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**Jordan Kantor**  
CHURNER AND CHURNER

The purring and ticking of a 16-mm projector in the first room of Jordan Kantor's latest exhibition signaled a certain quaintness. That the film takes Monet's haystack paintings—or rather, photographic reproductions of them—as its subject only underscored that sentiment (but not, in the event, an unself-conscious sentimentality). As some of the more widely circulated images from the latter half of the last century, the Impressionist master's *Les Meules*, 1890–91—studies of the most fleeting atmospheric conditions—now bear all the permanence of the commonplace. That ready-made charm is here subjected to a playful taxonomy. The three-minute-and-eighteen-second-long silent film, also titled *Les Meules* (all works cited, 2011), sutures together more than 1,400 photographs—nearly all of them gleaned from the Internet—of Monet's twenty-five-canvas suite.

Taken from Monet's catalogue raisonné, a single, black-and-white plate of each painting serves as the “establishing shot” for each canvas from the series—of which numerous successive images unfurl in quick succession. The film, projected in the same dimensions as the original canvases, faithfully evokes their physical presence, even as it seems to inject time—or at least a certain kineticism—into their immobile, flat spaces. Kantor has taken no pains to disguise the derivation of the photographs that constitute the piece. A copyright seal or logo (e.g., “Awesome Art”) occasionally appears superimposed on an image, some of which are more grainy than others. The source of those that originated as slides is less visibly apparent, even if—in having been converted to digital format—the images now stand at an even further degree of remove from the original painting. The various, immaterial layers of detachment between the canvas and its reproductions form the subject here as much as the paintings themselves—a gambit that

conjures Erin Shirreff's work *Roden Crater*, 2009. This deference to the vagaries of different cameras and calibrations also evokes something of Monet's practice itself, its own voluntary submission to the contingencies of atmosphere. Stalked from near and far, raked with light from angles, the conical stacks served the painter as a hitching post for light and weather, fugitive effects of season, snow, ambient haze.

The focus—or poignant lack thereof—on Monet's process further subtends the series of paintings Kantor concurrently produced. Based on digitally manipulated stills from a 16-mm film, these eight works in oil present landscapes in colors reminiscent of Monet's palette, by turns bright and almost brooding. A few of the works include what appears to be a flare of light that washes out parts of the image. A brilliant yellow creeps in from the right in *Untitled* (113577), threatening to flood the scene, while *Untitled* (113606) is steeped in a radiance that has dissolved any sense of horizon whatsoever. These effects recall, too, the proleptic proximity of Monet's images to abstraction, their relinquishment of figurative solidity to the corrosive effect of light, the sovereignty of that disintegration over the materiality of paint.

Kantor's numerical titles refuse any wistful projections into their spaces and emphasize the paintings' origin in digital reproduction—something the French call, quite fittingly, *photographie numérique*. Monet himself was no stranger to photography, exhibiting his work in 1874, alongside that of other Impressionist colleagues, in the atelier of none other than Félix Nadar, one of the pioneers of the medium. And his name continues to lend clout to a certain immediacy of vision, set not to nostalgic ends but to a more coldly objectivizing optics. MONET serves today as the acronym for “Multiwavelength Optical Networking,” a digital-information technology first developed by the National Security Agency as part of a covert communications development. Whether he intended it to or not, Kantor's play on mediation takes on a different valence in this light. Even despite—or precisely because of—their layers of remove, Monet's haystacks seem not so distant from technologies of surveillance and security. Trevor Paglen, take note.

—Ara H. Merjian