

Antoine Catala's work responds to the high technicality of current digital media by incorporating both lo-fi and analog. Filled with humour and a play on words, very often hiding a serious note, his work blends a conceptual reflection with specific work on material, and concentrates both on the aesthetic value of scientific projects as he does on the semiotic nature.

Throughout his work, the artist toys with the imperfections of language, the physicality of images and their tactile character, using the notion of accident and technology, the hologram, the 3D printer, morphing.

The *Heavy Words* exhibition presented at Peep-Hole will bring together for the first time three recent projects conceived as a trilogy: *Il était une fois...* (2012), produced by FRAC Champagne-Ardenne during the last Lyon Biennial and now part of the FRAC collection; part of the exhibition *Image Families* shown recently at UKS (Oslo) and at Fridericianum (Kassel) and *Abracadabra* (2013), shown in Empire State (Rome/Paris, 2013), to which new elements especially produced have been added for the exhibition in Milan.

The trilogy has taken form over the last few years, starting with an investigation conducted by the artist on the object=image=word equivalence, stimulated by the decisive role played by information technology in the contemporary world. Thanks to Internet research, any word can be associated with a large number of images, which when processed by the 3D scanners and printers of the latest generation can produce objects. A phantasmatic but at the same time very real relationship whose basis is language, as Surrealist thinking and the reflections of the Conceptual have already suggested.

*Heavy Words* crystalizes in works the illusionistic process in continuous evolution of what Catala defines as "machine-images" – computers, monitors, augmented reality devices, 3D – intersecting the elements of the triad in different ways. In *Il était une fois...*, the artist uses different technological outputs, like the hologram or the fog display, to reproduce a series of images of various kinds that appear to the

viewer as a rebus to be solved. Combined in a precise order, these images form the famous phrase that is the beginning of all stories: "once upon a time" (*il était une fois*), marking the start of the "fable about the technological principles and materials that structure language" then developed along the exhibition itinerary.

*Abracadabra*, shown here in an enhanced version, offers further analysis of the relationship between

word and image, presenting a series of kinetic pictograms created by the juxtaposition of punctuation marks and symbols. The communication through images typical of the language of the emoticon is thus represented in sculptural form. The exhibition concludes with *Image Families*, a phantasmagorical device that unveils, in steps, the illusionary nature of images. The machines in the form of drones flie inside the space and analyze the objects, starting with their reproductions. The objects are like apparitions and the mechanical voice that describes them outlines the cybernetic future-present of the systems through which computers learn.

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