

**Things that Death
Cannot Destroy.
The Day after
Tomorrow**

Linda Fregni Nagler

This short sequence of images is a selection from my collection of photographic plates for magic lanterns. The plates were scanned in transparent and opaque formats in order to show both the image imprinted on the glass and the object status of the photograph, which very often – but not always – includes a paratextual apparatus.

The magic lantern is a device invented in the 17th century that anticipated the cinema of the late 19th century. The lantern projects painted or photographed images, often hand-coloured, onto a screen in a dark room. The process is essentially the same as that of a modern slide projector, but it requires manual activation.

This collection shows a series of subjects of the late 19th–early 20th century, a world in which people, plants, objects, animals, and even monuments and architecture have now disappeared. From this “reactivated” archive, that I use for a series of performances, emerges the image of the world as modernity has represented it: a world bent and modified by the will of man. We see the great geographical conquests (the poles, mountain peaks, the most remote islands in the world...); the idea of exoticism and otherness, but also photography as a colonial document; the transformation of

landscape (deforestation, intensive agriculture and mining).

This century of photographs reveals a predatory instinct that is inherent both in the content of the images and in the gaze of the photographers, showing that my work – collecting, archiving and reactivating these photographs – is a specifically cultural act. Images not only travel through time and space, but also act within them, generating social and cultural experiences that change according to different contexts – and photographs – as material products, and continue to exist as cultural objects.

In the following pages, I present selected images from my collection, associating each plate with a text chosen on the basis of the image as a visual cue. Although the images have no direct connection to the texts, when associated with them they amplify issues relating to the Anthropocene, the climate crisis and the formation of the landscape, as well as power dynamics and the staging of the human figure. And, with particular reference to the medium of photography, they express the strong desire associated with this tool of mass visual representation and the growing need to classify and archive everything, a need that still does not seem to have been satisfied.

IND-019-ML

Sitting bull
TA-TON-KA-I-A TON-KA



“In 1872 the whole world seemed to be in motion, but one moment of stillness punctuated the year. That August, on the Yellowstone River, the Hunkpapa Lakota leader Sitting Bull and his tribesmen were fighting the soldiers protecting the Northern Pacific Railroad builders. A railroad line was being laid through what had been the last remote region, the last place in which the Plains nomads could live as they had lived. Earlier that summer Sitting Bull, whose very name described a buffalo, had declared at a peace conference, “I want those roads stopped just where they are, or turned in some other direction. We will then live peacefully together. If you stop your roads, we can get our game.” General Sherman replied, “You cannot stop the locomotive any more than you can stop the sun or the moon, and you must submit.” Sitting Bull was not ready to submit.

In the middle of the fight on the Yellowstone River, he laid down his gun and his quiver, walked toward the white soldiers, sat down on the grass, and lit his pipe. Two Oglalas and two Cheyennes came and sat down with him, and he passed them the pipe as the bullets whizzed overhead. Reckless bravery was required for that act, which harks back to the intertribal battles where counting coup and winning honor for bravery were goals as potent as killing the enemy. But it suggests an even more powerful yearning for a reprieve from history and its hectic pace in the 1870s. It was as though through courage and will the five men stepped off the runaway train of history or even stopped it. Perhaps in that interval they had time to see the grass clearly, to look at the sky, to think about where they stood, in the landscape as well as in history, to remember their lifetimes of roaming across such grasslands, fording rivers, following buffalo, of living in what then seemed to be the cyclical time of the seasons before the linear time of history caught them up. It was late to be fighting railroads. In 1872 the Oglala Lakota leader Red Cloud and his followers, who had fought the UP so valiantly, had already taken the train to Washington to pursue their rights by other means”.

Rebecca Solnit, *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West*, Viking Penguin, New York, 2003, p. 72.

ALP-019-ML

Rainier Nat. Park Rounding Grittar Rock
F.H. Maude, Los Angeles



“At 4,392m, Mount Rainier is the highest peak in the Cascade Range of the Pacific Northwest. An active stratovolcano, Mount Rainier’s last significant eruption was around 1,000 years ago. (There was some unconfirmed minor activity in the 19th century.) Although it hasn’t erupted for a long time, it is close to populated areas and is considered one of the most dangerous volcanoes in the U.S.

