



BALLROOM MARFA

As a nod to Far West Texas' ancient history as an inland sea, and in celebration of the wet summer months of our monsoon season, Ballroom Marfa presents Desert Surf Films. We've selected two visionary films from the early '70s, Alby Falzon and David Elfick's *Morning of the Earth* and Elfick's *Crystal Voyager*.

I was introduced to these films alongside others from the era – see: *Salt Water Wine* (Rich, 1973), *Super Session* (Jepsen, 1975) and *Tubular Swells* (Hoole & McCoy, 1975) – in a course taught by video artist Diana Thater at the San Francisco Art Institute. These surf films were sandwiched in between works from Fassbinder and Godard, Thater conspicuously recognizing them as part of a continuum of challenging avant-garde film. Where the cutting-edge European filmmakers of the '70s were creating inspiring, if difficult work, these surf films were taking a similarly innovative approach to editing, narrative and filmmaking, but the end result is one of pure pleasure.

These films capture a moment when both surf and film technology were changing. New camera techniques paired with faster, sharper surfing styles were able to successfully convey the new and experimental nature of surfing through film. George Greenough, the brilliant surfer, inventor, and engineer who is the subject of *Crystal Voyager*, says in the film “You might be in there for a few seconds but what goes on in your head lasts for hours.” The way this temporal suspension is captured by the non-linear editing styles, Greenough's breakthrough filming of the inside of a wave, and forays into the psychedelic on the shore, all communicate the ephemeral experience of riding the waves.

Crystal Voyager has since become one of my favorite films, George Greenough a secret hero. And I don't surf. I've got a shark phobia (except for Food Shark). These films make it possible to experience the pleasures of surfing, and affirm the innate value of fun, whatever form it takes for you. What stays in your head for hours is a sense of the true essence of pleasure, summed up perfectly by the title of Greenough's 1969 film, *The Innermost Limits of Pure Fun*.

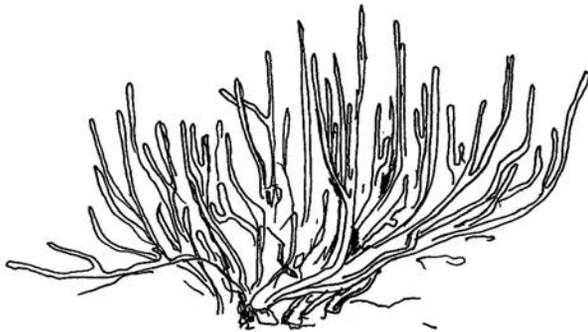
Ride on,
Susan Sutton
Executive Director
Ballroom Marfa



PERMIAN BASIN REEF BREAK

Laura Tucker

Wade through caliche shallows
Start by stepping in a fire ammonite colony
But before the conodont rattlers
And vinegaroon pod
Clutching coal-tar creosote surf wax
A thermal lift, and then below
Trichechusa angus fenced in a
Bermuda seagrass meadow
The limestone reef
Then coral nopalyps
Gorgonian ocotillo
A shale dropoff
And Larrea forests gloaming
against the abyss
83 there's a lull
So you paddle parallel
Toward the next one



When I was eleven years old my brother and I left our surfboards at an elderly doctor's house by the beach. The doctor and his wife delighted in the joy we found in the ocean. It was a joy we had only recently discovered, and they would sit and listen as we told them of waves we'd caught or animals we'd seen or sunrises we'd shared. They watched the surfing experience unfold through our eyes – how it took us in and mesmerised us with its beauty and gave us the ultimate freedom as children.

One night after a winter session when the sou'westerly had blown our fingers numb, the doctor and his wife had us in for a cup of tea. We sat clenching our warm mugs, telling them about the surf, when the doctor said, "I have a surfing record, it was given to me as a gift a long time ago by a couple of young surfers who left their boards here in the holidays. The music is very beautiful." He put the record on the turntable and passed me the album cover. It was *Morning of the Earth*. I stared at the album cover as the music played. I opened the gatefold and looked at Michael Peterson doing his famous cutback. I had no idea it was Michael Peterson or what *Morning of the Earth* meant, but it touched me and mesmerised me, the same way surfing had when I first discovered it. "I believe this album reflects the beauty you must see in the ocean," said the doctor. It was probably the mid-eighties when I discovered *Morning of the Earth* was also a film – some fifteen years after the fact. I watched its beauty and wondered what it was all about. The images of surfing were so real and I couldn't believe someone was shaping a board for himself in the open air on a farm, then ripping it apart at some beautiful blue point break. *Morning of the Earth* was what surfing had always felt like to me, and here it was in a film with that wonderful music the doctor had once played.

I went looking for Albert Falzon, the man who made the film. Fascinated with his vision, I wanted to know more about what he did and his ideas on life. I found out he was one of the founding publishers of Tracks in 1970, and had made *Morning of the Earth* as a side project to his magazine. He told me they produced Tracks from under a little house at Whale Beach, and when the swell jumped they'd make north coast runs from Sydney. "I would just film what was going on," he said. "Most of the surfers in *Morning of the Earth* were just hanging around at the time, there was nothing planned. Nat was living on a farm in Byron during his get back-to-nature and growing chooks stage. The sequence of Nat at Broken Head was the tail-end of a swell. I think at the time he was the only one out."

One of the elements that struck me most about *Morning of the Earth* was the natural way the surfers appeared in the film. It was like a window into their lives, the viewer becomes vicarious – you forget you're watching a film, and in doing so become a part of it. I asked Falzon about this. "I am always careful and considerate not to be intrusive when filming, in fact I almost find it offensive, so I try to use small cameras and avoid the film crew approach. I am interested in capturing lifestyle and cultural differences in a very natural and uninhibited way. I was able to film *Morning of the Earth* because of friendship and trust. It was no big deal, just one hand-held camera." So Falzon slipped behind the scenes, his camera capturing the lives of some of the best surfers from the seventies. Fifteen-year-old Steven Cooney surfing overhead Uluwatu for the first time with Rusty Miller – our first images of Indonesia's magic waves. Terry Fitzgerald flying at Kirra with his blond afro and finning his boards in Hawaii for an even greater leap in his relationship with the ocean. The classic scene set to Simple Ben where David "Baddy" Treloar shapes, glasses and sands his board, and then takes six-foot Angourie Point apart. And of course the Michael Peterson sequence from Kirra. Says Falzon, "I had my camera set up at Kirra and Michael Peterson showed up during a mini cyclone and painted the canvas, it was that simple. I just wanted to make a beautiful film about something I loved. The curious thing about art, as an expression of the inner life, is that it has the wonderful ability to uplift others. Surfing is art. A wave forms and breaks, and for a moment in time it becomes a tapestry for you to paint upon. Photography captures it, freezes the moment in time and asks you to stop and look. To realise that the moment is all we've got. If you can capture the attention of the audience for just that moment, then perhaps you are helping to awaken in them an aspect of consciousness that has nothing to do with their day to day activities."

I believe *Morning of the Earth* is as relevant today as when Albe released it in the early seventies. It transcends time and age with its innocence, pure vision and beauty. It touches a part of the human soul that can't easily be explained. *Morning of the Earth* helps us understand why surfing is such a beautiful adventure to take part in. It is a very rare and important piece of work and remains an inspiration. A beautiful film from the heart.

