

ADSVMVS ABSVMVS

in memory of Hollis William Frampton, Sr.

1913-1980

abest

Hollis Frampton, 1982

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from the New York State Council on the Arts, through
Light Work, Syracuse, New York.

ROOM EAST, 2015

The author has come to suppose that he conserved the things represented herewith against the day when they were to be photographed, understanding them to harmonize with photographs then unmade according to a principle within the economy of the intellect. A photographic text and its proper pretext bear the following resemblance to one another: each is a sign of the perfective absence of the other.

In the unimaginable or ordinary case of their copresence, an object and its picture, contending for the center of the spectatorial arena, induce, out of mutual rejection, an oscillation of attention whose momentary frequency is the implicit *cantus firmus* of our thought. If we understand but poorly our own notion of likeness between paired entities, we understand even less the manner in which entities are like, or unlike, or may come to be like, or unlike, themselves. This indisposition depends from a temporary defect: that we have not yet evolved to comfort in the domain of time, our supreme fiction, that parses sets of spaces in favor of successiveness.

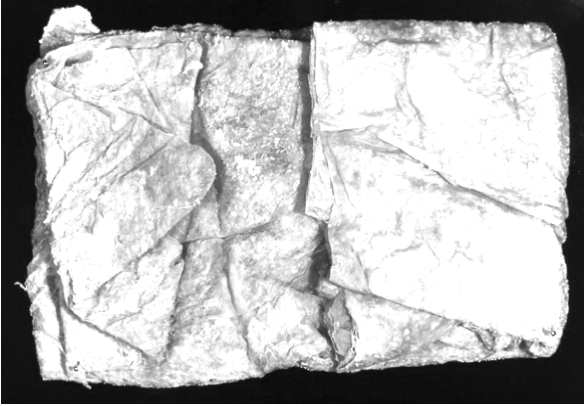
But before there were photographs, there are autographs, or happenstances whereunder bounded vacations of matter generate asexual artifacts, reproductions of themselves, necessarily incomplete: desiccations, fossils, memories, mummies, traces indistinguishable from residues. Appearances like these, found free in nature, command our attention, for they present to us, hovering at the margins of legibility, a collocation of failed instants when matter seems about to invent, in comparison and its precedent recollection, the germ of consciousness. Nature, or the customary behavior of matter, implies the photographic image at least as certainly as it implies ourselves. Accordingly, since they predate us, photographs may be treated scientifically

Fourteen argued plates are appended. The author acknowledges that their identifications are as probabilistic as the captions of all photographs, thereby suggesting that taxonomy is an incomplete discipline.



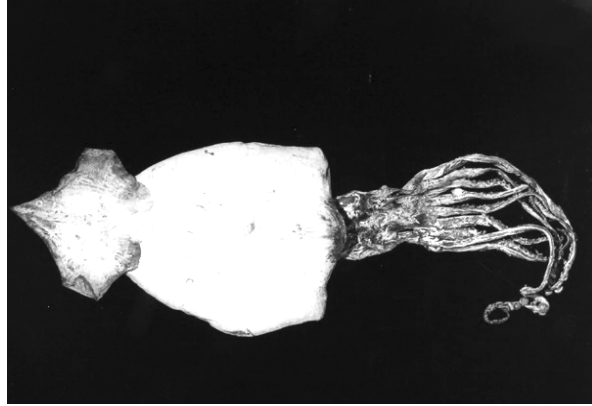
I. WHITE CLOVER (*Melilotus alba*)

This specimen was found by Marion Faller in an established escape well within the dripline perimeter of a Crack Willow in the Town of Eaton, New York in July, 1977. Good fortune emanates from ownership of the consequence of a chromosomal ambiguity in this leguminous herb. As the number of leaves is incremented, luck increases exponentially. For related but inferior species, that increase is merely arithmetic. Even numbers greater than three govern cards, odd numbers, love. The nectar is edible, but disappointingly weak considering the exercise required to extract it.



II. JELLY (*Physalia physalis*)

This remnant of a specimen was purchased by the author in February, 1982 from J & S Oriental Grocery on Erie Boulevard in Syracuse, New York. The stinging coelenterate, not a true jellyfish, is perfectly congruent with the virulent Portuguese Man O' War of the Atlantic, and is fished for food in the Sea of Japan. Only the flotation bladder is available at market, since the jellyfisherman reserve for their own households the finest portion, the mouth parts, which they call the head. Once desalinated and rehydrated, the bladder is sliced into strips and eaten raw, alone, or perhaps with cold chicken, juliennes of cucumber, and a light *purée* of sesame. In appearance and first texture, this food resembles classic india rubber bands, but it retrieves for the palate something of the childish adventure of jumping on beached bell jellies after a hard sea storm: ever so momentarily, they resist, and then, suddenly, pressed, liquefy and vanish, leaving behind an everlasting sensation.



