Moving The Image

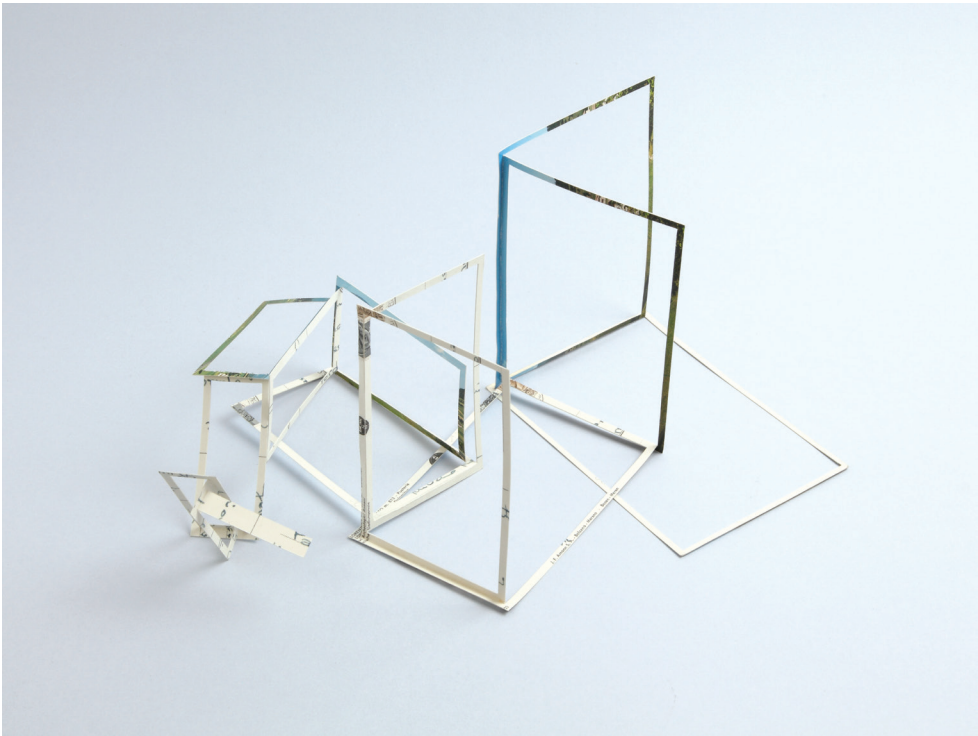
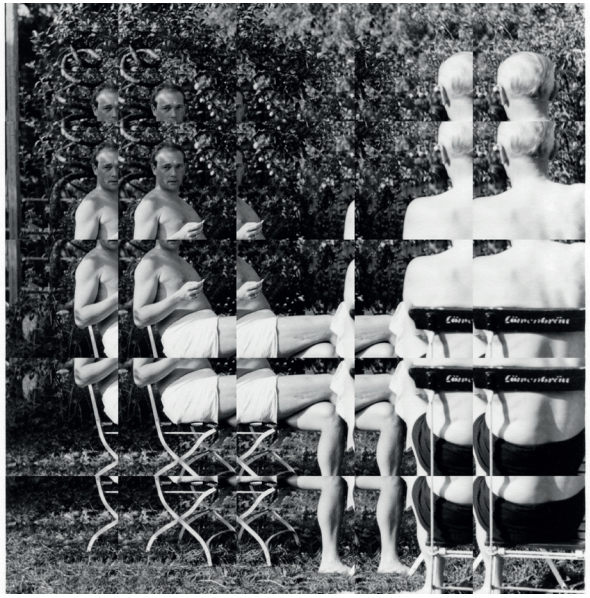


