

# **These Aesthetics Are Not New**

Post-Internet conditions and their effect on  
contemporary ideas of representation in Painting.

**By Callan Grecia**

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Practical Supervisor: Ms. Tanya Poole

Thesis Supervisor: Ms. Rat Western

## **Abstract**

*These Aesthetics Are Not New* draws inspiration from the effect of digital technological progress on a consumer society. The Internet as a source of ubiquitous imagery reaffirms the idea that in a Post-Internet age there is nothing new, only conditions affected by a networked way of life. In this thesis I attempt to question contemporary ideas of representation and art making, specifically within the medium of oil paint, in a digitally consumed culture of instantaneous access. I interrogate the repetitive imagery that pervades our online experiences, and I speak about how I use my grasp of painterly knowledge and lexicon to replicate digital conditions in the real world to further cement my position that contemporary aesthetics, (digital, physical or both) are not new.

I first introduce the reader to the idea of the Post-Internet, exploring the digital's encroachment on our physical spaces and its relation to the politics of the medium of Oil Paint. I then address the concept of the Image-Object, and unpack this idea by comparing and contrasting emoji's in relation to gestural mark making and the ascription of meaning through iconographic methods in Oil Painting. This culminates in an analysis of my physical practice in relation to these ideas, and concludes with my observations on the future of our ways of seeing, as affected by the Internet and technological progression.

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Name: CALLAN GRECIA

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## Introduction

Twenty-six years since the invention of the Internet as we know it, it has become less of a novelty and more a banal necessity for communication, research and query. In *The Vision Machine*, Paul Virilio (1994), describes the drastic shift brought about by the instantaneity of technological progression. After the advent of New Media, and then, through the exploration of Internet spaces, artists became concerned with addressing how to exist in digital spaces due to their novelty and accessibility. Two decades later we begin to see an encroachment of the once novel digital spaces and aesthetics, on our own physical spaces. This shift in the politics of representation, as with the invention of the photographic camera, has impacted on Painting. But what direction has this shift taken under the influence of digital and networked media? Oil Painting has throughout history tended to shift and adjust to new modes of representation. In an age where ubiquitous imagery begins to blur the lines of translation, however, we start to see the need for a mode of representation not bound by medium.

In an essay entitled *The Image-Object Post-Internet* (2010), theorist of digital art Artie Vierkant defines an idea called the *Post-Internet*. This idea is “*defined as a result of the contemporary moment: inherently informed by ubiquitous authorship,*



*the development of attention as currency, the collapse of physical space in networked culture, and the infinite reproducibility and mutability of digital materials”* (2010, p.3). This idea stems from contemporary artists being more Internet aware and unconstrained due to the numerous methods of translation, appropriation and transmutation available digitally and physically. This opens up the borders between the digital and physical due to the sheer amount of information available, but also starts to ask questions about the politics of representation unique to both. The repetitive nature of visual information one becomes aware of under these conditions, changes ideas of originality and the original author through unbridled visual stimulus in a society of consumption. Aesthetics become interchangeable and influence is abundant. To further interrogate these ideas, I have divided this mini-thesis into three sections that provide insight into the nature of the Internet’s effect on contemporary art making practices and politics of representation.

### *Technology and The Traditional Medium of Oil Painting. What is the Post-Internet?*

In ‘Technology and The Traditional Medium of Oil Painting. What is the Post-Internet?’ I situate the reader by providing a brief engagement with what the Post-Internet is. This chapter also explores the digital’s encroachment on our physical spaces. When examining the origins of Post-Internet, one needs to consider the long history of traditional Painting as a medium, it’s politics and our ways of seeing, and how they relate to the images we are surrounded by on a daily basis. In *Expect The*

*Unexpected* (1994), Paul Virilio states that “If, according to Plato, the sophism of the painter consisted in only showing his mirage at a distance, what mirage are we dealing with today, with the real-time televising of the world?” (1994, p24)

*The Image-Object, Cy Twombly, Emoji’s.*

This chapter focuses on how, from the early 2000’s, the painted image and the digital aesthetic began to verge upon each other in both the physical and the virtual realm. In this chapter I will look closely at theorists Artie Vierkant and Marisa Olson to gain an understanding of their ideas of ‘Image-Object’ and ‘network conditions’ within the in context of the Post-Internet. I will look at the way skeuomorphism and iconography seems to form a bridge between the digital realm, and the physical one, relating these thoughts to the work of painter, Cy Twombly.

*Wish Fulfillment, The Image as Object, Painting as a vehicle for Internet Conditions, Impasto.*

In this chapter, I explore my own work, providing analysis not only on the painted works, but the process that led to the creation of those specific works. The mini-thesis is specifically structured to contextualize my thinking around these ideas, and the exhibition has been created as a response to my findings.

## **Chapter 1: Technology and The Traditional Medium Of Oil Painting. What is the Post-Internet?**

The early 21<sup>st</sup> century could be epitomized as an era where the use of digital technologies has become almost necessary to exist. The past 25 years have been subject to their exponential growth, which although this presents an optimistic realm of new possibilities, also begs the question of what happens to our ideas surrounding traditional modes of representation.

As early as the 1930's cultural theorist Walter Benjamin decried the devaluation of the individually crafted object in the face of mass production. In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* Benjamin reflects on how modes of representation are political and social reflections of an historical era:

*"The capacity of [an] artwork to encode information about its historical period (and, in so doing, potentially to reveal to readers and viewers otherwise inapprehensible aspects of the nature of their own era, and the way in which modern media – as genres and as individual works – affect the changing human sensory apparatus" (2008, p.9)*

However, the manic speed of these advancements has put us in the precarious situation of not being able to fully understand the politics of new modes, whilst attempting to keep up with the rapid progression of technology and the still newer ideas that come with it. While looking at these extensive advancements, specifically with the aid of the Internet, mass production has far exceeded the quantities of the production line, which motivated Benjamin's reflections. As the previously sought after and difficult to acquire becomes instantaneously accessible, what becomes of intimate modes of representation, particularly Oil Painting, where the object is 'one of its kind', an object that also exists as an image and is 'not reproducible'?

A look at the mass consumption of products, (information and images in particular) and the subsequent mass consumption that follows, has led to an online image economy, which is readily accessible from not only computers, but also smartphones and other Internet enabled devices, as well as through branded clothing and other merchandise which rely on imagery themselves to sell. This high consumption rate of visual data we are bombarded with by the screens that perpetually surround us, has now taken root in our physical spaces. Technology and the digital have gone mainstream in a big way in the last 10 years, and previous ideas of art making have to be reviewed under this new light. This is especially true for the traditional medium of Oil Painting and its politics. Since the first daguerreotype was created in 1839, Painting has been declared dead, however, it is still effective in depicting society and the ideas of artists engaged within the medium today. However one wonders how

Painting can situate itself in this shift of view and integrate the shift in representation that occurs when one diverges onto new modes of painterly communication and translation in a world where digital presence can often be overwhelming. Is there a need for the physicality of the painted work? Can Oil Painting translate into the digital spectrum and retain what Oil Painting essentially is? Or do we need to redefine outdated ideologies regarding the medium of Painting in particular as well as other contemporary modes of art practice?

