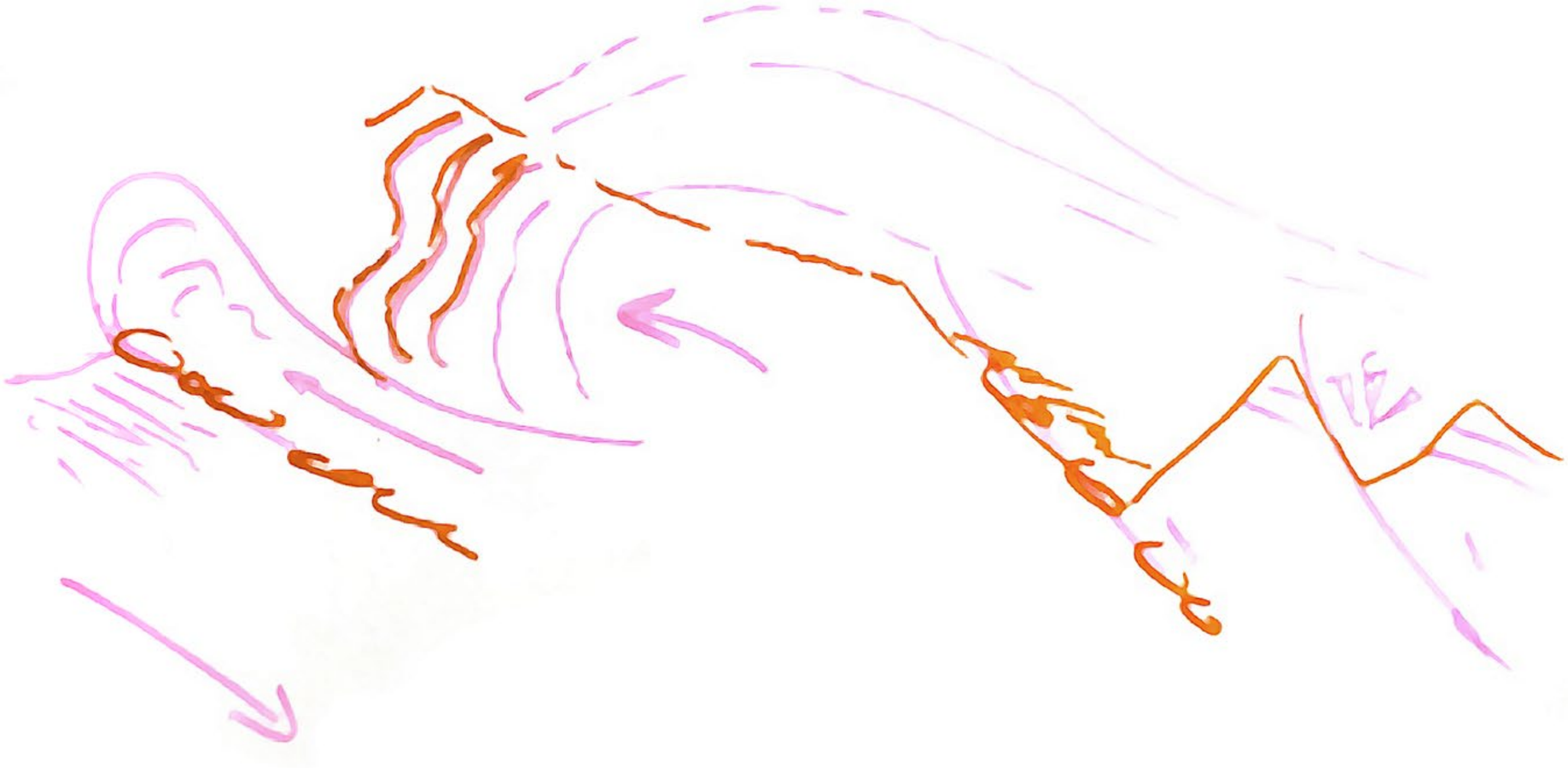
2013 — 2018
Homage to James Hutton to
An investigation of the laws observable in the
composition, dissolution and restoration of
land…

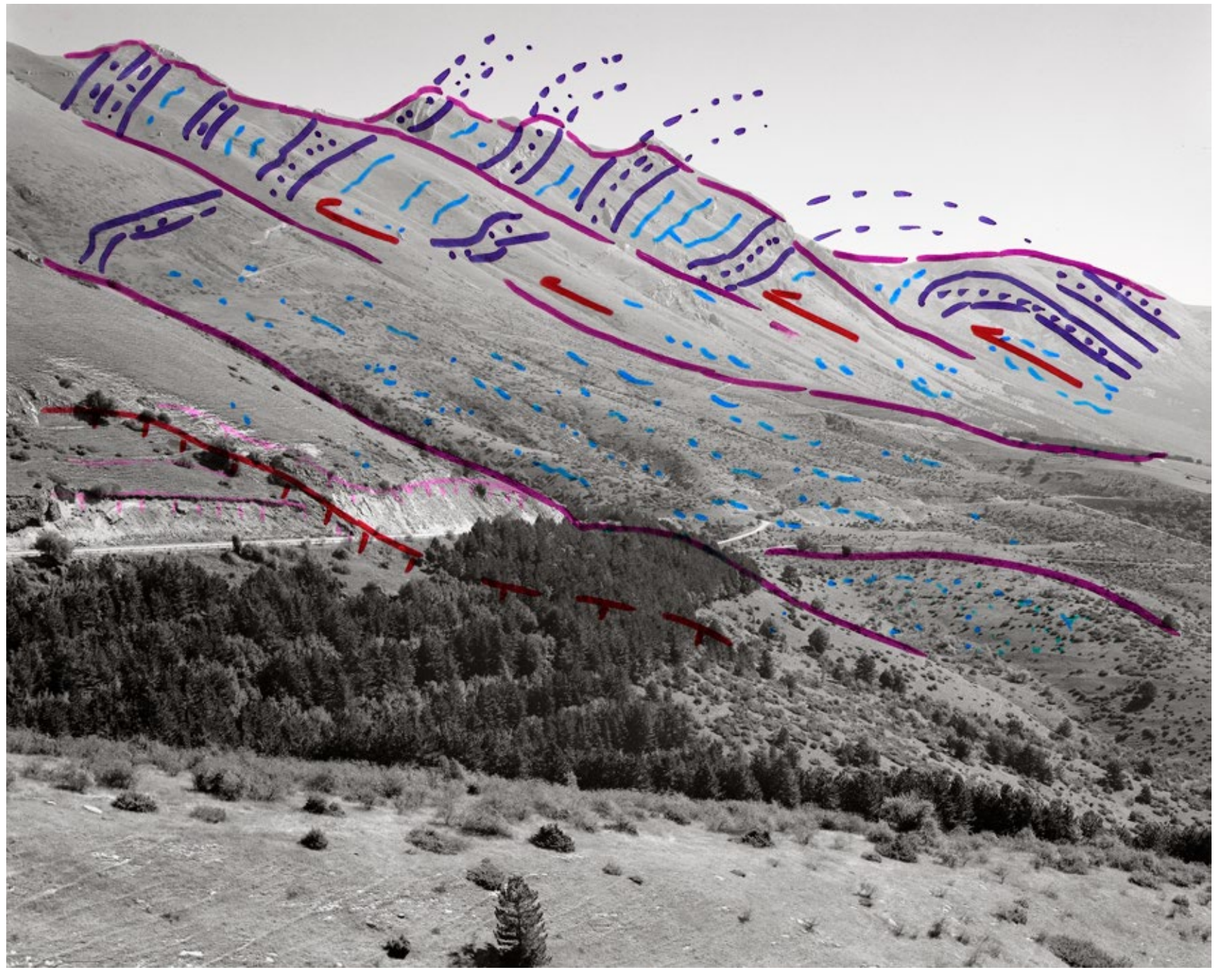
Fabio Barile

Homage to James Hutton 2013

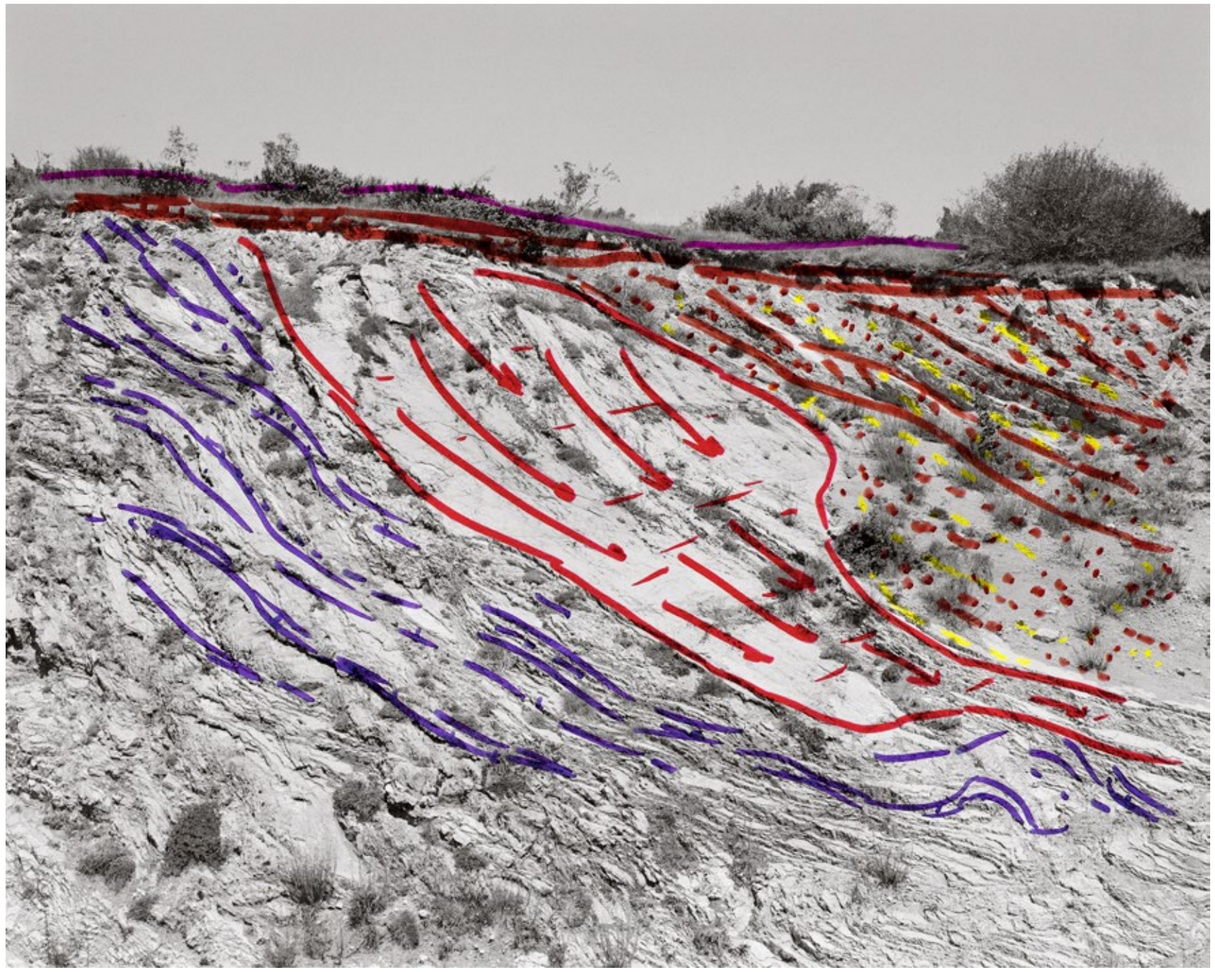
Homage to James Hutton, focuses on the aftermath of the earthquake that shook the Italian region of Abruzzo and the city of L'Aquila in 2009.
The series displays images of an antipodal nature to the substantial amount of photojournalistic projects that followed the event. Barile applies a scientific detachment to the tragedy, finding fertile ground for his research in the collaboration with the geologist Antonio Moretti, whose technical diagrams, applied and layered onto Barile's landscapes, encourage a meditative exercise on the complexity of landscape, its evolution and formation.



