

## HEATHER DEWEY HAGBORG: 1000 HEATHERS 14 SEPTEMBER – 30 NOVEMBER 2019

Press Release: 6 August 2019

*1000 Heathers* is a new work from artist Heather Dewey Hagborg, commissioned as part of *Data/Set/Match*, a year-long digital programme at The Photographers' Gallery exploring the ever-evolving role and effects of scientific image datasets.

The photographic image today has become a computational product, the outcome of complex algorithmic processes. These calculations have a huge effect on the way the world is understood by humans. Using Machine Learning, image datasets train facial recognition algorithms. The quality of the dataset determines what the system "sees" and the algorithm makes decisions about what specificities of a face become important.

Drawing on some of the latest research around adversarial and fake image production and employing advanced technology, Dewey Hagborg uses 'evolutionary algorithms' to not only recognise face features but also synthesise images linked by their 'relationship' to the artist's face. The resulting piece will present a sequence of images that stem from the same source but vary widely in terms of appearance. Each one can be said to contain a version of the artist's face, while ranging between images that are clearly recognisable to human eyes as such, alongside totally abstracted, figuratively indistinct forms.

Many of the images in datasets that feed facial recognition algorithms are scraped by the dataset creators without consent and contain errors or overly reductionist descriptors such as gender or race, or even attractiveness. These approaches are reinforced in the algorithmic mechanics of the system itself and are hugely problematic given the reliance on these for machine learning.

As we are increasingly engulfed by images of dubious origin, propagated through politically structured networks and curated by opaque and sometimes discriminatory algorithms, it feels an important moment to reflect critically on the power of the image and our reliance on representational assumptions.

Photography generally implies a subject, which can be represented; it seems to have a certain claim on 'reality'. This is not an abstract or esoteric consideration, but one with real social and political consequences for how we see the world around us, and how we assess the truth claims of the images which circulate in our networks.

In a world which is increasingly abstracted, virtual, informatic and algorithmic, representation begins to lose its stability. Particularly with regard to visual art and photography, it feels more important than ever to

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consider an approach that utilises algorithmic methods to deconstruct our automated and virtualised society.

Dewey Hagborg aims to unpack the ways that images are increasingly generated and used today in computational science and expose the hidden workings contained in these processes. 1000 Heathers keys in to the problematics of categorisation more generally, a hugely significant biopolitical issue and of particular importance when considering the production of images used in police, state, and disciplinary contexts.

-ENDS-

### Press Contacts

**For further press information, interviews and image requests please contact:**

Grace Gabriele-Tighe or Sophie Parker at Margaret PR on +44 (0) 20 7 739 8203 or email [grace@margaretlondon.com](mailto:grace@margaretlondon.com) or [sophieparker@margaretlondon.com](mailto:sophieparker@margaretlondon.com)

**For General information and enquiries about The Photographers' Gallery, including their archive, Print Sales Gallery or Bookshop contact:**

+44 (0) 207 087 9346 or email [press@tpg.org.uk](mailto:press@tpg.org.uk)

### Notes to Editors:

#### Heather Dewey-Hagborg:

Dr. Heather Dewey-Hagborg is a transdisciplinary artist and educator who, since 2001, has been working at the intersection of art and science, with an emphasis on conceptions of the natural and the artificial. Her controversial biopolitical art practice includes the project Stranger Visions in which she created portrait sculptures from analyses of genetic material (hair, cigarette butts, chewed up gum) collected in public places.

Heather has shown work internationally at events and venues including the World Economic Forum, the Daejeon Biennale, the Guangzhou Triennial, and the Shenzhen Urbanism and Architecture Biennale, the Van Abbemuseum, Transmediale and PS1 MOMA. Her work is held in public collections of the Centre Pompidou, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the New York Historical Society, among others, and has been widely discussed in the media, from the New York Times and the BBC to Art Forum and Wired.

Heather has a PhD in Electronic Arts from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She is an artist fellow at AI Now, an Artist-in-Residence at the Exploratorium, as well as Science Center, and is an affiliate of Data & Society. She is also a co-founder and co-curator of REFRESH, an inclusive and politically engaged collaborative platform at the intersection of Art, Science, and Technology.

