

Thoughts on Indeterminacy

By Declan Hoy

In her essay "Missing People: Entanglement, Superposition, and Exhumation as Sites of Indeterminacy", Hito Steyerl speaks of indeterminacy as an "impossible coexistence", a state of "material entanglement" between two things. Indeterminacy defies the rules of a macrophysical reality which positions situations as either/or events.

The playwright John Guare wrote a play titled *Six Degrees of Separation* which premiered off Broadway in May of 1990 and then on Broadway in November of 1990. Much of the play involves a quasi-fictional Vasily Kandinsky painting. Guare took two separate paintings by Kandinsky, *Black Lines* (1913) and *Several Circles* (1926), and combined them into a singular double-sided painting.

In 1945, Canadian poet Elizabeth Smart wrote a novel of prose poetry titled *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*. The novel chronicled her relationship with British writer George Barker. In 1950, Barker wrote a novel titled *The Dead Seagull* describing his romance with Smart. Their relationship and all of the events within it have two different tellings, as well as all the stories of those who witnessed Smart and Barker walking down the street, or sitting in a park, but never cared to write down their accounts.

"The painter Max Lieberman painted four identical pictures titled *Cart in the Dunes*; the fourth version was lost." - from *The Missing Pieces* by Henri Lefebvre.

In 1969, the artist Robert Barry released different inert and noble gases into the atmosphere at a variety of sites. Barry speaks of these works as being materially concrete and unified but at the same time beyond our perceptions and ever expanding. "You start with something that is completely measured, a cubic foot of inert gas that's released into the expansive infinity. But it's also a cycle since these gases originally come from the atmosphere." - Robert Barry, in *Conversation with Mathieu Copeland*, 2009.

On April 23, 1855, photographer Roger Fenton took one of the most circulated images of war. Captured during the Crimea War, *Valley of The Shadow of Death* depicts a a barren road contained by two hills on either side — no people are seen, but there are several cannonballs scattered throughout the image. Another version of this photograph exists, composed identical to the image first discussed except that it contains no cannonballs. There is much debate, even to this day, about which image was taken first and whether the fact that there are two slightly different images disrupts the authenticity of the photographs. In her 2003 book *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag argues that the image with the cannonballs was taken first, while others — such as filmmaker Errol Morris — have declared that

the image without the cannonballs was the true original.

Three artists were given the task of considering and reflecting on ideas and notions of indeterminacy and superposition. Collin Brown approaches notions of indeterminacy within images as not an absence but rather an additional layer of information that is not about content but rather about form. This form shows how the image is treated, how it is seen, passed on, or ignored, censored, and obliterated. Caroline Araujo-Calisto compares indeterminacy to the experience of compulsory heterosexuality. Araujo-Calisto appropriates a pop song from her childhood which is obsessively heteronormative. By defamiliarizing the song's original sound, structure, and lyrics, the norms imposed by the song are subverted. It is then situated in two worlds simultaneously: the world of pop culture and a world of desperation and need to escape the institutions that control women's sexuality. Kristen Webber investigates indeterminacy through the recounting of a ghost story from Larkspur, Colorado, a place named after its surrounding plant matter which is believed to keep spirits away. Webber created a book containing a 1996 newspaper article discussing a ghost sighting that took place at a bar in Larkspur. Between the pages of the book, as well as scattered throughout the gallery, Webber has placed the larkspur flower, which the town is named after.



Installation View

From Left to Right:

Untitled #2 (Series of Cut Pages)

Collin Brown

Framed, uncoated A3 paper

16" x 13"

Untitled #5 (Series of Cut Pages)

Collin Brown

Framed, uncoated A3 paper

16" x 13"

*Larkspur, Colorado, Named After the
Fields (Installation view)*

Kristen Webber

8.5" x 5.5"

Installation View

From Left to Right:

Larkspur, Colorado, Named After the Fields

Kristen Webber

8.5" x 5.5"

Karaoke night with Marina Ferrer (Bye-bye Tim)

Caroline Araujo-Calisto

Video with sound, 1:22 loop



Larkspur, Colorado, Named After the Fields
Kristen Webber
8.5" x 5.5"



Larkspur, Colorado, Named After the Fields
Kristen Webber
8.5" x 5.5"

When the customer asked the person to stop,
the ponytail flipped over his shoulder onto his chest.



But no one was behind him.

Karaoke night with Marina Ferrer (Bye-bye Tim)
Caroline Araujo-Calisto
Video with sound, 1:22 loop



Untitled #2 (Series of Cut Pages)

Collin Brown

Framed, uncoated A3 paper

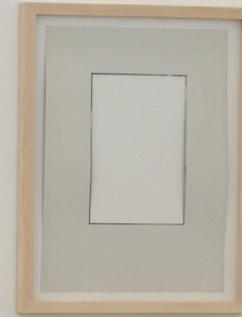
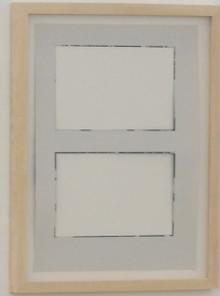
16" x 13"

Untitled #5 (Series of Cut Pages)

Collin Brown

Framed, uncoated A3 paper

16" x 13"



*Schrödinger's Cat was
Named Milton*

The Ivan Gallery,
Alberta College of Art
+ Design, Calgary AB,
Canada

November 6-11, 2017

Caroline Araujo-Calisto

Collin Brown

Kristen Webber

Curated by

Declan Hoy