

Video Walkthrough | Aimée Zito Lema: Scryer in the Archive

Aimée Zito Lema gives a virtual tour of her solo exhibition at Mercer Union, *Scryer in the Archive*. Taking as a starting point her family's experience of living in Argentina during the political turmoil of the 70s, the artist shares her process of working with the material memory of paper, and reflects on how the photographic image traces personal and collective histories across generations.

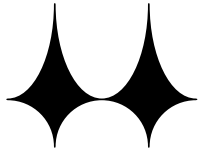
Watch the walkthrough on Mercer Union's website: <https://www.mercerunion.org/exhibitions/aimée-zito-lema-scryer-in-the-archive>

Aimée Zito Lema: What's important to me is working with the photograph as physical material not only as an image, and the transformation that the material goes through. The paper in this water is also going through a process, and at the end of each exhibition, the material vanishes, disappears.

So in this space there are three large basins. My idea was to work horizontally, so you are discovering kind of details of the work that as a viewer, you can kind of start putting together. Often I am interested in looking into archives from the period of the last civic military dictatorship that took place in Argentina, in the 70s. So I often look back at this material and use this period of history as a starting point to think and generate works. Many dictatorships are known for the violence that they generated in society, but this specific dictatorship has been I think historically the most cruel and the one that left hardest marks also in Argentinian society. And I think one very important element is the fact that 30,000 people went missing. This figure of the disappeared person really becomes a part of society at a time and also of collective memory until today.

All of the images that I use for the exhibition come from a leftist publication, a revolutionary kind of magazine that was published in the 70s in Argentina. While I was going through the process of selecting the images of the magazine, I was also starting to photograph my kind of daily environment, my life, my own children. And at the end, what I started doing was to draw all the figures in the photographs of what I call the intimate archives. And all of these line drawings is what you see now on top of the archive images. It's almost like literally putting different historical times or different narratives on top of each other and creating a new image. So the idea of the *Scryer in the Archive* came from this idea of looking at an image of the past through the water as if looking through a crystal to see something of the future.

I started working with water actually not with the idea of making a work that would include the water, but it was part of the process of making paper. I was going a lot to paper restoration studios trying to learn how restorators work with the paper. I was interested in this idea of paper having a memory, a material memory, that the people working with the paper, they were actually trying to erase this memory. So I started to think of the paper itself as the carrier



of the historical image and how this is also being passed through these reproductions from one person to another, from one generation to another.

The way I look at the past and history has always been in flux, it's always been changing. That has to do with your personal perspective, your age. So many things change in a person, which also changes the way you can look at the past. So I like this idea that you can shape the past as a material to work with. The paper in this water is also going through a process. And at the end of each exhibition, the material disappears, because at the end the paper is dissolved. So I'm more interested in the image existing for that period of time, and even if you see it today as it is, you know that it will not stay like this forever.