

Perhaps the obsession that feeds *La valeur sublime* (*The Sublime Value*) stems from the need to create meaning: unity at all costs and against all odds, since it is always the same person filming and observing, multiplying the ways in which an image can be constructed using a variety of masterful editing techniques. The work reflects a state of irresolution, an unframed fragmentation that characterizes the movement of all things, the loss of meaning that follows, and the flux in which all these images participate. On several occasions, the editing juxtaposes movement with the fleeting stillness inscribed within these sequences. The shadow cast by the videographer sustains the imagery in *La valeur sublime*, reminding us that these images never stand entirely alone, in self-referential isolation. Born from a process of observation, they form a sequence when perceived within a common frame, even if each image is often worlds apart from the next.

In the videos, Christophe Tarkos' text *L'argent* (1999) is extracted, re-edited, and narrated in a voiceover characterized by an unrelenting yet strangely soft-spoken diction. As though recalling the ideology of the market in its death throes. As though people did not want to hear anymore about it, at a time when acidic images of traders in beige suits set against the scarlet alter-globalization protesters, are reduced to a new kind of folklore. The images are unmistakably of the moment. But is the play of shot/counter-shot between security forces and some unruly crowd necessarily the harbinger of a movement? Perhaps. But in this case, where is the alternative? Have the past twenty years been a recurring nightmare? Where certain images and the technological systems that transmit them single-handedly foresee a range of possible outcomes? This kind of variety is only a shield.

Changes in register and drop frames impose their own order in the work of Étienne de Massy, and take on a unique meaning when presented in the gallery. Viewed this way, and marked by an internal resonance, the work gains new breadth. On the other hand, the two videos

can also be screened at festivals. In this case, each work will be perceived differently, falling within a succession of short films, where an understanding of complex issues diverges from one artistic vision to the next. In this sense, the gallery space becomes a kind of airlock, more closely reflecting the artist's frenzied point of view, adept in both circumferential and centripetal approaches, "squatting the satellite," as heard in the voiceover for *Somnia\_3* (2007), another of his key videos.

To be apart from the world, but still circle it; to be there and to no longer be there. Undoubtedly this is one of the paradoxes of *La valeur sublime*, where Christophe Tarkos' text begins with the admirable slogan "Money is the sublime value." Choosing specifically to position itself at a distance, the work shows images of security forces alongside their anti-establishment opposite, without necessarily committing to either perspective, since the flood of images acknowledges one side as much as the other. Which doesn't prevent the videographer from taking a side, with growing concern in light of the tableau he compulsively seeks to shape.

If he seems in control despite all this, one might also decode the central theme of a legacy in the work. While Étienne de Massy's technical accomplishments are apparent, the hallucinatory montage of images in motion still seeks to innocently survey a distraught world, a world troubled by the sight of spare change placed upon a child's lips, prompting consideration of the unresolved relationship between money and the future, as if in a game. The impact of these admittedly slick images is deep, sudden, and beautiful.

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**Guillaume Lafleur** has written on film and the media arts. He is the Executive and Artistic Director of Daïmon.

Text translated from french by Jo-Anne Balcaen.

ÉTIENNE DE MASSY  
(MTL)

LA VALEUR SUBLIME  
(THE SUBLIME VALUE)

January 17 - February 15, 2014  
Video installation



An installation comprised of two videos, both produced using stop-motion techniques. The first, presented in the main gallery, is an adaptation of the poem *L'argent* by Christophe Tarkos (1999). By putting this text in dialogue with his haunting and realistic imagery, and by deploying the irony in Tarkos' words to foster a certain level of discomfort, de Massy compels the spectator to examine his or her own relationship to money: "the sublime value."

Shown behind the first, as a sort of backstage view, the second video is a reflection on the digital image, on its immaterial, clean, and slick nature. Questioning its status as the "perfect tool" for the creation of parallel universes, irrational and completely disembodied, de Massy uses a process of accumulation, and sets the image to different rhythms, different arrangements that begin to build a narrative – captured live, suspended in fragments. Overflowing with abstract imagery, the video paradoxically creates a void, a distention of perceptions, a space without beginning or end.

**Étienne de Massy** is a graduate of Concordia University in Montreal (Canada). He has also studied at the Tisch School of the Arts in New-York (USA). A specialist in photo-digital animation, his works have been shown in numerous festivals, including: Mostra internazionale di video e cinema oltre (Milan); Vidéoformes (Clermont-ferrand); Internationales Kurzfilm Festival (Hamburg); Interfilm (Berlin); Viff (Vancouver); Festival du nouveau cinéma (Montréal). In 2009, he won the 1st prize from the VAD (International Video and Digital Arts Festival, Spain) in Spain for his film *Somnia\_3*.

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**SKOL**

372, rue Ste-Catherine Ouest, Espace 314,  
Montréal, QC, H3B 1A2  
[www.skol.ca](http://www.skol.ca) / [skol@skol.ca](mailto:skol@skol.ca) / 514.398.9322

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