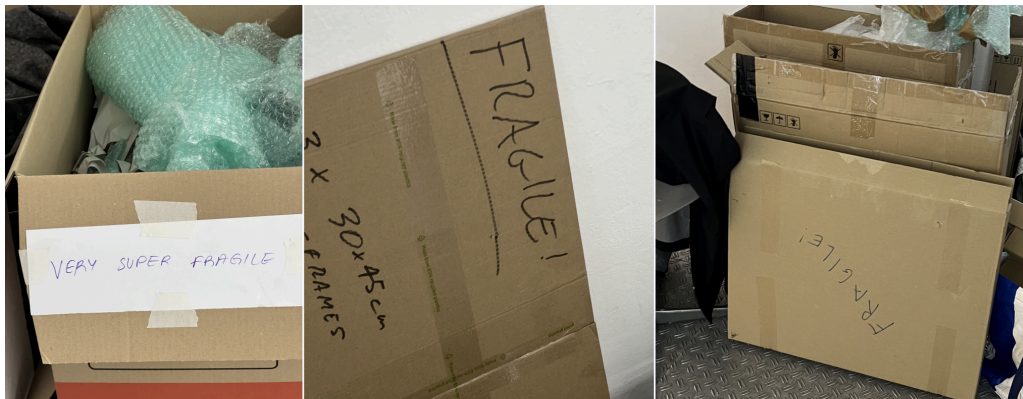


A Right to Fragility



When has fragility ever not been relevant to the archive and memory, to visibility and privacy? Carefully packing evidence of presence into digital and physical forms, passing it from hand to box, from one digital carrier to another, travelling in vans and across networks toward a final destination. Unwrapping layers of bubble wrap, connecting cables, and eventually discovering that something has been damaged, we inevitably realise that no matter how large the word “*fragile*” is written, no matter how many exclamation marks or protective layers we add, instability, distortion, and loss cannot be fully prevented. It is precisely this fragile state of evidence that resonates within the exhibition *Marginal Evidence*. Presented at SIGN project space, the installations by Claudio Tola, Severi Aaltonen, and Nadia Sotirova Abadjieva do not attempt to shape the archive into a stable container of truth. Instead, through three spatially independent works, they each approach its porousness and fragmentation in different ways.

During the installation of the exhibition, I wandered among boxes, tables, wooden constructions, and jars of paint, gradually finding myself later in the week, in a spacious, breathing environment where a rhythmic narrative began to emerge. What initially had appeared as scattered materials and logistical remnants slowly became part of a larger visual structure. As fragments of someone’s life began to surface, I noticed how this shifted my attention toward images rather than toward specific subjects, whose presence was already absent during the installation process. This gentle wandering of the mind through detached and impersonal corners, in search of meaning partly shaped by my own perspective, allowed me to approach the unstable and blurred periphery of what was unfolding before me. Yet as the opening of the exhibition drew nearer, chaos gave way to order, pushing me further away from that delicate moment when there was still hope for a continuously collapsing multilayered field of meanings.

Redundancy partially unsettles this order. As one of the strategies for preventing the fragility of archives and memory, redundancy in turn becomes a key mode of expression within each of the works. Content repeats, traces circulate, and details return in altered forms. Repetition and ordering function here as stabilising devices, giving visible form to what has survived. Yet despite this faint vitality, the objects that emerge remain difficult to grasp. In this sense, redundancy does not clarify. It multiplies perspectives without bringing us closer to stable knowledge, leaving the viewer within a dispersed field of fragile traces whose meaning is continuously reconstructed.

Marginal Evidence operates through a peculiar movement between the general and the particular. The viewer is invited to approach something specific, yet the object of attention continually dissolves into distributed fragments. Within such a scattered configuration, the notion of marginality becomes difficult to locate as the visible central actor from which others distantiate into the margins is absent to begin with. To which center are the presented works and the exhibition itself being directed? And for whom is this evidence presented?

As I enter the main project space, I meet the fragility of control and the desire to consolidate knowledge confront me with an increasing sense of uncertainty. The deliberate reproduction of partial images and video records of a terra incognita activates my attention, raising a simple question: does this island really exist? At the same time, the soothing,

rhythmic sound of waves tranquillises the urgency of this inquiry, leaving me suspended between fragments of evidence and gazing upon sandy beaches.

