

MILJA LAURILA

Persons
Projects

Feminism and memory are central themes in Milja Laurila's work, which delves into the intricate relationship between knowledge and the subconscious. In her artistic practice, she questions a photograph's ability to forget what it once was proof of—does an image that is detached from its context still remain related to the original semantic field, or does it transform into something new? By using borrowed images—particularly photographs from old medical books—as the foundation of her work, she frees them from their original context, allowing them to take on new meanings and speak on their own. Her alterations subvert and disrupt the sociopolitical structures underlying the original photographs.

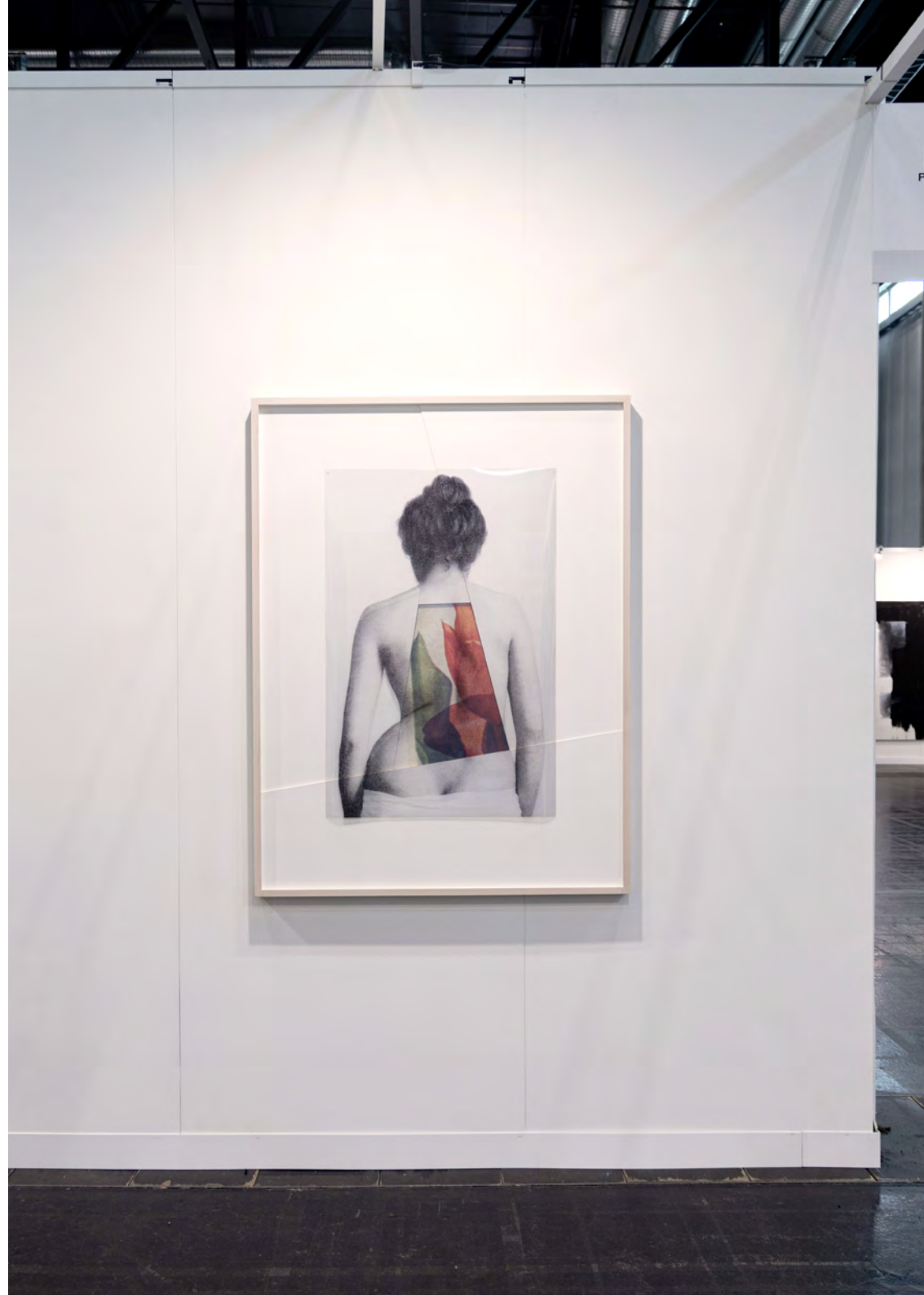
Milja Laurila (*1982 in Helsinki, Finland) studied for a year at Musashino Art University, Tokyo in 2008, before graduating

from the Aalto University School of Arts, Design, and Architecture in 2010. Her works have been exhibited internationally at various solo and group exhibitions, including shows at Brooklyn Museum (New York), LACMA (Los Angeles), National Gallery in Sopot (Poland), Kunsthalle Helsinki, Fondation Hippocrène (Paris), MOCAM (Krakow), École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts (Paris), and Borås Artmuseum (Sweden). Her works are also included in the collections of important American and Finnish institutions, such as Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Helsinki Art Museum, Finnish Museum of Photography, Saastamoinen Foundation Art Collection (Finland), and State Art Collection (Finland), in addition to private collections in Australia, Belgium, Finland, Germany, and Norway.

