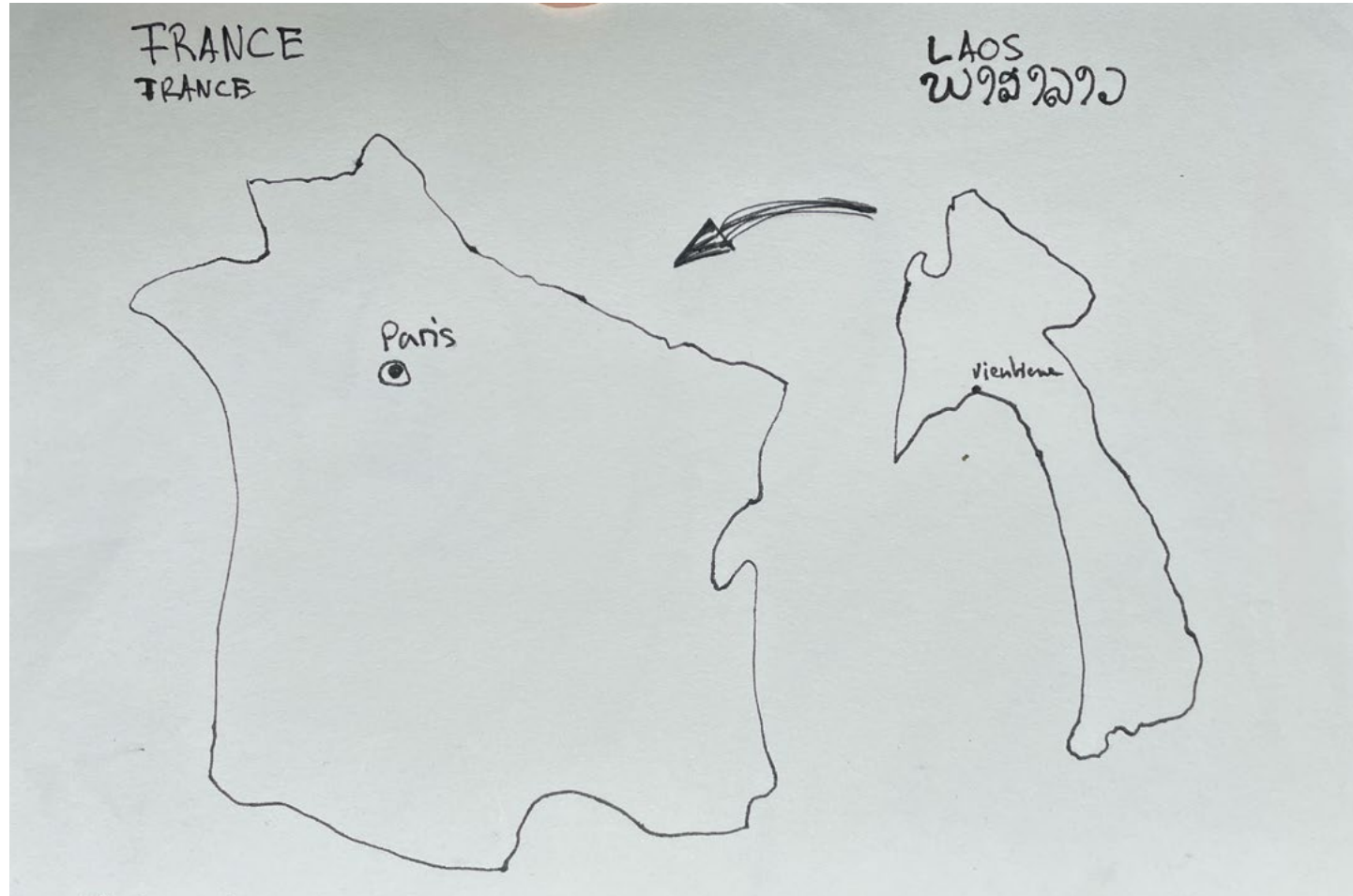


Portfolio

Marco Frauchiger

Selected for: Visarte Switzerland, residency scholarship at Cite Internationale des Arts, Paris (August - October 2026)



Cartographic sketch of France and Laos in connection

The Archive Is Elsewhere – Laos and the Colonial Afterimage

During a three-month residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, I will continue my artistic investigation into the role of photography in postcolonial contexts. The project focuses on the displacement of image and administrative archives of French Indochina, with a particular emphasis on Laos. The ob-

servation that “the archives on Laos are in Paris” points to both a geographical and epistemic shift: colonialism not only reshaped territories but also re-located knowledge—physically, ideologically, and visually.

By engaging with these archival image-politics, my research asks how Laos was imagined, mapped,

and photographed within the colonial archive; what role photography played in constructing an “Other”; and which gaps, absences, and displacements emerge in contrast to contemporary image cultures in Laos. This exploration forms the foundation for a body of artistic work that seeks to critically and poetically re-appropriate photographic practices in service of marginalized contexts.

how to dismantle a bomb

Work context (2019 - 2025)

2 Million Tons of Bombs: In the “Secret War” between 1964 and 1973, American cluster bombs rained down on the small country of Laos every 8 minutes on average—more than on Japan and Germany during the entire Second World War. Almost 50 years later, many areas are still uncleared of unexploded ordnance. The starting point for my work is to be found in the legacy of this war. My artistic practice is mostly researched on site in Laos; parts of it are created directly there in collaboration with local actors. The experiences, materials, and perspectives gained on site form the central source for subsequent projects, which are now being conceived, realized, and produced in Switzerland as the next phase. In this way, a transnational body of work emerges that critically interrogates global entanglements, colonial continuities, and the materiality of war.

The artistic engagement with image production here becomes a space of critical reflection, where the representational promise of photographic images is questioned just as much as their role in journalistic and war-related narratives.

The work poses subtle yet urgent questions about the construction of reality in images and analyzes the ideological imprints of photographic representation. Particular attention is paid to the medium itself: How

can photography—both in its materiality and in its narratives—be rethought in order to break through hegemonial, colonial, and imperial perspectives? How can the camera be deployed as a tool that not only serves observation^{1.)}, but also assumes responsibility through the image products it generates?

Since beginning my engagement with this artistic context, I have repeatedly wrestled with my legitimacy to work in relation to Laos. From the end of 2019 onwards, I dealt with these questions intensively, was able to clarify many aspects, and today see my role clearly defined. It is our responsibility to look closely at where problems exist and what consequences arise from them. Taking the example of a weapons-producing country, it is my task to turn the camera against ourselves: as a witness to our activities, but also as someone privileged within this system—a position that must itself be critically interrogated. The aim is to make visible how this catastrophe—as well as others—is connected to our own actions. At the same time, it is essential to continuously reflect on one's own artistic practice and the photographic tool, which is itself shaped by the structures and perspectives mentioned above.

A central tension lies in the ambivalence between documentary quality and aesthetic seduction: color, composition, and the apparent beauty of object and

representation can distort perception and lead to a problematic aestheticization of violence and trauma. The work therefore asks not only how images of war, destruction, and remembrance are produced, but also whether cameras are even capable of grasping the unspeakable and the invisible—traumas inscribed in both the collective/social and the actual landscapes.

My artistic practice consists largely of interconnected works, many of which have their origins in Laos. They are based on extensively researched and locally gathered material. Often, a new working phase emerges from a previous one—whether through inspiration or through the further processing of individual elements that are transformed into new forms.

Since 2019, this process has given rise to a multifaceted body of work that engages with a shared thematic concern, while applying different artistic strategies and working methods. how to dismantle a bomb thus constitutes a work context on which I have been working for several years, structured into various projects.

^{1.)} *The Assignment: Or, On the Observing of the Observer of the Observers – Friedrich Dürrenmatt – A Media- and Society-Critical Novel, 1986*

Cameras, 2020 - 2024

In Laos, four different cameras I have been built to date. These self-developed and constructed cameras are made from war materials – including parts of airplanes produced by a Swiss aircraft manufacturer, which were once used by the CIA during the secret war in Laos.

The transformation of this material into image-producing devices is a central aspect of my artistic practice: from the remnants of destruction emerge tools of seeing, reflection, and remembrance.

Over the years, both the formats of the photographic paper used and the technical and conceptual requirements for the cameras have changed.

Insights gained from previous research, experiments, and image production have continuously contributed to the further development of the devices.

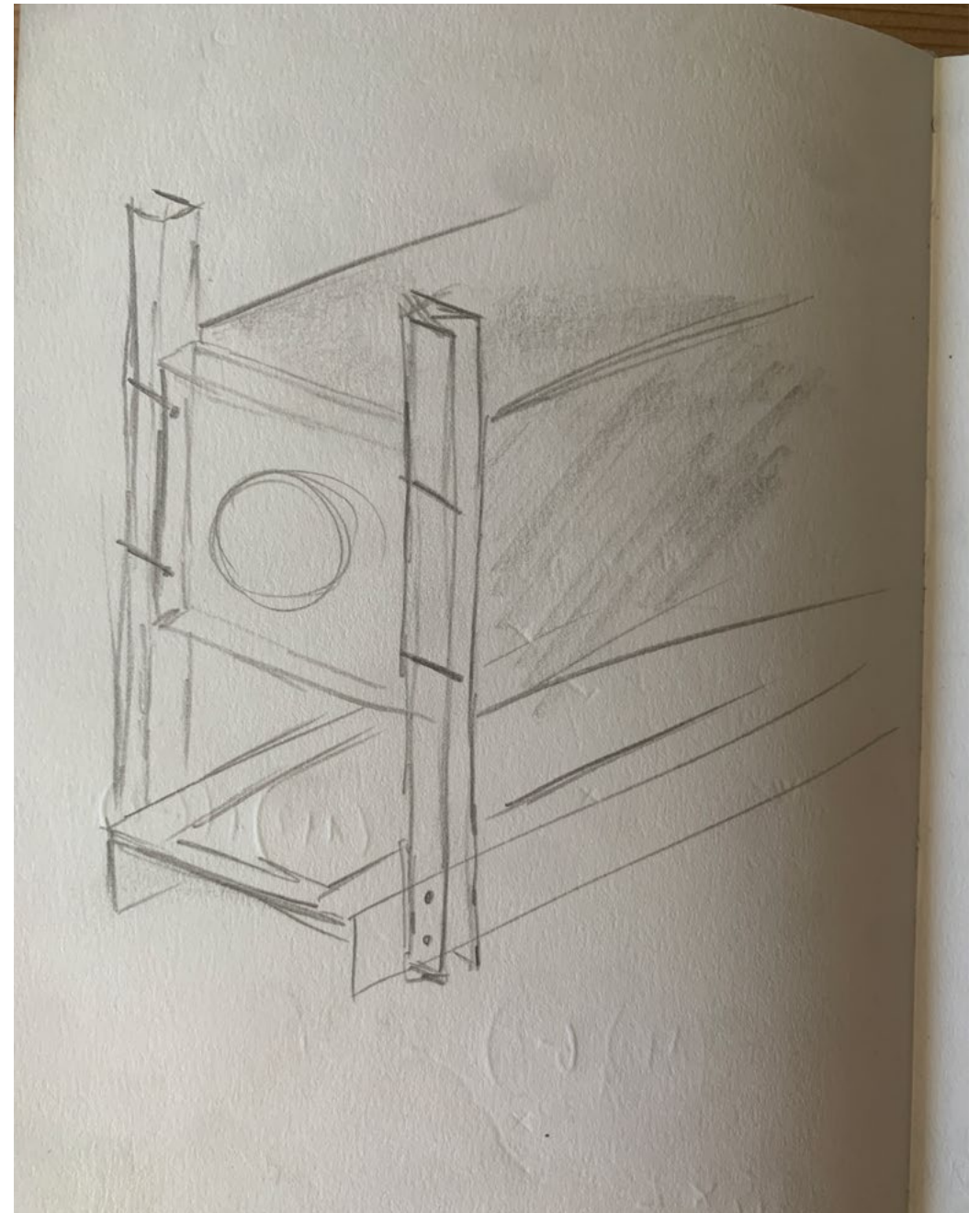
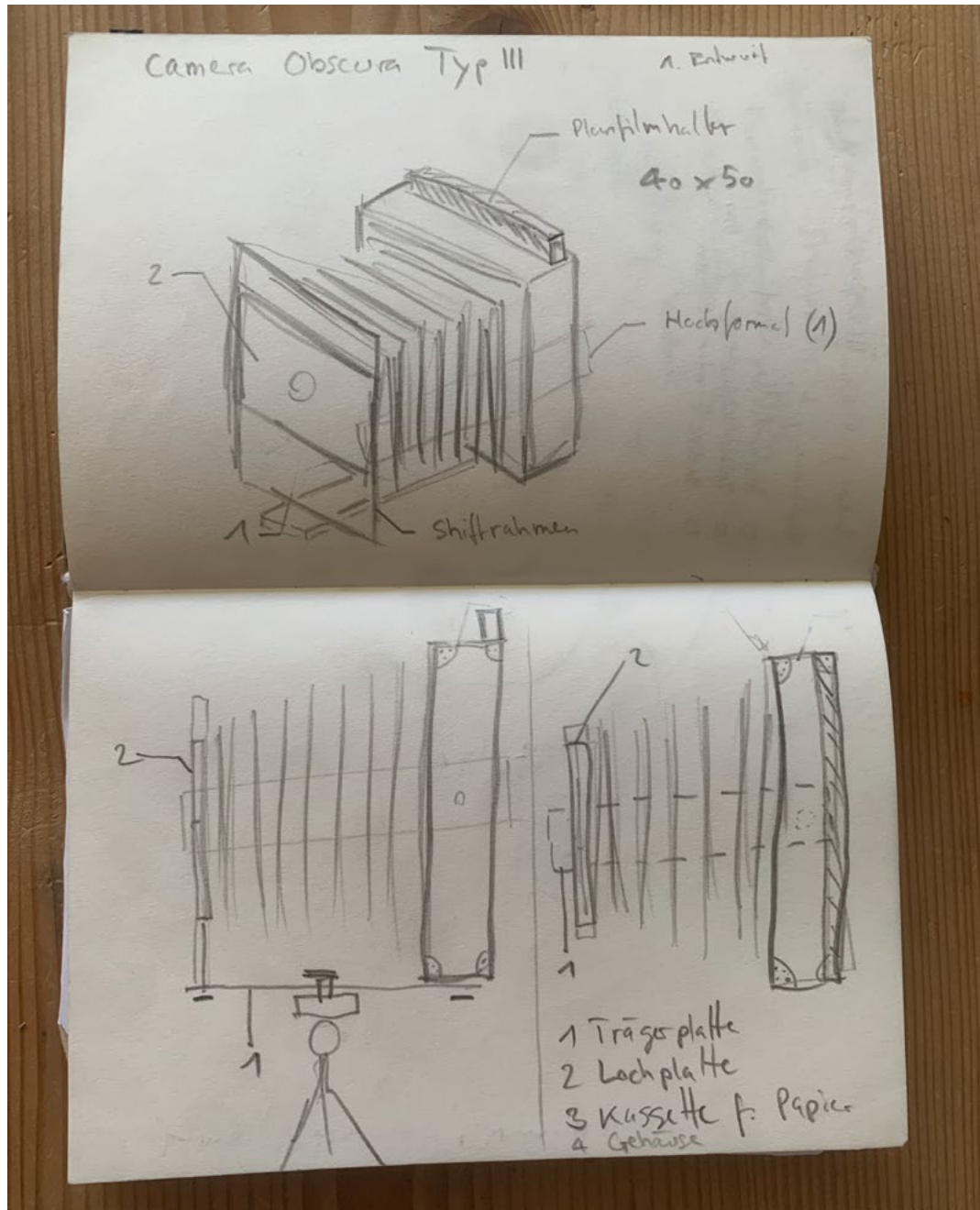
Each new camera thus carries traces of what came before – as a continuation as well as a response to the specific context and materials from which it emerged.

