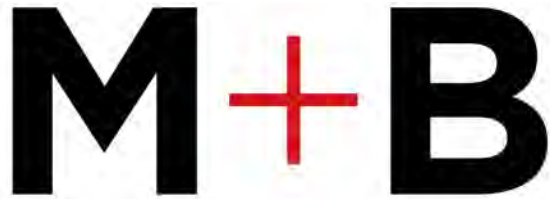




JON RAFMAN

Press Pack



JON RAFMAN

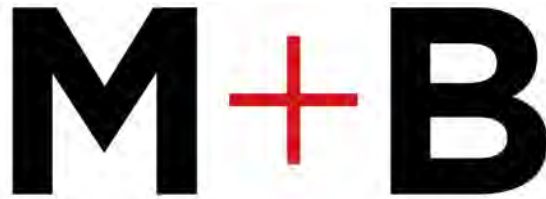
BORN 1981
Lives and works in Montreal, Canada

EDUCATION

2006-2008 M.F.A. School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Film, Video and New Media
2000-2004 B.A. McGill University, Philosophy & Literature

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

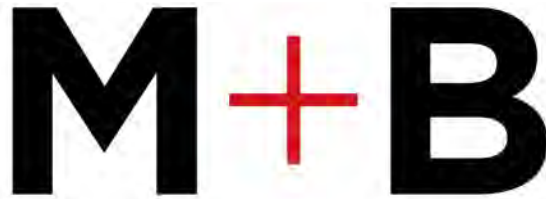
- 2015 Zabludowicz Collection, London
Keren Cytter/Jon Rafman, two-person exhibition, Feuer/Mesler, New York, NY
Field Vision, two-person exhibition with Christian Jankowski, Future Gallery, Berlin
Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Canada
- 2014 *Jon Rafman: The end of the end of the end*, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, MO
Hope Springs Eternal, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, Montreal, QC
Independent Fair, UNTITLED, New York, NY
DISown, Installation in Red Bull Studios, Chelsea, curated by DIS Magazine, New York, NY
Powerball Installation at The Power Plant, in collaboration with Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, Toronto, Canada
- 2013 *You Are Standing in an Open Field*, Zach Feuer Gallery, New York, NY
Remember Carthage, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, Montréal, Canada
A Man Digging, Seventeen Gallery, London, UK
Annals of Lost Time, Future Gallery, Berlin, Germany
Jon Rafman, Fondazione Pastificio Cerere, Rome, Italy
Remember Carthage: New Online Art, The New Museum, New York, NY
- 2012 *Much Have I Travelled in the Realms of Gold*, The Green Room: The Composing Rooms, London, UK
Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France
The Nine Eyes of Google Street View, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK
Mirror Sites, International Art Object Galleries and M+B Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Nine Eyes of Google Street View, Angell Gallery, Toronto, ON
BNPJ MMXII, American Medium, New York, NY
- 2011 *Brand New Paint Job Extended*, PMgalerie in collaboration with Future Gallery, Berlin
9 Eyes of Google Street View, Sid Lee Collective, Amsterdam
Brand New Paint Job, Fabio Paris Gallery, Brescia, Italy



2010 *The Age Demanded*, Golden Age, Chicago, IL

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 *2015 Sobey Art Award*, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Canada
Image Objects, City Hall Park, NY
Russian Doll, M+B, Los Angeles, CA
Concentrations 59: Mirror Stage—Visualizing the Self After the Internet, Dallas Museum of Art, TX
Anti-Grand: Contemporary Perspectives on Landscape, Joel and Lila Harnett Museum of Art, University of Richmond Museums, VA
What Remains, Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College Chicago, IL
- 2014 *By Proxy*, James Cohan Gallery, New York, NY
New Systems, New Structures 001, William Arnold, Brooklyn, NY
Today : Tomorrow, Balice Hertling, New York, NY
Private Settings, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Poland
Gang Signs, Future Gallery, Berlin, Germany
AIRBNB Pavilion, 14th Venice Architecture Biennale, Italy
Silicon Valley Contemporary, San Jose, CA
Science Fiction: New Death, Foundation for Art and Technology, Liverpool, UK
Art Post-Internet, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China
Speaking Through Paint: Hans Hofmann's Legacy Today, Lori Bookstein Fine Art, New York, NY
What is a Photograph? International Centre for Photography, New York, NY
- 2013 *Where are we now?*, The Collection Museum, Lincoln, UK
Speculations on Anonymous Materials, Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany
ANAMERICANA, Depart Foundation, Rome, Italy
Drone: The Automated Image, Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal, Montreal, Canada
Frequency: Lincoln Digital Cultures Festival, London, UK
MAMA Showroom, Rotterdam, Netherlands
The Photographer's Gallery, London, UK
Center for Photography at Woodstock, Woodstock, NY
Ed Ruscha Books & Co., Gagosian Gallery, New York, NY
Extravagant Features, C24 Gallery, New York, NY
Jew York, Zach Feuer Gallery, New York, NY
- 2012 *Surface Tension*, The Future Gallery, Berlin, Germany
Collect the WWWorld: The Artist as Archivist in the Internet Age, 319 Scholes, Brooklyn, NY
Scope Creep, Yaffo23, Jerusalem, Israel
Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship, Higher Pictures, New York, NY
Seriously Old Grey Hair, Christopher Crescent/ HD Project, New York, NY
Rome wasn't built because no one was doing anything that day, Outpost, Norwich, UK
Nine Eyes, Moscow Photobiennale, Central Exhibition Hall Manege, Moscow, Russia
Public, CONTACT Photo Festival, Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto, ON
Screenshots, William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT



Mapas Invisibles, Luis Adelantado Gallery, Mexico City, Mexico

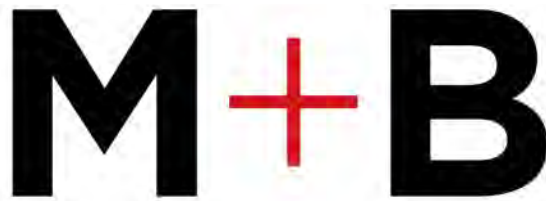
- 2011 *Point-of-Presence*, TRUCK Contemporary Art Gallery, Calgary, AB
Format, The Luminary Center for the Arts, St Louis, MO
new jpegs, Johan Berggren Gallery, Malmo, Sweden
From Here On, Les Rencontres d'Arles Photographie: International Photography Festival, Arles, France
Alrededor es imposible, La Casa Encendida, Madrid, Spain.
Stone Sky over Thingworld, Bitforms, New York, NY
Offline, Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin, Ireland
Pepsi Throwback Label on a New Coke Can, Reference Gallery, Richmond, VA
Read/Write, 319 Scholes Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 2010 *Free*, New Museum, New York, NY
Maps & Legends, Fotographia Festival Internazionale di Roma, Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome, Italy
Repair, Ars Electronica Festival, Linz, Austria
A Unicorn Basking in the Light of Three Glowing Suns, DeVos Art Museum, Marquette, MI
Man in the Dark, The Woodmill, London, UK
Within which all things exist and move, Art 45, Montreal, QC
FutureEverything Festival, Manchester, UK
Avatar 4D, Noma Gallery, San Francisco, CA

ART FAIRS

- 2014 Art Basel Miami Beach, Zach Feuer Gallery
Artissima, Balice Hertling, Paris
FIAC, Balice Hertling, Paris
Art Los Angeles Contemporary, M+B, Los Angeles, CA
Art Los Angeles Contemporary, Zach Feuer Gallery
- 2013 Art Los Angeles Contemporary, Solo Booth, M+B, Los Angeles, CA
- 2012 Basel Miami, NADA Art Fair, Seventeen Gallery, Miami, USA
ARCO, Madrid, Spain
ArtHK, Saamlung Gallery, Hong Kong, China
Artgeneve, The Future Gallery, Geneva, Switzerland
- 2011 Basel Miami, China Art Objects Galleries, Miami, USA
Frieze, China Art Objects, London, UK

AWARDS & HONOURS

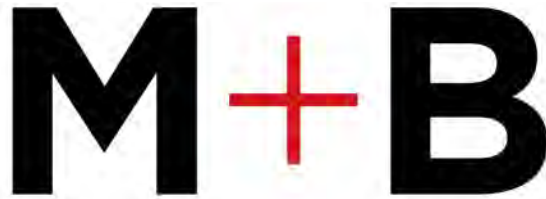
- 2012 Media Arts Grant, Canada Council for the Arts
- 2010 Filmmaker's Assistance Program Grant - National Film Board of Canada



2008 Artist Production Grant - Canada Council for the Arts, Emerging
Research & Creation Grant - Conseil des arts et des lettres du Quebec

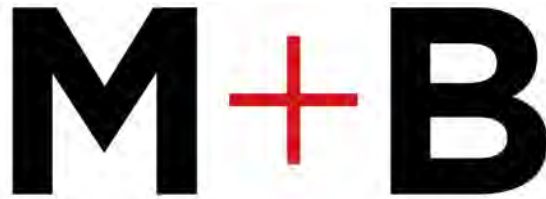
SELECTED PRESS / CRITICAL REVIEWS

- 2015 Beech, Mark. "Jon Rafman Mixes Sexy Tech With Video in London Art Show," *BLOUIN ARTINFO*, October 26
Barnard, Elissa. "At the Galleries: Strong Candidates for Sobey Art Award," *Herald Arts & Life*, October 22
Gottschalk, Molly. "Jon Rafman's Participatory Playground Hits Harder Than You'd Think," *ARTSY*, October 17
Johnson, Ken. "Review: Image Object Looks at the Relationship Between the Virtual and the Physical," *The New York Times*, July 16
Indrisek, Scott. "Image Objects Brings the Digital Outdoors," *BLOUIN ARTINFO*, July 8
- 2014 Mullet, David. "Jon Rafman's Digital Wanderings at Art Basel Miami," *Dazed*, Dec 12
Cleveland, Carter. "Carter Cleveland Says Art in the Future Will Be for Everyone," *Wall Street Journal*, 7 July
"Review: Jon Rafman: Hope Springs Eternal," *Artreview*, Vol. 66 No. 6, September
"Artist Gives Place a Brandt New Paint Job with Famous Paintings," *Creative Boom Magazine*, March
- 2013 Soderberberg, Brandon. "The Best Music Videos of 2013," *Noisey by Vice*, 30 December
"The Top 10 Gallery Shows of 2013," *Artsy Editorial*, 19 December
"Jon Rafman," Interview by Stephen Froese, *PIN-UP*, December Issue
"20 Artists to Collect Now," *Architectural Digest*, December Issue
"Annals of Time Lost," *Amusement.net*, 6 May
- 2012 "2012 Roundup: Artist Breakthroughs," *Canadian Art*, 24 December
"Looking for CanCon at Miami Art Basel?" *Maclean's*, 6 December
"Montreal-based artist finds beauty in Google's Street View," *New York Daily News*, 29 August
"The 100 Most Iconic Artworks of the Last Five Years by ARTINFO," *ARTINFO*, 17 September
"Photographers using Google Street View – in pictures," *Guardian Online Gallery*, 15 July
"Google muse: the new breed of street photographers," *The Observer*, 14 July
"How Google Street View is inspiring new photography" by Geoff Dyer, *The Guardian*, 14 July
"Critic's Pick: Jon Rafman at M+B Gallery," *ARTFORUM*, 14 June
"Street Views" by Geoff Dyer, *The Believer Magazine* Vol. 10 #5, 1 June
"Mirror Sites: Jon Rafman at M+B Art and International Art Objects," *Photograph Magazine*, 29 May
"Artists and Technologists Team Up for Rhizome Event" by Randy Kennedy, *The New York Times*, 3 April
"Rafman's Google Goods," *NOW Magazine*, 10 May
"Interview: Jon Rafman, the lack of history in the post-Internet age," *EYECURIOUS*, 4 May
"Jon Rafman's The Nine Eyes of Google Street View" by Murray Whyte, *Toronto Star*, 3 May
"Jon Rafman: Mapping Google" by Saelan Twerdy, *Canadian Art Magazine*, 3 May



- "Best in Show: ARTINFO Canada's Top Pick from World's Largest Photography Festival,"
ARTINFO, 2 May
- "Contact Photography Festival 2012 Preview," *The Toronto Star*, 26 April
- "Artists and Technologists Team Up for Rhizome Event," *The New York Times*, 3 April
- "Photographie – Les oeuvres très Net de Jon Rafman," *Le Devoir*, 5 March
- "Visual Arts: PrOn explores world of unsatisfied digital desires," *The Montreal Gazette*, 4 March
- "Gott Google," *Tages Anzeiger*, 29 February
- "Jon Rafman's Surreal Google Street View Accidents," *The Huffington Post*, 27 February
- "Nine Eyes of Google Jon Rafman snapshots project from Google Street View cars that go globetrotting," *RushLane*, 22 February
- "The Nine Eyes of Google Street View: a photo project by Jon Rafman," *The Telegraph*, 21 February
- "Stolen Moments: Google Street View Art Project," *The Huffington Post*, 21 February
- "The street views Google wasn't expecting you to see – in pictures," *The Guardian*, 20 February
- 2011 "Independent Projects turn Google Maps into Entertainment" by Rob Walker, *The New York Times Magazine*, 30 December
- "Callings from Canada: Virtual Reality Bites" by Raji Sohal, *PBS - Art:21*, 20 December
- "The Grand Map" by Avi Steinberg, *The Paris Review*, 5 October
- "Google's Mapping Tools Spawn New Breed of Art Projects," *Wired*, 15 August
- "Codes of Honor," *Kill Screen*, 19 September
- "Exhaustive Images: Surveillance, Sovereignty, and Subjectivity in Google Maps Street View," *Fillip*, 1 September
- "Down the Line," *Frieze*, 1 September
- "Surveillance, Sovereignty, & Subjectivity in Google Street View" by Gabby Moser, *Fillip* #15, 1 September
- "Why you are the future of photography" by Sean O'Hagan, *The Guardian*, 13 July
- "Jon Rafman's Google Street Views" by Jimmy Chen, *Thought Catalog*, 7 March
- "Jon Rafman and Tabor Robak's BNPJ.exe" by Lauren Christiansen, *Artinfo.com*, 9 February
- 2010 "Global Entertainment," *The New York Times*, 30 December
- "Calling from Canada: Virtual Reality Bites," *Art21 Blog*, 20 December
- "Jon Rafman at Golden Age – Art Review" by Jonathan Kinkley, *Time Out Chicago*, 17 November
- "The Portraits of Google Street View" by Alexis Madrigal, *The Atlantic*, 9 November
- "Deutschland späht durch die Pixellöcher," *Der Spiegel*, 19 November
- "Networked City: at a festival where the world gets reprogrammed," *Motherboard.TV*, 7 September
- "Avec view sur la vie" by Marie Lechner, *Libération*, 25 October
- "Jon Rafman," *PAINTED, ETC.*, 18 October
- "Take it to the (virtual) streets" by Scott Indrisek, *Modern Painters*, 1 September
- "Tragedy and Comedy, Starring Pac-Man" by Seth Schiesel, *The New York Times*, 15 July
- 2009 "Search and Destroy," *Harper's Magazine*, New York, NY, 1 Nov
- "Bushwick Artist Profile: Jon Rafman," *Bushwick BK*, 13 March

FILM SCREENINGS



- 2014 *Popova-Lissitzky Office Complex*, Art Basel, Miami Beach
Juan Gris Dream House, Art Basel, Miami Beach
Under-Paralell-Alter-Multi-Outer-Inner-Other-WORLDS, curated by Pascual Sisto, Michael Thibault Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Hope Springs Eternal, FACT, Liverpool
- 2013 *Remember Carthage*, Edinburgh Arts Festival (Circa Projects), Scotland
In the Realms of Gold, Optic Nerve Festival, MOCA, Miami (forthcoming)

PANELS / DISCUSSIONS

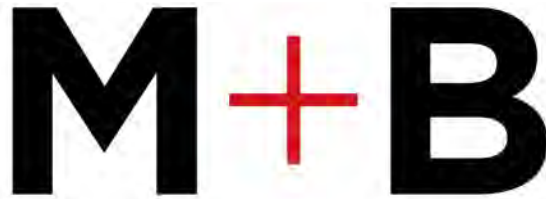
- 2014 The end of the end of the end, Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis, MO
- 2012 Surveillance, Security and the Net, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C.
- 2011 Mediated Landscapes, Index Festival, New York, NY
The Metropolis and Me: New Narratives Urban Interface, Little Tokyo Design Week, Los Angeles, CA
Visual Art and Fair Use, World Fair Use Day, Washington D.C.
- 2010 doing it for the lulz, Xspace Cultural Center, Toronto, ON
Virtual Explorers, SECAC, Richmond, VA

INTERVIEWS

- 2012 "Three Questions for Jon Rafman," La Gaîté Lyrique, 11 May
"Jon Rafman, The lack of history in the post-Internet age," *Eye Curious*, 4 May
- 2011 "Jon Rafman interviewed by AIDS 3D (Daniel Keller and Nik Kosmas)," *Kaleidoscope*, 14 Dec
"Interview with Jon Rafman," *The Brian Lehrer Show*, WNYC TV, 18 May
"Jon Rafman talks to Dean Kissick," *Tank Magazine*, Vol. 7 Issue 12, 1 May
"Artist Profile: Jon Rafman" by Manuel Berger, *Lodown Magazine* #75, 2 March
"Jon Rafman Prend des Photos de Photos Google," *Vice France*, 11 January
- 2010 "Revealing Jon Rafman," *Bomb Magazine*, 8 July
"A Conversation with Jon Rafman," *Bad at Sports*, 12 May
"Is Second Life the theatre of the absurd?," *NPRIL*, 28 May

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

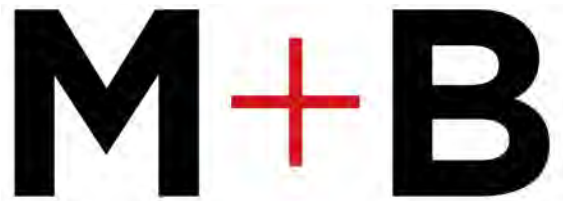
- 2014 *Artist Book*, Punctum Press
New Age Demanded, Colour Code
- 2013 *PIN-UP Magazine* 15. United States
ANAMERICANA. Rome, Italy: Nero



- 2012 Screenshots catalogue, CT, William Benton Museum of Art
Moscow Photobiennale 2012 catalogue, Moscow House of Photography Museum, Moscow
Russia
- 2011 *Nine Eyes of Google Street View by Jon Rafman*, Jean Boîte éditions, Paris, France
Inéditos 2011 catalogue, La Casa Encendida de Obra Social Caja Madrid, Spain
In the Nostalgia District, Frieze Magazine 20th Anniversary Issue, London, UK
From Here On catalogue, Arles, Ninth International France
Les Rencontres d'Arles Photography catalogue, Arles, France
The Metropolitan Issue, Gup #30, Amsterdam, Holland
- 2010 *Dans lequel tout choses existent et s'animent: Jon Rafman and Gabor Szilasi*, Art45, Montreal,
QC
Futurspectives - Fotografia 2010 catalogue, Rome, Italy
Repair - Ars Electronica 2010 catalogue, Linz, Austria
FutureEverthing 2010 catalogue, Manchester, UK
- 2009 "IMG MGMT: Nine Eyes of Google Street View by Jon Rafman," *Art Fag City*, New York, NY
"16 Google Street Views by Jon Rafman," *Golden Age*, Chicago, IL
Fotofest Biennial 2009 catalogue, Houston, TX

ARTIST TALKS AND ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

- 2014 *Private Settings*, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Poland
In Search of the Virtual Sublime, The Moving Museum, Istanbul
Artist Talk: Jon Rafman, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, MO
- 2012 La Gaîté Lyrique, Paris, France
Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, NY
Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow, Russia
Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, IL
- 2011 University of Texas, Austin, TX
NMM Festival, Norrköping, Sweden
Ontario University of Art and Design University, Toronto, ON
Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, CA
Roski School of Art, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA
Alberta College of Art and Design, Internet Art, Calgary, AB
University of Nevada, Intro to New Media, Reno, Nevada
- 2010 Bard College, Red Hook, NY
University of California Santa Cruz, Intro to Media Arts, CA
University of Southern California, Internet Art
- 2007-2008 Assistant Instructor, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Media Practices & Video II



COLLECTIONS

Getty Trust, Los Angeles
Saatchi Collection, London
DeVos Art Museum, Michigan
Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome
Musee Des Beaux Arts
Blema and Arnold Steinberg Collection, Montreal, Canada
Depart Fondation, Italy
Saatchi Collection, London, UK
La Caisse de Depot Collection, Montreal, Canada
Hydro Quebec Collection. Montreal, Canada



JON RAFMAN

Jon Rafman (b. 1981) is a Montreal-based artist, filmmaker and essayist. Mixing irony, humour and melancholy, Rafman's work explores the paradoxes of modernity. Well known within the digital community, his work is informed by the rich potential provided by contemporary technology in its possibility for celebrating and critiquing contemporary experience. As an artist whose subject is the human experience, he captures the human in a wide variety of potentially alienating contexts. He received his BA (2004) in literature and philosophy from McGill University in Montreal, QC, and his MFA (2008) from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in Chicago, IL. Jon has exhibited his works across the US, Canada, Italy, Sweden, Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Japan and Russia. Rafman's *Nine Eyes of Google Street View* has been featured in *Modern Painter*, *Frieze*, *Der Spiegel*, *Libération*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *Harper's Magazine*, his solo exhibition at M+B chosen as ArtForum Critic's pick.



JON RAFMAN

Selected Portfolio

M+B



Jon Rafman

Installation view of solo show at the Zabludowicz Collection, London
October 8 – December 20, 2015

M+B



Jon Rafman

Installation view of *Image Objects*, group show at City Hall Park, New York
June 30 – November 20, 2015

M+B



Jon Rafman

Installation view of *Jon Rafman: The Attraction of Virtual Communities*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MAC), Québec
June 20 – September 13, 2015

M+B



Jon Rafman
Installation View of *Field Vision*, two-person exhibition at Future Gallery, Berlin
May 1 – June 13, 2015

M+B



Jon Rafman

Installation view of *What Remains*, group show at the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College, Chicago
January 26 – March 22, 2015

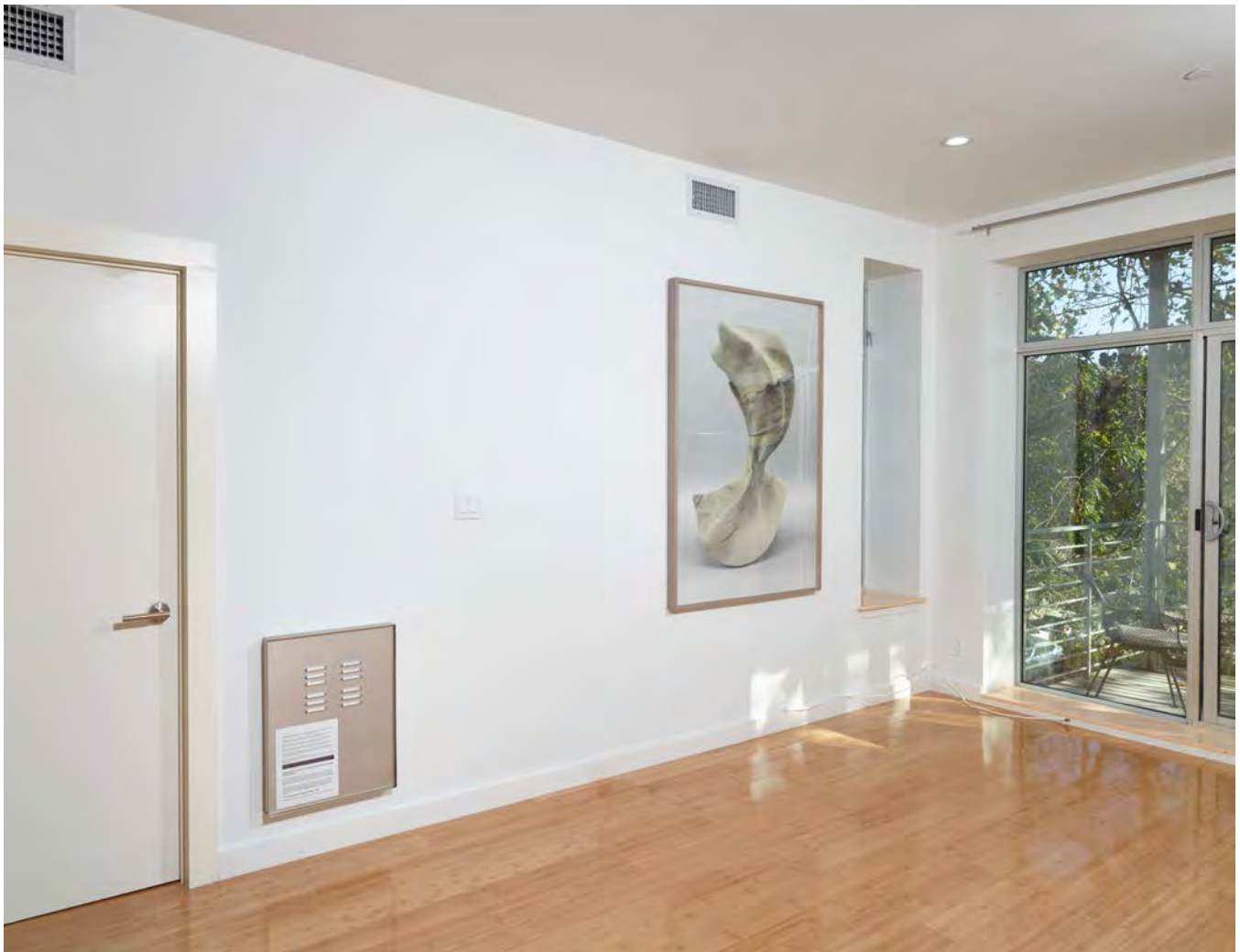
M+B



Jon Rafman

Installation View of *By Proxy* at James Cohan Gallery, New York
November 20, 2014 – January 31, 2015

M+B



Jon Rafman

Installation view of *New Systems, New Structures 001*, three-person show
with Darja Bajagic and Jesse Stecklow at William Arnold, Brooklyn, NY
September 26 – October 26, 2014

M+B



Jon Rafman

New Age Demanded (Twombly #2), 2012

archival pigment print

signed and dated verso

unique

58 x 42 inches (147 x 107 cm)

(JR.02.011.58)

M+B



Jon Rafman

New Age Demanded (Ribbed Kline), 2012

archival pigment print

signed and numbered verso

unique

58 x 42 inches (147 x 107 cm)

(JR.02.009.58)

M+B



Jon Rafman

Installation View of *The End of the End of the End* at the Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis
June 27 – August 10, 2014

M+B



Jon Rafman
New Age Demanded (Wavy Malevich)
signed and dated verso
archival pigment print
58 x 42 inches
unique
(JR.02.012.58)

M+B



Jon Rafman

New Age Demanded (Flapface Bronze), 2014

3D printed photopolymer resin, acrylic polyurethane paint
signed and dated verso

20 x 14 x 10 inches (50.8 x 35.6 x 25.4 cm)

unique

(JR.02.013.20)

M+B



Jon Rafman

Speed Demon Nero Marquina, 2014

CNC routed nero maquina marble

19 x 14-1/2 x 10 inches (48.3 x 36.8 x 25.4 cm)

unique

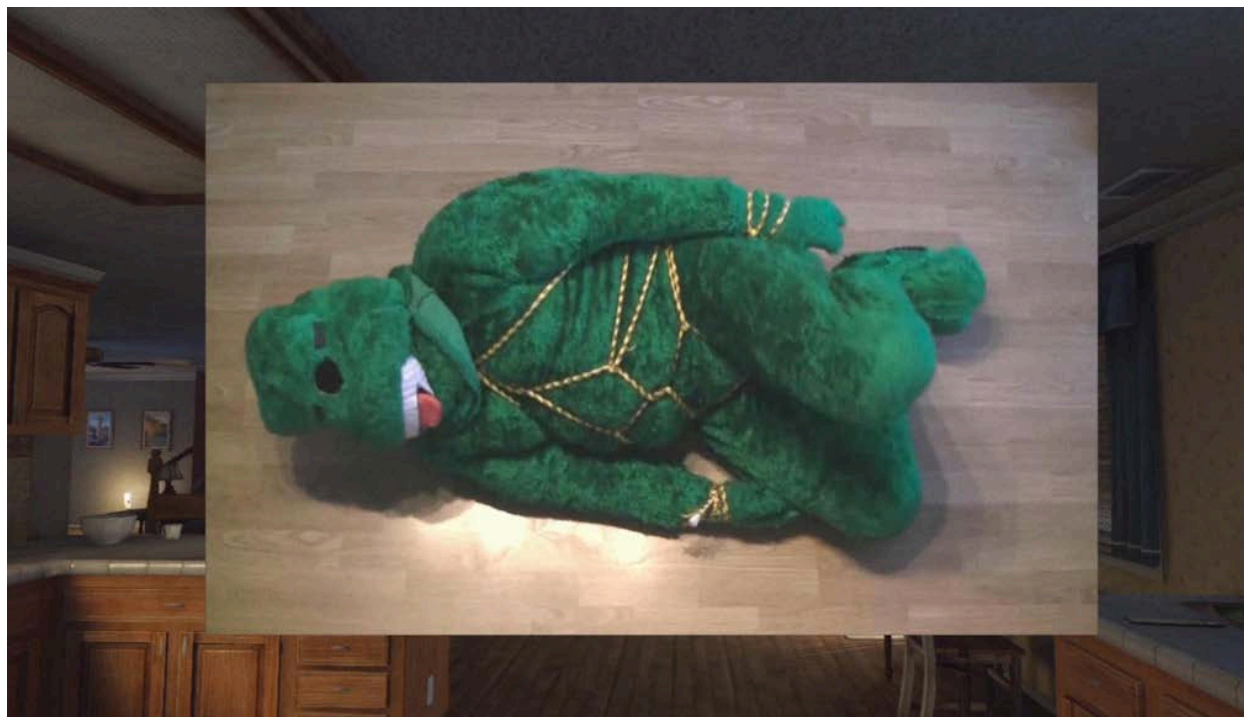
M+B



Jon Rafman

Installation View of *Hope Springs Eternal*, solo show at
Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, Montréal
June 4 – 28, 2014

M+B



Jon Rafman
Mainsqueeze (film still), 2014
HD video
edition of 3

M+B

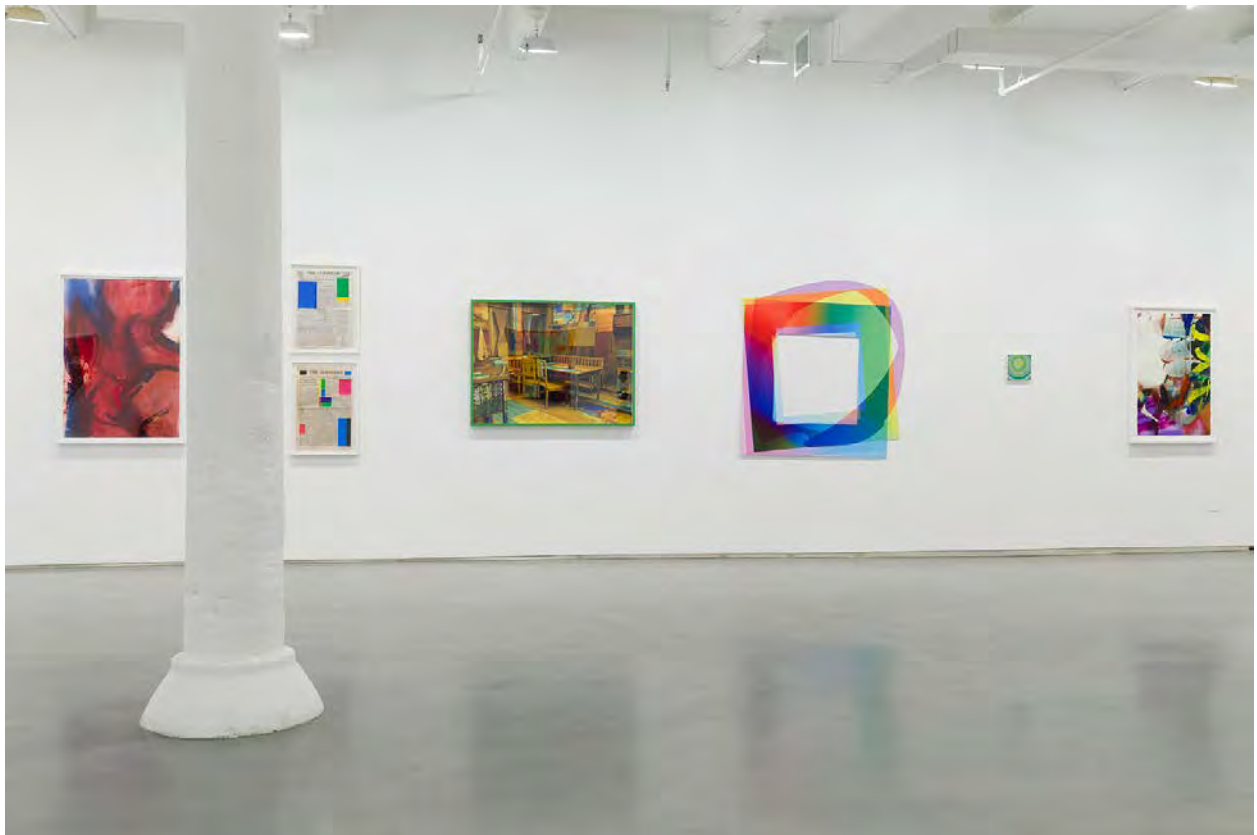


Jon Rafman

Screen – (Wave), 2014

LED flat screen TV, adhesive vinyl, volcanic ash, HD video loop
32 x 54 inches (81.3 x 137.2 cm)
unique

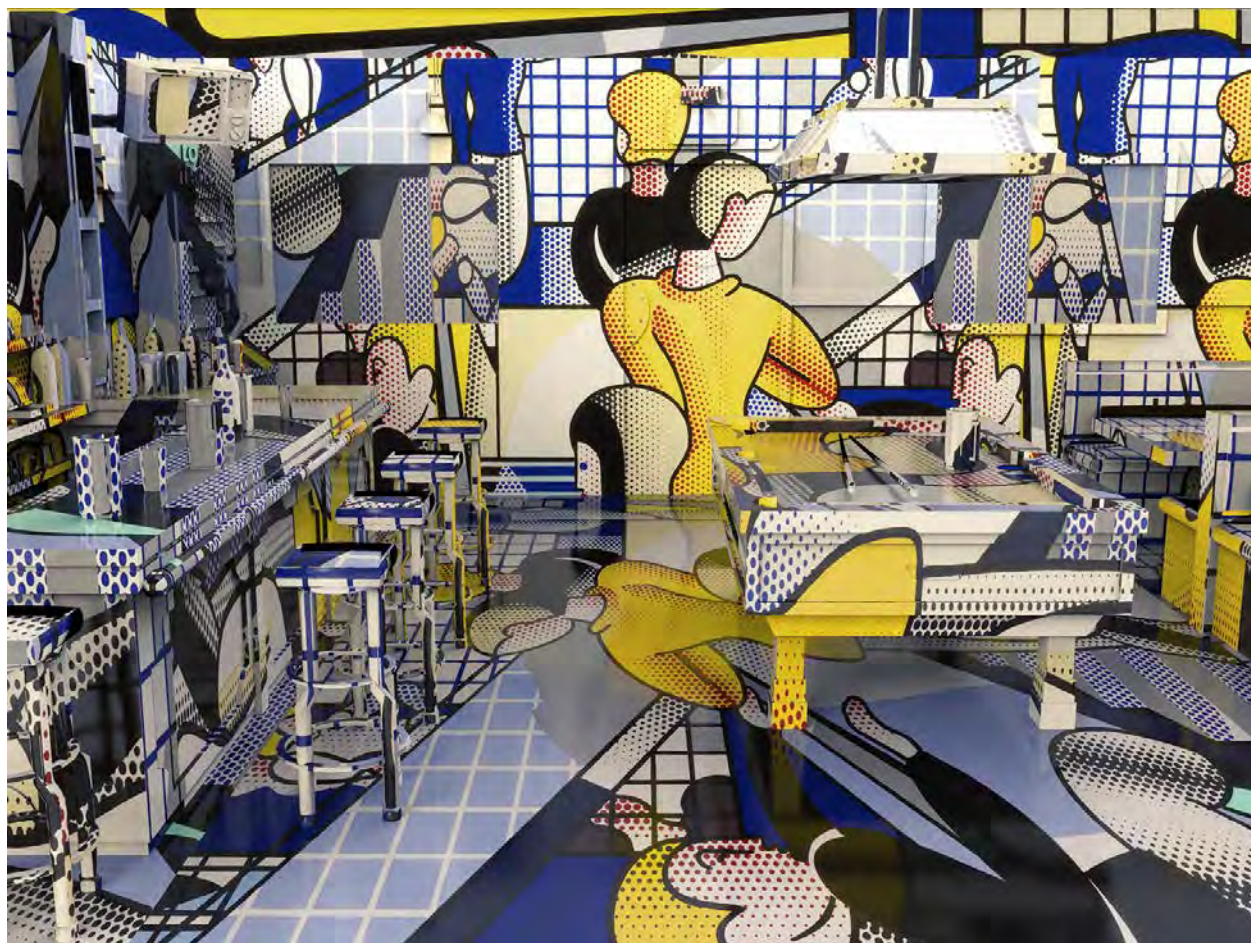
M+B



Jon Rafman

Installation View of Speaking Through Paint: Hans Hofmann's Legacy Today at Lori Bookstein Fine Art
February 13, 2014 – March 15, 2014

M+B



Jon Rafman
Lichtenstein Pub, 2013
archival pigment print on dibond
36 x 48 inches
unique
(JR.03.004.36)

M+B



Jon Rafman

Brand New Paint Job (Rousseau Hotel Room), 2011

archival pigment print mounted on dibond

36 x 30 inches (91.4 x 76.2 cm)

unique

M+B



Jon Rafman

Brand New Paint Job (Georgia O'Keeffe Waiting Room), 2013

archival pigment print mounted on dibond

36 x 30 inches (91.4 x 76.2 cm)

unique

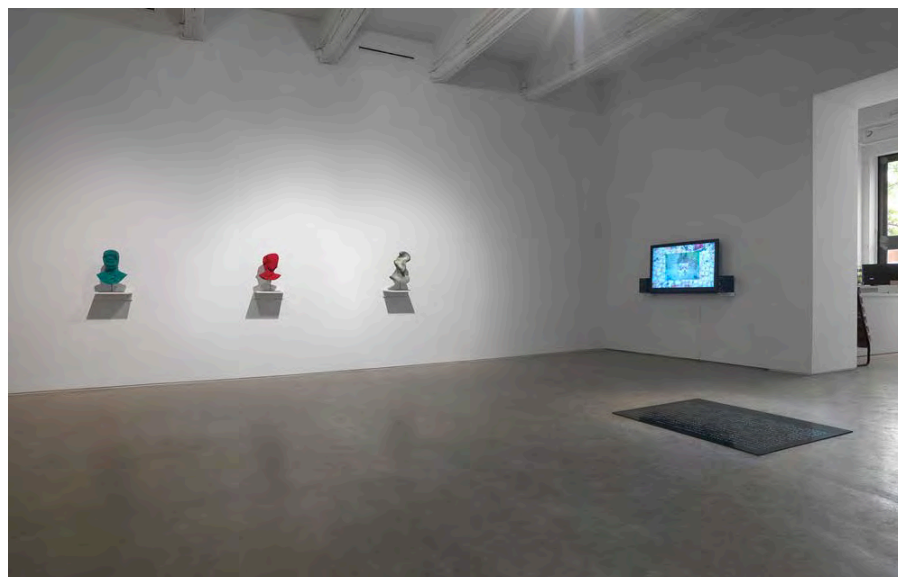
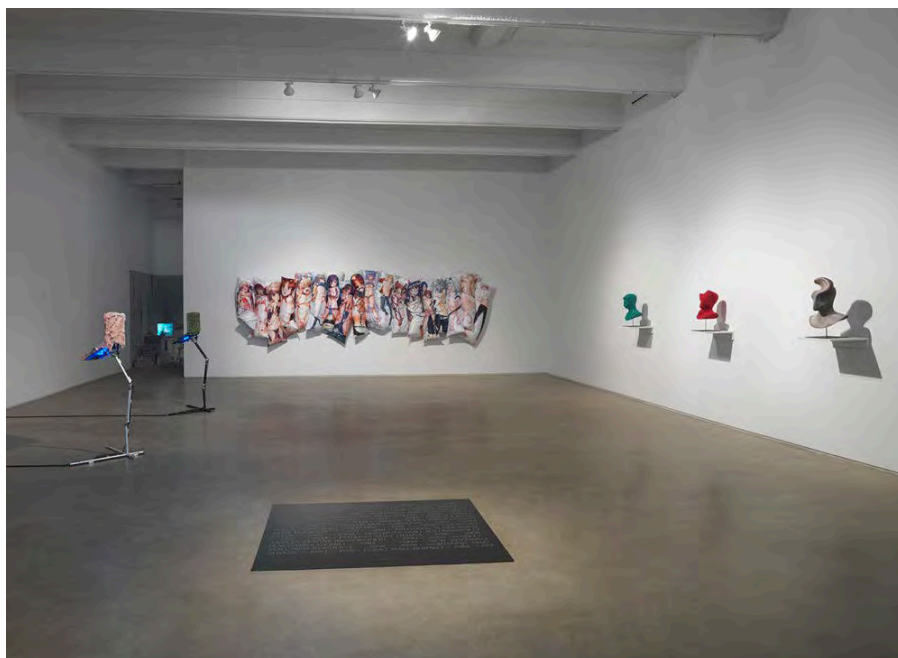
M+B



