

Damian Taylor



Dunbar 20/02/2017,
15.41-15.43 (2021)





Mutton Cove, Portland 13/09/2021,
10.50–11.23 (2022)



These works are made by scanning the sea from left to right, compressing into images periods of time ranging between a minute and a little over half an hour. Each tells a story, a chronicle of the conditions in which it was made.

Mutton Cove, Portland 13/09/2021, 10.50–11.23 (2022), for example, was exposed for 33 minutes—that is, the sunlight recorded at the left edge is about half an hour older than the light at the right. It looks down at the sea from the top of a high cliff on the west of the Isle of Portland, on the south coast of England. The wind was strong, the sea rough, the sky alive. As the image was formed the tide rose. The constant motion of the sky, although out of frame, can be read in the lighter bands running down the image at irregular intervals, which correspond to periods when shafts of sunlight broke through one or both layers of hurrying cloud above. Each fine line that comes into focus near top of the work, before descending in a curve to the right, marks the movement of a single wave towards the coast, towards the camera and the viewer. Somewhat like counting tree rings, by counting the lines that meet the bottom edge of the image one can tell how many waves broke against the cliff during the exposure. From their spacing one can gauge the relative intervals between the waves. Variations in frequency and height are evident in the subtle modulation of the mesh-like surface of the image, which offers a singular notation of the rhythmic soundscape that was so powerfully present while it was being created. Running as though underneath and sometimes through this mesh, the wider, less regular lines curving down from right to left make visible the deeper currents and swells at play in the sea, the surface of the water negotiating both the pull of the atmosphere above and the resistance of the seabed below.

The sheer excess of information in these scans, I hope, throws one back on a particular atmosphere that they evoke—an elusive feeling or presence of a time and place; something both familiar and unfamiliar, enigmatic and meaningful; a photographic record, yet a record of time very much at odds with the conventions of photography. Something that keeps giving.

