

Drones are male honeybees hatched from unfertilized eggs, so they cannot sting or produce honey. They are characterized by large eyes, have a body size greater than that of worker bees, and are fast enough to accompany the flight of the queen bee.

Also called drones – because they have some of the same physical attributes as honeybees – are unmanned aerial vehicles that can fly autonomously while being controlled remotely from the ground. These machines perform reconnaissance, as well as attack missions for the military. Since 2004, they have been used extensively by the US in Pakistan, particularly in the North Waziristan region to target militants. It is predicted that the drone will fundamentally change the landscape of war, and that future conflicts will be fought between different forms of automated technologies. Drones also have many civilian applications, such as fire fighting and the surveillance of pipelines, and there is growing amateur interest in building and flying them for recreational purposes. Their military and civilian functions have created a major debate around the ethics of automated warfare and public surveillance.

Drones continue the human quest to view the world from above. During the 1860s, the French photographer Nadar took to the sky in a balloon to take the first aerial photographs over Paris. Some forty years later, Julius Neubronner conducted an experiment by harnessing a camera to the body of a pigeon, which led to the invention of “aerial photography by means of a pigeon photographer.” It was during the First World War that camera-bearing pigeons were used for military purposes, when both the Allied and German armies deployed them to spy behind each other’s lines. This use of the pigeon can be seen as forerunner of the machine drone.

In many respects the French photographer Raphaël Dallaporta continues in this tradition of seeking a higher ground from which to view the surface of the earth. In 2010 he travelled to Afghanistan to assist a team of French archaeologists in compiling a visual inventory of the Afghan

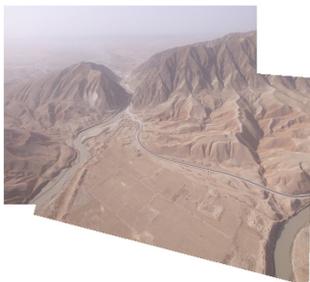
national heritage. With the help of a specially adapted drone, he made a visual survey of archaeological sites in the northern province of Balkh. This region of Afghanistan, and in particular the regional capital, also called Balkh, was once a major centre of learning and is one of the oldest cities in the world. However, in the 13th century, the Mongols destroyed the city, and climate change led to desertification of a once fertile region. Today most parts of the city are in ruins. From a Western perspective, the most famous sites are associated with Alexander the Great, who travelled to the region in 327 BC. More recently, the present war in Afghanistan has made the region dangerous, and some of the historical sites have been used again for military purposes. Dallaporta’s work *Ruins* (2011) surveys this landscape of conquest, conflict and invasion. His 8-minute video *Checkpoint Tanguï* (2012) combines two synchronized animated videos taken from the drone, and uses an image recognition algorithm to merge the images that trace the path of the drone over the landscape. In both works, the views from the drone reveal this ancient landscape, but also a landscape that is constantly changing, being marked by recent conflicts. It might well be a landscape of the future.

Paul Wombell is an independent curator and writer on photography living in London (U.K.). He has been director of Impressions Gallery, York (1986–94), director of The Photographers’ Gallery, London (1994–2005) and festival director of the Hereford Photography Festival (2006–07). Since 2007 he has curated exhibitions for the annual photographic festival PHotoEspaña in Madrid and for FotoGrafia Festival Internazionale di Roma. Most recently, he organized the one-person exhibition *Calves and Thighs: Juergen Teller* (2010) and the group exhibition *Bumpy Ride: The Prophecies of Photography* (2010). He regularly writes for international photographic publications. He has edited eight books on photography, the most recent being *End Times: Jill Greenberg* (TF Editores/D.A.P., 2012), and *The 70s: Photography and Everyday Life* (La Fábrica, 2009) co-edited with Sergio Mah.

RAPHAËL DALLAPORTA
(FR)

LE MOIS DE LA PHOTO À
MONTRÉAL

September 7 - October 5, 2013
Photographs, video



For its 13th edition, Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal has invited renowned British curator Paul Wombell to develop an exhibition program around his theme, *Drone: The Automated Image*. From September 5 to October 5, 2013, twenty-five exhibitions deployed in different sites will transform the city into a vast yet coherent photography exhibition. This event will chart the changing relationship between the camera and the human body.

In 2010 Raphaël Dallaporta travelled to Afghanistan to assist a team of French archaeologists with compiling a visual inventory of that country's national heritage. Many of these historical sites are endangered by pillage, and the war that started in 2001 has caused further damage to important monuments. Dallaporta was able to fly a specially adapted drone over the Afghani landscape to take pictures of historical sites. From this survey he made the work *Ruins* (2011). With their jagged edges that break the symmetry of the rectangle, the images reflect on the state of deteriorating remains and convey the fragile nature of the archaeological sites.

Raphaël Dallaporta was born in 1980 in Dourdan, France. He lives and works in Paris. He graduated from Gobelins, l'École de l'image and is the recipient of the Foam Paul Huf Award (2011) and the Young Photographer ICP Infinity Award (2010). He has had solo exhibitions at the Musée Nicéphore Niépce in Chalon-sur-Saône, France (2012); the Foam Fotografiemuseum in Amsterdam (2011); the Musée de l'Élysée in Lausanne (2010); and the New York Photo Festival (2008). His series *Ruins* was presented for the Prix découverte at the Rencontres d'Arles in 2011. His works are in major public collections, including the Fonds National d'Art Contemporain and the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris.

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