

MARIA GIOVANNI



Perhaps that's what I feel, an outside and an inside and me in the middle, perhaps that's what I am, the thing that divides the world in two, on the one side the outside, on the other the inside, that can be as thin as foil, I'm neither one side nor the other, I'm in the middle, I'm the partition, I've two surfaces and no thickness, perhaps that's what I feel, myself vibrating, I'm the tympanum, on the one hand the mind, on the other the world, I don't belong to either (...)

Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*, Faber and Faber, 2012, p.108

My practice is a reflection on representation and its supporting mechanisms.

Using a variety of media, ranging from drawing, lithographic printing, to performance and film, I engage with questions of presence and absence, visibility and invisibility, silence and speech.

With apparently counterproductive strategies of voiding, erasure or obscuration, my practice interrogates the conditions of possibility, addressing existence through negation.

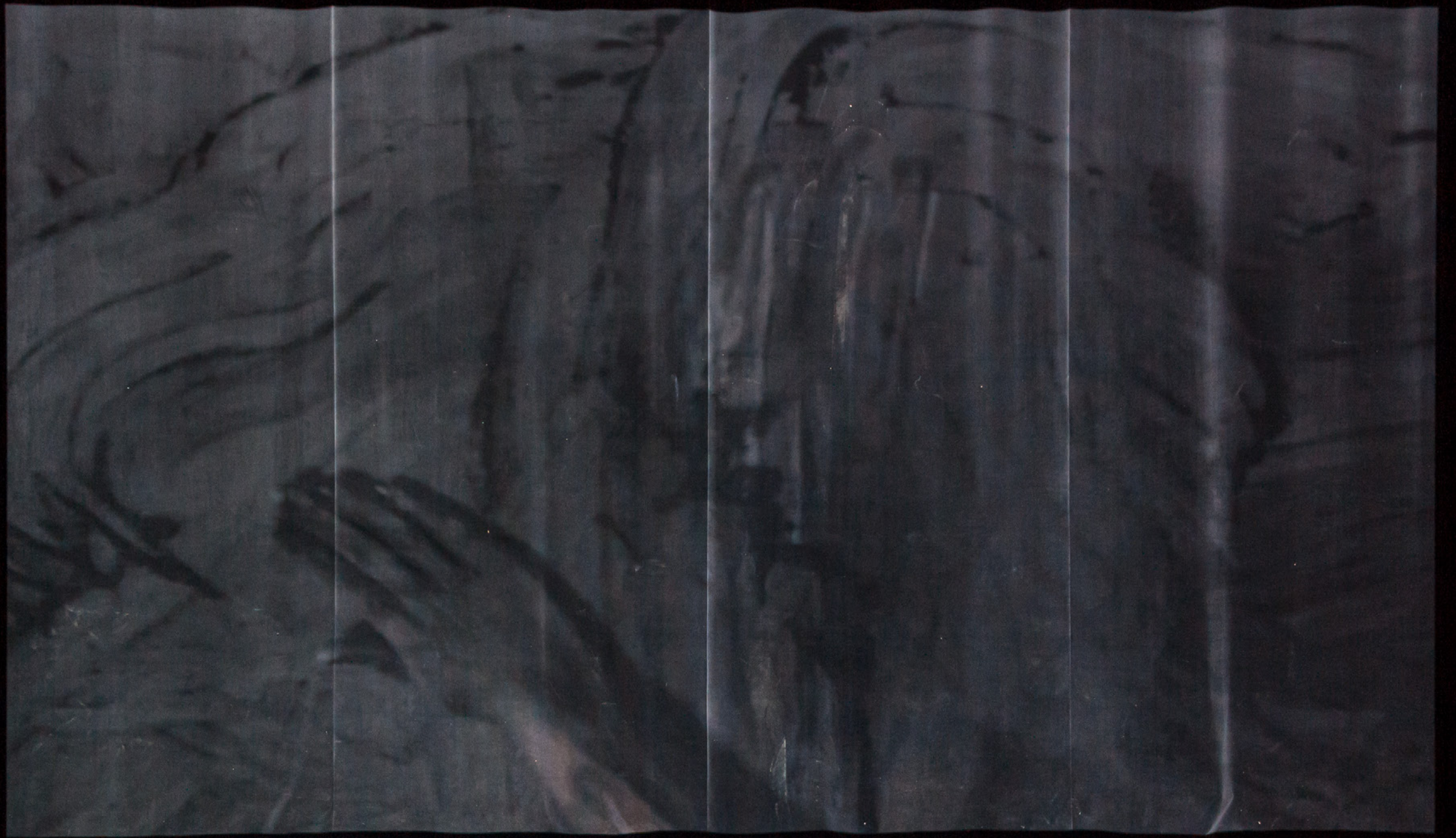
My work also highlights a fascination with the process of mediation, and throughout my research I try to pinpoint the specificity of a given medium by focusing on its apparatus.

