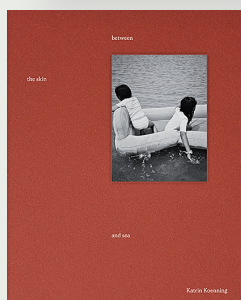
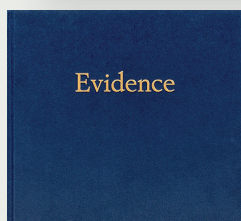
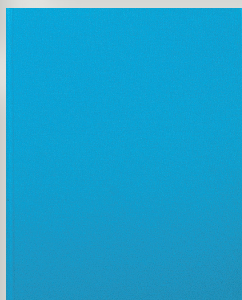
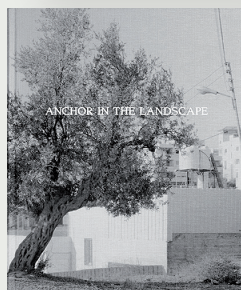
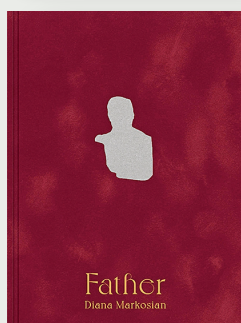


## Reviews by Dalia Al-Dujaili and Diane Smyth



# Bookshelf

## Why Exhibit? Vol 2

Anna-Kaisa Rastenberger and Iris Sikking

Fw:Books, €30

Back in 2018, Anna-Kaisa Rastenberger and Iris Sikking published *Why Exhibit? Positions on Exhibiting Photographies*, an intriguing mix of essays and interviews with artists, curators and writers, circling round the question of what it is to display work in physical space, particularly when there are so many alternatives. Now they are back with *Why Exhibit? Vol 2*, which has the subtitle *On Curating Photography*. As the subtitle suggests, it hones in on curating and curators, though it does still include artists; it also returns to the essays-plus-transcripts format.

As before it is an interesting read, and the talking heads are well-chosen; slightly more mysterious is why some of the conversations are several years old, conducted back in 2021. Their contents sometimes necessitate a double-take mental shift back to Covid; at other times the book reflects more recent, even less comfortable changes. There is a fascinating conversation with Kateryna Radchenko, for example, on creating images in Ukraine after the full-scale invasion by Russia; there is a brief mention by Tanvi Mishra of the cancellation of the Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie in Germany after curator Shahidul Alam posted pro-Palestinian content on his social media.

Beyond that it is a wide church, with contributions on many and varied aspects of curation; it is almost a magazine in sheer zeitgeistiness, though published in book format. Deeper questions circle, perhaps about what curators add, or why they exist, or even about photography itself. Eszter Erdosi and Taru Elfving's contributions stand out, wondering fundamentally about what it is to look, and the inherent violence of the "trespass of the boundary of visibility". **BJP**

fw-books.nl



Installation view of *Project Iceworm* by Anastasia Mityukova. Image © Jens Nober, from *Why Exhibit? Vol 2*.

## Father

Diana Markosian

Aperture, £40

*Father* feels familiar – Diana Markosian takes us into her dad’s home in a way that is highly personal and yet, at the same time, deeply universal in its depiction of domestic warmth. But something haunting lies beneath the surface of these seemingly tender images of one man and his daughter. Markosian’s latest monograph is a moving narrative of estrangement, reconciliation and the search for missing family members, both an intimate memoir and a shared meditation on loss and reconnection.

Through a combination of documentary photographs, archival materials and her own diaristic writing, Markosian explores her relationship with her estranged father and the experience of finding him in Armenia, after years of not knowing him. The cover, with his silhouette debossed, reflects this – it is a copy of a family photo in which Markosian’s mother cut out her father. Both lyrical and raw, the book speaks to the complexities of parenthood and family, and the dissonance between idealised notions of a parent and the reality of their absence.

Markosian’s story begins with her childhood in Moscow, where her parents’ separation set in motion her father’s gradual erasure. After immigrating to California at the age of seven with her mother and brother,

Markosian slipped into an existence in which her father was not only physically absent but deliberately excised from their family history. For her father, she and her brother became missing children, and he sought to find them for years.

The book’s visual narrative mirrors the fragmented nature of memory and familial bonds, and Markosian interweaves her contemporary photographs with archival images and snapshots, to create a mosaic that is both intimate and unnerving. The diary text that accompanies these visuals lends vulnerability, as she recounts her journey to Armenia to find her father. The style is both documentary and stylised, demonstrating the photographer’s range and flexibility.

