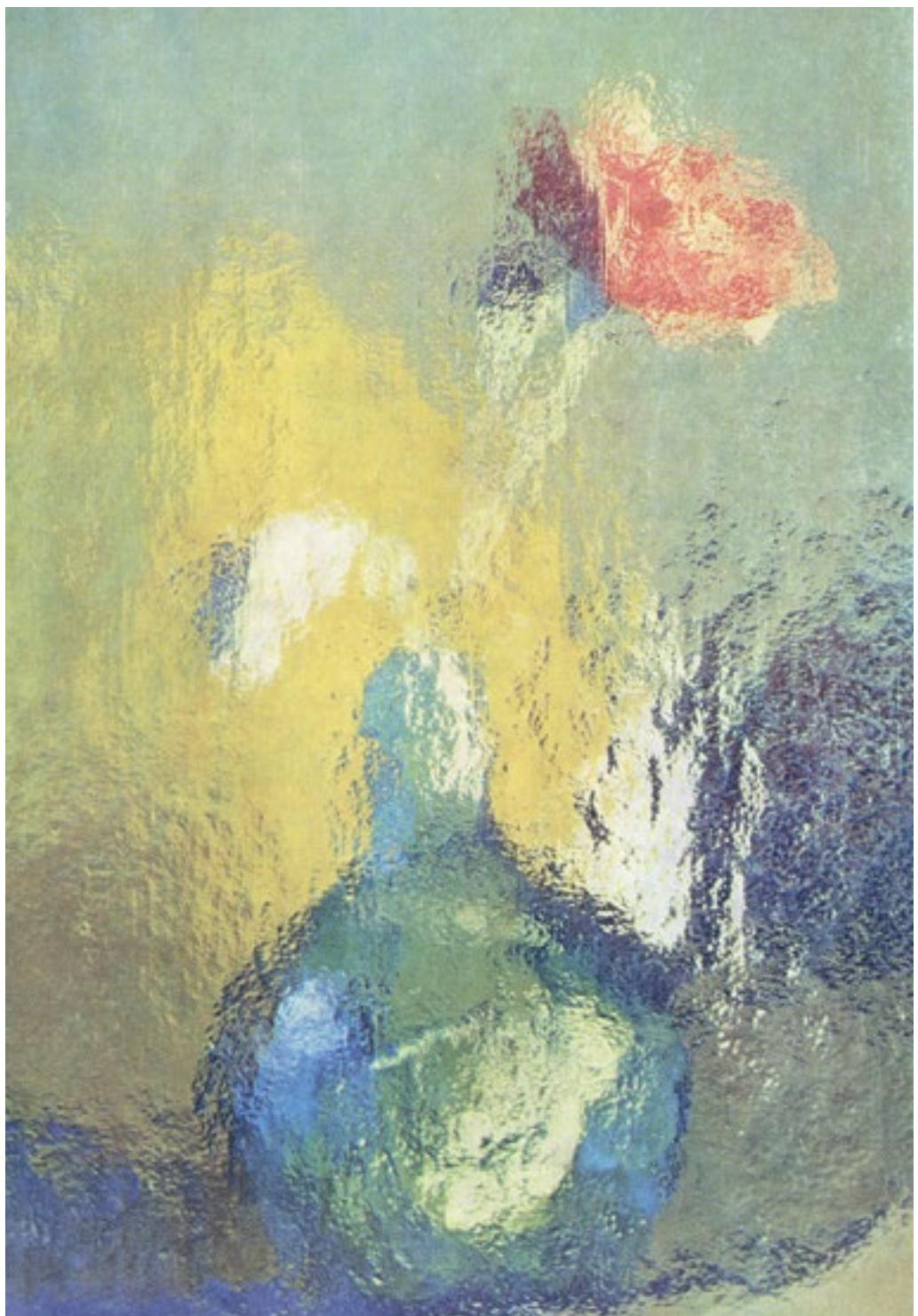


The Infinite Library
Books 1–50

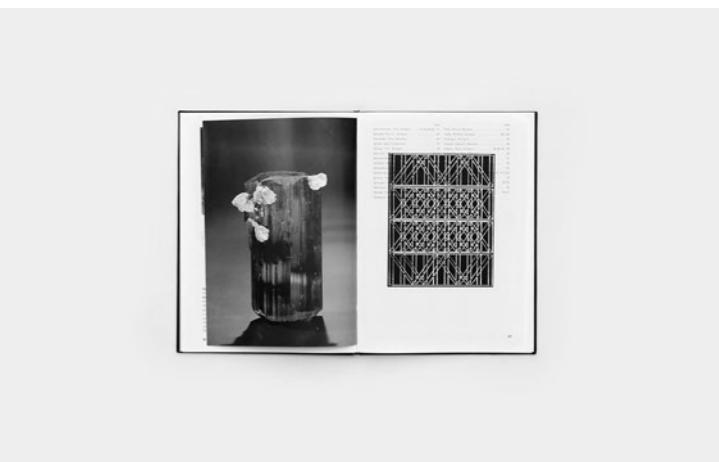
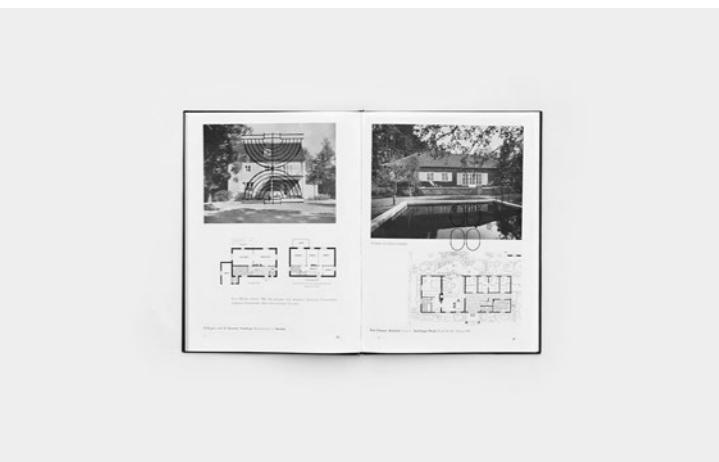
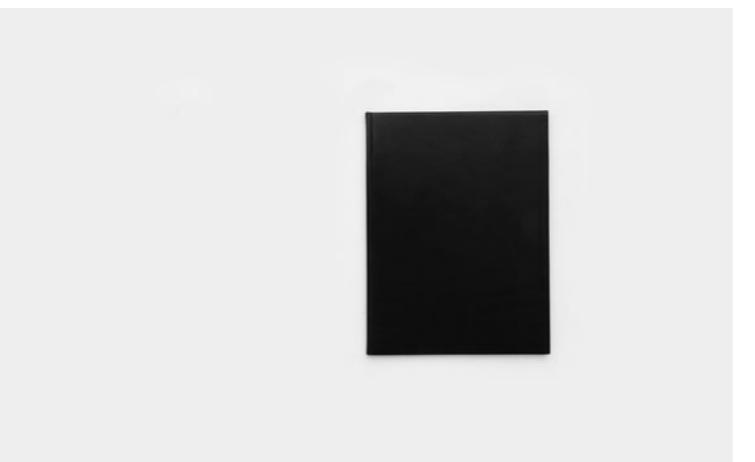
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Haris Epaminonda

