ManApparatus*

How does the tool, the instrument, change from an object to a work of art? How does it cancel itself (as an industrial object) and acquire new identity and meaning? Aim Deuelle Luski on the idea of ManApparatus and on the digi-image, following Matan Mittwoch’s show at the Dvir Gallery.

Critique / Aïm Deüelle Lüski November 20, 2015

In Matan Mittwoch’s (b. 1982) first solo show, a Hasselblad camera is laid on its back (the film’s back), glued to the concrete floor two levels below-ground, capturing the light coming from the skylight in the gallery’s roof. But instead of showing the image captured by the reflex mirror, the camera looks at whoever is looking at it, blocking its field of vision. Consequently, the credibility-being of the instrument, which enabled it to faithfully expose its exterior and display it as a picture, an image, is disrupted. This act of disruption opens a new time-space for the instrument, different from the historic and phenomenal time where it had existed. This is no longer time for observing outer space, for which purpose it had been created (as a special instrument made to NASA specifications), but political and technological time, signifying the moment of emergence of every new instrument, and the moment of its obsolescence, when a newer instrument, technology, or other political-economic matters appear. The instrument has lost its time, has been compressed into a different existence, where it has been found to be a useless object, transformed and buried in a different field, the art field marked on the gallery floor.

מתן מיטווך, מראה הצבה. 2015. באדיבות גלריה דביר והאמן. צילום: אלעד שריג

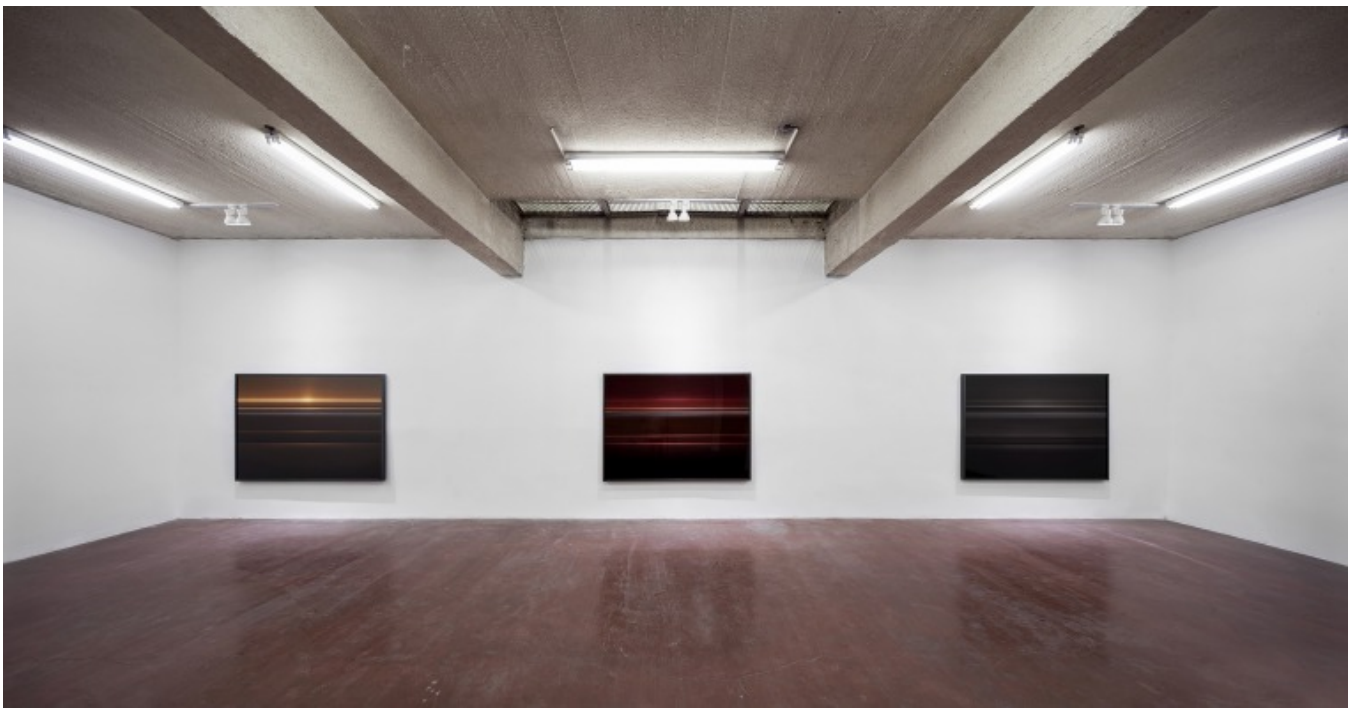


Installation view
2015. Courtesy of Dvir Gallery and the artist. Photo: Elad Sarig

In the new field, which no longer produces images or testimonies, the apparatus constructs an imaginary net-discourse with similar works of art from the past, such as Duchamp's Ready-made-added[1], while referring to other contemporary works that question the economic value of the artwork. The maturing of the image in the new field is faultless, open, occurring on the surface of the realm of instrumental representation in art. Differing from Duchamp's Ready-mades, in the era of the digi-image there is no room for secrets or dark areas, irony, or tongue-in-cheek, as the idle instrument asks itself existential, onto-theological questions such as, "am I the same as my production value, or am I, being idle, worth less than the materials used to manufacture me (just as in the recent past we used to designate obsolete PC boxes as junk, good only as doorstops)?"

This argument clarifies some of the concerns behind this show: what goes on in the machine's mind, in the mind of the idle instrument? How do machines talk to each other, or make each other talk? In what is the time sequence, and what time systems are generated by the duplication and the inwards-guiding of the image, back into the apparatus and into the computerized memory created by the images? And since, in digi-imaging, it's simply about replicating mathematical lines, who (or what) remembers the images?

