



VINTAGE PRINT

RAW AND STILLS



VINTAGE PRINT

A film by

Siegfried A. Fruhauf

THOUGHTS ON *VINTAGE PRINT*

by Maria Morata (Translation: Eve Heller)

In a film loaded with energy, Siegfried A. Fruhauf challenges the history of landscape imagery and its medial depiction, employing analog and digital imaging methods to explore the boundaries between photography and film.

A photograph captured at the end of the 19th century of a bucolic river landscape represents nature as untouched wilderness and serves as the template for the film. However, the meditative atmosphere of the original image is barely perceptible: From the very first film frame, it becomes subject to diverse optical, mechanical, chemical and digital transformations. The representative function of photography and its capacity to represent the world is confronted by the technical nature of its medium.

The original image belongs to the beloved genre of landscape photography, a tradition initially derivative of landscape painting before rapidly developing its own visual vocabulary. The discovery of photography reactivated the debate about realism in art because it provides the ultimate mimetic process for making reality visible, measureable, perhaps even more tangible and understandable than ever before by means of a technical process. Photography's apparently faithful reproduction of the phenomenological world signaled the domination of nature by humankind. Its near scientific simulation of reality spoke to the positivist zeitgeist of its time as well as an unshakeable belief in technology and progress that informs and shapes society, thought and art to this very day.

The film addresses the authenticity of the photographic image. The innocence and purity of the original print collide with our contemporary digital world, encountering a context that has long been engaged in extensively questioning the authority of photography and its medial image as a tool for recording the world and reality.

Vintage Print executes its fundamental visual strategy using a zoom to film the photographic print. The cheerful landscape is gradually transformed into pulsating movement through the minimal but continual application of a strictly precise back and forth manipulation of the lens, thereby revealing the optical and mechanical intervention of the zoom. The center of the image loses its leading role. The linear perspective of the camera obscura that traditionally draws the eye to the vanishing point becomes displaced.

The eye is moved to focus on the edges, the boundaries of the image. Our culturally transmitted perceptual hierarchy is thus turned on its head as the film creates a dynamic dialectic between the center and the periphery of the image.

The film also explores the illusion of three-dimensionality presented on screen. The illusion of depth and movement that normally occurs during projection in the cinema is due to the sluggishness of the retina. The actual flatness of the projective surface becomes hidden. With *Vintage Print*, the film screen exhibits a different capacity for 3-D. It is energized by the optical irritation of the flickering image which grows warped and bends, as if reaching out toward the individual and collective viewer. The trinity of eye, brain and body becomes activated, the movement and space of the cinematic image is physically experienced.

Other forms of manipulating the image join the oscillating zoom over the course of the film. A complex constellation is constituted by symmetrical mirroring around the vertical axis, alternations between positive and negative, black and white versus color, contrast shifts and solarisations evidencing the chemical nature of analog photography. A recognizable natural motif becomes subject to a process of abstraction.

Gradually, the mechanical movement of the zoom is replaced by a very rapid, thaumatropic alternation between images exhibiting various degrees of chemical deterioration. The film penetrates the silvery grain of photographic emulsion and reveals the materiality of the photographic and simultaneously cinematographic image. Micro-particles of the optical, chemical and digital manipulations expand the view into a macroscopic universe revealing what look like stars, heavenly bodies and moon craters.

The soundtrack adds another level to the imagery and assumes a narrative function, however loose. The sound of synthetic cricket chirping raises thoughts about the boundary between nature and culture. Human voices and machine sounds (train, helicopter) suggest a dramaturgical liaison with the history of landscape depiction. It renders a kind of heterotopic accumulation of place that could be read as an aural portrait of the temporal space between the time the original photograph was taken and its contemporary cinematographic version.

Fruhauf creates a cinematographic artifact which conveys a constant and visible medial transformation from photography, to film and digital data: a metafilmic reflection upon the representational capacity and materiality of the image and about the transformative and interpretive energy of cinema.





