



## Image to the power of infinity Laurence Bretrand Dorléac, 1999

A new digital era is upon us, with numbers joined by invisible links infiltrating every sphere of life. Today bar codes on manufactured goods are scanned and decoded immediately; the same process identifies holders of social security and bank cards. Even filing consists of keying codes into a computer - a far cry from traditional clerical work. The digital factor has taken over from human input, replacing chance and random effect with speed and reliability, and linking people and objects in an infinite network of meanings.

Behind these miracles lies a meta-machine: the computer, feeding on manufactured rather than natural energy, manipulating data through a combination of language and mathematics. Even more striking, the computer is a means of reconciling technical and symbolic discourse, once considered mutually exclusive. Making it only natural that digital reality would break into the art world, too.

Art history traces the renewal of forms that has come with the emergence of new techniques. And just as photography and cinema began with the luminous traces of objects, image is inextricably linked to the empire of numbers. With one major difference: today, for the first time, images are capable of self-generation, an infinity of instantaneous variations of shapes and colors that can end with full disintegration.

Methodically, painstakingly, Miguel Chevalier extracts meaning from these sequences of digital images. His video work focuses on swift and unceasing movement, a succession of seizing-decomposing-recomposing. Works shown here were chosen as particularly eloquent examples of the process involved in restoring the steps and reconstituting the cycle.

Present in each is the square, recalling pixels (from "picture elements") - the tiny interfaces between image and number. Reproduction of an identical subject in a new square shaped by four different sequences restores the strength of color and its effects on perceptions of reality. Archive footage is transmuted into an icon of remembrance. Corroded from within, its intelligibility fades until it becomes an abstraction. Only interwoven colored signs remain.

Digital grooves on vinyl grooves, work stretched or embedded: in each case, at least one element underscores the precarious nature of the sign and the role of memory. Yet the program serves several purposes: far from being emptied of its content, the image retains its full emotional power as Miguel Chevalier uncovers the foundations of modern thought. Ahead lie movement, speed, transmission vectors, events and memory. Behind is the radical nature of the number - omnipresent, a sign of life and death.