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Scanography: photographic art between the realms of sight and touch

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ABSTRACT

Scanographs are photographs made using a scanner, and they have become increasingly present in contemporary photographic art in the expanded field. In this article, I examine the artistic processes of three artists working with scanners and analyze their works through their relationships with the senses of sight and touch. These works open up spaces for a haptic gaze, where the tactile qualities of the working processes of the artists are mediated through the images. I use theoretical sources centering on sight and touch, presence and absence, analogue and digital to suggest ways of considering these qualities not as opposing characteristics but rather as simultaneous polarities.

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Scanographs, photographic images made using a scanner,¹ have become a field for contemporary artists to explore the possibilities and expand the ontological borders of photography. In this article I examine scanographs by three contemporary artists, Inari Sandell (b. 1991, Finland), Kira Leskinen (b. 1987, Finland) and Anna Skladmann (b. 1986, Germany) from the angle of the senses of sight and touch, and sensitivity itself as a concept deeply ingrained in photography. I analyze the works from a position that gives center stage to the materialities at work, notwithstanding the works' subject matter, their visual content.

Despite its recent popularity, scanography is by no means a new phenomenon. Leskinen notes that historically scanographs are related to photocopy art, sometimes called Xerox art, born in the 1960's as the first Xerox-labeled photocopying machines came into the market in the late 1950's. Both scanography and photocopy art are based on the sweeping movement of the light source.² This origination with light makes scanographs a fascinating case to study in relation to photography, noting that whereas a camera records light from its outside, the light source in a scanner is built inside the device.

With regards to photography history, scanography could be placed within what has been called the expanded field of photography, practices that move beyond traditional conceptualizations of photography, often engaging with material experiments and alternative techniques.³ The taxonomy of photographic art has often followed the workings of light; we talk about lens-based or light-based art when referring to experimental photography that falls

outside the scope of traditional or established forms of photography. Although not unproblematically classifiable as lens-based, scanographs can be classified as light-based art and thus also have a close relationship to the discourse of photography history, theory and philosophy.

All three artists discussed in this article tend to exhibit their scanographs in formats typical to photographic art. Sandell as mounted prints, sometimes also in self-made lightboxes, often as parts of an installation that includes other, sculptural and textile works. Leskinen's scanographs are most often exhibited as framed prints, at times also as textile-like, suspended panels. Likewise, Skladmann inclines to exhibit her scanographs as framed or mounted prints.

The focus of this article is on the human body and its senses, both the artists' and the viewers', extending into the possible sensitivities of the photographic materials and machines used.⁴ I examine the scanographs of Sandell, Leskinen and Skladmann especially through theoretical writings by Laura U. Marks and Juhani Pallasmaa.⁵ Marks, a new media and film theorist, whose works have often addressed the relations between media and the human senses, is read in parallel to Pallasmaa, an architect who in his theoretical writings has emphasized the importance of other senses than the visual in architecture.

By evading the adjustable optics of a camera, the non-adjustability and the relative impossibility of controlling the outcomes of a scan instead becomes the means of artistic expression in the scanographs analyzed. All three artists mainly use flatbed scanners, originally designed to scan documents. They place objects on the glass pane of the scanner and let the

sweeping light of the scanner make the image by moving under the glass. Leaving the scanner's lid open during the scanning, the artists at times also touch and move the objects on the glass while the scanning is in process, making touch and physical presence very concretely an integral part of the works. My analysis is made multifaceted by studio visits and dialogue with the artists,⁶ whose own research⁷ has also been pivotal for my writing. The ability to interview the artists was an important reason for choosing their work in this article, and I thank them for sharing their work and thoughts with me.⁸

I start by introducing the works of the three artists separately in the first three sections, Making Sensitivity (Sandell), On the Cusp of Abstraction (Leskinen) and Hyperreal Botanicals Skladmann), and move on to analyze them in depth. The section Beyond the Visual focuses on the visual as the most important sense in Western culture, and examines scanographs as combining both visual and tactile qualities. The section Witnessing and Presencing delves into the differences between the senses of sight and touch with regards to physical presence, and introduces the terms witnessing and presencing as verbs as a way to analyze our engagement with photographs as both carriers of visual information and as physical objects. In section Movement and Multitemporality, scanographs' relation to temporality is analyzed through the themes of stasis and movement. The concept of glitch is examined as an integral part of artistic expression, rather than as a technical mistake. The section Planarity and Gravity addresses the implications of the planar working mode in these three artists' work, with special attention to the two-dimensionality this creates.

Making sensitivity

Inari Sandell is a multidisciplinary artist whose recent work has often involved fabrics. The scanographs they made with fabrics started during the pandemic, when the artist was experimenting with fabrics previously used for a sewing hobby, wondering what to make of them. By using the scanner, Sandell had the opportunity to bypass the optical gaze of the camera, and engage with the fabrics through the sense of touch; creasing and folding them into the picture, rather than visually arranging them.⁹ In the works the fabrics' colors and the detailed structure of their weave become portrayed in a slightly undulating and glitching¹⁰ visual display, where the moiré patterns created by the scanner's digital rendering give them a rippled and watery appearance. The scanner brings out the weight of the fabrics, their volume creates peaks and valleys, which are flattened into a two-dimensional image of proximity and distance where

light and dark areas give visual hints to detect nearness and remoteness.

