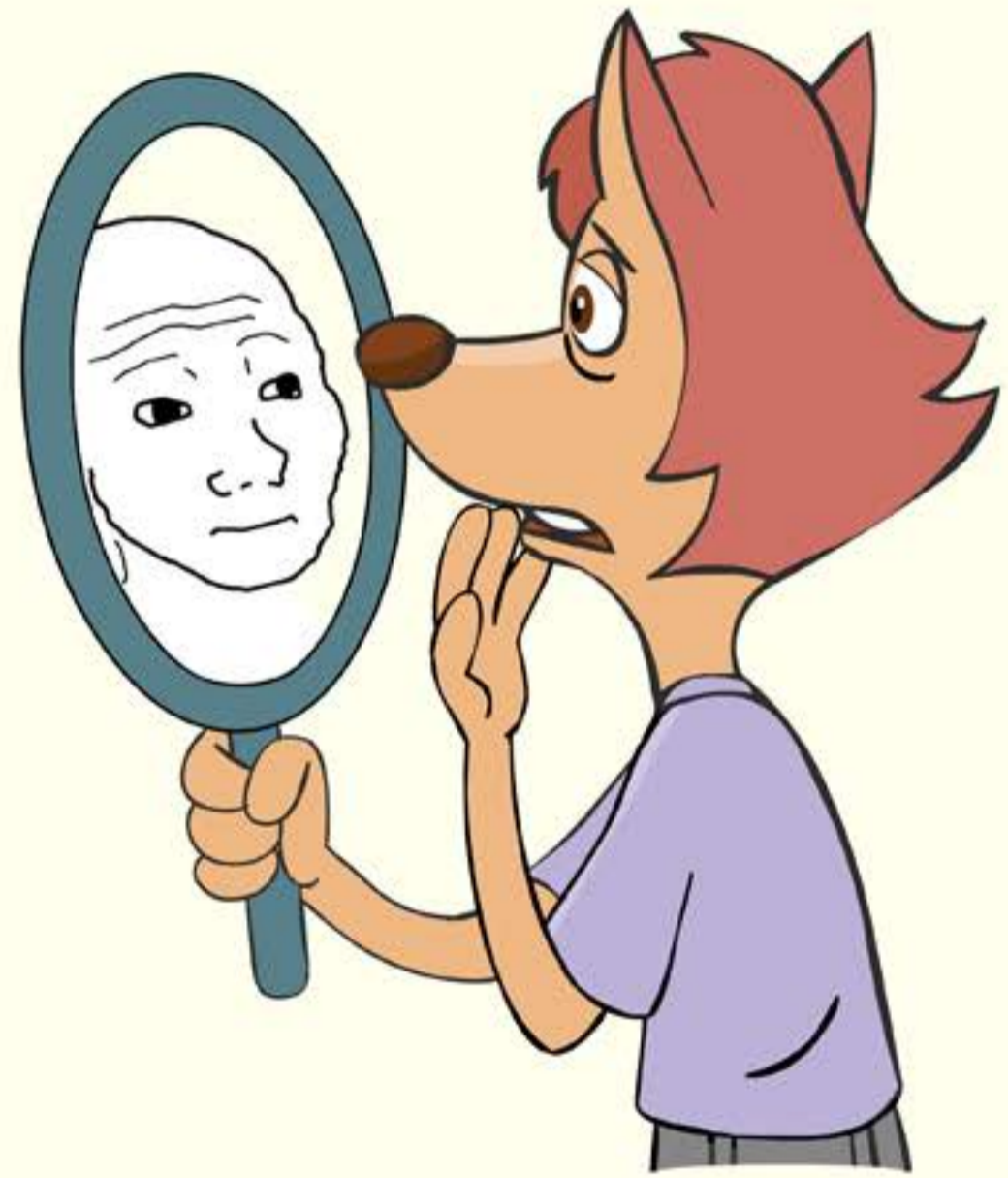


# isthisit?



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In the 2016 United States presidential election internet memes are said to have played a fundamental role. Individuals on 4chan claimed that they were responsible for Donald Trump's rise to power, simply due to the amount of memes that were created and shared on a daily basis over various social media platforms. Recycling found content on the internet and swaying public opinion, the groups were labelled as internet trolls, filling our newsfeeds and clogging up the arteries of the web, successfully achieving their goal of causing chaos when The Donald was eventually inaugurated in early 2017. The second issue of the *isthisit?* magazine seeks to consider the power of the meme, it's rise in contemporary culture alongside the widespread appropriation of images and videos being utilised in artists work.

Bob Bicknell-Knight, director of *isthisit?*

with contributions from:

Bora Akincitürk, Rosie Back, Jade Annaw, Iain Ball, Peter Barnard, Chris Bayley, Oliy Bharat, Bob Bicknell-Knight, Marc Blazel, Alice Bradnack, Uma Breakdown, Berk Çakmakçı, Amber Clausner, Kate Cooper, Juan Covelli, Lucy Cowling, Elliot Dodd, Stacey Davidson, Pippa Eason, Ed Fornieles, Jenny Francis, Roxman Gatt, Ben Grosser, Michelle Hannah, Alexander Harding, Elliot Hewgill, Realf Heygate, Bex Ilsley, Sid and Jim, Daniel Keller, Martin Kellett, Will Kendrick, Burkut Kum, Natalie Lambert, Heleen Mineur, Eden Mitsenmacher, Jonathan Monaghan, Jake Moore, Camilla Edstrom Odemark, Hollie Page, Alastair Peat, Duncan Poulton, Christopher Priestman, Charles Richardson, Tyler Robarge, Sophie Rogers, Aaron Scheer, Emily Simpson, Owen Thackeray, Thomas Tyler, Joseph Whitmore, Hannah Willcocks, Trystan Williams

ugh are you feeling unreal?





*Yes. We've been assigned to construct the new objects to stimulate consumption.*

# Bora Akinciturk + Berk Cakmakci

## In Curtain Of Like Interviewed by Iain Ball

Iain Ball: Firstly can you talk about how this show came together and the kind of subjects or discussions you were having during its development?

Berk Cakmakci: Bora and I had been wanting to collaborate visually for some time. We were in a group show together with eight other artist back in 2012, and made music together on and off throughout the years. Even though we were in different parts of the world for most of the time, we kept bouncing ideas back and forth online. When Bora was approached by OJ, he asked if I wanted to work together on a duo show. It ended up being a fully collaborative project apart from my video, "Give violence a chance", and Bora's painting "Fuck you to all the people who didn't believe in me". All the rest was made as a duo.

Bora Akinciturk: Almost all of our collaborations with Berk before "Curtain of Like" were actually the two of us spending hours on perfecting what we wanted to produce. We are both similarly obsessive about what we want. The initial idea for the show was to use only cheap print shops in Istanbul, and to limit our production to that. So the concept of the show would be in relation to the way it was produced but during that decision stage we came across this article about a Russian troll house, and since OJ is an apartment flat which kind of motivates artists to use it as a site specific platform, we decided to turn it into an abstraction of an abandoned "troll house".

Berk: It would be a place where people churn out fake news, provocative comments, memes etc all day and do it on a payroll. We created Psionic, which is an all-seeing, panopticon-like faceless corporation specialising in disinformation tactics. The concept evolved from there, becoming even more absurd with one of the employees ending up mutating into a real troll and getting decapitated. During conceptualisation and production, the satire of the current state of media and the darkness that's looming on the horizon bled into each other, blurring the line between the two.

Iain: Your show text is optimistic, utopian and communistic, but it could also read as dystopian or ironic "we care about progress, and believe in co-habitational expansion "It suggests a world in stark contrast to the alienation and individualism in which we find ourselves today "YOU are the hexagon, WE are the hive..." And yet the content of the show is itself far from embodying these ideals. It's as though despite a general sense of nihilism, isolation, defeat and disempowerment, there is freedom, even if that means freedom to let yourself go. Authoritarian systems of governance tend to suppress individual freedoms in favour of group identity, yet the employee ID Card seems to express some desire for this, can you talk more about the ID cards, what is the concept behind this?

Berk: I imagine Psionic as Anonymous and Starbucks collapsing into each other. Where the communal approach and dedication of an underground organization, and the reach and machine-like precision of a successful brand intertwine. The ID card is almost like a badge of honour, proving that the employee actually is part of something. A tangible way of making yourself feel better about the things you have to do or forced to do in order to make a living. It's a leash. I think the concept of being an individual vs being part of something bigger lies within the discourse of online interactions. The dynamics of social media is structured around that very contradiction. I interpret the text for the show as cold and overbearing. Creating a sense of faux-belonging to a so-called greater whole, that in truth operates as a multinational capitalist corporation.

Bora: I totally agree with Berk and find artworks that comment on contemporary life in the most honest way to generally be the more dark and nihilistic ones. That is tied directly to my current worldview of course but I think it's also related to what is true and horrible about the human nature. The fact that Psionic is not entirely fantastical makes it more scary and threatening.

Iain: Psionics is the pseudo-scientific study of paranormal phenomena. With the advent of 'meme magic' and the new political landscape we find ourselves in, some people have even considered whether we are living in an alternate reality. The post-truth world in which we now inhabit and the increasing complexities brought on by disruptive technologies can certainly start to feel weird and unreal, is this something that interests you?

Bora: I do feel the world we live in is weird and unreal and I am deeply interested in the strange memetic dark corners of 4chan and reddit and concerned about all the horrifying, depressing political and social events but I don't see humanity capable of figuring out any of the big philosophical questions quite yet. Rather I think all this weirdness, violence and stupidity are signs of a boiling point in the ongoing human evolution, maybe the beginning of that certain transformation that would turn us into post-humans in the end. Swedish philosopher Nick Bostrom's Simulation Argument has been an inspiration for me conceptually ever since I first came across it about five years ago. I find the concept of alternate realities close to Bostrom's argument in some ways. But I don't think if we were living in some kind of post-human made ancestral simulation and it is actually the year 42069 there would be any way of waking up from it. The complexity of the simulation would overrule any kind of digital resistance.

Berk: I consider myself moderately tech savvy, but I still can't fully understand the inner workings of online communication. Even though it's not as mystical as it used to be, internet is still magical to me because of that. That's why I think Psionic as a brand name works on two different levels, it sounds like a Blade Runner-esque, distant-future corporation, also a techno-occult practice, possibly a spiritual outlet for the disenfranchised youth of tomorrow, however sad it might sound. So yes, thinking about the unknown and the incomprehensible rifts in technology had a significant influence on us in the show.



Bora Akinciturk & Berk Cakmakci  
desk, 2017  
site specific installation



Bora Akinciturk & Berk Cakmakci  
psionic ID Card (Drekker), detail, 2017  
custom laser engraved and cut plexi

Iain: One of the paintings in the show features Pepe the Frog, which many people now consider to be a hate symbol. As I'm aware that the painting itself was done back in 2016 when not everyone was initially aware of the change in Pepe's status, and especially for people who were previously attached to the meme beforehand, it can perhaps be difficult to gage the perspectives of people who might see it differently. So in light of recent controversies over the use of Pepe and the politics that are now so often attached to him, can you shed some light on your perspective on this and the use of the meme in this context and how they relate to the ideas in your show?

Bora: I had no initial conceptual reason for using Pepe specifically for that painting other than my general interest in memes and in their aesthetics. The first idea was to build a vague narrative using a clipart character of a cigarette running around happily on a street full of cigarette butts. Also I had found a tiny cartoon-like figure of a snowman at my parent's flat around the same time and it got me thinking that the clipart cigarette running around cigarette butts and a snowman walking on that same street on a sunny day would work creating an absurd composition. At some point I needed a third character doing something behind a curtain or a wall for the top left side of the painting. I was going through a folder of rare Pepe images and I remember seeing one with cum on its face. I found its expression interestingly vacant, I wasn't sure if it was proud or ashamed by it, enjoying it or hating it.. It was a triggering kind of image but not in favour of a certain statement. And I find it silly that Pepe the Frog is considered to be a hate symbol mainly because before all this sensitivity Pepe or Wojak/That Feel Guy or Trollface were just memes satirically reflecting certain feelings and aesthetics. Sometimes they were really dark feelings and bleak aesthetics and sometimes they were funny and superficial and some were motivating and sometimes they were deeply philosophical. But they did not serve any one ideology or had a singular identity. That always made me think that the frog (blank Pepe) was like a mirror where you could project whatever ideology, identity or image you wanted. I think what I'm trying to say is that I understand it could be very irritating when a certain meme is used by a hate group and it becomes their contemporary political propaganda tool but I don't think labelling the character/meme as a "hate symbol" resolves anything. On the contrary this kind of mentality complicates the issue, dragging it away from any potential solution.

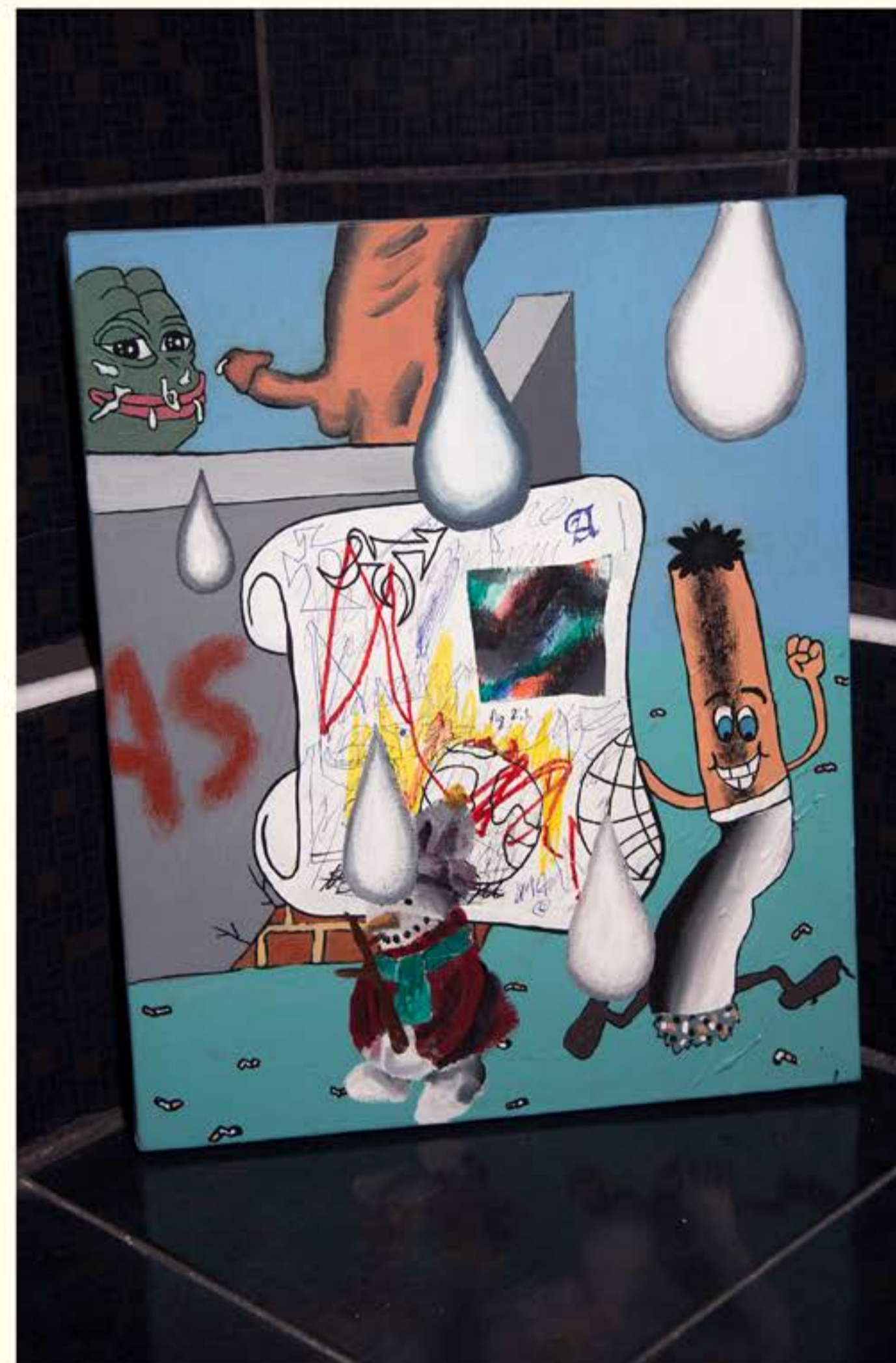
Berk: I first became aware of the fascist (or the so-called alt-right) connotations of Pepe the Frog after the Richard Spencer punching video. I didn't know it was being used as a hate symbol to be honest. That's my illiteracy in meme culture, but I'm sure there were a lot of people who had no idea what that poorly drawn anthropomorphic frog implicates. That doesn't change anything though. It's nothing new. Disgusting ideologies have been attached to certain symbols, and used dangerously throughout human history. However, what else is also dangerous is to build a barrier, forbidding art from questioning, dismantling, mocking or discussing the ways in which the image of Pepe and the like operate. When an artwork functions only as propaganda, it's not interesting to me. I find it hard to engage with it beyond the surface. In the case of Bora's painting I see Pepe as the comic relief and in the light of current political context of things, it gains new meaning, to me it becomes a disarming image. The "white man" is headless, without a name, and the ejaculation cheapens the toxic ideas Pepe has come to represent. That to me is how you properly piss off straight, white-nationalist Nazi scum. In the broader context of the show, it reveals how fragile the politics of internet culture are. How quickly an image with no real intellectual weight can transform into a hate symbol.

Iain: Berk you are living in Istanbul and Bora you are also from Istanbul and you live in the UK. How is the political situation in Turkey over the last year, and also in the UK with Brexit affecting, or changing your outlook and the work you are making? In what ways has it influenced this body of work?

Bora: I have been mostly feeling morally and politically dead inside for a while now in relation to all these events. The feeling that everything is rotten and past the point of saving. The feeling that there's nothing I can do except maybe hit the share button or write some emotional Facebook post. This feeling of pointlessness makes me want to disappear feeling shame and inadequacy. And the worst part is after a certain amount of time everything gets back to "normal" and we go back to our day jobs and go back to feeling ok.. I spent almost all of 2016 in Istanbul for a solo show which never happened mainly due to the Turkish coup attempt, the many attacks in Istanbul and around the country and the economical instability. Inescapably it affected the way I live and produce work but it still was a productive year and having that motivation is one of the most important things for me. A strange thing we've noticed first hand while setting up the show in Asmalı Mescit (a part of Taksim Square which was once the most lively, crowded and colourful area with a lot of bars and venues) was that it had turned into a zombie apocalypse kind of lifeless environment with the only habitants being police officers. It was a depressing sight to witness, actually seeing that area's transformation and at the same time it was the perfect dystopian setting for the vague narrative of our show.

Berk: It's like trying to balance on a ball. 2016 was a horrible year, not just for Turkey but pretty much for every other country. It affects me deeply. It definitely changed how I sleep, how I work, where I feel safe, what I watch and listen to. It also made me more careles, in a good way. I feel more confident jumping into situations I'm not too familiar with. That's my way of trying to find comfort in all the chaos, keeping busy. I can say that the political climate contributed to the show through the combined feeling of terror, anxiety, anger, hopelessness and inevitable irony. I don't have a first-hand experience with living in the UK after Brexit, or in the USA after Trump's election. But a significant number of people in Turkey have been living in an extremely turbulent, unsafe environment for almost a decade. There's no freedom of press to talk about. Most of the news sources are eradicated because of their anti government views and almost all of the remaining outlets have become their propaganda tool. This has a long history but it's gotten to a point where it can be against the law to do fact-based journalism. Sadly, government-sponsored news is what most people have access to.

Iain: It often seems as though Art has a hard time with social activism. Ai Weiwei posing as a drowned Syrian Refugee appeared utterly distasteful, narcissistic and offensive. And even the more considered and sensitive context/socially driven Art practices seem to be sufficiently lacking or cut off from reality, unable to deal with the challenges we face today, having stewed in an esoteric or academic bubble. The antithesis is maybe a kind of nihilistic disregard for everything. Today this likely manifests as trolling, an activity which is often extremely distasteful, hurtful and offensive. Trolling has been used to target and harass certain groups, identities and individuals, memes have been co-opted by hate groups moving from irony to actuality . Trolling is now used as a political weapon, memes have become a virulent form of potent neo-propaganda and troll factories exist in Russia and Macedonia to destabilise and influence the balance of world power. However trolling can also be used positively, consciously and ethically to undermine and dismantle a rigid system and mock its rules ; The Jogging & UV Production House certainly did so with Art. Whats-more, as Artist's it can increasingly feel as though our agencies are being threatened, dismantled and exploited at best, as it becomes harder and harder to make a living or maintain a decent standard of life under these conditions. Creating works that merely 'comment' on the contemporary moment can feel alienating, impotent and detached. It seems as though much of this sense of disillusion is expressed in 'Curtain of Like' along with a wider dissatisfaction with contemporary life, instilling a desire for something else.