Photo by Julia van den Broek

Hypotheses

- A photographer who moves while taking a picture is inside the situation photographed; a photographer who takes a picture at standstill is outside the situation photographed.
- A picture taken in motion is subjective; a picture taken at standstill is objective.
- A picture taken in motion is a coincidence; a picture taken at standstill is a decision.
- The best way to free a photograph is to take a hipshot; the best way to freeze a photograph is to put the camera on a tripod.
- A picture taken in motion cannot be a picture taken at standstill.
- A photographer who moves while taking a picture needs more light than a photographer standing still.
- A photographer who takes a picture while standing still needs more time than a photographer who is moving.
- A photographer who moves while taking a picture is on a trip; a photographer who takes a picture at standstill performs a trick.
- A picture taken in motion is real; a picture taken at standstill is artificial.
- The moving photographer sees the world as one big space; the photographer standing still looks at the world as a collection of places.
- A picture taken in motion works with elements that exist at the surface of the world (horizontal movement); a picture taken at standstill aims at entering the depths of the world (vertical movement).
- The content of a picture taken in motion = its form; the form of a picture taken in motion = its content.
- A picture taken at standstill tends to hide; a picture taken in movement tends to show.
- A moving picture believes in development; a static picture believes in authenticity.
- Movers dare to doubt; standers dare to state.
- A picture taken at standstill says ‘yes’; a picture taken in motion says ‘no’ or ‘I don’t know (yet)’.



Front Cover: Kensuke Koike
Travel Sculpture, digital video. Courtesy of the Artist.

Preceding pages: Salvo
The Sneezing Man, An Investigation of Motion in Photography, 2014, pages from an artist book.

Above: Edouard Taufenbach
Au Jardin, 2018, 25 silver gelatin prints of a photograph from the Collection of Sébastien Lifshitz, collage on Canson paper. Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Binome, Paris.

Right: John MacLean
Slip, 2019, digital print. Courtesy of the Artist and Flowers Gallery London.

Moving The Image by Duncan Wooldridge

Images slip, stutter and shift; they move and act. They slide in and out of focus, compress and expand, build layers and flatten down, zoom in and out. They scroll, and skew, stretch and squeeze. They scale, transfer, and leave traces physical and digital. Images are neither transparent nor immaterial: they present and conceal, expose and crop, appear and disappear into distant drawers, racks and data servers. And this is before we get to the familiar lexicon of photographic verbs: those which include to document, to capture, and to share.

This array of activity prompts a simple but significant claim: that images move, not as simple objects performing to the will of the photographer, but as a complex combination of interactions, desires and programs. Images move between the intentions of a maker and the logics (or program – as Czech philosopher Vílem Flusser named it) of the world of photography; a world that is industrial, social, composed of chemistry, mechanics and physics. It is possible even to conceive of a photography without us: a large volume of imagery sent across the internet now functions without the need for human interaction; computational photographies and machine learning enable the distribution and interpretation of images without human affect, pleasure or response. The human 'operator' does not control photography in its entirety, but modifies and is modified by it in turn. A momentary attention to this array of different activities should give pause when we enter into a debate about whether the image is still or moving.

The Image, Moving

The movement of photography is continuous: the industry of the image participates in what Manuel De Landa has called a 'machinic phylum', in which military and geopolitical conflict seek ever more detailed tools. At the same time, photography is physical and mineral. It is written into a planetary, thermodynamic force made of heat and light. It is, of course, social: as Pierre Bourdieu wrote in his study of photographic social behaviours, the image acts as a social glue. This now encourages stickiness and addiction, revelation and pleasure, and maintains a long held tussle between convention and experimentation.

What might come of this most global of media? Generative images propose a photograph that points not to the past but to the future. At the very least, we can state the following: that the movement of the image is a key component of its being. Its 'image' might appear arrested in a moment, but it relies upon a great multiplicity of actions and actors to do just this. Claiming a kind of stasis removes such images from the world: our present is a complex assemblage. It necessarily follows that any image that represents just such a moment would be a complex assemblage also.