מתן מיטווך, גל [1-3], 2013-2014, 142.1x196.3 ס"מ (כ״א), הדפסת פיגמנט ארכיונית. באדיבות גלריה דביר והאמן. צילום: אלעד שריג **[2]**



[3]Matan Mittwoch, Waves (I-III)
2013-14, archive pigment print, 142.1x196.3cm (each). Courtesy of Dvir Gallery and the artist. Photo: Elad Sarig

Relocating the Hasselblad camera from outer space, onboard a NASA probe, to the gallery, from its sublime spot at the edge of time, where it observed the universe from a superior viewpoint, and affixing it in the floor of the lower level of a gallery in the south of Tel Aviv, reiterates the Duchampian question – how does the tool, the instrument, transform itself from object into an artwork? How does it abrogate itself (as an industrial object) and acquire a new identity, a new meaning?

The main point Mittwoch tries to make is that the new instruments (and not Man) are leading the discovery and the “machine-becoming-animal” process, to borrow from the terminology of Gilles Deleuze. Through his penetration into and identification with instrument-thinking, by conceding the superiority of the human gaze and consciousness in the process of becoming-machine, Mittwoch enables the new instruments to discover their own unique existence values. That is, Man makes room (and not just ostensibly) in his being and allows the machine to win some time-space for itself, which is not part of the problem of super-density of the human space. The artist’s retreat and reduction, the freedom from authority, from ownership, and from the excessive knowledge of the human outlook, provides the instrument with a structure which will enable it to position itself as a part of the living world, from which it had been banned, and releases it from its archaic, historic place in the realm of inanimate objects.

There was a moment in the show when everything seemed to pulsate with life; there was a sense of a rhythm, a situation where the images on the wall suddenly made the human gaze redundant, each conversing with the revised image facing it. This is the moment that transforms the images from their inanimate state into a new state of becoming animated. The “becoming” ascribes Man to the machine, but also the machine to Man, creating a new life form which is neither human nor instrumental. The new in-between-ness generated here manifests as a pure relationship, its existence mediating between two parallel potentials. On one side is Man, created in the image of God, committed to his responsibility as a living body, and on the other side is the inanimate object, a soulless and body-less instrument, which “owns” nothing. This object acts here as an essential factor, occupying the in-between being, the in-between-ness as a new ontological state; philosophy

has yet to explain the imminence of its appearance and disappearance.

