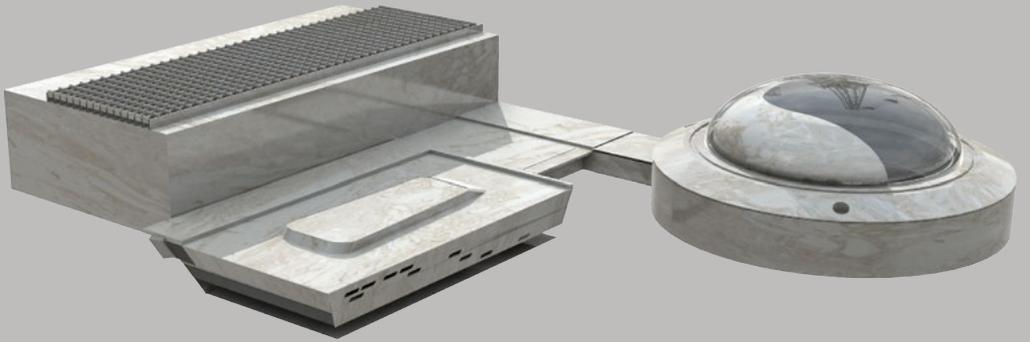


The Museum
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Browsing the Internet, I encounter a URL that leads to the portal of a museum. It displays a GIF of an edifice slowly rotating upon itself over a gray background watermarked with a logo stating: “The Museum.” I click the revolving emblematic icon and find myself in front of the 3D augmented version of this insignia. This is the monumental edifice of a façade covered by cream marble and composed of straight lines that collide in an adjacent posterior spherical section. To get access to its interior, I cross an automated security check. I swipe down on the fingertip sensor and the small doors open silently.

Now I find myself in a luxurious, spacious, and polished museum. To my mind, it references the Avenue at Etihad Towers in Abu Dhabi, the Leopold Museum in Vienna, and the lobby of the Mira Hotel in Hong Kong, from where Edward Snowden leaked the classified information about the NSA. Its design seems drawn from

notions of speed, smoothness and aerodynamics. Consider, for example, Umberto Boccioni's bronze sculpture titled *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* from 1913, the ergonomic interior of a luxurious BMW—one of the Individual 7 Series—or the flawless movement of a military drone.

The museum is empty and over its walls, sometimes, homemade online videos appear that seem to be playing on shuffle. These are neither holograms nor projections—these are haptic visual algorithms. They emerge: on and off the walls. The first video appears before me.

The camera is positioned low, near the floor, capturing a part of its cream limestone tiles and a small part of a light gray wall showing an electrical socket. A new Goodyear Wrangler DuraTrac tire 31X10.50R15 LT 109Q stands alone in an upright position. I see a protagonist in profile entering from the right of the frame. The protagonist is wearing a new Dainese Aero EVO D1 leather motorcycle racing suit, predominantly white and black, ornamented with red and blue patterns, still with the price tag on. The helmet, gloves and boots all match. The protagonist sits down on the tire like a jockey on a horse. In this

position the protagonist bounces their hips up and down as if to check the tire pressure. Soon the protagonist slowly rolls the tire back and forth, navigating this movement with their pelvis. This action is repeated about eight times, producing squeaking sounds due to the friction of the rubber tire on the floor. Then, the protagonist stands up, steps back, and lies down with their torso and pelvis over the tire. With the left hand, the protagonist slowly removes the cap from the silver valve stem. The protagonist puts the cap on the floor and now I see that they hold a red four-way tire tool in the left hand. The protagonist starts slowly unscrewing the valve stem, producing a hissing sound. The valve is completely unscrewed and the air deflates rapidly. While pressing their pelvis hard against the tire and keeping their hands on the floor directly under the shoulders, the protagonist lifts their feet up in the air, creating a 90° angle with their legs. Subsequently, the protagonist starts to gently bounce their pelvis up and down on the tire about 15 times. The protagonist remains in one position for a couple of seconds, as if observing the deflation effect. As the air pressure reduces, the airflow slows down. With subtle bounces, the protagonist squeezes the tire hard with the pelvis and thighs until

maximum deflation is reached. The protagonist slowly walks their hands back towards their feet to reach a standing position and exits the frame on the right, the same side that they have initially come from. The tire is left behind, standing alone and deflated. Now, without having any pressure exerted on it, the tire automatically starts to slowly reinflate.

