

A group of miners in a dark tunnel. They are wearing white hard hats and yellow protective suits. The scene is dimly lit, with bright lights from their headlamps illuminating the workers and the rocky walls of the tunnel. The miners are standing in a line, looking towards the camera or slightly away. The overall atmosphere is one of a busy, underground work environment.

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A Thousand Pictures of Nothing, Emmanuel Van der Auwera's third solo exhibition with the gallery, reflects on a world, which seems to reject rationality, reason and physical reality for technological myths, emotional politics and conspiracy-ridden claims. Continuing to investigate the impact of automation, image circulation and digital culture, Van der Auwera straddles the digital and the analogue, interested less in scientific promise than its impact on the human condition, mental wellbeing and contradictions in perception of possibilities for a better world. Scrolling through pressing social topics and major events, works in the exhibition incorporate both emerging and traditional technologies to explore the influence of media, regulation and the radical shaping of opinion in the post-truth era. These include 'VideoSculptures', a film constructed with audio and video AI tools as well as a selection of 'Mementos' adding to his acclaimed series and unique collaboration with technicians at a Belgian newspaper production plant. The archeology of mass media and documentary approaches within a generative digital space connect the various modes of production.

VIDEOSCULPTURE XXV (ARCHONS), 2022



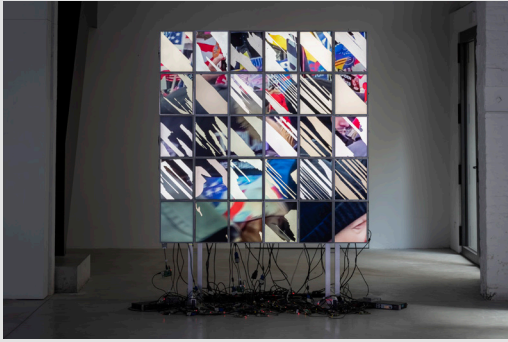
8 LCD screens, black glass, cable, 19 min. HD video, color sound
170 x 310 x 310 cm - 66 7/8 x 122 1/8 x 122 1/8 in

In Van der Auwera's 'VideoSculptures', the screen and related hardware become sculptural material. The large-format *VideoSculpture XXV (Archons)* consists of eight manipulated screens and four black glass plates via which the images can be seen in their inverted form. This cinema in negative explores the theme of digital immortality and is loosely based on futuristic tales by research and security specialist Rick Ferguson. To the naked eye, the screens yield nothing but white light. It is only when looking down into the dark glass that one can see images flitting by, seemingly ad infinitum, as if squinting into an endless mine of poetic visions reflecting a postmortal digital life.



VideoSculpture XXV (Archons) was commissioned for the artist's solo exhibition at the House of Electronic Arts in Basel, Switzerland (2022) and supported by the European Union's S+T+ARTS program via the Mindspaces Residency.





LCD Screens, polarization filter, Raspberry Pi, metal, cables, HD video (22 min loop), 234 x 179 x 140 cm - 92 1/8 x 70 1/2 x 55 1/8 in



The polarizing filters of the screens in *VideoSculpture XVII (January 6th.)*, have been partially removed, manually deconstructed into fleeting strips. Here, the DIY nature and punkish poetic gesture of taking a knife to the screen remains visible. On close inspection, this techno altarpiece reveals the dust and dirt as the glue of the machine is cut apart. The composition takes a painterly approach to mass media, playing with the framing and filtering of the camera, the screen and the narratives delivered towards a shaping of popular opinion. Van der Auwera hence creates a distance from the event, flattening it through abstraction. This distance allows one to rethink and shift perception, escaping the problem that exists through ubiquitous exposure. Often, the more something is exposed, the less visible it becomes.

This is literally the case in photography, where overexposure can result in the erasure of an image. Van der Auwera's 'Memento' series is an ongoing collaboration with technicians in a newspaper production plant started in 2016. At that time, works were created using images that had appeared in the paper and using the paper's offset plates and imaging equipment to create layered exposures activated by light refractions. Over time, more liberties were taken with the process. Plates were mounted together. Images were enlarged. They were also eventually selected from niche digital media and imposed into the newspaper format. Ink was rolled across them with the paper's rotary press. The work *Capitol Red* is the second in the series to mark the end of a president's term with a 21st century spin on paintings of political events like those by Delacroix, Goya or Rubens. Instead of painting with oil however, Van der Auwera hijacks the vocabulary and mechanized processes of mass media. A series of new works are also on view. These focus on three areas: a meme titled 'Accidental Renaissance' to which *Capitol Red* and others belong, images scribbled on by conspiracy theorists and a series of images that don't actually exist, text-generated pictures used in the development of the film *White Cloud / 白云*.

MEMENTO



Installation view "A Thousand Pictures of Nothing", Harlan Levey Projects, 2023.





View of the exhibition "A Thousand Pictures of Nothing", Harlan Levey Projects, 2023.

WHITE CLOUD / 白云, 2023



White Cloud / 白云, 2023
HD video, 18 min 30 sec



Emmanuel Van der Auwera's new film investigates mysterious white clouds, the promises of communication technologies and the lives of laborers whose work helps us see the world and yet remains outside of the visible grid. *White Cloud* is an emotional speculative documentary that offers one of the first looks into an equally mysterious and influential Rare Earth Element mining district. While questions related to geopolitics, ecology, capitalism, conspiracy and future scenarios circulate around the film, at the core is the testimony of a lonely miner attempting to embrace a dark and desolate landscape in search of a better tomorrow. Using generative audio and visual tools, Van der Auwera looks into the deep underbelly of these technologies and the rarely spoken relationship between the earth's bowels and humanity's outer space dreams. The film has an uncanny, slightly grotesque feel as emerging AI technologies show their own flaws. It was not despite, but exactly because of these flaws that Van der Auwera was driven towards the utilization of these tools. Within months or perhaps weeks, this aesthetic will disappear leaving us with an illusion of reality where what doesn't exist is indiscernible from what does. And herein perhaps lies the artist's focus, providing us with critical resources to read the physical world as it vanishes before our eyes.