This is the work *As Far as It Can Be Seen (Notes Around a "Desert" Island)* by Claudio Tola where I float through the project space attempting to imagine an island piece by piece through reproduced image-attempts made by others to document proof of its existence. The island appears less as a stable geographical entity than as a collective projection assembled by Claudio through scattered traces of visual records. No single observer or narrator occupies the center of this process. Instead, the work unfolds through dispersed acts of looking and depiction, leaving the viewer to navigate a field of (literal) margins.

From my perspective, pressing at the outer margins of Claudio's installation is the added pressure from what Édouard Glissant articulated as "*right to opacity*", suggesting that not everything must become fully visible or fully knowable in the face of the demands by Western intellectual categories. In this context, the island seems to further resist our own demand made to Claudio for complete transparency, remaining suspended between speculation and documentation. This tension resonates with the Sentilene, whose total refusal of transparency embodies the very stakes Glissant identifies: the imposition of western norms of visibility for purposes of control. Yet translating this tension of resisting opacity into an artistic form inevitably introduces a paradox. Once placed within an exhibition space structured for observation and interpretation, opacity itself becomes subject to scrutiny. What was meant to remain partially unknowable risks becoming another object of analysis, raising questions about whether the work honors the Sentinel's stance ethically, empathically, or primarily as a formal approach.

By appropriating and re-presenting attempted depictions of the island across different media, Claudio Tola exposes how the desire for visibility continues to generate images even in the absence of stable knowledge. Even when the subject withdraws or remains distant, the act of looking persists. Each representation appears less as confirmation than as a tentative gesture toward something that remains beyond reach. In this light, the vulnerability of the installation lies not only in the uncertain existence of the island, but also in the fragile balance between the right to remain opaque and the persistent impulse to render the world visible.

Fragility also emerges from the instability of the media themselves. Photographs, lightboxes, projections, and screens appear to function as carriers of evidence, while simultaneously revealing the limits of what they can preserve. Dispersed throughout the space, these fragments mimic the way content circulates across online sources and archival repositories. In an era defined by the rapid proliferation of digital images and contested forms of evidence, the installation resonates with broader questions about how knowledge is assembled from artifacts that remain perpetually unstable. Gathered piece by piece and carefully presented to the viewer, they remind us that such traces are never fixed: they shift between platforms, disappear, resurface, and dissolve within the vast flow of observations and projections. The redundancy of documentation does not bring the viewer closer to verification. Instead, it gradually transforms the island into a speculative construct sustained by the very effort to capture it. What the installation ultimately exposes is not a hidden territory waiting to be confirmed, but the fragile apparatus of observation through which such territories come into being.

From a space bathed in blue light, where images mostly remained still yet occasionally teased the viewer's gaze, I moved into the realm of a direct and hypnotic archive. A small screen flickering with animation marked this carefully crafted transition, guiding me into a state already familiar to my mind.

I am met by a neat row of ten screens, each turned in the opposite direction. Wires intertwine rhythmically, as do the blinking lights signaling data transmission, creating a pulse that occasionally syncs with bright flashes on the screens. Freed from their plastic casings, the monitors naturally merge with the garage space into a solid, industrial organism. This is *Spectator* by Severi Aaltonen.

Crossing to the opposite side and settling comfortably on the floor, I became immersed in evidence of someone's everyday life, deconstructed in a peculiar way and organised almost like a set of images appearing in a Google search. Indeed, the work's description informs us that what we are seeing is "raw material of artificial intelligence" which was created by a mysterious "reversed learning process" method. The phrase evokes the logic of a "*black box*:" a system whose operations remain largely inaccessible, even as its outputs appear before us.

Machine learning datasets typically consist of large collections of scraped and labelled images used for training models. Once processed, these images are translated into numerical patterns that no longer retain their original visual or contextual meaning. Extracting and presenting them again within the installation therefore raises an interesting ambiguity:

the material returns to visibility, but the computational learning operations that once acted upon it remain largely invisible. In this context, one could argue that the work does not actually reverse the learning process but rather recontextualises its visual inputs. This ambiguity becomes even more pronounced when the installation incorporates material sourced from the Internet Archive (Archive.org), a preservation-oriented digital repository rather than a dataset explicitly structured for machine learning. While archived images may indeed appear in training datasets, their presence online does not necessarily indicate prior algorithmic use. The work thus brings together different kinds of digital repositories under the broader condition of data circulation. Taken together, these ambiguities render the work's internal logic fragile.

