

# DEAR DAVE,

## 2018 LUCIE AWARD PHOTOGRAPHY MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

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MUNGO THOMSON "VOLUME 15. MONUMENT TO A PERIOD OF TIME IN WHICH I LIVED" 2025.

By Danielle Ezzo, April 10, 2025

I consider the gravity of images in Mungo Thomson's two sister exhibitions at Karma, on view until April 26. By gravity, I don't mean the literal mass of objects, although, much has been said about the photographic object losing its material properties as it transitions from the physical world into digital ephemera. I'm referring to the metaphorical and canonical pull they have. Images linger in our personal and collective imaginations, forming an invisible scaffolding of meaning.

The viewer crouches down on the ground in the viewing room of the gallery's 22 East 2nd Street location for 'Time Life', a series of video works, settling into a shapeless grey bean bag along the back edge of the dark room. The projection bathes the entirety of the opposite wall with shuffling images: a mime demonstrating emotion, a dancer undulates snake-like, fingers pick a guitar next to an instructional graphic, and microscopic slides illuminate geologic patterns and textures. The videos which are comprised of still images sourced from printed how-to guides and reference material create rudimentary motion in the spirit of Eadweard Muybridge. Each of the five videos has a relationship with sound, too: one the clicking of a book scanner shutter, another the atmospheric jazz music of Eiko Ishibashi, and then a record skipping mindlessly. Each piece, atomic and isolated in nature, appears as a key to a larger whole.

Thomson speaks not just to the vast catalog of information in the Time Magazine archive, but to time—that slippery thing—both non-linear and anachronistic. Perhaps more importantly, Mungo speaks to the times we find ourselves in and where we, the viewer, are situated in relation to an expanding matrix of media, and the lens through which objects are encoded into that system. By including a clear view of the book scanner that cataloged each document, he directs the viewer's attention not only to the artifacts themselves but also to the documentary methods, printing practices, and design milieu of a particular era. It's in the outer edges of the frame that we realize the image is as much about the process of reproduction as it is about the objects at its center.

This brings me, of course, to Einstein's theory of General Relativity, which describes a four-dimensional continuum in which space and time are woven together and influenced by the presence of mass and energy. Celestial bodies warp the spacetime around them, images—especially those in Thomson's work—generate a kind of cultural or canonical curvature, distorting linearity and drawing ideas into the viewer's orbit.

At Karma's other location at 188 East 2 Street, 'A Universal Picture', two adjoining rooms are lined with six-foot-high framed mirrors, each echoing the dimensions of a magazine cover. Their red vinyl borders reference the iconic Time Magazine design, subtly shifting as you move through the space to reflect changes in the logo over the years. The mirrored surfaces hold more than just your reflection—they contain a constellation of reproduced covers: Saddam Hussein, Marilyn Monroe, the surface of Mars, and molecular models. As you walk, your image merges with theirs. Standing between the mirrors, you find yourself centered—literally and symbolically—alongside these historic figures and narratives as if pulled momentarily into their gravitational field.

The James Webb Space Telescope confirms what Einstein proposed: spacetime bends perception itself, making vision inseparable from the forces that shape it. In Thomson's work, this idea becomes tangible—the projection that engulfs, the mirror that multiplies—each a lens that reveals how archives, like light, arrive shaped by the technologies that carry them. Understanding, then, is never fixed, but always refracted—always in motion.

Danielle Ezzo is an interdisciplinary artist and writer. She is the author of *If Not Here, The Where?* published by [Silent Face Projects](#) in 2023, and is on the faculty of ICP.