

MARJOLIJN
DIJKMAN

**EARTHING
DISCHARGE**

September 4, 2020—March 21, 2021

Earthing Discharge

Marjolijn Dijkman employs scientific methods and imaging technologies to bring underlying socio-political structures and their environmental entanglements to light. Operating in the space between fact and fiction, and abstraction and speculation, she creates films, performances, objects, and photographs that challenge the ideological and cultural dominance of Western science. *Earthing Discharge* is an extension of the artist's research into the history of electricity and the environmental impact of contemporary energy storage. By documenting materials linked to what may become one of the largest lithium mines in the world in Manono in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dijkman comments on the ecological fallout generated from mining this valuable mineral and the toxic electronic waste produced as a result of the rise of green energy.

For this commissioned wallpaper, Dijkman creates a collage comprised of photographs depicting items associated with technology and energy use — minerals, circuit boards, personal devices, and industrial leftovers. Arranged across the CAC's 40-foot lobby wall, the images are rendered in high contrast, emphasizing the objects' electrical fields and radiant glow. Dijkman's labor-intensive process involves activating the conductive matter using high voltage electricity and photographing them through heat conductive glass similar to what is used in smartphones. The resulting blue and purple halos and irregular linear rays, a phenomenon known as *corona discharge*, is caused by the ionization and electrical disturbance of adjacent air. The photographic collage makes visible electric currents that we rarely see, calling attention to the systems of extraction that support most of the world's modern energy, communication, and mobile computing technologies.

*Organized by Amara Antilla, Senior Curator,
Contemporary Arts Center.*

Marjolijn Dijkman was born in 1978 in Groningen, The Netherlands. She received her BFA from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam (2001), and held post-graduate positions at the Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam (2003), and Jan van Eyck Academy, Maastricht (2006–07). Her work has been featured in numerous international exhibitions at institutions including the Sharjah Biennial (2007); Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (2010); Marrakech Biennial (2012); Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2014); Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (2015); Shanghai Biennial (2016); Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (2017); and Sydney Biennial (2018), among others. Dijkman is one of the founding members of Enough Room for Space (2005–present), a collaborative arts initiative centered on projects and discussions that respond to pressing social, political, and ecological issues. She currently lives and works in Brussels.

Ask Yourself

- 1 Electricity is the backbone of modern industrialized society. When it was expanding in use around 1900, many feared it, believing it to be magic or witchcraft. Now, although it is an everyday part of our existence, there remains a mystery around electricity. Why do you think we maintain such curiosity around a common thing in our lives?
- 2 The dichotomy of the micro- and macrocosm is applicable to Dijkman's art. She shows us the micro views of electricity and technology, which are invisible to the naked eye. How do you view electricity and technology on the macro level in your everyday life?
- 3 What is electrical waste (e-waste)? How many electronic devices do you have lying around your house that no longer work? How easy is it to recycle these devices?
- 4 One of the narratives found in Dijkman's work is a critique of capitalist policies, particularly as they relate to the mining of materials in colonized and previously colonized areas. How does the tech industry continue to perpetuate these colonialist practices? Does environmental racism impact neighborhoods where you live?

FOTOFOCUS

M
mondriaan
fund


Dutch
Culture
USA

CAC
Contemporary
Arts Center

This exhibition is supported by the Kaplan Lobby Fund. Additional support was generously provided by FotoFocus and the Mondriaan Fund. This program is supported as part of the Dutch Culture USA program by the Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York. *Earthing Discharge* is part of an ongoing collaborative project, *On-Trade-Off* (2018-present), initiated by the artist initiatives Picha (Lubumbashi, DRC) and Enough Room for Space (Brussels, BE).

