

Martino Nicoletti

Portfolio

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Artist's statement

As a fine art photographer and visual artist I have been working for over fifteen years across different countries in South and South East Asia (Nepal, Tibet, India, Pakistan, Thailand, Laos Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia) and Europe.

My artistic work is largely characterized by a radically “primitivist” approach, based on the use of analogue ultra-vintage devices and techniques (e.g. box cameras, toy cameras, pinhole photography): beyond aesthetic aspects, this specific choice is inspired by the desire to bring the production of images within the framework of a slow and non-intrusive approach to reality.

This same option – programmatically related to a drastic limitation of control over the “photographic act” – also aims to lead image production toward the vast territory of the “aleatory”: an approach enabling the photographic device and even the cine-camera itself to express their own intrinsic spontaneity without any bounds or restrictions.

From the domain of certainty, therefore images come back to that one of pure “chance”, with all the risks and the possibilities which may result from this approach: a radical visual primitivism chosen as a privileged way to free the gaze and make possible the emergence of inner landscapes.



Qualification

PhD

- 2012 Practice-based PhD in Fine-art photography. University of the West of Scotland - School of Creative and Cultural Industries. Thesis title: *Submerged Landscapes: Aesthetics of Visual Primitivism*.

- 1997 Ph.D. in Visual anthropology. University of Siena - Faculty of Humanities. Thesis title: *The Ancestral Forest: A Study on the Religious Imagery of the Kulunge Râi of the Nepal Himalayas*.

Master

1992 Master degree in Visual anthropology. University of Perugia - Faculty of Humanities.

Publications

Photographic and travel books

Nicoletti M. (2016), *Kathmandu: diario dal Kali Yuga* (book + CD), Paris, Le loup des steppes

Nicoletti M. (2015a), *Kathmandu: Lessons of Darkness*, Milan, Mimesis International;

Nicoletti M. (2015b), *The Snowy Snap : The Story of Chaturman Rai, Himalayan Folk-photographer and Film-maker*, Milan, Mimesis International

Nicoletti M. (2014), *Cantare tra le mani*, Torino: Lindau

Nicoletti M. (2013a), *The Zoo of the Giraffe Women: A Journey among the Kayan of Northern Thailand*, Kathmandu: Vajra Publications (orig. edition: Rome 2011)

Nicoletti M. (2013b), *The Nomadic Sacrifice: The Chöd Pilgrimage among the Bönpo of Dolpo (Western Nepal)*, Kathmandu: Vajra Publications (orig. edition: Rome 2010)

Nicoletti M. (2012), *Kathmandu. Lezioni di tenebre*, Roma: Casadei Libri

Nicoletti M. (2010), *Chaturman Rai: fotografo contadino dell'Himalaya*, Roma, Exòrma

Nicoletti M. (2008), *The Path of Light: Ritual Music of the Tibetan Bon*, Bologna, Borgatti Edizioni Musicali (CD-book)

Nicoletti M. (2005), *Riddum: The Sacred Word of Sancha Prasad Rai, Shaman of the Himalayas*, Roma, Castelvecchi

Artist's books

Nicoletti M. (2018), *Gudel*, Paris, Éditions Le loup des steppes

Nicoletti M. (2017) *Les routes d'eau*, Paris, Le loup des steppes

Nicoletti M. (2015) *Water Memory: An Orphic post-mortem Journey*, Paris, Abaris

Nicoletti M. (2015) *Bangkok Skyline: Five Photographs plus One*, Paris, Abaris

Nicoletti M. (2010), *Submerged Landscapes: A Pinhole Photographic Tale*, Bangkok, Parbphin LDT

Nicoletti M. (2010), *Interregnum*, Bangkok, Parbphin LDT

Nicoletti M. (2009), *Kathmandu, leçons de ténèbres*. Bangkok: One Editions

Exhibitions

Solo exhibitions

- 2014 *Water memory*. Multimedia exhibition, Lassalle College of the Arts, Singapore
2012 *Chuna wa tok (Lime and Mud)*. Series of landscape artworks; Village of Booni; Hindukush Pakistan
2012 *Submerged Landscape*. Photographic exhibition; Booni Community Centre; Booni Village – Hindukush Pakistan
2012 *A Human Zoo: among the Kayan of North Thailand*. Photographic exhibition; Museo Nazionale D'arte Orientale “Giuseppe Tucci”, Rome
2012 *The Zoo of the Giraffe Women*. Video-installation; Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA), Glasgow
2012-2011 *Beuys and the shaman*. Series of installations; Palazzo della Penna – Museum of Contemporary Art; Municipality of Perugia; Perugia (Italy)
2011 *Ruins*. Photographic installation. Abandoned house; Trasimeno Lake; Umbria (Italy)
2010 *Nomads of the Invisible*. Photographic exhibition and multimedia installation; Leonessa Museo Civico, Leonessa, Rieti (Italy)
2009 *Bangkok: Dreams of a Dead Person*. Installation; “Area Privata Gallery”, Perugia (Italy)
2009 *Chod: Sacrifying the Self*. Photographic exhibition and multimedia installation; Sala Santa Rita – Comune di Roma, Rome
2008 *Kathmandu, Leçons des ténèbres*. Photographic exhibition; Fahrenheit 451, Rome

Group exhibitions

- 2014 *Show Cabinet*. Multimedia installation; Show Studio, London
2012 *The Last Mile*. Multimedia installation; The Bonnafont Gallery, San Francisco
2012 *I Must not Look You in the Eyes*. Video-installation; Sound Thought – The Arches, Glasgow
2011 *The Nine Doors: Shamanism and Contemporary Art*. Video installation; Sala Santa Rita (Rome)
2011 *Lo zoo delle donne giraffa*. Photographic exhibition and multimedia installation; “Stazione di Topolò”, Udine (Italy)
2011 *Le nove porte*. Video installation; Castello Brancaccio, Municipalità of San Gregorio di Sassola, Rome
2010 *Stenopeica*. Photographic installation; Silpakorn University, Bangkok

- 2010 *A Shadow in a Wardrobe: Memories*. Multimedia exhibition; Silpakorn University, Bangkok
2010 *Taswir-tracks*. Photographic exhibition and multimedia installation; “Stazione di Topolò”, Udine (Italy)
2008 *Mekong Monsoon*. Photographic exhibition; “Stazione di Topolò”, Udine (Italy)
2008 *Leçons de ténèbres*. Photographic exhibition and performance; Fattoria San Giuseppe, Spello (Italy)
2008 *Visit of courtesy*. Installation; “Casa d’Arte”, Spello (Italy)
2003 *Cosmogonia*. Multimedia exhibition. Palazzo delle Papesse – Centre of Contemporary Art, Siena (Italy)

