

Escaping the Archivist's Folly: A Review of Jeremy Bolen at Soccer Club Club

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Jeremy Bolen, "S-214713 1948/2018, Yerkes Observatory/Chicago," 2018, Glass plate negative from Yerkes Observatory, chromogenic print exposed to Chicago night sky, volcanic ash from Mount St. Helens, 20 x 24 inches

RECOMMENDED

Camille Henrot's 2013 video piece "Grosse Fatigue" brings the weight of encyclopedic knowledge of human experience and demonstrates how the ever-increasing accessibility of information can overwhelm to the point of paralysis. Henrot suggests that those given the choice to do anything will simply do nothing. This meditation on the current mediascape and twenty-first-century image culture exacerbates how visual clutter, all classified, sorted and catalogued, can overwhelm the archivist to the point of exhaustion and futility.

The folly of the archivist—to know it all, to see it all—does not affect Chicago-based artist Jeremy Bolen. It seems this same approach to data, instead of overwhelming, calms the researcher, at least in their pursuit of alternative methods of documentation. In his exhibition "Casual Invisibility," Jeremy Bolen continues with previously visited themes of scientific knowledge in relation to empirical observation, but for this work, the material source now includes glass plate negatives from the Yerkes Observatory in Williams Bay, Wisconsin.



Jeremy Bolen, installation view of "Casual Invisibility" at Soccer Club Club, Winter 2019

The Yerkes Observatory's archive of astrophysical data runs parallel to Bolen's attempts to create a visual language for that which cannot be seen by the naked eye. His access to these materials informs his current body of work directly. Whereas Bolen uses sculpture to enliven field data research involving environmental slow-violence, the negatives from the Yerkes' refracting telescope, the largest ever used for astronomical research, give a visual platform to that which no one had ever seen previously, in the gallery or otherwise.

During a residency with Latitude this past June, Bolen worked the plate-glass negatives amongst other materials and research from various scientific institutions in the Midwest into the hybrid objects now on display at Soccer Club Club. These pieces work best in reversing the plaque/artifact dynamic. Neither exclusively photographs nor archival objects, Bolen blends these items into a pleasing display of the formerly unnoticed.



Jeremy Bolen, "Zion, Illinois Burial #5," 2018 / Photo: Text Print from buried infrared film, 54 x 42 inches

The overlap and intersection, present amongst the sculptures and images for "Casual Invisibility," adhere to the geometry of ninety-degree angles, and thus, operate as highly aestheticized spreadsheets. Contemporary in their abstraction and cleanliness, the works function as visual addenda to the titles in which they find themselves reclassified.

For instance, "Zion, Illinois Burial Film #5" sources buried infrared film from the former Zion Nuclear Power Station for the structural component of the piece. Wedged into one corner of the room, the print of this image, framed in black, leans against one of the mirrored walls of the former Polish sports bar, and also leans against a black and white landscape, mounted flat the leaning print obscures the full image from sight. This piece serves Bolen's interests in phenomena and geological time while also incorporating the space to emphasize the reproducible nature of the data which goes unseen. Most admirably, Bolen boldly positions his own work within the same ephemeral state as the research in which he sources.

Jeremy Bolen's "Casual Invisibility" shows through January 12 at Soccer Club Club, 2923 North Cicero, with a closing party 7pm-10pm on January 12, with a DJ set and musical performance by [Good Fuck](#).