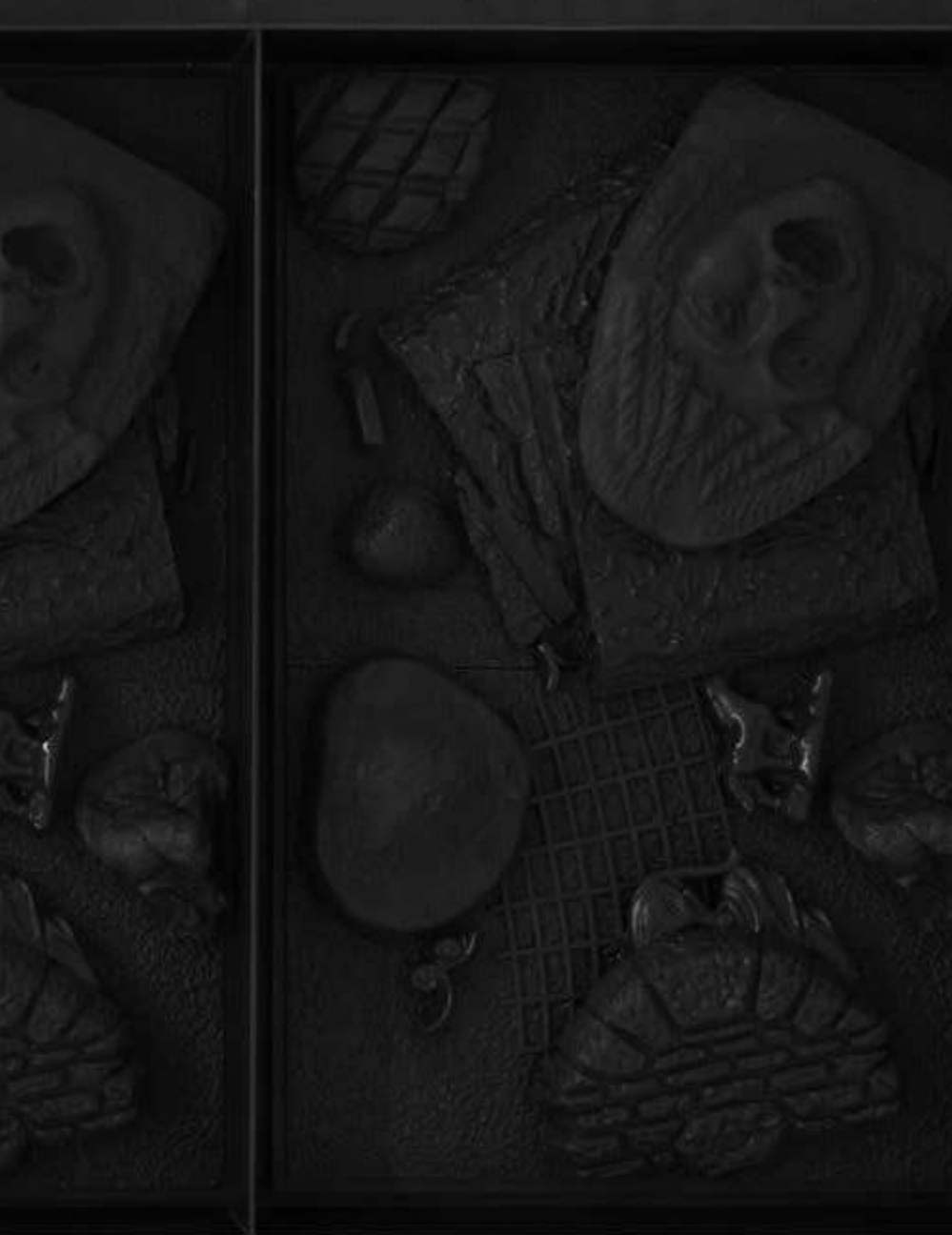




This Morbid Round Trip from Subject to Object (a facsimile)

