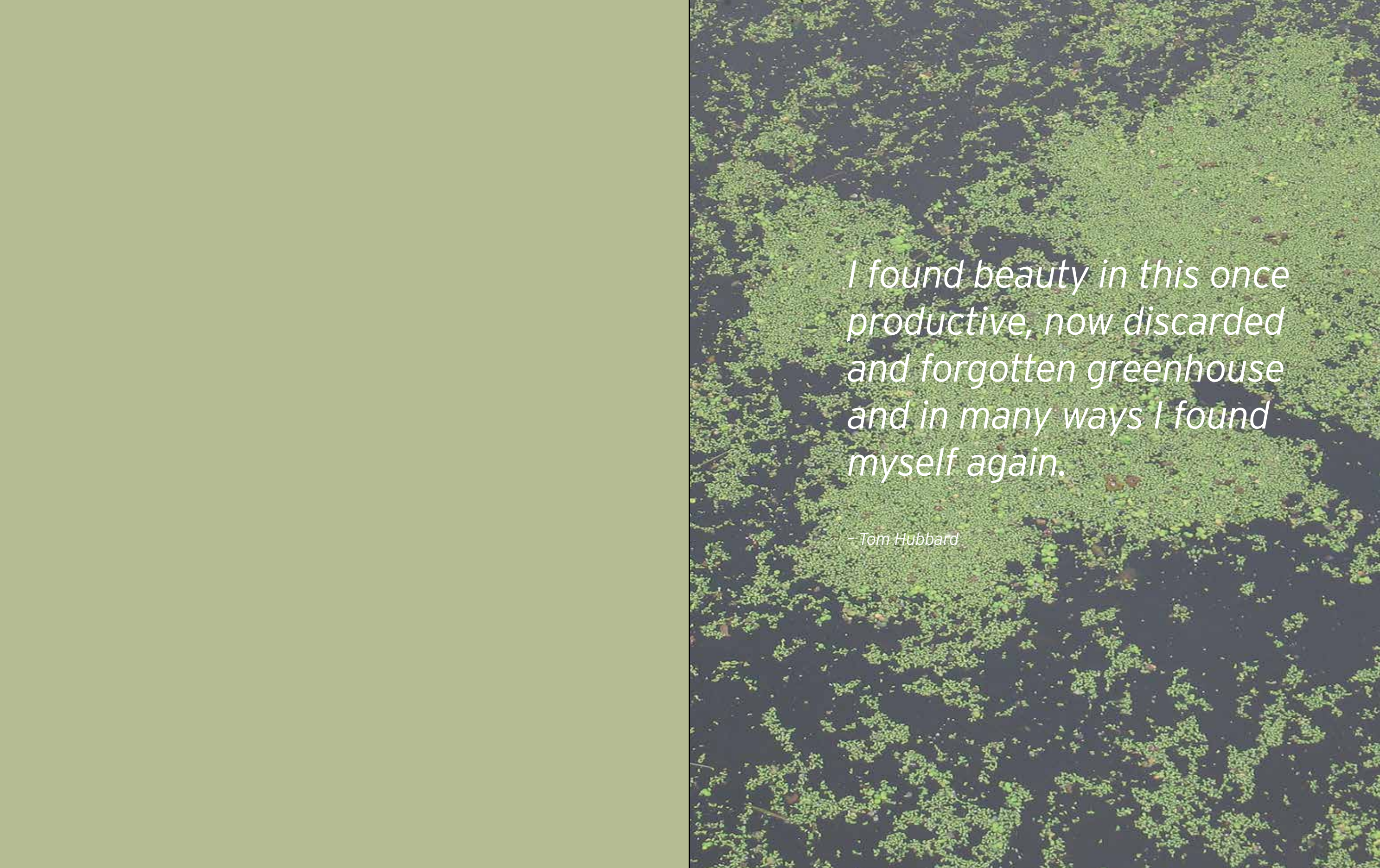


TOM HUBBARD

BROEI•KAS





*I found beauty in this once
productive, now discarded
and forgotten greenhouse
and in many ways I found
myself again.*

- Tom Hubbard



TOM HUBBARD | GREENHOUSE

I have always been drawn to abandoned, derelict or unwanted places. I believe these places have stories to tell which lie just beneath the surface, just out of reach and hidden by panes of broken glass, layers of peeling paint and rust, scattered debris and years of neglect.

