

THE NEW YORK TIMES

MARCH 31, 2022

WHAT TO SEE IN N.Y.C. GALLERIES RIGHT NOW: MUNGO THOMSON

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A screenshot from Mungo Thomson's video "Volume 5. Sideways Thought" (2020-22). Credit Mungo Thomson and Karma

Mungo Thomson's "Time Life" at Karma is a thrilling accomplishment, adding a new chapter to the long conversation about photographs, mechanical reproduction and ways of seeing. It may not be for everyone, though: I watched all seven rapidly flashing videos, made with images scanned from vintage instructional manuals, catalogs and cookbooks, and I left the gallery feeling like I'd just ridden a high-speed roller coaster.

The premise of "Time Life" is simple: sifting through a vast, sometimes absurd archive of images and presenting them at breakneck speed. "Volume 2. Animal Locomotion" (2012-22) shows people demonstrating various forms of exercise, accompanied by a pulsing track by the electronic music pioneer Laurie Spiegel. "Volume 6. The Working End" (2021-22) features fingers tying knots and the percussion of the avant-garde composer Pauline Oliveros. The show's opus might be "Volume 5. Sideways Thought" (2020-22), with an original score by Ernst Karel, which animates the expressive but inert bronze and marble sculptures of Auguste Rodin.

Thomson's project draws fruitful comparisons to other artists and theorists: Eadweard Muybridge, Gerhard Richter, Arthur Jafa and Richard Prince, who, as a young artist, actually clipped publication images at Time-Life Inc. There are also echoes of Aby Warburg's 1920s "Mnemosyne Atlas" and André Malraux's "Museum Without Walls" (1949). What Thomson's adds is

a hydraulic-launch speed: We are not “supposed” to look at images this fast. And yet, the jarring somatic experience of “Time Life” offers a chiropractic antidote to scrolling aimlessly on your phone, languidly consuming pictures and casting a few of your own into the universe of technical images.