On ideas of how technological progress and the all-encompassing nature of the Internet affect ideas associated with contemporary art, Olson states that, *"It's important to address the impacts of the Internet on culture at large, and this can be done well on networks but can and should also exist offline."*(Olson.2008). Here, Olson refers specifically to the emergent concept of a Post-Internet society. This idea was created to describe the current ideas of art and art making, as well as the way art is perceived, viewed and presented in a technologically reliant society. To understand the framework of what makes up the Post-Internet discourse and why it is so pertinent to art making, particularly Oil Painting, in the current technologically immersed era, one has to look back to understand the present and look toward the future.

One needs to understand the ideas of the past that have contributed so heavily to

the present. This can be seen in the way the programs we use to create digital art are constructed. This is key in understanding the ideas behind the way the digital provides us illusions and simulations, Skeuomorphic elements that draw from our reality that become tools and cues within the virtual realm. Montage in itself is an age-old tradition that has been re-revolutionized to aid us in the completion of relatively (today) simple tasks. Never is it more apparent in the way we have functions on our computers keyboards that allow us to copy+paste, directly derived from collage. Now we have the option of including time-based objects like video and audio in our contemporary artworks, an opportunity not afforded to those who were not in the technologically advantageous position we are currently in.

Let us situate ourselves within the medium of oil paint for a moment while taking into account the pertinence of one of the digital world's most obvious tools of representation, the screen. The screen, a rectangular, physical object can be seen as a skeuomorphic derivative of the frame of traditional Oil Painting, and the artwork on the canvas can be seen to be a separate reality that occurs on our digital screens today. What one also needs to be aware of are the formats our screens can achieve. Portrait and landscape are the two most intriguing linguistically, as they are practically in the same shape as canvases would have been made during Renaissance Painting. Adobe Photoshop is an incredibly rich source of ideas of digital simulation in relation to Oil Painting, in that it contains digital counterparts to physical actions, specifically in regard to Painting. The number of obviously referential tools such as

Canvas Size, Brushes, Color Palettes and Layers are digital simulations of a physical and essentially low tech medium, rendered in a high tech interface. Let's say a painter paints a work that excites the masses to the point they are asked to paint another Painting exactly the same as the previous one for each of the people who wish to own that exact Painting for themselves. It is impossible. However, with the advent of print and digital media, one is able to own a copy. This copy may not be exact in that, it will not have the three dimensionality of the original if this copy is digital, and the inherent flatness of the image will be two-dimensional, but it is as exact as it would ever be in the virtual space that it exists within. Going back to the screen, if one could procure a screen the exact dimensions of the original, one would be a step closer to having an exact copy of the original Painting, however, it would still lack the physical brushstrokes, the physical medium and the physical properties that make the original Painting exactly that, the original. The digital is still only able to simulate the original. The image you own is an illusion. This cultural effect of adoption and then simulation creates a strange slippage between what we can consider real and what is virtual.

Let us go back to the idea of the screen as a surface. The screen is an interesting visual phenomenon which in many ways is a driving factor in the way that we perceive the digital matrix, as well as how we are being conditioned into new ways of seeing relationally. Essentially, in classical visual culture, the 'screen' would have been the canvas, and more modern visual culture; we have the screen one sees on

televisions, cinema, mobile devices, etc. According to Lev Manovich, the screen at its most basic incarnation can be characterized by *'the existence of another virtual space, another three-dimensional world enclosed by a frame and situated inside our normal space'* (Manovich, 2001). What is interesting about this idea is the way in which the screen, in the newer digital sense or in the classic idea of a framed Oil Painting, can exist within its own virtual space, and then have some factor on the space it is situated in. These virtual spaces, these screens surround us on a daily basis, and yet we have not given the screen enough attention, instead, we've looked rather at the worlds they enclose within them. This overlapping of realities is pertinent in unpacking of the idea that is Post-Internet, and presently, screens have adopted a form of overlapping with the User Interface or UI Technologies. These User Interfaces are observable on smartphones, computers, televisions, cameras, etc. and consist of the screen of the device, which then plays host to multiple windows within it. These windows house virtual realities of their own in the form of media players, image viewers, Adobe Photoshop, video editing software and the rest. We have done away with the single interface screen and now, we are able to act on and off of multiple realities within a single frame. What is astounding about the modern digital screen is the way it came about. One can trace cinematic ideas behind the screen to theatre and diorama, however, the origins of the contemporary screen we use today that engages us with User Interfaces and multiple window viewing has its origins within a key idea that affects all those who use the Internet or devices that are connected to it, surveillance. Beginning with the invention of



photographic technology, government and military ideas of surveillance began to grow. Through photography, surveillance was possible from an aerial and therefore covert vantage point. With WW2 and the progression of photography, radar was developed, due to a need for a more instantaneous method of keeping track of the enemy. Without the delay of having to wait for the photographs of the enemy to arrive, delays were eliminated and data transfer became instantaneous. The necessity for a screen that provided information without delay has since then evolved from the basic computer interfaces of the first consumer directed computers, to the now common, multiple window interfaces of today's technology. We are now seeing screens that allow us the option of 'no' delay in the form of 'live view', a development first seen commercially in broadcast television (live sports or events) and later point and shoot cameras. Live view allows one to see life through, or rather, on the screen in 'real' time. Of course there is a delay, as the represented image has to go through numerous processes before it can be displayed, however this lag is barely noticeable with the right device or the right connection. An interesting product of 'real time' and the 'live view' is the social service, Skype. This allows people to conveniently connect with each other from anywhere in the world (that has access to the Internet) in a video or audio format. What intrigues me is the idea of representing 'real realities' virtually, taking them out of the physical and reintroducing them into a connected reality where the interaction can be disturbed by pop-up adverts and notifications. This interrupts the general fluidity of conversation and allows for events that could only occur through technology to take

place. Looking back at the idea of the visual dualities represented by screens, Skype is a real world example of how the worlds of the physical and the digital exist separately in a sense, yet they still manage to influence the way we view the spaces the effect in new ways.

The advent of the GIF, arguably one of the first kinds of artworks of the Internet, a compromise was available which allowed for the narrative that exists within video, which can for certain purposes be overtly narrative, and the stillness/lack of movement that one sees in Oil Painting. The GIF format (an acronym for Graphics Interchangeable Format) was best suited to network logos and less realistic, more vector based images with less color variations. Due to the small file sizes this compression type afforded, the GIF was then afforded the ability of animation as computer technologies improved but were still not at the processing capacity for the average PC to process video. An animated GIF file comprises a number of frames that are displayed in succession, allowing for a time-based image, restricted to a small, set amount of data. The GIF has been adopted by niche Internet cultures as a means to accomplish essentially what Internet aware artists are aiming to achieve, in that, it allows for elements that couldn't possibly occur in Paintings, such as movement, to be perceived through a constrained video narrative. GIF's allow for informational artifacts to be included into an essentially still image that previously could not be accomplished through Painting or Photography. This brings about a new way of seeing, where photographs and Oil Paintings were essentially still and

lacking movement within the frame, we are now able to change the rhetoric by altering how it is one thinks about images. The GIF lacks the physical qualities inherent in Paintings. It seems that animation and video help include a time-based element into a painted work, but this changes how we read the work, from a Painting, to a digital work or a projection of a digital work. The Painting is no longer a painting but an essentially digital representation of a Painting. The stop frame animation technique provides GIF like qualities to painting yet these works are still inevitably accessed online or through technology such as the digital projector. If one then looks to older technological ideas such as holographic trading cards, maybe one day there will be a way of painting that allows for a time-based, physical element that doesn't need technology to portray it, rather, we will use the ideas behind the technology to bring the grain of the digital back into the physical.

