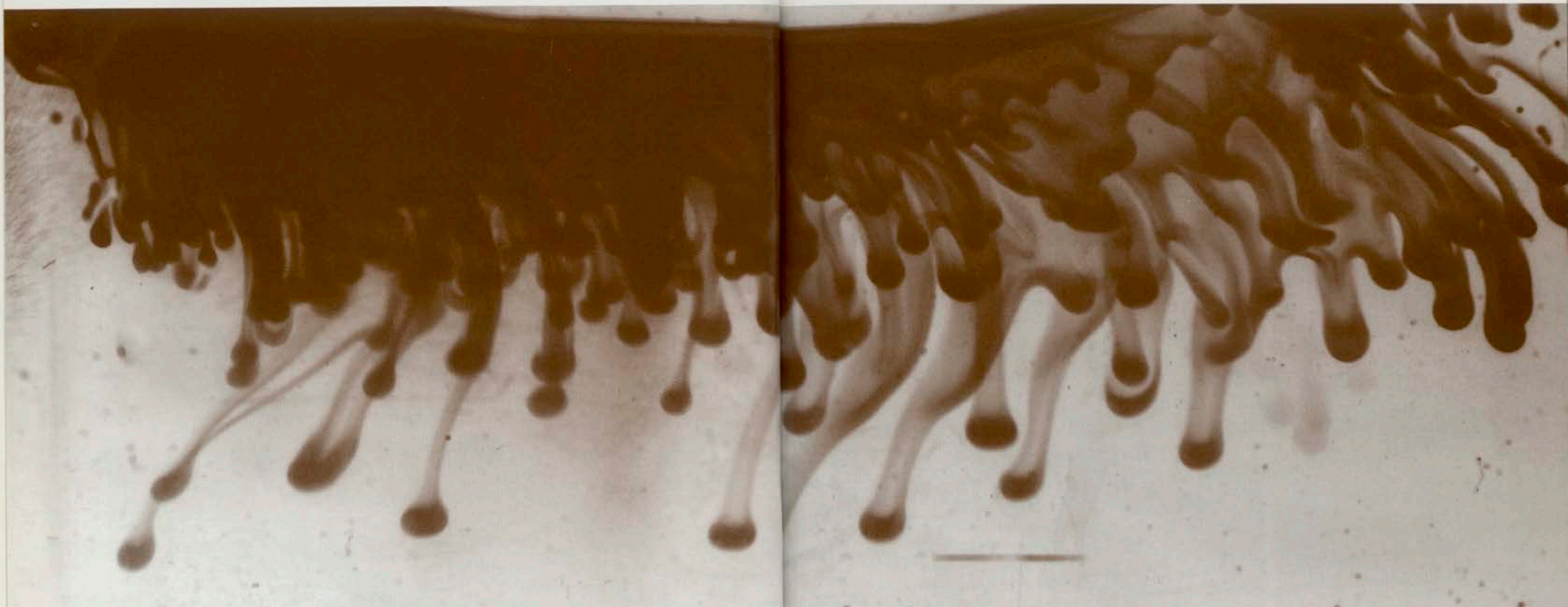




deepdown ● ● ●

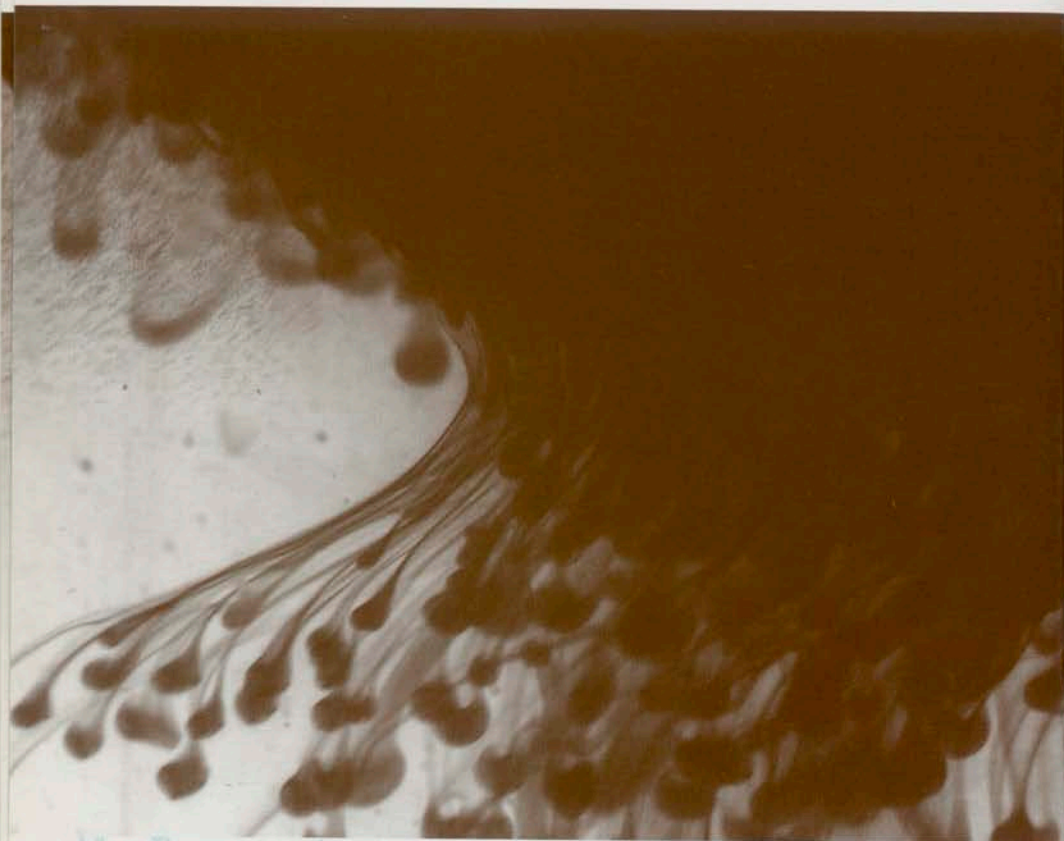
In the deeps of the Marianas Trench, 11,000 metres below the surface of the sea, there grows a monster unknown to human kind. This monster first approached me through a dream.