The exhibition *Moving the Image* explores the many conditions that are revealed by searching for movement within and around the image. In situating photography not as a discrete moment, but as a combination of events, it identifies photography's functions across intentions, gestures, and labours: the decisions which impact upon how an image is conceived, produced and distributed. Rather than present works by subject matter, the

exhibition focuses upon identifying instances in which the image reveals aspects of this movement, which is always the divergence from a singular human intent – the romantic western logic of the photographer's eye. There is instead a space of accident, contingency, experiment and excess. It is the little spark that animates Moyra Davey's writing on Photography & Accident, the inadvertent image that results from Peter Geimer's revised history of photographic origins. It also an intervention into the 'program' identified by Flusser in his influential *Towards A Philosophy of Photography*, where he sees the industry of photography and its fast moving, quickly redundant imagery. Why might we seek such a complex and convoluted, and at times archly theoretical way to think about the image? Because there is a challenge and resistance in the image that might be located, a form for photography that might be at stake. The potential to find new ways of operating in the universe of images might be found here, against those which are simple, superficial, or easily thrown away.

Take for example, a work which begins the exhibition, Sarah Pickering's *Pickpocket*. Studying the gestures of this sly shadow occupation, Pickering sees in the pickpocket an operator who intervenes directly in a flow (of goods and money), and redirects their movement. She makes an image of the pickpocket's technique, which she prints to the size of a playing or bank card. At the opening event of Manifesta 11, for which the work was commissioned, Pickering's collaborator reversed his process and threaded the image into the pockets of exhibition goers, including artists, curators and collectors. Pickering's process might be risky and provocative, but she reveals an alternative circuit through which images might flow. She reveals a latent channel that many of us do not acknowledge: the exchange, gift, the illicit and stolen object or image. She places her work here, and explores how it surfaces. In a comparable vein, David Horvitz's *Mood Disorder* explores channels of transformation. A single image that Horvitz posted onto Wikipedia to illustrate depression is tracked by the artist as it moves across web, illustrating articles that cover an enormous gamut of interpretations. What role does the image play in such illustrations? Here, we see the image continuously re-moulded by its own army of online picture editors, shifting beyond one context and into many. Must we accept structures which are already instituted, or might we locate our own strategies for placing images into the world?

Parallax

There are spaces between an image and the intentions that informed its making: photography extends and complicates human vision. This is more than a shift from the binocular to the monocular, or from subjectivity to objectivity: it is the composition of many parts which are each made malleable under the construct that is the 'image'. An image is a composite: this undoes its conventional claims to unmediated documentation. In displacing the old claim that the image produces truth, John Roberts has argued for a photography akin not to fact but to testimony, an equivalence to speech, with its capacities for construction and fiction. Just like language, photography is defined and understood collectively. It is a hoarder of myth – the photographer's eye, and its claims to objectivity and to fact – though photography is much more interesting than such mythologies allow for. Just as language makes possible what can and cannot be said, as Michel Foucault revealed, so too photography shapes what is possible, and becomes a site of constraint, a power which can limit or offer new directions. It is up to each user to take photography into those new places.

The tools we seek are usefully manifest in the condition of parallax. Parallax is the phenomenon, visible in some cameras, of the disjunction between two forms of vision – often the lens for the viewer, and a lens for exposure onto film. It produces a gap that alters the framing and edges of an image. It is in the gap between these forms where reality is actually constructed. John MacLean's *Outthinking the Rectangle* begins with slips and displacements which allude to the difference between technical and human vision. His intent is to see beyond the camera as a device that moulds the human operator of the camera. In pushing the camera to see what lies beyond its usual parameters, MacLean finds an ambiguous space that operates around and under the image. The surrounding space enters into the work as MacLean works upon the image, in its moments of exposure, in its mediation and postproduction, and ultimately, in its form of display. Each element is part of the image.

