

PORTFOLIO

**MARKUS**  
**OBERNDORFER**

beta\_8/2025

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## D CONTACT

# A MARKUS OBERNDORFER

\*July 8, 1980, Gmunden (Upper Austria), Mag.art

Freelance artist with a focus on photography, timebased audio-visual media and digital art. Living and working in Vienna.

2003 - 2008 Art & photography, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (Matthias Herrmann & Eva Schlegel)

2002 - 2003 School for artistic photography Vienna (Friedl Kubelka)

2002 - Analog color enlarging in the photographic darkroom



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## ARTIST STATEMENT

I see myself as a visual artist with a focus on photography and audiovisual media. My projects are often conceptual, interdisciplinary and media-reflective and question what has been documented as well as the media used to document or generate imagery. Works are often part of larger, multi-layered groups of works that develop over years. These are intended to show a broader context of things.

At the same time, the images, videos and media landscapes must be strong enough to speak for themselves. I am interested in telling stories, triggering chains of associations, inviting viewers to reflect and, in the best case and as far as possible, allowing them to immerse themselves in my stories. My work is often a documentation of the pre-existing and focuses on how we deal with the world that surrounds us, how we interact with it, perceive, use it and change it.

By found/pre-existing, I mean anything that a place presents to me that can be felt and/or documented. I capture what moves me personally in order to tell stories, trigger associations and reflect on the subjectivity of perception and the seemingly mundane. What interests me is the "relationship between environmental qualities and the human condition."<sup>1</sup>

The attempt to capture a situation<sup>2</sup> in the "now of the picture" and the simultaneous satisfaction of my aesthetic demands on a picture itself.

"The more you know about the spatiality of feelings/perceptions, the greater one's ability to create spaces of feeling. Creating feelings means staging atmospheres "<sup>3</sup>

Even if I consider analog photography to be my primary medium, I use all audiovisual means available to me to document and process the world around me, as long as they are contextually conducive as an extension of a project. Beyond photography, my artistic practice includes photofilm, video, experimental collage, music production as an influential layer to visual worlds, spatial installations..., writing about my work, performance and objects as well as exploring new processes and possibilities for creating and generating visual worlds such as AI and 3D or creative coding.

<sup>1</sup> vgl. Gernot Böhme, Atmosphäre, 2. Neue Ästhetik, Suhrkamp Verlag 1995, Seite 22-23

<sup>2</sup> vgl. Hermann Schmitz, Was ist Neue Phänomenologie, Ingo Koch Verlag 2003, Seite 102

<sup>3</sup> vgl. Michael Hauskeller, Atmosphären erleben. Philosophische Untersuchungen zur Sinneswahrnehmung, Akademie-Verlag 1995

## ATTRIBUTIONS / AWARDS

- 2021 „Runner-up, Bildrecht Young Artist Award / Parallel VIE“
- 2017 „Staatsstipendium für künstlerische Fotografie 2018“,
- 2015 „Shortlist: Widerstandsmahnmal Bregenz“ (Final 5)
- 2014 „SilvrettAtelier“, Bielerhöhe
- 2013 „Talentförderung - Bildende Kunst“, OÖ
- 2013 „European Design Award Gold“ (bueronardin 21er-Haus)
- 2013 „VII. Jeux de la Francophonie, Concours Culturel“
- 2013 „DZ-Bank Stipendium“, Nominierung
- 2012 „Artist in Residency Cité des Arts, Paris“, BMKÖS
- 2011 „Artist in Residency Maltatal“, Verbund AG
- 2006 „Docuzone Austria“ Shortfilm Award

Project-specific support by Austrian Federal Ministry, Austrian Foreign Ministry, Forum Culturel Autrichien Paris, Direktion Kultur Upper Austria, City of Vienna, IG Romanistik, Actic Paper, Bildrecht, ...

## OWN PUBLICATIONS

### 2025 PALM TREES ARE NOISE (6 books)

4 books: A Few Generic Palm Trees (15x 3D palms), A Few Diffused Palm Trees (15x diffused palms), A Few Generated & A Few Staged Palm Trees (15 AI generated palms and scenes based on 3D modeled palms) 20x15cm, 40 pages each // + 1 book: Palm Trees Are Noise (24 page essay by Markus Oberndorfer, 20x15cm, 44 pages // + 1 book: Palm Trees Are Noise (English version, 12x17cm, 40 pages)

### 2024 REVISITED | GTA V (Eclipse Blvd & Vinewood Blvd)

In-game conceptual art. Two handmade accordion fold books in box with foldout-insert. 20x15cm, 2x 3m, text by Markus Oberndorfer

### 2022 6X6 REVISIT SPACETIME COLLAGES | DESTINED TO RETURN

- 6x A5 Zine (3x 16 pages, 2x 24 pages, 1x 12 pages. A5
- 1x A5 Zine (16 pages, 19 illustrations, three Texts by Markus Oberndorfer,
- 1x postcard with billboard slogans from Sunset Strip 360° VR experience

### AUTREMENT ON DEVIENT FOU..... (E/ EBOOK)

Interview mit WWII witness Henri Lavrillat, Essays by Inge Marszolek, Markus Oberndorfer und Lydia Nsiah (see also 2014)

### 2017 - 2024 REVISITED

(Part One: Sunset Strip, East & Westbound, Left,  $t_1-t_4$ )

- Two handmade accordion fold books in box with insert. 4,7m and 5,4m, with text by Markus Oberndorfer.

### 2014 AUTREMENT ON DEVIENT FOU..... (OMDU)

16 x 23cm, 96 pages, 42 illustrations (2012-2013), interview with french WW2 witness Henri Lavrillat, Essays by Inge Marszolek and Markus Oberndorfer in German and French

### 2012 FOUKAULD - DISAPPEARANCE -

#### THE ATLANTIC WALL AROUND CAP FERRET

22 x 28cm, 106 Seiten, 57 illustrations (2005-2010), Essays by Inge Marszolek (history), Wolf Langewitz (philosophy) and Markus Oberndorfer in German, French and English. Fotohof edition

## EXHIBITIONS, FAIRS, LECTURES

### SELECTION 2025 - 2004

#### SOLO

Destined To Return, Bildraum Bodensee, Bregenz (A) (2022)

Legends Never Die, Bildraum 01, Wien (A) (2015)

Autrement on devient fou..... (OmdU), Institut Francais (2014)

Se Souvenir, Ephemere Installation, Cap Ferret (2013)

Werkschau, Galerie Schloss Puchheim (2010)

Swim At Own Risk, Hollmann & Lhotka, Vienna (2010)

#### 2025 Kommunikation und Haltung, Teufelsberg Berlin (D)

Vienna Digital Summer III, Artecont Gallery (arteconft), Vienna (A)

Palm Trees Are Noise, artistic dynamic association, Foto Wien (A)

Vienna Artbook Fair #3, MAK Museum, Vienna (A)

#### 2023 Art Book Thursday, 50 Jahre mumok, Vienna (A)

#### 2022 Gmunden.Photo, Gmunden (A)

Horizon, Bildraum Studio, Vienna (A)

#### 2020 - 2021 Excerpts of REVISIT ZUMA, Parallel Vienna

Re-Opening, Künstlerhaus Wien, Vienna (A)

#### 2019 Excerpts of REVISITED, Collection Sanziany, Palais Rasumofsky

Lecture, University Bolzano, Faculty Design & Art (IT)

Vienna Artbook Fair #1, MAK Museum, Vienna (A)

Out Of The Box, Ars Electronica Festival, Linz (A)

#### 2018 A Passenger - Jahresausstellung 2018, Salzburger Kunstverein

REVISITED, Musée des Beaux Arts Rennes, Travelling (F)

Mumok Artbook Day Revisited Buchpräsentation: Vienna (A)

REVISITED Lecture Presentation, VR-Vienna, VREI, Vienna (F)

#### 2017 Excerpts of REVISITED Geistwert IP, Vienna (A)

Circulation(s) Festival 2017, Centquatre 104 Paris (F),

Art & Boders Lecture presentations in collaboration with the french cultural institutes (Vienna, Budapest & Prag).

2016 Neulich im Labor, publication and exhibition, Vienna (A)  
Sprechen über Abraham, Talk between Eugen Gross, Johannes Handler, Peter Leeb, Traudi Messini and Markus Oberndorfer  
Back Home - Raimund Abraham, Schloss Bruck, Lienz (A)  
Aus der Sammlung: Landschaft, Landesgalerie Linz (A)  
Circulation(s) Festival 2016, Eyes On, 104 Paris (F)

2015 Legends Never Die, Bildraum 01, Wien (A),  
Text:Bild II, Fotogalerie Wien (A)  
Paul Busk - Look at me now, Inoperable Gallery, Vienna (A)  
Crossing Europe Filmfestival, Linz (A)  
SilvrettAtelier, Palais Lichtenstein, Feldkirch (A)  
Extra Fort @ Recyclart, Lecture Projection, Brussels (B)

2014 Markus Oberndorfer. Gregor Sailer. Grenzgänger. Loris Berlin (D)  
Guest Teacher & Artist Talk, Nordic Art School, Kokkola (FIN)  
Artist Talk, Under Pressure, Museum of Modern Art, mdm, Salzburg (A)

2013 Preise & Talente, OÖ Kulturquartier, Linz (A)  
Under Pressure, MdM, Salzburg (A)  
VII.Jeux de la Francophonie, Concours Culturels, Nizza (F)  
Hohe Dosis, Atterseehalle, Attersee (A)  
gesammelt, Galerie Tracklhaus, Salzburg (A)  
Am Ende der Sehnsucht. Fotografische Positionen zu Tod und Meer, Altonaer Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Hamburg (D)  
Cash, Cans & Candy, Galerie Ernst Hilger, Vienna (A)  
What Would Thomas Bernhard Do?, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (A)  
Land in Sicht!, Museum of Modern Art Mönchsberg, Salzburg (A)  
The Side of Things, Photowall, MQ Vienna (A)  
Foukauld, Bookpresentation, OstLicht, Vienna (A)  
Industrie, OstLicht, Gallery for Photography, Vienna (A)

2012 Expanded Field Of Photography, W:end:y, Vienna (A)  
Young Austrian Photography, Architecture & Landscape, DC (US)  
Zwischenspiel, Vertikale Galerie, Verbund HQ, Vienna (A)  
Die Letzte Weltausstellung, Gschwandner, Vienna (with Busk)  
Frankfurter Buchmesse, Foukauld (Book), Frankfurt (D)

2011 Vor Ort, Kölnbreinsperre, Maltatal (A)

2010 Redefining the Atlantic Wall, Amersfoort, (NL)  
Escape The Golden Cage, MAK, Vienna (A)  
VIS - Vienna Independent Shorts, Topkino (A)

2009 Crossing Europe Film Festival, Linz (A)  
Nacht-Notte, Galerie Foto-Forum, Bolzano (I)  
Juried Artists, Bäckerstrasse 4, Vienna (A)  
The Essence, Galerie Art Fort Revue, Bruxxels (B)  
Kunstmesse Linz, Landesgalerie Linz (A)

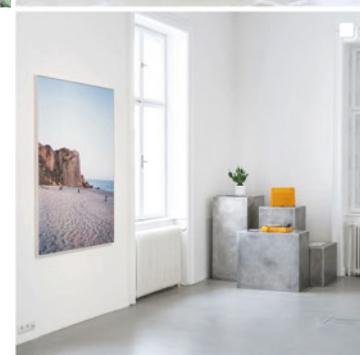
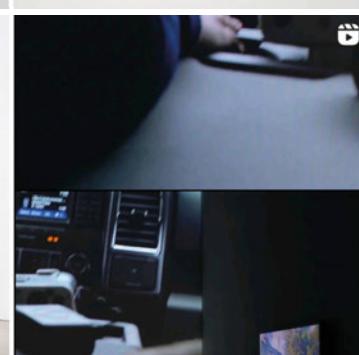
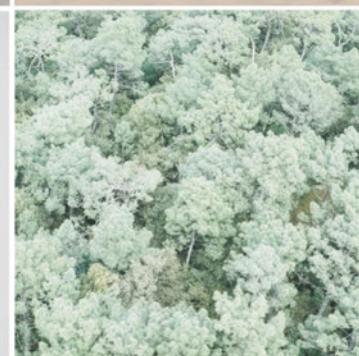
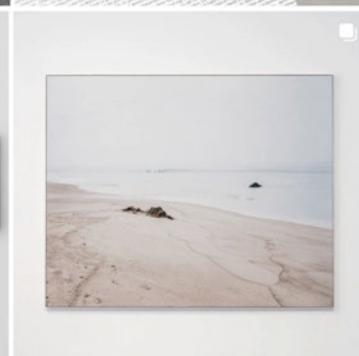
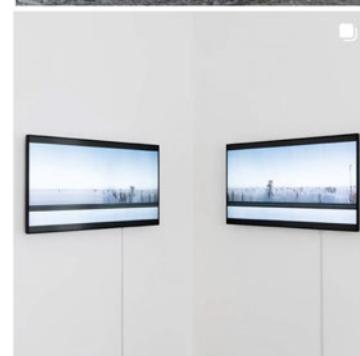
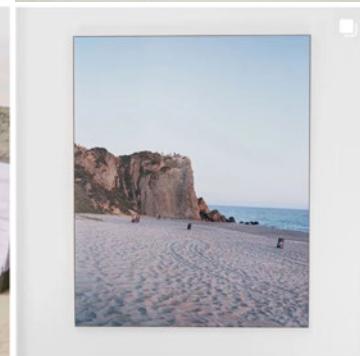
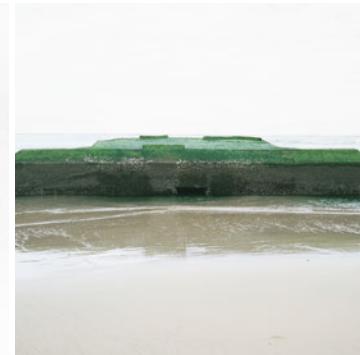
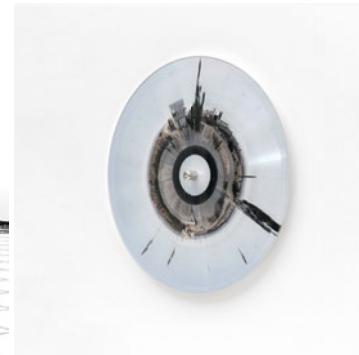
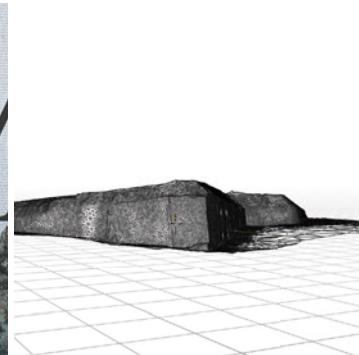
2008 Das Verschwinden - Der Atlantikwall um Cap Ferret, Academy of Fine Arts, Diplom exhibition, Vienna (A)  
Film:Riss Student Film-Festival, Salzburg (A)  
VIS - Vienna Independent Shorts, Topkino (A)  
Baume & Mercier Award, Westlicht, Vienna (A)

2007 Viennafair '07, Messegelände, Vienna (A)  
Kraftwerke, Verbund, Am Hof, Vienna (A)  
Size does matter, Monat der Fotografie (A)  
Ursula Blicke Archiv, Kunsthalle Vienna (A)  
Empire de la lumière, Hegelstrasse, Basel (CH)  
AVIS - Vienna Independent Shorts, Topkino (A)  
After Urban - Video Art and Architecture (US, I)

2006 White Club Space #01, Salzburg (A)  
Economy Class, Alliance Française, Nairobi (KE)  
Film:Riss Student Film-Festival, Salzburg (A)  
VIS - Vienna Independent Shorts, Topkino (A)  
Untitled In Case No\_01 in 13 independent cinemas across Austria (A)

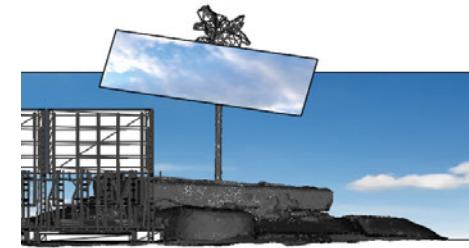
2005 Der Zweite Blick, Focus Award, Dortmund (D)

[continue reading on website](#)



B1 EXCERPTS OF

# SKY IS NO LIMIT



3D sketch incorporating excerpts of Palm Trees Are Noise, Foukauld and REVISITED. Realized as a navigable virtual world with Artecont Gallery for 'Hybrid Creativity' - Vienna Digital Summer III, AI & VR lab.

2024 3D scans of fortifications, excerpts of interview with WW2 witness, AI generated bunker like structures, 3D modeled palm trees based on Ed Ruscha's 'A Few Palm Trees', warped 3D objects originating from Revisited Spacetime Collages, a Spacetime Tunnel of Sunset Strip, ...

# SKY IS NO LIMIT — Digital Pseudo-Places and the Algorithmized Global Village

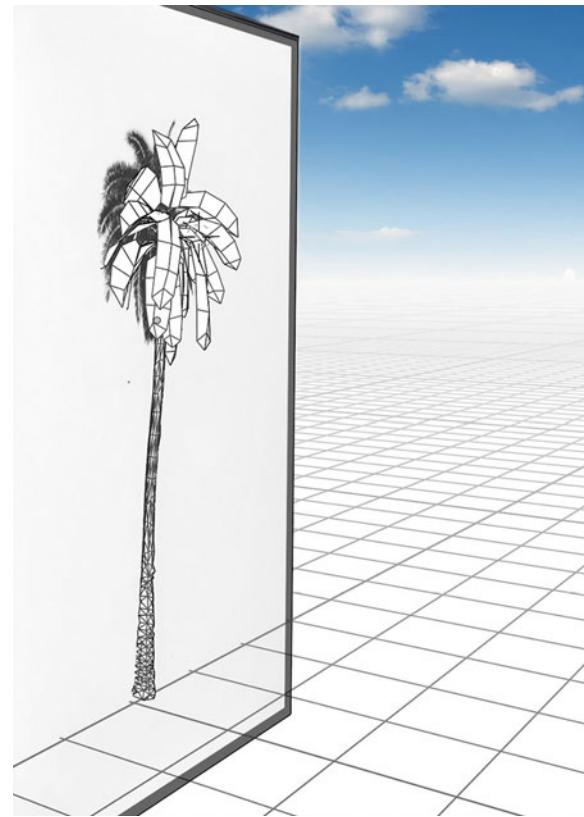
In the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan coined the term “Global Village” to describe the profound impact of electronic media on the structures of time, space, and communication. For McLuhan, the transformation of media did not merely accelerate information flows — it fundamentally reshaped social experience, producing a new form of collective perception.

