



Although it is true that the fabric of reality has been expanded, distilled into pixels and riddled with uncertainty, attempts to identify its features have contracted into recording mechanisms. The symptoms of this can be seen everywhere: bearing names such as 'face recognition' and 'algorithmic surveillance', they outstrip representation through identification and the *instant décisif* through category analysis. For the photograph-as-technical-image, this is a lucky break: relieved of its former function as a taxonomic index of reality, its materiality and its expressive function are reinstated, restoring a languid, stretched-out temporality to both viewer and photographer. The latter once more assumes the role of what the philosopher Vilém Flusser calls a "functionary" and reconnects with a process of materialising, rather than recording, the layered strata of reality.

Martin d'Orgeval's new show at Galerie Hussenot takes the full measure of this context. Attentive to the shadowy underside of sensory experience, the artist hearkens to the asynchronous rhythms of things: there are moments of bedazzlement and moments of waiting; both ghosts and fossilisations are present. With *Fantômes et Témoins* [Ghosts and Witnesses], however, he makes a shift by expanding his subjects to include an event: an event that wants so much to be captured, predicted, encircled and frozen that it finds itself ensnared by its own hyper-visibility. As we enter, the artist at once presents it and makes it vanish: a piece of digital wallpaper, stretched and enlarged so that it covers an entire wall, is a cunning ploy. At first sight, we see nothing—or next to nothing. The scale is too huge for optical vision, and because the subject is absent it defies rational understanding. Nothing stands out; nothing interrupts or springs from the surface.

Instead, something absorbs us and signals an out-of-shot presence. And yet we are actually there. At this precise moment, recorded by Martin d'Orgeval with a field camera, Notre-Dame is on fire. On 15 and 16 April, the cathedral was ablaze. The media were awash with images. But what we see here is a crowd whose gaze does not meet our own. Nothing, not even the image itself, points to the event. There is no frame, no *parergon*, but there is something more dimly menacing that re-establishes the event within its timeframe: a trace more than an impact, smoke rather than fire. The philosopher Gaston Bachelard said that he studied "the renewal of reverie and the dreamer contemplating a solitary flame", and this observation applies equally well to new ways of perceiving the photographic image.

The artist provides evidence of this with a series of daguerreotypes, which, in negative mode, using void rather than volume and white rather than black, depict the successive states of a burning candle—its decreasing size, its flame and its smoke—along with a series of fingerprints. Here, perception (the kind set forth under the auspices of art) takes place over time, just as it is haptic. *Fantôme et Témoins* introduces us to this paradigm through the contrast between the forms presented—the monumentality of the wallpaper and the intimacy of the daguerreotypes— and by respectively stretching out the event and lengthening the process. History is mirrored in the intimate, and the ordinary assumes a state of frontality. A yawning chasm, an immeasurable gap, opens up in the gallery space and allows us to walk along its edge.

The image, and even more so this image, divorced from representation, is a *thing*, as the artist and theorist Hito Steyerl reminded us in her 2010 essay *A Thing Like You and Me*. Since then, the scope of this observation, originally applied to digital images, has expanded: today it concerns daguerreotypes as well as digital prints. What connects them, on a more profound level, is the body at work: a body engaged in the process of reception which, in turn, must learn to make itself into a porous interface. The ghosts and the smoke pass through us. And in escaping, by their very nature, from strict documentation, they send back our own reflection as much as they depict the hyper-present at a particular point in time.