Looking at the history of Oil painting is essential in understanding the ways in which artists are looking toward digital imagery today to produce paintings. If one looks back in history at the different ways painting was used, one can see the way the use of the medium in each period reflected certain socio-political ideas of the time, things people were beginning to consider about the world around them, translating into the medium of oil paint. The paintings of the Renaissance reformation were an incredibly rich source of ideas. Oil Painting became a reflection of a society attempting to understand the world, and the stars through science and geography, adopting techniques such as perspective to create the illusion of depth within the

frame. This came from a rebellion against the idealized representations of the heavens and the gods, which were still using elements of science and alchemy to create imagery that embodied these ideas. The paintings of Gustave Courbet turned the 18<sup>th</sup> century ideals on their heads in an effort to depict the people, the everyday, and the real. Modernist ideas of progress suggested that prior ideologies are challenged by newer, more present ways of thinking, and so on and so forth. If, however, this progress were the natural order of technological advancement there would be little purpose in retaining design elements of previous technologies in new technologies (i.e. skeuomorphs) beyond a certain point of creating familiarity. Traditional Oil Painting, therefore would no longer be desirable or of use. Etching and various kinds of printmaking would have died with the advent of the dot-matrix printer. There are key elements that make an Oil Painting an Oil Painting, or a traditional copperplate etching (for all that it has the function of seriality) that retain or rather, reinvent their value for modern audiences.

It is not only ideology that is being challenged, but also the very fabric that makes a medium specifically that medium. There are factors such as the idea of the screen and of course cultural appropriation, however, the ideas that link a digital way of seeing with the formal concerns and visual aspects of painting that seems the most pertinent, is the notion of flatness. While both mediums share the idea of flatness at the core of their aesthetics, these flatnesses exist very differently in relation to one another. The different aesthetics that identify each as its own raise questions when

one begins to prepare one for induction into the other. This is where problems of representation come into play. The limitations that comprise the medium of oil paint are a flat surface, the canvas or 'shape of its support' (three-dimensionality) and the properties of the pigment. Digitally, one is limited to brightness or illumination, pixel matrixes that only support as many pixels as are available (screen definition) and two-dimensionality. Modernist oil painters were incredibly attuned to this idea of flatness, which became the key motivation behind the flat, linear images that were produced by the movement, and if one looks as far back as the Old Masters, one can see the integrity of the flat surface that was retained, where illusion was used to create depth of field and three-dimensional space. What is interesting about Modernism in relation to the ideas that surround The Post-Internet is that the limitations and conditions of painting can *"be pushed back indefinitely before a picture stops being a picture and turns into an arbitrary object; but it has also found that the further back these limits are pushed the more explicitly they have to be observed and indicated"*(Greenburg, 1961). By pushing the limits of a medium, one can be seen to be attempting to transcend the medium in some sense. The flatness of a digital screen constrains the physical properties of an Oil Painting in a virtual, 2-dimensional space, where depth cannot accurately be perceived. Physical representations of digital imagery will never be as flat as they appear on our screens because of the inherent physicality of the painting as an object. As there will always be allusions to two-dimensionality and three-dimensionality that can be achieved within Oil Painting and digital, the crossover between the two begins to highlight

these illusions and render them ineffective. In light of this, how can Painting effectively situate itself within the digital, whilst retaining the concepts that constitute the medium itself? Can digital imagery and lexicon be rendered as effectively through physical Oil Painting? If one looks at the way galleries today operate, usually, the physical works on display inside the gallery are photographed to be uploaded onto the gallery's online catalogue. Physical catalogues of exhibitions are also created and contain the photographed and then printed images of the work that is on display. In both cases, these platforms serve, as a liminal space that contains the relevant visual information within in it, yet doesn't represent it adequately enough to fully appreciate and analyze unless one actually visits the gallery to view the work on display. This is due to the size restrictions and two-dimensionality specific to the digital language of representation. The translation of the flatness of Oil Painting into the flatness of the digital and vice-versa becomes the metaphor discussed above. Upon viewing this, one begins to question the way the digital lexicon embraces simulacra, propagating a death to all that we perceived once as 'original', or 'real'. By simulation, and then reproduction, we begin to kill the 'origin' of the image repeatedly, breaking down the mystical, the flatness of the paint. The death of the painting.

*“Renaissance painting offers a revealing analogy to this situation. The incomparable development of this art and its significance rested not least on the integration of a number of new sciences, or at least of new scientific data. Renaissance painting made use of anatomy and perspective, of mathematics,*

*meteorology, and chromatology. Valery writes: "What could be further from us than the strange claim of a Leonardo to whom Painting was a supreme goal and the ultimate demonstration of knowledge? Leonardo was convinced that Painting demanded universal knowledge, and he did not even shrink from a theoretical analysis which to us is stunning because of its very depth and precision...." –Paul Valéry, Pièces sur l'Art, "Autour de Corot," Paris, p. 191. 17 "The work of art," says Andre Breton, "is valuable only in so far as it is vibrated by the reflexes of the future." Indeed, every developed art form intersects three lines of development. Technology works toward a certain form of art." (Benjamin.1935)*

This idea that Walter Benjamin explored in 'The Age of Mechanical Reproduction' speaks towards Painting being able to engage with progress through an all-encompassing view that engages with universal ideas in order to better situate the medium during a certain time. Thus, by engaging with technology and developing knowledge of it, one can hopefully find a means of representing it, and possibly transcending the boundaries and limitations of the medium to create something that doesn't die upon its introduction to the physical realm. Is there perhaps a new way of representing Painting digitally and the digital physically? Is there a possibility for this?

What one needs to take into account when attempting to understand the idea of

Post-Internet is its infancy, not only in ideology but also with regards to the availability of influences such as the Internet that has existed so briefly in the span of human existence, yet has also managed to become a banality in its incredibly organic integration into human life. This newness, however, the idea's inherent youth lack the foundation to adequately describe empirically what Post-Internet art actually is. This is apparent in how we engage with the digital and also with how we represent it, in that we have no metaphor to explain why Post-Internet art is what it is. We only have examples of things that are congruently associated with the idea insofar as these examples contribute to deciphering Post-Internet; its emergence and the artistic possibilities that can come from it.

