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**The History of Technology**

**July 11 - Aug 23, 2014**

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Essentials

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# The History of Technology

Simon Denny  
Samuel Levi Jones  
Dashiell Manley  
Philipp Timischl  
Margo Wolowiec

## In the Nick of Time

Responding to the technological advances of his time, Bauhaus visionary László Moholy-Nagy heralded the “New Vision,” a perceptual shift in the apprehension of the world, one guided by mechanical apparatuses and disseminated across global media networks. The arrival of “new instruments,” as well as access to “new methods of work” would, Moholy-Nagy wrote in his text, *Painting, Photography, Film* (1925-27), revolutionize the fundamental structures of every day existence.<sup>i</sup> But, just as Jean-Jacques Rousseau had theorized over a century and a half earlier in his *Discourse on Inequality* (1754), Moholy-Nagy also understood that the speed of industrial developments and the scope of information that followed would far outpace man’s ability to fully grasp their implications.<sup>ii</sup> Confronted with the products of a technology little understood, man translates the novel into the commonplace; everyday means are employed to comprehend uncharted ends. Moholy-Nagy identified a lapse in the time “before innovation [was] purely utilized,” a period in which the “new function... is shrouded in the traditional,” and “the possibilities of innovation” must necessarily be disclosed through the forms of older ones.

For each of the five artists included in “The History of Technology,” the status of contemporary technology is reconciled through recourse to artistic processes that draw upon traditional media and practices of installation. What can be observed to varying degrees with these artists is what Pavle Levi’s notion of “retrograde remediation,” an important part of his analysis of early twentieth-century avant-garde cine-

ma. In other words, the pronounced “technological/practical inadequacy,” of an older medium is utilized in coming to terms with another.<sup>iii</sup> Echoing Marshall McLuhan’s axiom, “the content of any medium is always another,” the works exhibited in “The History of Technology” grapple with the effects of contemporary technology through the use of more familiar media.<sup>iv</sup>

In the case of **Philipp Timischl’s** “TV Sculptures”, differing frames of perception are conjured forth in the juxtaposition of photographic and cinematic media. As with *Paris, In Treatment* (2014), *Can you imagine? Let me explain. #1* and *Can you imagine? Let me explain. #2* (2014), Timischl’s process begins when he first applies a epoxy resin to an area of stretched canvas.



Philipp Timischl  
*London, In Treatment* (2014)

Following this, he then prints an image using the technique of UV-Direct Print. The resulting image is later situated along its vertical axis atop a flat-screen LCD TV. In earlier iterations of his “TV sculptures,” Timischl’s canvasses reflexively included stills from scenes playing out on the TV screens below them, while in his current series the staccato horizon line of urban skyscapes is depicted (Paris, London, San Francisco). Meanwhile, continuous loops of varying duration unfold on the TV’s beneath, featuring clips from shows such as *Lost*, and more recently,

the intro sequence from the HBO series, *In Treatment*.

Timischl’s play with the static form of photo-reproduction, contrasted with the televised images, draws attention to the resulting division of time and its perception. In this way, Timischl’s combines share a conceptual lineage with Yugoslavian Surrealists, Alexander Vuco and Dusan Matic, and their “cinematic” sculptures, most notably, *The Frenzied Marble* (1930). A vertical assemblage made of hay, wood, metal, and clay, *The Frenzied Marble* is composed of three, stacked rectangular panels, the overall effect of which creates the impression of a filmstrip. Much in the same way that Vuco and Matic reframe the grounds upon which cinematic comprehension is considered by producing works that incorporate the “permanently immobile” assemblage, Timischl evokes the chronological disparities of per-



Philipp Timischl  
*Can you imagine? Let me explain. #1* and *Can you imagine? Let me explain. #2* (2014)

ceptual reception through his deployment of multiple technologies.

**Margo Wolowiec’s** intricately woven panels, by contrast, offer a radical re-configuration of the relationship between

the videographic and the static. In a way that Levi might identify as “cinema by other means.” A term first applied to the works of Vuco and Matic, Levi’s “other cinema” re-



Margo Wolowiec  
*Blue, Yellow, Blue* (2013)

fers to artistic processes that examine the structures of perceptual and cultural associations “directly inspired by the working of the film apparatus,” evoked, however, through the material technology of other media.<sup>v</sup> For

Wolowiec, this process involves the collection of web-based images, often from Instagram, that are then printed onto polymer threads using dye sublimation ink. Wolowiec then weaves the thread together utilizing standard looming techniques while also incorporating steps in the production of the panels that allow for chance mistakes to arise.

