

VLADIMIR: *Maybe you had a vision.*

ESTRAGON: *A vision.*

VLADIMIR: *A hallucination.*

ESTRAGON: *An illusion.*

POZZO: *What are you waiting for?*

VLADIMIR (to Estragon): *What are you waiting for?*

ESTRAGON: *I'm waiting for Godot.*

Although much of the work or leisure activity we perform in digital environments involves conscious attention, most of the interactions to which we abandon ourselves with rapt attention occur in a suspended state of consciousness. Hence, as Elena López and Borja Morgado's eldest daughter's question in a first draft of the present project called *Gott ist tott* stated states, the unconscious acceptance of the presence that Artificial Intelligence has come to have in our everyday life only becomes disturbing when we think about it consciously -is Alexa God? (Morgado and López, 2022: 142). Until then we barely perceive it, we barely intuit that the "familiarity" that defines our dealings with AI is a powerful weapon whose proper use, rather absent, should serve to regulate fundamental parcels of freedom of the individual. A prompt is a request and reissues a power relationship between a human being and an AI every time it is used. But, as announced by that fantasy that has run through the history of the West from *Pygmalion* to 2001: *A Space Odyssey*, there are occasions when this power relationship is subverted and the machine not only "talks to me", but "solicits me." A certain threat then begins to loom. The dominance of the machine is announced and the *status quo* of a frightened and obedient humanity is reestablished.

In Samuel Becket's play, Vladimir and Estragon obey, wait for Godot and do not move, they have nothing else to do. Their conversation, barely animated by the minimal changes introduced by the biological rhythm of their existence, always returns to the same place, wanting to leave and not being able to. The litany that this eternal return configures announces an encounter that never takes place and evidences the permanence of a lack that is never satisfied. As a litany, it does not seek to snatch or call to action, but to give access through its compulsive recitation to an indifferent and passive state of mind, abandoned to the mere *happening*.

Like *Waiting for Godot*, *SplendorIA* also announces an arrival. In doing so, it brilliantly contributes to that mythical imaginary in which human beings suffer the consequences of their technocratic audacity. But, in addition, with a commendable astuteness, López and Morgado's proposal postulates an open response to the challenge posed by Artificial Intelligence. Somehow, photography or cinema

also shook the existing order time before. Actually, this historical awareness should give us a peace of mind that *SplendorIA* corroborates. Like photography or cinema, AI is a tool, yes, but if, instead of this obviousness, we focus on the possibilities it opens up as a poetic, artistic, creative genre, etc., we will be in a position to move forward, to see that the announcement *SplendorIA* makes is a necessary stimulus for a culture that moves forward.

Articulated in the form of a photo-pictorial dialogue, *SplendorIA* is an invitation to reflect on the challenge that Artificial Intelligence poses to the understanding of our relationship with technology from a dimension that encompasses cognitive, emotional and spiritual states of the individual. From a visual poetics made in a tone that we could identify as epic, the staged drama moves through these states following without ambiguity what we could define as a conscious search for the absolute.

The material/formal/symbolic base

In formal terms, *SplendorIA* is structured on the basis of a triple confrontation of formats: between a large photographic altarpiece composed of six images, four paintings on panel in a more intimate devotional format and a super-vertical diptych of medium-size format. This contrasting relationship is reinforced, on the one hand, by the play of stony planimetry offered by the close-up view, the low angle shots and the pronounced foreshortenings of photographs attentive to the naturalistic detail of the marble cut in the open sky; on the other, by the unsublimated literalness of a mimetic transcription in oil paint of enlarged cut-outs of digital copies of Baroque Annunciations characterized by poor quality, dirt and RGB glitter; and, thirdly, by the reticular sieve through which digital color acquires a translucent and clean luminous value. The different materials involved and the artistic techniques applied are structured in a game of contrast that, from the offset printing on matte cotton paper of the photographs and the silkscreen work that patches them with gold ink, leads us to the white stone paper, used as a support for oil painting, but also as a luminous base for digital prints. All in all, from the purely visual dimension that intervenes without mediation in the construction of the story *SplendorIA* unfolds, López and Morgado's bet forces the

encounter of the photomimetic and material/digital literalness alluded to above with the glow that characterizes the golden cutouts that strategically bathe the hallucinated experience of the proposed imaginary.