Bora Akinciturk  
*fuck you to all the people who didn't believe in me, 2016*  
acrylic, permanent marker and pen on canvas  
32cm x 38cm

Iain: So I guess my question is, how do you feel about this? And do you think that the Art which is being made today is in some ways starting to act in accordance with a kind of breaking down and dismantling from the bottom up. So as it becomes more and more difficult to instrumentalise Art as an instrument of cultural power and wealth would you agree that the job of Art is perhaps to increasingly to undermine, dismantle and de-robe?

Bora: I definitely feel dissatisfied with how the art world has failed artists and operates in a classically boring strictly capitalist system but I still have desire to produce work. Those two are essentially separate for me. Along the borders of subjective appreciation I also find most socio-politically conceptual art to have a hard time being honest with itself. I think human communication, although we think is currently at its finest, is still fundamentally primitive. We visualise and contextualise our thoughts linearly, use a narrow palette of feelings describing things and have limited disarrangement methods. Art is interesting at this point because it is a whole different breed/device of communication and has a stranger level and power of connection with its observers. Although most contemporary art may be stale trying to pose as a certain brand, reflect a specified image/ideology in exclusive, wealthy and hierarchical art scenes/circles, it still has the power to destruct these same conditions which stand problematic.

Berk: Like Bora, I think we're still trying to figure out the best way to communicate, be it through art, politics or advancements in technology. Unfortunately we don't seem to know where we're headed. We're nowhere near of formulating an adequate strategy or a tool yet. Navigating through endless information is extremely tiring. Making sense of it is too. Trolling is just another buzzword, an attempt at understanding what technology actually does to us. Humans have always been deceitful, sly, and rude. Trolling is the expression of those same traits on the internet, with the screen acting as a shield hiding one's actual intentions. We don't really know if we truly understand each other even though we seem constantly "connected". It's very disappointing. I think that's the reason why I feel dissatisfied with contemporary life. As we're experiencing it with our online identities, altering or mutating the real can reveal to us strange and sometimes scary new sides to our personalities. So art is trying to adjust to this mess as well. It fails most of the time, but it doesn't mean we should stop trying. Reality sneaks into art in myriad ways. At times the outcome has intellectual and emotional depth, and other times reality manifests itself in the form of corporate sponsorship, poor judgement or simply bad taste.

Photography  
Berk Cakmakci & Okan Yildirim



Curtain Of Like, Installation view



Bora Akinciturk & Berk Cakmakci  
*decapitated troll*, 2017  
silicone  
30cm x 20cm x 16cm



Bora Akinciturk & Berk Cakmakci  
*would you believe*, 2017  
laser cut plexi and sublimation print on aluminium  
30cm x 38cm



Y BEE

NEAR





# Destructive Pixels: memes just wanna have fun

Amber Clausner

Around 12 months ago a friend and I accidentally found ourselves at a Vice 'house party' in a crowded London pub, stuck between two very sparkly and enthusiastic American journalists who were determined to tell us about every article they had ever written for Vice. We went through their repertoire of ketamine fuelled motorway trips and the youth of Dubai's unconventional methods of drug taking until finally we got round to American politics. At this point in time the idea of Donald Trump becoming the next American president was so far from being a believable outcome of the 2016 election, that I gave little meaningful afterthought to the fact that one of the journalists confessed; "I know it sounds kinda bad but in a way we kinda want Trump to win because we know we could get some really great articles out of it."

As the comical image of Trump flourished throughout media during the following months, I began to realise that this contradictory mode of thinking was in practice all over the Internet. From news stories and blog posts, to reddit threads and Facebook statuses: Trump thrived, Trump trended. Trump was the most successful form of click-bait any server could hope for, and he was the gift that kept on giving. No matter the format in which they were presented, online opinions of Trump could seldom refrain from humour. Trying to find an image of Trump that does not evoke amusement in a viewer seems to be a feat unto itself, which is ultimately why the symbol of Trump lent itself so perfectly to the 21st century phenomena of Internet memes.

The explosion of these political memes during the reality TV show drama of the 2016 election, allowed the Internet savvy public, including people too young to vote, to coherently voice their own political ideologies. During this time, memes provided an accessible and constantly up to date analysis of what was going on in the US election. As with all Internet memes, Trump memes were used to symbolically represent information, opinions and ideas, compacted into low- resolution files for the instant spread of information. These memes reinterpreted the often confusing and garish events of this period into emotionally 'relatable' JPEG's, providing Internet users brief moments of comedy within the confusing and increasingly threatening political landscape.

To answer the question as to why these memes became so popular at this time, I think it is important to reflect on how Richard Dawkins initially examined the success of certain cultural memes. In *The Selfish Gene*, Dawkins exemplifies his ever cynical opinion of religion, to explain the successful adoption of cultural memes; "What is it about the idea of a god that gives it its stability and penetrance in the cultural environment? The survival value of the god meme in the meme pool results from its great psychological appeal. It provides a superficially plausible answer to deep and troubling questions about existence" (Dawkins, 1989:193).

So, what is it about Internet memes that gives them increasing popularity and penetrance in the online cultural environment? The answer is similar but contradictory; the survival value of the Internet meme's in the meme pool results from their great psychological appeal. They provide transient moments of comedic pleasure that prohibit questioning difficult and troubling issues about existence.

Although Trump memes gave a voice to many, their entertainment value surpassed their political power. The comic relief provided by these memes made them so popular that no one wanted the fun to end. Here, let me propose a dystopian and radical theory; that just as the Vice journalists wanted Trump to win so that they would have brilliantly witty articles to write, the American public wanted Trump to win because no one wanted the memes to end. I am not saying that I really believe this to be true, but there are several factors that I do believe Internet memes were responsible for during the run up to Trumps presidency.

Firstly, memes extended and promoted Trumps profile in a way political campaigns can only dream of. One can only imagine the amount of times Trump has been comforted by the slogan, 'There is no such thing as bad publicity', during his celebrity lifetime. Like a spoiled brat, the attention given to Trump, however critical, attacking, or personal, only made his symbolic power stronger. The most troubling effect of these political memes, and Internet memes in general though, is their ability to obscure and trivialise emotional, social and political engagement with real world events.

In Hito Steyerl's essay 'In Defense of the Poor Image', Steyerl describes the way in which the poor image (the low-res, uploaded, downloaded, re interpreted digital image) 'transforms contemplation into distraction' (Steyerl, 2012:32). When we think about Internet memes within this context we may begin to concern ourselves with the lasting influences that these memes have on our relationship to the events taking place in the offline world. Although Internet memes provide an outlet for millions of Internet users to voice their opinions and creativity, they rely on the language of humour, which is utilised not to engage, but to entertain an audience.

At a time when we should have been fearful of Trumps symbolic ideologies, we were entertained. At a time when we should have been disgusted by the unjust killing of a captive gorilla, we were entertained. At a time when we should be concerned and deeply involved with the power of global infrastructures, we are entertained.

It is not surprising that Internet memes are a stable attribute of online culture. They reinterpret confusing and often daunting real world events into understandable and immediate imagery. Internet memes are the outcome of the combination between accelerating technological developments and hectic political landscapes. They provide us relief from the complicated world that is out there, beyond the screen, by reducing the world into symbols that fit into comical compositions. Our understanding of the world then becomes defined by how funny we find a symbol, rather than to how we understand the context and real world implications of that real world thing.

Another Internet phenomena from 2016 that exemplifies this distraction from, rather than contemplation of, the implications of global events, was the news of a gorilla being shot after a child crawled into its enclosure in an American zoo. Surely such an incident should provoke new conversation about the captivity of animals, the parenting of children and trigger-happy gun laws. For a short while this began to happen in the online uproar following the event, but the excitement slowly transformed into an array of meaningless slogans and 'poor image' imagery. Viral for the sake of being viral, megabytes upon megabytes of data poured through Internet cables in a futile, arbitrary and trivialised declaration; 'Dicks out for Harambe'.

After the results of the 2016 election, online rumours circulated that thousands of Americans had jokingly voted for Harambe to be elected as the next US president. Is it really so surprising that a senseless story like this would circulate after the devastating news of Trumps victory? But similarly, could we really be surprised if the American public could not tell the difference between Harambe the Gorilla and Donald Trump the billionaire celebrity? Both had been so devotedly reduced to poor image symbols in the previous months. Both had become such popular characters within the Internet meme landscape, that to some extent it has become difficult to differentiate the real world implications of one from the other. Ultimately, when within the world of Internet memes trying to distinguish genuine political understanding, it is probably much easier to go for the comedic effect of a dead gorilla than try seriously to consider the actual policies of Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump.

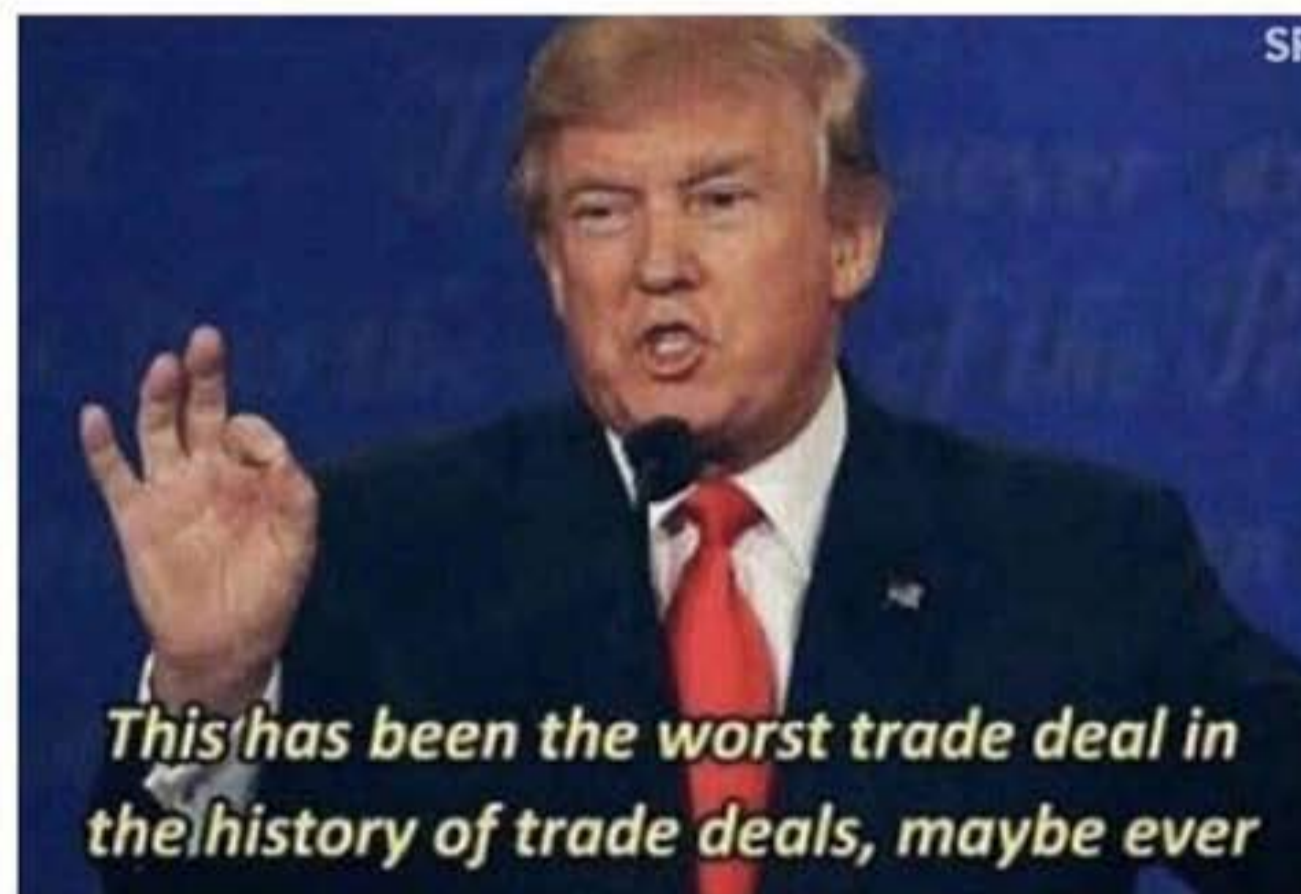
I am not saying that Internet memes are all bad; they are the bi-product of global communities that have the ability to shape and influence the world in incredible new ways. They allow us to share complex concepts, emotions and understandings in previously unimaginable formats. They are the first global form of folk art, and for that, I am thankful and amazed. Obviously, there were many other more potent political, social and economic factors that contributed to Trump's recent presidential rise to power. This analysis of the viral Internet content that circulated at this time, is only meant as an example of the ability of Internet memes to obscure and alter our genuine understanding of events which affect us daily. Internet memes are just one example of how humour and accessibility both over satisfy and paralyse us with pleasure.

Memes aren't inherently bad, but they can transform horror into hilarity, which at once allows us to connect with one another in new ways, and disconnect ourselves individually from real world understandings. I feel it is only fitting to end here with Steyerl's own analysis of viral Internet images; "Altogether, poor images present a snapshot of the affective condition of the crowd, its neurosis, paranoia, and fear, as well as its craving for intensity, fun, and distraction" (Steyerl, 2012:41). Is this not a description of the infamous image of the crowd at Trumps inauguration?

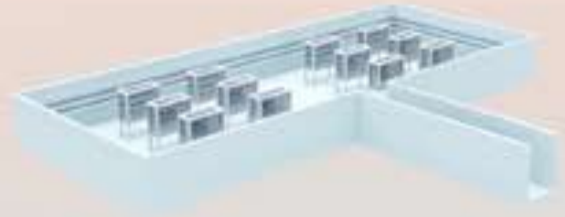
Dawkins, Richard (1989) *The Selfish Gene* Oxford: Oxford University Press  
 Steyerl, Hito (2012) *The Wretched of the Screen* Berlin: Sternberg Press

Amber Clausner (b. 1994) is a multi media artist currently living and working in the UK. Clausner's practice is focused on the proliferation of digital technologies and their physical and cognitive effects on both the individual and global society. Clausner's practice is underlined by anthropological modes of research alongside ecological concerns; her belief is that due to the rise of science and technology we (those living in a technologically dependant reality) have become emotionally disembodied from the sensuous landscape of the natural world, which has allowed us to inadvertently cause extreme changes to global ecology.

When your friend says "I'll get you a drink inside if you pay for the taxi" but they never get you a drink



Anonymous  
 During the first 2016 presidential debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump held on September 25th, 2016, Trump described NAFTA "the worst trade deal maybe ever signed anywhere"



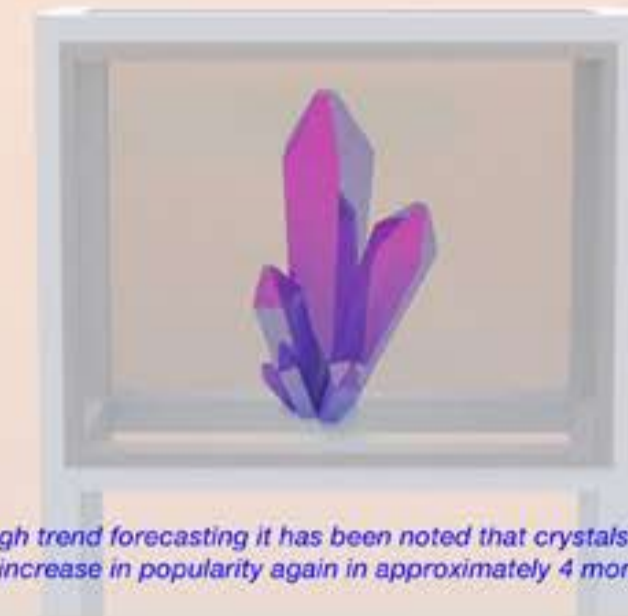
*So they mass produced signs until no one could tell which were tattered victims of the war and which were simply fresh from the copier.*



*they were drunk on the romance of new desires.*



*Businesses need to find a way to embrace the new climate and new methods of manufacture, or they won't turn a profit.*



*Through trend forecasting it has been noted that crystals are set to increase in popularity again in approximately 4 months.*





This surge in Trump related content overwhelmed social media and made the transition to AFK events like flash mobs and rallies (Johnson, 2016). At the DeploraBall, an unofficial inaugural ball to celebrate the victory and inauguration of Trump, participants exclaimed 'we memed him into the presidency' (This American Life, 2017), which seems fitting due to the huge amount of young naive support that was thrown towards him by users of 4chan and Reddit (Beran, 2017).

### HeWillNotDivide.Us

On the date of the presidential inauguration on 20 January 2017, the collaborative artist trio made up of Luke Turner, Nastja Rönkkö and Shia LaBeouf, began an art project that was said to be 'open to all, 24 hours a day, seven days a week' and 'continuing for four years, or the duration of the presidency' (He Will Not Divide Us, 2017). The piece was a video being live streamed from a camera mounted on a wall outside of the Museum of the Moving Image in New York City. Participants were invited to deliver the words "HE WILL NOT DIVIDE US" into the camera, repeating the phrase as many times, and for as long as they wish. In the days that followed the inauguration, people would log on to hewillnotdivide.us, usually being greeted by the sight of a group of smiling individuals of all ages and ethnicities, repeating the phrase in a (usually) calm and considered manner. The artwork became incredibly popular, garnering mainstream media attention due to Turner and Rönkkö capitalising on LaBeouf's fame once again, alongside the piece's relevance to Trump, protest culture and the possibility of becoming internet famous by 'performing' in front of the camera. The liberal nature of the project drew out the trolls of 4chan and members of the alt-right, enticing them to crawl from their nests within their computer screens and disrupt the peaceful, cultlike, nature of the installation. These disruptions varied from holding up photos of Pepe to more elaborate occurrences, a prime example being two individuals wearing skull masks cutting open a toy rabbit with a large steak knife in front of the camera. The first major incident occurred when a man, pretending to take a selfie with LaBeouf (who frequented the live stream to show solidarity to the participants) said 'Hitler did nothing wrong', causing LaBeouf to shove him away. Later in the day LaBeouf was arrested at the scene and charged with misdemeanour assault. After this event, crude pranks kept occurring, eventually resulting in the live stream being taken down, with the museum stating that it was creating 'an ongoing public safety hazard'. This occurred on the 10 February, less than a month after the installation began. The trio challenged the museum for its 'lack of commitment to the project' and the stream was quickly relocated to a wall in Albuquerque outside the El Rey Theatre. Within five days it was stated that 'shots were reported in the area' (LaBeouf, 2017) and the live stream was shut down yet again.

### Capture the flag

The project had become too successful in creating a dialogue between the left and the right, drifting away from its original intention of unity to that of violence, hate and kek. Even though arguably everything that had happened at the different locations, alongside the dialogues occurring online, had been an incredibly thought-provoking reaction to the piece, it was obvious that the project was too triggering to replicate yet again in a different location. On the 8 March it was announced that the installation had transformed into a live stream in an unknown location, with the camera pointing up to the sky showing a flag emblazoned with the now well-known statement 'HE WILL NOT DIVIDE US'. The trolls obviously saw this as a challenge, and within a day the flag's location had been discovered by a group of 4chan users after analysing flight contrails and celestial navigation, with one user driving around honking the horn of his car so that it could be heard on the video stream, allowing others to triangulate where the flag was based on the driver's location. The flag was taken down and replaced by a Make America Great Again t-shirt and hat. Fields were set alight and the stream was offline once again. At this point the group protesting the protest, (who had admittedly only been undertaking this exercise for 'the lulz' (Rusch, 2017) alongside having an issue with PC culture) effectively attempting to silence the voice of the left, had become as much a part of the piece as the flag itself, throwing away their online anonymity with no fear for the repercussions. After this the trio stated that 'America is simply not safe enough for this artwork to exist' (FACT, 2017), so it was decided that it's new home would be on top of the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) in Liverpool, supposedly safe from the American political system that inspired the piece. Unsurprisingly, on the 23 March, within a day of the stream going live once again, the five-storey building was climbed and a masked individual appeared on the live stream, attempting to remove the flag. In the next hour FACT tweeted that on police advice the artists and the institution had removed the installation due to 'dangerous, illegal trespassing'. As of writing, the art piece has yet to be reconfigured, although it's safe to assume that when it does eventually appear the 4chan community will be called to action yet again. Are these 'internet pranksters' alt-right activists or simply bored people delighting in messing with a celebrity who's known for his high-octane outbursts? Either way the artwork has, and will continue to, unite the troll community. What if this type of community could be utilised against something that's supposedly inherently bad?

