Picturing the Intangible and the Ephemeral

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A Report Submitted to the Lamar Dodd School of Art of the University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

ATHENS, GA
Picturing the Intangible and the Ephemeral

by Janelle L. Young

Approved:

[Signature]

Michael Marshall, Major Professor

5.2.16

Date
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE / SUBJECT</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>1–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>6–15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND RESEARCH</td>
<td>16–21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPERIMENTAL PLAN</td>
<td>22–25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBSERVATIONS AND DATA</td>
<td>26–31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION OF RESULTS</td>
<td>32–37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>38–61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PREFACE
My work pictures the intangible and the ephemeral. Examining the natural world around me, I create experiments, running my observations through specific controls as a way to synthesize a vast and overwhelming universe. The result is a poetic engagement that affords the viewer a new sense of reflection. As an artist, my pursuits may only remain as an emulation of a scientist or philosopher’s work. Yet in the studio, I can measure space and time, the weight of the moon or the magnitude of a volcano. Like science, art too seeks out truth. I work primarily within photography, where the relationship of art to science is undeniable, indeed the line between the two is easily confused. The camera, a product of science, is imbued with a sense of objective power. However, even the earliest (made) photographs revealed some of the medium’s great contradictions – the camera is accurate and untruthful at the same time. Nicéphore Niépce’s *View from the Window at Le Gras* (fig. 1), historically cited as the first photograph created, captures sunlight radiating on both opposing walls of the scene, physically an impossible sight; whereas *View of the Boulevard du Temple* by Louis Daguerre (fig. 2) illustrates a crowded Paris street bathed in light as almost vacant. Despite photography’s objective and scientific inclinations, these early images showcase the medium’s capability to discover the unperceivable and the invisible.

The oscillation between contradictory notions of truth and fiction, the peculiar rendering of time and duration, and the capture of the seen and the unseen greatly interests me. These ambiguities, found in the medium of photography, point to the dueling capabilities and limitations of the mechanical process, a device I exploit in my work as I explore, in a variety of other media, the natural world, perception, phenomena, and the sublime through a pseudo-scientific methodology.

Fig. 1: Nicéphore Niépce, *View from the Window at Le Gras*, c. 1826, heliograph

Fig. 2: Louis Daguerre, *View of the Boulevard du Temple*, Paris, c. 1839, daguerreotype
When speaking about my work, I frequently mention my interest in pseudoscience, studies that falsely prescribe as scientific. The list of pseudosciences is vast, ranging from lunar effects, to astrology, to the study of paranormal activity. I find these studies to be fascinating and wonder if sometimes they hold validity. In reference to the pseudoscience of lunar effects, Cornell University professor and mathematician Steven Strogatz explains in his book *Sync: How Order Emerges From Chaos In the Universe, Nature, and Daily Life*:

...spooky effects have been ascribed to the phases of the moon....But when the statistics are redone properly, the correlation with lunar phase always evaporates....Yet many sensible people—including police officers and emergency room staff—continue to believe otherwise."

I guess I am one of those "sensible people" he is talking about. Though I understand the scientific statistics and facts on lunar effects I can’t help but wonder if there is something science is missing, or just hasn’t found yet. Science works in absolutes, but art works in doubt. Through art, I can understand the moon in ways science cannot (fig. 3 and 4).

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Fig. 4: Contemplating the Moon (This is Just Styrofoam), 2015, found object and vinyl, 18.5 x 12 x 12 in.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<td>B₄Na₂O₇</td>
<td>Sodium tetraborate</td>
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INTRODUCTION
Fig. 5: *Untitled* from *Valuations* series, 2014, archival inkjet print, 16 x 20 in.
The *Valuations* series, created in spring 2014, was the first time I began comparing my studio to a laboratory and photographs to data. The work itself was analogous to that of a scientific experiment. I created small, perishable sculptures by growing mold, fungus and seeds (fig. 5 and 6). The photographs acted as the final assessment, remnants of each methodical attempt – a catalogue of data for the viewer to interpret. The initial investigation of fungus and growing subject matter in my studio has not transferred to my current work. What has remained, however, is the meticulous treatment of my subject matter and transforming and imbuing the banal with a sense of formal beauty, critical curiosity and potential new meaning. *Valuations* encouraged my interest in pseudoscience, the medium of photography’s potential ability to capture the unexplained or undiscovered, and the possibility of allowing the viewer a more ambiguous interpretation of the work.

