



Plasvivor

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Kristin Hjellegjerde

# Plasvivor

Sheets of plastic lay outstretched as if pressed between slides, ready to view through a microscope. Their thin skin takes on a transparency that imbues this most hardy of industrial materials with a delicacy, rendering them fragile. Pieces of ripped-up plastic bags are joined by other paraphernalia, bits and pieces, bottle caps and feathers, transforming into a strange, postmodern stained glass window. In other works, large sculptures are altars to our consumer society, while long reels of slides, lit from behind, become intricate mosaics, illuminated manuscripts telling the tale of the human detritus that makes up our streets. Kristin Hjellegjerde is pleased to announce a solo show of works by Spanish multimedia artist Hector Castells Matutano. *Plasvivor*, running from 25th April – 25th May, is the story of the plastic survivor, presented through large-scale light boxes and prints.

In a sense, Castells Matutano takes on the role of an archaeologist, using these contemporary remains of a transparent (and plastic) society to bring to light our guilty ecological conscience. He juxtaposes the disposable and the primitive, the kitsch and the uncanny, playfully reintroducing a sense of humanity where it has previously seemed totally absent. Pieces such as *Waste* (2013) draw on his experiences living in Paris and photographing the city's homeless. "My apartment in Paris was tiny, [so] I spent most of my time out in the street," explains Castells Matutano. "The street became my studio, and I began taking pictures (slides) of everything that caught my attention." It was the number of homeless people that drew his attention, leading him to document these 'homes' in the street, capturing the various used mattresses, pieces of plastic and other detritus that people carried with them. "Within the terrain of aesthetics, I sought to create a collage that reminded me of a Mondrian or Richter painting, but with additional information within the documentary images," he explains. This was followed by *Space* (2014), a photogram within which he placed items from his everyday life – a bottle of sparkling water, CDs and DVDs, bubble wrap, and drawings and paintings, to name a few. "It looks like a snapshot of what you find in the streets of a city, but it is actually the contents of my studio floor (which is full of rubbish)," he says. The result is almost alchemical, transforming the many individual pieces into a photographic whole, its brown tint reminiscent of the radiography process, at once hyper realistic and slightly retro.

Castells Matutano's practice revolves around research into his everyday life, the accumulated items torn apart, reconstructed and rearranged into new compositions. He plays with the plasticity of material, commenting on our consumerist society – a critique that is evident in his Plastic Graffiti series. In this, he uses and reuses plastic shopping bags to create "irrational puzzles [that] accentuate the archaeological, the universal importance of plastic and its role in our age of excess." ("Needless to say," he adds, "I use cloth bags for my shopping.") Meanwhile, *Wawe* (2014) is a light box work that brings plastic firmly into the psychedelic realm via Australian Aboriginal paintings, by which the artist was inspired. "It creates an abyss of colour," he says: "a psychedelic dream – or nightmare."

The effect itself was the result of a fortunate accident. "I had broken all of my analogue cameras," he explains, "and didn't have the means to repair them, so some years ago I bought some discounted film and tried to find a new way to shoot with it." Indeed, the process of producing the work is long and meticulous, with Castells Matutano working with film in a dark-room, regulating the levels of light with a precise eye and slowly building up his murals, washing and drying objects, waiting for items to dry, and constantly monitoring the effect of light on his film. "The ritual in both cases is quite meditative," he muses. "There is this sense of complete awareness and alertness within the darkness."

In the works of Abebe, Ahmed and Boswell, we see a complementary exploration of the foundations of our cultural and belief structures and the ways in which they operate in a state of continual flux. "I think we all share an intrigue into this idea of belonging, and what it means to be living in the world today," says Boswell. Whether the impact of technology on a rural society, or the appropriation and reappropriation of rituals and customs, or even the deconstruction of an Oriental carpet, there is a focus on the liquid nature tradition and culture – what do we hold on to, and what do we adapt? How do we, as humans, leave behind traces of what once was, what is, and what could be?