Unseen, it may be accurate to call it beautiful. Full of the beauty of nakedness so secret it might as well be dead. It has no arms, no legs, but makes its motion where there are no dimensions, only volume. A flowering, delimiting the currents as they stream sun-warmed deep into the frigid hydrosphere.

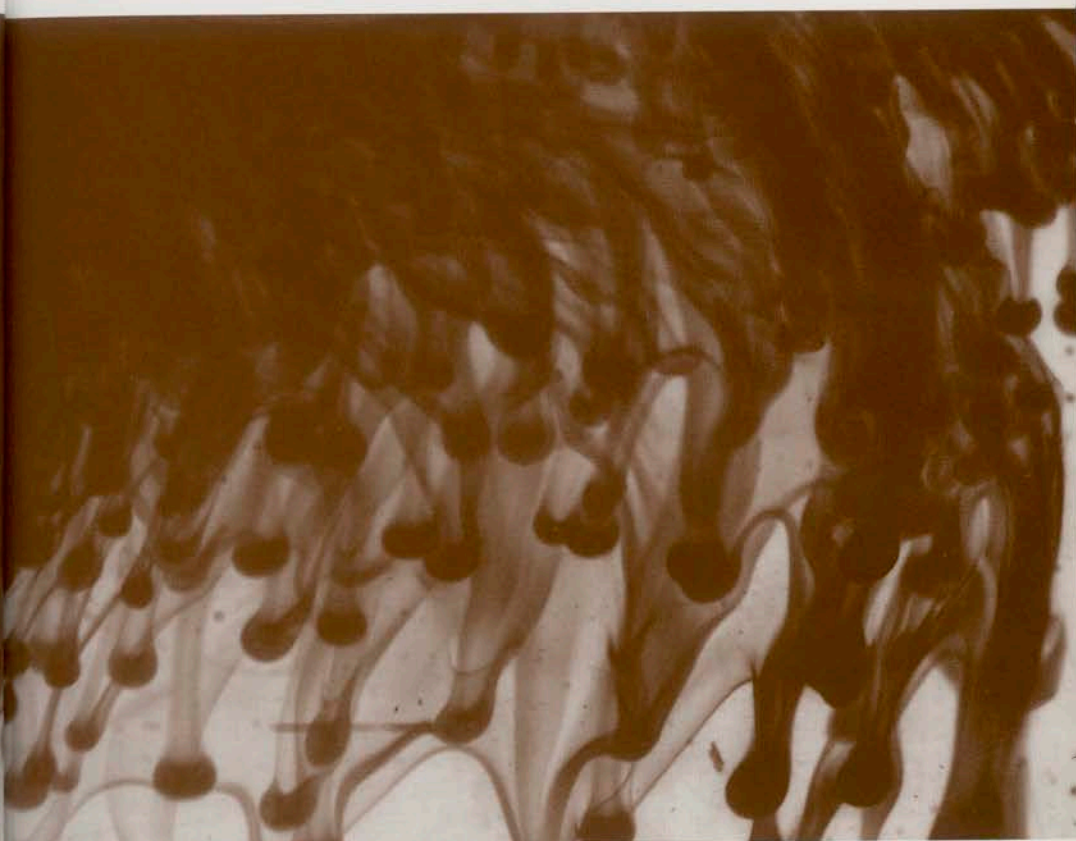


With a piece of my mother's fortune I was able to purchase the *Sally-Ann*, a bathyscope that had never descended to the depths I intended to penetrate.