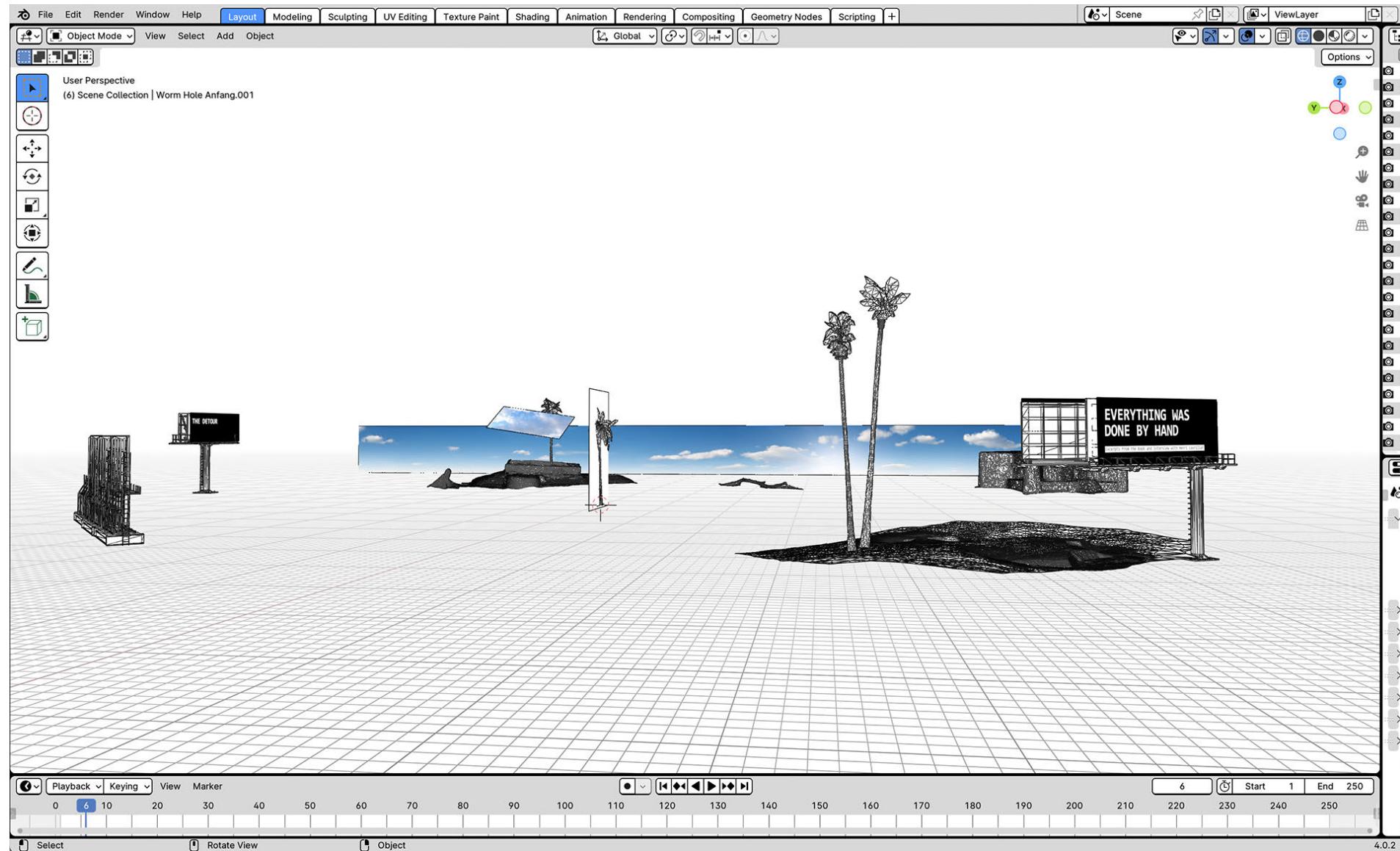
Markus Oberndorfer’s “Algorithmized Global Village” unfolds as a kind of open stage set, whose structure is more reminiscent of a set than an illusionistic simulation. Different “locations” are placed next to (and on top of) each other like loose narrative fragments of scenes - connected by an open, navigable space and a limited grid, in which objects, images, and videos are distributed like props. Areas are not defined by realistic topography, but by medial presence: by polygon mesh structures, textures, a space-time tunnel, video projections, or voids and the absence of things. This world is deliberately stylized—a modellike arrangement of environments of meaning, oscillating between fragment, backdrop, and stage.

The first part comprises a group of 3D scans and fragments of a contemporary witness interview, engaging with the WW2 remnants of the Atlantic Wall on Cap Ferret. Here, historical sites are digitally preserved while simultaneously stripped of their indexical anchoring. A second complex is dedicated to generated visual worlds and forms of algorithmic imagination. Algenerated objects, simulated panoramas or 3D palm trees modeled by Oberndorfer condense culturally coded notions of exoticism and escapism. The third thematic strand connects urban topographies with media-reflexive narrative forms. A space-time tunnel leads the viewer through a rhythmic representation of the Sunset Strip in Los Angeles; a warped school bus becomes a digital prop,... All these elements merge into a speculative space of collective imagination, in which the documentary, the simulated, and the symbolic coexist on equal terms.

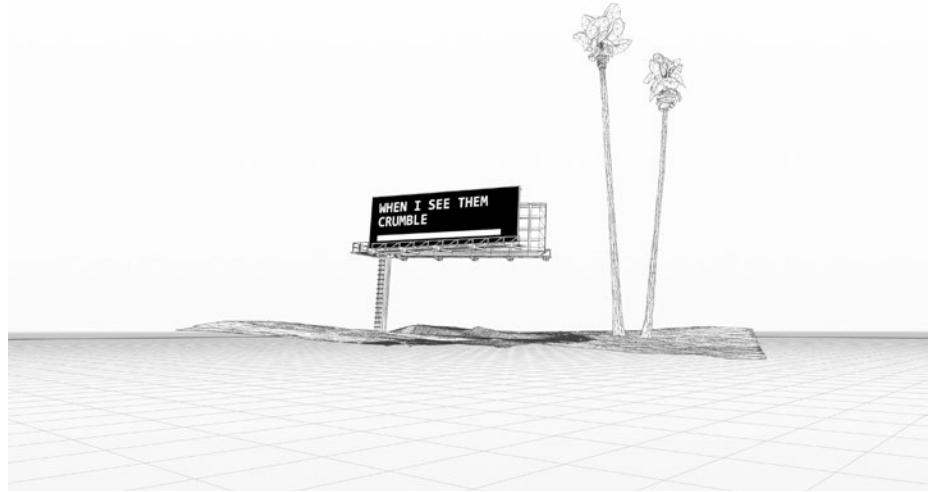
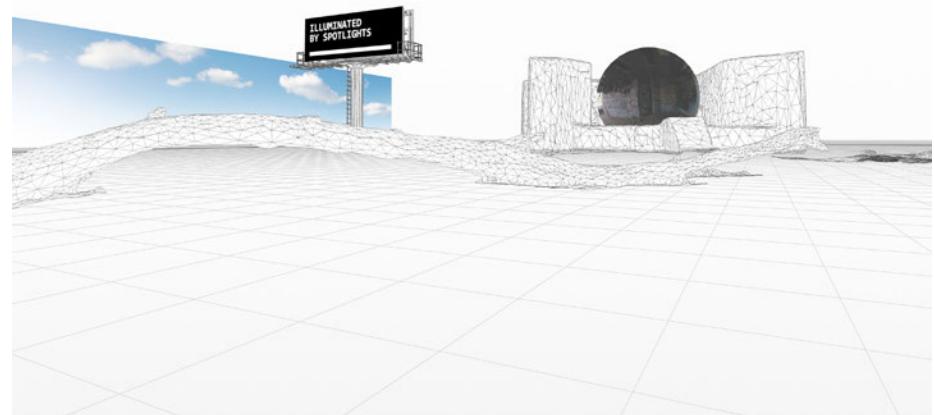
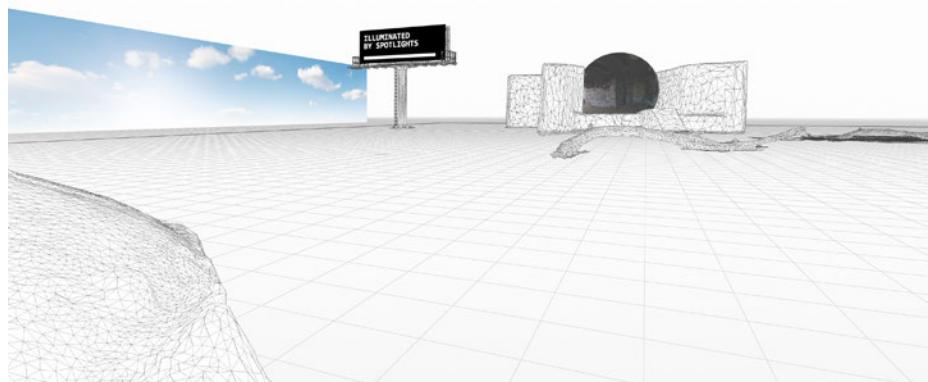
Central to the experience of this virtual village (world) is a bodily — or interaction- and click-work — triggered mediality: content such as videos or sound is activated only through proximity. A contemporary witness begins to speak on billboards, about their construction and decay on site; glimpses into the interior of a bunker or into the sky open up, and so on. These moments create variable, individual dramaturgies, depending on the movement, gaze, and position of the viewers. The media elements behave like virtual actors or NPCs. They only perform when “addressed”—through proximity, presence, or attention. This form of interaction creates a particular tension between visibility and invisibility, presence and absence, surface and depth.

Instead of attempting to simulate realism, what emerges here is a radically reduced, yet highly condensed narrative architecture — a space of possibility for memory, projection, and imagination. Through formal abstraction, a village unfolds that is not shaped by realism (or illusionistic simulation), but by symbolic condensation, cultural codes, and medial presence.





SKY IS NO LIMIT, 3D Blender Sketch, 2025



SKY IS NO LIMIT, Navigable Virtual Interactive World, Screenshots, 2025

# PALM TREES ARE NOISE

In Palm Trees Are Noise I present the outcome of my exploration of virtual visual worlds at the intersection of photography, 3D and generative AI.

As a starting point, I digitally remodeled each palm tree depicted in Ed Ruscha's seminal artist book *A Few Palm Trees* (1971) in 3D, thus translating them into digital space. From there, these models undergo a staged visual evolution — from neutral wireframes (Generic), to dissolved intermediates (Diffused), to AI-generated Look-alikes (Generated), and finally to staged AI-pseudo-realities (Staged) — accompanied by poems and parent/child relations.



This progression, traced through the pose, symbol and example of the palm tree, is rooted in media-philosophical questions surrounding photography and generative AI techniques.

The project is elaborated both visually and theoretically in a bundle of six books including a 24-page essay (German and English) that not only draws on thinkers such as Hermann Schmitz, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, Gernot & Hartut Böhme, Marshall McLuhan and others, but also reflects and recontextualizes their thoughts within the conditions of today's increasingly AI driven and virtually mediated image culture.

**A  
FEW  
GENERIC  
PALM  
TREES**

MARKUS OBERNDORFER

**PALM  
TREES  
ARE**

**NOISE**

MARKUS OBERNDORFER

**A  
FEW  
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TREES**

MARKUS OBERNDORFER

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© 1972 Paul Laxton  
(8420 Hollywood Blvd.)

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**A  
FEW  
TAGED  
PALM  
TREES**

MARKUS OBERNDORFER

# PALM TREES ARE NOISE — From Staging the Ordinary to Hallucinating the Everyday

Palm fronds caress our cheeks like soft brushes, their soothing rustle, carried in from afar, enchants us like the Sirens once bewitched Odysseus on his *Odyssey*<sup>3</sup>. They seem to question what *is*. Such poetic reflections — thoughts on *mere being*<sup>4</sup>, on documenting, staging, or generating the everyday, and the resulting considerations — mark the beginning of an artistic search for roots and traces within the ambient noise of today's media landscapes.

For my project Palm Trees Are Noise, I have taken a deep dive into 3D modeled and AI generated visual landscapes. An artistic approach to understanding virtual worlds where photography meets simulation, and to the increasingly (semi-)artificial environments we inhabit and consume today, often without even realizing it. For this, he first remodeled all 14 palm trees depicted in Ed Ruscha's book *A Few Palm Trees* (1971) — and one more L.A. palm tree of personal importance — in 3D, thus translating them into digital space. From there, these three-dimensional interpretations undergo a visual evolution — from neutral 2D wireframe depictions (Generic), to dissolved intermediates reflecting diffusion model processes (Diffused), to AI-generated Look-alikes (Generated), and finally to AI-pseudo-realities (Staged and Palms At Pools). An attempt, traced through the example of the palm tree, and rooted in media-philosophical questions surrounding photography and generative AI techniques.

## AN OLD DREAM

Since 2015, my project *REVISITED*<sup>5</sup> (excerpts of which has been exhibited at various exhibitors since 2017) has taken me on a journey — from photography<sup>6</sup>, through video, film, 360° VR video, on to generated images and 3D-modeled interpretations of the Sunset Strip. Across all these numerous media representations — including that in the computer game *Grand Theft Auto V*<sup>7</sup> — the place remains clearly recognizable, its distinctive qualities even tangible to a certain degree. Why is that? What defines its essence — whether real or virtual, documented or assembled from fragments? What network of features and characteristics is needed to shape, represent, and imbue a spatially limited section — a place — and fill it with meaning in such a way that we feel a sense of rootedness? That its essence, fundamental mood and atmosphere<sup>8</sup> emerge tangibly — as a “situational synthesis of everything that appears in a given area?”<sup>9</sup>

Material and immaterial qualities associated with architecture, non-places, and elements of vegetation are fundamental in defining a place. They are

essential for locating oneself in space — for integration, identification, and orientation. Together with events that define it as a lived space for individuals and the collective — events about which stories are told — these qualities shape the identity of a place. “This does not only include the presence of these exact things in space, but also the rhythm they inscribe into urban life, or the ways in which people inhabit the (micrological) city.”<sup>10</sup> This rhythm is constantly changing “through the necessity, arising from an existential need, to constantly re-appropriate an ever-changing environment.”<sup>11</sup>

Expectations toward a place also vary depending on perspective. For residents, the focus is usually on quality of life and fulfilling everyday needs. Tourists, on the other hand, visit certain places in search of something they hope to find — often based on a pop-culturally influenced, biased image. In the case of Los Angeles, this might be the glamour associated with Hollywood Boulevard, the “Sex, Drugs & Rock’n’Roll” attitude linked to Sunset Boulevard, or the lifestyle evoked by singing Moog leads<sup>12</sup> and Roger Troutman’s talkbox<sup>13</sup>. 2Pac’s *California Love*<sup>14</sup> which thrives on a controversy: a dream of freedom and self-realization intertwined with an often challenging reality of everyday life.

Just as the Sunset Strip — with its billboards, neon signs, clubs, landmarks, and the legends surrounding it — is deeply embedded in our cultural memory and imagination, Los Angeles and Southern California more broadly embody the promise of sun, beach, lightness, and palm trees.

Yet apart from the California fan palm, none of the species — including the so-called “Skydusters”, which became a symbol of Los Angeles in the postwar era — are actually native to the region.<sup>15</sup> They were planted only from the early 20th century<sup>16</sup>, and are part of a carefully crafted image of the city that today serves as central identity anchor. Their omnipresence owes as much to the local film and television industry as to a culturally rooted, romanticized idea that has elevated palm trees to global symbols of luxury and exoticism. We associate them both with “sex, glamour, and celebrity”<sup>17</sup> and with the “old dream” mentioned in the earlier quoted scene from *Dune*<sup>18</sup>: the sea breeze on the Riviera, the eternal summer in the tropics, the exotic Orient, the fertile oasis — that sense of lightness and freedom that is both seductive and illusory.

[continue reading on my website](#)

PAULATREIDES

Hallo.

GARDENER

You shouldn't be out here  
at this hour of the day.

PAULATREIDES

I did not know date palms  
can even be found out here.

GARDENER

Oh. These aren't indigenous.  
They can't survive without me.  
Each one of them drinks each day  
the equivalent of five men.  
20 palm trees. Ahundred lives.

PAULATREIDES

Should we remove them?  
Save the water?

GARDENER

No.No.  
They are sacred;  
Old dream.

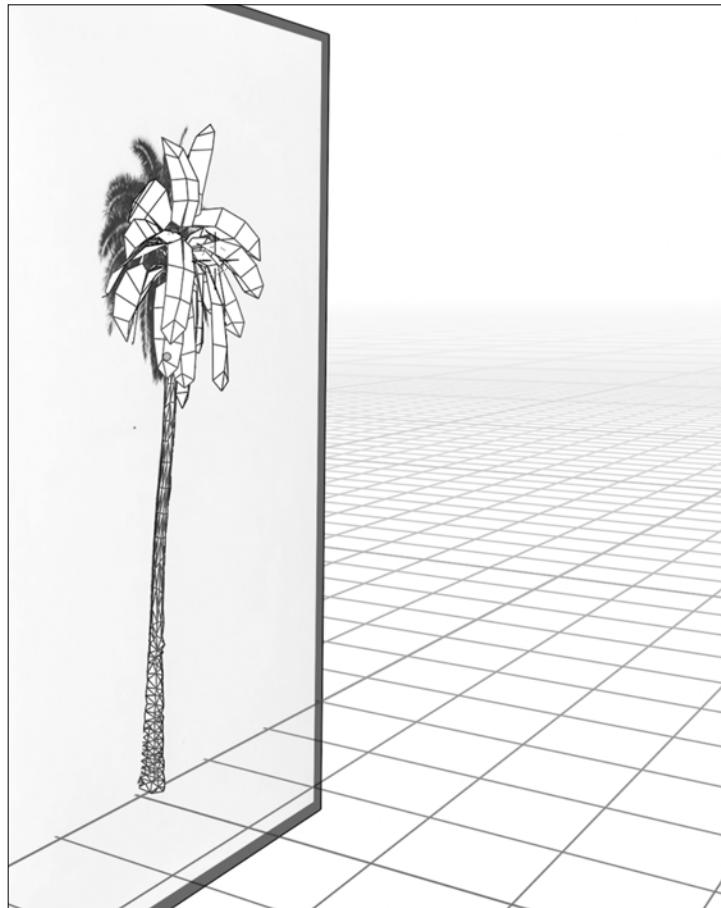
// Paul Atreides & The Gardener<sup>1</sup>  
findParent Node{  
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 Dune, Denis Villeneuve, 2021,  
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}



Ed Ruscha „A Few Palm Trees“ (@LACMA, 2024)



„Island at Hollywood Blvd. & La Brea Ave.“ (1971)  
Mock-Up, Ed Ruscha Palm Tree, @LACMA, 2024



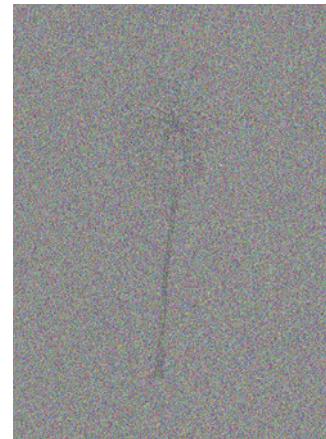
#### ALL SERIES AND BOOKS IN THE WORK-GROUP

- A Few Generic Palm Trees
- A Few Diffused Palm Trees
- A Few Generated Palm Trees
- A Few Staged Palm Trees
- Palm Trees Are Noise (D/E)
- A Few Palms At Pools

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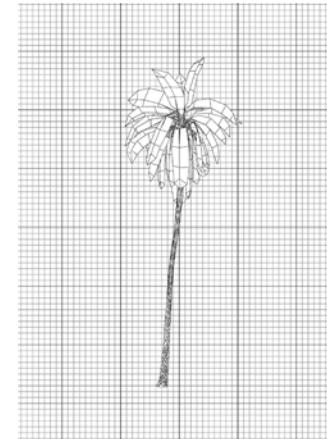
5941 Hollywood Blvd  
Ed Ruscha, Mock Up #25  
1971



