

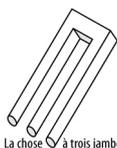


LET US START FROM THE MIDDLE

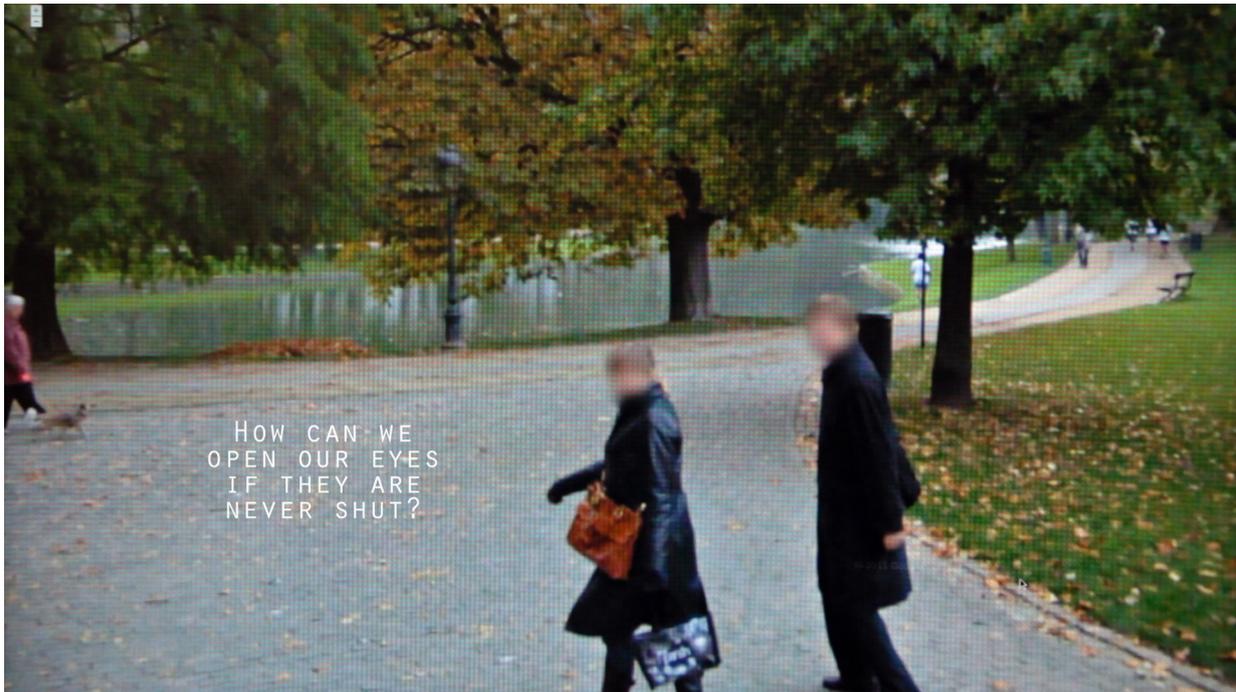
THE VANISHING VANISHING-POINT

A FILM BY

EFFI & AMIR



PRODUCED BY LA CHOSE À TROIS JAMBES



SYNOPSIS

ENGLISH:

In the heart of Europe there is a garden, in the garden there is a tree and there is always a couple. The Vanishing Vanishing-Point is a contemplative walk and a detective story, within the parallel world of Google Street View.

FRANÇAIS:

Au cœur de l'Europe, il y a un jardin et dans le jardin, il y a un arbre. Et il y a toujours un couple. The Vanishing Vanishing-Point est une promenade contemplative, une enquête au cœur du monde parallèle de Google Street View.