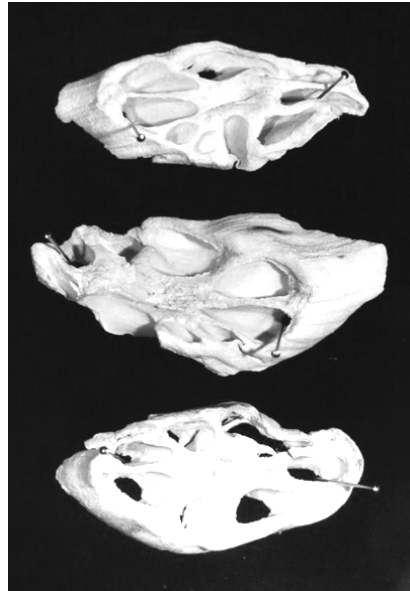
III. CUTTLEFISH (*Rossia mastigophora*)

This specimen, one of a pair costing \$1.39, was purchased by the author at King Chong Company, Bayard Street, Manhattan, in November, 1981. Its chalky or calcærous braincap, called *ossa sepiæ*, has been excised for sale to the canary trade, as well as the little sac in which it carried with it a calamitous portable tint of night. The flesh of the genus is more savory, more pensive, less yielding to the teeth, than that of other caphalopods, who invite being eaten carelessly, with quick, flashing bites.



IV. CHIMÆRA (*Challorhynchus capensis*)

This specimen was purchased by the author at a marine curio shop on Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco, in April, 1980, for five dollars. Its stated provenance was Hong Kong, and we may conjecture that the genus appears as an adulterant among edible catches dragnetted in easterly effluents from the Indian Ocean. The present apparition is an artificial fetish, made by incising the fish along its dorsal edge. It is then opened like a pamphlet, drawn, dried, varnished, and the result prepared for hanging as a wall decoration by twisting a noose of thin copper wire about what passes for a neck. That wire has been removed: its presence implied a false narrative, since fish are never garotted or executed by hanging.



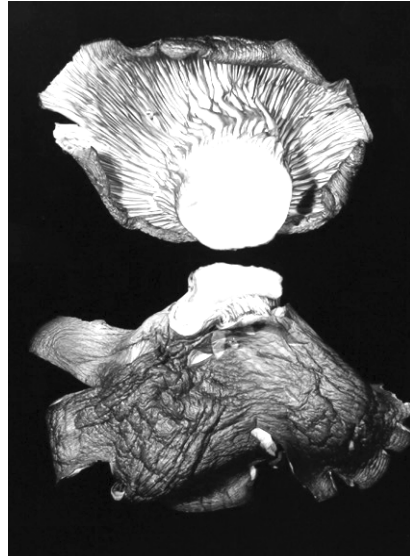
V. LOTUS (*Nelumbo nucifera*)

These specimens were purchased by the author in June, 1980 from J & S Oriental Grocery on Erie Boulevard in Syracuse, New York as part of a packet of fourteen costing seventy-nine cents. The species is prized only for the edibility of the immature tuber represented here; unlike the sort from Gondwanaland, it never harbors jewels. The ancient euphoriac psychotropic of the Nile valley derived from the fruit of a tree, *Zizyphus lotus*, of the buckthorn family.



VI. MIDSHIPMAN (*Porichthys notatus*)

This specimen, one of a pair costing \$1.49, was purchased by the author at William's Market in Mattydale, New York, in October, 1979. It's tail is bowdlerized, having been surreptitiously gnawed some months later by Maxwell, a cat. The species, a notorious whistler and schooler of subtropical shallows, is customarily seined, by hand or from rowboats, in Thai waters, where it is often chopped or shredded and pickled in a sour, peppery escabeche. From anatomical evidence, it is clear that this fish subsists on a diet of smaller fish, and possesses only moderate vertical mobility. It was mislabeled, though, as pollack (*Pollachius virens*), a commercially important cod-like fish of the North Atlantic, shaped less like a cudgel, which appears at table even more seldom than hake.



VII. OYSTER SHELL (*Pleurotus ostreatus*)

These specimens were gathered, among a vast recurrent troop, by the author, in the company of Gerald Church, Postmaster in the village of Eaton, New York, on a raw morning at the beginning of November, 1981. Fresh, or dried and reconstituted, the abundant meat of this fungus is of unusual tensility. At least three races may be distinguished by the tone of the slightly viscid cap, which may vary from opalescent white through pale gray to a strong yellowish beige. Invariably, the gills of mature bodies are foraged by a small beetle whose presence is positively diagnostic of a choice species well distributed throughout the North temperate zone. It is one of two fully domesticated edible fungi, the other being a strain of *Agaricus campestris* propagated on beds of clay and composted horse dung in the abandoned anthracite mines of Pennsylvania. In Japan, this *Pleurotus* is domesticated on rotting elm logs. The author has obtained it wild, as well, from senescent maples, and from standing beech (*Fagus americanus*) in seeming health; but the establishment of its mycelium is always a sign of pathology in the host.



