



# Human Scale

## *Thora Dolven Balke*

● 13.09 – 06.10.2024

MELK – Hallings gate 5, 0751 Oslo

**Thora Dolven Balke** (b. 1982) lives and works in Oslo and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). Her practice is strongly mediated through photography and moving images, heightened by their sculptural installation, often alongside sound and objects made of materials such as silicone and resin. Dolven Balke's work is socially engaged and at times collaborative and curatorial. In the past years, she initiated the Agder Kunstakademi, a collective work of public art produced by KORO (Public Art Norway) in the form of a three-year education program developed and run by artists for inmates in the maximum-security prison at Agder Prison. Recent exhibitions include *Modo Host*, CAMA, São Paulo (2024); *Moon in Your Mouth*, UKS (2023); *Rough Seas*, Melk (2021); *False Spring*, Lydgalleriet (2020); *Mind moves with matter*, body blends into space, Kunsthall Trondheim (2019) and *FLOW*, Melk and Cavalo, Rio de Janeiro (2019)

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**Exhibition support by**  
Kulturdirektoratet and  
Fond for lyd og bilde

MELK Oslo is pleased to present **Human Scale** by Thora Dolven Balke.

In her fourth solo exhibition at the gallery, the artist examines the short-sightedness of human metrics and structures through an exploration of materials such as glycerin soap, silicone, acrylic, ropes, hooks, and gemstone stickers. Dolven Balke considers how objects can embody layers of intimate narratives, often in the intersection between photography and sculpture.

Throughout the show there are architectural elements such as fences and spikes, with their shapes recast in translucent soap. The decorative hostile barriers that should divide external from private and secure the fragile openings of a building are reimagined in bendable, easily dissolvable constructions, resulting in a vulnerable boundary between domestic life and the outside world.

These tensions between rigidity and frailty, vastness and confinement, and the organic versus the perpetual also appear in the works that give the exhibition its name: two prints on thin silicone sheets depicting cetacean fetuses preserved in glass jars, photographed at the Sandefjord Whaling Museum. Captured in their most defenseless, pre-life state, the close-up images of the specimens suggest the potential of enormity these creatures were denied, as they are suspended from biological time for research and contemplation.

In Dolven Balke's photographic works in the exhibition, everyday scenes are infused with marine imagery, as in a new series of works that layer large-format transparent negatives over sparkling gemstone stickers. Their crystal, drop, eye and tear shapes add a sense of teenage wonder to the compositions, evoking joy and playfulness as well loss and uncertainty.

Hanging on the gallery's end wall are three pinkish silicone bodies cast from infant bathtubs. Slouching figures, sagging under the weight of their own softness and succumbing to gravity. These hollow, skin-like casts, reminiscent of deflated or empty vessels, are caught between states of support and collapse. Yet, there's a seductive quality to their limpness, much like jellyfish in the medusa phase. This sense of suspended animation, of bodies existing in a state of potential without fulfillment, echoes the exhibition's broader themes. By using materials that dissolve, bend, and stretch, the works throughout *Human Scale* explore the ambiguity of our defenses—whether physical barriers, fragile bodies, or emotional protections.

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*Scavenger, 2024*  
*4X5 negative, gemstone stickers*  
42 x 42 cm  
26.000 NOK



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*Crack, 2024*  
*4X5 negative, gemstone stickers*  
42 x 42 cm  
26.000 NOK



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*Forever living products, 2024*  
*4x5 negative, droplet stickers*  
42 x 42 cm  
26.000 NOK



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*W, 2024*  
*4x5 negative, drop chrystal stickers*  
42 x 42 cm  
26.000 NOK



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*Blaze, 2024*  
*4x5 negative, gemstone stickers*  
42 x 42 cm  
26.000 NOK