An example of this is the Vaporwave movement. Vaporwave is a niche genre of music that originated on Internet forums such as Tumblr, Instagram and Soundcloud in early 2010. The genre itself attempted to encapsulate early 80's and mid 90's nostalgia through the sampling and subversion of 80's and 90's smooth Jazz music while incorporating prominent visual lexicon of those era's in the visual components related to advertising and marketing the music online. Visually, Vaporwave's obsession with early 90's graphic design, Grecian statues and lo-fi glitch art can be seen as a nostalgic look at the early years of technology which imagined itself futuristic but which has become rapidly dated and betrays its analogue roots all too quickly. The speed at which technology has moved has rendered even relatively recent history in technological design quaint and old fashioned. As Vaporwave music began to enter the mainstream of consumer culture in early 2012 through a



burgeoning online, almost cult like following, one is able to see a mimetic visual language, reliant on the past, develop through new means of consumption, such as social media and Internet forums. Iconography in the digital artworks produced under the moniker Vaporwave became ingrained in the term. To a young audience immersed in the screens of their computers and smartphones, Grecian statues, Styrofoam cups filled with 'lean', glitch art and gradated backgrounds in the digital online artwork being produced became synonymous with the Vaporwave culture. These elements began to represent a Post-Internet visual language, or at least attempted to try and define elements of it through looking to the past. By juxtaposing those elements alongside newer, more contemporary cultural aspects, however, an inability to predict the trajectory and impact of contemporary art right now, have become tropes of our society. We have fallen into a need for continual 'newness'. We can only achieve such newness by 'futurising' the past, rather than examining our current technological processes which become banal in their availability. Metaphors are difficult at best to describe an entire socio-political movement, but possibly, by attempting to understand the present, we can use our findings epistemically to engage with ideas surrounding new modes of representation and what it means for our futures without having to resort to the rhetoric of futuristic dystopia and the ultimate failure of humanity through machines. These aesthetics are not new.

## Chapter 2: The Image-Object, Cy Twombly, Emoji's

*"Artists are not creative in the sense of constantly coming up with new content. Rather, they change the form, the medium, the framework. In their hands, form is elevated to method, media become cocreators, and blueprints turn into diagrams." (Mulder,2012,p14)*

Technological progress has created a space for artist's to now ubiquitously use the Internet as a tool to aid their practice in diverse ways. Not only are works created online but the platform is used to promote, market and display as well as an online resource for information to manifest artwork in the 'real' world. Olson describes this as, "offline art", or art "after the Internet"(2008). The banal accessibility of the Internet in an age of optic fiber, super high-speed connections, mobile phone Internet capabilities and smart watches have taken the miracle of instantaneous access and super-communication and rendered it now as an everyday given. The Internet then becomes something we are used to, something that exists purely for access to information, entertainment and business, a daily part of our lives rather than the exciting avant-garde it entered our world as on its inception. What is compelling about Post-Internet art is the way it embraces this banality, or rather how it forces one to interrogate what it is to make art in an age that is after the Internet. This then offers an ideological space to begin dismantling the boundaries of

Internet aware practice, previously confined in most cases to New Media practices, and start making art that as Olson states, *“encapsulates and transports network conditions and their critical awareness as such, even so far as to transcend the Internet”*. (Olson.2008). With this transcendence come slippages in representation, viewer consumption and traditional concerns surrounding New Media versus non-digital methods of art production. Let me start by addressing the possible reasons for Internet-Aware artwork finding its way more and more into our physical realm of existence, not forgetting to acknowledge where and when these shifts began to occur in our current spaces of visual pursuit.

Artie Vierkant’s observations on the shift in understanding of intellectual property in a post-industrial society proceed an idea that is very pertinent to understanding what Post-Internet art is. He notes that:

*“Art after modernism has been deeply entwined and rightfully at odds with intellectual property. In response to the legal codification of protections for creative labor, the twentieth century brought us “the readymade” and “appropriation” as key artistic tools. These tools are changing, however, or producing tools that aren’t yet named.”(2008:102)*

Accepted current practices of intellectual property, however, have a multiplicity of iterations in a Post-Internet age. How this impacts art making is more than simply an aesthetic associated with its Internet-Aware practitioners, but also affects modes of

production, reception and exchange in a society who haven't, as yet fully, grappled with the impacts this cultural phenomenon has on our society as a whole.

As discussed in the previous chapter the Internet and its instantaneity grants access to a seemingly infinite amount of information. As one cannot possibly explore every aspect of the Internet and its endless landscape, I focus on network conditions particularly surrounding Social Media such as Facebook, Instagram and Tumblr as the amount of information available now, in part because of these sites, compared to during the initial introduction of the Internet is exponentially larger. The advent of these Social Media sites in conjunction with image sharing and image capturing technologies becoming cheaper and far more accessible, and the global increase of Internet access has led to the production of an *image economy*. Jaron Lanier describes this term, *image-economy*, as coming from the idea of information creation and dissemination taking on new forms of access in a society bound by consumerism in a way we have never seen before- one where information and images provide us instant gratification. This is only temporarily as, increasingly, we attempt to satiate our hunger and desire for infinitely more (2013). No longer is the archaic notion of artist as creator, and viewer as purveyor necessarily true, but depending on which end one looks at it from it could also not be *more* true. With these new advancements in technology, everybody has the ability to create '*art*'. If one has access to a smartphone, tablet or computer of any kind, it is possible to utilize the image capturing and image making technologies on these devices to

create and then share one's own creative endeavors, to a worldwide audience consumed by images, hungry for newer information. This creation and then sharing of work has put the modern human being in a space of creating one's own artistic narratives, conscientiously or otherwise. This constant flow of production leads to a *'visual noise'*, compiled by us, the users of this technology. Your Facebook, Instagram and Twitter newsfeed, your Google image search, your Snapchat story, all contribute to the idea of an image economy, a space of *'ubiquitous authorship'*. *Brand Innovations For Ubiquitous Authorship* is a title of a group exhibition organized by Artie Vierkant in 2012. This exhibition, invited more than 60 international artists to submit objects produced using a custom online printing or fabrication service and which was delivered in sealed boxes directly to the gallery. Turning the artist from a unique creator of individually crafted objects into a designer of potentially mass produced products echoes the creative process of social media streams where *'objects'* in the form of images or ideas can be shared, copied and pasted, duplicated multiple times by makers not the originator. In these spaces, one becomes aware of the fact that the content we engage with across Internet platforms is not necessarily new. What is more apparent is the regurgitation of imagery and information most commonly witnessed in cases of images, videos or text based articles that go *'viral'*. The idea of the viral image, the image that has an origin but is reproduced, shared and becomes immediately familiar is interesting in relation to how much of this economy of visual information is made up of new imagery and how much is essentially similar content that has been shared so severely, it inducts itself into

Western visual culture at present. To return to Vierkant's summary of intellectual property in a Post-Internet society, we can see how this idea becomes most pertinent when we start to see the viral image, web based interactions, functions and aesthetics, or 'network conditions' as they are described by Olson (2008), appear in our physical reality. This constant revival, reworking and re-sharing is interesting in the way new content manifests itself and the ways that artists then need to address the notions of what is theirs, where it has come from, is it 'original' and does originality even matter at this point? Mulder notes that something in this shift of understanding about creativity will be lost:

*"All signs indicate that technological art will succumb to current social pressure and becoming something useful to people and the economy. In the process, we will lose the part of what I will call the intellectual life of our times; the extent to which we are able to be conscious of the present.*  
*(2012:08)*

The convergence of digital and networked media on our physical reality presents us with new problems of representation. The idea of the original becomes blurred when physical and digital art making practices blend as art practitioners create work that relies on network conditions but exist in a physical space. Let us then begin to navigate the origins of this convergence and explore the ways in which network culture began to converge onto our physical spaces and how that could affect ways

of art making presently.

