Prima Materia

by

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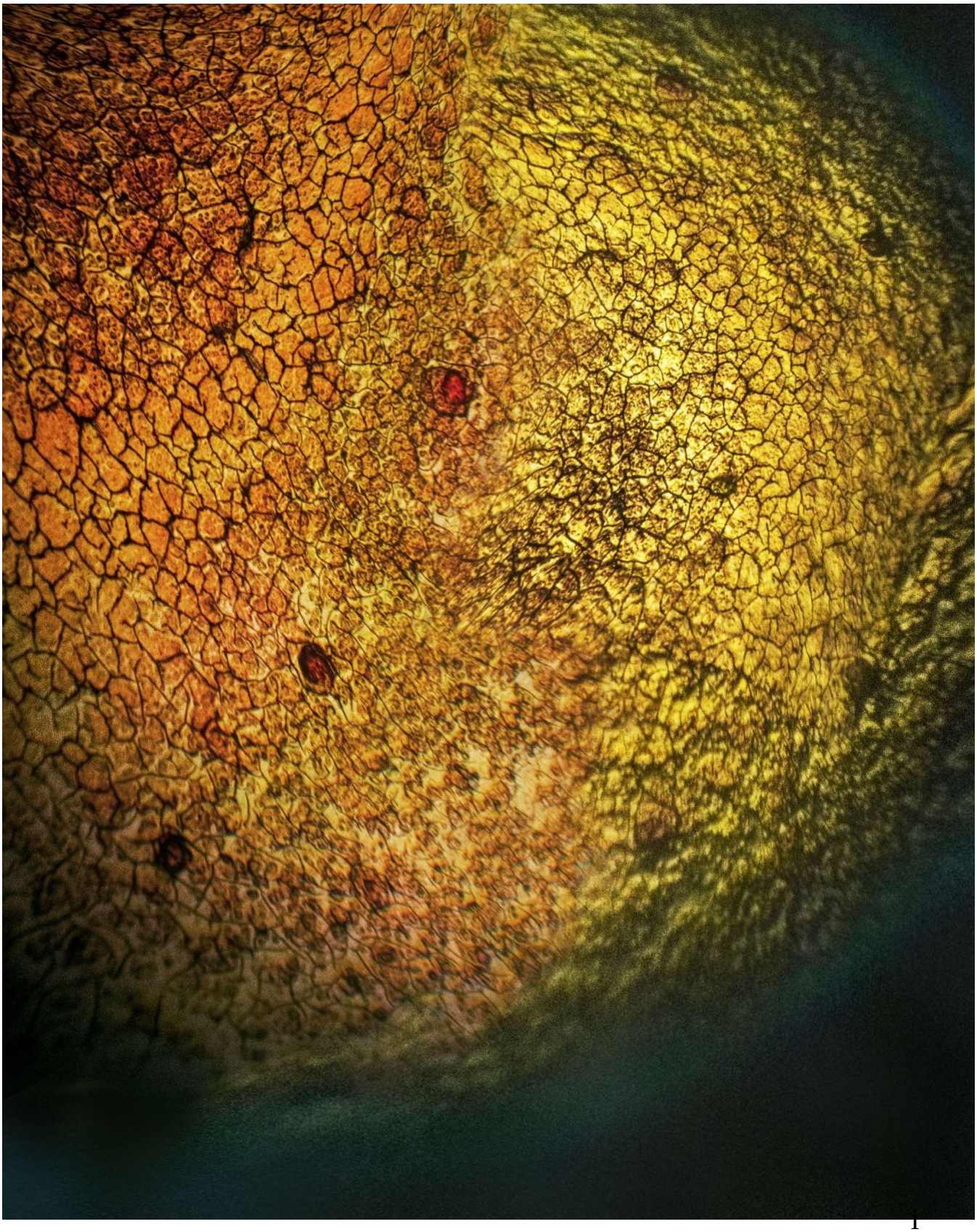
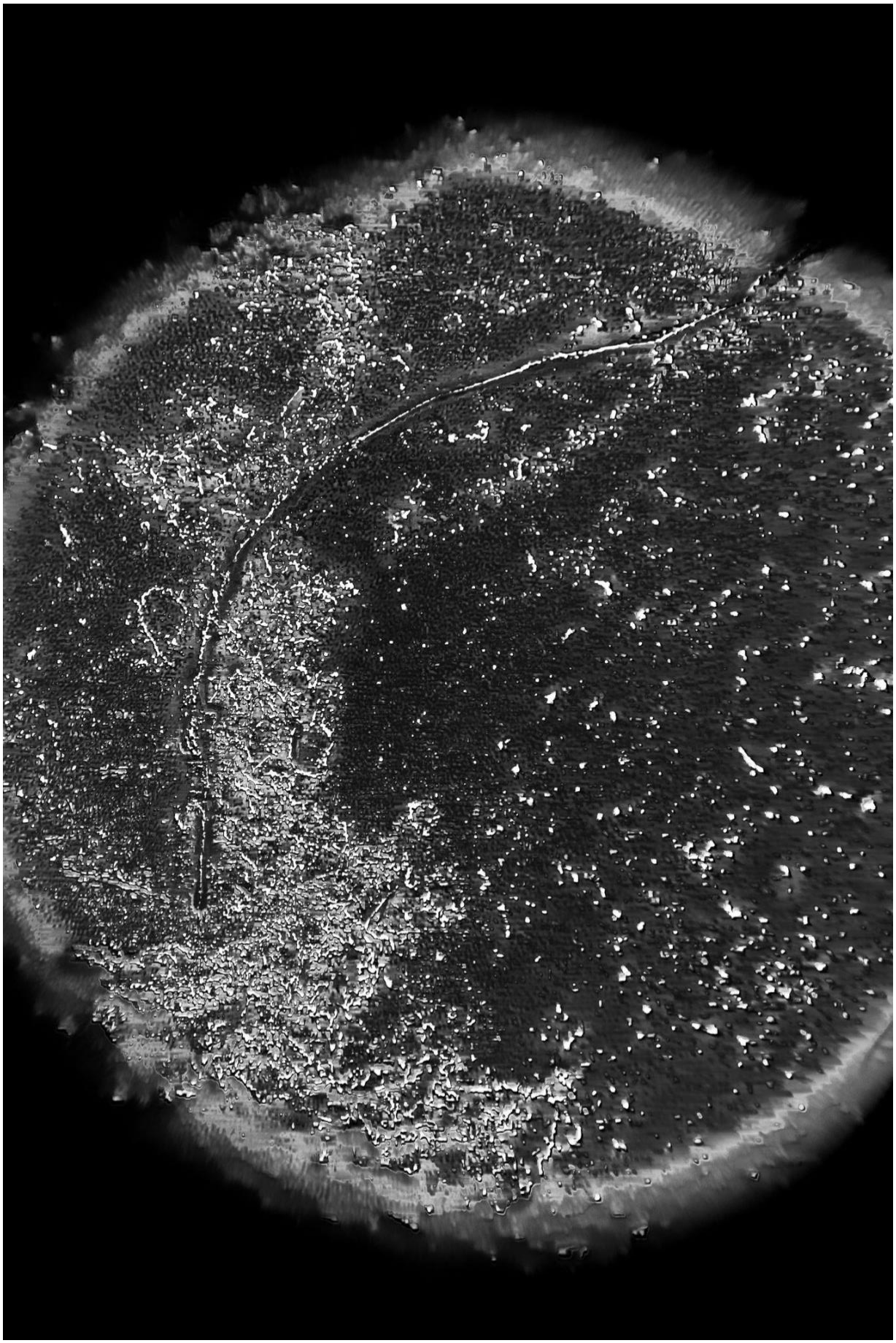