Mount Rainier has deep cultural roots for the Indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest, whose lands surround the mountain. For these communities, Mount Rainier was not just a physical landmark but a sacred entity tied to creation stories, spirituality, and survival. In various tribal languages, Mount Rainier is commonly known as Tahoma or Takhoma, often translated as ‘mother of waters’ or ‘snow-covered mountain.’ Archaeological evidence, like stone tools found at the peak, suggests the existence of seasonal camps dating back thousands of years. It is unlikely that climbing to the summit was a cultural practice because high elevations were often seen as the domain of spirits and deities.

In May 1792, English explorer Captain George Vancouver sighted the mountain during a scouting expedition. He named the peak Mount Rainier after Admiral Peter Rainier of the British Navy. The name has caused controversy, with many people believing the name should feature a local figure or have an Indigenous name. However, Mount Rainier has stuck”.

Kris Annapura, *The Climbing History of Mount Rainier*, “ExplorersWeb”, 2 April 2025, <https://explorersweb.com/the-climbing-history-of-mount-rainier/>.

ARCH-007-ML

13282 - Mutual Life Insurance Company Building - A Ruin Among Ruins - San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of April 18, 1906.
Keystone View Co. Factories, Meadville PA.
Copyright

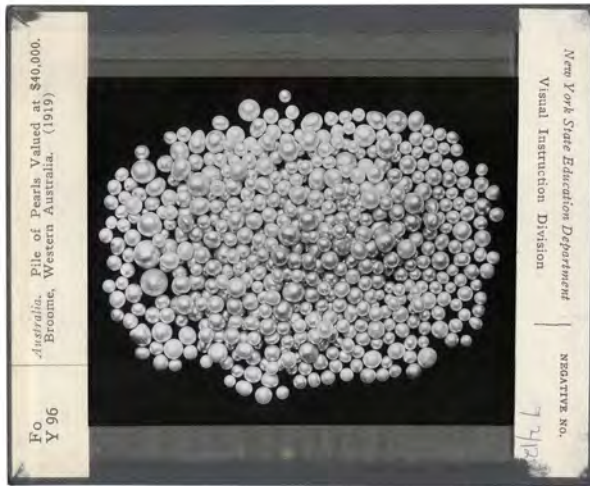


“There was no hysteria, no disorder. I passed Wednesday night in the path of the advancing flames, and in all those terrible hours I saw not one woman who wept, not one man who was excited, not one person who was in the slightest degree panic stricken. Before the flames, throughout the night, fled tens of thousands of homeless ones. Some were wrapped in blankets. Others carried bundles of bedding and dear household treasures. Sometimes a whole family was harnessed to a carriage or delivery wagon that was weighted down with their possessions. Baby buggies, toy wagons, and go-carts were used as trucks, while every other person was dragging a trunk. Yet everybody was gracious. The most perfect courtesy obtained. Never in all San Francisco’s history, were her people so kind and courteous as on this night of terror.”

Jack London, *The Story of an Eyewitness*, “Collier’s Weekly”, 5 May 1906; republished in Louis L. Snyder and Richard B. Morris (eds.), *A Treasury of Great Reporting*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1949, p. 271 (pp. 269-273).

