

It is well known that photography has been undergoing an inescapable process of technological advancement since the end of the 20th century. A whole system of photography techniques, methods and production equipment was replaced by another super-structure of methods and devices (electronic, or digital, as it is often called), which dramatically changed and expanded the possibilities of capturing, editing and circulating images. The work of Dominic Hawgood is representative of this irreversible transition. In contrast to the conventional profile of a photographer, whose predominant activity lies firmly in capturing images, this artist's creative process cannot be dissociated from the increasingly accessible and fundamental possibilities of a field of photography that expanded greatly with the digital (r)evolution. Hawgood focuses on practices associated with image manipulation and the production of computer generated images. As such, his images call attention to decisive and current questions about the ontological and epistemological nature of photography, while simultaneously forcing us to question the limits, tensions, and articulations between real and virtual, between fact and fiction, between representation and imagination.

For EPEA 03, the artist began a new project entitled *Casting Out the Self*. Similarly to previous projects, Hawgood mobilises the cold and dominant presence of technology, in order to explore his fascination with sensations and states of mind. The project calls our attention to recent trends in the field of perception and awareness, stimulated by mass use of plants with hallucinogenic properties. The artist is particularly interested in the use of Dimethyl-tryptamine (DMT), a psychedelic substance which acts to alter or disturb the central nervous system. DMT is the active ingredient in *Ayahuasca*, a drink used by Indigenous people in South America.

DMT is seen as a means to access the spiritual world. In this context, the dichotomy between the "real" world and the *projective* experience provided by DMT is the inspiration for a body of work that explores changing and expanding borders of consciousness and perception. In collaboration with Jules Malcomson and Dave Corney, Hawgood creates video animation which displays various images, visu-

als, and objects. This work focuses on digital technology and the visual world this technology makes possible, but also serves as a means to raise questions regarding the transition from the real world to the digital world. For Hawgood, DMT induces an experience whose virtual characteristics can be compared to visual experiences provided by recent digital technologies, in the sense that they produce a hyper-real world which inevitably reformulates the conditions of living in time and space.

This association between the consumption of DMT (among other old shaman rituals which have been gaining popularity) and new digital technologies is also the result of a cutting and ironic view regarding the ways Westerners have tried to (re)discover the means — sensual, spiritual, poetic, metaphysical — to reconnect with the environment. Therefore, the effect of new technologies must also be perceived within the framework of strategies and behaviours aimed at altering the ways we experience and understand the world. These are methods that reject, put into perspective, or rethink the prevalence of scientific discourse and the endeavours of a rationalist obsession which tends to reject alternative ways of relating to the world. Hawgood plays with our visceral reaction to the points of intersection between flesh and pixels. He uses impossible images — a world of light and illusion which is totally (re)constructed by computer — thus forcing us to meditate on the extent and diversity of the geography of reality that we might be willing to visit and experience.

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