



Conceptual multimedia artist Penelope Umbrico questions notions of temporality, identity, and image consumption in a post-internet age. Her best known works are immersive installations of images depicting a specific phenomena culled from sources such as Craigslist, eBay, mail-order catalogs, and brochures. Umbrico develops imagery that balances the virtual and real, leaving up to her viewers to discern between the two.

In much of her more recent work, Umbrico appropriates found images, culling them from what she jokingly refers to as the "photo-worthy" world—sources such as Craigslist, eBay, mail-order catalogs, and brochures. She then alters her material through techniques that obscure the processes engaged in its production. For a series that employs sunset images from Flickr, Umbrico trolls the photo-sharing site, gathers her material, and presents it in large installations—matrices of thousands of photos.

For her recent show "Mountains, Moving: Light Leaks, and Chemical Burns," Umbrico digitally altered and serialized prints of Mount Moran in Wyoming's Grand Teton National Park taken from Aperture's "Masters of Photography" series. Each found photograph was put through a series of iPhone filters that imitate happy accidents in analog photography, creating prints full of psychedelic color and shifting perspective, but which had little situational relation to the mountain as it was originally photographed.

While in many ways, for Umbrico, "the medium is the message," as Marshall McLuhan's famous treatise goes, her choice of subject matter is also poignant. Each serialized subject has a mystical resonance in its own collective history. Mount Moran, for example, was named for landscape artist Thomas Moran and is the site of a 1950 tragedy in which 21 people, including seven children, were killed in a plane crash. Likewise, a sunset stands in both for the sublime and for death, and is a natural phenomenon that pinpoints an exact shared moment in the lives of people around the world.

Umbrico points out that the proliferation of repeated imagery can dull the effect those awe-inspiring moments hold: "[T]he illusion of choices we're given masks the actual limits of choices we really have. To me these technologies seem to be tyrannical, especially when they define in our own minds who we are, how we want to be seen, and how we see the world." However, even as she distances herself from the banality of our media-saturated image culture, Umbrico's works also highlight the uniting effect of these assertions of humans capturing the world around them, be they virtual or real.