

Anne Hardy and Fatoş Üstek in conversation

The following text is edited from a recording made at Maureen Paley, London on 4th February 2021



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Fatoş Üstek: The new show *Rising Heat* is composed solely of photograms that you have been making over the last year. Would you talk us through how you started making photograms and how they relate to your broader practice?

Anne Hardy: I made the first photograms in 2015 when I was working on my solo show for Modern Art Oxford called *FIELD*.² They grew out of the process of making that exhibition. In all of my work I use materials that are leftover, abandoned or found; things that have somehow lost their purpose or their function but embody a feeling of potential. These objects might include a piece of concrete I find on the street, or a sound which I record. While I was building quite a complex installation in my London

studio for the *FIELD* exhibition, I started to investigate the left-over material I was generating, such as dust particles and pieces of string, and so on. I would collect everything from the floor at the end of each day and take these items to the darkroom and experiment. I'm interested in the process of transformation that happens in the darkroom that is quite alchemical, uncontrolled and involves a level serendipity.

FÜ: Your solo exhibition at Modern Art Oxford followed two other one-person exhibitions, namely *TWIN FIELDS* at The Common Guild, Glasgow³ and *Fieldwork* at the Freiburg Kunstverein⁴. The show at Modern Art Oxford demanded a larger scale of production for you with multiple installations to install across different spaces.

¹ image: *Rising Heat*, Maureen Paley, Studio M, London 2021

² *FIELD*, Modern Art Oxford, Oxford, UK, 7 November 2015 – 10 January 2016

³ *TWIN FIELDS*, The Common Guild, Glasgow, UK, 6 June – 16 August 2015

⁴ *Fieldworks*, Kunstverein Freiburg, Freiburg, Germany, 19 September – 2 November 2014



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What was it about that exhibition that grasped your attention and made you want to start collecting other residues from the making process? Would you in a sense see the photograms as a way of digesting the exhibition?

AH: The first sculptural installation - or FIELDwork, was produced at Maureen Paley in 2013 and titled *Two Joined Fields* (2013).⁹ I worked in the upstairs gallery for about six weeks before the show opened in order to build a work in situ. The leftover materials from this FIELDwork were used to make another installation that was exhibited downstairs - *Fieldwork (materials)* (2013). This dualistic approach to making has a parallel with my early photographic works. So, I would say that my interest in residues has been inbuilt in the work for a long time. I like how these fragments convey a sense of gesture, time and presence. The Modern Art Oxford show was the first time I started to make something else with those materials.

FÜ: Within your photography and FIELDworks you construct a universe that is almost complete - that is composed of items that each have their own place, weight and significance. As the photograms are compositions that emerge from unstructured encounters between the leftovers from other works it feels that you're almost creating a parallel universe to those other projects - or is it that we are looking at the same universe but through different lenses?

AH: The FIELDworks have an overall structure to them. There is a defined feeling and atmosphere that's built from small details into a complete environment and the making process is quite controlled. I think the photograms in some way amplify those details that are found in the larger works. They're not fragments of those works, but they feel as if you had gone in close up. They're about a change of perception, suggesting an environment or world that exists on a different scale to the original - as if you've been taken into the microscopic.

FÜ: It seems that the making process of the FIELDworks and your photographic work is quite controlled. Do the photograms provide a different modality for you that allows you to employ randomness and to surrender to serendipity?

⁵ image: *An Abandonment was accountable for the Accumulation of Acid After Dark / Punctuated Remains* (detail), 2015 exhibition view: *FIELD*, Modern Art Oxford, 2015

⁶ image: *TWIN FIELDS* (detail) exhibition view: The Common Guild, Glasgow 2015

⁷ image: *Two Joined Fields – Field (I) and Field (decagon)*, 2013 exhibition view: Maureen Paley, London, 2013

⁸ image: *Two Joined Fields – Field (I) and Field (decagon)*, 2013 (interior view)

⁹ Maureen Paley, London, UK, 11 April – 25 May 2013



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AH: With everything I do, I have a process whereby I set up a framework within which to work, and that often relates to a specific location or atmosphere. With a FIELDwork, that's perhaps a yearlong process from which a single project will emerge. The photograms have a similar process, but it's happening on a smaller scale and it's something that's very immediate and might happen in one day. There is a level of control, but once I start working, I see what happens, and chance comes into that process - it feels very freeing and intuitive. I want to have that sense of tactility and movement in the end result as the process of production is actually very physical and I use a lot of different things to generate the shapes, and the colours.

