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The Record in Question

Kari Varner
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Abstract

This thesis is an archive composed of text and image that catalogs the perpetual distance between the photograph and its subject. In my practice the fluidity of representation is examined through the frame of the photographic archive, while the notion of what constitutes a photographic archive is redefined. While seeking to describe the mutability of encounters with landscapes and past memories the materiality of the photograph is emphasized, the image and its substrate destabilized, and both experience and photograph are fleeting. In many cases water acts as the alchemical substance for transformation, leading the photographs closer to a state of dematerialized materiality. My longing lies in the desire to fully represent a subject through the photographic image, and awareness that the photograph leads not towards an understanding of the subject, but a photographic fiction.
Introduction

Photographs are favored for their descriptive quality and supposed clarity. Indeed it was William Henry Fox Tablet that titled his book on photography the *Pencil of Nature*. Instead of the human hand, it was the sun and nature that have drawn directly on the paper to create the photographic image. The effects of this translation process from mechanism to matter guide my practice.

I am interested in how collections of images relate to or diverge from the subjects they claim to represent. The archive is a selective assemblage, which constructs and dictates relationships between images. I use ephemeral materials in order to destabilize and transform the photographic archive while investigating the fluidity of collective representation. The places that I photograph are decontextualized and therefore depict displacement rather than a sense of belonging. The desire to preserve an experience in its totality is accompanied by the inevitability of forgetting.

The archives I produce often hover or vacillate between fluid counterpoints. Collections of photographs shift between materiality and immateriality, transformation and preservation, reveal and withholding, place and placelessness. To put it more concisely, they are mutable spaces that reflect my desire for permanence and change.

For my latest archive, I revisited and photographed the same location along the Missouri River for three months. The only constant of the river is change, and any attempt to record it presents an inherently incomplete view. Despite this lack of total representation, I remain loyal to the photographic image. This loyalty results not from the photograph’s perceived clarity, but its potential for endless transformation.
Chapter 1:
Impending Union
I take 170 to 270 heading north. Exiting the highway, I drive in the middle of a bumpy country road, its small bridges are in need of repair, and I find the probability of being swallowed up by a ditch more likely than a head on collision. I turn right into a flat marsh and crawl along the circuitous route. The colors are softer now. Portions of the road have been ripped out, leaving dirt, gravel, and gaping holes. After the fifth visit I had finally mastered the twists and turns necessary to reach the paved road on the other side. I pass standing water, a boardwalk, an elaborate looking ramp, small parking lots, and a bike path. I drive until the road runs out. Back to the mounds of vines, the creaking of dead wood, the sound of planks underfoot. Rounding the bend, the trees part and the wind picks up.
I journey to the river at least once a week. There the land is flat, the leafless trees are silver and brown, and flocks of birds flit from one field to the next. The confluence is a place of calm collision, where the muddy Missouri is swallowed by the shorter but more well known Mississippi. It is here that the Missouri River, the longest river in North America, loses its identity. As I witness this impending union, I record the last moments before the Missouri water, some of which has travelled 2,341 miles from western Montana, is relabeled as the Mississippi.

Figure 1- Kari Varner, A Map to the Confluence. 2017. Digital illustration.
I photograph the surface of the water exclusively, leaving out the sky and rocky shore. Of course it is impossible to photograph only the water itself. Although I narrow my frame to the water’s surface, my photographs include the reflected sun, trees, clouds, shadows, and sometimes people on the north bank. The river, like all water is seen in relation to something. The shore gives the river its shape, the wind its surface, and the sky its color. Reflecting scenes along its banks, whether it be a refinery, casino, skyscraper, or wilderness sanctuary, the river is in flux. Things disappear or are revealed depending on the weather, and everything is subject to the rippling of the water’s surface.

Taking one photograph after another, I miss many things in-between. I freeze some moments while letting others pass uncaptured. After taking the last image, I linger at the water’s edge. In these moments, I must keep reminding myself not to take another photograph, as I unconsciously reach for the zipper on my camera case. There is no satisfactory number to reach, or determinant for an accurate or complete representation of the confluence. The impossibility of this project points to the impossibility of complete preservation, accurate representation, or total recollection. In this context, archiving is framed as a series of futile, but nonetheless desired steps for collection. Because the river is always changing, I acknowledge my perpetual failure to portray it. Each image depicts a fraction of the subject, and the archives display a narrow portion of an endlessly shifting landscape.
Chapter 1:
Impending Union

Chapter 2:
Follow
The River
Petals and stem droop towards the pavement. There is no one in sight. I hear nothing over the hum of the cicadas. It smells of mud with a tinge of sewage. The air clings to me, enveloping me in an unwanted muggy embrace. My sneakers scrape against the rocks, and I grab an exposed root for support. Squatting down to observe the surface, I notice some water skimmers interrupting the otherwise stagnant stream. Just then, two dragonflies hum past. They land close by. Raising my camera and framing and shooting quickly, I get two shots before they whiz away. I watch them go.

Redacted Image 1 – Kari Varner, the Blue River from the series Follow the River. 2014.
The creek behind my house was generally nothing more than a trickle, but when a heavy rain fell it moved swiftly enough to make you think twice about crossing it. When I was young, I dreamt of dragging the family canoe down the hill to that creek, hopping in, and following the river to its end. Six years ago, I decided to undertake a variation of that by following that same creek to the Blue River, then the Missouri, eventually finishing at the Missouri’s confluence with the Mississippi. Unfortunately, I traveled the width of the state of Missouri by car and not canoe. My focus was on photographing the changes in the landscape, and the people living along the creeks and rivers who were connected by this fresh water network. I observed its diverse agricultural, industrial, and recreational uses, and also witnessed the complexity of the relationships between the individuals I met and the waterway they know well, as both river and I moved through the state headed east towards St. Louis.
Starting in the 1960’s, composer and sound artist Annea Lockwood began recording rivers, streams, and springs. This eventually led to sounds maps of the Hudson (1982), Danube (2005), and Housatonic Rivers (2010). Through her river archives, Lockwood captures the physicality of the river, the textures of the water, and the ambient noises in the surrounding area. The sound maps are presented as immersive installations that last between one and three hours. Interviews with individuals living along the river play on a separate track accessed through headphones. Similar to my 2011 project that visually portrayed the changes in the river, and included interviews and portraits of those dwelling along the banks of the Missouri, Lockwood presents the complexity of a waterway through recordings of both the water and those that know it well. Lockwood states that: Sound Maps trace these rivers at specific times, each site in a specific moment which can’t be taken as "representative" of some whole, not even of the site itself.¹ The recordings are portraits of a specific time within the mutable expanse of the waterway.
Chapter 1:
*Impending Union*

Chapter 2:
*Follow
The River*

Chapter 3:
*Framing
Fluidity*
The river I followed from Kansas City to St. Louis in 2011 and visited 20 times during 2016 and 2017, is not the river it once was. Meandering, frequently flooding, and carrying upwards of 320 million short tons of sediment per year the river was an untamable muddy force with dangerous currents and a wealth of biodiversity.\(^2\) Now over 30 percent of the river flows through artificially straightened channels, and its silt transport has been reduced to as low as 20 million short tons per year.\(^3\) Despite this reduction, the Missouri River is still referred to as the “Big Muddy” and continues to transport half of the total silt that empties into the Gulf of Mexico.

