

# RACHEL TONTHAT

SELECTED WORKS 2016-2022



*Antithetical Gate; Instilled, Remade, Calligraphy Installation, 2022*

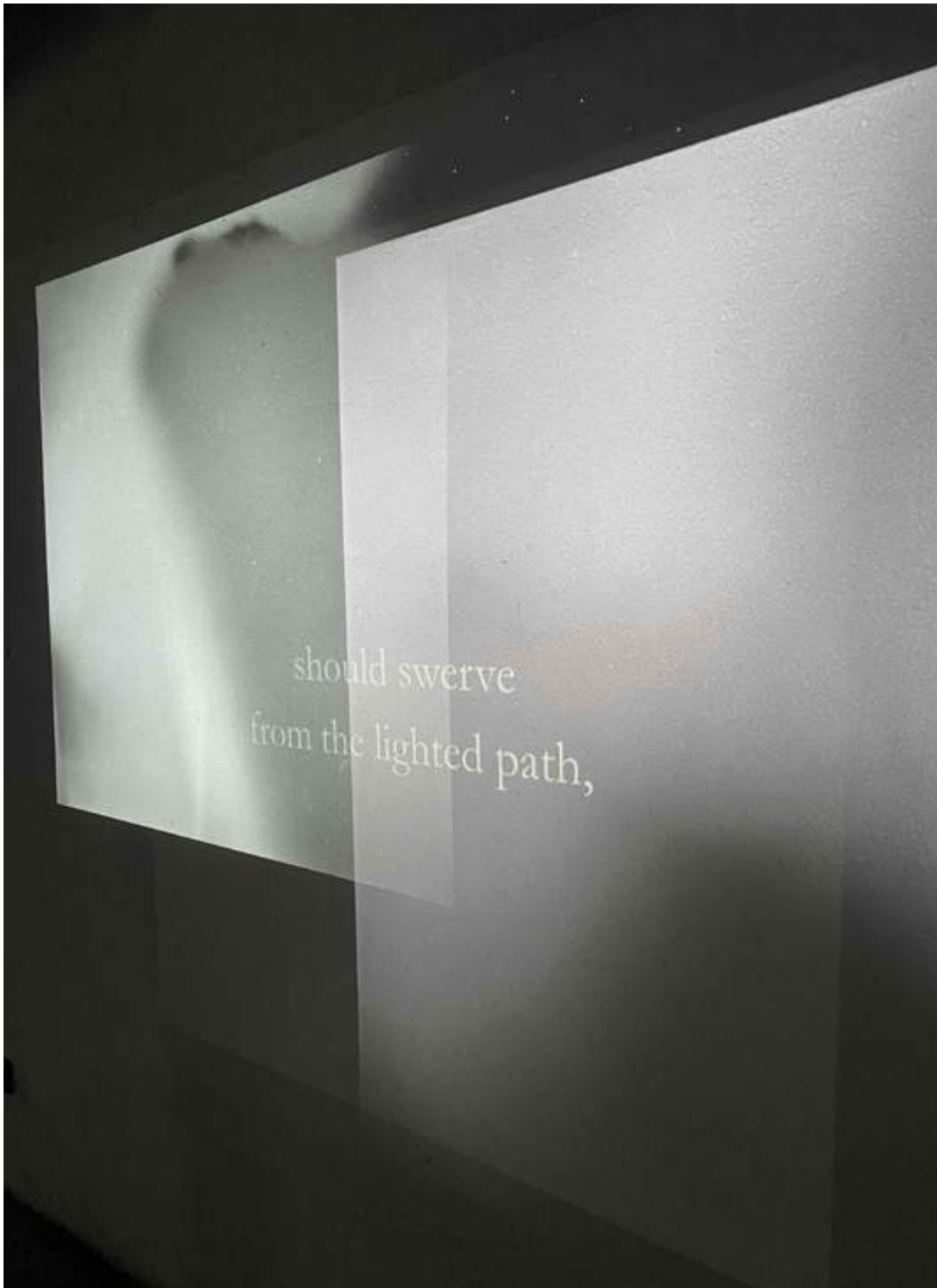
The *Antithetical Gate* series explores the notion of naming, combined with physical demarcations of entryways found in antithetical couplets, torii, and mezuzoth, to set apart a space.