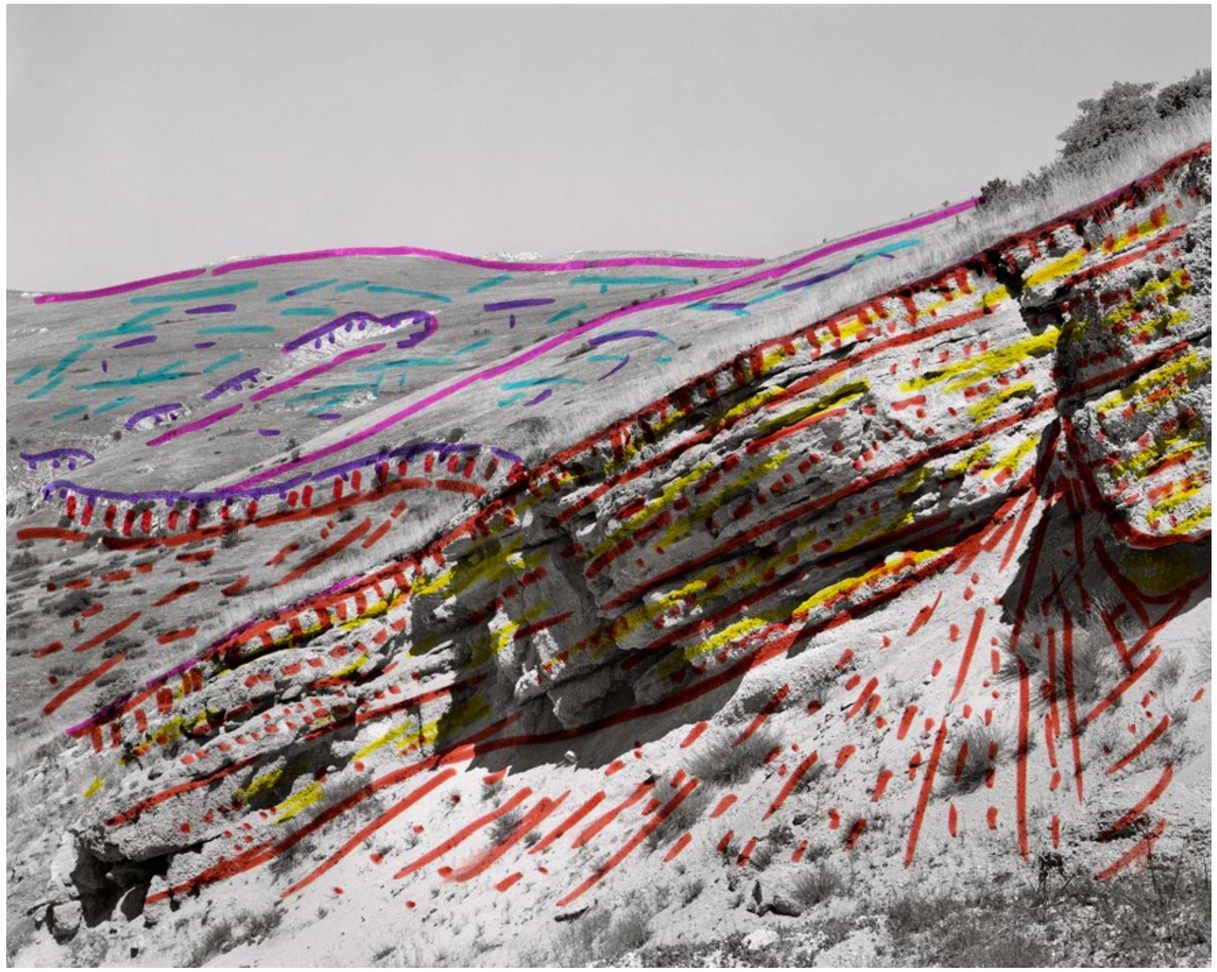
Drawing by geologist Antonio Moretti



Homage to James Hutton #1
2013



Homage to James Hutton #7
2013



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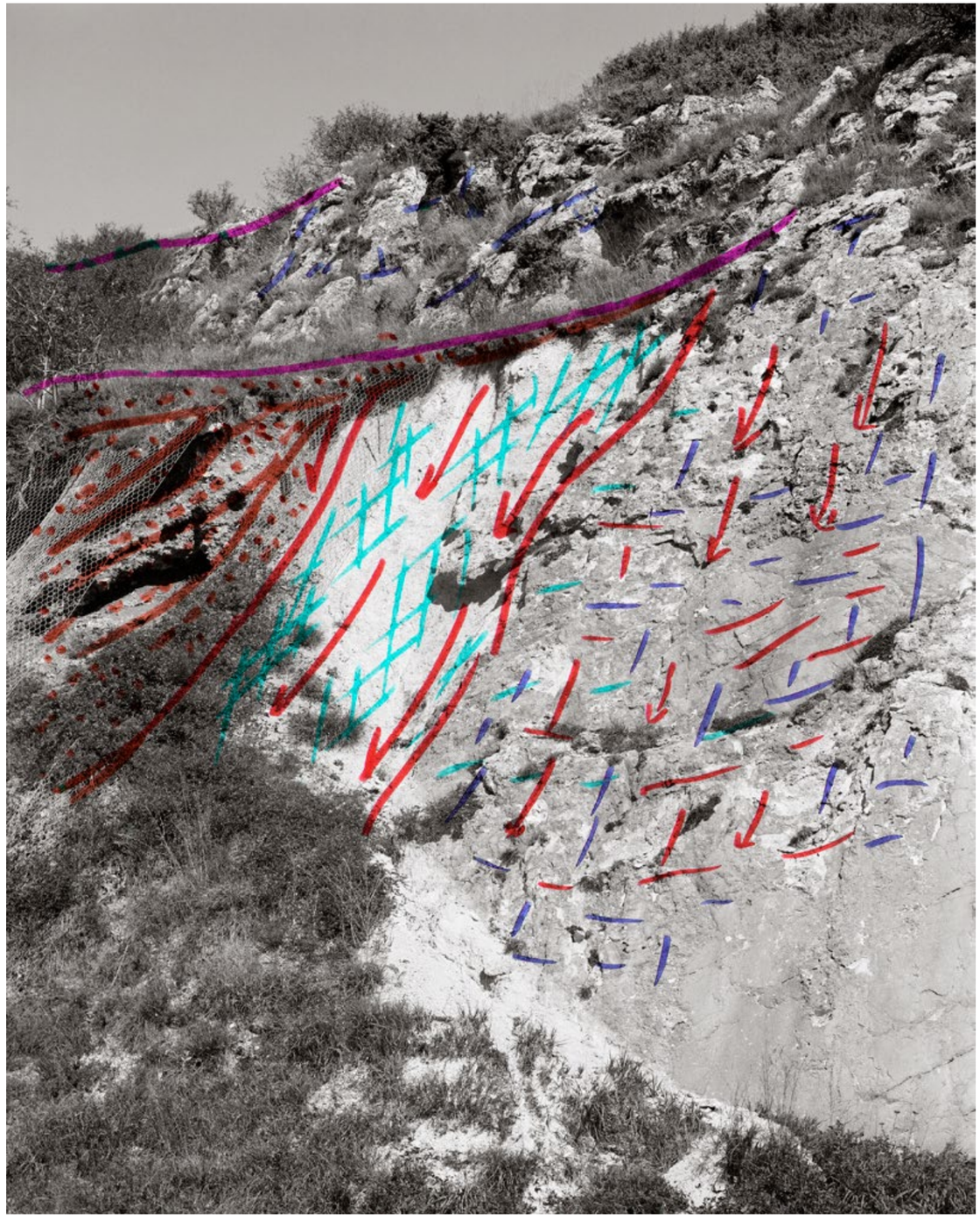
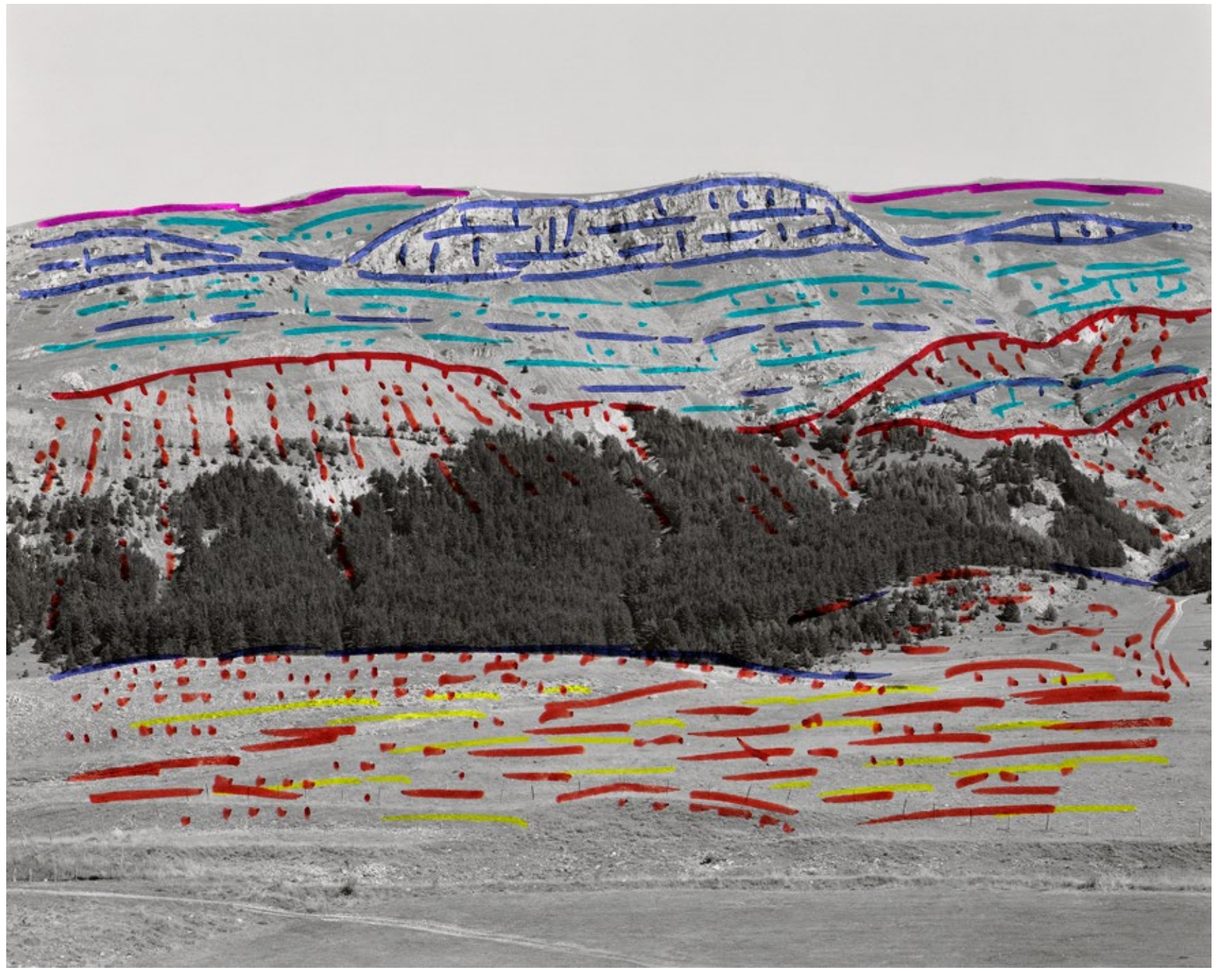


Homage to James Hutton #7
2013



Homage to James Hutton #2
2013

An investigation of the laws observable in the composition, dissolution and restoration of land 2014 — 2018

Essay by Naomi Itami

'*A few hundred years hence, in this same place, another traveller, as despairing as myself, will mourn the disappearance of what I might have seen, but failed to see. I am subject to a double infirmity: I am hurt by everything I see, and I constantly reproach myself for not looking as much as I should.*'
Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Tristes Tropiques"

At first glance, Fabio Barile's practice could be said follow in the long tradition of Italian landscape photography which includes practitioners such as Luigi Ghirri, Guido Guidi, and Gabriele Basilico. On closer inspection, however, the images in *An Investigation* hew to a tight conceptual framework that belie their simplicity, asking deeper questions about the nature of Time and geologic time, questions whose philosophical implications underpin scientific endeavor, human perception, and the unknowable forces of creative destruction at work in Nature and within the artist himself.
The works are tethered to their titles: geological descriptions and accounts of the experiments Barile undertook. Whether admired for their grandeur, or viewed as documents, the material alludes to the binary relationship between science and art, and the leaps made by artists and scientists toward one other, in the belief that startling connections are possible.
The ambitious scope of the work produces a surprisingly internal travelogue of cosmic dimension.
Drawing from the realms of geography, physics, chemistry, and biology, An Investigation borrows from the multifarious approaches of geological observation and data collection and from the history of photography. These photographs are about looking as much as we should. James Hutton's book 'Theory of the Earth' was seminal to the project and the artist cites Timothy O'Sullivan's 'Geological survey of the 40th parallel' as a direct influence. Echoing early photography pioneers such as Blossfeldt, Le Gray and Bayard, Barile works on an unwieldy large format camera, evoking the arc of the photograph's evolution, and linking photography to the bygone days of exploration. In an age where every mountain has been google- mapped and every island breached, Barile suggests that the only journey remaining is inside the image itself.
And indeed, a slow reading of the photographs elicits what Romain Rolland called in a letter to Sigmund Freud in 1927, an oceanic feeling. Textures and striations of uneven planes in the rocks and landscapes provide clues as to how and when these ancient formations came to be. They also yield a sensual appreciation of Time's inexorable march. As all images tend toward dissolution (digital photographs pixelate, paintings reveal brush strokes) a haptic visuality is elicited from the viewer. The viewer's gaze travels across these images like a caress. The eyes fastening to them as though organs of touch. Barile's invitation is most successful here, as it invites contemplation of the infinite rather than pulling us down the narrow path of a private narrative. After all, glacial formations are not going anywhere soon.