The inclusion of an empty envelope in the back of each book invites readers to participate in the narrative by sharing their own stories of loss and reconciliation. This addition transforms *Father* from a solitary memoir into a collective exploration of intimate bonds and the human need for connection. As a follow-up to her acclaimed first book, *Santa Barbara* (2020), which followed her mother’s movements, *Father* further proves Markosian’s ability to weave intensely personal stories with broader social and cultural themes. **BJP**

aperture.org

Image from *Father*  
© Diana Markosian.



Image from *Anchor in the Landscape*  
© Adam Broomberg and Rafael Gonzalez.



## Anchor in the Landscape

Adam Broomberg and Rafael Gonzalez

Mack Books, £45

Many books and photoseries have been made about displacement in Palestine. But few try to capture the land and its ecology as keepers of Palestinian memory, heritage and trauma. Adam Broomberg and Rafael Gonzalez's *Anchor in the Landscape* positions the tree – the olive tree to be exact – as just that: an anchor and a vessel which witnesses entire generations come and go, and go again.

The olive tree is a sacred species in the West Asia region, and for many Arabs and Jews it is a source of livelihood as well as a non-human ancestor. Broomberg and Gonzalez's images therefore style the olive tree with graceful, even spiritual, reverence. But nowhere are the ties to land more troubled, tense and tried than in Palestine, and Broomberg and Gonzalez are well aware of the political connotations of photographing even a simple tree there. Shot in black-and-white, the portraits of olive trees in Palestine are displayed in the book alongside their physical coordinates, placing them in a very real locality, rather than as an abstraction or a figurative, romanticised notion of connection to land.

Though the book is quiet, and olive trees are relatively small, here they are depicted as majestic, almost larger than life, and seemingly speaking of a wisdom and timelessness that even outdates this political and social conflict. The only written interjection is an essay by Dr Irus Braverman at the end, which quotes a Palestinian villager. "My olive trees and my sons are the same. They are all my children," he laments, after farmer Bilal Mohammad Saleh was shot in the chest while picking olives on his family's land in the northern West Bank.

As a result of settler violence against Palestinian farmers and harvesters, the act of picking olives has become a dangerous endeavour, speaking to a wider, sinister reality of forced displacement; the missiles of war also colour even innocent landscapes as violent and traumatic places. Olive trees support the livelihoods of more than 100,000 Palestinian families, but since 1967, 800,000 Palestinian olive trees have been destroyed by Israeli authorities and settlers. Suddenly, the olive grove becomes a site for much more than harvesting; grief, confusion and the need for regrowth become intertwined, at the roots. **BJP**

[mackbooks.co.uk](http://mackbooks.co.uk)

