

## John Di Stefano's indeterminate states

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*The photograph then becomes a bizarre medium, a new form of hallucination: false on the level of perception, true on the level of time: a temporal hallucination . . .*<sup>1</sup>

John Di Stefano's new works presented in *Indeterminate States* highlight the flexibility of perception through ambiguous blurring. He has attempted to make images that are difficult to recognise and about nothing specific. This lack of clarity is what makes the works so intriguing, encouraging audiences to impose their own reality on the image. As Richter explains '...you can see many more things in it [blurry images] than in a sharply focused image.'<sup>2</sup> Their abstract qualities evoke infinite interpretations, as we inevitably try to make sense (perhaps figuratively) of the ghostly patterns and flickering tones. Not dissimilar to previous works such as *Field* (2013), *WE'VE* (2013), and *Register* (2014). *Lux Motus (No. 1-5) & Lux Motus Continuus* also seek to engage the relationship between the materiality of analogue video and photography and perceptions of light as an expression of time.

*Lux Motus (No. 1-5)* explores temporality, incorporating the contingency of time and duration, which resonates with the idea of an indeterminate state. Di Stefano is interested in the in-between, a liminal state or existence in flux. Unlike *Field* and *Register*, which can be viewed as static, these new works act as a form of documentary practice looking at the photogram as the 'residue or the documentation of an event that happens in a darkroom,'<sup>3</sup> or as Barthes puts it a representation of "that has been." The analogue medium is not reproducible; there is a randomness, which flies in the face of photography and incorporates a performative element. Each photogram is handmade by the artist and the resulting images reflect the wavering nature of Di Stefano's breathing and movement as he attempts to hold objects still between the light source and the paper. A slightly different *modus operandi* to photograms previously produced by Di Stefano, the arduous task tests the body's limits and could comment on the performativity of photography as it documents a moment of suspension. This process produces

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<sup>1</sup> R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, London: Vintage, 2000, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> G. Richter, *Writings, Interviews and Letters 1961 – 2007*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2009, p.81.

<sup>3</sup> J. Di Stefano, interview with the artist, 21 April 2016.

mysterious visual spaces made of moirés and blurring; aesthetically reminiscent of Gerhard Richter's trademark blurs and relating to notions of visual and bodily perception.<sup>4</sup>

While *Lux Motus Continuus* is a separate single channel video work, visually and conceptually it functions in dialogue with the *Lux Motus* photogram series. Almost a reversal or rethink of Di Stefano's previous work *WE'VE*, *Lux Motus Continuus*' black flickering screen suggests temporality and the infinite. The perpetual video has audience's staring into the abyss of reverberating static produced on an analogue television. One cause of this static is cosmic noise (cosmic microwave background radiation)<sup>5</sup>; produced from stars such as the sun outside the earth's atmosphere. The video poignantly highlights random infinitesimal noise from the cosmos, situating us in the world; 'I don't know [What are we picking up], but it is actually coming from something much larger, much bigger, much further away, that we don't even comprehend.'<sup>6</sup> Di Stefano has further abstracted the static captured by slowing the movement of pixels down, the ghosting effect extending the life of the pixel for a few more frames beyond what initially triggered it. Forcing the viewer to engage more intently on individual white dots. The flash of light is thus a moment captured in the same way *Lux Motus (No. 1-5)* is documenting a random moment in time.

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<sup>4</sup> J. Di Stefano, 'Field.' 2015, viewed April 2016, <http://www.johndistefano.net/#!field-2013/cyit>

<sup>5</sup> C. Wanjek, 'Exploring the Universe,' NASA. 2007, viewed April 2016, [http://www.nasa.gov/vision/universe/starsgalaxies/cobe\\_background.html](http://www.nasa.gov/vision/universe/starsgalaxies/cobe_background.html)

<sup>6</sup> Di Stefano, 2016, op.cit.