

Everything is Made of Light

17 - 28 May 2022

**Mark Kasumovic
Mary O'Neill
Matthew Pell
Isabella Streffen**

Exhibition Text

Everything is Made of Light features images and texts from four contemporary artists that question, challenge, and converse with notions of the “unrepresentable” within our contemporary culture. Jacques Rancière, in his essay, *Are Some Things Unrepresentable?*, scrutinizes the challenges faced by images in depicting the world around us. This raises provocative questions surrounding camera-based images whose truth value is constantly being eroded within contemporary culture, and a world that is seemingly always becoming more difficult to represent. How can images and language be used to expand, rather than contract, our understanding of contemporary culture? How are new strategies created to represent the intangible, imperceptible and elusive? What is the camera’s role in enlightening us regarding complicated notions of “truth”?

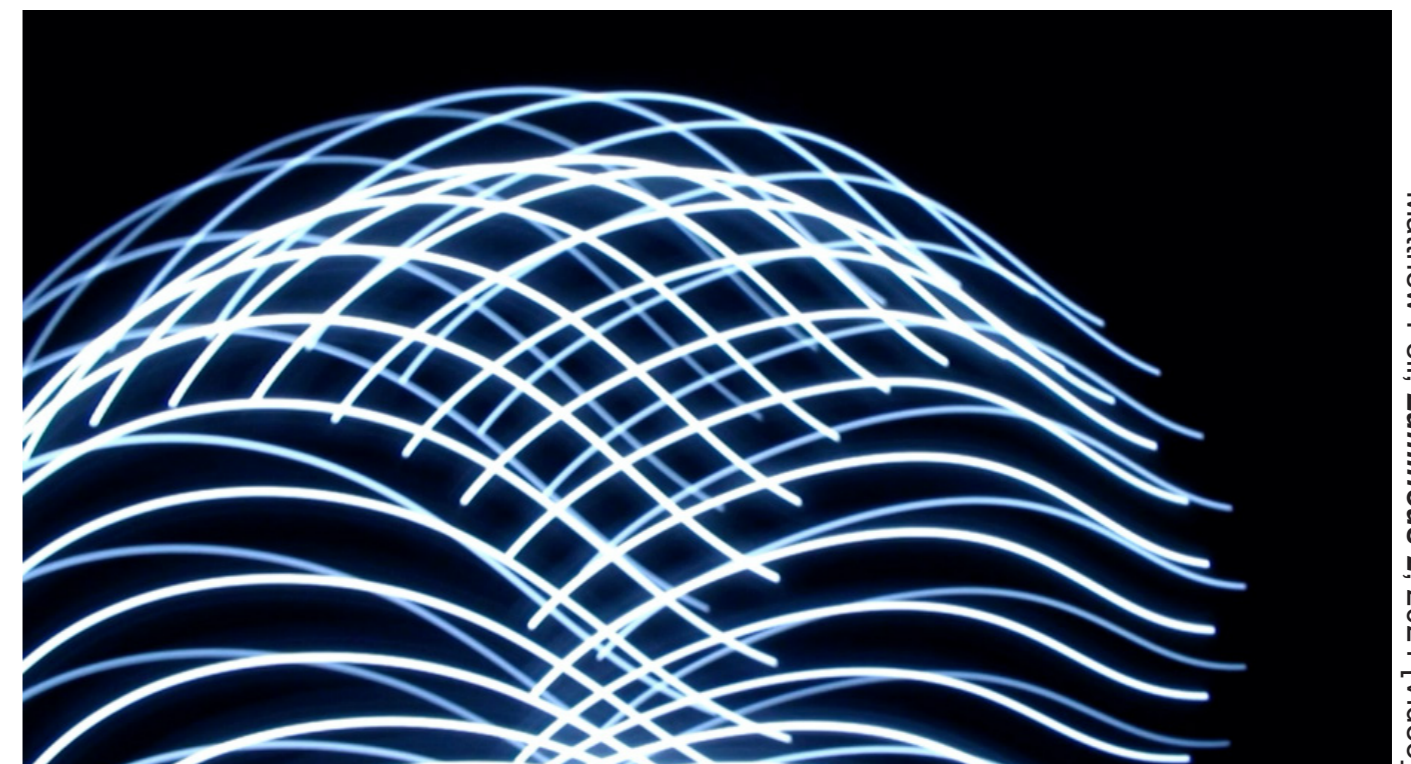
The capacity of an image to represent its subject is a broad challenge all images must confront. The history of photography and the practice of image making reveal many complications regarding the tenuous relationship between images and what they represent. Roland Barthes famously withheld a photograph of his mother in his written observations about photographs in *Camera Lucida*, telling his readers that the photograph would be meaningless to them, and that it was his relationship to its subject that made the photograph meaningful. Countless other thinkers have raised concerns over how images represent others, how meaning is culturally ascribed, and how images often manipulate the truth in various subtle ways. So much so that it becomes difficult to imagine how images might solve some of the problems—of (mis)representation, of manipulation and of distrust—that they have at least in some part created. This challenge for images amplifies when the subject itself is difficult to define.

The interconnected and interdisciplinary approaches towards documentary shared by the artists focus on relationships beyond traditional narrative, and problems associated with documentary as truth. This tends to resemble our

But what exactly is an appropriate language of art and images? Must they be biased, and if so, does that make them fallible? Should they remain neutral, if that is even possible?



