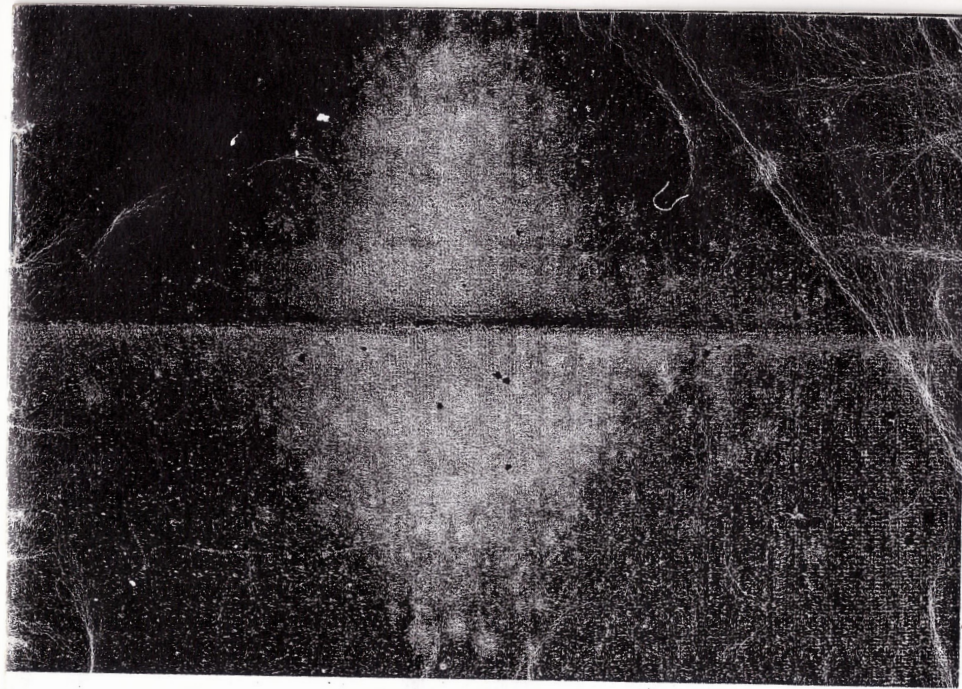
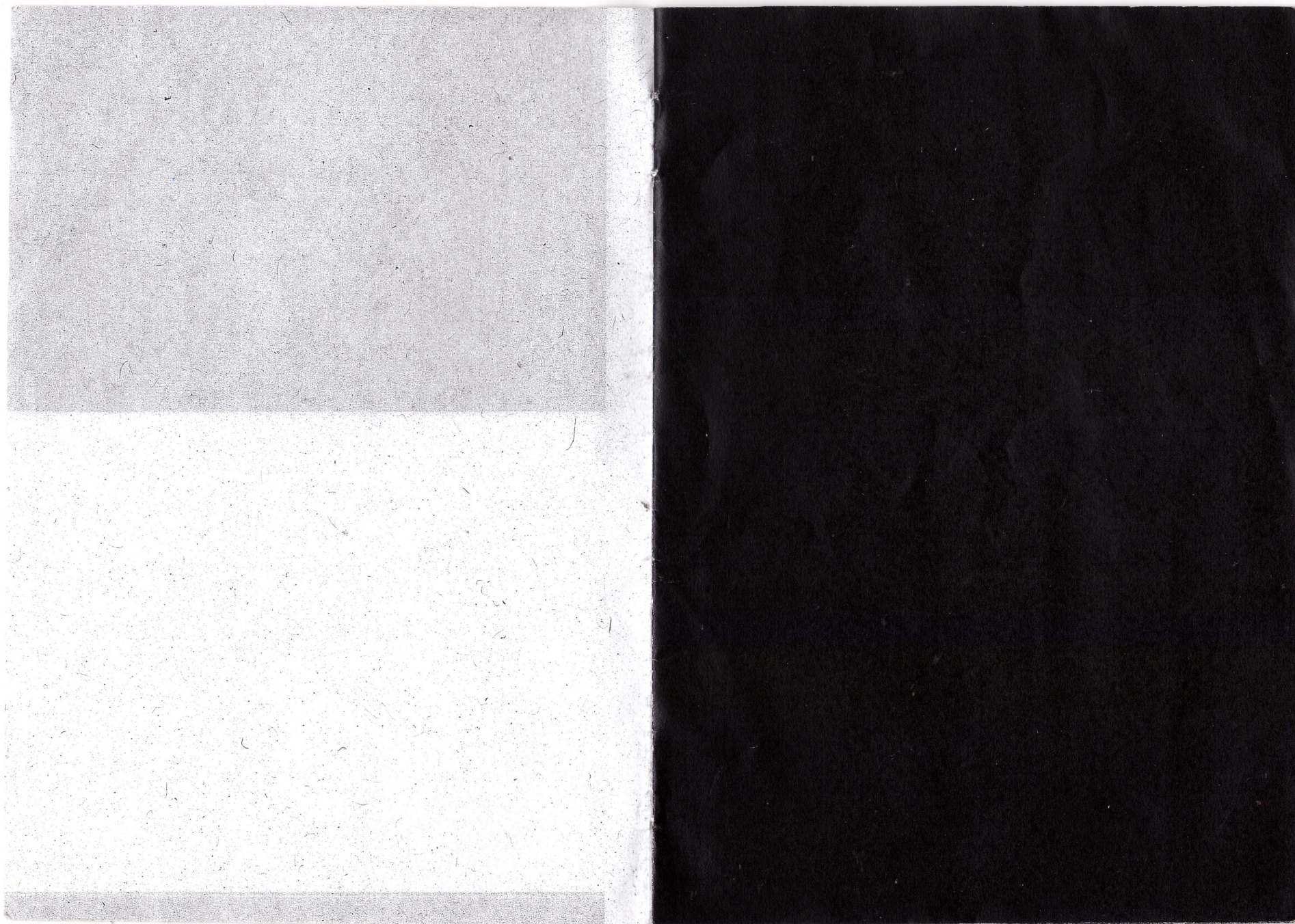