This approach of constant « *mise en abyme* »*, underlines my interest in structures of creation, support, exhibition and staging. I attempt to bring the background to the foreground, usually giving an impression of behind the scenes. In film and performance, for instance, this can take the form of an apparent emptiness, silence, or absence of narrative.

I also frequently play on the interspace between my two languages (English and French) and the idea of the potential and the limits of translation.

My pieces are punctuated by recurring images of hands, veils, screens, or places such as stages and studios.

* The double-mirroring effect created by placing an image within an image and so on, repeating infinitely. Reflexive strategy where the content of a medium is the medium itself.

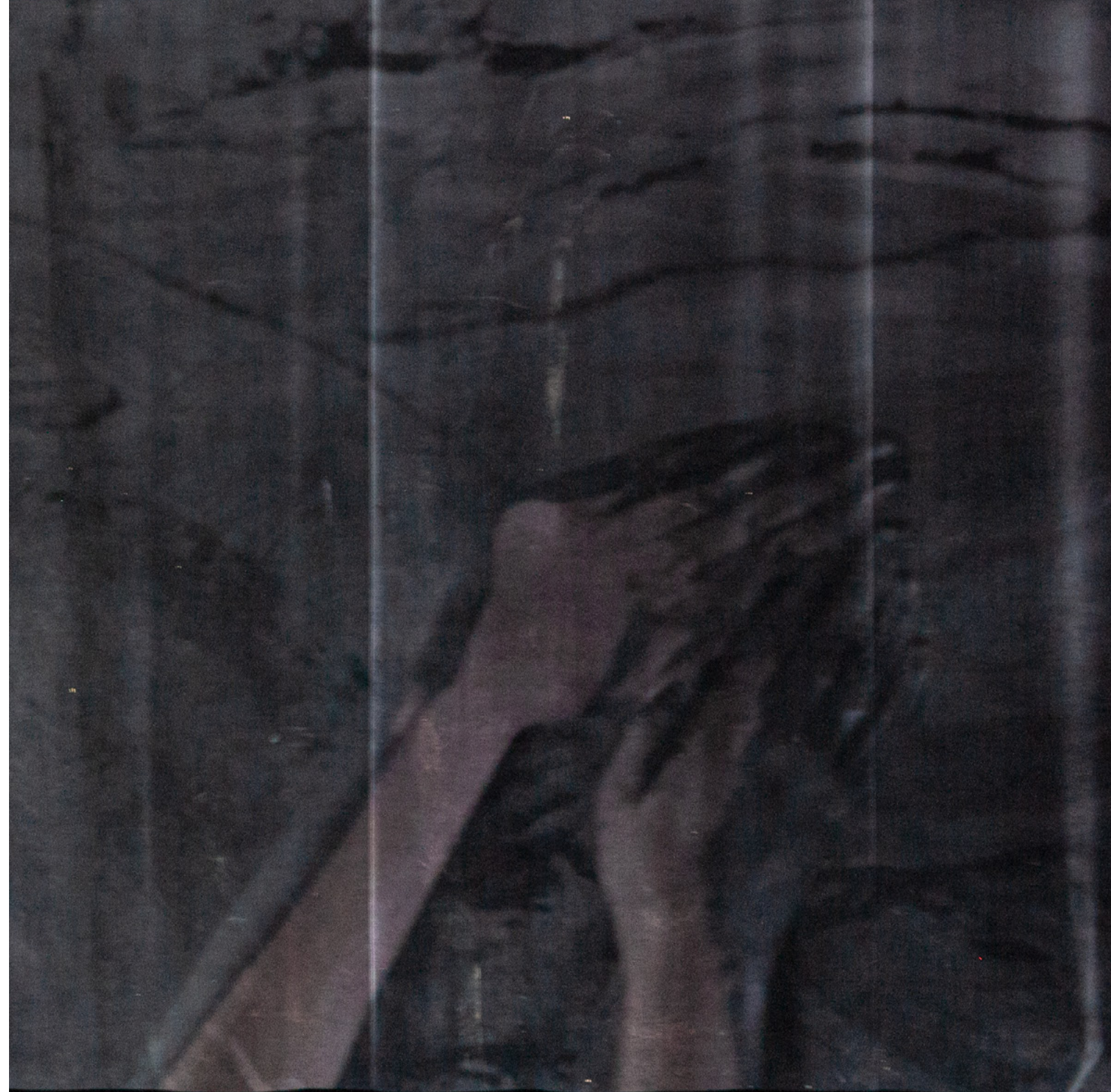


A handful of dust , 2019
Installation vidéo

A Handful of Dust

Installation
Video projection on dark velvet curtain,
10 minutes loop
2019

A Handful of Dust is a video installation exploring the limits of visibility. In the darkened backstage, surrounded by thick black velvet curtains, the viewer plunged in this immersive experience, is obliged to take time to adjust and apprehend. As the eyes get used to the lack of light, they discern hands brushing the curtain, spreading graphite powder on its surface. Almost nothing, merely a handful of dust.