Instilled  
with  
Intention



Remade  
and  
ordained





*Among the Grain*  
projection installation, 2021

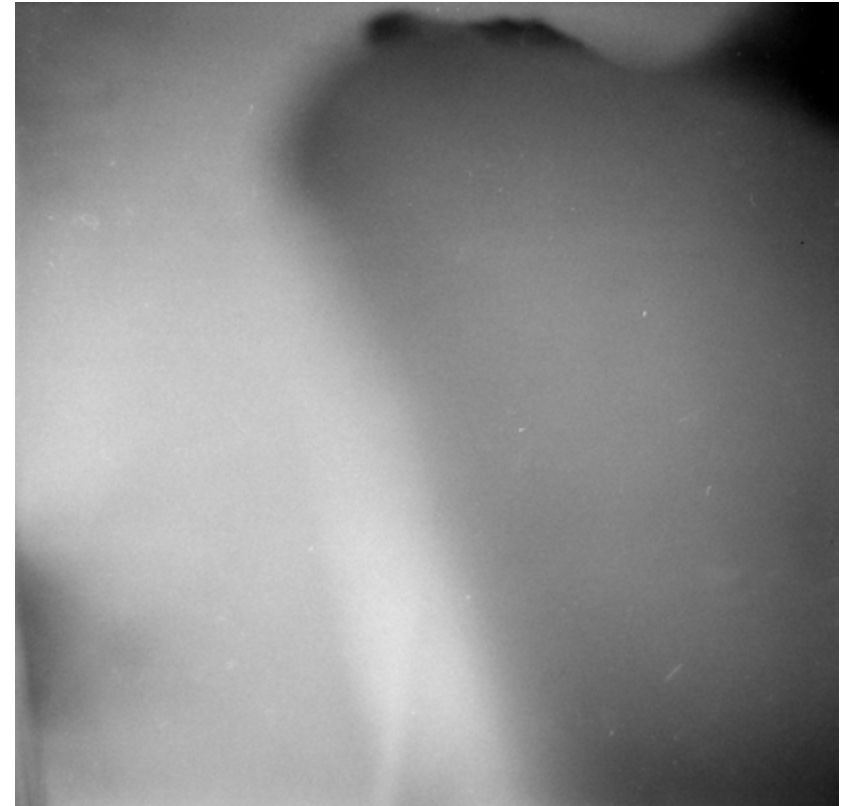
A revisiting of the self portrait, *Among the Grain* explores the sensation of being lost— losing one's way, one's sight, or even one's sense of self.

*This work, a miasma,  
inside which one reaches out their hand  
like one lost in the storm.  
What is that waiting in the darkness before you,  
moments before your fingertips?*

*Perhaps getting lost is like sledding down  
the mountain at night.  
There is both the exhilaration of untasted freedom  
and this queasy lump in the throat,  
this pain in the chest right below the breastbone.*