Fig. 6: *Untitled from Valuations* series, 2014, archival inkjet print, 16 x 20 in.
Upon completion of that project, I began researching elementary science projects and started to replicate them through using the specific materials and equipment found in my studio. I grew crystals out of Kodak D-76 developer (fig. 7); I modified my chemistry, adding soap and sugar and blew bubbles at pre-exposed paper (fig. 8); I made rudimentary agar plates and swabbed my work space (fig. 9 and 10). I began to push the medium of photography for personal scientific discovery.
During this time, I began researching perception and interpretation. One day, while I waited for something in the darkroom, I folded an exposed piece of silver gelatin paper in half, put a little developer in the seam, and made a chemical-blot. Unfolded, the mired image alluded to Rorschach inkblots (mirrored images), but viewing just half of it, an otherworldly, science fiction landscape emerged (fig. 11). Making these prints, similar to monoprints, was additive. Like the Valuations series, I was utilizing all my boxes of odds and ends, materials I had hoarded but never knew what to do with. Regardless of the expiration date, I have never thrown away unused silver gelatin paper, and throughout the years my friends have always given me their leftovers as well. With what felt like an endless supply of material, I decided to see just how many I could make for a large installation, giving the outdated paper one last shot to be something.

Capturing the Infinity of the Sea or Field (Cozen) was influenced by a book, A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape, written in the mid 1700s by the artist Alexander Cozens. In the book, Cozens instructs amateur artists to begin a painting or drawing by first creating an arbitrary inkblot to allow for a more natural and creative landscape. My process is similar, though I utilize developer instead of ink and work on photographic paper. Utilizing multiple developer solutions, I put small amounts of it onto a pre-exposed piece of paper, folding it in half to create a symmetrical, ambiguous atmosphere. Though this process ultimately is left up to chance, there is a surprisingly great deal of control that can be exerted, allowing each inkblot to be a conversation between happenstance and the will of the artist. The gallery installation comprises 672 4x5 and 4x6 inch individual chemical-blots arranged in an undulating grid (fig. 12). The piece utilizes the paper fold jutting out from the wall, giving the viewer an overwhelming tactile experience, as well as guiding his or her perception by first viewing the chemical-blot halves to illuminate the landscape rather than a mere Rorschach inkblot. What I find most interesting about this work is the multiple viewpoints it encompasses. From far away it can be gross, overwhelming chemical splatters or, on the contrary, a dream-like flicker. On close inspection, science fictional worlds emerge – romantic, bleary or toxic.

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Fig. 11: *Untitled from Capturing the Infinity of the Sea or Field (Cozen)* series, 2014, silver gelatin print, 20 x 24 in.
Fig. 12: Capturing the Infinity of the Sea or the Field (Cozen), 2014, installation view, silver gelatin prints, 7.5 x 8.5 ft.
At the beginning of 2015, I challenged myself to not take a photograph for a month. I
didn’t do this because I was frustrated with the medium of photography, but rather because I
wished to disrupt my formulaic work patterns. I was interested in perception, interpretation and
viewing, so it didn’t make a lot of sense to go back to “a standard, all the same size, spaced out
evenly, all in a row” approach to my work. After completion of the Cozen installation, I began
researching art historian E.H. Gombrich’s theory of perception and his notion that our viewing is
illusion-based. Everything exists in abstract forms and it is the viewer’s preconceived concepts
that shape an interpretation. However, a viewer cannot simultaneously see the abstract form and
the inference simultaneously. The visual understanding switches back and forth.3 This could also
be said about a photograph. It’s not uncommon for a person to see clumps of silver or dots of ink
on a piece of paper, and say “that’s my grandma,” or “that was our old house.” Expanding on this
notion, my goal was to create work that allowed the viewer’s perception to not just oscillate, but
straddle implied and imagined meanings. This was achieved by incorporating textual components
and alternative ways of viewing the work.

In Duck or Rabbit? each piece was placed in a way to build upon the last, so that, even
though everything was created separately, with loose connections, the viewer began to see a
larger narrative from the work as a whole, building upon contextual clues (fig. 13). I used text
to give an overall title for each piece, to prompt the viewer, and placed additional text in subtle,
white vinyl for further explanation:

*Artist Statement (Rabbit or Duck?)*
*Portrait (35 mm)*
*Contemplating the Moon (This is just styrofoam)*
*One Hour (Five Feet)*
*Tomorrow We’ll Return to the Morn (338 1” Pieces / 37” x 16” x 15” Chair)*
*Surrogate Sun*

![Image](image.png)

Fig. 13: *Duck or Rabbit?*, installation view, 2015
This was the first time I titled each piece of a series. In the past, I have shied away from titling work, finding it even difficult to name an overall body. This new approach, with titles and installing for multiple interpretations of the work, unlocked rich possibilities to engage further with my viewer – a tactic carried on throughout my thesis work. In the end, I was surprised to see how all this work was essentially black and white. While I was working, I didn’t give it much thought; however, I believe it was a subconscious choice. Incorporating color would have muddied the water. This work is more successful paired down to the minimal necessity, an element I continue to explore.

Fig. 14: *Artist Statement (Rabbit or Duck?),* white vinyl, 28 x 34 in.

