

empty room, silver mirror

Samuel de Lange and Jackson Klie



Cover image

Samuel de Lange, "A good brine," (research still), 2022.

Poster image

Jackson Klie, *The Perpetual Was*, 2022, chromogenic print mounted on wood, varnish, plaster, cotton; 8x10 inches

Gallery 44 Centre for Contemporary Photography is a charitable, non-profit, artist-run centre committed to supporting multi-faceted approaches to photography and lens-based media. Founded in 1979 to establish a supportive environment for the development of artistic practice, Gallery 44's mandate is to provide a context for meaningful reflection and dialogue on contemporary photography. Gallery 44 is committed to programs that reflect the continuously changing definition of photography by presenting a wide range of practices that engage timely and critical explorations of the medium. Through exhibitions, public engagement, education programs and production facilities our objective is to explore the artistic, cultural, historic, social and political implications of the image in our ever-expanding visual world.

Samuel de Lange works with combinations of photographic material, moving image, cast objects and furniture as site-sensitive responses to place and context. Developed through a wide range of interests, his practice uses specific cultural moments, artworks, or objects as points of departure, seeking a politics or critical mode in the gaps and overlaps that form between seemingly divergent subjects. He received his MFA from Glasgow School of Art in 2019, and has participated in residencies and exhibitions in Canada, Europe, and the UK.

Jackson Klie works with image based media to investigate the anxieties of contemporary photography. By expanding on ideas of the contingency and performativity of images and archives, his multidisciplinary practice highlights the slippery nature of identity. He received an MFA in Studio Art from the University of Guelph in 2019, and a BFA in Photography Studies from Ryerson University in 2013. The artist would like to thank the Ontario Arts Council for its support in the production of this work.

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Curated by Lillian O'Brien Davis

Rooted in archival infrastructures and practices of storage, arranging and sorting, artists Samuel de Lange and Jackson Klie explore images in transition. Both artists consider caches of information and images—contained within an internet database and a disused mine. Through these two artistic projects, presented in parallel by Gallery 44, the artists consider the alchemy of the storage and classification of images.

de Lange and Klie both explore moments of transformation, noting objects and images that have slipped or been pushed out of a cycle of use and preservation. The exhibition explores the displacement of images through fragmentation, decontextualization and containment. de Lange explores photography as a fragment, unfixed with mutable context and materiality. For Klie, fragmentation is a key interest in the photographic process, particularly in the use of found images, collage and assemblage. For both artists, fragments presented together generate invisible connections, displaced through decontextualisation.

Jackson Klie's body of work explores the decontextualized and decaying image. Klie uses "deadstock" archival photographs available for purchase online as well as a variety of materials such as mesh, metal grids, and collage. The photos are drawn from various websites selling images, no longer in use by publications or newspapers, which are mailed to the buyer with a certificate of authenticity. Though the contents of the photographs (people, places or activities) are no longer known or identified for the most part, the photographs themselves are deemed authentically valuable. Klie works with these images divorced from an archival narrative and then scanned, digitally or physically altered in order to explore the moments of transition when an image changes from an object of representation or documentation to a conglomerate of chemicals, shifting and permeable.

For Klie, the destabilization is generative, suggesting an expansion of conceptual possibilities. The moment of transition or transformation of the photograph is key to Klie's work as each object (including both wall works, and sculptures) included in the exhibition demonstrates moments of transformation such as the silvering of an image—which is the degradation of silver-based emulsions that cannot be stopped, or the tearing and effacing of a photograph that has been placed and replaced in an adhesive family photo album. These shifts are aided by the artist's own hand, purposefully

working each photograph in order to push up against the implied preciousness these archival or preserved images contain.

Along with Klie's investigation of images in transition—gloves, grids, mesh and frames all function as different forms of encapsulation in Klie's work. White gloves typically used in archival preservation work to protect materials from human flesh are drawn into association with mesh cyanotypes in order to explore the materiality of the image-less image. The delicate and permeable mesh and glove installations are photographic frameworks without an actual image. The installations in the exhibition distend Klie's interest in the moments of transition of an image where it becomes its materiality.

Key to this body of work is Klie's interest in fragmentation as a methodology to produce images. Noting that the moments of transformation where Klie focuses attention occur in the gap or fragmentation of the image from its original context or physical location, such as the remnants of a family photo still clinging to an adhesive backing.

Deep within the caverns of a disused mine, records and documents are held in perpetuity. Samuel de Lange's body of work explores histories of salt and photography as entangled apparatuses of preservation.

Salt mines are often repurposed as high-security storage facilities after they are no longer viable for mining due to their constant temperature and humidity which provides an ideal environment for fragile materials. The precious mineral enclosed in the earth is removed in a checkerboard pattern to leave permanent, solid salt pillars to support the roof of the mine. As the mineral is extracted the height of the mine may average 18 feet in a bedded deposit to 100 feet in a dome mine.¹ These sites of extraction function as repositories for cultural memory. de Lange explores photography as a methodology that can structure gestures of searching into the speculative spaces left behind in these mined deposits.

de Lange explores the ecology that exists behind the display and dissemination of objects, the invisible structures that dictate what is cared for and how, what is stored and what is displayed, what is remembered and what is forgotten.

1 <https://www.mortonsalt.com/salt-production-and-processing/>

Using the process of salt printing and casting fragmentary objects in salt, de Lange explores material aspects of storage infrastructure. de Lange's prints depict elements of industry and infrastructure associated with salt mining and production. Corporations can pay to store documents and artifacts, buried in a cavernous self-sealing archival space, where a vast number of objects are accessible mostly through images, shared individually and by request. Through these pieces, the artist focuses on the apparatus of industry that aids in the concealment of objects not yet on display, or objects which will not ever be put on display.



Samuel de Lange, *Preparatory drawing for a fragment*, 2021.

The interstitial space of the mine, where objects are left to be out of the way but are considered too valuable to be burned or recycled, becomes highly significant, as the space is fundamental in framing how we come to understand objects. What is precious, what is accessible and what we cannot throw away. de Lange explores the infrastructure of containment; safe and controlled environments which seemingly exist outside of our daily reality but in fact live in the marrow of our planet.

Both of the artists in this exhibition are thinking about the moments of preservation or containment and how images transition out of their original context. The title, *empty room, silver mirror* works in two parts reflecting on the threads of containment and destabilization that appears in both artists' work. First, bringing to mind images of large, empty archival spaces, and also the reference to the camera itself, as it's also the latin word for room or chamber. Additionally, silver mirror refers to the thematics of decay and distortion which happens as a result of the silvering of a photograph. To imagine that deep inside the cavernous salt mine shafts of the world are millions of units of paperwork seems to suggest a kind of trojan horse narrative. In this case however, instead of soldiers inside of a gift-horse, if we were to peek inside the planet we might find the British National Gallery's tax returns from 1987. Infrastructures of preservation designed to contain objects that in all likelihood will never again see the light of day. It's unclear what or how value is understood in relation to these caches of images and information though they both suggest a fragmented relationship to preservation, perhaps suggesting that "we might need this again someday."