Castells Matutano creates altars and mosaics out of plastic. In an age of plasticity, his archaeological offerings act as examples of what we will leave behind. Perhaps, he questions, instead of Da Vinci and Michelangelo, instead of the Sistine Chapel and the Pieta, our contemporary consumer society will leave behind it these objects instead. "Perhaps capitalism exists as a religion, and plastic is one of its sacred materials," he says. "I use plastic because it is everywhere, and, in this sense, from the micro to the macro, represents my world." By imbuing them with colour, separating, washing and realigning, each piece of collected rubbish becomes a precious item, at once a warning and a sacred object, transcending from the discarded to the immortalised. "To humanise a piece of plastic is challenging..." he says.

# Spiritual Plastic

By Vangelis Athanassopoulos

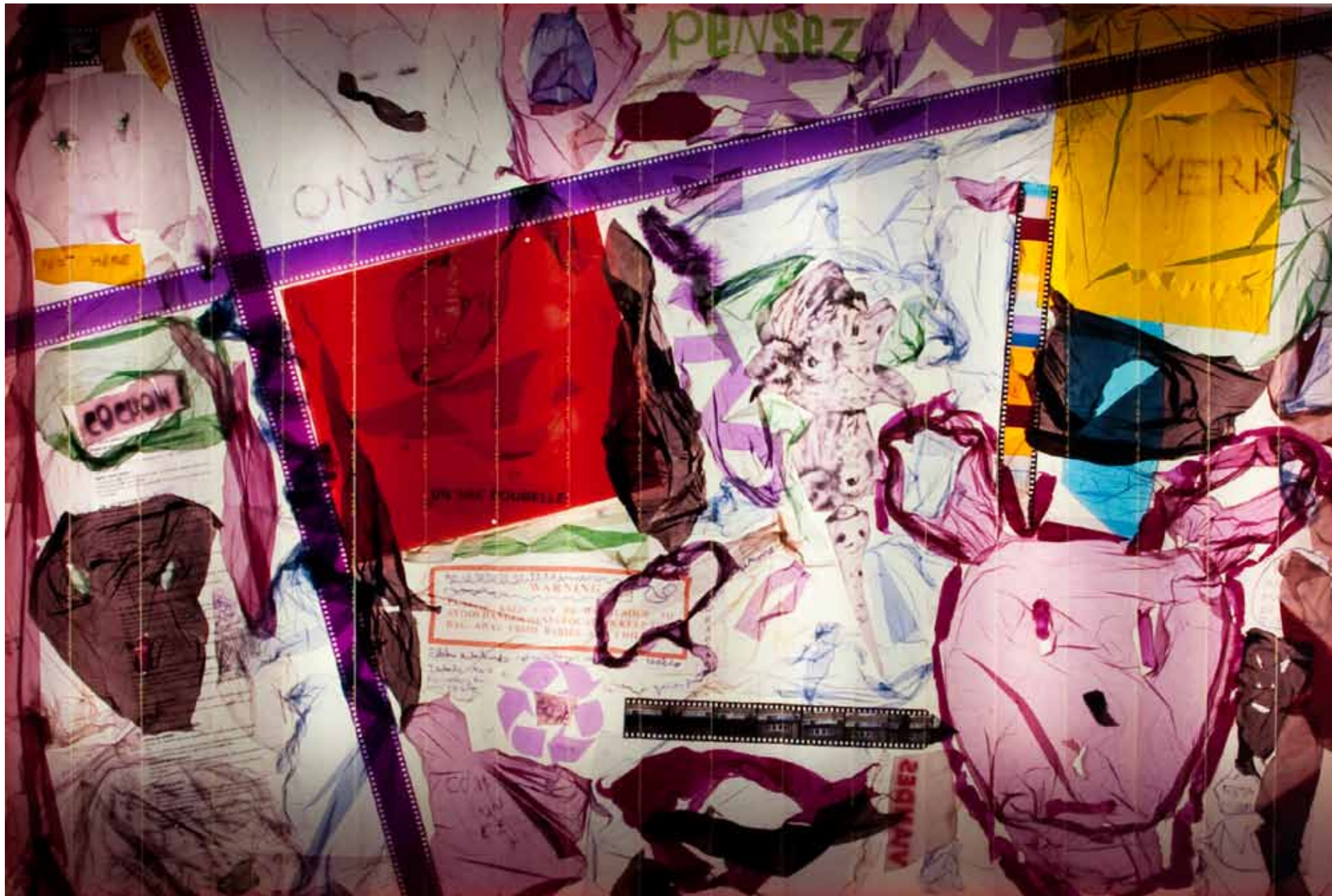
Transparent coloured glass, plastic bags and bottles, feathers and film, more plastic bags: Hector Castells Matutano's visual universe may bring to mind a Neo-Dadaist garbage collector with a psychedelic sensibility – combined with an almost purist approach to economy and refinement of artistic means. The result is a poetic and experimental radiography of the left side, in which depreciated objects and devalued materials are given new life through light, often recalling something between a religiousless stained-glass window and a light-box stripped of its commercial message. Here emerges an ambiguous, unstable kinship between object and image, abstraction and representation, matter and light, transparency and texture, post-pop consumerism and ghost-like relics, seen both in the graphic materiality and spectral presence of Castells Matutano's photograms and collages. This juxtaposition reveals a subtle play in which the equation  $\text{line}=\text{color}=\text{light}$  is the starting point of an exploration of the limits of the physical consistency and pure visuality of the form. The term "plasticity" works here as a pun: it describes both a formal and material property of the work, "plastic" being, in post-industrial societies, the lower stage of materiality and a precarious incarnation of pure use-value.