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BACKGROUND RESEARCH
aesthetics

Alberti, Leon Battista; On Painting
Anderson, Laurie; "Interview with Charles Amirkhanian"
Bachelard, Gaston; Poetics of Space
Bag, Alex; "Untitled Fall '95"
Baldessari, John; "I will Not Make Any More Boring Art"
Barthes, Roland; Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography
Batchen, Geoffrey; Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography
Baudelaire; excerpt from "Salon of 1859"
Baudrillard; "The Hyperreal and the Imaginary"
Benjamin, W.; "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
Berger, John; "Understanding a Photograph"
Bhabha, Homi; Location of Culture
Biesenbach, Klaus; "Sympathy for the Devil"
Birnbaum, Daniel; "Interiority Complex: Gregor Schneider's Dead House Ur"
Bochner, Mel; "Book Review"
Botting, Fred; Gothic
Brainard, Joe; excerpts from "I Remember"
Breton, André; "First Surrealist Manifesto"
Brougher, Kerry; "Impossible Photography"
Budd, Malcolm; Values of Art
Burke, Chloe S. and Christopher J. Castaneda; "The Public and Private History of Eugenics: An Introduction"
Burty; "Nadar’s Portraits"
Calvino, Italo; "The Distance of the Moon"
Cage, John and Pauline Schindler; Excerpt of love letters
Cage, John; "Some Rules for Students and Teachers"
Calle, Sophie; excerpts from Double Game with Paul Auster
camera-less photography
Cameron, Julia Margaret; excerpt from Annals of My Glass House
Carroll, Lewis; "Hiawatha’s Photographing"
Celmis, Vija; "Interview with Chuck Close"

Celmins, Vija, Night Sky #2, 1991, oil on canvas

chemical reactions
Chéroux, C. et al.; The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult
Clayden, A. W.; Dark Lightning
Cocker, Emma; "Over and Over, Again and Again"
Collier, Anne
collodian
combustion
Cooke, Lynne; "Robert Gober: Site Specific Installation"
Costello, Diarmuid and Margaret Iverson, "Introduction: Photography between Art History and Philosophy"
Crawford: The Keepers of Light
Cunningham, Chris; "Window Licker"
Damisch, Hubert and Richard Miller; Delacroix’s "Journal"
Danto, Arthur C.; "Andy Warhol: Brillo Box."
Davies, David; "Scruton on the Inscrutability of Photographs"
Darget, Louis
dark side of the moon
developer modifier
Dr. Beers Developer
Duchamp, Marcel; "Apropos of "Readymades"
Duchamp, Marcel; "The Creative Act"
Duchamp, Marcel; "The Richard Mutt Case"
duration
earth rotation
Judd, Donald: "Specific Objects"
July, Miranda: "The Shared Patio"
Kanare, Howard M.: Writing the Laboratory Notebook
Kant, Immanuel: Critique of Judgment
Kaprow, Allan; excerpts Allan Kaprow: The Blurring of Art and Life
Kelly, Ellsworth: "Notes of 1969"
Kennedy, Randy: "This Ranch in Detroit is Not For Sale"
klecksography
Klein, Jennie; "Paul McCarthy: Rites of Masculinity"
Korot, Beryl: Dachau 1974
Korot, Beryl: on Dachau 1974
Kosuth, Joseph; "Art After Philosophy"

Kosuth, Joseph, *One and Three Chairs*, 1965

Krauss; "Photography's Discursive Spaces"
Kraynak, Janet; "Homecoming: Do Ho Suh takes up residence at Lehmann Maupin"
Kristeva, Julia; "Approaching Abjection"
Kruger, Barbara; "Pictures and Words: Interview with Jeanne Siegel"
Kulvicki, John; "Image Structure"
lavender
Langley, P.: "Ryan Trecartin: The Real Internet is Inside You"
Levine, Cary; "Manly Crafts: Mike Kelley's (Oxy)Moronic Gender Bending"
Levinson, Jerrold; "Wollheim on Pictorial Representation"
Lewis, Jennifer; Framing the Victorians: photography and the culture of realism
Lewis, Michael J.: "How Art Became Irrelevant"

