A Fallen Line of Marble Drums

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1. INTRODUCTION

A Fallen Line of Marble Drums is an on-going interdisciplinary artistic research project developed within the context of expanded approaches to photographic art practice (Soutter 2016). It considers alternative ways of working with photography, photographs and notions of the photographic, incorporating digital technologies, such as 3D scanning, digital animation and 3D printing as research methods to make artworks for exhibition output.

The focus of the project is located in Athens, Greece and specifically a ruined Corinthian column that is part of the ancient Temple of the Olympian Zeus, a popular tourist site in the centre of the city. The column was destroyed in a little documented hurricane in 1852, knocked over by the storm and remaining to this day, with its drums stacked in a line along the ground.

Figure 1: Temple of Olympian Zeus, 3D Model (Panomedia)

The column’s form, material and the event of the storm is used as an starting point within the research methodology. Digital and analogue artworks have unfolded from this point of departure, and address a contemporary extreme weather event that by chance occurred the day I first visited the site.

This paper discusses two works made for the project: A digital animation installation titled *Pentelic Scarves*, modelled around a snapshot photograph made in Athens and a set of digitally constructed images titled *Firma (collage)* made through layering of LiDAR scans, captured across multiple sites relevant to the project.

2. ATTICA WILDFIRES JULY 23RD 2018

The timing of my visit to the temple site on the 23rd July of 2018, coincided with a tragic day in the Attica region. Around the city that day, sudden and erratic winds swept through the streets. I was also aware of an ominous purple/pink haze dominating the sky, which remained for the duration of the day. I subsequently learned of the wildfires that had rapidly swept through the coastal town of Mati, killing over 100 people. The fires had started on Mount Penteli (also the origin of the Marble quarried for the temple).

Following this terrible event and within the context of my experiments with digital imaging systems, I sought to develop works that would make a connection between the event of the storm in 1852 and the event of the wildfires in 2018. These distinct events are placed alongside one another in order to ask how such a practice might contribute to interdisciplinary dialogues around the increase in frequency of extreme weather events, brought about through the global climate crisis. The project looks back to the event of the storm in 1852 and proposes the ruins of the Corinthian column, as symbolic representation of the threats posed by increasing extreme weather events.

2.1 Pentelic Scarves

Pentelic Scarves, is a 3-screen digital animation installation modelled on a photograph and experiences of that day in Athens. An image of a tourist display stand of silk scarves was unintentionally made using the iPhone Live Photo
mode, later revealing the scarves caught flowing in the winds.

![Figure 2: Display stand, still frame from LivePhoto Loop (by author)](image)

Reflecting upon the image and learning of the impact of the winds and consequent fires, led to the creation of the animation. The 3D modelling software Maya was used to create a virtual version of the stand. Individual textured cloth elements, rendered using directional wind simulation, create interactive collision events between the modelled scarves.

The piece is made as memorial of that day. Presented in the gallery on screens, supported by a custom scaffold structure and free standing in open space its appearance resembles a cenotaph. The installation offers a contemplative experience, the sombre animation can be moved around and viewed from different angles. It is orchestrated so synchronised interactions of scarves across screens can just about be perceived, as the animation plays through, creating an uncanny affect.

2.2 Expanding the photographic

The work is a digital visualisation and evidently not a photograph, in the way the snapshot it is derived from is. However, the work could be considered to be photographic, in that retains qualities or characteristics that are found in a traditional photograph. Modelling software is increasingly used in commercial still-life work, taking the place of images made in “real” studios, with the resulting images perceived and unquestioned by their audience as photographs. Pentelic Scarves not only iconically resembles its referent display stand but also looks back and recollect a memory of the day’s events.

“Memory, in the abstract, exists somewhere between the particular subject who remembers, and the particular object that stimulates the remembrance” (Kember 2008).

![Figure 3: Pentelic Scarves, still frame and installation view (by author)](image)

2.3 3D Collage

Further processes utilising LiDAR scanning technology have been developed to make digital collage works. These experimental pieces synthesise 3D scans of landscape elements in the different locations, relevant to the project, combining them within a singular virtual environment using the software Blender. The results, rendered and framed through a virtual camera, are impossible, imaginative landscapes. Images across the series reveal differing levels of digital noise or glitches produced through the process, though on first glance appear as apparently traditional perspectival photographic images. The locations used to capture 3D scans are the Temple of Zeus, the ancient quarry site at mount Penteli and the town of Mati.

3. REFERENCES