Castells Matutano's images have a particular way of combining the disposable and the primitive, the kitsch and the uncanny, playfully reintroducing a sense of humanity there where it seemed totally absent: they are the contemporary remains of a transparent society with a guilty ecological conscience, discovered by some archaeologist of the future.

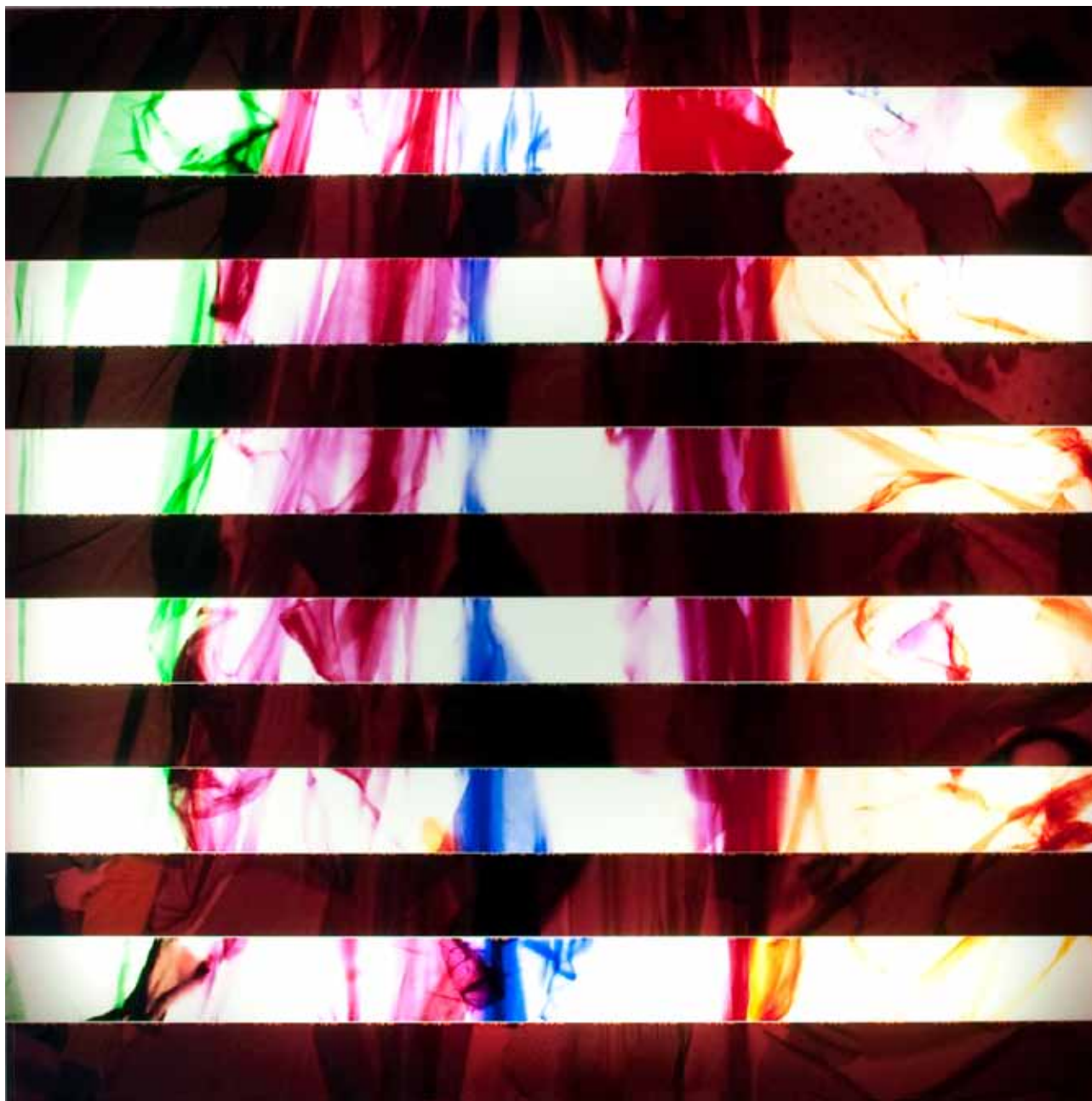
## Hector Castells Matutano

Hector Castells Matutano (Barcelona, 1978) is a visual artist, performer and filmmaker. He earned his MFA from the sculpture department of the Royal College of Art, London in 2012. Prior to this, he studied biology at the Barcelona Universitat Autònoma. Solo exhibitions include *Plastic Graffiti*, The Film Gallery, Paris (2014), *The Jungle*, Post Gallery, London, (2012), *Ripper Teeth in Action*, Modern Art Oxford (2011-12), *A Stag Beetle in Canal Bridge*, Cortex Atletico, Bordeaux and *Diggers*, Heygate Estate SSE Space, London (both 2011). Group exhibitions include *Desire Danger Dada*, Whitechapel Gallery (2014), *Back and Forth*, South London Gallery (2013), *Camera Britannica*, Pompidou Centre and *Chromatic*, Kristin Hjellegjerde (ARTECO) (both 2012). For more information, visit [www.artecogallery.com](http://www.artecogallery.com).





Plastic Graffiti #3, 2014  
Photographic sculpture with lights, slide film, plexiglass,  
epoxy resin and fluorescent light  
117 x 77 x 10 cm



