

# *Survey Minor*

Animal Holdings, LLC.  
230 Wickenden Street  
Providence, RI  
02903

Dear Surveyor,

Another day of good news, the first in a long time! New work and very much, as you know, needed. The other night I was in Monte Andantino and made the acquaintance of one of these European counts over a few rough hands of brag—not quite the royalty I was most hoping to encounter at that moment. What a fine man this Count is! Fine, *fine*: it turns out he was recently willed a property in our neck of the globe and needs measurements made. Well, I say—let's make!

Now the sensitive thing is we're really quite low on funds “at-this-precise” and I just can't afford to send you out to do the measurements on your own. The days are getting shorter but travel expenses and housing are only getting longer, or more expensive, as the case may be, or is, in my estimation. And I've an eye for business!

The short of it really is that we can't afford to have you go out there and do the surveying in person. Instead, you're going to have to do the best you can with stereograms. We've contracted a photographer who lives near enough to the property to go out and take the photos. They should follow this letter shortly. I've instructed her to attach any relevant information along with the pictures.

It really is much cheaper this way, and cheaper means more money. That's the counterintuitive thing about all this *business*. Sorry to keep you office bound—I'm certain we'll have you back out there soon. I'll “be-in-touch.”

Ever your  
loving boss,  
Jack Animal.

Hello Surveyor,

Glad to be working with you. Enclosed are the first few pictures. I'll warn you they're not perfect. I'm still dialing in my technique. Forgive me. The contraption I've made to take these double-pictures is a bit rough. I should have it sorted soon.

This was my first trip out to the Count's lot. Strange place. Maybe you have more information on it than me. I can't figure out what it was being used for or who it used to belong to. Take a look for yourself. I'll send more along soon.

Lira.



Facing north in the main area, just east of the flats. These little hills are everywhere in the transition space between the woods and the big quay. No real plants growing, just a covering of velvet clover. I think they might just be gravel or something with dirt on top. I imagine you'll still need to include them in your topographic map. Worth noting?



Another view of hills. Damaged and shaky. It's hard to keep the camera still, even on the tripod. The wind is strong and cool down in this main area. It must be coming in from the east off the water.



Facing east. That's the slope coming down to the coast in the background. This whole flat area lies right up against the river, which runs northwest to southeast. It sort of juts out into the river and has a kind of rectangular shape. Behind the mound here—which was spongy and damp, even while the rest of the ground was pretty well dried out by the sun—you can see the eastern fork of the access road. I imagine these piles are debris left from when they flattened or invented this area.



Facing up, into the clouds. Not really. Or indirectly. The sun is strong (again in the main area—you can see the faint outline of some hills in the background) and shade is simply not in supply. My dark bag, too, needs mending. When I talked to Mr. Animal I tried to explain that working with paper would be more awkward due to the larger format—both photos are taken directly onto the same piece of paper, about eight by five inches—but he gave me a very strict budget, and this way at least I don't have to pay for film or enlarger.



A picture from my bedroom window I took to test the developing process. It's hard to explain exactly how it works. I don't understand it really. Why it keeps turning out blue.

Look at all those windows. Do you ever get hired to make maps of the insides of places? When I was a kid I drew maps of places I'd been. Then, photos—a photograph is a kind of map. So dense with information. A way of transferring information density. Even here, with this primitive, lensless camera—look how fine the detail is. If you look close enough, you'll see the image sits slightly *behind* the dust and other aberrations on the surface of the print. Scarring from agitation during development.

When you snap into the stereoscopy, you'll find those scratches fall on and form a windowpane. Your eyes travel comfortably through real instant depth. All that density climbs back up to you.



Another test photograph, this one from my kitchen window. So much more information than I thought I'd be able to catch with this set-up. Animal knew what he was talking about. Probably we are could all make do with a lot less. Curious how simple most recording technologies are once you have the principle down.

