divining Hand: The art of searching for water, oil, minerals, and other natural resources or anything lost, missing, or badly needed* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1979), 47.

practice-based research, I have engaged with objects and imaging techniques as tools to conjure up such encounters into a state of emergence. The notion of a medium is central to this work, broadly considered as an agent that serves to link or intervene between two things, enabling something to occur. It is this sense of a medium which encompasses my material choices, as I choose to work predominantly with bronze sculpture and photochemical materials. Both of these media possess heightened sensitivities to touch, time, and light, and I embrace these sensitivities in order to bring what evades me into a visual, tangible, or felt state of awareness. This leads me to identify the second model of mediation that is central to this work: myself as a facilitator, preparing and enacting the conditions for emergence to take place, conjuring visions and sensations into being through an intuitively-led practice of art.

This project is comprised of three components: the studio-based work, including photographs, bronze sculptures, etchings, and other material experiments along the way; the exhibition *When Suddenly the Limb Did Quiver*, in which the artistic work may be activated within a site of reception; and this support paper, through which I hope to sketch an outline of the motivations, methods, and outcomes of the conjuring practice that is my graduate research. The material products of this research include objects and images that are receptive bodies, with the ability to become activated and continually respond to light, time, touch, soundwaves and other factors. By manifesting these interactions in ways that might then be received by a human subject, these objects and images contribute to a variety of knowledge that is felt, intuitive, and nonverbal. As such, this work evades a single, definitive reading. Rather than serving as a conclusive document this paper is propositional in nature, conveying my present perspective on a living body of work. By permitting provisional or undefined results to have presence in this research, I remain receptive to the continually evolving outcomes of my practice, leaving room

for the strange and wondrous products that continue to emerge. Like the novice dowser, I move forward with outstretched arms, sensitive to a sudden beckoning toward that which has yet to materialize.

INTUITION:

To follow an inkling

The conception of any work, for me, begins with an inkling. I am often compelled by encounters with other beings, and other forces, in my everyday life; sometimes these meetings leave me with an unsettled impression of the event, my curiosity stimulated by some strangeness in the encounter — something left unsaid, unknown. These curiosities tend to lie dormant for a time before resurfacing as though through a reflex: an inkling, a call from within to put an idea to work. Such inklings compel me to manifest images and objects through a practice of artmaking, often before I can fully articulate their purpose or my reasons for doing so. The untidy remnants of such murkily formed notions are manifest in the incomplete studies lingering in corners of my studio: a printed image of draped black velvet, pasted to the wall; a tin-can telephone; silhouettes of ambiguous forms cut out of mirrored acrylic sheets. All these things and more are borne from attempts to process, to understand or articulate an inkling through the act of creation. Sometimes they appear not to amount to much, but more often it is through such exercises that I achieve some kind of clarity. Artistic practice enables me to access the state of intuition, which is "at once the product of certain knowledges, the *content* of what is known, as

well as a process, or *way* of knowing."[2] Intuition is not bound to a singular location in the body (such as the brain), but draws variously from sensorial experience, emotional feelings, and unconsciously felt affects; intuition can be understood as a sense in and of itself. I consider the inkling to be a product of intuitive process, a conscious moment when "intuition situates immediacy of insight and response to what summons you."[3]

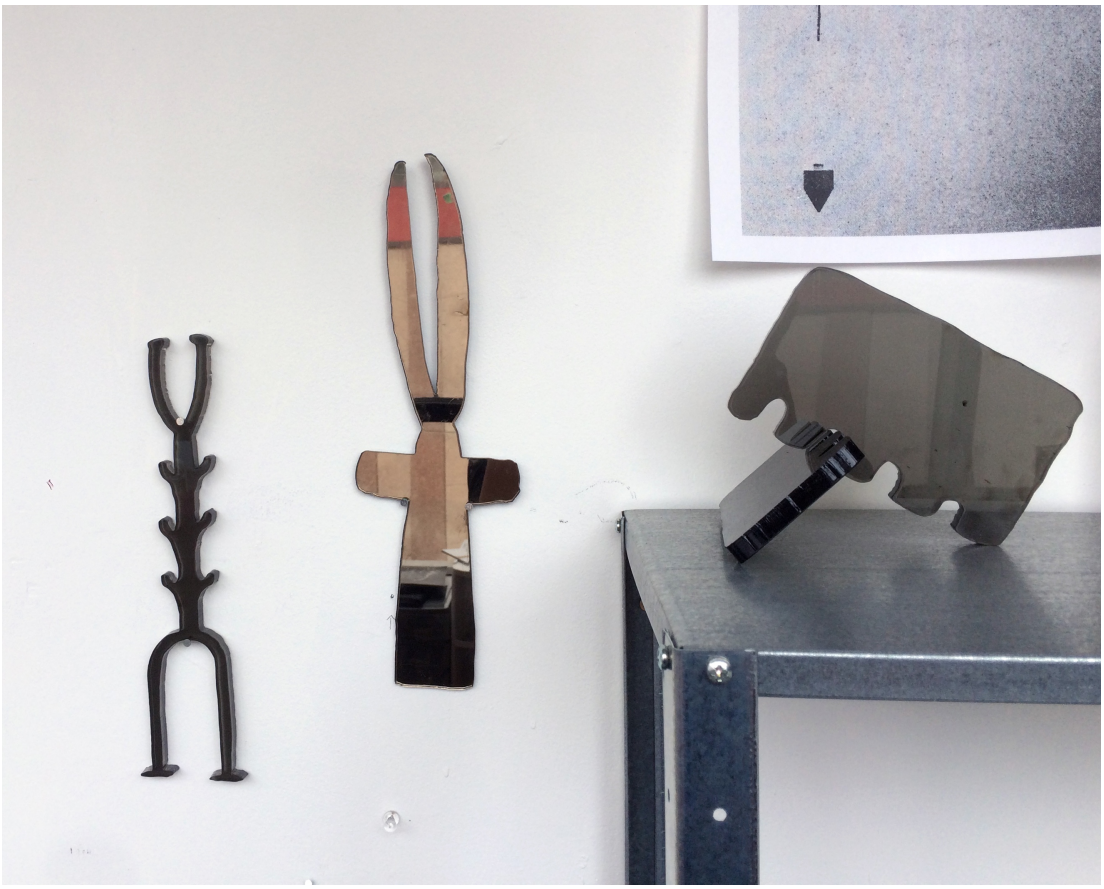

Figure 1. Sonya Filman, *Studio Experiments,* 2017

[2] Jennifer Fisher, "Introduction," in *Technologies of Intuition,* ed. Jennifer Fisher (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2006), 11.
[3] Carolee Schneeman, "On Intuition," in *Technologies of Intuition*, ed. Jennifer Fisher (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2006), 92.

Figure 2. Sonya Filman, *Studio Experiments*, 2017

In conceiving of my studio practice as a method of intuitive knowledge making, I regard the art and writing of American artist Susan Hiller with admiration. Having "never known a mind without a body," Hiller engages in a variety of research developed through embodied processes, synthesizing ideas through corporeal engagement and the act of making.[4] She notes that in order to clearly articulate thoughts about her ideas and work, she must allow these to "focus themselves nonverbally first" through embodied artistic practice.[5] This is especially true of her participatory artworks including *Dream Mapping* (1973), an event in which seven participants slept outdoors for three nights in a meadow in Hampshire, surrounded by "fairy rings." Common to English folklore, these naturally occurring rings of mushrooms are said to result from supernatural origins. The field operated as a site for the participants to dream each night, and in the morning the group would convene to discuss and draw maps of their dreams. A composite map derived from the drawings made by all participants was developed for each night of sleep. In this work, the rationalizing activity of mapping (as usually applied to concrete, physical space) is used to articulate a collective experience of dreaming, something immaterial and interior to the self. As such, *Dream Mapping* serves as an excellent example of the non-hierarchical character of Hiller's intuitive practice. Eschewing definitive concept-to-solution processes, Hiller identifies her practice as "paraconceptual," situated between the conceptual and the paranormal. It is through this lens that she queries seemingly rationalizing treatments — such as cataloguing and museological display strategies — by applying them to subjects that defy rational explanation, including a variety of surreal, supernatural, paranormal, and unconscious experiences. In *Dream*

[4] Susan Hiller, "The Word and the Dream (1993)," in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 794.
[5] Susan Hiller, "The Word and the Dream (1993)," in *Thinking About Art: Conversations with Susan Hiller*, ed. Barbara Einzig (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 122.

Mapping, this paraconceptual approach is visible in the casting of the event as something between a social experiment and an insular performance. In this work, Hiller sets the conditions for a receptive experience (in selecting the site, and setting some loose parameters for the activity) without over determining the form the work would take. *Dream Mapping* remains flexible and collaborative, with the drawings developed from the event remaining open to interpretation and the possibility of ongoing additions.

This work, along with Hiller's practice more broadly, embodies the sensibility I have adopted in relation to my own practice: to cultivate an openness to the unexpected, and to operate as a facilitator for things to emerge, rather than obliging my artmaking to express something definitive. In thinking about this condition of receptivity, I reflect on Hiller's assessment of the unconscious, which "could be whatever it is that temporarily escapes the scrutiny of normal everydayness, or whatever it is that surprises you in some odd way, or disturbs a smooth practice of work, or inserts itself into something unexpectedly."[6] It is from this place of the unconscious that the inkling extends, compelling me toward artistic practice as a way of responding to surprising encounters. It only seems fit to begin this reflection on my own practice with one such instance, wherein an encounter with some strange bodies impressed within me a need to seek knowledge through the act of making.

[6] Susan Hiller, *The Provisional Texture of Reality: Selected Talks and Texts, 1977-2007*, ed. Alexandra M. Kokoli (New York: JRP/Ringier, 2008), 219.