Isabelle Cornaro



**This Morbid
Round Trip
from Subject
to Object
(a facsimile)**

Isabelle Cornaro

Fig. 1

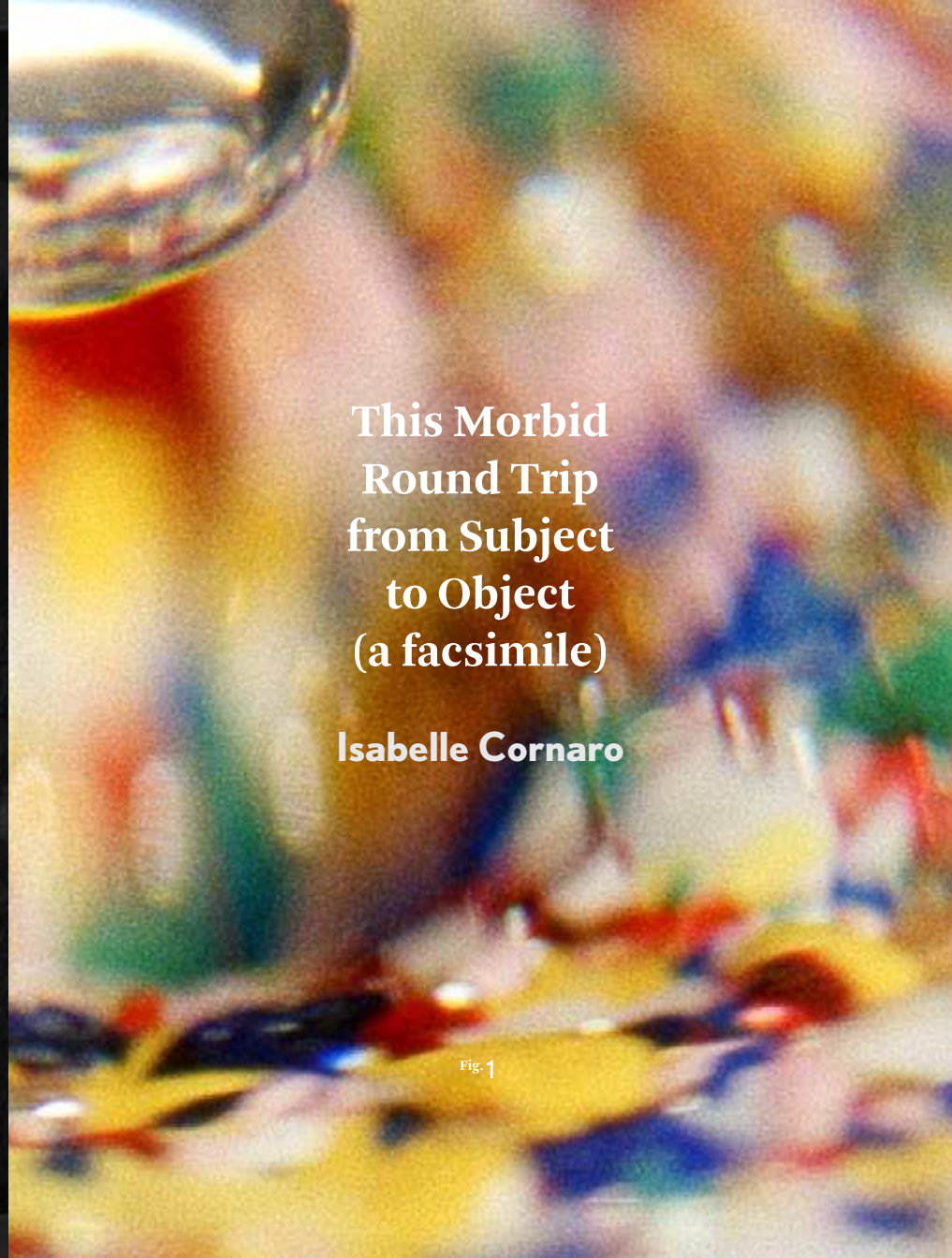




Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4





Fig. 5



Fig. 6

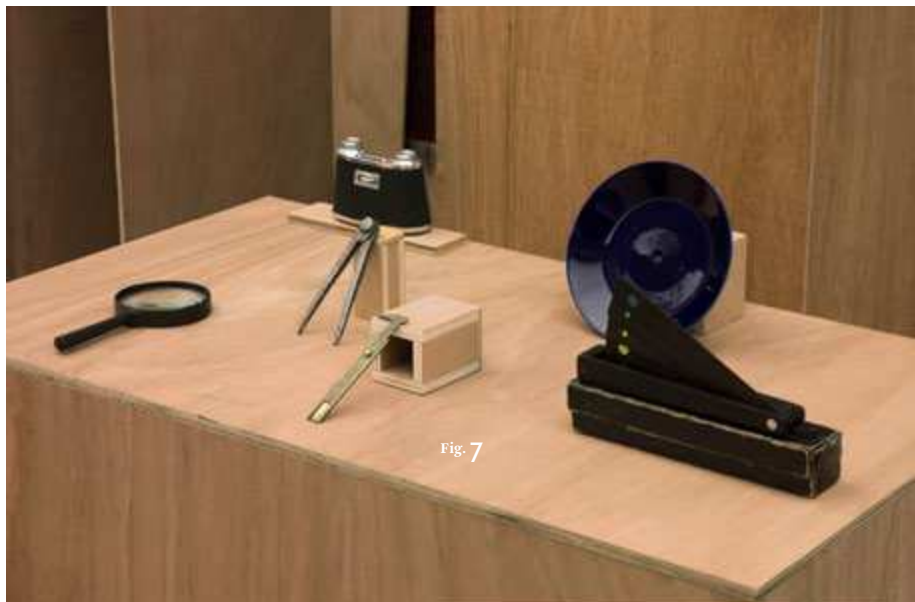


Fig. 7



Fig. 8





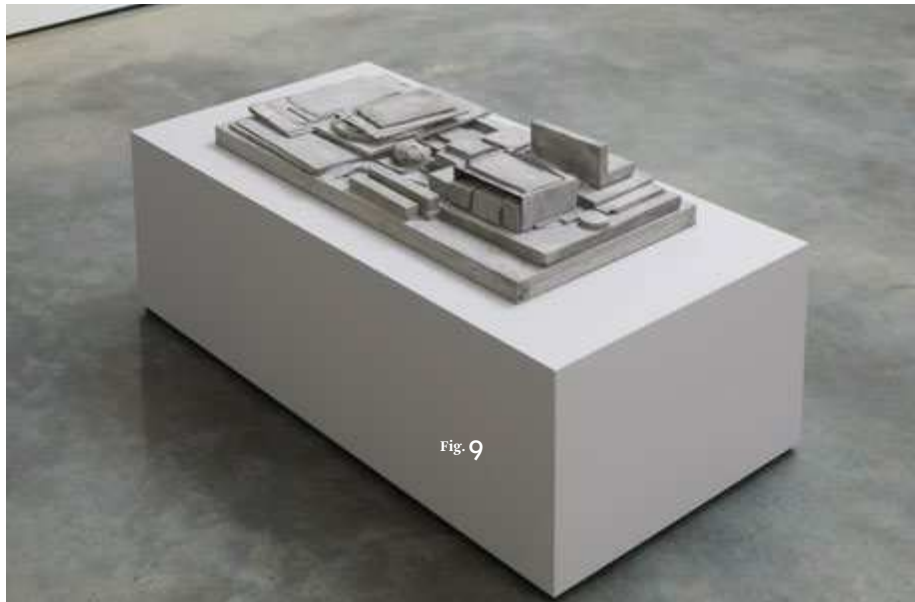


Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13

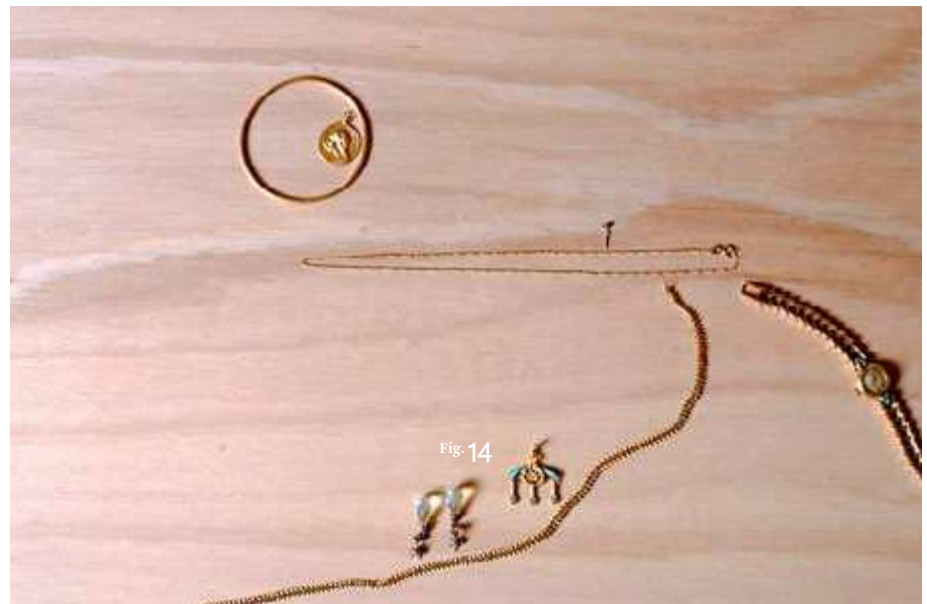


Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16

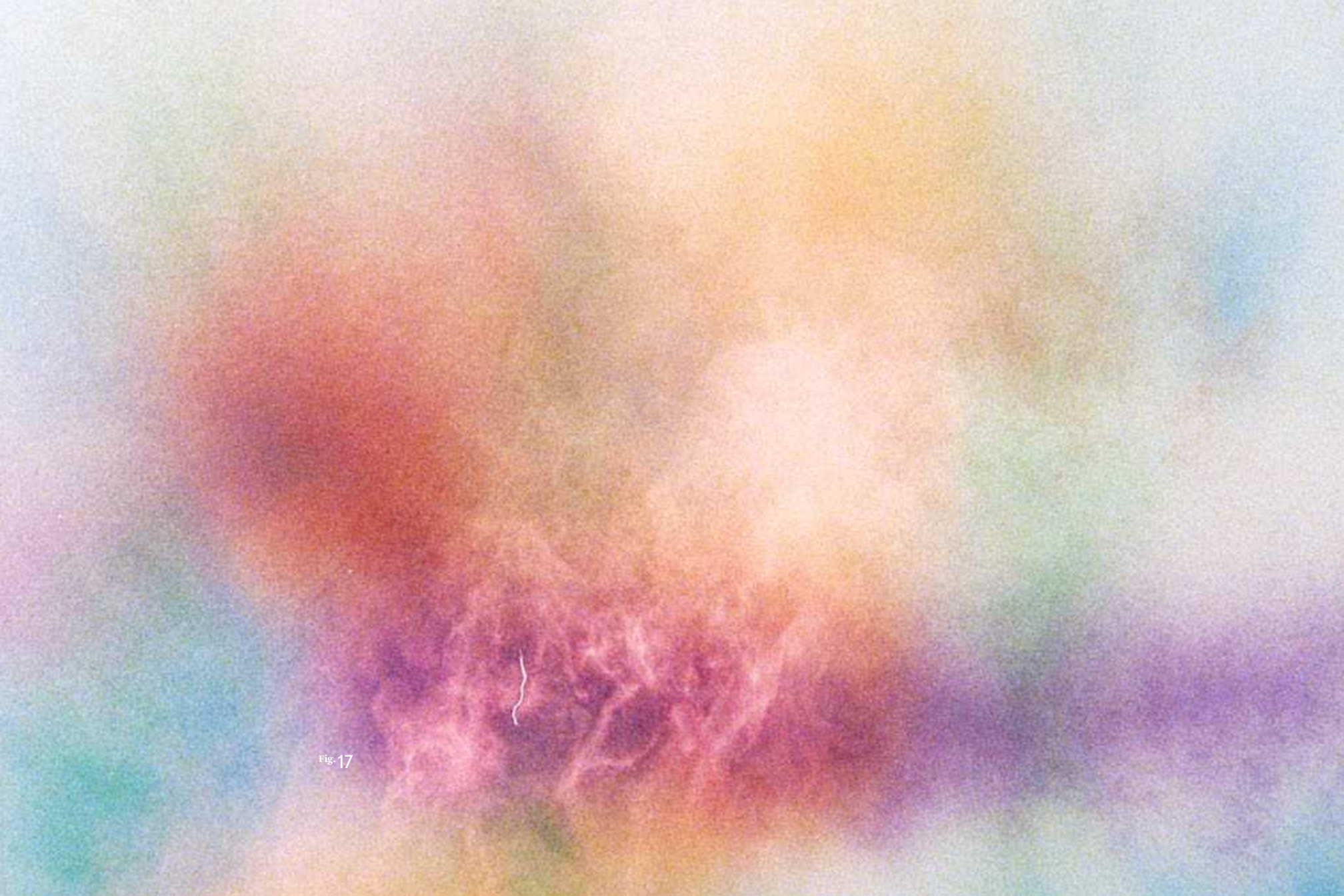


Fig. 17

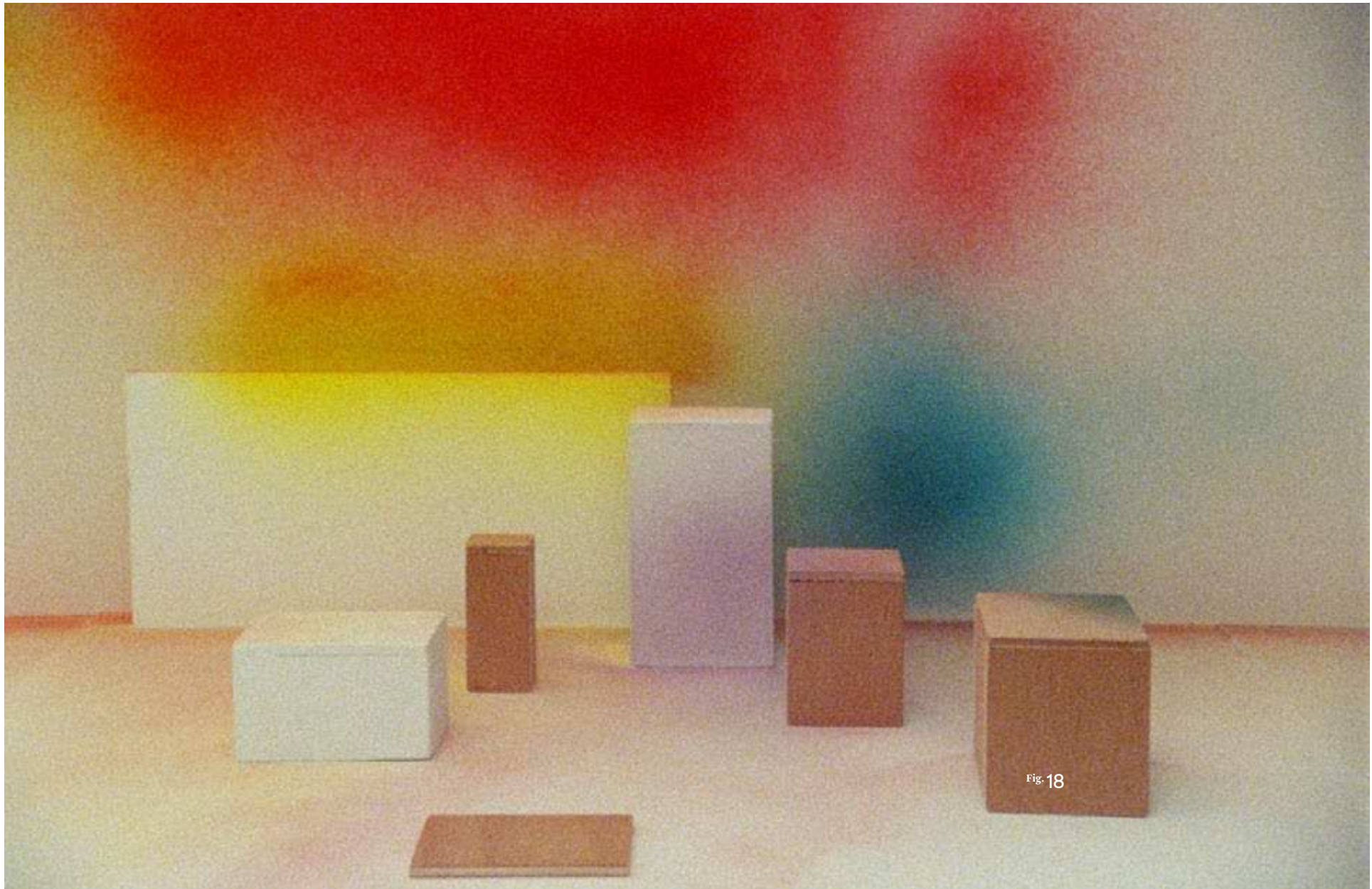
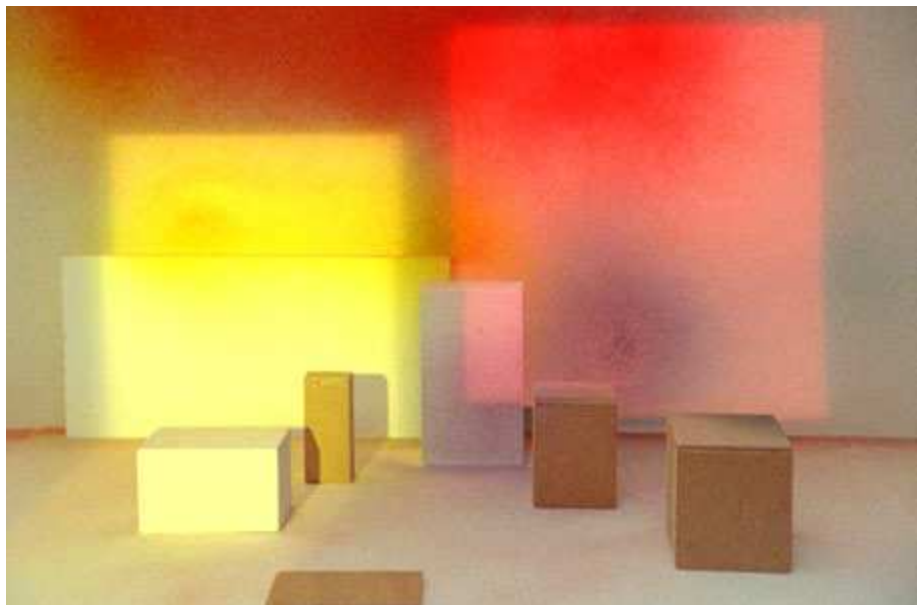
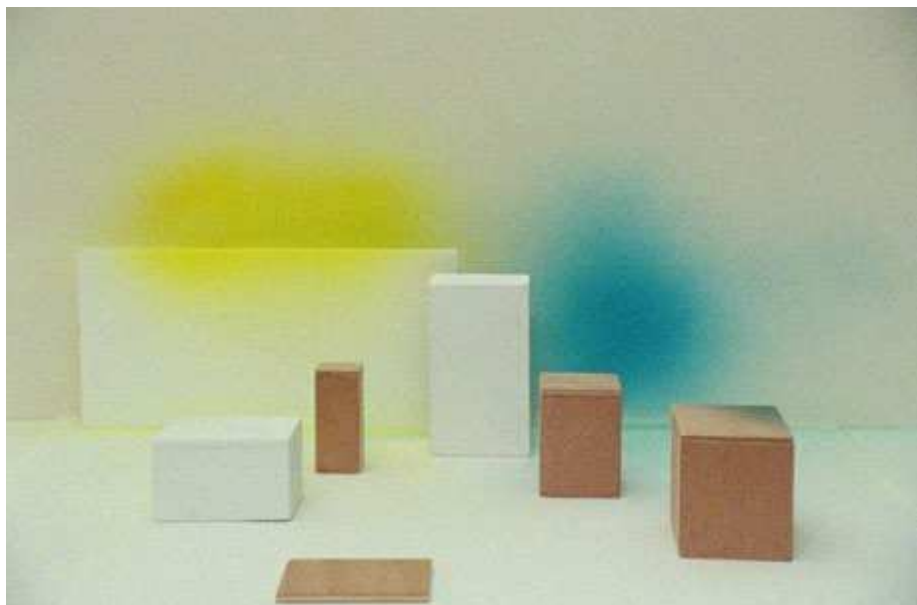