Prima Materia is the primitive formless base of all matter.
Who we are and what we are made from; the gifts from nature delight us so
We forget we are trapped in this popping bubble of oxygen

Our relation to nature is cyclic
What we give is what we receive

The Earth is a blessing in disguise.



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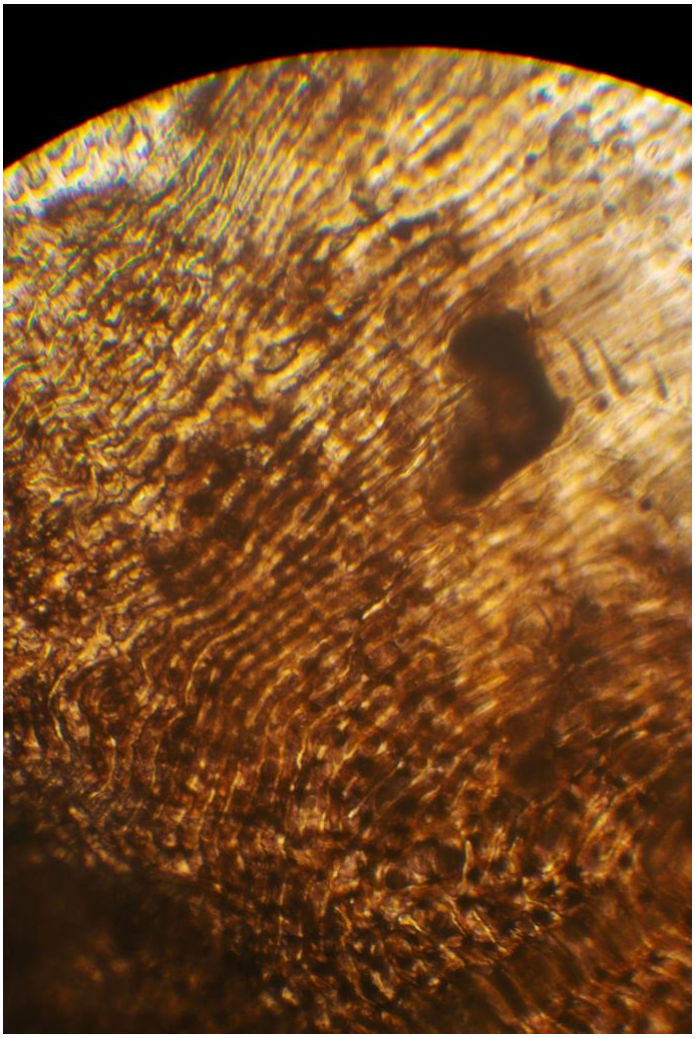

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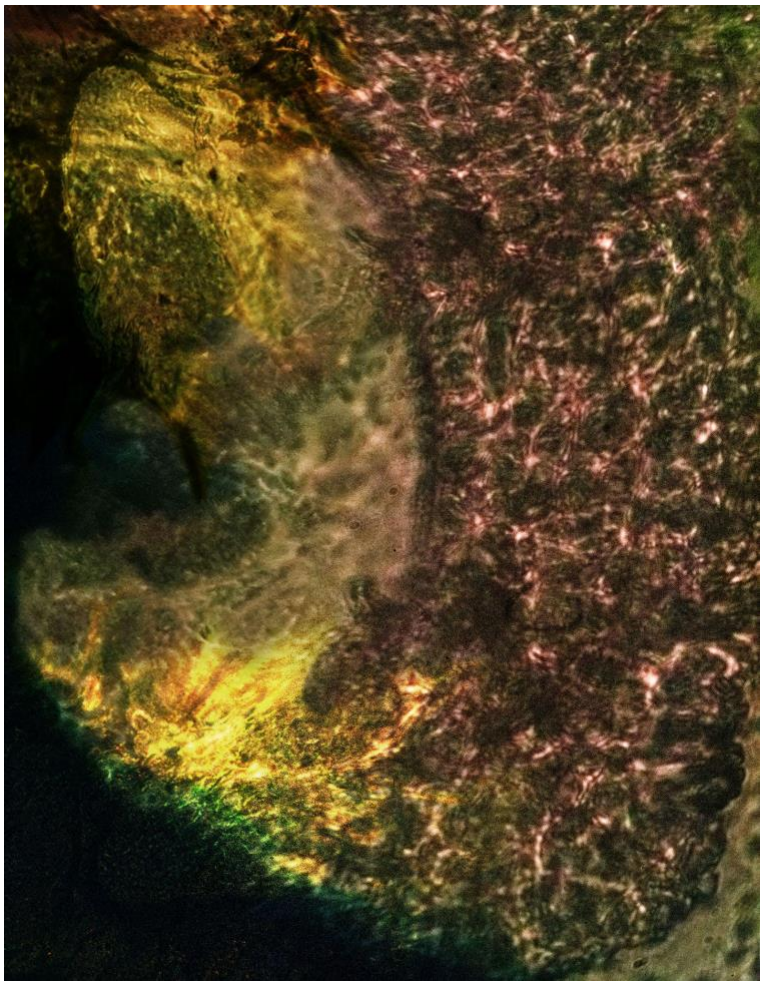
The intention of my work is to show how our physical makeup mimics the organic elements and forms found in nature, by experimenting with principles of time and scale. Many people in the current era seem to have forgotten the blissful effects of nature because we have become overly reliant on technology. Spending long hours staring at screens is not the way we are supposed to lead our lives in our natural state. We are not robotic beings; we are like seeds in Earth's garden, consisting of clusters of cells that flourish in sunlight and derive happiness from the simplest things in life. Using a large format camera and a microscope, my perception of the world has vastly changed because I am now looking at things with a macro and micro sense in mind, placing myself in relation to what’s around me.