Sandell's artistic practice has a background in the artist's personal experience with neurodiversity.¹¹ The scanned fabrics presented questions for the artist such as how to portray something that is of interest to their own nervous system and issues they are sensitive to. Sandell tried first to photograph the fabrics with a camera, which however resulted in a too narratively constructed framework: the immediate questions being what had happened to the fabrics, who had put them there, where did they come from. The scanner revealed another world where the focus was more on the sensuous experience of the fabrics, more directly than with the camera, which felt to Sandell to be doing something too much, something extra. Sandell describes the similarity of the scanner's way of depicting its subjects with the same intensity and sharpness as the neurodiverse experience of a "lack of filter" for different sense experiences and perception; meaning that the choice of what to sense or what to choose as important among the whole of sense perception is impossible. Sandell started to wonder whether it was possible to make a photograph where everything is meaningful, where there is no predisposed idea of what one is supposed to look at.¹²

In *Frayed polyester chiffon in green and fingers* (2021) (Figure 1) we can see a slightly shiny green

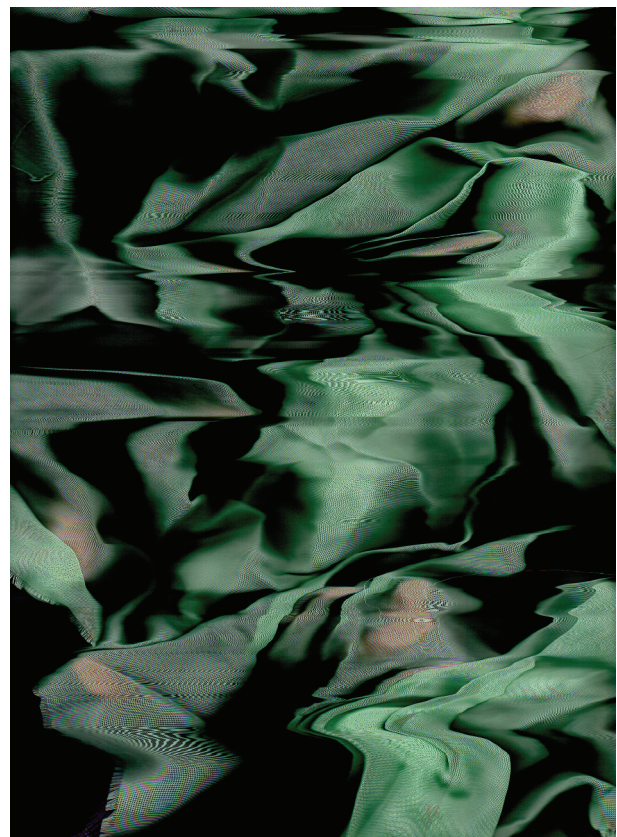


Figure 1. Inari Sandell: *Frayed polyester chiffon in green and fingers*, 2021. Scanograph.

fabric from the point of view of the scanner, giving the spectator a feeling of being underneath as the fabric folds on the glass plate of the scanner. The name of the work gives an indication of what the different colored specks among the fabric are, as we can see the artist's fingers faintly showing through the gauzy fabric.¹³ There is a digitally glitchy appearance to the work, as the fabric's weave breaks into a graphic wave of over-sharp moiré, or shows an aberration of pink and lilac colors. The image is made with a tent-like structure over the scanner to avoid external light coming through,¹⁴ and the darkness accentuates the effect of proximity created by the scanner's light. One might be tempted to describe this darkness as the background of the image, but that would not be adequate, as it occupies space everywhere among the whole image, often very much in the foreground, in the fabric's folds. Concepts like foreground and background become rather obsolete with the unification of visual space the scanner creates.

Fabric as a motif alludes to the canvas as a base material for painting, a surface of fabric stretched on a frame. In *Hand-dyed silk in green and pink* (2021) (Figure 2) the fabrics' colors shift from green and pink to a sheer white, and the areas closer to the surface of the scanner appear sharp and glitchy, whereas the areas farther back fade



Figure 2. Inari Sandell: *Hand-dyed silk in green and pink*, 2021. Scanograph.

into a soft out of focus haze. The fabric folds and flows over the frame, not a subject with clear outlines or distinct form, but billowing and somewhat uncontrollable. Resisting the fixedness of the edges of the image became a way for Sandell to also resist fixed meanings.¹⁵ There is no up or down in the composition, its meaning rather revolves around the tension between closeness and remoteness, made manifest through the shifts in focus and sharpness.

The image of Sandell's works is very close to the surface, the fabric touching the screen and folding upon it. In *The Skin of the Film*, new media theorist Laura U. Marks studies video works that use fabric as a motif.¹⁶ According to her, cinematic images can have a way of "[appealing to] embodied memory by bringing vision as close as possible to the image; by converting vision to touch".¹⁷ Were it to be described in cinematic terms, Sandell's scanograph would be a close-up taken to the extreme, all the way to touch. Marks sees the surface of a video itself as fabric-like, and images of fabrics as a way to appeal to memory.¹⁸ While making these works with the fabric motif, Sandell considered printing them on fabric, but decided against it, as it "felt like the multiple layers of implied touching would cancel each other out".¹⁹ In relation to this, it is intriguing that the back and forth movement of the scanner is similar to weaving a fabric on a loom, one thread at a time, the shuttle moving left and right.

