

DIS-APPEARANCE

Jeffrey Shaw 1992

The activity of both art and science has always been the interpretation and recreation of reality - an exercise of human imagination creating virtual realities which embody tentative structures of meaning. The world appears to us in light of those fictions which we project onto its surface. Whereas Eastern cultures have recognised the primacy of these projections, Western culture has made an idolatry of the virtual reality it has created, calling it an objective reality that is separate from the mind that projects it. This machination places us as observers and consumers (and despoilers) of a compulsive world model.

Paradoxically, the recent and revolutionary development of "virtual reality" technologies are rooted in this machination. Needing to also encompass the immateriality of its desires, our materialist culture was compelled to invent a technology which could embody fiction with the same objective realism as that of the compulsive world model. But this power of simulation also inverts the machination, by making the real disappear within the deluge of hyper-real fabrications.

The disappearance of all things. The disillusion of all ideologies. The disembodiment of all functions. The insubstantial truth hidden behind the veil of substantialities. The telepresence of desire, unbounded by the constraints of space or time. The incarnation of automata as the exteriorisation of our desire.

Art has always struggled with and against the machination of an objective reality. Ceci n'est pas une pipe - this is not the world. The simulational efficacy of the new technologies offers a whole new domain of articulation to this discourse. Technologically generated virtual realities are a persuasive new space of fiction, whose apparent realism can be the gateway to a meta-realism that expresses the immaterial dimensionalities of our experience. Here, person is no longer a somnambulist wandering through a mausoleum of objects, rather she/he is an adventurer in a newfoundland of embodiments of insubstantial truths.