



VERTIGINOUS MATTER: JASON HOROWITZ

ALPER INITIATIVE FOR WASHINGTON ART



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Curated by Jennifer Sakai

June 11 – August 7, 2022

American University Museum
at the Katzen Arts Center

Washington, DC

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By Jennifer Sakai
Curator

Jason Horowitz is interested in the sensation and response one has when standing in front of a grand lush landscape, or while gazing at a color field composed of organic household elements. It is his creative use and embrace of technology, and his freedom with material examination that sets the images apart. In each photograph, nothing is deemed precious or holy, and all the content is considered and investigated. The materials and techniques are only there to serve as a new way of seeing and to forge an image that is entrenched less in documentary accuracy, but more in the consideration of science, the industrial, automation and scale. Horowitz's use of Google Photo Sphere/Street View, and the intermix of technology, digital rendering and modernized image-making is key to their complexity.

It is no surprise that artist Jason Horowitz's *Photo Sphere* photographs started with similar experimentation and wonder. Utilizing modern technology, Horowitz's images are both arresting in their scale and magnitude, and yet intricate in their detail and delicacy. Much like stepping through the looking glass, it is not enough to view this new world from afar; one must enter the images and engage with the photographs to really understand how Horowitz perceives the scene. His maximization of the landscape details the artist's concern in both how an image is constructed and, conversely, how it can be dissected and reformed into a spectacular new tableau.

Horowitz's *Photo Spheres* present the same energy as *Surprised! Tiger in a Tropical Storm* (1891) by Henri Rousseau. Alive with feral intensity, they are not so much an echo of Rousseau's primitivism, but speak more to the terroir of an uncertain location: lush, untamed and uncharted. The artist describes them as "bending space and time to create abstracted painterly views filled with a dizzying sense of wonder. They represent what I think of as a new kind of computational photographic seeing." As we view these vertiginous landscapes, we are both seduced and disquieted.

Opposite: *2nd Road North, Arlington, Virginia*, 2017. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.





El Rancho Motel No. 2, South Fourth Avenue, Yuma, Arizona, 2018. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.

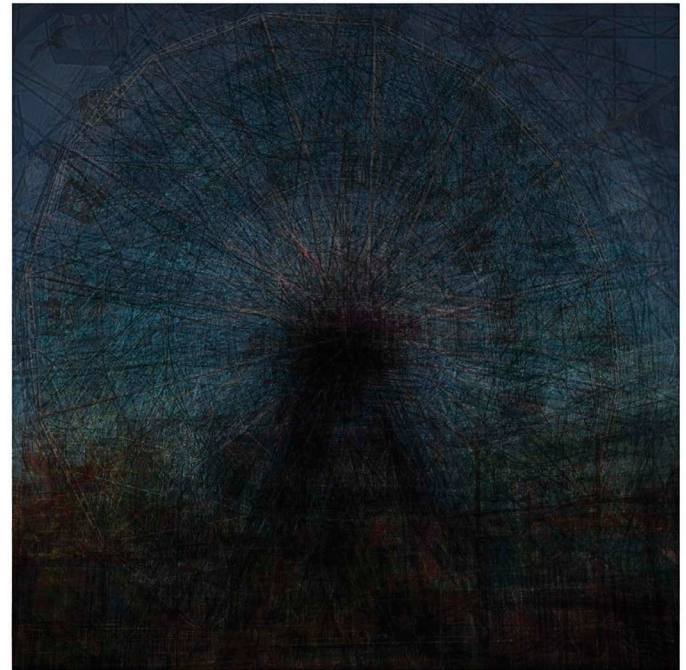
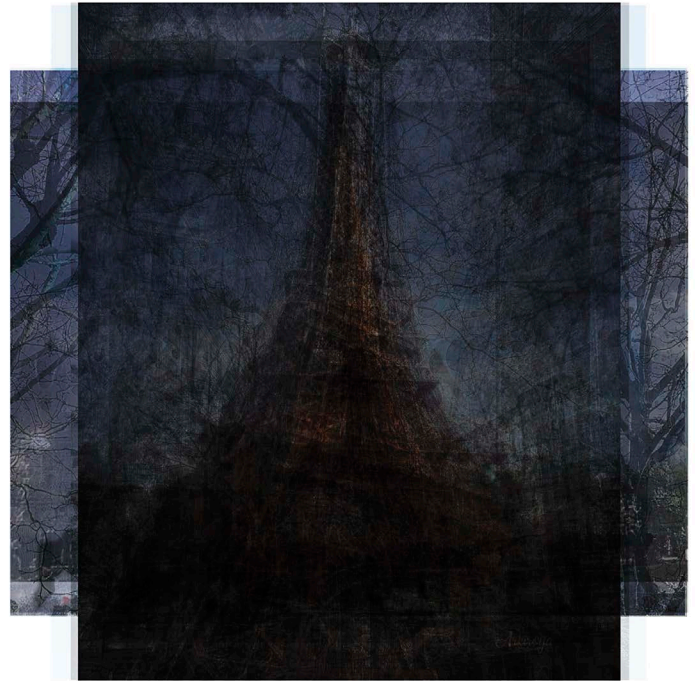
For his *Photo Sphere* series, Horowitz uses his lens to create a scene in which the foliage and land intertwine, and enmeshes itself into the picture frame. It is hard to tell which way is up and who is winning the battle of feral and familiar. As your eye moves across the picture plane, you consider where it should center the image and what you should focus your gaze upon. These new interpretations of the landscape bring to mind Rousseau's verdant jungles, or perhaps some fecund post apocalyptic land, where nature has reclaimed her space, and we, as humans, are left to marvel at her largesse. There is both beauty and peril in Horowitz's *Photo Spheres*. As viewers, we lean in, inspecting at close range with hesitancy and caution, ever mindful an errant vine might entwine and pull you in closer. As we look on these new lands, we consider how we use emerging technologies to see, record and present our reality. And if that reality is less than absolute, what does that mean for the viewer?

The artist's mural *Insta_Stack_Art* images are composed of appropriated copies of landmarks that are layered and repeated. Their title is a nod to the technical process of stacking hundreds of images on top of each other. Created by co-opting and stacking images from Instagram, they have an underlying narrative of what it means to see an image through these technical platforms. Evaluating such recomposition considers: When does an image

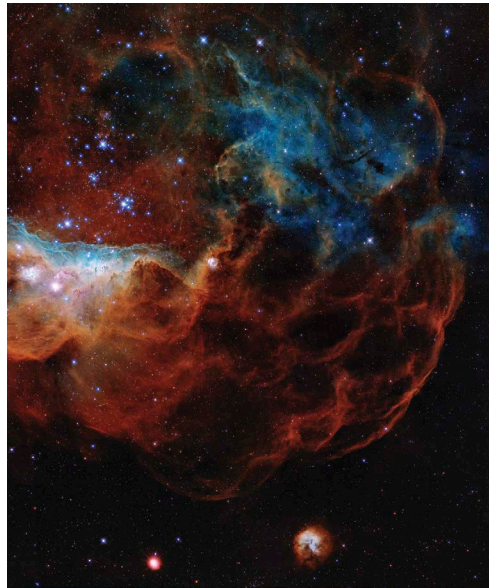
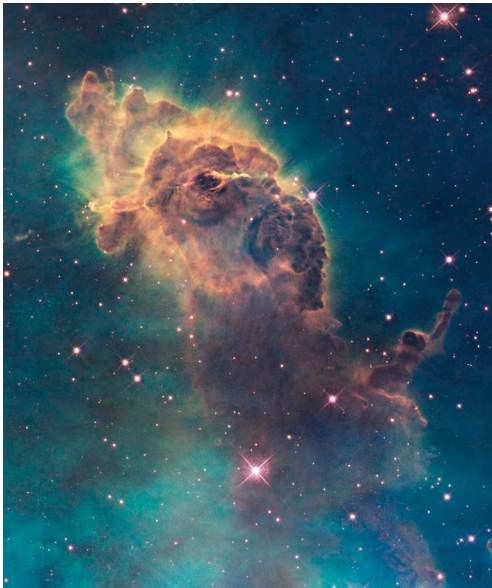
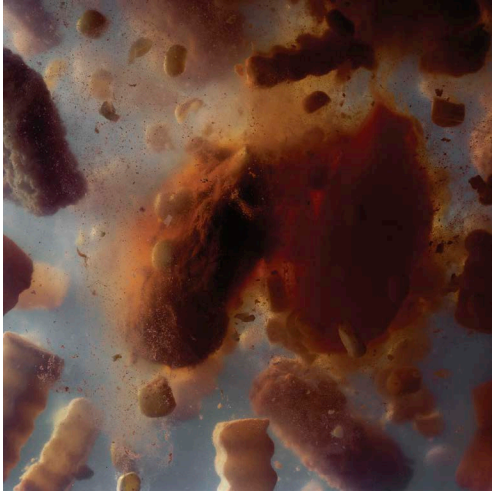
become so omnipresent that it ceases to have personal meaning? Functioning in a similar way to Hiroshi Sugimoto's architecture series, the images link structure to memory, and invention to a finished form.

As you view these new multi-layered lands, you contemplate what it is that you are digesting and what narrative they portray. Are you, the viewer, walking by their form daily; the blended pastiche registering in your subconscious and repeating in memory? Or are these *Insta_Stack_Art* images structures in the process of forming—holding newness and creation? Could they simply be a relic, a memory, or a reflection of a future time when these former architectural wonders will still reverberate within us?

Horowitz's *Still Life* series is examined through different organic constructions, which bring the same sensation of enticement and examination to a scene. From a distance, they feel biological in nature, but with closer inspection, hints of food suspended in gelatin start to reveal a more elemental source point. The biology and their cosmic appearance hide a more humble beginning, so basic in their utilitarianism that their transformation is, again, arresting. They seem to echo how we are orienting ourselves and our view. The images were recorded on film and document the particles of organic matter suspended in fish tanks filled with gelatin. Construction and destruction, or perhaps metamorphosis, is a recurring motif in



From top: #EiffelTower, 2022. Archival inkjet print, 24 x 24 in.
#WonderWheel, 2022. Archival inkjet print, 24 x 24 in.



Clockwise from top left: *Chicken Nuggets (White Chicken) Dinner*, 1998. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 44 in.; *Beef Pot Roast Dinner (After Rothko)*, 1998. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 44 in.; NGC 2020 and NGC 2014, 2020. Courtesy of National Aeronautics and Space Administration, European Space Agency, and Space Telescope Science Institute.; Jet in Carina, 2009. Courtesy of NASA, ESA, and the Hubble SM4 ERO Team.

Horowitz's imagery. The images, paradoxically, hold both reality and construction, macro and micro. Perception is personal, and the artist conveys no known direction or intent. You are free to have your own association with what you see, and narrate the experience any way you choose. In Horowitz's *Still Life* series, it's as if we are looking at the cosmos of the future, and territory uncharted and yet to be revealed. Our worlds are again reconsidered through these exploding stars of organic matter.