Curated exhibitions

- 2012-2011 *Beuys and the Shaman: Ecstasy, Ritual and Art*; Museo Civico Palazzo Penna (Perugia, Italy)
2011 *The Nine Doors: Shamanism and Contemporary Art*; Sala Santa Rita (Rome)
2010 *Nomads of the Invisible*; Municipality of Leonessa; Museo Civico di Leonessa (Leonessa, Rieti, Italy)
2010 *Taswir-tracks*; “Stazione di Topolò”, Udine (Italy)
2009 *Chod: Sacrifying the Self*; Sala Santa Rita (Rome)

Contacts

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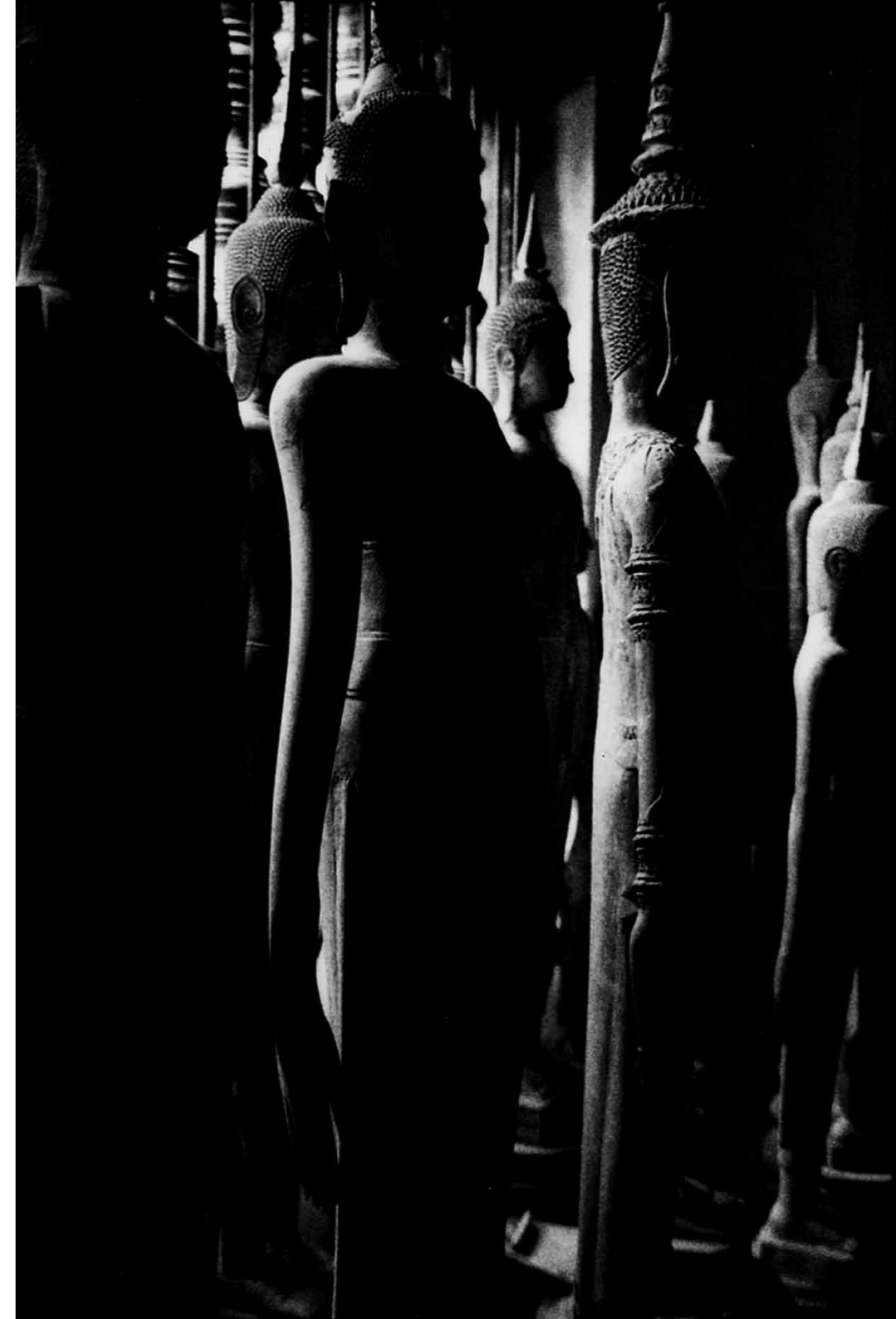
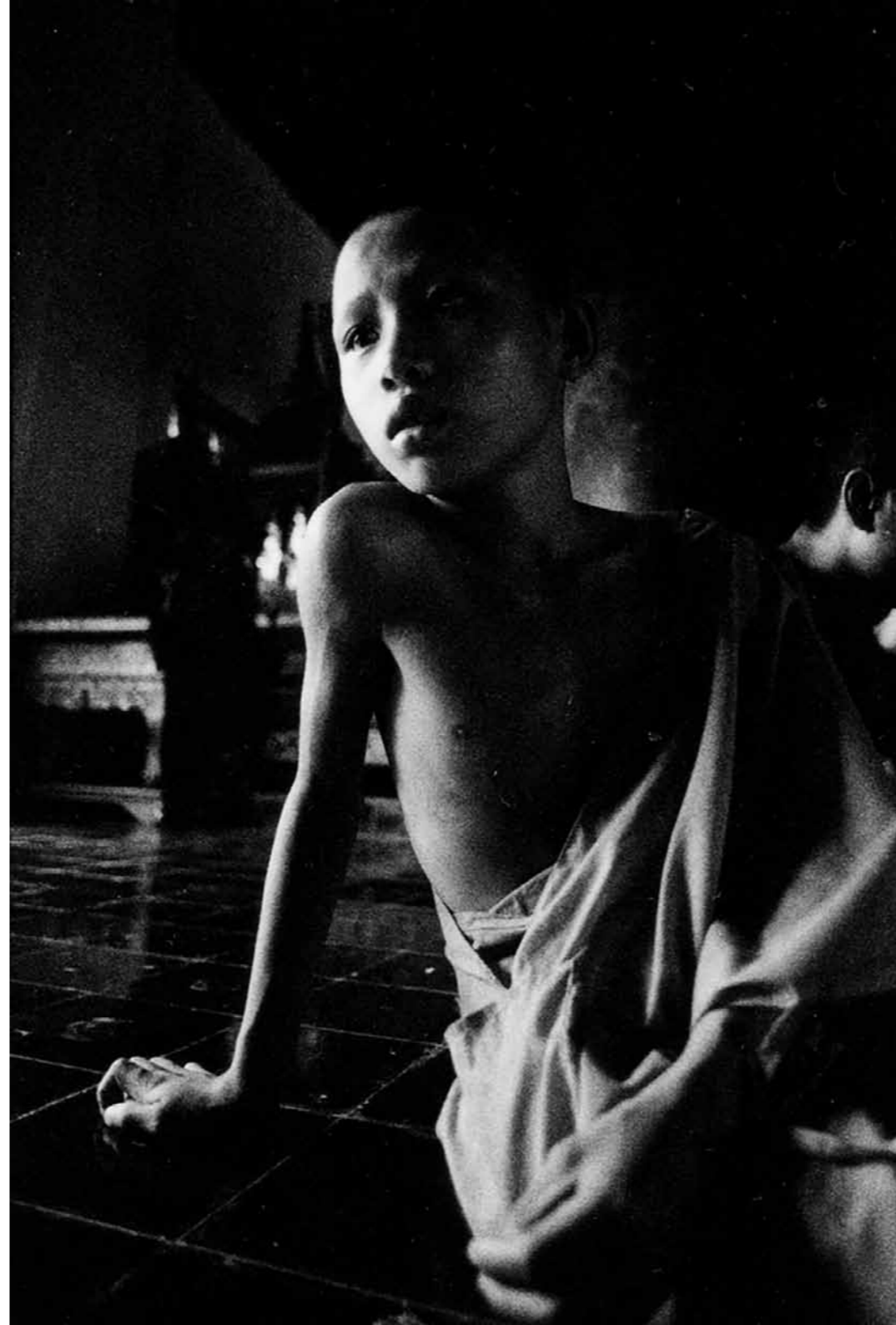
Black and white analogue photography