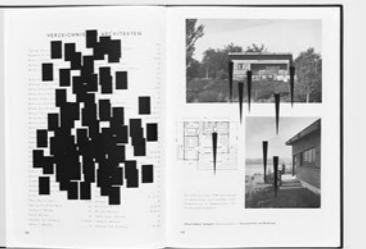
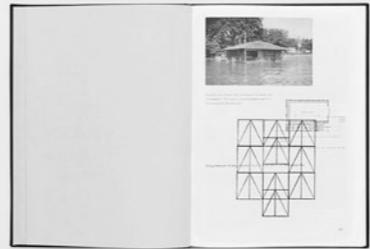
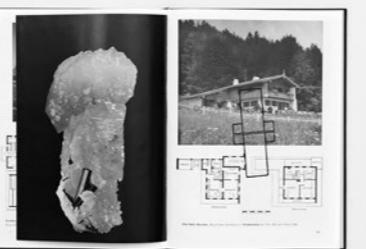
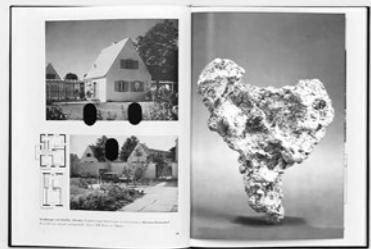
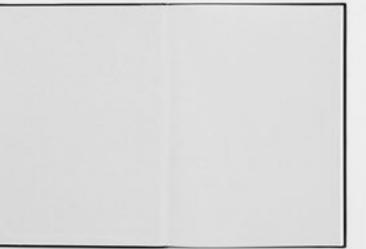
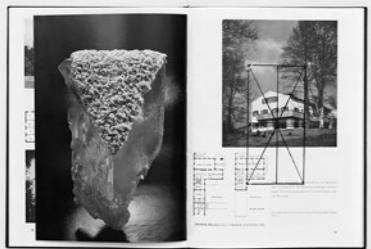
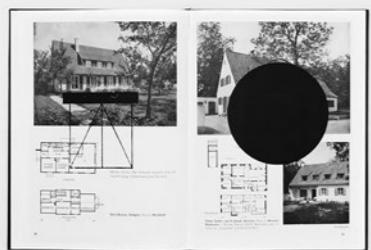
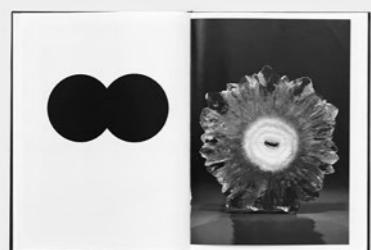
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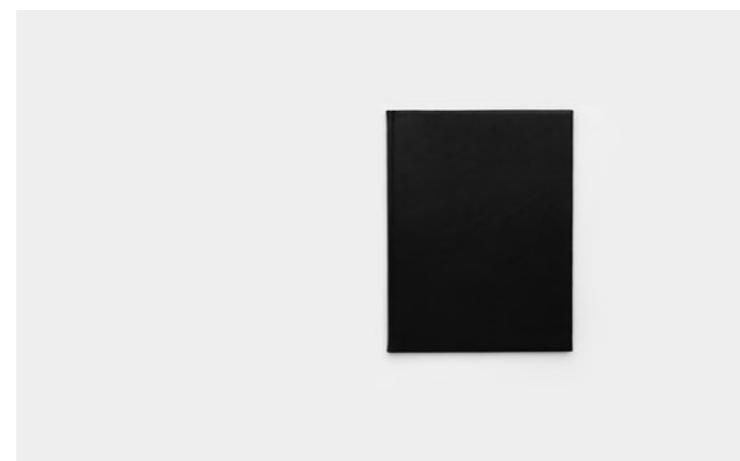
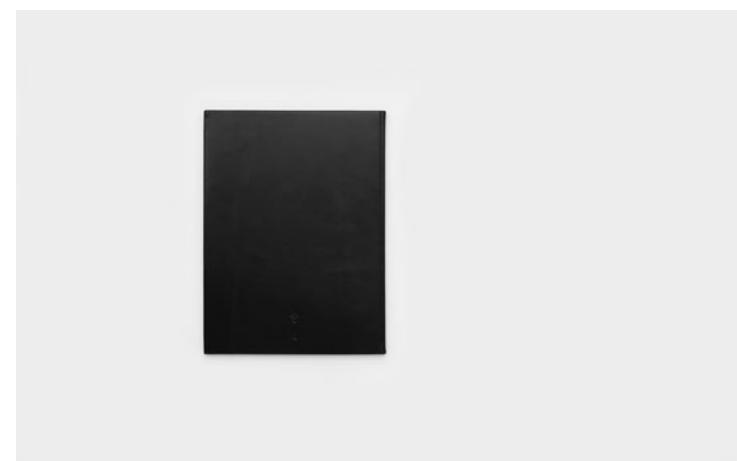
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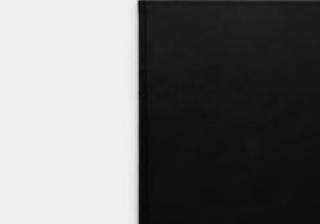
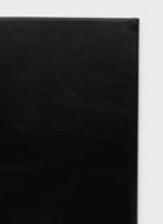
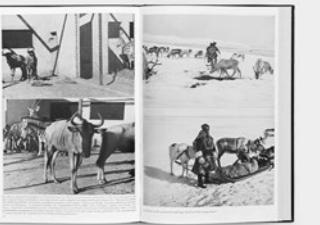
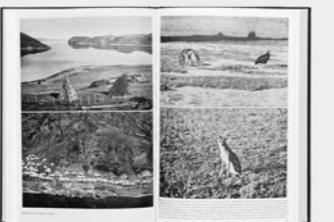


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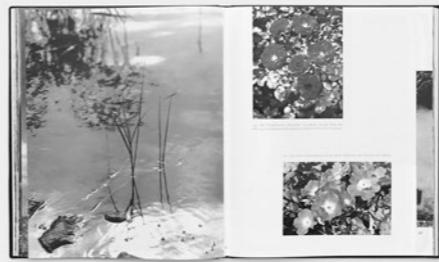
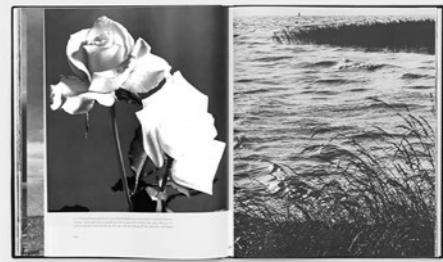


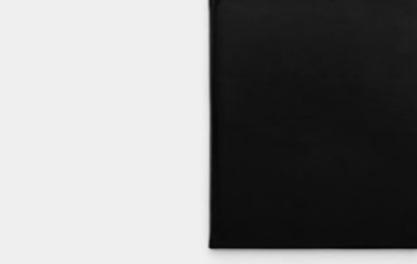
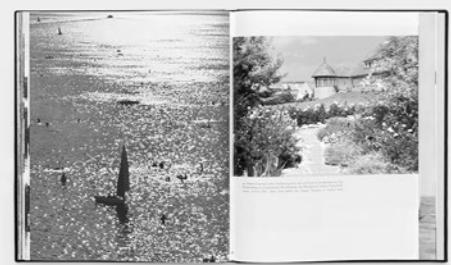


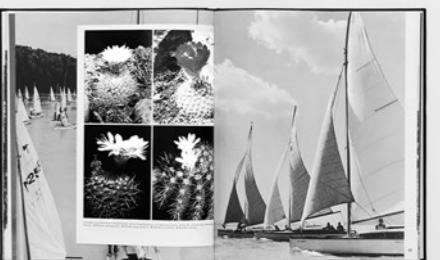
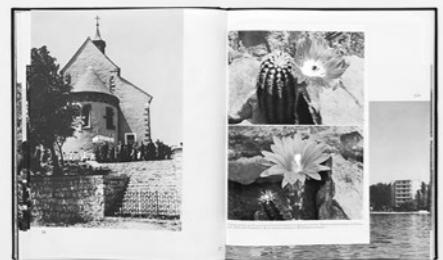


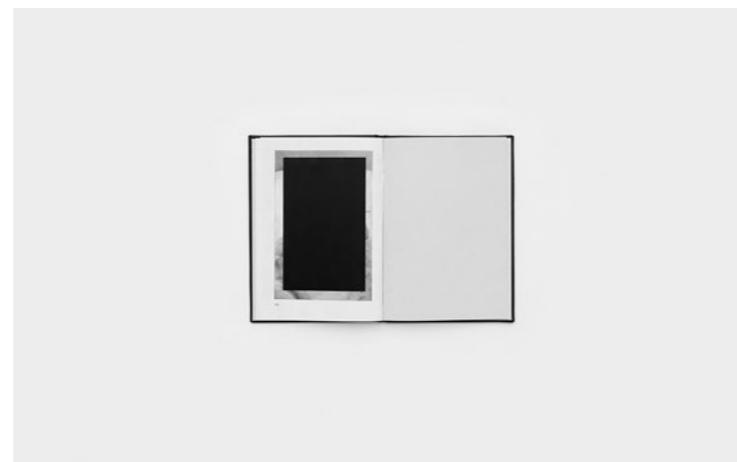
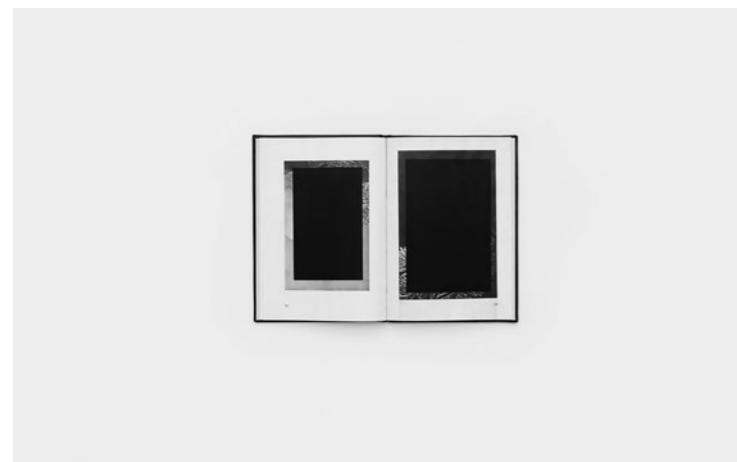
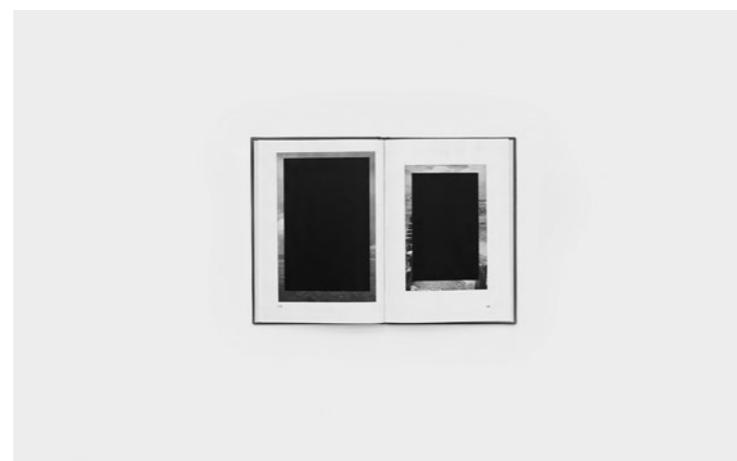
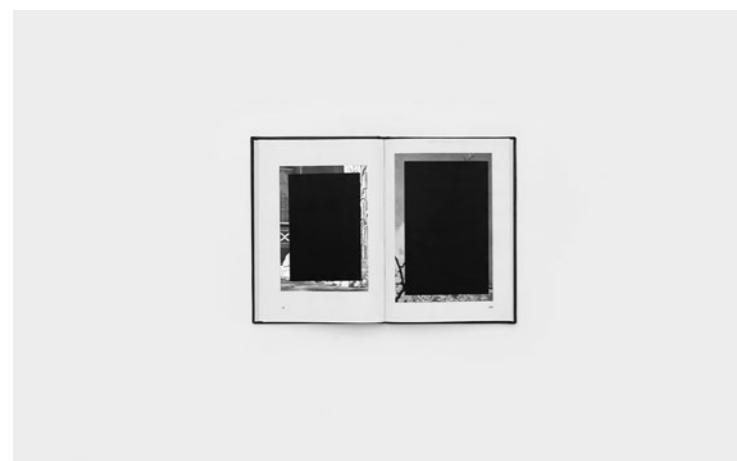


