


January 2013


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 The first great wave of enclosures of the commons took place in the late sixteenth to mid seventeenth centuries. Pressures for greater profits had already led to the seizure of lands owned by the monasteries by forward-looking nobles and the rising richer peasantry. Kicking thousands off the commons, however, meant they kicked back. Already in 1549, there had been mass rebellion in Norfolk and elsewhere against enclosures. As enclosure increased, so did resistance to it. The early seventeenth century brought mass open warfare against enclosing landowners: most famously in the midlands in 1607, where thousands of the landless poor fought the militia, destroying fences, and breaking open enclosures. Interestingly this was where the names of Levellers and Diggers were seemingly first adopted or used to describe these poor rebels. Later of course these names would assume huge political significance.

As part of this wave of rebellion, a long anti-enclosure fight was beginning for Sydenham Common. Sydenham Common no longer exists: it covered a large area between modern Sydenham and Forest Hill. The battle against enclosure began around 1605, as a local squire, Henry Newport, attempted to fence a large part of the common off for 'improvement'. At this time there were large numbers of squatters on the common, encouraged by the lack of restrictions there on grazing of animals. They supported themselves almost entirely by raising pigs, cows and sheep...

After years of inconclusive legal wrangling, Newport and his allies tried to violently evict the poor and enclose the land around 1614. Locals apparently led by the vicar of Lewisham, Abraham Colfe, tried legal methods of challenging this, going to court and marching en masse to petition the king in 1614. But although the court in fact ruled the enclosure illegal, Newport wouldn't budge: this led people to adopt the preferred tactic of tearing down his fences and filling in his ditches. Every time he put fences up again crowds gathered to break them down. Their men "drave out and killed sundry of the cattell of the inhabitants." But the locals fought pitched battles and successfully, at least for a while, prevented the enclosure taking root. Eventually the Privy Council ruled that the enclosures were illegal and put a stop to them in 1615... Colfe's more legal approach was obviously an attempt to tone down the violent resistance of local squatters. Not for the last time, legal and violent tactics ran in parallel. 

Excerpt from Bristol Radical History Group, "Down with the Fences", Past Tense Publications, 2004, pp.3–4.



Frederik Van Simaey,  
*You Never Get a Second Chance  
to Make a First Impression*,  
2012, c-type print

## YOU NEVER GET A SECOND CHANCE TO MAKE A FIRST IMPRESSION

Marko Stamenkovic

◇ *Perhaps she is just shy? — Why? Because you looked at her. — It's nothing to be embarrassed about. Still, you kept looking at her. — He was different.*

*I don't want to hear about him anymore. — About her you mean?*

*Yes, about her, of course about her. — It's up to you.*

*One more question. Then you can leave. — Yes?*

*Czy obraz może zabić? — Yes, image can kill.*

*I słowa? — He proposed I read Gombrowicz. So I will.*

"I'll tell you about yet another adventure of mine, probably one of the most disastrous."<sup>1</sup> These opening words of a famous Polish novel make me think of that night again and again: our first night, the only night, and — I'm afraid — the last one. If the limits of language allow me to find any proper term to name what is nameless and what must remain so — with respect to our mutual contracts to keep silence around the most pleasant, provocative, and terrifying moments in our lives — then it was an 'adventure' indeed, and a very special one at that. It came to an end before it even started, before the end of the night. But the Spectacle went on and on, till the dawn or possibly even after while the Image evaporated as soon as there were no more words to express what should have been, what must have been unpronounced. Words can kill. *Czy obraz może zabić?*