(pinhole, box and toy cameras;
old-fashioned professional cameras)

Calling for Rain

Analogue photography (Luang Prabhang – Laos, 2007)

In an ancient Buddhist temple, statues, guarded by dim light and protected by silence, recount. Outside, monsoonal rain.



Bangkok Skyline

Analogue photography (Bangkok, 2007)

An old plastic Afga Click, 6×6 format, of the 1960s peers at the subtle line that separates the world of humans from that one where man is no longer.



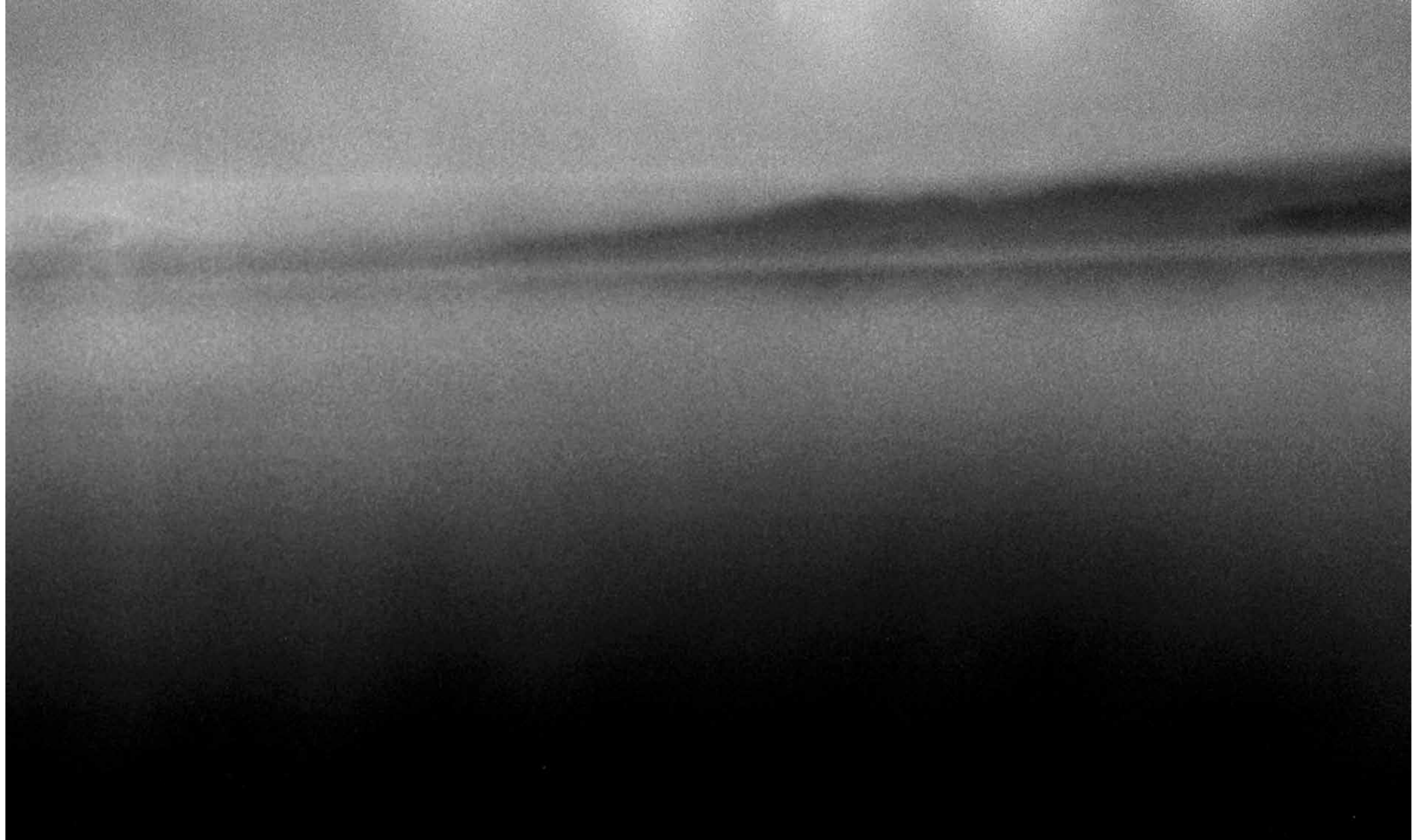
Water Memory

Analogue pinhole photography (Trasimeno Lake - Italy, 2013)

Inspired by the texts of ancient Orphic gold tablets – traditionally buried alongside the body of the initiate as a memento and actual guide during the journey – this work, combining performance and photography, presents a series of images taken in the territory of the Trasimeno Lake, in the Italian region of Umbria, using pinhole photography.

In this visual and visionary narration of an initiatory afterlife, the solitary soul is depicted dialoguing with its old memories and fighting the relicts of its past, placed between the risk of extinction in the abysses of nothingness and the possibility of continuing its journey to be finally reunited with its divine matrix.











Chöd

The Self-Sacrificial Ritual Among The Bonpo of Nepal

Analogue photography (Nepal, 2009)

In the heart of the Himalayas, officiants belonging to Tibet's ancient religion, Bön, undertake a long ritual pilgrimage through wild and inhospitable places inhabited by mountain deities, water genii, ferocious demons and dangerous ghosts.

As the pilgrimage unfolds, having attracted the spirits' attention with wildly provocative acts and evoking their presence by reciting a ritual text and the sound of magical musical instruments, the practitioners celebrate the meditative sacrifice of their own body (*chöd*), offered to a whole host of invisible beings as spiritual nourishment during a singular ritual banquet.











Submerged Landscapes

Pinhole photography (Trasimeno Lake - Umbria, 2009)

Inspired by an ancient pagan myth, this work narrates the tragic love story between the fascinating aquatic nymph Agilla and Prince Trasimenus, son of the powerful Etruscan King Tyrrhenus.

