

Artists: Pierre Clement and Michele Gabriele

Exhibition title: Basic Extinct

Venue: Silicone Espace d'Art Contemporain, Bordeaux, France

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We share with the Renaissance the urge to apprehend a manipulable version of reality. Whether we consider perspective or cyberspace, both representation systems reflect a single desire; namely getting a sufficient overall view to map the multiple and draw an ordered image from chaos, in order to avoid being thrown about by vagaries, to try to identify schemes and recurrences, to draw maps and find probabilities. During the Renaissance, the new man, the Vitruvian Man, was able for a while to think that he controlled and owned nature. Nowadays, this illusion has vanished. The first golden age of cyberspace is behind us. If our measuring and viewing instruments are increasingly accurate, we no longer know how to make sense of their results, which thus contradict each other. "More information produces not more clarity, but more confusion", then writes James Bridle in *New Dark Age* (2018). Daily life requires that we still move and act in spite of everything, and try as best we can to invent empirical navigation modes – in the absence of reliable maps or schemes. Art has, however, the luxury of being able to embrace complexity and to stick as close as possible to a reality full of possibilities.

Pierre Clément and Gabriele Michele share the approach of this baroque realism, which is slightly accelerationist in part, and more fascinated than critical. In Silicone, their series come face to face: wall bas-reliefs and sculptures on plinths stand glaring at each other, irreconcilable and yet complementary. First, there are those dinosaur heads, more specifically velociraptor heads, which seem to have been ripped from the body of an animatronics specimen. Although he manufactures himself the mould for them before oil painting the material alloy, Gabriele Michele is indeed inspired by a film, or rather several films: *Jurassic Park* and its various sequels. However, the sculptures rely on the discovery that these animals have never actually existed in the shape bestowed upon them by Hollywood, as scientific studies proved that they were closely related to poultry from our farmyards. Silent, the wall pieces of Pierre Clément seem, on the other hand, to reflect a function forever forgotten. The backlit white frames are reminiscent of louvers, or perhaps anti-aircraft radars. Each of them is printed with visuals taken from satellite images and larded with nails on which are hung natural elements: twigs, oyster shells and strings.

These successive layers of meaning, none of which ever seems isolated from the others, these almost geological strata which would condense a laminate of timelines, re-enact in

Pierre Clément's work the loss of origin. Origin is now the one we choose to believe in among multiple possibilities, since no definitive proof can help us to select objectively a single one. As such, the existence of each of these condensed versions of time, space, viewing techniques and belief systems, is apparently in line with the existence mode of "arche-fossils" described by Quentin Meillassoux in *After Finitude* (2006). With this term, the philosopher refers to the existence of any reality prior to the appearance of thought, and therefore to his illusion of ordering reality. With the velociraptors of Gabriele Michele, complexity or "contingency", to put it as Quentin Meillassoux, assumes the shape of an irreconcilable binary; namely two sides of the same thing, each of them dissimilar and which will never be seen side by side. Images and therefore objective evidence are doomed to continue to conflict: some attest to the absolute existence of the first side, the others to that of the second one. Only subjective impressions and emotional resonances will make us give more credence to one or the other hypothesis.

The fact that both sides can exist together, that reality can be not unique but multiple, here is what few people will be ready to believe. Because it is indeed belief we are talking about. "The world is too complex to be captured by simple stories. Rather than accepting it, we invent increasingly baroque and confusing stories, which are increasingly convoluted and indeterminate", continues James Bridle regarding the growing popularity of conspiracy theories. Without having to go that far, fake-news and the psychological mechanism of the "rebound effect" underlying them are also a sign that traditional story forms are losing momentum. This complexity is welcomed by Pierre Clément and Gabriele Michele who let it grow. Introduced in the modern vision system of the white-cube, in this well-ordered environment where things are put on plinths and hung, it spreads there the virus that will erode, from the inside, the vacuum certainties of art – a belief attempting to organise chaos among others.

-Ingrid Luquet-Gad