The Image did not want to look at me anymore. Hands over her face, it could simply not look: it ran away instead. For good, I guess. As appearances are deceptive, their property of vanishing from our view, their disappearing into the 'vanishing point' indeed, is inevitable. You may strive to stop them, to prevent them from fleeing, to grab their hand even (while desperately looking for a yet another gaze of comprehension, as if the language is not enough) and trying to utter another useless phrase or two, but in vain. Images, however 'beautiful' they may appear to your eye, do not exist beyond the desires they embody (but not all desires are the same). No matter how spectral they are, images have the power to exist only in their manner of appearing — as images. They also have the power to return — in their manner of reappearing again — no longer only as images, but as

ghostly traces of images, as empty places of actual absence in lieu of their previous material presence, as faceless, blurred photograms inhabiting holes in the grey zones of our memory, as imagination or 'phallic ghosts' indeed: "In the Lacanian algebra, the phallic ghost is the ultimate placeholder of annihilation, lack, or indeed 'cancelled manhood,' the *objet* a which centres and organises desire through the fundamental drives."<sup>2</sup>

In that game of cancelling manhood (and our own 'manhood' as such), the question, one among many, keeps reappearing: what is it that drove me, ultimately and fatally, to that object that I saw — and still see — not only as the object of desire, my desire (in line with the aforementioned Lacanian algebra) but also as the object of writing, *this* writing? What is it that still makes me call it 'Image' instead of pronouncing its real name, *his* real name? Is it because, by being the ultimate placeholder of annihilation, the object is symbolic of nothingness — my own nothingness emerging from our 'self-annihilating' game in which the biggest stakes were our common views on sacrifice, on spectacles of fiery death and public rituals of self-denial by burning? Or is it because the Image stroked me like fire, a lightning out of the blue sky, as simply, surprisingly and fascinatingly as that? In the end, to immolate is to sacrifice: to 'burn' an image equals the premature exposure of photography — once you do it too soon, there is no way back. *You Never Get a Second Chance to Make a First Impression*. Is it really so?

The image of that girl, photographed by Frederik Van Simaey, captures my attention: sitting behind the wooden table, she is refusing to look, to offer a gift of looking.

She may be shy, but I would rather see her in the light of silent resistance — she dares to protest by not letting herself look and be looked at in return.

To look at whom or what? If not at me (or you, or them, all of us together, returning our gaze to the image of her behind the 'screen' of that photographic print), then she might have been faced by something else. 'Frozen' in a never-ending posture of resistance exactly at the moment of not-looking she becomes *immortalised* in front of a mere shadow: the shadow of what must have been, and must forever remain, hidden from her and our eyes. And it must be so, as not all images can be transparent. The public disclosure of some images, for all the viewing instances voluntarily or reluctantly involved in the process of looking, would mean but a single thing: an open confrontation with the so-called public moral (whatever it may be) in a way that, we have been taught, opposes the norms of decent and acceptable behavior — in public, at least. Is the ultimate invisible image — of one's own death, for example — so powerful that it must forever remain hidden? Is that what she really refuses to accept by refusing to see, the mirroring image of her own death? Or the fallacy of ever seeing it through her own eyes? How do we (or can we) look at images that resist observation, or those that cannot be perceived?

she dares to protest by not letting herself look and be looked at in return.

Among all the points of view lurking from the visible world as a spectacle, there was one, and only one, with a uniquely privileged status, that, for one reason or another, arrested my gaze. It was there — at the surface of *that*