In symbolic terms, López and Morgado's discourse derives from the critical appropriation of a series of historical or cultural clichés. The monolith, as an inescapable metaphor of the anthropological/technological/spiritual crossroads that our tradition has associated with the evolutionary irruption of the essentially human, propitiates the encounter between the natural coarseness of the rock and *perfectio*, as an aesthetic, mystical or mathematical ideal firmly rooted in the history of the West. The fleur-de-lis, as an allegory of promise and submission key to Marian iconography, filtered through flashes of RGB color painted in oil, comes to stage a new light of hope that transits from the analogical/natural to the digital/artificial. This crossing is also emphasized through the prominence given to the stone paper as a visual and symbolic support. Composed fundamentally of calcium carbonate agglutinated through synthetic resins, it could be said that this material is more than related to the physical components and screens that support our digital environments. Hence, when the time comes, it intervenes in the design of a stained glass window that, as a chromatic-spiritual sieve of light and religious architectural space, represents an end of a journey. And this journey, rather than being conclusive, emphasizes through values of transparency the need for an open and inclusive debate on how AI has been incorporated into our lives.

The story

The story begins with the deliberate search for a photographic encounter. Its purpose, to witness the touch of the first light of day on a marble quarry in the peninsular southeast. As such, the plan triggers the adrenaline of a sabotage action, but against whom or what is it directed? Hiding in the early morning break between cyclopean planes of cut stone to take some landscape photos is not going to convince the competent authority of the innocence of the mischief, but neither does it seem very focused as an act of denunciation. It is, of course, an artistic project, and its very genesis implies an out of focus because what it announces/denunciates is much more than what it shows/signals (here the first disproportion appears, the symbolic/sublime moment of the Hegelian aesthetic story).

The question

The planning of the "quarry" photographic safari already anticipates questions about our inhabiting the world that connect ancestral fears and obsessions with threats present in our current dependence on technology: What power relationship regulates both prehistoric and current versions of this encounter? What cultural narratives/clichés allow analogies to be drawn between these possible versions? Do these narratives/clichés respond effectively to the regrettable technological colonization of spaces of autonomy or freedom that we should have protected?

The prelude

If there is something exemplary in *SplendorIA*, it is the dialectical spirit that has articulated the work of López and Morgado. The interplay of images and ideas in the gradual construction of the project demonstrates a deep Socratic commitment, and from it emanates much of the enjoyment that their montage at La Postap provides. The exalted formalism and grandiloquence of the projected planes that structure Morgado's photographs are appropriately compensated through the respectful embrace of López's symbolic appropriations. Her responses reveal complementary nuances of the religious heritage with which the veneration that the AI receives today is connected, in such a way that, if in the magnificence of the marble blocks the ancestral tremor of a choleric and vengeful divinity seems to appear, in the human scale of Lopez's lilies dwells the absorption of the devotional panel -from *Modern Devotio* (Figure 1). And if the appearance of the RGB glitch finally reveals the simulacral character of the technological enchantment that determines our current world, its traumatic persistence is sublimated to the point of generating a new, transparent, orderly and subtle light in stained-glass windows.

The hypothesis

Lopez and Morgado's healthy artistic/conceptual exchange ends up revealing the animistic unconscious in which our most basic fears in the face of AI are lodged. With great virtue, through the theological metaphor that articulates the proposal, the importance of what their work makes visible lies not only in the almost instinctive character of that (animistic) response but in its exposure to manipulation, its propensity to become an instrument for domination. The metaphorical use of gilding in *SplendorIA* confirms the constancy with

which this complicated intersection between pure aesthetic fruition, religious symbol and disciplinary device has historically worked its enchantment.

The technological sublime

With that use of gilding in mind, I will begin by outlining a framework/cliché that I think is useful insofar as it traces the limits of the reflection with which I would like to make a first intervention in the dialogue opened by Lopez and Morgado. It is about “the technological sublime” as a recent manifestation, beyond other categories exhausted by tradition, of the attempt to take a new look at the relationship between art and technology, once the consideration of the latter as a disintegrating and destructive force for the former has been overcome. For the Italian philosopher Mario Costa, understanding the impact that technology has had on our aesthetic behavior implies the consideration

of a displacement that has taken place in an eminently communicative dimension. In tune with those who, like Lucy Lippard -following in the critical wake of, among others, authors such as Lyotard or Baudrillard- promulgated a process of “dematerialization” of Art, Costa defends in his *Principles of an Aesthetics of Communication* (1986) that “the event of the aesthetics of communication is not so much a mobilization of ‘concepts’ as ‘a mobilization of energy’, an event in which ‘the immateriality of energy and field tensions’ have managed to displace ‘the aesthetic object and form’” (Costa, 2015: 98).