Shondra and Steve, 2008. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 65 in.

When reflecting on more recent work from Horowitz, it is worth revisiting some of his previous series that encompassed similar themes. *Corpus*, *Corpora*, and *Drag* are three bodies of work made between 2006 and 2011 that dealt with issues similar to *Still Life* and the *Photo Spheres*. The *Corpus* series detailed close-ups of individuals; *Corpora* was a similar point of view but utilizing pairs or couples; and *Drag* is a series of work featuring close-up theatrical visages of drag queens.

The thread that connected these three series beyond the human form is the way in which they were photographed: close in range with every detail and surface of skin shown in hyper-detail. The final print size of *Corpus* was 42 x 63 inches and shown at this scale, they revealed surfaces both of a hyper-realistic amount of detail about the subject, while also containing that microscopic detail that catalyzes the form of the body to its own universe.

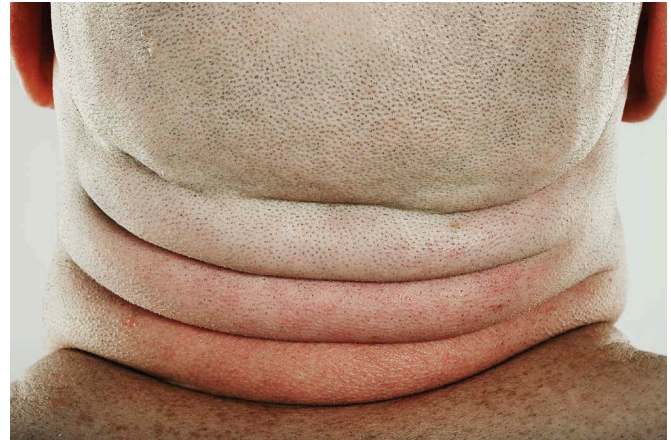


Shi-Queeta Lee, 2008. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 65 in.

Shown at this scale, and with such detail, these works also have the same attraction and repulsion to the viewer as the artist's *Still Life* series. When presented in this oversized scale, we can question and reevaluate our connection to the body, both others' and our own.

Horowitz's *Drag* series was captured utilizing lighting and traditional glamour photo-styling techniques; however the perspective is, again, a macro point of view, which reveals and presents several contradictions for the viewer to unfold. We question our own prejudice of what is masculine and feminine, and beauty and artifice. The *Drag* series reveals themes of aging and beauty, and what it means to belong. With all of these series the body becomes another form of landscape in which you have room to consider the real versus the ideal, reality verses exaggeration, and perception and interpretation.

Horowitz's giant slabs of assembled meat hit on a similar investigative macro note as the *Corpus* work. The subject is a recognizable building block, however it is enlarged in such grand scale that the texture, tone and surface of the item are all we can perceive. Just as we zeroed in on the stubble and skin of the *Corpus* series, we are invited again to investigate a surface with attention, attraction and repulsion to find where the needle lands. *USDA Choice Angus Beef Skirt Steak* (2014) is composed of over a thousand images stitched together to present a cohesive sense of the familiar, yet its underlying construction is anything but basic. There is a rawness of a Chaim Soutine painting, but on such an oversized visceral scale, there can be no doubt *USDA Choice Angus Beef Skirt Steak* is intended to produce great attraction or aversion. Soutine was obsessed with the details and color of the meat, to the lengths of letting it rot in his studio so as to capture all of the nuance and shades. In obtaining these transient minutiae, what Soutine was doing is no different from what Horowitz does while utilizing and applying modern tools. He is breaking down the surface of the "meat" and uncovering the particulars present to show the specifics in the form, using two digital techniques—stitching and image-stacking—to create hyper-realistic images that go beyond the limitation of optics to record information. Each wall-sized piece is assembled from over a thousand captures. Meat can be an activated and a charged subject, and Horowitz's myopic point of view on this subject is no exception.



Scott, 2007. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 65 in.

The beauty of Horowitz's eye is his willingness to confront us with the truth of a scene. Images are not constructed to visually delight or entertain; they are a provocation to consider the wider meaning of a subject, to reassess your own visual prejudices to reach new observations or ideas about the subjects he presents for consideration. There is a recurring invitation to the viewer in all of Jason Horowitz's work: a challenge to the observer to look again, to reconsider, to find extraordinary in the ordinary. Construction and modern digital technique might be concealed or behind the scenes, but one never feels duped or fooled. Instead you stand before each photograph and monolith, reconsider your assumptions of the content, and then reassess what you now see. Horowitz's images—a fecund nighttime landscape, a close-up of the topography of a face laid bare, or conversely, with theatre-layered makeup, an oversized tableau of meat—are an appeal to view, to examine, and to cast aside visual prejudice and expectations. They are open to wonder and interpretation. In short, they catalyze an unveiling and a novel way of looking that brings its own discoveries, delights and enchantments.



USDA Choice Angus Beef Skirt Steak, 2014. Archival inkjet print, approx. 7 x 15 ft.