Wolowiec’s final compositions are made up of several bands of images woven together – echoes of the cinematic strip – stacked in horizontal bands. As one result of her chance-inflected weaving process, threads are often skewed and stretched, modifying the images printed upon them, the result of which mirrors the distortion achieved when fast-forwarding or rewinding a VHS tape. Other segments in the horizontal bands recall the buzzing electrostatic screens of televised white noise. In all of her compositions, as with *Blue, Yellow, Blue* and *White Light* (both 2014), there can be discerned blurred fragments of figural forms - a pair of hands, the portrait of a woman, a roadside

desert landscape. In many ways, Wolowiec's work calls to mind Douglas Gordon's video art and, in particular, his manipulations of found footage and his play with speed and editing. For Gordon, as much as for Wolowiec, "video time – the time of slow motion,



Margo Wolowiec  
*White Light* (2014)

freeze-framing, and repetition – is the given time" of the current generation.

**Dashiell Manley's** objects also engage with cinema's arresting effects. In a series of eight, double-sided mounted canvasses, *Walk Cycle 1* (2014), a figure depicted in mid-stride, recalls the stop-motion studies of Eadweard Muybridge and the characters that populate comic strips. With dotted lines trailing behind the figure Manley echoes the strips and grids that Muybridge incorporated into the background of his compositions as a means to measure the motion of his subjects. Compellingly, Manley incises a singular figural form directly into each of the eight canvasses, filling the shapes with red-gel acetate. The objects, which are gouache on aluminum on one side and collage on Plexiglas on the other, are mounted to a system of metal-gridded scaffolds. Manley then installs a series of pinpoint lights directed at the red-gel figures, the effect of which re-

sults in the projection of their form upon the posterior wall parallel to the surface of the object. Here, as with the technical require-



Dashiell Manley  
*Walk Cycle 1* (2014)

ments demanded of the cinematic medium, Manley underscores the primacy of light in the apprehension of motion, while nonetheless avoiding the employment of the film negative altogether. And, to further show this intellection within his works, Manley uses polished aluminum on one side of the painting on panel. Circling around the in-situ partition, the beholder is able to catch glimpses of the body in motion. In this way, Manley reflexively incorporates the very physicality of motility within his assemblages; in effect, his works become real-time cinematic projections.



Dashiell Manley  
*Walk Cycle 1* (detail)

To that end, Manley's work evinces qualities of what Jonathan Walley termed "paracinema," or the artistic engagement with elements considered to be "cinematic," but that are not "embodied in the materials of film as traditionally defined."<sup>vi</sup> Film, for Walley, is not a timeless absolute, but rather a "cluster of historically contingent materials"; the "idea of cinema,"

he concludes, is not a function of the materials, but rather the "materials of film are a function of cinema."

**Samuel Levi Jones'** effacement of found encyclopedias attempts to dislocate an ontology bound by claims of empiricism. Derived from the Ancient Greek word *enkyklios* ("circular") and *paideia* ("education"), the original function of the encyclopedia was, in codified textual form, an attempt to present a total world-view of all that was known to man. A temporal document, the encyclopedic was also, paradoxically, man's attempt to give form to the seemingly infinite. For Levi Jones, the material obfuscation of informative texts symbolically mirrors the exclusion of minorities effectively written out of the grand historical narratives imposed upon them. Commenting on



Samuel Levi Jones  
*Of Easy Virtue* (2014)

the absurd nature of such taxonomic endeavors, the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges concluded in his essay, "*The Analytical Language of John Wilkins*" (1952), that, "If there is a universe, its aim is not conjectured yet."<sup>vii</sup> Showing the futility underlying the impulse for such classification, Levi Jones discards all but the covers of the encyclopedias he appropriates for use in his assemblages. As with his, *Of Easy Virtue* (2014), a black-washed collection of flattened and reversed covers, Levi Jones dramatically intervenes upon their surfaces in a process that blocks any attempt at textual

intelligibility.