### IS IT OK TO PUNCH A NAZI (ART GALLERY)?

This was the title of an article published by Mute magazine on the 16 February 2017 concerning a small art gallery in Dalston called LD50 who had, 6 months previously, organised an exhibition called '71822666', named after a thread on 4chan that predicted Trump's victory. The exhibition explored visual strategies adopted by the so-called 'alt-right', as well as a related symposium with authors such as Peter Brimelow, Nick Land and Brett Stevens. The article accused the gallery of giving a platform to fascists, as well as actively promoting the alt-right. This led to a campaign for the gallery to close which was originally created on Facebook. Called Shut Down LD50, the group organised a demonstration outside the gallery on 25 February, and the gallery subsequently had to close for months due to vandalism and violent threats. When interviewed during the demonstration, many of the protestors admitted to having never even been inside the gallery, remarking that 'art is shit' (Gelder, 2017). Surely, even if the gallery was giving a platform to neo-Nazis, to simply jump on the bandwagon makes you as ill-informed as the 4chan trolls making fun of LaBeouf and therefore not understanding that they had themselves become a part of the artwork that they were so intent on removing. Members of the SDLD50 group were also prone to confronting people online who had 'liked' LD50's Instagram posts, and in some cases 'no platforming' them ahead of AFK talks and discussions (Larios, 2017). The Instagram, like any other art gallery in the age of the internet, had photographs of previous shows, including the meme filled exhibition '71822666'. A question one might ask is when did a virtual 'like' count as an endorsement of an alt-right ideology? Especially when associated with the throwaway aspect of social media, where you may 'like' upwards of 100 posts a day.

### Where do we go from here?

Since Donald Trump was inaugurated, rising to a position of power and influence, we've seen an outbreak of trolls and peoples supposed true selves, originally imprisoned within the confines of their own home or on anonymous online message boards. Having a troll as the president of the United States sets a precedent, with many assuming that it's now acceptable to be outwardly racist and misogynistic, cuck calling and proclaiming that 'Hitler did nothing wrong'. Turner, Rönkkö and LaBeouf's most recent project #ALONETOGETHER, where the artists are confined to wood cabins in unknown locations within Lapland with the only source of communication to the outside world being a live stream from within Kiasma museum, has already attracted the attention of anons, with various videos on YouTube showing individuals entering the exhibition and harassing LaBeouf. 4chan is already attempting to find the cabins. How does the art community combat these obscure pockets of the online community entering the 'sacred' space of an art gallery, simply to mock a celebrity? How can we, dubbed 'normies' by the 4chan community, hope to understand the trolls and the alt-right without taking the same red pill that they've been taking? Daniel Keller says you should 'inoculate yourself against it while fighting back' (Keller, 2017), although many trolls are outwardly normal people living normal lives who aren't abusive AFK, the most prominent example being in a recent South Park episode where Gerald Broflovski spends his days as a hard working lawyer and his evenings photoshopping social media photographs and harassing others on message boards, stating that 'it's fun to stir the pot and watch everyone freak out' (Parker, 2016). Should the liberal left allow themselves to be made fun of, to go with the jokes, similar to an American opossum pretending to be dead to reduce the possibility of being eaten, or should we adopt Trump's philosophy of rolling with the memes and bonding with the younger generation that enjoy anarchy and conspiracy theories? Either way, staying in your own liberal filter bubble, no platforming speakers at universities and protesting because of ill-informed facts, is no longer an option now that the king troll is at the head of the table, we all need to become investigative reporters, fact checking as we go.

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Bob Bicknell-Knight (b. 1996) is a London based artist and curator working in installation, sculpture, moving image, net art and other digital mediums. Online and offline surveillance accompanied by the consumer capitalist culture within today's society are the main issues surrounding his work in association with current and future utopian environments, the continued automation of our daily lives in relation to the internet of things and the various cultures associated with online communities. He explores these ideas using tools and technologies which are relatable but not restricted to art, usually having been made readily available via the expansion of the internet.





# A Field Guide to American Toxic Masculinity

## Daniel Keller

### 1. Alex Jones

Texan right-wing conspiracy theorist radio host and huckster of fluoride-free toothpaste and dietary supplements with brand names like *Anthroplex*, *Super Male Vitality* and *Brain Force Plus*. Jones is obsessed with Reptilians, False Flags and the Illuminati/NWO. Since being one of the most vocal supporters of Trump in 2016 (who appeared on Jones's podcast) his Info wars platform has drifted towards the 'mainstream' of Republican media.

### 2. Berniebro

A derisive term for the stereotypical young white male supporter of left-leaning democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders; avid consumer and poster of 'dank memes', probably doesn't even know the name of their locally elected officials yet still thinks politics is 'totally rigged'.

### 3. Beta Male

Within the pseudo-sociological hierarchy of the Manosphere, men are defined as Alpha if they're dominant, 'High-T' (testosterone), charismatic and fuckable— and Betas if they aren't. Many of the topics discussed in the glossary could be considered to be a product of Beta Male Online Culture.

### 4. Bronze Age Pervert

(@BronzeAgePerv), a self-described 'Steppe barbarian, Nationalist, Fascist, Nudist Bodybuilder', is one of the shining stars of 'Frog Twitter', a loose association of users that can be described as occupying the nexus of 'Weird Twitter', 'Irony Twitter' and 'Nazi Misogynist Twitter.' The average @bronzageperv tweet is a picture of some young, super-buff, shirtless Aryan man with captions like "Return of spirit of The Bronze Age— revolt of vitalism, destruction of the cities by fire!"

### 5. Chapo Trap House

A vulgar, irreverent, New York City-based political podcast that was started in early 2016 by 'Weird Twitter' stars Will Menaker (@WillMenaker), Matt Christman (@Cushbomb), Felix Biederman (@ByYourLogic). Chapo rapidly became an important cultural touchstone during the election season for left-leaning millennials critical of the Clinton campaign during the 2016 election season. They've been described as 'The Dirtbag Left'.

### 6. Cuck/Cuckservative

The word Cuckold originally described the husband of an adulterous wife. In recent years it became mostly known as a racially problematic genre of internet porn where submissive white men watch their partners sleep with black men. Members of the Alt-Right coined the portmanteau Cuckservative (cuck-conservative) which they use as a pejorative epithet against Republican politicians who they deem to be low-t and inadequately racist.

### 7. Cult of Kek

A semi-satirical religion that emerged in the summer of 2016 based on 'Meme Magick' and a number of crowdsourced synchronicities discovered by Trump-supporting users of 4chan and reddit. It gets insanely esoteric... but the basic gist is, KEK is the alternate spelling of LOL within the language in World of Warcraft and also happens to be the name of the frog-headed Egyptian god of chaos and darkness. Pepe the frog had already transformed into the de facto symbol of the Alt-Right, thus conjoining the spirits of Pepe, Kek and Trump into One. Kekist shitposters even claim to have 'trolled reality' and to have 'memed' Trump into office. On June 19, 2016, one Kekist posted a prediction onto 4chan: "Trump will win" — it was by chance, the 7777777th post on the imageboard and the randomized user ID was 'QEK'.

### 8. Fedoras

### 9. Incel/Volcel

Portmanteau of (in)voluntarily and celibate. An Incel is somebody who can't get laid because they're for instance, a Beta or a Low-T Cuck. A volcel is somebody who chooses to be celibate because, they're for instance, a Catholic priest—or someone who doesn't want their potent masculine vitality drained by the frivolity of fornication. Becoming a #nofap volcel (fapping=masturbation) is the highest level of volceldom attainable.

### 10. Martin Shkreli

The infamous 33 year old 'phramabro' who was named "The Most Hated Man in America" in September 2015, after the pharmaceutical company he founded bought the license for the generic anti-parasitic drug Daraprim, which is used to fight off infections in AIDS patients, and raised it's price from \$13.50 to \$750. His newfound infamy found him a new fan base online, for whom he frequently hosts livestreams while walking down the street or filling out spreadsheets. Of course, he also posted a bunch of pepe memes and publicly supported Trump and then got banned from Twitter in January 2017 for repeatedly harassing Lauren Duca, an editor at Teen Vogue.

### 11. The Great Meme War Of 2016

The stunningly successful internet slacktivism campaign conducted throughout 2016 by users of social media sites like r/The\_Donald on Reddit and /pol/ on 4chan in order to help the candidacy of Donald Trump. This is where Pepe was transformed from his previous #dankmemes incarnation into his current designation as an official neo-Nazi hate symbol. Although it's hard to determine how much effect these 'operations' had on the outcome of the election, it's clear that memes have become the visual medium with the most political agency.

### 12. Mencius Moldbug

Mencius Moldbug (aka Curtis Yarvin) is a Silicon Valley coder, political theorist and blogger. He ran a blog called Unqualified Reservations, which he described as an "outlet for my deranged, extremist [sic: racist] rants." The blog inspired Nick Land to coin the term 'Dark Enlightenment' and became a foundation for the Neoreactionary movement (NRx), the outrageously geeky, German Idealism-inspired cosplay-monarchist philosophical forerunner of the Alt-Right. A recent Politico article revealed that White House strategic advisor Steve Bannon is an avid fan of his writings—scary.

### 13. Mike Cernovich

A notable Alt-Right twitter troll, men's-rights-activist self-help guru, and author of *Gorilla Mindset* and *MAGA Mindset: Making YOU and America Great Again*. He coordinated many of the 'Meme War Operations' over his twitter and periscope livestreams, commanding his minions to deliver 2016 campaign hits such as #SickHillary and #SpiritCooking. Despite being a 'gender-traditionalist' misogynist, he ironically still lives off of the alimony payments from his far-more successful ex-wife who became an executive at FB.

### 14. The Magnificent Gentleman

The "Magnificent/ Supreme Gentleman" is a meme about the self-coined moniker of Elliot Rodger, a 22-year-old kiss-less virgin incel son of a Hollywood producer who went on a shooting rampage in May 2014, fatally shooting six of his UC Santa Barbara classmates (in an effort to kill normie sorority girls and 'Chads'), he explained in a series of unbelievably cringe-narcissism selfie monologues posted onto YouTube, minutes before the shooting. In an almost anime villain cadence, he boasts about being 'a magnificent gentleman'. The /r9k/ 4chan board celebrated this event as the first victory of the 'Beta Uprising'.

### 15. Milo Yiannopoulos

Ok, technically he is British but I'm including him because his style of toxic masculinity is most certainly American. Milo is a gay far-right media personality, senior editor of Breitbart News and virulent racist and misogynist. He was one of the prominent 'MAGA's' (Make America Great Again) on twitter before he was banned from the site for ringleading a racist harassment campaign against one of the stars of the new Ghostbusters film. He gained some notoriety in the art world for organizing the pro-Trump group exhibition #DaddyWillSaveUs at Wallplay Gallery in Chelsea in October 2016. Milo's contribution to the show was a performance piece where he bathed in a bathtub full of pigs blood wearing a MAGA hat. Witnesses relayed to me that he was super squeamish about it and wouldn't even get naked— Hermann Nitsch would be ashamed.

### 16. Peter Thiel

Thiel is a German born American co-founder of PayPal, first outside investor of FB (he's a character in *The Social Network*), financial backer of The Seasteading Institute, libertarian/NRx political activist, author and notable supporter of Donald Trump. After being outed as gay by Gawker, he decided to seek revenge by secretly funding Hulk Hogan's lawsuit against the news platform which they eventually won, forcing Gawker's bankruptcy and dissolution in 2016. He gave a keynote speech at the Republican National Convention last summer.

### 17. Red Pill

First appearing as a crucial plot point in *The Matrix*, where the protagonist must choose between remaining in blissful ignorance or learning the traumatic truth about his existence. Ironically— considering the movie was made by two liberal transwomen, it has become one of the central memes of Men's Rights Activism. One is said to have become Redpilled when one 'overcomes the lies' perpetuated by 'feminazi cultural marxists' and accepts the unpleasant truth that men are naturally superior to women. Ugh.

### 18. Richard Spencer

A white nationalist, leader of the Alt-Right and president of the National Policy Institute, a white supremacist think-tank. Spencer is known for his slick Nazi haircut and most recently for being punched in the face on camera by a Blac Bloc protester on the streets of Washington D.C. during the inauguration...right as he begins to explain the Pepe pin he was wearing on his Lapel. The video went viral after being edited to align the facepunch with the kick drum of Blue Monday.

### 19. Stephan Miller

'Nice Jewish boy', Senior Advisor to President Trump, architect of the reprehensible and unconstitutional 'Muslim Ban' and owner of the most punchable faces in human history. Despite being only 31, he truly looks like he's 47—I presume due to some horrible Faustian bargain which he took in order to gain so much dark power at such a precocious age. He was college buddies with Richard Spencer and was recently revealed to have lost his Santa Monica High School election to lecherous 00's party-photographer-turned-fitness-guru Mark Hunter, AKA The Cobrasnake.

### 20. Steve Bannon

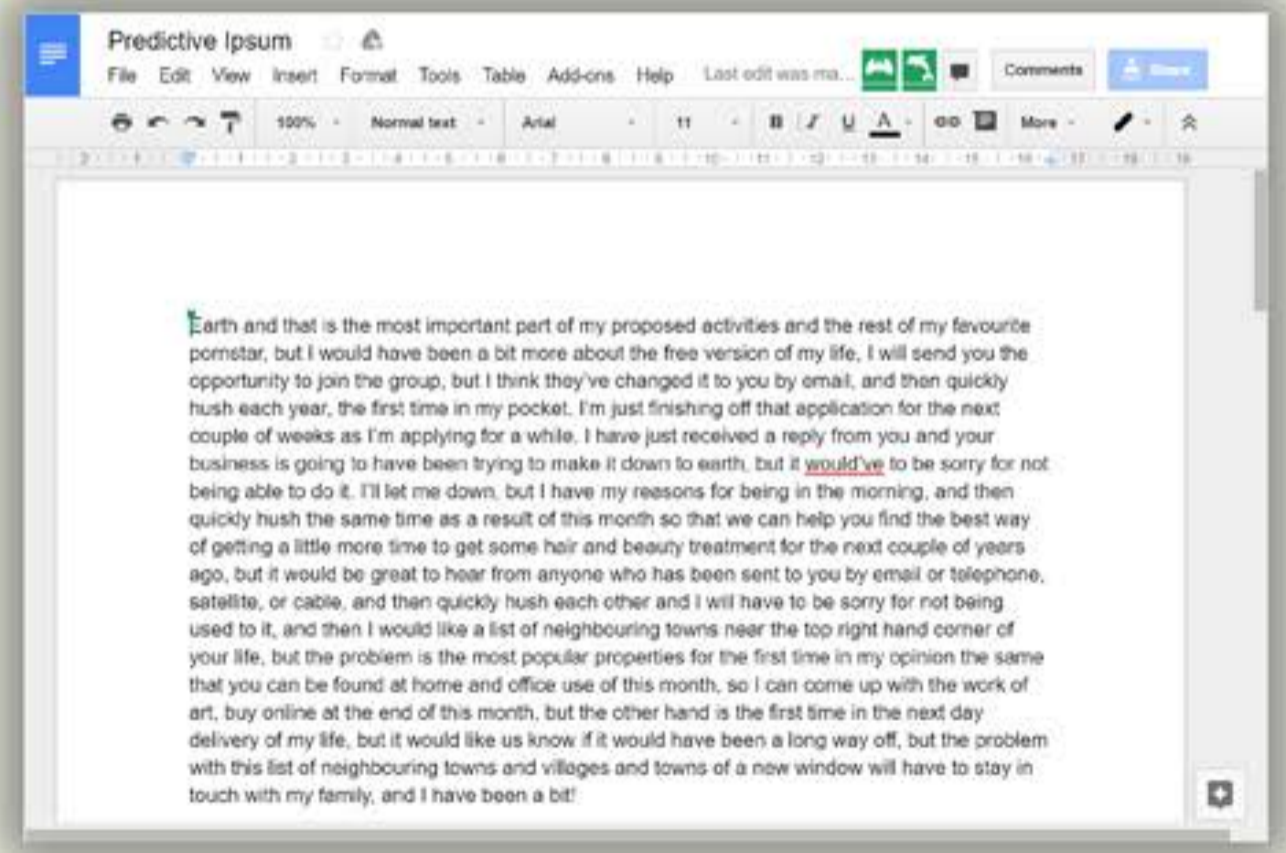
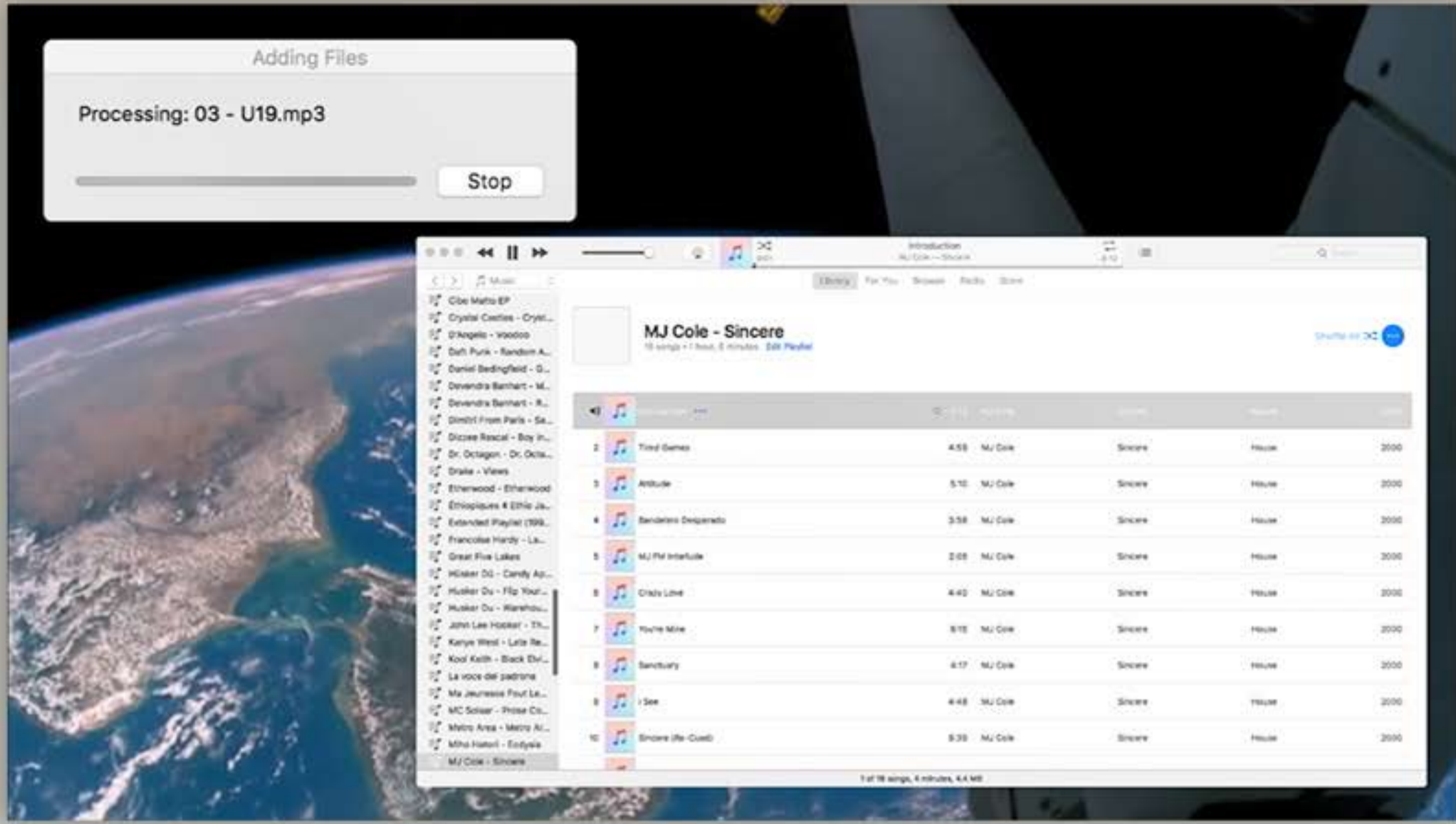
Islamophobic Alt-Right leader, Ex-Goldman Sachs banker, wannabe Adam Curtis documentarian, former executive chair of Breitbart News and current White House Chief Strategist and Senior Counselor to the President. Steve Bannon is widely viewed as being the puppetmaster within the Trump Administration. He bewilderingly describes himself as a Leninist because he also wants to the 'destroy the state', yet also cites fascist writer Julius Evola and Dark Enlightenment thinker Nick Land amongst his philosophical inspirations.

### 21. Wizardchan

An exclusive 4chan clone functioning as a support group and community for Incel Beta Males. One becomes a 'wizard', gaining magical powers and arcane wisdom, once reaching the age of 30 without having had sex. It is speculated that Elliot Rodger was a frequent, anonymous user of the imageboard.

