

Riparian Score

The River Lea Variations
Kirsty Badenoch

15.06.22

28.07.22

Microscope is Periscope’s investigative space for talking, thinking and testing with natural processes. The Microscope ‘Slides’ are a series of pamphlets that examine our emerging experiments, exhibitions, workshops and talks.

Pamphlet 01 documents ‘Riparian Score’ by Kirsty Badenoch. A six-week exhibition and events-programme explored the edge between the river and the woods between June and July 2022.

Microscope

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~ Riparian (adj)
'relating to or situated on the banks of a river'

~ Score (noun)
'a single musical document that contains all the different parts for an orchestral performance'



Riparian Score

The River Lea Variations

Riparian Score is a visual symphony performed by riverine ecologies upon mild steel.

The works invite the river to play itself. They capture the energetic exchanges between river and riverbank - eddies and flows, tidal shifts, micro bacteria rotting and decaying, organic and in-organic matter getting caught and released, the budding and blooming of algae communities, the heaving and cracking of ancient tree roots as winter storms push us through into spring.

The Lea Variations were conducted over durations from 24 to 160 hours, between 30.12.2021 and 08.04.2022. They comprise twelve plates - one of which was swept away by the river during a flash storm - and two barrels.

Kirsty Badenoch, Artist, Architect and Researcher.

Associate Director/Head of Research at Periscope and a design tutor at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. In 2021 she curated the Cartographies of the Imagination festival of drawing at Omved Gardens. Engaging with landscape processes across practice and academia, her work centres around ecological interactions and environmental regeneration.



Steel Plate G re-situated by the River Lee



The back of a plate fully patinaed



“These variations were set along the lowland stage of the River Lea as it flows through Hackney Marshes. Emerging from its containment within a concrete channel for the last 73km, this small stretch of naturalised river sings out in low harmony and discordance. It sings of herons, carp and dragonflies; dive-bombing parakeets riding the cool air stream at dusk; the Lea Mermaids (our wild swimming group conceived during lock-down), community dog-walkers chasing up to fourteen leads at once; and summer ravers splashing e-coli into plastic pint glasses at Hackney Beach. It also sings of abandoned trolleys, plastic bags, wrappers and tampons caught in branches, illegal-sewage tipping and heavy metal contaminants that ooze a threatening iridescence when disturbed. It sings of these

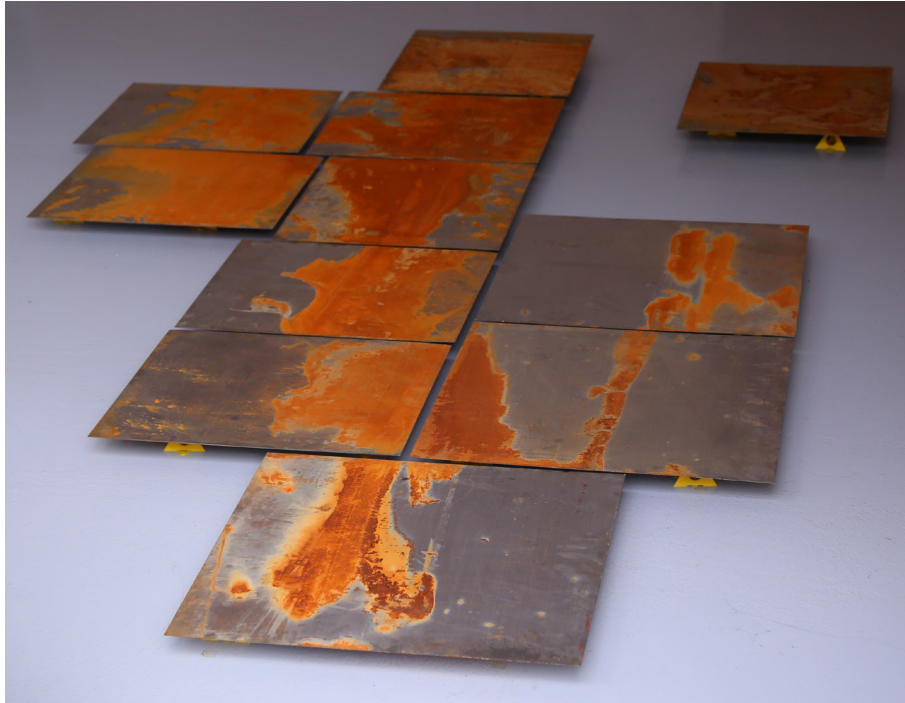
“These are collaborative, unchoreographed tracings, imprints of the river’s past. By it’s nature a river is a transitory state, the plates keep on eroding.”



urban and biotic interchanges for three kilometres before re-entering its concrete case for the remainder of its journey to the Thames.