The potential for shifts in vision remain present in the photograph, even when the original maker did not originally seek them out. Edouard Taufenbach works regularly with existing imagery, shifting its focus through cutting and assemblage to make a composite that echoes the optical sensitivity of the eye. He animates the photograph, not through cinematic motion, but by finding configurations which allow the eye to flicker and retrace its route across the image. In his work, the eye and image operate in an exchange of shifting perspectives and viewpoints. Both Taufenbach and Clare Strand point to how an image remains in flux after its production, locating a new tension for it that might point to alternative pasts and futures. Clare Strand's long-held archive of images are continually revisited and adopted for new investigations. Her work *Research in Motion* presents a collection of imagery from her archive, placed into small lantern-like vitrines in which the images move to construct new optical encounters.

Strand's works *Material* and *Retouch* play with the emergence of dust and little evidences of matter – the almost imperceptible but ultimate evidence of continuous biological and chemical change. Within such minutiae are the complex realities which the photograph might begin to reveal. Strand follows the patterns of dust and blemishes upon the print surface of *Retouch*, using it as a compositional guide. She punches out the marks in a play on the deletion that retouching entails, and its denial of photographic detail and excess. What results is an image which is aleatory, albeit one which stages the tension between events and the human operator. It is not a coincidence that Strand's images also call upon a history of punched negatives, images destroyed by image editors, such as the legendary Roy Stryker of the Farm Security Administration (FSA), who attempted to 'kill' unwanted images – Strand makes this destruction constructive, and the subject of our attention.

Generative Images

Photography moves continuously between construction and destruction, excess and loss. The image flattens and appears to render static that which is depicted. Yet it also produces excess, and generates continuously. The photographic image constructs new logics, its program shaping forms and creating possibilities to which it might be put. Free from the constraints of functionality, artists explore these photographic possibilities in a way often not permitted by the communicative drive behind the majority of photographs. In the place of depiction, artists actively test limits and capacities, court abstractions, and dive down rabbit-holes. Artists pay attention to their material, and configure a project in a dialogue that moves between observation and experiment.

From here, it becomes impossible to deny the spatial characteristics of the photograph any longer. The generative capacities of the image go hand in hand with the physical realisation of the image and its presence in the world. Liz Deschenes works with the physical capacities of the image, activating photography's geometries as a starting point, as her work seeks forms that respond to space. She utilises photography's analogies across image and architecture. Here, in *Untitled (Tilt/Swing)*, she uses the movements of the large format field camera, which has an adaptable 'standard' to correct for optical distortion – and applies these movements to reveal delicate optical and experiential phenomena. This image, which is the photograph of a photograph, shows how the image gathers information, and becomes transformed as it exists in space. As John Cage stated in his commentary on Robert Rauschenberg's White Paintings, their reduction allows the image to become a receiver, a landing strip upon which light, dust, shadows and reflections might perform. Photography's geometries are revealed here, at the subtlest levels of physical presence.

Rendered tangible, Taisuke Koyama's works take the form of long sequences of images, hung so that the works appear to scroll vertically, whilst emphasising the physical qualities of photographic paper. Key to his project is the notion of photography as a generative medium, one that continuously constructs new visual phenomena. Koyama's *Untitled (RN)* is formed from the re-photographing of a work he has previously displayed in London at the Daiwa Foundation in 2016, in a solo exhibition entitled *Generated Images*. Koyama's projects often see the artist rethinking recurring motifs, such as light particles or rainbows, through processes which will reveal technological noise, computational decision-making, or optical phenomena. Here, Koyama's work crosses from one motif to another: the projection and re-photographing of a video work showing light flickering across a body of water, and becomes a monochromatic rainbow, constructed through the passing RGB combinations which are visible only as a digital sensor reads another digital emission.

The Moving Image?

