



IZABELA PLUTA

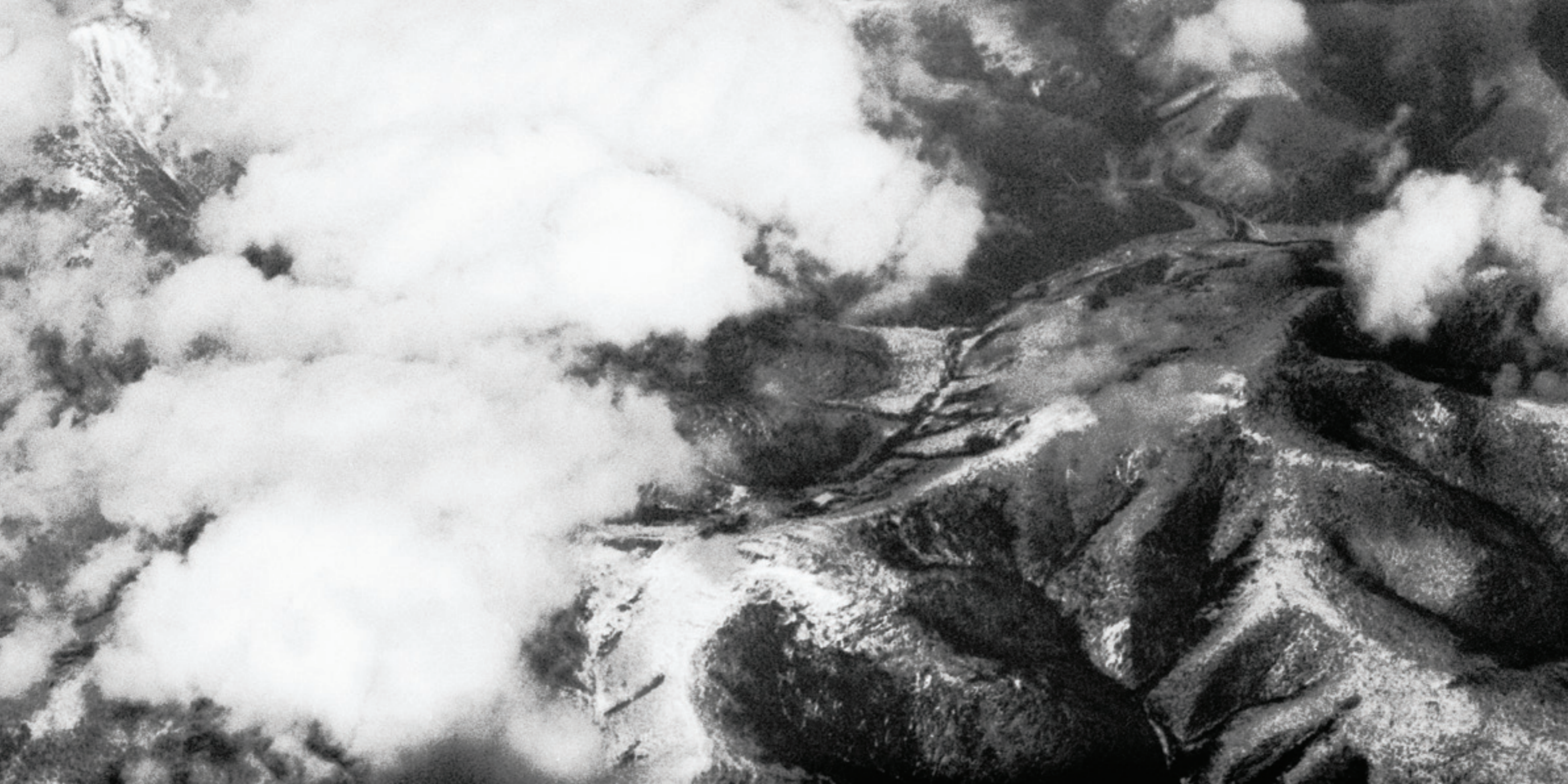
**DISPLACED IMAGES
OF DISTANT OBJECTS**

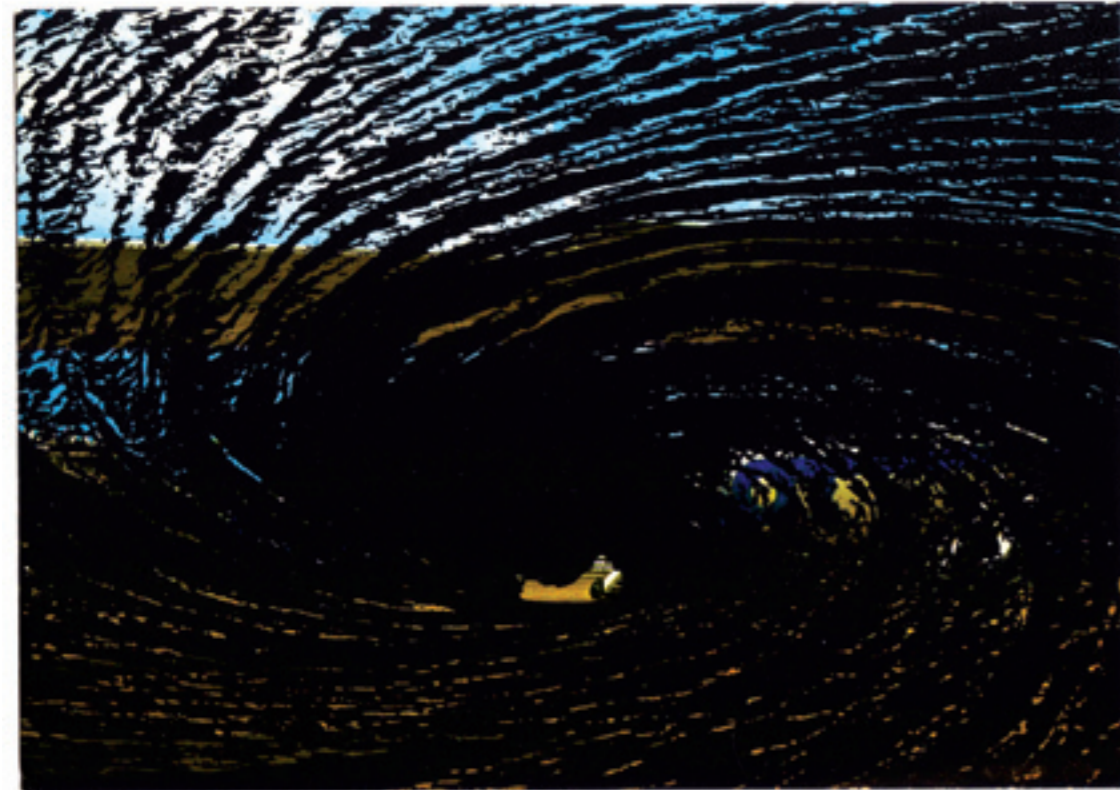


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OF DISTANT OBJECTS**

Monash Gallery of Art, Focus Gallery
21 September–16 October 2011





DISPLACED IMAGES OF DISTANT OBJECTS

*...here, in this corner, between the chest and the fireplace, 'you find countless remedies for boredom, and an infinite number of things that deserve to occupy your mind for all time: the musty odour of the minutes of three centuries ago; the secret meaning of the hieroglyphics in fly-dung; the triumphal arch of that mouse-hole; the frayed tapestry against which your round, bony back is lolling; the gnawing noise of your heels on the marble; the powdery sound of your sneeze... and finally, the soul of all this old dust from corners forgotten by brooms.'*¹

In Gaston Bachelard's literary reverie *The poetics of space* we are introduced to the 'corner dreamer' Count Pinamonte, a solitary figure who inhabits Oscar Vladislas de Lubicz-Milosz's novel *L'amoureuse initiation*.² Pinamonte prefers to occupy himself with the poor, forgotten spaces of his crumbling Italian palace, disconsolately waiting for his lost lover to return. This curious habit of dwelling in corners is an act of reminiscence, a meditation on the sacred and the profane, the present moment and the passing of time, spaces occupied and unoccupied, the intimate and the infinite, sensation and the nature of being. It is the sublime that is present in humble, discarded objects, places, and images in the world. This corner *is* the world: it is an interstitial space, a nook set aside for contemplating displaced images and distant things.

The minutes of three centuries ago continue to tick and the soul of all this old dust is disturbed as our sense of time and place simultaneously expands and contracts, unbounded moments upon moments traversing back and forwards. This limitless motion offers us momentum, vibrating with the incessant thrum of existence where past and present, distance and proximity, are all part of the same continuum. It is in this immeasurable space that we are finally able to grasp the monumental contained in small things and the extraordinary in the commonplace.

Izabela Pluta offers us an infinite number of things that deserve to occupy our minds for all time. Uncovering the remarkable in unremarkable locations, she traverses time and place fluidly. In her particular corner of the world we discover a postcard of the Baltic, imprinted with a black whirlwind form, like the residue of a fingerprint. A series of photographs of discarded and

displaced objects unearthed from her garden: a broken, disjointed vertebrae; corroded, encrusted metal objects; an arching horseshoe; a gnarled leather boot, its sole intact, missing laces. A glimpse of an interior with two posters of tall ships, taped to the wall at their corners. A map of the Baltic Sea with lights that show origin and destination. Aerial views of the earth as seen from the air, forming patterns that resemble lichen on rock. A large wreck yard in central Finland, a peculiarly ordered man-made mountain of refuse.

