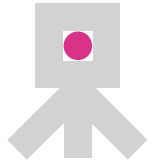


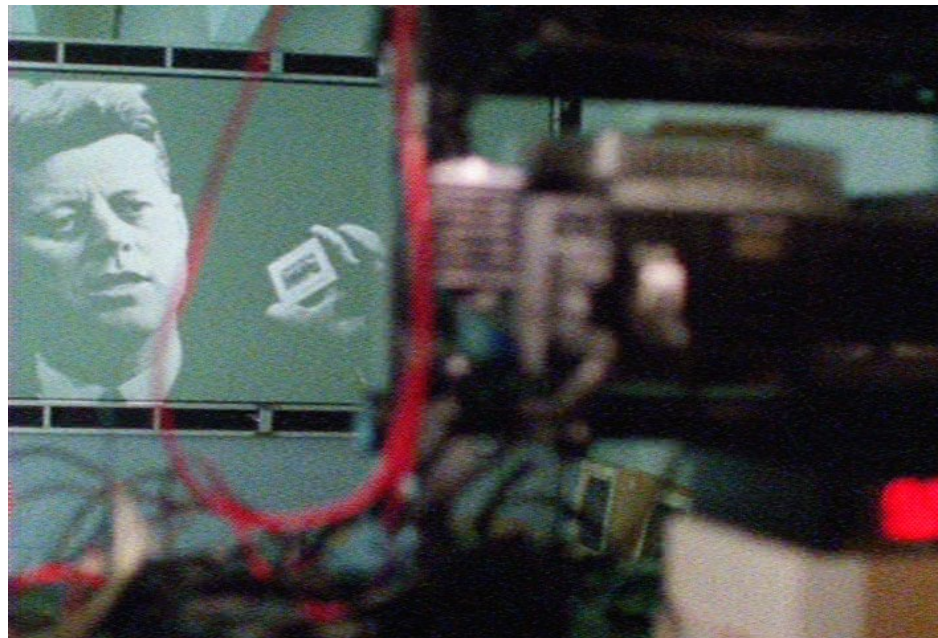
PhotoResearcher



ESHP Ph European Society for the History of Photography

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Editorial

Image after Image: Reconsidering the Fabric of Slide Shows

A peculiar situation emerged during the last decade after Kodak decided to discontinue its manufacture of slide carousels in 2004. On the one hand, there is a persistent interest in the now positively outdated technology among contemporary artists. On the other, we cannot but notice a curious lack of its systematic contextual investigation. The motivation behind this issue of *PhotoResearcher* – to bridge this ‘gap’ and ‘reconsider’ the importance of slide shows for the history, theory and practice of visual arts – might therefore appear straightforward. The urgency for a focused discussion about the historical and contemporary artistic uses of slide shows was stressed by the writers and curators who made previous attempts to address this issue in different capacities.¹ However, the problem of methodology, or how to contextualise slide shows appropriately, has already manifested itself in the attempts to define them as a distinct medium, different from both cinema and photography.² The problem of medium specificity, most famously described by Rosalind Krauss, and especially pertaining to the division between the still and moving image practices, seems to be among the chief reasons preventing any definitive articulation of slide shows, which remain afloat in the spaces surrounding and transgressing different modes of thinking about, and working with, images. Rather than seeking to resolve this situation, this issue embraces the elusive position of slide shows in order to encourage further debate about media hybridity and convergence between different forms of art. In terms of photography, this approach appears very timely, as its ubiquitous presence in everyday life demands – more than ever – the exploration of its multi-layered and polymorphic nature as well as its various strands of agency.³ Although the essays in this issue may be seen as affiliated with such themes as ‘technology and archive’ and ‘art and life’, as well as ‘movement and narration’, we hope that the readers will soon realise how they are often interconnected and overlap with each other, by no means exhausting all the options for a meaningful conversation about slide shows.

