



Forensic Architecture

Curated 5films by 5filmmakers

Complied by Christina Varvia and Eyal Weizman



We selected films that form part of our expanded networks of collaborations, conversation and inspiration. These are friends but not in the sense of a chummy social milieu, but in that of creative, political and intellectual co-travellers – people who we worked with, investigated with, or that inspired our work in fundamental ways. Their films are y do investigative films, but at the same time they also investigate the essence of the medium of film itself. They have all taught us valuable lessons, gifts we cherish and take with us wherever we go next.

Purple Sea by Amel Alzakout, Khaled Abdulwahed
Letter to a friend by Emily Jacir
August by Avi Moghrabi
Terror Contagion by Laura Poitras
Trace Evidence by Susan Schuppli



Eyal Weizman

Eyal Weizman is the founder and director of Forensic Architecture and professor of Spatial and Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London, where in 2005 he founded the Centre for Research Architecture. In 2007 he set up, with Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti, the architectural collective DAAR in Beit Sahour/Palestine. He is the author of many books, including *Hollow Land*, *The Least of all Possible Evils*, *Investigative Aesthetics*, *The Roundabout Revolutions*, *The Conflict Shoreline* and *Forensic Architecture*. Eyal held positions in many universities worldwide including Princeton, ETH Zurich and the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna.

He is a member of the Technology Advisory Board of the International Criminal Court and of the Centre for Investigative Journalism. In 2019 he was elected life fellow of the British Academy. In 2020 he received an MBE for 'services to architecture' and in 2021 the London Design Award. Forensic Architecture is the recipient of a Peabody Award for interactive media and the European Cultural Foundation Award for Culture. Eyal studied architecture at the Architectural Association, graduating in 1998. He received his PhD in 2006 from the London Consortium at Birkbeck, University of London.



Purple Sea by Amel Alzakout, Khaled Abdulwahed

Christina Varvia

Former Deputy Director and Lead Researcher of Forensic Architecture (FA), Christina joined the FA team in 2014 and held a variety of roles, from leading investigations and overseeing research and the development of new methodologies, to setting up office structures. She is trained as an architect at the Architectural Association (AA) and Westminster University, and has taught a Diploma unit (MArch) at the AA (2018-2020). She was also a member of the Technology Advisory Board for the International Criminal Court (2018).

Currently, Christina is pursuing her PhD at Aarhus University where her research focuses on biopolitics and imaging of the human body. She has received the Novo Nordisk Foundation Mads Øvlisen PhD Scholarship for Practice-based Artistic Research and is also a fellow at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art. She is a founding member and the chair of the board of Forensis, the Berlin-based association established by FA.