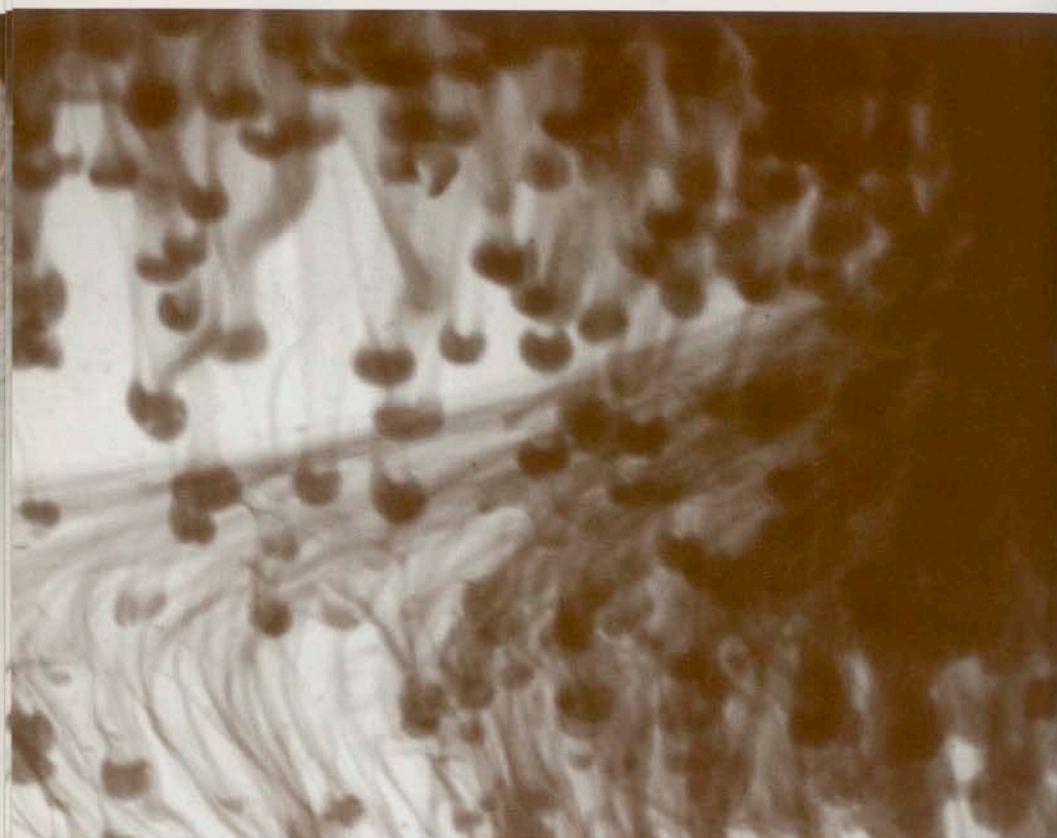
She was a gaudy yellow, I'm afraid, and looked something like the autopsied stomach organ of some steel leviathan. We reinforced the hull and painted her black; I feared my monster would fly at the merest idea of color.



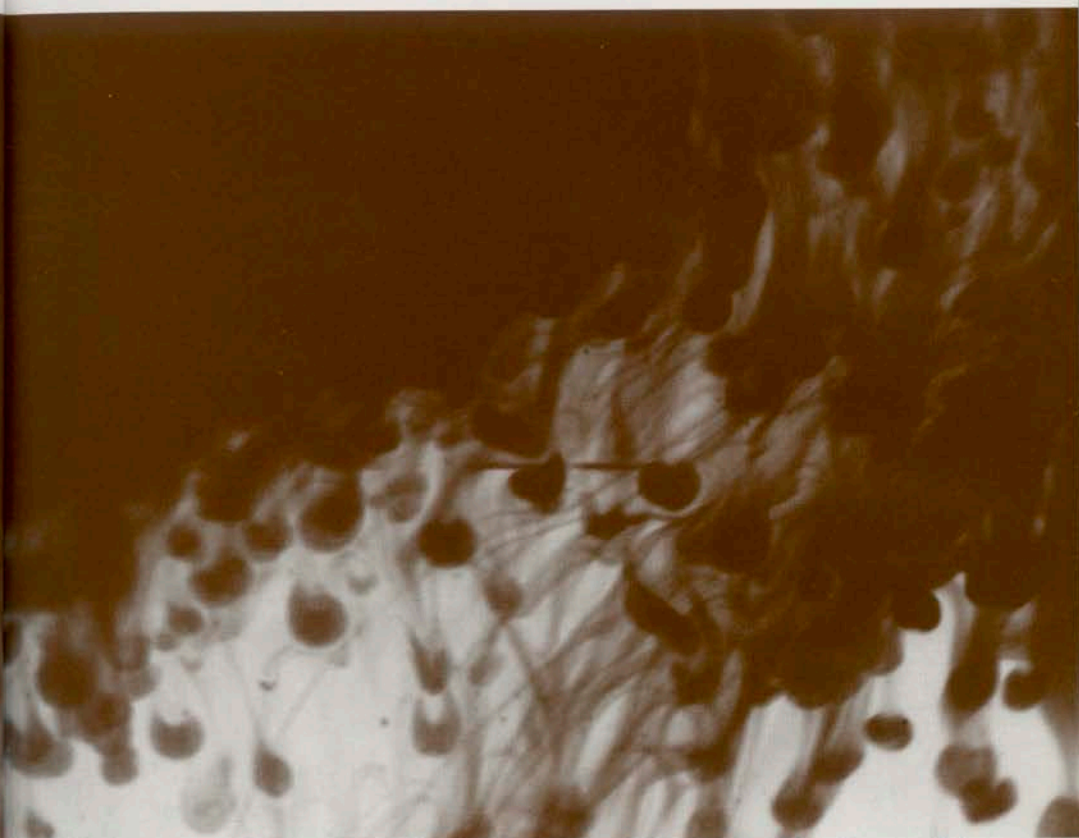
When I've captured its image, my monster will resemble a demon crafted by some Boschian god. A gothic thing of wicked teeth and boiling eyeballs. Yet, in its own realism it is invisible.