Mary O'Neill, *This is All I Have [excerpt]*, 2022



Matthew Pell, *Luminous 2*, 2021 [Video]

shared contemporary experience as sifters of information: as we endlessly try to make sense of conflicting viewpoints and politics. What is interesting to consider in Rancière's text is the implication that we must rely on a shared vocabulary of images that are not exclusive to a particular subject. While interpretability is a valuable feature of images, it is perceived here as a significant limitation as well. The malleability of images is an excellent tool of the poetic image but presents a problem when an "appropriate" and specific language of description is required towards representation. But what exactly is an appropriate language of art and images? Must they be biased, and if so, does that make them fallible? Should they remain neutral, if that is even possible?

Mark Kasumovic presents us with a body of work titled Instrumental which explores the relationship between the act of discovery, the camera, the history of technology, and the particular problem of trying to represent the invisible.

Mary O'Neill presents us with a world where there is no order, no coherence. Where things happen and you have no control. Images are paired with texts that ultimately confuse and question more straightforward narratives.

Matthew Pell explores the manipulation and abstraction of time in his Luminous series, view, physical movement and scale on objects that emanate light in an urban environment. The fundamental elements of such objects may be observed in a way impossible through natural circumstances.

Isabella Streffen's work highlights how the sharing of images connects us to each other, shows how we make sense of the strangest and most dislocating elements of our electronic communications as we navigate the aftermath of extended isolation, and long for greater proximity.

"Speech Radical and Two Fires flirts with the politics and poetics of social media's proxy-erotics using materials, sites and media available in a strictly domestic, locked-down setting to collide cottage-core with at-home science lessons, zoom cocktail parties and Instagram filters, communities new to digitally-mediated events with the weary and eternally online."

-Isabella Streffen



Isabella Streffen, *Timeline Moon* [still], 2022



Isabella Streffen, *Feu d'artifice* [still], 2021



Mark Kasumovic, *Space Exploration Experiment*, 2015

Any stimulation of the optic nerve results in a sensation of light.

Nerve cells consist of two parts.

Psychosis is experienced as an intrusion of a 'thou' on the 'I'.

There is an inseparable link between electricity and cerebral function.

The semicircular canals of the inner ear regulate the awareness of your position in space.

Someone invents the telephone.

Someone sends long-wave wireless telegraphic signals over a distance of more than a mile.

The junction between neurons is called a 'synapse'.

Someone detects a slight increase in carbon dioxide production by stimulated nerves.

Sleep is not just the absence of being awake, but is a vital instinctual and biological process.

The fundamental problem of communication is the task of reproducing at one point in space, a message created at another point.

Someone, while investigating the atmospheric static interfering with radio communications, establishes that the radio source he has been hearing since the previous year, comes from outside the solar system.

Wormholes, or 'handles', are continuous lines of force that exit and re-enter the observer's world.



Isabella Streffen, *Cyanometer* [stills], 2020

Et in Arcadia Ego

Returned to nature the magical quality of the creatures is recovered. The figurines transform the familiar grasses, shrubs and flowers into an exotic landscape and tell happy stories of love and belonging. In their previous existence the inhabitants of this paradise – the young lovers, the deer, the blue bird – were living creatures, cherished by the couple who had looked after them, woven them into the webs of their loves and memories. For those who could not see them as natives of paradise, they were inanimate objects that were not even beautiful. It is only when re-introduced to their natural habitat that their uncanny beauty and their capacity to express the profound sense of loss embodied in all narratives of paradise is restored.

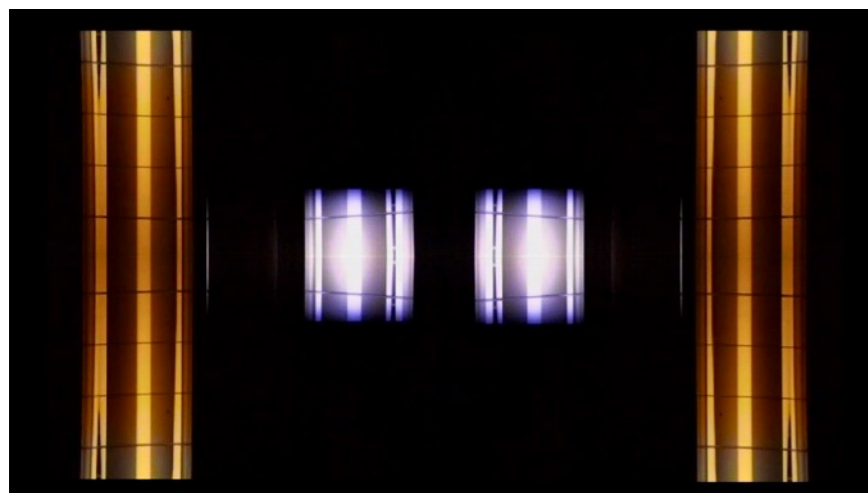




Matthew Pell, *Luminous 2*, 2021, 2:54 min.



Matthew Pell, *All Sparks*, 2022, 5:00 min.



Matthew Pell, *Essence (2016)*, 2016, 5:00 min.



Mary O'Neill, *This is All I Have [excerpt]*, 2022

This Is All I Have

All I have is this photograph. There is no one to ask about it. All I remember is this photograph. I have lost it several times but it finds its way back to me. Yesterday I found it when I came to stay with M while writing a book about memory. It was stuck in a copy of the Penguin Collection of Italian Verse, marking the page for *Ed è subito sera* by Salvatore Quasimodo
Ognuno sta solo sul cuor della terra
trafitto da un raggio di sole:
ed è subito sera.

He was culling his library and this was on its way to the charity shop. You'd think, as this is all I have, I would take better care of it. Photographic memory usually refers to an exceptional ability to recall. Is there a word for only being able to remember photographs?



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