As a juxtaposition to the noble, sombre images of ancient rock and landscape, Barile produced playful, decidedly lo-fi images of the scientific experiments he undertook that serve to round out *An Investigation*.
Highlighting the disparity between man's pursuit of knowledge and Nature's inherent perfection, the artist used darkroom and everyday household materials, to replicate (on a smaller scale) the physical forces and natural phenomena that occurred beneath the surface of the earth over the 4.5 billion years of its existence. Barile says the experiments became the key to interpreting the landscape as a complex, hidden system, transforming it into a form of research, in the hopes of creating a vision that is not to be received passively, but rather, "interrogated by our gaze". The analogue models do indeed explicate processes like the formation of stalactites and differential erosion using everything from crackers to Ikea furniture, but mostly serve as an attempt to stretch the viewer's grasp of deep time. In so doing, Barile invites us into a mordantly funny, quasi-pathetic time machine of his own making, to travel to a time before humanity existed and to question what will be left when we cease to exist.
Knowing that images of nature can never be separated from nature, Barile accepts that the world has been exhausted by representations of itself. The natural world has become a simulacrum, manipulated for the purposes of revealing aesthetics lodged within 'objective' representation. The artist's use of geological descriptions as image titles, urges the viewer to consider far more than the science behind the geological structures. The large format prints, products of Barile's obsessive gaze, are windows which give onto both a distant past and a presumptive future with geologic time as the connective tissue.
Like a Renaissance artist, Barile considers art to be an instrument for understanding the universe, a view which implies reverence for the pioneers of modern science, chief among them, the father of geology, James Hutton (1726-1797), who first perceived that the earth is alive with geologic activity, as well as determining that the Earth is billions of years old. Glimpsing our planet's history in these primordial landscapes inundates the imagination to the point of paralysis. How can we conceptualise geologic time? Numbers fail. One hundred thousand years or one hundred million years can't be encompassed. The landscape is the only evidential inscription of deep time— both the victim and the perpetrator of change. It is the immensity of time writ large, in a language we can decipher.
A final word about photography as a natural process that has its origins in the same ancient earth: "*The photographer deals in impressions that are enabled by the apparatus of the camera, chemicals, plate and light. Remarkably, this concept of impressions mirrors another natural process, namely, that of fossilization. If fossilization is an ancient impression of softer organisms onto harder geological forms, photography is its modern, mediated equivalent. It is the impression of gradations of light and shadow onto stone, metallic, or glass surfaces—themselves the elder products of geological forces. This new technology is written back into the earth's deep history. The landscape crosses over to the order of the photograph, and vice versa; each an impression, each a fossil.*"[1]
Barile's work takes us on a temporally dizzying journey through deep time not merely through the myriad geographical forms of his native land, but through the language of the photographic medium itself.

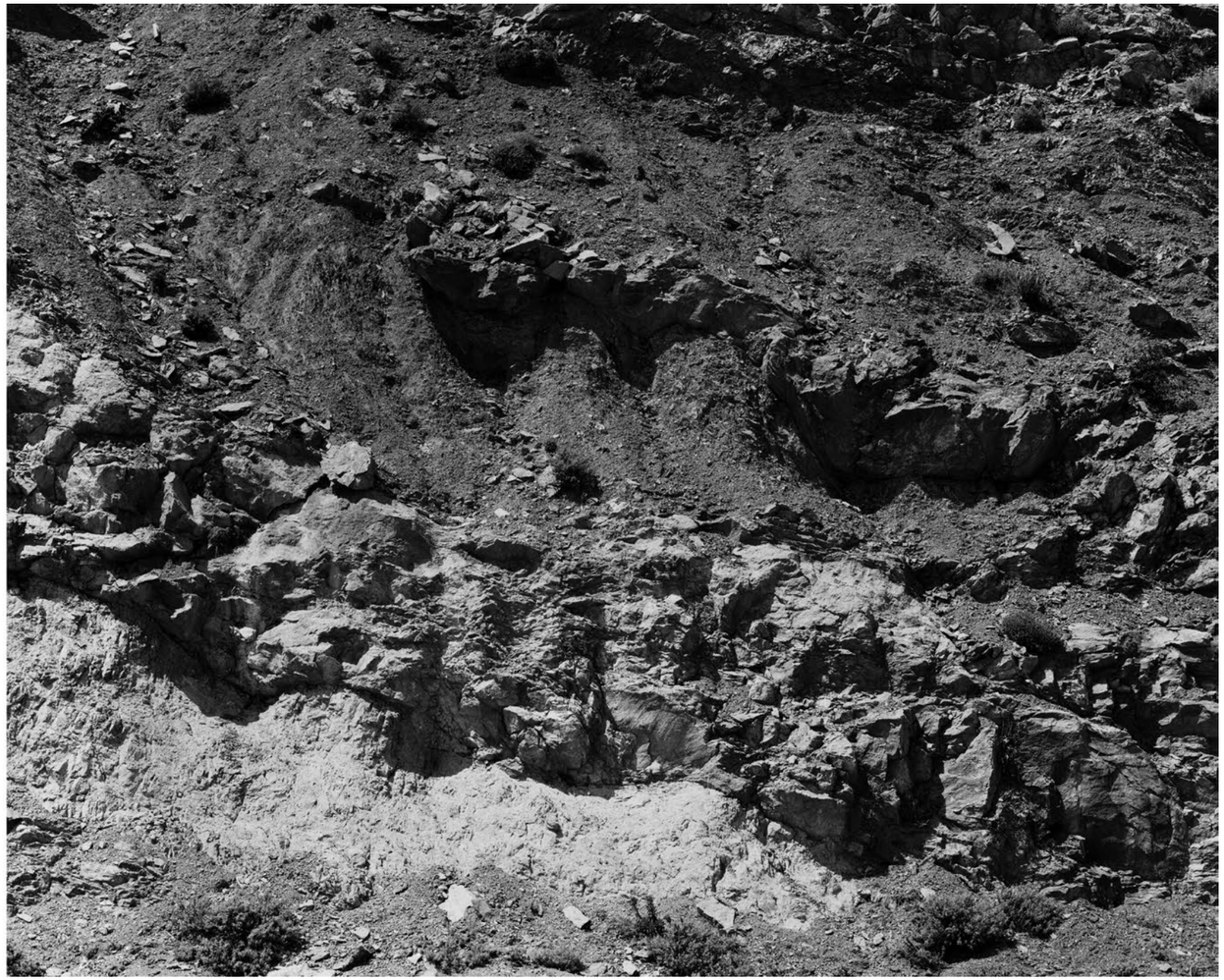
1 Architecture in the anthropocene:
Encounters among Design, Deep time, Science and Philosophy : Episodes from a history of scalelessness: William Jarome Harrison and Geologica Photography. Adam Bobbette

Untitled
2015

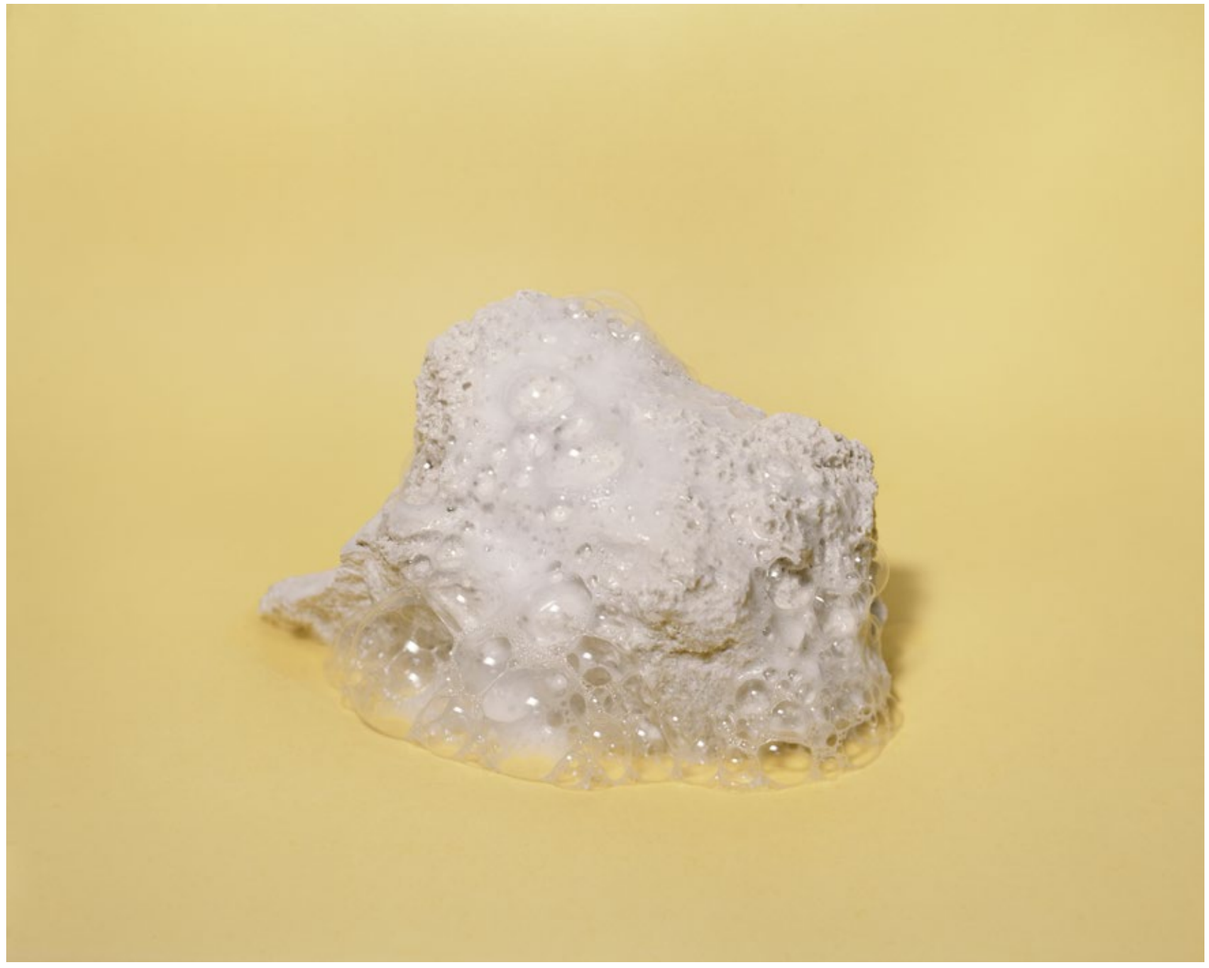
Dolostone outcrop in the Campo Imperatore plateau,
Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park.
2015

View of the fossil and the present day tidal notchs, the first dating back 125-128.000 YA, Orosei Gulf.
2016