The experiment, to which, I may say, no government or academy has yet contributed a single doubloon, is to descend in darkness to the high depths of the Marianas and attract the beast by means of small, potent plankton extractions offered in the grasp of the bathyscape's mechanical arm.



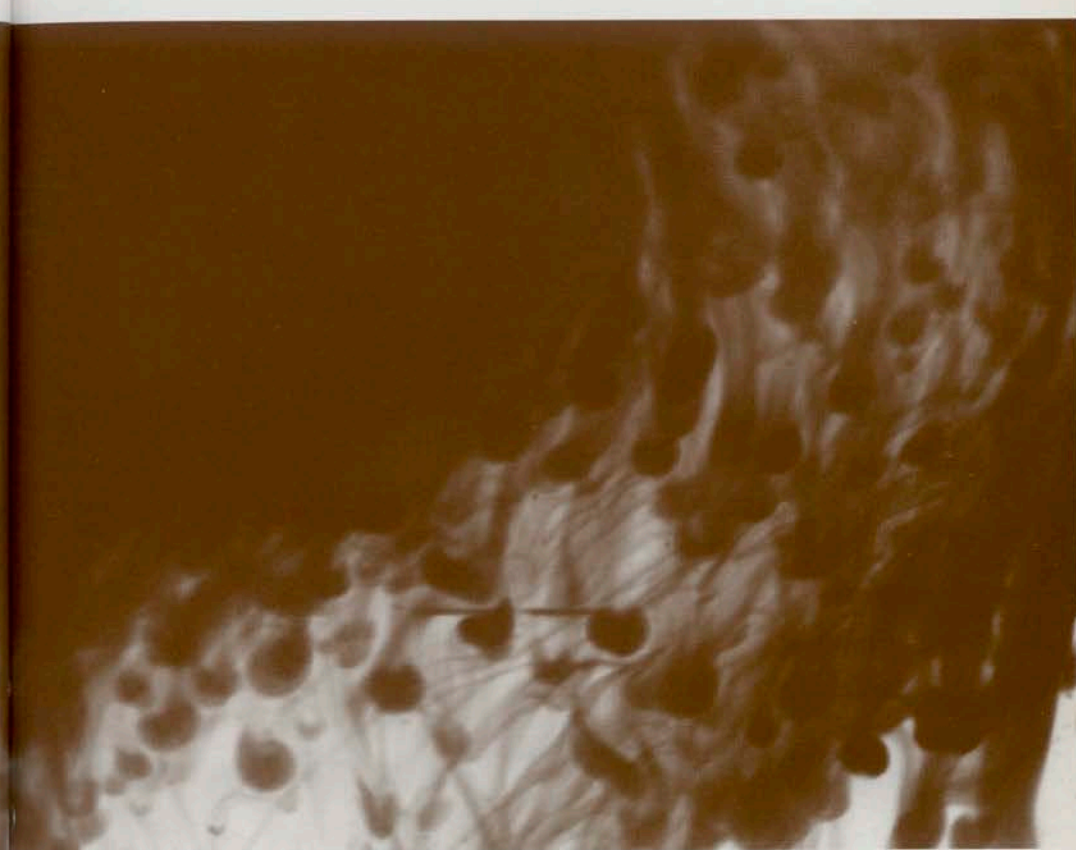
When my instruments register the monster's proximity, I will blast the deeps with sixteen 800 watt spot-lights, blow an instant's hole in the primeval. The generated light will set off a single set of photographs from cameras placed on many of the extended arms.



Only the crew of indigenous islanders manning the trawler I've hired will know of my departure, and this is a matter, by their superstitions, of which they will never speak.



There are 2.75×10^{20} gallons of saline water curling through the carved canyons of this planet's surface. Even now I am diving inside of them.



Self-propelling feeding tubes, mouths, stomachs, tails and excretiatory orifices, sail through this groundless world sucking dumb life from its streams.

Time-lapse

*"Whenever we are trying to... call up some period of our history, we become conscious of an act sui generis by which we detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves, first, in the past in general, then in a certain region of the past – a work of adjustment, something like the focusing of a camera... Little by little it comes into view like a condensing cloud; from the virtual state it passes into the actual; and its outlines become more distinct and its surface takes on color, it tends to imitate perception."*¹ Henri Bergson (1859-1941).

The amorphous, black space of Joyce Campbell's installation *deepdown* 2001 exudes a sense of being in an unearthly environment. The quiet ticking of multiple Super-8 projectors marks distance, depth, or perhaps time as the space is traversed and experienced. Campbell has used few visual spatial reference points in the darkened installation, creating a sharply disorienting effect. Two of her projections are seamlessly side-by-side on a large, free-standing perspex sheet and two more are layered and project onto each other on two smaller sheets. The installation encourages a visceral rather than a reasoned and fully conscious response from the viewer. The experience of this cavernous environment recalls filmic depictions of the unknown, such as labyrinthine science-fiction films or deep-sea diving scenarios.

