

Keep off the Grass!

An exploration of how photographic practice may be used to develop alternative representations of the urban nature subject.

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PhD in Media Arts (by practice)

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the degree Doctor of Philosophy.*

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‘Show people the best pictures you can get of beautiful common things; make them notice the beauty of form, all the curves and combinations of lines, and the beauty of colour, and when they next see the thing which the picture represented, they will see in it beauty which, but for the picture, they would not see.’

Thomas C. Horsfall (Horsfall, 1883, p. 32).

Declaration

I, Luke Blazejewski, declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance to the regulations of University of Salford, and is an original piece of research, except where indicated by reference in the text.

Signed.....

Date.....

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This research would not have been possible without the support of some key figures in my life. I would like to take this time to thank them.

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~ For Mum, who has never stopped
believing in me ~

Contents

List of Figures..... ix

Arrangement of Content xiii

Abstract..... 1

Research Questions 2

Research Objectives..... 3

1. Literature Review 4

 1.1. The Disconnect4

 1.2. Technological Nature.....9

 1.3. The Influence of Nature Photography 14

 1.4. Urban Nature Photography17

 1.5. The Definition of *Aesthetic*26

 1.6. A Wider Photographic Discussion30

2. Methodology36

 2.1. Introduction.....36

 2.2. Practice-based Component38

2.3. Reflective Component	42
2.4. The Final Project	45
2.5. Production Ethics.....	47
2.6. Declaration of Field Ethics	48
3. Experiments	49
3.1. Decentering the Human Subject	50
3.1.1. Experiment Question	50
3.1.2. Experiment Objectives.....	50
3.1.3. Introduction	51
3.1.4. Process	63
3.1.5. Analysis	63
3.1.6. What Next?	64
3.2. Conceptual Closure	66
3.2.1. Experiment Question	66
3.2.2. Experiment Objectives.....	66
3.2.3. Introduction	67
3.2.4. Process	79
3.2.5. Analysis	79
3.2.6. What Next?	80
3.3. Abstraction	81
3.3.1. Experiment Question	81

3.3.2. Experiment Objectives.....	81
3.3.3. Introduction	82
3.3.4. Process	94
3.3.5. Analysis	94
3.3.6. What Next?	95
 3.4. Neo-romanticism.....	 97
3.4.1. Experiment Question	97
3.4.2. Experiment Objectives.....	97
3.4.3. Introduction	98
3.4.4. Process	110
3.4.5. Analysis	110
3.5.6. What Next?	111
 3.5. Renegotiating the Human Subject	 113
3.5.1. Experiment Question	113
3.5.2. Experiment Objectives.....	113
3.5.3. Introduction	114
3.5.4. Process	126
3.5.5. Analysis	126
3.5.6. What Next?	127
 4. The Final Project	 128
4.1. The Final Project Question	128

4.2. The Final Project Objectives	128
4.3. Introduction.....	129
5. Critical Reflection	151
5.1. Introduction.....	151
5.2. The Human Subject	152
5.3. The Resulting Aesthetic	154
5.4. Identity	159
5.5. Research Context.....	164
5.6. Conclusion	166
5.7. Ideas for Further Research	171
References.....	173
Appendix A	190
Appendix B	195

List of Figures

Figure 1.1	Andy Rouse “Polar bear (<i>Ursus maritimus</i>)” (2011)	10
Figure 1.2	Britta Jaschinski “Macaques” (1996)	11
Figure 1.3	Frans Lanting “Scarlet macaws overlooking Tambopata River” (2003)	15
Figure 1.4	Iain Green “Nesting at No10 (Kestrel)” (2005)	18
Figure 1.5	Laurent Geslin “Kingfisher on its favourite fishing post” (2010)	19
Figure 1.6	Ian Wade “Urban fox, Bristol” (2010)	21
Figure 1.7	Iain Green “Peregrine premiere” (2005)	22
Figure 1.8	George Shiras III “Deer Jumping” (1906)	31
Figure 2.1	Diagram illustrating the cyclic relationship between the components	
	Practice and Reflection.	37
Figure 3.1a	Grey squirrel (<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>)	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 3.1b	Black-headed gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 3.1c	Black-headed gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 3.1d	Mute swan (<i>Cygnus olor</i>)	56
Figure 3.1e	Muscovy duck (<i>Cairina moschata</i>)	57

Figure 3.1f	Canada goose (<i>Branta canadensis</i>)	58
Figure 3.1g	European beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>)	59
Figure 3.1h	European holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)	60
Figure 3.1i	Common daffodil (<i>Narcissus cultivar</i>)	61
Figure 3.1j	Himalayan balsam (<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>)	62
Figure 3.2a	European rabbit (<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>)	69
Figure 3.2b	Grey squirrel (<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>)	70
Figure 3.2c	Black-headed gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)	71
Figure 3.2d	Black-headed gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)	72
Figure 3.2e	Canada goose (<i>Branta canadensis</i>)	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 3.2f	Canada goose (<i>Branta canadensis</i>)	73
Figure 3.2g	Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	75
Figure 3.2h	Feral pigeon (<i>Columba livia</i>)	76
Figure 3.2i	Creeping buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>)	77
Figure 3.2j	Bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>)	78
Figure 3.3a	Grey squirrel (<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>)	84
Figure 3.3b	Brown rat (<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>)	85
Figure 3.3c	Feral pigeon (<i>Columba livia</i>)	86
Figure 3.3d	Feral pigeon (<i>Columba livia</i>)	87
Figure 3.3e	European magpie (<i>Pica pica</i>)	88
Figure 3.3f	European magpie (<i>Pica pica</i>)	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Figure 3.3g	Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	90
Figure 3.3h	European holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)	91
Figure 3.3i	Common nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>).....	92
Figure 3.3j	Bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>)	93
Figure 3.4a	Grey squirrel (<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>)	100
Figure 3.4b	Brown rat (<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>)	101
Figure 3.4c	Brown rat (<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>).....	102
Figure 3.4d	Feral pigeon (<i>Columba livia</i>)	103
Figure 3.4e	Feral pigeon (<i>Columba livia</i>)	104
Figure 3.4f	European magpie (<i>Pica pica</i>)	105
Figure 3.4g	Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	106
Figure 3.4h	Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	107
Figure 3.4i	European holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)	108
Figure 3.4j	European beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>)	109
Figure 3.5a	Grey squirrel (<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>)	116
Figure 3.5b	Grey squirrel (<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>)	117
Figure 3.5c	Feral pigeon (<i>Columba livia</i>)	118
Figure 3.5d	Black-headed gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)	119
Figure 3.5e	Black-headed gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)	120
Figure 3.5f	Carrion crow (<i>Corvus corone</i>)	121
Figure 3.5g	Canada goose (<i>Branta canadensis</i>)	122

Figure 3.5h Greylag goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)	123
Figure 3.5i Bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>)	124
Figure 3.5j European holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)	125
Figure 4.1 Grey squirrel (<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>)	131
Figure 4.2 Grey squirrel (<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>)	132
Figure 4.3 Black-headed gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)	133
Figure 4.4 Black-headed gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)	134
Figure 4.5 Black-headed gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)	135
Figure 4.6 Feral pigeon (<i>Columba livia</i>)	136
Figure 4.7 Feral pigeon (<i>Columba livia</i>)	137
Figure 4.8 Feral pigeon (<i>Columba livia</i>)	138
Figure 4.9 European magpie (<i>Pica pica</i>).....	139
Figure 4.10 European magpie (<i>Pica pica</i>).....	140
Figure 4.11 Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	141
Figure 4.12 Canada goose (<i>Branta canadensis</i>)	142
Figure 4.13 Greylag goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)	143
Figure 4.14 Himalayan balsam (<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>)	144
Figure 4.15 European beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>)	145
Figure 4.16 European beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>)	146
Figure 4.17 Bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>)	147
Figure 4.18 European holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)	148
Figure 4.19 European holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)	149

Figure 4.20 European holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)	150
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Arrangement of Content

University of Salford guidelines require a PhD by practice to consist of two particular items. These are the *Portfolio of Practice* and the *Critical Evaluation*, and, accordingly, both are present in this thesis. However, rather than presenting them as two distinct sections, they have been fused together into one all-inclusive document. The Portfolio of Practice can be found through Chapters 3 and 4, while the Critical Evaluation is partly accounted for by five individual reflections in Chapter 3, and much more completely so in Chapter 5. In addition, Chapters 1 and 2 provide an account of the *Literature Review* and *Methodology*, respectively.

Abstract

The relationship between people and nature has long been suffering from a cultural disconnect. In truth, nature is far more readily likened to travel than it is to everyday life; synonymous, as it is, with those faraway ideals beyond the everyday reach of an urban dweller. However, urban environments are teeming with a range of plants and animals, known as *urban nature*, thus providing the opportunity to shed these exotic associations in favour of a far more accessible experience. In order to do so, the form of contemporary urban nature photography will be examined in this thesis, where any representational trends found to be inhibiting its development will be identified, and ultimately challenged.

A combination of photographic practice and reflective analysis was used to challenge these problematic trends. Five experiments were carried out. These served to yield a set of photographs which developed alternative representations of the urban nature subject. The resulting photographs of each experiment were subjected to a means of reflection; based on Gary Rolfe's three stage method but refocused for compatibility with photographic practice, where observations were drawn from one experiment so as to guide the direction of the following experiment. These experiments culminated in a final project: a definitive body of photographs that served to fuse the findings of each experiment into an alternative aesthetic.

Identity became a critical theme underlining the representations of the urban nature subject in this thesis, for the displacement of photographic information began to instil the subject with - to some extent - otherworldly sensibilities. This process challenged the active predisposition toward naturalism in urban nature photography, and began to direct such tendencies toward a much broader aesthetic landscape; engaging with unreserved artistic ideologies so as to develop exclusive representations of the urban nature subject.

Research Questions

- There are many cultural and economic factors that influence the relationship between people and nature, but how - and to what degree - has the genre of nature photography contributed to such influence?
- What are the benefits of engaging with nature, and why is it essential to raise awareness of urban nature?
- When reviewing examples of contemporary urban nature photography, what problematic trends are identifiable in its photographic form, and what are the implications of such trends?
- How may photographic practice begin to challenge these trends and develop alternative aesthetics in the form of urban nature photography?

Research Objectives

- Investigate the current relationship between people and nature by reviewing the relevant literature and photographic texts.
- Identify trends in the form of urban nature photography that are inhibiting its development, citing the work of photographers.
- Produce a set of practice-based experiments that challenge these trends and raise further observations.
- Reflect on the experiment findings so as to produce a final set of photographs which evidences the development of an alternative aesthetic in urban nature photography.

1. Literature Review

‘Most of us live in cities, towns or suburbs. It is possible day after day, week after week, to see only our immediate surroundings; the street we live in, the view from the bus or commuter train, or glimpses of open space... Despite this the countryside has a powerful hold on our imagination. At the latest count seven million people visit the country every weekend to look at the scenery.’

David Dimbleby (Dimbleby, 2005, p. 9).

1.1. The Disconnect

In his play, *The Life and Death of King Richard the Second*, Shakespeare described the natural environment as ‘this other Eden, demi-paradise, this fortress built by Nature for herself’ (Shakespeare, 1634, p. 21). Samuel Palmer, in a letter to his father in 1828, noticed that ‘general nature is wisely and beneficently adapted to refresh the senses and soothe the spirits of general observers’ (quote by Samuel Palmer, quoted in Grigson, 1947, p. 85). Even William Wordsworth, in his 1798 poem *The Tables Turned: An Evening Scene on the Same Subject*, alluded to the woefulness of a life devoted to books, and instead urged people to ‘come forth into the light of things, let Nature be your teacher’ (Wordsworth, et al., 1798, p. 187). However, such references stem from a period where people were much more attuned to nature, whether it was culturally, economically or even artistically. Unlike today, society was scattered across the rural landscape and this meant that nature was essential to the survival of each individual social unit (villages, hamlets, family groups). After all, people acquired their food and

shelter from natural resources. Ever since this period the relationship between people and nature has been deteriorating, undergoing dramatic change (Hall, 1998; Stratton, 2000), and it is no surely accident that such deterioration has been simultaneous with the urbanisation of society.

The Industrial Revolution was an influential episode in nineteenth century culture that forged a major change in society. Foremost, it began to change where, how and even why people lived their lives (Stearns, 1998). Urbanisation spread, and society began to find itself more dependent on the early cities for survival, causing the countryside to become more of a recreational presence. This expansion also had a striking impact on the landscape of Britain, an effect which became further exacerbated by practices of enclosure and clearance, legalised forms of depopulation in rural areas (Chandler, et al., 2005). Today, urban environments cover about 2.8% of the earth's surface (ICLEI, 2008a), and yet, a census carried out in the mid-nineteenth century revealed that 50% of Britain were living in cities or towns, a number that by 1911 had reached 80% (thirty six million people) (Konijnendijk, 2005). While UK populations have continued to rise, a 2010 census revealed that 80% of Britain were still living in urban areas (unlike the previous thirty six million, however, this 80% was now representing about fifty million people) (United Nations, 2009).

On the one hand these figures expose the behaviours of a culture grounded in urban development, while on the other hand they expose an inherent problem surrounding the perceptions of nature. Nature is seldom associated with the city. In truth, nature is considered the antithesis of the city; synonymous, as it is, with travel and domestic escapism. That is to say, those who seek nature often believe their solution is found in the nearest car, train, boat or plane. This is eloquently defined by the author Bill Bryson and worth quoting at length:

'To see and enjoy nature, then, many of us leave the city and seek out more dramatic, less populated landscapes far away. Then, when our vacation time is up, we return to the seemingly unnatural world of city life, all the while gritting our teeth and longing for our next chance to return to a wilder

nature's green embrace. The mind-expanding and soul-enriching value of travel notwithstanding, this flight from the city is somewhat misguided. Lost is the opportunity to explore the city's many natural amenities, and surprising treasures, some of them hidden and others in plain view' (Bryson, 2010, p. 30).

Only an ounce of imagination is really needed to see how the city might resemble the natural environment. Multi-storey buildings simulate the vantage point of cliff walls, lamp posts supply breeding birds with the perfect stage in which to sing and attract a mate, while security fences, quite aptly, provide territorial boundaries. Many species (plants and animals) consider the urban environment a very efficient habitat for their life cycle, and have adapted to the numerous benefits of city living (Snæbjörnsdóttir, et al., 2010). This indicates that urban environments are actually thriving ecosystems with a wealth of biodiversity (Baines, 1986; Packham, 2007). These species are known as *urban nature* (Dixon, 2002) and provide critical opportunities to experience nature in everyday life. Nature should no longer be considered as separate to the city, but as an integral part of it.

- There is only one animal exclusive to the urban environment; the feral pigeon (*Columba livia*). Feral pigeons are derived from domestic pigeons, which were once kept for sport but broke free of their domestication and returned to the wild. They are descendents of the rock dove (*Columba livia*); the wild pigeon, which today can only be found on the North West coasts of Scotland, nearby offshore islands and Northern Ireland coastlines. The feral pigeon is similar to the rock dove in terms of its biology; it is simply geography which governs the differences in name. The feral pigeon is an urban inhabitant and can be found on every continent except Antarctica (The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, 2012).

One of the major benefits afforded by urban nature is its habituation to the presence of people. Animals living in the city encounter people on a daily basis, and as a result are much more tolerant of human presence than animals found in the wider natural

environment. Sightings become much more frequent and the proximity in which one can approach a subject is typically much higher. In this sense, urban nature is able to provide just as much relaxation as any escape from the city, as the benefits of nature are transferable to urban nature (Kaplan, 1984). It is broadly accepted, after all, that engagement with nature can be highly beneficial for both psychological and physical wellbeing. These benefits include raised attention spans and lowered stress levels, as well as a personalised awareness of contemporary environmental issues (Berman, et al., 2008; Charles, et al., 2009; Grinde, et al., 2009; Kellert, et al., 2008; Nilsson, et al., 2010). That is to say, the stirring embrace of a woodland canopy, or the reflections of a motionless lake, infuse a peace of mind which needs little instruction. Furthermore, urban green space also takes account of ecosystem services, including pollination and the active maintenance of air quality, as well as even raising property values (Magle, et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, the term *urban nature* itself is actually rather oxymoronic, juxtaposing the artificial with the natural for notable effect (Lapkoff, 2007). These two ideas have long been in opposition with each other, of course, and so perhaps it is about time this is subjected to change. For example, cities have been likened to the products of nature and even considered 'as natural as the colonies of prairie dogs or the beds of oysters' (Jacobs, 1992, p. 443). The city is a product of human behaviour, in the end, and due to humans (*Homo sapiens*) being a part of nature then perhaps it is actually logical to consider cities as natural as the beds of oysters. This kind of posturing will not suffice, however, for it does not change anything. The bare reality is that when asked to think about nature 'to many, images of the Serengeti are conjured up and in consequence expectations are left unfulfilled when visiting a National Nature Reserve for the first time' (Barker, 1990, p. 1). These stagnating perceptions might be a result of ideas not having grown simultaneously with ecological development. For example, while urban environments indeed harbour a range of biodiversity, many people continue to liken their impressions of nature with those faraway landscapes and exotic species beyond the reach of everyday life. These perceptions are rooted in the human mind, which is able to attune and adjust to its immediate surroundings far more effectively than the

human body. The human body is instinctually bound with the natural world, whereas the human mind is not. In fact, unlike the body, the mind is continually subjected to, and affected by, a wealth of external stimuli (Wexler, 2006); making it susceptible to change. The human body will always belong to nature, but the mind, due to society's estrangement from the natural world, needs to be re-educated about urban nature if attitudes are ever going to learn how to value the plants and animals found in urban environments.

Perhaps the most fundamental benefit afforded by this susceptibility to change is the development of perception. Perception governs the majority of human behaviour, for it is perception that guides the actions of each individual; based on a set of attitudes and characteristics unique to that individual. For example, maybe the criterion of the Labour Party is more attractive than the Conservative Party because their principle is more attributed to your own persuasion. Physicist Fritjof Capra suggested 'the major problems of our time... are all different facets of one single crisis, which is essentially a crisis of perception' (Capra, 2000, p. 325). That is to say, in regard to the relationship between people and nature, if - as a substantial amount of literature certainly seems to imply (Brower, 2005b; Fudge, 2002; Jowit, 2010; Louv, 2009; Pergams, et al., 2006; Pyle, 2003; Vining, et al., 2008) - people have become disconnected from nature, it is likely to be a result of negative perception. Much like an opinion, however, perception can be changed. James Miller coined the term *extinction of experience* when referring to this disconnect (Miller, 2005), observing that people no longer engage with nature because it is no longer essential to survival. This is a critical observation, although the choice of terminology may seem somewhat melodramatic, after all, it is worth taking into account that this relationship may not be severed, but shifted. With this in mind, in order to understand how nature is being perceived it is essential to understand how nature is being presented.

1.2. Technological Nature

It is undeniable that technology provides immediate access to the world. The cultural, social, financial, ecological, political, linguistic or even artistic details of most regions can be found at the touch of a button, and travel to these places can be just as easily arranged. Accordingly, there is much concern about the impact of this technology on people's perceptions of nature. Television, the internet, and video games now form a large fraction of recreational pastimes in the majority of urban cultures (Louv, 2009), and therefore - simply by being based indoors - negatively affect the amount of time people spend outdoors (Pergams, et al., 2006). This may, at first, seem to be the very source of the disconnect between people and nature, since logic dictates one should go outdoors if one is to engage with nature, but actually this assumption is no longer precisely true. Technology does not shy from nature. Natural history films like *Planet Earth*, *Nature's Great Events* or *Life* (broadcast on dedicated networks like *Eden*, *The Discovery Channel* or *Animal Planet*) show seldom seen animal behaviour taking place across faraway landscapes, while video games like *Zoo Tycoon* educate children about animals (Kahn, et al., 2009).

In this sense, technology is likely to be contributing to the disconnect between people and nature on a grand scale. However, it is not only that technology is keeping people indoors that is the problem, although it is critical, it is more so that nature is very much on the verge of becoming a techno-experience. Technological nature, described here as 'technologies that in various ways mediate, augment, or simulate the natural world' (Kahn, et al., 2009, p. 21) is replacing *real* nature at an alarming rate. However, it may be worth considering that technological nature has actually done more harm than just keeping people indoors, for it has led to a pseudo-access, where people are far more educated than they are experienced.

Technological nature has forged a relationship so heavily saturated in exotic imagery (Kaiser, 2007) that it has fashioned a culture where 'kids today can tell you about the

Amazon rainforest, but not about the last time they went into a wood alone' (Henley, et al., 2010, p. 3). This observation is not so surprising, either, as 'children spend less time playing in natural places, such as woodlands, countryside and heaths... Less than 10% play in such places compared to 40% of adults when they were young' (Natural England, 2009, p. 5). Perhaps the core problem with technological nature is content, then, as the subjects represented are often those which are resoundingly separate to domestic life (Carwardine, 2007) (Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1 Andy Rouse "Polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*)" (2011)

For example, it is probably fair to imagine that most people can identify a polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) when presented with a photograph of one, and yet, 'a questionnaire carried out [in England]... suggests that less than a third of the population know what a sycamore tree looks like... two-thirds do not recognise a peacock butterfly' (Jowit, 2010, p. 12). To put this into perspective, two thirds of the survey respondents could not recognise one of the most common butterflies in England (Randle, 2011). Joanne Vining and Melinda Merrick conducted three separate questionnaires, in 1997, 2003 and 2005 (participants were randomly selected via postal survey, and amounted to 198 subjects) in order to examine how people perceive the natural environment. This

yielded a sobering set of results, for they observed that ‘even though the majority of the participants considered themselves part of nature (76.9%), natural environments were largely described as places absent from any human interference’ (Vining, et al., 2008, p. 1). Steve Baker, author of *Picturing the Beast*, believes the representation of an animal is often largely influential in shaping how people perceive that animal (Baker, 2001). This is undoubtedly true, and may allude to not only why the polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) is far more recognisable than a peacock butterfly (*Inachis io*), but even to why it is valued more so as a species. Polar bears are subjected to much more coverage in contemporary media.



Figure 1.2 Britta Jaschinski “Macaques” (1996)

This pseudo-access is not just image-based either. Public zoos quickly became popular excursions during the nineteenth century because they guaranteed access to nature within the confines of the city. In 2010, 1,011,257 people visited London Zoo (Harris, 2010a) to view the species on display. At first, and quite understandably so, one might see these visits as a mass engagement with nature, which, indeed, they may very well seem to be, however, on further investigation they actually amount to quite a tainted

experience. Zoo enclosures are designed to keep the viewer and subject apart, after all, which is why humans and animals are placed on opposite sides of the same fence, with little but passing glances for interaction (Figure 1.2). Zoos present themselves as valuable access points to nature in the city but are products of a social construction, since 'inside the grounds of these zoological gardens, an illusion of Nature is created from scratch and re-presented back to human audiences in a cultural performance' (Anderson, 1995, p. 275). In a zoo nature is taken from its context and stripped down in order to be re-presented to audiences as an experience constructed by people, for people. This kind of reshaping is not dissimilar to the process of nature photography, either, as the photographer, on locating his or her subject, goes about representing it from a certain perspective for a certain reason. While a photograph may not seem as extravagant as a cultural performance, it still stands as a form of representation designed by people (here, the photographer), for people.

It should be noted, though, that while technology seems to be keeping people indoors and away from the natural world, there are certain technologies available for people wishing to share their experiences of nature. For example, *iSpot* (The Open University, 2013) is an online network where users may upload images of species they have been unavailable to identify, prompting other members to then open discussions that may serve to classify that subject. Similarly, *Nature Share* is a website that allows users to upload images of species they have seen, logging the date and location for the benefit of other naturalists in the area (Green Mountain Digital, 2012). There is also a wealth of identification apps for mobile phones that serve as modern-day equivalents to the traditional field identification books. *MyNature: Animal Tracks* allows users to search a database of animal footprints, scat and wider signs of passing in the wild that serve to help the user identify what kind of animal may have recently passed by (MyNature Inc, 2010). Other apps deal with birdsong (Green Mountain Digital, 2010), wildflowers (BDY Environmental LLC, 2011) and marine life (AV Works, LLC, 2010). These examples do not aim to contradict any of the observations drawn regarding technology's impact on the relationship between people and nature, but serve to raise awareness of some

of the developments being made that seek to ultimately challenge the indoors culture of an urbanised society.

1.3. The Influence of Nature Photography

Nature photography is an international genre of photography which deals specifically with the representation of plants, animals and landscapes. It is escapism, a front row seat to the spectacles of nature that would otherwise be off limits to the vast majority of people. Accessing the inaccessible lies at the core of nature photography, where a preference for uncommon species is often evidenced over the common (Carwardine, 2007; Henley, et al., 2010). Suffice to say, this is because 'the photographs show us animals we could not "normally" see' (Brower, 2011, p. xiv), which, in turn, are often tied up with wider conservation efforts and the security of highly delicate ecosystems resoundingly separate to urban life (Wright, 2010) (this may further support why the polar bear is so much more recognisable than a peacock butterfly). It should be noted, however, that nature photography is not being disputed here for its role in protecting global biodiversity. It is the effect of these representations upon how people perceive nature that is being disputed.

That is to say, perceptions of nature are in danger of becoming synonymous with the subjects of nature photographers and wider conservationists, who place an emphasis on those faraway landscapes and exotic species which are separate to everyday urban life (Figure 1.3). This is exactly where the problem lies. Nature is everywhere, and yet, it is treated like it is not. Instead, nature is objectified, commoditised, and very rarely deemed equal to humans (Fudge, 2002). This attitude stems from an anthropocentric frame of mind. The term *anthropocentrism*, coined in the 1860s, places the human at the very centre of the universe where all other life is judged on its usefulness to society (Campbell, 1983). These minds 'think they are now independent from nature if not an outright embodiment of human domination over the natural world... urban dwellers suffer from a moral corruption, disconnected as they are from what E.O. Wilson calls biophilia' (Light, 2001, p. 7). Biologist Edward O. Wilson coined the term *biophilia* as a reference to humans having evolved as part of nature, who grow with an instinctual need to be close to other forms of life (Wilson, 2003; Wilson, et al., 1993). However,

while it is true this closeness may be a product of our hunter-gatherer origins (or if to consider the biblical view, that human life began in a garden), it has long since begun to fade. Paradoxically, in fact, support for this notion can be found in *biophobia*, for if biophilia is the need to be close to other forms of life, then biophobia is the need not to be. David Orr, author of *Earth in Mind*, believes ‘biophobia ranges from discomfort in “natural” places to active scorn for whatever is not manmade, managed, or air conditioned’ (Orr, 2004, p. 131). It is a fear of the unfamiliar, and it is not surprising to see that these terms are in some sense connected, as while the presence of biophilia weakens the strength of biophobia grows (and vice versa). Suffice to say, the declining relationship between people and nature is a result of such minimal experience in the natural environment.



Figure 1.3 Frans Lanting “Scarlet macaws overlooking Tambopata River” (2003)

In spite of this, however, the natural environment is regularly valued above its urban counterpart, despite the fact that ‘a city, a trash dump, or a garden all have a history, a complex relationship between parts, that we can come to appreciate. It is not clear why a history of human interference should require us to value an environment less’

(quote by Janna Thompson, quoted in Brady, 2003, p. 199). It is likely the differences in value are bound up with people's inclination toward the exotic, which in turn then serves as escapism from the monotony of domestic life. This is not to be condemned, but nor is it the only option available. After all, the plants and animals found in urban environments are able to provide just as much escapism as their exotic counterparts, but only if the labels applied to them by society are overcome. Needless to say, these labels include *pest* and *vermin*, and are plagued with negative connotations that only inflict harm upon society.

- '[These] domesticated and built spaces - spaces where humans and animals meet on a more regular, even everyday basis - erode boundaries and throw up forms of conflicting, harmonious and in-between relationships... creatures that are marginalized - either because pests and vermin (pigeons, rats) or because too every day to be of interest (starlings) - become significant as their crossing between human and natural habitats are exposed' (Brady, 2010, p. 55).

These species, categorised as pests and vermin and therefore marginalised because of it, are precisely those that people will encounter on a daily basis. The effects of these widespread common occurrences become lessened as they fail to surpass the model of everyday life. This is their negative perception. As soon as their presence becomes a passive one, they are rendered banal. That is to say, while these plants and animals afford critical opportunities to engage with nature they are repeatedly overlooked. It is reasonable, then, to label this problem as a matter of perception, and if perception is ever to change, representations must be challenged. In the following section urban nature photography - a field of photography which deals with the plants and animals in urban environments - will be introduced.

1.4. Urban Nature Photography

Urban nature photography - a subgenre of nature photography - deals precisely with those plants and animals in urban environments. It was in the early-nineteen eighties when this subgenre first began to surface (Angel, 1982; Baines, 1986), along with recognition of the psychological and physical benefits of urban green space, which had also begun to be seen in a far more critical context (Kaplan, 1984). Unlike its wider counterpart, nature photography, however, which can be traced as far back as the late nineteenth century (Brower, 2005a; Petterson, 2011), by comparison, urban nature photography is still in the early stages of its development. Suffice to say, it has certainly had much less time to develop than its counterpart, and consequently illustrates a discernible stagnancy in form. In order to pinpoint this, the work of three urban nature photographers will be investigated so as to ascertain the contemporary form of urban nature photography. Here, certain trends regarding the aesthetic make-up of an urban nature photograph will be identified across their works, with the specific aim of isolating any trends that may be inhibiting the aesthetic development of the subgenre. Ascertaining these trends is tied up with the wider function of this thesis, which is to begin developing alternative representations of the urban nature subject. The choice of such trends will, in turn, shape the choices that are to be made in Chapter 3 (entitled *Experiments*), which will constitute the main body of practice in this thesis.

The three photographers to be examined here are Iain Green (Green, 2005), Laurent Geslin (Geslin, 2010) and Ian Wade (Wade, 2011), and have been chosen due to their position as published authors. This makes them important for two reasons. To begin with, as published authors they can be considered as authorities in the field of urban nature photography: an authority which infuses their photographs with an influential and esteemed conviction. Secondly, their representations govern the standard forms of urban nature photography; particularly in regard to the content and composition of a photograph. Therefore, their photographs determine the representations which

become synonymous with urban nature. Together, these three photographers signify an accurate account of contemporary urban nature photography, and as a result will be subjected to examination.

Many photographers were found who were not published in any critical capacity and therefore were not chosen for review. While their images were self-defined as urban nature photography, they did not exclusively pronounce themselves as urban nature photographers. Their portfolios were freely accessible on photo sharing websites and independent websites, and while they were not chosen for review here, their images still demonstrate the same symptoms as the images of the three photographers who have been chosen. These photographers will be referenced here for the meaning of thoroughness (Felton, 2012; Giles, 2008, 2011; Gregory, 2012; Hobson, 2012; Leach, 2010; Nold, 2012).



Figure 1.4 Iain Green "Nesting at No10 (Kestrel)" (2005)

There is an inherent tendency, or predisposition, in urban nature photography which serves to convey the urban element of a photograph (Figure 1.4). This covers various areas of a composition, including the choice of subject and the environment in which

to represent it. This tendency is defined as juxtaposition. For example, the deliberate contrast of two forces in an urban nature photograph - these being the urban nature subject and the urban environment - serves to create a striking relationship between the *urban* and *natural* elements of the composition. However, while this process acts as a kind of construct for the subgenre, its use actually leads to a much wider problem regarding expectation.



Figure 1.5 Laurent Geslin “Kingfisher on its favourite fishing post” (2010)

Juxtaposition is undoubtedly the predominant form of representation in urban nature photography, and subsequently its repeated use has shaped the expectation (which is recognised by photographers) that an urban nature subject must always be juxtaposed with the urban environment, if the image is to be defined as a valid example of urban nature photography (Figure 1.5). This is a representational strategy; a structured form of representation which carries with it information about the subject, information that has stemmed from viewer expectation. Ultimately, the photographer then sets out to satisfy this expectation by embracing a recognisable visual form. Steve Baker defines

a representational strategy as a style of representation that regulates how a subject is represented by the image-maker and received by the viewer (Baker, 2001). In urban nature photography such a strategy is aligned with the ecological definition of urban nature (natural subjects found in the urban environment), and it is interesting to note how this definition is translated into photography. Here, urban nature is represented as *urban – nature*: two subjects, juxtaposed so as to maintain a definition rather than the depiction of a solitary, or unified, subject.

There is an update to be made here as regards terminology. Up until now, *the urban environment* has been the only term used in which to classify the presence of a wider urban environment. Here, an additional term will be introduced to refer to the same presence, and will be known as *the human subject*. There are two reasons for this. To begin with, the urban environment is a product of human action and thus the human subject is essential in its construction, while secondly it is much easier to imagine the juxtaposition of two physical *subjects*. Therefore, *the human subject* will also refer to the presence of the urban landscape in a photograph, and throughout this thesis will be used interchangeably with *the urban environment*.