A handful of dust, 2019
(Détail)

Elle a écrit silence.



(MOT MUET)



Du coup bah en fait voilà, 2019
Performance

Du coup bah en fait voilà

Performance-Lecture
Video projection, live performance and
recorded sounds, 5 minutes
French and English versions
2019


- *You see ?*

Du coup bah en fait voilà is a multimedia performance which explores the notion of phatic function, theorized by the linguist Roman Jakobson. "The phatic function is the part of communication which keeps open the line of communication itself; it is the means by which two or more speakers reassure themselves that not only are they being listened to, but they are also being understood.» (Oxford Reference)

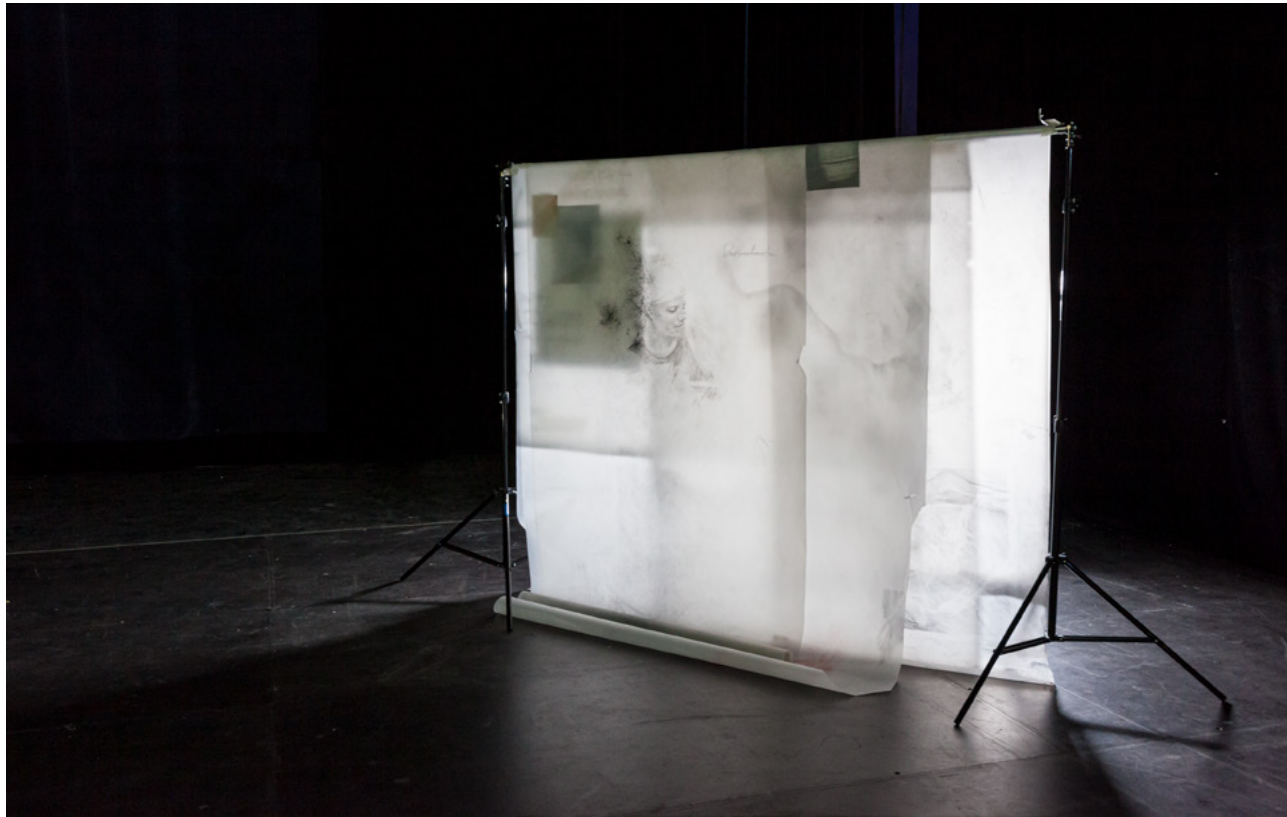
It is, in this sense, a part of communication that is separate from the exchange of meaning; it is, as it were, without content of its own. Paradoxically this essential function can entirely colonize discourse at the expense of meaning. This capacity of speaking about nothing, a form of small talk, is at the core of this lecture which plays with the continuities and dissonances between different audio-visual communication channels.