ANDREW KIDMAN



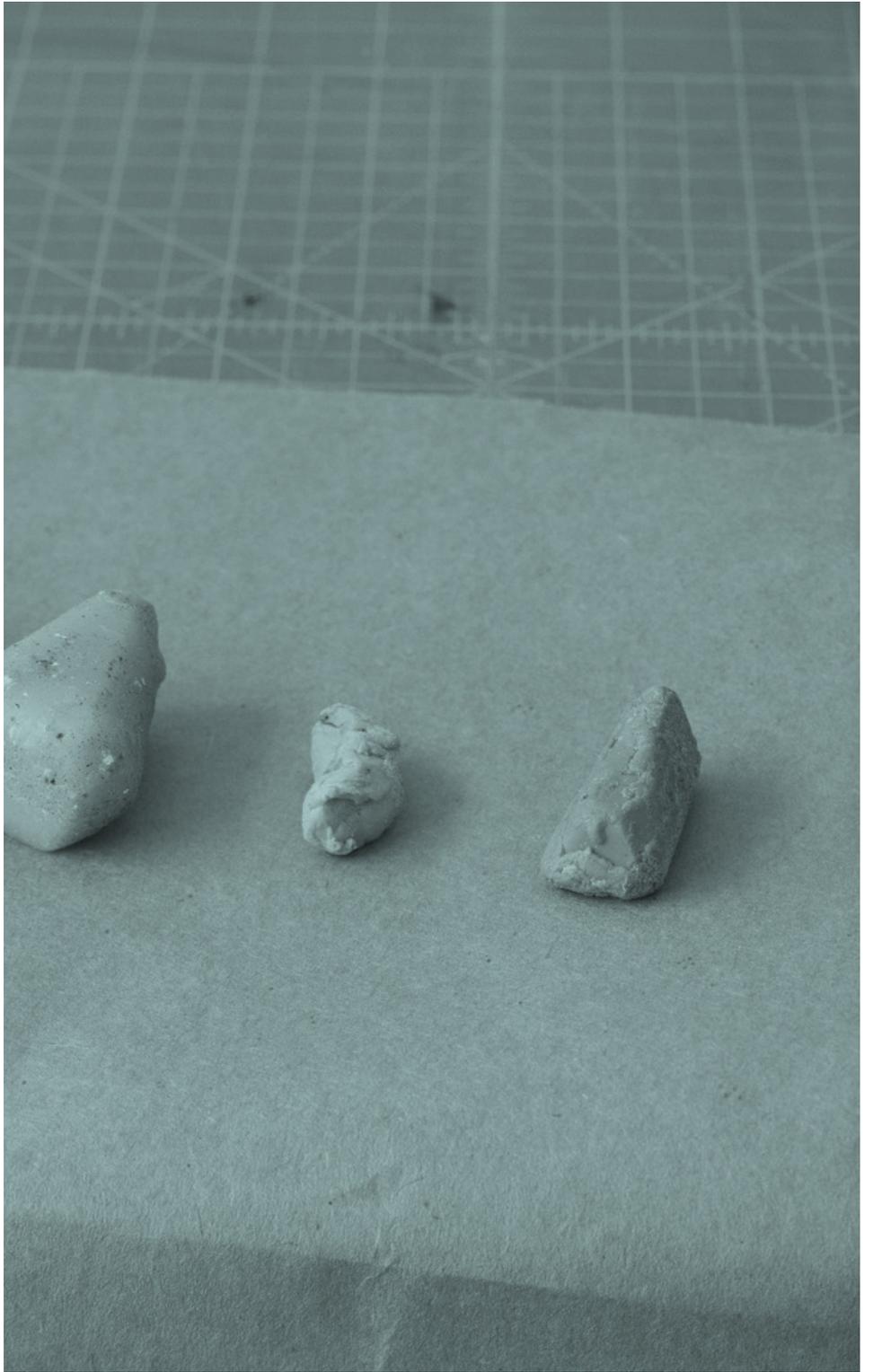


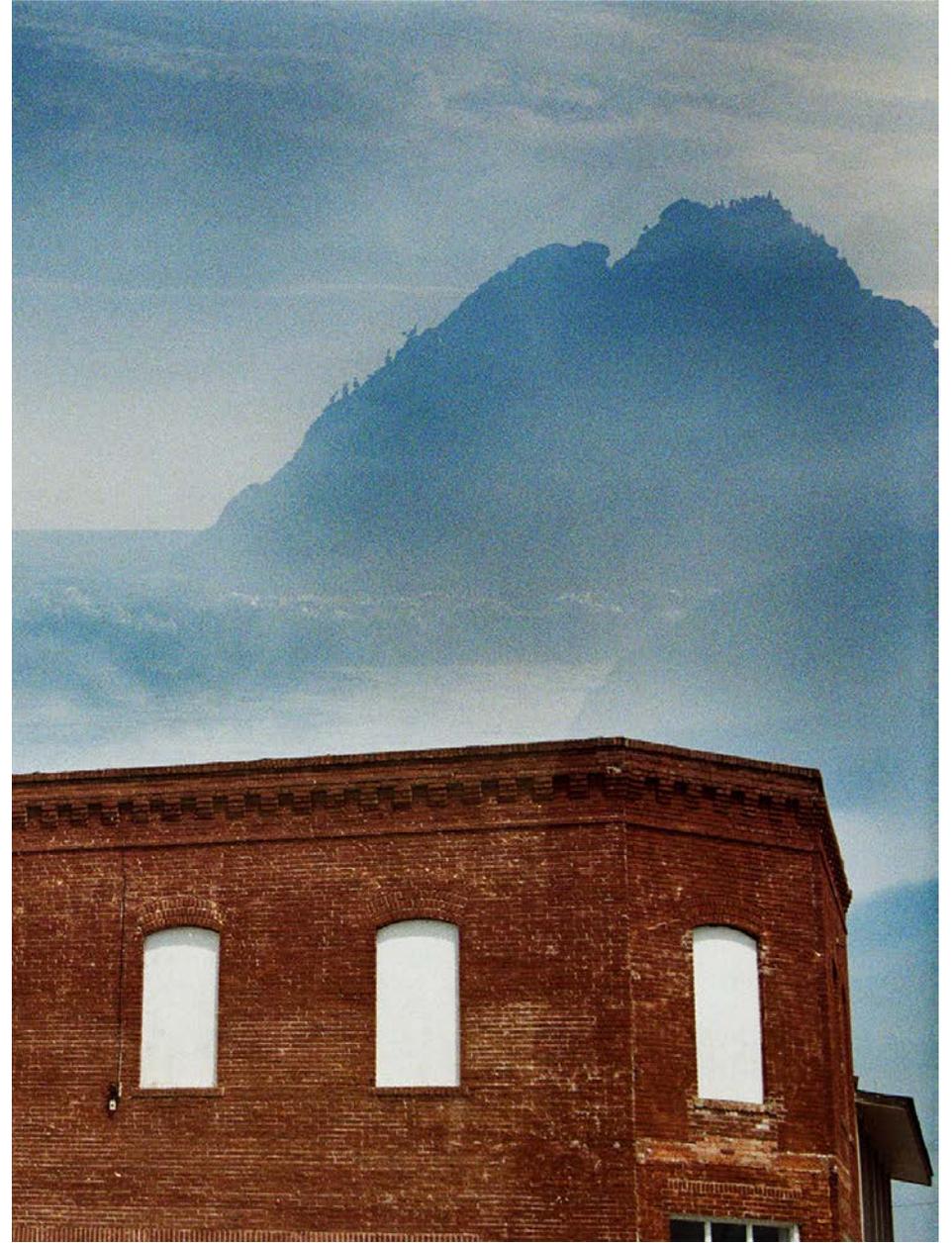
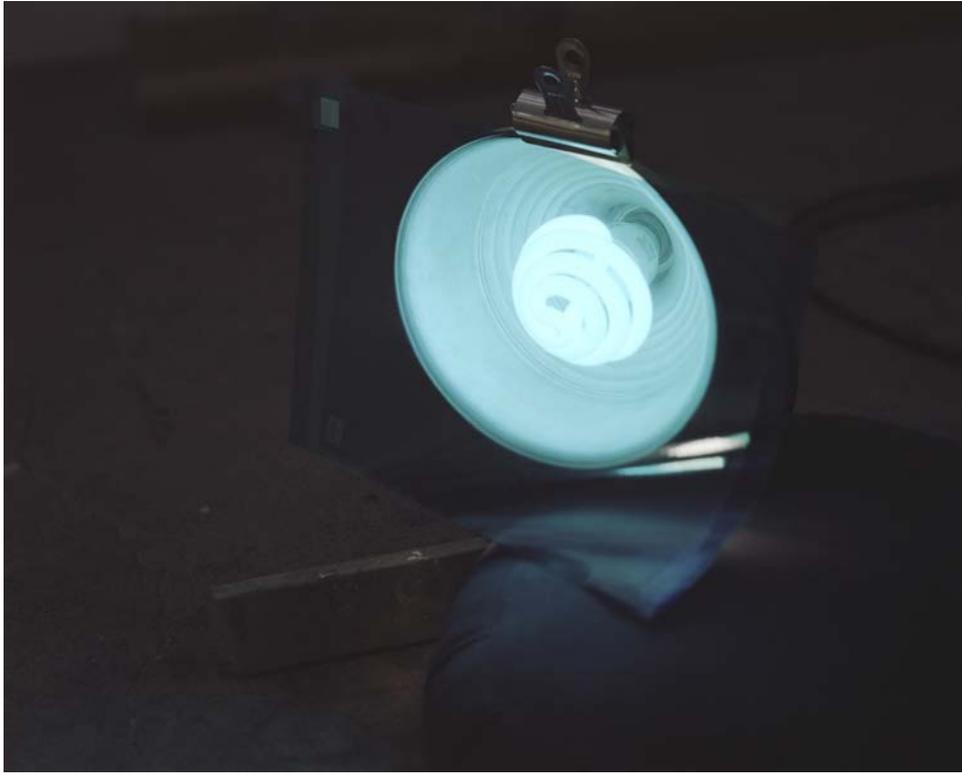