I have swam in this river almost every week since moving here four years ago. I have drawn it and drawn from it. These variations look towards another form of understanding - one that gives voice and vision to the imperceptible complex riparian processes that lurk within the river, darting too small or too fast or too vast for us to catch. These are collaborative, unchoreographed tracings, imprints of the river’s past. By it’s nature a river is a transitory state, the plates keep on eroding.”

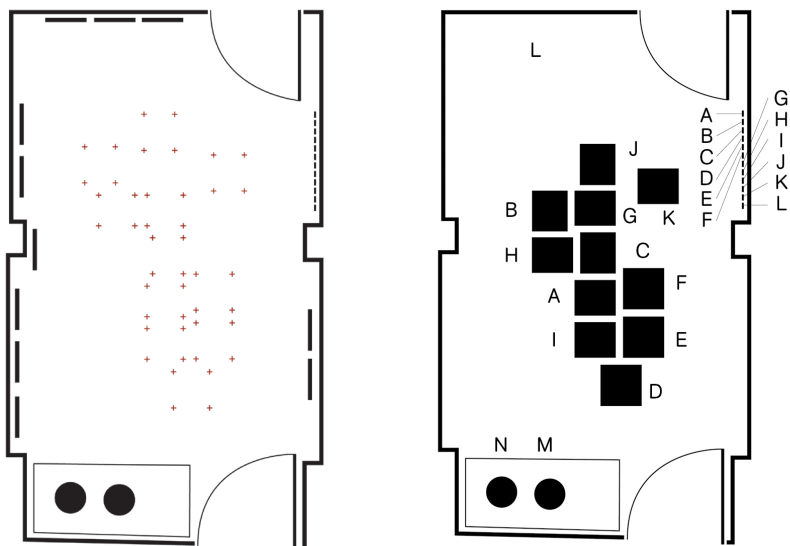
Extract from ‘Riparian Score’ by Kirsty Badenoch - a documentation of her work and process.



Steel plates installed on the floor



Plates installation on walls



1

2

Riparian Score

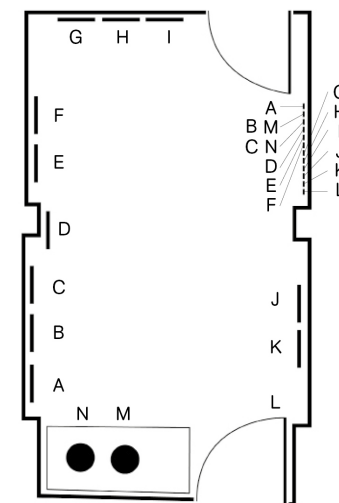
Reconfiguring the Space

Microscope, in comparison to the expansive valley of The River Lea, is small - roughly 3.0m x 4.4m. The pieces are intended to be exhibited on the riverbank. Re-siting the voice of a river within a contained urban shopfront raised discussion around the limits of our appreciation of landscape when in an urban setting.

The exhibition has two configurations. The normal layout sites the plates on the floor, with visitors invited to circulate

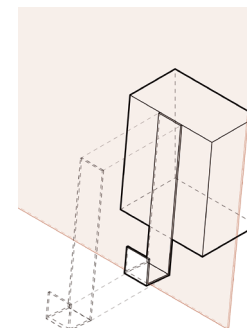
the perimeter. During events the plates are hung on the walls, giving the room a horizon datum of rusted metal aligned to the original tide level.

In the floor-configuration (fig. 2), the plates were re-organised according to their flow-rates, creating new relationships between the various notes of the river. The plates hover 45mm above the ground on a series of painter pyramids (fig. 5) that delicately support the steel plates, limiting damage to the patina. This layout provokes conversations of the work as a notational movement of the river. The installation occupies the majority of the space, the river strains to escape the room. Visitors are forced to creep carefully around the edges and engage with edges, corners and faces in a choreography around the river edge.



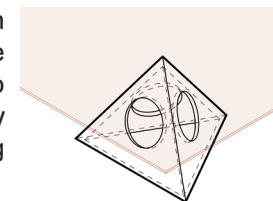
3

As the works were created by their environment, it follows that they should also respond to the space they are now exhibited in. The wall-configuration creates curious interplays and playful tensions with the odd array of workbenches, power outlets and historic shutter mechanisms that occupy the walls (fig. 3). A set of bespoke wall-fittings were made in-house to allow the plates to visually hover away from the wall (fig. 4). As the exhibition responds to the room, the room responds to the exhibition.

