

The Museum of Falling

Curated by Patrick Pound

November 2024

to February 2025

City Gallery

Melbourne Town Hall

melbourne.vic.gov.au/city-gallery



ISBN 978-1-74250-924-2

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Curator | Patrick Pound is an Australian artist working with collections of images and objects as if on a dare. His 2017 survey exhibition, *Patrick Pound: The Great Exhibition*, was held at the National Gallery of Victoria.

From Melbourne to Mannheim, Manhattan to Madrid, Pound has worked with numerous public gallery and museum collections, alongside his own ever-growing photo collection-based artworks. He has held more than 50 solo exhibitions and been included in more than 80 curated exhibitions in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, USA, France, Germany, Spain, England, Korea, Italy, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Netherlands. In 2019, Pound was shortlisted with curator Susan Bright to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale.

Thanks | Patrick Pound would like to thank Eddie Butler-Bowdon, Amelia Dowling and Savannah Smith at the Art and Heritage Collection, City of Melbourne, for their crucial support and assistance throughout the exploration of this project and the City of Melbourne collections. Their intimate knowledge of the collection and its wonderfully diverse material was invaluable to this project. Patrick would also like to thank the designer Stephen Banham for his thoughtful engagement from catalogue fonts to exhibition design, which added so much to unfurling the ideas behind this peculiar curatorial and collection-driven artwork. Thanks also to Hilary Ericksen, a fine editor. He would also like to thank Juliet Frizzell and his family for their tolerance of his insatiable collecting, thinly disguised as an art practice.

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The Museum of Falling unpacks the material history of civic space and the all-too-human experience of navigating it. This exhibition-cum-installation is a material feast that is also a tragicomic parade of falling. In reanimating the city's collection, *The Museum of Falling* records some of the ups and downs of our city.



THE MUSEUM OF FALLING

The Museum of Falling unpacks the material history of civic space and the all-too-human experience of navigating it. Through objects mined from the City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection combined with items and images from my own archive, it overflows with traces of the city and our attempts to inhabit and make sense of it.

Inside cover

Plastic figurine,
14 × 14 × 8 cm,
detail from Patrick Pound,
'Museum of Falling', 2024,
collection of the artist

Opposite

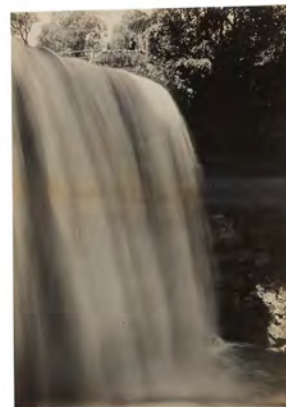
Vernacular photographs,
dimensions variable,
detail from Patrick Pound,
'Museum of Falling', 2024,
collection of the artist

The archive of any city is a feat of spatial conjuring. The constraints and systems, plans and directories, maps and blueprints, models and devices, and above all the photographs, are just some of the material traces of the past that record the city's existence and our occupation of it. The City of Melbourne's collection is full of such traces, and it provides an object lesson in spatial manifestation. It is an eccentric collection that points to the articulation and occupation of its time and space: the time-punch of the city worker, the taxi flag-fall meter, the curious devices for measuring and organising. These traces of space and time are also leftovers, material remnants that, having fallen from use, are now relegated to the archive.

The collection houses an array of unlikely objects, not obviously treasures in themselves but saturated with a history of useful civic endeavour. There is a beauty and an integrity to their design and their now-spent service. These unlikely objects have the patina of purpose. They are immediately recognisable as having what we might call a peculiar aesthetic of usefulness. Their form clearly owes everything to their function, though that function is now missing in inaction.

The Museum of Falling assembles many such material traces, and it places the endlessly photographed human body in the thick of things. The parade of falling images and objects, largely from my own archive, animate the items from the City of Melbourne's collection. Together they perform as an amusing and telling assemblage that records the city's ups and downs, the falls more than the rises. Material traces of incidents both major and minor – an Olympian falling from his bicycle and an infant from his tricycle, a pole vaulter mid-air and a falling pedestrian – are installed in spurious and amusing categories. Important moments rub up against the little happenings of ordinary life.

