

## Jon Rafman

### A Man Digging

29<sup>th</sup> May – 27<sup>th</sup> July 2013

In *A Man Digging*, Jon Rafman engages with the emotional and perceptual experience of a present-day explorer as he navigates virtual worlds. The contingency and intrinsic mutability of memory are foregrounded in the exhibition as Rafman explores the distance between our online and offline experience. Incorporating both anachronistic and cutting-edge technologies, commissions from deviantart.com, and footage from video games, *A Man Digging* shows how virtual worlds have dislocated the archive from its traditional moorings and given rise to new forms of desire, anxiety, and nostalgia. While examining Rafman's ongoing preoccupation with loss, the work directs our attention toward the potential of the virtual archive to unveil alternative ways of constructing and preserving our collective and personal histories.

For the exhibition, Rafman shows recent works reflecting the fascination with digging through memory in order to revisit and preserve the past. He investigates historical discontinuities between different methods of archival storage through a new series of images printed on silk and installed on a classic architectural blueprint display rack. There is an interrogation of traditional modes of cultural evaluation; mixing things like the appropriated images from the British Museum collection that are canonized and historically weighty, with architectural blueprints or patent drawings that are more specialized and technical. Decontextualizing these images from their conventional presentations the artist develops new relationships from the archival materials to produce unfamiliar readings.

Rafman also re-imagines his *Nine Eyes of Google Street View* project by using increasingly obsolete technology in the form of an interactive installation with a microfiche reader. In addition, he moves on to 3D printing technology, creating a physical manifestation of a *New Age Demanded* bust.

Finally, this exhibition also features two films that in different ways articulate loss by journeying into the protean landscapes of individual and social memory. *Remember Carthage*, made in collaboration with Rosa Aiello, takes the viewer on an expedition in search of an abandoned resort town deep in the Sahara desert. The film emphasizes how digital media renders historical events accessible, while at the same time alienating us from the events that constitute history. An anonymous narrator traverses an endless landscape where markers of time and place only exist as floating signs, where authentic sites merge with simulations. It is unclear whether the narrator in *Remember Carthage* ever arrives; he finds himself caught in a delirious, virtual dream world.

Alongside *Remember Carthage*, Rafman also premieres his newest film, *A Man Digging*, in which a narrator undertakes an evocative journey through a nostalgic wasteland. Caught between past and present, between history, narrative and fiction, he roams through the uncanny spaces of a video game massacre. The film and exhibition as a whole deals with contemporary anxieties about the relation between physical and virtual presence while engaging with broader questions of loss, memory, and desire.