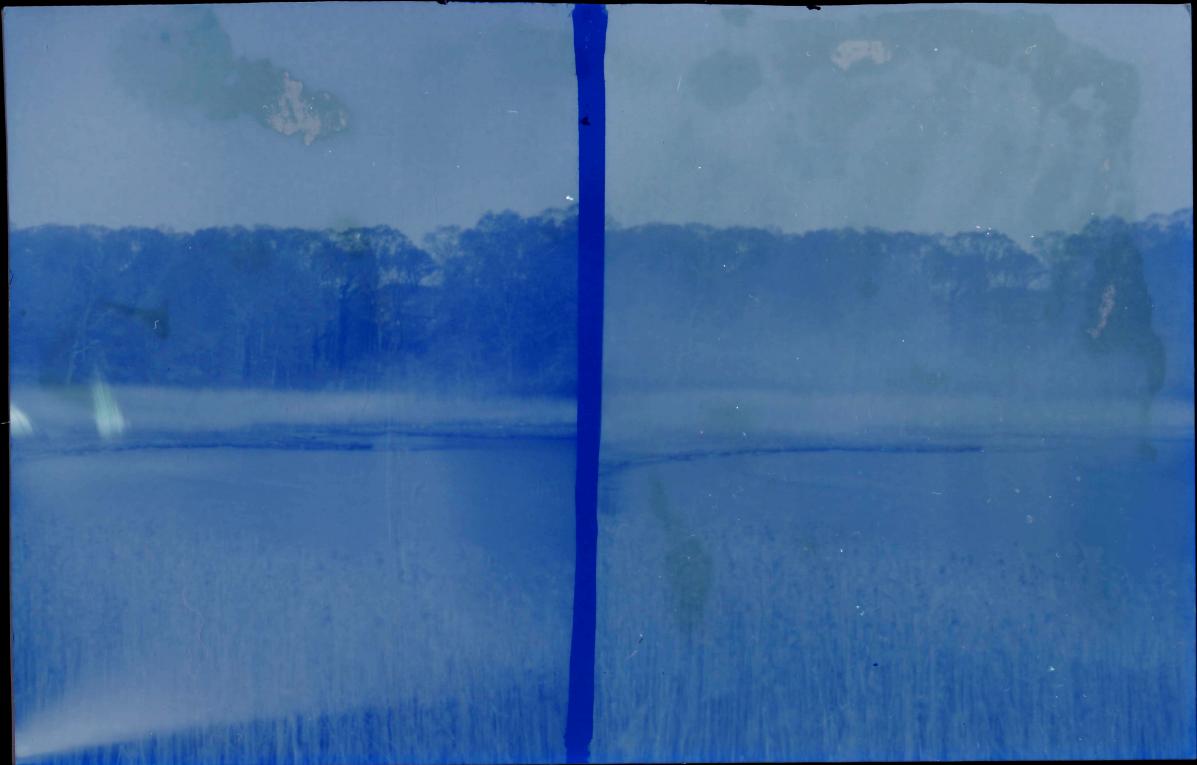
Is there no phenomenon that will not turn out to be transferable? All will be made to pass into the record, for better or worst, with the specifics of the transfer finally clearing up what each observable was in the first place. For now we know about light and sound. Later we will know in a similar way about other things, about everything.

Notice how hard it is to get the transformers in the foreground into focus. You have to cross your eyes. The two apertures are set a little too far apart for something so close. This way you get a better sense of the scale of objects in the distance—again, at Animal's recommendation. This way things sometimes look a bit like wooden facades arranged in a three dimensional space. You lose surface depth but gain a better sense of distance from the camera.

*I would like to set your eyes close. A mouse base.*



Northeast of the main area, more east than north, there is a small woods that shades the largest of the river's inlets. You can see the water through the trees here. (Water naming a quality of light.) This picture faces northwest-ish from the eastern slope. The woods are quiet, with fewer signs of whatever industrial terraforming work I'm now sure was done to create the flat quay on the other side of the main hills. Near the edge of the woods, where they first give out to the false shore, I found some strange things. At first I thought it was all trash—some of it definitely is, stained paper and bottles, that sort of thing—but other things seem to have been stowed or else stored and forgotten. Neat stacks of materials, now degraded and fused with rust and grime: cinderblocks, metal sheeting, tons and tons of pipes and pipe fittings. Pallets underneath sunken almost entirely into the muck. Someone had plans for this area, at some point. Can't imagine what.



Photograph of the inlet. I'm not sure which direction. There are usually ducks. Evidently none today. I'm not sure this photo will help your mapmaking, since the far shore is past stereopsis. I've tried to win you a little extra range by setting the apertures here about twice as far apart as normal human eyes. I thought I should warn you about this hyperstereoscopic effect so that you take care when making judgements of scale. Probably things will seem slightly miniaturized. Imagine you are twice as large as normal. You've sat for a moment to look over the water. This is what you see. You have bad eyesight—especially in your right eye. And it is wider than your left.



In the woods facing the inlet, now from the northern side facing south. A chopped up tree. Can't have been too long ago it was cut up. Do you know if there is a caretaker or someone working on the land already? I've never seen anyone else here, though a few times I think I've heard voices out in the wooded areas. Whoever they are, they never come down to the main flats. I know I'd see them down there. Look at the shape of the fallen tree. Reminds me of those drawings of skeletons with gaps between the joints. Or once I saw a snake cut up by a lawnmower. It made me leap.