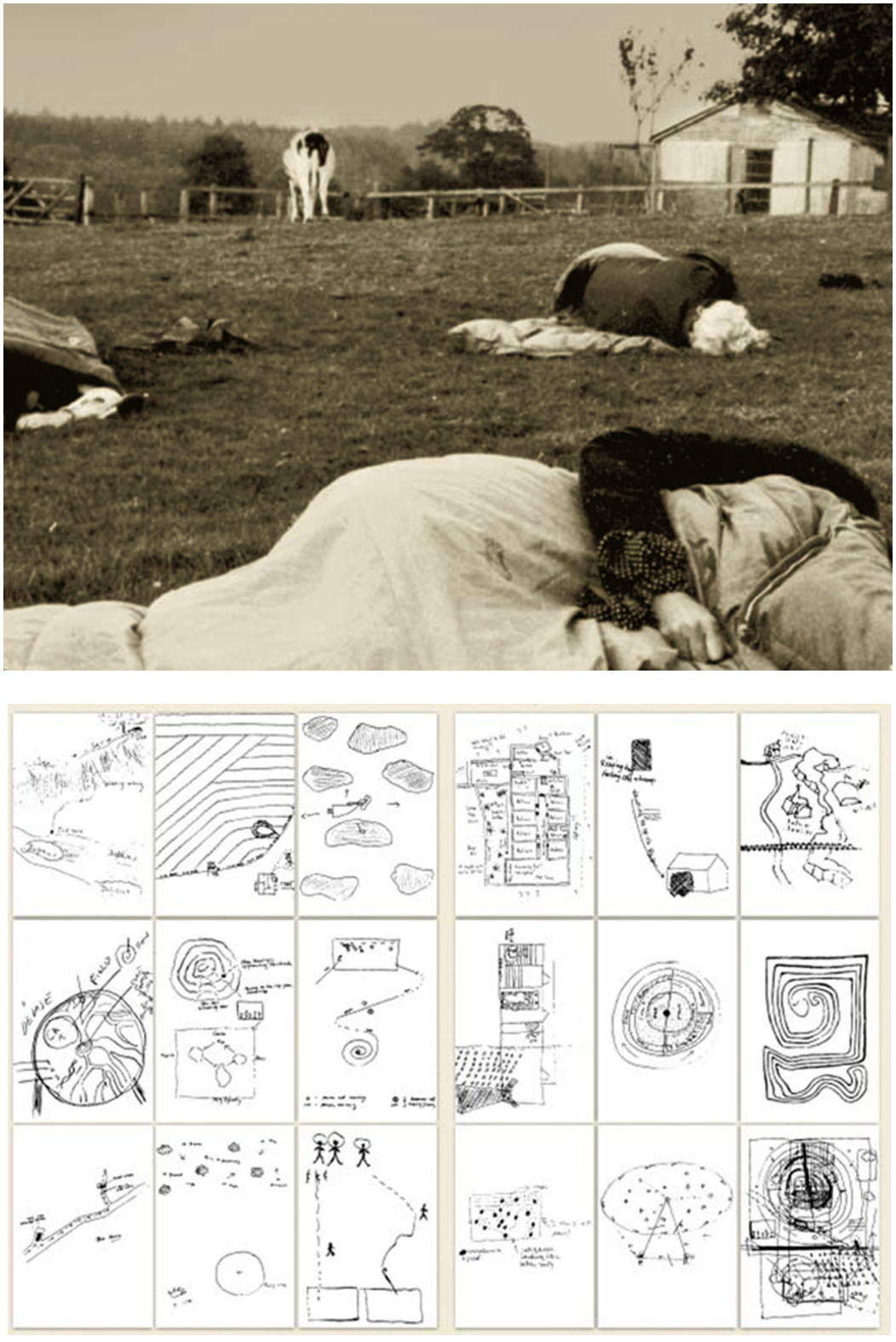

Figure 3. Susan Hiller, *Dream Mapping*, 1973

SENSITIVITY:
Feeling for the next thing

In the summer of 2016, I visited an exhibition entitled *Curiosities* at the Stewart Museum on Île Sainte-Hélène in Montréal. Curated by contemporary artist Jérôme Fortin, and inspired by the historical "cabinet of curiosities", this exhibition featured over 300 objects from the Stewart Museum's collection. The exhibit was arranged around a long hallway lined with small rooms on either side, each filled with an abundance of particular types of objects such as globes, locks and keys, or fantastical maps. While perusing the exhibition, the contents of one particular room caught my attention. Arranged in a large vitrine were about forty individual objects, all seemingly made from wrought or cast iron. The didactic panel told me they were domestic items of varying ages: meat hooks, candlestick holders, tools for tending a fireplace. However, they seemed very strange to me when divorced from their domestic context. These dark forms appeared not as commonplace objects, but as if they were weapons, totems, or instruments of some bizarre quasi-scientific origin. I photographed them, and sketched them in ink when I returned to my studio. Flattening them into two dimensional drawings queered these forms even further. The iron objects had a strangeness to them, such that I was able to imagine them as other than what they were. They recalled to me implements of precision — tools of inquiry that one might use in an attempt to make sense of the strange and incomprehensible.

What was it about these tools? What drew me to these once utilitarian objects which had now acquired a more mysterious, ambiguous status? Echoing Martin Heidegger's Tool Analysis from *Being and Time* (1927), Bill Brown notes that "we begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us," when they fail in their prescribed duties or are displaced

from their mode of use.[7] Recontextualized in the exhibition, the metal forms I observed were changed for me. Though they were surely objects, existing in a human lexicon and having uses in the service of human subjects, there was also, perhaps even more strongly so, a curious thingness to them. Less absolutely functional — as they once were — these forms, while shaped by human hands had become entirely ambiguous, sitting outside my realm of knowledge.

The ambiguity between these categories of "functional object" and seemingly "dysfunctional thing" arise within the cabinet of curiosity, as this space engenders a fanciful viewing experience. The various objects held within the cabinet are situated in a territory of ambiguous purpose, inciting varying degrees of learning, pleasure, wonder and entertainment. Time is likewise compressed, as objects from varying temporalities are gathered and united in a single space. I was charmed by the quirkiness and ambiguity of these humble objects, as their gathering within the cabinet seemed to imbue them with a sense of occult potential. Their functional differences were obscured by the unifying mode of their display, and yet, in them I perceived an evocative power. They appeared, rather, as lively and exceptional entities, evading my ability to identify them with any certainty. This elusive quality, Jane Bennett notes, is a hallmark of things. For, when objects appear as things, they are "not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics."[8] I had until this point viewed such objects as instrumental, made to serve very concretely defined functions for human-oriented use, but these seemed open to an undefined realm of potential. As I looked upon them, these iron forms suggested to me that the way to understand the undefined potentials of such odd entities was to engage with them through an embodied practice; perhaps

[7] Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 28, no. 1 (Autumn 2001): 4.
[8] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 5.

then I might receive some insight into the potential of such vaguely defined things. Returning to my studio, it was this uncertainty as to the liminal status between *object* and *thing* that spurred my own sculptural explorations.

WEIGHTS

With my curiosity stimulated by these iron forms, I knew I wanted to make something reflective of the strange instruments — unhinged from their prescribed functions — that I had encountered in the *Curiosities* exhibition. After a period of learning bronze casting techniques, I decided to create a set of precision weights. Weights used for measurement are tools of exactitude, revealing an empirical and conventional fact that cannot be discerned by the eye alone, and can only be approximated by the hand. The precisely gradated size and uniform shape of a weight set ensures their trustworthiness. My desire to use them in some way in my work was never to replicate or produce a true set of weights, but rather to allude to the idea of a system more generally. Something charmed me about the idea of a seemingly functional system which completely fails to perform its prescribed duty. Without any defined relationship to a scale of measurement, perhaps these weights could help me to articulate, and put to use, a slippage between the class of objects and the realm of things.

Before the weights could be cast in bronze, they had to be formed in wax. I had no specific objective reference point when I began to work. Rather, I sculpted the warm, soft material based on how I remembered the iron weights I had seen in movies, in my ninth-grade science class, and in my grandfather's basement among the tools he kept from his career as a chemist. The tactile process of wax modeling allowed me to engage with a gestural rather than

precise approach in sculpting these weights. I could test out different ideas of how I wanted them to be shaped; if I didn't like a choice I had made, I could heat the wax and re-form the weights until I found a solution that felt right. I gauged my progress not by external measure but by "feel". For example, when I was forming the first weight I tried to make it look somewhat convincing in terms of what I thought it should look like, quickly realizing that this was counter-intuitive. The warm wax would only take the form my own hands and tools could give it. I embraced this material limitation, lumping together the basic shape with my hands, then shaving down the rounded edges with a hot knife. This treatment left the wax models with faceted surfaces, much like crude hand tools that reveal the process of their making through their very form, their sharp edges having been chipped out of a once rounded stone. My intuitively driven process of rendering these wax forms made them idiosyncratic, which accentuated the lack of formal rigour or consistent gradation in size throughout the group. I added small, rounded handles to the top of each form, lending an impression of their possible use.

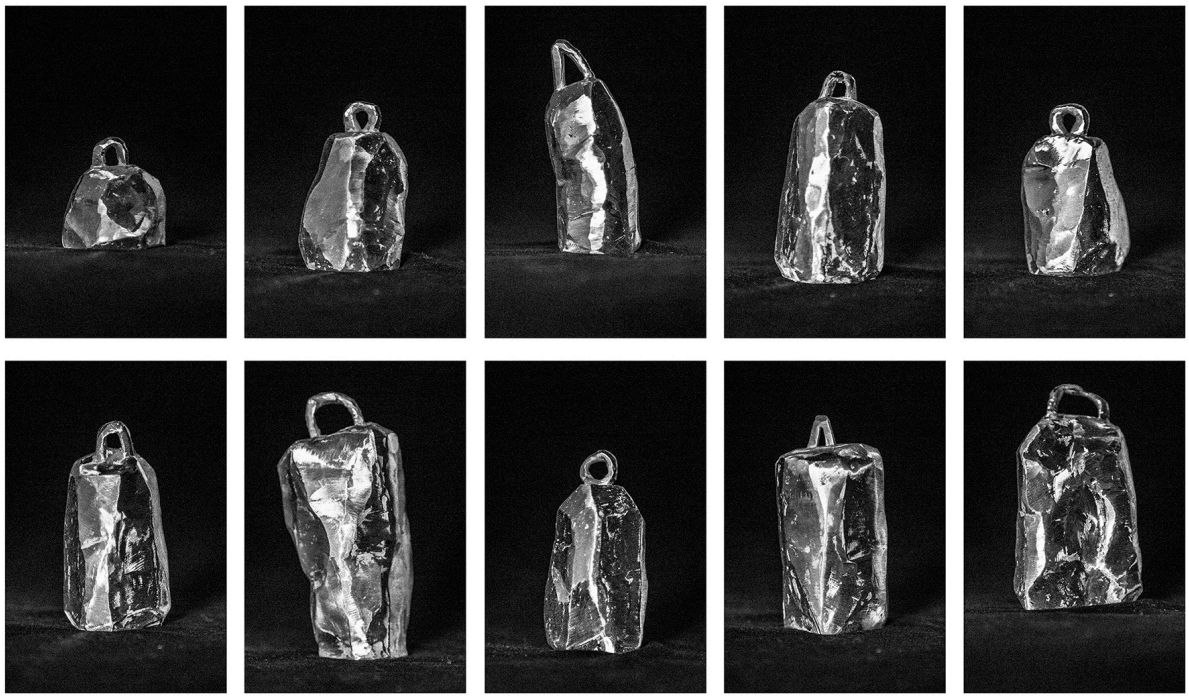

Figure 4. Sonya Filman, *Bronze Weights*, archival inkjet prints, 9 x 7 inches ea., 2017

Looking at the finished forms, I could not help but find them beautiful. Their shimmering, gold-coloured surfaces have all the preciousness of jewels and all the strangeness of the curious objects that inspired them. I took pleasure in holding them in my hand and feeling their solidity, their earthly quality, their absolute tangibility. I call them "weights", because that is how I imagine them, but I'm still not sure it is really what they are. They do not bear the specific functionality that characterizes a weight: none of the fineness or precision, no markers of their absolute relation to a unit of measurement. Without all the empirical functions of a weight, they fall slightly askew from what is familiar to me. Though they failed to adopt the rigorous functions that characterized what I knew to be weights until this point, I wondered if there might be a system or a capability known to these objects that I could not yet detect. Instruments always seemed to me to exceed the category of objects, being built in response to specific,

human-focused needs to observe and experiment. However, as is the case for all objects, they have a life of their own. They do not simply serve to further human inquiry, but often determine its scope, setting the parameters for what may be possibly gleaned through their use. I wondered, if I remained receptive to this possibility, perhaps my odd weights could reveal something other than what I knew to be a measured understanding of the world. I felt a need to activate them, but unsure of what their mode of activity might be, I decided to document the weights in the hope that visualizing them through a photographic image might potentially summon some insight.

