

SZABÓ Dezső**Empty Images**

14 January – 28 February

The series entitled *Empty Images* comprises part of a larger scale program which I have been working on for the past few years (*Black & White*, 2015; *Exposed*, 2016; *Limits of Light*, 2017; *Scale*, 2018). The title and inspiration for the series come from what is referred to as a contact print. The series itself consists of photograms; it turns the tools that aid in photography into images, thereby paying tribute to them. At the same time, the works, in this form, actually function as autonomous works of art. The way I think about it, if we remove the negatives – that is to say, the visual information – from the tools used for archiving and creating contact prints, then, almost as a by-product, we are left with the negative sleeves as a form. Thus, that which was previously regarded as unimportant becomes present in its own right. Carrying this train of thought further, the thus recorded phenomenon, as an empty form, presupposes the absence of the image, while it becomes an image itself. I extended this observation, as a possibility for artistic use, to objects used to store and handle negatives, slides and paper photographs of different formats, such as photo albums and envelopes – which, until the early 2000s, were more characteristic of amateur photography and the mass use of images. The analytical examination of the nature and operational mechanisms of photographic images had been of interest to theoreticians and artists in earlier periods of the history of photography as well. Now, in the context of the latest technological – and the resulting societal – changes and means of image use, questioning and re-exploring the nature of the photographic image has once again gained validity. We are passing through a phase in the history of cultural transformation and visual communication, in which there is still an opportunity in art to reinterpret the essential character of analogue photographic image making before bringing it to a close.

Dezső Szabó

Dezső Szabó (1967) is a visual artist. He studied in the Painting Programme of the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts between 1990 and 1997. After his initial engagement with monochrome painting, he became interested in photographic image making. During his early period, he captured aviation and natural disasters (*black box*, 1999), various natural phenomena (*Tornado*, 2001), mysterious locations (*Spot*, 2000), and deep-sea shots. He also created works composed of stills taken from television broadcasts, using his small film camera. In his series entitled *Time Bomb* (2008), the self-destructive logic of the mock-up approach and the chosen subject matter signified an extreme endpoint in his modelling of visual scenes. In recreating the scene and the image, Szabó was already questioning the operational mechanisms of images and their contemporary status during this early period. As of 2015, he extended his activities to exploring the nature of analogue photographic images. Dezső Szabó's works have been featured at numerous solo and group exhibitions; his latest institutional exhibition entitled *Darkroom* was held in 2018 at the Hungarian Museum of Photography. His works can be found in the collections of the following prominent institutions, among others: Hungarian National Gallery (Budapest), Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art (Budapest), Institute of Contemporary Art (Dunaújváros), Art Gallery Paks (Paks), Rómer Flóris Museum of Art and History (Győr), and Hungarian Museum of Photography (Kecskemét).

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Empty Images I (Hama-Negativ-Archiv 35mm), 2019, silver print photogram, 58x48cm

Empty Images IV (Hama-Negativ-Archiv 60x70mm), 2019, silver print photogram, 58x48cm

Empty Images XV (Picto), 2019, silver print photogram, 58x48cm

Empty Images XVI (Negative-Archive), 2019, silver print photogram, 58x48cm

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Empty Images XII (Agfacolor), 2019, silver print photogram, 58x48cm

Empty Images XIII (Negative-Archive 60mm), 2019, silver print photogram, 58x48cm

Empty Images VIII (Bantex 2111, 9x13), 2019, silver print photogram, 58x48cm

Empty Images XVII (Diathek), 2019, silver print photogram, 58x48cm

Empty Images X (Color Negative), 2019, silver print photogram, 58x48cm,

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Empty Images XXV (Fotex-Photoalbum), 2019, silver print photogram, 58x48cm

Empty Images XXVI (Photoalbum), 2019, silver print photogram, 58x48cm

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Empty Images XXII (Fotolux), 2019, silver print photogram, 58x48cm

Empty Images XXIII (Forte), 2019, silver print photogram, 58x48cm

Empty Images XIX (Slide Mounts), 2019, silver print photogram, 58x48cm

Empty Images XXVIII (Budapest-Photo Corners), 2019, silver print photogram, 58x48cm