Courtney Jaeger

CECILIE CARLSEN
SELECTIVE HEARING



SOFT HORIZONS - A SHORT STORY ABOUT BEING A TREE

BY KAROLINE FRANKA FOLDAGER

The tree appeared to always be listening. No matter from which direction you looked at her. She stood slightly bent, resin drying on the bark like amber jewelry against ancient sun damaged skin. The trunk had opened in multiple oval shapes, from the heat, the cold and the moist. When a wind moved through the forest the tree didn't react immediately. There was a sensation that she waited and listened before shaking her branches and leaves. She was an old tree, a wisdom in the forest, there was something immortal about her being but also something fragile and on the brink of death.

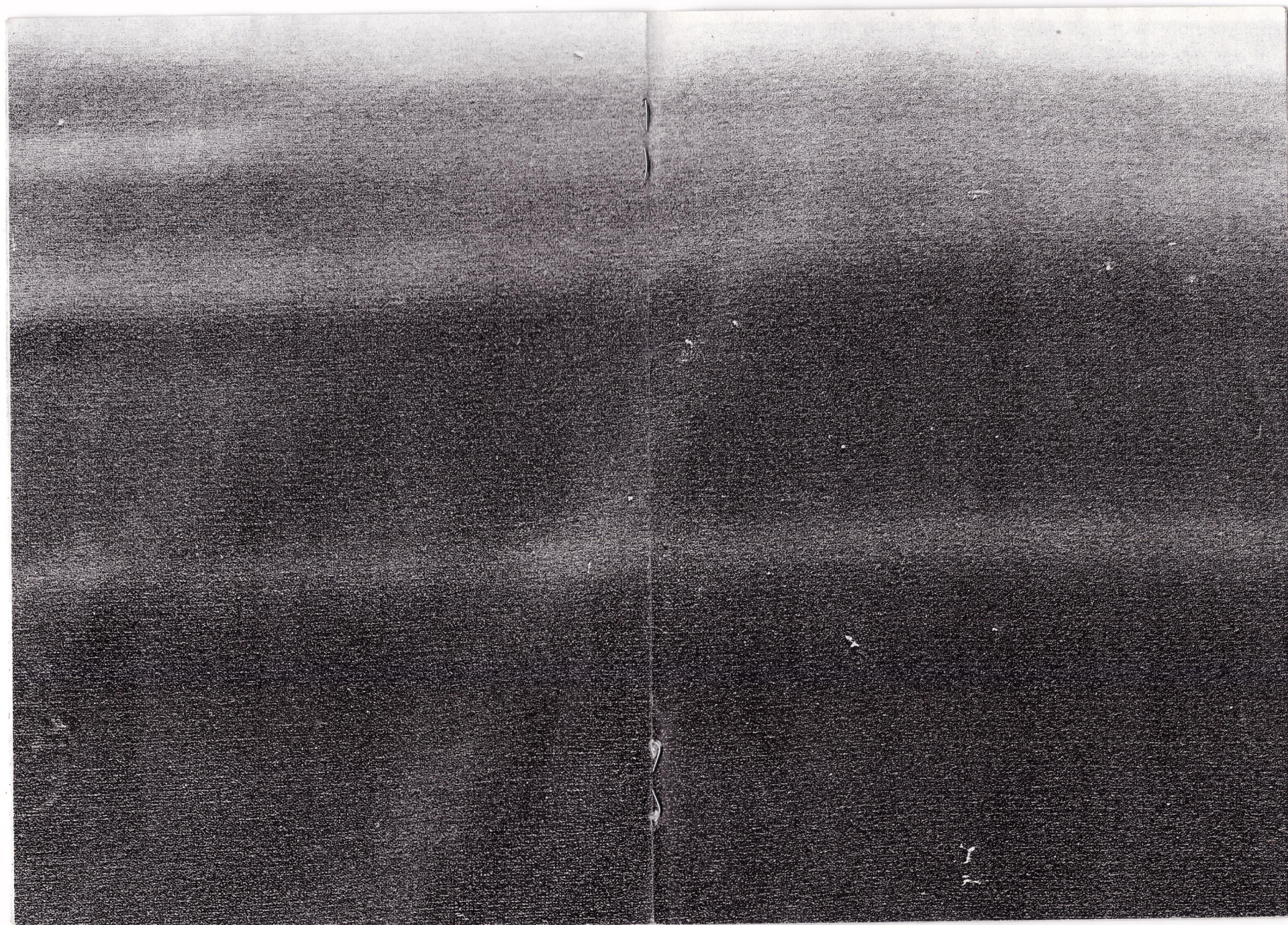
I feel as if I have written down my own story multiple times. I always narrate my thoughts and memories in a way that I imagine I would like it all to sound like if it was being read in a memoir by someone else. By someone completely fabulous. But I am the one who listens. I only react to physical sensations with very little availability for self expression. I wave my longest branch a few centimeters to greet the birds. The forces of nature. I can't write or talk.

Someone had once tied a ribbon around one of her branches. Meaty pink velvet, now almost white. The fabric remained there through several seasons until it became difficult to tell where the tree ended and the ribbon began. Moss grew over the knot. Small insects slept inside the folds of the bow. At night the forest made small adjustment sounds. Bark expanding. Roots slurping the water underground. Animals moving carefully through leaves.



Listening carefully the tree thought it sounded less like nature and more like a room full of people trying to speak. Every day the tree lived and aged.

