

In one of his novels, J.L. Borges imagined a map with a scale of 1:1 that would reproduce an area so exactly that it could be perfectly superimposed. At the same time period (1940), Casares was writing *The Invention of Morel*, a novel that tells the story of a scientist who built a recording machine (images, sound, feelings...) that broadcasts in 3D, fitting over original space and replacing it. By looping projected images, he was able to generate eternal life by infinitely repeating the same moment. The only downside of the machine was that it destroyed the bodies of the living people that were recorded. Reality was thus annihilated by its own image.

These works of Science Fiction underlined early on the connection between perversion and the evolution of techniques of representation. Recording tools designed to preserve and repeat times gone by evolved directly into video surveillance, the instantaneous distribution of information, and into viewing events in real time as they take place, at the moment they may or may not be entering into history. Today, the most perfected techniques are used to anticipate the future. Oracles have been replaced by computer modeling. These simulation devices are used for many purposes; military (preparing for combat), political (polling), commercial (marketing), scientific (reproducing natural phenomena), architectural (formalizing 3D projects)... Simulation is part of the vast interventionist undertaking to control reality and the onset of technical efficiency to offset natural, economic or human surprise.

Artists have studied transformations in representation very closely. They have tackled the deconstruction of its inner-workings in order to offer different perspectives. Thomas Léon alternates stills put into perspective by sculpted exhibition sets and projected moving images. He uses computer modeling to build videographic spaces. His installations conjure up an atmosphere similar to that of video games and simulation tools. However, they throw the spectator in a space-time context that is opposite from the way contemporary media images have accustomed us to viewing. His first digression from digital technique lies in the relationship between time and efficiency. Though the synthesis images are there to represent anticipation and perfection, he uses them as spaces undergoing deconstruction; spaces lacking time, location, dimensions, and sometimes even their state of being. He turns the simulation process around by rerouting the anticipation devices to represent places void of a future or which recall an undetermined past.

In these places, all "vacant urban environments", almost no human body is present. It almost seems as if we are in a deserted or devastated landscape. The spectator is not excluded from this void, in which he can be contemplative; it offers a physical and critical state free of questions of identity. The photographs are displayed on fixtures and sculptures that give them a specific position and viewing angle and the video projections show the space to be taken over. The goal is thus to "choose a position" with regards to the images. Perspectivist viewpoints, projections and computer-generated images... Thomas Léon's methods seem to play upon the turning points of representation mentioned by Dominique Paini in *Le Temps exposé (Exposed Time)*, "We can distinguish between three types of major historical breakthroughs: from medieval imagery to the perspectivist viewpoint of the 15th century; from the easily manipulated printed image to mechanical and optical modernization of the spectacular 19th century representations; from analog relationships to image creation outside any reference to reality: digitalization, synthesis, virtual reality."

In his last video, "Drones" (see online exhibit), the virtual camera's movement could not have been shot by a human being. The run takes places very close to the different surfaces, at unattainable heights and with a rhythm that is far too exact. The title gives an idea of the potential origin of such a recording. Drones are small spy planes/cameras used by the army for discreet monitoring. References to military strategy are frequent in Léon's work. In *Les Leurre (Dummy Tanks)*, a desert is scattered with black boxes that open at random every 1 to 4 minutes, freeing inflatable tanks. The references to military techniques recall with sarcasm, critical resistance or artistic fascination, the troublesomely spectacular nature of modern simulacra.

"Drones" is a sequence of machine images, produced by digital calculations that simulate the incredibly perfected movement of a remote-controlled video camera. Yet, the contents of the images seems at a junction between painting (perspective, color and texture), landscape (organic elements), film (movement, depth and photographic fades), and architecture or sculpture (matter and components). The original elements are samples of photographic or auditory reality that have been taken out of context and disembodied. The slowed rhythm of the moving images, which the artist refers to as a "low intensity" event, bestows the viewer with a state of unproductive waiting that could seem introspective, but is more about being vigilant. In a similar manner, the stretched and modulated sound, halfway between coded tone and hold music, creates an oppressive environment. Through variations in scale and distance, the image oscillates between representation and abstraction, leading to an extremely close-up view of its subject and allows us to brush up against its edges. We thus look as we would touch, focusing on a detail to understand the whole, on matter to understand form, by narrowing in to open up. Through digital technology, Thomas Léon offers us the experience of investigative, precise viewing.

Despite having a progressive goal, resorting to simulation techniques has not made human beings more efficient, harder nor more adaptable to their environment. The endless desire to plan ahead has perhaps contributed to a need to re-learn perceptive autonomy. There is a strange resemblance to Plato's cave allegory. At this time of preventive war, we can appreciate alternatives offered by certain contemporary artists in the face of these new peddlers of illusions.

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