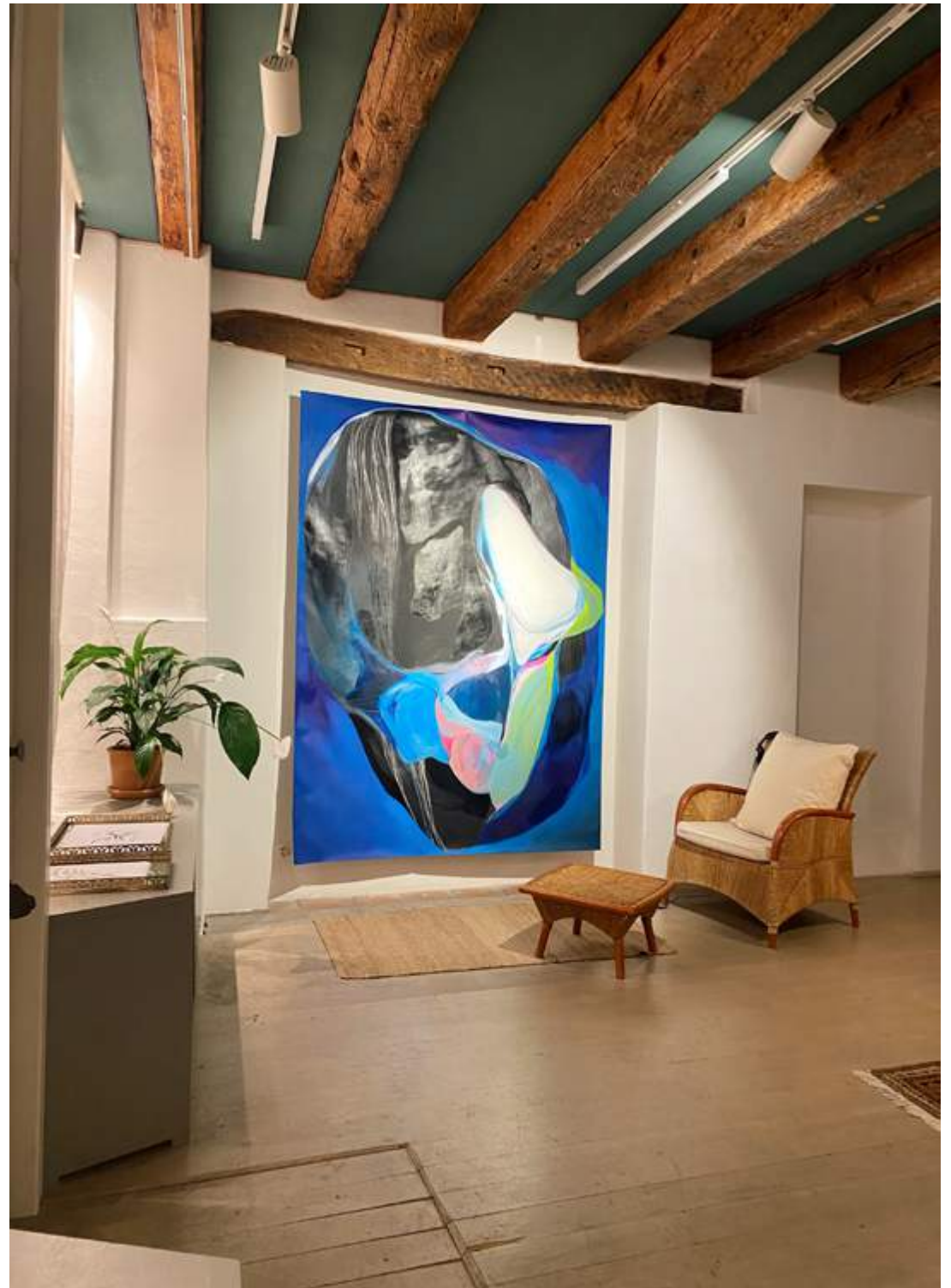
*If your sled should swerve from the lighted path,  
where will you find yourself?  
It has begun to snow-  
you will never be able to follow your tracks home.*

*And I, in this aimless, disorienting gale  
Can hardly find myself among the grain*



*A Room Set in Time,*  
interior installation, 2021

An installation of furnishings made to house text based works and create an environment around them in which they could be better absorbed. The work, along with the accompanying text, examines types of space and the way it can be utilized, reassigned, or transformed.







*A Window to the Future, and Other Stories*  
*The Library of Alexandria. The Fall of the USSR.*

For time is an element like every other, luminous, moving unseen, only visible to those who fear to run out of it. In the Japanese concept of space, "ma," time is not the fourth dimension, added to the three spatial dimensions. Space is composed of two physical dimensions, wound together with two parts time, entangled. The Library of Alexandria exists in memory not only as a lost historical monument but also as a room guarded by time, filled with unfathomable knowledge that can never be retrieved.

In rooms, all the world is played out. The four corners and all the space between shift to our needs. In a clean, well-lit room, Hemingway reflects on the bar as one of the only places one can pass time late night hours with dignity. Under a good light and in a clean and pleasant place, rooms are also spaces of possibility. In her essay, "A Room of One's Own," Virginia Woolf suggests that within its humble space lies the key to creative freedom, where potential might become incandescence given time for uninterrupted thought.

Here we are, in this room set in time. It is only a fortnight, but perhaps it is enough for those on the street to come in and out of us. Enough for someone enough silence to listen to the stories that live here temporarily, and enough time for uninterrupted thoughts.

