

# afterimage

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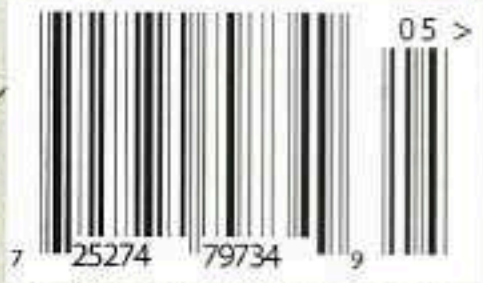


**Getting Past the Icon:** Should Photographers Depict Reality, or Try To Change It?

**Believing In Not Seeing:** Teaching Atrocity Without Images

**Reviews:** Laura Letinsky | Barbara Bloom | Clive Holden | Dara Friedman | Rosa Barba | Lauren Bon | Kelly Richardson | Middle East photography | The Fertile Crescent: Gender, Art, and Society | Art13 London | Japan Media Arts Festival | It's the Political Economy, Stupid and more...

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## MEDIATED ALGORITHMS

### Clive Holden: *Media, Mediated*

Stephen Bulger Gallery

Toronto

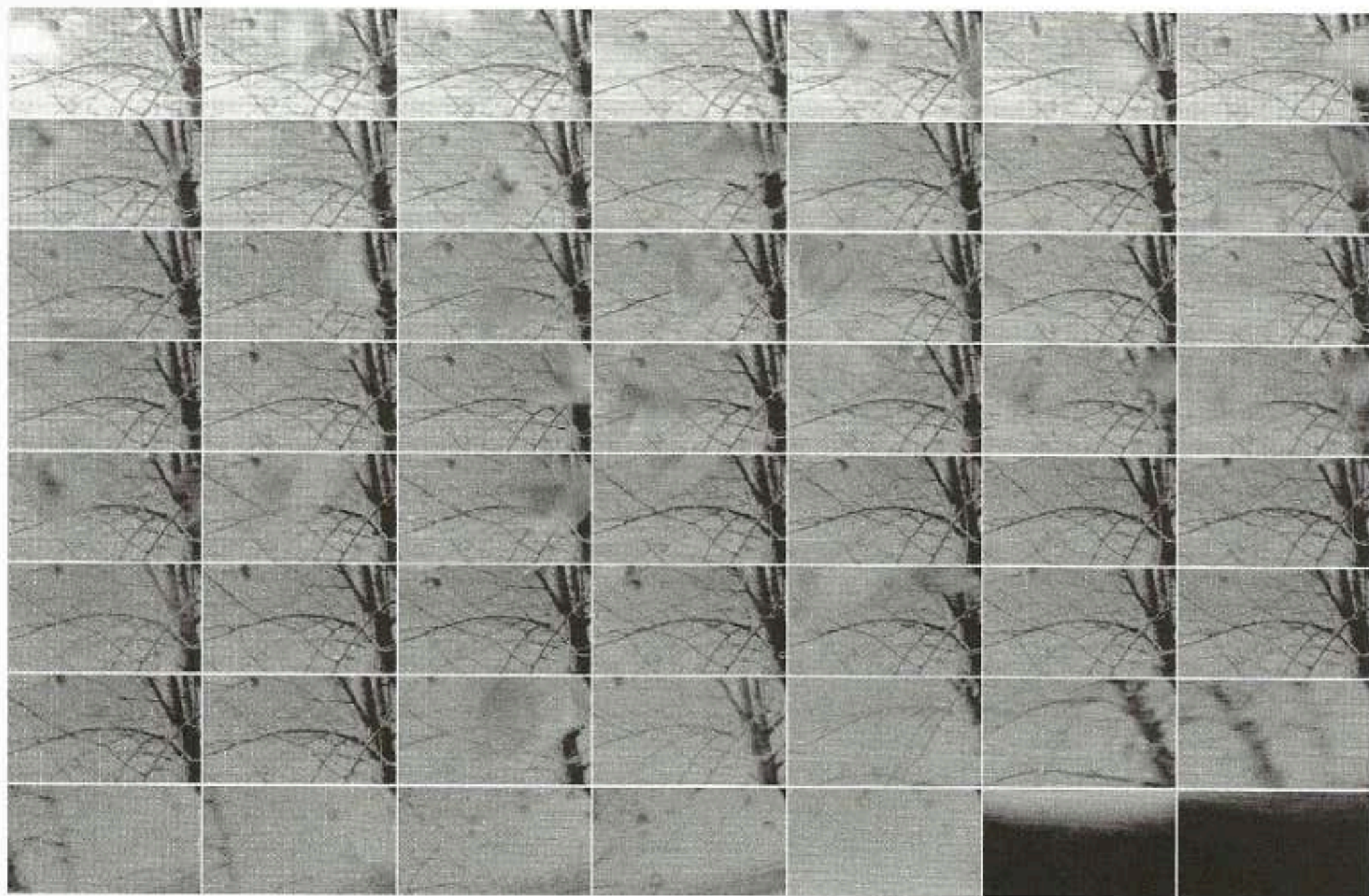
March 2–30, 2013

An approach to artmaking that is driven by the prospect of chance, by the accidental, is reliant upon the inherent rationale of the natural world. There, chaos constitutes change (or vice versa) and reveals new forms that displace and/or update the old. Toronto-based multidisciplinary artist Clive Holden's recent practice has manipulated the properties of the natural world into an aesthetic strategy. Utilizing the randomization and dynamism found in nature serves to unsettle and reconfigure his installations, transforming them into ever-evolving media.