While the urban nature subject and the human subject are essential components for juxtaposition - this does not mean these subjects should be considered equal - as the presence of the human subject substantially overwhelms the urban nature subject in a photograph. After all, the urban environment provides a photograph with its urban component, which in turn sustains the definition of urban nature (plants and animals in urban environments). It is for this reason the urban environment is always present in a photograph, for its presence brings definition; a definition that would otherwise be absent if it were not for its urban component. With this in mind, then, the human subject becomes the primary force precisely because enforcing its presence - judged to be compulsory in a photograph - widely inhibits the freedom of the photographer, who must ensure that the urban nature subject is always composed in relation to the urban environment. Needless to say, this serves to provide discernible evidence that the resulting image is an urban nature photograph. Furthermore, the presence of the

human subject regulates the composition in regard to both its physical construction and its resulting aesthetic, which together serve to relegate the urban nature subject as the secondary force in a photograph; subjugated by the underlying presence of an urban authority (Figure 1.6).



Figure 1.6 Ian Wade "Urban fox, Bristol" (2010)

The semiotic function of an urban nature photograph is derived from the presence of juxtaposition. An urban nature photographer must 'identify locations where it should be possible to photograph the animal in an iconic urban environment' (Carwardine, 2007, p. 71) so as to classify the subject as urban nature. Juxtaposition, in this sense, is a framework that has formed a stereotype, regulating how urban nature *should* be seen rather than how it *could* be seen.

Steve Baker believes 'the stereotype is consistent in certain important ways with that of the semiological sign' (Baker, 2001, p. 29) for they both instil their representations with an overarching message, or purpose. Stereotypes, notably in imagery, minimise the amount of time it would otherwise take to process information by simplifying the

representation of that information. Urban nature photography may be considered to have developed its own stereotype through the presence of juxtaposition. However, this thesis is concerned with the development of alternative representation in urban nature photography, and so - because 'stereotypes are the enemy of change' (Baker, 1993, p. 217) - stereotypes are the best place to begin. Due to its infancy, the form of urban nature photography has lay dormant regarding its own development, and this has resulted in the subgenre inheriting a certain trend from its wider relative, nature photography. This trend concerns the urban nature subject, or rather more precisely, the choice of subject, as the urban nature photographer exhibits a preference for the uncommon species (Figure 1.7).



Figure 1.7 Iain Green "Peregrine premiere" (2005)

There is much value in representing uncommon species, of course, since the purpose of an urban nature photograph, at its most basic level, is to raise an awareness of the biodiversity in urban environments. Identifying the species that are rarely associated with urban life is essential when broadening people's understanding of urban nature and this is not being disputed. However, it does raise a concern about the absence of

common species. Needless to say, it is difficult to universally define what is meant by common, since all populations are in a continual state of expansion or contraction. In spite of this, there are some studies (Gaston, 2010; Lindenmayer, et al., 2011) which provide a definition of *common* in population ecology, and with this in mind common species will be defined as:

- 'Eruptive or cyclical and hence periodically common.
 - Generalists capable of exploiting a wide range of environmental conditions.'
- (Lindenmayer, et al., 2011, p. 1663).

The reason for such an absence of common species in urban nature photography is not entirely clear. However, it may originate from a socially constructed fear. These fears are the results of negative perception, for 'the presence of these creatures - pigeons, starlings, rats, mice, foxes, and all manner of insects is a threat of some kind, a kind of leakage and therefore a representation of the fragility of our insulation from the 'wild'' (Snæbjörnsdóttir, et al., 2010). These aversions to ecological pests, such as the feral pigeon (*Columba livia*) or the brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) is virtually intuitive, and may be traced to damaging perceptions surrounding the animal, rather than the animal itself. For example, an encounter with a feral pigeon is seldom welcomed as a natural experience, and in all likelihood it will not conjure up thoughts of admiration or respect, but rather of the disease and ultimate disorder inherently associated with the bird. This perception has its roots in pop culture. Tom Lehrer might have started this trend with his 1959 song *Poisoning Pigeons in the Park*, while Woody Allen in the 1980 film *Stardust Memories* soon went on to popularise the very idea of pigeons as *flying rats* (Harris, 2010b).

Again these observations return to the notion of viewer expectation, for it is unlikely the photographer harbours such animosity toward these kinds of species. In fact, it is far more likely that the photographer - understanding that such negative perceptions are held by a vast majority - deliberately overlooks these species in order to appease their viewers. However, while the literature explored in this chapter may incidentally

prompt this kind of observation, in regard to any theoretical grounding, it remains as simple conjecture.

Thus far, two trends have been identified to be inhibiting the aesthetic development of urban nature photography. These are known as juxtaposition and a preference for uncommon species. However, these trends have only been described in a pragmatic sense, where little has been said about their impression on the aesthetic of an urban nature photograph. Consequently, the effect of these trends upon the aesthetic of a photograph will be now discussed.

The preference for uncommon species in a photograph prompts a consequence in its photographic form. Locating an uncommon urban nature subject - which has to then be juxtaposed with the human subject - inhibits the freedom of the photographer for two reasons. Firstly, uncommon species are generally far more difficult to locate and photograph than common species. Secondly, when this uncommon subject has been located - the difficulty of location notwithstanding - the photographer must then set about composing it in relation to the urban environment. Consequently the products of this framework are so governed by juxtaposition that they become embedded in a naturalistic aesthetic, widely known as 'the theory or practice in art and literature of representing nature, character, etc. realistically and in great detail' (Allen, 1990, p. 790). Naturalistic representation embraces such a leading aesthetic position in urban nature photography - due to juxtaposition and uncommon species - that every time a photographer stays faithful to this framework they surrender, albeit inadvertently, a significant amount of their creative capacity. Suffice to say, these observations might illuminate certain reasons for such a discernible stagnancy in the contemporary form of urban nature photography.

Without doubt there are cases where the operation of this stereotype has validation in urban nature photography. For example, juxtaposition, while being problematic to the form of urban nature photography does, as a representational strategy, serve its purpose of locating the urban nature subject in the urban environment. It is essential to stress this strategy is not being disputed as a pointless endeavour, but rather as an

established form of representation among many other potential strategies. With this in mind, juxtaposition must not prevent the development of alternative aesthetics in the form of urban nature photography.

For additional photographs from the three photographers examined in this literature review, see Appendix A (p. 190).

1.5. The Definition of *Aesthetic*

There is a word which repeatedly occurs throughout this thesis that warrants further discussion. This word is *aesthetic*. Here, its prime context in this thesis alludes to the development of an *alternative aesthetic* in the photographic form of urban nature photography. With this in mind, a definition of the term *aesthetic* will be provided so as to underline its function within this thesis. As it is described by The Concise Oxford Dictionary, an aesthetic is predominantly 'concerned with beauty or the appreciation of beauty' (Allen, 1990, p. 19). This, however, encompasses a very broad spectrum of perception, as beauty is undoubtedly subjective. In spite of this, the notion of beauty will be discussed further later. Beforehand, the meaning of aesthetic - as understood in this thesis - will be defined so as to ascertain a clear direction for the methodology and the following experiments.

There are, essentially, five aesthetic senses. These are sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. Each governs a specific response to a particular experience, to which someone may then form a set of associations with that experience. While these five senses are important, however, only one will be submitted to investigation here: sight. After all, this thesis is an exploration of photographic practice, a practice which is aligned with visual representation.

In the visual arts an aesthetic is associated with visual style, and thus often the artist's own definition of beauty. For an artist, an aesthetic is best considered as a guiding set of principles that influence the visual style of his or her work. For example, this can be viewed in the surrealist art movement. Surrealism was an artistic movement in early twentieth century European culture where artists bid to explore the creativity of the unconscious mind. Understanding this framework, then, only requires a brief look at the surrealist phase of Pablo Picasso's career to demonstrate the influence of guiding principles on visual form (Picasso, et al., 2005). This is what is meant by the notion of aesthetics in this thesis and serves to define what is meant by the development of an

alternative aesthetic, it is concerned with the expression of visual style, specifically in the form of urban nature photography. With this in mind, it is necessary to return to the discussion of beauty.

The photographs produced in this thesis will be inclined to the expression of *beauty*, a term which is often used in regard to nature (Brady, 2007, 2010; Carlson, 2000). It should be noted, however, that beauty is an exceedingly broad ideal that navigates a range of conceptual landscapes, including, but not restricted to, art, culture and even society. However, while an in-depth study of beauty exceeds the scope of this thesis, a brief discussion of beauty and artistic practice will be provided. For example, if two photographers take photographs of a grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), even if they are of equal experience, using the same equipment in the same location at the same time, they will still create two different photographs because the two photographers see the world differently from each other. They carry their own body of experiences, opinions and ideologies which shape how they see the world, and here the same can be said of beauty. There are many interpretations of beauty (perhaps it might be fair to say everyone holds a slightly different interpretation) for people will find different things beautiful for different reasons. The Concise Oxford Dictionary outlines beauty as 'a combination of qualities such as shape, colour, etc., that pleases the aesthetic senses, esp. the sight' (Allen, 1990, p. 96). However, this only serves to highlight the components beauty is built upon, and does little to explain why people find different things beautiful.

As already stated, the idea of beauty is incredibly vast, ranging from 'the beautiful (in the narrow sense), the pretty, the tragic, the comic, the magnificent, the handsome - even the terrible, the dreadful, the awful, in so far as these arouse genuine aesthetic feelings - are... all sub-species of the beautiful' (Stace, 1997, p. 9). Beauty transcends any strict definition, then, and in turn may initially cause this very discussion to seem irrelevant by association. However, it is precisely the lack of any strict definition that makes it so powerful. After all, 'if aesthetics were nothing but a systematic catalogue of whatever is called beautiful, it would give no ideal of the life that transpires in the

concept of beauty... The idea of beauty draws attention to something essential in art without, however, articulating it directly' (Adorno, 2004, p. 66). Beauty is remarkably subjective. Its strength is drawn from its existence as a conceptual force, for if it was physical matter - subject to scientific dissection - its essence would become universal and its components quantifiable fact. Therefore, 'the enquiry, "what is beautiful, and why?" can only be answered by him who has often asked the question' (Robinson, 1869, p. 4). It has long been said, after all, that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder' (Hungerford, 1886, p. 142).

Of course, aesthetics is not simply art-based, at its core aesthetics is concerned with the appreciation of beauty, and this is not exclusive to art. Environmental aesthetics, for example, is a subgenre of aesthetics concerned with the appreciation of beauty in the natural environment (Carlson, 2000). The appreciation of nature could, for many, struggle to seem like anything but a positive attribute, but when bearing in mind the subjectivity of beauty, its issue lies in choice. The diversity of life on Earth is amazing, and while only 1.3 million species have been recorded, the recent predictions for life on Earth reach up to 8.7m (Mora, et al., 2011). It is highly improbable, however, that all 1.3m recorded species would be considered beautiful by the 7 billion people living on Earth (estimation as of October 2011) (Hanlon, et al., 2012). In truth, it is far more likely that one person's view of beauty will not reflect the next person's view, for one can only define beauty by oneself. This solves nothing, though, and only leads onto a wider problem already outlined in this chapter.

Allen Carlson, author of *Aesthetics and the Environment*, suggests that when an artist displays an appreciation of nature the results may often cause an *aesthetic affront* to nature, which he describes as an upset being inflicted upon the natural environment (Carlson, 1979; Carlson, 2000). The notion of an affront is most eloquently defined by Glenn Parsons, author of *Aesthetics and Nature*, who states 'the general idea behind the notion of an aesthetic affront is an insult, indignity, or slight to X that is based on interference with the aesthetic qualities of X' (Parsons, 2008, p. 130). This is regularly demonstrated in the genre of environmental art, where artists use natural resources

to produce their artworks, which are then exhibited in the natural environment. They use the products of nature, which as natural resources have one aesthetic quality, to then cast these resources into an artwork, which now inherit an entirely different set of aesthetic qualities. The affront is found in dissemination, for it is these repackaged resources - the artworks - which are exhibited to people, whose experience becomes more one of art than of environment. The inherent environmental message that was made with so much conviction during its creation inevitably becomes lost beneath the context of an artwork.

While an affront is not associated with urban nature photography; as a photograph is not made up of natural resources or exhibited in the wider natural environment, it is worthy of noting here, for there are parallels to draw regarding how people perceive urban nature. That is to say, perceptions of nature which are aligned with the exotic, in turn, serve as an affront to the common. Undoubtedly, this is an indignity imposed upon urban nature, as positive aesthetics (the appreciation of natural beauty) is only likened to those species of an uncommon variety, since the most regrettable truth is that 'wild nature is just always more beautiful than humanly modified nature, and only the latter can ever have negative aesthetic value' (Brady, 2007, p. 294). Thus, in order for these perceptions to change, as noted earlier, representations are the best place to begin.

It should be noted the photographs created in this thesis are not concerned with any sense of universal beauty, nor are they an attempt to undermine the beauty in wider nature photography. They are purely alternative representations of the urban nature subject. Any sense of beauty belongs to the researcher, and will not be submitted to any objective scrutiny in this thesis.

1.6. A Wider Photographic Discussion

George Bernard Shaw, author and playwright, once remarked that 'no man can be a pure specialist without being in the strict sense an idiot' (Shaw, 2005, p. 230). This is a comment to be valued in this thesis, for a specialist - in the most acute sense - may often find him or herself in danger of becoming overwhelmed by a tunnel vision-like state of mind where, sure enough, they may realise the most intricate details of their craft, but ultimately fail to understand its place in wider research. This thesis sits in a rather narrow field of photography - urban nature photography - still in its infancy as a subgenre of nature photography. With this in mind, it is important to recognise the wider field of photography and identify where urban nature photography might then be placed within its broad spectrum.

The most effective place to begin is with the definition of a nature photographer, for many photographers throughout history have worked with natural subjects without, *per se*, being classified as nature photographers. Robert Mapplethorpe, for example, produced some of the most iconic representations of sexuality in his photographs of lilies in the twentieth century (Marshall, et al., 1988). Imogen Cunningham and Man Ray (born Emmanuel Radnitzky) also worked quite heavily with plants, while Andreas Feininger, in *The Anatomy of Nature* (Feininger, 1956), captured the skeletal forms of natural subjects, in addition to examining the texture of nature itself in *Nature Close Up* (Feininger, 1977). In spite of this, these photographers were never categorised as *nature photographers*. Even the images of Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange during the Farm Security Administration (Hagen, 1991), while produced in rural landscapes, without a doubt belong far more to a socio-political disposition rather than, say, one of conservation, and perhaps this is precisely the point. Nature photographers are a collective whose work is devoted to the natural elements, often for the conservation of those very elements. This differs greatly from a photographer who is working with natural subjects but whose core message is ultimately one of an aesthetic, or indeed, political disposition. Ansel Adams may be the best example here; his images not only

explored the beauty of natural landscapes but also served to raise awareness for the protection of those landscapes (Adams, 2006). Eliot Porter, too, had a significant role in the development of nature photography with his landmark photographs of birds in colour (Porter, 1972) which subsequently contributed to the protection of those very birds.



Figure 1.8 George Shiras III "Deer Jumping" (1906)

The key difference between nature photography (here, this is including urban nature photography) and other fields of photography is that it suffers from a significant lack of literature. George Shiras III, US Representative, is credited as being the first nature photographer, and in 1906 his images (Figure 1.8) were the first nature photographs to be published in National Geographic (Shiras, 1906), but this is where the origins of nature photography end. For some, it may be difficult to believe that photographers only began to move their focus onto nature by the late 1900s; almost a century after Nicéphore Niépce created what is generally accepted to be the first ever photograph in 1825. However, the earliest photograph of an animal in its natural habitat was not taken until 1872 - nearly fifty years after Niépce's discovery - by an anonymous crew

member aboard the *Challenger* expedition, and portrayed a penguin rookery (Bousé, 2000). It is fair to say, then, that due to the expedition's emphasis on marine life, and since it was made during a voyage of scientific discovery; which would have provided essential information for future conservation efforts, this photograph can be defined as a *nature photograph*.

The absence of literature in the field of nature photography may be a product of the Digital Revolution (Zysman, et al., 2006), where developments in camera technology have led to a general devaluing of photographs. After all, the Digital Era consists of a population who not only live in an image-saturated culture but actively engage with it on a daily basis. Needless to say, the moment an instrument - once regarded as an exclusive pastime - becomes available to the vast majority its exclusivity soon begins to fade away. Admittedly, though, this observation can only serve to defend the lack of literature in urban nature photography, for as already noted, nature photography can be traced back to the nineteenth century. It might be that the lack of literature in urban nature photography is a product of the socially fabricated anxiety surrounding common species / ecological pests (discussed earlier), or perhaps it is, rather simply, that the subgenre is such a recent development it has yet to find support (outside of this thesis) in any critical capacity.

Thus far, however, this discussion has done little to locate urban nature photography in the wider field of photography. At first it should be noted that the definition of an urban nature photograph borrows from the elements which constitute a valid nature photograph, meaning the validity of the photograph is dependent on its context and purpose. An image of a natural subject in the urban environment is not simply - by its association - an urban nature photograph, it must be created out of a conservationist attitude (this idea also stems back to choosing published authors when analysing the form of urban nature photography, for their photographs are the advocates of urban biodiversity). Nevertheless, if urban nature photography is to be viewed in the wider photographic spectrum one must then look beyond its obvious affiliation with nature photography and toward other, more lateral, ways of thinking. For example, in terms

of both its observational characteristics and its use of the environment, urban nature photography could be said to share certain parallels with street photography (a type of photography concerned with subjects found in public spaces and often depicted in candid situations). However, such an association is not drawn purely because of their physical similarities, but rather, in fact, because of the underlying motivations of the photographers.

While these genres may differ in their choice of subject matter, there is one common element that unites them. This is their engagement with urban activism. Needless to say, it is unlikely that these photographers would define themselves as activists, but yet it remains true that their photographs of urban life certainly demonstrate many qualities of activism. This may be easier to observe in urban nature photography, for it is directly engaged in the process of raising awareness, while street photography's link with activism, initially, may seem quite a tenuous one. The photographs of Henri Cartier-Bresson and Eugène Atget cannot be overlooked here (Brenson, et al., 2004; Naef, et al., 2000). Without doubt Atget's photographs of Parisian life between 1897 and 1927, and Cartier-Bresson's treatment of the Liberation of Paris in 1944, serve to define characteristics of a hugely influential epoch where both photographers can be defined as activists, but for two different reasons. Atget's prolific study of the streets of Paris became a vital influence in the birth of documentary photography (Lemagny, et al., 2000) while Cartier-Bresson's images of the Liberation of Paris became the voice of an entire nation (Assouline, 2012).

Today, street photography has surrendered its link with urban activism in favour of a much lighter ideology, where it is led by a candid observation that serves to replicate the act of holding up a mirror to society (Wells, 2004). Perhaps this is so as to detach itself from the genres of photojournalism and documentary photography which have grown out of its development - inheriting many of the same characteristics - but in a far more commercial capacity. Any sense of political philosophy or cultural advocacy has left street photography, joining these other genres. As a result this has led street photography to adopt a rather humorous and eccentric perspective into its aesthetic

(Howarth, et al., 2010) where everyday moments are captured by photographers in a playful and optimistic manner.

Initially, such an investigation into street photography may seem rather peripheral in regard to urban nature photography. However, this discussion endures because it is an important one. The possibility that street photography may have had some causal impact upon the creation of urban nature photography is worthy of further research, since the earliest references to urban nature photography can be found in the 1980s (Angel, 1982; Baines, 1986), the same time urban nature conservation was beginning to find its momentum (Marren, 2002). It is not unreasonable for the rising popularity of urban nature conservation to have gathered the attention of street photographers working in urban environments, who could have quite easily shifted their focus onto the urban nature subject. However, due to the lack of literature on such a correlation these timeframes can only persevere as conjecture and have been highlighted due to their potential for future researchers.

This discussion has, for all intents and purposes, provided a brief lateral investigation of the genre of photography. However, the field of photography is an enormous one, and consists of far too much material to be adequately sustained in a supplement to this thesis. Needless to say, the observations drawn here do not act as an exhaustive list but serve to provide a wider reading of urban nature photography in the broader sphere of its practice. It has proved critical to identify other genres which surround it in the photographic landscape, because, while the discoveries made in this thesis will be attributable to the field of urban nature photography, the origins of the subgenre remain uncertain due to the lack of literature available. This discussion has served to contribute to such a deficiency.

The following chapter will now discuss the methods used in this thesis so as to begin challenging the trends that were identified in the form of urban nature photography earlier in this chapter.

2. Methodology

‘Using the arts in research may be closer to the act of problematizing traditional conclusions than it is to providing answers in containers that are watertight... the products of this research are closer in function to deep conversation and insightful dialogue than they are to error-free conclusions.’

Elliot Eisner (Knowles, et al., 2008, p. 7).

2.1. Introduction

Practice-based research is an applied system for discovery. Identifying a problematic trend in any subject will inevitably prompt the development of solutions toward that very problem. Here, ‘discovery consists of looking at the same thing as everyone else and thinking something different’ (quote by Albert Szent Gyorgyi, quoted in Johnson, et al., 1998, p. 37). This process is not as flippant as it may seem, however, for it is led by two components that shape its narrative. These are *Practice* and *Reflection* (Malins, et al., 1999).

Practice and Reflection are essential components in practice-based research for they complement each other in the course of discovery. It is their relationship that is able to initiate and support the critical development of ideas. For example, once a body of practice has been produced (imagine, perhaps, a set of photographs for the benefit of this thesis), afterwards, and so as to further the ideas explored in these photographs, they must be subjected to a reflection. At this stage, the resulting photographs should be reviewed in order to highlight any trends or observations that may then influence

the development of further ideas, and therefore a second set of photographs, which, in turn, could then be reflected on so as to produce a third body of photographs, and so on (Figure 2.1).

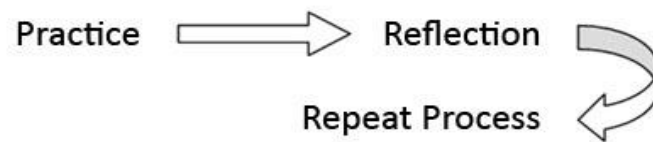


Figure 2.1 Diagram illustrating the cyclic relationship between the components Practice and Reflection.

In this chapter it will be determined how these components, Practice and Reflection, will be used to inform photographic practice and challenge the contemporary form of urban nature photography. They have been divided into two sections, *Practice-based Component* and *Reflective Component*. To begin with, the Practice-based Component will be introduced.

2.2. Practice-based Component

The mechanisms set out in this chapter are designed to produce a set of experiments that serve to challenge current representational strategies in the contemporary form of urban nature photography. With this in mind, the foundation of this thesis will rest upon a series of practice-based experiments where photographic practice (the act of taking photographs) will be used to develop alternative representations of the urban nature subject. To begin with, the following points serve to ascertain the structure of these experiments.

- Each experiment will be led by an experiment question and a set of governing objectives. These will target representational strategies which have not been explored in urban nature photography; steering the direction of the practice-based component (this being the photographs) in order to provide a response to the experiment question.
- Following this, a brief introduction (approximately 500 words) will outline the idea being explored in each experiment by referencing the relevant literature and photographic texts.
- Five experiments will be carried out here. Five will provide the opportunity to navigate a landscape saturated in alternative representations, leaving behind a series of aesthetic investigations which can be followed, reviewed, and built upon by future researchers.
- Ten photographs will be presented as the results of each experiment and will provide a response to each experiment question. For example, if an aesthetic is able to be consistent across the resulting ten photographs, it may be able to demonstrate the development of that very aesthetic. In addition, although in a far more practical sense, ten photographs will provide a substantial amount

of opportunity for dissemination and exhibition (dissemination is discussed in Chapter 5).

- Once completed, the photographs will be subjected to a process of reflection (approximately 500 words) where a series of observations will be drawn from the resulting photographs and used to influence the direction of the following experiment (upon where this process, listed by the previous five bullet points, will then be repeated). The process of reflection will be discussed later in this chapter.

Having ascertained the structure of the experiments, now the process of photographic practice will be discussed. Firstly, however, the representational strategies identified in the literature review will be summarised. Essentially, two trends were observed to be contributing to a naturalistic aesthetic in urban nature photography: juxtaposition and the preference for uncommon species.

1. Juxtaposition

Urban nature photographers are faithful to a representational strategy called juxtaposition. In this strategy the urban nature subject is juxtaposed with the human subject so as to classify the former subject as an urban inhabitant, and the image as an urban nature photograph. Such a process, however, restrains the photographer, whose creative freedom begins to wither beneath such an aesthetic authority.

2. Uncommon Species

Urban nature photographers evidence a preference for uncommon species in order to raise awareness of urban biodiversity. Initially, this might seem to be a noble aim, and in some sense very much is so, however, the implications of this decision are two-fold. Evidencing a preference for the uncommon species marginalises those common species which remain overlooked, unheeded and discriminated. Secondly, uncommon species, by their very substance of being

uncommon, are typically far more problematic to locate and photograph than common species. As a result of such obstacles, concessions and compromises are made during production, fixing a distinct linearity in the representation of the resulting images.

These trends cause an urban nature photograph to become instilled with naturalistic representation, which has obtained the dominant aesthetic position in urban nature photography. Thus, if these trends are to be challenged using photographic practice, certain changes must be made toward the production process itself. Firstly, a change of location is proposed.

These photographs will not be produced in typical urban environments; as evidenced in the literature review, but relocated to urban green space sites. Changing locations serves to oppose the current perceptions of an urban nature image, for stripping any subject of its regular environment then allows the opportunity to explore alternative representations of that subject. The choice of urban green space is a product of those observations made earlier in the literature review regarding juxtaposition; a trend that compels the photographer to work in quite typical urban landscapes. Suffice to say, a change of location provides the platform in which to begin challenging these inherent representations. Furthermore - albeit as a by-product - working in these urban green space sites serves to raise awareness of such environments and to encourage further engagement with them.

Urban green space sites are described as semi-natural (due to their urban geography) areas within a wider urban landscape (Natural England, 2011; MBC, 2011): 'land that consists predominantly of unsealed, permeable, 'soft' surfaces such as soil, grass, shrubs and trees... parks, play areas and other green spaces specifically intended for recreational use' (Dunnett, et al., 2002, p. 8).

The benefit afforded by urban green space is access. Field craft and animal behaviour have always been - and indeed always will be - critical skills when tracking subjects in the wider natural environment, for these animals are often timid and intolerant of any

close proximity to people. Urban green space flourishes here for two reasons. Firstly, urban green space is far easier to access than, for example, the closest national park, while secondly, urban species are typically much more habituated to the presence of people (Gehrt, et al., 2010). This means it is possible to spend long periods of time in close proximity to these species, which in turn provides a substantial opportunity for the photographer (who is practically guaranteed a kind of access) to experiment with alternative representations.

The second trend - a preference for uncommon species - will be challenged by rather obvious means, and that is to say, by only focussing on common species; those which are 'eruptive or cyclical and hence periodically common...' (Lindenmayer, et al., 2011, p. 1663).

Initiating such a concentration on common species aims to expand the perception of urban green space by aligning these marginalised species with the grandiose ideas of nature itself, rather than the banality they are accustomed to. The magnitude of this association cannot be overstated, either, since 'the importance of naturally common species - those that are abundant and widespread - in shaping the world around us is so blatant that it is easily overlooked' (Gaston, 2010, p. 154). If photographs of urban nature can be developed in this thesis that begin to fragment people's perceptions of these common species, then, perhaps, the troubled relationship between people and nature may begin to find a resolution.

Thus, photographs in this thesis will only be produced in urban green space sites and represent common species. Five experiments will be conducted, however, and so for there to be a transition between each experiment there must be a system in place to guide the process. This system is called reflection.

2.3. Reflective Component

Reflection is vital in practice-based research because it channels the development of further practice. Reflection is a tool for progress, 'a form of mental processing - like a form of thinking - that we may use to fulfil a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome, or we may simply "be reflective" and then an outcome can be unexpected' (Moon, 2004, p. 82). However, one should not be flippant in reflection. The reflective process must gently guide the process of thought while managing its observations in a coherent manner. Thus, a model of reflection has been designed for this thesis and will be discussed below.

This model is a three-stage process influenced by other models of reflection (Borton, 1970; Rolfe, et al., 2001). However, unlike these models its main adaptation lies in its design; the model is made to be compatible with the use of photographic practice as a research method.

For example, models of reflection are often shaped for experiential professions such as nursing, teaching or care work (McNiff, et al., 2002; Rolfe, et al., 2001; Whitehead, 1989). In these professions the researcher will engage in a social environment where their process of engagement is subjected to reflection. However, the development of representation is not a product of social engagement but a product of practice-based enquiry. Therefore, in this research, reflective awareness needs to be on the products themselves (the photographs) rather than any form of social performance offered by the researcher. With this in mind, the reflective model exercised in this thesis will be comprised of three stages.

1. Process

The method of practice will be outlined in this section. That is to say, how the camera was used in order to produce the resulting photographs. For instance, any adjustments made to internal or external variables will be defined in this

section. Internal variables are aligned with the camera itself (exposure levels, shutter speeds, focal points and colour balance), while external variables take account of the landscape (use of the physical environment, animal behaviour or the harnessing of light).

2. Analysis

In this section, *Analysis* refers to a retrospective review of the photographs in each experiment. Once the practice-based element is complete - and the ten photographs considered to be most symptomatic of the experiment question have been chosen - the aesthetic component explored in that experiment will be observed in regard its effect upon the representation of the urban nature subject. Each aesthetic component will develop an alternative representation of the urban nature subject, since each experiment, and thus component, will draw upon a set of different influences in its representation. That is to say, it is anticipated that each aesthetic component will instil its photographs with a set of qualities appropriate to that component. Determining these qualities is the aim of the work reported in this section, and will be done so by reflective scrutiny on behalf of the researcher, who will analyse his or her photographs with an active regard for the development of, and contribution to, alternative representation in urban nature photography.

3. What Next?

Certain observations will have been drawn in the analysis which may warrant further investigation. These observations may include the development of an aesthetic component or the adjustment of a camera mode (shutter speeds or exposure levels). These will be identified here and used to guide the direction of the following experiment.

Photographing nature is a classically unpredictable process, and in view of this many photographs will be made during production. Logic, of course, determines that many of these images will not be presented as the experiment results (some efforts will fail

while others will succeed). Thus, if ten photographs are to be exhibited as the results of each experiment, a process of selection must transpire so as to identify these final ten from the many photographs produced. Photographs suffering from the following faults will be discarded:

- Technical faults. Adjustments will be made to variables such as exposure and colour balance during the experiments, but when they are inadequately tuned and create unusable material - in the context of that experiment - they will be discarded as technical faults.
- Production faults. These are photographs that failed to capture the subject at all.

The remaining photographs will yield a range of technically proficient images - again, in the context of each experiment - to choose from. Ten photographs will be selected from the remaining images and exhibited as the results of that experiment. They will be selected because:

- At the researcher's discretion, a response to the experiment question is visible in the photographs.
- The experiment photographs, in regard to examples of contemporary urban nature photography, explore alternative representations of the urban nature subject.

For examples of photographs that were discarded by the process of selection, see Appendix B (p. 195).

When five experiments have been produced, the observations of each reflection will inspire a final set of photographs.

2.4. The Final Project

The purpose of the final project is to provide a form of closure within the framework of this thesis, which serves to exhibit a culmination of the aesthetic ideas explored in each experiment. This is the development of an alternative aesthetic in urban nature photography: a final representation derived out of the experiments. Needless to say, the exact course of the final project itself cannot be known until the experiments are complete. However, the following details outline the structure of this project. By this stage five experiments will be complete, and when this is so the objective of the final project will be three-fold.

1. Summarise the observations made in each experiment reflection. *It should be noted these observations are also known as aesthetic components and will be used very much like building blocks to help guide and construct the alternative aesthetic.*
2. If any experiments - thereby, any aesthetic components - are not found to be suitable for the final project, reasons will be given.
3. With these observations in mind a final body of photographs will be produced that serve to exhibit, in regard to the aesthetic components explored in each experiment, the development of an alternative aesthetic in the form of urban nature photography.

The final project, much like the experiments, will be opened by a question and a set of objectives. However, the introductory section that follows will then deviate from this formula. In this section the aesthetic components developed in each experiment will be summarised briefly, identifying the components which will be brought together in the final project. However, this research inclines more so toward art than science, and so even while the components will be listed, there will be a level of interpretation to be engaged with by the researcher when determining how these components should

be fused. This is to be expected, though, for the idea of practice-based research lies in the developments of the researcher alone.

The process of practice in the final project, as regarding how the photographs will be produced and how they will be presented will be similar to the experiments, but with some minor changes.

- Twenty photographs will be presented as the final project results. Twenty will provide a significant body of photographs so as to demonstrate a culmination of these aesthetic components. Furthermore, this larger body of photographs will distinguish the final project from the experiments, while being a sizeable number for dissemination.
- The process of selection will remain the same.
- These photographs will then be subjected to a reflection, but in a much wider capacity than the experiments. This is the *Critical Reflection* and will form the final chapter of this thesis (Chapter 5).

