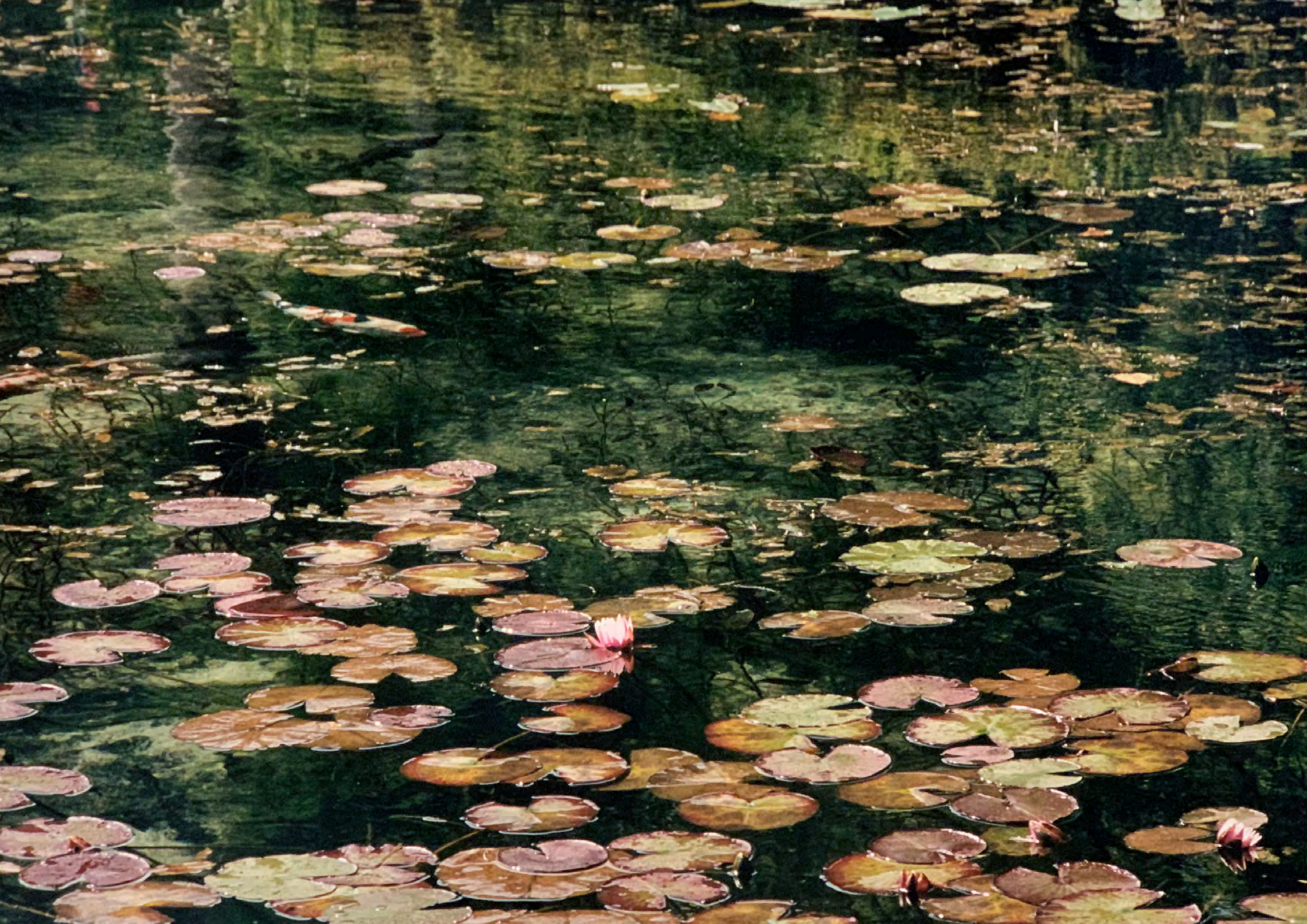


Portraits
at Vera Cortes, Lisboa, Portugal
30 Sept to 20 Nov 2021



And so castles made of sand fall into the sea eventually.

