

Two toed lassitude Colin Miner

Opening September 9, 7-11PM
September 9 - October 7, 2017

8eleven *new location*
888 Dupont St. Suite 103

Your Own Eye by: Leila Timmins

Bringing together disparate works and converging lines of inquiry, *Two toed lassitude* comes together as a composition, an ever-changing assemblage, growing and evolving through associations, assonances and absence. Much like the ways tiny polyps form coral or trees become a forest, the works shift and expand through proximity to one another, building density of meaning where the political becomes visible through the absent, cyclical and askew. This is the way Colin Miner works, cropping out part of an older work and reconfiguring it in a new context, returning to an idea from a different point of view, inverting scale and colour, making movement imperceptibly slow, transforming objects that were once slack to be rigid and allowing stiffness to slump. The works become scaffolding to expansive ideas that layer materials and metaphors as a means to point to something overlooked or forgotten. Created over a series of residencies – Banff, Peru and the Bruce Peninsula – the works weave an unfolding understanding of the natural world with one that is temporarily arrested through imagery, allowing for a slowed and lassitudinous way of looking.

Between Abstraction and Representation

In many ways there is not a clear line between representation and abstraction. Representation is always in some way an act of abstraction and abstraction must always be conveyed through representational means. A photograph, even if blurred and not immediately legible, will always be a trace of an action and the representation of light on a surface. Instead, the terms are relational like emotion and thought, fixed and fluid, or truth and fiction. Abstraction at its core embodies the distance between what is portrayed and its original referent – a low resolution screen-grab, gestural marks across a page, or a memory fading over time. Conversely, representation attempts to hold true to a reproduction of the world as it is, a doubling of what we can see with our eyes.

The images Miner accumulates and then reconfigures in his assemblages, play between these poles of fastidious reproduction and its complete abandon. A large black and white image, resting on the floor and coming almost halfway up the wall, appears noisy and pixelated. There is something definitively digital in its aesthetic, like an accumulation of photoshop filters or an ultrasound image without its bodily referents. The work is part of a series, pulled together loosely under the name "Available Light", referencing the title of a photographic manual and pointing to the provenance of each of the images. Taken from these analogue photo manuals, the work *Untitled (Slip)*, is a scan of an image used to show silver emulsion slipping on its gelatin substrate. It captures movement in the moment of fixing an image, a failure of the chemistry to properly adhere. Although the image inscribed in the negative is not clearly depicted, and potentially never even known, it can still be read as a literal representation of the silver halides on the page. Furthering still this notion of slippage, Miner's scan of the digital reproduction has been further broken down, pulling the CMYK layers of the image slightly askew. The result is only visible upon very close inspection, but from a distance, seems to make the work sparkle like its analogue counterpart.



8eleven
888 Dupont St. Suite 103
8eleven.org

The removal of the image from its original context provides a further abstraction, its legibility muddled when uncoupled from its original framework. This is a strategy that runs through Miner's practice, purposefully complicating our ways of seeing and how images gain meaning. In this way, "Available Light" is more of a framework than a clear body of work. Images pulled from the pages of photo manuals appear throughout the exhibition in different forms, at times, affixed to the side of sculptures, often cropped or their colours inverted. The only hint to their origin can be found in their titles, often directly pulled from the image's caption. "Extend previsualization until the negative image below can be seen in your own eye" comes directly from the page of one such manual, showing the negative image of tree bark. With "While looking at this" following on the subsequent page with the image's positive. This relationship between image and text reveals their pedagogic purpose. These images are (or were once) demonstrative of how a photograph should be: striving for visual clarity and a mastery over the medium. But removed from this context, the images take on new meaning. Taped to the side of sculptures, the two inkjet prints create a protective cover much like the way bark covers a tree.

Covers and what they contain/keep out are another throughline in this work. The structures holding the images of bark are cast out of plaster, created from dust jackets used to protect various photographic equipment. The slumpy materiality of the original vinyl is maintained, suggesting the bulky objects underneath that once held its shape, and the plaster is flecked with the blue-black pigment of aniline dye. Forming constellations across the surface, the aniline dye – the first synthetic pigment, developed around the advent of photography – highlights the folds and seams of the fabric. In some ways it is a monument to the original object, hardened and embellished for display, but simultaneously marks its destruction as it is necessarily ruined in the casting process. The resulting sculpture is too rigid to properly cover an object and too fragile to be of use. Similarly, the bucket placed on top of the sculpture, uses an inverse casting method, where the exterior of the paper bucket is retained and the interior walls are layered with plaster, rendering it both preserved and unusable.

