

SCOPIO **NEWSPAPER**

VISUAL SPACES OF CHANGE
FENDAS INTEMPORAIS
by Jiôn Kiim, Artur Leão
#6 May 2021









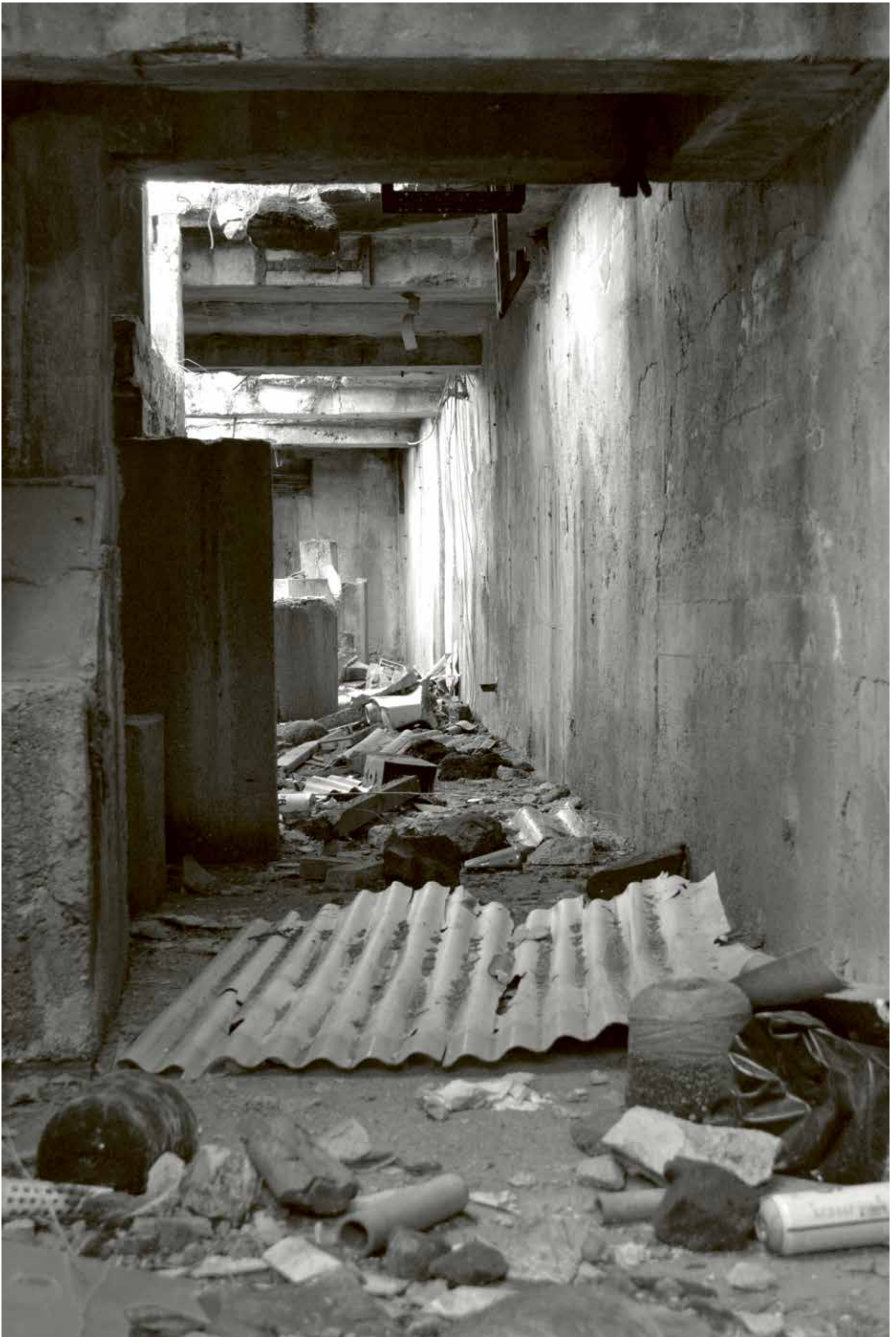




















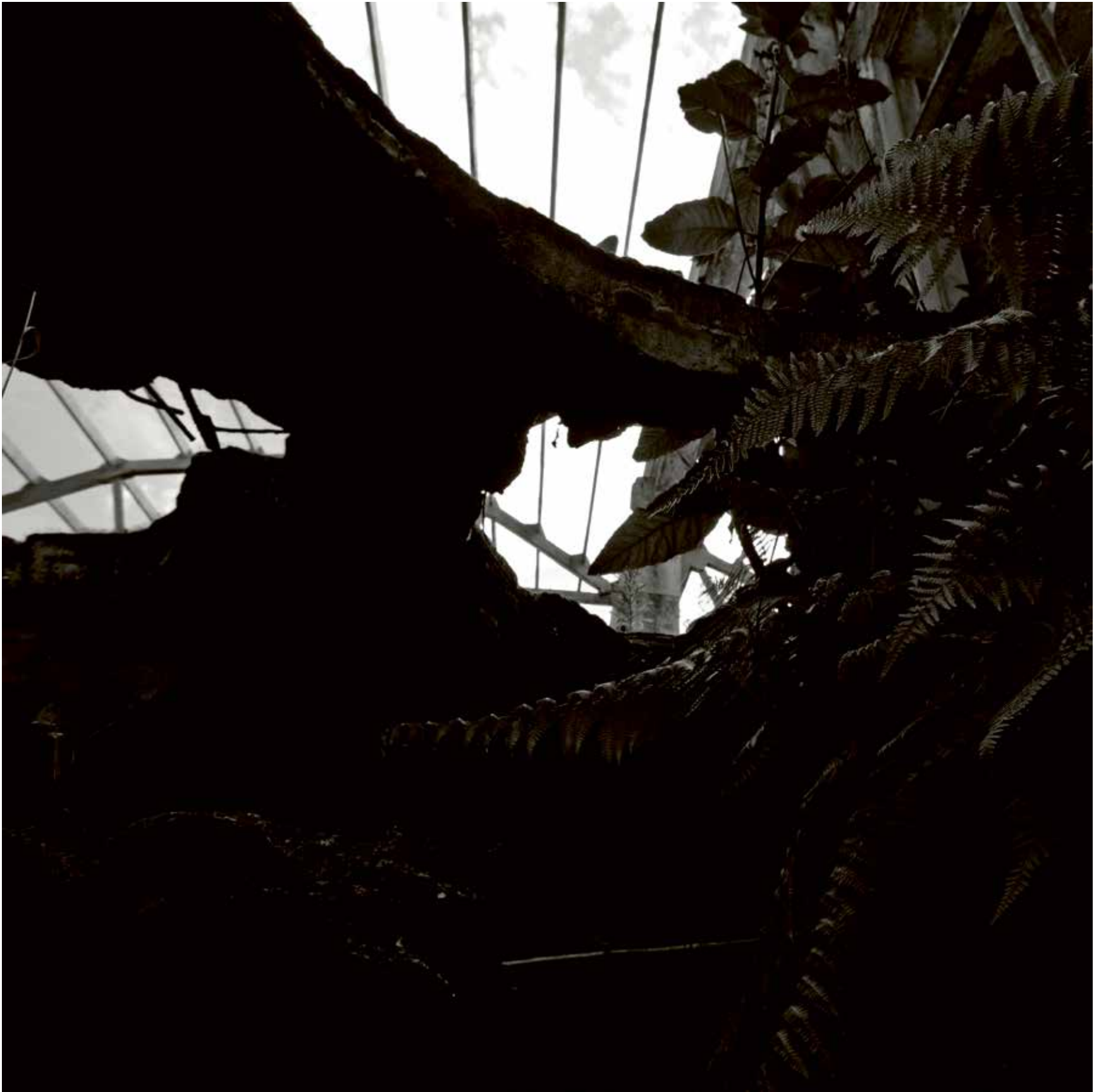












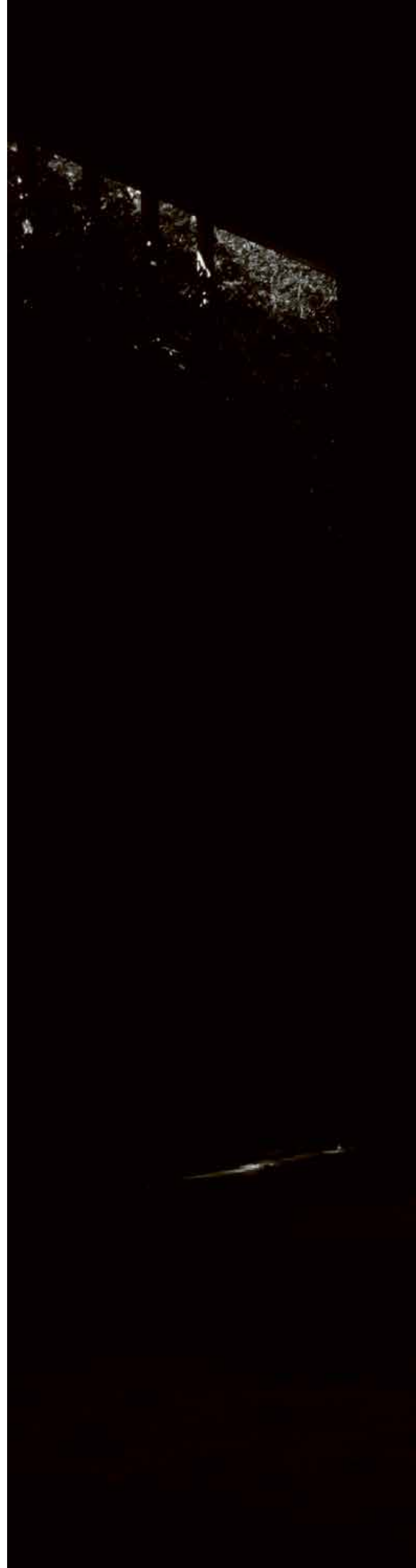






















• BAMS.

FENDAS INTEMPORAIS BY JIÔN KIM AND ARTUR LEÃO

BY PEDRO LEÃO NETO

The realm of the project “Fendas Intemporais (Timeless Crack)” is the territory par excellence of the heterotopias of Foucault and/or the negative spaces of Augé, where the different periods of architectural and urban transformation of the city are present through multiple vestiges and where the places of the rural, suburban and urban are confused, thus demonstrating how the border between these spaces is increasingly tenuous.

In this B&W contemporary photography project of Jiôn Kiim and Artur Leão, which has as artistic object abandoned industrial buildings in the municipality of Matosinhos, located in Greater Porto, we can perceive right at the start their critical and poetical gaze towards these territories. The image of this site in the 2nd spread shows us a theatre of destruction that the city transformation process in itself entails and, in the case of these two young artists, this meant visualising the abstractions of capitalism that transforms the city in a way influenced by artists as William Burroughs or Ed Ruscha and especially Robert Smithson.