Fig. 18



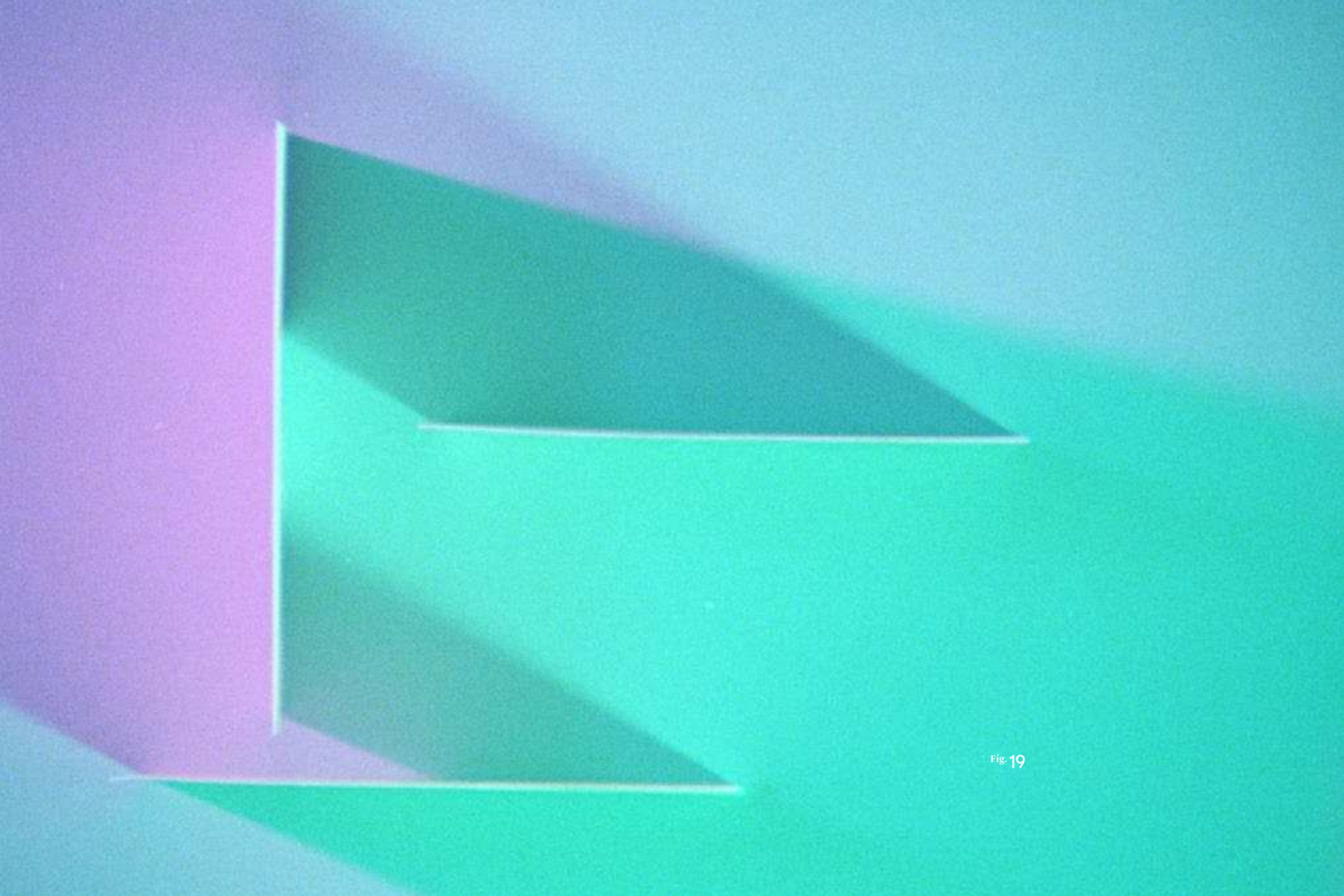


Fig. 19





Fig. 20

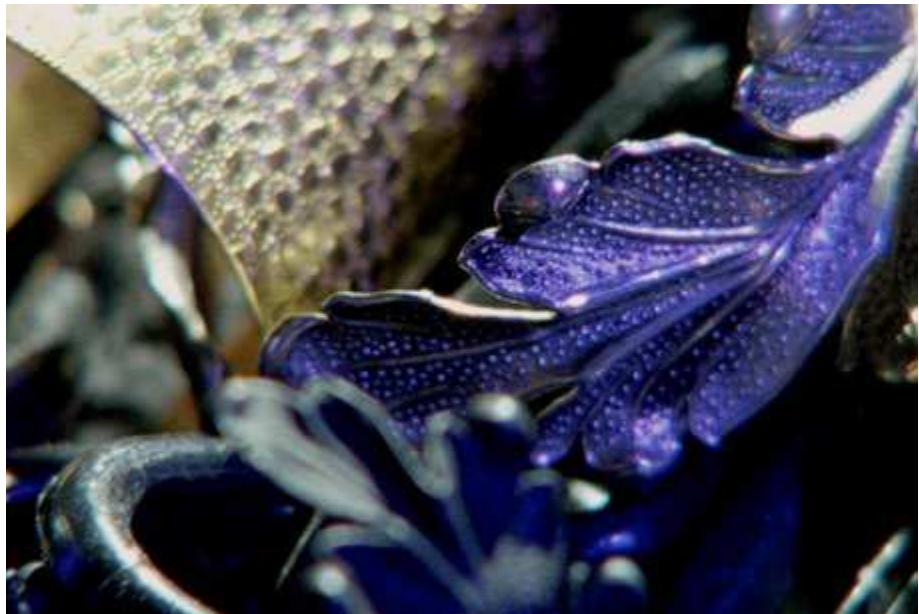
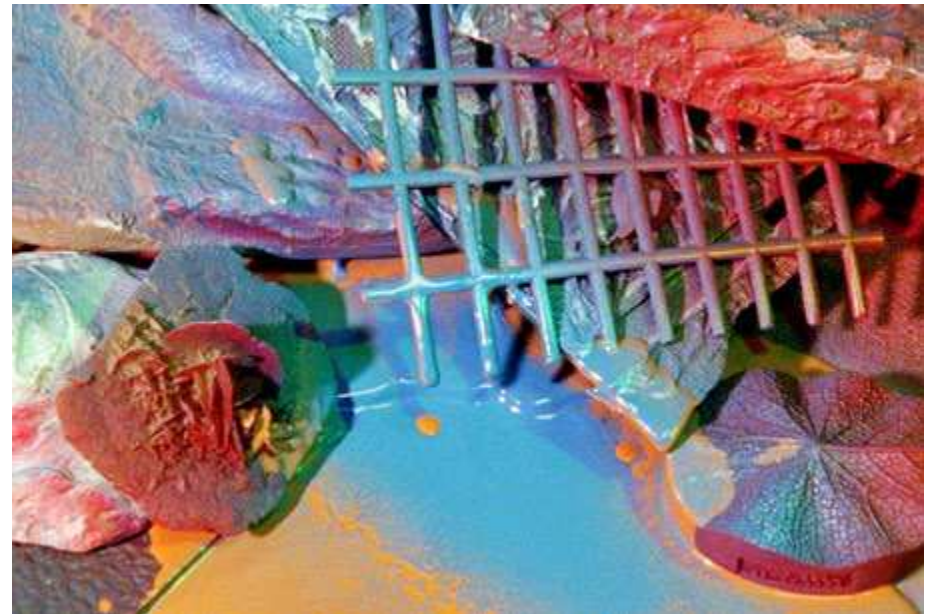
