

galerie frank elbaz.

Mungo Thomson

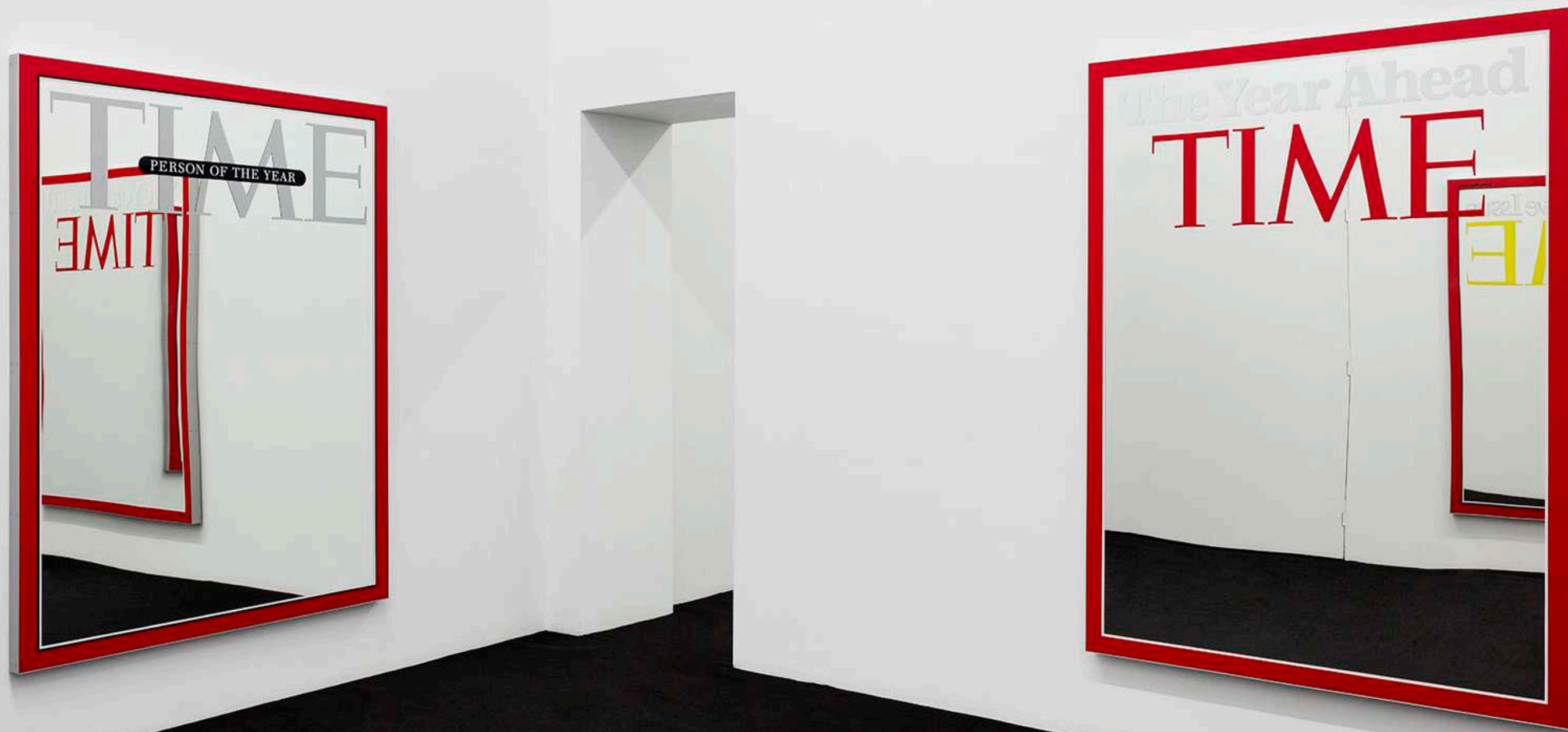
galerie frank elbaz.



Mungo Thomson
August 5, 2019 (Notre Dame), 2020
Enamel on low-iron mirror, poplar and
anodized aluminum
188 x 142 x 6 cm (74 x 55 7/8 x 2 3/8 in.)
(20202315)

The Californian artist Mungo Thomson explores popular culture and everyday objects, using elements such as the covers of the notorious TIME magazine or a standard deck of 52 playing cards. Through his eclectic body of work which includes films, sculptures, photographs, music and books, Thomson leads us to question what we most take for granted, or fail to notice.

Mungo Thomson's TIME mirrors are person-sized, silkscreened mirrors bearing the iconic logo and red border of the international weekly news magazine TIME. The mirrors are based on individual covers of the magazine that reference cultural or cosmological notions of time, history, perception and encounter.

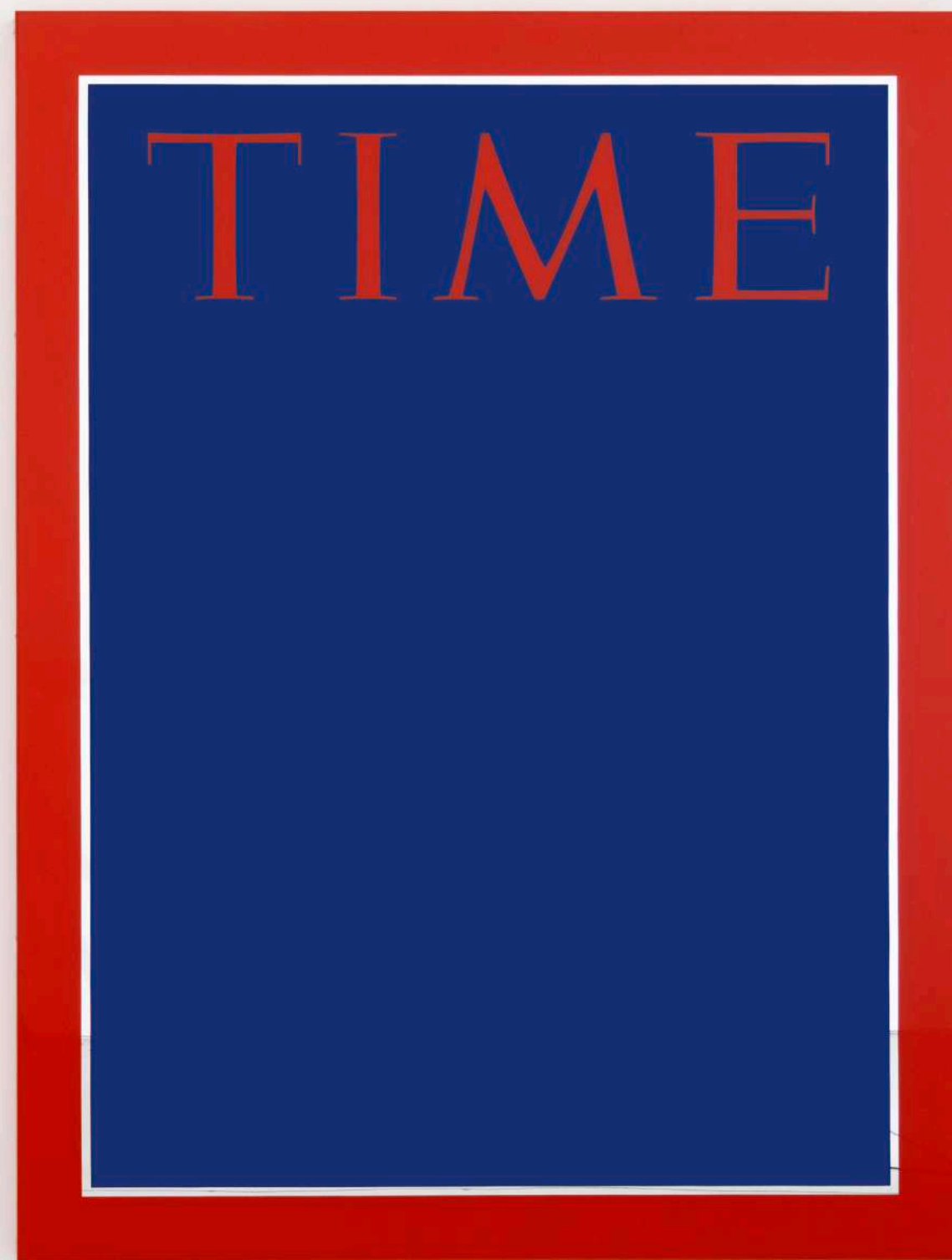
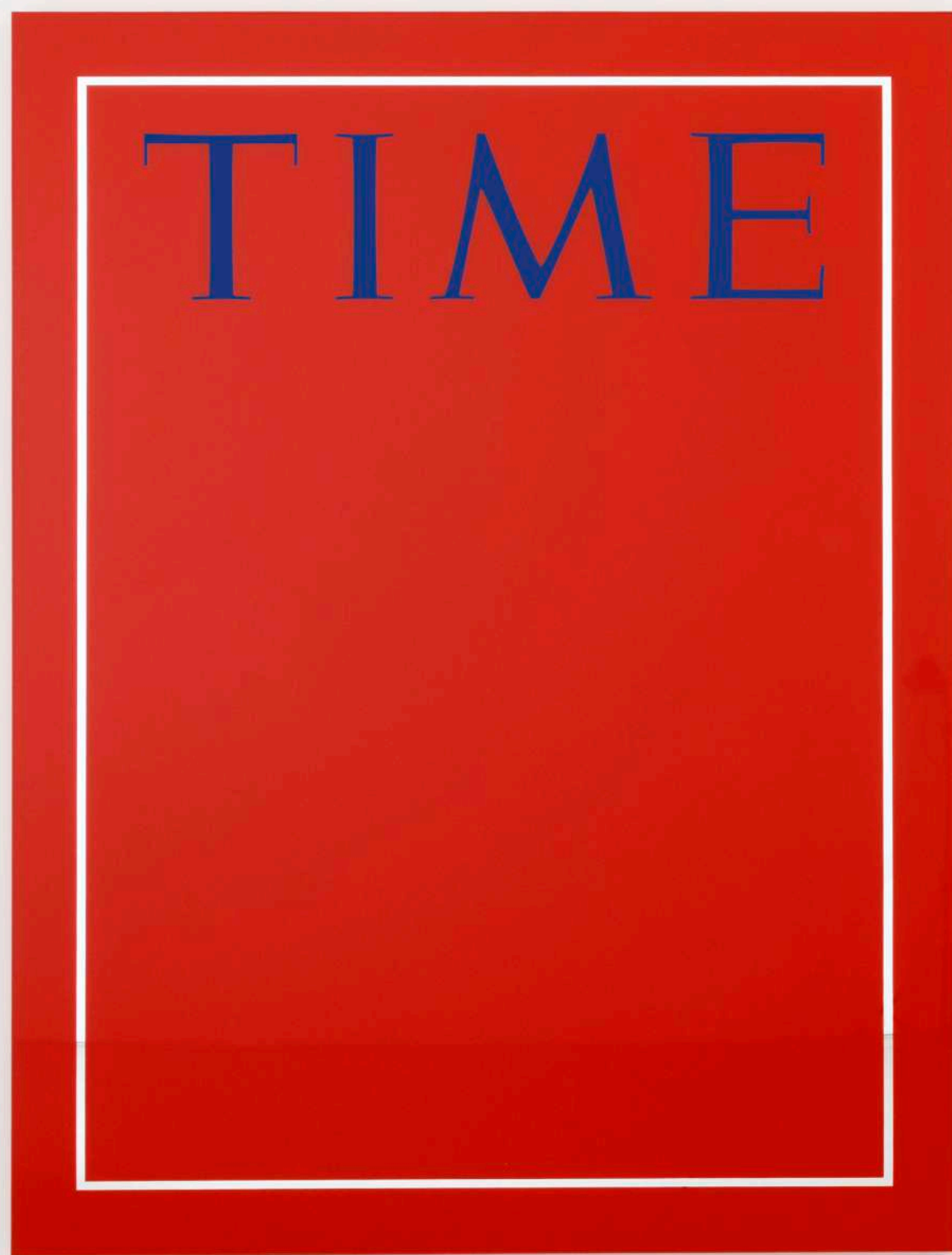


Mungo Thomson, *Sideways Thought*, installation view, galerie frank elbaz, Paris, 2022



Mungo Thomson
January 1, 2000 (Welcome to a New Century), 2022
 Enamel on low-iron mirror, poplar and anodized aluminum
 188 x 142 x 6 cm (74 x 55 7/8 x 2 3/8 in.)
 (20222942)





Mungo Thomson
May 24, 1968 (Robert F. Kennedy) / July 6, 1968 (The Gun in America), 2014
Enamel on low-iron mirror, poplar and aluminum
Diptych: 188 x 142 x 6 cm (74 x 55 7/8 x 2 3/8 in.) each
(20142027)

TIME



Mungo Thomson

TIME

TIME

MAKIGallery

Mungo Thomson



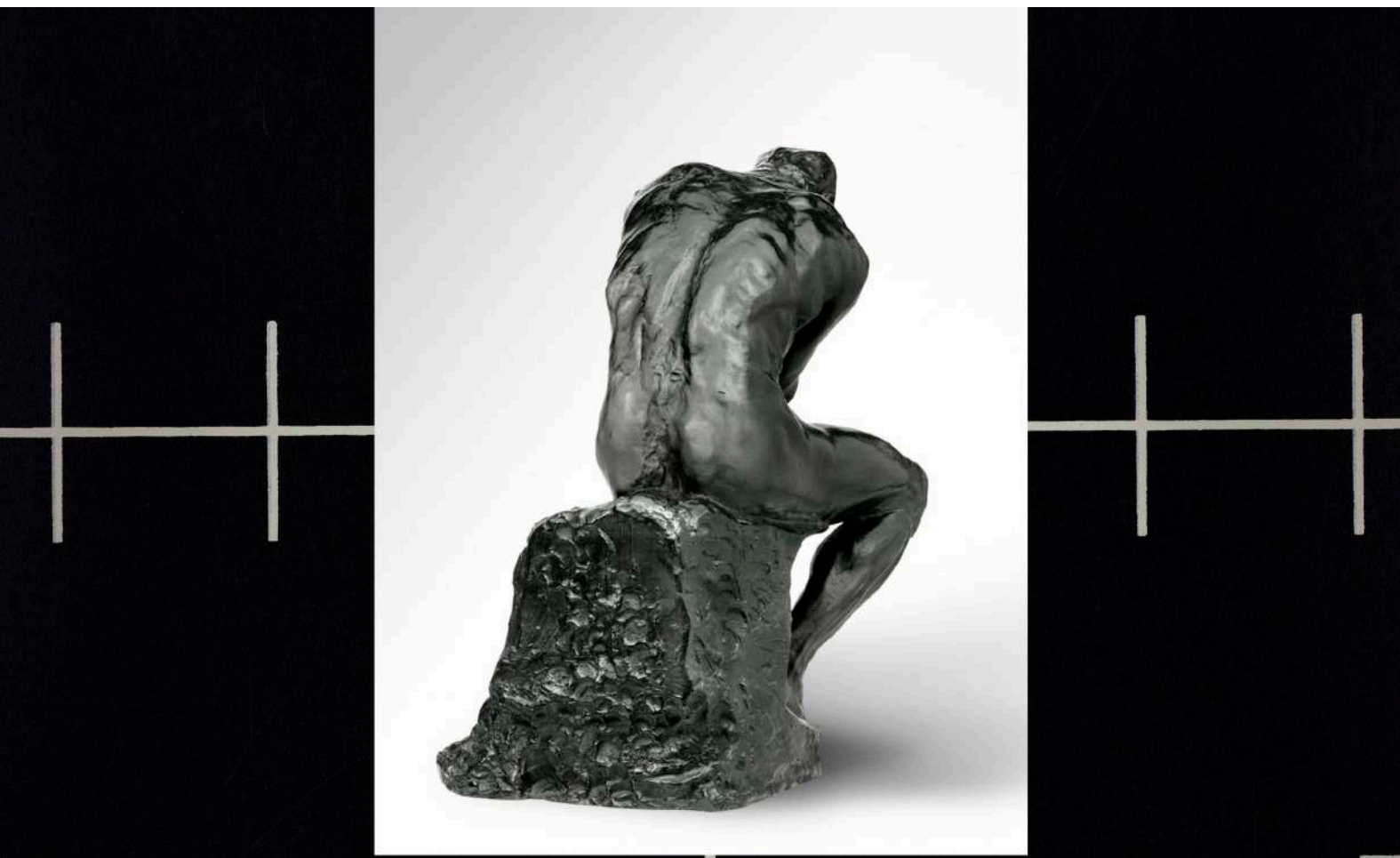
MAKIGallery



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galerie frank elbaz.

