



Lorna Bauer, *Neon Studio Study (Brooklyn, New York)*, Archival inkjet print on fine art paper, 16"x20", 2012



Fiona Annis, *Hesitation (the empty form of time) No. 3*, C-type enlargement of wet-plate collodion (ferrotype), 40"x 50", 2013



Laura Findlay, *The Perfume Bottle*, Gelatin silver print, 10"x8", 2009

UPSHOT
FIONA ANNIS
LORNA BAUER
LAURA FINDLAY

CURATED BY NATALIA LEBEDINSKAIA
& ANASTASIA HARE

PLATFORM CENTRE FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC + DIGITAL ARTS

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Upshot concentrates on stilling the moments between actions and consequences through a selection of works by Fiona Annis, Lorna Bauer and Laura Findlay. Their photographs, videos, and paintings explore the potential of visual construction within a space between an event and its result. In the exhibition, this space encompasses a breadth of manifestations, including legacies, recollections and durations, such as long intervals and simultaneities, as well as narrow concrete moments in which consequences immediately follow actions, like a bulb shattering into countless pieces. This space can also be infinite and unknown, as when consequences act as clues to actions that preceded them at indefinite times. For instance, a mass of shards of glass suggests a breakage, while each shard evokes an act of removal or of piecing together.

The curatorial concept for *Upshot* was inspired by Milan Kundera's premise in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, in which he proposes that once put into action, decisions never return and thus become 'unbearably light' in their absence of universal consequences. The sensation of time passing is a familiar one: the moments in which the outcome of an action becomes irreversible, like the flash of utter certainty that the cup which was formerly held within a grasp is about to break on the hard tiled floor and will never be whole again, even though it has not yet hit the ground. It is these moments of irreversibility, and their wider implications, that make manifest the lightness that Kundera describes.

Kundera begins the novel by stating, "The idea of eternal return is a mysterious one, and Nietzsche has often perplexed other philosophers with it: to think that everything recurs as we once experienced it, and that the recurrence itself recurs ad infinitum! What does this mad myth signify?"¹ Kundera's exploration of the 'lightness' is set in opposition to this concept of 'eternal return'. Kundera argues that we cannot condemn or judge something that is utterly transitory, "In the sunset of dissolution, everything is illuminated by the aura of nostalgia, even the guillotine."² This lightness is the quality that tints the past in sepia tones and yearning.

Eternal return burdens every move with heavy responsibility. However, as Kundera suggests throughout the novel, the lightness is not necessarily a virtue, unlike how it can be framed within dichotomies of lightness/heaviness and positive/negative. Instead, it carries with it a painful irreversibility. Each decision acquires a different burden – that of all consequences relentlessly moving forward.

Kundera builds this conflict as a choice between weight and lightness, looking back to Parmenides' posing of the same question in the sixth century BC. Parmenides presented the world as composed of corresponding binaries: "light/darkness, fineness/coarseness, warmth/cold, being/nonbeing. One half of the opposition he called positive (light, fineness, warmth, being), the other negative."³ In this configuration, the opposition of weight and lightness positions weight as negative, and lightness as positive: a binary that Kundera incites us to consider undoing, as lightness can be unbearable and contradictory.

There is a resonance between Kundera's ideas and the medium of photography. Photography promises a stilling of time, a seemingly magical ability to hold onto a moment despite the awareness and inevitability of its passing. This paradox is heartbreaking, as every image that promised an everlasting childhood, a perfect romance, a monumental event or an eternal vacation becomes a testament to their irretrievability. The three artists in *Upshot* build on this 'unbearable lightness' implicit in the photographic process in different ways.

Subtle nuances within Annis' monochromatic scenes illustrate the indefinite distinctions between positive and negative, dark and light, form and void, weight and lightness. Annis' photographic encounters become a point of departure for contemplation on such polarities, as well as repetitive acts and their sites and stages of articulation. In the selected works from Annis' ongoing series *Les paroles qui sortent de l'ombre* (2012), the space between action and consequence is loaded with possibilities, as marks and spills become summarized and recorded on wet plates and within their undetermined resulting images. Similarly, in her *Bridge Meditations*, Annis depicts the sky, but the relationship between the image and its referent is dislocated, as the clouds take various forms within their vacant backdrops. Created through an explorative process that involves negotiations between removals and additions, the artist documents the intangible and nonphysical properties that occur in the development of her work.⁴

Afloat in the sky are fluffy white clouds that appear light and radiant against the vast dark space that surrounds them. It is as if pictured here is the vision of nightfall or storm. The clouds blend with images of small chemical spills, creating a dialogue that speaks to the poetry of chance. The dialogue blurs the opposition between image and noise, or between what was meant to be photographed and the photograph itself. Here, the spills and the clouds become one. By depicting the subject along with its process of documentation, Annis elevates the process that fails to transparently describe the objects in front of the lens, showing that these are not photographs that have 'captured' the passing moment.