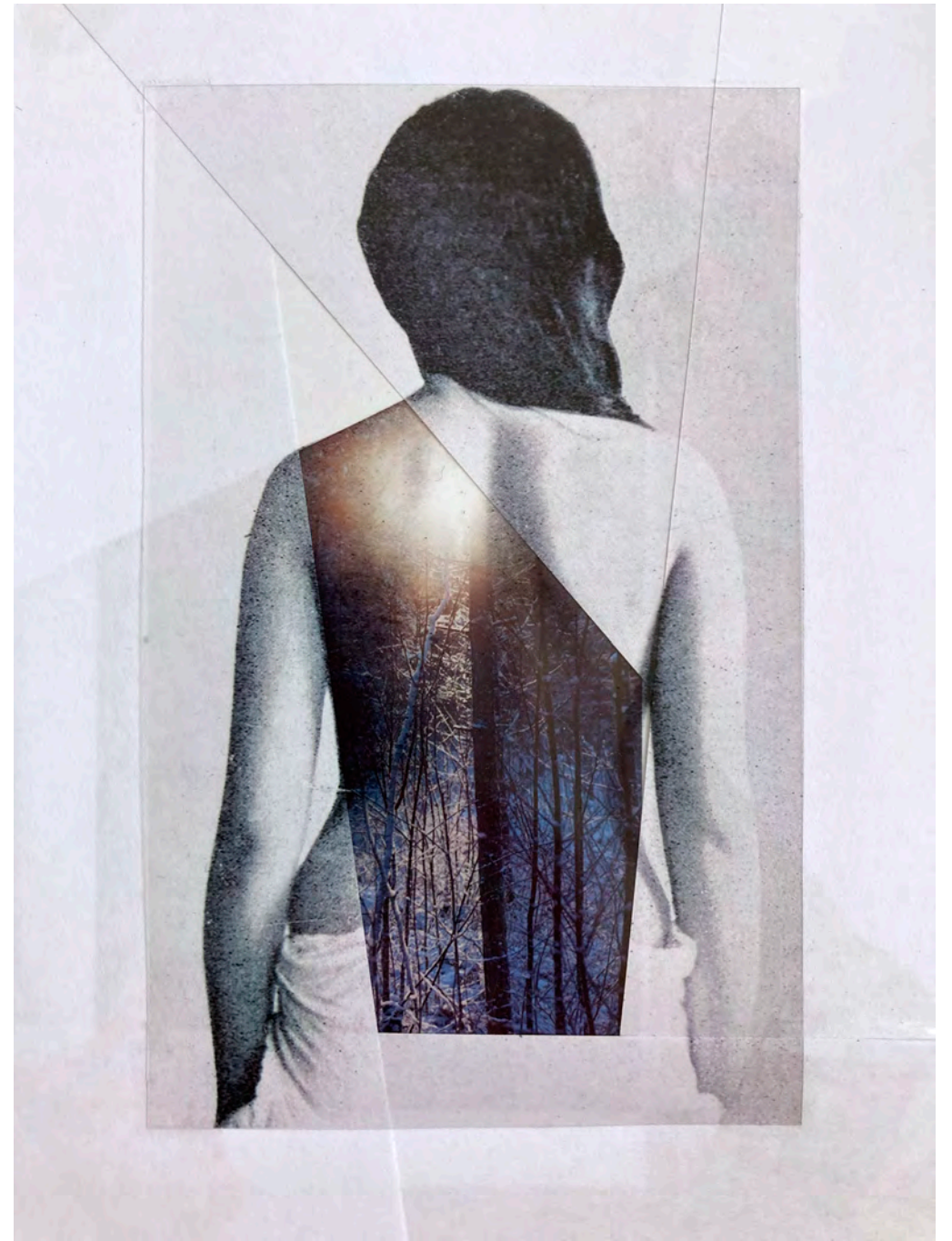


INTERIORS, 2024

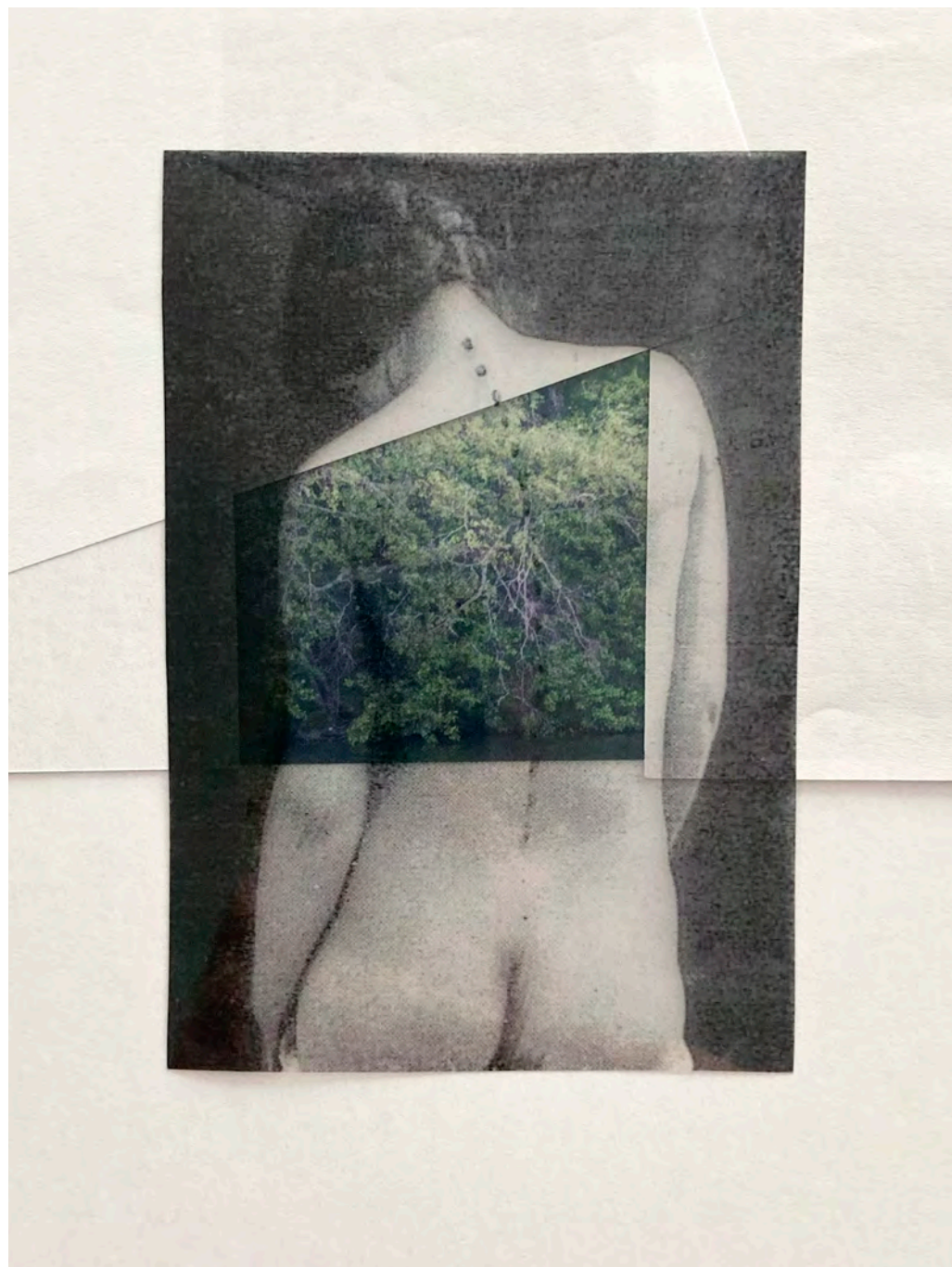
Laurila's latest series, *Interiors*, utilizes images of early 20th-century female patients, carefully chosen from an archive she has compiled throughout her artistic career. Over the years, these women have become intimately familiar to the artist, becoming uncannily intertwined with her sense of self and stirring emotions within her own body. By weaving her personal emotional experiences into these images, she