But beyond this, Levi Jones' removal of the encyclopedia's pages can also be understood as a physical analogon to the symbolic excision of the corporeal contents contained within. For Michel Foucault,



Samuel Levi Jones  
*My Journey* (2014)

writing in his seminal text, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) the "archive" – from which the encyclopedia draws its lineage – "is the border of time that surrounds our presence...it is that which, outside ourselves, delimits us."<sup>viii</sup> In this light, the compression of experience and time that forms the corpus of the encyclopedic body is, at the hands of Levi Jones, effectively obliterated.

If Levi Jones' assemblages can be interpreted as a commentary upon the production of information and its access, **Simon Denny's** installations look to explore the very mechanisms by which such information is disseminated. Denny's, *All you need is data: the DLD 2012 Conference REDUX rerun*, is an installation of rail mounted ink-jet canvasses – or "screens" that appropriates images and imitates the skeuomorphic style of the Digital Life Design conference

held in Munich in 2012. A gathering of the worlds leading tech entrepreneurs, inventors, and investors, the annual DLD cabal is the hipper, tech-savvy cousin to the yearly meeting in Davos, Switzerland. And, just as global economic and political directives are discussed at the latter conference, the future direction of digital technology and internet access can be said to be formulated at DLD.

With a total of 89 screens included in his original exhibition, Denny provides a visual encapsulation of the conference's entire roster of events, incorporating quotes from key-note speakers and titles from panel discussions. Individually, as with *12.20 Digital Diplomacy* (2013) and *12.40 University* (2013), Denny often rewords the original texts, following upon the likes of Barbara Kruger, appropriating clichéd corporate jargon and turning it reflexively upon itself. In one screen, the original headline, "A Dynamic Dance" is transformed by Denny into "Need, Speed and Greed." Elsewhere, the headshots of conference attendees are



Simon Denny  
Exhibition view of *All You Need Is Data* at Petzel Gallery, New York (2013)

juxtaposed with quotes – some unattributed – that proclaim, "We as little brothers are the collective big brother. It's a democratic kind of totalitarianism." Given the current

climate of Edward Snowden's NSA spying revelations and the forthcoming FCC rulings on net neutrality, Denny's appropriation of DLD archival material is a prescient meditation upon the rights of individual privacy and access.

Furthermore, Denny's "screens," recall Gilles Deleuze's observation that "every diagram is intersocial," functioning in order



Simon Denny  
Exhibition view of *All You Need Is Data* at Petzel Gallery, New York (2013)

to produce "a new kind of reality," separate from the one it depicts.<sup>ix</sup> The foreclosure of the social in the digital world is interrupted by Denny through his appropriation of its visual forms and tropes. Understood within the contemporary context of the second Industrial Revolution – the Digital Age – Moholy-Nagy's modernist polemical text is just as prescient today. Defined by a daily life structured by social media, recent technological innovations have radically reconfigured a longstanding causal relationship that exists between time, the speed of technology, and human ability to comprehend it. However if, as according to Deleuze, the freeze-frame nature of photographic technology – and by extension cinema – "marks the logic of disembodiment," new media technologies do the opposite, containing within the possibility of memory's preconfiguration an enlivened constellation of the yet-to-be encountered.