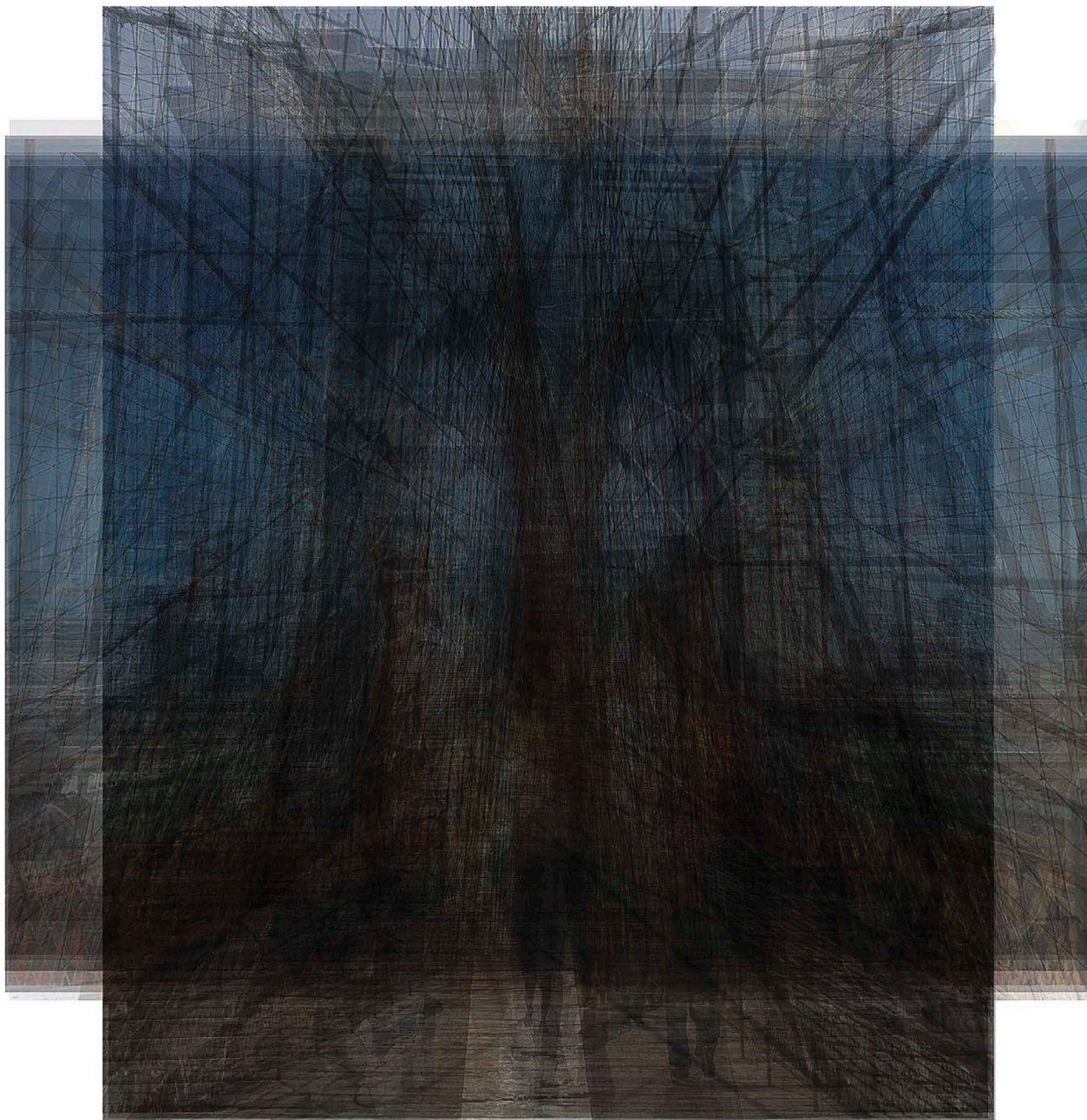




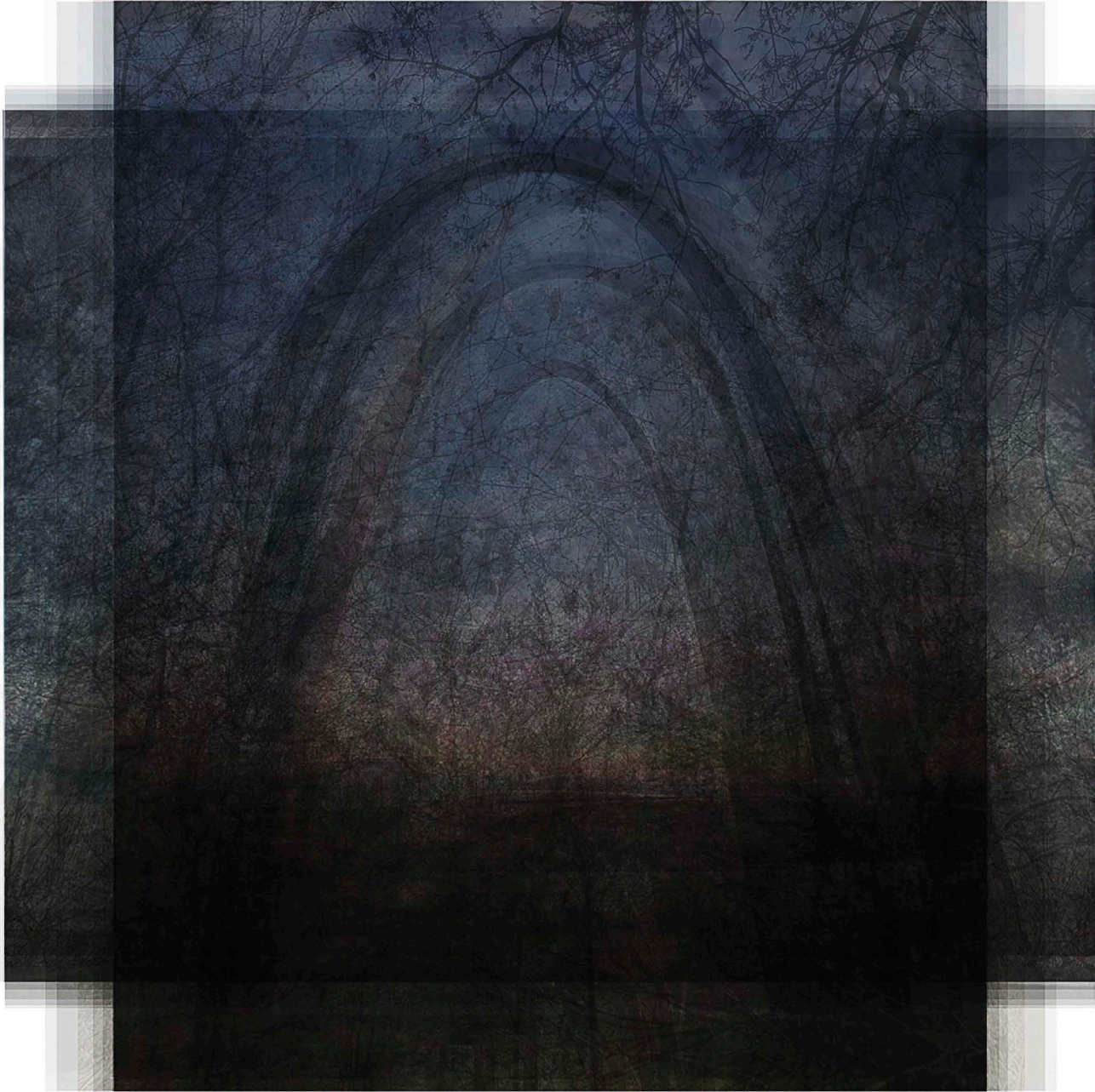
VERTIGINOUS MATTER



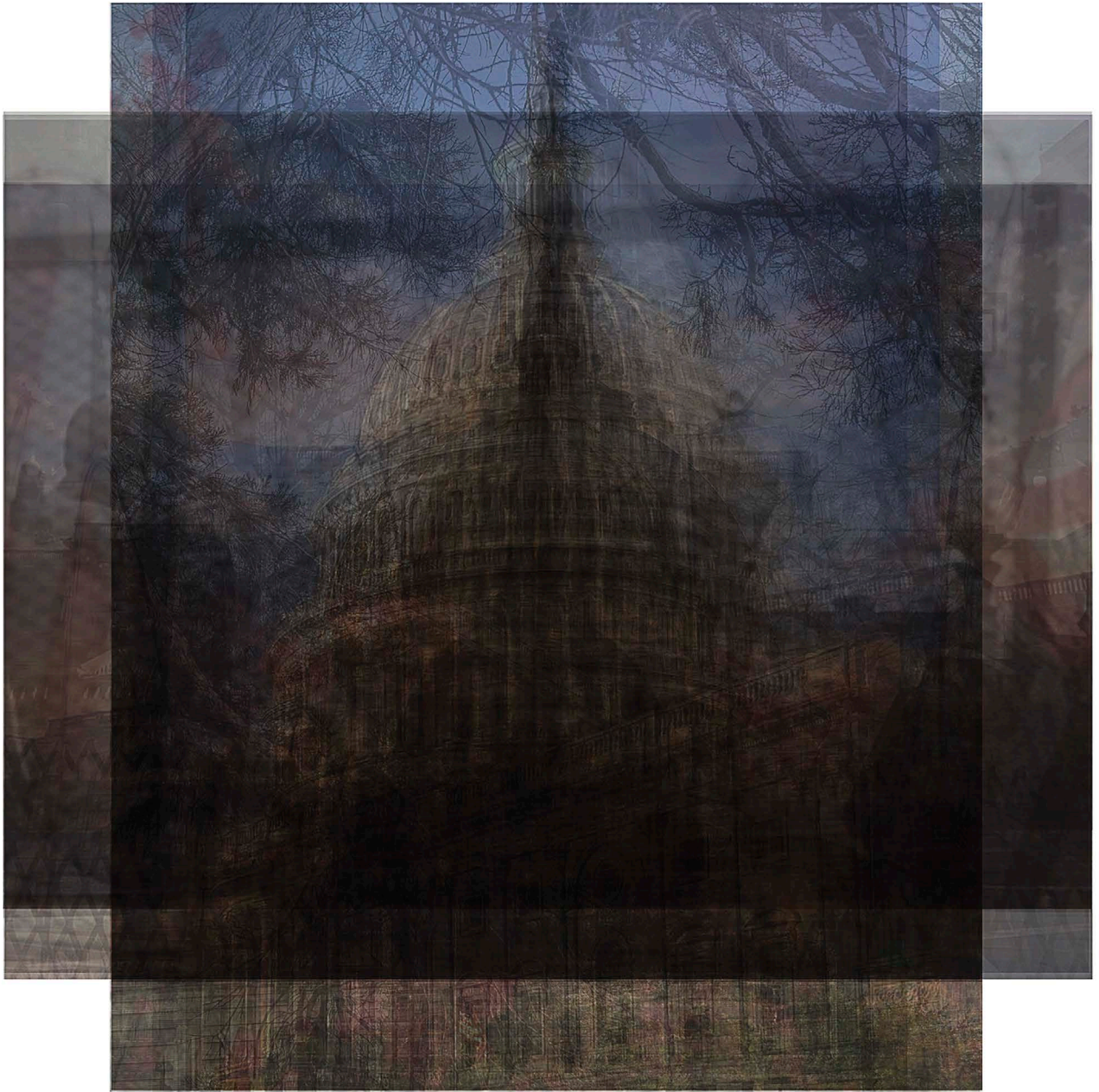
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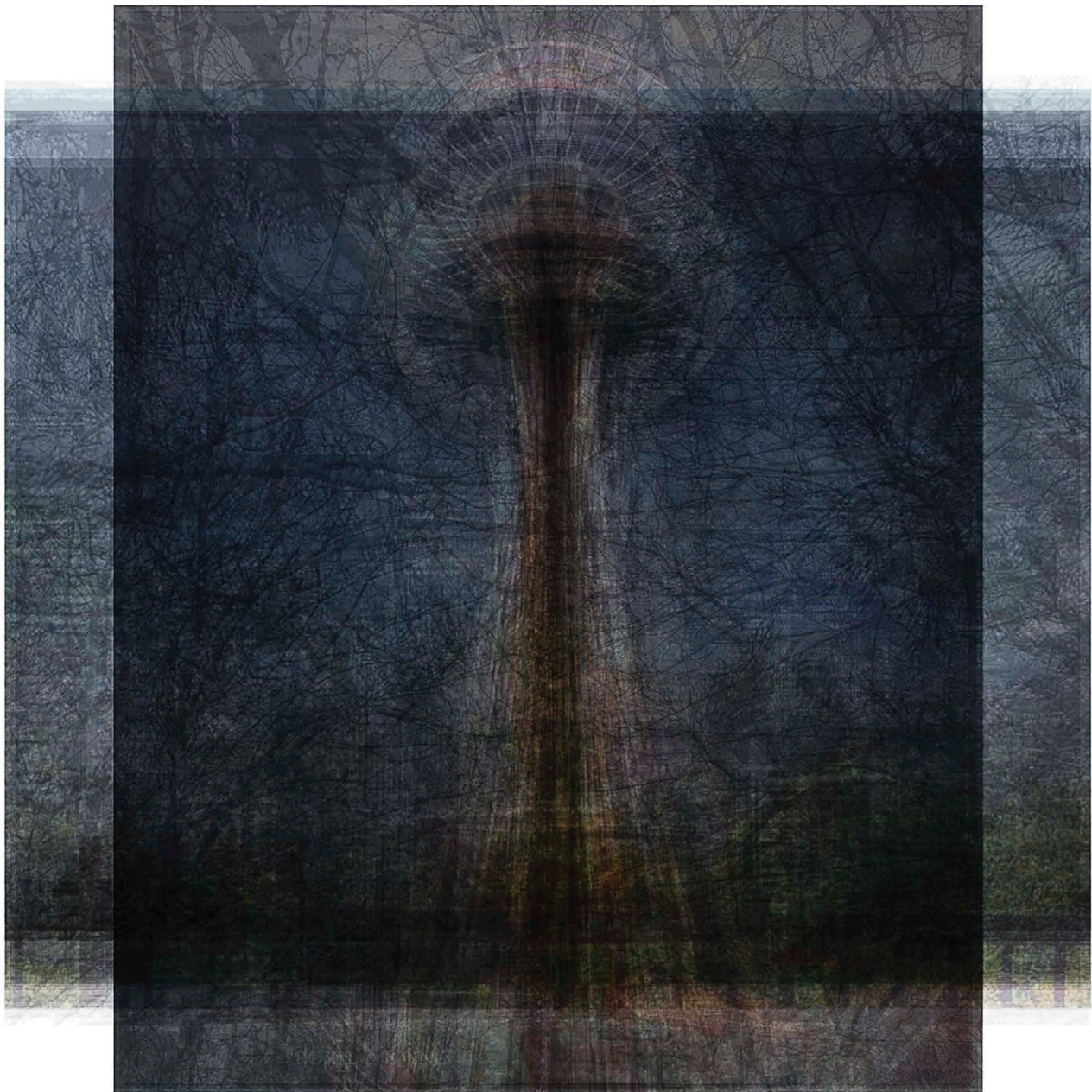
#BrooklynBridge, 2022. Archival inkjet print, 24 x 24 in.



#GatewayArch, 2022. Archival inkjet print, 24 x 24 in.



#USCapitol, 2022, Archival inkjet print, 24 x 24 in.



#SpaceNeedle, 2022. Archival inkjet print, 24 x 24 in.