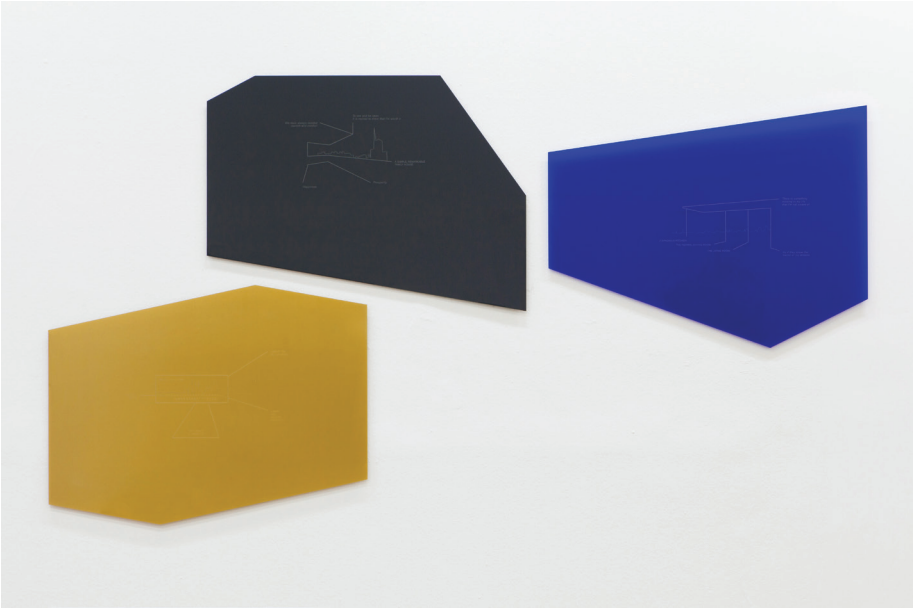
The perception that digital information remains immaterial is one of the biggest myths of our current relationship to technology. Digital images depend upon extensive physical infrastructures, and reside in specific locations, including data farms, where their arrangements are held until their information is sought and accessed. We rarely get the sense of this mass, as our experience of images are predominantly consecutive, one by one, rather than spatial or comparative: we scroll from one image to another on screens not designed for multiplicity. We require a specific re-presentation of mass-photography's quantities and variance to draw out an alternate perception of the image. It is here that aberrations reveal themselves, allowing us to make sense both of the sheer quantity of images that exist, alongside the actuality and presence that each one contains.

A proto-cinematic form of image capture is located in the webcam, which, in its earliest incarnation sent images separated by necessary intervals to awaiting viewers, who sought an experience of distant places. Corinne Vionnet's *Automated Matterhorn* shows just such a view, here looking out at the iconic mountain, though we might be disappointed to see that its peak is clouded over repeatedly. Vionnet 'grabbed' images from a fixed webcam each time it showed the mountainside obscured by cloud cover. By withholding the spectacle of the mountain for a moment, Vionnet and her selection of the clouds reveal something to us: this camera - which looks only at this icon - bears a continuous trace, as the shape of the mountain shows itself to be burnt into the webcam sensor: transferred from mountain to camera, in a surprising demonstration of optics, the Matterhorn's famous outline is etched permanently into the vision of the device, as if the camera becomes one with the mountain, a becoming-mountainous of photography. Vionnet's examination of mass-photography often works with quantity – from shared subjects for touristic photographs to the repeated remediation of the same image. Here this scale points both to the images themselves, but also to the task of the camera, which has produced endless images with small variations occurring each and every day, each of which is a photograph, each of which is stored, collected and memorised.

The separate webcam might be thought of today as a retro device. But in a period of increased digital connectivity, with its proliferation of small cameras, the comparatively low-fi, low-cost camera has adopted new uses in which movement is fundamental. The contemporary webcam, like its predecessors, always possessed the capacity for recording continuous video footage, though this is not in itself interesting. Rather, what might interest us is how software and connectivity have become features of the camera, which as Neil Jurgenson has claimed, are so integrated as to constitute the largest area of all photographic use in the smartphone and other connected devices. With its internet connectivity, the webcam possesses the potential to not only couple with its own internal software, but to reach out to an algorithmically programmed system which functions, in its reading and interpretation of the imagery it encounters, as a form of motion sensor and motion detector. Tracking movement as it appears in front of the camera, the software interprets the image without a human operator, so that the camera hovers between watching and recording. In Lou Cantor's new work, made specifically in response to the context of the exhibition, a web-enabled camera and central processing unit broadcast images of the exhibition space, capturing it only as movement takes place within the space as viewers pass through, as light shifts rapidly, or as any other event is played out within the gallery. To demonstrate this transmission, each image is received by a screen in Lou Cantor's studio in Berlin, where the artist takes on the role of a potential observers of the exhibition, also being observed in turn.

