"What shall our new ornaments be? How should we adorn mortality now?...The narcotic and cosmetic each distribute a space. They sculpt what rhythmed peace could be."
—Lisa Robertson

The 1983 film *War Games* is largely remembered for its closing scene; an errant military supercomputer, after simulating 14,000,605 nuclear scenarios with Russia, achieves a moment of divine self awareness and abandons its mission to detonate an atomic bomb. The film's heroes watch in sublime horror from their bunker as an LED map of the globe is covered with trails of fake white missiles. The computer enumerates a series of hypothetical wars as steps in its epiphany, "India Pakistan War, Iceland Escalation, Syrian Provocation, Zaire Alliance, Sudan Surprise," all of whose winners are calculated as none. The film had such an impact on Ronald Reagan's understanding of the stakes of global information systems that he postponed a meeting with Russia to organize a national security directive.

Beyond a nightmare from the twilight of the cold war, the film offers a prescient model for how global peace is both bound to and accomplished by deterministic systems beyond the scale of human subjectivity. This was understood long ago by Immanuel Kant, whose essay "Perpetual Peace" posits the end of all war as a teleological fact. For Kant, moss in the tundra and camels in the desert are proof that a god's providence moves the process of nature. While war might push humans to inhabit the most remote regions of the globe, this is all in the service of a "global cosmopolitanism" that will one day be achieved.

The USSR is long gone, but there is still war, and we are now starting to recognize that the more immediate existential threats to mankind come from our relationship to camels and moss, not our fellow men. If we are to trust Kant, then we aren't there *yet,* so what is our role *now* in this unfolding process? In the machine learning systems that govern our financial markets and will soon start driving cars, trillions of points of synthetic data are generated and processed on a register beyond the scale of our comprehension. Ecological critics are apt to point out the energy required to sustain these supercomputers, but on what grounds can we draw an ethical distinction between the symmetry they might uncover, and our civilization—the oil that delivers us to art? Can Kant's god distinguish our paintings from a hallucinated "Iceland Escalation"?

In *A Schiena Dritta*, Ross Eaton scales up one of the tiny glass infinities featured in his previous show *Grazed*. What was once the size of a shoebox now fills the entire gallery, and three foreign flags extend out to infinity in a hall of mirrors. Is this a war room? Who is an ally and who is a foe? Is the fate that awaits us here any different from the rest of the series? In Eaton's installation, the possibility of perpetual peace is a question of aesthetic permutation. As Calvino once enumerated a list of imagined cities in the travels of Marco Polo, we are here presented with one possible world, and forced to view our own as equally contingent. Just as Borges once remarked after kicking a dune in the Sahara—"I am modifying the infinite"—the artist's dispersal of sand in the gallery suggests that every aesthetic intervention is an act of providence.

- Andy Rickert