



4,786,139 Suns From Flickr (Partial) 1/14/09, 2009 © Penelope Umbrico

## Lesley Martin

It seems like this image by Penelope Umbrico – though hardly a single image; more like a multitude of images – has been on my mind almost continuously over the past year. It was just over a year ago, in fact that I first saw it realized in actual time and space as part of a show I curated for the first annual New York Photo Festival. The name of the piece is *Suns from Flickr*, and it consists of a grid of hundreds or thousands (depending on the allotted space for the installation to fill – it was 44 feet when we installed it in Dumbo in 2008) of 4 x 6 inch Kodak machine C-prints, each depicting a tightly cropped orb of a sun. Each of the images has been culled from the popular photo-sharing site and when the piece is installed, the caption notes that this is a partial installation, followed by the actual number of sunsets that one might find if searching for the keyword “Sunsets” on the day the piece was created (5,461,278 at the time of this writing, for example). After all, who amongst us can honestly say that they have never succumbed to the impulse to snap this most banal yet beautiful of all photographic tropes? Yet despite the banality of the source – or perhaps because of it – the impact of this piece is un-

deniable. The range of colours is glorious: pinks, oranges, purples, blues and the energy is palpable, as though this amassing of images of the sun, shot by anonymous photographers all over the world, is enough to channel the real power of the sun, its ability to transform the most common of materials into something growing and alive. +

*Lesley Martin is the publisher of the book programme at the Aperture Foundation in New York. She has edited over fifty photography publications, including: Reflex: A Vik Muniz Primer; An My Le: Small Wars; Shuffle by Christian Marclay; Paris - New York - Shanghai by Hans Eijkelboom. My Life in Politics by Tim Davis and On the Beach by Richard Miarach. Previously she was Senior Editor at Umage Editions. Lesley Martin was one of the curators of the first edition of New York Photo Festival in 2008.*