“Degradation of the natural Missouri River ecosystem is clear and is continuing. Large amounts of habitat have been transformed in order to enhance social benefits, and the ecosystem has experienced a substantial reduction in biological productivity as a result. Natural riverine processes, critical to providing ecosystem goods and services, have been greatly altered. The ecosystem has been simplified and its production of goods and services has been greatly compromised.”\(^4\)

For over 100 years, North America’s longest river has been continuously modified, tailored, and quelled to suit human activity. There is a growing list of threatened or endangered species – including birds, fish, insects, plants, mammals, reptiles, and mussels. These species have endured the building of dams, diversion and channelization of the river flow, and heavy pollution from industry and agriculture. The water they swim through, the flora and fauna they ingest, the currents that carry them, are shifting at an accelerated rate.

The entirety of the Missouri River that I followed six years ago while traveling from Kansas City to St. Louis is channelized and therefore heavily regulated. In many regions, the once untamed Missouri is now a constructed river system that would be largely unrecognizable to previous generations. The roiling and swollen waterway of the early 19\(^{th}\) century is irretrievable, and a pacified Big Muddy has taken its place.
Collectively, the Missouri and Mississippi rivers pass through 15 states and converge just north of St Louis. Both rivers outline at least a portion of 11 state borders, saving the middle of the country from becoming a collection of unidentifiable rectangles. The ancient metaphor that rivers are the arterial bloodstream of a people remains very much alive. In the burgeoning United States, the Missouri River provided access into newly acquired and unexplored land beyond St. Louis, and became the starting point for all major trails used by pioneers and settlers. Despite this, the Missouri River could not fulfill its anticipated role as the artery of the America West. It was one of Thomas Jefferson’s bitterest disappointments that the Missouri River did not connect with the Pacific Ocean. Instead, the River forms from three mountain streams, and runs through the foothills of Montana’s Rocky Mountains to its eventual end just north of St. Louis.

As a river carves out its course, it displaces land and erodes away its banks. The constant addition of water and debris carried and combined from distant locations, and contributed by lesser streams, means that the river is in a constant state of unrest. The river absorbs traces as it flows onward, and in this way represents place and placelessness. It is both a constant of the landscape and a visitor just passing through. We encounter it from a specific vantage point, as it moves indiscriminately forward past the places we know, and towards those unknown.
Chapter 1:
*Impending Union*

Chapter 2:
*Follow*
*The River*

Chapter 3:
*Framing*
*Fluidity*

Chapter 4:
*Traversing*
*Placelessness*
The wind is howling across the flat barren shore. It lifts the sand, flinging it towards the sea. The sky is a cloudless gray mass, looming overhead. I turn off the light and stack the tan and blue fabric, placing them on the seat of the chair. The nearly setting sun leaves pink streaks above the trees.

Figure 4 – Kari Varner, *New Topographies IV*. 2016. Archival Pigment Print, 24 x 36 in.
Thousands of glistening lights dot the otherwise dark ground. The light of the moon has turned the sky into a silvery plane. I pluck the carbon fiber sheet from the lamp, as bits of black dust collect on the white shade. The only light now is the glow of the camera menu.

Figure 5 – Kari Varner, *New Topographies I*. 2016. Archival Pigment Print, 24 x 36 in.
A series of twelve barren landscapes, printed in a conventional landscape photography scale are framed and hung in a row. In each composition, a sliver of foreground is in focus as the land recedes till the horizon gives way to the cloudless sky. I have never been to these places, indeed no one has. If the viewer believes they have encountered them, it has been through their filter of past experiences, and their inclination to relate them to an earthly place. The New Topographics series examines the conventions of landscape photography through seemingly natural and expansive scenes that have been constructed from simple materials.

These places are foldable; they can be packed in a cardboard box or thrown away as easily as a newspaper. They are places based on placelessness that use recognizable photographic techniques to divulge the process of their making. Each tabletop construction, formed solely from fabric and light contains the fundamental elements of a landscape. Earth, a sense of space, the horizon, sky. However, there is no wind, rain, erosion, or growth. These landscapes do not exist outside of their frame, and rely on the photograph to support the illusion of their expansiveness.
Sonja Braas is known for her intricately produced artificial photographic depictions of seascapes, snow-covered mountains, and lava fields. Braas actualizes our conceptions of rugged untouched landscapes while addressing the influence of media depictions of the natural world. *The Passage* includes 52 nearly colorless photographs portraying barren landscapes reminiscent of the artic tundra. Shifts in the land and lighting suggest a passage of time and a prolonged journey, but because the photographs derive from sets, we have no sense of scale or distance. In the words of Simon Schama, there is a difference between land, which is earth, and landscape, which signifies a kind of jurisdiction. It always meant the framing of an image. In this case, the photograph does not frame the land; the landscape exists only through the photographic image.

Figure 6 – Sonja Braas, *Week 2* from the series *The Passage*. 2010. C- Print, Framed 16.3 x 20.3 in.
Chapter 1: Impending Union
Chapter 2: Follow The River
Chapter 3: Framing Fluidity
Chapter 4: Traversing Placelessness
Chapter 5: On The Surface
The tray is filled with bright blue liquid the color of Gatorade. I stand above it expectantly in my gloves and apron, clutching my 8x10 pearl resin print in one hand. I dip the corner of the print into the liquid before guiding the rest below the blue surface. Tipping the corner of the tray slightly, I let the solution linger against one side before letting it rush back to fill the tray. The print changes from black to brown, before eventually reaching a rich gold. For many others this was enough, but I continue. The emulsion beings to bubble, then lift off in increasingly larger sections. A black veil swaying with the tide of the tray. It’s too much. It rips off, floating above the paper for a few moments, before settling to one side at the bottom of the tray. I grab the tongs, fish out the print then extract the veil which has now transformed into a wad of sticky black slime. I walk towards the pitch-black entrance, turning one corner, then another until I am back under the soft orange light amidst the sound of the steady gurgling stream.