*I is, 2024*  
4x5 negative, fisheye stickers  
42 x 42 cm  
26.000 NOK



*Shadow play, 2024*  
4x5 negative, gemstone stickers  
42 x 42 cm  
26.000 NOK



*Gravitas I, 2024*  
Silicone, pigment  
80 x 36 x 15 cm  
52.000 NOK



*Gravitas II, 2024*  
Silicone, pigment  
80 x 36 x 15 cm  
52.000 NOK



*Gravitas III, 2024*  
Silicone, pigment  
80 x 36 x 15 cm  
52.000 NOK



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*Human Scale, 2024*  
UV print on silicone, aluminum supports  
130 x 71 x 20 / 130 x 76 x 20 cm  
38.000 NOK each



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*Perimeter, 2024*  
Glycerine soap, hooks  
Dimensions variable



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*Perimeter, 2024*  
Glycerine soap, clamps  
Dimensions variable

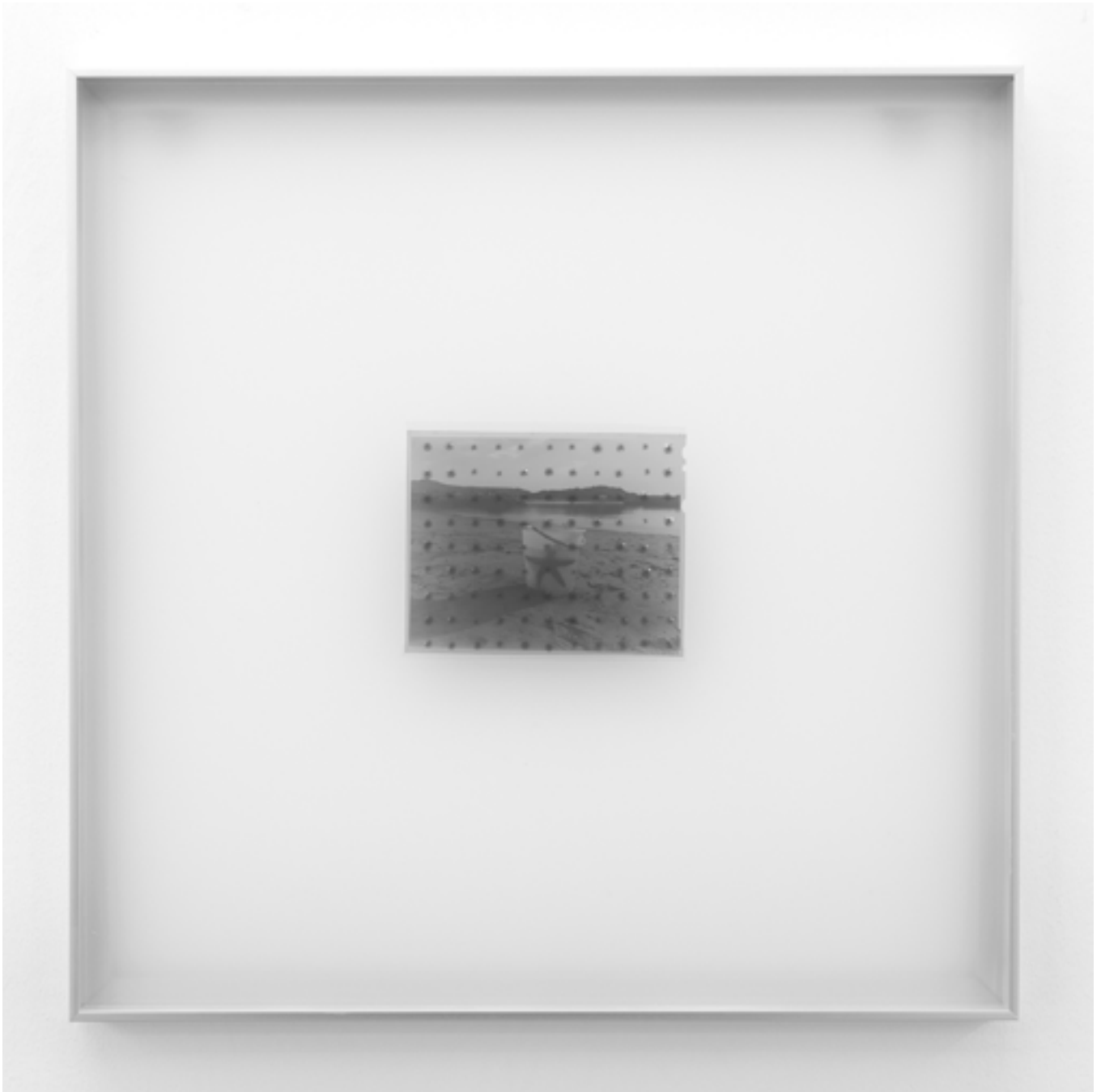


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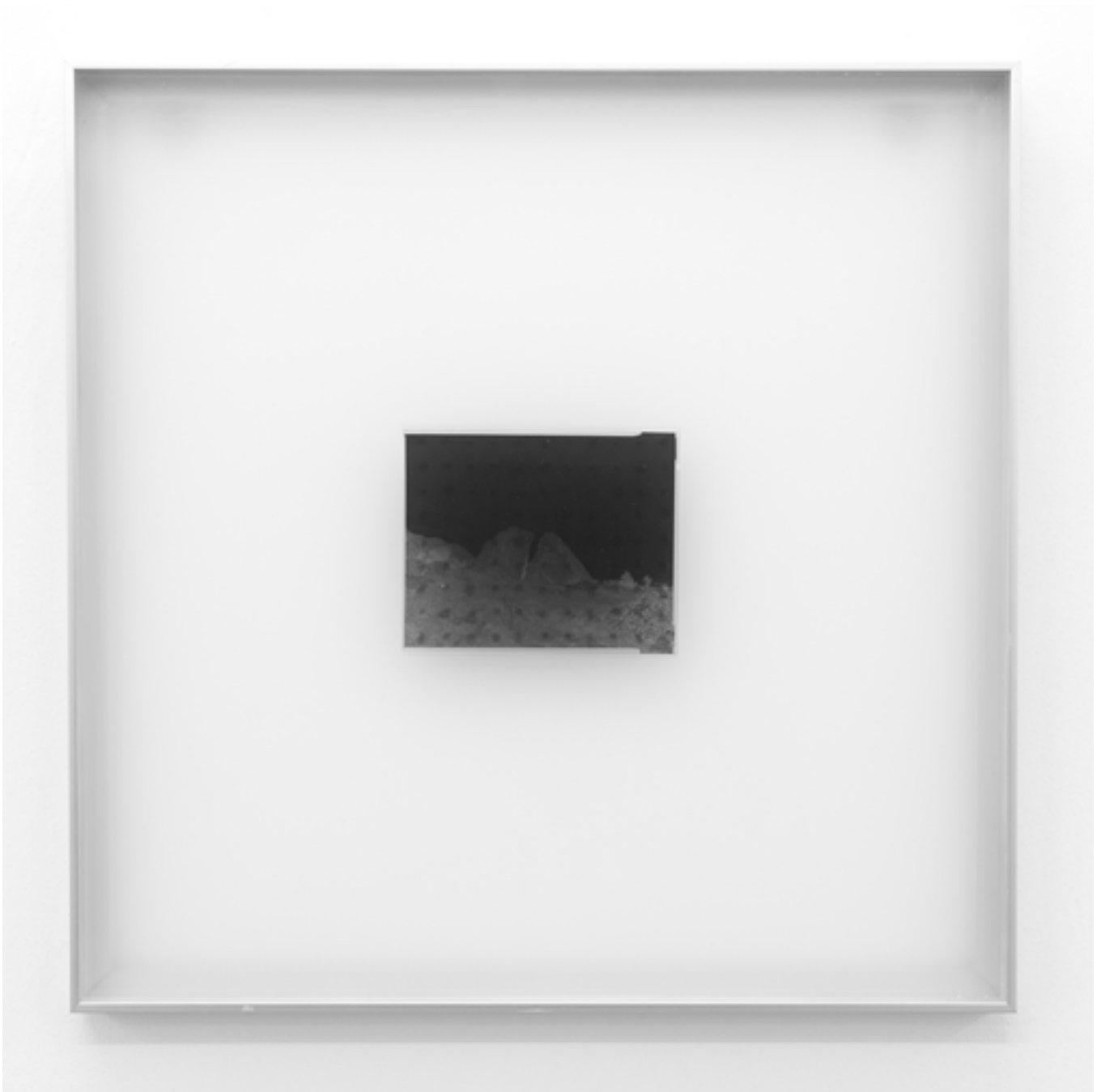
*Perimeter, 2024*  
Glycerine soap, shark hooks  
Dimensions variable