I am nothing but a small ant in this ecosystem we call Earth.

When creating this body of work, I spent time thinking about what it means to be original or authentic. History is constantly repeating itself, yet why are some people and movements more iconic than others? We have set up a hierarchy in society that subtly tells us what we need to improve, and that we need to do more. I believe one determining factor of authenticity is based on our life's ticking clock on Earth before we expire. Society moves at a rapid pace, and we can only process so much before new events arise. Authenticity in the context of art history has been an ongoing debacle; whether referring to an artist, the art work itself or the context surrounding it. I have taken inspiration and been influenced by conceptual artists, process and post minimalist artists, and land art + site specific artists because they create with the body in mind. I resonate with Robert Morris' *Glass Cubes* because he believes the space around the art and the body become one as the viewer walks through it. The space becomes a perceptual idea, a physical embodiment; whereas the description becomes a social object, it's not personal anymore. Where you are located in relation to the work can change your experience.



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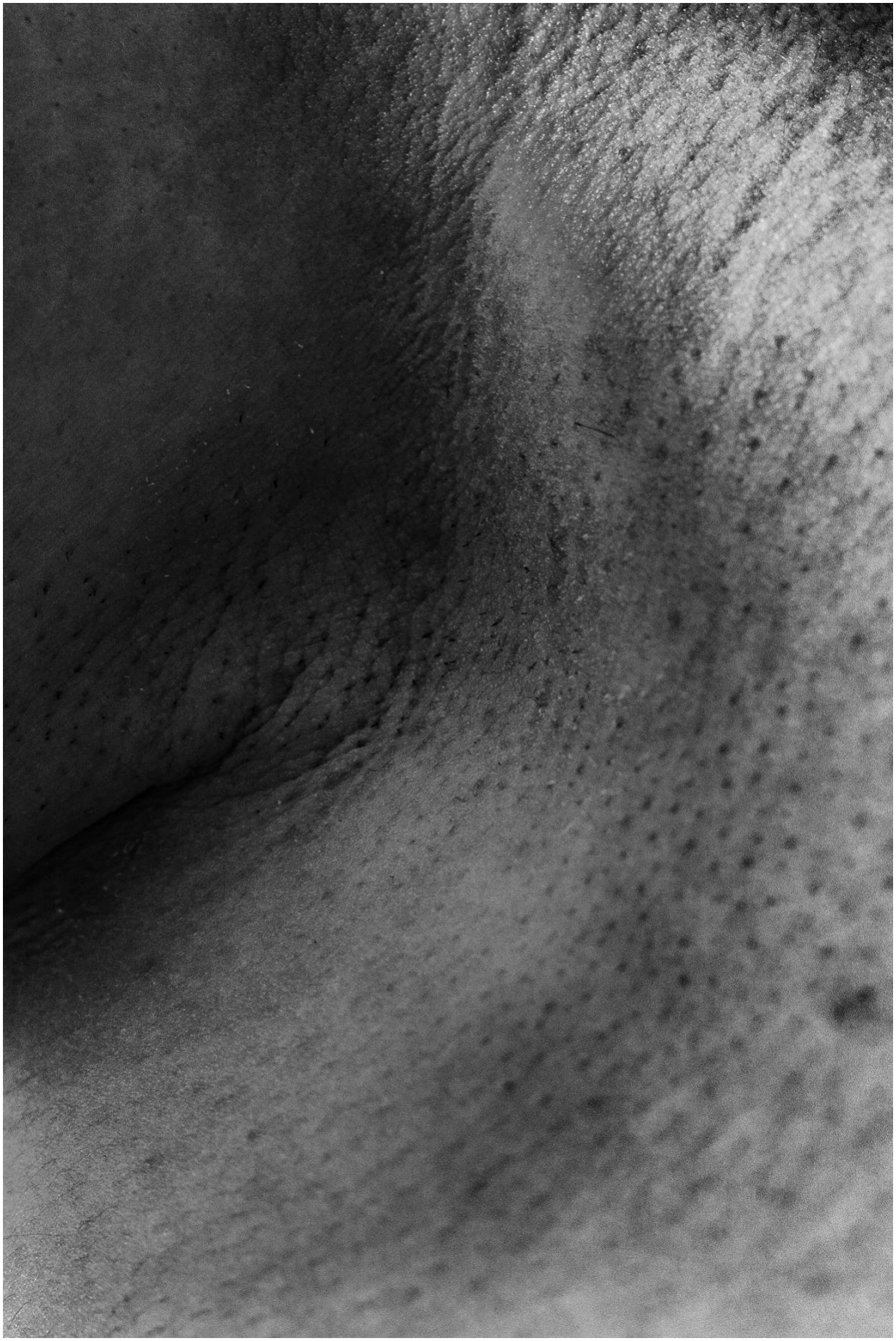
