



GEZEITENTÜMPEL | TIDAL POOLS

[gə'tsaɪt̩'tymp̩l̩] | Philipp Aldrup



Gezeitentümpel | Klartraum vom Nebel – A Lucid Dream of Nebula, 500 x 330 mm

It is advisable to look from the tide pool to the stars and then back to the tide pool again. – John Steinbeck

GEZEITENTÜMPEL is a collection of visual poems and questions about the brevity of life and the vastness of time. They are archeological meditations, presenting hidden parts of Singapore that symbolize the infinite glory- and futility- of existence.

Tidal pools are spaces caught between the extremely different forces of land and sea; they know the silent glare of sunlight and the surging power of ocean tides. The forces around them change constantly, yet they remain the same.

They hold yesteryear's dreams, today's chimaera, tomorrow's fleeting love, next century's great disasters; all these fragments slowly drifting towards the bottom of the ocean of time...disquietingly silent.

I found tidal pools beneath Singapore's highways, in the wayside scrub, on cemeteries and in abandoned buildings. I saw physical metaphors, spaces caught between the logical forces of the rational and the unpredictable forces of the absurd.

Maybe one has to descend to the tidal pools' ground in order to discover – whether you see stars or you see dirt, it is OK.



Gezeitentümpel | Höhlenbewohner – Cave-dweller, 840 x 560 mm



Gezeitentümpel | Chinatown, 840 x 560 mm



Gezeitentümpel | Endmoräne – End Moraine, 840 x 560 mm

*Fallen souls, drifters, the wasted, the waiting and the collapsed,
the cheated potential, the hidden materials – from these make
heroic and hopeful events. From trash and ephemera make history.*

Phil Smith, 'Mythogeography: A Guide to Walking Sideways'



Gezeitentümpel | Zeitgeist, 560 x 840 mm



Gezeitentümpel | Mangrove – ManggiManggi, 1010 x 670 mm

Was mag denn wohl der alte Urwald träumen?
Er ist ja selbst ein üpp'ger Traum der Zeiten,
Wenn, grüßend nach des Meeres Silberschäumen,
Hoch auf ihm hin sich Blumengärten breiten.

Gottfried Keller, Gedichte, 1846

What might the old jungle dream of?
He himself a lush dream of times,
When, saluting the silver sea,
Gardens of flowers are sprawling high upon him?

Gottfried Keller, Poems, 1846

THE ALLURE OF THE TIDAL POOLS

The global imperative towards economic growth generates an appetite for things we do not need, things which consume resources, wreck the environment, erase history and unsettle our peace of mind.

Faced with rapid changes in a land we feel increasingly detached from, we are losing the connection to memories of our home. We seem to have minimal influence over these changes.

Behind the city's shiny malls and in the wayside scrub lie shabby nooks and crannies – temporary faultlines between former places and places-to-be. These Gezeitentümpel/tidal pools are ephemeral spaces radiating a timeless atmosphere.

Despite being by-products of urban construction, they resist becoming a functional part of an exponentially accelerated system of economic utilisation.

Their beauty originates from their lack of use; their allure lies in their refusal of vociferous persuasion. They resemble virgin nature, neither exploited nor maintained ... they are simply existing.



Gezeitentümpel | Längengrad | Longitude | 103°48'0"E, 1010 x 670 mm



Gezeitentümpel | Bollwerk – Bulwark, 1190 x 790 mm



Gezeitentümpel | Aufruhr – Rebellion, 560 x 840 mm



Gezeitentümpel | Denkmal – Memorial, 840 x 560 mm

Every act of rebellion expresses a nostalgia for innocence and an appeal to the essence of being.

