

“FAUXSSILLES” FOR THE FUTURE:  
CYANOTYPE EXPRESSIONS ON PLASTIC WASTE

A Master’s Thesis

by  
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To my family.

“FAUXSSILLES” FOR THE FUTURE:  
CYANOTYPE EXPRESSIONS ON PLASTIC WASTE

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
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THE DEPARTMENT OF  
COMMUNICATION AND DESIGN  
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BILKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA  
JUNE 2018

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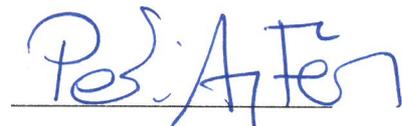
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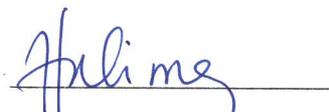
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Director

## **ABSTRACT**

### **“FAUXSSILLES” FOR THE FUTURE: CYANOTYPE EXPRESSIONS ON PLASTIC WASTE**

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M.F.A., in Media and Design

Supervisor: Vis. Asst. Prof. Andreas Treske

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This thesis focuses on the increasing plastic waste problem in the marine environment and it tries to create an artistic reflection with the Cyanotype photographic technique in order to create a body of work that highlights the relationship between found Plastic Objects and Cyanotype Photographs. The project conceptualizes the plastics as the fossils of the future since the material is highly durable and much resistant than the organic components in the marine environment. The conceptualization of these “fauxssilles” sounds like fossils, focuses on the plastics and photographic series being “faux”; meaning “fake” and “false”. The Cyanotype as one of the earliest photographic techniques has been used for this series with a reference to the first photographic book by Anna Atkins, and this alternative photographic process has been selected as the Cyan - Prussian blue of Cyanotype technique has a reference to the marine environment and the chemistry (plasticity) of cyanotype prints are as durable as the content of the images of the plastics. The research focuses on the plastic waste problem and examines key artworks, in addition to the research on the theoretical framework in photography theory, focusing on permanence, memory and the evidence aspects of photography. The experimentation process uses photograms and the final implementation is a series of 14 photographs. The photographed objects were selected according to the Ocean Conservancy 2017 report, following the top 10 found item on ocean shores.

*Keywords: Alternative Photography, Cyanotype, Fossil, Photogram, Plastic Waste*

## ÖZET

### GELECEK İÇİN “FAUXSSİLLER”: PLASTİK ATIK ÜZERİNE CYANOTYPE DİŞAVURUMLAR

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Yüksek Lisans, Medya ve Tasarım M.F.A.

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Bu tez, deniz ortamındaki artan plastik atık problemine odaklanmakta ve buluntu plastik nesnelere ve cyanotype fotoğrafları arasındaki ilişkiyi vurgulayan sanatsal bir yansıma yaratmaya çalışmaktadır. Proje, yapısı organik bileşenlere göre daha dayanıklı olan plastiği, geleceğin fosilleri olarak kavramsallaştırmaktadır ve fosil kelimesi gibi okunan “fauxssilles” adı altında “faux” yani “sahte” ve “yanlış” olmalarını vurgulamaktadır. Anna Atkins tarafından üretilen ilk fotografik kitaba referansla en eski fotoğraf baskı tekniklerinden biri olan cyanotype tekniği kullanılmıştır. cyanotype tekniğinin Prusya mavisini deniz ortamına atıfta bulunduğu ve cyanotype baskıların kimyası (plastisite) görüntülerin içeriğindeki plastik materyaller kadar dayanıklı olduğu için, bu teknik tercih edilmiştir. Araştırma, plastik atık problemine odaklanmakta ve ilgili projeli incelemekte, fotoğraf teorisindeki kuramsal çerçeve araştırmasının yanı sıra fotoğrafın kalıcılığı, hafızası ve kanıt yönlerine odaklanmaktadır. Deney sürecinde fotogramlar kullanılmaktadır ve uygulamanın son hali 14 fotoğraflık bir seri olarak sonuçlanmıştır. Fotoğraflanmış nesnelere Okyanus Koruma 2017 raporuna göre okyanus kıyılarında en çok bulunan ilk 10 maddeyi takiben seçilmiştir.

*Anahtar Kelimeler: Alternatif Fotoğraf, Cyanotype, Fosil, Fotogram, Plastik Atık*

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## CHAPTER I:

### INTRODUCTION

*Do we have the courage to face the realities of our time and allow ourselves to feel deeply enough that it transforms us and our future? Come with me on a journey through the eye of beauty across an ocean of grief and beyond. <sup>1</sup>*

#### 1.1. Scope of the Study

This research tries to tackle the emerging plastic waste problem in the marine environment, through the photographic series “Fauxssilles for the future” that is created with the Cyanotype technique in order to falsify the human-made fossils endangering the ecological structure worldwide. Within the scope of the research, I tried to focus on the theoretical and conceptual elements within the history of photography in relation to the emerging plastic waste problem. The research conceptualizes the photographic work as fauxssilles<sup>2</sup> to represent fake and false fossils. The research is shaped with the written material on

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<sup>1</sup> This is the voiceover taken from the teaser of the *Midway* Documentary by Chris Jordan. The Documentary focuses on the life of Albatroses living in the Midway Island in the North Pasific, witnessing the challenges of life. The project is examined in detail on Chapter II.

<sup>2</sup> Translated as "False" from French, meaning "Made in imitation; artificial." or "Not genuine; fake or false." in Oxford Dictionary. The conceptual use of this vocabulary is explained in detail on chapter 4.2. “Fauxssilles”

photography, focusing on the materiality of photography in addition to the aesthetic and artistic approaches through the history.

This saying of “Fossils for the Future” tries to achieve an artistic criticism since the subject matter of this photographic series hasn’t got any organic elements on their chemistry, rather the term “fauxssilles” is being used to sound like *fossils* to illustrate the durable and resistant nature of plastic based and single-use products which could remain approximately from 1 year to 450-600 years. The term “fauxssilles” to critically highlight the plastic items as the fossils for the future, even though they do not have biological characteristics, they can be analyzed with the scientific approach that Atkins used on the botanical elements. I wanted to illustrate my criticism towards the increasing plastic waste problem while approaching plastic items as fake organic subjects that could overtake the coexisting biological specimens due to the resistant chemistry. (Wright, 2017)

This research saying that “There would be more plastic than fish by the year 2050” was supporting my argument on conceptualizing the plastic as the fossils for the future since the marine environment that is home to many species of fish was being filled with plastic, thus replacing and filling the organic traces of marine life with plastic ones. From this perspective I have worked on a series of Cyanotype photographs, with a key focus on plastic waste, in relation to the history of photography and the discussions within the field based on the materiality and permanence of photographs. It is essential to acknowledge the

theoretical and aesthetic references that built up this process from scratch towards its final form, which would be highlighted in the next part.

## 1.2. The Conceptual Journey



Figure 1. photograms of of crushed plastic bottles.

I would like to mention some key concepts, in order to highlight the main elements supporting the *Fauxssilles For the Future* photographic series.

The creative process started from the very first impressions opened up by the possibilities of cyanotype technique. While the conceptual design was being developed from the allegory of fossils, towards the final photographic series; there has been several inspirations<sup>3</sup> from different theoretical approaches, contemporary projects and artworks creating inspiration on my thought

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<sup>3</sup> I tried to get as much visual inspiration as possible from the online platforms and printed materials by using keywords such as “fossil”, “photogram” or “cyanotype”. Miller’s and Witherell’s work was one of the first visual impressions I had in relation to documenting traces and connecting the process to Cyanotype technique.

process. I have been working with the cyanotype technique in the last three years. I was focused on the Gestalt's object & Background principle and how this concept could inspire the photogram experiments in terms of objects' left traces on a light sensitive surface.

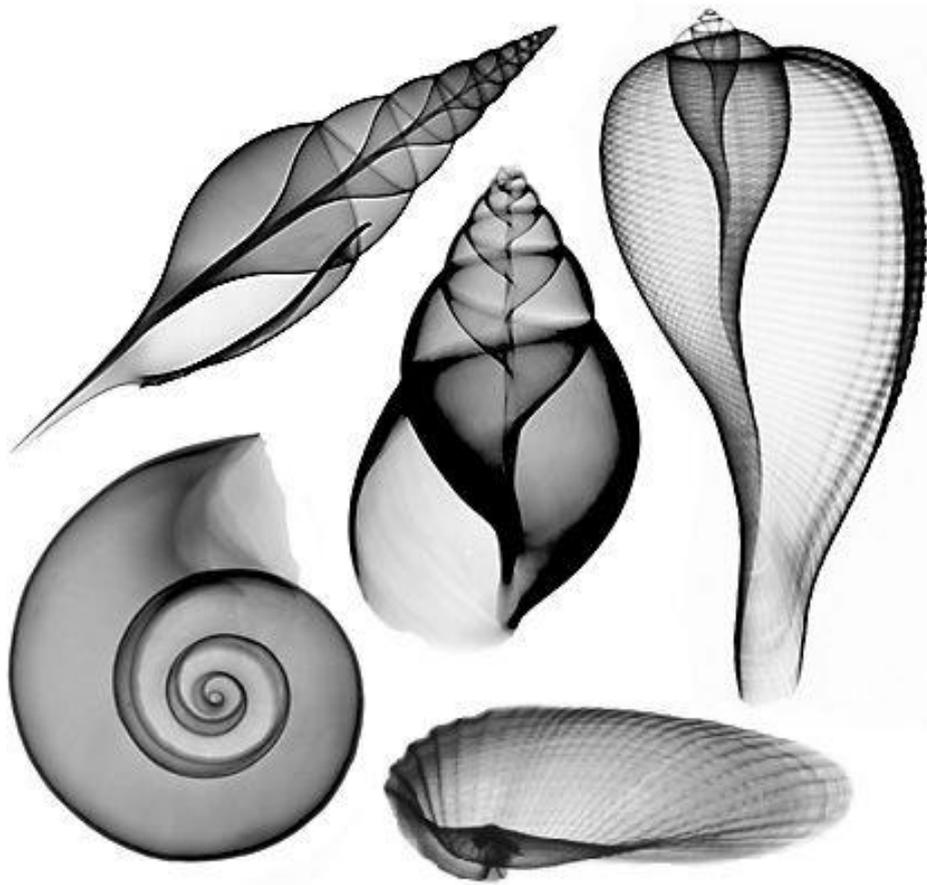


Figure 2. X-ray images of some sea shells.

In the meantime, I have also come across some X-Ray images of sea shells and animals during my research on photogram experiments. Additionally, I have been witnessing many research examples on the plastic waste problem, through some online videos and shared articles. Finally, all of these inspirations came together within a concept to visualize “the plastic on blue” as the traces of the waste on the ecological surface.



Figure 3. Lynnette Miller's Bottles<sup>4</sup>

The first idea that came up to my mind was using some plastic objects' x-ray images to create cyanotype prints which will have a direct reference to these object's permanent existence over blue. I came across some visual references to this concept, but I had to correlate this work towards the Cyanotype technique. I was aiming to create a connection between the object and the background, to highlight the fact that the plastic items are ending up in the marine

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<sup>4</sup> "When we first moved into our home 42 years ago we found a large pile of discarded bottles in the top corner of the half acre of garden. This place used to be a small farm and was first built at least 200 years ago so some of the bottles, most of which are broken, are very old." says Miller about this work.

environment. In this sense, plastic waste problem of our damaged world would have been illustrated in these x-ray images; just like monitoring someone's lungs or bones, when they are being harmed or getting sick.



Figure 4. Carrie Witherell's Relic series

Throughout the process, I examined several photographic works, graphic design elements and theoretical approaches in order to support my project design process. Later on the conceptual process, after eliminating the idea of photographic representation with the x-ray scanning for several reasons, I tried to create a series of photograms. Photograms have a radical standpoint in the history of photography due to the camera-less outcomes of the exposed objects over a light sensitive surface. Creating photograms to document the plastic items seemed very powerful as it refers back to the history of photography and

concepts towards the light leaving traces; from Henry Fox Talbot's photogenic drawings, Anna Atkins' photograms towards Moholy-Nagy's photogram experiments on the "New Vision" of his Bauhaus era, until much contemporary works like Michael Jackson's Luminograms. The photogram series made out of the plastic elements would be creating ghostly-looking silhouettes that vary in form and texture, portraying different aspects and characteristics of several objects that all share a common chemistry of plasticity. The expected outcome was creating a typology of plastic objects, when they all came together, sharing the similar negative-positive aesthetics with a variety of shapes and intensity. The literature review was also supporting several discussions about the uses of the photograms and the way artists are representing their artistic motivation was very influential and supportive on the conceptualization for my work.



Figure 5. Photogram experimentation with plastic objects.

What the well-crafted photograms have a powerful representation in the history of photography for me was the fact that they portray the silhouettes of certain elements, being faithful to their materiality but throughout the process of experimentations resulting in very abstract photograms; and some explorations with the support from some written documents, I have also given up on the photogram practice as it was more related to the abstraction and subjective representations, rather than an objective representation of the visible truth and the measurable reality.<sup>5</sup> This is also the reason why I have changed the title of the thesis from “Cyanotype Impressions”<sup>6</sup> to “Cyanotype Expressions” to highlight my standpoint and artistic motivation more effectively.

## **1.2. Literature Review**

The reading material for my thesis could be divided in two parts; first part (Chapter II) was focused on the scientific research on the plastics and the marine debris<sup>7</sup> as I have problematized the plastic waste as the core of my project, while the second part (Chapter III) was related to the inventions of photography, the theoretical discussions within photography studies, the means of artistic and experimental representation through photograms and some key projects in relation to photography and fine arts with regards to memory transference. Additionally, the scientific approach of paleontology and

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<sup>5</sup> There were other reasons for not continuing from the photogram works and they are detailed in chapter 4.2.

<sup>6</sup> This part was in the title to “Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions” which is the first photographic book created in 1983 by Anna Atkins’.

<sup>7</sup> Also known as marine litter, the common term to describe the human-created waste that has deliberately or accidentally been released in a lake, sea, ocean or waterway.

oceanography has been supportive within the creative process in order to understand the nature and meaning of the fossils.

Within the scope of the research, considering the plastic elements and cyanotype photographs as the fossils for the future, the process encouraged me to create a body of work for the paleontologist of the future. The journey recalls the earliest cyanotype imprints, that gives its name to “Blue Prints” that was a general term for copying the engineering drawings. I have selected the Cyanotype<sup>8</sup> technique not only as a powerful reference with its dark, Prussian cyan-blue color to the marine environment where the plastic waste ends up; but I also wanted to refer to the history of the Cyanotype Technique. I have been examining literature with a focus on alternative photographic techniques, photographic expressions and the uses of photograms, photographs potential as evidence and its materiality. On the problematic of plastic waste, I examined ongoing projects and the contemporary actions led by United Nations Environment, National Geographic Magazine, Greenpeace and several NGO’s such as Ocean Conservancy and 4Ocean, in addition to the examination of Governmental action within Turkey. This process was quite critical as I needed the scientific proof in relation to the plastic waste problem and analyzing the ongoing responses worldwide was supportive for me to consider where my project might fit under certain possibilities and future expectations.

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<sup>8</sup> The photo-chemical process was discovered in 1842 by the English scientist and astronomer Sir John Herschel and it was used to describe the early scientific drawing copies as Blueprints.

### **1.3. Methodology**

The theoretical framework of the thesis is shaped by the scientific research on the plastic waste problem, in addition to discussion within the photography theory. For the creation of the project, I have photographed a group of plastic material on a liquid environment and created Cyanotype Prints out of a selection of 14 photographs. While creating this body of work, I have used the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup data from the Ocean Trash Poster that illustrates the most found 10 items on the cleanup process. The Ocean Conservancy has run beach cleanups for 30 years and according to their research, 73 percent of the beach litter worldwide came from plastic; such as cigarette butts (the filters), bottles and caps, food wrappers, grocery bags and polystyrene containers. In 2016 the conservancy collected 9,200 tons of trash in 112 (Parker, 2018)

Throughout the process of deciding which plastic material would be used to create the photographic series, the data from the International Coastal Cleanup project led by the Ocean Conservancy Initiative has been supportive. From the list on the Ocean Trash Poster, I have selected the plastic items to be photographed such as; "Plastic Beverage Bottles", "Forks, Knives and Spoons", "Cups & Plates", "Bottle Caps", "Plastic Grocery Bags", "Takeout-Takeaway Containers", "Straws/Stirrers" and "Food Wrappers". I have excluded the "Fishing Gear" and "Cigarette Butts" from this list.

# International Coastal Cleanup

## WHAT WILL YOU FIND?

**Food Wrappers**  
Even though many food wrappers look like foil, most are made of plastic.  
• Try buying in bulk and using reusable containers to store on-the-go snacks.

**Plastic Beverage Bottles**  
In the sun and salt water, plastic bottles become brittle and break into smaller pieces.  
• Opt for tap water or fountain drinks in a reusable bottle.  
♻️ Breakdown Time: 450 years

**Forks, Knives & Spoons**  
Volunteers collect enough utensils—more than half a million in one day—to host a picnic for every resident of Washington, D.C.  
• Entertain with reusable forks, knives and spoons made from bamboo or recycled plastic.

**Cups & Plates**  
Foam cups and plates cannot be easily recycled and often crumble into small pieces.  
• Grab a reusable mug that can go from coffee to smoothie with just a rinse.  
♻️ Breakdown Time: 50 years

**Fishing Gear**  
Abandoned fishing gear can trap and harm ocean life long after it is lost or discarded.  
• Don't leave your line behind; participate in a fishing-line recycling program.  
♻️ Breakdown Time: 600 years

**Straws/Stirrers**  
Volunteers collect enough straws and stirrers in one day to line California's 840 mile coastline.  
• Next time you're out, politely refuse plastic straws or carry your own reusable straw.

**Bottle Caps**  
Plastic bottle caps are one of the most commonly found items in the stomachs of sea birds.  
• Keep your bottle caps to use for art projects or on-the-go games. Checkers, anyone?

**Cigarette Butts**  
The most common item found during beach cleanups, cigarette filters are actually plastic.  
• Properly dispose of cigarettes in receptacles or use a portable ashtray.  
♻️ Breakdown Time: 1-10 years

**Takeout/Takeaway Containers**  
Volunteers collect enough containers in one day to get takeout for breakfast, lunch and dinner every day for 868 years.  
• Reuse these containers for tomorrow's leftovers or other storage needs.

**Plastic Grocery Bags**  
Plastic grocery bags pose high risks to sea turtles when they mistake them for their favorite food, jellyfish.  
• Toss reusable bags in your backpack, purse or car so they are handy for every trip to the store.  
♻️ Breakdown Time: 1-20 years

International Coastal Cleanup logo (left) and Ocean Conservancy logo (right).

Figure 6. Ocean Trash Poster from International Coastal Cleanup Project.

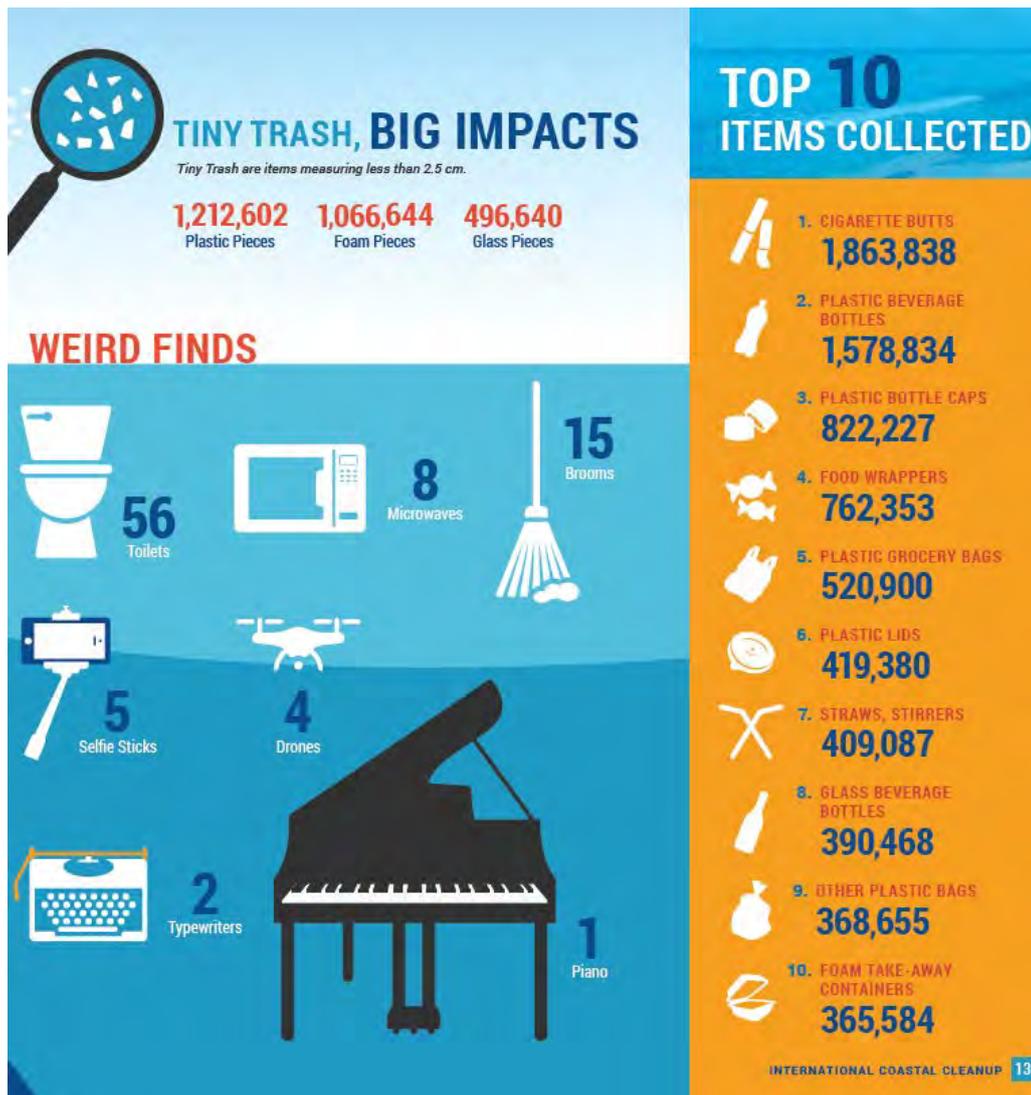


Figure 7. Data from International Coastal Cleanup 2017 Report.