The critical reflection will largely differ in its length and scope when compared to the experiment reflections. Firstly, this is because it will make up an entire chapter, while secondly, it will provide an overarching review of the results of this thesis rather than focussing on a single set of photographs. Accordingly, it will identify the contribution of each aesthetic component toward the aesthetic of the final photographs, and thus, the final aesthetic will be subjected to review as well. The distinct feature of this critical reflection will be its focus on ideas that may not be aligned with the development of representation directly, but perhaps, instead, ideas that rest on the periphery of this research. For example, the definition of urban nature photography (as it is known by the researcher) may have changed during the course of this research, and in turn the research context in which this thesis sits may have changed with it. In addition, if any of the aesthetic components were considered inappropriate for the final project and subsequently not included, reasons for this will be given. The reflection will conclude with suggestions for further research.

2.5. Production Ethics

Photographs will be imported into Windows 7 Ultimate via USB connectivity as JPEG files. These files will be catalogued for storage. Only minor adjustments will be made in post-production (Adobe Photoshop CS4) addressing tonal balance, sharpening and cropping. No items, subjects or locations will be manufactured.

The resulting aesthetic style in each experiment will be a product of the camera and not of post-production, but this claim requires further vindication. The parameters of post-production are in an ever-changing state due to the growing popularity of post-produced photography. As a result it is critical to identify the boundaries of production in this thesis, as the potential of post-production cannot be denied. However, for the purposes of this thesis post-production is found to be an unsuitable trait for the field of urban nature photography, as there is little discovery to be made by photographic practice if it is governed by the authority of post-production. With this in mind, post-production will only be used as a mere corrective process and not as an authoritative creative process. After all, nature is a force of physical reality, and while the purpose of this thesis may indeed be to challenge the form of urban nature photography, it is more satisfying (as a practice-based researcher) to challenge these boundaries in the camera rather than in post-production.

For details of the photographs in this thesis (such as exposure values, shutter speeds, etc.), see Appendix C (p. 211).

2.6. Declaration of Field Ethics

I hereby state awareness of the relevant legislation and codes of practice, and agree to conduct my practice accordingly:

- *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (Archives, 1981).
- *Botanical Society of the British Isles and its Code of Conduct* (Palmer, et al., 1999).
- *RSPB Wild Birds and the Law: England and Wales* (Section, 2010).
- *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010* (Archives, 2010).

The welfare of the subject is far more important than the photograph. The images in this thesis were produced in urban green space sites around the Greater Manchester UK area and thus no location consent was required. *The Nature Photographer's Code of Practice* has been followed (The Royal Photographic Society, 2007) and no plants or animals were harmed, captured or threatened.

3. Experiments

‘The creative personality is always one that looks on the world as fit for change and on himself as an instrument for change.’

Jacob Bronowski (Bronowski, 1979, p. 123).

This chapter is comprised of five experiments and forms the central body of practice in this thesis. The first experiment begins by challenging the presence of two subjects in an urban nature photograph (such a predisposition was identified in Chapter 1 as a key trend in urban nature photography) while the following experiments will, in turn, progress onto further observations.

Experiments begin overleaf.

3.1. Decentering the Human Subject

- Experiment One

‘Decentering of the human subject opens up a valuable conceptual space for shifting the animal out from the cultural margins... destabilizing that familiar clutch of entrenched stereotypes which works to maintain the illusion of human identity, centrality and superiority.’

Steve Baker (Baker, 1993, p. 26).

3.1.1. Experiment Question

- How may the human subject be decentered in a photograph, so as the urban nature subject becomes the primary force?

3.1.2. Experiment Objectives

1. Summarise the presence of two subjects; bound by juxtaposition, in an urban nature photograph, while noting how the urban nature subject is relegated as the secondary force.
2. Produce a set of photographs which aim to decenter the human subject from an urban nature photograph, so as to renegotiate the urban nature subject as the primary force.

3.1.3. Introduction

It was identified in the literature review that an urban nature photograph consists of two subjects; the urban nature subject and the human subject, which are juxtaposed with each other for stirring effect (see p. 19). This process instils the photograph with naturalistic sensibilities. While, certainly, this strategy serves to locate the position of the urban nature subject within its surrounding environment, the by-product of such a process strips the photographer of his or her potential. That is to say, pursuing the notion that if there is no urban environment present then there is no evidence of the subject being urban in character, leads, very quickly, to the human subject becoming a compulsory presence, and as a result the foundation of the photograph will always be predetermined. Therefore, if this trend is never challenged its influence on urban nature photography will never cease.

Needless to say, this inhibits the freedom of the photographer, who composes his or her photographs in adherence to the expectation that the urban nature subject must be juxtaposed with the human subject. However, while this may mean both subjects are present in an image, it does not mean they are equal. The human subject greatly outweighs the urban nature subject in a composition precisely because the presence of the urban environment is judged to be so compulsory; inhibiting the photographer by guaranteeing a representational strategy upon the photograph before it has even been taken. This assures the human subject as the primary force because it relegates the urban nature subject as secondary.

The purpose of this experiment is to create a set of photographs which decenter the human subject from the composition. This will renegotiate the presence of the urban nature subject (all being well - to the primary force in the image), while averting any sense of naturalistic representation. After all, the 'decentering of the human subject is a major opportunity to see animals and humans differently' (Wolch, et al., 1998, p. 18). In addition, while juxtaposition may inhibit the freedom of the photographer, its

compulsory presence in a photograph is inhibiting the greater development of urban nature photography altogether, and this is of vital importance. Thus, decentering the human subject is a key investment in the development of urban nature photography, seeing as ‘the destabilized human subject opens up the space to acknowledge animal subjects *in order so* our notions of humanity could also be shorn of gender, race, and species preoccupations’ (Italics added) (C. J. Adams, 1994, pp. 12-13).

Elliot Ross’ portfolio *Animal* (Ross, 2010) evidences how the human subject might be decentered in a photograph. Here, his subjects are those found in captivity; an arena he wishes to free them from, and there are certainly parallels to draw between Ross’ ideology and this experiment (which relates to freeing the urban nature subject from its urban entrapment). In *Animal*, Ross casts the human subject aside so as to ensure his natural subject is the focal point, the primary force, which soon becomes isolated and alone; unable to escape the human gaze. This affects how the photographer and viewer perceive the subject, as the photograph’s meaning is now being derived from a single subject rather than a process. It is no longer about definition, ‘all indications of actual surroundings are deleted because they would be distracting and irrelevant. No habitat needed to keep anything grounded here. Our focus is on a gesture, not on a jungle’ (Zollner, 2010).

This experiment shares this sentiment, but unlike Ross’ use of post-production when isolating his subjects, the human subject in these photographs will be decentered by the camera alone.

Results begin overleaf.

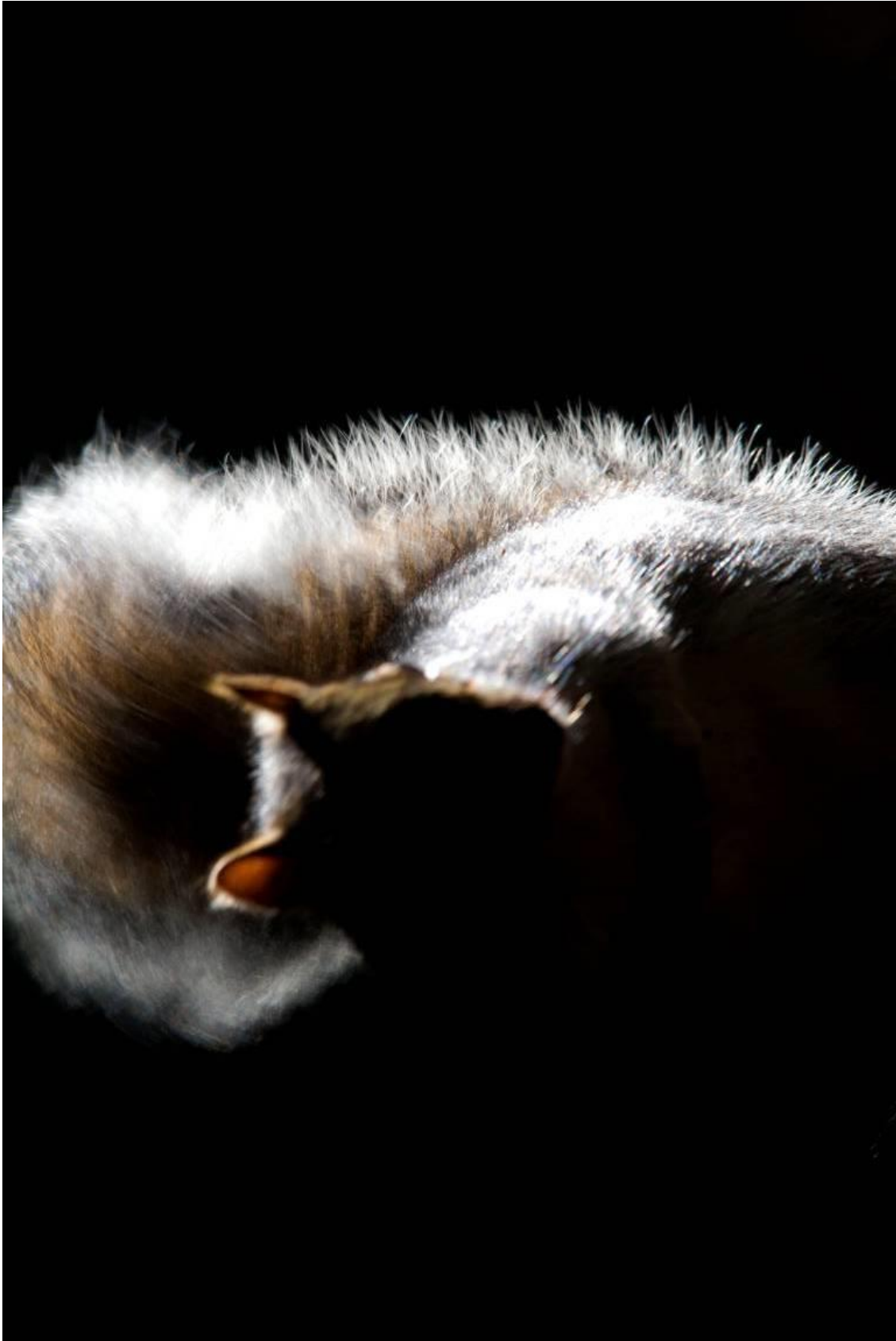


Figure 3.1a Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)



Figure 3.1b Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)



Figure 3.1c Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)



Figure 3.1d Mute swan (*Cygnus olor*)

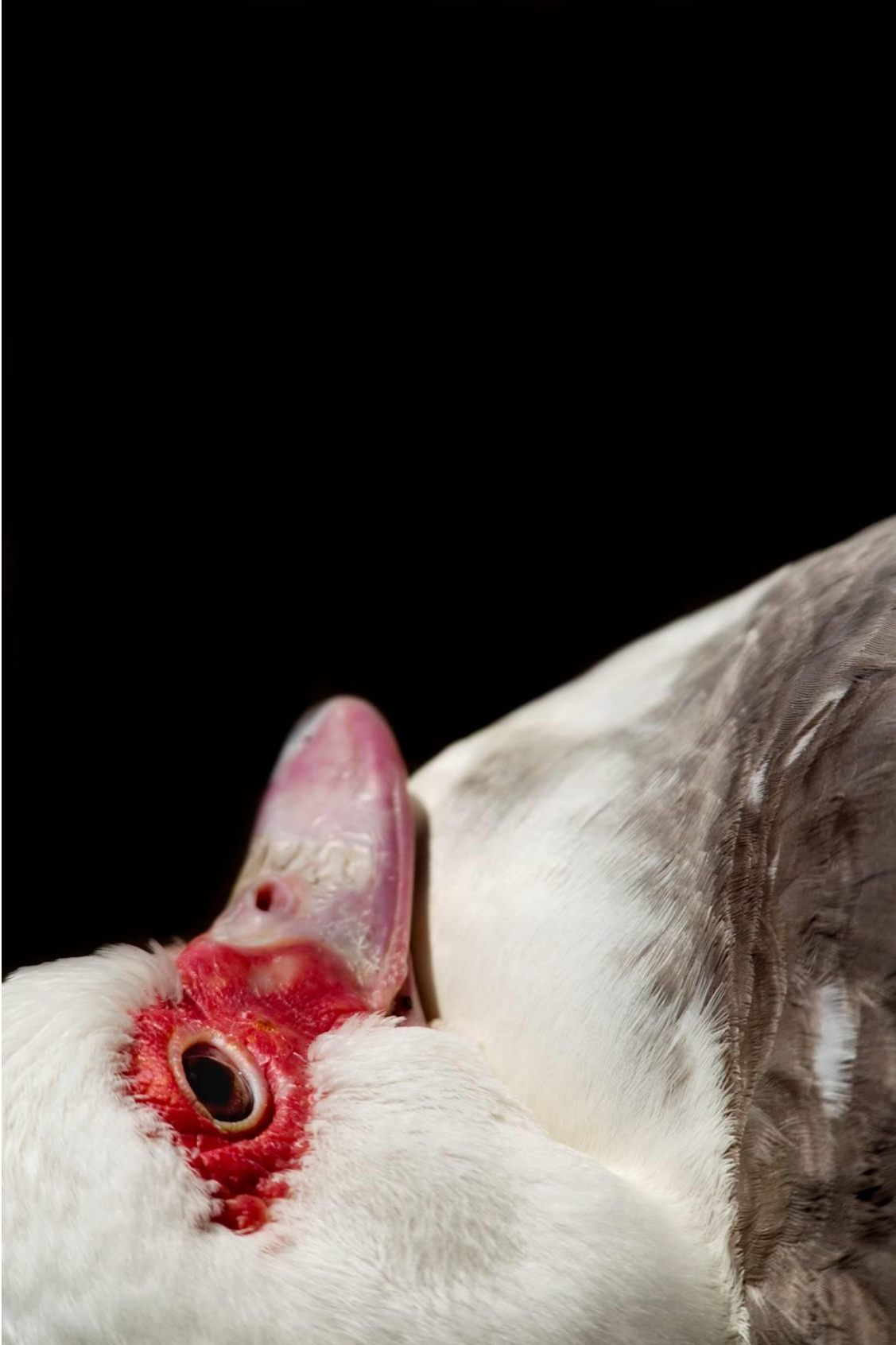


Figure 3.1e Muscovy duck (*Cairina moschata*)

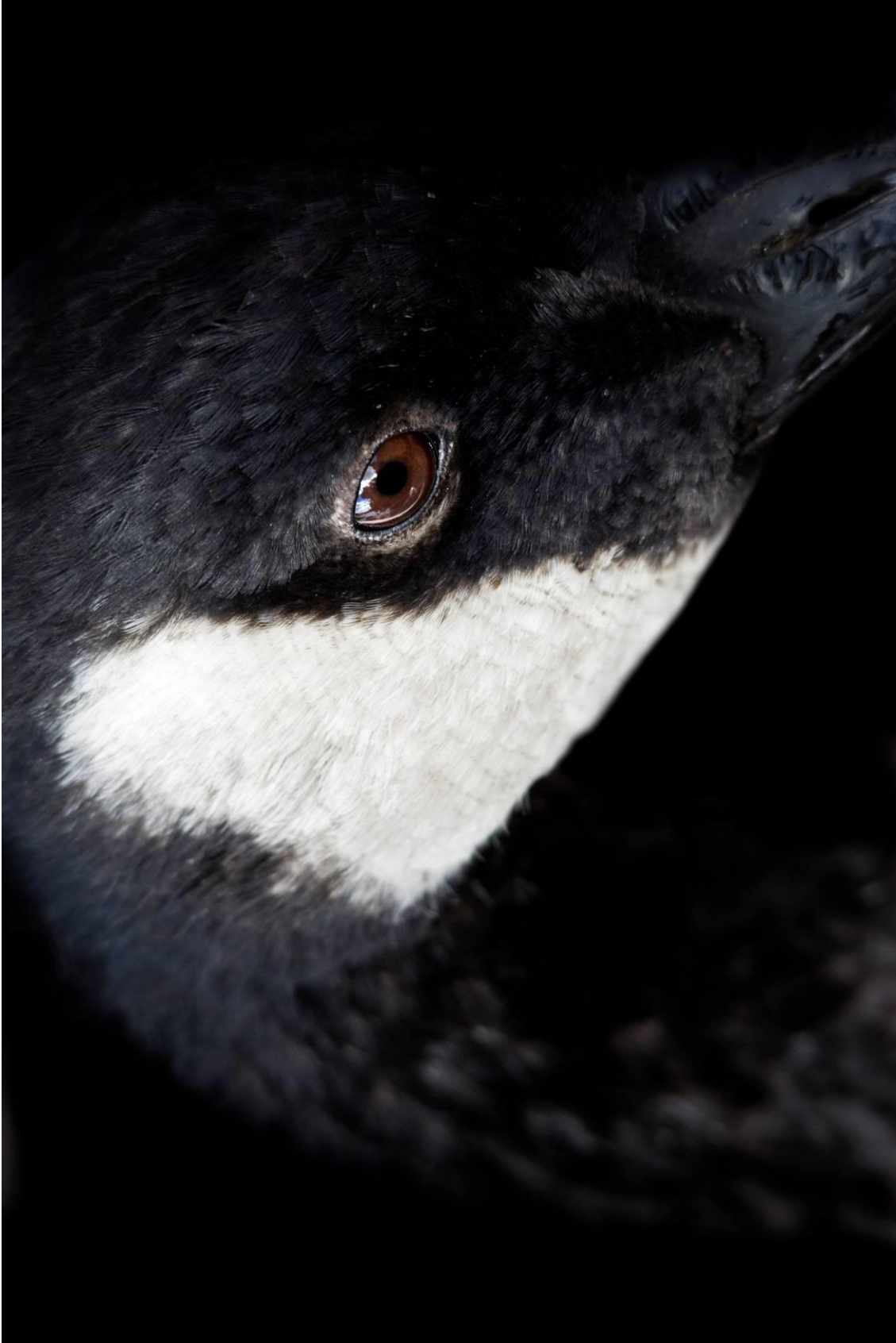


Figure 3.1f Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*)

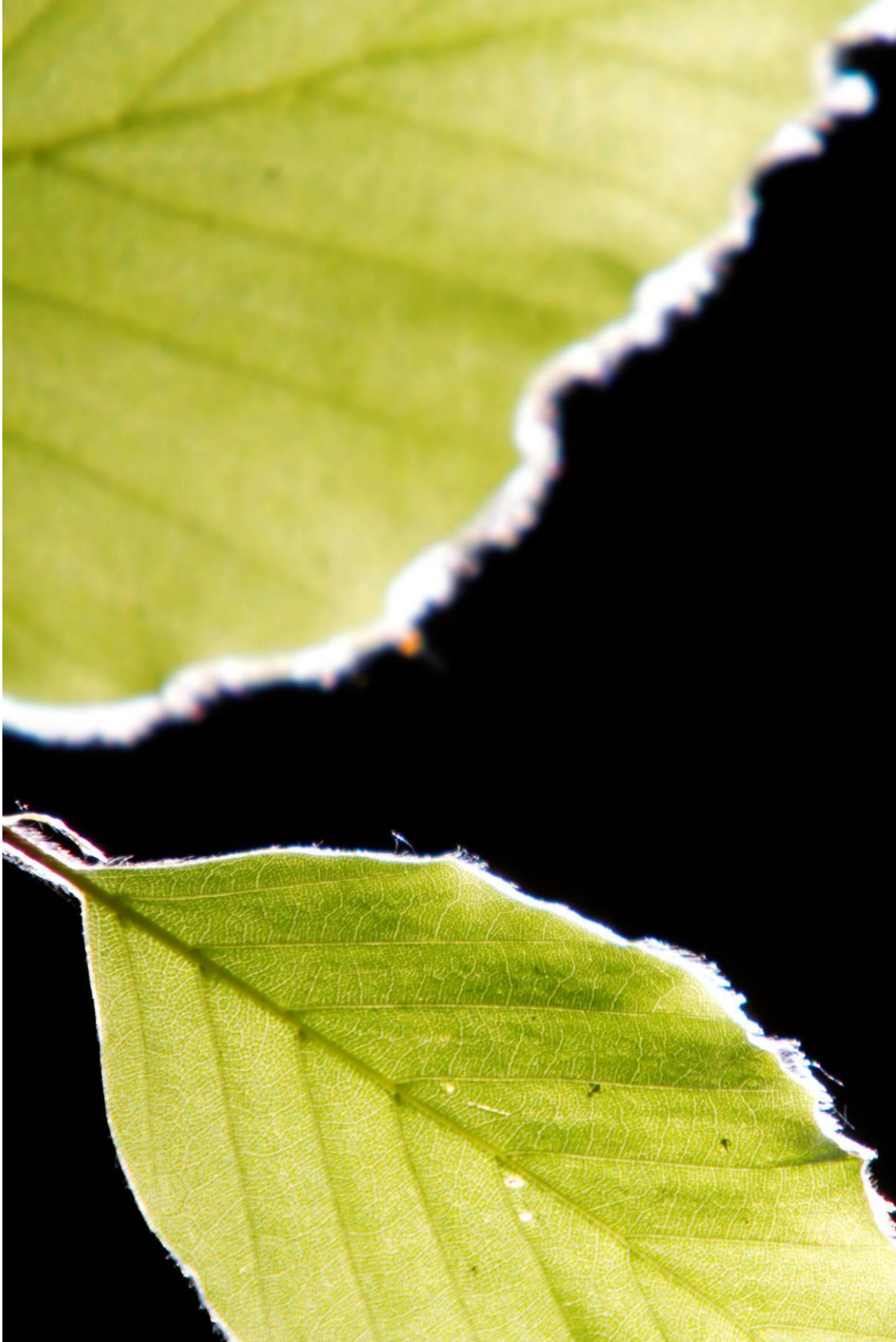


Figure 3.1g European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*)



Figure 3.1h European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)



Figure 3.1i Common daffodil (*Narcissus cultivar*)



Figure 3.1j Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)

3.1.4. Process

Isolating the urban nature subject involved two steps. To begin with, the subject had to be beneath natural light, and secondly, the background had to be poorly lit. When these elements were achieved, the urban nature subject (currently situated in direct natural light) was exposed for, which in turn led the poorly lit background to become underexposed, appearing black.

3.1.5. Analysis

These photographs resist the juxtaposition of two subjects by obscuring reference to the human subject. Instead, they convey an absence of superfluous information that would otherwise serve to define the subject as urban nature (for example, Figure 3.1j; of Himalayan balsam). This absence is defined as an underlying blackness in order to focus entirely on the urban nature subject, which has now become the primary force in the photographs.

Renegotiating the urban nature subject has led the photographs to inherit notions of portraiture, for each subject is being projected as an individual rather than a general representative of the species. However, as there is no decisive reference toward the human subject in these photographs their integrity as valid examples of urban nature photography fall into question. Nevertheless, they remain proven examples of urban nature photography for three reasons.

1. Content

The subjects are examples of common urban nature species which share their characteristics with the definition of common in wider ecology, and are found in urban green space.

2. Production

The photographs were produced in urban green space. While this location is not overtly present in the photographs, it is subconsciously evidenced in their production. Urban nature is habituated to the presence of people. This allows close proximity to the subjects and the opportunity to freely experiment with representation.

3. Context

The photographs are the products of a practice-based enquiry concerning the development of an alternative aesthetic in urban nature photography and are contextualised as such.

However, while the human subject has been decentered, in truth, its causal presence may not have been displaced entirely. After all, the human subject serves not only as a reference point in an image but as a catalyst for its construction. The photographer is human, and composes each image by way of a personality, since 'photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are' (Sontag, 1979, pp. 6-7). Interpretations will almost always be those of the photographer, for in order to faithfully represent how a grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) (Figure 3.1a) or a black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) (Figure 3.1b) - or any animal - may perceive their environment is an exceptionally difficult task (Baker, 2000). However, while the presence of the human subject - here defined as the photographer - will be inevitable, it is not considered detrimental to the development of representation in urban nature photography.

3.1.6. What Next?

Decentering one subject has laid emphasis upon the other. Focussing entirely on the urban nature subject has led the photographs to become instilled with a great sense

of clarity, for displacing the human subject has laid all the photographic information in the photograph upon the urban nature subject (this is most discernibly so in Figure 3.1c and Figure 3.1h; of the black-headed gull and European holly), which in turn has now become readily identifiable. It is precisely this notion of photographic information that overwhelms the form of urban nature photography in naturalism, and therefore, in the following experiment this idea of information and clarity will be further explored and ultimately challenged.

3.2. Conceptual Closure

- Experiment Two

‘It is a matter of holding questions open and of resisting popular visual culture’s tendency to jump to neat answers, pictorial clichés, and thus to conceptual closure.’

Steve Baker (Baker, 2001, p. xvii).

3.2.1. Experiment Question

- How may the authoritative presence of photographic information in an urban nature photograph become displaced, so an alternative power may then arise from its eviction?

3.2.2. Experiment Objectives

1. Define the term *conceptual closure* and establish its affiliation with the notion of photographic information.
2. Produce a series of photographs which oppose the presence of photographic information by refusing to result in any clear-cut, decided, or concise forms of representation.

3.2.3. Introduction

Conceptual closure is a term used by Steve Baker when discussing the representation of animals in art. It refers to visual culture's inability to resist clear and concise forms of representation, which repeatedly result in pictorial clichés (Baker, 1993). With this in mind, conceptual closure is rather similar to naturalistic representation, since both infuse their subjects with such clarity that minimal interpretation is required to grasp its meaning. Therefore, if the presence of photographic information and its influence on conceptual closure is to be displaced, it must be interchanged with an alternative presence. Moreover, this presence should not be one of clarity, but of visual energy, a strength embraced by vigour and spirit rather than detail. This idea of visual energy is eloquently described by Romanian artist Constantin Brâncuși when reflecting on his own work:

‘When you see a fish, you don’t think of its scales, do you? You think of its speed, its floating, flashing body seen through the water. Well, I’ve tried to express just that. If I made fins and eyes and scales, I would arrest its movement, give a pattern or shape of reality. I want just the flash of its spirit.’
(quote by Constantin Brâncuși, quoted in Mitchell, et al., 2007, p. 33).

Following Brâncuși’s ideology, then, this experiment will examine the unquantifiable essence of the urban nature subject above its detail; a flash of its spirit as opposed to information, and this lateral exploration may be critical to the development of urban nature photography. That is to say, displacing such information synonymous with an urban nature photograph spurs a divergent thought process where the development of new representations, freed from the restraints of superfluous information, may be considered. This is where visual energy will be claimed; the periphery of the subject’s being, rather than its identity or environment. Trivialities are not important here, but it is important that the subject be rendered from its ecological definition; rearing less and less faith to its presence in physical reality and expanding further toward a sense

of otherworldliness. Visual energy is not united with anything that may be compared to, say, the human eye, as it serves to exceed naturalism at all costs by delving below the surface of physical reality.

The camera has been noted in much photographic theory for its ability to, seemingly, replicate physical reality (Barthes, 1982; Berger, 1972; Sontag, 1979). This debate will not be furthered here, for it is too broad to be sustained, but it should be recognised that an unmistakeable division between the photograph and physical reality may not be entirely viable, since, that is to say, physical reality is where the camera's subjects are found. Therefore, to dismiss any outward hypocrisy, while the objective of these photographs is to ascertain visual energy, it is understood that energy is the result of a physical subject. This experiment does not claim to displace physical reality from a photograph, but rather, to displace the authority of photographic information and its synonymy with naturalistic representation.

Results begins overleaf.

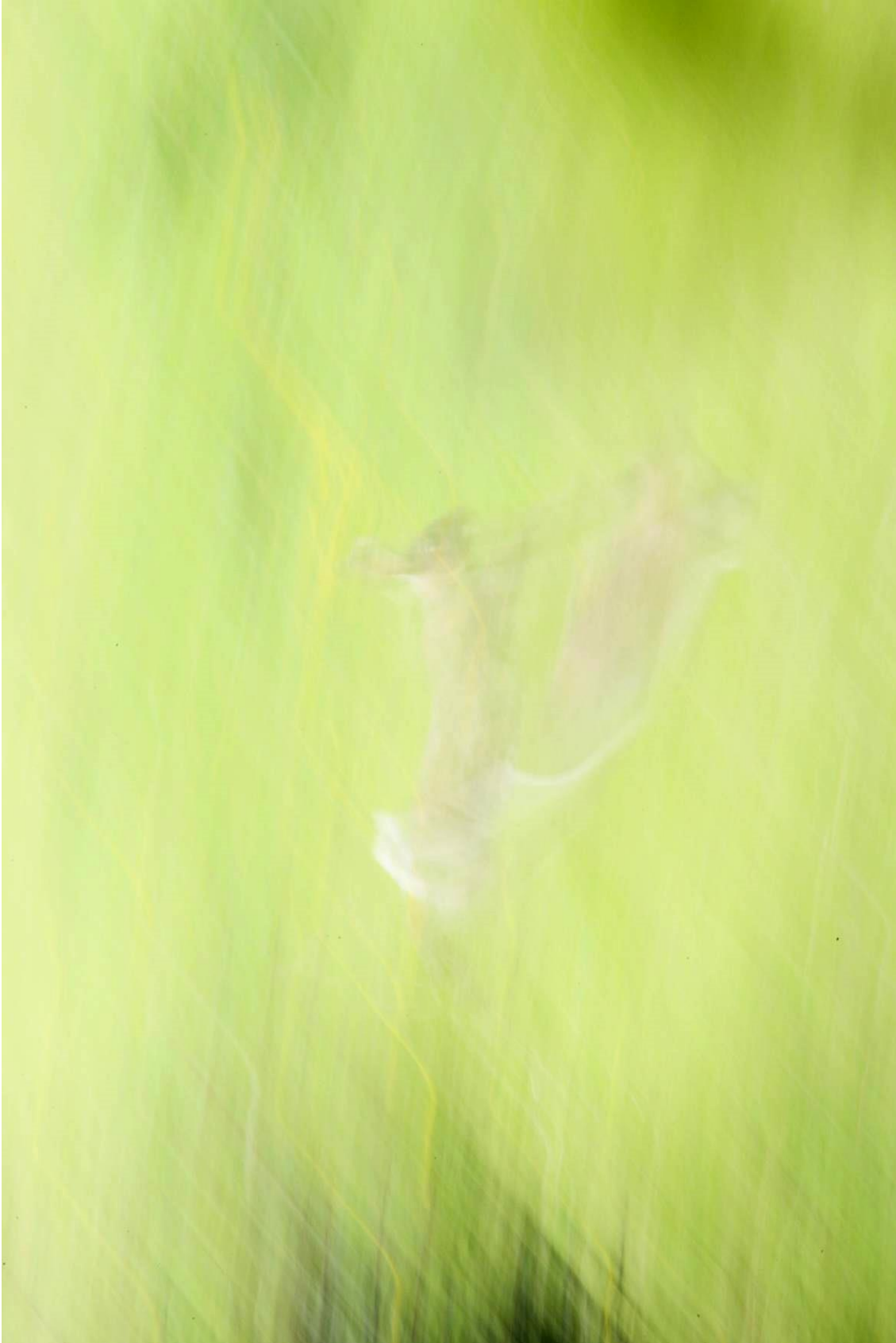


Figure 3.2a European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)



Figure 3.2b Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)



Figure 3.2c Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)



Figure 3.2d Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

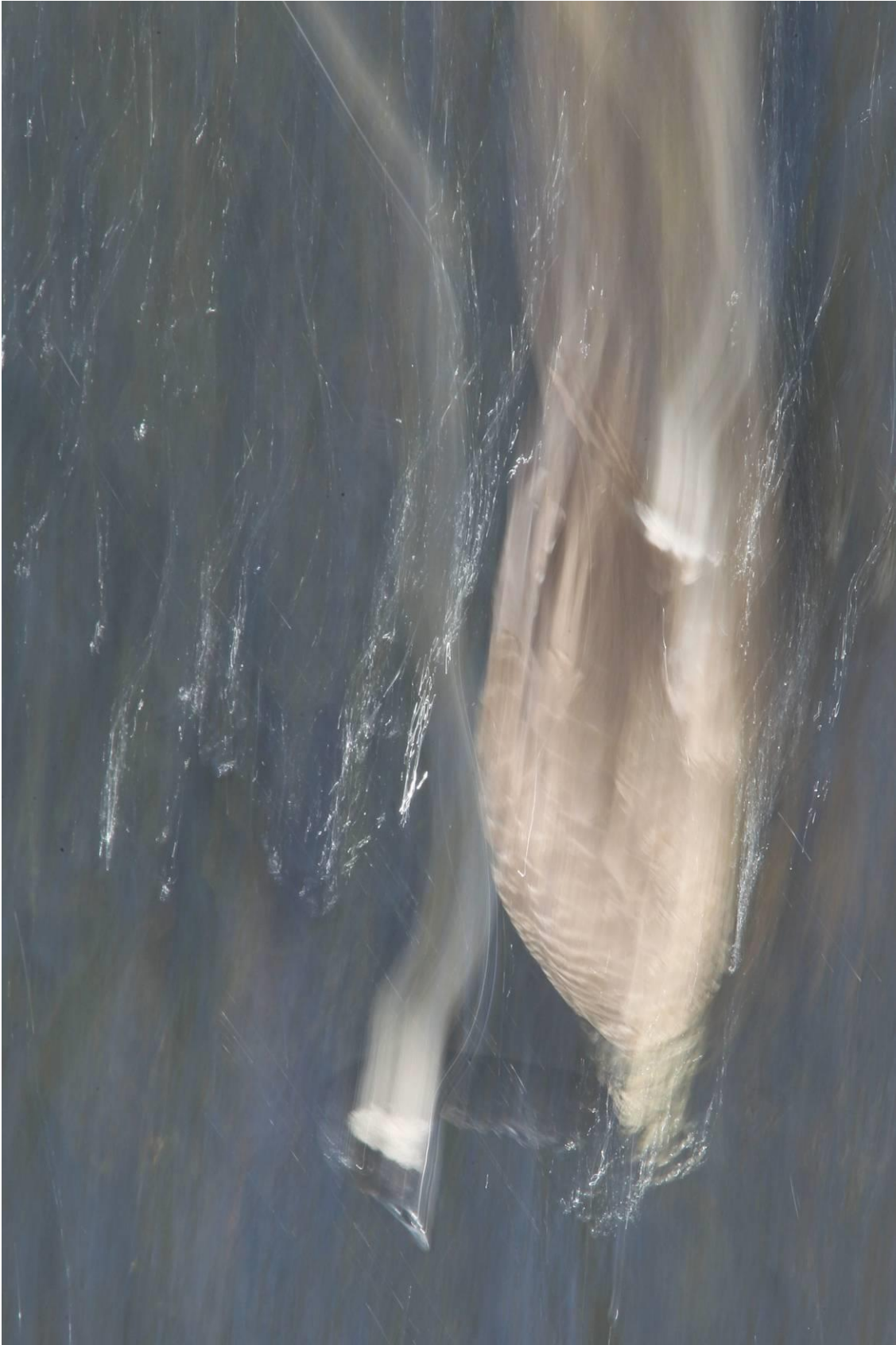


Figure 3.2e Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*)