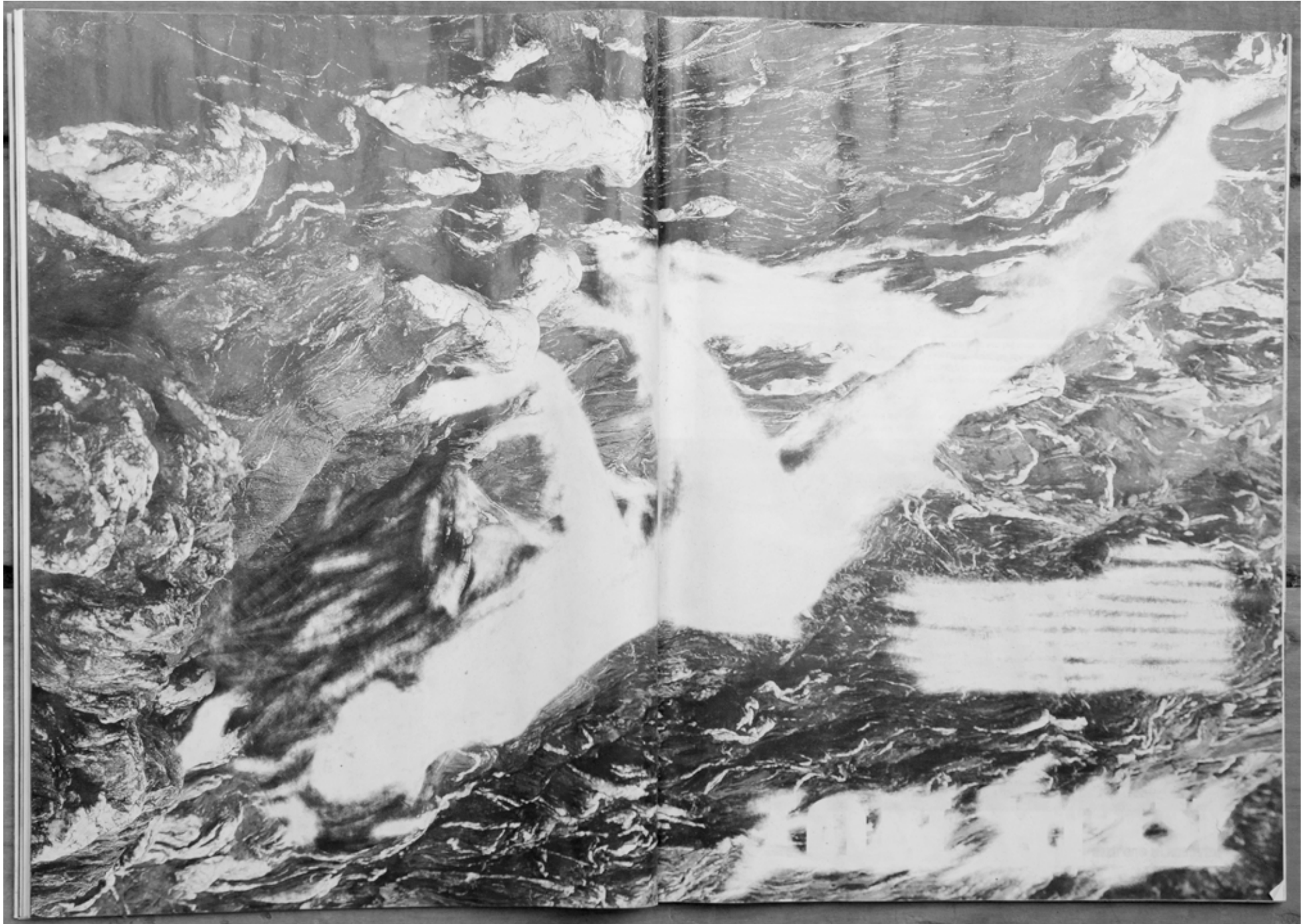




image — where my gaze was locked and imprisoned: at the vanishing point (*le point de fuite*) or the point of fleeing indeed. Yet the image vanished faster than light, disappeared, it had to disappear (at the end of the night) as, for images, 'to disappear' means to remain faithful to the very property of the image world: to exist temporarily as deceptive appearances, then to escape, never to return. Nevertheless, the moment was memorable. Am I exaggerating? No, not at all. A unique moment like that comes round once in a lifetime. *That* was the one: the moment when spectres seemed to be more real than the reality of physical presence in which we found ourselves looking at each other, face-to-face, *tête-à-tête*. Or one-to-one indeed, while everyone else was trying to behave according to the rules, prescribed for all onlookers willing to take part in the-spectacle-of-a-ritual-of-a-sacrifice-of-a-gathering-of-a-show-of-a-party.