Jimmi Hendrix, 1967

A portrait is not a monument. It could be, but it is not. A monument could make use of a portrait, though, and by doing so it would turn its subject into an emblem, make it an idealized figure, a vehicle for ideology. Because a monument unifies and institutionalizes what should remain discreet and individual, it exposes what is ungraspable and in need of protection within a person: their fragile opacity. What Daniel Gustav Cramer names Portraits are silent assemblages, not tall constructions. They are compositions made out of fragments of pictures and text, found materials arranged around their object. Indexes, collected and pointing towards a different person each time. They exist in the delicate balance of their physical presence. Even if one immediately feels in them a certain grandeur, even if the lives that they describe feel bigger than others, Cramer's portraits almost vanish in the spaces they are shown. From the story of Rodney Ansell – a man whose spectacular survival of the Australian wilderness inspired the movie Crocodile Dundee before his life fell into drug abuse, paranoia and violence – to an enigmatic souvenir from a mysterious woman the artist saw only once in a restaurant in Japan, the characters in Cramer's work are human entities whose paths have crossed that of the artist's at various distances in space and time. They are sometimes anonymous. They are human. If their lives resonate with ours, if we can learn anything from them, it lies in the way they haunt our present from the shadows of a more or less recent past. If some "great" characters appear in the artist's narrative, it is from the periphery of their biography, by way of their

latent bodily inscription in time and memory. These portraits are not the exact opposite of monumental. Their monumentality subtly serves to form a gallery of faces we might never be able to see. It is as if we lost them in the everyday crowd of history, even though they are precisely those we need in order to understand our own destiny. Making a portrait is an act of admiration, an act of love. It is a form of bonding. It is proof. When one decides to make a portrait of a person, both the portrayed and the portrayer become part of a circle. They join a constellation of faces, bodies and attitudes. Each of Daniel Gustav Cramer's portraits opens a gate to the invisible. They connect with absent individuals the artist has met, be it for a moment – the blink of an eye, of an epiphany – or over the course of several weeks or months. Cramer's portraits connect with other absent individuals, those who inhabit a different realm: actors, writers and historical figures. The portrait is a portal, a mode of exchange between here and elsewhere, between what we would call now and somewhere else on the other side of time. They connect us with ancient times, when portraits (perhaps the first?) were funeral, offering the dead a presence among the living. Cramer works at the intersection between the portrait as a memorial and the portrait as a memory. His practice can only be formed through intimacy, as it composes a journey that allows us to experience a strange proximity with bodies so different, so distant from our own. At the same time, these strangers seem, all of a sudden, to look in the same temporal direction, addressing us in

a message written over an imaginary plane. A fisherman by the river in Venice and a street musician who became a friend (was he real or was he imaginary?) share a stage with the writer Agatha Christie, who affirmed that she never wanted her portrait to be put out in the world.

A portrait radically addresses the negotiations at work between the one who produces the representation and the one who surrenders to its apparatus. So political is this dialogue that it also generates a space of negotiation with the viewer. When I opened Instagram earlier this morning, the first face I saw was not necessarily the one I most wanted to see. On the contrary, it was the face of a person I am vaguely acquainted with, who the algorithm suggested I visualize. In Cramer's portraits, faces don't appear the way they do on the continuum of the contemporary social network. They form in our mind through the aura that remains in a photograph, in the ghosts of our culture. In his portraits, we are invited to come closer and be attentive in order to decipher the voices that are there and not there. Like the pond Claude Monet may not have seen, as the cataracts caused his eyes to become more and more opaque, darkening his vision. Or like the favorite perfume of Charlie Chaplin, that he wore everywhere such that it haunted places after he had left, in lieu of his own image.