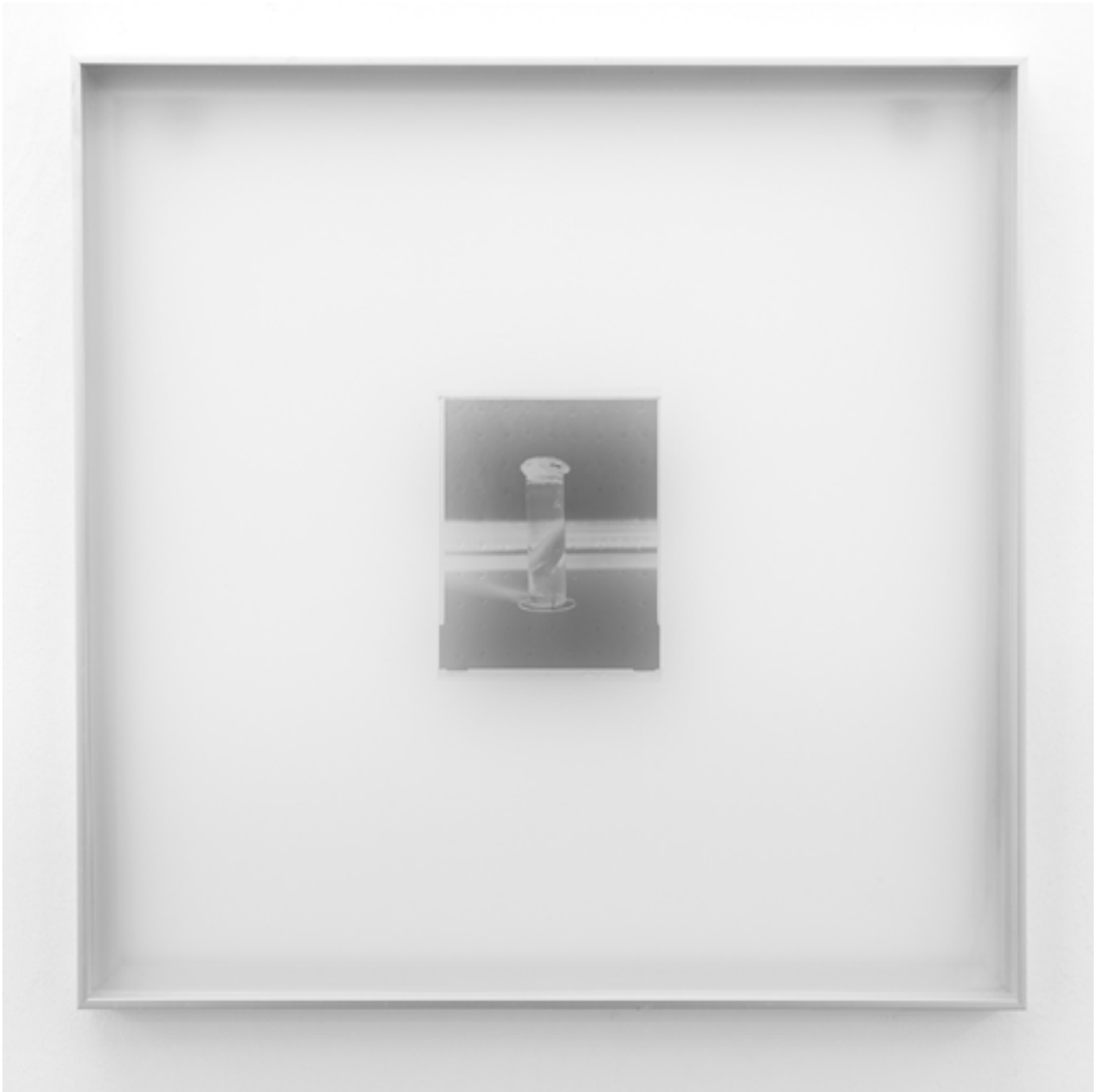
+ 5 % art tax on all sales



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*42 