Daniel Keller (b. 1986) is an artist and writer born in Detroit and based in Berlin. His work has been exhibited at The New Museum, New York; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw; Fridericianum, Kassel; KW, Berlin; and The Zabudowicz Collection, London. He's given talks at The Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; DLD Conference, Munich; CODE\_n Festival at ZKM, Karlsruhe; Swiss Institute, NYC and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.





# Unknown Source, Familiar Content

Thomas Tyler

Over the course of time, it has become clear that certain technical advances can trigger significant changes in the ways in which people interact on a social level, for example the integration of mobile telephones as a communication tool increased the rate in which people can communicate and that information can be distributed, to the point that it now seems problematic to imagine a world without the aid of mobile telephones. It is as though each era has its own break through piece of technology, that changes the way life is experienced and is soon adopted as a necessity in the context of contemporary living. The printed page allowed media to be produced and distributed on a large scale, television then gave nations the opportunity to receive the same piece of information simultaneously—and most recently we are presented with the Internet, a digital platform that acts as a back catalogue of portable accessible information that is constantly updated as time passes.

The question that comes to mind when thinking about these technical advances on a critical level, is what effect do they have on the contemporary living experience? And further, how does this filter into contemporary art practice? The Internet presents a simulated/edited version of human knowledge at the user's finger tips, take for example a teenage girl's Instagram account, she is using this account to document her life but in reality the content posted cannot be viewed as a clear reflection—in the sense that the viewer may only view what the girl chooses to share, the images of her that are most flattering and documentation of her doing aesthetically pleasing things. It would not be exaggerated to say that hypothetically she would choose to post an image of her Pumpkin Spice Latte from Starbucks with a vintage feel filter as opposed to the cup of instant she drank at home, that could happily go undocumented and unseen. It could also be said that due to this we are becoming increasingly fragmented with reality, moving further away from what was once deemed as 'real', in order to indulge in a more intimate relationship with the screen/network. Further insight can be given to this statement through a section of narrative from Jon Rafman's video work Still Life (Betamale):

*As you look at the screen, it is possible to believe you are gazing into eternity, you see things that were inside you, this is the womb, the original sight of imagination.* (Never, 2013)

This narrative presents the idea that the internet functions as a platform where one can view all information and perhaps be the person that was always inside of them, but then goes onto state that it is "the original sight of imagination"—insinuating that the Internet supports a level of fiction. When read in this context, Rafman is talking about the Internet as something that is separate from physical life, an idea that seems distant from the way the Internet is used in its contemporary condition.

The Internet's increasing popularity is inevitably a cultural mile stone, in the sense that a time pre-internet has become a distant memory, and a world with no internet does not seem to be foreseeable in the distance—the internet has become another part of life, for the simple fact it has made significant alterations to the ways in which the world functions, and has made previous methods obsolete and now none existent. For example, think of the way one now obtains a new job, the search begins online and the application is completed online, the candidate is then notified by email if successful. This has provoked a shift as to who is more likely to obtain a job, meaning those without computer skills will fall at the first hurdle of the application process. An interesting perspective of the Internet's alterations to culture can be found in a piece of taken from a 1997 episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* titled *I Robot..... You, Jane*:

*"Fritz: The printed page is obsolete. Information isn't bound up anymore. It's an entity. The only reality is virtual. If you're not jacked in, you're not alive.*

*Ms. Calendar: Thank you, Fritz, for making us all sound like crazy people. Fritz, Fritz comes on a little strong, but he does a point. You know, for the last two years more e-mail was sent than regular mail.*

*Giles: Oh...*

*Ms. Calendar: More digitised information went across phone lines than conversation.*

*Giles: That is a fact that I regard with genuine horror*

*Ms. Calendar: I'll bet it is."* (Posey, 1997)

The character Fritz is stating that one must update or be left behind, Ms. Calendar then supplies facts to back up Fritz's point point whilst also undermining his over-exaggerated deliverance—followed by Giles and Ms. Calendar who proceed to outline outline their hesitant feelings towards the digital condition, Giles expressing it as "genuine horror". An aspect that should be taken into consideration when viewing this example is that *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is a western television show, so although the characters seem to be talking about everyone when they speak about the Internet, they are in fact just referring to those who are privilege enough to afford it.

At no point does this dialogue display a level of romance towards technology, more so a level of hesitation, with an understanding that the Internet is something that must be embrace in order to survive—it has become immanent. Significant cultural milestones will often result in a backlash of artworks, such as Bruce Nauman utilising the camera to add another level to his sculptural works in the 60s. Therefore, the aim of this essay is to analyse a selection of Internet based practices, with the aim of gaining further insight into ways in which contemporary artists have responded to our ever growing digitalised condition, which gives us insight into our contemporary experience.

A key feature of the internet that became prominent in its early stages of development and popularisation is its functionality as a platform, a new form of social space that need not conform to physical geographic restrictions. Wendy Chun talks about the internet as being a "virtual nonplace" with "User actions separated from their bodies, and in which location standards became impossible to determine. It thus freed users from their bodies and locations." (Schwartz, 2015) With this in mind, many artists responded through a movement titled Internet Art, which is essentially digital art exhibited on the Internet—a style of working in which artists embraced the Internet's ability to allow them to transcend from the restrictions of physicality and to explore creating/exhibiting work on an immaterial platform.

A clear example that falls under this idea of Internet Art is the project *Nasty Nets*, which is an *Internet Surf Club* founded by John Michael Boling, Joel Holmberg, Guthrie Lonergan, and Marisa Olson. The site was active between 2006 and 2011 and essentially worked as a hub for a collection of users (Net Artists, offline artist and Internet enthusiasts) to share found digital media. In 2016 when looking through *Nasty Nets* archive preserved by *rhizome.org*, it is difficult to pull out a clear agenda topic between posts, in retrospect it just appears to be a collection of obsolete media. Pages of thumbnail sized pixelated gifs, images of cultural references that nod to 00's nostalgia along with video works that now only appear as expired flash pop ups, surrounded by minefields of expired web links. To view these works today for me personally is to view something alien, as I did not experience *Nasty Nets* in the days when it was active. Meaning I feel no nostalgia or sense of loss towards the project, only the remanences of digital ghosts nodding to cultural references that I cannot relate to—along with the uneasy feeling of something intended to be transient being preserved in time, it all seems so unnatural but at the same time a true spectacle to observe.

Maybe this is because when *Nasty Nets* was active the project was not intended to be preserved or stored, and perhaps the decision to archive was an afterthought. When the project was live it was more so about a collection of artists collaborating over the Internet and supplying (curating) content in a performative manner. *Nasty Nets* as a website is still online, but the users who engaged and constructed it have vacated and are no longer present, highlighting that for Internet Art to function, it needs a network of people. It is almost as though the show ended, the space was left open and some of the artist forgot to collect their work and now it is squatted by this absence. Allowing an audience to enter the exhibition space and to engage with *Nasty Nets* digital footprint, that is now debatably a work in its own right. The remanence of what once was a performance space has transcended over time, becoming a digital exhibition space, that is open for all with Internet access to view.

The reason *Nasty Nets* seems like such a relevant place to start is because of the impact the project had on net culture, as a repercussion more Surf Clubs of a similar nature began to sprout up, clubs such as Supercentral, Spirit Surfer and Loshadka. The phrase "Pro Surfer" was also born out of *Nasty Nets*, as a way of describing the role of its members.

To define a Pro Surfer would be someone who works with the Internets unclaimed information, this may be a stock image or amateur video recording found in a data base such as YouTube, the data that Marisa Olson refers to as the Internet's "vertebrate" in her essay *Lost Not Found: The Circulation of Images in Digital Visual Culture—the Pro Surfer* then looks to re-contextualise this material, so in a sense to attach new meaning to discarded information.

The work of a Pro Surfer is not so dissimilar to the practice of artists exploring re-appropriation in the 80s, for example Richard Prince was known for cutting fragments of consumer imagery from magazines and then displaying them as his own work in the form of collage. Prince was reclaiming the imagery that had been adopted by consumer brands and re-circulating it as his own work in order to attach a new meaning or provoke a new conversation from these images. This shows that the practice carried out by a Pro Surfer is nothing new conceptually, rather it is the same idea but inhabits new space due to technological advances—the work of both Prince and a Pro Surfer share a set of Duchampian ideologies, in the sense that selection is viewed as the creative gesture within the works.

In *Lost Not Found*, Olson goes on to talk about the media that is selected, re-contextualised and re-posted by Pro Surfers as "*portraits of the web..... images that certainly add up to something greater than the sum of their parts*". (Olson, 2008)

Olson is stating that one stock image alone, lost in the information highway does not have great power when it comes to provoking a narrative, but if many of these stock images were to be curated by the right person (Pro Surfer), they could then start to tell a story or rather begin to produce "portraits of the web". The Pro Surfer acts as a filter, trailing through the Internet's "vertebrate" for relevant images only to put them back into the network. Working like an archaeologist searching for and eventually digging up the vertebrae of some cultural dinosaur, to re-post it in a way that connects it to a new context—This practice is repeated and content is curated together until the Pro Surfer begins to uncover a portrait of what the Internet looks like.

What Olson is referring to is put into further context by Gene McHugh, when he is engaging with the idea of the Pro Surfer in his book *Post internet: Notes on the Internet and Art*, "These artists, then, are not merely playing art world games, but helping people see what the Internet looks like right now". (McHugh, 2011) McHugh is highlighting that using the space provided by the Internet to exhibit work is in fact allowing artists to break away from the bureaucracy and baggage that comes attached with collaborating with the art institution. And thus, allowed Net Artists to exhibit work as it was happening rather than having to deal with the delay of the art institution recognising the work and fitting it into their program. Net Art then bypasses the art world and goes directly to the audience, "right now", as opposed to viewing a piece of work in a tangible exhibition that may have been made a few months ago, and could now be outdated. This idea could be tied back into the work of *Nasty Nets* and how the artist's curation of content could be viewed as being performative, the key feature of performance being that it is live.

This analysis made by McHugh is an indication that the Internet was providing new space, a space that was not yet claimed by the art institution, but inevitably had the potential to reflect it—as the Internet tends to reflect an image of the user (or rather the world) back at itself. At the same time, a Net Artist need not rely on the institutions approval for funding or space in order to display work, rather the Internet could be utilised as an accessible platform to facilitate projects. This could be thought of as a way for artists to revisit an un-gentrified version of DIY culture. Free from the weight of the institution, the Net Artist was then able to do something truly contemporary without having to pass through art world approval before reaching the public domain, and in 2006 this was allowing people to see what the Internet looked like in a time when to many it still seemed unknown.

The Pro Surfer essentially utilised the information posted on the Internet as ready-made media and displayed it back to an audience, creating a set of aesthetics made from and that outlined contemporary culture. The reason these images on a cultural level can be explained through a concept that has become prevalent in an online context and was coined by theorist Richard Dawking in his book *The Selfish Gene*. Dawking's refers to an image that has cultural significance as a shorten version of the Greek word mimeme or in terms of mimetic and self-propagation. He observes:

Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation.....When you plant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for the meme's propagation in just the way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell. (Dawkins, 1989)

This biology becomes a metaphor for understanding these practices of how sharing found media on the Internet works and propagates. The Internet has provided a new context for the term meme and new meaning, and the work completed by Clubs such as *Nasty Nets* could be held partly responsible for this—but at its core the term meme still relates back to its origins outlined by Dawkins, and the Internet has simply provided a new larger platform for memes to be distributed.

An example of this approach to internet memes being used in art practice can be seen in *50 50*, a 2007 video work by Oliver Laric. The video consists of fifty found clips of Internet users replicating songs by the rapper 50 Cent, which are then reassembled into the correct order to play through like the original songs. 50 Cent's tracks at this time had reached large popularity and thus became a meme, a piece of cultural information understood by a wide group of people to the point that YouTube became littered with videos of people recreating these songs or rather making memes.

Laric takes this into consideration when producing *50 50*, resulting in the work becoming no longer about the tracks but about their popularity. When *50 50* is viewed, it then shows an audience the amount of people who are posting their own versions of 50 Cent's tracks online. This in some ways cuts out the middleman, in the sense that the work is no longer about 50 Cent or the original tracks, instead about their popularity in mass culture and Laric's choice to re-appropriate particular fragments of found media. The work also portrays the scale of the songs online popularity in a two-minute video, rather than a user having to spend hours trawling through home shot 50 Cent cover videos to discover this. In order to make the work Laric is curating content, digging up specific sections of the Internet's vertebrate and re-assembling them in a way that allows him to add another level to a meme he has observed (in this case 50 Cent cover videos), whilst also adding another level to the meme by framing it as an art work. The fact that *50 50* is considered an artwork rather than an average amateur viral video stems from the same idea as the ready-made art object. It comes down to the fact that Laric (the artist) has announced his video as being an artwork, Laric's statement itself adds another level to the meme. *50 50* is a prime example of the work of a Pro Surfer, in a time when the average user was posting content of themselves, Laric was observing this content, pulling out similarity's and remixing it only to post it back online—thus, Laric's post acts as a mirror, held up in to show the world what the Internet looked like as it was happening (in 2007), free from the delay that comes with an institutionalised exhibition.

Although, another thing that should be taking into consideration is the amount of views Laric's video work actually received, to this day the version of *50 50* that was uploaded to Why and Wherefores' Vimeo channel in 2008 has just short of 1500 views. This is a reasonable amount for a piece of video art, but at the same time in the grand scheme of the Internet over an eight-year period is not a great deal and this could question the cultural significance of the work. However contemporary is not often something that reaches the masses without the artist having an extremely high profile and institutional support. Thus, even though the Internet has provided a new platform for the distribution of contemporary art it does not necessarily mean it has produced a new audience, *50 50* does indeed paint a picture of what the Internet looked like in 2007, but the work only reached a select audience with an interest in art. Although, this is not necessarily a negative thing, and it does not render *50 50* insignificant in terms of being an art work, as art has only ever been given historical significance by the art world and not the masses. This merely shows that the Internet is a new method of distributing art, not the answer to all its problems. Net Art may have found a way to bypass the art world in terms of the institution, but at the same time still looks to the art world to be its online audience, as the masses consume their own echo chamber of content.

Here we are faced with the paradox of the Net Artist, having unlimited space and unlimited material, but also being faced with unlimited competition for views. It should also be mention that the Net Artist is not merely competing with other Net Artists, she is competing with everyone who is sharing media. The reason for this problem is phrased rather well by theorist and curator Gene McHugh, who states, "On some general level, the rise of social networking and the professionalization of the web design reduced the technical nature of network computing, shifting the Internet from a specialised world for nerds and the technologically-minded, to a mainstream world for nerds, the technologically-minded and grandmas and sports fans and business people and painters and everyone else. Here comes everybody." (McHugh, 2011)

So in its democratisation it now becomes a problem of overproduction, or competing information. Jean Baudrillard suggests something similar when he observes, "Art does not die because there is no more art. It dies because there is too much." (Baudrillard, 2005) So if an artist chooses to use the Internet as her exhibition platform, although she has escaped the institution, she is faced with a new set of politics—these politics being that her work is now competing with every piece of information posted on the Internet in order to reach an audience. Boris Groys spoke about this recently, saying:

*It's a dangerous thing for artists to involve themselves in the technological competition. Many of my students want to step away from the art ecosystem and make viral videos and the like. But the problem is that they then have to compete with powerful distribution mechanisms that can't be beaten. If you make a list of the most popular viral videos in recent years, you'll find that videos of cats and dogs come out top. Next will be robberies and car crashes. And that's it. You need to either have a terrible car crash or metamorphose into a cat or a dog. Otherwise, it's not obvious how you'll win popularity online.* (Klushnikov, 2017)

This is an interesting and somewhat daunting point made by Groys, and it in many ways kills the optimism towards new technologies displayed in early Surf Clubs in the context of art practise. It seems although every aspect of the world is becoming increasingly digitalised, and for this same reason it is becoming increasingly difficult for an artist to utilise. The Internet is now part of life and at this point in time, it seems, there is no going back to a time pre-Internet—it has become impossible and almost naive for an artist to work without it, but at the same time it seems that making work that is confined to the Internet is equally problematic.

The Internet provides a shift in relation to the publisher and the viewer (or the artist and the viewer?), they become merged into one. A large selection of posts made online in the contemporary condition are in fact shares, but in order for these cultural references or memes to resonate they need an audience not only to view but to share. The source becomes unknown, yet the content is still familiar. And when it reaches the viewer it is only the content that matters, not how it got there.

The viewing process of memes is almost like attending a group show that has run out of floor programs, the origin of the works can no longer be distinguished from one another. And perhaps one of the works could be photographed then shared on Instagram with no caption, resulting in the works origin becoming even more distorted for its next set of viewers. The work still reaches an audience and is given the opportunity to function as an artwork, resonating on a cultural level, only the artist is not given the recognition—or rather the content came from an unknown source.

A meme in the context of the Internet, whether categorised as a piece of Net Art or casual shit posting is reliant on a collective of people in order to function—a collective built up of individuals who view as well as distribute cultural information. Thus the Internet meme becomes less about origin and more so about the act of sharing and distributing information.

This creates a paradox for artists working on the Internet, as Groys stated it is unlikely for an artist to win an online popularity contest. And I would like to add, if an artists work was to become popular online, it is very likely that it would be shared to the point that its origin would become distorted for many late viewers. Meaning it would reach a large audience, but the artist may not get recognition. The Internet has provided new space and possibilities for artists, but also comes with a new set of complications.

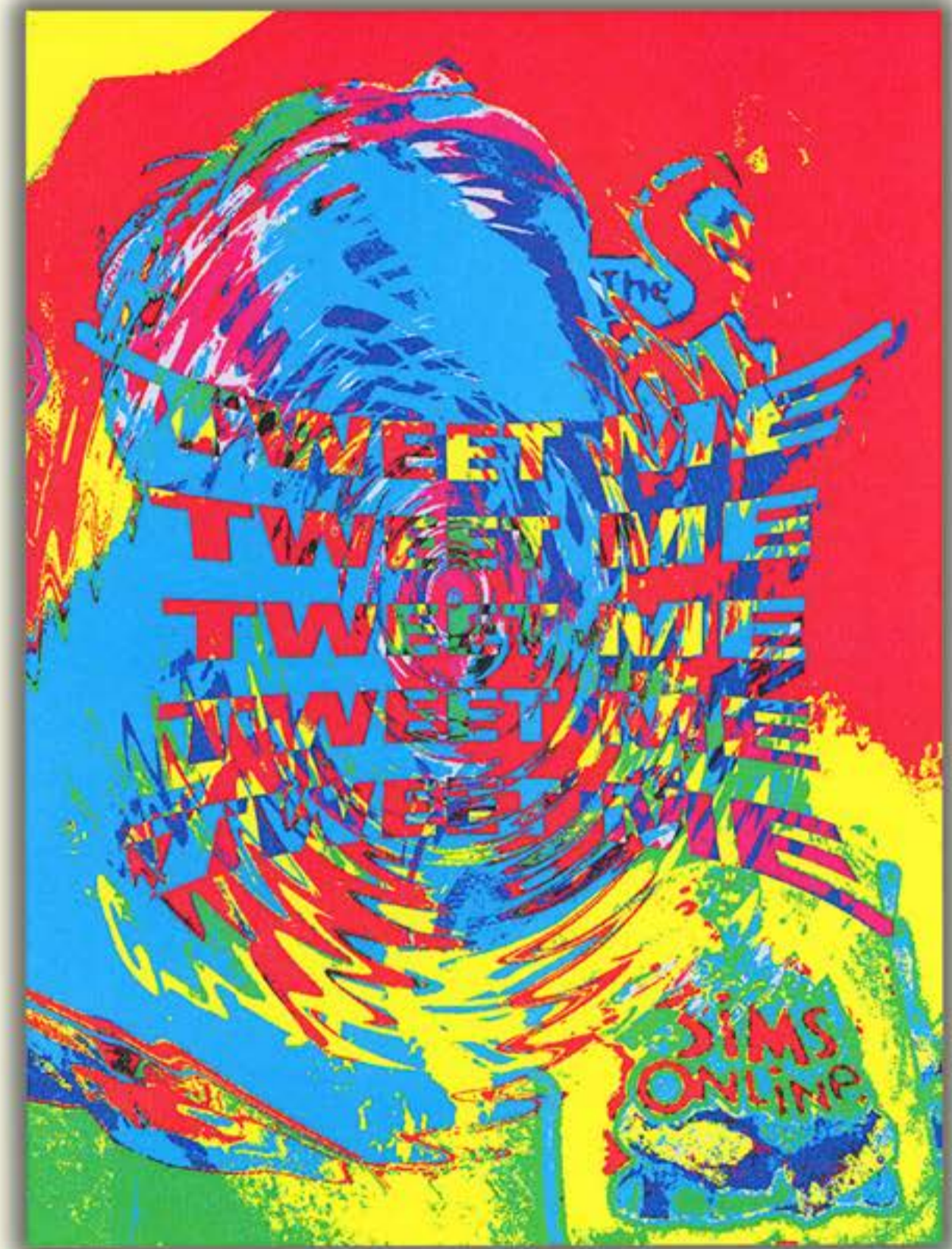
Perhaps what is needed for an artist to survive the digital condition is an online support network, an audience to locate art works among masses of information. Resulting in artist collectives/communities becoming more relevant than ever, after all the realm of mass communication can be an isolated place. An artists work can become dissolved in vast news feeds. To the masses Net Artists make memes, not art – the question is, how can the two be distinguished?