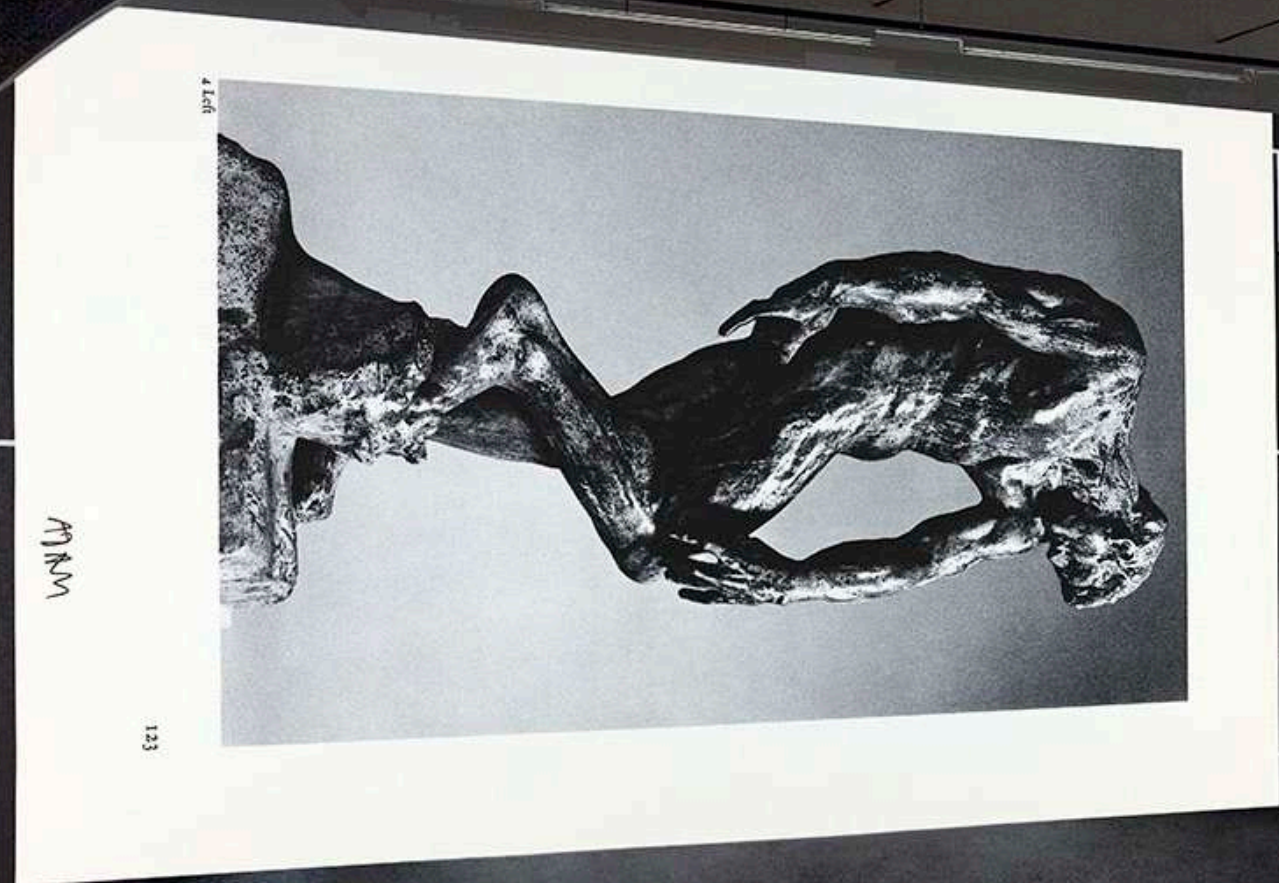
galerie frank elbaz.



The video *Volume 5. Sideways Thought* is part of *Time Life*, a series of stop-motion animations that use reference encyclopedias, photo books and instructional manuals as their raw material. The project imagines these books being scanned by a high-speed robotic book scanner, the kind used by universities and tech companies to archive libraries. *Time Life* proposes such a device as a new kind of filmmaking apparatus: a machine making flip-book-like animations, spitting out short anthropological essays while digitizing books for the Internet.

Volume 5. Sideways Thought is a motion study of the complete works of Auguste Rodin, made by aggregating every possible photographic view of Rodin's sculptures found in books on his work. Thomson assembles 360-degree revolutions around each sculpture, approximating a 3D digital scan of Rodin's corpus using only 2D analog materials. The original musical score is by Ernst Karel, a musician and sound artist and co-director of the 2020 film *Expedition Content*.

Mungo Thomson
Volume 5. Sideways Thought, 2020-2022
4K video with sound, 8:09 minutes
Original Score by Ernst Karel
Edition of 5 + 2 AP
(202020222937)



Mungo Thomson
Volume 5. *Sideways Thought*, 2020-2022
4K video with sound, 8:09 minutes
Original Score by Ernst Karel
Edition of 5 + 2 AP
(202020222937)
Exhibition view, *Sideways Thought*, 2022, galerie frank elbaz, Paris

galerie frank elbaz.



Mungo Thomson
Snowman, 2020
Painted bronze
73,7 x 46,4 x 55,9 cm (29 x 18 1/4 x 22 in.)
Unique
(20202279)

Snowman recasts the seemingly ubiquitous cardboard delivery box into a bronze monument for our age. Recasting also is an appropriate term for the transformation of these disposable (but environmentally damaging) cardboard boxes into the durable, mineralogical bronze. Thomson seizes the everyday, too easily cast off consumer objects of our day and produces anthropological relics for the future.



Mungo Thomson
Snowman, 2020
Painted bronze
46,4 x 48,6 x 65,4 cm (18 1/4 x 19 1/8 x 25 3/4 in.)
Unique
(20202280)



galerie frank elbaz.

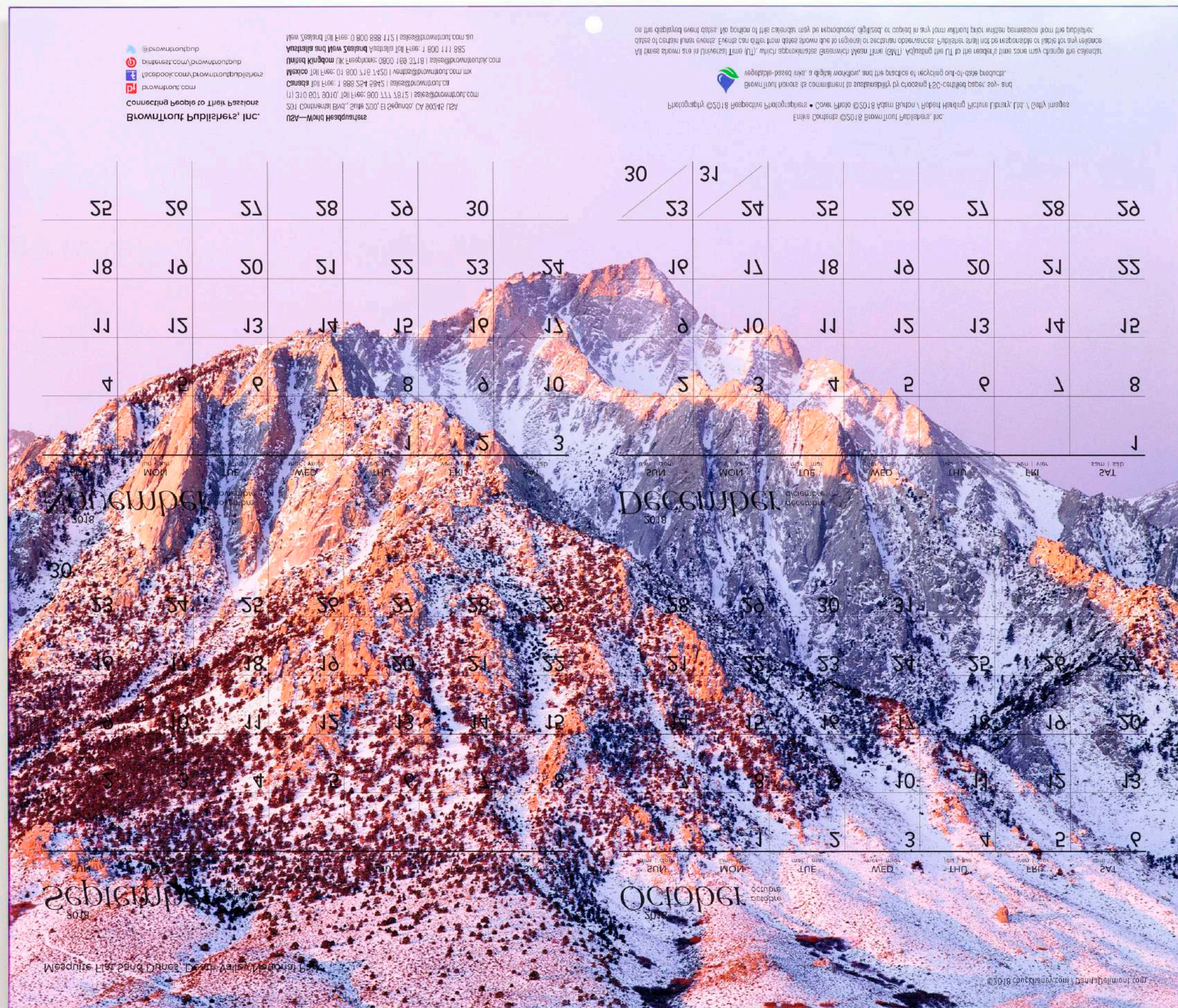


Mungo Thomson
Snowman, 2022
Painted bronze
229,2 cm high, Ø 13,3 cm
90 1/4 inches high, Ø 5 1/4 inches
Unique
(20222956)

Thomson's new Snowmen are vertical columns of shipping tubes, stacked in descending sizes and evocative of Brancusi and Tatlin, that were used to ship prints, proofs, paper and posters to his studio.



Mungo Thomson
Snowman, 2020
Painted bronze
9,3 x 23,5 x 34,2 cm (3 2/3 x 9 1/4 x 13 1/2 in.)
Unique
(20202319)



Mungo Thomson
 Wild & Scenic California 2019 (September-December), 2019
 2-sided UV-cured print on samba fabric, custom LED lightbox
 244 x 285 x 10 cm (96 1/8 x 112 1/4 x 3 7/8 in.)
 (20192081)

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vegetable-based inks, a digital workflow, and the practice of recycling out-of-date products.
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30 53	31 45	52	59	57	58	59
19	17	18	19	50	51	55
9	10	11	15	13	14	12
5	3	4	2	9	7	8

NEW YEAR'S DAY

3	5	7
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SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

JANUARY

JANUARY 2016

galerie frank elbaz.



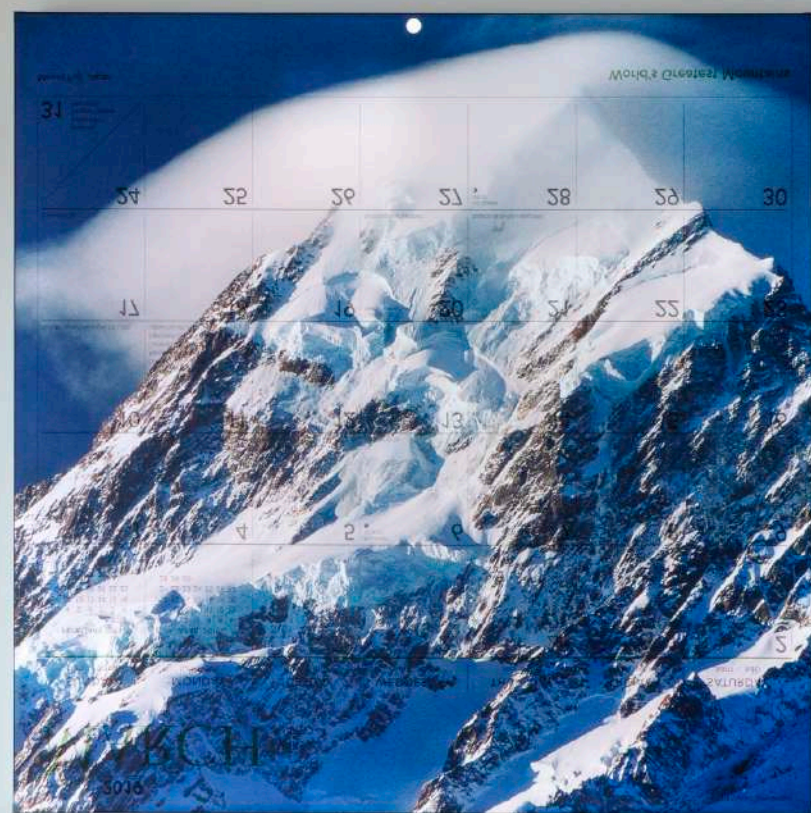
Mungo Thomson's lightbox works display calendar pages as if held up to the sun, allowing the reverse side of the page to show through. The images on the front and back of the page are collaged together with light – a calendar graphic with a photograph of a mountain, the grid of a single month embedded in an image of geological time.

These images are printed on either side of a single piece of fabric and stretched over a custom LED lightbox at an immersive scale. These works consider geochronology from a precarious contemporary vantage, using everyday, art-adjacent materials that already hang on the wall. Like Thomson's earliest wind chime works, the lightboxes pair evocations of elevated consciousness and spiritual pilgrimage with pragmatic home decor.