Jon Rafman

Installation View of *What is a Photograph?* at the International Center of Photography
January 31 – May 4, 2014

M+B



Jon Rafman
Installation View of *You Are Standing In An Open Field* at Zach Feuer
September 12 – October 26, 2013

M+B



Jon Rafman

How can you love one child more than another?, 2013

18 Dakimakura body pillows

94 x 235 x 30 inches (238.8 x 597 x 76.2 cm)

unique

(JR.05.001.94)

M+B



Jon Rafman

Installation View of *You Are Standing In An Open Field* at Zach Feuer
September 12 – October 26, 2013

M+B



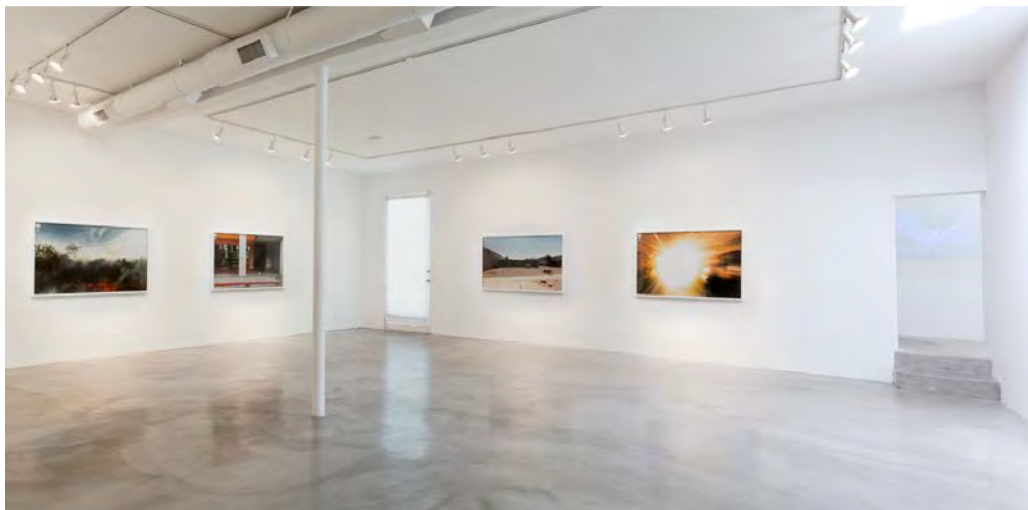
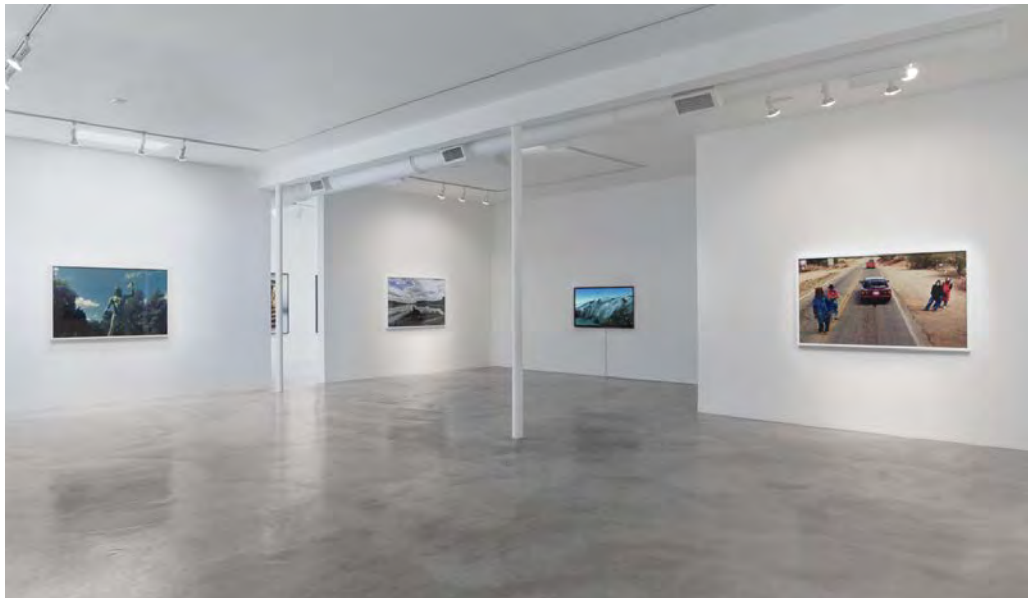
Jon Rafman
Installation View of Bus Bench Art
July 3 2013

M+B



Jon Rafman
Installation View of *Annals of Time Lost* at Future Gallery
April 27 – June 1, 2013

M+B



Jon Rafman
Installation View of Mirror Sites at M+B Gallery, Los Angeles
May 19 – June 23, 2012

M+B



Jon Rafman

Nacozari De Garcia – Montezuma, Sonora, Mexico 2011

signed and numbered verso

chromogenic print

edition of 1 plus 1 artist's proofs

40 x 64 inches (102 x 163 cm)

(JR.01.006.40)

M+B



Jon Rafman

3081 Valmont Road, Boulder, Colorado, United States, 2012

signed and numbered verso

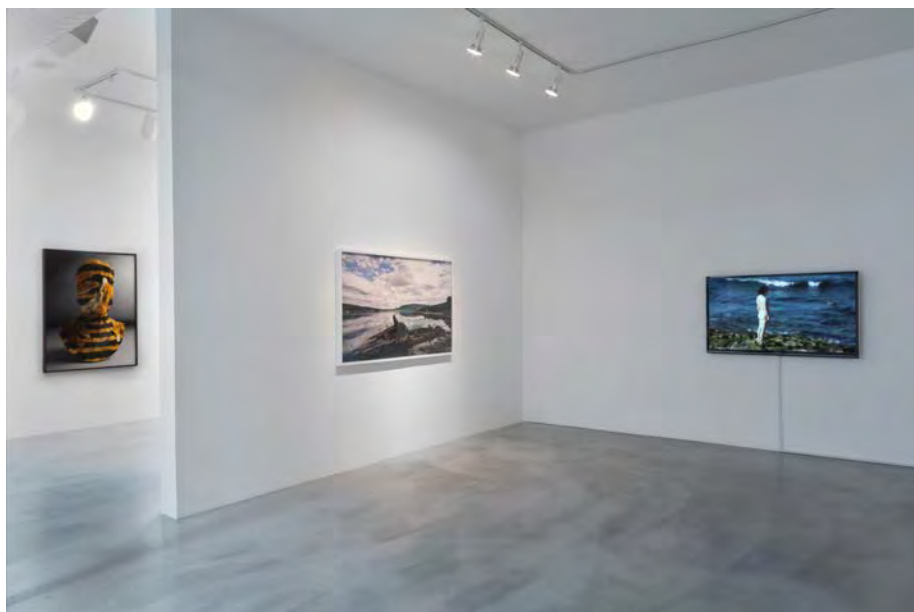
chromogenic print

edition of 1 plus 1 artist's proofs

40 x 64 inches (102 x 163 cm)

(JR.01.002.40)

M+B

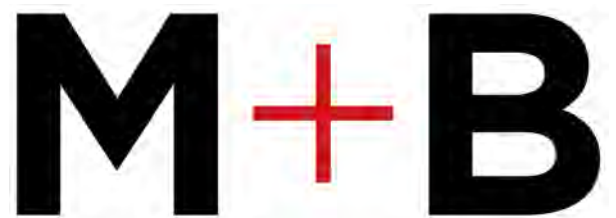


Jon Rafman
Installation View of Mirror Sites at M+B Gallery, Los Angeles
May 19 – June 23, 2012

M+B



Jon Rafman
New Age Demanded (Craggy Picabia), 2012
archival pigment print
signed and numbered verso
unique
58 x 42 inches (147 x 107 cm)
(JR.02.005.58)



JON RAFMAN

Press and Press Releases



Herald
Arts&Life

AT THE GALLERIES: Strong candidates for Sobey Art award

From fallen wildlife to bleak corners of the dark web, wide array of genres in play

By Elissa Barnard
October 22, 2015

For all its quiet, the Sobey Art Award exhibit at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia to Jan. 3 is startling and moving.

But you have to spend time with it, says curator Sarah Fillmore, the award's curator and the gallery's chief curator.

"Despite the installation being spare, it's quite emotional. All of the work I find really charged. It's a challenge. I feel our audience is up to the challenge."

The winner of the annual \$50,000 award for artists 40 and under who have exhibited in a public or commercial gallery within the last 18 months will be announced at a gala ceremony at the gallery Wednesday. The other finalists get \$10,000, and the 25 long-listed artists each get \$500.

This year's short-listed artists are Halifax's Lisa Lipton, Atlantic; Montreal's Jon Rafman, Quebec; Abbas Akhavan of Istanbul and Toronto, Ontario; Raymond Boisjoly, a Vancouver artist of Haida and Quebecois descent, West Coast and Yukon; and Winnipeg's Sarah Anne Johnson, Prairies and the North.

The art that grabs you most immediately by the throat is Akhavan's placement of taxidermied birds and animals in the main exhibit and almost hidden in other gallery spaces. Look for an owl in an arch in the hallway leading out to Bedford Row.

A curled-up fox nestled into a corner of the Ondaatje Gallery next to a wooden folk art figure has horrified cruise ship passengers this fall as they toured the gallery, says Fillmore.

Akhavan, an Iranian-Canadian, calls this work *Fatigues*, a play on the French word for tired and with army fatigues.

"The animals met their demise through encounters with humans and with a built environment. The birds ran into buildings in the financial district in Toronto, the deer was hunted for its meat and the others were hit by cars," says Fillmore.

"They look like they're trying to get out of this environment. The animals died because they were where they shouldn't have been or where we think they shouldn't have been. You could look at it globally in how nations fit and do not fit together and how people are displaced."

From dead animals to the dark web is quite a leap. Next door to the deer are two types of work by Rafman, who explores computer technology on the Internet, in gaming and in digital production.

Rafman, who just opened his first major solo exhibit in London, invites people to watch a video of figures playing or in a computer game and to sit on beanbag chairs covered in fabric indicating furies — people who dress up in animal costumes.

Rafman "often deals with communities on the dark web," says Fillmore.

Those can include people playing violent games, sexual fantasizers and furies.

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"It's very easy to get nervous about it," she admits.

However, "people find each other in all kinds of ways. He's very genuinely invested in these communities."

For his New Age Demanded series, Rafman continues his exploration of technology in creating 2D and 3D digitally printed sculptures based on modernist creations by artists like Moore, Brancusi and Arp with altered surfaces.

"He's asking us to question our dependence on technology," says Fillmore.

He wants people to ask themselves if it's delivering the utopia they want.

Photo-based artist Johnson's Hospital Hallway 2015 is her first foray into video and is a confining room containing a circular, white-walled hallway under hot fluorescent lights. A Sobey finalist in 2011, she explores her grandmother's experience as a woman with postpartum depression who was given electroshock therapy and changed for life.

The hallway is lined with framed video images of Johnson wearing a grey mask of her grandmother's face and in nervous motion, trying to escape or settle. She is sometimes literally climbing the walls or staring out from behind the mask, her eyes feverishly moving.

"She hopes you'll feel uncomfortable. It evokes the hospital's corridor her grandmother couldn't get out of. It's a circular hell."

Halifax artist Lipton thrilled crowds at Saturday's Nocturne: Art at Night with Hoop Dreams, a theatrical combination of female drummers, basketball players in competition and all the paraphernalia of a sports/art event, including a broadcast on CKDU. The final game of Hoop Dreams is Tuesday at 8 p.m. sharp at the Halifax Grammar School, 5750 Atlantic St.

"Hoop Dreams may be one of the most interesting and strongest collaborative pieces I've ever witnessed," says Fillmore.

"She is a worker; she is driven."

Lipton, who was twice before long-listed for the Sobey, exhibits the darkest of her sections, Greysville, from The Impossible Blue Rose, a film she calls a "docu-fiction" and that she's been travelling throughout North America to compose.

Viewers watch an unsettling, theatrically-charged film featuring her parents wearing long red nails and being interviewed by "Joey" in their suburban home about the existence — or not — of true love. All the objects in the film constructed by Lipton are contained within the darkened viewing room, from a gold heart in a treasure box to a martini glass with a miniature paper umbrella.

"It's good and evil. She's uber, uber romantic. She believes there are two forces and is interested in seeing how they play out."

West Coast short-listed artist Boisjoly of First Nations heritage examines "what it means to be immersed in that heritage" in his text on vinyl panels.

This is one of the most oblique pieces, with imagery inspired by The Living Gods of Haiti, a film posthumously produced of footage shot by American experimental filmmaker Maya Deren between 1947 and 1954. She became immersed in voodoo as a practitioner in order to document it.

Visitors to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia will notice both the gift shop and the long-closed cafe have walls covered in brown paper. The gallery will soon announce a restaurant is opening in the former shop space, which has windows onto Hollis Street. The store is moving into the old restaurant space.

**ZABLUDOWICZ COLLECTION ANNUAL COMMISSION:
JON RAFMAN
8 OCTOBER–20 DECEMBER 2015**

Exhibition Preview

Wednesday 7 October, 6–9pm



Jon Rafman & Daniel Lopatin, production still from *Sticky Drama*, 2015. Photo: Reuben Henry

For his first major solo exhibition in the UK, Canadian artist Jon Rafman has transformed the spaces of the Zabludowicz Collection into a playful series of new installations that immerse visitors within his video and sculptural works. Emerging from his interest in the relationship between technology and human consciousness, Rafman's works examine ideas of desire – its simulation and enactment.

In his latest work, commissioned for this exhibition, *Sticky Drama*, 2015, Rafman has worked in collaboration with Daniel Lopatin to create his first fully live-action short movie featuring a cast of over 35 children, developed in London over the last three months. Co-produced by Warp Records and featuring music from the forthcoming album by Oneohtrix Point Never, the video brings to life a fantastical world in which characters are on a quest, battling for dominance and in a race against time to archive past histories. Inspired by the costumes, staging and extended improvised narratives of Live Action Role Play (LARP), the video reflects the vivid, often violent world of children's imaginations and games, as well as extending Rafman's ongoing investigation into the nature of memory and the horror of data loss.

Drawing on the simulated landscapes of computer games, Rafman has created a large-scale artificial hedge-maze populated with digitally manipulated sculptural busts from his *New Age Demanded* series and a new 8ft *Manifold* figure. The installation heightens the collapse in our distinctions between the real and the digital as visitors are invited to enter a virtual space using Oculus Rift technology. Transporting us from the maze, imaginary scenarios interchange with tangible experiences and dissolve our perceptions of place and time.

The exhibition also brings together recent video works which collage together images, text and footage drawn from video games, internet memes and virtual landscapes. These poetic new narratives critically engage with the aesthetics and subcultures of online communities. Visually compelling, funny and shocking, these videos are presented in new sculptural installations that reference spaces of play and spaces of contemplation, forcing the viewer to physically enter into these unsettling psychological realms.

A new monograph on Rafman's work will accompany the show featuring texts by Kevin McGarry, Ana Teixeira Pinto and a conversation between the artist and Booker Prize shortlisted writer Tom McCarthy. There will also be an extensive programme of free public talks and live performances. The exhibition is curated by Maitreyi Maheshwari, and has been generously supported by Seventeen Gallery.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Jon Rafman (b.1981) is an artist living and working in Montreal. In 2015, he has had a major solo exhibition at Musée D'Art Contemporain de Montreal and two person shows with Keren Cytter at Feuer/Mesler, New York, and with Christian Jankowski at Future Gallery, Berlin. He has previously had solo exhibitions at Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis; Plymouth Rock, Zurich; Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, Toronto and Montreal (all 2014); Future Gallery, Berlin; Zach Feuer Gallery, New York; Seventeen Gallery, London (all 2013); Palais de Tokyo, Paris and Saatchi Gallery, London (all 2012). His works have featured in numerous group exhibitions around the world, and notably in the 2015 Biennale de Lyon and Moscow Biennial as well as recent exhibitions examining the interface of digital culture and subjectivity including *Digital Conditions*, Kunstverein Hannover; *The Future of Memory*, Kunsthalle Wien (all 2015); *The Digital Revolutionaries*, Art Basel Miami Beach; *Private Settings: Art After The Internet*, MOMA Warsaw and *Speculations on Anonymous Materials*, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel (all 2014). He is currently nominated for Canada's prestigious Sobey Art Award.

Rafman is represented by Feuer/Mesler, New York, Future Gallery, Berlin, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, Montreal, and Seventeen Gallery, London.

Daniel Lopatin (b. 1982) known as Oneohtrix Point Never is a musician, composer, producer, and label founder of Software Recording Company living and working in Brooklyn, New York. He has released numerous EPs and full-length albums and has an upcoming album, *Garden of Delete*, due November 13, 2015 on Warp Records.

He has been commissioned by museums, organizations and festivals such as Holland Festival (2014); Tate Britain, London and MoMA PS1, New York (both 2013); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., and Saatchi & Saatchi, London (both 2012); and The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2011). His film scores include Ariel Kleiman (2015) and Sofia Coppola (2013) and his production credits include Antony and The Johnsons (ongoing) and Nine Inch Nails (2013) among others.

ZABLUDOWICZ COLLECTION

Zabludowicz Collection is a philanthropic organisation including a growing collection of contemporary art and a programme of international exhibitions, events and artists' residencies. Founded in 1994, the Collection is dedicated to fostering new audiences and a sustainable environment for contemporary art, offering a variety of opportunities and support for artists and art organisations. All of its activities are privately funded and free for the public to access.

The collection contains over 3000 works of art by more than 500 artists, spanning 40 years of art production. Its focus is on emerging art from the late 20th century to the present day and it is in constant development. The Collection has been directed since 2006 by Elizabeth Neilson.

In 2007 the Collection opened its main exhibition space in London, in a 19th Century former Methodist Chapel, where it has worked with artists, curators and the collection to produce

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ART SY

Jon Rafman's Participatory Playground Hits Harder Than You'd Think

By Molly Gottschalk
October 17, 2015



Installation view of Jon Rafman at Zabudowicz Collection, London, 2015. Photos by Thierry Bal, courtesy of SUTTON.

Leave it to Frieze Week to indulge the crawl-into, climb-onto art experiences that distill the simple, childlike pleasures of viewing art. Last year, Carsten Höller's giant die at Frieze London found Klaus Biesenbach climbing through its wormholes; the year before, a mammoth figure by Jennifer Rubell allowed for photo-ops inside a hollowed womb; and this year, Rachel Rose's scale model of Frieze London offers a reprieve on plush white carpet for those who duck in—should one pass up the corridor of beds (by ÅYR) and camaraderie of collectors charging phones and resting eyes when amusement-park levels of exhaustion set in.

To top it off, a maze with an oculus rift centerpiece has lured the crowds to Zabudowicz Collection for Jon Rafman's first major solo exhibition in the U.K. Every year, the collection invites emerging artists to take over their space (an old church in London's Chalk Farm, last year transformed by Ryan Trecartin and Lizzie Fitch). And this year, the 33-year-old Canadian artist has filled the chapel with video and sculptural installations complete with a water bed, a massage chair, and a ball pit—the last of which is the uncontested 'gram of the week. For Rafman, a key figure amongst a group of prominent post-internet artists, known for fusing digital and physical spaces and referencing video games to internet memes, this collision of virtual and reality could sound like the next big art circus—but it's surprisingly wonderful.

Upon entering the show you'll be asked to remove your shoes; slip-ons would be preferable (mine fortunately had zips)—you'll be taking them off and on a lot. Though there's a map of the exhibition's many stations, the first, a giant hot-tub-sized ball pit, is impossible to miss. Climb the ladder, slip beneath a bath of translucent pearl-colored balls—deep enough to eclipse your head—and look up. Rafman's video, *Still Life (Betamale)* (2013), streams above, looking deep into the web and the pleasures, and acceptance, found in fetish and online subcultures. Buried deep in the pit, the internet's all-consuming grip on our lives makes its presence known. It's potentially smothering, but like late nights surfing the net, it feels just too good to get out.

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Pull yourself together and a three-seat purple sofa awaits. It's bespoke seating for Rafman's *Mainsqueeze* (Hug Sofa) (2014), designed after "squeeze chairs" given to autistic children for comfort via enclosure. They feel like a hug, one you might need while watching the piece's quick sequence of video clips: a bodybuilder crushes a watermelon between bulging thighs; a washing machine convulses until falling to bits; an anime couple masturbates in the glow of a static analog tv; a woman pets a crawfish to classical music and then squishes it with her sneaker.

Perhaps the strongest suit of Rafman's films in this show is their installation. (I had a fun time climbing into the two works housed in 'cockpits,' a basement-bound gamer's wet-dream wherein filing cabinets have been emptied and outfitted with flatscreens, speakers, and seating for one.) Past the former-church's nave, in a pink-walled bedroom, a quilted twin bed sits amongst slime-covered teenage detritus: scattered horror movie magazines, old appliances, a Tamagotchi, a slinky. On the wall opposite, you'll find Rafman's new film, *Sticky Drama* (2015), made in collaboration with musician Daniel Lopatin (of Oneohtrix Point Never). After a summer spent considering gaming, Live Action Role Playing (or "larping"), and the way an imagined world can become reality, Rafman devoted the last three months in London to creating the live-action short, enlisting a cast of 35 local children. Narratives around desire, memory, history, and imagination are enacted through flashbacks in the life of a Tamagotchi—'90s pre-teen-dom has officially replaced the '80s as the art world's latest obsession.

There's more—and the show's real tour de force requires a bit of a hunt. Following along the dark pathways of an AstroTurf hedge maze, lined with Rafman's signature digitally rendered busts, search out the Oculus Rift waiting at its center. Encountering dead ends is encouraged, as each offers a spotlight sculpture (in marble, copper, silicone, concrete) on a mirrored plinth—teasers to the behemoth, gilded figure that awaits at the labyrinth's center.

Lines have become an unfortunate, if planned for, feature of museum and gallery shows in recent years, most actively begun by artists like Höller who've turned institutions into amusement parks complete with slides and carousels—but the line for Rafman's Oculus is truly worth the wait. Take what you know of Rafman's older works using the device, or Daniel Steegmann Mangrané's piece from the New Museum Triennial, and toss them aside. This work is quite possibly the Frieze Week magnum opus—and it uses virtual reality technology in a way unprecedented in art.

When you hit the front of the queue, you'll be placed face-to-face with the aforementioned golden sculpture. But, once the headgear goes on, all that was once around you will soon disappear. Suddenly you're moving forward, as if riding a motorized walkway in an airport, through a glassy landscape and into a tunnel that leads to a dark and enchanted forest. Looking up, starry, startlingly realistic night skies reveal themselves through the trees; every tree pulses, as if breathing, and peeking through branches are Rafman's colossal sculptures, littering the landscape like follies you'd walk to—had you not been instructed not to move. At the climax, you'll slowly levitate until you're among the treetops, looking down on this magical world, until the view fades to black. Hurry up and hand your goggles over to the next in line. They'll be dying to know why you've gasped and sighed so many times in this surprisingly moving five-minute span.



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The last stop is a hike upstairs to the mezzanine. If you're still feeling dazed, Rafman's offered up a massage chair equipped with looping video of cityscapes. And nearby, a waterbed streams footage via a monitor suspended overhead: a wave pool full of children sporting brightly colored inner tubes, loops to the lull of ambient music. Lightheaded and entranced, I pull myself from bed to head blissfully back to Frieze. As Anita Zabłudowicz added, with a glint in her eye, on the way out, "We've just seen a glimpse of the future."

—Molly Gottschalk

"Jon Rafman" is on view at the Zabłudowicz Collection, London, Oct. 8—Dec. 20, 2015.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PUBLIC ART FUND EXHIBITION EXPLORES
DIGITAL CULTURE THROUGH NEW SCULPTURES
BY SEVEN INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS**



IMAGE OBJECTS

**June 30 – November 20, 2015
City Hall Park, Lower Manhattan**

FEATURED ARTISTS:

Alice Channer, Lothar Hempel, Jon Rafman,
Amanda Ross-Ho, Timur Si-Qin,
Hank Willis Thomas, and Artie Vierkant

June 24, 2015, NEW YORK, NY—Public Art Fund presents a new thematic group exhibition at City Hall Park exploring the relationship between contemporary sculptural practice and the digital landscape. The show features a diverse international group of seven artists—**Alice Channer, Lothar Hempel, Jon Rafman, Amanda Ross-Ho, Timur Si-Qin, Hank Willis Thomas, and Artie Vierkant**—who share an interest in the interplay between images and objects, and the ways in which rapidly changing visual culture and imaging technology influence how we understand and perceive the world around us. ***Image Objects* is on view June 30 – November 20, 2015 at City Hall Park, Lower Manhattan.**

Image Objects features seven new commissions that examine how the democratization of image creation through smart technology and internet networks has changed the way that sculpture is being created by artists, as well as how those works are viewed by the public. The seven works in this exhibition respond to a landscape in which life—and art—is captured by the camera's lens and played out online. In some cases, the artists utilize the same sets of tools used by the public to document the everyday—from basic computer software to image filters and social networks; in others, they push the limits of technology with 3-D printing and the manipulation of materials. The tension between natural and manmade objects is highlighted by the installation of these works in an urban park.

“The way that we interact with the world is has become increasingly mediated, with so much of our experience taking place through the lens of our own camera or someone else's and being

posted to social media platforms. This show looks at how artists are consuming images and making sculptures that are reflective of the interface between the viewer, lens, and artwork. The artists featured in this exhibition represent a direct and transformative interpretation of the relationship between an image-based culture and public consumption,” said exhibition curator **Andria Hickey**, Public Art Fund Curator.

The exhibition’s title is a nod to **Artie Vierkant’s** influential essay of the same name, as well as a series of his works that exists somewhere between physical sculptures and altered documentation images. Working from flat abstract color compositions created digitally to have the appearance of layered dimensionality, the artist makes UV prints on dibond and precision-cuts them to create photographic prints with the depth and presence of a sculpture. Each time these pieces are documented officially, the resulting photos are altered, generating derivative works that do not accurately represent the original physical object. For City Hall Park, Vierkant is creating a sculptural version of an Image Object that explores the loss of fixity in objects and images in the digital era. Printing these digitally altered images directly on a large, irregular cut-steel structure, the visual gaps between the form and the layered images expose how perception is altered by the lens of a camera or the screen. Similarly, **Amanda Ross-Ho’s** new work acknowledges the role that photography plays in framing the way we experience images of objects. The second iteration of a recent public sculpture (*The Character and Shape of Illuminated Things*, which was on view at the MCA Chicago in 2013), Ross-Ho’s new work is similarly derived from an image in a photography handbook published in 1980, before the widespread use of digital photography. Centered between a cube and sphere, an oversized mannequin’s head is outlined by a green neon square mimicking facial recognition software found on applications like Facebook—a nod to the idea that public art today is frequently experienced through the lens of a camera.

Transforming a two-dimensional image into a three-dimensional form, **Hank Willis Thomas’** new work explores themes of subjectivity and historical context, while challenging ideas of authorship and originality. His life-size bronze sculpture shows an arm reaching to the sky and balancing a basketball, a detail from a 1986 photograph of a Harlem Globetrotter spinning a basketball on his finger in the likeness of the Statue of Liberty, which can be seen in the background. Isolating the player’s gesture from the context of the photograph, Thomas addresses questions about how an image’s meaning is changed by the framing of the camera’s lens. In the context of a digital landscape, the sculpture invites the viewer to ask questions about the symbolic value an image communicates, especially when cropped or otherwise manipulated. **Lothar Hempel** comments on the impact that images have on memory or one’s understanding of a single moment over a period of time by utilizing a similar approach to image appropriation. For *Image Objects*, he has combined a cut-aluminum sculpture that has been digitally printed with an image of a woman on two skateboards cut from a dated photograph with a familiar spinning computer memory ball mechanically rotating atop the image. Layering digital and analog references, Hempel draws connections between the evolving nature of memory in our technologically mediated environment.

Timur Si-Qin pushes this idea further in a new work—his first outdoor commission—for *Image Objects*. Adapting an archetypal advertising display that might be seen announcing car dealerships along suburban highways or providing directions in an office park, Si-Qin’s work features a logo created by the artist to promote the idea of peace. Viewed in the park, an unexpected setting to confront advertising, this work investigates consumer culture, revealing how the psychological dimension of marketing displays frames the interpretation of symbols and brands in the urban landscape.

Like several other artists in the show, **Alice Channer** explores the potential of merging digital and physical realms. Investigating themes of nature, evolution, and mass production, the seven rocks that form her sculpture *R O C K F A L L* began as small pieces of found concrete rubble. Using 3-D scanning, Channer virtually stretched the forms, which were then cast in concrete, aluminum, and Cor-ten steel to resemble large-scale rocks that reveal the marks of their digital making. Situated in the natural, albeit man-made park, these rocks form an uncanny succession of natural and unnatural forms. Similarly **Jon Rafman's** two new marble sculptures from his *New Age Demanded* series are being realized using 3-D creation software. Derived from traditional figurative busts, Rafman's works have been digitally manipulated and carved with lasers, rendering perfect lines and impossible curves that could never have been formed using hammer and chisel.

This exhibition is curated by Public Art Fund Curator Andria Hickey.

VISITING THE EXHIBITION

City Hall Park is located in Lower Manhattan, and is bordered by Broadway, Chambers Street, Centre Street, and Park Row.

Hours: 7:00am – 12:00am daily

Subways: A, C, E to Chambers Street; 4, 5, 6, J to Brooklyn Bridge-City Hall; R to City Hall; 2, 3 to Park Place

City Hall visitor information is available by calling 311.

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

This exhibition is generously supported by Erin & Matthew D. Bass, the AB Foundation, James Keith Brown & Eric Diefenbach, and an anonymous donor.

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Special thanks to the Office of the Mayor, Office of the Manhattan Borough President, Department of Cultural Affairs, and Department of Parks & Recreation.

ABOUT PUBLIC ART FUND

Public Art Fund brings dynamic contemporary art to a broad audience in New York City by mounting ambitious free exhibitions of international scope and impact that offer the public powerful experiences with art and the urban environment.

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Image: Amanda Ross-Ho, *THE CHARACTER AND SHAPE OF ILLUMINATED THINGS (FACIAL RECOGNITION)*, 2015. Rendering. Courtesy Mitchell-Innes & Nash. Image courtesy of 3Dmass Design & Engineering and Alessandro Zezza

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M+B

The New York Times

Review: 'Image Object' Looks at the Relationship Between the Virtual and the Physical

By Ken Johnson
July 16, 2015

When contemporary art ventures into the public realm, outside the protective walls of galleries and museums, the question arises, "Who is this for?" Its potential audience is no longer viewers who are already interested; now it includes passers-by of many dispositions, not all of whom have the time or the inclination to reflect on the aesthetics and knotty ideas that artworks may put in their paths.

Few of the works in "Image Object," a show of conceptually complicated and visually unprepossessing sculptures at City Hall Park in Manhattan, are likely to stop busy pedestrians in their tracks. But for those who aren't rushed and are given to philosophical rumination, they can be rewarding to ponder. Weather permitting, this beautiful little park is an excellent place for that.

A Public Art Fund production organized by the fund's associate curator, Andria Hickey, the exhibition presents sculptures by seven artists who have all exhibited internationally. It's meant to address a particular condition of modern life: On the one hand, technologically mediated



"New Age Demanded" by Jon Rafman.
Credit Hiroko Masuike/The New York Times

imagery constantly impinges on us from every direction; on the other, images are perpetually being turned into real things, like fancy cars and tall buildings. The exhibition's introductory text panel explains, "As images are rendered into objects, and objects are circulated as images, the boundaries between the physical and the virtual are blurred, challenging us to rethink how we see the world around us."

The two-way relationship between image and object is most clearly illustrated in works by Jon Rafman and Alice Channer. Mr. Rafman's piece, "New Age Demanded," features two blobby shapes in white marble vaguely resembling sculptures by Henry Moore. Mr. Rafman made them by distorting a digital photograph of a Greco-Roman bust and rendering the resulting images in stone, using computerized machinery.

Ms. Channer went through a similar sequence of converting object to image and image to object to create "Rockfall," a set of sculptures mimicking jagged rocks. She began by taking photographs of small chunks of concrete rubble, which she then digitally altered. Those images were turned into three-dimensional molds by computerized machines, and the final works, much larger than the original objects, were cast in concrete, aluminum and Cor-Ten steel.

Like Mr. Rafman's works, Ms. Channer's sculptures are both objects and images. So what's the difference between an image and an object? For the purposes at hand, an object is a unique, physical thing. An image is a nonmaterial pattern that can be physically incarnated or reproduced in multiple ways. Most artworks, it can be argued, are fusions of imagery and objecthood.

Because images are constrained only by the limits of imagination — unlike objects, which must obey the laws of physics — they often idealize what they represent, asserting social and political meanings. Works by Hank Willis Thomas and Amanda Ross-Ho exemplify this.

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Mr. Thomas is known for Pop-Conceptual works about black identity and racism. His contribution here, "Liberty," features the cast-bronze arm of an athlete spinning a basketball on his index finger. Resembling a fragment of an ancient Greek sculpture, it's mounted on a truncated pyramid, and the whole assemblage is coated in candy-purple auto body paint.

According to the exhibition label, Mr. Thomas took the image from a 1986 photograph of a Harlem Globetrotter with the Statue of Liberty in the background. Considering that a few black athletes are among the most celebrated people in the world, while many black people feel that they are still struggling for equality and liberation, Mr. Thomas's ostensibly triumphal sculpture exudes an unsettling ambiguity.

Ms. Ross-Ho's monumental sculpture "The Character and Shape of Illuminated Things (Facial Recognition)" has a female mannequin head, much larger than life, flanked by a cube and a sphere; all three elements are painted gray and elevated on a big oblong pedestal.

Ms. Ross-Ho took the image from an old instructional book on photography. Her rendering of it plays with implied feminist skepticism about the fantasy of the perfect woman. A glowing green neon rectangle framing the mannequin's face adds a tangential complication by referring to facial recognition software, which invites another question: Can machines "see" the way humans do? Doesn't seeing require consciousness? But that's a line of inquiry for another exhibition.

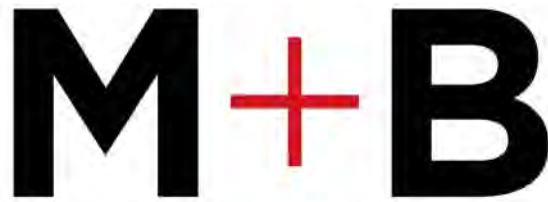
Ideological skepticism also animates Timur Si-Qin's "Monument to Exaptation," three tall, sleek panels with the word "Peace" spelled in neat white letters on each panel's sides under a round symbol resembling a yin-yang sign. The panels look as if they were produced for corporate advertising.

The titular word "exaptation" is crucial. It refers to an evolutionary trait that comes to serve a different purpose from its original function. Mr. Si-Qin's sculpture alludes to how the once-radical style of Minimalist abstraction is often co-opted to create deceptive images of moral universality for capitalist enterprises.

As for the remaining works, Lothar Hempel's suffers from obviousness, and Artie Vierkant's from obscurity. Raised on a tall pole, Mr. Hempel's piece "Frozen" is an enlarged cutout of a 1970s photograph of a woman skateboarding, which he lifted from the web. Attached to it is a glowing, revolving rainbow-colored pinwheel, the familiar cursor on Apple computers signifying "Wait." The assemblage comments simplistically on the Internet's bewildering compression of time, memory and history.

Mr. Vierkant's sculpture is an abstract construction of geometric metal planes partly painted in hard-edged sections of color. One of a series of works called "Image Objects" (the source of the exhibition's title), it's the product of a self-cannibalizing process by which Mr. Vierkant turns digital images of his finished works into new pieces.

That procedure and its import aren't readily evident in the present sculpture. Nevertheless, determined philosophical viewers might extract from it illuminating ideas about creative thinking in today's increasingly digitized and mechanized world.



BLOUINARTINFO

“Image Objects” Brings the Digital Outdoors

By Scott Indrisek
July 8, 2015

“Image Objects,” on view through November 20, brings digital culture to City Hall Park in New York. Organized by Public Art Fund and curated by Andrea Hickey — who also put together the sprawling group show “Objects Food Rooms,” currently on view at Tanya Bonakdar — the exhibition riffs on the complex interplay between two- and three-dimensions, between the computer-generated and the supposedly “real.” The artists on view, including Jon Rafman, Amanda Ross-Ho, and Lothar Hempel, all probe these unique tensions, often mixing cutting-edge technologies with old-fashioned materials. (Rafman, for instance, uses computer modeling software to create forms that are then hewn from marble.) In a conversation via email, I spoke with Hickey about how our obsession with sharing images of art on social media platforms is changing creative culture.

I didn’t notice the term “post-Internet art” cropping up in any of the explanatory text surrounding this exhibition, but I was curious as to your thoughts on what that term even means. Like “postmodern,” it seems as if everyone has their own definition.

Like many people, I have problems with the term “post-Internet art,” particularly in the context of an exhibition presented in the public realm. When Marisa Olson coined the term during a 2006 panel discussion, it was never intended to act as a catch-all phrase for so many divergent interpretations of work influenced by, and responding to, the contemporary digital landscape. This landscape is so ubiquitous to our everyday experience that any work produced today could be termed “post-Internet” by the very fact that contemporary visual culture is always in dialogue with digital public (and private) space. And on a pragmatic level, the word is simply confusing. Unless you are invested in the art discourse around the term, it reads as “after-the-Internet,” which does little to explain the nuances of the ideas behind the word, or its attempt to articulate a contemporary moment.

When I was conceiving this show, I was interested in working with artists who were engaged in an intentional dialogue with the digital landscape, particularly in terms of how their work might provide a participatory conversation for viewers in the public realm. We all have an experience of how our lives are presented, and transformed, online, and these works invite that kind of interaction, providing a different kind of nuance to the viewer’s encounter with sculpture in public space.

That said, there are artists in the show who have been part of an ongoing conversation about “post-Internet art,” as well as artists whose work has been on the periphery or outside of this group: Amanda Ross-Ho, Alice Channer, Hank Willis Thomas, and Lothar Hempel, to be specific. In bringing this group of artists together, I was interested in exploring how these ideas move beyond a specific niche group of artists whose work has a strong connection to art presented online, mining online sources, etc. For me, “post-Internet” is as much about our everyday experience of public space, both in real life, and online, as it is about art production. Artists who have a deep relationship with visual culture and photography are incredibly relevant to this conversation.



Jon Rafman
New Age Demanded (Curveman Carrara), 2015
New Age Demanded (Elegante Carrara), 2015
Marble

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Certain sculptures here, like Amanda Ross-Ho's, are directly interacting with the notion of social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. (And of course all the labels for this show include the appropriate #imageobjects hashtag and @PublicArtFund twitter info for online sharing.) Do you think that the public's increasing tendency to treat artworks as little more than photo-ops is a disheartening development? Does it prevent a certain type of careful looking — or does it simply encourage a new type of looking, one that it would be silly to rail against? How are artists like Ross-Ho reacting to these developments and challenging or commenting on them?

The public's increasing tendency to document art in public space was very much on my mind when conceiving of this show. I think it is really important to look carefully at how and why people choose to document and disseminate images of their surroundings, including artworks, rather than simply dismissing them as "photo-ops." When I started at Public Art Fund four years ago, we were just beginning to look at how the public interacted with artworks via social media and more recently, we've come to see that it has a tremendous influence on how people engage with art in the public realm. I'm not sure that it encourages "a different type of looking," but I do think these images are evidence of an interest in framing a work of art with one's own subjective camera lens. Each viewer that documents an artwork online and shares it is having a very personal relationship with a work of art: they select the frame of what they want people to see, they might include themselves in the image, they choose filters. They transform these public works in an incredibly creative way. Artists working in the public realm are increasingly aware of this kind of engagement with their work. The addition of the neon square in Amanda Ross-Ho's tableau (which was produced in a different iteration, sans neon, for the entrance to the MCA Chicago) is a direct response to how the public documented her earlier work in public space, specifically how social media software brings a conversation about facial recognition to the otherwise mute documentation image.

Works in "Image Objects" by Jon Rafman and Timur Si-Qin riff on recognizable sculptural traditions — from Rafman's warped "classical" forms in marble to Si-Qin's version of the "monument." How do you think contemporary artists in general are adapting age-old sculptural techniques into the 21st century?

Like painting, sculpture always has to contend with its classical and art historical traditions. I think this is particularly true in a site like City Hall Park. The Victorian park design invites a relationship to outdoor sculpture traditions like the statue, the monument, and the bust, and artists naturally respond to this history in new ways. In terms of technique, it is very interesting to see how many artists are utilizing new technologies like 3-D scanning, 3-D printing, and CNC routers to create new objects that might not have been possible previously. You can see this in the exhibition, and in the work of many other artists making sculpture today. The idea of an artist creating forms by hand with raw materials is almost more unique than those who are using high-tech fabrication tools. Both methods provide very interesting approaches to object making, but new technologies lend themselves to different realms of possibility that push these classical forms to new lengths.