MARFA

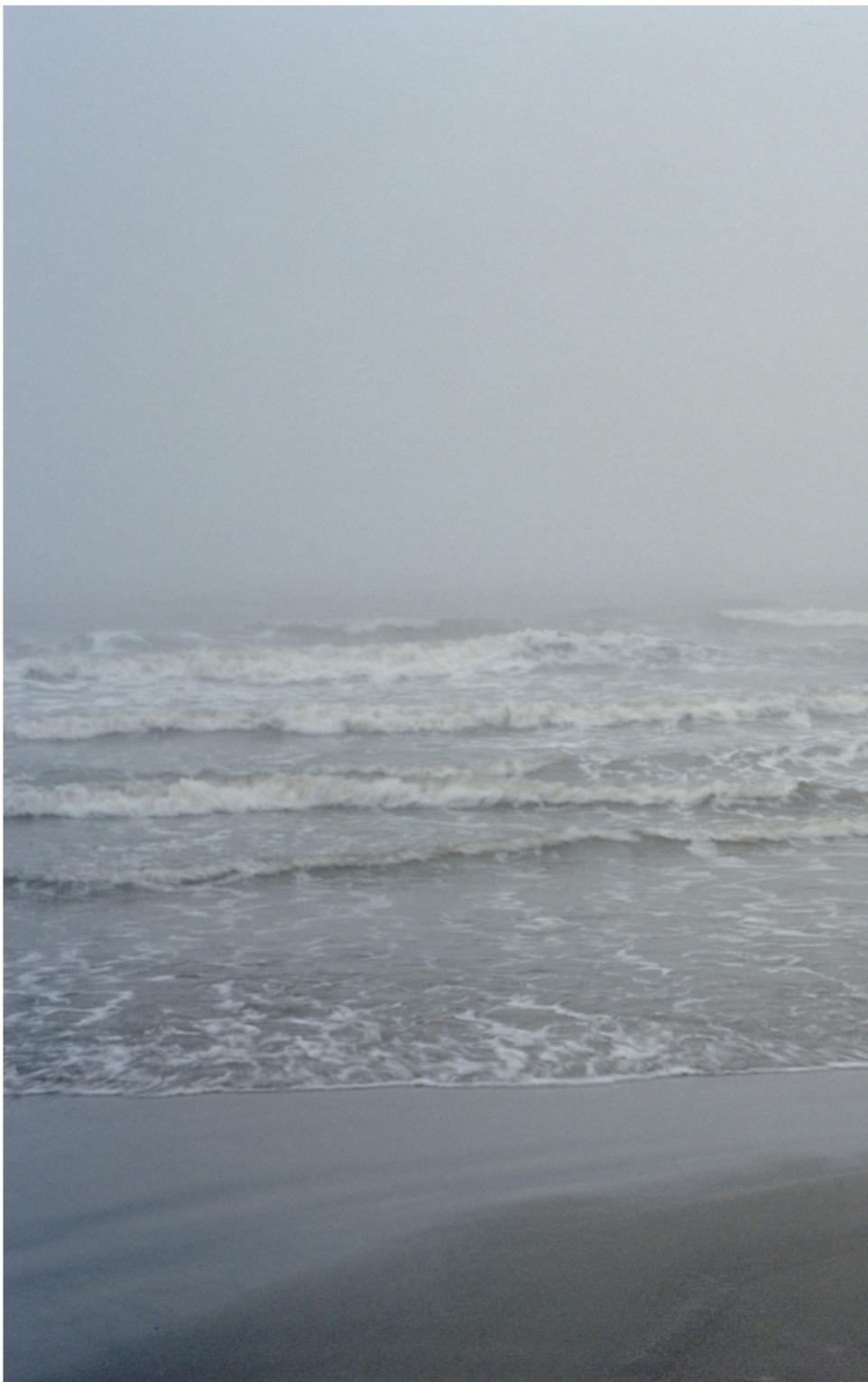
Eileen Myles

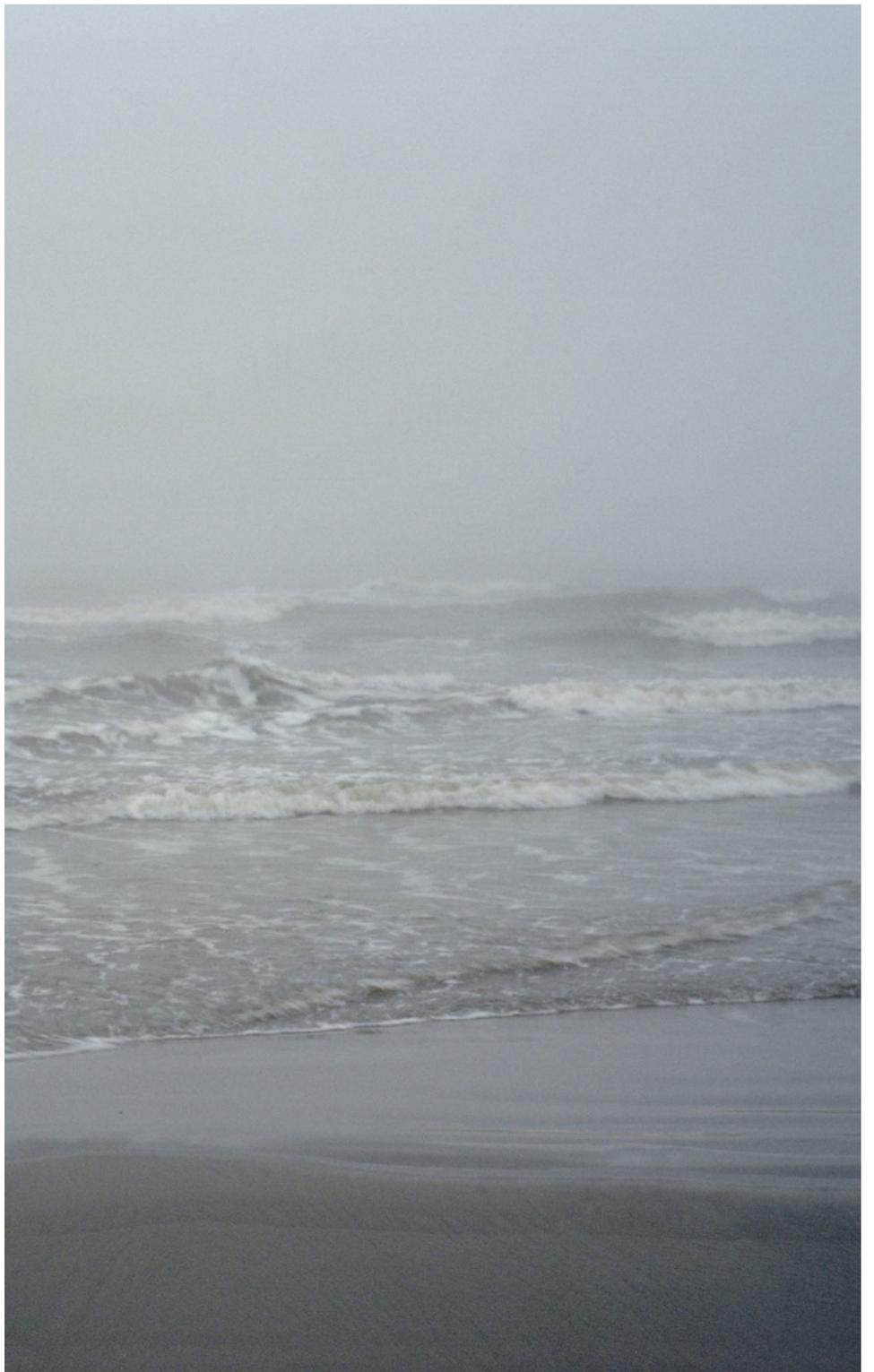
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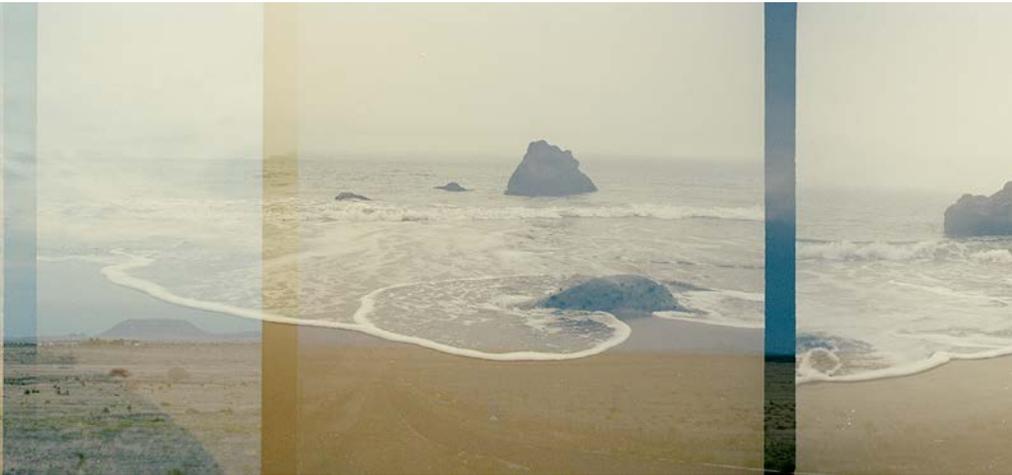