Purple Sea by Amel Alzakout, Khaled Abdulwahed

Purple Sea

by Amel Alzakout

Khaled Abdulwahed

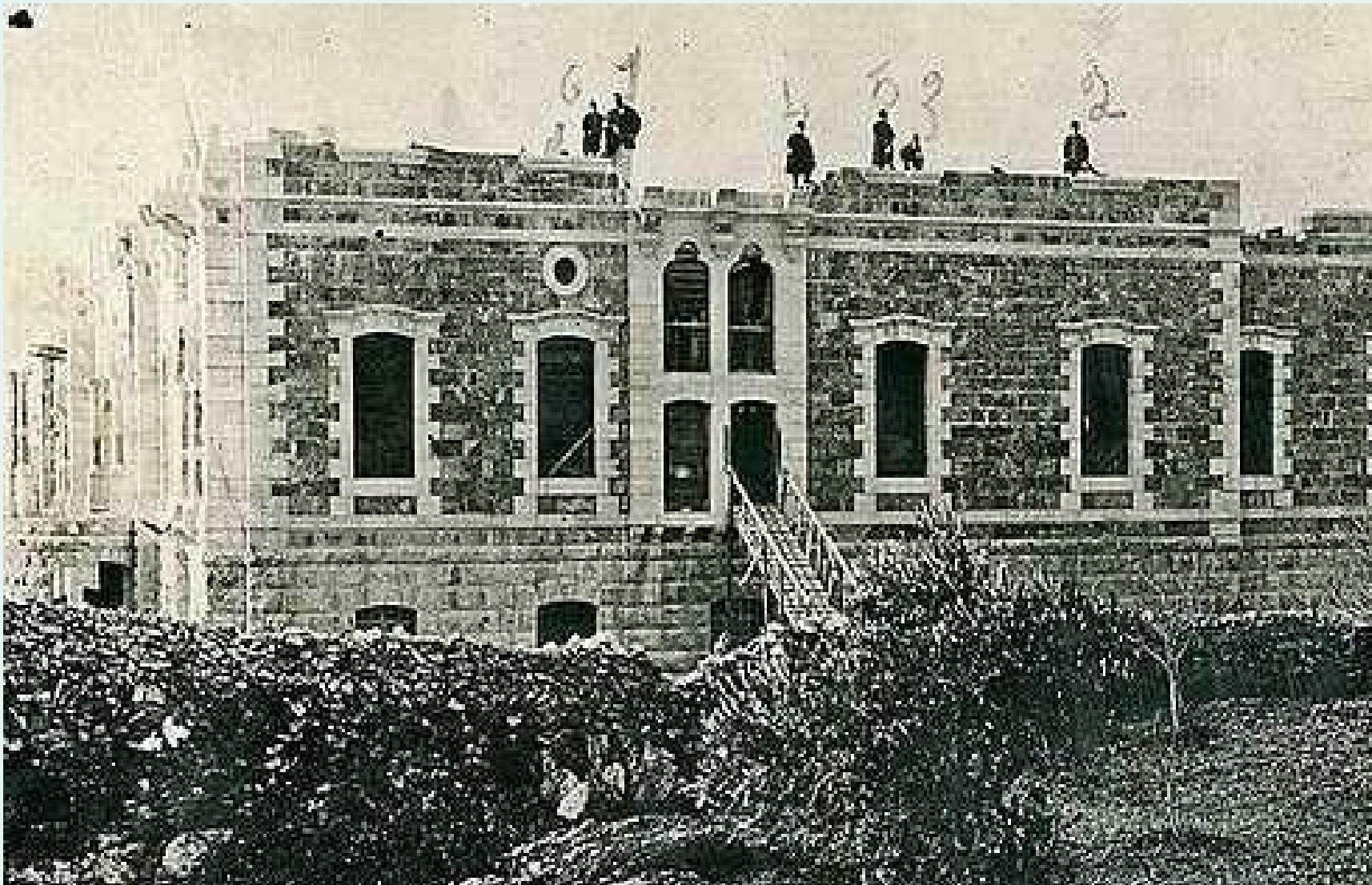


The film includes extraordinary footage of one of the deadliest shipwrecks of a migrant boat at the Aegean Sea, at the border between Turkey and Greece/Europe. Amel Alzakout filmed her journey, with a waterproof camera attached to her wrist, in order to share the experience with her partner who was waiting for her in Germany. Not knowing that the boat would shipwreck, the camera chillingly documents the moment the boat breaksstarts sinking, and later collapsing on its side and the subsequent rescue operation. Brilliantly directed and edited as a seamless piece and narrated by Alzakout herself, the film offers a personal account of a tragedy and the psychic space of waiting to be rescued at the threshold of Europe. The camera, designed for recording fun days at the beach, renders images of the drowning and the surviving passengers against the bright Mediterranean landscape both eerie and the underwater objects and feet floating andmost beautiful. As Amel's hand enters and exist the water, camera alternately captures, objects slowly deceding into the depth, the legs of the passengers trying to keep afloat, the blue skies, the helicopter and the rescue boatsadding to the eeriness of the story. The film offers an utterly unique way of countering the 'migrant crisis' rhetoric that has dominated Europe in the last decade. Forensic Architecture worked with Alzakout to investigate the shipwreck. Combining her perspective with other cameras on site, the resulting sister investigation titled Shipwreck at the Threshold of Europe: Lesvos, Aegean Sea unpacked the structural failures that resulted in such a massive loss of life. The film offers an utterly unique way of countering the 'migrant crisis' rhetoric that has dominated Europe in the last decade.