There's a certain layering going on with all of the work here: It's pulling from the Internet, then rendering things in three-dimensions, while also reflecting on how these 3-D objects will appear in photographic documentation. Someone like Artie Vierkant is doing this very explicitly. This may be a dumb question, but given that back-and-forth between digital and "IRL," could someone just as easily experience "Image Objects" from the comfort of their own desktop computer?

It's not a dumb question at all. In fact, it was absolutely something I was thinking about when I started working on this show. It's a given that we live in a time when we easily experience art online (we might also call it the Contemporary Art Daily way of seeing an exhibition). The great thing about presenting art in public space is that viewers encounter the work unexpectedly — they're having lunch in the park, or walking through it, and the nature of the viewer's interest in this space shifts how images of the work are shared online. It's my thinking that these works will appear differently IRL than they will online, simply because they were created with the notion that they would have a kind of second life as an image. The artists were very conscious of the transformation of the work from object to image, and I'm curious to see how this second life will become a part of the work, and the exhibition, throughout its duration.

"Image Objects" is on view at City Hall Park in New York through November 20. Explore how the public has been documenting the show online via the #imageobjects hashtag on Instagram.

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DNAinfo
New York

Artists Examine Digital Landscape With Quirky Sculptures in City Hall Park

By Irene Plagianos
July 8, 2015

LOWER MANHATTAN — Amidst the well-manicured greenery of City Hall Park, artists are playfully examining a different landscape — the digital world.

Seven new, large-scale sculptures are now on display, as part of the Public Art Fund's latest exhibition, "Image Objects," a collection inspired by how rapidly changing digital culture "influences the relationship between images and objects," the nonprofit said in a statement.

The sculptures subtly play with the way an object quickly transforms into a digital image when we snap photos, manipulate them, and share them across social media platforms. The artists' twist: they've taken images, and turned them into sculptures, made, in part, with digital imaging technologies.

Los Angeles-based sculptor, Amanda Ross-Ho's massive "The Character and Shape of Illuminated Things [Facial Recognition]", for example, is a rethinking of an image from an 1980 photography handbook, before digital photographs were the norm.

The quirky piece features a huge mannequin's head outlined by a green neon square, mimicking the facial recognition software found in places like Facebook — "a nod to the idea that public art today is frequently experienced through the lens of a camera," the fund said in a statement.

The artists are also keenly aware that their objects will once again become images — something readily apparent when, on a recent afternoon, passersby snapped photos, and, of course selfies, with the pieces.

Some of the artworks also seem to have another use: a fun spot for kids to climb. Jon Rafman's two, large, marble sculptures were created by first distorting digital images of Greco-Roman busts, then carving the abstract form into marble. The twisty, grey pieces seemed to be a favorite for intrepid kids scaling the sculptures earlier this week.



DAVID ALTMEJD AND JON RAFMAN AT THE MAC THIS SUMMER, TWO MONTRÉAL ARTISTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Montréal, June 19, 2015. – The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MAC) is all ready “to celebrate two exceptional Montréal artists, both well loved here and admired throughout the world,” says John Zeppetelli, Director and Chief Curator of the MAC. The artists in question are indeed riding high: they are sculptor David Altmejd, whose Montréal exhibition is the first collaborative undertaking between the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris and the MAC, and Jon Rafman, an explorer of Web culture who turns its phenomena into various unexpected forms. Presented **from June 20 to September 13**, the two shows invite Montrealers and the many tourists who come to visit our city during the summer to venture into two fascinating and highly original worlds.



David Altmejd, *The Flux and the Puddle*, 2014

DAVID ALTMEJD – FLUX: FROM SARAH TO THE FLUX AND THE PUDDLE

The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is proud to host the brilliant homecoming of David Altmejd, who is already well known from the US to Europe. *Flux*, a major survey exhibition, features some thirty works produced over the last fifteen years by this Montréal-born sculptor currently based in New York. The show also includes a site-specific mural and another new work, fresh out of the artist's New York City studio.



Jon Rafman, *You Are Standing in an Open Field (Waterfall)*, 2015

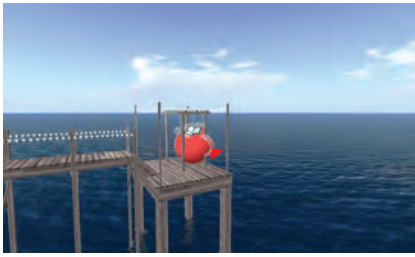
JON RAFMAN: THE ATTRACTION OF VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES

The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is delighted to present the first major museum exhibition in Canada devoted to Montréal artist Jon Rafman and to accompany it with an extensive catalogue. Rafman first made a name for himself with his series *The Nine Eyes of Google Street View*, begun in 2009, and his international reputation has grown ever since. At the MAC, the exhibition *Jon Rafman* brings us a wide-ranging selection of video installations, sculptures and photographs produced since 2008.

Part anthropologist, part archivist, Rafman brilliantly and passionately explores the subcultures that people the Internet, seeking to question the distinction between virtual and real. Describing himself as “deeply humanistic,” the artist is interested in the effects of technology and its obsolescence, and in the artificiality of the digital world, which he thinks indicates a current “fed-up” attitude toward the real world.

Given the abundance of subjects offered by the Web, Rafman does not feel the need to create original material, choosing instead to work with existing matter. “The craft is found in the searching, selecting or curating, and editing together of the materials pulled from far-flung corners of the Web.” Yet, he insists, “it is not about fetish tourism or shocking people about what exists in the dark corners of the net. Rather, I am giving the sourced material a poetic treatment.”

Among the works on view at the MAC, the video series *Kool-Aid Man in Second Life*, 2008-2011, takes the form of tours of Second Life in which Rafman's avatar, the Kool-Aid Man, guides us through astonishing micro-communities. A narrative work tinged with nostalgia, *Codes of Honor*, 2011, is a docu-fiction that is an homage to video arcades. The use



Jon Rafman, *Kool Aid Man in Second Life*, 2008-2011



Jon Rafman, *Mainsqueeze*, 2014

of images found on various sites and forums is a recurring strategy in Rafman's work, but it is especially potent in the video trilogy comprising *Still Life (Betamale)*, 2013, *Mainsqueeze*, 2014, and *ERYSICHTHON*, a brand-new work.

Rafman continues to explore new ways of experiencing his videos: in viewing pods. He has made use of wardrobes and other furnishings, inspired as much by the world of design as the suburban vernacular, which he has equipped with screens playing his work from the last two or three years.

The artist also demonstrates an interest in the minor and major forms of art history in *You Are Standing in an Open Field*, 2015, a series of large-scale photographic tableaux in which the foreground is littered with computer keyboards and the backgrounds are landscapes taken from paintings from various periods.

Born in 1981, Jon Rafman lives and works in Montréal. He holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has exhibited at the New Museum in New York, Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Saatchi Gallery in London and the Contemporary Art Museum Saint-Louis. In 2014, Rafman was short-listed for the prestigious Future Generation Art Prize, awarded by the Victor Pinchuk Foundation to an artist under 35, and in 2015, he is a finalist for the Sobey Art Award. His works may be found in public collections in Canada, the United States and Europe.

Complementing the Jon Rafman exhibition

To coincide with this exhibition, the artist is presenting a selection of works from the series *The Nine Eyes of Google Street View* in locations outside the museum: along the Lachine canal near Atwater market and along Monk boulevard in the Sud-Ouest borough. These presentations are organized by the Maison de la culture Marie-Uguay.

Curation

Jon Rafman was organized by Mark Lanctôt, curator at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.

Catalogue

In connection with the exhibition, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal has published *Jon Rafman*, a 192-page catalogue illustrated with colour and black-and-white plates. The publication includes an essay by exhibition curator Mark Lanctôt, as well as one by Sandra Rafman. Priced at \$35, the catalogue is available at the MAC Boutique.

In conversation with the artist

A talk between artist Jon Rafman and exhibition curator Mark Lanctôt will take place on Thursday, June 25, at 7 p.m., in Beverley Webster Rolph Hall. The conversation will be held in English.

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This is Where it Ends: The Denouement of Post-internet Art in Jon Rafman's Deep Web

By Saelan Twerdy
July 9, 2015

In a recent essay for Artforum, Jon Rafman described his early work as “romantic.” Specifically, he cited his virtual safaris of Kool-Aid Man in Second Life (2008-2011) and the Google Street View screen-captures of his Nine Eyes project (2009-). His more recent videos and installations, he commented, “have a darker tone.”

Rafman’s eponymous solo exhibition at the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal (MACM) – the first Canadian museum show for the Montreal-based artist (a shortlist nominee for this year’s Sobey Prize) following earlier solo exhibitions at the Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis (2014) and the Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2012) – confirms Rafman’s drift towards increasingly disturbing subject matter while demonstrating the persistent influence of Romanticism on his work. Through his frequent references to Romantic poetry and painting, Rafman continually presents himself and the subjects of his videos, installations, sculptures, and images as wanderers on a quest, exploring uncharted (virtual) territory in search of the Sublime, in the form of a lost ideal or a transcendent experience.



Jon Rafman, “A Man Digging”, 2013.

Rather than growing less Romantic, then, Rafman’s work has become Romantic in a different vein. What has changed in particular is the kind of sublimity that he and his imagined narrator-protagonists pursue. It’s telling that this exhibition – which is an early-career survey, though by no means a comprehensive one – doesn’t include any images from Rafman’s celebrated Nine Eyes series, for which he trawls Google Street View in search of striking photographic compositions accidentally produced by Google’s roving cars. The slow shift in Rafman’s body of work that this exhibition documents is largely a shift away from what he was doing with Nine Eyes, which was, until fairly recently, his best-known project. The transformation of attitude involved is also, as I will explain, representative of larger trends in internet culture and among Rafman’s circle of contemporaries.

When it launched in 2007, Street View was a particularly potent symbol of the convergence of the real world and its digital mediation through internet-based apps and platforms. Thanks to the wave of Web 2.0 technologies that rose to prominence in the mid-2000s, such as Youtube, Facebook, and the Google empire itself, the internet ceased to be (if it ever really was) a free-for-all playground for hackers, programmers, and nerds, and became a part of normal life for most people.

This is the juncture that Gene McHugh periodized as the post-internet condition, and it was in the nascent stage of the term that Rafman’s peregrinations through Google’s globe-spanning streetscapes captured some of the euphoria that accrued to the internet as a public space. The sense of the sublime that Rafman captured in this project wasn’t only inspired by the unexpected beauty of urban or natural landscapes (of which the series includes quite a few), but by the sense of limitless potential inherent to having so much of the real world so easily accessible for virtual browsing.

Of course, Nine Eyes also indirectly gestures at the problems posed by having such an enormous archive of images in the hands of a private corporation – all the blurred faces, addresses, and license plates on Google Street View hint at the Faustian bargain we’ve all entered into, trading the constant tracking and surveillance of our actions and environments for free access to information. Over the course of the last decade, grandiose promises about the internet’s potential to democratize politics, business, and culture have faltered. Though Silicon Valley

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suffers no shortage of utopian prophets, its credibility has been challenged by revelations regarding the extent of government and corporate surveillance, and by increasing evidence that the profits of the digital revolution have mostly accrued to a tiny (mostly white, mostly male) class of entrepreneurs.

This being the case, it might not be surprising that Rafman's art has drifted away from investigating the factors that put the "post" in post-internet – the mainstreaming and ubiquity of digital technology, the collapse of any definitive break between the "IRL" and online worlds – towards more marginal web communities and subcultures where the fantasy of the virtual as an escape from real life still thrives. Rafman's

Jon Rafman, "Mainsqueeze", 2014

recent works blend images sourced from deviant and hedonistic micro-communities (furries, "crush" fetishists, hentai) with a poignant sense of nostalgia for the visions of the future offered by previous eras.

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It's fitting that the first works that a viewer encounters in the MACM exhibition are videos drawn from Rafman's Kool-Aid Man in Second Life project, presented in a viewing installation composed of a glass box with a built-in chair and integrated speakers – one of a number of custom installations produced for this show in order to display Rafman's video works, most of which are available online. In retrospect, *Nine Eyes* (2009-) and *Kool-Aid Man* (2008-11), both of which were initiated around the same time, represent a crossroads in Rafman's practice. Both involve the artist on a journey of exploration through virtual worlds, but where *Nine Eyes* raises questions about the politics of visibility, about surveillance and data ownership, and about the status of photography in a world of image excess, *Kool-Aid Man* has more to do with the psychology of gratification enabled by the internet. The latter is a quasi-ethnographic and often voyeuristic catalogue of the wildly varied pleasures and fantasies invented and pursued by denizens of the web's murkier corners. Needless to say, the path suggested by *Kool-Aid Man* is the one that Rafman's more recent work has followed.

Wherever Rafman's Kool-Aid Man avatar goes in Second Life, he finds environments and other avatars apparently created for the sole purpose of having weird sex – or at least some facsimile thereof. Watch as Kool-Aid Man encounters a male figure in baggy jeans and a bucket hat masturbating a recumbent unicorn, or as he observes a hermaphroditic centaur mounting a fox-humanoid from behind, or as he approaches a fire-breathing, three-headed dragon in a torch-lit castle (a moment's hesitation, a hint of relief – has Kool-Aid Man finally encountered a legitimately majestic creature?) only to see the dragon get up on Rafman's avatar and start humping it. One has to wonder what kind of satisfaction Second Life users were really deriving from these crudely-animated sex acts. Not to belabor the obvious, but CGI models don't experience pleasure, and making it look like they do takes a lot of effort – a fact that becomes more clear when Kool-Aid Man visits the "Pompeiiian Delights Sex House," where the walls are plastered with pixelated ads for 3D-rendered body parts, animations, and sound effects to make one's virtual sex experience more lifelike.

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It's not all quite so sordid, though. As with Rafman's Google Street View images, Kool-Aid Man's journey through Second Life is punctuated by as many moments of surprising beauty and meditative reverie as absurd or pathetic spectacle. Half of what makes the project so intriguing is how often those two poles co-exist – parody, nostalgia, and celebration are virtually indistinguishable in this, as in many of Rafman's works. Consider, for example, Kool-Aid's Man happening upon a synchronized dance routine, performed by furries, goth-raver avatars, and a blue-skinned Na'vi, all the while set to Darude's 1999 trance hit "Sandstorm." The patent absurdity of the scene crosses over into touching pathos: a lot of work went into crafting this moment of strange togetherness. The figure of Kool-Aid Man himself (itself?) condenses these contradictory aspects as a commercial mascot from Rafman's childhood (and my own, I should add, since we're more or less the same age), noted for peddling a cheap, sugary drink with outrageous party attitude. Contrasted

with the more adult situations through which Rafman pilots his protagonist, however, Kool-Aid Man's blankly euphoric grin and goofy dancing animation take on a beatific innocence, uncorrupted and eternally enthused.



Jon Rafman, "Still Life (Betamale)," 2013.

The same glass-case installation that screens Rafman's Kool-Aid Man videos also displays a few of his other stand-alone videos set in virtual worlds, such as *In Realms of Gold* (2012), which borrows its title from a poem by John Keats. The video distills excerpts from a first-person shooter in which no combat action occurs, giving the viewer a chance to luxuriate in the lifelike renderings of landscape features, foliage, animals, and atmospheric effects. It's one of Rafman's most straightforward statements that, within virtual worlds traversed by gamers or internet users, an experience of sublime beauty is possible. *Woods of Arcady* (2010-12) juxtaposes a text-to-speech reading of W.B. Yeats's poem "The Song of the Happy Shepherd" – its first line: "The woods of Arcady are dead / And over is their antique joy" – with footage of classical statuary and architecture in Second Life, carrying the more ambiguous message that virtual archives allow access to historical information and experience while, at the same time, the sheer volume and availability of such information dilutes any possibility of legitimate historical consciousness. Technology provokes a futile quest for an imagined, authentic experience that is ultimately unrecoverable, and attempts to recreate it produce only travesty.

In Kool-Aid Man in Second Life there is another layer of nostalgia that has to do with the datedness of the platform itself. Launched in 2003, Second Life was already a bit passé by the time Rafman began exploring it in 2008. Though its user base peaked around 2009, its graphics have remained at a fairly clunky 2003 standard. More importantly, its free-for-all ethos is closer to the cyberpunk future imagined in the 1990s than to the mundane, contemporary reality of social networks exemplified by Facebook's "real-name" policy. Despite the sensationalism of much of Kool-Aid Man's content, the project is pervaded by a sense of loss and melancholy provoked both by the relegation of the utopian dream of a virtual world to the fringes of internet culture, and by the thoroughly abject ends to which this technology (and the imaginative resources of its users) has been employed.

As Rafman has gravitated towards extreme internet phenomena, the utopian sublime of his earlier work, characterized by outward exploration into the promising expanse of new virtual territory, has shaded into a more dystopian sublime, plumbing psychological depths rather than geographic space. In a series of videos including *Still Life (Betamale)* (2013), *Mainsqueeze* (2014), and his new *Erysichthon* (2015), Rafman has trawled the message-boards, forums, and video channels of the deep web to create disorienting and often difficult-to-stomach collages of deviant imagery. In this exhibition, *Still Life (Betamale)* and *Mainsqueeze* are both presented within a blue vinyl "pit couch" installation reminiscent of viewing architecture that Ryan Trecartin has used to display his videos – which makes sense, given that both artists aim to give form to the sometimes pathological mutations of selves squeezed through digital networks.

The other question that emerges from Rafman's trajectory is how much further can he mine this vein? The voiceover of *Erysichthon* repeatedly invokes a dead end or a point of no return. The last two major video works in the exhibition, *Remember Carthage* (2013) and *A Man Digging* (2013), are both film essays sourced from video games (*Max Payne 3* and *Uncharted 3*, respectively) in which the narrators seem to come unmoored in time, and ultimately get lost, or lose themselves. Is Rafman similarly hitting a dead end? Or has he lost his way?

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In the same essay I quoted earlier, Rafman stated that he's fascinated by the darker manifestations of internet culture because he sees them as a by-product of the lack in contemporary society of a "viable or compelling avenue for effecting change or emancipating consciousness." He writes: "the energy that once motivated revolution or critique gets redirected into strange and sometimes disturbing expressions." Without a belief in any redemptive, transcendent, or even effectively critical function for art, however, one wonders what motivations remain to fuel an artistic practice. Rafman has also confided that his own artistic process mirrors that of the trolls that he portrays: "[It] begins with surfing the internet to the point of sickness, where it feels like I'm about to lose my mind sitting in front of the computer for so long." Simply put, can he keep it up? Should he?



Jon Rafman, "You Are Standing in an Open Field (Waterfall)," 2015.

A number of Rafman's contemporaries have recently made public renunciations: Jennifer Chan tweeted "Postinternet: I renounce my intellectual contributions to this colonial movement. It's been a massive ideological jerkoff." Nik Kosmas of AIDS-3D quit making art in order to focus on bodybuilding and his matcha tea business, declaring, "I just didn't think there was a point or a respectable future in endlessly critiquing or arrogantly joking about innovations coming from other fields." Jaako Pallasvuo decided to stop uploading. And in a talk given in Montreal this April, trend-forecasting collective K-HOLE declared "burnout" to be the next big thing: the ability to go off the grid and enforce your own privacy is now a potentially expensive luxury, a status symbol. Some might strategize a "weaponized burnout," calculated to keep their audience hungry, while others might experiment with "lifestyle burnout," downgrading (or outsourcing) their internet presence for their own well-being.

It may be that post-internet art itself is burning out. In Lucy Lippard's canonical account, Conceptual Art – at least in its first, focused, capital-C/capital-A iteration – lasted six years (1966-1972). Post-internet art, if we date it from 2008 (when Marisa Olson allegedly coined the term) or 2009 (when Gene McHugh started his blog), has lasted about as long. Of course, it was only after the end of its first phase, and the termination of the more radical aspirations associated with it, that Conceptual Art was canonized, its higher-profile practitioners safely integrated into the gallery system, and its influence distributed as a more diffuse form of small-c conceptualism.

It is likely that we are nearing the end of the breathless first phase of the artworld's reckoning with the hegemony of the internet, and the long-term fallout may well follow a similar trajectory. For one thing, post-internet artists are getting solo museum shows now. Jon Rafman's work has been some of the most provocative and popular of post-internet art's initial wave, and he stands poised at the cusp of, potentially, much greater commercial and critical recognition. But the long-term reception, relevance, and viability of post-internet as a category remains uncertain. If Rafman levels up, he could rise above the label, or cement its respectability, or define what comes after. At present, though, Rafman appears to be more concerned with drilling down than rising up. In his latest work, the future appears as a yawning void rather than a promising vista – though still sublime in its own way. Whether this image is what the age ultimately demands will largely depend on how the age appears, once we're looking back.

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Visual arts: David Altmejd and Jon Rafman's universes collide

By John Pohl
June 25, 2015



Jon Rafman's photographic series *You Are Standing in an Open Field* references a 1970s computer game. *JON RAFMAN*



David Altmejd says *The Flux and the Puddle* represents everything he has worked on as a sculptor over the past 15 years. *JAMES EWING / ANDREA ROSEN GALLERY, NEW YORK*

New and highly engaging Musée d'art contemporain exhibitions of work by two Montreal-born artists couldn't be more different, yet end up complementing — and connecting to — each other quite well.

David Altmejd: *Flux* is an awe-inspiring exhibition of fragmented objects in monumental Plexiglas enclosures, large plaster figures and sculptures made of mirrors and metals. It could be an exhibit in a natural history museum of the future, demonstrating how humanity evolved by using the energy that flows through the universe.

The Jon Rafman exhibition is a video tour through the underbelly of the Internet, viewed in structures that, in the words of curator Mark Lancôt, "look as if they have been fabricated by a less-than-skilled handyman with material scavenged from the detritus forgotten in the back of suburban garages and garden sheds."

These funky viewing pods contrast nicely with Altmejd's pristine sculptures, emphasizing the distance between Rafman's pop art and Altmejd's high art. But the structures also help equalize the exhibitions and show two artistic visions that mesh well.

Rafman explores the universe of the Internet, while the threads and pathways that run through Altmejd's structures are like hypertexts into an Internet of the universe.

A bust of Altmejd's sister with a hole instead of a face, "like the universe just a fraction of a second before the Big Bang," he told *Canadian Art*, opens a chronological survey of his work over 15 years.

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There follows a darkened room with crystalline structures that emanate and reflect light, along with some of the early werewolf sculptures that signalled Altmejd's interest in transformation. In a side room are heads in the process of transformation, with one plaster piece seemingly made from the wall itself.

Next is a room with five giant figures on a variety of pedestals, and one within Plexiglas. The exhibition continues with more Plexiglas sculptures, including *Le spectre et la main*, which seems to capture the moment a zebra exploded. The frozen moment reveals that transformation includes both creation and destruction, showing beings shedding parts and taking on others.

The Flux and the Puddle, which Altmejd said in an interview represents everything he has worked on as a sculptor over the past 15 years, occupies the centre of a large gallery that has its walls covered in mirrors.

"Flux is the energy that travels through my work and the liquids that flow through it," he said. Puddle refers to the putrefying juices that travel through the piece and "spill" onto the floor of the museum.

This piece has been acquired by Giverny Capital and will be on display at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec for 10 years, said François Rochon, president of Giverny. Afterwards, it will be donated to a Quebec museum.

Where Altmejd's fragments work like dotted lines to indicate movement in the physical universe, Rafman presents fragments he has culled from the virtual universe we call the Internet.

You Are Standing in an Open Field is a series of photographs that reference a text-based role-playing computer game from the 1970s. A dirty keyboard sits on a computer geek's cluttered desk before a Romantic landscape painting. The image wouldn't have been possible in those days of 256-kilobyte computer memories. In another work, Rafman posits a future where human memories can be recorded for future playback, leading to a black market in which the traumatic memories of one person can serve as entertainment for another.

Betamale is a video collage of screen grabs taken from websites that feature images of pornography and violence made by members of an online community.

"There is a sense of frustration and alienation with the real world, an inability to lead fulfilling lives in an era of faceless structures," Rafman said in an interview. "I often find desires expressed in disturbing forms in the online universe."

The future will be more immersive as the technology of virtual reality becomes more accessible, Rafman said. "But it's a scary possibility. Why enter the real world when you can go into a magical forest?"

Rafman has created just such a magical forest in a screening room where the visitor dons a virtual-reality headset to experience four minutes of moving through trees buffeted by wind on a moonlit night. The hunger of people to connect with each other is illustrated by an Internet phenomenon that everyone talks about for a short time before forgetting it. Rafman said he has never seen such an extreme viral arc on social media as the short-lived blue-black dress/white-gold dress perceptual quiz this year.

"Viral, but then forgotten; banal but pointed, it creates an ability for people to join a conversation," he said. "There is a potential for change, but also a potential for amnesia, as hot topics are instantly forgotten in a world that lacks a strong, unified ideology."

Altmejd's universal flows of energy could be the basis of a unifying ideology, but it doesn't seem the messy world Rafman has uncovered is ready for it.

Still, the inclusion of photography in the art world over the past 40 years has democratized art — non-artists sometimes take great photographs — and Rafman enlarges the art world further by giving meaning to the images he finds online.

Does that mean art has a potential role as a social unifier? Both Rafman's universe of the Internet and Altmejd's Internet of the universe suggest the possibility, with Rafman uncovering a human need for connection and Altmejd finding those connections in the energy that flows through us.

Altmejd projects our highest aspirations; Rafman shows the reality in which we are mired.

Rafman is the Quebec finalist for the 2015 Sobey Art Award, a prize for artists under the age of 40 that Altmejd won in 2009. The winner will be announced Oct. 28 in Halifax.

M+B

ARTslant
New York

On Troll Caves and Rose Gardens: Jon Rafman and Keren Cyttter at Feuer/Mesler

By Taylor Dafor
May 19, 2015

In Jon Rafman's 2013 film, *Still Life* (Betamale), we watch furries and hentai sourced from the deep web while a flat voice-over delivers a speech about leaving one world to enter another. It's the promise virtual realities offer us: escapism. This idea is at the center of *Grand Tour*, the inaugural two-person show featuring new works from Rafman and Keren Cyttter at Feuer/Mesler, one of two new Lower East Side galleries founded this year by Zach Feuer and Untitled director Joel Mesler (the second gallery, Mesler/Feuer, occupies the same space Untitled once did).

As in *Still Life* (Betamale), much of Rafman's work has investigated the more disturbing ways people construct their lives around the computer, both virtually (online gaming communities, fetishistic subcultures of the deep internet, etc.) and physically (the spaces in which the computer sits in the home of heavy users, referred to by Rafman as "troll dens" or "caves"). His recent work explores these same themes and environments in large-format prints, depicting den desks and keyboards littered with detritus: empty energy drink- and coffee-containers, half-eaten foods gone to rot, over-the-counter pill bottles, and so on. These prints act as a kind of portal between the real world and the virtual one.



Grand Tour

Keren Cyttter, Jon Rafman

Feuer Mesler

319 Grand Street, 2nd floor, New York, NY 10002

May 10, 2015 - June 14, 2015

Juxtaposed with the keyboards in the foreground are stock images of waterfalls and sunsets, like those found on old desktop screensavers, or generic Homer-esque paintings of boats battling sea at storm. All six prints are covered in clear resin, which, applied unevenly and to different degrees, as if spilled or sprayed, imbues in the work a tangibility. Not to mention a cheeky joke, the resin invoking the various sticky substances—soda pop or semen—one might find around computer dens.

Projected in the corner of the gallery's first room is Cyttter's video, *Rose Garden*. The work is a kind of pastiche of Luis Buñuel's surrealist film *The Golden Age* (1930). It's set in a rural bar called the Rose Garden, presumably named after the slogan of an infamous Marine Corps recruitment poster which hangs inside: "We Don't Promise You a Rose Garden". However, this slogan, ignorantly repurposed by the military, was taken from the 1964 memoir, *I Didn't Promise You a Rose Garden*, about a schizophrenic woman who creates her an elaborate make-believe world in her mind.

M+B

This is appropriate given the style of the film: multiple plots co-exist independently, their scenes overlapping. The storylines comprise loose reenactments of scenes from Buñuel's film, yet are incongruous and delivered without introduction or exposition. A middle-aged man crows about his teenage son, who stands next to him polishing a shotgun; a woman is wooed by a man while her boyfriend buys drinks at the bar; a man in the back whispers dirty talk into a payphone; the female bartender smiles on the other end of the line. The dialogue is generic, as if written by a child, and at times doesn't sync up with the actors' mouth movements. The soundtrack changes moods, none of which fit the visual. The film feels like an alternate reality.

The final work in the show is a collaboration between the two artists and a conversation between their interests. In the second gallery room sits a large wooden and aluminum box built by Rafman, titled *Cabinet*. The box, unfinished, its skeleton exposed, is an isolated viewing space designed specifically for watching a film by Cytter. Inside the box sits a single chair, its back big enough to block the view in and out. While sitting in it you can see only the TV in front of you, which plays Cytter's film, *Siren*, on repeat.



Jon Rafman, You are Standing in an Open Field (Waterfall), 2015
Archival pigment print, polystyrene, resin
58 7/8 x 78 3/4 x 3 1/4"



Keren Cytter/Jon Rafman, Grand Tour, 2015
Installation view at FEUER/MESLER, New York.

Siren is a collage of digital footage, video from on-computer camera, and a screen share of Cytter's own monitor as she edits the very film we watch. Instead of focusing its attention on the machinations of cinema, as *Rose Garden* did, *Siren* is interested in the various ways in which video lends itself to narration, fictional or biographical, real or implied. It's part art-house, part student project, part parody. It also samples video from other sources, a small post-appropriationist gesture.

The idea of "avatarization" is at the center of both artists' works, albeit in different capacities. For Rafman, it's the digital avatar, a descendant of McLuhan's theory of technology as an extension of the person—a prosthesis. Rafman is interested in the people who live more in virtual reality of the internet than they do in real life, where they sit behind a computer screen. Cytter, on the other hand, conjures a conceptual avatar, like a mask in theater, a narrative device that frames the way we understand an individual's identity. In both circumstances, artificial worlds are created around the central subject, be it cyber geeks or people who make movies of their lives. These are the people who live in their own rose gardens.



ARTNEWS

DIGITAL ART MARKETPLACE DAATA EDITIONS MAKES REAL-LIFE DEBUT

By Hannah Ghorashi
May 18, 2015

Daata Editions debuted its online gallery and marketplace at NADA New York last week, operating out of a large, moderately popular booth in the middle of an open space. Its tables were equipped with iPads, with which visitors could explore the website and/or create an account for themselves. Daata is the brainchild of David Gryn, film curator for Art Basel Miami and founder of consultancy firm artprojx.

Everything I knew about Daata I had learned from skimming past a couple online headlines that included classic online headline-y word pairings like “shake up” before “the art world,” “the art market,” etc. I knew it was an online marketplace for buying and storing digital art, but I was craving particulars—prices, procedures, statement of purpose. To this end, I made eye contact with a representative. I smiled. She smiled, revealing an upper frenulum piercing dangling between her two front teeth. The tiny gold ring and I played peekaboo for the rest of that conversation.

“These are all the artists who were asked to commission a video event or sound piece,” she said, pointing to a list that named Ilit Azoulay, Helen Benigson, David Blandy, Matt Copson, Ed Fornieles, Leo Gabin, Daniel Keller & Martti Kalliala, Lina Lape-lyte, Rachel Maclean, Florian Meisenberg, Takeshi Murata, Hannah Perry, Jon Rafman, Charles Richardson, Amalia Ulman, Stephen Vitiello, and Chloe Wise.

“They were asked to make six pieces, and today is the release of the first ones. The idea of Daata [long a]”—she seemed to misspeak—“or Daata [short a, apparently the correct pronunciation] editions is that you can purchase video work online. You can do this here or at home, and you can make your own account where you have your own gallery. Each work comes in editions of 15, except for one piece by Jon Rafman, which is free to subscribers. Once you make the purchase, you get a download file in HD quality. Right now you can watch all of them online, you can even share the link, it just has our little watermark on top. That’s basically the idea, that everyone can watch it, but owners will get a certificate and a better quality file.”

The first edition is always cheapest, starting at \$100 or \$200 and increasing by likewise increments, except for the last one, which is always double the previous price. Sales histories are posted online, and we noted that a museum was listed among the first buyers—or acquirers, in this case.

“So...what about hackers?” I asked.

“Oh, I don’t know,” said the rep, laughing a little. My eye followed her glinting upper gum admiringly. “It will probably happen all the time. But I guess it’s kind of the same as buying a print of a painting.”

So, is HD quality worth \$5,000? Or even \$100? That is a question each art collector must answer for herself.

CONCENTRATIONS 59: MIRROR STAGE— VISUALIZING THE SELF AFTER THE INTERNET



Dallas, TX—April 6, 2015—Through a series of recent single-channel videos, *Concentrations 59: Mirror Stage—Visualizing the Self After the Internet* examines the changing understanding and representation of the self via digital technology and the Internet. Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s term “mirror stage” refers to the stage of human development in which the infant first encounters an image of itself (often via a mirror) and begins to perceive the notion of selfhood. With this concept as its starting point, this exhibition explores how we as human beings now reencounter and reimagine the self via the myriad of screens we experience in our digital lives (computer, smartphone, tablet, etc.). *Concentrations 59: Mirror Stage—Visualizing the Self After the Internet*, organized by the Dallas Museum of Art and on view April 10 through December 6, 2015, is part of the *Concentrations* series of project-based exhibitions by international emerging and under-represented artists. The series began in 1981 as part of the DMA’s commitment to showing the work of living artists, while preserving the excitement of the work.

“The Dallas Museum of Art is pleased to organize and present *Concentrations 59: Mirror Stage*, introducing the work of eight multimedia artists to the community of North Texas,” said Maxwell L. Anderson, The Eugene McDermott Director of the Dallas Museum of Art. “For more than thirty years, *Concentrations* has showcased installations of over fifty emerging artists, with the goal of offering their innovative new work to DMA audiences.”

This exhibition proposes that our confrontation with the screen establishes the relationship between ourselves and reality anew, allowing for infinitely mediated and malleable notions of the self that were unimaginable prior to the advent of the Internet. At times schizophrenic and narcissistic, the work included in *Concentrations 59: Mirror Stage* employs a variety of technologies such as motion capture, 3-D animation, and webcam footage to explore various facets of how we come to know and define ourselves as individuals in today’s “post-Internet” world.

“The artists included in *Concentrations 59: Mirror Stage* take a critical look at how the Internet has fundamentally changed how we as human beings come to know ourselves and our place in the world,” said Gabriel Ritter, The Nancy and Tim Hanley Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art. “Their works consider an elastic notion of the self that stretches the limits of representation, presenting a mirror image of identity in the digital age that is both fascinating and disturbing.”

Over the course of eight months, the exhibition will display works by an international roster of artists—including Ed Atkins, Trisha Baga, Antoine Catala, Aleksandra Domanović, Jon Rafman, Jacolby Satterwhite, Hito Steyerl, and Ryan Trecartin—with a different artist's work on view each month.

Concentrations 59: Mirror Stage—Visualizing the Self After the Internet is included in the Museum's free general admission. The exhibition will be accompanied by a full-color illustrated brochure with an essay by exhibition curator Gabriel Ritter, The Nancy and Tim Hanley Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art. Montreal-based artist Jon Rafman, the second artist featured in the *Concentrations 59: Mirror Stage* rotation, will perform as the iconic Kool-Aid Man as part of his ongoing performances within Second Life during the May Late Night on Friday, May 15. Artists Ed Atkins and Jacolby Satterwhite will participate in a *Concentrations 59: Mirror Stage* roundtable discussion moderated by exhibition curator Gabriel Ritter scheduled for late October 2015; programming details will be forthcoming. Additional programming, including gallery talks, will be scheduled throughout the run of the exhibition. For dates, prices, and details, visit DMA.org.

Concentrations 59: Mirror Stage—Visualizing the Self After the Internet is organized by the Dallas Museum of Art. Additional support provided by the Contemporary Art Initiative and TWO X TWO for AIDS and Art. Air transportation provided by American Airlines.

Images: Ryan Trecartin, *(Tommy-Chat Just E-mailed Me)*, 2006, video, Courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, © New York Ryan Trecartin; Hito Steyerl, *HOW NOT TO BE SEEN: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File*, 2013, HD video, Image courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, © Hito Steyerl; Jacolby Satterwhite, *Reifying Desire 6*, 2014, HD video, Courtesy of the artist and OHWOW Gallery, Los Angeles, ©Jacolby Satterwhite

About the Dallas Museum of Art

Established in 1903, the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) is among the 10 largest art museums in the country and is distinguished by its commitment to research, innovation, and public engagement. At the heart of the Museum and its programs is its global collection, which encompasses more than 23,000 works and spans 5,000 years of history, representing a full range of world cultures. Located in the nation's largest arts district, the Museum welcomes over 650,000 visitors annually and acts as a catalyst for community creativity, engaging people of all ages and backgrounds with a diverse spectrum of programming, from exhibitions and lectures to concerts, literary events, and dramatic and dance presentations. In January 2013, the DMA returned to a free general admission policy and launched DMA Friends, the first free museum membership program in the country, which currently has over 90,000 members. For more information, visit DMA.org.

The Dallas Museum of Art is supported, in part, by the generosity of DMA Partners and donors, the citizens of Dallas through the City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs, and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

For more information, please contact:

Jill Bernstein
Dallas Museum of Art

M+B

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New Age Demanded (Spinal Klee)

Unique archival pigment print, 2012

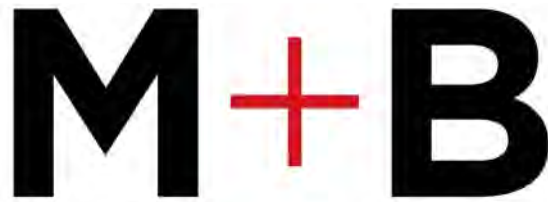
Signed and numbered on the reverse

58 × 42 inches; 147.3 × 106.6 cm

Jon Rafman (Canadian, born 1981) is a Montreal-based artist whose work explores the paradoxes of modernity. Well known within the digital community, this particular work represents the technique in which the artist employs 3D technology to create "skin" in the manner of a Paul Klee color grid sequence over a virtual classical Greek bust, with both human and non-human features. Jon Rafman's works are exhibited across North America and Europe. This piece and others by this artist are available through M + B Gallery in Los Angeles, California. Visit www.mbart.com to view more works by this artist.

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DAZED

Jon Rafman's digital wanderings at Art Basel Miami

The artist's ongoing digital archaeology notches up a level as virtual reality takes baby steps into the art world

By David Mullet
December 12, 2014

Jon Rafman's digital travel adventures are now a few generations of technology deep. He first gained attention in 2008 when his "Kool Aid Man" avatar wandered "Second Life" with Rafman's classic empathic yet ironic stance. Following shortly thereafter, Rafman's iconic project "9-Eyes" highlighted manifold perspectives on humanity in shots captured worldwide by the Google Street View's nine lens camera. Now the digital tech world has offered up it's latest iteration of virtual reality with the Oculus Rift in creating an immersive 360 degree digital environment.

Represented by the Zach Feuer Gallery in New York, Jon's installation 'Junior Suite' at the NADA art fair in Miami deepens his exploration of the relationship between the virtual and the real and the ever-blurring line between the two. This time, he directly overlays virtual space right on top of the real space of a Miami hotel room, and the audience is invited to occupy that space via the VR headset. Looking through the window of the balcony back into the room, it features a woman lying under the sheet of the bed in the hotel room and 'Scarface' playing on the virtual television. When you reach out to the glass in virtual space, you touch the real glass. Behind you, the hyper-saturated aquamarine blue of the ocean appears in pixel form. A short time into the experience, the virtual space explodes and tears apart around you into random geometries. The floor beneath you and the ocean disperse. Your disorienting virtual world is now a place of randomly generated, shrapnel-like abstraction and your brain thinks it's real.



Jon Rafman gave geek art fans the chance to peer into his interactive world
Courtesy of the gallery

"I don't know if it's useful any more to talk about it as a clear dichotomy between the virtual and the real, as most of our lives are happening in front of screen. There's just different levels of what the virtual is" – Jon Rafman

Less a digital meander than a move to come to terms with the possibilities of a direct fusion between virtual and real, "Junior Suite" represents a new level of virtual that transcends the traditional rectangular space of the screen. As Jon explains: "Film was the medium of the twentieth century, but it no longer occupies the same place. A similar kind of revolution in culture and experience that occurred alongside the advent of film and TV is now occurring in a comparable fashion with these new technologies. In this case, it reflects a longstanding desire for fully immersive experiences"

M+B

"Junior Suite" is the artist's first piece to reflect on the new VR medium, which will emerge on the market next year with consumer headsets offering VR experiences, cinema, and games for the masses. "I question whether it is useful any more to talk about a clear dichotomy between the virtual and the real, as most of our lives are happening in front of a screen. Always a multi-faceted multi-levelled concept, the virtual is taking on new and different meanings in its relation to the real with these new technologies. What I am interested in is how our subjectivity as human beings has either been transformed, or the transformation in our subjectivity has been revealed, in these new virtual worlds."