When dreams the room has, no one can say. A quiet wood gathering, a stillness so full that only the machine could break it with heavy tread or the swing of a door: the room listens, waits, sleeps.



Where are you? you ask, searching the room for a trace of my hand. Here it is, the room itself, laid for you. My touch on every texture, every stitch. Even these worn furnishings chosen for the grain of the wood, for patina burnished over time are mine.

It seems a small thing to give. What is a room but another place, walls around space, where one can close one's eyes and feel the listening air, large enough to make one feel small, or small enough to comfort.

Layered over every physical structure is our sense of it, the dreaming of which can transform one room into a home and another into a prison. Within the walls of the tabernacle of song, scored but on paper, room was set aside for the oak of the covenant in which God was believed to reside—the ridge of ridges. The room was nothing, a blank, but words of ordinary cloth, to the effect, the room was empty save for a wooden box, but both imbued it with something more. Inside the cloth walls shiver as if invisible hands have begun their dance.



*The Unknown Self*, interactive online quiz, 2021

From origami fortune tellers that spell the name of our future partners to BuzzFeed quizzes which promise to reveal our true identities, the human desire to categorize ourselves and receive truths from an outside source runs deep. Working as part science fiction and part satire, *The Unknown Self* explores the possibilities of the virtual world and, half ironically, who we really are when no one is looking, if such categorization is either possible or useful.

On the fringes of the program the velvet darkness of Blank Slate blurs as worlds take shape. One night, as you pace the edges of your world, a place of potential but with still-meagre outlines and unhandsomely delineated space, you catch sight of another's.