x 42 cm*  
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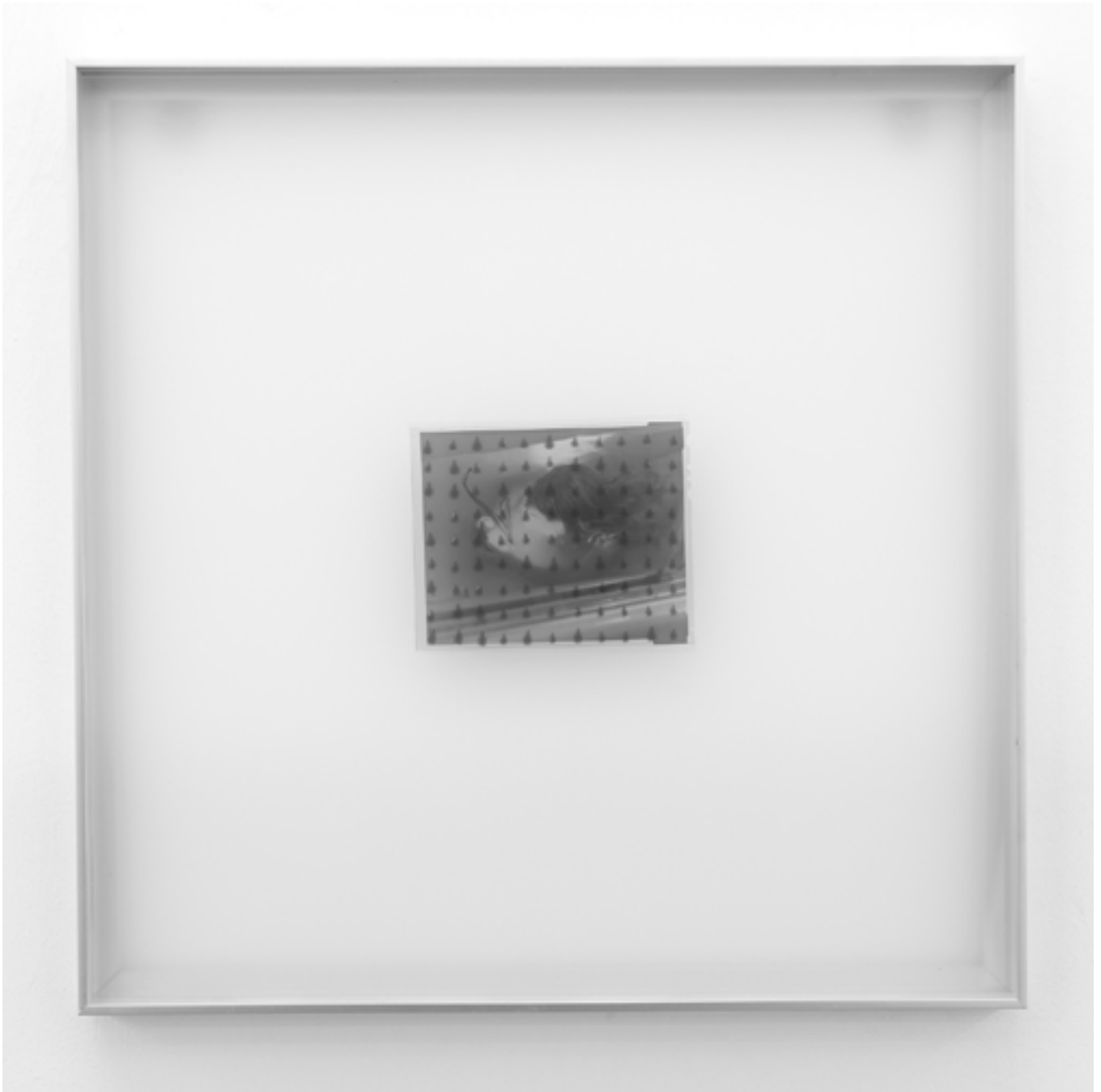