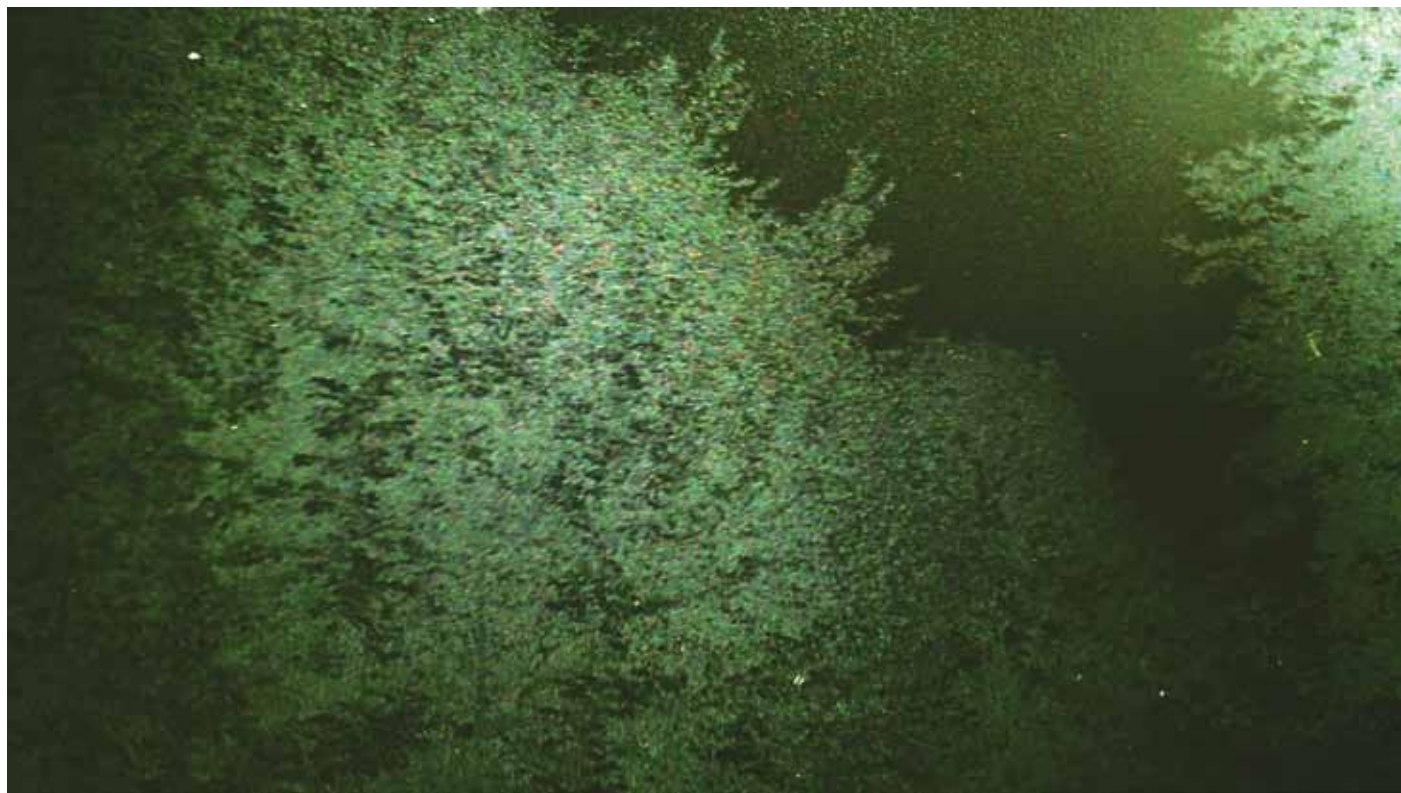






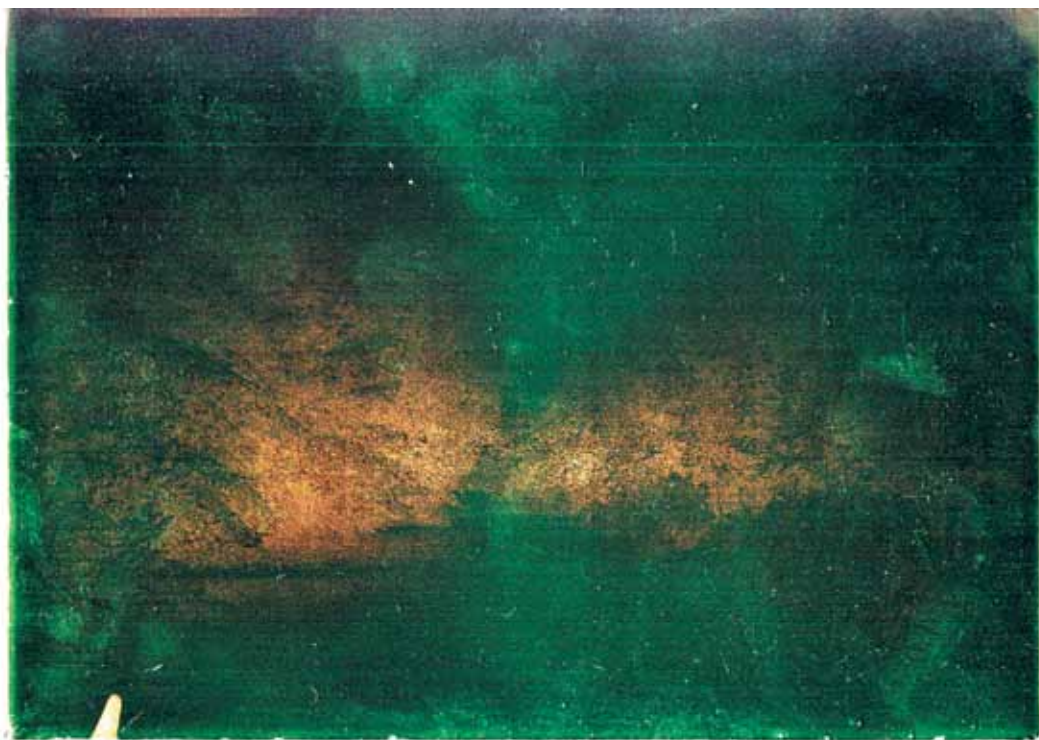