Jon insists that it's his job as an artist to confront what is happening through both celebration and critique. "What does the Oculus Rift represent? It is, in part, a quest for totally immersive escapist environments. This concept of immersion can be seen as a sign of an impoverishment of our senses but at the same time the next step towards where our profound desires have taken us." The role of science fiction and the literary origins of our existing and future tech world are well-documented. According to Jon, digital tech leaps like VR are simply a manifestation of long-evolving shifts in consciousness. "It's interesting how there's a serious lag. This stuff has been brewing now for decades. I noticed there's a repetitive motif when talking to VR developers. 'This is what I thought we would have already, and now it's finally here.' It's clearly been a desire for decades now. It was there prior to William Gibson's *Neuromancer* in 1984. And was articulated well in Neal Stephenson's 1992 novel *Snow Crash*."

"I'm always interested in new technologies, and not to diminish them, but when you get to work with them you sometimes get caught up with the gimmick" – Jon Rafman

Across town at the Design Miami / 2014 fair, the Miami-based scientific art group Coral Morphology took a different approach to VR with their Oculus-based piece "Coral Therapy". In their virtual world, the 360 environment operates more like a deprivation chamber. Their stunning meditative experience features a psychedelic arrangement of fluorescent corals and sea anemones that work with a subtle ambient soundtrack to create an out-of-body experience. Coral's Jared McKay explains: "We are bringing nature back into the future of technology. We reclaim and rescue coral that is endangered and bring it to artificial reefs or our coral laboratory. We grow them there and video them, so here we've used time-lapse photography to create this virtual experience." As a pain-reduction device, the piece is designed for use in a broader therapeutic context. The group plans on releasing the artwork to the public when the Oculus headsets become available to consumers next year.

Hacker collective Ruse Laboratories also brought VR to Art Basel Miami Beach with their subversive "1st Annual Larry Gagosian Film Festival." To an unaware Gagosian staff, audience members in Gagosian's booth would put on the mobile VR headset for short bursts of time. Inside the VR world, they were greeted with a 3D replica of Gagosian's art space. The paintings were swapped out digitally with crime-related films including *Evolution of a Criminal* (2014), *Cocaine Cowboys* (2006), *F is for Fake* (1973), and *Hackers* (1995). Their ALGO virtual reality glasses combine the immersive experience of VR with a custom satellite-based, geo-fencing algorithm that limits access to specific venues around the globe. "We believe that VR technology itself will soon be standardized, so the true magic is combining it with other powerful technologies, ideas, people, and places," said Ruse Laboratories co-founder Benjamin Gleitzman.

In our tech-driven consumer culture, Jon has embarked on a form of digital anthropology where the public inevitably become absorbed into these new kinds of canvases. "I'm always interested in new technologies, and not to diminish them, but when you get to work with them you sometimes see people focus in on the novelty. I know this from working with Google Street View in "9-Eyes". In any case, it becomes a part of the art. With "Junior Suite", the reaction that I get when people try the VR is, to me, as thrilling as creating the experience itself."



Canada's Jon Rafman up for the Future Generation Art Prize

By Diana Whistance-Smith
December 5, 2014

In the eyes of Google Maps pops up an overly excited fellow, gleefully throwing his arms up in the air on an industrial side street of New York City. Another photo shows a young group of shoeless children skipping rope behind a collection of worn down buildings. Scrolling further is a photo of two women in minimal clothing posing beside a metal fence, out of the general public's view, or so they think.

Little did anybody know, a Canadian man named Jon Rafman, who captured these unpredictable yet provoking moments through a series of Google Maps images, would be shortlisted for the prestigious Future Generation Art Prize.

Established in 2009, the global prize, which applies to worldwide artists under 35 years of age, will announce the winner from over 5,500 applicants on Dec. 6 in Kyiv, Ukraine, and give the groundbreaking artist \$100,000 to spend towards producing new artwork and continuing to shape the world with their artistic inclination.



Photo courtesy of <http://9-eyes.com/>

Rafman is one of this year's eclectic nominees, after grabbing the world's attention in 2009 with his project 9 Eyes of Google Street View. This project is an ongoing series of accidental shots taken by Google Maps that he has presented to the world. It shows the weird and wonderful moments that often go unnoticed, but happen to shed new light on the controversial issues and the spectacular generosity that inhabits the souls of the world's inhabitants.

In light of our world becoming increasingly reliant on technological advances, Rafman's ability to turn digitized work into art sets him apart from other artists. His portrayal of the humorous and exquisite public moments that can be brought to public awareness through the Internet makes him an excellent candidate for a prize that praises future world advancements.

Rafman received his MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2008. His work has been displayed in various international and solo exhibitions, from Italy, France, the U.K., Canada, and the U.S. A few of his collections remain in the Musée des Beaux Arts in Montréal, and the Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome. Until Jan. 4, 2015, the Montréal native's work will be displayed in the Pinchuk Art Centre in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Rafman's 2013 project, Brand New Paint Job, has also been gaining attention. Brand New Paint Job features artwork inserted into architectural designs and building interiors. Although the videos and photos are mostly digitized or created via computer photo generating systems, the kaleidoscopic colours and design schemes used in bedroom sets and office work-spaces leave the viewer in awe.

His unique eye for vivid artwork, from photographic representation to digitized euphoric layouts, have proven that he is an exceptional candidate for this year's Future Generation Art Prize.

ANTI-GRAND

Contemporary Perspectives on Landscape

January 15 to March 6, 2015

Joel and Lila Harnett Museum of Art
University of Richmond Museums, VA
museums.richmond.edu



The exhibition *Anti-Grand: Contemporary Perspectives on Landscape* will feature 26 contemporary, international artists and collective who examine, challenge, and redefine the concept of landscape, while simultaneously drawing attention to humanity's hubristic attempts to relate to, preserve, and manage the natural environment. Engaging humor, tenderness, wisdom, and respect, the artists will look at many facets of this subject, and the exhibition will include video, installation, video games, and traditional two- and three-dimensional media.

Artists

Olivio Barbieri (Italian, born 1954)
Vaughn Bell (American, born 1978)
Justin Berry (American)
Doug Beube (Canadian, born 1950)
Elisheva Biernoff (American, born 1980)
Martin Bonadeo (Argentinian, born 1975)
Matthew Brandt (American, born 1982)
Adam Cvijanovic (American, born 1960)
Katrín Elvarsdóttir (Icelandic, born 1964)
Flatfarm (European media art collective)
Kristin Holder (American, born 1973)
Institute of Critical Zoologists
(Robert Zhao Renhui, Singaporean, born 1983)
Patrick Jacobs (American, born 1971)
Kim Keever (American, born 1955)
Guy Laramée (Canadian, born 1957)
Chun-Yi Lee (Chinese, born 1965)
Linda Lynch (American, born 1958)
David Maisel (American, born 1961)
Tom McGrath (American, born 1978)
Jesse McLean (American, born 1975)
Jon Rafman (Canadian, born 1981)
Gerco de Ruijter (Dutch, born 1961)
Jon-Phillip Sheridan (American, born 1977)

Curators

- N. Elizabeth Schlatter, Deputy Director and Curator of Exhibitions, University of Richmond Museums
- Kenta Murakami, '15, art history major, University of Richmond, columnist for DigitalAmerica.org
- Assistance with videogames and related programs by independent curators Lauren Vincelli and Will Blanton

Past Exhibitions and Online Catalogues

- "Flow, Just Flow: Variations on a Theme," www.flowjustflow.com
- "Art=Text=Art: Works by Contemporary Artists," www.artequalstext.com

Contact

N. Elizabeth Schlatter
University of Richmond Museums, VA
804-287-6423
eschlatt@richmond.edu



image: Vaughn Bell (American, born 1978), *Metropolis*, 2012, installation at Seattle Center, acrylic, aluminum, hardware, rigging, soil, water, native plants and mosses of the Pacific Northwest forests, footstools. Photograph by Spike Mafford

JAMES COHAN GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BY PROXY

November 20 – January 17, 2015

Opening Reception: Thursday, November 20, 6 – 8 PM



XU ZHEN, produced by MadeIn Company, *Eternity*----*Aphrodite of Knidos*, *Tang Dynasty Sitting Buddha*, 2014

James Cohan Gallery is pleased to present a group exhibition entitled *By Proxy*, opening on November 20th, 2014 and running through January 17th, 2015.

Marcel Duchamp called it "aesthetic osmosis," the process by which an artist transfers responsibility to a viewer, empowering them to complete the work out in the world. This idea, of art as shared enterprise, is the theme of this exhibition. Here, the word *proxy* encompasses the tools and techniques that complete artworks away from the artist's hand. This exhibition is concerned with those tools and techniques, the effects they can have, and the instances when an idea calls for more than just the artist to take form.

JAMES COHAN GALLERY

Production, outsourcing, interactivity and appropriation have become increasingly mainstream modes of artistic expression over the past 100 years. The shared enterprise, in which the artist somehow cedes responsibility for the final work, now takes many forms: from fabrication and machines to chance, games, relational practice and the increasingly fertile landscape of the internet. *By Proxy* includes Marcel Duchamp's assisted readymade *With Hidden Noise*, a ball of string with an unknown object rattling inside it; embroidery works by Alighiero Boetti; three drawings from John Cage's 1990 series *River Rocks and Smoke*, in which chance operations are performed by smoke settling in the fibers of the paper; Oliver Laric's *Yuanmingyuan Columns*, a new work created with 3D scans of Chinese cultural artifacts ensconced in Bergen, Norway; Yoko Ono's seminal chess set and war allegory *Play it By Trust*; and a work from Xu Zhen's recent *Eternity* series, which juxtaposes the East and West by mounting headless replicas of key Hellenistic and Buddhist sculptures neck to neck.

The exhibition will incorporate work from the past century to the present day. Participating artists are Francis Alÿs, Alighiero Boetti, John Cage, Marcel Duchamp, Wade Guyton, Oliver Laric, Lee Mingwei, Sol LeWitt, Yoko Ono, Jon Rafman, Mariah Robertson, Siebren Versteeg and Xu Zhen. A full color, 24-page brochure with an accompanying text will be available for free at the gallery.

For press inquiries, please contact Jane Cohan at jane@jamescohan.com or 212-714-9500.



Private Settings

Art after the Internet

September 25, 2014 - January 6, 2015

Opening: September 25 at 7 pm

Curated by: Natalia Sielewicz

How does the rampant technological progress and our daily contact with media shape the experience of identity and social interaction?

The exhibition attempts to answer this question from the perspective of the generation of artists born in the 1980s and 1990s, who entered the artistic scene amid the dynamic expansion of the Internet and mass digital culture, in a space full of seemingly limitless possibilities and characterised by an excess of images and information.

For the young generation, the web is not a space beyond material reality, but rather an integral element of the everyday, which encourages increasingly bold design of one's own identity and its management. While the Internet and mass access to new technologies have reshaped the intimacy of one-to-one feedback, they also provoke expressive individualism and „curating” aspirations of our virtual existence. What matters is affect and presence. And yet, the architecture of the web, in which we vehemently like, hate, recommend, blog, and create ratings, does not favour getting to know the Other, but limits us to a compulsive urge of self-documentation and an optimistic affirmation of the „friends of our friends”.

It is also a landscape of ever-blurring borders between production and consumption, the public and private domains, original and copy, the intimate and the transparent. The irresistible need to express oneself, one's opinions, and the “authenticity” of the message have had an irrevocable

impact on our experience of ties and relations with another human being. Everything is changing: the record and distribution of our own selves, the manner of representation and the potential of identification. The unprecedented freedom of communication and expression generate the possibility of daily performance of gender, race, social roles and hierarchies.

The exhibition is an answer to this striking metamorphosis of the social consciousness, highlighting it as an element which has fundamentally revalued the question of freedom, privacy and anonymity of each and everyone of us. Young artists engage actively in these changes and shape a new language and aesthetic categories. They ask questions about the condition of the individual and the essence of visual representation: the way we perceive and express ourselves through images in the era of aggressive self-promotion and economy of attention. In a way, it can be seen a reaction to today's imperative of creative participation in public life, symbolised by the figure of a prosumer – at once a spectator and an amateur creator of culture. Along these lines, the logic of late capitalism favours not only solid hardware but, more importantly, inventive software with its promise of personal fulfilment and successful conveying of one's own personality and brand.

“Private Settings“ is also an attempt to shed a new light on the language of contemporary visual culture – from idealised stock photographs and homogenous corporate conventions, to the chill of the digital abyss and the aesthetics of amateur Internet practice, which questions the cult of the professional artist and traditional ways in which art functions in the society.

The exhibition is accompanied by an abundant programme of collateral events – from film screenings and meetings with artists, to performances by Korakrit Arunonandchai, Jesse Darling and DIS Magazine and the Internet projects by Czosnek Studio group and the artist Yuri Pattison.

Artists: Sarah Abu Abdallah and Joey DeFrancesco, Korakrit Arunonandchai, Ed Atkins, Trisha Baga and Jessie Stead, Darja Bajagic, Nicolas Ceccaldi, Jennifer Chan, CUSS Group, Czosnek Studio, Jesse Darling, DIS, Harm van den Dorpel, Loretta Fahrenholz, Daniel Keller, Ada Karczmarczyk, Jason Loeb, Piotr Łakomy, Metahaven, Takeshi Murata, Yuri Pattison, Hannah Perry, Jon Rafman, Bunny Rogers, Pamela Rosenkranz, Gregor Rózański, Ryan Trecartin, Ned Vena

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WALL STREET JOURNAL

Carter Cleveland Says Art in the Future Will Be for Everyone

The Artsy Founder Writes That the Internet Holds the Promise of a World Where Art Is as Ubiquitous as Music Is Today

By Carter Cleveland
July 7, 2014

Before talking about the future of art, I'd like to draw your attention to the past, to another form of human expression: music.

Pre-20th century, the music world in the West resembled the art world today. If you listened to professional music, were informed about the genre and attended performances, you were part of an elite class.

Today, it's hard to imagine a world where listening to music has anything to do with class. Not everyone can afford front-row seats to a Justin Timberlake concert, but everyone knows his music. You can ask anyone on the street about their favorite band and watch their eyes light up. In contrast, try asking someone on the street about their favorite artist and rarely will you find a similarly enthusiastic response. (If this thought experiment doesn't make sense, you probably live in New York or London—two cities that together account for over 60% of the global art market.)

So why has music succeeded in transcending class hierarchies while art has not? Pessimists would say that fundamentally there is a finite universe of people interested in art, or that you must experience art in person to acquire a passion for it. But these same arguments were made about music and attending live performances over 100 years ago.

No, a love for art is not genetically predestined. Like music, passion for art is nourished from a young age via exposure and education. But while the record player and the radio drove music's exposure beyond class boundaries, those technologies were incompatible with art.

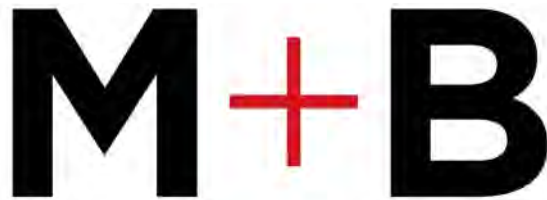
The good news is that the Internet provides a medium for both music and art to reach anyone with an Internet connection—and therefore holds the promise of a future where art is as ubiquitous a part of culture as music is today.

Given that, here are six predictions about the future of art:

1. The art of tomorrow will be the technology of today. Going back to charcoal on a cave wall, artistic mediums always began as functional technologies. Consider the daguerreotype, once an affordable alternative to commission paintings, now a fine-art medium beloved by Chuck Close. As we become increasingly comfortable with new technologies, they will transition to future modes of self-expression. Contemporary examples include Jon Rafman's Google Street View art, Dwyer Kilcollin's sculptures made using 3-D printers, and Katsu creating abstract paintings with spray-paint-carrying drones. And just imagine the kind of artistic experiences made possible by new virtual-reality technologies.

2. An "upper-middle-brow" of art will emerge. Literary critic William Deresiewicz used the phrase "upper middle brow" to describe cultural content that has widespread appeal and stands on its own critical merit. Television has seen the emerging dominance of upper-middle-brow shows like "House of Cards." In film, Pixar has managed to engage high-, middle- and even lowbrow audiences simultaneously. And Shakespeare accomplished the same in theater. Today art is rarely appreciated for appealing outside of a small world of tastemakers—although examples like Banksy and Christian Marclay (particularly his film "The Clock") come to mind. But in the future, a larger and more diverse audience of art lovers will celebrate artists that achieve trans-brow appeal.

3. The art market will expand massively. The global art market is about \$66 billion annually, but for every one household that collects art there are 37 with the same average income who don't. If art becomes a ubiquitous part of culture, collecting could become normal behavior for households with disposable income, just like buying luxury fashion and jewelry. At Artsy we are seeing this phenomenon firsthand among new collectors in Silicon Valley, a market we have early visibility into given our tech-startup roots.



4. There will be many more galleries. Some 71% of collectors and 88% of dealers regularly buy and sell art via digital image (sight unseen), and on Artsy we see an average distance between buyer and seller of over 2,000 miles. Additionally, as of 2012, art fairs now account for 36% of all dealer sales. Art fairs and online platforms give galleries global reach without the costs of multiple physical locations. This ability to reduce costs will see a corresponding increase in galleries able to serve the rapidly growing art market.

5. New artists will be discovered faster, and location won't matter (as much). SoundCloud Chief Executive (and Artsy investor) Alex Ljung recently pointed me to the phenomenon of Lorde, a 17-year-old from New Zealand, who hit No. 1 on Billboard's Hot 100 less than a year after releasing her first extended play (EP) on SoundCloud. Online music platforms are making these kinds of discoveries increasingly frequent; and online art platforms will similarly unearth more talented artists regardless of location or how connected they are into the art world's existing power structures.

6. Education today will ensure the longevity of art in the future. For the majority of the 20th century, contemporary classical music flourished. Then, an elitist outlook that saw no value in educating new audiences began to dominate the genre. While rooted in the values of artistic integrity, this elitist stance was falsely premised on the idea that connoisseurs are born, not made.

Ultimately, ignoring future audiences proved lethal for contemporary classical music, which has now become largely an academic pursuit with the biggest names barely able to fill the orchestra sections of concert halls.

Why won't the fate of contemporary classical music befall contemporary art? Because unlike the contemporary music establishment, the art world is educating new audiences via the Internet. Museums, foundations and galleries increasingly publish artworks online and—critically—supply contextual material for self-education (the same reason Artsy created the Art Genome Project, which provides art-historical context and allows users to discover related artists).

As with music, a passion for art is made, not born. By educating young audiences today, we are avoiding contemporary classical music's fate and ensuring that future generations have the opportunity to become art lovers, collectors, patrons and connoisseurs.

M+B

ARTFORUM

Jon Rafman

July 3, 2014

Jon Rafman is a Canadian artist whose work explores shifting boundaries between the virtual and the real while acknowledging fading distinctions between the two. Here, he discusses his recent work and debut solo exhibition in an American museum. "Jon Rafman: The end of the end of the end" is on view at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis from June 27 to August 10, 2014.

I BEGAN TO KNOW the fighting game community of New York while I was doing interviews for my 2011 film *Codes of Honor*, which is about a lone gamer recounting his past experiences in professional gaming. That work generally deals with a loss of history and the struggle to preserve tradition in a culture where the new sweeps away the old at a faster and faster pace. I saw the pro gamer as a contemporary tragic hero who strives for classic virtues in a hyperaccelerated age.



Jon Rafman, *Still Life (Betamale)*, 2013, HD video, color, sound, 4 minutes 54 seconds.

The very thing the gamer attempts to master is constantly slipping away and becoming obsolete, which acutely reflects our contemporary condition.

When I held the pro gaming tournament at Zach Feuer in honor of the original Chinatown Fair arcade, which was the last great East Coast video arcade, it was as if the whole project had been leading up to that night. This was also true for the release on 4chan of my 2013 film *Still Life (Betamale)*, a work that brings to light the darker fetishes of Internet subcultures—including furry fandom, kigurumi, and 8-bit anime. The community and the artist came face to face, and the reaction to the work was rich and varied. For instance, a 4chan user wrote:

this shit would have been cool in 2005 but you're on goddamn 4chan in 2013, one of the biggest sites for "SUCH A LOSER ;_;"
people to ever browse the internet
someone didn't found out your dirty secret life and reveal it to everyone else
we've been doing it since the early/mid 2000's
it isn't special
get over it

Here the commenter is mocking my fetishization of these subcultures in classic 4chan style, while also revealing that sense that the moment you "discover" said culture it has already moved on. It also indirectly hints at the sublime feeling I every now and again experience when I'm surfing the Web and I suddenly discover a new community or fully formed subculture that has its own complex vocabulary and history. It's this overwhelming sensation that there are subcultures within subcultures, worlds upon worlds upon worlds ad infinitum.

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My earlier work is more romantic: There's a flaneur-like gaze that crystallizes in the Google Street Views of Nine Eyes and the virtual safaris seen in the Kool-Aid Man in Second Life projects, for instance. As the Internet became a ubiquitous part of daily existence, I shared in the excitement of these new communities and was excited to explore the newly forming virtual worlds. Sometimes I see myself as a member of the community, but in many cases I approach the subcultures as if I were a passing explorer or an amateur anthropologist.

My latest videos and installations have a darker tone, delving into the murkier corners of the Web. What concerns me is the general sense of entrapment and isolation felt by many as social and political life becomes increasingly abstracted and experience dematerialized. There is no viable or compelling avenue for effecting change or emancipating consciousness, so the energy that once motivated revolution or critique gets redirected into strange and sometimes disturbing expressions.

I had planned to premiere my latest video, Mainsqueeze, in St. Louis for "The end of the end of the end," but it was deemed too difficult and disturbing for the context of the exhibition. Some of the content, particularly the section with the "crush fetish," in which a woman is depicted stepping on a live shellfish, is indeed difficult to watch. But I think the fetishes can evoke repressed desires as well as reveal latent societal tensions. There's an underlying barbarism that can be found in daily life that I'm trying to capture. That said, I think the film is as beautiful and ironic, or postironic, as it is horrifying.

Currently, I'm developing a sculpture and installation series that has grown out of my intense interest in "troll caves," which are the spaces inhabited by gamers during excessive hours in virtual reality. These spaces are actualized in a gallery environment and represent a borderland between the real and virtual. The troll caves contain a certain refined depravity that I find especially poignant today. They are at once abject and sublime spaces, revealing the material residue of a life completely dedicated to an online existence, and they point to the impossibility of total escape from physical reality.

— As told to Gabriel H. Sanchez

M+B

HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

Jon Rafman's Not-So-Still Life of a Digital Betamale

June 11, 2014

By Ben Valentine

"As you look at the screen, it is possible to believe you are gazing into eternity," says an absent, artificial female voice in the beginning of Jon Rafman's NSFW "Still Life (Betamale)" (2013) video. "You see the things that were inside you. This is the womb, the original site of the imagination. You do not move your eyes from the screen, you have become invisible."

"Still Life (Betamale)" confronts some of humanity's newer and more obsessive activities, all things that may be unique to the web (though we're never sure). The video sets the stage with shots of disgustingly lived-at computer desks covered in bits of food and cigarette ashes, surrounded by energy drinks and dirty dishes. The main character, the fat man with panties covering his face, pointing two guns at his own head, is leading us on a nearly psychosis-inducing stream of various types of fetish



Image from Jon Rafman's "Still Life (Betamale)" (2013)

and subculture porn — some of the web's darkest and strangest corners. This is not the safe and corporate internet of Facebook or Google; "Still Life (Betamale)" is drawn from the visually overloaded world of 4chan, as obsessively browsed by a man who lives in his mother's basement.

The video paints a clear picture of the stereotype we associate with 4chan users: smelly men who obsessively consume, produce, and share socially unacceptable media, never AFK. By splicing together footage and images from these online communities, Rafman places the viewer at the center of a mind-numbing search for meaning in some of the most socially questionable places.



GIF of Jon Rafman's "Still Life (Betamale)" (GIF by Hrag Vartanian for Hyperallergic)

Mirroring the presumptive aspects of the platforms and users that inspired it, Rafman took "Still Life (Betamale)" to its origins by posting the work on 4chan. Brandon Soderberg writes in Vice:

Unveiling the footage to 4Chan is a bold move because it meant taking this video (first posted on YouTube but removed, then uploaded to Vimeo and pulled there as well, and currently housed on OPN's [One-ohtrix Point Never] website), which is in part, an act of Internet culture culture co-opting and readjusting, right to its "source." That stands in sharp contrast to say, Rihanna scooping up some #seapunk signifiers and sending them straight to Saturday Night Live, skipping every rung of the underground-to-mainstream ladder and pillaging an entire Tumblr community. OPN and Rafman's decision to feed message board curiosities in the form of a video back to the collators seems like a far more ethical, and implicative approach.

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As Soderberg mentions, the music for “Still Life (Betamale)” was composed by Oneohtrix Point Never (OPN), and it somehow helps lend the uncomfortable stream of imagery an almost transcendent feel. (Check out OPN’s other great video, “Boring Angel,” comprised solely of emojis.)

One anonymous 4chan user understood the video’s deep connection with the site, posting on the film’s resulting 4chan thread, “It’s almost like a stream of content posted on 4chan.” Infamous for starting LulzSec and Anonymous, 4chan boards, especially those like /b/, are notoriously lewd, pornographic, misogynistic, and weird.



Image from “Still Life (Betamale)”

While many people dismiss these platforms as vile and perverse spaces disconnected from reality, and Rafman certainly doesn’t find the most appealing material from these communities, I don’t think that is his critique.

These images reveal more about us, as humans, than they say about the web. We are all searching for meaning and pleasure, which many of us find in places we’d rather not publicly discuss. Rafman has lovingly and carefully documented some traits and segments of humanity that we’d rather sweep under the rug, hoping they’ll disappear — but here they are. Furies, hentai, and monster porn aren’t ‘unnatural.’ The web didn’t create these ideas; we did. Rafman shows how these creations were made in a sincere search for pleasure, meaning, community, and self-expression, as grotesque as they may look to some of us.



Press contact: Ida McCall
314.535.0770 x311 / imccall@camstl.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**FIRST AMERICAN SOLO MUSEUM SHOW
BY CANADIAN ARTIST JON RAFMAN
On view June 27–August 10, 2014**



Jon Rafman, *New Age Demanded (The heart was a place made fast)*, 2013.
Archival pigment print mounted on dibond, 60 x 40 inches. Courtesy the
artist and Zach Feuer Gallery, New York.

March 20, 2014 (St. Louis, MO) – The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) presents the first American solo museum exhibition of emerging Canadian artist Jon Rafman. On view June 27 through August 10, *Jon Rafman: The end of the end of the end* features a selection of recent sculpture and photography from Rafman's *New Age Demanded* series as well as a curated series of video works from 2008 to 2014. Rafman explores the relationship between the real and the virtual in contemporary life, urging viewers to reconsider the boundaries between the two.

While some of Rafman's videos explore disturbing yet captivating erotic desires found in online subcultures sourced from the deep Web, others celebrate the utopian possibility for self-reinvention offered by the Internet. Rafman's sculptural busts—which initially appear to be warped versions of the traditional figure—are 3-D printed and can be understood as physical manifestations of digital desire. Rafman also photographs the busts, returning them to two dimensions and adding digital paint and overlays of materials culled from the Internet.

Highlighting the degree to which digital information permeates our everyday lives, Rafman underscores the conflict between intangible imagery and the human need to connect, revealing both the possibilities and

limitations of virtual exploration. At the same time, Rafman points out that it is no longer possible to differentiate actual identity from online persona. In combining both the physical and virtual, his works occupy an unfamiliar and uncanny third space between the two realms.

Jon Rafman: The end of the end of the end is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Jeffrey Uslip, Chief Curator.

Jon Rafman (b. 1981, Quebec) lives and works in Montreal. Recent solo exhibitions include the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, and *The Nine Eyes of Google Street View*, Saatchi Gallery, London. His work has been featured in group exhibitions, including *What Is a Photograph?* at the International Center of Photography, New York, and *Free* at the New Museum, New York.

-more-

RELATED PROGRAMS

Press & Patron Preview: Summer Exhibitions

Friday, May 9, 10:00 am

Join exhibiting artists and CAM curators for a walk-through of the exhibitions. RSVP to Ida McCall at 314.535.0770 x311 or imccall@camstl.org.

Opening Night: Summer Exhibitions

Friday, May 9

Member Preview: 6:00 pm

Public Reception: 7:00–9:00 pm

Opening Night: *Jon Rafman: The end of the end of the end*

Friday, June 27, 6:00–9:00 pm

ALSO ON VIEW THIS SUMMER

Great Rivers Biennial 2014: Brandon Anschultz, Carlie Trosclair, and Cayce Zavaglia

May 9–August 10, 2014

Katharina Fritsch: Postcards

May 9–August 10, 2014

Brenna Youngblood: Loss Prevention

May 9–June 22, 2014

Audible Interruptions: Cameron Fuller, Van McElwee, and Sarah Paulsen

May 9–August 10, 2014

About the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis

The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) presents, supports, and celebrates the art of our time. It is the premier museum in St. Louis dedicated to contemporary art. Focused on a dynamic array of changing exhibitions, CAM provides a thought-provoking program that reflects and contributes to the global cultural landscape. Through the diverse perspectives offered in its exhibitions, public programs, and educational initiatives, CAM actively engages a range of audiences to challenge their perceptions. It is a site for discovery, a gathering place in which to experience and enjoy contemporary visual culture.

3750 Washington Blvd / St. Louis, MO 63108 / 314.535.4660 / camstl.org

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CAM announces new hours, beginning May 9, 2014: 11–6 Wed / 11–9 Thu & Fri / 10–5 Sat

Free admission brought to you all summer by Gateway Foundation!

###

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

944 Queen St W, Toronto, ON, M6J 1G8

JON RAFMAN

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL



June 4 – June 28, 2014

Opening

Wednesday June 4, 5-8pm

galerie antoine ertaskiran in association with LIBRALATO is proud to present Jon Rafman's *HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL*. In this exhibition, Rafman continues his exploration of the deep web. Combining sculpture, installation, and video, Rafman captures contemporary experience as mediated through virtual worlds. Pulling from the visual vernacular of internet troll caves, and obscure online subcultures, Rafman finds the sublime in the abject - revealing both the possibilities and limitations of digital technologies.

As 4chan user anon 40254871 said of Rafman's work:

*this shit would have been cool in 2005 but you're on goddamn 4chan in 2013, one of the biggest sites for "SUCH A LOSER ;_;" people to ever browse the internet
someone didn't found out your dirty secret life and reveal it to everyone else
we've been doing it since the early/mid 2000's
it isn't special
get over it*

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL is presented in parallel to Jon Rafman's installation during the Power Ball, The Power Plant's yearly fundraiser, which this year pays tribute to the transformations that have occurred as a result of the digital revolution.

Jon Rafman (b.1981) lives and works in Montreal, he holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has exhibited at the New Museum (New York), Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Saatchi Gallery (London), the Contemporary Art Museum of Saint-Louis and the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art (Toronto). Rafman's work has been featured in *Art in America*, *Modern Painters*, *Artforum*, *Frieze*, and the *New York Times*. He has recently been nominated for the Sobey Art Award 2014 and has been the recipient of awards from the Canada Council for the Arts and National Film Board of Canada.

For more information please contact:

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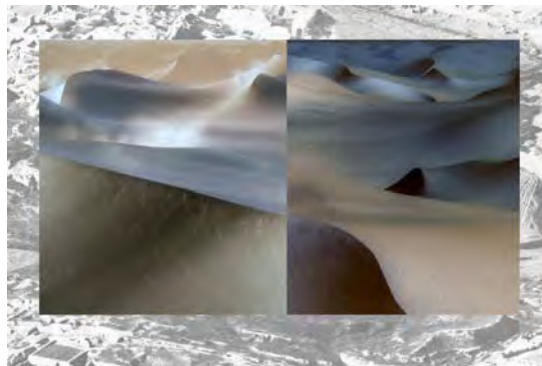
GALERIE ANTOINE ERTASKIRAN • PROJECTS // LIBRALATO

944 Queen St W, Toronto, ON M6J 1G8

M+B



Jacynthe Carrier and Jon Rafman Open Exhibitions at Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran August 2013



Jon Rafman, *Remember Carthage*, HD video, 2013.

MONTREAL - From august 28 to october 5, Jacynthe Carrier will present her first solo exhibition at galerie antoine ertaskiran. in her new project entitled *Les Eux*, the artist examines through the use of video and photography, intimate relationships perceived by several characters in a barren and abandoned landscape, which thus becomes tamed. *Les Eux* evolves into an intimate video where proximity and repetitive movements transport the viewer to a realm of poetic intrusion.

Jacynthe Carrier is the recipient of the Prix Pierre-Ayot 2012, awarded by the City of Montreal. This project is supported by the City of Montreal.

Born in Lévis (Québec), Jacynthe Carrier lives and works in Québec and Montreal. Carrier obtained her Master's degree in fine arts at Concordia University. her work has been presented in several solo and group shows in Canada (La Triennale Québécoise 2011, La Manifestation d'art de Québec 2008, Le musée régional de Rimouski, Le Centre de la photographie VU, La galerie de l'UQAM), France, Brasil and USA. Her previous project *Parcours* will be part of 2 exhibitions in France in 2013 (at the Cultural Canadian Centre in Paris and at Le Fresnoy as part of an exhibition curated by Louise Déry). Jacynthe Carrier will be an Artist-in residence at Residency Unlimited in Brooklyn in 2013.

Galerie antoine ertaskiran will make use of a new space adjacent to the main exhibition room to present *Remember Carthage*, a video by Jon Rafman. in *Remember Carthage*, the artist (in collaboration with Rosa Aiello) explores the relationship between memory and identity, both historical and personal. Sourcing footage from video games and *Second Life*, this video takes the viewer on a journey in search of an abandoned resort hotel deep in the Sahara. moving seamlessly between actual, virtual, and imaginary space, the work underscores the difficulty of constructing a continuous narrative in a present increasingly bereft of meaning. while using technological tools themselves to show how they can estrange us from history, this film blurs the line between genuine and reproduced, physical and virtual, remains of the past. *Remember Carthage* highlights the impact of a post-internet world on notions of loss, decay, and nostalgia.

This exhibition takes place in conjunction with Jon Rafman's participation to Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal.

M+B

complexART+DESIGN

50 Must-See Pieces at the Armory Show 2014

March 6, 2014



Jon Rafman, *New Age Demanded (Pocketed Magnetite Black)* (2014)

Gallery: Zach Feuer Gallery (821)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Speaking Through Paint: Hans Hofmann's Legacy Today

Curated by Stacey Gershon and Deborah Goodman Davis

February 13 – March 15, 2014

"A teacher affects eternity: he can never tell where his influence stops." – Henry Brook Adams ⁱ

Lori Bookstein Fine Art is pleased to announce, *Speaking Through Paint: Hans Hofmann's Legacy Today*, ⁱⁱ an exhibition curated by Stacey Gershon and Deborah Goodman Davis. This exhibition will bring together a group of contemporary artists working across a range of media whose work is influenced, directly or indirectly, by Hans Hofmann.

Hans Hofmann is widely considered to be the most important art teacher of the postwar generation. From his arrival in the United States to teach at UC Berkeley, until his death in 1966, he continually proved to be a major influence on some of the most significant and varied artists of the latter half of the twentieth century. His most notable students include the painters Helen Frankenthaler and Lee Krasner, the sculptor Louise Nevelson, and the performance artist Allan Kaprow.

Hofmann's work spanned five decades and two continents, bridging European modernism with American abstraction. Never content with the status quo, he experimented ceaselessly throughout his life. Hofmann embraced the flatness of the canvas and achieved spatial structure through exploration of vibrant colors and the relationships between them. His dynamic gestural compositions, though abstract, were always rooted in nature and the world around him and created a spiritual connection to the materials of painting.

This exhibition will re-explore Hofmann's legacy by positioning his work with contemporary abstract art. The works in this show will explore various themes central to Hofmann and abstraction, such as color, emotion, gesture, nature, plasticity, and the slab. Indeed, the enduring importance of Hofmann's teachings and his art is apparent in his indirect influence on artists of the 21st century.

The show will juxtapose paintings and drawings by Hans Hofmann with recent abstract art in various media including paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture, ceramics, photography and video. Some of the artists to be included are Stephen Antonakos, Kristen Baker, Cecily Brown, Jessica Eaton, Katharina Grosse, Peter Halley, Mary Heilmann, Marine Hugonnier, Owen Kydd, Sophy Naess, Elizabeth Neel, Jon Rafman, David Reed, Brie Ruais, Cordy Ryman, Erik Saxon, Arlene Shechet, Amy Sillman, Josh Smith, Artie Vierkant, Stanley Whitney, Helen Miranda Wilson, and Betty Woodman.

Deborah Goodman Davis and Stacey Gershon are independent curators and art advisors based in New York.

Speaking Through Paint: Hans Hofmann's Legacy Today will be on view from February 13 – March 15, 2014. An opening reception will be held on Thursday, February 13th from 6-8 pm. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10:30 am to 6:00 pm. For additional information and/or visual materials, please contact Joseph Bunge at (212) 750-0949 or by email at joseph@loribooksteinfineart.com.

ⁱ Henry Brook Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907), Chapter 20.

ⁱⁱ The title for this exhibition is derived from the following quote by Hans Hofmann: "Painters must speak through paint, not words." Hans Hofmann as quoted in *It Is*, No. 3, Winter/Spring 1959.

Contact: Communications Team
212.857.0045 info@icp.org

media release



Mariah Robertson. *154* [detail]. 2010. Courtesy collection Dan and Barbara Newman.
© Mariah Robertson, courtesy American Contemporary, New York

What Is a Photograph?

On view from
January 31, 2014
through
May 4, 2014

Media Preview
January 30, 2014
11:30am-1:30pm

RSVP:
info@icp.org
212.857.0045

On view at the International Center of Photography from January 31 through May 4, 2014, *What Is a Photograph?* explores the range of creative experimentation that has occurred in photography since the 1970s.

This major exhibition brings together 21 emerging and established artists who have reconsidered and reinvented the role of light, color, composition, materiality, and the subject in the art of photography. In the process, they have also confronted an unexpected revolution in the medium with the rise of digital technology, which has resulted in imaginative reexaminations of the art of analog photography, the new world of digital images, and the hybrid creations of both systems as they come together.

“Artists around the globe have been experimenting with and redrawing the boundaries of traditional photography for decades,” said ICP Curator Carol Squiers, who organized the exhibit. “Although digital photography seems to have made analog obsolete, artists continue to make works that are photographic objects, using both old technologies and new, crisscrossing boundaries and blending techniques.”

Among those included in the exhibition is Lucas Samaras, who adopted the newly developed Polaroid camera in the late 1960s and early 1970s and immediately began altering its instant prints, creating fantastical nude self-portraits. Another artist who turned to photography in the 1970s was Sigmar Polke. Although better known as a painter, Polke explored nontraditional ways of photographing and printing, manipulating both his film and prints in the darkroom and often drawing and painting on his images.

(more)

More recently, Liz Deschenes has used camera-less photography in a subtle investigation of nonrepresentational forms of expression and the outmoded technologies of photography. And, James Welling has created a heterogeneous body of work that explores optics, human perception, and a range of photographic genres both abstract and representational.

COMPLETE LIST OF EXHIBITION ARTISTS

Matthew Brandt b. 1982, Los Angeles; lives and works in Los Angeles.
Marco Breuer b. 1966, Landshut, Germany; lives and works in New York State.
Liz Deschenes b. 1966, Boston; lives and works in New York City.
Adam Fuss b. 1961, London; lives and works in New York City.
Owen Kydd b. 1975, Calgary, Canada; lives and works in Los Angeles.
Floris Neusüss b. 1937, Lennep, Germany; lives and works in Kassel, Germany.
Marlo Pascual b. 1972, Nashville; lives and works in Brooklyn.
Sigmar Polke 1941–2010; Germany.
Eileen Quinlan b. 1972, Boston; lives and works in New York City.
Jon Rafman b. 1981, Montreal; lives and works in Montreal.
Gerhard Richter b. 1932, Dresden; lives and works in Cologne.
Mariah Robertson b. 1975, Indianapolis; lives and works in Brooklyn.
Alison Rossiter b. 1953, Jackson, Mississippi; lives and works in the metro New York area.
Lucas Samaras b. 1936, Macedonia, Greece; lives and works in New York City.
David Benjamin Sherry b. 1981, Woodstock, New York; lives and works in Los Angeles.
Travess Smalley b. 1986, Huntington, West Virginia; lives and works in New York City.
Kate Steciw b. 1978, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; lives and works in Brooklyn.
Artie Vierkant b. 1986, Breinerd, Minnesota; lives and works in New York City.
James Welling b. 1951, Hartford, Connecticut; lives and works in Los Angeles.
Christopher Williams b. 1956, Los Angeles; lives and works in Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Amsterdam.
Letha Wilson b. 1976, Honolulu; lives and works in Brooklyn.

CATALOGUE

The show will be accompanied by a full-color catalogue published by DelMonico Books • Prestel with essays by Carol Squiers, Geoffrey Batchen, Hito Steyerl, and George Baker.

What Is a Photograph? (ICP/ DelMonico Books • Prestel, 2014)

224 pages + 200 illustrations

9 1/4 x 11 inches

Hardcover; US \$49.95

Publication date: January 2014

What Is a Photograph? is generously supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, Deborah Jerome and Peter Guggenheimer, the ICP Exhibitions Committee, and by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.



