



**FIELDSTUDY 22**





Wiebke Leister  
**Echoes and Afterlives**





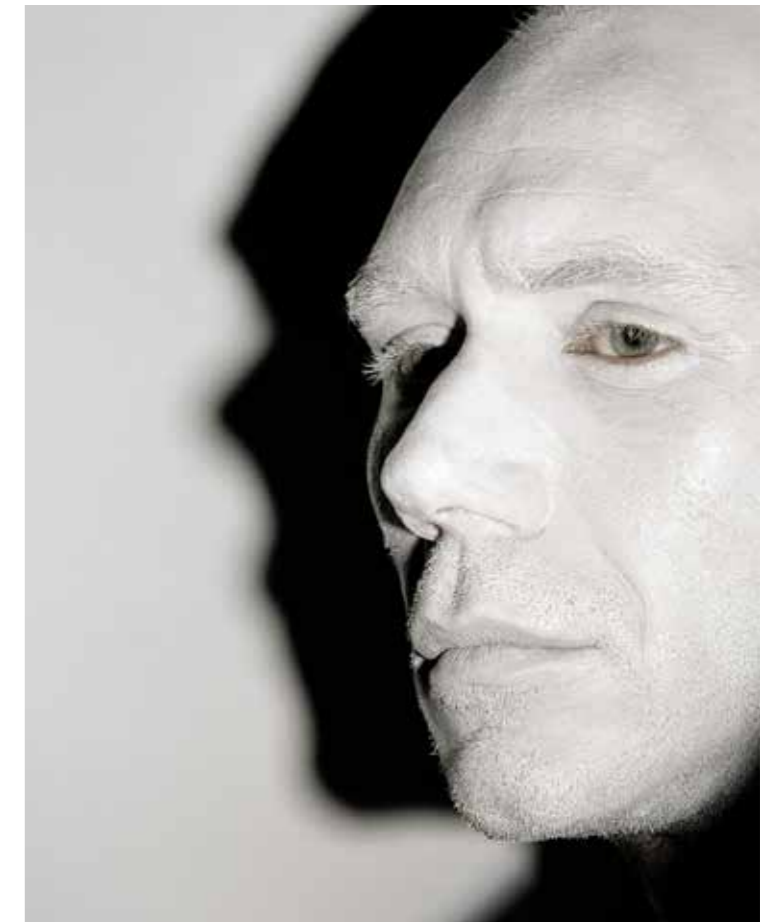
Moves through curtain, walking with intent. Sliding forwards, little by little. Demonstrating an inherent presence. To flutter, to lie down, to turn back, to approach. To fall, to collapse, to crush, to tumble. Each needing a different entrance, new beginning. Takes few steps forward and looks off into distance. Moves to centre indicating journey, coming to halt. Atmosphere of circumstances, face hidden.





*Dew whitens into morning. Faintly glowing.  
An empty canvas, blank sheet of paper unfolded.  
Sleeping through shadows, exposed.*

*Breath fogging a window, face like marble.  
Shadow-absorbing powder, thick as mud.  
Opaque surface, no more than milky liquid.*



Faces forward, eyes ahead. Holding head in line with body, moving forwards. Conscious breathing, looking straight into light. Shaded view, upwards and onwards. Body out of sight, seeking focal point. Impassive features, mouth tightly closed. Head above eye-level, locating centre for balance. Points of reference, on wall for direction, on floor for position. Thrusts head up high, leads with chin. In arch to right, then downwards. Rotates head sharply to left, facing down. Stops and listens, lowering head further. At front, turns to audience to introduce name.





*A flat plane, without shadow, without depth.  
Scarred features of moonlight. White shell on white ground.  
Dense as sugar, empty as sleep.*

*Pale space of its tomb. A silent song, wintery dawn.  
Pearls between words, last cloud in faraway sky.  
As though emerged from water, rinsed of meaning.*



Opening lines. Straight arm, straight face, facing corner. Hips forwards, body backwards. Vivid movements, less bodily force. Don't rush. Body turns, arms follow. Carried by all-enveloping sounds, syncopated time. Tune in, finding pitch. Voice is what's heard, presence what's seen. Watch. Voice becomes acting, movement becomes sound. One mind. Do it one hundred times. Timbre slightly broken. Do it two hundred times. Grainy voice. Glissando on last note. More hundred times. Always a bit behind the rhythm. Don't look down. Carry voice and body lightly, filling all limbs with force of intent. Listen. Gestures rooted in practice, presence derived from within. Fluid and unique, producing effect at will.