Thus, the main issue raised by the show is the existence and the state of the instrument (a digital picture is no less an instrument than a camera) in relation to Man, who is still made of flesh and blood. And then there is the question of the phenomenal vision, which depends on the body and on its position in space, as opposed to instrumental vision, which relies only on itself. Human vision creates the phenomenon at the moment of looking, completing the image by way of the transcendental self, which adds accumulated knowledge and memory to the instant picture, then retreats and turns inwards on the question of appearance, still very essential to Man (and more so in the age of the Selfie). All this is inessential to the blind instrument, a tool which can see through mathematical formulae and the running lines of the software. The difference is magnified in the age of the digi-image, which seeks its way back to the “bio,” to the animal it cannot know, and finds its place in the in-between-ness.

מתן מיטווך,אינדקס הדפסת פיגמנט ארכיבית גודל: 106*129.8 ס״מ. 2015, באדיבות גלריה דביר והאמן. צילום: אלעד שריג **[4]**



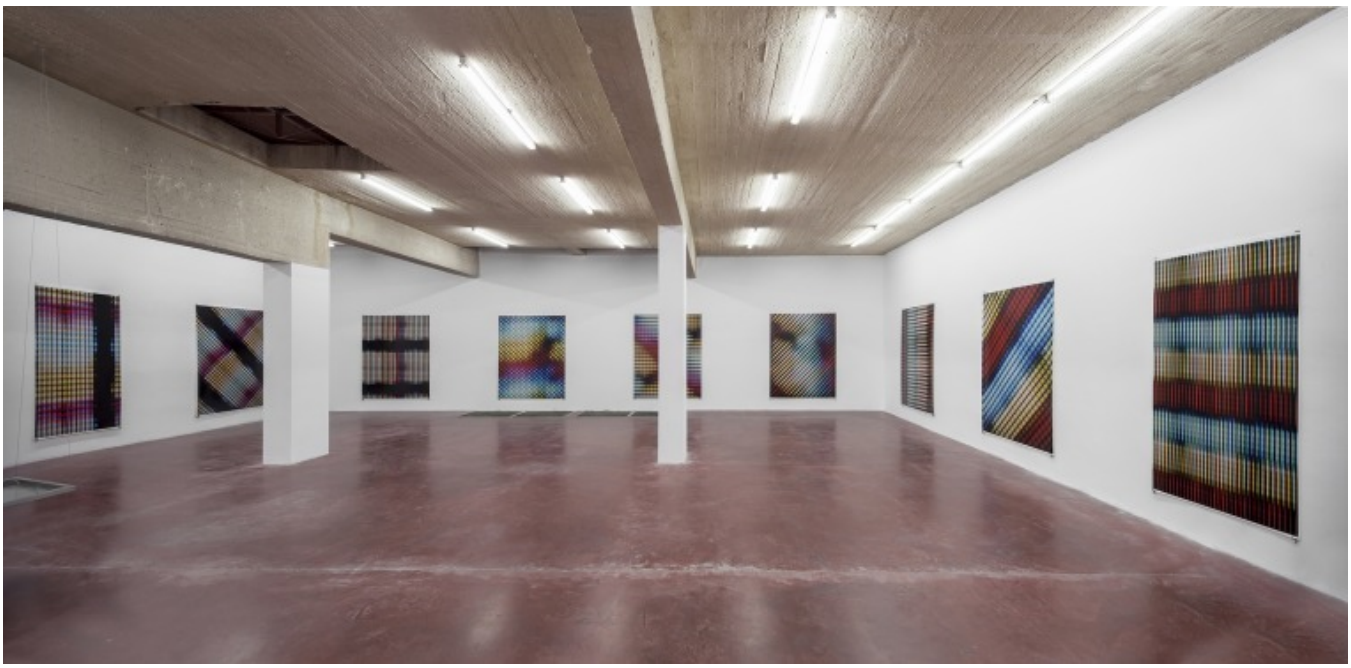
[5]Matan Mittwoch, Index
2015. archival inkjet print, 106x129.8 cm. Courtesy of Dvir Gallery and the artist. Photo: Elad Sarig