OGGMESS-081-ML

Negative N#. 7 2/12Fo Y96 Australia. Pile of Pearls Valued at \$40,000. Broome, Western Australia. (1919) The University of State of New York Visual Instruction Division New York State Education Department



“On the northwestern tip of Australia, Broome is 1,800km from the nearest city, Darwin. The town was founded in 1883 and named after the then-state governor, Sir Frederick Napier Broome. One of the most fascinating of all Australian towns, its history began in the 1870s, when it was discovered that the waters around the town were home to the *Pinctada maxima* – the world’s largest pearl oyster. At first it was the shells that were thought valuable – the mother of pearl was used to make buttons and cutlery and jewellery that would be exported to New York and London – and the oysters were collected by divers who sailed in and out on pearling luggers. Around the turn of the 20th century, 80% of the world’s finest pearls came from here – and the trade didn’t just transform the town’s fortunes but also its population. Pregnant Aboriginal women were believed to make the best divers, as it was thought they had greater lung capacity. When blackbirding was outlawed, Broome was faced with the challenge of finding others to do the dangerous work of diving for pearls. In 1901 the Australian government passed the Immigration Restriction Act – which limited the numbers of non-whites coming into the country – but Broome was given a special exemption and immigrants arrived from China, Japan, Malaysia and elsewhere to work as pearl divers and settle in the town. The legacy of that immigration and early multiculturalism is everywhere in Broome: the town centre is called Chinatown”.

Sarfraz Manzoor, *Broome, the pearl of Western Australia*, “The Guardian”, 18 September 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2011/sep/18/broome-australia-beach-pearl>.

LUO-016-ML

III (9175) Sponge Market. Key West Harbor, Fla.
Keystone View Co., Factories, Meadville, Pa.
Copyright



“The ‘sponges’ that are sold are only skeletons. Sponges are animals that attach themselves to rocks on the bottoms of warm seas. The openings in the sponge which you buy are, in the live sponge, filled with a soft, jelly-like matter. This soft substance can be readily squeezed out.

Divers collect the sponges from rocks, with long rakes or hooks. These sponges are put into boats, carried to the shore, and there left until the jelly-like matter decays. Then they are washed, dried, sorted, and shipped to market. It is one of these markets at Key West that is here seen. You will observe that the sponges shown are round in shape. This is because their long ends have been trimmed off. Many of the finer varieties are bleached before marketing.

Sponges are found in many parts of the world in warm seas. But there are only a few places where sponge fishing is profitable. The best known of these are along the eastern shores of the Adriatic Sea, and off the coast of Greece and Asia Minor and parts of Africa. In the Western Hemisphere the chief sponge fisheries are off the Florida coast and among the Bahama Islands”.

Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas,
<https://www.cartermuseum.org/collection/sponge-market-key-west-harbor-fla-p199320111>.

PA-030-ML

304-6233- Log raft containing millions of feet of timber, Columbia River, Ore.
Copyright by Underwood & Underwood, N.Y.



“It is near Troutdale, some 50 miles east of Portland, that we have this chance to see the working of one of the most ingenious freight schemes ever devised. These logs are tree trunks felled miles above here along the Columbia. They were hauled down to the river on skids and bound into this gigantic, cigar shaped bundle, to be towed to market that is only about the middle of the raft alongside us now; it extends almost as far back behind us, a veritable miracle of skill. Mr. Robinson who constructed this raft, made his first notable attempt in a similar line some years ago in Nova Scotia. His part of the work was perfectly successful, but the boat engaged to tow the raft down the coast cut loose from its terrifying charge in a storm, and the vagrant raft, left to its own devices, floating around in the very path of the ocean steamers, was like a crazy highwayman at large; that state of things could not be suffered, and the raft was broken up with an immense amount of trouble, because the work of binding had been so admirably done!

That chapter of history is like those recording the tribulations of the first railroads and steamboats. Now the feasibility of this raft-method of transportation has been practically demonstrated in the face of the most discouraging doubters. This particular raft has over seven hundred miles to travel yet before it reaches the Golden Gate.

Much of the best timber in the world goes through the hands of these Oregon lumbermen. Standing, it may be worth perhaps 50 cts. per thousand feet. Manufactured into rough lumber it commands somewhere about \$7.00 per thousand. The total lumber trade of the U. S. amounts to \$566,832,984 yearly”.

Usa 1902, Columbia River Oregon, Log Raft Logging Underwood Stereoview Card, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O201933/stereoscopic-views-of-canada-and-photograph-underwood--underwood/?carousel-image=2025PC4422>.