A sequential series of nineteen colour photographs introduces the films at the entrance to the installation. For some time Campbell has used series of multiple photographs to arrest events that happen over time in cross-sectional instants. In *deepdown*, nine pairs of ilfochrome images use rudimentary time-lapse to document an evolving process. These images trace a chemical reaction as an electrode corrodes and colloidal silver gradually dissipates to form a suspension in water. They are without any sense of scale or spatio-temporal reference. In previous work with photogram techniques Campbell has exposed self-generating bacterial colonies onto large sheets of photographic paper. The immediacy and directness of the technique enabled her to create a literal trace of an organic process.



Her current work involves the use of a large-format copy lens, which enables her to capture, at one-to-one scale, an indexical slice of action within the liquid. With its very narrow depth of field, the copy lens cuts a focused slice of space and time from this chemical event. Unlike the process of contact printing a photogram, which cannot easily render depth, a view camera allows Campbell to trace swift processes that evolve in three dimensions.

The A4 prints in *deepdown* are actual size reproductions which seem to dissolve on the black wall of the gallery into an amorphous but luminous, swirling substance. Neither gaseous nor crystalline nor soluble, the suspended silver colloid retains an organic appearance, dispersing like a drift of cigarette smoke.

By linking snapshots or instants of time together as if in real time, time-lapse photography attempts to come to terms with the problem of depicting duration. In this sense time-lapse photography prefigures the emergence of cinema. In writing about the way film works,



Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) says, "...cinema is the system which reproduces movement as a function of any-instant-whatever that is, as a function of equidistant instants, selected so as to create an impression of continuity."² Like cinema, sequential time-lapse photographs allow for this impression of continuity, but they also allow for a prolonged meditation on any instant or moment.

Deepdown takes the idea of time-lapse or duration as a touchstone, but develops it into

a meditation on perception, materiality and ultimately, on consciousness. The privileged instants of photography, which in cinema become a blur of movement, are in this installation identified, drawn out and re-presented in a myriad of ways. Each moment is deconstructed and explored for its psychological as much as physiological effect. A literary analogy can be made with the memoir novels of Marcel Proust (1871-1922). Proust's elaborate observations, drawn from his own prosaic social experience, are expanded into a myriad of impressions, speculations and recollections. In commenting on the work of Proust, Phyllis Rose has noted that his writing "pays such minute attention to the sequence of emotions and experiences which constitute any psychological event, [it] breaks down all psychological movement into so many component parts that all motion seems suspended, and what we see, however fascinating, is no longer sequential action but a series of static gestures."³ Like the novels of Proust, Campbell's installation dwells on minute, focused observation, in order to reflect and examine the process of gradually unfolding consciousness.

The slippery surfaces of her high-gloss photographs invite careful, even minute attention. Campbell's interest in the 'acute veracity' of her images stretches to her preoccupation with the purity of materials. In a serendipitous layering of materiality, the silver colloid chemical she images (generated simply by suspending an electrically charged silver wire in water) is in harmony with the silver nitrate emulsion used in all photographic processes. The subject and the object of the photograph merge into a synchronic play of materials. Campbell talks about her work as being neither abstraction nor representation and this idea is important. She describes her works instead as indexical systems, like footprints, that have a direct relationship to the things that they signify.⁴ The harmony of her materials, silver imaging silver, enhances this relationship. The photographs literally *are* the things that she photographs.

Campbell's previous work with mural-sized contact prints involved a process of mapping that complicated the 'realism' of photography. Those images of bacterial colonies were an exact trace of the actual and durational event, a residue from a performative act, exposed to light-sensitive paper. Like a bacterium on a glass slide seen through a microscope, the images produced had an observable and convincing relationship to the actual event. *Deepdown* explores similar territory but uses the distancing device of a camera lens.

One example of a paradigmatic issue that scientific realists debate is whether objects that are viewed through a microscope, that are too small for an unaided human eye to detect, actually substantially exist outside mere perception. The problems posed by scale for the scientific realist are duplicated in Campbell's installation and are exacerbated by the ethereal qualities of the black gallery space. Definitions of visual perception have always been cloudy for a scientific realist. The bias of empiricism towards direct observation perhaps indicates a flaw in scientific consciousness, just as Campbell's installation draws our attention to the emergence of our own consciousness based on her merely suggestive imagery.

Campbell's prints eliminate reference to scale. The phenomena she records are selected on the basis that they are open-ended and associatively rich but highly indistinct. Her images of colloids, crystals, shipwrecks, corals and seaweed are immense and almost infinitely complex. They beg interpretation. The base, fractal geometry of nature is nowhere better captured than in Campbell's time-lapse footage of rhomboid-shaped crystals hardening. Uniform but imperfect, their organic structure is the result of processes that are both complex and unpredictable. The apparent immensity of these reproduced forms, in which we interpret cities or desert landscapes, is only an effect of their status as image. The ambiguous images highlight the relativity of human perception and the consequent partiality of presentation.

A relationship between science and the filmic image was established by the work of maverick scientific documentary filmmaker Jean Painlevé (1902-1989) whose pioneering forays filming underwater included a pseudo-documentary of mating seahorses and a film on the geometric choreography of crystal formation. Campbell's films, like Painlevé's, reveal qualities of raw observation, where the camera is set up and left to roll, without her direction, to record an event or process. Yet her subject matter clearly reflects the non-narrative, abstract attitudes of structuralist film. The material has distinctive antecedents in the subject matter of Painlevé's documentary work, but Campbell's work also reveals signs of structuralist film ancestry in the lack of editorial intervention and the arbitrary timing of her nebulous footage.