Marks notes how the often overlooked domestic work of women, such as decoration, embroidery or weaving "invite a small, caressing gaze", as opposed to the "grand compositions, important subjects, and a correspondingly exalted position of the viewer" which have often been regarded as the primary interest of art history.²⁰ Resisting the feminizing of this smaller gaze, Marks presents it as an alternative strategy, simply a different way of looking.²¹ I see this thought as parallel to the intimations of architect Juhani Pallasmaa who muses in his seminal book *The Eyes of the Skin*, that the loss of focus that is brought about by the current stream of images could perhaps "emancipate the eye from its patriarchal domination and give rise to a *participatory and empathetic gaze*".²² This gaze, intuited by Marks and Pallasmaa as small, caressing, participatory and empathetic, can in Sandell's works be seen to be mediated through the sense of touch, as the works intrigue the viewer to look and feel closer into the whirling folds of the fabric.

On the cusp of abstraction

As the fabric in Sandell's works takes our ideas to the canvas as a base material for painting, so the paper in Kira Leskinen's is a reminder of the importance of

paper as a material in photographic processes. Leskinen's scanographs are made with straps of colorful paper cut in different sizes, placed on the scanner and moved around while the scanning is in process, creating abstract-looking forms and transitions. Moving the papers around while making the image brings with it a sense of temporality, and with time comes also rhythm, evident in the sometimes sharp, sometimes more liquid and wavy shifts between different colors and shapes.

The colors are usually vivid and clear, as in *Morriña* (2016) (Figure 3), where white, yellow and red areas bring to mind aerial photographs or maps, outlines of topographic forms, maybe islands or continents, as the eye looks for recognizable shapes. This almost-recognizability of the images makes them hover somewhere between identifiable and non-identifiable, giving flight to imagination but nowhere for it to safely land. The name of the work is Spanish for homesickness, and it accentuates the work's resemblance with topographic motifs, as well as a longing for meaning and signification, for origins and a native land.

In her earlier scanographic works Leskinen often used to work in a darkened space, but has later started to experiment with the effects of daylight, as residencies in Italy and Peru gave ample opportunities for this.²³ In Peru especially, the sunlight was so intense that it could not be controlled, but the

artist had to adapt to it, layering multiple strata of papers in the scanner, sometimes even 10–20 layers.²⁴ The intensity of natural light is evident in *Sahha* (2022) (Figure 4), where the white aperture in the middle with the light shining through has a window-like quality. The light creates chromatic aberrations around the layers of paper, multiplying the edges of the shapes. It seems to break and bend the colors in a prismatic way, reminding us of the wave-like nature of light itself.

Leskinen also works with methods of graphics and textile art, especially with tufting, a method used to make rugs by punching together tufts of thread.²⁵ For a visual motif, Leskinen translates her scanographs into patterns for the tufting. It is not so much an attempt to recreate an exact likeness of a scanographic image in the tufting, but rather to take it as a starting point, and transmute it into another field of work, often changing the colors, but keeping the visual outlines.²⁶ The two-dimensional scanographs then acquire a three-dimensionality in the tufting, further accentuating their topographic connotations as the surface of the tufting is uneven and billowing. Leskinen describes her interest towards textile methods as a longing for softer materials in the world of contemporary photographic art where material questions are often shaped by conventions in exhibiting: a demand for high definition, museum quality exhibition prints.²⁷



Figure 3. Kira Leskinen: *Morriña*, 2016. Scanograph.

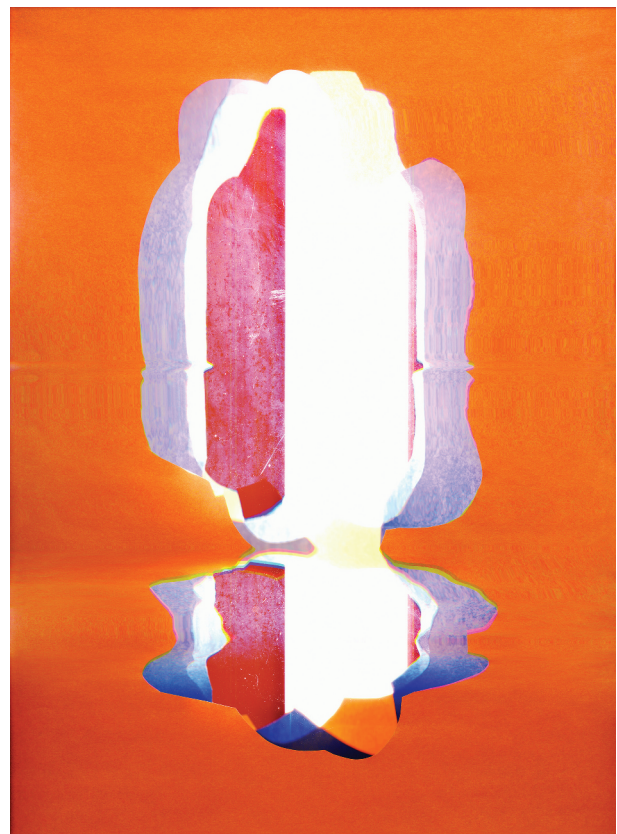


Figure 4. Kira Leskinen: *Sahha*, 2022. Scanograph.

