



MASOOD KAMANDY

There is no denying we live in an image-saturated culture. Although artists continue to make photographic images with and without a camera, digital media has broadened the practice. This proliferation has inspired artists to ask different questions and to push the boundaries of the medium in new ways. Masood Kamandy is one such artist. Kamandy began by using a camera to capture and frame events unfolding around him. These images fell into the documentary tradition and clearly showed he had a keen eye and a social conscience. He studied Photography at SVA receiving a BFA in 2004, worked as a photo editor at the *New York Times Magazine* and the agency Art + Commerce. A trip to Afghanistan after 9/11 led to his forming the first Photography Department at Kabul University, a relationship that continues to this day.

In his own practice, Kamandy began to explore ways of working that were not strictly photographic. He looked to the Internet as a way to make the work more collaborative. One project, "Words Become Images," is a website that asks visitors to supply a word which he subsequently interpreted literally or poetically with a photographic image. In this project Kamandy recognized the power of the Web as a format for both collaboration and communication sparking his exploration of code-based works.

Relocating to Los Angeles to attend graduate school at UCLA (MFA Fine Art, 2012) furthered his interests in the possibilities of melding technology and photography. Still, for Kamandy, the initial image—the photograph—remains integral to the process and directs the outcome of the final pieces. *Superpositional* (2012) is a project that began with a question. After viewing Tony Smith's massive sculpture *Smoke* situated in one of LACMA's transitional spaces, Kamandy began to ponder how an artwork inhabits its space, how it affects the people who encounter it, and if he could write a computer program (a piece of software) to reveal how people engage with art over an extended period of time. Interested in how photography compresses space and time, he invented a way to explore issues of simultaneity. The idea of presenting many aspects of an object

"SUSPENSION" (FROM THE OBJECT SERIES), 2013

Masood Kamandy

PIGMENT PRINT, 24" x 20"

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

or moments in time at once is not revolutionary. Muybridge, Marey and Edgerton used photography to explore temporality and movement, yet Kamandy does it with software.

What does his software do? In thinking about what multiple images of a single object or space reveal as well as what happens when images overlap, Kamandy created a program that combines multiple digital files stored on a computer in a particular order. The software also provides mechanisms to filter the information contained within the digital image/s. The resulting pictures become denser than the observable eye can see, yet derive from acute observation. Many of the images in the *Superpositional* series begin as photographs of ordinary objects: crumpled paper, a light bulb, Christmas lights, *The New York Times*. Each object is photographed many times from various angles in Kamandy's studio under controlled lighting that often includes the use of colored gels. The digital images are then placed in a folder on Kamandy's computer desktop and run through his software. This is where magic happens, creating unexpected surprises from the program's montaging. Able to control the results, Kamandy focuses on a particular effect; subtraction as in *Cherry*, where the overlapping produces dark negative spaces that make the bright red and orange cherries pop. Or difference, as in *Source* where he tracks the trajectory of a hanging lightbulb, allowing the movement created through the layering to generate heightened colors.

Kamandy believes in sharing and is pro open source. To that end he created *Collapsus*, an application where users can manipulate their own stack of images. On www.collapsus.org, a project commissioned and produced by dOCUMENTA(13), he makes the application available for people to download, suggesting users share the images they create by uploading them to the site. Kamandy is interested in where photography and software intersect and how, through digital technologies, a photograph can become painterly. Rather than mix colors additively (like in painting), Kamandy uses the algorithms in his software and digital printing controls to make images that while photographic, appear to be so much more.

In his newest body of work, *Objects*, Kamandy has backed off from the saturation and heightened effects of the software used in *Superpositional*, and is now creating small sculptures that he photographs in his studio. Pushing beyond how to make a photograph painterly, he is now exploring how to make it sculptural through a more subtle use of his computational software.

—JODY ZELLEN