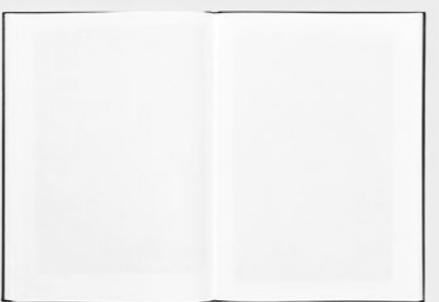
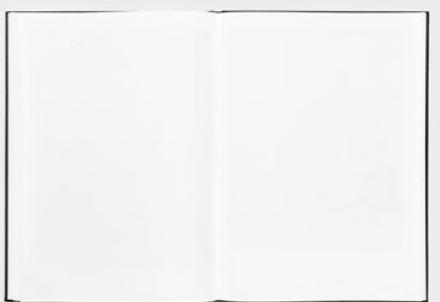
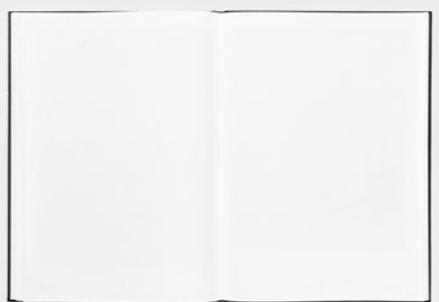
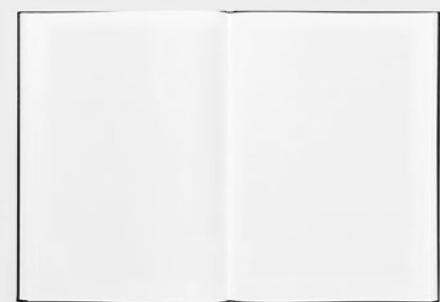
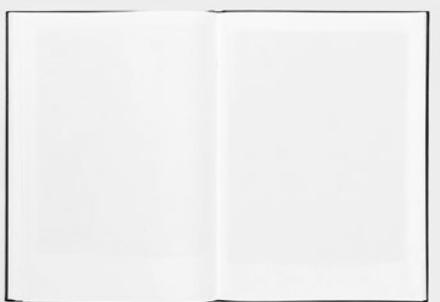
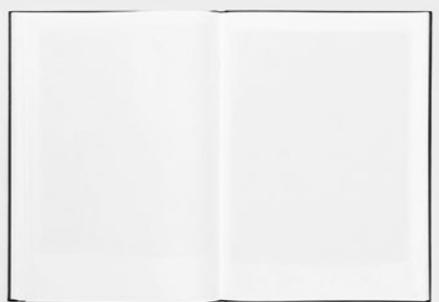
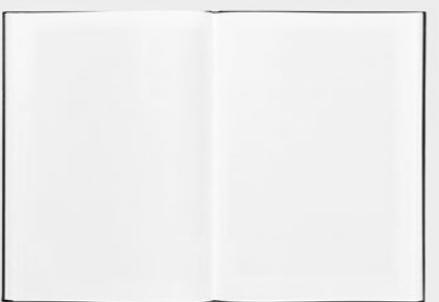
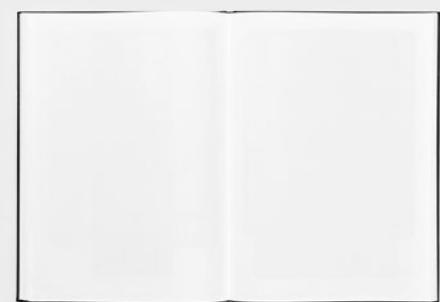
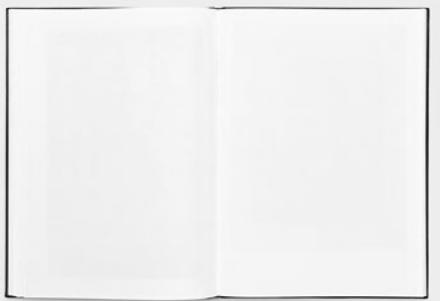
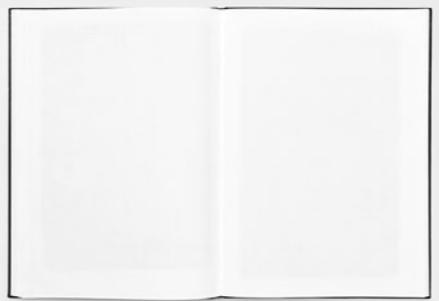
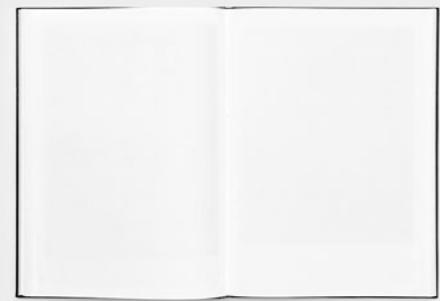


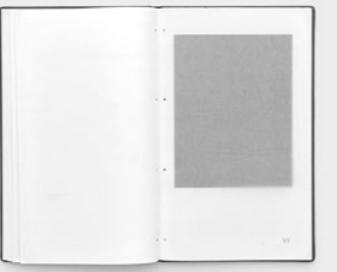
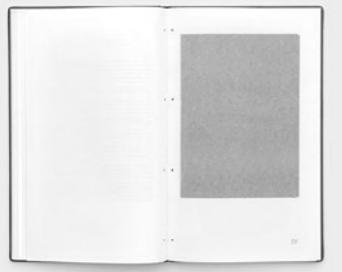
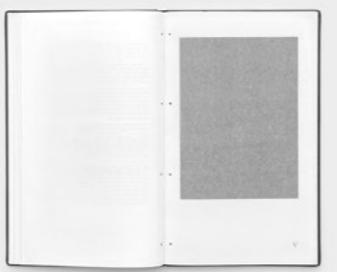
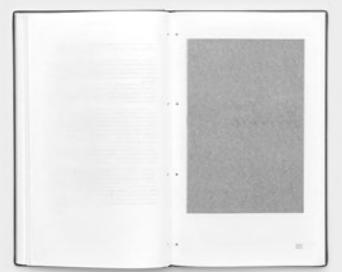


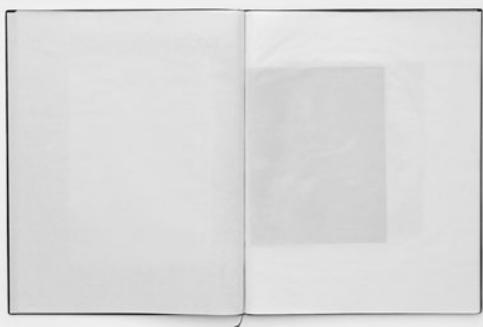
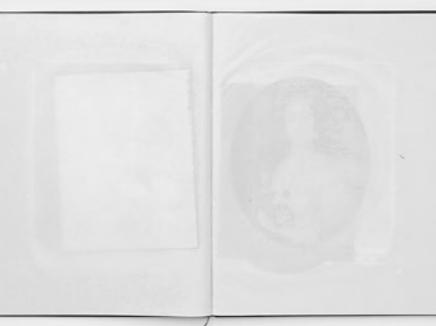
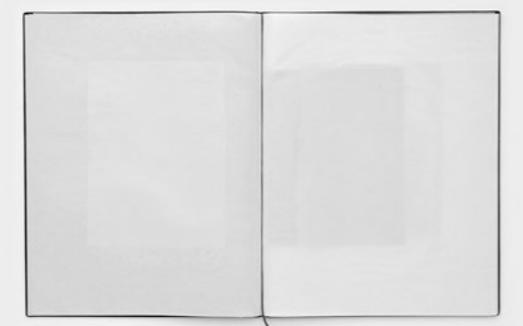
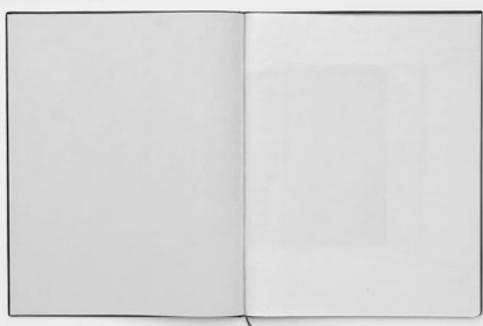
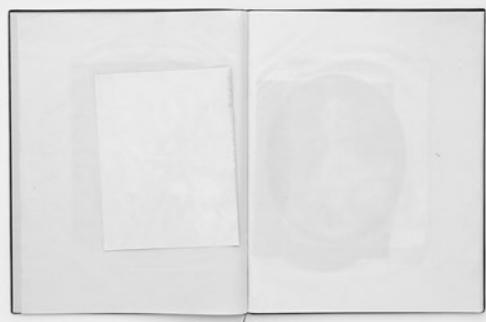


