

The Chandrasekhar Limit-Boaz Aharonovitch 22.12.2011 - 27.01.2012

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Over the past decade, Boaz Aharonovitch has been engaged in an examination of the limits of the photographic medium, its conventions of display, and its status as an object. His works stretch the limits of photographic time, place, and perspective through the use of a rich range of materials, including his own photographs and a wide variety of photographic "ready-mades." Aharonovitch's work process, which involves processing, manipulating, and laboriously combining anywhere between dozens and hundreds of images into a single composition, is equal in importance to the final result. His photographs constitute compilations of dark and disturbing images of suicide-bombing sites, scorched forests, tangles of thorns, or thick clouds rising in the aftermath of explosions. Alternately, they feature images of flowers or exploding stars, whose stunning, exaggeratingly colorful appearance blinds the eye. Taken together, these themes represent Aharonovitch's interest in the extreme poles of creation and destruction, life and death, pleasure and danger. In both cases, disparate images are unified into a single image that encompasses numerous photographic angles, places, and points in time, transforming each individual composition into a distilled essence of destruction or .temptation

Political, local and historical resonances are repeatedly revealed within Aharonovitch's layered photographic compositions, where they are fused with personal emotional concerns. So, for instance, his images of plants, most of which are black-and-white photographs of thick, dark tangles of vegetation, serve as a charged local plant guide, a labyrinthine thicket that has both emotions and political connotations. The image of the scorched forest, which appears especially pertinent in an Israeli context a year after the massive fire that ravaged the Carmel Mountains, is composed of several sites devastated by fire, and seems to contain the memory of every forest that ever went up in flames; the image of the cypress treetops becomes a representation of all cypresses – a tree associated, in a local context, with bereavement and death, yet also with pastoral, rural landscapes; the thick, impenetrable forest of pine trees makes reference to the Jewish National Fund's reforestation projects, while the work Eden (2008) seems to assimilate and .digest these specific images in a futile attempt to contain all existing images of vegetation

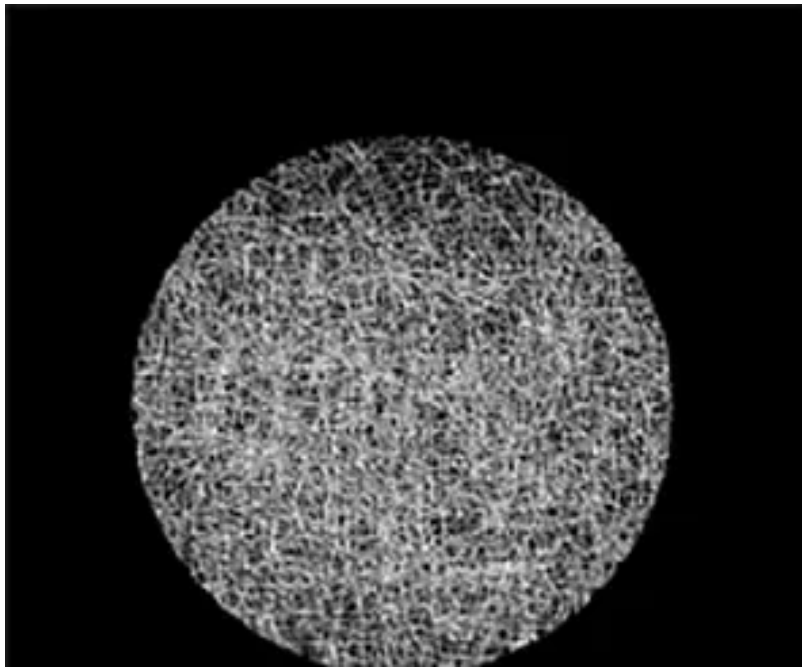
27.01.2012 - 22.12.2011

The new works featured in the exhibition The Chandrasekhar Limit continue to expand both temporal and spatial limits, and produce fictional landscapes that appear at once apocalyptic and fantastic, and which bring together images from a range of different sources. The work The Chandrasekhar Limit (2011) is composed of existing aerial photographs of famous tourist sites and danger zones worldwide, which come together to constitute a photograph that initially appears to document an existing place. Fragments of aerial photographs of the Egyptian pyramids, the Forbidden City in Beijing, a Parisian boulevard, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and the nuclear reactor in Iran are intertwined as if the entire world, including its extreme poles, were attempting to fit into a single photographic frame. The work Dark Matter (2011) is similarly based on satellite and other photographs taken using advanced technologies. These images capture the Supernova phenomenon – the explosion and collapse of stars, which marks the end of their life cycle. The light hitting the fragments of such explosions creates a brilliant chromatic aura, fusing sublime beauty with violence and destruction. The choice of the title Dark Matter was inspired by the world of astrophysics, in which this term relates to matter that cannot be directly observed since it does not absorb or emit electromagnetic radiation, and whose existence may thus only be implicitly deduced. This term underscores the tension in Aharonovitch's works between knowledge and ignorance, between what may be defined and what eludes definition, and between a seemingly calm surface and the invisible dramas taking place below it. The work The Promised Land (2011) is similarly composed of aerial photographs, which Aharonovitch himself took during flights over Israel. Here too, the result is a deceptive landscape that may be read as a primeval, biblical mountain range or a futuristic, apocalyptic landscape – suspended, once again, between the pastoral and the threatening. The intentional temporal disorientation produced by these works is also related to the appearance of the photographic object: black-and-white images whose granular quality is .reminiscent of early photographs, surrounded by shiny new Perspex frames

In some instances, Aharonovitch performs preliminary actions in his studio in order to produce certain images. The work Burning of the Books (2011), for instance, which calls to mind a black, ashen field, is composed of images of burnt books compiled one upon the other. In this case, the artist was constrained to burn the books himself in order to produce the necessary images. This work, which was created after his studio had been cleaned and emptied out, is suffused with historical, and specifically Jewish, connotations; at the same time, it may be related to the longing to efface all existing knowledge and start anew creation. The act of cleaning and rearranging the studio, which was designed to make room for new knowledge or forms of action, did indeed give birth to a new series of photographs. In this case, however, the photographs are not composed of layered digital images; rather, they feature actual layers of slides, notes, old pictures, newspaper clippings, and glass fragments classified and collected in the course of cleaning the studio, and transformed into photographic subjects. Despite the essentially different type of action underlying the work on this series, these photographs similarly produce a kind of landscape, or place, that appears to exist on the threshold of collapse or annihilation: piles of old pictures resemble a building on the verge of collapse (S # 004, 2011); torn book pages form a dilapidated tower (S # 008, 2011); a pile of burnt slides resembles a scorched pagoda, a possible allusion to the recent Tsunami in Japan (S # 001, 2010); and a music box encircled by flames similarly alludes to burnt houses and other disasters (S # 005, 2011). The tearing, burning, and destruction of these objects are seemingly violent actions resulting in their eradication. At the same time, the photographic action itself, and the careful processing of each image, preserve and eternalize their vestiges, transforming them into objects of desire that .transcend their familiar context and embody the possibility of a different kind of landscape

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