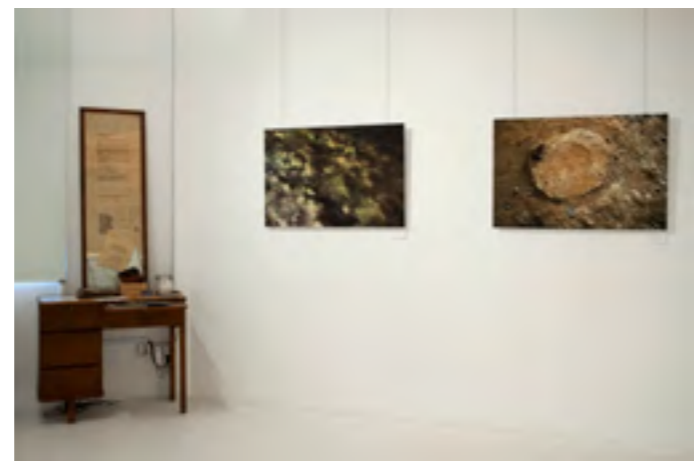
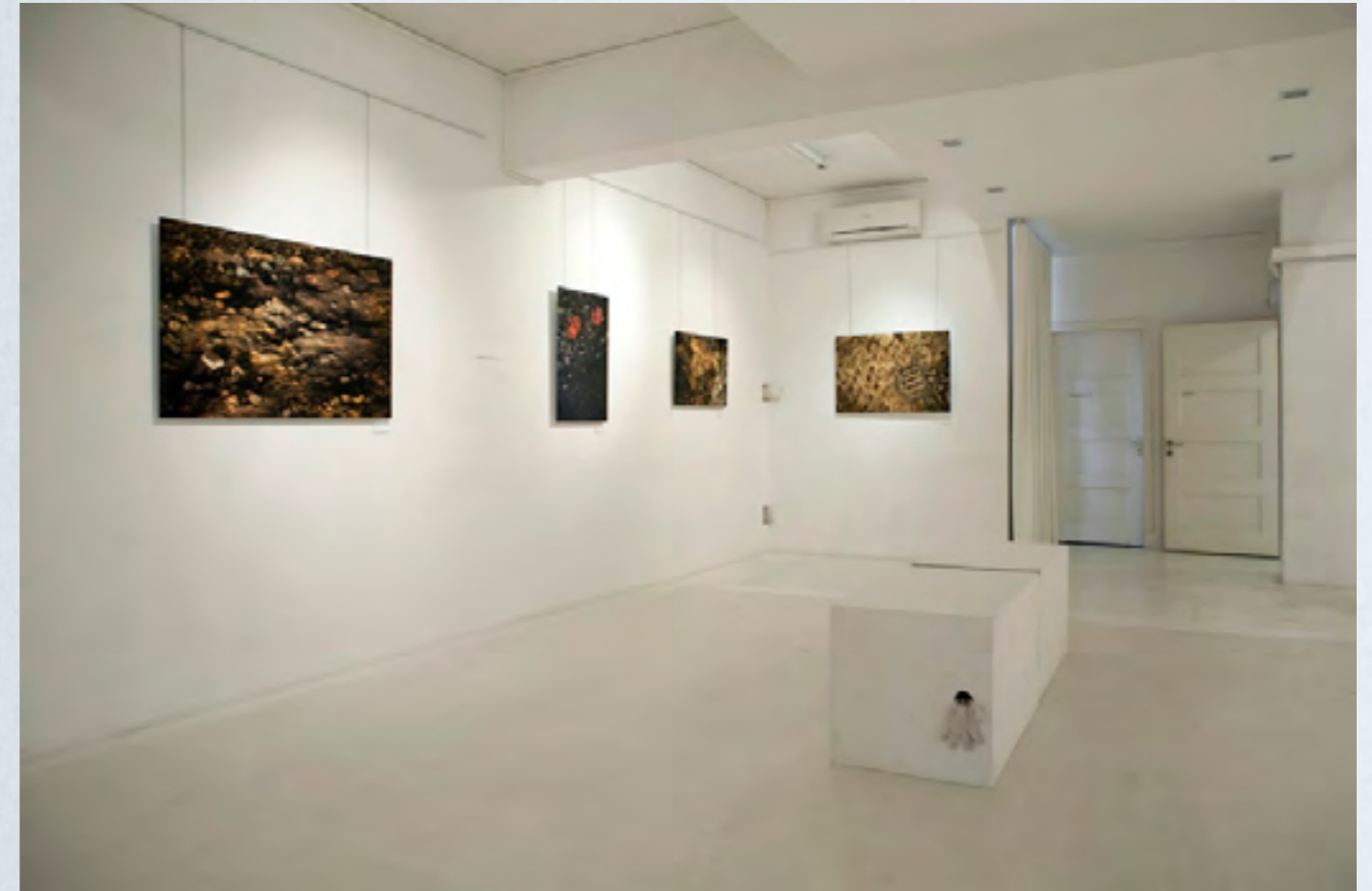