And as a result of this dematerializing impulse, the reconsideration of the relationship between technology and Aesthetics demands the rescue of concepts capable of embracing the downcast of a subject exalted by tradition that has no place in this new context. In the Greco-Latin, Baroque, Enlightenment and modern heritage of the sublime, Costa recognizes the echo of

ESTRAGON: I’m tired. (Pause) Let’s go.

VLADIMIR: We can’t.

ESTRAGON: Why?

VLADIMIR: We’re waiting for Godot.

ESTRAGON: That’s right. (Pause.) So what do we do?

VLADIMIR: We wait for Godot.

ESTRAGON: That’s right.

an encounter with the exorbitant, excessive or excessive, which is still present in its postmodern version: the technological sublime. The new excess manifests itself in an intertwining of new electronic and digital technologies whose self-development and self-organization completely flee from any human possibility of control and management. This new manifestation of the sublime, if on the one hand implies the weakening of the subject and the failure of art with all its apparatus of associated categories (beauty, style, genius, expression, etc.), on the other hand, gives rise to a still aesthetic feeling born of de-subjectification, of the suppression of the symbolic and of the expansive hegemony of pure signifiers deprived of meaning (Costa, 2015: 99).

The problematic splendor

In the scenario of postmodern deprivations that the technological sublime allows to outline, a first vignette drawn from psychoanalytic discourse and appropriated by art theory makes sense. It portrays that fracture of the subject with which the central position that the traditional perspective and the Cartesian system of thought assigned to it. In its relation to the gaze, brightness -*splendor* (from *splendor-oris*)- from a double virtue of reaching and being reached at the same time, destabilizes the integrity of the subject of tradition, making it unable to recognize itself in the scene as a closed unit. To the fetishistic trauma that reveals this fracture Freud associates, in the account of one of his clinical cases, the vision of a shine on the

nose, (Freud, 1981) and Lacan, in the account of a personal memory, the shine of that can of sardines floating in the sea with which Petit-Jean made him feel his own exclusion - *Do you see that can? Do you see it? Well, she does not see you!* (Lacan, 2006). The paradoxical gaze that "does not see you" but "looks at you" is already contained in the idiomatic con-fusion of Freud's child: born in England and later moved to Germany, the latter's fetishistic relation to the shine on the nose reveals an irreversible replacement between "glance", gaze, and "Glanz", shine. For Rosalind Krauss, this confusion makes possible "the fusion of the gaze and the gazed, the subject and the object, of the one who sees and what he sees", confirming the latency of an undeniable optical unconscious behind the formal, rational and ordered facade of the canonical account of the gaze in the West (Krauss, 1997: 177).

I wanted to introduce this section by highlighting through the shine/fetish the identification of a different gaze whose critical value will allow us to link a story line that, if everything goes as I hope, will manage to place such a complex issue as the one *Splendor!*A tackles and stages within a coherent framework of interpretation. My idea is that López and Morgado's project exploits in dimensions that go beyond the merely symbolic the effect of dynamic enchantment with which different phenomenologies/technologies throughout history and in different contexts have contributed to define the individual's visual

relationship with the world. Although the purely visual effects of the use of gilding in Byzantine, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Romantic, Modernist, etc. imagery or in modern painting were the same, and all summon the intervention of that fascinated or confused gaze proposed by Freud or Lacan, the moral discourses that have regulated its use were not always homogeneous.

In the eleventh century, for example, the expropriations carried out to finance the military campaigns of the Byzantine emperor Alexius I Comnenus spurred an iconoclastic movement that, trying to justify the new destiny of many religious icons, denigrated the enormous value that the use of precious metals or jewels had fulfilled in the visual experience they had provided to believers. The imperial semeioma of 1095 expresses the following:

And again, the emperor asked: "Which do you call icons: the material substances of the icon [...] or the figures [...] made visible [...] in them?" and everyone answered: the figures made visible in the material substances (my emphasis)"
(Quoted in Pentcheva, 2010: 200).

With this reduction of the understanding of the icon to the figure represented and the resemblance, it was a matter of devaluing the material in which it was made. Metal, precious stones, enameled tesserae, etc. had been fundamental elements of the spectacle of

ESTRAGON: Let's go.

VLADIMIR: We can't.

ESTRAGON: Why?

VLADIMIR: We're waiting for Godot.

ESTRAGON: That's right. (Vladimir resumes his back and forth) Can't you stand still?

phenomenological *poikilia*¹ in which the divinity had made itself present and their prohibition, as we see, would serve in the long run to grease the development of naturalistic painting (Pentcheva, 2010: 201).