Stillness moves

But insisting on objects to have a specific use, limits

their possibility of transformation. Photography is itself an act of transformation, turning a memory or idea into something that can be carried and taken with you. The desire to arrest time and pull a moment from time and space has always been a central impetus of the medium. Though time is also photography's illusion. Almost every photograph appears instantaneous, but of course, there's no such thing as "instantaneous", all fragments of time have a length. It can take milliseconds or multiple minutes to arrest an image but there is something in the presumed immediacy that elides duration.

Curious as well about objects and organisms that carry the markers of their own history, Miner has been captivated by snails, trees and spiral formations, which recur throughout the exhibition. Snails especially have been a pivot point of his practice and are a symbol that he keeps returning to. Protected within a spiral shell that calcifies and grows with the seasons, snails are earthly creatures that feed on plants and hide in the dark recesses of forests and gardens. A small zinc print of a spiral cloud formation hangs in the space alongside an image of a curled tree trunk printed on silk. Both images reminiscent of snails, replete with curved details and even the suggestion of a head and tentacles. These snail-like apparitions call for a slow kind of looking, one where new images and ideas appear before you if you set your gaze for just a moment. Snails, of course, are synonymous with slowness, their name a stand-in for inefficiency and sluggishness. But slowness and lassitude are privileged here. A short, looped video shows the dense foliage of the Peruvian jungle, with oscillating patterns of light falling on the ground through the trees. A large snail moves imperceptibly slowly, sensing its way across the forest floor, leaving only a glistening trail behind it. The spiral of its shell both a reminder of the calcification of time and also its elusive and cyclical nature, suggesting constant renewal and return.

Hidden from view, just out of sight

Bits of paper and ends of matte board are cut to create holes and rounded appendages. They are scrappy tools, made quickly and intuitively, to focus or block light, revealing the depth and detail of an image in the dark room. Each set, reflecting the temperament and care of their maker as they are used to coax the clearest image onto the page. Strategies for burning (letting light in) and dodging (maintaining darkness) emerge throughout

the works as both metaphor for what is revealed or concealed, and also a furtive nod towards things in a state of becoming.

A second video also shot in Peru, shows a leaf suspended, dancing in the foreground, in front of the dense jungle brush. The leaf blocks and reveals the background as it moves within the frame and flickers in the light coming down through the trees. Light is a delicate balance within the rainforest, with each organism primed to survive on the few beams that filter down through the canopy. What remains unseen is the large swaths of forest that have been cleared and burned just beyond a screen of foliage. These patches of land, hidden from view, just metres from the river banks, allow streams of light to hit the forest floor. Marked with small emblems or tarps that are only legible from the river to those who know to look, these hidden plots are often used for illicit farming practices or unregulated gold mining. Shadow economies, concealed in the dense darkness of the forest.

The diverse constellation of at times dissonant and contradictory works, comes together through these methods of looking. Pausing, slowing down, gazing askance, squinting or holding something up to the light, are strategies for engaging what is not readily seen. Miner uses images to think about his making of images and similarly takes up the tools of image-making as indices for how we see and experience the world. Each work, pulled into service to make sense of the other works before us, wordlessly but fluently inflect one another with meaning.

Colin Miner (Halifax, Canada) is an artist working with assemblage, composition, and duration to develop conversations with the ontological anxieties that shadow the photographic. He is the recipient of numerous awards and residencies, most recently in the Peruvian Amazonia, and has presented exhibitions in Canada, China, Germany, and the Philippines. Miner's practice includes writing, facilitating exhibitions, and the artist project Moiré. www.colinminer.com
www.moire.ca

Leila Timmins is a writer and curator based in Toronto. She is currently the Curator of Exhibitions and Public Programs at Gallery 44 and is a founding member of the EMILIA-AMALIA feminist working group.