



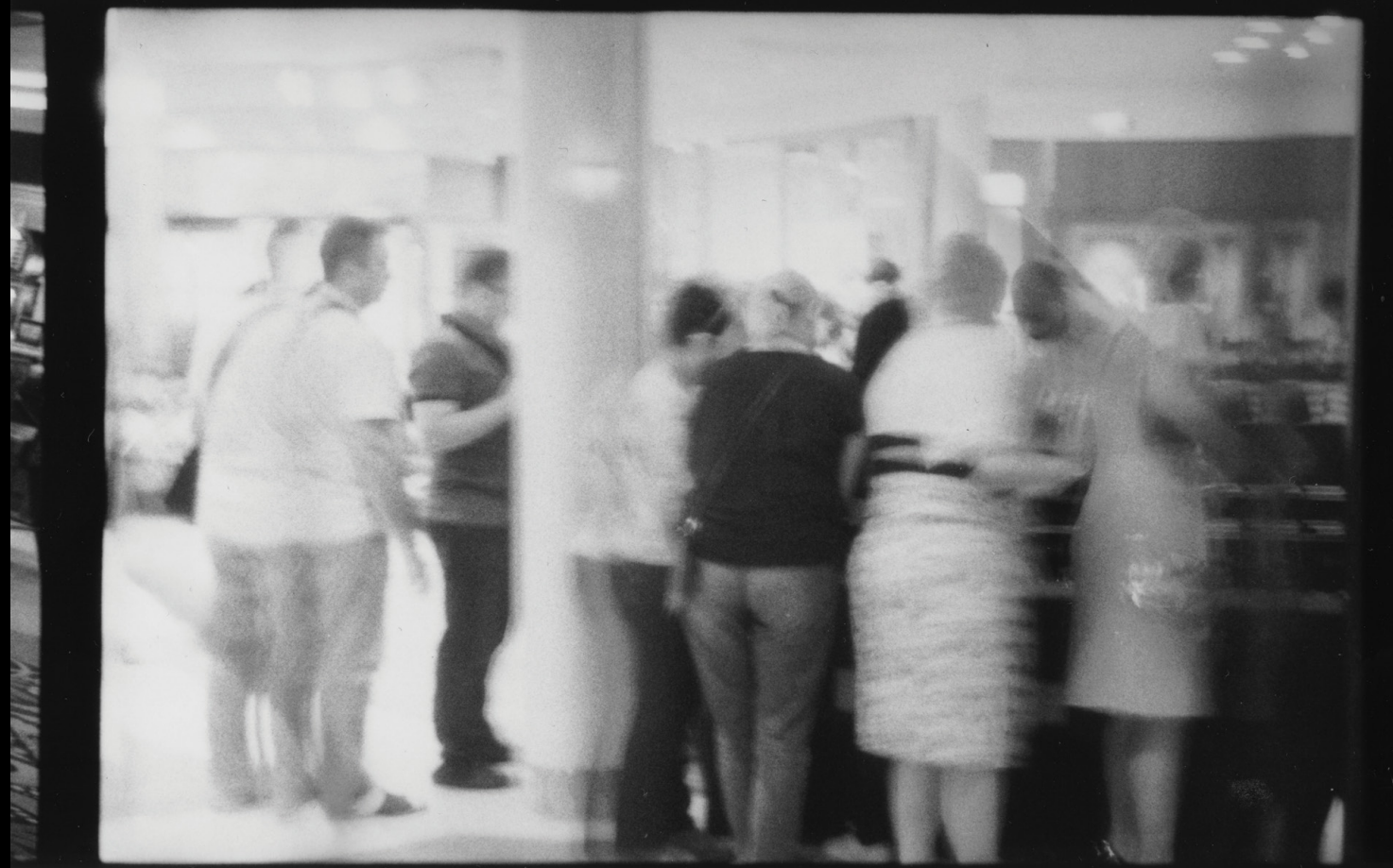
G A L E R A S



In late summer 2017 I spent a week working on a luxury cruise. My job, as described a month before departure, was to be a technician for audio-visual streaming between two twin ships. However, said definition started to blur just a few hours after setting sail: during a week of almost complete sleeplessness, I experienced my own 21st-century version of work in the galleys. Nothing to boast about on my CV or my medical records.

What I got out of it was a few strolls around a version of Mykonos flooded by the cruise passengers while massive speakers did away with the island's own sounds; my arrival at the Acropolis in a state of fatigue that the potential mystical experiences of a Philosophy graduate setting foot on Athens for the first time in his life could not equal; and a few rolls of film shot between loading, unloading, arguing, nails, boards, labyrinthine corridors, my co-workers' serious injuries, undoable tasks and puffy eyes.

















The cruise passengers (who had been invited to celebrate an important anniversary of the pyramid-scheme company they were part of) spent most of their time on board doing sports: either in the gym or on deck (10K runs around the deck at 6.30 a.m. followed by Brand X energy drinks or nada yoga classes amplified through enormous speakers).

