

The following is an excerpt from the catalogue:

DAVID SPRIGGS : STRATACHROME, published by Galerie de l'UQAM, 2010

STRATACHROME : THE SAGA OF GREEN

Marie-Eve Beaupré

...Presented as if in suspended animation, the luminous installation offers a synthesized perception of the represented bodies and masses, referents of the contemporary power whose chromatic resonances belong to the military, artistic, social and technological spheres. The aim of Spriggs' approach is to surprise reality in order to immobilize it, the better to identify the figures that govern the power. In this, his strategy is not unlike the anamorphic process: rather than creating a vanishing point for the viewer's eye, he inverts the conventions of perspective so that the viewer becomes the vanishing point.

The large scale favoured by the artist and the curved shape of the sections serve to flood the visitor's gaze. The work occupies nearly the entire field of vision in the gallery, producing a cinematic effect in which the iconography reads like a montage composed so as to simultaneously fuse and confuse the information. This effect functions like our own perception of reality, which is most often shaped by a montage of temporalities produced by the new technologies that redefine our grasp of events. The Internet remains the principal symbol of this. Thus, even while making the viewer omniscient, the work testifies to the fact that an overabundance of images can also be blinding.

In this installation, the artist's borrowed and created symbols and referents are painted in fluorescent acrylic on large sheets of transparent film. A camera of the sort used to film three-dimensional images, set on a tripod, is reproduced in each section, its slightly set-back position emphasizing the idea that all of the images are part of a virtual universe. A reproduction of a soldier's camouflage uniform is superimposed on the carcasses of two crash-damaged cars (some will see a reference to Andy Warhol's 1963 Green Car Crash). In addition, a painted cloudy mass is clearly visible in the upper area. Enigmatic at first glance, it has large openings borrowed directly from Marcel Duchamp's Large Glass (1915-1923). Executed on glass, implying transparency, this work, like Stratachrome, includes the viewer as subject behind the reproduced images. The resulting composite imagery is reminiscent of green-screen special effects. In the lower area of one of the sections, a nude model appears in pose. The source image is from a Dürer print illustrating a perspective drawing lesson, where the use of a grid helps the artist calculate the effects of perspective on the subject to be reproduced. This method of representing linear perspective is similar to those used by David Spriggs, but his invented assembly process enables him to transpose two-dimensional images in space. The stratachrome concept can thus be understood as a new form of three-dimensional representation.

Despite reproduced pornographic scenes in which the virtual body is exposed, viewers find themselves moved not by seduction but by fascination before this monumental installation, curious to dissect the images composing the whole. Each section refers to a different type of nudity, defined by the artist as pornography of the body and pornography of war. This concept refers, in particular, to ideas on the media space

devoted to pornographic images developed by Jean Baudrillard.⁷ The effect of body and object virtualization derives from the use of both anamorphosis – image distortion produced by means of an optical system – and perspective, with a paint gun used to depict the organic elements and the technological elements rendered with a brush. The installation's iconography transposes the theatre of operations of a conceptual war between various symbols of contemporary power and, in so doing, questions the image-making process. The battlefield aesthetic produces images with the potential to become promotional media missiles, especially the image of total control that suggests masked prisoners, seen in the corner of one section. The surfeit of images that makes certain parts of the installation illegible can be interpreted as a form of self-censorship; this allows the work to point up the false transparency of visual information and raise the issue of media policies in present-day wars.

In today's world, most combat is virtual, as in the new drone-based military strategies and wars waged by cyber-pirates. Present-day war is fought less between individuals than between symbols that we experience through the media, hence virtually. These new possibilities inevitably lead to the loss of direct experience and make it almost impossible to detect the substitution. With the interpenetration, overlapping and superimposition of form and content comes a definitive loss of meaning. The spatial ambiguity perceptible in David Spriggs' installation follows from this erosion of the boundary between real and virtual.

"The history of battle is primarily the history of radically changing fields of perception. In other words war consists not so much in scoring territorial, economic or other material victories as in appropriating the "immateriality" of perceptual fields." Paul Virilio, War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception (London: Verso, 1989), p. 10.

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(For further reading please see the publication 'Stratachrome - David Spriggs' produced by Galerie de l'UQAM with an essay by Marie-Eve Beaupré and an introduction by Louise Déry)

Marie-eve Beaupré is working towards a PhD in art history, with a focus on Canadian monochrome painting, under the direction of Thérèse St-Gelais (uqam) and Jacinto Lageira (Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne). As a curator, she has organized exhibitions at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (*Stéphane La Rue. Retracer la peinture*, in collaboration with Louise Déry), the Musée d'art de Joliette (*François Lacasse. Les déversements*), the Musée régional de Rimouski (*Les Perméables*) and the Galerie de l'uqam (*David Spriggs. Stratachrome, Stéphane La Rue. Retracer la peinture* and *Libre échange*). Her responsibilities at the Galerie de l'uqam over the past five years have included working on the Canadian Pavilion exhibition for the 2007 Venice Biennale and coordinating the Wim Delvoye project *Cloaca No. 5*, in 2009. In addition to publishing essays and articles, she is broadening her research on Quebec art by inventorying artist studios.