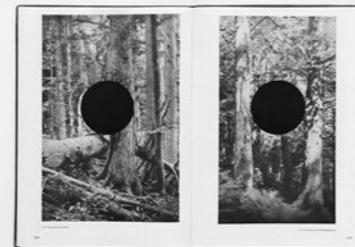
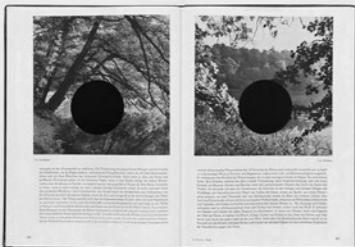
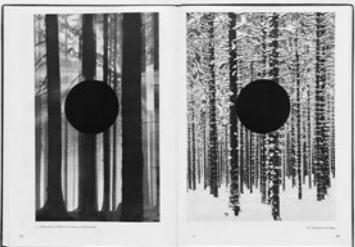
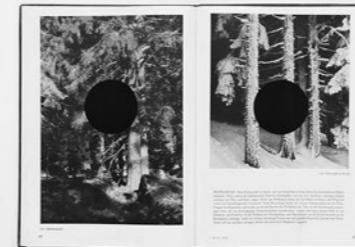
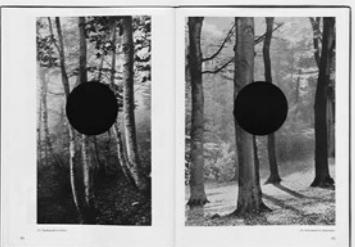
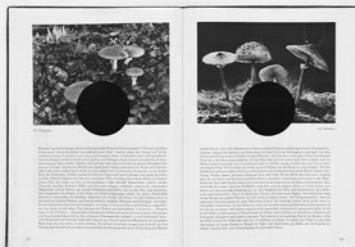
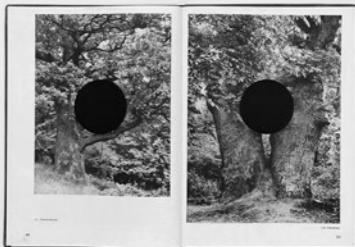
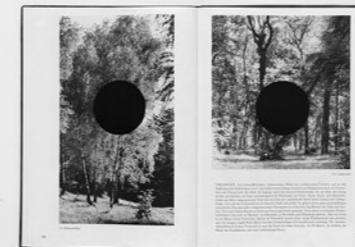
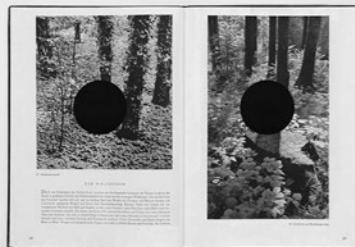


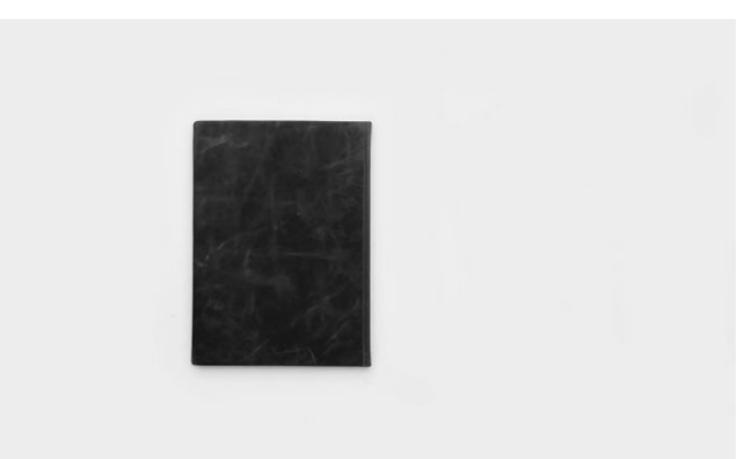




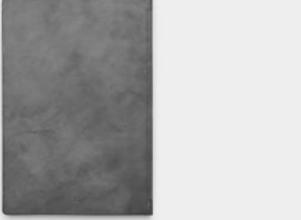
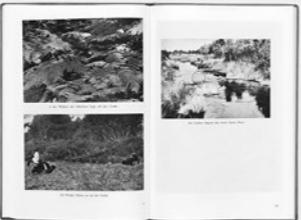