loop
Lopes, Dominic; "The Aesthetics of Photographic Transparency"
Lopes, Dominic; Sight and Sensibility
Lopes, Dominic; Understanding Pictures
Lozano, Lee; excerpts from Lee Lozano: Notebooks 1967-1970
Lubow, Arthur; "Ryan's Web" lumen prints
Mach, Ernst
Mann, Sally; "What Remains"
Marey, Etienne-Jules
Marin, Louis; "Utopic Degeneration: Disneyland"
Marina Abramovic: The Artist is Present
Marinetti, F.T.; "The Futurist Manifesto"
Martin, Agnes; excerpts from "Writings"
Mays, Aspen
McCauley; "Photographs for Industry: The Career of Charles Aubry"
Mcintosh, G; "Depiction Unexplained: Peacocke and Hopkins on Pictorial Representation"
mimesis
meridian
methodology
Metz, Christian; "Photography and Fetish"
Micchelli, Thomas; "The Death of Painting, All-New, 2014 Edition"
mold
Monk, Philip; "The Calculations of Time"
mood
Morris, Errol; Believing Is Seeing: Observations on the Mysteries of Photography
mushrooms
Muybridge, Eadweard (Edward James Muggeridge, Edward Muybridge, Helios - Titan god of the sun, Eduardo Santiago Muybridge, Eadweard Maybridge)
mycelium
natural philosopher
natural world
Nesbit, Molly; "What was an Author?"
Newman, Barnett; "The Plasmic Image."
Norden, Linda; "When the Rainbow is an Option"
Oldenburg, Claes; "I am for an Art" obfuscation
Paglen, Trevor
Parry, Eugenia; “Convalescent Incorruptible”
Pasolini, Pier Paolo; “Observations on the Long Take”
perception
performance
perishable sculptures
Perrine, Laurence; “Denotation and Connotation”
phases of the moon
phenomenology
Philips, Lisa; “Paul McCarthy’s Theater of the Body”
philosophy
Piper, Adrian; “The Triple Negation of Colored Women Artists”
Plato, G. M. A. Grube, and C. D. C. Reeve; Republic
Pluto
Posner, Adrianne; “Falling Bodies and the Problem of Remembrance: Eric Fischl’s Tumbling Woman”
pseudo-science
Ramachandran, Vilayanur S., and Diane Rogers-Ramachandran; “Seeing Is Believing”
Rauschenberg, Robert; “Note on Painting”
Rauschenberg, Robert; “Untitled Statement”
Ray
Reich, Steve; “It’s Gonna Rain”
Reich, Steve; “Musical as a Gradual Process”
Rejlander; “An Apology for Art-Photography”
Riley, Bridget; “Untitled Statement.”
Robinson, Henry Peach; “Pictorial Effect in Photography”
Rossiter, Alison
Saltz, Jerry; “We Are Theirs”
Samaras, Lucas; “Another Autointerview”
Saville, Anthony and Richard Wollheim; “Imagination and Pictorial Understanding”
scan
Schimmel, Paul; “Gober is in the Details”
Schwartz, Jaime; “Is a Photograph Still an Index If It’s on the Internet?”
scientific method
Scruton, Roger; “Photography and Representation”
sculpture
Sekula, Allan; “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning”
Sekula, Allan; “The Body and the Archive” self-referential
Serra, Richard; “Tilted Arc Destroyed” shadows
Sherman, Cindy; “Interview with Els Barents”
Sherman, Cindy; “Untitled Statement”
Showalter, Elaine; “The Hysterical Hot Zone”
Sliwinski, Sharon; “Icarus Returned: The Falling Man and the Survival of Antiquity”
Smithson, Robert. “Monuments of Passaic.”
Smithson, Robert. “The Spiral Jetty”
Smithson, Robert. “Yucatan is Elsewhere.”
Smithson, Robert. Spiral Jetty 16 mm film on video

Smithson, Robert, Yucatan Mirror Displacements (1-9), 1969

Snyder Joel and N.W. Allen; “Photography, Vision, and Representation”
Snyder, Joel; “Picturing Vision”
Snyder, Joel; “The Documentary Photograph as a Work of Art”
Solanas, Valerie; “Scum Manifesto”
solar plates
solstice
Sontag, Susan; “Against Interpretation”
Sontag, Susan; “On Photography”
Spector, Nancy; “R. Gober: Homeward-Bound”
Starkman, Christine; “Infinite Points of Contact”
Stein, Sally; “Passing Likeness: Dorothea Lange’s ‘Migrant Mother’ and the Paradox of Iconicity”
Stella, Frank and Donald Hudd; “Questions to Stella and Judd by Bruce Glaser”
Stella, Frank; “The Pratt Lecture”
Stewart, Susan; “The Imaginary Body”
styrofoam

Tzara, Tristan; “Dada Manifesto 1918”
Varndoe, K.; “Fragmentation and Repetition”
Varndoe, S. “Of Surface Similarities, Deeper Disparities, First Photographs, and the Function of Form”
Vidler, Anthony; “Full House: Whiteread’s Postdomestic Casts” & “Lost in Space: Toba Khedoori’s Architectural Fragments”
v vinyl
void
von Brevern, Jan; “Resemblance After Photography”
Von Hore, Charleen
Wallace, Isabelle Loring; “Sex, Sameness and Desire: Thoughts on Versace and the Clone”
Wallace, Isabelle Loring; “Gravity and the Grave: Jasper Johns and the Metaphorics of the Fall”
Walton, Kendall; “How Marvelous! Toward a Theory of Aesthetic Value”
Walton, Kendall; “Pictures and Make Believe”
Walton, Kendall; “Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism”
Warhol, Andy. “Warhol in His Own Words: Untitled Statement”
Welling, James
Weschler, Lawrence; Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees: A Life of Contemporary Artist Robert Irwin
Westcott, James; “Gregor Schneider and the Flattering Performance of Installation”
Williams, Gilda “Doubling: Gregor Schneider: Interviewed by Gilda Williams”
Wilson; “To My Patrons”
Wojnarowicz, David: excerpts from Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration
Wollheim, Richard; “Seeing-as, Seeing-in, and Pictorial Representation”
Wollheim, Richard; “On Pictorial Representation”
written language as form
X-Files; 1993-present

