



# Limits of Photography

January 1 — March 25, 2012

Chris Naka / Curtis Mann / Daniel Hojnacki  
Doug Stapleton / J.J. Murphy / John Brill  
Randy Hayes / Rhona Shand / Sally Ketcham / Vera Klement

Sally Ketcham, *Endgame #12, 2008*

*Limits of Photography* explores the area where the viewer loses faith in the veracity of photography. We have been confident since the beginning of widely published photographic images in the late 1920s that photographs are telling us something very truthful about the world. When publisher Henry Luce launched Life Magazine in 1936 he wrote a promotional ad:

"To see life; to see the world; to eyewitness great events; to watch the faces of the poor and the gestures of the proud; to see strange things— to see and take pleasure in seeing; to see and be amazed; to see and be instructed; thus to see and be shown is now the will and new expectancy of half mankind."

In the entire ad he uses the words “see,” or “watch,” or “eyewitness” 14 times. He does not use the word “photograph” when, in fact, he means “see in photographs.” This confusion of sight and photography would become very useful to news magazines and to advertisers in them.

This confusion can be challenged when the photograph is manipulated to the point of where we lose our trust both in its identity as a photograph, and subsequently in its veracity as a document. A subtext of this exhibition is how long we can still identify a photograph as photograph, and the realization of how good we are at confusing photography with reality.

The exhibition contains a wide variety of contemporary mixed media, video, and technical alteration and manipulation. Some of these departures from photographic purity result in very minimal imagery and some in dense, intricate detail. Taken as a whole this work results in something more akin to a series of partially remembered dreams—reports as to what was behind rather than in front of the camera. Each artist, however, has their own purpose and goal. The limits of their medium is a tool rather than an agenda.



Vera Klement, *War Monody (Autumn)*, 2004

The exhibition title exploits a double meaning. The first is that many of the artists in the show push photography to the limits of recognizing it as photography. The second refers to the limitations encountered when we trust photography as if it were perception—as if it were a window rather than a flat, constructed surface. These two obviously play off against each other and provide good metaphoric possibilities for making art as well as for viewing.

—Rod Slemmons, Curator at Large, Museum of Contemporary Photography