Revealing the passage of time through video, Bauer's series *Cycle of Return* (2009) explores duration and its relation to visual representation and construction. In *Horizon (500 sheets of office paper)*, what first appears as a ship is revealed by the gusts of wind to be a pile of stacked paper. In *Kaleidoscope*, while Bauer appears to be shooting at the viewer, or the camera's lens, it is in fact a miniature hall of mirrors that both marks the viewer's position as safe and slowly reveals itself as a deceptive structure. In *Blackout*, light bulbs swing and then explode one at a time, until the room darkens: the simplicity of this gesture nevertheless evokes from the viewer the expectation of the final blackout. Similarly suspenseful, Bauer's photographic series *Neon* (2012) depicts slender fluorescent bulbs leaning against a wall, tense with the anticipation of their impending fall. *All the Material* (2010) is a departure from these explorations of causality. The mound of glass shards against the dark background is a trace of a complete undoing of what used to be whole, and the moment of expectation and release rests solidly in the past.

¹ Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, translated from the Czech by Michael Henry Heim, 2009, Harper Perennial Modern Classics (originally published 1984, Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.) p.3

² Kundera, p.4

³ Kundera, p.5

⁴ Fiona Annis, artist statement, 2013

In Findlay's work, the object also becomes a marker of the present moment, which has since passed, and foreshadows a future. Findlay addresses action and consequence by centering her works on the formation of memory, which manifests through relationships with objects, especially those connected to personal loss. After moving into her deceased grandparents' home, she grew to know them through the objects they left behind – a process narrated through her intimate photographs of planters, perfume bottles and trinkets in *A Portrait of My Grandparents* (2009). Findlay's images are about the effort of remembrance, and the undeniable presence of fissures and forgetting. The moments in her paintings are not quite reconstructed, they depict only what was able to take shape through recollection. They are efforts to return, met with the impossibility of this task. Remembering is an activity rooted in Kundera's unbearable lightness, permeated with knowledge that the moments will continue to recede, that the memory is not a look back but an acknowledgement of irreversible passing.

Scanned images of an eraser and playing card reveal imprints and stains that speak to their former lives as active objects out in the world: traces of hands that touched them, evidence of use and love. Their markings reveal the presence of what came before, and also predicts continuous wear. The object rotates as its image flickers, creating the effect that each bounce induces it with life. Through Findlay's rendering, the objects constitute an extension of their owners' lives, and in this way, the space between action and consequence continues to grow even after the final moments of touch and use have taken place. Further extending the implications of actions, a photograph of playing cards laid down methodically on the floor in a game of memory prompts the viewer to consider which card to upturn.

Through these works, the artists create a dialogue of potential histories and outcomes that occur within a transitory moment. They bring to light the intimacy of this space between an event and its result through the unique marks documented in the creation of Annis' photographs, traces existing on personal objects in Findlay's work, and the coded scenes revealed in Bauer's imagery. Together they evoke the desire for suspension and a yearning for the recovery of the irretrievable in time and place.

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Anastasia Hare
&
Natalia Lebedinskaia
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LIST OF WORKS

FIONA ANNIS

All images courtesy of the artist & Galerie Lilian Rodriguez
Celestial Measures, Antique telephone magneto powering lightbox with glass slide from Observatory archive (1910), 2013
Celestial Measures (this is where it happened), C-type enlargement of wet-plate collodion (ferrotype), 60" x 50", 2013
Matter imprinted with its echo (No. 1), Etched anodized aluminum, 12" x 24", Text source: Jeanette Winterson, *Gut Symmetries*, 2013
Matter imprinted with its echo (No. 2), Etched anodized aluminum, 12" x 24", Text source: Jeanette Winterson, *Gut Symmetries*, 2013
Matter imprinted with its echo (No. 3), Etched anodized aluminum, 12" x 24", Text source: Jeanette Winterson, *Gut Symmetries*, 2013
Matter imprinted with its echo (No. 5), Etched anodized aluminum, 12" x 24", Text source: Jeanette Winterson, *Gut Symmetries*, 2013
Hesitation (the empty form of time) No. 1, C-type enlargement of wet-plate collodion (ferrotype), 40" x 50", 2013
Hesitation (the empty form of time) No. 4, C-type enlargement of wet-plate collodion (ferrotype), 40" x 50", 2013
Bridge Meditations (No. 1), C-type enlargement of wet-plate collodion (ferrotype), 40" x 32", 2013
Bridge Meditations (No. 2), C-type enlargement of wet-plate collodion (ferrotype), 40" x 32", 2013
Bridge Meditations (No. 4), C-type enlargement of wet-plate collodion (ferrotype), 40" x 32", 2013

