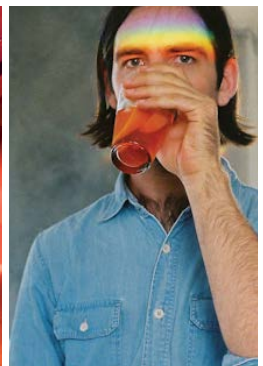
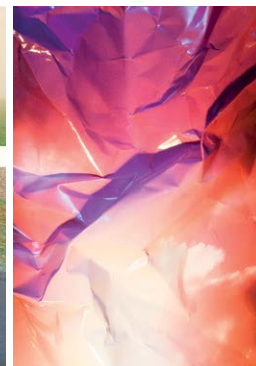
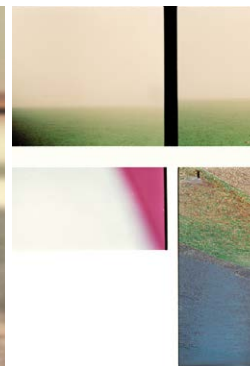
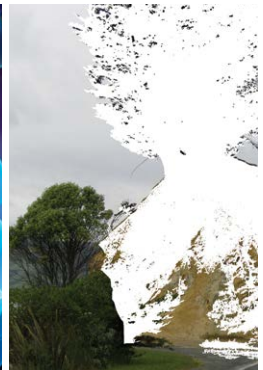
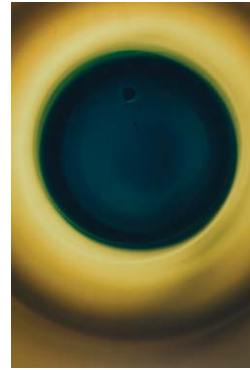
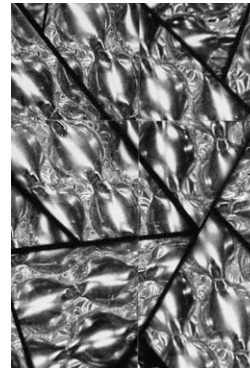


VIEW FROM THE WINDOW

SEAN BARRETT
DANICA CHAPPELL
JACKSON EATON
KIM DEMUTH
MIKE GRAY
MEGAN JENKINSON
BENJAMIN LICHTENSTEIN
PHUONG NGO
IZABELA PLUTA
KATE ROBERTSON
JO SCICLUNA
VIVIAN COOPER SMITH
MELANIE JAYNE TAYLOR
JUSTINE VARGA

CURATED BY JASON MCQUOID
& VIVIAN COOPER SMITH



VIEW FROM THE WINDOW

Christopher Williams-Wynn

Over 180 years ago, the French inventor Nicéphore Niépce produced *View from the Window at Le Gras*. Depicting the view over a series of buildings and the countryside surrounding a French estate, this fragile work was produced in a camera obscura by focusing light onto a pewter plate coated with Bitumen of Judea. Its archaic form and production seem far removed from the digitally-augmented, large-scale work of many contemporary artists, yet it still haunts photography. As well as recalling the origins of photography, it indicates a number of enduring polarities: analogue and digital; image and object; physical darkroom practices and digital post-production; personal and institutional or collective experiences; and duration and snapshot.

At the root of photography rests a fundamental contradiction between infinitesimal instant and prolonged exposure.¹

To hone in on this condition, **Sean Barrett** combines long exposure times with moving light sources. Intimating the restless energy of light, he generates sets of fluid lines animated in prismatic bursts of colour or the solemnity of black-and-white. This central paradox also appears in **Justine Varga's** images. Foregoing the camera apparatus, she exposes the filmic surface to the daily cycle of light and dark in an exploration of the capacity of film to retain the residue of temporal experience.

Examining the role of photographic technology inevitably leads to debates about analogue and digital production. When viewed retrospectively, declarations regarding the death of photography at the hands of the digital appear overly hasty.² Indeed, the role of digital mediation informs **Mike Gray's** work. After photographing landscapes on a digital camera, he distorts

his images by inserting extracts of poetry and other texts into the digital files, thereby entwining the domains of culture and nature.