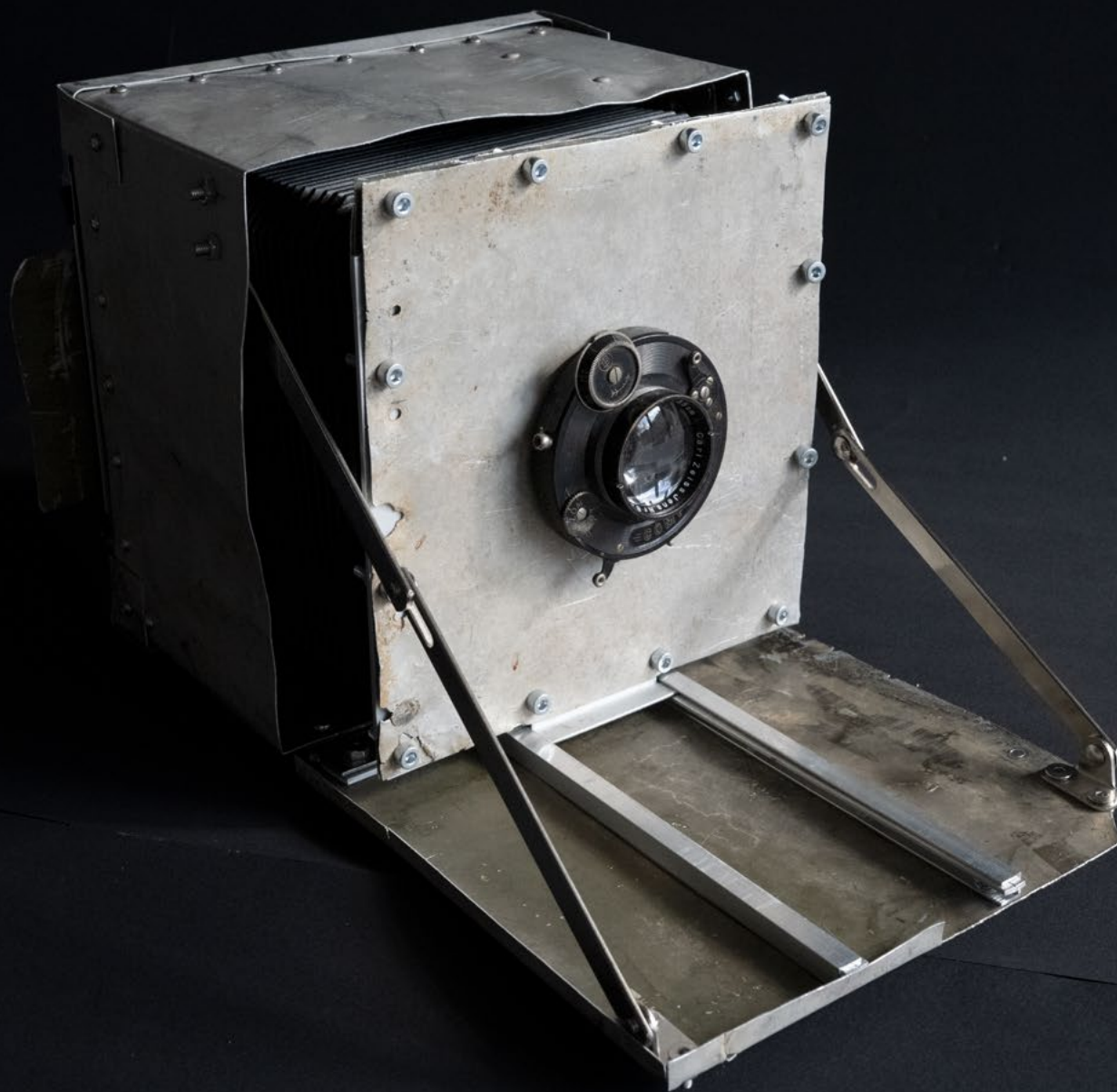


Camera Obscura, Type III, Large format 40x50cm, year of construction 2024



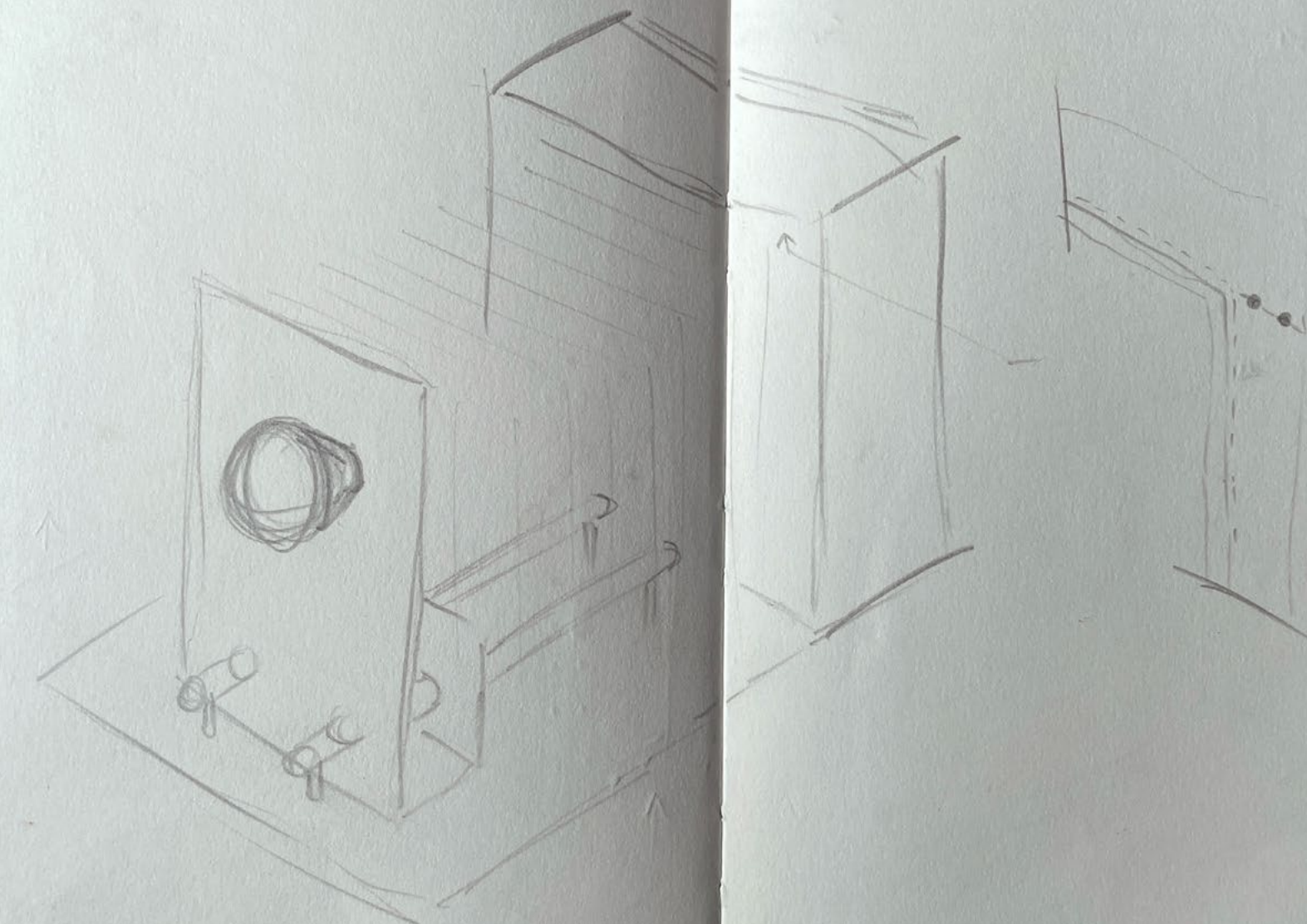






The latest development of a camera involves a self-constructed large-format 4×5-inch camera equipped with a lens and a sheet film holder for both negative and slide (positive) films.

Camera Obscura Typ IV





The camera obscura was commissioned from a local craftsman and constructed from the remnants of a cluster bomb dropped in Laos and a downed American aircraft.



The camera obscura was commissioned from a local craftsman and built from the remnants of a napalm bomb dropped in Laos.



Camera Obscura on the landing strip in Long Tieng



Camera Obscura in a bomb crater



To be seen @
Swiss PhotoMonth 2025
@Centre de la Photographie,
Geneva 27.9.25
@ Photoforum,
Biel 4.10.25

Set on the former CIA airbase in Long Tieng, Laos, Kite Studies is a three-minute video that interweaves archival footage from the 1960s and present-day images shot at the same location in early 2025. The historical material includes images of Swiss-manufactured aircraft in Long Tieng—an operational hub during the so-called “Secret War.”

In stark contrast, today’s footage captures local children running freely along the same runway, flying a handmade kite constructed from remnants of military material. Camouflaged on one side and reflective silver on the other, the kite becomes both artifact and metaphor—rising, faltering, and crashing back onto the same ground.

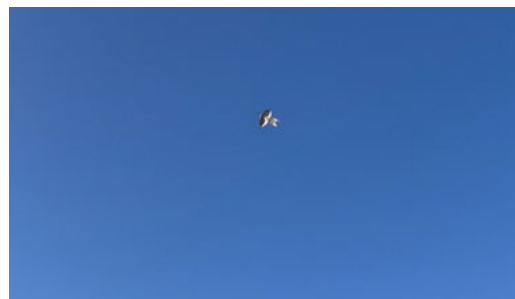




03:30



03:35



03:59



04:04



04:31



04:45



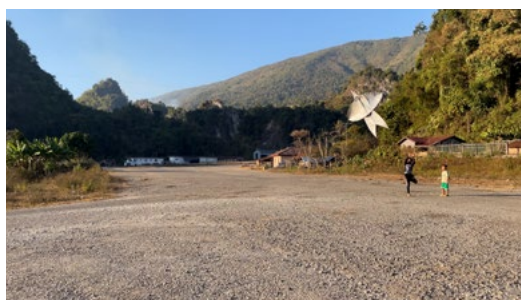
04:56



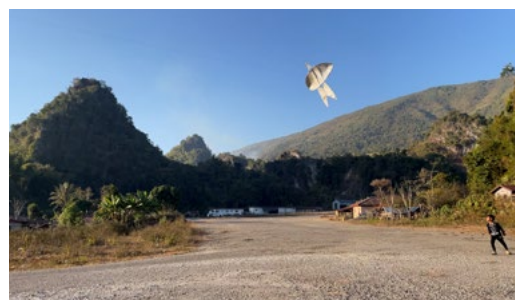
05:31



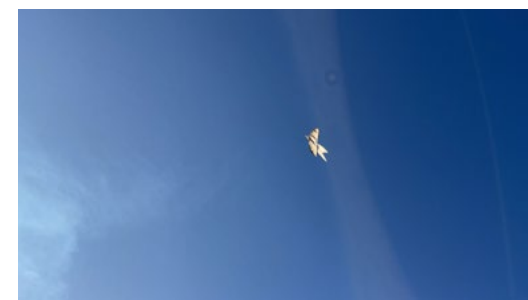
05:41



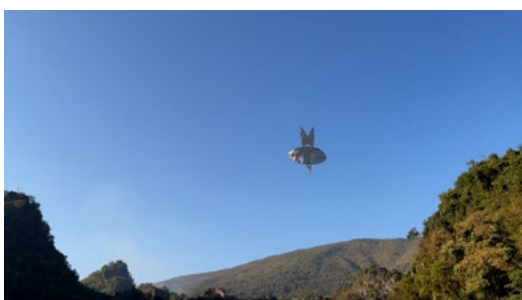
06:12



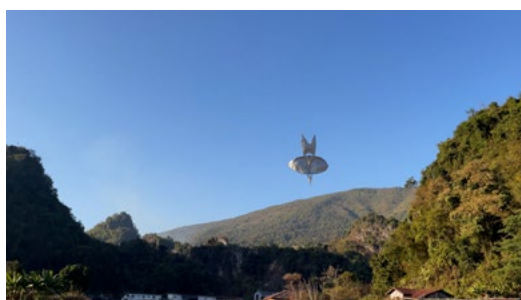
06:44



07:10



07:32



07:58



10:47



13:46

“Building a Future” evolves from my series «Pink Landscapes» and responds to a world shaped by geopolitical uncertainty, the global rearmament of armies, and the enduring material legacies of conflict. The work reflects on how futures are constructed—politically, physically, and imaginatively—amid systems of violence and extraction. Through the transformation of war-related materials into photographic tools and images, it questions what it means to build hope from the remnants of destruction

At first glance, the photographs show idyllic landscapes bathed in colourful light, appearing almost utopian—promising happiness and harmony. The images depict wounded terrains and historic sites in Laos—remnants of the U.S. secret war. Shot on expired film, they produce a distinctive palette of faded, unpredictable colours that deepen memory and loss. On their reverse, advertising slogans from global arms corporations and institutional users—such as intelligence agencies and military forces—are revealed. Phrases like “building a future we can all trust,” or “be all you can be” come from weapons manufacturers’ marketing rhetoric. Stripped of context, they resemble self-help or motivational quotes—harmless, even uplifting. This ambivalence is intentional: the softened language of war collides with an ostensibly happy surface.

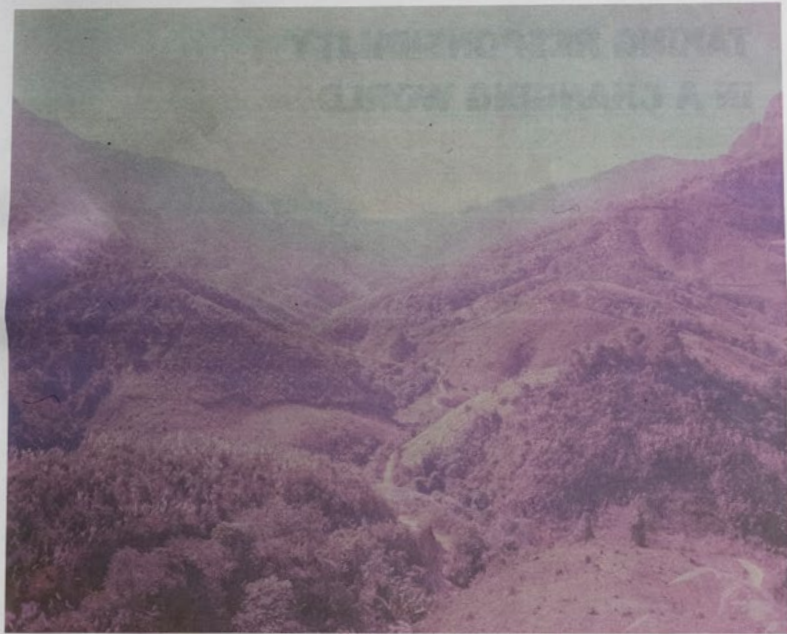
These companies often use images and slogans evoking a safe, optimistic future. Landscapes and calm colours reinforce messages of protection and peace—concealing the violent reality behind the products. Building a Future contrasts this sanitized aesthetic with underlying power and militarization. All slogans appear in original wording but unified typography. Like newspaper headlines, they are set in bold, compact sans-serif fonts. I chose Franklin Gothic, a typeface common in U.S. newspapers, to reinforce the link to public messaging and mass communication. These slogans are printed on the reverse of the images on thin, translucent newsprint. The mirrored typography shimmers subtly through the fragile paper like ghostly traces, becoming partially legible yet fragmented, and inviting viewers to decipher the hidden layer beneath the polished surface of beauty and bliss.

This is not cynical, but a critical reflection on the interplay of image, language, and ideology. Researching this piece, I was struck by how often future appears in slogans and brochures of global defense firms. It’s loaded with positive connotations and used to sell a violent reality as visionary hope. «Building a Future» exposes this rhetorical strategy—confronting it with a multi-layered, ambiguous visual language.





The camera obscura Typ II was commissioned





BE ALL YOU CAN BE
BUILDING A FUTURE WE CAN ALL TRUST
DO THE RIGHT THING
EXPANDING HUMAN POSSIBILITY
LIFE IS FRAGILE
PUSHING PAST POSSIBLE
STRENGHT ON YOUR SIDE
TAKING RESPONSIBILITY IN A CHANGING WORLD
TOGETHER AHEAD.
WHEN IT COUNTS
YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE
YOUR MISSION IS OURS.
THE FUTURE IS WHAT WE MAKE IT

Slogans from global arms corporations and institutional users



Building a Future, Newspaperprint, 2025



The image is printed on the front, and the headlines are printed on the back of the page.