As if taking Deleuze literally when he states, "the cinema seems to thrive on privileged instants,"⁵ Campbell's installation iterates privileged moments in an endless and indiscriminate loop. Original footage is looped onto two projectors, again using the milky colloidal silver imagery. Campbell then pitches two randomly timed sequences against each other, one depicting the substance rising and the other the substance falling. Reflections from the shiny, reverse side of each screen create a pocket of light between the two projections that yields an experience of atmospheric immersion. By moving through the space the viewer can intercept and interrupt the images. The experience of the work is thus affected by the viewer's location and the time taken to traverse the work.



Constantly in motion, the two adjacent images on the single, large screen lurch as they pan through a murky underwater environment cluttered with plant life. Spatially the images confuse and disrupt a sense of linear motion. The viewer is invited to project meaning onto an ambiguous but richly associative field of movement. The dual images surge in a state of flux from flat and superficial to a cathartic, plunging sense of depth. The polarity between depth and surface belies a dialectical bias in this installation. The dualist relationship between the mind and the brain and, by extension, consciousness and matter, is a constant conceptual echo that reverberates throughout this installation. Perhaps this echo is consciousness, or perception, or perhaps it is memory.

Campbell's screen operates like the ground-glass focusing plate of a camera that Bergson describes, thus his analogy is made actual in Campbell's installation. Bergson attempts to blend tangible matter and intangible memory dynamically at the screen. The screen is for Bergson an analogue of the conscious moment, or in his words the "moving plane of my actual representation of the universe".⁶ Bergson's dialectic field of the screen was adopted in the work of post-structuralist theorists such as Deleuze, as a means of dealing with the problem of the *difference in kind* between mind and body, matter and memory. The dialectic field of the screen, or the focal point of the camera, provides an opportunity for the dynamic blending of matter and memory, perception and consciousness.

At its heart, *deepdown* explores how we become conscious of spaces. Our experience of the installation quickly becomes our *memory* of the experience. In a feat of imaginative projection, Campbell has presented her version of the process of *becoming conscious*. She presents an atmosphere in which an audience can participate in its own imaginative projection, by trying to decipher the space and her ambiguous images.

Campbell documents "meaningless systems that are both complex and unpredictable". Deliberately non-representational, her imagery is highly suggestive but non-specific. In developing the work, Campbell says "deep sea diving at night introduced me to one of the most disorienting spaces that I could imagine experiencing."⁷ The confusing sensation of vertigo, of not *knowing* the direction in which you are moving, spells a complete loss of comprehension of both direction and distance. Sculptor Robert Smithson (1938-1973) wrote of experiencing a similar disorientation as he explored the desert around Salt Lake, Utah: "My dialectics of site and nonsite whirled into an indeterminate state, where solid and liquid lost themselves in each other... No sense wondering about classifications and categories, there were none."⁸ Campbell's murky imagery is linked to our *gradual* consciousness of the space as we enter and our eyes adjust to the dark. Disorienting situations provide provocative opportunities for the imagination, and *deepdown* allows space for our own imaginative projection. It reveals how we spatialise in order to better understand emotional or mental states. The act of perception is a kind of spatial participation, even at a distance. Campbell deliberately limits our vision to heighten our senses.

A sense of exploration is paramount in *deepdown*. The installation invites the viewer to develop consciousness in an intuitive and oblique way and to translate this residual experience into memory. Campbell's scenes of trawling through underwater are "not



abstraction, not representation, but a dynamic process that is amplified and transposed into another medium⁹. Both the moving images and the photographs are an attempt to render and repeat indefinitely an organic process. For Deleuze, movement is a mobile section of duration.¹⁰ Campbell's installation is an attempt to analyse the concepts not only of both movement and duration, but also of perception and consciousness. Brian Massumi would argue that movement is a requirement for perception, and further that perception arrives through movement.¹¹ By contrast Smithson would argue, "Timelessness is found in the lapsed moments of perception, in the common pause that breaks apart into a sandstorm of pauses."¹²

The dialectic between matter (as perceived) and memory (as projected onto images) links the writing of Bergson and Deleuze with the tradition of structuralist filmmaking and the works of Smithson. The dialectic field between matter and memory is for Campbell actualized on the perspex screen, on which the viewer is asked to project meaning in the installation. She presents a series of any-instants-whatever that suggests movement and articulate duration. Using a procession of frozen moments, Campbell describes a dynamic process that happens through time. The sense of movement is for Campbell essential to perception, consciousness and meaning.