Letter to a friend

by Emily Jacir



Emily, a friend of mine (EW) for more than a decade, has been a conversation partner and a guide in these dark times. Our conversations were attempts to understand the way art and culture could be activated to support the struggle for Palestine's decolonisation. Her work, in particular *Material for a Film* 2005 - ongoing was an inspiration for Forensic Architecture. Her Bethlehem home/residency - DAAR Jacir is located a teargas-canister throw from the brutal and ugly wall Israel has built to cut her city from Jerusalem. The building, constructed in the 1880s is located on the historical main road connecting the main Palestinian cities of Beersheba, Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Nablus and Nazareth. It is probably, as she often says, "the most tear gassed art residency in the world" and certainly the most raided by Israeli forces. It is a miracle oasis of conceptual political creativity, organizing, assembly, debate and Urban Farming. The house has a magnificent history and a story, and this story is told in a video letter she movingly addressed to me. In this letter she manages to interweave the story of her house, her life, and her aesthetic work. It brings together archival material from over a century, personal photographs as well as incredible and new video footage she has shot just outside the front door, which somehow manages to capture so much of the story of Palestine. The film is also a proposition, a challenge to us, once we are yet to take, to invert the temporal order of forensics and look at the future, not at what has taken place but at what could potentially happen, at what might inevitably take place. The film is contagious in its poetic spirit and political energy and careful in parsing out the media vocabulary of our generation.



August by Avi Moghrabi

In the past three decades Avi Mograbi's films have produced some of the most incisive and original portrait accounts of the paradoxes and contradictions of being an Israeli filmmaker or an Israeli artist within a context of a colonialist society. They both document the political situation and query the means of its representation. They seem to ask what we could do as documentarists and artists and they do not always come back with hopeful answers. The films should really be seen together, and for those that can and want

to, we recommend watching them as a series. (in any case don't miss 'How I Learned to Overcome My Fear and Love Arik Sharon' from 1997, and his latest 'The First 54 Years - An Abbreviated Manual for Military Occupation'). If you do, you will see them as a political and cultural barometer for the social mood, and you may agree with us that they become more somber with time. Avi is always a character within his films. He is a jester, musician, his own psychologist and alter ego- and in this way he is able to embody the tragic reality he lives through. As one film shifts to another, we see him aging (gracefully!), we experience the changes in the circumstances of his private life, his relationships, his moving from comedy to tragedy through farce, and back again. Many of Avi's films present video and reflect on the status of video, present testimonies and question their motivation, tell stories and ask what is the filmmaker's right to tell them at all.

'August', from 2002, does all that through a simple proposition. To make a film about August, a month that Avi believes is a metaphor for whatever is most disturbing of the State of Israel, and film it only within the month of August. Avi's scenes capture the Israeli occupation in the small things: as a mood, as a prayer, as a child's racist joke, as a mistrust of the camera, as an entitled frustration. Constantly being provoked and answering back from behind the camera, he is documenting his own implication in the scene, and the way his presence creates a scene. His filming demonstrates how filming itself is seen as an obstacle to the apparatus of domination and surveillance of the colonized population. Perhaps this is not the intended meaning but for us his encounters show a society detached from the horrors it perpetuates, yet still psychically absorbing them as discomfort, anger, and defensiveness.