Additionally to the list of top 10 items collected, I photographed balloons<sup>9</sup> and tooth brush, in addition to the variety of grocery bags and plastic bottles. The plastic items were easily found on accessible places such as supermarkets or restaurants. I have collected them from these places, rather than adding a performativity element on collecting these items as I wanted to achieve a specific kind of plastic elements and texture.

<sup>9</sup> Over 90% of released balloons rise to an altitude of 5 miles then burst into small fragments, the rest remain inflated before descending back down with most eventually ending up in the sea. Attachments such as ribbons and string tied to the balloons are also a problem for marine life as they can lead to the entanglement. (Barker, 2017)

#### **1.4. Chapters in Brief**

The research can be mainly examined as three separate but connected parts apart from the Introduction and Conclusion chapters. In *Chapter II*, I have focused on the plastic waste problem through the history and its environmental consequences; in addition to worldwide activities held against the problem with a focus on key artworks that successfully highlight this problem, sharing common intentions that I have been carrying out throughout my journey. In *Chapter III*, I tried to highlight ongoing discussions on the photography studies in order to support my standpoint in the photographic series, with the focus on materiality, objective and subjective representations and the photographer's role in general. Permanence and memory was the key elements that I tried to link the whole chapter into, to support my creative action towards the "fauxssilles". *Chapter IV* reflects how the whole concept merges as one to create the "Fauxssilles For the Future" and *Chapter V* reflects the implementation phases. The research also required the examination of some artworks that focuses on the same critical problems or succeeds in the same photographic techniques and artistic representations for other subject matters either in a critical way or for other manners. In order to support my artistic motivation and conceptual framework, I tried to focus the artworks of Mandy Barker, Chris Jordan and Von Wong in relation to plastic waste problem on Chapter II. On the photographic and memory transferring aspects of the artistic representations, I examined the Memory of Mankind project, in addition to the focus of Antiquarian Avant-Garde photographic Movement on Chapter III.

## **CHAPTER II:**

### **ON PLASTIC WASTE**

The invention of plastic has brought about a new era in the history of mankind. It is quite possible, that in several hundred years time, people will look back on the 20th century as the 'plastic period'<sup>10</sup> in the same way that archeologists and anthropologists regard the iron and bronze ages, or the age of steam. Since its introduction, plastic has become an integral part of our lives - quite simply we cannot live without it.

(Brighty, 2015)

Througout this chapter, I would be focusing on the Plastic waste as an emerging environmental problem. This part of the thesis tries to highlight

#### **2.1. Drowning in Plastic<sup>11</sup>**

Man is exploiting the past, plundering the fossil record and this can only be done once. There will have to be an end to the reserves of coal and oil, they cannot grow again in the rocks once they have been removed. (Fortey, 1991, p. 155)

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<sup>10</sup> This view of today as the plastic era, support the creation of "fauxssilles" as they would be keeping the track of todays data of the plastic filled era. Conceptualization of the plastic materials' documentation within the cyanotype photographs, this material would be retelling the story of this plastic era for the future.

<sup>11</sup> Referring to the June 2018 Edition of National Geographic Magazine's Planet or Plastic edition cover; "We made plastic, we depend on it. Now we're drowning in it."

Fortey (1991) mentions that each time we drive a car, we are able to do so because of the photosynthetic activity of plants many millions of years ago. With his words, “It would not be overstating the case to say that western society owes its present affluence to fossil fuels.” (Fortey, 1991) Plastic production is only one example of what humans are creating for the sake of the industry and the economy. Many products owe their existence to energy derived from consuming fossil fuels. Earliest uses of plastic date nearly 3,500 years ago, to the Olmecs of Mexico using the natural plastics from gum trees to create rubber balls. Unlike the 19th and 20th centuries’ synthetic plastics like celluloid (inventor Alexander Parkes) and Bakelite (Leo Bakeland), today’s plastics are mostly made from fossil fuels as the crude oil and natural gas providing cheap alternatives to plastic made from plants. (Gabriel, 2018) The exploitation of coal as a cheap and accessible source of energy became crucial, when the plunder of the fossil fuels started in 1969 when James Watt patented the design of a steam engine and the Industrial world economy became more dependent of the extraction of oil from the rocks. (Fortey, 1991)

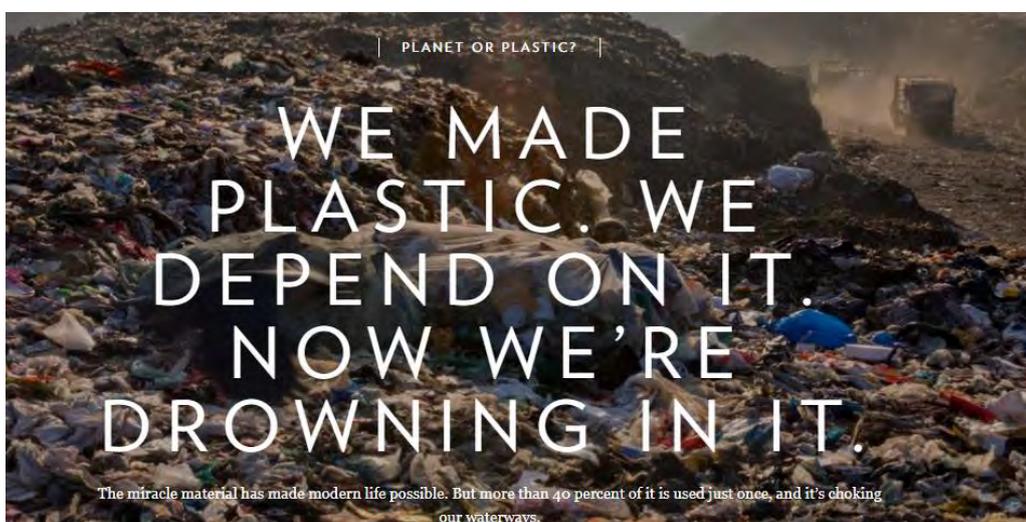


Figure 8. “Planet or Plastic” webpage of National Geographic Magazine.

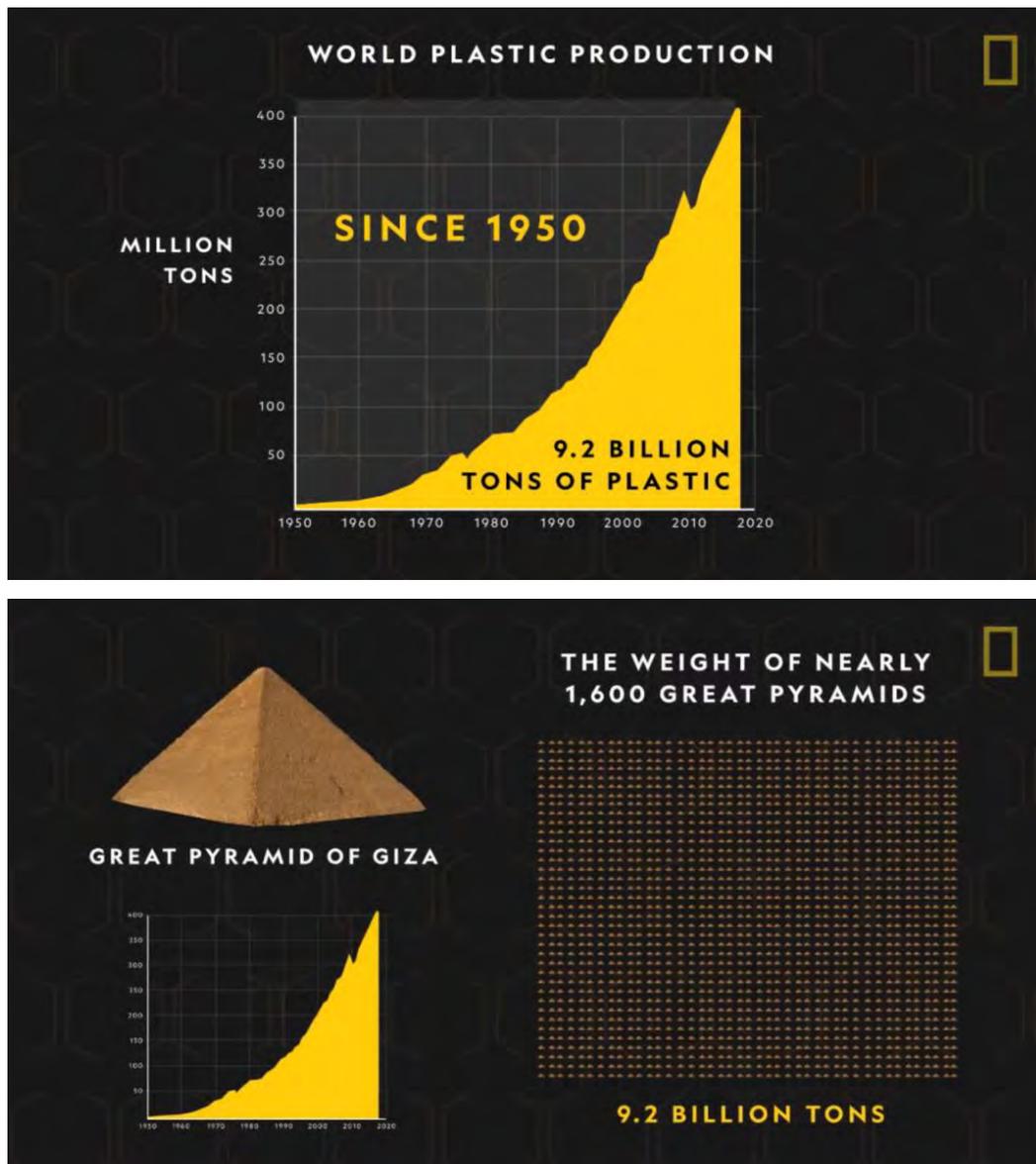


Figure 9 . Plastic 101 Video, showing the scale of plastic waste.

Because plastic wasn't invented until the late 19th century, and production really only took off around 1950, we have a mere 9.2 billion tons of the stuff to deal with. Of that, more than 6.9 billion tons have become waste. And of that waste, a staggering 6.3 billion tons never made it to a recycling bin. (Wright, 2017)

This project entitles the plastic material as *fauxssilles* since they are inorganic, human-made materials out of real fossil elements. The human influence becomes a critical issue with the increasing uses of plastic, as many types of plastics do not biodegrade threatening fish, seabirds and marine mammals. In the earlier years single-use plastics have brought great convenience to people around the world. (Parker, 2018) Unlike organic debris that biodegrades, the plastic debris disintegrates into ever smaller pieces while remaining a polymer. The plastic ultimately becomes small enough to be ingested by aquatic organisms that reside near the ocean's surface. In this way, plastic may become concentrated in neuston, thereby entering the food chain. (Barnes, Galgani, Thompson, & Barlaz, 1985–98)

The main idea to study plastic waste as *fauxssilles* first came to my mind from this study from The United Nations Ocean Conference estimating that the oceans might contain more weight in plastics than fish by the year 2050 and an estimated 99 per cent of seabirds will have ingested plastic. (Wright, 2017) This portrays the critical situation that we have to face about the plastic waste problem. The following chapter focuses on key campaigns held against this problem within the worldwide and Turkey centered scope.



Figure 10. Photograph<sup>12</sup> from 1955 Time Magazine. (Parker, 2018)

Knowing that the single use plastics allowed easier living standards, the massive production and consumption practices cause the plastic waste problem and the single-use plastics cannot be seen as a solution as they turned out to become a wider problem.

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<sup>12</sup> “Throwaway Living” became popular but they also play a big part of today’s plastic waste problem as single use plastics are creating the bigger part of the marine debris.



Figure 11. Fauxssille created with single use plastics used with meals.

## 2.1. Taking Action against the Plastic Waste

"It is past time that we tackle the plastic problem that blights our oceans. Plastic pollution is surfing onto Indonesian beaches, settling onto the ocean floor at the North Pole, and rising through the food chain onto our dinner tables. We've stood by too long as the problem has gotten worse. It must stop."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Erik Solheim, Head of UN Environment

### 2.2.1. Worldwide



Figure 12. Photograph<sup>14</sup> of Justin Hofman. (Parker, 2018)

In the last few years, the plastic waste problem has become even more crucial. Each year, more than 8 million tons of plastic ends up in the oceans, wreaking havoc on marine wildlife, fisheries and tourism, and costing at least \$8 billion in damage to marine ecosystems. Up to 80 per cent of all litter in our oceans is made of plastic. (Wright, 2017) Recently, worldwide campaigns are launched against the plastic waste problem. UN Environment launches the global #CleanSeas campaign to end marine litter by the year 2022, while Greenpeace starts the #BreakFreeFromPlastic movement. National Geographic Magazine published its June 2018 edition with the “Planet or Plastic” title, to share the stories of the growing crisis through the latest science and research, in order to educate audiences around the world about how to eliminate single-use plastics

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<sup>14</sup> “a photo I wish didn’t exist” says Hofman about this photograph of the seahorse latched onto a plastic cotton swab in the polluted waters of the Indonesian island of Sumbawa.

for preventing their way into oceans. (Parker, 2018) These campaigns are urging governments and individuals for plastic reduction policies; targeting industry for minimizing plastic packaging and consumers for changing their throwaway habits to prevent an irreversible damage being done to the seas.



Figure 13. #BreakFreeFromPlastic campaign.

The Ocean Cleanup is a foundation was founded in 2013 develops technologies to extract plastic pollution from the oceans and prevent more plastic debris from entering ocean waters. The project aims to begin the cleanup in 2018, and

reach full-scale deployment in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch<sup>15</sup> by 2020. (The Great Pasigic Garbage Patch, 2018) The Ocean Cleanup launched an iOS and Android application in 2015 in a form of a Visual Survey to anyone on a boat on the ocean to contribute data with the purpose of providing scientists with the amount, kind and whereabouts of plastic pollution. The application requires a 30-minute observation session for the observers log the debris they see, replacing the paper surveys and the data could be shared with other scientists.

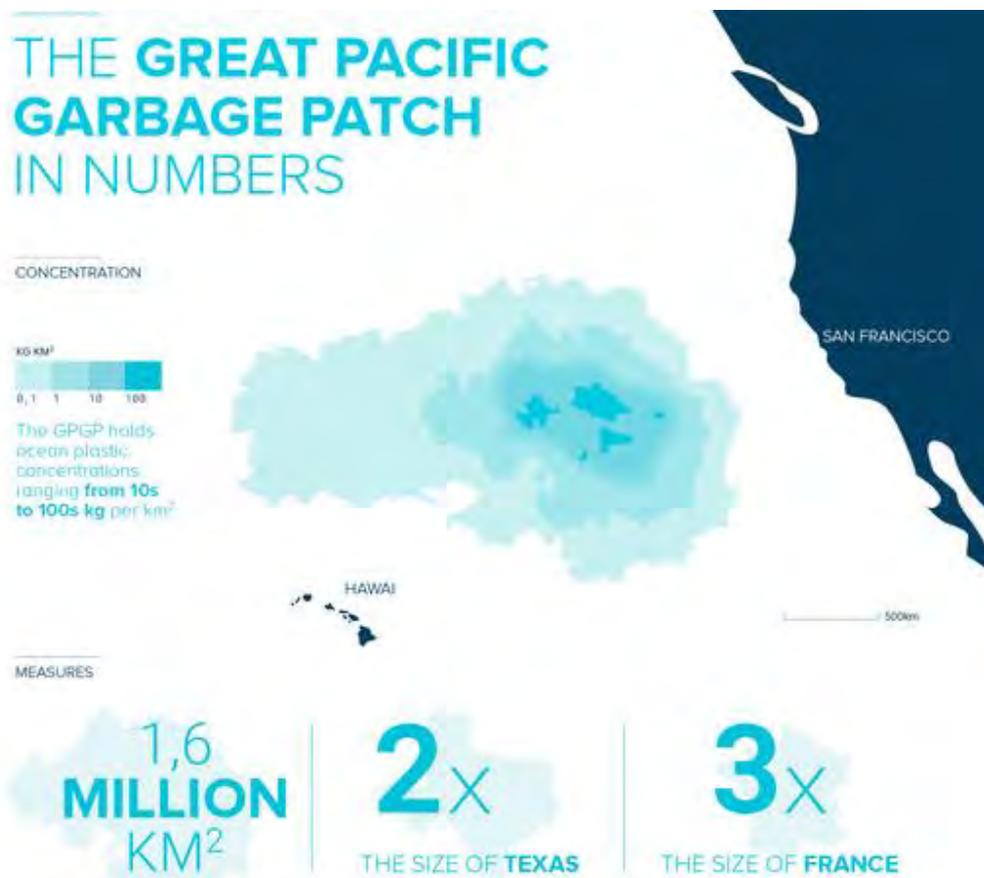


Figure 14. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch in Numbers.

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<sup>15</sup> The Great Pacific Garbage Patch (GPGP) is the largest of the five offshore plastic accumulation zones in the world's oceans. It is located halfway between Hawaii and California. The term was coined by Charles J. Moore, returning home through the North Pacific Gyre after competing in the Transpac sailing race in 1997. (The Great Pasigic Garbage Patch, 2018)

Another Campaign called “4Ocean” started by two Surfers, employs over 150 people worldwide such as captains and cleanup crews full-time from Florida to Bali for cleaning the oceans, in addition to hosting beach cleanups, offshore cleanups and worldwide cleanups to make the greatest impact. 4Ocean has removed 811.034 pounds of trash In less than 2 years from the ocean and coastlines. The project is led by individuals purchasing 4Ocean Bracelets to fund removal of one pound of trash from the ocean and coastlines. The 4Ocean bracelet represents the commitment to cleaning the ocean and to raise awareness of the 4Ocean movement with the mission of ocean sustainability, recycling awareness , earth preservation and creating global economies.

The image shows a screenshot of the 4Ocean website. At the top left is the 4Ocean logo. To the right are navigation links: SHOP, MONTHLY CAUSE, CLEAN UPS, and ABOUT US. Below this is a blue banner with the text: "THIS WEEKEND ONLY: In Celebration of World Oceans Day, Each Purchase = 2 POUNDS Pulled!". The main content area features a large heading: "By purchasing a 4Ocean bracelet, you will remove one pound of trash from the ocean & coastlines." Below this heading is a central image of a blue "4Ocean Signature Bracelet" with white beads. Surrounding the bracelet are several feature icons and descriptions:

- Represents the 1 pound of trash that you removed from the ocean & coastlines.
- Symbolizes your commitment to cleaner oceans.
- Connects you to the 4Ocean movement!
- Beads are made from 100% recycled glass
- Made from recycled materials.
- Unisex design.
- Adjustable from 2-5" in diameter.
- 100% waterproof.

At the bottom of the bracelet image, it is labeled "4Ocean Signature Bracelet".

Figure 15. The webpage of 4Ocean clenup campaign and bracelet purchase.

06.2018

# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

PLANET OR PLASTIC?

*18 billion pounds  
of plastic ends up  
in the ocean each  
year. And that's  
just the tip of  
the iceberg.*

Figure 16. National Geographic Magazine's 2018/June cover.

Although there were several photographs and illustrations focusing on the plastic objects that I came across previously, it became more powerful when this photographic design has found its place on a famous magazine cover like National Geographic Magazine that has a chance to reach wider audiences than personal artworks. The Magazine's June 2018 cover was portraying a gigantic plastic grocery bag, modified like an iceberg with its small top part visible while the larger part was drowning in the ocean. There were more photographs shared online from the magazine edition, portraying animals and wasteland workers being in danger. The final version of my project was exhibited in a group exhibition opened on May 3 2018, in Bilkent University's Art Room (FADA) within a group of MFA students, shortly after May 18 when the June edition of National Geographic Magazine's "Planet or Plastic" edition cover was taking its place on some online platforms. This was a nice coincidence to see a worldwide famous environmental magazine launching an activity against plastic waste and highlighting the planet being in danger. Within the scope of the "fauxssilles", I have also used several grocery bag images as one of the most found items across the ocean shores, with a very short usage time near 15 minutes. (Parker, 2018)



Figure 17. Fauxssille created with transparent grocery bag.<sup>16</sup>



Figure 18. Fauxssille created with matte grocery bag.

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<sup>16</sup> Throughout the thesis, the scanned images of fauxssilles are visible, there are 14 photographs in the photographic series in total.

Throughout the research process, I examined the visual works in the online platforms such as pinterest or facebook, and there were common patterns in terms of visual representations of the plastic waste problem, mainly focusing on the transparent structure of plastic materials and their resemblance to organic forms like jellyfish, shark or iceberg.



Figure 19. Jellyfish-Grocery Bag parallelism, the grocery bag as a predator.



Figure 20. Fauxssille created with grocery bag, looking like a jellyfish



Figure 21. Fauxssille created with grocery bag, looking like a kind of fish.

Working with transparent elements on a liquid environment opened up possibilities of several graphic elements to appear. The plastic grocery bags were able to be creating several shapes in the liquid environment while half of the material is placed underneath the water, ending up biologic looking images such as a jellyfish, fish, or the head of a sea turtle, but the final appreciation depends on the viewer to extract meanings out of the visual elements.

### **2.2.2. Turkey**

In the 1970s, after the first discoveries of the oceanic plastics presence, countries with coasts to the Mediterranean joined together under the roof of United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and signed the Barcelona agreement in 1978 with the aim of preventing and reducing pollution in the Mediterranean. (Güven, 2018) Outstanding research in Turkey was carried out as an academic and was carried out in the first scientific study of the Middle East Technical University by the Institute of Marine Sciences 1982-1983 year, Iskenderun and was screened in order to determine the amount of plastic waste in the coastal areas and the sea floor in Mersin Bay. According to the research, 88 tons of plastic waste was found within one kilometer and the amount of waste was determined to be increasing as the depth increased. (Güven, 2018) As the plastic waste problem arises and the micro plastics became a critical topic worldwide, the activities in Turkey increased.