(more)

ALSO ON VIEW

Capa in Color

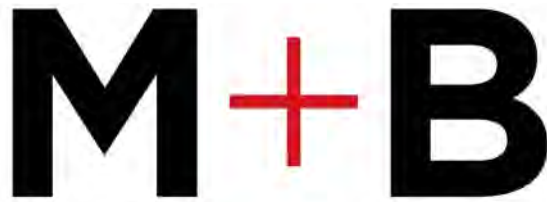
January 31–May 4, 2014

Organized by ICP Curator Cynthia Young, this exhibition will feature Robert Capa's color work for the first time. Beginning in the late 1930s, Capa began experimenting with color film and used it regularly until his death in 1954. Some of these images were published in the magazines of the day, but the majority have never been seen or even printed. Posthumous exhibitions and publications have ignored Capa's color photography and this aspect of his career has virtually been forgotten. The exhibition will present nearly 100 contemporary color prints by the famous photojournalist. It will also include contextual publications and personal papers to offer a fascinating new look on this master of photography. *Capa in Color* presents a pioneer of color photography, years before it was considered an acceptable medium for serious photographers.

About ICP

The International Center of Photography (ICP) is the world's leading institution dedicated to the practice and understanding of photography and the reproduced image in all its forms. Through our exhibitions, educational programs, and community outreach, we offer an open forum for dialogue about the role images play in our culture. Since our founding, we have presented more than 500 exhibitions and offered thousands of classes, providing instruction at every level. ICP is a center where photographers and artists, students and scholars can create and interpret the world of the image within our comprehensive educational and archival facilities. Visit www.icp.org for more information.

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ARTFORUM

“What Is a Photograph?”

ICP - INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Avenue of the Americas

January 31–May 1

March 1, 2014

By Gabriel H. Sanchez

Many of the artists in this expansive exhibition place an emphasis on the physicality—or lack thereof—of photography rather than on its capacity to represent the outside world. As a whole, “What Is a Photograph?” might be taken as a diagnostic inquiry, with the title reading as a rhetorical question. Curated by Carol Squiers, the exhibition includes twenty-one artists, ranging from Gerhard Richter and James Welling to Liz Deschenes and Eileen Quinlan, and has tasked itself with surveying the medium since the 1970s.

The work of both Matthew Brandt and Letha Wilson exhume a long-standing tradition of American landscape photography with fresh invigoration. In Brandt’s large-scale *Grays Lake, ID 7, 2013*, Technicolor abstractions stem from an actual processing bath in the depicted lake waters, while Wilson’s monolith *Grand Tetons Concrete Column, 2012*, employs industrial concrete to sculpturally engage her iconic views of the American West. Draped through the gallery’s foyer is Mariah Robertson’s *154, 2010*. This single photograph measures one hundred feet in length and has been meticulously hand-processed by the artist in a highly toxic photochemical environment. The remarkable result validates its production, as every inch of this dangling photograph reveals a labyrinth of glowing hues and pictorial intricacies.

Parallel to romanticizing the darkroom are the several artists who wholeheartedly embrace the more conventional, digitalized avenues associated with the medium. Travess Smalley’s *Capture Physical Presence #15, 2011*, exploits the imaging systems of a flatbed scanner to manipulate his collages into what he describes as mind-numbing “feedback loops.” Kate Steciw’s approach in *Apply, 2012*, takes advantage of a Google-based research method, purchased stock imagery, and sculptural tack-ons that recall the slick advertisements of commercial photography. Elsewhere in the gallery, a wall text accompanying Jon Rafman’s eerie and unadorned busts reads, “The age demanded an image / Of its accelerated grimace, Something for the modern stage / Not, at any rate, an attic grace.”

PIN-UP

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Fall Winter 2013/14
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Interview by
Stephen Froese

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JON

RAFMAN

Amateur archivist, essayist, ethnographer — these are all titles that have been proposed in attempts to classify the artist Jon Rafman and his polymorphous body of work, as have monikers like gamer, redditor, and fanboy. All describe roles Rafman navigates, sometimes vicariously, throughout his work, moving freely between the digital and the physical, the material and fantasy, exploring memory, identity, and desire. The 32-year-old may have an academic penchant, but his work displays obvious Pop sensibilities, as demonstrated by the ongoing *9-Eyes* series (begun 2009), probably his best-known work, in which he collects “decisive moments” from far corners of Google Street View which are then posted to his Tumblr as well as being mounted on 40 x 64-inch canvases. He also has a growing body of short films, mostly captured in virtual environments like “Second Life” or open-world video games, which have been exhibited in galleries and museums but are also freely available online, alongside working drafts and raw footage he regularly uploads to his personal Vimeo account. And then there are serial works like *New Age Demanded* (begun 2010) — an ongoing collection of digitally created busts that exist both as an online image catalog and in the form of more conventional prints and sculpture — and *Brand New Paint Job* (2010, ongoing), where Rafman virtually shrink-wraps iconic 20th-century paintings by the likes of Picasso and Lichtenstein around CAD models from SketchUp’s 3D Warehouse. After originally presenting them online as JPEGs and video fly-arounds, Rafman has now started to apply such digital surface effects to real-life objects and rooms, coaxing the aesthetic and the functional into an awkward face off. If Rafman seems insouciant about his artworks’ double lives it might be because he sees the boundaries between the virtual and the so-called real dissolving. Indeed Rafman’s oeuvre frequently draws attention to the ways in which this crossover has already become intuitive for us, and how technology is changing not only how we understand and relate to the world around us, but also the ways in which we know ourselves. Or, to put it in his own words, Rafman is carrying forward the tradition of the Romantic explorer into new virtual worlds.

Stephen
Froese

This summer, during the Venice Art Biennale, you built one of the digital interiors from your *Brand New Paint Job* series into a physical room. Going from a digital design to a physical object is standard practice for an architect, but it somehow seems different in this context, especially because the effects produced are so patently digital. What’s at stake for you when your digital work becomes physical?

Jon
Rafman

That’s what I’m trying to figure out by doing these projects. It’s not yet possible to achieve the same degree of immersion with a screen image as you can in real life and so the *O’Keefe Antechamber* [2013] at Palazzo Peckham in Venice was an attempt to create a totally immersive artwork. A lot of my digital images ultimately end up partly functioning as prototypes for real objects, like the 3D-printed *New Age Demanded* busts. The work forces one to reflect on the movement between the real and the virtual, how they bleed into one another. I really appreciated the fact that when

you entered the space at Palazzo Peckham you had the urge to take a picture. We ended up with all of these images that looked like incredible CG renderings of a space but were really just photographs people have taken.



For his project *Brand New Paint Job* (2010, ongoing) Rafman creates 3D models of interiors which he then entirely “shrink-wraps” in staples of 20th-century art, such as this Georgia O’Keefe painting (left). For his installation *O’Keefe Antechamber* at Palazzo Peckham during the 2013 Venice Biennale, Rafman convincingly recreated the previously virtual interior as a physical space (below left).

SF Do you think that the classic distinctions between physical/real and digital/virtual are turning out to be less stable than we thought? Last week a friend sent me an image where this guy had wanted a mountain villa, but he was living in Beijing, so he built a fake mountain on top of an apartment building...

JR ...and the Chinese authorities told him he had to take it down.

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS WITH A MODERN INTERNET EXPLORER

SF Yeah. And it seemed like the kind of thing that should only happen in “Second Life.” Then there’s the Guangzhou Opera House by Zaha Hadid: when the architect Lebbeus Woods first saw photographs of it, he thought they were renderings and wrote about how they had digitally designed this building so that when it was physically built it would resemble a “pure” digital object.

JR Yes, these are perfect examples of what I was aiming at with the installation, but I’m interested in these things on a much more human level. I’m trying to understand what it means for human subjectivity when “Second Life” enters your “first life.” The installation at Palazzo Peckham was partly an attempt to create a space for an experience of art that has been lost. A Beethoven orchestra, for example, may once have been able to convey a totally immersive aesthetic experience that it no longer can today, partly because there

is so much distraction and because our attention spans have transformed. I also think that the attempt to achieve this immersive experience at Palazzo Peckham ultimately failed. But I actually don't mind that failure, because maybe recreating that experience is impossible today and that is what most needed to be revealed.



9-Eyes (2009, ongoing) is Rafman's most widely known work. In it the artist mines the repository of images on Google Street View for rare and unusual moments, like a rogue tiger (3081 Valmont Road, Boulder, Colorado, United States, 2012; 40 x 64 inches) or a napping superhero (*Fuji-Q Highland*, 5-6-1 ShinNishihara, Fujiyoshida, Yamanashi, Japan, 2009; 40 x 64 inches).

SF There is also something interesting about the disjuncts in translation from digital model to physical space, especially in an installation like the one at Palazzo Peckham.

JR I actually think that was one of the aspects in which the project failed — the fact that it became so much about the energy and time it took to build it. I don't like it when labor — how difficult it was to make — becomes the main focus, because it obfuscates the original simplicity of the conceptual gesture, and it just becomes crafty. Sometimes installations can lean too heavily on craft rather than the ideas.

“MANY OF YOUR PROFOUNDEST MOMENTS HAPPEN VIRTUALLY.”

SF Would you rather have it all 3D printed out of the same material?

JR Yes, I think I would. I'd like the work to be as readymade as possible. Digitally skinning an object in a 3D program is a simple process of changing the surface of an object or environment. That's what I like about *Brand New Paint Job*, it walks the line between art and design by forcing High Modernist painting into becoming wallpaper, and in the process realizing one of painting's greatest fears, which is becoming decorative. In the same way the functional room or object becomes somewhat useless in having itself covered and being turned into an art object. It's also a comment on the nature of the relationship between art and design, and how important design is to art. Design is a huge part of the art vernacular — even though it's deconstructed and used in anti-design ways — especially for my generation, where people are using and appropriating branding techniques

and corporate aesthetics. It's almost troll like: on one level I'm trolling the paintings and on another level I'm trolling interior-design chic as a concept.

SF Speaking of craft, you said something similar about your Google Street View photo series *9-Eyes* — how the amount of time it takes to find the images isn't something you want associated with the value of the work. But isn't the time spent lost in these worlds a really important element of the work?

JR Time is important in my work, but more as a concept — memory, time, and how you capture time passing. But I don't like it when it's framed as a “freakish” amount of time. It's more about time and obsession, and I guess because my work deals with obsession there is a freak quality to it, but I don't like it to be the only thing that's discussed. I'm curious about how new technologies both change and reveal how we experience time. The *9-Eyes* series hit such a deep chord that it went mainstream. But on the blogs people would often emphasize the time spent collecting the images over the content of the images themselves. There can be a popular attitude that if a work took years to make it must implicitly be a better work. I don't like those aspects to be the reason why a work is valuable. Nowadays, I don't search for all the images myself, I hire people to search for a lot of them. But I still think that a good image is a good image, however long it took to find.

SF But in another sense, a lot of the virtual spaces you explore in your work, like “Second Life,” are places that people have constructed to spend much of their time in, as an augmentation of or an escape from the real world — or do you even think we can still talk about these as separate places?

JR It's definitely blurred. If so much of your life is online, or in front of a screen, and so many of your profoundest moments are happening “virtually,” I think they need to be looked at with a certain amount of respect. Those moments are still real even though they're happening online. There is still something physical to the experience, it's just different. A major crux of my work is how these virtual worlds not only change the way we interact with our landscape and our environment, but also how we experience and remember the past.



A 2013 installation view of “You Are Standing in an Open Field,” Rafman's first solo exhibition in New York at Zach Feuer Gallery. In the foreground is *Plaque* (2013), a 48 x 60 x 0.5-inch slab of engraved granite that lists the “death” of two shopping malls in New York State.

SF Can you give an example of that?

JR I think it's important to be aware of what's been lost, or the things that are soon going to be lost. In my recent show at Zach Feuer [“You Are Standing in an Open Field,” 2013] there was a piece called *Plaque* that draws an analogy between stories about the last days of two virtual worlds — “EverQuest Online Adventures” and “City of Heroes” — and

stories about the death of two shopping malls in New York State. The truth is that the virtual and the physical world are fused together at all times, and both these malls and the video games were huge virtual worlds. But because they are so banal and have seemingly little historical value, they are not really archived or taken seriously except by the population for which they were important. Those are the types of environments and locations I'm most interested in.



Two stills from the 2013 music video Rafman created for "Still Life (Betamale)," a track by Brooklyn-based experimental musician Daniel Lopatin and his band Oneohtrix Point Never. Much of the video's imagery is culled from Rafman's excursions into the virtual world of furry fandom, a subculture with sexual interest in fictional anthropomorphic animal characters.

SF On several occasions you've referred to yourself as an anthropologist, in addition to being an artist. What do you mean by that?

JR I have an interest in finding the past in the present and following the legacy of the Romantic tradition today and seeing how in video games or on the Internet a lot of these traditions live on. It relates to my interest in virtual exploration as connected to the figure of the Romantic explorer. I'm interested in how these new worlds change culture at large, but culture is such a huge thing that I'd rather focus on very specific subcultures, in the tradition of Walter Benjamin and ethnography in general. You can learn a lot by looking at extremely marginal cultures and cultural objects in society. The more marginal, the more ephemeral, the culture is, the more fleeting the object is, I think the more it can actually reflect and reveal "culture at large."

SF Did you always know you were going to end up working as an artist? Because before doing your Master of Fine Arts at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago you also studied philosophy and literature at McGill.

JR I did know I wanted to be some sort of an artist, but I was more thinking of being a filmmaker and creating narratives. During my undergraduate studies I would try to convince my professors to let me hand in short movies instead of final papers. And sometimes I'd convince them. But I kind of got that out of my system. In fact, the films are so bad and amateur that I plan on somehow incorporating them into my practice.

SF Can you say more about the films?

JR They were narratives inspired by literature courses I was taking at the time. All my friends were in them, and the acting was awful. Later, when I went to art school, it wasn't the gallery world but the indie film world I was thinking

about as the type of industry I would have to deal with to make my work.

SF How do those early films relate to the films you're making now?

JR Those early films were more essayistic and I was heavily influenced by Hollis Frampton, Chris Marker, and Alain Robbe-Grillet... and whatever else I was watching at the Video Data Bank in Chicago. But that was definitely the beginning of my current artistic practice, and I'm still continuing that project.

"MY PROCESS BEGINS WITH SURFING THE INTERNET TO THE POINT OF SICKNESS."

SF When you were growing up, were you a part of any of the Internet or video-game subcultures that you're exploring in your work now?

JR I grew up pre-Internet — I'm from the generation that experienced the transformation. And I think I'm lucky to have witnessed the change. I did play a lot of video games though, but I would never consider myself anywhere close to the level of one of these professional gamers. I just played a little bit more than the average kid at the time. I'm also an only child, so I would construct these vast fantasy worlds, and wanted to share them, but I guess I didn't have the right friend group. I went to a pretty conservative Jewish elementary and high school and nobody wanted to play dungeons and dragons with me. It was a lot easier to get people to play video games, but I wouldn't consider myself a true gamer, even though I kind of wanted to be one. I think that's where the anthropologist element in my work comes from: I don't feel totally part of the culture, but I definitely have a profound empathy and desire to know more about it.



Rafman foraged motifs from Hudson River School paintings to create the covers of fictional DVDs in an effort to underline their similarities with virtual video-game environments. A selection of them were presented during his 2013 solo show at Zach Feuer Gallery in New York.

SF How do you end up getting into these different subcultures, like the fetish cultures you explored for the Still Life "(Beta Male)" music video [2013] for Oneohtrix Point Never with all the furry and troll cave imagery?

JR My process begins with surfing the Internet to the point of sickness, where it feels like I'm about to lose my mind sitting in front of the computer for so long. I'm not saying this is a good thing, this is just how it's happened thus far. Through my surfing I reached this site called GUR0chan, it's a 4chan-type site, but specifically dealing with the most extreme and obscure fetishes. It mostly contains drawings and a /lit/ section where people write these crazy stories

that you wouldn't even believe, about fetishes you never imagined existed. There's this moment at the climax of the film where there's an enormous accumulation of this violent fetish imagery. I was trying to express the feeling of sensory overload after surfing the deep Internet and consuming so many images. I was also pulling texts from these sites all summer long, and eventually I synthesized it and started realizing that what I was doing maybe didn't need to be as ambitious as I initially planned. Then I started erasing certain elements and so it became a process of removal. Originally I was trying to make the film in the style of a BBC or PBS anthropology documentary, one of those ten-part educational programs from the 70s. But it ended up more like an early Jean Rouch film that oscillates between documentary and fiction.

“I’VE LEARNED TO EMBRACE HOW MY WORK CAN TRAVEL BETWEEN CULTURAL SPHERES.”

SF Were you also posting on GUROchan while you were doing research?

JR I didn't post on GUROchan, but I did try to get into the headspace of the fetishist. It reaches a point where you just can't identify with some of the fetishes. But I did start to understand a bit more what might be appealing about being a furry.

SF What is that?

JR There is a video of a fox furry drowning in mud, and when I first saw that image it captured something profound, and in way it seemed liked a symbol of the present. It's funny because I actually discovered it for the first time about six years ago and it stuck with me so deeply. There's both something erotic or sensual, and something unsettling about it. It feels like the fox is trapped in quicksand and being sucked down, but it also seems really cozy, and I want to be covered in all that mud.



Franz Kline Kawasaki *Ninja* (2012) is part of the *Brand New Paint Job* series and shows motorcycles that Rafman treated with an add-on surface of canonized works of art. The installation view is from Rafman's 2012 exhibition "MMXII BNPJ" at American Medium Gallery in New York.

SF There's one last thing I want to ask you: I heard a story that Kanye West flew you out to London to meet with him...

JR I don't know how much I can say about this on the record, but this is the story: Kanye contacted me through his manager, and said he wanted to start a creative dialogue. And I met him, and in the process I also met Will Smith, and Zaha Hadid was there too. Kanye and Will were sitting on these beautiful throne chairs.

SF What had everyone been assembled to talk about?

JR It was more like, "Let's get to know each other," but in a semi-formal setting and with everybody's entourages. It was a surreal moment and I felt like I was in a modern-day court. You know, the equivalent of a Medici court in the Renaissance, or maybe a bit more like Louis XIV — but not the home base of the court, more like a traveling court, and I was a visiting dignitary.



Two stills from the 3:57-minute-long *Woods of Arcady* video (2010) which documents scenes from the virtual environment "Second Life." The work's title is taken from of William Butler Yeats's 1889 poem *The Song of the Happy Shepherd*.



SF How did it feel to be a part of this contemporary court?

JR It felt like I could've been in "Second Life" and Kanye, Will, Zaha, and I were avatars. The celebrity world is like a virtual world, and I actually experienced it for a fleeting moment. This experience helped me realize that I'm in an interesting position in the art world because several of my projects appeal to a mainstream audience. A lot of artists think that if anyone can appreciate the work it can't be "deep" enough. But I've learned to embrace how my work can travel between different cultural spheres, how it can move between *Contemporary Art Daily* and the *Daily Mail*.

PLATES — pages 90–91, 94–95

- 1 *New Age Demanded (Draped Dubuffet)* (2011); archival print; 58 x 42 inches; courtesy of Jon Rafman Studios.
- 2 *Rosenquist Jeopardy Set* (2013); archival print mounted on dibond; 36 x 48 inches; courtesy of Zach Feuer Gallery, New York.
- 3 *Giacomo Balla 50s Living Room* (2013); archival print mounted on dibond; 30 x 36 inches; courtesy of Zach Feuer Gallery, New York.
- 4 *Picasso Everybody Loves Raymond Set* (2013); archival print mounted on dibond; 36 x 48 inches; courtesy of Zach Feuer Gallery, New York.
- 5 *Lichtenstein Pub* (2013); archival print mounted on dibond; 36 x 48 inches; courtesy of Zach Feuer Gallery, New York.
- 6 *New Age Demanded (Mishmash Dekooning)* (2012); archival pigment print; 58 x 42 inches; Courtesy of Jon Rafman Studios.

JON RAFMAN







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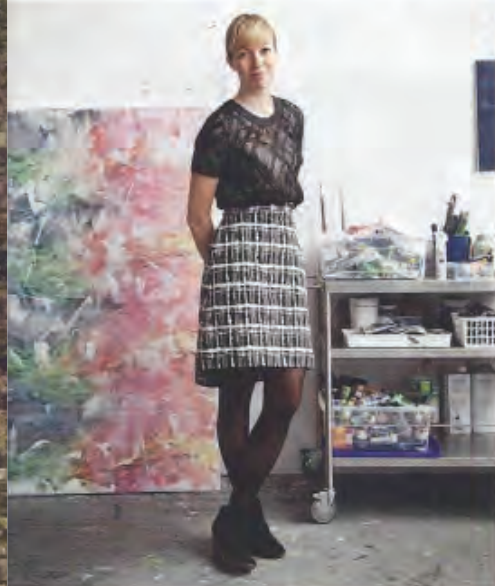
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ART SCENE

Clockwise from below: Brooklyn artist Julia Dault in her studio. *Lichtenstein Pub*, a digitally hybridized image by Jon Rafman. A still from Alex Israel's video performance/ interview with actor Melanie Griffith. *Seated Woman*, a sculpture by Ruby Sky Stiler.



LAURA SOLOMON, ADVISER

Witty and well-versed, Solomon has three adjectives for the art she likes: "beautiful, challenging, and a bit twisted." Artists she feels meet these criteria? Brooklyn sculptor **Ruby Sky Stiler**, for one, whose arresting constructions mash up elements of male and female bodies, of ancient and modern sculpture, referencing the fluid nature of identity. While the pieces look massively heavy and archaic, they're actually made of lightweight foam and fiberglass collaged with paper that she "ages" with a faux patina. Solomon is also a fan of **Julia Dault**, another Brooklyn visionary, who makes lively abstract paintings as well as tenuous, gorgeous assemblages of colored Formica and Plexiglas sheets curled and tied together like freeverse gift-wrapping bows that bring to mind Koons's high-polish balloon animals.

PETER REMES, COLLECTOR

One might assume that Remes, a Minneapolis developer who repurposes old industrial buildings, would be fixated on the past. But his penchant for up-and-coming



talents stems from how their work anticipates what lies ahead. "I feel like contemporary art is reaching into the future and bringing it back to us," he says. "I really like how disruptive young artists' ideas are to the status quo." Among those he's following closely is Montreal-based **Jon Rafman**, who mines today's Internet lingua franca—low-res photos, choppy videos, and DIY computer animation—to create his darkly humorous photographic works. Another favorite is **Alex Israel**, an L.A. artist known for the awkward deadpan interviews he conducts with willing celebrities like Rachel Zoe and Melanie Griffith. The captivating, at times absurd Warholian videos (available on YouTube) have gained him one

substantial following, while his dreamy-as-a-sunset pastel paintings—which he uses as backdrops for the conversations—have gained him another.

MARK HUGHES, ADVISER

After more than a decade in the New York gallery world, Hughes recently moved back to his native Australia, taking his global outlook with him. But he's keen on a few of his countrymen, including **Tomislav Nikolic**, a Melbourne painter whose candy-hued color-field canvases Hughes describes as "Rothko on Ecstasy, with a Baroque twist." Another favorite is Sydney- and Melbourne-based **Lillian O'Neil**, whose kaleidoscopic collages have a heavenly Tintoretto-like grandeur. Because she sources imagery from books from the past century, Hughes says, "you end up with all these different textures that give you an interesting perspective on the printed image in the digital age." →

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: JUDY KOGAC; COURTESY OF ZACH FEUER GALLERY, NEW YORK; STEFANIE KEENAN/WIREIMAGE; JASON MANDELLA/COURTESY OF NICELLE BEAUCHE GALLERY, NEW YORK

American Academy in Rome in collaboration with DEPART Foundation

OCTOBER 3 - NOVEMBER 14 2013

ANAMERICANA

curated by Vincenzo de Bellis

ANAMERICANA features more than forty works from the DEPART Foundation collection. The exhibition brings together artists from different generations working in various poetic and stylistic modes of expression and different media: painting, photography, graphics, sculpture, installation and video. Despite the variety of materials, all the works on display are marked by themes delving into the habits and traditions central to contemporary American society.

The title of the exhibition plays with the meaning of the word “Americana”, which usually refers to manufactured objects, or a set of artifacts, that belong or relate to the cultural heritage, history, geography and folklore of the United States. Many types of materials fall under the definition of *Americana*: paintings, prints and drawings, license plates or entire vehicles, household items, utensils and weapons, statues, and so on. Patriotism and nostalgia are predominant themes. Often the term is used to describe the subject of a museum or collection, or property for sale.

The title of the exhibition AN-AMERICANA is deliberately ambiguous: on the one hand “An” can be read grammatically as an indefinite article that in this sense refers to a non-specific typology of the noun “Americana”. Alternatively, if “An” is read as a privative prefix, it negates the word that follows it. The works on display here reveal the tendency of contemporary artists to relate their works to history, as well as to the artistic and social traditions of the United States, while, at the same time maintaining a critical distance from them, underling in the process the controversial aspects of an extraordinarily complex country.



Jon Rafman

You are standing in an open field

September 12 - October 26, 2013

Reception for the artist: Thursday, September 12, 6-8 PM

Zach Feuer Gallery is pleased to present Jon Rafman's first New York solo exhibition, *You are standing in an open field*. The show opens September 12 and is on view through October 26.

Journeys through virtual landscapes-rooted in the literature of the quest-highlight Jon Rafman's ongoing passion for online exploration and his continuing search for lost loves, ideals or cultures. In this exhibition, Rafman examines the material forms that memory takes through sculptures, videos and mixed media installations. With intimations of archaeology and anthropology, Rafman highlights the way that we rely on objects, be they artifacts or memorials, to locate our relationship to the past. This historical impulse to make sacred what is lost becomes all the more urgent when we consider contemporary technologies and online cultures, which disappear faster than LaserDisc or Betamax.

Rafman encases not-yet-vanished cultures in the form of sham relics or false monuments in order to both recognize their historical value and to critique contemporary amnesia. In his works, ephemeral cultures meet the solidity of constructed artifact. The artificial ruin becomes shorthand for a certain type of historical remembering, underscoring the dislocation between the form of the memory and the memory itself. In Rafman's version of archaeology, for example, a large finely engraved stone carving commemorates not fallen war heroes but the names of defunct New York state shopping malls. By using sham ruins to evoke an historical gaze on these contemporary cultural objects, Rafman changes the meaning of both and raises the question of what exactly we are remembering when we visit a museum, when we look at a memorial, or when we click on a broken web-link. His work reveals that we may preserve every indicator of memory, even when we might not be sure exactly which memory is being referenced.

Jon Rafman (b. 1981, Montreal, Canada) is an artist, filmmaker, and essayist. He received his MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2008 and his work has been exhibited at the New Museum in New York, the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, and the Saatchi Gallery in London.

Upcoming exhibition:

Elaine Reichek: November - December



JOSE HUIZAR
COUNCILMEMBER, 14TH DISTRICT

*** PRESS RELEASE ***

CONTACT:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Huizar: Rick Coca, (213) 200-9974, rick.coca@lacity.org

Councilmember Huizar Announces 100 Bus Bench Art Installation

LOS ANGELES (July 3, 2013) – Los Angeles City Councilmember José Huizar invites Angelenos to keep an eye out for new public art on the streets debuting this week in Council District 14. Twenty artistic installations will be placed on bus benches throughout Downtown Los Angeles and Boyle Heights on Friday, July 5, 2013.

The City of Los Angeles' DoArt Foundation (DoArt) and Make Art Public (MAP) curated the installations in coordination with Martin Outdoor Media after Councilmember Huizar's office reached out to the company with the idea of filling available spaces on the benches with art until they are leased out for advertisement.

"This project gives us the opportunity to bring art to the public right-of-way," said Councilmember Huizar, describing how the project got started. "I want to thank all our partners, especially the artists, for lending their talents to the City."

DoArt, a local arts organization focused on public art and education, and MAP, a Montreal-based collective dedicated to creating public art on unsold advertising space, funded and curated the project, selecting artists Dulce Pinzón and Jon Rafman for the installations.

Mexican artist Dulce Pinzón provided images from her "*Superheroes*" series of photographs, which explores the lives and labor jobs held by many migrant workers, specifically of Mexican heritage, and pays homage to these brave and determined men and women who somehow manage, without the help of any supernatural power, to withstand extreme conditions of labor in order to help their families and communities survive and prosper. This project consists of color photographs of Mexican immigrants dressed in the costumes of popular American and Mexican superheroes.

Contemporary artist Jon Rafman lends images from his "*9 Eyes*" series, which depict interesting and unusual images caught on Google Earth Street View from around the world. With an ostensibly neutral gaze, the Street View photography exhibits a spontaneous quality unspoiled by the sensitivities or agendas of a human photographer.

(more)

Bus Bench Art, page 2

Martin Outdoor Media installs and maintains over 5,000 bus benches throughout the City, including overseeing the advertising on the benches. Martin is offering free space for the art project on up to 100 bus benches throughout Council District 14 through September.

Councilmember Huizar has long pushed for more art in public places through his initiation of a 1st Street Arts Corridor in Boyle Heights and leading the effort to adopt a new Mural Ordinance for the City of Los Angeles.

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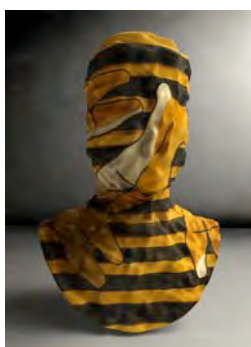
M+B

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JON RAFMAN: MIRROR SITES

May 19 – June 23, 2012

Artist's Opening Reception: Saturday, May 19, 2012 from 6 to 8 pm



M+B is pleased to announce *Mirror Sites*, a two-part exhibition of new work by Jon Rafman. Rafman is a leader in demonstrating how images created in digital space can be transformed to exist in physical space. As Jon Rafman bridges our two worlds, the virtual and real, it is only fitting that he should introduce us to his work at two galleries in a show entitled *Mirror Sites*. Mirroring is a salient term in both the computing and artistic worlds. Rafman's *Mirror Sites* is a dialogue spanning M+B and China Art Objects Galleries, both exhibiting examples of *9-Eyes of Google Street View* and *New Age Demanded*. This approach expands the dialogue of re-use and re-interpretation as well as our own desire to look for meaning and intent. As the digital world becomes alive in this new way, its images become vital in their new form, and we are made to rethink both the virtual and the real world. *Mirror Sites* runs from May 12 through June 9, 2012 at China Art Objects Galleries and May 19 – June 23 at M+B, with an opening reception at M+B on Saturday, May 19 from 6 to 8 pm.

In Jon Rafman's *9-Eyes of Google Street View* (GSV), the accidental, the incidental, the baffling and the dramatic collide. Rafman's work consists of selected images taken by the cameras atop the Google Street View vehicles that document the world's roadways in a constant mission to organize the world's information. While Street View's only goal is to capture the planet, mediated and easy for a viewer to peruse, Rafman's intervention is one of an Internet curator. He searches through the vast records of fleeting moments, holding up a planet size mirror to ourselves, nature and our constructed world. From this chaotic reality Rafman builds an ambitious visual project that reflects both our modern experience and our desire to read meaning into images. Within the sheer vastness, there is an inherent tension recognized by Rafman between the uncaring camera and the human being that sees meaning, sees stories and looks on things as a moral creature. As a result of editing, re-framing and focusing these moments, we are presented with images from the banal to the extraordinary in works that range from apparent social commentary to surreal landscapes touching on the sublime. The formal visual qualities Rafman manages to inject or discover only reinforce the terse but open-ended, comprehensive social message. We seem to live always under the eye of such observation. From some perspectives it appears to be Google, God or chance, but Rafman suggests that the universe that is reflected is our own contemporary consciousness.

M+B

Previously conceptualized and rendered solely in digital form, these shows mark the emergence of the *New Age Demanded* (NAD) series in physical form. Inspired by Ezra Pound's poem *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, in which a poet struggles to write in a Philistine age, NAD expresses Rafman's stance that every age demands something new of its artists, and that the artist can be seen as screaming to express it. Rafman takes the real to the virtual and then back to the real, bridging past and future, high and low, history and narration. Employing 3D software, Rafman sculpts the "skin"—including paintings by Bruce Nauman, Francis Picabia, Robert Delaunay, Mark Rothko and others—onto virtual busts. This evocation of both classical Greek busts and the covers to long-lost sci-fi space operas results in an image that suggests conversations and clashes between past, present and future. The reference becomes almost invisible yet fully integrated, as the different works in the series can be seen to represent different individuals in different ages on different planets. For Rafman, sci-fi is the literature of ideas, the world of alternative possibilities, and NAD allows the viewer to contemplate the artworks as unique beings of expression from what might appear to be another world of alternative possibilities. The age demands new artists capable of taking up this challenge, of plunging into this simmering broth and emerging with new awareness, new languages and new rules. The ability of Rafman's work to appeal to this call is what makes it so radical and potentially threatening. The exhibition will also be the preview of another digital intervention, *Tokyo Color Drifter*. The video work filters the city's landscape through the experience of a video game rendering of speed, a form heavily dependent on science fiction and virtual worlds.

Jon Rafman (b. 1981) is a Montreal-based artist, filmmaker and essayist. Mixing irony, humor and melancholy, Rafman's work explores the paradoxes of modernity. Well known within the digital community, his work is informed by the rich potential provided by contemporary technology in its possibility for celebrating and critiquing contemporary experience. As an artist whose subject is the human experience, he captures the human in a wide variety of potentially alienating contexts. He received his BA in literature and philosophy from McGill University in Montreal, QC in 2004, and his MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in Chicago, IL in 2008. Rafman has exhibited his works across the US, Canada, Italy, Sweden, Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Japan and Russia. This month, Rafman's work will be included in "Collective Identity," a group exhibition at the Museum of Canadian Contemporary Art (MOCCA) and presented as a feature show of the 2012 CONTACT Photography Festival at Angell Gallery in Toronto. The first part of 2012 also sees Rafman's work being exhibited at the 2012 Moscow Photo Biennale, the 2012 Hong Kong International Art Fair, the New Museum (New York, NY), American Medium (New York, NY) and China Art Objects (Los Angeles, CA). Rafman's *Nine Eyes of Google Street View* has been featured in *Modern Painters*, *Frieze*, *Der Spiegel*, *Libération*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *Harper's Magazine*.

Location:	M+B, 612 North Almont Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90069
Show Title:	Jon Rafman: Mirror Sites
Exhibition Dates:	May 19 – June 23, 2012
Artist's Reception:	Saturday, May 19, 2012 from 6 – 8 pm
Gallery Hours:	Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm, and by appointment

For more information, please contact Alexandra Wetzel at M+B at (310) 550-0050 or alexandra@mbart.com

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FUTURE GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Future Gallery
Mansteinstraße 3
10783 Berlin
Germany
Tel: +49-30-22344753
info@futuregallery.org
<http://futuregallery.org>
Gallery hours: Thursday - Saturday, 1 - 5 pm
Exhibition dates: April 27 - June 1, 2013
Opening reception: April 26, 6 - 10 pm

Jon Rafman ***Annals of Time Lost***

Future Gallery is proud to present *Annals of Time Lost*, an exhibition of new work by Jon Rafman. This exhibit focuses on the conceptual dissonance of the digital and physical archive.

Google's description of its mission to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful is consistent with the archival notion of accumulating everything; the will to enclose all eras, all forms, in a virtual place of all times that is itself outside of time. The project of organizing an infinite accumulation of our virtual lives betrays the desire to overcome the foundational and universal experience of loss. In *Annals of Time Lost* Jon Rafman engages with this utopian quest for the complete archive coupled with the anxiety around its ultimate impossibility.

Yet, as Rafman's work reveals, the archivist is required to choose what is ultimately going to be selected, catalogued and stored in the archive and what will ultimately be "the history". The archivist has to decide what is significant and what is trivial, what is core and what is circumstantial and indeed, as is increasingly asked, if there is a centre at all. He/she still has to decide what is real or what is ideal in the history or culture, what is true or what is fiction. Moreover, in the digital world, distinguishing between the original and the copy has been increasingly problematic. Thus Rafman develops new methods of engaging with our archives, histories and cultures rather than viewing them as static collections. Rafman conceptualizes his wish to preserve his virtual archives as a way of re-framing loss.

Annals of Time Lost works towards illuminating the individual's relationship to the archive and the desire for physical presence. The exhibition is archiving a condition that may not exist decades from now. It is itself a record of the anxiety and unease around where, how and what is the physical self when one is in a social relation in cyberspace. Rafman's work asks us to implicate ourselves in this process as both the creator and the subject, the archivist and the archived.

For this exhibition, Rafman premieres new works reflecting the show's title *Annals of Time*: a series of large-scale images printed using the same techniques employed for architectural plans and installed on a classic blueprint rack. Rafman also re-imagines his *New Age Demanded* archive—a series of sculptural 3D rendered busts—by using increasingly obsolete technology in the form of an interactive installation with a Microfiche reader. Alongside this, the artist travels forward in time using 3D printing technology to create the first physical manifestation of a *New Age Demanded* bust. In the same spirit, the increasingly antiquated technology of slides will feature images from Rafman's internationally celebrated and quintessentially contemporary *Nine Eyes of Google Street View* project.

FUTURE GALLERY

Jon Rafman (1981) is an artist, filmmaker, and essayist. He holds a B.A. in Philosophy and Literature from McGill University and a M.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His films and artwork have gained international attention and have been exhibited at Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome, the Saatchi Gallery in London and the New Museum in New York City. Rafman's work has been featured in Modern Painter, Frieze, Artforum, the New York Times, and Harper's Magazine.

M+B

photograph

Mirror Sites: Jon Rafman at M+B Art (West Hollywood) and International Art Objects (Culver City)



When Kohei Yoshiyuki went sneaking through Tokyo parks, snapping pictures of love-makers and sexual dabblers under brush and beneath black skies, his images felt like a coup, something he could only get through stealth. When Sophie Calle slipped into other people's hotel rooms and photographed their luggage, beds and shoes, the results were never boring because they were always illicit. But surveillance art doesn't have to be covert anymore. Montreal-based photographer **Jon Rafman** knows this. Ever since 2007, when Google sent out its fleet of hybrid cars with pole-like cameras on their roofs, he has been keeping tabs on Google Street View and the always growing, systematic database of images taken without specific consent of those in the cities and neighborhoods documented.

For his project **The Nine Eyes of Google Street View**, Rafman began wading through this in-progress database, looking for the uncanny accidents. He found a baby in Taipei crawling outside a seemingly empty Gucci store. He found a tiger in Boulder, Colorado, wandering through the parking lot of a boxy storehouse. Rafman could have taken other approaches to Street View art -- photographer Doug Rickard, who also culled from Google's archive for his series *A New American Picture*, focused on the most downtrodden neighborhoods. But even if they document real socio-economic injustice, Rickard's images feel like politically slanted voyeurism made using a tool of the capitalism they criticize. Rafman's, on the other hand, seem to undermine Google's systematics altogether by zooming in on what Google could not have planned if it tried. His double-location exhibition **Mirror Sites**, up now at M+B Gallery in West Hollywood through June 23 and International Art Objects in Culver City through June 9, feature a selection of these images, blown up, slightly blown out, and fit into large white frames. One of the most shocking is not the image of a car fire or masked bandits, but the image from Jurby West in the U.K. of white and black horses running past an ancient cemetery with a gray seascape in the background. You do a double take with this one, because you don't expect the clinical eye of Google to have caught something so classically sublime.

By Catherine Wagley, May 29 2012

M+B

ARTFORUM

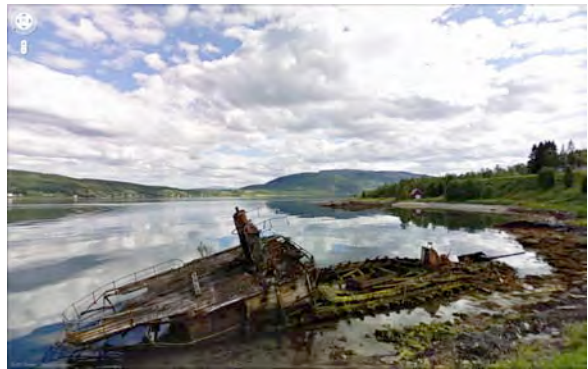
CRITICS' PICK

June 14, 2012

"Mirror Sites"

M+B Gallery
612 North Almont Drive
May 19 – June 23, 2012

There is an easy space for skepticism when facing the shifty depictions in Jon Rafman's art. His latest exhibition, "Mirror Sites," is currently on view at M+B and closed at International Art Objects on June 9. Among other works, the show at M+B features "9-Eyes of Google Street View," 2011, a series of large-scale digital prints pulled from Google's servers. *Fv261, Finnsnes, Troms, Norway*, 2011, also at M+B, captures an astonishing lakeside panorama where defined clouds stretch against a vivid sky as lush hillsides frame the landscape's dilapidated subject: a moss-covered boat, washed up on the shore.



Similarly, *253 Rua Lisboa, Itapeacerica da Serra - São Paulo, Brasil*, 2011, on view at International Art Objects, frames an unkempt alley; a butterfly flits close to the camera, making the insect enchantingly large against the asphalt background. Surprising nuances pervade the series, which may lead one to assume that Rafman has digitally altered the images—he has not. Rather, the "Street View" series, with its instances of oddity, alarm, and beauty, demonstrates that technology has systematized life's charming cases of spontaneity.

Rafman's "New Age Demanded" series, 2012, also on view at both galleries, is a grouping of lustrous, expansive prints that present digitally rendered busts covered in patterns drawn from famous paintings, with each bust grafted over a balefully vague figure. *New Age Demanded (Spinal Klee)*, 2012, for example, shows a bony vertebra spanning the center of a blank visage, its skin a mosaic painting by Paul Klee. *New Age Demanded (Grated Delaunay)*, 2012, reveals a bust of transparent colors; the shrouded figure's entire countenance has been carved into a lopsided void. To regard these spectral models feels unnerving; with their evanescent human features, one imputes the busts as representing identities. At the heart of Rafman's practice is this relentless migration of images between virtual and physical spaces, one that requires a commitment to interstitial navigation.