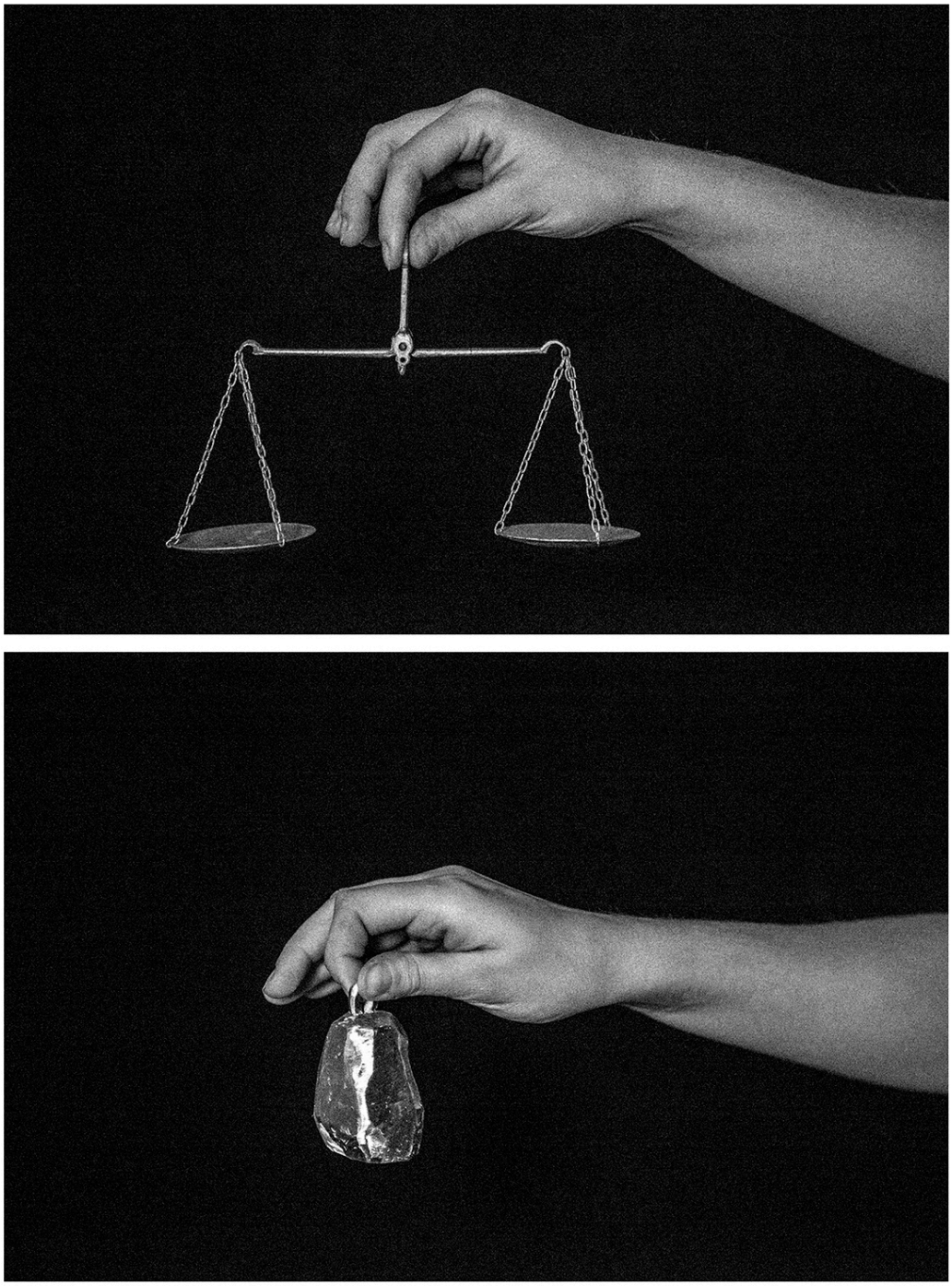

Figure 5. Sonya Filman, *To Balance, To Know,* archival inkjet print, 23 x 17 inches, 2017

EVALUATION

Shrouded away behind black curtains in the corner of a darkened room, I photographed the weights. In front of a black velvet backdrop, they appeared to hover in a vacant space as diffused light illuminated their faceted edges, giving shape to these idiosyncratic sculptural forms. The velvet absorbed all incidental light, enveloping the weights in a seemingly endless field of absolute black.[9] Extending from the right-hand side of the frame, a human arm reached out into the void, holding out the weights for contemplation. In some of the photographs, the hand does not hold the weights directly, but lifts them up on the hook of an antique spring scale, demonstrating the exact weight of the bronze form in a measure of pounds. The demonstrative gesture of the disembodied hand, and the evidentiary quality of showing the weight of the objects themselves, lends strongly to the strangeness of the photographs. The image seems to proclaim "this is how it works" while at the same time denoting the weight's lack of inherent relationship to a unit of measurement. By demonstrating the weight of these objects, the photograph reveals the irrational logic of the weights as they seemingly fail to fulfill their purpose.

This exercise of photographing the weights, structured on a model of careful observation, engaged the ability of a photograph to yield "non-data," observed by Lyle Rexer as a quality of photographic abstraction in which images of objects or events anchored in reality are rendered

[9] French chemist Michel Eugène Chevreul distinguished between Material Black (that always reflects some modicum of white light) and Absolute Black (not a surface, but a hole opening into a dark cavity, from which no light can escape). This distinction is described in Michel Eugène Chevreul, "Note de M. Chevreul sur ses derniers travaux," *Comptes Rendues des séances de l'Académie des sciences* 83, no. 26 (1876): 1265.

ambiguous through photographic imaging.[10] This ambiguity of the weights — their irregular forms, their undefined relationship to a scale of measurement — is emphasized in the photographs, reinforcing their apparent thingness. It struck me that in my process to better understand what I had made and how they might suggest something about scientific analysis, I had only confirmed their essential resistance to conform to an established mode of evaluation. Yet, as I held them in my hands, I could not avoid the fact that they possess a heaviness, a tangibility, and a familiarity that made it impossible for me to call them anything but weights. I questioned myself: could they even be things? They had not failed in their duty as tools of measurement, because they had never borne this responsibility to begin with; they did not fit the model of the once-utilitarian objects — gone astray from their functions to appear as something else — that had shaped my perspective on them up until this point. Reflecting on the problematics of the functional tool/object — broken tool/thing binary, Brown notes that this temporalized thinking "obscures the all-at-onceness, the simultaneity, of the object/thing dialectic and the fact that, all at once, *the thing seems to name the object just as it is, even as it names some thing else.*"[11] Maybe the weights could be both object and thing. Maybe they were neither. It occurred to me that their ambiguity, their oscillation between seeming functionality and persistent abstruseness is what lent them their captivating, mystical quality.

I gathered my small collection of weights and prepared to leave the shooting studio, and as I shepherded them into a box, some of the sturdy bodies struck against one another. Each collision produced a faint, shimmering sound — curiously delicate compared to the blocky composition of the forms. This sonic emanation was a strange and magical trait that I had

[10] Lyle Rexer, *The Edge of Vision: The Rise of Abstraction in Photography* (New York: Aperture, 2009), 18.
[11] Brown, 5.

overlooked until that point. It occurred to me that the weights certainly had revealed something of their character in a wholly unexpected way, in uttering this audible manifestation.

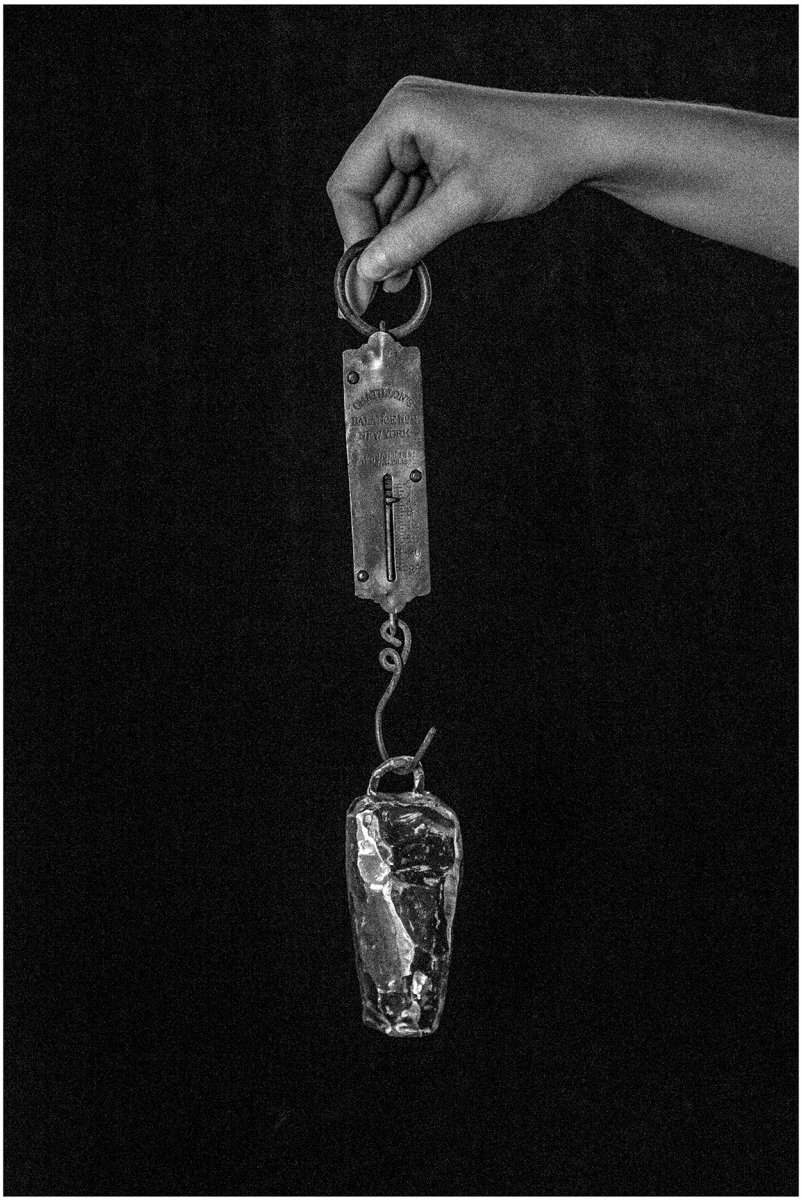

Figure 6. Sonya Filman, *To Weigh, To Know*, archival inkjet print, 22 x 15 inches, 2017

VIBRATION:

In which encounters resonate

Charmed by the shimmering tones produced by the bronze weights when one grazed against another, I felt compelled to engage with this enchanting sonic quality. The sound coming off the weights was certainly there, but quiet, ringing at the volume of a whisper. I felt there was something compelling about their musicality, but what exactly that could be seemed to fall just out of earshot. I resolved to develop a new set of forms, ones that would enable every strike upon their surface to reverberate longer, louder, and clearer. Thinking back again to the spindly, tong-like forms I had sketched from the *Curiosities* exhibition, I began to build a set of tuning fork-like objects.

Modelled in wax like the set of weights before being cast in bronze, the process of making the tuning forks was contemplative, repetitive, and speculative. The assurance of sonic potential compelled me throughout the process of their materialization, though the exact nature of this sonic quality I could not be sure of. Wax has a muted materiality. Its pliability suits a process of forming that is tentative and uncertain, allowing the user to operate on a gut feeling. It is only once the wax has been melted down and its void in a mold filled with bronze that the object takes on its hardened, vibratory character.

Making moulds out of sand feels a bit like archaeology — a process of discovery and exactitude — and at the same time, a gamble. I dig, mix, and sift wet sand into my molds, preparing the matrix through which I hope to command these forked forms into being. I am filled with uncertainty prior to a pour, as there is magic and mystery before the results. You can ask the unruly, molten metal to bend to your whims — to follow the pathways you've carved into

the mold, to flow smoothly along those channels in order to accurately reproduce your hand-formed model. But metals are defiant: they spill and pool in unlikely places, stopping short while coursing through the carved channels of the mold. After spending hours fondly modeling these forms in wax, coming to know their structure and composition so closely, it is exciting to experience the anticipation of breaking open the mould. Sometimes my effort is technically successful; the object emerges as an exact duplicate of its model. Other times, the object is malformed, misshapen, its development stopped short by some uncertain force or technical barrier. For me, these disruptions are welcome. They enhance the idiosyncrasy of the forms on one hand. The forks' final genesis appears almost as some divine scheme — their materialization made possible by some force outside myself.

TUNING FORKS

From the moment they gained solidity, they were vibratory. The forms bore both a heaviness and a resonance, and from the moment I first drew them from the detritus of their broken molds I could feel a hum of energy coursing through their limbs. As I worked over these bronze pieces, cutting supports and grinding the surfaces to a smooth finish, I observed the buzzing lengths of their tines while feeling the same sensation resounding up my forearms. I began to recognize that there was a continuity between the vibratory quality of the metal and the trembling of my own hand, a relationship between the body and these objects that I had not yet accounted for.

Laid across my studio tabletop are a selection of these odd objects. Bearing an uncanny resemblance to a common tuning fork, with an element of strangeness. They are linear, thin

bronze forms consisting of a circular loop at the top of a short handle, leading to a pair of u-shaped tines. Their shape is suggestive of a body, a stylized human form with a head, torso, and a set of long legs. Viewed head on, they appear like a three-dimensional form of hieroglyphic script, or a set of totemic objects. They allude to a language unknown, whether written or spoken; indeed, they do speak! I gingerly lift one of the bronze forms from the tabletop, holding it by the looped handle with one hand, and with the other I swing a bronze wand, striking the tines of the fork. The sound that carries forth from the fork is a heavy, robust clang that tapers quickly to a subtler hum, carrying on for a few moments more.

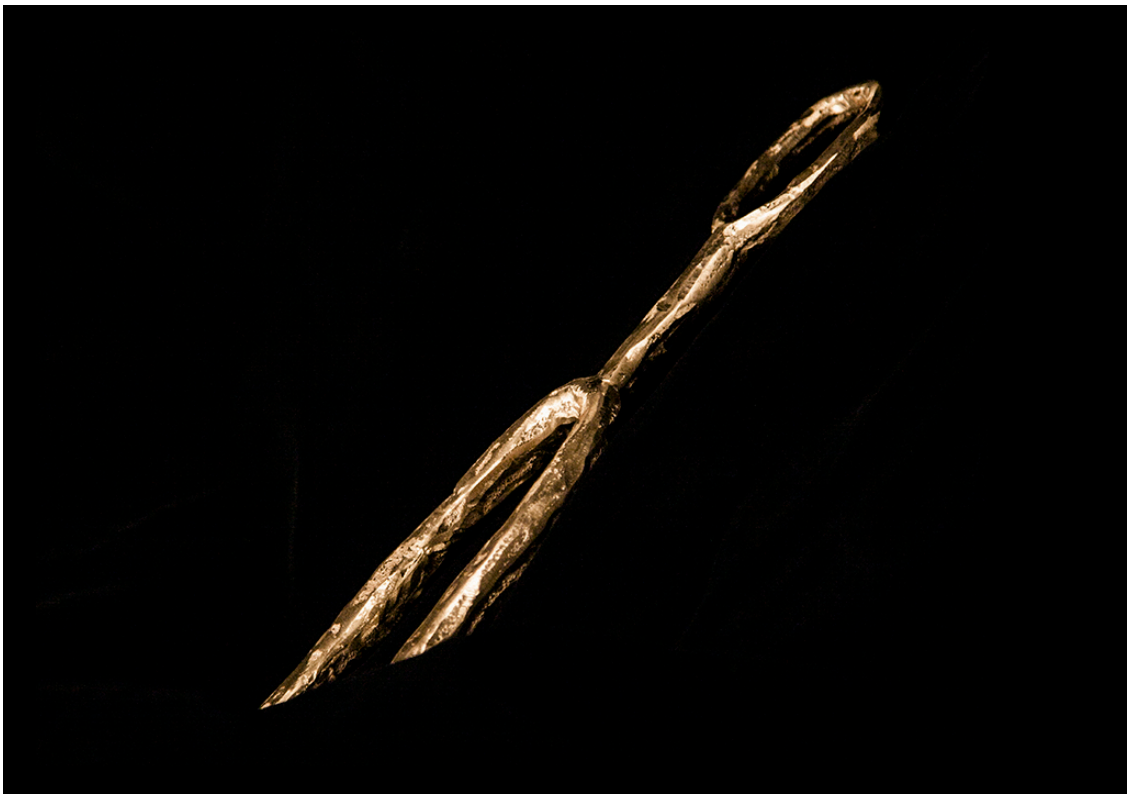

Figure 7. Sonya Filman, *Reclining Fork*, bronze, 6 x 2.5 x 0.5 inches, 2017

SENSORIAL LIMITS, MECHANICAL AIDS

There seems to be something inherently trustworthy about that which can be perceived by the senses. To see, hear, or feel something appears to locate it in the realm of knowability and in reality. However, when the senses are insufficient to perceive of or evaluate a subject, mechanical aids such as measuring instruments are often used to supplement the fallible human sensorium. In pondering the seeming dysfunction of the weights, I thought back on the ludicrous logic played out in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975), wherein a mob of villagers presents a woman to Sir Bedevere the Wise and claims that she is a witch. Sir Bedevere tests this claim through a comedically irrational rationale, based on the premise that witches burn just as wood does, and wood floats in water as a duck does. He seats the woman on a massive set of scales, and deduces that because she (somehow) weighs as much as a duck, then she must indeed be a witch. The scene distorts the idea of a logical investigation — aided by tools of objective measurement — into a grotesque parody of itself, in which the very idea of objective logic is called into question.

The senses are of course subject to deception and uncertainty, especially where matters of the imperceptible are concerned. The brain (and by extension, the human sensorium) is an interpretive machine. Our ability to perceive, and the way in which we do, is contingent on the means by which the body receives and mediates stimuli through specialized sensorial organs.[12] The human sensorium is limited in its abilities; our eyes perform poorly in both darkness and overly bright conditions, our ears fail to pick up on certain frequencies and subtle sounds, or are

[12] Gustav Theodore Fechner, *Elements of Psychophysics,* trans. Helmut Adler, ed. David Howes and Edwin Boring (New York: Holt, Rineheart and Winston, 1966), 10.

deafened by those that are too loud. These are some relatable examples of our physiological limitations, but more are in abundance. It is no wonder, then, that those who seek knowledge have so often turned to mechanical aids to supplement the limitations of our human sensorium. Circumventing the problematic subjectivity of human perception, instruments can often exceed the limited sensory thresholds of the human body, translating what was once imperceptible into a tangible manifestation.[13] For example, though light, sound, and heat all exist on the same vibratory spectrum, the human senses experience these differently based on how the sensory organs and the brain process the varying frequencies of vibration. Though we may not always be conscious of the vibratory foundations of our sensory experiences, they can be demonstrated to exist; embodied feeling alone cannot indicate their presence in reality.[14] As such, the human body has the ability to differentiate between these immaterial things that are essentially the same, and the relationship between vibration and sensation, or audible and inaudible sounds, are understood as different frequencies on a continuum, rather than different things entirely.[15] It is clear that embodied perception operates at a level of sensitivity which can allow us access to a breadth of subtleties and perspectives as the body mediates external stimuli. However, that which is readily perceptible — what is tangible, auditory, odorous — only amounts to a limited perspective when it comes to energies and presences that lie outside our sensorial faculties. The rest of exceeds the range of conscious human perception must be translated or transduced into sensibility. Whether received through the human sensorium or through some external

[13] Shelley Trower, *Senses of Vibration: A History of the Pleasure and Pain of Sound* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 68.
[14] Hermann von Helmholtz, "The Facts of Perception," in *Selected Writings of Hermann von Helmholtz*, ed. Russel Kahl (1878; repr., Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), 371.
[15] Trower, 41.

mechanism, the experience of immaterial things always takes place through a process of mediation.

HEARING / SINGING

The tuning forks permit me to experience a sustained encounter, as I feel the prolonged vibrations of the tines as they travelled through my fingers, my hands, my arms. Born from handmade models, the final products are highly idiosyncratic, like the weights that preceded them; their tines are of varying thicknesses and lengths. Indeed, some are lopsided, with one leg longer than the other. This physical difference lends each one a distinct voice; the tones emanating from each vibratory body are noticeably different, reinforcing the sense of individuality in each one. As I strike the tines of each piece — my mode of communing with these instruments — I hear and feel their vibratory response.