constructs a multilayered narrative where past and present converge. These unique photographic collages offer a reflection on the role of women in society, shifting from a clinical, detached gaze to a more empathetic, human perspective. The fractured layers and cuts in her work invite contemplation of the unseen, hidden aspects of human experience, questioning what lies beneath the surface.



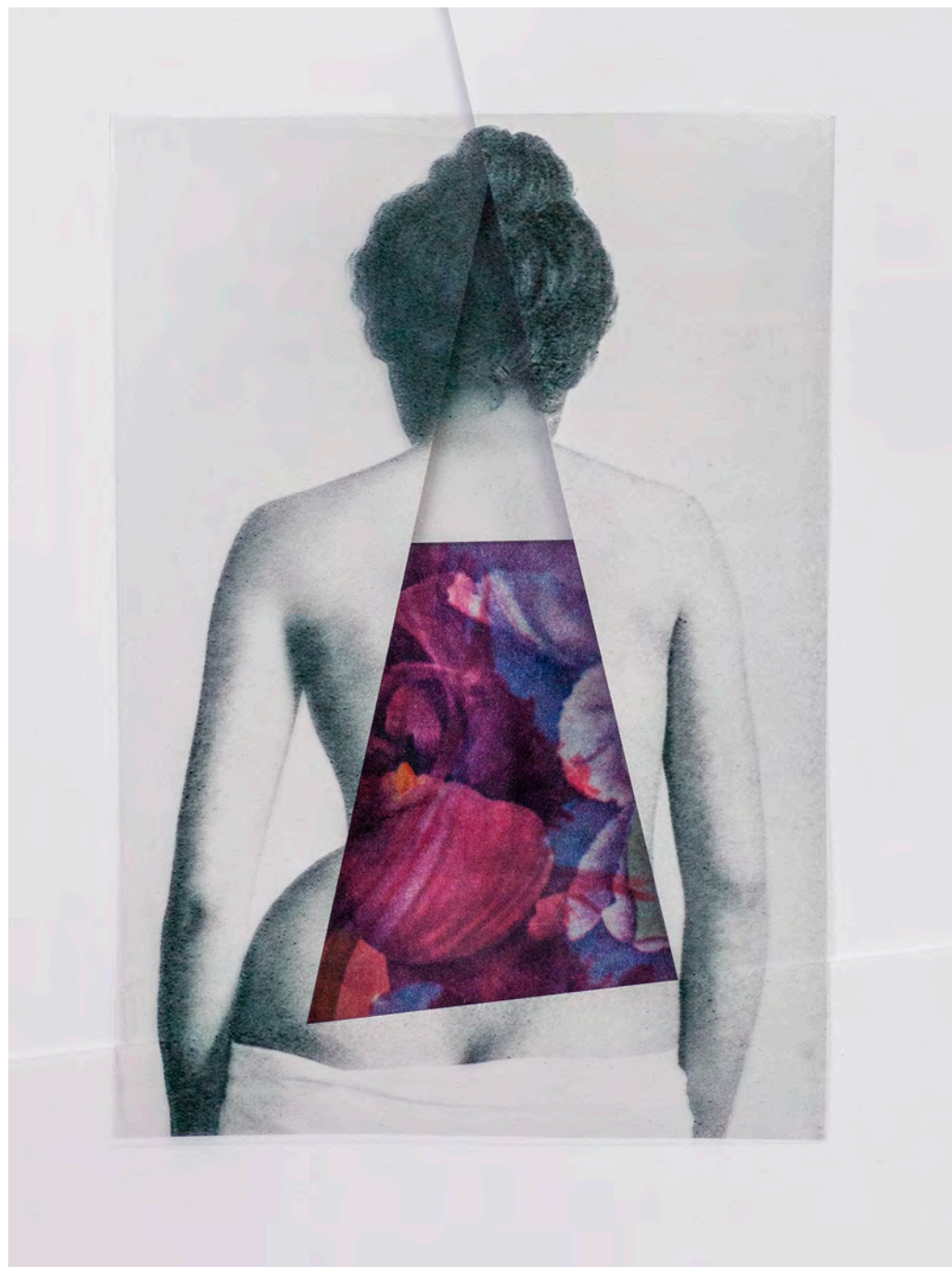
Interiors, 2024, exhibition view, viennacontemporary with Persons Projects