— Nicolas Linnert

Photo credit: © Jon Rafman, *FV261, Finnsnes, Troms, Norway*, 2011, color photograph, 40 x 64"

the PARIS REVIEW

ARTS & CULTURE

The Grand Map

October 5, 2011 | by [Avi Steinberg](#)



RV890, Norway 2011.

Toward the end of Lewis Carroll's endlessly unfurling saga *Sylvie & Bruno*, we find the duo sitting at the feet of Mein Herr, an impish fellow endowed with a giant cranium. The quirky little man regales the children with stories about life on his mysterious home planet.

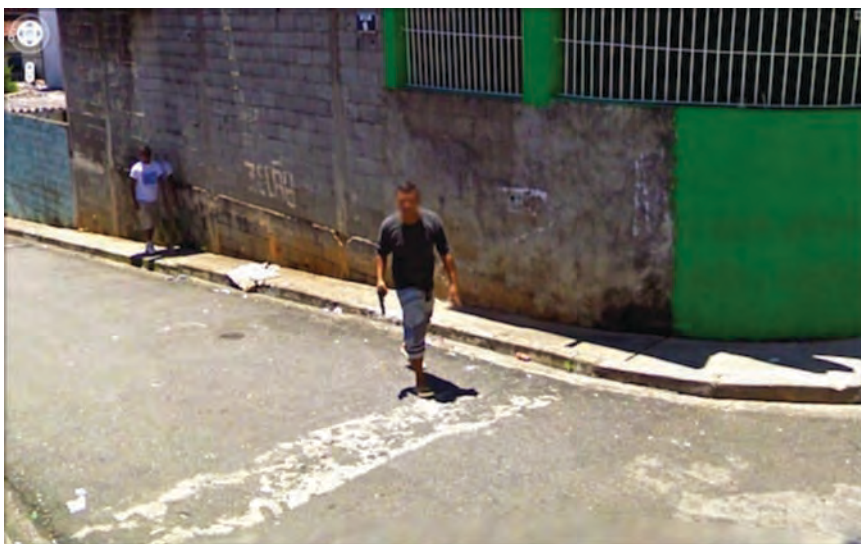
"And then came the grandest idea of all! We actually made a map of the country, on the scale of a mile to the mile!"

"Have you used it much?" I enquired.

"It has never been spread out, yet," said Mein Herr. "The farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut out the sunlight! So we now use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well."

Among Mein Herr's many big ideas, none is as familiar to us as the Grand Map. We use it, or a version of it, on a daily basis. With Google Street View, which allows us to traverse instantly from a schematic road map into the tumult of the road itself, we boldly zoom from the map to the territory and back. As the Herr said, "we now use the country itself as its own map." Of course it's still a hopeless work-in-progress and may always remain so. Like Sylvie and Bruno, we are attracted to this map precisely for the particular pleasure of imagining something so impossibly useful and, at the same time, so deeply counterproductive. Still, we have succeeded at folding many unruly miles of earth, from Manhattan to the Arctic Circle, into our own Grand Map. And, using our newfound ability to step through the cartographic looking glass, we began making discoveries.

First, we noticed the fantastical creatures. The boxes with legs, the transcendent weirdos, the off-duty robots and headless zombies, the sad-sack centaur. Then things got a bit more serious. Sin entered the map.



80 Rua Giulio Eremita, São Paulo, Brasil, 2010.

Midday house break-ins and hillbillies with guns. Butt-cheek cleavage, kidnappings, dozens of burning cars, hosts of faceless men emerging from brothels, scores of citizens peeing on things.



Carrer Martimo, Beniparrell, Valencia, España, 2009.

Then there was bloodshed. Sometimes, the violence appeared as a kind of parable. The Firetruck and the Bicycle:



Or the parable of the Lady in the Trunk:



On occasion, it was truly dreadful. There were anonymous bodies, bloody corpses, the full-color horror of midday slaughter.



Finally, there was the question of the mapmakers' role in all of this.

On a rural road we found a clue. A Google Street View car, its patented panoramic nine-lens camera mounted seven feet high, was making its cartographic rounds through upstate New York. The [visual record of what happened next](#) was posted live. First, we saw a panicked doe run into the road. In the next shot we witnessed the doe cut down, crumpled on the pavement under the passing shadow of the all-seeing car. In the final frame, a rear-view, the doe was pictured at the side of the road, lifeless and forlorn.

A blog-fueled furor followed (“Google Killed Bambi!” “Stop the Corporate Baby Killers” “When are we going to hear that Google has killed [a pedestrian?](#)”), prompting Google to remove the images and issue a statement in which they twice referred to the roadkill incident as “sad” and explained that “the driver was understandably upset.” Still, they noted, it was a common type of accident.

The incident was only the most direct illustration of how the mapmaking camera is implicated in the messy world it charts and, worse, how it implicates us. A person seeking directions to Starbucks generally does not want to be told to “take a left at the homeless child.” To truly use the country as its own map, it turns out, involves weaving discomfiting images of the country directly into the fabric of the map. The result is not a tidy diagram of the world abstracted onto a blank slab—as nearly all maps since Mesopotamia have been—but rather a patchwork that chronicles, among many other things, the troubling process by which the map was composed.



9 Rua Pereira da Costa, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil, 2010.

Google’s removal of upsetting images doesn’t change the fact that the shots were initially posted there. Daniel Ratner, the chief engineer of Street View’s ingenious camera car, told me that images posted on Street View run through editing software that systematically blurs human—and occasionally dog—faces and license-plate numbers, all in the name of privacy. But, said Ratner, there are just way too many digital files for mere mortals to review. The images are captured, tagged, selectively blurred, and posted by computers. Most of these photos aren’t viewed by human eyes until they are live online—which doesn’t mean, however, that there aren’t a few interludes of human intentionality.

If you decide to [Google-walk along Sampsonia Way](#) on Pittsburgh’s Northside, for example, you’ll run in to a festival of happy quirks. After passing a marching band and parade, you’ll discover a proverbial rope of bed linens hanging from a third-story window. Further down the road, you’ll encounter two geeks sword fighting in full Dungeons & Dragons regalia. The photos captured on the street are the result of a project organized by local artists to produce

representative street tableaux, little performance-art pieces, specially designed for the Google Street View cameras. Some of the shots are intentionally banal: the images of people unloading a U-Haul truck, for example, and the shot of local yuppies stretching before running a marathon were also staged. The project was undertaken with the help of Google—as it must, since Google keeps the schedules and routes of its camera cars a strict secret. Google understandably prefers this wholesome, controlled type of eccentricity to the bare balls and bloody bodies variety—and it surely prefers this harmless playacting to other, more aggressive, more spontaneous acts of performance art that Google’s camera cars occasionally inspire.



The random boys flipping off the camera, the villagers in England who formed a human chain to block the entry of the camera car, the ongoing debates in some countries over whether to ban Street View for perceived privacy violations—and even the street art project in Pittsburgh—all get at the problematic core of using the country as its own map. Lewis Carroll imagined the problem comically, as an objection put forth by farmers (it will block the sun!). In “On Exactitude in Science,” Borges offers a dark gloss to Carroll’s map. “The Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, coinciding point for point with it,” writes Borges, will become “useless and permitted to decay and fray under the Sun and winters.” The 1:1 map, Carroll’s exuberant Grand Idea, is, to Borges, the work of an empire on the verge of decline, with nothing left to do, nowhere left to go. “In the Deserts of the West, still today,” he reports, “there are Tattered Ruins of the Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars.” If Borges is right, the unwillingness of Street View’s skeptics to be captured in the grand map may be the refusal of people to be a part of just such an empire.



RV888, 2010.

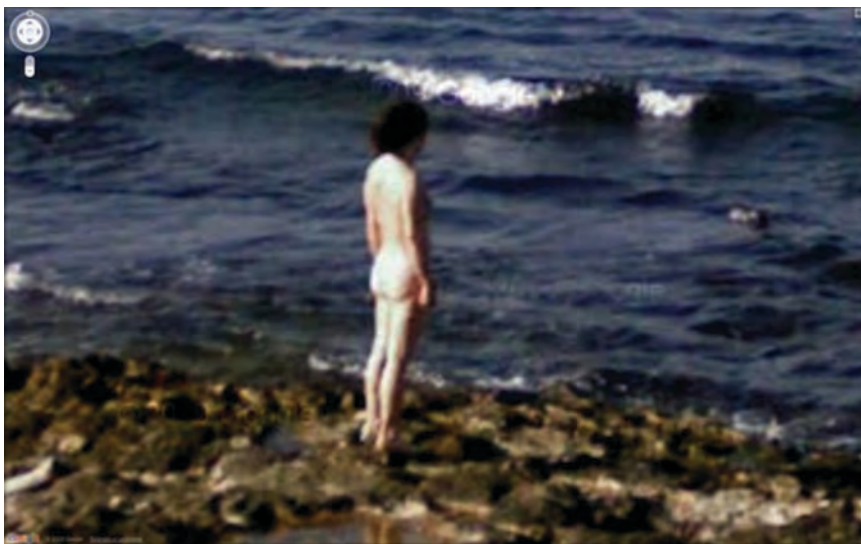
Then there are those who choose to redraw the thing, to take it for the raw material that it is and make something of it for themselves. The result can be stunning, as seen in this curated collection of [Street View shots by artist Jon Rafman](#). “Although the Google search engine may be seen as benevolent,” writes Rafman, “Google Street View presents a universe observed by the detached gaze of an indifferent Being. Its cameras witness but do not act in history.” Rafman ends up being less interested in the detached mapmakers than in the individual who can explore the map for personal meanings and somehow reclaim the territory. Rafman accomplishes this himself by discovering accidental images marvelously embedded in the map. Wild horses running through a coastal cemetery. A nude woman standing by a rocky shore, contemplating the sea. A little boy hiding. These images are only more powerful for

having Google's imprimatur on them, for being captured at random and buried within the maze of images.



B5, Jurby West, United Kingdom, 2011.

This happens to be how many of us enter the great map. One night, you locate a distant childhood intersection. You leave the street map and enter the scene, passing seamlessly from map to territory. But there are no goofy hijinks or bloody corpses there. No sublime horses. Just a bright, sunny street with uneven sidewalks, lined with parked cars—a place that once contained everything that you knew and needed to know, which once held the entire range of possible truths. Then you take a Google-step back, and suddenly it's a bit less sunny and a bit more populated. You swing around to your left, and now the sky is overcast and foreboding. A step forward and a neighborhood man you once knew, who was pictured sitting on his porch a frame ago, has vanished. Now the sun is out again, but setting. This private territory, with its radically shifting light, its dreamlike angles, and its specters popping in and out of view—that odd combination of detailed recollection and ever-thickening fog—resembles the structure of memory itself. It's like visiting a lost place. It's not the grandest idea but, at certain moments in life, it's the best we've got.



58 Lungomare 9 Maggio, Bari Puglia, Italia, 2009.

Avi Steinberg is the author of [Running the Books](#), a memoir of his adventures as a prison librarian.

Images Courtesy [Jon Rafman](#).

TAGS cartography, Daniel Ratner, Google, Google Street View, Jon Rafman, Jorge Luis Borges, Lewis Carroll, map, Mein Herr, Mesopotamia, On Exactitude in Science, Sampsonia Way, Street View camera, Sylvie & Bruno

In the land of serendip says:

October 6, 2011 at 3:27 am

[...] Luigi briefly drew attention to the latest offering from our friends at Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security: the Adaptation and Mitigation Knowledge Network. And that — along with all the other maps that seem to have been springing up whenever one's back is turned — reminded me of a map passage from a little-known Lewis Carroll book, *Sylvie and Bruno*.¹ Looking for the exact quote, I discovered that it had appeared yesterday in the daily blog of the august Paris Review.² [...]



Jon Rafman Brand New Paint Job

Brand New Paint Job

Domenico Quaranta

«The age demanded an image
Of its accelerated grimace,
Something for the modern stage,
Not, at any rate, an Attic grace».
_ Ezra Pound ^[1]

1.

On 25 March 2011, the Canadian artist Jon Rafman received a cease and desist letter from Sodrac, a society of artists that represents intellectual property rights. The letter requested an immediate stop to the publication, on the website brandnewpaintjob.com, of images “reproducing artworks, or any substantial part thereof”, by artists including Francis Bacon, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Marc Chagall, Alberto Giacometti, Adolph Gottlieb, Jasper Johns, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Yves Klein, Franz Kline, Willem De Kooning. On the site in question, for the last few months and at frequent, irregular intervals, Rafman has been creating art works which incorporate images that reference various famous modernist



New Age Demanded #1 (Kline), (2011)
New Age Demanded #2 (Richter), (2011)
C-print, 80x60 cm

paintings, as well as a small number of contemporary works. He utilizes these images as textures applied to various 3D models taken from Google 3D Warehouse, the online gallery that users of Google Sketchup – a free 3D modelling programme – can avail themselves of to upload and share their works.

This initial communication was followed on 11 April 2011 by another cease and desist letter signed by the Artists Rights Society (ARS) of New York, and its Paris-based sister company ADAGP. According to the letter, ADAGP noted that Rafman had been “displaying and distributing unauthorized reproductions of our members’ works, including those of Joan Mirò and Jackson Pollock, in the context of an online game”, and consequently requested payment for reproduction rights.

The work in question is *BNPJ.exe* (2011), created by Jon Rafman in collaboration with his artist friend Tabor Robak, and distributed free online by Extra Extra, a non-profit space based in Philadelphia ^[2]. Rather than a classic videogame, it is a 3D navigable space that the visitor can move around in, without a precise mission, exploring various settings: indoor and outdoor, claustrophobic corridors and infinite deserts, modernist offices and futuristic cities. But the distinctive thing about it is that these spaces are entirely papered in textures taken from various ultra famous paintings by artists like Yves Klein, Jackson Pollock and Fernande Léger. The use of bits and pieces of these paintings creates highly atmospheric settings,

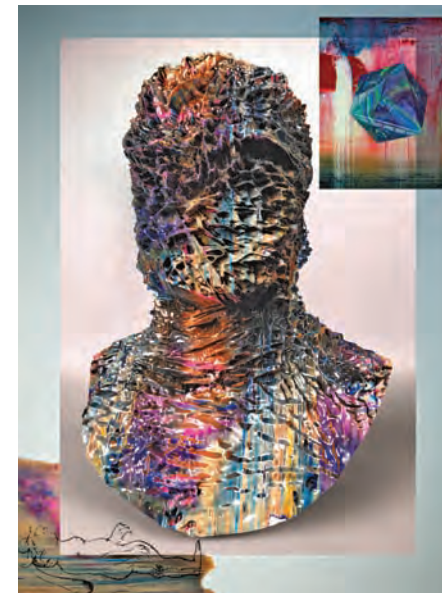
BNPJ.exe, (2011)



and it is not always easy to understand the provenance and size of the “loan”. Some of them, like the Yves Klein Blue that greets us in the metaphysical, disorienting corridor leading into the world of *BNPJ.exe*, can only be understood in the light of the subsequent loans we encounter. In any case, these artworks are not “cited” in a postmodern fashion, but “deployed” in a purely functional manner: Pollock’s drip paintings are well suited to conveying the rough stone of a desert, while Mirò’s constellations, teeming with life forms, make a wonderful home for a giant ant, also entirely covered with the same imagery.

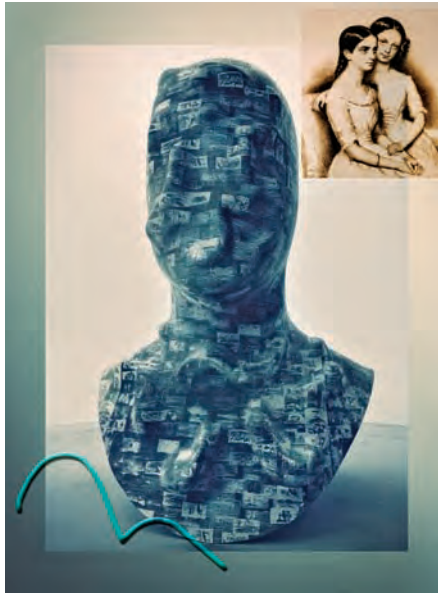
2.

I have referred to these two recent events, although it might have been advisable to refrain from doing so, to point out the subversive power of an apparently innocuous project like *Brand New Paint Job* (here on in, *BNPJ*), which actually touches on various unresolved but crucial spheres of modern culture. What makes *BNPJ* a radical project, despite its apparent



accessibility, is – on one hand – its not immediate identification as a work of art and – on the other – its referencing of a conception of intellectual property that is not shared by current legislation.

As for the first point, without entering into the legal motivations behind the cease and desist letters, it is interesting to note that neither of them refer to the artistic nature of the project. The first makes a generic mention of “images”, and the second refers to an “online game”. It has to be said that if Rafman had been recognised as an artist, and his work as art, it is highly likely that it would have satisfied the criteria for fair use: the limited use of copyright material for specific purposes, as normally applies to artistic appropriations ^[3]. So how was it possible that a collective set up to protect the interests of artists did not recognise, or refused to recognise, the artistic nature of a work? I think the answer lies in the mode of production and distribution of the works gathered under the collective title *BNPJ*. As we have seen, the blog gathers works created by papering amateur 3D



design models with textures taken from famous paintings. The resulting images – be they bedrooms or lounges, bars or pieces of furniture, human bodies or classical sculptures, cars or planes, film stars or animals – are ambiguous in nature. Some would not look out of place in an interior design magazine, others appear to be extrapolated from a 3D design tutorial. Their distribution in blog form, but without any kind of explanatory information, does the rest, along with the title of the project, which lowers the noble pursuit of “painting” to the commercial slang of “paint job”. The same could be said about **BNPJ.exe**, a “software programme” or “videogame”: both far from being recognised as legitimate artistic languages. Even more of a “violation” is the use that Rafman makes of his sources: these are not credited, and used for decorative purposes to embellish a scholastic 3D design exercise. Drawing a moustache on Mona Lisa is no longer a problem. But using Diego Rivera to decorate a living room, Theo Van Doesburg to embellish a

New Age Demanded #4 (Ryman), (2011)
C-print, 80x60 cm

plane, or El Lissitzky to jazz up a Cadillac can become one. This is not about bringing high brow and low brow together, but more a question of putting the high into the service of the low, to produce something closer to the latter than the former, and deny the unique, exceptional nature of high culture. These considerations lead us to the second point, which could be summed up in a famous hacker slogan: *information wants to be free* ^[4]. When culture is converted into digital data, there is no longer any way to control it or block its circulation. This splendid axiom, which has been powerfully challenging the survival of traditional copyright for around 20 years now, acquires new meaning on today's net, a sort of huge dump inhabited by barefoot, hungry scavengers who collect, manipulate, reprocess, combine and sell on even the tiniest scrap of information. Nothing, once on the heap, can escape this destiny, not even with the protection of the Artists Rights Society. It is as though the sublime Morris Louis turned out to be the perfect plumage for a penguin badly drawn by a student, it too abandoned on the web. The intrinsic potential of this primordial soup is massive and, as yet, impossible to quantify. Western culture, taken to the point of exhaustion by post-modernism, is about to be redesigned, not by the web, but by the scavengers that skulk in its gutters, reactivating abandoned scraps, using old tools the wrong way, sticking incompatible things together, remixing code, gulping down anything and then putting it back into circulation with a loud and satisfying burp. And enabling others to do the same, in a process that is rapid and unstoppable because it is shared in real time by a global community without respect or rules.



The age demands... new artists, capable of taking up this challenge, of plunging into this simmering broth and emerging with a new awareness, new languages, new rules. And, behind its pleasing and apparently anti-artistic exterior, the ability of Rafman's work to respond to this call is what makes it so radical. Which is why some people find it so threatening.

3.
Seen in its progression, through forty or so pieces, from the first **Cy Twombly Lamborghini Gallardo** of 2010 to the recent **Cy Twombly Apartment** of 2011, **BNPJ** looks like an intensive, speeded-up course of appropriation and refinement of a tool. The act itself is a very simple one, the banal addition: model + texture = **BNPJ**. And this allows the artist to work on the details, implications and dialogue between model and texture. Sometimes he uses a fragment of an original work, sometimes the whole thing; sometimes he uses it on its own, at others he puts it with other works by the same artist. The former approach is more frequent with abstract works, which are easier to translate into repeated



patterns. Sometimes he uses other elementary effects of 3D modelling, like the mirror image used in **Honda Civic hatchback reflecting a Monet**. These choices reflect the dialogue between the two elements: the reflection effect suits Monet, who dedicated his life to painting stretches of water, and Picabia, obsessed with mechanisms, adorns a Monster Truck, while the Oriental-style swirls from a certain period of Van Gogh's do a great job of decorating a Volkswagen Bus, hippy icon par excellence.

But as the subjects accumulate, it gets more and more difficult to attribute the end result to a simple operation of addition. The images get more refined, and less outré. Rafman takes painstaking care over simulating the various materials that comprise an interior. **BNPJ** overlaps with other practices, like that – frequent for the artist – of setting his digital images in real space, making it difficult for the observer to distinguish between the end result and a photograph. In the series **Paint FX Sculpture Garden** he maps his textures (appropriated from other paintings or created by him^[5]) onto modernist sculptures set in “real” gardens.



Rousseau Hotel Room, (2011)
Schwitters Alley, (2011)
Twombly Boy's Room, (2011)
Digital print on canvas, 60x50 cm

We thus come to the series **New Age Demanded** (2011), in which the various stylistic registers and production strategies explored separately in other works come together to form a language of exceptional complexity. The centre of each of these images is occupied by an eerie, mysterious, faceless figure, somewhere between a deformed classical bust and a sci-fi character. The material it is made of changes from work to work – from spiky and iridescent to porous and opaque. The skin comes from paintings by Franz Kline, Gerhard Richter or Robert Ryman, but the loan is almost entirely illegible, fully integrated into the vision. In the background, always in the same position, are elements that simulate painting or collage, or boldly declare their own digital origin. Along with cubes, geometric solids, drawings or prints borrowed from who knows where. The Photoshop levels accumulate, as do the literary, philosophical, artistic and alchemical references. Each piece is a trip through time, between past and future, high art and low art, history and narration. Each piece is a response to what the new age seems to demand of an artist like Jon Rafman.

- [1] Ezra Pound, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, 1920.
- [2] The work can be downloaded at <http://eexxttraa.com/bnpj.html>.
- [3] For further information, cfr. *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_use.
- [4] The expression is attributed to Stuart Brand, founder of the Whole Earth Catalogue. For further information, cfr. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_wants_to_be_free.
- [5] *Paint FX* (www.paintfx.biz) is a collaborative project produced with Parker Ito, Micah Schippa, Tabor Robak and John Transue. The five artists anonymously publish a series of digitally created abstract “paintings” on the same web platform, using the most simple, banal default effects of the most popular graphics programmes.

Jon Rafman
Brand New Paint Job
Curated by Domenico Quaranta

April 30 > June 10_ 2011

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LODOWN magazine

Cover A, Edition "Juventus Turin"

Javier Bardem
Dylan Rieder

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>> PICASSO BOMBER by JON RATMAN, p.22

Jon Rafman

Nicolas Jaar

Travess Smalley OFWGKTA

Helmut Smits

Asger Carlsen AIDS 3D

The
Future of
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ARTDIRECTION
MANUEL BÜRGER



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<http://www.brandnewpaint-ob.com>

<http://www.-onrafman.com>

JON RAFMAN

Alright, let's be honest here: if it wasn't for our guest art director I still wouldn't have the slightest idea who Jon Rafman is. Maybe it's because I've become more reclusive and ignorant with every new year. Maybe it's because I stopped following any kind of feuilleton a while ago already. Maybe I'm more fascinated by any kind of ephemerality than by persistency and substance these days. Maybe my own little universe and its inhabitants were too busy with trying to establish a weird kind of significant independence apart from a system of labour, capital and time. But most likely: maybe it's because I used to run in the other direction as soon as terms like "internet art" or "digital artist" occur. Not necessarily because I think executing ideas in an analogue way is more elaborate or automatically more meaningful, but because I'm generally scared of 72dpi and its associated accessibility for each and everyone.

It's in the nature of things: digital art tends to be more experimental and subversive than any other art form these days due to its immediate effect and easy ways of distribution to spread the results, regardless how high or lo-brow they might seem. And Montreal-based artist Jon Rafman is one of its finest and most outspoken practitioners of his craft. He lately got a lot of attention through his rather brilliant Google Street project, a series of intriguing and odd images he sourced

from Google's street view map system. The rest of his catalogue comfortably sits between impressive and thoughtful ways of renderings (like his Brand New Paint Job project, e.g.) and instantaneous works with the character of elaborate pranks. Time for Lodown to invest a little further.

Jon, we've -ust slipped into 2011... would you say it's still important to discern between analogue and digital or is there an almost restrictive and hypocritical ring to

it as soon as you want to clearly separate these concepts?

My own attitude towards a purist who insists on making the distinction between analogue and digital is a combination of

respect and challenge.

Respect

because I prize their emphasis on formal and tactile aspects such as colour, texture, and composition. I see this as core to the artistic value or quality of the work. I have learnt from this formal rigor and try to achieve it in my own work. What I challenge, however, is an excessive emphasis on what purists, especially photo purists, see as intrinsic or inherent aspects of their craft be it the emulsion or the brand of camera or components. At one point in history, that view may have been relevant but to me it no longer carries the same relevance.

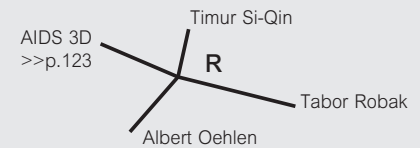
To me it seems like they are fetishizing what they view as being true to the medium. I feel that by doing so they are diminishing the artistic value or potential quality of digital forms or new languages that integrate the still image. I still agree that certain formal

aspects are important but new technological and artistic developments create a new freedom and re-infuse a new energy into the old mediums.

I question the type of "purism" does not allow us to incorporate new forms and developments. Perhaps with some arts like painting it is a lot about the actual materials. In my view, you can be a purist but the purity or perfection or quality is no longer tied completely to the material aspects of the work. I developed this attitude in part because internet culture encourages a sort of lightness or nonchalance, and disrespect towards the precious physical object and this has been liberating for many artists.

Why is the term internet artist still handled as a dirty word, even though the internet has existed for decades already?

JON RAFMAN IS A MONTREAL-BASED ARTIST THAT SOMNAMBULATES BETWEEN DIGITAL WORLDS AND MULTIPLE MULTIMEDIA CHARACTERS THAT RECENTLY RAISED A LOT OF ATTENTION THROUGH HIS GOOGLE STREET VIEW SERIES.



Jon Rafman

digital is a combination of



Jasper Johns Oval Office, 2010

I think the negative association with net.art has developed in part because people tend to reduce it to either boring 90s hacker art or retro web 1.0 animated or a distinct type of ironic kitsch and in-jokes that employ a mix of pop-cultural and obscure internet references.

So would you consider yourself to be an internet artist?

Yes, in that, the internet is one of the primary spaces in which I exhibit my work. Although I do make work that is not exclusively made for exhibition on the web. I prefer using the term Gurthrie Lonnegan coined “internet aware art”. And with each progressive generation the internet is increasingly integral to everyday living. And so dialogue amongst internet aware artists is steadily turning into less and less of a conversation limited to the signs and symbols of the web. It is transforming into a conversation about everyday reality.

The very ma-jority of art forms aren't only positioned in time, but by geographic coordinates as well. Would you say that the internet and its related blog tumblr-culture is our new Esperanto, a new kind of international folklore?

Definitely I think there is a real dialogue that is taking place between artists all over the globe. Back in 2006, group internet surf blogs like Nasty Nets first began to highlight this new vernacular, but since then it has transformed and become increasingly complex. This blog culture allows for individuals to respond instantaneously to each others no matter where one is based,

fostering a culture of direct response that often resembles a real-time conversation where fast paced conceptual and aesthetic exchanges can occur. Sometimes I sense that me and the other internet-aware artists are all collaborating in the search for structure in this seemingly formless overflow of information that we are bombarded with everyday. Other times I feel like we are all simply attempting to highlight the contradictions and chaos of the digital age, revealing a world in which we are constantly being bombarded by fragmentary impressions and overwhelmed with information, a world in which we see too much and register nothing.

like-minded artists like Oliver Laric for example made the transition from virtual to tangible physical art. Were you ever tempted to do the same... I can imagine it's a lot easier in terms of a quick cash-in.

In away I've already made the transition from virtual to physical since I've been making large format prints of my Google Street View images. The desire to create something that occupies physical space is tied to the desire to see ones work in a new context away from the computer screen. When I first saw my Street Views hanging on a wall, I noticed new aspects of the im-

age that hadn't seen when they were purely digital. I think a lot can be gained and learned about ones work by materialize it also artists have to feed themselves somehow.

I once read you were interested in trying to use a new kind of 3D printer for a certain series of yours. Please



Gerhard Richter Car Scene, 2010

**tell me a bit more about this
pro-ect.**

Yes, I see each one of my “Brand New Paint Job’s” (BNPJ) as both a stand-alone work and a proposal for a physical object. Right now 3D printing technology is available, but printing at large scales is prohibitively expensive. I imagine, however, that in the not so distant future it will become affordable and one day we will have 12 years old boys designing 3D models of their dream cars in their parent’s basement, uploading the

models to an on-demand 3D printing website, and receiving the life-sized prototype shipped to them within the week. Until then, I've been exploring different strategies to realize my BNPs in new ways. Currently I'm working with Tabor Robak to create a totally immersive 3D environments where you

will be able to interact with my BNPJ models like in a first person shooter. (1)
I'm heavily fascinated by your Street Jew series (2)... for me it kinda disables the common preconception that the very majority of what you find in the depths of the Interwebs is either gnarly or devoid of meaning. How much time do you usually have to spend before you find an almost perfect picture?

I have to mentally prepare myself before I go Street View “surfing”. The process re-

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quires intense endurance and concentration. When I first started off, I would regularly go on 12 hour Ritalin-fueled



International Klein Blue Prius, 2010

marathon runs and about half way through the session I would enter an almost trance-like state. Usually it would be hours upon hours before I'd find anything worth screen capturing. These days, however, I'm less interested in finding the "perfect picture" and more fascinated by the idea of the Street View collection as an incomplete whole or as an ongoing stream of images. I've gotten into the habit of analyzing reoccurring motifs and patterns, comparing all the different methods people have of flicking off the Google camera.

Do you sometimes have the feeling that you're the very first person who ever laid

JON RAFMAN'S PICTURE COMMENT

of Cory Arcangel's "Photoshop CS: 110 by 72 inches, 300 DPI, RGB, square pixels, default gradient "Spectrum", mousedown y=1098 x=1749.9, mouse up y=0 x=4160 (2008)"



>>Museum goer1: "I wonder how he made this?" Museum goer2: "My mother always wanted me to marry a gradient." Museum goer3: "CS4 totally sucked.<<

eyes on this scenario? Is it like voyeurism without the sleaze?

I often start a session by going onto the official Street View homepage to see where the Google cars are currently

as he reveals the conditions of our enslavement.

Do you necessarily divide between aesthetics and statement... I'm asking because your Brand New Paint Job (BNPJ) series seems to flirt



Basquiat Zeppelin, 2010

located across the world and begin surfing from those points. I thrive off the idea that I may be the first person to ever have gazed upon the given scenario. And it is this joy in exploring the virtual world that led inexorably to a critique of the real world in which we are trapped. The 9 Eyes project both celebrates Google's technologies and critiques the culture and consciousness it reflects. We want to matter and we want to matter to somebody but loneliness and anonymity are often our plight. At times, I introduce a moral perspective at times by adopting the role of a member of the community. At other times, I alter or undo familiar conventions by reframing or by introducing the human gaze. In this way, I align myself with the historical role of the artist who not so much liberates us

with the fascination of triviality (or kitsch).

No, I am as much influenced by a terrible kitsch I consumed growing up as the great works of literature and art I read and experienced. I think this mix of high and low influences is just part and parcel of modernity. Brand New Paint Job was born out of the desire to discover the formal result of the juxtaposition of a two-dimensional image with a three-dimensional model. I wanted to start conversations between surfaces and their underlying structure. So I forced collisions between the 3D model and 20th century painting to create a two-way road of meaning in which the model says something about the painting and vice versa. In this way, the clash of the cultural weight of a high modernist paintings and a mass produced

vehicle is not simply another example of the blurring of the distinction between high and low culture. The object may



Pollock Tank, 2010

have a cultural significance on one level (e.g. a tank) and the painting (e.g. a Pollock) on another level so that the questioning of the meaning of the signs unsettles us in yet another way. BNPJ attempts to confront paintings historic fear of becoming a decorative object. BNPJ begs the question has painting becoming just an exclusive wallpaper for the designer chic? The tension between the uselessness of the painting and the instrumentality of the object highlights the diminished division between art and design these days. I think more and more important to look at the world with a historical consciousness. History is "wrapped" around us at all times, even if it has been relegated to the status of surface textures or a glossy layer of paint simply applied over everything, like a paint job. Some people interpret BNPJ as wryly mocking art history, but one can equally see BNPJ as paying genuine homage to it. When I cover a room from wall to wall with a repeating painting, the room becomes a shrine to the painting.

A rather twisted sense of humour and a soft spot for the

slightly absurd can be found in a lot of your series. Would you say this component is an integral part of your body of work?

From Duchamp's readymades to Cory Arcangel's Photoshop gradients, humour has played a prominent role in the history of art this past century. In my search for how to best critically examine and represent modern experience, I also tend to arrive at ideas that contain an element of the absurd. One reoccurring themes in my work is contemporary alienation expressed through the tension between the ideal and the real and the romantic and the ironic.

What's next for Mr. Rafman?

I just finished up a short film titled Codes of Honor about a pro video game player. The film emerged out of my time spent investigating pro fighting game culture. I was living in New York spending every day in Chinatown at the last great East Coast video game arcade. I bring my camera and interview all the regulars and put the interviews on my YouTube channel (>>3) dedicated to documenting the subculture. It was great, the YouTube videos triggered all these debates about who was the greatest Ken or Ryu back in 1998. The film combines interviews I captured at the arcade and Second Life macinima to tell the story of a fallen video game player reminiscing his glory at the joysticks.

MORE LINKS:

1. <http://eexxttraa.com/>
2. <http://googlestreetviews.com/>
3. <http://youtube.com/arcadehustla/>

Words: Forty



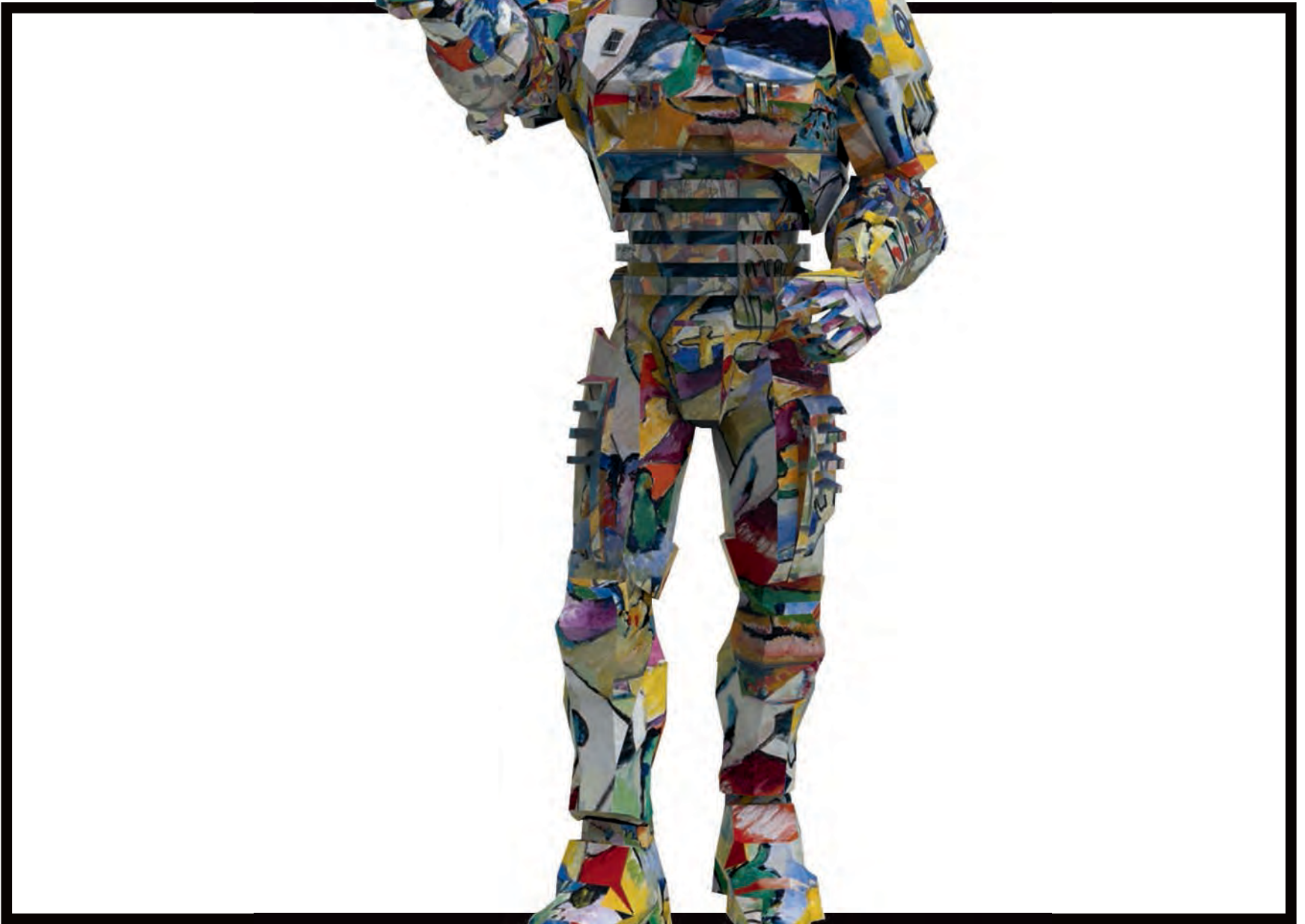
Frank Stella Starship Enterprise, 2010



Miró Alien Chest-Burster, 2010



Bruce Marden Prison Cell, 2010



Kandinsky Robocop, 2010



found on <http://www.spiritsurfers.net>



UNTITLED, 2002, by Brad Troemel

You don't necessarily have to be a Photoshop wizard in order to make basic elements of a picture join in for an intense visual relationship—sometimes you just hit the bull's eye and a simple imagery turns into beautiful poetry. Whether it's a cheap montage and the way two entirely different things are connected that causes a tickling irritation, or a trivial graphical effect suddenly becoming a part of a narrative; the simpler the trick, the more beautiful the effect.

Unfortunately, this doesn't work on demand as most of that magic happens by accident—which makes the results even more thrilling. Like pulling a killer joke in a very difficult moment, you can unveil the truth about a whole situation just by using simple, silly means.

Aside from smartly keeping you entertained while you surf, these works reflect on common design tools, web aesthetics, user culture and our daily life with technology; making it an autonomous genre of its own?

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Words Manuel Berger

CHRIS COY

Is internet art always expected to be unserious and thus more serious than conceptual art?

I think early conceptualists were equally serious & unserious. What I mean is that it's difficult today to view Conceptual Art without fetishizing its aesthetics: typewriters, pseudo-scientific notation, sets of instructions, black & white photography, etc. All have been

canonized as markers of a certain type of intellectual endeavor and emotional detachment/coolness. Things were deadpan then, they're deadpan now; not much has changed. We're still dealing with similar questions and being quite underhanded about it.

How stubborn can openness be? Openness can be pretty damn stubborn.



Chris Coy, Conceptual Art, <http://proposed.tumblr.com>, <http://seecoy.com>

CANNON BALLS



MARTIN

<http://www.martinkohout.com>

Martin Kohout, Waterfalls

Does the amount of visual effects available eat you up?

Somewhere between concepts, desires and shamanism without a strategy to a certain extent. Therefore effects can be fun to play around with but I don't care so much. They are around from time to time (var. colors / lengths / odors / genders and slickness) and at the end one has to pick some1 or whatever. Indeed: if you want, they will pop up anywhere. Like if u want... actually they can act as both a facade or a concept. What a handshake. Do you sometimes confuse

whether you're in front or behind the screen?

Tell me about it. At the same time the common metaphor of cyberspace as a space is a piece of a shit. It's not divided by the screen (it has various qualities from the hardware to your friends list—it's not happening solely somewhere behind...) But yes, I wish mine was at least few inches bigger and with a remote control. We learned pretty well to perceive in the death of one quality a presence of another. Don't u have a boat to borrow? Let's get back to the beach.