The body is sensitive to forms of vibratory energy, and "simultaneously receiving vibrations and radiating outwards."[16] Paralleling my own activity as a creator and enactor of these sonic explorations, the forks as simultaneously receptive and creative. A medium of reception — whether a mechanical instrument, the human ear, or the nerves in the body — all "contribute [their] own 'noise' in the automatic, unconscious process of sense-making."[17] In thinking about such a device parallel to the body, it appears to me that an instrument that both responds to and emits sound presents an opportunity to engage productively with both the felt state of contact

[16] Ibid, 48.
[17] Ibid.

with sonic phenomena, as well as to remain receptive to the unfelt, the vibratory energy that encircles us always, going unnoticed, or else perceived as forms of light or heat.

I am still trying to articulate this relationship, but by working through these tuning fork-like things I find myself coming closer to a point of understanding. There is something in the vibratory potential of the object that alludes to an active body, whether presently manipulating the object or not. Sometimes when I lift a fork from my tabletop I feel the light hum of vibratory energy coursing through the tines. As the subtle drone subsides, I cannot help but feel that I've interrupted a communion between the tuning forks and something else that I do not yet understand.

TRANSMISSION:
Receiving a signal

In July of 2017, I made a pilgrimage to St. John's, Newfoundland. My purpose was to make work, specifically in relation to what is, for me, a hallowed site: Signal Hill. This is the place where the first transatlantic wireless signal was received, opening the gates to an onslaught of disembodied clicks, taps, echoes and voices that would change the nature of communication forever. In the first week I spent in Newfoundland, I paid visits to the Cabot Tower on Signal Hill and the Admiralty House Communications Museum in nearby Mount Pearl. Both spaces exhibit a variety of photographic documents and historical instruments, relics of the telegraphic age. These mechanical devices are sparingly described in didactic signage; I understand little of how they operate, but instead see that they share a common purpose. They are all conduits of a sort, apparatuses that capture, channel, process, and transform wireless signals drifting through the ether, making them available to human ears. As I passed through the telegraphy exhibit in the Cabot Tower, I pressed my ear against the mock receiver through which a recording mimicking the first transatlantic signal played. There was static, a persistent crackling spattered with pops and snaps. Out of that white noise, I heard the *tap – tap – tap* of Morse code, the three sequential beeps indicating the letter *S*. Were the code not repeated so persistently, I could have mistaken it as part of the hissing in the background. It struck me that this coded message was not so distinct as it might seem from the other signals coursing through the ether — they did not sound so different, anyway. The code was decipherable, insofar as it bore an agreed upon, predetermined relationship to a verbal expression — the letter *S* — used in this case to gauge the success of the wireless telegraph in conveying a human-to-human message. But what of the rest,

the peripheral babel channeled through the receiver? I thought it could not be entirely inconsequential, but unhinged from a human lexicon, it had been relegated to the background.

I have since read an account that struck me as uncannily similar to my experience in the Cabot Tower. It seems the novelty of such ethereal white noise was not lost on those who were first to hear it — specifically Thomas A. Watson, an assistant to Alexander Graham Bell during his invention of the telephone in 1876. At the end of the working day, Watson would linger alone for hours, his eager ear pressed against the telephone receiver. With only one telephone line available, and no human voice on the other end, Watson was left to listen to the mysterious whistles, clicks, and rumbles of natural radio waves. There was nothing to transcribe, no coded message to interpret. Watson was simply enchanted by the "many strange noises in the telephone and speculating as to their cause."[18] It occurred to me that telephonic technology had the capacity not only to bring humans into contact with each other, but engendered encounters with the mysterious energies that lingered in between, causing this audible interference. Built to translate language into signal and back again, the truly compelling products of this technology were the detectable — but as yet illegible — emissions from the receiver.

[18] Thomas A. Watson, *Exploring Life: The Autobiography of Thomas A. Watson* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1926), 105.

Figure 8. Sonya Filman, *Conduit #1*, etching, 30 x 22 inches, 2017

CONDUITS / AUTOMATIC DRAWING

Sitting by the window of my St. John's studio, looking with a clear view toward Signal Hill, I began to draw. With a pencil in hand, I sketched loosely while musing on the impressions I had gained through my encounters with the telegraphic devices: the blocky, metallic forms of the various appliances; the still mysterious nature of how these devices managed to transform sound into signal; and that the emissions of a mechanical system built to deliver intelligible, human communications also managed to channel the obscure murmurs of something else. The drawings that came about during this thinking process appeared instinctively. They were a visual interpretation of the impressions I had been reflecting on, a way of making sense of it all.

I translated these sketches into etchings, inscribing their strange forms onto copper plates. The images are highly abstract. Dark, blocky figures hover on the spaceless image plane, their stylized shapes reading like an elliptical form with the bottom third cut off akin to stylized tombstones. Passing through these bodies — by way of open portals and wiry channels — is some viscous or ethereal matter, variously rendered in fine lines, rich black aquatints and barely perceptible open biting. These images conveyed, for me, the strange and indistinct utterances of the telephone and telegraph receiver, and the transductive quality of this technology, in its ability to convert one kind of energy or matter (such as the sound of the human voice, or the crackle of electromagnetic energy) into another audible expression. Though these emissions remained mysterious, they compelled me to acknowledge my proximity to, and interaction with, the imperceptible and intangible presences that so often evade us.

The practice of drawing — and of making more generally — for me is an intuitive way of articulating such subjects, which evade translation into a verbal language. This approach to

drawing resembles a practice of automatic writing, in which my own body serves to receive these ambiguous signals, impulsively articulating them in a visual expression. This kind of intuitive, receptive practice is employed by Susan Hiller in her automatic writing pieces, including *Sisters of Menon* (1972-79). This body of work marked her first experience with automatic writing, which she originally utilized as a drawing exercise.[19] During her first experience with the technique, Hiller says she "picked up a pencil and began to make random marks on a blank sheet of drawing paper. At first the marks formed what looked like [indecipherable] childish letters… then coherent words began to appear."[20] Though some of her spontaneous scribbling became legible — forming texts which she transcribed as part of the work — many of the scrawled lines appeared as "crypto-linguistic, calligraphic signs."[21] I perceive a similar effect occurring in my *Conduit* prints, a quality of suggestive or symbolic legibility enmeshed in the larger abstraction of the work. I feel this lends an openness to the project. I remain receptive to further discovery, never claiming a definitive interpretation of the ambiguous signals that reached toward me through the telephone receiver. Not a document of the instruments I had observed on Signal Hill, nor a wholly imaginative abstraction, these works occupy an intuitive in-between; the *Conduits* are a product of what is known to me — by way of visual and audible encounters — and a way of knowing, in which I enact a practice of artmaking as a means to sustain these encounters. Borne from this process of automatic drawing, these images suggesting transitory signals and ill-defined presences seemed to emerge from the paper, built up out of the slow additions of pencil marks, the various tones of grey gradually taking legible form. I observed a

[19] Rebecca Dimling Cochran, *Susan Hiller* (Liverpool: Tate Gallery, 1996), 64.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

similar process of emergence when working in the photographic darkroom, where images emerged out of a similarly mystical process, rising into visibility in response to interactions between light, time, and chemistry.

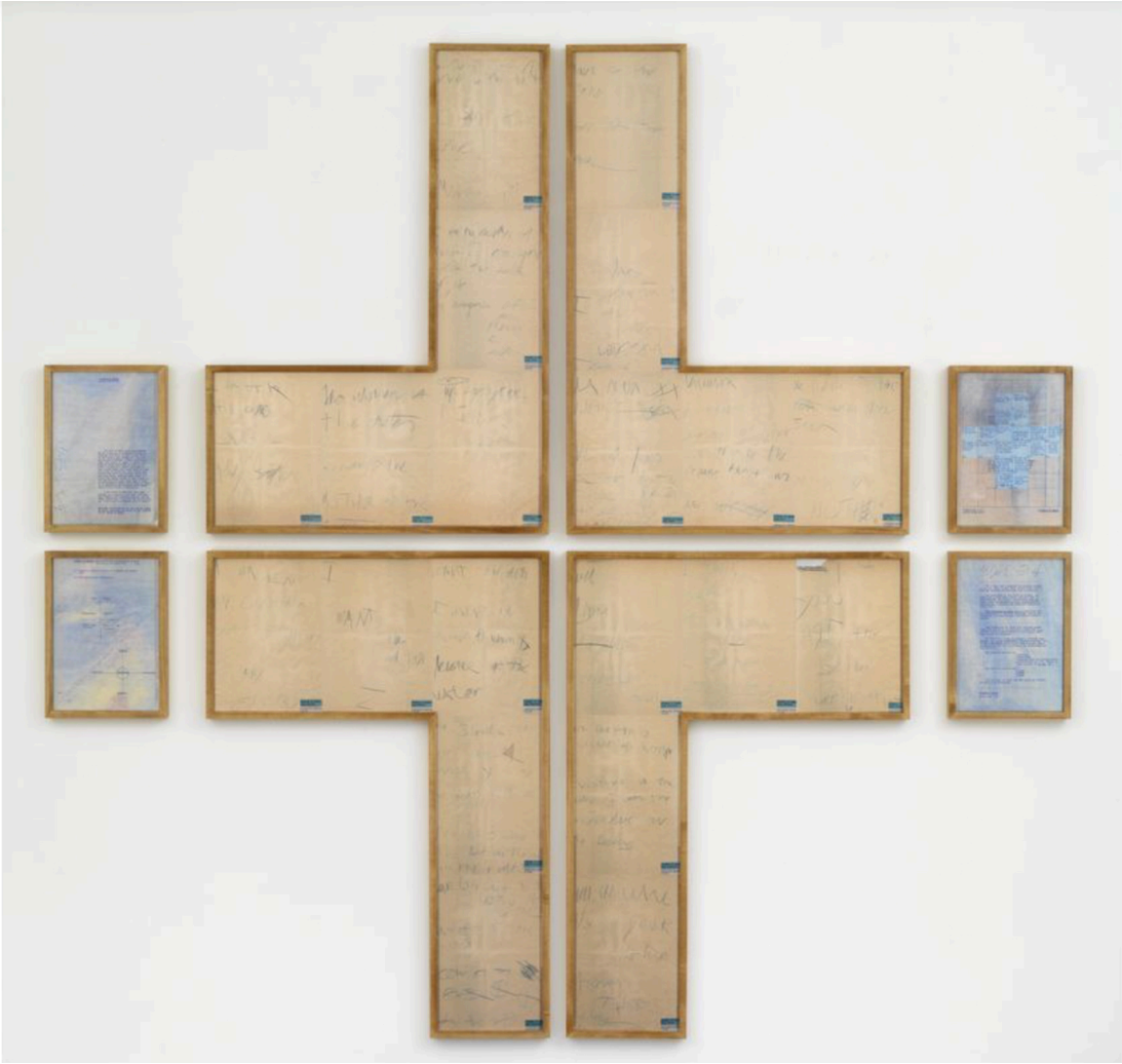

Figure 9. Susan Hiller, *Sisters of Menon,* 1972-1979

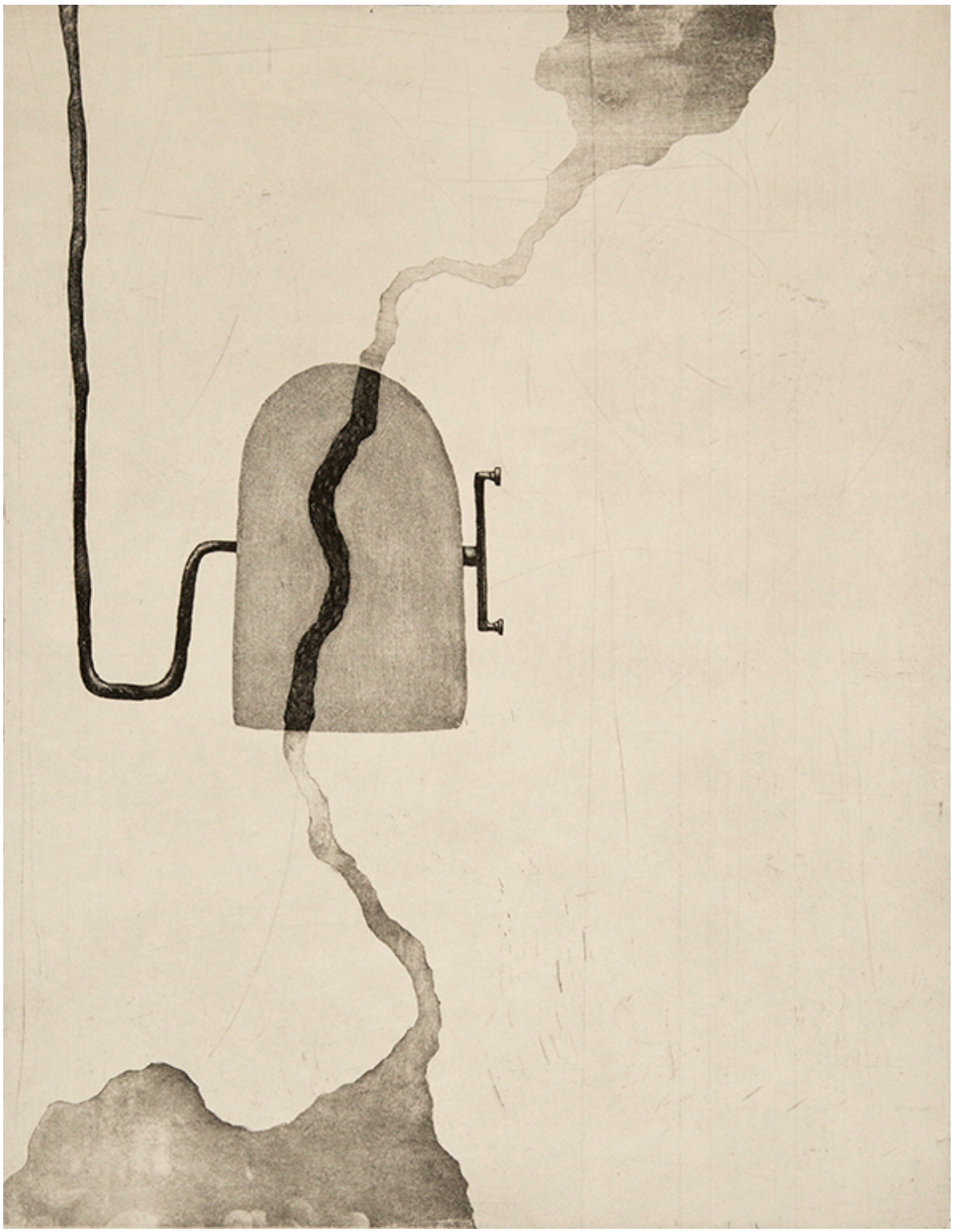

Figure 10. Sonya Filman, *Conduit #2*, etching, 30 x 22 inches, 2017

EMERGENCE:
Visions of presence and absence

There is a photograph made by American artist Sally Mann which I continue to find seductive beyond measure. The photograph depicts a corpse. The body is lying face down on the ground, and the earth around it is littered with drying leaves. The image is cropped close to the face of the subject, and from the right side of the frame, a mound of fleshy shoulder rolls in. The face is turned toward the camera to reveal the hollowed caverns of what once were a nose, a mouth, and two eyes. A crop of smooth, white hair drifting across the brow lends a feeling of softness to those leathery contours. A hazy grey mist enshrouds the face like a veil. Seeping from the vacant sockets, and settling thick around where the mouth meets the earth, this haze evokes the feeling of a soul departed, making its slow exit from the body it once occupied.

The beauty and the curse of my devotion to Mann's practice is that I've become so familiar with her processes of working. *What Remains: The Life and Work of Sally Mann* (2005) — a documentary film on Mann's career — illustrates her period of work at an anthropological research facility in Virginia. There she gained access to cadavers studied over many months in an effort to understand processes of bodily decay under particular conditions. As she speaks about this body of work, she describes the experience of making my favourite photograph, and reveals the source of the mysterious veil: a colony of maggots, writhing across the surface of the face and burrowing into the remaining flesh. Over the course of a prolonged exposure, the continual movement of these humble larvae produced the impression of an incorporeal presence. I call this knowledge a curse, because the secret to the mystique of this photograph is revealed. However, it

is this same knowledge that has stimulated the way that I approach working with the medium, and conditions, of photography.

Figure 11. Sally Mann, *Untitled WR Pa 53* from the series *What Remains*, 2001

Mann's photograph stands in my mind as an apt illustration of the key elements integral to all photographic images: the movement of light over a period of time, impressed on the chemically sensitive surface of a photographic plate. Photography as a medium can appear so scientific, not only given its relationship to documentation, but also in the process of image-making. The action of making a photograph is a knowing manipulation of the amount of light

allowed into the camera, a decision made about how fast to close the shutter, how much action to permit to pass before the lens. Despite this calculating quality inherent to the making of a photograph, the seduction of photographic media, for me, lies in the ambiguities and oddities that arise when these inherent elements (time, light, movement) take over the image according to their own imperatives. This is especially apparent in cameraless photographic processes, where the controls over exposure are loosened, and the qualities of objects laid upon the paper exert their own authority over the image making process. Reflecting on Mann's own manipulation of light, movement, and time to conjure the sense of an immaterial presence, I felt myself compelled toward photographic media as a way to make contact with — and make visible — not a subject, but an encounter. I would never call myself a photographer per se, having little inclination to tote an apparatus along with me, and even less to frame my world through a rectangular viewfinder. I am, however, a wholehearted devotee to the alchemical playground of the darkroom. It is here, under the dim orange glow of a safelight, steeping in the briny aroma of photographic chemistry, that I commune with light and time, suffusing their presence and their passage into the surfaces of photographic papers.

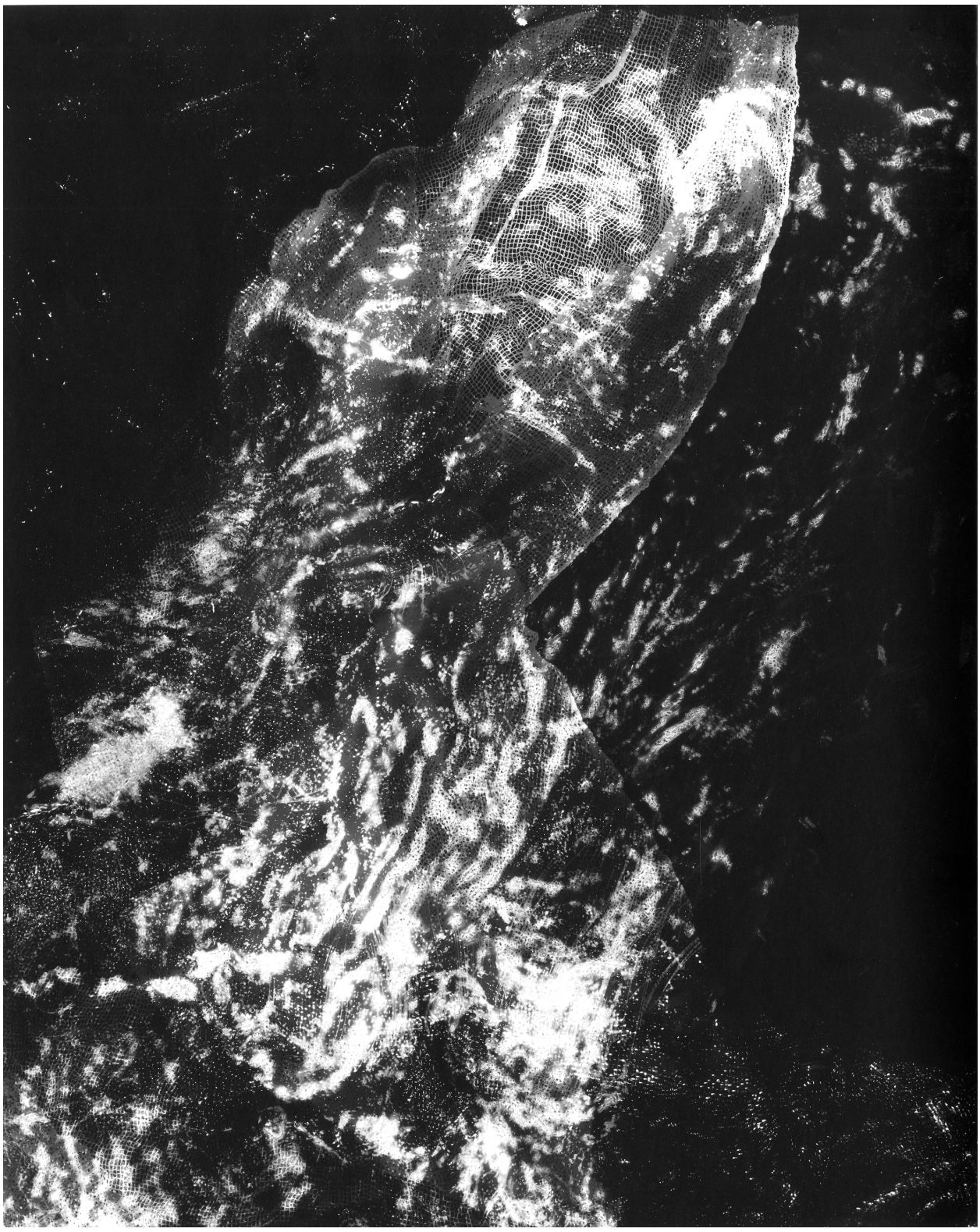

Figure 12. Sonya Filman, *Untitled Photogram #7*, photogram, 10 x 8 inches, 2016

PHOTOGRAMS: PRESENCE / ABSENCE

Through the murky bath of developer, I am confronted by a gauzy form as it emerges from the surface of the paper. This is a vision unknown to me, not a replication of my own view when placing an assortment of cloth and chemicals under the photographic enlarger. Rather, it is a trace of a presence, an interaction between some *thing* and the chemically sensitive surface. Fine outlines of wrinkled transparent bodies, the folded, fibrous mesh of loose-woven textiles, all appear as layered veils of white and grey, hovering in a black void. Each one is a surprise, a composition by happenstance, though I was not shrouded in absolute darkness. The warm glow of the darkroom's safelights allowed me some measure of awareness about where I was placing the tarlatan on the surface of the paper, but the photogram by nature is unfriendly to a prescribed compositional logic. Hinging on direct contact between an object and the sensitive surface of the paper, the photogram produces an image without the perspectival biases of the camera or lens, or of the human vision on which these are modelled.[22] As such, my ability to make calculated decisions was limited, and the resulting compositions were derived to a degree from chance.