Leskinen notes the possibility of scanographs to contain multiple viewpoints at once, which is typical also of cubism.²⁸ The subject of the image can be turned around and these different viewpoints included in one image. Leskinen analyzes her own works as abstract, and problematizes the possibility of creating an abstract photograph in the first place as a photograph is always a visual record of something real, something that has been.²⁹ The way her works visually relate to abstraction reveals a fruitful field as regards how what is known and unknown in the making of an image affects our interpretations of it. For example, Leskinen emphasizes the problem of naming the works, and ponders how to do it so as not to steer the viewer too directly back into the realm of signification.³⁰ To maintain a sense of detachment from signification Leskinen often names her works with phonetic affinities they evoke in her, as in the abovementioned work *Sahha*.³¹ This is in alignment with Pallasmaa's notion of artistic expression being "engaged with pre-verbal meanings of the world, meanings that are incorporated and lived, rather than simply intellectually understood".³² Leskinen's scanographs operate somewhere in between being intellectually understood, and incorporated and lived.

Hyperreal botanicals

Anna Skladmann's scanographs often depict flowers, fruits and plants, familiar subjects from still life and vanitas paintings and also from early photography. Skladmann mentions Anna Atkins's cyanotypes of algae and plants from the mid-1800's as an inspiration for her work, where she takes similar subjects into the digital realm.³³ The scanner meticulously records the minute details of the subjects, but only where they are close to the glass, as the features that are farther away fade slightly into the background, emphasizing the need for physical proximity in achieving visual clarity, distinction and sharpness. As with Sandell's works, the brightness of the light is a visual cue of nearness, striking the features of the subjects in close proximity harder than those further away.

Skladmann has a background in documentary photography, and she started working with scanners when she was studying at the Royal College of Art in London, where a photo technician suggested she try scanning.³⁴ Skladmann's entry into scanography resembles Sandell's as they were both questioning the medium of photography, trying to find some respite from the camera, and discover an alternative way for its limited way of building narratives.³⁵ Storytelling is the central motive for Skladmann's work and artistic practice, and she always starts with research into the history and background of

her subjects. She sees her scanographs as a natural continuity for her work as a documentarian, only the medium has changed.³⁶

The transience of nature is emphasized in Skladmann's scanographs of living materials. The life of the materials also affects the process of the scanning as there can be little insects or worms coming out from the plants and petals falling off. The time of working with cut flowers and fruit for example is limited as they start to deteriorate over time. An important factor in Skladmann's practice is observing the materials in the studio and through the scanner.³⁷

In Skladmann's series *The Genesis of Blame: A Natural History of the Forbidden Fruit* (2019) fruits, flowers and plants are scanned in haphazard-looking clusters, their closeness to the glass plate of the scanner emphasized by the subtle folding and crumpling of their volumes. In *Diospyros Kaki* (2019) (Figure 5) it is as if the plants and fruits are pressed against a window, a garden on the other side of the glass. The linear shapes of aberrations give a hint of the scanner's work. In *Piel de Sapo* (2019) (Figure 6) there are small parts of the plants, fallen leaves and dirt that make visible the planarity of the scanning. These parts fallen on the glass plate give an impression of floating on water or being carried by the wind. Their breezy lightness and small size intensify the weight of the large melon on the glass. The name of the series evokes the restriction of tactile engagement (one can look but not touch) bringing forth an idea of touch itself as the forbidden fruit in visual art.

Beyond the visual

Pallasmaa points out the deeply embedded bias on vision above all the other senses that dominates our culture: "In Western culture, sight has historically been regarded as the noblest of the senses, and thinking itself thought of in terms of seeing."³⁸ He continues: "Since the Greeks, philosophical writings of all times have abounded with ocular metaphors to the point that knowledge has become analogous with clear vision and light is regarded as the metaphor for truth."³⁹ Pallasmaa examines the "epistemological privileging of vision" and the "ocularcentric paradigm",⁴⁰ and how technological culture has even further ordered and separated the senses, privileging vision and hearing as sociable and public, "whereas the other three are considered as archaic sensory remnants with a merely private function, and they are usually suppressed by the code of culture".⁴¹ Marks also notes this hierarchy of the senses in Western culture, and writes of the habit of Enlightenment thinkers of separating the body from knowledge and regarding vision as the sense furthest from the body, and thus closest to the intellect.⁴² Photography and media theorist Mika



Figure 5. Anna Skladmann: *Diospyros Kaki—The genesis of blame: a natural history of the forbidden Fruit*, 2019. Scanograph.



Figure 6. Anna Skladmann: *Piel de Sapo—The genesis of blame: a natural history of the forbidden Fruit*, 2019. Scanograph.