BRAD TROEMEL

RODMAN, 200£, by Brad Troemel, <http://bradtroemel.com>

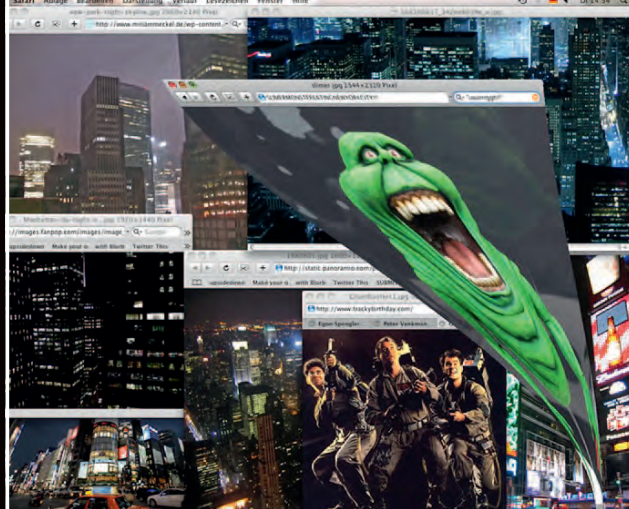
Do you feel it is all about who got game? About creating appealing yet ironic works with references to pop culture and a big "get it?!"

No, I don't think art is a game of Celebrity Jeopardy. When artists' only contextual reference in their work is the work of other artists they become boring very quickly. Viewers who recognize that kind of art's referent say "I get it" and move on without a thought, while the rest of its audience doesn't "get it" and doesn't care. "Art for art's sake" is a tired excuse to become insularly intentioned and limited in your scope of influence. Art has a responsibility to exist in and for the time it is made. The best art isn't even art all of the time—the best art has the ability to shape-shift and become useable in a variety of ways (as protest, as entertainment, as social diagram, as historical revision, as cultural intervention, etc.) It is this textured existence that allows great art to be applicable

to many and create new perceptions of the world in the eyes of its diverse body of viewers. You once said, "The point of art is not to create art out of thin air but to find what is meaningful out of everything in the world." What can we find in Rodman? Can you explain the magic of re-functioning?

Dennis Rodman is an interesting and dynamic person, and for that reason I wanted to associate myself with him by paying tribute to his trademark hair colours in a formal style that reflected the layered complexity of his life. Jogging [A.N. Brad's former blog] was as much about the individual works that comprised it as it was about the performance of constant art production online, so for that reason Rodman probably makes more sense when viewed alongside the other 800 or so other posts on that blog. Re-functioning is a tactic that allows the present to speak to the past—one of many impossible things art attempts to do.

DENNIS KNOPF



Slimer by Dennis Knopf, 200£



I felt the INFOspirit while having an

JOEL HOLMBERG

Either you get a ready-made in just a second or you might ignore it. What do we see here?

I think that Getty Images Hollywood Sign has captured peoples attention because it points to a shift in how and why images are produced today vs. in the past century. Hollywood movies have served as a popular database for referencing a range of emotions and behaviors, and in a way the studios hold copyrights on classic portrayals of humanity. Stock photography agencies like Getty Images are attempting to cast an even wider—albeit more empty and generic—net of cultural signifiers in anticipation of a narratives that do not yet exist.

Does "the sculpture already exist inside the block of marble" (Michelangelo)?

I never checked. But I'd say there's tombstones and table tops for hotels inside. I did find sculptures on websites, in spam emails and within the graphical user interface of my computer, however. You don't carve them out of mountains nowadays, it's more like catching butterflies. You have to spot and

collect them. Trying to dig up the author of a work in endlessly reblogged Tumblr posts, that's the sweaty part today. So I'm wondering if Michelangelo was still around (and that quote of his does sound like a classic Twitter post) what would he say? "The sculpture already exists inside Google's 3D Warehouse"?

What's your main inspiration?

The word "inspiration" sounds like there is a moment of reflection in my work, but I can assure you there is not. I'm getting bombarded with signs of pop culture all my life; shit in, shit out. What's more interesting to me is the motivation behind creating what you refer to as cannon balls. I've always been most productive when I had a certain audience in mind that I wanted to impress (not just the anonymous user). So being a member of an internet surfing club or knowing that a particular person follows my blog or feed makes me want to land a hit. I guess I just want those people to like me.

Getty Images Hollywood Sign, by Joel Holmberg, <http://www.-oelholmberg.com>

<http://www.trackybirthday.com>

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Sean O'Hagan On photography



Why you are the future of photography

A new show suggests that webcams, Google Street View and a cat named Nancy Bean are set to change the world of photography as we know it

Sean O'Hagan

guardian.co.uk, Wednesday 13 July 2011 18.25 BST

A [larger](#) | [smaller](#)



Street life ... Jon Rafman's Google Street View, Via Valassa, Rho, Lombardy, Italy. Photograph: Jon Rafman

Their manifesto begins: "Now, we're a series of editors. We all recycle, clip and cut, remix and upload. We can make images do anything. All we need is an eye, a brain, a camera, a phone, a laptop, a scanner, a point of view."

From Here On is the title of this manifesto-cum-group show unveiled at last week's Arles photography festival. It is, the curators insist, a glimpse of the future of photography. Or to be more precise, several glimpses of several possible photographic futures based on the premise that photography as we know it – whether reportage or documentary – is no longer the most viable way to make sense of a digitalised and increasingly atomised global culture.

The manifesto was created by five people: Clément Chéroux, a historian of photography and a curator at the Pompidou Centre; Martin Parr, photographer, collector and all round dynamo; Eric Kessels, founder of the KesselsKramer communications agency; Joan Fontcuberta, an art photographer; and Joachim Schmid, an artist who works with found photographs.

The internet and the cheap digital camera, they say, are radically altering how we see the world, and what we do with what we see. No arguing with that. The fast-forward momentum of digital technology "changes our sense of what it means to make" and "results in work that feels like play, work that turns old into new, elevates the banal. Work that has a past but feels absolutely present."



Feline photographer ... Nancy Bean

The elevation of the banal is one thing that the internet specialises in – from dancing pets to live webcasts from the living rooms of ordinary people leading ordinary lives. Sure enough, the show includes a cat photographer – that's a cat who takes photographs rather than a person who photographs cats. Nancy Bean is a three-legged ginger tabby from Devon who has been fitted with a camera timed to snap an image every minute. The results are variable, as one might expect: lots of views from under cars and out of windows. It is street photography, but not as we know it. Elsewhere, there are real live chickens in cages courtesy of prankster Thomas Mailaender, whose installation, Chicken Museum, is like an edition of Vice Magazine made flesh.

There are also a couple of series based on Google Street View images – Jon Rafman's blown-up, grainy evocations of the everyday, and a series of images of ordinary people pulling faces for the cameras of showroom computers. There are photographs that have been tampered with, added to, edited and manipulated. All the tropes of the digital culture writ large, then. Most of it, perhaps unsurprisingly, already feels all too familiar.

Among the slapdash, the crudely innovative and the downright nihilist, there are some interesting artists. Surveillance and appropriation are two of the key themes. Jens Sundheim's images, often photographs of himself taken on webcams, are painterly in a spectral way, which hints at something darker about a digitalised world of connection and disconnection. Corinne Vionnet finds snaps of well-known tourist sites – the leaning tower of Pisa, Mao's mausoleum – on photo-sharing sites on the web, then layers one on top of another until she reaches an impressionistic photo-painting.

The results are both real and ethereal – just like the mass tourist experience. Pavel Maria Smejkal's FATESCAPES take found historical images of war and devastation and strip them of all human figures. Here, photography is sampling its own past in much the same way that hip-hop did in the early 1980s, but without its heated debate about ownership and royalties.

Monica Haller's book project, Riley and his story, is an unapologetically serious work of political testimony. A collaboration with her college friend, Riley Sharbonno, who served as a nurse in Abu Ghraib prison, it is a brilliant diary-cum-memoir of war, trauma and loss.

These artists stand out amid a welter of the throwaway, the juvenile and the nihilistic that reflects the From Here On manifesto. "We're making more than ever, because our resources are limitless and the possibilities endless ... We want to give this work a new status," the manifesto concludes. "Things will be different from here on ..."

My immediate thought was: well, not that different if it takes a bunch of established curators and photographers to curate – and canonise – the work. Surely this is exactly the kind of cultural commodification that digital culture was meant to undermine, not encourage.

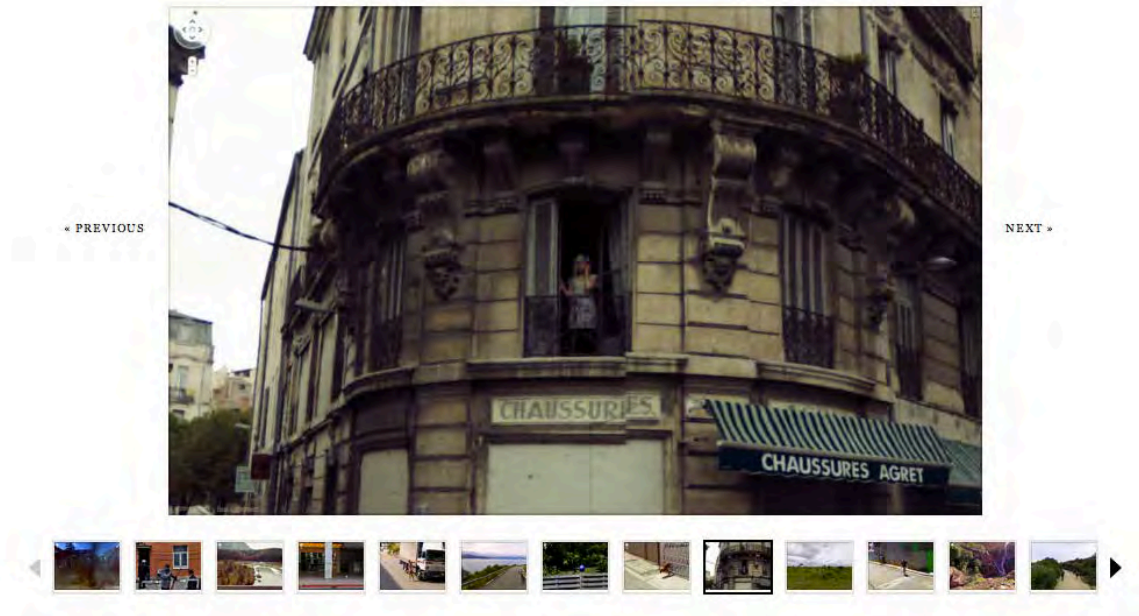
As I wandered, a little dazed, through From Here On, I found myself longing for more curatorial selectivity, more quality control. I was reminded of some words of warning from the internet-historian, Andrew Keen, in an intriguing forthcoming film on digital culture called [PressPausePlay](#). Keen speaks passionately about the downside of digital democratisation: "When you leave everything to the crowd, where everything is democratised, when everything is determined by the number of clicks, you are by definition undermining the seriousness of the artistic endeavour," he says. "There is no evidence that we are on the verge of a great new glittering cultural age, there is evidence that we may well be on the verge of a new dark age in cultural terms ... where the creative world is destroyed and where all we have is cacophony and self opinion, where we have a crisis of democratised culture." There was a glimpse of that possible future in From Here On. It was not a pretty sight.

Now see this

The [London Street Photography festival](#) is under way with [exhibitions](#) across the capital, including Polly Braden and David Campany's photographic [journey though the Lea valley in east London](#), [George Georgiou and Mimi Mollica's](#) contrasting images of Londoner's journeys by bus, and [Nick Turpin and Nils Jorgensen's](#) takes on their respective cities: London and Paris. There are also two great retrospectives, the unmissable [Vivian Maier: A Life Uncovered](#) and Walter Joseph's photographs of London street markets in the 1940s.

Jon Rafman's Google Street Views

MAR. 7, 2011 By JIMMY CHEN 



Jon Rafman is a lucky man for at least two reasons: (1) his priceless sensibility is a veil through which he sees a more beautiful world, a precious one that reaches such a state through the very aesthetic of non-preciousness; (2) he, through scouring the near infinite territory of Google street views, is statistically even able to consistently find universal moments of “condensed being” which would make the greatest haiku poet weep.

Under the auspices of conventional photography, these images — a dog struggling to transgress a gate whose holes are barely larger than its own skeleton; an infant crawling alone in front of a seemingly “fake” Gucci store; a derelict horse gnawing away at urban detritus for food — point to a kind of surreal alienation incurred, unconsciously, by a negligent modern world. These Lynchian moments are informed by their very verity, beyond cinematic or narrative agenda generally imposed by the invoked director, or those like him. The idea of art somewhat cheapens this enterprise.

The lazy and easy answer is that God, his canvas our flesh and the space between us, is a great artist, perhaps a stunning genius so misunderstood that half the world despises him. This is a lesson in entropy, the soft arbitrariness of life, that when finally punctured by a sudden moment, oozes meaning. And yes, our friends at Google may have something to do with this, but their voice is muted, neutral, and merely incidental. Their camera is blind, even glib, in their profit-fueled survey of the known world. And God has yet to sign the gallery consignment, so this leaves us with you, me, and dear Jon, polishing these turds of absurdities into shiny diamonds.

One motif we see over and over again is the prostitute between solicitations, just standing half-naked by a truck, her face blurred out. Such illicitness lends itself to the power of Jon's either somber or enthralled voyeurism. It is difficult to read Jon, his sense of humor, sadness, cynicism, or irony; perhaps he is merely presenting us a version of a world as a journalist might. The unmarked story, if we are to engage ourselves with these prostitutes, is the explicit trade of sex. The invisible money shot only visible between the two participants. Our role, here, is to not see. But it is not just these whores whose faces are obscured, but everybody's, as if simply being human is a derogatory act.

These photographs, or I should say curation, are less about seeing than imagination, fueled, ironically, by the boring empiricism of life. We understand perfectly the preceding and subsequent moments of each image. A man crashes his car and lol calls his cell phone. A dog pisses legs raised on a wall, cognizant of and shamed by its non-humanness. A man vomits next to a pay phone, barely missing his shoes. The formal compositions of the photographs barely matter, and after a while, the subjects — the unwitting representatives of our race — seem to blur into one. All the drama — the car crashes, the indignant moonings and middle fingers, the near or imminent deaths, the police arrests, the mysterious fires — are slowly taken for granted, soon to reside in a shallow past, a pool in which we put our own shady memories.

But I never want to forget that butterfly, the orange winged floating period that could end this sentence, if only this sentence marked my end. But I'm still looking, grateful for everything and everyone who might be responsible for this: Jon, God, Google, the butterfly, and maybe even me. People are ugly to one another, yet life, in its ultimate punkdom, is quietly beautiful. It's

ridiculous if you think about it. An OJ-esque white unmarked van with a 360° aggregated view drives around the world to visually dictate the flayed mark of road, passing whores, car crashes, kids on bikes, misguided animals, punks with guns, dying great wide landscapes — passing it all with a billion dollar budget right under our noses, in order to make a timeless appointment with a butterfly, who as a pair of floating lips, was able to muster a silent smile for me. 

Picture of the Day: The Oval Office, in the Style of Jasper Johns

By Chris Good



Since 2010, [Jon Rafman](#) has been digitally reimagining objects and settings in the styles of famous artists for a tumblr blog called [Brand New Paint Job](#). (See the [Edward Hopper Buick Station Wagon](#) and the [Franz Kline Starbucks](#)).

Here, he gives the Oval Office a new paint job in the style of Jasper Johns



OUT THERE

TAKING IT TO THE (VIRTUAL) STREETS

"I have to mentally prepare myself before I go Street View surfing," says Jon Rafman, one of several new-media artists who are harnessing Google's visual-mapping technologies to make fine art. "The process requires intense endurance and concentration. Once I'm in the groove, I enter a trancelike state." Rafman trawls Google's archives to locate digital shots capturing dramatic moments, which he then blows up, in some cases to nearly 6-by-10-foot formats. When hung in a gallery, the enlarged scenes take on a significance not conveyed on the computer screen: "The degradation that occurs gives them an almost painterly quality," he says.

Given that Google technology is available to anyone with an Internet connection, it's not surprising that other artists have exploited the creative potential of Street View and Earth. Michael Wolf, who lives in Hong Kong, trains a tripod-mounted camera on the images on his computer monitor; Andreas Rutkauskas, in Montreal, produces richly detailed virtual mountain landscapes using Google Earth; New York's Hermann Zschiegner rephotographed Ed Ruscha's 1967 *Thirty-four parking lots in Los Angeles* using Google Earth satellite shots.

Google artists herald a new stage in the evolution of appropriation art. Zschiegner makes this explicit in his book *+walker evans +sherrie levine*, a collection of all 26 images of Allie Mae Burroughs, Walker Evans's most famous subject, which turned up in a Google Image search on the names of Evans and Sherrie Levine (an earlier rephotographer of Evans's work). With this new evolutionary stage comes a new crop of thorny intellectual-property issues. Since the artists using Google technology have obviously not produced the digital source material they're employing, how can they claim the work they make as their own? "The part of the process that makes it 'my' work is in framing and re-framing the images," Rafman asserts. "By reintroducing the human

gaze, I reassert the importance, the uniqueness of the individual." Michael Wolf—who started photographing Street View shots of Paris while living there—agrees. "It all boils down to what I notice and how I crop the image," the artist says, noting frequently seen details that he tends to fixate on: "extreme Google face erasures," the company's watermark hiding in clouds, urban pigeons.

Recently Rafman has been editing together stills plucked from Google Street View with swooping Google Earth aerial shots of iconic locales like Machu Picchu and Stonehenge for a digital film, *You, the World, and I*, which pays homage to the French filmmaker Chris Marker. The appropriated images illustrate a story about seeking lost love around the globe, told by a poetic narrator. "Each Street View was a sphere," he intones. "Each little sphere contained a potential memory, the possibility of finding her." Like artists such as Eva and Franco Mattes, with their interventions in Second Life, Rafman lands an emotional punch using a technology that seems horribly ill suited to earnestness.

The narrator of *You, the World, and I* is able to find but a single low-res Street View capture of his beloved, standing naked at the edge of a body of water. When he later returns to the same coordinates, the fickle currents of Google technology have swept away even that: "This image is no longer available." —SCOTT INDRISEK

JON RAFMAN,
58 Lungomare
9 Maggio, Bari,
Puglia, Italy, 2009.
Digital C-print,
45 x 72 in.

Jon Rafman's photographic and video work using Google technology will be showcased at the ARS Electronica Festival in Linz, Austria, September 2-11, and at the Fotografia Festival in Rome, September 23-October 24. For an online roundtable discussion of Google-based art, visit artinfa.com.

Calling From Canada: Virtual Reality Bites

December 20th, 2010 by [Raji Sohal](#)

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"Maybe the Internet is for me what Paris in the 20s was for Joyce, Hemingway, and Gertrude Stein or New York in 50s was for Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg." — Jon Rafman

Canadian new media artist [Jon Rafman](#) may be best known for his [Google Street View project](#) and his clever and poignant web art series [Brand New Paint Job](#), in which recognizable 3D objects (and entire rooms and scenes more recently) appear to be wrapped in famous paintings as though the paintings themselves were wrapping paper. Because of the easy, crude techniques used to produce some web art, along with its reproducibility and disregard for the original copy (but we'll leave that Pandora's box for another post!), web or net art is still finding its sea legs in the fine art world. However, as a conversation with Rafman maintains, and as his live virtual tour project [Kool-Aid Man in Second Life](#) (see promo video [here](#)) in particular reveals, these conceptual works are as relevant as art gets today: they arise from our decentralized Internet age and draw attention to how contemporary subject formation is increasingly co-constitutive of the virtual, the actual, and the real.



Jon Rafman, "Kool-Aid Man in Second Life," installation view, 2010. Courtesy the author.

I caught Rafman's presentation of a live virtual tour of Second Life as it was delivered to an audience at Montreal performance venue, [Il Motore](#). The presentation, which has happened in numerous cities now (and received much [press](#)), entails Rafman's live navigation of Second Life with his avatar, Kool-Aid Man, as in [The Kool-Aid Man](#) — that exaggeratedly large jug of toxic-colored "drink" whose weird deep-voiced proclamations of *oh yeah!* and penchant for jumping through brick walls you may remember from marking commercial breaks on Saturday morning cartoons in the eighties. According to Rafman, Kool-Aid Man is identified with a specific demographic, one which grew up before the Internet age. Kool-Aid Man also represents an empty signifier from the decade that defined excess: "you can inscribe whatever you want onto Kool-Aid Man." Much like Second Life itself, the reappropriation of Kool-Aid Man here, is both a source of ironic humor and a place for self-conscious critique: what is he and what does he represent, if anything?



Source: <http://koolaidmaninsecondlife.com/>

Rafman refers to the project as “virtual ethnography.” The tours are interesting as anthropological studies and sociological vignettes into today’s subcultures too. Rafman’s Kool-Aid Man mingles with [furries](#), medieval fetishist avatars, and every kind of kitsch reference imaginable in Second Life. Teleporting from one [NSFW](#) scene to another, audiences don’t know whether to mock what they see or take it seriously. After all, behind each avatar and each fabricated scene in the virtual online world exists a human being, probably on a home computer or in a cubicle at an office. Hypothetically, you and I could sign up to Second Life any time and navigate in the privacy of our own homes, but Rafman’s virtual tours’ re-presentation of this phenomenon occurs in a special context: a public group setting. The group setting pushes people’s understanding of Second Life. The audience amplifies the social awkwardness, self-consciousness, and curiosity of the themes explored in Second Life, leading one to wonder, how real is virtual reality? At one point an audience member sitting by me referred to the “fake fantasy: we were exploring on Second Life tour, to which Rafman retorted, “But it *is* real. I mean, this is actually happening.”

According to Rafman, it is the live navigation of Second Life that constitutes “the performance,” which goes down something more like an experiential, group lecture that favors extroverted participants. It is Rafman who navigates Kool-Aid Man; however, he asks attendees for their input on what to do, where to go, and what to say to other avatars while perusing the program. Like a physical tour with an informed tour guide, Rafman invites the audience to ask questions throughout the tour. During the performance, we stumbled upon virtual parties, orgies, dystopian wastelands, and the most bizarre social encounters occurring between other avatars. Rafman warned us, “if you can imagine it, it exists in Second Life.” At one point, another avatar even discovered that Rafman was giving a virtual tour of Second Life to our group and allowed us to interview him. He also told us about some cool places to check out in Second Life and teleported with us to a few of them. Chance and improvisation are the opportune words in this performance. Neither Rafman nor the audience knows what will happen when the artist logs in Kool-Aid Man. What ensues for sixty or so minutes raises myriad questions that deal with how we live and where agency lies in virtual reality — can the web, and a virtual game specifically, have agency?

If Bruno Latour’s [actor-network theory](#), in which he postulates the agency of objects, is extended to include the net and the web, then living online with different and various selves – through Second Life and other social networking programs and applications – is to be given more credence. Latour states:

For the thing we are looking at is not a human thing, nor is it an inhuman thing. It offers, rather a continuous passage, a commerce, an interchange, between what humans inscribe in it and what it prescribes to humans [...] What should it be called neither object nor subject. An instituted object, quasi-object, quasi-subject, a thing that possesses body and soul indissociably.

This is the very philosophical stuff we're grappling with in our digital era now, and that art is being made to draw some of these connections together. To provokingly represent them through recontextualization is exciting to me.

With net art gaining popularity, it is becoming clearer that virtual reality cannot be reduced to being phony nor fake, insofar that it is happening; it occurs, it occurs in the virtual realm, and the virtual folds into the actual, although sometimes through subtler manifestations. Take, for example, how virtual-reality has been experimented with in healing burn victims in physiotherapy; the victim watches an ice cold scene on a screen which in turn, actually lowers his or her body temperature. In this case, the incorporeal event is virtual *and* actual (in the actual is changed because of the virtual). Too heady yet? Bear with me. This idea stems from philosopher Constantin V. Boundas's idea that "the virtual is the real that has not yet been actualized." In the realm of Facebook and avatars, subjectivity is the constitution of dynamically constructed virtual and actual aspects creating reality as we know it. Fifty years ago, this notion would be some far-out scene in a Kubrick flick. But Rafman's recontextualization and presentation of one aspect of the virtual web world brings it home.

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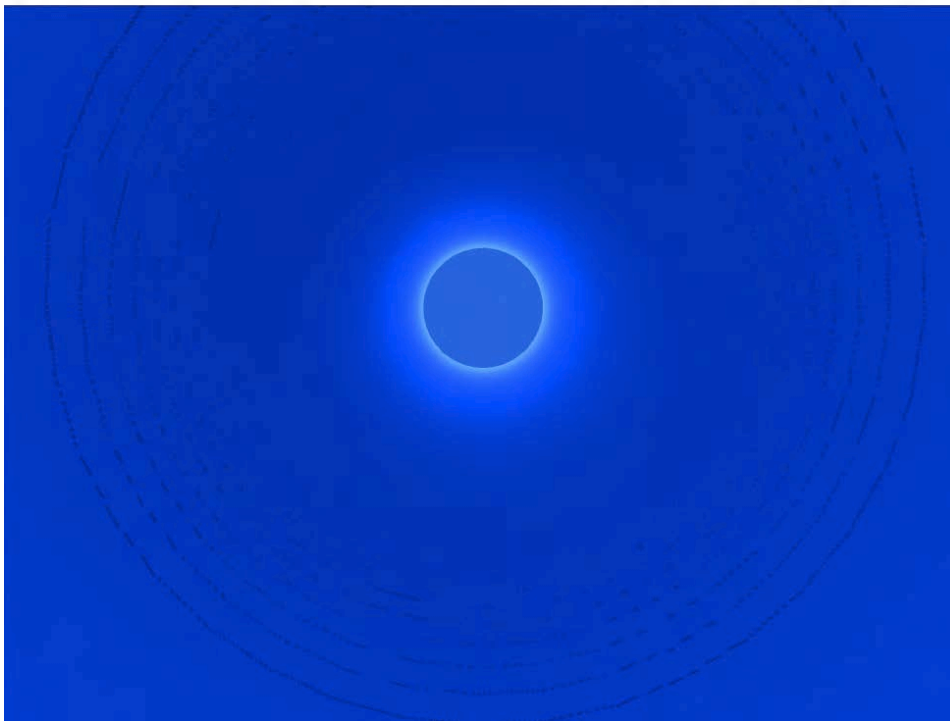
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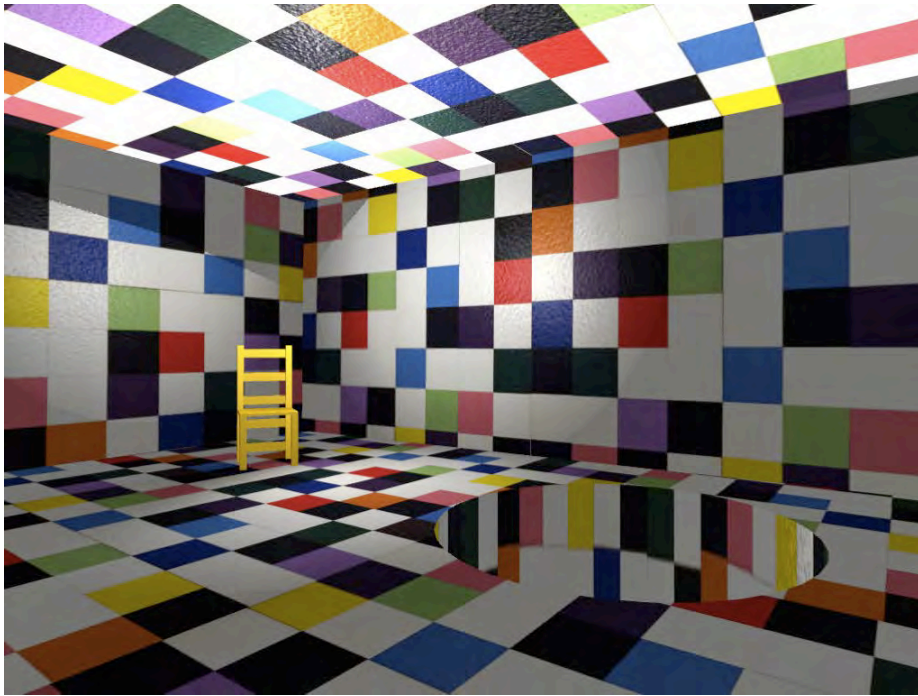
FEBRUARY 9, 2011, 4:30 AM

Featured Review: Lauren Christiansen on Jon Rafman and Tabor Robak's Bnpj.exe

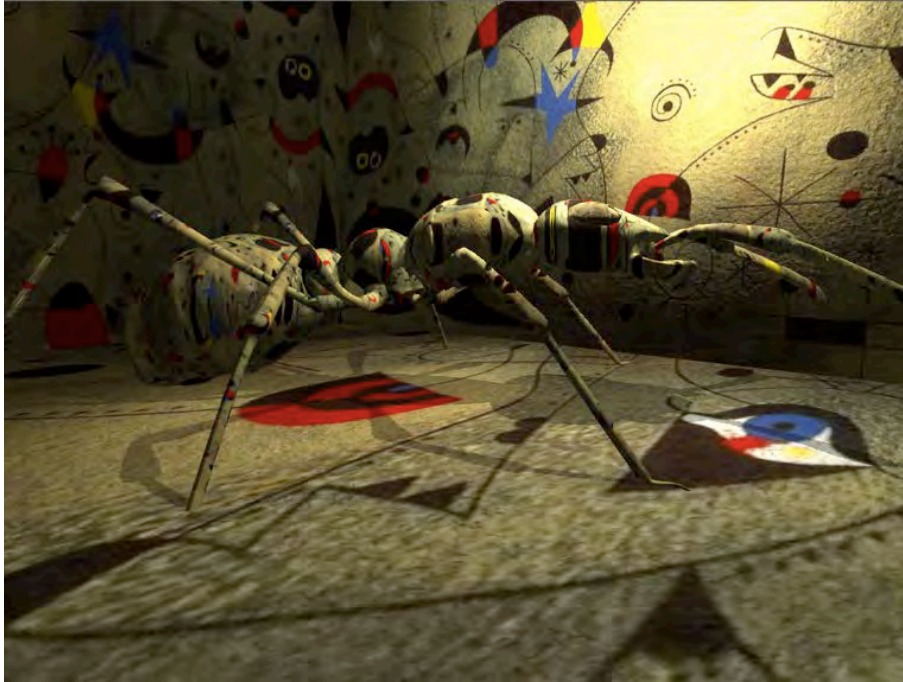


Should you find yourself on [the website of Philadelphia-based gallery Extra Extra](#), you'll be prompted by a cryptic text to ingest the synthetic resin making up Yves Klein's signature [International Klein Blue](#). Appearing similar to a conversation found on a role playing game emulator, the text incites its viewer to download *BNPJ.exe* and charge down a hallucinatory rabbit hole into a virtual environment designed by new media artists [Jon Rafman](#) and [Tabor Robak](#).

The gallery's first web based release, *Bnpj.exe*, combines past projects of both artists, notably Rafman's [Brand New Paint Job](#) series and Robak's [Mansion](#) project. For those unfamiliar, Rafman's Brand New Paint Job pairs computer generated 3D renderings of objects with the signature aesthetics of art historical greats. Robak's *Mansion* is a nearly inescapable, theatrical digital environment reminiscent of a haywire screensaver. *BNPJ.exe* invites the viewer into the combined habitat of Rafman's renderings and Robak's immersive and seemingly infinite Mansion project, mimicking the user functionality of a Y2K era role-playing game such as Counterstrike. Distinct from such-role playing games, *BNPJ.exe* allows for little to no user interactivity, perhaps spare knocking over a chair or witnessing a wayward military tank. In the absence of interactivity, the pair has produced an engrossing virtual world, maintaining the aesthetics of a videogame without the clear objectives usually incited through interactive narratives.



Turning the viewer into participant and art's history into immersive visual environments, the multi-level interactive project feels like a contorted inversion of the [Google Art Project](#). Creating digital walls out of paintings rather than digitizing environments out of walls, Google Art Project coincidentally was released only hours earlier the same day. The result is an illusorily self-determined investigation, with the participant left to explore each environment until they find the next hidden entrance. A disorienting series of IKB corridors opens into a vortex of Ellsworth Kelly's *Spectrum Colors Arranged By Chance*. After a free fall through space filled with blimps patterned in Kelly's works, Jackson Pollock's *Number 31* follows the contours of a mountainous seemingly militarized zone. Using arrow keys to navigate, the next level is found through traversing the sharp peaks and scaling a ramp into a sci-fi portal (a "stargate" specifically) with yet another environment framed in the history of modernist painting found through the threshold. As the environments mutate participants become more mentally—and almost physically—immersed in the digital environment. The virtual tunnel vision subsides only after participants find themselves at the bottom of an IKB well with no exit and the final phrase from the prefacing text becomes prescient, "As though in a trance, absorbed into the static blue all around you, swallowed like a ghost into its thick haze, you are no longer able to determine how much time has passed, how quickly it is passing, and how long you will be trapped here..." Slowly regaining critical consciousness it becomes apparent that Robak and Rafman lived up to their warning. BNPI.exe swallows participants whole and leaves them in a virtual purgatory with no clear escape.



Perhaps trapped in the blue abyss, just before consciousness returns, BNPJ.exe most clearly executes its ability to diminish one's physical self in exchange for its virtual surround. But for all its potential to lure the participant into an artificial environment through their computer screen, BNPJ.exe refuses to entertain. While it's pretty necessary to understand the vernacular of videogames in order to navigate from room to room, the project does not offer the entertainment features its chosen medium often facilitates.

What looks and feels a lot like an allegorical techno phobic scenario from a mid '90's movie about the dangerous encroachment of cyberspace into our daily lives may not be such a nostalgic one liner as it may first appear. Being trapped in the bottom of a virtual well evokes an undeniably sincere sense of disorientation and panic. But this sense of psychological entrapment seems to imply something greater, pointing toward the politics surrounding the digitization of aesthetic experience. BNPJ.exe shouldn't be mistaken as a billboard for the collaborators' technological know-how and proclivity for Modernist painting, though it remains dubious that the painting referents bear any relationship to the objects they inhabit.

Outside the spectrum of the computer screen, the hypothetical ingestion of IKB's seminal component, Rhodopas (whose title seamlessly blends sci-fi with art history), seems to indicate BNPJ.exe's underlying implications. Hot on the heels of Google Art Project, it's clear that art distributed through the web has already offered its rebuttal to those fearful that digitization implies the loss of our true ability to experience art. While we may not be at a point where we can re-imbue whatever is lost from art's history digitally, BNPJ.exe proves the experiential in art is not lost with technological advancements, it's more real than ever before.

Editor's note: Lauren Christiansen is a guest contributor to Image Conscious



Published on *Time Out Chicago*

Issue: 299

"The Age Demanded," Golden Age ^[1], through Dec 10.

Art review

By Jonathan Kinkley

Jon Rafman roams Google Street View like a contemporary Robert Frank, discovering in street photos a rich narrative of life around the world. *Nine Eyes of Google Street View* snatches screenshots of Irish toughs flipping off the camera and of a naked woman standing on an Italian beach, personalizing Google's all-seeing eye. By emblazoning the Street View navigational tool and Google's logo on each print, the Montreal-based artist nods to the images' coproducer. Yet he also reminds us that we can use this tool for purposes other than Google's. Many new-media works look outdated fast. Rafman's work is much more substantive: He's the rare digital native who's cognizant of the artist's role in the world and of art history. Though his experiments involve the latest technology and Web trends, such as crowdsourcing and viral memes, his attempt to celebrate and humanize digital media has staying power.

Adept at making machinima (videos shot in virtual worlds), Rafman created *Woods of Arcady* in Second Life, linking pastoral scenes of real-life ancient statues and monuments that have been transformed into rudimentary virtual 3-D models. A Yeats poem lamenting the end of the classical era and the beginning of the modern narrates the piece, ironically, given that modern technology made this digital arcadia attainable.

It's a shame that Golden Age's tiny quarters require Rafman's work to be sandwiched between bookshelves and hung in a hallway. But this solo show breathes life into so many different aspects of online culture it could speak for a wide swath of new-media artists.

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11/17/2010

The New York Times Magazine

CONSUMED

Global Entertainment

By ROB WALKER

Published: December 30, 2010

Part of what's different about this version of map-based enjoyment is that technology has brought it into a realm that occasionally crosses the border of voyeurism. It's one thing to speculate about distant lands; it's quite another to zoom in for a better look at a random pedestrian in Taipei. (Street View blurs faces and license-plate numbers.) And as the artist Jon Rafman has demonstrated with his astonishing ["The Nine Eyes of Google Street View"](#) project, which culls compelling images that the company's roving cameras have unthinkingly captured, Street View produces images that are as unexpectedly beautiful, beguiling or disturbing as those of any traditional street photographer.

The New York Times

Tragedy and Comedy, Starring Pac-Man

By SETH SCHIESEL

Published: July 15, 2010

The Game Play festival has something for both adult gamers and children. At one extreme: on Saturday evening the new-media artist Jon Rafman led a somewhat boozy crowd through a guided tour of some of the exotic sexual subcultures in Second Life, the popular virtual-reality system (which insists that it is not a game).

The New York Times

Art In Review

By Karen Rosenberg



It may seem like a stroke of morbid journalistic humor that the New Museum's "Free," a show exploring the Internet as a public art space, coincides with another exhibition titled ["The Last Newspaper."](#) On the third floor, artists are toiling in a makeshift newsroom; on the second, they're dismantling the last traces of print culture.

Or so you might think. In reality, the shows offer similar experiences — lots of reading, supplemented by video, photography, performance and multifarious conceptual object-tweaking.

Certainly the organizer of "Free" — Lauren Cornell, the executive director of [Rhizome.org](#) and an adjunct curator at the New Museum — deserves credit for thinking off-screen. "Art engaged with the Internet does not require it to exist online," she writes in her essay in the [virtual catalog](#).

So sculptures that make use of objects found on eBay, by Hanne Mugaas and Amanda Ross-Ho, are fair game. So are Rashaad Newsome's collages of Web-based images, though these don't feel substantially different from the print variety.

Meanwhile, some significant platforms go ignored; none of the 50 works on view engage [Facebook](#), YouTube (for that, you'll have to go to the [Guggenheim](#) — see Roberta Smith's review of "YouTube Play" on Page 29) or [Twitter](#). (Tumblr, a Twitter competitor, does play a significant role.) These omissions feel like a missed opportunity.

In many ways "Free" is most interesting as an exercise in open-source curating. In her essays and labels, Ms. Cornell makes frequent references to the Creative Commons co-founder Lawrence Lessig's 2004

A Show Is All Cyber, Some of the Time

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book “Free Culture” and the artist Seth Price’s 2002 [essay](#) “Dispersion.” Mr. Price’s “Dispersion” is particularly relevant because it talks about the Web’s superseding of physical public space.

“We should recognize that collective experience is now based on simultaneous private experiences, distributed across the field of media culture, knit together by ongoing debate, publicity, promotion and discussion,” he writes.

True to its argument, “Dispersion” exists in multiple forms — one of which is a screenprinted-polystyrene wall sculpture titled “Essay With Knots” (2008).

But the art in “Free” doesn’t always rise to the level of the dialogue. It’s also darker and more cynical — or maybe it just looks that way, weeks after a Webcam prank made one teenager distraught enough to jump off the George Washington Bridge.

“LEAVE ME ALONE” says a giant T-shirt by Ms. Ross-Ho, despite the mellow associations of its tie-dyed rainbow spiral.

Even projects rooted in creative problem-solving have a way of becoming dystopian. At last year’s “Seven on Seven” conference, initiated by Ms. Cornell, artists were paired with Internet entrepreneurs and asked to innovate under strict time limits. The Internet-video artist [Ryan Trecartin](#) teamed up with David Karp, founder of the microblogging platform Tumblr. Their brainchild, “River the Net,” is now projected on a large screen in the museum. Essentially it’s a stream of video clips uploaded by visitors to their site, with tags that allow the viewer to toggle from one 10-second clip to the next. In an interview on an art blog, Mr. Trecartin described it as “a movie made by everyone and the plot arc is the life of a tag.” With its attention-deficit pacing, it shares some of the qualities of Mr. Trecartin’s own [videos](#). It also looks a lot like the site Chatroulette, and has some of the same problems — becoming, at times, a vehicle for pornography. (The museum version, like the Web site, isn’t censored.) But the real thrill is in the often odd coupling of words (each clip has three tags) and moving images.

An intense desire for communal experience underlies many of the works in “Free,” whether or not they exist or were produced on the Internet. Aleksandra Domanovic’s “19:30,” a split-screen video installation, combines introductory graphics from local news programs from the former Yugoslavia with footage of techno-raves.

Similarly, Lisa Oppenheim’s series of slide projections, “The Sun Is Always Setting Somewhere Else,” mines the Flickr posts of United States soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan for postcard-worthy photographs of sunsets. The Flickr images, printed out and held up to actual skies, transcend banality with a nagging sense of homesickness.

Other artists cleverly subvert the protocol of online communities. Using Yahoo! Answers, Joel Holmberg aims profound, existential inquiries at an audience more accustomed to supplying practical knowledge. It’s amusing to see people struggle to field questions like, “How do you occupy space?”

Martijn Hendricks, meanwhile, infiltrates an online forum on the video of [Saddam Hussein](#)’s execution. His “Untitled Black Video” (2009) shows the comments only, in white text at the bottom of a dark

screen. Some cheer and others express outrage, but a sizable number simply complain about the poor video quality.

Technical difficulties inspire Andrea Longacre-White, who repeatedly reshoots low-resolution photographs of car accidents until the images themselves become blurry wrecks. Working in black and white, she's a [Weegee](#) for what we used to call the information superhighway.

Not everything in the show is gloomy, suspicious or sinister. The tone of Alexandre Singh's "School of Objects Criticized," a quirky and compelling sculptural tableau, is defiantly antic. Using spotlighted pedestals and a soundtrack, he transforms toys and household items into characters in a lively comedy of manners (after [Molière](#)'s "School for Wives").