I'm a mysterious material. Everything is. There's so much you will never know and even more that I will never tell. That's all right. I am not interested in talking about things through the membrane of, everyones lack of understanding. I have no words but I leak with resin. I'm dry and cracking open. I feel I have blood all over me. I have no real blood that can leak out. Those who know how it feels to have a bit of blood wetten their skin from a cut, can better imagine being completely covered in it. I have some kind of essence that is like my blood. Something that must run out through my skin to leave space for everything that enters me. I have always listened and absorbed.



That is how all things enter me and empty me. My bark is an ear. My bark is a vagina. My bark is an open mouth and a million starring eyes. I've heard people describe certain materials as feminine. Silk, wool, dampness, thing that soften and absorb sound. Things that carry traces of what has been done to them easily. There is nothing soft about being a tree, standing upright year after year with the entire body exposed to everything. I am hard. The softness is what you choose to see, what leaks out, my decay, which exists because I am hard.

I remember being smaller. Flexible enough to bend completely during a storm. Like a skinny breakdancer. I remember hands touching my trunk experimentally, hugging me, human children, young deers, trying to understand what kind of material I am. Living things, nature, are often touched like dead objects before they are understood as being alive. I fear axes in an abstract way. Not constantly. More like a low knowledge. I fear my age and rigidity against the heavy wind. Humans walk close by me in the morning, their words are often harmful because they are loud and selfish. Too much leaks out of me to make space for others. I never stop growing and never stop fearing the moment I will fall. There is a lot of pride in being vertical. But I never stop growing upwards can feel embarrassingly self conscious. Everyone is watching me do it and everyone wants my body until they won't anymore.