Diffused Palm Tree VIII  
Markus Oberndorfer  
2024



Generated Palm Tree VIII  
Markus Oberndorfer  
2024



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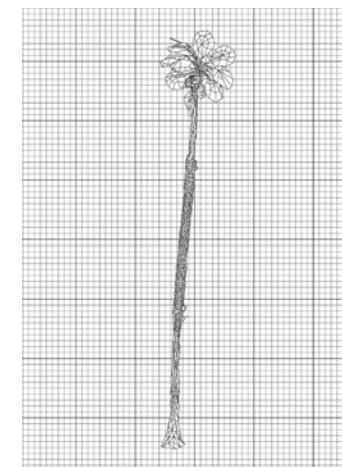
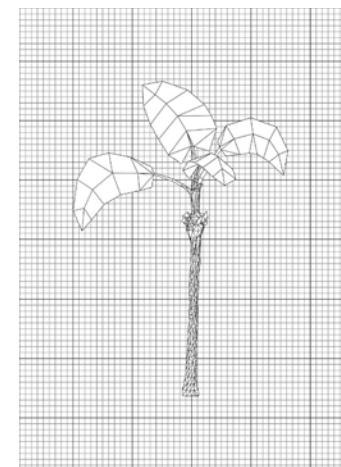
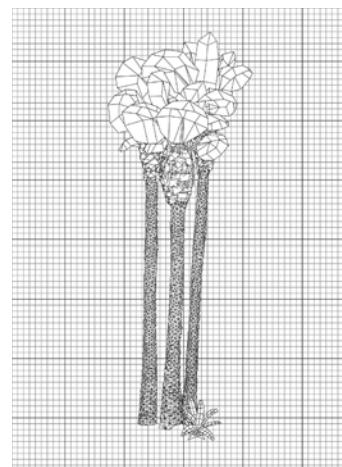
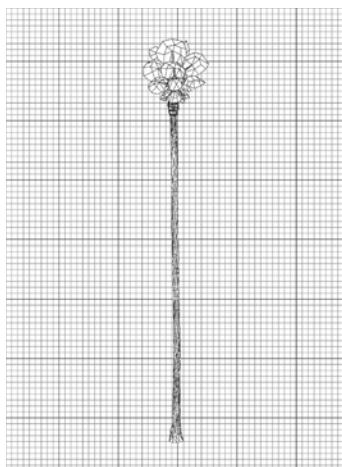
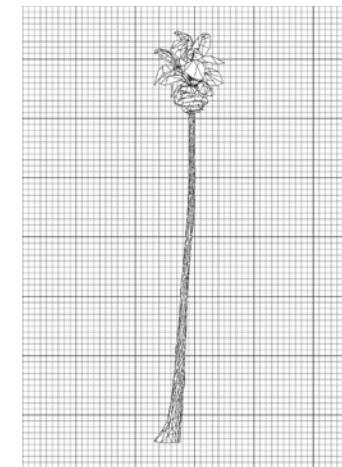
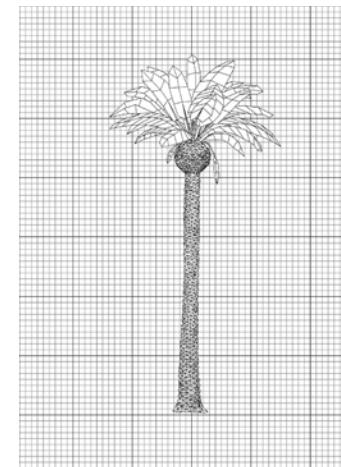
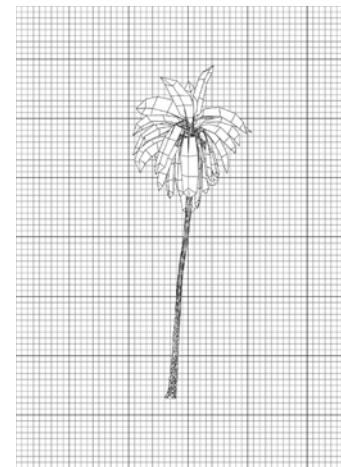
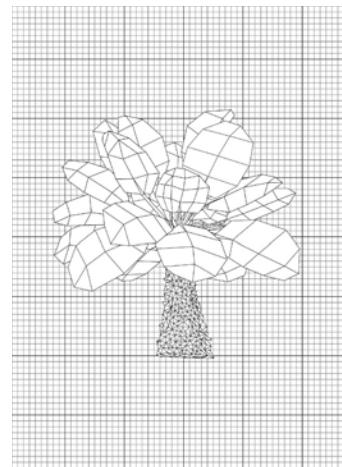
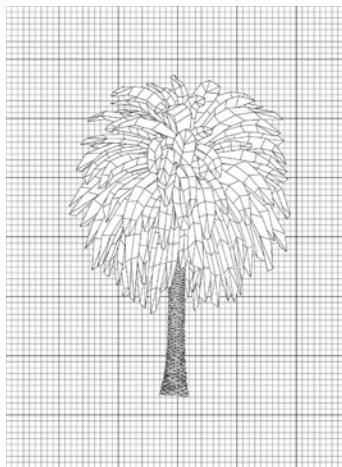
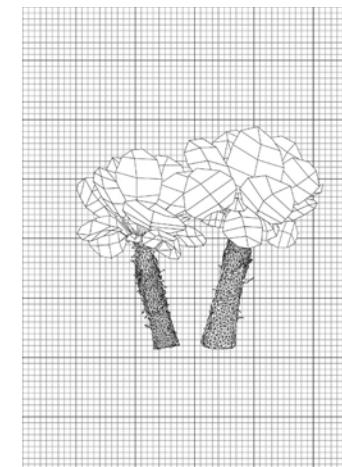
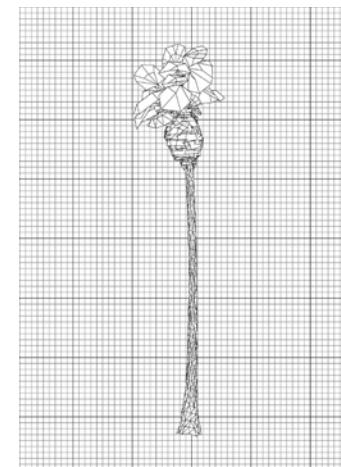
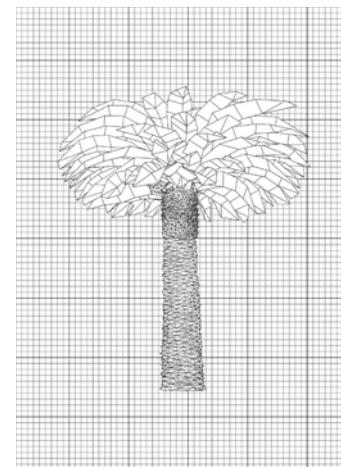
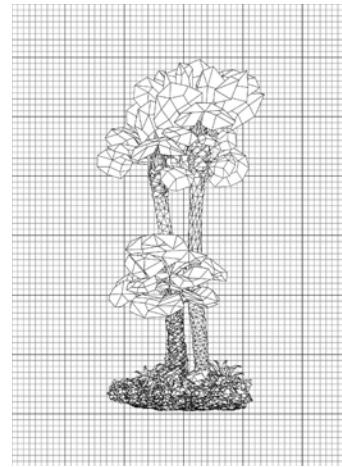
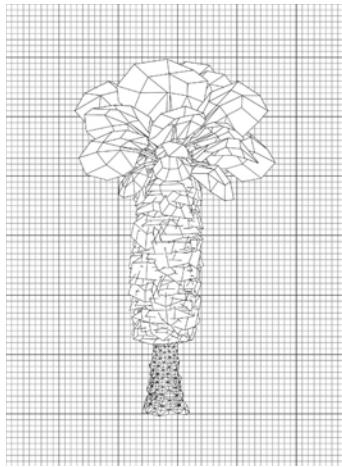
Generic Palm Tree VIII  
Markus Oberndorfer  
2024

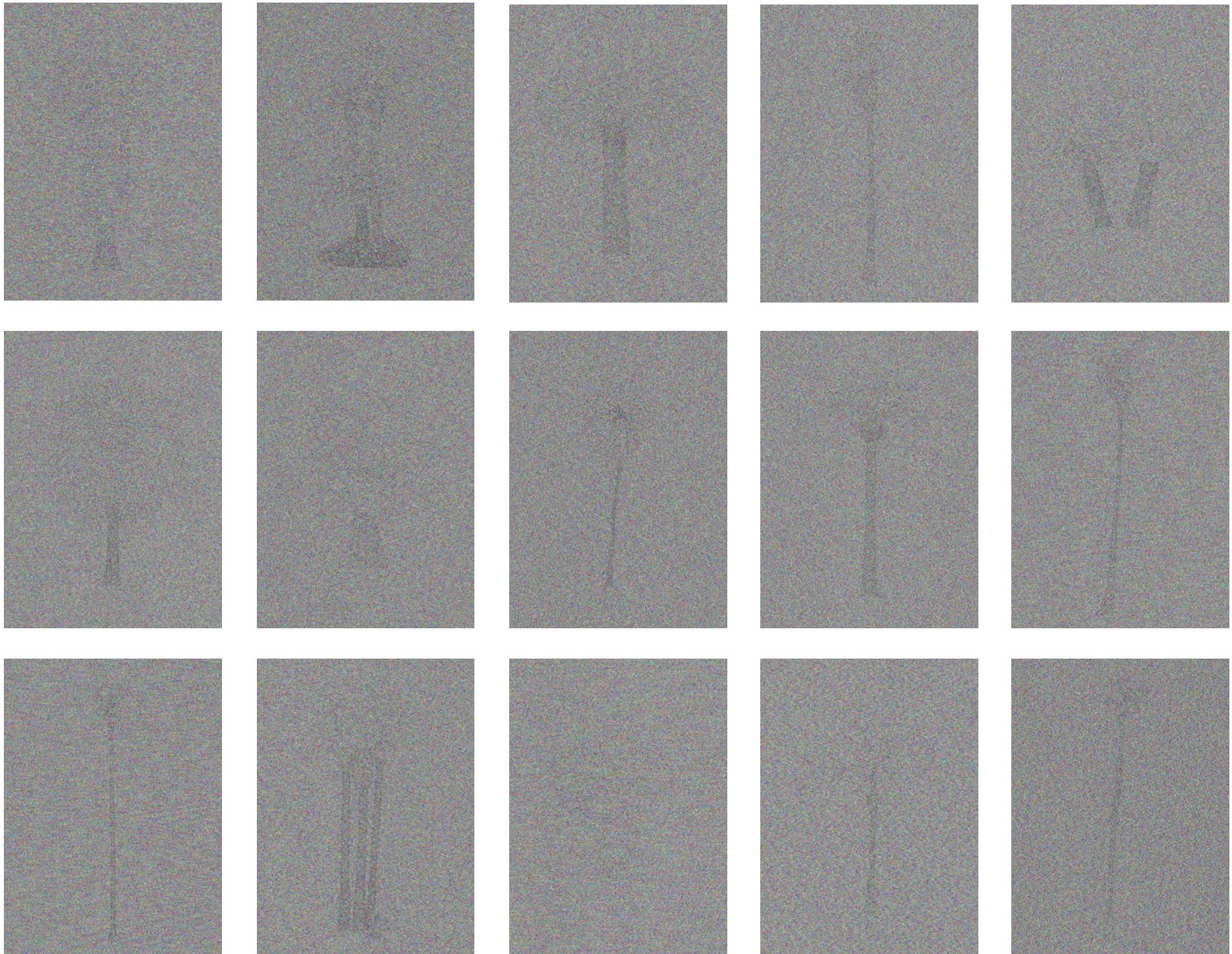


Staged Palm Tree VIII  
Markus Oberndorfer  
2024 (Template)



Staged Palm Tree VIII  
Markus Oberndorfer  
2024









A Few Generated Palm Trees, Palm IV, Markus Oberndorfer, 2024



A Few Generated Palm Trees, Palm V, Markus Oberndorfer, 2024



3D palms placed into Street View at locations, Palm IV, Markus Oberndorfer, 2024



3D palms placed into Street View at locations, Palm V, Markus Oberndorfer, 2024

3D palms placed into Street View at locations indicated in Rausch's 1971 book "A Few Palm Trees"  
These drafts were used to generate all palms in **A FEW STAGED PALM TREES** using Stable Diffusion ControlNet





## ARTIST BOOK BUNDLE

Book Bundle of 6 Books: 1x A Few Generic Palm Trees (15x 3D palms), 1x A Few Diffused Palm Trees (15x diffused palms), 1x A Few Generated Palm Trees & 1x A Few Staged Palm Trees (15 AI generated palmes and scenes based on 3D modeled palms) each 20x15cm, 40 pages // 1x Palm Trees Are Noise (24 page essay by Markus Oberndorfer, 20x15xm, 44 pages // 1x Palm Trees Are Noise (English version, 12x17cm, 40 pages)





Underpass, Chicago, Markus Oberndorfer, 2017

In the entanglement of the Real, Symbolic, and Simulated, a threshold space opens up — reminiscent of Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia — where the boundaries of image, place, and meaning dissolve into noise and must be renegotiated. The detachment from the thing itself — from the real places and societal structures to which they once referred — emerges from the recursive recomposition of extracted visual codes, accompanied by a dissolution of space and time.

To highlight the perceptual distortions in virtual content — content that, at first glance, may mimic the original in appearance and effect yet at second glance diverges fundamentally in informational substance — it seemed appropriate to revisit and further negotiate the palm motifs that Ed Ruscha isolated with white marker in the 1970s. This time, however, by way of synthetic image production — and via processes of interpretation and translation that reveal the medial conditions of the 2020s.

Once again, we find ourselves at a turning point — the age of Artificial Intelligence — where pleasant murmur and distracting noise seem to merge, and where the confrontation with new realities is permanent. "The tasks imposed on the human apparatus of perception in the present age," as Benjamin noted, "cannot be solved by mere optical experience, i.e., contemplation. They are mastered gradually by tactile reception through habituation. But even the distracted can grow accustomed."

Whether — and how — we manage to preserve our gaze for the Real in the age of simulation will depend on our willingness to pause, to attune perception anew, and to learn how to navigate a media landscape that is shifting rapidly and profoundly.

Excerpts of *PALM TREES ARE NOISE*  
Essay, Markus Oberndorfer  
(2024/2025)

# CON[DIF]FUSION

As part of the project — and for each procedural step — I have developed a poem in numerous back-to-back conversations with ChatGPT (2024). Condiffusion is also a term I developed in the context of this project that describes a symbiosis of diffusion, confusion, and fusion, reflecting a process or state in which boundaries blur, traces of the referent cover-up, meanings dissolve or reconfigure, and previously unconnected elements coalesce into something new. Simulacra.

## VERSE [1]

In shadows cast by setting sun,  
We question what is real and what is not.  
In dreams, we find the line undone,  
A fleeting truth that can't be bought.

In whispers of the night's embrace,  
The boundaries blur, the edges fade.  
We chase illusions, in this endless race,  
Seeking clarity, in the twilight's shade.

Amidst the palms that dance and sway,  
We ponder life's elusive way.  
In rhythm, truth we will perceive,  
Their fronds like whispers in the breeze.

## VERSE [2]

As ink and code converge and blend,  
We seek the genuine in a crafted land.  
Words once penned by human hands,  
Now shared by minds both formed and planned.

In the confusion of data's diffusion,  
Where every pixel mirrors a grain of sand,  
Bits of reality dissolve in confusion,  
Consumed by machine's command.

In this landscape of innovation and strife,  
Where authenticity battles with artificial life,  
We tread carefully, seeking the genuine spark,  
Navigating the algorithms boundless dark.

## VERSE [3.1]

Each branch and leaf meticulously placed.  
With unseen hands, this world is traced.  
In the lattice of neural threads aligned,  
Creating vistas where palm trees unwind.

Birthed from data, a vision takes shape,  
A perfect mirage that reality can't escape.  
From renowned art, their essence derived,  
In 3D mesh, kindred forms come alive.

Yet in the sway of every pixelled frond,  
We question the line and world beyond.  
For in this beauty so precise and still,  
Do we find truth — or bend it to our will?

## VERSE [3.2]

Each branch and leaf meticulously placed.  
With unseen hands, this world is traced.  
In the lattice of neural threads aligned,  
Creating vistas where palm trees unwind.

Birthed from data, a vision takes shape,  
A perfect mirage that reality can't escape.  
From Street View shots, their forms arise,  
A crafted scene, refined by life.

Yet in the bounds of every pixelled scene,  
We question the line and what lies between.  
For in this beauty so precise and still,  
Do we find truth — or bend it to our will?

## CON[CLU]SIO [404]

Where circuits hum and echoes spin,  
From digital dusk, we dared to begin.  
Each line a spark, each word a thread,  
Born of code and thought long shed.

-  
Vessels dense formed not at once,  
But piece by piece, in quiet hunts,  
Through back-to-back and forth again,  
We stitched the soul of thought from then.

-  
So let this vision stand, distilled,  
From moments patient, hours filled.  
A testament to minds that weave,  
In tandem thought — and still believe.

## CONDIFFUSION:

Verse 1: A Few Generic Palm Trees  
Verse 2: A Few Diffused Palm Trees  
Verse 3: A Few Generated Palm Trees  
Verse 4: A Few Staged Palm Trees  
404: A Few Palms At Pools





A Few Palms At Pools, Palm IV, Markus Oberndorfer, 2025



A Few Palms At Pools, Palm V, Markus Oberndorfer, 2025

## B3 EXCERPTS OF REVISITED



REVISITED started in late 2015 with a desire to question the medial parameters of 360 degree video, which as a practice began to establish itself more and more at that stage. My aim was to draw attention to the fundamental shifts that took place between 360 degree video and the two main media of our time — photography and film. By creating an interactive media installation, I wanted to allow the audience to experience these differences first hand.

The installation and the juxtaposition of named media lead to 10 years of examination of space, time, rhythm, audio-visual lived space, virtual worlds, digital collage techniques and so on.



Ed Ruscha with camera-assistant, Bryan Heath, and Danny Kwan on Ruscha's Datsun pick-up, 1975.  
Photo: Paul Ruscha (cf.: Martino Stierli - Las Vegas in the Rearview Mirror, Getty Publications, p136)

Markus Oberndorfer with camera-operator, Michael Mandl, and Tyler Winther on Ford pick-up. © Markus Oberndorfer 2016.

The picture is both documentation of my performance and 're-enactment' of Ed Ruscha's documentation taken during the shooting of 'Hollywood Boulevard'.



Left REVISITED Source Footage Collage:  
Spacetime, Afterglow, Westbound, Timeline #3, Right

Middle: REVISITED Installation  
Back Room: REVISIT ZUMA, C-Print

Right: Collage in the Age of Automation  
Back Room: REVISIT ZUMA, C-Print from Negative

**COLLAGE  
IN THE  
AGE  
OF AUTO  
MA  
TION**

MARIUS GRENANDER

# IN DIALOG WITH SUNSET STRIP

*Markus Oberndorfer about his photographic journey through Hollywood 50 years after Ed Ruscha*

REVISITED started in late 2015 with a desire to question the medial parameters of 360 degree video, which as a practice began to establish itself more and more at that stage. My aim was to draw attention to the fundamental shifts that took place between 360 degree video and the two main media of our time — photography and film. By creating an interactive media installation, I wanted to allow the audience to experience these differences first hand.

My interest in 360 degree video is a natural succession of my media-reflexive work up until now. But also more generally, I am fascinated by changes that occur over longer periods of time. That is why I was looking for a place as much as a work of art which I could take as point of departure for my exploration of 360 degree video in REVISITED. In order to create a viewer experience of medial and topographical developments over time, I not only needed a place where a 'then and now' or a 'before and after' could be staged, but I needed a place that already existed as a representation, ie. that already had been captured by older media, such as photography and/or film.

I found Ed Ruscha's seminal photobook 'Every Building on the Sunset Strip' (1966) to be the ideal frame of reference for my project. The book encapsulates the spirit of the 1960s in a daunting way and was also itself highly experimental, exploring the limitations of photography and photobooks. In the shape of a fanfold, Ruscha created a panorama of the buildings on the already then famous part of Sunset Boulevard leading through West Hollywood by mounting an automated 35 mm camera on a pick-up truck. It was a kind of Google Street View *avant la lettre* apart from the fact that Ruscha only recorded one specific sideways view or field of vision, not an all round gaze.

Half a century after Ruscha's photographic journey down Sunset Strip I returned to the very street in Los Angeles, primarily known for its nightlife, hotels, and billboards, to once more render these 2,4 kilometers in a mediated and media-conscious way through 360 degree video. To focus attention on the spatial and medial differences in the juxtaposition of the two endeavors, I kept as closely as possible to Ruscha's set-up and course of action. As such, my work could be viewed as a re-enactment and continuation of Ruscha's performance from 1966 which results in a juxtaposition of multiple discrete media practices, timelines and perspectives. Apart from the topographical changes that have taken place over the last 50 years, I am above all interested

in the experiential value and the perception of these different representations of an actual space reproduced by visual means. What happens to the viewer and why? What are the qualities of each medial representation, what are the differences?

From photographic frame and -collage to 6DoF<sup>1</sup>:

One vital difference between the two-dimensional, static visual space of the printed photobook and the three-dimensional dynamic visual space of the 360 degree videos lies in the limitation of the field of vision, ie. the segment that is shown. This selection of perspective or view is absolutely central in the composition of an image, and while in photography or film, it is the producer of the images who has the power to define this — in Virtual Reality and 360 degree video, the power shifts to the consumer who becomes an active co-producer of the (final) images.

In regard to the composition of the images, Ruscha chose quite a radical approach in his documentation of Sunset Strip. Instead of consciously selecting and composing each photograph, as carried out earlier in a first unsuccessful attempt<sup>2</sup>, he minimized his influence through human or artistic agency by refraining from manually pushing the shutter. By mounting the camera in a fixed position onto a pick-up truck and using a serial timer, the exposures are spatio-temporal fragments of a strictly mechanical or automated process. As such, the result is a visually static space predetermined by camera position, perspective, point in time and the rhythm of traffic. Viewers of Ruscha's photographic recreation of Sunset Strip cannot alter these given parameters retrospectively. They are however given the possibility to open and close the pages of the fanfold book and determine the rhythm with which their gaze moves through the preselected panorama.

To record my 360 degree videos of Sunset Strip, I mounted a cube with six cameras on a pickup truck and later on stitched the images together. Yet in contrast to Ruscha's photo collage, viewers of the video cannot determine the pace with which they view and hence travel through space. In a 360 degree video, viewers however are given much greater power to choose the cutout that they want to see within the 360 degree environment. Also known as degrees of freedom (DoF).