At the end of this schizophrenic monologue, the projection screen is raised, revealing another space inviting the audience to go through the stage curtains and behind the scenes.

- *However, words are like actions, those that we think are empty, are perhaps, in fact, the most pregnant of all.*



"Le discours c'est comme un rideau,
l'important c'est ce qu'il y a derrière. "



Untitled

Installation
Graphite and paper collage on tracing paper,
photo stand, light, approx. 1m60 x1m20
2019



Untitled, 2019 (detail)



Notes on Fluid Mechanics

Video and sound
15 minutes
English
2020

Notes on Fluid Mechanics is an essay-film reflecting on readings of *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* by Luce Irigaray and *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist phenomenology* by Astrida Neimanis.

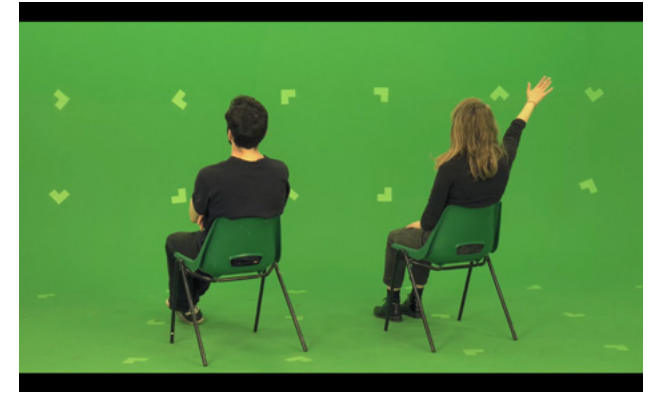
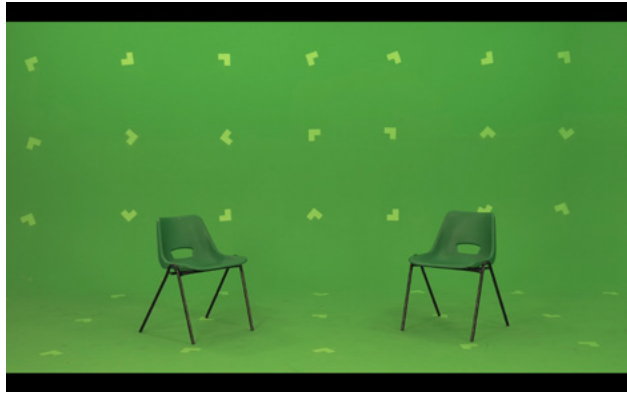
This piece investigates fluidity in matter, in respect of its liminal, ambiguous and relational qualities. Between visible and invisible, corporeal and incorporeal, this film, unresolved and endlessly becoming, is a hybrid association of sound, moving images and texts.