Technology and archive

Some of the most often referenced moments in the history of slide projections are their lineage to magic lantern shows, as well as their early integration into the art-historical curriculum, or what we might regard as parallel relations to technology and archive. The discovery of an instrument for projecting pictures painted on glass slides in 1656 is attributed to the Dutch astronomer and mathematician Christiaan Huygens. In the seventeenth century, the device started to be called the ‘magic lantern’ and received its first description in Athanasius Kircher’s *Ars Magna et Umbrae* (1671), following an increased interest in its abilities among European intellectuals.⁴ From very early on, the dual functions of the magic lantern as an instrument of science and entertainment enabled its occupancy of a broad range

1. For some of the curatorial projects dedicated to the subject see: Stéphane Bauer (ed.), *Dia – Slide – Transparency: Materialien zur Projektionskunst*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, NGBK 2000. Darsie Alexander (ed.) *Slide Show: Projected Images in Contemporary Art*, exhibition catalogue, University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press 2005. Susanne Neubauer (ed.), *Projektion: Chan, Export, Fischli/Weiss, Gander, Gillick, Graham, Knoebel, Parker, Streuli*, exhibition catalogue, Luzern: Kunstmuseum Luzern 2006.

2. Neubauer 2006 (reference 1), 26.

3. For an informative discussion of photography as immanently intermedial and heterogeneous, see the introduction to: Raphaël Pirenne, Alexander Streitberger (eds.), *Heterogeneous Objects: Intermedia and Photography after Modernism*, Leuven: Leuven University Press 2013, vii–xxii.

4. Barbara Maria Stafford, Frances Terpak, *Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen*, Los Angeles, CA, Getty, Research Institute 2001, 297.



Figure 1
John Davies, Visual Resources Centre,
Manchester School of Art,
Slide Collection 2015.



Figure 2
John Davies, Visual Resources Centre,
Manchester School of Art, Slide Collection:
Josephine Baker 1928, 2015.

of different environments – homes, coffeehouses and laboratories – with theatrical ‘phantasmagoria’ shows becoming popular in the late eighteenth century.⁵ Such technological heritage translated into the twentieth century, in which constant improvements to the capacity of projection were complemented with the addition of colour.⁶ A manual explaining filmstrips and slide projection in 1949 includes the following statement:

*There is nothing really novel about the modern still projector. Fundamentally, it is exactly the same as the old-fashioned magic lantern, which came down to us from centuries ago. Research and experience had led to considerable improvement in the design and performance of the various components of the projector, of course, and modern photographic materials have greatly increased its scope. But anyone expecting to find in the miniature still projector radical departure from the larger and older standard 31 x 31 in. lantern, or even the so-called magic lantern will be disappointed.*⁷

Therefore, while the technology remained the same, the early duality of its use led to a proliferation of ways in which the histories of slide shows came to be narrated. As a form of entertainment, they are claimed by the historical traditions of cinema, video and more recently ‘projection’ in art.⁸ As such, they also gradually found their way into the popular literature, mostly explaining the production and presentation of slides as a means of home entertainment and business promotion.⁹

5. Stafford and Terpak 2001 [reference 4], 298–301.

6. See for instance: Caroline Fuchs, ‘Anticipation and Reality: A Re-Evaluation of Autochrome Projection’, *PhotoResearcher*, no. 19, 2013, 33–42.

7. Maurice Kenneth Kidd, Cyril Walter Long, *Filmstrip and Slide Projection*, London, New York: Focal Press 1949, 15.

8. For instance: Laurent Manoni, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema*, Exeter, Devon: University of Exeter Press 2000. Chrisie Iles (ed.), *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964–1977*, New York:

Whitney Museum of American Art, 2001. Stuart Comer (ed.), *Film and Video Art*, London: Tate Publishing 2009.

9. Such as: Norman Rothschild, *Making Slide Duplicates, Titles and Filmstrips*, Garden City, N.Y., Amphoto 1962. A significant part of this literature was produced by Kodak Eastman Company, as for example: Michael F. Kenny, Raymond F. Schmitt, *Images, Images, Images*, Rochester, NY: Eastman Kodak Co. 1979. See also: Ann Bishop, *Slides: Planning and Producing Slide Programs*, Rochester, NY: Eastman Kodak Co. 1984.