The video finishes here and disappears before my eyes, revealing once again the empty, polished marble wall of the museum. I don't know who this performer was or why this video appeared. But obviously, the performer has turned on the camera, recorded the video, and subsequently uploaded the video online. Anybody can see this video at anytime and anywhere. Someone is probably watching it right now.

It is most likely that I am also being surveilled here at the museum. It is so large and empty that I feel exposed to an unknown observer, to the eye of the other. There is nowhere to hide. I am conscious that I am internalizing a law and obeying a force of an external power.

I walk further, entering the cabinetry look-alike space coated with the finest mahogany wood.

Wooden doors smoothly slide open and reveal a huge rotunda topped with a glass dome. The sunlight shining through the dome reflects on the polished walls. The room is majestic, yet it resembles an enlarged dome-style security camera turned upside-down. The room pulls me into its center and now I face the two symmetrical escalators leading to the gallery that encircles the space. Everything in the space gleams and the reflections of light discretely accentuate the novelty of the materials. There is not a single scratch to be found, not on the marble floor or walls, the die-cast aluminum floor plates of the escalators, or on the black-rubber coated handrails. Everything is quiet and presented as a matter of fact. The motor assembly and the main drive gear of the escalators make a subtle hissing sound that calms me down.

Nothing moves except for the escalator's steps. The step chain continuously pulls one-piece aluminum steps from the bottom platform to the top one in an endless loop. As if everything else has slowed down, I feel relaxed. The stairs, flattening on the top and bottom landing platforms, produce a pleasant rhythmical, and almost inaudible, clickety-clack sound. This sound stimulus affects me physically as if my skin

has been touched around my hips. The escalators keep on going. Occasional slight rubber squeaks of the handrails passing through the truss activate a tingling sensation that starts on my scalp and smoothly runs down to my neck and upper spine, causing a thrilling sensation that I never want to end. Each time the rubber squeaks, it rasps my spine pleurably. This is a shared moment of intimacy while being alone in the room. Vulnerable, I let myself go and I feel the flow of energies and fluids woven in the fabric of the marble walls, the metabolism of the museum. The sense of coming together with this abstract entity compensates for my lack of comprehension. Behind the escalators, a wall segment resolves into a new video.

I am presented with the close-up of two hands holding an iPhone X over an out-of-focus Arizona White granite kitchen countertop. A young voice greets the viewers and announces that this is a customized iPhone X plated with 950 platinum. I am assured by the voice that this will be the most satisfying video ever. The hands present a silverish, fresh-out-of-the-box Masamoto Gyuto 210mm chef's knife that foregrounds the platinum-plated phone. The protagonist suspends exhaling and announces that

they will make a tiny inscription on the phone. With the edge of the knife, the protagonist starts slowly engraving “YOLO:)” Once concluded, the protagonist exclaims “awesome” in wonder and amazement. To make sure we see the last incision well, the protagonist adjusts the phone to better fit the angle of the camera. Once the result is demonstrated, the voice announces the next phone embellishment phase, saying that they will inscribe a series of arabesque motifs on it. With the knife, the protagonist slowly scratches several layers of rudimentary arabesques over the phone’s entire back. Once concluded, the viewer is presented with the result. After a brief pause, a third episode starts. This time, the scratching of the phone appears voracious and entirely arbitrary. The protagonist scrapes the remaining untouched parts of the phone roughly, even mercilessly. This is followed by a rhythmic hammering on the logo and the home button. Once the phone is all bashed up, the voice expresses the hope that this video turned out to be satisfying. The protagonist closes the video and, with an enthusiastic hang-loose hand gesture, encourages viewers to “stay tuned.”

The video dissolves and I am faced with the wall of the museum again. In the same way as light-sensitive cells of the retina get photo-bleached when exposed to very bright lights, causing black spots to appear where the cells have previously been overstimulated, I see the pale marble engraved with scars analogous to the ones of the iPhone X. I sense the tactile proximity of these engravings. The structure I am in is not inanimate and here, at the museum, these engravings seem to be saved for posterity, but due to the museum's volatility that remains uncertain.