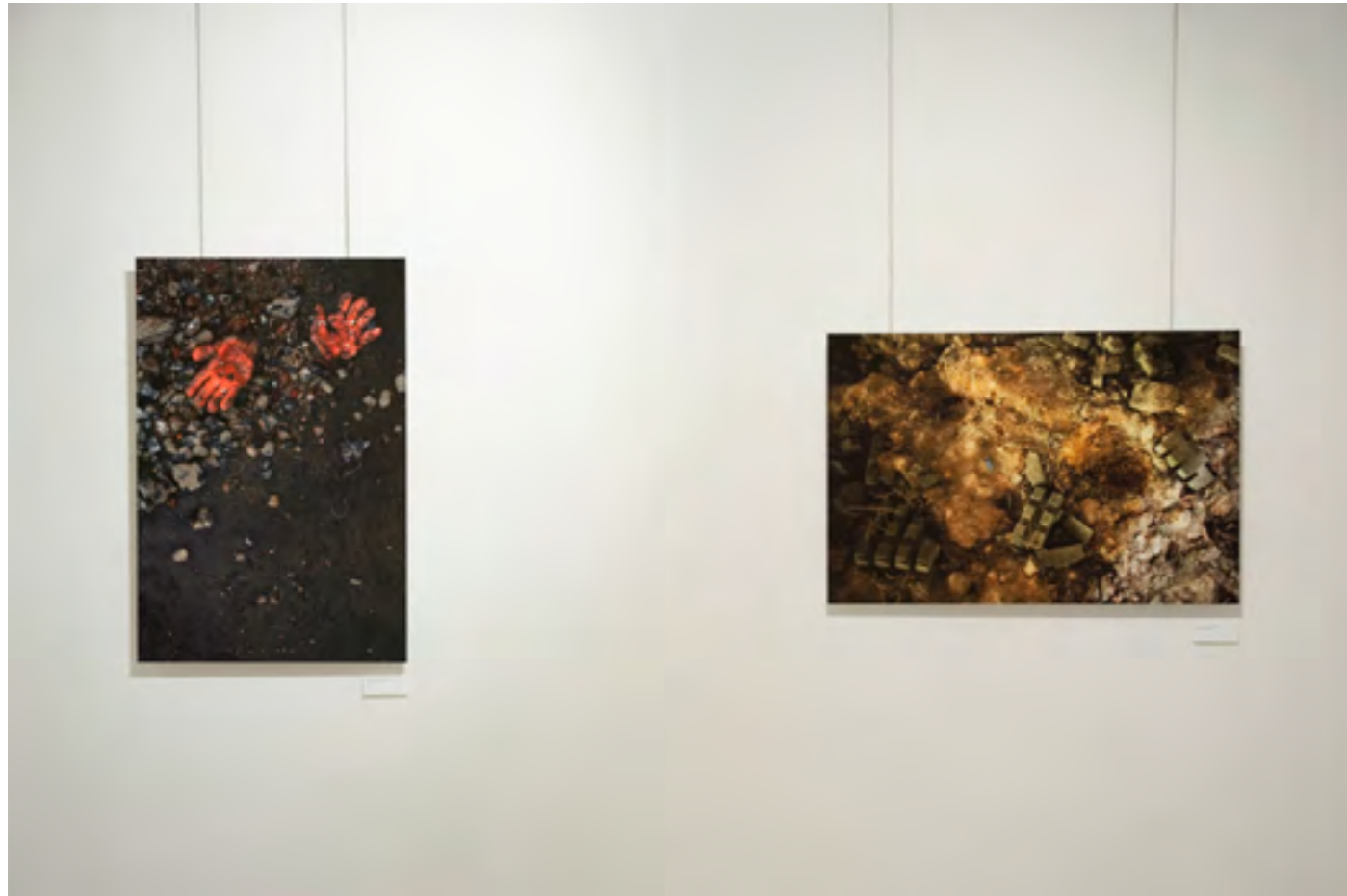
Albert Camus