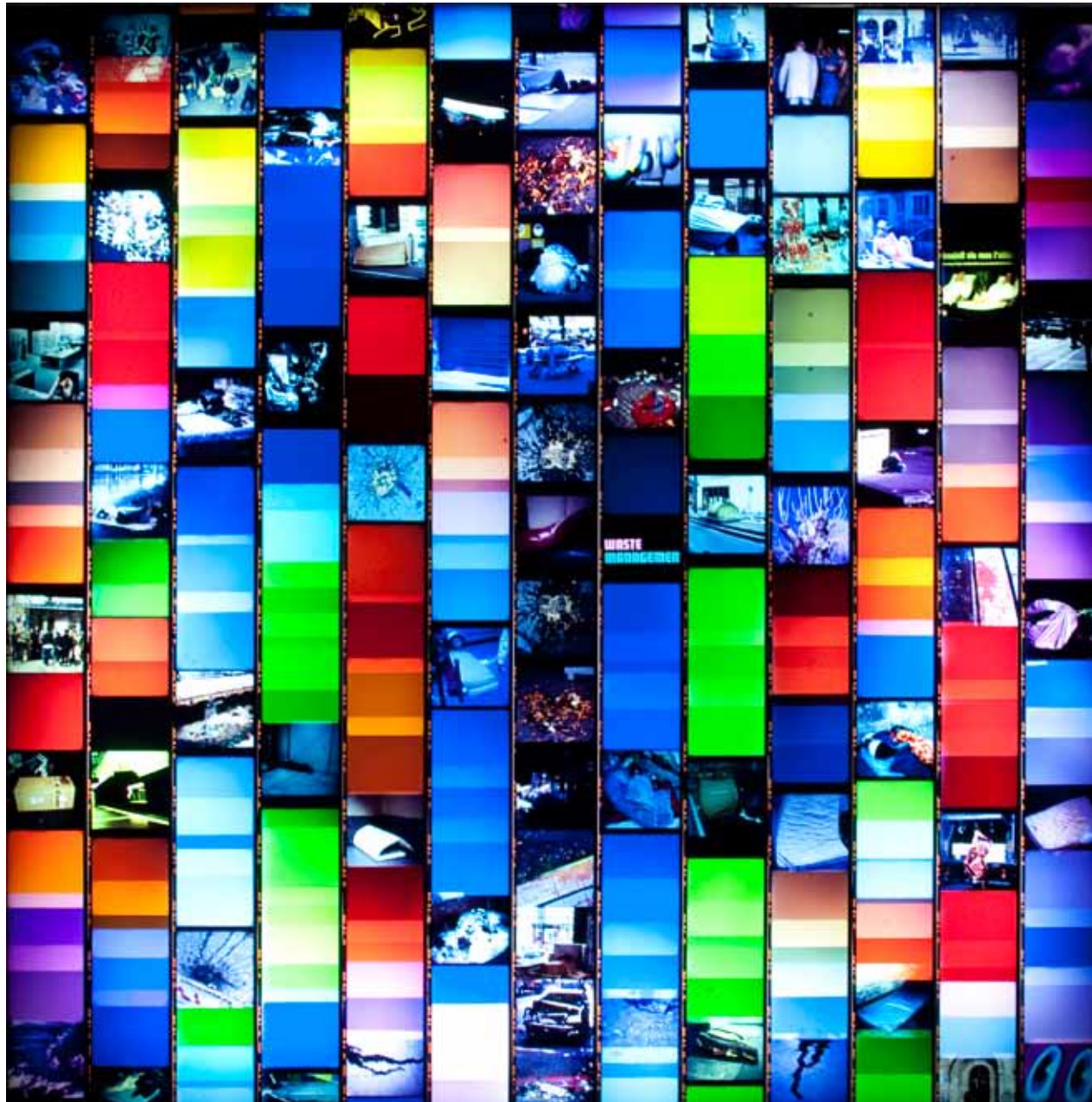
Flow, 2014  
Photographic sculpture with lights, slide film, plexiglass,  
epoxy resin and fluorescent light  
80 x 80 x 9 cm



