



**Next Level:**  
**Anouk**  
**Kruithof**

17.11.17 – 28.1.18

***¡Agua!***

# ¡Agua!

Anouk Kruithof's work (Dordrecht, 1981) is multi-layered, interdisciplinary, and unconventional. Breaking with the traditional two-dimensional format of photography, she approaches the medium from a wide variety of angles. She uses the images that she makes, finds, borrows or buys as the starting point for photo montages, sculptures, installations, publications, performances, videos and interventions in the public domain. Due to her innovative treatment of the medium and her forward-looking approach to the rapidly changing role of the photographic image, Kruithof is viewed as a pioneering artist in the contemporary photography sector.

Whatever form her work takes, Kruithof's interest is always to investigate how images and image consumption influence our perception. The way people relate to each other and to the world is increasingly shifting to the digital arena, and for Kruithof, the spiraling amount of images produced and consumed daily is both frightening and liberating. At the same time, the integrity of the images we consume is becoming more dubious than ever before. Kruithof eagerly utilises the unlimited possibilities offered by the medium, but is also confronted by the questionable side to our rapidly evolving visual culture. Kruithof is fascinated by the lack of confidence people have in the photographic medium, while embracing it willingly as a means to promote our identity and to validate our existence. Kruithof's work explores this 'contemporary schizophrenia': a kind of mental disease of the modern human being, who is no longer capable of distinguishing fact from fiction. The artist contemplates a world consisting of a relentless stream of edited, constructed, spliced-together images that have lost their credibility: reality today is thoroughly scripted and subject to continuous post-production.

Kruithof responds to our ambivalent relationship to images by collecting existing images

of contentious themes and translating these into her own visual idiom. By extracting the image from its digital context and transforming it into a three-dimensional, physical confrontation, the artist interrogates the ways in which our (digital, online) image consumption influences the meaning and the impact of what we observe. Thus, for her series *#Evidence* (2015–2017), she examined how American businesses, educational institutes and government entities strategically design their online (corporate) profiles. She distilled 650 screenshots from their Instagram accounts to create a series of photo montages and sculptures. By manipulating this visual material and translating it into her own visual idiom, the artist divests the images of their promotional purposes. Her works question the way photography enables individuals and organisations to visually construct and circulate their image worldwide.

In the midst of this visual self-promotion, Kruithof deftly identifies the ethical dilemmas that often go unnoticed or unremarked, such as government surveillance practices, gun ownership and privacy. Taking images of identity cards, confiscated and posted online by the American Transport Security Administration, she magnified them into unrecognisable abstract images in pastel colours and printed them on transparent flexible materials such as latex and plastic. She then draped these materials over metal structures made of camera fixtures. In this way the artist makes us aware of the manipulability of images and how this is used to curb reality to serve particular purposes.

Collecting existing photographic images depicting urgent and topical themes is characteristic for Kruithof's work. For her latest work – made especially for the exhibition at Foam – she compiled an extensive collection of (online) images pertaining to environmental pollution and the consequences of global warming. She was surprised at the aesthetic



*Petrified Sensibilities 04, 2017*  
Sculpture made of Inkjet print on latex, oxygen mask, oxygen tubing

dimension of photographs of shocking events, such as the dumping of chemical waste and oil spills at sea. She also collected amateur footage of collapsing glaciers: a 'spectacle' that tourists are thrilled to capture on film. With her installation, Kruithof highlights the dissonance between the gravity of the situation and the often aestheticized and fleeting manner in which this is presented and unthinkingly circulated in cyberspace.