When not forced to exhaust themselves physically, they attended company product presentations and, during their free time, enjoyed the cruise's swimming pools, shops and leisure areas.



















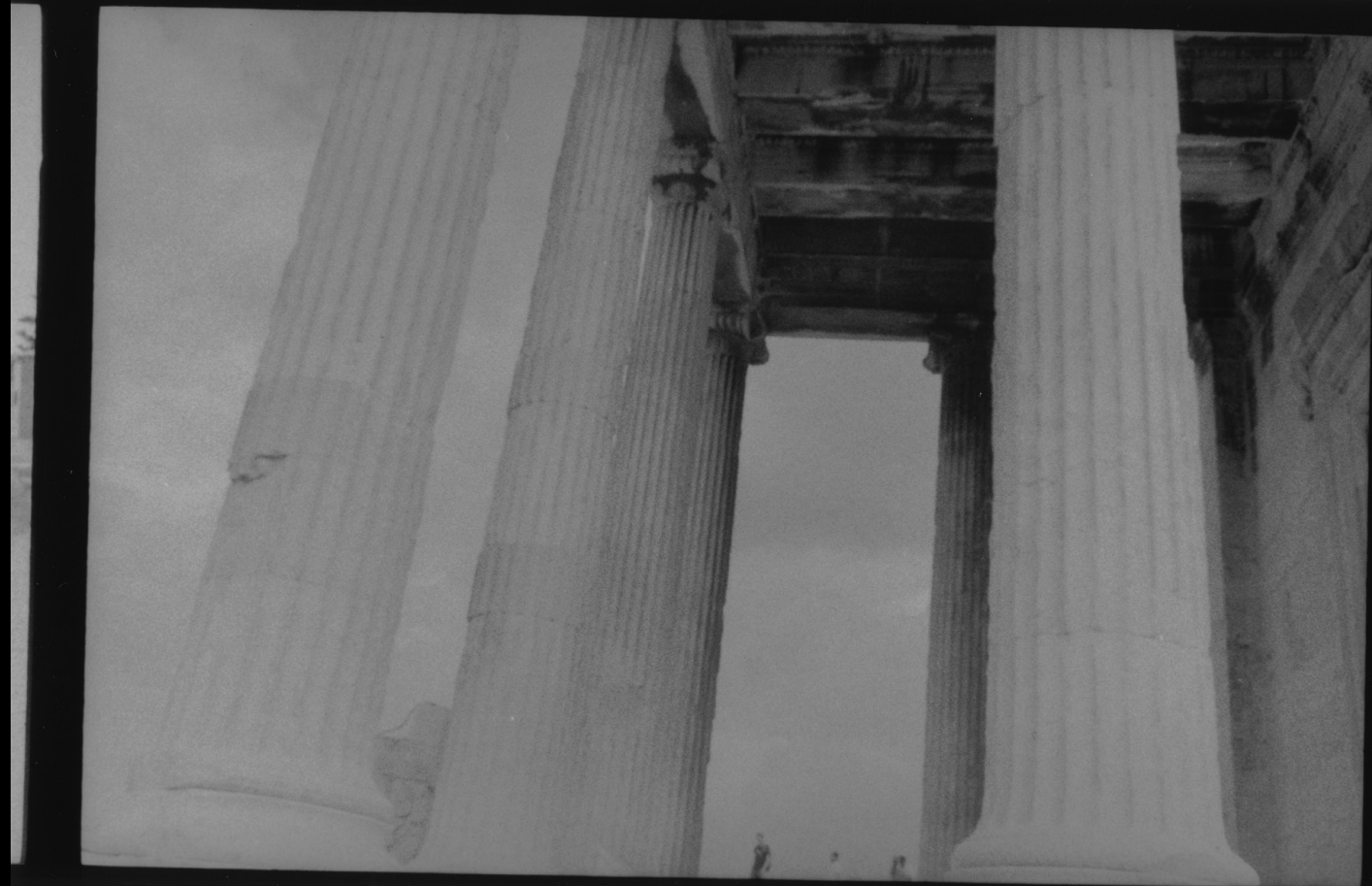


I got to visit Athens for an hour, twenty minutes of which were spent in a taxi trying to reach the Acropolis as quickly as possible. Two of my co-workers and me had managed to slip out of the cruiser when our supervisor had gone to do some check-ups on the other side of the ship after we had docked at the Piraeus. After several days sleeping one or two hours at irregular intervals in order to carry out tasks I was not supposed to do, I didn't care anymore. Our beeper was still on, but out of range as soon as we left the ship.

