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## Jeroen Nelemans



**Wavepool** – Has your practice always centered around the digital image?

**Jeroen Nelemans** – My art education started at the New England School of Photography in Boston. This two-year program, which was in 1999, was all analog photography. In the second year, a class was offered titled Photoshop 1.0. I remember that I didn't know how to cope with all the new possibilities to alter an image and I was much more at ease with the restrictions that the darkroom offered. After my BFA I received an MFA where I explored large-scale installation work and began working with video. It was while working with video that I began to contemplate the possibilities of the digital image. The digital image became very apparent as I altered the moving image frame-by-frame, working both with video edit programs as well as Photoshop. The backlit experience of manipulating the digital image later

manifested itself in my current light boxes. Serving both as part appropriation and part visceral experience, of the way we currently see images. I would pilfer iconic imagery or ideas, from the analog world, and use these to challenge the relationship between traditional documentation and contemporary notions of representation.

**Wavepool** – Considering that your light boxes intentionally mimic the digital viewing experience, what differences do you see between viewing the work in a gallery setting and viewing the images on a screen?

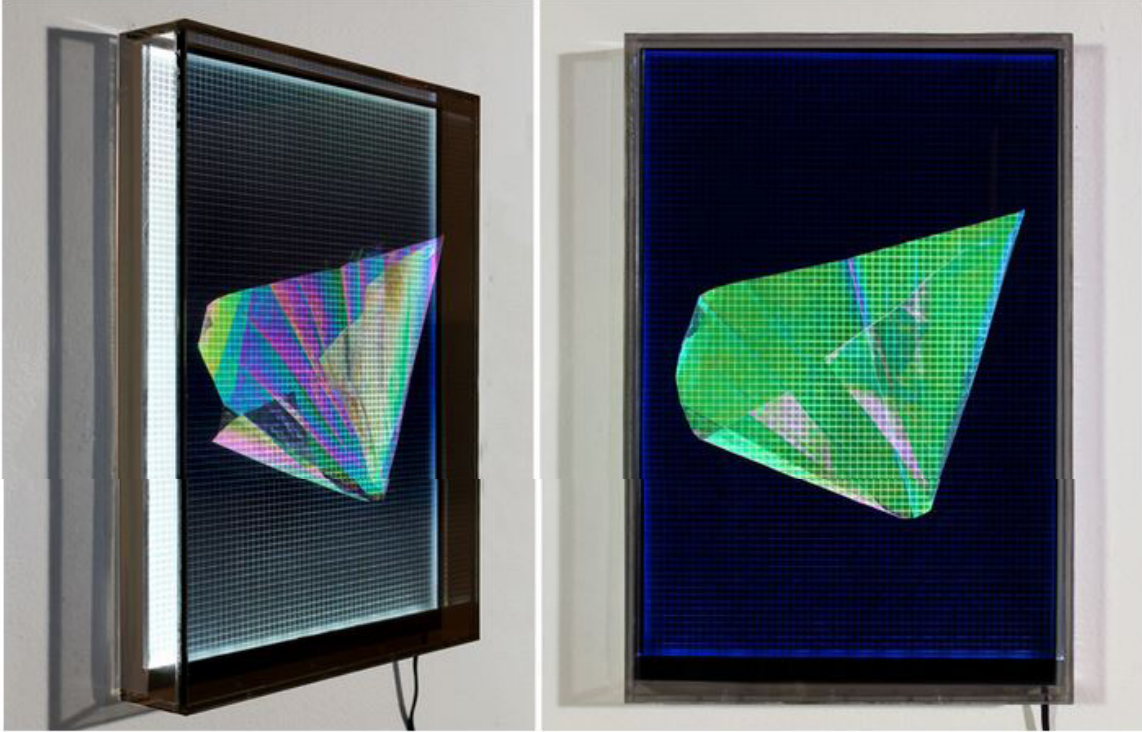
**Jeroen Nelemans** – In our current culture, we readily participate with most backlit images. Using the smallest devices, like our smart phones and tablets, we have the ability to manipulate images. We can easily copy, paste, rotate, crop and add filters, but most importantly we participate with digital images. We become co-producers of these images. With my backlit images, there is less participation, as I am interested in creating a moment of contemplation. In the light box series: *Scapes in RGB* and *the More I See, the Less I Grasp* and *Eindhoven*, I allow the light source to become part of the image. These idyllic landscape images cannot be separated from the mechanism of their creation.