Through her work, Kruithof goes beyond the specific issues addressed by her series. While her sculptures and installations are based on images of environmental pollution and government surveillance, they simultaneously symbolise a collective psychological state of mind prevalent in western society. The crashing ice and unrecognisable identity cards function as metaphors for the transience and the chaos that the artist experiences personally as well. The amorphous and abstract images are the result of a malleable and at the same time amorphous and undefinable

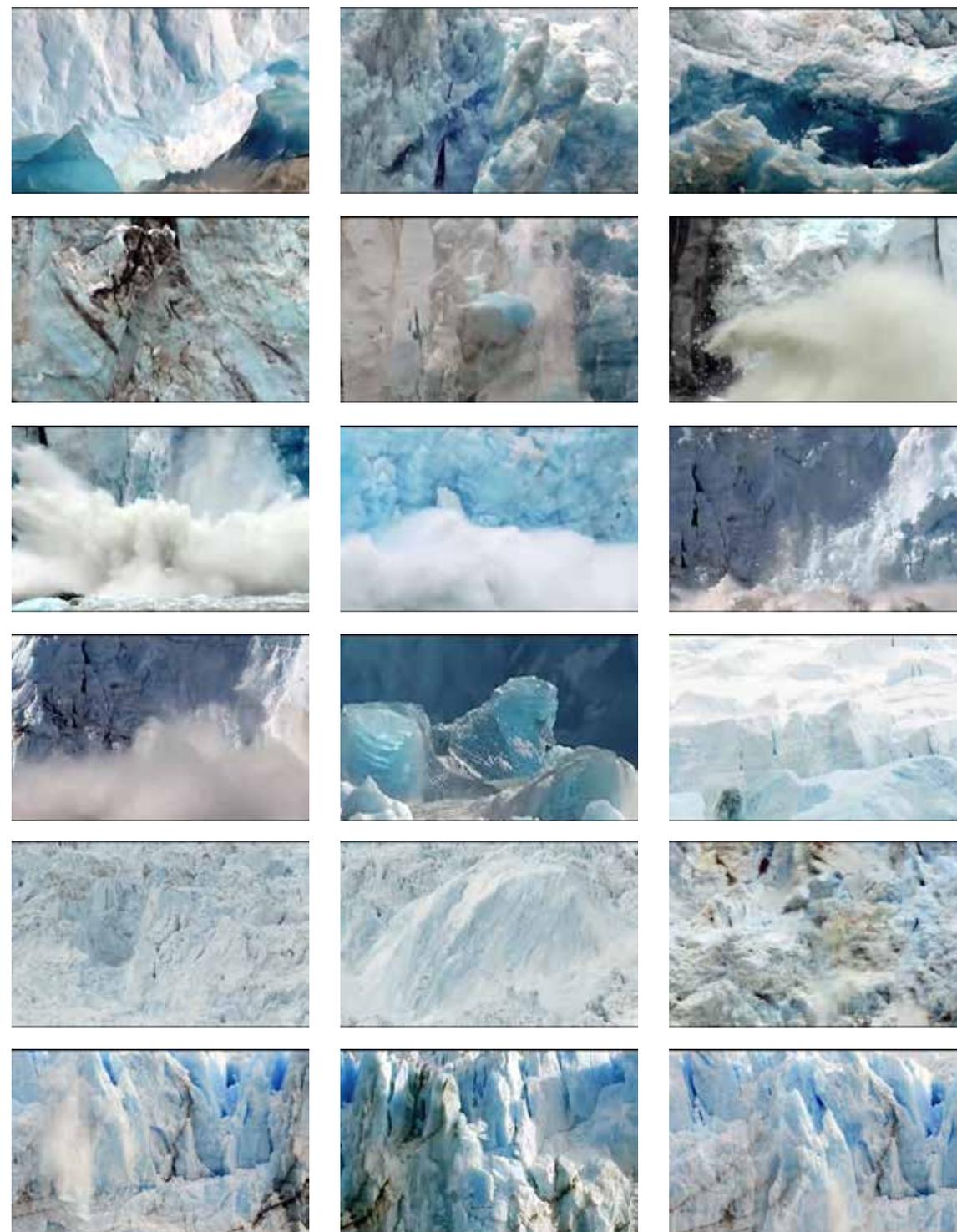
world in which everything is possible, and nothing a matter of course. By converting immaterial (online) expressions of a collective unease into a physical form, Kruithof tries to capture a collective mood manifested in the current post-internet society.