Bern, 12.06.2025

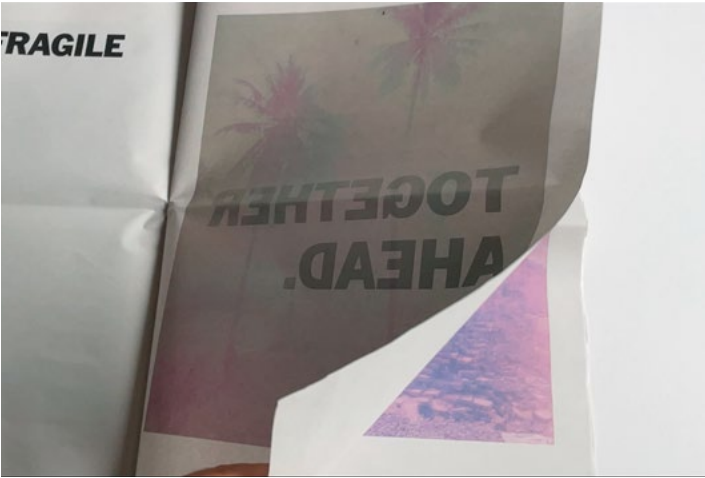
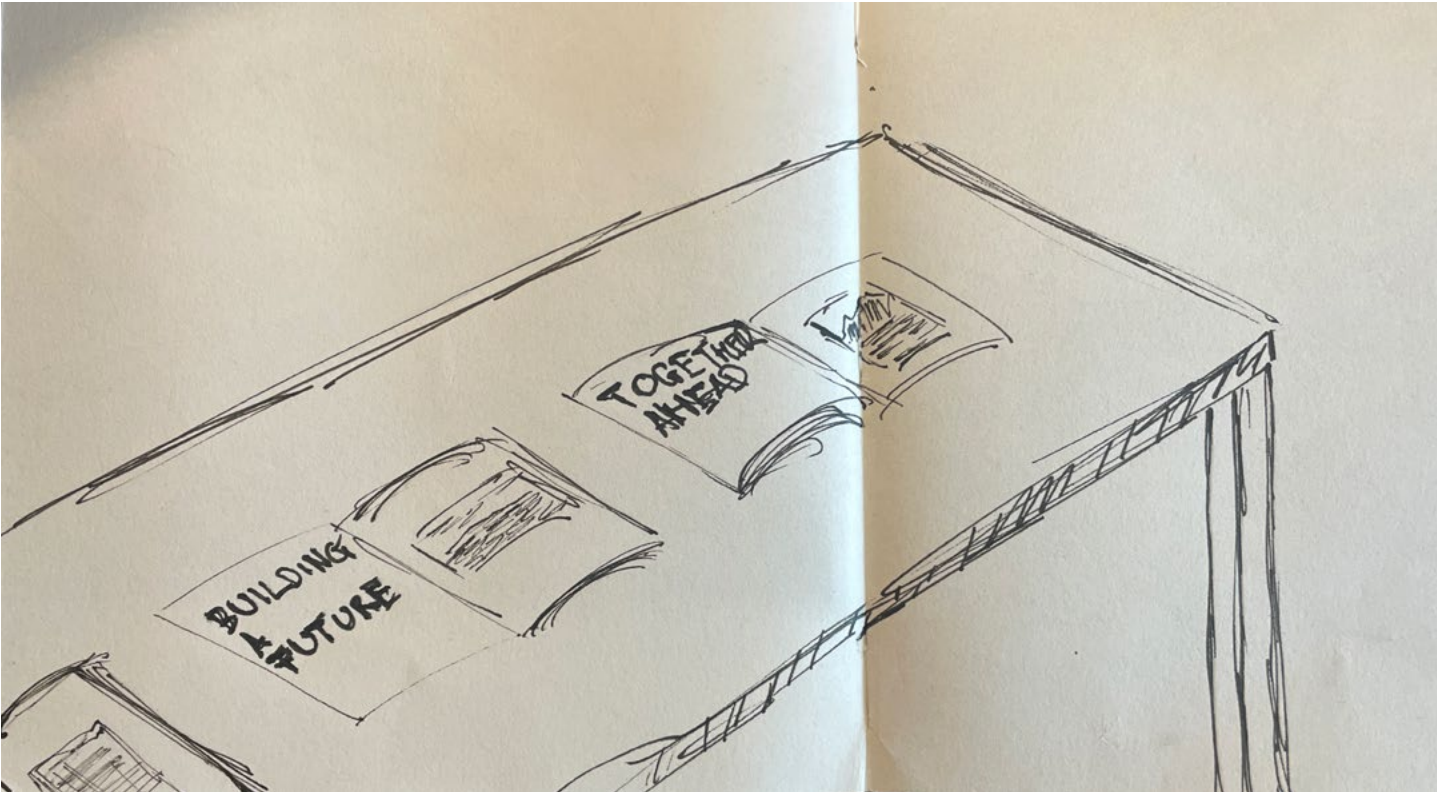
Original Advertising Slogans of Weapon Manufacturer

1. Be all you can be
2. Building a future
3. Do th right thing
4. Expanding human possibility
5. Life is fragile
6. Pushing past possible
7. Strenght on yours side
8. Taking responsibility in a changing world
9. Together ahead.
10. When it counts
11. Your mission is ours
- T2. The future is what we make it
13. Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free

**THE
FUTURE
IS
WHAT
WE
MAKE
IT**









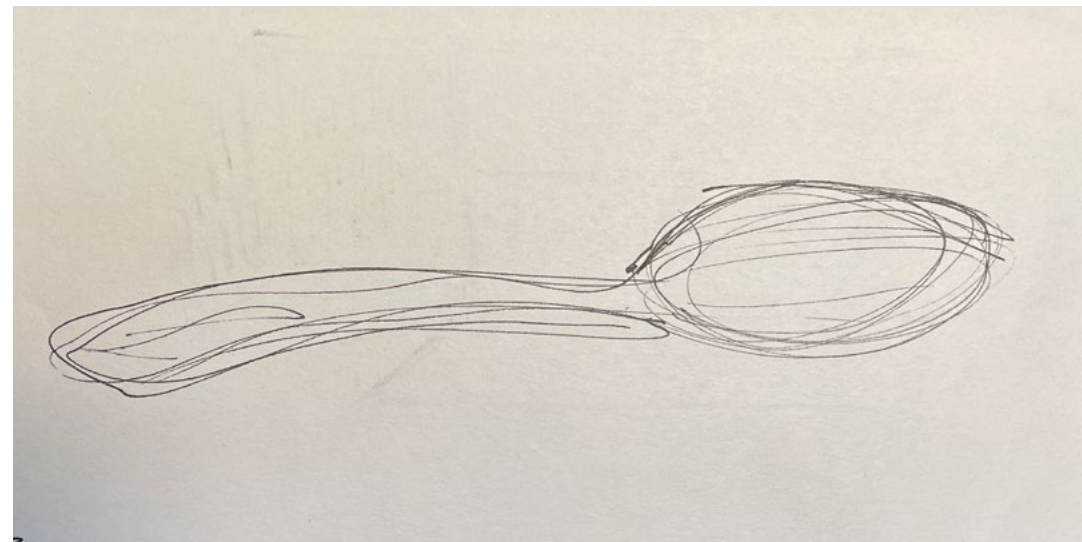
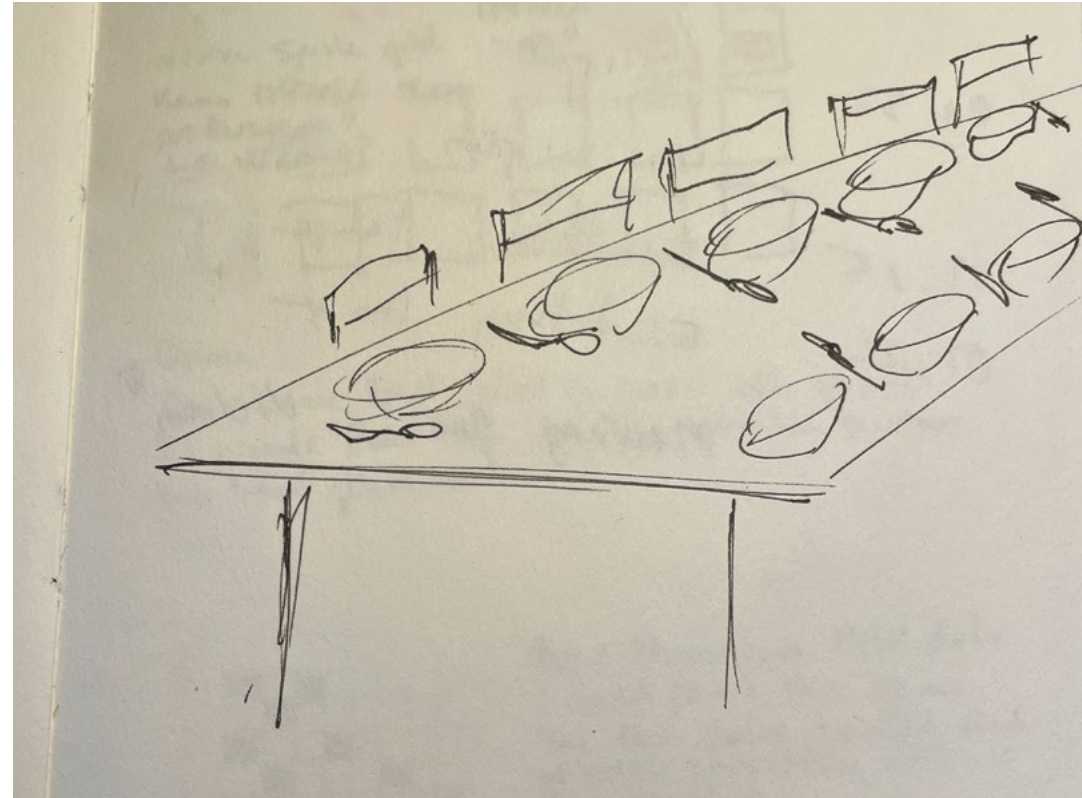
Digesting History is a site-specific, performative work that addresses material history, memory culture, and global entanglements through a quiet but deliberate gesture: during a shared meal, conventional cutlery is replaced with specially crafted spoons made from bomb material.

The performance centers around 665 spoons, which I commissioned to be made in a small workshop in northeastern Laos — a region that was heavily bombed by the United States during the so-called „Secret War“ (1964–1973). Over two million tons of ordnance were dropped on Laos, making it the most heavily bombed country per capita in history. The number 665 refers to the exact number of submunitions (bomblets) contained in a single cluster bomb unit of the type used extensively during that campaign. The spoons were cast from scrap metal collected from the remains of such a unit.

These types of spoons are still in use today — particularly in small noodle soup shops in the heavily affected regions. Their continued presence in everyday Laotian life reflects a remarkable form of material adaptation and transformation: violent remnants of war turned into quiet instruments of daily sustenance. I could think of the table as being set with regular cutlery, and while the people are already seated, I am going to switch the spoons. Of course, the soup would be just one course among several in the menu.

I commissioned these spoons in order to bring them into a new context — that of Switzerland. The performance unfolds at a long table in a familiar setting of institutional hospitality — a dinner, a reception, a donor event. The food served is Khao piak, a traditional Laotian noodle soup that is still commonly eaten in the whole Laos. The table is simply set, the atmosphere quiet, the gesture minimal: the guests eat without knowing, until they realize what the spoons are made of. The act of eating becomes an encounter with material violence — transformed, displaced, embodied.

Digesting History is conceived for 30 participants or more and is ideally integrated into formal or semi-formal events. It can be repeated with different groups. No explicit announcement is necessary — the gesture is self-contained and reflective. History is not only referenced — it is, quite literally, digested.



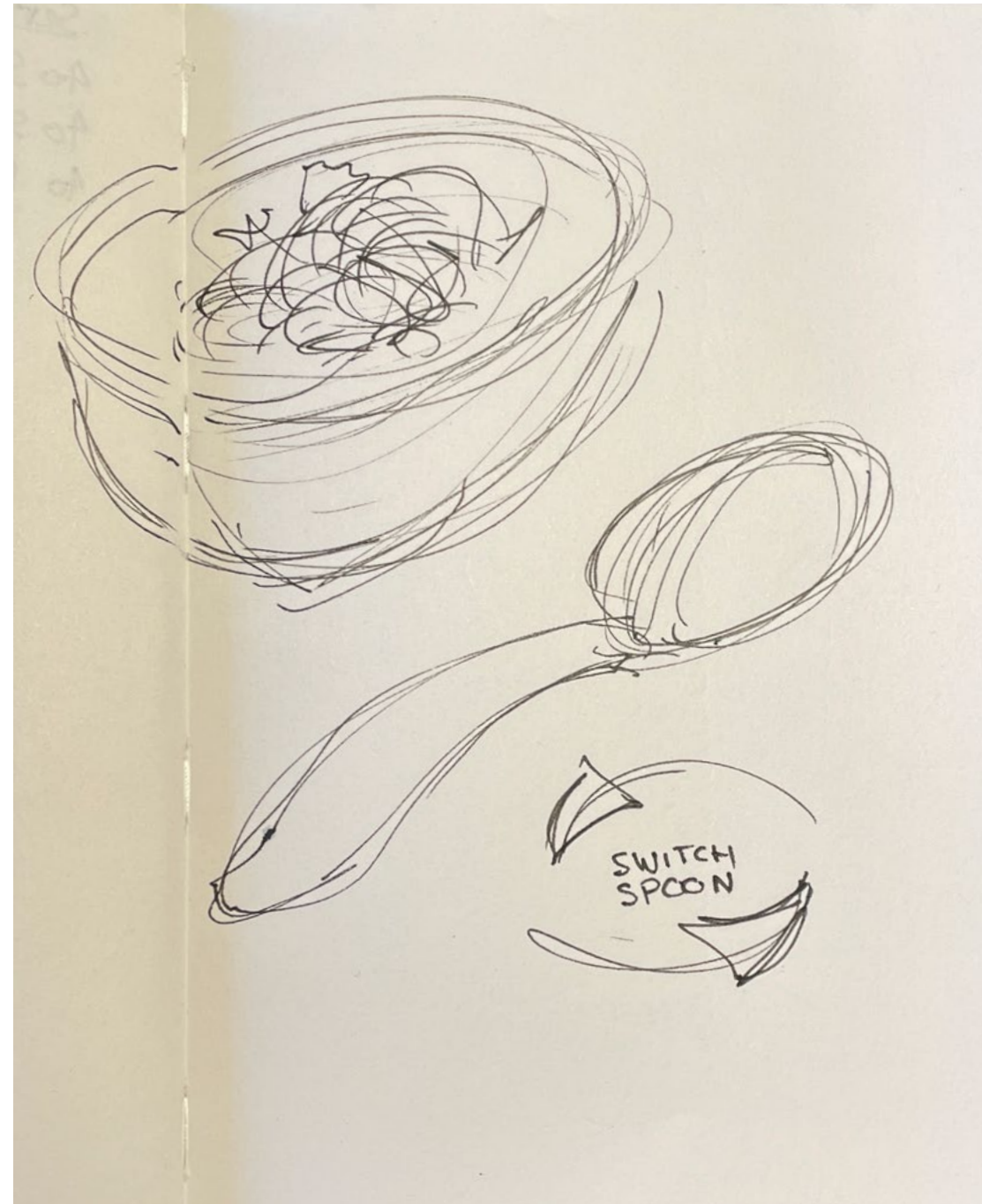
Performative Proposal: "Digesting History"

Digesting History is realized as a shared meal for 30 participants or more. The performance is designed for formal or semi-formal situations involving communal dining — such as exhibition openings, donor events, general assemblies, or curated public programs.