A second stop in the location of this controversy about the use of gilding takes us to the moment in which the bases of this naturalistic ideal of painting acquire a systematic character far from the hybridizations that the Byzantine icon promoted and Gothic art developed with profusion. The application of gold was generally rejected by Renaissance painters and treatises. Ghiberti, for example, in his *Comentarii*, relying on ancient references, defended that churches should be conceived white in order to eliminate any reminiscence of idolatry. As for the problematic use of gold in painting, Leon Battista Alberti, in book II of his treatise *De pictura*, strongly discouraged its use, arguing that, if an object is made of gold, it should be represented using colors, just as marble columns, trees, fabrics and flesh tones are represented with them. The argument on which Alberti's precepts rest alludes to the uncontrolled effect produced in a composition by the brightness of gold, which does not depend on the painter but on the external illumination of the work (Nieto Alcaide, 1978: 76).

The two historical excursuses introduced above present brightness -splendor- as a problematic aspect in the making and use of the image. In the Byzantine iconoclastic context, a whole phenomenology based on the material qualities of the icon is discredited as a superfluous element in its appreciation, and in the Renaissance, together with the attempt to block idolatrous attitudes, the disparagement of the use of gilding in painting is justified by the artist's lack of control over its effects. It is worth bearing in mind that, however specific their contexts or anecdotal they may be, the rejections we have illustrated involve political, religious, economic and ethical issues in the configuration of power structures that condition the behavior of the individual in the long term, establishing schemes that end up being hegemonic.

As in those contexts, the use of gilding in SplendorIA also stages a relationship of power, and its mystical or religious connotation runs through the symbolic syntax of the rest of the poetic elements brought into play. The power relation from which, as we saw in the previous section, postmodernity has conceptualized its "technological sublime" presents clear analogies with the *sentiment of creature* in which Rudolf Otto, for example, located the sublime in his sentimental definition of the holy/numinous (Otto, 2001). If anything emphasizes the visual and symbolic dynamism that the use of gilding introduces in each of the pieces that make up SplendorIA, it is the residue of transcendentalism and mysticism that regulates our current relationship with AI. But gilding operates in dimensions that undoubtedly come before this allegorical game, articulating phenomenologies that allow us to trace historical connections from revisionist perspectives akin to (post)structuralism. A reference provided by Rosalind Krauss in her text "The grid, the /cloud/ and the detail" will help us, besides facilitating the transit towards this new logic, to establish a bridge that leads us from the rejection of gilding -of the emitting brightness and the receiving hallucination- to its accommodation in frames of convention or artistic logics for modernity and postmodernity (Krauss, 1994).

This is the famous invention with which Filippo Brunelleschi aspired in the Renaissance to establish the basis of perspective as a new system of universal representation, based on a demonstration that, involuntarily, contains the limit or negation of its own validity. Moreover, and for obvious reasons, this limit or negation is continuous with the thread of rejections from which we have started, since it is marked by a use that the Italian artist made of silver leaf, in the pictorial representation of the baptistry of Florence that illustrates the wooden tablet of the aforementioned demonstration. In short, proving that in the linear perspective system there is a coincidence between the point of view and the vanishing point leads the Italian artist to place the viewer looking from

1- See Destrière, P. (2015) *A Companion to Ancient Aesthetics*. Wiley-Blackwell. "Poikilia ("variegation") is a protean notion, used by the Greeks to describe the visual effect produced by the combination of different colors and materials in an object, but also to express ideas of variety and complexity. Its meaning covers many fields: crafts, music, poetry, rhetoric, medicine, ethics and politics. [...] These two groups of significance (colorful ornament/ intricacy) are intimately connected in Greek thought. The study reveals in particular that variegated artifacts have a seductive power that appeals to the eye but also to other senses, thus demonstrating that poikilia is a key notion for understanding a specific factor of ancient aesthetics: the intensity of the pleasure-producing, polysensory experience" (pp. 406-421).

the center of the face opposite the painting, through a peephole, at the painted image of the baptistery reflected in a mirror that the same viewer holds with an outstretched arm (Figure 2). The limit, the negation, of the incipient system of representation would be in this case in a sky, in clouds that, impossible to delineate, are presented through the reflection of the real sky, as a witness of the demonstration, in the silver leaf cutout on the silhouette of the represented building and the reflection of the whole (real sky reflected and painted baptistery) in the mirror to which the peephole opens.