Middle East Technical University Department of Marine Sciences Institute held another study conducted by the of samples taken from 18 points from Dalaman

to Iskenderun coast on Republic of Turkey's Mediterranean coastline between the years of 2015-2018, , revealing that there are close to 140 micro plastic particles per kilometer on the surface of the sea. (Güven, 2018) Another research focuses on the micro plastic litter composition in the gastrointestinal tract of fish, which is also included in the National Geographic Magazine's Turkey edition entitling the outcomes as "Plastic in the Fist" with an illustration of the surveys findings to highlight the emerging field of study focusing on the plastic entering the food chain. According to the examination of 337 fish from 28 specimens, micro plastics were found in %58 of the fish in the Mediterrean Sea's Mersin and İskenderun gulf. (Uygun, 2018)

Apart from to the ongoing academic work, Turkey's Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning also conducted various studies with ecological and economic worries, such as the "Zero Waste Project" started in 2017, aimed to reach 35 percent of the recycling rate from waste by the year 2023. According to the 2017 Activity Report, 97 tons of non-hazardous wastes and 2,5 tons of hazardous wastes are detected throughout the country. (Planning, 2018)



Figure 22. Zero Waste Project, Activity Report.

Additionally to the academic and governmental work, NGOs are working on the plastic waste issue to raise awareness in the social context. DenizTemiz (SeaClean) Association (TURMEPA) and Turkish Marine Research Foundation (TÜDAV) are also actively involved such as the environmentally-oriented campaign "Let's keep the Mediterranean clean" (Clean Up The Med) involving all Mediterranean countries, including Turkey, in order to clearing the Mediterrean coast simultaneously with the support of civil society organizations. TURMEPA supported approximately 33,000,000 liters of liquid waste and 2,650,000 kilograms of solid waste ending up on the seas. (TURMEPA, 2017) Şeyda Dağdeviren Hill from TURMEPA was listed as the Coordinator from Turkey, in the Coastal Cleanup 2017 Report. (Jones, 2017) The report mentions volunteers, site captains, state and county coordinators of 112 countries around the world collecting<sup>17</sup> over 18 million pounds of trash.

Dr. Olgaç Güven (2018) states that the overall actives are being supportive and the consciousness is rising in Turkey, in his article on the National Geographic Magazine's 2018 June Turkey edition. He mentions that like the rest of the world, Turkish citizens have to rethink plastic, as we cannot fully exclude it from our lives. It is important to acknowledge the individual responsibilities we have against the plastic waste problem. Six things we can do against plastic waste was mentioned such as; "Give up plastic bags, Skip straws, Pass up plastic bottles, Avoid plastic packaging. Recycle what you can, Don't litter." (Wright, 2017) to inform the readers about possible easy solutions. All of the

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<sup>17</sup> In the project, 1,079 people took part, collecting the total of 31,965 items weighted as 3,292 kilogram within 9.0 kilometers where the most found items were 17,084 cigarette butts and 3,866 plastic beverage bottles. (Jones, 2017)

environmental solutions and actions held by the governments and NGO's depend on us, to create a global awareness against the plastic waste, to reduce our consumption and recycling practices. The fauxssilles for the project not directly offers recycling or cleanup solutions, rather mirrors this critical situation back to the audience, to awaken their environmental concerns.

### **2.3. Examined Artworks**

The conceptualization and implementation of the process was full of experimentation and discoveries on a personal level but in order to understand the wider context of my project and how it fits under certain art fields; I believe it is important to acknowledge key artworks that touch upon similar problems, either conceptually or implementation wise. Knowing that the plastic waste problem is an emerging aspect within the environmental issues, there is a need to examine some key artworks within the scope of this thesis, as the artistic motivation behind the following projects are encouraged me to finalize my research and have the courage to look for further possibilities for the future of this project. Accordingly, I would be focusing on the following projects in order to see how they have approached the topic of environmental waste that I have problematized through the plastic waste issue. The projects would be examined in relation to the conceptualization of the problem, within the framework of my artistic motivation.

*Popsicles of pollution; Hong Yi-chen, Guo Yi-hui, and Zheng Yu-ti*



Figure 23. Popsicles of pollution; Hong Yi-chen, Guo Yi-hui, and Zheng Yu-ti

Ice pops usually look delicious, but these are completely inedible. Three art students; Hong Yi-chen, Guo Yi-hui, and Zheng Yu-ti collected polluted water from a hundred sites around Taiwan, then froze it into blocks, hope to draw public attention to water contamination and inspire people to generate less waste. (Parker, 2018) The project has been nominated for the Young Pin Design Award and featured in the New Generation of Design Exhibition at the Taipei World Trade Center. (Sierzputowski, 2017) This body of work has been very inspirational for me as the project was created under an MFA program in the National Taiwan University of the Arts, which is tackling a similar

environmental problem and the implementation to me was very well crafted. Additionally, the project was examined as “Faux Frozen Treats” in an online article (Sierzputowski, 2017) which again encouraged my for falsifying the usual elements within the conceptualization of my project as it might have the capacity to achieve a similar artistic appreciation such as the Popsicles of Pollution project gained. The project not only uses the polluted water samples to create the popsicles, but it has the design of several packaging design in order to illustrate the body of work more of a “faux” frozen treats, fully designed.

### ***#MermaidsHatePlastic, Von Wong***



Figure 24. #MermaidsHatePlastic, Von Wong

Von Wong is a globally known photographer, focusing on the environmental waste problems as he creates photographic series focusing on the waste from plastic, electronic and cloth. He mentions how pretty photographs can change the world and just by spreading the word how someone can make a difference.

Wong states; “As an artist, I have always wondered what kind of difference I could make. Alone, I was just a photographer – but thanks to the help of amazing individuals we transformed a lifeless pile of used garbage into a message” (Wong) This is how the #MermaidsHatePlastic<sup>18</sup> project is born out of 10,000 bottles borrowed from the waste management centre Tomra. His work had been very influential as this project is published on the website with the “450years.com” domain, referring to the lifetime of a plastic bottle varying from 450 to 600 years. As my project places the permanence of materials on a dual level, through the photographs and the plastic objects; Wong’s statement was very powerful in terms of his conceptualization over the non-degradable plastics. Within a single week, the project generates over 10,000 pledges from people around the world to reduce their plastic use. (Enos, 2016) Wong tells that, only 1% of them reducing their plastic consumption by 10%, would mean 100,000 less plastic bottles in the sea. It is very powerful to see the potential of such projects, echoing on a worldwide scale in a positive way. He mentions that over 10 million views with the requests for prints came streaming in in just a period of a week, from teachers, entrepreneurs to mothers wanting to have a print up to share the threat of plastic pollution in “a beautiful interesting way”. Accordingly, Wong and his creative team decides to offer prints with a message at cost, so that “You can help spread the word.” (Wong) This is very nice to see his work echoing worldwide that it lead people to support, and the artist produce printed edition. This way, it is making the plastic waste problem become much more visible, on an international level.

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<sup>18</sup> The project reflects the idea of creating a series where a mermaid is trapped, or sitting within, a bunch of plastic bottles.

*Midway, Chris Jordan*



Figure 25. Midway, Chris Jordan

The quotation on the beginning of the thesis belongs to Chris Jordan's teaser of the Midway documentary-photography project. The video opens up with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's words from the Rime of the Ancient Mariner; "...and till my ghastly tale is told, this heart within me burns". The teaser portrays Albatrosses of the Midway Island where nearly two million Laysan albatrosses live and twenty tons of plastic debris washes up every year, with five tons of that debris being fed to albatross chicks. Researchers have concluded that approximately one-third of their chicks die, and many of those deaths are the result of being mistakenly fed plastic by their parents, and every single one contains some quantity of plastic in their digestive system. (Shukman, 2008) Jordan was successful for making me "feel deeply enough" and even such a short video was enough to burn my heart, to face the realities of our time.



Figure 26. Mady Barker's work

I would also focus on Mandy Barker's project on the following part and I wanted to include her work which was included in the National Geographic magazine, which also focuses on the same problem. Every piece of plastic in her photographic work was found in the stomach of a single albatross chick. Each piece in the photograph from the bottle caps in the top row to the tiny fragments along the bottom represent "parts of something we could have once used," says photographer Mandy Barker and she states "I wanted to create something that would resonate"<sup>19</sup>. (Daly, 2018) Both Jordan's observations on the Island and Barker's photographic representations are powerfully illustrating the endangered species getting harmed by the marine debris and plastic waste.

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<sup>19</sup> I would discuss her artistic motivation below in detail.

## Works of Mandy Barker

Mandy Barker is an international award-winning photographer whose work involving marine plastic debris has led to a series of photographic projects that illuminate plastic's ubiquity as well as its reach, receiving global recognition. I came across her works on the Plastic Waste as Art Section in the National Geographic Magazine's June edition of Plastic or Planet. I wanted to discuss one of her works in a spread of the magazine, where she showcase a collection of Coca Cola bottle caps collected from all around the globe, with the written tag names highlighting which part of the world the object is sent from. As the magazine highlights, "Barker crowd sourced a global collection" to show various projects from discarded bottle caps turning up on beaches—and in birds—around the world. (Daly, 2018)

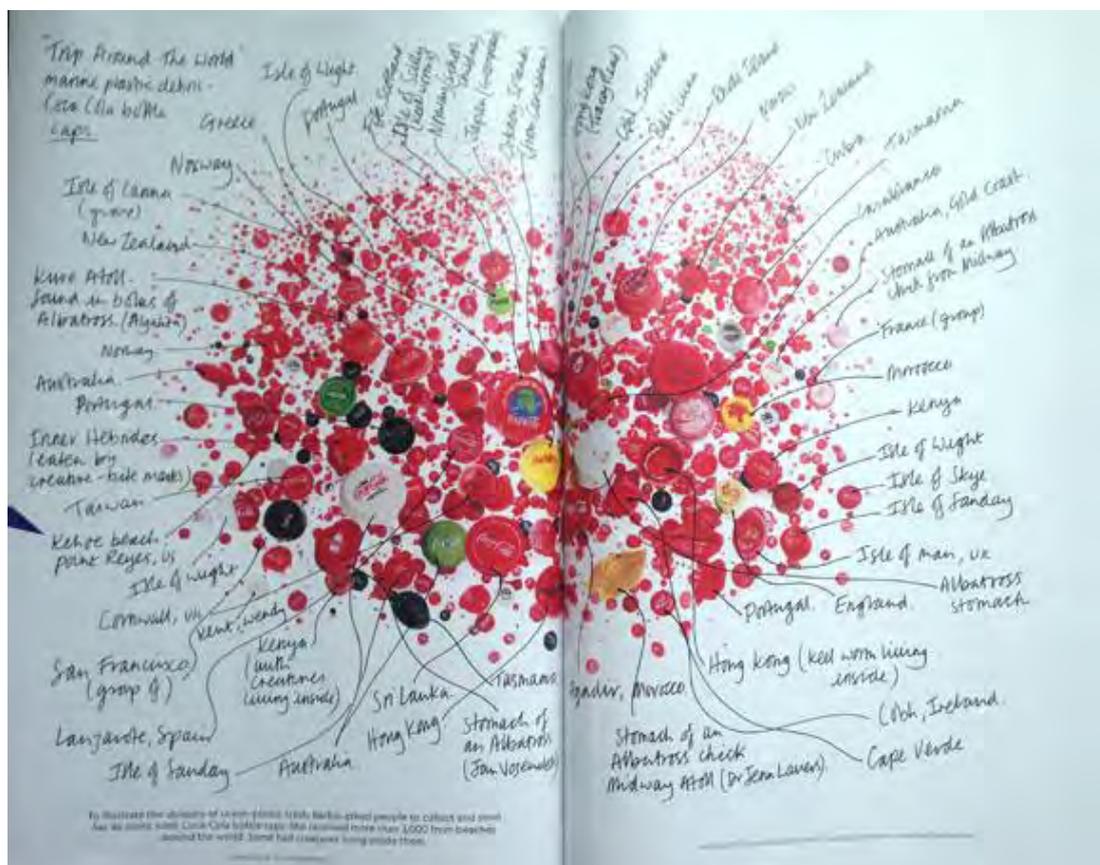


Figure 27. Plastic Waste in the Seas, National Geographic.

What excites me in Barker's work is not solely seeing enormous collections of plastic, but the way she describes her work and the artistic motivation shaping her practices. When I was developing this thesis, I was wondering the outcomes of a rather site-specific implementation of the photographic series, highlighting the information of location about where my key plastic objects are found and collected. This would have been adding a locative element and the collection would have an evidence standpoint. Throughout the process, I have excluded the location element as the fauxssilles do not vary in its *species* dependent on where it's found or where its ending up. The location element would be adding another statement with its performativity, but for the scope of this project, I decided to limit the project to some standardization.

With similar intentions to Chris Jordan, Barker states that she feels in her gut the reality that no area in the world is free from plastic anymore and she highlights how she wants the rest of us to feel it "from the poles to the Equator, from the sea surface to the ocean floor." (Daly, 2018) I would be discussing The Photographer's Role through the theoretical framework in Chapter 3.3, but throughout my thesis process, I felt that Mandy Barker was one of the most successful contemporary photographers that achieved the social role<sup>20</sup> of an artist, as well as succeeding to find her own way of aesthetic representation and visual tone. Her work opened up many possibilities to further develop my work.

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<sup>20</sup> Her work has been highlighted as "The series aims to engage with the public by stimulating an emotional response, combining a contradiction between initial aesthetic attraction with an awareness to encourage social responsibility."



Figure 28. Mandy Barker's sketchbooks<sup>21</sup> showcased in her web portfolio.

The discovery of Barker's work was very inspiring as she plans her projects in collaboration with marine scientists in order for her photos to "give science a visual voice," conveying plastic's impact on the natural environment in a way

<sup>21</sup> One of the most exciting moments through my thesis development, is coming across Barker's work, not just for the photographic outcomes being massively illustrative out of the real, found material; but for the state of mind she portrays through the development of her works in general. The sketchbooks are for instance plays the most powerful role portraying her creative journey; showcasing the references and inspirations she intended to reflect, from the formation of the fish shoals and the visualization of the galaxy, towards the impressions from the sea surface and the flowery forms. She has also played with the words such as creating "feel", "fear" or "real" out of the "sea".

that scientific research papers cannot. (Daly, 2018) The way she approaches the plastic waste problem and the ways in which she creates and captures her collections was as inspiring as Anna Atkin's photogram works from 1842, for being similar to her scientific approach for the documentation of botanicals, which eventually ends up becoming very powerful, artistic abstractions. Luckily, I came across a book review of Barker's "Beyond Drifting: Imperfectly Known Animals"<sup>22</sup> book review, linking the body of work to Anna Atkin's book, with a focus of Barker's Victorian stylized scientific approach and artistic representations.

The review states that barely two decades later of Atkins' revolutionary move on abandoning the pencil to allow her algae species draw themselves on light-sensitive paper; Barker's work has produced an important photobook echoing the Victorian-era science as it exposes a contemporary environmental crisis. (André, 2017)



Figure 29. Review mentioning similarities between Barker's and Atkins'.

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<sup>22</sup> The project was shortlisted for the Prix Pictet Award SPACE 2017

*Beyond Drifting: Imperfectly Known Animals*

Barker has chosen a 19th-century form to address a 21st-century problem speaks to both the power and futility of the old notion of photography as proof. Her presentation of this work recalls the era of positivist science, which held that if something could be seen—in a photograph, perhaps—it therefore existed. Ironically, Barker's constructed images provide a kind of positivist proof that plastic-infused plankton exist. At the same time, despite ample visual evidence and data that warn of this and other contemporary ecological and environmental crises, far too many people—some of whom wield the power to mandate positive change—have chosen to remain in denial of what is, in fact, perfectly known. — (André, 2017)

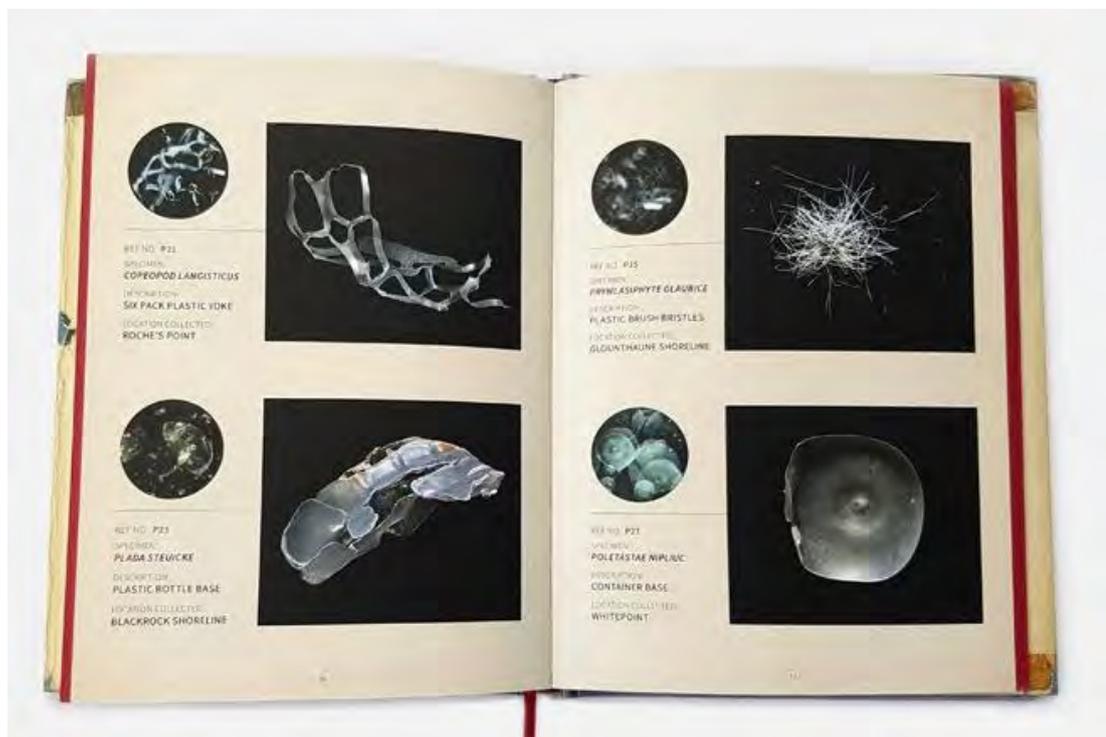


Figure 30. The index page portraying the microscopic images and plastics.

Barker presented the new 'specimens' out of the recovered plastic debris as microscopic samples while each name contains the word 'plastic' hidden within its title. She mimics John Vaughan Thompson's<sup>23</sup>, early scientific discoveries of plankton, representing both the current situation concerning marine organism's intake of plastic particles, alongside early discoveries when plankton were free from plastic. (André, 2017) The project is presented as an old science book from 1800's like Atkin's famous work and it "serves as a metaphor to the ubiquity of plastic and the anthropocene, encapsulating in miniature the much larger problem of an imperfect world." (Barker,2017)

It was quite inspirational to see her work in the National Geographic Magazine. When I examine her work in detail, it became even more exiting since the way the planktons are used as the source of the ecological life on the marine environment were very enthusiastic as her sketchbook reflects her inspirations from Henry Fox Talbot's photographs and plankton drawings from the Victorian era. She have made experiments with salt prints to illustrate the body of work, which was once again referring back to photography's origins. I would be discussing the positivist approach on photography to highlight standpoint, but seeing Barker's approach was very supportive in terms of artistic representations. Additionally, the way she moves between contemporary and historical time periods and techniques was also supportive for my project, in order to witness successful ways of self-expressions.

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<sup>23</sup> John Vaughan Thompson (1779-1847) was a British military surgeon, marine biologist, zoologist, botanist, and published naturalist.

## **CHAPTER III:**

### **ON PHOTOGRAPHY**

In this chapter; I would be focusing on the inventions of photography and the cyanotype technique; theoretical approaches on photography studies, discussions towards photography's materiality and the post-photography (Mitchell, 1992) concept; the potential of photograms and abstraction in photography; memory transferring aspects, transparency of photographs and photographers' role. I would try to emphasize key concepts from the theoretical concepts with the help of key texts written in this manner. In the final part of the chapter, I would be focusing the project Memory of Mankind (MOM) and the Antiquarian Avant-Garde photographic movement to support my argument on creating my photographic series and the conceptual design behind the implementation.

#### **3.1. Historical Framework**

*The History of Humanity is known only through the art it leaves behind.*

*Think about it, when was the last time an archaeologist unearthed apolitical speech? (James, 2009, p:510).*

### 3.1.1. Inventions on Photography:

*The light-marking art (...) is flourishing as a language without compromise (...) one that is not tied to a syntax-dependent feast (as perfect as it is) of 1's and 0's that is only a solar flare<sup>24</sup> away from erasing history. (James, 2009).*

The invention of photography was not one persons' discovery; rather it was invented as a collaboration of several people who were experimenting with techniques and chemicals. In *"The book of alternative photographic processes"* Christopher James (2009) mentions amateur artists and chemists were employing photogram techniques with simultaneous creative and practical scientific intentions such as Sir John Herschel's Anthotypes created with the juices of flowers and sunlight, Anna Atkin's cyanotype studies of algae, Mongo Ponton's work with potassium dichromate for his "shadowagraphs" and William Henry Fox Talbot's photogenic drawings. The Greek meaning of photography means light drawing and the silhouette might be seen as the essence of photography. The silhouette was seen different than a painted portrait as it was mechanically produced, more objective in representation of individuals, unlike subjective paintings. (Museum, 2014)

The way that we familiarize ourselves with the world around us just fundamentally changed with photography. (Museum, 2014)

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<sup>24</sup> James, whose work is highly concerned around alternative photographic processes, mentions the unexpected risks of geomagnetic solar storms that might be damaging the modern technology, erasing the digital data as the devices are being effected. Solar storm of 1859 was one the most known events in this sense.

