

# This sense of wonder

Brigitte Lustenberger

*«Life and death, the flicker that separates one from the other,  
fast as a bat's wing, more beautiful than every sonnet.»*

Dorian Gray, from the TV Show *Penny Dreadful*

This sense of wonder is an analog and digital multimedia installation – a project at the interface of photography, images of light, projection, photograms and transparencies, including a mix of genres and different media. Transitory aspects are embedded in various photographic processes and ideas of presentation.

The work has been awarded with the Merck-Prize 2018 of the Darmstädter Tage der Fotografie.







*Bugs unknown VI*



Like a scientist I collect flowers and dead insects and fix them to glass slides – with glue, hairspray, tape, or leaving them in salty water to literally dry them onto the slide.



They are frozen in time, but still decomposing – becoming deconstructed scientific abstractions.

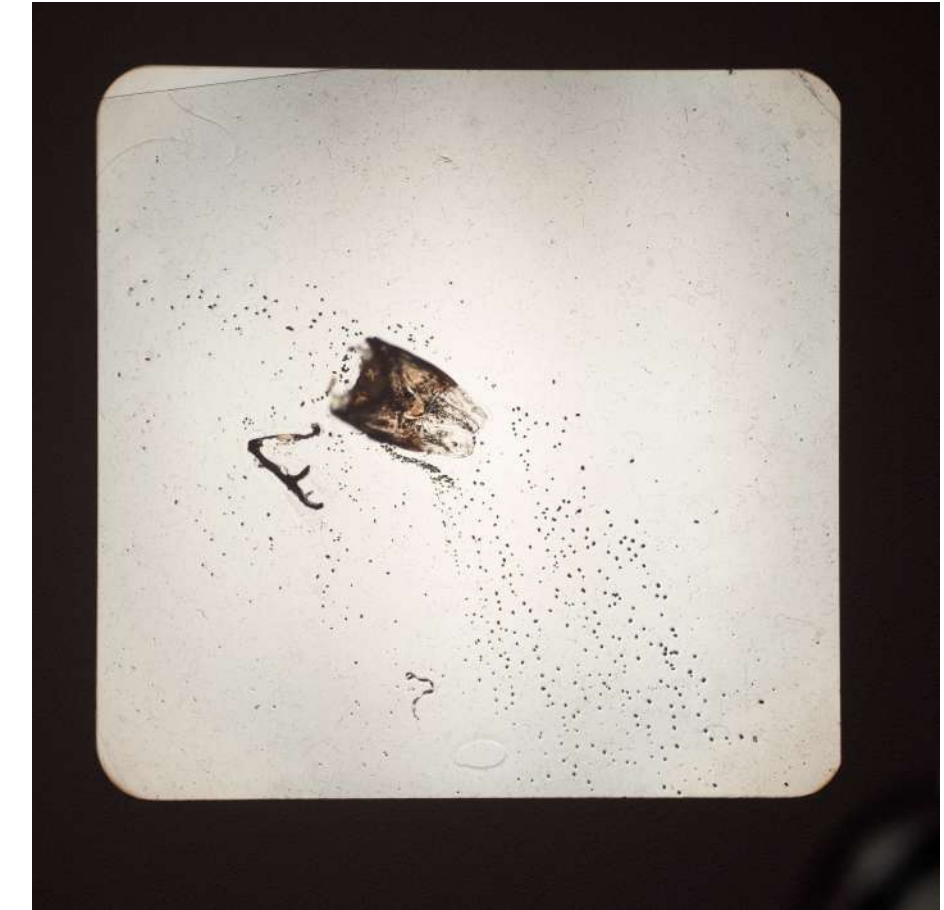




Installation view at Mathildenhöhe



The bright light of old slide projectors and light desks transform the insects' semitransparent body parts into fragile but powerful projections.



The transparencies are transformed into abstract imagery whose gorgeous details are only visible because the enlargement.





I am mixing different media and  
photographic genres to push and  
break the boundaries of photography.

*I heard the blackbird sing*

*Bugs unknown II*







*Allegory of a vanitas*



Installation view at Mathildenhöhe





Installation view at Kunsthau Interlaken

An in water submerged portrait surprises us with an intense almost eery encounter. The photographed woman looks the viewer straight in the eye from under the water, Ophelia-like, peaceful but unsettling.