In silver gelatin printing, the emulsion is a delicate layer that sits atop the paper substrate. This layer contains the imagery, and like skin, is susceptible to scratching, dryness, cracking, and peeling. It can sag, discolor; become darker when exposed to excessive amounts of light, and slough off when burned. Early on, I was taught to conceal its blemishes and cover its surface in order to protect it from dirt and grime. The prints that had mars, wrinkles, stains, or irredeemable flaws were dubbed unworthy and quickly disposed of.

Rather than conceal, reprint, or enshrine under glass, I often seek to implicate the photograph as both a material and device of representation. Since learning the silver gelatin printing process I have bleached, boiled, dripped on, baked, buried, burned, and bathed with my prints. They have been submerged in wax, resin, acetone, and glue. While also being plunged into tap, ocean, sea, and river water. Along with being etched on, rubbed off, transferred onto wood, molded into sculpture, and printed on many materials that I simply do not know the names of.

Frequently through these transformations, information is withheld as I accelerate the inevitable degradation of the print. In Sixteen, I collected photographs from my personal family album of events that I could not recall, and were therefore only directly verifiable through photographic evidence. I printed each image to scale on a transparency, and then proceeded to submerge them in water and wipe them away one by one. The erasure left marks from the act of cleaning and traces of the original image. All of the ink from the photographs has remained in the jar of water used to clean each print, while the transparencies dangle from the ceiling. A video projection of the ink swirling in water is cast through the transparencies, and plays on an endless loop. The now separated components of the photographs have been reassembled and installed together as the video reanimates the disintegrating photographic matter.
In my process of making, I often set parameters that encourage change without being able to fully foresee the end result. I am intimately involved with, and also distance myself from my images. I cast them out to the sea, wipe them away, and ensure their delicacy and vulnerability so that they will undergo a reconstitution after my interaction with them ceases.

Figure 7 - Kari Varner, *Sixteen*. 2016. Inkjet prints on transparencies, water, glass, led light, single channel projection, dimensions variable.
Chapter 1: 
Impending Union

Chapter 2: 
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The River

Chapter 3: 
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Fluidity

Chapter 4: 
Traversing
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Chapter 5: 
On The Surface

Chapter 6: 
Side By Side
It’s so bright, and I’m on the blue couch with the buttons. I hear a creaking, is it the screen door? Was there ever a screen door? The door swings open smoothly, silently. A blinding white light fills the room. I feel as if my eyes are going to burn, but I continue to look. I begin to discern a figure as my eyes adjust. It’s you, but not really you at all. It is as if your skin has been scrubbed clean for so long and so intensely that your features are doughy. Light continues to emanate from every one of your non-existent pores. You do not move or speak. I want to go to you. Instead, I wake up.

REMEMBERING ME: So here I am and I want to talk about this experience I had “x” time ago and I have to wonder why I’ve picked just that one-or even why I remember that one think. I’m thinking about all the memories that are me too but totally forgotten. I’m thinking about those forgotten things, why did I forget them?-isn’t the missing me, me too? ⁹

-Roni Horn
My desk as been cleared off, aside from one pen and a stack of empty white cards. Staring at nothing in particular, and conjuring one scene after another, the first two words are always the same. “I remember the bleeding bunny in the butterfly net,” “I remember the oscillation of a hundred illuminations,” “I remember ascending the marble steps in the summer heat.”

The clouds have finally parted, so I grab the marble steps and run outside. I hold them up while shooting into the sun. A ray peaks out from the top step.

Figure 8 – Kari Varner, Reperformed Memory 8. 2016. Single channel projection, dimensions variable.
Dusk begins to settle; the bulbs and batteries have been assembled. Weaving through the thick brush I stagger clumsily from one tree to another. My jeans snag and rip on a thorn and my oversized gloves keep sticking to the tape. The bulbs are affixed to every available surface, and for a brief moment there are fireflies again.

Figure 9 – Kari Varner, *Reperformed Memory 12*. 2016. Single channel projection, dimensions variable.
Beginning with two-inch square notecards, I wrote short, one-sentence summaries for memories discovered by deliberately mining my personal archive or through seemingly spontaneous recall. This was the first translation; a static collection of words directly assigned to the memory. I then used these memory to text translations as guides to re-photograph the event. Each image attempts to imitate the memory, further complicating the process of remembering. Now, when trying to recall the original event, the process of restaging the memory emerges along with the details of the initial event. The series of seventeen photographs are presented in differing scales, and for varying lengths of time in a single projection. They appear from nothing and dissipate without warning, presenting a non-chronological archive as the order of the images changes at random, while the past configurations are irretrievable. The immaterial has been made material and then immaterial once again.

While there is a desire to rescue these moments from the oblivion of forgetting, these images do not capture memories, but instead are another form of fiction recontextualized in the present. Now the memories have been unearthed, and the images, wander ghost like, through the present, subsuming and blotting out the nuances of the past. Pierre Nora maintains that this meticulously minute reconstruction is a phenomena of modern memory. Fear of disappearance has necessitated the usage of external props and tangible reminders. The contemporary archivist saves everything while the archivist of the past knew the necessity of controlled destruction. In my series of Reperformed Memories, the details have been meticulously reconstructed, but they do not amount to a more complete memory. Instead, I have moved closer to an embellished fiction, a substitute for the past.
“Secure the shadow ere the substance fade, let nature copy that which nature made.”12

This effective 19th century St. Louis advertisement instills a sense of anxiety and fear for life without photographs. The events will fade from your memory, but luckily there is a quick solution to solve that problem. Accumulate more photographs, and therefore more memories, but do not wait, or the shadowy substance of memory will be lost to oblivion.

The accumulation of images is often equated to the accumulation of memories. It is a simple enough equation, but do photographs really provide an adequate and streamlined surrogate for memory itself? Barthes like Proust believe that not only is the photograph never, in essence, a memory... but it actually blocks memory, quickly becomes a counter memory13 When we equate photographs to memories, then the latter is no longer fluid, but collectible.