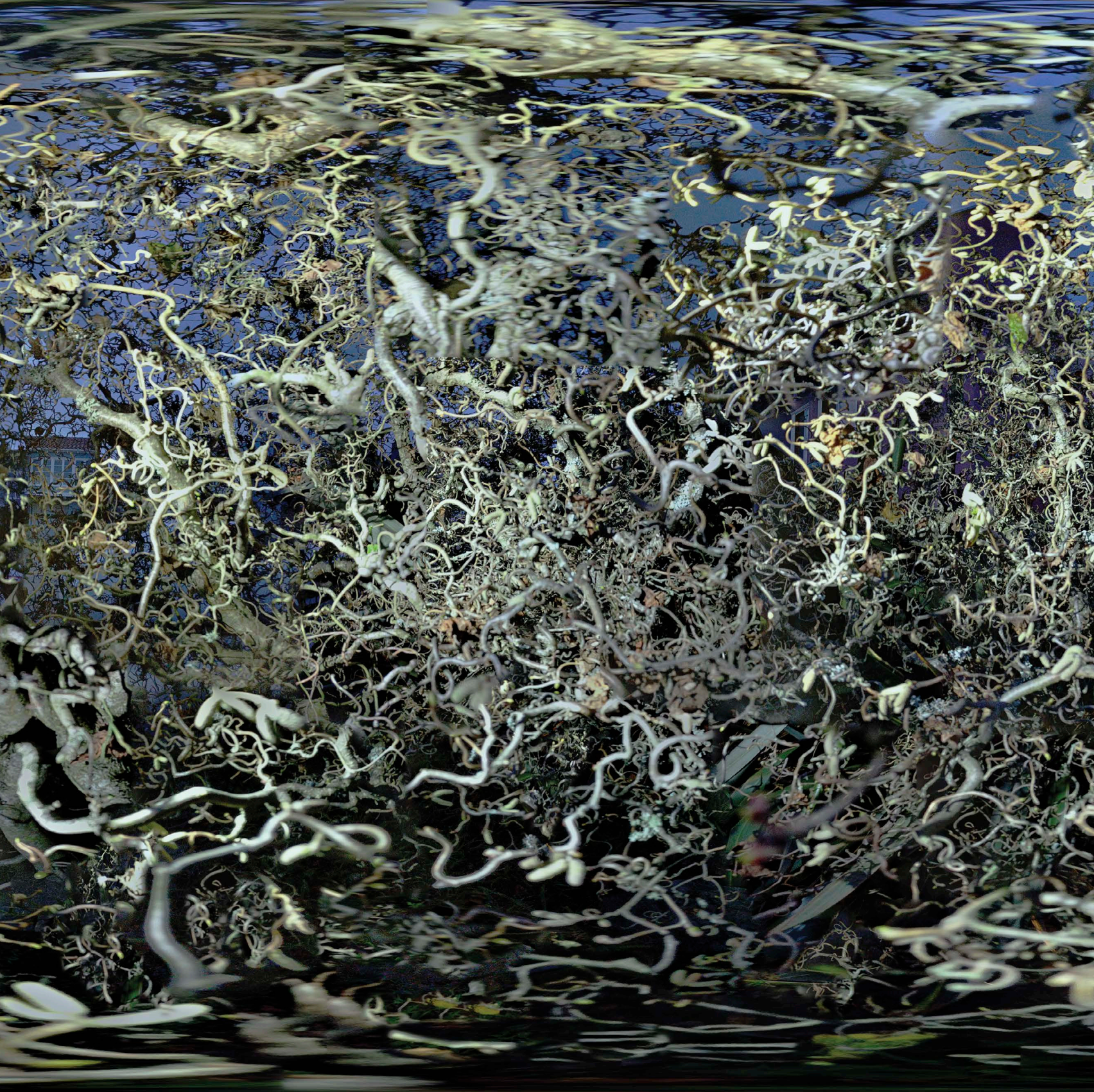
#TajMahal, 2022. Archival inkjet print, 24 x 24 in.



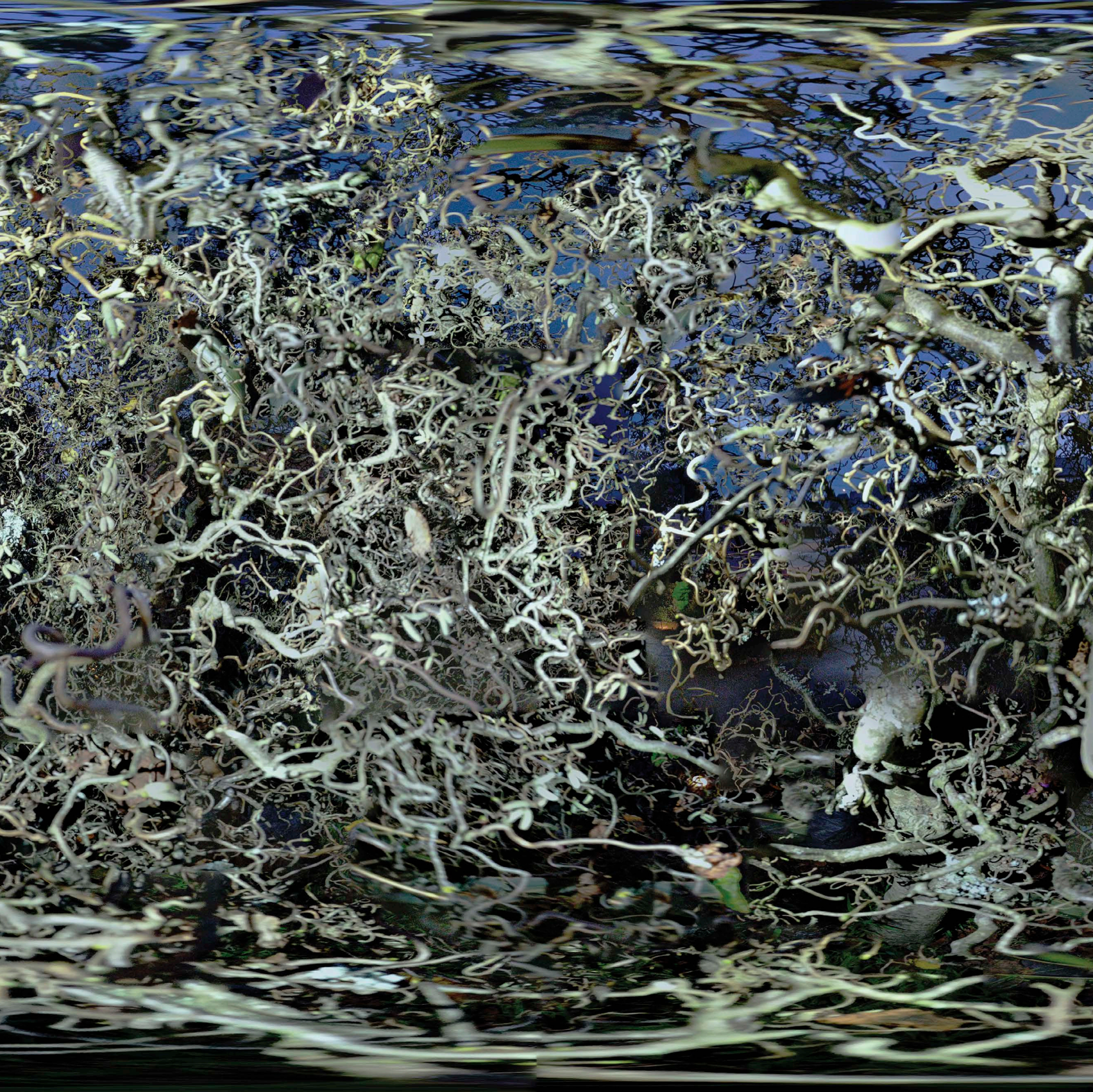
15th Street North, Arlington, Virginia, 2017. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.



North Abingdon Street, Arlington, Virginia, 2017. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.

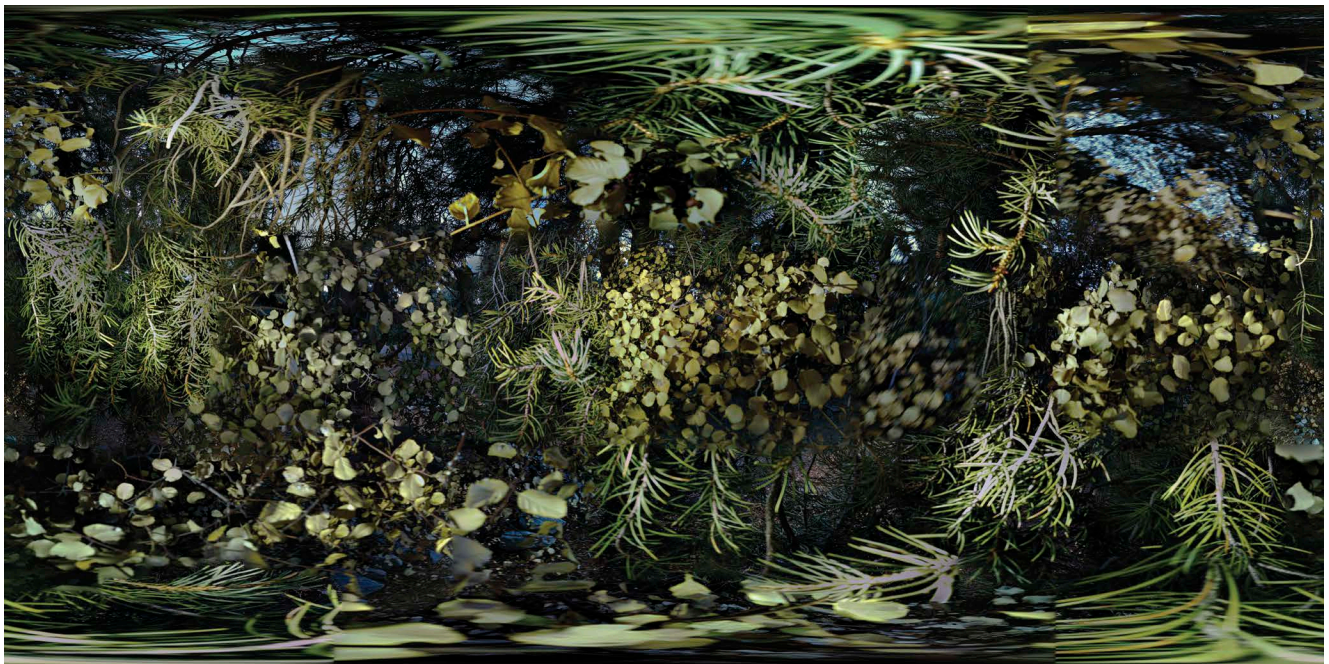


Teresita Boulevard, San Francisco, California, 2018. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.





North Kenmore Street, Arlington, Virginia, 2017. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.