At the latest, slides became objects of institutional collecting during the late nineteenth century. A national survey of slide collections in the UK, carried out by the British Library in 1989, however, recognised the lack of basic information about slide collections in the country, indicating how not only their *modus operandi* but indeed their very existence was known only on an anecdotal basis.¹⁰ The survey, which sought to assemble data for a comprehensive directory of publicly accessible slide collections in the UK regardless of their subject matter, solicited responses from 1244 institutions, out of which roughly one third came from various universities, institutions of further and higher education, institutes and polytechnics.¹¹ The same institutions also rated high in the size of their depositories, holding twenty-two out of twenty-nine collections with more than 100,000 slides, in comparison to only three held by the national museums and galleries.¹² These statistics evidence an ample use of slides as teaching aids, but they also draw attention to a similarly anecdotal account of their ongoing disappearance. For instance, two recent student initiatives – ‘Save our Slides’ and ‘Adopt a Slide’ – increased awareness about the questionable future of the Visual Resources Centre at the Manchester School of Art and its collection of around 300,000 slides (figs. 1 & 2).¹³ Apart from using and producing printed materials and organising events, both of these initiatives also rely on digital media platforms for their campaigning, bringing to the fore the tensions and possibilities interlinked with digitisation.¹⁴

Both of these relationships, with ‘technology and archive’, are revisited from contemporary perspectives in this issue. **Paige Sarlin** reads the history of the Kodak Eastman Company’s production and discontinuation of slide carousels through the notions of obsolescence and over-determination in order to demonstrate how technologies are made redundant not only because of market demands but also through their relationship with the fluctuations and changes in the structures of capitalism. **Tina Weidner** reveals the necessity for a change in institutional policies and practices of archiving and conservation that result from the obsolescence of slide projection technology, focusing specifically on the collection of Tate Gallery in London.

Art and life

Regardless of their long history, there is little doubt that slide shows came to prominence within the so-called ‘new’ art of the 1960s and ‘70s. Integrating photography and the capabilities of the still image with their performative and conceptual forms of art production, many artists took advantage of the accessibility, unique character and materiality of slide shows. The best-known examples of this use include such artists as Dan Graham, Marcel Broodthaers and James

10. Toy McKeown and Mary Edmunds Otter, *National Survey of Slide Collections*, British Library Research Paper 67, The British Library Board 1989, 2.

11. McKeown and Otter 1989 (reference 9), 12.

12. McKeown and Otter 1989 (reference 9), 18.

13. Ashley van Dyck and Jelena Stojković, personal communication, July 2015. For the Visual Resources Centre of the Manchester School of Art see: <<http://www.artdes.mmu.ac.uk/visualresources>> (15.07.15). For the ‘Adopt a Slide’ initiative see: <<https://pickaslide.wordpress.com>> (15.07.15). See also:

Chris Sharratt, ‘Slide away: Manchester School of Art archive under threat’, *a-n*, 28 May 2015, available online: <<https://www.a-n.co.uk/news/slide-away-manchester-school-of-art-archive-under-threat>> (15.07.15). At the time that this text was completed (July 2015) the School decided to keep its slide collection, integrating it into the University’s Special Collections.

14. For more about the relationship between archives and digitization see: ‘Archiving on the Line’ strand of the *Either / And* project, available online: <<http://www.eitherand.org>> (15.07.15).