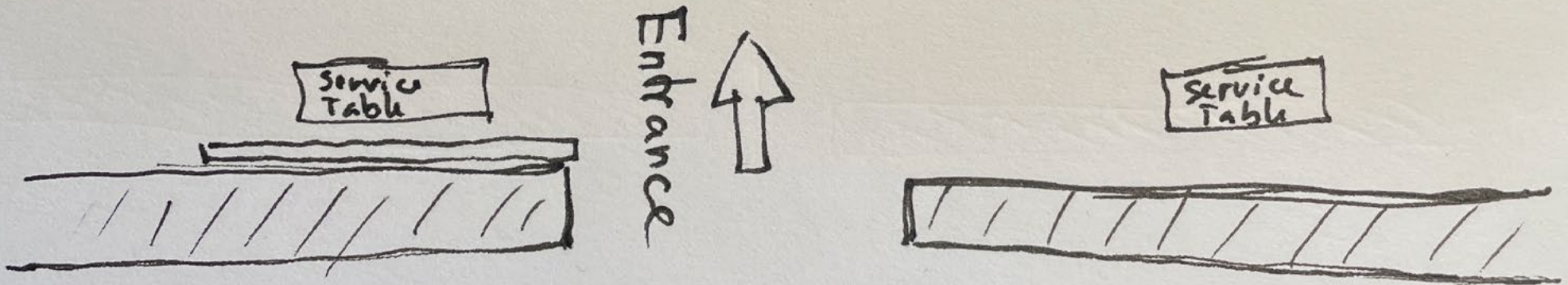
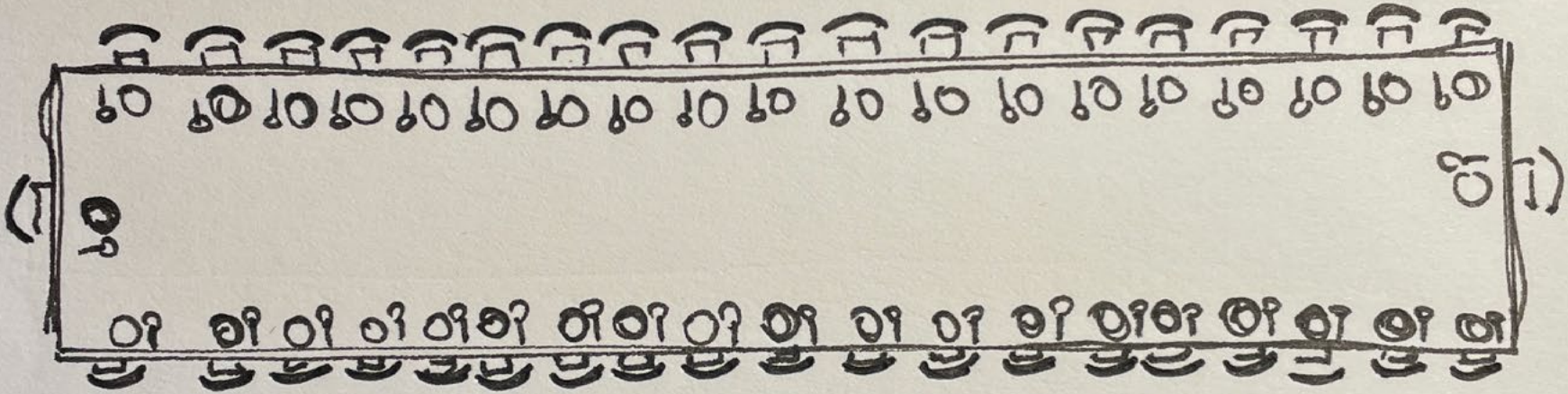
Guests are seated around a long or U-shaped table, set with simple tablecloths, clear glasses, and simple bowl. The atmosphere is intentionally reduced, focusing attention on the act of eating and the tools used. Instead of standard cutlery, each guest receives a spoon, (replaced by my gesture), made in Laos from melted bomb fragments — specifically, metal from U.S. cluster bomb casings dropped during the Secret War.

This subtle substitution becomes the central gesture: an unspoken confrontation with the violent history embedded in a seemingly ordinary object. The action of eating becomes a performance in itself — direct, physical, and collectively experienced.

The meal will be simple — just soup — reinforcing the ordinary nature of the moment. A short text may be provided at the start to introduce the work, but the performance relies primarily on the participants' quiet engagement.



Serving Area
40 Seats
40 Spoons
40 Bowls





Traditional Laotian noodle soup with the spoons in a local shop in Laos







1862 Dakota War of 1862

**1862 Dungan Revolt (1862–77)
Muslim Rebellion**

1863 Ecuadorian–Colombian War

1863 Battle of Shimonoseki Straits

**1863 Bombardment of Kagoshima
Anglo-Satsuma War**

1863 Shimonoseki Campaign

1989 United States Invasion of Panama

1989 First Liberian Civil War

1990 DHKP/C Insurgency in Turkey

**1990 Eelam War II
Part of the Sri Lankan Civil War**

1990 Gulf War

1990 Rwandan Civil War

2021 2021 Afghanistan–Iran Clashes

**2022 Chittagong Hill Tracts Conflict
Part of the Terrorism in Bangladesh**

**2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine
Part of the Russo–Ukrainian War**

**2022 M23 Campaign (2022–present)
Part of the Kivu Conflict**

**2022 2022 al-Shabaab Invasion of Ethiopia
Part of the Somali Civil War**

Project Description

The War Movie is a video without images. It draws on the aesthetics of classic spy and propaganda films as well as Cold War-era cinema – while deliberately refraining from showing any images itself. At its core is a complete list of all wars from the beginning of industrial warfare in 1861 up to the present day, 2025. This list unfolds in the style of end credits: plain, uncommented.

The soundtrack consists of a heavily altered version of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” the national anthem of the United States. Through extreme slowing and distortion, the anthem loses its patriotic tone and becomes an abstract soundscape – a muffled droning and rumbling reminiscent of distant war noises. It transforms into an acoustic echo of imperial violence and nationalist excess.

The representation of violence and terror is not simply omitted, but posed from the outset as a question of image politics – an approach that critically interrogates conventional forms of representation. The work resists a visual regime that aestheticizes or commodifies war through media images. *The War Movie* articulates this refusal as a radical gesture: no representation at all. In doing so, it creates a space for reflection on the ethics of representation, on history, and on responsibility.



Image assembly: The War Movie, Video, HD, s/w, Ton, 2025, 67 Min., TV

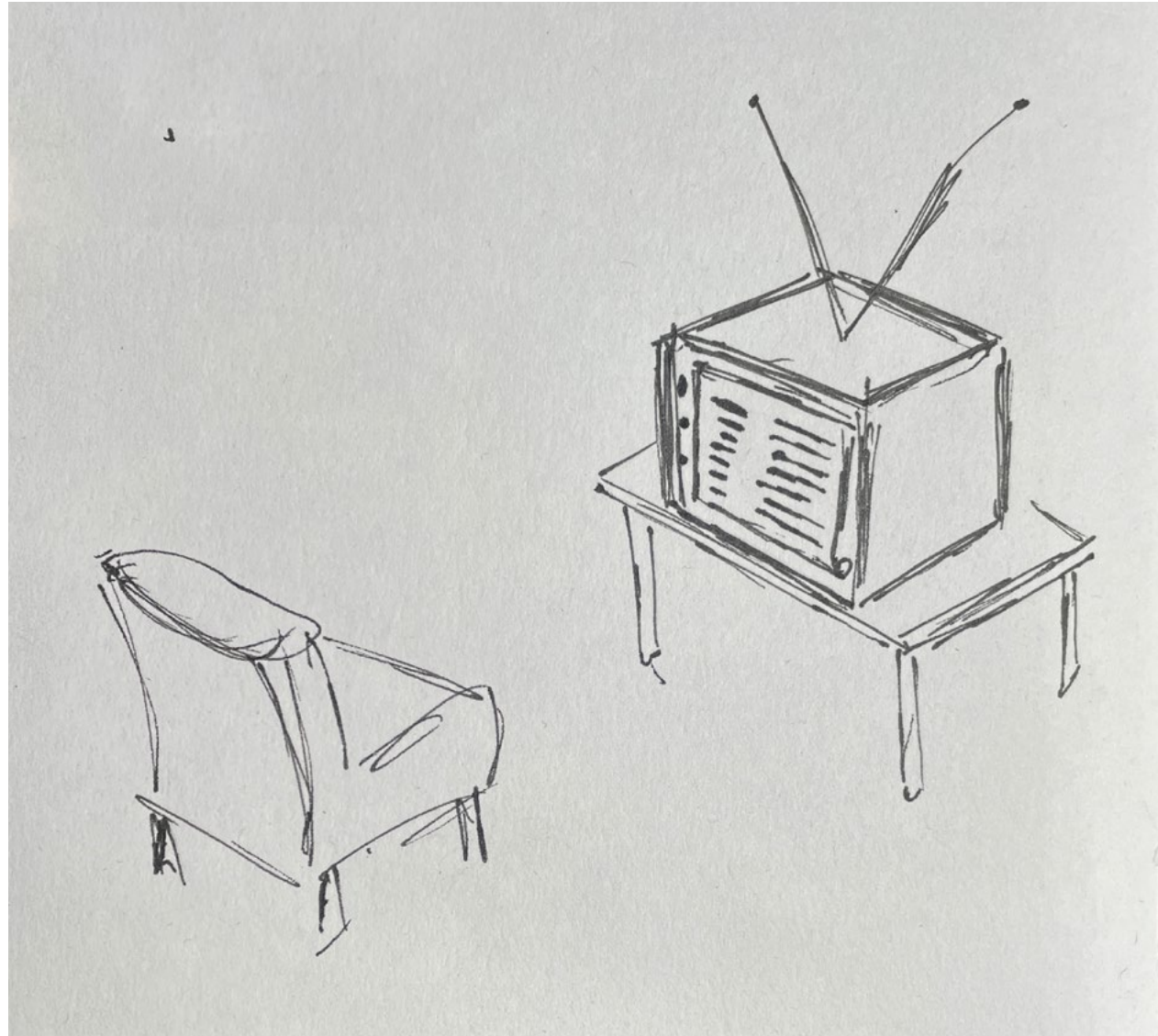
Exhibition concept

The 67-minute black-and-white video (HD) with sound is presented on an old television set from the 1960s or 70s – a deliberately chosen display that references media history and supports the aesthetics and materiality of the presentation. The TV stands on a simple table, evoking an everyday, almost domestic atmosphere.

Opposite the television is a single seat – an invitation for focused, unhurried reception. The presentation is designed in such a way that viewers must consciously bring time with them to engage with the work.

The sound is played openly into the space – through the television's built-in speakers, as an integral part of the installation. This open sound presentation creates an acoustic presence that lifts the video beyond the merely visual and actively shapes the space. It emphasizes that this is not about isolated viewing, but about a direct, immediate engagement with what is shown – without shielding, without filters, but also without spectacular overwhelm.

The work follows a conceptual approach that questions dominant image politics. The depiction of violence and terror is not shown, but is formally and thematically bypassed. This omission is not a withdrawal, but an expression of a deliberate questioning of the possibilities and limits of visual representation.



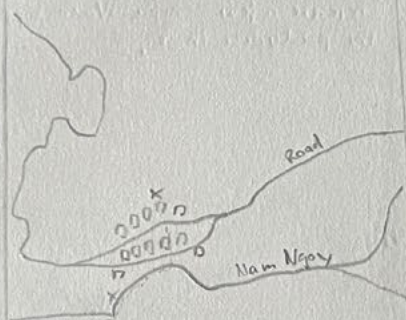
The background of the slide is a photograph of a landscape, likely a valley or a series of rolling hills. The entire image has been filtered with a uniform pink color. The sky is a pale, almost white pink, while the hills and the ground in the foreground are various shades of pink, from light to a slightly darker, more saturated pink. The texture of the ground appears to be uneven, possibly due to vegetation or soil. The overall effect is ethereal and somewhat surreal, given the monochromatic color scheme.

Due to improper storage and the passage of decades beyond their expiration date, the chemical components of slide films begin to degrade. The layers start to deteriorate, with cyan and magenta often persisting the longest. As a result, less information is retained in the image. Using this method, I photographed wounded landscapes, destroyed cultural monuments, and former war zones in Laos.

A central theme of my work is the ambivalence between documentation and aestheticization in the depiction of conflict. Seemingly beautiful images can unconsciously draw us into problematic representations. My work questions whether images are truly capable of adequately capturing war, trauma, and devastated landscapes. By using expired film material, I aim to encourage reflection on how aesthetics influence our perception of destructive events.

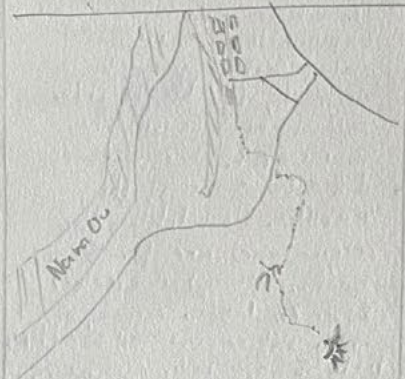


Ban Na



Multiple River Power stations
along the Nam Ngoy River.

12.01.25

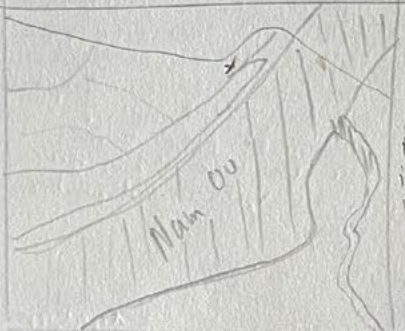


Climbing up the Phu Ban
Hill, the viewpoint. Very
rough way, steep with
ladders and ropes.

But on the Hill top you
can overview the whole
Nam Ou River valley and
in the Nam Ngoy valley.

This part of Laos was
also hit hard by the
bombings, thus because of
the local Phou Lao bureau
and probably because it had
and direct access road to Vietnam.

13.01.25



Nong Khaw
Back in Nong Khaw there
are still traces of war material
in town. Just exhibited not
active of course. The little
Museum 3 km outside town
is carefully and interesting
made.

13.01.25

Today I travel from Nong Khaw
with the Minivan to Luang Prabang
and then with the Train to
Kasi. Apparently there was
american activities in this
dusty small town. No signs
though. I tried to find traces
and found out there are
none. Can I take pictures of
a symbol of the war here?
Kasi is a dusty truck town
along a heavily used truck
Route and crossing the train
over a huge bridge.

14.01.25



Good to see Yang again.
He is so helpful.

We went to Muang Khoun,
the destroyed Buddha statue
and a few other things and
then I got invited to have
lunch at Mr. Peth's House.
I bought some metal as
usual. Took some photographs
in Ban Napia and discovered
that the people in that town
started to set up little museums
such as this. They plan to build
at Mr. Peth's Workshop.

15.01.25

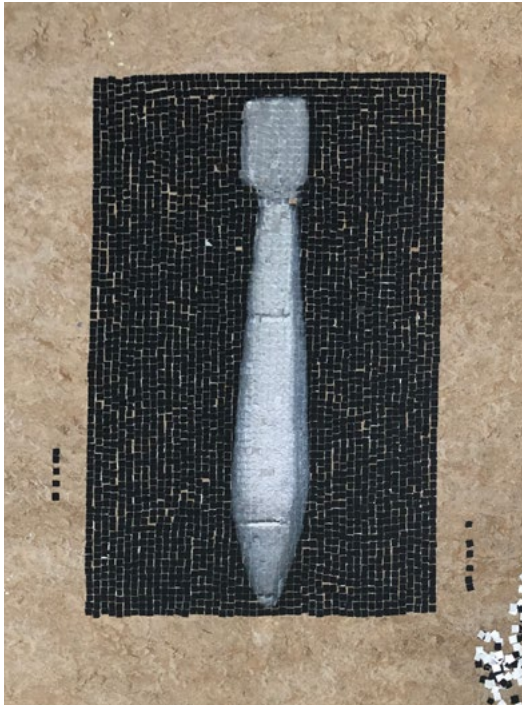
Bad Views from the Front. We
can not go to Phu Pha Pi since
the CIA is looking for their
bones. They closed the road
to the Mountain. What I heard.
So there is the question. How
do I deal with that situation?
I cannot take pictures of?
Start speaking about images
I didn't take?