At first, it seems illogical to destroy a commodity that is so new and luxurious, but this should not be dismissed as merely an absurd gesture. Because something else matters here, and that is the illusion of personal attention, and this, again, compensates for my lack of understanding. This video is probably made to indulge the viewers in the satisfaction of witnessing something deeply irrational. Something that is at odds with the obsession for flawless forms of industrial designs and the impeccable perfection of its materials, textures, and even smells. I have just witnessed an action freed from the obligation for utility value. This is the expres-

sion of irrational non-productive expenditure that speaks to my unconscious desires.

So, being observed here at the museum is now less of a burden because I am coming to recognize something within me that escapes the possibility to be surveilled and objectified. Videos such as these make me come undone and I feel as though I am entering a new cycle of subjectification.

I hear something up on the gallery and I walk back to the escalators. From the ascending staircase I can already see a new video playing on my left; it is curved to fit the concave wall of the space.

I see a shot, from above, of two feet wearing a pair of new Air Jordan 6 Carmine sneakers. The soles are flatly stuck together as if to better expose the medial part of the sneakers. The sneakers are predominantly made of white and red leather. The outer soles are white, black, and transparent blue. The right sneaker has two sentences handwritten with a blue ball-point pen, one stating “hate to play with these sneakers” alongside the eyestay, and the other stating “hot Jordans” on the outer sole. The

left sneaker has two other sentences, one saying “sneakers 4 trash” and the other “just R.I.P. it.” The next shot displays the two sneakers alone, standing next to each other on a light-gray carpet with a white-colored wall in the background. Over the embroidered “Jumpman” logo, the padded tongue of the right sneaker has the word “COOL” handwritten on it with a king-size permanent black marker. The hands, now armed with a hunter’s knife, re-enter the frame. The transparent air cushions are slowly pierced, one after the other, producing short sounds of deflation. The shoe with the hunter’s knife strangled between the deflated cushion is exposed to the camera for a couple of seconds. At this angle, one can read three statements written with a black marker: “hurt deep inside,” “awesome destruction,” and “not a time waster.” The hands leave the frame for a while and reappear, exposing a thick black marker that is rolled between the fingers. The marker’s cap is removed, and the protagonist writes, in large capital letters, the word “CRAP” over the embroidered logo on the tongue of the left sneaker. The two sneakers are placed on the floor next to each other, facing the camera. Together they read “COOL CRAP.” The hands leave the frame and return again with a hunter’s knife and start

slashing the black-padded collar of the right sneaker, revealing the inner padding. The protagonist puts on the sneaker, cuts the laces with the knife and rips the tongue with their hands, spreading debris on the floor. Once detached from the sneaker the tongue is exposed to the camera. The knife cuts the horizontal line on the medial side of the sneaker, exposing the protagonist's bare foot. The foot keeps the sneaker standing on the ground while the hands are tearing it apart. Once concluded, the sneaker is taken off and left standing like a suspended ruin, enabling one to see its interior. The disfigured sneaker is then pushed to the background, leaving the space in front of the camera available for the left sneaker to feature.

A new series of statements written with a black marker can be read: "YOUR sneakers next time," "srt8up4shot," "pretty freakin hot," "the art of sneaker killing," and "slow death for this pair." A wooden chopping board is placed under the sneaker and a vertical transverse section is hand-sawn through "it" to expose its anatomy. The two halves of the sneaker are turned 360° counterclockwise, one after the other, showing both their interiors and exteriors.

The two remaining parts of the left sneaker, the front and the rear elements plus the tongue of the right sneaker, are reassembled, reviving the original shape of the left sneaker before it was torn apart. The sculpture is suspended on its own for a while, as if the protagonist wanted to suggest a new model of sneaker.

This video dissolves before me and I turn away from the wall. Through the glass dome, I see the clear sky. I conclude that The Museum is a technology that surveils and reflects upon itself. It guards the space outside and within itself, and those who visit it watch surveillance while being surveilled. What I see in The Museum has an impact on me, and simultaneously I impact on its infrastructure. And due to this reciprocal reconfiguration, any distance I still have from it collapses.

