Roaring beyond the windowpanes

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Ellen Hutchins's breath

> *My nerves are so weak that my hand trembles & I can hardly write...*
>
> *The mountains are ever before me to excite regrets & remind me of the happy tho' solitary hours of enjoyment I have had rambling among them. The noise of the sea brings the sea plants before me & the pleasure I used to feel in collecting & preserving specimens for my friends. I feel as I if I should never again have such peaceful enjoyments to soften hours of anxiety & sorrow.*
>
> [5th of July 1813, Ellen Hutchins in a Letter to Turner]

> *I wish all the world felt as light & free as I did when ranging over the heath where I found it. One advantage in such a remote country as this is that one can ramble about as one pleases. It would want many advantages to compensate all its disadvantages. Where else could one set out alone to ramble among rocks & mountains or take only a little boy or girl to bring my basket & box.*
>
> [20th of May 1812, Ellen Hutchins's in a Letter to Turner]

The work *Roaring Winds*, presented in this paper, explores the mental landscape of an early Irish botanist named Ellen Hutchins (1785-1815). For most of her brief life,

ending at the age of 29, Hutchins experienced physical and mental ailments, likely due to recurring bouts of tuberculosis (Chesney 1997).

As a young girl, she was sent from West Cork to Dublin to be treated by and live with the family of Whitley Stokes. Stokes, who had just become a Professor of Medicine at Dublin's Royal College of Physicians, was already a well-known botanist and a family friend. He encouraged Hutchins's talent for studying cryptogamic plants. With her keen eye, she quickly became one of the early experts on lichens, liverworts, and seaweeds. She received invitations to collect species and correspond with leading botanists of the time, including James Townsend Mackay (1775–1862) and Dawson Turner (1775-1858).

Lichens and seaweeds, plants that seemingly materialize from air and water and form breathing filaments that stretch from the sea's depths to mountain tops, became Hutchins's personal obsession. In her letters, we read how her walks to collect specimens marked moments in her life when she found self-realization and relief from her difficult circumstances. There is a poetic and pragmatic connection between her longing for fresh air and her attention to the most ecologically sensitive beings in her environment.

Windows and mountains as laboratories for exploring affective regulation

Our project operates at the intersection of ecological psychology, visual arts, and philosophy, exploring the projective qualities inherent in the living environment. This work is embedded within the broader context of the PhD research project *Landscapes of Stress* at the Psychiatry Department of the University of Amsterdam. Our analysis focuses on projection as an affect regulatory strategy. Rather than perceiving projection as a one-directional process where ideas or feelings are merely cast outward onto people, objects, or places, we propose a reciprocal understanding of projection (Habets et al., 2024). Consider it as the forecasting of affective aeromancy.

We draw on a radically situated conception of imagination (cf. van Dijk & Rietveld, 2020; Ianniello & Habets, 2025), defined as embodied skills for maintaining openness to the world through expressive articulation of thoughts and feelings. We investigate how the ephemeral and affective qualities of materials and surroundings are not passive backdrops but active participants in imaginative processes that articulate felt relations, positive or negative, toward one's world. Biographical experience inscribes a horizon of significance through which individuals develop affective orientations and future-directed forms of inhabitation. These orientations are not static but dynamically shaped by imaginative activity, enabling individuals to continually reconfigure their relationship to their place in the world, an ongoing process rooted in the lived body's perceptual engagement with the world.

In Hutchins's case, imagination unfolds in the intersecting spaces of a 19th-century interior and the expansive vistas of the West Cork mountains and coastline. Her confinement intensifies the significance, transforming it into a perceptual threshold where unfulfilled intentions and longing accumulate. The window becomes not only a

source of light and air but also a structure for sustaining affective direction and temporal continuity, serving as a hinge between the lived body and its withdrawn world. This act of imaginative projection is not merely a passive escape but a dynamic, self-affirming process (Zahavi, 2005) in which the continuity of the self is maintained and reshaped through its relation to the environment.

Through the analysis of historical self-narratives, such as Hutchins's letters, phenomenological interviews (cf. Becan 2014, Høffding 2015) conducted in West Cork, and the creation and documentation of large-scale art installations, we examine the subtle practices through which individuals articulate their identities in relation to place. Centering lived experiences in our transdisciplinary approach enables us to develop a phenomenological account of projection as an active and situated form of affective orientation expressed through material, perceptual, and imaginative means. Here, projection is not merely an expression of feelings onto the environment but a constitutive practice of self-affection, where the self is both shaped by and continuously shapes its relationship with the world.