The invention of the camera was seen as a tool of objective documentation and photographers imitated the aesthetic qualities of the classical paintings for proving themselves to the art world. Images created with camera were taken as “true” resembling human vision. (Neusüss, 1994) After Photo-Secessionists’ success on selling their photographic collections to a fine art museum, it is acknowledged how photography changed and freed painting with the medium’s unique qualities. (Bilici, 2013)

Realizing the creative possibilities, Henry Fox Talbot discovered “the photogenic drawing” such as precise photogram “tracings” of flowers, leaves, feathers and lace on salted and silver nitrate sensitized surfaces while other artists were employing photogram techniques with creative, practical and scientific intentions by the mid-1800s. (James, 2009). Bilici highlights (2013) that Talbot published his 1844 book *The Pencil of Nature* with the idea of light and chemically treated paper automatically producing “drawings” of the natural and unnatural world, which changes the ways of understanding photographic images as unmitigated proof. The memory carrying capacity of photographs are also important, coming after shadow drawing, painting, and death masks as prior examples of memory devices before the invention of photography. (Aytemiz, 2013)



Figure 31. Example of Henry Fox Talbot's photogenic drawings.

James (2009) focuses on the old “mirrors and windows” conflict ranging from the last century, where the camera represented a perfect tool; where the “mirror” representing the image as an expression of the artist, and the “window” reflecting the image being defined by the information of within the photograph. The image is “as much about as the information as it is about the system of delivering the content” on the window perspective; but from the “mirrors” perspective, visual literacy emphasizes the “light-marking” , “the “photo-graphis” where the print itself is seen as a sign, a symbol, and a mark, perhaps even a metaphor for the process of making the print. (James, 2009). Within the scope of my project, I would be mainly locating my work as a

“transparent” “window” or as an “evidence”. Photography has a special place in material culture, as it is a paradoxical technology. On the one hand, it transforms the material into light and shadow. On the other hand, it gives materiality to the intangible (as in a lost moment, or a lost one). Photographs are not signs of presence but evidence of absence. Or rather the presence of a photograph indicates its subject’s absence. Photographs contain a realization of loss. (Aytemiz, 2013) This is why I found photography a strong medium for the creation of fauxssilles.

Realist theories give priority to the mechanical origins of the photographic image. They argue that the mechanical arrangement of the photographic camera means that ‘physical objects themselves print their image by means of the optical and chemical action of light’ as “stencils off the real”, “traces”, or as “records” (Lister, 1995) The historical use of photographs as ‘evidence’ and a reliable documentation has long been in continual contradiction with other uses of photographs, particularly as art, and in advertising and corporate publicity. Positivism suggested the belief that observable, quantifiable facts, recorded by scientists and experts, would one day offer man such a total knowledge about nature and society, while the “Photographers now supply us with more facts every month than the eighteenth century Encyclopaedists dreamt of in their whole projects.” (Robins, 1995)

### 3.1.2. The Cyanotype Process:

Atkins<sup>25</sup> learned about photography from none other than William Henry Fox Talbot and his wife, Constance, whose experiments with "photogenic drawings" (James, 2009, p:151)



Figure 32. Cyanotype as a contact printing process.

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<sup>25</sup> Anna Atkins (1799–1871), was the first woman photographer and presumably learned the cyanotype process from Herschel, who was a family friend. James mentions “a process that she presumably learned from Herschel who lived down the road, and who had invented the process” (James, *The Cyanotype Process*, 2009)

The cyanotype was discovered by Sir John Herschel (1792–1871) in 1842 as the first simple and successfully realized practical non-silver iron process, invented a mere three years after the “official” announcement of the discovery of photography, providing permanent images in blue values. Between 1839 and 1842 Herschel conducted hundreds of separate experiments on the light-sensitivity of silver salts, metals, and vegetation, including an investigation of potassium Ferro cyanide and ferric ammonium as the two primary chemicals found in the classic cyanotype formula. (James, *The Cyanotype Process*, 2009)



Figure 33. UK Frederick, *Slipping through*.<sup>26</sup>

In October 1843 Atkins began issuing published folios of her photogenic (photogram) drawings where she created cyanotype images of algae, ferns, feathers, and waterweeds. There are thirteen known versions of her work entitled *British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* (1843–1853). These books,

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<sup>26</sup> Work from 2017, Part of “Out of the Blue, Celebrating 175 years of the Cyanotype” collection.

containing hundreds of handmade images, were the very first published<sup>27</sup> works to utilize a photographic system for scientific investigation and illustration.



Figure 34. The first photographic book by Anna Atkins.

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<sup>27</sup> "Significantly, created prior to Talbot's Pencil of Nature (1844–1846), a published work that is generally given credit by historians as the first to have achieved this important milestone." (James, *The Cyanotype Process*, 2009)

### 3.2. Theoretical Framework

If photography produces a set of objects, meanings and social relationships – what we might gloss as ‘histories’ – we need to look for more diverse ways to understand the apprehension of photographs, to break their reduction to the visual alone. (Edwards, 2009)

As I was conceptualizing the body of work, I have made research through the photography studies. From the key discussions ongoing in the field, what interests me about to support my project was highly concerned about materiality and the permanence, in addition to the focus on memory. For the conceptual process, I was focusing on the photographic series as an evidence of today’s memory, which would be transferred to the following generations. There are several discussions on the meaning of images, the production techniques and the viewer understands which I would be focusing on according to some theoretical approaches.

For Hans Belting (2001) the "image" is defined not by its mere visibility but by its being invested, by the beholder, with a symbolic meaning and a kind of mental "frame" and an "image" was more than a product of perception and “it is created as the result of personal or collective knowledge and intention.”

(Belting, 2001) He gives the example of the triad image-medium-body, where the medium refers to the technology or artisanship that transmits the image to whatever it is that gives visibility to the image and the body refers to the living body, the spectator. (Belting, 2001) There is a crucial focus on the body as a

medium, in order to finalize the transmission of information within my project and it demands a special kind of reading. From this perspective, the images of memory and imagination are generated in one's own body and “the body is the living medium<sup>28</sup> through which they are experienced.” (Belting, 2001)

Vilem Flusser, which is another name that discusses photography through philosophy, discusses images as significant surfaces and he says 'Even though the last vestiges of materiality are attached to photographs, their value does not lie in the thing but in the information on their surface.' He focus on the power of photographs as reductions of the four dimensions of space and time to the two surface dimensions. (Flusser, 2000) His approach was supportive for me as I was trying to conceptualize a series of fossils onto paper, as fauxssilles which tell their story within the exposed area. This specific ability to abstract surfaces out of space and time, to project them back into space and time is what is known as 'imagination' as the precondition for the production and decoding of images from Flusser. (2000) He also mentions that the magical nature of images must be taken into account when decoding them. Thus it is wrong to look for 'frozen events' in images for him, rather they “replace events by states of things and translate them into scenes.” (Flusser, 2000)The connection of magic is once again crucial here and my aim with the photographic series was creating fossils that would speak louder within the environmental context. From his point of view; I wanted my project offer a “window” to a certain series of facts through technical images as Flusser states that; the non-symbolic, objective character of

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<sup>28</sup> “The medium helps us to see that the image neither equates with living bodies nor with the lifeless object. The distinction between image and medium is rooted in the self-experience of our body.”

technical images leads whoever looks at them to see them not as images but as windows as ways of looking at the world. (Flusser, 2000) Flusser also reduces the basic elements of the photographers' intentions as follows:

“first, to encode their concepts of the world into images; second, to do this by using a camera; third, to show the images produced in this way to others so that they can serve as models for their experience, knowledge, judgment and actions; fourth, to make these models as permanent as possible.” (Flusser, 2000)<sup>29</sup>

Flusser's argument and the previously mentioned argument of Barthes' support the conceptual design of “fauxssilles” as the technical and transparent images opening up windows towards an environmental problem. From this perspective, the images do not refer to any meaning solely, but they require the intellectual response of the viewer in order for the critique to find its meaning.

### ***Photography in the Digital Age***

The death of photography has been reported (Robins, 1995), there is a growing sense that “we are now witnessing the birth of a new era, that of post-photography where the certainties of the photographic era have been deconstructed.” The camera Mitchell points out, has been regarded as ‘an ideal Cartesian instrument – a device for use by observing subjects to record supremely accurate traces of the objects before them and the photography has

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<sup>29</sup> I would not be opposing to this conceptualization as it fits mainly all aspects of my procuton.

been regarded as the model of impersonal and objective neutrality. As Mitchell notes, 'the photographic procedure, like scientific procedures, seems to provide a guaranteed way of overcoming subjectivity and getting at the real truth' (Mitchell, 1992) We are in fact moving from an era of 'knowledge through recording' to one of 'knowledge through simulation' where the image no longer re-present the object but simulates its presence, to create a double of the reality (Robins, 1995)

Robins also discuss about the contradictory directions within photography towards 'science' and a myth of 'objective truth' on the one hand, and towards 'art' and a cult of 'subjective experience' on the other. He criticize the ongoing debate on post-photography becoming obsessed with the 'digital revolution' and how its transforming epistemological paradigms and models of vision. He mentions that "We seem now to feel that the rationalization of vision is more important than the things that really matter to us (love, fear, grief)" with a focus on that "There is even the danger that the 'revolution' will make us forget about what we want to do with images – why we want to look at them, how we feel about them, how we react and respond to them. (Robins, 1995)

It is notable that much of the most interesting discussion of images now concerns, not digital futures, but, actually, what seemed until recently antique and forgotten media from our post-photographic vantage point these have suddenly acquired new meanings, and their re-evaluation now seems crucial to understanding the significance of digital culture. (Robins, 1995)

With the quotation of “The dead do not disappear” from Freud, Robins states that the culture could be preserved and thought about through history and that the archaeology of images are linked to psychological excavation as images are a means of being open to cultural diversity. (Robins, 1995) “The future of images is not (techno-logically) determined. Different possibilities exist – as long as we can resist the comforts of determinism. Images will continue to be important – “technological revolution” notwithstanding – because they mediate so effectively, and often movingly, between inner and outer realities.” (Robins, 1995) This reminds back that the approach of Antiquarian Avant-Garde artists as they appreciate the means of digital productions and interpret the advantaged of it to continue the analogue means of production.

### ***Photography and Materiality***

The materiality of photographs takes two broad and interrelated forms. First, it is the plasticity of the image itself, its chemistry, the paper it is printed on.<sup>30</sup> Second are the presentational forms, such as cartes de visite, cabinet cards, albums, mounts and frames, with which photographs are inseparably enmeshed and which have constituted a major consumer market since the nineteenth century, especially after the Kodak revolution of the late 1880s. Both these forms of materiality carry another key element, the physical traces of usage and time. (Edwards & Hart, 2004)

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<sup>30</sup> Continues as ‘the toning, the resulting surface variations as Schwartz argued, ‘the choice of ambrotype over paper print implies a desire for uniqueness, the use of platinum over silver gelatin intimates an awareness of status, the use of gold toning a desire for permanence’ All of these techniques are part of Alternative Photographic Processes today.

I would be focusing on the material aspects of photographs which might be seen as “extending and doubling the indexical trace of the image, emotionally and haptically embedding memory practices” (Edwards, 2009) In this sense, photographs are important for cultural memory and history and they offer a material experience (Edwards, 2009) From this perspective, I found photography a suitable medium for my project as it tells the unknown story of our era, through documented photographs on plastic waste.

Photographs are both images and physical objects that exist in time and space and thus in social and cultural experience. They have ‘volume, opacity, tactility and a physical presence in the world’ and are thus enmeshed with subjective, embodied and sensuous interactions.

(Edwards & Hart, 2004)

Materiality as one of the focus points for the book *Photographs Objects Histories*<sup>31</sup> and the process of platinum was also mentioned in to book as it “speaks to a desire for permanence” which is one of the most stable and permanent of photographic processes, as opposed to the volatility and inherently unstable chemistry of silver-based prints, (Edwards & Hart, 2004) Although the chemistry of Cyanotype has a different characteristic, it also speaks for a desire towards permanence, like all other alternative photographic processes do in the digital era. Similar to the daguerreotype’s visually was

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<sup>31</sup> The central rationale of *Photographs Objects Histories* is that a photograph is a three-dimensional thing, not only a two-dimensional image. As such, photographs exist materially in the world, as chemical deposits on paper, as images mounted on a multitude of different sized, shaped, colored and decorated cards, as subject to additions to their surface or as drawing their meanings from presentational forms such as frames and albums.

being inextricably bound up in its physicality; its image and message of remembrance and resistance were tied to, and transmitted through, its materiality as well as its function and trajectory as souvenirs, souvenir and gift (Schwartz, 2009)

### ***Photograph as Evidence***

This daguerreotype warrants close scrutiny as object, image and symbolic space because its shifting cultural meanings are deeply embedded in the complex and dynamic relationships between visibility and physicality, object and narrative, history and memory, author and audience, indexicality and instrumentality.<sup>32</sup> (Schwartz, 2009)

The photograph is the verification of the presence of a thing at a certain past moment as Barthes claims “what I see has been here” and “that has been” which suggests that the subject existed in that specific moment in the past. At the same time the photograph confirms its complete ‘pastness’, that is to say, its death. (Edwards & Hart, 2004) Therefore, Barthes considers every photograph as an annunciation of the death of the subject. (1980) From such perspective, it is once again showing the death of the fauxsilles, as they are inscribed images in relation to death and fossilization.

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<sup>32</sup> Continues: “Its social functions — as souvenirs (memories), as souvenir (reminder of personal experience or commemorative keepsake) and as gift (symbolic offering) — are inextricably linked to its narrative functions: as visual record of a performance of identity, as concrete expression of pride and patriotism and as material residue of an act of communication.” (Schwartz, 2009)

Aytemiz (2013) focuses on the post-mortem photography and states that “a dead body is proof of death but at the same time, it is also about a life that has been lived.” She continues by mentioning that “the bodies have histories and similarly, a photograph portrays a proof of a moment past/death, in addition to being an evidence that the captured moment happened in real time.” Within this perspective, the camera reduces incidents, moments, and subjects, that is to say, reality itself to an image: an inanimate object. (Aytemiz, 2013) What I have tried to achieve within the framework of the fauxssilles is to capture a lived incident for the future, in order to prove that moment is lived to say that we have experienced the plastic waste in our time. They do not only a reference on their own but they also speak the problems of today. From this perspective, the photography was a suitable medium to embody “fauxssilles” as a memory tool.

### ***Photography and Transparency***

The transparency of the medium is such that ‘in order to see what the photograph is “of” we must first suppress our consciousness of what the photograph “is” in material terms’ (Edwards & Hart, 2004)

There is another aspect as the “transparency of the photograph” to consider as it focusses both on the photograph’s invisibility as an object and its simultaneous materiality. (Edwards, 1999: 223). “Photographs are transparent objects in which its intimacy with the referent allows one to overlook their material quality.” From this perspective, Aytemiz (2013) sees the photograph as “a melancholic, relic / transparent object that includes the traces of the absent

and replaces the deceased body” which is what she (2013) mentions that makes it an inseparable part of mourning rituals. Following this concept, what is left in the marine environment would be more or less plastics left as relics. Going back to the chapter 2.3, and witnessing the dead bodies of albatross chicks in the Midway work once again reminds this incident, as the plastic replaces the bones remaining from the biological elements such as the dead albatross bodies in the Midway Island. As the plastics are overcoming the amount of organic life near them and as they are chemically resistant, they would be there as the “fauxssilles” long after the bones are gone.

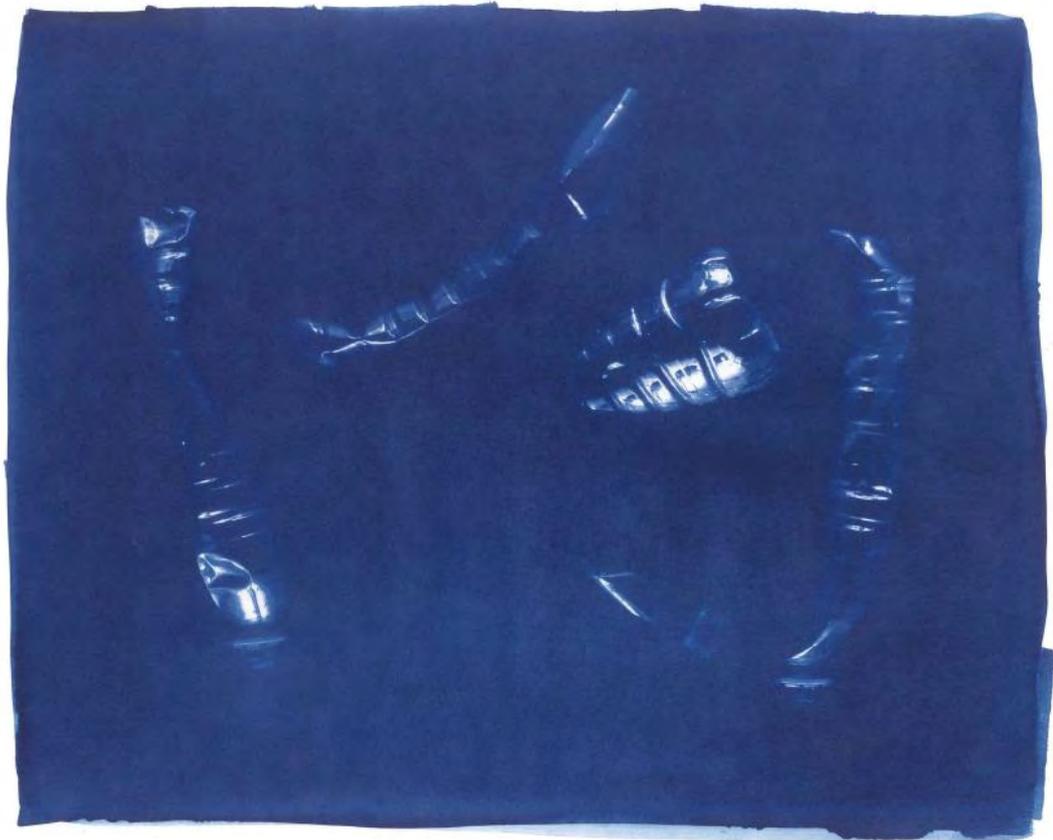


Figure 35. Fauxssille created with plastic bottles, looking like bones left behind.

In that sense, my photography series has a little sense of mourning photography as the plastic overcomes the biological elements nearby, so the surrounding

space might seem as the absence of deceased species. Additionally, using transparent plastic objects includes another transparency level for the viewer to overlook the material to see the hidden meaning of a wider problem. Working within a liquid environment with half drowning materials is supporting this conceptualization of absence of organic elements through plastic objects being present and fulfilling the environment.

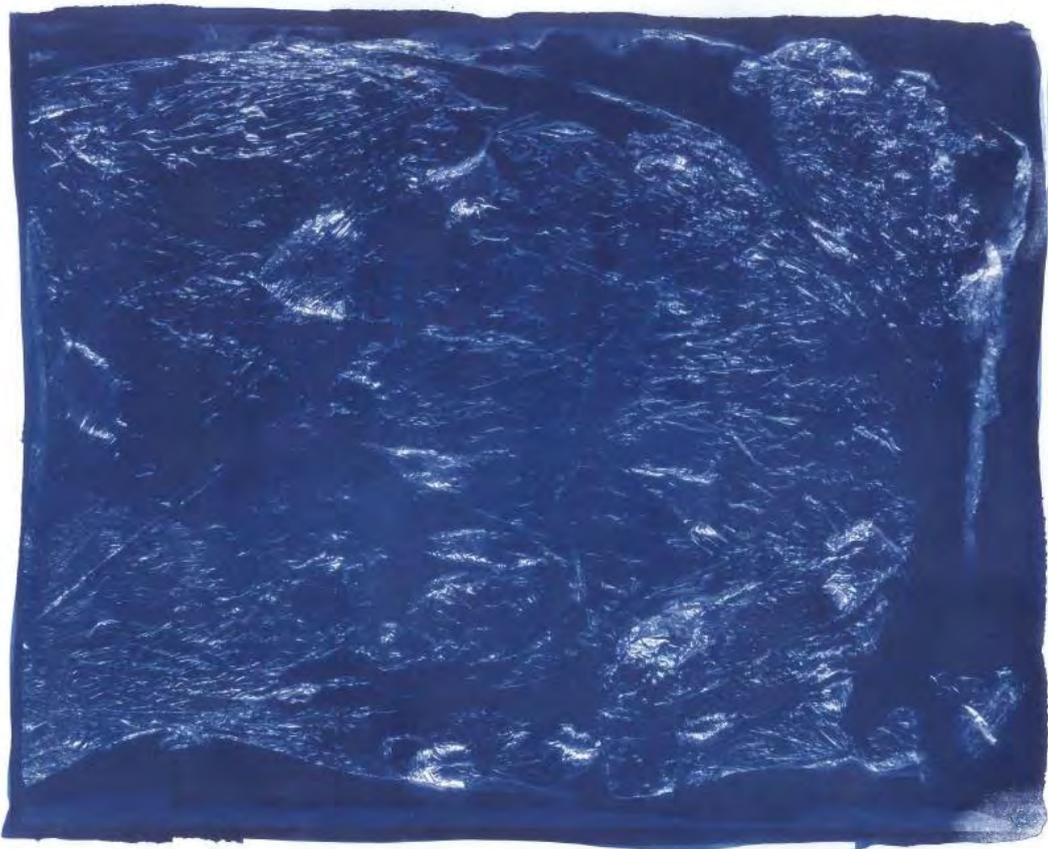


Figure 36. Fauxssille created with transparent food wrapper.

“The transparency of photographs assigns them the power of bringing the absent one nearby. An illusionary proximity is created by the photographic image. Therefore, it is hard to concentrate on the photograph itself and differentiate the referent from the representation.”

(Aytemiz, 2013)

Aytemiz (2013) mentions that photograph and its materiality cannot be separated, like Barthes suggests, “photography always carries its referent with itself,” “is never distinguished from the referent,” “they are glued together,” and “the referent adheres.” (1980) From this point of view, the Fauxssilles are created through both the body and the image of the photographic work. As “the transparency assigns a spectral quality to photographs where the image and its association with the referent predominates the gaze” , through the cyanotype prints and the transparent plastics, one shall not only see an image, but directly look towards the marine environment to imagine these objects flowing and drowning, without being disappeared for many years. “Absence” of the biological elements are crucial here again as the presence of plastic elements forces the ecology to its limits of extinction, and the presence of “fauxssilles” proves the absence of real and organic fossils within the marine environment.

