



*Green Puce*  
Maegan Hill-Carroll

A response by Jessica Evans

*Green Puce* is an exhibition constructed around the shape of a memory and its correspondence with media and images. Working backwards from our expectations of photography's indexical procedure, the installation meditates on past experience using substitution, concealment, and varying narratives. The work is in reference to, but not shown as, photographs taken by Hill-Carroll while living in Botswana in 2000 and 2001. This period—rife with the complications of volunteer tourism in Africa, the presence of AIDS, witchcraft, and love—was mediated by the camera. This collection of photographs has become a personal archive Hill-Carroll recognizes as inaccurate, and no longer legible as documentary. In forgoing the presumption of truth in the image, *Green Puce* turns towards the breach between photographs, memory, and the recuperation of time through hypomnemata.

This departure is framed within the photographic milieu of projection, filing systems, and the slideshow. Hill-Carroll substitutes the hundreds of images taken in Otse with photographer's colour-aid cards, scanned and presented in her video projection *Colour-Aid*. The images (or the absence of images) appear sequentially, but without specific order. The viewer is given a sense of parataxis: without the readymade coordination of image and narrative, the succession of bright monochromes indicates volume and camouflage. In replacing the photos with colour cards Hill-Carroll's archive becomes coded, but also signals her mistrust in exhibiting the images as faithful representations of events. The colour cards have been used by photographers as paper backdrops for decades, and here they act as intercession. Hill-Carroll's reservations towards the photograph's ability to accurately describe the fullness of the memory results in an exchange in which the data of the documentary image is distilled into the affect of colour.

*Colour-Aid's* oscillations are synced with, and supported by, Hill-Carroll's voice as it meanders through the backstory of each "image". This commentary reproduces the loveliness and absurdity of the details retained over time; these small comments, such as "on the bureau the condoms are housed in a Pringles chip container" are as specific as they are inscrutable. The presence of Hill-Carroll's voice also works to counter the redaction of her Botswana series: the audio recording is another object of perception meant to transmit and conserve an element of the past, guiding the viewer through Hill-Carroll's floating recollections.

The digital and photographic mechanisms at work within *Colour-Aid* allude to Bernard Stiegler's assertion that human memory is exteriorized and thus technical from the start, and so the question of memory becomes a question of knowledge as well. In criminal trials, eyewitness testimony is often given great weight in deciding the guilt or innocence of a suspect, despite being notoriously unreliable. This contradiction stems from an overconfidence in memory as an accurate recorder of reality and experience when really, memory—like perception—is constructed and reconstructed. In *Colour-Aid's* audio, Hill-Carroll's commentary on the photos disarranges time and is braided with anecdotes that have crept in over subsequent years, true to the intricate and nonlinear nature of recovering experiences. But if the ability of recollection to objectively reflect events is unreliable, then why do we continue to rely on it? In Susan Howe's *The Telepathy of the Archive* she writes "here is deep memory's lure, and

sheltering: [one] experiences enduring relations and connections between what was and what is". The enactment of a third memory through the artwork, supported and constituted by technics, performs the knowledge of a negotiation between past and present self.

The dreamy perambulation of *Colour-Aid* is braced by the more menacing form of *Blue Hell*, the filing cabinet which contains Green Puce's lone visible photograph. In the filing cabinet, Hill-Carroll acknowledges that the spectre of the archive is unavoidable, but works to remove its unique self-positioning to truth and to evidence. The locked cabinet also performs what it can mean to be "done" with the past; not a monument to preservation but a gesture of setting aside. Where *Colour-Aid* encloses the viewer within an internal monologue, *Blue Hell* suggests memory firmly contained within the imposing object. Its single photograph is a faceless self-portrait displayed at the base of the drawer, taken after Hill-Carroll's return to Canada. Derrida believed that the archival impulse contains both constructive and destructive drives; that in its structure are parallel desires for the creation and eradication of record, documentary, and monumental apparatus. Where *Colour-Aid* offers the viewer access to interiority in lieu of representation, *Blue Hell* emphasizes internal barriers and the processes of compartmentalization. Suspended between these works is Hill-Carroll's irresolute attitude to personal archive and its volley between emotions and things, particularly in the form of the photo. The self-portrait in the drawer signals that the artist is not only filing away the documentation of her former experiences and reliance on the camera, but that she is also distanced from a seamless connection to a previous instantiation of identity.

*Blue Hell* relays Hill-Carroll's ambivalence towards the Botswana series, the photographs that at various points in time were ignored, then made too precious, then important to the narrative until the narrative became more important. In the sequestered body of the cabinet, the archived images—to which the viewer is denied access—cannot exist outside of what they memorialize. This speaks to the relationship between personal events and selection: which details remain intact, how emotions and accounts become warped and amalgamated. Freud argued such selection is also a repression. The unconscious, after all, is a theory of memory and its censorship.

*Green Puce* positions these objects of perception in an interface of disclosure and denial. Hill-Carroll's interpretation of her photographic histories privileges the indistinct and mutable forms of remembering and forgetting; the comingling of what "actually" happened and how it felt. The artworks are situated around what is lost in the delegation of memory to the technical apparatus, relaying the processes of self-configuration that require reconciliation with, and estrangement from, the past. In this space, one is invited to consider the nuances that make a document different from a story.

**Maegan Hill-Carroll** is an artist living and working in Vancouver, Canada. She holds an MFA from the University of California Los Angeles and a BFA from the University of Manitoba where she grew up in Winnipeg. Her work has been exhibited across Canada and in Los Angeles. Her writing has been published in the contemporary art magazine *Fillip*.

**Jessica Evans** is an artist and writer currently living in Vancouver, British Columbia.

## EXHIBITION

06 January - 18 February 2017

## OPENING RECEPTION

Friday 06 January | 7 PM

## ARTIST TALK

Saturday 07 January | 2 PM

## PLATFORM

**Director** | Collin Zipp

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**IMAGE** | *Green Puce*, Maegan Hill-Carroll, 2016