The inspiration for this body of work came from the discovery of a derelict greenhouse near our new home in Voorschoten, The Netherlands. Like the farms and barns I worked in growing up in the Midwest, this greenhouse had a sense of history, place and integrity in spite of its outward condition. I have since located and photographed other abandoned greenhouses in Katwijk and Valkenburg, but the greenhouse in Voorschoten remains a special place to me. This body of work is comprised of photographic images and mixed media works incorporating found objects, colors, textures and materials from the site and documents a rapidly changing Dutch landscape. In some ways this work is a time capsule, recording a portion of the history of the area and my emotional state at the time.



TOM HUBBARD | A SENSE OF PLACE

Every inhabited building or structure leaves behind an undisclosed and unrecorded history that remains lingering along its walls. It is in such often empty and forgotten places that certain individuals have the sensitivity to assimilate and connect with a non-distant past. As if they could still hear the voices and perceive the lives who once inhabited such places in the fragments that still remain, these individuals have the capacity to identify with it. It is that sense of place and belonging that drives the human spirit to a place we like to call our own.



*How hard it is to escape
from places. However
carefully one goes they
hold you – you leave little
bits of yourself fluttering
on the fences – like rags
and shreds of your
very life.*

- Katherine Mansfield



In 2005, Midwest artist Tom Hubbard moved to the village of Voorschoten, The Netherlands with his family. Upon his arrival, he soon realized the challenges of his new lifestyle. His frustration with the new language and the inability to find a job without speaking the language led him in a search to assimilate and discover his immediate surroundings. He spent time walking and exploring the neighborhood that had become home to his family.







It was during this time that he found an empty and abandoned greenhouse soon to be demolished and replaced with residential dwellings. Hubbard had always been attracted to and fascinated by old and abandon buildings and structures. He immediately became interested in the greenhouse and began to explore the stories and the life it once carried. Hubbard embarked on a search for the property owners and thanks to his persistence, he soon had unlimited access to the site and its remains. He then began spending numerous hours walking, photographing and making a personal connection with the site. This process of discovery led him to create a body of mixed media works that include photography, encaustic, paint, and objects collected from the site. The end result is a unified whole made of fragments and historical references to what it once was, a thriving greenhouse in The Netherlands.



Telling a unique story through the repurposing of a fragment and its historical understanding is nothing new for Tom Hubbard. He is not foreign to investigation and history digging. In one of his previous projects, he spent over two years investigating and tracing the death of his father during the Vietnam war. Such focused initiative took him to travel away from home in search for the actual site of his father's death as a US Marine. *Semper Fidelis: How I Met My Father* was for Hubbard the result of a personal need for closure and self understanding. Beyond the geographical importance of his father's death, the journey of discovery was the healing process necessary for his own inner peace.





In comparison, the *Broeikas* (Greenhouse) Project came about not as a personal concern to discover something about his past. Rather, as a result of his present experience in a foreign land. It came to him out of the circumstances of his life's journey when his family temporarily immigrated to The Netherlands. The greenhouse he came across in his daily walks was similar to a treasure awaiting to be uncovered by the right person at the right time. As unequivocal as it may seem, Hubbard's arrival to The Netherlands and his adaptation to the new reality awoke in him the investigatory aspect of his personal character. Not only did Hubbard rediscover a fragment of a once lived past, he also unearthed a personal passion and attachment for the history of a place.



In his work, Hubbard explores appropriation as a way to construct a new reality that, at the end, embodies a sense of personal truth and reflection. His work incorporates the nostalgia, memory and geography of the past while inviting a new narrative for the present. It is, however, in the process of making art that Hubbard responds with sensitivity to the limitless possibilities of the subject matter. During his long walks in and out of the greenhouse, Hubbard photographed, sketched, noted and collected; letting a sense of place slowly set in while wondering about the life and the stories this place once carried.