Elo in turn importantly reminds us that besides the clear hierarchy between sight and touch, there is an intimate cooperation between them, and that touch also has had an important role in the Western philosophic tradition, albeit often as a servant of vision.⁴³ We “grasp” things when we understand them.⁴⁴

The ocularcentrism Western philosophy has come to adopt is especially prominent in our ideas of what photography is. Photography history has been obsessed with the visual, but it is to be noted that

the material, the object, is what *touches* us in photography, both literally and symbolically.⁴⁵ To contradict this obsession of the visual in photographic histories, Elizabeth Edwards and Janet Hart emphasize in their introduction to the seminal book *Photographs, Objects, Histories: On the Materiality of Images* that perhaps the most influential work of writing on the reception of photographs, Roland Barthes’s *Camera Lucida*, besides describing the visual content of the image of the lost mother, also describes the photograph as a physical object.⁴⁶

Photography has a double bind as both an image and an object, they write⁴⁷ and this is where the scanographs as special kinds of photographs become an interesting case in point in relation to sight and touch, since their image/object qualities differ from camera-made photographs. The relation between subject and resulting image *looks* closer, as the subjects of the images touch the glass directly, unlike the subjects of a photograph made with a camera and shot through an adjustable lens.

Marks brings forth art historian Alois Riegl's terms the optic and the haptic: "While optical perception privileges the representational power of the image, haptic perception privileges the material presence of the image."⁴⁸ The haptic then is not the same as touch, but rather a specific way of looking and seeing. The word haptic comes from "haptein" to fasten,⁴⁹ which is interesting in comparison with the etymology of the word scan, which comes from the Latin word "scandere", to climb, a way of fastening oneself to a surface, gripping it while moving along. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari also use Riegl's paired concepts, and—importantly—prefer the word haptic over tactile, "since it does not establish an opposition between two sense organs but rather invites the assumption that the eye itself may fulfill this nonoptical function".⁵⁰ Without the optic interruption of the adjustable lens of a camera, the scanner "sees" its subjects in a haptic way, almost as if touching them.

It is important to emphasize that photography is not only about relaying visual information, but that it is also about sensitivity in many respects: not only the sensitivity of the receiving surface, but also all the sensitivities of the other bodies, materials and apparatuses involved, including the programmed "senses" of the machines and software and the physical sensitivities of the materials.

Witnessing and presencing

When speaking of looking at and emotionally relating to photographs, metaphors of touch are often used, as Margaret Olin observes in her fittingly named book *Touching Photographs*.⁵¹ She writes: "There is a tension between looking and touching: the two activities seem to alternate like a blinking eye, as though we cannot do both at the same time."⁵² Olin explains: "The word *photograph*, meaning 'light-writing', evokes both vision and touch, and in exploiting the slippage between the two parts of its name, photography gains power as a relational art, its meaning determined not only by what it looks like but also by the relationship we are invited to have with it."⁵³ This dual relationality of engaging with photographs has to do with their dual existence as images and objects.⁵⁴ Olin summarizes: "The fact that a photograph, once taken, can become

a visual presence in our world does not only mean that we look at photographs. We also are *with* photographs; and we spend time in their presence."⁵⁵

I would like to draw further attention to the acts of looking and being, of witnessing and presencing as verbs.⁵⁶ Olin observes how "photography merges the language of witnessing with the language of the index",⁵⁷ the language of the index meaning the language of touch, of physical presence. One can witness something only by looking, whereas presencing entails physical nearness and contemporaneity. Meditations on visual and tactile perception often turn to philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and especially his idea of double sensation, that to touch is always also to be touched by something, and that to see does not include this two-way condition. One can see without being seen and vice versa.⁵⁸ Absence can thus be experienced—and emphasized—through the visual, whereas presence requires physical proximity.

The scanographs seem an interesting intermediary between the analogue and digital worlds, merging together the tactile qualities of the former, and the computable qualities of the latter. In scanographs the analogue, tactile processes of the artists becomes reduced to an image, the sense of bodily presence removed and distilled into a haptic desire for the absent touch as we are left with only its visual trace. With their tactile quality, scanographs could be seen as related to photograms, cameraless photographs made by placing objects directly on a photosensitive surface, such as paper, glass or metal.⁵⁹ But in relation to indexicality, photograms and scanographs differ in that photograms are unique objects, whereas scanography produces a digital file, which can be copied over and over. In the works of Sandell, Leskinen and Skladmann, the material effect of the fabric, paper or plants touching the glass pane of the scanner is visually striking and evocative, but this touch becomes mediated and transferred through the digital.

Furthermore, when we encounter the works online, on the artists' websites or on social media, the images can be zoomed in on, which gives us as viewers a restored personal contact with them. We scan the images anew with our eyes, our bodies. This effect of renewed bodily presence with the work becomes especially emphasized when using a device with a touchscreen, where the operating occurs by hand without a mouse or a stylus.⁶⁰

Movement and multitemporality

The rejecting of the static single point of focus in favor of a moving gaze characteristic to scanographs is reminiscent of the way we look at an artwork or

survey a landscape. Pallasmaa admires the visually rich paintings of Netherlandish artists Pieter Bruegel (ca. 1525–1569) and Hieronymus Bosch (ca. 1450–1516), and how they “invite a participatory eye to travel across the scenes of multiple events”.⁶¹ The multitemporality in their paintings allows for an experience, a subjective and temporally bound event of looking. In the scanographs, by contrast, we are looking at the multitemporal scenes that the moving gaze of the scanner has recorded, over a duration of time. The event of looking is already fully generated for us, the “experience” of gazing at the subject matter of the scanographs has been done by the scanner, and it is presented to us distilled in a single still image.