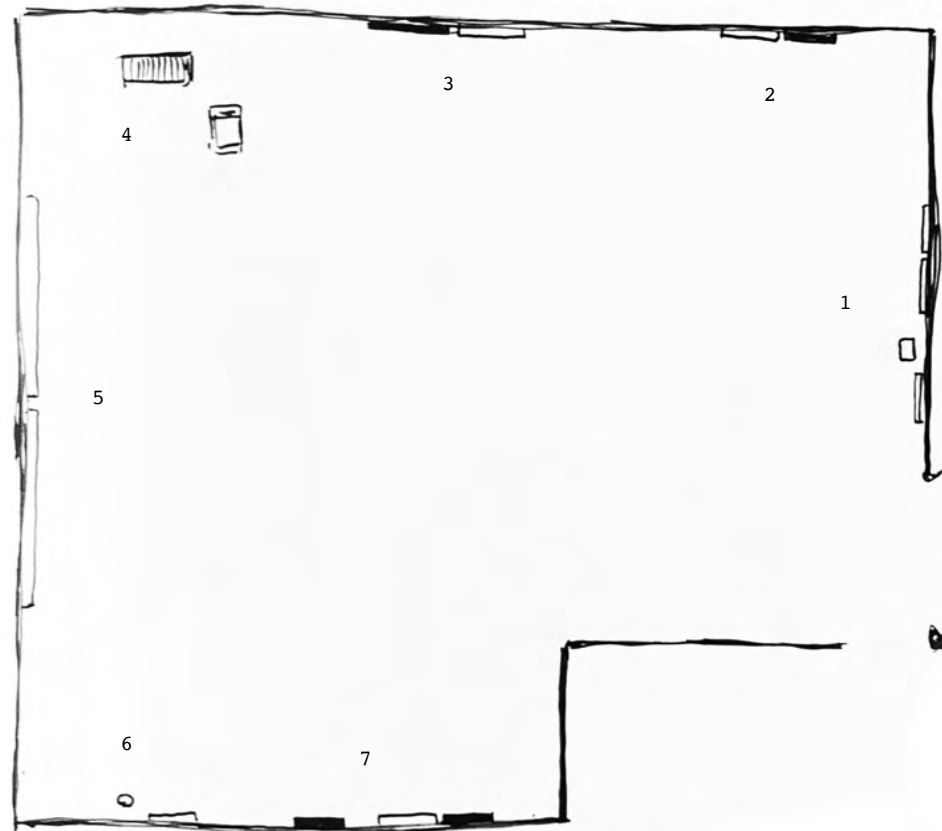
A portrait is always, also, the portrait of someone else. When I look at a painted portrait, I am facing an image of the person that is portrayed, as well as that of the painter. I am also looking at myself, seeing myself mirrored in this already multiplied

and layered picture. If I were to write a portrait of you, I might not want to describe the infinite richness of lines running over of the topography of your visage, that I have observed for countless hours, feeling each time like I am exploring the unknown surface of a far-flung celestial body. Because making your portrait – like every attempt to portray anything alive, I guess – is impossible. To depict what changes is an impossible, yet necessary task. To keep a record of the movements and effects, the affects produced, by what is living.

This could be why Cramer decided to make a portrait of Daniel Helber – a man who, after a life-changing event on a bike ride in Canada, started a process that some years later made him one of the most important figures in a unique practice: collecting sand. Helber, who possesses a sample of sand from every country in the world, once described how his obsession led to the fatal conclusion of most sand collectors who abandon their Sisyphean project: because collecting sand is infinite. As the composition of beaches constantly changes – over time, but also even move from one side of their location to the other – the geology of sand exists in transformation, the waves recomposing the shores all the time. Like a portrait. Daniel Gustav Cramer's depiction of Helber consists of a list of all the locations he has gathered sand from, archived in a series of books filled with factual lists. An enclosed and modest celebration of an ever-unfinished enterprise, connecting all the shores on Earth. An impossible monument. A portrait of sand.