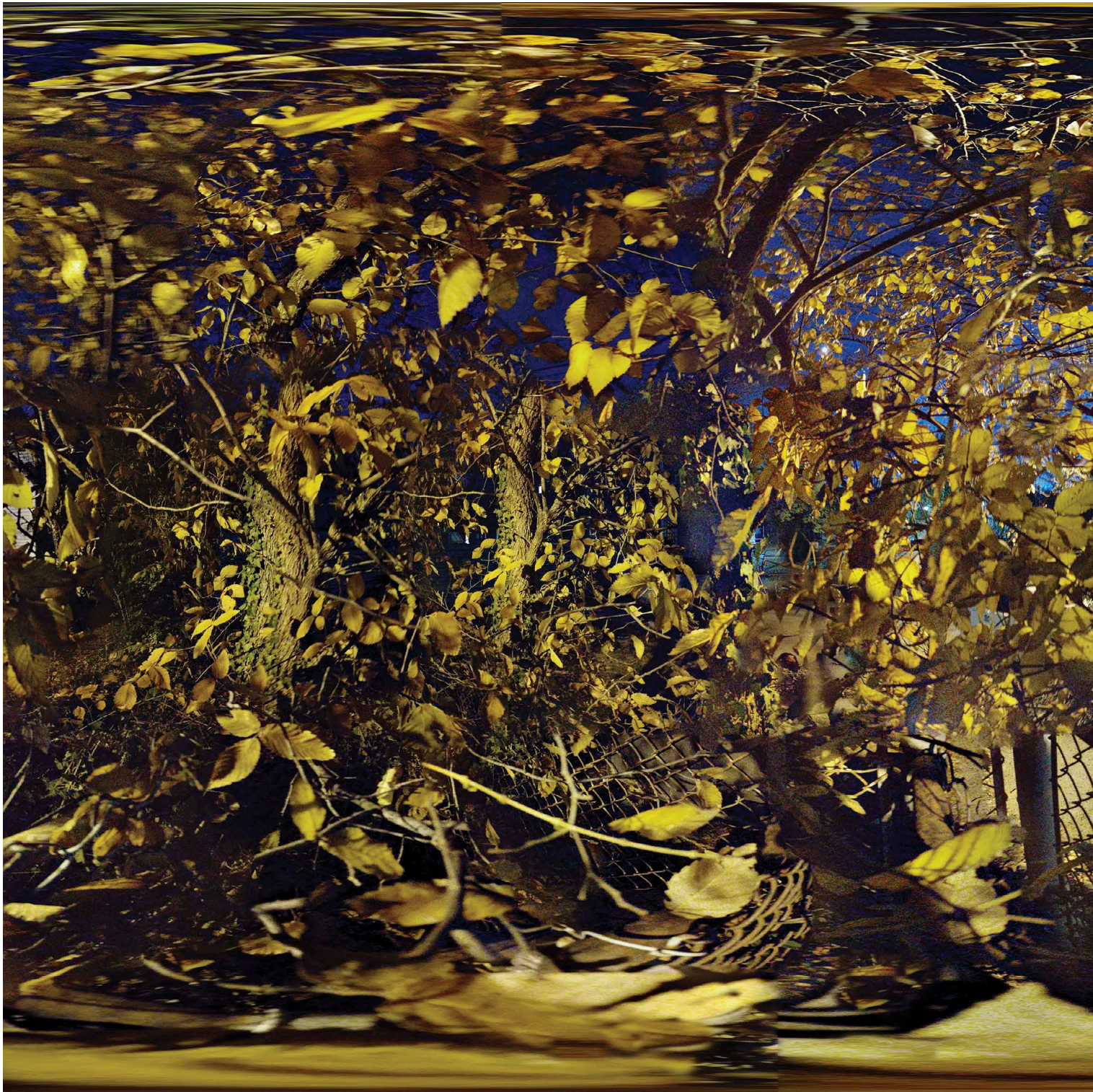
Tirol Drive No. 2, Frazier Park, California, 2018. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.



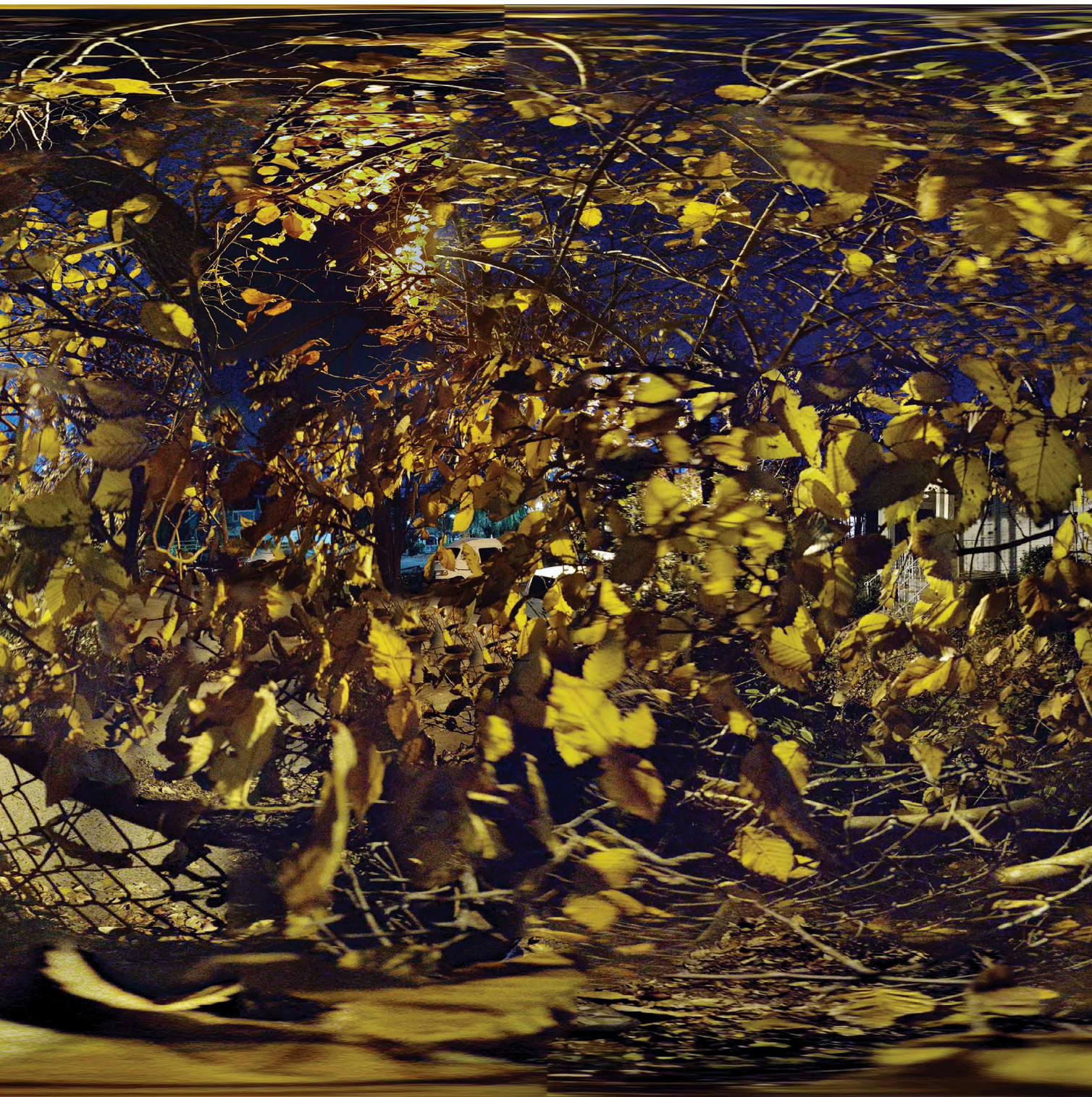
North Lincoln Street, Arlington, Virginia, 2017. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.



North Lincoln Street No. 3, Arlington, Virginia, 2019. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.



7th Street North, Arlington, Virginia, 2017. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.

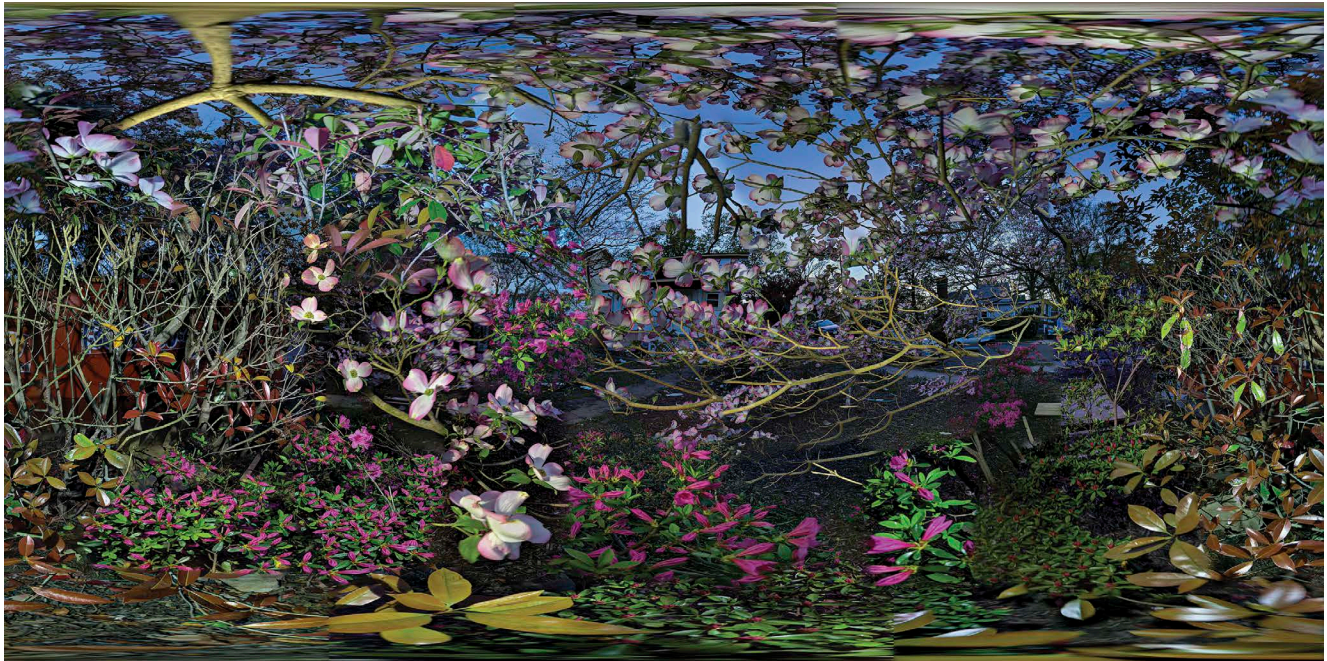




North Nelson Street, Arlington, Virginia, 2017. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.



2nd Road North, Arlington, Virginia, 2017. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.



6th Street North, Arlington, Virginia, 2019. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.



North Oakland Street, Arlington, Virginia, April 15, 2020, 08:26:27 PM, 2020. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.



SpaghettiOs with Sliced Franks, 2014. Archival inkjet print, 15 x 22.8 ft.



Zesty Italian Style Supreme Pizza, 2014. Archival inkjet print, 16 x 15 ft.