The New Aesthetic is a term coined by writer, publisher, technologist, and artist, James Bridle in early 2011. This project, aware of Post-Internet ideas, began to look at what Bridle considered a 'new turn' or paradigmatic shift in the ways that we as humans perceive the idea of the digital encroaching in on the physical world. The project began to analyze how the vast digital expansion fits into our current modes of thinking. Beginning as an open source, shareable idea of curated images that reflect mechanized ways of seeing on social media giant, Tumblr, *The New Aesthetic* seeks to open up a dialogue between man and machine, to attempt to understand the computers that surround us, and the means with which they are trying to communicate with us. It has since sparked numerous debates about our grasp of the increasingly technologically reliant society we live in. These debates center around what this apparent technological revolution means, not only with regards to art, but societally as well. *The New Aesthetic* also reflects the idea that we have entered into a highly digitally influenced way of seeing, one that isn't new, but one in which we haven't yet acknowledged the monumental gravity of its many possibilities. The Internet and the ever-increasing availability and affordability of technology are massive contributing factors towards this way of seeing as they inevitably begin to change previously technologically absent ways of thinking, hence Olson's notion of the Internet Aware artist (2008). As the Internet, Social Media and mobile devices have become so embedded in Western society, it is only a matter of time before

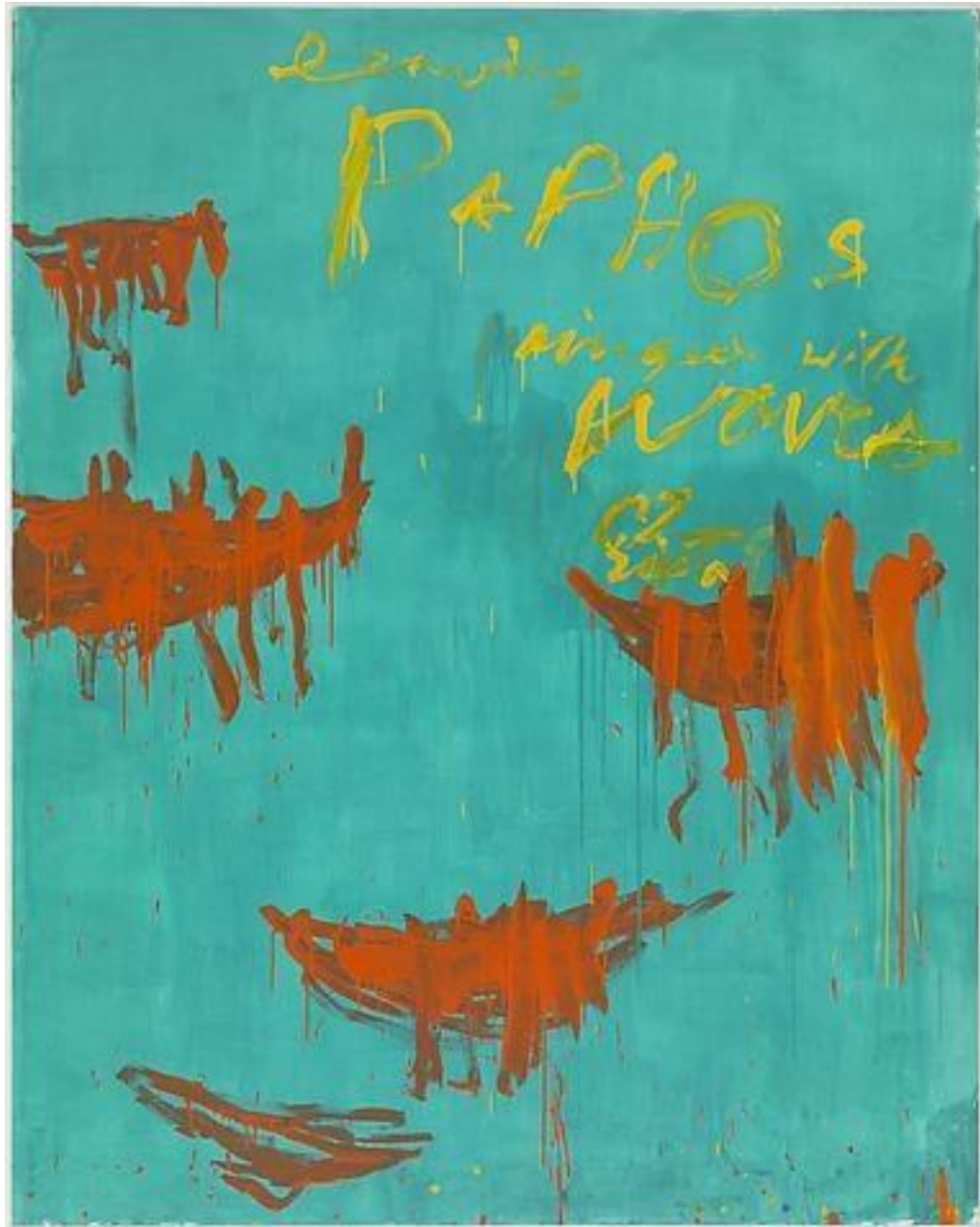
they begin to have an impact on traditionally 'low tech' ways of doing and seeing. This view is pervasive. It encompasses daily facets of life and is increasingly shifting society to adopt various digital norms in the physical realm, in a rather tangible form. This can be contributed to an incessant futuristic ideal brought about by new technologies that are effectively more and more able to make the digital, physical. Computers and machines are beginning to 'understand' us, and we have yet to translate the messages they have for us as we bask in the banality of the *"phenomenal that isn't so phenomenal"*(Olson.2008)

