

Image Volume
07.11.2024 – 27.11.2024

Lorenza Longhi
Thomas Julier

Curated by Nemo Bleuer

Text by Sylvain Menétrey

Baffled as I am by the dark spectacle of the world, I start this text with a low confidence in my ability to be a good interpreter of the contemporary collective mind well. I'll propose then a low-risk theory: at work, at home, in the street and on public transport, our perception is determined by the 16:9 format of flat screens, whether in vertical or horizontal position – conditions of perception that make us short-sighted, restless, sleepless and dissatisfied. And so we dream of more real experiences, or do we? But few of us venture into the real world, even if the resurgence of war, political violence and destruction – or the rise of trolling if you're looking for a hybrid experience – might suggest otherwise. A less nihilistic approach, at least at first glance, would be to seek the real deep within the screen surface in a kind of Cronenbergian movement.

Is there a surplus of experience to be found in this flat space that could satisfy our senses and our desires? This is one way of approaching *Image Volume*, the oxymoronic title of Lorenza Longhi and Thomas Julier's duo show. In this exhibition, the two artists explore a fantasy where the image gains depth. Not through the medium of performance, virtual reality or sound and light shows that promise a kitsch immersion in modern painting, but by "acknowledging", to borrow a concept from Michael Fried, the literal conditions of the screen-mediated image; its format, flatness, composition and reflective black surface.

Visitors are welcomed into the exhibition with a charming gift box. Longhi has carefully, perhaps lovingly, customized it with polka-dot stickers and a lace strip. The box contains an iPhone playing an edit of footages of male tennis players practicing the traditional autograph on a Plexiglas plate after winning a match. They sign the glass with a marker, creating the illusion they are writing directly onto the eye of the camera. The video is reflected on a Fresnel lens leaning against the lid of the box. The lens enhances the phone screen like a prosthesis, also reinforcing the immediacy between the autograph scene and its broadcast. As the ink drips onto the lens-turned-screen, we might imagine the players on the other side of the surface. The work deploys a mechanism that seemingly brings us closer, while simultaneously increasing our distance from the source – another screen where our gaze collides. This miniature dream machine encapsulates our desires, frustrations and well-paid heroes. The personalized display barely conceals the commercial relationships it encloses, between a multinational company product, the sport-business and the famous signature that instantly adds value to an artwork.

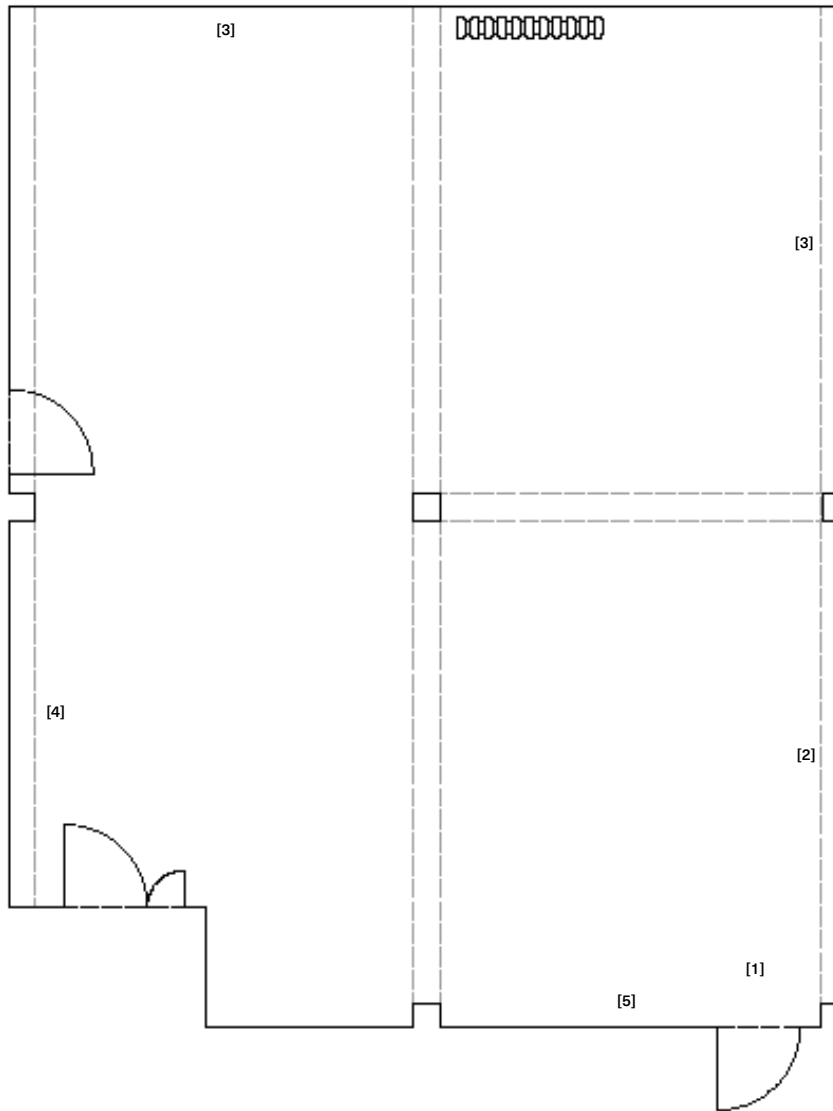
Two still videos taken on Thomas Julier's phone invite us to dive deeper into these layers of visibility, accompanied by a cavernous soundtrack evocative of drone music. The musicologist Jonathan D. Kramer described this "music without phrases" as creating a vertical experience of time. The repetition of sounds without perceptible melodic progression disrupts linear time, opening the abyss of an immediate present looping endlessly. In his videos, Julier captures signals that make time perceptible. In the first video, a police siren. In the second, church chimes. These sounds punctuate the urban experience, the former as an adrenalin rush, the latter imparting a linear tempo. Slow-motion recording elongates and neutralizes them, inviting us into the vertical dimension of sound, its spatiality.

