

Hallucinations and Other Facts, 1988

Perception takes place in the spaces between objects and their representation. In *Hallucinations and Other Facts*, I used photography's macro/micro and stereoscopic capabilities to show discrepancies between an object and its visual representation. The unseen processes of perception were the subject of this work.

The images used in *Hallucinations...* include:

1. A satellite image photographically reproduced onto a canvas measuring 210cms x 210cms. The colours of the satellite image were computer-coded to represent specific geographical data, for example, red areas indicating water in the geo-scape. It shows a view of a colour-coded section of New South Wales taken from several kilometres above earth. This particular view is one we can never directly experience - it is that machine's view of landscape.

I became interested in satellite, x-ray, sonar and other images originating from science and technology as free-floating phenomena that upset the conventions of human perception. By their nature these images appear to foreground subjectivity, and suggest a coupling of science and art.

The satellite image used in *Hallucinations...* initially looked to me like an attractive piece of multicoloured marble or an enlarged detail from a visually opulent painting. In a sense, it could have represented both or neither, of these things.

2. I made twenty-four identical colour A4 size photocopied reproductions of a painting by 17th C Romantic painter Henri Fragonard, entitled *Rinaldo in the Garden of Armida*, to hang opposite the satellite picture. The grids within both pieces suggested a connection between them.

Every alternate paper copy in the grid was overlain with a transparent acetate one of the same image but a in slight misregistration to its paper counterpart. This resulted in a variety of moiré patterns created by the doubling of the screen dots in the printing process of the original. My aim here was to suggest that such images displaced from their original source are disorienting, and disrupt perception because like hallucinations, those images cannot be located in, or attached to, the objective world.

3. The third piece measuring 42 x 80cms, was a photocopy on tracing paper of an original 19th century stereoscopic photograph of the Arc de Triomphe. It had been printed onto a single sheet of photographic paper with no division in the photograph to indicate that it contained two separate images taken simultaneously. The monument which had taken years to construct was doubled by a simple blink of the two 'eyes' of a stereoscopic camera. This doubling reduced the cultural iconographic power of the original monument which is a symbol of a triumphant point in French history. The doubling also symbolically disrupts notions of hierarchical conventions of a single, dominant viewpoint.

I made this piece by recopying and enlarging each consecutive copy of the stereoscopic photograph until it appeared as a faded and broken shadow of the original, like a fading after-image.

Upon entering the exhibition space from a doorway adjacent to the Fragonard piece, I anticipated that the viewer's eye would be caught first by the large vivid satellite image on canvas at the distant end of the room and be drawn to it, then be attracted to the opposite end of the room to look more closely at the coloured Fragonard photocopies. On the way to the Fragonard piece, one might just notice the faint and doubled Arc hovering at the corner of the eye like a disembodied ghost of the past, or like the barely perceptible influences of culture on our vision.

All three are views of landscape originating from different periods in history via old and new image-making technologies. The visual relationship between the satellite image and Fragonard painting was underscored by the 'swapping' of their supports. Here, as in some of my earlier works, painting and photography swap places. The satellite image was 'spray-painted' (via an inkjet printer) onto canvas and the Fragonard painting was photocopied. This was also intended to reduce the values placed on

the artworks that is often based upon their materiality or hand-made qualities, and to allow more attention to be given to the images as phenomena. There are two discrepancies here, one between the different views of landscape, and the other, between matter and image.

4. The perimeter of the room was traced by a paper frieze made up of multiple copies of a black and white micrograph of butterfly sperm magnified 40,000 times. When I first saw this image, I would never have guessed that it was a micrograph of butterfly sperm. Its caption told me it was butterfly sperm. Unless, I am directly involved in the scientific processes in obtaining such an image, I must simply accept it as truth. That is, I have to have faith—and believe it is indeed a true image of butterfly sperm. Its cheerful black and white graphic design quality reminded me of cartoon art. I wondered why such delightful patterns had never been used in wall paper. The frieze physically connected all three images and surrounded the installation space, incorporating as part of the work anyone who might enter that room.

The exhibition was accompanied by a transparent single page catalogue with my following text:

Images as phenomena we experience are in themselves mysterious or essentially inaccessible.

Gaps in our knowledge direct our understanding of things via a familiar course through points of least resistance in our experience, as a river might attempt to find sea level. Our knowledge picks up and carries forward new phenomena generally along a collective and familiar journey, however contorted that journey might be.

Concurrent vessels of historic and individual understanding merge and divide, propelled by current technology.

I arrived at the title, *Hallucinations and Other Facts*, through thinking about photographic images as hallucinations, and of hallucinations themselves as being both a fact and an illusion. Around the time of making the work I had heard a politician on radio use the phrase, "untrue facts" - a contradiction in terms coined to avoid actually calling somebody a liar.

A hallucination is a fact in so far as it is known to occur. Hallucinated images are not necessarily of factual events or real objects, though they are real enough to the person experiencing them. Thus, a hallucination can be a fact and not a fact at the same time, without reflecting an objective or locatable world. In this sense, sight and perception are not immediate but hover at the corner of the eye.

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