Upon reaching the Acropolis, I was in the strangest state of mind, special but unhinged, with two cameras hanging from my shoulder, my pockets packed with tools and a preternatural tingling on my hands whenever I touched the stones of the ancient Greek city. We walked as much as possible around the Parthenon and, when we reached the Erechtheion, I was spellbound by the caryatids, the clouds in the blue sky and, down below, the city of Athens. That moment was like delving head first into all the dialogues of Plato at the same time and seeing the Olympus, along with its divine constructions, move from its mount to those clouds.

That unreal feeling was interrupted by a call to my co-worker's mobile phone, an enraged voice asking where we were, ordering us to go back at once. The spell was broken very quickly, we almost rolled down the stairs and were back on board in ten minutes.

















While we sailed on the Mediterranean Sea in the dead of night, the deck was flooded by a storm. As we left the storm further and further behind, whenever a lightning awoke, it lit the patch of rain covering a stretch of the horizon above the black sea, covered by clouds, and high above them, electric paths of pure light.

I had never seen a storm like that, restrained and localised, drowning in the black immensity of the sea.



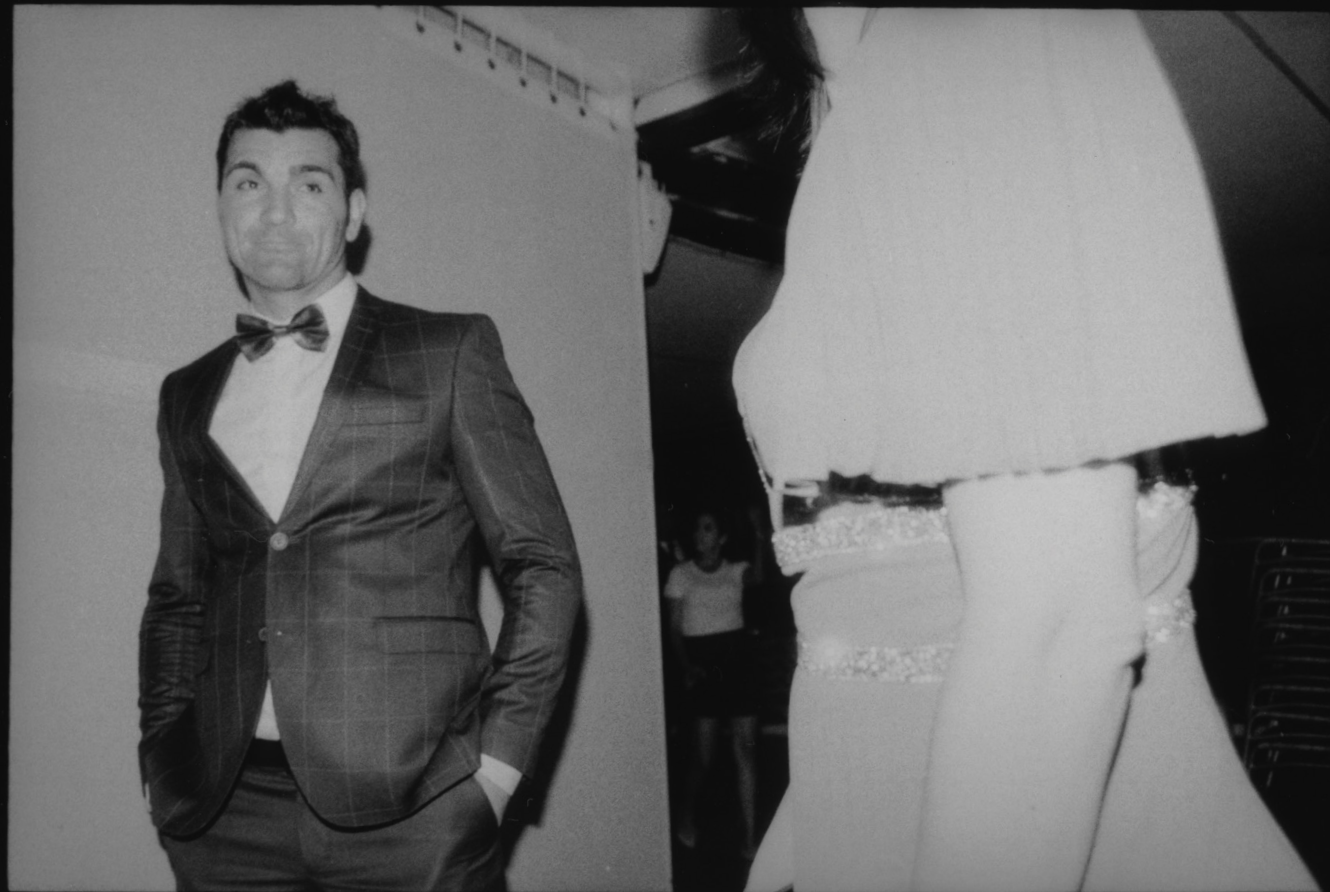
















LUIS HIDALGO, 2019

