

DISRUPT



CHANTELLE MITCHELL • DIEGO RAMÍREZ • IZABELA PLUTA • JOSEPHINE MEAD
STELLA N'DJOKU & JULIA ANASTASIA PELOSI-THORPE • KARL HALLIDAY
MOLLY STEPHENSON • NAZLI BAHMANI • ŠEJLA KAMERİĆ

Blue Spectrum & Descent Study

Blue spectrum and descent study developed into an extensive series of unique cyanotype prints, under the same title, and appear in the artist's exhibition, *Measures of Refraction* at Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Sydney.

IZABELA PLUTA

Deep sea diving is something
I never expected to do.

I think about the ocean and its body of water as a surreal form which has inspired me to consider vastness beyond a mere concept: of how water is experienced and what affect it leaves upon you.

When I look out to the horizon from land, as it encompasses the sky and the sea, it continues into an unthinkable distance. Its span impossible to perceive, as light and colour operate and combine in constant flux.

Under the sea this works in
a completely different way.





In 2018, curiosity led me to an underwater rock formation off the shores of Yonaguni-Jima in Japan.

Locals refer to it as 'The Monument' – a mythologically disputed site located near a fault line on the cusp of the Pacific Ocean and the East China Sea which lies between 5 and 25 metres beneath the water's surface.

Before the last Ice Age, some 8000 years ago, the area was above sea level, and so contention lies around the question of whether this formation is a man-made artefact or naturally formed by the currents. The site has been studied by marine scientists and archaeologists since it was found in 1986 by a local diver, Kihachiro Aratake.

That same year, coincidentally,
I left poland and migrated
to Australia.



I arrived on the island during a period of perilous currents and wild winds in winter when water temperature keeps to around 18-degrees. The Monument is difficult to reach. Owing to these precarious conditions and its position off Iseki Point, 100km from the eastern shore of Taiwan, access is only possible for a few months a year.

That day the sky was overcast, with choppy water and easterly winds. Twenty minutes out and south-east from the harbour, shale cliffs appear and begin to line the coastline. They seem as though they have slipped into the sea – you can sense their weight – the palpable force with which rock collapsed to form the inversed craters of shattered debris beneath. They're stacked in repeating semi-horizontal layers and bear a certain gravity of unquantifiable scale. They've been created by the hollowing out of (fallen) mass which is echoed in the protrusions left residue in the tidal zone – they remind me of photographic inversions: of negatives and positives.



Until our small boat reaches the exact location just to the edge of the sunken rocks, the possibility of diving remains uncertain. The sense of knowing what lies beneath, without the means to witness, is ridden with anxiety and hope (although I anticipate what I'm about to see, it is uncertain what the experience will bring).

The white-washed surface of the water: a barrier shielding the monument from sight.

Experience is only made
possible in an ether which
is not made up of air,
but of water.



A local diver jumps into the messy waters, feeling out the strength of invisible currents. He resurfaces minutes later, shouting an affirming “Okay”.

The moment suddenly becomes very real and with it my intuition and unease of going underwater shift into action. I move quickly, securing my gear, putting on my mask. Before I know it, I’m ushered to the boat’s stern and there is nowhere to move except forward – off the edge and into the swell that makes my chest tighten.

The piercing noise of the crashing waves and the boat motor punctuate this heightened instant of what is about to happen and release a rush of adrenaline.

As I jump, the sound breaks.

My body, encased in dense neoprene, contracts as I’m embraced by the cold water. It fills my ears. The sound of my breath, amplified through the respirator, takes over my awareness of my new surroundings.

I’m no longer next to anything I understand, but within something whose materiality I can feel constantly on and around me.



The cacophony of the wind's tempestuous chaos, the sonorous diesel-powered engine and the endless collision of surface waves turns instantly to silence. Punctuated only by the steady rhythm of my inhalation and exhalation, calms my body as it adjusts to the conditions, my mind races. The space around me is full, experienced as a heaving volume. A mass that pushes against me while I push back onto it's encompassing force and move through it.

Water is denser than air.

I breathe and equalise, pinching my nose to expel the pressure in my head as I gradually descend, feet first. My body moves gently, arms and legs bending and stretching through the water, as if in slow motion. My breathing slows. I think of all the things I cannot see through the thickness of the blue. I can't make sense of the distance. My slow-moving body is hurried by the current's quickness, guiding me towards The Monument without thought or direction. I'm aware of the slippage between floating and drifting - sinking. I simultaneously move with the water while pushing against its force with my limbs. The only constant is the familiarity of my breath.



Blue remains blue. Rays of light break the surface of the water, racing themselves to the ocean's depths.

There the blue changes, perceived in vertical troughs that come from above and fall beneath, dissolving into darkness.

As the light travels farther, only blue light remains – eventually being absorbed as well. As the blue is all around me it's all that I can think of.

I try and conceive the measure of it – its endlessness in relation to the scale of my body. A speck. Magnitude. Endless distance that terrifies me.