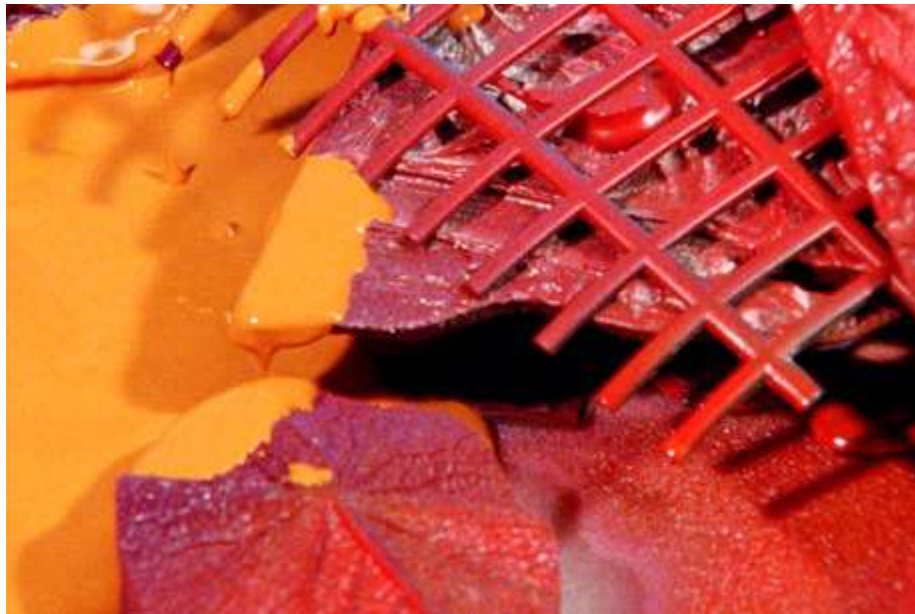
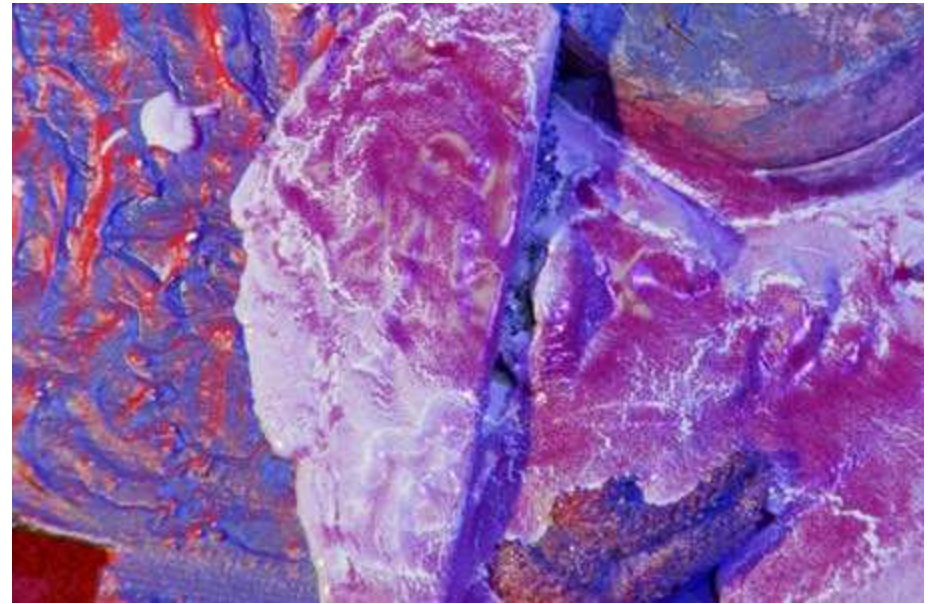
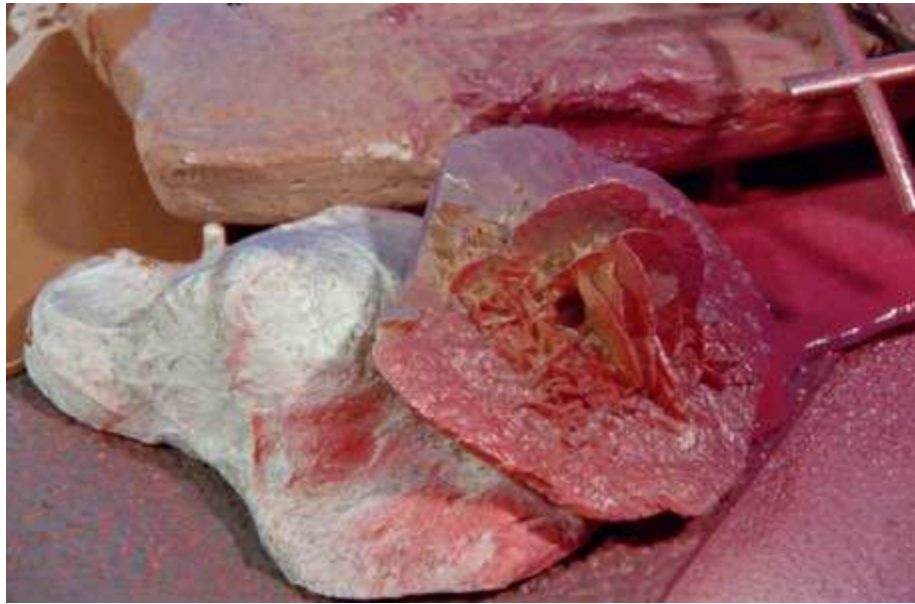