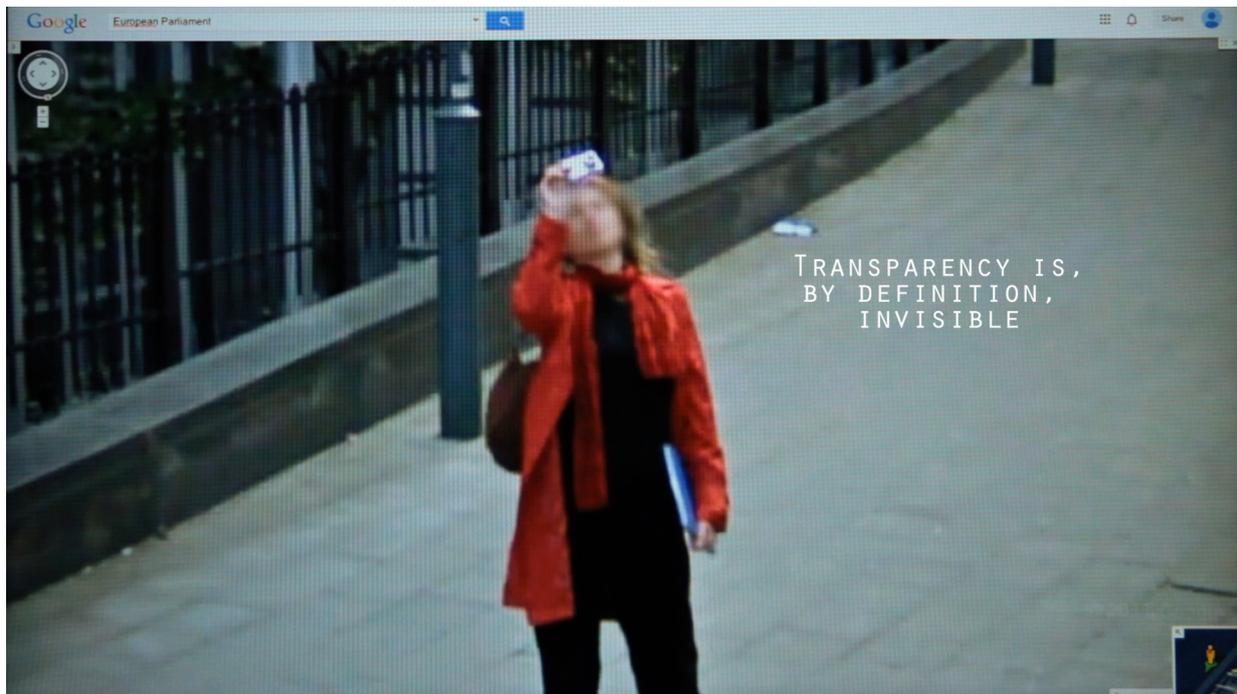


DESCRIPTION

ENGLISH:

Since autumn 2005 we have been following an olive tree that was planted in the Parc Leopold, a small and well-tended park at the feet of the European Parliament, and a few dozens of meters away from our apartment in Brussels. The Olive tree, as foreign as us, appeared in the park several weeks after our own arrival in this city. It was difficult not to regard it as a mirror, and the reflection it was sending us was quite discouraging. We visited this tree regularly, documenting it while constantly questioning this new attachment we were developing towards it. The tree's condition has gradually deteriorated, until in spring 2012 it was removed, leaving an oval patch of soil on the green grass.

For quite some time we didn't know how to use the material we have created and accumulated, both video documentation, staged clips and writings, until the day we looked at the Leopold Park in Google Map, and saw that the tree was still there. Not in the top view, but in the street view. Still out there, continuously dying.



FESTIVALS & EXHIBITIONS

// APEXART, NY, USA - Group exhibition - Decolonized skies, curated by Hi & Low Bureau

// TIRANA ART LAB, Tirana, Albania - Solo exhibition - Let Us Start From The Middle, curated by Adela Demetja

// ISELP, Brussels, Belgium - Group Exhibition - Hostipitalité, curated by Florence Cheval

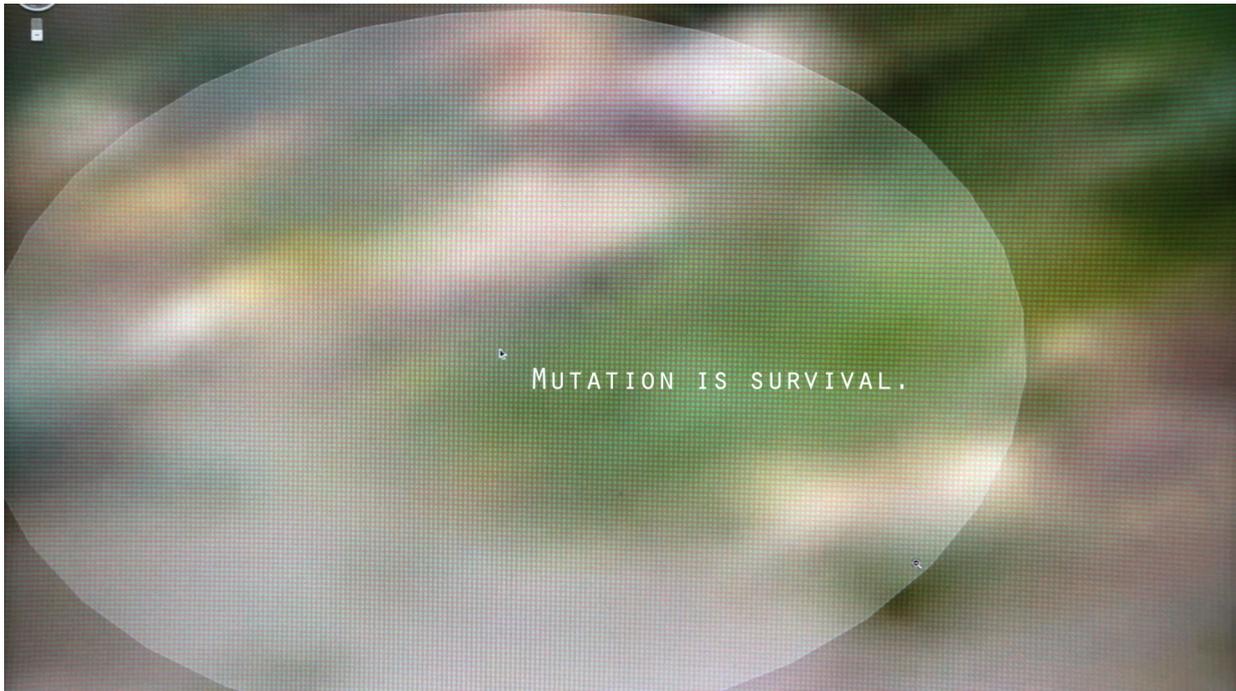
// ADN Platform, Barcelona, Spain - Group exhibition - Decolonized skies, curated by Hi & Low Bureau