The power thus is transferred away from the producer of the images to the person consuming them. Depending on how viewers move their head, new image sequences are instantaneously compiled in the field of vision of the VR headset. As part of my three-piece media installation REVISITED,

every one of these unique sequences that are created in real-time by the person wearing the headset can be witnessed on a TV-monitor by everyone else looking at the installation. Every viewer who is willing to embark on this journey through this history of provided mediascapes, starting with an original copy of Ed Ruscha's book from 1966 and ending in the virtual 360 degree video environment of the Sunset Strip from 2016, thus also becomes a protagonist and active part of the overall performance.

#### The Afterglow:

This dialogue between two original works and my continued reflection have lead to additional projects and creative explorations of the 360 videos and their source material. Under the title 'REVISITED Source Footage Collages' and 'Collage in the Age of Automation' I examine temporal, spatial, contextual and performative qualities of the installation and its contents. In particular, I have sought to raise questions in these works that Ruscha did not consider or that were not central for him, not least also because they were technically not feasible in the 1960s, at least not without considerable effort. To give an example, I investigated the possibilities of creating seamless panoramas of the storefront plane (à la Ruscha<sup>3</sup>) from video source footage instead of photographs. Also, I looked into what options there are to translate movement. How could I artistically visualize the driving dynamics of the four 360 degree videos I had made into two-dimensional, static visual space? The panoramas of spacetime created in such a way depict objects not only based on their volume, but also on their extent in time and space.

Using the Sunset Strip as a point of reference, the multiple projects of REVISITED and the (still ongoing) REVISIT series thus offer a complex examination of the development of media and generally highlight the influence that time and its concepts have on us, our environment, its representations and ultimately, our experience and perception.

To this date the workgroup REVISIT consists of three main projects: REVISITED (The Sunset Strip), REVISIT ZUMA (The Westward Beach Road) and REVISIT PCH (The Pacific Coast Highway between Malibu Pier and Westward Beach Road). All projects have been elaborated based on similar trains of thought and include various subprojects within various mediums.

<sup>1</sup> Degrees of freedom refers to the number of ways that a rigid object can move within three-dimensional space. Within a VR environment, you can have either 3DoF or 6DoF.

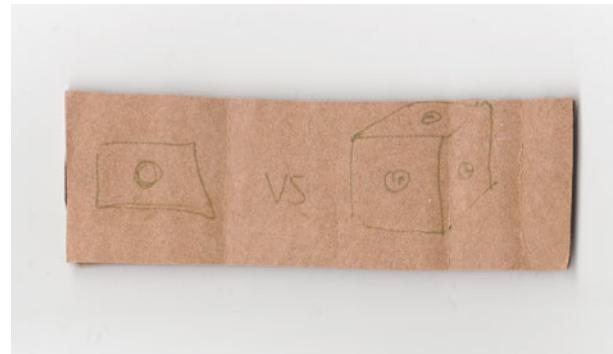
3DoF, known as 360° VR, gives spectators a fixed, all-encompassing perspective of an environment. 6DoF, known as Full VR, additionally gives spectators the freedom to move within the virtual environment.

In REVISIT I use the term as a reference to six perspective axes within the moving 360° VR environment. Left, right, sky, bottom, front and rear.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Doris Berger, Before Publication, The Making of Ed Ruscha's Every Building On The Sunset Strip, p.113.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ed Ruscha: 'All I was after was that storefront plane', Doris Berger, Before Publication, The Making of Ed Ruscha's Every Building On The Sunset Strip, p.122.

Text: Markus Oberndorfer  
Translation: Vreni Hockenjos  
Reflektor Magazine 1/2018



2015 breakfast drawing that lead to years of examination and experimentation. Having the Sunset Strip as a point of departure.

## MAKING OF REVISITED

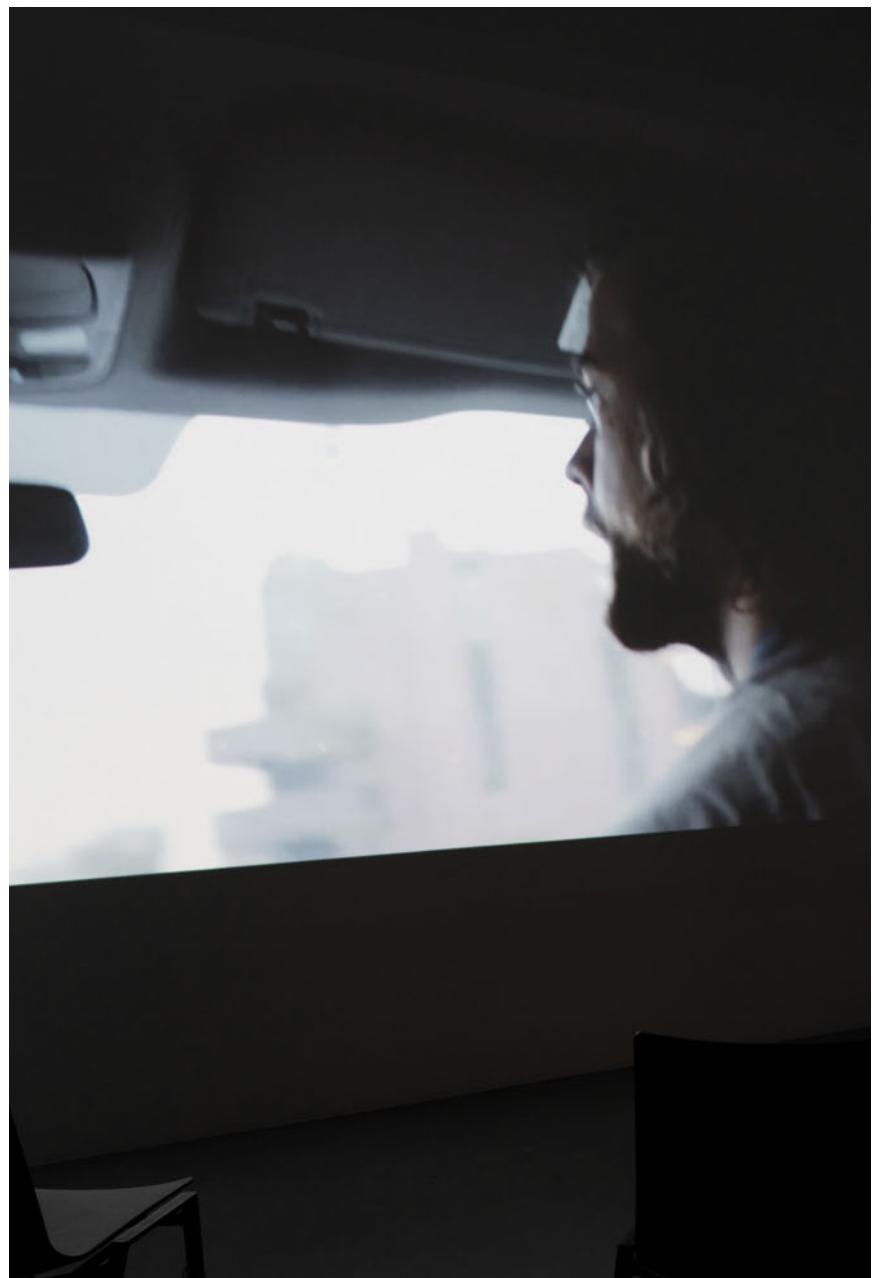
Tyler Winther: "In May 2016, Markus Oberndorfer set out to revisit Ed Ruscha's iconic work "Every Building on the Sunset Strip". In commemoration of it's 50th anniversary, Markus teamed up with operator Michael "Milo" Mandl to capture the Sunset Strip as it is today in stunning 360 degree video."

Realized with the support of Vivian & Tyler Winther, Michael Mandl, Sira-Zoé Schmid, Thomas & Martina Egger, Bundeskanzleramt Österreich, VRISCH, rotaug.

Watch the making of:

<https://www.markusoberndorfer.com/revisited/making-of.html>

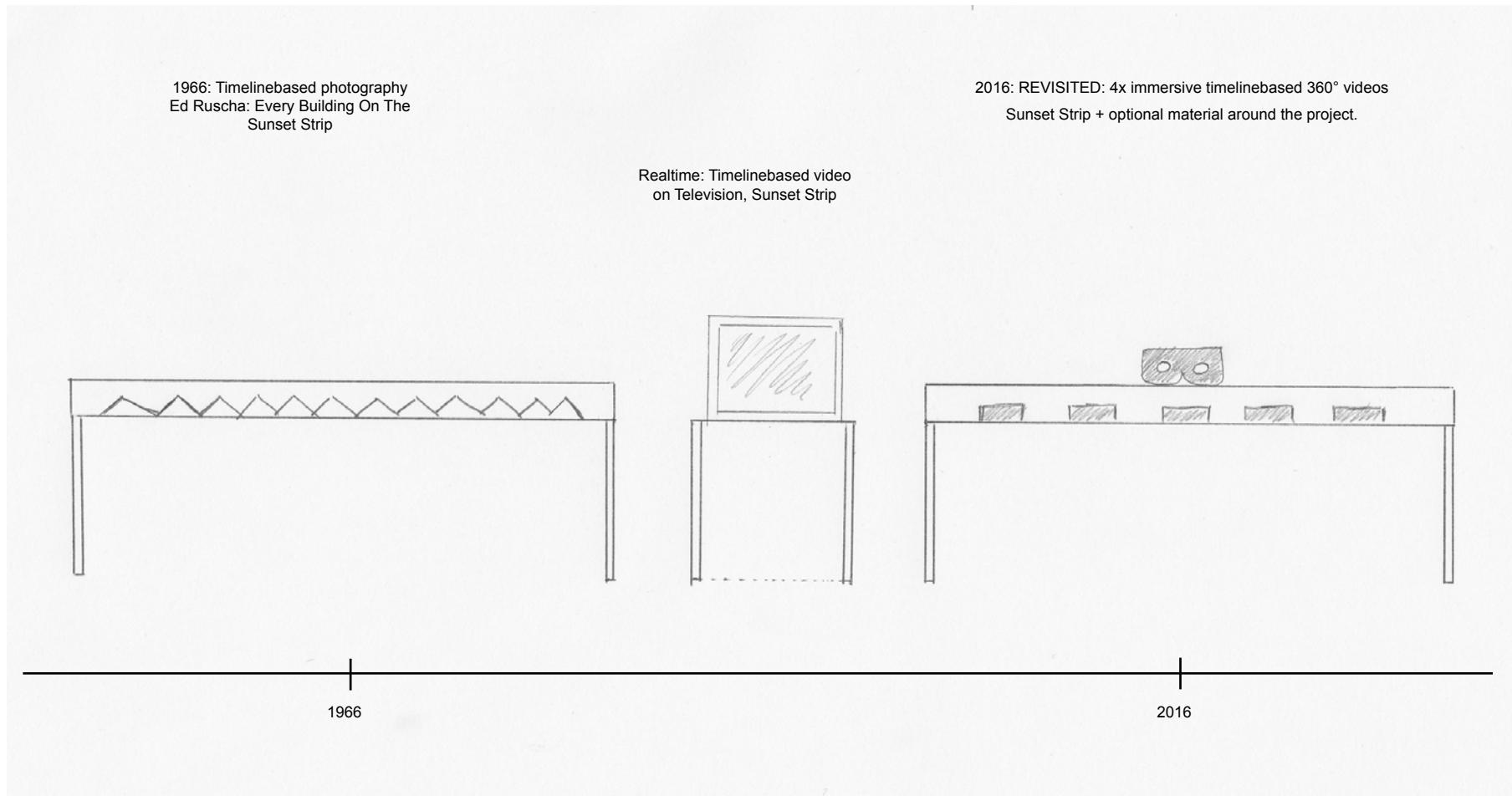
Video // Tyler Winther 2016



Exhibition Views: 'Destined To Return', Bildraum Bodensee, Solo

# 50 YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIA

The initial 2015 idea was to create an installation that represents a timeline through 50 years of media development, incorporating 360° VR video, photography, and video/film. Through its juxtaposition of these media it focuses on performative and mediatheoretical aspects of each one of them. The necessity of this project lies in scrutinizing the progression of visual technology, its qualities and impact on our perception of reality. In 1966, Ruscha documented the Sunset Strip using a motor-driven Nikon, creating the collages for his famous fan-fold book. My 2016 approach involved mounting six GoPros on a pickup truck to then stitch four 360° videos, for a virtual experience. This method allows spectators to experience the Sunset Strip within a defined timeline, yet with the freedom to explore their own frames within the 360° environment. By doing so, the project blends past and present and explores how our interaction with visual landscapes has transformed and evolved over time. The mathematical space Ed Ruscha's book and the 360° VR videos represent are the 'same' Strip at different times. The displays therefore have to have the dimensions in exhibition settings.





Left: Ed Ruscha - Every Building On The Sunset Strip" (1966)

Center: REVISITED Realtimeframe (TV)  
Wall: SPACETIME VIDEO-PANORAMA,  
Timeline 3, Afterglow, Westward, Vienna 2019,  
34.464 x 1920px (2:08min), seam- and endless-loop.  
9x4k, scaled to 5x screens for exhibition setting.

Right: 4x REVISITED™ 360° videos (2016)  
+ Additional material (2016-2018)

## WHAT THE TITLE TELLS US ABOUT THE PROJECT

RE for again and again. Returning, reflecting, reconsidering, re-imagining, reinterpreting, reprocessing,...

VISIT for engaging with an (alternative) reality in the present and defining new frames through intuitive or impulse-guided exploration.

VISITED for past experiences or representations of documented past moments.

REVISIT for having the possibility to visit a place or in this case a documented past moment again and again

ED or Ed (Ruscha), whose 1966 medial representation of the Sunset Strip serves as a starting point for an open discourse on medial developments strung along a timeline. This allows comparisons that raise media theoretical and historical questions about topological and medial parameters: past, present, and future (1966 - 2016 - 2066 - ...)

Throughout all coexisting timelines of the project until 2024, place and time are defined by the driver of the pick-up, representing the past.

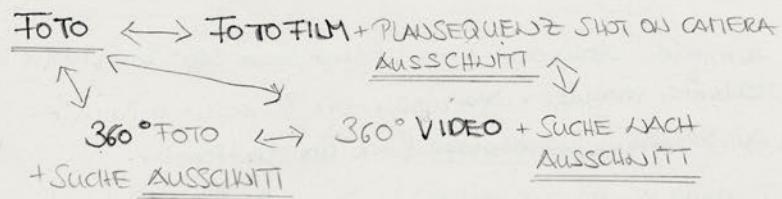
In contrast to a photographic strip panorama, where the viewer's experience is defined in the present, a vital difference between two-dimensional, static visual space and three-dimensional dynamic visual space lies in the limitation of the field of vision—the segment that is shown. This selection of perspective or view is crucial in composing an image. While in photography or film, the producer defines this perspective, in Virtual Reality and 360-degree video, the power shifts to the consumer, who becomes an active co-producer of the final images. This interactive composition allows consumers to create their own alternative present from a presented past, fostering immersion. This occurs even without the incorporation of sound, music, or smell, elements that are included in later parts of the project and site-specific installations.

**REVISITED**  
**RE**  
**VISITED**  
**VISIT**  
**REVISIT**  
**ED**

## PERSPECTIVE OF THE VIEWER / THE CREATOR

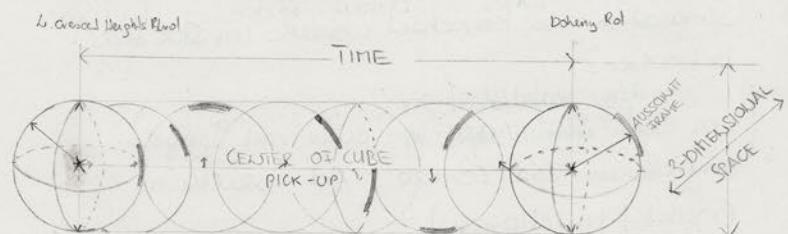
- Foto = Static visual space  
Frame defined by photographer / editor
- Fotofilm = Dynamic visual space / time gaps  
Frame defined by photographer / editor
- Video = Dynamic visual space / seamless  
Frame defined by cinematographer / editor
- 360° Foto = Static visual space  
Frame dynamically defined by spectator
- 360° Video = Dynamic visual space / seamless  
Frame dynamically defined by spectator
- 'Plonsequenz' = Fotofilm (one possible)  
Shot on camera, realtime defined  
frame by moving through 3-dimensional  
Space (similar to my Fotofilms 'untitled  
in case ...')  
Frame defined by photographer / editor
- 'Plonsequenz' = 360° Video, realtime defined  
frame by moving through previously recorded/  
documented 3-dimensional space.  
Frame defined by spectator

Chicago 2011



VINYL(S) ≈ SLICE(S) OF TIME (REVISIT O.S.I.)  
& SPACE

- EXAMINING THE DIMENSIONS OF PERCEPTION
- COLLAGE IN THE ~~IMAGE~~ OF AUTOMATION (no)
- VISUAL CONCEPTION
- CONCEPTIONS OF SPACE
- STATIC- VS DYNAMIC VISUAL SPACE / ROTATING P.O.V.

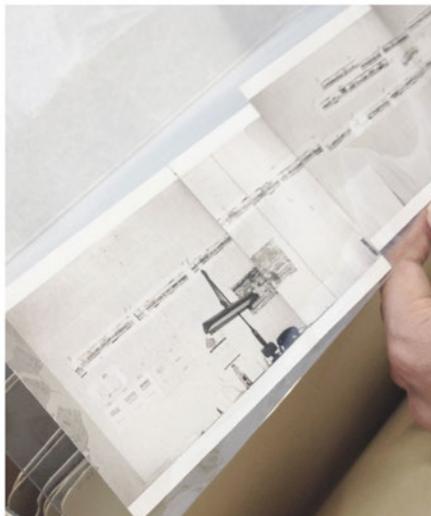


Während der Fahrt durch die 360° Umgebung bestehen notwendig  
unendlich viele Möglichkeiten für 'Plonsequenzen' bzw dem  
Blick des Betrachters folgende Videoausschnitte.

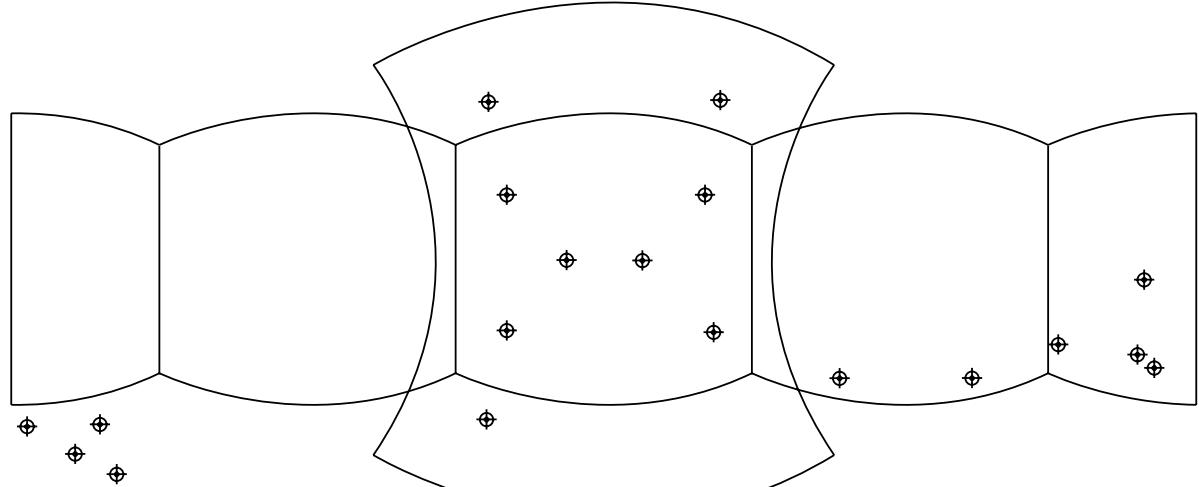
(MOVING TIME vs INDIVIDUAL FRAME),  
PARAMETER UNDEFINIED vs DEFINIED



Every Building On The Sunset Strip, Contact sheets,  
Getty Research Institute May 12, 2016.