Figure 3.2e Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*)

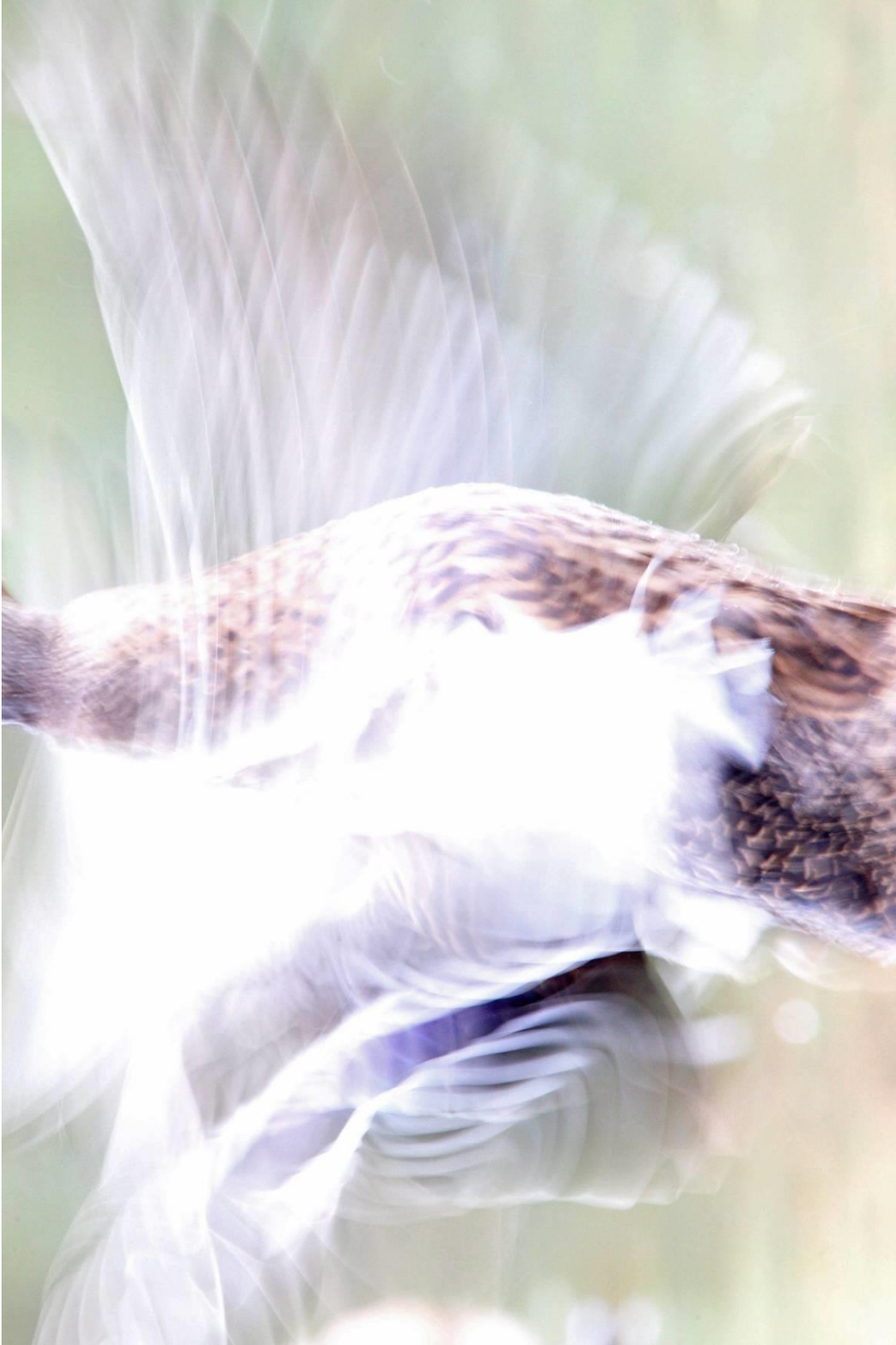


Figure 3.2f Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

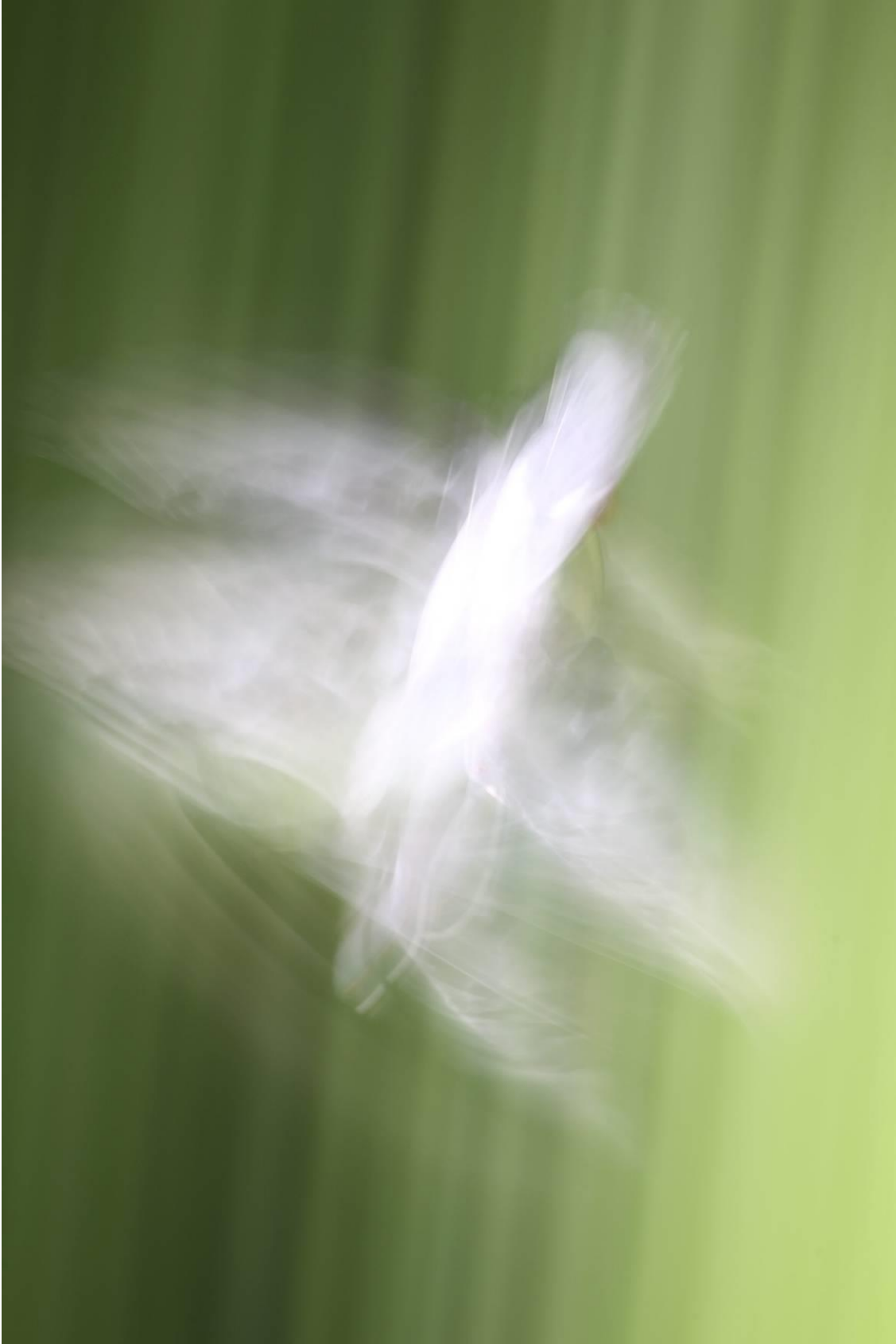


Figure 3.2g Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)



Figure 3.2h Creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*)



Figure 3.2i Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*)

3.2.4. Process

Slower shutter speeds were used with camera movement to enforce an emphasis on motion, disfiguring the photographic information that would otherwise have led the photographs toward conceptual closure. This began to shift the urban nature subject from its restraints within a naturalistic framework, causing it to become represented by an underlying pseudo-realism; hinting at the presence of a wider environment but denying it any clarity.

3.2.5. Analysis

These photographs suggest rather than state. They are driven by an energy that casts the urban nature subject behind a veil of obscurity (established by the slower shutter speeds), transforming the state of information into something less solid, less tangible in form, for the photographs are not concerned with any sense of factual accuracy or physical reality and do not offer conclusions. They serve as a mechanism for freeing the form of urban nature photography from the restraints of conceptual closure and steering it toward a spectrum of interpretation, where the photographs may whisper suggestions of a familiar world - or subject - but due to the distortion of information will always remain just out of reach; a pseudo-reality. This can be seen in Figure 3.2f, where the water beneath the Canada goose has become so obscured it seems almost part of the animal itself.

Certain parallels may be identified between these photographs and the photographs of Bill Brandt, whose high contrast aesthetic may be described as dislocating physical reality into a kind of pseudo-reality. This delicate distortion of familiarity is crucial to the development of representation in any field, since 'doubt at authenticity - the end

of assurance - begins to oscillate towards the beginning of knowing new, potentially more important truths' (quote by Bill Jay, Brandt, et al., 1999, p. 11). These truths are not concerned with the subject's detail, but rather, as Brâncuși notes, the flash of its spirit. Any resolving sense of clarity has been displaced in these photographs, where the urban nature subject has become instilled with a kind of transience that alleviates the subject from its ecological grounding toward an aesthetic much more indicative of abstract art. Information has been displaced and reshaped into an alternative energy exploring alternative truths.

Thus far, there is one camera variable (this being exposure) that has been adhered to in both experiments. These balanced exposure values have forged a colour spectrum representative of physical reality, causing a certain level of information to safeguard its place in the resulting photographs (for example, see Figure 3.2b and Figure 3.2e; of the grey squirrel and Canada goose). This notion of information is to be considered in the following experiment.

3.2.6. What Next?

These photographs began to exhibit notions of abstraction. After all, the physical act of shifting the urban nature subject into a pseudo-reality can be easily likened to the process of abstraction. Such developments are critical, for 'long ago it was enough to copy the surface forms of nature, but now it is our task to get to the root of nature's meanings... to look beneath the surface of things' (Hale, 1993, p. 13). This concept of abstraction, coupled with the adjustment of exposure values, will be explored in the following experiment.

3.3. Abstraction

- Experiment Three

‘Don’t copy nature too much. Art is an abstraction; draw this abstraction from nature while dreaming before it and think more of the creation which will result.’

Paul Gauguin (Ord, 2003, p. 87).

3.3.1. Experiment Question

- While exercising a deliberate use of increased exposure values, how may the notion of abstraction become implemented into the form of an urban nature photograph?

3.3.2. Experiment Objectives

1. Determine the underlying framework of abstract art, with added reference to photographic practice.
2. Produce a set of photographs that deliberately use increased exposure values so as to explore how artistic abstraction may be applied to the representation of the urban nature subject.

3.3.3. Introduction

Abstraction is used here as a synonym for abstract art: 'art which does not imitate or directly represent external reality' (Read, 1966, p. 3). Instead it is 'achieving its effect by grouping shapes and colours in satisfying patterns rather than by the recognizable representation of physical reality' (Allen, 1990, p. 5). However, the notion of abstract art could be considered an idea abstract in itself, as these definitions are only loosely thread interpretations; while they may seem like-minded, there is no unquestionable definition of abstract art and nor can there ever be, since abstraction is a language of the subconscious mind, and may take the form of many representations and serve a wealth of purposes.

Of course, the camera draws its material from physical reality, and unless the general conventions of photographic practice are challenged the camera will do little to alter the information captured. Previously, it was this mechanical disposition which meant 'photography was regarded as a technology of science and knowledge rather than an art form' (Morris, 2003, p. 140). Its rapport with science defined the camera as a tool specifically designed for capturing physical reality, and divided photography from art for many years.

Abstract photographer Freeman Patterson (Patterson, 2003) adopts a similar process to the previous experiment, combining slower shutter speeds with camera motion to abstract his subject. His ideology could be defined as transcendental in regard to its open-minded representation, as he suggests that the very act of 'seeing, in the finest and broadest sense, means using your senses, your intellect, and your emotions... It means looking beyond the labels of things and discovering the remarkable world around you' (Patterson, 2004, p. 7). Patterson uses his camera to unfasten the world in an open-minded philosophy, instead of shutting it down with any conformance to physical reality. Abstraction is about seeing beyond the limits of what is usually seen, it is about creating that which will not conform, from a landscape that, at least by the

human eye, cannot be seen. Abstract ideologies are sourced from the very periphery of physical reality.

This ideology is shared here, which aims to abstract the urban nature subject by way of increased exposure values (for balanced values incite a colour spectrum indicative of physical reality). In the previous experiment slower shutter speeds were observed to distort information, and thus, increasing the exposure values serves to exacerbate this distortion by way of its effect on the colour spectrum; increased exposure values will, in turn, diffuse the levels of saturation in the colour spectrum. It is not surprising that 'colour is one of the most powerful tools available to the abstract photographer' (Frost, 2007, p. 68), for 'we do more than see colour; we feel it at an emotional level' (A. Wilson, 2010, p. 35). Colour, then, is much more than just information; it is the very articulation of the abstract language.

Results begin overleaf.



Figure 3.3a Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

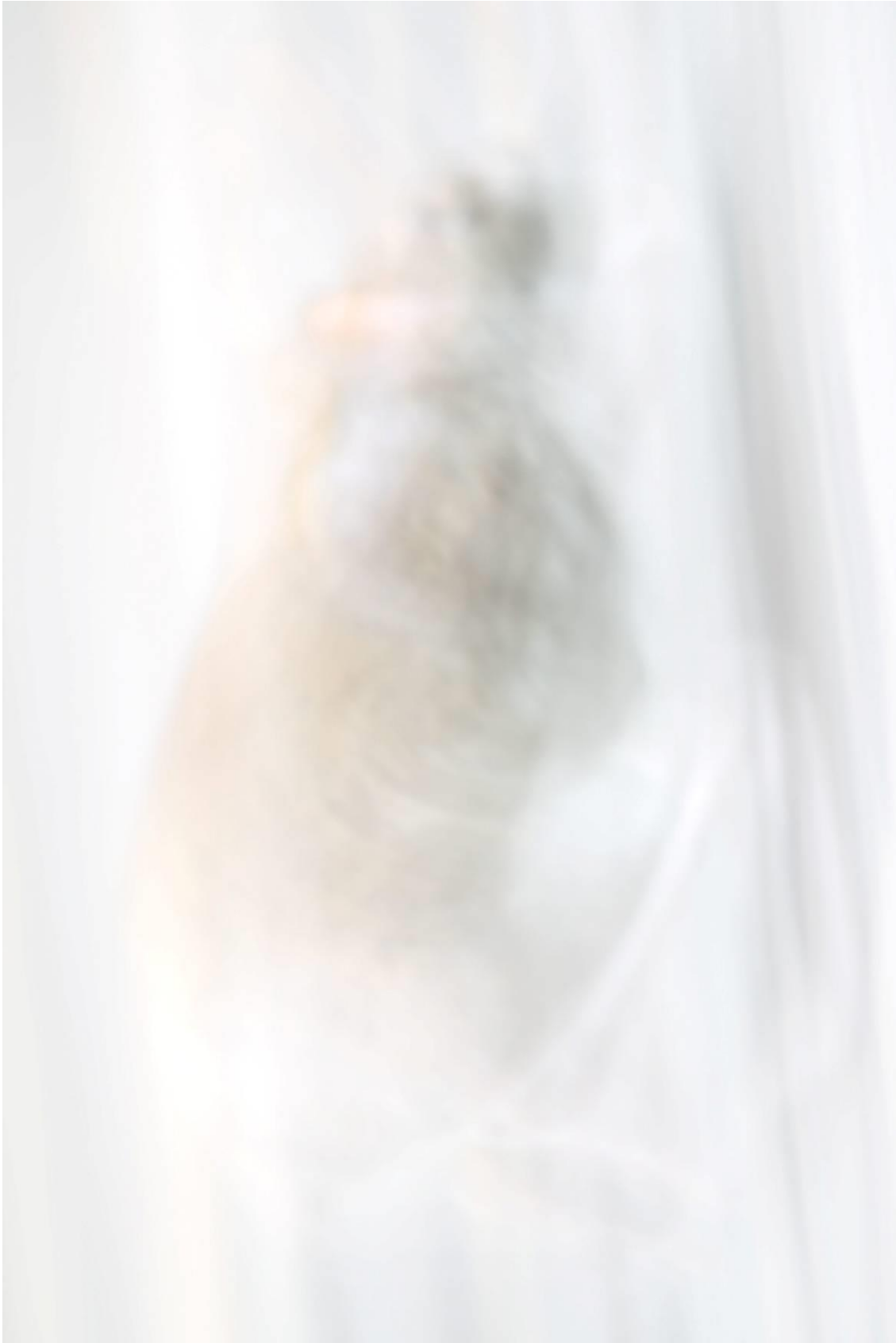


Figure 3.3b Brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*)



Figure 3.3c Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)

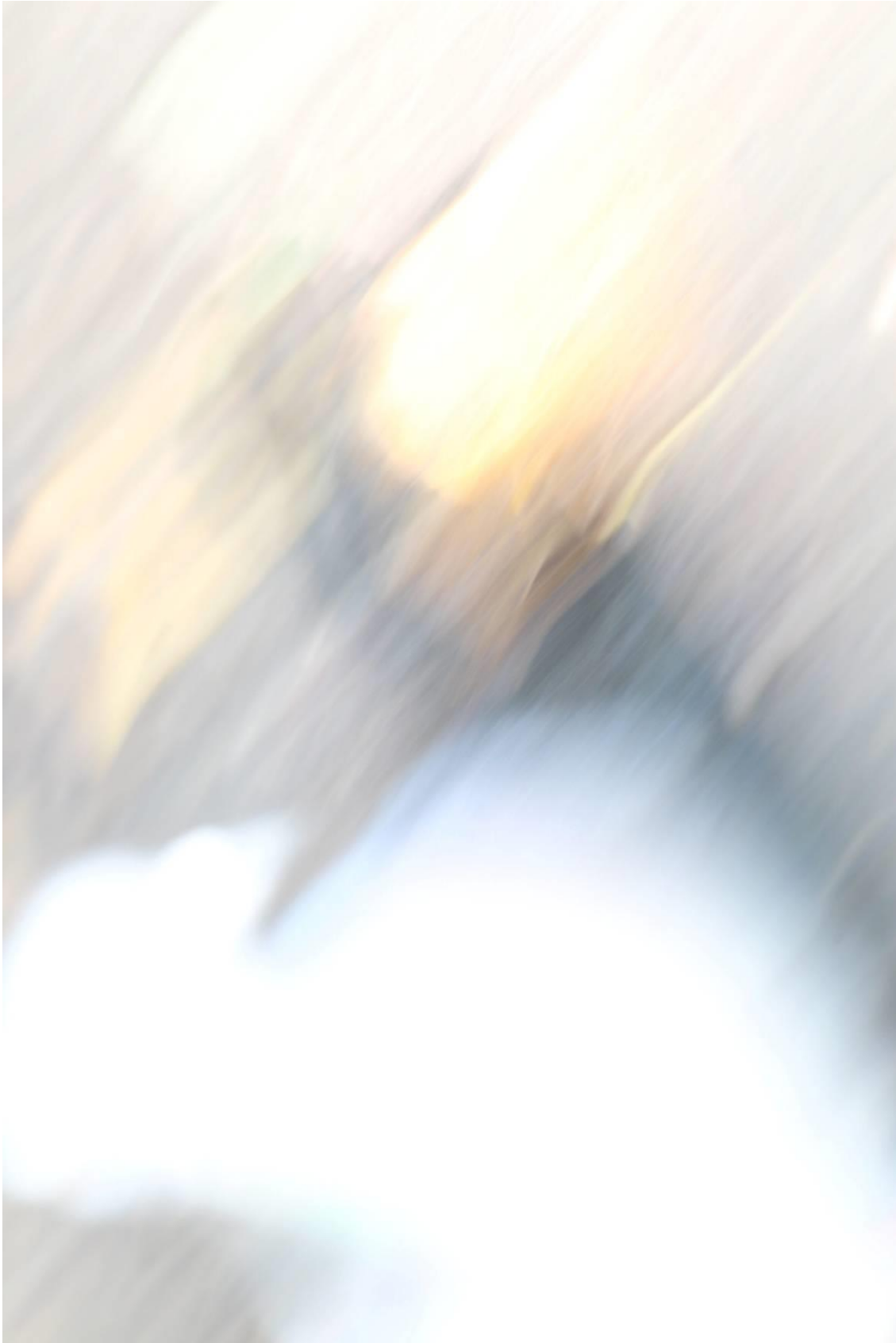


Figure 3.3d Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)



Figure 3.3e European magpie (*Pica pica*)

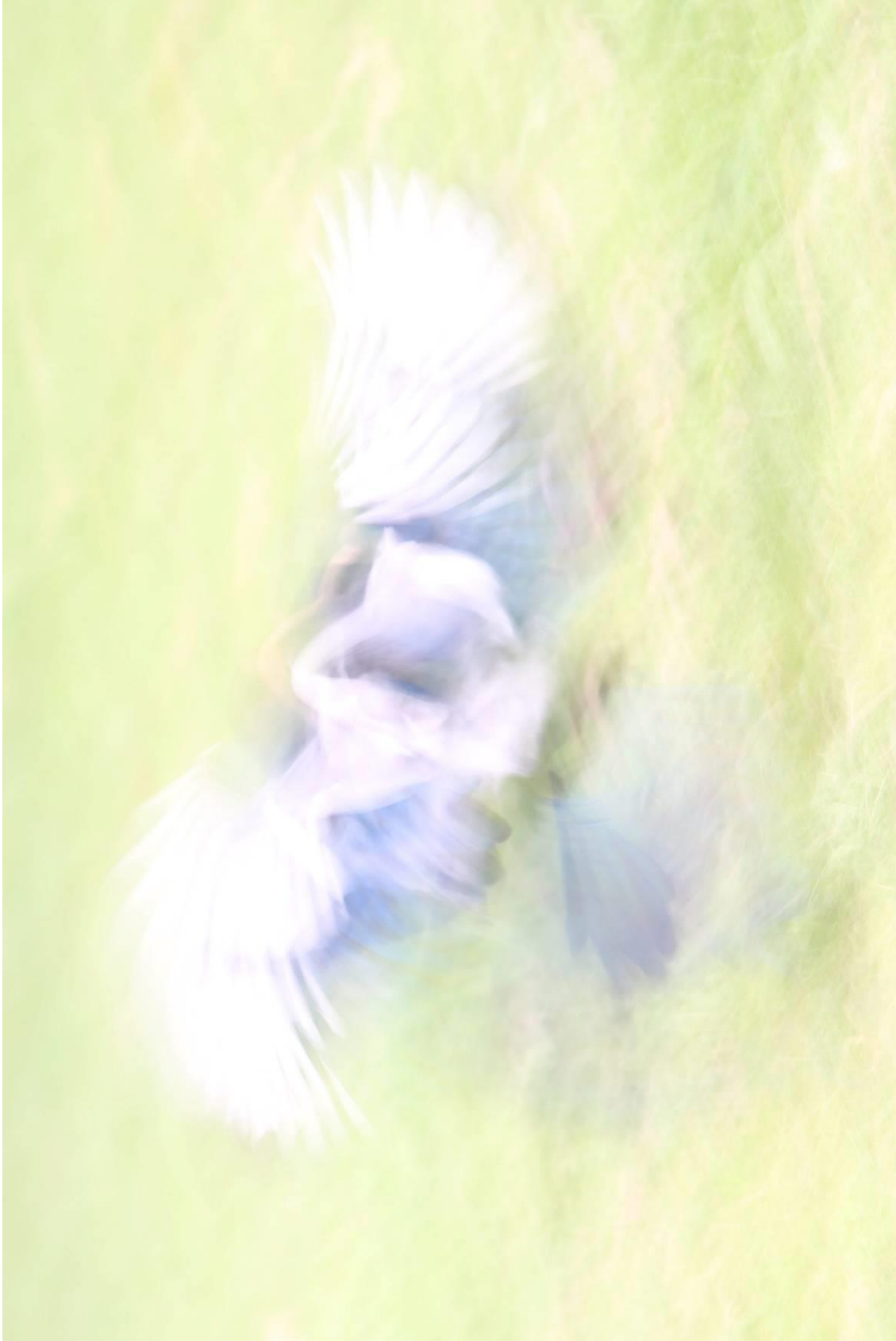


Figure 3.3f Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)

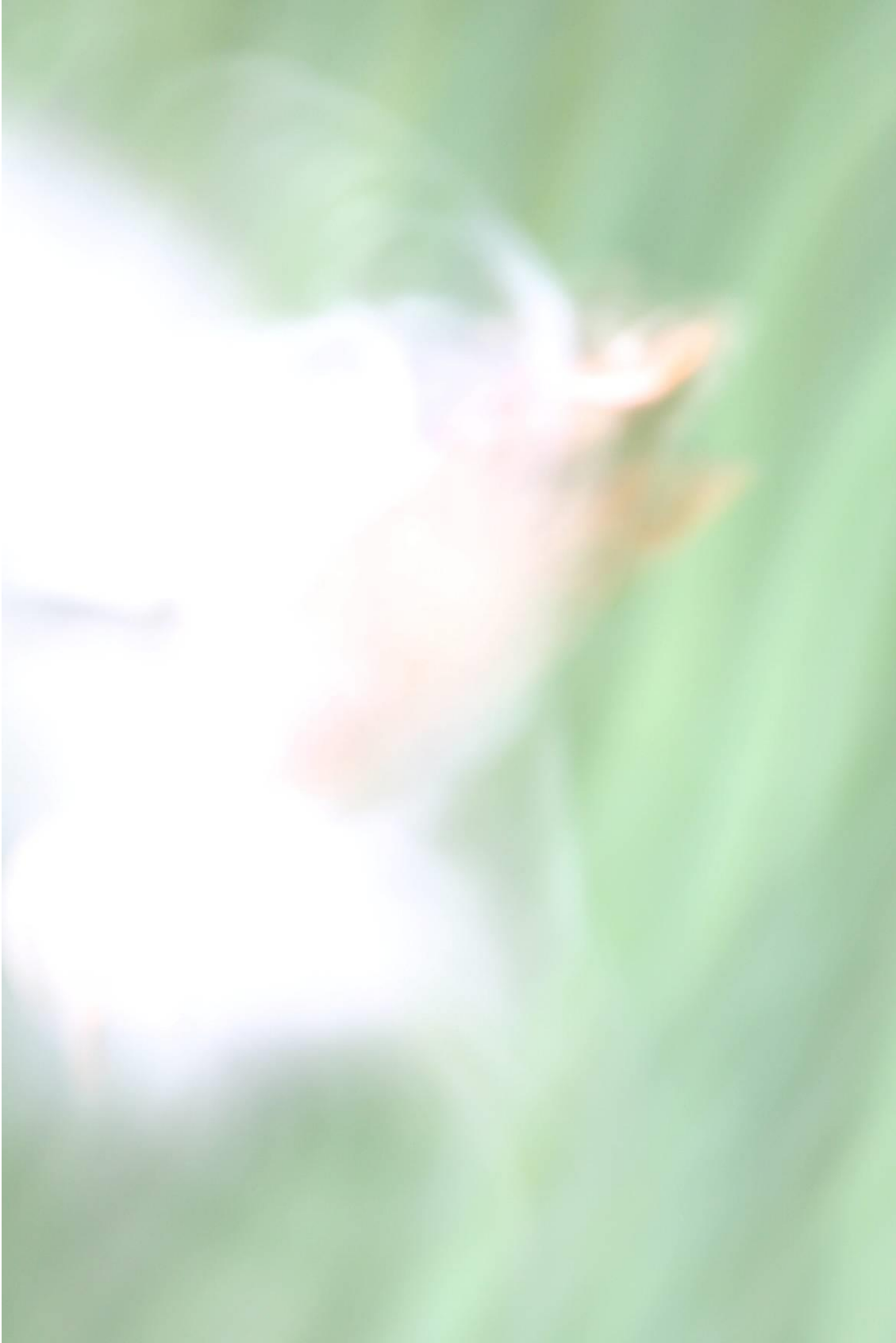


Figure 3.3f Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)



Figure 3.3g European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)



Figure 3.3h Common nettle (*Urtica dioica*)

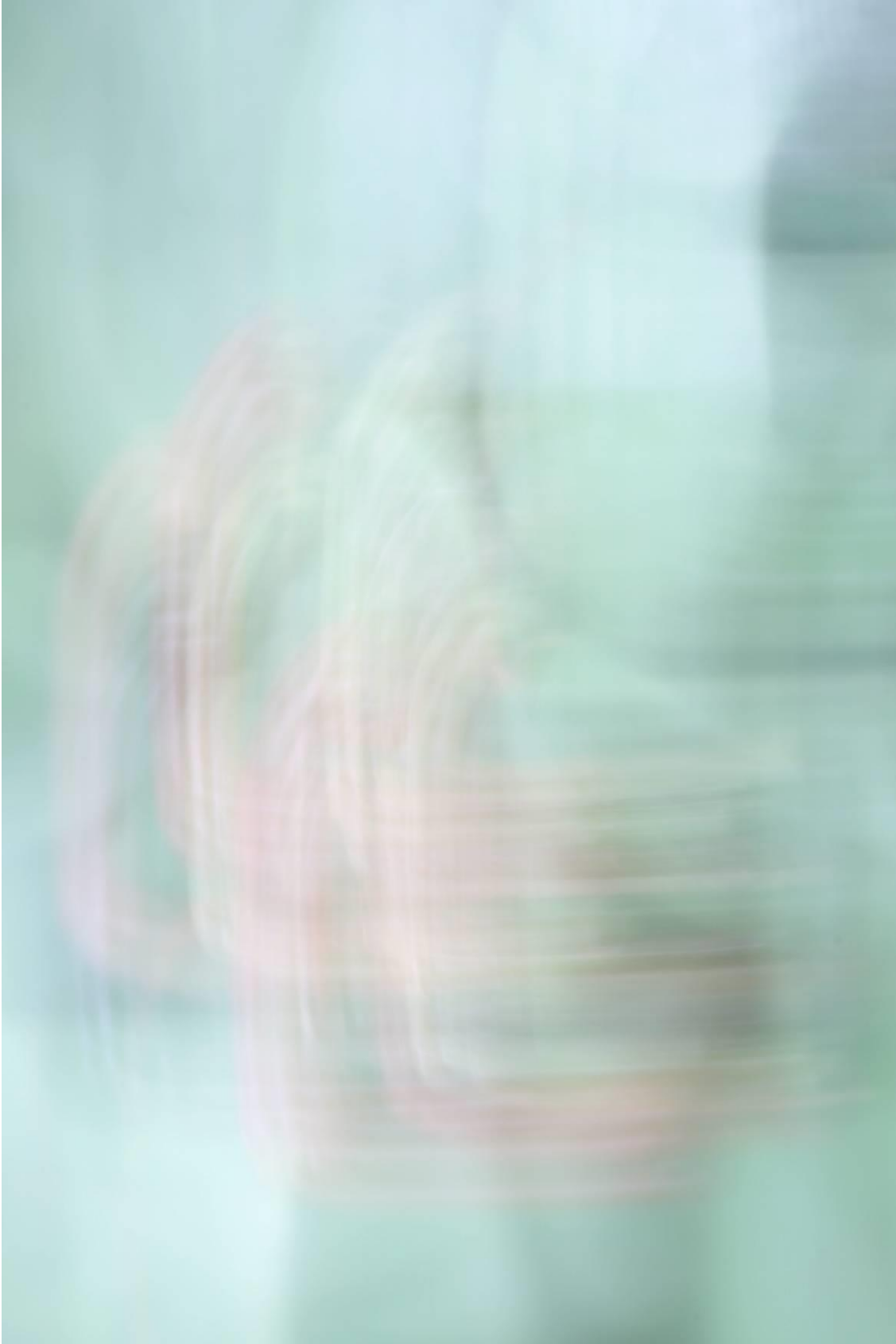


Figure 3.3i Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*)

3.3.4. Process

Following from the previous experiment slower shutter speeds were once again used to capture motion. Exposure values were also increased, causing the camera shutter to remain open for longer periods of time. This incited an overexposed aesthetic that distorts much of the information in its colour spectrum. As a result, the photographs navigate an erratic tonal landscape that abstracts the urban nature subject (perhaps most evident in Figure 3.3a; the Grey squirrel), instilling it with an underlying sense of ethereality.