PHILIPP ALDRUP

I am a German who has been based in Singapore since 2008. With my camera I create images of places that possess a disquieting beauty filled with an ethereal sense of timelessness. My recent work, entitled "GEZEITENTÜMPEL | tidal pools" evolved from my documentation of urban spaces in Singapore and Jakarta, as well as from the extensive exploration of Pulau Ubin, a small island near Singapore, whose few remaining residents live a bygone lifestyle in our present times.



Gezeitentümpel | Nachklang – Reverberation, 1010 x 670 mm



The Gezeitentümpel exhibition premiered at **OBJECTIFS GALLERY** Singapore and ran from 1 February to 9 March 2013.

Established in 2003, Objectifs is a visual arts centre dedicated to promoting photography and filmmaking.
www.objectifs.com.sg

The exhibition consisted of 11 inkjet prints on SIHL fine art paper, mounted on frameless *dibond* boards.

Discarded pieces of furniture, collected from the streets nearby the gallery, formed the space for the artist statement and accompanying booklets, post cards and soundtrack-CDs.





Exhibition catalogue | Index sheets, recycled paper

THE OBSERVATORY

When photographing the GEZEITENTÜMPEL series I was very conscious of the sounds around me. I imagined them to be as much present tones as a collage of verberating sounds of bygone and possible future activities.

Singapore's renown music group **THE OBSERVATORY** enthusiastically connected with the visuals. They recorded a 60-min collage of resurfacing sounds, noise and melodies, which accompanied the exhibition over the 5 weeks and they presented a improvisation performance in the gallery space.

"Like the discarded and the forgotten artifacts of our past and future surfacing in the images of the tidal pools, the noise these exhumed objects would make is imagined and extrapolated upon. Forgotten but in their true essence, pure and beautiful in atonal character, and just as equally important." – **LESLIE LOW**, The Observatory



An Excerpt of **The OBSERVATORY'S** Soundtrack can be heard here: www.tinyurl.com/tidal-OBS

Their CDR is distributed by **UJIKAJI RECORDS** : www.tinyurl.com/obs-CDR

The Observatory is not afraid of the unpredictable. With a foundation of four members, the Obs constantly make musical constructions, build relationships with other musical artists and make plans for music without plans. They challenge themselves and their fans. The band has recorded four albums in Norway. Their current work, **CONTINUUM**, consciously reflects their Southeast Asian background. www.theobservatory.com.sg



PIBLOKTO in Gezeitentümpel

Piblokto is a solo project by Alexius Cai. Recorded mostly at home over a span of two years, his album *Colourless Fields* is a reflection on the tenacity of human fortitude and the search for tranquility amidst the desolation and vastness of the Siberian tundra. www.pibloktoq.bandcamp.com

"The vastness of time intertwines within the tidal pools that exude a myriad of exhumed melodies. Awkward, abandoned – yet beautiful. Piblokto interprets Gezeitentümpel in its essence, brevity and beauty." – **ALEXIUS CAI**

Alexius interweaved his wide and tranquil soundscapes with the visuals of the tidal pools during a live performance in the gallery. The recording can be heard and downloaded here: www.soundcloud.com/piblokto/piblokto-in-gezeitent-mpel



ANDY YANG

Andy Yang composed a sound piece for the image 'A Lucid Dream of Nebula' - a collage of the perpetual flow of the water's tides meeting the countless submerged sounds of fish, bubbles, plants, garbage... www.soundcloud.com/andyangsookit/reactions-to-a-lucid-dream-of

Andy Yang is a multidisciplinary artist from Malaysia, based in Singapore. His ongoing fascination with human emotions, music and abstract expressionism has led him to his latest series of paintings, entitled *Tranquility*. www.andyyangsookit.wordpress.com



On March 09 the GEZEITENTÜMPEL series experienced an artistic extension, when Singaporean artists Debbie Ding, Wei Fen Lee, Koh Nguang How, Alexius Cai, Yeo

Siew Hua, Low Lai Chow, Tianshu Ge, and Andy Yang responded to the images with sound collages, videos, poems, essays, paintings and artifacts.

Multidisciplinary artist and researcher KOH NGUANG HOW showed excerpts of his extensive photographic documentation of Singapore's changing landscape.

Koh's unflinching urban exploration and his 'unromanticising' perspectives on the country's development have been an important inspiration for my current projects.

More of his work can be seen here:
www.tinyurl.com/KohNguangHow



Gloves of Korean construction workers in Singapore, 2012



Simpang, Singapore ca. 1988

Artist DEBBIE DING presented selected texts on art and urbanism. www.fragments.psychogeography.sg

Robert Smithson

A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey, 1967

The last monument was a sand box or a model desert. Under the dead light of the Passaic afternoon the desert became a map of infinite disintegration and forgetfulness. This monument of minute particles blazed under a bleakly glowing sun, and suggested the sullen dissolution of entire continents, the drying up of oceans-no longer were there green forests and high mountains-all that existed were millions of grains of sand, a vast deposit of bones and stones pulverized into dust. Every grain of sand was a dead metaphor that equaled timelessness, and to decipher such metaphors would take one through the false mirror of eternity. This sand box somehow doubled as an open grave-a grave that children cheerfully play in.

