

Natália Trejbalová

About Mirages and stolen Stones, 2020

Full HD, sound, color, 18'50"

Courtesy of the artist

The initial idea for the film About Mirages and Stolen Stones, which I began in 2018, arose from my interest in speculative narrations and popular conspiracy theories, in particular The Flat Earth Theory. Despite the possibility to access extremely effective visualization tools, such as Google Earth, now available to a growing number of people, the belief that the Earth is flat has returned, finding many new followers. I believe that the renewed success of this speculation denotes the spread of an extreme relativism regarding the reliability of explanatory models that concerns the functioning of the world. Meanwhile, the hierarchies of knowledge, including the social distinction between experts and non-experts, appear increasingly blurred. On the one hand, the success of the Flat Earth narration can be seen as one of the consequences of changes introduced in the management of information following the spread of the Internet. On the other hand, it can be also related to an evolution that has occurred in our relationship with images and with visual representation in general. Often, in fact, those who believe in the Flat Earth only trust their subjective gaze and they advance a simple reasoning: if one sees the horizon flat, the Earth must also be flat. Apart from our individual gaze, everything is potentially manipulable, especially images.

One of the distinctive features of the film lies in the choice of adopting a subjective perspective of global phenomena, such as the impossible flattening of the Earth's surface. In other words, it is a question of imagining how we, as individuals, perceive the changes of a much greater extent, which concern our planet as a whole.

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About Mirages and Stolen Stones marks the beginning of a new path in the artist's audiovisual production, moving from the use of found footage and CGI to video camera shooting, the creation of set and props.

The film is divided into three complementary acts. The first, *and then we cut the ground from under*, was shot in autumn 2018 and presented at DEMO - Deptford Moving Image Festival in London (2019) and in a solo show at 35M2 in Prague (2020).

This chapter is meant to be an introduction to the world of the flattened Earth, told by a scientist who is investigating the phenomenon. The narrator explains her hypotheses by explaining the new geophysical conformation, the creation of the Border of the Earth and the Great Rainbow. It seems that from the moment the Earth underwent the so-called flattening, the world has simplified and humanity has begun to lose knowledge, languages, numbers, images and in general the ability to understand complexity.

The imagery in this chapter is inspired by the 3D visualizations used in Material Physics to study the behaviour of materials and is meant to generate visual ambiguity between the CGI images and the real shots. The physical laws seem suspended.

The second chapter, *Where is when the Sun never rises*, is dedicated to the Border of the Earth. The narration goes into details of this mysterious area, the sound and the narrator's voice evolve and change. Slowly her reflections become less rational and more personal.

Underlying the whole film, although not immediately evident to the viewer, a parallel emerges between the speculative narrative on the flattening of the Earth and man's real responsibility for the destruction of the planet and its ecosystems. The scientist, protagonist of this story, gradually wonders if the terrestrial flattening was not caused by man. The only area where everything can still be found and generated is the Border of the Earth, a real finis terrae. From this place the Great Rainbow can be observed, extending over a canal, gives rise to an ethereal landscape in which the waters of the oceans fall into the infinite space of the universe.

The imagery in this chapter is inspired by old science fiction films and the analogue effects used in cinema before the arrival of digital, especially in the creation of props and miniature models. One of the main references for this part is Karel Zeman films.

In the third and final chapter, *"Once, returning ..." she said*, the only part of the film shot outside of the studio, the narration changes and become a song, a litany of loss. The protagonist's voice sings a ballad, as if she was the only one to regret the world of the past. Here the music takes over the images that instead become abstract. The camera focuses on the sun reflections in the sea, on the colours of sunrise or sunset that become increasingly blurred, making room for the sound part of the narration.

About Mirages and Stolen Stones is an imaginative journey to the ends of the Earth. The viewer immerses herself in the narration, wondering - only at the end - about the loss of the world as we know it.

Until November 13th, 2020, *About Mirages and stolen Stones* will be on view at Case Chiuse HQ, Milan, within the solo exhibition dedicated to the artist.

Natália Trejbalová was invited to take part in *Il Pianeta come Festival*, a project produced by Terraforma festival, which takes its inspiration and name from the iconic 1972 series by Ettore Sottsass. For this project, the artist used and reinterpreted a selection of stills from the film.

The film will be also presented in a series of events and exhibitions projects at independent spaces such as: the 3HD Berlin festival; XY in Olomouc in collaboration with PAF festival (Czech Republic); Four Elements Festival (Slovakia).