Such transmissions of the image bring to mind the apparent simultaneity of the image, though Lou Cantor points to the lag and delay, as the image passes from one location to another, in a play of echoes which reveal the physical distances that digital transmissions cover, even as they do so at scarcely comprehensible speeds. The transmission of the image appears therefore to recede, though in actuality – in what a few philosophers have noted as being a consequence of repetition and seriality - the image also points forwards to a future to come, as an event that will repeat can be thought, anticipated, and experienced entering into the future tense. Where we view a lag, we can also see a future unfold.

Discipula's *Promise Areas* finds that photography has a second language pointing forward: the rendering or artist's impression, constructed and shaped within a language of photography, in a form that resembles that of a crude photo-realism. Spliced or extrapolated from multiple images, the artist's impression points to a vision of the future, in which an image of prosperity and individual achievement are rewarded with material gain. Discipula have spent time gathering images from 'global cities' – those cities which explicitly court international property buyers and project visions of a globalising neoliberal ideology – only to actively disassemble their constructed visions of



Above: Discipula
Promise Areas, 2016, engraved acrylic. Courtesy of the Artist and Spazio Gamma, Milan.

Right: Taisuke Koyama
Untitled (RN), 2019. Courtesy of the Artist and Metronom, Modena.

Opposite: David Horvitz
Mood Disorder, 2012, digital print. Courtesy of the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin.

Following page: Louise Lawler
Triangle (adjusted to fit), 2008/2009/2011, vinyl print. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York.

