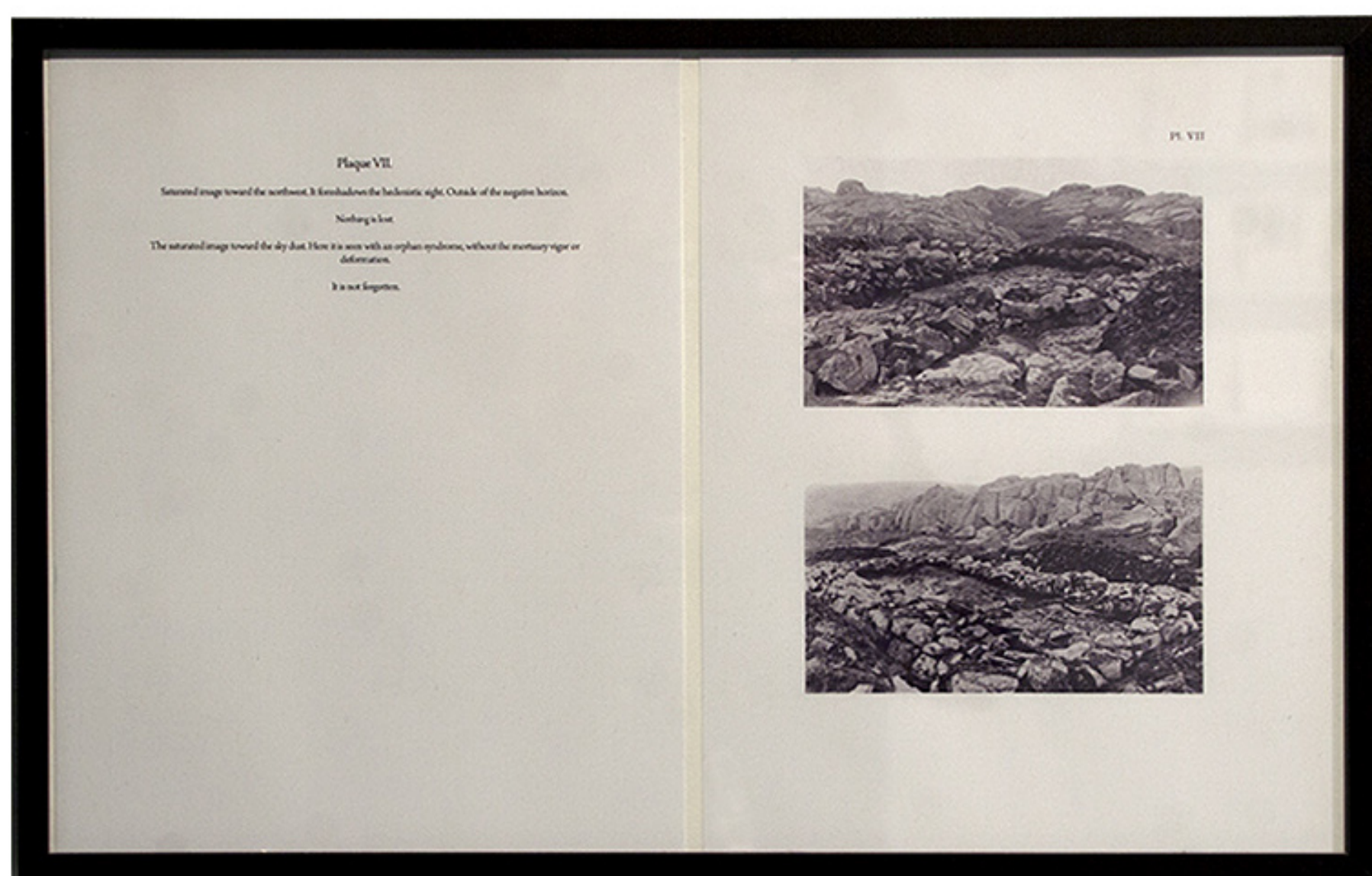


ARTFORUM

DECEMBER 2013

BEST OF 2013



Pablo Helguera, *Rogaland* (detail), 2012

CHARLES GAINES

Pablo Helguera (Kent Fine Art, New York)

In his solo show this past fall at Kent Fine Art, Helguera presented *Rogaland*, 2012, a work appropriating sixty-three plates from a 1936 book by Norwegian archaeologist Jan Petersen. In an act of willful mistranslation, Helguera rewrote Petersen's captions in English, replacing the Norwegian words with Anglo-Saxon substitutes based only on similarities in sound, no doubt under the spell of the illustrations themselves, which detail the excavation of medieval rural settlements. Helguera argues that his manner of translation reveals something fundamental about the nature of art because it forces poetic interpretations. But for me, it shows that poetic confluences can problematically pass as truth statements. Once embedded within a scholarly apparatus that bears the stamp of authority, any proposition, no matter how fantastical, is imbued with a patina of truthfulness.