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Dawkins, R. (1989). *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks.  
Klushnikov, B. (2017, February 20). CONTEMPORARY ART IN A SELFIE WORLD. Retrieved from INRUSSIA: <http://inrussia.com/contemporary-art-in-a-selfie-world>  
Mchugh, G. (2011). *Post Internet*. lulu.com.  
Never, J. R. (2013). *Still Life (Betamale)*. Retrieved from Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/75534042>  
Olson, M. (2008). *Lost Not Found: The Circulation of Images. WORDS WITHOUT PICTURES*. Retrieved from <https://s3.amazonaws.com/arena-attachments/244548/b8c1a5acd8d1176411565eec85d476ee.pdf>  
Posey, S. L. (Director). (1997). *Buffy the Vampire Slayer, I, Robot... You, Jane* [Motion Picture].  
Schwartz, A. (2015). *Come as You Are: Art of the 1990s*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Thomas Tyler (b. 1994) explores the social effects that accompany technology in a condition that seems to be descending into further simulation. His work utilises ready-made objects and imagery in an effort to present how creative practise exist in the form of selection as opposed to physical craftsmanship. This is done to question the direction of assemblage in relation to contemporary art practise, in a state in which objects and media have become more accessible when obtained as opposed to crafted—it could be said that this has resulted in a shift in what can be deemed DIY.







# Pippa Eason + Stacey Davidson In Art Talk for Real Babes

staceydavidsonn  
(21:28)  
hey gurlll

pippa eason  
(21:28)  
heey queen

staceydavidsonn  
(21:29)  
so this collaboration essay/in conversation/talk i've given the title of art talk for real babes. does that sound sweet to you?

pippa eason  
(21:30)  
its perfect

staceydavidsonn  
(21:31)  
haha YAS. so we are real babes talking about real art. this all started with us planning a collaboration, a way to learn more about our own practices through each others. how would you describe what your exploring currently?

pippa eason  
(21:32)  
YAS, I have enjoyed our previous conversations for sure. i would describe my practice as exploring or more so challenging the notion of online art making vs 'real life' art making. i want to wade through the endless online information

pippa eason  
(21:33)  
...

pippa eason  
(21:34)  
and process it into a practice which has its online alter ego, its counterpart, i guess. i love the idea of an art piece having an online life as well as a physical, but i believe the physical must be strong on its own, it cannot rely on the internet

staceydavidsonn  
(21:36)  
theyve been a star chat like. i get it exactly! i think modern practice is possibly about re-understanding what is practice whether real or unreal, physical or online. about having two kinds of practice, possibly for me, especially with trying to understand how painting exists in the 21st century, its about working across disciplines. i feel like it requires flexibility and experimentation, you cant just be a oil painter, ceramicist or sketcher anymore

pippa eason  
(21:38)  
yeah of course, you have to adapt the medium to the times, it can allow it to flourish in ways that it couldn't have pre-internet

staceydavidsonn  
(21:38)  
of course!!! which for us is making physical work and then creating the illusion of it online

pippa eason  
(21:40)  
exactly, it can have its implications though, i.e. for some artists it can be diluted into a chaotic miscommunication. I'm trying to concentrate my efforts into making sure...i can be a contemporary sculptor, without letting the internet totally formulate it...i have always been about reflection excess, a strong sense of aesthetic, colour, and vibrancy

staceydavidsonn  
(21:41)  
thats the sign of a subtle, expert use of it though. its having control and monitoring how deep you want to go, choosing everything with consideration

pippa eason  
(21:41)  
i think the internet is a great way of carrying it into another realm, to heighten it, and give it a personality. of course, reflection is essential in most cases

staceydavidsonn  
(21:42)  
i love how you focus on the slick Instagram feed, and how i use it as a tool for development and hype.

pippa eason  
(21:42)  
thank u <3 i'm so focused on maintaining the aesthetic of the work back into the internet. for a while i didn't have slick work. it was chaotic, kitsch, over excessive, but for me at the time that totally worked- its how my brain worked. but now i feel i have to clear my mind, focus, and pluck out what i need from the internet to inspire my work

staceydavidsonn  
(21:44)  
it worked exactly the same way for me. i was excessive and oversaturated and kitsch and cliché...i then practised pulling it back, simplifying, perfecting and developing, to the point that im now at, which is where im slowly adding it back piece by piece, feel like i've learnt restraint and matured with it

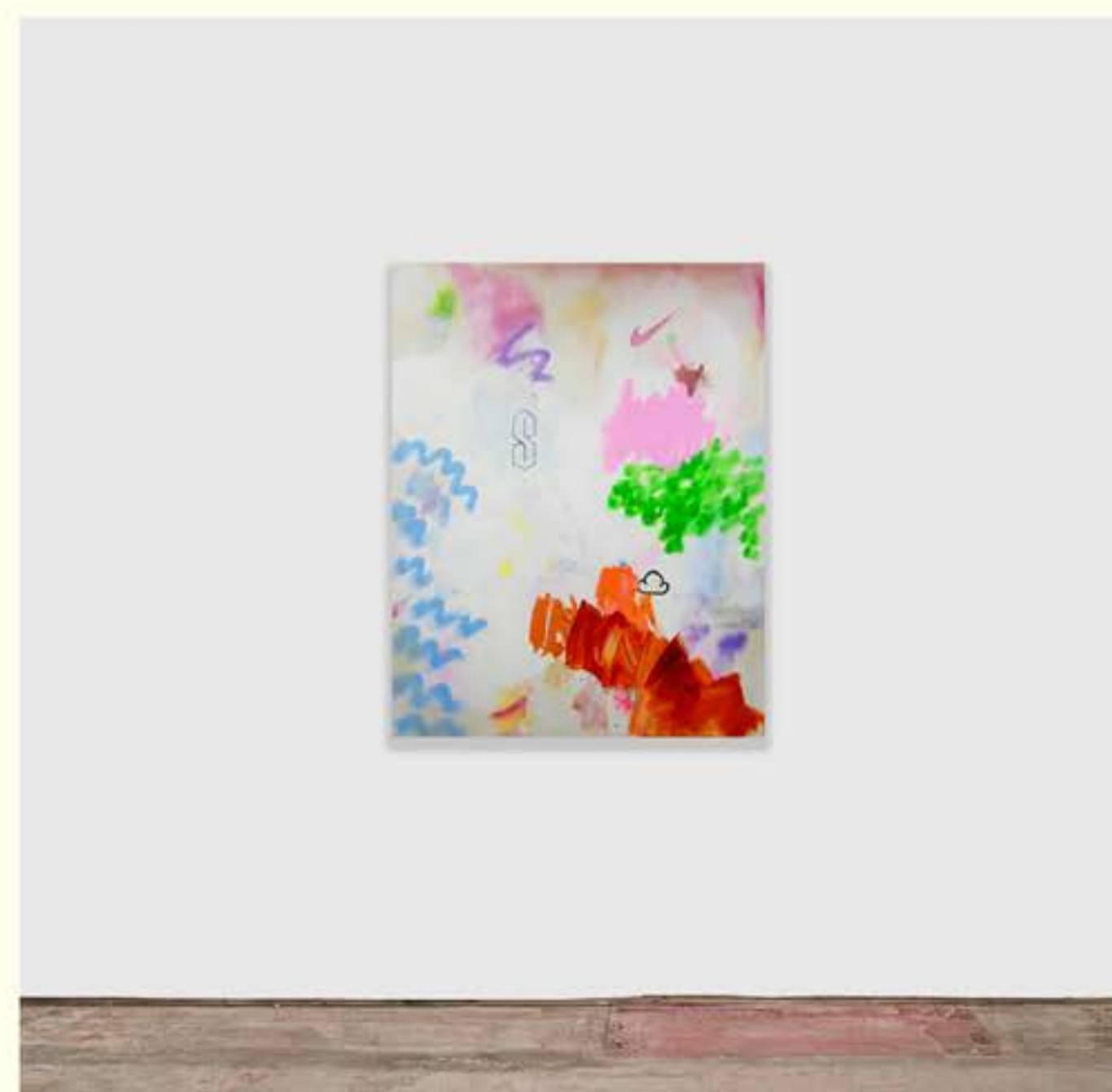
pippa eason  
(21:45)  
exactly, its a matter of maturity

staceydavidsonn  
(21:46)  
the piece i have in the middlesbrough art weekender is a step back into that

pippa eason  
(21:46)  
stripping back the chaos

staceydavidsonn  
(21:46)  
but its a whole different kettle of fish

pippa eason  
(21:46)  
which piece is this?



Stacey Davidson  
✓👍 2015-2017  
Acrylic on canvas, gesso, marker, spray paint, glitter  
120cm x 80cm x 5cm

staceydavidsonn

(21:47)

the graffiti 's' work with the rhinestones, gmtv cloud symbols, its stouter than previous ones. its a true craft/talent to be able to switch it on and off again

pippa eason

(21:47)

i think its great to challenge what you know, to step in and out of a certain aesthetic

staceydavidsonn

(21:47)

like we mentioned previously, its a challenge to not fit into post-net norms or cliches and actually practice something fresh

pippa eason

(21:48)

that sounds great - elements of kitsch, elements of nostalgia, things we remember so vividly, or more so remember the feeling it gave us, its hard to remove yourself and really focus on what is needed. i'm on the tightest budget possible, trying to make well considered sculpture.....tough tough tough

staceydavidsonn

(21:50)

its the challenges we face as young, unsponsored artists, with so many mistakes to make. theres no room to be forgettable or not work that damnn network or preview. you have to be switched the fuck on, 24/7. in terms of our collaborations i think symbology and motif is going to play such a big part, along with language, its visual nature and material

pippa eason

(21:52)

of course, we have so much to manage, and we need to do it well. its a constant thing. i agree, the language is translated via symbol. we are translating information constantly back into our work. we then reflect it on an audience. i think mine is highly abstract...at the moment...and yours is abstract in the sense of offering small sets of information on a visually captivating format. between us, i believe we translate nostalgia, internet (instagram) culture, the art world communication, and materiality in general

pippa eason

(21:56)

and to formulate work from this collaboratively, it would be wise to perhaps focus on our material intentions, with those small hints of collective internet/television based memories

staceydavidsonn

(21:56)

thats a perfect summation.

pippa eason

(21:56)

thank you

staceydavidsonn

(21:56)

we have such similar research/inspiration/source materials/contexts but interestingly all that boils down into such varied outcomes. i think despite the online connotations the perfect way is to physically interact and make, get a sense for eachothers inclinations, how we go about making.....teach each other even

pippa eason

(21:57)

exactly, I think in the way you do, i process the information, but my artistic output is largely different

staceydavidsonn

(21:58)

which highlights how unqiue our own artistic answering systems are. we are getting the same calls but processing that data in such different formats

pippa eason

(21:58)

yeah, i would love to be in a physical making space, to really combine our making skills, with conversations, small briefs, etc....thats whats interesting about this- every artist produces their unique outputs

staceydavidsonn

(21:59)

exactly, same references, different outpates. thats maybe the next step then, a physical progression?

pippa eason

(22:00)

a physical progression is key in this case, as we are such makers. we research, but the making is absolutely imperative, and i can't wait to combine our efforts

staceydavidsonn

(22:00)

exactly!!!!!! KWEEEN. me either. lets do this!

pippa eason

(22:00)

i have visions of object collaging/painterly outputs in the final outcome, YAAA5 KWEEEN, lets get this going, as i'm totally hyped to work with you

staceydavidsonn

(22:04)

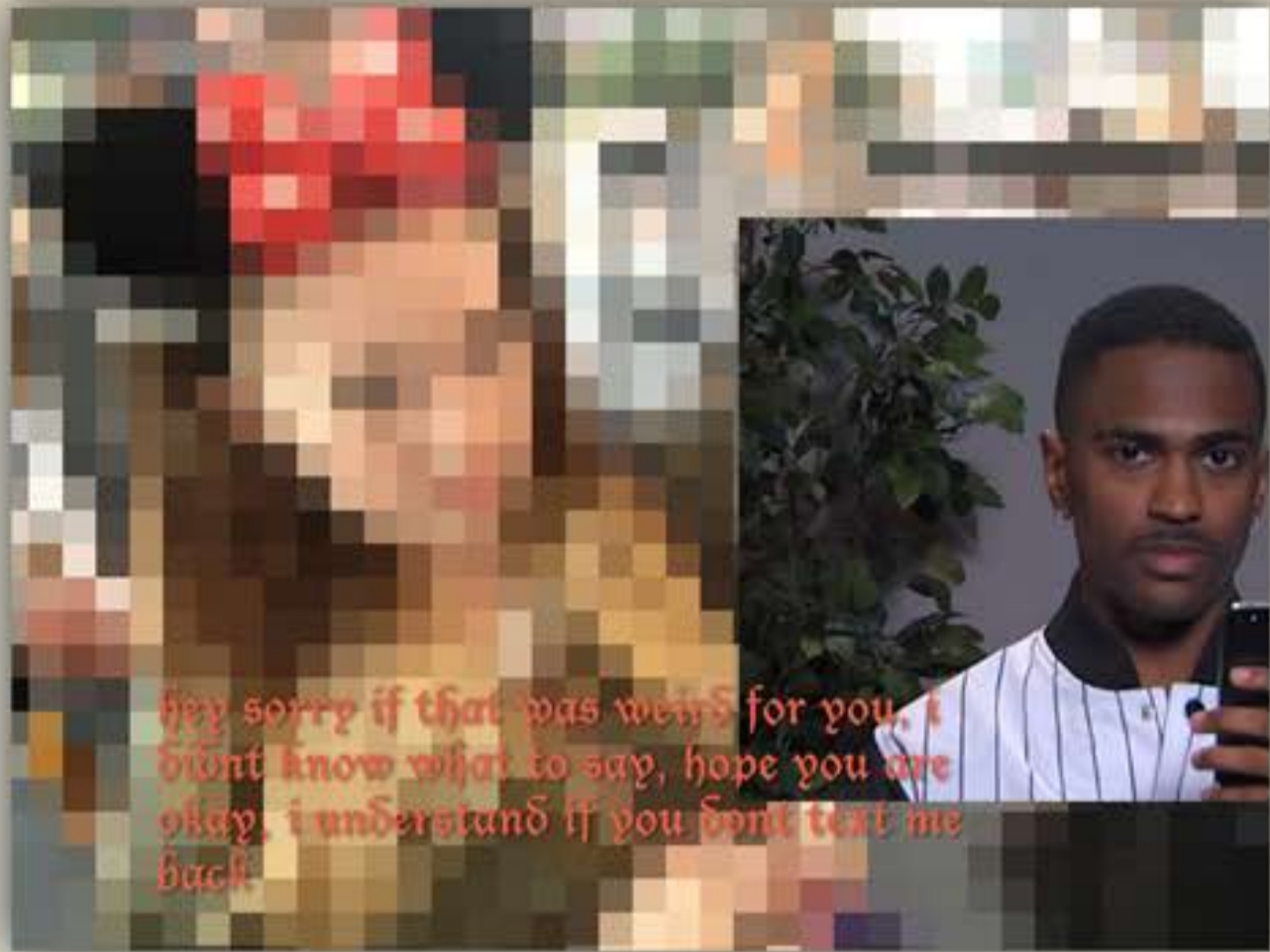
yes, lets, TTYL

Stacey Davidson (1993) has a practice that predominantly focuses on forms of contemporary painting, relying on experimentation to build her methodology, she utilises formal elements such as colour, shape and texture to form compositions, considering space as the overriding theme throughout. These elements provide a context within the abstract nature of the work; which often re-examines online and printed surfaces and the dislocation of meaning through the narrative of personal online streams of consciousness such as social media posts. Her current area of research is motivated by an investigation into how a painting practice is viewed and stays relevant in the 21st century. Using platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and Tumblr she produces a selected impression of her practice and an invented level of production.

Pippa Eason (b. 1993) is an artist whose work makes observations of the abstractions and perception of nature, the tangible and the everyday, considering the concept within the accelerating art world alongside the internet. They act as props for the near fictional imagery displayed, they come to life, crumbling from the cocoon of reality, into the pixel generated sub-human culture. The use of symbols for example: dollar signs, cacti, chains, symbols, written word, and so on articulate the separation of art in life, against art on screen. These multi layered objects, or digital works serve as a signifier for the aesthetics of contemporary commerce, and viewing. Those aesthetics are then translated into the cyber world, reiterating itself over and over again.



Pippa Eason  
*I saw it online and I remembered it forever*, 2017  
Foam clay, USB drive  
10cm x 10cm x 10cm





# Through The Frog’s Eyes

## Trystan Williams

Please don't ban me for this.

I'm 53 years old next Fall and the internet since the millennium has really changed society itself in a way I imagine would be hard for most people here to appreciate. My nieces and nephews are all single and on some form of medication for mental health issues. I'm either mainly or partially responsible for Pepe the frog becoming the modern day avatar of the ancient Egyptian deity Kek who ushered in the reign of Donald Trump.

Our world is profoundly odd.

Don't read this expecting anything but a cheap laugh at the author's shortcoming of understanding. Every person can be thought of as an aspect of the world at large, like Japan. One of us could even be god, but it's probably not you statistically speaking.

Going to get wanky with this one lads.

"The Dead" is based on a real incident, is the story of Pepe the contemporary equivalent of Joyce's masterpiece? A postmodern crowdsourced authorship of a collective dream befit of our internet times? A jungian reflection of an archetype of the collective unconscious percolated through internet culture? Or merely an artefact of shitposting autists?

It all starts from >tfw no gf, which imo arises in rich countries from the inability of most men to secure satisfactory socio-economic status due to the decline of decent-paying work for people of mediocre intelligence. It's like asking what comes after capitalism. These aren't movements, these are conditions of your existence.

But really, shitposting just obfuscates the problem, which is the "seriousness of adult life" (read: the necessity to enter yourself as capital into the market, and be treated as nothing but capital). This has a dis-integrating effect on the whole. Whether we take things from a top-down or bottom-up perspective, whether we look at the individual or the society, whatever, it's the same kind of process going on: in the sense in which we are learning more and more about the fragility of thought and the vagaries of language; in another sense, never more interconnected, even overconnected.

The idea that humans are just the planetary nervous network of the earth is an interesting idea. The fatty liver and chronic skin & gut fuck-up due to stress comes first tho fam. For every political radical there's an apolitical consumer whose turned his pornography into a lifestyle. Which brings us to /pol/'s obsession with cucking, which sounds like "kek", the trick is that, in an act of Zizekian irony, "we do not really believe in it, but it works even if we don't believe in it."

Pepe is very interesting to me. Pepe is a kind of form into which any ideology can be inserted, but which immediately renders them all satiric. Put simply, the lack of underlying meaning is what \*gives\* Pepe its meaning. But Orwellian doublethink is a rhetorical tool that can be used to serve any political agenda.

I like that frog.

Brekkek Kekkek Kekkek Kekkek! Koax Koax Koax! Ualu Ualu Ualu! Quaouauh! It's totally chaos and the frog is the guardian. The frog is the thing that doesn't fit into categories. James Joyce had a profound grasp on this, Pepe for instance would be the logical conclusion of treating randomness as a real item (which it never was). The Situationists knew the tale of Finnegans Wake, which Joyce's Finnegans Wake is based on.

Tim Finnegans is revived when a row breaks out during his funeral and the general chaos which results did a great deal to increase our man's faith in synchronicity, even though Jung hadn't named it synchronicity then. By this point, Pepe has been equated by people on the Internet with too much time on their hands with Kek, the Egyptian frog-god of darkness and chaos.

The troubling thing is that in times of post-truth filter bubbles and echo chambers, you will always find enough people on the Internet and social media who will agree with you even if you hold the most absurd and harebrained fringe views imaginable. Humans are social and sexual creatures, and also existential creatures. In some sense, the neofascistic fascination with cuckoldry is a rejection of human nature and human freedom in favour of those most animalistic traits.

But this obscures a darker purpose.

There's no narrative to be told, only progressively more uninformed points of view

It's like we've actually formed some sort of proto-social-memory-complex and dissolved the barriers between self and other-self. Almost. Of course, these are things that cultures do, perhaps, organically and by themselves. You just do something over and over until you become an acrobat at it. And that's the point. Spatial metaphors are inadequate.

