

Long, Declan, 'Yuri Pattison' the engine exhibition review, *ArtForum*, April 2021

## ARTFORUM

## REVIEWS

## DUBLIN

Yuri Pattison  
DOUGLAS HYDE GALLERY

A slate-gray sea flecked with scattered embers of evening light. Beyond, shrouding the horizon, the hot-pink haze of a crazy lurid sunset. At this unique passing moment in the trippy real-time drift of Yuri Pattison's mesmeric digital simulation *sun\_set pro\_vision*, 2020–21—an ever-changing ocean scene on five separate screens, vividly rendered with game-engine software—the balance of solemn sea and showy sky seemed just about believable. Despite the gaudy extravagance of the setting sun's display, the sequence recalled familiar real-life skyscapes and resembled, in its radiant extremity, the types of strange and spectacular urban sunsets that trend, from time to time, on social media—dazzling natural light shows that might, in places, owe their peculiar intensity to the meteorological effects of pollution. But spend a while with Pattison's algorithmically adaptive imagery—the appearance of the sunset simulation alters depending on data received from an online air-quality tracker—and the virtual scene evolves in a variety of still more unearthly ways. This stock vision of soothing and uplifting beauty becomes, in a series of slow unpredictable transitions, a dreamily disquieting vista. Sky and sea turn sickly yellow or putrid green. Cloying bubble-gum brightness darkens to deep, seemingly impossible purple. As real-world data influences the computer-modeled atmosphere, connections with recognizable reality are lost.

Against the ongoing phantasmagoric drama of the software-generated sunset, Pattison set the obdurate anti-aesthetic banality of the exhibition hardware. This tension has long inhabited his intricately engineered art (or perhaps his intricately artful engineering). Indeed, the overall title for his Douglas Hyde Gallery presentation, the artist's first major show in his native Ireland, was "the engine": a term signaling his interest in both the powerful world-building potential of game-environment programming systems and the inescapably material, machinic basis of such advanced technology.

Pattison unobtrusively augmented *sun\_set pro\_vision* in quiet corners and in-between spaces with devices composing several smaller, though inevitably complex, electronic assemblages. Like much of Pattison's work to date, his efforts to explore future-shock concepts and abstruse computer processes were complemented by a rigorously

utilitarian approach to installation design. Plastic casings and fiberglass components, power leads and connecting cables, circuit boards and cooling fans—all were exposed for under-the-hood inspection. The glowing high-definition screens that stood tall or lay flat around the gallery—sleek totems of immersive tech—were held in place by the most rudimentary unrefined supports: steel shelving units and aluminum pallets, fittings more suited to backroom storage than to front-of-house display. From one artwork to another, miscellaneous interconnecting items of industrial and electronic hardware, manifesting different degrees of manufactured durability, were insistently and sculpturally present. Yet so much of what one saw and heard—from whirring, wheezing hard drives and dangling taped-together cables, to strips of protective cellophane and strategically propped cardboard boxes—spoke of makeshift solutions, material vulnerability, or looming obsolescence. Like the volatile virtual panorama on the *sun\_set pro\_vision* screens, the physical environment of "the engine" was a quietly unsettled space.

Pattison's exhibition coupled superficial calm with persistent underlying agitation. Sonic palpitations—rapid hammering pulses, not unlike the intro beat from New Order's "Blue Monday"—sent out by the chip-scale atomic clock in *True Time Master*, 2019–20, formed a low but emphatic backing track. Created using clock and amplification equipment associated, like most vanguard technology, with military-industrial complexities, the sound represented absolute accuracy in the measurement of time. But the relentless incidental juddering of this propulsive rhythm was disconcerting, a forceful pulsating that perhaps expressed something of time's incessant and variously felt pressures. *True Time Master*—like companion pieces such as *Dublin Mean Time (UTC—00:25:21 : 2000 – Now)*, 2020, a digital simulation reconstructing the ill-conceived and short-lived Millennium Clock installed as a public artwork in the River Liffey in 1996 but removed after only a few months—was born from restless multidirectional research into the management, materialization, and meaning of time in disparate contexts. Numerous time lines—histories of computing, economics, telecommunication, colonialism, global conflict, and more—converge (in a substantial handout text). There is always, Pattison's art seems to imply, too much information—as the sun keeps setting and the clock keeps ticking.

—Declan Long

Yuri Pattison, *sun\_set pro\_vision* (detail), 2020–21, OpenGL software, modified Dell PowerEdge R420, GeForce GTX 1650 GPUs, uRADMonitor model A3 atmospheric monitor, HD digital-signage monitors, Dexion slotted angles, aluminum EUR pallets, Dell PowerEdge R420 server chassis, *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World* (book), decapped GPU chip, cables, Ethernet switch, padlock. Installation view. Photo: Louis Haugh.