Brunelleschi's demonstration, alien to the recommendations that Alberti would make some time later, takes the form of a complicated visual apparatus that aspires to achieve, in addition to the universal validity of perspective as a system of representation, a plausible visual illusion. However, it was a very *sui generis* visual illusion, because, as Alberti suggests, it introduces an element beyond the artist's control and beyond the control of the system that embraces it. For the American art historian, the /cloud/ with its vaporuousness, instability and movement, identifies the necessary differential marker of an autonomous semiological system, that of everything that perspective/painting allows to delineate. But the cloud is only part of that which intervenes as a differential marker: the reflective metallic surface, the silver leaf, -also unstable and changing- is a necessary accomplice.

In the aforementioned text, a certain analogy with Brunelleschi's demonstration allows Krauss to conclude that, despite the enthusiasm with which critics celebrate the postmodern

openness of the architectural and pictorial poetics of Mies van der Rohe and Agnes Martin respectively, their commitment to an autonomous artistic practice denies that openness. In fact, a line of commitment to opticality that is difficult to reconcile with the allegorical or symbolic game exploited by that postmodern criticism is provided by a formal key element: the grid. Its role in both works is none other than that of ordering itself in a system that moves from the haptic to the optical, from the apprehensible to the ungraspable, and from the linear to the atmospheric.

The problematic splendor bis

If the semiological system that vertebrates the possible senses of *Splendor* succeeds in staging the relation of dominion/control that has marked the relation of the human being with technology until the irruption of a "technological sublime", the /gilding/-its emitted brightness and its received hallucination- supposes for that system a differential marker. There is a technological sublime not yet dematerialized, not yet detached from visual phenomenologies, in which modern painting finds the destiny -the limit, the differential marker- of its own logic. It is in fact one more example mentioned by Krauss in the aforementioned text that inscribes "our subject", that of "the technological sublime", that of the "destabilization" or "fracture" of the spectator-subject as an integral entity, in an account that connects Byzantium and Modern Art with a framework of ideals that only the theoretical vocation that drives the autonomy of the avant-garde could outline. It is worth recovering the words of Alois Riegl that Krauss recalls in her text and that, as will be seen, shed

ESTRAGON: What should I say?

VLADIMIR: Say: I am happy.

ESTRAGON: I'm happy.

VLADIMIR: Me too.

ESTRAGON: Me too.

VLADIMIR: We are happy.

ESTRAGON: We are happy (Silence) And what do we do now that we are happy?

VLADIMIR: We wait for Godot.

ESTRAGON: That's true.

light once again on the debate that *SplendorIA* opens. In relation to a brooch carved in bronze using the technique of cuneiform incision in the late Roman period, the Swiss art historian comments that in this type of work

...the relationship varies with each movement of the wearer, and what one moment ago was an illuminated side, the next becomes dark, thus accentuating in an essential way the character of the sparkling, unstable and uncertain (Riegl, 1992: 230).

For Riegl, these changing -sparkling, unstable and uncertain- games of figure and background guide the attention of critical art theory towards the changing, unstable and uncertain place occupied by the spectator, as the inevitable destiny of the dialectical development of an objectivist Kunstwollen. In fact, for Krauss this instability of the spectator, as a particular concern of avant-garde artists in general, does not contradict, but rather supports the defense of a search for the objective in their creations. The aforementioned fixation with the optical objectivity of Mies and Martin comes to mind, but, as we shall see, the issue cuts across key moments in both the theoretical and purely empirical/optical consecration of American Abstract Expressionism.

It is enough to look at a first scene taken from "Byzantine Parallelisms", a 1958 text that Clement Greenberg wrote for *Paris Review* but only published in *Art and Culture*, his 1961 anthology, to understand the extension that this logic acquires. In that text, the art critic highlights that Pollock, "with his aluminum paint and intertwined threads of light and dark pigments", eludes in his intermediate stage the sculptural reference that the tonal contrast could still arouse, pointing towards a game of optical counter-illusions that connect him with historical uses of metallic effects. In Greenberg's own words, "this new type of modern painting, like the Byzantine mosaic of gold and glass, seeks to fill with its radiations the space between it and the viewer" (Greenberg, 2011: 192).