[...] I should now like to prove the irreversibility of eternity by using a jejune experiment for proving entropy. Picture in your mind's eye the sand box divided in half with black sand on one side and white sand on the other. We take a child and have him run hundreds of times clockwise in the box until the sand gets mixed and begins to turn grey; after that we have him run anti-clockwise, but the result will not be a restoration of the original division but a greater degree of greyness and an increase of entropy.

Of course, if we filmed such an experiment we could prove the reversibility of eternity by showing the film backwards, but then sooner or later the film itself would crumble or get lost and enter the state of irreversibility. Somehow this suggests that the cinema offers an illusive or temporary escape from physical dissolution. The false immortality of the film gives the viewer an illusion of control over eternity but "the superstars" are fading.

DEBBIE DING	Selected texts: by Gil Doron, Robert Smithson, Vilem Flusser, Debbie Ding
WEI FEN LEE	A poem: REFORESTATION
KOH NGUANG HOW	Photographs and artifacts: PLACES
ALEXIUS CAI	Live recording: FROM UNDERNEATH THE AYE TO SIBERIA AND BACK TO THE CTE
YEO SIEW HUA	Video: GEZEITENTÜMPEL revisited
LOW LAI CHOW	Video: PORTALS
TIANSHU GE	Painting: 安。家。 - safe home
ANDY YANG	Sound piece: A LUCID DREAM OF NEBULA
THE OBSERVATORY	Soundtrack: GEZEITENTÜMPEL

PRESS

Stars Beneath the CTE

by *Stephen Black*

in *SA (Singapore Architect)*

www.uebersee.com.sg/philippaldrup/photo/Stars_Beneath_The_CTE.pdf

AUGUST MAN Magazine Interview

by *Ci'en Xu*

www.augustman.com/interview-gezeitent%C3%BCmpel-philippaldrup

DATA & MUD

by *Stephen Black*

in *The Pocket Arts Guide*

www.scribd.com/doc/123080500/The-Pocket-Arts-Guide-37-Jan-Feb-2013#page=41

Gezeitentümpel: A song of visual poems

by *Wei Fen Lee*

in *FOTO-FOTO: poskod.sg*

www.poskod.sg/Posts/2013/3/12/Gezeitentmpel-Tidal-Pools



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PANTHERA PURA | gezeitentümpel II - A work in progress

PANTHERA PURA | gezeitentümpel II is a photographic series which builds upon the themes of the Gezeitentümpel project. The motivation of this work in progress is to explore more deeply the particular history and legends of selected spaces.



PANTHERA PURA | vimarda – devastation



PANTHERA PURA | Agalita – fallen flower

Stars Beneath the CTE

Exhibition Review: *Gezeitentümpel (Tidal Pools)*
by Philipp Aldrup
1–28 February 2013
Objectifs Gallery

With his carefully composed photographs serving as archeological meditations, Philipp Aldrup presents hidden parts of Singapore as in-between spaces shaped by different forces of nature. *Stephen Black reports.*

Text by Stephen Black
Photography by Philipp Aldrup

“Every act of rebellion expresses a nostalgia for innocence and an appeal to the essence of being.”

—Albert Camus

Gezeitentümpel (Tidal Pools), Philipp Aldrup’s recent show at Objectifs, is a rebellion, albeit a quiet and humble one. With *Tidal Pools*, Aldrup has rebelled against his own past, having hurled away photojournalism and his own highly regarded documentary approach to embrace the spirits of poetry and philosophy.

There is a lot of dirt in *Tidal Pools*. Aldrup presents Singapore as a collection of earthy surfaces almost devoid of vegetation and traces of humanity. These superficially barren plots of land represent Aldrup’s inner thoughts, just as the brushstrokes in Zen landscapes represent both distant mountains and the artist’s inner mind.