Enter Shift Control C to copy their code

Enter Command DIR to continue walking onwards

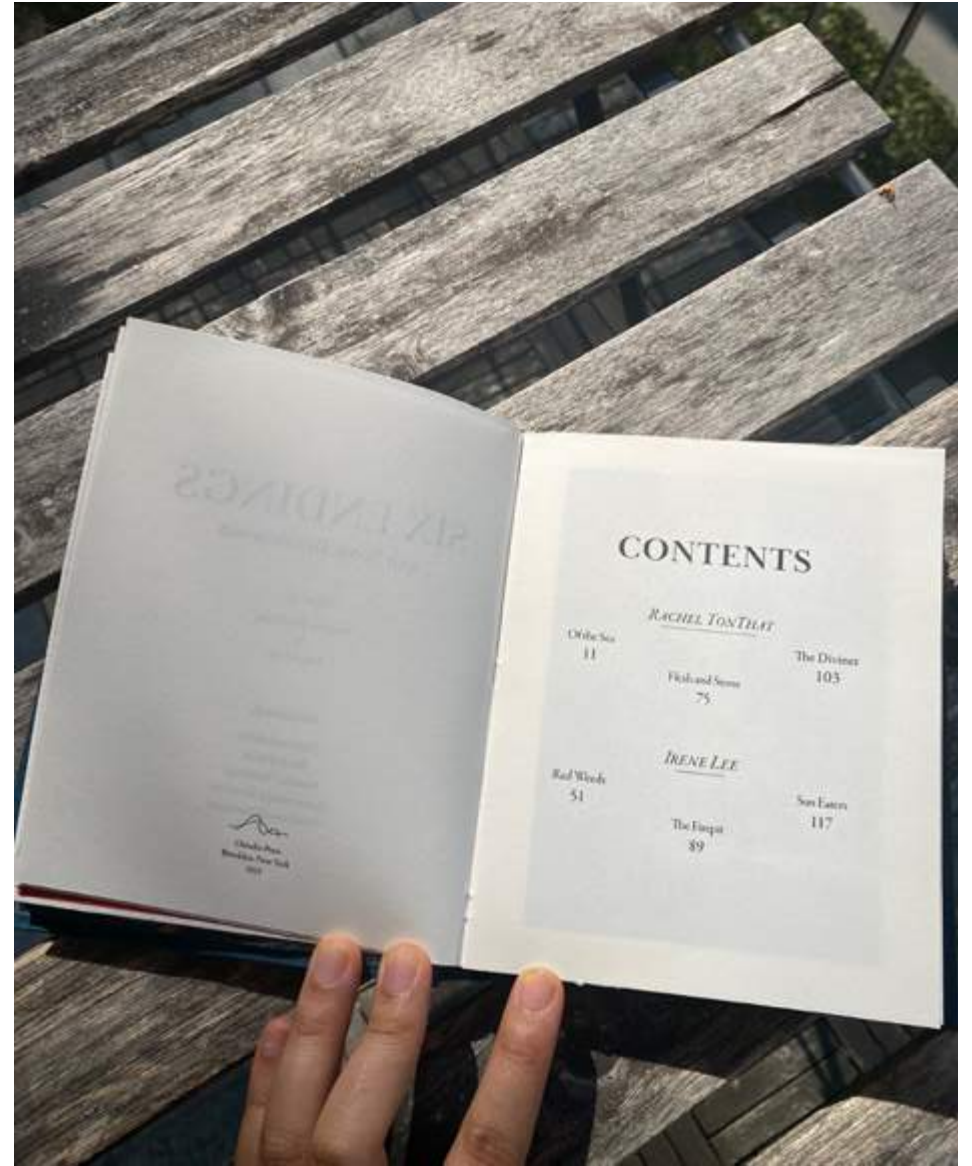
Enter -- to strike up conversation





*Six Endings and Some Beginnings,*  
artist book, 2022

A limited run of forty handmade artist books in collaboration with writer Irene Lee. Working from fears surrounding the current climate change crisis and influenced by ancient tales of the destruction of the world by the elements, the book contains three stories by each author inspired by different ancient myths, as well as two photographs from *The Sensual World* series, three illustrations by Rachel TonThat, and two booklets within the book with the original myths for reference.