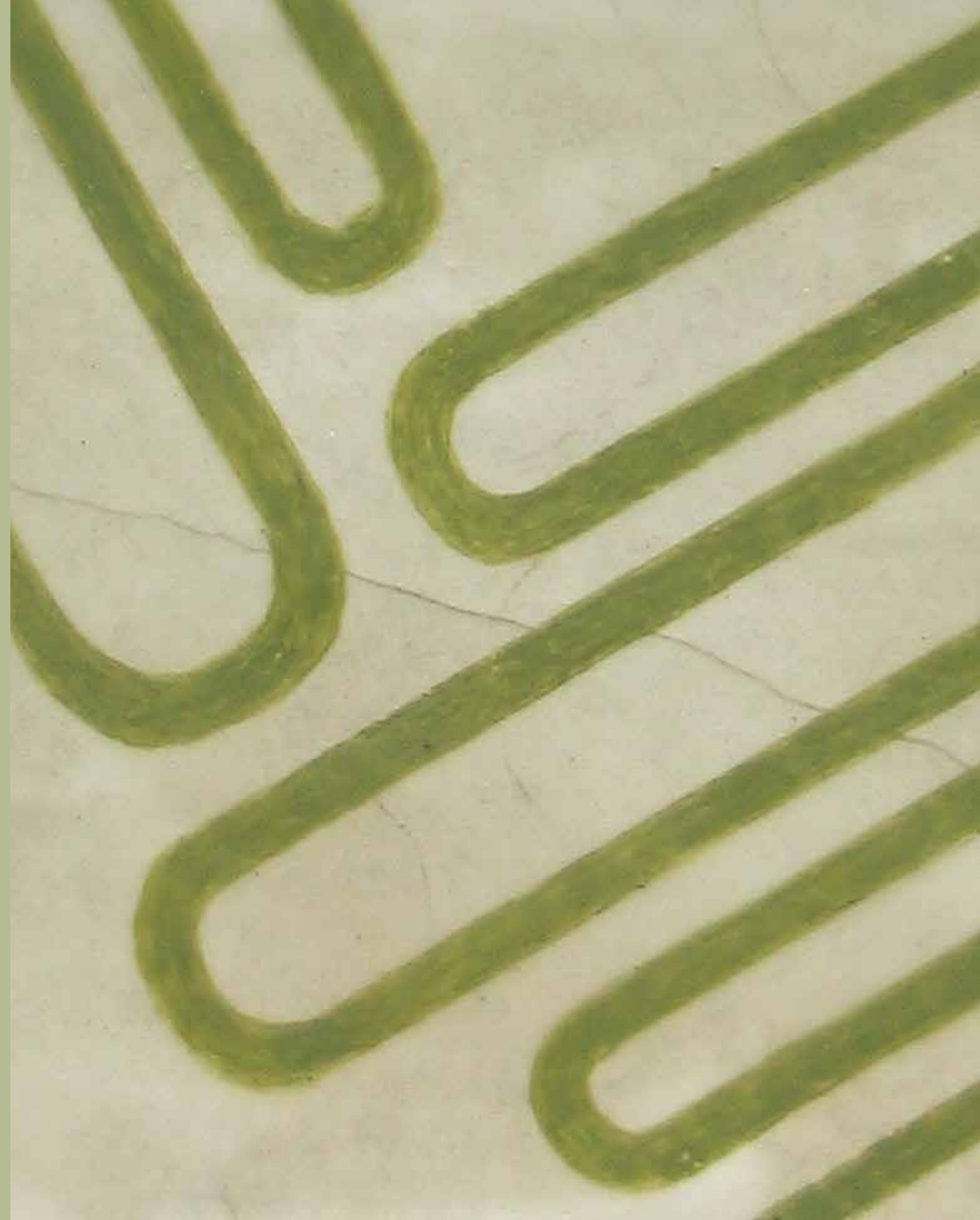
Hubbard's process of object appropriation is vast and varied. Sometimes greenhouse objects such as windows, wires, glass, fabric, and hangers find their place hanging, attached, embedded, placed over, painted on or stitched in the work. Such elaborate and significant use of rusted fragments in contrast with the history of art making materials such as encaustic, painting and photography present the viewer with a sophisticated and masterfully crafted layering of meaning and metaphor.