Naturally, this poses significant challenges to the definition of reproducibility and the grain of analysis, as all involved research methodologies are inherently qualitative and reflect serious subjective and intersubjective qualities of experience. We assert that art/science projects can bring to the forefront lived experience and demonstrate how behavioral research is always situated within real-life contexts by blurring the boundaries between psychological experiments and works of art. Whether in the laboratory, the clinic, or the mountains, the faculties of affectivity, imagination, cognition, and perception should be understood as radically emplaced, contingent, yet continuously changeable relationships between people and a world in flux.

Roaring Winds

The photographs gathered in this publication emerged over the course of a three-month residency at Glenkeen Gardens, overlooking Roaring Water Bay in southwestern Ireland. Rooted in daily trips of our family collective through the landscape, the project unfolded slowly, technically, attentively, and collaboratively:

1)We worked with a large-format analog camera, whose very material constraints shaped the pace and posture of image-making. Beneath the dark cloth, peering into the ground glass, the frame became a composition, a spatial encounter, a perspectival opening. As John Szarkowski wrote, "The picture becomes less a thing made than a window that one looks through." This deliberate slowing-down was a way to remain attuned to the terrain, the lichen and tidal edge, as the sites Hutchins herself might have searched in her pursuit of cryptogams. The film holders allowed for four exposures per outing, each carefully chosen and composed, each an attempt to register presence with both botanical and affective register (Figure 8).

2) The negatives produced through this process were later used in a series of image-elicited conversations with local experts in and around Bantry, where Ellen Hutchins spent much of her life. These encounters deepened our understanding of her

writing and environment, enriching the project through layered perspectives, archival, ecological, and personal. We spoke with writer and historian Madeline Hutchins, who is also Ellen's great-grandniece; archaeologist and botanist Finola Finlay; writer and performer Karen Minihan; and ecologist Clare Heardman. In the conversations, we traced Hutchins's possible paths across the landscape, highlighting overlooked places, historical nuances, and opportunities to take photographs. The negatives brought forth a *shared presence* of the places that Hutchins longed to be during the conversations, acting like windows looking out onto the past and eliciting interpretations and perspectives on her state of mind as she dealt with her physical challenges (Figure 9).

3) Following these dialogues, the negatives were developed and printed as cyanotypes on glass plates. This publication presents contact proofs of the 8x10 cyanotypes to explore the tonal value and image resonance. The cyanotype process was chosen for its tactile and historical associations, evoking a photographic temporality closer to Hutchins's imagined future. While photography had not yet entered the botanical sciences during her lifetime, it would later become a key method for specimen documentation. We are particularly drawn to the cyanotype photograms of seaweeds by Anna Atkins, daughter-in-law of Dawson Turner, who may have known of Hutchins's work. In total, 180 photographs will be printed on glass. When paired with Hutchins's letters, these images provide the material for a phenomenological analysis undertaken at the Lemon Tree Interdisciplinary Center for Psychiatry, Psychotherapy, and Philosophy. This analysis explores how imagination and expressive articulation sustain self-affection and world-relatedness, even amidst physical constraints.

4) Looking ahead, the photographs will be installed in windowpanes as part of a spatial installation titled *Roaring Winds*, a house without walls, a space made of air and light. The work will be presented at Working Artist Studios in West Cork and at the Crespo Foundation in Frankfurt in 2026, accompanied by a live radio broadcast. We will conduct phenomenological interviews during the exhibitions to explore how visitors relate to the work and its atmospheres. Through this, we aim to better understand the roles of projection, memory, and self-affection in gallery contexts. The photographs invite viewers into a state of elsewhere or elsewhere to become present, a resonant openness that echoes Hutchins's longing to return to the mountains. The windowpanes thus act as both material and metaphor, offering a site for reflection and research: a philosophical inquiry conducted beyond traditional texts alone.

Figure 1. Lichen on rock, coastline of Glenkeen Gardens.

Figure 2. Roaring Water Bay.

Figure 3. The Wild Lands, Glenkeen Gardens.

Figure 4. Toormore coastline.