“Photography captures too much information to function as memory. It is too coherent and too linear in its articulation of times and space. It obeys the rules of non-fiction. Memory, it contrast, is selective, fuzzy in outline, intensively subjective, often incoherent, and invariably changes over time – a conveniently malleable form of fiction.”14

Desire for photographic preservation intensifies when the potential for disappearance is perceived. The greatest accumulation of personal and institutional photographs comes from depictions of events rather than subjects considered mundane or routine. Susan Sontag outlined the role of labor in relationship to travel and photography in her essay On Photography.15 Making photographs gives us a sense of purpose while engaging in leisurely activities, provides evidence of our adventures, and allows for the compiling of a tidy record that can be placed on the shelf or stored in a digital folder labeled “Summer Vacation 2016.” Photographs become the singular representation of a place, providing a concise collection that distills the experience of travel in to a selective archive of events and locations deemed worthy of remembering.
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Chapter 6: Side By Side
Chapter 7: Becoming What It Will Be
I find a fist-sized rock amongst the boulders to mark the spot. The Ziploc is folded neatly in my pocket as I pace the shoreline. Only five minutes more, fifteen will have to be enough. I nearly reach the rock before the tide forces me back. Running this time, I drop to my knees and plunge my fingers into the sand, scooping furiously. Water surges forward, filling the hole with a frigid mixture of soupy sand. Again and again the waves hover rush in, and retreat. The sea foam reaches my elbows and surrounds my boots. Looking back, I know it is time. I ascend the rusted stairs and turn to watch the rock being dragged below the surface.

Redacted Image 4 – Kari Varner, Reykjavik. 2016, Polaroid print, 1.8 x 2.4 in.
In November 2014, Kathleen Compton, Richard A. Bennett, and Sigrún Hreinsdóttir submitted an article outlining their findings on the correlation between ice mass loss and uplift on the island of Iceland. After analyzing the data of 62 available GPS stations between 1995-2014, the team noticed a rapid acceleration in uplift, particularly in the central and southern regions of the country. They estimated that 95% of the total ice melt in Iceland is likely the result of climate and that this increased loss of glacial ice will result in more volcanic activity.

![Figure 10](image_url)

**Figure 10** - Velocity and acceleration measurements from 62 CGPS stations in Iceland and the location of major ice caps. (a) Velocity as of 2014.5. (b) Time-averaged acceleration. The color bars indicate magnitude, while the size of the symbol is inversely proportional to the certainty of the measurement. V = Vatnajökull, H = Hofsjökull, L = Langjökull, ME = Mýrdalsjökull and Eyjafjallajökull, and D = Drangajökull.

Iceland is a land of environmental extremes. Constant wind, rain, and a lack of vegetation means that erosion is one of the predominate forces shaping the surface of the country. As erosive forces carry the soil of Iceland away, new land is formed by the high concentration of volcanic activity. Iceland experiences an accelerated cycle of formed and lost land, all while the glaciers melt and drain into the sea. I decided to travel to Iceland because of the instability of its environment, and I like many before me, documented its diverse wilderness.
Olafur Eliasson is known for his sustained engagement with the Icelandic landscape, as is displayed in his many gridded photographic series’ of the country. In *The fault series* from 2001, Eliasson photographed fractures in the otherwise mossy green or rocky brown surface. In the majority of the images the fault outlines a black void, an absence of earth, while in a select few water can be seen through the narrow crack. The 32 photographs are diverse in their portrayal of the subject, showing the variation and mutability of the Icelandic environment.

![Image of Olafur Eliasson's The fault series](image)

Figure 11 – Olafur Eliasson, *The fault series*, 2001. C – print in 32 parts, each 24 x 16 in.

Eliasson's photographs represent an ever-expanding archive as he documents the changing land. The making of these images is reliant on the artist's intimate knowledge of Iceland's rugged terrain. His interest lies in recording variations in the land from one season and location to another while he traverses the landscape.
For *Being Here: In Progress*, I journeyed to 12 different sites in the southwest region of Iceland that are rising due to the loss of glacial ice. In each of the locations I went through the process of photographing the land, printing the image, and immersing the print directly in the environment for a timespan of 30 minutes to three days. The photographs were buried, bathed in mud pots and hot springs, covered in moss, volcanic sand, and algae, and put adrift in the Atlantic Ocean. Each Polaroid was placed in a Ziploc bag immediately after its extraction, and has remained there since. All 12 Polaroids will be removed from their respective microclimates after one year. Through this process, the prints were made vulnerable to the landscape, and imbued with residue of the place. Now that the have been transported to St. Louis, this series exists in a liminal state of displacement. Although they still contain materials of the Icelandic Landscape, the prints have been recontextualized, and will likely never return to their place of origin.

![Figure 12 – Kari Varner, *Being Here: In Progress*. 2016-ongoing, Polaroid prints, Ziploc bags, soil, sand, and water, dimensions variable.](image-url)
Figure 13 – Kari Varner, *Videy Island* from the series *Being Here*, 2016. Polaroid print, Ziploc bag, the Atlantic Ocean, 1.8 x 2.4 in.

Figure 14 – Kari Varner, *Skógafoss* from the series *Being Here: In Progress*, 2016. Polaroid print, Ziploc bag, Skógá river water, 1.8 x 2.4 in.
In *Iceland Rising*, 32 glass test tubes are displayed in a single line on a shelf. The tubes, which are arranged in pairs, each contain a photograph printed on organic paper, and submerged in water. The sixteen pairs include images of the same location in Iceland, taken five years apart, with the left image captured in 2011 and the right in 2016. The water levels vary from one tube to the next, and represent the number of inches that the land has risen in these locations in between the time the two photographs were taken.

The prints were originally placed in the tubes on November 1st, and have been disintegrating since then. Of the 16 locations in Iceland, those that experienced a more drastic rise in the land were also subject to an accelerated rate of disintegration in the photographic print due to higher levels of water in those tubes. The set of photographs is accompanied by a map and two charts, which display the locations where the images were taken in the southwest region, the water levels in millimeters for each tube, and the rise in the Icelandic landmass from 2011-2016 for the 16 locations. With the information provided, viewers can trace my journey through the landscape while witnessing the fragmentation of the photographic prints.
Figure 16 – Kari Varner, The Map and charts located alongside *Iceland Rising*. 2016. 10 x 20 in.
24 glass columns span the height of the room in Stykkishólmur, Iceland. The columns are filled with water of varying color and clarity that were collected from glaciers in Iceland. The tubes, which are illuminate on each end, reflect light, other tubes in the library, the view of the town and the ocean from the window of the Vatnasafn building. A rubber floor with English and Icelandic words relating to the weather accompanies the tubes. Moving through Roni Horn’s *Library of Water* represents the act of navigating the Icelandic landscape, while passing the melted remnants of hulking frozen giants.

![Image of Vatnasafn/Library of Water](image)

**Figure 17** – Roni Horn, *Vatnasafn/Library of Water*, 2007. 24 glass tubes, glacial ice, rubber floor, lights, permanent installation.