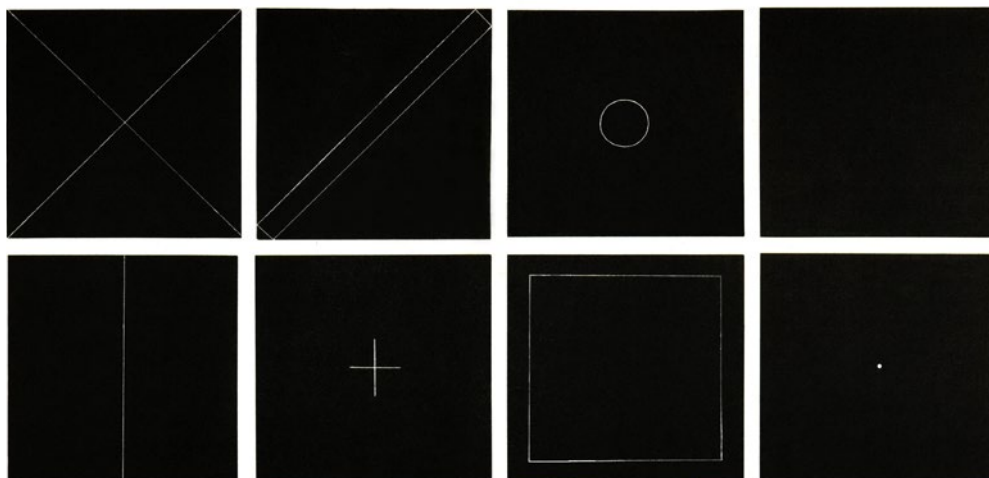


Figure 3
Zoran Popović, *Axioms* [Aksiomi], 1971,
linocut 40 x 40 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

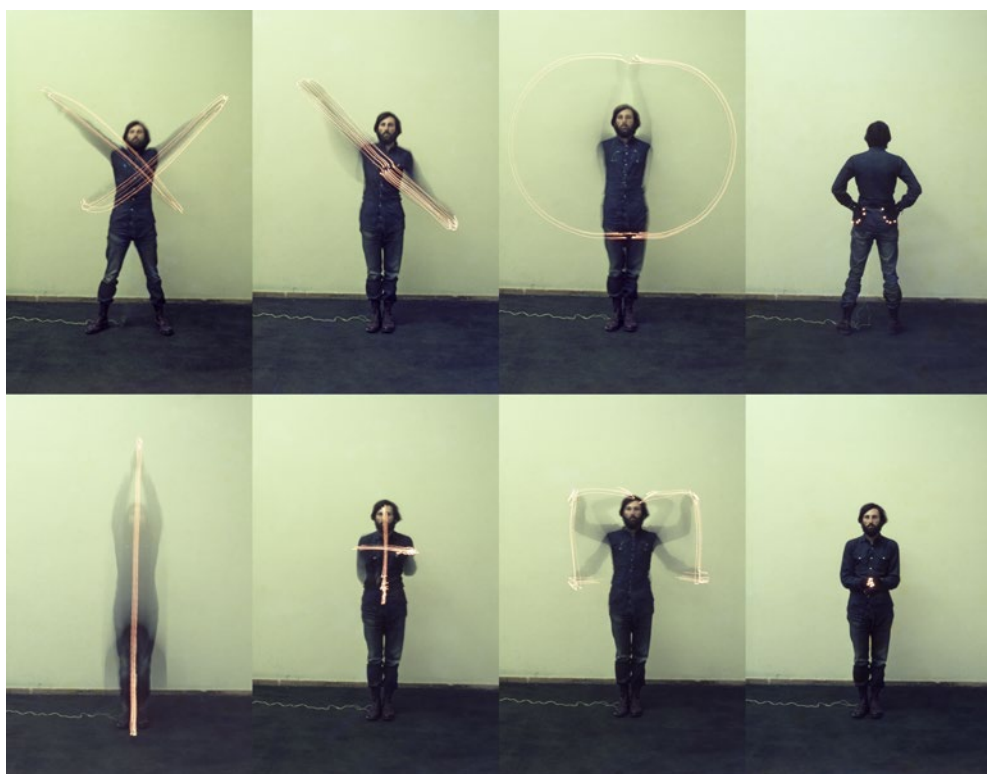


Figure 4
Zoran Popović, *Performance Axioms*
[Performans Aksiomi], 1972.
Courtesy of the artist.
Photographer: Vladimir Dobričić-Kića.