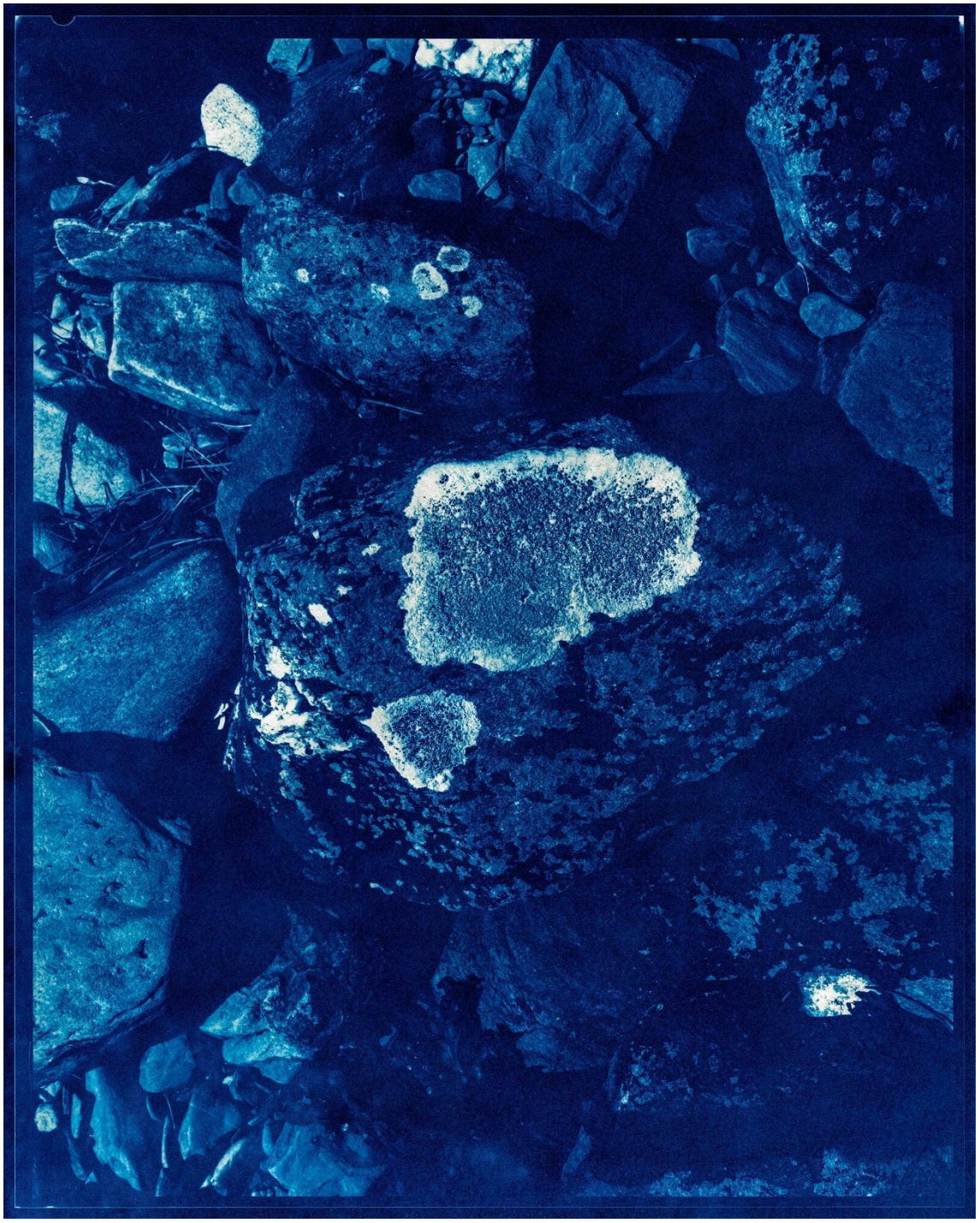

Figure 5. Lichen on rock, coastline of Glenkeen Gardens.

Figure 6. Knockboy, Priest's Leap.

Figure 7. Four Crosses.

Figure 8. Taking photographs with a Large Format Camera at the coast of Glenkeen Gardens.