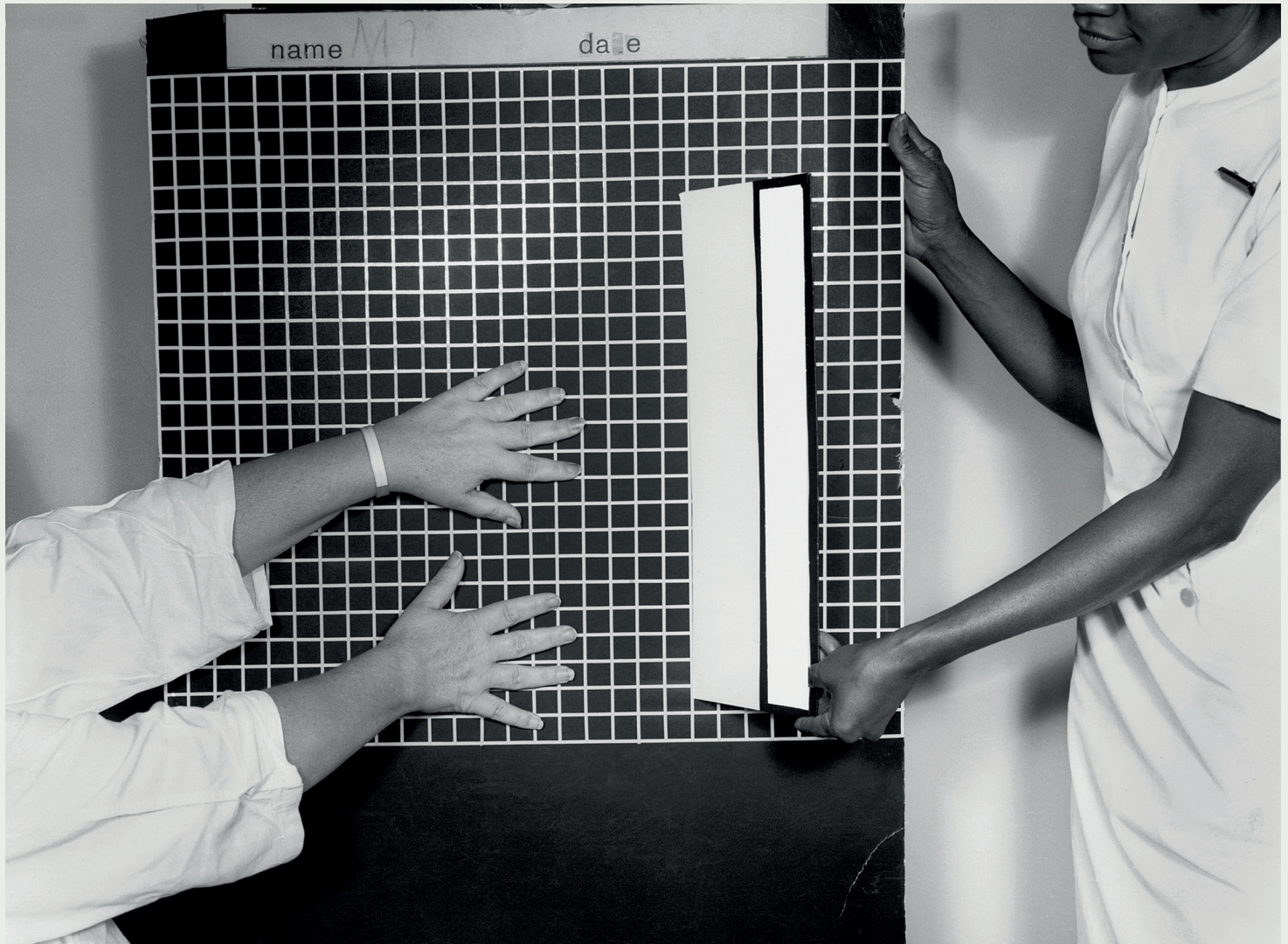


Image from *Evidence*  
© Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel.

## Evidence

Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel

DAP, £45

It is a stone-cold classic of course, first published in 1977 and cited continuously by artists and academics ever since. That does not make *Evidence* any less striking, as this handsome new edition attests. Made by Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel from 1975–77, *Evidence* is a collection of images gathered from industrial, scientific, governmental and other institutional archives around the US West Coast, where they had been made to document certain events. Sultan and Mandel opted to omit information about those events, or what the images were supposed to evidence, leaving just a peculiar string of visuals. Photography might be indexical, a recording of what is in front of the lens (assuming it is documentary) but this indexicality struggles to convey meaning when context is stripped away.

What is left behind is by turns humorous and disturbing, an unfolding series of test shoots or crime scenes. The images all seem absurd, portraying humans and the occasional animal as comic victims of unknowable technology. The passing of time has, if anything, made the images less knowable, though perhaps easier to date, the style of the clothes now bookended in a particular period, the sheer quality of the photographs speaking of large format analogue technology.

Ironically, the book itself has become the context for these images, many of which will be familiar to readers; in this edition there is also an essay by Sandra S Phillips, curator of photography at SFMoMA, providing exhaustive detail about the original project and the artistic scene in which it was made. Even so, the photographs in *Evidence* slide out of control, suggesting their ultimate unknowability. We are surrounded by ever more images, yet we do not really know what they convey, and therefore how they act on us; more thought-provoking still, even if images are supplemented with captions, we do not know how our brains might combine or detach these details. **BJP**

artbook.com

## Between the skin and the sea

Katrin Koenning

Chose Commune, €55

Shot between 2020–23, *Between the skin and the sea* covers a seismic period in global history marked by lockdowns, quarantines and the threat of a small but deadly virus. Shot in ‘Australia’, as Katrin Koenning puts it, “AKA unceded Wurundjeri, Tati Tati, Mutti Mutti, Gubbi Gubbi, Gunai Kurnai and Taungurung Country”, the project is also born of a contemporary experience of global warming and uncontrollable fire, and a very personal loss. There is only a short text to point the reader in these directions though, and you would not necessarily know any of them from the images. Depicting often-domestic scenes, they instead quietly appreciate the small moments of a good life – sleepy babies, clean washing, fresh fruit and the beauty of cats.