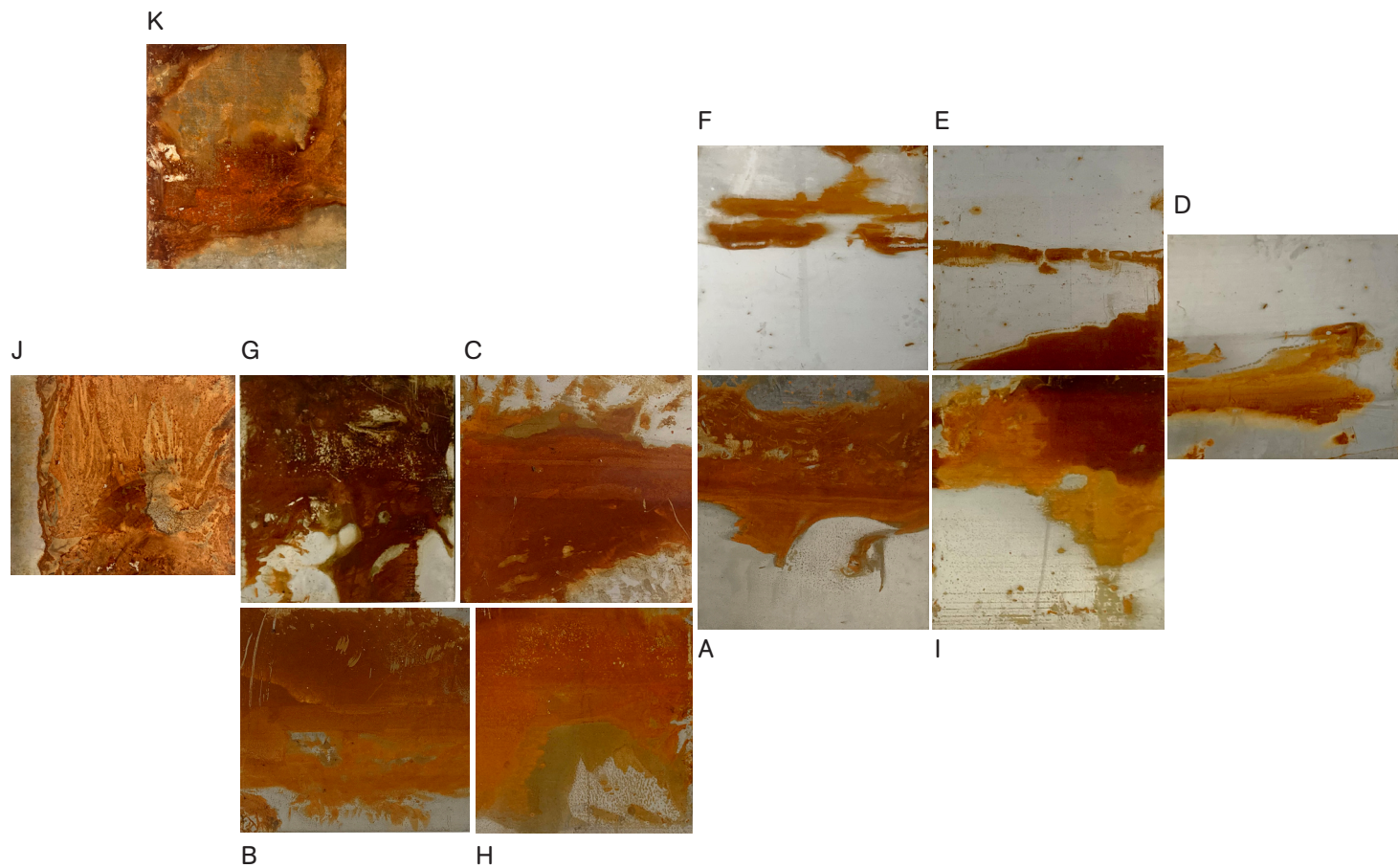


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The two barrels hung in the window from the same strings that hung them into the river, spinning slightly and reflecting the changing light over the day.