LUO-047-ML

33/8 Schlachthof in Chicago (158). Stuttgart.



“My sight is failing,’ she said finally. ‘Even when I was young I could not have read what was written there. But it appears to me that that wall looks different. Are the Seven Commandments the same as they used to be, Benjamin?’

For once Benjamin consented to break his rule, and he read out to her what was written on the wall. There was nothing there now except a single Commandment. It ran:

ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL

BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS”.

George Orwell, *Animal Farm: A Fairy Story*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1945, pp. 104-105.

LUO-096-ML

Landing Supplies, 1929.
Landing supplies - Tristan Da Cunha - 844 S.A.



The island of Tristan da Cunha was first sighted in May 1506 during a voyage to India by the Portuguese admiral Tristão da Cunha, after whom the island was named. It is an active volcanic island, the largest of the Tristan da Cunha archipelago, and one of the most remote in the world, accessible only by ship from Cape Town, which is 2,810 kilometers away. The voyage to the island usually takes about six days in stable weather conditions. The island has a diameter of about 11 kilometers, covering an area of 98 square kilometers, most of which is uninhabited. The only area suitable for human settlement is Edinburgh of the Seven Seas, named after Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, son of Queen Victoria, who visited the island in 1867. It has a population of approximately 250 islanders, devoted to farming and fishing, making the island's economy largely self-sufficient. All land is communally owned and livestock numbers are strictly controlled to both conserve pasture and prevent wealth accumulation by better-off families. No 'outsiders' are allowed to buy land or settle on Tristan. There is one full-time police officer and three special constables. Tristan da Cunha is a British Overseas Territory: one of the remaining former colonies which have not yet asked for independence, and wish specifically to retain their link with the United Kingdom.

Text by Linda Fregni Nagler.

NATHIST-005-ML

American Museum of Natural History, New York



“The wilderness had patted him on the head, and, behold, it was like a ball—an ivory ball; it had caressed him, and—lo!—he had withered; it had taken him, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation. He was its spoiled and pampered favourite.”

Joseph Conrad, “Heart of Darkness”, in *Youth, Heart of Darkness, The End of the Tether: Three Stories*, J.M. Dent & Sons LTD, London, 1948 (ed. or. 1902), p. 115 (pp. 45-162).

FLO-002-ML

147. Pair of Pears. San Jose, Cal.
San Jose Chamber of Commerce.



"Pears are classified in three classes, as defined below:

'Extra' Class

Pears in this class must be of superior quality. They must be characteristic of the variety.

The flesh must be perfectly sound, and the skin free from rough russeting.

They must be free from defects with the exception of very slight superficial defects provided these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package.

The stalk must be intact.

Pears must not be gritty.

Class I

Pears in this class must be of good quality. They must be characteristic of the variety.

The flesh must be perfectly sound.

The following slight defects, however, may be allowed, provided these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package: a slight defect in shape; a slight defect in development; slight defects in colouring; very slight rough russeting; slight skin defects, which must not extend over more than; 2 cm in length for defects of elongated shape; 1 cm² of total

surface area for other defects, with the exception of scab (*Venturia pirina* and *V. inaequalis*), which must not extend over more than 0.25 cm² cumulative in area; slight bruising not exceeding 1 cm² in area.

The stalk may be slightly damaged.

Pears must not be gritty.

Class II

This class includes pears that do not qualify for inclusion in the higher classes but satisfy the minimum requirements specified above.

The flesh must be free from major defects.

The following defects may be allowed, provided the pears retain their essential characteristics as regards the quality, the keeping quality and presentation: defects in shape; defects in development; defects in colouring; slight rough russeting; skin defects, which must not extend over more than: 4 cm in length for defects of elongated shape; 2.5 cm² of total surface area for other defects, with the exception of scab (*Venturia pirina* and *V. inaequalis*), which must not extend over more than 1 cm² cumulative in area; slight bruising not exceeding 2 cm² in area."

UNECE STANDARD FFV-51, concerning the marketing and commercial quality control of PEARS, 2020 EDITION, UNITED NATIONS, New York, p. 4.