One of the roles of a museum is to breathe life into otherwise lifeless things, so we might see them afresh as they once were. As an artist, I'm perhaps more interested in rethinking museum collections rather than placing them in order to be read as narrative arcs in agreed storylines, restaged as entertainment or spectacle. As an artmaker, rather than a curator in the usual sense, I am



Pages 8 + 9

Vernacular photographs,
dimensions variable,
detail from Patrick Pound,
'From Crawl to Walk
to Run to Fall', 2024,
collection of the artist

interested in finding out how things might (temporarily) hold and express my ideas. This exhibition-as-installation relies on museological traditions to deliberately and playfully test the limits of images and objects to behave differently, so that we might look at them afresh.

The complex network of items that shapes *The Museum of Falling* not only celebrates the material history of civic space and the very human attempts at commanding it, but also holds in precarious balance my interest in the dynamics of falling. From a photograph of an Olympic high jumper to that of a falling tricyclist or an album of elevators, the limits of our endeavours to rise rather than fall, and to manoeuvre though space, are here on full display. Sometimes to jump is to fall.

The exhibition captures civic place and space making through remnant model objects. There are diagrams and models of the city layout, records of tripping hazards and model propositions for places to sit and take in the city. There is an aerial photograph of the river winding through the city and a large model of that same scene. There are plans, elevations and copies. There are casts, moulds and models galore. There are measuring devices once used to demarcate city spaces.

Throughout these intersecting material traces are woven hundreds of images and objects collected specifically for this project. Like a cryptic crossword or a game of snakes and ladders, the exhibition-as-installation is something of a folly erected to the meaningful and chance relations of things. The effect is surprisingly informative and just a little bit bewildering.

The Museum of Falling highlights the very ideas of assembling, archiving, sorting, categorising, serialising and generally making sense of things. Constellations of items express connected themes, all related to the occupation of civic space. Photographs catch us as we evolve from crawling to walking to running to falling. They capture our attempts to defy gravity, as we dive into space, or lean over until we inevitably fall back to earth. Buildings, plant life and humans all find themselves leaning to the right – until they fall.

Collecting and art-making

My work has grown out of a poetic mode of collecting as a form of art-making. It often involves museum installations, rethinking collections as if on a dare. This exhibition is a network of intersecting images and objects that the visitor, like a city dweller, must navigate. At its core are objects and images from my personal and ever-expanding 'Museum of Falling'. Everything from a toy waterfall to a book titled *How to Profit from the Falling Dollar* has a place in this so-called museum.

In this City Gallery iteration, objects and images from my collections have been gathered and augmented to explore what it might mean for them to take their place in the context of the city collection and to rethink them in unexpected ways. I have gathered items that speak to ideas of making and articulating space, deploying them to revive some rarely seen industrial detritus and functionally redundant objects that have been so wisely preserved by the city in its store, as if their chances for future resuscitation were half expected.

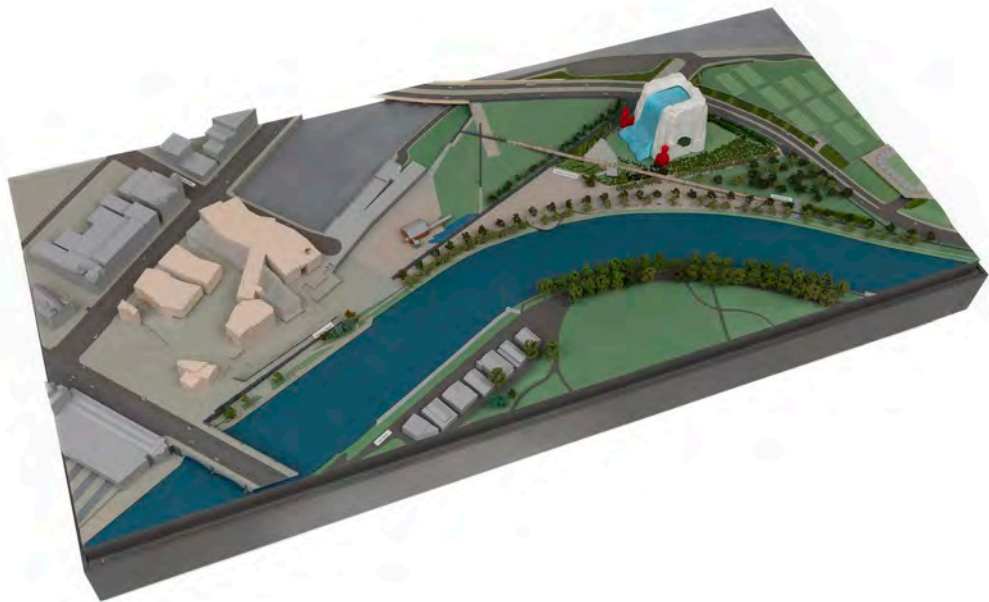
These objects have fallen by the wayside. Once fit for purpose, they are fast fading signs of a practical past, with a vernacular aesthetic all of their own. As redundant forms, well past their use-by dates, they are somehow rendered matte – sculptural things, beautifully banal and heroically obscure. It is as if these objects are themselves on the verge of forgetting their past function. Relieved of their original uses, they are ripe for repurposing. Here, we mark their fall through time and space.

