

Dryopes

This project evolved out of a time spent in a mountain village in Greece during early 2016. It's a place that I have been going to throughout my life but it had been a decade since I stayed there in winter and the adjustment was rough. The house was frigid, there was snow on the mountaintops and occasionally thick fog would roll in. Hours of each day went to coaxing a couple of smoky wood stoves to life. When we could, we explored the tracks that led up and through the mountains. These places were wild but also dotted with abandoned structures, old threshing circles, and disintegrating pathways.

I had been working with dance and a few days after arriving in the village I had the idea to capture the kinetic energy of our experience in a few short, improvised choreographies.

What began as an exercise became a compulsion. Over the next weeks I shot whenever possible. The pieces were collaborations between the dancer and myself, with a spontaneity determined by the weather and landscape. The initial feeling was of impermanence, the way the weather moved through the mountains, the way we understood the land in our passage through it, the light or sound at a certain spot during a particular time of day.

But the project transcended this poetic documentation of the land. It became an exploration of memory and meaning within these moments, a search for an inner terrain. Within the process, I found myself thinking about the multiple layers of my experience in this place, how we change over time, of spaces providing context and premonition. Increasingly as we worked, I perceived the dancer's motion tracing out a kind of text upon the landscape; a text that communicated the repetitions and patterns of life, the lost epiphanies and discarded selves that we encounter in familiar places.

The title, Dryopes, alludes to metamorphosis, the animism of antiquity while referencing a local settlement close to where most of these images were captured. Apart from one composite image, the photographs occurred in camera with no adjustments after the moment; these final Dryopes explore transformative states occurring at dusk and under the light of a few full moons.

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