In the light of day, I am better able to see what has emerged from these experiments. The images have a liquid quality, transparent and twisting, rife with losses of focus that lend them a sense of emergence, transformation, a coming or going. As Geoffrey Batchen describes of photographs made without a camera, my photograms at once stressed the physical directness inherent in the process of their making — the moment of physical and chemical interaction between the object, the sensitive paper, and light — while offering an "immaterial style of image,

[22] William C. Wees, *Light Moving in Time: Studies in the Visual Aesthetics of Avant-Garde Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 54.

translucent and abstract in form and impossible to identify with the world they inhabit."[23] Digressing from the perspective of my own human vision, the billowing, translucent forms slipping along the surface of the image embodied this type of vision defined by Lyle Rexer as "novel seeing," characterized by a machine-aided vision free of representational qualities, presenting "a vision of things that have not yet been seen… [which] offers objects defined by their concrete, material existence, referring to nothing outside of themselves."[24] The particular (im)materiality of my photograms — their gauzy contents wavering between visibility and invisibility, presence and absence — imparted a distinctly phantasmatic quality, a strangeness in the lingering visual trace of presence and absence at once. Though this is essentially the case for all photographic images, the point appears distinctly heightened for me where the interaction between photographic chemistry and light produces not an illustration of what had been there, but rather an imprint of a presence now departed. This kind of engagement with the evocative potential of photosensitive chemistry was thoughtfully deployed by Toronto-based artist Nadia Belerique in her 2014 exhibition *Have You Seen This Man* at the Daniel Faria Gallery in Toronto. Central to her installation, an off-white rug spread across the center of the gallery space was imprinted with the traces of boots, sneakers, and high-heeled shoes, whose soles had been dipped in a light sensitive emulsion before being tracked across the space. These traces of bodies passing through the room is revealed over time, as the emulsion emerges and darkens with exposure to light. On the periphery of the rug, steel sculptures modelled after human-scale cardboard cutouts linger — fixed and atemporal. This contrast between the shifting state of the

[23] Geoffrey Batchen, *Emanations: The Art of the Cameraless Photograph* (New York: DelMonico Books-Prestel, 2016), 22.
[24] Rexer, 11.

photochemical residue, and the static existence of these quasi-figurative structures, alludes to a past event to which we are not privy, whose only witnesses are the chemically based prints. In Belerique's work these chemical tracks allude not to a subject situated before the camera or the eye, but to a presence within the space. The residue of this fleeting presence is captured, if only for a brief time, as the chemical traces of an absent body slowly shift and fade.

Figure 13. Nadia Belerique, *Have You Seen This Man,* 2014

Figure 14. Nadia Belerique, *Have You Seen This Man* (detail), 2014

A COLLABORATION WITH THE EPHEMERAL

Gauzy veils drift across the picture plane, through my field of vision. Layered and entwined, their slow passage along the surface of the photographic paper is traced in shades of grey. Smears and pools of pure white tell of various interactions taken place between those loose fibres and the emulsion, that chemical skin stretching across the dimpled surface of the paper. Pulled from the bath too soon, underdeveloped, unfixed, and left hanging in the warm light of a studio window, the image has only just been born. Those bright whites turn in the sunlight like a fresh bruise, wavering between shades of blue and purple before healing to a cool, dusty pink after a few weeks. The change is barely perceptible to anyone else, but as I look upon them day after day I can see them shifting. Months on, they've darkened to shades of grey and mauve. The fine details of the gauzy fibres have faded into misty fields. I continue to think about the birth of these pictures — a trace of a momentary interaction between an object and a surface. The touching of those two entities burned into the flesh of one, while the other escapes unscathed. The photogram holds onto this trace of those touching bodies, but slowly that too drifts out of sight once more, and my eyes turn to gaze upon the vacancies left in their wake. In the darkroom, I can adjust both light and time; I can manipulate exposure, I can add filters to increase contrast, I can play fast and loose with chemical development processes. Yet, I can only control so much. The photogram as a medium operates to produce imagery that is unfamiliar to a human viewpoint. Each image visualizes an experience — an interaction — that I cannot envision or fully predict. And so, I am only a participant, one part of the ensemble in this venture toward conjuring images of presence and passage.

Figure 15. Sonya Filman, *Untitled Photogram #8*, photogram, 10 x 8 inches, 2017

CLAIRVOYANCE:

Where the hidden may be brought out to emergence

In the Gales Gallery at York University, the site of my thesis exhibition *When Suddenly the Limb Did Quiver*, darkness is an overwhelming condition. The lights are dimmed considerably, and sparsely placed. The beam of each flood lamp is softened, narrowed, and warmed through a combination of cinematic lighting gels. Dark, russet red paint coats three out of the four walls, heightening the condition of darkness by reducing the spread of ambient light throughout the space. Where the dim light falls over hung prints and photograms, the images therein are warmed by the soft glow, appearing to emerge from the shadows.

Along the first red wall to the left of the doorway, a narrow ledge holds the bronze weights, arranged from smallest to largest, leading one's gaze toward ten printed photographs: each image features one of the weights resting on a black backdrop, with high-contrast lighting that emphasizes the faceted surfaces of the bronze forms. The *Conduit* prints occupy the wall opposite the doorway, hanging close together while the periphery is engulfed in shadow. Situated to the right of the *Conduit* prints is a single, vertically-oriented photogram. On the adjacent white wall, two more photograms hang horizontally, large enough that one has to either move across their length, or step back considerably in order to scan their expansive surfaces. The photographic paper presents a vast, dark field within which gauzy forms emerge from and fade back into the darkness, their contours clouded as they appear to drift across the abyss. Along the edges of the photograms, shadows of the curling paper are traced in shades of grey, blue, pink, and red, charting the contracting movement of the surface throughout the photographic exposure. The physicality of the paper remains visible in the way that the photograms are hung,

hovering a few centimeters from the wall with their curling edges reaching out into space. The single light directed at each photogram enhances this sculptural quality, casting the shadows of these curves across the paper and along the wall, heightening the interplay between the shadowy forms within the image, and the impression of the print itself coming into visibility within the darkened room. A fourth photogram is laid out on the floor, projecting from the bottom-right corner of the white wall toward the centre of the room. The curling paper, attempting to enfold itself from either end, strains against a singular bronze weight that holds down the farthest edge of the photogram. Sticking out from the wall above this print is a reaching, wooden stick; hanging from the end of the limb by black leather cords are three bronze pendulums.

In the centre of the gallery, a narrow table stands. Its length requires movement to view it fully. The structure begs for one to come close and to walk alongside the objects laid out upon its surface. The tuning fork-like objects rest on the tabletop, carefully arranged alongside one another in the manner of a taxonomical display. The surface of the table is lined with black velvet, absorbing the soft light that falls over the bronze objects such that they appear almost to hover over an open void when viewed at a certain angle. When seen closely, the soft fabric and the raised edge of the tabletop appear to cradle the tuning forks, imbuing the shimmering, golden surfaces with a sense of preciousness. Laid out perhaps for contemplation, to be looked upon with reverence, they are seductive in their beauty and beckon one to reach out and touch them; their vibratory potential hangs latent in the air, waiting to be engaged.

In the vast, darkened gallery one's sense of corporeality is heightened; a body passing through the space drifts between lighted spots and darkened voids, shadowy corners and tenebrous images. Darkness commands a presence in relation to the body; it envelops us, enshrouds us, disorients us. An embodied experience of darkness is one of disjoined awareness; as

one passes through dark space, we contend with a heightened awareness of our own awkward bodies, remaining on edge for unexpected interlopers that might impede our passage through space, be they objects or other beings.

The lighting gels, the dark paint, and the curtain over the glass door are all part of a conscious arrangement of mood within the gallery space. What these spatial devices produce is less an absence of light than a condition of artificial darkness. Noam Elcott postulates artificial darkness as being a technology of visibility and invisibility, in which distinct apparatuses (such as architectures, the reflectivity of paints, and the sensitivity of the human eye to specific light spectra) operate in tandem to produce conditions of darkness or invisibility.[25] Embedded within the conditions of the gallery environment, black materials such as the pearlescent, textural photographic appear as absolutely dark voids. As such, the darkened conditions of the space permit the figures within these images to be perceived as emerging from overwhelming darkness — becoming visible as opposed to being illuminated. The dim light of the gallery serves not to reveal the works in their totality, in their present state of being, but to make apparent their quality of emergence and transformation, coming out of a space beyond human perceptibility. Even the apparently static photographs of the weights on their black backgrounds are augmented within this darkened space, as the sharp distinction between the high whites on their faceted surfaces and the depth of space in which they are situated highlights the lack of what is visible in the image, hinting that there is more to them than meets the eye. The conditions of darkness surrounding the presentation of this work serves to embody the feeling of how the work comes into being, engendering an embodied viewing experience. The gallery serves as a creative space,

[25] Noam M. Elcott, *Artificial Darkness: An Obscure History of Modern Art and Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 11.

an extension of the studio, in which the *dispositif* of artificial darkness serves to provoke the conditions of receptive viewership that allow the manifestations of this artistic practice to emerge.

SUMMATION

The processes and the body of work described in this support paper have allowed me to access a state of receptivity: to see, touch, and feel a breadth of experience that had eluded my perceptive abilities until this point. As I continue to work, enacting conditions and devices through which I might conjure imperceptible beings into a state of emergence, I find myself continually enchanted by the strange apparitions borne into my reach. To claim this paper, or the accompanying exhibition, as a conclusion would be an inauthentic gesture given the provisional quality of the work and its living character. This paper is not meant to mark the tidy ending of a completed body of work, nor to articulate the precise outcomes of this practice-based research; such a claim would presume this work had already revealed all that it could, which I do not believe to be the case. Instead, this support paper is an extension of the practice of making that it describes, likewise materialized through an effort to make sensible that which can never be entirely captured.