Study on dike propagation, gelatin, caramel, syringe and plastic plate.
2016



Untitled.
2016

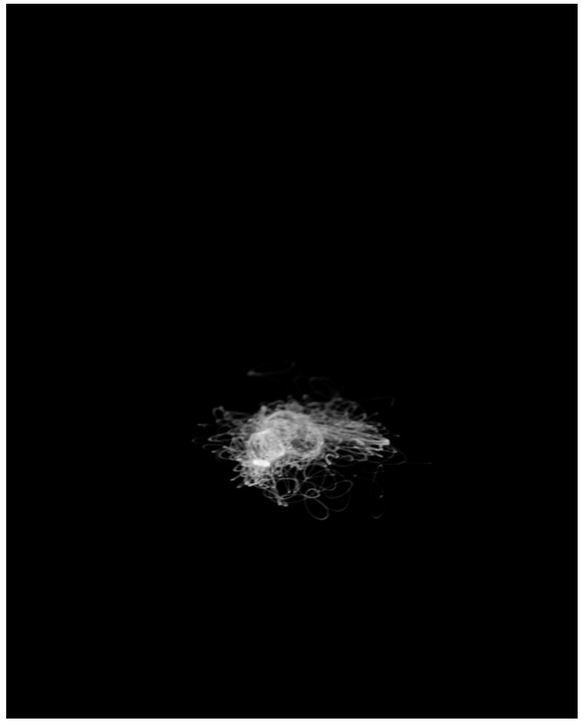
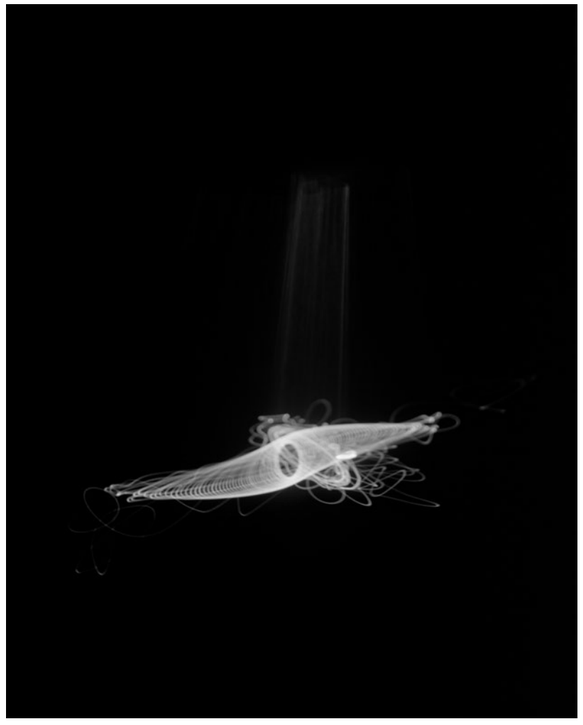
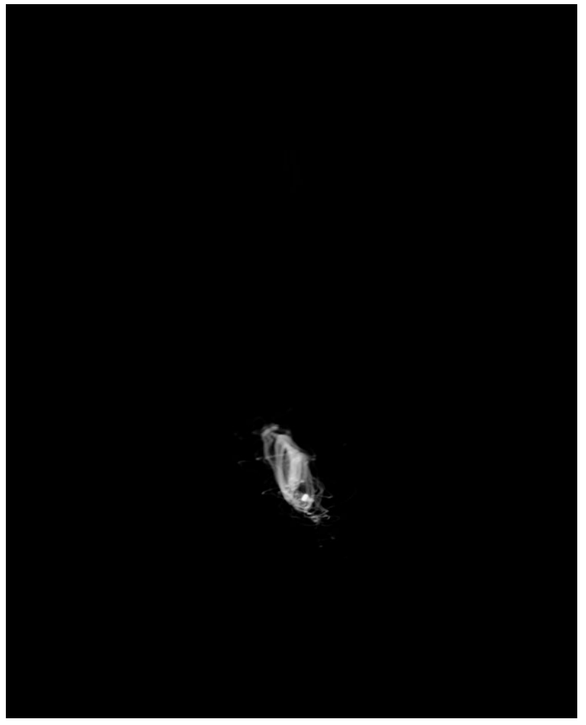
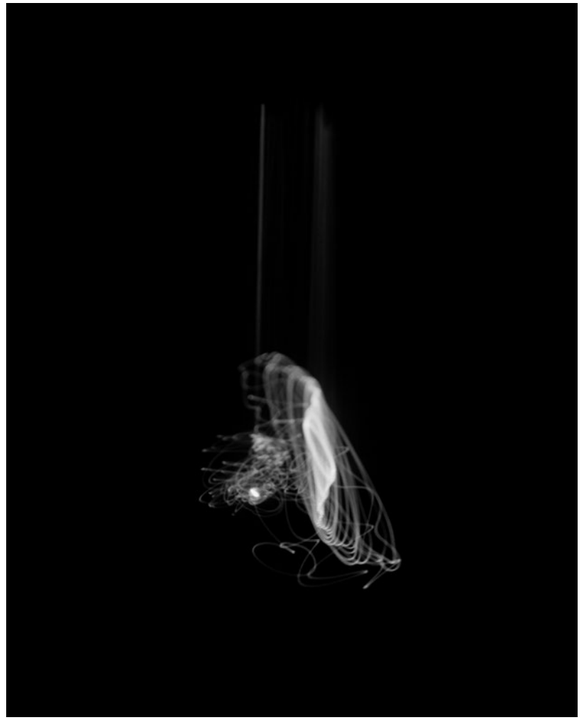
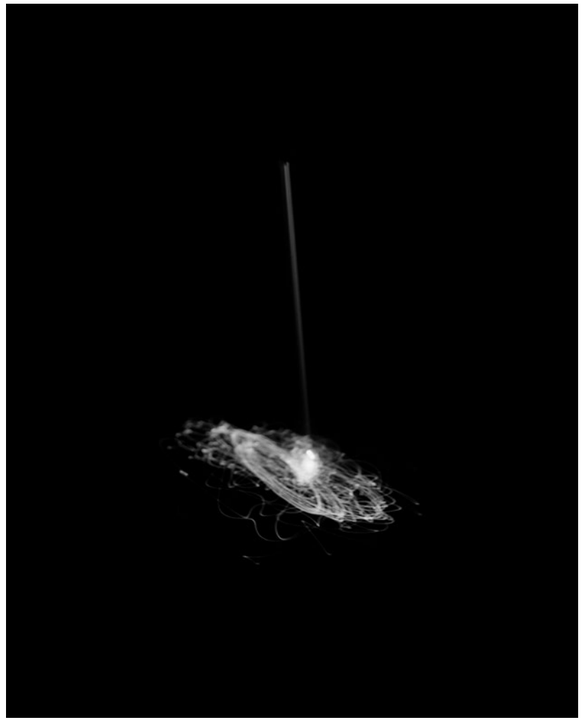
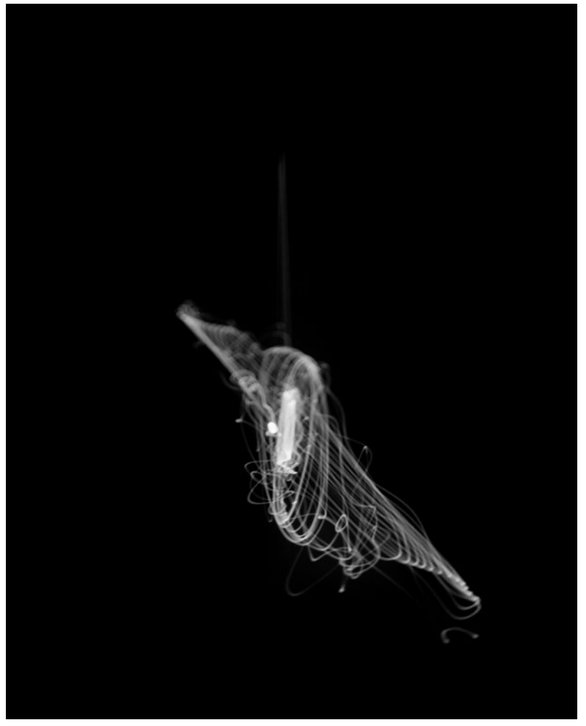


Study of the mechanism of Solutional caves formation, Hydrochloric acid on Travertine - $HCl + CaCO_3 > CaCl_2 + CO_2 + H_2O$.
2015

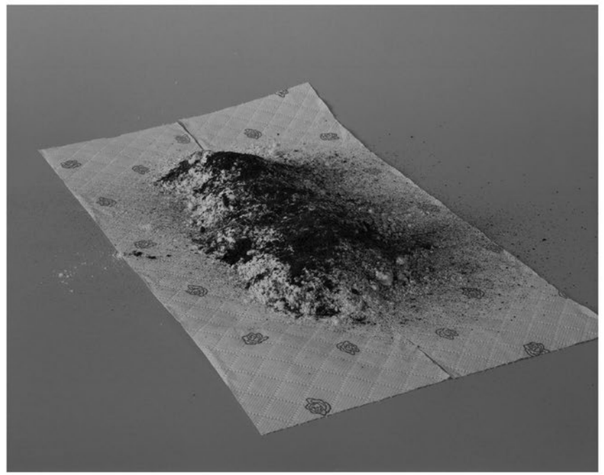
Limestone cave in the karst plateau of Murge in the Apulia Region.
2015

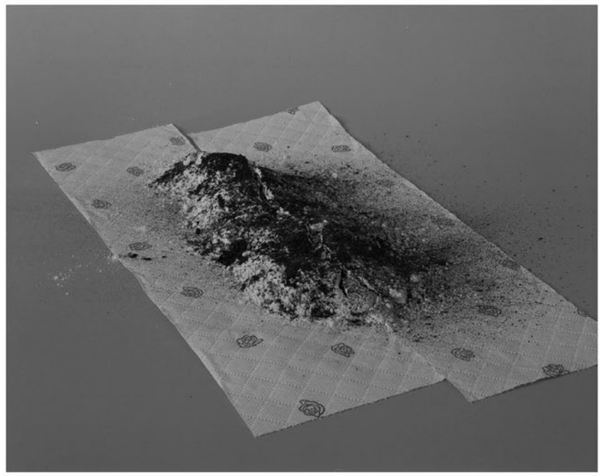
Reinterpretation of the vertical pendulum seismograph created by Don Andrea Bina in the mid 1700s. 2015

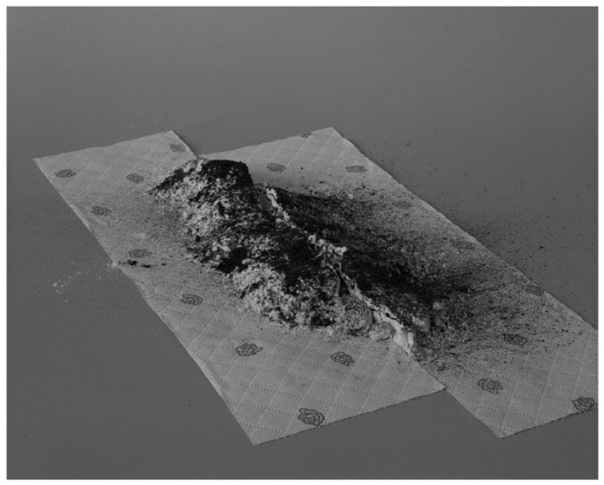
Laser pointer, stone, clamps and Ikea furniture.
2015

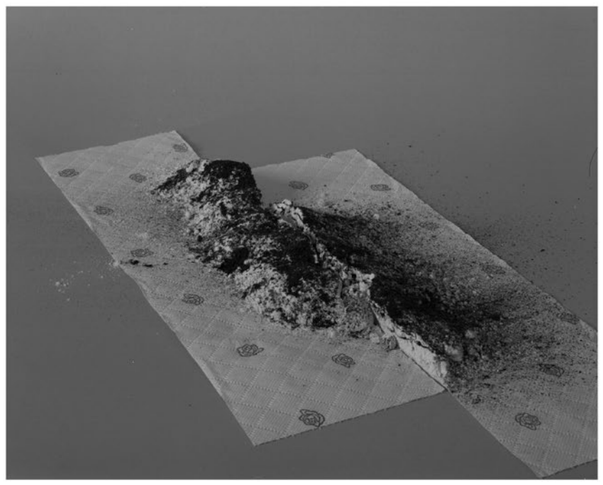







Simulation of an earthquake registered by a reinterpretation of the vertical pendulum seismograph created by Don Andrea Bina in the mid 1700s. The trail is created from a laser which draws the movement of the pendulum during and after the earthquake.
2015