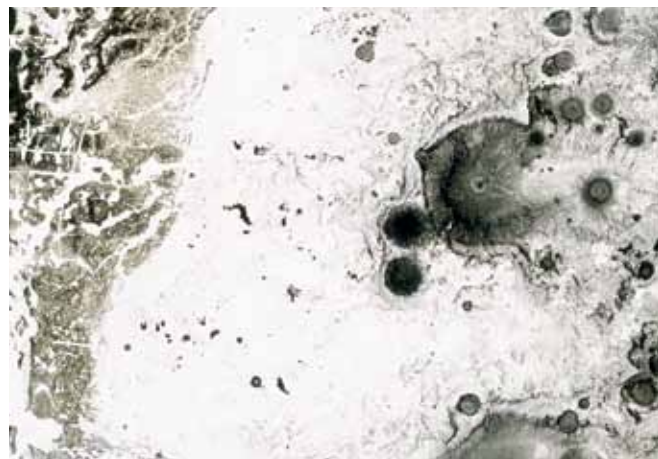
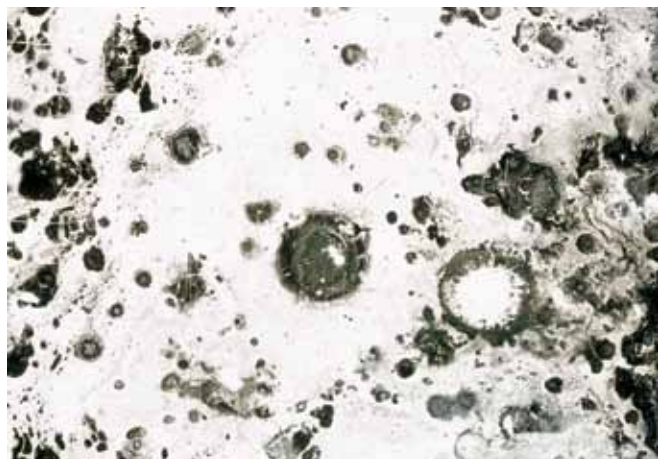