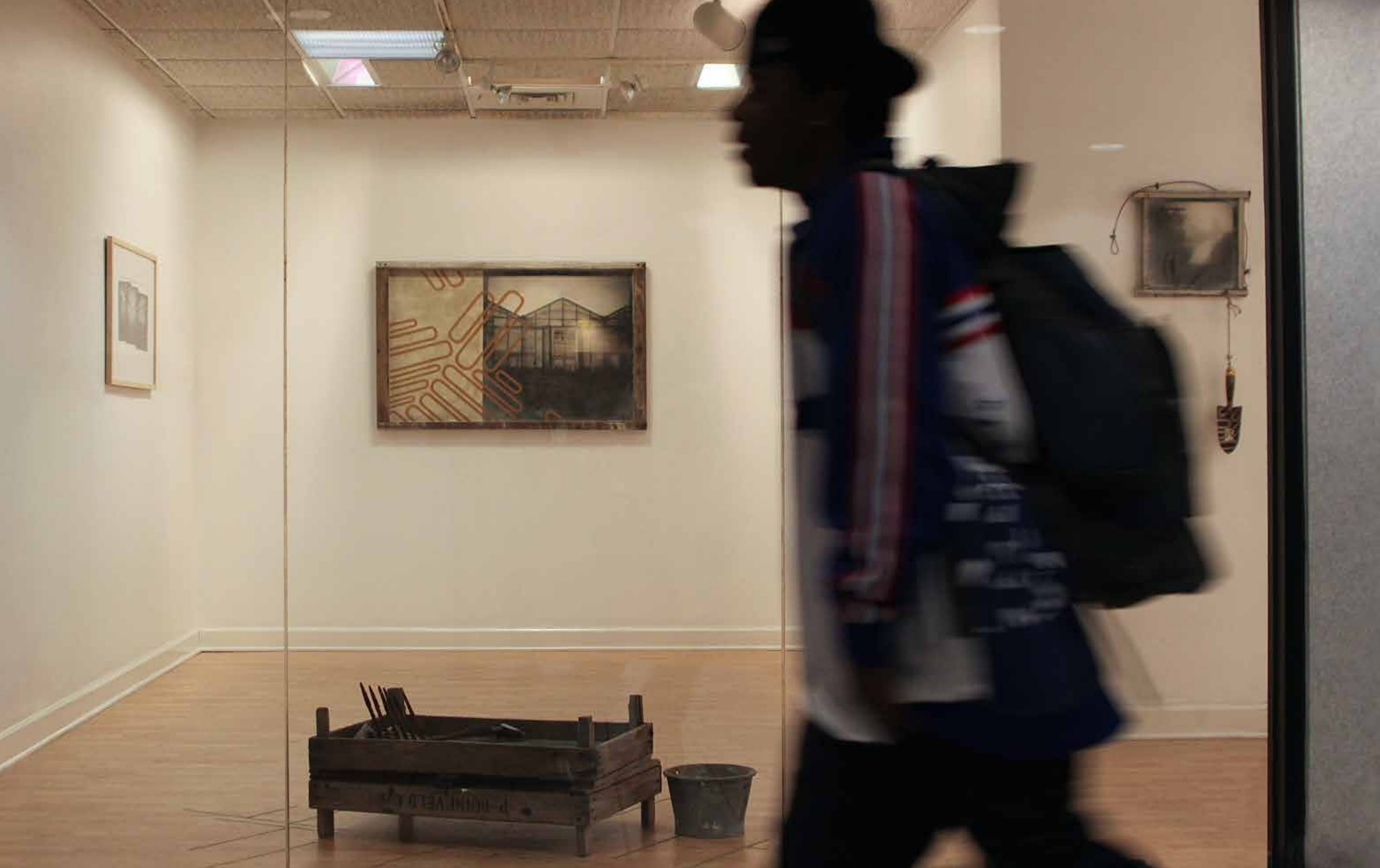






In the work *Verloren*, translated from Dutch and meaning “Lost”, Hubbard presents a panoramic view of the entire greenhouse made of three separate photographs lined up together to make one continuous image. The photographs in this work and all others in this project are taken under a foggy and colorless mist. The result is a soft and subtle image reminiscent of a lost memory. The photographs are then overlaid with encaustic that, in turn, adds its own diffusive effect over the entire surface. A strong sense of design is evident by the careful use of lines creating simple forms that resemble those of a map. The word “Verloren” is visible in a light gray color and a stenciled typeface. Works like this reflect Hubbard’s love for design, photography and surface. *Verloren* is more than a scientific investigation of a place. It acts as a symbolic metaphor of the search for identity under a new cultural context.