This conversation, projected from the gallery walls, takes us back to Heidegger and his dialogue with modern technology, to his warnings and his dark prophecies regarding the transformation of Man into an instrument, a tool, or a part of an alienated industry, which separates him from his being. He has distanced himself from the windmill and severed his ties to the land, has lost his bond with life's beginning and end, as embodied by the presence of death. (According to Heidegger, Man has industrialized death just as he had done with agriculture in the Industrial Age.2)

Ideas about our capability these days to critique and deny the superiority and exclusivity of human consciousness and Man's contempt of the animal kingdom, have taken hold in the late 20th century. This is due, to a large extent, to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida, who created a virtual toolbox that enabled a re-examination of Man-animal relationships from points of view which were impossible till then. The deconstruction of this idea in the show introduces the inanimate objects' desire for the "bio," by means of the in-between space and the new concept of the ManApparatus, which links Man and machines. This desire belongs to the in-between space, bringing it out of concealment, only to sink it back into the imaginary space which has been created. It juxtaposes everything vital to Man and to the machine, but leaves out their annihilating quintessence, as the artist, who has always been part of history's representation, steps aside and makes room for the digi-image or the ManApparatus, which forms a different category of instantaneity and meta-time, impossible till now.

In order to form a philosophy which speaks to the object's consciousness, breaking free from the exclusive hold of the human subject on consciousness and self-consciousness, we must observe the series called Blinds. This is a series of nine large-scale, eye-catching prints (213.5X160 cm), self-enclosed and inward-gazing. Mittwoch defines the last minuscule function ostensibly left for Man by the machine, and places it at the imaginary in-between-ness. The eye finds a place within the inanimate consciousness as a vestige which now suddenly enables turning back to Man, pointing to the moment of reversal: the large-scale works supposedly address the phenomenal experience of looking through the human eye, the physical viewer in attendance, enhancing the sense that the human eye does not "know" what it sees or what is the essence of its experience as it gazes at the works directly and sensually. The eye and its action become archaic, a distant memory, in a place where the machine and ManApparatus engage in a different dialogue, from which rational reflection is absent and the now anachronistic discourse of the beautiful or the sublime is left out.

מתן מיטווך, Blinds (I-IX), הזרקת דיו על נייר ארכיבי, 2015, 213.5x160 ס"מ.
באדיבות גלריה דביר והאמן. צילום: אלעד שריג **[6]**



[7]Matan Mittwoch, Blinds (I-IX)
2015, archive pigment print, 160x213.5cm (each). Courtesy of Dvir Gallery and the artist. Photo: Elad Sarig

The idea of ManApparatus enhances the dual vision created in the show: one type of vision is the gaze towards the surface, maximizing the inkjet printer's ability to comprehend the configuration of color, light, and image, which are not Image, Light, or Color, but rather movements and transformations between various programming languages. Another kind of vision is the ability to discern between movements and languages and the generations of technological vocabularies, which cancels, or perhaps makes completely redundant, their need for external connection to what has been, apparently, the source of the image - in this case, the IPad and the way light rays refract off its glass surface, which hides thousands of LED bulbs. The bulbs, hidden underneath, turn the screen on and off at meta-human speed. So does the new subject, the picture, as it obviates most of the discourse on the inadequacies of human vision, which is dependent on a "real" light source. This discourse is made up of questions regarding, for example, what can or cannot be represented, the differences between negative and positive, the distinction between the painterly and the photographic, as well as the matter of the boundaries of the image and the methods of its archival preservation.