16.01.25





Installation View: Noorderlicht Fotofestival Groningen, 2021

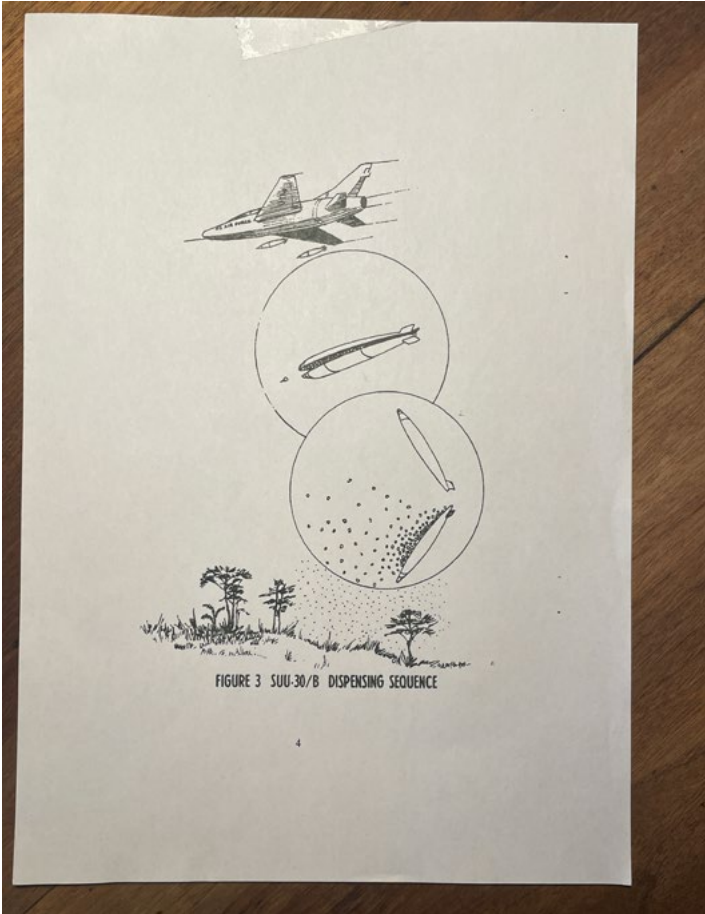
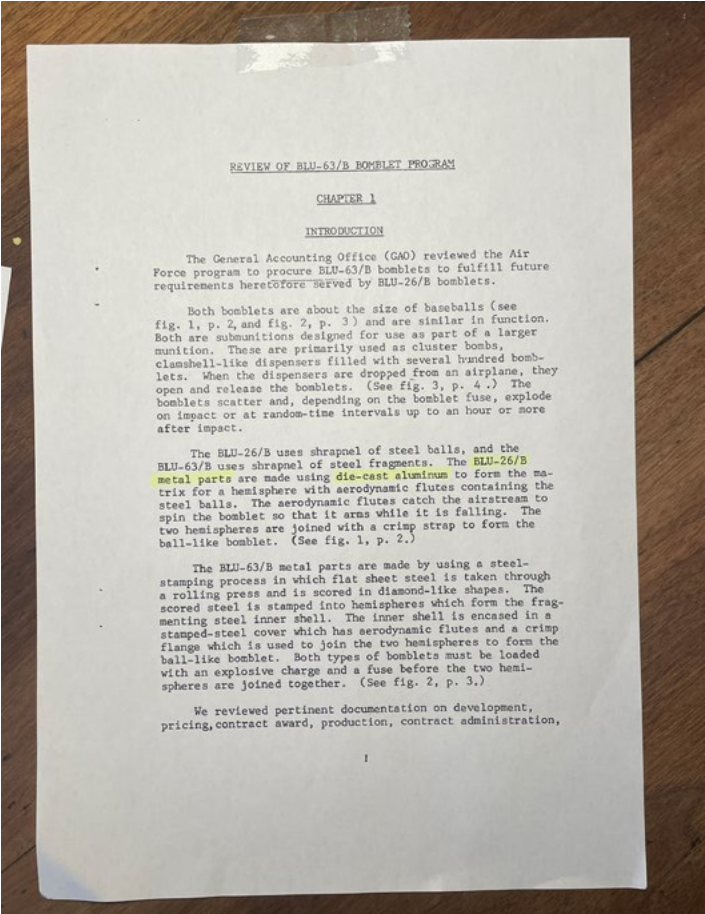
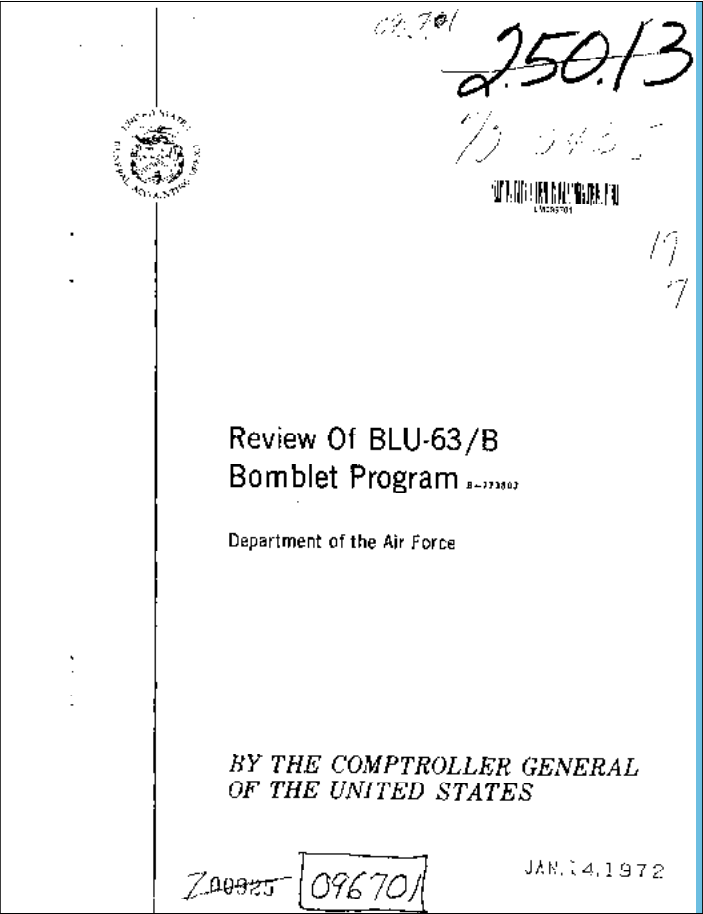


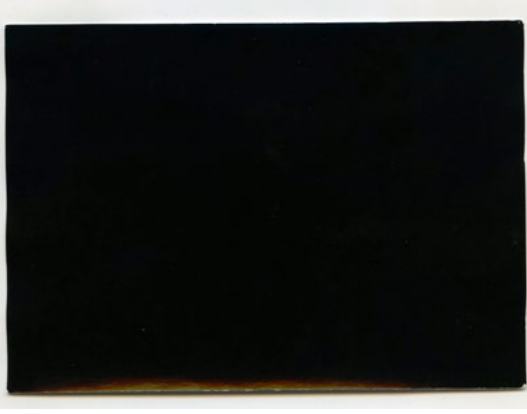
The large-format image (70 × 87 cm) consists of a total of 6,090 puzzle pieces, each with an edge length of 1 cm. It is presented flat on the floor of the exhibition space and is not protected by markings or barriers. The exhibition area is deliberately left open – it is expected that visitors may accidentally step on the puzzle. This potential disturbance of the work is an integral part of the artistic concept: the destruction does not occur intentionally, but inciden-

tally – making the fragility and mutability of the image visible. As the puzzle pieces disperse within the space, the work expands beyond its original form.

At the center of the image is a bomb-shaped figure composed of exactly 665 puzzle pieces. This number, along with the material of the print – aluminum – refers to a specific type of cluster bomb used in Laos, which was also made of aluminum.

The work combines conceptual rigor with material reference and explores the interplay of violence, memory, and visual representation.





During my journey to Laos, I commissioned a local craftsman to build a camera obscura from bomb debris. As a result, the images were exposed directly onto Silver gelatin print direct-positive paper during the research trip and developed on-site using an analog process. Each of these images measures 13 x 18 cm and is a unique piece.

The conditions for photographing in the field did not allow for a precise or controlled process during exposure and development. This led to the creation of images in which seemingly nothing is visible. I consider these

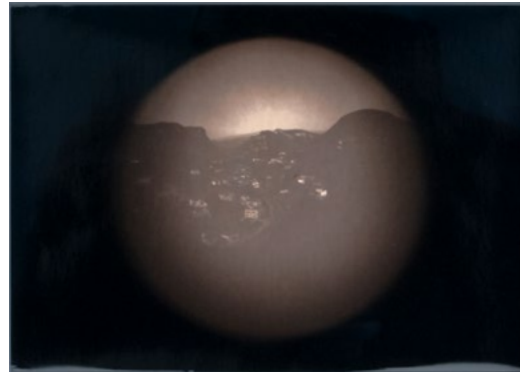
imperfections to be part of the project itself, especially in the context of the Secret War in Laos. The photographs depict historical and wartime sites, such as the runway at Long Tieng, the former CIA headquarters during the "Secret War."

Upon closer inspection of these dark, backlit images, landscapes and war scenes begin to emerge. This quality is particularly suited to addressing the historical event of the Secret War, symbolically bringing light into the darkness.





1



2



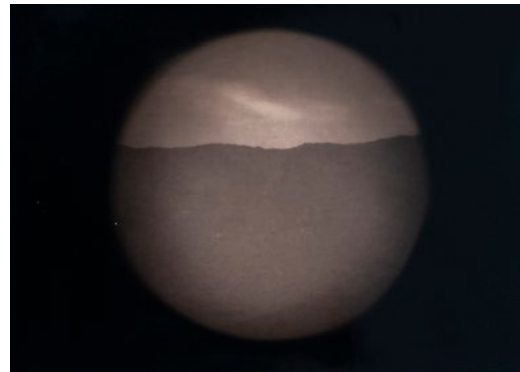
3



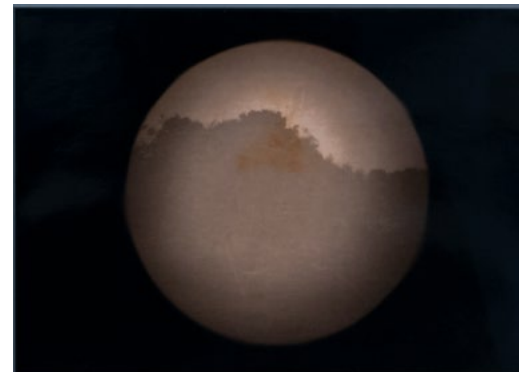
4



5



6



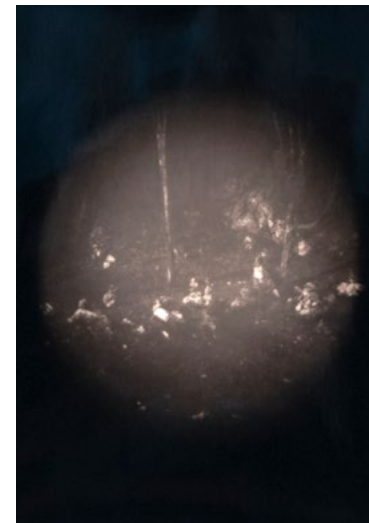
7



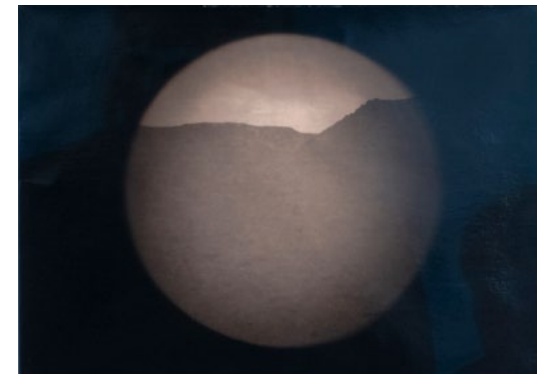
8

Camera Obscura Images - Pictures from Historical and War Sites

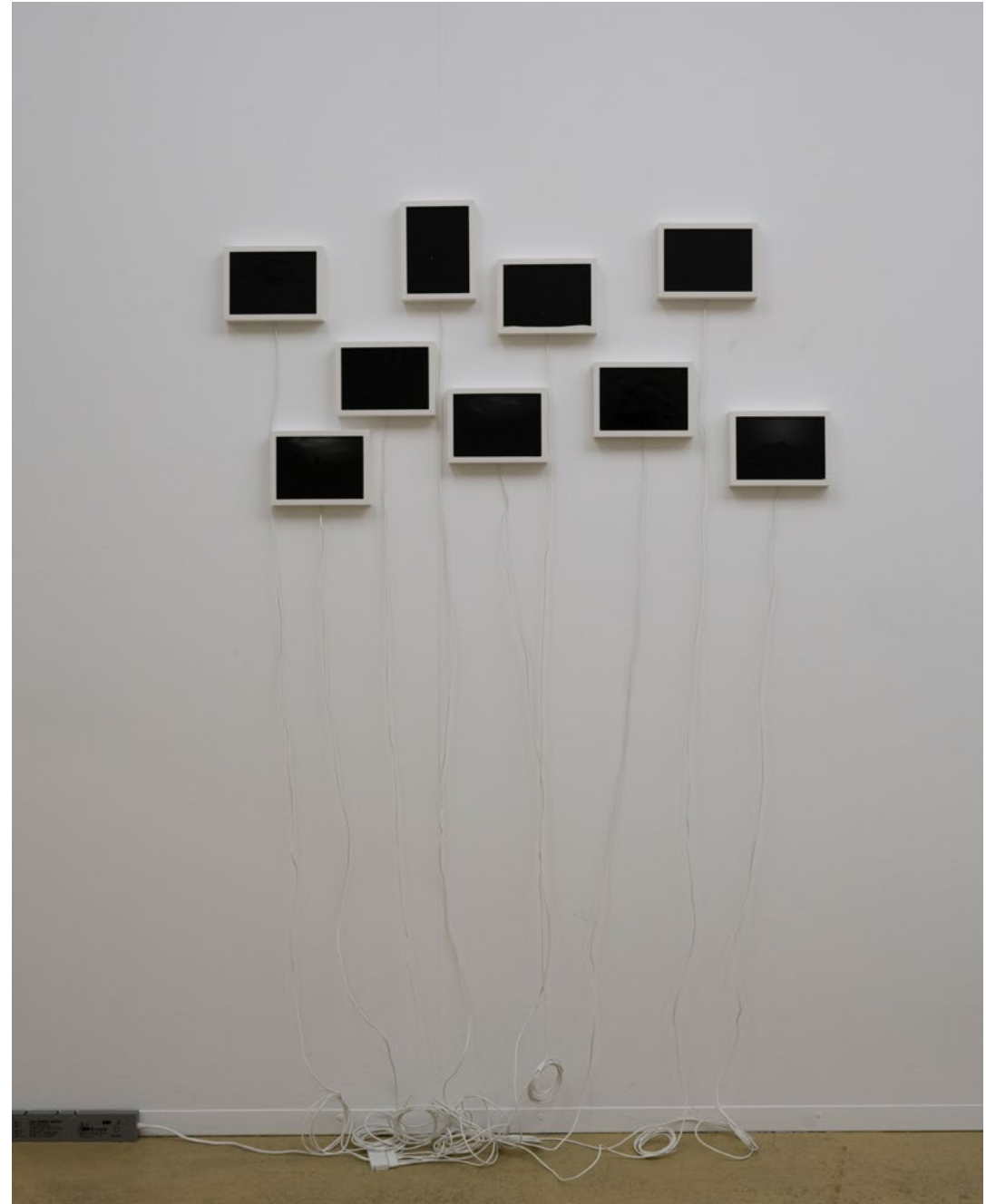
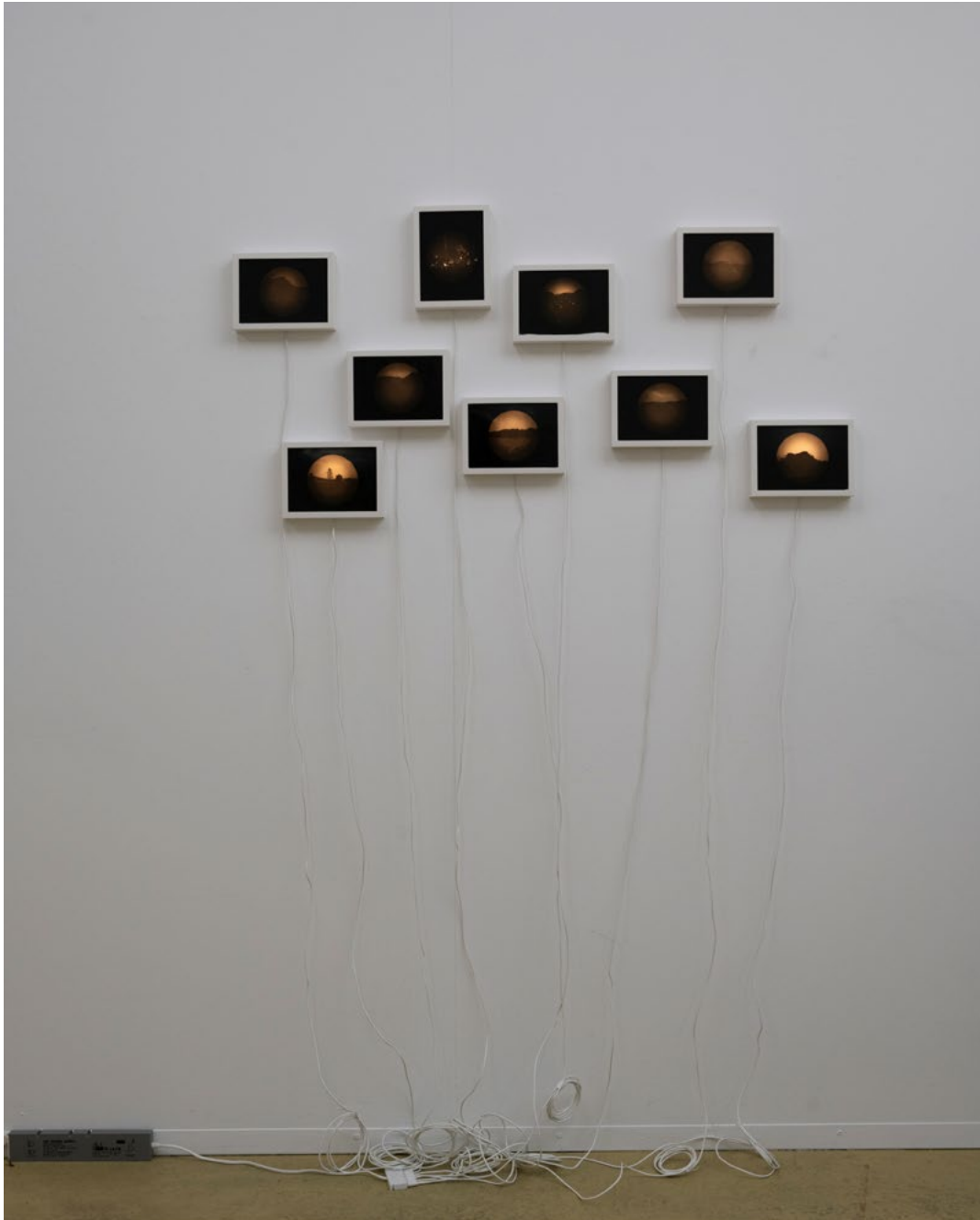
- 1 Pile of clay jars in a field in the Plain of Jars, Phonsavan, Xieng Khouang, Laos, February 12, 2020.
- 2 View from the karst mountains towards the former headquarters and airstrip of the CIA in Laos, Long Tieng, Xaisomboun, February 4, 2020
- 3 Rice field with cows, a typical Lao landscape, Nak Ho, Xieng Khouang, Laos, Feb. 12, 2020
- 4 A tree growing out of a bomb crater, Pakheo, Xieng Khouang, Laos, February 13, 2020.
- 5 Burnt soil, Phonsavan, Xieng Khouang, northeastern Laos, February 12, 2020.
- 6 View from inside a 400-pound bomb crater with a diameter of 30m, Ban Khangthat, 1st visit, Xieng Khouang, Laos, February 4, 2020
- 7 Bomb crater with tree in Plain of Jars, Phonsavan, Xieng Khouang, Laos, Feb. 12, 2020
- 8 Scenic view of Plain of Jars, Phonsavan, Xieng Khouang, Laos, February 12, 2020.
- 9 Tree in the foreground of a Phatet Lao cave (Revolutionary Movement hiding place) in the Plain of Jars, Phonsavan, Xieng Khouang, Laos, February 12, 2020.
- 10 View from inside a 400-pound bomb crater with a diameter of 30m, Ban Khangthat, 2nd visit, Image II, Xieng Khouang, Northeast Laos, February 13, 2020