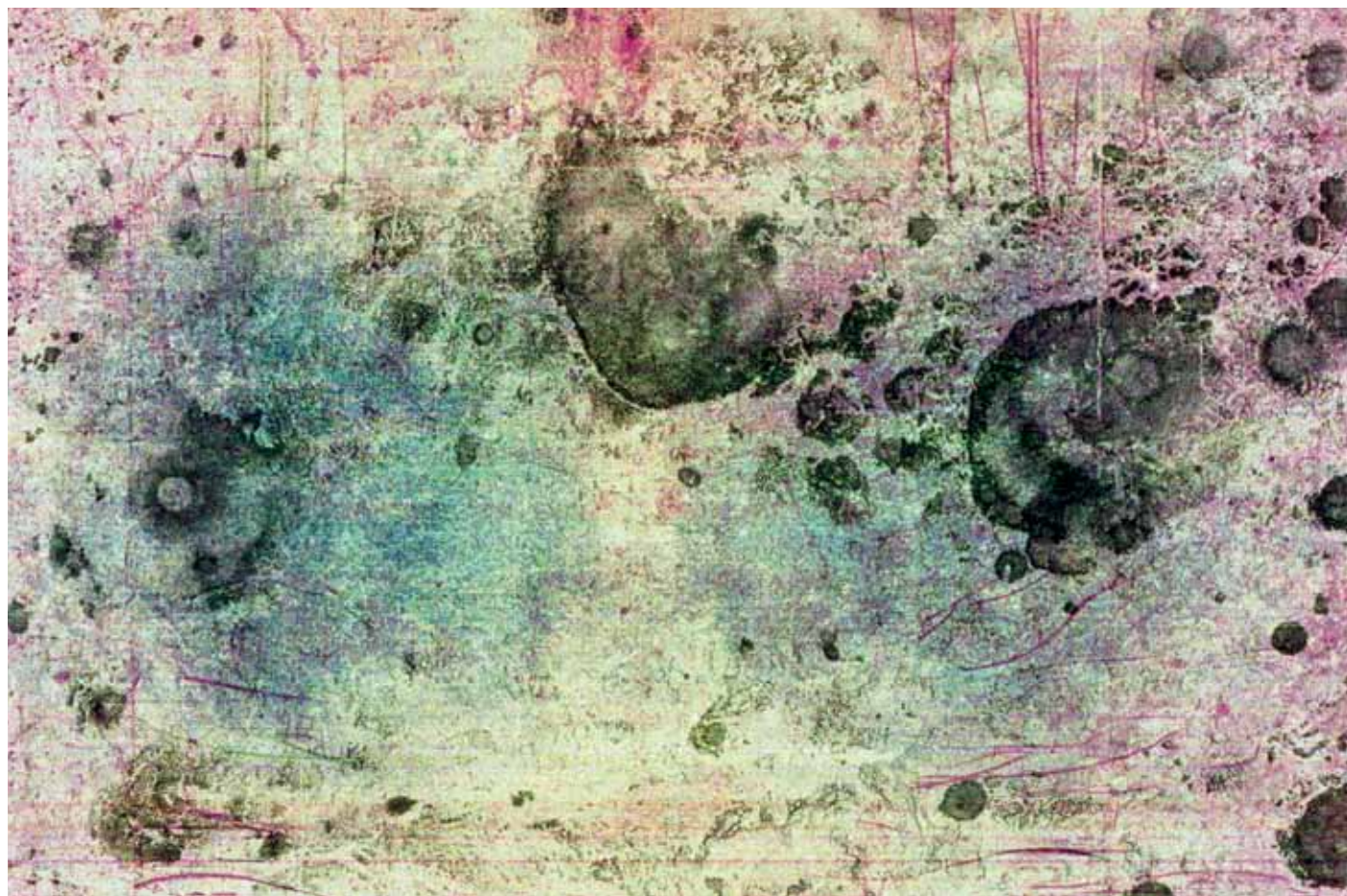












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Siegfried A. Fruhauf | AT 2015 | DCP | Dolby 5.1 | 13 min

Audio Samples by Anna Katharina Laggner and Christoph Ruschak

The photographic negative that forms the basis of this film originates from the late 19th century.

Many thanks to Sophie Senger-Weiss and the Langer family for this image!

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