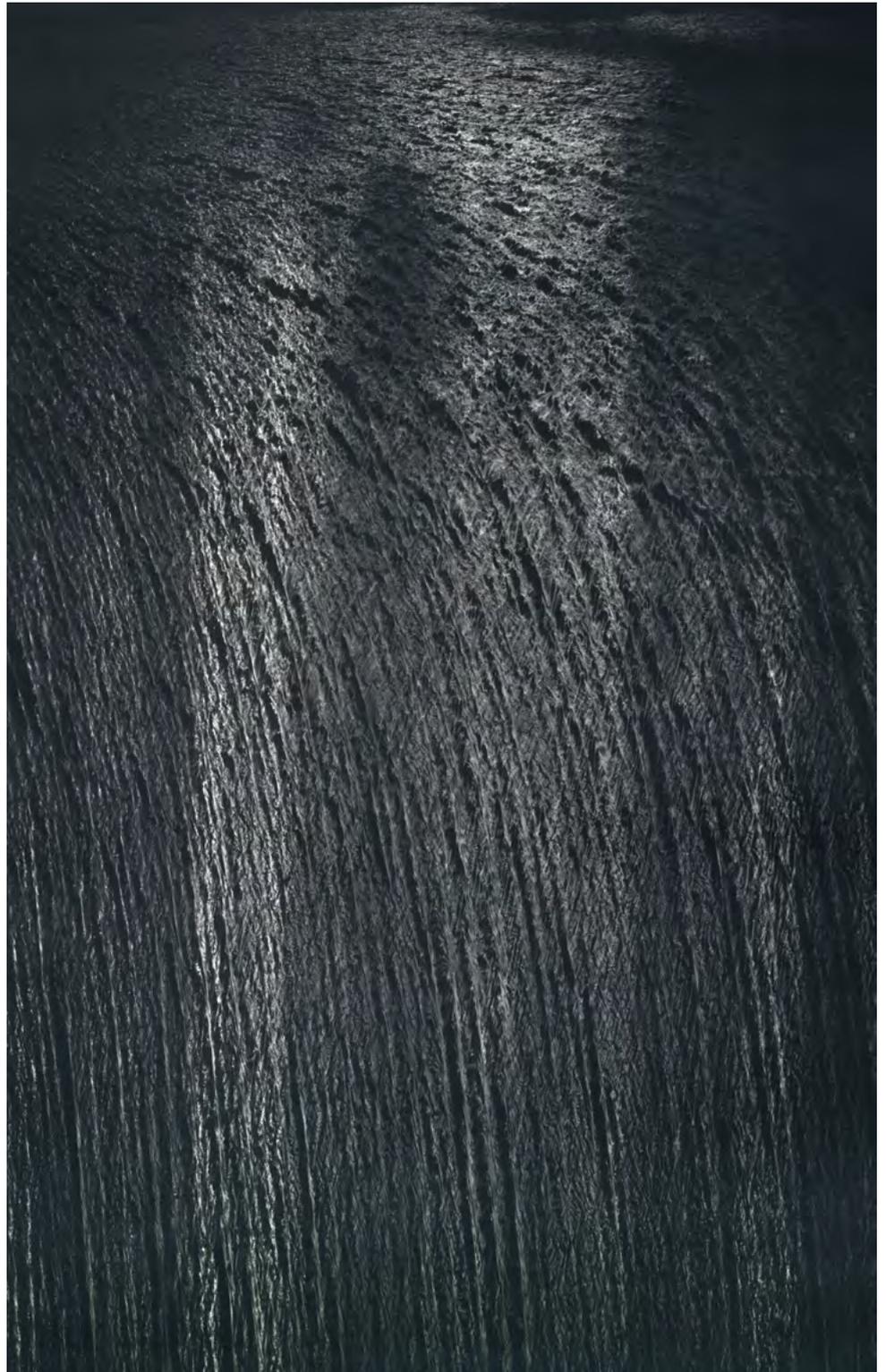




Mutton Cove, Portland 14/09/2021,
17.05–17.15 (2022)



Mutton Cove, Portland 05/10/2021,
17.24-17.27 (2022)



The majority of the images are taken either from the coasts of East Lothian and the Scottish Borders or the Jurassic coastline of southern England. Historically, both areas have played significant roles in how people have thought about the nature of time and how the past has been viewed in the present.

In the late eighteenth century the rock formations of the Scottish coast were pivotal in the development of James Hutton's conceptions of deep time and geological unconformity—the breaks in the geological record that occur at the junction of strata dislocated and distorted over unfathomably long periods. Exposed by the incessant pounding of waves, the beds of fossilised flora and fauna sedimented in England's Jurassic Coast