### **3.3. Photograms, Abstraction and Subjectivity**

If we define a photogram as a copying process whereby a stencil or any object is directly copied onto a photosensitive surface by light, we can interpret it very broadly. Understood in the way, a suntan that leaves a white pattern of a swimming suit on the body would be photogram.

(Neusüss, 1994)

Through the essays of Floris M. Neusüss, Thomas Barrow and Charles Hagen the book “*From Beyond Vision, Photograms by Christian Schad, Man Ray, László Moholy-Nagy, Raoul Hausmann*” describes the uses of photogram from the

pioneers of the art world, tackling questions on the relationship between objects leaving a trace on a light sensitive material and experiments on how photograms function as a camera-less process. (1994). Photograms were made in the nineteenth century in connection with the invention of photography while Niepce, Bayard, Talbot and others used them to test the light sensitivity of the emulsion and it is also used as a copying process for materials in the natural sciences (Neusüss, 1994). Between 1910 and 1920, considering human perception as imperfect, artists looked for “objective” methods of representation. Because they felt that painting tends to communicate inner moods, they turned to “automatic” no longer listening to their inner voices, they became aware of the expressiveness of the material itself and sought to allow its inherent liveliness and language to unfold in their work. (Neusüss, 1994)

The Berlin avant-garde’s artistic perspective states that they could clearly no longer accept a finite, immutable standpoint for observing the world. The expressions of photogram technique were seen closer to the abstract painting for its immaterial representation which is addressing unique experiences from the viewer. (Barrow, 1994) Tristan Tzara published the first photogram in the history of art in Dadaism in 1920 (although it was not called a photogram since there was still no name for this “new” process.) Tzara later coined the term schadography, a pun that links the name of the inventor Christian Schad, who created the first photograms in art in 1919. Neusüss (1994) also acknowledges Man Ray as one of the inventors of photogram as he uses the term Rayograph in 1922 to call his inventions after his own name. Another

inventor of photogram for Neussüs was Laslo Moholy Nagy<sup>33</sup> as he concentrated on light as a medium that could paint itself who had succeeded in replacing the pigment of painting with light. . (Barrow, 1994)

*Moholy-Nagya pris conscience que les erreurs du langage photographique constituent une excellente base pour la nouvelle grammaire visuelle qu'il cherche à composer. Il pense pas que les erreurs photographiques doivent être évitées, elles sont des erreurs banales uniquement d'un point de vue historique conventionnel. (Chéroux, 2003, p. 84)*<sup>34</sup>

This part was taken from Clément Chéroux's inspiring book called "Fautographie, Petite histoire de l'erreur photographique" (2003). It was very exciting to see his focus on the photographic error and how it has seen important within the history of photography. Throughout my thesis, Moholy-Nagy<sup>35</sup> has been one of the most supportive names as he experimented within the norms of the photography as well as visual narratives. Chéroux's work uses the term "Fautographie" which is alters the term photography by using the french word "faute" which could be translated as "fault", focusing on the photographic errors and their meanings. What I tried to achieve with my "fauxssilles" has some inspiration from this body of work, as it does not only

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<sup>33</sup> Nagy supported the elimination of camera as "the ignorance of this device would define the illiterate of the future". He saw the elimination of camera apparatus when making the phograms as symbolic of the liberation that could come from total abstraction. (Barrow, 1994)

<sup>34</sup> "Moholy-Nagy realized that the errors of the photographic language constitute an excellent basis for the new visual grammar he seeks to compose. He do not think that photographic errors should be avoided, they are trivial errors only from a point of view of the conventional history."

<sup>35</sup> In his book The New Vision, László Moholy-Nagy coined the term Neues Sehen (New Vision) for his belief that photography could create "a whole new way of seeing the outside world that the human eye could not". (Barrow, 1994)

play games on a vocabulary level<sup>36</sup>, but it also theoretically approaches the concept of “faults” and “errors” within the photographic representations.

Chéroux focuses on the the play of light and shadow that led Moholy-Nagy to experiment with photograms in the early 1920s and how it could be related to Raoul Hausmann’s expressions on the light and the shadow where the potography is also skiagraphy: ombrography, or "melanography" (2003).

Chéroux highlight how Hausmann focuses on the light shadow through complementary contrast and the concordant contradiction as the reversed effect on writing with the light. Hausmann states<sup>37</sup> that “ We only make the image BLACK. MELANOGraphy. [...] The OMBERS no longer speak of the meaning, they render the image of a Thing, which no longer remains a Thing, which evokes something other than the Thing.” (Chéroux, 2003) He mentions that the light speaks only through the shadows, which changes the thing into a signifying image as his conceptualization of the MÉLANOgraphie that he learned as the secret character of the signs which do not signify what the Thing intends to signify. (Chéroux, 2003) There are several intentions behind the uses of light to create shadows on a light sensitive surfaces, depending on the artistic motivations. I would be focusing on the artistic practices of the pioneers. The quotation below support my intentions on working with “plastic” as a waste material, to create ways of representation.

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<sup>36</sup> Man Ray also used the word games using the terms of "photogaffe" or "falsetography" exploring the range of accidents in photography. (Chéroux, 2003)

<sup>37</sup> “Nous ne faisons que rendre l'image NOIRE. La MÉLANOgraphie. [...] Les OMBRES ne parlent plus de la signification, elles rendent l'image d'une Chose, qui ne reste plus Chose, qui évoque autre chose que la Chose.” (Chéroux, 2003, p. 84)

*As they watched the collapse of the belle époque from their Swiss refuge, the Dadaists recycled its leftover rubbish to use as a fertilizer for something new. Since the traditional way of the artist as inspired by “higher things” had also ended in the trash, Christian Schad took his inspiration from discarded fragments, worthless stray objects, and the microcosm of the wastebasket. (Neusüss, 1994, p:8)*

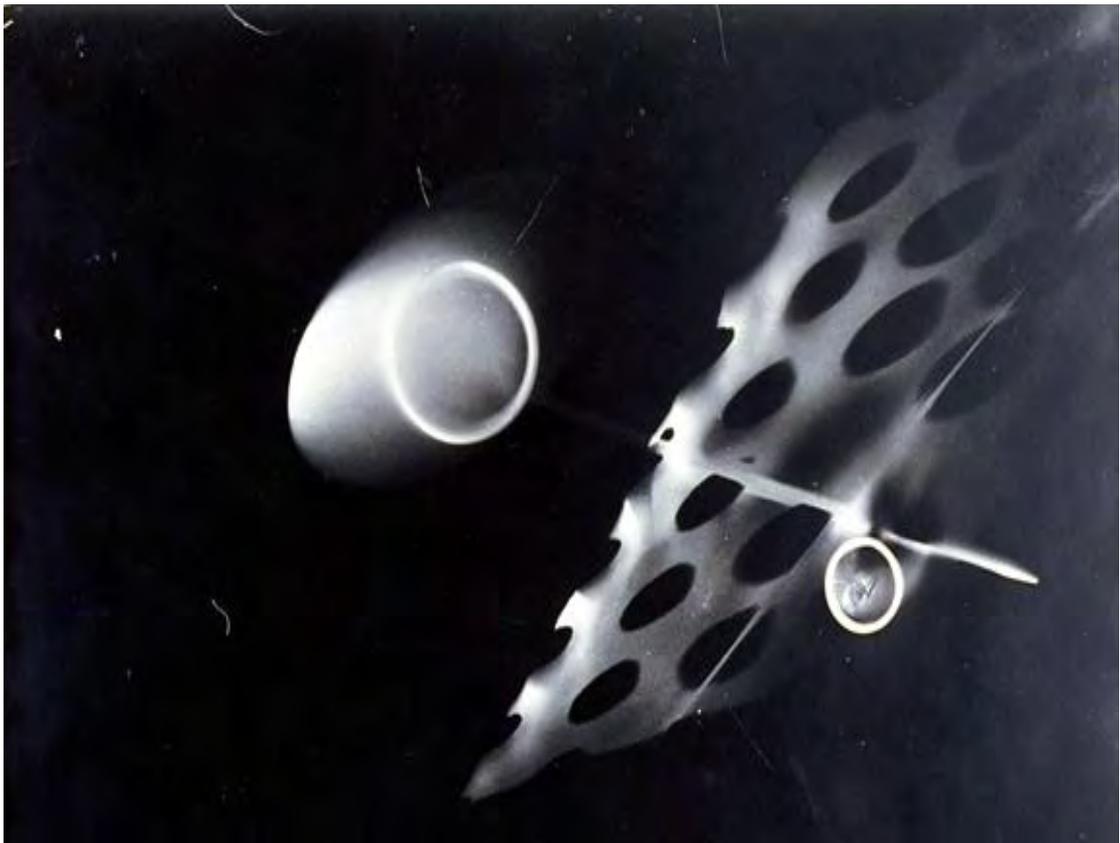


Figure 37. Photogram of Moholoy-Nagy

Walter Benjamin text “The author as Producer” also acknowledges the revolutionary strength of Dadaism in testing art for its authenticity. “You made still-life’s out of tickets, spools of cotton, cigarette stubs, and mixed them with pictorial elements. You put a frame round the whole thing.” (Benjamin, 1982)

From this perspective it was a way of saying “your picture frame destroys time” while the smallest authentic fragment of everyday life is saying more than painting. Benjamin (1982) mentions that their revolutionary attitude passed into photomontage which inhibit the productive capacity of the intelligentsia as he want us to demand from the photographer “a revolutionary use value”.

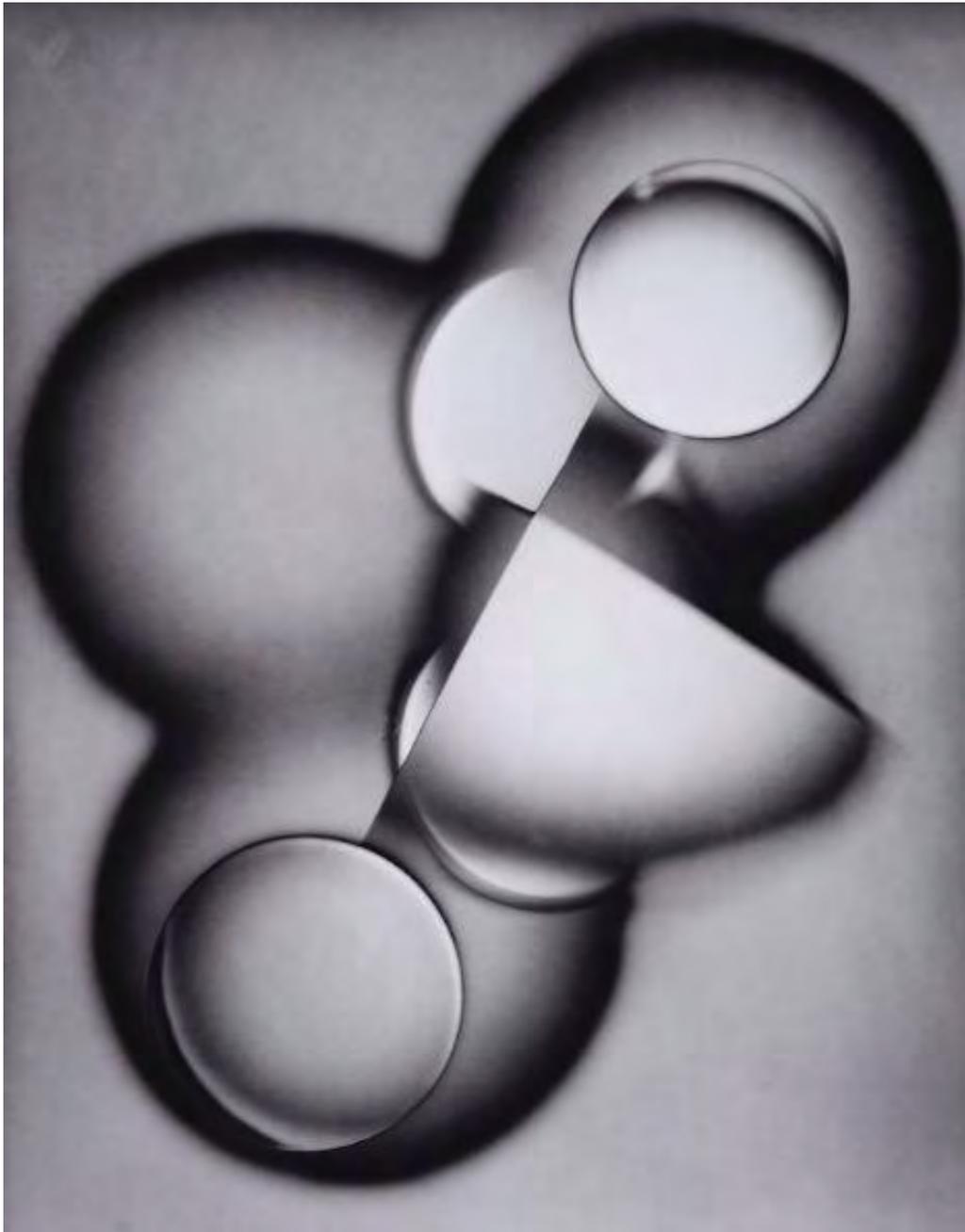


Figure 38. Luminogram work of Michael Jackson

About his much recent Luminogram works, Michael Jackson says “I begin to realize that under certain circumstances it was quite possible to treat this photographic paper almost like a canvas, and you could in a certain way control the light that you are directing onto it.” (Gallery, 2016) He mentions that he found it very exciting<sup>38</sup> to see how by just taking the light that was there, its possible to mold it in a similar way to a sculpture, by directing it so that it reacts on the flat surface of the paper, leaves a particular type of mark. (Gallery, 2016) Therefore, the potential of photograms and light-drawings are still accurate within the artistic representations as it allows the ideas to be obvious on paper.

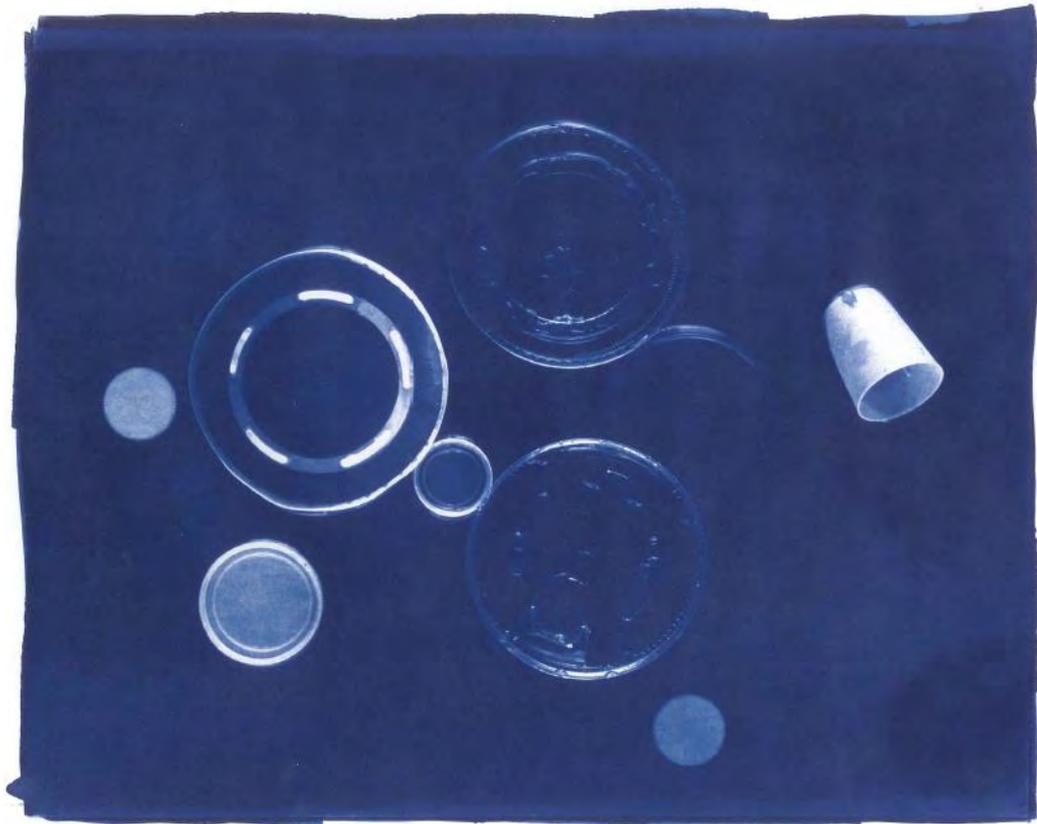


Figure 39. Fauxssille created with plastic bottle and glass caps.

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<sup>38</sup> “That’s the magic for me of the way the light works with this paper, this chemical level without any camera, film, computer or anything getting in the way. It is just me working on the light and directing it and pushing it onto the paper.” (Gallery, 2016)

While working within a liquid environment by capturing several plastic elements on a limited frame, I had the chance to experiment with several graphic combinations, through the relationship between the floating object, the visible and drowning parts of the objects, the molding of shapes and the negative positive space created within the frames. The research on plastic waste supported my decisions on the selection of plastic items used on the photographic series but the artistic approaches of within the history of photography supported the aesthetic decisions I have made during the production phase.

### **3.4. On Permanence and Memory**

“Etched with strange pictograms, lines and wedge-shaped markings, they lay buried in the dusty desert earth of Iraq for thousands of years. The clay tablets left by the ancient Sumerians around 5,000 years ago provide what are thought to be the earliest written record of a long dead people.”<sup>39</sup> (Gray, 2016)

The permanence is highly related for the project as not only the cyanotype outcome of the work is resistant but also the plastic polymers out of strong chains, light, and durable material is very resistant and problematic. In that sense, as an archival printing method, the cyanotype has been used, in order to transfer today's data through a photographic series, tackling the plastic waste

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<sup>39</sup> The Sumerian civilisation portray a great motif in the permanence of the humanity's memory, and just as the fossils carry the information from the pre-human era, the post-human era is escripted in the artifacts, from cave painting, through ceramics, till photography and beyond.

problem. To quote Lazzarato (2007) “Memory, unlike the body’s sensory-motor movement, produces increasingly precise true images of the perceived object.” From this perspective, I would be focusing on the presence and memory aspects of photographs, and what they represent as evidence capturing the truth about the lived experiences. I would also look at some art practices that succeed what I try to achieve such as the Memory of Mankind project, in addition to the examination of the artistic motivation from the Antiquarian Avant-Garde group.

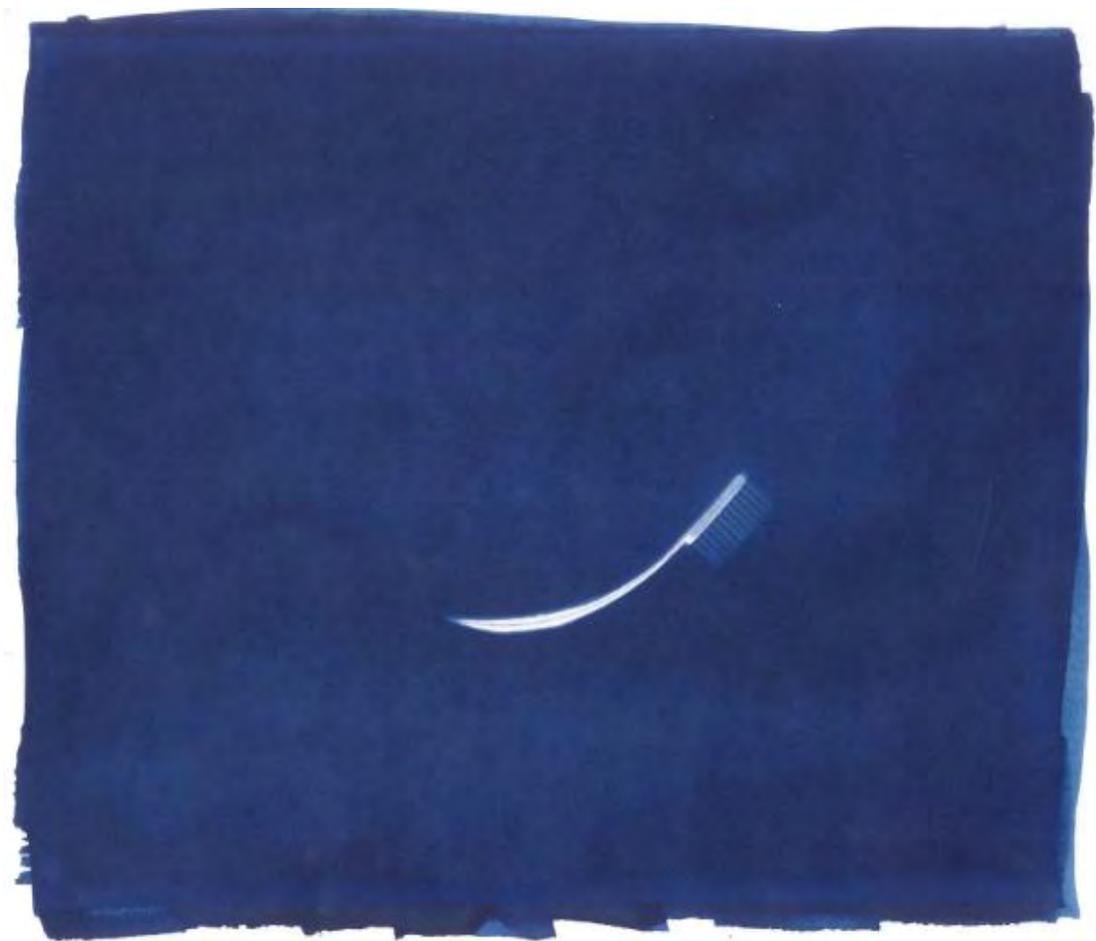


Figure 40. Fauxssille created with toothbrush.