i can(t) see the ocean from here









THE FAR WEST TEXAS SURF REPORT

Episode 1/8 - Report for Wednesday, May 10th

[phone rings]

You've reached the Far West Texas Surf Report. This is Punch Kennedy with your dawn patrol report for [Wednesday] [May] [10th].

[beep]

Well, I ain't gonna tell you about the waves just yet - you see, I ain't quite at the break yet, and well, the sun's not even up. Swells are bending on into the Big Bend from the south, so I'm gonna head on down Highway 67 - check out some of the points. If I'm half as good at this forecasting thing as I am working cattle, I believe we should be seeing some pretty peaks just as soon as old Hannah shows up.

But first, I gotta tell y'all this dream I had last night. You see, I ain't got anyone to tell 'em to in the morning... Might just be the gas leak, but they've been getting kinda strange as of late.

...

I dreamt there existed this book called *Swimming Holes*, that cataloged every inland swimming spot in the continental United States. And not just the lakes and ponds and cool mountain pools, but the lap pool at the old folks home, the water depot by the train tracks, or the hot tub at the beachfront hotel. And every shallow suburban reservoir with a rope swing.

There are no photographs in the book, and each spot - listed by state and county - is described in a terse kind of code, mostly made up of acronyms, and printed in a very small font - to fit it all in a pocket sized book. But, once you get familiar with the code, you can read it just like any other guidebook.

"The rope swing hangs from a large white pine, 150 yards northeast of the litter barrels just past mile marker 18 on Route 27," and "the third door on your right past the lobby is unlocked and leads to the patio. Towels are on your left, " or "the hole in the fence is across from the Dairy Queen parking lot."

To maintain secrecy, the book is tucked inside the jacket of a biography of one of the forgotten U.S. presidents; someone like James Buchanan, or Chester Arthur, or uh..Millard Fillmore?

The only way to get the book is to make a photocopy of an existing one. The wrinkles, splotches, and smudges resulting from the wet hands of swimmers around the country are passed on with each new copy.

drawing of an owl. The owl is perched on two roses, and is surrounded by six floating skulls. The skulls look like they're melting. Above the owl's head are four exclamation points. The owl's enormous eyes are looking back over its left wing. I haven't yet worked up the nerve to ask my cousin why he shot two people—who they were, why he shot them, why am I writing you letters in prison? The owl, meanwhile, reminds me of the prototypical poet—looking back (Orpheus), six melting skulls (shape-shifting death/s), exclamation points (flashes of consciousness)—which reminds me, in turn, of the surfer in his Sisyphean fixation and futility. Recently, my cousin was moved from his cell, which he shared with a cellmate, to administrative segregation, aka solitary confinement. He's in his cell 23 hours a day, and is occasionally let out for YARD. YARD, for him, consists of the relative freedom of standing outside in a tiny cage.

I am writing these notes in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, where I'm taking a break from the desert to teach writing to elementary school students. Walking through the Liuhe night market last night, I saw a t-shirt that read:

CALIFORNIA
SURF POINT
LIFE,LIKE,SURF

No space after the commas. California Surf Point in southern Taiwan, a reminder of some ambiguous utopia. There are flower heads—pink carnations—whirling above the waves, though the waves are only a suggestion of movement, fortified by repetitive sound, which is part of the etymology of surf: rushing sound. It is what I hear far away from the ocean—in the desert, where spirits are pervasive, and the whirling carnations are echoes of the land before ruin. The ocean is the pre-consciousness of the desert, the desert the most truthful extrapolation (future) of the ocean. Maybe the problem is that when a surfer returns to shore, they are not thrown far enough into the waste of their life to see that there is no difference between standing on the surface of a wave and being incapacitated in a dry, desert valley. What of the flash, though—not like LIFE,LIKE,SURF, but Venus does not look happy—she's seen it, she's felt it. She looks resigned, melancholy. Life has only begun, and already feels like waiting. Is it because she knows she's going to relent and let her body be smothered by the mortal pink robe? Or is it because she knows that the opposite—returning naked to the waves, over and over again—is also a form of eternal damnation?

White men are the color of earthworms. They are tireless, and love (or require; contrived requirement being mistaken for love)—to fulfill their destiny in desperation by repetitive motion. Repetitive motion creates the illusion of immortality, because it folds time, which is a tonic for people with a particular aversion to mortality. Such aversion is typically reserved for the self, not anyone else, aka the victims of single-minded aversion in the form of murder. It's not that mortality can be overcome, but that life can go on forever. Life goes on forever in the form of unearned chance, masquerading as choice, granted indefinitely. It's a matter of perspective—more specifically, whose perspective. Surfers require (desire) repetition in nature, which the ocean provides in the form of waves. There is always the next wave, like gambling. But the ocean is a superabundance of abyss. It is deified, but (or because) it can also annihilate the spirit. It would be easier to remove the capacity for suffering, like removing a part of the brain, and throwing it into the ocean, but the brain returns—washed onto the shore. Surfers, no matter how hard they try, can neither express nor manifest surfing when they are not surfing. Life, daily life, outside surfing, is an interval between surfing and surfing. The interval is constantly being justified, because it is time, magnetizes time, and intervallic time needs to be justified. One's recourse is to constrict the boundaries of one's life inside surfing.

Do you think surfers inwardly loathe the inherent nature of waves? They are always on top of them. Even when a surfer is inside the barrel of a wave, they are on its surface. Are surface and surf related, etymologically? Surface means above the face. Surf means what—a sound, maybe, a surge? I would say it's laughable, if it wasn't already laughter—that is, identical to every behavior performed before the sublime.

I think of a cross upright on the waves, racing towards the shore, like Jesus running on water. I think of cliffs, weeds with salt-fattened leaves, and a buoyant idiocy that makes magic possible. I think perfection in any endeavor is a synthesis of all genders. I think that love is hard won, and that surfers are not suicidal enough.

