



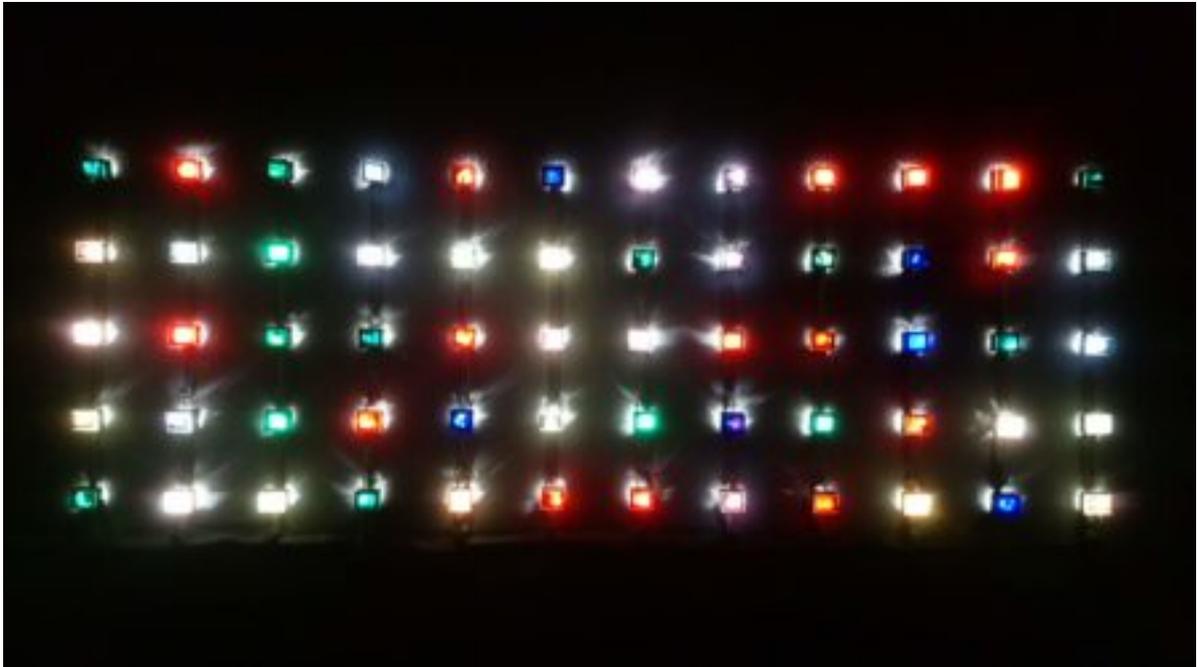
## MUU WRITES 10

*MUU Writes* is a group composed of MUU members artists who share an interest in writing. The group has set themselves the task of publishing an essay on every exhibition scheduled in MUU's program autumn 2018, to be released both online and in the gallery.

MUU writes 3/5/2019

Text: JOHN GAYER

Time slip: Jakob Johannsen's *WAVES*



*Waves* (2018) is an artwork that makes use of analog photography and light. Set out on one wall of MUU Studio, each of the tiny 35mm transparencies are mounted over an appropriately scaled lightbox. This causes them to glow marvellously in this dark space and generate an intriguing duality, which urges viewers to look at the work from multiple perspectives.

Stepping into the space one instantly becomes aware of the slides' presence and the coloured light that saturates these images. It is possible to glimpse details of the sixty micro-compositions, but for the most part they are overshadowed by the intensity of the green, blue, red and white hues that flood through them. If some logic underpins the organisation of these images and lights, it isn't obvious. While one can enjoy the engaging abstract quality to the coloured lights' placement, that characteristic seems peripheral to the crux of this piece. Spread out in open rows and columns, the assemblage suggests a fragment, perhaps taken from an L.E.D. readout, that has been greatly magnified. One can easily imagine the lights changing colour or flashing as they parade across a message board. This reference to movement is also reinforced by second one, though on a much smaller scale. The sprocket holes that run along the upper and lower edges of each transparency speak of the camera mechanism that enables film to be advanced and re-spoiled. Whereas the first type of motion is computer controlled and simulated, the second reference refers to a manual or motor driven process.

By interweaving these two forms of motion, Johannsen is revealing something about the nature of image capture technology and its history. Such distinctions clearly multiply upon moving close to the work. That proximity exposes a broader range of contradictory information. Johannsen plays with relationships of scale, space and subject matter to create a disjointed tale that highlights various kinds of networks and grids, the characteristics and limits of analog and digital technologies, and expressions of time. His canny use of reversal film, which produces positive transparencies and has not yet completely disappeared from the market, enables him to investigate this unpredictable concurrence and provide insights into what is a most complex set of affiliations.

Arguably, one of the most striking – as well as incongruous – kinds of pictures Johannsen includes are images documenting individuals using a laptop or smart phone. Not only are they situated in predominantly dark spaces, but light from the apparatus' screen also illuminates their faces. These views parallel old-world paintings of people reading by candlelight. The nature of the light and, therefore the scene, are modulated both by the source of that radiation and the medium used to convey that image. Indirectly, these pictures also refer to old terminology – words such 'tablet' and 'scroll' – adopted for touch screen use. Today most artists working with slides utilise found images, the appreciation of which stems from their sentimental value and connection to the recent past. Johannsen, on the other hand, provides a most welcome and altogether different perspective on their application. He uses them to depict features that do not ascribe to those nostalgic-tinged traits. *Waves* stands as a form of analysis that elucidates the ebb and flow of photographic technology. Visually alluring and conceptually resonant, *Waves* is rife with permutations and deserves the viewer's full attention to experience what it holds.

**Jakob Johannsen: Waves**

**6.4-12.5.2019**

**MUU Studio**

Lönnrotinkatu 33, Helsinki

Open: Tue – Fri 12-17, Sat – Sun 12-16