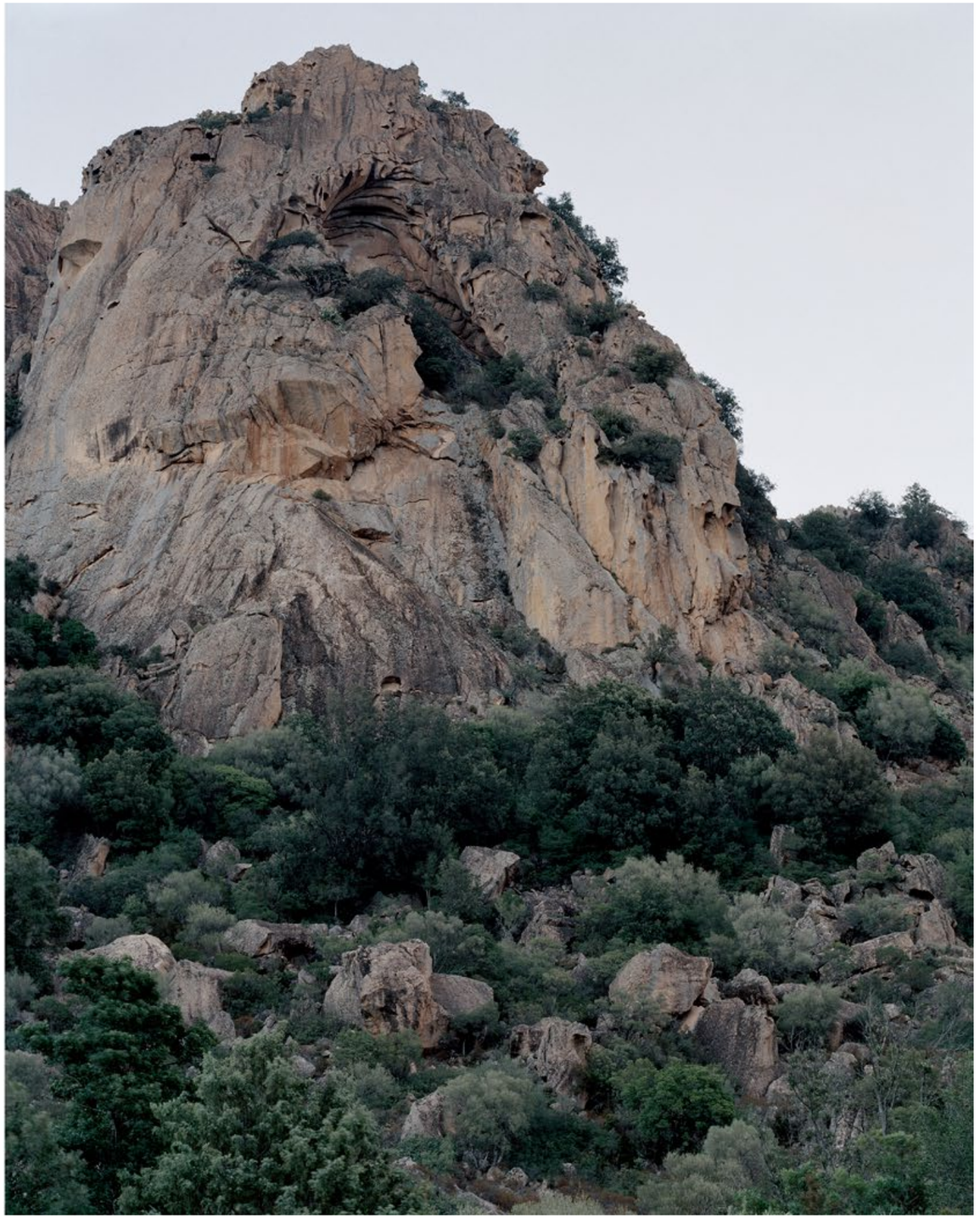




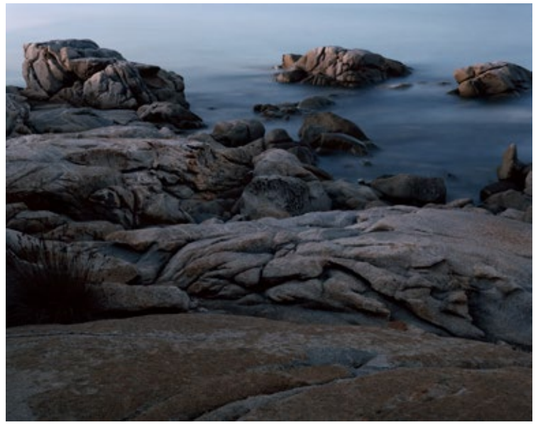


Transform fault. Toilet paper, flour and cous cous powder spice.
2017

Study on the earth magnetic field.
2016



Untitled.
2017



Untitled.
2017
—

Badlands.
2016
—

Columnar jointing.
2015
—

Stromatolites fossil.
2016
—

Pillow lava.
2016
—

Cave.
2015
—

Lichenometry.
2017
—

Sinkhole.
2016
—

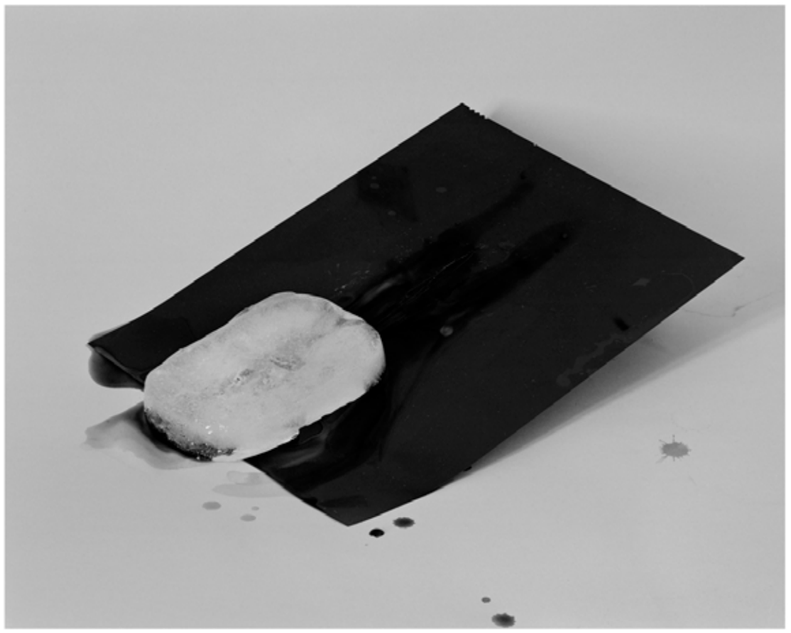
Shist river bed.
2017
—

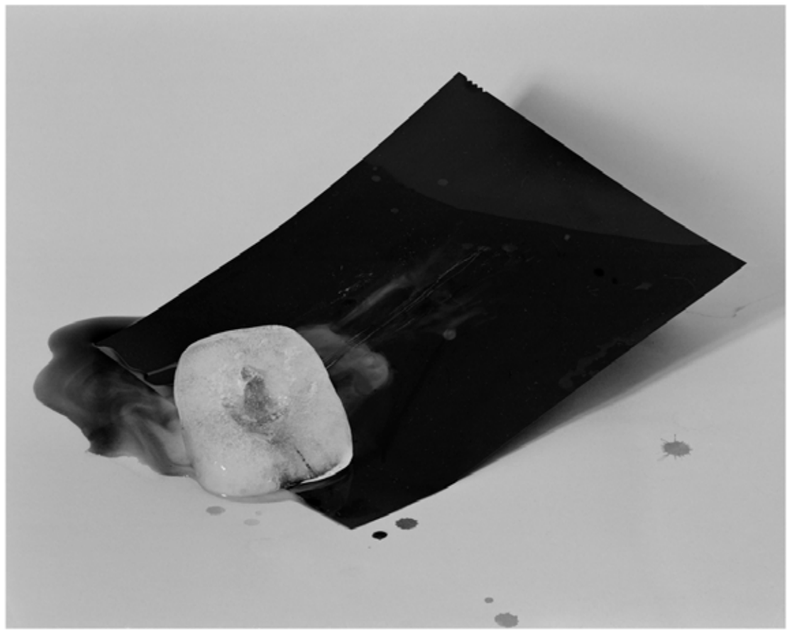
Underwater
lava bouble
2017
—

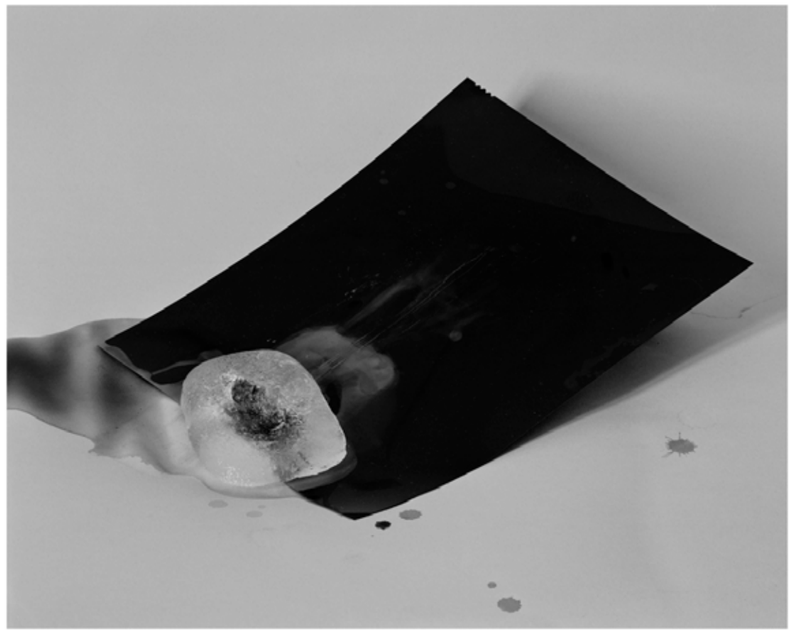
Study on dune formation, decorative sand and hair dryer.
2016

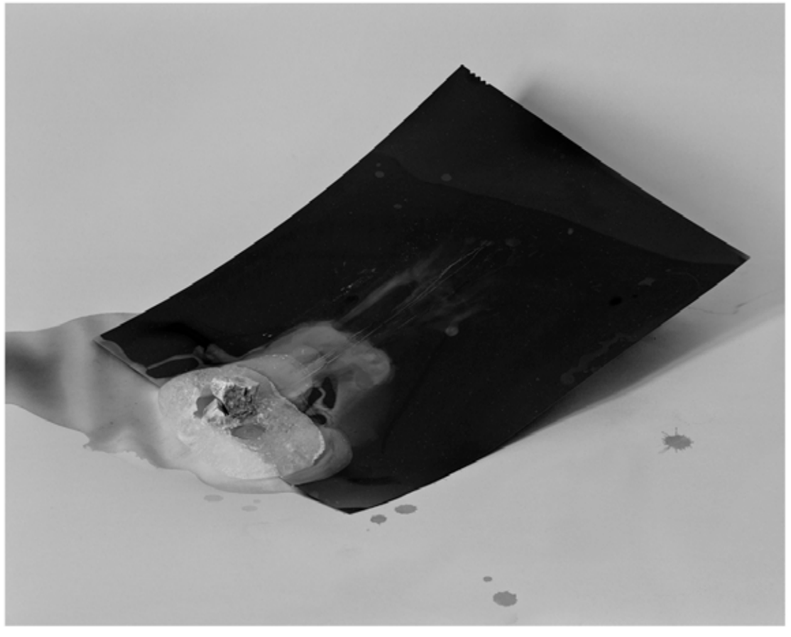
The Codula Ilune canyon contains the biggest cave system of Italy,
the karst system extends for 70 km in the Supramonte massif.
2016