Figure 5
Zoran Popović, Zoran Popović presenting his
Performance Axioms to the public at the 2nd April
Meeting, Expanded Media Festival, Gallery SKC,
Belgrade, 1973. Courtesy of the artist and the
Archive of Student Cultural Centre Belgrade
[Studentski kulturni centar, Beograd].
Photographer unknown.



Performance Axioms [Performans Aksiomi] project of the Serbian artist Zoran Popović, taking up a central position in his work as a conceptual artist in former Yugoslavia over the period between 1971 and 1973.¹⁶ The project centred on Popović's complex critique of the 'axiomatic' understanding of modernist art aesthetics and the problems faced with the 'execution' of what he termed 'artwork-systems'.¹⁷ It involved different reiterations of eight geometric diagrams, or 'axioms': 'x' mark, diagonal line, circle, empty space, vertical line, cross, square and dot. These axioms were first produced in the linocut technique (fig. 3) but, soon thereafter, the artist also performed them on different occasions using small sources of light attached to his fingertips. Most frequently, the performance consisted of two integral parts: a series of around eighty slides of the performance would be shown in a darkened room (fig. 4), accompanied by Johann Strauss II's *The Blue Danube Waltz* for around six minutes, followed by the actual performance, accompanied by Pink Floyd's *One of These Days* and lasting for another six minutes.¹⁸ The use of slides in this project becomes relevant from various vantage points, including – but not limited to – its treatment of still images not as documents of the performance itself but as elements of an individual work integrated in the project, as well as for the performative character of that work, complemented with those instances when the artist would show the slides himself (fig. 5).

The increased use of slides in the 1960s and '70s was not concentrated on the questions of formalism and aesthetics, but interconnected with the radical political movements of the period, offering a means of not only breaking away from the conventional methods for producing artworks but also of a direct critique of institutional (and governmental) frameworks and policies through which they were exhibited and assigned value. In Popović's opinion, the use of 'new' media such as film, photography, slides and video, challenged established forms

Coleman, who inspired a substantial share of the existing scholarship on slide shows.¹⁵

However, much is yet to be acknowledged in terms of the position and relevance of slide shows for artistic practices of that time, especially in a global scope of 'new' art. For instance, we can observe an interesting example of the use of slides within such a context in the

15. Some examples include: Dan Graham, *Two Parallel Essays: Photographs of Motion: Two Related Projects for Slide Projectors*, New York: Multiples 1970. Marcel Broodthaers (et al), *Marcel Broodthaers: Projections*, exhibition catalogue, Eindhoven: Stedelijk Van Abbe Museum 1994. George Baker (ed.), *James Coleman*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2003.

16. Ješa Denegri, 'Zoran Popović: Strogo kontrolisane predstave' [Zoran Popović: Tightly Controlled Representations], *Moment*, vol. 14, 1984, 25.

17. Zoran Popović, 'Axiomatizacija umetnosti i o formiranju praznih, idealnih sistema umetnosti' [Axiomatisation of Art and on Forming of Empty, Ideal Systems of Art], in: Zoran Popović, *Aksiomi 1971-1973*, exhibition catalogue,

Belgrade: Student Cultural Centre, 1983, unpaginated. This text is an excerpt of a letter sent by Zoran Popović from New York to Gregor Urkom in London in June 1974.

18. Zoran Popović, *Performance Axioms* [Performans Aksiomi]: *Concise History*, mail correspondence with Branislav Jakovljević, 2014, 14–15. Zoran Popović and Jelena Stojković, personal communication, May 2015. I would like to thank Zoran for all the kindness, effort and support he showed during our correspondence relating to this text, between April and July 2015. I would also like to thank Una Popović for making this communication possible.