3.3.5. Analysis

Increased exposure values - coupled with camera motion - were the main techniques for applying abstraction. Consequently, information has been extracted in favour of a much more delicate illustration. For example, identifying the urban nature subject in these photographs is a difficult endeavour because there are such few, if any, faithful indicators of physical reality. However, 'the beauty of the abstract composition is still tethered by the world; the difficulty of identification just draws us that much deeper into the photograph' (Walden, 2010, p. 126). Wayward defiance of the photographic principle (balanced exposures and sharp focal points, etc.) has served to shape these photographs with an almost transcendent, albeit fragile, grace. Due to their vigorous rejection of information these photographs need far more concentration than any of the previous experiments, and more time to comprehend. It is important to note this comprehension would emerge, in all likelihood, by reason of an open-mind. After all, having been compared to the previous experiments, these photographs are certainly the most impenetrable. Their representation is far more intangible and irregular, and even though this irregularity is the product of conscious choice, it is also understood

that without any supplementary context regarding the subject of abstraction, valuing these images by their own merit would, in truth, demand much effort on behalf of the viewer (for example, see Figure 3.3g and Figure 3.3j).

Furthermore, the increased exposure values began to prompt a suspension of colour in an urban nature photograph. No longer does the application of colour support the representation of physical reality - in fact - no longer does colour have any impact on information at all. Its contribution toward physical reality is now unfastened, and the main purpose of colour is redirected to the rejection of photographic information. In addition, increased exposure values caused a reduction in the vibrancy of colour, but with the lessening of one force is the strengthening of another, and thus, in turn, this reduction in colour began to bear an ethereal crux. Ethereality, 'light, airy; heavenly; of unearthly delicacy of substance, character or appearance' (Fowler, et al., 1919, p. 279) here instils the urban nature subject with an aura of transcendence that imparts an almost celestial quality.

There are parallels between this experiment and the previous one as regards motion, but they stand as separate studies. This experiment is aligned with the abstraction of detail, rather than the displacement of it. Here, information has been extracted from physical reality and then later adapted into an abstract form. Previously, information was shifted, but not extracted. Furthermore, in this experiment, an underlying sense of feeling began to arise in these photographs. While feeling may initially seem to be an ostentatious thought, it is used here to refer to the awareness of sensation, and is braced by the fragility of the photographs, which almost begin to captivate romantic sensibilities.

3.3.6. What Next?

Similarities may be drawn between the presence of ethereality in these photographs and strategies employed by the artists of the Romantic Era; as much like abstraction,

romanticism has struggled to ascertain any universal definition (Antal, 1935; Eichner, 1982). It is much 'easier to feel than to define, chiefly because in its general meaning it expresses a personal and emotional as opposed to an objective and rational attitude of mind' (Newlin, 1936, p. 2). With this in mind, romanticism, within the construct of photography, and its broader relationship with nature, will be explored further in the following experiment.

3.4. Neo-romanticism

- Experiment Four

‘The Romantics sought to smash this clockwork mock-up of the heavens, to put magic and mystery back into things, and to turn the world adrift once more in a wild and unpredictable universe.’

Malcolm Yorke (Yorke, 2001, p. 15).

3.4.1. Experiment Question

- How may the evocative sensibilities of romanticism (an aesthetic established by artists in the Romantic Era) be implemented into the form of urban nature photography?

3.4.2. Experiment Objectives

1. Discuss the romantic aesthetic and its relationship with the representation of nature, while identifying the revival of neo-romanticism and the implication of monochrome.
2. Produce a set of photographs that bestow neo-romantic tendencies upon the urban nature subject.

3.4.3. Introduction

The Romantic Era encompassed several artistic genres, from painting to literature to music, and was seen as a multifaceted artistic challenge to the Age of Enlightenment (Eisenman, 1994; Ruskin, et al., 1987). The Enlightenment was a period in eighteenth century culture when developments in science and technology (such as the Industrial Revolution) were beginning to enforce societal control over the natural environment (Casey, 2008). It is interesting to observe that an aesthetic appreciation of nature is a relatively new pastime in Western Europe, only dating back around two hundred and fifty years, which would have occurred simultaneously with the birth of the Industrial Revolution (Waterhouse, 2007). It is quite likely the romantics were the architects of this pastime, and on account of their poignant sensitivity, above the Enlightenment's bias for precision and order (Rosen, et al., 1984), they rest as some the most creative minds to have brought nature to society.

Many painters were inspired by frameworks such as Edmund Burke's *The Sublime and Beautiful* (Burke, 1764) and William Gilpin's *The Picturesque* (Gilpin, 1794) which were designed for consultation and creative inspiration. These frameworks, like the artists themselves, would shy away from precision and order, detail and fact, for these were ideals stimulated by the Enlightenment. Instead, the romantics explored how nature made them feel (Brown, et al., 2000; Stainton, 1991), responding to the shapes, tones and textures of the natural landscapes which nourished their attention and cultivated their imagination.

Neo-romanticism is a revival of these eighteenth century ideologies (McLanathan, et al., 1978; Yorke, 2001), enveloping much of the same philosophy as the Romantic Era while acquiring other technologies that were not readily available during that period, including photography. Raymond Mortimer, writer and art critic, coined the term *neo-romanticism* in 1935 with regard to the paintings of Paul Nash. When Mortimer used the term again in 1942 (Marter, 2011), he had begun to draw attention to a series of

British artists whose works were exhibiting a revival of traditional romanticism. Neo-romanticism began to surface in the works of photographers such as Fay Godwin and Edwin Smith, who, interestingly, were never directly, or consciously, working as neo-romantic photographers; their photographs were exhibiting the romantic sentiments for them.

Neo-romantic photographers work in a monochromatic colour spectrum (often black and white), romanticising their subjects by a contrast of tones and shades within that particular spectrum (Godwin, 2001; Reed, 2008). Black and white photography, here, is often found to be more effective at evoking emotion than colour because it is easier to empathise with (Webster, 2004). The art critic, John Berger, believes this empathy is related to how the brain processes colour. That is to say, a monochromatic spectrum might seem limited when compared to a fuller colour spectrum, but it is precisely this limitation that means 'black-and-white photography is paradoxically more evocative than colour photography. It stimulates a faster onrush of memories because less has been given, more has been left out' (Berger, 1992, p. 193).

The aim of this experiment is to employ this notion of neo-romanticism into the form of urban nature photography, and consequently, to bestow such romantic sensibilities upon the urban nature subject by ways of a divergent and conflictive monochromatic landscape.

Results begin overleaf.



Figure 3.4a Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)



Figure 3.4b Brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*)



Figure 3.4c Brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*)



Figure 3.4d Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)



Figure 3.4e Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)



Figure 3.4f European magpie (*Pica pica*)



Figure 3.4g Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)



Figure 3.4h Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)



Figure 3.4i European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)



Figure 3.4j European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*)

3.4.4. Process

These photographs were initially produced in colour and later changed into black and white in post-production. In spite of this, though, the conflict between light and dark tonalities was achieved entirely in-camera. This was done by studying how fragments of natural light would stagger across the landscape so as to yield inconsistent lighting conditions. Here, the urban nature subject was photographed during the moments it passed through these conditions (Figure 3.4h).

3.4.5. Analysis

The absence of colour forges a monochromatic colour spectrum no longer related to colour's contribution to information. Instead, the images are defined by the dynamic contrast between light and dark tonalities (seen in Figure 3.4f; the Magpie), typical of much monochromatic photography (Beardsworth, 2012). This led to an emphasis on light. Both subject and environment were observed in regard to how light would pass through the landscape at fluctuating strengths. Therefore, in order to arrest a conflict between the light and dark tonalities, the photographs were created beneath irregular lighting patterns. This meant the urban nature subject became comprised of what are, essentially speaking, shades of grey.

Working in a greyscale spectrum led to a decrease in the vivacity of the photographs, symptomatic of such a process. However, the conflict of these tonalities arrested the subject's movement; perhaps more so than the general effect of photography, too, as the monochromatic spectrum began to stimulate nostalgic sensibilities. This is critical to the development of romantic ideology, for to be romantic is to be sentimental. No longer are these photographs faithful to any factual accuracy. Instead, such nostalgic

sensitivity began to underwrite a stirring of departure, or bereavement, in the form of urban nature photography. Suffice to say, ever 'since the 1970s, black and white has developed a nostalgic aura... an aesthetic of memory' (Holloway, et al., 2005, p. 252), as well as being associated with loss, an otherworldliness, that sits beyond the reach of other kinds of representation. Susan Sontag noted that 'nature has become more a subject for nostalgia... than an object of contemplation' (Sontag, 1979, p. 102). Here, she draws a similar observation to that in the literature review, suggesting that nature photographers seek only to cast neutral representations that conform to expectation, rather than provoke new ideas.

The term *nostalgia* was coined by Johannes Hofer in 1688 (Pilgrim, et al., 2010), and since then romantic ideology and nostalgia have been closely tied due to their mutual idealisation of the past (Bonnett, 2010). However, the photographs in this experiment are not affiliated with any sense of fading wilderness, unlike the work of Nick Brandt (Brandt, 2009), who, in *A Shadow Falls*, memorialises the fading wildlife of East Africa in a neo-romantic aesthetic: grief, loss and demise being the themes that connect his work here. In this experiment, neo-romanticism has not been used to be nostalgic of the subjects themselves, although this could be a side-effect. No, neo-romanticism is nostalgic of the wider relationship between people and nature, which, as noted in the literature review, is in a highly sensitive state.

Having observed how light interacts with its environment these photographs began to reinstate the presence of a broader landscape (Figure 3.4g), having been displaced in the previous experiments. This provides the opportunity to bring the experiments full-circle; back to the human subject.

3.5.6. What Next?

Due to these photographs alluding to a wider sense of environment they propose an opportunity to return to the problem underlying the first experiment. This concerned

the presence of two subjects - the urban nature subject and the human subject - in a single composition. With this in mind, the following experiment will explore how the presence of the human subject might be reintroduced to a photograph in its capacity as a contextual indicator, without relegating the urban nature subject as a secondary force in the composition.

3.5. Renegotiating the Human Subject

- Experiment Five

‘Western society continues to draw heavily on symbolic ideas involving animals... the immediate subject of those ideas is not the animal itself, but rather a human subject drawing on animal imagery to make a statement about human identity.’

Steve Baker (Baker, 2001, p. xxxv).

3.5.1. Experiment Question

- How may the presence of the human subject be re-established in the form of urban nature photography, while not compromising the urban nature subject as the primary force?

3.5.2. Experiment Objectives

1. Discuss the factors involved in framing both the urban nature subject and the human subject in a single composition.
2. Produce a set of photographs that reintroduce the human subject in an urban nature composition, but as a secondary force.

3.5.3. Introduction

In the literature review the presence of two subjects was identified as a compulsory trend that subscribed to the definition of *urban nature*. Thus, these two subjects; the urban nature subject and the human subject, were juxtaposed with each other (by the photographer) so as the resulting product might then be appropriately defined as an urban nature photograph (see p. 19). However, the problem here is that juxtaposition forms a powerful dialogue between the two subjects, and is much more illustrative of definition than it is of expression.

In the case of urban nature photography these dialogues contribute to an underlying sense of anthropocentrism, where the dominance of the human subject characterises the notion of societal control over nature (Campbell, 1983; Light, 2001). For example, a photograph of an exotic plant or animal is compelling by the characteristics of that very plant or animal; any wider sense of environment is less important because exotic subjects live apart from society. However, urban nature shares its habitat with people, and vice versa, and so perhaps it is for this reason that both photographer and viewer deem the human subject (here, an indicator of urban context) to be a critical presence in urban nature photography.

The implication of this is that the urban nature subject inevitably becomes relegated as the secondary force. Such contextual authority, manifested in the presence of the urban environment, leads the human subject to invariably stand as the primary force in the photograph. The aim of this experiment is to re-establish the human subject in a photograph, but as a secondary force. This will differ from preceeding experiments because it concerns the incorporation of physical matter - the human subject - rather than the use of conceptual forces (such as abstraction or romanticism). In addition, it should be noted that while this experiment serves to reassert the human subject, the indicators used to identify the human subject may begin to differ from those used in wider urban nature photography. This is because, unlike the much more typical urban

environments referred to in the literature review, these experiment photographs will be produced in urban green space. Consequently, the human subject will be admitted through a set of semiotic codes, and thus, objects, that demonstrate (by discretion of the researcher) urban sensibilities.

Furthermore, this final experiment will bring closure to this chapter. The reflection will introduce the next stage of this thesis, which will be concerned with the development of a conclusive body of photographs, and thus, an alternative aesthetic in the form of urban nature photography.

Results begin overleaf.



Figure 3.5a Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)



Figure 3.5b Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)



Figure 3.5c Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)



Figure 3.5d Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

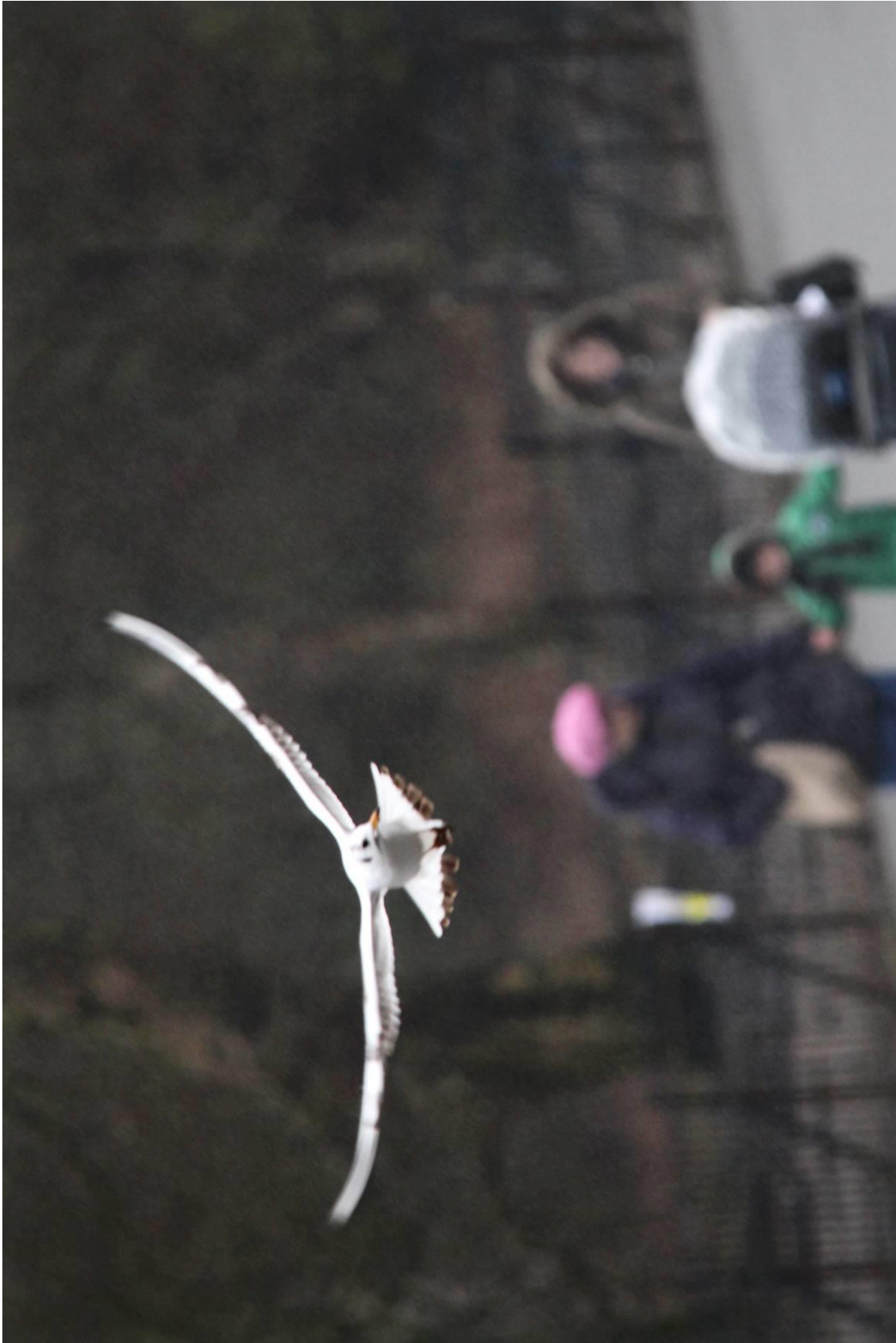


Figure 3.5e Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

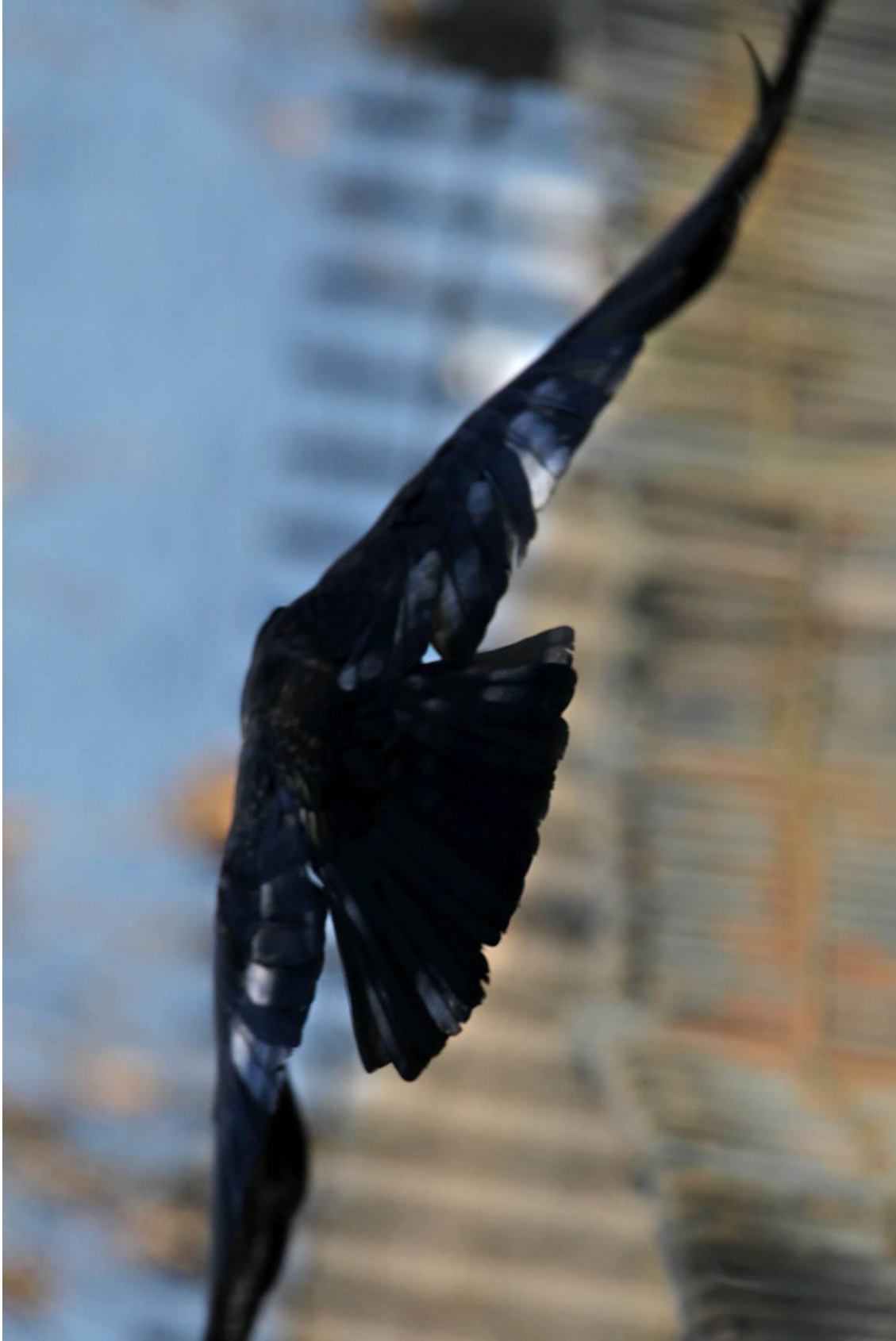


Figure 3.5f Carrion crow (*Corvus corone*)



Figure 3.5g Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*)



Figure 3.5h Greylag goose (*Anser anser*)



Figure 3.5i Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*)



Figure 3.5j European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)

3.5.4. Process

These photographs were created by identifying an entity representative of the urban environment and situating it in relation to the urban nature subject. However, it was important to try and sustain the presence of the urban nature subject as the primary force in the photographs, therefore preserving the human subject's relegation as the secondary force.

3.5.5. Analysis

It is clear that a substantial amount of photographic information has resurfaced in the photographs due to the presence of juxtaposition. This instilled the photographs with an explicit sense of naturalism (particularly so in Figure 3.5c and Figure 3.5h); the very trend previous experiments were designed to challenge. Ensuring the presence of both subjects soon imposed limitations upon the production process, causing both subjects to become illustrated with a large amount of clarity. Two factors were active in the re-emergence of these naturalistic sensibilities.

1. When composing a photograph so as to juxtapose two subjects, then in order for both subjects to be discernibly clear, both must be represented with a lack of ambiguity (Figure 3.5i). This sense of clarity triggers a substantial amount of information to enter the composition, and in turn underwrites the absolute re-emergence of naturalistic representation.
2. As well as accounting for natural light, the environment and the urban nature subject, there was an additional element to be continually searched for in this experiment. This is a signifier, and would be an object (or entity) that signified the presence of the human subject (or the presence of an urban context). That

is to say, the human subject became an anchor that grounded the photographs in physical reality, and thus, too, in naturalism.

This observation stems back to the literature review, which identified the function of juxtaposition and its constraints upon a photograph. However, this observation is no longer drawn by a secondary analysis, and therefore, the constraints of juxtaposition have become even more prominent. These photographs are profoundly unarresting, after all, and this is primarily due to the re-emergence of information subscribing to a lack of vitality. The urban nature subject is not the primary force in the photographs; which is most evident in Figure 3.5b of the Grey squirrel and Figure 3.5e of the Black-headed gull. Its representation is clear and concise and overwhelmed by the authority of a definitive environment.

It would be unjust, however, to overlook the main purpose served by the presence of the human subject, which is a mechanism for advocating the wealth of biodiversity in urban environments. This function is an important one, and is not being dismissed as ineffective, however, it is, for all intents and purposes, one kind of representation in a subgenre capable of multiple efforts.

3.5.6. What Next?

This experiment marks the end of the practice-based experiments and the beginning of the final stage of this thesis. The following chapter will introduce the final project in further detail.

4. The Final Project

‘This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.’

Winston Churchill (Shapiro, 2006, p. 153).

4.1. The Final Project Question

- How may the aesthetic components of each experiment be combined into an all-embracing representation, which aims to fuse the sensibilities drawn from each experiment into a compounded form; illustrating the development of an alternative aesthetic in urban nature photography?

4.2. The Final Project Objectives

1. Produce a body of photographs which fuse together the aesthetic components explored in each experiment.
2. Write a critical reflection (this will constitute the following chapter) which will serve to evaluate the results of the final project, and in turn, the outcomes of the wider thesis.

4.3. Introduction

While Churchill was referring to matters of World War II in his quote on the previous page, his sentiment remains the same. This chapter, *The Final Project*, intends only to provide a form of closure in this thesis, and not the research area in general. While it may be the final step of this thesis, it is hopefully the first of many new steps toward the development of urban nature photography (any areas for further research will be discussed in the following chapter).

To be clear, this project aims to blend the aesthetic components of each experiment into a cohesive body of photographs. In this thesis there has been some reference to the development of an *alternative aesthetic*, and it is here where such an idea will find its realisation. This process will now be broken down. Each experiment developed an individual aesthetic component which represented the urban nature subject from an alternative perspective (abstraction, neo-romanticism, etc.). This meant that each of these experiments were developing the form of urban nature photography in terms of practice, and in each reflection these styles were observed in regard to their impact on the urban nature subject.

In the methodology it was outlined that once the experiments were completed a set of photographs would be produced which aimed to blend the aesthetic components into one final portfolio. The final project is this portfolio, and so, if these components are to be culminated, they must be identified. The following information summarises (in chronological order) the aesthetic components that were explored during each of the experiments.

Portraiture → Visual energy → Ethereality → Nostalgia → Juxtaposition

= The Final Project

Above: The aesthetic components explored in experiments 1 - 5.

It is useful to imagine each aesthetic component as a building block that can be used to form the direction of these final photographs. Each building block represents a set of characteristics (identified above) regarding the representation of the urban nature subject, and blending these components serves to yield a body of photographs which allude to the presence of each component by way of a multi-layered synthesis. That is to say, upon completion, a fusion of these individual components will provide a set of photographs that evidence the development of an alternative aesthetic in the form of urban nature photography.

In addition, it was noted in the methodology that any components deemed unsuitable for the final project would be identified. With this in mind, then, the fifth experiment, *Renegotiating the Human Subject*, due to its contribution to the vivid re-emergence of naturalistic representation, is considered to be rather discordant with the direction of this final project. Therefore, any elements likened to this component will not appear in the following photographs, and the reasons for this will be discussed further in the critical reflection (Chapter 5).

Results begin overleaf.

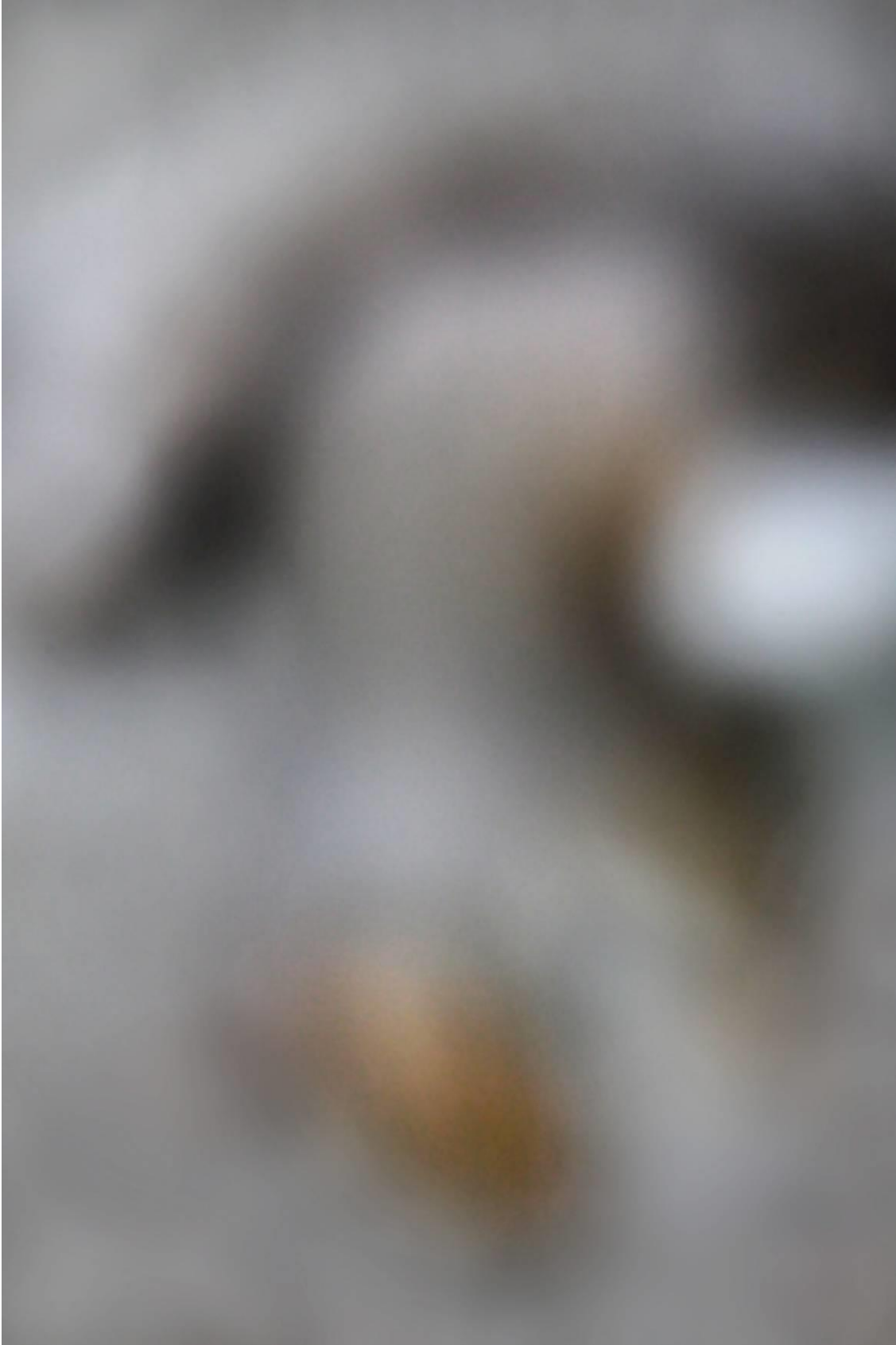


Figure 4.1 Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)



Figure 4.2 Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

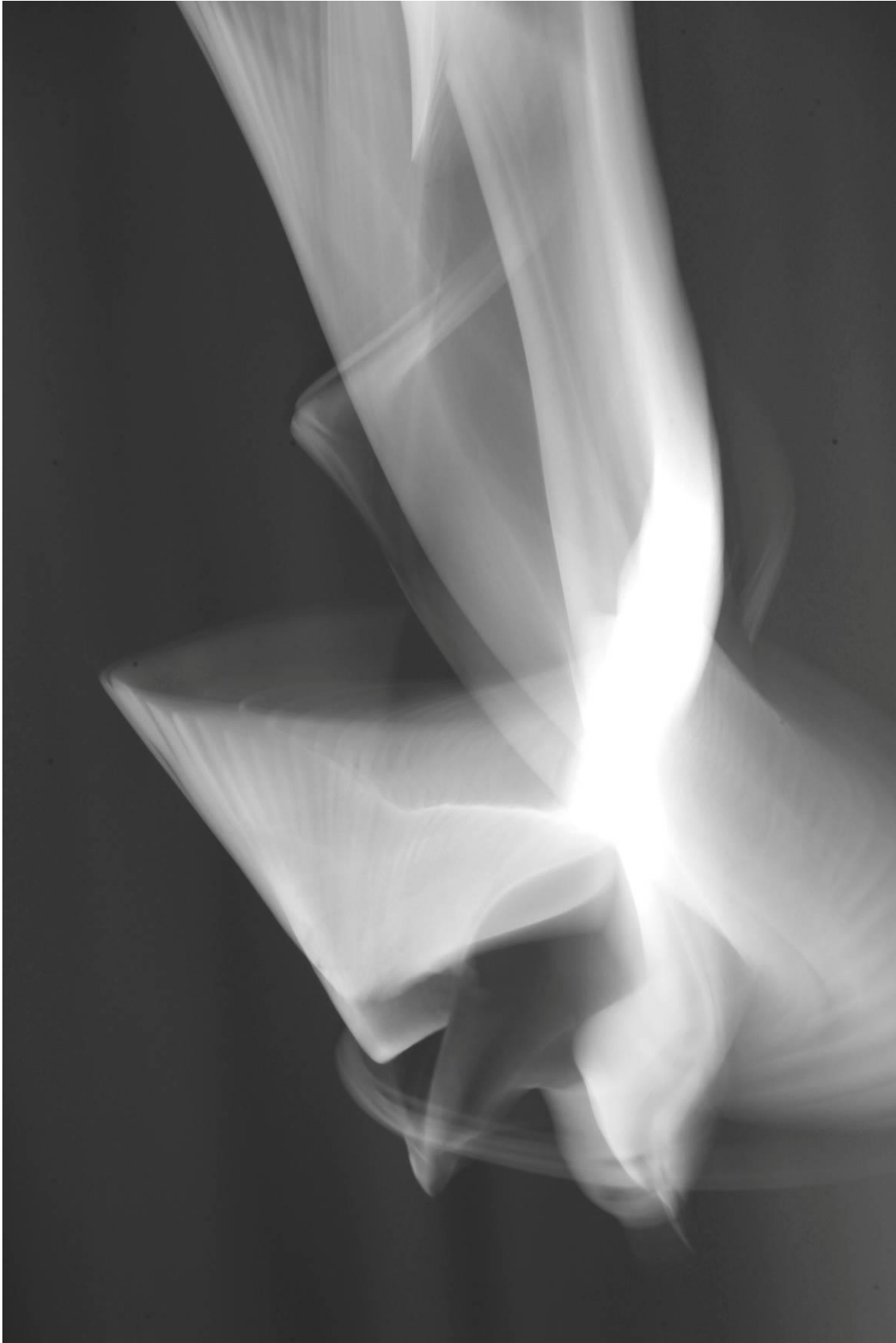


Figure 4.3 Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)