Although the work is titled “library”, there is no exchange or portability of the library’s contents. The connection lies in the continuous cycle and exchange of water from one environment or organism to another. “In an Arctic Iceberg, in your drinking glass, in that drop of rain, on that frosty window pane, in your eyes, and in every other microscopic, microcosmic part of you (and me), all waters converge.” Horn memorializes this alarming convergence of solid becoming liquid, and freshwater melting into saltwater. The columns are vessels of preservation as the Icelandic glaciers continue to disappear.
“One’s mind and the earth are in a constant state of erosion, mental rivers wear away abstract banks, brain waves undermine cliffs of thought, ideas decompose into stones of unknowing, and conceptual crystallizations break apart into deposits of gritty reason.”

- Robert Smithson
Time is an essential material in my work. From the amount of time that the shutter is open in the camera, to the number of seconds that the developing print sits in the stop bath, photography and time are inextricably linked. Barthes, Sontag, and many others have regarded the photograph as an artifact of a time, presenting a past moment, a ghost that ultimately speaks about death. In my work time is substantive, we wade through it, peer into it, see it’s layers, witness its effects.

Frequently, multiple durations of time coexist in one piece. In Being Here: In Progress, there is the moment when the photographs were originally taken, the period for which each photograph was submerged in the landscape, and the number of months that the Polaroids have been sealed in their respective microclimates. Iceland Rising places two disintegrating photographs of the same location together. While the landscapes were taken in 2011 and 2016, all of the images in the series were printed in 2016. The photographs have been fragmenting for six months, as the prints continue to become increasingly abstracted. In many cases, time acts as a coauthor that alters the archive long after my involvement in the piece has concluded.
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In *The Missouri River* 38.81408088787352, -90.12370347726687 and 38.815604433618454, -90.12407945049151 I traveled to and photographed the Missouri River 20 times between December 2016 and March 2017.24

12/27/16
1/18/17
1/22/17
1/27/17
2/5/17
2/11/17
2/24/17
2/26/17
3/4/17
3/5/17
3/10/17
3/12/17
3/13/17
3/14/17
3/15/17
3/18/17
3/19/17
3/24/17
3/26/17
3/30/17

Of the photographs taken during the 20 visits, 1,000 of them were edited. Looking out the window, I see that it is cloudy and windy again, for the fifth time in a
Figure 19 – Kari Varner, Pages 6-10 of the book 38.81408088787352, -90.12370347726687 and 38.815604433618454, -90.12407945049151. 2017.
The 1,000 photographs were printed and placed in water. Then the results were filmed for 20 days.²⁶

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Figure 20 – Kari Varner, Page 16 of the book 38.81408088787352, -90.12370347726687 and 38.815604433618454, -90.12407945049151. 2017.
The footage was compiled into a 30-minute video using 131 video clips.27

IMG_3911.MOV  IMG_3726.MOV  IMG_4015.MOV
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IMG_3890.MOV  MVI_1478.MOV  MVI_1695.MOV
MVI_1193.MOV  MVI_1619.MOV  MVI_1484.MOV
IMG_4005.MOV  MVI_1464.MOV  MVI_1526.MOV
MVI_1601.MOV  IMG_3960.MOV  IMG_3706.MOV
MVI_1460.MOV  MVI_1583.MOV  IMG_3986.MOV
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MVI_1584.MOV  MVI_1667.MOV  IMG_3943.MOV
MVI_1044.MOV  IMG_4137.MOV  MVI_1598.MOV
MVI_1411.MOV  MVI_1515.MOV  MVI_1636.MOV
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IMG_4131.MOV  IMG_4124.MOV  MVI_1648.MOV
IMG_3964.MOV  IMG_3993.MOV  MVI_1448.MOV
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MVI_1046.MOV  IMG_3979.MOV  MVI_1521.MOV
MVI_1430.MOV  MVI_1581.MOV  IMG_3971.MOV
IMG_3715.MOV  IMG_4161.MOV  MVI_1631.MOV
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IMG_4133.MOV  MVI_1457.MOV  MVI_1644.MOV
IMG_3831.MOV  IMG_3998.MOV  IMG_3965.MOV
IMG_3940.MOV  IMG_4020.MOV  IMG_3990.MOV
IMG_3922.MOV  MVI_1554.MOV  MVI_1452.MOV
IMG_3978.MOV  MVI_1042.MOV  IMG_4131.MOV
IMG_3991.MOV  MVI_1679.MOV  IMG_3886.MOV
MVI_1610.MOV  MVI_1622.MOV  MVI_1050.MOV
IMG_4001.MOV  IMG_3920.MOV  IMG_4135.MOV
MVI_1414.MOV  IMG_3927.MOV  MVI_1434.MOV
IMG_4160.MOV  MVI_1425.MOV  IMG_3997.MOV
IMG_4028.MOV  IMG_3751.MOV

Figure 21 – Kari Varner, Page 18 of the book 38.81408088787352, -90.12370347726687 and 38.815604433618454, -90.12407945049151. 2017.
Once the work is installed, I will visit the museum 27 times in order to add all of the prints to the water. 

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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Figure 22 – Kari Varner, Page 22 of the book 38.81408088787352, -90.12370347726687 and 38.815604433618454, -90.12407945049151. 2017.
The Missouri River 38.81408088787352, -90.12370347726687 and 38.815604433618454, -90.12407945049151 presents the same archive three times. In the form of one six foot by one foot print, in two tanks containing 44 gallons of water, and in a 30 minute looped video displayed on a monitor. When arranged in a vertical line, the two tanks mirror the length and width of the print, creating a fractured floor to ceiling channel of water. The video is isolated from its counterparts, and shown among other artworks in the gallery. Viewers are asked to determine its function and relationship to the rest of the installation, while also potentially reading the video as a standalone piece.

The photographs themselves are decontextualized extractions from the Confluence site. If separated from the archive, the images could depict any muddy river with tall trees on its banks. While building my archive, I made 20 trips to the river, taking at least 50 images each visit, eventually acquiring 1,000 after several months of collecting. When separated from the archive and viewed individually, a photograph of the water’s surface distills the river into a single representation, rather than depicting its mutability. In the absence of the collection the armatures for reading these images collapse. Archives give us the context to be able to read photographs, and in this way the archive as institution, then, absorbs the photograph’s original status as potentially but incomplete archival itself.
In *Six Memos For The Next Millennium*, Italo Calvino states that we are living in an unending rainfall of images. An unrelenting cascade of imagery that result in a flood of photographs, which are carried where? Into rivers then out to sea?

A general fascination with images made through a mechanism persists. One of the original dilemma of photography was not how to produce an image with light, but how to keep it. With no ability to secure a lasting record, images created with light were fleeting. Photographs would fade over time leaving an empty print of a once existent photograph. In 1827 light and time became collectible, their edges delineated by light sensitive material on a substrate.