In the foreground of the image we see this suburban theatre of war through a mountain made up of a pile of earth, dust and rocks coming from the demolition of those industrial textile buildings, as well as by the immense crater in the middle ground, as if a bomb had been dropped. Then, the multifaceted territory of the background, where disparate caterpillars and the different scales of intervention are seen by the considerable skeletons of the industrial ruins and the trivial residential houses at the other side of the road. All this makes us feel the multiple experiences, diverse languages and architectures that are intersecting in these territories, as well as the several ruins that appear as entropic monuments of contemporary times (Robert Smithson).

Then, both authors evolve in their work focused on exploring the interior spaces of this industrial building offering us a look both critical and fictional about these non-spaces and through their visual narrative make us (re)discover these invisible realities, communicating through the image and in the light of a new poetical perspective, the richness of these abandoned spaces.

Through their series we can also think about the recovery and valorisation of these non-places which, although they may not seem to have a great real value, have an enormous potential for transformation, as Sola Morales explains to us in *Terrain Vague*, because they are spaces that are evocative not only of absence, but also of expectation and promise: spaces of the possible in our contemporary cities. This is what we believe, which is that photography can be a form of art and an autonomous critical territory that makes us think differently about the territory, contributing in this way to understand how cities potentially can be dynamically transformed through subjective personal tactics of appropriation of these lost and neglected urban space because many of these ruins can be the stage for different ways of acting upon the city.

THIS SOLID MASS OF CONCRETE, THIS USELESS OBJECT...*

BY MIGUEL LEAL

In every building, there is the anticipation of the construction's eventual ruin. Inscribed in each project there is also the memory of a future ruin. Our cities – especially the dense and heterogeneous spaces they have become in the last two centuries – have served as laboratories for such an expectation, even more so from the moment in which the idea of architecture was seized by the voraciousness of consumerism and where the lifespan of a building, in purely economic terms, is presently estimated at about 25 years, with this end inaugurating a spiral of demolition-construction in which the cycles come one after the other in a syncopated rhythm. The economic dynamics of cities – or more precisely, the urban conglomerations that we still refer to by that name – is relentless. The life cycles of buildings coincide with the economic cycles that reconfigure the urban space, the industries, and the flow of people and goods. Contemporary ruins are the instant ruins of demolition**, and no longer the slow and idealized ruins of Romanticism, sculpted by time, but rather the lightning-quick ruin of fast-building.