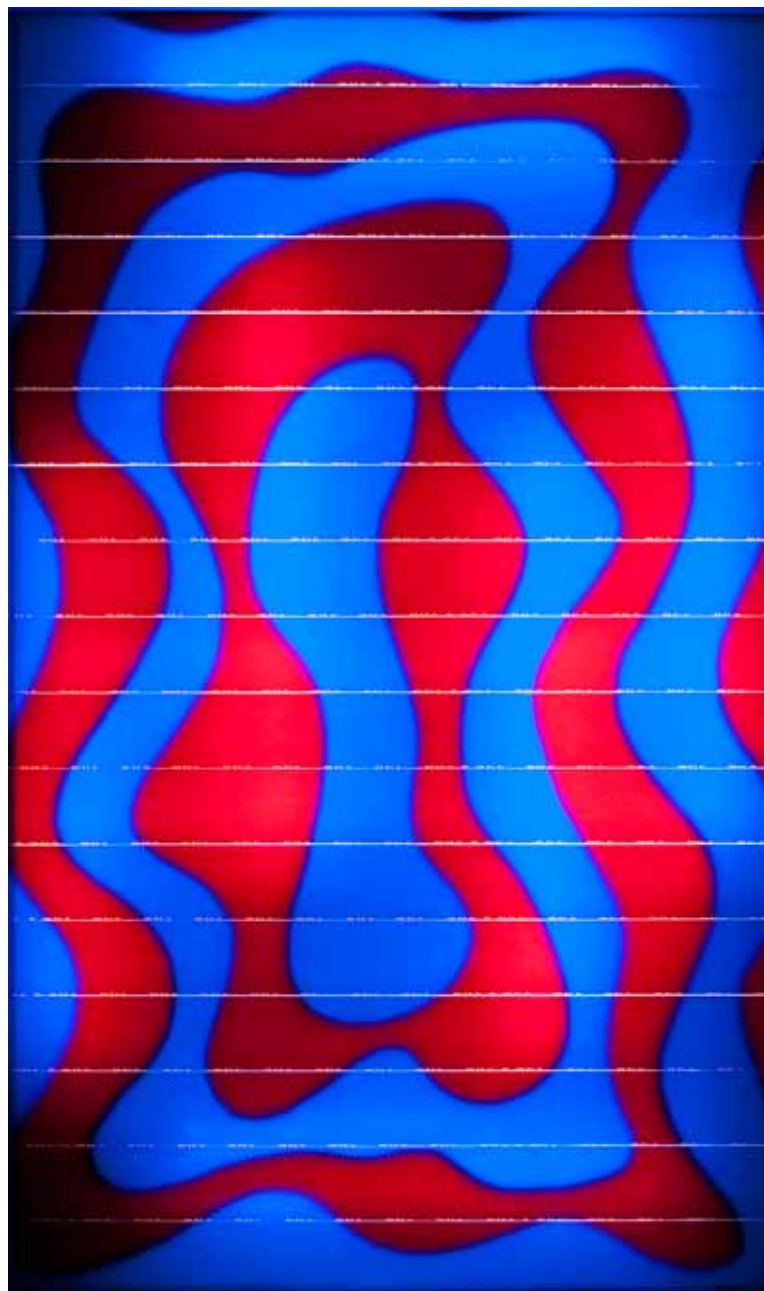


Space, 2013  
Photographic sculpture with lights, slide film, plexiglass,  
epoxy resin and fluorescent light  
80 x 80 x 9 cm





Waste, 2013  
Photographic sculpture with lights, slide film, plexiglass,  
epoxy resin and fluorescent light  
80 x 80 x 9 cm



Wave, 2014  
Photographic sculpture with lights, slide film, plexiglass,  
epoxy resin and fluorescent light  
62.5 x 106 x 10.5 cm



Chikydog, 2014  
Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Paper  
3 editions in total + 1 AP  
100 x 150 cm  
48 x 32 cm





Basketcase, 2014  
Hahnemühle Photo Rag Paper  
3 editions in total + 1 AP  
100 x 150 cm  
48 x 32 cm