All surfers are latent Venuses.

When I was young, and my family visited the west coast (we lived on the east coast), my relatives tried to teach me how to surf. I was uncoordinated. My body could not understand the waves. I felt like I was failing some essential family qualification—that I was less qualified, less family. I tumbled over and over inside of the waves—blue and white with clouds and shadows and rocks. My body was spit.

I envision my cousin in prison—his movements severely curtailed—and imagine what constitutes the form of his freedom. I started writing him letters from the desert, the Sonoran (Tucson, AZ), and then the Chihuahuan (Marfa, TX). I hope this letter finds you in good spirits, he always writes back. He plays chess with the other inmates by calling out moves through the walls. He reads books—stories by Chuck Palahniuk, poetry—and writes letters. And he draws. He sent me a

But, the real tricky part is picking out a book owner amongst all the other swimmers. I got my copy from a girl swimming in a pool at a midwestern motel. She told me she was on vacation from Bordeaux and had come to see the cornfields and all their flatness - before she dove back down to the bottom. But the fibers of her jean shorts that clung around the hole in the chain link fence gave her away. "No, sir", I heard her explain to the management later with a forced accent, "a sheep with an itch passed by earlier, I'm staying in room 307". But the motel only had two floors, and besides, cut off jeans weren't allowed inside the pool area. They paid no attention to her biography of Franklin Pierce.

We swam together in a lake we both knew of, just off the dock where we remembered it to be shallow. But every time I tried to swim down to the bottom, the lake grew deeper and deeper. On my last attempt, I saw a small whale shark, surrounded by a school of bright purple minnows. After showing her, we quietly slipped back onto the dock. Water dripped off our noses onto the pages as we thumbed through the book, searching for a new spot. We stretched out on the hot wooden planks to eat our red apples. They had green shapes at the top where the leaves had hid them from the sun.

...

Yew! Look at that set! Must be head high!

Well, here we are, sure is nice to get out from behind those cattle trucks... Ol' Hannah's risin' on up, and man, if I didn't know any better, I'd say I'm looking at golden pastures stretching all the way to the horizon - what a sunrise.

Looks like we've got a lot of water moving out there today. Swell is here, right on time too, what'd I tell ya? I'm looking at some chest to head high waves here, peeling all the way down the point.

But be sure to watch out for those rattlers in the shallows, they love the warmth these south swells bring in. You can expect bigger peaks over at Pinto's, the canyon will really focus this long period swell, but look twice before sneaking through the fence - you won't be the only one out for a dawn patrol down there on the border.

Should see a little bump with the incoming tide, high tide at high noon today. Winds should blow offshore all day. Crowds are light. Empty, actually...usually is, isn't it? Swell should be sticking around a while, so go get you some. Every hour is golden hour out here in Far West Texas. I'm going swimming.

[beep]

IAN LEWIS

NOTES ON SURFING

Brandon Shimoda

My cousin was sentenced to 25 years in prison for attempted murder. He shot two people. He was driving down Westminster in Orange County CA, when he pointed a handgun out the window of his car and shot the people in the car next to his. Their car veered off the road and flipped over. The driver and passenger were found nearly dead, bleeding profusely, one from a hole in his face. My cousin, described by the police as a “transient,” kept driving. The news gave few details, but did mention that the two people who had been shot were “driving home from a taco stand.” This was late fall, 2013. My cousin was sentenced to 25 years in the spring. His sentence began one year after the shooting. He was 27 years old, now 28. He’s currently in solitary confinement in a prison in the San Joaquin Valley of California.

When I think about surfing, I think about my cousin. He’s a surfer. He is, even in solitary confinement, a surfer. Perhaps more than ever—surfing is his innocence. Before he shaved his head and covered his body in tattoos, including a cross beneath his eye, he was a surfer. His brother is also a surfer. So is his father (my uncle). So is their cousin (my other cousin). So are most of my mother’s cousins (my first cousins once removed), and their sons and daughters (my second cousins). They all grew up and live in southern California, not far from the beach. They all have blond hair, blue eyes, and they’re all white—principal facts that have always separated them from my sister and me (dark brown hair, brown eyes, and half-white). When I think about surfing, I think about my white relatives in southern California.

I also think about Venus, the goddess of love. Specifically, Botticelli’s *The Birth of Venus* (1486), in which Venus is standing on the hinge of an enormous shell risen out of the waves. She is beautiful, sublime. Is she giving birth to herself? Her beauty, her sublimity, is the opening to enlightenment, if only her witnesses could temper their attention. We, for example, are on the shore, watching Venus emerge. Are we taking part in her birth? Are we the ones holding the pink robe for her to step into? In the water, Venus is incorruptible, but she’s looking on land, where she will become human—one of us, corruptible, that is everyone’s misfortune.

My sister and I have four cousins. Our three white cousins surf. Our Korean cousin does not. He was our first cousin, and is our only cousin on the Japanese side of our family. Our youngest cousin (our fourth) pointed a rifle at my mother once. It’s a joke, he said, in an attempt to apologize, it’s not loaded! But of course it was fucking loaded. I babysat him when he was five. I was eighteen. One day I took him to the beach across the highway and fell asleep on the sand beneath a cliff while he played, unsupervised, in the waves. He’s in his twenties now, and still tells this story. Yeah, I say, I feel bad, but you survived, right?





MOUNTAINS

Eileen Myles

crunch

mountains

poured

mountains

stoic

mountains

gulping

mountains

piles of rocks

red rocks

red green bearded

mountains

holding the road

and faces

lazy mattressy

mountains

frontal lions

and beasts

beasts calling

out

like sex

heaving sexy

mountains

mountains

full of tiny yellow

nodes

folded satisfied

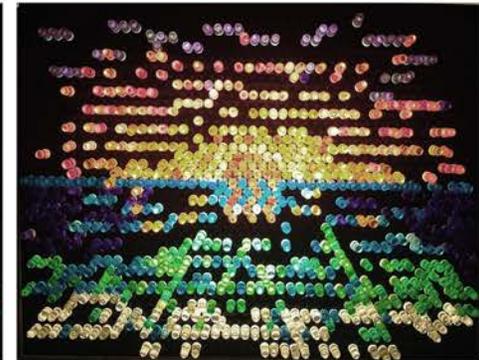
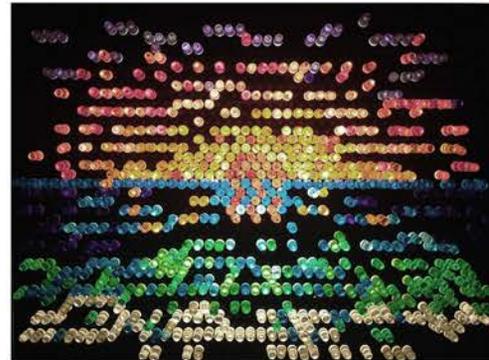
satisfied green

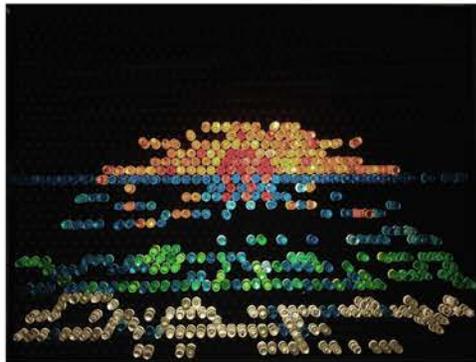
mts.

crotchty crotchty

crack hitching
to what's
down below
mountains for
myles
swirling shapely
profile wavey
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the thing I love
is the thing
that absorbs
me stripes
of rock
swirling crusty
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pointed
tree; lost its
head