At the same time, there is an aversion to the emptiness in cities and in those gestures which we associate with their construction. On par with other forgotten spaces, ruins, in their obsolescence and lack of usefulness, are the void that a certain idea of a city seeks to combat. Ruins are grey or dark blotches on the city map, zones that the jargon of economics says it wishes to renew, requalify and bring back into the market. Ideally, following the logic of the “instant ruins” made by demolition, such ruins would not be much more than a brief transit point between “the before” and “the after”.

But even so, and for a variety of reasons, there are always ways to escape from the whirlpool of fast-building, at times via the radical form in which it is not simply a building that is being abandoned but instead an entire neighbourhood or even an entire city. Without any new economic cycles on the horizon, or given how it is easier and cheaper to occupy new territories, ruins may come to represent, paradoxically speaking, a form of resistance to the capitalist logic of mercantilism, thus functioning as places that are out of place, useless spaces of resistance, and ones cast adrift.

Thus it is that these ruins, shortly after they have departed the world of the living – and enough time for them to become a forgotten asset, a ghostly space – take on a new dimension and are often occupied and re-appropriated as the territories of others in the mainstream, becoming transfigured themselves at the hands of whoever inhabits along the fringes. In their obsolescence, the ruins reveal themselves as a type of silent memory, one from a more or less recent past, mausoleums that are vacant, of no good use, or transformed into a “no man's land”, spaces whose time, for now, has expired, and with it, laws and place.

In the case of the photographs of Jiôn Kiim and Artur Leão, we speak of heavy ruins made of cement and iron, memories of a modern architecture that was aspiring to a certain functionality and efficacy of construction which has now been transformed into silent monuments, into solid masses of concrete, into useless objects. Pillaged, disembowelled and cleaned out of anything that might have immediate economic value, traversed by sections and tunnels that lead us to secret places, overrun by vegetation that has claimed a place for itself, modelled by the light which stubbornly pierces through the gaps – these are ruins that have put up resistance to the tempests of economic cycles, and at the same time, are testaments of them. Aided by the crisis afflicting an entire region, they defy the notion of having fallen suddenly into ruin and withstand utilitarianism's horror of the emptiness to which all buildings are condemned. These ruins are an oasis of freedom in the midst of the regulation of spaces and property. They are territories that, for the moment, have neither owner nor function, as they wait to be re-appropriated. They offer a glimpse of a time gone by, of another place, like those paths that take a bit of effort to climb, those without any specific destination or goal, along the fringes that the city offers within its very heart.

* Cf. Paul Virilio, em *Bunker archeology* (Paris, Galilée, 2008, p. 15): “[...] ce massif de béton incliné, cette chose sans valeur qui n'avait su m'intéresser jusqu'alors autrement que comme un vestige de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, autrement que comme l'illustration d'une histoire, celle de la guerre totale.” De facto há nesta história das ruínas uma marca indelével da guerra, de uma guerra que se faz por muitos meios.

** Cf. Dan Graham, “Gordon Matta Clark”, in, *Gordon Matta Clark*, Valencia, IVAM, 1993, pp. 211-215.

COLOPHON

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Miguel Leal
Born in Porto, in 1967, where he lives and works. Visual artist and Professor at the School of Fine Arts, University of Porto (FBAUP). A few recent exhibitions: Playground, Playlist#23, Café Candelabro, Porto (2018), Duplo Negativo/ Double Negative, CIAJG – Centro Internacional de Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães (2018), Duplo Forró, Residência Mezzanine, Café Ceuta, Porto (2016), Manual de sobrevivência (Figuras), Espaço Mira, Campanhã, Porto (2014), Cripta, Laboratório das Artes, Guimarães (2011), Aqui Fora, Uma Certa Falta de Coerência/A Certain Lack of Coherence, Porto (2010), Keats, Keaton & Jürgenson, In.Transit, Porto (2009), SATURNO, Galeria Fernando Santos , Porto (2007).

EDITORIAL

BY MARIA NETO & PEDRO LEÃO NETO

In this number of scopionewspaper # 6 May 2021, we present the photography project “Fendas Intemporais” of Jiôn Kiim and Artur Leão. This photography project integrates the set of case studies coming from Contemporary Documentary Photography on Portuguese Architecture in Visual Spaces of Change, which is the present major theme of this Public Funded research (FCT) coordinated in FAUP by AAI group of R&D Centre CEAU.