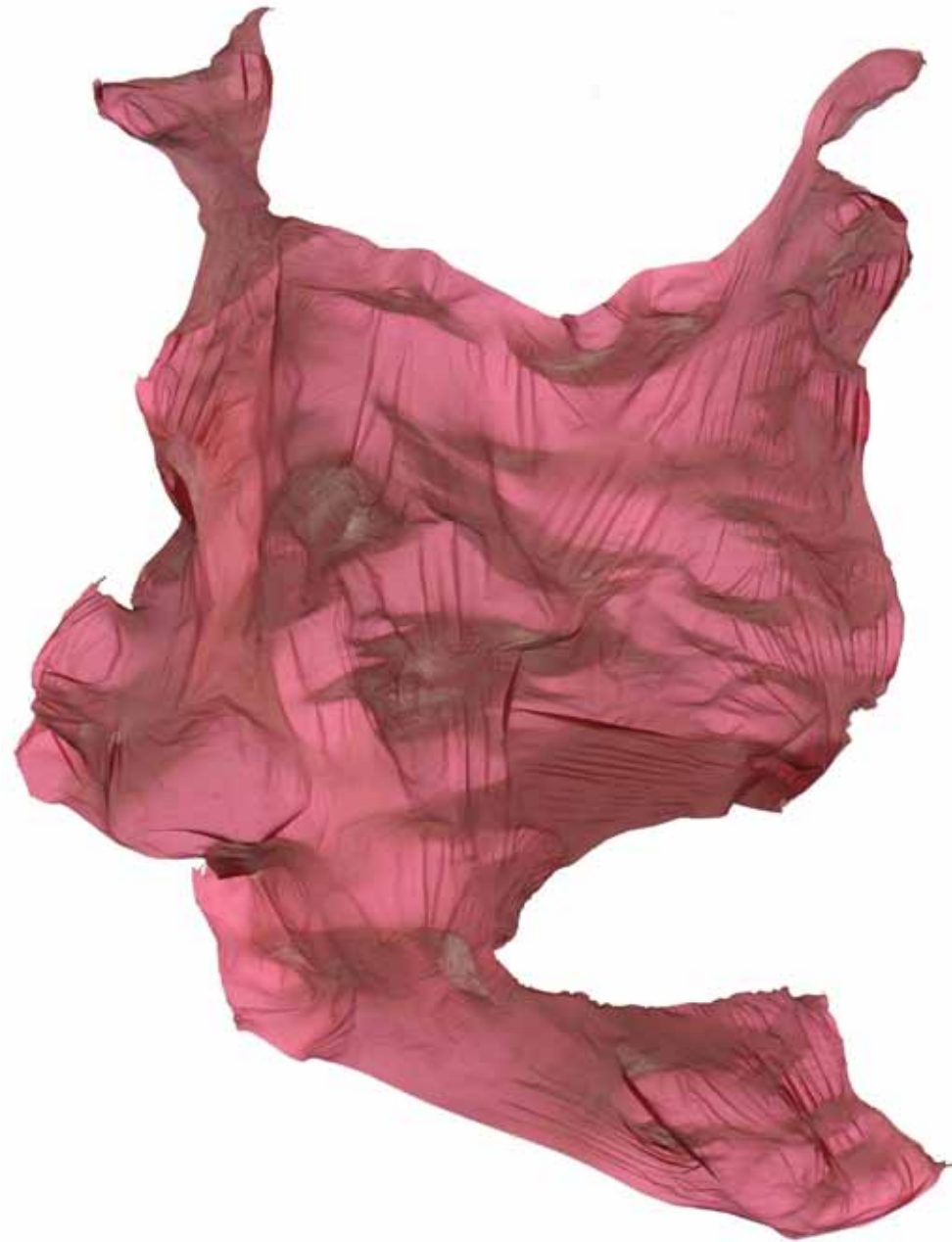
Widow, 2014  
Hahnemühle Photo Rag Paper  
3 editions in total + 1 AP  
100 x 150 cm  
48 x 32 cm



Mapatxe, 2014  
Hahnemühle Photo Rag Paper  
3 editions in total + 1 AP  
100 x 150 cm  
48 x 32 cm



Pan, 2014  
Hahnemühle Photo Rag Paper  
3 editions in total + 1 AP  
100 x 150 cm  
48 x 32 cm



Red, 2014  
Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Paper  
3 editions in total + 1 AP  
100 x 150 cm  
48 x 32 cm