Mungo Thomson
Amazing Planet 2020 (August), 2020
Double-sided UV-cured print on samba fabric, custom LED lightbox
142,2 x 142,2 x 8,9 cm (56 x 56 x 3 1/2 in.)
(20202263)



Mungo Thomson
Background Extinction, exhibition view, galerie frank elbaz, Dallas, TX, USA, 2019



Mungo Thomson
Background Extinction, exhibition view, galerie frank elbaz, Dallas, TX, USA, 2019



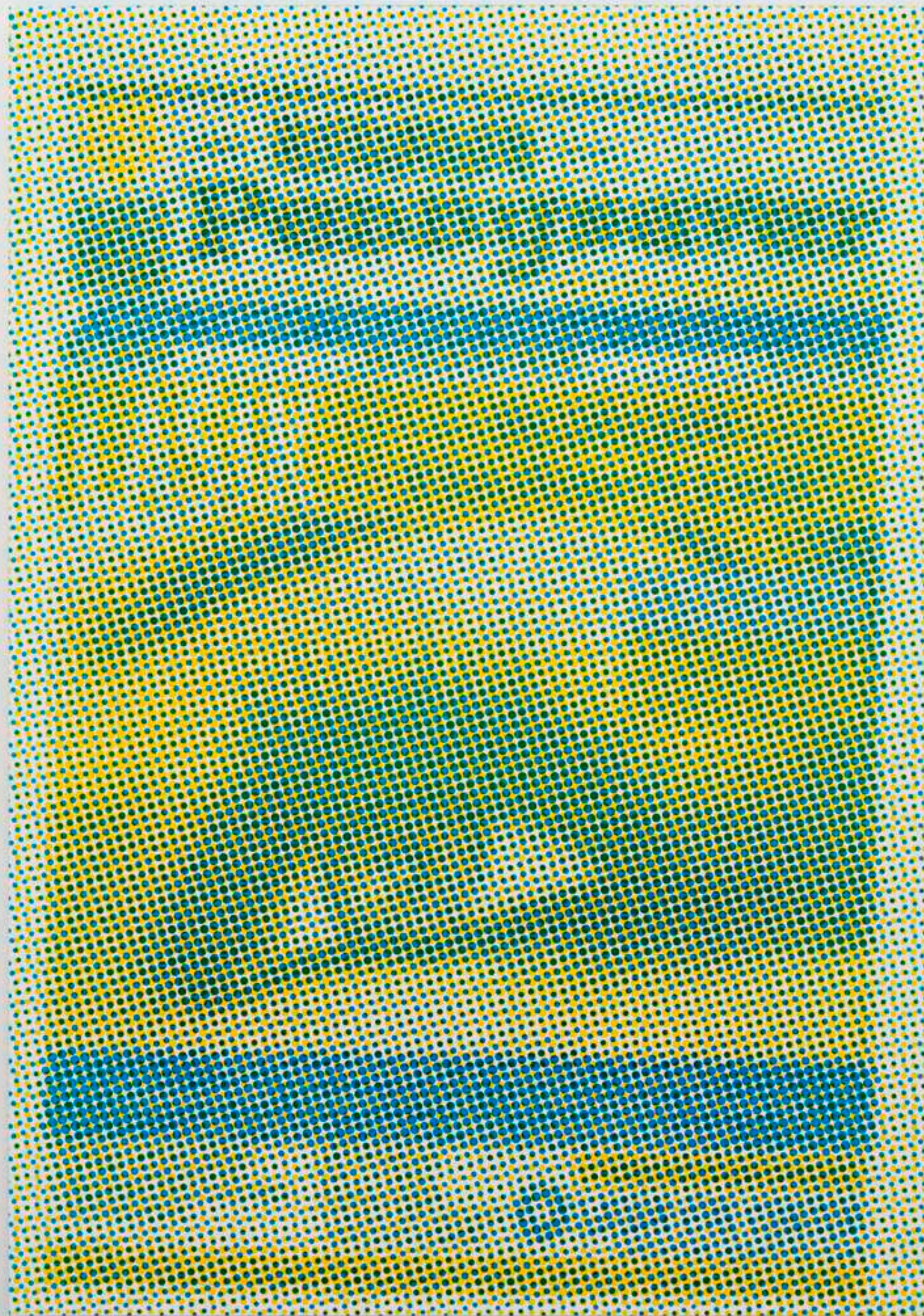
Mungo Thomson
Stories of Almost Everyone curated by Aram Moshayedi, exhibition view, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2018
Photo: Brian Forrest



Mungo Thomson
Stress Archive, 2014-2018
Stress toys, Lucite
Dimensions variable
Installation view, Vision Valley: The Glendale Biennial Brand Library & Art Center, Glendale, USA, 2018
Photo: Shane Rivera



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The source material in the Rods and Cones series was the junk circulars Mungo Thomson receives in the mail everyday. Whereas generally these small magazines very familiar in Los Angeles, such as Pennysaver or Local Values, are a nuisance and immediately recycled, the artist has been collecting them for several years. He selected pages related to vision (prescription glasses, contact lenses, ophtalmologists' offices, etc.), then scanned or photographed and abstracted them by enlarging them to 10 times their scale. In the human eye, the rods and cones are responsible for the perception of color and light. The series aims at arousing an awareness of one's own vision and of the way the visual field is actually an aggregate of tiny parts. The image can be seen using a cell phone camera. In these paintings, light is both a function of vision (cones are responsible for color, and rods for light) and a self-conscious artifact of California art. Mungo Thomson was influenced by the Light and Space movement and its claim for Southern California light.

Mungo Thomson
PS 10610 Eagle Rock 9/19/12-9/25/12 P1 CY, 2017
Transparent pigment on panel
232,5 x 162,5 cm (91 1/2 x 64 in.)
(20171333)

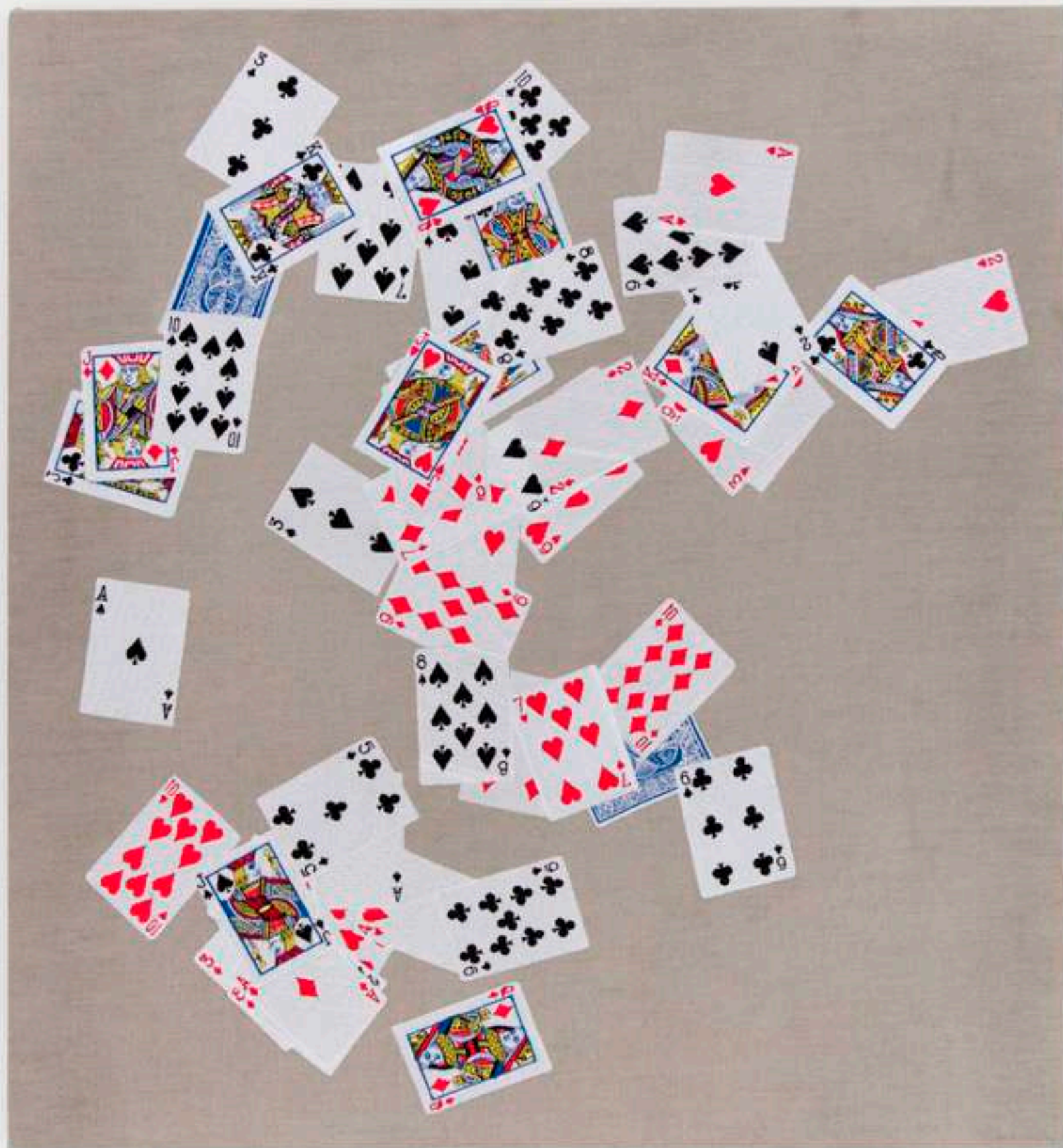


Mungo Thomson
PS 10610 Eagle Rock 4/17/13-4/23/13 P1 CMY, 2017
Transparent pigment on panel
232,4 x 162,6 cm (91,5 x 64 in.)
(20171176)



Mungo Thomson
Composition for 52 Keys, 2018
Custom code, computer components, Yamaha Disklavier piano.
Photo: Mark Woods





Mungo Thomson
Composition #7, 2015
Embroidery on linen
73 1/4 x 68 cm (29 1/4 x 27 1/4 in.)



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The Compositions series by Mungo Thomson is a project generated by chance operations: to produce each work, a standard deck of 52 playing cards are shuffled then thrown into the air. The resulting scatter formation on the studio floor is photographed and translated into an image on linen via digital embroidery. Digital embroidery is a long and fastidious process, it takes as long as one week to embroider the pattern onto a surface, or around an hour per card. John Cage's musical experimentations and chance-based compositions are a major inspiration for Mungo Thomson. He is also greatly inspired by Marcel Duchamp's work with found objects and basic games. In this series, the artist refers to Jackson Pollock's practice, using the studio floor as a site of production for work, and rendering his splatter gestures as scatter gestures. The final work appears as a celebration of the totally random; it is also a completely unique and unrepeatable configuration, reproducing cosmic laws but in a casual and prosaic way: the odds of being one thing and not another.

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Composition for Marimba is based on Thomson's premise that one can write a score for a 52-key marimba by shuffling a deck of cards. The marimba is commonly used as background music in pharmaceutical commercials, political campaign ads and movie trailers, for his warm and "human" sound; Composition for Marimba proposes the marimba as an endless, oceanic aural backdrop for an exhibition. An iPhone app plays every configuration of a shuffled deck of cards as a new sequence of notes on a marimba, displaying each card onscreen. Given that the number of possible arrangements in a deck of cards is an "astronomically large number", the program will not run through all the possible combinations of musical notes during the lifespan of planet earth. The visual reference to Robert Filliou's piece Telepathic Music No. 5 is important as well as the filiation with John Cage; Mungo Thomson plays with Cage's notions of an open-ended and chance-based score and associates them with the logic of computers and automation.

Mungo Thomson
Composition for Marimba, 2016
iOS app, iPhone 6 Plus.
Custom music stand in chromed brass, duration variable



Mungo Thomson
Cricket Quintet for clarinet, violin, 2 flutes and Percussion (detail), 2013
5 iPod shuffle, 5 mini-speakers, 5 cricket cages
Diam 8,8 x 13,5 cm (3 4/9 x 5 1/3 in.)
Installation view, galerie frank elbaz, Paris, France, 2013

galerie frank elbaz.

Mungo Thomson

Born in 1969 in Woodland, California, USA. Lives and works in Los Angeles, USA.

Education

- 2000 Master of Fine Arts, Interdisciplinary Studio, University of California, Los Angeles, USA
- 1994 Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program, New York, USA
- 1991 Bachelor of Arts, University of California, Santa Cruz, USA

Solo Exhibitions, Projects & Performances (selection)

- 2025 Time Life, Karma, New York, USA
A Universal Picture, Karma, New York, USA
- 2024 Collection in Focus: Mungo Thomson, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA
- 2023 Time Life, Karma, Los Angeles, USA
- 2022 Sculptures, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO, USA
Sideways Thought, galerie frank elbaz, Paris, France
Time Life, Karma, New York, USA
- 2021 Nagori Yuki, Isetan Shinjuku, Tokyo, Japan
- 2020 Mungo Thomson | Archives, Masahiro Maki Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
Background Extinction, galerie frank elbaz, Dallas
- 2019 Rods and Cones, Masahiro Maki Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 2018 Composition for 52 Keys, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA, USA
American Desert (for Chuck Jones), Museum of Fine Arts Houston, TX, USA
- 2016 Why Does The World Exist?, galerie frank elbaz, Paris, France
- 2015 Time, People, Money, Crickets, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada
- 2014 Crickets for Solo and Ensemble, ArtPace, San Antonio, TX, USA
Wall, Window or Bar Signs, Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco, CA, USA
- 2013 Mungo Thomson – Negative Space, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada
Time, People, Money, Crickets, SITE Santa Fe, NM, USA Times Museum,

galerie frank elbaz.

- Guangzhou, China
High Line Art Performances, The High Line, New York, NY, USA
Mungo Thomson, galerie frank elbaz, Paris, France
- 2012 Levitating Mass, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO, USA
The Apartment, Vancouver, Canada
- 2010 New Year 7, Western Bridge, Seattle, USA
Mungo Thomson, Gavlak, Palm Beach, FL, USA
- 2009 The Varieties of Experience, John Connelly Presents, New York, USA
Silent Film of a Tree Falling in the Forest, SCREENING, Philadelphia, USA
Billboard Project, LAXART, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2008 Hammer Projects: Mungo Thomson, UCLA Hammer Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Einstein #1, Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2007 Mungo Thomson: Between Projects, Kadist Art Foundation, Paris, France
- 2006 Mungo Thomson: Negative Space Variations, Eldorado Series, Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea (GAMeC), Bergamo, Italy
Art Statements, Art Basel 37, Basel, Switzerland
Freak Flag (White Flag), REC (Galerie Esther Schipper Project Space), Berlin, Germany
- 2005 The Suburban, Oak Park, Illinois, USA
New York, New York, New York, New York, John Connelly Presents, New York, NY, USA
- 2004 Centric 65: Mungo Thomson, California State University Art Museum, Long Beach, CA, USA
2004 Bienal Internacional de Cuenca, Cuenca, Ecuador
Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2002 Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2000 Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 1998 Levitating In My Studio, The Hole, Postmasters Gallery, New York, NY, USA
- 1996 Rest Area, Stefany Martz Gallery, New York, NY, USA
- 1995 Mungo Thomson, Stefany Martz Gallery, New York, NY, USA

Group Exhibitions (selection)