Interiors (Winter), 2024, Pigment print, paper, polyester film, 129 x 94,5 cm



Interiors (Island), 2024, Pigment print, paper, polyester film, 129 x 102,5 cm



Interiors (Purple), 2024, Pigment print, paper, polyester film, 129 x 102,5 cm

Interiors, 2024, exhibition view, ParisPhoto2024 with Persons Projects





Interiors (Stars), 2024, Pigment print, paper, polyester film, 140 x 107 cm



Interiors (Moon), 2024, Pigment print, paper, polyester film, 140 x 107 cm



Interiors (Berlin), 2024, Pigment print, paper, polyester film, 140 x 107 cm



UNTITLED WOMEN, 2022

Laurila's series, *Untitled Women* (2021-22), comes from her discovery of a 1930s book titled "Woman. An Historical Gynæcological and Anthropological Compendium." The book, originally published in Germany in 1885, was one of the most influential texts in the field of sexual science at the time. The book describes the female physiology from an anthropological viewpoint. It is illustrated with hundreds of photographs of naked women and children from all over the world, primarily colonized countries. The bodies are stripped from their personality, presented as exotic specimens, and referred to as mere objects. In her work, Laurila is looking to change the purpose of the original photographs and to present the women from a different perspective. By using translucent paper to hide the original scientific photograph, except for the women's eyes, she

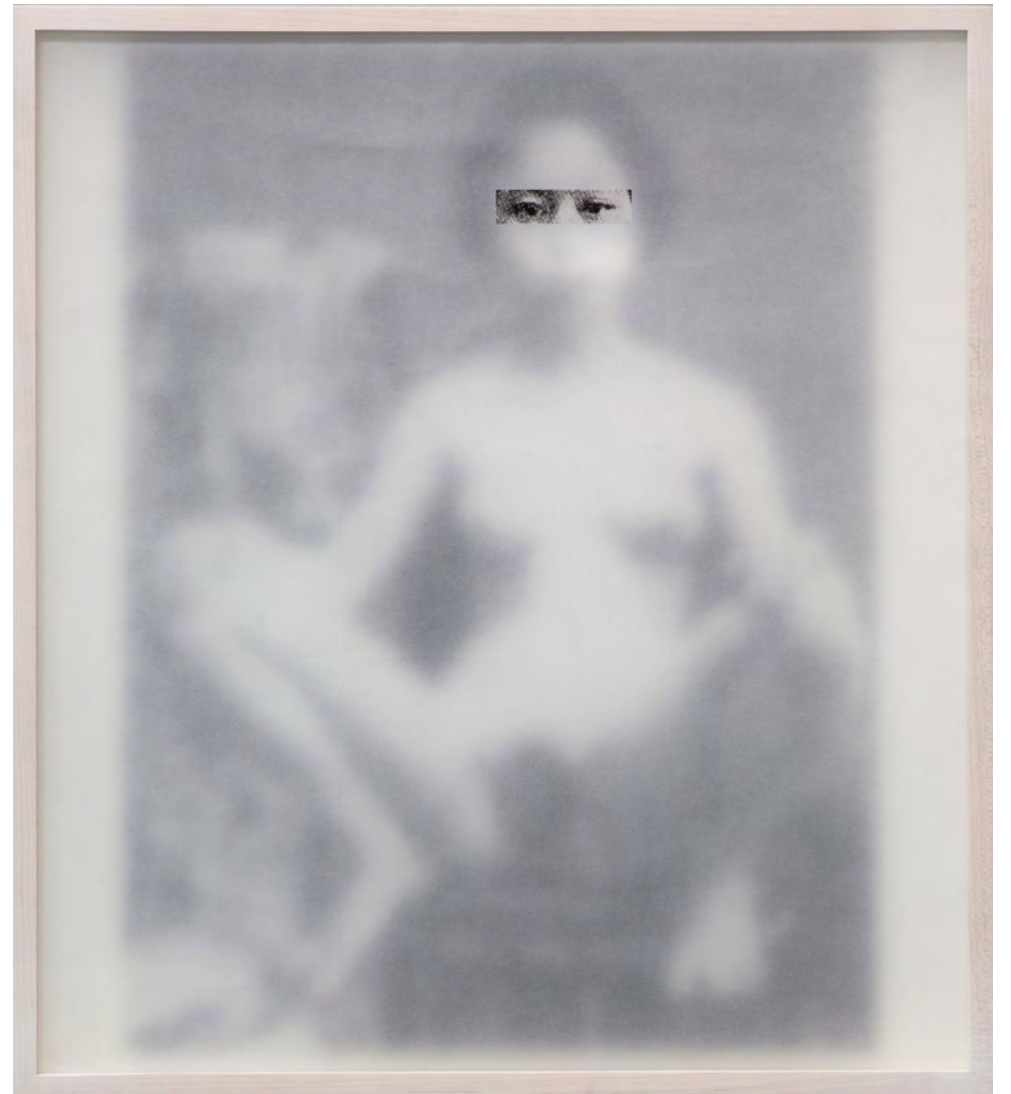
is shifting the focus from the detailed assessment of the female body parts to the eyes and the power of their gaze. "Now it is them who are looking at you. How does it feel to be looked at?"