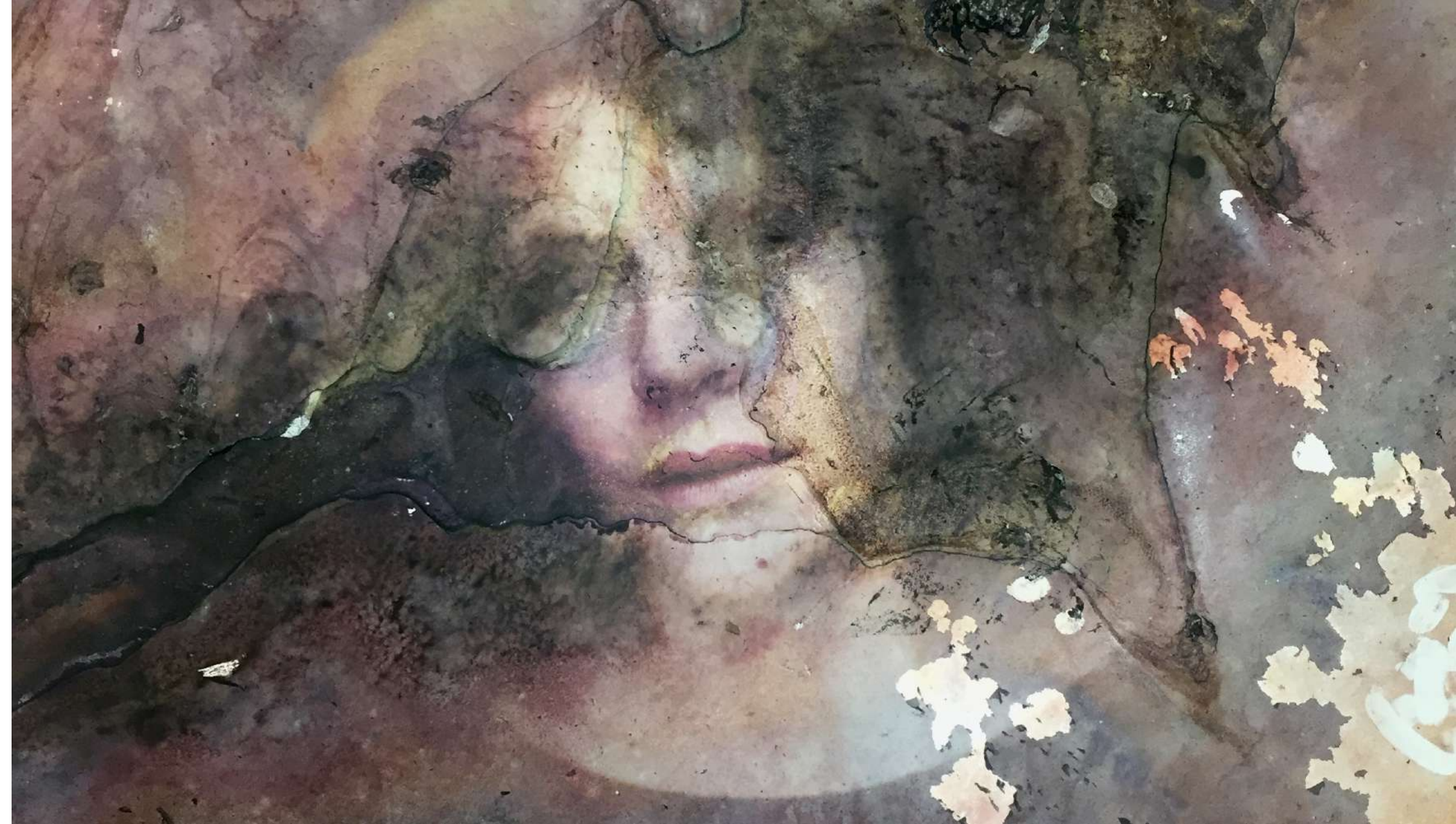




Installation views at Fotofestival Verzasca







Slowly the emulsion of the C print dissolves and we can literally observe the decay of the photograph. The disturbingly beautiful decay of the under water portrait references subtly and unequivocally the transitoriness of being.





*For better for worse*

In the municipal council hall of the Erlacherhof in Bern my works play with decay, with the beauty of the vanishing and decomposition, but also with the sadness of unachieved goals - in the spirit of Schiller's interpretation of an elegy: mourning the seemingly insurmountable distance between ideal and reality.



Installation view at ArtStadtBern





*The prolog of an elegy*

After being submerged in water for over a week the emulsion of the C print slowly dissolves and produces a new reading of the original portrait. The male gaze in the photographic portrait comes apart and almost disappears in a veritable blaze of color and form.

*Time has come*







*Is it an ending though?*



Installation view at Tart Gallery





Installation view at Tart Gallery



Light tables show the unique slides as photographic sculptures.





*We passed the setting sun*

*Is there something else though*







*An apparition of memory*

The slides are incredibly delicate and lead into exploring the fragility of life.

*The things which I have seen*







*A tender grief that is not woe*



*The memory of our pain*





*Don't look now IV*



My chiaro-scuro portraits and still lifes literally go back to the meaning of the word portrait which descends from the Latin word *portrahere*. It translates as to bring something to light, to reveal.



For my analog images the only light source is natural day light coming through a window. The images are of a serene reduction leaving as much as possible to the viewer's imagination.





In the Baroque tradition portraits are about status or identity and still lifes evoke meaning by showing certain objects. I drain the image of contextualizing content, focusing on transient aspects and leaving as much as possible to the viewer's imagination.

