The night is no longer dead;
it has a life of its own.
There’s the sign: the loud screech of the final sound-check bursts through the dark venue. And then an eerie silence. The muffled jabber of voices return to swim around my ankles once more, briefly, reminding me that others are here. I have enough time to weave through the fog, towards the front of the stage, and clear my mind with one, deep, resolutive exhale. . . . Wait for the sonic tide to break. And then, it hits. A deluge. A solid mass. First the long and deep waves of the bass tones. I close my eyes and fall. Struggling briefly to orientate myself. Shifting. I grasp out in an attempt to discover an analytical path towards understanding—What is happening to me?—before releasing this part of my mind that must find-a-way-through. It floods over me, through me: simultaneously enveloping and penetrating. I stand, stepping my feet apart—slightly—to align with my shoulders, firmly planted within this massive textual density that is spreading like layers of gauze, pervading the space. The vocals begin, emitting short waves, occasionally piercing out from underneath the lengths of the guitar and drums. I feel sonic pressure, released by the amplifier, pushing against my wrists and throat, and am overcome with the sensation of sounds swirling around me, immersing me, plummeting into my ears. Everything that was solid is now porous. I stand, exercising the strategic and exhilarating tightening and releasing of tension maintained throughout the set. Giving in to the sensation of being suspended, the pleasure of being lost, of not expecting, the impossible…

When Philip Tagg writes on the structure of Western music, in his *Introductory Notes to the Semiotics of Music*, melody (since the Renaissance) is described as a linear, sequential entity, standing in front of the texture of the accompaniment. It is a recognizable voice, premiering high above the—sometimes indistinguishable—ambiance of the music. Typically (in occidental music) the vocalist leads, as the premier focal point of the performance, providing a single entry-point through lucid lyrics and chorus. With a profane gesture, Black Metal inverses this—counteracting structural hierarchy and its inherent monotheism. In describing the polyphonic, or polycentric, Tagg aptly cites the secular, visual compositions within paintings by Hieronymus Bosch or Pieter Bruegel the Elder. So many entry-points arise from the cacophonous moment of inception that there appear to be none-at-all. There is an all-at-once-ness to everything. Eyes and ears dart across obscured terrains and a yawning void expands. Perhaps, if there is not one clear answer, there are no answers? Nihilism is an exit strategy; you can always simply leave and let the vivacious sounds thrash against the thick doors that slam behind you. Or, you can enter it; let it engulf you. As if you were on the verge of drowning, you must enact here a mortal fight to maneuver through its elongated duration, affirming your own will to power, transcending your previously stagnant agency with a willingness to navigate through strange seas.

† Special thanks to Cláudia Azevedo for her insight and conversation during the inception of this undertaking.
In the following pages, images by nine artists evoke Black Metal visually. The punctum here is obfuscation through texture. Within each image, complex layers imply both thickness and depth, offering extended spaces to be traversed, experiences to be undergone, exertions to be overcome. Traditional visual relationships between figure and ground are strategically reversed. Similar to the sonic event described above—where the melody is buried beneath a combination of the drum’s blast-beat, the guitar’s tremolo, and the amplifier feedback—each of these images emanate a dense, yet permeable, temporal and spatial confusion in their depiction of vast and immersive spaces. The perceptive viewer may recognize individual elements—trees, water, skies, stars, bones—but there is a rift: these images are not representing the objects that you know they are. Using demotic materials, they create a visual noise that is optically disorientating. It is a divisive technique. The mediations taking place are indeed the substance of the images: we do not look at these images, but through them.

The skeptical nature of encounter that I am recommending within this introduction (double fistedly: both sonically and visually) is a critique of the rational, analytical, representational, or measurable explorations of time and space, in favor of an experience that Eugène Minkowski recognizes within “dark space” or the phenomenological “lived space.” To describe “me-here-now,” you must abandon the notion of distance: the qualitative impulse to geometrically measure, and thus definitively distinguish, yourself outside and against your surroundings (and I would add, to equate your previous experience of objects: the that-then to the this-now). It is in this dark terrain that living unfolds and personal freedoms transpire. By intimately knowing and confronting this obscure and expansive depth laying before us we are able to actualize our potential and intuitively plunge ourselves into it. The simulated fog of the concert venue, the long drawn-out tones, the low rumbling of grays rolling across a photograph, multidirectional perspectives, simultaneity, the whirling storm clouds, our ability to reach out and wrinkle/shove time and space, the seductiveness of closing one’s eyes and navigating this private, seemingly ambient, space… it is all this, I feel, Minkowski perceives when he observes in Lived Time: “The night no longer is something dead; it has its own life.”

Within these curated pages, the obscure and abstract texture of Black Metal manifests as a veil that replicates the substantial darkness of the night’s cloak. Night, momentarily displaced, perceived dead, emerges from this disjuncture, overcoming it with a raw vitality. Inversing figure and ground; interchanging melody and ambiance. The images express an opening of possibilities. Independent now from time and space, they seethe with the qualities of a transitional phenomenon and gain a life of their own.