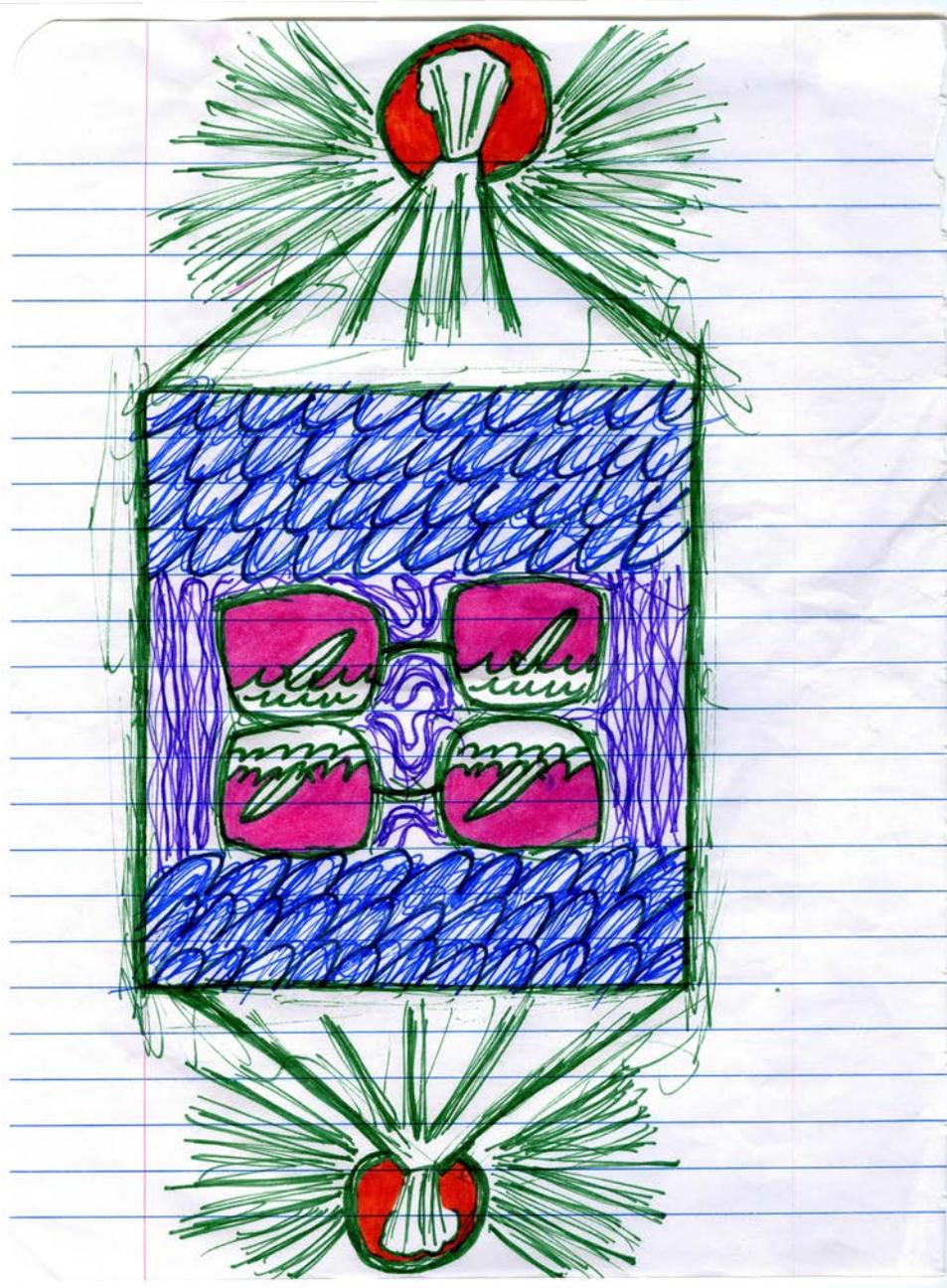
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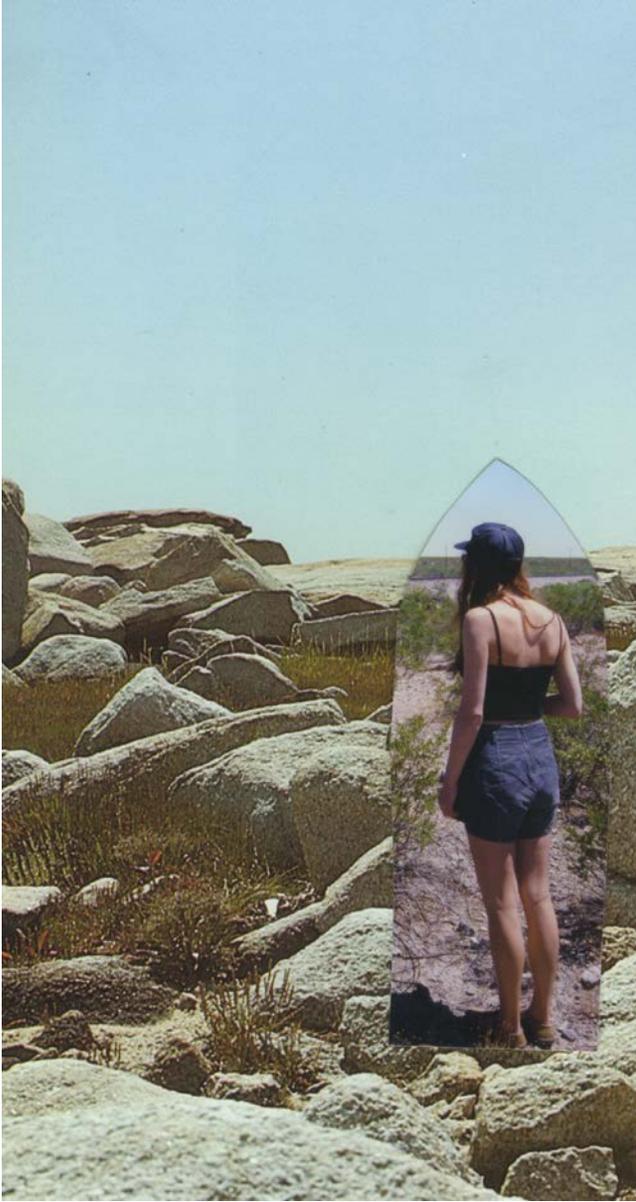




