

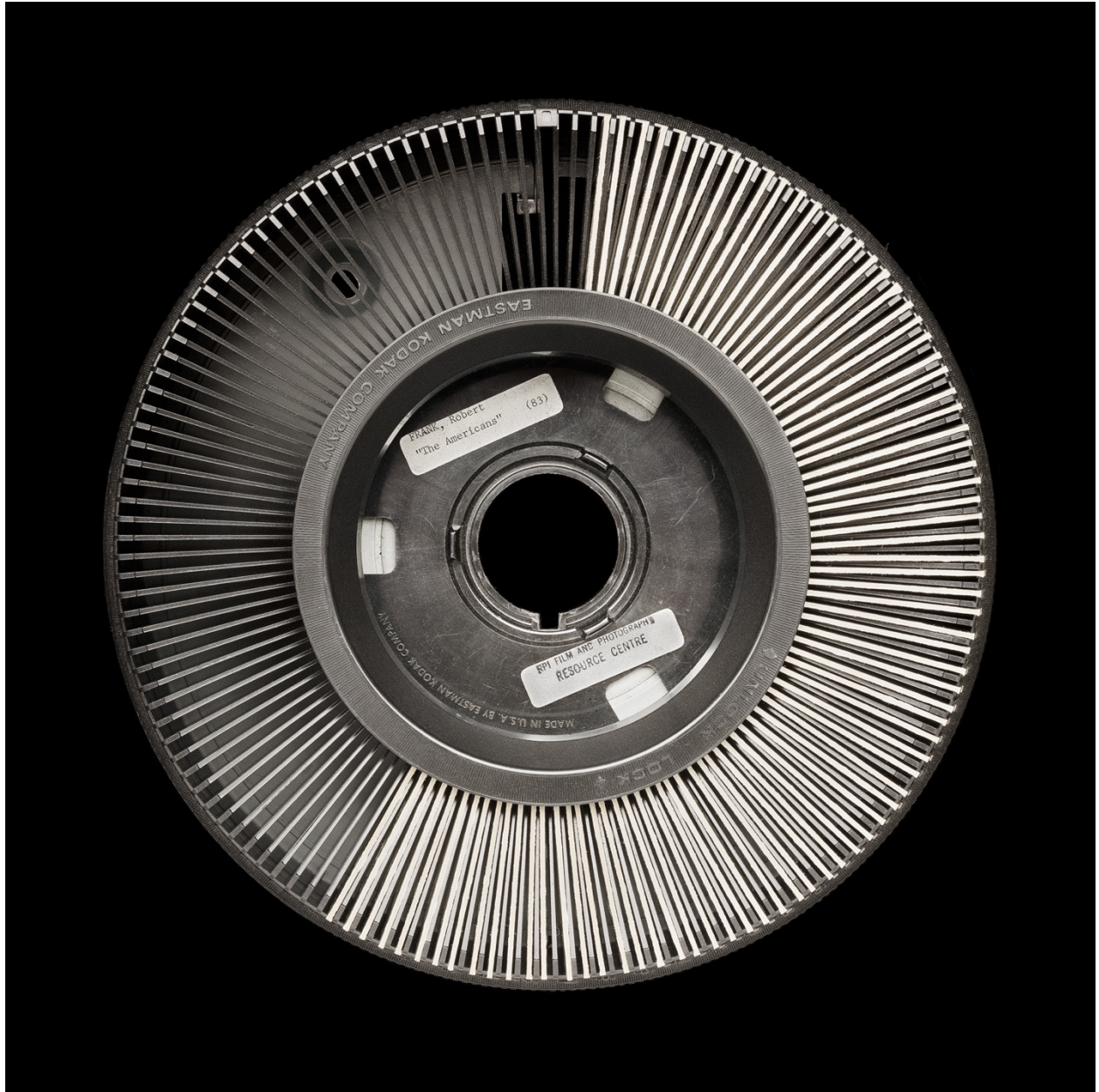
Susan Dobson

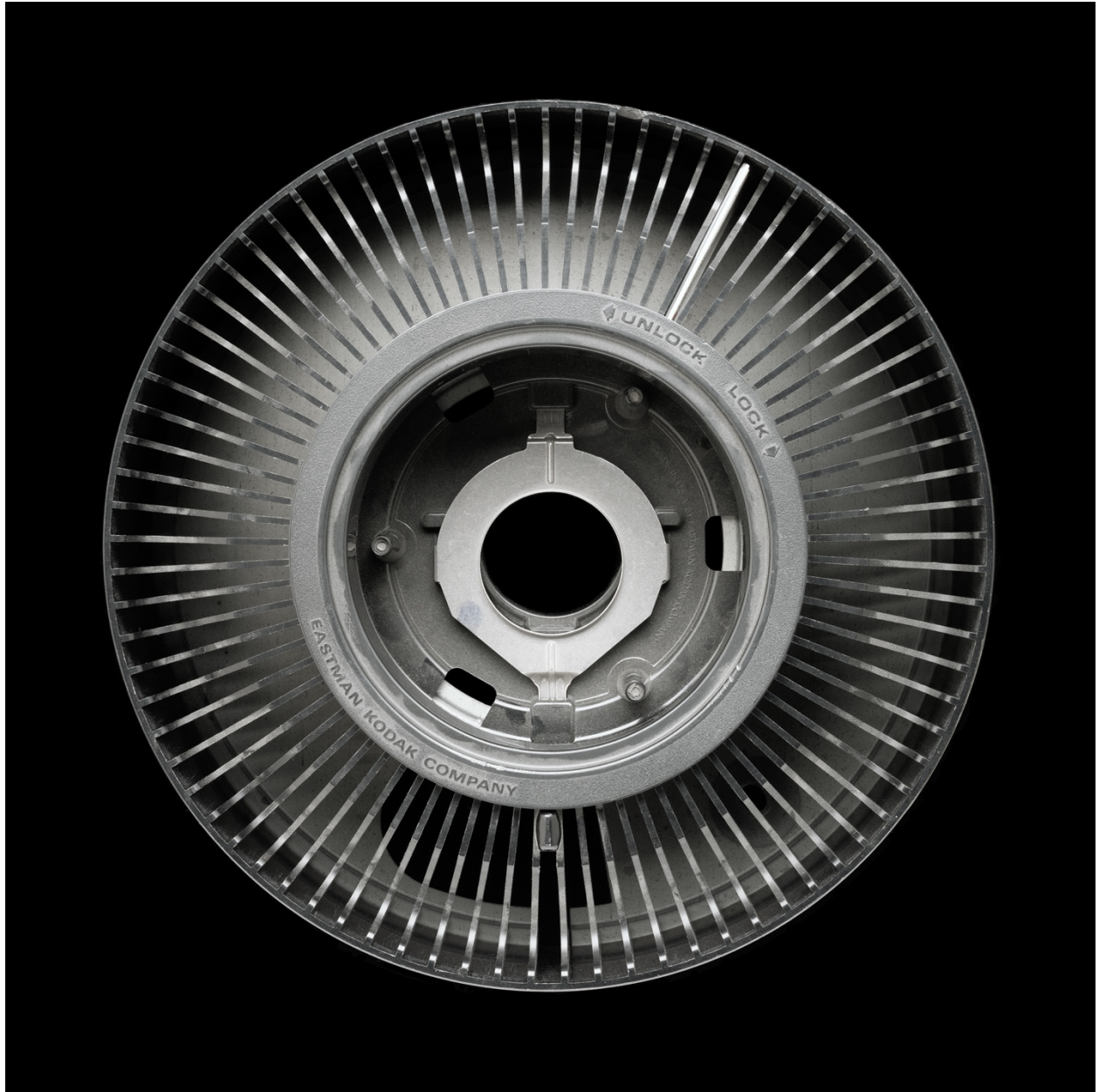
Slide | Lecture

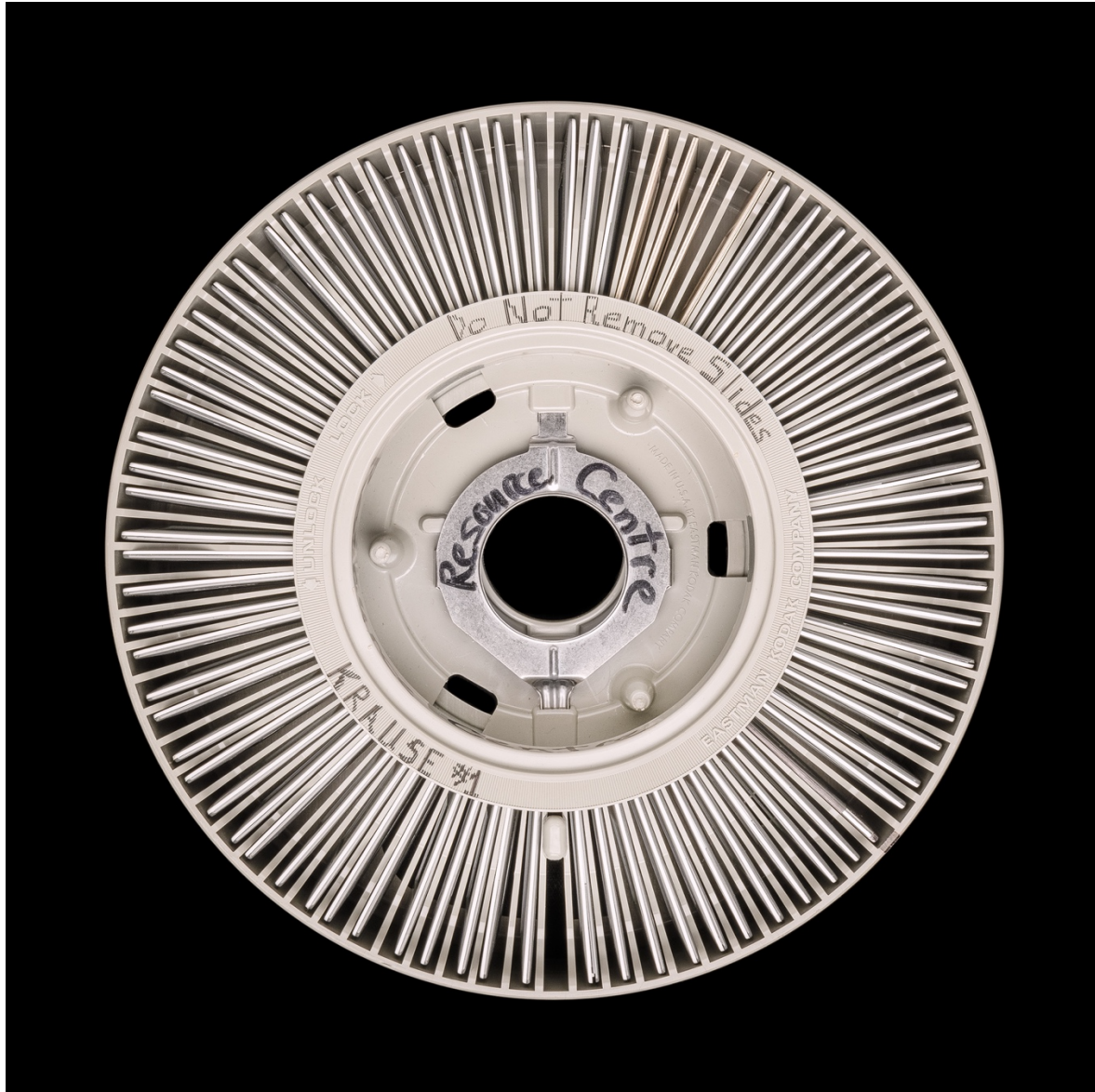
Ryerson Image Centre, University Gallery
September 15–December 4, 2021



In *Slide | Lecture*, Susan Dobson reconsiders the materiality, physicality, and meaning of abandoned university slide libraries, and gleans revelations from these obsolete archives. The Guelph-based photographer's precisely composed images of these outdated photographic transparencies, originally made to be projected in art history lectures, expose the canonical biases of traditional visual culture—dominated by Western male artists, while marginalizing or excluding art by those outside the establishment.