9



10

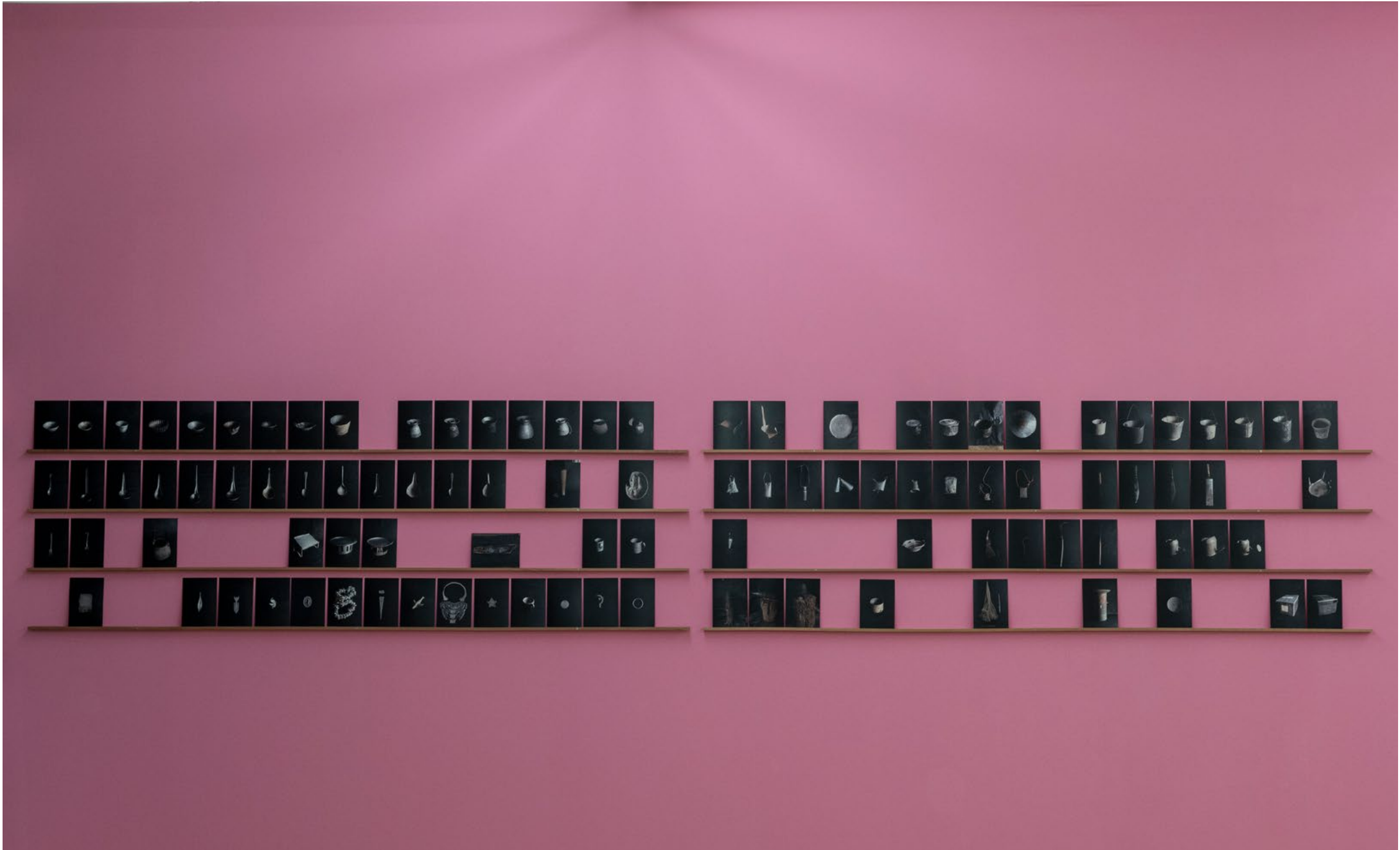


Installation views: 9 framed uniques, 13 x 18 cm, installation with light and timing device, *Austellungsraum Bellevue, Basel 2023*



Selection of everyday objects transformed from the remains of bomb material. Among the objects is also a photograph of the camera obscura (made on my behalf), with which I photographed the camera obscura images in Laos.

The Camera Obscura also appears among these items because it resumes the tradition of making these artifacts out of bomb debris.



Installation View: 100 Artifacts, *Austellungsraum Bellevue, Basel 2023*



Installation View: (Audio, Photography), *Austellungsraum Bellevue, Basel 2023*



Installation View: *Bieler Fototage 2025*, Rue Basse

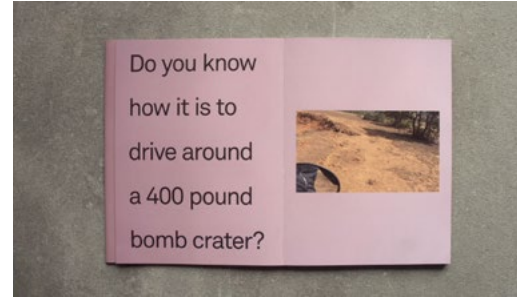




03:30



03:35



03:59



04:04



04:31



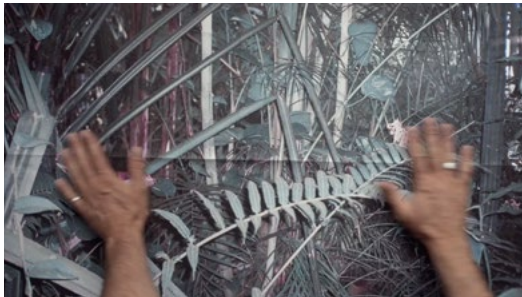
04:45



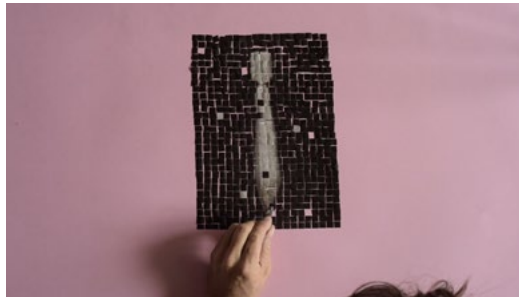
04:56



05:31



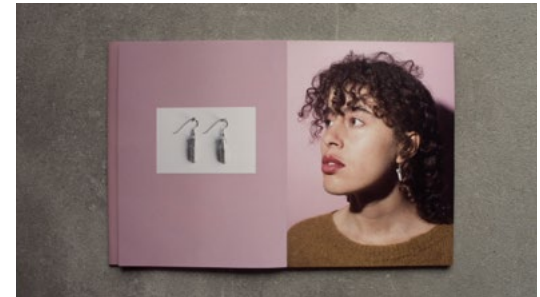
05:41



06:12



06:44



07:10



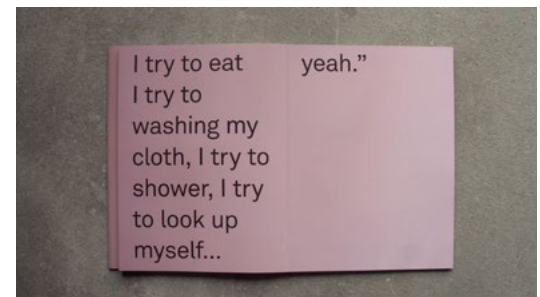
07:32



07:58



10:47



13:46

Letters to John

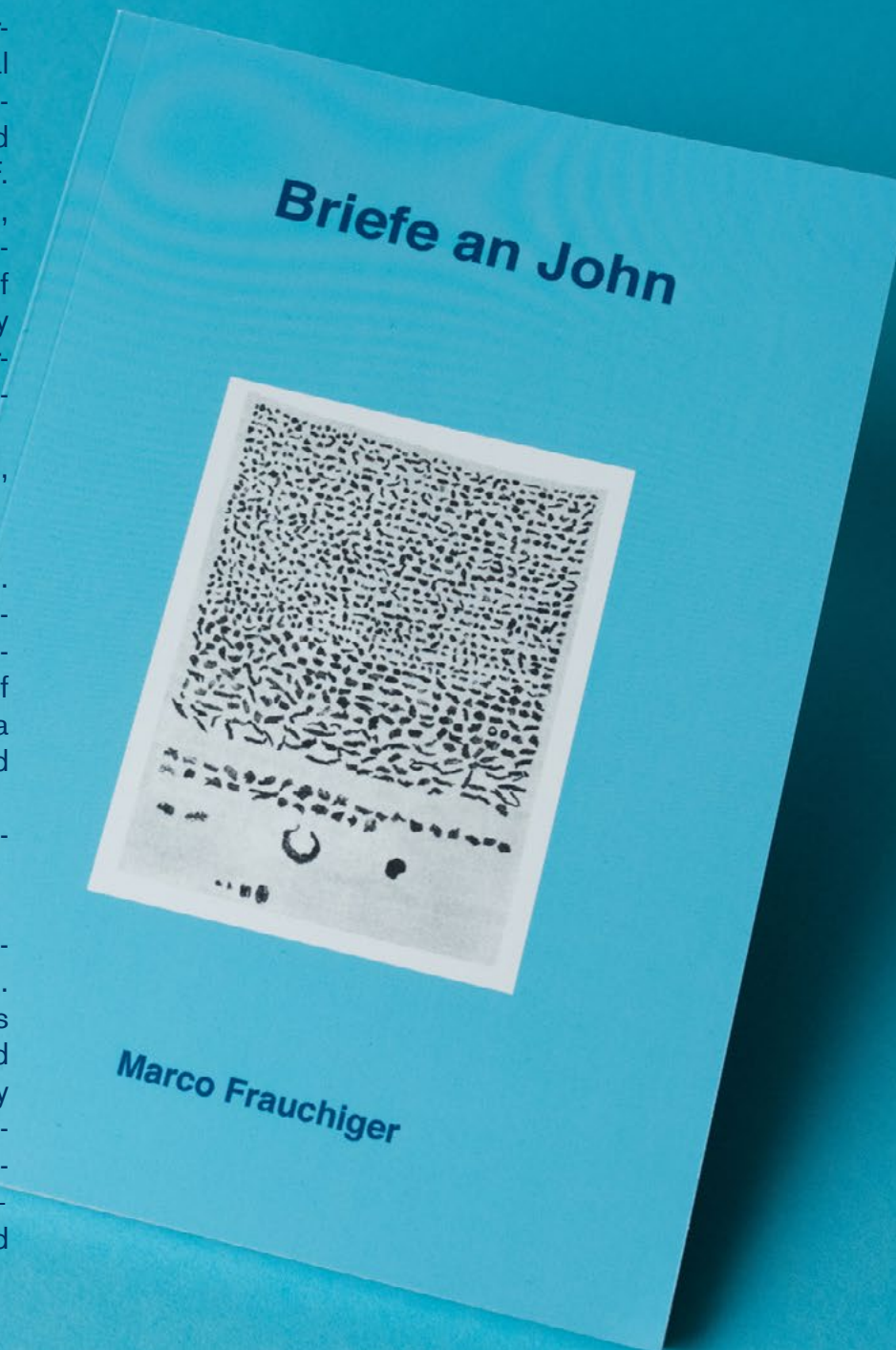
The reflection on the complexity of the topic, personal doubts, noteworthy circumstances, historical and military details, and the connection to my artistic work appear in the form of letters addressed to the then President of the United States, John F. Kennedy. He can no longer receive these letters, and it remains unclear who the appropriate addressee for them would be today. For the readers of this letters, they represent an attempt to probe my personal position towards such—also current—armed conflicts, and to relate it to my own responsibility and practice.

Why did I write letters? What, after all, are letters, and what do they mean?

Letters are, first and foremost, something private. They often contain intimate and personal expressions, written to and intended for someone in particular (or sometimes never sent at all, which itself carries a certain meaning). Letters usually have a clear addressee, directed to a specific person, and are not meant to be read by others.

Letters carry a quality of secrecy, and by publishing them here, I make them public.