VIII. COMMON GARTER (*Thamnophis certalis*)
and EASTERN COACHWHIP (*Masticophis flagellum*)

Vacated Winter skins, found in the Summer of 1980, in a vegetable garden in the Town of Eaton, New York, are proposed as standards for a new system of measurement. These benign reptiles, insectivore and constrictor respectively, are alleged to hear through their tongues. They are enjoyed by diurnal predatory birds, and universally deprecated by fools.



IX. GARDEN TOAD (*Bufo americanus*)

This specimen was donated by Mary Emmaline Bryant, then of Poolville, New York, in August, 1979. The author suspects that her gift was prompted by the creature's imaginary tactile symmetry with certain grotesque or exotic fungi, of indeterminate identity, which he had gathered on that pleasant day, whereafter he stopped in Poolville to show them to her family and drink a bottle of beer. Constantin Brancusi maintained that toads are more handsome than Michelangelo's statues, but he referred to the modest French park toad. The drug bufagin, a cardiac stimulant and vasodilator, brewed from Chinese toads during the Chou and former Han, and rediscovered in the West in the early 1950's has never been synthesized and may have fallen into medical desuetude or disrepute. Its scarcity in purified form is pendant to the deserved unpopularity of toad catching as an adult vocation: toads defend themselves in a perennially surprising way.



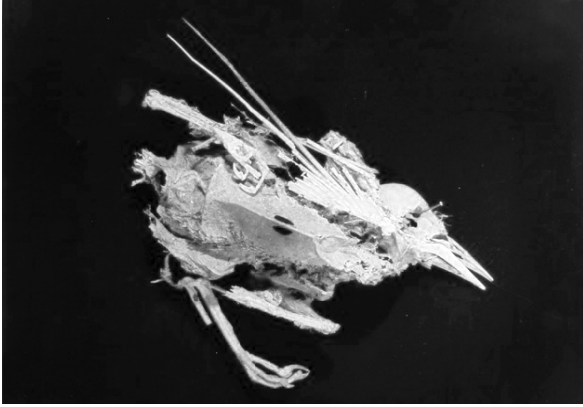
X. PEPPER (*Capsicum longum*)

These specimens, dried at various ages, were grown by Marion Faller in her vegetable garden in the Town of Eaton, New York, during the Summer of 1981. This preservative method steals something of the peppers' piquancy, but it enhances their essence, and imparts to them a luscience of unexcelled saturation. Because it is a triumph to raise Jalapeños on the Allegheny Plateau, where the growing season is barely a hundred days long, we determined to celebrate the first big harvest with a feast. For an afternoon, I parched and flayed, she stuffed with three farces, we sauced and baked. Ah!



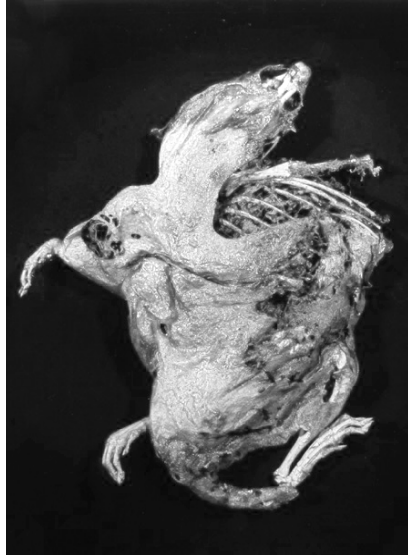
XI. GRASS FROG (*Rana pipiens*)

This specimen was discovered by Will Faller, Jr. in May, 1981 on the shoulder of a macadam road in Randallsville, Town of Lebanon, New York. The timid soprano amphibian becomes highly vocal under collective sexual arousal, improvising stochastic nocturnal choruses of considerable elegance. It is nominally edible but meager.



XII. MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaidura macroura*)

This immature specimen was found by Bill Brand during the demolition of a wall in the Town of Eaton, New York, in July, 1975. The genus is never iridescent, but it is soothing in appearance as in voice, and graceful in its habits. The squabs are reputedly delicious, but are rarely to be gathered in quantity.



XIII. BROWN RAT (*Rattus rattus*)

This young adult specimen, enhanced by two spray applications of a cellulose acetate fixatif, was discovered by Adam Mierzwa in May, 1973 in the course of partially dismantling a house in the Town of Eaton, New York. The cause of its virtually total depilation is unknown. A rural pest, graminivorous by preference, the species constitutes the permanent North American reservoir of bubonic plague, and must not be confused with *Rattus norvegicus*, its urban counterpart. Inedible by custom, the genus *Rattus* is prized as a delicacy in Easter Island, whither it was brought by European explorers. The author wishes that its site of delectation might have been displaced to Yap, in proximity to superior megaliths.



XIV. ROSE (*Rosa damascena*)

This specimen was taken by the author as a keepsake from a funeral wreath at Millersburg, Ohio on March 5, 1980. The mature fruit, a hip, anatomically cognate with apples and pears, but unusual among most cultivars of this species, is edible, and contains appreciable quantities of ascorbic acid. Formerly, petals were smoked by the Queen of Siam, and offered for that use to guests during royal audiences; when strewn in the paths of the brilliant, or heads of State, they are a sign of acclaim.