Mostly shot in black-and-white, with occasional bursts of colour, these images are largely timeless and often universal; there is a shot of a woman cradling a young girl’s leg, for example, which is relatable as a parent, or as a child. There is room to wax lyrical here about the everyday and extraordinary but *Between the skin and the sea* wisely does not try; there is no essay beyond the enigmatic introductory text and some thanks and credits.

“Here, tales of entanglement, relation, connection and intimacy unfold,” writes Koenning. “Leaning into the shadows, the photographs trace networks of love, grief, kinship, shelter and repair.”

Currently intent and concept sometimes seem to take precedence over the artwork, but *Between the skin and the sea* is that rare thing – page after page of absolute killer shots. Koenning seems to be able to take fantastic photographs of just about anything, and her book is a visual delight; the networks of love are discernible, through the repetition of certain faces and places, but there is space for the images to be images, without trying to speak for them or push an interpretation. *Between the skin and the sea* received a Polycopies & Co publishing support grant and it is easy to see why; this is a photobook lover’s photobook, and maybe a photographer’s photographer, though both deserve to have wide appeal. **BJP**

chosecommune.com



Image from *Between the skin and the sea* © Katrin Koenning.

Image from *Aisha* © Yumna Al-Arashi.



## Aisha

Yumna Al-Arashi

Edition Patrick Frey, €68

The form of *Aisha* interrogates the colonial interpretation of the archive, and the imperial roots of photography. Photographic technology found its use most distinctively across former colonies of Europe, North Africa, the African continent and West Asia; today, Yumna Al-Arashi interrogates the violence of these methods, and subverts the power of the camera to hand authority and dignity back to the women at the heart of her project.

*Aisha*, which is named after Al-Arashi's grandmother, finds its origin in the artist's maternal lineage. Her grandmother has traditional tattoos and Al-Arashi became interested in their aesthetic, which is found across the North Africa and Middle East regions. The ancient art has pre-Islamic roots, but became less utilised as Islam spread more widely; now the tattoos face erasure completely, and older rural women are the last to carry the body-ink tradition. This book is a remedy against institutional archives, many of which house images of these women in glass cases and behind closed doors. Al-Arashi intends to democratise her archive, and humanise once again the people of the region.

The book design, by Naima Schalcher, also speaks volumes. The images are full-bleed, and since Al-Arashi chose to include every shot she took over her four-year project, it is a hefty tome. Even so, it avoids being a heavy read. Instead, it is paced with slow movement, images that are almost copies or duplicates, showing people or animals moving in and out of the frame. *Aisha* also includes Al-Arashi's diary entries and poetic vignettes, printed on thinner paper through which the words show in reverse. It is a transparency that reflects Al-Arashi's ethical intentions.

The images are vibrant and colourful and emit a quiet joy. The simplicity of the photography is refreshing, and Al-Arashi's vulnerability is evident throughout as she attempts to challenge her own ideals of images and come to terms with the violent history of the medium. **BJP**

[editionpatrickfrey.com](http://editionpatrickfrey.com)



## Wall as Horizon – Photographic Survey Neuchâtel 2023–2024

Laurence Rasti and A, G, L, M,  
N, N, T, Z

Scheidegger Spiess, £45

Made in a prison in the Swiss Canton of Neuchâtel, Laurence Rasti's *Wall as Horizon* is a thought-provoking reflection on incarceration. The stage is set by the opening essay by academic Luca Gnaedinger, which is titled *Pour quit sont faites les prisons?* (*Who are prisons made for?*) and concludes that, though ostensibly about deterrence, prevention, punishment or rehabilitation, prison is actually “an essential tool for the legitimisation and maintenance of social order”.

Rasti worked in a short-term prison, in which inmates typically stay for a year or less on sentences or awaiting trial; they have been put away for minor infractions, or even in lieu of fines. As Gnaedinger points out, prison populations are unfairly skewed to the disadvantaged, and taking a sentence rather than a fine shows that clearly: meting out more punishment to the destitute who cannot pay. Once inside, prisoners find themselves in debt, because of the cost of their trial and because being incarcerated is expensive. Everyday items such as shampoo are also not cheap in the prison shop, as Rasti shows in pages of products and their prices.