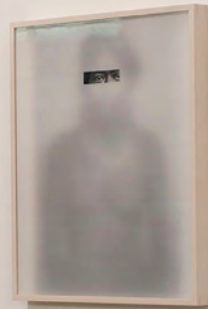
Untitled Women, 2022, Persons Projects, Berlin

Untitled Woman II, 2021, archival pigment print mounted on aluminum, cut paper, 86,5 x 62 cm

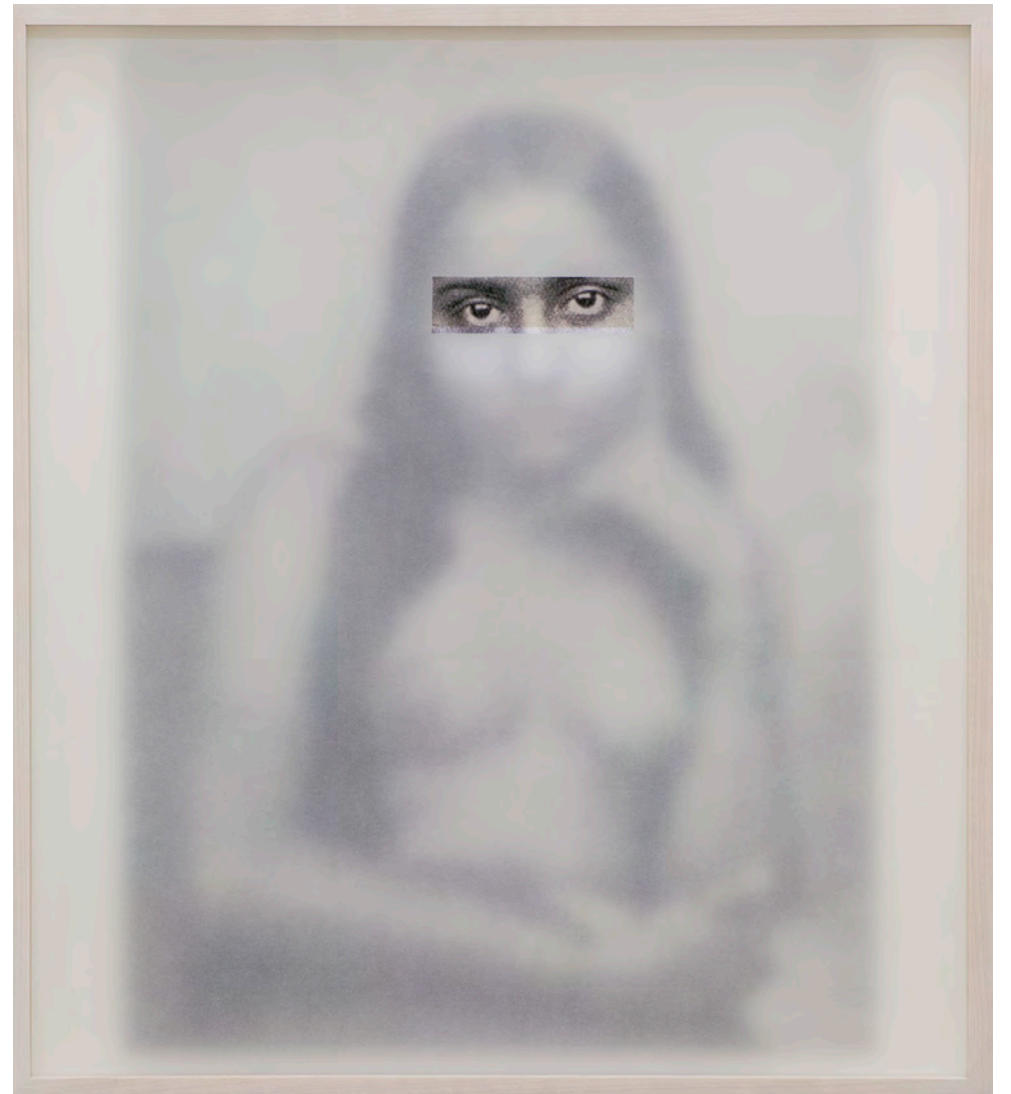




Untitled Woman IV, 2021, archival pigment print mounted on aluminum, cut paper, 64,5 x 58 cm



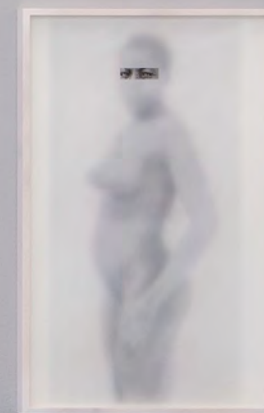
Untitled Women, 2025, HALLEN 06, with Persons Projects, Berlin



Untitled Woman IX, 2022, archival pigment print mounted on aluminum, cut paper, 68,5 x 61,5 cm



Untitled Woman V, 2021, archival pigment print mounted on aluminum, cut paper, 87 x 54 cm