Background of the oneiric work is Trasimenus, the gorgeous and vast lake of Italy's Umbria region as well as the original abode of Agilla.

“Seen from the depths of the water, sunbeams appear just as shining reflections. Water is not only matter: it is a fluid kingdom, to which one may or may not belong. Earth is not only an element: it is a pulsating territory, to which one may or may not belong. Fire is not only a substance: it is a living realm of which one may be part, or not. The same is true of the air, if one knows anything about it”.













Kathmandu

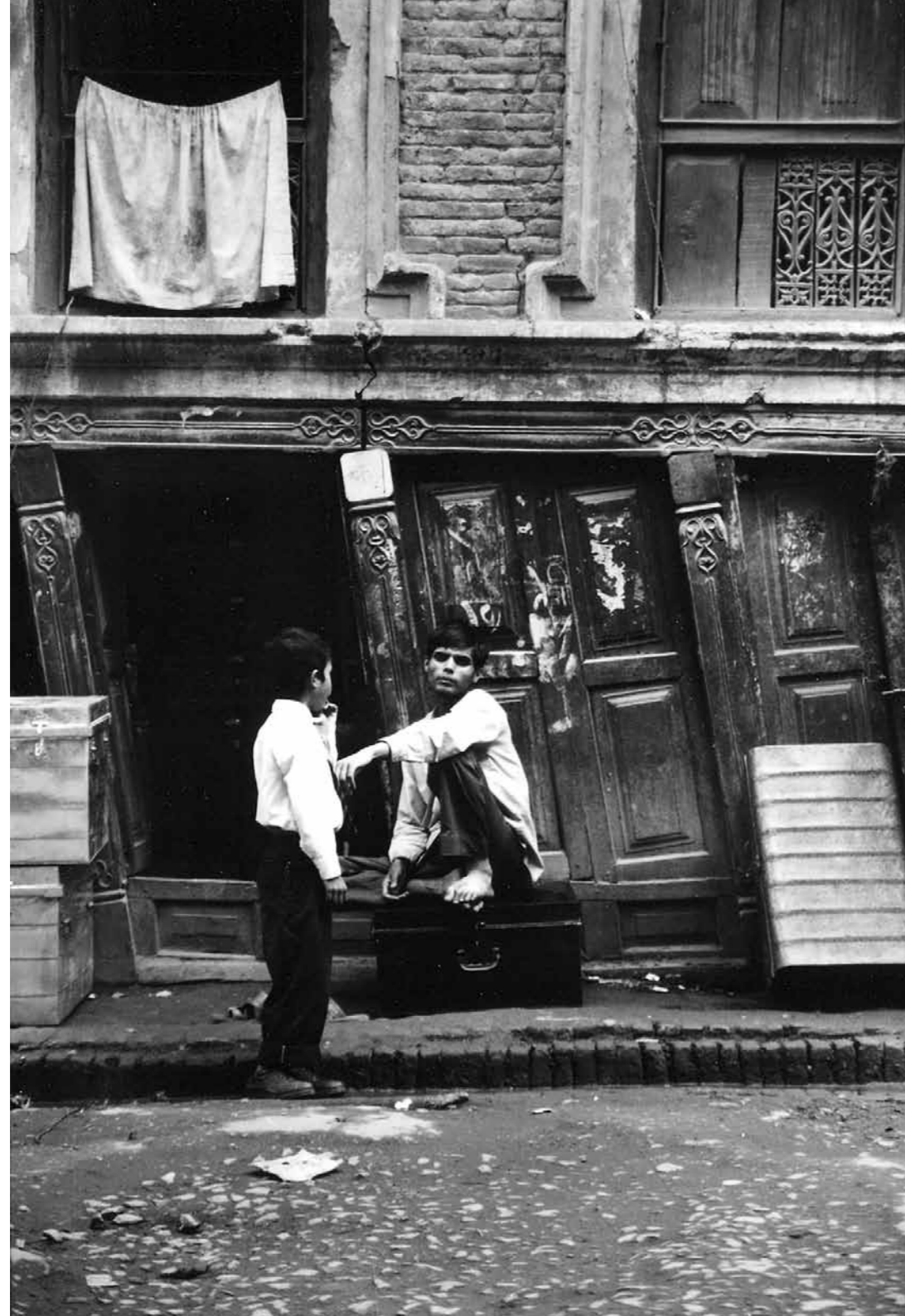
Lessons of Darkness

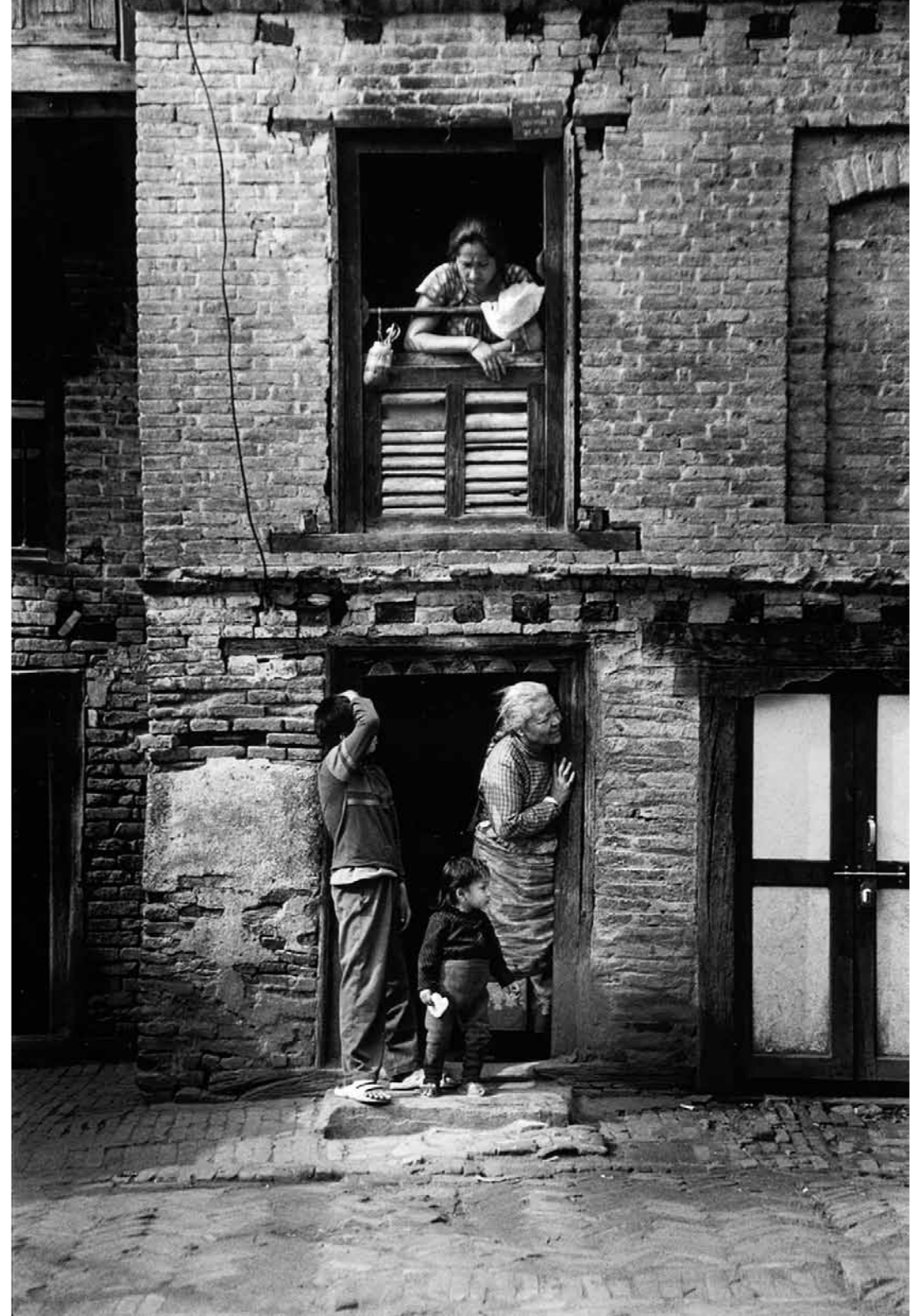
Analogue photography (Kathmandu, 2006-2011)