- 2025 SNOW SHOW: Winter Now, Sun Valley Museum of Art, Ketchum, Idaho, USA

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- 2024 *A History of Photography: Selections from the Museum's Collection*, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA
A Particular Kind of Heaven, 70 Main Street, Thomaston, Maine, USA
Hollywood Dream Bubble: Ed Ruscha's Influence in Los Angeles and Beyond curated by Dani Tull and Jessica Gallucci, The Hole, Los Angeles, USA
Color is the First Revelation of the World, Orange County Museum of Art, Costa Mesa, California, USA
- 2023 *Negative Space (STScl-2015-02)*, Grand Av Arts/Bunker Hill Metro Station, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Four On The Floor, Probably Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
After Laughter Comes Tears, MUDAM, Luxembourg
- 2022 *Building and Dreaming*, By Art Matters, Hangzhou, China
Five Ways In: Themes from the Collection, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA
Communication Systems in a Global Context, Fowler Museum at UCLA, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2020 *ATTO 4 – DIVERSI*, Museo Burel, Belluno, Italy
Friends of Ours, organized by Benjamin Godsill and Joel Mesler, Rental Gallery, East Hampton, NY, USA
Frieze Projects Los Angeles 2020
- 2019 *Cartooney*, New Media Gallery, Vancouver, Canada
Among Others: Photography and the Group, Morgan Library, New York, NY, USA
- 2018 *Superstition*, Marres, Maastricht, Netherlands
Post-Studio, Museo Jumex, Mexico City, MEX
Vision Valley, Brand Library & Art Center, Glendale, CA, USA
Stories of Almost Everyone, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2017 *The Time. The Place. Contemporary Art from the Collection*, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA, USA
Override, Expo Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA
More Light, JOAN, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Cash for Gold like Smoke for Mirrors and Land for Sea, Friche La Belle de Mai, Marseille, France
The Basilisk, Curated by Aaron Moulton, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Passages Nocturne La Suite, CAC Passages, Troyes, France
The Arcades: Contemporary Art and Walter Benjamin, Curated by Jens Hoffmann, The Jewish Museum, New York, NY, USA
L.A. Exuberance: New Gifts by Artists, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, USA

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- 2016 *This is Presence*, Artists' Film International 2016, Ballroom Marfa, Marfa, TX, USA
Touch the Sky, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, New York, NY, USA
Prototypology, An Index of Process and Mutation, Gagosian Gallery, Rome, Italy
Ordinary Pictures, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA
- 2015 *Collecion Jumex, In Girum Imus Nocte et Consumimur Igni*, Museo Jumex, Mexico City, Mexico
Prototypology, An Index of Process and Mutation, Gagosian Gallery, Rome, Italy
Theories on Forgetting, Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills, CA, USA
Project LSD, White Columns, New York, NY, USA
- 2014 *And Yes, I Even Remember You*, Aran Cravey, Los Angeles, CA, USA
The Outlanders, The Pit, Glendale, CA, USA
2nd CAFAM Biennale: The Invisible Hand, CAF A Art Museum, Beijing, China
A Guest Without A Host Is A Ghost, Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt; Beirut, Lebanon
California Landscape Into Abstraction, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA, USA
Golden State, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson, AZ, USA
Imitatio Christie's (Vol. 1), Galleria Zero, Milan, Italy
- 2013 *Dear Portrait*, MOSTYN, Llandudno, UK
Made in Space, Gavin Brown's enterprise and Venus Over Manhattan, New York, NY, USA
Vanishing Point, Bitforms gallery, New York, NY, USA
Yebisu International Festival for Art & Alternative Visions 2013: Public Diary, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Japan
The Polaroid Years: Instant Photography and Experimentation, The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY, USA
Dear Portrait, Oriel Mostyn Gallery, Wales, UK
Turn off the Sun: Selections from La Collecion Jumex, Arizona State University Art Museum, AZ, USA
Specific Collisions II, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY, USA
Made in Space, Night Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Rocks and Clocks: Cameron Gainer, Mark Hagen, Emilie Halpern, Mungo Thomson, Ambach and Rice, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2012 *Pacific Standard Time Public Art and Performance Festival: The Ball of Artists*, Greystone Mansion, Los Angeles, CA, USA
The Living Years: Art After 1989, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA

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- 101 Collection: Route 3, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco, CA, USA
Kadist - Pathways into a Collection, Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai, China
News From Nowhere, Firstsite, Colchester, UK
Temporary Structures, Walter and McBean Galleries, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA, USA
Lifelike, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA
Nothing Beside Remains, Los Angeles Nomadic Division, Marfa, TX, USA
Knowledges, Mount Wilson Observatory, California, USA
Dogma, Metro Pictures, New York, NY, USA
Mapas Invisibles, Luis Adelantado, México City, Mexico
Devouring Time, Western Bridge, Seattle, NY, USA
Particles, Meessen De Clercq, Brussels, Belgium
- 2011
- Untitled (12th Istanbul Biennial), Antrepo 3 and 5, Istanbul, Turkey
Magical Consciousness, Arnolfini, Bristol, UK
The Cinema Effect: Illusion, Reality, and the Moving Image, CaixaForum, Madrid, Spain
101 Collection: Route 2 – Undisclosed Destination, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco, CA, USA
Play Ground, New Walk Museum and Art Gallery, Leicester, UK
Forest, The Institute of Contemporary Art at Maine College of Art, Portland, OR, USA
Fun House, Western Bridge, Seattle, NY, USA
Light in Darkness, Western Bridge, Seattle, NY, USA
Locations, Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, NY, USA
La Vie Mode D'emploi (Life: A User's Manual), Meessen De Clercq, Brussels, Belgium
Transcendental Empiricism, Rob Tufnell, London, UK
Specific Collisions, Galerie Cosar HMT, Düsseldorf, Germany
- 2010
- Aleksandra Mir / Mungo Thomson, Gavlak Projects, Palm Beach, FL, USA
Exhibition, Exhibition, Castello di Rivoli, Torino, Italy
Olympic Sculpture Park Summer Projects, Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA, USA
MOCA Art Basel Miami Beach Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, FL, USA
El Gabinete Blanco / The White Cabinet, Fundación/Colección Jumex, México City, Mexico
For Real: 28 Projections in Public Space, Maastricht, The Netherlands
¡Sin techo está pelón!, Universidad de Guanajuato, Guanajuato, Mexico
DARK MATTER / SMOOTH STRUCTURES, Smart Project Space, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Huis Clos / No Exit, Galerie Elba Benitez, Madrid, Spain
Gallery, Galerie, Galleria, Norma Mangione Gallery, Torino, Italy

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- Altogether Elsewhere, Rodeo Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey
Billboard Project, Portugal Arte 2010, Lisbon, Portugal
The Secret Knows / The Secret (Still) Knows, 508 8th Street, Austin, TX; LAB, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2009
- Compilation IV, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Germany
Beyond the Picturesque, Stedelijk Museum voor Aktuelle Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent, Belgium; Museum Marta Herford, Herford, Germany
La nada y el ser (Nothingness and Being), Fundación/Colección Jumex, México City, Mexico
Looking Through the Other End of the Telescope, Scotsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Scotsdale, AZ, USA
The Moving Image: Scan to Screen, Pixel to Projection, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA, USA
- Changing Light Bulbs In Thin Air, Hessel Museum at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, NY, USA
Les Enfants Terribles, Fundación/Colección Jumex, México City, Mexico
Black Curtains: Art, Theater and Cinema, Artissima 16, Torino, Italy
Los Angeles: Aspects of The Archaic Revival, Galerie Haus Schneider, Uschi Kolb, Karlsruhe, Germany
Broken English, Seiler + Mosseri-Marlio Galerie, Zurich, Switzerland
Reading Standing Up, Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2008
- 2008 Whitney Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, USA
Le Havre Biennial of Contemporary Art, Musée Malraux, Le Havre, France
8th Bienal de Arte Panama: The Sweet Burnt Smell of History, Museum of Contemporary Art, Panama City, Panama
The Cinema Effect: Illusion, Reality, and the Moving Image, Part 2: Realisms, Hirshhorn, Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, USA
The Possibility of an Island, North Miami Museum of Contemporary Art at Goldman Warehouse, Miami, FL, USA
Sudden White (After London), Royal Academy of Art, London, UK
The Future as Disruption, The Kitchen, New York, NY, USA
The Lining of Forgetting, Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC, USA
The Tree: From the Sublime to the Social, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada
You Complete Me, Western Bridge, Seattle, WA, USA
Desertshore, Luckman Fine Arts Gallery, California State University, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Huis Clos / No Exit, Proyectos Monclova, México City, Mexico
The Store, Tulips & Roses, Vilnius, Lithuania
Everything Must out Going!, Asia Song Society, New York, NY, USA

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	Red Wind, Blum and Poe, Los Angeles, CA, USA Tapestry, Karyn Lovegrove Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
2007	Bill Leavitt, Allen Ruppersberg, Mungo Thomson, Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA Sympathy for the Devil: Art and Rock and Roll Since 1967, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL, USA; Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, FL, USA Been Up So Long It Looks Like Down To Me, Presentation House Gallery, Vancouver, Canada Some Time Waiting, Kadist Art Foundation, Paris, France
2006	Strange Powers, Creative Time, New York, NY, USA Prophets of Deceit, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, CA, USA Eigenheim, Kunstverein Göttingen, Göttingen, Germany Happiness, Gagosian Gallery, 4th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany Yes Bruce Nauman, Zwirner and Wirth, New York, NY, USA When the Moon Shines on the Moonshine, The Breeder, Athens, Greece The Show Will Be Open When the Show Will Be Closed, STORE Gallery, London, UK
2005	PERFORMA05: First Biennial Of Visual Art Performance, New York, NY, USA Frieze Art Fair Sculpture Park, Regent's Park, London, UK The Early Show, White Columns, New York, NY, USA
2004	2004 California Biennial, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, USA Treble, Sculpture Center, Long Island City, New York, NY, USA 100 Artists See God, Independent Curators International, New York, NY, USA VIDEODROME: 27 International Artists, Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, USA Repeat Performance, Artists' Space, New York, NY, USA 2048 KM, Or Gallery, Vancouver, Canada Drunk vs. Stoned, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, NY, USA Land of the Free, Jack Hanley Gallery, San Francisco, CA, USA Tonight, Studio Voltaire, London, UK
2003	SNOWBLIND: Matthew Brannon, Wade Guyton, Mungo Thomson, John Connelly Presents, New York, NY, USA 17 Reasons, Jack Hanley Gallery, San Francisco, CA, USA Sandwiched, Public Art Project, Los Angeles, CA, USA The Outlaw Series, New York, NY, USA Now Playing, D'Amelio Terras, New York, NY, USA
2002	ELEKTRA: Gabriel Orozco and Mungo Thomson, TRANSMISSION,

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	Glasgow, Scotland Rock My World: Recent Art and the Memory of Rock'n'Roll, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco, CA, USA Videodrome II, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, NY, USA Hear the Art, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna, Austria High Desert Test Sites, A-Z West, Joshua Tree, USA
2001	Sound System: 9th Biennial of the Moving Image, MAMCO, Geneva, Switzerland [untitled] 654321, Kunsthallen Brandts Klædefabrik, Odense, Denmark Hemorrhaging of States, TENT.CBK, Rotterdam, The Netherlands I Want More...And More..., Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin, Ireland Drawn from LA, Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis, USA
2000	Re-Drawing the Line, Art In General, New York, NY, USA Living, Part Two, Chicago Project Room, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Public Collections

France	FRAC Ile-de-France, Paris Kadist Art Foundation, Paris
Italy	Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea (GAMeC), Bergamo
Mexico	Fundación/Colección Jumex, México City
Switzerland	Schaulager – Emmanuel Hoffmann Collection, Basel
USA	Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco, CA Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, TX Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, FL Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA New School University Art Collection, New York, NY Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA University Art Museum, California State University, Long Beach, CA Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

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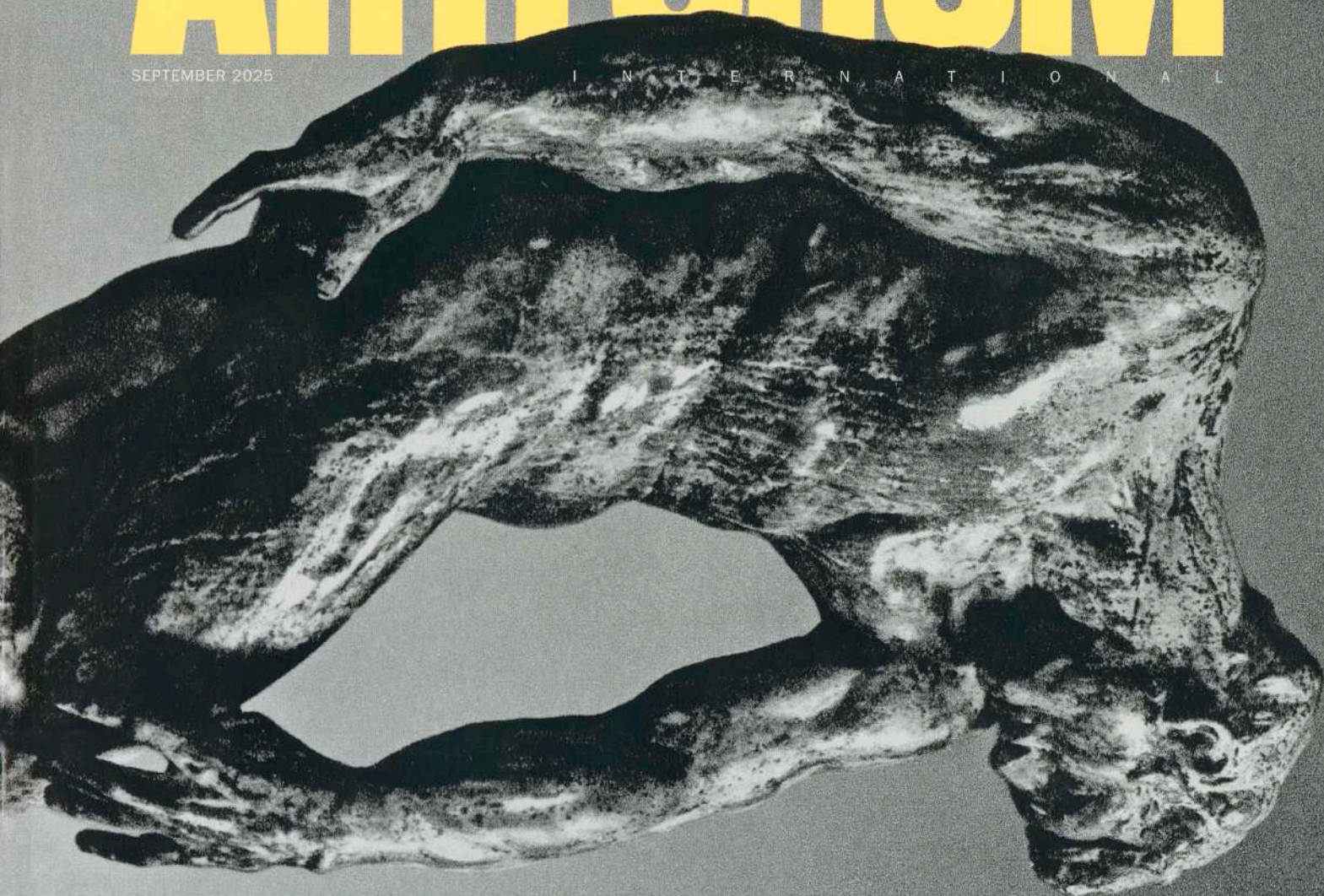
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ARTFORUM

SEPTEMBER 2025

I N T E R N A T I O N A L



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Mungo Thomson

BY JAN TUMLIR

Yuk Hui

WITH DANIEL BIRNBAUM

Ali Eyal

BY ANDREW BERARDINI

Agnieszka Kurant

BY CHRISTY LANGE

EDITOR'S LETTER

SIDEWAYS THOUGHTS

WHAT MAKES A WORK OF ART "GREAT"? When I was teaching art history, one idea that emerged in our classroom discussions was that the great work of art is often (though not always) polyvalent, proposing multiple ideas or themes simultaneously and readily lending itself to new readings by new audiences. In other words, it is the opposite of a question that answers itself, or an utterance that fully discharges its meaning in the moment of its uttering.

An approximation of this idea appears in this issue's thoughtful Close-Up on Mungo Thomson's video *Sideways Thought*, 2020–22, which is featured on the cover. As Jan Tumlr explains, the work is a kind of stop-motion animation made from Thomson's photographs of images of Auguste Rodin's sculptures that have appeared in books on the artist, including a 1969 volume from the popular Time-Life Library of Art series. Writing in defense of Thomson's "cleverness," Tumlr notes that every aspect of this video that may appear like a "one-liner" in fact "opens . . . to a radiating constellation of lines, pretty much inexhaustible." These include (but are not limited to) the analogous relationship of photographic prints and sculptural multiples; the feedback loops between Rodin's own photographs and sculptures; the modern *paragone* between photography and sculpture as mediums for freezing movement; and the ongoing digital transformation of the photo-based visual culture that emerged in mid-century.

When I sat down with *Sideways Thought* this summer, other "radiating constellations" appeared to me. Most notably, its unrelenting staccato rhythm seemed to reflect the breathless pace of current events, with Rodin's expressive figures—here suspended in the virtual space of tech-

nological media—becoming expressions of our own mediatized suspense. "Sideways Thought": what better phrase than this to describe the ricocheting between horror and hope in this hall of mirrors we call the present, or the experience of having our minds riven by bearing witness to world-changing events (from Trump's mobilization of ICE as a kind of secret police to Netanyahu's starvation of Gazans) while going about our daily lives?

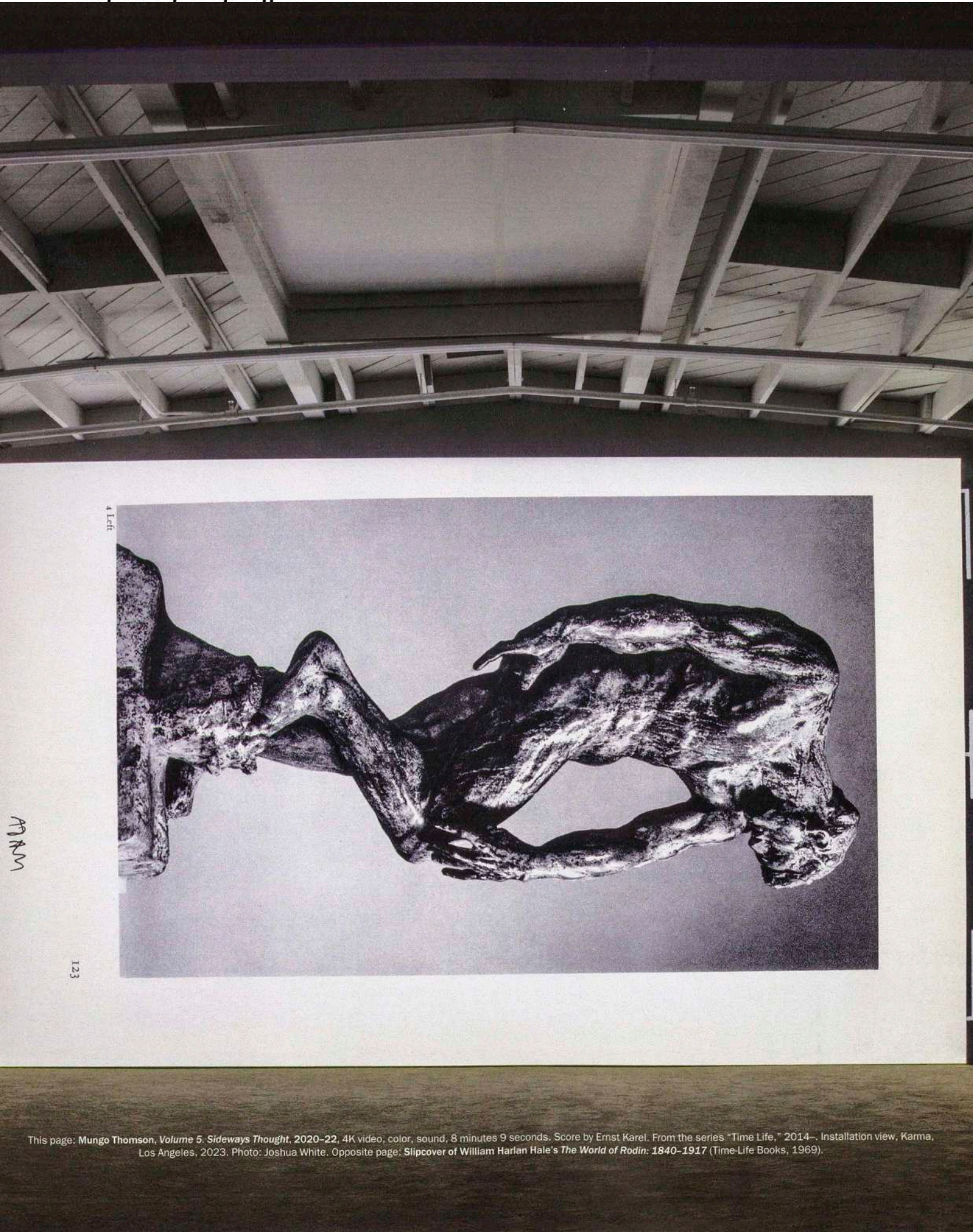
As I finish writing this letter in mid-summer, I have to assume our readers will still be in this "sideways" condition as they encounter this issue's texts on various forms of subversive art, from Elizabeth Mangini's sympathetic analysis of Carol Rama's rebellious feminism to Moritz Scheper's appreciation of the sincerity of Monika Stricker's fleshy paintings and Jim Quilty's narration of Lawrence Abu Hamdan's latest sonic investigation. Another theme that I hope will resonate is the relevance—both aesthetic and social—of artists who engage the fields of science and technology, as demonstrated by Christy Lange's essay on the art of Agnieszka Kurant, Doreen Ríos's introduction to Manuel Felguérez's "*La máquina estética*" (The Aesthetic Machine), and contributing editor Daniel Birnbaum's interview with philosopher Yuk Hui (which also continues our renewed interest in the theoretical models shaping contemporary art). The Features section is rounded out by the poetic reflections of senior editor Alex Jovanovich on Agosteo Machado's queer archives and of longtime contributor Andrew Berardini on the haunted and haunting paintings of Ali Eyal, whose work remembers the US invasion of Iraq, but is also so much more than that.

I am glad that today—though it has not always been

the case (and in fact, the magazine was founded on the antithesis of these terms)—*Artforum* is capacious enough to encompass the expressive and the expository, the diaristic and the diagnostic—sometimes within a single text.* The idea that the magazine is not just an archive or institution but also a dynamic, collaborative enterprise—one that can and should change with the times—is something I tried to keep in mind this summer, as we embarked upon the first redesign of the print issue in many years. (As you can see, it remains square; some traditions are too sacred, even for me.) In addition to moving our logo out of the top left corner (not for the first time), we are returning to having the names of select contributors featured on the cover, once again emphasizing writers and the important work they do. We also have reorganized the table of contents, with the aim of making it easier for readers to navigate each issue. Finally, we continue to expand our content: Our previews of notable exhibitions are back, and will appear every September, January, and May; the new Studio Visit page will close out each issue with a snapshot from an artist's studio, reminding us of the labor at the heart of this whole thing we reductively call "the art world." To repeat the words of Koyo Kouoh that Adam Szymczyk cites in his tribute to her in these pages, "artists are the visionaries and social scientists who allow us to reflect and project in ways afforded only to this line of work." □

—Tina Rivers Ryan

*On the distinction between "belletristic" and "analytical" criticism that informed *Artforum's* early years, see Yve-Alain Bois, "Books: Phil Said, They Said: Yve-Alain Bois on *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962–1974*," *Artforum*, October 2000, 21.



This page: Mungo Thomson, *Volume 5. Sideways Thought*, 2020–22, 4K video, color, sound, 8 minutes 9 seconds. Score by Ernst Karel. From the series "Time Life," 2014–. Installation view, Karma, Los Angeles, 2023. Photo: Joshua White. Opposite page: Slipcover of William Harlan Hale's *The World of Rodin: 1840–1917* (Time-Life Books, 1969).

CLOSE-UP

MUNGO THOMSON'S *SIDEWAYS THOUGHT*, 2020–22

JAN TUMLIR

THE VIDEO WORK *SIDEWAYS THOUGHT*, 2020–22, by Mungo Thomson comprises one part—or, as he puts it, “volume” (number 5, in this case)—of his expansive “Time Life” series, begun in 2014 and ongoing. *Sideways Thought* is generally devoted to the work of Auguste Rodin and, more specifically, to how the sculptor’s practice appears in print media. The pictorial material included in the video was gleaned from some fifty art catalogues, their number large enough to suggest comprehensiveness, although it doesn’t come anywhere near representing the totality of publications on the sculptor’s work—a goal that would in any case be unreachable, since new entries continue to appear on a regular basis. Thomson’s production process is relatively straightforward: He cuts pages from their bindings and shoots them on a copy stand with a Canon 5D camera connected to a Dragon-frame stop-motion animation program. On-screen, static pictures of static objects are thus made to move, or rather, since all of these objects have been photographed from multiple angles, in different spaces, and under varying conditions of light, our eyes are set into motion around them. Simple enough, yet the viewing experience is much more complicated, by turns enthralling and deeply disquieting. It is uncanny in precisely the sense highlighted by Freud, prompting anxious questions as to whether something dead has come alive, and vice versa. State-of-the-art animation techniques here collide with primal intuitions of animism.



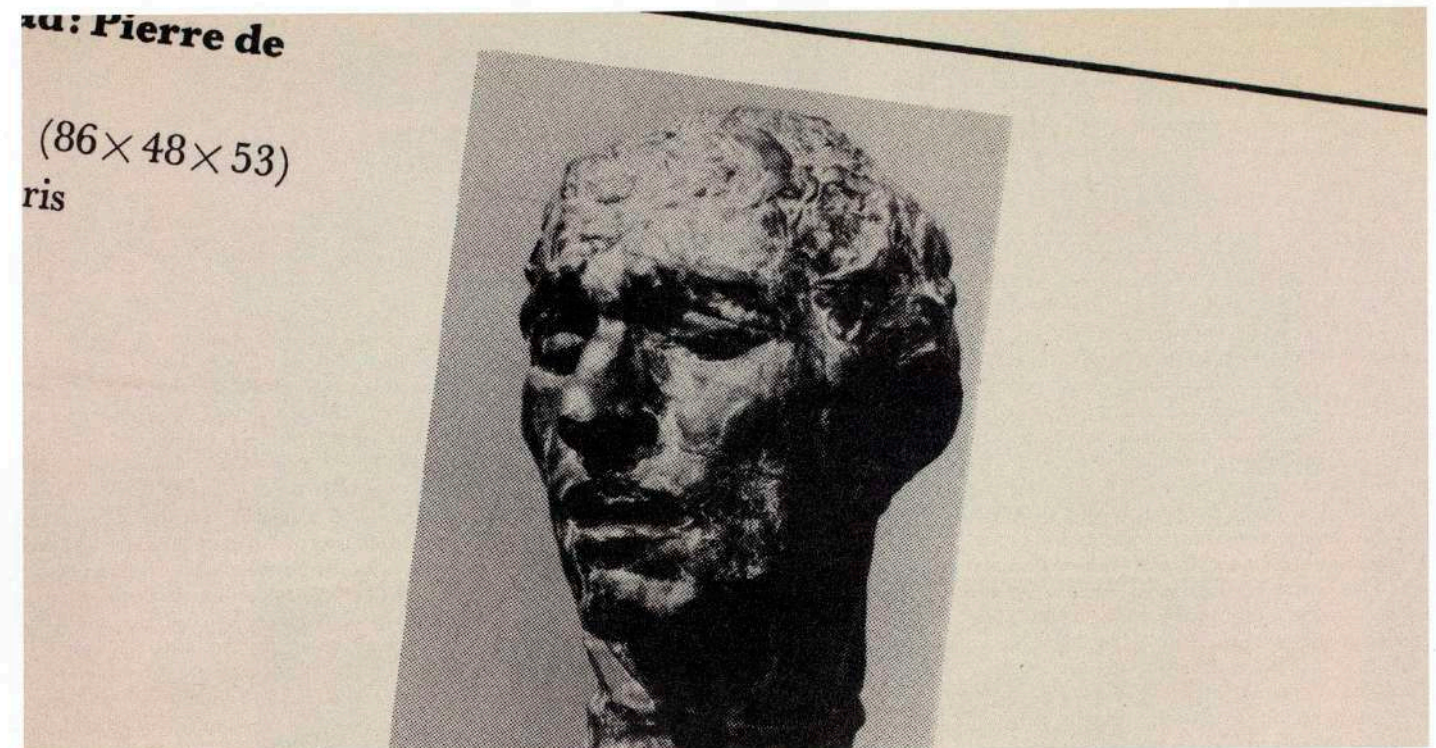
In *Sideways Thought*, discrete works by Rodin are merged into a singular, monstrous entity, a lump of *prima materia* continually undergoing decomposition and recomposition. One might be reminded of the malleability that defined Art Clokey’s clay character Gumby, a staple of children’s television programming during the 1950s and ’60s, only now the process unfolds without beginning or end: Ceaselessly, sculptural form pulsates and mutates. As we are never returned to any figural baseline, our eyes are increasingly ungrounded. Only in the technical artifacts—which include the registration lines of the copy stand, the skewed edges of pages, the fragments of text and annotation surrounding the pictures, and ultimately the grain of the photograph—do we find anything to firmly latch on to. These details are all reproduced in extremely high resolution and projected at large scale, a reminder that every illusion on offer stems from concrete “facts on the ground.” Remain focused: The main event of the work is mediation.

Other entries in Thomson’s “Time Life” series relate to exercise, cooking, flowers, etc.—an assortment of topics deemed by the publishers of Time-Life Books as essential to individual cultivation at a particular moment in history. Together, they point back to a midcentury period of inflection in the logistics of mass culture,

particularly in the United States. They place us squarely in the midst of the “American Century,” a time of booming prosperity, national pride, and seemingly unlimited cultural clout.¹ Abstract Expressionist painting and jazz were being exported worldwide and yet, against this effervescent backdrop of free-form cosmopolitanism, the figure of the uncultured, uncouth, “Ugly American” remained stubbornly present. This might well have been Time-Life’s target audience; to put it bluntly, its books were designed to counter our incipient provincialism, and nowhere more sharply than in the art-related titles. These offered a tour of the art-historical horizon to an audience that, for the most part, had no access to the works collected in the cultural capitals. Sold on a subscription basis, books devoted to the old and new masters would arrive every few months in the homes of those marooned in “flyover country,” delivered by mail like emergency rations. One could say that the promise of André Malraux’s “museum without walls” was here fulfilled to the letter.² But the counterargument is no less valid: Reducing fine art to just another delectable item of staycation tourism, this virtual show-space might have advanced cultural taste no farther than the middlebrow mark.