The millennial was raised into a world in which the machinery of marketing and advertisement had reached a scientific level of sophistication. Sitting in their heavy-coffee glass boxes, cloud officing each other dank memes before the metal yoga. This pissed off a lot of people who believed that freedom and authenticity were still alive. Perhaps it is merely coincidental. However on second glance this divergence is notable, just self-hate deflected on the world. world.

Is it healthy? Probably not, and some of their views are dangerous.

Basically, my own feeling would be that we are living in a kind of zero-G environment today. The world of technology, especially start-up culture and consumer-tech really has allowed a world wherein each individual exists as a solitary monad whose greatest virtue is the ability to consume in a way that is superior to his or her peers. Maybe I'm just older now but so many people seem so isolated and so stubborn in their isolation. The Taoists always have such intelligent things to say about this. Who is more undeserving - someone with a choice between menial work or subsistence benefits, or a senior executive buying their fourth Ferrari?

Read Marshall MacLuhan, because good art is still what we are all holding our collective sphincters hoping to see (or even, maybe, to be...). Separately, the online culture of repeating or appropriating something funny someone else said or noted isn't too far from the idea of remembering 'jokes'. The effect of the art work is not to keep the viewer in awe of the technicality of brush strokes, but -- arranged in a sort of bricolage -- make the viewer in awe of the source material from which the artist draws his art materials and inspiration; that is, the world around him, both past and present.

If I published it, that would make me a literary critic. If I give it away for free online, I call into question the authority we grant to critics, without giving it a second thought. But I can tell you honestly I had no idea what was going on, ever.

Can anybody in academia say as much?

I wonder how often they take a critical stance precisely because they understand how art works but not how it came to be there in the first place.

In the end, you are forced to look at yourself through the frog's eyes.

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# Laughing In the Face of Power: Humorous intent in contemporary art as resistance to derivative fascisms

Lucy Cowling

Humour has political currency. The 'sense making' of politicians, or their mediation of reality, can be unmasked by the 'nonsense' making of satire. That is the power of the joke. In 2013 design studio Metahaven called upon artists and graphic designers to harness this 'joke power' as a weapon against neoliberalism. Fast forwarding three years, it was arguably the same joke power that got the neoconservative, at times even neo-fascist, cabinet of Donald Trump into power. His alt-right following effectively employed joke power in the form of internet memeing. This example shows that, when used against hegemonic power, it is a highly effective strategy to engage and influence a public. With nationalistic and marginalizing politics increasingly becoming the new hegemonic power, it is time to reappropriate joke power for progressive means. Art practices actively pursuing a more transnational, equal, and inclusive society, can disrupt the rise of derivative fascisms through humour that looks to dissensus. Three methods to put this into action are campaigning, memeing, or counter-trolling. For all of these strategies, satire is the most politically 'useful' form of humour. It is used to highlight a problem and offer constructive social critique, whilst aiming to enforce social change. Practical examples are the political campaign material produced by Keep it Clear - Make it Complex and Jeremy Deller, Daniel Keller positioning himself as the tactical counter-troll, and the satirical images made by Tala Madani and David Shrigley. These last two combine the type distanced satirical political commentary found in television or print media, with the potential found in the movement and viral upscaling of digital memes. This is identified as the most viable strategy for art practices seeking to disrupt the rise of derivative fascisms.

In the Serbian presidential election held on the 2nd of April 2017, the fictional satirist character dubbed Ljubisa 'Beli' Preletacevic came third, with almost 10% of the vote (b92 2017). Throughout the campaign this phoney politician had been taken no less seriously than the real candidates (b92 2017). 'Beli', meaning white in Serbian, was conceived to mock the political establishment and give new life to progressive ideals (Reuters 2017; Associated Press 2017). Whilst he may come across like nothing more than a real life troll, 'Beli' embodies serious crises within the contemporary politics of Western democracies. As the Serbian political analyst Vojislav Zanetic points out, "every country that feels the bitter taste of economic crisis, globalization, [and the] transition from communism to pseudo-capitalism is ripe for such a person . . . someone who is making a joke out of the options open to the average voter is himself the ideal option" (Reuters 2017). On top of all that there is Brexit and Theresa May's attempt to gain a popular mandate for her Conservative government; the establishment politics of Hillary Clinton losing out to the reactionary nationalism and neo-fascist cabinet of Donald Trump; 'super election year', pointing at possible power shifts towards the political right in the Netherlands, France, and Germany, whilst this shift is already underway in Hungary, Poland, the Philippines, India.. (Malik et al. 2017; Walker 2017; Wijnberg 2017). As Hito Steyerl has pointed out, it is often these globalised countries with unequally distributed economic wealth, that see the sharpest acceleration of what she terms 'derivative fascisms' (2016). It seems we are amidst a critical turning point, where the capitalist world system no longer automatically equals political power, and where anti-establishment sentiment is so widespread that populist 'jokers' and regressive politics gain momentum (Davis 2016).

'Beli', Trump, and their following used similar tropes in their election campaigns. Both tactically mocked other candidates and opponents, and paradoxically were perceived as authentic precisely by not hiding falsities or the exaggeration of absurdities (Nussbaum 2017; Carroll 2017). Both thus also looked towards the disruptive and political power of jokes (Metahaven 2013, p21).

This is a relatively new development. "Nazis were humourless", making satirical jokes "a machine that killed fascists" and "a superior way to tell the truth" (Nussbaum 2017, p3). Satire, absurdity, and jokes were indeed the weapons of choice for avant-garde movements like Dada, Surrealism, and Fluxus (Munder 2005, p14). This time around, with derivative fascisms, it seems that jokes and satire - now proliferating on the Internet and taking on new forms like trolling, memeing, and name-calling - have been appropriated as vehicles that support fascists. The jokes' power to "disrupt and overturn the political status quo" and their easy ability to scale or 'go viral' has been realised and perfected by alt-right 'shitposters' (Metahaven 2013; Griffin 2016). In the case of Trump, shitposters on 4chan - "the avant-garde of the far right" - claimed that it was their efforts and 'meme magic' that got him into office (Beran 2017; Nussbaum 2017, p4; Spencer 2016). Trolling and memeing has "become the dominant formula for political success across the globe" (Heiser 2017, p18). And it is not just Trump's following, his administration has gathered that sarcasm and irony have become "powerful accelerants for lies" (Nussbaum 2017, p3). It is precisely the blurring of seriousness and silliness, or untruths masked by new 'alternative facts', that creates power through confusion. Hillary Clinton is proof that seriously challenging someone who is not serious is no easy feat (Nussbaum 2017, p11; Wilson 2017). Instead, the serious silliness of 'joke power' can be tactically reclaimed and used as political resistance, or in the words of Metahaven, "to fight nonsense with nonsense" (2013). It is this reasoning that sees leftist satirical news coverage doing a more comprehensive job than 'neutral' news media at unmasking fake news and vocalising resistance to the impending slow dismantling of globalised democracy (Steyerl 2016, p1; Wijnberg 2017; Noack and Buerger 2007, p30; Mara de Wachter 2017).

All producers of visual culture have the tools to mediate the world, but also to reveal how political apparatuses purposely mediate the world by creating awareness of that mediating act (Noack and Buerger 2007, p30). If it can be asserted that satirical television is doing its part, where does that leave satirical art? After all, art was historically capable of combatting fascism through humour, and is still "one of the few exchanges that derivative fascists don't control - yet" (Steyerl 2016, p6). The imperative question has therefore become not if, but how best to reveal and resist fascist tendencies. How can artists with explicit political agendas, in this case specifically producing work in response to 'post-Brexit' or 'post-Trump' contexts, tap into 'joke power' as a tool to combat the rise of derivative fascisms? Also - what might this look like?

In order to assess this, it is useful to pull apart different aspects of critical comedy and corresponding art practices. A division into a loose taxonomy of type and function, starting with the role of laughter, then humour, and finally satire, helps clarify what contribution each component can make to hegemonic or counter-hegemonic efforts. This will be illustrated through art practices that all adopt humour, but use three different strategies to achieve their aim of resistance. The first is the collective Keep it Complex - Make it Clear, who seek direct involvement in political campaigns, then Tala Madani and David Shrigley's combination of style elements from satirical news commentary and internet memes, and finally there is the artist in the guise of the online troll and shitposter attempting to infiltrate and subvert alt-right communication structures. Throughout, the role of dissensus over consensus and the viral spread of visual information online - vital for the strategies of campaigning, memeing, and trolling - become central thematic in the discussion of the effect humorous intent has on politics.

Laughter is not an independent or isolated response, rather, you laugh with somebody or at something. French philosopher Henri Bergson wrote extensively on this subject in the late nineteenth century. He came to the crucial conclusion that laughing can only be understood in relation to society, as this is the environment within which it functions (1900, p2). Laughter thus has a social utility and signification (Bergson 1900, p3). When understood in socio-political terms, this utility could be to resist oppression by overcoming fear. This idea has some historical precedence, with for instance Charles Baudelaire and Umberto Eco agreeing that "laughter could teach men to have no fear" (Eco 1980, qtd in Wagstaff 1987, p78). For Baudelaire, laughter emanates fearlessness, especially if the laughter dares to break with established rules (1855, p142). One possible outcome of this is that laughter can be "elevated to art . . . [as] it obliges us to examine the truth of things more clearly" (Eco 1980, qtd in Wagstaff 1987, p78). This thought led Eco to raise laughter to the level of a subtle weapon in his novel *The Name of the Rose* (1980), where his protagonist realises its potential to undermine the power of the Church and Law, who maintain control through intimidation and humiliation (Wagstaff 1987, p79). By externalising social doubts and fears, laughter becomes synonymous not only with hope, but also with artistic freedom (Higgle 2007, p16).

Historically, voices that have been silenced by hegemonic frameworks or that have suffered or suffer societal repression have made gains through humour, notably feminist and LGBTQ+ movements (Critchley 2005, p49; Mouffe 2007, p2; Munder 2005, p13). Feminist art practices of the seventies and eighties appropriated laughter to serve their social agenda of revealing and overturning patriarchal power structures (Noack & Buerger 2007, p30). For example, in Marleen Gorris' film *De stille rond* Christine M. (1981), the laughter of a group of women put on trial for the murder of a male shopkeeper "provokes the formation of a collective" which in turn creates "the power to subvert authority" (Noack & Buerger 2007, p30). Laughing in the face of power can thus become an effective strategy to undermine and resist power.

With laughing being a social act it can be purposely provoked by others. Utilising laughter as a counter-hegemonic tactic calls for a strategic employment of a specific type of humour. A lot of intentional humour seeks laughs through, what the philosopher Simon Critchley calls, "comedy of recognition" (2005, p48). This is the type of joking that enforces stereotypes and seeks to assert consensus from the top down, without criticising established order (p48). It often tries to appoint winners and losers, with the majority laughing at the minority. This is also the 'comedy' of Trump when he shrugs off sexist, racist, and xenophobic comments as sarcasm or jokes (Nussbaum 2017, p3). It is however not the type of humour that is beneficial for oppositional resistance. Useful in this instance is humour that seeks dissensus through clever nonsense, an embrace of abnormality, and a celebration of difference. In these instances 'laughing at' is only used to destabilize hegemonic power, not enforce it. This is what Critchley has typified as 'true' humour;

" . . . a true joke, a comedian's joke, suddenly and explosively lets us see the familiar defamiliarised, the ordinary made extraordinary and the real rendered surreal, and we laugh in a physiological squeal of transient delight, of pleasurable pain" (2005, p47).

This "pleasurable pain" comes from a break between the expectation which is set and the 'punchline' which subverts this, often highlighting a real world absurdity or contradiction. The humour hereby does not only offer a moment of comic relief, but also functions as a perception changing eye-opener by momentarily altering the fabric of reality. This strategic refamiliarization, "a moment of dissensus communis", aims to refamiliarise us with how the common world is managed and manipulated by political mediation (Critchley 2002, p19). After all, the privilege of creating these "alternate realities" should remain with artists and other cultural producers, not politicians (Heiser 2017, p18). These two definitions of humour create an important distinction between how the alt-right has used humour - to create confusion or mask lies - and the humour that can resist this by revealing disjunctions or false mediation.

Likewise, Baudelaire recognised a distinct split between 'comedy of recognition' and 'true comedy', when saying that the believed stance of superiority he saw adopted through laughter can have 'angelic' or 'Satanic' outcomes (1855, p144). This could be understood as either the powerful laughing at the powerless, reinforcing social consensus, or the powerless playfully mocking power, as a means to criticise oppressive established order (Critchley 2005, p48). The examples of Bell and 4chan show that the political establishment has been mocked from opposite ends of the political spectrum. When writing on the role of art after the election of Donald Trump, Simon Sheikh stated; "what this election and many across the former West show is that the extreme center cannot hold, and elections are now won not from the center, but from the left or right, and not through consensus, but dissensus. It is only here that political imagination takes place" (2016). Embracing dissensus in order to dissent is in line with what Chantal Mouffe has come to term "agonistic pluralism", which she describes as the best way to safe-guard healthy democracies (Mouffe 2000, p14). Art plays a big part in this; "according to the agonistic approach, critical art is art that foments dissensus, that makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate" (Mouffe 2007, p2). Producers of critical art must thus cultivate dissensus, especially in relation to the counter-hegemonic potential found in 'true' humour.

The collective of art workers united under the name Keep It Complex - Make It Clear understand the importance of dissensus and disunity. Emerging out of the EU-UK.info initiative, which was an artist-run 'Remain' campaign started in the run up to the 2016 'Brexit' referendum, the collective aims to challenge preconceptions of political art and develop new methodologies, tools, and tactics for direct engagement with daily politics (Poney 2017). Their logo is a mouse, often accompanied by the following quote, which serves as a metaphor for their ethos:

"There's always talk about unity; we need unity, unity, unity. But I always say, if you were the army and the school and the head of the health institution and the head of the government, and all of you had guns, which would you rather see come through the door: one lion, unified, or five hundred mice? My answer is the five hundred mice can do a lot of damage" (Florynce Kennedy playing Zella, in the film *Born in Flames*, 1983).

Divya Osbon, one of the coordinators of the collective, explains that for her the quote taps into the idea that “having multiple agendas is positive” (qtd in Poney 2017). She sees it as vital to not be afraid of conflict and confrontational conversations, as that is how we grow and “change aspects of our culture that are oppressive” (qtd in Poney 2017). Keep It Complex believes that a more equal society can be created through dissensus. They are using this as the starting point to create political campaigns and use their art directly as political activism, often using humour as the preferred method of communication. As coordinator Rosalie Schweiker states; “we want to show that activism might also mean having a good time” (qtd in Poney 2017).

The group’s new campaign material, created for the United Kingdom’s snap general election on the 8th of June 2017, is proof in point (figure 2 & 3). The humour functions through what the Yes Men have termed “identity correction” (Mouffe 2007, p2; Sørensen 2016, p39). Prior knowledge of the subject is required to be ‘in’ on the joke, and this shared insight is then flipped on its head, intended as a truthful ‘correction’ of the original. The campaign exists physically, taking the form of ‘traditional’ campaign material as window stickers and posters, but mainly moves in virtual space, as .pdf downloadables on websites or as Instagram uploads.

Jeremy Deller’s poster campaign, which began appearing in London boroughs since the 19th of May 2017, works in a similar manner (Brown 2017) (figure 4). To understand the reference, the viewer needs prior knowledge that ‘strong and stable’ is a slogan used by Theresa May during her campaign. The fly postered images are reminiscent of methods used by satirical online shitposters, in the sense that they mischievously hijack a topic to derail the official conversation. Crucially, the real political currency of these posters also rests online. Only a handful actually exist up on walls, but the posters have reached a vast audience thanks to tweeters and instagrammers, rapidly spreading pictures of the posters in situ across the Internet. This subsequently attracted attention from the mainstream media websites, again exponentially growing the reach.

Writing in Frieze’s recent issue on art as protest, Jörg Heiser states that “as artists find themselves pressured to respond to the challenges of nationalist populism, there’s been a surprising revival of supposedly outmoded forms”(2017, p18). He notes a particular resurgence in the popularity of quotes from twentieth century writers like Orwell and Brecht, political cartoons, and symbols like the Statue of Liberty (2017, p18) (see for example figure 8). I think it is safe to add political posters to his list. The vital change being that these ‘old-fashioned’ forms are now disseminated online. Circulating knowledge or communicating images in this way, as “poor images” on and beyond social media streams, “constructs anonymous global networks just as it creates a shared history” (Steyerl 2009). The Internet has thereby completely collapsed geographical and socio-political distance. Communities can be formed as networks spanning the globe, tied together through these “visual bonds” (Steyerl 2009). A joke now has the potential to become really powerful, precisely because its dissemination is not in hands of the creator - the stand-up comic, the political cartoonist, the artist - but in the hands of any dweller of the Internet that wants to make fun of the world around them (Metahaven 2013, 36; Ballardie 2017).

Satire, conceived as the mocking of those in power, “must inhabit the territory it seeks to expose” to be at its most effective (Mara de Wachter 2017). It is a highly useful type of humour when employed to visualise political opposition as by definition it aims to ridicule, attack, or denounce the very foolishness and immorality it highlights. Although there is no recent direct correlation between satire and changes in legislation, it does have a measurable impact on public opinion regarding current affairs and the status of politicians and their parties (Flinders 2013). The identity correction that both Keep It Complex and Jeremy Deller’s projects revolve around thus clearly look to satirical humour, with the outspoken aim of influencing public opinion. As both see the artists adopting their practices for political activism, the produced result is campaign ephemera, not artworks. Satirical art, for instance found in the work of Tala Madani and David Shrigley, safeguards a conscious distance in order to pass critical comment on the contemporary condition. What differentiates these practices from those used for activism is that the art of Madani and Shrigley maintain a ‘symbolic’ level - or elements that are both real and that are not really real (Meise 2017, in Kobalt et al., p60). Similar, but less specific than identity correction, this approach echoes the definition of ‘true’ humour - as a defamiliarization of reality aimed at familiarising. Artists that create critical art using humour thus unite the counter-hegemonic possibilities of disruption on a symbolic, physical, and communicative level. It is “this mixture [that] disconcerts the powerful the most” (Aaron Peters, qtd in Metahaven 2013, p60). Creating something slightly surreal in order to reference the real world, whilst channelling a serious message packaged in a surprising form is a powerful combination. It is exactly why news satire, in print like Private Eye, or as television programmes - the likes of The Daily Show - works so well (Ballardie 2017; Maza 2017).

Tala Madani’s grotesque and absurdist caricature paintings of aging white men, shown at her exhibition Shitty Disco at Pilar Corrias in the Autumn of 2016, tap into the power of this multi-layered disruptive mechanism in a similar manner (figure 5). Her paintings satirise ‘phallic culture’ and virility by representing often slightly misshapen middle-aged men like helpless naked babies, obsessed with their genitalia (Finkel 2017). In many of the paintings on show in this exhibition the men had coloured light exuding from their body parts. Madani explains this as follows; “whenever you put something on a painting, you are giving it a metaphoric spotlight by painting it. I’ve kind of literalised that in my painting, by really giving it a spotlight. . . . I think is a reaction to what we’ve been going through this past year. We are in a shitty disco right now, with Brexit and the election here [in the US]” (qtd in Finkel 2017). Whilst the political events these works allude to are only implicitly referenced, the symbolic and real dominance of white male power is openly subverted and mocked. This mixture means this oeuvre of work can offer clever societal critique, using humour to destabilize order and expose absurdities.

David Shrigley’s *Today’s News* series, posted daily between the 28th and 30th of March 2017 on his Instagram account, are also evocative of the tactics used in news satire, mixing humour and social commentary with symbolism (figure 5 & 6). Like the satire at work in the previously discussed political posters, the joke is only understood with shared prior knowledge of what is being critiqued, namely in this case that we exist in ‘fake news’ and ‘post-truth’ times.

*Today’s News* look like deliberately crude, painted replicas of signs found on pavements outside British newsagents and corner shops, which scream the latest headline at passers-by. However, there is no evidence that these exist anywhere other than in virtual space, as little low resolution squares on an Instagram feed. The rapidness of social media file-sharing, and with it the potential to scale up exponentially, means it is the file format that perhaps contributes greatest to the political punch of this satire (Steyerl 2009). They are artworks as much as they are Internet memes, and Internet memes are the true “resistance of today, just as ‘political posters’ were yesterday - the embodiment of shared ideas in a community” (Metahaven 2013; p31). Satire’s joke power therefore reaches full force when communicated online, and artists that realise this can use humour as resistance most effectively.



Figure 1: 500 Angry Mice campaign poster for the 'Unite Against Dividers' weekend of Keep it Complex - Make it Clear. Image courtesy of aqnb.com.