Figure 6 a-c
Zoran Popović, *Zoran Popović, Cinematic Self-Portrait (Part I): Worker, Printing Press Operator, Miodrag Popović: About Life, About Labour, About Leisure* [Zoran Popović, *Filmski-autoportret (I deo): Radnik, tipomašinista, Miodrag Popović: o životu, o radu, o slobodnom vremenu*], 1977, selection of slides.
Courtesy of the artist.
Photographer: Zoran Popović.

of art like painting and sculpture by creating an opportunity to abolish the separation between art and life.¹⁹ *Performance Axioms* thus ultimately sought to integrate the subject, form and material substance of an artwork into one entity that would not stand as a symbol or a metaphor but reflect on the reality of everyday life.²⁰ A later slide sequence, *Zoran Popović, Cinematic Self-Portrait (Part I): Worker, Printing Press Operator, Miodrag Popović: About Life, About Labour, About Leisure* [Zoran Popović, *Filmski-autoportret (I deo): Radnik, tipomašinista, Miodrag Popović: o životu, o radu, o slobodnom vremenu*], from 1977, showed intimate records of his brother's workplace and family, accompanied with an interview (fig. 6 a-c).²¹ It was another, even more explicit, attempt at bringing art and life closer together that was carried out by merging images of 'labour' and 'leisure' and arranging them into a single sequence.

Two essays in this issue indicate a unique position of slide shows within the relationship between 'art and life', in the global context of 'new art' and beyond. **Julian Ross** focuses on the specific use and understanding of slide shows in Japanese post-war art in the decades between the 1950s and '70s, exploring in particular how they were positioned vis-à-vis such notions as 'synthesis arts' and 'intermedia'. **Hilde Van Gelder** and **Jeroen Verbeek** contribute a detailed description and a thorough analysis of *Reverse Magellan*, Allan Sekula's last and incomplete slide sequence from his final project *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum* (2010–2013). Showing how the sequence continued the artist's previous resistance to singular images while combining it with a specific move from a 'photographic ensemble' to a more flexible 'grouping'; the essay argues that the political significance of this slide-based work lies in its insistence on a 'vernacular or everyday poetics' and a search for 'new possibilities for civil alliance'.

Movement and narration

The technological underpinning of slide shows seems to have been resurrected in a specific form of after-life in the last decade. It became largely accepted that the carousel projectors and slide transparencies were widely accessible and affordable in the later part of the

photo albums and of Miodrag's art works, produced by combining pieces of textile: Zoran Popović 2014 [reference 17], 16.

22. This issue was first recognised by Basim Magdy at the panel discussion *Ph Curates: Slide Show Effect?* co-curated for The Photographers' Gallery in London on 15.01.15 by Julian Ross and Jelena Stojković. I would like to thank Julian for his enthusiasm for, encouragement of and invaluable contribution to, this research project, which also informed the publication of this issue.

19. Ješa Denegri 1984 [reference 16], 22.

20. Ješa Denegri 1984 [reference 16], 25.

21. The interview was recorded at the Student Cultural Centre [Studentski kulturni centar] in Belgrade on May 1, 1977. Images were taken over several days in 1977 in Miodrag's family home and at the Privredni pregled print house in Belgrade. The sequence also includes photographs of the family's

twentieth century although they are now often perceived as an embodiment of a preference for the outmoded, in a fashion that might equally include vinyl records or the 'return' to analogue photography, evoking fetishism and nostalgia. This simplistic view can be easily reversed with a shift of focus on the global availability of certain technologies.²² As an illustration, although Popović had strong intentions to continue producing slide-based works on an even larger scale after his return to Belgrade from New York in 1975, he was not in the economic position of being able to purchase a projector with lamps that could work for lengthy periods of time and such technology was not available in the artistic institutions he was associated with. Even after finally purchasing satisfactory equipment ten years later, in 1985, Kodak was unable to provide an adequate power adapter for the European electricity and the machine was left unpacked, symbolising the artist's unaccomplished desire to work in the specific format.²³ This shift of perspective that allows observing certain technologies through the lens of their availability in different parts of the world and in different historical periods opens up an *aporia* in the working of flows of capital that might be worth further exploration. However, it might not completely reverse the fact that such a technologically-driven, reduced view of contemporary practices completely disregards their versatility and the diversity of the ways in which they approach and treat slide shows as continuously important to the visual arts, even in digital forms of work. A more dramatic change of focus, on the thematic questions of concern that slide shows foreground – such as movement and narration – offers a much stronger alternative and continues with the exploration of precisely those particularities that made them a subject of fascination throughout their history.²⁴