Sequential arrangements of found photographs populate the exhibition like a flood of visitors to the city. What unfolds is a human comedy. 'From Crawl to Walk to Run to Fall' is made up of a single line of photographs sourced from discarded family snaps from across the globe, and newspaper and cinema images from disbanded archives. Like a Muybridge motion sequence, together they express the very human phases of crawling, walking, standing and running. They unfurl as a passing parade of life. Inevitably the parade ends with a fall.



2 1/4" CIRCLE Vellox 206 THURMAN





A second sequence, pinned in a line, shows an array of figures leaning further in each image until, of course, the human subjects fall. In yet another photographic sequence of falling objects, trees topple, buildings collapse, ships capsize. This is, after all, a tragicomic display from my 'Museum of Falling'. At the heart of this exhibition-as-installation is a set of images and objects, each of which holds an idea of falling, with the items filling a central stack of precarious platforms that articulate an idea of instability: life, with all its ups and downs.

But *how* might objects and images be found or made to hold ideas? Some hold the idea of falling quite literally; say, a ceramic model of a woman who has fallen over and a teeny bronze of another woman who has fallen off her sleigh. Other objects hold the idea less tightly. They might only be read that way when placed in this set, in this constraint of falling. For example, a wooden ruler with timber inlays reveals, in its tiny title, that it exemplifies the trees of Falls Idaho. Similarly, a necklace with a miniature piece of a meteor might, with some mental gymnastics, call to mind that we are looking at a fragment of a falling star. Like some cryptic crossword, a nearby copy of Albert Camus' *La Chute* and a postcard from Niagara Falls might provide helpful hints. Each object and image assembled here fits within the constraint, so the visitor's task is not to solve the puzzle, as it were, but to work out how the pieces fit into the puzzle. From a model of a proposed building to an aerial photograph or an architect's imaginary view of a future flyover, the city's collection and this exhibition illustrate how material culture might express ideas of occupation. A huge table-top architectural scale model illustrates the inner city and the Yarra River. A Fisher-Price toy has been added to the model: a plastic waterfall. In this scale model, the waterfall becomes an unthinking artist's proposition for a civic sculpture. The most observerant might also find a single tiny figure added atop a building in this model. He is mid-fall.

The name of the reshaped and redirected river on the model also reminds us that this urban environment, with its endless building program and litany of civic systems to support occupation, is, on its surface, very much a colonised, Europeanised space. It is overlaid on the uncaded land of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong/Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation.