Resistant or not, images play their own part in disclosing what must remain secret precisely through the exposure of their physical appearance: the material properties of images (of what is given to our view as an image) remain invincible in comparison to any other mode of communication. You may disagree, but it is never enough to say 'an image is worth a thousand words'. Even the moment of disappearance of their physical appearance gives spectres the power to remain present — not anymore as spectres or appearances but precisely as images (of spectres or appearances). Beautiful, terrifying, terrifyingly beautiful images — exposed yet impossible to look at... Looking is a demanding and dangerous task. If looking at images is even more risky, then resisting to look in such

a vigilant manner (as *she* does, and very properly so) does not only mean to resist, to protest, to take part in the game of social relations by acting out one's own oppositional stance. It also means to prevent something, to protect oneself, and justly so, from being exposed to images, from their deceiving or honest power, and the set of relational, sometimes disastrous consequences they may entail. ◇

1. Witold Gombrowicz,  
*Pomografia: A Novel*  
trans. Danuta Borchardt  
New York: Grove Press, 2009, p.3.

2. Elizabeth Klaver,  
*Sites of Autopsy in Contemporary Culture*  
New York: SUNY Press, 2005, p.95.



Frederik Van Simaey,  
*They Have the Watch but  
We Have the Time*, 2012  
c-type print

Excerpt from

## ON THE COMMON SAYING: 'THIS MAY BE TRUE IN THEORY, BUT IT DOES NOT APPLY IN PRACTICE'

Immanuel Kant

□ It is obvious from this that the principle of happiness (which is not in fact a definite principle at all) has ill effects in political right just as in morality, however good the intentions of those who teach it. The sovereign wants to make the people happy as he thinks best, and thus becomes a despot, while the people are unwilling to give up their universal human desire to seek happiness in their own way, and thus become rebels...

In every Commonwealth, there must be obedience to generally valid coercive laws within the mechanism of the political constitution. There must also be a spirit of freedom, for in all matters concerning universal human duties, each individual requires to be convinced by reason that the coercion which prevails is lawful, otherwise he would be in contradiction with himself...

Nowhere does practice so readily bypass all pure principles of reason and treat theory so presumptuously as in the question of what is needed for a good political constitution. The reason for this is that a legal constitution of long standing gradually makes the people accustomed to judging both

their happiness and their rights in terms of the peaceful status quo. Conversely, it does not encourage them to value the existing state of affairs in the light of those concepts of happiness and right which reason provides. It rather makes them prefer this passive state to the dangerous task of looking for a better one, thus bearing out the saying which Hippocrates told physicians to remember: *iudicium anceps, experimentum periculosum*. Thus all constitutions which have lasted for a sufficiently long time, whatever their inadequacies and variations, produce the same result: the people remain content with what they have. If we were to consider the welfare of the people, theory is not in fact valid, for everything depends upon practice derived from experience.

But reason provides a concept which we express by the words political right. And this concept has binding force for human beings who coexist in a state of antagonism produced by their natural freedom, so that it has an objective, practical reality, irrespective of the good or ill it may produce (for these can only be known by experience). □

ed. H.S. Reiss, trans. H.B. Nisbett, UK,  
Cambridge University Press,  
1970, pp.83–87.

Section of the treatment for the script 'Deep State':  
Examining the processes of its own production