Between 1966 and 1970, Time-Life released its Library of Art special collection, a corpus of twenty-eight volumes, introduced (as per usual) one at a time. Among these was the 1969 title *The World of Rodin, 1840–1917*. While this book was certainly a prime catalyst in the making of *Sideways Thought*, Thomson’s work reaches well beyond the imagery that appears in its pages. This marks a departure from his earlier videos, which tend to hew more closely to a single source in the imprint.³ The exorbitant proliferation of such imagery is here delivered in a form that might be termed at once cinematic and not, something like a very fast-turning slideshow. The upshot is undeniably a moving picture; however, animated at eight frames per second—well below the once-optimal number of twenty-four (now sometimes ratcheted up to sixty and even 120)—it falls short of that physiological sweet spot where the succession of distinct imagistic units is merged into a seamless flow by way of the persistence of vision.⁴ Rather, *Sideways Thought* plumbs a sour spot, and does so with great precision. Its momentum is herky-jerky, staccato. Between every frame a disjunctive gap intrudes, subdividing the whole back into its parts, and thereby confronting the viewer with the plethora of copy culture, a barely manageable immensity of data.

If we can relate Thomson’s video to cinema in more than a metaphorical sense, then it would have to be a highly fragile sort, always accelerating while at the same



That the current stage of “the age of technical reproducibility” is one equally prey to the forces of acceleration and inertia is a sense *Sideways Thought* renders acute.

time devolving toward the stasis of its photographic building blocks. It is a psychologically taxing experience; one struggles with it but then also occasionally surrenders in a kind of blissed-out exhaustion. Numerous precedents for Thomson’s approach can be cited from the annals of the avant-garde and/or underground, including such works as Wallace Berman’s *Aleph*, 1956–66; Stan Brakhage’s *Mothlight*, 1963; and Tony Conrad’s *The Flicker*, 1966. That the heyday of “hypnagogic cinema,” as some have labeled it, intersects with that of the Time-Life books lends this project a near-irreproachable conceptual basis. No less fortuitously, the concept can quickly be set aside. The impact of Thomson’s work is as overwhelmingly embodied and visceral—and also, I will add with some trepidation, mystical—as that of his forebears.

There is a distinctly anachronistic quality to these proceedings, and this too contributes to their uncanny effect. But whereas the filmic auteurs mentioned above drilled down on the stroboscopic flashing of their projectors, always set at the same rate, as a means of synchronizing the viewer’s breathing, pulse, and synaptic firing with the flow of images on-screen, Thomson commands a much more versatile technology. Here, because lenses remain open, the hypnagogic timing is adjustable.

In the “Time Life” works the image not only moves but vibrates; it carries a rhythm. These videos are composed either in response to a soundtrack (as is the knot-tying-themed *Volume 6. The Working End*, 2021–22, which is edited to the beat of Pauline Oliveros’s 1974 percussion piece “Single Stroke Roll Meditation”) or else they instigate it (for instance, *Volume 16. FOLK2NS, or The Encyclopedia of Guitar Chords*, 2025, in which the imagery literally scores the soundtrack, performed by Lee Ranaldo). The timbrally meandering electronic pulse in *Sideways Thought* was generated by Ernst Karel to the tempo of the footage. Reminiscent of Steve Reich’s metronomic Minimalism and equally of the thrum of scanning devices, its design came in reply to the artist’s demand for “an MRI you can dance to.”

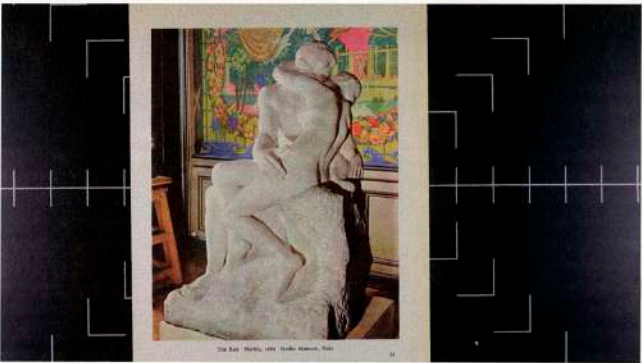
Upon his emergence, right around the start of the aughts, Thomson was often characterized as a late-stage responder to the so-called Pictures generation. This was a period when terms like *media hacking* and *culture jamming* had begun to displace the old-school “appropriation.” Plundering the reserves of mass-market entertainment as well as avant-garde art, he has always deployed both erasure and archival accumulation as signature tactics. For instance, in *The American Desert* (for Chuck Jones), 2002, the characters from “Road Runner” cartoons are excised

to leave behind just the scenery, a succession of moving landscape tableaux. In *Untitled (Time)*, 2010, a video that more directly relates to the one under discussion here, every *Time* magazine cover, from that of the first issue through that of the then-latest, scrolls by at an impossible pace. We are dealing with the life of *Time*, approaching information and knowledge from the outside, at an angle at once philosophical and absurdist.

Clever is a term that is sometimes used to describe Thomson by his detractors. In art, it carries a decidedly unflattering tone. Yet the cleverness on offer here opens every “one liner” interpretation to a radiating constellation of lines that is pretty much inexhaustible. One of these has to do with the fact that, as Rosalind Krauss notes in her 1981 essay “The Originality of the Avant-Garde,” Rodin was among the first in his field to work perfectly in sync with the regime of technical reproducibility. “Now, nothing in the myth of Rodin as the prodigious form giver,” she writes there, “prepares us for the reality of these arrangements of multiple clones.”⁵ Nevertheless, it is evident that Rodin multiplied his sculptures in edition copies circulated throughout the globe, much like photographs. This analogy is central to Krauss’s argument.⁶ The connection between the *dispositifs* of these two media—one involving casts and molds, the other negative film and positive prints—deserves much more attention than I am prepared to give it here, but let’s keep it in mind. Another tangential line worth pursuing: Rodin made ample use of photography proper in his figural renderings. In other words, the emphatically hands-on aesthetic for which he is known took shape in the shadows of the hands-off. By the end of his life, this artist had amassed an archive of some seven thousand photographs, many of them featuring nude models, which he employed in his studio process. In addition, Rodin regularly commissioned photographs of his sculptures, thus twisting this intermedial exchange into a feedback loop.⁷ One more line, this one pushing back against the last two: Rodin both embraced photography and decried it. He never went so far as to renounce it, as the record amply proves, but neither did he accept its vaunted realism without reservation. Rather, one could say that his goal was to mobilize the medium’s limits, these having everything to do with its incapacitating relation to movement.

In a famous dialogue with the critic Paul Gsell, Rodin reportedly said, “People in photographs suddenly seem frozen in mid-air despite being caught in full swing: this is because every part of their body is reproduced at exactly the same twentieth and fortieth of a second, so there is no gradual unfolding of a gesture, as there is in art.”⁸ That this “gradual unfolding of a gesture” might have been made up by the artist, and hence potentially erroneous, is suggested in Gsell’s rebuttal, as is the idea that the camera is incapable of any such fault. “So,” he responds, “when art interprets movement and finds itself completely at loggerheads with photography, which is an unimpeachable mechanical witness, art obviously distorts the truth.” “No,” insists Rodin. “It is art that tells the truth and photography that lies. For in reality time does not stand still.” This exchange is quoted at the very start of Paul Virilio’s 1994 book *The Vision Machine*, where it leads into an excursus on the automation of imaging and, moreover, seeing. For all their quibbling over questions of reality versus falsehood, the sparring partners drive at an insight that is central to Thomson’s project in general. Ultimately, it has to do with *energy* and the distinction between its patient aesthetic conservation and its abrupt technical capture and suspension.⁹

It is on this point that Thomson’s cleverness takes on a metaphysical tint, for these are concerns that can be traced back to ancient philosophy.¹⁰ The “Time Life” videos enjoin us to revisit such thoughts from the perspective of a picture industry that has, in the interim, undergone mechanization, electrification, and, finally, digitization. What is at stake today is the conversion of all images to a single standard of distribution. These once appeared in stand-alone works of art, either here (where I can see them) or there (where I cannot). Later, they came to be circulated more widely via editioned prints, photographs, newspapers, magazines,



served to embody the its commemorated in to Rodin was named on of Honour and w artists to achieve the e. xhibition of 1900, mantled and o that it could serve in space (see 145). t sculptor of the age. r number of visitors ty figures, American ho simply loved his meone who received s admirers did not es of his generosity. these years was a if Great Britain. who



interested him or at the 1890s, when the comm had occupied so much done only the occasion the depiction of his frik Chavannes (176). A big painter, Puvis had worl organizing the Salon of bust, Puvis's head and. backwards, away from suggestive of distance : of the forehead are ten and beard are crisply, p outset Rodin intended bare, as he had done in artists, but when Puvis in such a revealing stat in a shirt collar and jac rosette of the Legion o

This page and opposite: Three stills from Mungo Thomson's *Volume 5, Sideways Thought*, 2020–22. 4K video, color, sound, 8 minutes 9 seconds. Score by Ernst Karel. From the series “Time Life,” 2014–.

films, and TV. At present, they exist in one place, on a screen that folds all these formerly discrete modalities together. A good number of the Time-Life books are now available on such digital platforms as the Internet Archive. Somewhat ironically, Thomson’s studio process thus parallels a much broader (industrial) method, whereby books are systematically manipulated by robotic devices, their pages shuffled at great speed beneath a lens. Volumes are often destroyed in the course of their digital preservation, as is the imagery they contain. Now that these all are composed of exactly the same “elementary particles,” they can, in a sense, communicate with one another and, further, generate novel images through their algorithmic interaction. This can now happen at nearly the speed of light, which is not to say that the results are necessarily invigorating. That the current stage of “the age of technical reproducibility” is one equally prey to the forces of acceleration and inertia is a sense *Sideways Thought* renders acute. This is very rapidly becoming “the new normal,” yet Thomson’s work keeps us auspiciously estranged. Rodin’s effort to distill entire bodily movements (or gestures) into a single pose—his pushback against their sudden arrest in technical imaging—is one that we in effect replicate as viewers. Anything that moves in the imagistic pile-on of *Sideways Thought* only does so in our eyes, differently in every eye, but always here and now, in this space and at this time—a singular experience in which invitation to deep reflection collides with the invocation of fugue states. What more could you want from a work of art? □

JAN TUMLIR IS A LOS ANGELES-BASED ART WRITER.

For notes, see page 186.

TUMLIR/THOMSON from page 147

NOTES

1. The “American Century” was announced in a February 1941 issue of *Life* magazine by its founder, Henry Luce, in an editorial piece urging the nation to reconsider its isolationist policies and engage in the conflict of World War II. This language is resumed in a Time-Life book series published retrospectively in 1997: “Our American Century.”
2. The phrase *museum without walls* is derived from the first chapter of Malraux’s book *Voices of Silence*, which was originally published in three volumes under the title *The Psychology of Art* between 1947 and 1949. A meditation on the promise of photography as an aid to art appreciation, it preceded the first Time-Life title by a little over a decade but partakes of much the same zeitgeist.
3. As Thomson explained it to me, “Because *Sideways Thought* required so many more books on Rodin than Time-Life offered, I released Time-Life books as a parameter for the series and, after that, any bound printed matter was fair game.” Nevertheless, the publisher’s name has retained its place in his titling. One can infer that it remains a central point of reference for everything that follows.
4. This time signature was also chosen because hard-copy books are scanned at this same rate when digitized—eight pages per second is the rate scanned by

the BGS-Auto at the University of Tokyo.

5. Rosalind E. Krauss, “The Originality of the Avant-Garde,” in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (MIT Press, 1991), 155.

6. In this passage, for instance: “Like Cartier-Bresson, who never printed his own photographs, Rodin’s relation to the casting of his sculptures could only be called remote.” Krauss, 153.

7. Interestingly, this practice begins in a quasi-legal context, as is related in the following article on the website of the Musée Rodin in Meudon, France: “In 1877, his submission to the Paris Salon, *The Age of Bronze*, was the subject of huge controversy. Its critics accused Rodin of not having modelled this male figure, but of having used a life cast. The sculptor reacted by employing photographer Gaudenzio Marconi, who supplied art students with images, to take a series of shots of both the plaster version of *The Age of Bronze* and Auguste Neyt, the model who had posed for the work, so that they could be used as proof in his defense.” See “Rodin and Photography,” Musée Rodin, accessed July 9, 2025, musee-rodin.fr/en/resources/rodin-and-arts/rodin-and-photography.

8. This and the following quotes are derived from Paul Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, trans. Julie Rose (Indiana University Press, 1994), 1–2.

9. I am employing some of Rodin’s language here: As he says to Gsell, “If the artist manages to give the impression that a gesture is being executed over several seconds, their work is certainly much less conventional than the scientific image in which time is abruptly suspended.” Rodin, in Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, 2.

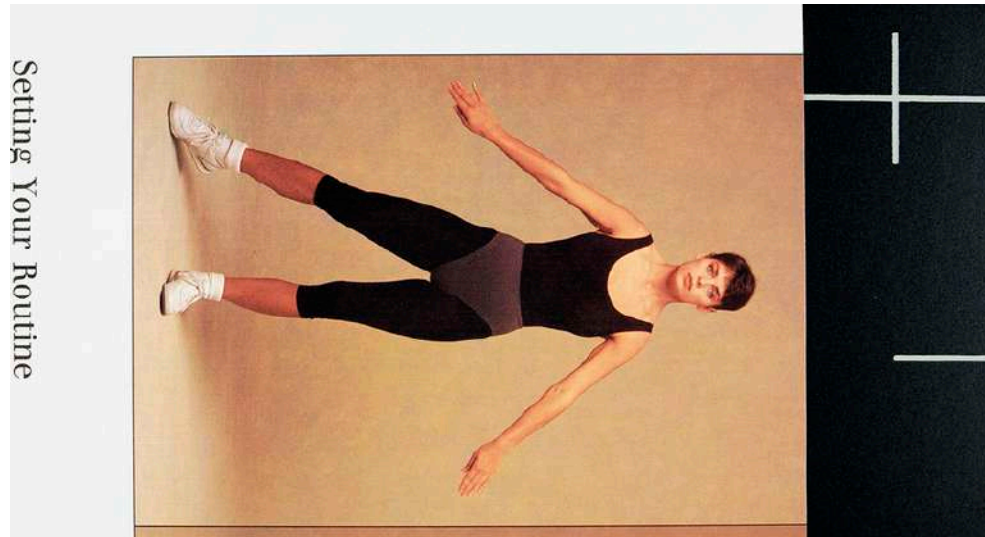
10. Aristotle, for one, placed the distinction between actual and potential energy at the core of his thinking. In his *De Anima*, we encounter the somewhat obvious but still striking observation that energy is extinguished in its actualization whereas its withholding as potential is outwardly akin to impotence. Nevertheless, without the latter the former could not arise. Potential is the animating principle, which the Latin term *anima* relates to the soul. Aristotle, *De Anima*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (The Modern Library, 2001), Section 5, 564–67.



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Mungo Thomson, *Time Life. Volume 2. Animal Locomotion*, 2015–22, 4K video, color, sound, 5 minutes 21 seconds.