Farther into those woods on the north side of the inlet. I like to think this shape was naturally occurring. Maybe the valley is sloped just so, just at this moment, that fallen branches crash and tumble into exactly this position. Maybe there's only one topography that would have this feature. Maybe all you need is this one image, or this twice image, to construct your map. Miles in every direction. Inside there was a simple wooden stool, a candle, and wood shavings. You should note that too, just in case. Almost everything is naturally occurring. That's my disposition.

Dear Surveyor,

Hoping you've made good progress on the count's property. I haven't heard from the photographer but she has your address so I imagine you two are just in direct communication. I do need to speak with her though, so ... if you get a chance, let her know she should get in touch with me as soon as she can. I've heard from the Count's people that he's boarded a ship already and is America-bound. So don't drag your feet.

Animal.



This is interesting. Facing directly up the major slope. A cleared path I'd missed the first time through. You can barely see it at the top of the hill on the left, but the road ends into a chain link fence —the same fence that follows the whole property line. Near it, within a bellied out section of the fencing, I saw some metal cabinets on cement stands. Electrical enclosures. Only they aren't hooked up to anything. I wonder if they were storing things in there, these people that used to work here or live here or do whatever it was they were here to do.



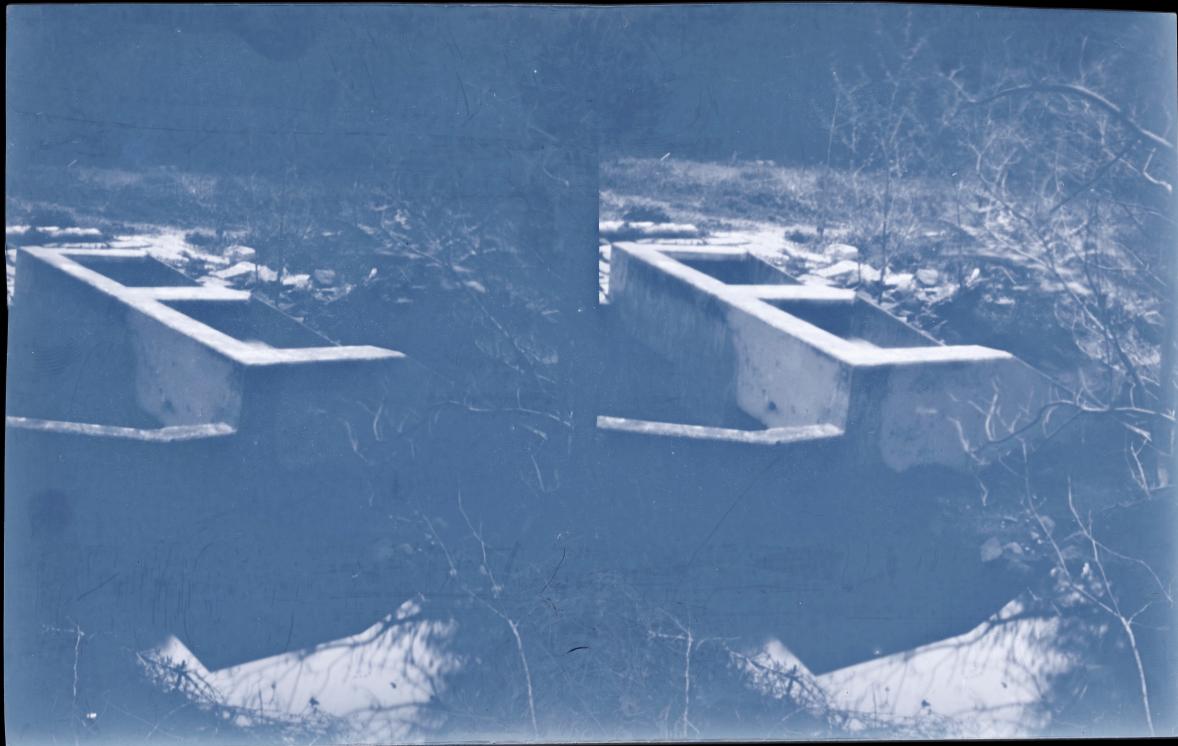
View through the chain link fence, looking out of the property at the top of the eastern slope. Also (faintly—try and focus on the white boxes) a view of the electrical enclosures described elsewhere. An accidental double exposure—I need to work on my note taking. Someone cut a hole in the fence around these boxes. Maybe the same person that did whatever it was that blackened them. Or maybe there was a fire inside. I couldn't get them open. I looked all over for some kind of informational panel, but didn't find anything. Maybe you know something.

