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Virtual Stonehenge Reconstruction

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HYPER NATURALISM & SIMULACRA IN STONEHENGE ART

Unver and Taylor have explored digitally a methodology that has interested makers and observers for decades. In the 1930's Walter Benjamin in his seminal discussion of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction worried about the destruction of authenticity and aura that reproductions of the real created for the viewer, whilst acknowledging that this reproduction allowed artefacts to be dislocated from their original ritual purposes and therefore making the once scared more accessible.

In 1977 Roland Barthes liberated the emphasis of construction and understanding of knowledge from the makers to the spectator by proposing that the author (in the case of Stonehenge this is a point for discussion) was no longer the 'god' that should be sought out to explain the works on offer. In fact, once the understanding of a text is placed with the viewer he suggested that to try to impose a final reading of an object is ineffective. Baudrillard believed that when a reader seeks out an image of the real (at the Stonehenge monument there is a physical barrier in place between the tourist and the object) the more vast the schism between a lived experience. Unver and Taylor, have helped to reinstate an immersive experience through the Stonehenge Virtual Reconstruction research. Up for debate is whether their output really is another example of 'technological inertia' or whether, because digital life and real life are now so closely intertwined they have enabled new spectators to get up close and personal with these stones.

[1] Roland Barthes. *Image Music Text* [1978] [2] Jean Buadrillard. *The Consumer Society* (1970)

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