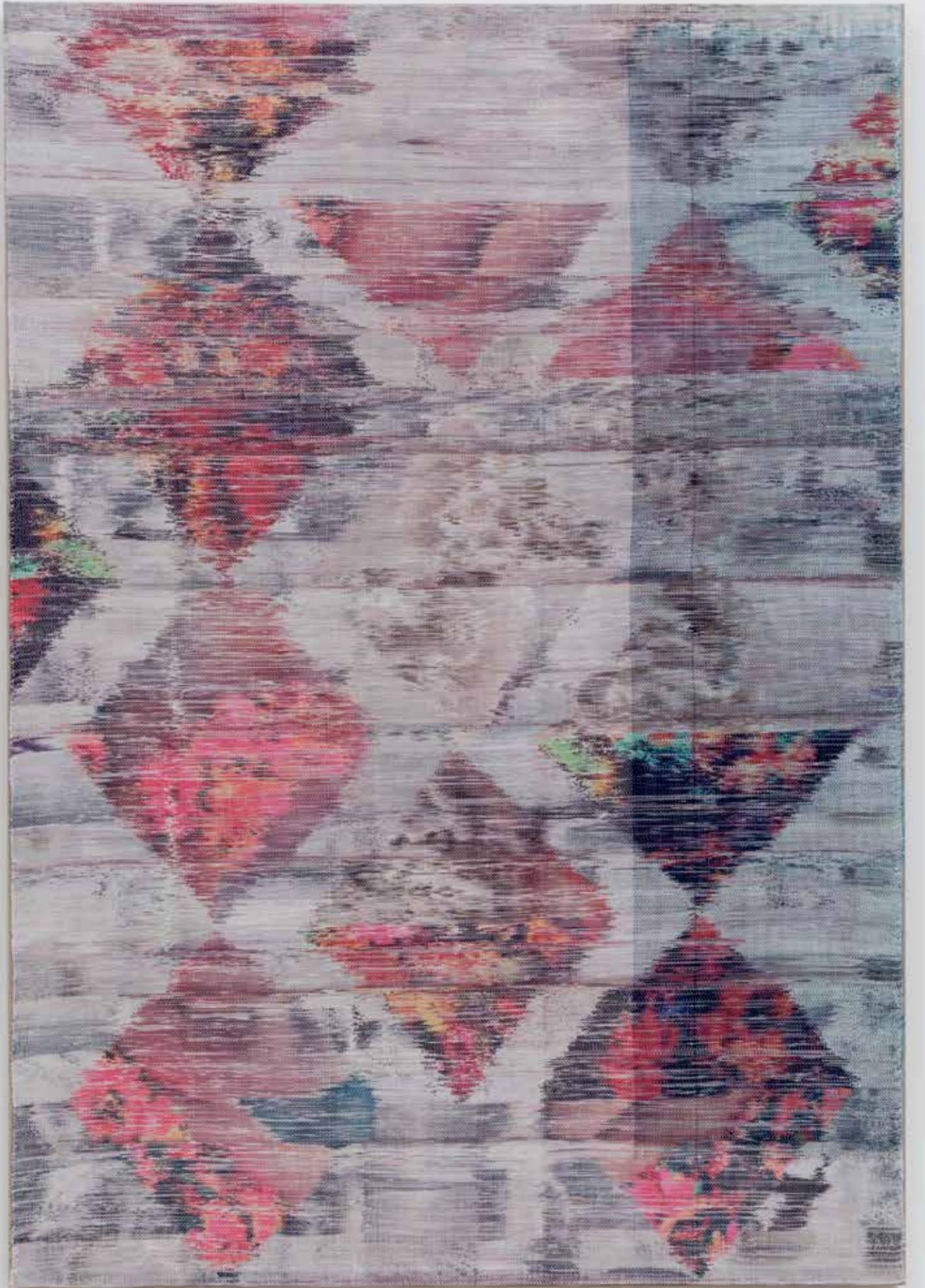