Mungo Thomson

KARMA | NEW YORK

I guess I’m being doubly nostalgic here, reminiscing about a gallery scene where you could sip a can of PBR while contemplating the 1960s. Though usually considered an inheritor of the cheerful LA Conceptualism promulgated by John Baldessari, Thomson (b. 1969) identifies as a child of Northern California, raised among the dissipating energies of the counterculture. A film such as *Untitled (Margo Leavin Gallery, 1970–)*, 2009, recovers the past through both medium and message. The celluloid reel, Rolodex, and roster of art-world contacts are all perfectly synced to evoke the same period style. (Side note: Don Draper’s famous *Mad Men* soliloquy on slide carousels first aired in October 2007.) The consistent anachronism of Thomson’s earlier work stands in contrast with the temporal drift of his exhibition “Time Life,” a series of seven digital videos with references drawn freely from the nineteenth century to the present.

The exhibition’s title nods to Time-Life Books, a now-defunct purveyor of direct-mail encyclopedias, catalogues, and how-to manuals that, prior to the rise of the Internet, were familiar fixtures in American middle-class homes. The conceit of the videos is that we are

into “machine vision”—images intended for technical devices rather than human eyes. That is, “Time Life” may be less concerned with the past, or even the present, than with an increasingly plausible future where traditional receptacles of memory are supplanted by server farms for raw data. Watching Thomson’s videos, I suddenly recalled a headline from the routinely oracular satirical newspaper *The Onion*: “Google Announces Plan to Destroy All Information It Can’t Index.” The article, I later checked, was published in 2005.

—Colby Chamberlain

What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now

By Holland Cotter, Roberta Smith, Arthur Lubow, Martha Schwendener and Blake Gopnik

March 31, 2022

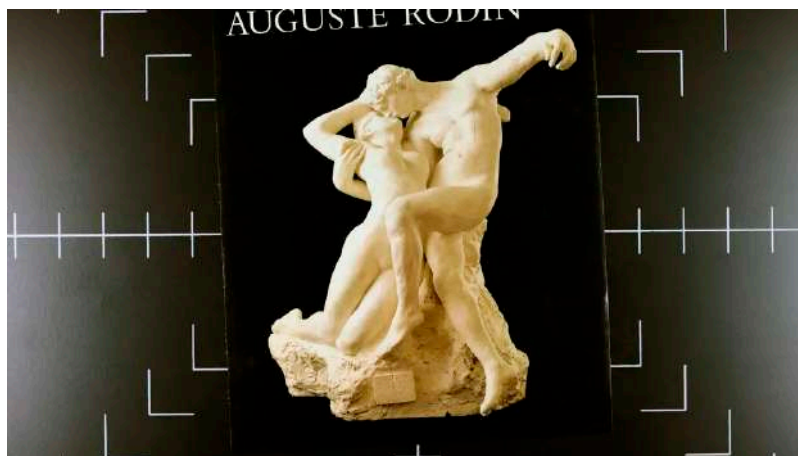
Want to see new art this weekend? Start in the East Village with the Swiss Institute's annual architecture and design series. Then head to the Lower East Side to check out Sascha Braunig's Neo-Surrealist paintings. And don't miss Joana Choumali's embellished photographs of her native Ivory Coast.

Newly Reviewed

EAST VILLAGE

Mungo Thomson

Through April 16. Karma, 22 East 2nd Street, Manhattan; 212-390-8290, karmakarma.org.



A screenshot from Mungo Thomson's video "Volume 5. Sideways Thought" (2020-22). Mungo Thomson and Karma

Mungo Thomson's "Time Life" at Karma is a thrilling accomplishment, adding a new chapter to the long conversation about photographs, mechanical reproduction and ways of seeing. It may not be for everyone, though: I watched all seven rapidly flashing videos, made with images scanned from vintage instructional manuals, catalogs and cookbooks, and I left the gallery feeling like I'd just ridden a high-speed roller coaster.

The premise of "Time Life" is simple: sifting through a vast, sometimes absurd archive of images and presenting them at breakneck speed. "Volume 2. Animal Locomotion" (2012-22) shows people demonstrating various forms of exercise, accompanied by a pulsing track by the electronic music pioneer Laurie Spiegel. "Volume 6. The Working End" (2021-22) features fingers tying knots and the percussion of the avant-garde composer Pauline Oliveros. The show's opus might be "Volume 5. Sideways Thought" (2020-22), with an original score by Ernst Karel, which animates the expressive but inert bronze and marble sculptures of Auguste Rodin.

Thomson's project draws fruitful comparisons to other artists and theorists: Eadweard Muybridge, Gerhard Richter, Arthur Jafa and Richard Prince, who, as a young artist, actually clipped publication images at Time-Life Inc. There are also echoes of Aby Warburg's 1920s "Mnemosyne Atlas" and André Malraux's "Museum Without Walls" (1949). What Thomson's adds is a hydraulic-launch speed: We are not "supposed" to look at images this fast. And yet, the jarring somatic experience of "Time Life" offers a chiropractic antidote to scrolling aimlessly on your phone, languidly consuming pictures and casting a few of your own into the universe of technical images.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER

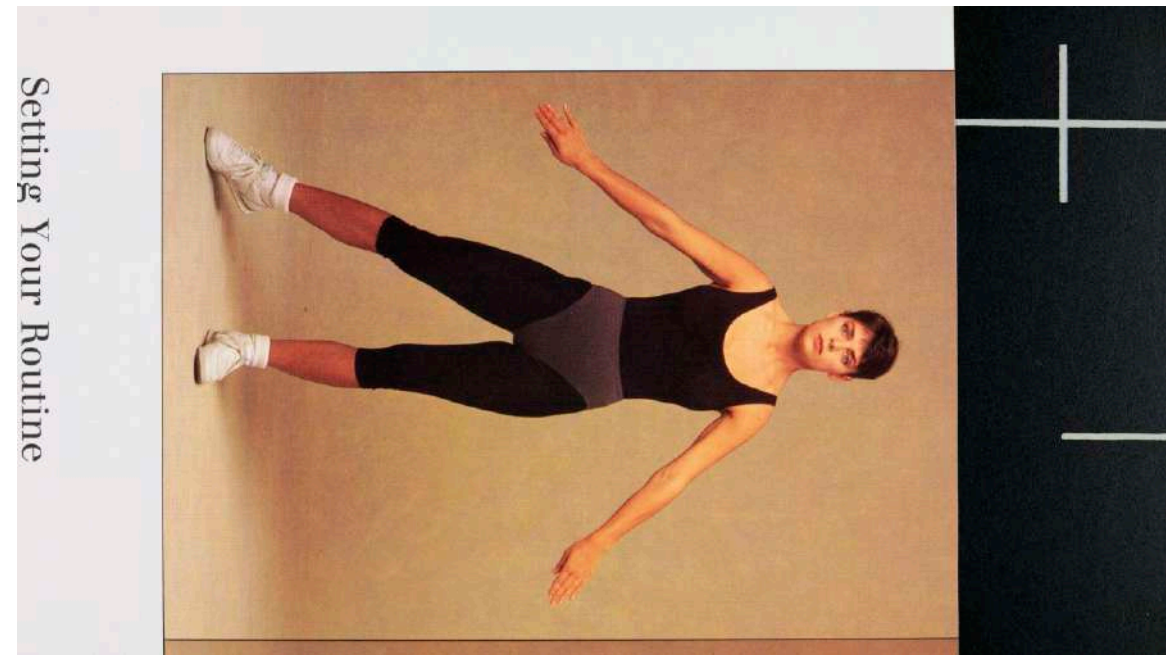
Art **Reviews**

Mungo Thomson's Elegies to an Analogue World

Thomson's videos conjure up the weird sublimity of internet wormholes, the familiar, swaddling mindlessness of allowing oneself to be swept up in a deluge of content and carried — where?



by Cassie Packard
April 2, 2022

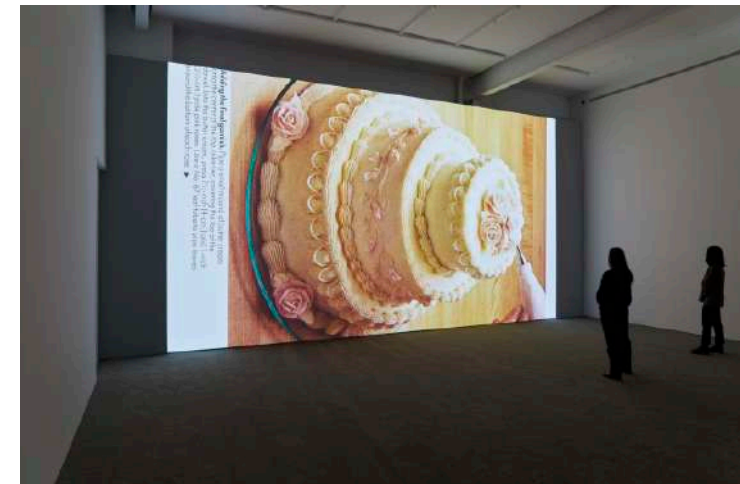


Still from Mungo Thomson, "Volume 2. Animal Locomotion" (2015-22), 4K video with sound, 5:21 minutes. Music: Laurie Spiegel, "Clockworks" (1974) (all images © Mungo Thomson, courtesy the artist and Karma, New York)

First: a single copyright sign. Then, the camera incrementally retracts to reveal surrounding text — names, dates, rights holders — shifting at stop-motion's brisk frame rate. Set to a soundtrack that overlays mechanical whirring with chiming and clanging, Mungo Thomson's 12-minute video "Volume 1. Foods of the World" (2014-22) proceeds to flicker through seemingly infinite pages of recipes, an unrelenting staccato of culinary instructions and demonstrative images: a marbled plate of neat canapés or tiered cake smothered with buttercream, hands whisking or slicing or kneading, and even — in a seriously granular approach to the language of cooking — a classificatory torrent of apple varieties.

One of seven short video "volumes" on view, movie-theater style, in Thomson's solo show *Time Life* at Karma, the work culls its content and title from a cookbook series published by Time-Life from 1968 to 1971. Time-Life, a purveyor of popular mail-order encyclopedias, mined the photographic repositories of general interest magazines *Time* and *Life* to produce image-dense volumes on topics ranging from wildlife to seafaring to computers. Time-Life books, which the Los Angeles artist recently characterized as a "proto-internet," were a staple of middle-class households across the United States in the 1970s and 1980s; in 2001, as the United States ushered in a new millennium with dial-up, Time-Life publishing folded. Thomson, for whom mass media — and mass-mediated

experience — are artistic touchstones, has explored *Time* in the past: previously, he traced the magazine's evolving font, and produced mirrored versions of its covers emptied of content.



Installation view of *Mungo Thomson: Time Life* at Karma. Pictured: "Volume 1. Foods of the World" (2014-22), 4K video with sound, 12:09 minutes. Music: Andrea Centazzo and Pierre Favre, "Koan #16" (2005) Ictus Records Catalog Number 504

Like a Soviet Kino-Eye with a wink, the videos in *Time Life* assign the viewer the perspective of a robotic scanner busily cannibalizing books to transform them into digital data. Laid atop a gridded base, the pages are sporadically sideways, nonsensically cropped, or atomized through proximity; at one fantastically animated moment, they even whirl around the book's spiral binding as if it were a maypole. The image-saturated spectator, whose fixed eye is not permitted rest, operates at the machine's pace: high-speed scanners can process eight pages per second, about the same frame rate employed by Thomson's stop-motions. In their imbrication of contemporary and pre-digital technologies (scanner and stop-motion, e-book and print book, internet and encyclopedia), these works ask what is lost, produced, and altered through sweeping digitization. Is analogue existence transformed, on an ontological level, in the process? Are we?

In the spirit of Time-Life books, each of Thomson's video volumes brings an encyclopedic scope to a single theme, such as flowers, search-engine-style questions, and knot-tying (the latter a metaphor, perhaps, for the Gordian knot of Thomson's inquiry). "Volume 2. Animal Locomotion" (2015-22), aptly titled after Eadweard Muybridge's proto-stop-motion experiments with motion photography, plucks images from fitness how-to books to depict individuals moving flip-book-style through lunges and squats, dance moves, and yoga poses — including yoga performed at desks. In a similar vein as Foods of the World's copyright sign, which wordlessly evokes the intellectual property issues accompanying digitization, the predominant Whiteness of the bodies throughout "Animal Locomotion" implicitly gestures toward the data biases that feed algorithmic racism.



Installation view, Mungo Thomson, "Volume 7. Color Guide" (2021-22), 4K video with sound, 4:30 minutes.
Original Score by Adrian Garcia

Not all of Thomson's volumes are rooted in Time-Life. "Volume 5. Sideways Thought" (2020-22) features photographs of sculptures by Auguste Rodin depicted from so many angles that they appear three-dimensional, a feat that clearly necessitated photographic sources beyond Time-Life's *The World of Rodin* book — perhaps drawing upon the thousands of photos personally overseen by Rodin, an early adopter of photography and subscriber to Muybridge's "Animal Locomotion" (which Muybridge made available on a subscription basis). The final video in the sequence, "Volume 7. Color Guide" (2021-22), takes a macro lens to a printed Pantone color guide; in a play on the work of California Light and Space artists like James Turrell, flashing fields of pure, grainy color overtake the screen and flood the dark theater. The empty, trance-like state provoked by viewing the work conjures up the weird sublimity of internet wormholes, the familiar, swaddling mindlessness of allowing oneself to be swept up in a deluge of content and carried — where? By whom? And why? It's something to think about.

Mungo Thomson: Time Life continues at Karma (22 East 2nd Street, East Village, Manhattan) through April 16. The exhibition was organized by the gallery.



ART

Taking Time with Mungo Thomson

Conversing on the artist's archival impulse.

By [HALEY MELLIN](#) | Jun 13 2019, 5:31pm

Los Angeles-based artist Mungo Thomson engages with how time is archived, chronicled, and immortalized through dispersed media. One of his most well-known series, *TIME*, which documents actual *TIME* Magazine covers in paint on mirrors, has uncannily leapt from the printed page to the selfie universe. From museum-goers to cultural celebrities to artists, viewers document themselves in a moment in time and experience what it would be like to be reflected on the cover of a magazine.

In a GARAGE exclusive, Thomson discusses his consumptive obsession with print media and an imperative to create an encyclopedic and anthropologic mapping of the world—from the *TIME* series to his work with mail, stop-motion cinema, and *National Geographic*.



Mungo Thomson April 22, 2013 (Made in the USA), 2014 Enamel on low-iron mirror, poplar and anodized aluminum 74 x 56 x 2.5 inches / 188 x 142 x 6.5 CM Installation view, Theories on Forgetting Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills Photo: Jeff McLane

GARAGE: Can you explain your *TIME* project?

Mungo Thomson: My initial *TIME* piece was a series of around 90 drawings of the evolution of the *TIME* logo that were collected in a book that I produced with LACMA. The mirror series came after the book. They are unique, person-sized mirrors silkscreened with the border, logo, and other artifacts found on actual issues of *TIME Magazine*. This series came from the simple observation that time happens in a mirror. There was something intimate about that fact that I wanted to cultivate. I wanted someone to live with the artwork and see themselves reflected in it, every day, and that would complete the work.

Thomson: Not exactly. They are vanity but also vanitas. Yes, you are on the cover of TIME, but you are also going to die. The work is both fun and cruel. I was referencing novelty *TIME* mirrors from the 1970s. I like drawing from sources like that, such as wall calendars, because they are already art-adjacent, or surrogates for art. I scaled the novelty mirrors to my own height so they would be large enough to reflect the viewer and their context.