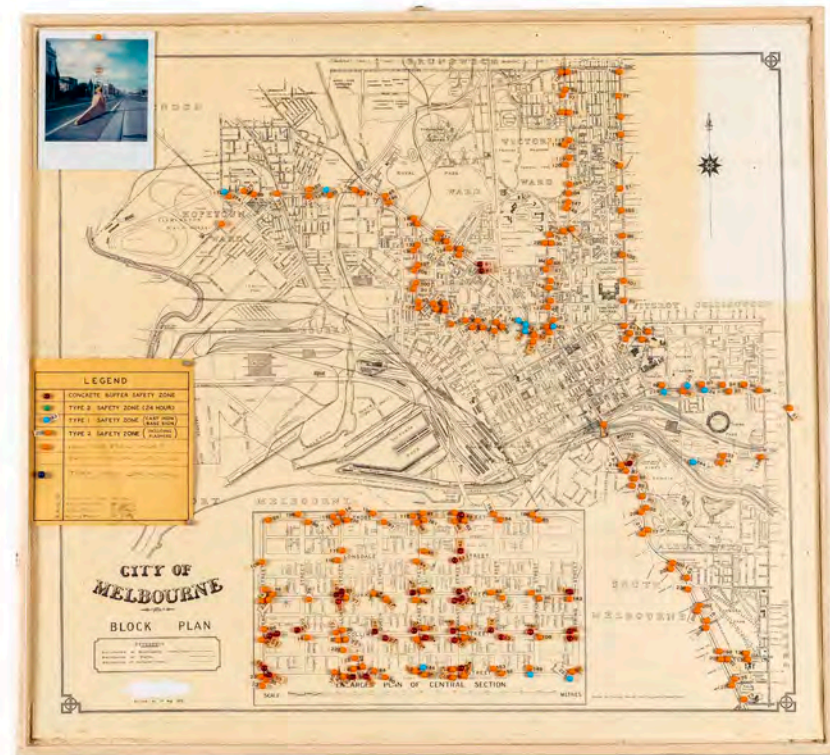
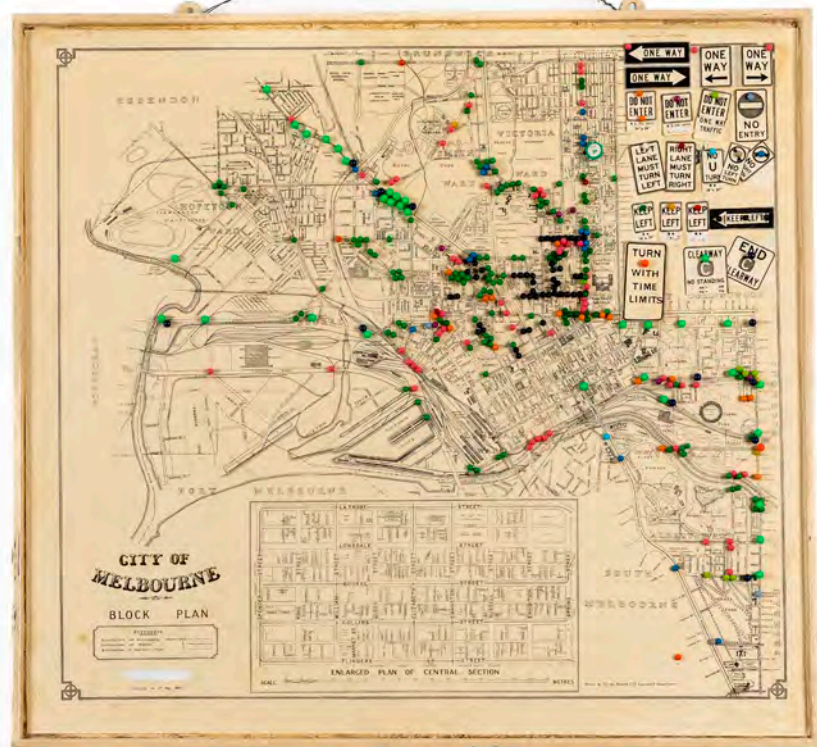


Above
Modelcraft (VIC) Pty Ltd, architectural model of the Yarra River and surrounds with objects from Patrick Pound, 'Museum of Falling', c. 2002-24, acrylic, timber and lighting, City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection and collection of the artist

Opposite
Modelcraft (VIC) Pty Ltd, architectural model of the Yarra River and surrounds with objects from Patrick Pound, 'Museum of Falling', c. 2002-24, acrylic, timber and lighting, 33 x 188 x 89 cm, City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection and collection of the artist

Page 12
Survey Branch, City Engineers Department, City of Melbourne, traffic signs block plan, c. 1979, paper on board with push pins, 57 x 61.5 cm, City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection

Page 13
Survey Branch, City Engineers Department, City of Melbourne, Tram stop safety buffers block plan, c. 1979, paper on board with push pins and photograph, 57 x 61.5 cm, City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection





THE

MUSEUM

OF

FALLING

Curated by PATRICK POUND

The Museum of Falling occupies the material history
of this space and that of the human experience of it.
Highlighting a previously untold corner of falling
images and objects, the exhibition also celebrates
humanity's relationship to falling as a universal and thrilling experience.