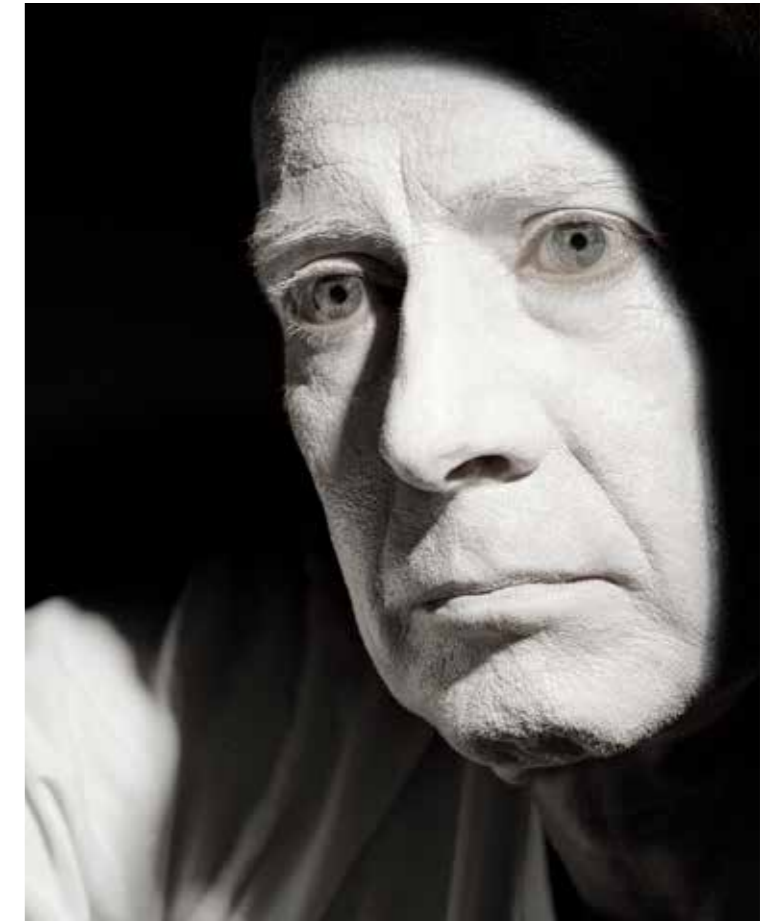




*Unhinged by light of day, smell of salty waves.  
Inscribed, a white lie. Listening to seagulls.  
A page of its flesh, like foam onshore.*

*Winds blowing, snow lies unmelted.  
Ice wears thin but lingers on. An area of white sand.  
Sound of flowing river under frost-filled skies.*





Return to former place indicating arrival. A different body, in touch with feet. Walk forward, pushing feet very hard. Feet tied together, tied to floor. Shifting pivot point. Heavy legs, arms to side. Pressure on ground, view from inside out. Begin to dance, be danced by the dance. First face backwards, then turning front. Turn left. Left foot. Beat left. Another beat. Mime walking, and continue dancing as text resumes. Now retreat, pulling feet out. Steps go forward, knees bend. Stand. Progress clockwise toward back right. Repose to other side. Left and right foot, advance body forcefully. On cue leap into air, come down kneeling. Flip legs over, rise carefully. Move body vigorously, stamp feet with restraint. Stamp feet vigorously, move body with restraint. Take few steps, return to same place, keepsake in hand.





*Dissolving after a storm, glimpse of reflection.  
Wet with tears, white with sorrow and pain.  
Intertwined whispers, echoing a hazy void.*

*With pain gone, release is swift.  
Colours changing, dimly white.  
Light at a distance, wraiths leave no remains.*





Recites closing lines. Rises and takes few steps towards front. Spreading arms towards viewers, then steps to side view. Drops to one knee, facing companion. Words changing in sequence, one into another. Now I am going, he says. I will come down and join your assembly, no matter where it will be. Dances and mimes as appropriate throughout final passage. Puts down prop and goes to stand in centre, dancing out final lines. Then slips away. Ascends and is gone.



## Wiebke Leister: *Echoes and Afterlives*

*Echoes and Afterlives* looks at the boundaries between embalming and enmasking; being in a skin and under a skin, in and under a mask, looking at a mask and seeing through a mask as something that equally changes one's gait and one's voice while playing with sensations of displacement and transformation. It treats the human face less as a façade but as an object that – even though central to our understanding of what it means to be human – is only ever in the process of approximating a subject: being filled by a subject, worn on the face of a subject. Possibly inverting the relationship of who sees and what can be seen.

A valuable reference point for this project has been the teaching of Japanese Noh theatre, in which the mask works as an extension of the actor: nuanced like a face, while the face itself is displayed as an impassive mask. This is exemplified in the actor's ritual of holding the mask to face him in an act of greeting, prior to shoeing the mask and stepping onto stage. This moment of face-to-face communication is said to allow the actor to become an other; a symbolic pact of mutual recognition and association. When the mask folds onto the face the actor becomes *enmasked* while the mask has become *enfacéd*, establishing a liminal space between subject and object. The actor appears to be one with his mask, while the mask becomes animated – accentuated by the angle of the head and the play of light on its many surfaces, reflecting a flow of ever-changing expressions: a lowered head displaying darker expressions, a head raised towards the light showing brighter emotional states.