Images could be kept, collected, cherished, and discarded. Along with the ability to collect, came the desire to store and preserve. Albums, frames, boxes, and files became common devices for presentation and storage of personal and institutional archives.

By definition the archive is both the place where documents, and records are kept; as well as the records themselves. I regard both the place of the archive and its contents as unstable and fluid in their representation of history. The archive implies a collection of many, in order to portray an ostensibly accurate depiction of its subject. In my practice a photograph rarely stands alone. The seriality in my work serves to examine a spectrum of methods used to represent a subject. I vary both the content and the repository or space of the archive. In *The Missouri River* coordinates, the same content is presented in several forms, revealing the malleability of the archive as a place of preservation.
The final presentation of each archive in *The Missouri River* results in a perceived taxonomic fluidity for all three forms. In general, the taxonomy prescribes the order within a collection of images, and gives an indication of the archivists’ intentions for the record. While in my archives the outcome is seemingly fluid, the procedure for creating the collection is ordered. The prints are stacked chronologically in preparation for their placement in the tanks. The first images taken of the river on December 27, 2016, are also the first to be placed in the tanks of water. As these prints fragment and fall, they will become the first layer of photographic sediment. Like the geologic record, the oldest material will also be the bottom most layer. The sedimentation of the images takes place according to their induction into the archive, as the prints eventually resettle in a configuration reminiscent of the initial chronological taxonomic structure.

Through the reformulation of its contents, the archive is not just a passive receiver of content, but an active producer of it. The archivist determines what is worthy of inclusion, and therefore worthy of remembrance. I as the archivist build and maintain the collection, but also accelerate the inevitable disintegration of the images in the tanks. The addition of prints is the primary disruptor and catalyst for change in the archive that is also subject to the forces of gravity and time.
Following every visit to the river, the photographs are processed, edited, layered, and composited. With the addition of each image the subject matter becomes increasingly abstracted. Patterns of reflections and shadows are ghosted into gradients of brown, gray, and blue. In this archive the images are consumed all at once. We cannot leaf through a neatly filed index of prints, or flip through a well-labeled and sequenced album. Instead, we peer through time, looking at the newest image on top and the oldest image on the bottom. 20 visits, resulting in 1,000 photographs are displayed in a monolithic six-foot by one foot reflective print. Time has been flattened as the images are blended into one.

Verb (used with object), archived, archiving: to compress (computer files) and store them in a single file. 33

While the individual images are withheld, the act of compressing many digital files into one is a contemporary form of archiving. In order to perform this process of archiving, there was first an accumulation of individual image files, then a distillation into one file containing the complete record. This form of collecting abruptly ends once the act of archiving is performed. When the process is complete, the archives edges have been delineated, its beginning and end solidified. There is no potential of movement or change within this record.
Straining to fix my eyes on any detail, it feels like I’m staring into a cloud. The closer I look the less is revealed. Another visit, another 50 photos added, as the gradient morphs again. When the thousandth image is added I scrutinize the composition, attempting to find any recognizable form, or hint of a single visit or photograph. Only the gradient shifting from gray to blue is discernible. The individual identities of the photographs have been subsumed by the collective.

Figure 23 – Kari Varner, *The Missouri River 38.81408088787352, -90.12370347726687 and 38.815604433618454, -90.1240794504915*, 2017. Archival pigment print on acrylic, 6 x 1 ft.
I chose to photograph the river because as a landscape it is tangible, but like memory is fluid and changeable. It flows onward as water from distant places is continuously added to it. “Each landscape is a palimpsest, in which particular circumstances determine the survival of remnant forms. In many instances, landforms are destroyed as quickly as they are created.” Geologic memory, like human memory is selective. Limnologist Gary John Brierley analyzes how imprints from the past influence the way landscapes look and operate. The river’s course along with the water and sediment it carries trace an incomplete history of its passage through the land.

“Perhaps inevitably, all landscapes have a partial or selective memory of past events and processes. Products from past events are eroded, reworked and preferentially preserved, resulting in selective memory. Many things pass through, but very few are recorded.”

I photograph the Missouri River, travel to it, walk its banks, and represent its surface. However, the prints withhold this experience and include only hints of the setting where the images were taken. The water is framed through the photograph, extracted then re-presented. The photographs are not revealed outside of the framework of their archival display. Each archive is mediated and filtered through its presentation and refers to place and displacement. The coordinates included in the title of the piece provide the only indications of the specific location were the images were taken. Instead of examining the individual photographs to observe changes in the surface of the water from one day to the next, the viewer witnesses the ongoing change within the tanks. Now it is the photographs themselves that are fleeting, rather than the river water rushing past.
There is an intentional vagueness to my archives. I use the word vague in my description both when considering the withholding and mediation of the images, but also in reference to the Italian meaning of the word vago, which implies wandering, movement, and mutability. During the process of combining the 1,000 images into one file to print, I would sometimes zoom in and peer towards the screen, looking for any identifiable shapes or details. Inevitably, the more images I added, the more vague the composite became, until it read only as a gradient of grays, greens, blues, and browns. In the gallery, as the viewer leans in to search for any recognizable detail they see their own reflection instead. It is as if the closer one gets to the image the further it recedes. The surface breaks apart into dots of pigment and the form is lost.

Rebecca Solnit describes the blue of distance in relation to desire and longing. “Blue is the color of longing for the distances you never arrive in. Just as the mountains cease to be blue when you arrive among them and the blue instead tints the next beyond” This blue is a place that we cannot reach, inhabit, or posses. I feel that there is a perpetual chasm between the subject and its photographic representation. This chasm manifests in the distance between the photographs I take of the river, and what is offered to the viewer in the final presentation. My longing lies in the desire to fully represent a subject through the photographic image, and awareness that the photograph leads not towards an understanding of the subject, but a photographic fiction.

“I had longed liked the idea of the river as a metaphor for memory. The river being a conscious thing containing memories – all the things it carries such as rocks, pebbles, shale. It is nature’s circulatory system.” Water and the moon are often coauthors of Susan Derges photographs, with the making of the image becoming a durational performance between river and artist. In seeking to eliminate intermediaries between her and her subjects, the surface of the
river became the transparency or negative, the moon acted as the exposure unit, and night her darkroom.

Figure 24 – Susan Derges, *Shorelines 1*, 1998. Silver dye bleach print, 40 1/2 x 95 1/2 in.