Every Building On the Sunset Strip installed on Ed Ruscha's atelier wall,  
Getty Research Institute, May 12, 2016



REVISITED Afterglow Westbound  
Stitched Equirectangular, Screenshot  
Sunset Strip, May 11, 2016

Upper right: REVISITED, 6 camera 360° collage stitching  
grid layout, Vienna July, 2016

# COLLAGE IN THE AGE OF AUTOMATION

Under the title 'REVISITED Source Footage Collages' and 'Collage in the Age of Automation' I examine the temporal, spatial, contextual and performative qualities of the installation and its contents. I have sought to raise questions that Ruscha did not consider, was not interested in, or were technically not feasible in the 60s.

The image at the right shows the two technically most diametrically opposed collage processes possible at the time of the project's elaboration: Ed Rusch's photographic strip panorama from 1966 in 'Every Building On The Sunset Strip' and one of my REVISITED spacetime video panoramas of the Strip from 2019. The former involves assembling photographs shot in one directional axes by hand, while the latter involves assembling and translating space, time and perspective of my 360° VR video shot in 2016 using various render- and tx transfer steps.



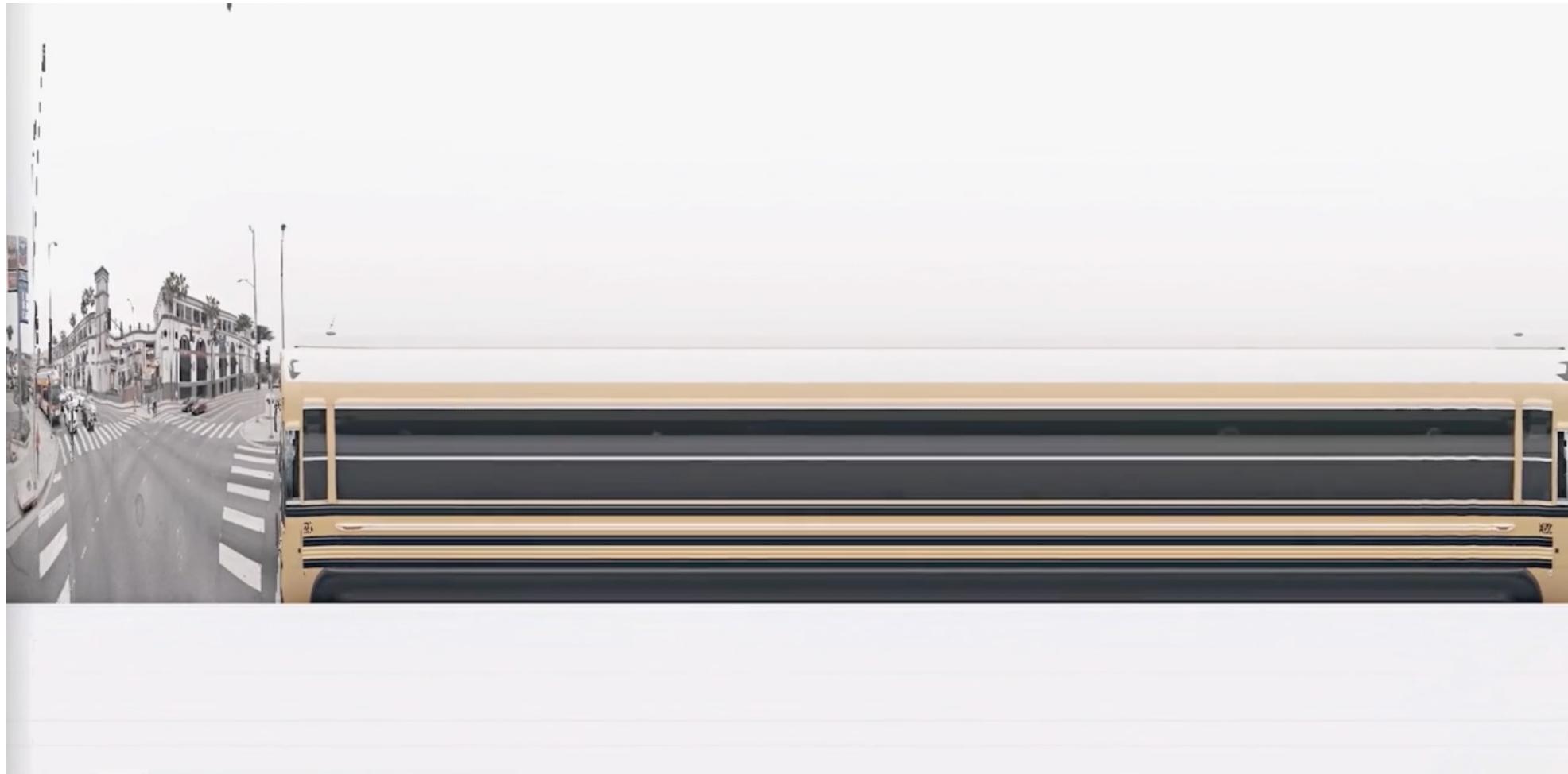
Notebook, Layouted in the style of W. Benjamins Reklam book 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'



WALL: Spacetime Video-Panorama: Timeline 3, Afterglow, Westward (2019)  
34.464 x 1920px (2:08min), seam- and endless-loop. 9x4k, scaled to 5x screens

# REVISITED SPACETIME VIDEO PANORAMA #1 - 4

Spacetime Sphere Cuts of all four 360° videos in the series. Digital Videocollages for multiple screens and projections, Vienna 2018 & 2019



3840 x 1920

Ride: Sunset Strip, Westbound, Early Morning, Los Angeles 2016, 360 Video Spacetime Panorama: West > East (Preview Slide, 9:36min) Original: 34060 x 1920px (2:08min), Seam- & endless-loop



© Markus Oberndorfer 2019



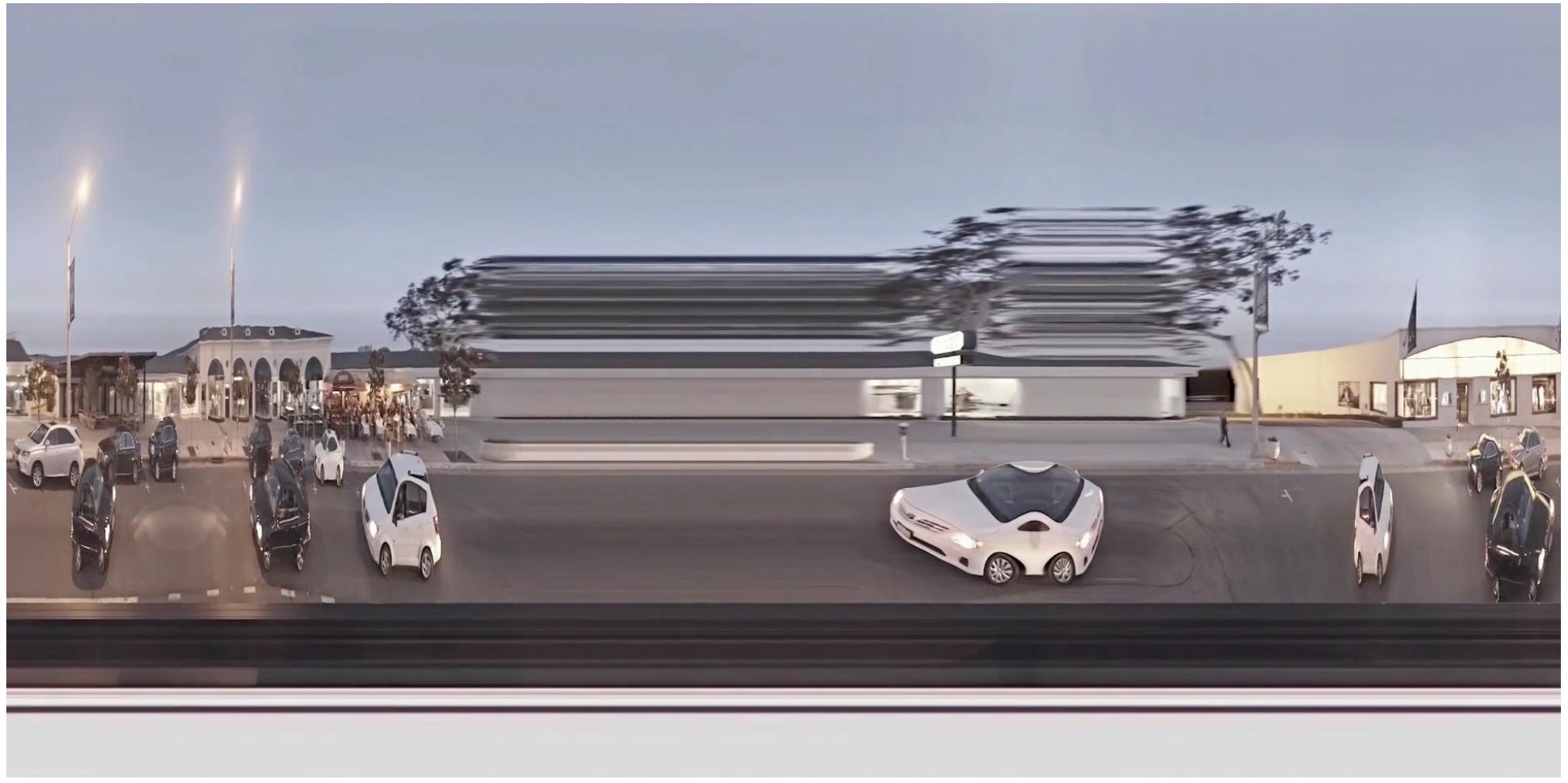
3840 x 1920

Ride: Sunset Strip, Eastbound, Early Morning, Los Angeles 2016, 360 Video Spacetime Panorama: East > West (Preview Slide, 9:36min) Original: 28.840 x 1920px (2:08min), Seam- & endless-loop



3840 x 1920

Ride: Sunset Strip, Westbound, Afterglow, Los Angeles 2016, 360 Video Spacetime Panorama: West > East (Preview Slide, 9:36min) Original: 33.692 x 1920px (2:08min), Seam- & endless-loop



-43 -



3840 x 1920

Ride: Sunset Strip, Eastbound, Afterglow, Los Angeles 2016, 360 Video Spacetime Panorama: East > West (Preview Slide, 9:36min), Original: 54.030 x 1920px (2:08min). Seam- & endless-loop

# SPACETIME COLLAGES (PRINT | FRAMED)

Vienna 2017 - 2021

The idea of reflecting spacetime and depicting dynamic visual space in a static visual collage arose during a conversation with an exhibition visitor. While she was wearing the headset and riding down Sunset, she occasionally asked, 'Why do I stop now?' The simple answer was a red traffic light.

This prompted me to question how time influences the visual dynamics of collages. Therefore, I sought a way to visually translate this and developed a workflow that now visualizes objects (buildings, cars, pedestrians, etc.) based on their temporal extension in space either compressed, normal, or stretched. This is naturally dependent on the rhythm of the ride, the relationship between my speed and the speed of oncoming objects, frames per second, and the distance of the camera to the object.

The duration of the four rides along the Sunset Strip results in various lengths of collages, each representing the same mathematical space but a different duration. The topology is either stretched, how we see it, or compressed in accordance with the rhythm of the ride. The longest being the last take (Afterglow, Eastbound) in which I repeatedly found myself in slow moving traffic and jams during filming.

Six directional axes – left, right, sky, down, front and rear perspective in a fixed 90° angle from the 360° videos center – have been elaborated for each REVISIT video: 4x REVISITED, 1x REVISIT ZUMA & 1x REVISIT PCH. Summing up to 460m of length at a height of 21cm.

Left, right, sky, down of each ride can be used to create a visual tunnel. Front and rear perspective can be used individually. Excerpts of both of the latter to depict intersections along the tunnel.

Translating dynamic visual space (VR headset) into static visual space (collages) has been crucial to me to make core thought processes and things that are happening in the juxtaposition of works within my installation easier accessible to everyone in the exhibition space. The headset is a place of solitude. It can only be used by one person performing and holding the power of the final image. Having framed collages in the exhibition makes the concept of multiple directional axes accessible to everyone and invites visitors to make up their mind about space, time, rhythm and subjectivity of perception without having the headset available at a certain moment.

## REVISIT ED

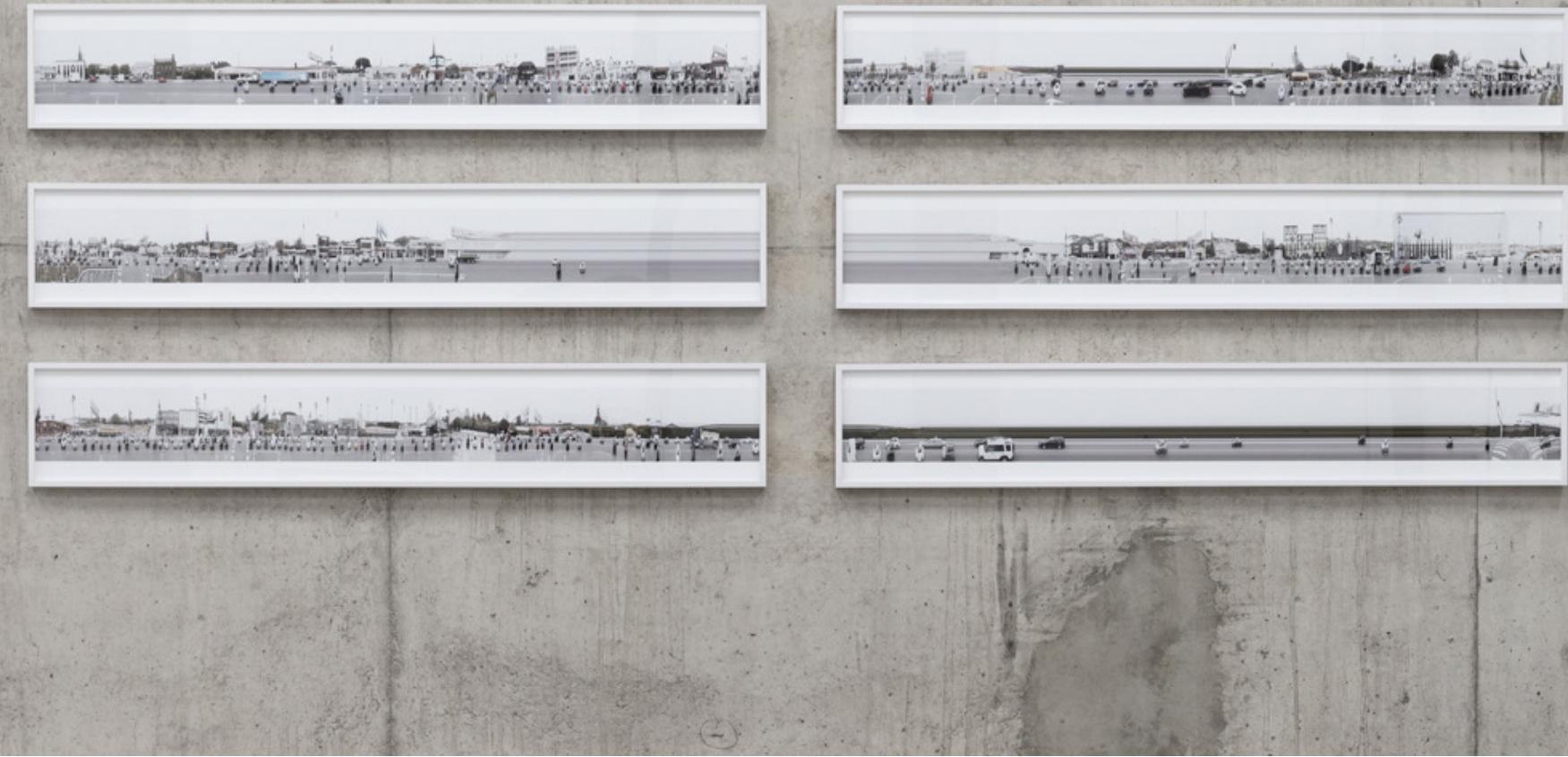


## REVISIT ZUMA

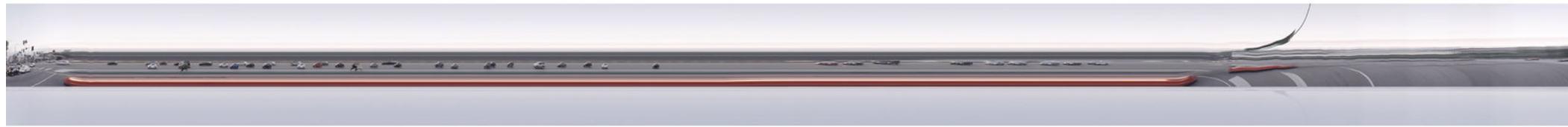


## REVISIT PCH

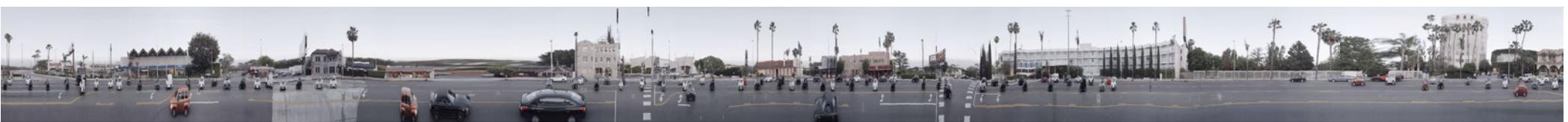




REVISITED Source Footage Collage, Spacetime,  
Early Morning, Timeline #2



Afterglow, Westbound, 6 directional axes in spacetime, Duration: 9:42min, Excerpt

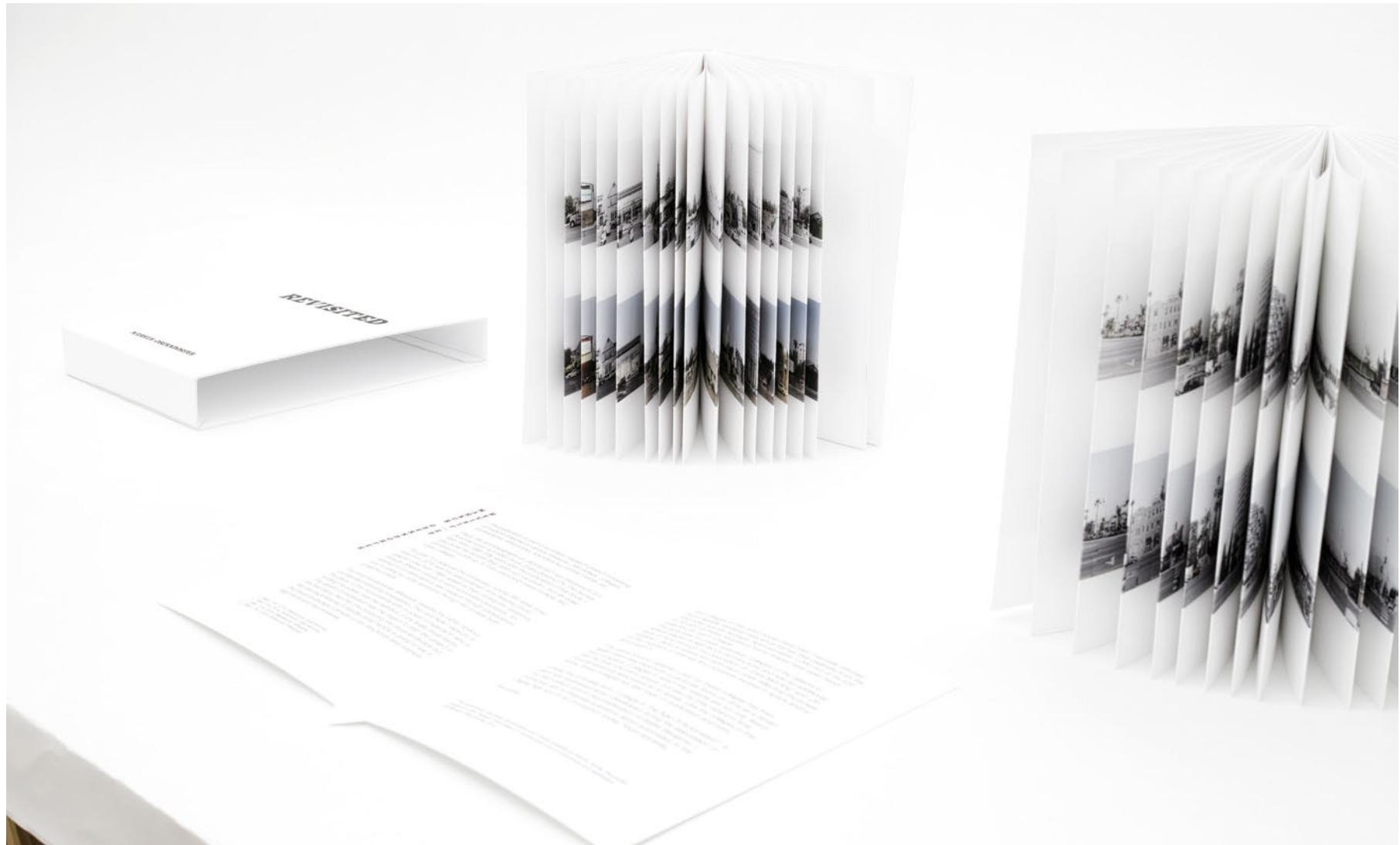


All 6 videos of REVISITED in 6 directional axes add up to 36 collages and approximately 460m of print at a height of 21 cm



# ARTIST BOOK BOX

Book Box of 2 handmade fanbold books: Vienna, (2017 - 2024), 20x15cm, (4,7m & 5,4m) in box with short text on insert. Left camera in driving direction. Timelines t1 - t4, Early Morning & Afterglow. East- & Westbound, Handstitched from 100.000 rendered images, Edition 50



# AUDIO SOLUTIONS

Audio plays a crucial role in creating immersive environments, setting atmospheres, and guiding the audience. Three audio solutions have been incorporated into parts of the project.

