

FLOATING

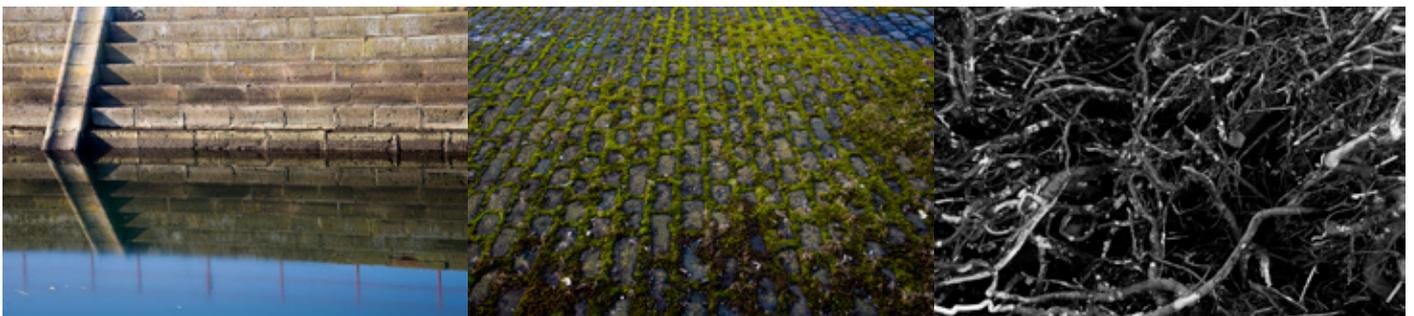
(A FEBRUARY DRIFT THROUGH
INDUSTRIAL EDGELANDS)

by D. FYANS

Resistance, trepidation, inertia. The initial seed germinating into forwards motion, the rush of anticipation with decisions made, camera charged, shoes on, threshold of the week long's flu induced comfort zone breached and out into the real world.



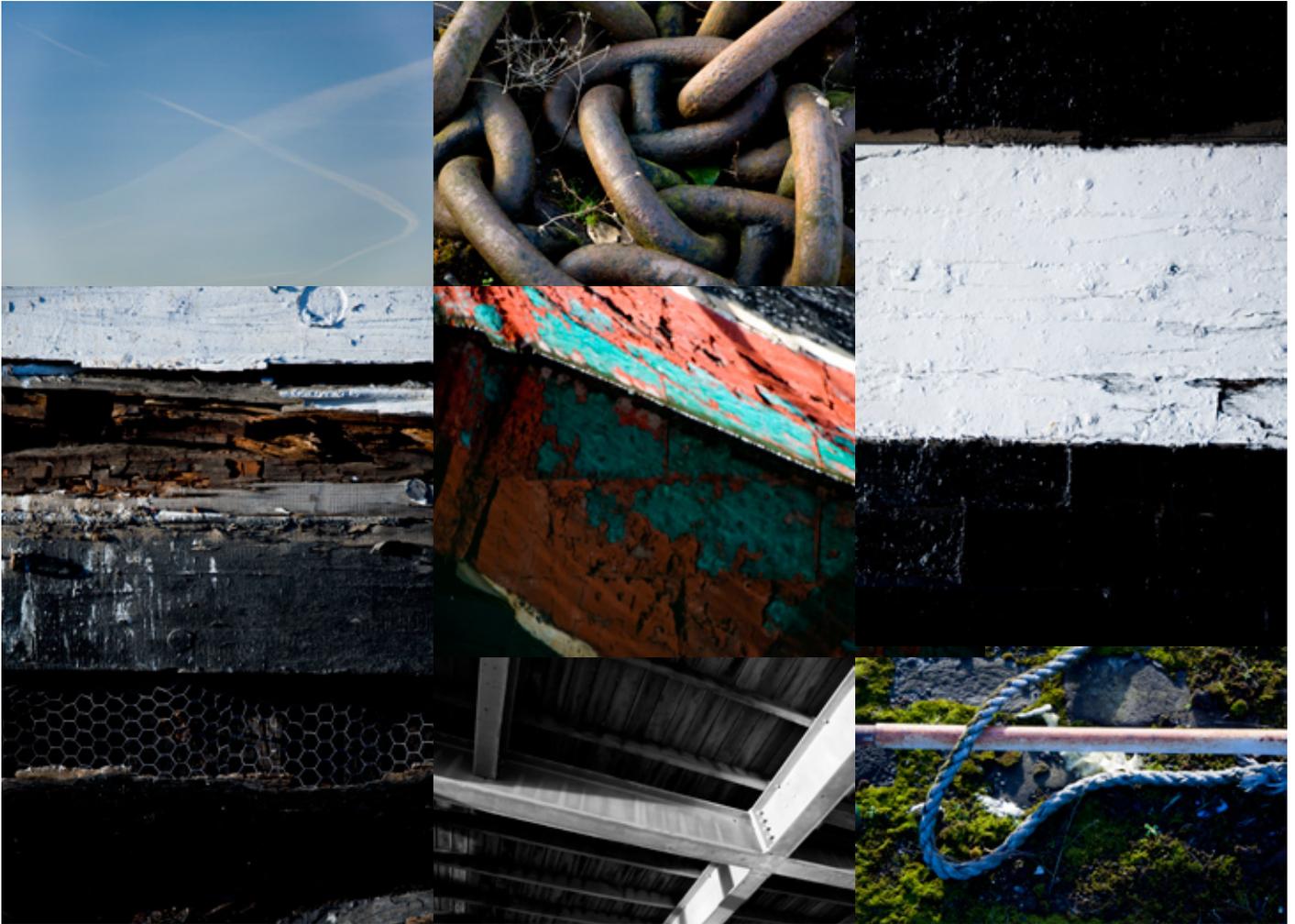
Moving quickly from the maddened crowd, flowing and crashing like waves against the Overgate, I follow unwritten lines against the tide, continuously breaking off, disrupting any semblance of order, a drift past the unbuilding of Tayside House, the traffic systems here mirroring a perfect rhizomatic model of severance and reconnection, throughways closed off by abandoned development hoardings waiting to become something else, even if it is just rubble and dust. Through cones, along carriageways and across half excavated stretches of neither pavement or road, running downstream towards the river, water persists, it always finds its way back to source.



