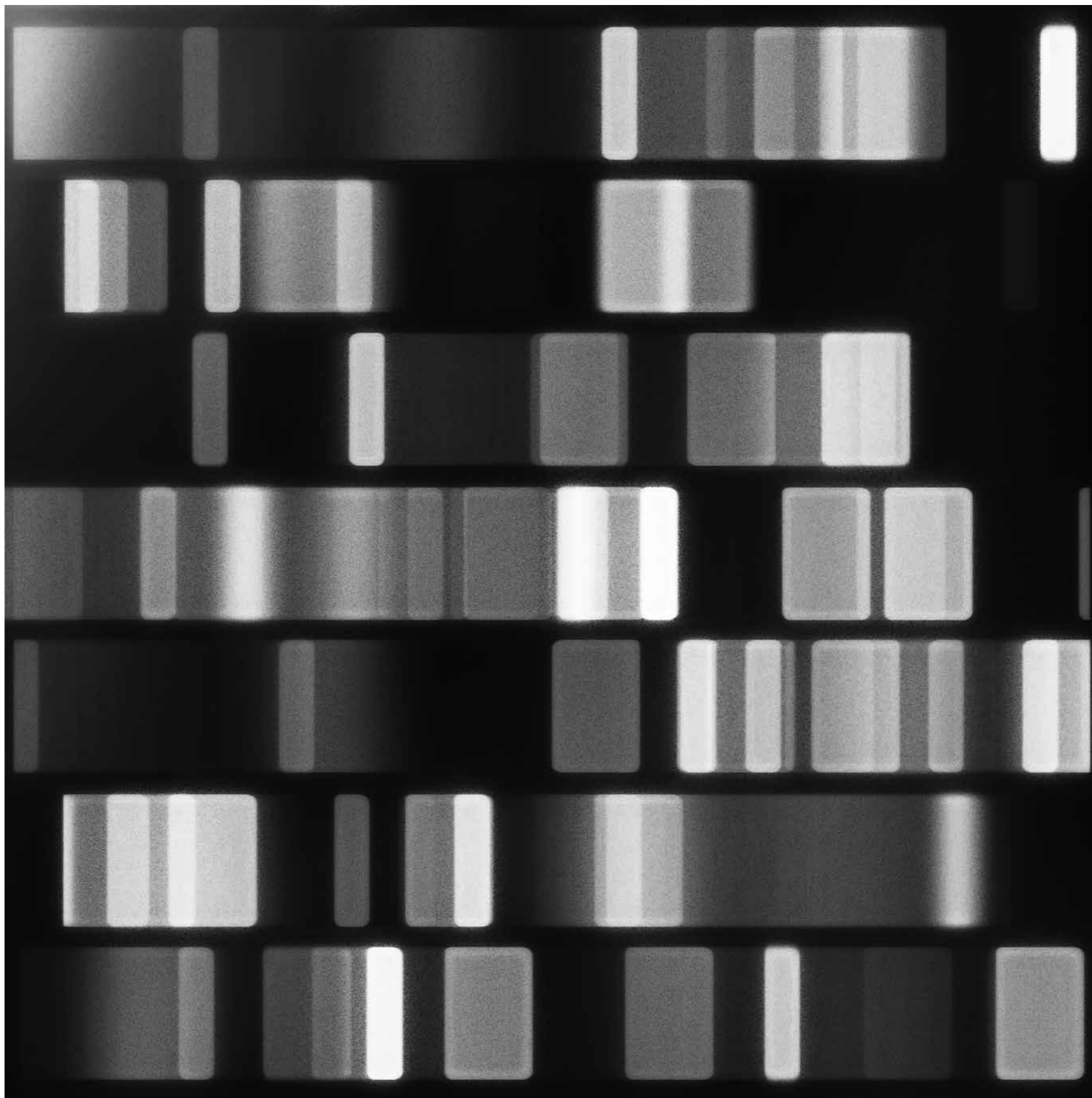


Johan Rosenmunthe  
*Hidden in Plain Sight*

27.01 – 18.03 2018



CV

Johan Rosenmunthe (b. 1982) is a graduate of the Danish School of Art Photography Fatamorgana and Roskilde University. He has exhibited nationally and internationally, most recently at Tranen Contemporary Art Centre, Kunsthal NORD, and Kunsthal Charlottenborg in Denmark, as well as DELI Gallery in New York, MELK in Oslo, and Museum De Domijnen in Holland. He has also published several artist books, including *Tectonic* (2014).