Figure 4.4 Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)



Figure 4.5 Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

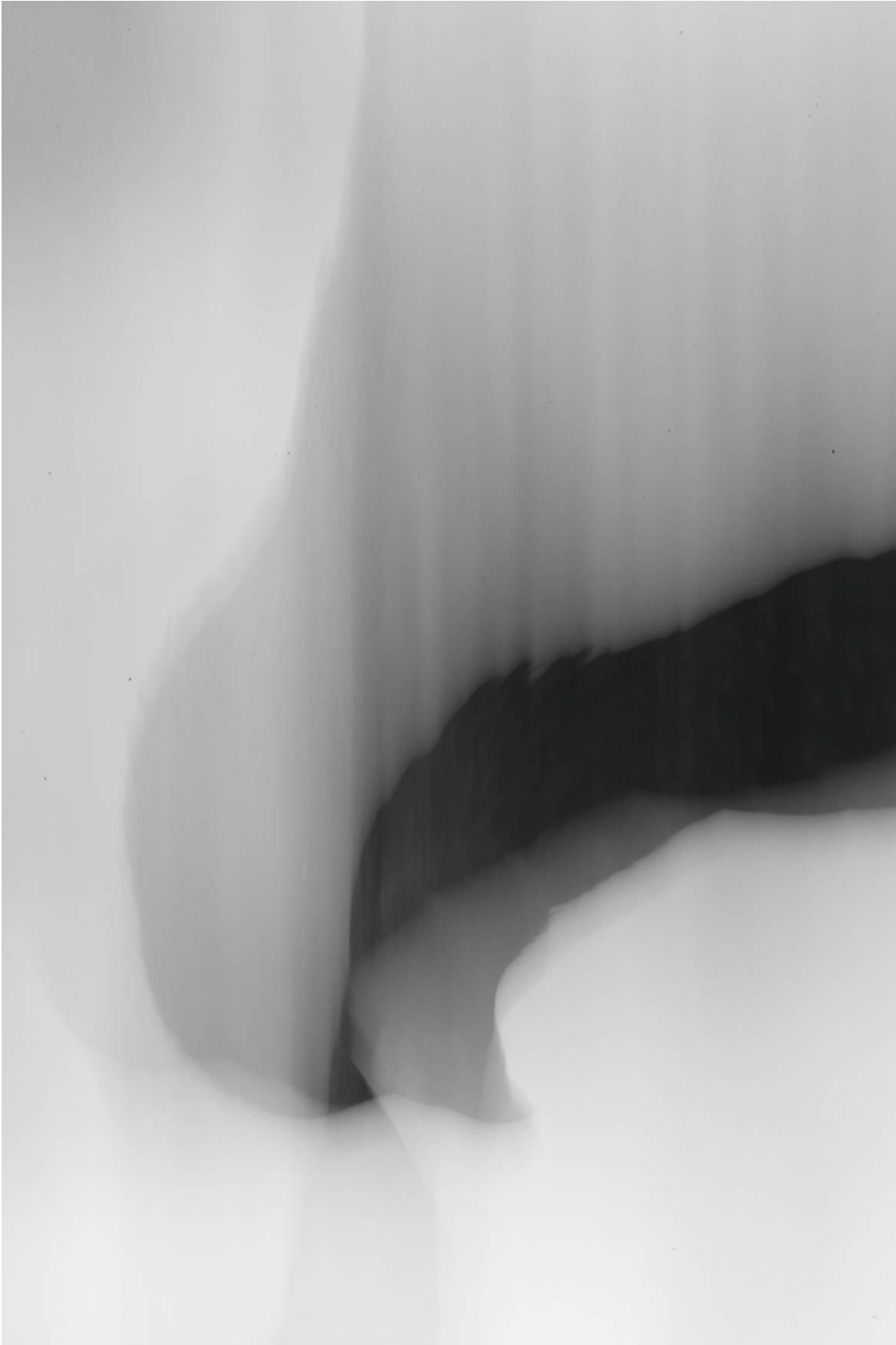


Figure 4.6 Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)

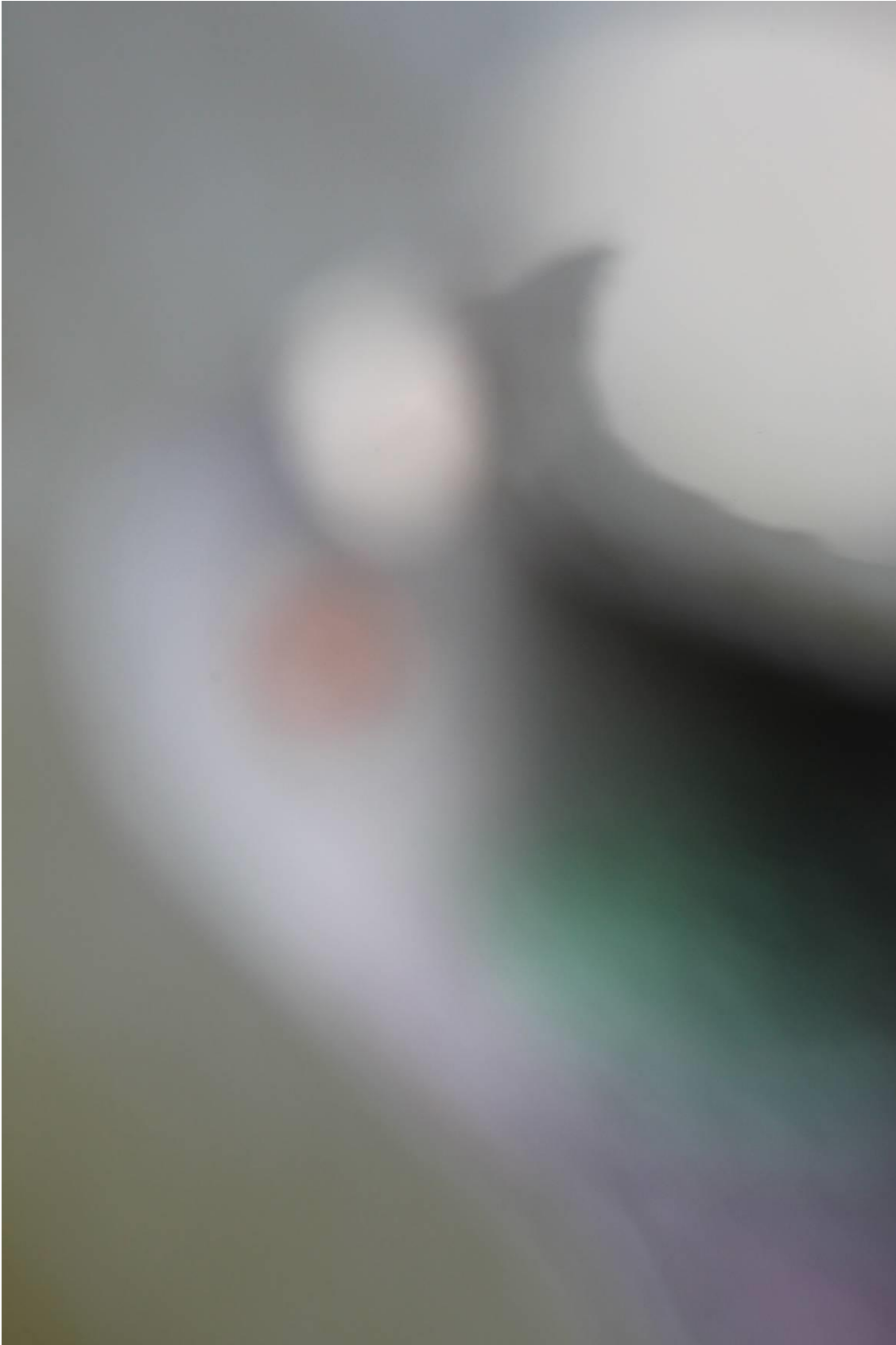


Figure 4.7 Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)

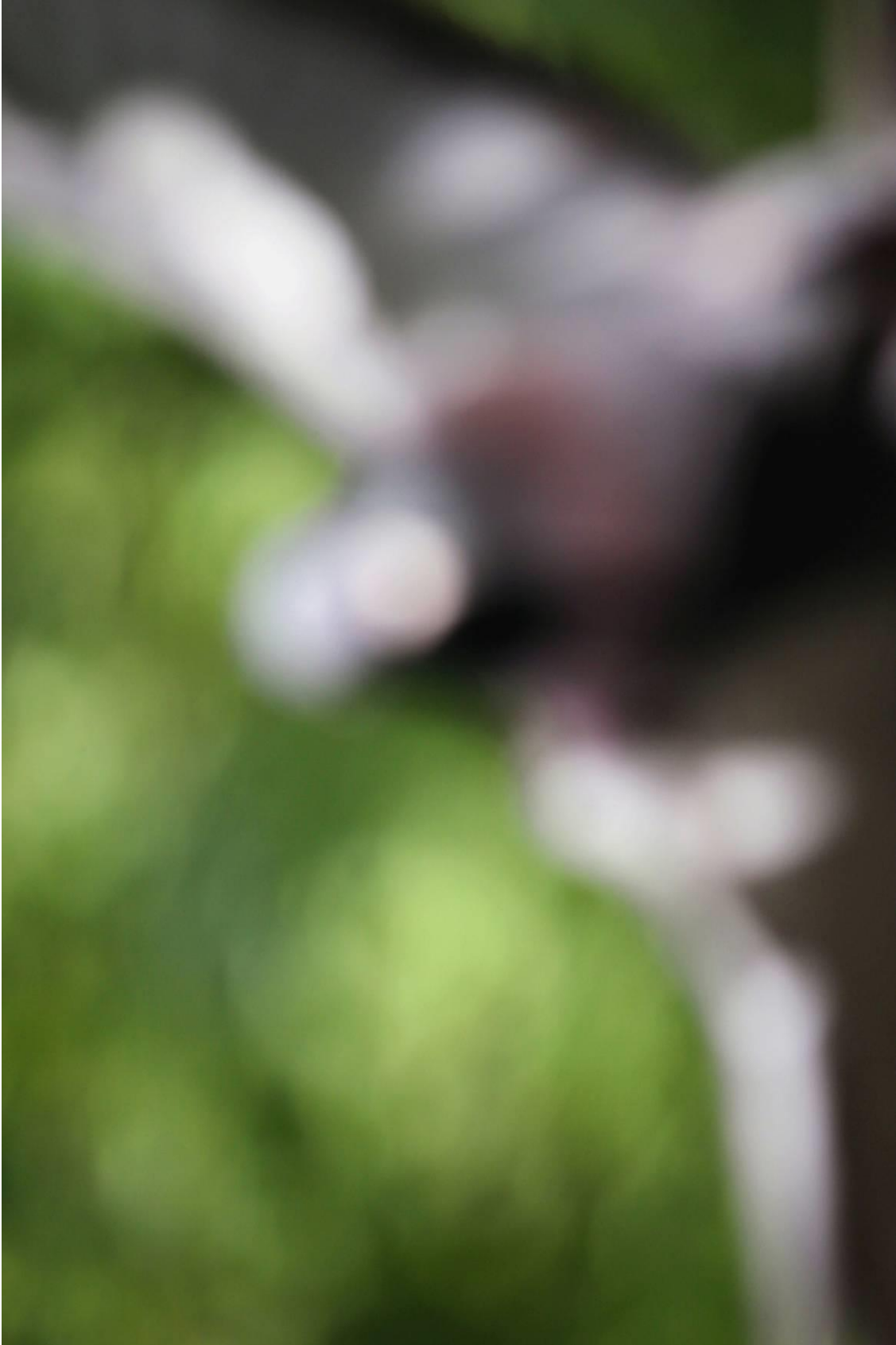


Figure 4.8 Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)



Figure 4.9 European magpie (*Pica pica*)



Figure 4.10 European magpie (*Pica pica*)



Figure 4.11 Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)



Figure 4.12 Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*)

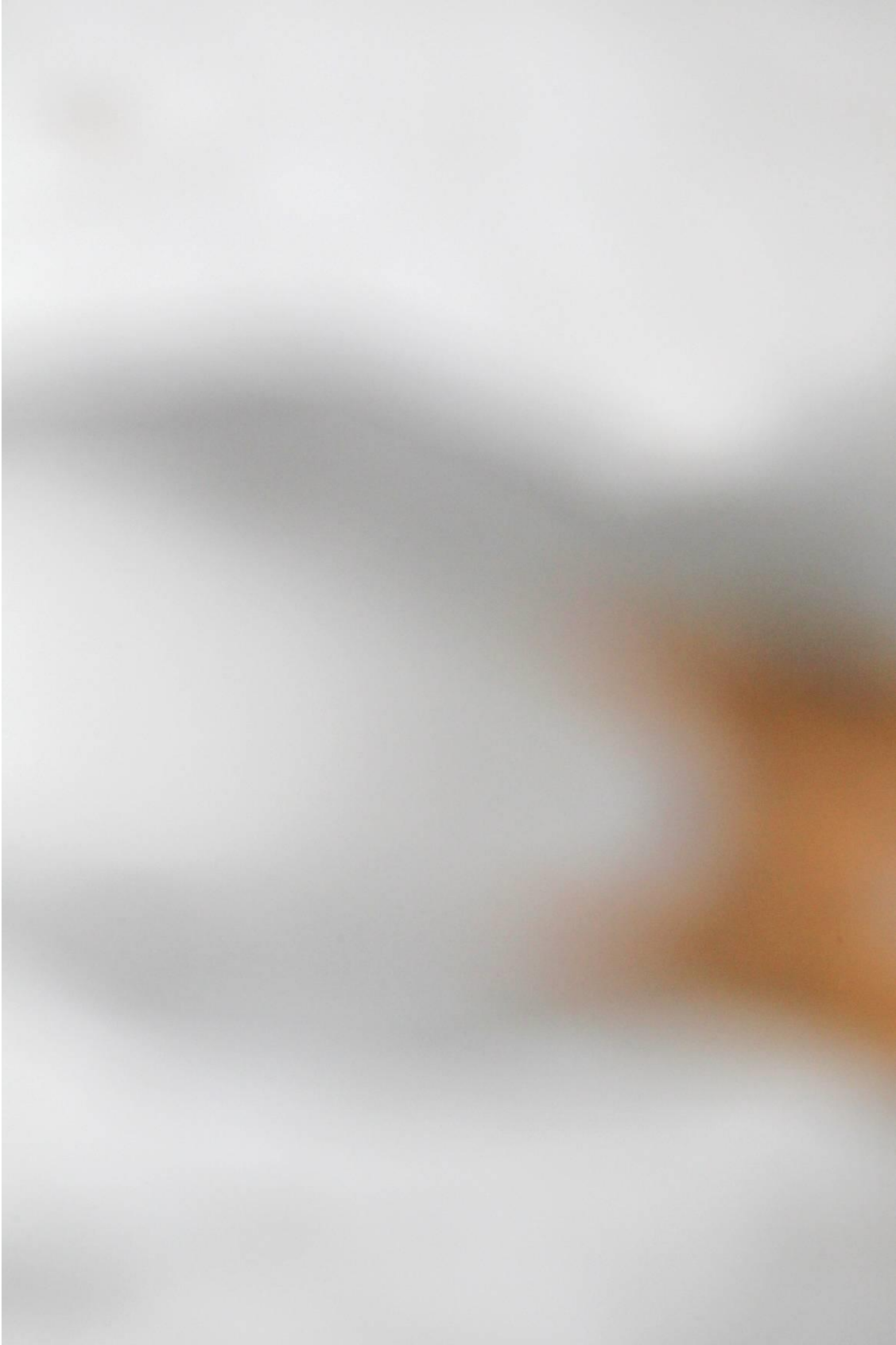


Figure 4.13 Greylag goose (*Anser anser*)

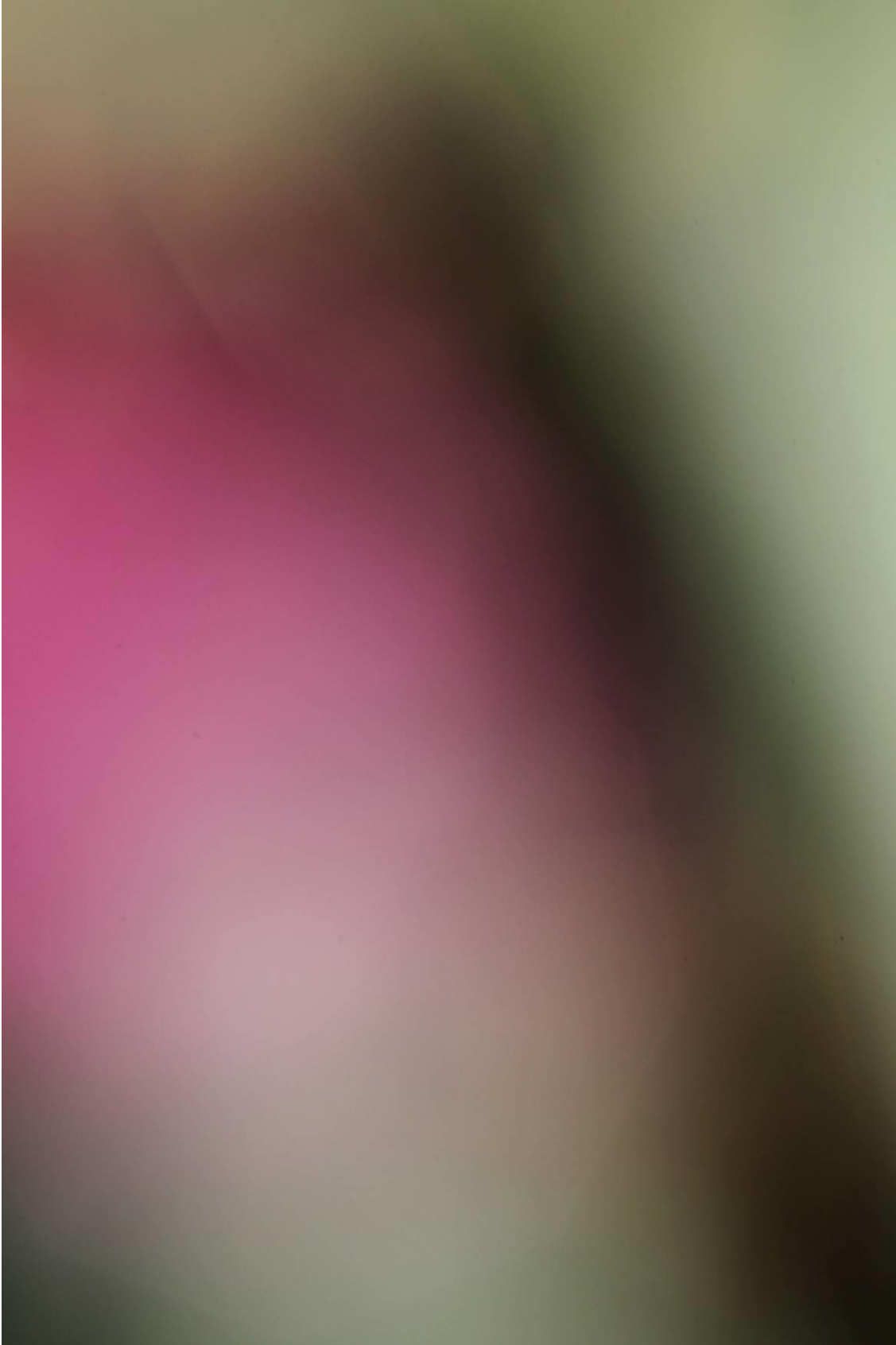


Figure 4.14 Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)

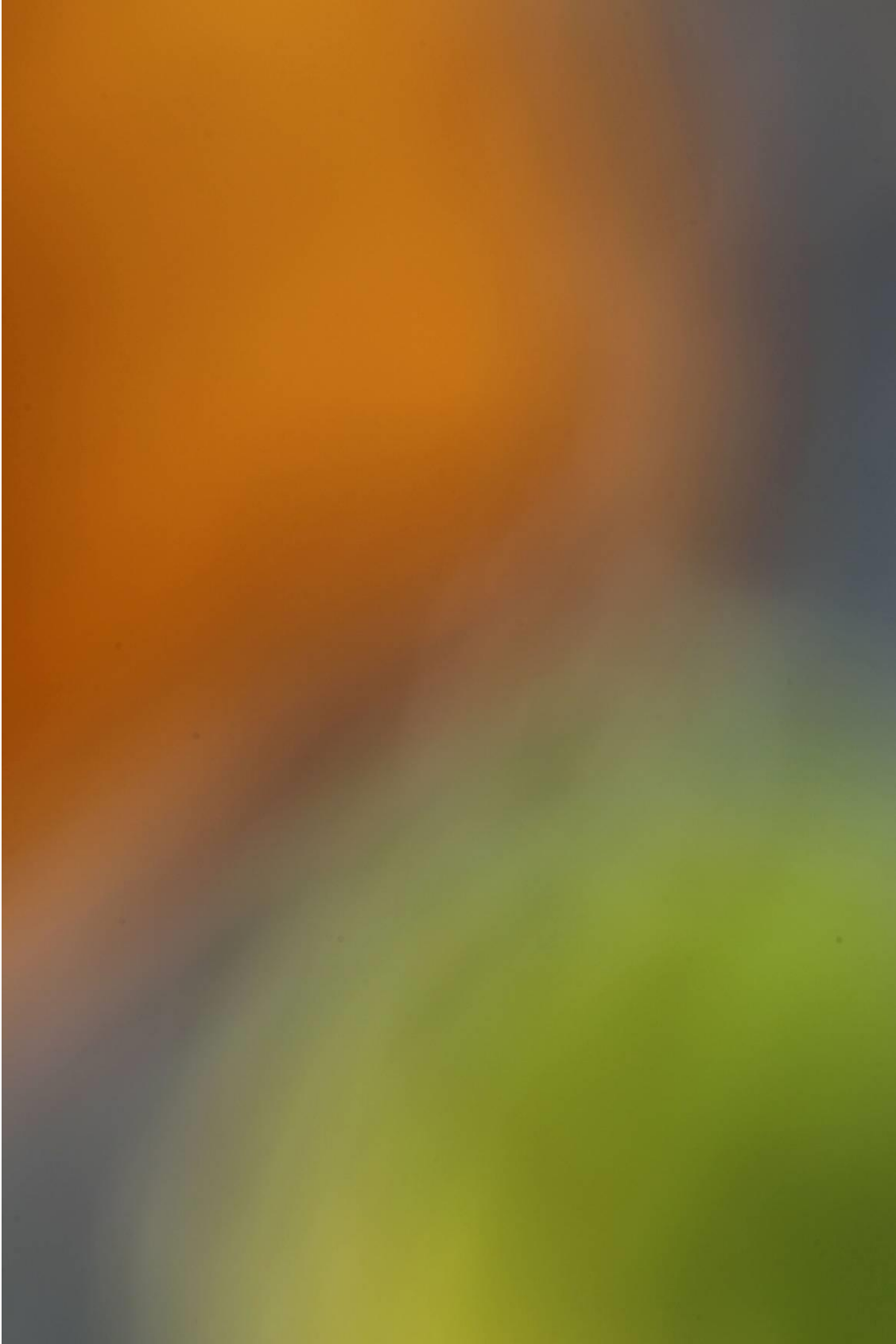


Figure 4.15 European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*)

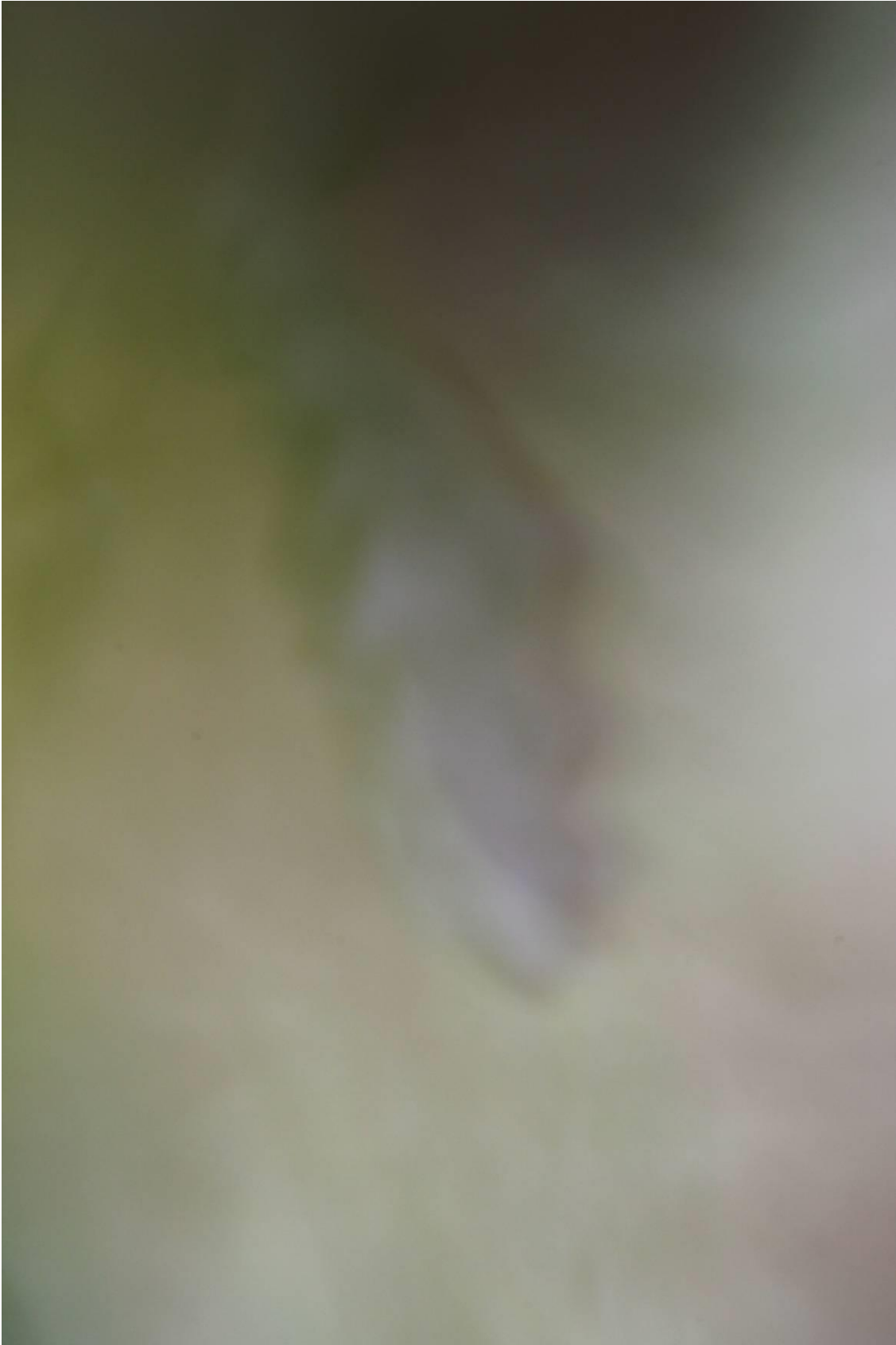


Figure 4.16 European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*)

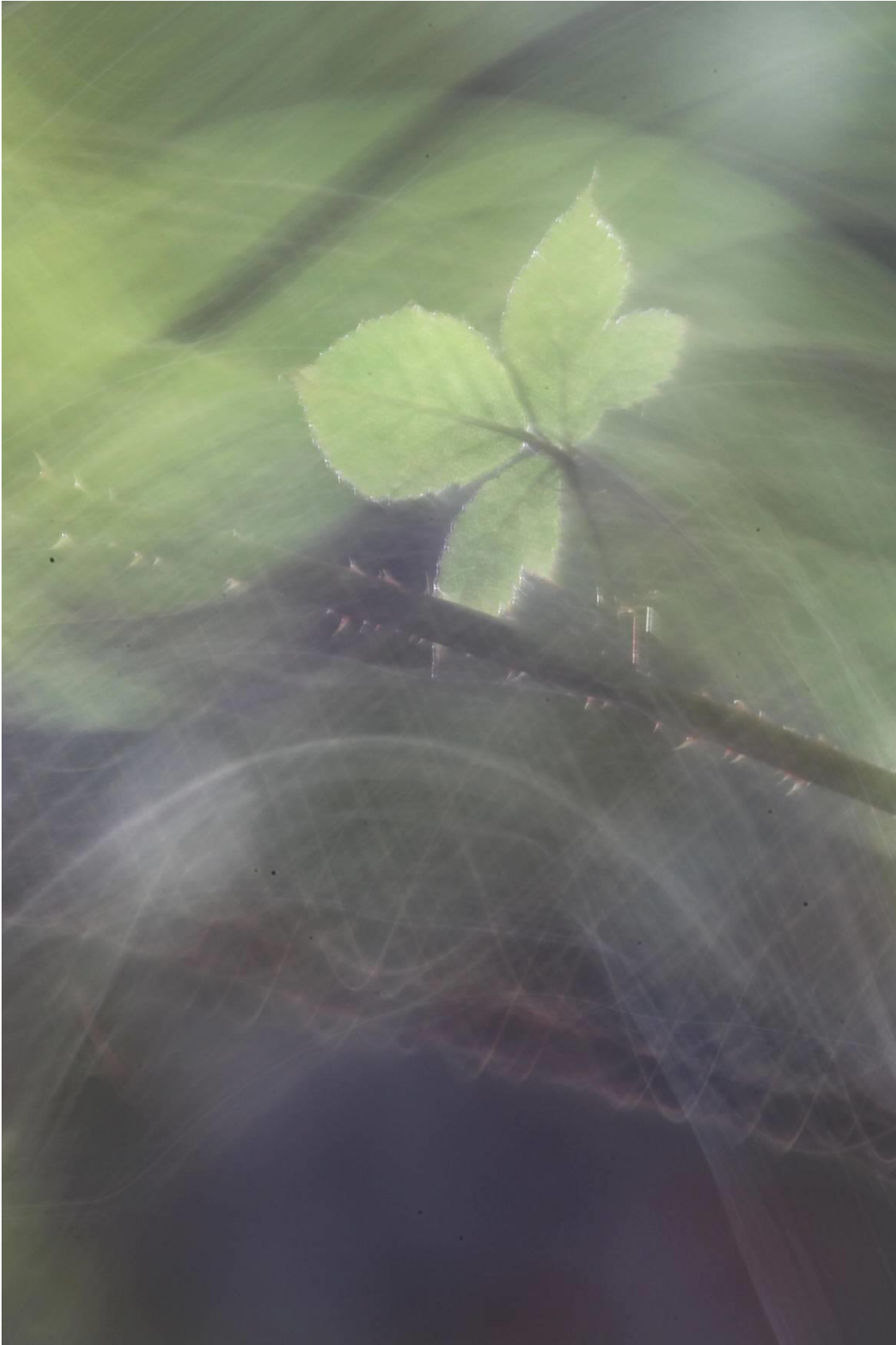


Figure 4.17 Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*)