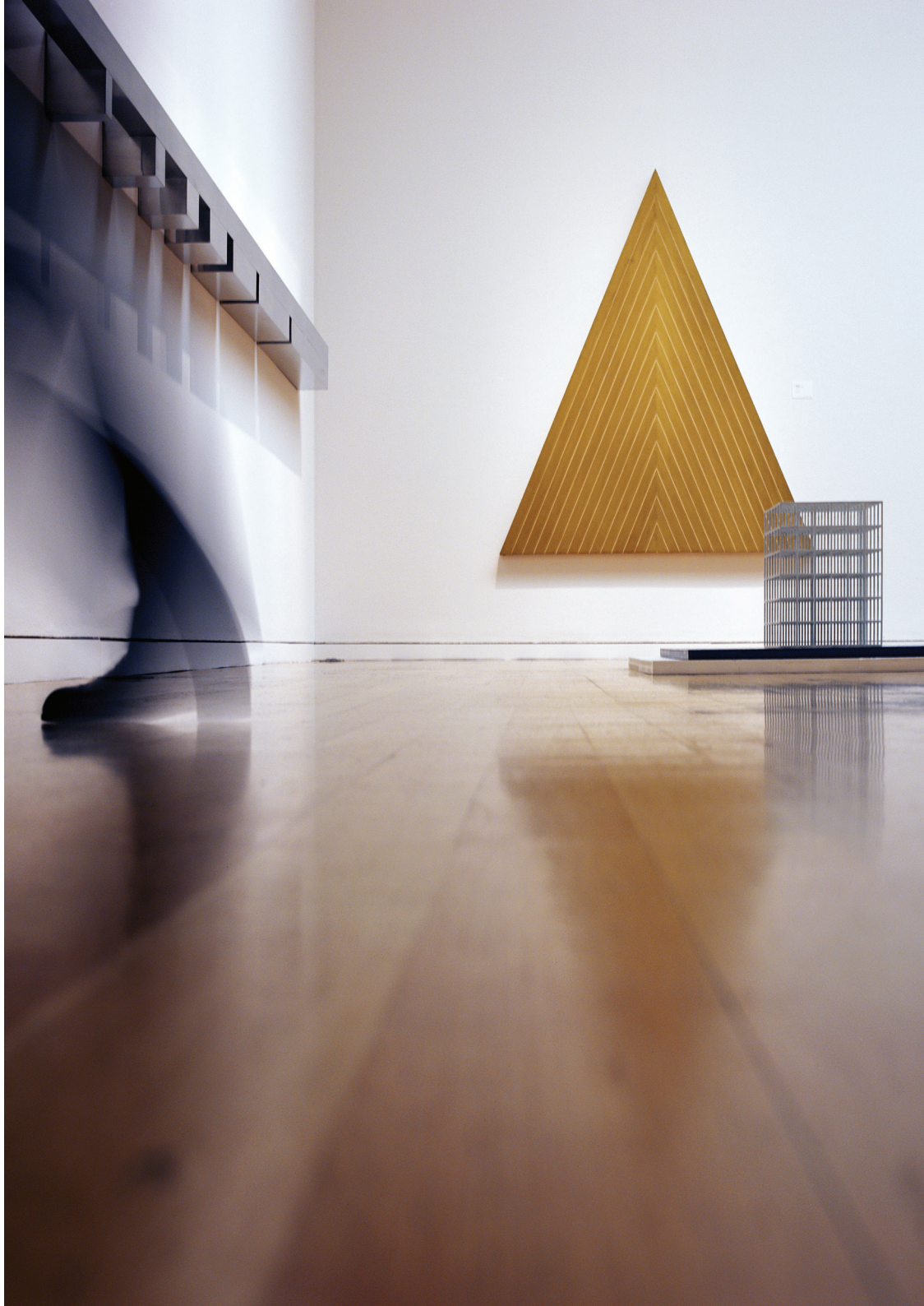
the future, which *Promise Areas* unpicks by returning them to spatial projections and to diagrammatic interpretations. The future here is constructed for us, is produced as something to be desired. Discipula present a case for constructing and working towards our own visions, in the place of a frictionless spectacle.

Moving The Image

The continuous movement of images, and their calls to us to claim and retain our attention, is continuously cited by critics, amongst them Byung Chul-Han and Franco Berardi, as constructing the very conditions of burnout and anxiety. As continuously moving targets set against our prompted and conditioned desire for stability, wealth and security, images construct and at the same time undo the very promise of a world to come. The endless movement of images is something we must measure, perhaps to tame or subvert. Horvitz's *Mood Disorder* makes comic this passage of photography, drawing attention to how an image rapidly circulates when it encourages a specific use. Horvitz tracked the re-use of his image, after it was posted to Wikipedia and made licence-free. The image shows a figure, with his head in his hands, waves splashing up behind in a knowing and hackneyed metaphor for the mind. But whilst the project shows that the image was used repeatedly for articles on depression and stress, Horvitz draws from this something subversively active and not passive. His intervention shifts each re-use, so that its function becomes a site of comedy and relief.

Might the artist reclaim the image by first giving it up? By relinquishing some decision making, an artwork constructs its own consequences. It is conditioned by our intention, and responds to its contexts, but the form that the image takes maintains its own distinct characteristics, and changes how we see the movements of photography. Louise Lawler, who has photographed and responded to the movements of artworks across her practice, negotiates the image and its place in the world. Lawler's realisation, that the image is changed by its space, is made manifest in the re-presentation of her imagery in the space of the exhibition. *Triangle (Adjusted to Fit),* pictured opposite, shows an institutional space in which three iconic works of American post-war art are situated. They each measure the space, and act as indices: a Frank Stella is reflected in the floorboards, whilst a wall-mounted Donald Judd measures the wall. On the floor, a Sol Lewitt cube sits, pointing to the construction of space and the cube of the gallery. A foot flashes across the left of the frame; its trace lingers like the residue of the figure in an early Daguerre photograph. While the image demonstrates measurements of space and its accompanying traces, it is shown across a long wall, stretched and pulled in the direction of the architecture. As the image gives up its original proportions to mirror the surface on which it rests, it describes how the image is push and pulled, used sensitively and also bent out of shape. This is the world of images, and Lawler's photographs show this use readily. If the work is changed by its space, the image might turn the relation between artwork and architecture inside out in turn.