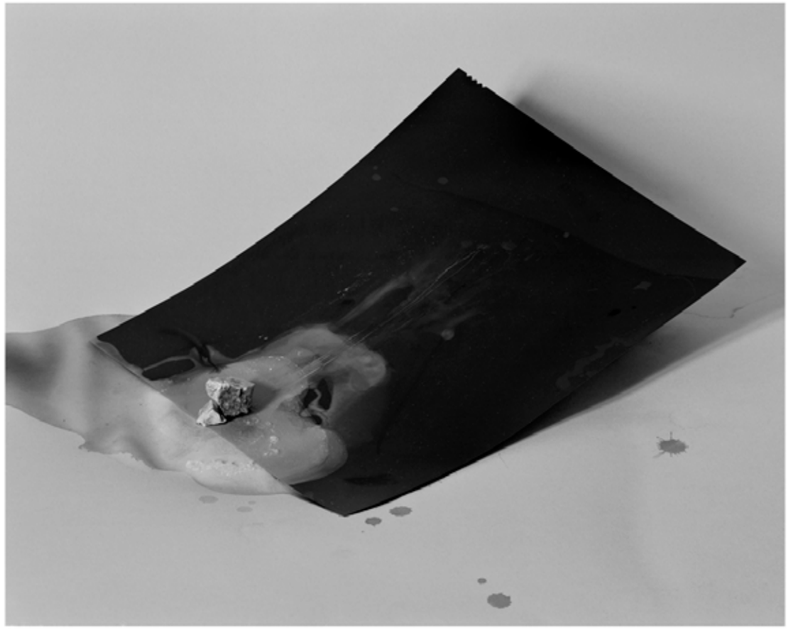
Pink granites with flint veins.
2017







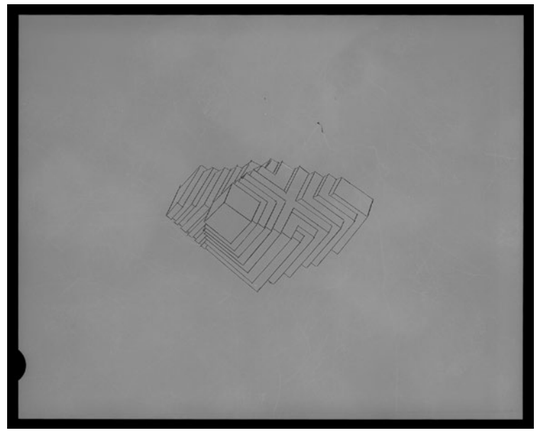
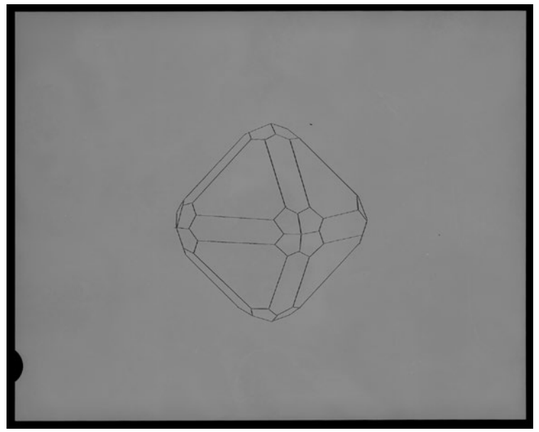
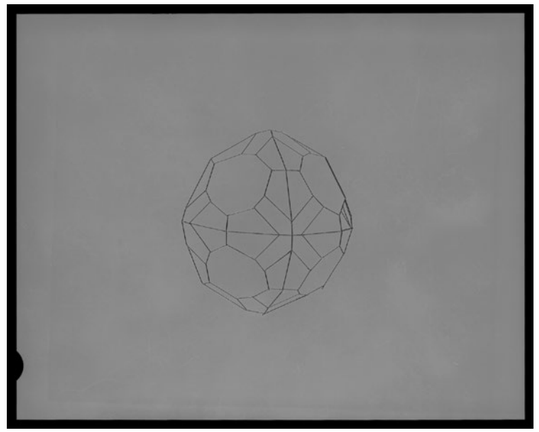
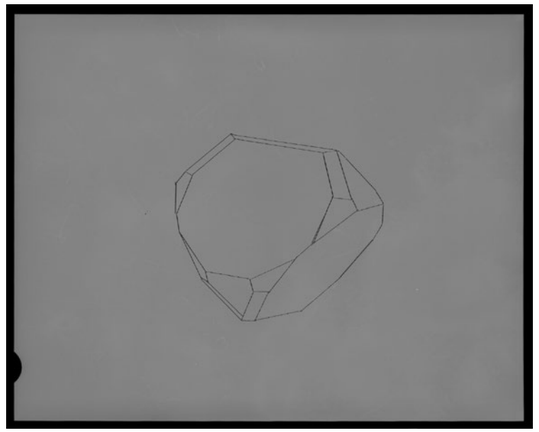
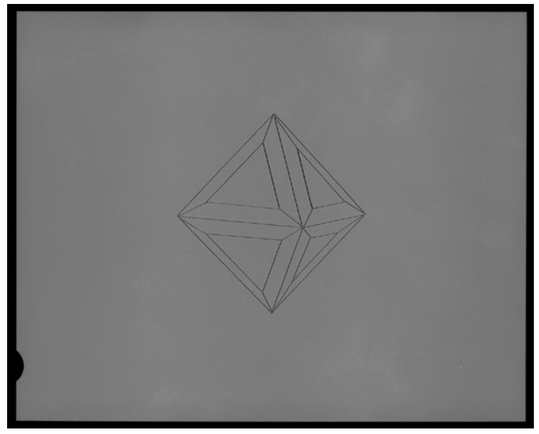
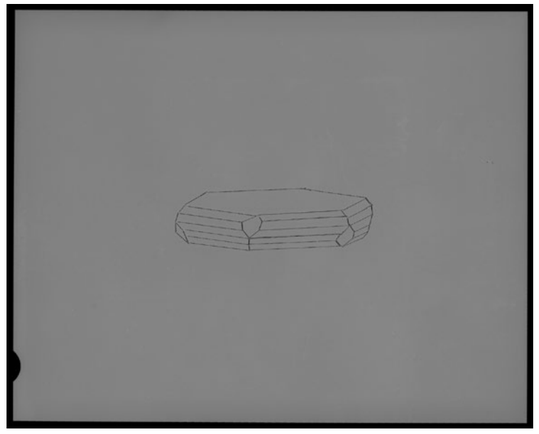
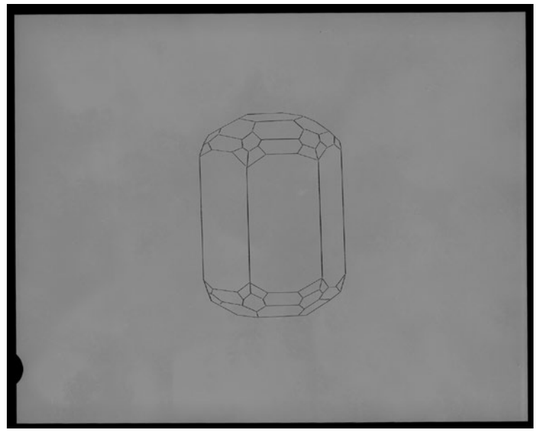
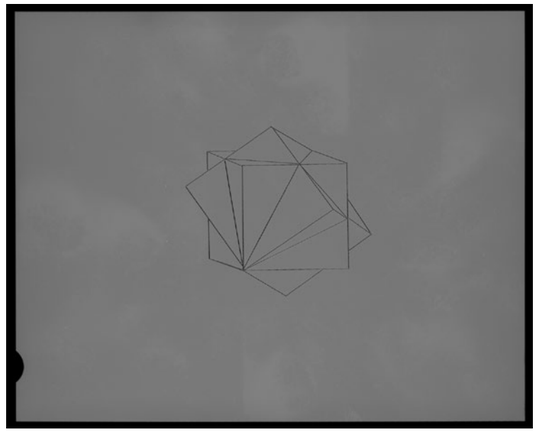




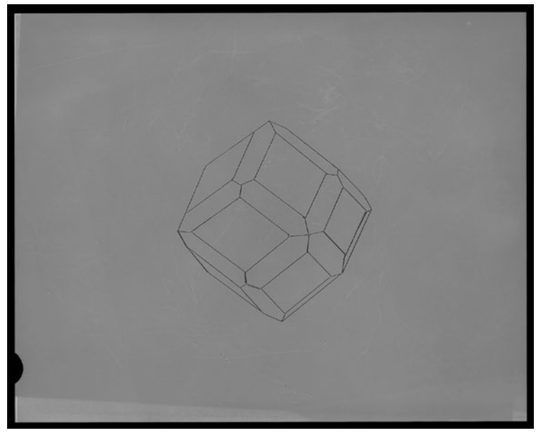
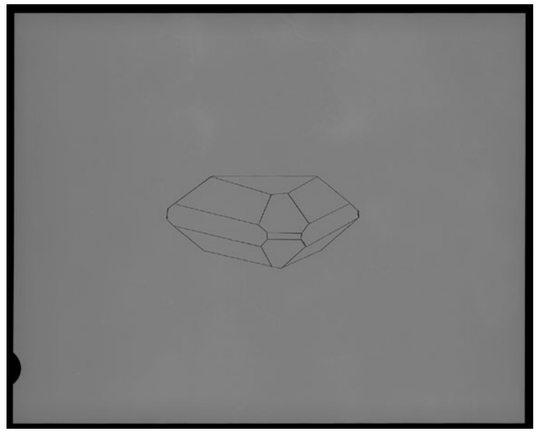
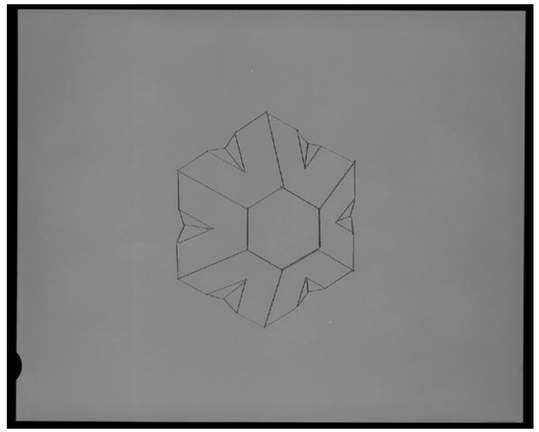
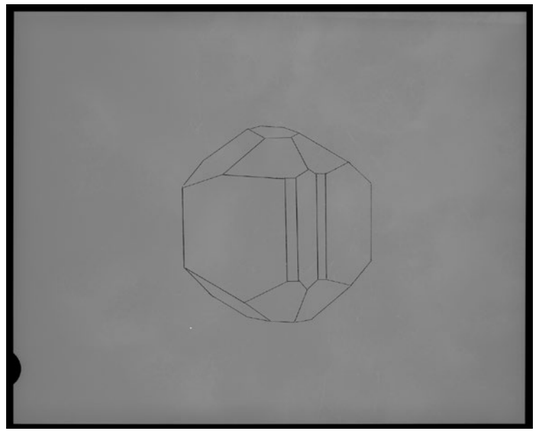
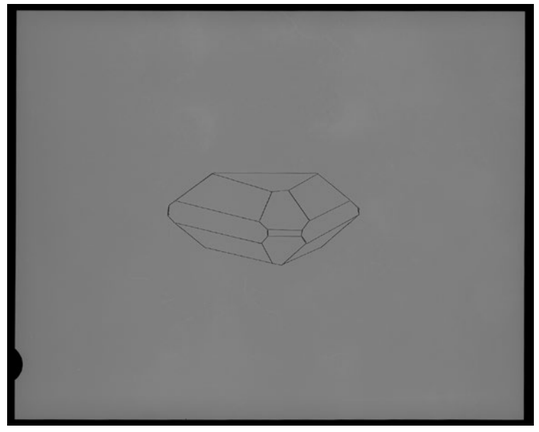
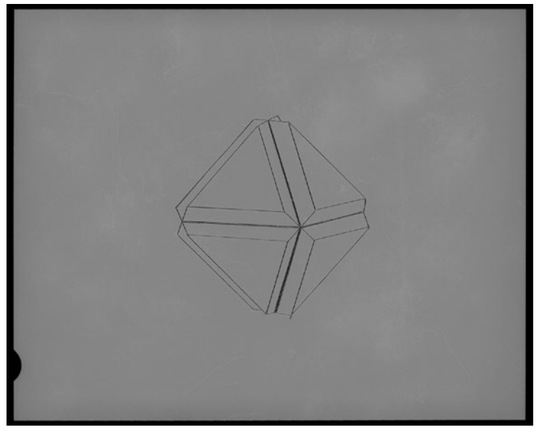
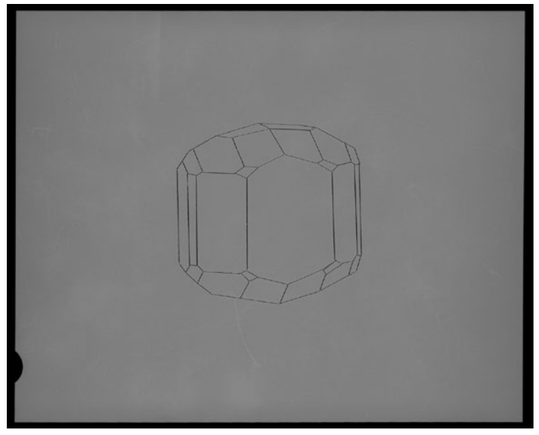
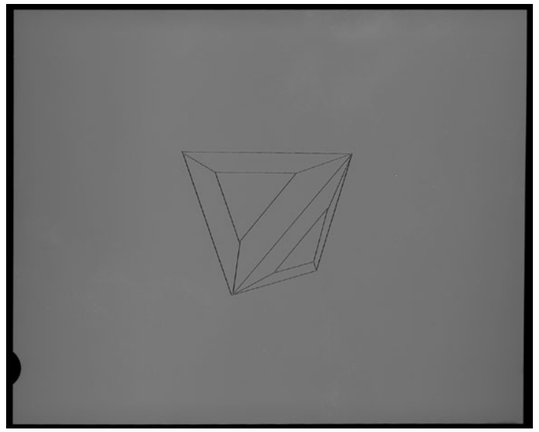
Study on the sign of glacier on land,
Scratches and erratic on 8x10" Kodak Tmax 100.
2016