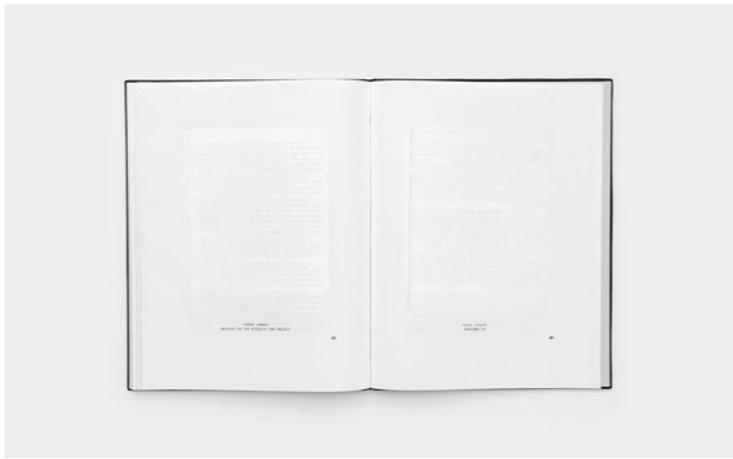
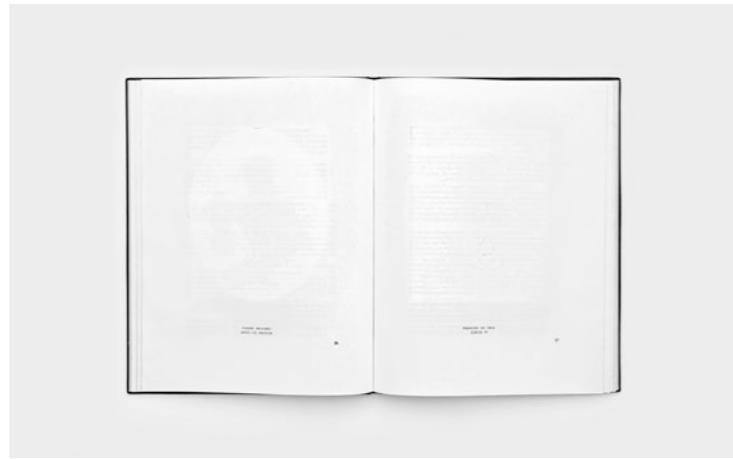
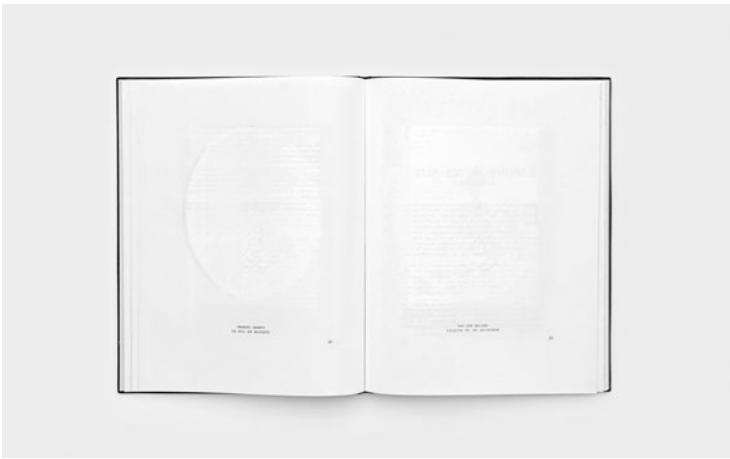
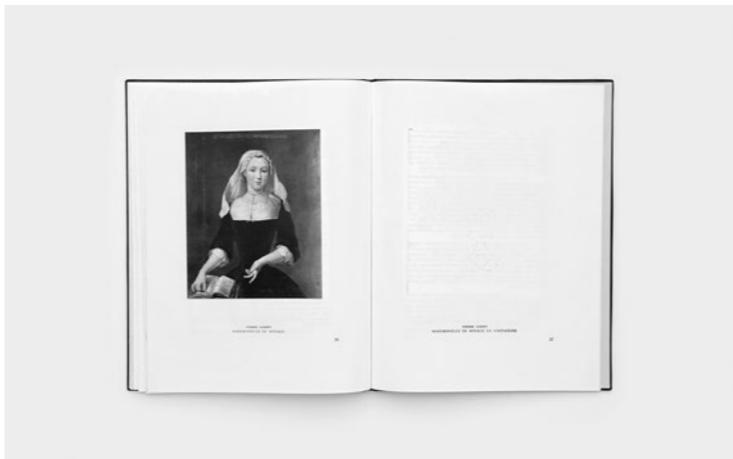
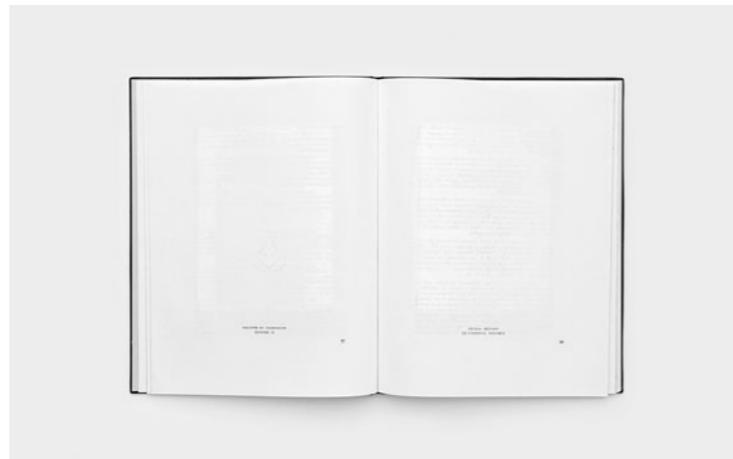
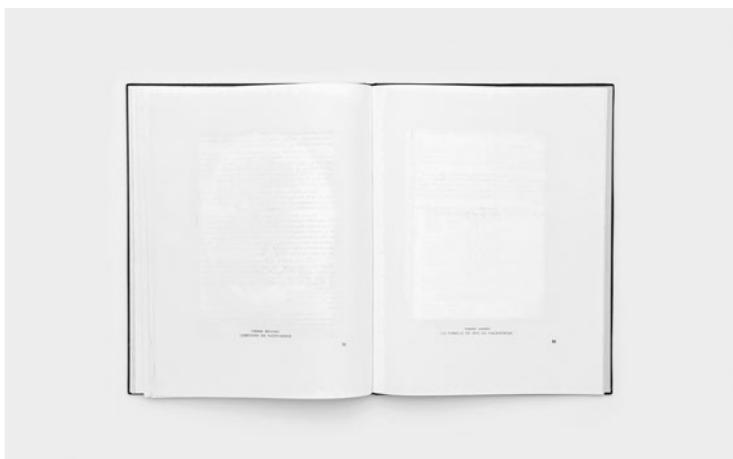
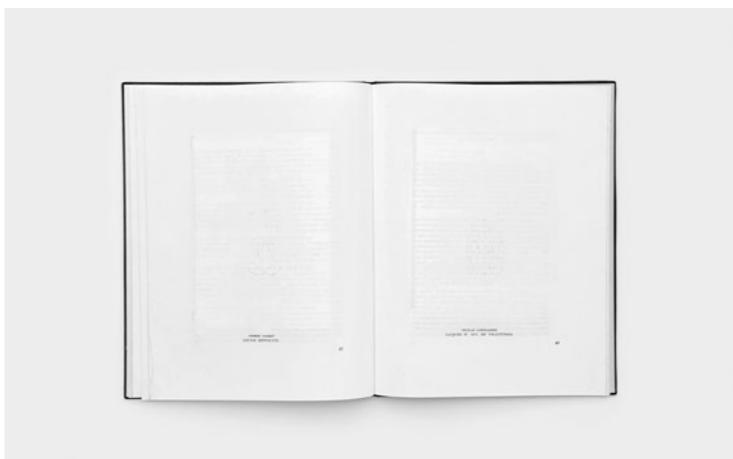
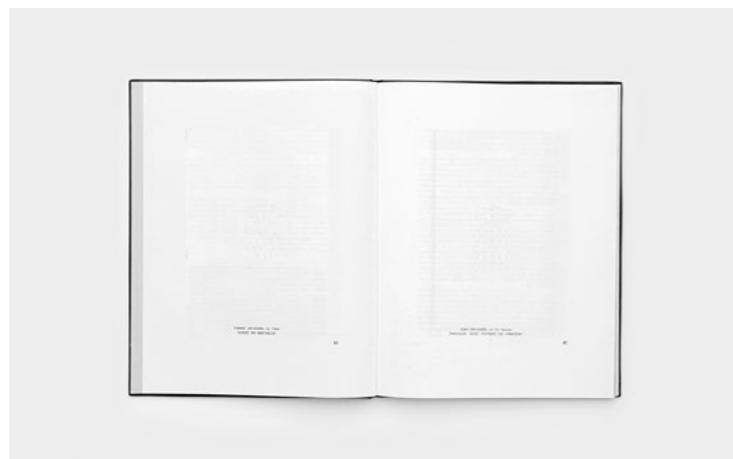
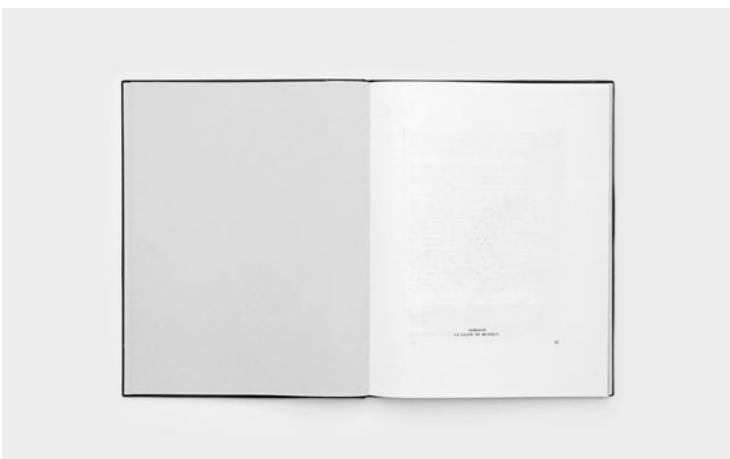
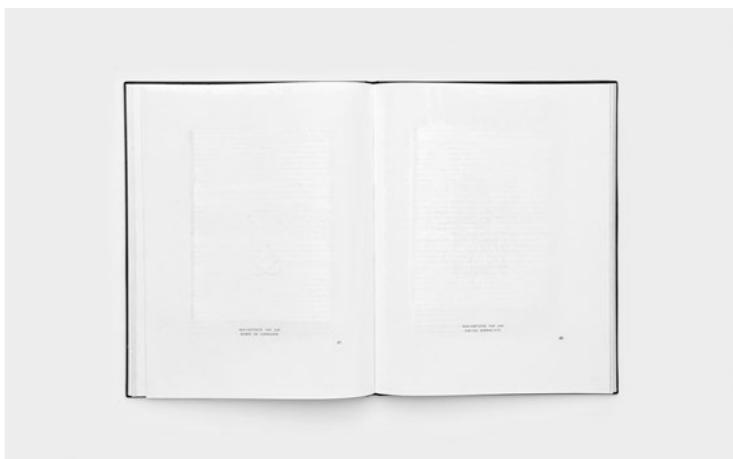
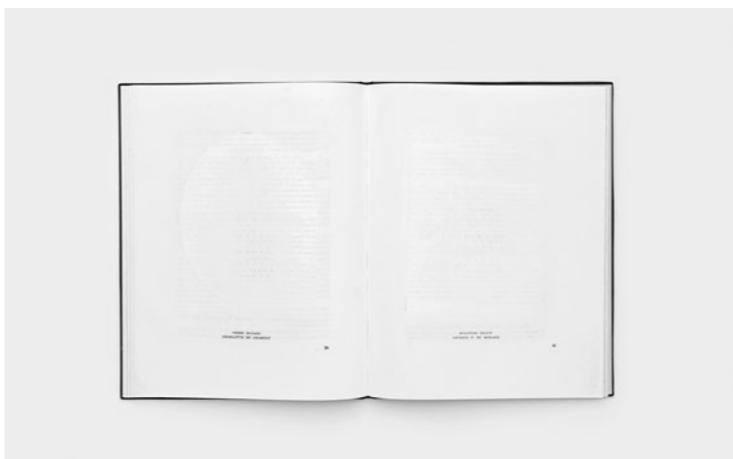
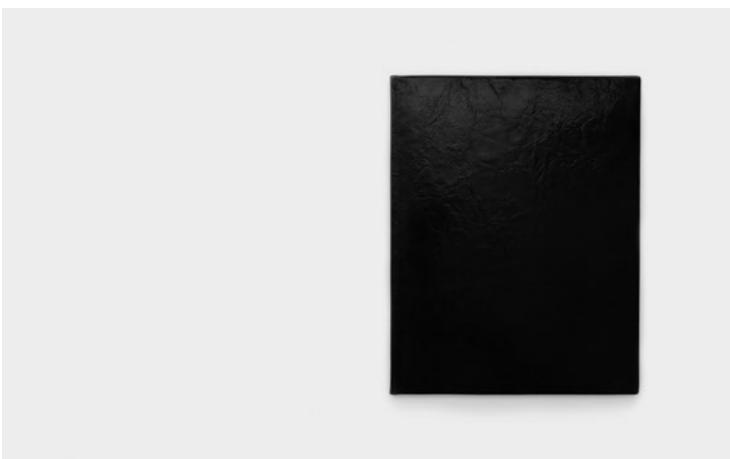