Linguistically these messages become relevant in how one could see the encroachment of network language and terms occurring in physical spaces through the usage of these terms in our real world environment. Terms that began as URL (online) terminology consistently make their way into everyday IRL (in real life) conversation, which seems to stem from the ever-increasing necessity of digital tools that we use in our everyday lives to communicate. From the initial advent of email and texting, to our present day usage of digital means to communicate non-verbally with one another, emoticons, memes, hash tags and acronyms are increasingly present in our IRL spaces. Through social media, we have become a society that communicates nonverbally, through text and images more so than we are able to verbally. The convenience of network communication becomes just as convenient as verbal communication and because we are almost all connected through social media, it seems like the logical progression of language to begin to adapt to using



these new terms. One can then link the concept of emoji's and emoticons to our simplification of language to include image-based representations of emotive language to aid purely text-based communication. These modern day hieroglyphs or iconographic indicators remove the need to consider tone while typing text, relying on an image to represent the emotive parts of the conversation through visual representations that occur in real life communication in the form of facial expressions, tone and body language. This is an example of how physical components of speech have been digitized to attempt to represent what cannot be represented online through images. Emoji's have also evolved with technology, starting as text based characters such as the '*smiley*', :-), to more realistic representations of emotion, object, time and place as visible on our mobile and computer keyboards at present. Emoji's are now the visual representatives for tone and seem to predict the simplification of real life conditions through digitization for the sole purpose of achieving light speed instantaneity, a series of events seemingly predicted by Virilio. This is the linguistic visualization of the instantaneity digital technologies offers, and that we use on a day-to-day basis. As network conditions affect our language, they also begin to show us our love for speed, in a world where access is instant; therefore communication needs to be as well. Not only are emoji's representative of a need for instantaneity, however, they also mimic ideas prevalent in the medium of Painting. One can compare the gestural mark making of Painting as a visual language in the same way that emoji's are shorthand for emotive states. I say this with the knowledge that the painted image rendered in oils and the digital

image do not share the same plane of visual representation, yet they do share similar ideas of simplifying communication, which is important when looking at the idea of traditional Painting as a medium through a Post-Internet lens.



**Fig. 1 C.Twombly, 'Leaving Paphos Ringed with Waves II'. Acrylic on Canvas. 2.6m x 2.1m. 2009**

If one looks particularly at the painted work of expressionist painter Cy Twombly for example one is able to trace the ways in which technological progression has left its mark. For an artist who creates work that is not related directly to the exploration of Post-Internet ideas, or that deals with network conditions, he still makes use of a similar language in his physical work that were propagated through technological advancement. Before I analyze Twombly's 2009 series of paintings '*Leaving Paphos Ringed with Waves*', it is imperative to note the way traditional studio Painting as a medium has consistently fluctuated in and out of contemporary spheres as a medium which many still regard as dead. As discussed in Chapter 1 however, the mark of scientific and technological progression is very apparent throughout history as painters utilized these means to create work that represented a contemporary moment. One of the most interesting iterations of this influence discussed above, appear markedly throughout the work of expressionist Painter Cy Twombly. Known for his expansive, large scale but almost minimally worked paintings, Twombly exudes a technological influence that became a defining feature of his work throughout his career. Painting seems to be an almost perfect Post-Internet vehicle as similar aesthetic concerns and visual languages that exist on two different representative planes define it. What also becomes apparent you will find is the iconographic and skeuomorphic means of representation that occur within emoji's and other technological advancements- this time however in reverse. Rather than quoting real world objects to detail the idea of desktop icons or human expressions, the painting quotes digital modes, glitches, screen reflectivity and movement back

into a physical realm. Both share these concepts as a mode of representation as in both cases what they reference is not real but iconographic. These modes of representation in Painting are apparent in the ways of making that the technologically aware see vividly in the work of the technologically unaware, as we are all affected by these conditions by virtue of being implicit in their use, as well as their propagation in a contemporary Western society.

In the series of paintings *'Leaving Paphos Ringed with Waves'* (2009), one becomes immediately aware of two critical visual cues that speak to the ideas of simplicity and instantaneity- qualities I have already used to describe emoji's. I have a strange reverence for the romantic ideals that underpin Twombly's work, however, I want to talk critically about the technical concerns within these paintings to further extend my point. The two visual cues I am referring to specifically are the usage of text within the painting, scrawled sparsely in yellow acrylic across the top right hand side of the canvas, and the linear, orange colored boat motifs that float across the canvas. These last are clear-cut from the turquoise background, almost standing off the proposed liquid plane. The linear visual materials we are given stylistically come from the artist's Army service as a cryptologist, a decipherer of codes. This has modern roots in data encryption and speaks to technological concerns of surveillance, however let us concentrate on the act of mark making, integral to the visual language of Painting. This series of work reminds me of a conversation over instant messenger. It is simple. Rather than depicting an elaborate story it points to a

more complex conversation. These are snippets rather than an entire narrative. The text allows us a base insight into the work, but it affords us, no more than the title in the catalogue because its gestural nature affords a sense of tone. The expressiveness of this writing is complimented by the little orange boat shapes, which further add to the tone of the work like personalized emoji's. These strange orange, linearly painted shapes Twombly has used to represent ships on the Mediterranean sea act as iconographic representations of the ships in the mythological reference used to create these works. In their simplicity one can immediately recognize their form to be old world, ancient wooden vessels. Yet they could also be arbitrary shapes, but we know through exposure to imagery, and through the artist incredible simplification of the essence of these vessels that they are what he says they are. They are not figurative at all, yet we can ascribe through this simplification of visual language and through cues that the artist has considered, that they are ships. The text and the icons work together to garner meaning and tell a story through mark making that could not exist without this symbiotic relationship that we now use to communicate with each other on a daily basis through digital means. The image and the object become one, they become entirely interchangeable as we see fit, and whether one exists on a digital plane or not, the terms of representation change but they can still be seen similarly through each incarnation.

Through these ideas, one can begin to start to break down the ideas of visual communication and how the digital has encroached onto the physical (and how

earlier forms of symbolic communication are appropriated by the digital). Both are reliant on similar languages, languages of the icon and symbol, which begin to exist on multiple planes rather than necessarily being bound by its origins. Olson then discusses the idea of '*objects that aren't objects*' (2008) essentially a physical object that exists primarily to be a '*vehicle of Internet content*'. These physical objects that convey network conditions seem to be the beginnings of a shift in understanding the Internet and technology's affect on classical art making practices, especially traditional studio Painting, by allowing the slippages in translation to occur by acknowledging that network conditions do in fact affect physical art practices. That these physical representations of network conditions occur should then begin to tackle the politics of representation that comes with this. In my practice, I have used the idea of objects as vehicles for network conditions through a two fold integration of these conditions into physical paintings, which I will discuss in the next chapter. Re-digitizing physical, painted work in order to make new, physical objects that exist purely as a vehicle for the re-represented image, allowing an integration and reintegration feedback loop of information reminiscent of the digital image economy. These representations of digital network conditions are thus encroaching on the physical, becoming offline representations of online ideologies.