document a climate that evolved from desert to tropical sea to marshland across nearly 200 million years. Fuelled by the groundbreaking discoveries of fossil hunters such as Mary Anning, the buried riches of these cliffs greatly influenced the development of palaeontology in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was also the fossilised forests of the Isle of Portland—traces of old sunlight submerged first under sea and then under rock—that inspired Charles Babbage, while at work on his Calculating Engine, to reflect on how we might turn to trees to rethink the complexities of time.

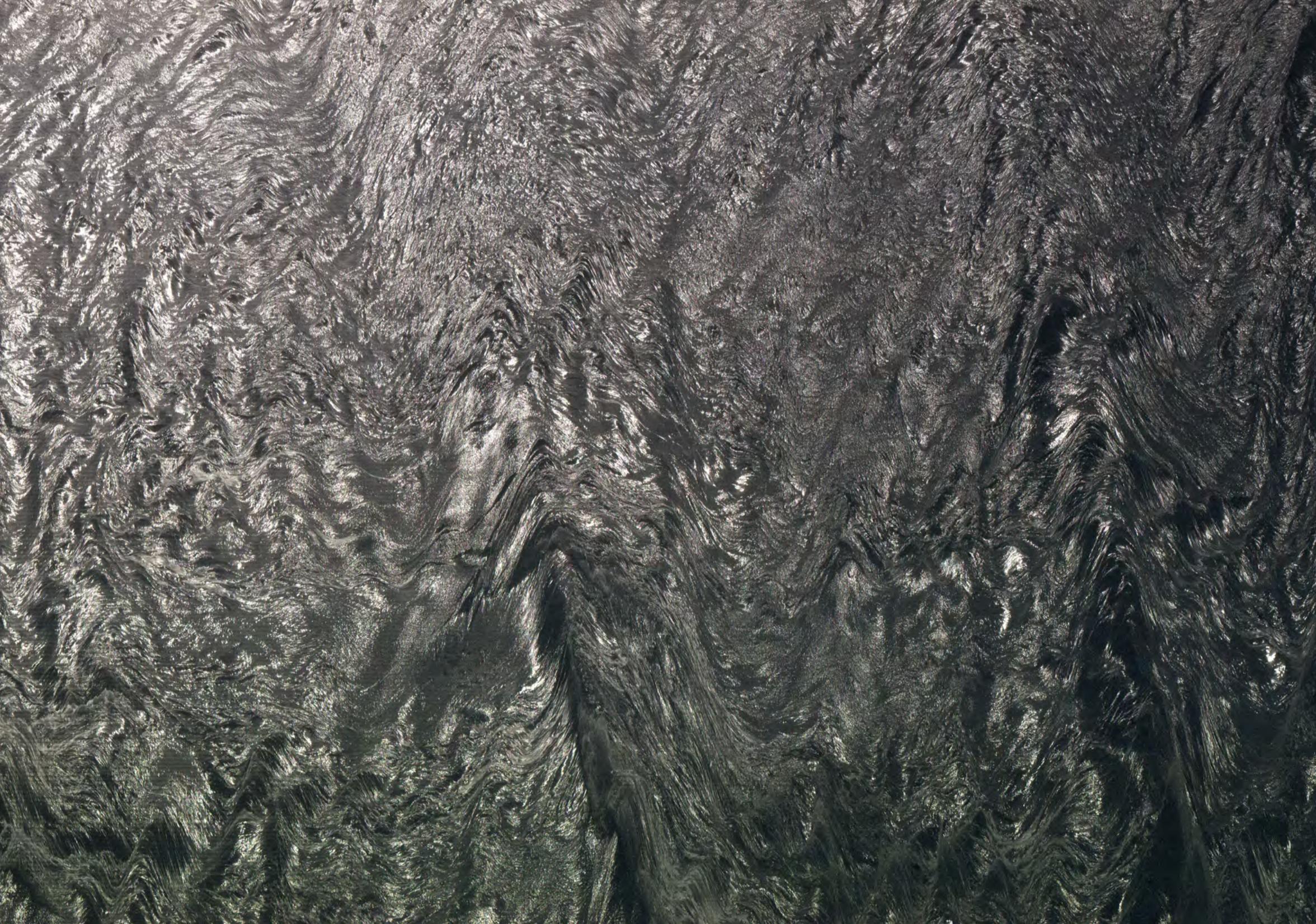
With these histories in mind, one becomes acutely aware that to stand on a clifftop and look down at the transient waters is also to stand on an unfolding record of the past; it is to stand in the present on an ungraspable richness of time.