Hanna Scott, September 2001

¹ Bergson, Henri. *Matter and memory* 1991 (First published as *Matière et mémoire* 1908, translated by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer) New York: Zone Books pp. 133-134

² Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 1: the movement-image* 1996 (trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press p. 5

³ Rose, Phyllis. *The year of reading Proust: a memoir in real time* 1998 London: Vintage p. 25

⁴ Conversation with the artist, 2001

⁵ *Cinema 1: the movement-image* p. 5

⁶ *Matter and memory* p. 152

⁷ Conversation with the artist, 2001

⁸ Smithson, Robert. "The spiral jetty" 1972 in *Robert Smithson: the collected writings* 1996 Jack Flan (ed) Los Angeles: University of California Press p. 146

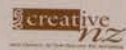
⁹ Conversation with the artist, 2001

¹⁰ *Cinema 1: the movement-image* p. 8

¹¹ Massumi, Brian. "Expressing connection: relational architecture" presented at *Video star* symposium, Massey University 2 October 2001

¹² Smithson, Robert. "Incidents of mirror travel in the Yucatan" 1969 in *Robert Smithson: the collected writings* 1996 Jack Flan (ed) Los Angeles: University of California Press p. 122

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GOVETT BREWSTER ART GALLERY



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Joyce Campbell

Born Wairoa, New Zealand
Lives and works in Los Angeles

Selected solo exhibitions

- 1999 *Bloom: a series of infiltrations* George Fraser Gallery, Auckland; Fiat Lux Gallery, Auckland; Triangle Television; www.artspace.org.nz; Area Gallery, Auckland
1997 *Fairy rings* Fiat Lux, Auckland
1996 *Touch lightly* Lopdell House Studio Gallery, Titirangi
Five winters 23A Gallery, Auckland
Serial The concrete deal, James Smith Council Car Park, Wellington
1995 *Safe* Teststrip, Auckland
Terminal Artspace, Auckland
1994 *Scour* Fisher Gallery, Manukau
1993 *Saving grace* High Street Project Gallery, Christchurch
Suffer Teststrip, Auckland and Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington
Constance turning Window project, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, Auckland

Selected group exhibitions and collaborations

- 2001 *Contingency of vision* The Suter Te Aratoi o Whakatu, Nelson
The tomorrow people The Physics Room, Christchurch and Lord Mori Gallery, Los Angeles
2000 *Drift* Detours downtown, Side Street Projects, Los Angeles
1999 *Asia Pacific triennial: screen culture series* Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
MAAP film festival Brisbane
1998 *Leap of faith: contemporary New Zealand art* Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
Everyday: the 11th Biennale of Sydney Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
1997-98 *Hosting* (with Michael Harrison) The Physics Room, Christchurch and First Floor Gallery, Melbourne
1997 *White out* Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, Auckland
1996 *Drift north* Robert McDougall Contemporary Art Annex, Christchurch

- 1994 *Pink bits* (with Ann Shelton) High Street Project Gallery, Christchurch
Art Now - site, body, sign, material: a survey of contemporary New Zealand sculpture Museum of New Zealand, Wellington
- 1993 *Gaining interest* Artspace Auckland
- 1992 *Vague/vogue - new sculptors/new sculpture* CSA Gallery, Christchurch
Light sensitive Artspace, Auckland
Bleach (with Ruth Boyask) High Street Project Gallery, Christchurch
Sweetness and light (with Saskia Leek) Temporary space, Achilles House, Auckland

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- Reyes, Ruben. *Transit* 1995 (catalogue text)
- Sanderson, Anna. "Sweetness and light" *Stamp* July 1992
- Watkins, Jonathan. *Everyday: the 11th Biennale of Sydney* 1998 Sydney: The Biennale of Sydney Limited

7000 metres



The iron walls of the submersible have begun to noise. Already, my plans seem jeopardized. The ghostly howls are certain to be detected by my prey. Perhaps the monster has already escaped me.



I have the intuition, however, that it is attracted by the gravity of my solitude. To the monster, the screams of my bathyscape, increasingly spine-tingling, are my own.



77250 metres. It is near! Its touch on the bait, so gentle, has awoken a tenderness in my heart. The tiny electric fires resulting from failed apparatus have raised their own small illumination and I must be visible myself through the central portholes.