Untitled
2014

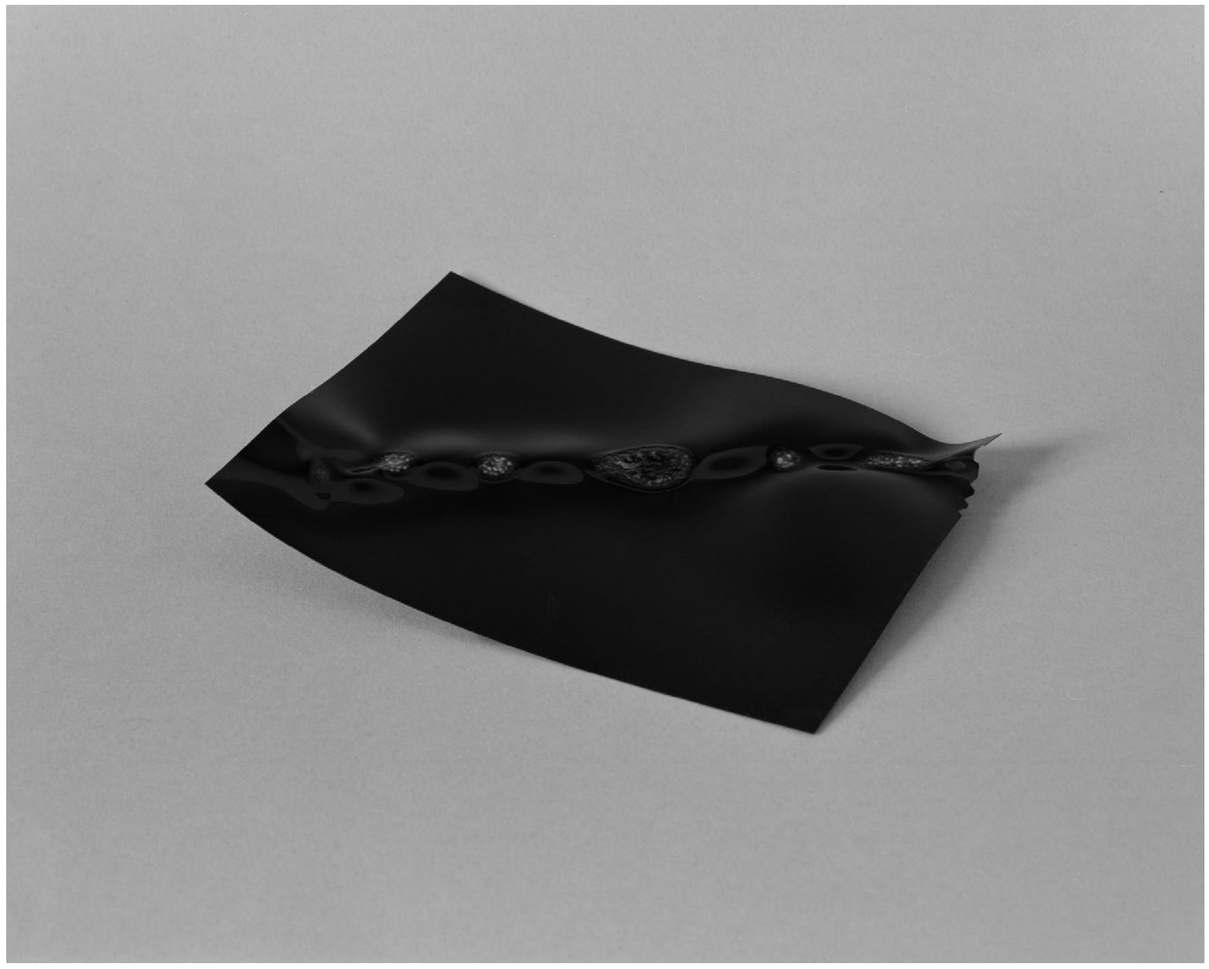
Crystal habits 2017

Crystal habits,
Contact sheets from engraved 4x5" negative.
2017

Crystal habits,
Contact sheets from engraved 4x5" negative.
2017



Study #1 on the Hawaiian hot spot and volcanic chain formation.
Tea candle and 4x5" Kodak Tri-X.
2016

Untitled.
2016

The typical basinal deposits adjacent to the Apulian Carbonate Platform carbonates are represented by the well-known Maiolica formation which consists of white, thin-bedded, micritic limestones with chert, rich in calpionellids and nannoconus. Various types of synsedimentary deformations affect the Maiolica Fm. Several slump features and “sedimentary dykes”.

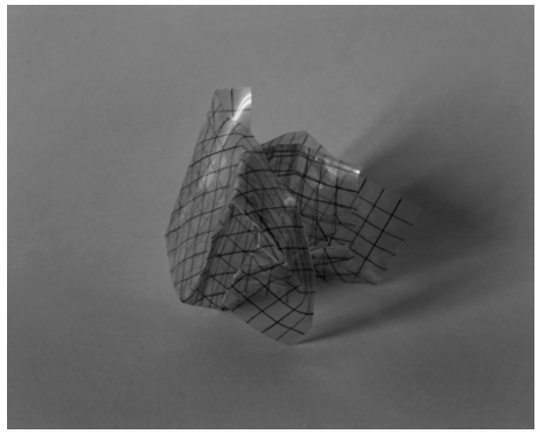
2015

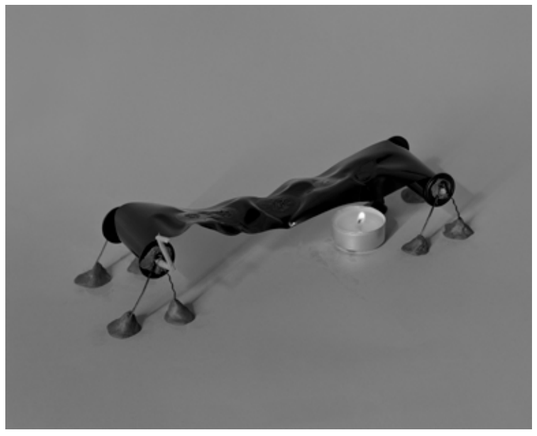
Untitled.
2019

Earthquake still life 2016

Set on washing machine during spin cycle.
(Homage to Giorgio Morandi)
2016

Badlands are a type of dry terrain where softer sedimentary rocks and clay-rich soils have been extensively eroded by wind and water. They are characterized by steep slopes, minimal vegetation, lack of a substantial regolith, and high drainage density.
2016





Fossil.
2016
—

Asteroidal bombardment, toy gun and flour.
2017
—

Fossil.
2016
—

Study on the acidification of the oceans, Hydrochloric acid on shell.
2016
—

Folding and crumpling a regular structure drawn on 8x10" film.
2017
—

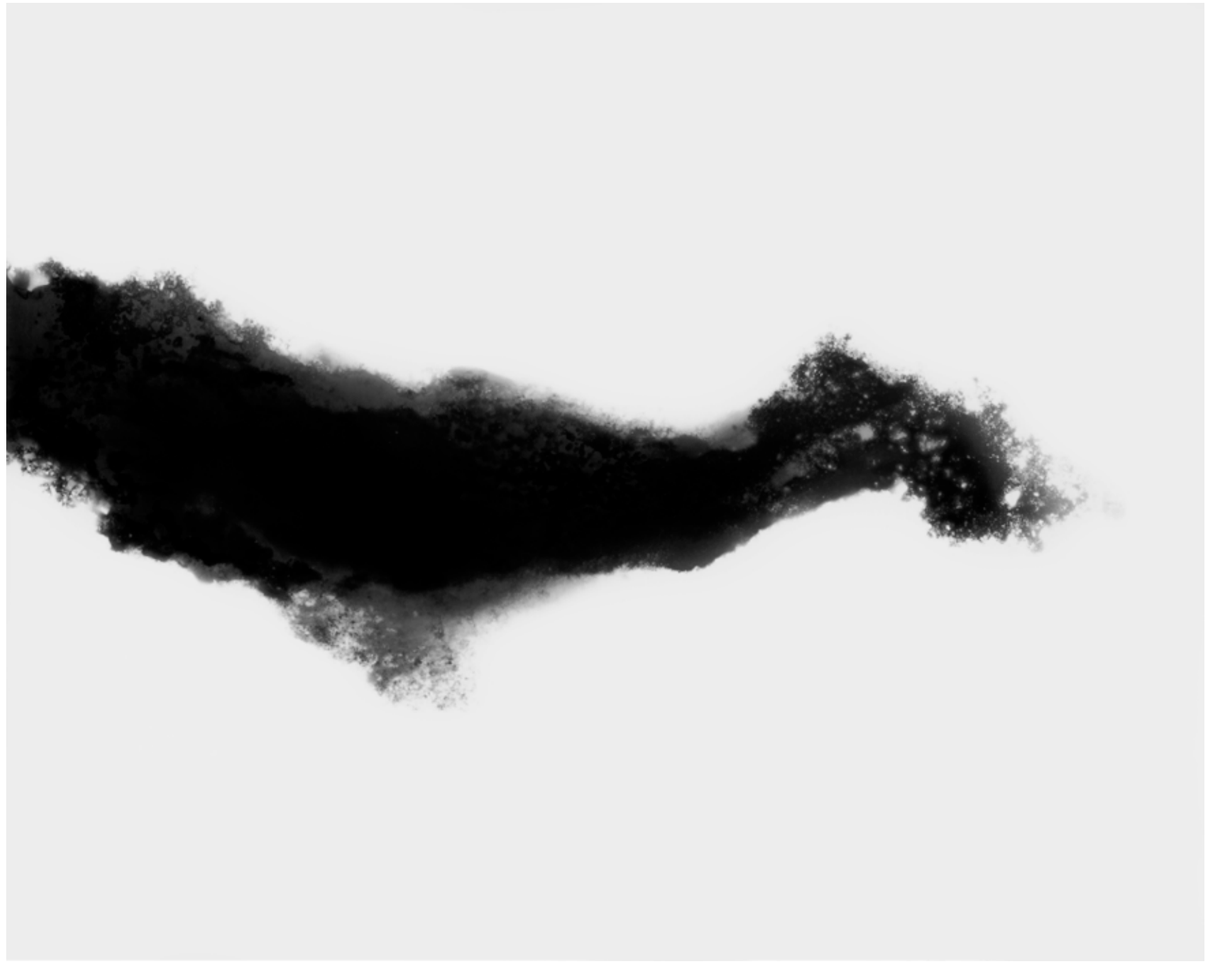
Attempt to create solid rock from soil, clamps, plywood and soil.
2018
—

Plasticine simulation of rock layers overlapped due to tectonic compression.
2014
—