### **Chapter 3: Wish Fulfillment, The Image as Object, Painting as a vehicle for Internet Conditions, Impasto**

*“After the issue of instantaneity’s lack of delay, here we have the issue of ubiquity’s distance, only the perspective is reversed: what now counts is not the vanishing point in the real space of a scene or a landscape, but only vanishing in the face of death and it’s question mark – its interrogation point – in a perspective of real time used and abused by the cathode screen with live broadcasting, offering ‘death live’ and an endless procession of repeat disasters.”(Virilio, 2005,p10)*

Throughout my physical art practice, as well I have been increasingly aware of the effects Post-Internet ways of seeing and ideologies have had on my specific area of focus. Situated primarily within the medium of oil paint, I am also aware of this medium’s classical connotations, long history and complex narrative. What I have unpacked in the previous chapters is a contextual basis for the reader. The works I have created throughout my Masters degree have been centered on these ideas and their relation to the medium of oil paint, but also relate to my personal experience as a content creator, as well as content consumer. Growing up in the early 90’s, I was

exposed to the frantic advance in technological progress, living through the births and eventual deaths of multiple technological advancements that molded and shifted my ways of seeing. Starting as exploratory play, I began to delve into the creation of work that fell within the labored, time consuming foundation of Oil Painting that also then explored the consumer culture, social media sites such (Tumblr and Facebook in particular) and the issues of representation that come with working within a Post-Internet framework and way of seeing. The culmination of this exploratory, philosophical exercise in looking, (as well as interrogating new ways of looking) is a series of Oil Paintings that engage a diverse range of subject matter, painterly vocabulary and integration of aesthetic considerations not bound by physical or digital barriers. These paintings comprise my Masters practical submission entitled, *"These Aesthetics Are Not New"*- Through these works I attempt to question contemporary Painting discourse and ideas of representation through the use of network conditions in an age of image ubiquity and instantaneous access. In this chapter I hope to give the reader an analysis of the work that has been created for this exhibition, informed by my knowledge of the history of traditional Oil Painting and Post-Internet concerns.





**Fig. 2 C.Grecia, *'I Travelled in Search Of Friends But Still Got Banned From Every Group I Tried To Join'*. Oil on Canvas. 1.3m x 0.75m. 2015**

I began my experimentation with, *'I Travelled in Search Of Friends But Still Got Banned From Every Group I Tried To Join'*, 2015 (Fig. 2) With this image I began trying to portray digital imagery through the physical act of painting. My process for selecting subject matter, at this point, was still in its infancy. I collated a diverse range of imagery that I believed encapsulated my experience of browsing the Internet, curating the images that spoke most to the digital aesthetic I was trying to depict. This first painting is a landscape filled with trees, snow, and strange flashing red, green and yellow orbs. The trees are layered to create depth with lighter shades of varying, muted blue hues, substantiated by thick, black impasto trees in the

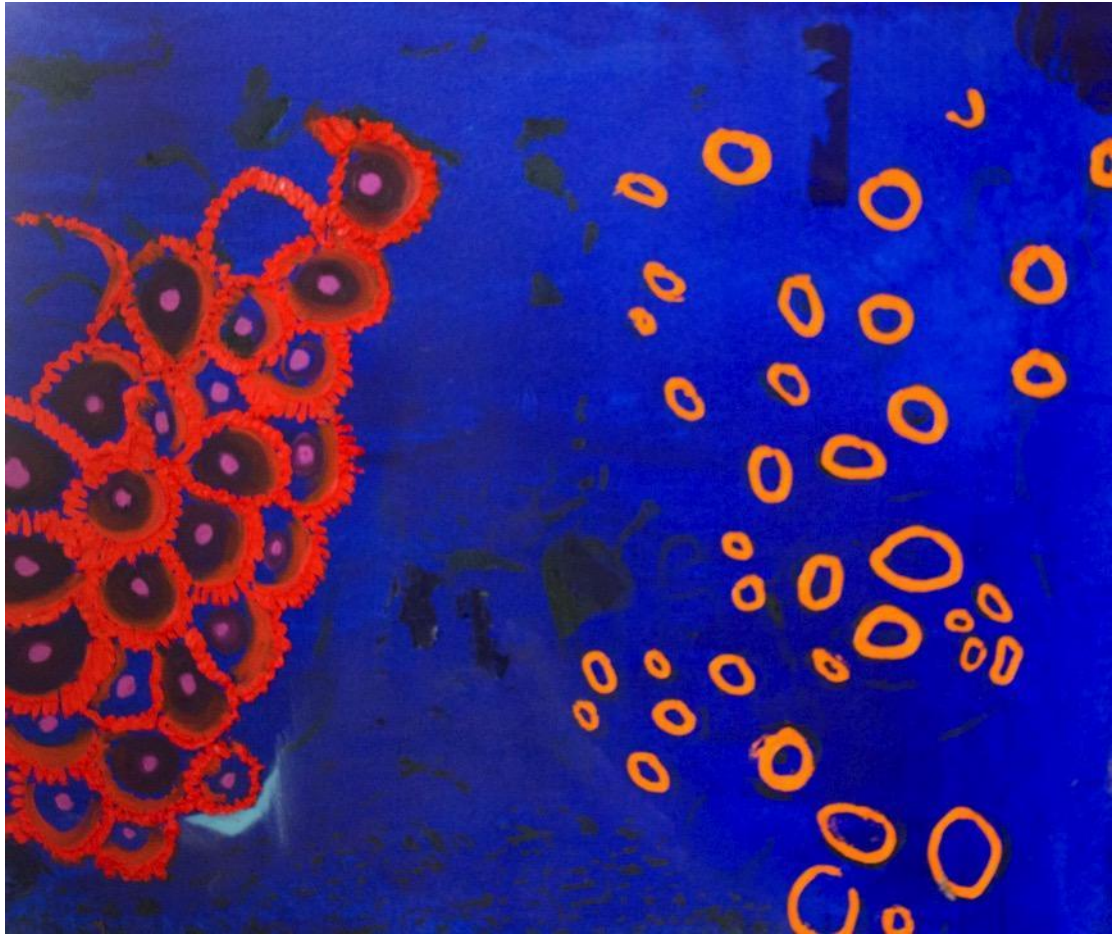
foreground. The floor of this particular forest scape is covered in snow, represented by the thin application of light blue and articulated impasto lines of varying cold tones, created by squeezing the colors through a syringe to create the glitch-like reticulated space in the center of the work. A fairly large work, this painting was my springboard into mediating the gap between painterly vocabulary and digital aesthetics. With the subject matter of the work, I attempted to create space that was allegorical of my own browsing experience as an individual maneuvering the digital 'landscape' of the Internet. Informed by the writing of Paul Virilio, my concerns were at this point an attempt to create a metaphor for the experience of network conditions through a return to classical landscape imagery. This figuration spoke to a darkness that exists when one browses the Internet, where one can access whatever one wishes, fulfilling harmless desires, or harnessing the power to indulge the darkness of the human psyche cloaked by the anonymity of existing behind the screen.

The painterly vocabulary of this work also exuded a cold luxury. Thick impasto elements become almost sculptural as the paint stands off the canvas creating visible dimension, completely contrasting the flatness Greenburg discussed concerning modernist Painting. Thus the painting turns from image into object. Already rooted in romantic ideals of wish fulfillment and excess, this element of the work starts to speak to the ideas of the *Image-Object*, turning a romanticized image not devoid of labor, into a new vehicle of disseminating network conditions. The

ubiquitous nature of landscape imagery becomes the vehicle for all forests. An image that exists physically, providing haptic feedback as a painting, but also representing the ability to travel anywhere in the world through the screen's cold, flattening filter. *'Then I Palm Trees'*, 2015 (Fig. 3), *'Deep Blue'*, 2015 (Fig. 4) and *'Browse Until You Find Your Solace'*, 2015 (Fig.5) all tackled similar aesthetic concerns in their subject matter and painterly execution, interrogating the Internet *'landscape'* and using contrasting painterly vocabulary to examine the product of compositing romantic Painting lexicon and the cold distance of online aesthetics. Not as large as *'I Travelled in Search Of Friends But Still Got Banned From Every Group I Tried To Join'*, 2015 (Fig. 2), I experimented with scale to explore the effect of dimension on how the work was perceived. Whereas the larger scale work began to appear more closely connected with the screens of television sets and cinema screens, the smaller the works became the more they began to correlate with the screens on mobile devices such as cellphones or tablets, the impasto acting as a means of receiving haptic feedback from such devices.