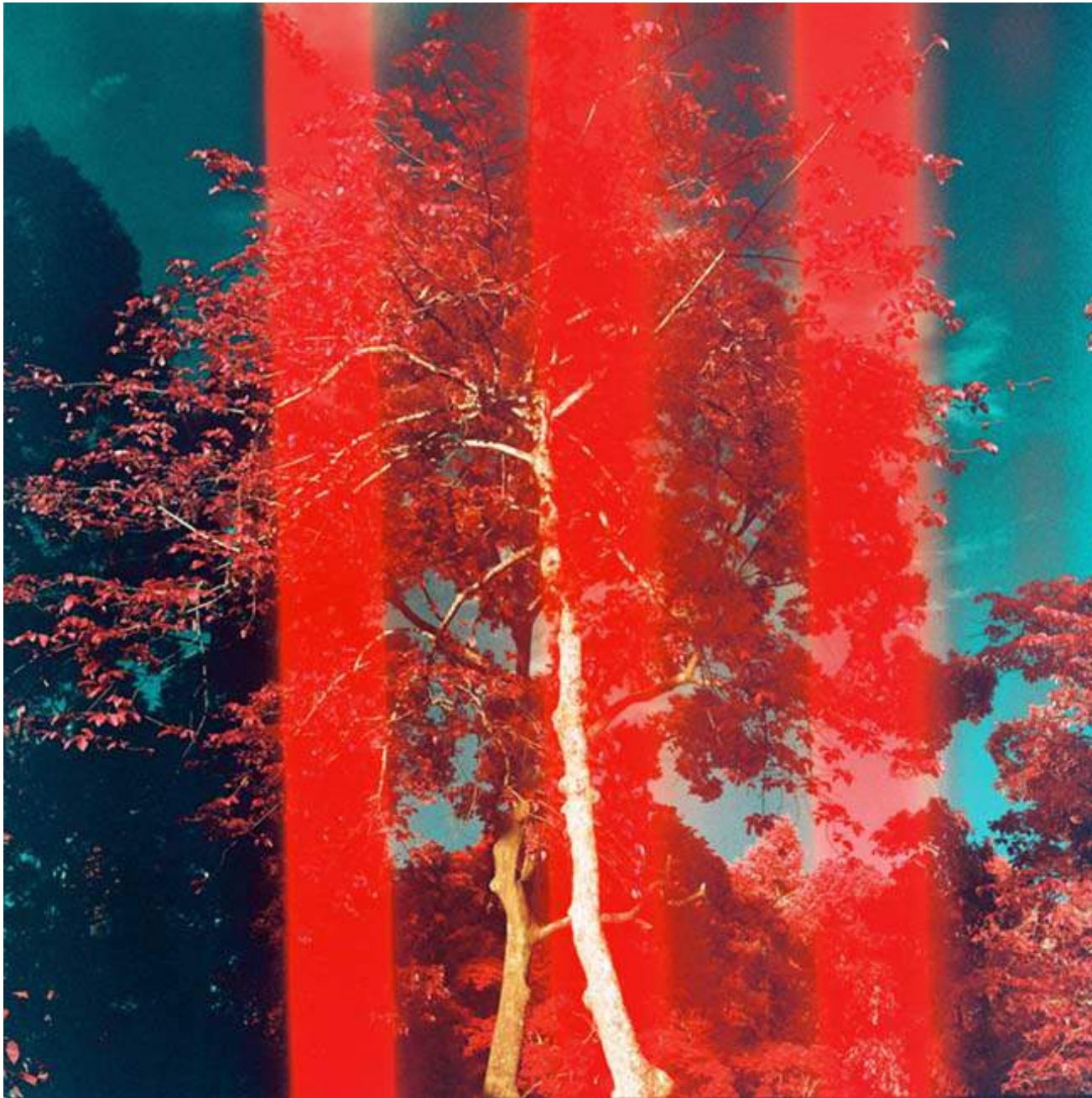


*The Final Sea*  
artist book, 2022

An edition of twenty-five handmade artist books in collaboration with artists Laura Laucella and Steen Sperling, *The Final Sea* is a collaborative aesthetic meditation on the digital and organic systems that surround us. The poem and illustrations found in *The Darkening Waves* describe a journey through fear embodied by different bodies of water in mythology— Nu, the Egyptian primordial sea; the River Styx, the river of the dead; and Nieflheim, the mist world. As the narrator travels through these waters, they are imbued with, and therefore inured to, fear.







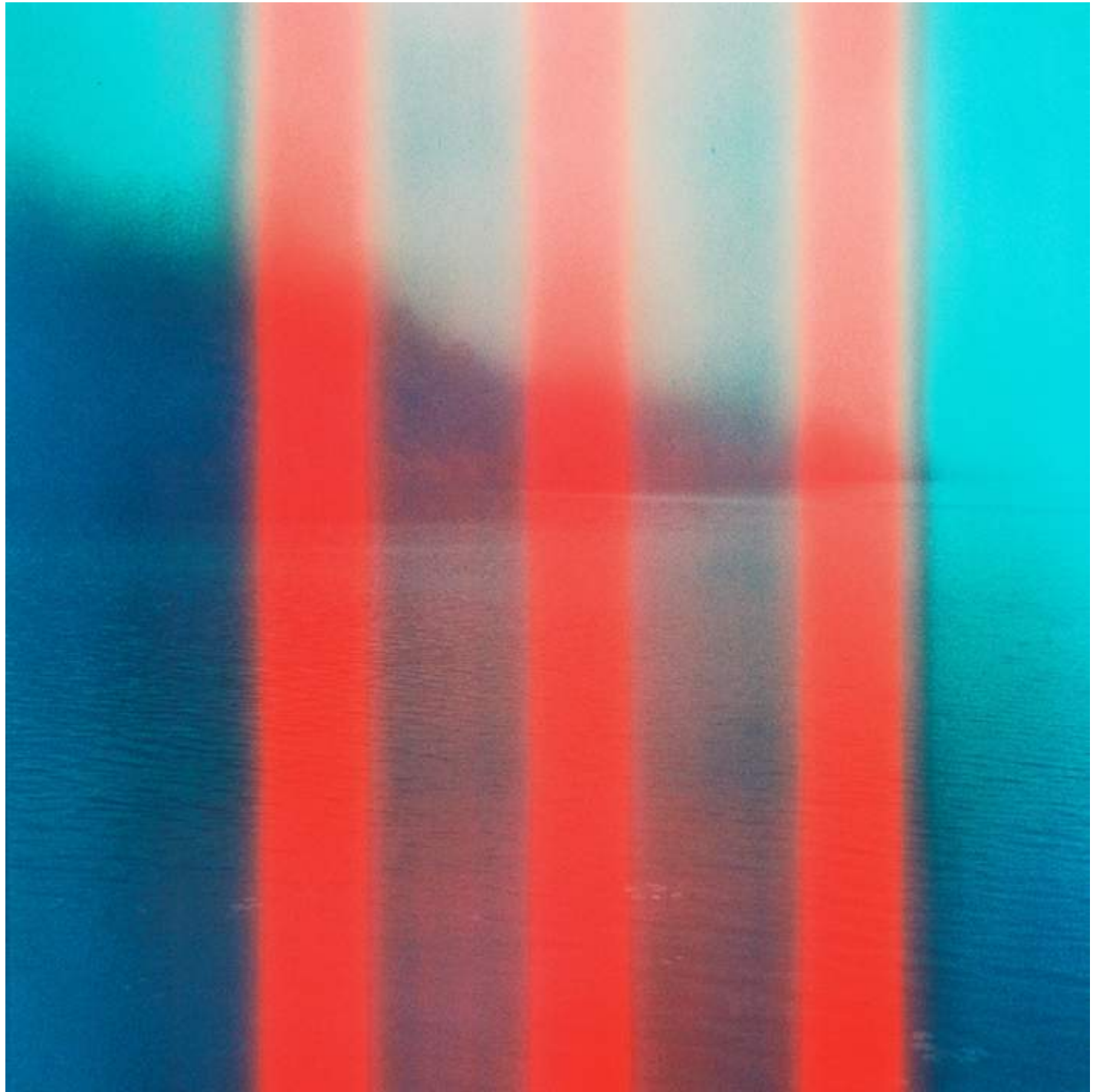
*The Sensual World,*  
Kodak aerochrome film,  
2016-2020