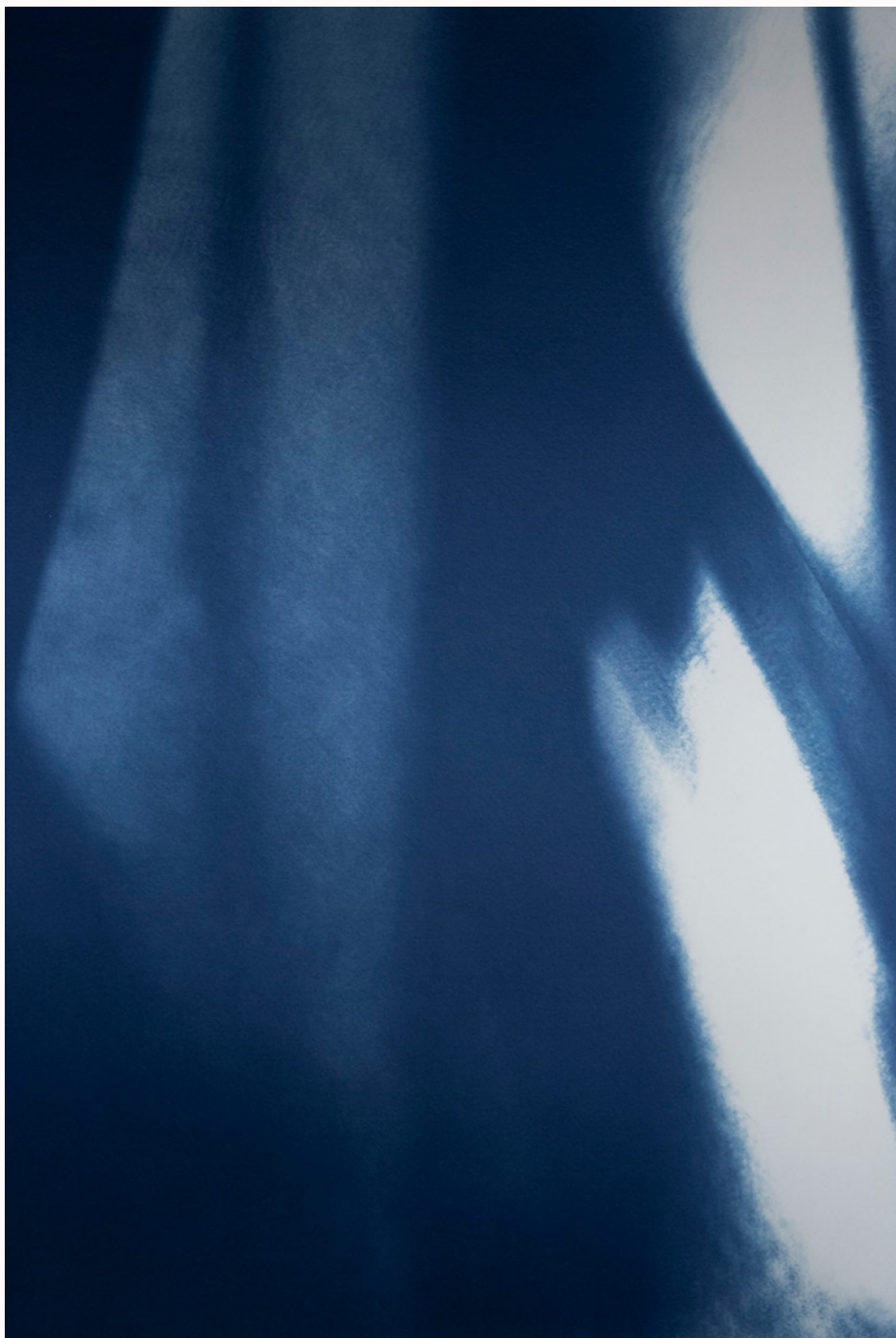




Eventually The Monument appears. Although I've seen it in photographs many times before this affective moment, I am not certain of what I'm seeing. I can't comprehend its totality because the water visibility is too poor, so I see it at constant speed, moving across it. It appears as if in sections, like a film; much too large to see whole unless I were above it, in crystal waters or above the sea. The very surface of the water obstructs its view.

The shale rock appears blue – sometimes revealing brown hues as the lack of light upon it removes its legibility. Its texture is ambiguous, concealed in parts with algae, a materiality camouflaging angular rock into softer forms and shapes.

The current continues to move me. I drift across the massive form as if on auto-pilot, seeing only what the water visibility allows. So many variables are at play and beyond my control – I'm completely unanchored, lingering in the fluctuating distance between my body and the formation. I give way to the invisible movement of water. Unable to see the current that I have relinquished my senses to, I can feel the force of its turbulence as I'm pulled closer to the anchored rock and then as quickly as I find my buoyancy, I'm pulled away and along until I'm past it-having been able to touch the rock for only a few moments because the feeling of it heightened my awareness of letting go to movement. Visceral.



The cold water on my body becomes colder.
The skin around my eyes becomes sensitive
to the pressure and the glass of my mask as it
fogs. As my body moves, without orientation
or gravity through the water, droplets trace
the surface of the glass and I'm able to see
just beyond the visible vapour of my breath
manifesting itself on the surface.

I'm too nervous to attempt to flush the mask
at depth for fear of not being able to replace
it in that same swift movement. A seemingly
simple action, which I have been taught,
always becomes an overwhelming task when
I'm underwater. I'm fearful of not being able to
open my eyes again and instead needing to
complete the dive with my eyes closed.

For me, the only thing more unnerving than
not being able to perceive the distance, is to
not be able to see its blue. Underwater, the
senses become heightened. Feeling water upon
my skin as a relentless contact compacting
upon me as I dive deeper is a powerful
physical sensation. It also manoeuvres in the
space of my imagination as endless space, a
contradiction to the feeling of compression.

I am always uncertain
of location.



STELLA N'DJOKU
&
JULIA ANASTASIA PELOSI-THORPE