<https://youtu.be/Ho7cnzLHtfM>





John said nothing, 2020
Video and sound, 3min30



John said nothing

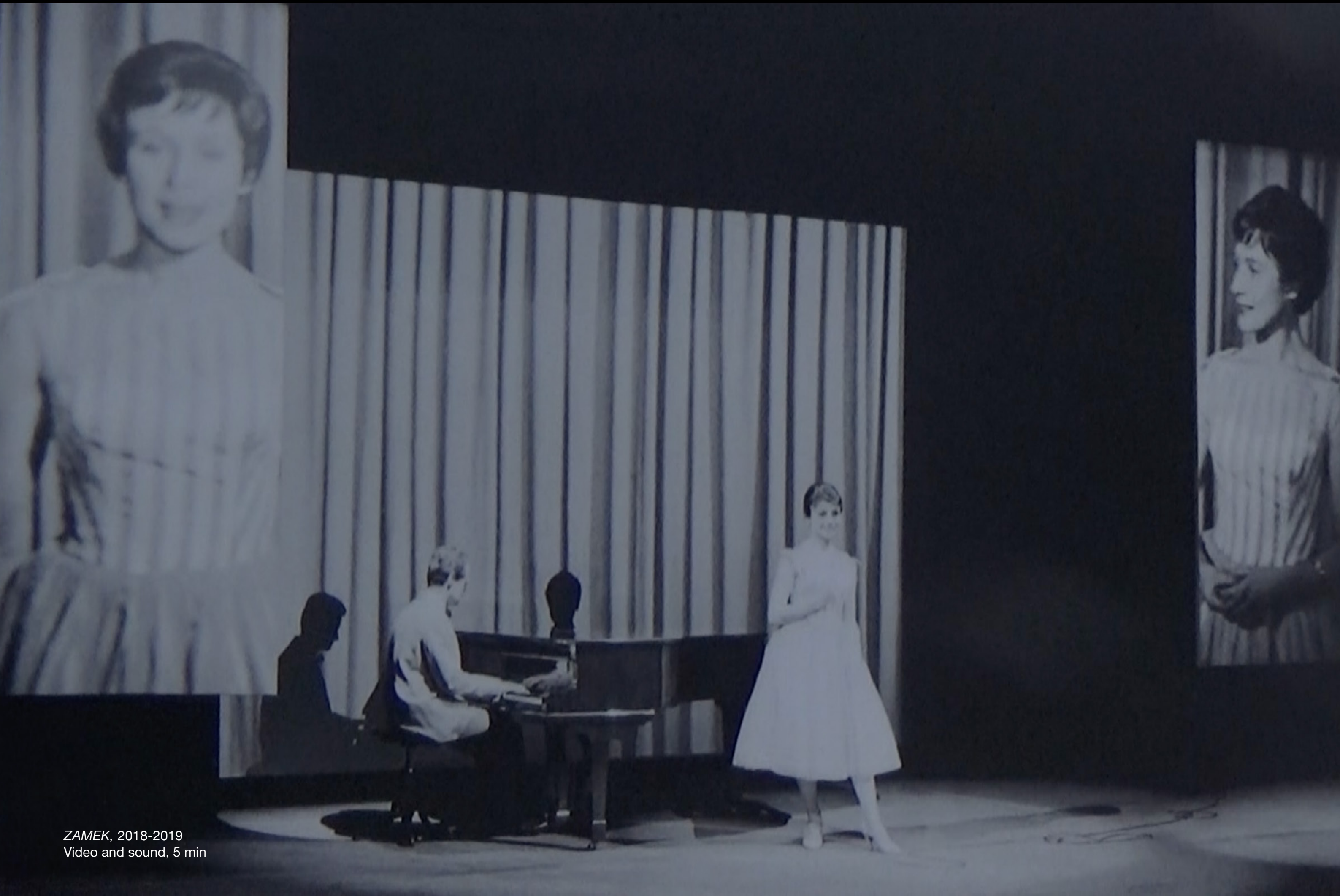
Video and sound
3 minutes 39
2020
English
(French subtitles available)

The green screen considered not only as a surface meant to disappear but also as a space of pure potential. A pregnant void. This film, made in collaboration with Leo Henderson, was inspired by the *Lecture on Nothing* by John Cage. The dialogue (or is it a monologue ?) idles, leading the audience nowhere.

- *Nothing more than nothing can be said.*

<https://vimeo.com/399134504>

Password: nada



ZAMEK, 2018-2019
Video and sound, 5 min

ZAMEK

Video and sound
5 minutes 04
French, English and Czech
2018-2019

This film was made after reading “*The Castle*” by Franz Kafka while in residency in Prague. This text echoed my own experience of misunderstandings and mistranslations as a foreigner in the Czech Republic, in today’s era of *Google Translate*.

The film plays with these discrepancies and dissonances in a dual rhythm: the narration of the familiar voice of the software, interrupted by silent images of Prague.

<https://vimeo.com/392717459>



K. chercha le mot exact,
mais ne le trouvant pas immédiatement,

K. cherchait le mot exact,
mais pour l'instant



autrement il ne comprenait rien.

sinon il n'a rien compris.

Il s'agissait sans doute simplement de quelqu'un

bylo to pravděpodobně jenom někdo



Je ne parviens pas à comprendre





Untitled (A promise), 2019
Video Installation, Loop



Empty handed, I, II & III (2020) Installation view
Series of three waterless lithographic prints on Somerset paper, 76X112cm, wooden
battens, 86 cm x2cm x2cm

Empty handed

Series of three waterless lithographic prints on Somerset paper, 76X100cm, wooden batters, 86 cm x2cm x2cm
2020

This series is inspired by gestures of display. In a sort of tautological loop, hands are hand-drawn, showing that there is nothing to show. In an almost counter-productive process, the challenge was to print with a minimum density, nearing transparency.