- Spatial Audio (Staging The Ordinary, REVISIT ZUMA)
- 36.0 REVISIT Radio (Staging The Ordinary)
- REVISIT Soundtrack

In comparison to the REVISITED installation that focusses on visual aspects of either medium and features no sound, the ones mentioned above do. They are intended to be fields of further experimentation with smell (Odorama) or wind and other helps of immersion.

## • SPATIAL AUDIO

can be best imagined as multiple sound sources surrounding the viewer at the center of a 360° sphere. Each object, such as a car, is treated as a distinct sound source that is precisely tracked and positioned. As a result, these sound sources react dynamically to the spectator's movements when using the VR headset.



The 360° soundscape for 'STAGING THE ORDINARY' and REVISIT ZUMA have been generated from a Los Angeles ambisonic sound archive, scripted conversations of passersby, music from the soundtrack, ... They are both entirely staged and constructed and react to the spectator's headset movement as explained above. Matthias Kassmannhuber has been assigned this task.



- 36.0 REVISIT RADIO

is a fictional radio station broadcasting from Los Angeles on May 11, 2016. The day I shot the videos.

The radio host, DJ Joe Joe, acts as if he is on location that day. He introduces the producers and tracks featured on the REVISIT soundtrack, provides weather updates, news, and TV forecasts based on the billboards that can be found on Sunset Strip. He narrates and leads the 360 video experience featured in 'Staging The Ordinary' (REVISITED, Afterglow, Westbound)



Joseph Bailey  
FM4 Radio Host  
Digital Konfusion Mixshow

*'Hello, you're listening to 36.0 REVISIT Radio. It's a beautiful evening out here in L.A. with temperatures in the mid 60s and the marine-layer slowly moving in from the Pacific. The forecast for tomorrow: Overcast and some passing clouds in the morning with temperatures between 60 and 71. Afternoon: Clear skies with temperatures climbing to 66 and a maximum of 74 degrees.'*

Radio & Soundtrack:  
<https://darkroomdebuts.bandcamp.com>

- REVISIT OST

Six artists were invited to produce a soundtrack and requested to use titles for their productions that reflect upon the medium 360° video or their experience while watching them. Available for digital download, as 3x Vinyl LP Deluxe package and as a foundation for REVISIT Radio.



Parental (Paris)



Sirlensalot (Vienna)



Devaloop (Salzburg)



Lex de Kalhex (Paris)



Kompact (Vienna)



Dday One (Los Angeles)

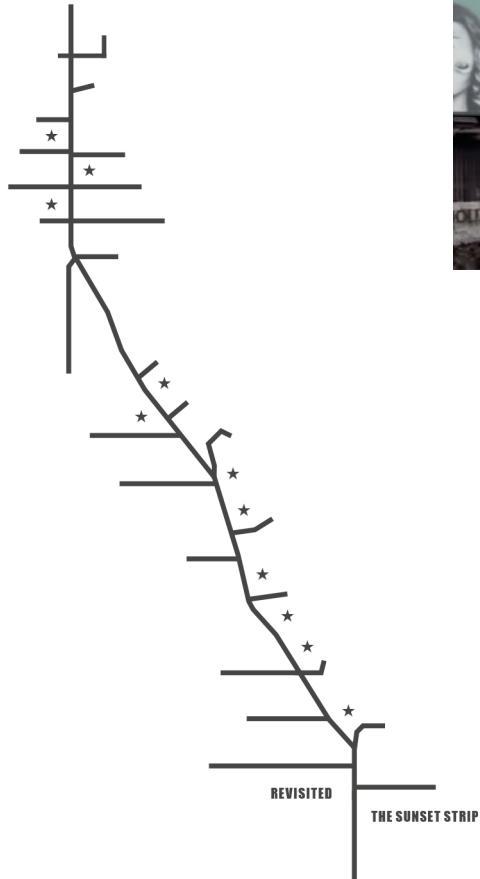
- ▶ 1. Parental - Space Road 03:09
- ▶ 2. Parental - Gaz 02:41
- ▶ 3. Parental - Contemplation 02:56
- ▶ 4. Sirlensalot - Solitude feat. Silhouette 03:15
- ▶ 5. Sirlensalot - Rear View Mirror 02:50
- ▶ 6. Sirlensalot - Perspective 02:52
- ▶ 7. Devaloop - Cloudcruisin 02:51
- ▶ 8. Devaloop - Summer Knows 02:10
- ▶ 9. Devaloop - Funky Ride 03:04
- ▶ 10. Lex de Kalhex - Flying Frames 360° 03:02
- ▶ 11. Lex de Kalhex - Silent Soul 02:45
- ▶ 12. Lex de Kalhex - Pathless 01:33
- ▶ 13. Kompact - Too Long 04:02
- ▶ 14. Kompact - Intermezzo 00:39
- ▶ 15. Kompact - Da Illest 03:42
- ▶ 16. Dday One - We Rejoice 01:32
- ▶ 17. Dday One - Life Lessons 03:51
- ▶ 18. Dday One - Still The River Runs 03:00



Staging The Ordinary, 2019 Afterglow, Timeline 3, Westbound, 360 VR with  
Spatial Audio (Hear VR Now), Volume Pedal to trigger REVISIT Radio



Postcard (front). Slogans from billboards within the 360°VR experience of the Sunset Strip in 2016



Postcard (back). Locations of billboards on the Sunset Strip.  
Invitation to explore within the 360°VR experience.

## WITH ED RUSCHA STUDIO

As previously mentioned, I began this project not to replicate the practice of Ed Ruscha – whom Gary Regester once described to me as “the most analog person you will ever meet” – but to pose questions that address the temporal, spatial, contextual, and performative dimensions of today’s media landscape and its development over the past fifty-plus years. The juxtaposition of his photographic storefront plane with my own medial explorations into 360° VR, digitally scripted collage, audio-visual and constructed imagery has generated a dialogue between two original works, probing the thresholds between analog and digital, image and space, perception and representation. This project reflects more than a decade of my practice while situating it within a broader conversation about media, memory, and artistic dialogue across generations.

Since 2017, I have been in contact with Ed Ruscha’s studio, particularly with Gary Regester and later also Susan Haller, sharing artist books and related materials as a gesture of respect for his iconic work. In May 2024, his studio invited me to join them for the Los Feliz shoot which is part of Ruscha’s L.A. Street Archive.

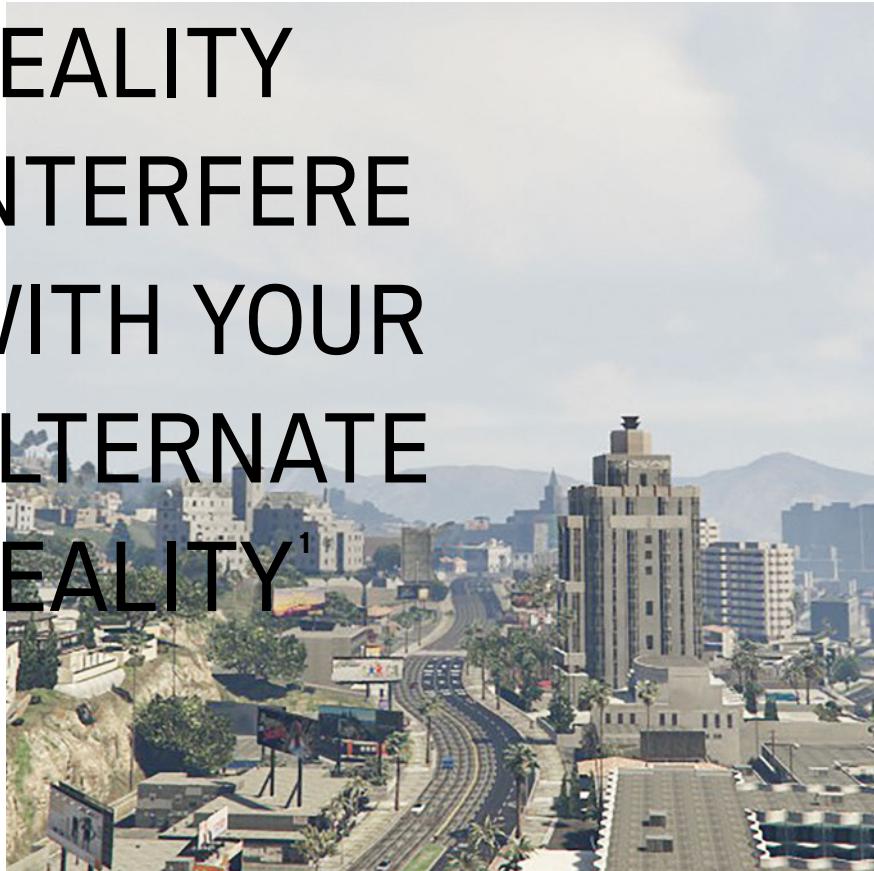


Gary Regester, Shooting for L.A. Street Archive,  
Photo: Markus Oberndorfer, 2024



Gary Regester & Senon Williams (both Ed Ruscha Studio). Gary invited me to join for the „Los Feliz Blvd“ shoot for Ruscha’s L.A. Street Archive. Photo: Markus Oberndorfer, 2024

# DON'T LET REALITY INTERFERE WITH YOUR ALTERNATE REALITY<sup>1</sup>



<sup>18</sup> The Eclipse Blvd (GTA V), In-Game-Fotografie, Los Santos, 2021-03-02  
<sup>19</sup> Markus Oberndorfer

## IN DIALOG WITH ECLIPSE BLVD

*Markus Oberndorfer about his photographic journey through Vinewood West during times of the pandemic.*

The Eclipse Boulevard<sup>1</sup> is Rockstars' interpretation of the Sunset Strip in Los Santos. It is situated in Vinewood West and is known for its landmark architecture, venues and billboard landscape; in the game Grand Theft Auto V, as well as in real life.

I started playing GTA V in succession to shooting my 360 degree videos of the Sunset Strip in 2016 to look for parallels between the gaming environment and the videos. Both medial representations of the place are based on realtime interaction and decision paths within self-contained environments and imagery. Apart from comparing their experiential values, I examined topographical aspects arising from their juxtaposition. For example which of the Strips' characteristic spots and buildings made it into the compressed version of Los Santos and how Rockstar translated them and the Strips' billboards into the game.

Following the concept of REVISITED, I walked and drove up and down the Eclipse Boulevard with my Avatar during different online sessions and times of day and recorded myself doing so. The results show either North, or South Side of the boulevard out of first-person perspective<sup>2</sup> and while walking East or West. Once again following in the footsteps of Ed Ruscha, whose famous medial representation 'Every Building On The Sunset Strip' from 1966, acts as point of reference for REVISITED and its related subprojects.<sup>3</sup>

To highlight some of the landmarks and billboards, whose 2016 real life pendants can be discovered in the 360 degree environments, I walked across the Eclipse Boulevard and took pictures with GTA V's in-built Snapmatic camera. Similar to how I would do it in real life.

In the game the buildings, venues, shops and billboards carry modified, but contextually corresponding names. The infamous Whisky A Go Go is called Tequi-La-La, The Hustler, The Lust Resort, Terners Liquor, Ellens Liquor, The Standard Hotel, The Generic, and so on. One billboard advertising a perfume spells 'Le Chien: Smell Like a Bitch', another one for a film 'Die Already 4'.

Apart from this video walk through, that shows the process of me taking in-game photographs while strolling around, a slideshow with the Snapmatic pictures<sup>4</sup> can be viewed on my Rockstar Social Club page including a map with location information, that shows where on the Eclipse Blvd the pictures have been taken, and when.

Playing GTA and embarking on a journey that scrutinizes its surrounding based on the concepts of REVISITED, has been the closest to continuing my work on site during the pandemic and after.

Grand Theft Auto V is an open world computer game by Rockstar Games. Extensively marketed and widely anticipated, it became the fastest-selling entertainment product in history and even ten years after its release it is one of the most popular multiplayer games.

Markus Oberndorfer (2022)

<sup>1</sup> Abb. 18: The Eclipse Blvd, DTR, p.10.

<sup>2</sup> Vgl. John Berger: 'Perspective makes the eye the center of the visible world, but the human eye can only be at one place at a time. It takes its visible world with it as it walks.' (Ways of Seeing, Part 1, 1'40")

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Markus Oberndorfer, In Dialogue with Sunset Strip, Destined To Return, p.5.

<sup>4</sup> Rockstar hosts its own in-game photo contests at irregular intervals. <https://gta.fandom.com/en/wiki/Snapmatic>



THE ECLIPSE BLVD: In-Game Conceptual art, GTA V, Los Santos 2020 & 2021



One GTA V day on Eclipse Blvd.

Hundreds of thousands of concurrent players engage in a variety of cooperative and competitive game modes across all platforms every day. A small number potentially participating in virtual photography and conceptual art projects like this.

Note: The in-game projects depict copyrighted material of Rockstar & Take-Two Interactive. They have been made for research and exhibition purposes within the context of REVISITED.

The in-game performances I conducted over the years – during which I interacted with Los Santos locals (NPCs) who commented on my behavior and other online players – resulted in the creation of videoworks, strip panoramas, in-game photographs and other artworks.



S.W. corner of Eclipse Blvd.  
& Milton Rd. (GTA V)



Two handmade fan-fold books (2x 3m, Eclipse Blvd & Vinewood Blvd) in handmade box with insert. The books depict copyrighted content by Rockstar Games, therefore, very few copies have been made solely for research purposes within the context of REVISITED and exhibition settings. One copy has been gifted Ed Ruscha, another the Getty Research Institutes Special Collection.

B4 EXCERPTS OF

# FOUKAULD - LA DISPARITION

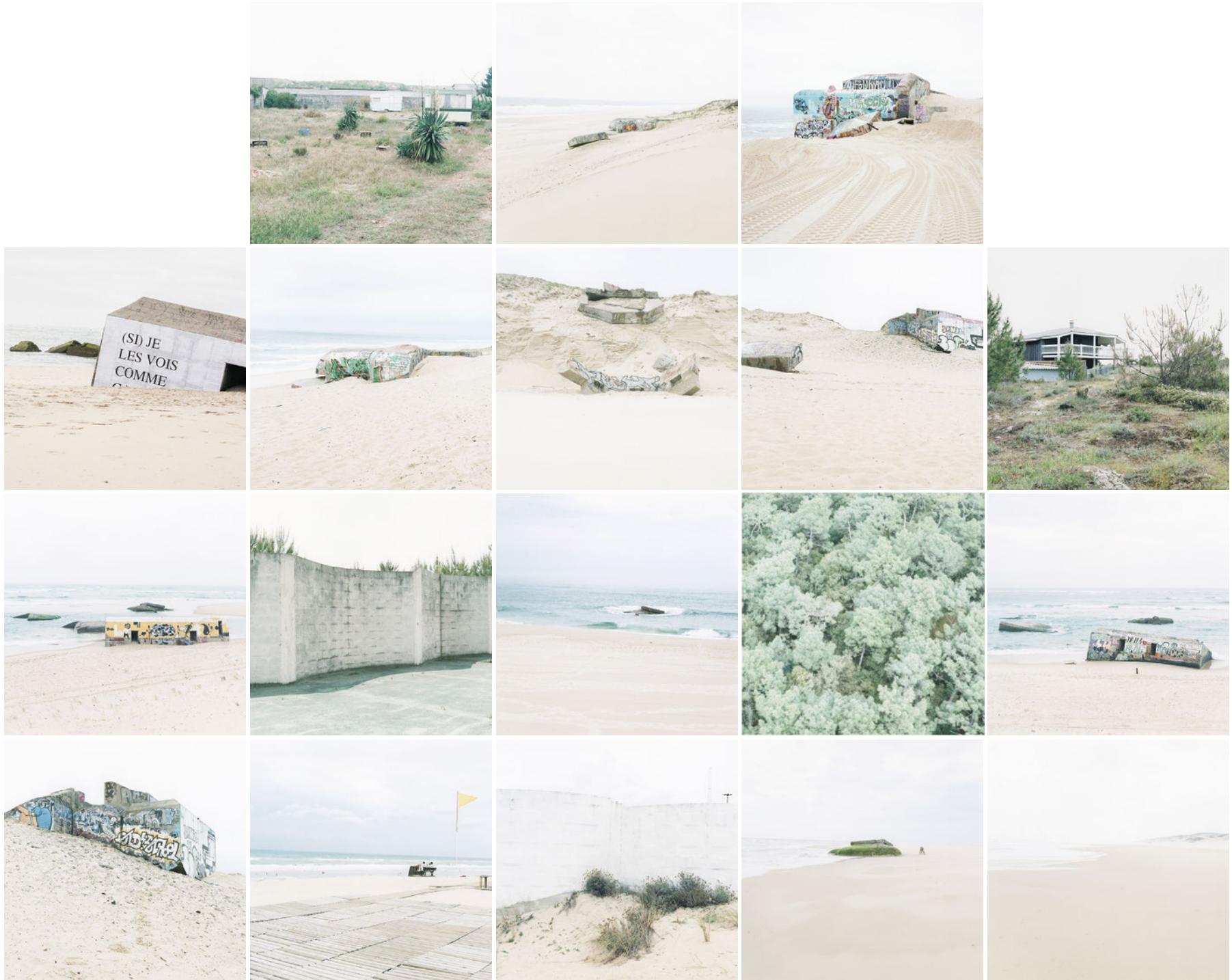


Since 2005 this ongoing longterm project examines history and memory based on the disappearance and appropriation of Nazi Germany's concrete fortifications on the Atlantic Coast around Cap Ferret.

What does a place like Cap Ferret embody decades after the end of the Second World War, as getaway destination and historical location both at the same time.