Megan Jenkinson, by contrast, uses digital manipulation to register the optical effects associated with the isolated islands in the icy waters of the Southern Atlantic Ocean. Owing to the techniques of lenticular photography, her atmospheric forms appear and disappear as you move past them, inviting reflection upon the technological mediation of vision.

As much concerned with touch as with sight, certain photographers remain fascinated by the darkroom as a site of action and transformation. Coupling an experimental approach to darkroom practice with an interest in post-production techniques, **Benjamin Lichtenstein's** monochromatic works draw together collage, photography and drawing on the volatile medium of light-sensitive paper. Working in total darkness, **Danica Chappell** layers objects

on photosensitive material to produce her images of rich tonal variation and muted colour. Her works invite a prolonged gaze, one that falls through the veil of appearance and into the diaphanous substrate of the image.

Recognising this interplay between the world and its multifarious representations, other artists interrogate the relation connecting nature and culture. **Izabela Pluta's** photographs examine the construction and experience of place. In her recent series taken in Northern Ireland, she photographs mock ruins in order to explore the gaps between contemporary experiences and past events, inevitably drawing together differing temporalities. Shifting focus, **Kate Robertson** adopts a quasi-ethnographic approach to photography as she explores and interacts with communities connected to the natural environment. Conducting her fieldwork carefully, she seeks to understand



Megan Jenkinson, *Solace – Morrell's Islands*, type lenticular, 21.7 x 38cm, 2009, edition of 5
Image courtesy the artist and Stills Gallery, Sydney

¹ Thierry de Duve, 'Time exposure and snapshot: The photograph as paradox', *October*, volume 5, 1978, pp. 113-125.

² These debates were especially prominent in the 1990s. See, for example, William J. Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era*, Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1992 and Anne-Marie Willis, 'Digitization and the Living Death of Photography' in Philip Hayward (ed.), *Culture, Technology & Creativity in the Late Twentieth Century*, London: J. Libbey, 1990, pp. 197-208.



Kate Robertson, Left: *Circle work 16*, unique toned gelatin silver print, 25.4 x 20.3 cm, 2013

Right: *Circle work 13*, unique toned gelatin silver print, 25.4 x 20.3 cm, 2013

Images courtesy of the artist and Edmund Pearce, Melbourne

the community's attempts to create a more caring and humane society. Combining a phenomenological and conceptual approach to place, **Jo Scicluna** situates the photograph within an expanded practice that interweaves image, object and installation. Formally and theoretically, she explores the resonance between photographic acts and physical experiences, two interconnected poles that motivate her quest to evoke place through object.

These concerns with the photographic object also inform a significant number of contemporary practitioners who treat photographs as complex material things.³ Focused on the sculptural possibilities of photography, **Kim Demuth's** wall-mounted boxes contain translucent sheets of etched acrylic that cover images of architectural interiors. These obscured forms engage the

imagination in the seemingly impossible task of reconciling architectural space and planar image. Despite similar concerns with materiality, **Vivian Cooper Smith** manipulates the photographic object-image itself. Re-photographing crumpled and creased photographs, he presents images of skewed landscapes and deformed skies as bursts of vivid colour. Poised between representation and reality, the material support refuses to disappear behind the photographic image. Extending these practices to the representation of the human body, **Jackson Eaton** produces 'melfies', a portmanteau of 'mirror selfies'. Taken by various people in his life, these works question the performative quest for external validation that accompanies visual representation. Printed on T-shirts and sold, Eaton encourages buyers to send in 'selfies' of themselves wearing these 'melfies', thereby establishing a circuit between image, object and body.

Another set of photographic practices is also concerned for the place of the individual, whether in relation to institutional systems or collective history.⁴ Combining her collection of personal photographs with the organisational techniques of institutional archives, **Melanie Jane Taylor** investigates the potential for the fragmented image to recall and reconstruct memories. Motivated by a similar interest in the role of the personal experience and memory, **Phuong Ngo's** artwork explores his personal identity as the son of Vietnamese refugees. With frequent references to the experience of the Vietnamese Diaspora, and the Vietnam War in particular, Ngo's work explores the relation between individual and collective identity through the overlapping lenses of political and personal histories.