Returning to the conceptual framework of the exhibition, it becomes difficult to identify a singular subject within this multiplicity of data. Instead, the work forms a kind of collective spectatorship – a redundancy shaped by those who, at some point, had access to the internet and uploaded contents of their own or others' lives. Speaking directly about marginality in relation to this material becomes difficult, not least because machine learning datasets are not neutral collections of “*the world*.” They are curated, filtered, labeled, and frequently scraped from dominant linguistic and geographic regions of the internet. As a result, the images we encounter here already carry the biases and asymmetries embedded within those infrastructures, making it unlikely that they meaningfully represent marginality.

Despite these tensions, *Spectator* raises an important question about the contemporary condition of our digital assets. By assembling materials drawn from online image flows, the installation points to how ordinary visual content is quietly absorbed into technological infrastructures and transformed into training datasets. In this light, the work succeeds less as a literal “reversal” of machine learning than as a reflection on its consequences. However, the gesture remains fragile: by reorganising and displaying these images once again, the installation inevitably operates within the same networks it seeks to reveal.

Leaving behind flickering monitors under uncanny sound, the narrative shifts to a more intimate scale – one that tells the story of a single person through objects and small details. Orange pipes catch my eye as I approach the basement. Descending, I begin to notice unexpected details within the space – elements that boldly assert their presence against the pale blue wall. The carefully designed wooden pedestals seem to recede into the background, subtly highlighting the objects placed upon them.

This is the work of Nadia Sotirova Abadjieva, *The Autobiography of My Father*. In this chapter of her autobiographical project, the artist turns toward a figure who had remained absent in her life: her father. As Nadia noted in conversation, his omission in the previous work *The Autobiography of My Car* was not accidental. Although he holds deep significance in her life, he was never emotionally present in a way that could easily become narrative. Faced with that difficulty, she does not confront him through dialogue. Instead, she searches the family home for evidence – objects that might hold what words never carried.

The portrait that emerges is sparse: small wood buses, huge perfume caps, tiny stuffed animals remade by her in clay. These items are modest but play an important role as “moments of sensitivity,” as manifestations of something she always believed existed but never directly encountered. They function less as direct testimony than as marginal evidence – small residues of a presence that was felt but rarely articulated. Here, the central figure is her father, with vulnerability forming the surrounding margin that Nadia carefully remakes to us in a way that he would never dare to introduce himself.

What emerges from these traces is not simply a portrait of the father, but a particular configuration of masculinity. The objects hint at gestures of care and sensitivity that seem to exist slightly out of place within the restrained emotional landscape the artist describes. Rather than openly expressed vulnerability, we encounter its indirect signs; small displacements in the expected narrative of paternal distance. The dynamics of the father-daughter interaction also remains behind the scenes, adding more nebulosity to the depth of their relationship. Intimacy therefore appears not as something that was fully shared, but as something reconstructed retrospectively, through the careful attention to these modest remnants. The daughter approaches this fragile territory not through confrontation, but through a process of recognition, assembling a portrait from indications that might otherwise remain unnoticed behind his masculinity.

This raises another question: does the act of remaking expose fragility, or does it construct it? By turning these objects into an artwork, she discovers a hidden sensitivity while simultaneously shaping how it can be seen. We encounter him only through her mediation, and in the end, we still know very little about him. His fragility becomes visible through

her authorship, though the evidence itself seems to belong more to her than to us. In this context, the question itself seems almost secondary.

Alone with this autobiographical portrait, one begins to sense a resistance to traditional depth. The autobiographical gesture itself appears unstable and deliberate, reflecting the limits of a relationship where intimacy remained largely unspoken. The work does not claim access to an inner truth that was never shared. In this sense, the piece does not give us the father. It gives us the space around him. And that space may be the most precise portrait of all.

Having completed my wandering through the corners of *Marginal Evidence*, I once again found myself thinking about the quiet mechanics of redundancy. On islands that may not exist, within datasets that endlessly circulate before settling in archival repositories, and among intimate objects drawn from interior spaces, proof appears not as certainty but as a field of traces continually shaped through interpretation. Once transferred into the project space, these fragments inevitably undergo reconfiguration, becoming objects of concentrated attention. Within this context, the redundancy that emerges begins to blur this concentration through ambiguity, producing alternative centres of attraction. Perhaps, in confronting order itself, redundancy becomes the fragile force that displaces the image from its centre and keeps marginality alive, and to be honest, that's all I can hope for.