Fig. 21



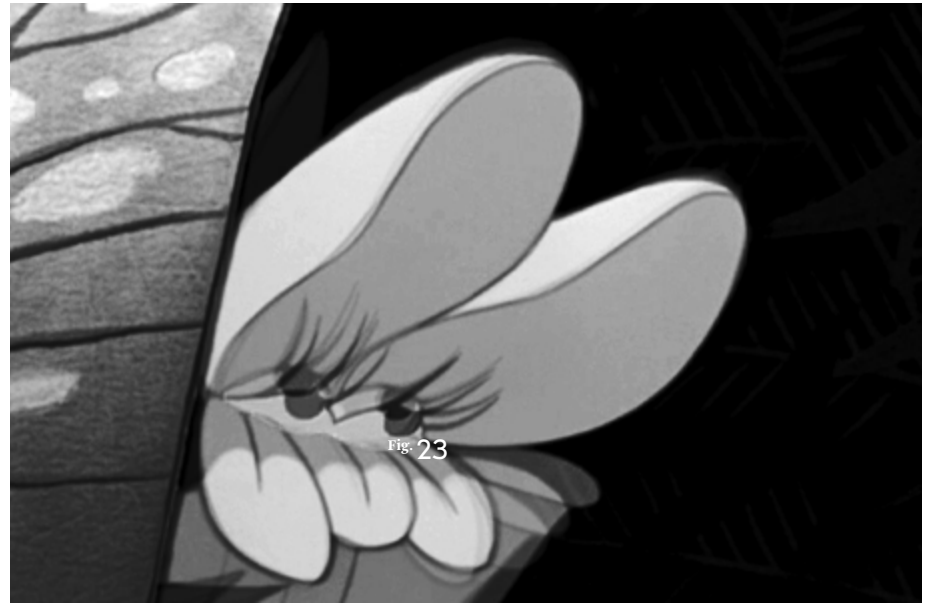




Fig. 24







Fig. 25



Fig. 26

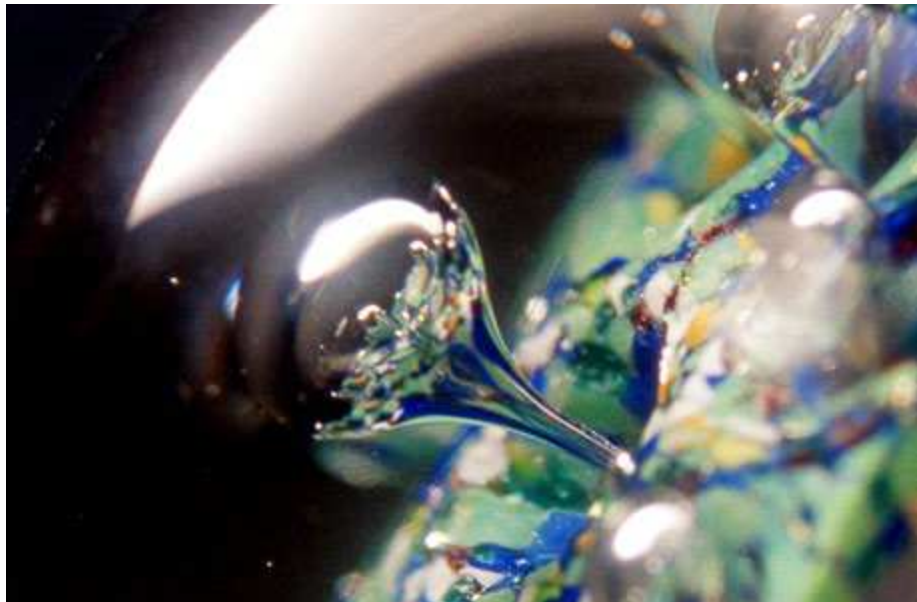




Fig. 28





Fig. 29



Fig. 30

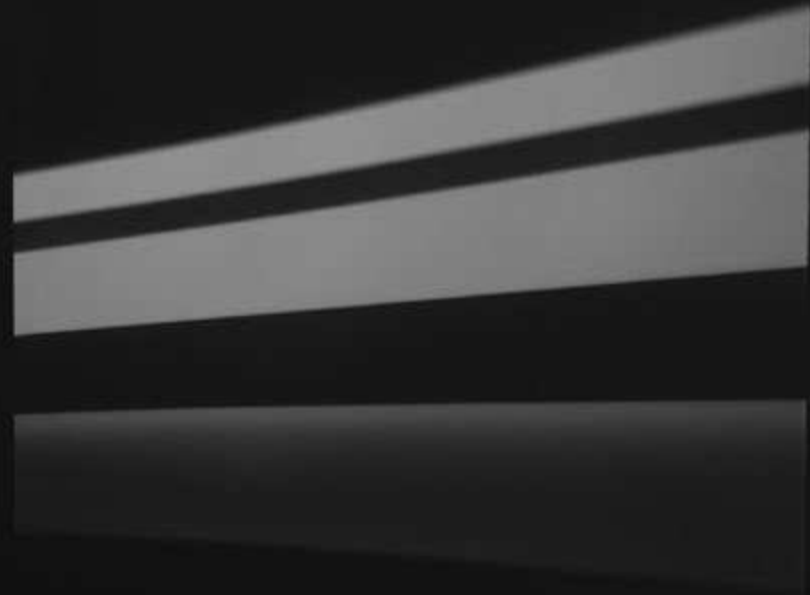


Fig. 31

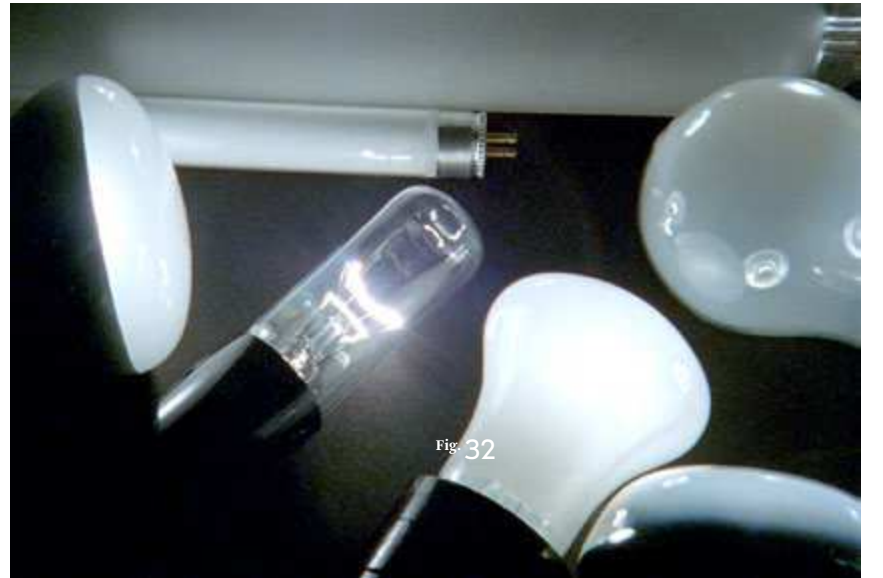
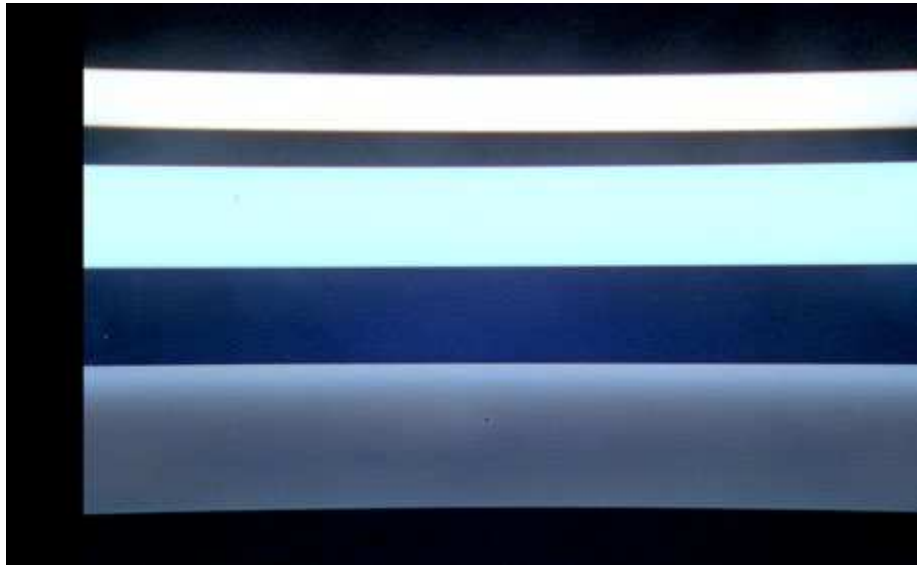


Fig. 32





Fig. 46



Fig. 33



Fig. 35

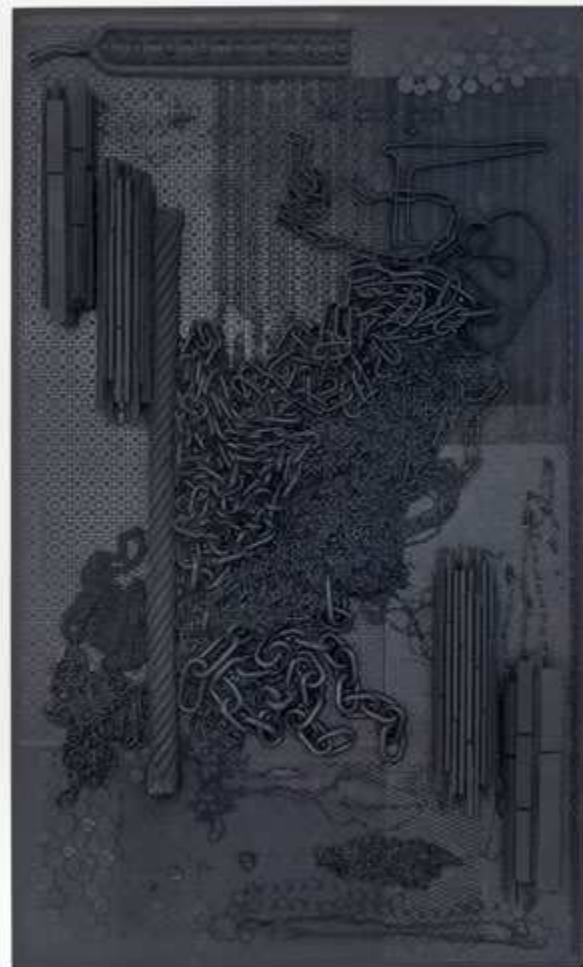


Fig. 36



Fig. 37



Fig. 39



Fig. 38



Fig. 40





Fig. 41



Fig. 42



Fig. 43



Fig. 44

Isabelle Cornaro Interview With Matthew Schum

of a similar typology. You may notice the objects share the shape of a flower, an animal, etc. and that the objects in *bas-relief* possess stylized patterns, such as laces, decorated metal, ceramic qualities and so on. Along with the geometric shapes found in the other objects, I named them generally under the categories of naturalism, stylization and abstraction, each of which stood for different ways of interpreting a natural model. To put it another way, I wanted to register different grades of resemblance, in that sense, the casted objects are submitted to a double system of resemblance in that they resemble the real objects that have been cast and they serve as abstract ideas or categories. As for the chosen shape and using plaster material, it is important to me that the castings are made in one chunk or block so that the form of the objects appear to be the solidification of a liquid. Additionally, in making the *Homonyms* series, I thought very much about sixteenth-century Mannerist grottos in which characters were designed and cast out of shapeless stone-like backgrounds.

MS: There is something Baroque about your plaster casts.

IC: I was always more interested in the Renaissance and most of all, Mannerist art.

MS: How did the *Homonyms* slip-cast sculptures begin? What set the series in motion?

IC: The idea was to put something together without order – as a heap, something *informe*, or as a set of accumulated objects



Fig. 45

This last phase came right before the Baroque and announced it, in fact. Yet Mannerism remained much less narrative in its structure to my mind. Along with Mannerists grottos, I was very interested in buildings like the Medici Chapel of Florence and in the baptistry in which Ghiberti realized his sculpted door, The Gates of Paradise. I even went back to this work while working on the *God Boxes* series (2012).