The Contemporary Photography Projects (CPP) that integrate the Galley Ruins and Abandoned Spaces in Visual Spaces of Change are concerned with visually narrating landscapes of absence and oblivion since these ruins are in a way an absence of meaning or use and “islands” in the city. They tell us a parallel story, a different space and world in relation to the productive city of everyday life. Many of these structures, now abandoned to their own materiality, are no longer occupied, unless by scarce waste and the stubborn vegetation that tries to regain its place. This flora now occupies some of the spaces and decorates the landscape, dramatizing the scene of ruin. In these spaces, where the memory of the past predominates over the present, the urban citizen often explores the strangeness of those places, taking advantage of their inoccupation and the sense of freedom that the abandonment allows.

These empty spaces occupy significant places in the city, prompting a reflection on their role and potential futures. If the economical, political and architectural interventions have, on other abandoned constructions, colonized such spaces, making them productive and giving them an identity, there is also place for preserving such places as alternative spaces in the city, areas that have a memory of the past but simultaneously empty of an imposing identity, spaces of freedom. What future and what role may these places have in the city, as really unique areas?

As Ignasi de Solà-Morales defended in *Terrain Vague* (1995), photographers show a special sensitivity to make us understand what in the territories presents as “imperceptible” or “invisible” when looking at Everyday life. In fact, contemporary photography is one of the arts that better succeeds in communicating a unique analytical vision able to simultaneously understand the reality and interpret it, images capable of questioning the territory, showing the ways it is transformed and lived, its conflicts and heterogeneous materials and architectures, thus being used as significant means of communication and research. The concept of “narrative” here becomes extremely important in influencing the way people understand and perceive the territory and how it is being lived and transformed.

BIOS

Artur Leão
Finished his degree in Visual Arts and Photography from the Escola Superior Artística do Porto (ESAP). He integrated the exhibitions “Do Not Touch Fresh Paint!” (2018) at Espaço MIRA; and “Playlist #25” (2018), a curatorial project by Nuno Ramalho at Café Candelabro. The project “Fendas Intemporais” was selected to be exhibited at the Metro Station of Aliados in the context of the “Porto Photography Biennale, 2019” and integrated with the research project “Visual Spaces of Change”. He is co-founder of the musical project Benthik Zone and follows an artistic strategy that implies travelling through fictional territories of a distant future and, at other times, through instances and moments of the past exploring several materials and mediums. Nowadays using photography, drawing and poetry as his privileged means of expression to document and rediscover the world, he is focusing more on themes such as metamorphosis inside the universe of classic mythology.

Jiôn Kiim
(b. Busan, Korea) lives and works in Porto. She holds a Diploma in Fine Art from HfBK Dresden and a BFA in Industrial Design from Hongik Univ. in Seoul, and she has studied in ABK Stuttgart and FBAUP Porto. Her work arises from the junction of contemporary life experiences with sociopolitical phenomena. She creates ineffable and ambiguous surfaces that visually embody her non-dichotomous rationality. Her practice is trans-disciplinary and encompasses various media, with drawing at its core, including photography, installation, video and performance. In 2017-2018, she collaborated with the photography publisher, scopio Editions and developed photographic research in her project “Terrain Vague; post-Fordist society” and in “Fendas Intemporais” with Artur Leão. Recently, her work has been published in Dose magazine #6 and selected to the exhibition Anuário ’20, programmed by Galeria Municipal do Porto.

ABOUT

scopionewspaper is an Architecture, Art & Image Research publication with a special interest in Photography as an instrument of inquiry and expression. This publication is structured around major themes as other publications of scopio Editions and these can integrate diverse related projects.

We are mostly interested in publishing work that explores the grammar and syntax of photography to build exploratory and critical visual constructs about architecture that stand by themselves. Thus the written text in the publication complements the visual essays and they both create synergies securing that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

scopionewspaper wants to disseminate several works and authors who use photography as an instrument to communicate in a critical, exploratory and innovative way diverse themes and who have a comprehensive understanding of architecture as a practice and discipline able to integrate the dimensions of art, sociology, history, politics, construction and the like. We are also interested in photographers and researchers whose work explores the material processes of creating, managing and interpreting sets of documents. This means we are interested in material processes where photography is explored as a significant research tool for critical and innovative views on architecture and urban transformation in their expanded fields.

scopionewspaper has as technological support for its dissemination and communication the scopio News Editorial area at scopio network platform. We want to achieve greater democratisation and diffusion of the AAI universes by making these themes close to a wider audience, while ensuring the integrity and quality of information, analysis and criticism that characterise the scopio editorial group. scopio news is one of several scopio initiatives with the aim to open the university to civil society, integrating and involving the community in the various practices and events linked to the AAI.