These questions have been recently posed by Florian Zeyfang in his two exhibitions: *Slow Narration Moving Still*, seen at the Bildmuseet, Umeå in 2009, and *Steine* [Stones], organised at the Künstlerhaus Stuttgart in 2012.²⁵ Zeyfang explains his motivation for working extensively in the format of slide sequences as a desire for the 'political appropriation of time' in what Laura Mulvey described as a 'delayed cinema' or the potential offered by the (paused) still image to the cinematic experience in the age of digital media.²⁶ The conceptual strength of the notion of slowness, which he ascribes to the slide sequence, as well as the advantages and boundaries presented by its specific apparatus (such as the ability of constant manipulation of slides, as well as the limited capacity of individual projectors), are of particular interest to Zeyfang, who uses them as tools that foster experimentation with an artistic investigation of moving-still dynamics and, especially, its temporal aspect.²⁷ For instance, in *Kieselsteine* [Isolation] (2012) (fig. 7), the notion of stillness, famously associated with photography, is also enacted in figurative terms, as the sequence of sixty-two slides shows images of stones, their materiality seemingly mirroring that of the (still) images that contain them. Animated in a progression of the sequence, however, they are placed in a constellation and thus eschew any

23. Zoran Popović 2014 (reference 18), 23–24.

24. See, for instance: Andrew Fisher, 'Anti-Modernism and Narrativity in the Work of Allan Sekula', in: David Cunningham, Andrew Fisher, Sas Mays (eds.), *Photography and Literature in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press 2005, 160–179.

25. For a publication following these two exhibitions see: Florian Zeyfang (et al), *Florian Zeyfang: Slow Narration Moving Still*, Berlin: Sternberg Press 2014.