Sugimoto, Hiroshi, Seascape: Baltic Sea, near Rügen, 1996, silver gelatin print

super 8
super moon
Sussman, Elizabeth; “Robert Gober: Installation and Sculpture”
tautology
time
titles
truth
Tucker, Jennifer; Nature exposed: photography as eyewitness in Victorian science
Turrell, James
The scientific method is a nice analogy to make while reflecting on my studio practice, but the utilization is just that – an analogy. The medium of photography has limitless possibilities; therefore, it is more efficient for me to employ a methodology by setting controls to narrow down my process and investigation. The controls are specific decisions I have already made, whether for conceptual or aesthetic reasons, to maintain throughout the work. The scientific method incorporates steps to follow sequentially; however, in art I can break this sequence, skip steps and move forwards and backwards multiple times throughout my exploration. Artist Robert Irwin believes the key difference between artists and scientist is that of intuition. Lawrence Weschler in Irwin’s biography, Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees explains:

For Irwin, however, if art is in many ways like science, it is at the same time not science, and the ways in which the two differ are as revealing as their similarities. “Once the scientist is finished, you can look back over his notes to considerer the precise sequence of yes-no weighings which brought him to his solution. It’s all quite logical and structured,” explains Irwin. “The artist, on the other hand, keeps no such record (although historians would love it if he did.) Rather, he literally paints over his errors. Six months later, when you ask him, ‘Why did you stop there?’ and he replies, ‘Well, because it felt right,’ his answer may not seem acceptable from a logical point of view – I mean it seems as if he just chanced on the final version – but in fact it’s quite reasonable. Given the possible, every ways possible, until he’s finally arrived at what makes sense to him. The critical difference is that the artist measures from his intuition, his feeling. In other words, he uses himself as the measure. Whereas the scientist measure out of an external logic process and makes his decision finally on whether it fits that process in terms of various external abstract measures."
Reason/individual/intuition/feeling: Reason is the processing of our interface with our own subjective being.

Logic/community/intellect/mental: Logic is the processing of our interface with our objective constructs, our social being.\textsuperscript{5}

Despite keeping notes, exposure times, etc. throughout my process, it would be impossible for someone else to exactly reproduce the finished project, a requirement for scientific experiments. Like Irwin explains, it is my intuitive moves, the feelings I have, that I cannot chart thoroughly and yet, like the scientific method, I begin each work with a question and hypothesis. “How can I capture ice melting?” or “how does one perceive dissipating fog?” Utilizing specific methodology, I transform my studio into a laboratory creating poetic results.

Question: “How can one measure their fixed point of view in a world that is constantly evolving and in motion?” I turned my attention to star trails, a photographic phenomenon of continuous lines created by a long-exposure of the night sky. Through basic research of stars, the earth’s rotation and other photographer’s attempts at this subject matter, I learn that due to the limitations of digital photography (the sensor overheats during long exposures), current examples of the trails are actually constructed in an image-editing software like Photoshop (fig. 15). This answer shapes my experiment.

Fig. 15: Jerry Lodriguss, Star Trails around the north celestial pole, 2006
I set out with a camera and expose film for three hours on October 13, the night of a new moon. The subsequent image (fig. 16) does illustrate the trails; however, it seems to be lacking the sensorial experience I am after – the flat, two-dimensional photograph does not illicit the feeling of a slow rotation, a physical experience I cannot perceive each day. Therefore, I go back to the beginning of the scientific method, researching a new experiment to utilize the current photograph through a new understanding of material. The resulting work, Four Light Year Lag, Three Hour Exposure (Star Trails), is comprised of a sculpted silver gelatin print (fig. 17 and 18), alluding to the shape similar to the earth’s rotation and a convex mirror on the ground below. The mirror, slightly fogged, reflects the wall mounted photograph at a much smaller scale and when the viewer approaches the work closer, their own veiled reflection emerges. Numerous works in my thesis utilize a “loop,” an image or idea circling back onto itself. Seen in examples discussed later in this report, many of the loops are closed, finished once presented to the viewer. Four Light Year Lag, Three Hour Exposure (Star Trails) allows the viewer, through the presence, to either complete or disrupt the continuum.