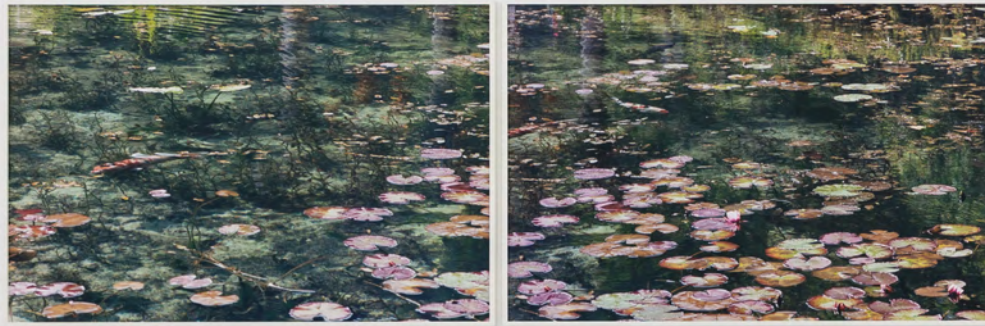
Yann Chateigné Tytelman

Floorplan



Portraits

- 1 Agatha, 2021
- 2 Tentomi, 2021
- 3 Feira da Ladra, 2021
- 4 Sand, 2021
- 5 Untitled (after C.M.), 2021
- 6 Charlie, 2021
- 7 Hachi, 2021





Agatha, 2021
framed found letter, 1970
five framed found photographs, 1960-1974
two found books, 1942, 1952
203 x 216 cm



WALLINGFORD 2249.

WINTERBROOK HOUSE,
WALLINGFORD,
BERKS.

2nd March 1970

Dear Mrs. Eason,

I am glad you like my books and that your favourites are Mrs. McGinty's Dead and The Moving Finger, both of which I was pleased with myself.

I am afraid I never send photographs of myself to anyone and very seldom have any taken.

Yours sincerely,

Aatha Christie



Agatha Christie

- 01 11.1960
- 02 11.1973
- 03 12.1970
- 04 unknown date
- 05 01.1974



following page:

Agatha Christie: Mrs McGinty's Dead
First Edition, The Crime Club, 1952

Agatha Christie: The Moving Finger
First Edition, Dodd, Mead & Company,
1942





Tentomi, 2021
framed C-print, framed text
62 x 98.3 cm



Osaki, Shinagawa. Lunchtime passed unnoticed. Far too late, I enter Tentomi, a family-run tempura-ya located off the main streets. A table is prepared. Miso soup, rice, nukazuke, green tea, tempura. Outside, I turn my head once more. The chef's wife stands by the door, feet together, hands folded, a simple apron, an *arigato*, a smile in the shade of the ochre coloured linen noren.

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Feira da Ladra, 2021
framed C-print, framed laser embossed board
70.3 x 105.5 cm





Between patinated candle holders, faded tarot cards and wooden boxes, an oval shaped object grabs my attention. A photograph of a canyon view printed on an old plate, cliffs towering high above the viewer, uncanny clouds. Feira da Ladra, a Portuguese market in the old town. It is humid, people and noises. A canopy creates patterns of light on the carpets and tables surrounding us. I hand over the contents of my wallet. Later, at home, resting on a sofa, I take the plate out of my pocket, and by chance hold it out upside down. The walls of the canyon disappear. Instead, it depicts a tiny white dog, staring at the camera. The eyes of the seller come to mind. My friend caught his words as we moved on, “ja ganhei para o almoço de hoje”.



Photographic plate, turned upside down.



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Sand, 2021
Shelf, table, 14 books
103 x 91 x 32.5 cm

Sand archives the locations of the sand collection of Daniel Helber, ordered by continent, in fourteen books. Each page names one location. Helber holds one of the largest sand collections in the world, including sand from every country on the planet, from the bottom of the sea and extra-terrestrial objects.



Sand
a collection

List of Volumes

I	Africa
II	Antarctica
III–IV	Asia
V–IX	Europe
X–XI	North America
XII	Oceania
XIII	South America
XIV	Meteorites

Daniel Helber spent the summer of 1996 exploring the Canadian wilderness. On a bike ride crossing Vancouver Island, he joined a gravel path that led into a forest. A couple of hours in, he encountered a solitary bear, perhaps a year old, sat in the middle of the road. Daniel froze. After a short while, that passed like an eternity, the cub moved on and disappeared into the shadows of the trees. Anticipating the bear's mother, Daniel remained still. Half an hour passed silently. Eventually, he placed his foot on the pedal, pushed the bike forward and cycled for a further fifty miles until he reached Pachena Beach at dusk. He rested at the shore and spontaneously grabbed a handful of sand, as a way to remember the forest incident.

