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Yuri Pattison, *sun_set pro_vision*, 2020-21
installation view

Yuri Pattison: the engine

Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin
17 December to 6 March

About 50km north of Dublin's city centre, the area around Newgrange was unusually quiet. The annual witnessing of the winter solstice had been cancelled; an ancient ritual undone by a very modern pandemic. A few minutes after 9am, the first light crossed the Boyne river valley and entered the narrow passageway of the 5,000-year-old tomb. No one was there to see it - except for some ghosts - but a dedicated live stream of the morning's sunrise left us watching remotely from our computer screens.

Later that day, I entered a similar confluence of the cosmic and the computer age in Yuri Pattison's exhibition 'the engine'. The sun is the driving force here too, most prominently in *sun_set pro_vision*, 2020-21, where individual monitors are arranged on true north, south, east and west-facing axes, and mounted on modular metal support structures. Each screen is host to an animation of a simulated sun illuminating gently rolling seas. In the subdued light of the bunker-like gallery, they appear as radiant tablets brought down from on high. Though calibrated to the world outside, in the gallery the suns seem suspended; like the boast of western empires, the sun never sets on these anxious horizons. Composed in another time, these words by Antonio Gramsci seem freshly minted, 'the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear'. Pattison charts this morbidity with a uRADMonitor, which measures the pollutants in the gallery space, altering the images accordingly; as viewers we contribute to their responsive, modelled reality. As in the world outside - in an ironic, aesthetic twist - the thicker the toxins in the atmosphere, the more refracted and beautiful the sunset is.

Pattison's installations are distinctly hi-tech, with their anthropological traces slyly insinuated. In previous works he has incorporated beds and office furniture as stand-ins for human presence within systems of capital and technological control. Similarly, lightweight translucent sheets have been used as projection screens and space dividers, softening hard edges and adding a sense of physical vulnerability. The softer forms of 'the engine' seem integrated into the technological apparatus itself, their sea and sunlight trapped like specimens inside a jar. Stepping carefully to avoid the nervous system of cables snaking across the gallery floor, I wondered about my own, aging apparatus and its place within the tireless machine.

If the cabling is the nervous system, *True Time Master*, 2019-20, provides its steady pulse. The US Department of Defense has developed a highly accurate atomic clock; Pattison mimics the clock's frequency and amplifies it through a counterfeit McIntosh MC275 tube amp. This Chinese knock-off sits atop its packing crate with its glass valves glowing, a gleaming retro artefact. Evoking western anxieties around the influence of modern China, the amplifier conjures various takes on notions of originality - as a cheaply produced fake, as transmitter rather than originator and as a variation on Walter Benjamin's prophecy that 'the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility'. Similarly mimetic and discreetly pervasive within the experience of the show is a series of illuminated panels, *It's always golden hour somewhere*, 2016-21, which are programmed to maintain a 'golden hour' light. Corresponding to the sun's most oblique angle in the sky, their idealised, artificial illumination mimics the photogenic dreaminess of those threshold moments beloved of romantics and cinematographers everywhere.

A monitor resting face upwards on a metal pallet, *Dublin Mean Time*, 2020, references Dublin's ill-fated Millennium Clock. Installed below the waterline of the river Liffey in 1996 and viewable from the city's iconic O'Connell Bridge, the digital clock counted down the seconds to the dawn of the new millennium. It lasted five months. Removed for cleaning from the notoriously dirty river and never returned, the 20th century would have to wind down without it. Pattison's clock counts in the other direction, its digital display counting up the seconds from 1 January 2000. My iPhone image of the work reads 66 18 7880 1. A meaningless number to me, and already out of date. The day after my visit the exhibition was closed, a victim of Ireland's latest lockdown. Alone in the dark, the clocks were still ticking.

John Graham is an artist based in Dublin.