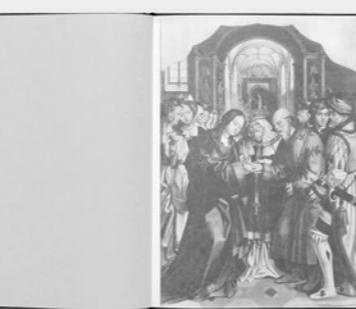
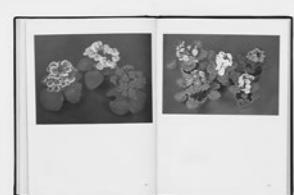
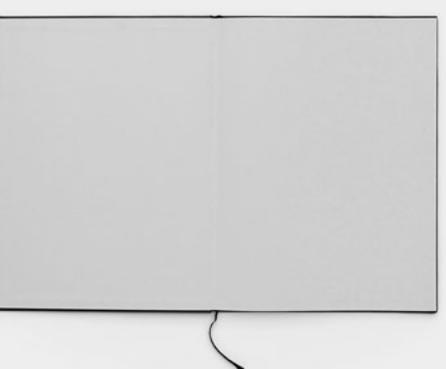
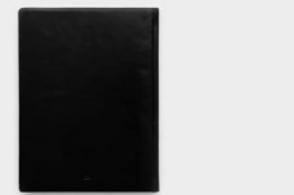
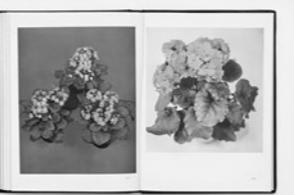