Dancing Ledge, Dorset 26/08/2020,
09.50–09.52 (2021)



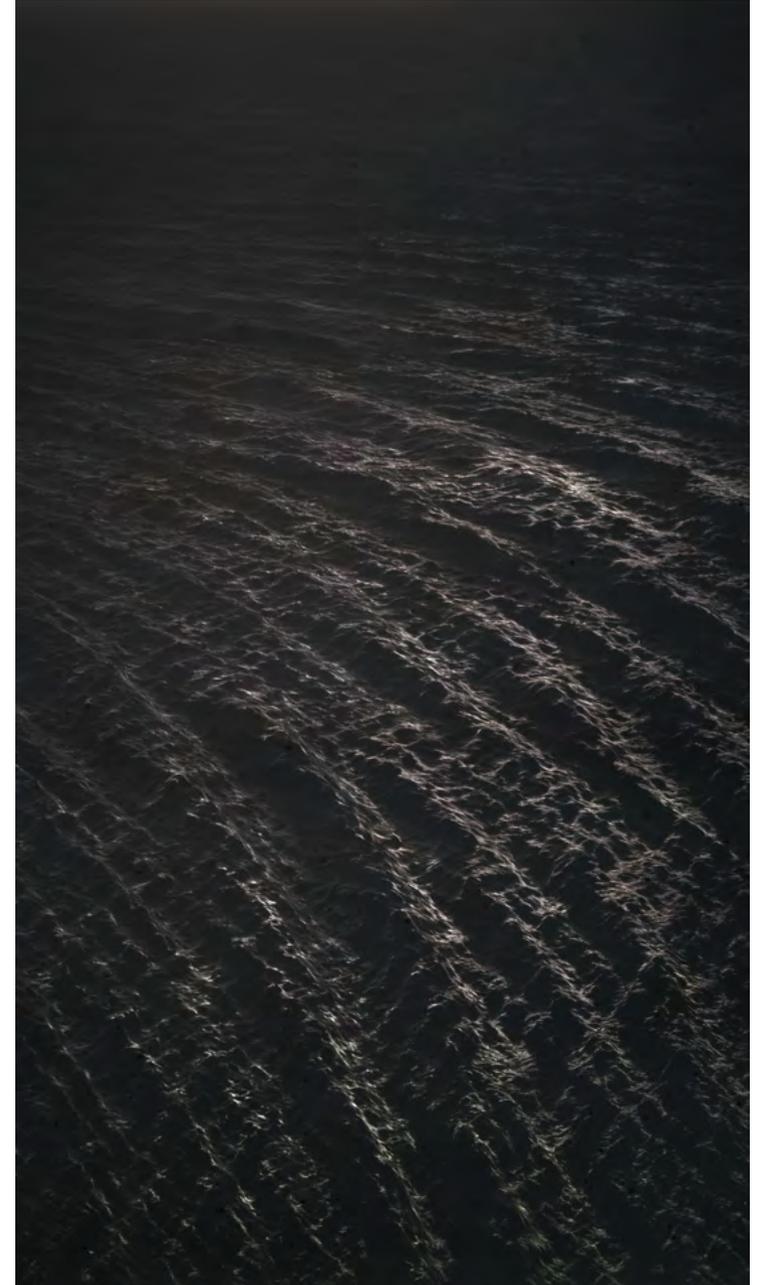


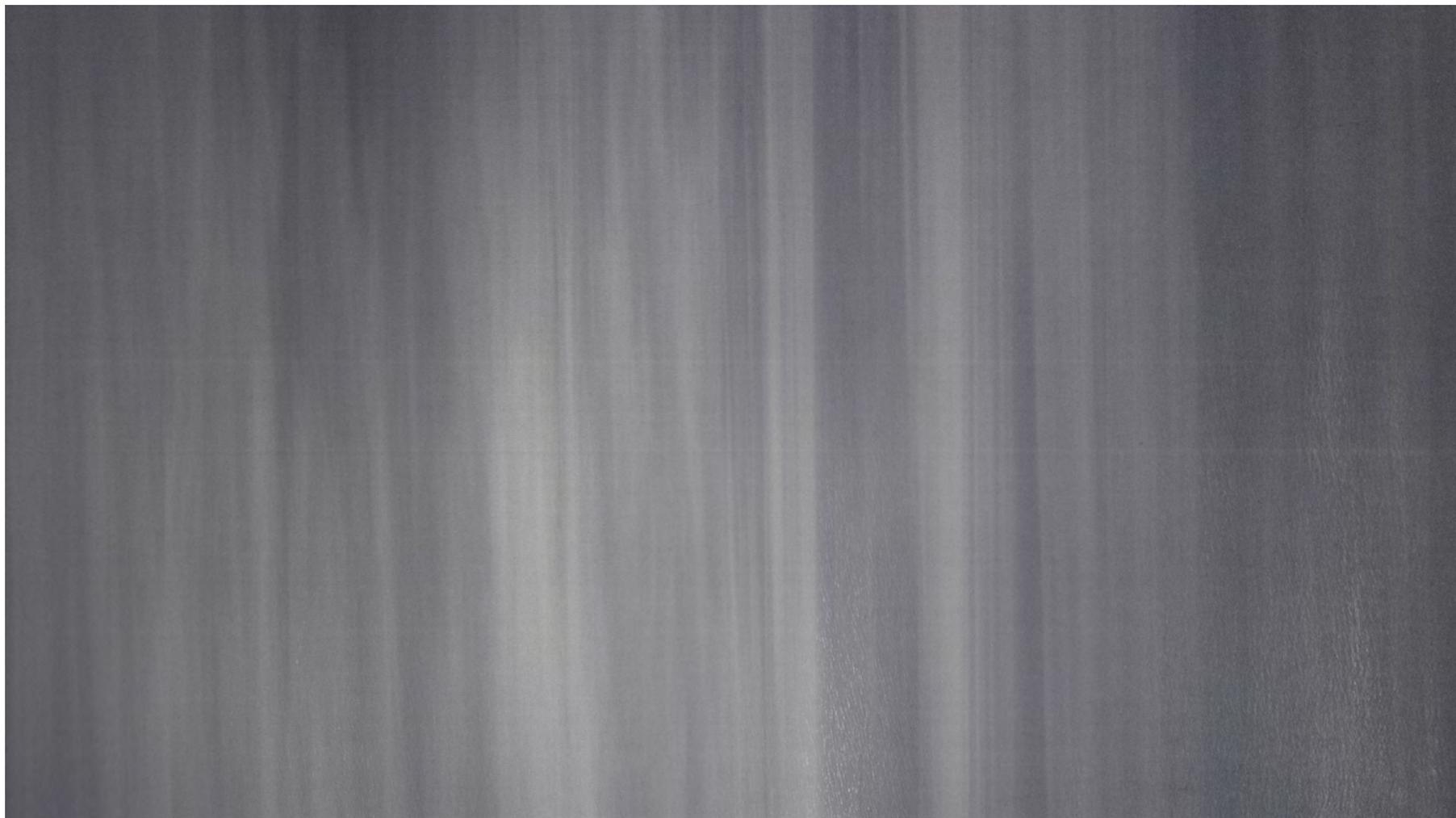




Mutton Cove, Portland
04/10/2021, 18.07 (2022)

Mutton Cove, Portland
14/09/2021, 16.12–16.16 (2022)







The works are produced by printing digital images onto sanded aluminium panels using uv-cured inks. The surfaces are then glazed and varnished, giving a nuanced texture and a sense of depth, the image emerging from the light reflected from the metal beneath. The works become luminous yet visually unstable. They shift as the light changes, coming alive in different ways at different times. They shift also as one moves around them, as the viewer forms a growing impression of the works, repeating something of the scanning process through which the images initially came into being.

Given their unfixed visual qualities, the finished works resist being reduced to standard photographic images. Rather than document them here, the reproductions in this book are printed from the original image files.