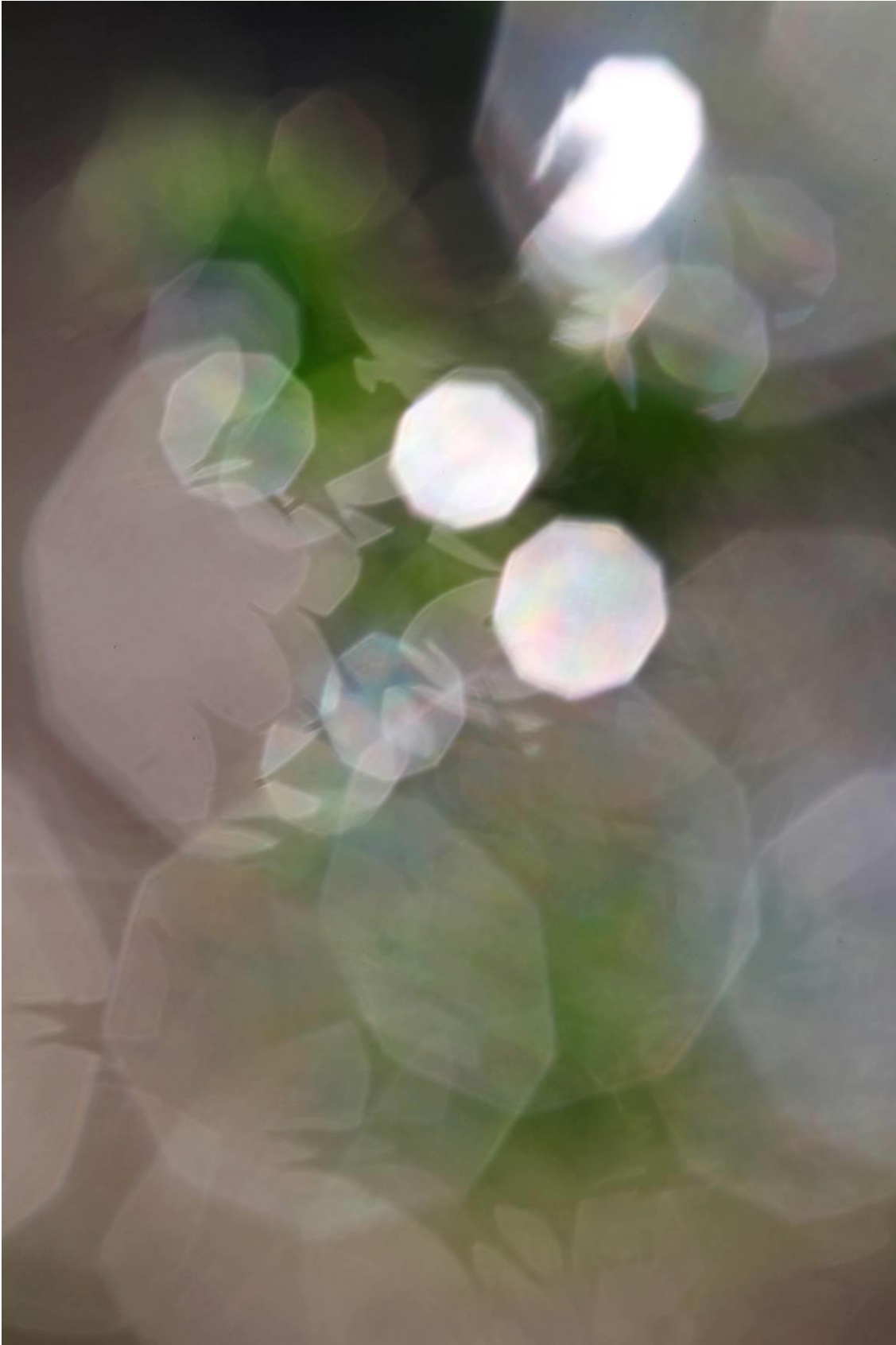


Figure 4.18 European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)

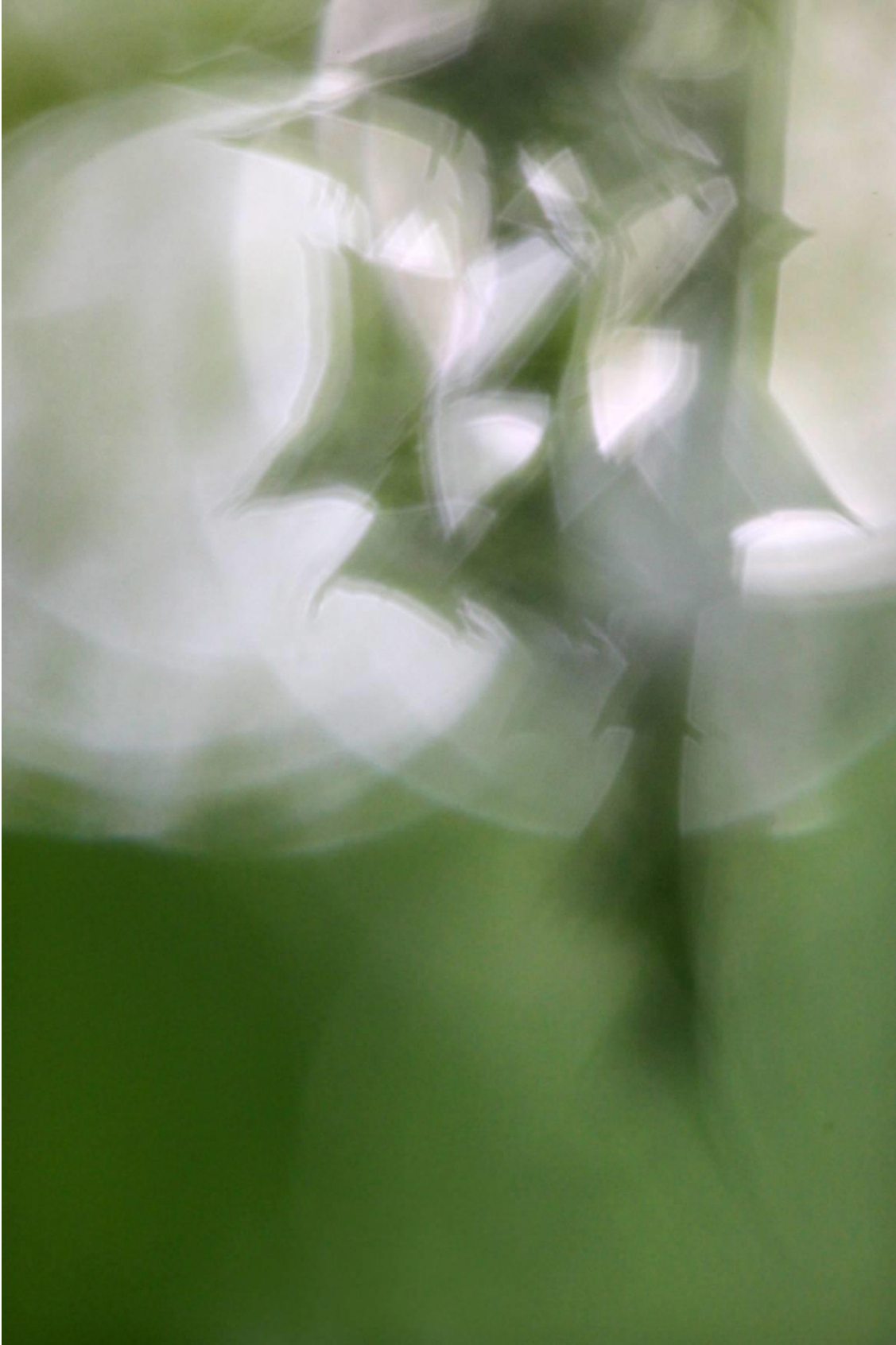


Figure 4.19 European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)

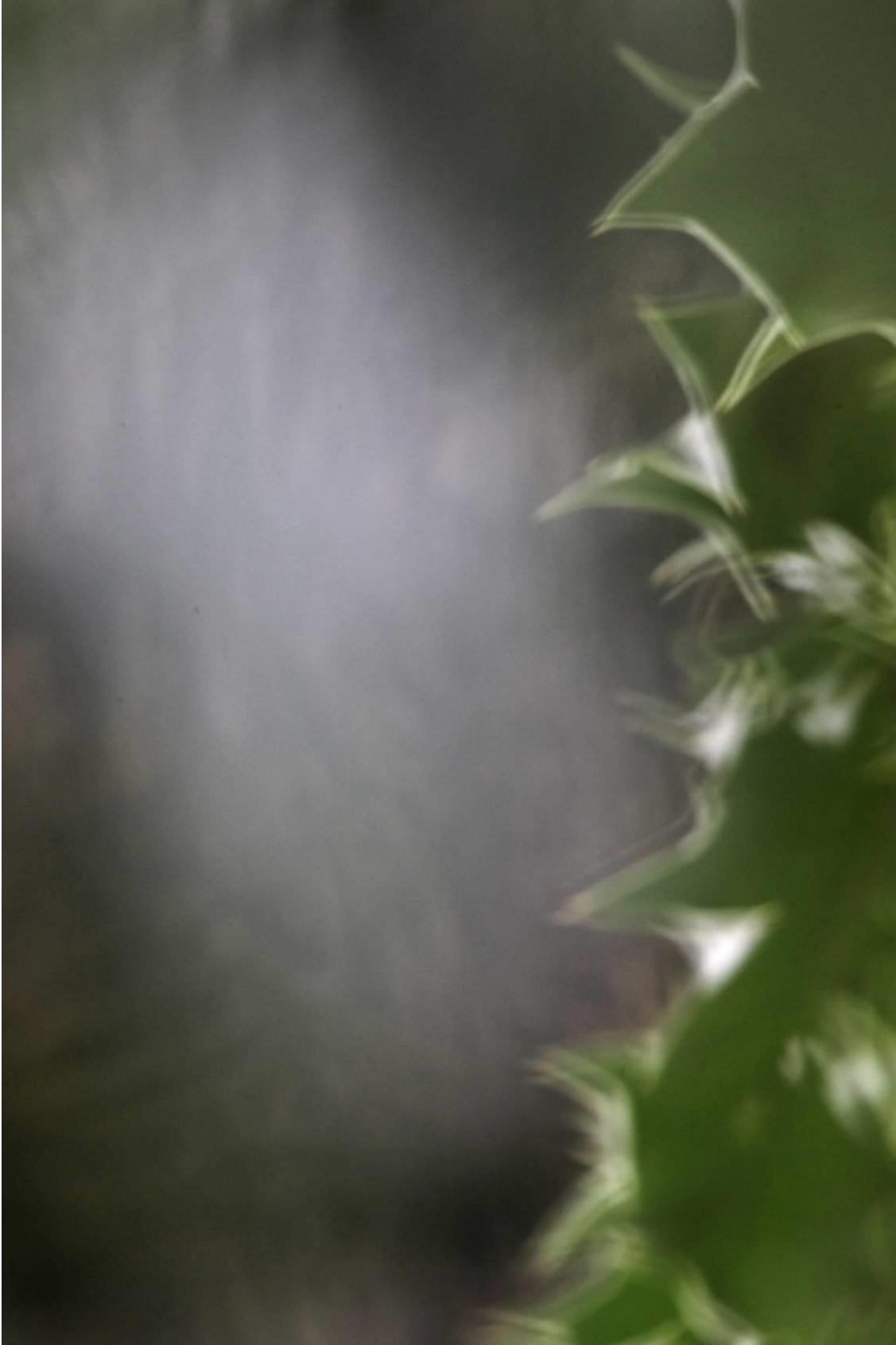


Figure 4.20 European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)

5. Critical Reflection

‘Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.’ (quote by Scott Adams, quoted in Chang, 2006, p. 296).

5.1. Introduction

The twenty photographs presented in Chapter 4 serve to exhibit the development of an alternative aesthetic in urban nature photography. An aesthetic, in art practice, is defined as a set of values which shape the doctrine of each artist, often becoming the foundation of his or her ideology, and visual style (Smith, et al., 1991). Each artist, like each researcher, or author, will project their own voice into their respective cultures, but it is important to remember these voices are sculpted by certain values, and that such values have their roots in experience. They are unique to the individual. People are products of their own experience, after all, for it is their experience which shapes their perception (Goldstein, 2010). That is to say, for an artist, these experiences set a foundation for their values, and thus, for their voice as a creative personality. With this in mind, the values which have led to these final photographs are attributable to the experiments.

5.2. The Human Subject

To begin with, and as stated in the methodology, the aesthetic component omitted in these final photographs will be identified, for there is a rather discernible absence of the human subject. The decision to exclude this component was certainly a conscious one, and made in an attempt to free the production process of the same restraints as those experienced in the fifth experiment. The human subject sparks these restraints because it compels a very specific purpose: it serves to locate, and thus to define, the urban nature subject in a broader urban landscape. Experiments one to four, of course, omitted the human subject, by the above definition, in favour of exploring alternative visual styles, but in the fifth experiment the human subject was reintroduced. This led to a core observation: the relationship between the subjects was leading the research in a very different direction; a direction that might be more suitable for independent study. This deserves further explanation.

It should be noted that the relationship between these two subjects is not considered to be beyond aesthetic development, but was omitted from the final project because it proposes quite a different problem. In the fifth experiment it quickly became clear that the relationship between the urban nature subject and the human subject is, for all intents and purposes, complex. After all, the human subject can stray far from any absolute definition; yielding multiple interpretations, if so desired. On the one hand, this unshackled definition may certainly provide much potential for the development of urban nature photography, but on the other hand, it will follow a route of enquiry distinct from the one in this thesis. Such an enquiry would be fixed on the relationship between two subjects, a relationship based on a set of dynamics that would undergo continual change in response to changing aesthetic components. It is here where this relationship reveals its complexity.

For example, if an aesthetic component was applied to an image of the urban nature subject, its effect would be upon that same subject, and this is exactly what occurred

in the experiments. The focus is on the subject. However, if an aesthetic component was applied to an image of both the urban nature subject and the human subject, its effect, in all likelihood, would barely impact their individual representation, because the prime function of the component would locate itself within the dynamics of their relationship. The proportions of the composition have changed, after all, no longer is the image representing a single subject, it is representing a relationship between two subjects. The impact of an aesthetic component will affect the primary function of an image, and since the function of an image with two subjects differs from the function of an image with one subject, any attempt at blending the functions would generate incompatible results due to inconsistent processes. This observation was drawn from the fifth experiment and acts as the main contributory factor to excluding the human subject in the final project.

However, and it has already been stated, the use of juxtaposition (and therefore, the human subject) is not being disputed because it is ineffective, but because it is already a well-established route of investigation. The presence of the human subject serves a very distinct purpose in urban nature photography, which is to locate the urban nature subject within its wider landscape. However, this is simply one kind of representation, and should not become the rule, or standard, of how a subject is represented. That is to say, the very idea at the centre of this thesis has always been that the freedom to explore and advance representation is essential to the development of urban nature photography.

These final photographs will now be examined in further detail, and so to begin with, the contribution - and thus influence - of each aesthetic component towards the final aesthetic will be discussed.

5.3. The Resulting Aesthetic

It was proposed, in the methodology, that the aesthetic components explored in each experiment would be layered together in mutual contribution toward an ultimate set of photographs, and the bearing of these components on the final photographs will be explored here. Beforehand, however, it should be noted that this layering effect is not entirely exclusive to the final project. One component has been consistent throughout all of the experiments, and remained as such even in these final photographs. This is composition design.

Portraiture, as an aesthetic component rooted in the first experiment, quickly became the foundation of composition design. Here, the urban nature subject was composed in the centre of the frame - a strategy that resonates throughout the photographs in this thesis - and in the following experiments new representations were then applied upon this design. In experiments one to four the urban nature subject was the single occupier of the frame, and served as the primary force in the photographs because of this. While composition design was a product of preference, it proved to be effective at challenging the trends observed in urban nature photography (namely, the human subject, and in turn, its restraints upon the photographer). However, the consistency of this composition design is not to be deemed an inhibition in itself. Certainly, this is not the case. This thesis has had to tread carefully, for urban nature photography has not been subjected to any academic interrogation, nor has it received any theoretical grounding outside of this thesis. Context will be dealt with later, however, until then, this section will return to the final photographs.

The strength of representation in the experiment photographs could be described as rather bold in its form. That is to say, the concept being explored in each experiment is visibly evident in their corresponding photographs. This boldness stems from each experiment exploring an individual aesthetic component, where the resulting images become synonymous with that single component. These final photographs, however,

do not follow this same pattern. Here, these photographs are not synonymous with a single component but a series of components. Consequently, the boldness of this final aesthetic may seem quite subdued in comparison to the experiments, as no individual component is being exclusively represented. Instead, they have been fused together into an all-encompassing aesthetic.

Certain components were easier to layer together than others during production. For example, the notions of visual energy and ethereality complemented each other very well due to their mutual emphasis on dynamic motion and the extraction of physical reality (this can be best seen in Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.9; of the black-headed gull and magpie). It did, however, prove difficult to incorporate the idea of nostalgia amongst these without maintaining a monochromatic colour spectrum, since the evocation of nostalgia is so inherently linked with black and white imagery (Barthes, 1982; Berger, 1972). This was overcome by employing neo-romantic sensibilities in the form of soft and fragile textures, enabling the urban nature subject to become seemingly transient and fleeting; and in turn evanescent, rather than solid, tangible, or most importantly, naturalistic. These characteristics aim to instil the viewer with a wistful preoccupation, since it would be naïve to describe these photographs as positive or idealistic. Indeed they are not. Their dreariness is a product of their colour spectrum, which is withered, and most certainly not concerned with any faithfulness to physical reality. For example, Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.10; of the feral pigeon and magpie, suggest heavy indications of a diminishing sensibility, where the subjects descend into a landscape of obscurity and melancholic inertia, both frozen and swollen by a sluggish inactivity. In addition, this observation later led to identifying parallels between the aesthetic of these final photographs and the eighteenth century art form often known as pictorialism, which will now be summarised.

Pictorialism was an aesthetic movement in photography that gained much popularity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Hannavy, 2007). It was the visual style of pictorialism that helped to establish photography as an art form rather than a science, as for many years photography was often considered a tool of science due to

its (seemingly) faithful representation of physical reality (Coleman, 2009). In order to challenge these ideas pictorialists would create their photographs with a deliberately subdued ambience, often by way of soft focus, which contributed to the otherworldly essence seen in the works of photographers such as Henry Peach Robinson and Alfred Stieglitz (Robinson, 1869; Stieglitz, 1978). Furthermore, it was precisely this subdued ambience that led their works to seem more like paintings than photographs, artistic interpretations as opposed to faithful recreations. These attitudes were instrumental in establishing the foundations of what soon became the open-minded photographic culture which exists today.

Returning to the previous observation; that the aesthetic in these final photographs is rather subdued when compared to the experiments, it is worth considering whether this may, in fact, be a psychological by-product of the experiment process rather than a rounded examination of the photographs. For example, the experiments (Chapter 3) developed a series of aesthetic components which would, in due course, together be fused into these final photographs. Thus, these final photographs are seen in relation to the experiments. They are the products of a process which is accountable for their very existence. With this in mind, perhaps the aesthetic of these final photographs is not as subdued as it first appears to be. It is possible that the colour spectrum might only appear withered after being compared to those far more vivid spectrums of the experiments. This is an observation which, for all intents and purposes, cannot, or at any rate, will not, be able to be subjected to a conclusive answer here. It is, however, something which could be discovered through broader dissemination strategies (the potential of dissemination - as regards further research - will be discussed in the final section of this chapter).

The photographs in this final project aimed to evidence a retreat from the limitations of naturalism in urban nature photography, and to a large degree succeeded in doing so. These photographs embrace a critical open-minded sensibility currently absent in the form of urban nature photography. Any sense of physical reality has been rejected here in favour of an unfastened sense of otherworldliness, where, much like the work

of pictorial photographers, the products can be more readily likened to paintings than photographs. In Figure 4.12 and Figure 4.19, of the Canada goose and European holly, there is a gentle eclipse overshadowing any sense of information regarding the urban nature subject. This aesthetic could be seen as pertaining to a *Conceptual Openness* in its representation and had much impact on the concept of identity, which, with valid conviction began to liberate the urban nature subject from the constraints imposed by its ecological definition.

It is also important to identify the main differences between plants and animals, both in terms of photographic practice and their aesthetic qualities. There may have been some disparity between how plants and animals were photographed in this thesis, as animals tend to move around quite frequently, whereas plants do not. However, while these distinctions are acknowledged, they are not considered detrimental to any of the practice in this thesis. Plants and animals are essentially two different kinds of subjects from a photographic point of view, which in turn instils them with individual aesthetic qualities; requiring plants and animals to be photographed somewhat differently. For example, when, in the second experiment (*Conceptual Closure*, see pp. 66-80) the idea of visual energy was being applied to the urban nature subject, it was attained by way of motion on behalf of the subject. However, unlike animals, plants do not move, and so in their case the notion of visual energy was applied by way of motion on behalf of the camera (moved deliberately while the shutter was open so as to produce a similar aesthetic to that of the animal's motion). Irrespective of these distinctions, however, plants and animals belong to the same body of energy; urban nature. The focus of this thesis centres on the resulting photographic aesthetic, after all, and is not a thesis of mechanical processes, but a thesis of ideas.

It was noted in the literature review that zoological gardens strip nature of its context so as to re-present it as a cultural performance. This was then likened to the process of nature photography, where a photographer will capture a fleeting moment of their subject so as to re-present it as a visual performance. Accordingly, the photographs in this thesis compel a level of reasoning, for they also strip the subject of its context in

order to re-present it in an alternative fashion, but here there is a critical point to be made. Although the subject is stripped of its urban landscape, its principal definition does not change. Urban green space, after all, may indeed alter the subject's physical environment - in regard to contemporary urban nature photography - but it does not change its context. Urban nature is just as easily found in urban green space as it is in much more typical urban spaces. This means the urban nature subject is not actually being stripped of its physical context in these final photographs, but of its wider social context. After all, these species are subjected to social anxiety and exiled to the edges of society because of it. They are marginalised, and therefore, stripping these species of their physical and social associations serves to challenge the negative perceptions surrounding them. This has been the aim of these photographs. However, challenging one kind of identity will inevitably raise observations toward the very idea of identity itself, which will now be discussed.

5.4. Identity

An inherent sense of identity (regarding the urban nature subject) was observed to be underlying the production process. Each experiment served to instil the urban nature subject with an alternative representation which, in turn, shaped the subject's sense of identity. That is to say, the subject's identity was being influenced by the aesthetic component applied to that particular experiment; each component governed its own representation, and is why each experiment represents a different visual style. While the effects of these styles have been identified in each experiment reflection, they will be briefly summarised here.

1. Decentering the Human Subject (p. 50)

- The decision to exclude the human subject in these photographs led the urban nature subject to become the primary force in the composition. In turn, these photographs began to reflect elements of portraiture, where the urban nature subject was being represented as an individual rather than as a representative of the species.

2. Conceptual Closure (p. 66)

- Here, the idea of photographic information and its contribution to naturalistic representation was targeted. Displacing this information, so as to prevent the presence of conceptual closure, led the photographs to evidence elements of visual energy.

3. Abstraction (p. 81)

- Ultimately, the idea of visual energy was broadened in this experiment by the use of increased exposure values. This led to an aggravated spectrum of light which furthered these photographs from any grounding in physical reality. Its

forceful disfigurement of colour resulted in the urban nature subject assuming an ethereal state.

4. Neo-romanticism (p. 97)

- In order to examine the absence of colour, a monochromatic colour spectrum was adopted in this experiment. Immediately, as is rather typical of black and white photography, the urban nature subject became underlined by a distinct sense of nostalgia.

5. Renegotiating the Human Subject (p. 113)

- The human subject was reintroduced into the composition and quickly led to a revival of naturalistic sensibilities. This not only produced an unarresting body of photographs, but relegated the urban nature subject as the secondary force in the composition.

However, beyond aesthetic representation there is another discussion to be made in regard to identity. The decision to focus entirely on common species was formed as a response to the wider perceptions of nature which, as noted in the literature review, are typically aligned with the exotic and remote. Consequently, the decision to focus on common species was two-fold. To begin with, guaranteeing access to the subjects was vital (for practical reasons) while secondly, representing common species aimed, by association, to promote the accessibility and biodiversity of urban green space. In spite of this, though, it should be observed that many of the species, albeit common, are considered to be ecological pests. The grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), Canada goose (*Branta Canadensis*) and feral pigeon (*Columba livia*), for instance, will, due to their widespread (and difficult to regulate) populations, all inflict detrimental effects upon their environment.

This then raises the question of whether it is a good idea to promote these species in any capacity, to which the answer remains firmly, yes, and there are two reasons for believing so. Firstly, this thesis has been aligned with the development of alternative

representation in urban nature photography. It is not an ecological study, and in truth, is more synonymous with art than it is with ecology. Here, representations transcend these categorisations, though, for it is about the physical subject, and this leads onto the second point. Raising positive awareness of these common species by attempting to reshape, or even enhance, perception (even if such species are ecological pests) is an essential foundation to set if a healthy relationship between people and nature is ever to be restored. The key to this is perception. The invasive qualities of Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), for example, do not physically transform the plant's appearance - these qualities shape how people perceive the plant's appearance - but the plant itself does not change. Negative perception is, of course, rather common in discourses related to ecological pests, as this is why they are *pests*. The best example of this is to be found with the feral pigeon (*Columba livia*), a bird that has become so inherently tied up with disease and colonisation that many struggle to see past these associations; thus condemning it to a life of marginalisation. This is the embodiment of anthropocentric thought, and is precisely why the photographs in this thesis serve to challenge such perceptions. They do so by offering up alternative representations, such as in Figure 4.15 and Figure 4.18; of European beech and European holly, where the subject may be discovered anew.

Up till now, identity has only been examined in regard to aesthetic representation and ecological definition; the potential consequences of these photographs have not yet been examined in any critical capacity. Therefore, it is important to return to the idea of environmental aesthetics.

It is possible to liken the effects of these photographs to the effects of environmental art, which were highlighted in the literature review. That is to say, these photographs might actually be triggering, albeit indirectly, an aesthetic affront to urban nature (an upset being imposed upon the natural subject). Thus, it is possible these photographs are doing more harm than good. After all, the urban nature subject alone has one set of traits, which, upon being captured by the photographer, are then distorted into an entirely different set of traits. What was, to begin with, a three-dimensional subject,

has now become a two-dimensional object. However, any sense of an affront remains firmly opposed. Unlike environmental art urban nature photography is not shaped out of natural resources or exhibited in natural environments. Its means of engagement, while of a conservationist attitude, is not experiential but representational. Of course, the urban nature subject has undergone change in response to the various aesthetic components explored in these photographs, but this has been precisely the purpose of this thesis. If perception is ever to change, then it is up to forms of representation to guide such a change.

Kate Soper ascertained nature to have two possible uses in art, which she defined as *nature-endorsing* and *nature-sceptical* (Robertson, 1996). Later, Steve Baker updated these to animal-endorsing and animal-sceptical. Baker believes ‘animal-endorsing art will tend to endorse animal life itself (and may therefore align itself with the work of conservationists or perhaps of animal advocacy)’ (Baker, 2000, p. 9) whereas animal-sceptical art, Baker suggests, ‘is likely to be sceptical not of animals themselves... but rather of culture’s means of constructing and classifying the animal in order to make it meaningful to the human’ (Baker, 2000, p. 9). The photographs in this final project, as well as those in the experiments, may certainly be considered animal-endorsing in their context, since they are not only in support of urban green space, but moreover, firmly oppose the embodiment of negative perception endured by the species which live there. However, if these photographs are animal-endorsing, they are precisely so because they are the results of a challenge to the form of urban nature photography, which may be described as animal-sceptical. This is because the subject is represented by a set of trends which underline its ecological definition through the adoption of an anthropocentric view of urban nature. This warrants further investigation, stemming from the first experiment.

For example, if it is claimed that a photograph depicts an urban nature subject when there is no evidence of an urban context in which to contextualise that subject, in all likelihood, doubt will be expressed over the integrity of that image as a valid example of urban nature photography. Indeed, such doubt can be applied to the photographs

in this thesis, to which a defence was given in the first experiment reflection (see pp. 77-78). In spite of this, though, perhaps such doubt requires further discussion. After all, when aiming to initiate a process of re-education there will always be conventions in place which impede its growth. This is no different here. The relationship between the urban nature subject and the human subject serves as a huge fortification in itself, albeit unintentionally, as its foundation in the form of urban nature photography has become so grounded that any representation which does not conform to its principle will be subjected to question and doubt. In these moments it is critical to defend the proposed representations, and in order to do so their place in wider research should not be overlooked.

5.5. Research Context

This section aims to contextualise this thesis within broader fields of research. It is not an exhaustive list, but does provide a well-rounded impression of the interdisciplinary qualities of this thesis.

It was noted in the literature review that this thesis sits in a subgenre of photography known as urban nature photography. This warrants further discussion on the subject of its context in wider research, for its context may not be quite as linear as one may assume. For example, if these photographs are indeed valid examples of urban nature photography, then it may seem that one could determine a resolution without further ado. By association, for instance, one may assume this thesis is based in urban nature photography, but this would be incorrect. At the beginning of this research its context in urban nature photography seemed inevitable, but now, with hindsight, this ceases to be the case. While the photographs themselves serve as examples of urban nature photography, it is important to note that they are also the products of a methodology, which, in turn, is a blend of interdisciplinary thought. With this in mind, the factors to precisely such thought should be identified, for they surely sit beyond the medium of just photography.

These factors lie in the field of aesthetics - specifically - environmental aesthetics (the appreciation of nature) and the aesthetics of visual representation (for example, the use of neo-romantic sensibilities). In spite of this, though, any sense of environmental aesthetics is, in truth, rather peripheral, for the appreciation of nature is an idea that has consciously circled the fringes of this research, but has seldom functioned at any distinctive level. It would be a futile effort, then, to ground this thesis in the field of environmental aesthetics, but its presence here, if only peripheral, should at least be noted. Artistic aesthetics, however, have functioned at a very fundamental level due to their influence over representation, and in turn, have led the photographs to be far more representative of the field of art than photography. After all, while photographic

practice has been used to challenge urban nature photography, it has assumed a set of artistic principles in which to do so.

The main distinction between these two fields (art and photography) can be observed in the reasoning of their production. That is to say, although the means to which these photographs owe their very being is, of course, photography, it was at this point when the camera became a tool for artistic investigation, taking aesthetics from the field of artistic practice and fusing them into urban nature photography. Thus, the distinction lies in representation. As noted in the literature review, urban nature photographers engage their subjects from an impartial, or even somewhat dispassionate, viewpoint, rather than with any distinct sensibility (see p. 19). The photographs produced in this thesis have been deliberately designed in order to challenge this state, and therefore evidence an open-minded receptivity toward the representational ideals drawn from wider artistic practices.

Consequently, it is much more appropriate to ground this thesis in the field of artistic aesthetics than it is in urban nature photography, although the images here do remain as valid examples of urban nature photography. This is because in academic research the subgenre is deficient in any theoretical grounding, thus meaning this thesis is the first time that urban nature photography has been framed in an academic construct, and so, with this in mind, it would be rather ill-advised to then contextualise this *new* research area entirely within itself.

There is an additional observation to note, related to the wider notion of urban nature conservation. When surveying this thesis it would be unjust to overlook, much like it was with environmental aesthetics, the underlying and somewhat immaterial essence of conservation which supports its foundation. However, again, grounding this thesis in the field of conservation would, like with environmental aesthetics, be unfitting, as its focus has been more aligned with representation. The reason why conservation is mentioned, though, is because the dissemination of these photographs would, due to their aim of raising awareness, constitute an act of conservation. This is a critical step for future research in this field.

5.6. Conclusion

As a practice-based researcher this thesis has passed through many enriching, and in some measure, enlightening, observations. Using the camera to travel a landscape of artistic aesthetics, all for the support of urban nature, proved to be greatly beneficial to the skill set of a developing practitioner, while also being an effort which has been delighted in. Here, the quote by Thomas C. Horsfall, used in the opening pages of this thesis, is returned to below:

‘Show people the best pictures you can get of beautiful common things; make them notice the beauty of form, all the curves and combinations of lines, and the beauty of colour, and when they next see the thing which the picture represented, they will see in it beauty which, but for the picture, they would not see’ (Horsfall, 1883, p. 32).

Horsfall’s meaning is quite clear on this subject, but the value of his words cannot be overstated. He draws the link between aesthetic representation and the influence of that representation upon the viewer, fundamentally underlining the beauty inherent in everything. Certainly, Horsfall understood that beauty is a subjective ideal, but he also understood that many subjects of a common variety are often overlooked by the majority. When this is the case, responsibility falls upon the artist to produce ways of rediscovering these subjects, so that they may then be reintroduced to the viewer so as to challenge their perception. This stage of reintroduction, however, is not part of this thesis, and will be discussed further in the final section of this chapter. Instead, a much more personal reflection around urban nature photography, as it now stands in retrospect, will be provided.

Perhaps it is appropriate to begin here. Parameters, restrictions, boundaries, factors, limitations, borders, controls or constraints can all serve, in some measure, to inhibit the creative process. Such a gesture may seem overexerted, but it is not said loosely,

and like Horsfall's words, cannot be overstated. This is especially so in regard to the form of urban nature photography, which in its contemporary form, and as identified in the literature review, is suffering from somewhat of a creative dehydration due to the trends that secure its representation. Looking back at these representations and equating them to the photographs in this thesis prompts a rather particular response, a response which, in its essence, is a fusion of joy and approval. What is unaccounted for, however, is an updated definition, or redefining, of urban nature photography in view of the research findings.

Irrespective of how far any representation is pressed in an urban nature photograph, it is important that one element is always at the core of its representation. This is, of course, the urban nature subject. Needless to say, it is obvious enough to suggest an urban nature photograph should consist of an urban nature subject, but its simplicity serves a fundamental purpose. An urban nature photograph, at least here, is defined as a photographic representation of the urban nature subject which has been created in an appropriate context (for example, urban green space, and not, for instance, in a photography studio). If this foundation is held, such a definition can probably sustain a great manipulation or distortion of its exterior elements, as long as its core essence does not falter. Modes of representation can change but the subject cannot. Initially, this gesture may, to some extent, seem insincere; having noted how parameters serve to inhibit creativity, but this should not be misunderstood. Declaring the urban nature subject as a critical subject is not the same as imposing limitations on the construction of a composition for the sole means of definition. The urban nature subject needs to be present. This is akin to an aviation photographer having to photograph an aircraft, or a photojournalist having to capture the fluttering moments of a contemporary news story. Every genre has a foundational element that can undergo manipulation as long as that element is never removed.

