

Duchamp could have said it, and perhaps did: that which is virtual is infra-thin. Thomas Léon sometimes refers to this as “micro-activities” or “low-intensity events”. “Saint Ouen, 13 May 2004” (2005) utilized computer image processing techniques to produce a minimal event undergoing an imperceptible evolution: the continuous variation in the light’s brightness reflected upon the facades of urban surroundings, a quavering leaf that finally separates and slowly falls off. In the same vein, a never-ending accession into slow motion gives an almost still shot, or a sort of “animated still-life”, of catatonic movement – as inhuman as the vermiform creep sliding across the floor in “Playground” (2005).

Art blends with virtual, with its technology and imagination, until the problem of representation (the space in which simulation takes place) becomes one of duration. Virtual is a study of duration, of the substantial, physical and plastic aspects of time. It is associated with slow motion as well as cuts and accelerations made possible with digital image processing, i.e. “Bullet-time” (2004) or “Delay” (2004).

It is the moment to leave time behind and come back to space, gradually recomposing space from (virtual) wastelands that can also be seen as fragments of duration. Shots of no-man’s-lands (stretches of road, industrial wastelands), taken consistently from an angle level with the ground, giving a curved look as if to fit each of the shots together: this is the medium used in “Playground”. The imaginary content of video games constantly shows through – textured landscapes laid out for kilometers on end, randomly generated by tying together a few basic patterns. An indefinable overall movement moves through the patchwork like a traveling shot that is both fluid and erratic at once, a bit like a landslide. There is no setting, no landscape, despite the mental images suggested by the soundtrack. This is not Earth from Above, but the use of space at earth-level for eyes that are no longer human. Everything is flat, and everything comes crashing down into one single shot: haptical rather than optical space, smooth space, animal space. Beneath this place, this site, beneath the space encoded by its purpose, its meaning, its symbolism, the most physical aspects of the ground will thus have had to be found once again. It shall have been necessary to reunite the ground with the desert or to make it look like a lunar surface. Three frames printed on opaline conjure up this desert path (“3 frames and a stream of air”, 2004). This space cannot be occupied and even less so lived in; we can only slide across it in every which way, or let the wind blow through it.

In a way, this exhibition is also a wasteland: a cement foundation with its branding, the unavoidable posts blocking the view, temporary partitions set up for the occasion... You would have to be able to cross through it all like an animal, your head hanging towards the ground, alternating between phases of extreme speed and slowness, stopping occasionally to get your bearings as you get further and further away. “Treasure Island” (2005) interferes with the normal patterns of movement within the exhibition. The lookout station, the viewing table and the pirate emblem printed on a tee-shirt put the audience on the lookout. The exhibition resembles the smooth and silent space of a coastal glacia: it is also slipping into virtual.

“Exhibition Catalogue for ‘Les enfants du Sabbat’ Thiers, 2006”