

This catalogue was printed in conjunction with the exhibition

Military Vision
3 April - 11 May 2013
Screen Space

All images of works courtesy of the artists

ISBN: 978-0-9872860-6-2

Published by
Screen Space
www.screenspace.com
+613 9012 5351

Ground Floor / 30 Guildford Lane Melbourne Australia 3000

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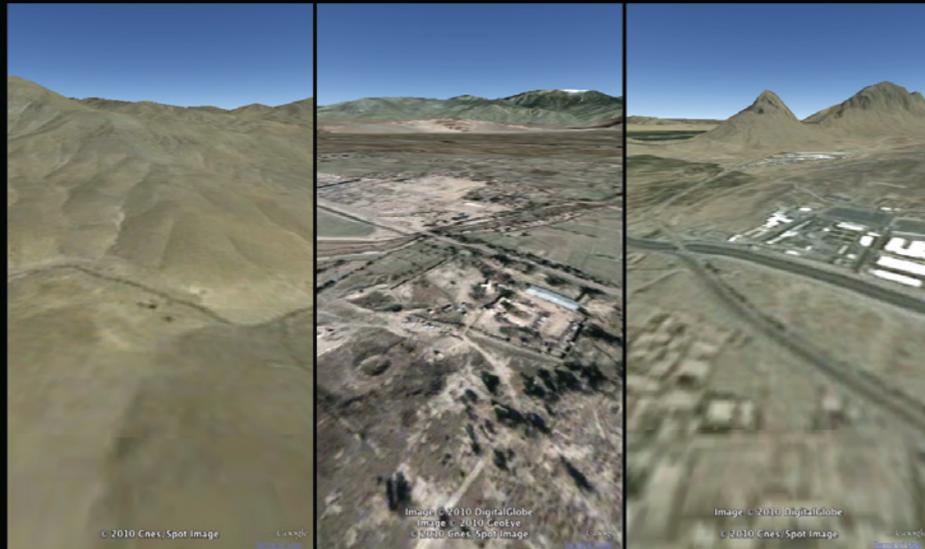
Military Vision

Denis Beaubois | Matthieu Cherubini | Jordan Crandall

Curated by Baden Pailthorpe



The Curator Mentorship Initiative is supported by the Sidney Myer Fund and administered by the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA)



2011-01-05 22:00:33 1st killed someone.
 2011-01-05 22:00:13 Proxacia 11 killed someone.
 2011-01-05 22:00:10 4th - 1st killed someone.

2004-03-29 00:00:00 Asian Highway 1 Explosive Bomb (IED Road) ClearanceRoute
 2004-03-24 00:00:00 Through Heavy Airborne (Hellfire Airstrike) 1 death
 2004-03-18 00:00:00 Heloland Bomb Airborne (Hellfire Airstrike) 8 deaths



Military Vision

Increasingly, advanced technologies developed by the military have become seamlessly integrated into civilian life. Sophisticated technologies of surveillance, mapping, tracking and communication now underpin many of our daily interactions. Indeed, these technologies have become ubiquitous. Yet how do these technologies of control, targeting and ultimately violence, shape the way we experience the world?

From unauthorised Wikileaks data about the war in Afghanistan, hacked *Counter-Strike* video game servers, surveillance footage on the US-Mexican border and violent action against the Australian Prime Minister's office, *Military Vision* presents the work of three artists whose work directly examines the militarisation of sight, territory and the politics of vision: Denis Beaubois, Matthieu Cherubini and Jordan Crandall.

Jordan Crandall is an American artist, theorist, and performer based in Los Angeles. His six channel video work *Heatseeking* (2000) was shot on the edge of the United States border with Mexico using technologies and techniques favoured by US Border Patrol. Rather than capturing immigrants illegally breaching the territory of the United States from Mexico, Crandall mobilises what he identifies as an underlying erotic desire of the technologically enabled, penetrating military gaze. By inverting this 'structure of seeing' from foreign borders to foreign bodies, Crandall gestures towards the penetration of territories by bodies, and the penetration of these bodies by psychological sight territories. In this way, Crandall establishes a continuum between external geopolitical territories and the perceptive inner territories that control the borders of States. Just falling into the pre 9/11 era of geopolitics, Crandall's *Heatseeking* (2000) almost presciently hints at the optical immune system that would go on to underpin the current global security apparatus, only to become an overactive autoimmune disease, where the protective gaze turns inward and attacks the very body it is supposed to protect.

The work of Australian artist Denis Beaubois, on the other hand, attempts to breach the symbolic architecture of political power: The Australian Prime Minister's Office. His video work *Impact: There is no aftermath* (2004), from his *Terminal Vision Project* literally deploys the camera as a weapon in an attempt to penetrate the office of the Australian Prime Minister. Reminiscent of the notorious bomb camera images from the first truly televised war: *The Gulf War* in Iraq, 1991, this mini vision bomb also destroys itself on impact. The viewer is propelled with the camera as it violently hurtles towards its target. In this gesture, the camera develops a body and itself becomes the 'event', rather than simply recording the 'event'. For Beaubois, since the camera is destroyed on impact, the target is similarly

destroyed in that it no longer exists 'televisually'. Visual artefacts from the camera's damaged nervous system (circuitry) attest to the physical trauma of this violent visual gesture. Here, as in Crandall's work, the body (in this case, the camera) penetrates the border of a protected, demarcated political site.

Matthieu Cherubini is a Swiss new media artist whose hybrid software work operates in the space between virtual territories and the real world deadly violence they represent. *Afghan War Diary* (2010) is a website that synthesises a link between real time virtual deaths in the seminal first person shooter *Counter-Strike*, the Wikileaks database of secret military reports from Afghanistan, and Google Earth. The work connects to *Counter-Strike* game servers where players repeatedly kill each other in online tournaments. Each time a virtual death is recorded in the server, the work connects it to an actual violent death as recorded in the Wikileaks Afghan War archive. The secret location and details of these deaths is generated using Google Earth satellite imagery. In an era where the violence of war is increasingly mediated through technologies of vision, *Afghan War Diary* (2010) offers a timely reminder of the carnage that lurks behind the banality of military statistics and confidential information. Google Earth's sterile geographical referents also hint at the global logistics of military vision and the perpetual gaze of the unblinking military eye.

The installation of these works makes a conscious reference to the dominance of screens and live video feeds in military and surveillance control rooms. The screen is undoubtedly the most dominant form in the contemporary military apparatus of control. Together, these works offer a select glimpse at practices that have engaged with the politics and affects of military vision over the last decade (2000; 2004; 2010). Further, these three artists represent three distinct generations of practitioners (born 1958; 1970; 1984). There are many artists who actively test and critique contemporary states of militarised vision, and this exhibition does not pretend to represent them all. Indeed, the most obvious contemporary mode of weaponised sight is the US Drone program championed by the Obama Administration. Whilst this exhibition does not explicitly feature works that engage with the US Drone program, the themes explored by the artists in *Military Vision* are bound up within the same conceptual fabric of perception, territory and control.

- Baden Pailthorpe

Left Top: Matthieu Cherubini, *Afghan War Diary* (2010) screenshot.

Left Bottom: Denis Beaubois, *Impact: There is no aftermath* (2004) video still.

Overleaf: Jordan Crandall, *Heatseeking* (2000) installation view.