

Anouk Kruithof

The work of the ever-inventive Anouk Kruithof (b. 1981, the Netherlands) knows no boundaries, stretching photography into different shapes and forms. Her new work investigates the photograph as evidence in our unstable times.



MINING MATERIAL

I gather material to work with. This material can be photographs and videos taken by me or text recordings from interviews, as well as objects from daily life such as sponges or old books, industrial material, and in the case of performance, the actions of human bodies, which I transform into different forms, such as installations – mostly photo-based – artist books and sculptures. In the case of my project #Evidence, out of my deep interest in the concept of the photobook *Evidence* by Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel, I activate the project through making new work which includes sourcing the Instagram accounts of several different corporations, government agencies, and institutions related to America's advanced technological future, specifically concerning technology, security, science and (mental) healthcare.

EVIDENCE

September marks the time when four years ago I went to live in the USA and swapped Berlin for New York. *Evidence* has always been my favourite American photobook. This project is based on admiration for the work, but it also feels symbolic to me – somehow personal. I have

made nine books so far and many of my conceptual projects involve photography and find their form in books. Although very different, there is an overlap in my work and *Evidence*. I was once invited by Chris McCall and Jim Goldberg, who was a very close friend of Larry Sultan, to be part of the Larry Sultan Visiting Artist program. Jim showed me what a special and dedicated man he was.

STRIPPING THE INSTITUTIONAL IMAGE

Published in 1977, *Evidence* is now a seminal photobook that marks the beginning of conceptual photography. It is a collection of found images taken from government agencies, corporations, and institutions. The artists searched through 77 archives and thousands of photographs, looking specifically for images that related to technology and the future. They carefully selected and sequenced 82 images into an exhibition that, importantly, were presented without any captions, thereby removing the original information associated with each photograph. The images were recontextualised and new associations were formed through their sequencing. Through this act they suggested that meaning is shaped

by context. Most of the photographs that Sultan and Mandel chose were already old at the time they found them, and depicted America's technologically advanced future, which is, in itself, already brilliant. They tried, by means of 'using' these old, 'objective' photographs to question photography as art and ideas of authorship. The result is also seen as a visual essay predicting America's ambiguous future.

#EVIDENCE

Now that everyone is a version of a 'pirate', questions about appropriation are not as relevant. What is interesting to me is how these organisations now have public archives and use social media as propaganda. Their Instagram accounts are evidence of their existence, open for everyone to 'see' what they do, which should be questioned. #Evidence uses screenshots as evidence, which comes from a huge research of contemporary organisations throughout America, and material to make new photos, photo-montages or photo-sculptures from.

Some of the works are remakes of photographs from *Evidence*, translated into the present and the future through colour, with changes that question even further what is

depicted in the old photographs. My work is a reinterpretation that contains the act of making: an 'activation'. What I admire is *Evidence*'s ambiguity, which works on many levels; it has this cryptically ethereal feel I also look for in my own practice. This is maybe because the photographs were not taken with artistic intention: they are question marks.

THE SHIFTING LANDSCAPE OF PHOTOGRAPHIC TRUTH

We live in a time where we can no longer trust photographs. They oppose the idea of photography as evidence. Yet using photographs as evidence of our existence is at its height. For example, browsing on a screen through someone's personal Instagram page shows us our megalomaniacal desires. Even scarier is that so many corporations, institutions, and government agencies also build their image archives through our (social) mediated landscape. Based on the facts the Instagram accounts of the organisations let me believe, #Evidence creates a critical, visual and philosophical environment which depicts our unstable and unpredictable present and future.



1 *Sweaty Sculpture (denim)*, 2015 © Anouk Kruithof/Boetzelaer Nispen
2 *Sweaty Sculpture (uneven)*, 2015 © Anouk Kruithof/Boetzelaer Nispen

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