מתן מיטווך, Blinds (I), 2015, הזרקת דיו ארכיונית על נייר ע"ב בד, 160x3213.5 ס"מ. באדיבות גלריה דביר והאמן. צילום: אלעד שריג **[8]**



[9]Matan Mittwoch, Blinds (XI)
2015, archival inkjet on rag paper, 160x213.5 cm. Courtesy of Dvir Gallery and the artist. Photo: Elad Sarig

Mittwoch's work gives new forms to the "division of the sensible" for ManApparatus, who has had an aesthetic experience together with the computer, which has processed the information within mathematical snares. These snares totally negate the possibility of particularizing the experience. They operate only at the universal level, at the level of the generalities that control the bio-digital world. The machine's other division of the sensible includes only one possibility – the unique possibility of the machine, which is always general, is neither political nor aesthetic, and isd incapable of knowing the particular; this is a limitation which is the foundation of its ontic distinctiveness.

The photographic universe, invented by Vilém Flusser in his early book, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*[3], is enriched, as he describes it, by one realization[4], based on what he calls "projecting-back." He argues that the photographer never photographs a primary event in an original way, noticing it at some decisive moment. Rather, he always projects unto the experience an image which already exists in the world, and to which he reconnects at the moment of the photographic event. (It is unclear whether Flusser means a conscious, mythic, or physical image). As part of the production process of Mitttwoch's nine images, a re-projection of the digital camera image has been done, the image turning back into the virtual memory of the IPad, and projected again on the screen.

Mittwoch's work process comprises three cycles: the machine looks at its self-image as it appears on the screen, at a 45º shift each time[5]. This creates generations of documented memories, which become the strata discernible in the final print. By using "re-projection" the camera can expand the conscious dimension of the photographic bio-digital universe, and by disposing with the production of actual new archival information, through the intervention of the Manapparatus, it obviates the classic questions about "the meaning of the photograph" or "the selection of the image," turning them into false functions of art. Thus, a new gesture is revealed, inherently bound to what the photographic-digital system can achieve. But in rejecting the pretention to show, to present, to reveal, or to choose, ManApparatus can find new states of things[6], as Flusser suggests. That is to say, a new way has been discovered, in which to observe the machine and its operations from the inside, including the whole range of possibilities available in the instrument's program to begin with.

In this way, the show participates in a process which rejects the ambitious and patronizing colonialism of human consciousness and philosophy as unique systems situated above the realm of the inanimate and silent objects, while taking issue with Heideggerian philosophy. The ManApparatus, present here in the show, has forgotten the old human self, and is not troubled by his new existence, by becoming superfluous to the machine, rather than vice versa. Unlike Duchamp's wheel - still usable while actually hinged to a chair, having lost its ability to turn anything (but not to be turned) – the metaphorically disabled camera is not quite disabled, and the enclosed set of prints is not sealed off or trapped in its own encoding. Through the normal lens, which enlarges the image, and through the reversed viewfinder, which concentrates the light, the machine acquires new "values of usability" as it reveals its "bio" – it generates its own life by sharing the information it contains/forms/transmits/encodes with other machines (digital camera + iPad + inkjet printer). The machines, in their looped existence, circumvent the human factor and engage each other, until they exceed their own usability as an apparatus. What resonates with usability is the aptitude of the instrument to be reliable, "and without that it is nothing," as Heidegger argues[7].

מתן מיטווך, Blinds (VII), 2015, הזרקת דיו על נייר ארכיבי, 160x3213.5 ס"מ. באדיבות גלריה דביר והאמן. צילום: אלעד שריג **[10]**



[11]Matan Mittwoch, Blinds (VII)
2015, archival inkjet on rug paper, 160x213.5 cm. Courtesy of Dvir Gallery and the artist. Photo: Elad Sarig