MS: Yet even if your sculpture incorporates ornamental fragments, the way you cast objects silences them. Instead of form vibrating, as a Baroque fountain might take on organic qualities meant to be visible from beneath falling water, or how a profiled silhouette appears to be lifelike upon a cameo, your casts really entomb things. As a whole, the objects you envelop in the sculptures look more like ossuary than privileged objects. Maybe it is bizarre, but I wonder if you think of the objects being more dead than alive after you have made one of your casts?

IC: I agree with your description of Baroque as having a quality of vibration and expansion, as opposed to the silent aspect of my work. The objects are muted by being fixed as an image in a material that makes them more generic—they are the image of a face,

a stone, a snake and so on — and by possessing the same consistency they seem to belong to the same kingdom and era once they are cast. It is also true that there is a funerary aspect to them as signaled in the title of the show at LA><ART—*This Morbid Round Trip from Subject to Object*, quoted from a previous interview with Quinn Latimer. Reflecting on our tendency to anthropomorphize objects and qualify them with feelings, whether it is due to memories and emotional value, or to hard work and financial value, I understood this movement as an extension of our own physical experience of objectification and death: namely, the transition from being a subject / animated person, to being an object / inanimate corpse. In my works, I connect this with my interest in the transition from shapelessness to formal properties and with an appreciation for chance and combinatorial processes.

MS: I ask about the “life” of the objects you collect because your working method employs and updates early twentieth-century found art. In Surrealism the found thing extracted from the marketplace has to do with unlocking the potential of the *démodé*. Breton’s writing, for example, envisions revolution in everyday things. An artist is defined by his or her power to recast the discarded object as a talisman or

dream image. This alchemy is elemental to a movement that rewired art history to make for the avant-garde and, concomitantly, presented an alternative to the economizing of every imaginable thing as capitalism progresses. I wonder how you see your work with found objects relating to these tactics.

IC: In this tradition, the found object was employed in various ways with very different meanings. Breton and the Surrealists gave it a magical and revolutionary potential, whereas Fluxus artists like Spoerri used it in a more conceptual way, embodying notions of process and time. The Nouveaux Realists followed a rather Pop tropism. I’d say that within all of these tactics, the use of found objects is linked to society. It is either a vehicle for collective symbolism, the factual evidence of a process or it points towards contemporary forms and notions of an era. I’d rather look at forms such as Duchamp’s and Morris’ and Levine’s later on. These artists incorporate randomness and something arbitrary that questions the ‘nature’ of the creative act, while they also express very personal mythologies linked to the existential question of being, which leads us back to your previous question.

MS: I am glad you brought up Spoerri. His

work employed the tradition of still life, painting to disengage from the game playing that has often plagued Pop Art as a sometimes bland means of provocation that was self-consciously ironic and therefore academic and commercial at once. Spoerri addressed this impoverishment of visual art with everyday life. His readymades confront us with our own mortality: he shows time elapsing not in minutes, hours and days, but in dirty ashtrays, coffee stained cups and saucers, dirty knives and all the forgotten meals that have come and gone before us upon worn tabletops. Among other things, mounting a dinner plate on the gallery wall somehow pointed to the despondence of the readymade. Yet Spoerri’s realism also goes back to sixteenth-, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century still life, which drew the eye with crafty compositions but, also, located the viewer’s body within the visual field of the objects radiating realistically, as though in a window display. Conversely, there is little idealism in Spoerri and I see that as relevant to the images you make in sculpture. That is the charm of this darker brand of found art you pursue. This is the heroism of modern life that finds the everyday object living out its final days in a dirty sink or a flea market free bin just like the bohemian lives in the dive bar cafe. I think your work channels this healthy negativism where

many of your contemporaries would seem to shy away from it in favor of irony or simple calculations blending the high and low.

IC: I guess it's the way I understand a deconstructive approach. I love this idea of showing time elapse not in minutes, hours and days but with the dirty ashtrays, sad cups and saucers—it's a very detailed and materialistic approach to showing time. With an early work I made titled *Savannah Surrounding Bangui and the Utubangui River*, which was a sort of prototype of the large installations *Paysage avec Poussin et Témoins Oculaires*, I was representing schematic somewhat naïve-looking landscapes with jewelry belonging to my parents. Somehow it was the same idea—something very materialistic and highly detailed about the irreducibility of the objects (necklaces, bracelets, pendants, so on), with their very specific qualities juxtaposed to their function as schematic even childish signs, for a common representation of space, such as a horizon, mountains and other features that compose a landscape.

MS: How do you see the found objects functioning, not in the medium of the plaster cast object, but as moving image?

IC: The films are to me the exact

equivalent of the castings: a record or a mechanical print, of real objects arranged sometimes in a composed way presented as accumulations. With the films a recording has less materiality, because it is made of moving images. Whereas the castings are still, by comparison, and possess strong materiality as volumes in space. There is also something very performative and childish in the films that occurs in the act of making. Objects are quickly arranged just before being shot and even while filming. Colored lights, spray and liquid paints are projected or poured in real time. It's a playful process. In the same way the editing is extremely simple, almost schematic, and employs a very simple early-film grammar with successive fixed plans, panning, wide shots and close-ups.

MS: Perhaps because you are focused intently on the distributing objects in your work, it avoids being busy. Meanwhile, your videos and sculptures quietly contextualize each other. It's visual art without being a big production. There's no siren song with the refreshing quality of silent film.

IC: The point is I find it always very difficult to insert a sound that doesn't work only as a commentary of the images and has its own plastic "objective" and, let's say, autonomous dimension.

from

Subject



MS: Who were some artists who attracted you to making video?

IC: Apart from Jean-Luc Godard whose film I was always a big fan and whose experimental practice can be linked to video art, I looked a lot at Marcel Broodthaers and Bruce Nauman film and video installations. The space and context they setup provided for the screened image to be experienced and understood in a larger constructed kind of thinking. And I have been very interested by artists such as Dara Birnbaum, Michael Snow, Rodney Graham, all of whose films and videos have a very strong and often repetitive structure. I also appreciate more accumulative or disordered kinds of films by artists such as Jack Smith and Bruce Baillie.

MS: What about favorite film directors?

IC: Oh that's tricky. As a teenager, my first intimate relation to art (meaning the sudden discovery of a world or a language that may indeed be yours, which you understand and eventually could speak) came with movies and becoming a cinephile at a young age. For several years with my father, during every college break, we would watch 3 or 4 films a day, which I then continued to do less intensely but as a weekly practice for another couple of years. So,

there are so many of them I love.

MS: What film do you suppose you watched more than any other?

IC: Movies like "The Devil, Probably" by Robert Bresson or "Sauve qui peut (la vie)" by Jean-Luc Godard, which was translated by "Every Man for Himself."



Fig. 46

to Object



Fig. 47



Fig. 48



Fig. 49



Fig. 50

In Captions, As Annotations.

by Lauren Mackler.

A wide-angled introduction

Now picture yourself in a scene, in which objects are arranged (displayed, collected, recorded), for your eyes (your lens, your pen) so that each facet is isolated, as though their depth was constructed through a series of flat planes. Transparent and functional, unemotional and seemingly impersonal, they point out into the world (sometimes the past, a particular history) and finds kinship in the kind of artworks that are uninterested in autobiography. The object's relationship to her is not important, she says. You might also hear her say words like categorical or empirical, by which you understand that she is making relationships between "things" that are deceptively formal, to say that they are, in fact, linguistic, or semiotic, and you might hear her say that these categories are recognizable such as "naturalism, stylization and abstraction." You might hear him say that her "sensibility seems to be of an archaeological and even curatorial persuasion."¹

Which gives her more responsibility

than she may have signed up for.

From which your mind inevitably goes to thinking about power, power and responsibility, and the malleable form they take. And how autobiography is a transposition through which some chose to read a work, and how a woman (anyone) contending with a vast social and cultural history as well as a personal experience, might opt to depict something larger than ones self, for art's sake. That is, to return the conversation to the object at hand.