By giving up the image to chance and space, to allow it to respond, and move beyond its apparent stasis, the image participates. A similar possibility for reimagining photography exists within the languages of the constructed image, which might turn from the presumption of staging to the necessity of all images as constructions. Steff Jamieson and Dafna Talmor construct their images, beginning with an assembly that takes place within the darkroom. Jamieson constructs an image through folding and exposure, thinking the image through its corners, translucencies, and forms of



compression. Placing her works into space, Jamieson's photographs fold and unravel, or tile and begin to multiply. Talmor's photographs emerge from the cutting up of landscapes, their reassembly constructing a space that encompasses both the pictorial spaces of the image and their very matter. Shifting and changing, Talmor's process reveals a transforming image, which echoes the landscape in its capacity for reinvention and renewal. Here, she presents a series of working prints, made by the artist as she constructs a work. But rather than considering this process as a route towards a final target or destination, Talmor understands this process as a non-linear manifestation of the malleability of all photographs. Each image is one of a series of potential forms.

Kensuke Koike, in his daily practice of working with everyday photographs, across postcards and other printed ephemera, seeks out the various potentials of each image. In his distance from the image, he acknowledges a site to re-think and re-encounter, a space that is constructive and open. He builds an image by building a new framework for the image, from which a space might emerge. His *Travel Pictures* make this evident. The *Travel Pictures* fold down into recognisable postcards, though their carefully orchestrated cuts reveal a potential to enter into space. They become sculptural and spatial maps, unravelled to occupy and activate our attention and curiosity. Seductive but also troubling, Koike traverses the breaking of taboos and plays with the psychology of the image. He shreds and cuts, folds and amends. He does so to return the image into circulation, to allow it to move once again. We need our images to stop, to be thought and encountered, but we need to come to terms with their motion also.

Compression and extension, flatness and depth: the image constructs a space in which it can reside, perform and act. The construction of images, which we often associate with the elaborately staged tableau of narrative cinema made static, is also the construction of worlds and the productions of ways of becoming. The philosopher Édouard Glissant calls this mondialité, a being in the world that is not universalism, but a moving towards the world, a becoming-worldly. This means that it is not necessarily the human who is moving. We might receive information, and we might be moved by it. He says:

"Moving around is not knowing; and staying in one place is not not knowing…I think that utopia, in the end, for me, would be this force that is the opposite of power. This force that each of us has to be able to approach, intuit, touch, seize upon the inextricable of the world. And for all that, there are no privileged classes. I say: we are all young before the world. And this youth, it's the capacity to feel all the world's flows mixing together, mixing together in a completely unexpected and completely inextricable way."

Moving the Image proposes that we accept the movement of our photographs. We might develop a consciousness of how they shift, ripple, and transform, how they bring the world to us, and we place them into the world. An image can be abused and controlled, conditioned or constrained. But there is no greater constraint than the condition of a photograph that conceives of its images as something static, arrested, or frozen. An image can, and must move.

Moving The Image:
photography and its actions
Curated by Duncan Wooldridge

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Artists
Lou Cantor, Liz Deschenes, Discipula, David Horvitz, Steff Jamieson, Kensuke Koike, Taisuke Koyama, Louise Lawler, John MacLean, Sarah Pickering, Salvo, Dayanita Singh, Clare Strand, Dafna Talmor, Edouard Taufenbach and Corinne Vionnet.

Text
Duncan Wooldridge

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