Returning to the darkroom after several months, I set about preparing the space for a day of printing. Entering the pitch-black chamber, I turn on the safelight, suffusing the room with a dim yellow glow. My eyes soon adjust, allowing me to organize the materials I need: trays, chemistry, and a roll of photographic paper. I unfurl the roll of paper across the whole floor, roughly cut away a long strip with a retractable knife, and drag this unwieldly sheet toward the enlarger. There, I spread out the sheet and dial in the time, aperture, and contrast settings for my first exposure; I have an idea of which settings will allow me to produce an image based on previous tests, but there are new variables at play today (the sheer size of the paper, a different

enlarger, and an unfamiliar developing process). I am taking a bit of a gamble, but I am open to the unexpected.

I make three separate exposures — tracing stages of movement as my subject shifts across the sensitive surface of the paper — before rolling up the sheet and submerging it into the developer. I fumble with the awkward roll, unfurling small sections within the shallow, too-narrow tray of chemistry, coaxing the murky liquid across the surface of the paper with my gloved hand. Holding my breath in anticipation, I gently rock the tray back and forth in an effort to lure the image out of hiding. Slowly the surface of the paper starts to turn grey, and I stop agitating the bath, my eyes scanning the bottom of the tray for the trace of an emerging figure. I watch, and I wait…

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archey, Karen, Florence Derieux, and Krist Gruijthuisen, eds. *Lisa Oppenheim: Works 2003-2013.* Berlin: Sternberg, 2014.

Batchen, Geoffrey. "Ectoplasm: Photography in the Digital Age." In *Over Exposed: Essays on Contemporary Photography,* edited by Carol Squiers, 9-23. New York: The New Press, 1999.

—. *Emanations: The Art of the Cameraless Photograph.* New York: DelMonico Books-Prestel, 2016.

Beer, Gillian. "'Authentic Tidings of Invisible Things': Vision and the Invisible in the Later Nineteenth Century." In *Vision in Context: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Sight,* edited by Teresa Brennan and Martin Jay, 85-98. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Beshty, Walead. "Abstracting Photography." In *Words Without Pictures,* edited by Alex Klein, 292-315. Los Angeles: Wallis Annenberg Photography Department, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2009.

Bird, Christopher. *The Divining Hand: The art of searching for water, oil, minerals, and other natural resources or anything lost, missing, or badly needed.* New York: E.P. Dutton, 1979.

Bishop, Claire. *Installation Art: A Critical History.* New York: Routledge, 2005.

Brown, Bill. "Thing Theory." *Critical Inquiry,* vol. 28, no. 1 (Autumn 2001): 1-22.

Cantor, Steven, dir. *What Remains: The Life and Work of Sally Mann.* 2005; New York, NY: Stick Figure Productions, 2006. DVD.

Chéroux, Clément. *The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.

Cotton, Charlotte. *Photography is Magic.* New York: Aperture Foundation, 2015.

Derrida, Jacques and Bernard Steigler. *Echographies of Television.* Translated by Jennifer Bajorek. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2002.

Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the new international.* Translated by Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Elcott, Noam M. *Artificial Darkness: An Obscure History of Modern Art and Media.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Fechner, Gustav. *Elements of Psychophysics*. Translated by Helmut Adler, edited by David Howes and Edwin Boring. New York: Holt, Rineheart and Winston, 1966.

Fisher, Jennifer. "Introduction." In *Technologies of Intuition.* Edited by Jennifer Fisher, 10-27. Toronto: YYZ Books, 2006.

Fort, Charles. *The Book of the Damned.* New York: Garland, 1975.

Fraenkel, Jeffrey, ed. *The Unphotographable.* San Francisco, CA: Fraenkel Gallery, 2013.

Gilliam, Terry and Terry Jones, dir. *Monty Python and the Holy Grail.* 1975; Culver City, CA: Columbia TriStar, 2001. DVD.

Grimes, Hilary. *The Late Victorian Gothic: Mental Science, the Uncanny, and Scenes of Writing*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2011.

Gunning, Tom. "To Scan a Ghost: The Ontology of Mediated Vision." *Grey Room* 26, (Winter 2007): 94-127.

Hankins, Thomas L. and Robert J. Silverman. *Instruments and the Imagination.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Harman, Graham. *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects.* Chicago: Open Court, 2002.

Heckert, Virginia. *Light, Paper, Process: Reinventing Photography.* Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2015.

von Helmholtz, Hermann. "The Facts of Perception." In *Selected Writings of Hermann von Helmholtz.* Edited by Russel Kahl, 366-408. 1878. Reprint Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1971.

Hiller, Susan. *The Provisional Texture of Reality: Selected Talks and Texts, 1977-2007.* Edited by Alexandra M. Kokoli. New York: JRP/Ringier, 2008.

—. "The Word and the Dream (1993)." In *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*. 2nd ed, edited by Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, 793-795. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

—. "The Word and the Dream (1993)." In *Thinking About Art: Conversations with Susan Hiller*. Edited by Barbara Einzig, 121-133. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996.

Kahn, Douglas. *Earth Sound Earth Signal: Energies and Earth Magnitude in the Arts.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

Keller, Corey, ed. *Brought to Light: Photography and the Invisible, 1840-1900.* New Haven, CN: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2008.

Kelsey, Robin. *Photography and the Art of Chance.* Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015.

Krauss, Rosalind. "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America. Part 1." *October,* vol. 3 (Spring, 1977): 68-81.

—. "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America. Part 2." *October,* vol. 4 (Winter, 1977): 58-67.

Kripal, Jeffrey J. *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Lethbridge, T.C. *Ghost and Divining Rod.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963.

Malbert, Roger. "Foreword." In *Curiosity: Art and the Pleasures of Knowing.* Edited by Brian Dillon, Marina Warner, and Roger Malbert, 9-11. London: Hayward Publishing, 2013.

Racière, Jacques. *Film Fables.* Translated by Emiliano Battista. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2006.

Rexer, Lyle. *The Edge of Vision: The Rise of Abstraction in Photography.* New York: Aperture, 2009.

Schneeman, Carolee. "On Intuition," in *Technologies of Intuition.* Edited by Jennifer Fisher, 92-97. Toronto: YYZ Books, 2006.

Schoonover, Karl. "Ectoplasms, Evanescence, and Photography." *Art Journal,* vol. 62, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 30–43.

Sconce, Jeffrey. *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.

Cochran, Rebecca Dimling. *Susan Hiller.* Liverpool: Tate Gallery, 1996.

Thurschwell, Pamela. *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Trower, Shelley. *Senses of Vibration: A History of the Pleasure and Pain of Sound*. New York: Continuum, 2012.

Vogt, Evon Z. and Ray Hyman. *Water Witching U.S.A.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959.

Watson, Thomas A. *Exploring Life: The Autobiography of Thomas A. Watson*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1926.

Wees, William C. *Light Moving in Time: Studies in the Visual Aesthetics of Avant-Garde Film.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

APPENDIX A:

Thesis Exhibition Documentation

Figure 16. Sonya Filman, *When Suddenly the Limb Did Quiver* (installation), 2018

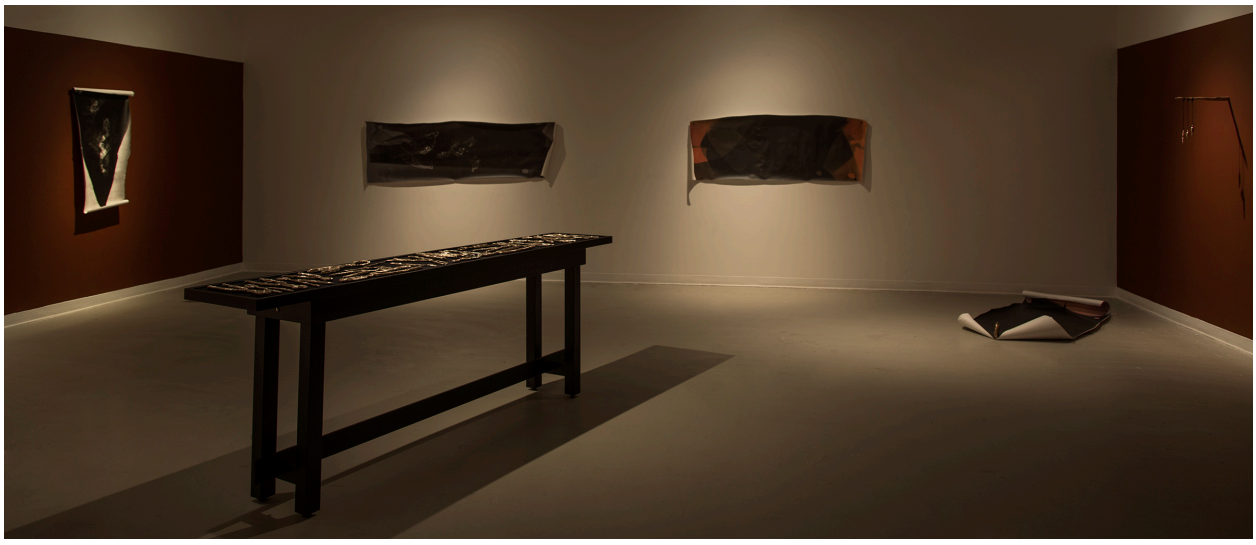

Figure 17. Sonya Filman, *When Suddenly the Limb Did Quiver* (installation), 2018

Figure 18. Sonya Filman, *Tuning Forks* (installation), bronze, dimensions variable, 2018

Figure 19. Sonya Filman, *Tuning Forks* (detail), bronze, dimensions variable, 2018

Figure 20. Sonya Filman, *When Suddenly the Limb Did Quiver* (installation), 2018

Figure 21. Sonya Filman, *Bronze Weights* (installation), bronze, 5 x 22 x 2 inches, 2017

Figure 22. Sonya Filman, *Bronze Weights* (installation), archival inkjet prints, 9 x 7 inches ea., 2017

Figure 23. Sonya Filman, *Conduits #1-4* (installation), etchings, 30 x 22 inches ea., 2017

Figure 24. Sonya Filman, *Untitled Photogram 031918-1* (installation), photogram, 48 x 18 inches, 2018

Figure 25. Sonya Filman, *Untitled Photogram 031918-2* (installation), photogram, 18 x 96 inches, 2018

Figure 26. Sonya Filman, *Untitled Photogram 031918-3* (installation), photogram, 18 x 84 inches, 2018

Figure 27. Sonya Filman, *When Suddenly the Limb Did Quiver* (installation), 2018