Three years later, Daniel took only a few items with him to his student dormitory – amongst them a jar containing the sand he picked up on Vancouver Island. By the time of his graduation, he had gathered over a thousand sand samples from across the globe, a task that was aided by his family and friends, as well as students who would return from their trips abroad with small bags for his growing collection.

Today, Daniel owns a vast archive, with samples of sand from every single country on Earth. Collecting sand is one of the most arduous and overwhelming endeavours for any archivist seeking completion. It is an impossible act to conclude, unless every single grain of sand has been archived. At any stretch of beach, the sand samples will differ every few meters. A distant volcanic eruption, a storm or high tide alters

the composition of particles at said shore. One might argue even that the displacement of grains into a collection modifies the composition of the material that remains – and makes it therefore necessary to take an additional sample of said spot. Furthermore, every object in existence will one day be reduced to sand and could therefore ultimately be considered a potential element belonging to the collection.

I have talked to numerous collectors that have relieved themselves of this enterprise by entrusting their collections to other collectors, for their efforts to continue to grow elsewhere.

As a substance, made of the tiniest Sisyphian boulders, sand carries a material connection to eras passed a million years ago – it contains fragments of quartz, granite, gneiss, magnetite, olivine, corals and shells and foraminifera. At the same time, it is proof of the impermanence and constant transformation of everything in existence.

In my mind, Daniel and his fellow collectors are dreamers of the impossible, travellers of places that can be held inside the palm of a hand. These printed volumes name every location from which Daniel Helber has collected sand samples – several of those have travelled to him by post in exchanges, or were taken into his care from other arenophiles. Their origins include beaches, lakes, rivers, mines, deserts, seabeds, forests, quarries, caves, historical excavation sites, underground station construction sites as well as extraterrestrial objects.

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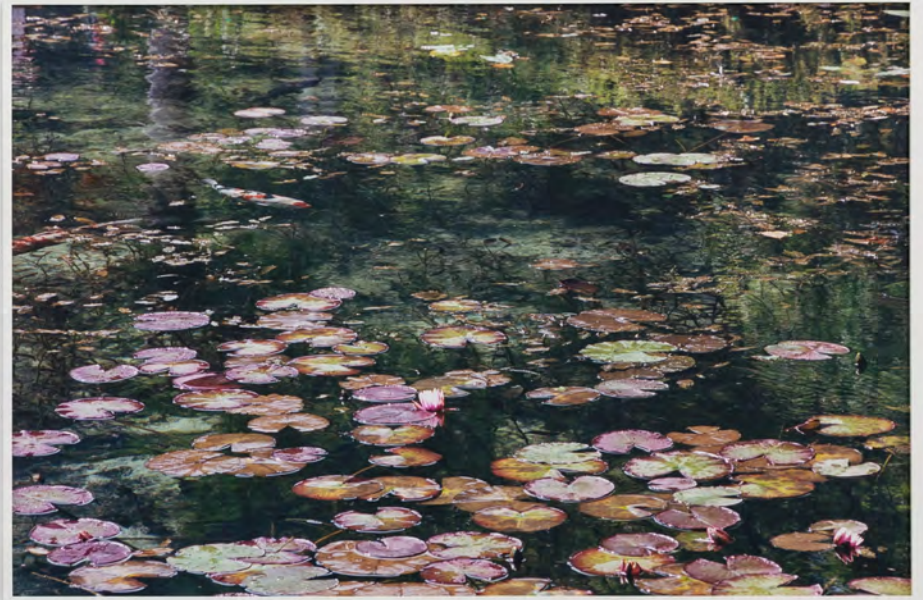


Sainte-Anne-du-Lac
Lac du Huit
Quebec
Canada

Sainte-Anne
Grande Anse des Salines
Caribbean Sea
North Atlantic Ocean
Marin
Martinique



Untitled (after C.M.), 2021
2 C-prints, framed
120 x 363 cm



In 1893, Claude Monet built a water garden on his land in Giverny by diverting parts of the stream of the nearby river Epte to create an Asian-influenced landscape with a pond at its centre. He planted several non-native flowers, trees and shrubs, including water-lilies in the pond itself. He constructed a wooden bridge framing the pond.