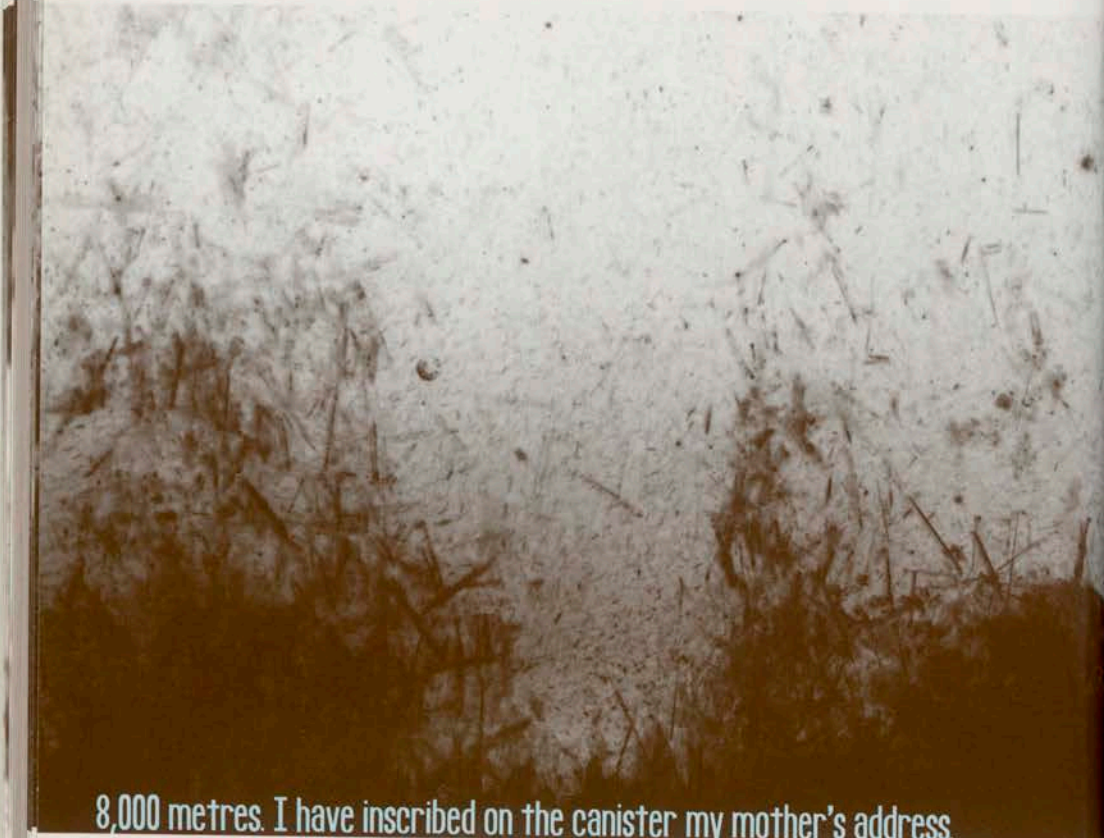
Indeed, I can easily make out the inexplicable alien that the monster sees, reflected there in the glass before me.



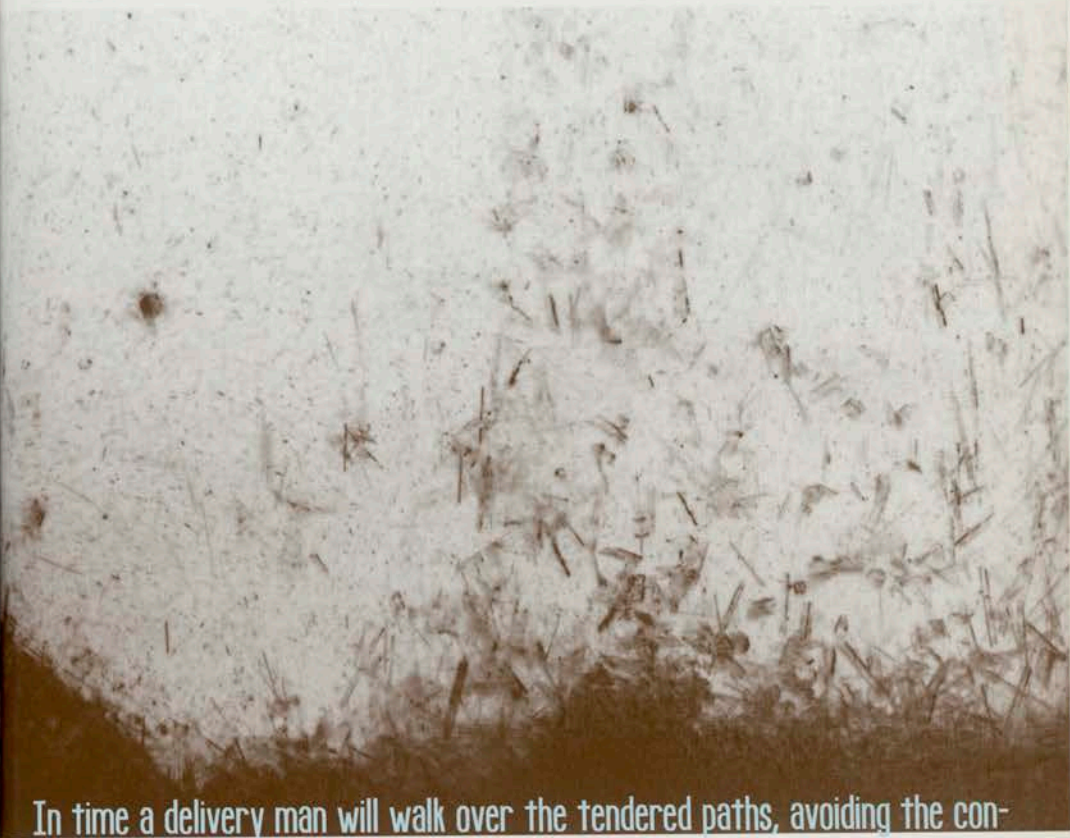
7500 metres. The girders are howling and I am at peace. Soon now, when the *Sally-Ann* implodes, folding into herself in one flash of destroying illumination, the experiment will be complete. The light will set off the cameras and the film will be ejected in its protective buoy canister, able to withstand all the pressure of the world's oceans.



In an hour's time it will burst into the atmosphere of the Western Pacific. Accompanied by this explanatory log, the canister will float on the seas for some time, years, perhaps, before it is retrieved.



8,000 metres. I have inscribed on the canister my mother's address.



In time a delivery man will walk over the tendered paths, avoiding the constant and cascading sprinklers of the garden, and deposit the canister into the frail hand that extends trembling from the partially opened door

I must make preparations

Mark von Schlegell



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