

WIELS

PRESS RELEASE

Simon Starling

Particle Projection (Loop)

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Particle Projection (Loop), 2007 takes as its starting point two 'clichés' of Belgian culture, a diagrammatic 1950's building and an artist who became a seminal figure for what is now referred to as 'institutional critique'. The project, commissioned to coincide with the transformation of a derelict brewery into a contemporary arts centre, appropriates these two phenomena and uses them as the 'raw material' to produce something new, albeit an image of a fast disappearing technology.

In 1957, Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers worked as a labourer on the building of the Atomium. Designed by André Waterkeyn for the 1958 World Fair in Brussels, the building is a simplified diagrammatic representation of a crystallised molecule of iron by the scale of its atoms. Broodthaers recorded the fabrication of this pavilion in a series of photographs that were later published in the newspaper 'Le Patriote Illustré'. Almost fifty years later the Atomium has been restored, its corroded aluminium shell replaced with a shiny new set of triangular panels. During the restoration a series of black and white photographs that directly mimic those made by Broodthaers were produced by Belgian artist Benoît Plateus following my instructions. Collapsing the moment of the original building project onto that of its subsequent restoration, looping back in time, these new images shadow their 1950's precursors frame for frame.

Across town an elegant concrete brewery is under renovation. Completed in 1931 for Wielmans-Ceuppens, the building was designed by Belgian modernist architect Adrien Blomme. This building was very much designed from the inside out. Once the eye-catching centrepiece of the brewery, the large brewing hall projected a sense of well-ordered, spotlessly clean, industrial production to passerby, while at night, the interior flooded with light created a kind of negative image of the building its concrete and metal exterior dissolving into the surrounding night, as the period photographs of Willy Kessels clearly show.

In a Berlin laboratory, a negative from one of the photographs documenting the renovation of the Atomium has been stripped of its gel coating, uncovering the developed silver particles that held the image of their diagrammatic big brother on the Heysel Plateau. Under an electron microscope, these sponge-like image-fragments reveal their true and ghostly complexity. The electron microscope images (synthesised equivalences generated from the accumulated scatterings of a pencil-beam of electrons moving across the surface of the silver particles) hint at an altogether different kind of 'architecture' – one of seemingly infinitely variable, labyrinthine structures more in tune with our newly 'complex' understanding of the world. Returned to 'celluloid', held once more in a field of tiny silver particles, hugely amplified and feed-back into the system from where it first came, this animated spectral figure will be projected into the brewing hall from a constantly looping 35mm black and white film, like a vast, amorphous chandelier, illuminating once more the public face of Wiels.

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