As these artists' works demonstrate, the field of contemporary photography is fundamentally multifarious, constantly eluding attempts to delimit and define it. Despite the diversity of these practices, they share a sense of critical inquiry. Whether working with analogue photographs in darkrooms or digital images in post-production, building physical objects or emphasising the immaterial, these artists all foreground the capacity for photography to interrogate our understanding of the world. Consequently these practices recall art historian Bernd Stiegler's vision of photography as a 'reflective medium'.⁵ By this term Stiegler refers to the inextricable link between photography and realism, but importantly not a form of realism understood as naïve mimesis. Rather, for Stiegler,



Jo Scicluna, *Where I Have Always Been (An Island)* – Detail
archival pigment ink on cotton rag, Victorian Ash timber, 2014
Image courtesy of the artist

³ For an excellent collection of essays discussing the role of materiality in photography, see Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (eds), *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*, London and New York: Routledge, 2004. See also Mark Godfrey, 'Image Structure: Mark Godfrey on Photography and Sculpture', *Artforum International*, volume 43, issue 6, February 2005, pp. 146-153.

⁴ On the relationships between photography, memory and archive, see also the recent special issue of *Photographies*, volume 3, issue 2, 2010.

⁵ Bernd Stiegler, 'Photography as the Medium of Reflection' in Robin Kelsey and Blake Stimson (eds), *The Meaning of Photography*, Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2008, pp. 194-197.



Vivian Cooper Smith, *Rapture Fracture #1*, type C print, 60 x 90cm, 2014, Edition of 3 + 1AP
Image courtesy of the artist, Edmund Pearce, Melbourne and Galerie pompom, Sydney

photography reflects upon the structures and assumptions through which we perceive the world, it 'plumbs the conditions and limits of our understanding of reality'.⁶ More than a veridical document or hollow simulacrum, photography thus exists as image, object and process, potentially all simultaneously.

The complexity of these works signals a second common element: the investment of time. All these artists expend considerable time and effort in producing their work, as do any dedicated artists. However, the relevance of this observation is that this temporal investment differentiates such work from the overwhelming glut of photographic images that circulate through the electronic networks of globalised society. Although it would be disingenuous and insensitive to claim that

tourist snaps of well-travelled monuments are only meaningless ephemera or signs of globalised homogeneity,⁷ the near ubiquity of photographic images highlights the need for considered reflection upon the place and value of photographic practices. Committed to extended periods of observation and experimentation, these artists display the patience and persistence to interrogate the problems and possibilities of photography. At their gentle request we repay this dedication through our own extended viewing, for without the time to look we might lose the time to think.

Christopher Williams-Wynn is an art history honours graduate of the University of Melbourne, and co-founder and co-editor of Dissect Journal.

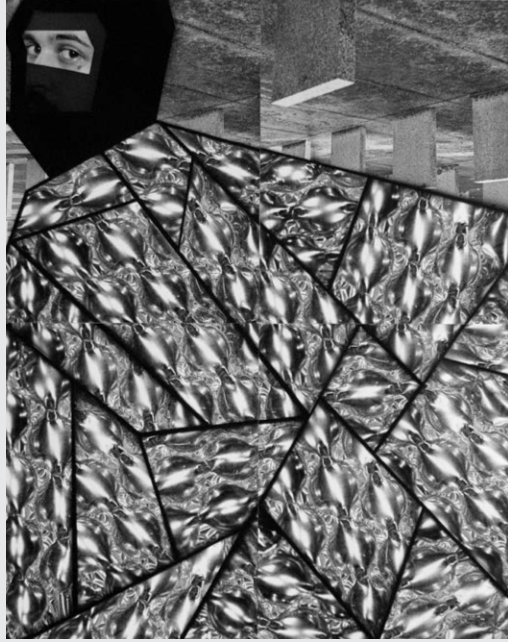


Phuong Ngo

Clockwise from top left: *Untitled #2*, *Untitled #3*, *Untitled #6* and *Untitled #4*
Stills from *Apocalypse Now and Then*, inkjet print, each 15 x 15cm, 2014, edition of 6 + 2AP
Image courtesy of the artist

⁶ Bernd Stiegler, 'Photography as the Medium of Reflection' in Robin Kelsey and Blake Stimson (eds), *The Meaning of Photography*, Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2008, pp. 197.

⁷ John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, London: SAGE Publications, 2011, pp. 155-187.