Derges subjects herself and her photographs to the environment, as she enters the river to immerse the prints under the surface for the length of their exposure. In order to produce this series, it was necessary for Derges to become acutely aware of tides and wave patterns, stating that the moon provided the pulse for the *River Taw* Series. Through her scientific research into alchemy, she realized “that when earlier scientists were conducting their experiments they were always aware of what was happening in the celestial spheres.” For Derges, the process of making became a conversation between artists and water. Even with her knowledge of the river and its tides, the river ultimately dictates what will appear and be fixed on the paper.
A stack of photographs with curled edges rests on a metal table. I grab the top print and place it on the surface of the water. It begins to spread, as if it reaching for the edges of the container. I carefully guide the print to one side and place another alongside it.

Figure 25 – Kari Varner. 600 of the 1,000 organic prints stacked chronologically, 2017.
Two rectangular glass tanks are positioned on the ground in a vertical line. Collectively, they contain 44 gallons of tap water. The same 1,000 photographs resulting from the 20 visits to the river have been printed on organic paper. They sit nearby in a very large stack, waiting to be placed in the water, one by one. This semi-transparent print is the image’s last vestige of individuality. Upon entering the archive, the prints experience an immediate material shift; it is impossible to access one without implicating another. The individual photographs that constitute the archive are withheld. Instead, the viewer encounters another kind of composite. Unlike the six-foot print, this amalgamation is mutable and ephemeral as we witness it transitioning from fluid but recognizable to fragmented beyond recognition. The coalescing of images marks a loss of individual identity, but prompts the adoption of a new expanded identification of what constitutes a photographic archive.
The photographs of the Missouri River water are returned to water. Once placed there, they cannot be extracted or separated from the rest of the archive. Imagery of the ripples and reflections of the water that were once discernible become abstracted beyond recognition. The photographic prints undergo a cycle of floating, drooping, falling, and settling. In this cycle they are first added to the water, then begin to spread towards the edges of the container, floating on the surface, and eventually sagging from the weight of the images above. As color is leached from the prints, cracks begin to form while the photographs break apart. The disintegrating prints hang down then sink and settle to the bottom. Frequently, remnants that have reached the bottom float back towards the top, or hover in the liminal space between, before drifting back down. Once settled, larger sections separate into increasingly smaller pieces until they resemble layers of sediment in a multi colored strata. After the images have fallen and the photographic dust has settled the archive appears to be at rest, as the process of disintegration continues. The photographic archive has transitioned from an archive of discrete items collected and categorized into a symbolic representation of the river itself.

Water, inkjet ink, dissolvable paper. These are the materials pictured in Figure 26, in a scene which when decontextualized, could pass as natural underwater environment. Yet, I continue to refer to this as a photographic archive. Archival projects typically manifest a compulsive desire for completeness, but this collection is meant to fragment into a new form. The unique imagery within each photographic print is lost, while the archive continues to more closely resemble the river represented in the original images. The contents of the tanks now behave more like a river than a photographic archive, and seem to more closely represent the experience of visiting the river than a stack of static photographs could.
“Rivers have, in greater degree than almost any other inanimate object, the appearance of animation, something resembling character. They are sometimes slow and dark looming, sometimes fierce and impetuous, sometimes bright and dancing and almost flippant.”

- Thomas Babington Macaulay

A swirling eddy breaching the otherwise placid surface, ripples that form and dissipate as the wind streaks past, the clouds parting after five consecutive gray days, these occurrences retreat as quickly as they come, ensuring my vigilance as I stand at the water’s edge. My experiences of observing the river and the water tanks are fraught with desire for permanence and change. I make images that are inherently fragile, impermanent, and sometimes animate, in an attempt to offer a similarly conflicted encounter to the viewer. The dynamism of the river is mirrored in the photograph filled tanks, as the prints float, fragment, fall, and settle.
Distillation is a central operation in alchemy, in which substances are rearranged in order to produce a state change within the material. In the Missouri River 38.81408088787352, -90.12370347726687 and 38.815604433618454, -90.1240794504915, 1,000 photographs are cast into water and eventually distilled into layers of sediment, they are composited into a single print, and the process of their transformation is condensed into a 30-minute video. The images of the river are organized, condensed, and re-presented within the parameters of the three distinct archival forms. The theoretical foundation of alchemy is the notion of the mutability of all matter. Instead of soaking paper in chemicals to develop and fix photographs; I use water as an alchemical substance of transformation. Water is the ever-present agent of change. It carved the circuitous route of the Missouri River, and creates fissures and fragments in my prints. In the Missouri River Archive, the collective break down of the photographic image and substrate is not a process of degradation, but reconstitution.

In order to understand the role of archiving in my practice, it became necessary to redefine what constitutes preservation of a photograph. The definition of preserve contains a common use of the term: keep or save from decomposition, but also includes a more general description of the word: keep possession of; retain. All of the components of the photographs that I introduce into the archives are retained and the exterior structure remains consistent, while the appearance of the archive has transformed. This notion of retention as conservation allows for an expanded classification of what constitutes a preserved artifact within an archive. As long as all the content remain within the archive, the entirety of the collection has been preserved.
While the foundation of alchemy was transformation, the ultimate ambition was preservation. The alchemist Magnum Opus was the discovery of the Philosopher’s Stone. The Stone was believed to be capable of turning base metals into gold, but more importantly provided immortality to those who utilized its rejuvenating properties. In order to achieve the preservation of self, a transformation of chemical processes must occur to create the stone. Once created, the stone preserved the life of those who consumed it, and converted common materials into precious ones, like nickel into gold or crystals into precious gems. This notion classifies a form of preservation only achieved through transmutation, and the coexistence of the two in one material. While the form of the photographs alter, the components of the photographic archive remain, preserved in a state of transformation.

In the water tanks archive, the image and substrate are equally vulnerable and disintegrate simultaneously. My use of on organic starch paper emphasizes the photographs status as material object and representational image. Contained within the stack of 8.5 x 11 sheet is the potential for concurrent individual and collective transformation as the artifacts evolve from print to sediment. The images hover between materiality and immateriality by making light and time tangible but still unfixed in their represented forms. “The science of exposing spirit hidden in matter, alchemy aims at dematerialized materiality” Through the process of disintegration, the prints reveal their potential to assume an infinite number of unanticipated configurations as they continue to dissolve into progressively finer dust. The photographs appear to dematerialize, while maintaining a fluid materially in their watery domain.
Now that the red light is flashing, I plunge the print through the floating plasmic layer. It curls back towards the surface, displacing fragments that now cascade down to the bottom of the tank. Everything sways for a few moments before returning to stillness. There is a long tendril almost ready to fall, and I know that inevitably I will miss this spontaneous display. I contemplate shaking it, forcing it downwards so that I may capture the moment. Knowing I must resist this temptation, I move to the other side of the tank.
The third form of the archive is displayed on a standard 32” wall mounted monitor. It is situated at a distance from the other archives, and could be perceived as a stand-alone piece due to its position in the gallery. The inclusion of a video presents a further mediation of the archive and the formulation of time present in the *Missouri River*. A modern tool for documentation further convolutes time, and moments of the archives past forms are revealed and reanimated. Depending on when the viewer visit the museum, it is likely that they will also encounter future forms of the archive, not yet reached by the tanks on display. This reanimation presents a ghost, former, or future self.