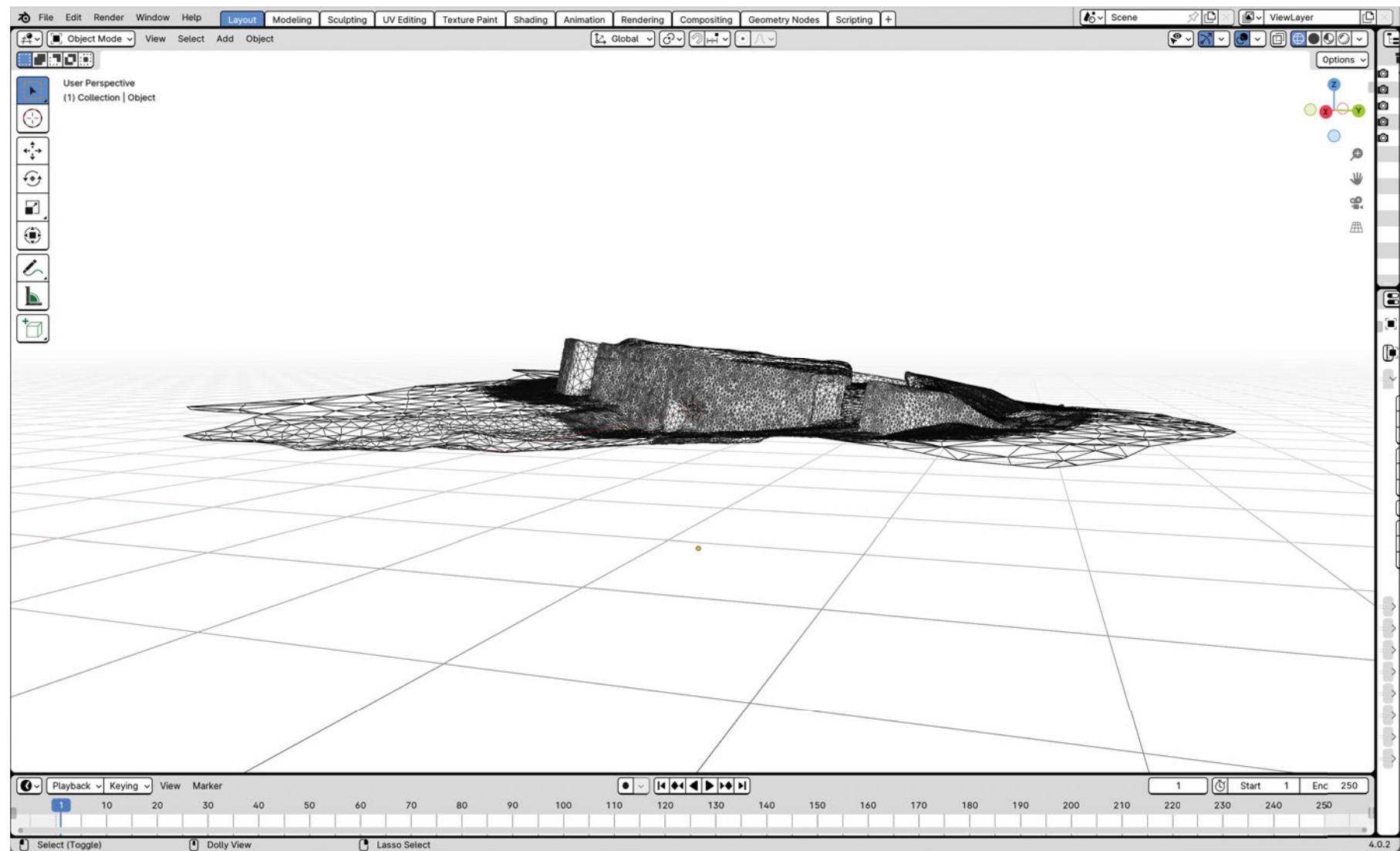


Blokos Verts II, Analog C-Prints from Negative: 29,2 cm x 37,5 cm & 120 cm x 150 cm, Edition: 3+2, Cap Ferret, 2008  
From the series: 2005 - 2024

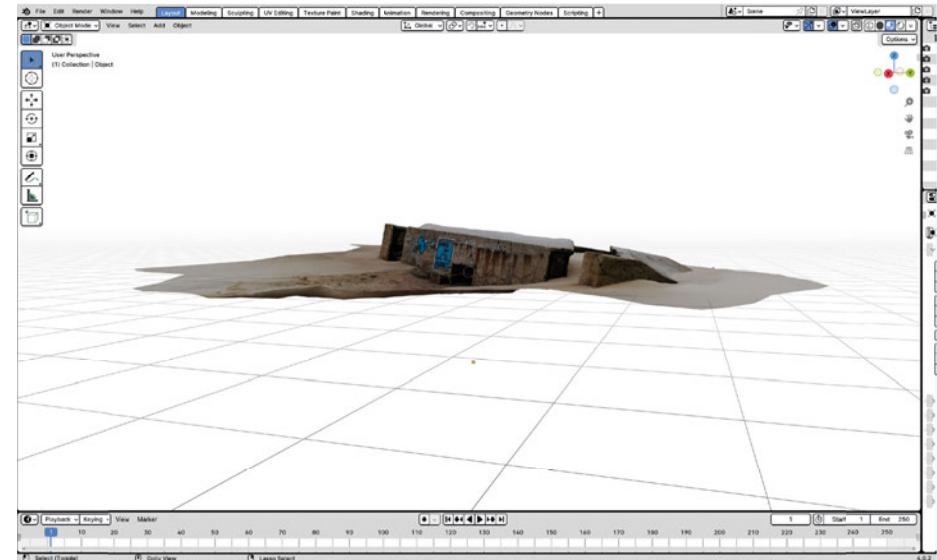
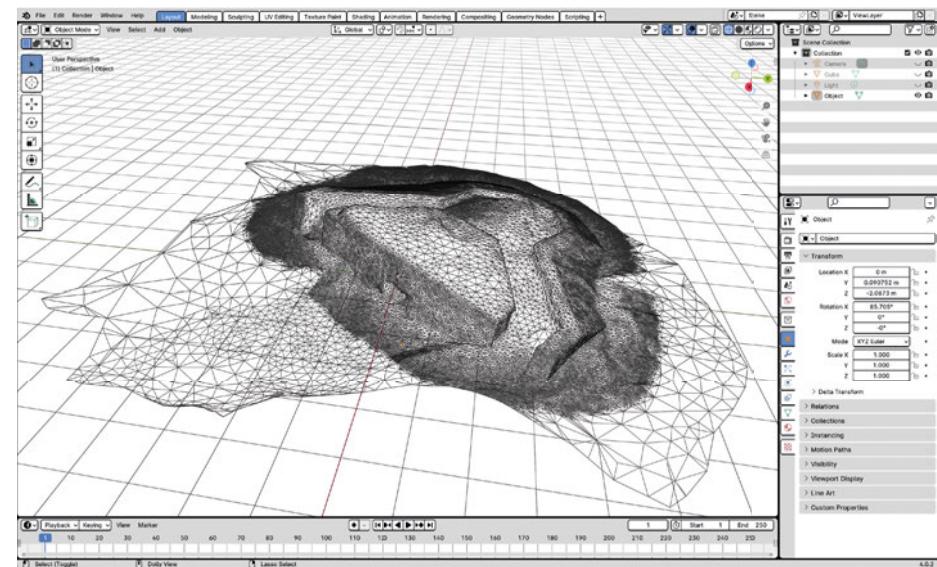
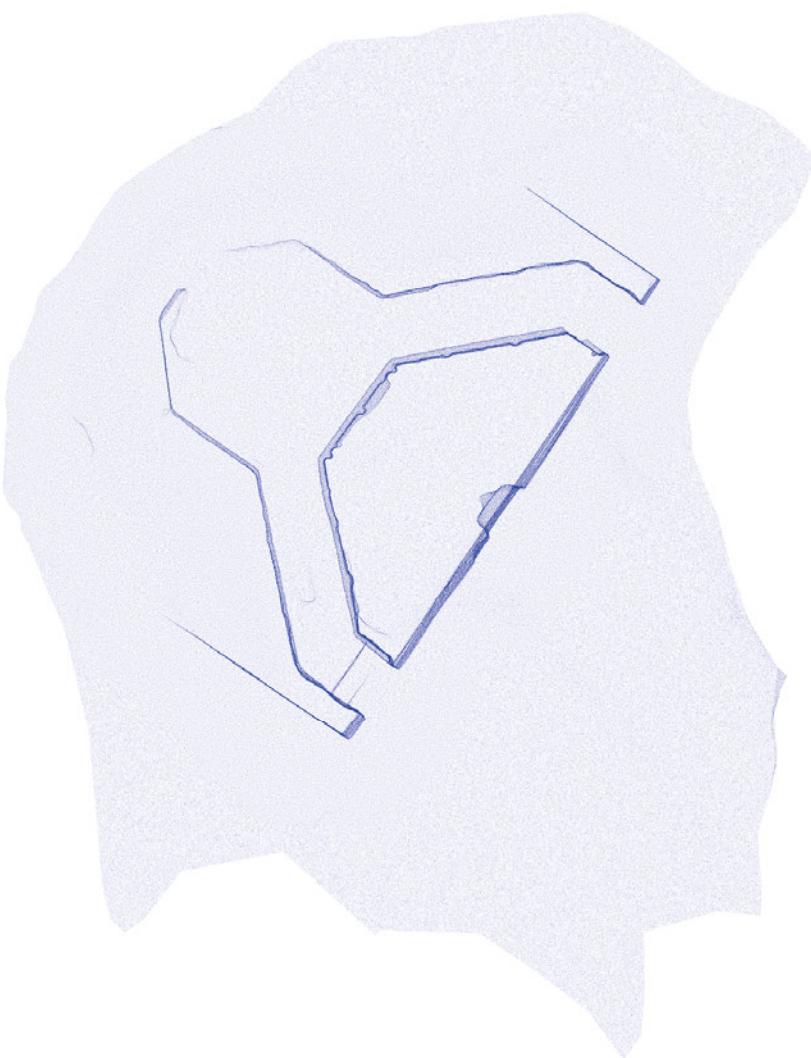


# Displaced Matter # 1 & 2

Thirteen 3D scans of WW2 bunkers (also photographed on negatives since 2005), Cap Ferret, 2024



Displaced Matter #03 (wireframe), 17\_9\_2024-18h57, Cap Ferret



Top: Displaced Matter #03 (blueprint & wireframe), 17\_9\_2024-18h57 // Bottom: Displaced Matter #11, 20\_9\_2024-12h45 (wireframe & texture)



# DISAPPEARANCE - The Atlantic Wall around Cap Ferret

*"The melancholic saves himself out of his silent heaviness and the dull mush of things through a metaphysic that elevates to a worldcondition, what his frame of mind is. He knows that life flows on a wave of death into a future, that simply enlarges the 'Skull Hill' of history. The ruin even shows the most powerful will on its transition to ultimate decay[...]"*

*"Yet you can still detect the construction-plan of a house or town, find the arches, archways, mural skeletons. But eventually you catch the water eroding the stone, the plants clawing themselves into the fractures of the wall, the wind playing in the empty window case, the sinister animals of the night scurrying through the rooms, that still bear trace of the former life of human beings. Nature restores what man forced from it. As powerful, proud or victorious the constructions might arise — there is a more powerful force, the quiet and subtle decay. To know this is the melancholic's pride."*

Quotation out of Hartmut Böhme's book „Fetishism and Culture"

ALL THINGS ARE CONDEMNED TO DISAPPEAR.

My photographic work "Disappearance - The Atlantic Wall around Cap Ferret" examines Nazi-Germany's concrete fortification on the Atlantic Coast around Cap Ferret. The Atlantic Wall was basically built to hold the Allies off from entering the heartland of the "Third Reich" in case of an attack. All together there have been around 8100 fortifications on the Channel Islands and in France, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Norway and The Netherlands that formed a 2685 kilometer long wall — the longest fortification ever built in such a short time (1942-1944) under one ruler (Adolf Hitler). The Allies' landing in the Normandy had some influence on the meaning and handling of the bunkers along specific parts of the Atlantic Wall. In Normandy where the Allies landed it was partly declared a historic monument; several bunkers have been converted into museums, others have become monuments or memorials for the fallen soldiers, prisoners of war, deported Jews, and civilians. In Cap Ferret and on other parts of the Atlantic Wall that have not directly been involved in the hostilities around the "D-Day" 2, the Atlantic Wall, in contrast, is disposed of its elemental history. It decays or is re-designated. One is not trying to restrain it as something it was 60 years ago, one tries to "live with it" and "let it live".



## ARTIST BOOK & BOX

FOUKAULD — MONOGRAPH: 106 pages, 22 x 28 cm, 57 color illustrations, German/French/English. Linen hardcover embossed. Texts: Essays by Inge Marszolek, Wolf Langewitz and Markus Oberndorfer, ISBN 978-3-902675-71-2, Design: Markus Oberndorfer, Edition: 750



LIMITED BOX: 1 Signed, numbered book "Foukauld", 1 Handprinted, signed, numbered, "Edition-print", Cap Ferret 2012, 1 Limited Blu-ray "Omega Point" photofilm (HD) // Sound: DDay One, Content (L)abel 2008, 1 Limited accompanying booklet with color illustrations and Essay "The intermediate image in my photofilm Omega Point" by Lydia Nsiah in German, French, Englisch, ... Design: Markus Oberndorfer, Edition: 50

# AUTREMENT ON DEVIENT FOU ...

*Photography, Interview, Video, Essay //*  
Villeneuve & Cap Ferret 2012 - 2014



When one reads the story of Lavrillat's compulsory work service and the living conditions at Cap during the Second World War alongside images of today's functional architecture on Cap Ferret, his story projects itself into the present as part of the collective memory.

Interview with contemporary witness Henri Lavrillat (Video & Text):  
31 min, Language: Französisch // Subtitles: English, German  
<http://www.markusoberndorfer.com/autrement-on-devient-fou/>



Camping, Cap Ferret, functional architecture now, often at the same locations as the worker camps building the Atlantic Wall fortifications during WWII.  
A matter of place in time...



Henri Lavrillat in front of his house in Villeneuve-Sur-Lot

# SE SOUVENIR

*Photography, Performance, Installation, Photofilm, Essay // 2013*

German, French, German, French, ... The languages alternate poster by poster on the bunker walls Henri Lavrillat was forced to build during compulsory work service, the walls I have studied and captured in my photographs over the last few years. By doing so, I have created a temporary photographic installation in the recreation area of Cap Ferret, which combines two of my projects, 'Autrement on devient fou.....' and 'Foukauld – La Disparition'. These projects, which both describe the processes of remembering and imagining, but from completely different perspectives, are contextually and performatively united, even if only for a short time, in the very place where it all happened.

On 19 and 20 September 2013, I glued approximately 160 posters – each with a complete transcript of the interview in the two languages, and in justified alignment without borders, – to the bunker walls. Standing in front of the bunkers, the observers who read start with the language they most closely identify with. However, they have to stop reading when they get to the next poster. The vertical 'divide' between the individual posters glued one next to the other (where German and French billboards intersect) is a reference to the division of France during WW2 as well as a reminder that language does not only create identity, it also reveals differences in identity.

While I was touching the rough bunker walls formed by both man and nature, smoothing the countless posters with my palms, I realized that I was bruising myself. This eye-opening insight, and the conversations I had with passers-by, made me understand what it really meant to unite the two projects (for the duration of the 'Se Souvenir' intervention), also in terms of completing my work on the disappearance of the German fortifications at Cap Ferret. I am not talking about understanding the concept, but about the moment in which I, as a visual artist who mainly uses photography and usually looks at things from a distance, became directly involved in the process of change. In this moment, I stopped being an observer and became someone who was being photographed, who was being confronted with the past, who was being questioned and observed. This role change enabled me to actively interact with what I call the pre-existing, which I usually just interpret and capture.

During my 'Se Souvenir' intervention – at least while I was putting up the posters and until the last posters have disappeared from the walls – I was actively involved in the on-site process of change, which I formerly used to just 'capture'. One aim of the project was to explore the potential of a setting through alienation or practice-led spatial design and both show and scrutinise

the spatial innovation potential resulting from the discrepancy between designated purpose and practical function. During my extensive analysis of the content and practical implementation of Henri Lavrillat's interview, I came to think about how individual statements could be interpreted against a metaphorical, i.e. not purely fact-based, background. When one (ON)<sup>a</sup> leaves Henri Lavrillat's (JE)<sup>b</sup> directional space of remembered subjective facts, one puts history in a different context and observes and interprets it from the perspective of a third person (IL)<sup>c</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> 'One has seen the movies' – Someone who was not present is only remotely (if at all) able to imagine what someone else experienced based on what one has seen, e.g. in documentary films.

<sup>b</sup> 'When I see them like that ...' – Here, Henri Lavrillat is speaking of himself. However, if one interprets 'I' not only as referring to Henri Lavrillat, but to 'oneself', the statement is true for everybody who imagines what happens 'when he (or she) sees them like that'

<sup>c</sup> 'He imagines' – He (or she) is the person who poses questions and interprets the pre-existing. It could be, for example, the man (or woman) who is standing right over there.







C-O-M, Analog C-Prints from Negaitve: 29.2 cm x 37.5 cm & 120 cm x 150 cm, Edition: 3+2, Cap Ferret, 2013

# ARTIST BOOK

AUTREMENT ON DEVIENT FOU..... (OmdU): 96 pages, 16 x 23 cm, two different papers, 42 illustrations, German/French, linen hardcover silkscreened. Texts: Talk between Henri Lavrillat, Céline Foulon & Markus Oberndorfer, essays by Inge Marszolek & Markus Oberndorfer. Design: Nik Thönen.



# Umbrüche UND Utopien

DAS ANDERE EUROPA

Der europäische  
Fotomonat in Berlin

Daghild Bartels

Markus Oberndorfer: „On a Vu“, aus der Serie  
„Se Souvenir“, 2013, C-Print von Negativ,  
120 x 150 cm, 342AP (© Markus Oberndorfer)



# SKY IS NO LIMIT — Digital Pseudo-Places and the Algorithmized Global Village

In the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan coined the term "Global Village" to describe the profound impact of electronic media on the structures of time, space, and communication. For McLuhan, transformation of media did not merely accelerate information flows—it fundamentally reshaped social experience, producing a new form of collective perception.

Today, in the age of 3D modeling, CGI, and generative AI, these dynamics have not just continued—they have intensified in unprecedented ways. Information flows are no longer simply boundless and fast; they are hyper-personalized, algorithmically filtered, and increasingly machine-generated. What was once a relatively "homogeneous" public sphere of mass-media has fractured into countless micro-publics—each governed by recommender systems and AI models. The "global village" has evolved into a fragmented mesh of individually curated slices of reality, fiction, and simulation—dispersed in a fluid, opaque stream of algorithmically optimized data fragments. Markus Oberndorfer's algorithmized "Global Village" captures and reflects these contemporary conditions through a deliberately stylized, non-illusionistic space: a model-like assemblage of environments of meaning, oscillating between fragment, backdrop, and stage. Instead of attempting to simulate realism, Oberndorfer creates an open stage set, where different "locations" are placed next to—and on top of—each other, presented like loose narrative fragments of scenes. Objects, images, and videos are distributed like props within a navigable spatial grid, untethered from realistic topography and instead defined by medial presence—polygon mesh structures, algorithmic textures, video projections, a space-time tunnel, or even voids and the absence of things.

The work weaves together three interconnected thematic strands. The first engages with remnants of the Atlantic Wall on Cap Ferret through 3D scans and fragments of a contemporary witness interview. Here, historical sites/ objects are digitally preserved while simultaneously stripped of their indexical anchoring. The second explores generated visual worlds and forms of algorithmic imagination. AI-generated objects, simulated panoramas, palm trees that Oberndorfer 3D modeled using Ed Ruscha's "A Few Palm Trees" as drafts condense culturally coded notions of "exoticism" and "escapism". The third connects urban topographies with media-reflexive narrative forms—most notably through a space-time collage representing the rhythm of drive along the Sunset Strip in 2016, referencing both lived space and its digital and cultural representations. (For example Ed Ruscha's Every Building on the Sunset Strip or Oberndorfer's 360° VR experience of it in REVISITED and his GTA V computer game collages of Eclipse

Boulevard). Central to the experience of this virtual (micro-)village is a bodily—or interaction- and clickwork triggered—mediality: content such as videos or sound is activated only through proximity. The contemporary witness Henri Lavilliat begins to speak on posters; glimpses into the interior of a bunker "from the inside looking out" or into the sky open up, and so on. These moments create variable, individual dramaturgies, depending on the movement, gaze, and position of the viewer. Media elements behave like virtual actors or NPCs. They only perform when "addressed" and reveal—through proximity, presence, or attention. This form of interaction creates a particular tension between visibility and invisibility, presence and absence, surface and depth. While the virtual visual materials—3D and especially AI-generated imagery—elude traditional referentiality, they represent cultural codes: a condensed visions of "bunker-likeness," "isolation," "threat," or conversely, "distance," "desire," "palm-likeness" and "escape." These image-worlds forge pseudo-places with pseudo-cultural memories, uncoupled from physical relics but rich in associative resonance. They exist in a threshold space where the real, symbolic, and simulated merge.