This incongruous, and yet strangely synchronous, collection of found objects and images are recorded plainly and without sentimentality. Pluta's distinctive photographic eye recaptures displaced and discarded moments, all intimately connected to her own serendipitous encounters. A gleaner of material culture and the chanced-upon image, she rummages, digs, photographs and gathers, accumulating odds and ends. I am reminded of the film *The gleaners and I (Les glaneurs et la glaneuse)* by French filmmaker Agnès Varda, in which we are drawn into the world of contemporary gleaning – those who forage for leftover food from fields, dumpsters behind supermarkets, and in urban market stalls; those who collect discarded objects, furniture and household debris from the dark streets of the Parisian suburbs.³

While ostensibly signifying the wastefulness of contemporary society, we are also drawn into the poetics of scavenging. Varda becomes a gleaner herself, a collector of images, experiences, stories and places which she captures with her video recorder. Plump, heart-shaped potatoes rejected by farmers and supermarkets for their lack of uniformity, and clocks without hands abandoned at the side of the road become precious things to Varda, as she confides, 'a clock without hands is my kind of thing.'⁴ I believe the same may be true for Pluta. Like Varda, she is an astute gleaner of places, images and objects, using photography as a means of witnessing sites in various states of decay and dilapidation. In their glorious ruin and disrepair each image signifies a deeper association with physical and psychological displacement and distance. Perhaps ironically, in accenting their dislocation and remoteness Pluta is able to reawaken a sense of familiarity and longing, and bring them closer to us.

While the places shown in each photograph are uninhabited, they resonate with a palpable human presence. In these unoccupied spaces there is the residual trace of intervention and agency, including the keen eye and hand

of Pluta herself. The process of discovery forms an essential part of her practice, and the phenomenological experience of place is as important as the material that emerges from it. Pluta has the sensibility of an anthropologist or an archaeologist, although her methodology is undoubtedly that of an artist. She is able to uncover the profound metaphorical associations that each image shares, and there is an intuitive and deeply personal logic in the way that Pluta (re)collects and arranges them. We can imagine each piece scattered throughout her studio, her home, in draws, in corners, or on the gallery wall, shuffled and reshuffled. It is here that other unexpected associations appear and fresh narratives and histories are born.

In whatever form they come into being, we are given an intimate glimpse into Pluta's own physical and psychological map-making, the characteristic way that she orientates herself within the world both past and present. While there may be a lack of sentimentality in the way each image is recorded and presented, Pluta's photographic practice is always an act of remembrance, a keepsake. These recollections are partially concealed from us, secreted away in a private corner known only to Pluta. And yet we are also complicit in this act of remembrance in a context that is entirely our own. In their discordance each object and image resonates with shared consequence and meaning, and in their ordinariness they are rendered extraordinary. They are not out of place.

Emma Mayall

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¹ Quoted in Gaston Bachelard, *The poetics of space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994) 141

² See Oscar Vladislav de Lubicz-Milosz, *L'amoureuse initiation* (c1910; Paris: A Silvaire, c1958)

³ Historically the act of gleaning was to gather the remnants of crops left behind after the harvest. People would assemble together to skirt the edges of fields collecting husks of corn and wheat left by the scythe, to dig through the soil for morsels missed by the plough, to gather grapes left to rot on the vine, or apples left to wither on fruit trees.

⁴ Agnès Varda (Director), *The gleaners and I (Les glaneurs et la glaneuse)* director and screenplay: Agnès Varda, Ciné Tamaris, 2000



Ship route (journey from Stockholm to Helsinki) 2011, chromogenic print, 38 x 47.5 cm



Ship posters 2011, chromogenic print, 38 x 47.5 cm







Horse shoe (found in garden dig, Wickham NSW September 2010) 2011, chromogenic print, 66 x 66 cm



Vertebrae (found in garden dig, Wickham NSW September 2010) 2011, chromogenic print, 66 x 66 cm



Lock (found in garden dig, Wickham NSW September 2010) 2011, chromogenic print, 66 x 66 cm

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Izabela Pluta: Displaced images of distant objects
21 September–16 October 2011

all works are courtesy of the artist and
dianne tanzer gallery + projects, Melbourne

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Cover and inside cover image: *Displaced images of distant objects* (detail) 2011
latex-based ink-jet print
270 x 620 cm