*“Things that were there and others that should have been.
This city, the Kathmandu of dust, mud and wood, hoisted and then
taken away, ripens at sunset.
People evaporate again in breath and the whole flat valley once more
lies down on its column of vertebrae”.*

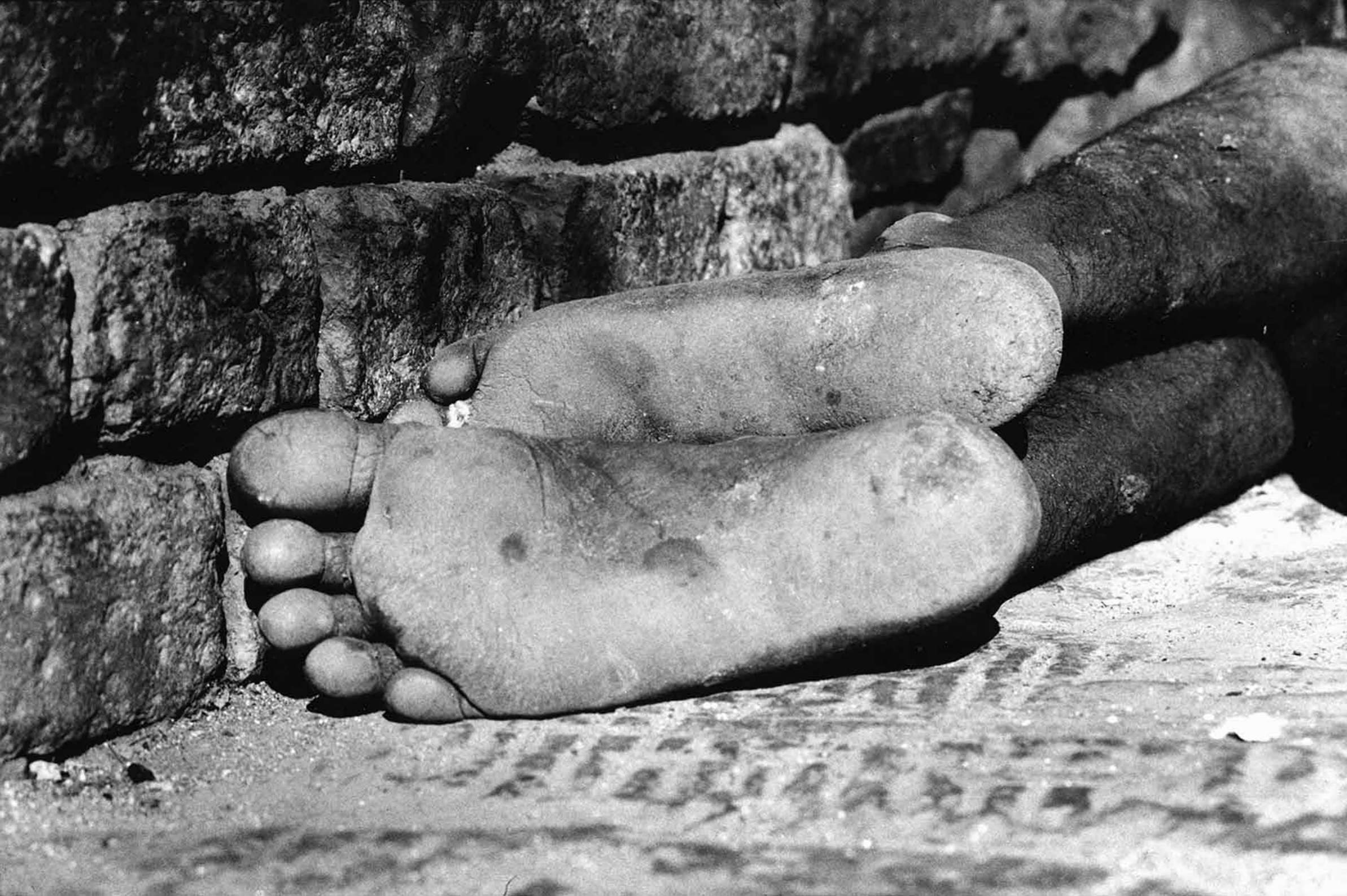