EVENTS

Sunday 18 February 2-5pm

MINI SEMINAR & WORKSHOP: *ARCHAEOLOGY AND MATERIALITY*

On the occasion of the exhibition, Overgaden invites you to a mini seminar focusing on objects and materiality. During the afternoon we will address topics such as the archaeological process, the study of contemporary objects, and how to design objects that speak to humans. Afterwards there will be a workshop conducted by Johan Rosenmunthe where you get the chance to preserve an artefact with a special story or sentimental value. Everyone can attend the seminar, but as there are limited seats for the workshop, registration for this part is required: [ac@overgaden.org](mailto:ac@overgaden.org). The event will be in Danish.

THANK YOU

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Image: Research material for the exhibition *Hidden in Plain Sight*.

This exhibition folder can be downloaded from: [overgaden.org](http://overgaden.org)

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Institute of Contemporary Art, Overgaden neden Vandet 17, 1414 Copenhagen K, Denmark, [overgaden.org](http://overgaden.org), +45 32577273

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*Acts of Sensing*

By Leah Beeferman

What do we see when we see? And how can we look beyond what we can see? In the exhibition *Hidden in Plain Sight*, Johan Rosenmunthe presents a constellation of everyday objects that he examines and exhibits via several atypical modes: scanning, slicing, laminating and floating. In these new contexts, the deconstructed objects prompt us to think about what such different modes of examining can reveal – and, more generally, what could be seen if we look at things in unexpected ways.

We are surrounded by objects: objects of culture, industry, health, entertainment. These objects have histories which begin with their mineral or material origins, expand by way of their harvesting, continue through their manufacturing, distribution and use, and end with their disposal, where they might continue to live on and on. The cycle is relentless.

Humans have uses for objects. This is why we make them – for *use* – even when a use is not immediately apparent. “Useful” objects facilitate work, activities, arts, medicine, commerce. They can maintain personal hygiene, protect us from the weather, help us see and learn, enhance our interiors, and produce yet more objects. Objects can also be used in ways they were not intended. Imagination and play set limitless bounds on what an object can do. We – the users of these objects – recognize their uses, and we may recognize their histories. But we may not notice their details, such as how a plastic bag stretches based on whether you bought bananas, or tomatoes in a carton or can, or the way a toothbrush deforms according to the shape of its user’s teeth and the angles at which she moves her arm and hand to brush. So what goes unnoticed? What aspects of these histories require other methods of observation, besides plain sight, to be discovered?

Implicit in every “device” for looking – every camera, spectrograph, x-ray machine, or pair of eyes – is what it excludes: what is outside its sensory range. Human eyes are unable to see beyond the light of the visible spectrum or through to the insides of objects or bodies, so we build imaging tools that can. Similarly, cameras or microscopes are designed and programmed in particular ways and cannot “see” outside of their respective structures without modification. Further, devices that “look” cannot hear, smell, touch, or taste; could it be that our image-driven society has us paying more attention to the visible than to the sensory, more broadly? At Overgaden, Johan Rosenmunthe organizes his chosen methods for looking at objects into three rooms, one in each. By isolating these practices, he allows us

to investigate what each mode brings to light – or to our senses – about the objects within.

In the first room, titled *Lacuna Playback*, several inkjet-printed works present a universe of two dimensions: scanned surfaces of objects, transformed and frozen, like photographs, in flat-image-time. There are familiar forms – cables, beans, powders, liquids, clays – mixed in with shapes that we know are real, but cannot fully distinguish. The artworks suggest both laboratory examination tables and the deep spaces of near-scientific realities. Yet it is only when focusing on the image-objects themselves that true dimensionality returns; we look hard and imagine, rounding them out in our minds. In the exhibition space, alongside the prints, piles of natural limestone provide a grounding sense of materiality: something solid and familiarly three-dimensional to connect these images, and our experiences of them, to the physical world around us.