*Even though it is still possible to see the absent one in photographs photography makes us be aware of the missing referent. However, unlike*

*traditional beliefs, that find an essence in a photographic portrait, such images (mourning<sup>40</sup>) do evoke only absence and are inherently melancholic. (Aytemiz, 2013)*

The overall critique of my photographic series conceptualizes the plastic waste increasing on the marine environments like oceans, seas and rivers. From such perspective, I believe that the final photographs succeeded on the capturing the liquid environment with plastic floating elements.

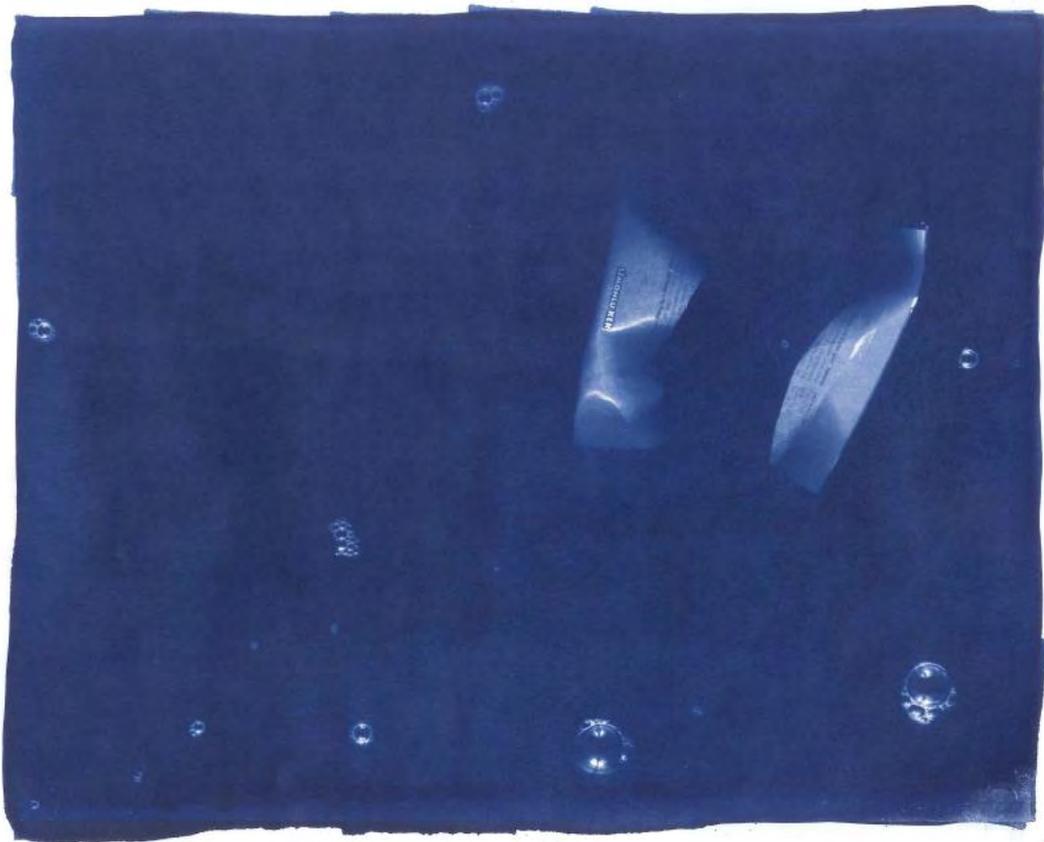


Figure 41. Fauxssille created with packaging material.

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<sup>40</sup> Aytemiz focusses on the mourning photography in this body of work with a relation to absence and presence.

From this absence-presence perspective, there might be a reading such as plastic becoming more visible, thus endangering species to a point of extinction and making them absent with their presence. All the photographs are captured from a same distance with a fixed lens, the framing is not changing while the plastic elements<sup>41</sup> are changing from different sizes, textures and transparencies. It reveals many details and sensations within the blue environment of the photographs, objects half way drowning, as if they are about to disappear.

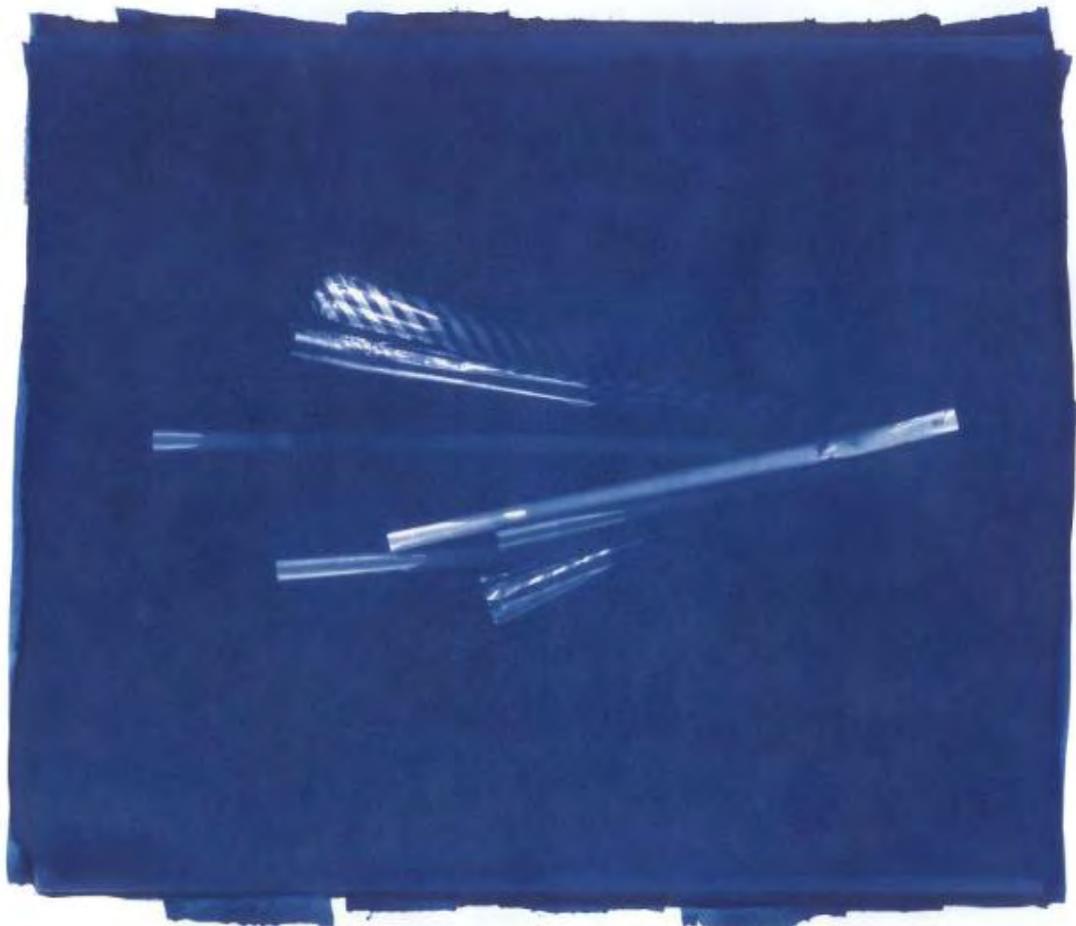


Figure 42. Fauxssille created with straws.

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<sup>41</sup> The photographs are critically illustrating this absence-presence situation, due to the plastic objects being very crucial on everyday life such as a toothbrush straw, plastic bottles and grocery bag.

### 3.4.1. Memory of Mankind (MOM)

*“Never before information was spread in such a density and speed.*

*Across the planet and in realtime we share ideas and emotions.*

*But what will remain from the shares, likes, tweets and posts?*

*How will the picture of our time look like in the future?*

*Will there be any traces of our existence except global warming, nuclear waste and countless energy-drink-cans?*

*How can our present story be reconstructed when the evidence of our existence are selfies and kitty-images beside minecraft-, fail- and pornvideos?” (MOM Project, 2016) (Gray, 2016)*

“Unfortunately we live in an age that will leave hardly any written traces,” explained Martin Kunze. We live in a digital world where information is stored as lists of tiny electronic ones and zeros that can be edited or even wiped clean by a few accidental strokes on a keyboard. The Sumerian tablets were powerful in terms of permanence and the stories and details they contain have stood the test of time, surviving through the millennia to be unearthed and deciphered by modern historians.

Kunze mentions that there are fears that future archaeologists may not benefit from the same sort of immutable record when they come to search for evidence of our own civilization. (Gray, 2016) Kunze’s solution is the Memory of Mankind project, a collaboration between academics, universities, newspapers and libraries to create a modern version of those first ancient Sumerian tablets

discovered in the desert. Their plan is to “gather together the accumulated knowledge of our time and store it underground in the caverns carved out in one of the oldest salt mines in the world.” (Gray, 2016)

The primary ambition of MOM is to preserve an image of our era, created by numerous participants all over the planet. MOM will also contain information which our society is obliged to forward to the future: e.g. description of nuclear waste<sup>42</sup> repositories. (Gray, 2016)

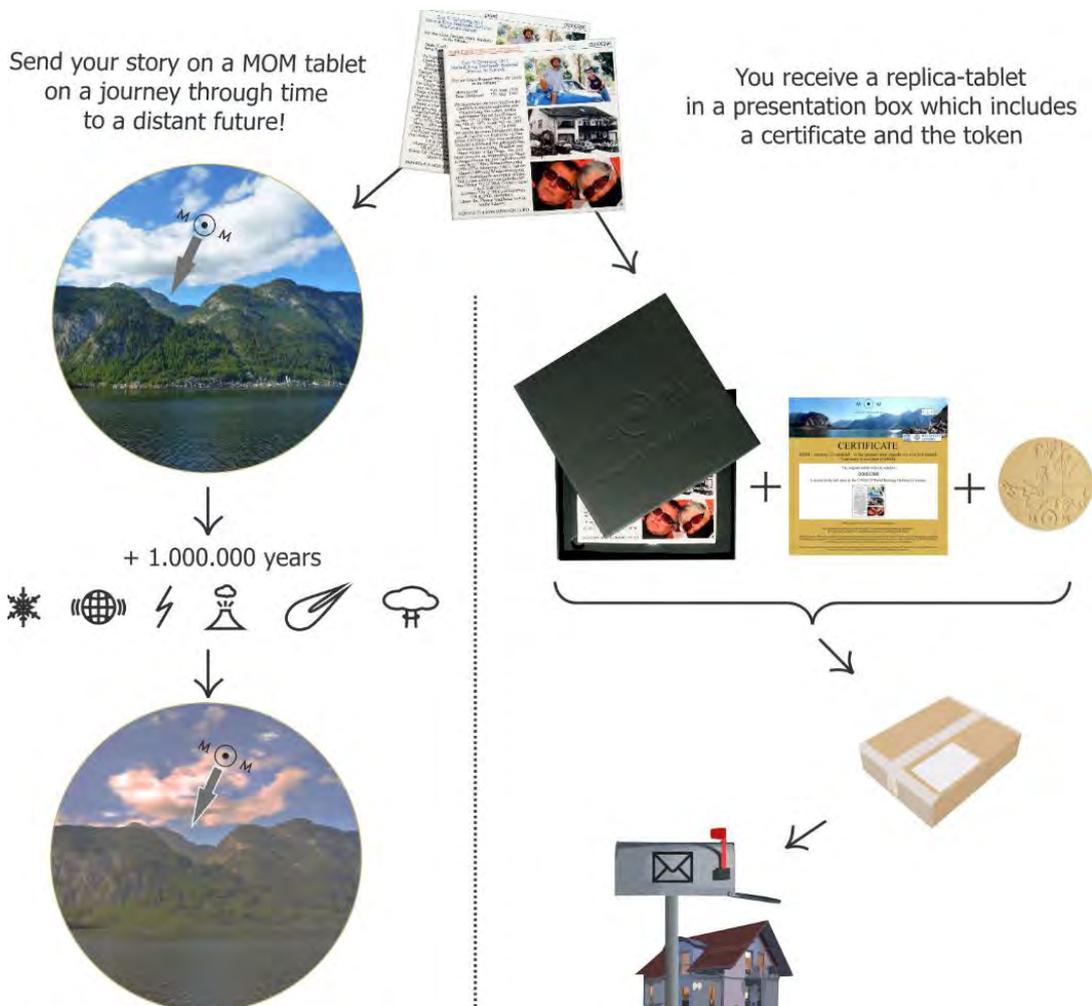


Figure 43. MOM projects webpage, telling the production process.

<sup>42</sup> Their mission on capturing today’s information with a focus on environmental issues supported my project as I have a similar attempt focusing on plastic waste. “In times where global warming, nuclear danger and biological warfare threaten the existence of civilization, saving the core knowledge and culture acquired over centuries is a backup measure. In case of a collapse, the MOM project could help survivors to rebuild civilization.”

Memory of Mankind (MOM) is an ongoing preservation project located in a Salt Mine<sup>43</sup> in Austria, funded in 2012 by Martin Kunze. The main goal is to preserve the knowledge about our present civilization from oblivion and collective amnesia. Information is printed on ceramic tablets, then stored in the salt mine of Hallstatt, Austria. More than a simple archive project, it aims to create the "Time capsule of our era"(Gray, 2016) The Project offers a critical standpoint against the digital and globally warming era, which might be similar to my attempt of critically illustrating the plastic waste as the future fossils. MOM tries to preserve the stories about the era by saving them from oblivion in a near future. (Gray, 2016) Due to the protection within a deep mountain through durable ceramic data carriers, MOM tells today's stories for 1.000.000 years.

Not only a group of scientists and historians study for the collection but they offer access to individuals wishing to inscribe data for the future. The project "preserves the essence of our time", contrary to national archives, the content for the MOM is collected by anyone who takes part, making it a collective<sup>44</sup>, "bottom-up" told history. Everybody who took part in the project gets a ceramic token as a "treasure map" for, indicating the location of the entrance. (Gray, 2016)

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<sup>43</sup> The Hallstatt salt mine is the oldest salt mine continuously exploited by man. As well as the depth and relative stability of the mine, the salt absorbs moisture and desiccates the air, and has a natural plasticity that helps to seal cracks and fractures keeping the caverns watertight.

<sup>44</sup> This reminds the creation of Mandy Barker's photographic Works, as it also includes the collective aspects for collecting the photographed objects. Their mission on capturing today's information with a focus on environmental issues supported my project as I have a similar attempt focusing on plastic waste.



Figure 44. Tokens of MOM project, indicating the Cave's location.

“The present is nothing but the most contracted moment of our past.”

(Lazzarato, 2007)

“Every ‘memory’ is also an anticipation of the future, an action. If, on one hand, memory is able to conserve, to accumulate, on the other it works as a force capable of affecting, of producing images and of acting.” says Lazzarato (2007) mentioning that the conservation and accumulation of the past takes place in function not of ‘what is’ but of ‘what will be’. For him “the ‘force to act’ is always an ‘encroachment on the future’.” (Lazzarato, 2007) From this perspective, I found these project very successful in terms of action provocation and the preservation of memory for an active manner. Lazzarato highlight that according to Bergson, everything becomes clearer if we begin from ‘exteriority’ and proceed towards the interior, whereas problems proliferate if we seek to go from the center. (2007) Therefore I feel the possibility of an action coming from an individual level.

I found this project and additionally Antiquarian Avant-Garde attempt which I would be focusing on the next chapter very influential and supporting my artistic act on preserving the images of today’s critical problems, in a chemical procedure that would preserve those images for a long period so that they might be informative for the future generations. Both MOM and Antiquarian Avant-Garde has a critical<sup>45</sup> standpoint against Digital means of production that lead them towards analogue productions techniques such as ceramics and alternative photographic processes. Through this approach, the data contractions are much resistant and permanent as they literally “inscribe” data over material surfaces, giving them a material presence within the virtual era.

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<sup>45</sup> According to Kunze, maybe nothing of the 21st century will last in the future, since most of our interactions are now virtual as he states that "accuracy versus bullshit" is one of the main themes of the MOM project, worried about loss of information.

### **3.4.2. Antiquarian Avant-Garde**

“The first antiquarian avant-garde defined itself in opposition... to industrial photography, to narrow professionalization, standardization, and technical progress, and especially to photography’s use as a mere instrument by almost every sector of society, wherever images are presented and consumed” (Rexer, 2002: 14).

The Antiquarian Avant-Garde is a photography movement and unlike many prior photo movements they are not associated with any name or any group, they do not have a manifesto. The movement explores the photography techniques that are long obsolete such as “Alternative” photographic processes. (Bilici,2013) Although, these alternative processes were the latest technological means of photographic imaging the time they were invented, they were abandoned from the mainstream in favor of newer (standardized) processes and they are not mainstream photographic processes but practiced by a limited number of photographers. (Rexer, 2002: 10). The term’s origin goes back to the 1960s as “a slogan in opposition to Kodak, which threatened to dominate all photographic processes and materials”.

Following “The author as a producer” text from Benjamin(1982) which I would be focusing later on, I appreciate the Antiquarian Avant-Garde approach even more as they were able to stand against the Kodak hegemony. This has encouraged me even more to finalize my work with the Cyanotype, where there is a possibility of staying undiscovered within the digital era.

“Camera artists with a wide variety of attitudes and motives were deliberately re-engaging the physical facts of photography, that is, its materials and processes, and turning to the history of photography for metaphors, technical insight, and visual inspiration. We call the movement to return to old photographic processes the antiquarian avant-garde.”

This part shows how Rexer (2002: 9) defines Antiquarian Avant-Garde.

Christopher James (2009: 542) highlights another important aspect as “the future of photography as a distinctive medium is to be found in its past.” The group of Antiquarian Avant-Garde artists not solely stand against the digital, but they have benefited from the means of digital productions to support their actions within Alternative Photographic Processes. They are using these techniques not as a way to make photographs look aged or to promote nostalgia, but rather to create contemporary works. What makes them Alternative is their anti-statement against Kodak monopoly on the ways of photography. Therefore, “the Antiquarian Avant-Garde is anything but antique” and as Lyle Rexer (2002: 8) states, “the past informs this work, it is the present that incites it”.

I appreciate how the Antiquarian Avant-Garde photographers embrace the possibility of accidents, failure and imperfections (Bilici, 2013), just like the experiments and discoveries being embraced by artist within the photogram practices. In those hand crafted techniques, the involvement of the photographer is often visible in the making of the photograph and these images are also sometimes a sign, a symbol and a mark even a metaphor on the process.

Although every photographer's reason or engagement in the antiquarian methods of photography is different, often there is a strong correlation between the photographic object and the idea. (Bilici, 2013) In the usage of the alternative photographic processes such as the cyanotype technique that I have been using on my series, I had the support from the Antiquarian Avant-Garde group in learning the appreciation of the process rather than the sole domination of the images. This supported my concept on relating the Prussian blue environment of my cyanotype prints to my critical standpoint on photographic plastic objects in addition to the outcome as durable photographic prints.

Both the Antiquarian Avant-Garde movement and the MOM project supports my argument on analog production within the digital era such as James states; "In the 1982 book "Thinking Photography", Burgin uses the opening essay<sup>46</sup> of Benjamin called The Author as Producer from 1934, in order to give some historical depth and foundation with clear alignment to the radical Marxist theory." (Welch & Long, 2009)

This essay opens up to a dual criticism to my project to be supported by Antiquarian Avant-Garde photography and the Memory of Mankind Project. On the one hand, the cyanotype technique that I have been using to produce the body of my work is located as an alternative photographic technique as it stands apart from the Kodak hegemony on the photography market, making it a

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<sup>46</sup> In his essay, Benjamin focuses on the role of the intellectual, to find innovative ways to subject the dominant social order and its cultural production to critical scrutiny and thereby help contribute to its downfall and to him those engaged with the photographic object should be able to revolutionize our understanding of it and not to contribute to its market value.

standpoint against the mainstream production and consumption practices of photography. Secondly, as Benjamin's text highlights the responsibility of the author, the core of Memory of Mankind project grows from the responsibility for memory transference, including key environmental problems to inform future generations. Antiquarian Avant-Garde has a similar standpoint to Benjamin's expectation, as they embrace all the unaccepted techniques from the Kodak hegemony within the photography industry.

For Burgin "the photography studies should play a leading role in a broader process of ideological critique and political intervention, in working to expose the mechanisms by which the dominant social and economic order sustains and reproduces itself." (8) (Welch & Long, 2009). This is applicable both for the usage of alternative techniques and the environmentally critical topic being exposed. It could be supported with Barthes' approach (1980) where the visual information is transformed into "what the photographer intends and the way photographer exhibits his art" as the channel that he distributes it and this is the way that the photographic image is coded. (Bilici, 2013)

## CHAPTER IV:

### “FAUXSSILLES” FOR THE FUTURE

"A Photograph is fossilized<sup>47</sup> light, and its aura of superior evidential efficacy has frequently been ascribed to the special bond between fugitive reality and permanent image that it formed at the instant of exposure. It is a direct physical imprint, like a fingerprint left at the scene of a crime." (Mitchell, 1992, p: 24)

Conceptualizing the Cyanotype photographs of the plastic elements as the fossils that will remain in the future, I wanted to entitle the body of work as the “Fauxssilles for the Future”. Reading the word I have created “Fauxssilles” would sound the same to the word “fossil” which is referring to the overall concept of the Project. The reason why I wanted to create this word was my aim on combining the words “faux/fake” and “fossil” in order to reflect the dual aspect of the final photographic outcome. This final word “Fauxssilles” fits perfectly to the project for two aspects of permanence. On the one hand, the photographs are documenting key plastic elements critically as the fossils referring to their resistance against biological specimens. On the second hand,

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<sup>47</sup> It was nice to come across this term used by Mitchell in the well-known book, as my project tries to create a similar analogy of light traces as fossils, evidence of today's information. Mitchell also mentions how André Bazin compares the photographs to mummies and relics as objects that exhibit "a transference of reality from the thing to its reproduction."

the very chemistry and material of the cyanotype prints are very resistant against contemporary fading photographic techniques, which are making them image fossils for their durable chemistry and materiality. Therefore; the word “Fauxssilles” refers to the photographic fossils as a combining reference both to the medium and the message of this work, in relation to McLuhan’s famous<sup>48</sup> concept. Edwards & Hart also mentions Barthes’ (1980) argument that the image and referent are laminated together as two leaves that cannot be separated, in order to focus on photographs having inextricably linked meanings as images and meanings as objects; “melding of image and form, both of which are direct products of intention”. (Edwards & Hart, 2004)

This dual reading of the project aims portraying the body of work in relation to both of the photographic content and the materiality as a totality. Therefore, the Fauxssilles are not only images of documented past life but also light drawings of these fossil-to-become objects of our future, as they are resulting in the absence of the biological elements by surrounding the marine environment with their presence, thus<sup>49</sup> altering the marine fauna as fake and inorganic fossils .