The images were produced during a period when Aldrup often pondered topics like the brevity of life and the vastness of time. In his artist’s statement, he mentions the writings of the French philosopher and Nobel Prize recipient Albert Camus. However, *Tidal Pools* is not an example of “philosophy-is-only-good-for-you- if-it-is-painfully-boring.” Within the exhibition’s dark, carefully composed images, there is a lightness of spirit that saves us from *Pessimismus*.

William Blake wrote about seeing the universe in a grain of sand, Aldrup perceives abandoned spaces as containers which, constantly and extremely slowly, hold and release memories. Just as real tidal pools exist between land and sea, Aldrup’s tidal pools exist between past and present. The images, with their lack of subject matter and indistinct lighting, represent the flow of time. In *Tidal Pools*, a space below the CTE could be the conceptual equivalent of an archaeology site or the remains of an underwater city. Or a galaxy. As Aldrup wrote for his piece in the *Paradise Lost* show at 2902 gallery in 2011:

Right in the middle of the city, behind the bustling streets and shiny malls, in the wayside scrub lie shabby nooks and crannies—temporary faultlines between former places and places-to-be—ephemeral spaces which paradoxically radiate a prehistoric and timeless atmosphere.

Is Aldrup a photographer, a visual artist, a philosopher, or a documentary maker? The differences are not clear cut, especially in Singapore. Photographer/visual artist John Clang won the 2010 President’s Design Award. Among the Singapore International Photography Prizes is one for “best author.” Chua Soo Bin, the photographer who originated the Singapore Girl campaign, produced photo books about Chinese calligraphy and ran a gallery showing paintings. There is now talk of “lens-based art.” Ultimately, we must trust our perception of the work.

Aldrup studied photography in Singapore, beginning with the Shooting Home workshop at Objectifs. Shooting Home urges participants to draw inspiration from their home environment. Aldrup adopted the Golden Mile complex as his “home.”

Threatened to be destroyed, Golden Mile was one of Singapore’s first high-rise developments, a vertical city built in the organic style of the Japanese Metabolist movement. A politician once described it as a “vertical slum.” Aldrup’s carefully composed images seemed to show that the residents were never “at home,” making the work seem to be more about Golden Mile’s architectural spaces than its flats and living rooms.

Aldrup began documenting other places threatened by modernisation. The Mitre Hotel, built over a century ago, was photographed as an uninhabited no-man’s-land full of decades’ worth of decay and fresh renovations.

Istana Woodneuk, an abandoned mansion now in the midst of a massive development area was the subject of another series. A photograph taken from one of its balconies shows a distant clump of housing estates, the sky, and green vegetation. We cannot put a date on it. If the image were converted to black and white it would feel like something made forty years ago.

Aldrup’s beautiful documentation of places like the

now-destroyed National Stadium, the soon to be downsized Bukit Brown Cemetery, and the Punggol area show them without any clear chronological markers. *Past, or present, or glimpses of the future?* Aldrup seems to have often stood in places that have disappeared/are disappearing/will disappear.

In one image, delicate white fans are suspended just beneath the high, light blue ceiling of the Capitol Theatre. Below are floor-to-ceiling scaffoldings, piles of dirt and stacks of elegant seats that wait to be carried away. The image seems to declare that the future is a place where stories and “new pasts” will accumulate. *New movies on the same screen in the same place. Different audience.*

“My work seeks to visualise the value and beauty of the friction between urban development and nature, the friction between reinvention and heritage, as well as the complications of urban planning, which is largely guided by economic imperatives.”

—Philipp Aldrup, personal statement

Pulau Ubin, a ten-minute boat ride away from the coast of Changi, was once a booming mining town of 6,000 people. Now, it has the atmosphere of an abandoned 1960s style *kampung*. Here, Aldrup discovered the Chias, an elderly couple. The simple home where they lived most of their lives is now being reclaimed by the jungle and they now spend more of their time in a



William Blake wrote about seeing the universe in a grain of sand, Aldrup perceives abandoned spaces as containers which, constantly and extremely slowly, hold and release memories.

modern HDB highrise apartment near Serangoon. (On Pulau Ubin, Aldrup also befriended a three-legged wild boar, but that is another story.) The Chias, who walk and take boats, buses, and trains between the two locations, add a human dimension to this phase of Aldrup's work.

By comparing his past work with *Tidal Pools*, we are given a platform to discuss the relationship between documentation and art. Aldrup's images of the sulphur mines in Indonesia provide us with a way of examining this complex issue.