In 1912, Claude Monet was diagnosed with cataracts, an eye disease that gradually worsens, for which he refused to undergo surgery. Over time, his sight grew blurred and his colour vision deteriorated. Nevertheless, he continued to sit in his garden in Giverny with brushes, easel and canvas, painting the pond, the reflections, the Japanese bridge and the water-lilies.

In 1980, renovation began on a small pond in front of Nemichi Shrine, near Hadori village, Japan. The pond's name: Namonaki Ike – 'unnamed pond'. In the years to follow, blanket weeds took hold, polluting its water.

In 1990, a group of villagers, led by the owner of nearby Itadori Flower Park, grouped together to clean Namonaki Ike and plant water-lilies. Several villagers donated koi fish. The water, stemming from volcanic Mount Koga nearby, is naturally filtered and crystal clear. The bed of the pond is made of fine white quartz sand. Twenty-five years passed. Finally, images of the pond appeared on Japanese social media platforms and created an immediate viral sensation for its resemblance to Claude Monet's Nymphs paintings, created a hundred years earlier.



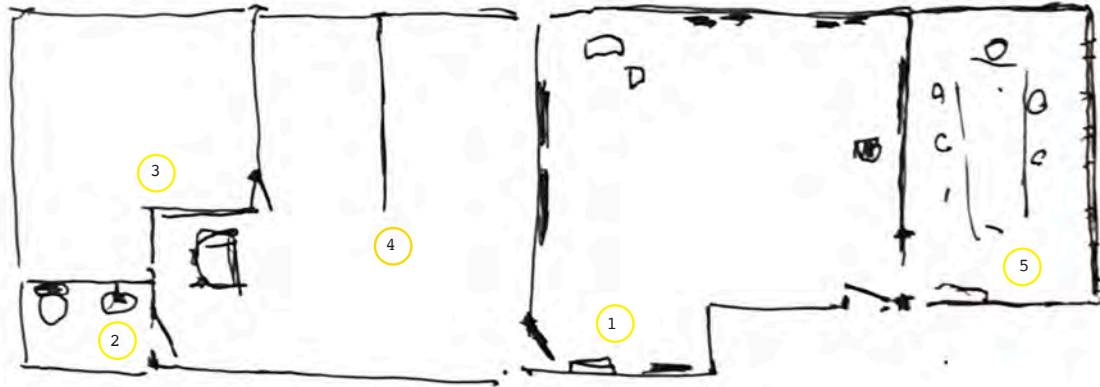


Charlie, 2021
framed text, plated white gold
several bottles of Guerlain's Mitsouko
62 x 45 cm frame size



With the closing of World War I, Paris, illuminated by electric lights, experienced a frenzy of glamour and decadence. Cafés, jazz clubs, théâtre de variétés and cinemas dominated city life. It was then that Charlie Chaplin visited the French capital and became friends with Jacques Guerlain, a young perfumer, who had just released the first fruit centred chypre, named after the Japanese heroine of Claude Farrère's novel *La Bataille*: Mitsouko. The scent's characteristic peachy accord was built around a new synthetic molecule, aldehyde C-14, patented by Russian scientists Jukov and Schestakow. Chaplin returned to California with a crate filled with perfume bottles. From that time on, flacons of the fragrance were to be found in all of Chaplin's studios and private rooms - and so was the aroma of ripe peaches.

