

In the short story "Chronopolis (1960), writer J.G. Ballard describes a megalopolis so vast that it has been divided into distinct time zones in order to properly function. As it grows, a strict system of keeping and managing time becomes increasingly necessary. When the city collapses, its inhabitants destroy all the clocks. Thomas Léon's work centers mainly on the medium of video. The sequences are most often looped and give a great deal of importance to experiencing the work of art while connecting with references to architecture and art history. The exhibit Chronopolis was conceived, with these specific characteristics in mind, to be something halfway between video show and an installation. The works follow each other through time, through contiguous spaces without necessarily crossing one another. The title of this exhibit is as much a reference to the alternative purpose of the device as it is a way to highlight two important parts of the works presented:

- Time: the time of experiencing the work of art and the time of the video loop (which aren't necessarily the same); time that is digitally fixed, stretched or condensed.
- The city: as a biased spatial site, sketched by relationships to power but also inextricably linked to an emotional ecosystem; affects, memory, between vernacular architecture and fictive city.

ON DETAIL.

Oscillating projections, two dollies in with soundtrack / a still in continuous silence.

Movement one.

Automatic exposure

A landscape inside an apartment, a paradisiacal view of a wallpaper on the wall of a room, an open book on a desk, post-it notes, a cupboard slightly ajar, a clock, a purely shaped vase, books...

The camera dollies in, framing the exterior of a 1970s style collective housing building, penetrates window by window and ambles into one living space before coming back out.

We slide into the apartment. The objects are unremarkable, some generic, yet the succession of details conjures up a feeling of intimacy. This long take begins with a separate film, a brightly lit shot of the silhouette of trees. The image jumps, to a speck, to a form of matter. A retinal impression, eyes closed on the back on a bus where the sequence of trees' shadows and the sun are hypnotizing. A blue insect flutters between two rooms. The creature is still and is deformed by the virtual video camera. It seems to change the shot and becomes a colored stain, a hub. Several minutes have passed on this journey before we realize, because of this blue spot, that the trip was taken in frozen time. We are more than omniscient, hyper conscious, from one thing thought and constructed by another that is holding time, space and limits. Unlike Thomas Léon's other videos, the eye does not touch, does not get close enough to feel the limits of the objects and their matter, excepting the moment where the window pane is penetrated – we float, fly over, guided.

Clipping and Shifting.

High Latency

A dolly in into a snowy landscape (over kilometers), a succession of houses that all look the same, the camera moves forward in the middle of a street, the main street of an empty and sleepy residential suburb. Halfway through the video, the view shifts to show only the ground stream past – the image is a progression of abstract and geometric variations. We brush with the ground, matter, texture. As a second and opposite shift occurs, we find ourselves once again in the street, with a repetitive row of houses on each side. The loop is completed, the landscape unfolds.

What is there, stable, subsists and self-perpetuates.

St-Ouen, 13 May 2004

An animated still shot of miniscule movements. We see the glass-paned facades of a commercial neighborhood and a rooftop terrace with a green plant. The constant variation in lighting, reflections on the building fronts, the wind rustling the leaves and finally pulling off one leaf which falls slowly to the ground...these low-intensity events bring the location to life. This is the sole video broadcast continuously on a flat, framed screen. It is silent, mute. It is what is left as one projection ends and the next begins. The temporality instilled by micro-activities is an illusion, the plant will never be entirely bare, night will never come.