// Kunst i Festival, Inderoy, Norway - Group exhibition - Space Above, Space Below, curated by Liv Brissach

// FID Marseille, France - Ecrans Parallels section

// ARTPORT, Tel Aviv, Israel - Group exhibition - Decolonized skies, curated by Hi & Low Bureau

// FILMER A TOUT PRIX Festival, Belgium - Grand PRIX du Jury, Belgian shorts



TECHNICAL DETAILS & INFO

2015 | 27'50 | HD | Stereo

Available versions: English, French, Hebrew | Available subtitles: English, French, Hebrew, Arabic

CREDITS

Script, Camera, Editing and Sound creation - Effi & Amir

Mix - Maxime Coton (Bruits asbl)

Production - La chose à trois jambes asbl-vzw

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www.effiandamir.net



FILMOGRAPHY

Mnemonic Gymnastics / 2015 / 16'

The Vanishing Vanishing-Point /2015/ 27'50

Same River Twice / 2013 / 111'

Jessy Cooks – a web documentary /2011/ 175' / www.jessycooks.org

Epiphany On Vacation / 2010/ 24'25

Histoires d'attentes (director: Amir Borenstein) / 2010/ 37'

APIness is... / 2008/ 17'03

Color / 2006 / 2'22

Miracle within a miracle / 14'26

Near East / 2004 / A picture disc (Vinyl|Video™) 9 tracks, total/ 16'00.

Topsoil /2003/08'10

Vil Nor / 2003/ 27'15

The Boat People / 2002/ 06'30

Dancing with Wolves / 2001/ 01'00

All My Sons / 2001/ 22'00

More Lost than Gained / 2000/ 10'30

Check It /2000 / 03'45

Artattack- An independent TV programme /2000-2002 /16 X 30'/2000-2002 /16 X 30'

The anecdotal ground of the world

Reflections on Google Street View

On the occasion of *The Vanishing Vanishing-Point*, a film by Effi & Amir Bruno De Wachter

How can we open our eyes, if they are never shut?

A map shows *where* things are located in a certain area – roads, paths, buildings, water, green... – but not *how* things are. The map makes an abstraction of the state of things – weather, human use, the growing and rotting of plants, the presence of animals, material wear – and is, therefore, timeless. It has to be re-drawn only when substantial changes are being made to the spatial structure. Consequently, it requires imagination to visualise how an unvisited place on the map looks in reality.

I am addicted to this kind of imagination and this addiction seems to grow when I spend a lot of time behind my desk. The map provides me with a scheme that I can fill in with my own creation, in my head, like in a solitary game. However, even though it is created in my own head, I am myself absent in this world: I don't need to take a position, not with words nor with my physical presence. Because of this, the boundary between myself and the world disappears – a true utopia, which becomes increasingly attractive when I am suffering from this boundary in real life.

After a period of wasting time poring over maps, a strong desire grows in me to go outside and reduce the map again to the role of a useful tool. When I do so, my imagination of a place is confronted with reality and exposed as an illusion. A revelatory moment follows

in which my idea of the place is adjusted: "That's how it looks!" and afterwards I am rarely able to recall the original imagining I had of the place. It has been replaced by my memory which, in turn, gets increasingly distorted by my mind, again causing a discrepancy between imagination and reality. With my next visit to the same place, I experience a mixture of recognition – where my memory and reality coincide – and a new kind of revelation: "In my memory, it looked different!"

It is October. One can tell by the dead leaves. And by the muddy green water. Although, it is just a surface; there is no bottom underneath.

What happens if – starting from the bird's eye perspective of the map – you zoom in ever further? According to Google, you end up with a photographic representation. A representation, however, that differs from a photograph because it has no fixed frame, and that differs also from a movie because the users have to move the frame themselves. It is a spherical picture with a mobile center. In contrast to the map, this photographic representation does show the state of things from one particular moment in the past. Because of this, it suggests being part of a personal story, and even more so since we see people walking around, even though their faces are blurred, a level of abstraction that remains.