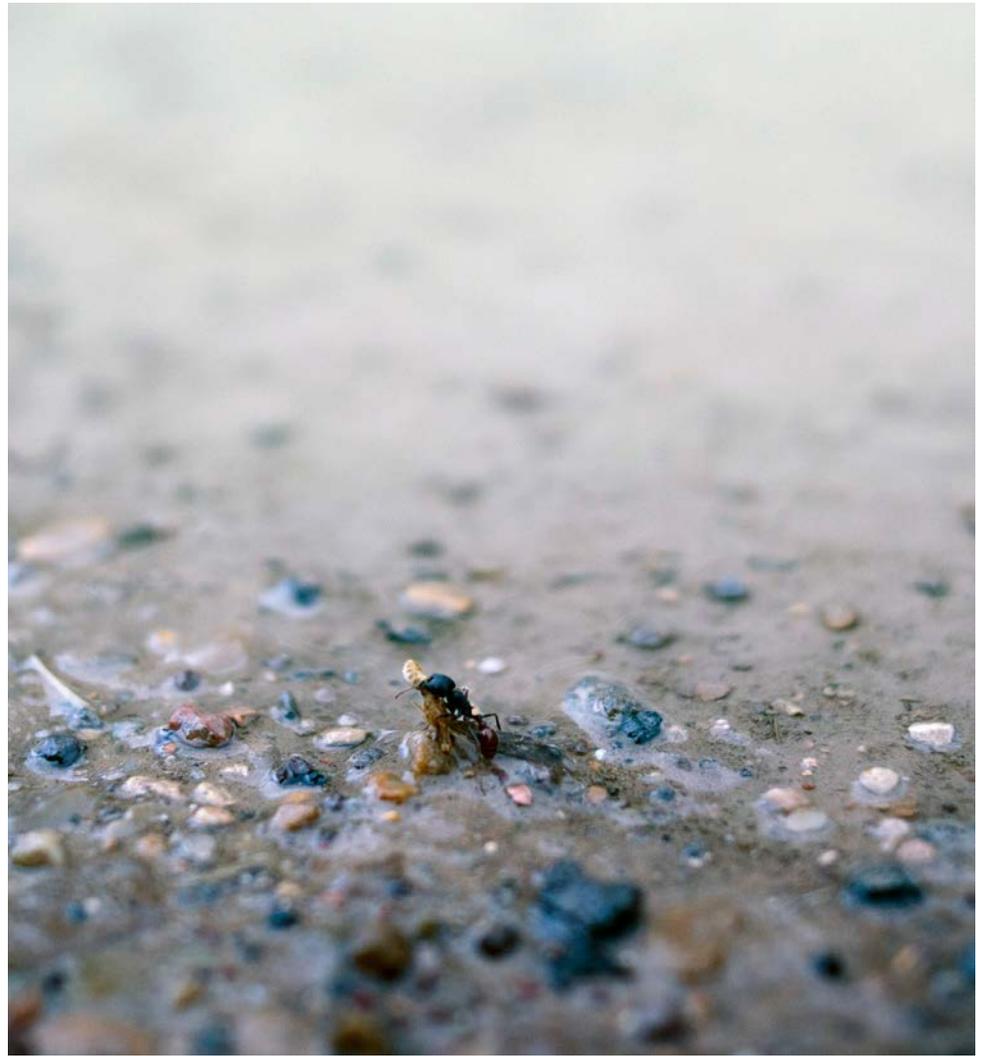
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elephant mountain
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that rabbit
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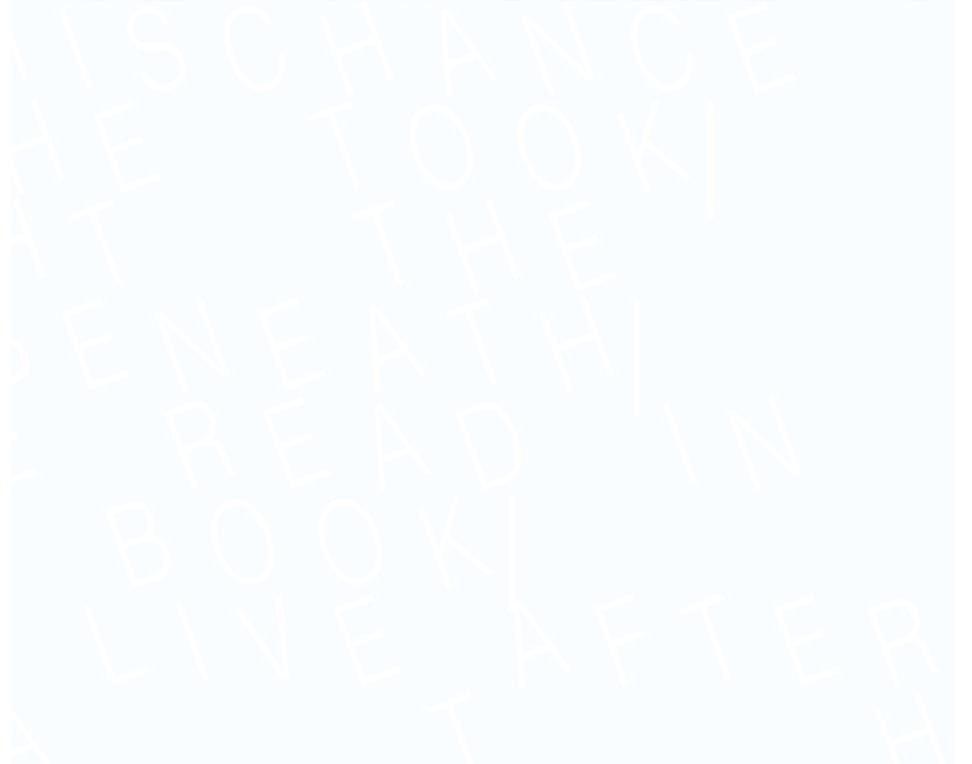
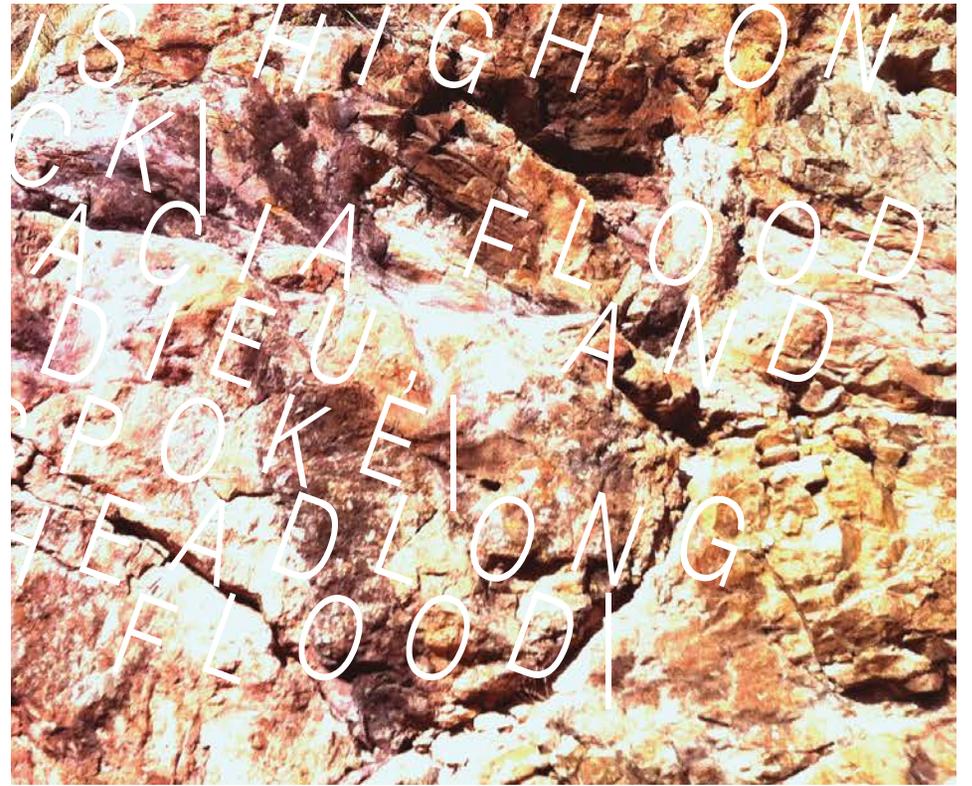
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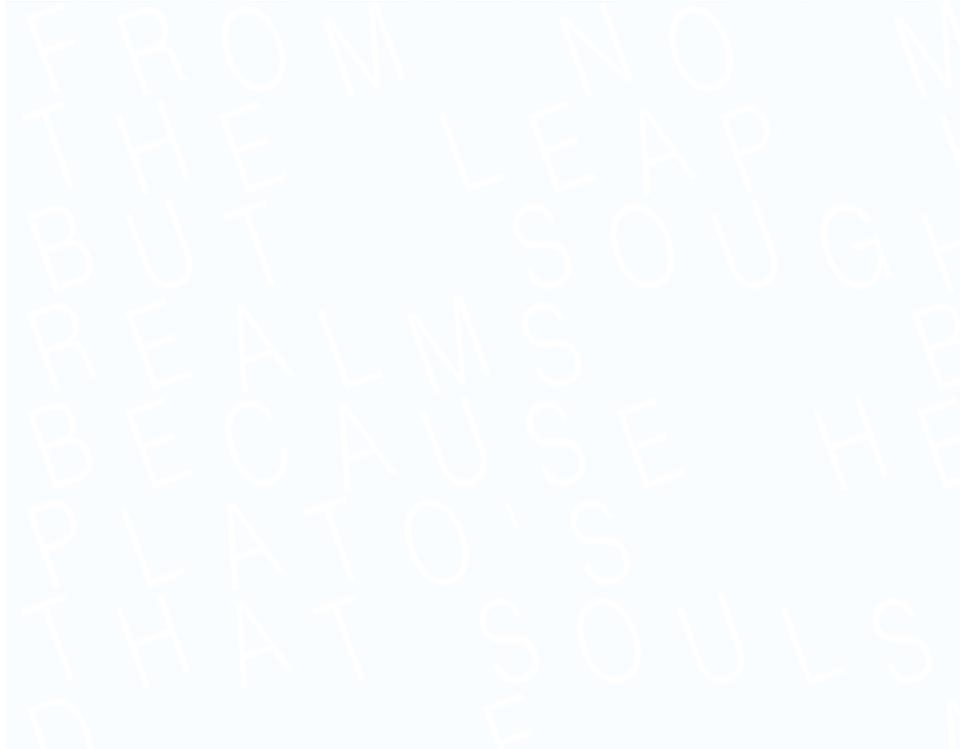
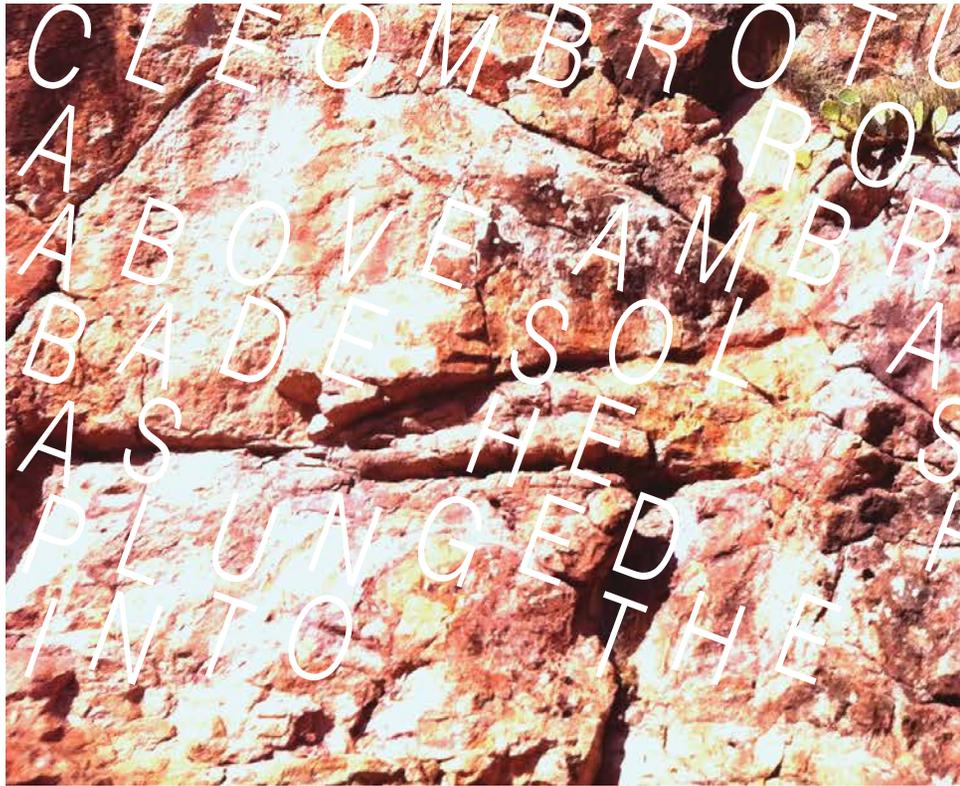