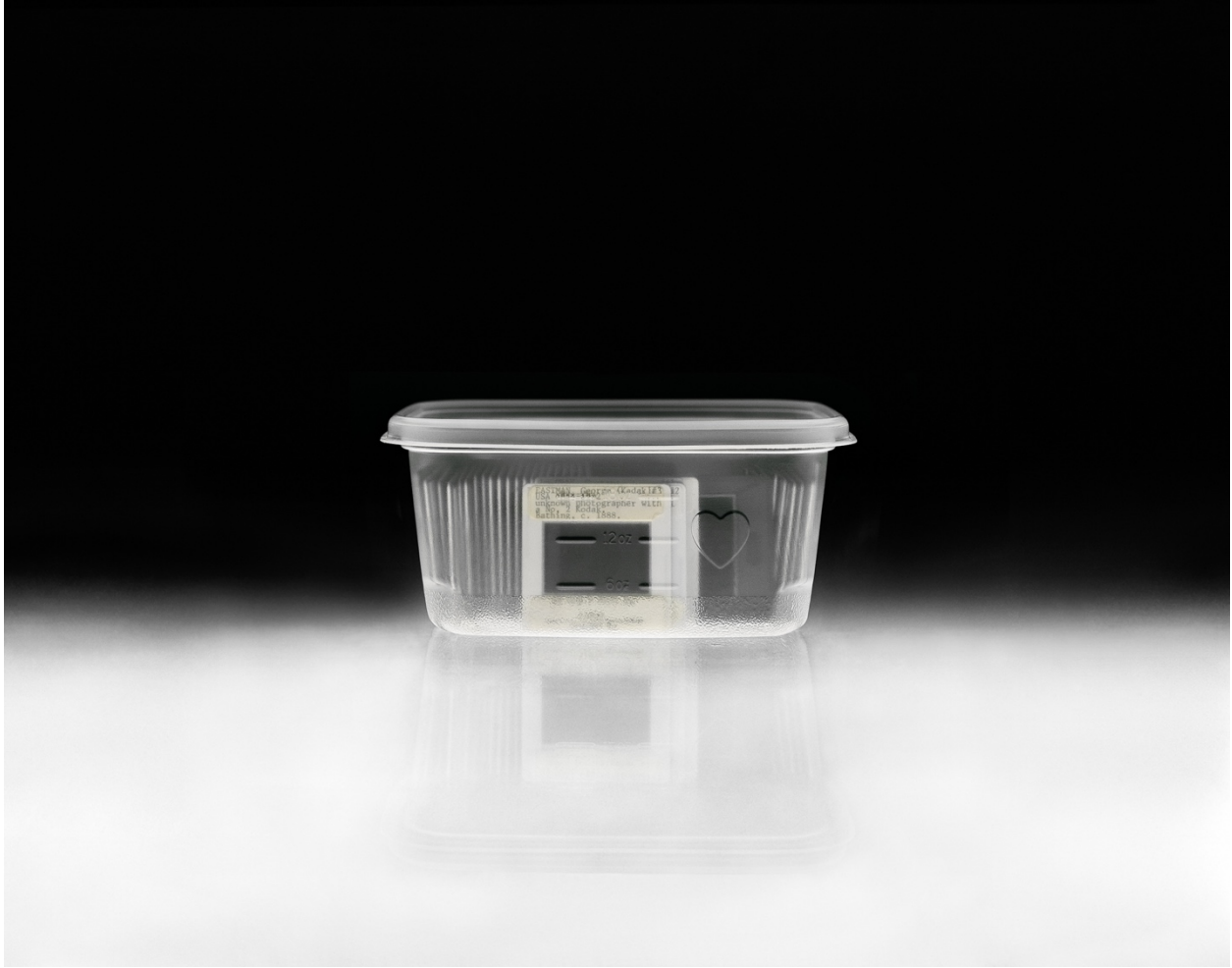


When Eastman Kodak stopped manufacturing Kodachrome in 2009, it marked the end of making and experiencing these greatly magnified, high resolution, sharp and accurately colored images. The culture had moved on anyway. Families no longer gathered in the dark for slide shows of birthdays and holidays. Photojournalists found faster, less expensive ways to capture color. Teachers, in particular, were quick to embrace the ease, economy and versatility of digital files that were easily made, instantly available, and could be situated within several lectures simultaneously. The distinctive sound that heralded a new image on the screen—almost heartbeat-like in its two-part click and rumble—would be heard no more. The once-ubiquitous boxed carousel tray was relegated to Art Department storage closets where one might still sometimes find boxes of even more anachronistic glass lantern slides. The file cabinets that stored and sorted copies of centuries of paintings and photographs were used less and less, eventually remaining unopened for months, and semesters, and years.



This is the circumstance of the slides that Dobson discovered in two Canadian art departments in 2016. She photographed them as objects, regardless of the images they carried, showing them as innumerable small fragments of knowledge, almost overwhelming in quantity and uniformity. She documented them as manifestations of systems of storage, organization, and thought, labeled and categorized by lecture topic, geography or artist. She photographed stolid file cabinets and open drawers. The drawers and hanging files are dusty, conveying a sense of having been abandoned in place. Many are packed full, with further categorization indicated by the brightly coloured slips of paper inserted by the archivist to identify subjects by genre. [A] drawer labeled “Africa Ceylon,” holds barely 30 slides, all bordered in white, in a drawer meant to hold hundreds. It’s hard not to read this as a metaphor for the paucity of attention non-Western art receives in the standard North American curriculum.





In this series, Dobson has also photographed plastic carousels of slides, from above and on a rich black background, thus emphasizing their formal qualities as well as their precisely formed mechanical nature. None of the carousels are full. Their lacunae suggest interrupted lectures, paused thoughts, and incomplete stories, as well perhaps, as the recontextualizing of a single slide by its removal from one carousel's narrative and replacement in another. These relics are fraught with such associations for those of us who grew up with them, but it is important to note that Dobson is less concerned with presenting a nostalgia machine than she is with urging us to think about photography in terms not of its technologies so much as of the things it has left behind. — Alison Nordström

Excerpted from “The Things We Keep,” in *Susan Dobson: Slide Library* (London: Michael Gibson Gallery, 2018)

Curated by Gaëlle Morel

Organized by the Ryerson Image Centre in partnership with CONTACT

INSTALLATION VIEWS







From Every World 2017
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Bombardieri - Bombardieri 2017
Mancini - Mancini 2017
Mickelthorpe - Mickelthorpe 2017
Van Gogh - Van Gogh 2017
Gauguin - Gauguin 2017



Bombardieri - Bombardieri 2017
Mancini - Mancini 2017
Mickelthorpe - Mickelthorpe 2017
Van Gogh - Van Gogh 2017
Gauguin - Gauguin 2017

Africa Caplan 2016