Empty handed II et Empty handed III, (details)

Installation View *Untitled*, 2017
Graphite powder on tracing paper, variable dimensions
Mixed Media on canvas, 77x96cm



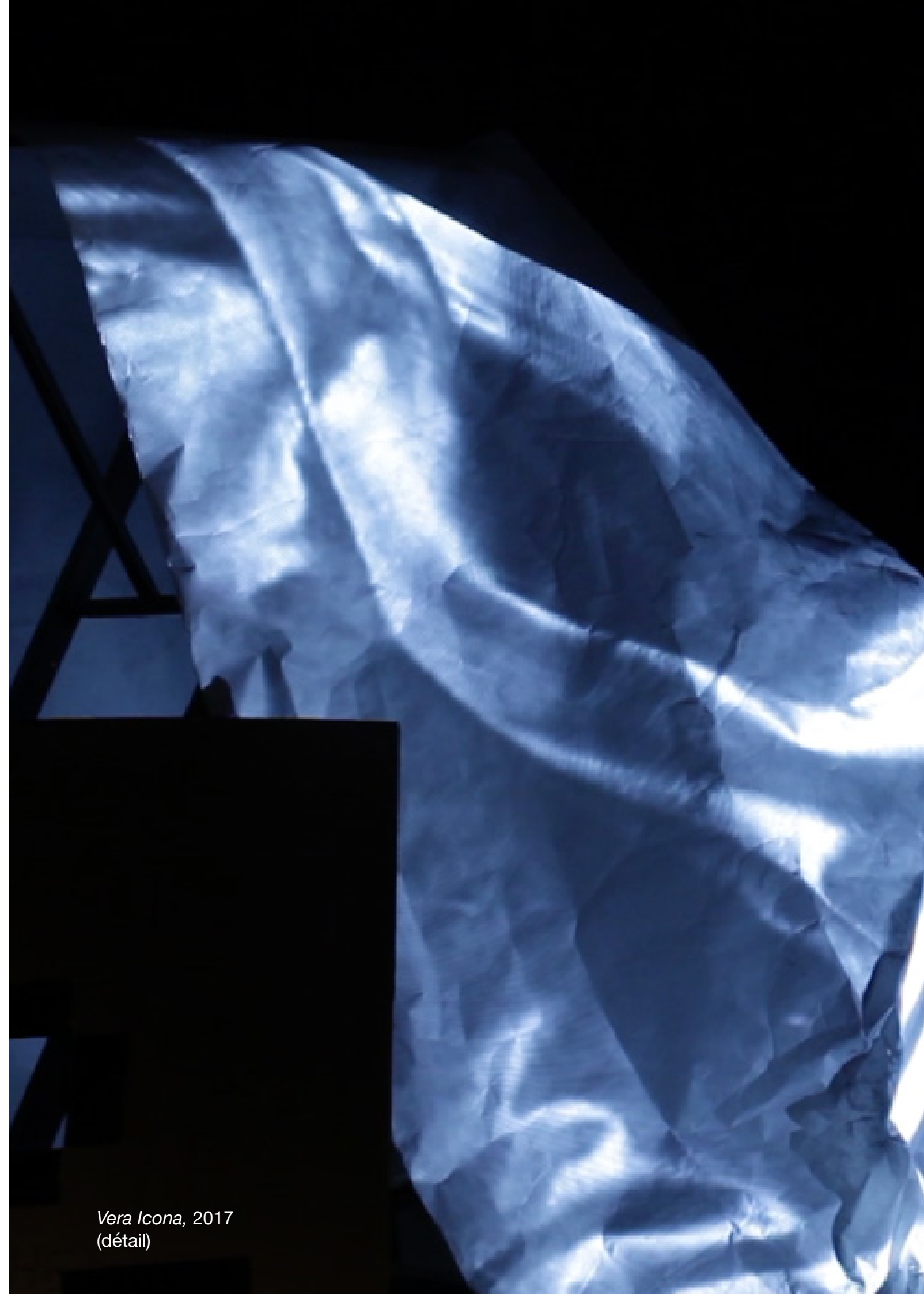
Vera Icona

Video and sound
4 minutes 30
French
2017

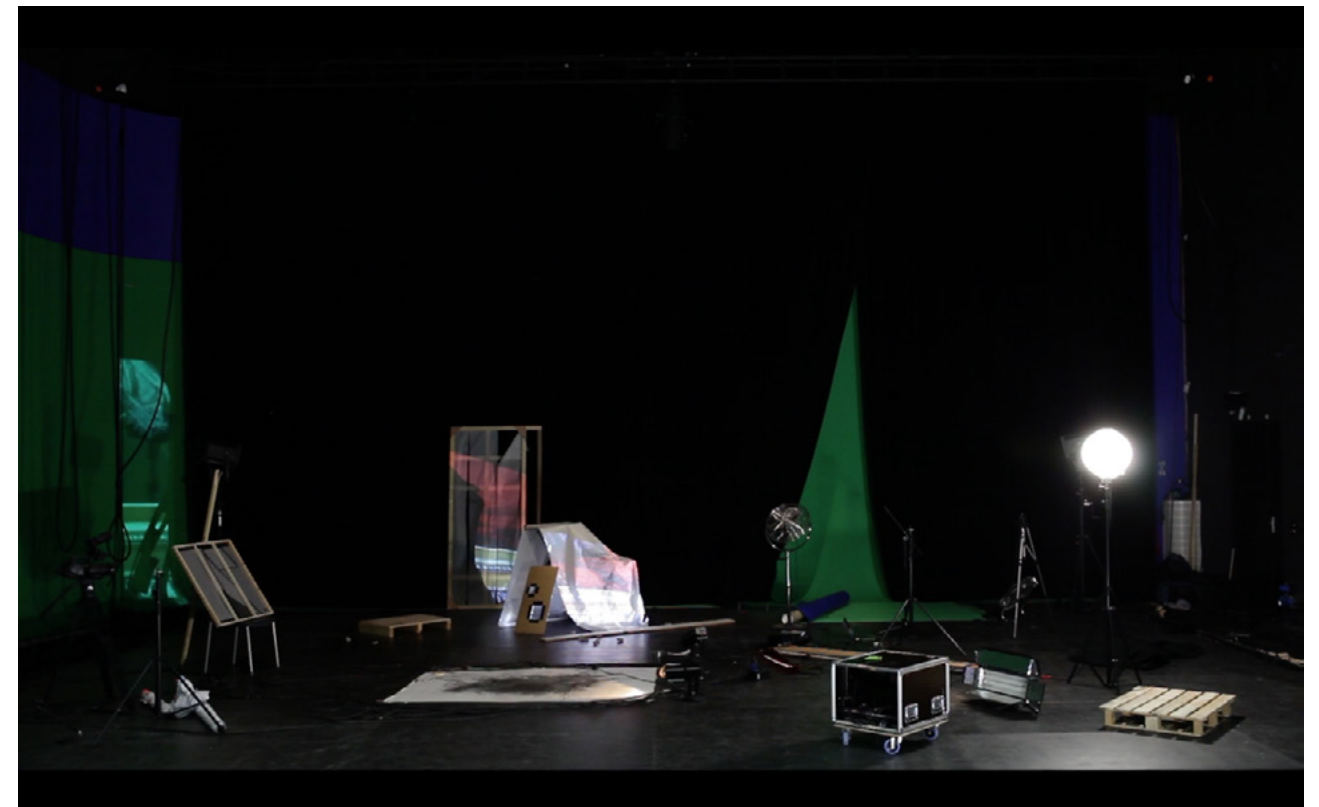
The image considered as an «in-between». A transitory moment caught between what has been, is and might be. A dialectical tension between visible and invisible, presence and absence.

In a similar way, the veil is a threshold: between appearance and disappearance, profane and sacred, desire and accomplishment. This piece cultivates the instability between dissimulation and revelation. This work is about entangling tales, times and meanings. The elements pictured are fluid: smoke, graphite powder, folds and projections of drapery. Hands are moving, a voice is narrating. The proclaimed text, hinting at potential interpretations, is quoted from «*Passion érotique des étoffes chez les femmes*» (1908), a study by Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault. A psychiatrist who also lectured on the topic of drapery at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Paris and photographed the layers of costumes worn by North African women.

<https://vimeo.com/223493705>



Vera Icona, 2017
(détail)



Vera Icona, 2017
Video and sound, 4 min 30



Almost nothing and Almost everything, 2020

Installation view.

Also shown, on the left : *Empty handed I, II et III*, in the background *Absent Present*.

Almost nothing & Almost everything

Installation, Plastic sheet, metal structure, tracing paper, latex sheet, screenprint on paper, latex gloves, variable dimensions
2020

Almost nothing and Almost everything is an attempt at «white writing». Empty screens, made of tracing paper and latex appear as membranes in waiting. Placed on the latex, a print made with transparent varnish might never be seen : almost nothing and almost everything.



Almost nothing and Almost everything, 2020
Installation view.