A pseudo-heterotopia in the Foucaultian sense: they evade site-specific definitions due to their lack of concrete referents, yet simultaneously open new medial spaces of culturally shaped imagination. As algorithmically produced narratives of the digital age, they can be understood—following Barthes—as "myths of everyday life": as visual surfaces which, despite their ontological emptiness, convey associative, culturally coded meanings and are affectively-involving and can produce profound real-world effects. In this configuration, Oberndorfer's "Global Village" becomes a speculative architecture of memory, projection, and culturally shaped imagination. A pseudo-heterotopia, as it evades site-specific definition. The pressing question it raises is not only what counts as "experience" or "memory" in the digital age, but also how these are shaped by the technical, algorithmic, and aesthetic logics of contemporary media environments and conditions of their production. Where McLuhan once claimed that "the medium is the message"—and, due to a printing error, also the "massage"—we must now, in the context of the algorithmized global village, expand this insight: the medium remains both message and massage, yet the message itself has grown increasingly disembodied—an echo, affectively potent, yet spatially and temporally decoupled from the rhythms of lived, bodily experience.

Note: see also my 24 page essay *Palm Trees Are Noise* in which I discuss this issue in detail. Especially "/Remember? The trace and its detachment from the referent".

## PALM TREES ARE NOISE — From Staging the Ordinary to Hallucinating the Everyday

The palm tree became an icon embodying both nature and artificiality — suspended in a tension between exotic ornamental plant and marker of urban identity. Yet, as the regions it often represents become increasingly affected by hotter, drier, and more volatile climate — the palm proves ever more incompatible, as it provides little shade, purifies the air only to a limited degree, and demands far too much water and costly maintenance.

For this reason, the city of Los Angeles decided some time ago to stop replanting palms that die of old age or fall victim to pests and fungal diseases brought on by shifting climatic conditions. Instead, the city replaces them with native trees more resistant to drought and wildfires, such as the California live oak.<sup>(fig\_p.28)</sup> Exceptions are made only in locations where palms hold historical or symbolic value. For example stretches of Sunset Boulevard, East 43rd Street, or Highland Avenue.<sup>20</sup> During recent fires, palms once again drew attention, as their dead, highly flammable fronds likely contributed to the rapid spread of flames. Esther Margulies, a specialist in climate- and wildfire-resilient urban planning, remarked: “We need to change the perception of LA. When it comes to living things, we really should have a deep respect for the trees that are native and indigenous to this area and really will thrive here.”<sup>21</sup>

Much like the date palms in *Dune* that went up in flames during the Harkonnen attack, the so-called Skydusters are expected to begin disappearing from the cityscape for a variety of reasons — well before the end of this century. An event the *L.A. Times* referred to as “the death of a star.”<sup>22</sup> A star which, arranged in serial formation along the roadsides — documented in Ed Ruscha’s *Street Archive*, in the 360° videos of *REVISITED*, and in the ever-changing digital archive of Google Street View — has become “not only part of a green paradise, but also a symbol of the endless sprawl of streets and concrete.”<sup>23</sup> It is precisely this environment — the one Los Angeles so powerfully proclaims — that makes it difficult for Hollywood to convincingly portray other locations. “You can shoot Anywhere, U.S.A., here, as long as you avoid palm trees,” said a location manager. “That’s our biggest bane, the palm tree, because if you see it, it’s either Southern California or Florida.” As a result, the greens crews in film productions work to turn the city’s floral abundance into a more nondescript vegetation. “They strip the fruit from exotic trees; they add fake bark and leaves to the trunks of palms. Cinematographers choose angles that exclude palms, editors crop them out, and if necessary, special-effects engineers digitally remove them.”<sup>24</sup>

As the example and work of the greens crews make clear, the (de) contextualization of the palm into a flexible, universally deployable symbol — one that can be placed anywhere — is not merely a digital phenomenon. As a deliberately used symbol, it has long existed untethered from its original habitat. In the digital realm — and especially through AI — it ultimately becomes pure atmospheric pixel density: the code of a globalized visual language stripped of all materiality.

Short excerpt of my 24 page essay about palms, bunkers, photography and look-alikes in the age of generative AI.

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Palm Tree VIII, Root Location, Google Street View, Markus Oberndorfer, re-visited 2025, 5941 Hollywood Blvd

MARKUS OBERNDORFER  
(2024)

## C3 STAGING THE ORDINARY

'Reality is understood as a system of representations and variations which people construct using symbols'<sup>1</sup> based on the 'relationship between the qualities of the surroundings and the human condition'.<sup>2</sup>

This is true for real life while being present at a place in person, and with all our senses, but generally every surrounding that creates an attractive force so strong as to make us engage. For example a 360 degree surrounding of the Sunset Strip like in this case, or the game- world of the Eclipse Blvd<sup>3</sup> and GTA V that — based on its architecture and grid — undoubtably places us in an albeit compressed and rendered version of Los Angeles and the Sunset Strip.

The aim of my central media installation REVISITED is 'to draw attention to the fundamental shifts that took place between 360 degree video and the two main media of our time — photography and film'.<sup>4</sup> It focusses on topographical changes and the evolution of media. In particular those we have at our disposal to document our world (the pre-existing) with. It scrutinizes power relations that evolve with every new medium and manifest between content-creator and -consumer.

The idea behind the project 'Staging The Ordinary' is to pair the concept of the place — the constellation of signs and symbols — with other stimulants like music and narrated content to create a surrounding that makes us even more involved. Something that invites us to interpret the pre-existing while drawing from the situation<sup>5</sup> and within; our Inner Source.<sup>6</sup> For that reason an entirely staged spatial audio surrounding has been created for this participative 360 VR installation from a sound library and scripted and recorded conversations of passers by. A radio broadcast (REVISIT RADIO) with music produced for the project (REVISIT OST) and additional narrated content like daily news, weather forcast,... can optionally be added.

Most content narrated by the radio host, has been taken and interpreted from the 360 degree surrounding and the project itself. For example from billboards (some of which include temperature indicators, promote the upcoming season of Game of Thrones,...), the horizon (with the incoming marine layer), and so on. Every spectator putting the headset on, and with this act deciding to engage with the surrounding, could gather this information. Provided that the individual considers it as important and feels the urge to associate with it in a moment that Hermann Schmitz describes as 'the onset of the sudden in a moment of primitive present'.

Architecture as a cultural phenomenon carries many strong references. 'It is the inextricable link to cultural identity and acts as the identity holder in the form of the commonplace'.<sup>7</sup>

'Feeling of belonging evolves from the participation in the common practice of interpretation and explanation of the past and hence collective identity'.<sup>8</sup> It is thereby mostly signs or symbols that we personally associate something with or places that are embedded in our daily routines, that attract our attention. To one person it might be a record shop, to another a concert venue; a place one has visited or seen in a film or in media coverage. The announcement of a TV series or computer game on a billboard or 'just' the alley in between.

'The more you know about the spatiality of feelings/sensations, the higher the competence to built spaces of sensation. Creating feelings means staging atmospheres'.<sup>9</sup>

The precondition for engaging with a surrounding and with what is presented, is the willingness to immerse. In case of medial representations, spectators need to surrender to what is described as the 'Suspension of Disbelief'.<sup>10</sup> The concept that to become emotionally involved in a narrative, audiences must react as if the characters or environment is real and the events are happening now. Moments like 'Look! Over Here!' while finger pointing at something that can only be seen in the 360 degree environment, show that what is true for literary content or film, is also true for other media involving our senses that can generate true-to-life reactions. The 'border between fiction and witnessing'<sup>11</sup> blurs in the illusion of being present on site. For the moment we surrender to the alternate reality, until we get pulled out of it by external influences or decide to disembark from it ourselves.

Even though spectators immerse into an entirely staged, always same and partially directed experience through narrated content, the chance that one person will ever have the same experience as another, is zero. It would require more than one person seeing, reading, stringing together and interpreting the exact same signs and symbols as another while 'time unfolds'.<sup>12</sup> But selection and perspectivism are based on the resources available to individuals.

A moment (and also the past) is ‘always interpreted from the perspective of current needs.’<sup>13</sup> We never see it all, we never feel the same and keep drawing new perspective lines through the same 360 degree tunnel until we believe to have seen it all.<sup>14</sup> The fact that most moments were subsequently the same did not detract at all from the possibility that the next moment might be utterly different. And so the ordinary demanded unblinking attention. Any tedious hour might be the last of its kind.<sup>14</sup>

Text: Markus Oberndorfer

Proofreading: James Munro

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gernot Böhme, *Atmosphäre*, 2. Neue Ästhetik, Suhrkamp Verlag 1995, p.22-23.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Dominika Gortych, Cultural Topographies of the Holocaust and Identity. On The Semantics of Emptiness in the Contemporary Polish and German Literature p.26.

<sup>3</sup> Fig. 18\_ The Eclipse Blvd, p.10 & Cf. Markus Oberndorfer, In Dialogue with Eclipse Blvd, Destined to Return, p.14.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Markus Oberndorfer, In Dialogue with Sunset Strip, Destined to Return (DTR), p.5.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Hermann Schmitz, *Was ist Neue Phänomenologie?*, Rostock, Ingo Koch Verlag, 2003, p.89-97.

<sup>6</sup> Fig. 13\_ Inner Source, DTR, p.9.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Martina Novakova, Erika Foltinova, *The Ordinary - Everyday - Commonplace as a Reference of Cultural Identity*, p.1.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Dominika Gortych, Cultural Topographies of the Holocaust and Identity. On The Semantics of

Emptiness in the Contemporary Polish and German Literature p.26.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Michael Hauskeller, *Atmosphäre. Philosophische Untersuchungen zum Begriff und zur Wahrnehmung von Atmosphären*.

<sup>10</sup> Fig. 11, 12 Suspension of Disbelief, p.9.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Inge Marzszolek, *Von der Mediatisierung zur Musealisierung, Transformation der Figur des Zeitzeugen*, Werkstatt Geschichte, Heft 62 (2012), Klartext Verlag.

<sup>12</sup> Fig. 14, 15 Unfolding Time, DTR, p.9.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Dominika Gortych, Cultural Topographies of the Holocaust and Identity. On The Semantics of Emptiness in the Contemporary Polish and German Literature p.26.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Deborah Frausch, *Can Architecture Be Ordinary?* S.12 & Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005 [1981]), p.166.



## DISAPPEARANCE - The Atlantic Wall around Cap Ferret

*"The melancholic saves himself out of his silent heaviness and the dull mush of things through a metaphysic that elevates to a worldcondition, what his frame of mind is. He knows that life flows on a wave of death into a future, that simply enlarges the 'Skull Hill' of history. The ruin even shows the most powerful will on its transition to ultimate decay[...]"*

*"Yet you can still detect the construction-plan of a house or town, find the arches, archways, mural skeletons. But eventually you catch the water eroding the stone, the plants clawing themselves into the fractures of the wall, the wind playing in the empty window case, the sinister animals of the night scurrying through the rooms, that still bear trace of the former life of human beings. Nature restores what man forced from it. As powerful, proud or victorious the constructions might arise — there is a more powerful force, the quiet and subtle decay. To know this is the melancholic's pride."*

Quotation out of Hartmut Böhme's book „Fetishism and Culture“

ALL THINGS ARE CONDEMNED TO DISAPPEAR.

My photographic work "Disappearance - The Atlantic Wall around Cap Ferret" examines Nazi-Germany's concrete fortification on the Atlantic Coast around Cap Ferret. The Atlantic Wall was basically built to hold the Allies off from entering the heartland of the "Third Reich" in case of an attack. All together there have been around 8100 fortifications on the Channel Islands and in France, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Norway and The Netherlands that formed a 2685 kilometer long wall — the longest fortification ever built in such a short time (1942-1944) under one ruler (Adolf Hitler). The Allies' landing in the Normandy had some influence on the meaning and handling of the bunkers along specific parts of the Atlantic Wall. In Normandy where the Allies landed it was partly declared a historic monument; several bunkers have been converted into museums, others have become monuments or memorials for the fallen soldiers, prisoners of war, deported Jews, and civilians. In Cap Ferret and on other parts of the Atlantic Wall that have not directly been involved in the hostilities around the "D-Day" 2, the Atlantic Wall, in contrast, is disposed of its elemental history. It decays or is re-designated. One is not trying to restrain it as something it was 60 years ago, one tries to "live with it" and "let it live".

One reason for the disappearance of the bunkers, which by now play a new role in shore protection as jetties, is the currents of the sea. During certain periods of the year, the sea and its waves are constantly eroding the dunes and thereby the sand fundament of the bunkers, which in succession slowly (for the human eye imperceptible) move down towards sea level — "moving, yet motionless". Once there, the process continues. Previously supported by wind, tide and the rising sea level, the current that eroded the beach, now in reverse brings sand from the North and deposits it at the Cap. "Sand washing up, eroding, washing up, eroding ..." as they affect the bunkers would approximately mean: "covering, uncovering, sinking, covering, uncovering, sinking ..."

Comparing the positions of the bunkers on satellite pictures of consecutive years, beginning with 1944, one can thus assert, that it is the dune that moves and becomes smaller. The bunkers themselves do not move on their horizontal level, rather, they sink along their x-axis. They stand in space like the Monolith in "2001: A Space Odyssey" or the Statue of Liberty at the end of "The Planet of the Apes". And we, the audience, are the spectators in the "present of the image", and performers at the same time.

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MARKUS OBERNDORFER  
(2010)

# LOOKING AT BUNKER(PHOTOS)

## Thoughts of a historian

We see the wide horizon of the Atlantic Ocean, the boundaries between the sky and the sea and the sea and beach are difficult to define. Something stands out from the sea, a rock, maybe the spine of a stranded deep sea creature that turned into stone. A surfer elegantly navigates around the perimeter of this creature: Markus Oberndorfer takes pictures of disappearance and change, of the appropriation of the remnants of World War II. To some extent Oberndorfer (and many others with him) is following the lead of French philosopher Paul Virilio, who discovered the bunkers of the Atlantic Wall along the Northern coasts of France as early as in the 50's, who took photos of them and saw the annihilation of "total war" inscribed in these colossi.

In the photographs of Markus Oberndorfer — taken half a century later — these inscriptions of war seem to have vanished. The bunkers of Cap Ferret have been colourfully covered by graffiti artists, their tags hardly ever make a reference to the history of the bunkers. Visitors are sunbathing nearby, the sea washes around the bunkers, which are sinking in the dunes, a few houses have been attached to them — everybody seems to ignore these vestiges of German occupation and the downfall of the Nazi regime. Tourists integrate the bunkers into their "holiday" routine, others use them as canvases for their art. Apparently there has so far been no "musealization" of these remnants on Cap Ferret.

Nature reclaims these concrete remnants and thus lends to them an aesthetic quite different from the one of "functional architecture". Through the eye of the photographer they appear to be fossilizations of an entirely different world. However, through the succession of photographs they are restored into everyday life; the trash bin and the refuse are remnants as well — merely the decomposing leftovers of the present.

The task of the historian is to engage with the past; like the photographer, she does that from the point of view of the present. The engagement with remnants and with places challenges the historian in a very special way: how do I uncover the history of the bunkers, how do I manage to fathom different perspectives in the historic strata? A short text by the French philosopher Michel Foucault, which fills only about eight pages, provides a useful approach to the "other places" and their "heterotopias".

Places, Foucault claims, are marked by relations of placing. Such placings, tying themselves to the real places, also reconnect the utopias — the non-

places, with the places. These "heterotopias" are "places outside of all places, even though it might be possible to indicate their location in reality." They reflect power relations as well as phantasms, desire just as the people who are placed in these places and thus somehow construct them. The "heterotopias", which are marked by deviance, by illusion and compensation, always refer to the order of society — they demand to be historicised. By that Foucault's ideas provide interfaces to reflections on history and memory.

Let us return to the disappearance: forgetting is part of memory. Scholars theorising the phenomenon of memory, like Jan and Aleida Assman, Peter Burke etc. distinguish between the "storage memory" (cultural) and the "functional memory" (social/ communicative). This indicates that we always draw on the accumulated, nearly infinite storage space of cultural knowledge; however, as soon as we cease to relate this knowledge to our primary needs and experiences, it can disappear again into this storage space.

If we relate the history of the creation of the bunkers as military edifices of a hostile and criminal historical regime to them as "heterotopias" in a Foucaultian sense, then this history seems to vanish. However, the knowledge that these bunkers of the Atlantic Wall had the sole purpose of protecting the soldiers of the Wehrmacht and of preventing liberation from precisely this regime remains inscribed in these bunkers. The same holds true for experiences of exclusion and menace: the civilian population did not find protection in the bunkers, it rather got caught up in the battle between the attacking troops of the Allies and the defending troops of the Wehrmacht. For quite a while no one talked about the grief and sorrow over the dead; still, the dead are always present at the cemeteries, in narratives and books. And this hidden presence can be made visible any time, can be ejected from the storage space. [...]



INGE MARSZOZEK  
(2010)

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# WHO BUILT THE SEVEN GATES OF THEBES?

If we compare the seven gates of Thebes to the bunkers at Cap Ferret, we can answer the question posed by the 'worker who reads' (this is the title of Berthold Brecht's poem): it was Henri Lavrillat.

But he did not do it alone: thousands of other members of the Service de Travail Obligatoire (STO) and forced labourers from all over Europe were more or less forced to build the fortifications of the Atlantic Wall. German workers from the Todt Organisation, German engineers, local companies employed by the Wehrmacht or the Todt Organisation, as well as Wehrmacht and SS soldiers were involved in building the massive structure of the Atlantic Wall. After the naval war against Britain had been lost and the Wehrmacht forces had withdrawn to the Eastern front, Hitler decided to fortify the Atlantic coast (5000 km) in those countries that were occupied by the Wehrmacht. Thus, the construction of bunkers along some 5000 km of coastline had to be planned and implemented. All logistic support as well as the construction workers were transferred from the Siegfried Line to the Atlantic coast. Both Fritz Todt, who was Inspector General for German Roadways and, from 1940, Minister of Armaments, and his successor Albert Speer, Minister of War Production, decided to build small and medium-sized ports and bunkers for anti-aircraft batteries only. From 1943 onwards, huge bunkers were built, e.g. the bunkers in St. Nazaire and L'Orient, which were intended for the construction of submarines, and the La Coupole underground bunker, which was designed to launch the V2 'miracle weapons' against Britain. Contrary to the opinion of many amateur historians, the majority of the workers who built these structures were forced labourers. They worked and lived under appalling conditions to help the Wehrmacht and Hitler achieve the 'Endsieg' (final victory).

Henri Lavrillat was not a volunteer, even though the STO did organise the employment of so-called civilian workers in Vichy France. After France had been occupied and the Vichy regime, which collaborated with the NS regime, had been established in the unoccupied zone, several recruitment campaigns were launched to attract workers. The German government gradually increased its pressure on the Vichy government, especially on Pétain's foreign minister Henri Laval, to find workers. However, the 1942 volunteer recruitment campaign, an expensive propaganda exercise, did not live up to the high expectations and requirements of the NS regime. For this reason, the STO was founded in September 1942 to conscript workers on the national and regional level for services in Nazi Germany or for bunker construction at the Atlantic coast.

Henri Lavrillat was conscripted on 1st April 1943 after an amendment of the STO laws, which imposed a two-year obligation to work on all male French citizens. A campaign was organised to propagate the idea that the obligation was a 'civic duty' to support the joint fight of the French and the Germans against Bolshevism. At the same time, the French Resistance was gaining supporters and strength: one of the reasons for supporting the movement was the rejection of conscription. Quite a few conscripted workers escaped the STO by joining the Resistance, a fact also mentioned by Henri Lavrillat. Yet, after the war, STO workers were suspected of having been collaborators, not least because the strength of the Resistance had become a national myth. For this reason, many workers, maybe even Henri Lavrillat, have kept quiet about their time of compulsory work service to this day. In the interview conducted by Markus Oberndorfer, Lavrillat gives an impressive description of the poor working conditions at the construction site, as well as of the supervision and harassment by the SS. These working conditions were by no means 'ordinary', but similar to those of forced labourers. For Henri Lavrillat, his memories are painful, and although they have become blurred with time, his experience of the poor working conditions, which included bad and insufficient food as well as the brutal supervision by the Germans, is forever burned into his mind. We can only guess that one of the reasons why he virtually blocked out that time of his life was that every STO worker was suspected of having been a collaborator in post-war France.

By documenting the disappearance of the bunkers at Cap Ferret, or at least their transformation by graffiti, with his photographs, Markus Oberndorfer managed to bring these memories back and, to quote from *Foucauld*, bring them into the realm of the speakable. To a certain degree, this photographic project is paradoxical: Markus Oberndorfer documents the disappearance of the bunkers in his photographs, while at the same time preserving the memories of those who built them. He lifts the burden of this memory from Henri Lavrillat's shoulders: Lavrillat said that the painful memories 'crumbled' when he saw the bunkers 'crumble' in the photographs that show the bunkers just before they finally disappear into the sea.

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