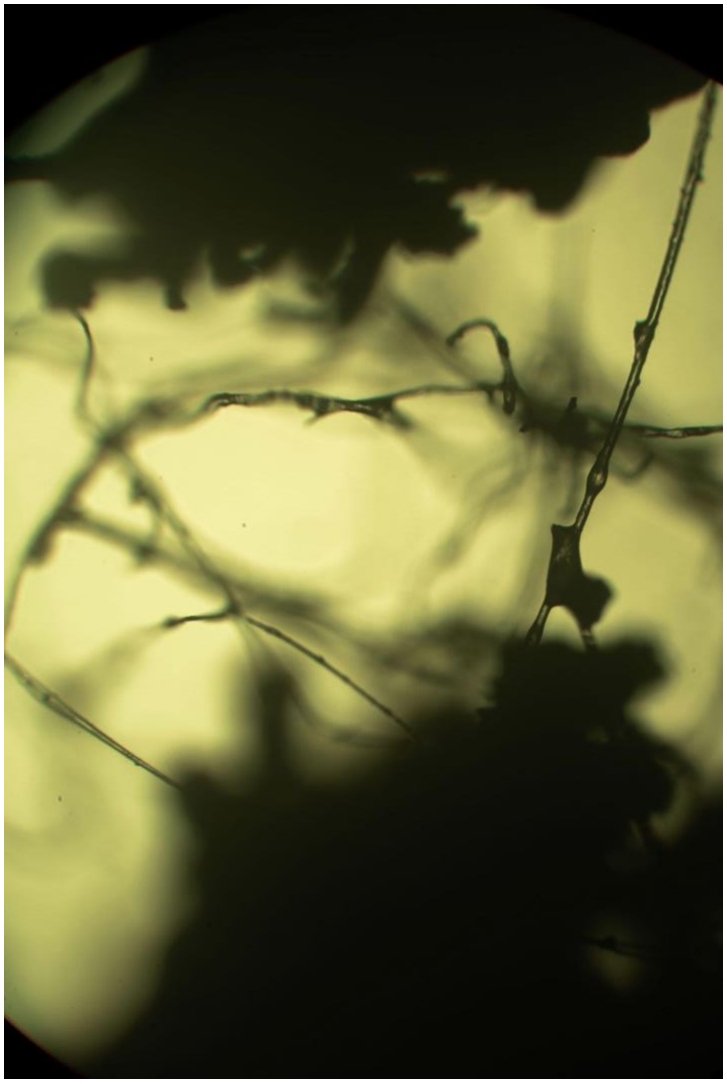
When elements from the natural world are extracted from their roots, they immediately begin to die. Artists like Robert Smithson and Walter De Maria use the land as their medium and do not necessarily remove things but enhance them so they can be appreciated and experienced by others. Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* has been a great influence because the piece is forever changing. As the salt crystals continue to grow, they create deep instability in the work- in terms of scale and human experience. I wanted to incorporate the natural world into my body of work, but without taking the risk of harming and disrupting the millions of lives buried in that ecosystem. As a compromise, rather than using real grass, I created an astro turf walkway in the form similar to an infinity sign. I worked the imitation grass around two columns and surrounded each pillar with four small arborvitae trees and various plants and flowers. Knowing that these natural elements were going to be repurposed, I felt less guilty about bringing them inside. By doing this, I am rejecting the institutional critique of the "white cube" because although I am placing elements from nature inside, I am not disrupting any current living ecosystem. I am transforming the space into an environment that speaks in harmony with my images.