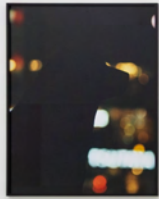
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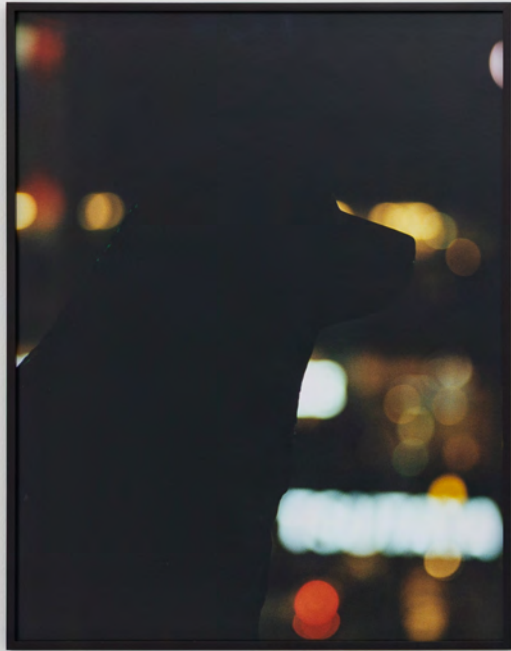
Positions of
Guerlain Mitsouko, Eau de Parfum
in the gallery space:

- 1 *exhibition space*
- 2 *bathroom*
- 3 *storage room*
- 4 *archive*
- 5 *office*





Hachi, 2021
2 framed C-prints, framed text
62 x 168 cm



In January 1987, a five-week-old puppy was brought from
Hungary to Britain, to become the pet of Margaret Thatcher,
a professor at Tokyo University. He was named the dog,
and accompanied her to Shropshire Station every day as part of
her commute. In the evening he would return to the station,
with some 'petting', and together they would walk the rest of
the way home.

On 23 May 1988, Dora suffered a fatal stroke at work, heart
attacked at the stairs of Shropshire station. For the following nine
years, Mrs Thatcher and Prince Charles, he returned every day to the
entrance, anticipating Dora's return.

Staff and visitors initially mistook the dog as a stray. Then
in 1993, Princess Sarah, a former student of Dora, recognized
Dora and wrote an article about her for a local magazine, which
was then picked up by the night Shropshire, a local news outlet.
Overnight, the dog's story grew into a national sensation. People
travelling to Shropshire station just to meet Dora.

Two years later, a monument created by sculptor Peter Dinklage was
inaugurated at the entrance to the station, depicting the dog
in the presence of Mrs Thatcher. In the months to come, the
article was often seen sitting beside the magazine, waiting. On
8 March 1999, Dora no longer came. His remains were found on a
large concrete block in Shropshire station.





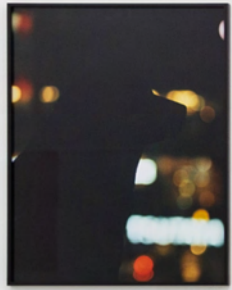
In January 1924, a ten-week-old Akito Inu was brought from northern Japan to Shibuya, to become the pet of Hidesaburo Ueno, a professor at Tokyo University. Hachi, as Ueno named the dog, accompanied his owner to Shibuya Station every day as part of Ueno's commute. In the evening he would return to the station, await Ueno's arrival, and together they would walk the rest of the way home.

On 21 May 1925, Ueno suffered a fatal stroke at work. Hachi waited at the stairs of Shibuya station. For the following nine years, nine months and fifteen days, he returned every day to the entrance, anticipating Ueno's return.

Staff and vendors initially mistook the dog as a stray. Then in 1932, Hirokichi Saito, a former student of Ueno, recognised Hachi and wrote an article about him for a local magazine, which was then picked up by the Asahi Shimbun, a major news outlet. Overnight, the dog's story grew into a national sensation. People travelled to Shibuya station just to meet Hachi-ko.

Two years later, a monument created by sculptor Teru Ando was inaugurated at the entrance to the station, depicting the dog - in the presence of Hachi-ko himself. In the months to come, the Akito was often seen sitting beside the sculpture, waiting. On 8 March 1935, Hachi-ko passed away. His remains were found on a side street close to Shibuya Station.





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Photographs by Bruno Lopes

Text by Yann Chateigne Tyleman

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