In *Object Echoes*, the second room, Johan Rosenmunthe presents objects that he has sliced, and embedded into plastic, on a white wall structure build of concrete. The objects hover somewhere between flat 2D and full 3D, but not the 3D that we are used to. They retain their physicality, but just barely. The plastic distances us from the object-slices themselves, as if they were samples encased for protection or on display in an archive. But we can still glimpse their interior structures, a vantage point we typically do not have. The wall, made from chalk, sand, and water, link the exhibition space to its geologic origins, as if to remind us of the historied objectness of the art institution itself – and how “pure” materials can be manipulated into “functional” states for human use.

In the last room, *Waiting for Osmosis*, several vitrines hold objects – violin bows, rolls of paper, door handles, and others – suspended in different liquids: demineralized water, tonic, caffeine, oil, acids, and bases. Despite the feeling of timelessness that objects suspended in liquid can evoke, these works feel truly four-dimensional. The objects’ histories evolve in real time as the liquid molecules interact with those that make up each object. This brings questions to mind: what can an object absorb, and what can it resist? What has it absorbed, or resisted, already? To try and find out, Rosenmunthe gives us a chance to drink the liquid enveloping one of these objects. This allows us to test what we, in turn, can absorb from it.

Typically, the systematic examination of nature, an object, or a physical phenomenon – made with the intent to understand why it is the way it is – is clas-

sified as “science.” Scientists (or the institutions that fund them) determine what questions to ask about the world and devise observational processes and measuring tools to try and answer them. They interpret data, form conclusions, and present their results formally, according to certain conventions. One can debate the freedoms and limitations of institutionalized science, but what is important to consider here, in context of *Hidden in Plain Sight*, is how methods of systematic observation can be applied *outside* of the scientific institution, and without the intent to make formalized conclusions.

Johan Rosenmunthe is inspired by how science works more than what science discovers. In this exhibition, and in his recent sculptural, photographic, and performative work, he uses methodologies that look and feel scientific, creating observational situations for himself and his viewers. But these situations are not meant to be conclusive. They prioritize an *awareness* of looking, the *act* of sensing, and the *potential* for discovery, over making concrete conclusions.

With a background in photography, it makes sense that Johan Rosenmunthe has ended up here, asking these questions, as there is a mystique implicit in photographed objects: what is the relationship between the original object and its representation as an image? We can only speculate about the original, based on the “evidence” given in a photograph. Photography – in both art and science – has always been tied into the ever-evolving debate about objectivity; there has always been the need to speculate. So what can be learned from an image-representation of an object?

In his photo-book, *Tectonic* (2014), Johan Rosenmunthe uses the “physics” of photography to affect the appearance and representation of rocks and minerals – some of the world’s most concrete and natural elements. In the photographs, these rocks change, affected by lighting, filters, settings, backdrops; they feel alternately suggestive, scientific, factual, narrative, poetic. The message, similar to that of *Hidden in Plain Sight*, is that the stories of objects – natural or human-made – are more flexible, complicated, and fluid than we might think.

In his art practice, Johan Rosenmunthe asks a deceptively simple question: what can objects reveal to us if we look at and consider them more thoroughly? Implicit to this question, however, is an awareness that objects have aspects to their histories that we can only imagine. Whether he is dealing with human-made objects (as he is in *Hidden in Plain Sight*), with human inter-

vention into natural materials (such as in *Core, Mantle, Crust*, a collaborative exhibition at Kunsthal Nord in 2016), or some combination of both (like in *Camping by the Solo River* at Tranen in 2016), Rosenmunthe wants us to look past the limits of our everyday human perspective, to see beyond how we normally see, and to understand that the world is alive in ways that are not immediately, or ever, accessible to us. He exposes this potential, and does what a good artist should do: give viewers the opportunity to look closely, consider, and walk away with more questions than answers. For Rosenmunthe, what remains inaccessible is as crucial to the world as what is observable. There is vital information in that space, and just because we do not see it certainly does not mean it is not there.

*Leah Beeferman is an artist. She works with photography, landscape, and digital image-making to consider relationships between information and abstraction.*