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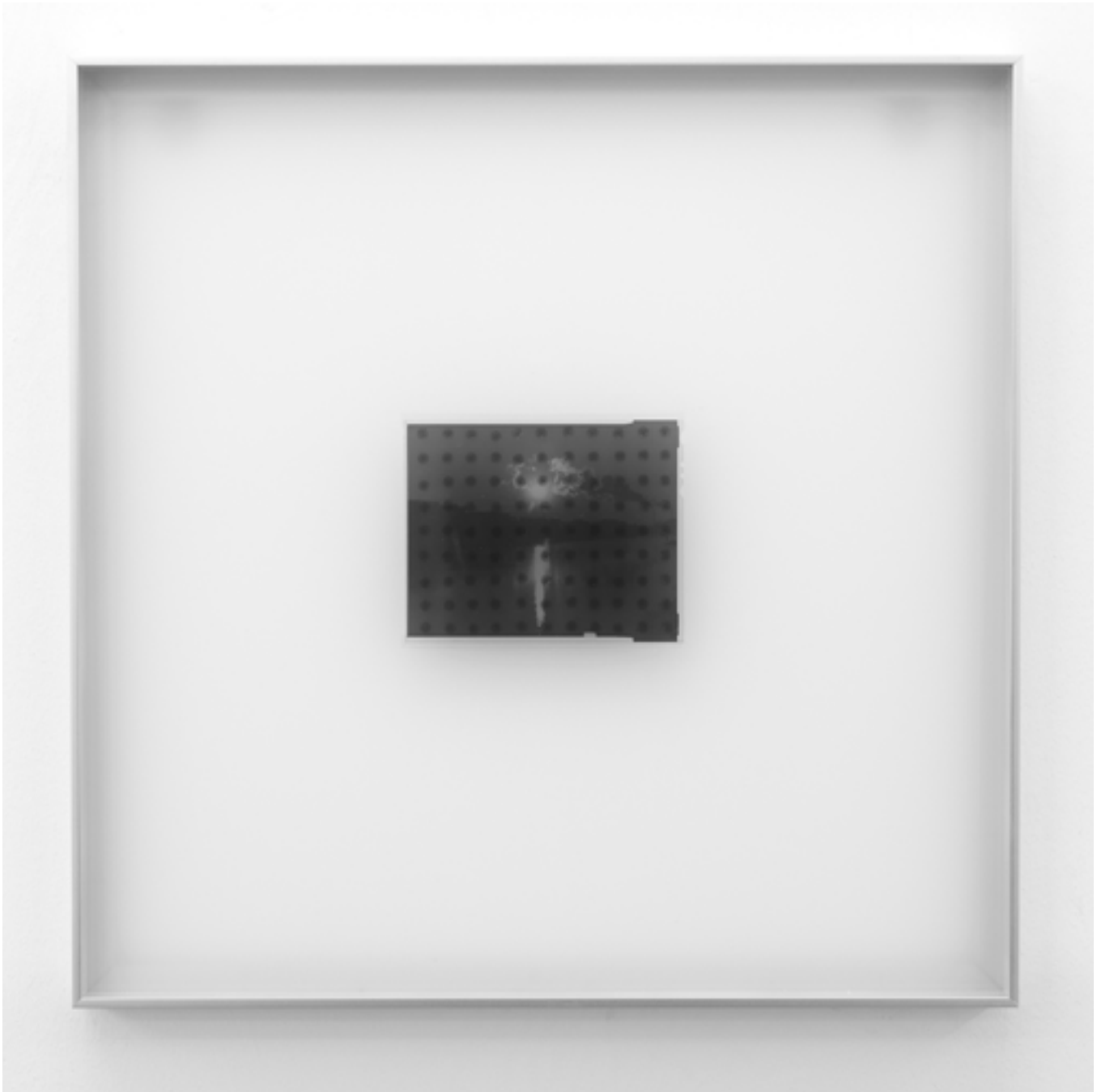