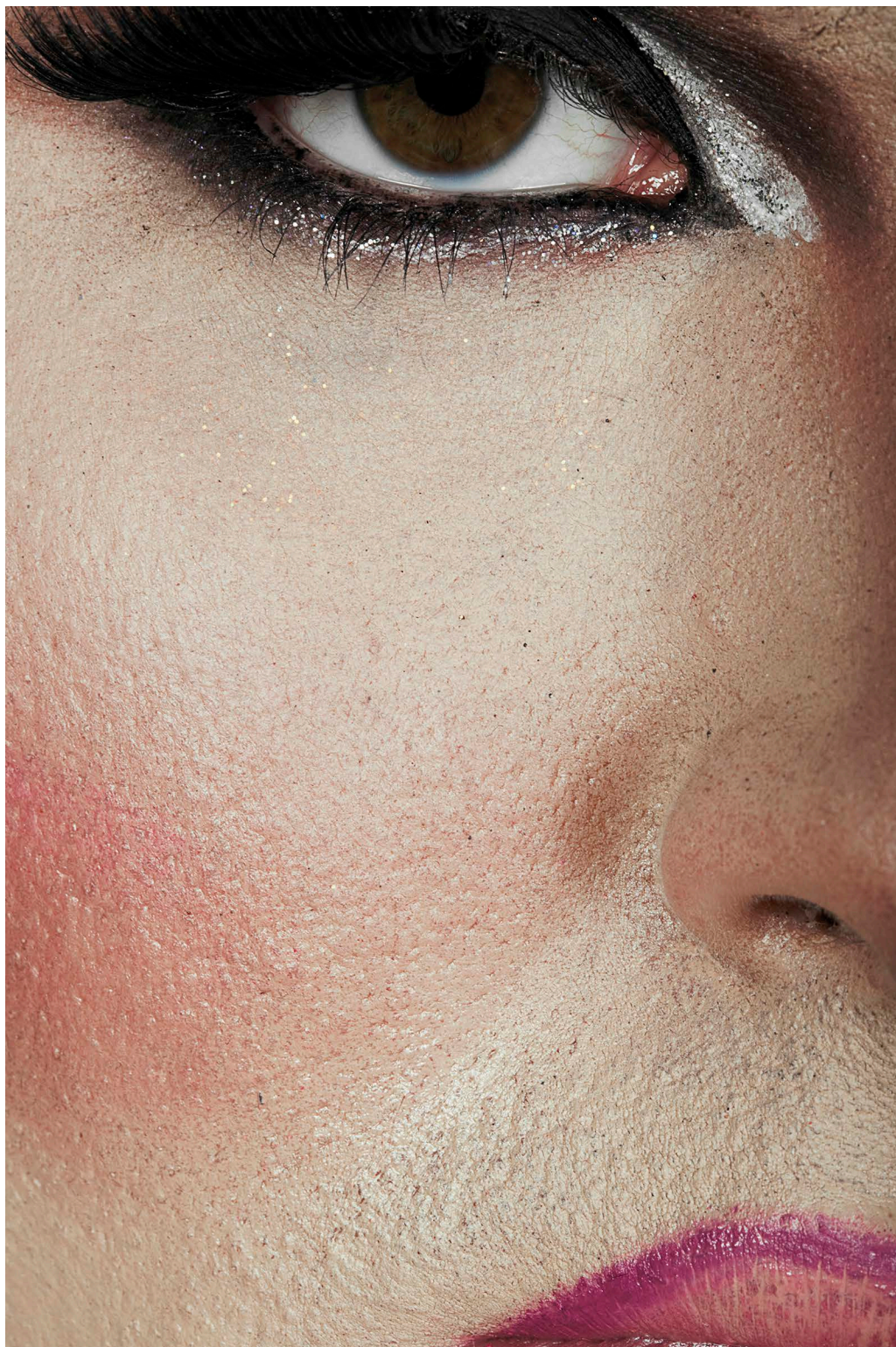
USDA Choice Beef Chuck Shoulder Steak, 2012. Archival inkjet print, approx. 8 x 15 ft.



Swift Premium Skirt Steak, 2014. Archival inkjet print, 9 x 20.1 ft.



Lady Sofia Karrington Bouvier No. 2, 2009, Archival inkjet print, 44 x 65 in.



Ba'Naka, 2009. Archival inkjet print, 65 x 44 in.



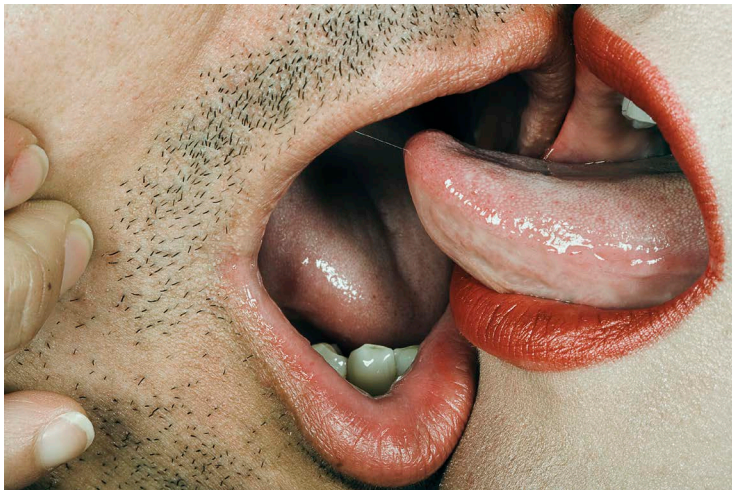
Tyria Iman No. 3, 2008. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 65 in.



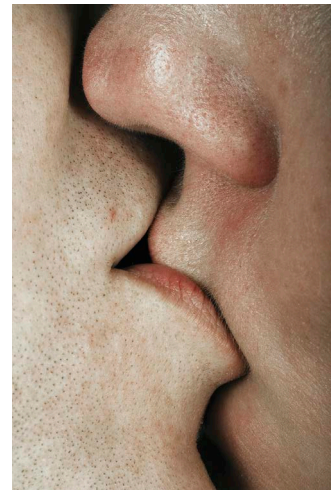
Tanya, 2009, Archival inkjet print, 44 x 65 in.



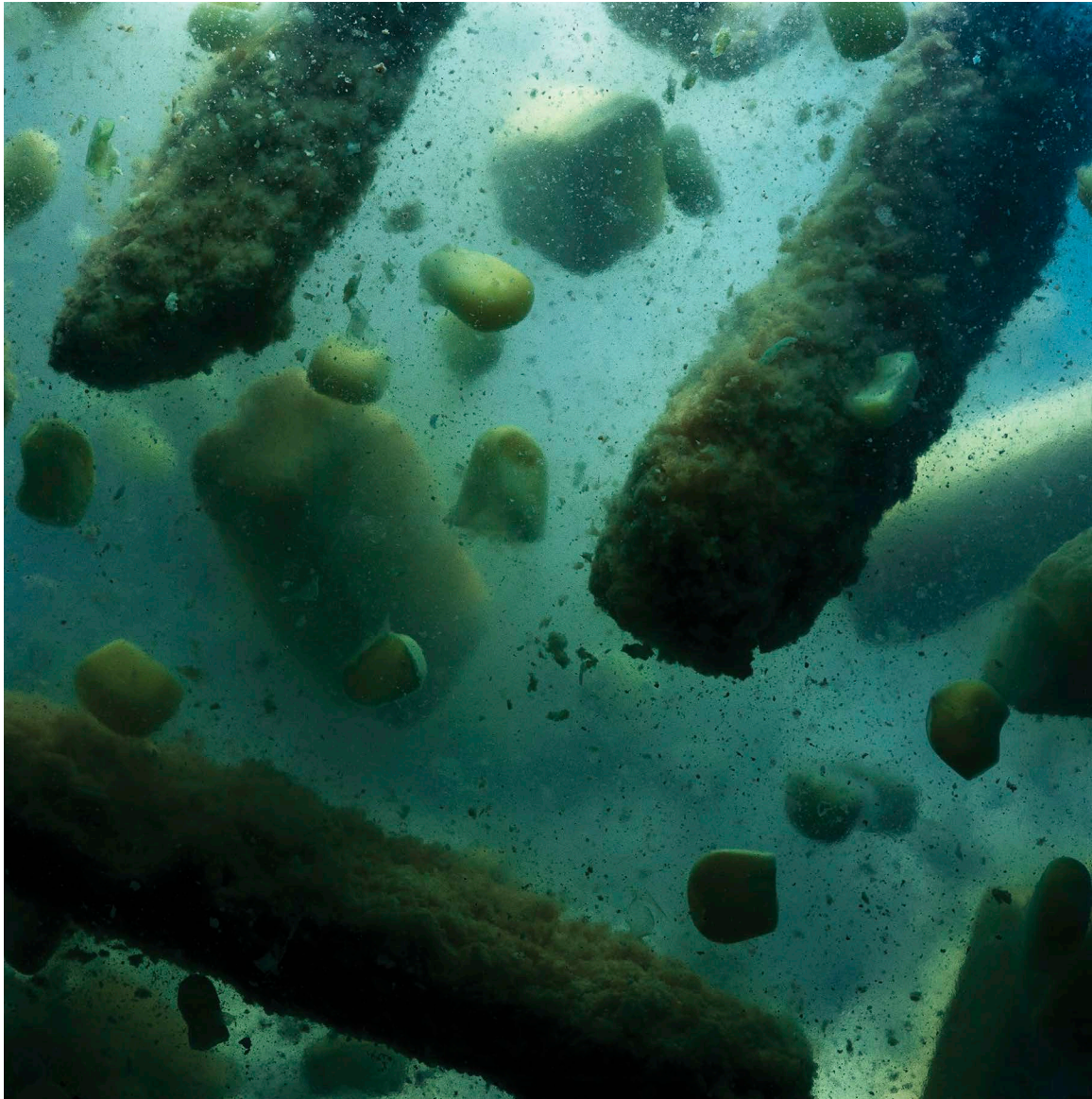
Mike, 2007. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 65 in.