With this in mind it could be said, although perhaps too hastily, that this ideology can be applied to the human subject - which has been repeatedly displaced - throughout the photographs in this thesis. However, this is where the major differences between

the human subject and the urban nature subject become pronounced. The idea that the human subject in an urban nature photograph is external, or even cosmetic, in its presence (inhibiting the photographic form) continues to be supported here. In order to be clear, this needs repeating. Unlike the urban nature subject, the human subject is *not* a foundational element. In truth, at best it can be compared to a *meme*, which is defined as a unit of cultural transmission. Professor Richard Dawkins coined such a term in his book *The Selfish Gene*. Here, 'examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes, fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches' (Dawkins, 2006, p. 192). Dawkins has described the meme as a new kind of replicator, synonymous to the biological gene in the sense of its ability to propagate itself in an environment, or *meme pool*. Unlike a gene, which propagates itself in the gene pool by the meiosis of sperm and egg cells, memes propagate themselves by means of cultivating the ideas which are embedded in the human brain. Memes then move between brains via the exchange of ideas in human culture. For example, if someone was to read this thesis, who, prior to reading, was unaware of the accessibility of urban green space, or who once held a negative perception of, say, the feral pigeon, might find its subject matter of great interest. Moreover, if this thesis was able to develop their perceptions of the feral pigeon, or raise their awareness of urban green space, this can be thought of as a meme. From here, the reader may then share his or her discovery, or new attitude, with colleagues, friends or families, who, if they too find the meme of great interest, might then share it with their colleagues, friends, etc, and so on. This is how a meme propagates itself in the meme pool, and how it is able to develop fundamental ideas in human culture.

This extended definition of memetics has digressed from the original point, however, which likened the presence of the human subject in an urban nature photograph to a cultural meme. This discussion will be furthered here. Essentially, the human subject can be thought of as an indicator of urban context. It began life during the very early stages of urban nature photography, where its ability to clearly set the urban nature subject in a wider urban environment soon became the very first meme to enter the meme pool of urban nature photography. This meme, which can also be defined as a

representational strategy, was then propagated by urban nature photographers who chose to adopt the same strategy. It was beneficial for these photographers to do so, as any representations that did not conform to this strategy would have been quickly challenged, or doubted, and therefore would have failed to propagate themselves in the meme pool. This serves to vindicate why the human subject is not a foundational element in an urban nature photograph. It is a product of representational evolution, and only a supplementary presence in composition. That is to say, it is quite possible for a strategy devoid of any urban indicator, much like the photographs in this thesis, to successfully propagate itself in the meme pool. To begin with, this new meme will almost certainly be met with criticism, since change can be rather distressing, and so in order to survive it will need an influential context in which to maximise its chances of propagation in the meme pool. Needless to say, at its very core, this thesis aims to provide such a context.

Perhaps, as noted earlier in this chapter, further research may begin to discover new ways of renegotiating the human subject in a photograph. However, in regard to its current position in urban nature photography the human subject is not considered a compulsory force. It serves one single purpose and that is to locate the urban nature subject in an urban environment. This strategy should not be an authority. Instead, it should find itself recognised as one mode of representation within a wider spectrum of potential strategies. Perhaps its failure to emancipate itself from this inhibition is a result of its infancy as a subgenre, which, in turn, serves to underline its deficiency in any aesthetic development. Moreover, it might be due to how these representations are being disseminated. Whatever the reason may be, it is nevertheless unfortunate that the human subject has become so deeply ingrained in the form of contemporary urban nature photography, and is certainly something for the immediate attention of future researchers.

Finally, it is important to identify how each of the four research questions outlined at the beginning of this thesis (see p.2) have been addressed throughout the preceding pages. To begin with, the literature review itself was designed specifically to deal with

the first three questions directly. For example, the cultural and economic factors that influence the relationship between people and nature were recognised in the review of urbanisation and the Industrial Revolution (see pp. 5-6), which led neatly onto the notion of technological nature (see pp. 9-13) and the influence of nature photography itself (see pp. 14-16). While discussing the broad wealth of biodiversity found in urban environments the benefits of personally engaging with these species on a daily basis were identified (see pp. 6-7 and p. 16), as well as both the cultural and financial value of raising awareness of urban nature (see pp. 5-12). The photographic form of urban nature photography was studied in a dedicated section of the literature review, which looked at three professional photographers and the aesthetic devices evident across their photographs (see pp. 17-25). However, it should be noted that the responses to these three research questions were based on secondary research, and that the most original findings were ultimately going to be found in response to the fourth research question. It was through the development of an original methodology (see pp. 36-48) that the five practice-based experiments were able to serve as a framework where the form of contemporary urban nature photography could be challenged, and alternative representations of the urban nature subject could be developed (and evidenced in *the final project*, see pp. 128-150).

Conclusively, and so as to offer a platform for future researchers working in the area of urban nature photography, any ideas discovered during the course of this thesis that were, for various reasons, unable to be explored in the main body of text, will now be discussed in the following section.

5.7. Ideas for Further Research

Many ideas were discovered during the research process that, due to the limitations of a single thesis, were considered more suitable for independent study. Accordingly, these ideas will be noted here for any future researchers working in the field of urban nature photography.

Earlier in this chapter an explanation was given for the absence of the human subject in these final photographs. Nevertheless, the relationship between the urban nature subject and the human subject provides a durable foundation for further research, as it embraces two observations. This first observation concerns the photographic form, as the influence of the human subject on naturalistic representation in a photograph is rather substantial. Therefore, developing alternative representations of the human subject might begin to challenge, and in turn loosen, its stronghold upon naturalistic representation. This second observation regards perception. The understanding of an urban nature photograph is currently joined up with the human subject, for which the reasons are clear enough. The reasons why alternative representations are met with such hesitation, however, are not so clear, and investigation into the reasons for this may yield interesting results.

It was noted in the methodology that very little post-production would be applied to the photographs so as to retain their integrity as products of the camera rather than the editing process. However, image manipulation is an area of digital art capable of transcending the restraints of both photographic practice and physical reality, and in turn may provide a range of opportunities for uncovering new representations of the urban nature subject. After all, stripping the subject of its limitations within a typical photograph (this being the direct product of a camera) may begin to uncover ways of shifting representation to an entirely new kind of platform. For these reasons, image manipulation is deemed an area of great potential for further research. In regard to

the photographs produced throughout this thesis, however, the next stage would be dissemination.

Dissemination is the act of sharing certain information. For example, an exhibition of the photographs produced in this thesis would form an act of dissemination. However, while an act of dissemination could not be sustained as a supplement to this thesis, it has much potential for future research. The key benefit of dissemination itself relates to the audience, who are able to engage with the work, if so desired, by sharing their thoughts with the disseminator. These responses can then be recorded, for instance, and even analysed, so as to note the effect of this information upon the audience. For example, if a body of photographs, such as in this thesis, has been produced so as to challenge current ideologies, it would be interesting to observe the impact, if any, of these photographs upon such ideologies. However, disseminating information for the simple sake of doing so is a hopeless endeavour, for this will then solicit the question of whom to exhibit to - and where and why - which readily moves into demographics and statistics.

Furthermore, it is not simply *who* this information is being disseminated to, but *how* it is being disseminated. The arrangement of an exhibition can have a lot of influence over the audience, whether this is the white walls of an art gallery, an open air public occasion or a niche experimental space. Each area will already be predisposed to their own cultural indicators; a set of subconscious associations synonymous with that very environment. Suffice to say, environments, as well representations, can influence how a viewer may engage with any disseminated works, and thus, is why dissemination is to be such a decisive factor in the future (and perhaps even continual) development of urban nature photography.

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Appendix A

The photographs in this appendix are all additional examples of contemporary urban nature photography. Their purpose serves to further support the observations drawn in the literature review concerning the obstructive trends active in the form of urban nature photography.

Photographs begin overleaf.



Ian Wade "Bristol fox (1)" (2011)



Ian Wade "Bristol fox (2)" (2011)



Laurent Geslin "Barcelona, peregrine" (2010)



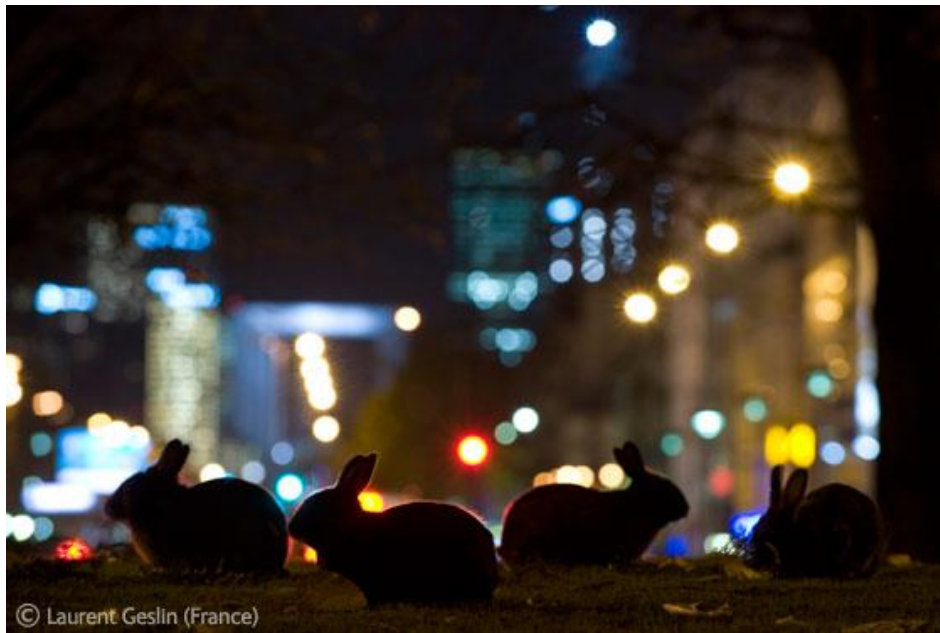
Iain Green "Arches" (2005)



Laurent Geslin "Alpine newt" (2010)



Iain Green "Wild London" (2005)



Laurent Geslin "Rabbits, Paris" (2010)



Laurent Geslin "Yellow-legged moustached icon hoverfly" (2010)

Appendix B

As noted in the methodology many photographs were taken during production while only ten photographs were presented as the results of each experiment. This meant the photographs were subjected to a selection process. This appendix presents some of the photographs which were rejected in the selection process so as to support the methodology.

3.1. Decentering the Human Subject

- Experiment One



Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

Irrespective of the awkward composition there was a distinct lack of light in the background of this scene, which in turn failed to create the desired blackout effect.



Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

Here is an example of a production fault, which is an image that has failed to capture the subject at all.



Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)

Again, there is a significant lack of vitality in the composition, as well as an imprecise focus on the subject itself.



Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*)

This photograph was rejected simply because its framing was deemed unattractive in the context of the experiment.



Common daffodil (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*)

Having the sunset burst through the daffodil created an unwanted lens flare that lit up the surrounding buildings.

3.2. Conceptual Closure

- Experiment Two



Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

To begin with it was quite difficult to harvest an appropriate sense of visual energy; in the case of this photograph it was felt to be underachieved. In addition, the mixture of greens, blacks and whites in the colour palette are very sharp and do not make for any kind of easy viewing.



Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

This photograph was believed to overstate the idea of visual energy, but contributed to the notion of abstraction.



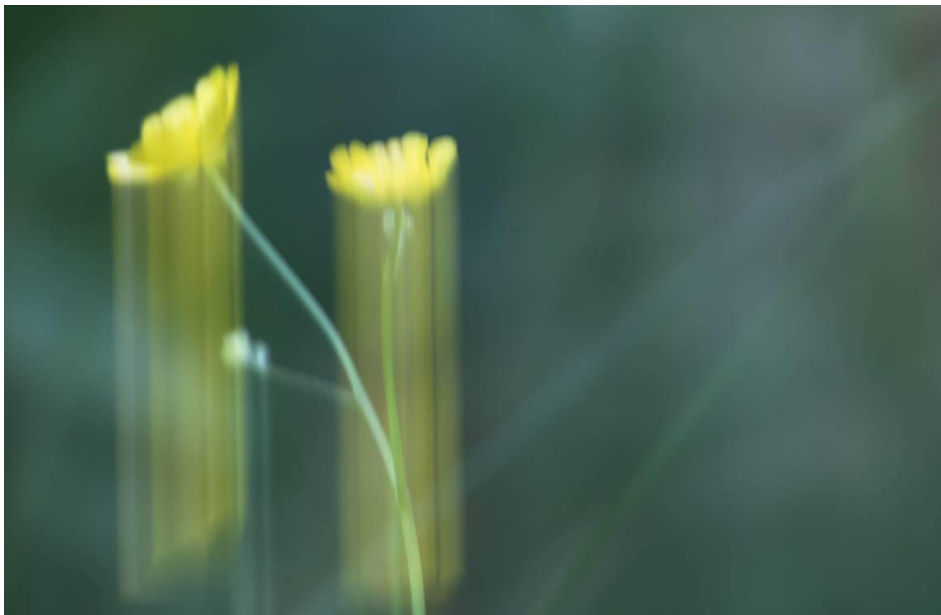
Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

This photograph just fell short of being exhibited, due to the limit of ten photographs per experiment.



Eurasian jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)

This is another production fault that has failed to capture the subject to any reasonable standard (in the context of the experiment).



Creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*)

This image of creeping buttercup was discarded in favour of another photograph that can found in the second experiment (p. 77).

3.3. Abstraction

- Experiment Three



Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

Since the idea of abstraction was derived from exploring visual energy in the previous experiment, there was simply too much detail in this photograph for it to qualify as an abstract composition.



Brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*)

The colour palette was too washed out in this image, and led to the subject blending in with the background.



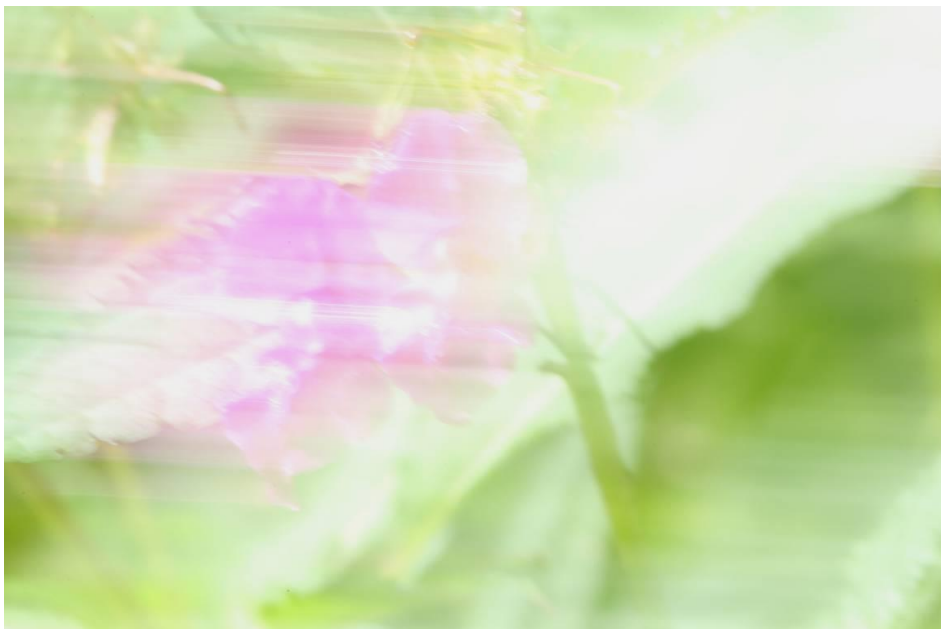
Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)

While the colours of the feral pigeon's wings create a fresh ethereality, there was just not enough of the pigeon in the frame.



European magpie (*Pica pica*)

Much like the previous photograph, unfortunately there was too much dead space in the composition.



Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)

The colours in this frame were considered somewhat sickly sweet; almost nauseating, and in turn far too overpowering.

3.4. Neo-romanticism

- Experiment Four



Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

While this composition was actually favoured in the resulting photographs of the neo-romanticism experiment (p. 100) this particular frame was rejected due to the absence of the grey squirrel itself.



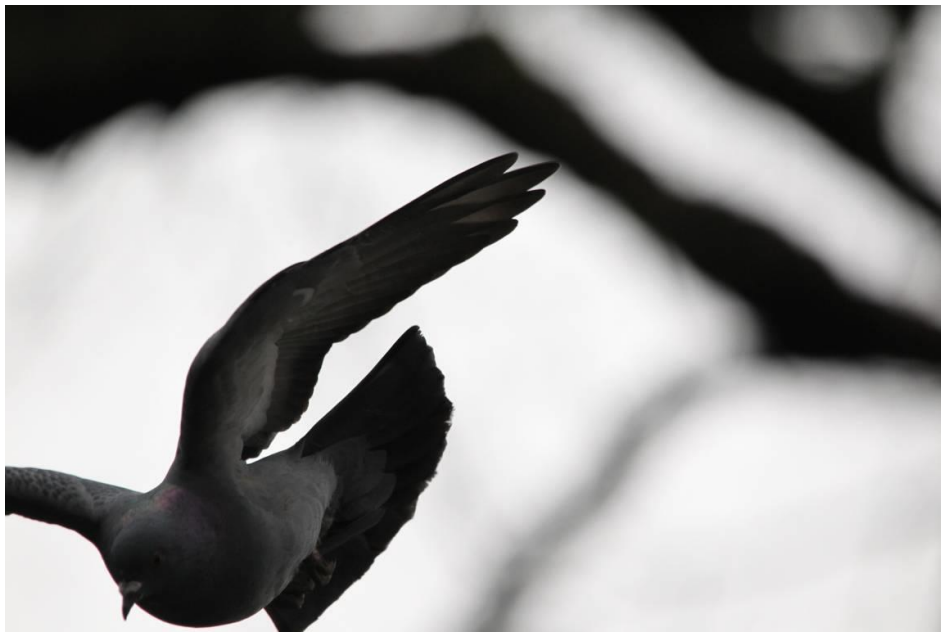
European magpie (*Pica pica*)

There is a piece of bread visible (provided by a passing walker) that has been dropped by the European magpie.



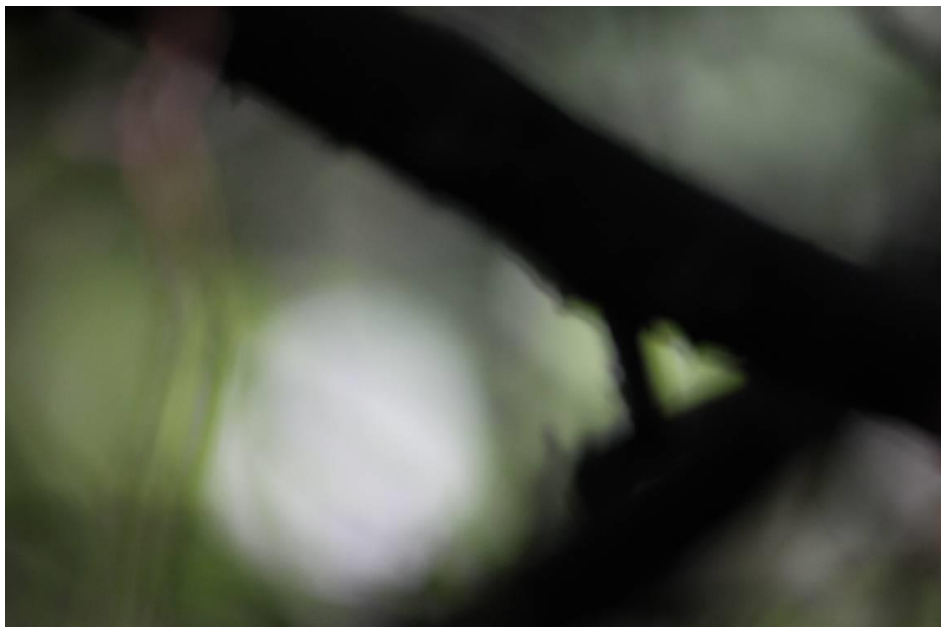
European magpie (*Pica pica*)

In addition to the obscured subject there is also a discernible lack of contrast between the light and dark tonalities.



Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)

The discomfited position of the feral pigeon serves to obstruct any kind of focal point in the composition.



European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*)

It felt as though this photography would have been more suitable for the abstraction experiment, and thus was discarded.

3.5. Renegotiating the Human Subject

- Experiment Five



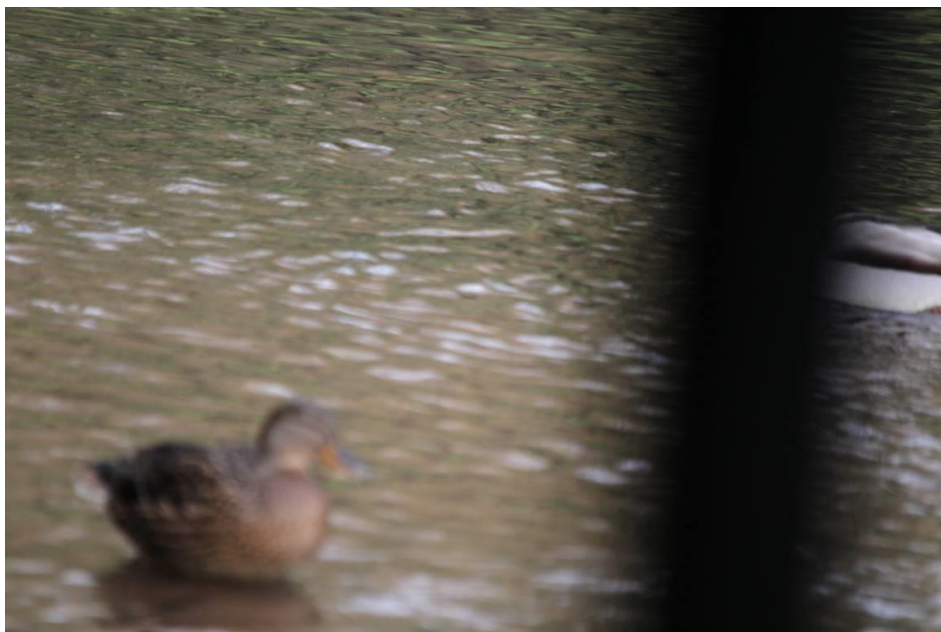
Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*)

While this photograph represents the accessibility of natural subjects in urban green space quite effectively, the absence of a single authoritative subject meant the image was considered to be somewhat clunky and ill-mannered when compared to previous photographs in the thesis.



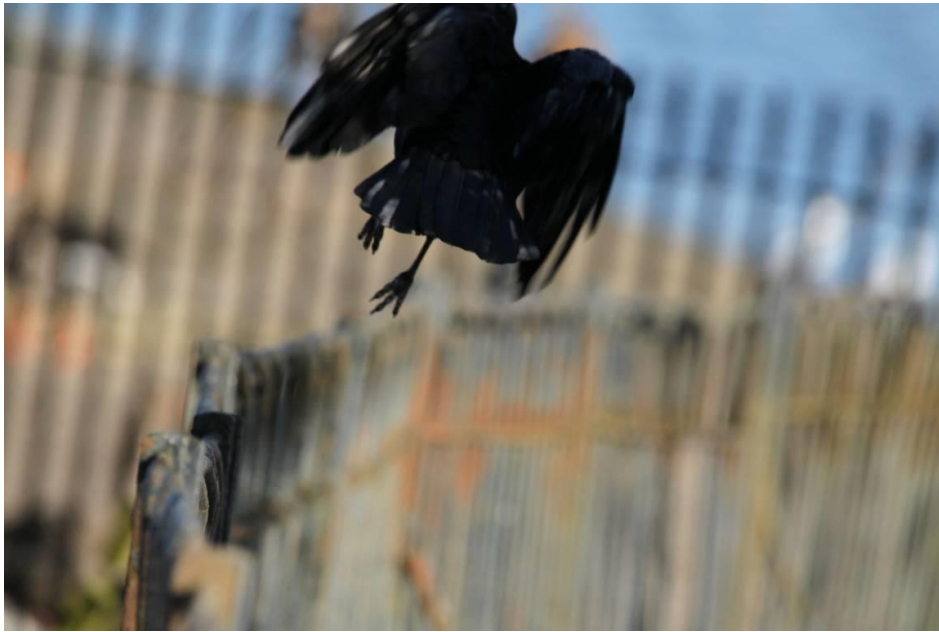
Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)

Production fault: the feral pigeon is leaving the frame. There is no way it can become the primary force.



Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Technical fault: the presence of the human subject is not pronounced enough in the composition.



Carrion crow (*Corvus corone*)

When compared to another frame in this series (p. 121) this photograph was deemed to be the weaker candidate.



Leyland cypress (*Cupressus leylandii*)

Leyland cypress tended to inspire rather unengaging and dry photographs; one being represented here.

Appendix C

This appendix serves to account for photographic information that was not included in the main body of the thesis, as such details were considered to inhibit and distract the viewing process. The information listed includes locations, dates, camera model, lens type, shutter speed, aperture and ISO settings, and are outlined here so as to provide an insight into the process of practice adopted in each of the experiments, as well as the final project.

3.1. Decentering the Human Subject (see p. 50)

Figure 3.1a

“Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (25/10/2010), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/250 sec, f/8, ISO-800)

Figure 3.1b

“Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (11/10/2010), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/5000, f/8, ISO-400)

Figure 3.1c

“Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)”, River Irwell, Salford, (01/08/2010), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/5000 sec, f/8, ISO-400)

Figure 3.1d

“Mute swan (*Cygnus olor*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (30/08/2010), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/5000 sec, f/8, ISO-320)

Figure 3.1e

“Muscovy duck (*Cairina moschata*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (11/10/2010), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/2500 sec, f/8, ISO-400)

Figure 3.1f

“Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*)”, River Irwell, Salford, (18/08/2010), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/320 sec, f/8, ISO-640)

Figure 3.1g

“European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (23/05/2010), Canon EOS-7D, 100-300mm f/4 EX DG IF HSM, (1/40 sec, f/8, ISO-320)

Figure 3.1h

“European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)”, Clifton Country Park, Salford, (22/08/2010), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/60 sec, f/8, ISO-500)

Figure 3.1i

“Common daffodil (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*)”, Silk Street, Salford, (20/04/2010), Canon EOS-5D, Canon EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM, (1/1000 sec, f/5.6 ISO-320)

Figure 3.1j

“Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (14/08/2010), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/160 sec, f/8, ISO-800)

3.2. Conceptual Closure (see p. 66)

Figure 3.2a

“European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (21/07/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/6 sec, f/29, ISO-250)

Figure 3.2b

“Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)”, Clifton Country Park, Salford, (27/07/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/40 sec, f/7.1, ISO-400)

Figure 3.2c

“Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)”, Blackleach Country Park, Salford, (24/07/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/10 sec, f/29, ISO-100)

Figure 3.2d

“Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)”, Blackleach Country Park, Salford, (29/07/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/30 sec, f/25, ISO-100)

Figure 3.2

“Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*)”, River Irwell, Salford, (24/07/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/5 sec, f/29, ISO-100)

Figure 3.2f

“Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*)”, River Irwell, Salford, (28/07/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/25 sec, f/11, ISO-100)

Figure 3.2g

“Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)”, River Irwell, Salford, (15/08/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/13 sec, f/14, ISO-2000)

Figure 3.2h

“Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (21/07/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/2 sec, f/8, ISO-100)

Figure 3.2i

“Creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*)”, Reddish Vale Country Park, Stockport, (27/07/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/4 sec, f/13, ISO-100)

Figure 3.2j

“Common nettle (*Urtica dioica*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (26/07/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/6 sec, f/16, ISO-160)

3.3. Abstraction (see p. 81)

Figure 3.3a

“Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)”, Reddish Vale Country Park, Stockport, (22/08/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/6 sec, f/6.3, ISO-640), [+2.7EV]

Figure 3.3b

“Brown rat (*rattus norvegicus*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (01/09/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/5 sec, f/7.1, ISO-160), [+2.3EV]

Figure 3.3c

“Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)”, Blackleach Country Park, Salford, (17/08/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/6 sec, f/8, ISO-400), [+2.7EV]

Figure 3.3d

“Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (17/08/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/6 sec, f/6.3, ISO-400), [+2.3EV]

Figure 3.3e

“European magpie (*Pica pica*)”, Peel Park, Salford, (01/09/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/4 sec, f/7.1, ISO-200), [+2.3EV]

Figure 3.3f

“European magpie (*Pica pica*)”, Peel Park, Salford, (01/09/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/5 sec, f/9, ISO-100), [+2.3EV]

Figure 3.3g

“Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)”, River Irwell, Salford, (01/09/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/8 sec, f/6.3, ISO-800), [+2.3EV]

Figure 3.3h

“European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (22/08/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/6 sec, f/8, ISO-100), [+2.3EV]

Figure 3.3i

“Common nettle (*Urtica dioica*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (22/08/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/6 sec, f/6.3, ISO-160), [+2.3EV]

Figure 3.3j

“Common nettle (*Urtica dioica*)”, Clifton Country Park, Salford, (01/09/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/3 sec, f/7.1, ISO-100), [+2.0 EV]

3.4. Neo-romanticism (see p. 97)

Figure 3.4a

“Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (12/12/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/10 sec, f/6.3, ISO-1600)

Figure 3.4b

“Brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (12/12/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/60 sec, f/6.3, ISO-1250)

Figure 3.4c

“Brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (12/12/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/3200 sec, f/6.3, ISO-2500)

Figure 3.4d

“Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)”, Blackleach Country Park, Salford, (14/12/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/1000 sec, f/6.3, ISO-1600)

Figure 3.4e

“Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)”, Reddish Vale Country Park, Stockport, (13/12/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/8000 sec, f/6.3, ISO-1600)

Figure 3.4f

“Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)”, Pennington Flash, Wigan, (01/11/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/800 sec, f/8, ISO-2000)

Figure 3.4g

“Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)”, River Irwell, Salford, (01/11/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/800 sec, f/8, ISO-2000)

Figure 3.4h

“European magpie (*Pica pica*)”, Burrs Country Park, Bury, (03/10/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/5000 sec, f/8, ISO-2000)

Figure 3.4i

“European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (01/11/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/500 sec, f/8, ISO-1600)

Figure 3.4j

“European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (01/11/2011), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/320 sec, f/8, ISO-1600)

3.5. Renegotiating the Human Subject (see p. 113)

Figure 3.5a

“Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (01/02/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/250 sec, f/9, ISO-800)

Figure 3.5b

“Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)”, Blackleach Country Park, Salford, (01/03/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/500 sec, f/8, ISO-800)

Figure 3.5c

“Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)”, Reddish Vale Country Park, Stockport, (25/01/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/250 sec, f/7.1, ISO-1000)

Figure 3.5d

“Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)”, Burrs Country Park, Bury, (17/02/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/200 sec, f/8, ISO-1000)

Figure 3.5e

“Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (01/02/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/250 sec, f/8, ISO-1000)

Figure 3.5f

“Carrion crow (*Corvus corone*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (01/02/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/1000 sec, f/9, ISO-800)

Figure 3.5g

“Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*)”, Pennington Flash, Wigan, (01/03/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/320 sec, f/18, ISO-640)

Figure 3.5h

“Greylag goose (*Anser anser*)”, Pennington Flash, Wigan, (25/01/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/100 sec, f/10, ISO-1000)

Figure 3.5i

“Common nettle (*Urtica dioica*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (19/02/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/80 sec, f/18, ISO-800)

Figure 3.5j

“European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (01/02/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/200 sec, f/14, ISO-800)

The Final Project (see p. 128)

Figure 4.1

“Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (27/07/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/3, f7.1, ISO-1000)

Figure 4.2

“Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (04/09/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/4, f8, ISO-400)

Figure 4.3

“Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (28/11/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/4, f14, ISO-100)

Figure 4.4

“Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (29/11/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/6, f29, ISO-100)

Figure 4.5

“Black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (03/09/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/50, f29, ISO-100)

Figure 4.6

“Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (29/11/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/3, f29, ISO-100)

Figure 4.7

“Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (17/10/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/160, f7.1, ISO-400)

Figure 4.8

“Feral pigeon (*Columba livia*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (28/08/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/320, f6.3, ISO-500)

Figure 4.9

“European magpie (*Pica pica*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (31/10/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/20, f/11, ISO-125)

Figure 4.10

“European magpie (*Pica pica*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (31/10/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/3, f29, ISO-125)

Figure 4.11

“Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (31/10/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/4, f20, ISO-100)

Figure 4.12

“Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (28/11/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/6, f20, ISO-100)

Figure 4.13

“Greylag goose (*Anser anser*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (19/06/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/4000, f8, ISO-1000)

Figure 4.14

“Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (17/10/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/400, f8, ISO-400)

Figure 4.15

“European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (31/10/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/15, f10, ISO-160)

Figure 4.16

“European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (18/10/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/40, f7.1, ISO-400)

Figure 4.17

“Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (28/11/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/8, f29, ISO-100)

Figure 4.18

“European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (28/11/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/50, f7.1, ISO-100)

Figure 4.19

“European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (14/08/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/40, f6.3, ISO-1000)

Figure 4.20

“European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)”, Heaton Park, Bury, (17/10/2012), Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM, (1/8, f9, ISO-500)