In her work, Kruithof addresses universal social and political themes while at the same time formulating a highly personal and idiosyncratic view of the world. The artist is acutely aware of her double role as image maker and image consumer. Her paradoxical relationship to the medium (as maker, receiver, manipulator and manipulated) informs her work in several ways. For example, for her project and publication *Untitled (I've Taken Too Many Photos/ I've Never Taken a Photo)* (2012-2014), she asked a boy who had never made a photograph before to edit her personal image archive. For *AHEAD* (2015-today) she used background colour as a 'neutral' way to categorise her ever-growing collection of anonymous portraits, taken of the back of people's heads in the street. For *Becoming Blue* (2006-2009) she investigated the relationship between the photographer and subject by means of intimate performative interactions. The surprise, fright, annoyance, stress, insecurity or relief with which the model reacted to the artist were captured by using the self-timer.

Performances, sculptures, publications, videos and installations: they are all part of Kruithof's attempt to bridge the gap between physical human experience and how this is expressed or depicted in the digital world. *Pixel-Stress* (2013) is an example of earlier work that explores the online/offline manifestation of emotions. Here, she created abstract blow-ups of images found on Google using the search term 'stress'. She then offered these images for sale to passers-by on Wall Street: the world's epicentre of stress and valuation. By continually navigating between the digital and physical experiential sphere, Kruithof investigates a collective state of mind that does not only manifest itself physically, but also becomes apparent in the in the relentless flow of images in an amorphous digital world.



*Neutral (Openhearted)*, 2015 from the project #Evidence, 2015-2017  
Sculpture made of metal, Inkjet print on vinyl, rubber



Video stills *Ice Cry Baby*, 2017 video, 3:00 min.  
Edit in collaboration with Laetitia Jeurissen

Kruithof addresses urgent societal issues and personal struggles in a playful and often lighthearted manner. For her work *Sweaty Sculptures* (2015), Kruithof photographed the transpiring bodies of 25 people who first performed a workout in the gallery. Transpiration is the most visible sign of nervousness, stress and exhaustion, and is at the same time a source of shame and social discomfort. She sought to surmount emotion and shame by magnifying the images of sweaty clothes, transforming them into light, colourful, humoristic sculptures. For the publication *The Daily Exhaustion* (2010), the artist parodied herself as an obsessed workaholic who has reached the state of sweaty exhaustion. It is one of the many tongue-in-cheek ways in which Kruithof captures the phenomenon of stress and mental exhaustion.

Kruithof's playful and personal appropriation of the medium of photography does not at all detract from her serious approach to the image as a social and political agent. In an era in which everyone is permanently taking and manipulating pictures and the resulting images are circulated freely and widely, the personal has become political. Just like the visual culture in which we live, her work method is confusing and revealing, personal and universal, liberating and oppressive, light-hearted and dystopian. This paradoxical layering, which characterises both the medium of photography and the human individual, forms a common theme that runs throughout her work.



Folly, 2017

Sculpture made of prostheses, fiberglass, metal, copper gas tube, LED-shoes, Inkjet prints on rubber anti-slip mats



The Daily Exhaustion published by KODOJI, 2010

### Anouk Kruithof

Anouk Kruithof graduated in 2003 at the St. Joost academy in Breda. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at renowned institutions such as the Nederlands Fotomuseum in Rotterdam, the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 2016 Kruithof won the *Volkscrant Beeldende Kunstprijs* public's award, and in 2014 the *Charlotte Köhler Prize*. In 2012 she received the *Infinity Award* by the International Center for Photography in New York. She won the *Hyères Photography Jury Grand Prize* in 2011. In 2006 her collaborative project with Jaap Scheeren was exhibited in Foam, and she was selected as Foam Talent in 2009. Kruithof has published eleven artist's books and is founder of The Anamorphosis Prize, an international award for self-published photobooks. Anouk Kruithof lives and works alternately in the Netherlands, Mexico City and New York. She is assisted by Samara Saade.

Sculpture back cover:  
*Flat Head*, 2017 © Anouk Kruithof  
Sculpture made of fiberglass,  
rubber, Inkjet print on latex

With special thanks to Samara Saade (assistant Anouk Kruithof) for the close collaboration on the project.

### Next Level

Since the autumn of 2015, Foam presents the exhibition series *Next Level*, with the support of Ammodo. The series is aimed at introducing the wider public to innovative art by relatively young artists who are making radical new use of the medium of photography.

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