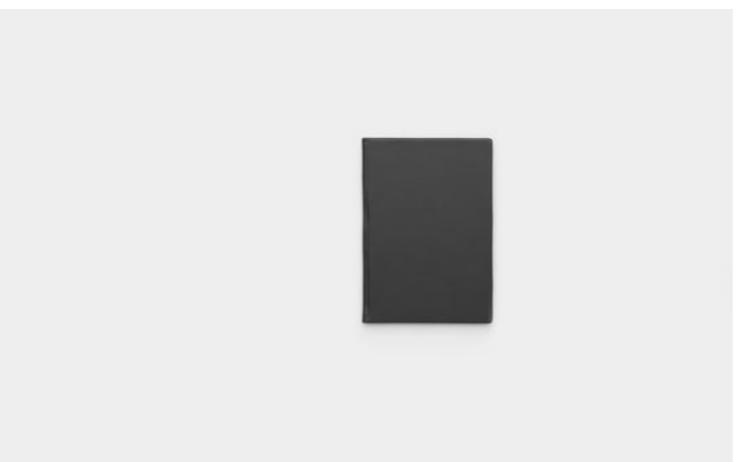


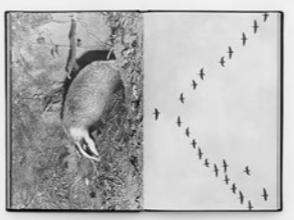


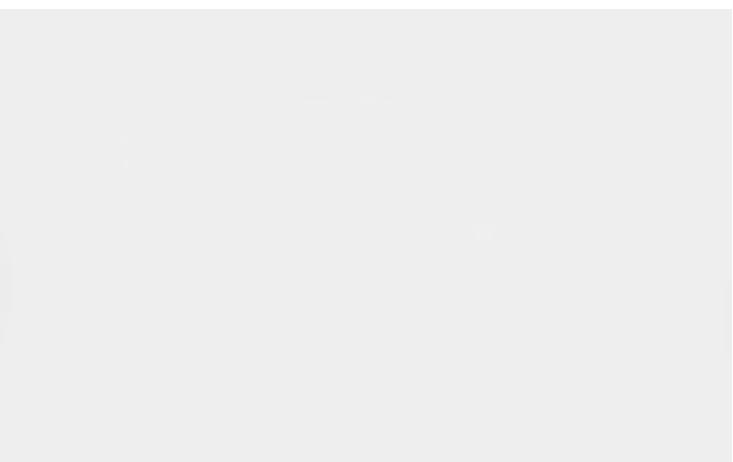
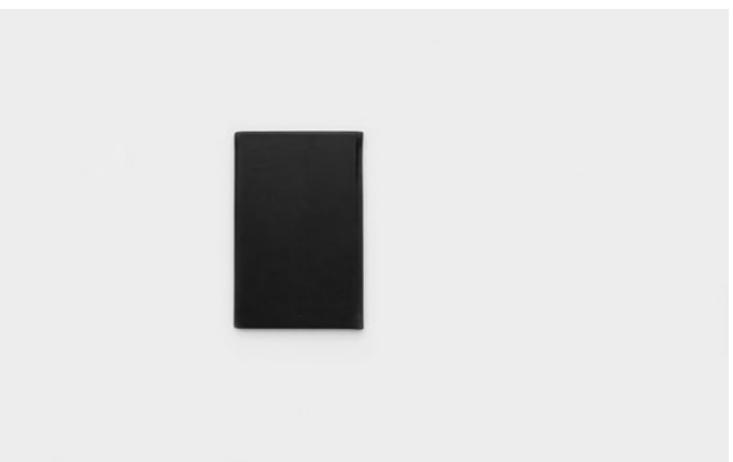












Das unergründliche Archiv

Am Anfang liegt das Buch ganz flach da, ist nicht mehr als eine sachte Erhebung auf seiner Unterlage, ein dezent sich über die Landschaft des Tisches oder Schreibtisches erhebendes Plateau. Ungeöffnet hat das Buch eine beinahe uniforme Oberfläche, unterbrochen lediglich von kleinen Unregelmäßigkeiten oder Gebrauchsspuren an den dunklen Rändern. Es sieht nicht einfach geschlossen aus, sondern wirkt reserviert, ja unnahbar, als wolle es seine Geheimnisse nicht allzu bereitwillig preisgeben. Es wirkt kaum einen Schatten auf die weiße Ebene, die es umgibt.

Einmal geöffnet, stellt das Buch ein räumliches Paradoxon dar. Einerseits strebt es weiter nach seiner zweidimensionalen Flächigkeit: Statt seine ganze Dreidimensionalität zu entfalten, dehnt es sich auf seiner Unterlage lediglich zu den Seiten hin aus – eine Hand streckt sich aus, vielleicht, um hier und da eine Seite glatt zu streichen, wo Falten sie unlesbar machen. Andererseits multiplizieren sich im gleichen Augenblick die Richtungen, in die sich das Buch bewegen könnte. Die noch ungelesenen Seiten breiten sich vor uns aus wie eine ganze Flucht von Räumen, die es zu durchstreifen gilt, und die Seitenzahlen sind unsere Orientierung auf dem Weg zurück. Auf jeder Seite – oder vielmehr auf jeder Doppelseite, denn jedes moderne Buch ist ein Diptychon – schweift das Auge ziellos über die Oberfläche, streift von Bild zu Bild (ganz offensichtlich haben wir es mit einem Bildband zu tun) oder verliert sich in den Tiefen eines einzigen Bildes. Textzeilen oder -blöcke lenken den Blick in die Horizontale oder lassen ihn, immer wieder vor- und zurückpendelnd, zum unteren Rand der Seite wandern.

Die Begrifflichkeit, derer man sich (zumindest im Englischen)¹ bedient, um es – jenes sonderbare Objekt, das nie ganz es selbst ist – zu beschreiben, deutet an, dass ein Buch ein weitaus größeres räumliches Volumen einnimmt, als es zunächst den Anschein hat. Man spricht darüber fast so, als handele es sich um einen bewohnbaren Raum. Schon allein der englische Begriff „volume“ für einen einzelnen Band belegt dies. Er bedeutet, dass ein Stapel zweidimensionaler Flächen eine Dicke hat, die wir in ihrer Gesamtheit nie auf einmal erfassen können, sind wir doch immer auf einer Seite gefangen. Verleger:innen sprechen vom „Umfang“ eines Buches – und meinen damit dessen Seitenzahl –, und im angelsächsischen Sprachraum fügen sich die Bundstege, die Abstände zwischen innerem Textrand und Bund, in der Sprache der Drucker:innen zu „gutters“ – Rinnen – zusammen. Diese Metaphern zeigen eine Begrenztheit des Raumes an, eine Art Umschließung, tatsächlich aber überschreitet das Buch seine Ränder und Grenzen und ist theoretisch unendlich.

Die in *The Infinite Library*² enthaltenen und imaginierten Räume sind zugleich schlicht und extravagant, klar verortet und doch grenzenlos. Hinsichtlich der erstaunlichen Ausdehnung dieser Räume – der Art,

The Enigmatic Archive

The book, at first, lies flat. It is no more than a slight elevation of the surface on which it rests, a discrete plateau that rises above the landscape of a desk or table. Unopened, the book presents an almost uniform surface. It looks not only closed but also somehow reticent or self-involved, as though it does not wish to give up its secrets too swiftly. It hardly casts a shadow on the white plane around it. Once opened, the book presents a spatial paradox. On the one hand, it aspires still to the platitude of two dimensions; instead of admitting its full three-dimensionality, it simply spreads itself laterally across its support—a hand reaches out, perhaps, to smooth the pages where they have ruffled into unreadable folds. On the other hand, the directions in which the book might be said to move now start to multiply. The unseen or unread pages extend before us like a succession of rooms to be traveled through; page numbers help us to remember our way back. On a single page—or rather on two pages, because the modern book is always a diptych—the eye wanders vagrantly across the surface, from one image to another (for this is, crucially, an illustrated book) or gets lost in the depths of a single picture. Lines or blocks of text draw the gaze horizontally, or force it to shuttle back and forth so that it descends vertically, to the lower limit of the page.

The vocabulary that we use (at least in English) to describe it—this curious object that is never quite itself—suggests that the book encompasses a much larger spatial volume than may at first be apparent; we talk about it almost as if it were a habitable space. The word “volume” already confirms this: a collection of two-dimensional surfaces is conceived as having a thickness that we never actually experience, trapped as we are on the surface of one page at a time. Publishers speak of the “extent” of a book—by which they mean the number of pages—and printers of the empty central “gutter” between two pages of text. These metaphors have to do with bounded space, with a kind of containment; but in truth the book escapes its margins and borders, and is theoretically infinite.

The spaces embodied and imagined in *The Infinite Library*¹ are at once modest and extravagant, localized and limitless. As regards the fantastical expansion of these spaces—the way the disparate fragments of the project seem to imply an infinite unfolding—we can read in *The Infinite Library* a deliberate homage to Jorge Luis Borges. In his celebrated story “The Library of Babel,” the Argentinean writer presents a library that is also the universe itself, a vertiginous realm “composed of an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries, with vast air shafts between, surrounded by very low railings. From any of the hexagons one can see, interminably, the upper and lower floors. The distribution of the galleries is infinite.”² Into this rigidly self-replicating and never-ending world is inserted an infinite number of books; that is, all the books that could possibly exist

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The Infinite Library

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