Rasti includes images of the prison, set against the backdrop of a quotidian Swiss town; as she points out, prisons are public, paid for by all, and yet usually hidden away. She also includes images of inmates and comments thoughtfully on her role in this process in a conversation with Federica Martini, another academic, whose work centres on the production of invisibility. Rasti's instinct is to anonymise the portraits, to avoid permanently freezing the men as prisoners, but some choose to show their faces, and she is unwilling to ‘infantalise’ their decision.

The photographer also showed the men how to use pinhole cameras and make cyanotypes, and includes their images; interspersed throughout the book are their letters and comments, giving more insight into their experiences. Some of the texts are heartbreakingly absurd, notably a letter asking for particular biscuits to be restocked in the shop. In another comment, the writer states he will be back in jail soon, “because I would be forced to commit certain offences to survive. Because you can't survive on 250 CHF of emergency aid per month”. **BJP**

[scheidegger-spiess.ch](http://scheidegger-spiess.ch)

Image from *District* © Vladyslav Andrievsky.

## District

Vladyslav Andrievsky

Syntax, €50

“Perhaps, he would devote himself to a dream. Perhaps, the dream would devote itself to him. Perhaps, it makes sense to abandon any devotions and not to spend on them the last of what is left of his life. But then what to spend it on? Perhaps, this answer is something that will never be known, because there is always hope of spending it, and what to spend it on is only a question of perverted hope.”

So begins Olha Pavlenko’s mysterious text *Prince of His Own Pattern*, towards the end of the book *District*. Before it are a series of images by Vladyslav Andrievsky, after it are blank pages, some thanks and credits, and a one-sentence statement reading: “The photos took place in Kyiv before the full-scale invasion.” The latter is so striking it is impossible not to read the rest of the book in light of it, the shots of youngsters and huge housing blocks lent new pathos given the circumstances in which they now exist (or perhaps no longer exist). Most of the images are shot in inky black-and-white, but there is the odd photograph looking up, showing the sun and blue sky breaking the cloud.

The text could refer to anyone searching for meaning and the will to keep going, but this context also makes both the writing and images feel urgent; finding resilience can be difficult but in Andrievsky and Pavlenko’s case it is inspiring. They have got together to form a publishing company and *District* is their first book, Andrievsky joking they did it themselves because they could not find a publisher. His comments are modest but, like the images, also speak of something brave and even punky; the urge to live the dream and pursue the perverted hopes, to not be defined by circumstance. **BJP**

@syntaxcontact





Image from *Mnemosyne Grove*  
© Georgia Metaxas.



## Mnemosyne Grove

Georgia Metaxas

Perimeter Editions, £29

Reusing family photos has become a popular contemporary trope, a way to acknowledge prior archives and, often, underappreciated histories. *Mnemosyne Grove* does both, utilising footage Metaxas' father shot on a trip to Greece when she was a child, but there are some twists. Her family's father was originally from Greece, but had emigrated to Australia at the start of the 20th century, and the footage is mostly of 'back home' in Europe. The Metaxas' attachment to the country has outlived many years away, and also survives in the artists' images, which include individual trees named as if they are family members.

Her father's footage is thought-provoking in other ways too because, as footage, it has allowed Metaxas to create short runs of similar images, which she interprets in terms of dactylic hexameter (the rhythmic scheme used in Ancient Greek texts). Her father died as they returned from this trip, which lends a sense of reflection to the images he shot; as the book's title suggests – named after the Greek goddess of memory and remembrance – this publication explores what we store away and how we then see it.

Mnemosyne is also known as the inventor of language and words, and they too play into this work; very little text is included, but there are sections bilingually numbered in English and Greek. Images are good at recording the particular, the individual tree rather than the plant or species; in his footage, Metaxas Snr recorded his family's relationship to a particular piece of land, though both have changed over time. But words do something much less specific, and different language systems reflect different ideologies. Metaxas has been drawn back to the motherland, though she is also now moved again, and these days lives in London; beyond her, and us, the landscape endures, eliding our attempts at control. **BJP**

[perimeterbooks.com](http://perimeterbooks.com)

**Losing Ground**  
 **David O'Mara**  
(Self-Published: 2018)

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**Paper:** Found paper  
**Cover:** Found billboard poster  
**Printing:** Found photographs tipped-in  
**Binding:** Handbound  
**Book size:** 42.5 x 30 cm  
**Edition size:** 10