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<sup>48</sup> The medium is the message analogy; focusing between the relation of the two, and how the relationship in-between.

<sup>49</sup> From the paleontologist perspective, this might seem as the success of the plastic over the failior of the living organisms within the marine life, recalling Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection, known as the survival of the strongest, which has a key role on the core of modern evolutionary thought, which presupposes that only those individuals which were “best fitted to obtain food and to produce health young would survive, and that the particular adaptations would be inherited.” (Benton & Harper, 1997) On a very simplified manner, this sadly represents Albatross species endangered as they have been fed plastic massively. When we look at the plastic’s victory over the living, they are more like viruses or parasites, making the living sick through their metabolism. But mainly, plastic are endangering by filling the environments, just like deforestation emptying it out.

#### 4.1. “*Fauxssilles*”

Most fossils were recognized as looking like the remains of plants or animals, but they were said to have been produced by a ‘plastic force’<sup>50</sup> (vis plastica) which operated within the Earth. (Benton & Harper, 1997: 2)

Benton & Harper focusses on how the Early Greeks and Herodotus recognized fossils as marine organisms proving evidence to the earlier life in the sea while other classical and medieval authors argued over the magical interpretations of fossils and they highlight that in Roman and medieval times, fossils were often interpreted as mystical or magical objects and some were worn as amulets to ward off danger. (1997) this was supporting my project on conceptualizing plastics as fossils which are once seen as a plastic force, coming from the unknown. If it could be possible to reset the information of the humans on earth, plastics would be there as plastic force, as they do not reside within an environmental consequences rather they are manufactured by man. In the middle ages the fossils were dismissed as a *delusu naturae* – “joke o nature” as the relics of long-dead creatures. This makes the Anthropocene a “*delusu naturae*” in general, as all the human made artefacts are unknown to the nature of the earth.

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<sup>50</sup> Aristotle assumed that there is a formative force which creates organic beings out of inorganic matter and he called this force *Entelechy*. The early Nature Philosophers translated this into Latin: *vis plastica* = formative force. The idea of plastic forces had been largely over-thrown by the 1920s.

Within the photography studies, souvenirs are also examined as 'magical objects' whose function is 'to envelop the present within the past'. (Schwartz, 2009) From this perspective, it is nice to come across similar discussions over fossils and photographs as magical objects, that transfer memories. There is 'the double function of the souvenir' meaning 'to authenticate a past or otherwise remote experience and, at the same time, to discredit the present'. (Schwartz, 2009) Knowing that this approach is related to the social actors within the photographs, I still believe it's important working with plastic objects as the subjects of my photographs as what is missing within the visual literacy. "If, in the daguerreotype as souvenirs, past was linked to present, then in the dual material nature of the gift, the present was nested in the past, the modern was juxtaposed with the primitive. (Schwartz, 2009)" Therefore fauxsouvenirs are also functioning as gifts for the future, linking the past to the present.

Far from being a peaceful blue sphere immune from the violent physical forces that shape the universe, the Earth may turn out to have been periodically devastated by catastrophic impacts that wiped out life on land and sea. (Fortey, 1991)

The entire knowledge about the history of the world, brought today with the information carried out by the fossils. This is why, the fossils are very important as memory carriers and the storytellers of the past life. Through fossils, we can reach the information of the past, about the living forms, their living conditions and sometimes the traces of others' extinction. Barthes' (1980) explores the experience of photography 'not as a question (a theme) but as a wound: "I see, I

feel, hence I notice, I observe, and I think” and for Barthes, understanding the representational nature of these images cannot be separated from understanding the sensations – the touch – of desire or of grief that they provoke. (Robins, 1995) What I aim to provoke; through fauxssilles are the wound of human effect over nature, causing extinction of many species. As “We regret, hope, fear and love with images” and “These emotions, guided by our reasoning capacities, provide the energy to turn images to creative and moral-political ends.” (Berger, 1980: 73) the materiality of the portrayed objects and their emotion provoking aspects tries to capture its viewer accordingly.

It can be seen that it is not merely the image qua image that is the site of meaning, but that its material and presentational forms and the uses to which they are put are central to the function of a photograph as a socially salient object. (Edwards & Hart, 2004)

Accordingly, Objects themselves can be seen as social actors, in that “it is not the meanings of things per se that are important but their social effects as they construct and influence the field of social action in ways that would not have occurred if they did not exist, or, in the case of photographs, if they did not exist in this or that specific format.” (Edwards & Hart, 2004) Plastic elements should be understood in this sense, with all the surrounding atmosphere and the social role we all share in common. Like a fossil, which do not only reflect facts about itself but which is also informative about the consumption and everyday practices of an era that it has witnessed.

Fauxssilles (Fake Fossils) might be referring to several meanings, according to the reader, but when I was trying to conceptualize the work, I had several conceptual expectations from the work which might be seen below, to illustrate several referential aspects. Accordingly; “Fauxssilles” are;

- Fake, in terms of the plastic’s synthetic molecular formation; rather than the commonly known fossils referring to organic, animal or plant traces.
- Fake memories for the future, as a criticism of the increasing marine debris, wishing the plastic waste to be diminished and prove this project wrong and fake.
- Fake – mistaken – wrong fossiles for the future; as they endanger the marine life like the research<sup>51</sup> informing about the amount of plastic which might overcome the amount of fish. This would be a *failed* evolutionary<sup>52</sup> step causing the extinction of several species as these inorganic elements would be telling the story of after the human’s arrival<sup>53</sup> through the exavation of fossil fuels.
- Fake, like other common names for reproductions of faux-leather, faux-marble; in order to highligh the increasing production of plastics for cheaper but environmentally damaging indurtrial standars; while there are biodegradable plastic production solutions or plant based plastic production options which are more environmentally concerned but unaccpted and underdeveloped within the industrial scope.

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<sup>51</sup> See the link.

<sup>52</sup> Due to the extinction of the living, referring to Darwin’s theory of the Survival of the Fittest.

<sup>53</sup> The production of plastic belongs to the antropocene era, where the organic processes are touched by human hand.

During my research, I came across the incident of the amateur palaeontologist Dr. Johann Bartholomäus Adam Beringer. For his book published in 1726; a monographic work, with 21 plates depicting 204 of the rocks and describing them in 14 sections: the "Lithographia Wirceburgensis".

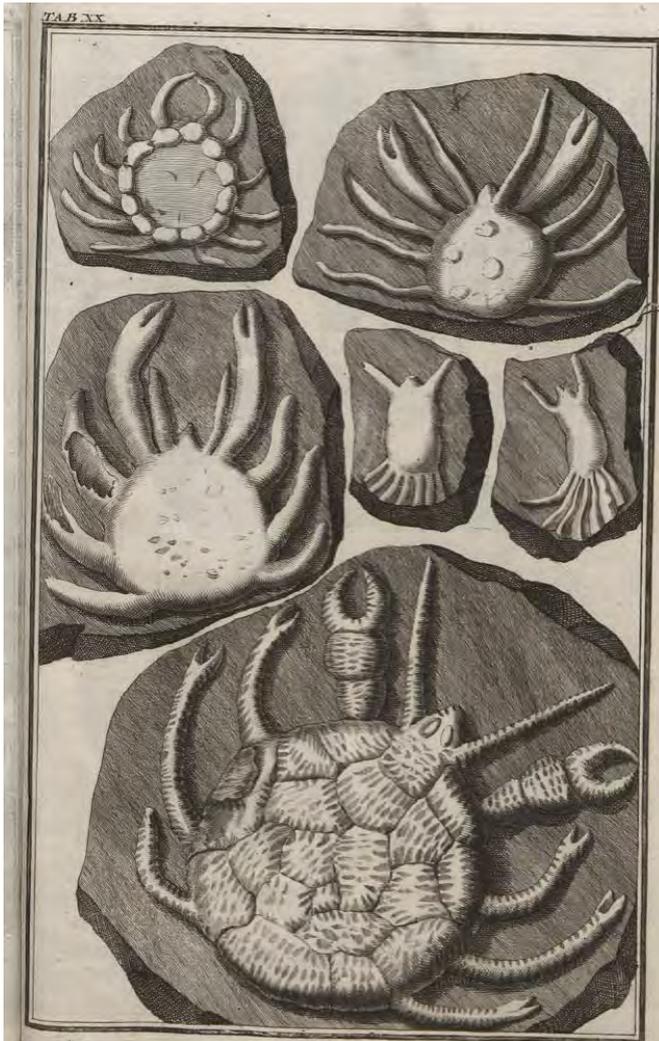


Figure 45. Beringer's fake fossils.

Beringer was particularly interested in 'lapides figurati' (figured stones), as naturally formed into images or shapes. In 1725 was approached by three youngsters, who offered him some strange stones, which they have found, to buy. Beringer was enthusiastic, paid a rich recompense for this and further

discoveries, and concludes that the stones must have been carved by God. Later it was revealed that it was a prank from the group of youngsters, selling around 2,000 pieces for over a period of six months. They confessed, fearing Beringer's reputation would be ruined or that natural history would never recover. The joke could have been lost to posterity had he not published an academic treatise. Beringer later tried to minimize the damage by repurchasing all the printed copies and destroying the print-plates, but his reputation was irreversibly lost and James Parkinson wrote "The quantity of censure and ridicule to which its author was exposed" made those who came after Beringer "more cautious in indulging in unsupported hypotheses," This made his work famous as "lying stones". Although his intentions were not publishing a series of "fake" fossils as real evidences, it was supporting my argument as a satiric concept, for working with a series of manmade plastics as fossils.

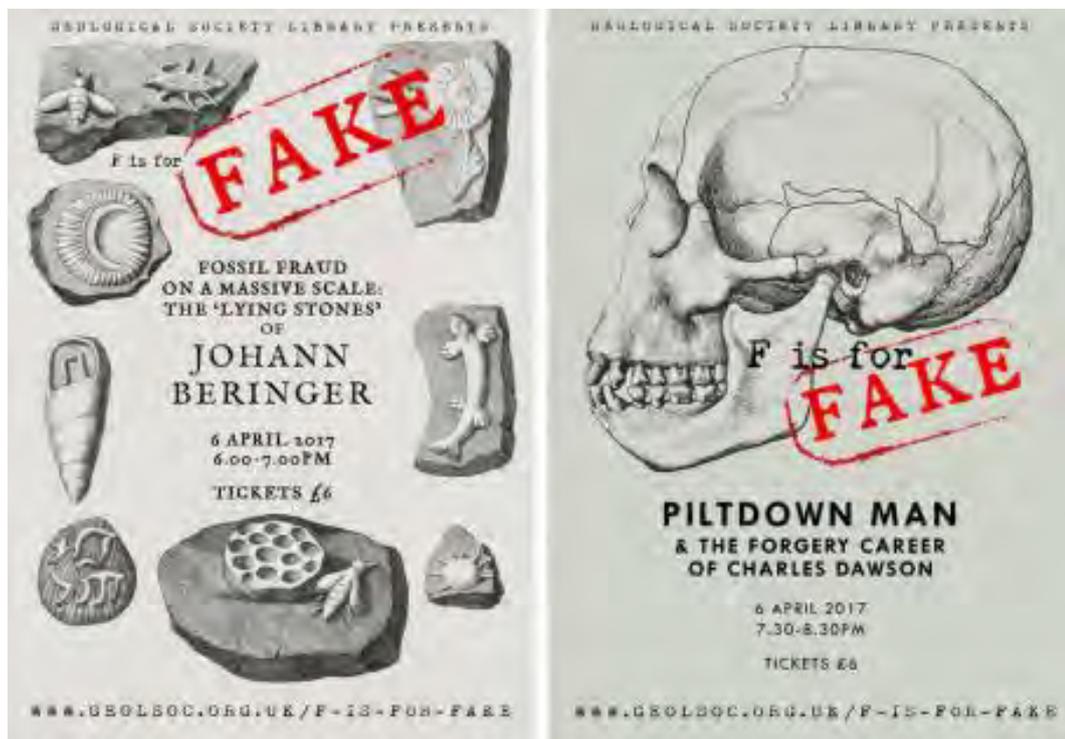


Figure 46. Johann Beringer's Book, reinterpreted in 2017

## 4.2. Experimentation

I want to mention the sun as the best light source you can use for contact printing.<sup>54</sup> Why is sun best? It's free, really bright, and nothing can come close to the good feeling you'll have sitting around outdoors printing with your friends and family. When I am teaching a workshop class how to make cyanotype murals in the sun, I often use the students as photogram objects on a sensitized bedsheet. (James, *The Cyanotype Process*, 2009)

On the implementation process, I first started by what that can be called as the photograms exposing the Cyanotype covered papers directly under the sunlight, by adding some key plastic objects; like James have mentioned as the process is the easiest process to begin with, with fast results being achieved. This photogram outcome was pretty much what I was aiming at, due to its objectified results in contrast to the subjectified and designed compositions since my content was demanding my personal distance toward this critical environmental issue, and I wanted to stay as technical as I could in terms of image creation. Using the inspirations from the history of the photography, the uses of photograms towards its contemporary reflections, and the historical development on the use of Cyanotype; these essays were conceptually very strong and promising. In terms of my aesthetic decisions, I tried to refer back to the earliest tests on exposing and fixing images with silhouettes and the contact printing of objects, was using the same copying method of technical drawings

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<sup>54</sup> It continues; "Unless you are working in a cold and dark climate most of the year, in which case you might think about becoming a poet, the sun provides the most efficient and least expensive means of exposing your contact negatives in printing frames."

that are called Blueprints, which has taken its name from the cyanotype process, as Sir John Herschel used this technique firstly to copy his course notes. The typology was achievable on the photograms in negative-positive values.

If it's possible to conceptualize the earth and the marine part as a light sensitive, pure surface, and Anthropogenic concept might offer a nice criticism over the marine, light sensitive surface being exposed under the human element such as the naval improvising and the plastic waste as one critical problem. Following this concept, the abstractions of photograms were capable of supporting the outcomes of the plastic waste problem over the marine environment. Due to the its abstracted and not sharp resulting, it was making the series hard to recognize the key plastic elements.

In order to keep the flowing environment and the dissolving-looking but resistant images of the plastic, I tried to keep the fluid background in the photographic process to achieve a similar result to the photograms that is mainly filled with the Prussian blue background and the ghost like solid plastics covering some parts. By using a dark colored liquid to photograph the floating plastic objects, I was able to transform my photographs to digital negatives with the transparent-like background that ended up having most part of the prints keeping the cyanotype chemical exposed, which means having a wide space covered in dark blue. This process of shooting the photographs with a dark liquid and using their negatives to allow this dark area to become dark blue; became a process replicating the successful and impressive effect of the photograms. Additionally; it was making the exposure process easier and

clearer due to the sharper results of contact printing with digital negatives rather than three dimensional objects thus having better exposed contours of the transparent objects and more details on the solid object's inner parts.

Although the photogram implications were at first seem to me the most efficient form of representation as they create a conceptual parallelism with the light leaving traces on paper, similar to fossils leaving a mark on rocks; I wasn't quite sure of the outcome of my photogram works. Hagen mentions that in their depiction of the world the photograms seem cruder and yet more honest than conventional photographs. This advantage of the photograms was supporting my first approach towards the usage of photograms instead of creating photographic works that uses a camera within the process. Hagen highlights that in photograms the shapes of objects are impressed by light onto the surface of chemically sensitized paper and the resulting images are the exact size and shape of the objects that produced them. (Hagen, 1994)

As I was trying to conceptualize the plastic objects in my work as fake fossils and using most found plastic items on the worldwide shores, this structure of photogram's representations would be supporting my concept. By exposing my cyanotype prints with several plastic items that vary in form, size and texture I wanted to achieve a body of work that resembles in the positive areas from color (Prussian blue from cyanotype chemicals) but vary in the negative areas from unique elements on each image.

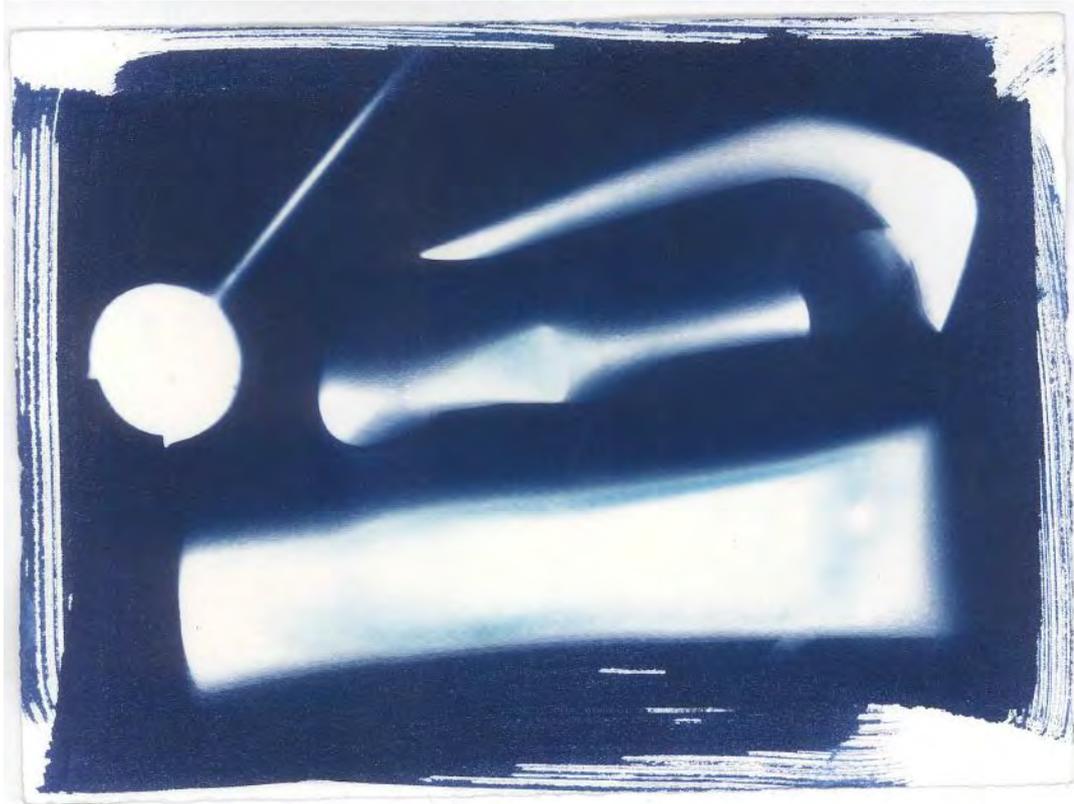


Figure 47. Photogram experiments with plastic objects.

With this approach, I was aiming to create a typology out of documented plastic items that vary in shapes but share the common language of all being produced in plastic. The first experiments of my photograms were fitting under that concept of leaving traces on light sensitive surfaces but the outcome has the plastics having a ghostly looking result as they were not two dimensional objects, which results their outer shapes being blurry. Additionally, the solid objects were blocking the light on the paper, giving wide areas being blank, but the shapes being unrecognizable due to their form. Although these results were supporting my analogy of photograms functioning as fossils due to their trace leaving characteristics being in common: the results were lacking the intellectual criticism I was aiming at, as the compositions and unexposed marks were too abstract and indefinable. While Charles Hagen was focusing on the

relatively contemporary (the text belongs to 1994) photogram works of several artists, he mentions that the photograms have rich psychological implications. He states that “They offer artists and viewers alike a sense of anarchic freedom, of the conscious mind gone on holiday. Made without the intervention of a lens, which maps the objects of a scene in mathematically regular relationships produced by Renaissance perspective, photograms seem to capture a primal photographic quality.” (Hagen, 1994)



Figure 48. Photogram experiments with plastic objects.

Considering the powerful aesthetics of the photogram representations, I had to kill my darlings<sup>55</sup> since no matter such a good fit the photogram makes to my concept, I have to avoid these abstract representations as my first intention on

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<sup>55</sup> “In writing, you must kill your darlings.” --William Faulkner, This literary advice refers to the dangers of an author using personal favorite elements.

this project was to critically awaken my audience with a highlight of the single use plastics playing a huge part in our daily lives that shouldn't turn out to become fossils.

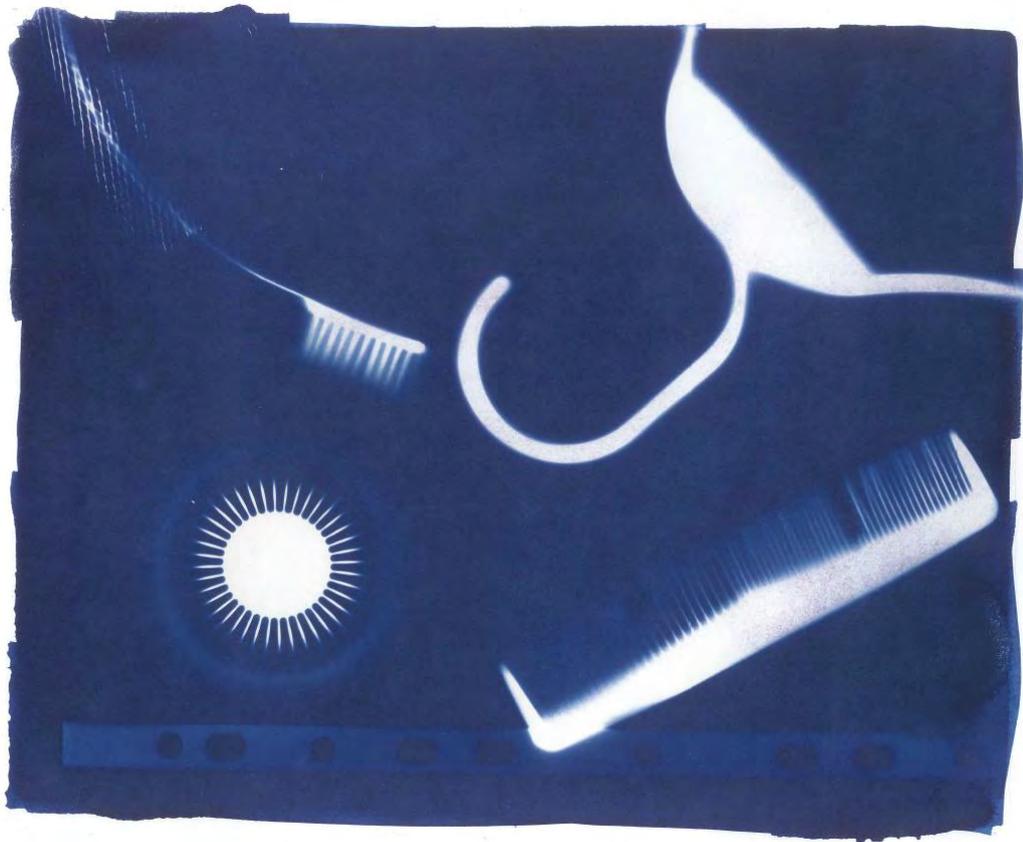


Figure 49. Photogram experiments with plastic objects.