When I land in Google Street View and take a first look around, I often feel a moment of wonder. However, when I start to wander around in this world, I'm quickly bored – a similar kind of boredom as when being forced to look at a series of holiday pictures of family and friends. I have no memory that goes with the pictures, that can fill in what cannot be seen: smells, sounds, materiality, and a course of time in which to write the story, a rhythm. The images show too much to make my imagination work, while they lack some essential aspects of a personal memory. Google Street View is so close to reality that the perspective gets lost in the particularities of the moment, but this doesn't mean that it becomes the unique experience that it promises to be at first sight. There is no bottom underneath.

Everybody is a witness; everybody is a suspect

And still. It does happen that, when the circumstances are right, a visit to Google Street View makes me nostalgic, even if I am looking at a place where I've never been. Nostalgia is not a desire for a past reality, but a desire for the stories that were once projected onto reality. It is a desire for a past desire. And that desire does not necessarily need a real memory to awaken. It can also stick to images that are recognisable enough to serve as a simulated memory. These can be old photographs or post cards found in the flea market or it can be an image of Google StreetView. And exactly because it is not a real world that is being recalled, but your own animation of that world, it almost inevitably appears to be a better world than the one of today.

Back then, Google Street View was still a future plan

Images on Google Street View sit on an ambiguous intersection between the concrete and abstract. By nature, any written text is also at this intersection, and even more so do biblical and other

genesis stories in which the anecdotal and the universal are deliberately intermingled – that is, so to say, their function. However, while genesis stories give your personal anecdotes universal ground, Google Street View, on the contrary, creates an anecdotal ground for universal, abstract representations of the Earth.

In the world of the Incas, a people without writing, the entire landscape was symbolically loaded. Natural elements like mountains, animals, the sun and the moon were considered as living gods; cities were deliberately built according to symbolic patterns. At the summer solstice, the sun rose behind a building on the central square of Cuzco. This building threw a shadow on the square that very precisely pictured the head of a puma. The landscape for the Incas was not only the décor of daily life, but also a text that gave this daily life meaning.

Is the world of Google Street View a jungle in which we are bound to ramble around without context, without a vanishing point? Or can it also serve as a blank page on which we can write a story that reaches beyond anecdote?

Bruno De Wachter (www.bdewachter.be) is a writer and walker based in Brussels. He writes essays and stories for magazines such as www.ny-web.be, and for lecture-performances.

Don't Look Away

Yael Messer and Gilad Reich

Let us start from the middle. It is a start, as good as any other. But a location has no middle. It has no beginning or ending. Only up and down. And we were down for too long. Way too long. But now something is happening. Now we can start from up high. So high, that it is even hard to see who is looking. Who is the one that sees everything from nowhere? Or maybe it is not about the one anymore, but about the many. The many that see everything from nowhere, zooming in everywhere at the same time, taking the high up as their starting point, and from there getting closer and closer.

We were down for too long because someone else took over our skies. Someone colonised them with cameras and missiles, maps and machine guns, only to colonise the territory, and the humans inhabiting this territory, underneath. Someone – it's a man, it's always a man – wanted to control them, organise them, tame them. And when he finished with these new territories of his, he started to control, re-organise and tame his own cities, his own people. And now, he sits in the new cities that he mastered, and keeps colonising all his territories all around the world with a screen and a remote control. He sometimes sentences someone to death, sometimes just collects information, but always maintains the view of power, the view from above.

We were down for too long because we did not have the means, the knowledge, the attitude, to climb so high. But actually, this is not true. Some people tried, and their attempts are the closest thing we have

to a subverted, independent history of the view from above. People like pioneers of photography Gaspard-Félix Tournachon (aka Nadar) or George L. Lawrence, each in his own way not only refused to work in the service of power, but insisted on working in the service of humans. They, and some others too, created images from up high that take into account those down below, inventing a language, a visual universe that soon will be erased and forgotten, by cameras that were transformed into missiles, and maps that turned into machine guns.

But now something is changing. Now we have more means, more knowledge, and definitely more attitude. Now we can start to reclaim the skies in a million ways. And since any start is as good as any other, why not start from the computer screen, or in the garden, or at the meeting point of these two realities? Why not start from the middle, in the cut between these different perspectives, start by asking where we can go and what we can do when jumping from Google Maps – always manipulated, like any other map – to Google Earth, which still holds some very vague connection to a material place, to video documentation from “too short a distance”? How can we disarm the new digital perspective from its old meanings and bring humanity to the faceless people in the pixelized surfaces? How can we create a context that will allow us, not only to stare at the images power produces, but also to own them, to play with them, to find our voices in them, at least partially?