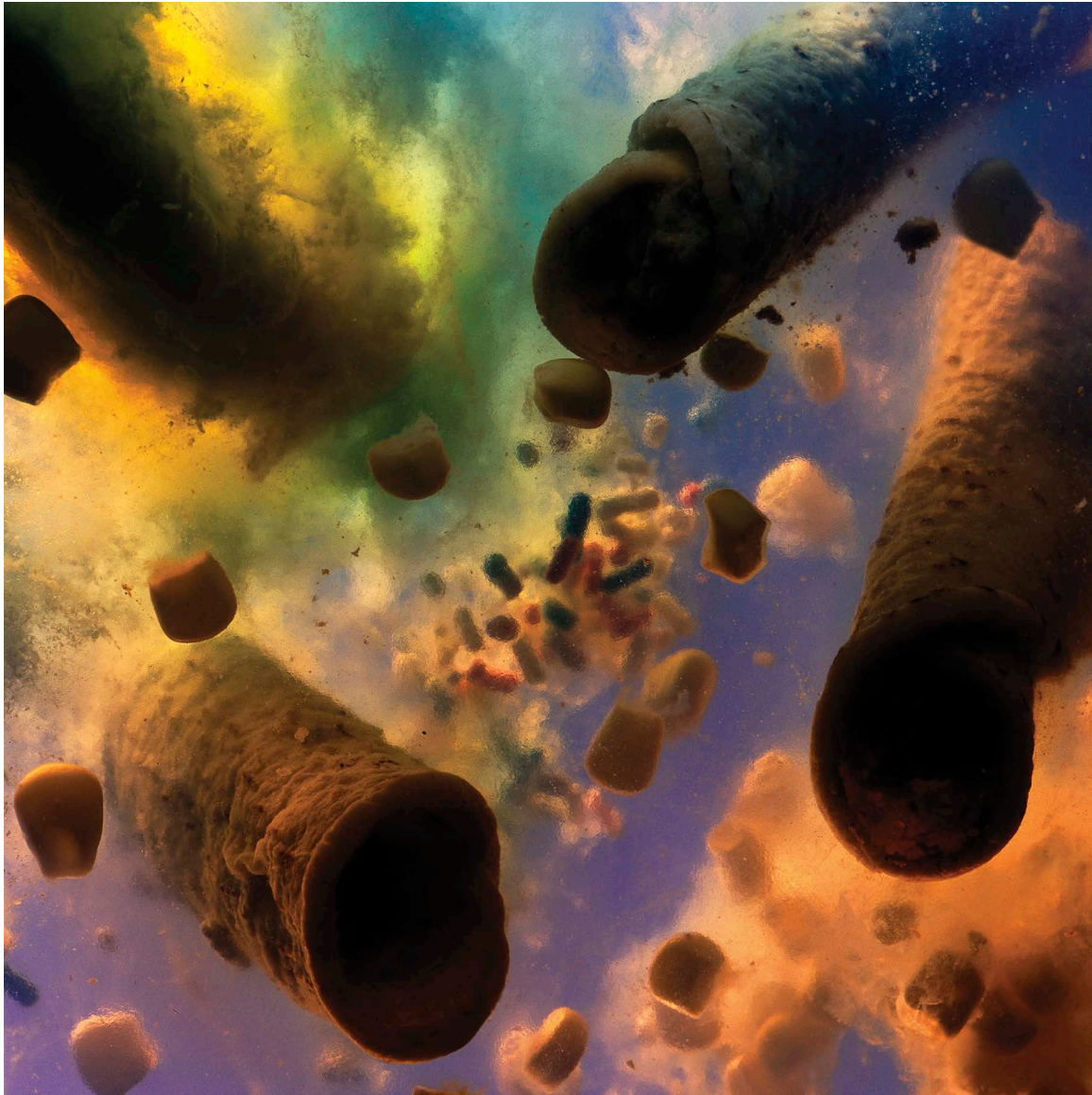
Tony and Liz, 2008. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 65 in.



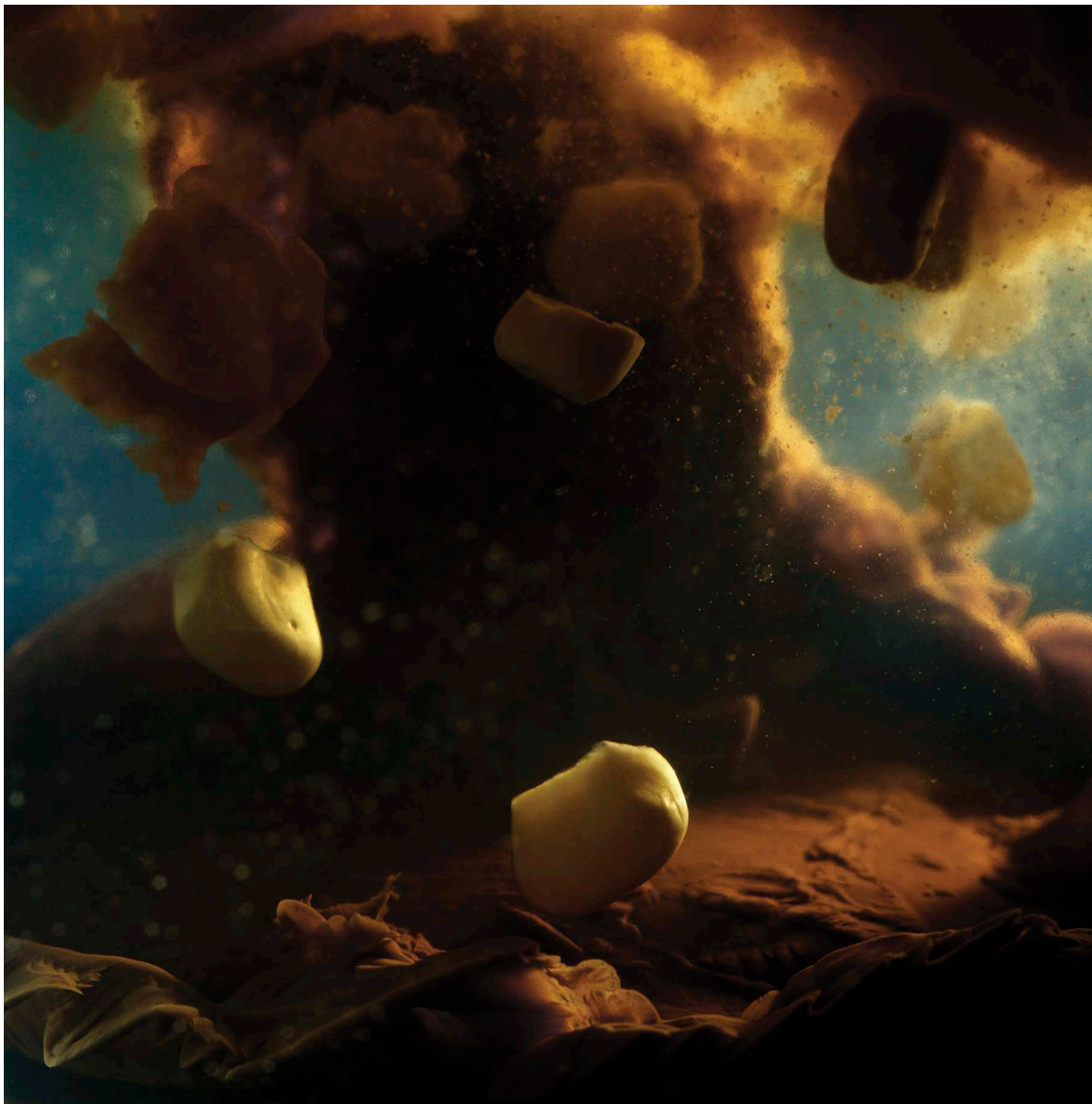
Scott and Zelda No. 2, 2007, Archival inkjet print, 65 x 44 in.



Frenzied Fish Sticks Fun Feast, 1998. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 44 in., edition of 5.

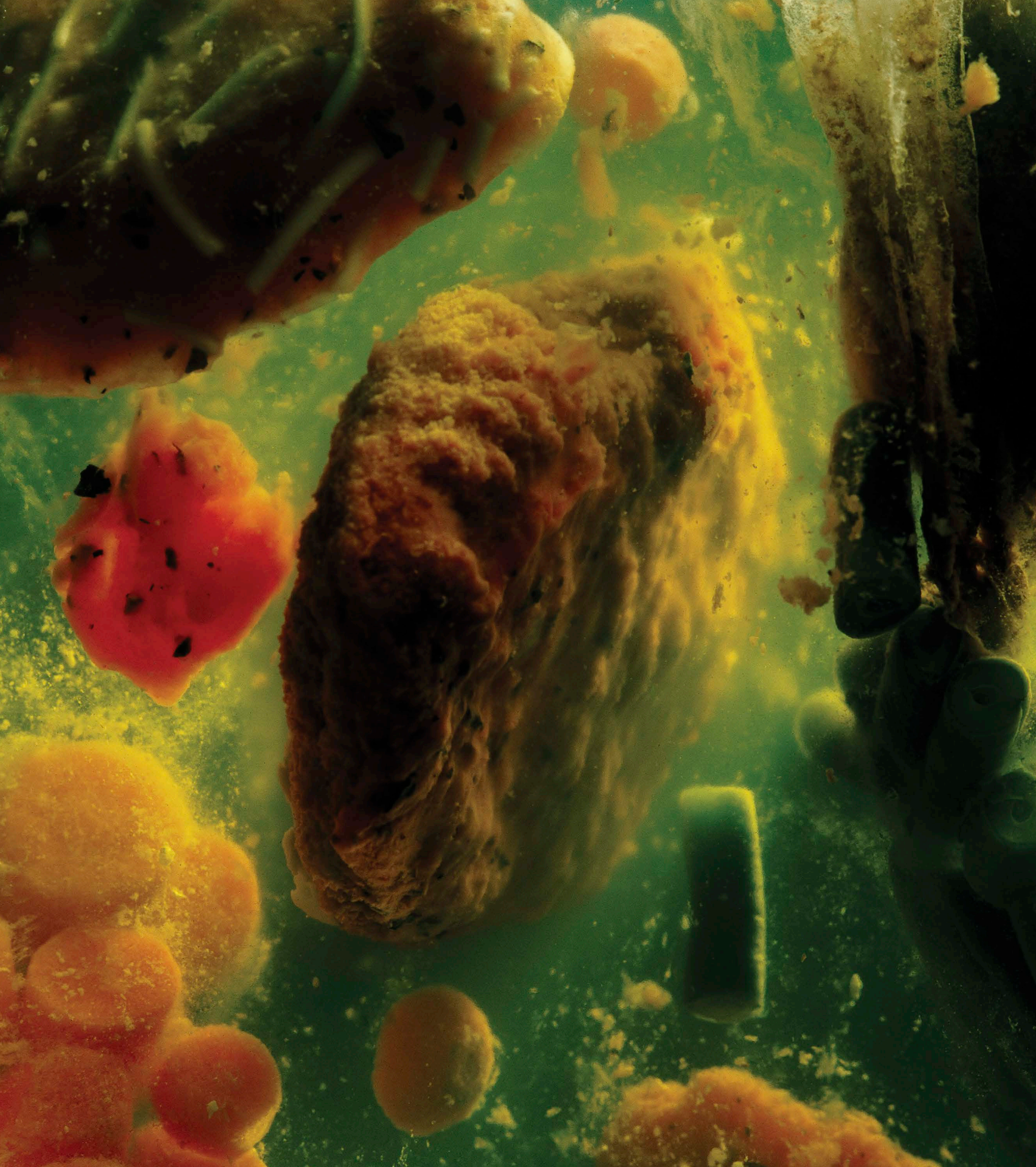


Game Time Taco Roll-ups Kid Cuisine, 1999. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 44 in.



Roarin' Ravioli Fun Feast, 1998. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 44 in., edition of 5.

Opposite: *Veal Parmigiana Dinner*, 1999. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 44 in., edition of 5.