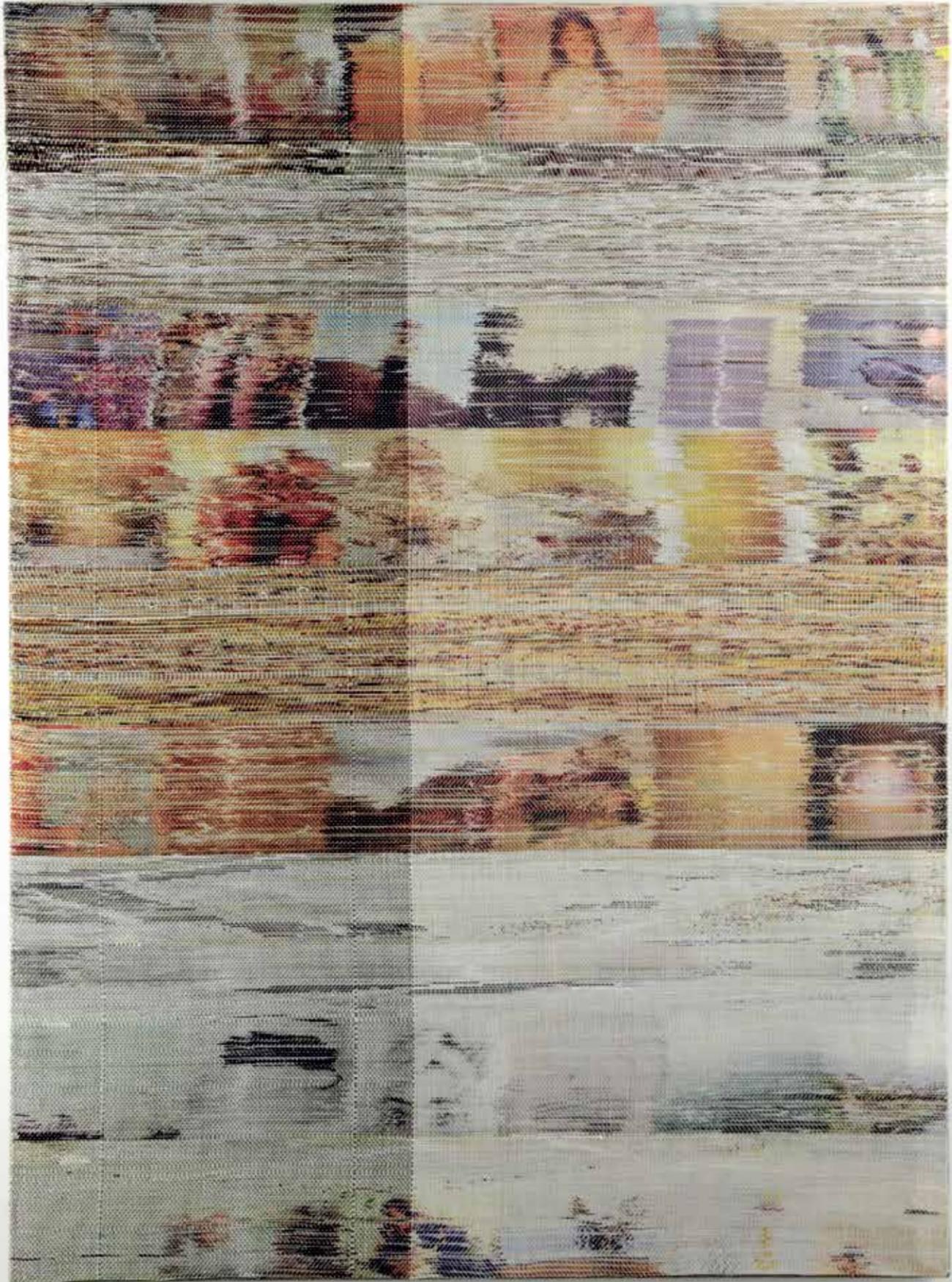
For French phenomenologist Mau-