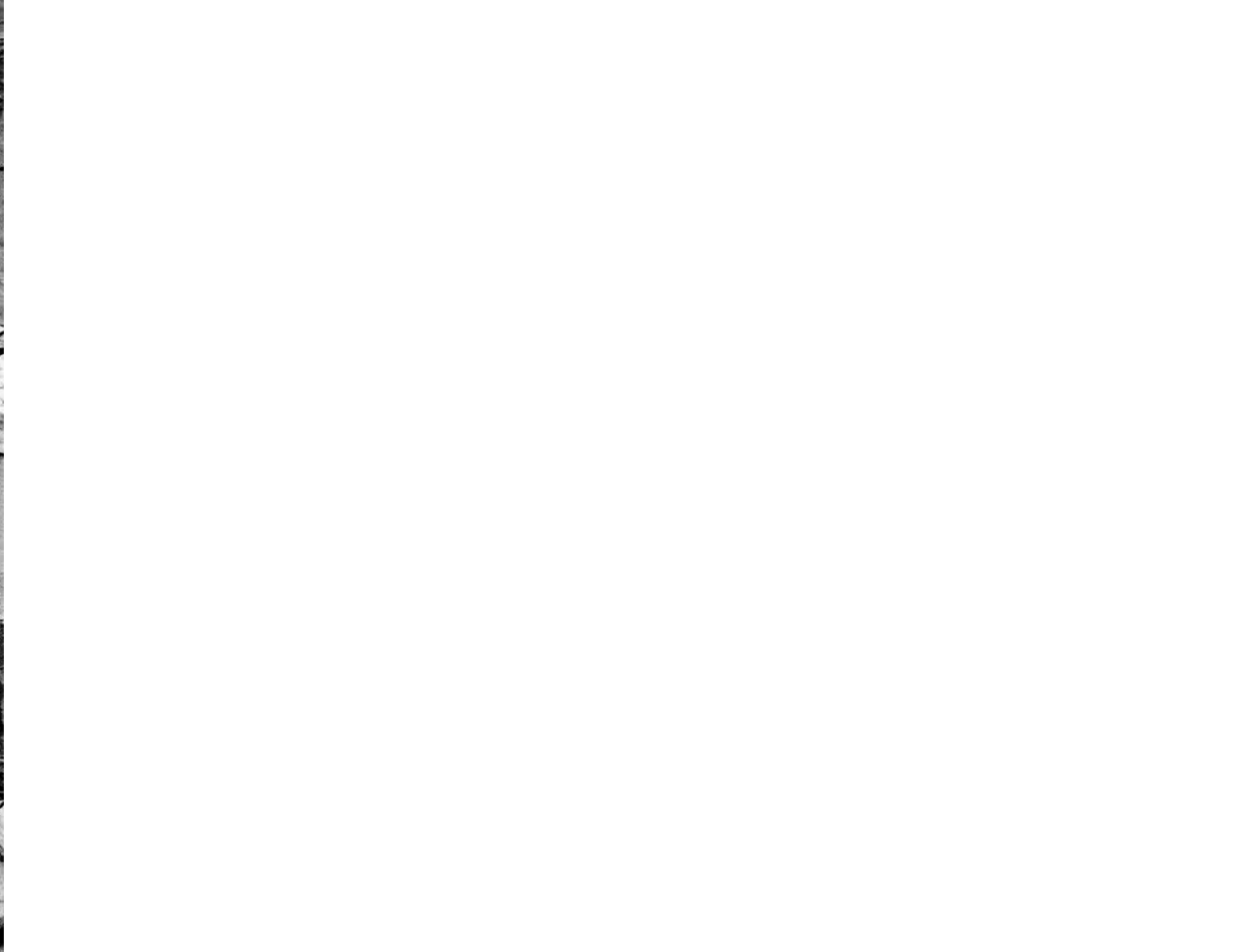














Riddum

Analogue photography (Kulunge villages, Eastern Nepal, 2000)

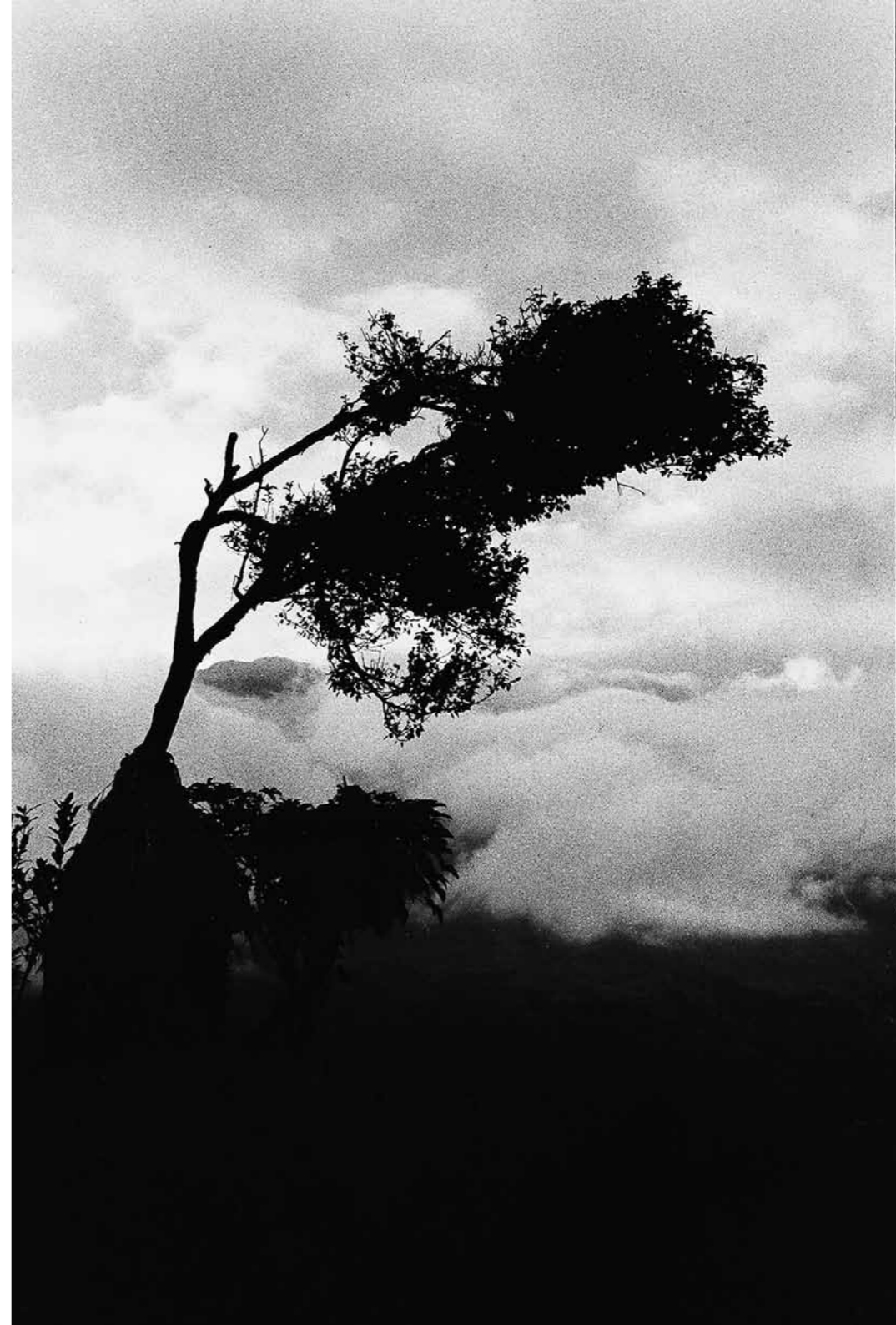
An artwork inspired by the sacred oral tradition of the Kulunge Rai of Nepal, as recounted to the author by the living voice of one of the most renowned old shamans of this ethnic group.