The movement of the scanner’s light makes pertinent references not only to kinetic art, but to cinema and video art where the camera moves, recording and transferring the scenes to viewers. In the scanographs however, the final result is a still image, containing the movement in one frame. The durational temporality of scanographs is especially evident in Leskinen’s work, where the papers are rearranged during the scanning, creating differently shaped apertures for the light to move through. This introduces a performative aspect, as the presence of the artist during the scanning, her movements and actions become part of the image.⁶² It is to be noted, that the duration of the scan varies greatly between the three artists, and the works analyzed in this study, in Sandell’s work ranging from a few seconds to around 15 seconds, in Leskinen’s approximately 30 seconds, and in Skladmann’s as long as around 20 minutes.⁶³ This difference between scanning times can be seen in the richness and clarity of visual detail in Skladmann’s work compared to Sandell’s and Leskinen’s.

The way the subjects of the images are placed upon the scanner creates a compositionality that derives from the stasis of its frame. In photography or moving image made with a camera, the frame is moved around when composing the shot, both by positioning the camera’s body and by zooming in and out. In the scanographs the frame of the image is predetermined by the size of the glass plate of the scanner, and it remains motionless. Furthermore, Leskinen notes the immobility of the scanner, as it always needs to be connected to the computer.⁶⁴

The movement inherent to the working of the scanner entails the constant appearance of visual glitches: abnormalities, chromatic aberrations and being out of focus, all seen as errors in traditional conceptualizations of photography. Sean Cubitt notes that glitches “do not stop transmission: they merely make it scrappy, dirty or noisy.”⁶⁵ They make us notice the technology used to produce the image, making visible something that should run smoothly, but does not. “Glitch is the evidence that control is

never complete”, Cubitt puts forth, and observes that it “comes as a small revenge, a tactical revolt of the material against its organization, of materiality against intent.”⁶⁶ Glitches make visible the material framework of scanographs.

All three artists mainly use flatbed document scanners, designed primarily to scan text and images printed on paper, not objects. Using the scanners against their original purpose creates a space for intentional mistakes, glitches that are somewhat controlled, but whose final outcome remains a surprise. This heightens the haecceity of the works.⁶⁷ Sandell explains that one can to some extent learn to foresee the glitches, when working conditions remain the same, and in this way it is possible to control them to some degree.⁶⁸ Skladmann in turn notes that different scanners have idiosyncratic errors, typical to each specific device.⁶⁹ Leskinen points out that controlling the scanner’s reading speed and the size of the resulting image are artistic choices in her work, as they affect the speed of the working process with the scanner and that way also the sense of play and spontaneity involved. Choices that are too conscious with a slower paced process result in rigid and too considered visual language, she explains.⁷⁰

Planarity and gravity

Besides the similarities in relation to touch mentioned above, Leskinen acknowledges the similarity between scanographs and photograms, as both require working in a planar way, with the artwork lying down.⁷¹ What differentiates these two ways of creating photographic images, however, is the direction of light: in a scanograph the light comes from underneath, which creates a curious sense of being upside down as opposed to working with photographic paper or another light sensitive surface on a table. The image is made from the other side of the glass plate of the scanner, from inside it, while it is as if the maker of the image is behind the image, in the background.⁷² Hence, looking at a scanograph has the same effect as looking at maps of star constellations that are seen from the viewpoint of gazing up from the surface of the earth, where the map normally seen from above has been switched into its mirror image.

The planar working mode brings the tactile force of gravity into play. It is as if the subjects of the images have fallen down on the glass plate of the scanner and are seen from underneath. This impression of the subjects falling down evokes a sense of natural events like rain or snowfall, especially in Skladmann’s works where the flowers and plants look as if they have been scattered by the wind. Skladmann herself describes this other-

sidedness as having a feeling of being buried, lying down.⁷³

The glass plate of the scanner both connects through the visual and separates through the tactile: it lets light through but keeps the bodies (human, fabric, paper and plants) outside.⁷⁴ The surface of the glass becomes the surface of the image, a tactile surface morphed into a visual one. Its transparency is betrayed by the flatness of the objects touching it and by dust, which Skladmann spends hours removing digitally from the image to maintain its lustrous lucidity.⁷⁵ Her works are thus reminiscent of Monet's paintings of water lilies, which are not so much about the lilies, but about the water which is so reflective we cannot really see it, we only intuit it through the reflections and the lilies on its surface. By contrast, Leskinen in turn sometimes adds dust or ash to the glass plate on purpose to emphasize its presence as an aesthetical choice.⁷⁶ As opposed to Skladmann's painstaking work with the digital file, for Leskinen and Sandell the work on the digital file after the scanning remains minimal.⁷⁷

As the light comes from inside the machine making the image, rather than from outside it as when working with a camera, the scanographs hide their other, upper side. The objects depicted cling to the surface of the glass, but instead of creating a two-dimensionality this rather enhances their three-dimensional objecthood, as the objects are not pressed completely flat, especially in Skladmann's works. Leskinen's works are somewhat different, because their being made of paper brings with it a different kind of planarity, and the ripped and cut outlines of the papers are not usually completely in view, i.e. the papers are not depicted so much as individual objects as the plants are in Skladmann's works. Sandell's fabrics are similarly seen more as surfaces rather than objects, like Leskinen's papers, but crinkled and creased to emphasize their volumes, foldings and drapings.

Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to study the artistic and aesthetical characteristic of scanography and scanographs in relation to the senses of sight and touch, coming to include themes such as the photographic object, temporality and photographic sensitivity. This has resulted in revealing a set of relations, rather than oppositions between sight and touch, presence and absence, and the analogue and the digital.

The scanographs could be described as visualizations of the effects of touch, as they allow us to haptically experience the feel and impression of the subjects of the images being physically present at the time of their scanning. The sweep of the scanner is as if a blind, feeling gaze detecting and recording the subject matter, whether fabric, paper or plants, as in

the cases studied in this article. In the works of Sandell, Leskinen and Skladmann, the tactile merges with the visual, resulting in images that have a highly haptic quality. In them it is as if we could feel the folds of the fabric, the slight movements of the papers and the weight or wispieness of the plants, through the sense of our vision.

A conventional understanding of photography is that it is an extension of vision. When the receptive surface is also taken into consideration, be it film or another physical material sensitized to light or a digital receptor, the sense of touch becomes included, and photographs become extensions of touch as well. In photography, then, there is something that sees, but also something that feels, a sensitive receiving surface. A camera that only sees, without the receptive component, is only a camera obscura, where the image continually flows and is not recorded or fixed anywhere.⁷⁸

The skin as something that feels and receives is emphasized by both Pallasmaa and Marks, the former in relation to architecture, and the latter to cinema. If the lens of a camera is thought of as the seeing component of photography, its "eye", then the receiving surface could be considered as the feeling one, the "skin". In scanographs these two senses are combined into one, as the light of the scanner has qualities of both seeing and touching.

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Notes

1. I first came into contact with the term scanograph through Kira Leskinen's work. See (Leskinen 2016). The terminology around this phenomenon is still variegated. I use the word scanograph for a single work, and scanography to describe the practice as a whole, to be in line with the terms photograph/photography. Sometimes the term scanography can also be used of a single work, see for example (Leskinen 2016), *passim*. The terms scannography, scannogram, scanner photography, scanner art and scan-art are also used to describe artistic practices with scanners. The three artists in this case study mainly use flatbed scanners, so they are the focus of this article. One can find a plethora of resources online with the abovementioned terms as to what kinds of different scanners and techniques can be used in scanographic practices. Scanography is also widely practiced outside of art, in amateur photography and commercial contexts. The term scanograph is also in use in the field of medical imaging. This links scanography as an artistic practice to the wider history and theory of technical images and imaging. This rich history, however, is outside the scope of the present article.
2. (Leskinen 2016), 29. As important predecessors working with photocopying machines, Leskinen