The allusion to Pollock's aluminum painting as an homage to Byzantine splendor had been proposed earlier. In his 1951 article for *Art News*, Peter Goodnough had noted that historical analogy: "Pollock uses metallic paint much like the application of gold leaf by painters of the past, adding the impression of mystery and ornament" (Goodnough, 1951). Again, however, the connection with the mystery or ornament of the past remains, compared to the systematization

to which Greenberg's commentary points, mere rhetorical superficiality. With the use of metallic paint, the wall, that ideal of two-dimensional positivist and impassable positivism with which modern painting played at emulating that space of neutrality or asepsis characteristic of scientific law, seemed to be filled with mystical or transcendental values.

In principle, the space of radiations between the painting and the spectator that Greenberg mentions would still summon an optical relation, "a gaze that, independent of the spectator's body, would be free to explore the dimensions of its projection, sustained exclusively by the subjective reflection on its own form of consciousness" (Krauss, 1997: 260). Its "radiations" -like the /cloud/ or the /silver leaf/ in Brunelleschi's demonstration- close a scheme of concerns that aspires to evidence a historical construction, that of the individual's self-conscious visual relationship to the world and that of the limits of that relationship. The technological sublime has to be situated in that limit, pointing out the out-of-field of that self-conscious visual relationship. From that technological sublime, from the threat of an irreversible loss of control in the face of AI still linked to a phenomenological basis, *SplendorIA* masterfully takes advantage of the poetic resources it sets in motion to send a forceful warning.

Conclusions

Fascinated, dazed and erratic at the same time, "de-subjectivized" as Costa would say, the type of gaze that the shine on the nose/can allows us to formulate, and which Krauss identifies as a necessary counterpoint to the objectivism of the modern narrative of art, has defined a certain visual experience of the individual at different moments throughout history, with privileged attention especially in religious contexts. In many of these contexts, gilding—the metallic or enameled surface, the precious stones, and the dynamic play of light that activated them—was able to contain within the experience of the image a way of being in the world, of knowing it, and of relating to divinity, to political/religious power, and to other individuals.

To understand the impact that AI has had on our lives as a result of a dematerializing and simulacral process, despite finding refuge in well-established frameworks of thought, is fraught with danger, since what conventional fiction portrays as the worst possible scenario for this process sometimes arouses massive enthusiasm. As Mike Kelley's *Pay for Your*

Pleasure (1988) made evident attractive and ingenious provocations uttered in the name of art can actually be harmful if we consider them seriously. But against this idea, millennia of fascinating apocalyptic fantasies and astonishing historical recreations, demonstrate their usefulness in stimulating our desire to improve the world we live in. This world is real; it is not a simulation capable of subsisting without a physical support. Our ability to see is also real, it cannot be a cultural construct alien to our health. The ways we see the world are a precious but delicate treasure whose understanding shouldn't undermine the care of that physiological basis. Relocating the technological sublime within the set of ambitions that guided the development of modern art, even if it only serves as a differential marker, reminds us of the need for such care. Rosalind Krauss's reflection, which we have followed throughout this text, does so, and so does the material/physical force of *SplendorIA* vindicates it.

Considering de-subjectification, visual bewilderment, or fascination as aspects historically associated with the identification of a certain type of aesthetic experience, we must understand its scope of action, as art historian Jonathan Crary argues in many of his reflections, in forms of control over individual behavior of which we have only just begun to become aware (Crary, 2008). Within and outside the field of Aesthetics, for him, models of vision and their associated epistemologies operate as a technology for constructing and managing individual behavior under the control of the dominant ideology. But where the latter is content with this new state of affairs, Crary revolts, refusing to ascribe the vision of the destructive power of technology to any aesthetic category. The American art historian points out that, analogous to the functioning of cinematic pornography or horror, our culture has allowed a kind of "malevolent scientific tinkering" obsessed with, among other things, nuclear explosion tests for which there is no possible point of view/vision (Figure 3). The continued visual exposure to such atrocities during the last decades of the twentieth century is part of a far from innocent plan to devalue human vision in which "powerful institutional complexes specific to states that were, at that time, competing for military and economic domination on a global scale" have intervened (61).

If *SplendorIA* proves anything, it's that every new technological threat resembles a previous one, and that all of them together seem to have

influenced the development of an ancient myth whose imaginary has shaped a kind of artistic genre of great value to our culture. AI is simply a technology, although it is much more than that: among other things, a profitable business and a powerful persuasive instrument. In this sense, *SplendorIA* could be yet another rehash of the iconoclastic rejection that runs through Western history from Plato to Baudrillard. But it has taken a different, tortuous and obstacle-ridden direction: that of understanding this persuasive power as a poetic possibility capable of opening up options for responding to the challenges created by an ecosystem at risk.

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