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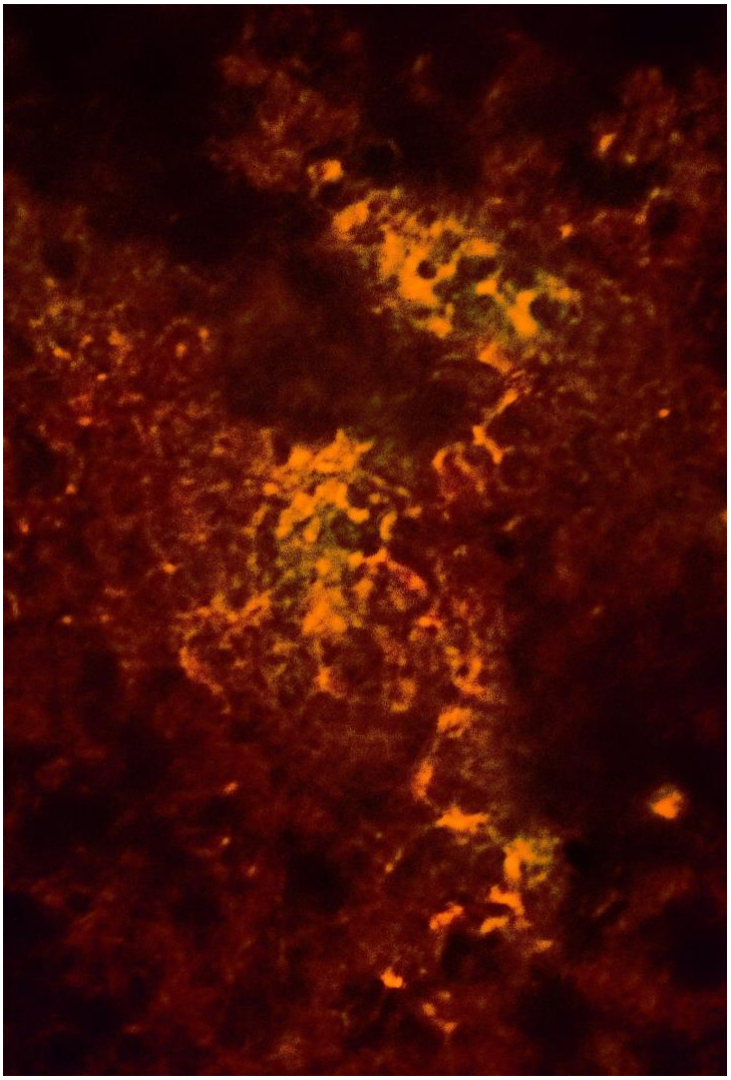

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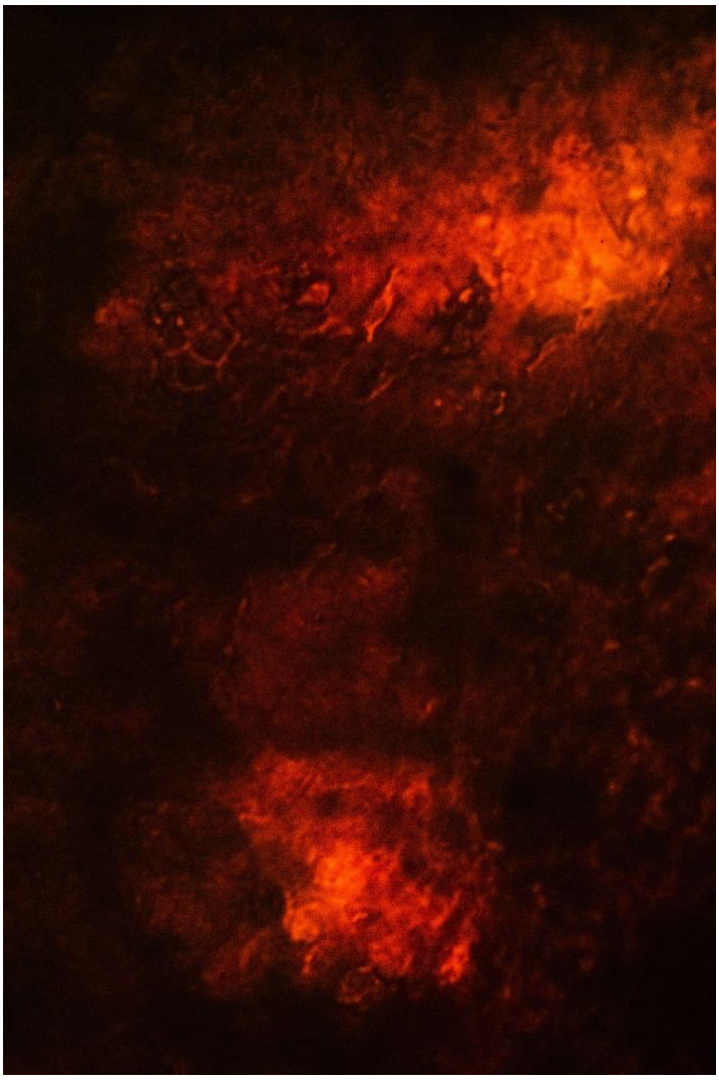
There is a powerfulness behind viewing matter on different scales. The eye is very deceptive and often tricks the mind into seeing things that are not there. The power a microscope holds is tremendous; I am now able to look into individual particles organically fused together, as well as atmospheric landscapes embedded in the human form. Such observation of microworlds makes the body unfixed and labile. A change in scale indicates a change in value. Quantity becomes qualitative. The microscopic eye, focused on the boundary of clarity between two blurred distances, asks us to question our observer and the truth of appearances.

