



Delocalised project

SERAFÍN ÁLVAREZ

MAZE WALKTHROUGH

Means of passage and travel are essential in science fiction, since the narrative tension in most works in this genre derives from some experience of alienation, exodus or voyage. Science fiction is perceived in the popular imaginary as an exercise in speculation with potential value, an ambition that makes technological advance a prerequisite. This advance has ultimately become – with few objections raised – the intrinsic factor of the fiction, of that which we unfailingly believe will come to pass tomorrow. In science fiction, this sensation is reflected above all in the tremendous technological evolution in modes of transport. Clearly out of synch with other aspects of the plot, these means of travel go beyond the physical constraints of our world and our organic dependence on it. In such craft, we are able to get anywhere. It is only once we have arrived that we subject ourselves to the strangeness that is *de rigueur* in this type of film, to everything that is typical of this cinematic genre. Only then will the importance of the journey become evident to us; only then will we see the significance of the way we got there, of that parenthetical moment that is resolved at full speed, crossing unimaginable distances and collapsing the vastness of the universe.

Serafín Álvarez grasps the brutality of this haste and proposes to lead us on a tour of a series of corridors taken from a number of sci-fi films. Even though we have settled comfortably into the overwhelming hypertrophy of the dimensions of the cosmos, we often forget that the structures that link the departure point and the destination are those that make travel possible. The corridor, therefore, becomes a kind of early symptom. We enter it in order to begin a journey. It is a rootless space that no-one owns. It is a nexus, a conjunction, a metaphor of process, change, transit and transition. Nothing begins and nothing ends in it. According to Álvarez, *Maze Walkthrough* pays tribute to the in-between. The corridor is, above all, an architectural structure of passage; that is its connecting nature. The bodies that use it are compelled to set themselves in motion, to display their accelerated speed. If the non-conclusive ambiguity of the corridor is uncoupled from places of departure and arrival, a suspended architectural construction is created, a looped structure with no exit. We enter the perfect maze. To get out of it, we will have to teletransport ourselves back to the prosaic reality of simply sitting on this side of the screen.

This return to our chair also makes clear to us the intention of exploring this transit that the ‘virtual’ forces us to embark on. *Maze Walkthrough* is constructed in the manner of a videogame to show the workings of some of these mechanisms that demand the unequivocal attention of the eye and allow us, after allaying our doubts, to enter

the experience of the credible. There is one mechanism closely related to that choice of corridors. As we get deeper into *Maze Walkthrough*, we are struck by the fact that, all of a sudden, each time we are presented with the possibility of taking a new pathway, the depths of a space with very specific characteristics open up. The way the structural and decorative elements of these walkways are repeated, one after the other, stepping back into the distance like frames within frames within frames, calls to mind the staging of a strict *mise en abyme*. We realise at once that we are in fact pursuing a vanishing point, that we are getting lost in a never-ending fall. The screen becomes a portal that sucks us optically in. We find ourselves immersed in an unending tunnel vision that absorbs us and forces us to violate the boundary of the plasma.

Serafín Álvarez (León, 1985) lives and works in Barcelona and Brussels. He holds a BA and an MA in Fine Art from the University of Barcelona and is currently engaged in a research project on the transmedia expansion of science-fiction film as part of his doctoral thesis. He has had solo shows at the MUSAC (Castile and León Museum of Contemporary Art) and La Capella and has shown work in group exhibitions in venues such as the Fabra i Coats – Barcelona Contemporary Art Centre, La Panera Art Centre and Halfhouse and in online projects, including *Artscoming.com* and *Stuffinablank.com*. He has led workshops and given talks at centres such as the SAC (Contemporary Sant Andreu), the Leandre Cristòfol Municipal Art School and the University of Barcelona. He has featured in a number of publications and catalogues and has also published his own artist's books. He has been awarded a number of grants to produce work, among them BCN Producció, OSIC and Plataforma P4.