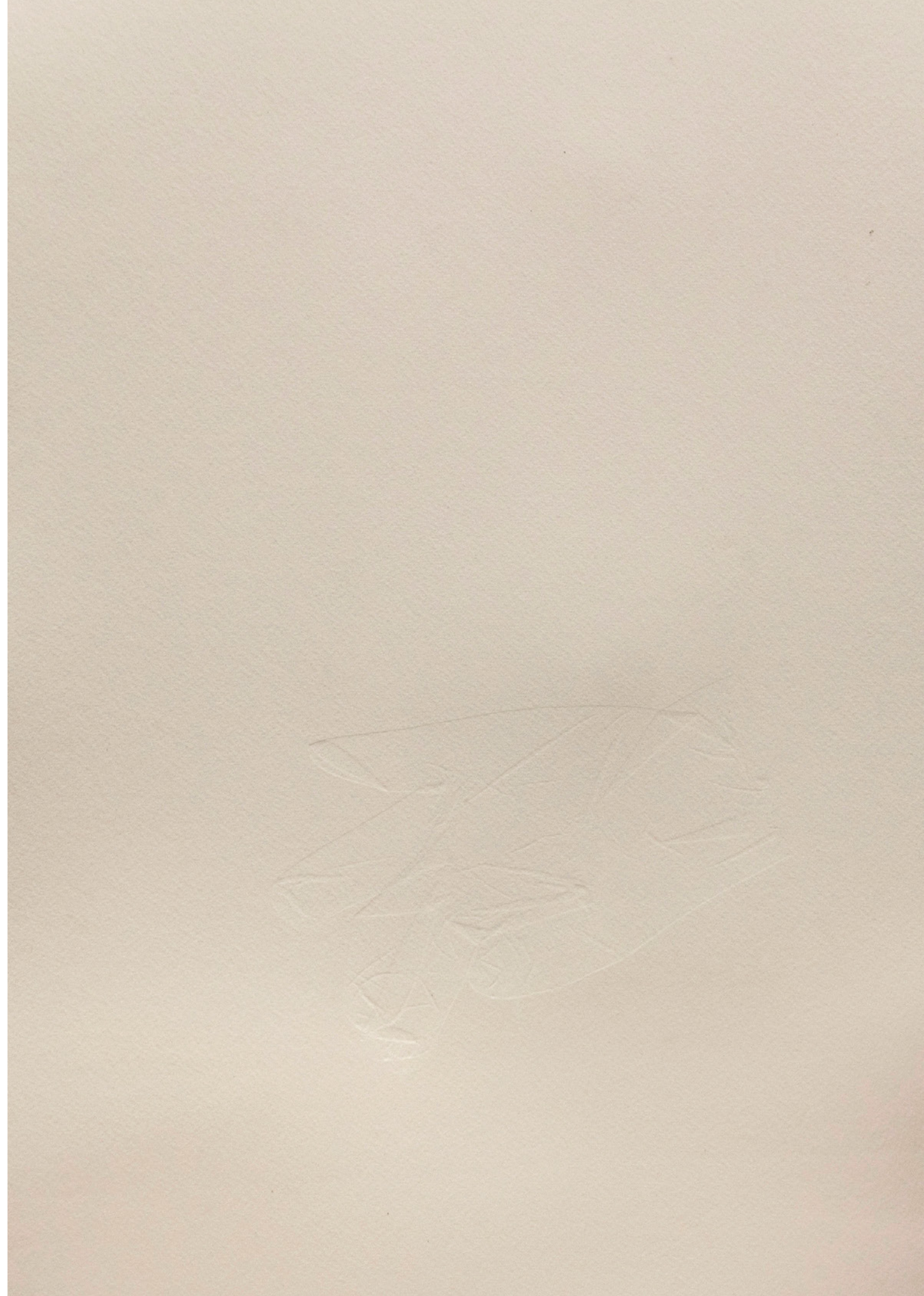


Almost nothing and Almost everything, 2020
Installation view



Above : *Almost nothing and Almost everything*, 2020 (detail).
Latex, latex gloves, varnish print on paper.

À droite : *H.C* , gaufrage sur papier, 2020 (détails).





Absent Present

Lithograph on Sommerset paper, graphite powder, 76x112cm

On the threshold of visibility, *Absent Present* is a print on the verge of self-sabotage, whose conditions of appearance depends on the position of the viewer. The ghostly hands, with the reflective quality of the graphite, play with light, coming forward or retreating in the darkness.



Untitled (Hand), 2020
Laser engraving on acrylic mirror, 60x33cm