- mentions Sonia Landy Sheridan who was active in the United States in the 1970's and who founded the Generative Systems research program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1970, and Italian Bruno Munari, who exhibited photocopying machines together with his work, for example in the main pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 1970. From Finland she mentions the work of Raakel Närhi, who won the Foto-Finlandia prize in 1996 for her series *Memento Mori* (1995), made with a colour photocopying machine. (Leskinen 2016, 29.)
3. See (Vuorinen 2022).
 4. I have previously written on human-nonhuman entanglements in photographic art, both in the digital and organic worlds, respectively. See (Vuorinen 2020, 2023).
 5. (Marks 2000; Pallasmaa [1996] 2012).
 6. Studio visit and interview with Inari Sandell 21.9.2023; and with Kira Leskinen 22.9.2023. Skype interview with Anna Skladmann 16.10.2023, and a following e-mail correspondence with all three artists.
 7. See Leskinen (2016); Sandell (2023).
 8. Other contemporary artists working with scanographic methods are, just to name a few: Joe Cruz: <https://jcruz.co.uk/project/jacquemus-97.>; Chantal Faust: <http://lycheeone.com/wp/artist/chantalfaut/>; Simon Ward: <https://www.simonwardphoto.com/new-gallery-39/w8988lidzldcpgt901of58nzyrxv1z>. and Andrea Zucchini: <https://www.andreazucchini.co.uk/new-gallery/>.
 9. Interview with Inari Sandell 21.9.2023.
 10. "The word 'glitch' refers to any form of electronic interference, especially those that become audible or visible in transmission. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word appeared for the first time in the 1960s as astronaut slang for a sudden surge in current." (Cubitt 2017, 2.)
 11. See (Sandell 2023), 3 and passim.
 12. Interview with Inari Sandell 21.9.2023.
 13. See (Cubitt 2017), 9 for a reference to artist Andrew Norman Wilson's series ScanOps (2012-) where the hands of scan operators for Google Books appear in the frame. See also: <https://www.andrewnormanwilson.com/ScanOps.html>.
 14. Interview with Inari Sandell 21.9.2023.
 15. (Sandell 2023), 21.
 16. See especially (Marks 2000), 112–113; 127; 168–169.
 17. (Marks 2000), 159.
 18. (Marks 2000), 168–169.
 19. (Sandell 2023), 21.
 20. (Marks 2000), 169.
 21. (Marks 2000), 169–170.
 22. (Pallasmaa [1996] 2012), 40. My emphasis. Pallasmaa's text was first published in the mid-nineties, and with the stream of images he writes about he refers to music videos for example. (See Pallasmaa [1996] 2012, 40.) The issue can be seen even as more pressing in our current times with the onslaught of social media and other online and networked images, and the proliferation of moving images on screens in public spaces, used for advertising.
 23. Väinö Tanner residence, Mazzano Romano Italy March 2018; Circolo Scandinavo, Rome Italy November 2019, Residencia KAI Arín Peru October 2022. (Interview with Kira Leskinen 22.9.2023.).
 24. Interview with Kira Leskinen 22.9.2023.
 25. The term tufting is used for working with a tufting gun, whereas the term punch needle is used for working with a needle by hand. Leskinen uses both methods. (E-mail correspondence with Kira Leskinen, March 2024.).
 26. Interview with Kira Leskinen 22.9.2023.
 27. Interview with Kira Leskinen 22.9.2023.
 28. (Leskinen 2016), 17. See also (Pallasmaa [1996] 2012), 37–38 on points in art history when artists have moved beyond the idea of a single, one-point perspective.
 29. (Leskinen 2016), passim., see especially 7.
 30. (Leskinen 2016), 33.
 31. See (Leskinen 2016), 33. The name of this work illustrates the difficulty of total detachment from linguistic signification, as "sahha" is an existing word with meaning in some languages.
 32. (Pallasmaa [1996] 2012), 28.
 33. Interview with Anna Skladmann 16.10.2023.
 34. Interview with Anna Skladmann 16.10.2023. The photo technician was Simon Ward, who is also an artist working with scanners, see <https://www.simonwardphoto.com/new-gallery-39/w8988lidzldcpgt901of58nzyrxv1z>.
 35. Interview with Anna Skladmann 16.10.2023; interview with Inari Sandell 21.9.2023.
 36. Interview with Anna Skladmann 16.10.2023.
 37. Interview with Anna Skladmann 16.10.2023.
 38. (Pallasmaa [1996] 2012), 18.
 39. (Pallasmaa [1996] 2012), 18.
 40. (Pallasmaa [1996] 2012), 19.
 41. (Pallasmaa [1996] 2012), 18.
 42. (Marks 2000), 119. On the relations between vision and touch in theoretical thinking, see also (Olin 2012), 7.
 43. (Elo 2012), 2–3.
 44. (Elo 2012), 2.
 45. See (Olin 2012), 2 and below on the use of language related to touch used when describing our relations with photographic images.
 46. (Edwards and Hart 2004), 1. See also (Barthes [1980] 2010).
 47. (Edwards and Hart 2004), passim.
 48. (Marks 2000), 163. It is an interesting fact that Riegl was a curator of textiles (See Marks 2000, 168.).
 49. See (Marks 2000), 162.
 50. (Deleuze and Guattari [1987] 2013), 572.
 51. (Olin 2012), 2.
 52. (Olin 2012), 2.
 53. (Olin 2012), 3.
 54. See (Edwards and Hart 2004), passim.
 55. (Olin 2012), 17.
 56. The writings of philosopher Byung-Chul Han on "essencing" and "absencing" as verbs have been influential for me here as well (See Han [2007] 2023, 1–21 and passim.).
 57. (Olin 2012), 16.
 58. See (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012), 95 and passim. (Pallasmaa [1996] 2012); passim (Marks 2000); 148–149 (Elo 2012); 2, 7 (Olin 2012); 9.
 59. On the history of cameraless photographic art (See Batchen 2016).

60. See (Elo 2012), 7 on transparency, immediacy and touch related to technology and touch-based devices.
61. (Pallasmaa [1996] 2012), 37.
62. Leskinen has also held performances where she makes her scanographs while an audience can watch.
63. Respective e-mail correspondence with the artists, March–April 2024. The exact time of a scan is not always measured, so these times are approximations by the artists.
64. See (Leskinen 2016), 28.
65. (Cubitt 2017), 2.
66. (Cubitt 2017), 3.
67. See (Vuorinen 2020), 45 on the aesthetics of intentional glitches. Sandell problematizes using glitches in works related to autism (See Sandell 2023, 21.).
68. Interview with Inari Sandell 21.9.2023.
69. Interview with Anna Skladmann 16.10.2023.
70. (Leskinen 2016), 37.
71. (Leskinen 2016), 19.
72. (Leskinen 2016), 19; and (Leskinen 2016), 30.
73. Interview with Anna Skladmann 16.10.2023.
74. See (Elo 2012), 7 on the characteristic of touchscreens to “sorting out the body”.
75. Interview with Anna Skladmann 16.10.2023.
76. (Leskinen 2016), 37, 41.
77. Interview with Kira Leskinen 22.9.2023; interview with Inari Sandell 21.9.2023.
78. Whether this visual unrecorded flow can even be considered an image is a question for another article.
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