Named after the poem by Louise Glück, this series attempts to document the remains of rainforests, lakes, and other famous ecological sites in Asia stressed by climate change. While in some cases, there is nothing that can be done, the series is an attempt to bear witness to these changes or disappearances.

*Sabah,* expired aerochrome film,  
120 x 120 cm, 2017



*Sapa*, expired aerochrome film,  
200 x 200 cm, 2018



*Batur*, expired aerochrome film,  
200 x 200 cm, 2017



*Inle Lake*, expired achrome film,  
200 x 200 cm, 2017

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Rachel TonThat is a conceptual artist and writer working with narrative. With its ability to influence, sometimes with more power to change minds than fact, storytelling is one of the main themes of her work. She is interested in the structures of narrative, in its transformative potentials, and in the ways it can be used to communicate across culture and language. Storytelling also serves as a vehicle to deliver or explore other recurring themes in her work including climate change, memory, and space-time.

# RACHEL TONTHAT

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## EDUCATION

- 2022 MA, FINE ART, Zurich University of the Arts, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2013 BFA, ILLUSTRATION, Parsons School of Design, New York, NY
- 2013 BA, LITERARY STUDIES, Eugene Lang College, New York, NY

## SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 *In the Other Room*, Sonnenstube, Lugano, Switzerland
- 2022 *The Final Sea*, Material, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2021 *Following the Unseen*, ZHdK, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2021 *The Library of Alexandria...*, Rindermarkt 23, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2021 *Building Worlds*, common.garden, online
- 2019 *live.make.mini*, Qua Artspace, Hanoi, Vietnam
- 2019 *Impermanent Earth*, Sàn Art, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

## GRANTS + AWARDS

- 2022 SWHNM Writing Mentorship Program Awardee
- 2022 ZHDK-AVINA International Project Fund Grant

## RESIDENCIES

- 2023 Wassaic Project, Wassaic, New York
- 2019 live.make.share, Hanoi, Vietnam
- 2019 A. Farm, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

## CURATING

- 2021 - 2022 *Intervening Spheres (series of six exhibitions)*, Egg ZHdK, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2021 *The Library of Alexandria...*, Rindermarkt 23, Zurich, Switzerland

## TEXTS

- 2022 "On What Animism Could Be—" (exhibition text) *SONNENSTUBE*
- 2022 "Places Unknown, Spaces In-Between" (exhibition text) *EGG ZHDK*
- 2021 "The Motion of Affects" (exhibition text) *GEPÄCKAUSGABE GLARUS*