Thus, the epistolary form is a kind of unveiling, through which I also refer to the secret war in Laos. At the same time, the letters can be understood as an appeal, one that may be read and understood by many. They are also an accusation, and they can be seen as a form of protest. Amnesty International, for example, often employs this form of protest—which is regarded as particularly civilized—in order to make their concerns known to a broad public.





Inhalt

Einleitung	7
Briefe an John (Ich erkläre den Krieg)	17
Dear John.....	18
Die CIA wirft mit Bomben	19
8 Minuten	22
Stimmen aus der Ebene der Tonkrüge	23
Profit	27
Deine Stimme	31
Die Geste	32
Darf ich das?	35
Das Handbuch und der Splittergarten	36
Free drop zone	43
Kinderzeichnungen, die nicht für dich bestimmt sind	46
Was hat das mit mir zu tun?	48
How to transform a bomb into a paraffin lamp	62
Beim Spielen verloren	67
Risky Business	68
Air Opium	69
Geheimarmee im Dschungel versteckt	72
I wanna make it clear (oder der Krieg, der keiner war)	76
Pepsi Cola und Munition	88
Vientiane 2014	90
Töten auf Distanz	91
Die Bomben, die wie Früchte aussehen und so benannt werden	92
Stolperdraht	95
Raven	96
Der letzte Brief	100
Résumé	103
Anhang	107
Bibliografie	133
Impressum.....	140

John F. Kennedy
White House
Washington DC
Amerika

Was hat das mit mir zu tun?

Dear John...

Du fragst dich sicher, was das mit mir zu tun hat?

Es ist die Zeit des kalten Krieges. Dinge geraten aus dem Lot, nachdem die Kräfte sich nach dem 2. Weltkrieg neu verteilt haben. Es gibt jetzt den Kommunismus, der sich rasch ausbreitet, und es gibt den Kapitalismus, der seine Ideale in grosser Gefahr sieht. Das ist einfach heruntergebrochen die Ausgangslange für diesen Konflikt, der in Laos eskalierte. Ich bin erst nach dem geheimen krieg in Laos geboren. 1976 war der Krieg bereits beendet, aber es schwellen weiter Konflikte an anderen Orten und die letzte Dekade des kalten Krieges erlebte ich als Kind und Jugendlicher und das habe ich so erlebt: Aufgewachsen in einem Dorf im Emmental, wo die Welt anscheinend noch in Ordnung war, kam ich immer mehr in Kontakt mit den Ereignissen, die sich da draussen weit ab von diesem hügeligen Gebiet ereigneten.

Die Angst vor dem Krieg

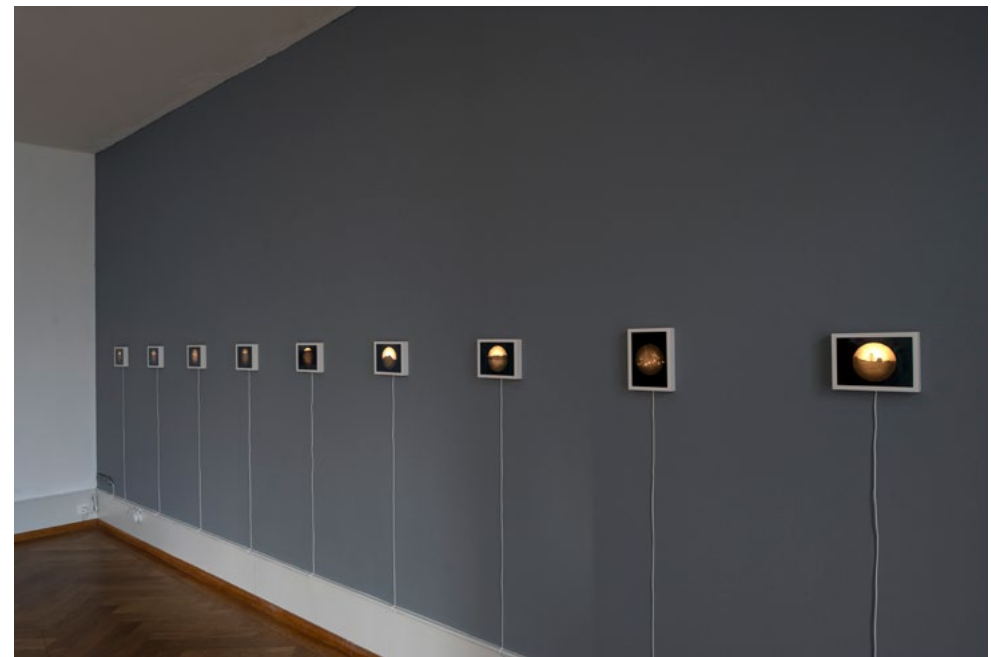
Oftmals am Morgen, wenn ich aufstand, das Radio lief, laut, die Nachrichten auf DRS 1 berichteten davon, was letzte Nacht geschehen war. Der kalte Krieg und auch die heissen Kriege kamen oft über den Äther zu uns an

unseren Küchentisch. Nie waren wir in unserem Land in der letzten Zeit in einen Konflikt involviert. Und trotzdem hat es mit uns zu tun, mit unserer Politik, mit unserer Wirtschaft und auch ich persönlich profitiere indirekt von den Konflikten. Die Kriege lagen wie ein Schleier über meiner Kindheit und Jugend. Ich erinnere mich daran, oft Angst davor gehabt zu haben, dass bei uns ein Krieg ausbricht.

Die Waffe im Schrank

Ich erinnere mich daran, dass ich eines Tages den Kleiderschrank meiner Eltern im Schlafzimmer öffnete und da stand dieses Gewehr. Diese schwarze, kalte Metall, sauber poliert. Ich hatte Angst, dass sich ein Schuss löst. Obwohl ich wusste, dass das Magazin leer war, keine Patronen drin. Es war, und das ist das einzig Gute an diese Geschichte, nicht erlaubt, Munition mit nach Hause zu nehmen, wobei es höchstwahrscheinlich keine grosse Anstrengung benötigt, Munition aufzutreiben. Ich traute mich kaum, das Sturmgewehr 57, abgekürzt Stgw 57, was weniger nach einer Waffe klingt, anzufassen, geschweige denn aus dem Schrank zu nehmen. Warum steht ein Gewehr im Schrank? Dieses Bild brannte sich in mir. Ich erinnere mich, dass ich zu einem gewissen Zeitpunkt in den letzten Jahren Teil der Bekämpfung der Drogen zu gewährleisten. Mein Vaterland. Mein Mann unter Waffen. Ich war eine Schweizerin. Ich war eine Angehörige der Armee. Ich war ein junges Mädchen. Ich war eine Einzige. Ich war eine Angehörige der Armee. Ich war eine liche Waffe zu sein. Ich war eine Die Schweizerin. Ich war eine du ehrenvoll. Ich bin ich bis zum Ende. Ich schied sich,





Installation View: *Prix Photoforum*, Photoforum Pasquart Biel/Bienne, 2022



Large scale Wallpaper 254cm x 380, Installation View: *Prix Photoforum, Photoforum Pasquart Biel/Bienne, 2022*



Installation View: *Kunstraum Dreiviertel Bern*, 2022



Installation View: *Kunsthau Langenthal*, 2022



Bomb shaped Earring behind glass, *Photoforum Pasquart Biel/Bienne*, 2022

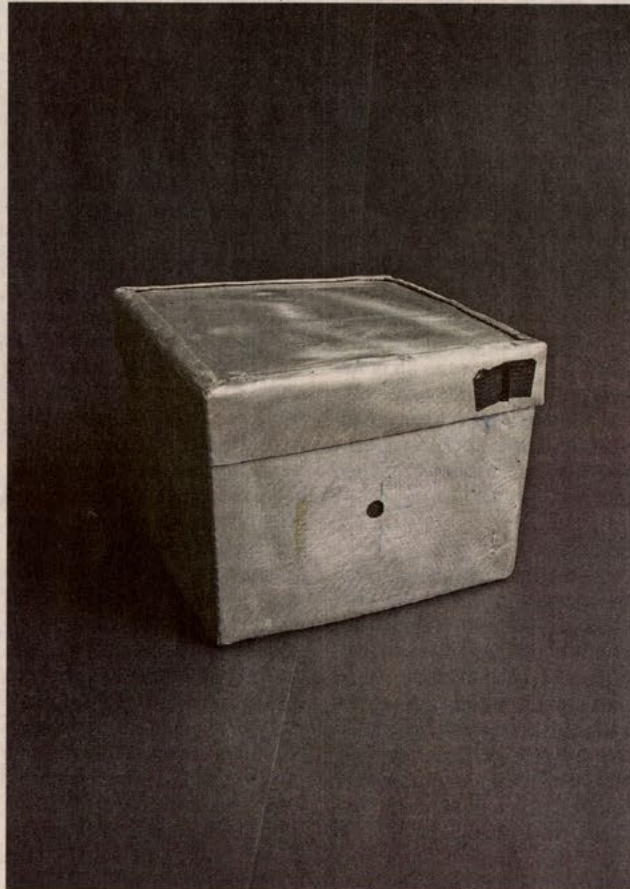
«Traumata kannst du nicht mit der Kamera erfassen»

Ausstellung: Prix Photoforum Der Berner Fotograf Marco Frauchiger macht Kriegsmaterial zu Kunst – eine Napalmbombe wird zur Kamera.

Helen Lagger

«Laos ist voller Kriegsmaterial», sagt Fotograf Marco Frauchiger. Dabei handle sich um Bomben der CIA, die während des laotischen Bürgerkrieges abgeworfen wurden, aber nie explodiert seien. Der Krieg in Laos, der zwischen 1953 und 1975 stattfand, wird auch als der «geheime» Krieg bezeichnet, da er im Hintergrund des Vietnamkrieges stattfand und bis heute wenig im Bewusstsein der Weltbevölkerung verankert ist.

Zum ersten Mal reiste Frauchiger vor acht Jahren nach Laos – dank eines Stipendiums. Dieses wird von der Journalistenschule MAZ und der Direktion für Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit DEZA vergeben, üblicherweise eher an die schreibende Zunft. Anfangs begleitete er dann auch Journalistinnen und Journalisten und versuchte deren Arbeit zu dokumentieren. «Ich fand es schwierig», so der 46-jährige Berner. «Auch weil gewisse Journalisten lieber selbst fotografieren, da sie damit zusätzlich Geld verdienen.» Schliesslich kontaktierte er verschiedene NGOs, die vor Ort Hilfsprojekte realisieren, und stiess auf das Thema des Kriegsmaterials.



Um aus Überresten einer Napalmbombe eine Camera obscura zu bauen, engagierte Fotograf Marco Frauchiger einen lokalen Handwerker. Foto: Marco Frauchiger



Frauchiger fotografierte für die Serie Bilder von historischen Kriegsschauplätzen – hier im nordöstlichen Laos. Foto: Marco Frauchiger

Frauchiger, der sich unter anderem bei der GAF (Gruppe Auto-didaktischer FotografInnen) hatte ausbilden lassen, wollte ursprünglich Fotojournalist werden. Doch 2018 geriet er in eine Krise. «Ich hatte viel zu viel Bildmaterial.» Der bereits etablierte Berufsfotograf suchte nach einem anderen Weg und begann ein Masterstudium an der Hochschule der Künste in Bern, in Contemporary Art Practice.

Das Projekt «how to dismantle a bomb» – auf Deutsch «wie man eine Bombe entschärft»

führte ihn 2020 erneut nach Laos. Für das Teilprojekt «Bringing light into the dark» hat er nun den mit 5000 Franken dotierten Prix Photoforum erhalten. Die Arbeit kann Frauchiger nun im Rahmen einer Ausstellung mit anderen von der internationalen Jury berücksichtigten Positionen zeigen.

«Marco Frauchigers Arbeit konnte die Jury besonders überzeugen, da sie einen kollaborativen Umgang mit der Fotografie entwickelt hat und die Fotografierten sowie die Betrachtenden

in den Produktionsprozess mit einbezieht», so Jana Johanna Haeckel, Jurymitglied und Direktorin am Photoforum Pasquart. Tatsächlich suchte Frauchiger vor Ort nach Artefakten, die aus Bombenmaterial hergestellt wurden. Frauchiger stiess auf Schmuck, aber auch auf Alltagsgegenstände wie Reiskocher.

Uralte Technik

Er beauftragte für seine Fotoserie einen lokalen Handwerker, der ihm aus eben solchen Bombentrümmern eine Camera obscura baute. Diese uralte analoge Technik zwang Frauchiger, langsam zu arbeiten. Durch ein Versehen gerieten seine Landschaftsbilder gänzlich schwarz. Erst wenn man die Aufnahmen von hinten beleuchtet, erscheinen geisterhafte Bombenkrater und verletzte Landschaften.

Diese Arbeiten sind schön und schrecklich zugleich und lassen die Betrachtenden bewusst ein wenig im Dunkeln tappen. Denn zu Frauchigers Thema gehört auch eine subtile Kritik am Fotojournalismus. «Traumata kannst du nicht mit der Kamera erfassen.»

Vernissage: Samstag, 3. Dezember, Photoforum Pasquart, Biel. Ausstellung bis am 15. Januar.



Die einfache Lochkamera, gebaut aus einer alten Nagabombe, und die verwetzten Landschaften, die der Fotograf Marco Franchiger in Laos mit ihr aufgenommen hat.

FOTOGRAFIE

Kunst als kontrollierte Explosion

Mit der ältesten Fototechnik der Welt auf der Spur eines vergessenen Missetats: Marco Frauchiger verstrickt die Altlasten der Bombardierung von Laos in eine vielschichtige fotografische Auseinandersetzung.

VON DANIELA JANISER (TEXT) UND MARCO FRACHIGER (FOTOS)



Die auf Aluminium auf-
gelegten Fotografien vom
Strandbühnen als Museum
im Lande einer Ausstellung
bringen die Besucherinnen
die Teile immer wieder durch-
einander.

Schwerste Pfingstschlacht, Spiesse zu Scheitern, was steht in der Bibel. Landliche Landarbeitern würden bei solch heissen Wäldern wohl erst einmal absteigen und sagen: Klingt gut - aber hier ist ja auch das Pfingsten und Mähen heisst nicht. Nach wie von hundert Millionen von Hingängen im Boden des südöstlichen Landes, eine mörderische Heimschmerzhaft der Flückenbombardements durch die US-Armee in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren. (vgl. „Bombenterror in die Gegenwart“ von U. von Bismarck) In der Gegenwart, in dem brachliegenden Agrarland, in dem die mörderische, die stess Gefahr, sich mit dem eigenen Pfingst in die Luft zu jagen, die Augen oder ein Bein zu verlieren, oder das Leben.

Und doch: Schwerer zu fliegen! Oder zumindest: Bomben zu suppenförmig. Mit den menschlichen Spegekörpern hat es in Lucca ein forciertes Altkleiderhandel entwickelt. Auch kleiderhandwerklich wurden die Bombenagente weiterverwertet. Man überdachte sie zu Kochgeschirr, zu Werkzeugen, gar zu Schmuckstücken für die Touristinnen am Ort. Im aktuellen Alltagsgegenstand bleibt der Bombenzirkus präsent, nämlich aufgehoben, eingebettet in eine immer heimliche Recyclinglogik.

Gebrochene Erleuchtung

Die Bombe auflösen

Ein anderer Teil von show in diamonds a bomb zeigt auf Abernitham aufgenagte, um Moask amerikanische Fotografen einer Strömung. Auch hier legt das Abernitham eine materielle Spur zurück zum Bombenmaterial. Die Anzahl der Teile, die den Bombenkörper bilden, entspricht der Anzahl der sogenannten Indikatoren.

Die Bombe auflösen

Ein anderer Teil von *where to dismantle a bomb* zeigt die auf Aluminium aufgetragene, zum Moskau zentrierte Fotografie einer Strahlungsbombe. Auch hier legt das Aluminium eine materielle Spur zurück zum Bombenmaterial. Die Anzahl der Teile, die den Bombenkörper bilden, entspricht der Anzahl der sogenannten Substanzen, die diese Bombe in sich trägt: 665 Stück. Bei Ausfällungen legt Fraunhofer dieses Moskau

den Boden, die BesucherInnen bringen es zu der Zeit durcheinander, manche nehmen einzelne Mosaikstücke mit nach Hause – auch das eine Art, die Bombe symbolisch aufzulösen.