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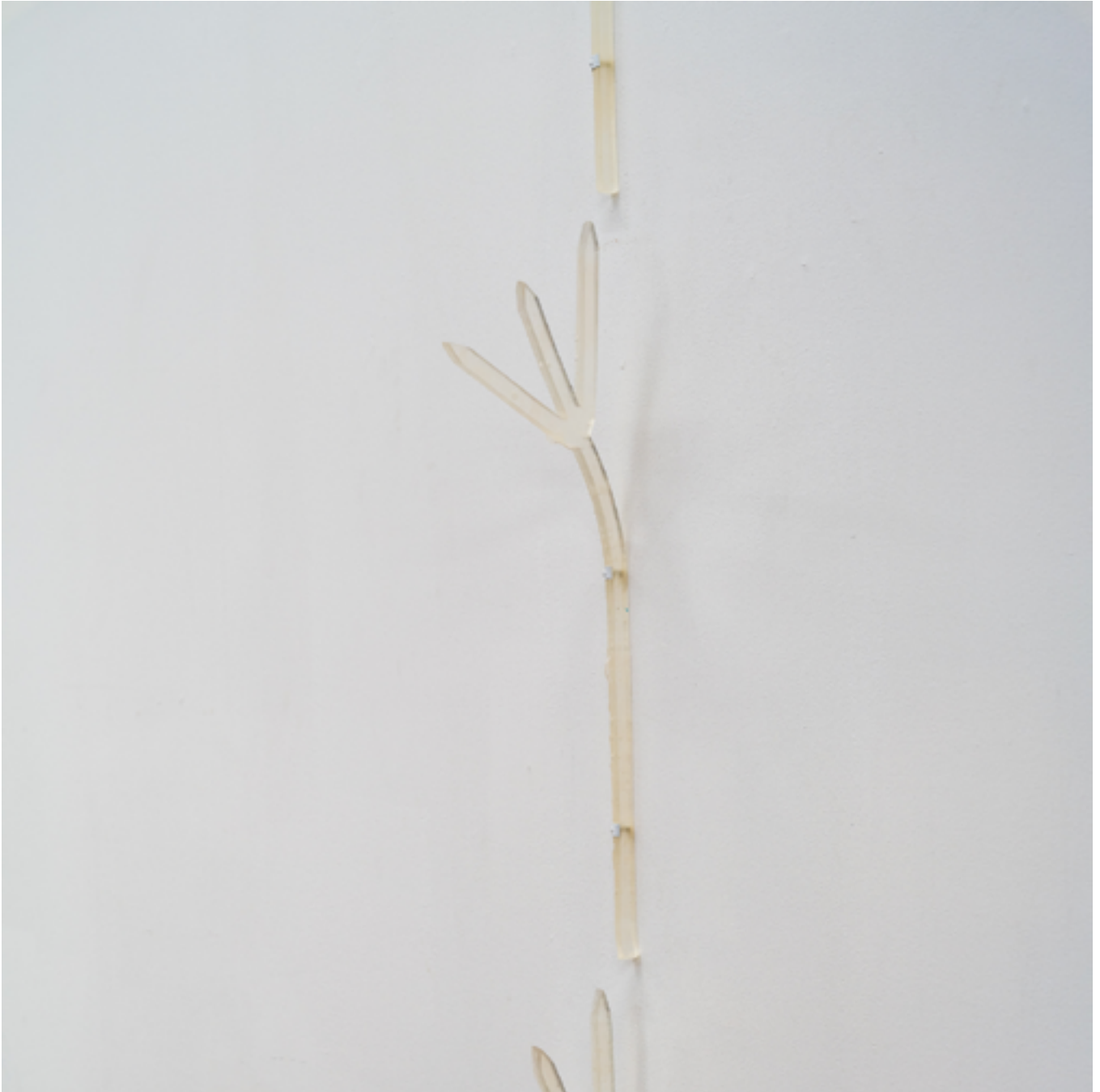


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*Glycerine soap, hooks*  
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*Perimeter, 2024*  
*Glycerine soap, clamps*  
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*Perimeter, 2024*  
*Glycerine soap, shark hooks*  
*Dimensions variable*