

# Columbus Museum of Art



## ***The Sun Placed in the Abyss***

October 7, 2016–January 8, 2017

### **Columbus Museum of Art**

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Columbus Museum of Art presents *The Sun Placed in the Abyss*, the first major exhibition to consider the persistence of the sun as a visual metaphor and material in contemporary photographic practices. Borrowing its title from a poem by Francis Ponge, the exhibition features photography, film, video, and installation works by more than 50 intergenerational artists who have used the sun to explore the histories and conventions of lens and light based media.

While the exhibition begins around 1970, photography has been dependent on the sun since its inception—the principles of the camera obscura were discovered as a result of attempts to observe solar eclipses, and the word photography itself means writing with light. Early inventors and practitioners referred to photographic processes as heliography (sun drawing) and sun pictures. “The sun is such a fundamental part of photography and our everyday lives, yet it has proven to be an extremely elusive subject to capture with a camera,” said Drew Sawyer, exhibition curator and William J. and Sarah Ross Soter Associate Curator of Photography. “Artists in the exhibition are working against these technical difficulties and are using the sun to interrogate the medium and perception itself.”

Covering 9,000 square feet of gallery space, this immersive exhibition explores how artists have used the sun to reflect on the historical, social, and technological conditions of photography since its invention. Numerous artists re-contextualize pictures of solar phenomena from the 19th century to today, tracing the intersecting histories of photography and scientific knowledge, including **Simon Starling**'s video installation *Black Drop* (2012) and **Sarah Charlesworth**'s multi-photo work *Arc of the Total Eclipse, February 26, 1979* (1979). Other works test the limits of photographic technologies and human vision, such as **Tacita Dean**'s

16mm film *The Green Ray* (2001) and **Mary Lucier's** 7-channel video *Equinox* (1979/2016). A recurring motif is the rising or setting sun, which artists have used to highlight issues of aesthetic taste and the material conditions of the medium. In photo and video works by **Rachel Harrison, Lisa Oppenheim, Catherine Opie, and Walid Raad**, this romantic and cliché trope becomes a poetic meditation on the politics of photographic representation and meaning.

"*The Sun Placed in the Abyss* continues the Columbus Museum of Art's curatorial focus on highlighting the meaning and relevance of contemporary art and photography for broad audiences," says director Nannette Maciejunes. "The insightful and absorbing works in this show reveal the degree to which even the most advanced and often difficult art of our time is still grounded in the world around us."

The exhibition includes works by Dove Allouche, Sarah Charlesworth, Anne Collier, Tacita Dean, Jan Dibbets, John Divola, Shannon Ebner, Buck Ellison, Sam Falls, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Ryan Foerster, Dan Graham, Rachel Harrison, David Horvitz, Craig Kalpakjian, Kikuji Kawada, Matt Keegan, Barbara and Michael Leisgen, Jochen Lempert, Zoe Leonard, Sol LeWitt, Mary Lucier, Lisa Oppenheim, Catherine Opie, Trevor Paglen, Anthony Pearson, Richard Prince, Walid Raad, Dario Robleto, Susan Schuppli, Hugh Scott-Douglas, Simon Starling, A.L. Steiner, Wolfgang Tillmans, Artie Vierkant, James Welling, T.J. Wilcox, Letha Wilson, and Hiroshi Yamazaki, among others.

This exhibition is sponsored by William J. and Sarah Ross Soter and by FotoFocus. The FotoFocus Biennial 2016 is a regional, month-long celebration of photography and lens-based art held throughout Cincinnati and the surrounding region that features over 60 exhibitions and related programming. As part of the Biennial, Participating Venues respond to the theme: *Photography, the Undocument*.

## Catalogue

*The Sun Placed in the Abyss* is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue published by the Columbus Museum of Art. It is edited with text by Drew Sawyer. Text by Jordan Bear, Associate Professor of Art History at University of Toronto; Tyler Cann, Curator of Contemporary Art, Columbus Museum of Art; and Kris Paulsen, Assistant Professor of Film, Video and New Media in the History of Art Department and Film Studies Program, The Ohio State University.