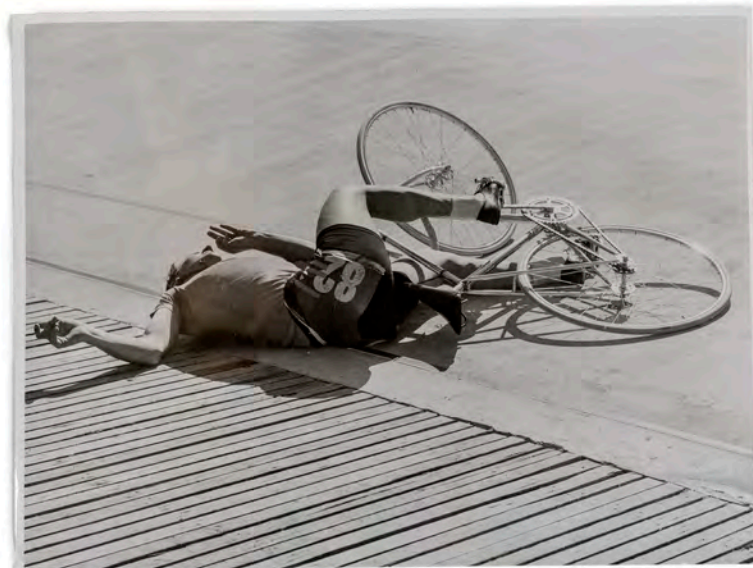
Installation view
The Museum of Falling
2024
Photography: Tobias Titz



Chubb's Safe Co.



Chubb's Safe Co.







WARNER BROS. PRESENTS ANTHONY PERKINS JANE FONDA IN JOSHUA LOGAN'S "TALL STORY" SCREENPLAY BY DAY WALSTON MARC CONNELLY SCHRAMBERG BY GAIL KATZ "T" WITTELMAN
 PRODUCTION BY JOSHUA LOGAN
 60 64



Curated by PATRICK POUND

The Museum of Falling unpacks the material history of civic space and the all-too-human experience of navigating it. Presenting a tragicomic parade of falling images and objects, the exhibition curates installation and reanimates the city collection in amusing and telling ways.

Installation view
The Museum of Falling
2024
Photography: Tobias Titz



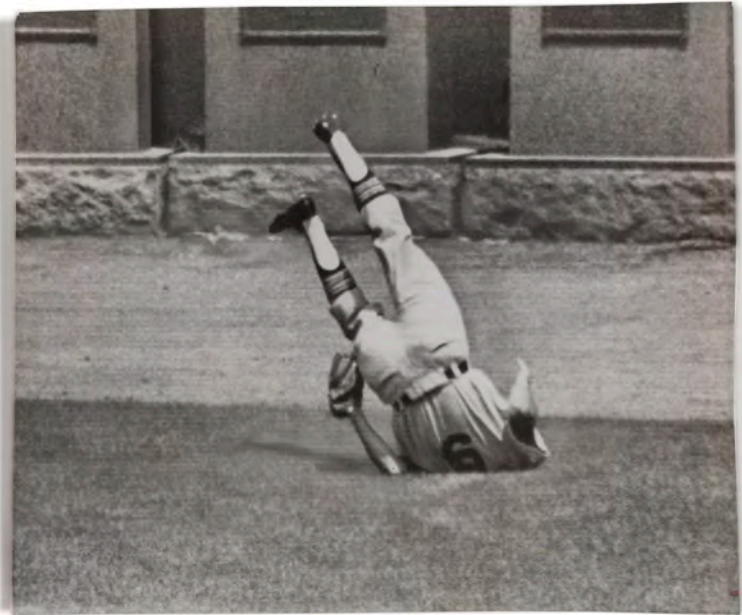


Pages 16 + 17
 Maker unknown,
 (Chubbs Australian Company
 Limited), lift enclosures,
 Melbourne Town Hall, N.D.,
 photographic paper adhered
 in bound photo album,
 5 x 45 x 76 cm (album open),
 City of Melbourne Art
 and Heritage Collection