rice Merleau-Ponty, the dialectical migration made within the parameters of codified technology expands "our access to our own historical past," and in so doing, enlarges our ability to perceive history. Such is the case with the five artists exhibited in "The History Technology." Time for them, rather than a forward, linear moving stream is instead understood a la Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927), as a deep reservoir of experiences and repetitions, recurrently tapped into and drawn from.<sup>x</sup> Thus, while new technology lays bare man's inability to comprehend the full implications of its function, it also sets in motion a consolidation whereby the future is framed within the memory-inflected past. The result is a "closer relationship to ourselves," one that gives recourse to an "intimate experience of the very vitality that forms the core of our being."<sup>xi</sup>

By Joseph Akel

## NOTES

- <sup>i</sup> László Moholy-Nagy. *Painting Photography Film*, (MIT Press: 1965).
- <sup>ii</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Discourse on Inequality*, (Penguin: 1985). See Rousseau's explication of his theory of "perfectibility," beginning on pp 141-2.
- <sup>iii</sup> Pavle Levi. "Cinema by Other Means," *October*, Vol. 131, (Winter, 2010), 51-68.
- <sup>iv</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*, (MIT Press, 1964).
- <sup>v</sup> Levi, 53-55.
- <sup>vi</sup> Jonathan Walley, "The Material of Film and the Idea of Cinema: Contrasting Practices in Sixties and Seventies Avant-Garde Film," *October*, Vol. 103, (Winter, 2003), 15-30.
- <sup>vii</sup> Jorge Luis Borges. "El idioma analítico de John Wilkins," *Jorge Luis Borges, Other Inquisitions 1937-1952*, trans. Lilia Graciela Vázquez, (University of Texas Press, 1993).
- <sup>viii</sup> Michel Foucault. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith, (Pantheon: 1972).
- <sup>ix</sup> Gilles Deleuze. *Foucault*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 35.
- <sup>x</sup> Sue Ellen Campbell. "Equal Opposites: Wyndham Lewis, Henri Bergson and Their Philosophies of Space and Time," *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 29, No.3 (Autumn, 1983), 351-369.
- <sup>xi</sup> Mark Hansen. "The Time Affect, or Bearing Witness to Life," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 30, No. 3, (Spring, 2004), 584-626.









# DIGITAL POLICIES



"After the overthrow of Ben Ali in Tunisia, a banner hung quite close to the French embassy that simply read 'Thank You Facebook'"



"This does test the traditional boundaries between private and government. open source politics is throwing open the doors of government and using crowdsourcing tools"



"Now that Libya is free we are turning to technology to improve the quality of life, democratize our government and improve transparency and accountability"

"In France or Britain or the US - we make friends, we flirt with people, we get together, we organize parties on social networks. It's a different thing when the function of these things is simply to let your family know that you're alive"

"To put things on the internet, to digitize, you socialize - that's been proven. Privatize - open up to competition. Internationalize - digitization is internationalization"



Wall

# SHARING ECONOMY



"In NYC we have 10,000 homes. Each of those people are earning on average 21,000 dollars a year from our website"

"We used to keep up with the Jones' and now I think we're sharing with the Jones"



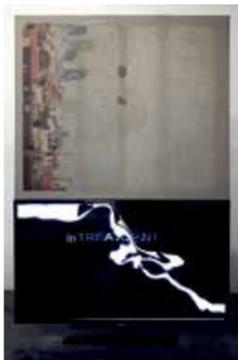
"People used to live in cities. After World War II we moved out of cities and started living in suburbs where we became disconnected. The further away we got from each other the less we trusted people. We started staying home and watching TV and we'd be isolated in cars"

"Could nations actually war with each other if their residents live together? I don't know but I hope it's less likely"

"We are hard-wired to share"



Wall



Philipp Timischl  
*London, In Treatment*  
UV print on epoxy resin on canvas, monitor, HD video  
63 x 41 x 6 inches (2014)



Philipp Timischl  
*Can you imagine? Let me explain. #1 and Can you imagine? Let me explain. #2*  
UV-Direct print on epoxy resin on canvas above flatscreen (one with sticker)  
62.9 x 41.3 x 1.57 inches (2014)



Margo Wolowiec  
*Blue, Yellow, Blue*  
Handwoven polyester, cotton, dye sublimation ink  
42 x 58 inches (2013)



Margo Wolowiec  
*Purple, White, Yellow I*  
Handwoven polyester, cotton, dye sublimation ink  
58 x 43 inches (2014)



Margo Wolowiec  
*You'll Be Missed Too*  
Handwoven polyester, cotton, dye sublimation ink, fabric dye  
81 x 57 inches (2014)



Philipp Timischl  
*Untitled (12346, not 5)*  
UV – direct print on epoxy resin on canvas above flatscreen  
63 x 41 x 6 inches (2013)



Philipp Timischl  
*Untitled (12346, not 5)*  
UV – direct print on epoxy resin on canvas above flatscreen  
63 x 41 x 6 inches (2013)



Margo Wolowiec  
*White Light*  
Handwoven polyester, cotton, dye sublimation ink  
34 x 47 inches (2014)



Dashiell Manley  
*Walk Cycle 1*  
Watercolor, gouache, ink, gesso, absorbent ground, aluminum, wood, paper, pastel, polymer medium, lighting gels, acrylic sheet, steel, Lowel omni tungsten light  
Painting: 60 x 48 inches  
Frame: 84 x 72 inches (2014)