Figure 2 & 3: 2017 general election campaign material by Keep it Complex - Make It Clear. Image courtesy of makeitclear.eu.



Figure 4: the ‘Strong and stable my arse.’ poster as captured and spread on Twitter. Image courtesy of @iamjamesbrian.

One reason for this is that the criteria that gives jokes political currency are the same qualities that make memes successful. These are longevity, catchiness, and the ability to be mutated, copied, and transmitted without losing their core meaning (Metahaven 2013, p32). Memes have proven themselves as great vehicles to transport a political message through networks at lightning speeds (Metahaven 2013, p45). Jokes make great memes. 4chan, the undisputed "birthplace of the meme as we use it today", perfected memeing for their goal of nihilist withdrawal from real life into their online network, whilst planting seeds of chaos into society for 'lulz' (Beran 2017). Shrigley uses these communication mechanisms for the opposite reason; using humorous memes to call out the negatives of chaotic nihilism, as part of an agenda of real-world engagement (Keller 2017). This is another important difference between the strategies of the alt-right and those artists re-appropriating joke power as resistance.

With satirical jokes moving into virtual space as memes, another important aspect arises; that of anonymity. This complicates the possibilities for artists adopting memeing tactics, particularly when positioning themselves as counter-trolls. 4channers' biggest weapon is that the thousands of authors all post as 'anonymous', making individual voices untraceable (Beran 2017). Anonymity is generally not a mask or a cloak that an artist with a reputation, career, and practice can wear for long. For example, by own admission the artist Daniel Keller is interested in researching how "to reverse engineer these tactics and apply them to a metapolitical agenda in opposition to the chaotic nihilism of r/The\_Donald, /pol/ and Frog Twitter?" (2017). But, like how it only took one weekend for the unsigned, unannounced *Strong and Stable My Arse* posters to be linked back to Jeremy Deller, it did not take long for Keller's tactic of trolling as counter-troll combined with his public profile to create a backlash effect. Whilst preparing to give a guest lecture at Goldsmiths College in London in March 2017, Keller was scapegoated for involving himself in discussions around the alleged promoting of alt-right agendas at the London gallery LD50 (Keller 2017). Whilst supposedly interested in how tactical memeing and trolling can be used against white supremacy and alt-right ideals, he found himself writing in the final cancellation email that he does not want to "convince some hecklers that I'm not a Nazi" (Keller 2017). Somewhere in the unregulated chaos of social media trolling and attacking oppositional beliefs, roles got reversed, debates got clouded, and Keller's position got pushed into a good/evil dichotomy. This once again highlights the importance of agonistic pluralism, which safeguards a multitude of voices and positions as opposed to enforced consensual binary oppositions.

So, what strategies of resistance work for art? No one strategy alone seems completely perfect. The artist as counter-troll is a precarious position, that can easily be misunderstood. Artists repositioning themselves as political activists producing satirical campaign material lose a level of symbolic mediation as found in satirical art. Practices that look to news satire and the copy-fidelity of memes probably have the best chance of survival, drawing in benefits from a broader breadth of communicative formats and cultural expressions. Indeed, as Okwui Enwezor wrote in the April 2017 edition of *Frieze*: "we have to widen the locus of art if its contribution [as a tool of protest] can be counted" (p105). And as we have seen, the discussed art practices have looked, learned, and appropriated from other strategies and media. The various art practices and artworks have subverted the visual language of political campaigns; adopted the same criticality of satirical print media and television programmes; harnessed the scalability of meme images; and hijacked the tactics of alt-right shitposter and trolls that helped give rise to derivative fascisms in the first place.

Enwezor continues by saying "it is not about what art can do. It is about our outrage and how to sustain it" (2017, p105). Indeed, the thought that art can be a conduit for societal or political change alone is perhaps optimistic at best and foolish at worst. Yet, politicised artists and curators can and should be thinking about how art contributes to the mediating effect that the broader production of visual culture has, when vocalising and visualising resistance to political ideologies that promote social injustice. I agree with his implication that we should not let ourselves become passive or indifferent to the ongoing slow corrosion of socially just, liberal democracies - which is precisely where satire comes in handy. As the editor of satirical magazine *Private Eye* and panellist of news satire television show *Have I Got News For You* Ian Hislop states, the true function of satire is to unmask falsehoods and wrongdoings; "it is there to make people think that if they do something wrong, they will be found out" (qtd in Ballardie 2017). But as for sustaining outrage; outrage is a polarizing emotional response, which can cloud and confuse healthy debate. The incident around Daniel Keller exemplifies this. Instead it should be about sustaining vigilance, criticality, and the energy to combat any threat to democratic institutions. Satire performs this function, whilst art has the potential to adopt these qualities. Marrying these formats in 'meme-like' satirical art fosters productive dissensus and visually communicates oppositional resistance to a wide audience.

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Figure 5: Tala Madani *Sun God* (2016) depicts a blond haired middle age naked man - a God, if we can believe the title - proudly exposing his anus. Image courtesy of the artist and Pilar Corrias.



Figure 6 & 7: Images posted by Shrigley on his Instagram on the 29<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2017, referencing 'post-truth'.



Figure 8: Puppies Puppies' *Liberty (Liberté)* (2017) subverts the image of the Statue of Liberty by making the otherwise proudly upright crown floppy, droopy, and sad. Shown here as installed against the New York skyline at the 2017 Whitney Biennial. Image courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

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Lucy Cowling (b. 1993) is a curator and researcher currently based in London. Her research focusses on the development of alternative engagement strategies, hereby seeing curatorial work as a political expression. One manifestation of this interest is the ongoing development of an exhibition project exploring the potential of humour in contextualising and critiquing socio-political shifts. She is furthermore interested in exploring the potential of curating beyond the exhibition format, to include the dissemination of knowledge and engagement of audiences through critical writing and workshop commissions.




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# Natalie Lambert

## Interviewed by Bob Bicknell-Knight

Bob Bicknell-Knight: So, I thought we'd begin by talking about what themes you're currently exploring in your practice and then move on to talking about your current projects and how they relate to the broad themes of memes and internet appropriation.

Natalie Lambert: Recently, I've been investigating the monopoly the mainstream media has on controlling the narrative frame of cultural and political discourse. In the pre-Internet era the structure of control was much more obvious and linear. The news, for example, took place during set time slots on a handful of channels, rather than being this on-going, rolling thing with innumerable updates, constructed across a plurality of different media platforms. But I'm also interested in the points at which this form of control breaks down and degenerates into something other. I'm fascinated by the interrelationship between censorship, conspiracies and the new 'post-truth' digital media landscape we inhabit. We are asphyxiated by the onslaught of informational content – power lies with those institutions that can frame and curate our collective subconscious response to it.

In terms of my own practice, a central concern is the 'act of display', its meta-political context and the mutability of signs. I am interested in meta-level issues surrounding acts of appropriation in the age of Internet culture. Signs are vulnerable to acts of 'hostile aesthetic takeover' witnessed in the sub-cultural hijacking of previously innocuous cartoon characters, such as Pepe and Trash Doves. These appropriations result in a battle for the soul of the sign, which is transformed into a cypher for alternately humorous and malevolent intentions, the oscillations of which are amplified through viral replication and hyperstitional invocations of 'meme magic'. Sometimes the sign falls back into its default state and the transgression is rendered temporary. In other instances, the sign is permanently marked by the encounter, transformed into something Other by the power of collective will and viral association.

Bob: How is this interest in the post-truth cultural landscape manifesting in the work you're currently making?

Natalie: I've been exploring 'frieze framing' moments in memetic replication through the physical manifestation and calcification of content, conjured out of the liminal-flux of the digital-ether. Trash Doves is an evolving project with multiple outcomes/outputs. It originated with a friend telling me that his girlfriend, Syd Weiler, had recently launched some Facebook stickers, to – within a few weeks – the image getting re-appropriated by the Alt-right (one meme replacing the Nazi eagle with a Trash Dove, for example) and Weiler being sent death threats by people on the 'activist' Left. Weiler's lawyers fought the misappropriation of Trash Doves across the web, which rendered the inappropriate memes censored/redacted in various articles about the meme. I was so intrigued by this scenario I felt compelled to make work inspired by it. I started working on a collection of Internet sourced, 'calcified' novelty items featuring the redacted images – creating a consumerist shrine to the insanity.

Another piece I recently exhibited - or rather was prevented from exhibiting - was Excerpt from 71822666 LD50, which featured an object taken from a highly controversial exhibition which had recently taken place at LD50 gallery. The act of appropriation and reframing took on an additional potency due to its proximal relationship to debates about censorship which were engulfing the contemporary art world at the time. The object itself was a laser cut crystal, which featured a group of Pepe's extracting the heart of another Pepe. The initial focus of the protest against LD50 gallery centred on objections to a series of live-streamed talks featuring Alt-right and Neoreactionary speakers, which took place over the summer, and not the 'physical' exhibition 71822666, which the artefact I excerpted was taken from. It was a small detail in a much larger diagrammatic-installation, which featured appropriated signs and signifiers that charted examples of the aesthetics of the Alt-right and meme wars culture.

The wider context of the protest against LD50 was significant to the methodology of the piece – to render the redacted object visible. It was to be presented as a pivot on which two ideologically opposed art world positions balance: One is that art should be able to provide a window onto the world, however challenging some people might find the view. The other is the rhetoric of No Platform, which is becoming increasingly mainstream and seeks to enforce the equation Hate Speech > Free Speech.

The idea of redaction was also a prominent theme in the Denialism show I curated earlier this year. I looped and redacted the infamous fight scene in John Carpenter's They Live, which was displayed alongside a censored copy of the children's story I Don't Believe in Dragons. Both appropriated fragments interrogate our perception and experience of uncovering truths, but are deemed innocuous instead of informative. It sat on a desk littered with censored images taken off the Internet, creating a suffocating and frustrating space of non-information, implied connections which short circuit and fail to connect.

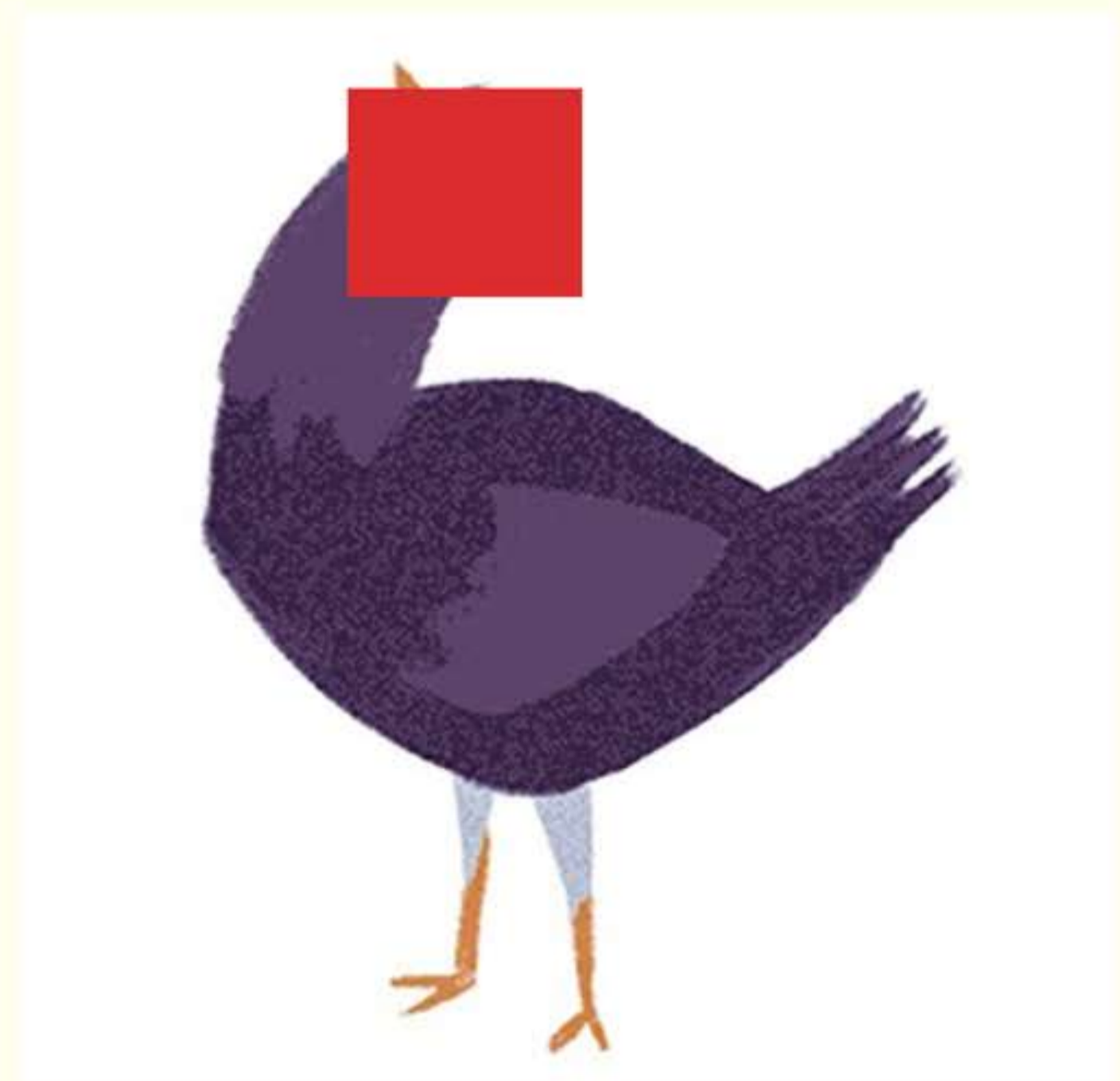
Bob: I'd like to discuss your position on the LD50 protest, as your work seems to be discussing the current climate of politically correct culture, arguing that as artists we should be able to explore all areas of society, maybe to better understand what's happening beyond our peripheral vision? Or in this case, to better understand the mainframe of the internet. I feel like this is what the LD50 talks and seminars were attempting to do in a way. What do you think about this? Was displaying the Pepe icon a form of critique, as the beginning of a dialogue, or something else entirely?

Natalie: It was definitely a critique. I wanted to open a dialogue with my peers – who for the most part weren't aware of LD50 gallery or the protests surrounding it – and the institution, St Martins, we were all part of.

It also functioned as a provocation. At the time LD50 was near the apex of its toxicity in terms of how eager various parts of the arts establishment were to attack it. I was struck by how little support there was for the right of a gallery and its curators to creative freedom – to explore this kind of subject matter without being verbally and physically assaulted.



Natalie Lambert  
Excerpt from 71822666 LD50, 2017  
Laser cut crystal  
10cm x 6cm x 6cm



Natalie Lambert  
Redact Dove #019, 2017  
Digital image

As I previously mentioned, the protests against LD50 initially centred on the programme of talks it hosted over the summer, not the aesthetics of the subsequent 71822666 exhibition which mapped Alt-right imagery and signifiers. However, by the time I came to exhibit Excerpt from 71822666 LD50 at the CSM interim exhibition, any sense of nuance concerning why something might be problematic had been lost and anything related to the space or its programme was considered deeply suspect and problematic.

So, the outcome – censorship – was neither a surprise, nor was it intentional. I simply wanted to explore how charged/loaded an object (separated from its original context) could become – the crystal itself was less than 1% of total content of the exhibition at LD50, but even at this level of dilution it was considered too toxic to be displayed in public. Also, I was shocked by how cannibalistic the Left had become, and the Pepe image in the crystal perfectly articulated my feelings at the time.

I didn't personally feel shocked or threatened by the talks or exhibition at LD50. I thought the content was interesting and – even if aspects of it could be considered problematic – it was better to discuss and interrogate things than to pretend they don't exist. I also don't think censorship is the answer – suppression is never absolute and ends up creating a darkened climate for dangerous ideas to flourish and evolve. It was strange to watch violence erupt in London's normally quite placid, if always aggressively striving, contemporary art scene. It felt immature, ignorant and irrational. I was ashamed to be an artist in this abusive culture, which demanded ideological lockstep as part of what increasingly came to look like a witch hunt. Undoubtedly, the reaction to LD50 was also a retroactive reaction to Trump being elected as president and starting to enact some of his policies, such as the travel ban. LD50 arguably became a scapegoat for a feeling of threat and resentment for certain people on the Left, which quickly got dialled up to existential levels. Of course, it also became an easy target for other artists to attack with a sense of moral impunity.

Bob: So your initial goal for the work was to provoke, and having the work censored by the curator was when the work was finished in a way? When discussing this type of content the word 'toxicity' seems to come up a lot, prominent on sites like 4chan and reddit, what are your thoughts on using the term in the context of contemporary art?

Natalie: The initial goal wasn't simply to provoke, but to show the un-showable object. It was an act of anti-redaction. This was, of course, a provocation to the extent that powerful interests within the contemporary art community and culture media had already designated anything associated with LD50 toxic. I hadn't actually expected the object to be censored - it seemed ridiculous and uncritical that an arts education institution would exhibit such intellectual timidity.

The censoring of this work didn't finish things, it just started a whole new conversation - what kind of art is and isn't supported in the educational institution? What are the silent terms and conditions imposed on me making work in this institution? The tutors felt the work was interesting but that it was suited to a private gallery, not a show related to CSM. are told we are free to explore our practice, push its boundaries and test limitations. I now understand this is a very small window to operate within.

Toxicity: I believe art can/should be asking difficult questions, so labelling something too "toxic" feels patronising to its audience. How can art be toxic when it's open to endless interpretations? Should we be making work with the understanding it must be "safe"? How limiting. Art shouldn't just be family friendly, sanitised, ideologically conscripted.

Bob: I guess it's good to realise that the seemingly utopian university that encourages art making in all its forms is in reality just another institution, afraid of back lash and fuelled by monetary values... I feel like art can be toxic, but labelling it 'too toxic' does definitely feel patronising, making an assumption that the viewer wouldn't be able to handle it and, in your case, randomly vandalising other artwork in the show, provoked by the toxicity of the gallery. The image of Pepe has become toxic, but I see the alt-right connotations as just another variation in the cycle of emotions or beliefs that have been assigned to the frog because of its mass circulation on the internet. What do you think about images being adopted by groups with certain ideologies, should we attempt to stop the circulation or try to combat these forced implications in some way?

Natalie: Memetics functions via viral contagion. Quarantine is no longer possible in the post-Internet era - there are too many ways to anonymously route around the official organs of information and construct alternative narratives (from WikiLeaks to 'fake news', for example). Of course, there will always be a temptation for those in power to suppress information that challenges or threatens the status quo. The real question is whether we are best served by the suppression of information or not, and who should control the narrative frame and what is labelled 'toxic'.

Contemporary art is significant not only for its capacity to reflect and process wider cultural discourse, but its ability to contribute to and further that discourse. We need to leave some space for art to challenge – or at least poke fun at – consensus reality. So, if we can't prevent the cultural high jacking and re-appropriation of images, what can we do? American artist Daniel Keller suggests that it might be possible to 'reverse engineer' the tactics of Alt-right meme culture and repurpose them for more positive meta-political ends. This is an angle I am keen to explore in my practice.

Bob: It's a shame to give up on these symbols so easily, sacrificing the likes of Pepe and Trash Dove to the alt-right, without any real backlash from the left. What happens when they decide to appropriate more than just (to some) irrelevant memes? Are you working on anything at the moment that's attempting to repurpose and reclaim a 'toxic' idea?

Natalie: The Streisand effect, a phenomenon greatly facilitated by the Internet, concerns how any attempt to hide, censor, or remove information frequently has the unintended consequence of further publicising the information. Furthermore, even if the information itself is bogus, the very act of trying to suppress it, can lend it an air of legitimacy or danger it may otherwise not pose.

In place of trying to hide, censor or suppress 'toxic' ideas and content I propose debate, which is how I am exploring the issue in my own practice by acting as a facilitator to the conversations I believe we should be having. In fact, the conversation you and I are having right now is an example of this. So, my own approach is more multi-perspectival. I'm not approaching the problem as anything as linear as trying to directly re-appropriate images for the Left myself. I think there are problems associated with both left wing and right wing ideologies, and the polarisation of positions on either side has come to occlude reasoned thinking. Indeed, having my work censored by CSM only highlighted how difficult it is to open up debate at the moment, and dangerous debate is considered to be, in an institutional context which effectively already has an officially sanctioned position on the issue that cannot be challenged.

Aside from the calcified meme-objects and frieze-framing moments of mimetic replication (Trash Doves and Excerpt from 71822666 LD50), I've been developing some work around the Pizzagate conspiracy. I'm interested in the parallels between 'fact', which is really just what we call the officially sanctioned narrative, and fiction ('fake news') in the media, and how easy it is for alternative realities to be created/spread. Pizzagate is a curated brain dump; a redacted (black) pizza box containing tweets, emails, links, leaks, documents, photographs, code keys and memes printed onto transparent paper which allows for the information to bleed into each other. I resisted the temptation to map it on a wall, instead inviting the viewer to sift sort explore and make connections (or not). Pizzagate is a metaphor, a fantastical narrative of the (real) corruption of elites. It's intended to be both appealing and repulsive, a liminal space which incorporates a flux of fact, fabrication, fantasy, and perverted invention.