In the midst of Victoria Dock lies the East Graving dry dock, a broken leg jutting back into the water. Land neither large, nor sturdy enough to coax in the developers that have already turned much of the beautiful Victorian industrial landscape into boring, flat complexes of steel and glass, luxury shoebox living for an itinerant population of young, professional commuters and moneyed foreign students. Through some long flattened Herace fencing, out in the East Graving, you could be adrift, floating at the landlocked prow of a great ship, the city flowing past as forgotten headlands. The cobbles unravelling themselves as the moss and ground weeds push to the surface looking to the sun while the dementia eaten train tracks tangle and bury themselves into the organic morass. They know their time has passed as they sink in slumber into their twilight beds.



The turning of the sun into it's early vernal cycle brings longer rays with each passing day, stretching out the features in time, clarification through magnification, the contrails in the sky draw maps of new territories. Only the percussive, resonant mechanics of a distant pneumatic drill and the harmonium droning of diggers and dump-trucks as they intertwine with the shrill cries of the Pied wagtails, Gulls and Oystercatchers mark any movement in this otherwise still pooling of early spring time.



Four gulls atop a skewed lamp-post cry out their intruder alarm, warning me off their trophy haul of broken shellfish as silent, dead mills look with vacant eyes towards uncertain futures.

Drifting further East, we pass into heavier industrial edgelands, giant scrapyards are set about by leviathan pincers, like the funfair claw, digging and lifting to see what shiny old treasures can be deposited in the prize slot on the back of the half full truck waiting to be taken elsewhere. The Harbour Cafe, an orange stained, wooden hut with its rain scarred laurel green signage shows no signs of life at this time of the afternoon, it is difficult to tell from the sun bleached remnants of fuzzy juice adverts in the window whether it closed earlier today, or earlier in the decade.



The Dundee Refinery spreads like groundweed, from its beginnings in 1932 when William Briggs & Sons Ltd, bitumen and chemical refiners first spotted a shadow on the x-ray of the landscape. Regular expansion since has led to the current operators, Nynas spitting out bitumen, fuel and other oil based 'solutions' to the tune of a throughput of 2000 tonnes of crude oil per day.



I suspect that it is a few too many accumulative hours spent inhabiting video games and clearing waves of terrorists from industrial sites or manoeuvring through pipe laden tracks that gives me such an appreciation of the beauty and madness of all the twisting and turning metal, shining in the long afternoon sun. The Moon hanging above and to the right of a particularly futuristic looking chimney gives echoes of waiting until the Death Star is in range, a giant planet killing machine swallowing resources and pumping out a means of controlling a universe through threat and restraint.



The roadside of East Camperdown Street lies littered with the seemingly discarded hulks of shipping containers. Too useful to scrap, too cumbersome to keep on-site, each comprises a unique combination of struts, corrugations, colours and the spattered moire of rust, resembling post-industrial lego bricks, scattered around the tarmac by a bored child.



The sprawling land of the refineries is cut through by the railway and the dual carriageways of East Dock Street, a near forgotten footbridge, tucked behind the maze of containers, spans over the tracks. At the crest of the bridge, the sun glints off the parallel lines, caught in the light like spiderwebs spun back towards the centre, the City in silhouette, ghosting into negative space. Working back towards the origin, past the Halley Brothers Mill and through the Wishart Arch, the spatial quiet and emptiness of the industrial soundscape gives way back into the everyday bustle, the streets once again a negotiation of tidal nomads. As the visual noise of advertising boards and inescapable weight of purposefulness creep back in, they colour reality with dull hues in spite of their garishness. When suitably decentred, the natural tendency to reconnect back into this mode of operation is difficult step, best disregarded.