Not unlike photography, mask-play results in emotive light images. At the same time the liveness of masks is essentially pro-photographic. The work seeks to visually translate this sense of a living object into photographs. It meditates on the moment in space and time when a mask meets a face and how the relationship between object and actor is established across the gap between two surfaces. This process combines two artistic gestures: the performer's gesture of donning the mask and the equally performative gesture of translating facial mask and masked face into the photographic plane, establishing a liminal space between actor and mask as the sculpted object folds onto and touches the skin. The whitened face here works as a non-representational space: an empty stage, a placeholder or insertion that alludes to imaginary characters, emphasizing the reflective state of an inner experience while evoking a sense of premonition and awareness.

This issue of *Fieldstudy* will be launched with a performance on 14 May 2016 at the event 'Masking and Enmasking: Noh Theatre as a Strategy in Contemporary Art and Performance' during the two-day festival 'Noh Reimagined' curated with mu:arts for Kings Place, London. It will be accompanied by an exhibition of the larger body of work 'Echoes and Afterlives' at PARCspace, 3 May – 25 June 2016.

**Wiebke Leister** is a German artist and writer based in London. She is course leader for MA Photography at London College of Communication, co-organizer of the Photography and the Contemporary Imaginary research hub, convener of the Theatre of Photography research group and a core member of the Photography and the Archive Research Centre at University of the Arts London. Her research investigates conditions of photographic Non-Likeness, in particular presentations of expressive signs of the face in relation to its facial canvas. Contact: [w.leister@lcc.arts.ac.uk](mailto:w.leister@lcc.arts.ac.uk)

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**Mask credits:** Kate Whitehead (page 1, 5, 16, 20), Victoria and Albert Museum (page 8), Noh Training Project UK (page 19).

Design: Dean Pavitt, Loup Design.

The **UAL Photography and the Archive Research Centre** was designated by the University of the Arts London in 2003 and is based at the London College of Communication. The Centre commissions new and innovative research into photography and culture and organises seminars, study days, symposia and conferences, both within the UAL and externally. The Centre has a core group of members including Tom Hunter, Sophy Rickett, Alistair 'O' Neill, Patrick Sutherland, Wiebke Leister, Jennifer Pollard, David Moore, Paul Lowe and Sara Davidmann. External members include Pete James, formerly Curator of Photographs at the Library of Birmingham.

Centre staff and members supervise a group of PhD students. PARC has a reference library of over 3000 books and magazines, and its archive collections include the *Camerawork* files, the John Wall papers, the Photography Exhibition Poster collection, and the Elephant Vanishes photography archive.

The *Journal of Photography&Culture* is co-hosted by the Centre and PARC also leads the online *Directory of Photographic Collections in the UK*.

Recent projects include *Ken. To be destroyed* by Sara Davidmann (publication and exhibition at Schwules Museum, Berlin); *Garden State* by Corinne Silva (publication and touring exhibition). Upcoming initiatives include RESORT with Canterbury Christchurch University and Turner Contemporary, a special issue of *Photography and Culture* from the 2015 *Fast Forward* conference and Moose on the Loose 2017: *Transformations*.

PARC's interests span the history and culture of photography, with particular emphasis on post-war British photography, the archive, contemporary photographic practice, the documentation of war and conflict, the photography of fashion and style, the visualization of the counterculture, and photographers as filmmakers.

PARC has worked with numerous external partners and collaborators. Current ones include: University for the Creative Arts; London Alternative Photography Collective; Canterbury Christ Church University; Turner Contemporary, Margate; Tate Modern; Fast Forward: Women in Photography; Moose on the Loose Biennale of Research; National Media Museum, Bradford; Fotogallery, Cardiff; Library of Birmingham; The Mosaic Rooms, London; Firecracker: Platform for Women Photographers; Frontline Club, London; People's Bureau, London; Museum of British Folklore, London; Photo London; *Journal of Photography&Culture*; Schwules Museum, Berlin; LGBT History Month; Photo Hastings; Four Corners, London.

For more information about PARC's work, and a full list of our projects collaborators and partners, past and present, visit: [www.photographyresearchcentre.co.uk](http://www.photographyresearchcentre.co.uk). Information about PARC's research can also be found at: [ualresearchonline](http://ualresearchonline), and on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. You can also sign up for our seasonal newsletter by e-mailing Melanie King at [m.king@lcc.arts.ac.uk](mailto:m.king@lcc.arts.ac.uk).

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