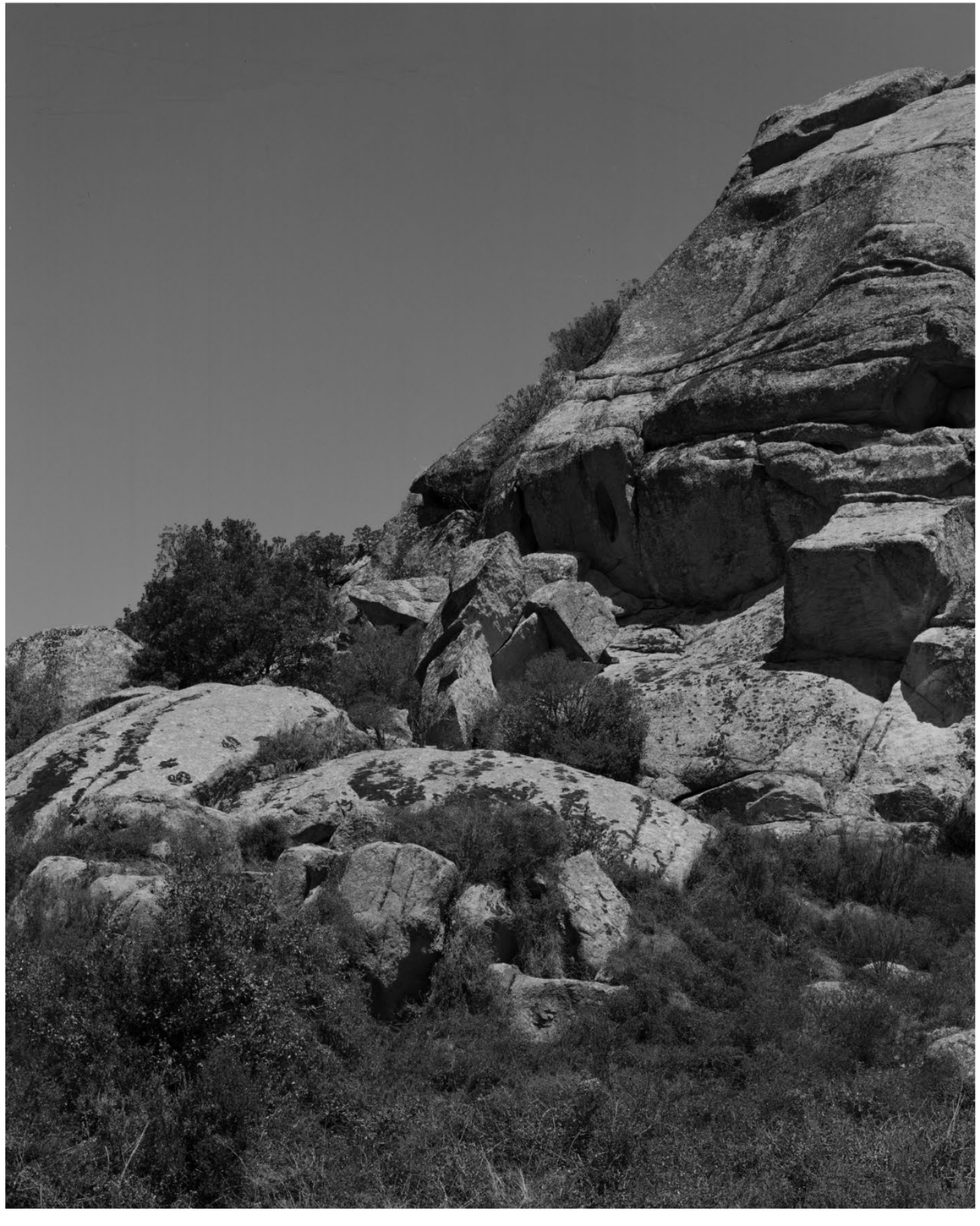
Simulation of water erosion and stream formation in the mountains, chromogenic paper and developer.
2017
—

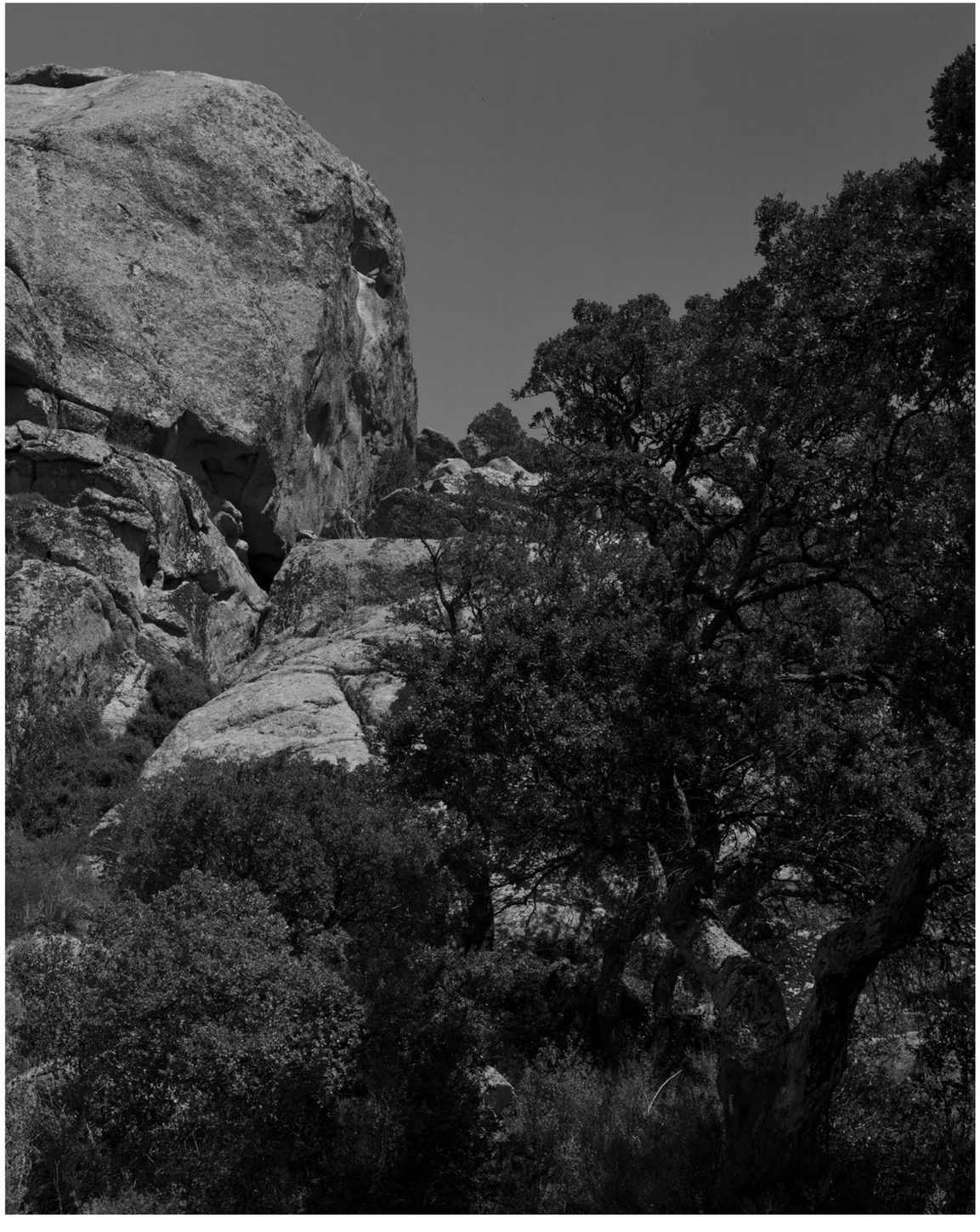
Study on the formation of basalt columns.
Starch and water.
2015
—

Study n°2 on the Hawaiian hot spot and volcanic chain formation, tea candle and 120mm film roll.
2016
—

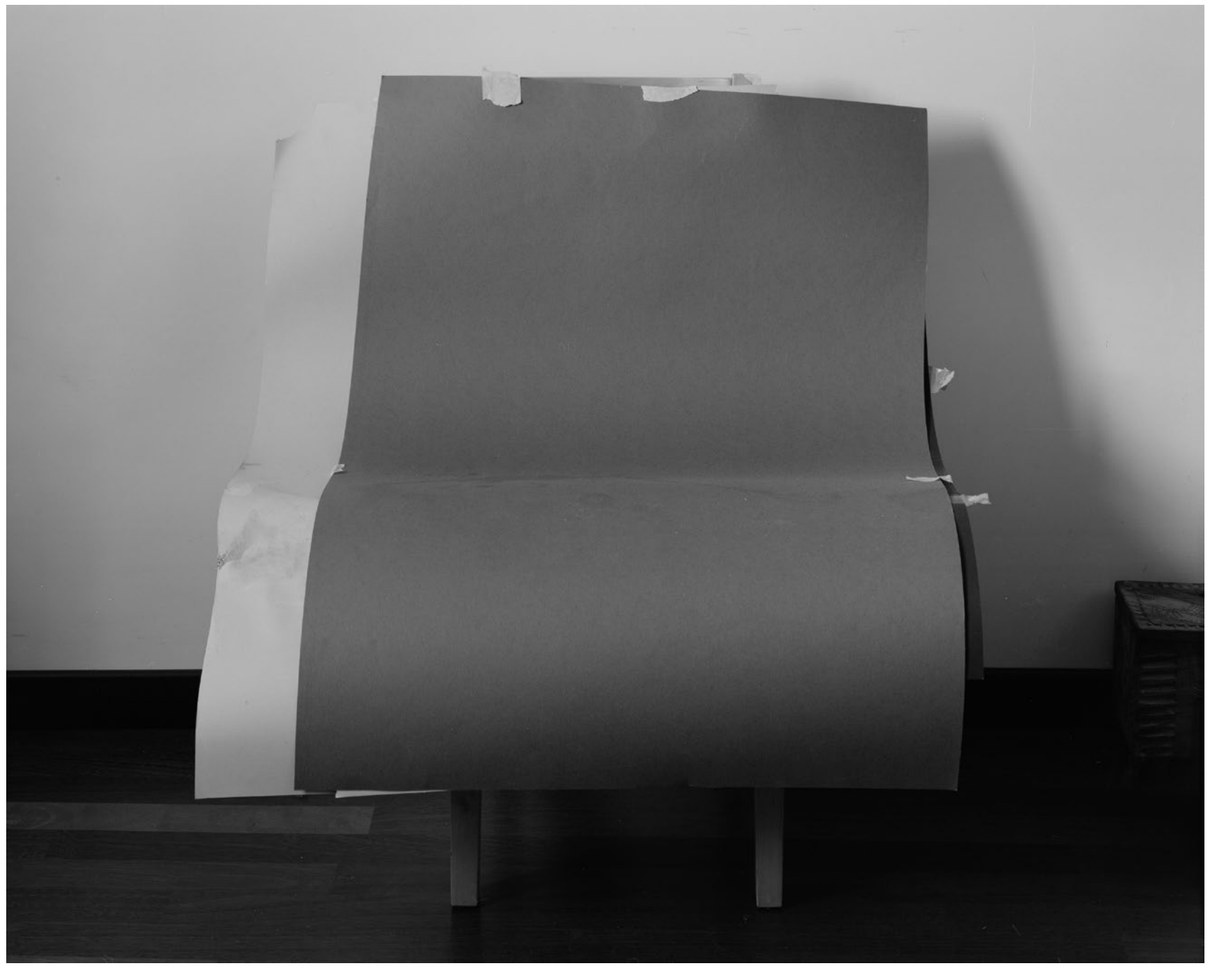


Simulation of river dynamics and erosion pat- terns in darkroom with
sand, developer and silver gelatin paper.
2015





Untitled.
2017



Set.
2016

Fabio Barile
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info@fabiobarile.com

Graduating from FSM in Florence with a degree in photography in 2007. He started his photographic research in 2005 with a project about coastal erosion, which affects 1500 km of Italian costline. The resulting project, “Among” aimed to investigate natural processes of the landscape. Over the last few years Barile’s work has been driven by an interest in science in relation to art - both conceived as tools for a better understanding of reality. His long-term project, “An Investigation of the Laws Observable in the Composition, Dissolution and Restoration of Land,” examines the manner in which geomorphology acts upon the land, serving as testimony to the vastness of geological time. The work employs photography to stimulate a deeper understanding of the landscape and our connection with the natural environment.

“At first glance, Fabio Barile’s practice could be said to follow in the long tradition of Italian landscape photography which includes practitioners such as Luigi Ghirri, Guido Guidi. On closer inspection, however, the images in
An Investigation hew to a tight conceptual framework that belie their simplicity, asking deeper questions about the nature of Time, and geologic time questions whose philosophical implications underpin scientific endeavor, human perception, and the unknowable forces of creative destruction at work in Nature”1. 1.Naomi Itami

Selected exhibitions

2020
Group exhibition, On Earth - Imaging, technology and the natural world
FOAM Museum, Amsterdam.

2019
Group exhibition, On Earth - Imaging, technology and the natural world
50th edition of the Rencontres d’Arles, in collaboration with FOAM Museum.
Fabio Barile & Domingo Milella - The shape of time
Centro Arti visive Pescheria, Pesaro, Italy

2018
Group exhibition at Villa Celimontana, MAPS|SPAM
Società Geografica Italiana, Villa Celimontana, Rome
Osservare la terra — a dialogue beetween contemporary photography and the historical archive of ICCD about photography as a tool for observation
ICCD — Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, Rome, curated by Benedetta Cestelli Guidi

2017
An Investigation of the laws observable in the composition, dissolution and restoration of land,
Matèria, Rome

2015
Homage to James Hutton
Matèria, Rome

2014
Group exhibition at MAXXI, Open museum open city
MAXXI, Rome
Fabio Barile & Francesco Neri, Middle-Earth a journey inside Elica
Elica Showroom, Milan

2011
Group exhibition at Museo Pino Pascali, Giovane fotografia di ricerca in Puglia, Museo Pino Pascali
Polignano a Mare

Publications

Fabio Barile & Domingo Milella - The shape of time, Fondazione malaspina edition, 2019
Fabio Barile & Francesco Neri, Middle-Earth a journey inside Elica, 2014
Vision And Documents Box, Documentary Platform, 2010
Diary N° 0 - Things that do not happen, 3/3, 2009