The visible space that this hanging time reveals is a proliferating field of screens on the wall, within which a fragmented image stands out. One video shows the grid-like pavement of a street with a strobe effect (likely the police car siren), the other an angel statue – two symbols of eternity; one materialistic, the other sacred.

Modernism, which often mixed these polarities, seems to be referenced by the compositions on the wall to remind us that a screen is not just a shape but also a form. Within this field of screens, the image gains greater freedom of movement – it could be here or there –, yet remains a product of the shape that defines and controls it.

Longhi's last series of works lean towards the allegorical. It shows an enlarged facsimile of the packaging for a ream of paper from a brand called Image Volume on which the artist has placed polarizing films peeled from screens. The films enable proper color display on screens; deprived of backlighting, they work in reverse, obscuring printed words and silk-screened motifs. However, as the surface fades, an imaginary depth or our reality may emerge from a shimmer.

Image Volume grew out of an extended dialogue between the two artists. Both reinvestigate the medium, its contingencies and the creative space it affords with an economy of means contrasting with the current volume of images, and with their own obsessions – Lorenza's focus on display as a site of tension and Thomas's on animation through image circulation. The image-screen is dismantled, enhanced, slowed, peeled, fragmented and repositioned – physical operations that symbolize a desire to tear break through and reach to whatever is beyond. Simultaneously, the screen gains vitality. Perhaps it thickens, loaded both by the image it projects and the projections of our mind. The exhibition acknowledges it as the double agent of our reality.



^[1] Lorenza Longhi, *Image Volume I*, 2024
 Metal, polarizing films, silkscreen ink, laser print on paper, mdf, screws
 30 x 91,5 x 0,5 cm

^[2] Lorenza Longhi, *New Loop*, 2024
 Cardboard box, fresnel lens, adhesive tape, phone, video loop
 17 x 19 x 21 cm

^[3] Thomas Julier, *She only ever saw the world in Full HD*, 2024
 Secondhand TVs, slo-motion videos, media players, speakers, subwoofer
 Audio mastering by Flavio Audino
 Approx. 35 minutes

^[4] Lorenza Longhi, *Image Volume II*, 2024
 Metal, polarizing films, adhesive vinyl, laser print on paper, mdf, screws
 100 x 36 x 1 cm

^[5] Lorenza Longhi, *Image Volume III*, 2024
 Metal, polarizing films, laser print on paper, mdf, screws
 86 x 42,5 x 1,5 cm