

ADAPTATIONS

The interrogation and reformulation of space and spatial constellations constitute the core of Niko Luoma's creative concepts and technical work processes in the photographic medium. While the past decade has seen Luoma dealing with entirely abstract visual content, the light-harvested film exposure itself remains to be the centrepiece of his work practice. His method involves a calculated, analogue technique of repeatedly exposing a single negative to lines of light, sometimes up to thousands of times, thus composing collage-like images, themselves translatable as abstract visualizations, or sculpted architectures, of time. Luoma's approach challenges definitions and boundaries of photography in terms of its traditional allocation to the past, therein refiguring our very understanding of time as fragmentary, rather than linear expansions within space.

Luoma's current series *Adaptations* (2015) are a natural, logical extension of his earlier *Variations on a Standard of Space* (2013). Themed on Paul Cézanne's early cubist notions of space and geometric solids, the previous series focused on transformations of shape and volume between two- and three-dimensional form, format, and medium, and the creation of multiple simultaneous viewpoints. Luoma's *Adaptations* confirm this deconstruction and rebuilding of visual space as a continual central concern, and underpin, moreover, the artist's questioning and negotiation of linear models. Using extant paintings, photographs, and sculptures as source material, Luoma seeks to establish dialogue—both technical and art historical—by converging the “geometries and modulations of spatial events” found in these works with his own personal experience. Though drawing from various individual solutions provided by previous artists to space-related issues of form and materiality, dimension and light, movement and speed, Luoma's *Adaptations* are not to be misunderstood as resulting images of secondary status. They do not aim to represent; their significance lies in the performative condition inherent to their material process of production. Luoma's inspirational sources—ranging from expressionist paintings by Pablo Picasso and gestural sculptures by Willem de Kooning, to the futurist manifesto *Art of Noises* (1913) by Luigi Russolo—serve, moreover, as specific fix points of departure, as parametric filters, or measures, through which Luoma's works may unfold aspects of rhythm, volumetricity, and directional force.

In essence, Luoma's space-and-light compositions remain self-referential, they point towards the process of their own creation—the moment of exposure—in medium-reflexive manner. Function and process become content themselves, which is why “the main reference is not on the outside but the inside.” Luoma's use of the term “inside” implies both the interior workings of the camera and the instance of intimacy experienced by the photographer, ultimately in the sense of Noël Arnaud's poetic assertion: “I am the space where I am.” The spectator, likewise, enters and expands into the spaces of Luoma's *Adaptations*, enticed to see the world with new and different eyes: the world as seen by artists of the past, through the prisms of Luoma's contemporaneous translations; the moment of contingency with the artworks inevitably altering the individual's knowledge of “what was” as well as his or her perception of “being” in the present. This participatory process shaping a consciousness of self and placement within time, it also indicates a cultivation and perpetuation of collective cultural consciousness, memory, and imagination. It essentially relies on the idea that exterior and interior work as mutually effective spaces, or rather, that human being and environment are to be considered as an active continuum. Conceivable as doors that open up connective walkways between the perceived “then” and “now”, Luoma's *Adaptations* invite the spectator to partake in fluid dynamics of history making as an on-going symbiotic process and human endeavour.

Shao-Lan Hertel / 2016