



Asbjørn Skou

I owe much of my love for process-oriented art – and art, in general – to the work of **Asbjørn Skou**. Early in my ongoing search for inspiration, I stumbled upon *Asbjørn* who, at the time, under his alias “Arms-rock”, had attracted much attention for his urban figurative street art. While I was initially drawn to his work for its aesthetic appeal, what really got me hooked was its

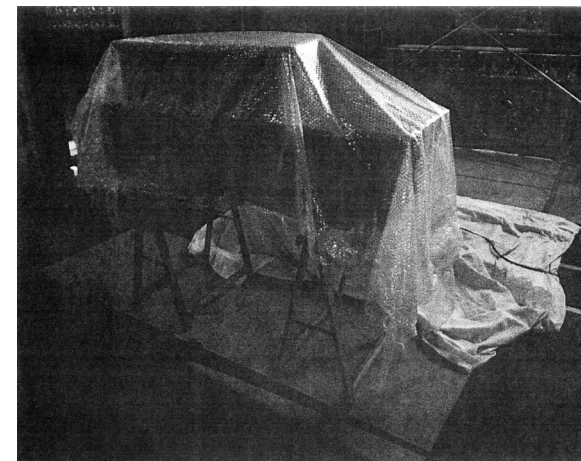
striking emphasis on process, context and allusion to social ritual, not to mention its ability to evoke self-reflection and ontological contemplation, not entirely usual for aesthetic representational work.

Years later, *Asbjørn* has produced a new batch of work that, at a first glance, might seem unrecognizable to followers of his earlier figurative work: black and white photography printed on large transparent sheets are layered upon each other, from which his new series of abstract, textural images

emerge. But upon closer examination, we still find much thematic continuity: As a street artist, *Asbjørn* focused on human individuality. He “...zoomed in on specific individuals...”, isolating them from the blur of urban anonymity. Now, through

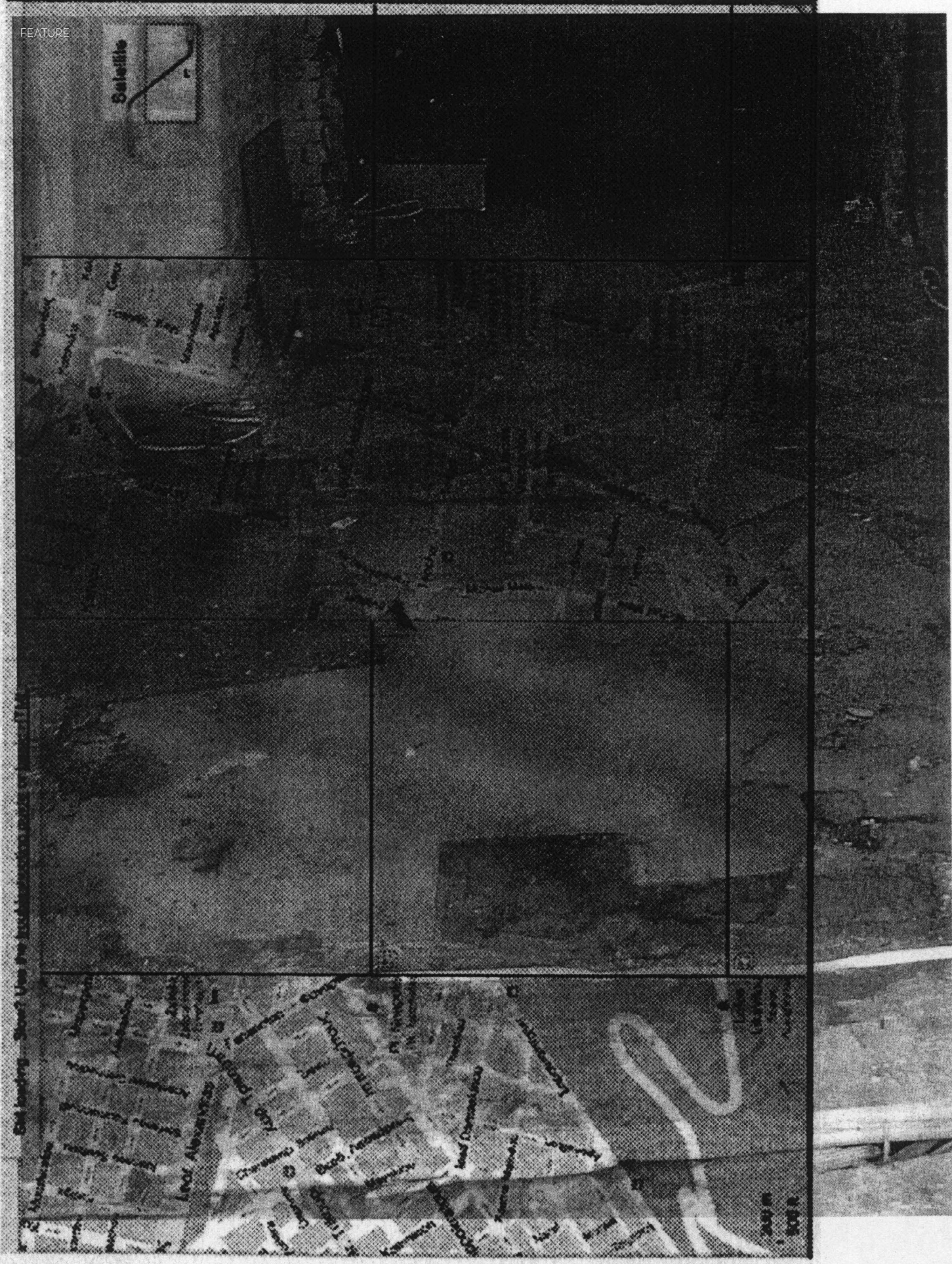
his photographic collage work, compiled from snapshots of various features from relevant urban settings, *Asbjørn* has “...been trying to zoom out more and more, to attempt to talk about constructions of wholes – though still in a language of fragments – from the individual to the places and institutions containing and defining them, to the spaces and sites relating to these, and finally out into some quality of abstraction.” While, at a surface level, his newer work may seem discontinuous, there still lies a “...very formal relation to the movement between themes.” And thematically, his work still centers on “...questions of how our individual and collective identities – and mythologies – are created and bound by particular places and sites.”