When the tree fell one day, it didn't happen with drama.

There were no axes, no witnesses, no huge crack. The roots loosened from the wet ground and the body gave in to its own accumulated weight and softness.

As a dead tree the forest seemed to agree that she fed everything around her more generously than she had alive, giving the nourishment of her body to the soil like a milk.

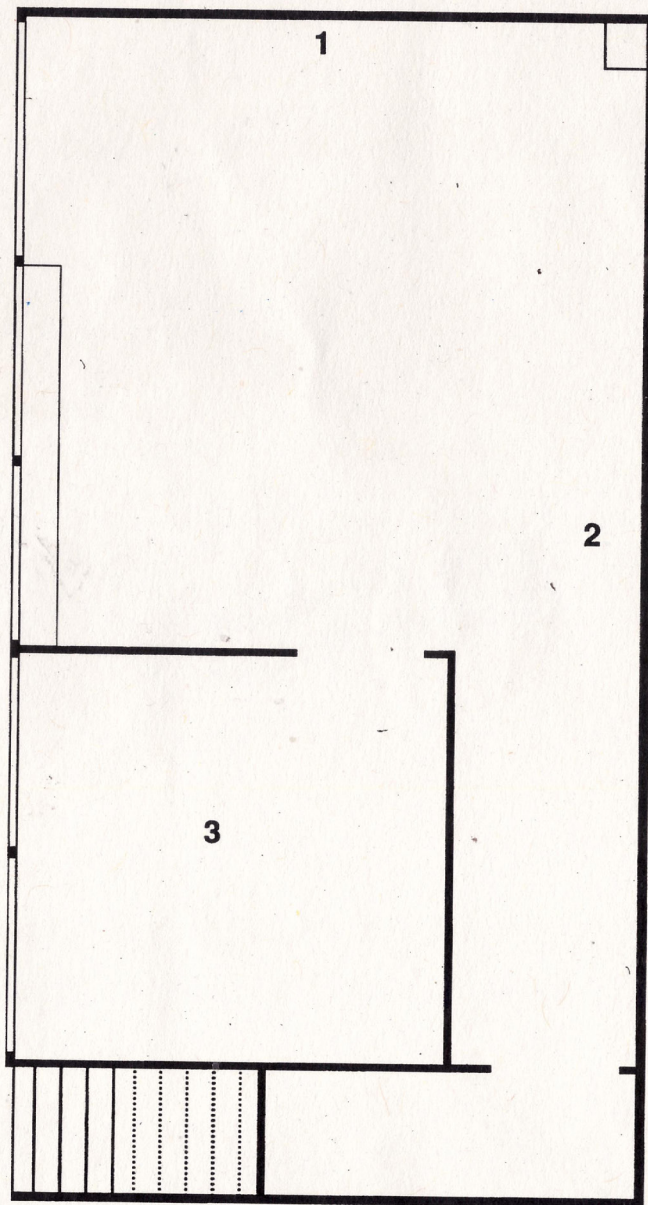
The mushrooms came, then the moss, then the beetles and worms drilling and nesting inside her soft wood.



Image Courtesy: Cecilie Carlsen
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04 JUN - 31 JUL

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1

The Zero Point I, 2026

Time bleached velvet curtains
stretched on wooden frame
336 x 234 cm

2

The Zero Point II, 2026

Time bleached velvet curtains
stretched on wooden frame
3 pieces, 106 x 214 cm (each)

3

Selective Hearing is a State of Mind (I-III), 2026

Selective Hearing is a State of Mind I

Cardboard, tape, glue, cotton
82 x 82 x 20 cm

Selective Hearing is a State of Mind II

Cardboard, tape, glue, canvas, pencil
82 x 82 x 20 cm

Selective Hearing is a State of Mind III

Cardboard, tape, glue, velvet
82 x 82 x 20 cm

Selective Hearing is a State of Mind IIII

Cardboard, tape, glue, cotton, varnish
82 x 82 x 20 cm