Hagen gives the beautiful example from the ocean about the primal photographic quality of photograms and he says "Like fish that live in the deepest parts of the ocean, the strange and beautiful forms found in photograms appear to have eluded the logical net with which perspective ensnares the world of things." (Hagen, 1994) This analogy perfectly highlights the strongest aspects of photograms in terms of their unique representations and the capacity of addressing aesthetic tastes. However, I had to take my subject matter out from the deepest parts of the ocean to the very surface of it, in order to put them

under the sunlight, floating on the water's surface to locate them as close as the human eye can catch upon. Therefore, I had to portray my plastic actors under the camera and Instead of avoiding the logical net as Hagen suggested about the photograms, I wanted to finalize my work in a photographed body of work, to become easily understandable in terms of shapes and forms, to become recognized and instantly captured by the viewer's perception of their individual logical nets.

Hagen says that "However strange and limited they may seem, photograms provide a more immediate, and even more accurate, form of depiction than images produced by camera and lens. Like x-rays, photograms reveal unexpected aspects of reality." He also mentions that "the artists tried to push photography beyond its traditional task of recording the face of the material world in conventional terms, and photograms offered both a door to another reality." (Hagen, 1994)

Knowing that all off these approaches were powerful and very promising for the art of photography, I have once again come back to what Hagen calls the "conventional" form of representation as I was tackling questions towards the material world and what it has facing, instead of pushing the boundaries of photography itself, towards finding my own artistic tone. Besides, I believe that the final photography series speak up from a much powerful sense as they allow the audience to face with the subject matter of a critical issue directly, beyond aesthetic worries and abstracted forms.

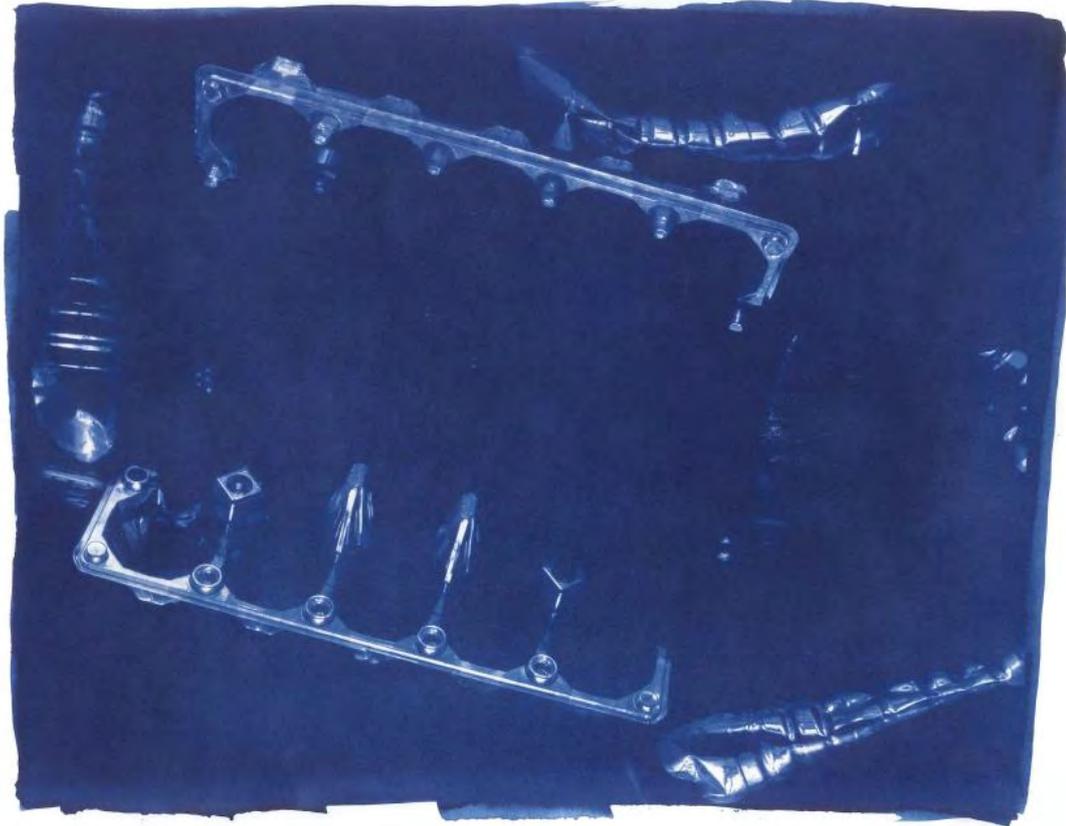


Figure 50. Fauxssille created with egg container and plastic bottles.

Additionally, the recreated liquid environment allowed me to portray compositions with semi-drowning objects instead of photogram samples maintaining the whole body of plastic objects that I believe was more efficient<sup>56</sup> on referring to the marine environment. I have also maintained the photographed area fixed and aspects of the lens to stay stable during the shooting, which standardized the photographed area so that instead of only the plastic materials created a typology on their own but the compositions set up a stage to be recreated in each shot as a performance.

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<sup>56</sup> I also wanted to allow a similar abstraction came from the very nature of the plastic objects that I have photographed, due to their transparency and organic looking forms as fauxssilles that are fake fossils over the blueness of the cyanotype sensitizer.

### 4.3. Implementation

In order to create the photographs to be used for the digital negatives of the cyanotype prints, I have started with a photography shooting. To create a kind of typology through the whole series, I have used a fixed area, with a firm camera distance so that the outer framing of each digital negative would have been the same when printed on the papers. I added a black ink to the water so that it would be creating a dark background in each object, when photographed with a flashlight, and when these photographs are turned out to digital negatives with light colored backgrounds; they allowed the cyanotype fill all the liquid area photographed. Working within a liquid environment allowed me to frame my objects half drowning and half over the surface, to refer to their final marine environments.



Figure 51. Fauxssille created with plastic ballons.



Figure 52. Photography setup; the liquid environment, flashlights.

There is the issue of permanence to consider. The cyanotype, in a pure Prussian-blue state and handled correctly, is permanent and one of the most stable alternative processes. (James, *The Cyanotype Process*, 2009)

I wanted to use the Cyanotype process which is an ultraviolet (UV) sensitive contact printing process that requires, as do most all of the non-silver processes, a negative the same size as the final print. (James, *The Cyanotype Process*, 2009)

The blue color of the cyanotype print is the result of the reaction of ferrous ions to the photo reduction of ferric ammonium citrate in combination with potassiumferricyanide, which I found important for the body of work as I want to achieve a direct reference to the relationship between the object and background to the plastic waste and the marine environment

There are two principal chemicals employed in the traditional cyanotype formula, and these are mixed together in equal parts to create a working sensitizing solution that will be applied to paper with a brush. They are: Part A<sup>57</sup>, ferric ammonium citrate and Part B<sup>58</sup>, potassium ferricyanide. (James, *The Cyanotype Process*, 2009)

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<sup>57</sup> In the green powdered state, ferric ammonium citrate is a light-sensitive compound that changes from a ferric to ferrous state when subjected to ultraviolet (UV) light.

<sup>58</sup> Potassium ferricyanide is the other half of the formula and is responsible for the blue color, when combined with the ferrous ammonium citrate.



Figure 53. Light-Sensitive paper, with the same sized digital negative.

In my thesis, I have been using a modified variation of classic Cyanotype formula suggested to Serdar Bilici (2018) by Loris Medici as stated in his thesis as the modified formula provides a slightly increased tonal range, deeper blue tones at the expense of exposure times which requires total control over the density and tonality of the negatives. For general purposes the formula that James (2009) suggests<sup>59</sup> is better suited and performs equally well.

SOLUTION A	SOLUTION B
80 ml. water	80 ml. water
25 gr. Ferric ammonium citrate (green)	42 gr. Potassium Ferricyanide
Add water to make a total solution of 100ml.	Add water to make a total solution of 100ml.

Table 1 - Modified Cyanotype Formula

Figure 54. Table from Serdar Bilici's thesis, showing the Cyanotype solutions.

<sup>59</sup> Solution A: 400 ml water (68°F) 100 g ferric ammonium citrate (green type), Solution B: 400 ml water (68°F) 40 g potassium ferricyanide



Figure 55. Exposure under the UV unit, washing and drying the papers.

The cyanotype is a contact printing process like a photogram, when the cyanotype sensitized paper is exposed with sunlight or an ultraviolet (UV) light source, it will require a negative(s) that is the same size as the print. Almost any type of paper or fabric can be used in the cyanotype process, dependent on “what type of statement you are going to make or what your intentions are with the print after it has completed its cyanotype journey”. (James,2009) I have used 20x25cm negatives, and Canson Montral 300 gram papers, exposed under a UV exposure unit as it provides a consistent and controllable light source rather than directly exposing under the sun. The exposed papers were then washed, dried and ready for the exhibition.

The final prints are framed and exhibited in a group exhibition opened on May 3 2018, in Bilkent University’s Art Room (FADA) within a group of MFA students. There were 14 photographs, each framed individually with light brown framings to create the contrast with the dark blue color. Each photograph was hanged alone as they might be creating a hierarchal order if hanged two in a row. While deciding on their order, I tried to consider the plastic elements captured within the photographs, in order to balance between negative and positive spaces and the variety of the object’s sizes.



## CHAPTER V:

### CONCLUSION

*“All photographs are memento mori”* (Sontag, 1978, s. 15)<sup>60</sup>

#### 5.1. About the Journey

The process of writing this thesis has been very inspirational through the research and practical experimentation. It has been full of discoveries, in regards to the theory and practice made within the scope of photography studies. It was an interesting journey for me working to merge the scientific and environmental aspects of the plastic waste problem, with my theoretical and practical background in photography and alternative processes. Like Sontag’s approach to all photographs as memento mori, the “fauxssilles” are just the conceptualization from a critical standpoint, their efficiency rely on whoever is witnessing that lived moment. As Barthes highlights on the visual meaning that “it was not only what the camera has recorded, but what the photographer abstracted and the observer saw and remembered as final product.” (Bilici, 2013)

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<sup>60</sup> “All photographs are memento mori.” And Sontag highlights that to take a photograph is “to participate in another person’s (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability.” She continues “Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt.” This concept support my conceptualization of fauxssilles as Cyanotype prints as the witness of these plastics being once existed, and turned out to become false fossils of an environmental incident.

The research opened up many possibilities for me to practice within the photographic medium and the cyanotype technique, from photogram experiments to the final photographic series. Although there are ongoing research from many fields of scientific studies towards the plastic waste problem, from ocean conservancy, coastal cleanups and solutions with biodegradable productions, the project offers a counter-assemblage of plastic objects as “fauxssilles” to highlight their dangerous characteristics for their resistant chemistry and durability; which might be the reason why they might have been kept still for decades, as fossils for the future telling the story of today.

The photographic project is located in the juxtaposition of photography and science. The photo-chemical aspects of this body of work not only refers to the blueness of the marine environment through the cyan blue of the technique; but it also recalls the very first photographic book in history of Anna Atkins created with the same technique of Cyanotype, which is still visible in key collections as the technique was very durable. The photographic project was created with similar intentions to Atkins’ work on capturing the images from the surrounding atmosphere in the most objective way; following the same scientific approach of documentation and preservice. Within this scope of practice, the photographic series are intended to critically illustrate how “faux” these images and objects may become for the future, by encapsulating lived moments of today, where the plastic waste portrays a crucial environmental problem endangering the biological life within the marine environment.

Knowing that the photographic image creation allowed many expressions within the art world; in creating the photographic series, I tried to avoid the abstraction within the photographic images and I hope to achieve the expected kind of abstraction came from the very idea of the overall conceptualization of the “fauxssilles” as they aim for an active visual voice that counteracts with the emerging problem.

Accordingly, I had the support from the photographic theory focusing on photography as an evidence, proof of lived moments and traces of light blocking materials such as plastic objects conceptualized as “fauxssilles”. The dual reading of this term “fauxssilles” might be firstly the naming of the Cyanotype prints which are chemically durable for long periods, and secondly the photographed plastic objects selected in relation to the data of most found items on the ocean shores, which are also highly durable contrary to the biological organisms sharing the same marine environment.

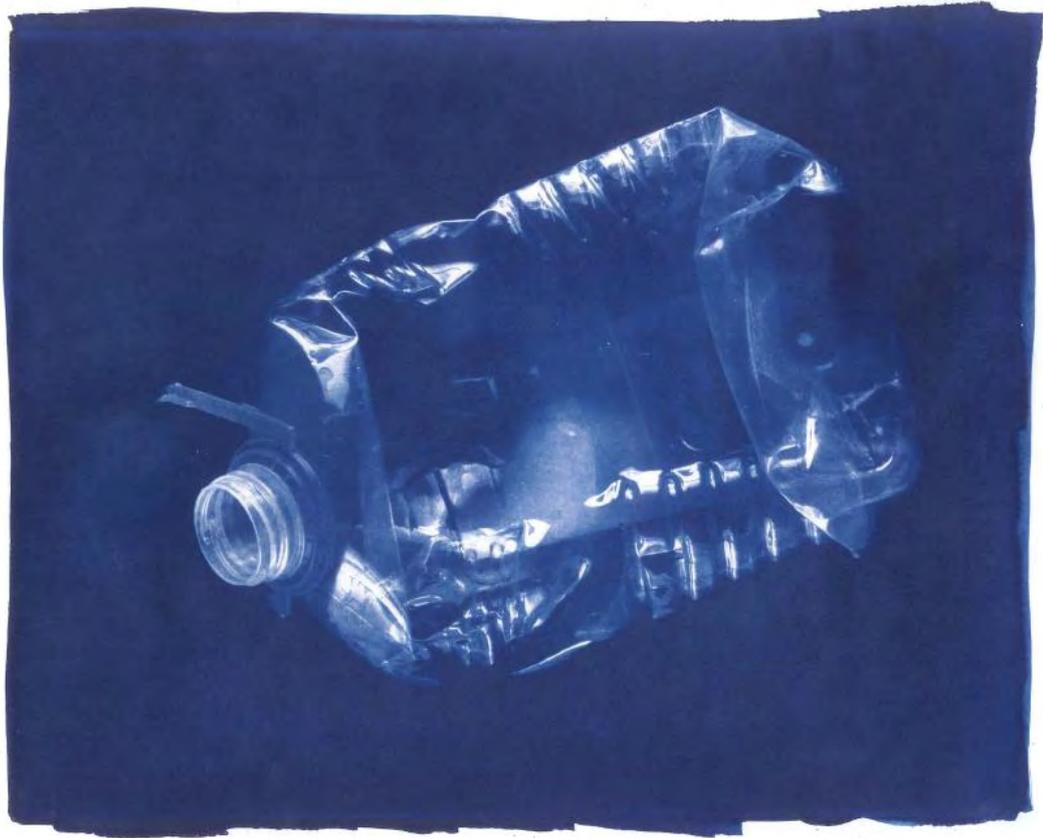


Figure 57. Fauxssille created with a big sized plastic bottle.

The final photographic series of 14 photographs were exhibited together and there is a possibility to add other objects to this series in the near future, in order to critically illustrate the plastic waste problem. I believe it was more powerful to see each image hanged on the same wall rather than the creation in a form of a book; as they might be referring to different captured parts of one single source of marine environment, where the dark blue liquid remains as a surrounding theme and the plastics vary in sizes and shapes.

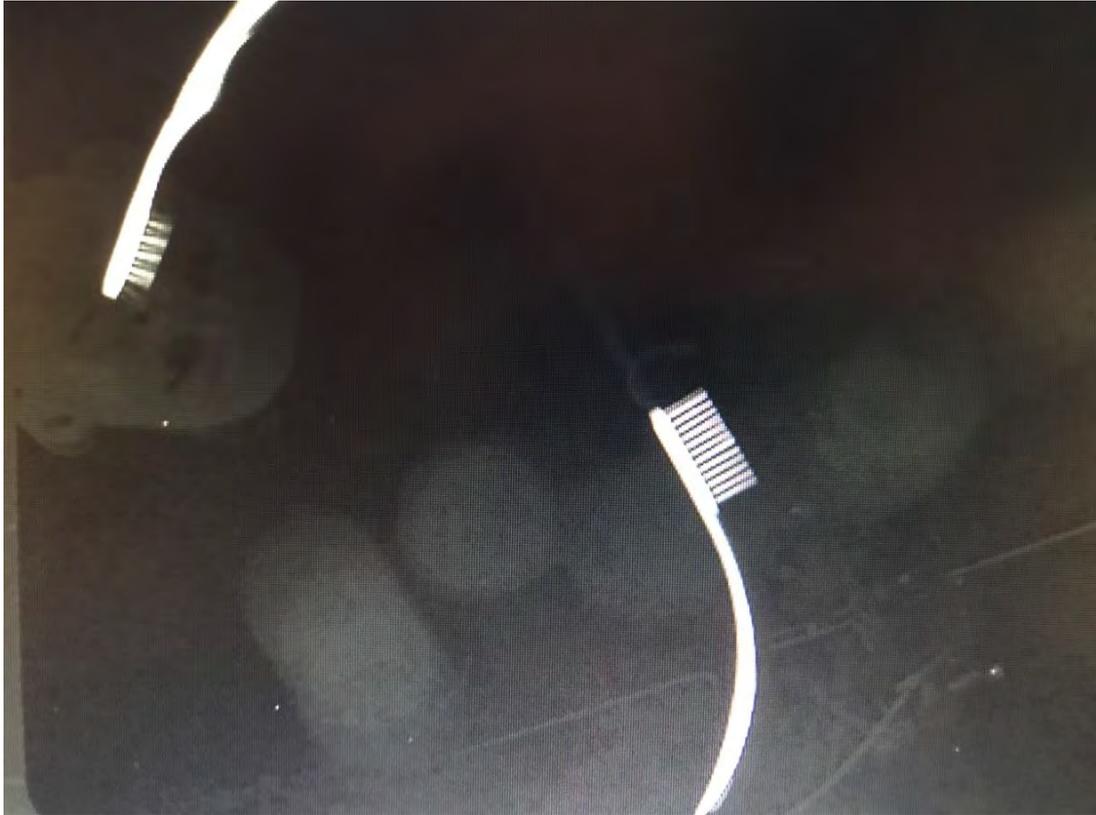


Figure 58. Reflection on the photograph, created during the series.

This photograph was taken from the entire photographs produces on the shooting. There were 14 photographs being used to create the final series but nearly 300 photographs have been shot during the process. This photographs reminds me again that it was a journey, full of discoveries and juxtapositions of arts and expressions. This image portrays my face reflected on the dark liquid surface, while I was focusing on my compositions in the water. As the toothbrush is flowing and captured near my mouth, it merges flat as this image of me becoming part of the process, with the objects, environment and the concept. I appreciate the elements of accidents that lead to discoveries.

Throughout the experimentation and research process, I came across many of those moments when I was inspired fully within these small discoveries and I would like to mention five things I came across within this journey.

I discovered the term “fautographie” which encouraged me to appreciate the faults and errors in photography, in addition to conceptually and vocabulary wise supporting my argument as “fauxssilles” Secondly, It was very surprising to come across the Fake Fossils of Dr. Johann Beringer as I was first worried to see the term I have been used was mentioned before, but as I discovered his story, it turned out that his intentions was never to have them “fake” rather it was the consequences of a prank. Thirdly, it was very inspirational for me looking at the book related to paleontology and fossil, as their scientific perspective and the historical narration was very interesting, in order to be able to discuss about the fossils through history and life evidence. It was nice to figure out that the fossils were once called “vis plastica” to describe their extra-terrestrial notion, unknown to humans back then. What today’s plasticity brought to this concept of fossils is once again, within the scope of Anthropogenic era, is turning fossils fuels into synthetic artifacts, the unnatural and inorganic chemistry quite unknown to the nature; plastic being “vis plastica” for the environment once again. The fourth thing which has been very influential for me is discovering Mandy Barker’s works as she was very certain about her artistic motivation and although her works vary in sizes and concepts, she has a clear style approaching the plastic waste problem through photography. Finally, what this process allowed me to witness is the freedom of expressions through the freedom of experimentations, as the photogram experiments played a big part of the theoretical and practical aspects.

## **5.2. Future Expectations**

I have eliminated the notion of collecting and site specific design, due to some limitations of time and some considerations against the abstraction. In more time, there might be other solutions keeping the photogram element within the process, and there could be an option to embody a location based project such as the shores of Mediterean or the Bosphorus Sea, to create a visual documentation created within the location, with the collected items, Just like the Ocean Conservancy posters illustrate, or the reports highlights and Mandy Barker's collective works but more like silhouettes, in blue and on site. Through this way, there can be more "fauxssilles" creates, to give this critical approach a wider audience. I wish the plastic waste problem being diminished within the few years, due to more eco-friendly living and the support of governments and NGO's.

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