*Losing Ground* is a portrait of London and a self-portrait of my fifteen years living there until 2016. The urban environment and its visual detritus has been a constant feature of my practice, and I draw inspiration from walking the streets and selectively gathering its discarded material culture. *Losing Ground* is a personal project which uses the work of strangers – the chaotic and random material of urban signage, drawings, lists, maps, emails, and lost photographs – to create a multiple narrative of voices, tones, messages, and meanings. Fragmented and without context, they form a collective portrait of urban life and its shared experiences. The title refers to the changing artistic and economic environment in London; the growing cost of living has rebuffed many people – myself included – and quashed its once-experimental creative spark.

My practice of working with found materials started when I was an art student in Dublin in the late 90s. I was conflicted about creating images in a world that was already saturated with visual stimuli. I walked around the city finding photographic material on the streets; printed photos and negatives. The work I made at this time was always printed from these found negatives. In the 2000s I moved to London and continued to work in the same way. This process was reacting to the high brow nature of artists. I liked the idea of an artist as someone who picked up rubbish and through doing so was re-engaging with the urban environment, bringing walking and making together.



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I wanted to bring texture to the photobook, and to make them a more tactile experience for the viewer. The photobook world had a set idea about how the photobook should look and be published. It's a creative industry and people should think outside of that and look for alternatives, especially in relation to the environment. I collect antique books and have always been interested in the condition of the book, and how you often have to wear gloves to protect the book. I liked the idea that you had to put on gloves to protect yourself from the book(s) I made in the *Losing Ground* series because they were so dirty.

I work full-time as a painter and decorator so I have had to carve out the time to make work. I collect materials on the walk to and from work. When walking, there's a lot of time to think, and through engaging with the environment on these walks I find things. By the 2010s there were no more negatives to be found, but sometimes I would still find photographs, along with paper and newspaper. In 2018 I decided to make *Losing Ground* using the photos I had collected in London over a 15 year period. The idea was to make 10 handmade books to fund the next book. *Losing Ground* is an A3 book made from collaged A4 found pages. I worked with this large scale of book to suit the scale of the found images. The A4 format would have been too small. Each of the books in the edition are unique and are made solely from found materials, and it's the format that unites them as an edition. It's a collaboration with the city and the people who lived there although not consciously. All of the material for this book was found in London; it was made on leaving the city as a kind of goodbye.

David O'Mara  
12.2022  
UK

Spread from *What Makes a Photobook Sustainable?*

## What Makes a Photobook Sustainable?

### Sustainable Photobook Publishing (SPP) Network

Manual Editions, £25

It is a small, modest affair and deliberately so – A5 size, so it can be created by simply folding an A4 sheet of paper, and bound with a fabric cord. The paper is made from 100 per cent agricultural waste, the cover is printed with an Eco-Tank inkjet printer, and even the cord was sourced from Yodomo, a textile reuse hub. *What Makes a Photobook Sustainable?* is a pleasingly practical look at reducing the environmental impact of photobooks in form as well as content. The book is edited by Tamsin Green and Eugenie Shinkle, and designed by Green with Federica Caputo, and as Rebecca Solnit puts it in a quote reproduced early on: “What we dream of is already present in the world.”

The book marks three years of the Sustainable Photobook Publishing (SPP) network, and includes transcripts of roundtables, essays, quotes, prompts and 40 case studies gathered over that time. SPP is international, and the book includes less-known examples from the majority world, some raising issues with which the West does not have to contend. Lukas Birk,

from Fraglich Publishing, points out that the post has been suspended under military rule in Myanmar, for example; Jordan Marzuki, from Jordan, Jordan Édition, notes that high humidity deforms pages in Indonesia.

There are also bigger names, such as Loose Joints and Hoxton Mini Press; their involvement is encouraging, situating sustainability as a concern that could and should be the mainstream. But as many of those involved make clear, thinking about sustainability is not just a matter of swapping out papers and inks, though the book is good on practical tips; it is a matter of fundamentally rethinking our approach to photobooks and photography. “My work has always been interested in the discarded and unwanted, using rubbish and found material,” reflects David O'Mara, an artist whose books are included. “It's about looking at what society discards and sees as useless as a way of looking at ourselves and our obsession with consumption.” **BJP**

manualeditions.com