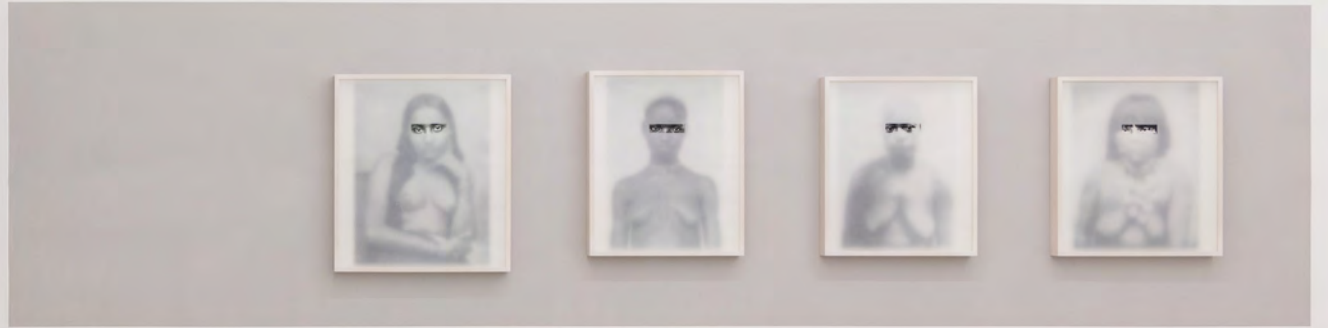




Untitled Woman X, 2022, archival pigment print mounted on aluminum, cut paper, 62 x 53 cm



Untitled Woman XIII, 2022, archival pigment print mounted on aluminum, cut paper, 78,6 x 63 cm



Untitled Women, 2022, Persons Projects, Berlin

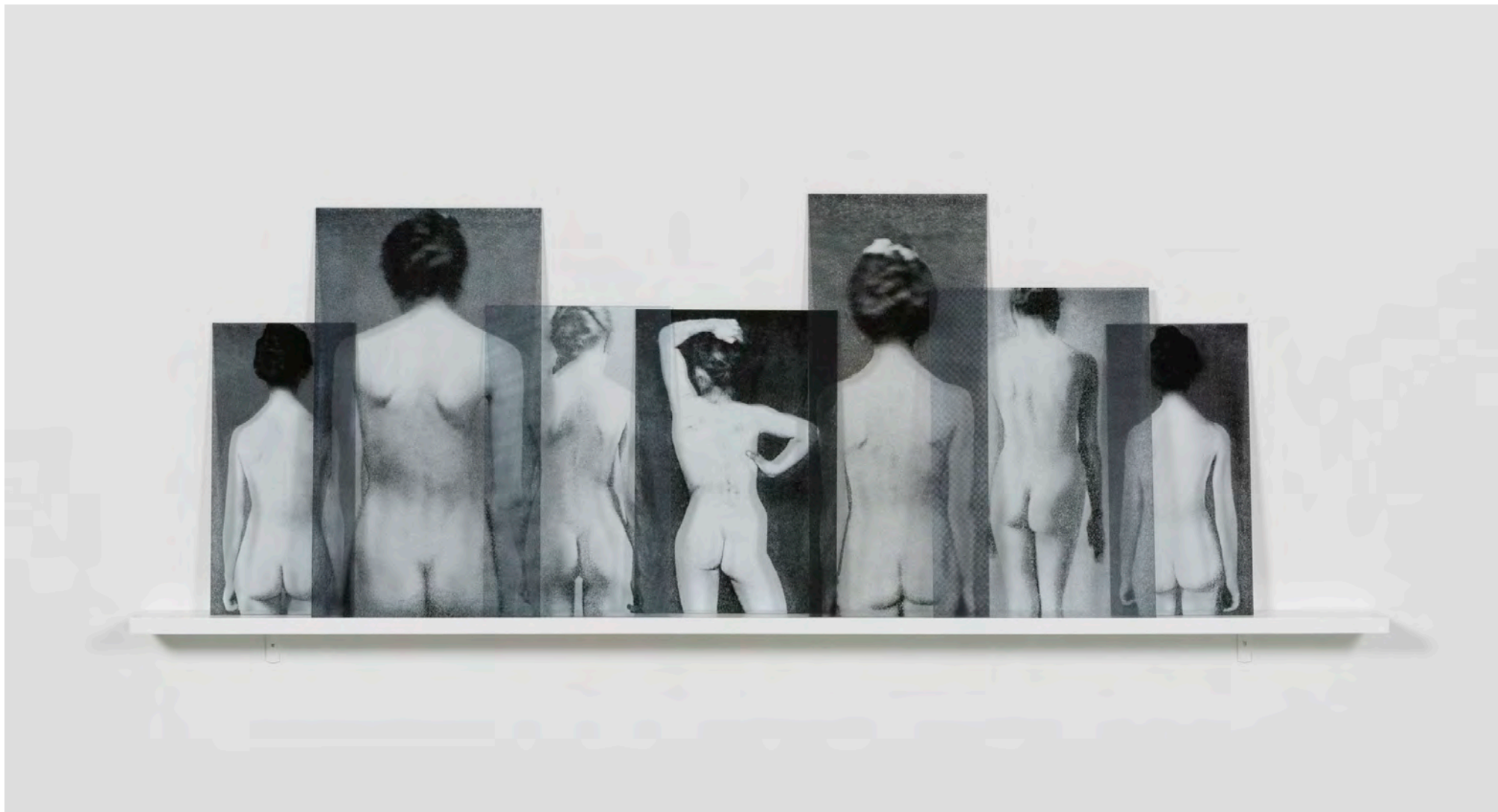
IN THEIR OWN VOICE, 2016

In her series *In Their Own Voice* (2016), Laurila uses archival photos from old medical books, removing the captions in an attempt to give the patients a chance to speak for themselves. Her interest in pictures of patients stems from a personal experience, where she was observed through the eyes of science. She reflects: “As I was standing naked in front of a doctor and her camera, I felt myself disappearing—I was mere flesh and blood, not an individual with thoughts and feelings. Even though the doctor was photographing my body meticulously, it felt as if she was looking right through me—as if I wasn’t there.” The images in this series are printed on transparent acrylic glass, which makes the portrayed figures translucent, almost weightless. The vitreous prints, which can be associated with the glass plates used in photography, work as a meta-