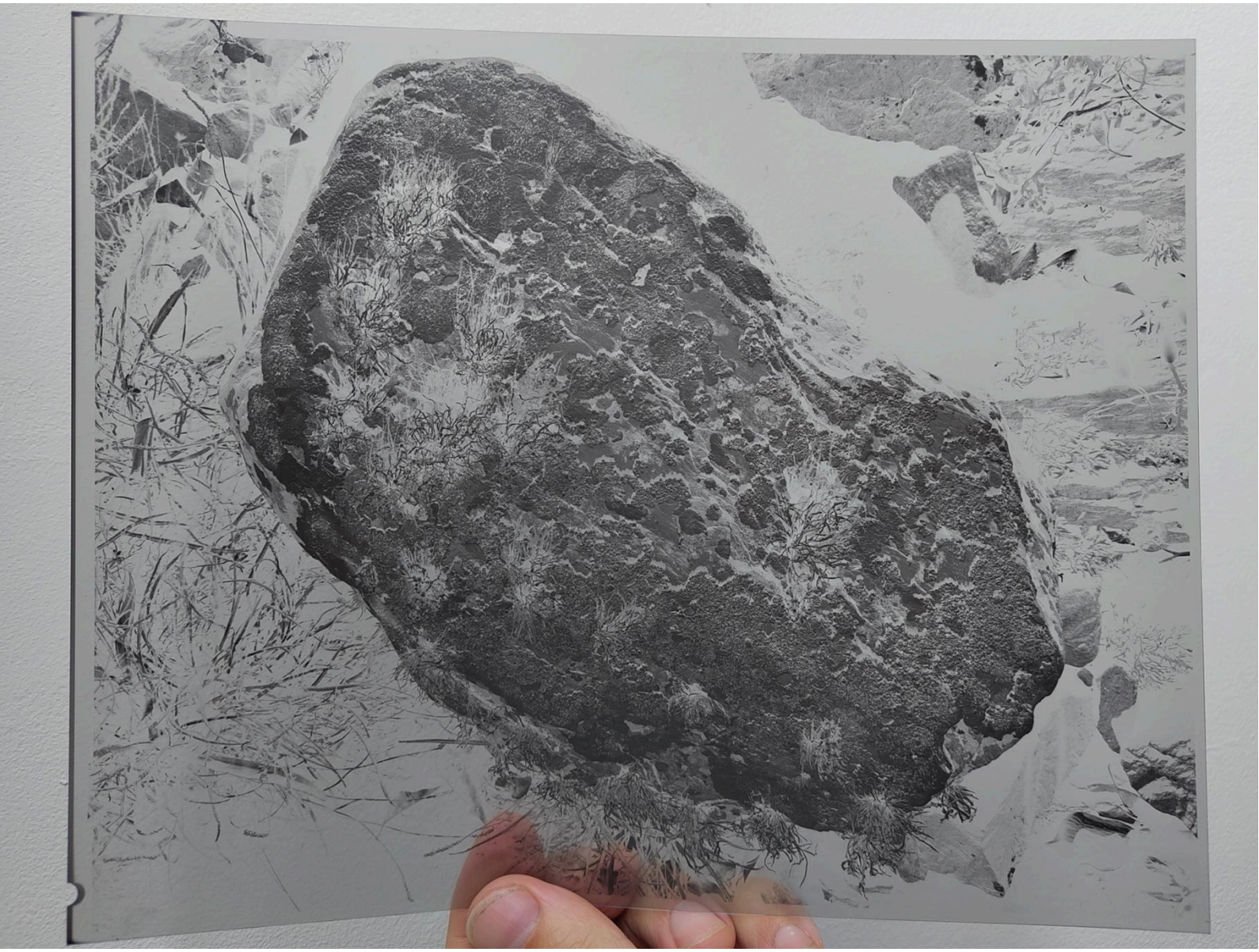

Figure 9. Negative 47 – lichen on a rock at the coast of Glenkeen Gardens.

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David Habets

Is an artist and researcher based in the Netherlands. Operating at the intersection of visual art, landscape architecture, and philosophy, his work explores mental and physical pollution through place-based art installations and material performances. His academic research focuses on how built environments influence psychological states, as part of a doctoral project at the Amsterdam University Medical Centre titled *Landscapes of Stress*.

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Biguzaa Habets-Posas
Son of Eva Posas and David Habets, embraces both Zapotec and Limburg heritage. As a young explorer, aspiring artist, and researcher, he also coined the name of the collective, Mbuchi.

David Habets, Eva Posas and Biguzaa Habets-Posas are members of **Mbuchi Collective**, a transcontinental collective of artists and researchers. Rooted between the Netherlands and Mexico, their practice weaves together Binnizá heritage and European folk narratives. Through spatial installations, live radio, public programs, curatorial research, and in play, Mbuchi journeys across linguistic and cognitive territory, mapping the winds that carry memory, identity, and language.

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