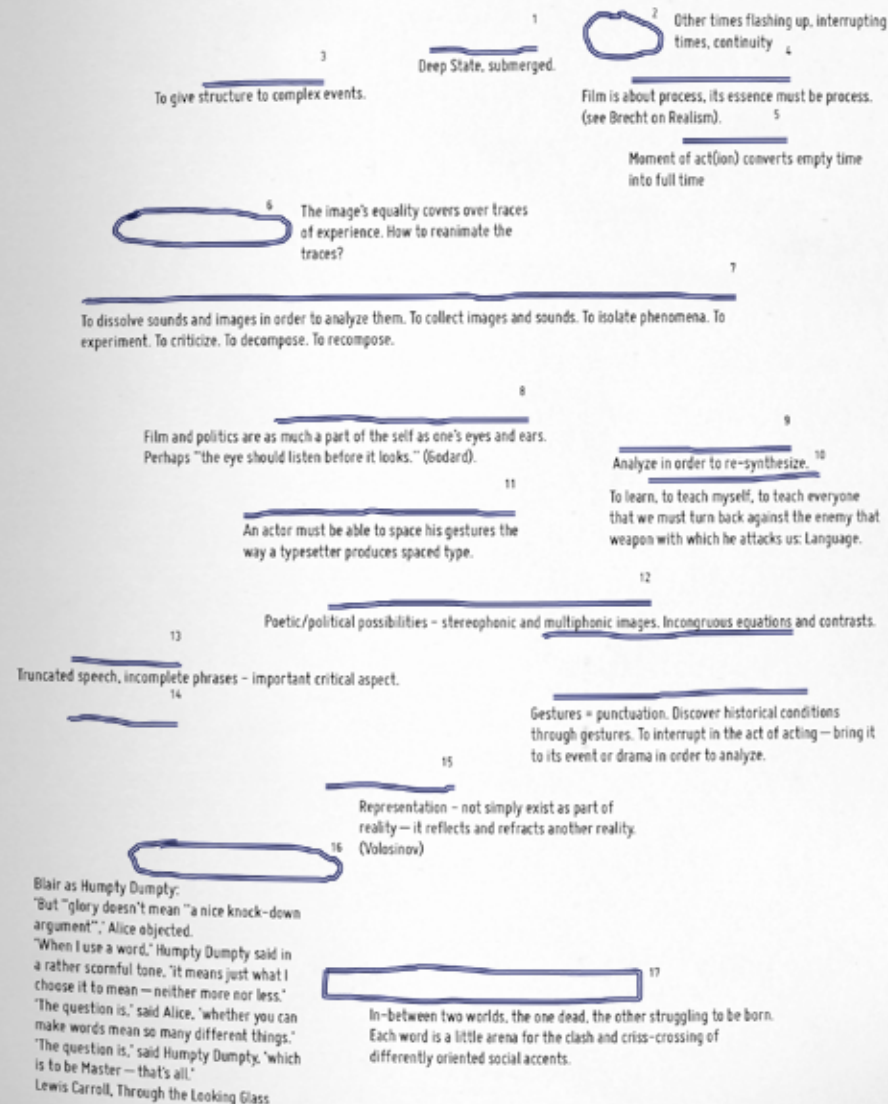
(...)

Act One.

We start with the Egyptian uprising of 2011. Footage can present a condensed version of the events more or less as they happened. The sense will be given very clearly of a city growing ever more restive and ready to explode. Footage of Egyptian comrades explaining certain issues of the background must be used to grant the situation its specificity. At the same time, the thesis of riots as language can start to be expounded, by use of a juxtaposition of certain repeated and typical acts of insurrection – the thrown stone, the outstretched arms, a certain chant – with a mouth speaking a particular phoneme, so that such phonemes and certain particular actions become inextricably linked. In the first instance, at this early point, these are simple sounds: buh; thuh; gah; and so on. Each as if in a training film for children painstakingly stated by an Egyptian mouth seen in close-up, and pinned to an image, until the image starts to intrude on the moments of the speaking, and the sound and image is tied absolutely together.<sup>12</sup> Slowly, over this first part of the film, these phonemes are strung together<sup>13</sup> into non-real but plausible-sounding collections of two and three sounds, with their images also spliced together<sup>14</sup>, so we might end up for eg seeing two or three brief snips of footage cut together, over the spoken nonsense word they represent.<sup>15</sup>

This should be interspersed with some of the more toxic crap spoken by Blair<sup>16</sup> and Biden and other Western rulers about the revolutions. By the juxtapositions, their fluent language should be harsh and jarring gibberish, whereas the careful and slow exposition of the riot language is an attempt, faltering, to speak something new.<sup>17</sup>

(...)





George Barber,  
*The Freestone Drone*, 2013  
still from HD video, 13'

## THE FREESTONE DRONE

Sean Cubitt

◇ Have you any dirty washing,  
mother dear?