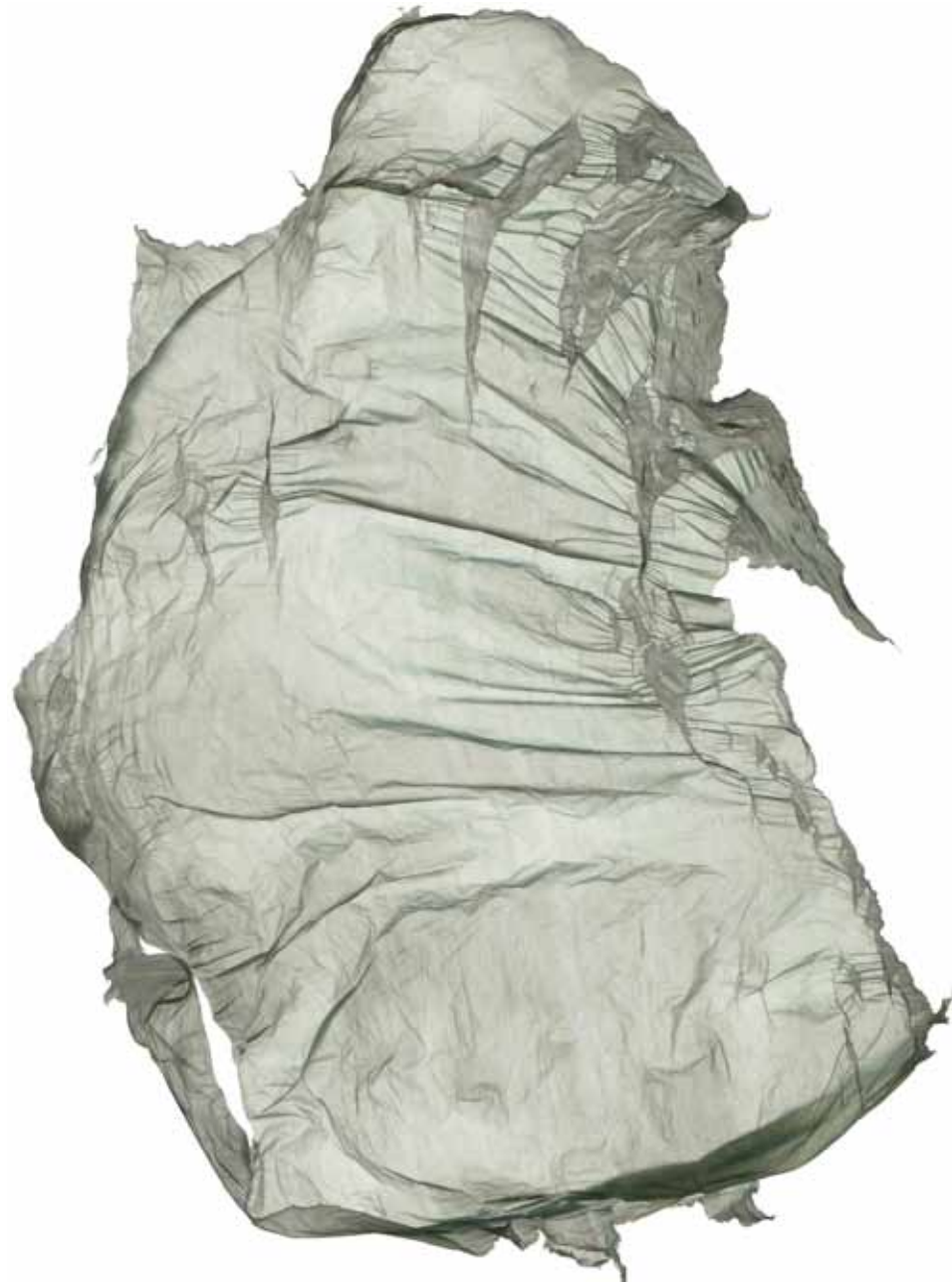




Messy, 2014  
Hahnemühle Photo Rag Paper  
3 editions in total + 1 AP  
100 x 150 cm  
48 x 32 cm



Peek Head, 2014  
Hahnemühle Photo Rag Paper  
3 editions in total + 1 AP  
100 x 150 cm  
48 x 32 cm



Brworm, 2014  
Hahnemühle Photo Rag Paper  
3 editions in total + 1 AP  
100 x 150 cm  
48 x 32 cm



Rubyns, 2014  
Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Paper  
3 editions in total + 1 AP  
100 x 150 cm  
48 x 32 cm





Splash, 2014  
Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Paper  
3 editions in total + 1 AP  
100 x 150 cm  
48 x 32 cm



Grone, 2014  
Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Paper  
3 editions in total + 1 AP  
100 x 150 cm  
48 x 32 cm



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