The microscope is deeply subversive because the eye is isolated, touch cannot follow, and the body is locked outside. The possibility of scalelessness enters. The defining mark or index is gone. The observed terrain can shrink or expand to the point where the microscopic and the macroscopic mimic each other endlessly. There are no overt self-portraits in this series. However, I used my body as a test subject to create specimen slides to be examined under the microscope. I collected samples of earwax, skin cells, blood, pimple pus, scalp and nose hair, dried mucus, semen, and menstrual blood.

For example, in this last sample, I can see a sliver of the body and how these loose organic forms of the menstrual blood mimic the jagged curves of a tree stump. Most people do not want to see my specimens in their natural forms. They are bodily excretions that often are considered unspeakable human imperfections. The juxtaposition between concealing and revealing is present in my work. I want my audience to be subtly aware of the subject matter my images begin with but also challenge the viewer by making that subject matter indecipherable. My work is indirect. It is an endless web of intertwined concepts of how, what, and where we are in relation to our environment.



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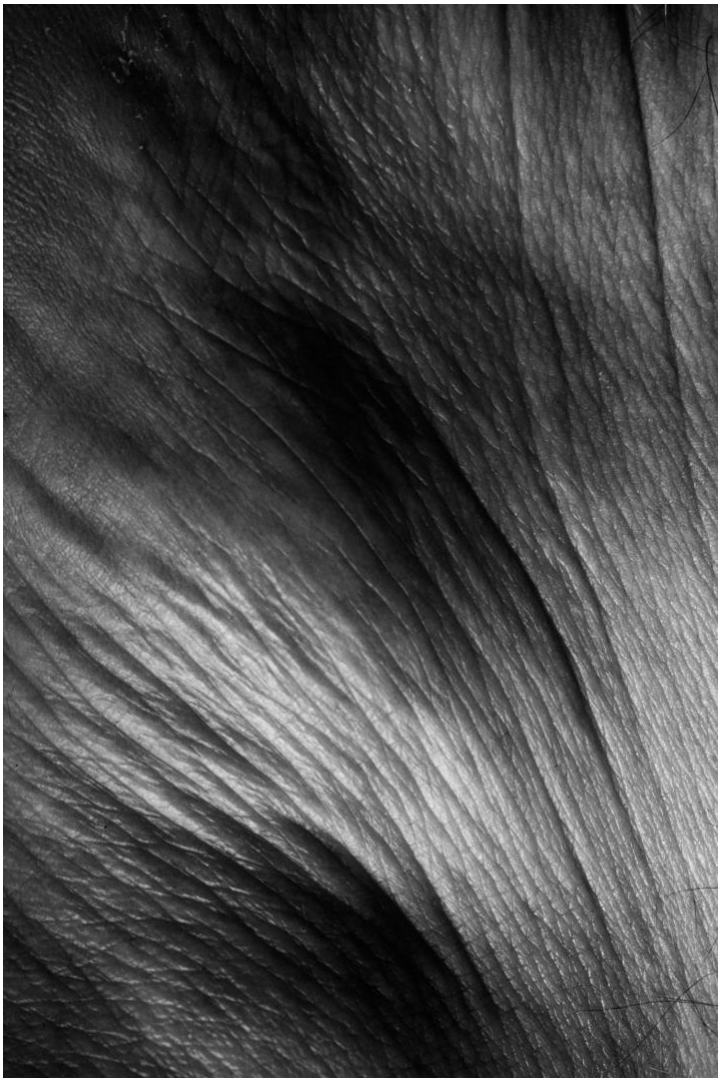