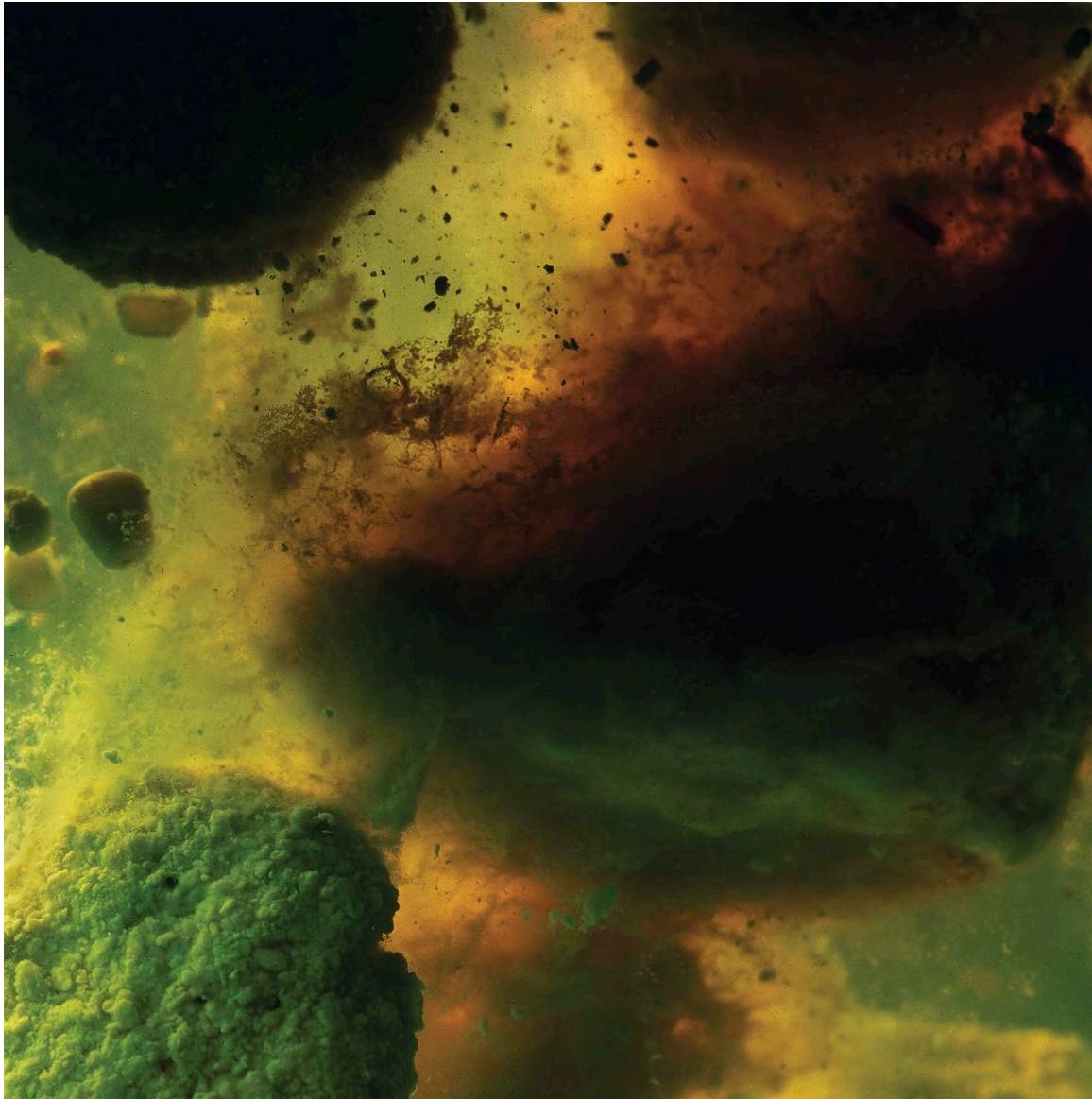






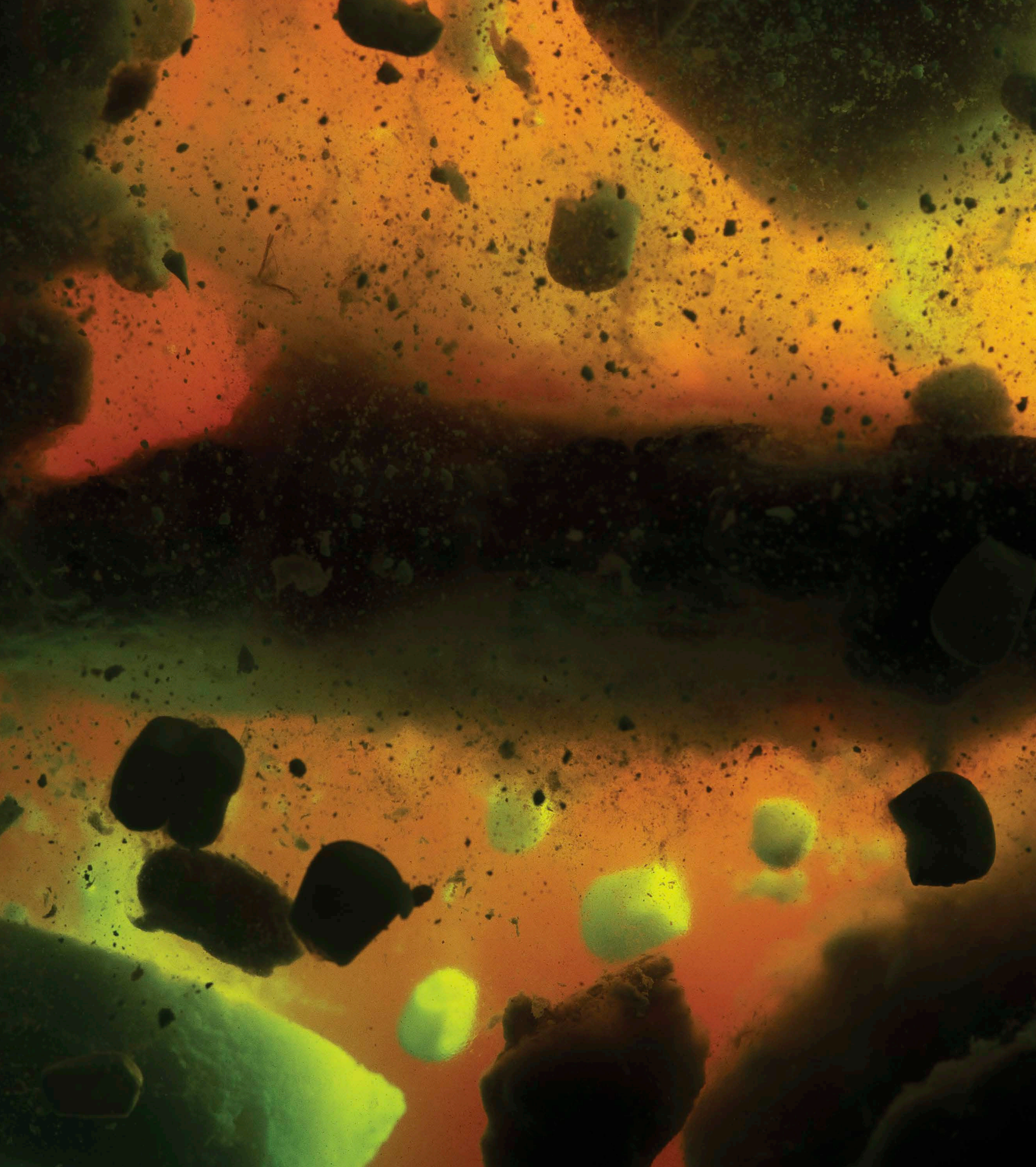
Still Life No. 5, 1998. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 44 in.

Opposite: *Hot Dog, Beans and a Salad*, 1998. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 44 in.



Cosmic Chicken Nuggets Kid Cuisine, 1998. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 44 in.

Opposite: *Boneless Pork Rib Shaped Patty Dinner*, 1998. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 44 in.





Still Life (Fern), 1994. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 44 in.



Still Life (Marigold), 1994. Archival inkjet print, 44 x 44 in.

JASON HOROWITZ

Jason Horowitz lives and work in Arlington, VA and his work has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including at the Blue Sky Gallery, Portland, OR; McLean Project for the Arts, McLean, VA; Peer Gallery, New York, NY; Civilian Art Projects, Washington, DC; Richmond International Airport as a Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Fellow; The Silber Art Gallery, Goucher College, Towson, MD; Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, Virginia Beach, VA; American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, Washington, DC; Honfleur Gallery, Washington, DC; Flashpoint Gallery, Washington, DC; Arlington Arts Center, Arlington, VA; among others.

Horowitz is the recipient of the prestigious Aaron Siskind Foundation Award; The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Fellowship; The Franz & Virginia Bader Fund Grant; and the Arlington County, VA Individual Artist Grant. His work is in the public collections of The Corcoran Legacy Collection and American University Museum, Washington, DC; Capital One Bank, Richmond, VA; The Dimock Gallery, George Washington University, Washington, DC; Banana Republic Corporation, Honolulu, HI; The Sheraton, Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, PA; and Furioso Development Corporation, Washington, DC.

Horowitz is always looking for ways to see things in a new way. From abstracted still-life images of food to close-ups of people in the studio, to digitally deconstructed and abstracted panoramas, he loves to explore ways to engage with and interpret the world through photography, and his work has focused on pushing technology and photographic "seeing" in new directions.

JENNIFER SAKAI

Jennifer Sakai is a fine art photographer, curator, and professor who resides in Washington, DC. She received her MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University in Fine Art Photography. She has taught at The Park School of Communication at Ithaca College, The Corcoran School of Art and Design, George Washington University, and the MFA program at American University. Sakai is curator of *Border Wall* at the American University Museum (Winter 2020) and *The Gifts of Tony Podesta* at the American University Museum (Winter 2019).

Sakai is currently on the Board of Directors for Transformer Gallery in Washington, DC. She has served on committee for IMF/World Bank Photographic Society; juried for ExposedDC and VCU thesis; and received distinction from FotoWeek DC in the Fine Art Photography category. She has presented numerous curatorial and professional lectures.

Her practice focuses on topics relating to the landscape, surface, and the emotional connection to memory, space, and history. Sakai has shown at The Corcoran Museum in Washington, DC; IA & A at Hillyer Gallery, Washington, DC; The Anderson Gallery in Richmond, VA; Addison Ripley Fine Art, Washington, DC; Transformer Gallery, DC; Lightwork Gallery, NY; Photoworks Gallery, Glen Echo, MD; Rubenstein Arts Center at Duke University; and Handwerker Gallery in Ithaca, NY.

She has published in American University Press, *Musée Magazine*, *Washington City Paper*, *Fotofilmic*, *Float Magazine*, *F-Stop Magazine*, *Covid Pictures Archive*, *The Washington Post*, *Color Tag Magazine*, and *The Tiny Seed Literary Journal*. Jennifer is selected as an artist for Charcoal Publishing Chico Review and BONFIRE artist residency. She is a multiple recipient of a DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities Grant for her photographic practice.

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Archival inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.

Pages 12–13: *6th Street North No. 2, Arlington, Virginia*, 2020. Archival
inkjet print, 44 x 85 in.

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FOR WASHINGTON ART

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The Alper Initiative for Washington Art promotes an understanding and appreciation of the art and artists of the Washington Metropolitan Area. We provide and staff a dedicated space located within the American University Museum, to present exhibitions, programs, and resources for the study and encouragement of our creative community.