#### The Photographers' Gallery

The Photographers' Gallery opened in 1971 in Great Newport Street, London, as the UK's first independent gallery devoted to photography. It was the first public gallery in the UK to exhibit many key names in international photography, including Juergen Teller, Robert Capa, Sebastiano Salgado and Andreas Gursky. The Gallery has also been instrumental in establishing contemporary British photographers, including Martin Parr and Corinne Day. In 2009, the Gallery moved to 16 – 18 Ramillies Street in Soho, the first stage in its plan to create a 21st century home for photography. Following an eighteen months long redevelopment project, the Gallery reopened to the public in 2012. The success of The Photographers' Gallery over the past four decades has helped to establish photography as a recognised art form, introducing new audiences to photography and championing its place at the heart of visual culture. [www.thephotographersgallery.org.uk](http://www.thephotographersgallery.org.uk)

**Visitor Information**

Opening times: Mon – Sat, 10:00 - 18:00; Thu, 10:00 - 20:00; Sun, 11:00 - 18:00

Admission: £5 / £2.50 and then free from 17:00 daily.

Address: 16-18 Ramillies Street, London W1F 7LW

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T: + 44 (0)20 7087 9300

E: [info@tpg.org.uk](mailto:info@tpg.org.uk)

W: [thephotographersgallery.org.uk](http://thephotographersgallery.org.uk)



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# THE PHOTOGRAPHERS' GALLERY

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HEATHERS  
14 SEPT – 30 NOV 2019

PRESS IMAGES

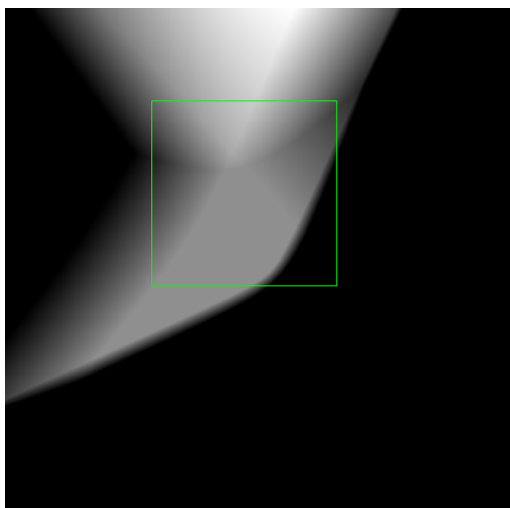


Image 1  
1000 Heathers  
From the programme: *Data/Set/Match*  
© Heather Dewey Hagborg  
Courtesy of the artist

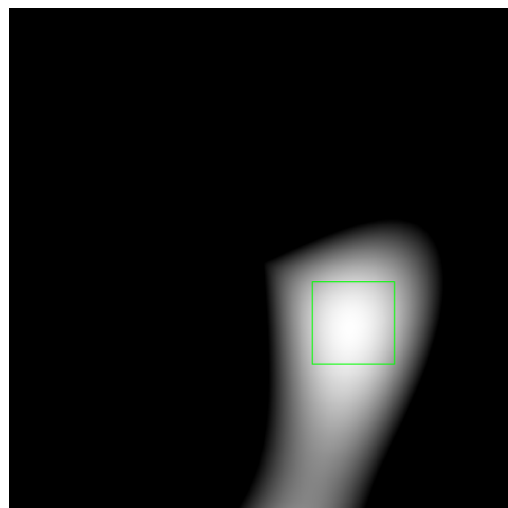


Image 2  
1000 Heathers  
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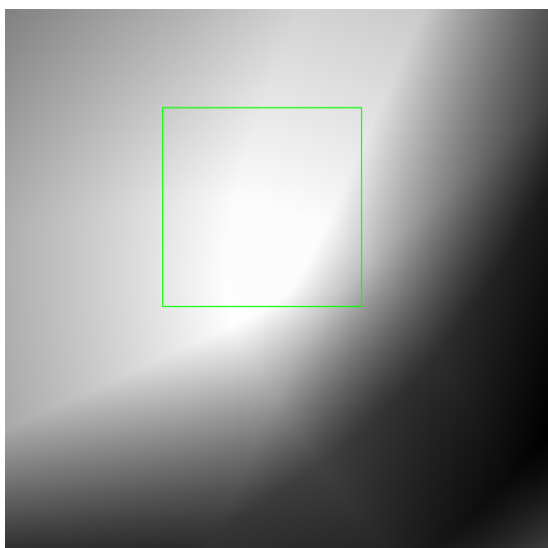


Image 3  
1000 Heathers  
From the programme: *Data/Set/Match*  
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### **Press information**

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