*Some time before*

*Birds*







*Flowers XIX*



*Still Untitled I*





*Flowers XXII*

*Still Untitled II*







*Flowers XXIX*

*Flowers XXXIX*







*Bugs unknown III*

My photographs lead into a lost and enraptured universe of withered and faded things: A beautifully wilted flower, the tenderness of an insect's wing, a hint of daylight on a lost, almost forgotten world.

*Flowers V*



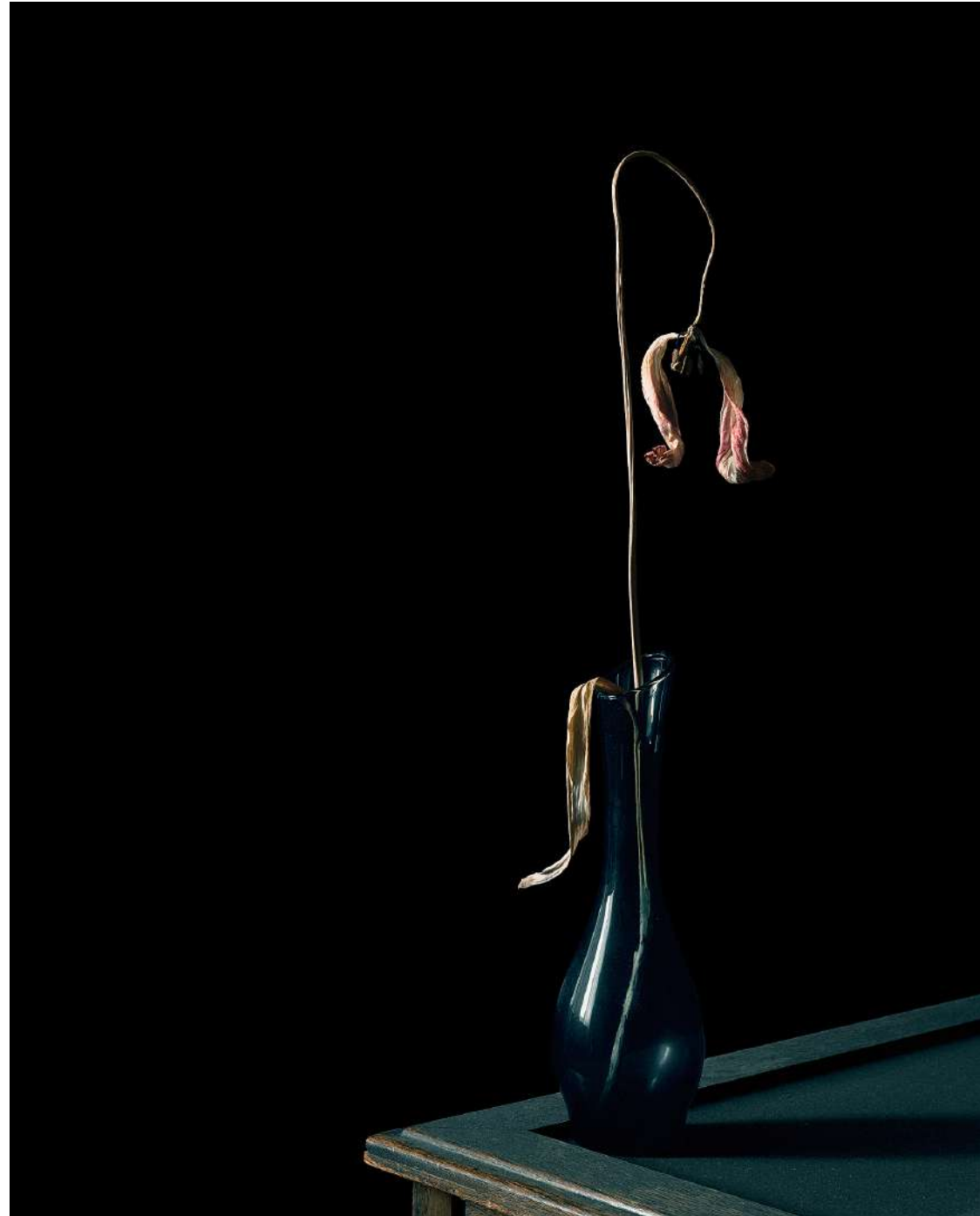




*I thought I would be afraid*

My work questions our notions of transience and shows poetically the ephemeral, fragile but also cruel beauty of decay and aging.

*Flowers XII*







*For its mate will come to mourn*

Photographed moments are no more than representations of the past lingering on the beauty of decay. They are ephemeral like the electronic light that fuels the projectors: As soon as the power supply is cut off, the images fade into darkness without leaving a trace.

Projection: *Thoughts too deep for tears*







«As a photographer, Lustenberger works meticulously like a scientist, aesthetically like a baroque painter and poetic like a lyricist. Her multimedia approach, her spatial experiments and sculptural thinking are breaking the boundaries of photography.»  
Jury Merck Prize 2018

*Your are the one who flew into the sun*

*Thoughts too deep for tears*