Drone technology is the latest weapons technology to increase the distance between killer and killed, from slingshot to bow, ballista to cannon, rifle to bomber. There are differences, though. As Ian Hamilton Finlay observes in his *Interpolations in Hegel*, "As the quiver contains

the arrow, the arrow itself contains, invisibly, the lines of its own flight". We will learn, with *The Freestone Drone*, that the drone does not contain in itself the reason why it kills so and not otherwise. Similarly, though sighting is an essential characteristic of weaponry, the missile itself, once loosed, is blind: until we reach the drone.

The purpose of the camera as gunsight is to balance the requirements of killing: to excise precisely this life but not another; and to render the life to be excised as coldly as possible. This is an extreme form of the witnessing which underpins the ideal of realism — to see things as they are. But realism has always mistaken things as they are for things as they appear to us, human as we are. Realism witnesses things of a size and speed suited to human sensoria. Realism is a humanism. The drone witnesses on behalf of its Controller, witnesses in the wavelengths that the Controller will understand, even if that means translating from machinic vision (infra-red) into visible greyscale pictures. Drone witnessing reveals this reduction of humanity required by a thoroughgoing realism, which must posit a Human authoritative witness of the witnessing, in the place where once a god underpinned the autonomous existence of an alien world.

Realism authors works by witnessing, but the witness that authors reality is really an abstraction: a perfection of the species, asymptotically approached. *The Freestone Drone* approaches the purity of witnessing as absolute proximity, the proximity that annihilates both witness and witnessed.

Or if not; if the annihilation is to be deferred or avoided, then the witnessing must admit that what it witnesses is not truth. Our first victim, the unmistakable physiognomy of Osama bin Laden, comes from a

US TV series. What is found, in the search for truth by camera, is often found footage.

"We already have the footage of our future: it is the footage of our past" said the Freestone Drone.

It is a poetic assemblage of footage. There are two helicopter passes, one over New York, one over San Francisco. The skyscrapers gleam under the kind of blue sky that greeted the 9/11 aircraft. Like the phoney bin Laden, we cannot but recognise the phoney Drone, mapped onto the NY footage, but, like the bin Laden frames, these are not so much false as fictive. The world perceived by the Drone is one that is supposedly mapped, supposedly structured by causes and effects — if there are children in the house, there will be children's things on the washing line. Causes should map onto effects. But here effects map onto causes: there is always a rationale for the stray weapon, when a non-combatant becomes a terrorist sympathiser "and they must be commies, cause they're all dead". The fictive underlay of realism reasserts itself in such retroactive movements of causality.

The Drone likes television shows about space. Barber shows us some. A 3D visualisation — of a bundle of DNA fibres? of the macrostructure of the universe? — revolves under a profile of clouds forming on the shoulder of a Himalayan peak, or is it a peak in the Karakoram or the Hindu Kush? Geographical imaging and data visualisation — which together form the geographical information systems that anchor drones' navigational abilities — become uncertain, unsure of scale or density and most of all unsure of time.

Like the protagonists of an Alain Resnais film, the Drone's humans are locked into a closed cycle of time. All wars are fought on the strategic principle that victory is

possible, and the tactical necessity that everything is always to do again. Because we always have with us the detritus that fascinates the Drone, those abandoned electronics, thrown-away cartons and

we are trapping ourselves in the endless cycle of incomplete recycling, time orbits us. And memory fails.

plastic bottles; because in the twenty-first century it is impossible to distinguish washing on a line from torn strips of PVC sheeting twisting on barbed wire; because we are trapping ourselves in the endless cycle of incomplete recycling, time orbits us. And memory fails. Only those memories survive that are memorialised, monumentalised, as New York has monumentalised the absence of the twin Towers which, before, no-one liked anyway, and which had been in any case built on the ruins of an older street-level entrepreneurialism wiped out in favour of a new neo-liberal economics of property as speculation. Where there was once a mom-and-pop store selling radio parts, and then a colossal office building for 'world trade', there is nothing, a memorial composed of emptiness.

The purpose of drones is to perpetuate emptiness.

