

Bob Bicknell-Knight

Drone Theory, 2018

HD digital video with sound, 5 min 9 sec, 28" LCD screen, aluminium modular system, print on aluminium, PVC, 3D printed polyamide, Barack Obama inauguration gold plated coin, custom USB drive, miscellaneous cables, screws

147 x 88 x 54 cm

Edition of 1, 1AP



Drone Theory is a video installation that's inspired by the book of the same name by Grégoire Chamayou, which argues against the use of drone warfare. The piece is made up of a video, alongside prints and sculptures, hanging and resting on and within a structure made from an aluminium modular system. The structure of the work resembles an information stand, featuring a vertical TV, as if it contains a timetable of train or plane departures, slowly changing and providing information to the public. Instead, the video depicts a computer animated drone flying in the sky, being looked at from an aerial view, with mountainous ground below. This, accompanied by an animated gif featuring the YouTube logo in the bottom right-hand corner, is seamlessly looped on the screen accompanied by the sound of the throbbing of a plane in flight.

The video, in its peacefulness, focuses on drones, and the desensitisation to warfare that has occurred through online viewing of various atrocities, including drone attacks. More specifically, it speaks to the desensitisation to the aesthetics of these metallic birds, flying through the sky and controlled from the ground. Through seeing visual representations of these objects, we grow accustomed to them and stop seeing them as a threat. The use of the YouTube gif works in this way, referencing screens and our obsession with these video platforms. The video was purchased from a stock footage website, alongside the gif being found online, adding to the work being online focused.

Alongside the video, placed on the structure are a series of sculptures and prints, one of them being a print of a drone, mid fire, caught on camera and uploaded to YouTube. The print is half obscured by a piece of PVC plastic, part of a curtain, speaking further about how seeing things through the sheen of the screen obscures and changes one's viewpoint of it. There's also two sculptures placed on the bottom of the structure, a 3D printed blue shell from Mario Kart, referencing the gamification of warfare, alongside a reference to a chapter in How to Talk about Videogames by Ian Bogust, The Blue Shell Is Everything That's Wrong with America, where Bogust speaks about the blue shell and how its qualities are duplicated by the military drone. Finally, there's a Barack Obama knock off coin from and produced in China placed next to the shell. It speaks to the production of falsified goods sold online, presidential power regarding drones and the controversies regarding Obama's extended use of drone warfare.

Watch the film by going to <https://youtu.be/olyRx1h86mQ>



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