FÜ: The other quality I would attribute to the series is that of ephemerality. They convey a fluid state, like a process of sublimation - where solid transforms to gas without its liquid phase.

AH: I think of the photograms as states of being - as moments, gestures, or feelings. The photograms that are on show here, are connected to the FIELDwork I made at Tate Britain in 2019/2020, *The Depth of Darkness, the Return of the Light* (2019), where I was invited to respond to the facade of Tate Britain that faces The River Thames.¹¹ This was a sculptural installation across the facade and steps with a quadrophonic sound installation that was composed to manifest different atmospheres. The sound drew on multiple references to The River Thames and I approached the site both literally and also psychologically - thinking about it as a place of ritual and history. I was thinking about a layering or collapsing of time, how might a multiplicity of timeframes collapse into each other and become visible. So, this was all in my head when I was working in the darkroom on the photograms. I was concentrating on what those atmospheres were, and how I could manifest them in a different way. Using the light and fragments of materials that I'd taken from the side of the riverbank in the course of my research and production process.

¹⁰ image: *The Depth of Darkness, the Return of the Light*, Tate Britain Winter Commission, 2019

¹¹ *The Depth of Darkness, the Return of the Light*, Tate Britain Winter Commission, Tate Britain, London, UK, 30 November 2019 – 26 January 2020

FÜ: You mentioned that the quadrophonic sound installation was creating the image of this atmospheric change for you. People standing in the centre of those gigantic loudspeakers were showered by sounds that evoked certain events, like a building crashing down. If we could say that you 'sculpted' the Tate with sounds, would you agree that, in the same manner, you are 'sculpting' the photograms with light?

AH: I think that's an interesting connection. The use of quadraphonic sound allowed me to build a mental space for the audience that could mutate and change in a way that obviously one can't do with tangible space. In other words, generally museums would not let you knock down half of their building for a commission! The plasticity of this 'sound space' lets the environment that you're inside of change shape and allows you to have a sense of the transience of where you are at that moment. I agree with your point about sculpting with light. That is what I've been trying to do. The colour that emerges as an outcome of this process creates that sense of mutability, of time, of things changing and not being in a static or fixed position.

FÜ: When you're collecting the objects how do you choose them and make the distinction of what you want, or don't want?

AH: My work is very much connected to specific types of locations within a city and thinking about the city as a living entity - an organism which we're all part of. I imagine the city as a kind of sea with tides, and eddies and places where stuff gets stranded or deposited. I think about those corners as being a bit like the unconscious, or the soul of the city and I take things from these areas. I'm interested in suggestibility, in objects where I don't know what they are or where they came from. In the case of the photograms that have plant parts in such as *Twilight Fever* (2020) or *Rising Heat* (2020), I found random bits of organic matter left on a stony beach and the image of a whole plant you see is constructed from all those different fragments - as kind of a potential plant that might exist at some time. It's about how the fragments combine together and become something else.

FÜ: We can identify a common thread across all your works - a sense of flow. From photographs, FIELDworks to photograms, they posit a before and after. For instance, in *Untitled IV (Balloons)* (2005) the scene is fleeting, as if the photograph is taken just before it vanished. Similarly, in your Art Night Commission, *Falling and Walking* (2017) – that I had the pleasure to work with you on, audiences walked into a setting that was about to collapse yet they



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¹² image: *Twilight Fever (The Depth of Darkness, the Return of the Light)*, 2020



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¹³ image: *Rising Heat (The Depth of Darkness, the Return of the Light)*, 2020