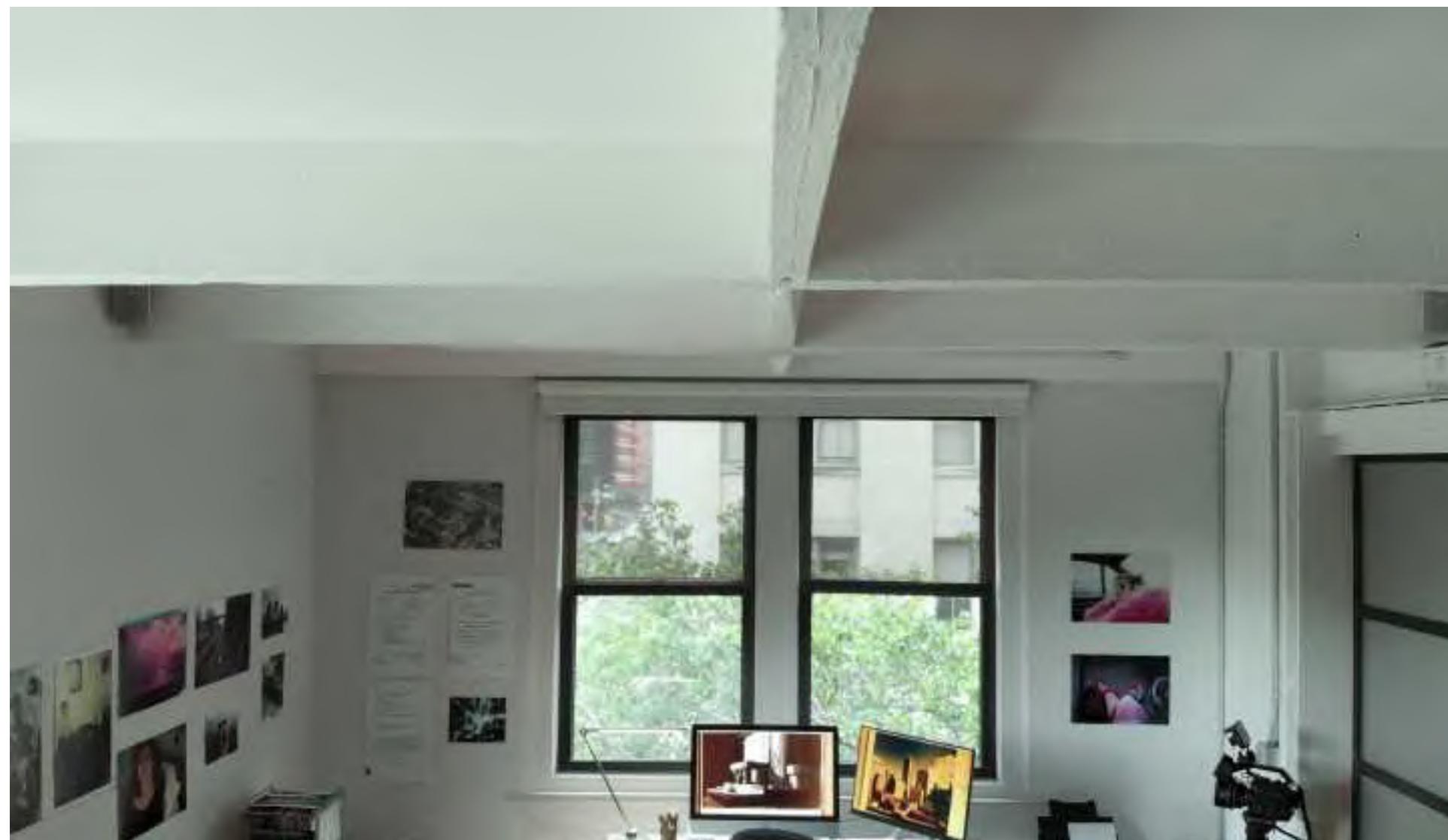


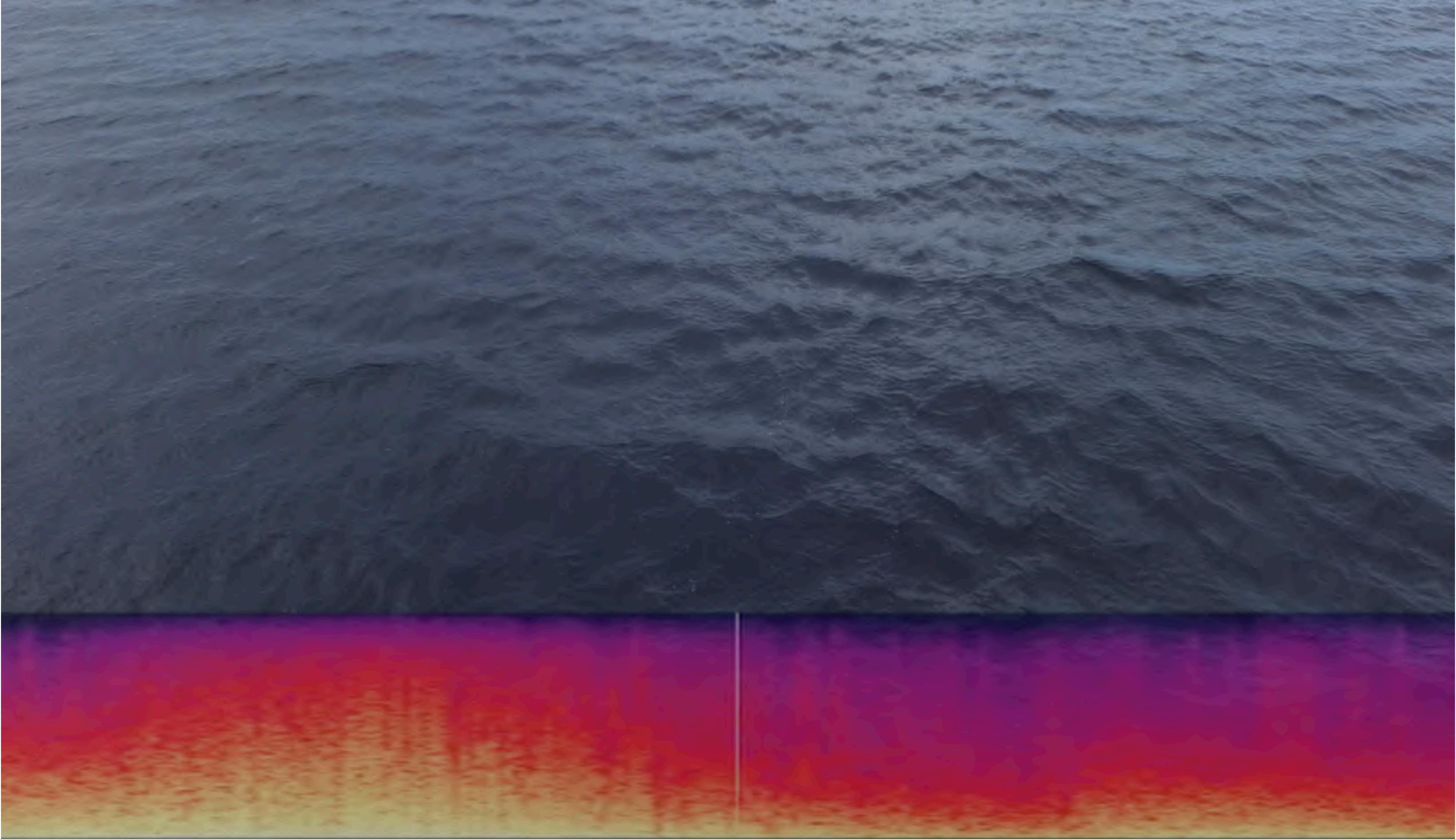
Terror Contagion by Laura Poitras

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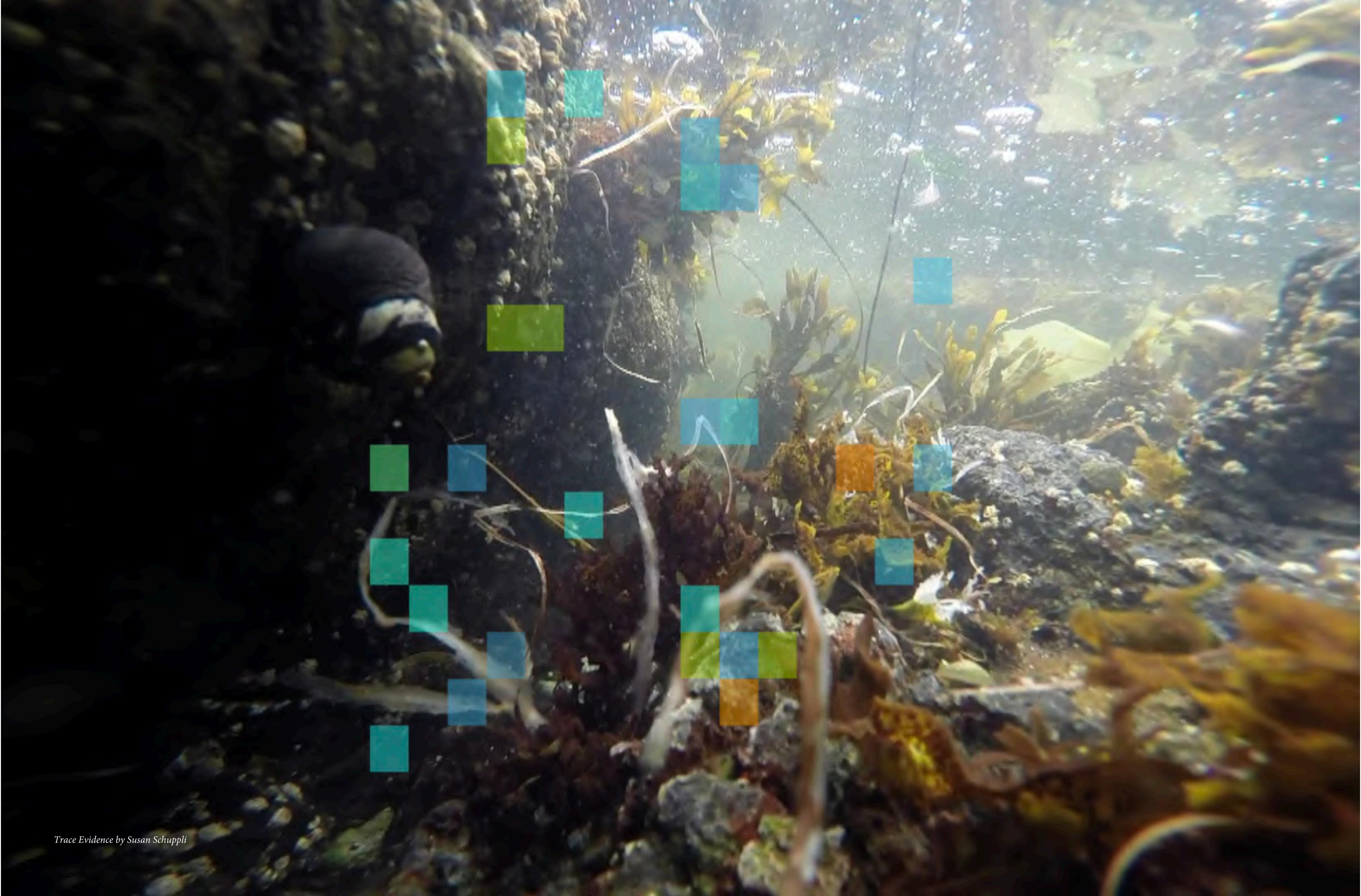
Laura has already worked with us on Triple Chaser and has been thinking with us for many years when, in 2020, at the height of the pandemic, we started this project. Forensic Architecture investigated the use of Pegasus malware made by the Israeli cyber surveillance company NSO-Group on civil society activists around the world – in India, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Palestine and more. We wanted to know from the people who were hacked, what it feels like, what happens in one's personal and psychic life when one gets infected, how violence that takes place in the digital domain leaks into the physical, how hacking lead to acts of physical harassment, intimidation, arrests and even murder. Laura was invited to sit in on all interviews/conversations we had with those activists targeted by Pegasus, with partners and amongst our own team, all scattered around the world and mostly locked down. However throughout the process Laura has become a partner in the investigative work. In a truly interventionist