-Amelia Ishmael


Alexander Binder

Pages 4-5: Untitled (Traum), 2009
Page 14: Untitled (Golgatha), 2011
Page 15: Untitled (Golgatha), 2011

Alexander Binder was born on the Halloween night of 1976, in the Black Forest/Germany. He’s a totally self-taught photographer, having never attended a photo class in his life. Even his lenses are mostly self-built from optical toys, old soviet cameras, prisms, or plastic crap. A fan of Hans Bellmer and Herbert List, Alexander creates mystical and ethereal photos that are characterized by a strong passion for the spiritual, the surreal, and the occult.

www.alexanderbinder.de

Gast Bouschet and Nadine Hilbert

Page 6: Grímsvötn, 2011
Page 7: Grímsvötn, 2011

On May 22, 2011, Iceland’s most active volcano—Grímsvötn—erupted full force, sending a cloud of ash 15 kilometers in the air. The pictures here were taken in early June 2011, while a thick layer of dust and ash still covered parts of the Vatnajökull glacier. The partially blurred images are the result of experimental techniques, based on optical lens mistreatment by means of volcanic dust and ice as well as camera damage. Our work investigates the aesthetics and ethics of a threshold between inside and out, hiding and showing. It depicts the planet as a complex system and reflects man’s foreignness in the world. We use visual handicaps to alter the visible and the ways of perceiving it. Obfuscation corrupts the process of perception and hinders the social construction of reality.

www.bouschet-hilbert.org

Ibrahim R. Ineke

Pages 18-19: Excerpt from “Blossom On a Thorn Bush” zine, xerografic print, 2011

Ibrahim R. Ineke is a draughtsman and curator, based in The Hague, Netherlands. He co-founded Baracca in 2005, as a means to “think out loud” his artistic praxis and to show work by artists whose approaches reflect or influence his own practice.

His artworks utilize and deconstruct the narrative strategies and visual structures of the comic book medium. Through sequences aesthetically influenced by drone music, they assert both the autonomy and interdependence of images in their use of layered xerographic noise, a slow gradual build, and hypnotic repetition.

www.melencolica.blogspot.com
www.spectralexistence.blogspot.com
www.baracca.nl

Alessandro Keegan

Page 20: Untitled 2, graphite on paper, 11 x 14 inches
Page 21: Untitled 1, graphite on paper, 11 x 14 inches

These black-and-white graphite drawings on paper share influences—such as nature, the sublime, growth, and decay—with the Black Metal genre.

The imagery suggests partially formed, primordial environments, emerging from light and shadow. In this way, they engage the theme of a beginning or a genesis. Untitled 1 is a landscape scene with a shadowy grotto. The mountain-like protuberances in Untitled 2 have a relationship to the mountain peaks often found in 19th-century Romantic paintings. I am interested in the subjective haze of Romanticism and fantasy art that is also a source of imagery adopted by the Black Metal aesthetic and other “dark” subcultures.

www.akeeganart.blogspot.com
Irena Knezevic

Failure of Visible Universe, conceived as an ongoing collaboration with the University of Chicago’s Department of Astrophysics in 2006, is an annual index of vanished galaxies, imploded within imaging range of Earth’s telescopes.

The light that has vanished millions of years ago, has finally reached us—a record of good, old times. The scientific material in this work, based on spectral imaging, is used as an artistic alternative to the mathematic calculation of collateral damage. The astrophysicists involved are the guardians who watch time and space unfold, without a flinch. Their powerlessness to intervene in the death of stars parallels, for me, the inability of consumers to intervene in the market forces and political decisions that affect us everyday. Especially pertinent in a time of recession and disaster, the editions were recently developed into personal one-offs, where annual editions—corresponding to the year of worst personal failure by the person collecting the work—can be ordered. The edition is sent flat, to be crumpled by the collector and hidden away behind bookshelves, under beds, or any other place where it can gather dust and ruin.

www.allyouknowistrue.net

Allen Linder

Page 16: Alone at nite in the forest with only a flashlight, black ink on paper, 2009
Here I approach making a drawing as an adventure. I begin with a simple mark, a doodle, a scribble. And then another and another. I make a conscious effort to try and avoid predictability. The mark making becomes a meditation which both focuses my vision and expands my peripheral vision. The marks build up into textured layers of density and complexity. I concentrate on the formal elements of line quality, light and dark, design and composition as the drawing continues to build itself. Forms begin to suggest themselves through the interplay of value. Some forms are refined, others merge and morph and others dissolve into darkness. I am attracted to deep, dark mysterious spaces. I avoid narrative reference as long as I can. I don’t want to know where I am going. I want to be surprised when I get there. I turn the page upside-down and sideways, searching for content in the evolving form. All at once, I see exactly what it is and I assign the title.

www.lindersculpture.com

Gean Moreno

Page 12: Untitled, mixed media on existing paintings, 2007
Page 13: Untitled, mixed media on existing paintings, 2007

The images of this series are of accumulations over preexisting paintings by a well-known geometric abstractionist, which are themselves a remake of a project that he produced in the late 1970s. They have something to do with the possibility of the remake as it begins to crust and thicken and miss its grooves, allowing an Outside to geometric abstraction itself to start oozing in.

Nine Eglantine Yamamoto-Masson

Page 8: From “Ouvertures” series, digital c-print, 2009-2012, 8.3 x 11 inches
Page 9: From “Ouvertures” series, digital c-print, 2009-2012, 8.3 x 11 inches
Pages 10-11: From “Ouvertures” series, digital c-print, 2009-2012, 8.3 x 11 inches

Nine Eglantine Yamamoto-Masson is a Berlin-based, French-Japanese curator, artist, and PhD candidate at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (University of Amsterdam).

“Ouvertures” is an ongoing mosaic of photographs taken on the other side of suspended spaces. It plays with the lie within the aesthetics of the Sublime and lingers on the mundane that makes them possible. The enacted “ouvertures” refer both to the photographic apparatus as to the opening of an interstice within (or a disruption of) a habitus of representation and viewing. The present selection is comprised of images from Siberia, Iceland, and the Philippines.

www.kinemanippon.org