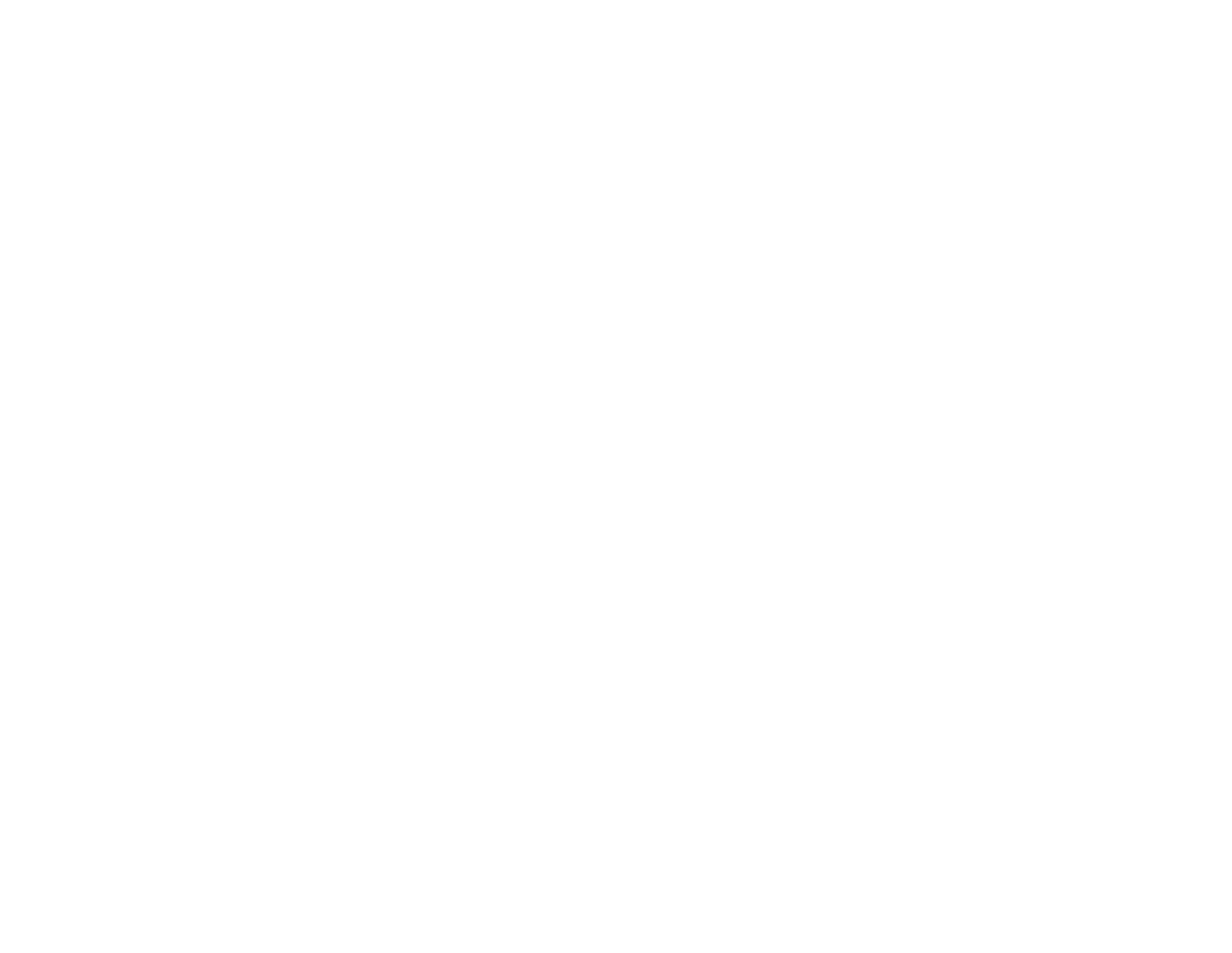
One day, the aged shaman Sancha Prasad Rai told me the story of his people. The story that even today the elders of the Kulunge Rai tribe hand down orally from generation to generation, under the name of 'riddum'.















Singing in your Hands:

A Journey among the Ismailis of the Hindukush

Analogue photography - plastic toy camera (Booni Village – Hindukush, Pakistan, 2012).

Arising from a sojourn in the Hindukush mountain range between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the work provides an uncommon glimpse of life among the Ismailis, one of the most fascinating and controversial groups of Shiite Islam, now directly confronting the Taliban threat.











A Himalayan Shamanic Pilgrimage

Analogue photography (East Nepal, 2012)

A series of images devoted to the pilgrimage to Silu-cha Mountain and the sacred lake of Salpa in eastern Nepal.