documentary mode she became centrally involved in the very investigation she documented. In the film one can see how, because of her own life experience and struggle, she gains the trust and confidence of the people she interviews. But the film is her work, personal and political at the same time. We added her film to the list also because, in her work — artistic, documentary, and political — Laura has captured something of the sensibility we admire. She irreverently meanders between registers (aesthetic and investigative, documentary mode and political intervention) that are sometimes treated as mutually exclusive. This film in particular shows how she uses media critically while cracking the source code of image and technology.





Trace Evidence by Susan Schuppli

Tsunami hydrophone recording 11.03.2011



Trace Evidence By Susan Schuppli

As a manifestation of trauma, hyperesthesia is not only a psychic but also a mediatic condition. Susan's film, one of the first products of her contribution to the Forensic Architecture project (she was the first project coordinator) deals with the way aesthetic impressions may erase traces of previous ones. This film forms part of a remarkable oeuvre of Schuppli's made under the title of a Material Witness. Works in this series deal with the way matter – from a filmic negative to glacial ice – can bear more-than-human witness in both recordings and erasures. Schuppli finds examples of this principle in Vladimir Shevchenko's documentary film on the Chernobyl nuclear disaster of 1986. Filming from a helicopter flying over the site, the celluloid of his film was imprinted with radiation in a way that left a pattern of white spots like exploding stars, as well as irregular audio distortions. Schuppli quotes the film's voice-over: 'It has no odour, nor colour. But it has a voice. Here it is. We thought this film was defective. But we were mistaken. This is how radiation looks.' Another work studies the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2010 in the Gulf of Mexico, Susan Schuppli saw, in the way the oil spread across the surface of the sea, refracting light in multiple colours, the creation of a new kind of image. This she hails as a 'hyperimage' calling ours a 'geo-photo-graphic era in which planetary systems have been transformed into photographic agents'.



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Trace Evidence by Suresh Subbu Pillai



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