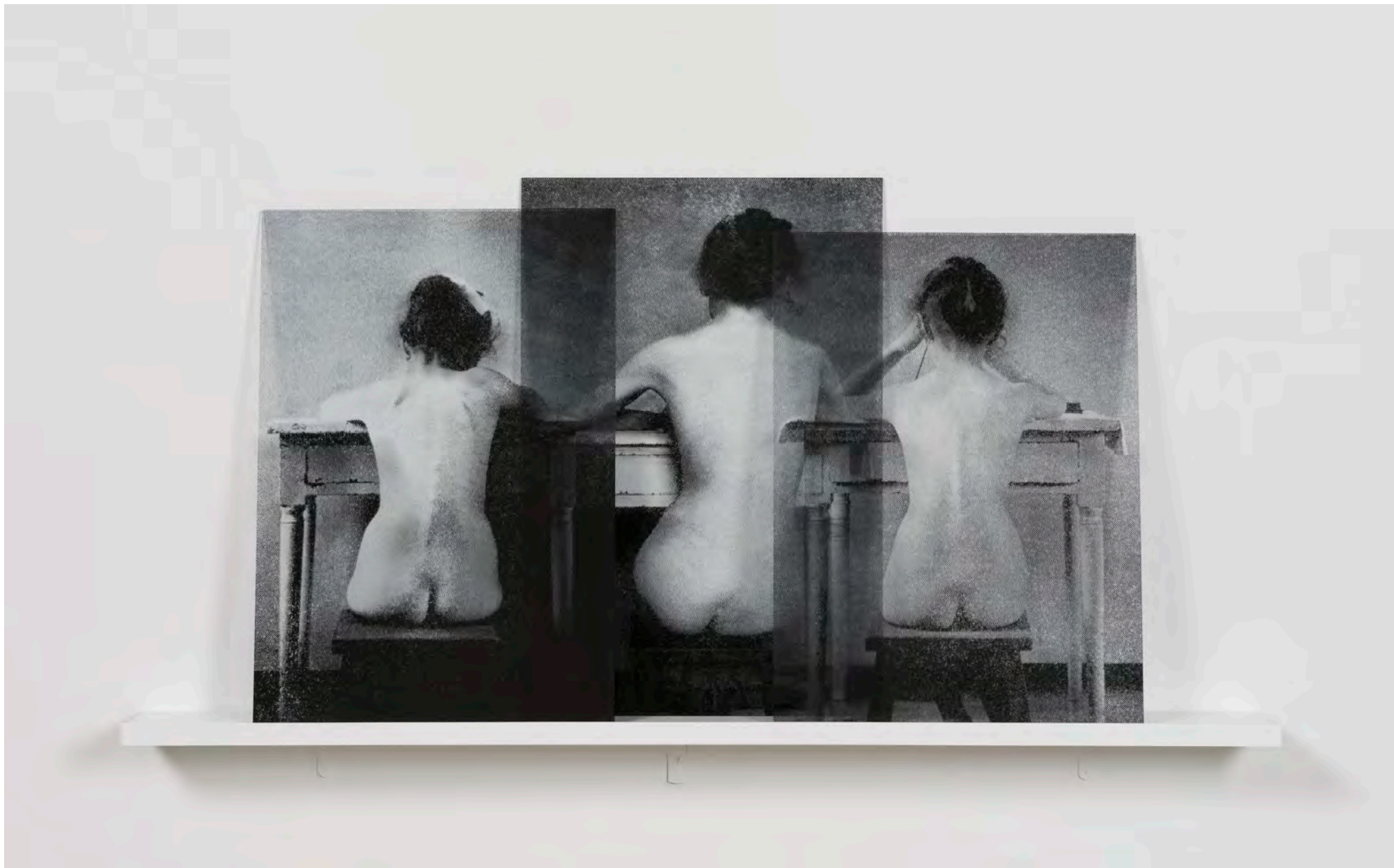
phor for the fragility of the portrayed subjects. Placed on wooden shelves facing the wall, the transparent material enables the figures to be formed through chiaroscuro as three-dimensional reflections on the walls. These soft shadows are bound to the movement of the viewer. In some of the works, the glass plates are placed on a pedestal or on the floor, facing each other. When the viewer walks around these sculptural pieces, the image changes constantly depending on the viewpoint of the observer. “With the help of archival imagery, this series continues my research into the perception of femininity.”



In Their Own Voice, 2016, Gallery Talk Persons (now Persons Projects)



Sisters, 2016, 7 UV-prints on acrylic glass, 68 x 200 x 12 cm



In Their Own Voice, 2016, UV-prints on acrylic glass, 61 x 130 x 12 cm



The Three Graces, 2016, UV-prints on acrylic glass, 74 x 78 x 12 cm



In Their Own Voice, 2016, Gallery Taik Persons (now Persons Projects)



Echo, 2016, UV-prints on 15mm acrylic glass, 136 x 98.5 x 98.5 cm

Book (Woman), 2016, UV-prints on acrylic glass, 32 x 21,6 x 25 cm





Art in Medicine, 2016, MOCAK, Krakow



ATLAS UND GRUNDRISS DER PSYCHIATRIE, 2013

“They say that I am insane, but I am merely contemplating”, wrote Amanda, a patient at a mental hospital in Finland, in her diary in the late 19th century. Amanda, a vagrant and a sexually active young woman, was diagnosed with “menstrual insanity”, and was taken to Seili Island, a former leper hospital that was transformed into an institute for the mentally ill. Like most of the patients– or inmates – at Seili, Amanda spent the rest of her life there. The series *Atlas und Grundriss der Psychiatrie* (2013) is inspired by a German psychiatric book from the year 1902. The book not only describes different types of mental diseases, but also attempts to visually demonstrate them in the form of photographic images of patients. However, the symptoms, diagnostics, and treatment of mental illnesses reflect the views of their time. What is regarded

as “normal” or stated as a scientific fact changes during the course of time: at the turn of the century, the hereditary of mental illness as well as degeneration was a topical issue. It was believed that mental illness manifested itself as physical signs, meaning that it could be seen. Common practice was to describe the appearance of the patients meticulously. What could be a better way to do this than photography, which had lent itself to the use of science ever since its invention? The photograph was taken as evidence, as proof. A photograph of a mental patient showed you what a mental patient looked like.

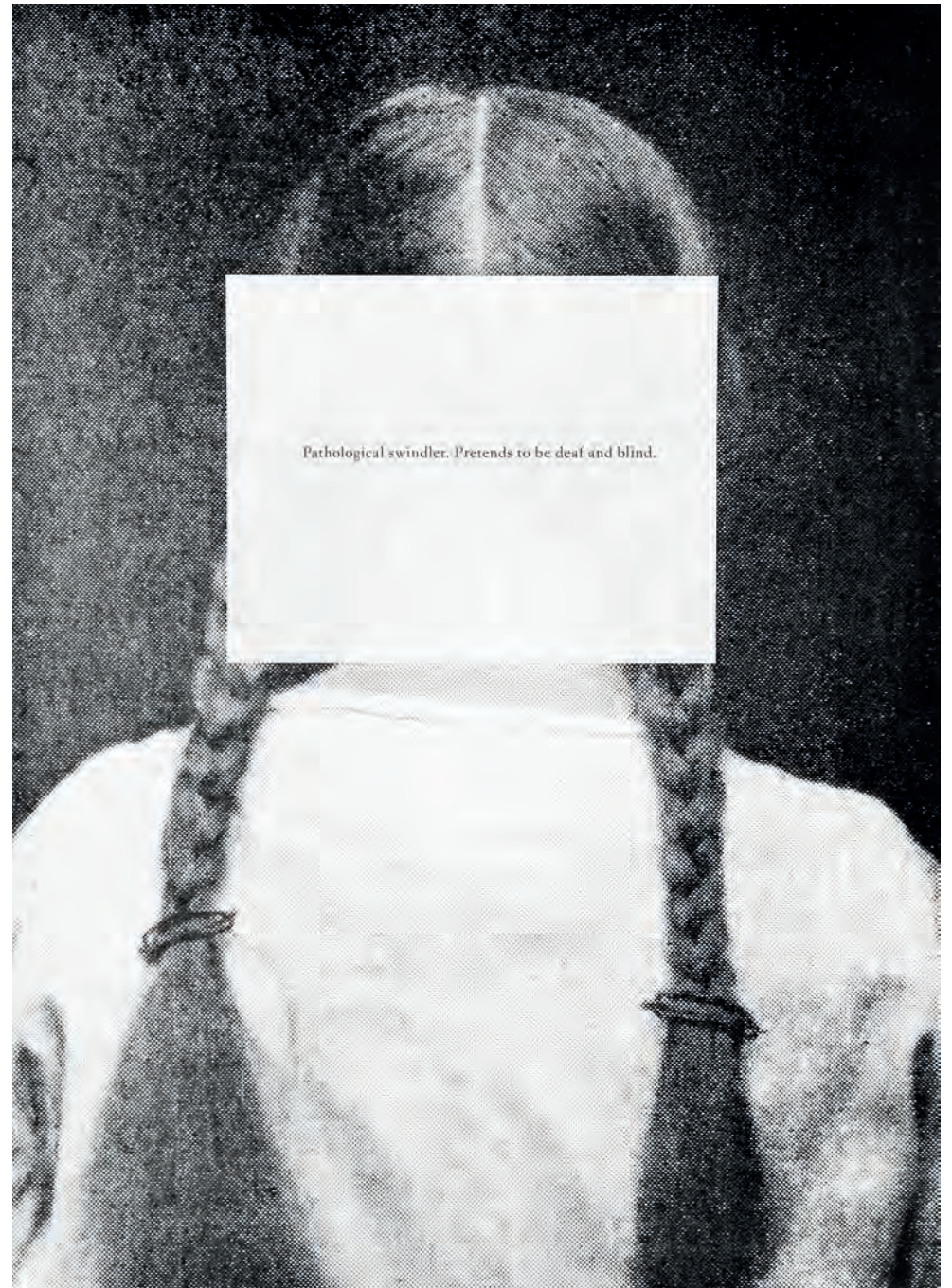




Atlas und Grundriss der Psychiatrie, 2013, Archival pigment print, Diasec, 12 works: variable dimensions



Atlas und Grundriss der Psychiatrie (5-year-old-child), 2013, Archival pigment print, Diasec, 47 x 34 cm



Atlas und Grundriss der Psychiatrie (Swindler), 2013, Archival pigment print, Diasec, 47 x 34 cm



No change in manner. Rhythmic tic movement,
blows to the head, exactly the same as before
the operation.

Atlas und Grundriss der Psychiatrie (Blows to the head), 2013, Archival pigment print, Diasec, 60 x 90 cm



Atlas und Grundriss der Psychiatrie (Hand #1), 2013, Archival pigment print, Diasec, 47 x 34 cm



Atlas und Grundriss der Psychiatrie (Hand #3), 2013, Archival pigment print, Diasec, 22 x 15 cm

Persons Projects

Lindenstraße 35
10969 Berlin

+49 30 2888 3370
berlin@personsprojects.com