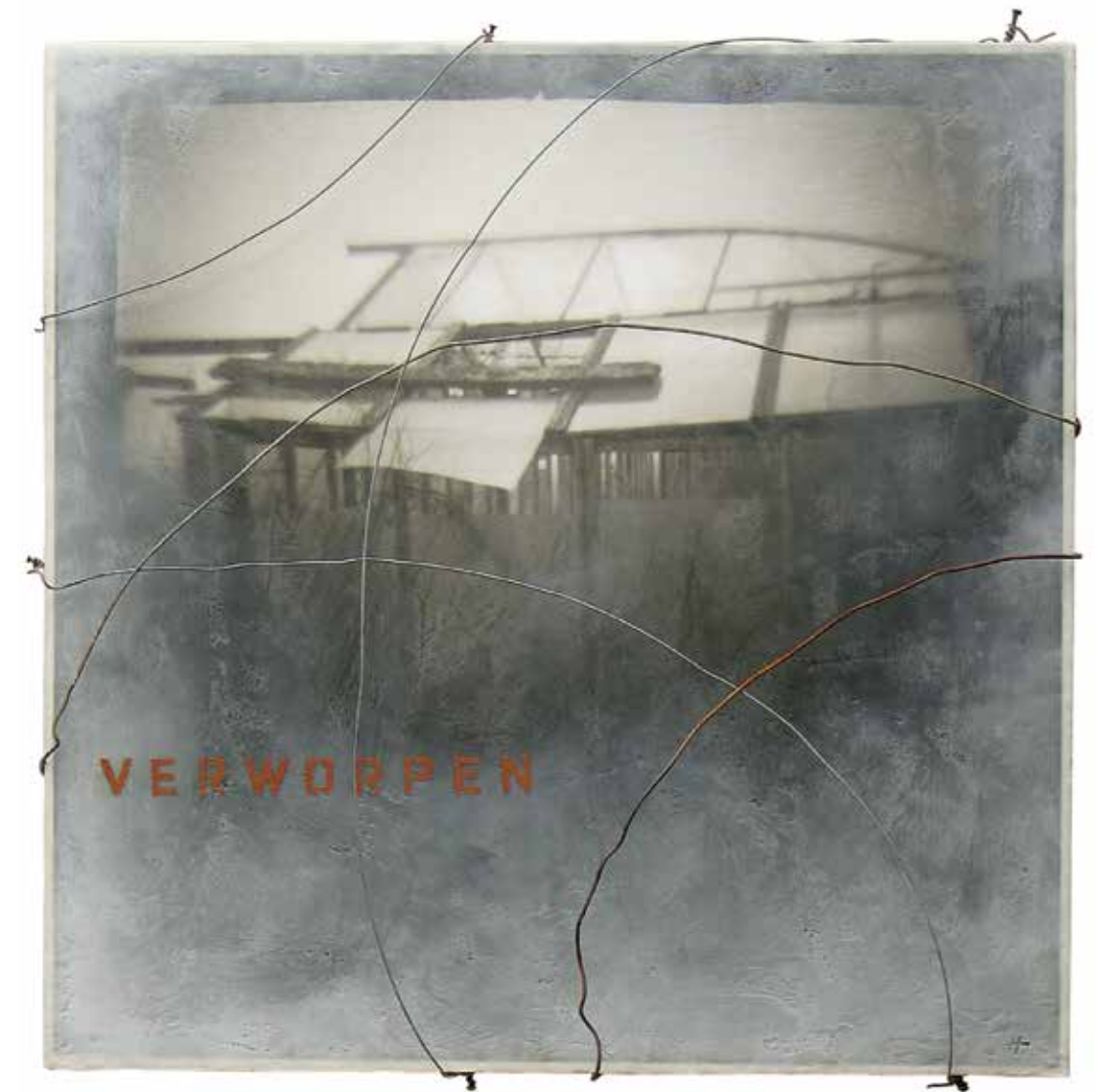
Within a new reality and a new landscape, the voyager finds himself trapped in the complex labyrinth of meaning and identity. Thus, the map found in Hubbard's work serves to convey a sense of direction and orientation. Although abstract and disguised to the viewer, the map reminds Hubbard of the specificity of his found treasure.

Beyond the obvious, Hubbard cultivates new life out of old forms. It does not take long for the viewer to understand that these works are reverent and respectful to the history they represent. Their new found life emanates from an art making process that does seem to revere and pay homage to a lost and perhaps forgotten history. In a sense, the greenhouse represents a sacred place away from home. A place where time does leave its visual and palpable mark and where quietness and respect are the mandatory requirements for its understanding.





The greenhouse project is about more than the sum of its parts; it asks us to explore and consider our perception of time, place and belonging. As time sometimes tends to amend our lives, Hubbard found inspiration in a lost and forgotten place. In that strange sense, the abandoned and far away landscape brought back memories of the farms in the Midwest; a place he once called home. The abandoned greenhouse was a place rich in history, artifacts and character that would make someone with the perceptive sensitivity, calmness and the curiosity of Tom Hubbard to respond with passion.







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