In my latest light box series this participatory element is more present, as there is a phenomenological aspect to the works of *to be Crystal Clear* and *Between a Solid and Liquid Space*. These light box series contain three main materials: light panels, cellophane and polarizing filters, which function as a whole.

A polarizing filter is a material that is part of any backlit screen and it is an essential component to the way we view digital imagery. In this light box series, I use polarizing filters to elicit colors from clear cellophane.

When light waves from the LED panel travel through certain plastics, like cellophane, it causes the light waves to bend in different directions. This refraction that occurs is best seen when this cellophane is placed between two polarizing filters as the light waves produce a spectrum of different colors that is reminiscent of the digital culture. These color schemes change depending on the viewpoint, which makes the images less static and invites more participation.





*to be Crystal Clear*

**Wavepool** – Can you elaborate on participation and co-production in visual culture? Do you consider your work to be a collaborative effort?

**Jeroen Nelemans** – The word meme was defined in 1976 by Richard Dawkins, an evolutionary biologist in his book *The Selfish Gene*. Contemporary culture sees the meme as a concept by participating with images or videos from the internet, yet the general concept is comparable to that of biological evolution. Dawkins analyzed the way cultural information is distributed.

From Dawkins' perspective the meme acts as a unit for carrying cultural ideas, which is "hosted" in the minds of one or more individuals, which can reproduce itself, thereby spreading and evolving from person to person.

I find this correlation interesting as I identify the digital image as a dynamic energy and matter. Even though I am a co-producer in many of my works, as I appropriate pre-existing images or ideas, I don't feel it is a collaborative effort. This does not mean that the dialogue stops with my imagery. In fact, I welcome the continuation.

**Wavepool** – I'm curious how the appropriation process starts for you. For example, looking at *Scapes in RGB*, I associate your intervention with an accident. How does an idea reveal itself to you?

**Jeroen Nelemans** – The last work informs the new work; this keeps the discourse in my artwork consistent. And you are right! *Scapes in RGB* derived from the colorful speckles that we all have seen on our phones during a rainy day. The question then is... what to do with it? Personal experiences and/or histories always help adding to these revelations. As I mentioned earlier, my art education started with photography. My first class was to learn the 4x5 field camera. I took an image of the Charles River, with black and white film on a foggy day. The result was very similar to Sugimoto's work, which I did not know at that time. Since then, my artwork has changed, but that memory and my affinity towards Sugimoto are still present. These choices are not always arbitrary.



*Scapes in RGB 4*



**Wavepool** – Is it important to you that the discourse remains consistent in your practice? Do you prefer to see that in other artists' practices as well?

**Jeroen Nelemans** – Naturally, I admire artists whose discourse is rigorous, but I don't think that this necessarily applies to my work. My practice has evolved over the past 10 years and even though I have worked in many different media, materials and ideas, essential elements are still embedded within my work.

**Wavepool** – Are there any noticeable evolutions happening right now?

**Jeroen Nelemans** – Most of my work has been related to an existing, iconic image from the “analog” art world. Vermeer, Mondrian, Turner to name a few. Instead of adding to the existing dialogue or concepts of an image, now my starting point is a blank “canvas”. The last two light box series *to be Crystal Clear* and *Between a Solid and Liquid Space* have their own visual identity, which is a new and exciting development for me.



Between a Solid and Liquid Space 6