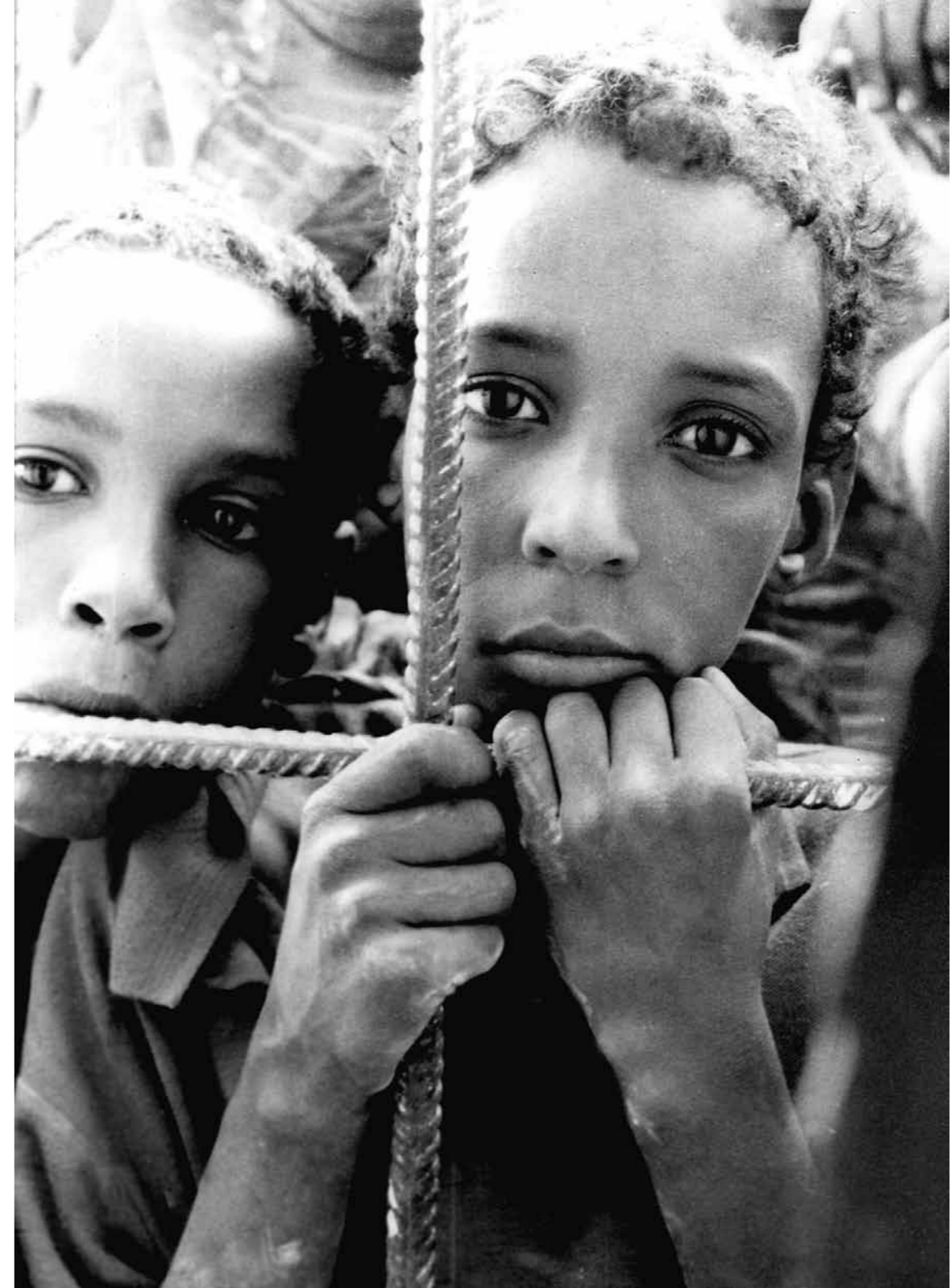


Suspended

Analogue photography (Algerian Sahara, 2011)

A work on the life in Saharawi refuge camps of Tindouf (Algeria).







The Zoo of the Giraffe Women

Analogue photography - Old box cameras, 6x9 format, of the 1920s and plastic Afa Click camera, 6x6 format, of the 1960s (Mae Hong Son – Thailand, 2009-2010)

A work devoted to ethnic tourism and life in the “human zoos” of northern Thailand.

“I am as you want me to be. If you follow me, I flee. Then, as soon as you reach me, docile, I let you capture me. I do not offer any resistance. I give way. I surrender. I leave you to it.

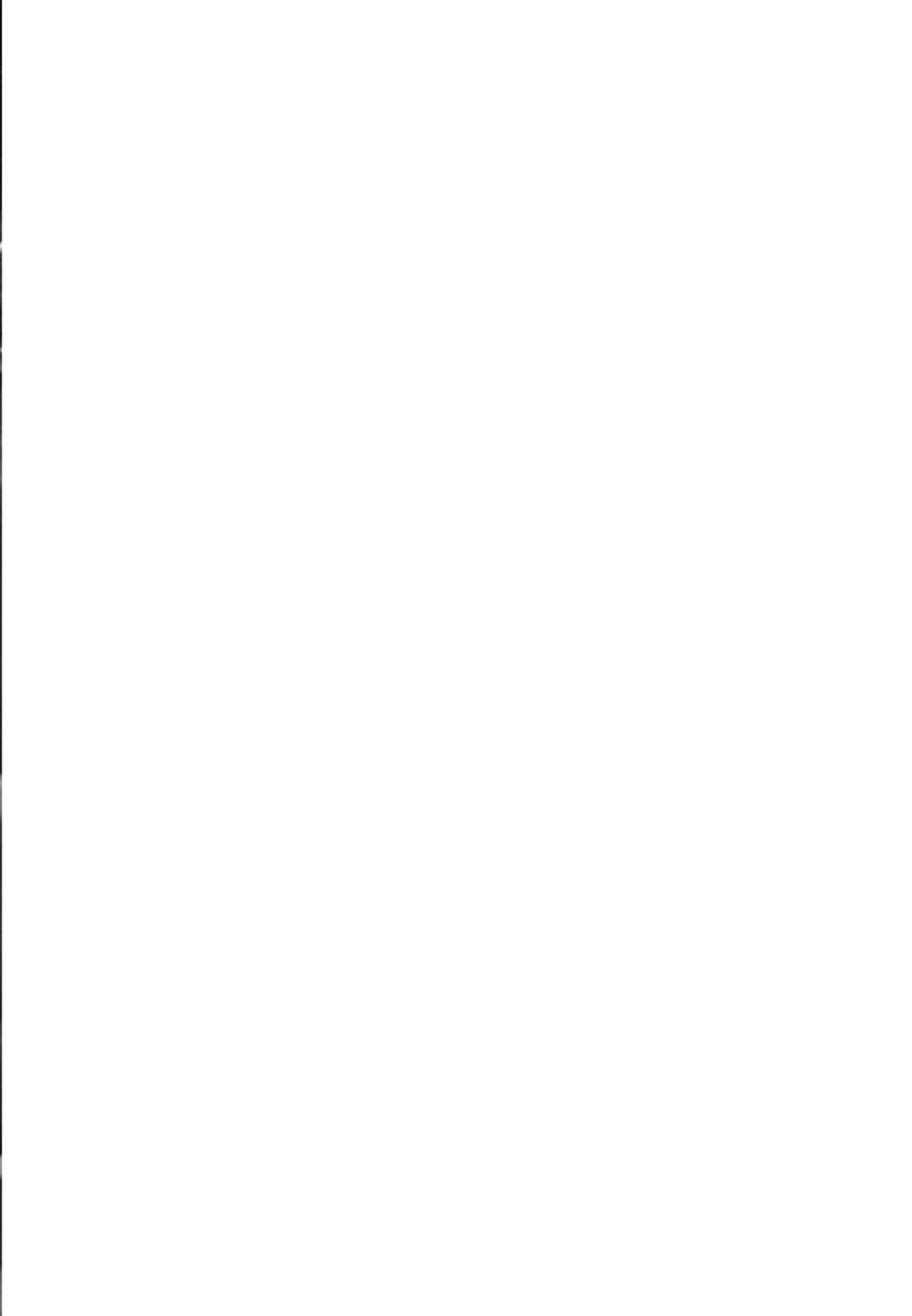
I know I must not look you in the eyes. I don't have to look you in the eyes. I have learnt. I do not do that. Leaving, you gave me a caress on the forehead, asking me to keep on sleeping. Do you see? I am sleeping.

There were smiles all round. Scattered on the tables, hanging from a door jamb, forgotten among the clothes to wash, among the bracelets and the puppets to sell. Crumpled up smiles among the dust of the road.

They aren't smiles. Actually they are smiles with a woman behind. Smiles to put on when someone comes from outside. Smiles to take off, removing the rubber band, when he leaves again. Smiles to slip on and slip off. To lay down, to put back, and to take up again when necessary.

Giraffe women. People for the zoo. Bodies tampered with. Beauty in the stocks”.







Colour digital photography

Pinhole Mekong

Digital pinhole photography (Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, 2009)

A long journey along Mekong river in accompanied by a digital pinhole camera.













The Path of Light

Digital photography (Nepal, 2013-2017)

A photographic reportage devoted to Bön, the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet.











Bangkok Slum

Digital photography (Bangkok, 2012)

Life and non-life, witnessings and memories in a Bangkok suburbs' slum.