As for the change, *Asbjørn* finds it vital to “...hammer out a space for playfulness and constant forward motion in the rigid landscape of dogmas, expectations and coherence.” The transformation in his work is “...catalyzed by a general desire to engage in new contexts, and let the work change according to a dialogue with new materials.” While his work continues to, technically, remain two-dimensional, his attention and commitment to the process and context has always rendered his work more of a sculptural feel. From representational figures to abstract collage, what



Text by Dania Lerman

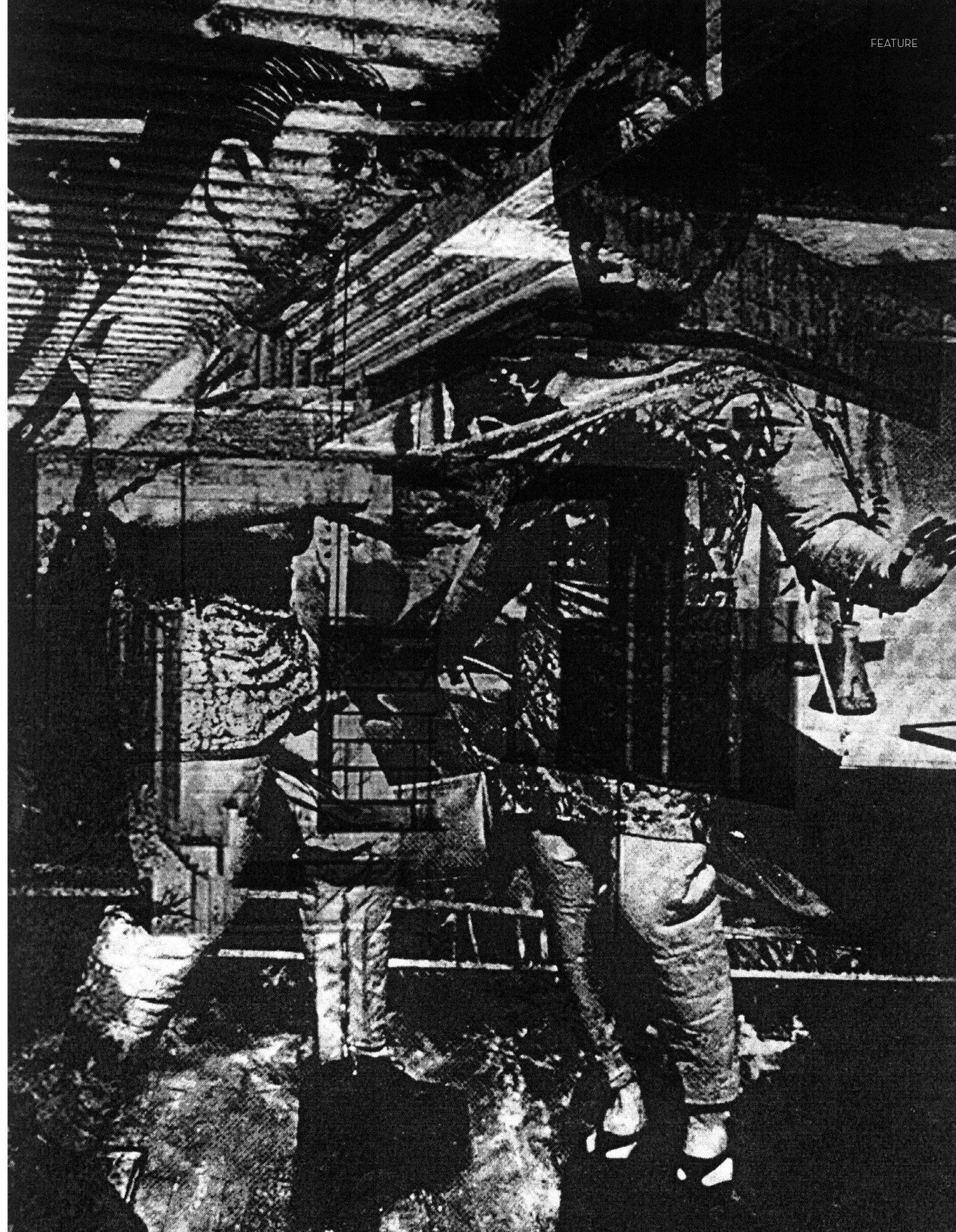
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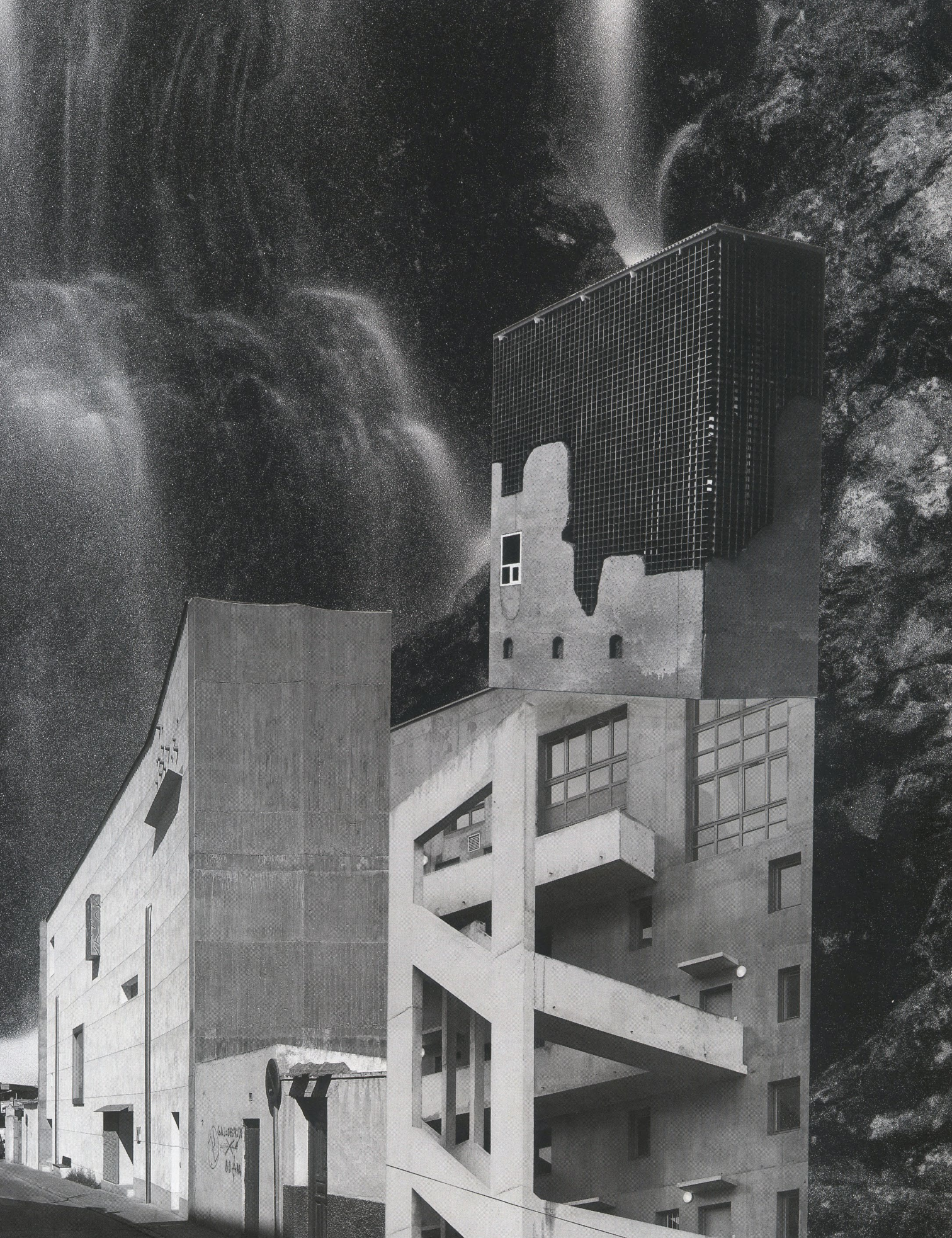