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The decision to photograph human forms and surfaces of the body with a large format camera was a conscious action. We are covered in lines, spots, and hair. I photographed my foot, mouth, ankle, and armpit where I had extracted samples to be viewed under the microscope. I used the view camera to create a sense of deceptiveness while also revealing new visual experiences through its meticulous resolution of detail. This is a very important aspect of my work because it allows the viewer to feel each specific texture, line, and tone of the image.

While on drives, walks, or simply taking time to observe what is around me, I came across an eye-seducing world of trees and organisms. I began to notice individual holes, the way a tree would bend, or the way bark peels. My images are identifications and signifiers of time: past, present, and future. With my view camera, I listened to which tree was speaking to me the loudest. I did not go out and find my subjects. They found me.

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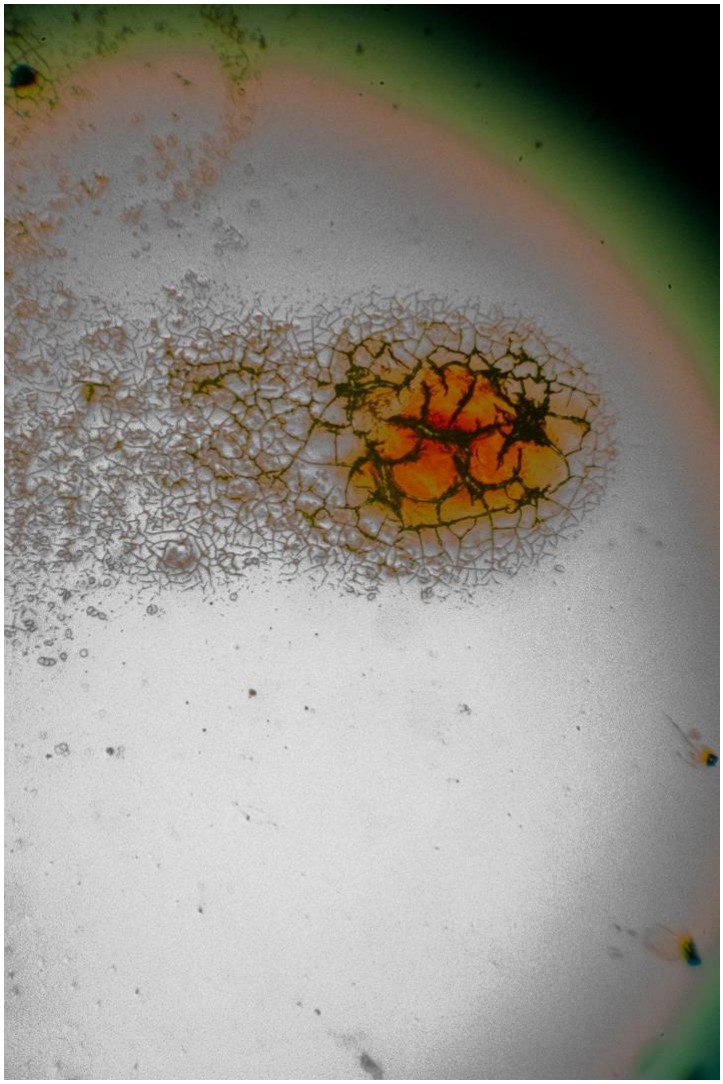

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Curiosity is the root of exploration, discovery, knowledge and of the self. I have learned to listen to my body and to the sounds coming from the outside world. We work in unison, and I am realigned. My body shifts with the seasons. We mirror each other. Together we flourish. I tan in summer and am bare and white in winter. It is jarring to think about how reliant we have become on man-made solutions to survive. Through creating this work, I have discovered new things about myself. I have taken the earth's resources for granted and learned that I am ignorant of so much beauty and life that surrounds me, and I remember we were not always this way.

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