A HAIKU SURF ATLAS

Joshua Edwards

Alex paddles out / As summer's final day dawns / On Zipolite
Assiduously / Barney reads the reports for / Yallingup's beaches
Catherine gazes / At Xiaomeisha's glassiness / And prays for a set
Dan, caught inside at / Waimea, pines for June / Who left him in May
Last year's runner-up / Eve is still an underdog / At Vanuatu
Uluwatu's cliffs / Stare back at Francois as he / Paddles in for lunch
Geoff's knees start shaking / At the sight of the huge waves / Of Teahupo'o
In her hometown of / Santa Cruz, Heather curses / Bay Area kooks
Way out in Rockport / Ian gets a new steamer / For the winter ice
In Quintana Roo / Julia goes to surf school / And drinks the water
Surfers fall in love / In Puerto Escondido / Like Kayla and Kai
Some people blame Laird / For ruining the mega / Breaks of Hawaii
What a thrill to get / Covered up totally, like / Mike on the North Shore

After a fin chop / Natali trades Malibu / For Emma Wood Beach
Les Cavalier has / A bad reputation but / Oren makes some friends
Just like his father / Paul rides a purple longboard / At K38
Quincy's luck will change / Off of Joe's Point today, birds / Sing to foretell it
With his back to France / Ricky rides a gentle wave / Toward Isle of Wight
At Hossegor, Sam / Catches a terrific ride / While time marches on
The Atlantics play / On the radio as Tom / Drives down the Gold Coast
Ulysses returns / To Fistral Beach and backhands / The first wave he sees
The artificial / Wave of Eisbach is something / New for Vanessa
The bloody cold of / Donegal can't keep Winston / From the sea's rhythms
Cloudbreak is teaming / With sharks today but Xavier / Doesn't give a fuck
As he emerges / From a bomb at Black's Beach, Yves / Flashes a shaka
Zach has noodle arms / After a long day wrestling / Anchor Bay's pockets
The moon reflected / In ten thousand vacant waves / As the surfers dream

STAY GOLDEN

Ian Lewis

Catfish, Balmorhea
(cover)

Nicki Ittner

Endless Horizons & Stay Golden

Photographer Unknown

Albert Falzon Filming

Susan Sutton

Introduction

Chris Moyse

Night Swimming

Andrew Kidman

Introduction

Dan Schmahl

Lineup I

Anthony DeSimone

Untitled

Ian Lewis

Underwater Disposables

Tim Johnson

Quiksilver Board Member Bails
(insert)

Ian Lewis & Anna Rotty

Double Exposures

Ian Lewis

Far West Texas Surf Report Transcript
Originally aired on Marfa Public Radio

Eileen Myles

Mountains

Albert Falzon

Morning of the Earth (1972) film still
(insert)

Ryan Penland

Surf's Up

Daniel Chamberlin

Forever Sucking Dry
(insert)

Graham Dickie

Microsines

Joshua Edwards

A Haiku Surf Atlas

Alex Schmidt

Surf Manifesto

Moritz Landgrebe

Cleombratus

Kate Yoland

Zone 1 (Amboy, California)

Emma Rogers

Waiting for the Big One

Rae Anna Hample

Ocean Sunset, Lite-Brite Series

Brandon Shimoda

Notes on Surfing

Ian Lewis & Anna Rotty

Marfa, TX / San Francisco, CA

Sam Falls

Christmas Card

Asa Merritt

Catch-up Call
(insert)

John Melillo

Waves
(insert)

Jem Goulding

Dead Sea (temporary title)

Eileen Myles

Marfa

Caitlin Murray

serf / rock
(insert)

Laura Tucker

Permian Basin Reef Break

Hilary duPont

Wish I Were Here
(insert)

Dan Merkel

George Greenough Filming

This publication was made by Hilary duPont, Liz Janoff, & Ian Lewis. It was produced by Ballroom Marfa in conjunction with the 2015 Desert Surf Films program, curated by Executive Director Susan Sutton. Ballroom Marfa is a non-profit cultural arts foundation that seeks to commission extraordinary work that is both site-specific and site-inspired. Find more information at ballroommarfa.org.

On August 28 & 29, 2015, Ballroom Marfa is screening two iconic surf films, *Morning of the Earth* (1972) and *Crystal Voyager* (1973). At the time they were made, these films represented the beginning of a surfing revolution in terms of both culture and technology.

From Matt Warsaw in the *History of Surfing*:

"Morning of the Earth *did for surfing naturism what Endless Summer did for surf travel and adventure, and Mickey [sic] Dora did for surf rebellion. It gave surfers a bigger, grander, more colorful version of their own lives.*"

"Greenough [of Crystal Voyager] swam out and photographed the tube from the inside looking out. This was a part of the wave that stand-up surfers almost never accessed, and to first-generation shortboarders, Greenough's images were nothing less than visions of the promised land."

August 28:

Morning of the Earth (1972) by Albert Falzon + David Elfick
with *Endless Bummer* (2009) by Sam Falls + Joe Zorrilla

August 29:

Crystal Voyager (1973) by David Elfick
with *The Adventures of NASASA* (2015) by Ian Lewis

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Morning of the Earth courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia.

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