Dashiell Manley  
*Walk Cycle 1 (detail)*



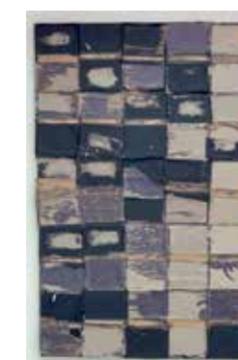
Samuel Levi Jones  
*Of Easy Virtue*  
Encyclopedia covers, thread, canvas, acrylic paint  
80 x 48 inches (2014)



Dashiell Manley  
*Walk Cycle 5*  
Watercolor, gouache, ink, gesso, absorbent ground, aluminum, wood, paper, pastel, polymer medium, lighting gels, acrylic sheet, steel and Lowel omni tungsten light  
Painting: 60 x 48 inches  
Frame: 84 x 72 inches (2014)



Dashiell Manley  
*Walk Cycle 5, reverse side*  
Watercolor, gouache, ink, gesso, absorbent ground, aluminum, wood, paper, pastel, polymer medium, lighting gels, acrylic sheet, steel and Lowel omni tungsten light  
Painting: 60 x 48 inches  
Frame: 84 x 72 inches (2014)



Samuel Levi Jones  
*Philosophy of "Right" (detail)*  
Encyclopedia covers, thread, canvas, acrylic paint  
78 x 50 inches (2014)



Samuel Levi Jones  
*My Journey*  
Encyclopedia covers, thread, canvas, acrylic paint  
45 x 60 inches (2014)



Simon Denny  
Exhibition view of *All You Need Is Data* at Petzel Gallery, New York (2013)



Simon Denny  
Exhibition view of *All You Need Is Data* at Petzel Gallery, New York (2013)



Samuel Levi Jones  
*Eradicate (detail)*  
Encyclopedia covers, thread, canvas, acrylic paint  
62x 80 inches (2014)



Simon Denny  
*12.20 Digital Diplomacy*  
Inkjet print on canvas  
62.99 x 43.31 x .71 inches (2013)



Simon Denny  
*14.45 Sharing Economy*  
Inkjet print on canvas  
62.99 x 43.31 x .71 inches (2013)

### **Simon Denny**

(b.1982, Auckland, New Zealand) received his BA from the Städelschule, Frankfurt. He has had solo exhibitions with Galerie Bucholz (Berlin), MUMOK (Vienna), and Petzel Gallery (New York). In 2012, he won the Art Basel Statements Baloise prize. Denny is nominated for the German Nationalgalerie prize, held at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin. His work will be featured in the 2015 Venice Biennial.

### **Samuel Levi Jones**

(b.1978, Marion, IN) received his BFA from Heron School of Art and Design in 2009 and his MFA from Mills College in 2012. His work has recently exhibited at Papillion and Reginald Ingraham in Los Angeles. He lives in Oakland, CA, and is currently participating in the Recology San Francisco Artist in Residence Program.

### **Dashiell Manley**

(b.1983, Fontana, CA) received his MFA from UCLA in 2011. His work was included in The Whitney Biennial 2014, the Hammer Museum's Made In L.A in 2013 and in the forthcoming group show at LACMA. Manley will open a solo show at Jessica Silverman Gallery in January 2015.

### **Philipp Timischl**

(b.1989, Graz, Austria) has a BFA from Städelschule, Frankfurt and an MFA from the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. Timischl has shown with Emanuel Layr in Vienna and Vilma Gold in London. He had a solo booth at LISTE titled "12 Works You Could Look at While in Basel" with Neue Alte Brücke.

### **Margo Wolowiec**

(b. 1985, Detroit, MI) lives in San Francisco and has an MFA from California College of the Arts. Recent solo exhibitions include Anat Ebgi in Los Angeles and Johansson Projects in Oakland, CA. This summer her work will be featured in Zeroes and Ones, curated by Amy Owen at Di Rosa in Napa, CA.

### **Joseph Akel**

is a writer based in New York City and San Francisco. His art criticism regularly appears in Artforum, Frieze, and The Paris Review, among others. He is a Ph.D. candidate in the University of California, Berkeley's Rhetoric Department where he is also affiliated with the Berkeley Center for New Media.

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