It's amazing how much detail the stereo effect adds. When I manage to look into this stereogram—and I have to ignore the fence to do it—the faint first exposure with the boxes suddenly becomes much clearer, clearer than either photo on its own.



More traces of industry nearby the boxes. South from the inlet and even farther south than the boxes, back into the woods. This small concrete dam is at the end of a long canal, connected on the west end to the river (opening up first into a little floodplain) and to the east through the slope in a pipe.

If you look close above the dam on the left, you'll see the trace of a second exposure from a different angle—actually, it was the first, which the second has overwhelmed. Must have caught the light better. Only the bold line and sharp angles of the concrete front is still visible—all the rest is subsumed into noise. Sometimes unnatural.



View of the concrete object from the other side. I'm beginning to think the whole symmetry of our organism (supposing you and I share or else constitute one) reflects the stereoscopic principle. Comparison, balance, systole and diastole, left-right and other sinister rules. I think the figure is beautiful. I wish there was someone more to show it to. Sometimes when I take a picture for you, I think I can hear you inside the box, straining your eyes. Standing in for later lookers. Hammerheads and many many-reverses.



View from the beginning of the access road. Facing southwest. I felt uneasy today and didn't go far into the property. Last night I had a dream. I was walking in the woods at the edge of the flats with my camera. There were tons of people out on the plain.

Looked like a fairgrounds. Folding tables with coffee and papers and plans and tools, construction equipment everywhere. Brilliant sunlight—too bright to take a picture. I came down and joined a long line heading to a tent. People spoke excitedly in a dialect I couldn't parse. At the tent they handed me a paper plate with steamed and downy fava pods, a bit of cheese, a hunk of bread. The cheese was soft and warm from the sun. I could taste it a lot.

Now the line continued into a wooden shack, some sort of attraction. They only let a few people in at a time. Chewing and mumbling. I walked into a wall and dropped my camera. An image shone—or two images, overlapping circles—onto the opposite wall. We all watched the scene: it was one of my photographs of the flats, of the quay where the shack stood, devoid of people. The only movement was the buckling of the grass, waving vegetation, waving water. I thought I saw the river rising.



The shore. Facing south. I don't think you can fully see it here—my tripod kept sinking into the mud and I had to readjust—but there's a little shack beyond the grass in the distance, pretty much straight away in the center. I heard voices and didn't go closer. At first I thought it was laughter, then maybe yelling. Couldn't make out anything with the wind. Wouldn't be squatters, right?

I've been talking to people in town. No one comes out here. They don't want anything to do with it. With what? I ask.



Again on the shore, now with the river to my back. Terrible earth smell everywhere. Nausea. More signs of activity: an old bin, rusted, full again of pipes and old fluorescent tube lights. Lying on its side like a tipped cow. I read a brand name in block letters on the face looking up. Probably it was the name of the company that was developing here. It's stenciled onto some of the electrical enclosures as well. Meselkino?

I think our language will make no sense to the world that's coming. They will not understand the stakes of all our activity. Too much will be too low and what was high, whatever was good with us, had extra breath, will be lost in the specifics of a system of expression as particular to us as whalesong, pheromones or bee dances. It does not make me sad. We are lucky to be before the effacement, to live still so close to the world that we at least sense it slipping away.

Look at the big white snake at the top of the bank. It might stop erosion?



I should have been more patient.

Dear Surveyor,

Congratulations on the map and many thanks for all your hard work. I've always had to count on you, and I like to think you count on me as well in a way. I'll send it along to the count, though I don't imagine it'll matter much in the end. I've just spoken with him. Sounds like he's imported an entire mansion from back home. They wrote a number with chalk on every single piece, took it apart, packed it into crates, and sent the whole disassembly over on cargo ship. I gather he'll just walk around and point to the flattest part of the land and have them rebuild it there. I expect he'll appreciate the map in any case. I expect ... I very much expect he'll pay as well. Something to look forward to!

Listen though, this is important and fairly odd. Sort of bothering me—and you know I'm not easily bothered. I was cleaning my desk and under some folders I found a letter, a letter I'd written to Lira—you know, the photographer—but must have forgotten to send. Or I probably assumed I'd sent it once I'd lost it. I can be a very busy man. As you know.

This letter though, I re-read it. It was at the end of our correspondence, after agreeing on payment, details, contracts and all that. The thing is ... this was the letter with the address. You know we can't give out our clients addresses before contracts are signed, so I'm certain I never sent her the address. I can't figure it out. I don't remember mentioning it to you. I still haven't heard from her. Tell me if you hear from her. I wonder how she knew where to go? How to get back?

Let me know.

Love,  
Animal