The individual instrument is worn down (by usage) and is used up (through consumption); therefore, usage itself is worn down and becomes routine. The instrument- being degenerates in the digital wasteland, and is reduced to a mere tool, where it can begin again. This degeneration of the instrument-being, ostensibly the deterioration of its reliability, is also the source of a different representation regime, which does not bow to the various practices of producing sensual pleasures for the human eye and body. It is the worn down routine of the apparatus, its triviality, and the discoverability of its actions, that is “pushed forth as the only kind of being unique to the instrument,” as Heidegger writes8. The apparatus containing the human exposes its new skill as pure usability, which inspires the illusion that the instrument’s origin is in a manufacturing process that imprints form upon matter. But the bio-digital reversal assumes that, although Man imagines that he has invented the instrument for his own purposes and exclusive use, it is conceivable that, as an authentic instrument-being, the origin of the instrument is more remote, since matter and form (the dead-inanimates) and the distinction between them have a deeper source. This source directs us to experience the usability of the apparatus through products, translated into languages which only it can “read” (like the transition between color “translations” which occur in the digital printer’s program, between the colors and their inverses within the picture, as they are processed into the objectiveless objective of art).

*The third part in a series on the digi-image. See: Aim Deuelle Luski, The Quotidian as Simulacra of the Image, Erev-Rav, 23.9.2013, and “Photography after the Simulacra,”, Erev Rav 25.3.2014.

- 1. Specifically, Duchamp’s late Ready-made, such as Anémic Cinéma, 1925. In these pieces Duchamp connects the Ready-mades (the bicycle wheel, the snow shovel, the urinal), which dealt with hand and body movements, to the eye, and interpreted the machine-event under a new ontic order.
- 2. Heidegger, M. (1977), "The Question Concerning Technology," In: Basic Writings (Ed. David Farrell Krell, Harper & Row).
- 3. Flusser, V. (2000), Towards the Philosophy of Photography, (Translated by Anthony Mathews, Reaktion Books).
- 4. “If one considers the camera (and apparatuses in general) in this sense, one sees that the camera produces symbols: symbolic surfaces that have in a certain way been prescribed for it. The camera is programmed to produce photographs, and every photograph is a realization of one of the possibilities contained within the program of the camera. The number of such possibilities is large, but it is nevertheless finite: It is the sum of all those photographs that can be taken by a camera.” See, There, Flusser (2000), p. 26.
- 5. Each cycle’s duration is an exposure of 1/5 of a second, and as soon as it’s deciphered it is loaded back onto the IPad via the network, in a process lasting less than 3 seconds; thus each unit is completed in 9 seconds of data processing and 3/5 of a second of exposure of the sensor to light.
- 6. The same symmetry between the function of the photographer and that of the camera can be perceived in the choice of the ‘object’ to be photographed. Photographers can photograph everything: a face, a louse, the trace of an atomic particle in a Wilson cloud chamber, a spiral nebula, and their own act of photography reflected in the mirror. In reality, however, they can only photograph what can be photographed, i.e. everything located within the program. And the only things that can be photographed are states of things. Whatever objects photographers wish to photograph, they have to translate them into states of things. Consequently, it is true that the choice of the 'object' to be photographed is free, but it also has to be a function of the program of the camera. Ibid., pp. 33-34.
- 7. Heidegger, M. (2008), Basic Writings, "On the Origin of the Work of Art" (1st Harper Perennial Modern Thought Edition, ed. David Farrell Krell, New York: HarperCollins).
- 8. In his article on Object-oriented -Philosophy Graham Harman writes on Heidegger and the tool question: “But in fact, equipment in Heidegger's sense is global. Beings are tool-beings. To refer to an object as a "tool-being" is not to say that it is brutally exploited as means to an

end, but only that it is torn apart by the universal duel between the silent execution of an object's reality and the glistening aura of its tangible surface. In short, the tool isn't ‘used;’ it is. What saves the bridge from being a mere pile of iron and asphalt is not the fact that people find it convenient, but the fact that any pile of anything exerts some sort of reality in the cosmos, altering the landscape of being in some distinct way."
http://www.beyng.com/OOP.html [12] See also Harman, G. (2001), Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects (Chicago: Open Court).

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