Absolute distance; absolute proximity. The act of mechanical witnessing is to increase to the theological scale the distance between killer and killed. But the divine judgment must also be accompanied by the diving moment, not of retribution but of apotheosis, the moment of becoming a god that overtakes Herakles in the closing lines of Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, where, in Pound's translation, he cries out in his agony "what / splendour / it all coheres", or the apotheosis of Saint Ignatius, founder

of the Jesuits, as he ascends into his painted heaven in the *trompe l'oeil* masterpiece of the Jesuit baroque. The Drone seeks his completion in the annihilation of human time and the becoming of the perpetual Present of the divine.

But this is only one side of the emancipation. On the other, the fated victim must also undergo their own theophany, and it is for this quintessence of the money shot that drones come equipped with cameras.

Realism is founded in abstraction from the dirty clutter of actuality in the premise of an absolute human author for whom it all coheres. *The Freestone Drone* is endlessly betrayed by his fascination with the clutter, the unique concatenations of stuff which antedate as well as postdate their efficient causes. The only moment in which the efficient Humanism of the technical gaze can finally observe the unique difference, the being other-wise of things, is in the moment of their destruction.

Dry irony, a light touch, a cool eye and a searching heart are all the little engine has to fight against his destiny and ours.

We will hang out the washing on the Siegfried Line. ◇



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# AGENDA

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## AT THE GALLERY

### **Frederik Van Simaey**

*Out of the Blues*  
until 26 January 2013

### **Abbas Akhavan**

*Untitled Garden*  
a permanent public work  
from 12 January 2013

### **George Barber**

*The Freestone Drone*  
2 February – 23 March 2013  
Artist in conversation with Sam  
Thorne (associate editor, *Frieze*)  
Wednesday, 27 February, 7pm

### **Anetta Mona Chişa & Lucia Tkáčová**

4 April – 25 May 2013

## ELSEWHERE

### **Marcin Dudek**

*Too Close For Comfort*  
Harlan Levy Project, Brussels  
26 January – 2 March 2013

### **Heide Hinichs**

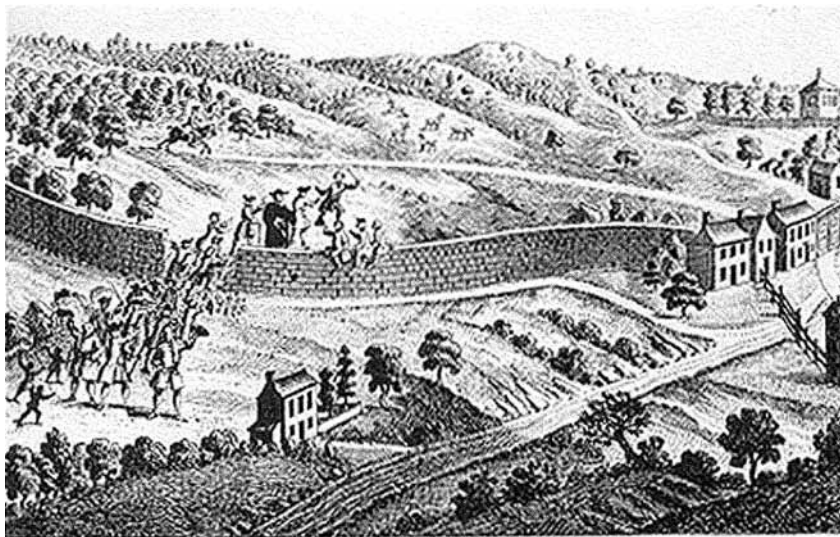
*Art Rotterdam*  
New Art Section  
6 – 10 February 2013

### **Daniel Medina**

*ARCO Madrid*  
Special Projects Latin America  
13 – 17 February 2013

### **Gallery artists**

*Art Brussels*  
Young Talent Section  
18 – 21 April 2012



*Eighteenth century illustration of parishioners breaking down the wall  
into Richmond Park, led by their vicar, claiming their right of way.*