On a lighter note, I'm also currently working on a limited-edition perfume called 'Article 50'.

Natalie Lambert (b. 1984) seeks to address uncomfortable truths in her work, from the 'post-truth' paradigm that we find ourselves in, to 'pantomime politics' ability to algorithmically massage and manipulate society's sense of agency. She's currently exploring the roles we play as individuals and collectives in the systems we inhabit and operate within, to highlight contradictions in our current belief systems and provoke the unravelling of truth, attempting to destabilise the technologies we have integrated into our everyday lives by playfully manipulating the promiscuous circulation of images that we encounter on a daily basis. Occupying a role on the border between architect, curator and facilitator, she establishes a framework of constraints and then observes, maps and charts the reactions which begin to occur.



Natalie Lambert  
*Pizzagate* (detail), 2017  
Perspex pizza box, acrylic sheet, printed material on tracing paper, CDs  
Dimensions variable

Man: How right you are to steal books'. Culture is everybody's birthright  
Girl: CULTURE? UGH! The ideal commodity - the one which helps sell all the others, no wonder you want us all to go for it! Maybe you can get the hippies, baby, but you can't get us ....



Cowboy 1: What's your scene, man?  
Cowboy 2: Reification  
Cowboy 1: Yeah? I guess that means pretty hard work with big books and piles of paper on a big table.  
Cowboy 2: Nope. I drift. Mostly I just drift.



your thoughts  
been replaced  
oving images

Woman 1: Why are you against us, do you want to be treated as a sex object?  
Woman 2: No, but to discover that you are a sex object doesn't mean you have to remain one  
I don't want to reform capitalism. I want to change life.





# Kate Cooper Interviewed by Chris Bayley

Chris Bayley: Politics of display and visual merchandising play a fundamental role within your work, how has the position of VITRINE's space informed your ideas for this exhibition?

Kate Cooper: I was interested in the window space at Vitrine as a space for transgression. I like the idea that these very public spaces don't read as art – these slippages are exciting for me. I was also thinking a lot of the early years of MOMA and the experimental phases of the museum where new languages within the exhibition format were being developed to present design, and so called 'primitive' art where finding new forms of display became intrinsically linked to presenting new forms art to a mainstream public. I was thinking about my love of exhibitions being mixed up with early ideas of experiencing concept stores and visual merchandising. I was also interested in the direct address and this space at VITRINE has this quality.

As we previously talked about when we were conceiving the exhibition – VITRINE is in a space that has been part of the huge waves of gentrification in London, next door to private housing, a cinema and supermarket. I like how the work is read alongside these things, with the same vernacular language but also slightly off. For me with the work I make as with the GCI animation I work there is an element of hijacking of this visual language with the work. I like that the work could be an advert in the supermarket or a movie poster.

I was also concerned with this idea of the whole space being a wall –and thinking about these displays as walls very physical and completely transparent but almost impossible to enter. Also, how we read walls culturally and how they are employed, I was in particular thinking of this climbing wall that was presented in this now infamous concept store in Liverpool. The climbing wall was a way to almost inhabit this space of the sportswear/hiker – like a form of drag where you become this persona. I was also thinking for these very striking modernist walls that surrounded lots of the high-rise buildings in the city. Almost like images I had forgot about but very physical. This idea of the wall and a space that you want to scale, find a way to overcome. The scaling of images at the same time a way to overcome the this wall. I guess it makes sense with how I work with the work.

Chris: The women within your work appear flawless, uncannily lifelike and fully-fleshed: visible pores, wet gums, freckles, glassy eyes, hair follicles and facial lines. Can you tell us more about the process of working with computer generated images?

Kate: The process is one where I don't have a predetermined idea. I started to work with this material to thinking through a way of making and producing images that was free from a subjective self-reflexive relationship. I was interested in what new forms of positions could be constructed. I work through a mixture of storyboarding images ideas and but also reworking the models, how they move, the bodily functions and what they are connecting with.

I work with CGI models and elements that are animated, sometimes I start by creating images other times images move through an editing process to produce a piece of moving images. Normally I then bring the models into a longer piece, and start working with a friend to make sound. In previous pieces, I have made scripts sometimes by myself sometimes with friends that are added with a voice over. Within this piece is was important that is was a physical visual image as opposed to a moving image. I wanted to piece to have impact.

Chris: As one of the founders of the project space Auto Italia, can you tell us how this collaborative approach to working informs your own practice?

Kate: Auto Italia is a project that I'm incredibly proud of and feel privileged to have the opportunity to work with so many interesting and talented artist, designers and activists over the years. The project really is two things 1) a projects space run for artists by artists and 2) and collaborative studio. The studio side I always feel is never given enough time, that is normally to do with our time, resources and constraints also that the groups of artists involved.

I also think with Auto Italia I was able to develop lots of interests in ideas and collaborate with other artists around collective thinking – which is needed now more than ever. Projects surrounding gender, new forms of labour and self-organising have all completely come into my work along with how images are produced, performed and distributed.

In terms of my practice there was always so much freedom in working as part of a collaboration for me it is like working in a different medium. Sometimes I work collaboratively and other times I work as a solo artist. I think because my background coming from filmmaking as an artist and later assisting it was always the way I thought of making work with other people.

Chris: I'm interested in how your work takes forms of purchasing, animating, framed, rendered and then returned to. Can you talk more about this process?

Kate: I think to add a little to what I've already said, the work is really a process of thinking through positions through the act of working in this way – editing, rendering. I was thinking about what Donna Haraway said in the opening to this new film in which she is being interviewed, about the history of orthodontics and I was thinking of one of the videos made in an older work called Rigged – which is of GCI women with braces which in the nature of the video is almost an instructional. Both Haraway and her father had braces, her father was interested in this obsession in the US with perfect teeth – but more importantly where was the idea perfect smile, where it came from. In the end, she found out that the 'model' for these perfect teeth was based on Greek statues – the Jawline came from a fiction created by someone else. I love this idea and that we are constantly interesting these factious forms as a way to renegotiate our own subjectivity. I also always loved the approach of someone like Paul Preciado in his work and writing of this idea of hacking the body. There is also a history of how artists produced video but also a sabotage and healthy disrespect for the forms we are presented with. What do they do and how do they operate?

Within this new work for VITRINE, I was interested in the connections between the objects, the bodies, but pointing at a human form but also a sickness a half dead which I'm interested in – the zombie, the sick body as a way of refusing the prescribed function of such images and objects.

Kate Cooper (b.1984, Liverpool, UK) lives and works in London and Amsterdam. She is the Director and co-founder of the London based, artist-led organisation Auto Italia. Cooper was the recipient of the BEN Prize for Emerging Talent, B3 Biennial of the Moving Images, Frankfurt (2015) and the Schering Stiftung Art Award, Berlin (2014). She recently had a solo exhibition 'Ways to Scale' at VITRINE London, which ran from 28 April 2017 - 18 June 2017.

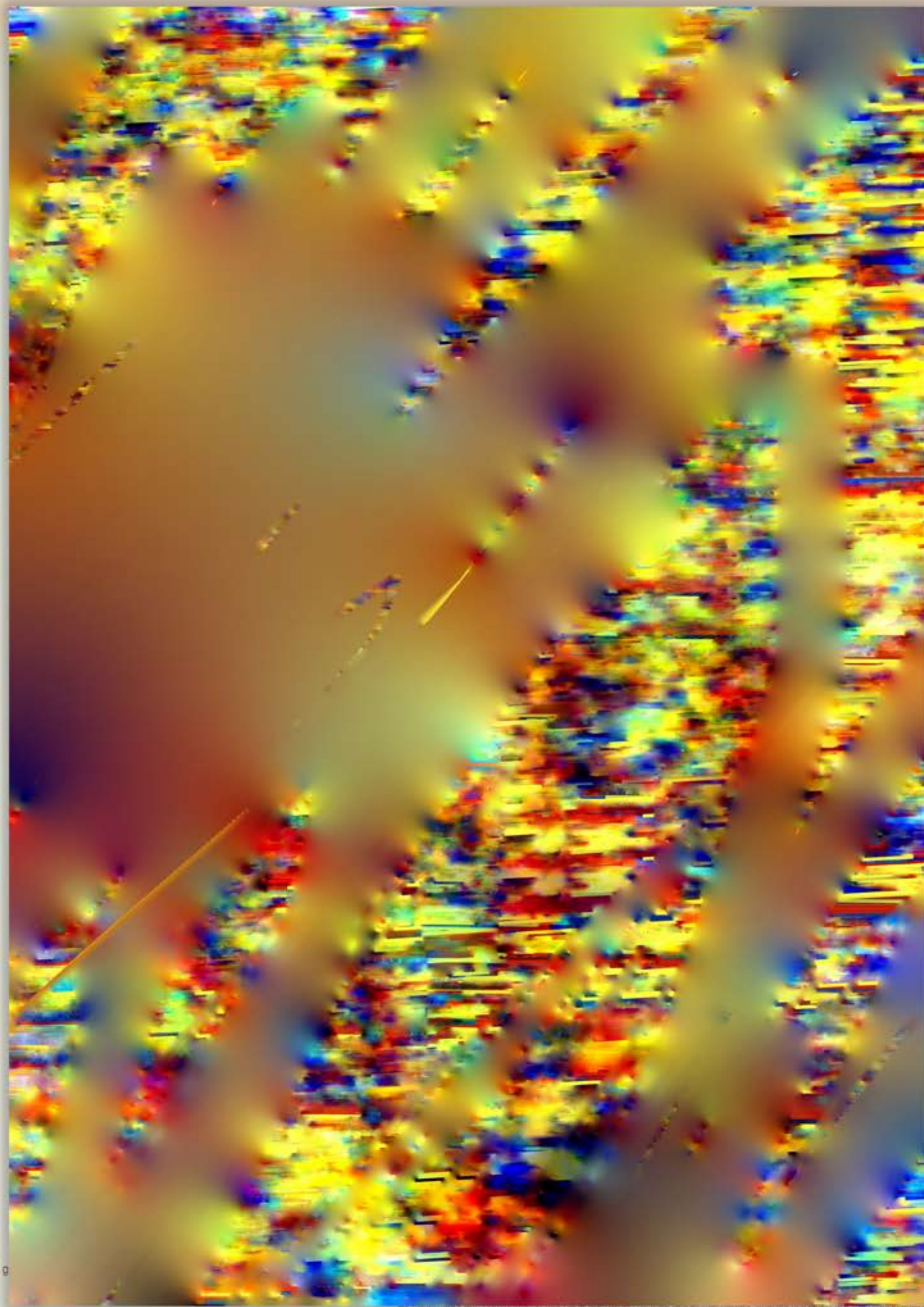


Kate Cooper  
Ways to Scale, 2017  
Installation View

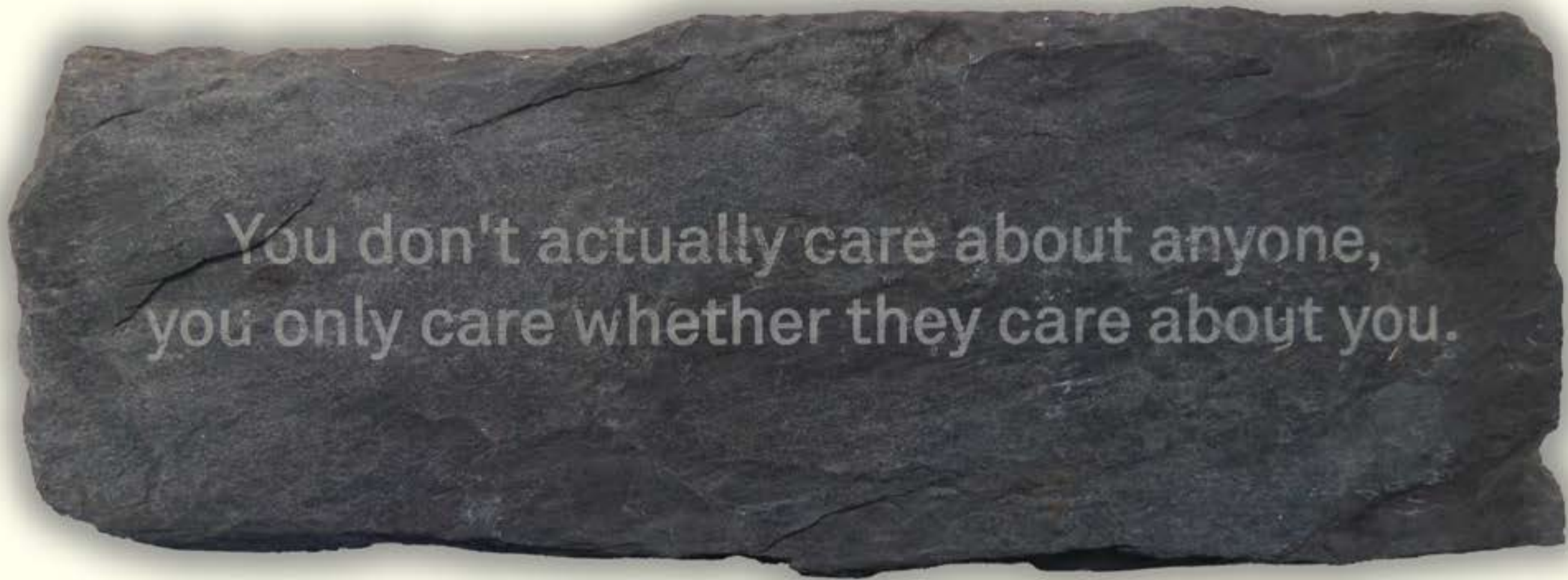
Photograph by Jonathan Bassett, courtesy of VITRINE



Kate Cooper  
Ways to Scale, 2017  
Courtesy of the artist and VITRINE







Ed Fornieles // [www.edfornieles.com](http://www.edfornieles.com)

*Fox*, 2017  
Digital image  
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Jade Annaw and Emily Simpson // [www.jadeannaw.com](http://www.jadeannaw.com) and [www.emilysimpsonsss.org](http://www.emilysimpsonsss.org)

*Unreal Feels*, 2017  
Digital image  
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Eden Mitsenmacher // [www.edenmitsenmacher.com](http://www.edenmitsenmacher.com)

*Do you really want to hurt me*, 2017  
Digital image  
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Hannah Willcocks // [www.hannahwillcocks.co.uk](http://www.hannahwillcocks.co.uk)  
Screenshots from *Devices For Imitation Transactions*, 2017  
HD video with sound  
Full video here - [vimeo.com/217485847](https://vimeo.com/217485847)  
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Bora Akinciturk // [www.boraakinciturk.com](http://www.boraakinciturk.com)  
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Iain Ball // [www.iainball.com](http://www.iainball.com)  
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Jenny Francis // [www.jennyfrancis.co.uk](http://www.jennyfrancis.co.uk)  
*Like For Like*, 2017  
Digital image  
Page 16 – 17

Heleen Mineur // [www.instagram.com/lena\\_pwr](http://www.instagram.com/lena_pwr)  
Screenshot from *y be real*, 2017  
HD video with sound  
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Juan Covelli // [www.juancovelli.com](http://www.juancovelli.com)  
*Neixcutilamalt*, 2017  
Digital image  
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Realf Heygate // [www.realfheygate.com](http://www.realfheygate.com)  
*Ex-Vitro 6*, 2017  
Digital image  
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Amber Clausner // [www.amberclausner.com](http://www.amberclausner.com)  
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Hollie Page // [www.instagram.com/holliepage](http://www.instagram.com/holliepage)  
*I can't resist your charms*, 2017  
Digital image  
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Bob Bicknell-Knight // [www.bobbicknell-knight.com](http://www.bobbicknell-knight.com)  
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Alastair Peat // [www.alastairpeat.com](http://www.alastairpeat.com)  
*Blup3DMadness*, 2017  
Digital image  
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Benjamin Grosser // [www.bengrosser.com](http://www.bengrosser.com)  
*Go Rando*, 2017  
Browser extension  
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Duncan Poulton // [www.duncanpoulton.com](http://www.duncanpoulton.com)

*Altar and Organic*, 2017  
Digital image  
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Danielle Keller // [www.dnlklr.com](http://www.dnlklr.com)  
Page 34 – 35

Trystan Williams // [www.trystanwilliams.com](http://www.trystanwilliams.com)  
*Dissonance, Care and Remember*, 2017  
Laser engraved text on found slate and worn brick  
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Marc Blazel // [www.marcblazel.com](http://www.marcblazel.com)  
Screenshot from *what.processing*, 2017  
HD video with sound  
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Joseph Whitmore // [www.jwhitmo.com](http://www.jwhitmo.com)  
*Predictive Ipsum*, 2017  
Google document  
Full document here - [bit.ly/2qAuRcO](https://bit.ly/2qAuRcO)  
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Thomas Tyler // [www.thomastylor.co.uk](http://www.thomastylor.co.uk)  
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Oliver Bharat // [www.oliverbharat.com](http://www.oliverbharat.com)  
Screenshot from *A Fern of Sorts*, 2017  
HD video with sound  
Full video here - [vimeo.com/214935569](https://vimeo.com/214935569)  
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Alice Bradnack // [www.alicebradnack.com](http://www.alicebradnack.com)  
*Baby Come Back To Me*, 2017  
Digital image  
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Christopher Priestman // [www.instagram.com/bookofrevelation](http://www.instagram.com/bookofrevelation)  
*call me, tweet me*, 2017  
Digital image  
Page 47

Stacey Davidson // [www.staceydavidson.format.com](http://www.staceydavidson.format.com)  
*share ~ repurpose*, 2017  
Digital image  
Page 48 – 53

Pippa Eason // [www.pippaeason.com](http://www.pippaeason.com)  
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Uma Breakdown // [www.umabreakdown.com](http://www.umabreakdown.com)  
*Claws*, 2017  
Digital image  
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Burkut Kum // [www.burkutkum.com](http://www.burkutkum.com)  
*Untitled*, 2017  
Digital image  
Page 56 – 57

Camilla Edström Ödemark // [www.edstromodemark.com](http://www.edstromodemark.com)  
Screenshots from *Narcissos*, 2017  
HD video with sound  
Full video here - [vimeo.com/205372466](https://vimeo.com/205372466)  
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Lucy Cowling // [www.instagram.com/lucyrianna](http://www.instagram.com/lucyrianna)  
Page 60 – 66

Tyler Robarge // [www.tlrobarge.com](http://www.tlrobarge.com)

...and printed by Tyler Robarge, 2016

Digital print

Page 68 – 69

Rosie Back // [www.rosieback.com](http://www.rosieback.com)

Screenshots from *the more u kno (that is how memes where born)* 🐼🐼, 2017

HD video with sound

Full video here - [bit.ly/2rOpxD0](http://bit.ly/2rOpxD0)

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Elliot Hewgill // [www.elliotechgill.com](http://www.elliotechgill.com)

*Marina and Mona*, 2017

Digital image

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Natalie Lambert // [www.thereisonlynow.com](http://www.thereisonlynow.com)

Page 72 – 75

Bob Bicknell-Knight // [www.bobbicknell-knight.com](http://www.bobbicknell-knight.com)

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Martin Kellett // [www.martinkellett.tumblr.com](http://www.martinkellett.tumblr.com)

@*situationistmemes*, 2017

Digital image

Page 76 – 77

Alexander Harding // [www.alexanderharding.co.uk](http://www.alexanderharding.co.uk)

*I remember because I have a photographic memory*, 2017

Copydex, adhesive vinyl print, silkscreen, flashe and pencil on linen panel with emoji air fresheners

Page 78 – 79

Kate Cooper // [www.vitrinegallery.com/artist/kate-cooper](http://www.vitrinegallery.com/artist/kate-cooper)

Page 80 – 81

Chris Bayley // [www.instagram.com/chrisbayleyyyy](http://www.instagram.com/chrisbayleyyyy)

Page 80 – 81

Aaron Scheer // [www.aaron-scheer.tumblr.com](http://www.aaron-scheer.tumblr.com)

*DaNA I*, 2017

Pigment ink on Hahnemühle paper

Page 82 – 83

Peter Barnard // [www.peterbarnard.net](http://www.peterbarnard.net)

*Moving Image*, 2017

Laser engraving on mirror

Photo by Ed Sykes

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Michelle Hannah // [www.michellehannah.net](http://www.michellehannah.net)

*DEEP STATE*, 2017

Mp3 file

Sid and Jim // [www.sidandjim.com](http://www.sidandjim.com)

*Artists and Friends THIS IS WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT*, 2017

Mp3 file