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Indeterminate Objects (classrooms)

—

A digital commission for The Photographers' Gallery, London

Researcher: Wendy McMurdo

Research Programme: Creative Industries Futures

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Project Details

- **Indeterminate Objects (classrooms)** was produced as a commission for The Photographers' Gallery in London
- Screened on Media Wall from October 2017 to January 2018
- Consists of photography, 3D imaging and digital animation, exploring the impact of 24/7 online culture on the lives of children.
- Also featured in a short film produced in 2018 by The National Galleries of Scotland entitled *The Digital Mirror*

300-Word Supporting Statement

Indeterminate Objects (classrooms) was produced as a commission for The Photographers' Gallery in London, where it was screened on their Media Wall from October 2017 to January 2018. This piece utilized photography, 3D imaging and digital animation to explore the impact of 24/7 online culture on the lives of children.

The work was shot in an Edinburgh primary school, with the camera moving continuously through the various rooms of the school. Combining photography with the three-dimensional techniques more usually associated with computer games such as Minecraft, a series of standard classroom interiors at the school are presented. The traditional elements – desk, bookshelf, children's drawings, teacher's desk – are linked by a series of floating 3D visuals representing the influence of new technologies. As these abstract forms hover and rotate above the desks, they cast shadows on the classroom floor, which appear as real as those cast by the classroom furniture.

This piece was the result of an ongoing research project exploring the impact of gaming and digital interaction on pre-adolescent children. In Indeterminate Objects (classrooms), both personal observation and contemporary research into the subject were used to produce a piece of work highlighting the pervasive nature of digital gaming and the ways in which this can shape the way that children now think, play and learn. Indeterminate Objects reflects therefore on the persistent nature of these unseen forces and raise pertinent questions around the impact of ever-increasing data immersion on young identities.

This work was disseminated through the installation-exhibitions at The Photographers Gallery and online via a long-form interview on the Photographers Gallery's site Unthinking Photography.

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Research Output

Production still

Indeterminate Objects (classroom)

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Research Output

Production still

Indeterminate Objects (classroom)

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Research Output

Installation shot

Indeterminate Objects (classrooms)

Photo credit:
Tim Bowditch

Research Output

Installation shot

Indeterminate Objects (classrooms)

Photo credit:
Kate Elliott

Dissemination

The Media Wall of The Photographers Gallery, London October 2017-January 2018

The Media Wall is a permanent exhibition space on the ground floor of the gallery, which addresses digital transformations in photography

Press release: 5 October 2017: Wendy McMurdo – Indeterminate Objects (Classrooms).

Also disseminated via The Photographers' Gallery's digital blog *Unthinking Photography* and featured in a short film at the National Galleries, Scotland.

Contextual Evidence

To coincide with the launch of the commission, an interview with Wendy McMurdo and the Photographers Gallery's digital curator Katrina Sluis was published on The Photographers' Gallery's digital blog *Unthinking Photography.*

Quotes from the interview:

- "According to Professor Alan Winfield, who is a founder of Bristol Robotics Laboratory, robots are working models of life. Robots can help us understand life - and indeed ourselves - better than we do at present. I think reflecting on the ethical and moral questions raised by contemporary developments in robotics does tie directly into many of the issues regarding our evolving relationship with the technological world. Where are the edges of our worlds and when does reality tip into simulation for example? How do we measure and understand our complex relationships with machines and algorithms? These seemed to be questions thrown up by robotics, computer gaming and also in the work I was doing with children engaging with evolving technology."
- "In *Indeterminate Objects* I really wanted to make a piece which posed the question: where does reality end and simulation begin? In the imaginative life of the child, this question is, I think, particularly complex. To do this, I decided to make a series of photographs of classroom interiors, where floating 3D visualizations would hover above each desk. As the viewer takes in these images, these 3D visualizations begin to move. As they spin and rotate, they cast simulated shadows on the classroom floor, which appear as real as those cast by the classroom furniture. Reality and simulation become as one."

The illustrated interview can be read in full: https://unthinking.photography/themes/interviews/interview-with-wendy-mcmurdo

Contextual Evidence

Short film produced in 2018 for The National Galleries, Scotland, featuring *Indeterminate Objects (classrooms)* was made to be viewed in the gallery and on the National Galleries YouTube channel

Wendy McMurdo The Digital Mirror (Director Marissa Keating)
Running time: 5:14

Film description:

Wendy McMurdo works with photography and film to explore how technology and identity inform and relate to each other. With a particular interest in childhood and the world that children occupy, McMurdo's work raises questions about advancing technology and what this means for younger people. In this film the artist discusses the influence that gaming has on her work, and how photography and social media are like digital mirrors which we hold up and see ourselves through