Mungo Thomson March 23, 1987 (The Nature of the Universe), 2013 Enamel on low-iron mirror, poplar and anodized aluminum 74 x 56 x 2.5 inches / 188 x 142 x 6.5 CM Installation view, Galerie Frank Elbaz, Paris Photo: Zarko Vijatovic

archiving?

Thomson: Each mirror is specific to a weekly issue of the magazine. I see the series as a new archive or network. When I was young, I collected comic books. I thought I was going to grow up to draw for Marvel before I shifted into art. And that completist collector mentality, the imperative to be encyclopedic and anthropologic and to map the world, informs my work. I have built new archives, or counter-archives, out of some of my collections: Time Life books, field recordings of insects, roadrunner cartoons, Hubble photos. A work that I recently exhibited at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, titled Mail, collects the incoming mail at the museum hosting the exhibition and presents it as a sculpture. It is also a growing, temporary archive—I think of it as a clock.



Mungo Thomson Mail, 2013/18 Museum mail accumulates unopened during run of exhibition Dimensions variable Installation view, Stories of Almost Everyone Hammer Museum, Los Angeles Photo: Brian Forrest

GARAGE : What excites you about print media?

Thomson: I'm interested in the twilight of the analog. I think what something is most acutely felt when it is in decline. Currently, culture is half-and-half. While digital culture is ascending, art remains stubbornly analog. I have made an app as an artwork, and I am constantly online, but it can be like a casino on the internet, you know, airless and without clocks. I want things to feel real, to have aura, to have haptics. When I was a preparator at MoMA in the 1990s, some mornings I went into the galleries with a feather duster before the museum opened and was alone with those objects, dusting Duchamp's Bicycle Wheel and Van Gogh's Starry Night. I think of digital space as having no dust.



Mungo Thomson Mail, 2013/18 Museum mail accumulates unopened during run of exhibition Dimensions variable
Installation view, Stories of Almost Everyone Hammer Museum, Los Angeles Photo: Brian Forrest

GARAGE: Experience of your work is highly variable based on the day and the viewer.

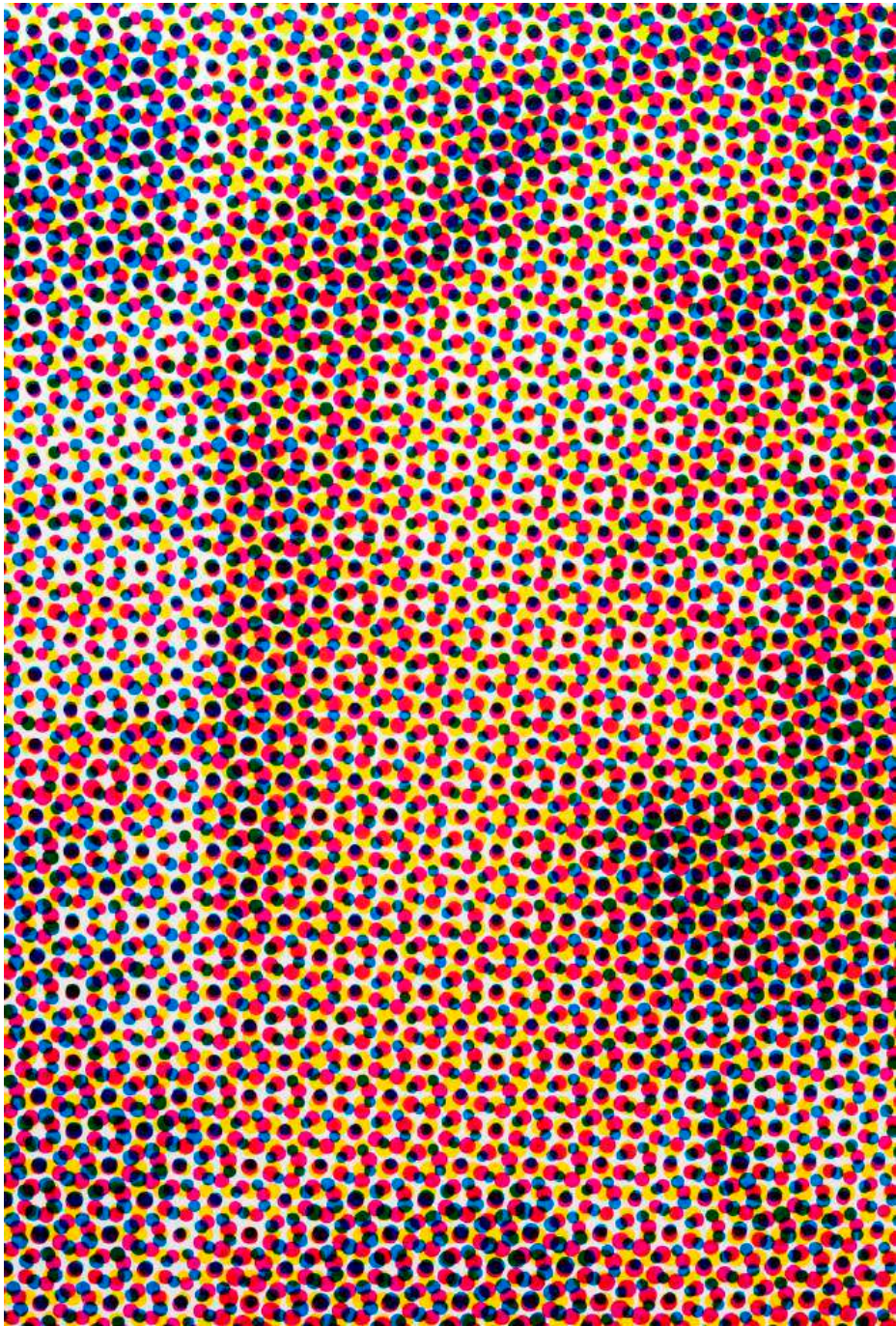
Thomson: I make a lot of works where the viewer's experience is going to be different if you see it today rather than tomorrow, or in real life, rather than on a screen. The sound of a work I made for the Whitney Biennial, Coat Check Chimes, depended on how many coats hung on it that day. This is an appeal to your physical, as opposed to virtual presence, and a way to incorporate time and chance into the work. I believe in the unique encounter where the experience is variable, and context-sensitive. Like life.



Mungo Thomson PS 10610 Eagle Rock 2/4/15–2/10/15 P1 CMY, 2017 Transparent pigment on panel 91.5 x 64 inches / 162.5 x 232.5 CM Photo: Shane Rivera

GARAGE: Could you tell me about your recent piano piece?

Thomson: Composition for 52 Keys pairs a deck of cards with a player piano. The number of possible permutations of order in a 52-card deck is astronomical; they say a deck of cards has never been shuffled the same way twice in the history of the world. And a piano has 52 white keys. I produced a computer program that assigns piano keys to playing cards, lowest to highest, and then shuffles the deck over and over again—and it just goes forever. The computer feeds the piano live code, and the piano renders each shuffle as music. And it will play for trillions of years



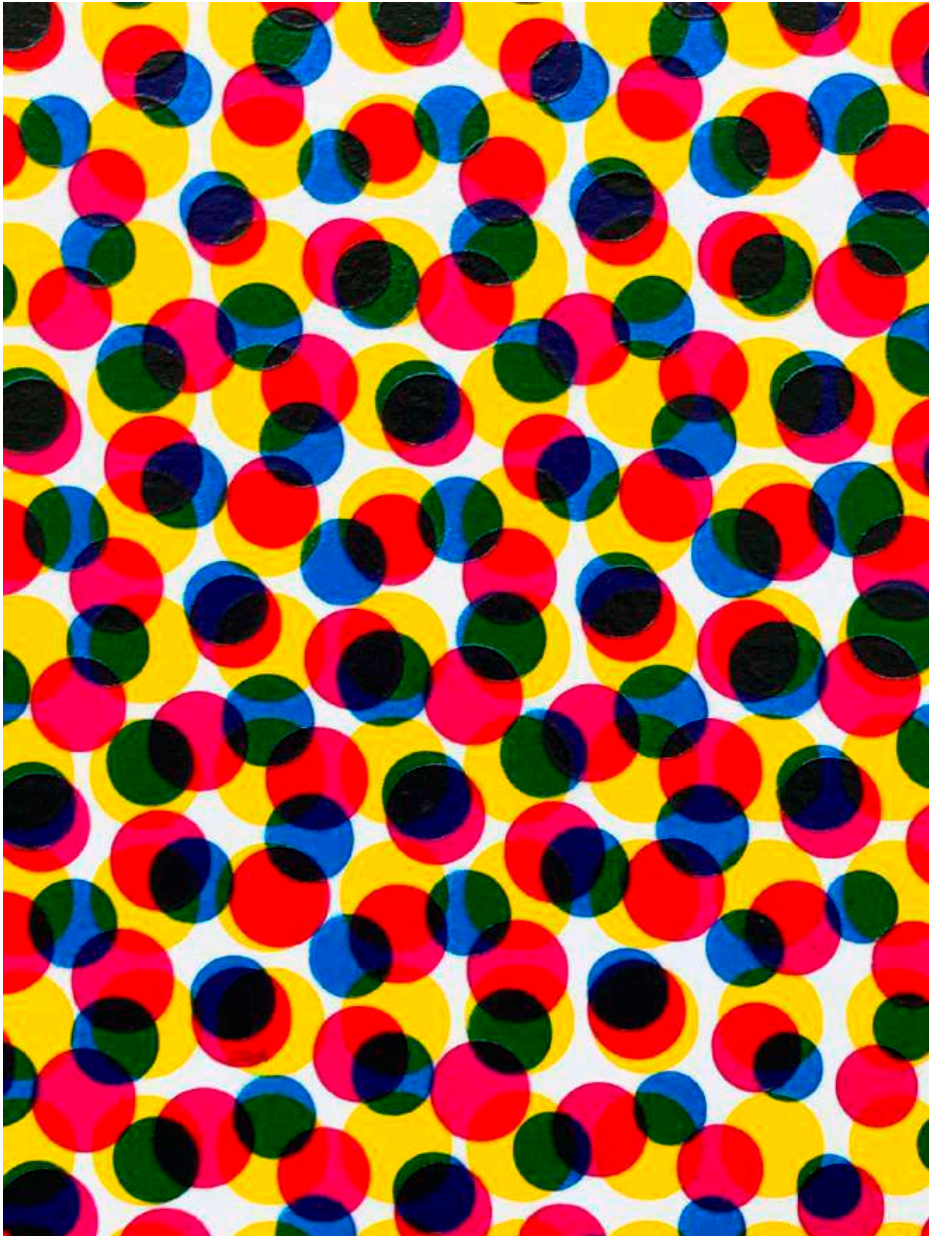
Mungo Thomson PS 10610 Eagle Rock 2/4/15–2/10/15 P1 CMY, 2017 (Detail) Transparent pigment on panel 91.5 x 64 inches / 162.5 x 232.5 CM Photo: Shane Rivera

GARAGE: Are the embroidered Compositions a companion to the musical one?

Thomson: Yes. They are similarly informed by chance and questions about what a “composition” is. A deck of cards is shuffled and thrown on the floor, and the resulting pattern is embroidered. Each Composition has some three million stitches. They are a super labor-intensive monument to a throwaway gesture. For me, those

GARAGE: These questions of embedding cosmic thinking into everyday things is a component of your work. *TIME Magazine* is not just *TIME Magazine*, it’s also a stand-in for time itself.

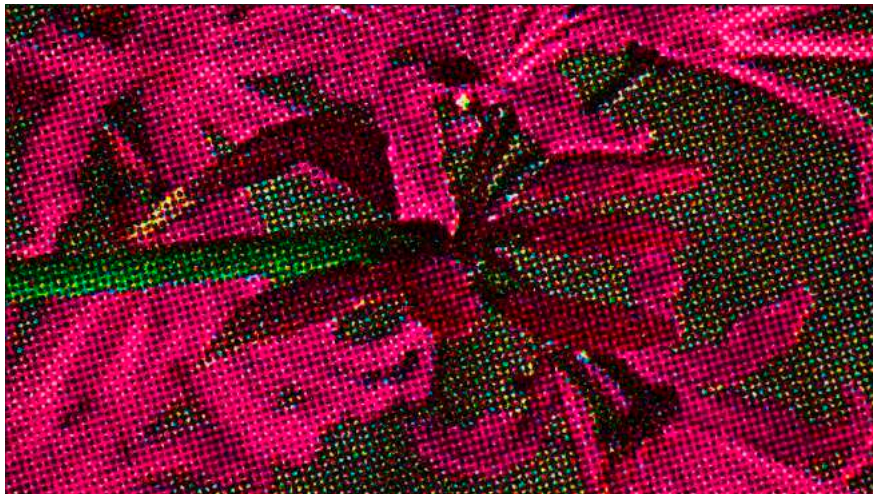
Thomson: I like extrapolating out to the next frame. I am interested in how things nest inside each other, how parts make up a whole. How “mail” is made up of individual pieces of mail. How a book is made of individual pages, and a film is made of individual frames. Stop-motion animation is something that articulates this relationship well and is something I’ve been engaged with for 10 years. Stop-motion builds the whole from the part right before your eyes



Mungo Thomson PS 10610 Eagle Rock 2/4/15–2/10/15 P1 CMY, 2017 (Detail) Transparent pigment on panel 91.5 x 64 inches / 162.5 x 232.5 CM Photo: Shane Rivera

Thomson: Heidegger's idea was that there is a world before us that we forget to see, and the artists' job is to disclose it again. I think this rings true. Heidegger uses the example of not being able to see the glasses he's wearing, but not being able to see without them. Charles Ray also said that obvious things are the most easily overlooked and the most enigmatic. For me, that is the coins in your pocket, the sound of crickets, magazines and junk mail.

GARAGE: In discussing your work, curator Siri Engberg of the Walker Art Center, said, "He talks a lot about how he goes after simple ideas, but what he really does is make them magical." I like your pairing of "simple ideas" and straightforward execution.



Still from Volumes: Volume 3: Flowers, 2019 Single-channel video with sound 16 Minutes

Thomson: I am more interested in a simple surface with a world beneath than a complex surface without much else going on. I think if something can be elegantly and economically expressed so that it blooms in your mind, then it should be. I want something to transmit and belong to the viewer and I do my best to remove any impediments to that. It can't become yours if it's too much mine.

GARAGE: What are your upcoming projects?

Thomson: I'm developing a series of videos from Time Life books on subjects like food and fitness and flowers. The stop-motion videos show the books as they are digitized for the Internet by the world's fastest robotic book-scanner. The book-scanner shoots books at eight pages per second, which is the frame rate of my animations. It posits a book-scanning robot as a filmmaking apparatus, and it's essentially making flip books and I'm filming them. I think of Time Life books as an analog prototype for the internet, in that it was an attempt to produce a popular compendium of human knowledge that arrived in your home. What do we do with data. And that's the subject matter of this work. It's the story of time and life, told one frame at a time.

Adding the final garnish. Pipe a small mound of butter cream onto the center of the top cake tier, covering the top of the dowel. Into the butter cream, press 1 ½-inch [4-cm.] and 1-inch [2 ½-cm.] pale pink roses. Use a No. 67 leaf tube to pipe leaves around the bottom of each rose. ►



Mungo Thomson
Volume 1. *Foods of the World*, 2014–22
4K video with sound
12:09 Minutes
Edition of 5, 2 AP
Exhibition view, *Time Life*, KARMA, New York, USA