Holden's installations at his recent exhibition, *Media, Mediated*, at Stephen Bulger Gallery in Toronto, engaged ephemerality through carefully composed algorithms and computer programming languages such as HTML5, JavaScript, and GIFs, reshuffling his selected images ad infinitum. For instance, *Wind at Lake Manitoba* (2013) featured a monitor cross-sectioned into sixty-four small frames of stripped tree branches in a state of flux. Each frame captured the tree in close-up, its few shrivelled leaves at times barely visible, and at other times so near that

they remain out of focus. The rampant energy, flickering, and spatial orientation of the images may have impelled some viewers toward discomfort because they were at once here, there, and everywhere—multidimensionality as material. Interjected into these frames at random points in time against a stark black background were the words "WIND AT LAKE MANITOBA." The incorporation of descriptive text with montaged Super 8 film images made reference to a semblance of narrative, and correspondingly, to the qualities of traditional cinema. For Jacques Rancière, "The image is never a simple reality. Cinematic images are primarily operations, relations between the sayable and the visible, ways of playing with the before and the after, cause and effect."<sup>1</sup> Although he engages traditional cinematic media, Holden's work is stimulating precisely because the before and after, the cause and effect, have been made wholly unpredictable.

In a compelling formal juxtaposition, *Wind at Lake Manitoba* was (re)created by Holden as a large-scale 4 x 6-foot chromogenic print. Here, the movement and instability that characterized the media wall installation of the same name has been rendered static, captured and immobilized in both space and time. Though it features a slightly different spatial orientation—seven horizontal frames and eight vertical frames—the print stands and declares itself as an autonomous object. What this does is open up a space in which the viewer can dictate their responses rather than have their responses, rather schizophrenically, mediated to them.



Holden's large-scale print *Countdown, 8s* (2013) further reconciles his interest in cinematic forms and static images. In the work, the picture plane is evenly divided into forty frames displaying the number "8" as it would appear in a conventional film leader. Each frame is tinted or shaded differently from the others in browns, grays, greens, reds, and oranges. The motionlessness of the number and its visual repetition contrasts brusquely to the film leader's original intent and meaning: temporality. In *Countdown, 8s*, time has been channelled into visual space and is presented against its intrinsic structure, almost against its will, which is why it stands as a charged image and statement. Ultimately, the work is an assault against the rationality of the medium by disrupting its sequential nature.

However, it was the single-channel media wall installation *Bear Gun Love Hate* (2013) that best exemplified Holden's complex use of randomization, static images, and temporality, specifically through 35mm film leader, pictograms, text, GIFs, HTML5, and JavaScript. This time his frames—ten across, five down—were constructed as circles within squares. The film leader motif appeared again in different frames as a rapidly flickering black-and-white picture. Images of hand guns, bears, houses, trees, and mountain climbers appear at various intervals along with text reading "LOVE," "HATE," and "RAGE." Considering the seemingly arbitrary selection of images and texts, this work, like some others, constituted a semiotic exercise based on the potential of random visual, written, and digital languages to produce meaning.

Perhaps the most fascinating element of Holden's practice lies in media installations such as *Wind at Lake Manitoba* and *Bear Gun Love Hate*. The exhibition brochure for this show highlighted the fact that these works are organized through randomization algorithms that "can never be viewed the same way twice"; thus, through the prowess of their creative potential and their drive towards renewal, they approach that which we know as self-determinization. According to Marshall McLuhan, "the new media are not bridges between man and nature; they are nature,"<sup>2</sup> which may be why Holden's data-driven new media work has formed an aesthetic relationship with the fundamental processes of the natural world.

**MATTHEW RYAN SMITH, PhD**, is a writer, independent curator, and educator based in Toronto. His writings have been featured in several Canadian and international art publications including *G Magazine*, *ArtUS*, *FUSE*, *Artinfo Canada*, and *Magenta*.

NOTES 1. Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2007), 6. 2. Eric McLuhan and Frank Zingrone, eds., *The Essential McLuhan* (London: Routledge, 1997), 272.

**Above**

*Wind At Lake Manitoba* (2013) by Clive Holden; © Clive Holden; courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery