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## DEEP TIME DEPOSITS – Mudlarking Blueprints of the river Thames

My presentation looks at a site-specific artist-in-residency project commissioned by the Beaconsfield Gallery Vauxhall and exhibited in London 2.–16.3.2020. The installation invites to consider the river Thames as a plastic medium, and a dynamic and naturally occurring archive of the Anthropocene. The natural and cultural leverage was studied by means of light-sensitive techniques such as the cyanotype and soil chromatography.

Working in the tradition of the London mudlark, I searched the foreshore on a daily basis to create a portrait of tidal action. The archaeological condition of the Thames foreshore was explored in an installation that includes cyanotype contact prints, pickings of debris and mud chromatograms. Exposed to sun, wind and rain, the iron compounds of the cyanotype were harnessed to act as pictorial agents that built a record of the river's "anthropogenic burden". The non-human archival labour of the mud was further reflected through a filtering process inherent to paper chromatography. The techniques implicated highlight the elusive and the surreal nature of the flotsam and jetsam that emerge every day through tidal action.

In the thematic context of the Helsinki Photomedia, my blueprints and chromatograms constitute ways of worldmaking. The work draws from a re-negotiation with evidentiary methods of measuring, archiving, tracing, and inscribing. Implementing documentary strategies (photograms, chemistry, and archaeology) the work exhibits the non-human archival labour of the tides. And playing with imaginary fictions evoked by the narrative potential of the pickings, my installation sets out to fathom the river Thames' anthropogenic subconscious. Phenomena emerge within the physical and material processes of recording, only to fall again outside the scope of human cognition. A critical study of the natural world calls for material engagement and imagination. Creating a dialogue between the past and the present allows us to reach out for contingencies and to face the unforeseen.

More info and images: <http://www.tuulanarhinen.net/artworks/deeptime.html>

[Tuula Närhinen](#) is a visual artist based in Helsinki. Her work explores physical and conceptual underpinnings of pictorial representation. Re-adapting instruments derived from natural sciences, she has developed methods for letting trees trace the shape of wind on their branches and found techniques that enable the waves of the sea to inscribe themselves. Her works result in spatial installations that, alongside the yielded (photo)graphs, artefacts and renderings, showcase the methods of inscribing and the DIY instruments implicated. The practice is characterised by the artist's corporeal enactment and exposition of the material process. By making her working methods transparent and positing the gallery spectator as an embodied eyewitness to the spatial and medial translation of a natural event, Närhinen encourages the viewer of her works to participate in the (re)presentation of the phenomena.

Närhinen holds a Doctorate of Fine Arts (DFA) from the University of the Arts, MFA from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts and M.Sc. in Architecture from the Helsinki University of Technology.

Keywords (separate using a comma):

photogram, cameraless, blueprint, cyanotype, inscriptions, Anna Atkins, John Herschel, silver nitrate