

LAMENT: for altered, erased, & lost histories

Evergon (Montreal, PQ), **Chris Curreri** (Toronto, ON), **Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan** (Winnipeg, MB), **Jenna Edwards** (Toronto, ON), **Tess Hurrell** (London, UK), **Jason Lazarus** (Chicago, IL), **Cody Trepte** (Los Angeles, CA)

The photograph, the image burned onto the paper surface as a means to keep forever a document for our collective memory is, despite popular misconception, fallible. Employing a series of minimalist as well as fantastical strategies, the artists in *LAMENT* play with the supposed infallibility of the archived image from various perspectives. When considered together, the work in this exhibition suggest alternate strategies of how a photograph may offer information, and conversely how such information contained in the image may be presented as well as altered, erased, and perhaps lost.

How are these artists queering history through their interpretations of it? What does it mean to alter a photographic record? Is it the image or the object of the photograph that carries the most importance? In order to help answer these questions, and pose more, work by the following artists is brought together: **Evergon**, **Chris Curreri**, **Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan**, **Jenna Edwards**, **Tess Hurrell**, **Jason Lazarus**, and **Cody Trepte**. These pieces reflect a three tier approach of how we might conceive of and categorize time through film and photography: familial, social, and historical.

The family album, as wrought as it is ubiquitous, is so often the starting point of how we learn to take pictures, pose for pictures, and keep pictures. The artists in *LAMENT* obscure the photo album in various ways: **Jason Lazarus'** installation consists of dozens of found snapshots placed backwards to edit and hide the photographic information in order to privilege the jotted down dates and other handwritten notes held on their reverse in his piece *Recordings* (28 Years Ago). Lazarus considers his installation site-specific as each time he presents this work he contemplates a new narrative and subsequent clustering of it based on experience and incorporates local found photos. The forlorn memory-aids: '1st HAIRCUT', 'MY VIOLET DRESS & HAT', 'Salome', 'Labour Day – 1961' act as multiple punctuation marks in a run-on sentence; as a conversation full of ellipses; or perhaps a pixelated landscape where what information is presented begins to fill in the holes of what is missing. Whereas **Cody Trepte** takes the notion of the information found in a photograph one step further in his bookwork, *Photo Album*. Trepte has transcribed literal descriptions of every picture in his family photo album in order to then translate the descriptions into black and white ones and zeros of binary code, which comprises the seventy-five perfect-bound volumes. A simple, matter of fact descriptor than forces the viewer to draw their own image in their head, reaffirms the act of looking as active not passive, and aligns the viewer to consider the weight of photographic histories as transmitters of information: 'A snapshot of me standing and smiling up at the camera, I am wearing a red onesie with white socks. My posture looks precarious as if I am just learning to walk. In the background, clothes are strewn about the mauve carpet.' **Jenna Edwards** translates the weight of photographic history and has literally piled the photographic records of various friends and acquaintances into stacks for portraits that blur studio and forensic standards. The records of records, an individual or family's entire collection of photographs, in her *Accumulated Histories* series encourages more questions than answers: who has more photographs, and why? Who keeps what kinds of photos? Where do photos end up once the family no longer wants them? And is it the quantity or quality of photos that amount to a life lived?

The social aspects of photographic interpretations are explored by **Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan's** sincere inquiry into the correlation between preserving art (re: film, and as a correlation photography) as a means of preserving the self in trying times in their video, *Archeology and You*. The artists have stated: "This videotape in five parts manipulates shards of narrative into a meditation on the construction of self and culture through language. It juxtaposes historical theory with ever-timely questions such as 'What do we have to say?' and 'Why do we bother writing it down?' Alternately, **Tess Hurrell's** series, *Chaology*, is comprised of a suite of six black and white silver prints taken of studio re-creations of major explosions from the 20th century. Including interpretations of Hiroshima, nuclear tests, and the space shuttle disaster as well as burning oil and white phosphorus bombs, these cotton balls and string constructions pose the questions: 'how do we capture historical accuracy?' and 'what role do artists play in the interpretation of historical record keeping?' Where Hurrell fabricates, **Chris Curreri** subtracts in order to provide a melancholic landscape., *Circa 1960* is 16mm film loop that slowly reveals itself to the audience. Curreri filmed the back of a photograph and then poked pinholes through the outline of an unseen landscape in order to allow light to come through and the image to be read; ultimately the photograph is destroyed so that the visual information can be attained. Gradual changes in lighting, recalling the techniques of nineteenth-century dioramas, gently but dramatically shift the viewer's perceptions of the predominately imagined landscape extending the decisive moment into a never-ending series of nights and days.

LAMENT also showcases the ways in which artists use the lens and obscure the lens revealing interpretations of history. For instance, **Evergon** has created a fictional persona for himself as an iconic 18th century sailor / pirate in the series *Crossing the Equator, Going South, Pacific Rim*, replete with grass skirt and aged mermaid tattoo stretched across his torso. In this recent studio series the viewer is confronted with several possible truths, and it is up to them to decipher what they want to take from the image. Impersonation is not new to Evergon, who has developed numerous personae over the years (including: Celluloso Evergonni, Eve R. Gonzales, Egon Brut) and as such has documented everything from circle jerks to interpretations of mythical encounters in his most well-known series, all the while pushing the boundaries of what is expected to be represented, and captured through photography for posterity sake.

As the banner exhibit for PLATFORM's *palimpsest* year in which we are considering the photograph as a metaphor for time and space collapsing – acting as both past and present – *LAMENT* questions the failure of photography as a record of things remembered and recreated for memory. Through provocative and poetic gestures, the work in this exhibit forces a re-reading of how we understand history and historical accuracy (if such a concept even exists), and ultimately privileges the experiential over the record.

J.J. Kegan McFadden
Director / Curator

[Excerpted from a forthcoming essay]

LIST OF WORK

Evergon

Crossing the Equator, Going South, Pacific Rim series [numbers 1 – 5], 2010
Chromira prints
Courtesy of the Artist + Galerie Trois Points, Montreal

Jason Lazarus

Recordings (28 Years Ago), 2012
found photographs, site-specific installation
Courtesy of the Artist

Chris Curreri

Circa 1960, 2006
16 mm film, 6 minutes
Courtesy of the Artist

Cody Trepte

Photo Album, 2007
75 unique, hand made books: paper, adhesive, and wood
Courtesy of the Artist

Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan

Archeology and You, 2003
video, 7 minutes
Courtesy of the artists + Video Pool Media Arts Centre, Winnipeg

Jenna Edwards

Accumulated Histories series, 2007 - 2008
light jet prints
Courtesy of the Artist

"The Collection of R. Albert"

"The Collection of P. Zeppieri"

"The Collection of J. Allen"

"The Collection of D. Dickinson"

"The Collection of M. Ward"

Tess Hurrell

Chaology series [numbers 1 – 6], 2006
silver gelatin prints
Courtesy of the Artist

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