Loin des yeux
Claire Moeder - curator

Loin des yeux engages the viewer in an exploration of the invisible. The exhibition encompasses a selection of photographic and video works in which the images—partial, ambivalent, subterranean—shy away from the gaze. It brings together artists Julien Discrit (France), Claire Hannicq (France), Anouk Kruithof (United States/Netherlands), Jacinthe Lessard-L. (Québec), Petrel | Roumagnac (duo, Finland/France), and Alana Riley (Québec).

These artists experiment with visual blurrings that testify to the many layers of visibility. They shift our perception, leading (or losing) it, as hidden images oscillate between disappearance and reappearance. Infiltrating the various existential possibilities, the exhibition explores peculiar strategies of dissimulation and resistance that have an immediate impact on our reading of the works.

The total or partial disappearance of the subject, access to it made nearly impossible by an intentional and parasitic blurring, is a recurring strategy. It calls for experiencing works of vacillating perception and in a constant state of tension, placing the viewer in a physically and reflexively ambiguous position. The exhibition thus introduces new relationships between the spectator and the works, which are removed or partially obscured. These variations spawn a latent frustration that forces viewers to apprehend the image differently, whether it be fixed or moving.

Anouk Kruithof is producing a series based on found photo-negatives on which she applies the luminous impression of a flash. The glare of the iPhone, like an act of erasing or wiping memory, nonetheless produces hybrid, residual images. Jacinthe Lessard-L.’s work, for its part, suggests the use of a silver halide camera. She produces the elliptical and reversed image of a lens, drawing on the US concept of photographic invisibility in order to examine its very nature. Of photography, Julien Discrit only preserves its luminous source. Using a spectrometer to isolate the light taken at a specific point in time and place, he creates an installation where the captured real now becomes an imageless image that refers solely to colour filter.

In her video work, Alana Riley turns the digital camera back toward the luminous source in order to produce a liminal image at the limits of abstraction. And like Riley, Claire Hannicq generates intentionally dazzling effects that interrogate the act of photography. Both artists exploit the luminescent potential of a filmed sequence or of a photograph arranged in the installation space to momentarily blur one’s sight and to instill doubt regarding the terms of the image’s existence. With a series of photographs that are available online for one time only, Hannicq also underscores the paradox of the image’s unique status and its reproducibility.

Petrel | Roumagnac’s book-object places the spectator in front of an absent image. The duo proposes a textual transcription of photographs and of image transformations produced in museum conservation facilities. The writing borrows its form from the theatre, restoring images through stage directions and blocking without coming into view. On the whole, the exhibition brings contradictory images into play, images meant to dissolve at the moment of their appearance, while affirming the persistence of the photographic medium despite their fleeting nature: whether through disappearances or omissions, concealment or abstraction, the materiality and fragility of the image are never far way.

Through simple manipulations, sometimes combined with new technologies, the processes at work can suggest luminous explorations of the beginnings of photography and cinema. The artists here brought together fashion sensitive, variously tenuous or more self-assured connections with these experimentations in order to return to an accidental, spontaneous, or compound use of light as primary creative material. Loin des yeux doesn’t propose a nostalgic rapport with the medium so much as a critical though playful distance generated by the act of photography. Julien Discrit only preserves its luminous source. Using a spectrometer to isolate the light taken at a specific point in time and place, he creates an installation where the captured real now becomes an imageless image that refers solely to colour filter.

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Claire Moeder is a curator and author. Since 2008 she has curated several solo exhibitions in Québec, France and the United States and has participated in residencies. Her current research focuses on images and writing practices.

The curator wishes to thank each of the artists, who have contributed with such relevance and sensitivity to this exhibition project, and is grateful to the OPTICA team, John Alain Loïk, Marie-Ève Subrette, Élisabeth Lessard, Gabriel Morest, and Marie-Ève Letourneau for their expertise and support. She is also grateful to Claire Moeder for her particular gratitude for Marie-André Naud, Chloé Bégin, Melanie Courtois, Marc Dulude, Véronique Leblanc, Chris Lloyd, and Anne-Marie Saint-Jean Aubre, whose generosity and passionate attention were crucial to the exhibition. She thanks the Darling Foundry for its collaboration. She thanks the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec for their financial support. Claire Moeder is particularly grateful to Marc-André Audet, Thomas Loin des yeux Claire Moeder - curator

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