Fig1 & 4. Premier Rêve d'Oskar Fischinger, (2008)

Fig2. Metronomie, (2014)

Fig3. Témoins Oculaires, Spike Island, Scene 4, (2015)

Fig5. Homonymes I (#1 - 7), (2010 - 2012)

Autobiography or lack thereof

Now picture yourself in a situation which is deceptively personal. The objects that surround you imply ownership and private history. Your tendency is to create a relationship to what is on display for you, to build narrative, to construct pasts. It is a fact that the original jewelry from her early work was her parents, but most objects are now found, foraged in flea markets by a sober hand. They contain traces of (someone's) personal history but with-

out an anecdote as evidence, that quickly becomes an abstract idea, and without a character and a sense of narrative, it is difficult to conjure empathy. However, it is by being void of empathy, that these objects become copies, doubles for a larger collective biography – paradigms of personal, social and art historical experiences.

Fig 6, 7, 10, 11. Paysage Avec Poussin Et Témoins Oculaires, I - VI, (2009 - 2014)

Fig 8, 9. Homonymes I, #1 - 7, (2010 - 2012)

Fig 12. Témoins Oculaires, Spike Island, Scene 5, (2015)

Fig 13. Témoins Oculaires, Spike Island, Scene 1, (2015)

Fig 14. Savannah Surrounding Bangui and the River Utubangui, (2003 - 2007)

Fig 15. Témoins Oculaires, Spike Island, Scene 2, (2015)

Fig 16. Témoins Oculaires, Spike Island, Scene 4, (2015)

Research & Display

Now picture yourself in front of a landscape, and by landscape I mean nature, or maybe bodies or faces or paintings or objects. A pool of like-minded images, a carefully collected set of references. A few characters remerge: Nicolas Poussin, Oskar Fischinger, Edward Kienholz and Walt Disney. Each man for a different reason.

Their ideas are restaged in new media, loosened from their original intent to create a new form, a mirror form, through material alterations. From Poussin, she extracts the study of perspective from paintings into sculpture, the relativity of objects to each other in a landscape and the unreliability of the witness. From Disney she appropriates images that are consumable like objects or propaganda, she takes the breath-giving attribute of animation and spikes it with the scale-bending quality of early film. From Fischinger she takes the metaphysical likeness of abstraction to spirituality; and from Kienholz, who once planned but never executed a piece he would have titled "God Boxes", she takes a title, a un-accomplished work, a starting point from beyond the grave and in that, a bit of mortality and immortality.

And so it becomes clear to you that her "quoting" is self-aware. It situates her historically in a chain of instances and reoccurring thoughts. It take the stance that each artwork might just be the beginning of the next, empowered by it's own un-inhibited segue.

Time is not linear in this world, objects are as reusable as images and shift from being subject to matter, in a range of materials (plaster, steel, light... to name a few).

You remind yourself, that research is a mix of search and reconfiguration. That



Fig. 51



Fig. 52



Fig. 53

information has no fixed form, it is reliant on the hand that molds it for presentation...

Fig 17,18. *Floues et Colorées*, (2011)

Fig 19. *De L'argent Filmé de Profil et de Trois Quarts*, (2010)

Fig 20. *Amplifications*, (2014)

Fig 21. *Choses*, (2014)

Fig 22, 23, 24. *Celebration parts I – III*, (2013)

Fig 25. *Reproductions (# 1, purple)*, (2010/15),

Fig 26. *Figures*, (2011)

Fig 27. *Premier Rêve d'Oskar Fischinger*, (2008)

Forensics & Evidence

Now picture yourself at a vantage point which is ideal, albeit subjective and deceiving. What you are looking over is tautological, in more than one way: You are seeing objects that themselves are made for viewing. But also “things” that are characters, that illustrate their function, “things” that are literal and figurative. “Things” that are articulating ideas; telling you stories of their own production, consumption, and behavior. They are witnesses and she reminds you that “the literary sensibility of the title pointed to the act of reading objects.”²

This kind of reading, however, has an agenda.

The nature of evidence is that it is “truth”, but truth based on consensus,

driven by subjectivity. Forensics takes its root from “forum” or, “on trial before the public.”

You look back at the objects which are actually on film, and you begin to question scale, “lipsticks become obelisks”³ he points out. This is an antic inherent to the medium of film who’s early adopters and viewers, you might remember, feel under the spell of its ability to shift scale. Much of early cinema is about the play with perspective afforded by a lens.

Everything is possible when objects are translated to light.

Fig 28, 29, 30, 31, 33. *This Morbid Round Trip From Subject To Object at LAxART* (2014)

Fig 32. *Film Lampe* (2010)

Translation, Transformation

Now picture yourself between tongues, when she turns to you to say: “What is first striking about Flaubert is his contempt for sentimentality and his fervor for *le mot juste*.”⁴ It is in translation that you best understand your own language, your own time, earnestly.

Her sculptures are casts of life, uncomposed piles, collections made through questionably subjective categories. They are a pile of inanimate things, slip-cast, made solid and made “one.” Alone,

the objects are simply functional, as a collection they have agency, as a solid mass they have meaning, if not voice.

And he turns to you to say “when I asked where her compulsion to arrange came from, she said she saw it as being linked to language – she perceives her objects as syntactical units that add up into sentences – and a leeriness of self-expression.”¹

You might hear her say that it is important that the plaster of which they are made is liquid then made solid. That all the parts are made into a single form; the groupings she makes creating categories, a kind of vocabulary, a new language.

Fig 34. *Reproductions (# 3, red)*, (2010/15),

Fig 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43, 45, 48. *God Box, #1 – 5*, (2013)

Fig 36, 41, 44, 53, 54, 55. *Orgon Doors, versions I, II, III, IV*, (2013)

Fig 46, 47. *Homonymes I*, (2010 – 2012)

Fig 42, 49. *Orgon Door, installation view at Galerie Francesca Pia*, (2014)

Symbols & Death

Now, finally, picture yourself in a time, where language is replaced by symbols and symbols quickly become monuments. “Their ornamental arrangement suggests a message written in code, like the indecipherable hieroglyphics of some alien



Fig. 54

civilization emerging from the wreckage of our own. Thus arises the paradox that the obelisk seems to speak both a common contemporary parlance and a lost tongue.”⁵

Which reminds you that art, like fiction, is a contract between the artist and his witness. One which similarly involves a kind of new vocabulary, position and frame. A fascimile, in this picture, is

an imperfect attempt at mirroring something live, its success and its failure is measured by the liminal space that turns a witness into a viewer.

And death... is a whole other kind of miscommunication. "Everything indeed is at least double" says *La Prisonnière* ⁶

Fig 50, 51. Homonymes II, #1 - 17, (2012 - 2013)

Fig 52. Orgon Door, installation view at Galerie Francesca Pia, (2014)

Fig 56. Témoins Oculaires, Spike Island, detail view, (2015)

Quoted:

- (1) Chris Sharp on IC
- (2) Quinn Latimer on IC
- (3) Eli Diner on IC
- (4) Lydia Davis, paraphrased on translation and Flaubert.
- (5) Paul Galvez on IC
- (6) A quote from Proust's *La Prisonnière* by way of Anne Carson's *Albertine*.



Fig. 55

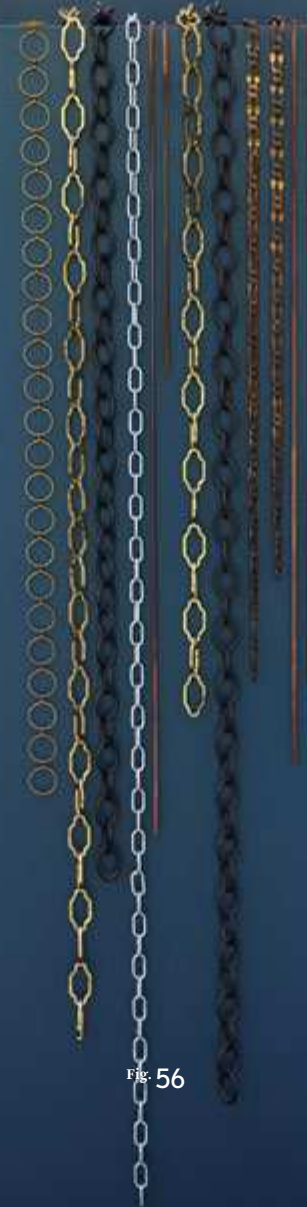


Fig. 56



Isabelle Cornaro's exhibition
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Object" was produced by LA><ART
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LA > ART