still remains is his strategy of “...using the production of images as a tool to engage with spaces while simultaneously letting this engagement alter the image-space in an interdependent relationship.” He ultimately continues to explore “...how images, as both surface and objects, relate to the spaces in which they are installed or projected into; how their scale, materiality or placement can expand their presence beyond that of flat representational surfaces.”

A major focus of Asbjørn's is “...translating space into image, and image into space.” He grounds this highly conceptual approach in themes of human existence, like how “...architecture, objects and images are interlinked as a trinity, materialized through immaterial concepts like ritual, ideology and metaphysics.” Acknowledging the hefty and “dangerously pretentious” nature of this, Asbjørn tries to “...approach the work as an equal measure of conceptual and formal experimentation... as a set

of complex intersections between form, surface and meaning.” For instance, in his layered photographic series, Asbjørn uses “...a range of materials with a standardized quality and predefined placement, like laser prints, xerox copy, tape, inkjet, plaster and mdf - things that you can get at the utility store, so to speak.” Asbjørn's material base not only contributes to the efficient construction of his work, but additionally draws our awareness to the bizarre complexities of the artificial and





mass-produced landscape we've come to inhabit: "I am more often confronted with plasterboard and styrofoam, cement and plastic, than I am with bronze, marble and oil paint... Take Styrofoam...a fast and crappy material, a regular by-product of something else, but it will never go away - it's a hyper-object."

As far as future work, Asbjørn "...keep[s] coming back to the spatial discussion... Right now it mainly amounts to series of experiments, some with a context and some of them slightly non sense-ical...There is a lot of half-finished stuff concerned with bricolage and image negation". Keep an eye out for his upcoming solo exhibition at Munch Gallery (Chelsea, NY) and site-specific installation at the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center (Athens, Greece). He is also in the process of having a book published by Konnotation Press that explores the "...hybrid between documentation and fiction, site-specific activity and discussion of the book as site."

Asbjørn studied at the Hochschule für Kunst in Bremen, Germany and is currently based in Copenhagen. He's exhibited in over 60 group and solo shows in London, New York, San Francisco, Copenhagen, Vienna, Bremen, Berlin, and Cairo, amongst several other major galleries around the world. His work continues to transform and adapt to the ever-shifting context of human existence.