A feminist Slinky toy and a "neo-post-Marxist" bottle of bleach, among others, engage in dinner-party discussions about Duchamp, [Woody Allen](#) and other cultural touchstones. On paper it's childish, but in practice it skewers the chattering class and shows off Mr. Singh's excellent ear for dialogue (also flaunted in his lecture-style performances).

"School of Objects Criticized" has a room to itself, at the end of the show, and in many ways it stands apart. It doesn't seem to have much to do with the Internet, or "free culture"; in fact, an analog tape recorder is among the anthropomorphized items.

That's the problem with "Free," in general. It's a conversation and an exhibition that aren't quite on the same page.

"Free" continues through Jan. 23 at the New Museum, 235 Bowery, at Prince Street, Lower East Side; (212) 219-1222, newmuseum.org.

The Portraits of Google Street View

Nov 9 2010, 2:22 PM ET By [Alexis Madrigal](#)



[The New Museum](#) in New York has a fascinating exhibition up through January called Free that takes "explores how the internet has fundamentally changed our landscape of information and our notion of public space." The catalog from the show is [online for all to see](#).

My acquaintance Joanne McNeil wrote an essay for the book that I love. She looks at what several works from the show say about how we see our collective future. Jon Rafman's *Selections from 9 Eyes of Google Street View* underpin her analysis. Rafman culled unintentional portraits of people going about their lives as the Google van rumbled by. He found the art embedded inside this decidedly prosaic mapping exercise.

McNeil, for her part, thinks hard about Google's project through the years. She projects a time when the image quality of Google's technology will plateau. Without timestamps or physical markers of their era, the site "will achieve a perfect atemporality."

Time is just another thing to scramble and remix on the Internet. Now Google is in the process of reshooting everything in higher resolution, creating the possibility of an enormous geomatic

archive if they continue the project. There are reports that the company intends to "refresh" the data every year. Eventually the quality of Street View photography will peak and the website will achieve a perfect atemporality. The image quality of 100 Oak St in Google Street View in 2015 will look no different from a 2025 representation. Date is then determined by recondite indications of the landscape and architecture transforming. No sepia tone, no lens flare occurs to sort these images into their respective moments in history.



Her conclusion about the networked world is not unlike Bruce Sterling's. [We live in atemporal times](#), he's been telling us. The real world of the future has, in the important senses, frozen in our imagination, McNeil says.

The future was once represented in fantastically romantic ways: white spacesuits, buildings infinite in height, interplanetary travel, alien interactions, an abundance of wealth, and robot servitude. Now the future is represented as something more compressed and accessible. The future is on the Internet, in those screens we glance at intermittently at all waking hours of the day. Our expectation is the "IRL" world will look not much unlike what we see today. It is a future of gradual changes, incorporating familiar aspects with new but not too crazy updated technology. What is in abundance is not wealth but information.

The idea of the future is now a distorted mirror. It is the future of screens. Like the daguerreotype, screens contain memory and reflection, as well as an unknown difference only discerning eyes can see. We are overfutures. We've reached the point where the past, present, and future look no different from one another.



ART » GENERAL

December 23, 2009

Art: Best of 2009

Jon Rafman

Undoubtedly the strongest net artist without representation today, Jon Rafman describes himself as a storyteller. It's an apt description, though I'd add that he's a bit of a digital wanderer as well. The countless hours spent in Google Street View collecting screenshots are a testament to this, as is his Second Life Tour, given by none other than the Kool-Aid Man. Undoubtedly my favorite, zany aspect of this video is the amount of time Kool-Aid Man spends underwater without losing any of his ice cubes or colored drink.



Art & Design

10 Best Art & Design shows of 2010 in no particular order

By Lauren Weinberg

"[Jon Rafman: The Age Demanded](#)," Golden Age, Oct 29–Dec 10. TOC contributor Jonathan Kinkley believes Rafman roams Google Street View "like a contemporary Robert Frank...[His] attempt to celebrate and humanize digital media has staying power."

[Views]

SEARCH AND DESTROY

From a series of Google Street View images collected by Jon Rafman at googlestreetviews.com (top to bottom): "526 7th St., Rapid City, South Dakota," "Eagle Point Dr., Sherwood, Pulaski, Arkansas," and "2104 S. Lamar Blvd., Austin, Travis, Texas."



KULTUR

LEIPZIGER VOLKSZEITUNG

Kandidaten-Rennen um MDR-Chefredakteur

Wer wird es? Rätselraten um das Personalkarussell, das beim Mitteldeutschen Rundfunk (MDR) weiter dreht. Nachdem Ende September die frei werden Chefs (Fernsehdirektor, Landesfunkhaus-Chef Dresden) der Dreiländeranstalt neu besetzt wurden, gibt es jetzt noch eine offene Stelle: den Chefredakteur. Wolfgang Kenntemich geht nächstes Jahr in Rente, da muss Intendant Udo Reiter nun also noch einen Posten neu besetzen. Wobei im Laufe des Jahres immer mal eine Überlegung durch den Sender geisterte, die Chefredakteure von Fernsehen und Hörfunk in einer Person

zu vereinen. Eine Kommission unter Leitung von Hörfunkchef Johann Michael Möller tagte und überlegte, aber kam wohl letztlich zu keinem wirklichen Ergebnis. Außer, das gespart werden sollte.

So läuft das Rennen um den Chefredakteurs-Posten nun mit zwei Kandidaten: Thomas Braune, Regierungssprecher von Ministerpräsident Matthias Platzeck in Brandenburg, und Tim Herden, Leiter des MDR-Studios in Berlin. Die größeren Chancen dürften bei Herden liegen, da Intendant Reiter zuletzt im-

mer die Hauslösung gesucht hat. Da müsste dann also die Wahl auf den 45-jährigen Herden fallen, der Ende der 80er Jahre in Leipzig studierte, noch beim DDR-Fernsehen begonnen hatte und von Anfang an zum Mitteldeutschen Rundfunk als Reporter und Redakteur gehörte, bevor er 1999 ins ARD-Hauptstadtstudio wechselte und dieses Jahr als Autor mit dem Hiddensee-Krimi „Gellengold“ debütierte.

Im Fall von Thomas Braune könnten leicht Diskussionen über die Nähe oder

Ferne von Politik und öffentlich-rechtlichem Rundfunkauftrag aufkommen, obwohl der 51-jährige Hallenser als DT 64-Macher, Redakteur und Moderator des Ostdeutschen Rundfunks (ORB) alles andere als ein Fachfremder ist.

Da das Abschiedsdatum von Wolfgang Kenntemich im Herbst liegt, bleibt Intendant Reiter eigentlich noch einige Zeit zum Abwägen. So wird, nach Auskunft von MDR-Sprecher Dirk Thärichen, der die Namen als reine Spekulation bezeichnete, davon ausgegangen, dass die Entscheidung Anfang bis Mitte 2011 fällt.

Norbert Wehrstedt



„Wahrhaftigere Dokumentation des Lebens“?: Aufnahmen von Google Street View, die Jon Rafman für sein Kunstprojekt „Nine Eyes“ auswählte. Fotos: www.9eyes.tumblr.com

Eine Welt voller Schnappschüsse

Der 29-jährige Jon Rafman macht aus Google Street View ein Kunstprojekt

Seit Google Street View gestartet ist, wird die Debatte von Begriffen wie Privatsphäre und Datenschutz beherrscht. Der 29-jährige Jon Rafman aus Kanada allerdings wählt ein anderes Wort für die im Internet veröffentlichten Fotografien von Straßenzügen, Städten und ihren Bewohnern: Kunst.

Von NINA MAY

Neun Augen hat die Kamera, mit der Google durch die Straßen der Welt zieht. Alle zehn bis 20 Meter macht sie eine Aufnahme, ein automatischer Archivier des Augenblicks, Dokumentation nach dem Zufallsprinzip. „Nine Eyes“ nennt Jon Rafman sein Kunstprojekt, das im Internet zu sehen ist (9eyes.tumblr.com), bereits in Österreich gezeigt wurde und zur Zeit in New York ausgestellt wird.

Ein Auto, das in den Graben gefahren ist, eine Prostituierte, die aus einem Lkw steigt, Verhaftungen, aber auch stille Momente offenbaren diese Bilder: Hund und Frauen, die gemeinsam aus dem Fenster schauen, ein nackter Rücken am Meer oder einfach schöne Naturbilder von Pinguinen auf Schneefelsen oder eine Möwenschar, die an Hitchcocks Film erinnert. Viele Stinkefinger und einige nackte Hintern tauchen auf, aber auch Menschen mit dem Plakat „Wir lieben Street View“. Meistens aber nehmen die Porträtierten das Google-Auto mit der Kamera nicht wahr.

Manche Bilder haben eine so klare Botschaft, dass man sich erst wieder bewusst

machen muss, dass hier nur eine automatische Schaltung den Auslöser bediente: ein alter Mann im Rollstuhl auf einem leeren Parkplatz mit „Bus“-Kennzeichnung etwa. Vielleicht hat Rafman recht damit,

wenn er im Projekt eine „wahrhaftigere Dokumentation des Lebens“ sieht. Schnappschüsse, so sagt man, zeigen oft das wahre Gesicht, und Google Street View offenbart eine ganze Welt davon: Ein pummeliger Junge, der gerade im Begriff ist, über einen Zaun zu klettern, ein Straßenarbeiter, der ein Stoppschild wegträgt, ein Eisbär, der eine Pfote über die Brüstung seines Geheges streckt. Ein Ausbruchversuch? Doch die neun Augen sind schon weitergezogen.

Für sein Kunst-Projekt surfte Rafman Stunde um Stunde im riesigen Datenpool von Google Street View – nicht ohne sich zuvor mit Sporttraining auf den Sitzmarathon vorzubereiten. „Ich habe tagelang nur geklickt. Durch die ständige Wiederholung

verfiel ich in einen trance-ähnlichen Zustand, der etwas Spirituelles hatte.“ Er reiste an Orte, die er gerne mal im richtigen Leben besuchen wollte oder wählte

Jon Rafman: Die Angst vieler Menschen, Google Street View stehle ihnen ihre Privatsphäre, ist Ausdruck der Illusion, das einzelne Leben sei so unglaublich interessant, dass jeder darin herum stöbern möchte.

sein Ziel einfach zu fällig mit der Maus auf der Landkarte. „Ich suchte nach Bildern, die archetypisch entscheidende Momente festhalten, die Essenz einer Handlung. Oder die eine nostalgische Geschichte erzählen, oder einfach eine schöne Licht-Komposition haben.“

Damit setzt Rafman der Zufälligkeit von Google-Street-View die bewusste Selektion von Aufnahmen entgegen. Er ist sich im Klaren, dass er so zum Manipulator wird. „Erst durch meine Auswahl werden die Bilder zu Kunst. Zuvor sind sie nichts als Information. Sie brauchen einen Rahmen, um Kunst zu werden, das meine ich sowohl im übertragenen wie im wörtlichen Sinne.“ Die Spannung zwischen dem roboterhaftem Blick der Google-Kamera und dem Verlangen des Menschen, Geschichten zu

erzählen und so Bedeutung zu erzeugen, sei symptomatisch für die moderne Welt, in der jeder Einzelne ständig danach strebe, seine Wichtigkeit zu bestätigen. „Die Angst vieler Menschen, Google Street View stehle ihnen ihre Privatsphäre, zum Beispiel ist Ausdruck der Illusion, das einzelne Leben sei so unglaublich interessant, dass jeder darin herumstöbern möchte.“ Tatsächlich seien aber die meisten Aufnahmen auf Google Street View schlicht banal. „Aber das gilt schließlich auch fürs Leben.“

Hat sich durch die Arbeit seine Wahrnehmung der Wirklichkeit verändert? „Nein, Street View hat mir eher schon unbewusst bekannte Dinge vor Augen geführt. Die Menschen sagen immer, dass Technologie unsere Art zu denken verändert. Ich glaube eher, dass sie sich längst verändert hat und dass deshalb Technologie populär werden, die dieses Denken bestätigen. Street View etwa zeigt die Gesichter der Menschen verschwommen. Und wenn wir durch die Straßen gehen, nehmen wir die meisten Menschen, um die wir uns nicht scheren, auch nur als Schemen wahr. Diese Trübung der Gesichter sagt deshalb viel über uns aus.“

Rafman sucht stets im Internet nach Inspiration, über diese Plattform sieht der in Montreal Lebende sich mit der ganzen Welt vernetzt. „Ich habe Freunde in Berlin, es fühlt sich so an, als seien sie direkt neben mir. Wir Internet-Kinder sind alle im Dialog miteinander.“

@ www.9eyes.tumblr.com



Künstler Jon Rafman inszeniert sich selbst gern in medialer Umgebung. Foto: Privat



23/10/2010 À 00H00

Avec view sur la vie

L'artiste canadien Jon Rafman puise dans Google Street View la matière à l'élaboration de ses fictions.

Par **MARIE LECHNER**

«Je n'ai pas une seule photo d'elle, alors que nous avons passé notre jeunesse ensemble, à parcourir le monde.» Le narrateur du film *You the World and I*, qui se déploie sur le globe virtuel Google Earth, déplore n'avoir aucune trace de cette amie qui refusait obstinément de se laisser prendre en photo. Puis se souvient que, lors d'un séjour sur la côte italienne, la voiture Google était en maraude. Il sillonne comme un forcené Google Street View et finit par la trouver. Une photo floutée d'une jeune femme de dos, face à la mer, qui rappelle ces clichés de famille passés, empreints de nostalgie. L'image qui a inspiré cette intrigante fiction, l'artiste montréalais Jon Rafman l'a effectivement trouvée sur Street View. Ces photos prises automatiquement par des voitures Google le fascine. En 2009, Rafman a collectionné une étonnante série de captures d'écrans extraites des vues panoramiques de Street View pour le blog Art Fag City, intitulé «Nine Eyes of Google Street View». *«Au début, j'étais attiré par l'esthétique amateur de ces images brutes, écrit Rafman, Street View évoquait cette urgence que je ressentais dans la photographie de rue ancienne. Avec son regard supposé neutre, la photographie Street View a une qualité spontanée qui n'est pas altérée par la sensibilité ou les arrière-pensées d'un photographe humain.»* Une vraie photographie documentaire, donc, capturant des fragments de réalité débarrassés de toute intention culturelle. Tous les 10 à 20 mètres, les neuf appareils photo enregistrent automatiquement ce qui passe dans leur champ puis un logiciel assemble les images pour en faire des panoramiques, d'où Rafman extrait différentes sélections, faisant référence à l'histoire de la photographie ou critiquant le mode de représentation de la vie moderne formaté par Google. Certaines captures évoquent le réalisme brutal de la vie urbaine, réminiscence du travail des photographes de rue américains (comme cet homme armé d'un fusil d'assaut dans les rues d'une ville du Dakota), des scènes de crimes, des incendies mais aussi des instantanés façon carte postale, tel ce baiser volé rue de la Huchette à Paris, qui évoque Doisneau, capturant ce que Cartier-Bresson appelait *«l'instant décisif»*. Ou encore cet homme entraperçu par la porte entrebâillée d'une pissotière rue du Faubourg-du-Temple, qui rappelle à Rafman les mises en scène du Canadien Jeff Wall. Sa collection recèle des vues inespérées, tel cet arc-en-ciel formant une arche autour d'une route déserte de l'Iowa ou ces paysages psychédéliques provenant d'erreurs de caméra.

Si Street View propose une variété de styles, c'est dans une grammaire visuelle qui lui est propre, dictée par le mode de production de l'image : les visages floutés (façon photos volées de paparazzi), la texture numérique et une perception faussée de profondeur, analyse Rafman. Par ailleurs observe-t-il, si nous avons une chance égale d'être photographié par la machine, en réalité, ce sont souvent les pauvres, les marginaux, les prostituées qui tombent dans l'œil de Google. Cet œil intrusif provoque d'ailleurs, à son passage, des doigts d'honneur quand ce ne sont pas des culs, des mains qui recouvrent le visage et des têtes qui se baissent.

«Bien que l'image soit obtenue par un appareil photo automatique, estime l'artiste, le spectateur ne peut s'empêcher d'interpréter l'image, et d'y chercher du sens.» Or Street View enregistre tout sans accorder de signification à rien, observant le monde d'un regard détaché et indifférent. *«Nous sommes bombardés d'impressions fragmentées, noyés sous les données, mais souvent nous voyons trop de choses sans rien en retenir»*, constate l'artiste qui questionne la prétention impérialiste de Google à ordonnancer l'information pour nous, fixant le cadre de nos connaissances et perceptions.

YoutheWorldandI.com
GoogleStreetViews.com

RAFA SPORTS

contemporary art talk

A CONVERSATION WITH JON RAFMAN (NSFW VIDEO)

May 12, 2010 · [Print This Article](#)



Jon Rafman and I had a chance to catch up in Second Life last week and do a series of interviews that culminated in the above video (which contains NSFW graphic imagery near the end). We discuss his recent work and its relationship to cinema studies, as well as talk about how the work digests contemporary Modern experiences.

I suggest that projects like Brand New Paint Job and Woods of Arcady operate as a kind of collision between High Modernism and amateur consumer technology, and that these fusions provide a unique critical comment on nascent mash-up cultures that exist online. Jon and I also discuss how his inclusion in 1stChillin's Avatar4D show in San Francisco, and involvement with that emergent netart community, has influenced his artistic process. Jon comments on how his discovery of nasty nets rekindled his artistic sense of inquiry and how the mobility and quickness of blogs and surf clubs fostered a dialogue that he found absent from contemporary art circles he had participated in up to that point.

Later in the interview, I ask Jon if he finds that his new found sense of discovery of working online manifests itself in his (now highly popular) Kool-Aid Man tours in Second Life. The initial location for Jon's journey and participation within these virtual worlds comes from the joy of spatial exploration and subsequent need for spatial mastery within 3D environments. We wrap up our conversation by discussing how working with Second Life, and developing real meaningful relationships within that environment, has led him to invest in the ideas of multi-user experiences as a means of engaging and analyzing multi-layered artistic paradigms within networks.

Jon's Google Street View project will be part of the opening festivities tonight at the FUTUREEVERYTHING festival in Manchester and will remain open until the 23rd of May. You can also visit his site for more information: <http://jonrafman.com/>

BOMBLOG

ART LITERATURE MUSIC FILM PERFORMANCE OUT & ABOUT PODCASTS

ART

REVEALING JON RAFMAN

By Lindsay Howard Jul 8, 2010

Netartist Jon Rafman's Kool-Aid Man avatar is one of his primary characters, taking appointments and leading tours through Second Life worlds both utopian and fetishistic, as well as starring in still images and films directed by Rafman himself, which humorously contrast the avatar's round red body with the super-sexy alter egos more commonly seen in Second Life. He speaks with Lindsay Howard about his work. Featuring an original Kool Aid Man in Second Life video!



Jon Rafman, KOOL AID MAN IN SECOND LIFE, 2009.

via [Kool Aid Man in Second Life](#).

"People make crush art about you all the time, don't they?" That's the first question I asked Jon Rafman one month ago after he discovered I was embarking upon an ongoing multi-media performance inspired by his work. Our conversation provided my first hint into Rafman's process. He wanted to know what I'd done between the time I left work and the time I arrived at home, the name of the office building, where my roommate was born, the details of my relationship to certain net artists, and a host of other very specific questions which I later saw as part of his process for, and reverence toward, the construction of one's personal narrative. The truth, though he wouldn't admit it, is that Jon Rafman is one of the net art community's most respected and beloved figures. This prestige, it seems to me, relates to his ability to position himself in shamanistic roles, as director, storyteller, and tour guide, as the middle man exploring essential concepts of modernity/contemporary experience, and then processing and framing them into narratives. His work is concerned with virtual worlds, self-identity, and the collapse of high/low art. He is the artist/curator behind [Googlestreetviews.com](#) and the cartoonish internet *flâneur* directing tours through Second Life as [Koolaidmaninsecondlife.com](#).

Rafman's Kool-Aid Man avatar is one of his most primary characters, taking appointments and leading tours through Second Life worlds both utopian and fetishistic, as well as starring in a collection of stills and films directed by Rafman himself, which humorously contrast the avatar's round red body against the super sexy alter egos much more commonly found in Second Life. The tours are primarily directed between virtual avatars, however Rafman also performs the tours live, inviting audience members to directly interact and inform the journey, as he subtly contextualizes and frames the experience. The Kool-Aid Man avatar, as it relates to Rafman's body of work as a whole, is an externalized representation of Rafman's honest and committed artistic struggle to construct and examine self in virtual culture.

When Rafman agreed to do this BOMB interview, our collaboration began with a series of ideas and links shared over g-chat conversations, emails, late-night video chats and Skype calls. We discussed constructing a short film inspired by Jean-Luc Godard's interview of Woody Allen or designing a text interview where every word or phrase hyperlinked to another obscure place on the web (à la the early papperad website). Ultimately, I confessed that my true intention for this interview was to reveal "the real" Jon Rafman. Our discussion over Skype (transcribed below) proposes that perhaps "revealing the real" is... well, I wouldn't want to give away a story right at the very beginning.

Lindsay Howard: Do you think about Kool-Aid Man as an extension of yourself? Is there an evolution there toward the fragmented virtual self and physical self? How are you considering that?

Jon Rafman: I think underlying that question is the unease consisting of where, how, and what is my physical self when I am in a social relation in cyberspace.

The Kool-Aid Man avatar relies on me to exist. If I don't log into Second Life, he is not out there somewhere in the world. He makes it clear to me that it is not necessary to have a computer chip implanted into your brain in order to become a man-machine. To fully connect physical existence with digital existence, it is not necessary to alter one's body. Perhaps Kool-Aid Man is a cyborg in the fullest sense in that he is combination of computer programming and human agency.

Even more important is that the cyborg/avatar demonstrates there is no such thing as a pure physical self. What we take as the most fundamental aspects of self are mediated through the lens of culture. I don't think identity is bound to our physical composition. How we feel and perceive ourselves, the roles we play are all socially mediated.

The internet includes social worlds in which an avatar is required in order to navigate and interact with other people. In these virtual worlds, be it Facebook or Second Life, our avatar is our social representative. What we choose reveals many ways in which our physical or 'real' self is constructed. So perhaps choosing an avatar makes manifest our fragmented and multiple selves.



Jon Rafman, KOOL AID MAN IN SECOND LIFE, 2009.

via [Kool Aid Man in Second Life](#).

Although, having an avatar in Second Life need not change your understanding of selfhood. After all, we are always inhabiting or sending forth avatars in our day-to-day lives. I definitely feel, however, that the way the internet is transforming how we construct our identities deserves more attention. I think the notion of even going on stage has changed with the many varied vehicles the web has provided us.

To me, what is even more important than a fragmented self is, how does this lack of physicality in interaction affect us? Like, what is the impact of the lack of the tangible touch?

LH: I want to read a J.G. Ballard quote that I've seen you reference before:

"I believe that organic sex, body against body, skin area against skin area, is becoming no longer sufficient... What we're getting is a whole new order of sexual fantasies, involving a different order of experiences, like car crashes, like traveling in jet aircraft, the whole overlay of new technologies... These things are beginning to reach into our lives and change the interior design of our sexual fantasies."

I'm curious to know whether or not you agree with him, and how you're thinking about this subject as it relates to your experiences in Second Life.

JR: I agree to a certain extent. I definitely think that our engagement in cyberspace can be seen as an erotic act. An extreme metaphor and example for this is the fetish known as [Vorarephilia](#), or "vore" for short. Vore is a condition wherein one is sexually aroused or obsessed with one living being devouring another. On one of my tours, I showed my friend, Matt Wiviott, a thriving Second Life vore community. Matt subsequently wrote a fascinating article in which he devotes some time to analyzing the fetish. He argues, and I totally agree with him, that despite vore being a marginal fetish in Second Life, it is helpful in understanding the nature of virtual existence and digital mediation.

The fetish can be compared to the desire to return to the womb. The desire to be consumed entirely, to be completely engulfed by a totalizing feminine body is fundamental to the desire to inhabit cyberspace. Making the voyage home into the womb and analogously the process of being swallowed alive is powerful metaphor for the process of fully immersing oneself on the internet.

The state of being in the womb, however, can be considered one of bliss, but also simultaneously one that very closely resembles death. Still, there is a strange comfort in this form of death. Like the cyborg, the act of losing oneself in cyberspace evokes both dread and desire simultaneously.

Technology has given us many new symbols to play with, and our fantasies are becoming more and more divorced from our physical bodies. But I think that, at the core, there are certain impulses and drives that have not changed and are simply expressing themselves in new ways.



Kool-Aid Man in Second Life – tour promo 2010 (excerpt 1) from jonraffman on Vimeo.

LH: I'm thinking about your internet experience and the different worlds that you inhabit on the web. I guess I'm thinking about them in terms of neighborhoods: there's the Second Life world you inhabit, then there's the net art community where you're a social figure interacting with others and others are interacting with you, then there's the accumulation of items from the deep internet that you bring to the social sphere through mediums like your del.icio.us, tumblr, or Facebook, and then you have your artist site, which essentially functions as a business card. How do you consider the relationship between these neighborhoods? What are your goals for each?

JR: The initial joy at finding two successive virtual worlds to explore (Google Street View and Second Life) led inexorably to my critique of the real world in which we are trapped. At times I adopt the role of a member of the community at other times I just re-frame what I find, if not so much in liberating us but in revealing the conditions of our enslavement.

LH: Your work is often presented through the voice of an authoritative (if at times unreliable) narrator, whether you are giving a tour in Second Life, directing a film, writing an essay, or performing live. How did you find this role?

JR: I was influenced by literary and essay models, but mostly I am drawn to exploring the relationship between memory and identity, both historical and personal. The mix of authority and the faultiness of memory has a particular pull.

Memory is both the basis and the confirmation of selfhood, but it is also unreliable. I am interested in how self-narratives are used to construct the self, but I am also struck by the variety of ways memory seeks the narrative form and fails.



Jon Rafman, 58 LUNGOMARE 9 MAGGIO, BARI, PUGLIA, ITALY, 2009. Installation in the artist's studio.

via [Google Street Views](#)

LH: Kool-Aid Man in Second Life necessitates a relationship with your audience, whereas with a lot of net art, or art in general, the audience doesn't have to be so specific. How does the requirement of a participatory audience impact the way you consider and construct a story?

JR: There is a more direct conversation going on with audiences and other artists because of the internet. I very much value the immediate feedback I get when I exhibit something online, post a video to my [Arcade Hustla youtube channel](#), or give a tour in Second Life, compared to the endless waiting when submitting films to film festivals or grant applications to government agencies, etc. This new directness is energizing. I feel even more motivated to make work.

LH: How do you see net art existing in the marketplace, and how do you reconcile that with your personal artistic goals?

JR: Good question. I don't really have an answer to that. In its original spirit, putting something up on the internet meant making it accessible to all which nonetheless raises the question of how the artist is to live.

I think that artists using any form, medium, or technique in its early infancy tend to be idealistic about it. Whether this is true or not, there is nonetheless the sense that new ground is being broken, and this imbues everything with a certain energy.

One likely path is that netart takes the same path as performance art: it will be assimilated into existing institutions. But like performance art, the issue of selling the work will be a touchy subject. Perhaps video and other sort of documentation of the work will be sold, but I don't know.



Jon Rafman, SLEEPING SHEPHERD BOY, 2009.

[website](#)

I also have the sense that a lot of the serious artists that are using the Internet are very reluctant to call themselves "netartists," and I understand why. The label carries baggage with it. There is a triviality that often is associated with the word "netart," a certain feeling that netart is somehow reducible to either retro animated gifs or a certain kind of ironic kitschy humor or in-jokes that employ a mix of pop-cultural and obscure Internet references.

LH: Does the Internet subvert the idea of a 'master narrative'?

JR: No, I think the master narrative was subverted way before the Internet became popular. I think it had more to do with the failure of major ideologies.

But I also think that we live in one world and we are not so different from one another, and that a universal discourse exists. If I experience fragmentation due to being overwhelmed with data, it may well represent contemporary reality and consciousness. Perhaps our subjectivity changes over time, but it is ultimately part of our shared human history. We are narrative creatures. No matter what, we will create stories that have patterns and arcs and consist of a series of events that can be recounted.

Jon Rafman will be showing original work in a one-night-only group exhibition, titled Area/Zone, at Bruce High Quality Foundation University this Friday, July 9th at 7pm. On Saturday July 10th at 10pm, Rafman is performing Kool-Aid Man in Second Life at the Brick Theater in Williamsburg as part of the Game Play Festival. To schedule a guided tour of Second Life contact: [koolaidmaninsecondlife \[at\] gmail \[dot\] com](mailto:koolaidmaninsecondlife[at]gmail[dot]com).

Share Bomb



Lindsay Howard has performed in galleries, theaters and warehouses from Chelsea to Philadelphia to the Time Based Arts Festival in Portland. She curates video/net art shows in Brooklyn, NY and blogs at www.look-im-lucid.tumblr.com. She is on Facebook.

This entry was posted on July 8, 2010 at 4:33 pm, filed under [Art](#) and tagged [Interview](#), [Jon Rafman](#), [Lindsay Howard](#), [Netart](#), [SecondLife](#), [Video](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#). Follow any comments here with the [RSS feed for this post](#). [Post a comment](#) or leave a [trackback](#): [Trackback URL](#).

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ONE TRACKBACK

1. By [Tweets that mention Revealing Jon Rafman – BOMBLOG – Topsy.com](#) on July 9, 2010 at 2:09 am

[...] This post was mentioned on Twitter by BOMB Magazine, Matei Sâmișălan. Matei Sâmișălan said: [from seecoy] Revealing Jon Rafman – BOMBLOG: <http://bit.ly/cK0QVk> [...]

POST A COMMENT

JON RAFMAN TALKS TO DEAN KISSICK

Montreal resident Jon Rafman is at the forefront of a new wave of internet artists and filmmakers from around the world. He's best known for his tumblr blog *The Nine Eyes of Google Street View* – a collection of found photographs – and for his narrative films made in *Second Life*, and he has just finished a new film about professional video gamers. Rafman spoke to Dean Kissick via Skype about finding Shangri-La in a run-down Chinatown arcade, and finding '20s Parisian café culture on the internet.

DEAN KISSICK: Why did you decide to make a piece about an arcade?

JON RAFMAN: It started about four years ago. I was hanging out at this arcade in Chicago, where I was going to college at the time, and I met this gamer who had reached a certain pinnacle in his short career that was so high – you're at your best when you're still in your teens, because your hand-eye co-ordination is at its peak – and from that moment on he lived in the past. I liked the idea of this character who was reminiscing about his glory days at the joystick, and I had always wanted to tell the story of the end of an era. So the film would be an elegy to the arcade era, and also to a person living in an age where everything is so accelerated that you can be outmoded when you're still in your 20s.

Then I moved to New York and I discovered this arcade in Chinatown: just this little smelly hole in the wall, packed with teenagers, reeking with sweat and bad Chinese food, and all the machines were dilapidated. But at the back there were four new machines playing *Street Fighter 4*, with massive amounts of kids crowded around the machines, betting money and competing against each other. And it turns out it was considered the last great arcade on the east coast, and it's where all the greatest east coast players emerged. I already wanted to tell the story and I had started playing around with it, and shooting stuff with actors, but when I found this place it was like, everything's so much more real – my fantasy of this world didn't even come close to the richness of the reality of it. Every day I'd go there and hang out at the arcade.

DK: So what happened?

JR: I learnt about one guy who was considered the first east coast champion: his name was Eddie Lee and he pioneered the New York style of gameplay, "turtle style", an extremely defensive form of fighting where you just constantly run away. Anyway, he disappeared after a while, and everyone had different stories, but apparently he was picked up by these Wall Street types who thought that pro video gamers would make amazing day traders, because it requires the same skills: fast-paced decision-making

and whether anyone will actually remember him. Ultimately, gamers are not playing for money, so a huge part of it is playing for respect and having their legacy live on.

DK: Did you have any filmic influences?

JR: Structurally I'm most influenced by Chris Marker, who uses montage and found footage to weave together narratives.

DK: I've heard that he uses *Second Life* himself, that he's constructed his own virtual archipelago and museum.

pessimism. His magnum opus, *Sans Soleil*, is all about in Japan in the '80s, which was the most technologically and economically advanced culture of the time, so he's definitely interested in the future as well as the past.

DK: Are you nostalgic for the past?

JR: Every generation migrates to a new centre, and I think the internet is the equivalent of Paris in the '20s – with all the great expatriate writers from Ernest Hemingway to James Joyce to Gertrude Stein – or postwar New York. I can't visit my friend's studio, or meet in a café, but I can communicate through Skype, like with you right now. The "net art" community that I found online is who I'm in dialogue with, and they're basically providing the inspiration and audience that is helping forge this new vernacular that is very much tied to the internet. You don't have that tangible touch and physicality of hanging out in New York in the '50s or Paris in the '20s, but at the same time it's way more international, and I'm able to reach way more people – it's reflecting the modern experience, which is extremely tied down to the computer.

DK: On that note, can you explain the process of exploring the world through Google Street View?

JR: I'll usually go to places that I really want to go in real life, or places that the Google cars are exploring at the moment, because often if there's something crazy in these photographs it won't have been caught or deleted yet. On the Street View website it tells you where the cars are at the moment – so right now, Romania

and Brazil – and it's great because they're progressively moving towards the less developed countries, and those are often more exotic and less documented. For instance, I now have a far better understanding of the geography of a Brazilian favela than I ever did before. And when I first started, I would go on these marathon Street View runs where I would almost enter a trancelike state of just clicking and gathering and not stopping until I found an incredible image.

JONRAFMAN.COM



THE AGE DEMANDED #1 (2010). COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

and just going with your intuition; understanding these limited rules and working within them, and working fast. So he became a day trader and made millions of dollars, and he hasn't returned to the game. And everyone wants him to return, but he's moved on. He was an inspiration for my film, which uses the interviews that I've shot at the arcade and "machinima" – basically, using video games to make movies – shot in *Second Life*. The whole movie takes place in *Second Life*, and the story's told in a nostalgic voiceover from a character who was once a great video-game player, but is now thinking about his past,

JR: I have a feeling he got help building that world, and he's in his 80s now so I wonder whether he actually hangs out in *Second Life*. But he was one of the pioneers of interactive models of art back in the '90s, and he very much embraces new technologies. I think he's a modernist in a postmodern world, which is kind of how I feel. There's this fragmentation that's occurred, and it's taken to new levels with the increasing amounts of information that we're constantly processing every day, and as artists we need to confront that. There's a sense of loss in Marker's films, but it's never nostalgic to the point of pure

interview

Nine Eyes

An interview
with Jon Rafman

Most spiders have eight eyes. Google has nine. Jon Rafman (1981, Montreal), an artist-cum-netronaut always on the frontline of our virtual expansion, is fascinated by Google's panoramic views that support our insatiable need for navigation. Thanks to Sid Lee Collective GUP met up with Jon in real life and asked him some questions concerning his Nine Eyes project.

What made you decide to initiate this project?

In 2007, Google started to send out an army of hybrid electric automobiles, each one bearing nine cameras on a single pole. I am interested in how they approach the registration of the world as a neutral, unbiased recording. But also in the vastness of the project. This infinitely rich mine of material gives me the opportunity to explore, interpret and curate a new place in a new way.

How do you select?

One year ago, I started collecting screen captures from a range of Street View blogs and through my personal hunting. To a certain extent, the aesthetic considerations that form the basis of my choices in different collections vary. Initially, I was attracted to the noisy amateur aesthetic of the raw images; an urgency that I felt was present in earlier street photography. With the panoramas, I can locate images of gritty urban life reminiscent of that hard-boiled style of imagery.

You mentioned street photography. In what way does Google Street View relate to that tradition or genre?

Unspoiled by the sensitivities or agendas of a human photographer, Google Street Views recorded a never-before-seen side of humanity, urbanity and photography itself. Yet the mode of production – an automated camera shooting from a height of eight feet from the middle of the street, the blurring of faces, the unique digital texture – nonetheless limits and defines the images' visual aesthetic.





“We often see too much...



There are other people collecting images on Google View. How do you compare your work to, let's say, that of Michael Wolf?

I do not have the illusion of being the first, nor the ambition to be the only artist working with Google View. Besides that, the medium – like any other – gives enough creative space to find a personal approach. Some adopt an investigative attitude and regale us with possible or actual crimes, such as muggings, break-ins and police arrests. Others with a more libidinal nature may single out images of prostitutes captured by the roving Google vehicle. Myself, I am very much interested in that absence of a moral dimension and like to challenge the imperial claim to organise information for us. I believe it is important to question the company's right to be the only one framing our cognition and perception.

You have been called an 'internet-aware artist'. What are your thoughts on that title?

Since obtaining my MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, my daily work has more or less involved surfing the internet for epic finds and inspirational banality. By selection and editing I am functioning both as an artist and as a curator, constructing and deciphering 'meaning' at the same time. Obviously, this way of working creates a cultural text like any other, but it is exactly the tension between an automated camera and a human who seeks meaning, reflecting our modern experience, that I am interested in. The gap between a structured and structuring space, that is my playground.

➤ More images on gupmagazine.com

...and register nothing” Jon Rafman

Bushwick Artist Profile: Jon Rafman

by [Mimi Luse](#) | March 13th, 2009



Jon Rafman at his virtual desk. — Photo courtesy of the artist.

Every day the artist [Jon Rafman](#) wakes up, drinks a TwinLabMass Fuel Gainer Vanilla Power shake, checks his three email accounts, five online social-utilities, the forty-eight blogs that he contributes to, makes some internet-aware art, brushes his teeth, and goes to sleep. He wouldn't let me meet with him IRL (in real life), but sent me a portrait of himself in his Bushwick studio.

That he lives and works in the neighborhood might not seem so relevant since much of his work is inspired by, made from, and often consumed in cyberspace. Since obtaining his MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, his work has been shown at the [Slamdance Film Festival](#), [Rhizome.org](#), [Clubinternet.org](#) and in physical galleries both [here](#) and [abroad](#). But the majority of what Rafman does has less to do with his own place and more to do with where everyone else is (i.e. online all the time). His daily work involves surfing the internet for epic finds and inspirational banality, and much of his oeuvre involves compiling the serendipitous moments of web pathos and comedy that he stumbles upon. He places his new media work in contrast to other artists who hack software counter to its original uses, or guys like [this](#), who use the internet as a marketing tactic for the sale of very analog paintings. Currently, his biggest influences are fellow net artists he discovered through his [del.icio.us](#) network, like [Guthrie Lonergran](#), [Oliver Laric](#), and [Harm Van Dendorpel](#).



Segway parade. [Click for more.](#)

One of Rafman's projects is an impressive selection of Google Street View images that he has collected; viewable [here](#) and [here](#). Captured by the Google-cam at random, and then captured by Rafman as screenshots, the images are either bizarre abstractions (thanks to blips in the digital photography) or surreal scenes like a Segway tail gate party. With the Google Street Views, Rafman creates surreal narratives using a medium intended for neutral mapping. He says, "The individual Street Views are like photographs that no one took and memories that no one has." The work is presented as a PDF pack of images online, or, in a gallery setting, he can present large-scale digital prints (which you can see at his show this weekend).

Rafman's Google Street Views are about the act of surfing the web, and how the deeper you go, the more likely you are to come across some pretty out-there stuff. Often scouring for hours, sometimes days, it's a trial-by-fire search, ("I'll drop the little yellow Street View man icon randomly somewhere on the planet and start exploring,") while other times he's tipped off by friends, but ultimately, he says of his images, "it's the act of framing itself that gives things meaning."

Rafman is like a roguish anthropologist or explorer, documenting his adventures on the World Wide Web. For another work in progress, Rafman gets even deeper. Setting up an avatar for himself on [Second Life](#) in the guise of the Kool-Aid Man, Rafman wanders its underworld like an internet [flaneur](#). Of course, the often clichéd graphics and CG stock characters of Second Life are no Weimar Berlin, but Rafman still takes considerable psychological risks, entering into some of the most out-there fantasy lands, sexual and otherwise. Sometimes a voyeur, other times an annoyance to those who play SL in earnest, in his absurd rotund costume, he positions himself as the anti-avatar, in complete opposition to romantic characters (pneumatic babes, furies, extreme Goths) that the majority of players fashion for themselves. Like a tourist, Rafman's Kool-Aid (username: Theodore Hartono) documents his travels, and over time, the artist has compiled a [hilarious album of snapshots](#). In each, Kool-Aid Man's indefeatable grin renders the role-playing a little absurd, proving that context is everything, even in the artificial reality of Second Life.

Taking up the mantle of the artist as an interpreter and medium of popular culture, Rafman sees his work in Second Life and elsewhere as an in-depth examination of our social consciousness and the way that technology mediates and affects our interactions.

"Throughout history, artists' have celebrated and critiqued the world around them. The world I live in cannot be critiqued without confronting the ubiquity of the internet in our society... I don't want to fetishize these new media, I by no means think they are our salvation (for example that they will lead to a more 'authentic' democracy). But I feel the need to understand why the internet and all the social networks associated with it have become so damn popular. Like [Siegfried Kracauer's](#) analysis of cinema in the last century, I'm attempting to understand what the success and popularity of the internet reveals about our consciousness today."

"Ready Made or Not" Group show opens this Saturday, March 14th at [Video Gallery, 10 Goodwin Place](#). Reception 6-10pm.