

The dependent producer. Notes on CELESTE by Solimán López

At noon of the 5th September 1822, a 46 years old John Constable was painting the sky. It was a typically British sky, covered by clouds "moving very fast", as he noted later, "with occasional very bright openings to the blue". The sketch, now on display at the Victoria & Albert Museum, was just the new entry of a project he was pursuing in those months, inspired by the recent ground-breaking studies on clouds physics of chemist Luke Howard. What strikes the contemporary eye is the perfect balance between the need to quickly sketch what was before his eyes and the feeling of looking at a satisfying composition that doesn't leave room to calculated disorder. The cutting-edge theoretical knowledge in clouds physics and the experimental outdoor sketching were used by Constable to make a depiction of a natural phenomenon that can't be mistaken for reality.

CELESTE (2017) by **Solimán López** explores similar paths. He questions the use of high technology for the purpose of establishing the semblance of the sky as accurately as possible, synthesising the data accordingly to arbitrary parameters. The result is an image that, while recalling the original content, becomes something else. It's a gradient whose pigments don't really replace the colours of the sky because they don't address the human perception of reality but machine's.

If digital gradients are the effect of the human need to make the pixel something more than a mere single coloured unit, the pixels composing it express an utopic plan of harmony - a plan that turns the alien black digital screen in a less alienating surface. A gradient aims to bring the object on the screen back to reality, camouflaging its shades among the shades of what is not backlit, of what is not made of pixels. The reason why there are so many digital blue skies on the internet and on our digital wallpapers is that they are almost universally known as objects of relaxation. They're a tool we unconsciously use to fight the binary grammar of the digital experience; they serve the same purpose of plants we put in our white and tiny offices. They're icons in the sense that open passages between what is it and what could happen outside our usage of the device. This peculiar fascination for the sky is the *raison d'être* of the technology employed by Solimán López to make **CELESTE**, even before then the work itself.

Since the introduction of photography, artists, scientists and philosophers reflected on what is the extent to which human role is important in the making of a photograph. If it's true that is the camera that almost automatically captures a picture, it's the photographer who determines the composition, the right moment and that presses the button. Going further back, it's a human being the one who built the camera according to his own needs and skills. How much is independent a machine of its maker? To what extent the perception of the maker is influenced in return by his machine?

In times of exciting and unprecedented machine learning experiments, **CELESTE** plays an important role specifically in virtues of the way it engages the visitor in a challenging discussion regarding the never ending question of the dependency of creators and creations. Behind the happy-go-lucky scientifically accurate process with which Solimán López depicts the sky it lies an urgent need to question to what extent we can still choose what pigments they can use to depict reality and how our tools are/will be affected by our human needs.

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