"I went to the mines in 2008 as a tourist and left with strong images," Aldrup has stated. His images illustrate documentary photography's basic formula: an interesting place + time = an interesting photo.¹

Aldrup's quote indicates that the images were the result of chance. Neither philosophy nor an established artistic practice influenced the creation of the photos. He was a casual photographer, not a painter, film director, conceptual artist, writer, researcher, or dancer.

Let us now imagine Aldrup returning to the same spot in 2013. Let us also assume that he continues to explore the ideas that mattered to him during the creation of *Tidal Pools*, including Camus's analysis of the Greek myth of Sisyphus. Sisyphus was punished by the gods for removing Death from the world. His punishment was to push a huge boulder up a hill. Just before reaching the top, the enchanted boulder would roll back down and Sisyphus would have to start at the bottom again. Forever.

It is likely that the images of the miners from Aldrup's second trip would be much different from the first. They might reference or even visually duplicate the myth of Sisyphus. These "miners as Sisyphus" images would float between the fluid borders of visual art, documentary, conceptual art, and could even be considered as a form of theatre.

There are Singaporean photographers who blur boundaries. Charles Lim documents the waters surrounding Singapore, creating photographs that are conceptual, personal, and political. Amanda Heng's

oeuvre features photographs of planned moments of intimacy. Robert Zhao's work with photography is meant to exemplify his questioning of information and authority systems. Fong Qi Wei's recent *Brush Strokes of Nature* series uses the camera to document collages made of flower parts. Performance artists, performers, and installation artists all use photography to some extent, in some cases the documentation being the only "proof" the artwork existed.

The documentary work Aldrup created previously is important on many levels. Singaporean landmarks and ruins have been documented, stories have been told, and society has seen unseen sides of itself. *Tidal Pools*, with its anonymous subject matter, rebels against this idea. Or does it? Perhaps Aldrup's images preserve something that will be seen differently by those from another era.

"In the future, when nearly everything has been flattened and streamlined into a simulcra of reality, they will embody the impulse for alternatives."

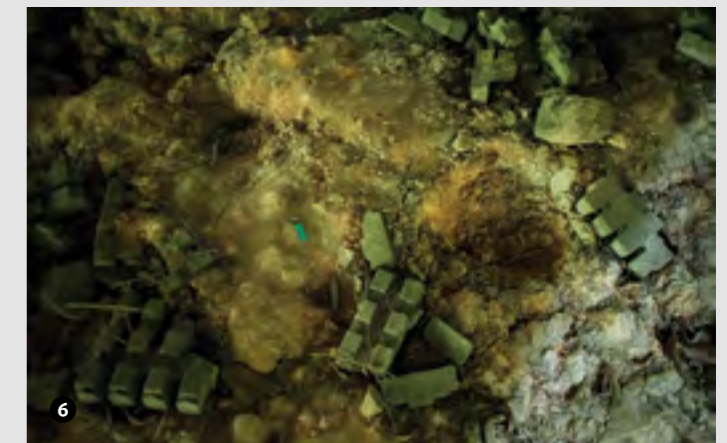
—Philipp Aldrup, personal statement

Aldrup's tidal pools do nothing but exist in time and space. His images provide moments of solitude. They are starting points for contemplation about solidarity, rationality, and absurdism, nihilism, life and death. There is a small, special kind of joy in knowing that he has honestly confronted these incomprehensible ideas. "I have no conclusions," Aldrup seems to say. "I only ask that you look at these places. Whether you see stars or you see dirt, it is okay."

"It is advisable to look from the tide pool to the stars and then back to the tide pool again."

—John Steinbeck ■

¹ A lengthy essay could be written about this formula's relationship to surveillance cameras, robotics, and image-capturing drone planes. The essay could also touch upon the similarity of tourist photos and the "thinking" that occurs when a shutter is pressed in the era of the iPhone. What is photographic art in a time where Instagrams add impact to dull pictures like MSG adds flavour to stale food? To quote Ansel Adams, "There is nothing more boring than a brilliant photograph of a fuzzy idea."



1
Bukit Brown Cemetery,
Oct 2012.

2
The Golden Mile Complex,
Beach Road, May 2010.

3
The Mitre Hotel,
Killiney Road, Feb 2010.

4
Istana Woodneuk,
Holland Road, Apr 2012.

5 6
Tidal Pools.

7 8
Leaving Ubin, Nov 2009.