Fig. 16

Fig. 17: Four Light Year Lag, Three Hour Exposure (Star Trails)

Figure 18: side view

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5 Ibid., 135.
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**OBSERVATIONS AND DATA**

**PROPRIETARY INFORMATION**
For decades photography was used to capture and catalogue visible objects for science. Towards the latter half of the 1870s and onward, the camera became a tool for capturing scientifically the invisible.⁶

At a young age, I always carried a camera, focusing mainly on capturing my childhood memories. It wasn't until high school that I began to photograph, essentially, to see what something would look like photographed, understanding how the medium could transform a scene solely by isolating it. My undergraduate studies opened my eyes to the world around me. I became a keen observer of my surroundings – aware of peculiar phenomena in nature, how light behaved during the day and at night, how unexpected natural and manmade forms coexisted. I often wondered if I was the only one noticing.

I'll never forget the first time I realized this new enhanced way of seeing. A friend and I used to go listen to live jazz every Wednesday night. One time I was waiting for him and while I stood on the sidewalk, I looked up. I noted the peculiar hue of leaves around me. Illuminated by the full moon, the leaves took on an unnatural shade and seemed to vibrate. I remember standing there in awe. I had come to that spot countless times and had never noticed. I smiled, feeling like I had a secret – I was finding wonder while all those around me kept walking. I didn't have a camera with me at the time (this was before cameras were so readily available in our pockets), and yet, the full image is etched in my memory some 12 years later. This experience, of the leaves, transfers to my current investigation as an artist. I create experiments in my studio to make finite ephemeral moments.

The term scientist emerged around the same time photography was invented in the 1830s. Prior, scientists were called “natural philosophers,” a term that seems to imply more subjectivity to the field we now know today. From the onset of photography’s invention, amateur scientists and photographers used the medium to picture the familiar, enthusiastically collecting and cataloging their stock much like scientific specimens. Described as “unmediated,” “pencil of nature” or “spontaneous,” photography possessed an implied truthfulness that complimented scientific study.

With new advances in the medium, exposure times were faster and equipment more accessible. By the 1870s, Britain experienced an influx of amateur photography which coincided with an increase in scientific photographs. Scientists utilized amateur photographers and would hold workshops to teach appropriate procedures to obtain objective data, for example, requesting assistance in cataloguing clouds and lightning. Amateurs eagerly accepted the challenge. Scientists used the camera as a mediator between the eye and the unseen and created new processes to photograph invisible specimens, for instance bacteria, constellations, air pressure, internal bones (the X-ray) and motion. This allowed evidence to be created and ultimately studied in schools and laboratories. These photographs slowly and with hesitation began to replace the subjective scientific drawings of this time period.

Microscopic and astrological photographs were that of the unseen; however it was easier for the public to believe them. Photographs of abstract ideas picturing the invisible were more confusing. Studies of motion by Eadweard Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey challenged the current conventions of how motion was understood. Photographers and scientists in this realm were researching the invisible through the manipulation of what could be seen. Marey (fig. 19) turned to photography to eliminate the need of drawings to interpret his motion findings by he creating photographs in which the figures created their own data graphs.

Physicist and philosopher Ernst Mach in 1887 created “Phases in the Flight of a Bullet” (fig. 20). While studying supersonic aerodynamics Mach wanted visual proof of the turbulence created by a moving bullet. He was able to photograph the invisible without the aid of an additional optical devise; however, he did employ a powerful flash as an intervening tool. The image, though faint and rather abstract, depicts the bullet on the right which is enveloped by a circular form – the ocular impression of air. It can be said that images, like this modified photography’s identity as merely a reproductive tool. Over a century later, Mach, Marey and Muybridge’s relevance persists as a foundation to my artistic practice by showcasing a photograph’s ability to create data instead of merely representing it, a continuing ambition of mine.

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Fig. 19: Etienne-Jules Marey, *Geometric Chronophotograph of Human Locomotion*, 1886

Fig. 20: Ernst Mach, *Phases in the Flight of a Bullet*, 1887
Though many scientific photographs are aesthetically remarkable, they were not created to exist as art. There is a difference between doing science and art talking about science. Mark Dion appropriates scientific conventions, creating his own imaged curiosity cabinets. His sculptures and installations (fig. 22 and 23) look as if they could be exhibited in an objective natural history museum, but on closer inspection, Dion’s own subjective perspective shines through, giving the viewer a new interpretation of his repositioned anthropology. James Welling’s spanning career of 30+ years exemplifies his curiosity of the photographic medium, pushing the limits and redefining its capabilities. Through his studies of perception, Welling transforms mundane subject matter such as drapes, foil (fig. 24) and floor tiles, and imbues them with a sense of wonder and ambiguity. Although I do not believe Welling equates his studio practice to a scientific methodology, his treatment of subject matter alludes to that of scientific discovery, illustrating a new essence of his materials. Aspen Mays’ (fig. 25) work seems to bridge Dion and Welling by adopting scientific conventions while simultaneously commenting on the medium of photography – an approach I employ in my own work. Through the development of hybrid strategies, taking cues from both art history and scientific research I have been able to create subjective and poetic experiences. It is in this way that I feel my practice is in conversation with the works of Dion, Welling and Mays.