LORNA BAUER

All the Material, Chromogenic print, 30" x 40", 2010

Cycle of Return

Horizon, Digital video, 4:00m, 2009

Kaleidoscope, Digital video, 8:30m, 2009

Blackout, Digital video, 3:30m, 2009

Neon Studio Study (Brooklyn, New York), Archival inkjet print on fine art paper, 16" x 20", 2012

Neon Studio Study (Brooklyn, New York), Archival inkjet print on fine art paper, 16" x 20", 2012 (series of 6)

LAURA FINDLAY

Some Night Times, Oil on canvas, 16" x 20", 2013

A Portion of a Pier, Oil on canvas, 24" x 24", 2013

Three Vantages, Oil on canvas, 11" x 14", 2013

Witness, Oil on canvas, 24" x 30", 2012

Rook, Oil on canvas, 26" x 20", 2013

A Portrait of my Grandparents

The Furnace, Gelatin silver print, 10" x 8", 2009

The Electrolux, Gelatin silver print, 10" x 8", 2009

The Crystal Vase, Gelatin silver print, 10" x 8", 2009

The Perfume Bottle, Gelatin silver print, 10" x 8", 2009

The Oil Lantern, Gelatin silver print, 10" x 8", 2009

The Rotary Phone, Gelatin silver print, 10" x 8", 2009

The Tea Mug, Gelatin silver print, 10" x 8", 2009

The Brass Planter, Gelatin silver print, 10" x 8", 2009

The Radio, Gelatin silver print, 10" x 8", 2009

The Teapot, Gelatin silver print, 10" x 8", 2009

Three Sisters

The Memory Game, Archival inkjet print, 24" x 24", 2012

Aunt Isabel's Powder Compact, Archival inkjet print, 24" x 24", 2012

Sentimental Garbage, Animated gif video, 24:07m, 2013



Fiona Annis, *Bridge Meditations (No. 3-6)*, C-type enlargement of wet-plate collodion (ferrotype), 40"x32", 2013

FIONA ANNIS

Fiona Annis is a Montréal-based visual artist and researcher whose interdisciplinary practice emphasizes the use of scores and time-based media. In 2008 she completed a master's degree at the Glasgow School of Art and she is currently pursuing a practice-led PhD at Concordia University. Fiona has exhibited in national and international contexts including: The AC Institute (New York City), the CCA (Montréal) Goldsmith's University (London), LowSalt Gallery (Glasgow), and the AGA (Edmonton). Fiona is currently exploring the alchemic potential of antiquated photographic processes.

LORNA BAUER

Lorna Bauer is a Montreal-based visual artist. Bauer has presented her work in solo exhibitions at Galerie Nicolas Robert; Sporobole; YYZ Artist Outlet; Gallery Les Territoires; The University of Toronto Art Centre and in the Projection Access Space at the Art Gallery of Mississauga. Recently, Bauer's work was included in *The Work Ahead of Us* at the Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal and *Decisive Moments, Somewhere Else* at Trinity Square Video. In late 2013 Bauer will be a resident artist at Couvent des Récollets in Paris supported by the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec.

LAURA FINDLAY

Laura Findlay was born in Montreal in 1984 and raised on Vancouver Island. She received her BFA from Concordia University in 2011 and is an MFA candidate at the University of Guelph. She lives in Guelph, Ontario. Findlay was nominated as a finalist in the 2013 RBC Painting Competition.

ANASTASIA HARE

Anastasia Hare is an independent writer and curator based in Toronto. She holds an MA in Art History with a diploma in Curatorial Studies in Visual Culture from York University and a BFA in Art History and Studio Art from Concordia University. Hare has contributed numerous writing and curatorial projects to art galleries and artist-run centres in Ontario and Quebec.

NATALIA LEBEDINSKAIA

Natalia Lebedinskaia is the Curator of Contemporary Art at the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba. She holds an MA in Art History from Concordia University, and a BFA in Art History and Studio Arts. Previously, she worked at The Banff Centre for the Arts and Walter Phillips Gallery in Banff, Cargo Collective, and Studio Béluga in Montréal, and worked independently on projects and publications in Montreal and Winnipeg.



Laura Findlay, *Witness*, Oil on canvas, 24"x30", 2012



Lorna Bauer, *Neon Studio Study (Brooklyn, New York)*, Archival inkjet print on fine art paper, 16"x20", 2012