WAR-016-ML

I
* 2.7 Able Test at Bikini – Ball of Fire, Shock Wave, Ring Cloud
Keystone View Company
Studios, Meadville, Pa.



“Between 1945, when the first bomb exploded in Alamogordo, New Mexico, and November 1962, more than 200 known aboveground or ‘atmospheric’ tests were conducted by the United States military, not only in Nevada but at the Pacific Proving Ground in the Marshall Islands and other locations. These tests were diligently, meticulously, even obsessively chronicled both by still cameras and movie reels, producing a vast number of images shot by amateurs and professionals alike, using every type of camera and film, and taken with devices that were stationed on specially constructed towers, slung around the necks of reporters, carried by planes overhead, or amassed at News Nob. [...] Indeed, we have grown accustomed to the images of such blasts, including the iconic mushroom cloud, stroboscopic pictures that dissect the precise unfolding of the explosion, and aerial photographs of the cratered, devastated aftermath—this repertoire of images, which has become highly charged with symbolic and metaphoric power, has been seared into the history of the twentieth century” [...] In *How to photograph an atomic bomb* (2006), Peter Kuran “details the development of Lookout Mountain Studios, also known as Lookout Mountain Laboratory, a highly classified Hollywood-based production facility that was subcontracted by the Department of Defense in 1947 to document nuclear tests using both still and motion pictures, outsourcing the role of recording so that the scientists at Los Alamos could focus their attention on weapons development [...]. More than 250 people, including directors and producers, worked at Lookout Mountain during its existence; about 40 were cameramen sent on location to stand in the face of these blasts [...]. Only occasionally did these workers wear protective gear that might shield them from the damaging health effects of the radioactivity they were absorbing [...]. Residents who lived near the test sites (aka ‘down-winders’) were regularly assured that fallout would bypass their towns, and that the plumes of smoke and other debris did not pose significant health concerns. Not only that, but the indigenous residents and the ecosystems of these regions were utterly ignored”.

Julia Bryan-Wilson, “Posing by the Cloud: US Nuclear Test Site Photography in Process”, digital, corrected version, pp. 9, 11, 12, 11, 19 (pp. 7-24); first published in John O’Brian (ed.), *Camera Atomica: Photographing the Nuclear World*, Black Dog Publishing, London, 2015.

ARCH-013-ML

29017 A Fr 0728 Pt A.h el
Orly, Fr. Aéroport. Hangar. Exterior. Front & side. 1916 (destroyed).
Reinforced concrete. Hollow iron ribbed construction. Eugene
Freyssinet, architect. The Art Institute of Chicago. Ryerson Library



German Cinematographer Eugen Schüfftan perfected the *Schüfftan process* in 1927, while working with Fritz Lang on the film *Metropolis*. The director wanted to insert actors in sets of monumental scale, so Schüfftan came up with a special effect that would create such illusion with the use of miniature buildings.

To do so, he positioned a glass plate at a 45-degree angle between the camera and the miniatures. Using the camera viewfinder, he traced an outline on the glass indicating where the actors would later be inserted. This outline was then transferred onto a mirror, and all reflective areas outside the marked shape were removed, leaving only transparent sections. When the mirror was set in place of the original glass plate, the reflective portion obscured part of the miniature buildings while simultaneously reflecting the stage behind the camera. In order for the actors to appear at the right size, they were placed several meters away from the mirror. This created the illusion of people walking among gargantuan cityscapes.

Text by Linda Fregni Nagler.



Fregni Nagler, L. (2025). Things that Death Cannot Destroy. The Day after Tomorrow. *L'uomo Nero. Materiali Per Una Storia Delle Arti Della Modernità*, 22(22-24), 235–249.

https://doi.org/10.54103/2974-6620/uon.n22-24_2025_pp235-249

Issue

[Vol. 22 No. 22-24 \(2025\): L'uomo nero green](#)

Section

Monographic Section

License

Copyright © 2025 Linda Fregni Nagler



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).