

LYDIAN STATER

For Immediate Release

Order of Operations

Matthew Cronin & Wieteke Heldens

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"You put your right hand in, you put your right hand out, you put your right hand in, and you shake it all about, you do the Hokey Pokey and you turn yourself around. That's what it's all about!"

— Jimmy Kennedy (Northern Irish songwriter)

Lydian Stater is pleased to present *Order of Operations: Matthew Cronin & Wieteke Heldens*, a two-person exhibition featuring new works from both artists that explore systems, abstraction, labor, and representation.

Wieteke Heldens only made two paintings in 2022. A prolific painter whose output typically consists of dozens of works per year, Heldens recently became a mother. And while she cherishes the time spent with her son, she feels guilty about being away from her studio. This guilt is well known among artists struggling to balance art and life in an increasingly precarious economic system.

A byproduct of this system is the gig economy: workers making money where they can whenever they can. The source images used in Matthew Cronin's photographs are culled from numerous online ads promoting OnlyFans subscription accounts. On this platform, sex workers use their image to entice viewers and make money.

But at what cost? How has the collision of capitalism and the information age fractured the sense of self? We are not our jobs, right? Or are we? Mothers? Artists? Sex workers?

In this exhibition, abstract images sit alongside low resolution home video footage. Abstraction is no accident here; both artists use meticulous self-imposed systems and methodologies, while making room for chance and process, to explore how color and form can convey meaning. Paint drips are cataloged and numbered in Heldens' paintings while resampling to the nth degree pushes Cronin's images beyond recognition. And while representation recedes, abstraction allows for new modes of understanding.

In Heldens' *8kg* and *9kg*, titled for the weight of each painting, everything is exactly where it should be as far as the artist is concerned. Building upon algorithmic systems developed throughout the artist's history, Heldens focuses on the feel, quality, and atmosphere of her painting's dimensions and color palette. These, combined with controlled drips and expressive brush strokes, are ways to make sense in a senseless world.

In *The Unbearable Closure of Being*, Cronin uses non-traditional methods of enlargement along with layering and color correction to explore connection, intimacy, and beauty, but most importantly, representation in a world increasingly defined by abstraction. The final photographs bear almost no likeness to the source imagery, and similar to the fantasies sought by subscribers of cam chat platforms, the resulting pictures can be anything one wants them to be.

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And in a system where there is literally not enough time to manage all responsibilities, efficiency and ingenuity are an asset. In *...minutes spent away from my studio*, small screens play videos of an artist on leave; playing with and reading to her child. What might be considered downtime from the practice of making art, Heldens has flipped the act of care into an act of resistance against rigid market conditions. Similarly, in *8kg & 9kg from studio to gallery*, she has turned the mundane act of artwork transport into durational performance and video work. For Cronin, layers from his physical photographs have been repurposed into slow moving and alluring videos, allowing his source material to live in multiple mediums and dimensions.

There is an "order" many are expected to follow in life: school, job, fucking, marriage, children, work, retirement, death. More and more individuals are doing these things out of order or not at all. Artists, for their part, have often been the first to denounce sweeping declarations of normalcy. The works in this exhibition are a small part of this tradition.

Matthew Cronin lives and works in New York's Lower East Side. He holds an MFA in Studio Art from University of Texas at Austin as well as a BFA in Photography from Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Cronin's process makes use of pre-existing photographs which he reimagines through montage, multiple exposure, and alternate methods of scanning. His work has been exhibited in galleries and museums throughout the United States and Canada including The Visual Arts Center, Austin; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Back Gallery Project, Vancouver, and the NARS Foundation, Brooklyn. His work has been featured in numerous digital and print publications such as *Der Greif*, *A New Nothing Vol. 1*, and at the Humble Arts Foundation. He has participated in residency programs at the NARS Foundation and Wassaic Project. Cronin's work can be found in the Ogden Museum of Southern Art's permanent collection and in the archives at the Center for Creative Photography.

Wieteke Heldens graduated from the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague, in 2007. Heldens' work has been shown internationally, including the Kunstmuseum Den Haag in the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Great Britain, Ireland, Denmark, South Korea, Japan, and the United States. She has also worked as an artist-in-residence in Chongqing, China and Turin, Italy. In 2013 Heldens won the Royal Award for Modern Painting in the Netherlands. She is a recipient of a Stipend for Established Artists of the Mondriaan Fund. Wieteke Heldens lives and works in Long Island City, NY.