Der Fotograf als Bombenentschärfer, seine Wirkgruppe als eine Reihe kontrollierter Explosionen? Fraughtiger Auseinandersetzung mit der südlichen Allzeit des Krieges in Laos stellt zwar auf grobe Fragen. Die daraus entstandenen Bil-

Die Frage ist, ob diese Ergebnisse die Hypothese stützen, dass die

DER GEHEIME KRIEG

Bombenterror bis in die Gegenwart

Bombenterror in die Gegenwart

Die neun Jahre andauernde Bombardierung ohne Rücksicht auf zivile Opfer blieb, wie von der CIA beabsichtigt, vor der Öffentlichkeit weitgehend verborgen. Erst die Pentagon Papers warfen 1971 ein Licht auf den «geheimen Krieg». Offiziell gilt die einseitige französische Kolonial-Leon für die USA wie auch für Vietnam als neutral.

Zu den Verstrickungen und den Trauma-
ta des als «verdeckte Operation» getarnten
Bombenabfalls kommen verheerende Späfolge-
nungen. Prozent der abgeworfenen Sprengkör-
per sind nicht explodiert. Sie liegen zum Teil in
heute offenen herum wie Spielbälle, oft werden in
Läse deshalb Kinder schwer verletzt oder getöt-
et. Auch unter der Erde lauern nicht deaktivierte

der bleiben jedoch angenehm tastend, fragend, nie aufdringend oder trophäenartig – wie das manchmal bei Kriegsreportagen der Fall ist. Vielmehr lässt sich eine intime Geschichte, die nie wirklich zu bewältigen ist, nur so angehen: in viele kleine Alltags- und Kunstprojekte zerkleinern, die – im geschützten Prozessraum der Kunst – die Gewalt in etwas weniger Schmerzhaftes übersetzen.

haftes Übersetzen.

Gegenwart

Gegenwart

Sprengeleise. Dieser in die Gegenwart hinein verläufige Baubemühen hat seit Ende der 1980er Jahre in die 2000er Jahre des 20. Jahrhunderts geführt. Nach 2015 sprechen Quellen von mehr als 20 Millionen potentiell gefährlichen Sprengkörpern im Boden: Dräminerale, Granaten, Brandbomben. Diese schmerzhaften Killer beinhalten auch die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des armen Landes, zwei Landstriche können landwirtschaftlich nicht genutzt werden.

In mühsamer Kleinarbeit wird Laos seit Jahrzehnten parzellierweise von den gefährlichen Blindgängern (UXOs genannt) befreit. Die Organisation Weh ohne Mienen erwa bilantier- te allein für das Jahr 2021 die Identifizierung und Beseitigung von 339 »Kampfmittelrück- ständen«, 572 333 Quadratmeter Agrarland konnten so wieder bestein werden. (Ausschnitt aus dem Bericht 2021)

Zwar reiste 2016 der damalige US-Präsident Barack Obama gegen Ende seiner Amtszeit nach Laos und bewilligte Hilfsbeiträge in zwei-stelliger Millionenhöhe für die Bombenent-schärfung, und auch andere Staaten geben Geld. Doch ein Schuldengeständnis der USA bleibt

This block contains four separate black and white photographs of ancient artifacts, arranged in a 2x2 grid. The top-left photograph shows a long-handled spoon with a rounded bowl. The top-right photograph shows a knife with a rectangular blade and a wooden handle. The bottom-left photograph shows a wide-mouthed bowl or jar. The bottom-right photograph shows a funnel-shaped object with a handle and a base.

Vier Alltagsgegenstände, die in Laos aus entschärften Sprengkörpern gefertigt wurden: ein Löffel, ein Messer, ein Reiskocher und eine Petroleum-Lampe.

SAMEDI 3 MAI 2025



Marco Frauchiger, de la série «Pink Landscapes & Transformational Objects», 2020-2024. (Marco Frauchiger)



Anastasia Mityukova, de la série «Quiet neutrality», 2024-en cours. (Anastasia Mityukova, 2025)

Photographie

Ces horizons incertains

La 28e édition des Journées photographiques de Bienne présente le

Les Journées photographiques 2025 proposent 18 expositions présentant dans 10 lieux de la cité bernoise les réflexions de photographes contemporains sur un paysage géographique, social, politique et économique.



Tshepiso A (Tshepiso A)



Ahmed Khirelsid, «Under Control», 2024. (Ahmed Khirelsid)

le GAP chaque du cont Bienne, pour de onrique taire et («conte i caine Ts et légend des colla sur des l erraient souligné définir moins p

L'é De sid doc Kharto

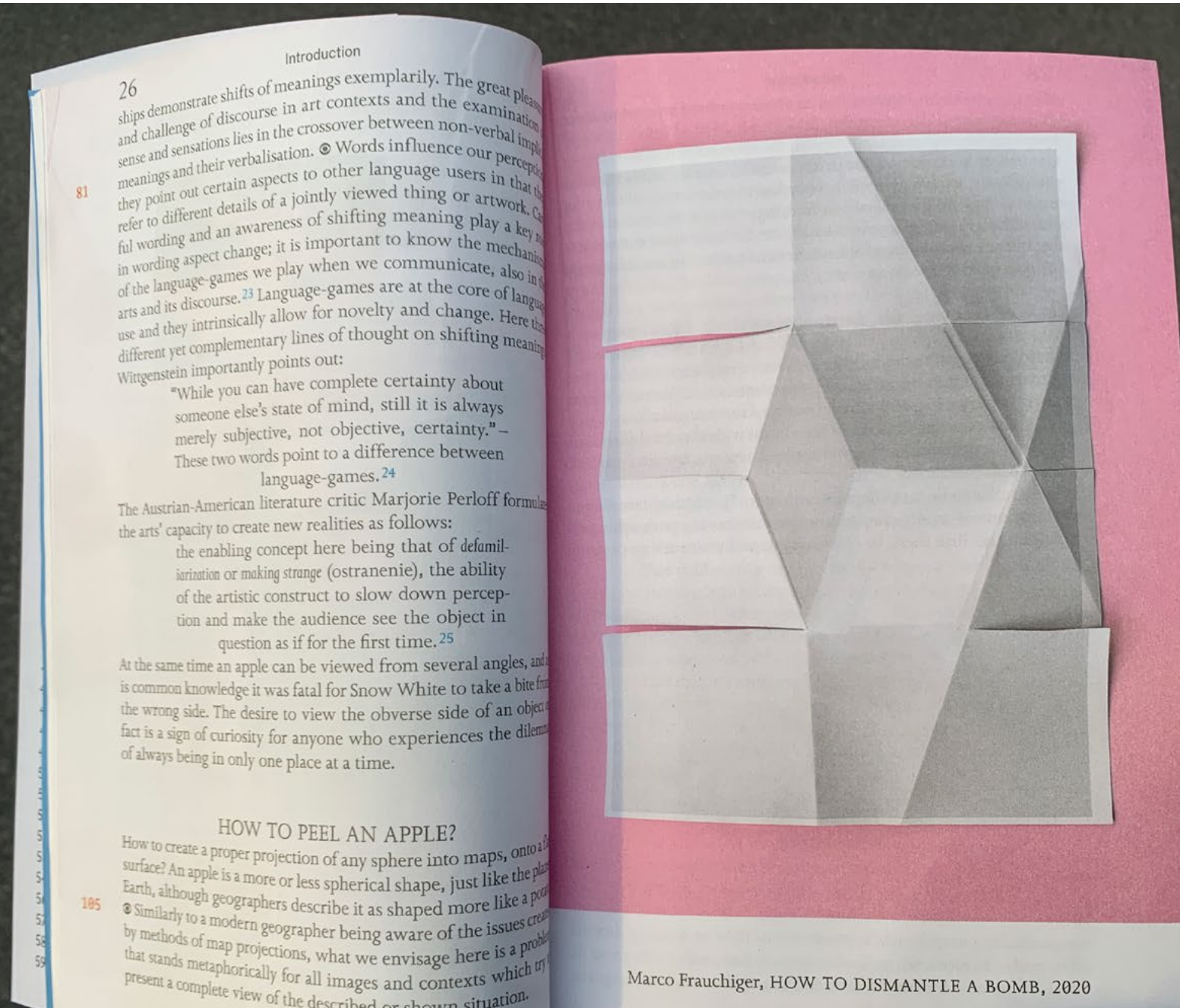
Dans un office postal désaffecté et transformé en lieu artistique alternatif par REBL – célébrant dans la tradition de la *street photography* un espace urbain et ses habitants.

Sur des murs historiques de la rue Basse, ce ne sont pas des paysages que présente le Bernois Marco Frauchiger, mais une série d'objets en grand format – une cuillère, un seau, une tasse... C'est au Laos, le pays le plus bombardé au monde, qu'il a réalisé entre 2020 et 2024 la série *Pink Landscapes & Transformational Objects*. Fabriqués à l'aide de restes d'obus, les objets qu'il dévoile symbolisent la résilience d'une population transformant en ustensiles utilitaires des outils de destruction. Un peu plus loin, à Juraplatz, il montre des photos de ce paysage laotien bombardé prises à l'aide d'une *camera obscura* qu'il a lui-même conçue, et qu'il expose également. Comme il utilise des pellicules périmées, ses images sont désaturées, et incarnent parfaitement ces horizons incertains qui servent de fil rouge à cette édition stimulante des Journées photographiques de Bienne. ■

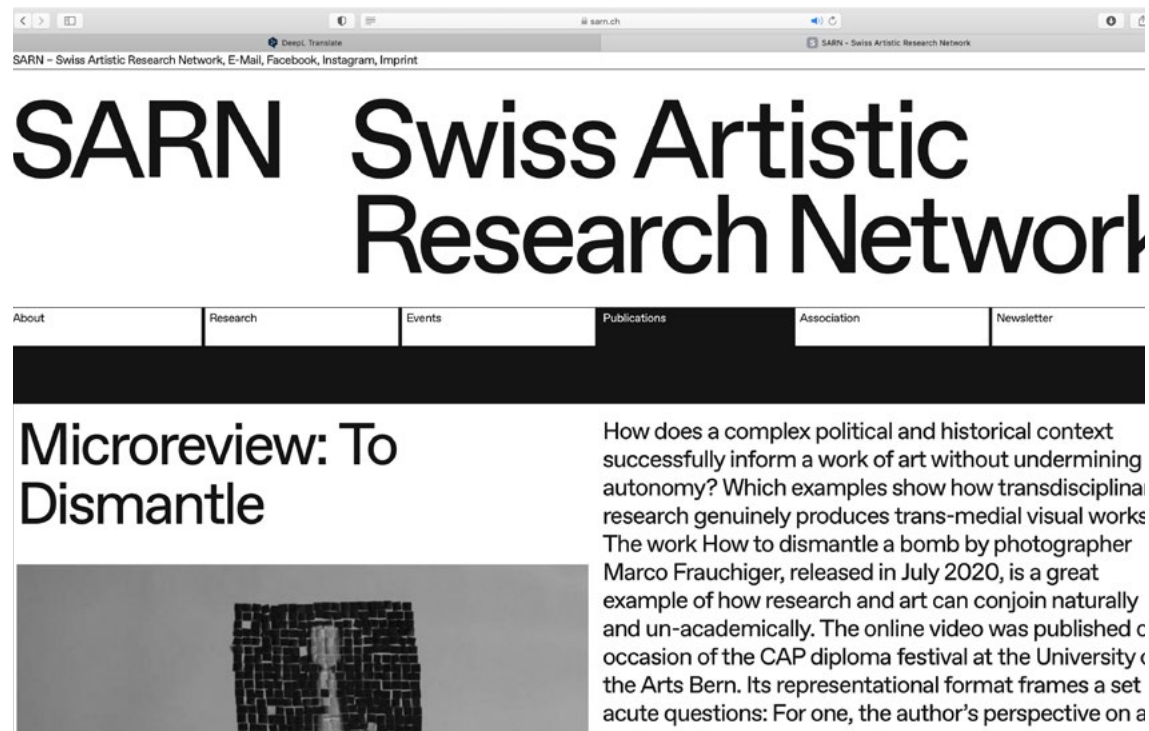
pho-avec

«Journées photographiques de Bienne», du 3 au 25 mai.









Tine Melzer: Review (english) about *how to dismantle a bomb* on **SARN** (Swiss Artistic research Network): Click [Here](#) for the Review

“Sharp editing, which carefully interweaves poetic imagery, physical proof, documentation, moving and still images, challenges the relationship between aesthetics and societal facts.” *Tine Melzer*



Cultural editor Bernard Senn from SRF, introduction to the work on 09.11.23



“TeleBilingue” TV Interview (french/swissgerman) Switzerland, 4.12.22

Biography

Marco Frauchiger

Vita

Marco Frauchiger (*1976) is an artist based in Bern, Switzerland. His artistic practice engages with socio-political questions, with a particular focus on Switzerland's global entanglements. Since 2009, he has worked independently on documentary and conceptual projects.

He is a self-taught photographer. From 2004 to 2005, he was a member of the group of self-taught photographers (GaF). In 2013, a grant enabled him to spend an extended working stay in Laos, where he developed a personal body of work and collaborated with NGOs. In 2014, he attended a one-year masterclass in Vienna.

From 2018 to 2020, he completed a Master's degree in Contemporary Art Practice (CAP) at the Bern University of the Arts (HKB). In 2025, he completed a CAS in Theory and History of Photography at the University of Zurich. His work has been exhibited both in Switzerland and internationally. In 2022, he received the Prix Photoforum in Biel/Bienne Switzerland for his project *how to dismantle a bomb*.

Educations

2024—2025

CAS in theory and history of photography, University of Zurich

2018—2020

Master of Arts in Contemporary Arts Practice, Bern University of the Arts

2014—2015

Masterclass Anzenberger, Vienna

2004—2005

GaF, Gruppe Autodidaktischer Fotograf*innen, Bern

Exhibitions (selection)

2026

Metron-Haus, Brugg, (Upcoming)

Kornhausforum, Echo)), how to dismantle a bomb (Upcoming)

Junkere 11, Bern, (Upcoming)

2025

Swiss Photo Month 2025, Photoforum Pasquart in Biel

Swiss Photo Month 2025, Centre Photographie Genève in Geneva

Biel/Bienne Video Festival (Upcoming)

Journées photographiques de Bienne, Biel, Juraplatz and Rue Basse

WIP Salon, Zurich

2024

Swiss Photo Month 2024, Prozess Raum Bern

Pool Collective Summer Show, The Great Adam Brody, Zurich

2023

cerco Kollektiv, Cantonale Berne Jura 2023/24, Kunsthaus Pasquart Bienne, office hours

BelleVue, Ort für Fotografie, Basel, how to dismantle a bomb

Ausstellungsraum Klingental Basel, The Kingdom of Atlanta

Musée d'art de Pully, du Nil de Leman

2022

Prix Photoforum 2022, Photoforum Pasquart, Biel/Bienne, how to dismantle a bomb

Kunstraum Dreiviertel, Bern, how to dismantle a bomb

2021

Cantonale Berne Jura 2021/22, Kunsthaus Langenthal, how to dismantle a bomb

Noorderlicht International Photography Festival, Groningen, NL, how to dismantle a bomb

Prozess Kulturraum, Bern, It reminds me of a place I've never been to

ARFF International Film Festival, screening how to dismantle a bomb

2020

Whiteout, Kunstmuseum Thun, Cantonale Berne Jura 2020, how to dismantle a bomb

Common Ground, Kunsthaus Pasquart Biel, Diploma Exhibition, how to dismantle a bomb

Prizes, grants, nominations

2025

Visarte Switzerland, studio scholarship at Cite Internationale des Arts, Paris

Focus Photo, Pro Helvetia

Metron Förderpreis

2022

Prix Photoforum Gewinner 2022 with how to dismantle a bomb (Bringing light into Dark)

2021

«Continuer» Research Grant Canton of Bern, how to dismantle a bomb

Tavel- and Research Grant City of Bern, how to dismantle a bomb

Corona Förderstipendium, Kunstkommission Stadt Bern

Projektbeitrag Kantonale Kunstkommission Bern

Förderbeitrag Burgergemeinde Bern