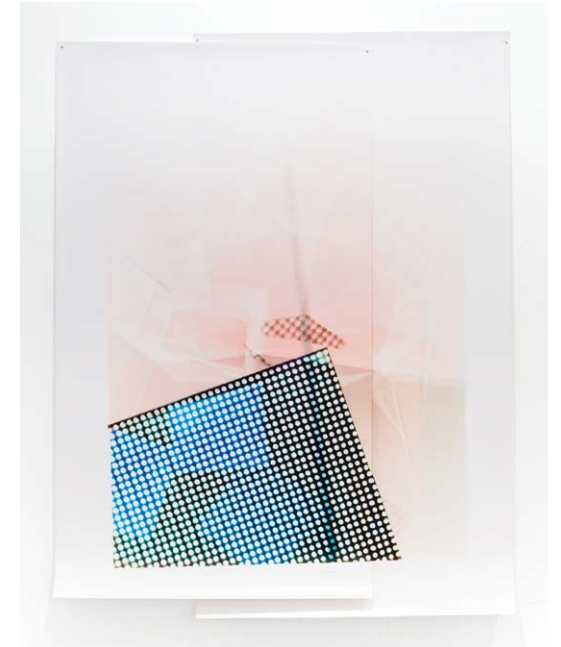


Benjamin Lichtenstein
A veneer of protection (self portrait)
 unique state gelatin silver print
 93.5 x 75cm, 2014
 Image courtesy of the artist



Sean Barrett
Bright Swarm
 duratrans on blackwood lightbox
 80 x 60 cm, 2014
 edition of 3
 Image courtesy of the artist

Danica Chappell
Panel Haptic #1
 chromogenic hand print
 185 x 145 cm, 2012
 edition of 1
 Image courtesy the artist
 Documentation by Paul Adair



Mike Gray, *Confide in Me*, archival inkjet print, 67 x 100cm, 2013, edition of 9
 Image courtesy the artist



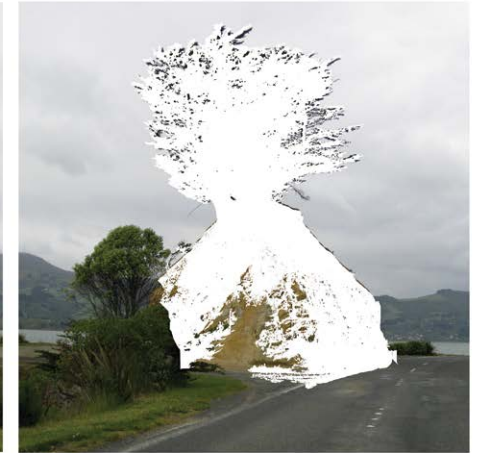


Justine Varga

Left: *Morning* from *Sounding Silence*
type C print, 77 x 61cm, 2014, edition of 6 + 1AP

Below: *Evening* from *Sounding Silence*
type C print, 47 x 38.5cm, 2014, edition of 6 + 1AP

Images courtesy of the artist, Stills Gallery, Sydney
and Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide



Izabela Pluta

Left: *Study for a sham ruin #7*, pigment print, 50 x 50cm, 2012

Right: *Study for a sham ruin #8*, acrylic on pigment print, 50 x 50cm, 2012

Images courtesy of the artist, Dianne Tanzer Gallery + Projects, Melbourne and Galerie pompom, Sydney



Melanie Jayne Taylor,

Title of work, Medium, size cm, 2013
Image courtesy of the artist

Kim Demuth

9.55am 11.06.2008

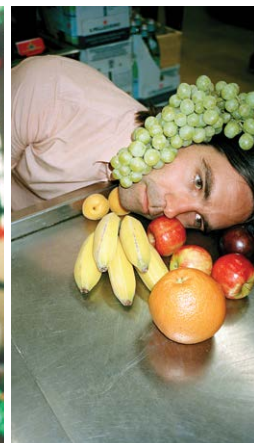
sculptural photography, 110 x 88 x 6.5cm, 2012
edition of 3

Image courtesy of the artist





Jackson Eaton
 From top left to bottom right:
Brigtown Melfie
Friend Melfie
Grandad Melfie
Groceries Melfie
Opening Melfie
 digital prints on cotton t-shirts,
 dimensions variable, 2012-2013
 Images courtesy of the artist



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