Fig. 21: Aspen Mays, Why haven’t we seen a photograph of the whole Universe yet?, 2009, 1.5” plastic badge, unlimited edition
Left, Fig. 22: Mark Dion, *Mandrillus Sphinx*, 2012, wood, glass, plastic, tar, metal, ceramic, paper, cork, ribbon, and string, overall installed dimensions: 69 x 26.5 x 50.5 in.

Above, Fig. 23: Mark Dion, *Mandrillus Sphinx*, detail

Fig. 24: James Welling, *April (B35)*, 1980, Gelatin silver contact print, 4 x 3 ¾ in.

Fig. 25: Aspen Mays, *Untitled (Fireflies inside the body of my camera, 8:37-8:39PM, June 26, 2008)*, 2008, archival inkjet print, 32 x 26 in.
DISCUSSION
OF RESULTS
My piece featured in the Georgia Museum of Art’s MFA Group Thesis exhibit, investigates the event of solstice, the longest or shortest day of the year. Utilizing a rudimentary, pinhole camera, I created photographs to explore the notion of time and light both conceptually and metaphorically. Beginning at sunrise and concluding at sunset, the top row of one-of-a-kind prints were created during the duration of Winter Solstice, December 21, 2015 (fig. 26).

Fig. 26: Solstice, 2015-2016, 46 silver gelatin prints, installation view, Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, GA

The bottom row are positives created by using the prints above as paper negatives. I mathematically divided the daylight hours so that the first, middle and last exposures fell directly during the moment of the sunrise, the sun’s meridian and the sunset. The center image is the midpoint of the day – when the sun is at its highest peak.

A great deal of my work requires doing daily observational research. Leading up to the Winter Solstice, I would observe the light each day. Using a compass, I recorded its position and make test exposures while examining possible locations for the project. I currently live out in the country, in a house built in 1860. With its rich history and old trees, I thought it would be a
perfect choice. The tree featured in each image was settled upon because it was the only area illuminated by both the sunrise and the sunset. Other locations would have been in shadow at one point during the day. A dominating force on the property, I can’t help but wonder how many solstices this massive oak tree has experienced.

The wide angle of the hand built camera gives way to a circling image, alluding to a compass or to the sun’s rotation, never giving a concrete horizon to the viewer. In fact, the brush at the top of the negatives are located behind the camera. Towards the end of the installation, you can see the sun setting (fig. 27). This work is hung sequentially from left to right presenting the viewer with a progression of light to darkness, darkness to light, an orbiting sensation of being a fixed point of perception in an ever evolving environment.

![Image of the tree](image)

Fig. 27: Solstice No. 17-19, 2015-2016, silver gelatin prints, 20 x 16 in.

The methodology for Solstice stemmed from a project created in 2015 entitled Morning Song (Morning Fog on Fogged Paper). In summer 2015, I was given a few boxes of (chemically) fogged silver gelatin paper. A sheet, when run through the darkroom chemicals, would be sheathed in warm shades of grays and delicate paper pulp patterns. My first inclination was to run the unexposed paper through the chemicals and install all 50, basically blank, sheets in a long row. Though the visual in my head was striking, the idea seemed to be lacking. I shelved the idea and began researching natural phenomena, observable events created by nature, research
derived from earlier philosophical and perceptual research during the *Duck or Rabbit?* work. Fire and combustion (fig. 28), volcano eruptions (fig. 29), moon and sun rises, rainbows (fig. 30), phase transitions (ex. ice turning to liquid, fig. 31), decomposition (fig. 32), and spider webs (fig. 33) – this list is abbreviated in terms of natural phenomena, but was a starting point to observing my surroundings and daily life using the economy of means inherent to photography. I could capture these phenomena, whether they be found, fabricated or imaged. This way of working embraced my interest in exploring and discovering through pseudoscience and the medium of photography.

Fig 28: *A Moment*, 2015, archival inkjet print, 22 x 27.5 in.

Fig 29: *Untitled (Inverse Volcano 2)*, 2015, archival inkjet print, 42 x 52 in.

Fig 30: *Untitled (Rainbow Board)*, 2015, archival inkjet print, 18 x 12 in.

Fig 31: *Five Hour Melt, Five Hour Exposure*, 2015, archival inkjet print, 20 x 20 in.

Fig 32: *Floral Deconstruction*, 2015, archival inkjet print, 14 x 11 in.