The river continues to flow past as I freeze a moment, making the ephemeral tangible. The fluid river has been made static, enshrined in the photograph. When the images are added to the tanks of water they are reanimated and the changes recorded. They sway, drop, rise, hover, and fall again. Eventually, when all images have fallen, settled, and fragmented, the archive will be seemingly static once again. Yet, the video record plays on a continuous loop, resurrecting the photographs, and never truly letting them rest. The archive forms and disintegrates again and again.

Figure 29 – Kari Varner, Video Still from *The Missouri River* 38.81408088787352, -90.12370347726687 and 38.815604433618454, 90.1240794504915. 2017.
“Nostalgia (from nostos return home, and algialonging) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy.”

Svetlana Boym outlines two nostalgic tendencies in which one focuses on the patching and reconstruction of lost or decaying histories, while the other dwells in loss and longing, preferring to linger on ruins and embrace the patina of age. In the Missouri River project I pursue both roles as an avid archivist feverishly documenting passing moments, and a purveyor of loss by intentionally increasing the rate of change.

The work itself evokes an accelerated production of nostalgia. All elements have been mediated and the information is unavailable in its traditional form. The armatures of the archive and image have fallen away, as the prints fragment before our eyes. While the pre-recorded video reanimates the transformation of the archive, it also generates an anticipatory nostalgia for the future changes that will occur. Although the tanks are on view, the contents will never appear exactly as they do in the video. Instead, viewers witness an accelerated non-linear re-presentation of the event. Despite having three versions of the same content, viewers are offered an incomplete picture with no recognizable form of archival preservation.

I feel a sense of dread when I depart from the river or leave the water tanks unattended. I long to return, and record the newest changes in the condition of both watery environments. With each return comes a sense of loss and discovery. Utilizing ephemeral materials heightens the sense of nostalgia and evokes a desire for permanence and stability. Starting on May 1st, the archive in the tanks will evolve in the museum, until its deinstallation on August 7th. I will miss many moments during the 98 days of transformation, knowing that a video can never capture the experience of seeing the piece, just as a photograph cannot portray the feeling of seeing the Missouri at the confluence site.
After three months the archive’s disintegration will cease. The tanks will be emptied, and the water evaporated from the fragmented photographic pulp. Once the prints, turned sediment are separated from the tanks and water, they will no longer exist as one of the three forms of the Missouri River archive. Inevitably, portions of the collection large and small will be lost when the tanks are emptied, and archive will no longer contain the complete catalog of 1,000 images. The photographic material will not lose its relationship to the river, but will likely be contextualized into another configuration of the archive. Ultimately, the water will be returned to the hydrologic cycle from which it came. The process of distillation and transformation will continue, as the prints become a dried fusion of 1,000 representations of the river in one abstracted and condensed form.

The monolithic print, and video documenting the disintegration process, constituting the other two forms of the three-part archive, will continue to exist as fixed representation of the Missouri River Archive. While the building of the collection has concluded, I have only attempted to represent a few instances within the Missouri River’s end at the confluence site during my six months of documentation. The empty glass vessels now have the potential to support new archives, transformations, and representations.
Conclusion

During the past six months I have taken 1,000 images of the river, which display the intricate variation of the ripples and waves, subtle shifts in light, and shadows tracking across the water’s surface. However, they are unavailable for viewing in an unmediated traditional photographic form. Instead, I have elected to present three forms of the same archive all seeking to convey the experience of the Missouri River and its permanent mutability.

It took me 1,000 photographs to confirm what I know and I do not know. I do not know the Missouri River, and the more meticulously I try and record it, the further it expands, boundlessly, ever outward, and away from my ability to represent it. Like a mirror, the river reflects my longing to know a subject that recedes from me as quickly as I approach it.

I do know that transformation and preservation can coexist in one artifact or archive, as my archives transform to dust and settle into photographic sediment. The dissolution of the photographs is not a loss, but a reformulation that results in the discovery of new photographic forms.

After all the photographic dust has settled, and the tanks have been emptied, the river will continue to flow towards its impending union with the Mississippi and onward to places unknown.
Notes

3 Ibid., 26.
4 Ibid., 3.
6 Ibid., 364.
7 Ibid.
9 Briony Fer, *Roni Horn aka Roni Horn* (Gottingen: Steidl & Partners, 2009), 145.
13 Ibid., 15.
14 Ibid., 16.
17 Ibid., 746.
18 Ibid., 744.
20 The 12 sites in order of when they were visited: Videy Island, Videy Island, Vestubaer, Hólavallagardur, Reykjadalur, Hveragerdi, Hveragerdi, Thingvellir, Thingvallavatn, Skogafoss, Vik, Dryhólaey.
21 The 16 locations in order of first to last visit: Videy Island, Reykjavik, Vestubaer, Blue Lagoon, Krusovik, Grindavik, Kleifavatan, Reykjadalur, Hveragerdi, Thingvellir, Alaskan Lupine, Seljalandsfoss, Skogafoss, Vik, Dyrhólaevugur Dryhólaey.
22 Briony Fer, *Roni Horn aka Roni Horn* (Gottingen: Steidl & Partners, 2009), 131.
24 This is a list of dates that I visited and photographed the Missouri River.
25 A complete list of all one thousand images used for the three forms of the archive represented by their file names.
26 250 of the prints were placed in the tank and left to disintegrate for 30 days. The results were filmed for 20 days, and these are the dates when the filming took place.
From the 20 days of filming, the footage was distilled into a 30 minute looping video, using 131 video clips.

Once the work is installed in the museum, I will visit 27 times in order to place 1,000 organic prints in the two tanks of water.


Ibid., 30.


The oldest known surviving photograph was taken by Nicéphore Niépce in 1826 or 1827.


Ibid., 77.

Ibid., 81.


I find myself describing the photograph as a corruptible body that is digested upon its introduction to the archive. The archive is presented as one collective corpus, with the viewer consuming all 1,000 photographs of the archive at once.

Allan Sekula, “Reading an Archive, Photography between labour and capital.” *Photography Reader*, 446.


Ibid., 27.


Ibid., 27.


Ibid., 53.
Bibliography