Page 18
 Figurine,
 62 x 20 x 20 cm,
 detail from Patrick
 Pound, 'Museum
 of Falling', 2024,
 collection of the artist

Page 19
 Global Olympic Picture
 Association, Virginio Pizzali
 (Italy) lies on the track after
 falling during the eliminating
 heats of the 4000 metres
 pursuit, 1956, photographic
 paper, 16.5 x 22 cm
 City of Melbourne Art
 and Heritage Collection,
 © Olympic Photo Association

Page 20
 Alan W. Chandler
 (Architectural Models Pty
 Ltd), maquette for Red Stair
 Amphitheatre, Southbank
 (designed by Marcus O'Reilly
 Architects), c. 2005, plastic
 and wood, 15 x 78.5 x 58.5
 cm, City of Melbourne Art
 and Heritage Collection,
 © Marcus O'Reilly Architects



Page 21
 Mahlstedts (VIC) Pty Ltd,
 directory plan, City of
 Melbourne (detail),
 c. 1923-28, paper and
 leather, 5 x 124 x 58 cm,
 City of Melbourne Art
 and Heritage Collection

Page 22
 Vernacular photograph,
 9 x 12.5 cm, detail
 from Patrick Pound,
 'Museum of Falling', 2024,
 collection of the artist

Page 23
 Vernacular photograph,
 20.5 x 25.5 cm, detail
 from Patrick Pound,
 'Museum of Falling', 2024,
 collection of the artist

Page 26
 Claude Neon, Melbourne
 Town Hall with neon lights,
 c. 1980s, photographic paper
 mounted on board with
 painted detail, 40 x 47 cm,
 City of Melbourne Art
 and Heritage Collection,
 © Claude Neon

Page 27
 Vernacular photograph,
 20.3 x 25.4 cm, detail
 from Patrick Pound,
 'Species of Spaces', 2024,
 collection of the artist

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Australian Segment Olympic Photo Association, Joyce Racek (United States) in the women's gymnastics at the West Melbourne Stadium, 1956, photographic paper, 22 × 16.5 cm, City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection, © Olympic Photo Association

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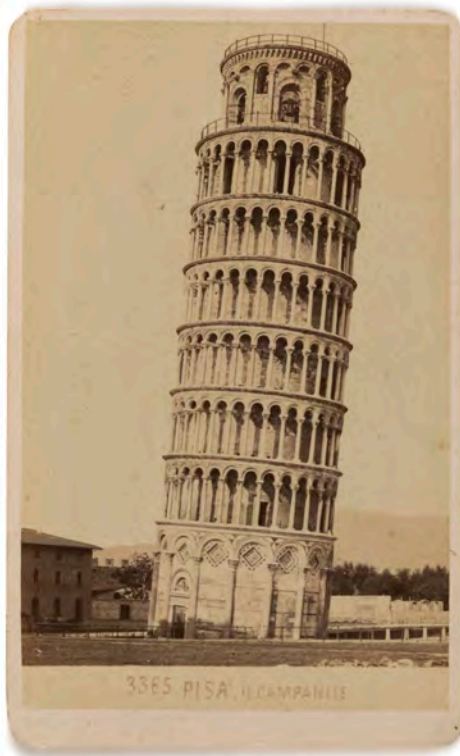
Vernacular photograph, 14 × 16.5 cm, detail from Patrick Pound, 'Museum of Falling', 2024, collection of the artist

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Vernacular photograph, 10 × 6 cm, detail from Patrick Pound, 'Museum of Falling', 2024, collection of the artist

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Vernacular photograph, 6 × 9 cm, detail from Patrick Pound, 'Museum of Falling', 2024, collection of the artist



Installation view
The Museum of Falling
2024
Photography:
Tobias Titz