Fig 33: *Found Constellation/Web*, 2015, archival inkjet print, 28.75 x 23 in.
My house is only a mile from a large river and in the fall, 2015, each day seemed to always begin and end encased in fog. I was fascinated by how in the morning everything looked romantic and peaceful, and yet, at night the fog created an ominous tension. Since fog is considered a natural phenomenon, one day it clicked – use the fogged paper I had received months ago to study dissolving fog. Building a pinhole camera out of the box the paper came in (the same camera I would then use to create Solstice), I created 28 one-of-a-kind photographs over the duration of a foggy morning (fig. 34). As the sun rose, the fog dissipated. The resulting installation presents the viewer with a progression of clarity, an accumulation, much akin to a dawn chorus.

Fig 34: *Morning Song (Morning Fog on Fogged Paper)*, 2015, installation, 28 silver gelatin prints, dimensions variable

*Infinity* (fig. 35 and 36) is a self-referential study of an object collected from the natural world. A piece of unexposed silver gelatin paper was used as a backdrop when the photograph of was taken. The flash exposed the film while simultaneously creating a photogram. The diptych thus reveals a comparison and contradiction of the essence of the object. *Signal, Phase One* and *Signal, Phase Two (Artifact)* is a two-part piece. When I began photographing the light of sparks to study fire and combustion, I prepared painted panels to merely serve as a backdrop for the photographs. The resulting soot and burn marks became important, as an artifact of the light alongside the photograph itself. The image of the sparks (fig. 37) is installed adjacent to
the photograph of a panel atop the panel itself (fig. 38). This piece incorporates multiple facets of representation circulating on a loop, whereas the physical board begins to appear as if it is the photographic record itself.

*Picturing the Intangible and the Ephemeral* is about capturing the fleeting experiences of the natural world. Mediating my observations through rigorous and inventive methodologies, I create data. Through the course of my Thesis research I have concluded that the production and collection of results are generative. The experimentation and final works heighten my curiosity about the evolving world and the means by which I transform my experiences for the viewer. The presumption of a conclusion is the end of the scientific method; however, this work continues as new background research for my continued exploration.

Fig. 35: *Infinity*, 2016, silver gelatin print, 19 x 15 in.

Fig. 36: *Infinity*, 2016, silver gelatin print, photogram, 19 x 15 in.

Fig. 37: *Signal, Phase One*, 2015, archival inkjet print, 24 x 30 in.

Fig. 38: *Signal, Phase Two, Artifact*, 2015, archival inkjet print, wood and acrylic, 48 x 24 x 6 in.
CONCLUSION
Morning Song (Morning Fog on Fogged Paper) No. 3, 11 and 28, 2015, installation, 28 silver gelatin prints, 20x 16 in., each
*Untitled (Inverse Volcano I)*, 2015, archival inkjet print, mylar, wood and acrylic, 5 x 24 x 36 in.
*Untitled (Inverse Volcano 3)*, 2015, archival inkjet print, 16 x 20 in.
Found Constellation/Web, 2015, archival inkjet print, 28.75 x 23 in.
Untitled (Rainbow Board), 2015, archival inkjet print, 18 x 12 in.
*Untitled*, 2016, silkscreen on paper, 32 x 20 in.
A Moment, 2015, archival inkjet print, 22 x 27.5 in.
"Untitled (Inverse Volcano 2), 2015, archival inkjet print, 42 x 52 in."
One Hour Melt, One Hour Exposure, 2015, archival inkjet print, 15 x 18.75 in.
Untitled (Found and Fabricated Phenomenon), 2015, archival inkjet print, 16 x 20 in.
Moon Meridian, 2016, archival inkjet print, 24 x 30 in.
Four Light Year Log. Three Hour Exposure (Star Trails), sculpted silver gelatin print, convex mirror, dimensions variable
Counter Topography, 2015, archival inkjet print, 22 x 27.5 in.
Floral Deconstruction, 2015, archival inkjet print, 14 x 11 in.
Counter Topography, 2015, archival inkjet print, 22 x 27.5 in.
Tomorrow We’ll Return to the Moon (338 1” Pieces / 37” x 16” x 15” IVAR Chair), 2015, found object, white and gray vinyl, 5 x 36 x 36 in.
*Five Hour Melt, Five Hour Exposure*, 2015, archival inkjet print, 20 x 20 in.
Signal, Phase One, 2015, archival inkjet print, 24 x 30 in.
Signal, Phase Two, Artifact, 2015, archival inkjet print, wood and acrylic, 48 x 24 x 6 in.
Signal, Phase Two, Artifact, 2015, archival inkjet print, wood and acrylic, 48 x 24 x 6 in.
Infinity, 2016, silver gelatin print, 19 x 15 in.
Infinity, 2016, silver gelatin print, photogram, 19 x 15 in.
Solstice, No. 2, 2015-2016, 46 silver gelatin prints, 20 x 16 in.
Solstice, No. 22, 2015-2016, 46 silver gelatin prints, 20 x 16 in.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


ILLUSTRATIONS