26. Florian Zeyfang 2014 (reference 25), 63. In reference to: Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2006.

27. Florian Zeyfang 2014 (reference 25), 69.

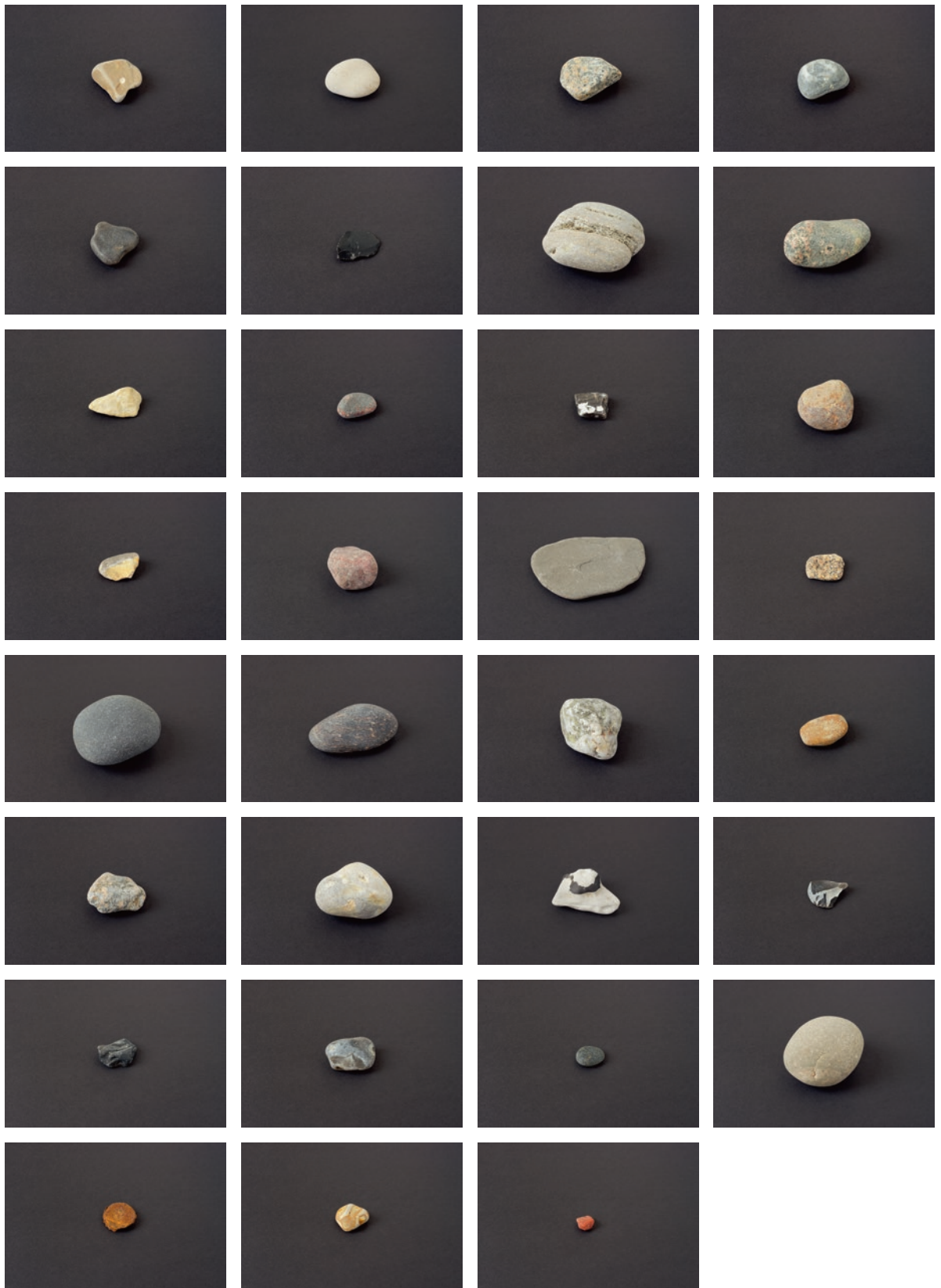


Figure 7
Florian Zeyfang, *Kieselsteine* [Isolation], 2012,
31 of 62 colour slides,
slide projection, ca. 8:0 min.
© Courtesy of the artist.

singular interpretation, or ‘isolation’, either as independent slides or as elements of a linear narration, inviting different intertextual relations to emerge in the pauses between them. It is exactly the sequential mode of presenting separate slides – as an image after image – and the openness that it creates for both artists and viewers in terms of the relations that they might forge between them that constitute the lasting legacy of slide shows, regardless of the fact that increasingly prevailing digital media formats seem to be taking their hereditary entitlement to it for granted.

Several essays in this issue tackle the notions of ‘movement and narration’ in the contemporary artistic uses of slide shows and in relation to the digital means of producing and disseminating images. **Lilian Haberer** discusses how slide projection makes movement visible with a particular focus on the practice of Tris Vonna-Michell. She especially explores rhythmic arrangements of various elements of his work and how they construct narration through circulation and superimposition. **Helen Westgeest** focuses on a ‘slideshow-video’ produced by the Lebanese artist Akram Zaatari, *On Photography, People and Modern Times* (2010), so as to trace out the temporal and material implications of an interaction between the still and moving images within a digital slide show as a ‘critical outsider’ to their analogue predecessors. **Dork Zabunyan** explores a possibility that digital platforms such as YouTube grant an opportunity of a ‘new life’ to slide shows. Discussing the work of the Syrian collective Abounaddara, Zabunyan claims that it operates as a ‘critical portal’ that counters a stereotypical portrayal of the war in Syria offered by the media and thus reaffirms the political power of images.

Jelena Stojković, Ulla Fischer-Westhauser, Uwe Schögl
Vienna, October 2015