5



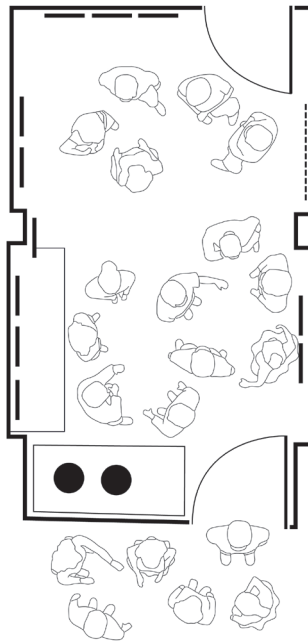
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Hung steel barrels



Collection of site photographs



The White Birch

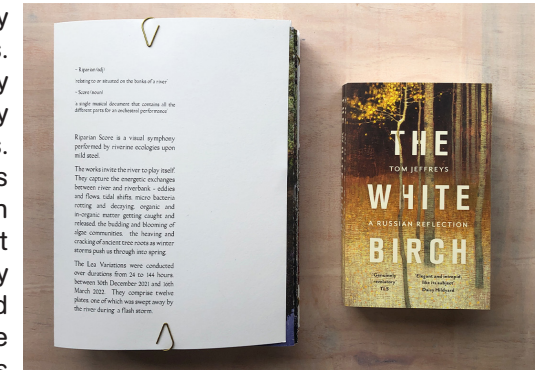
Paperback book launch
22.06.2022

The paperback book launch of Tom Jeffreys' 'The White Birch' staged an open evening of conversation on ecologies, culture and history between the woods and the river edge. Journeying through society's changing relationship with nature from 18th Century landscape painting all the way up to contemporary park design, and through differences between Eastern and Western perceptions.

A short reading from the book was followed by a conversation between Tom and Kirsty celebrating art, rivers, trees and the natural.

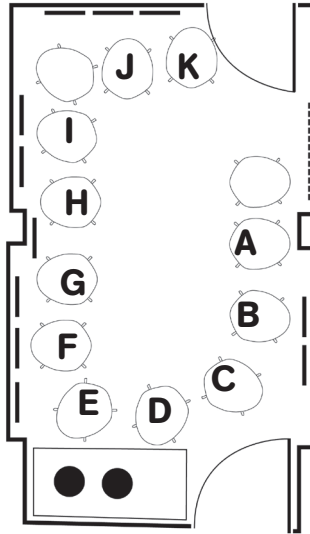
"It has been hand-planted by Tsarinas and felled by foresters. It has been celebrated by peasants, worshipped by pagans and painted by artists. It has self-seeded across mountains and rivers and train tracks and steppe and right through the ruined modernity of a nuclear fall-out site. And like all symbols, the story of the birch has its share of horrors (white, straight, native, pure: how could it not?). But, maybe in the end, what I'm really in search of is a birch that means nothing: stripped of symbolism, bereft of use-value . . . A birch that is simply a tree in a land that couldn't give a shit."

Extract from the book synopsis



Tom Jeffreys, Author and Art Critic

An independent writer, editor, and art critic with an interest in art that engages environmental questions. He is the author of two books: 'The White Birch: a Russian Reflection' and 'Signal Failure: London to Birmingham, HS2 on foot'. His work has been published in magazines, newspapers and websites like ArtReview and Frieze and is an editor the online magazine 'The Learned Pig'.



Attendees:

A. Izzy Bishop
B. Dan Rea
C. Gideon Corby
D. Esther Adelman
E. Teagan Dorsch
F. Rebecca Faulkner

G. Stacey Lewis
H. Kirsty Badenoch
I. Tim Waterman
J. Will Templeton
K. Anthony Powis

The River Talks

28.06.2022

From Diatom fossils to gorilla gardening along the River Lea; our earliest memory of rivers to

the sunken groundwater below Chennai - the river talks staged an open conversation on British rivers from the perspectives of paleo-ecology, landscape research, photography, community action and art. A non-hierarchical and interdisciplinary conversation between presenter and listener - the talk acted as a sharing of knowledge, stories and possibilities with our relationship to rivers and water.

Isabel Bishop, Lecturer in Ecology at UCL People and Nature Lab

A scientist working to understand the quality of freshwater ecosystems across the globe. Her PhD looked at methods of ecology and paleoecology. She engages at the interface between environmental and social systems, working with community involvement programmes including citizen science as well as with policymakers.

Gideon Corby, Ecologist

In 2012 Gideon founded the 'Wildlife Gardeners of Haggerston' who have won European awards for their amazing ecological projects throughout Hackney.

Anthony Powis, Researcher

Architect, researcher and design tutor working with watery conditions. He worked with MUF for five years on public realm projects, and finished his PhD last year. Entitled 'Thinking with Groundwater from Chennai' this looks at knowing and thinking with groundwater, or 'the river just below the surface'. He teaches a BA studio on 'living systems design processes' at Westminster.

Related Reading

Tania Kovats - Drawing Water

Max Liboiron - Pollution Is Colonialism

Dilip da Cunha - The Invention of Rivers

Mould Collective - Architecture after Architecture: Spatial Practice in the Face of the Climate Emergency

Lindsay Bremner - Monsoon as Method

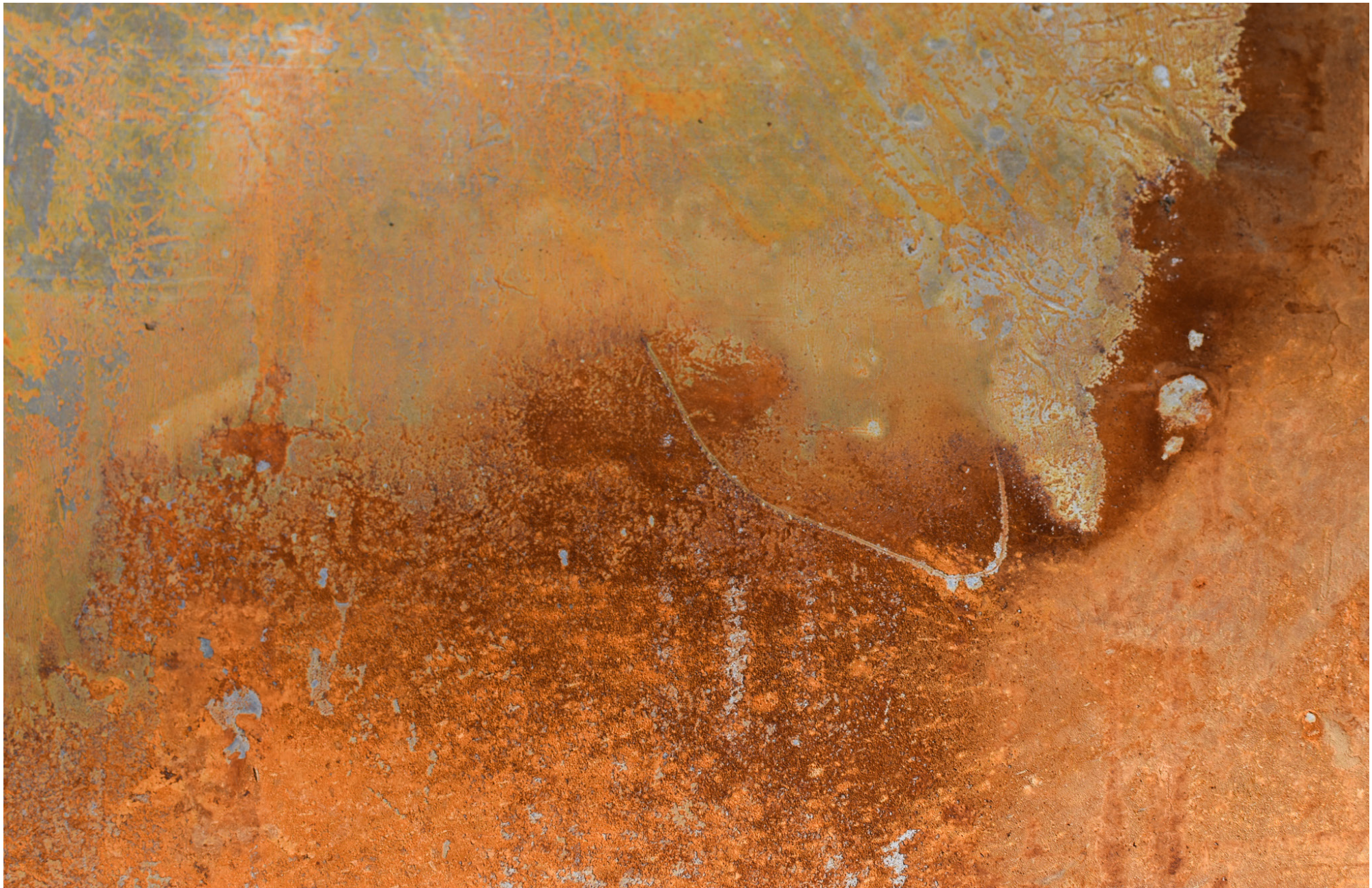
Tim Waterman - Sharing The City One Step At A Time

Tim Waterman - There's Room: In a New Battle Strategy, the Dutch Give Some Ground Back to the Water

Tim Waterman - It's About Time: The Genius Temporum of Martí Franch's Girona Landscapes

Landscape Architecture Magazine





Microscope Slides 01: Riparian Score

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Periscope is a spatial design agency focused on regenerative design and public architecture.

We design and deliver resilient projects that work for people and the planet, grounding our interventions within their greater ecological, topographic and social fabric. In valuing meticulous research, technical rigour and plural voices we seek to meet the challenges of our own and future generations.

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