

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

FREDERIK PETERSEN



JAN  
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NOON | JANUARY 21<sup>ST</sup>

CENTRE SPACE  
JOHN A. RUSSELL BUILDING  
FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE  
UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

WAX RUBBER SKIN  
NATURALISTIC PRACTICES IN NATURAL  
SCIENCE, RELIGION, AND POPULAR CULTURE

**SYNOPSIS** | In Wax Rubber Skin I use photography to explore the hidden ideologies in natural history museums, medical collections, and theme parks. I ask if the photographic gaze can penetrate the perceptual construction and discourse surrounding imitation and representation to reveal something authentic. The promise of the work is that by directing the camera towards the pictorial, spatial, and narrative depth proposed in museum displays, a glimpse of an underlying, primary reality is revealed.

The photographs in Wax Rubber Skin are an investigation into the expressions and uses of naturalistic representations. It occupies a territory that ranges from objective documentation to the biases that come with didactic and instructive fabrication. The work is driven by an interest in the coincidences and errors that allow unforeseen meanings to enter displays of highly realistic figures of reality. It seeks out instances where curatorial intentions are compromised by an unreflected execution and moments where ideals of objectivity are subverted by the curious juxtaposition of elements.

I seek to establish a correspondence between fundamental traits of photography and subject matter. In particular, I search



for a resonance between the camera’s film plane and pictorial surfaces outside the camera. Perhaps photography, in itself split between authentic registration of reality and pure fiction, corresponds to the simultaneous artificiality and naturalism in such constructions as wax figure cabinets and habitat dioramas.


**BIO** | Frederik Petersen is an architect, PhD, and educator. He is a Researcher in Residence at C.A.S.T., a Senior Maker at the Bartlett UCL, and a founding editor of Entreen – On Architecture and Image. He has taught at the Bartlett, Oxford Brookes, Aarhus School of Architecture, and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts School of Architecture.

His practice spans sculpture, furniture, and photography. His photographic work explores representational practices. It is driven by an interest in naturalistic reproductions of reality and their influence on the construction and perception of reality. Through the documentation of representational cracks in nearly perfect illusory landscapes his work attempts to uncover moments of authenticity within artificiality. His photographs ask if error and self-contradiction within faithful reproductions of nature might reveal an obtrusive degree of reality.

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