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Cognition & Connections: The Photographs of Elena Willis 2003-2017

MOMENTA | Biennale de l'image

September 7 - October 14 , 2017

Artist Present Thursday September 14, 5 to 7pm



Production photograph (left) / Sweet Dreams II (right), Inkjet print, 60" x 40", 2006.
© Elena Willis / ELLEPHANT

Imbued with a sense of strangeness and wonder, Elena Willis' photographs are a subtle meditation on social and environmental concerns. From the color spectrum of the atoms at the heart of nuclear fusion (*Atoms to Energy Series*), to the elements in the Earth's crust essential to technology (*Rare Earth Elements Series*), to the plants that have adapted to pollution (*Cohesion Series*), Willis' photographic series emphasize that the fabric of reality is woven by hundreds of disconcerting paradoxes.

Elena Willis was born in Banbury, England, and currently lives and works in Montreal. She has a bachelor degree in photography from Concordia University and graduated in 2003. Her work has been exhibited in Canada, the United States, Europe and Asia, and she has been the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including the Research and Creation Grant from the Canada Arts Council in 2015. Her photographs are also part of several private and public collections including that of the Cirque du Soleil, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, and the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre Collection.

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ELLEPHANT is pleased to present *Cognition & Connections: the Photographs of Elena Willis*, a survey of Willis' photographic work. Offering a closer look at Willis' artistic methods and processes, this satellite exhibition of MOMENTA | Biennale de l'image focuses on how Willis uses various staging effects and technological tools to create images that merge reality and set-up, factual information and fantasy. Eschewing Photoshop and other digital interventions, Willis stages each scene in its entirety in front of the camera's lens, resulting in dreamlike landscapes suffused with the illusion of truth.

On the Theme *What does the Image Stand For?*, this year's MOMENTA explores the concept of photographic evidence, in a way that goes beyond considerations for objectivity or the testimonial function of the medium. Willis' work draws attention to the fantastical and surreal side of reality and creates images that allow us to better understand the world around us and our place within that world.



Emission Spectrum of Carbon Dioxide #3, Atoms to Energy Series, 2017, inkjet print, 35" x 50". © Elena Willis / ELLEPHANT