**Fig. 3 C.Grecia, *Then I Palm Trees*. Oil on Canvas. 50cm x 35cm. 2015**



**Fig. 4 C.Grecia, *Deep Blue*. Oil on Canvas. 45cm x 35cm. 2015**



**Fig. 5 C.Grecia. *Browse Until You Find Your Solace*. Oil on Canvas. 15cm x 35cm.**

**2015**



**Fig. 6 C.Grecia. . *These Are On My Etsy*. Oil on Canvas. 70cm x 55cm. 2015**



**Fig. 7 C.Grecia. *Specters*. Oil on Canvas. 40cm x 40cm. 2015**

In the works, *'These Are On My Etsy'*, 2015 (Fig. 6) and, *'Specters'*, 2015 (Fig. 7) there was a shift in thought that occurred concerning the recurrence of certain imagery that I noticed while researching Post-Internet aesthetics online and curating images off of the Internet to turn into paintings. The repetitive subject matter that intrigued me the most prior to starting these works was the prevalence of archaic marble statues and busts being incorporated into net art during that period. This particular use of marble statues became part of the previously discussed online subculture Vaporwave, and the figures of the past were given a renewed breath in



contemporary art practice, becoming an iconographic motif of the network culture it now figure headed. This resurgence of the marble statue in a very young, online sphere began to resonate with the ideas of image economy and wish fulfillment I have discussed above. The marble statue also became a symbol, instantly recognizable now as born again modern, an attempt at contemporaneity by reaching to the past and essentially repurposing an visual language as a vehicle to become the driving force behind a 'newer' one. This became the springboard for my exhibition title, *"These Aesthetics Are Not New"* as I became more aware of the same patterns occurring over time online, birthed out of network conditions, shared to maximum capacity and then assimilated into the physical world once it had been adopted from online subculture into offline popular culture.

Visually this prompted a shift in my painterly vocabulary as evident in the slicker, more layered approach evident in these two works. This ever-changing visual lexicon becomes an overarching theme throughout the paintings, reminiscent of my initial interest in technological progress and it's affect on art making practices in a world of exponential technological advancements. In *'These Are On My Etsy'*, 2015 (Fig. 6), the marble sculpture motif becomes the focus of the image. There is an evident focus on surface, and concerted effort to achieve a screen like luminosity through layering washes of thin oil paint used as glazes to refract light and mimic the screen I first viewed these marble statues on. The thick impasto of the previous paintings has been left behind in favor of a more throwaway method of painting. My idea was to

create layers that act as a representation of the image economy as historical and visual palimpsest, one image that can represent a miniscule period of online history through strong iconographic reference to the most prominent visual cue of that specific Post-Internet moment, the marble statue.

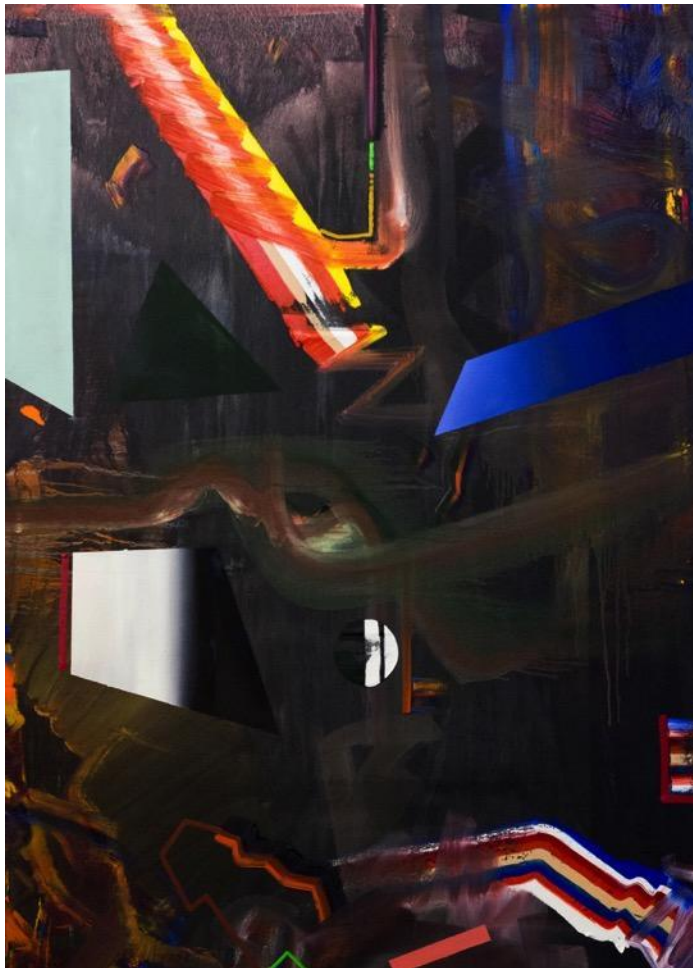


**Fig. 8 C.Grecia. *Wish Fulfillment*. Oil on Canvas. 2m x 1.75m. 2016**

In '*Wish Fulfillment*', 2016 (Fig. 8), the largest and possibly the strangest piece of figuration I've ever committed to canvas appears as a 2m x 1.5m Lamborghini Diablo painted in a posterized, idyllic manner that sits off a flat turquoise foreground and a mystical, layered background of black, green and yellow. The work sees its origins

from a conversation I had with my practical supervisor, Tanya Poole. We discussed previous ideas of instant gratification and wish fulfillment, channeling the consumer culture of the Internet. There are mechanisms available to us whereby we can either acquire our desires, in the form of online shopping, and there are ways we can temporarily satiate our hunger for more using those same tools to download images of what we cannot, in order own to acquire these things in a different way. The image becomes object again, a running theme throughout the body of work. Inspired by computer background images I grew used to as a young boy exploring the relatively new Internet, this image of the Purple Lamborghini stuck out as a subject matter worth committing to canvas for its iconic, cult status, as well as its immediate notions of wish fulfillment and instant gratification. The process of creating this painting however was the exact opposite of the instantaneity I find myself bound by in this Post-Internet space. The image was created through intense layering and consideration of surface, attempting to allude to some form of depth through a thin but luminous background of glazes, and brighter flat plane for the figuration to sit against. The car itself is the most instantly recognizable because of the way it has worked and tries to achieve hyperrealism, but fails in the apparent distortions of perspective. This attempt at creating an object that exists in our own physical space as purchasable, also then exists as a painted object now with the same senses of exclusivity and rarity of the actual car, but also exists as a new means of ownership and a vehicle for the network conditions of a culture defined by instant gratification.

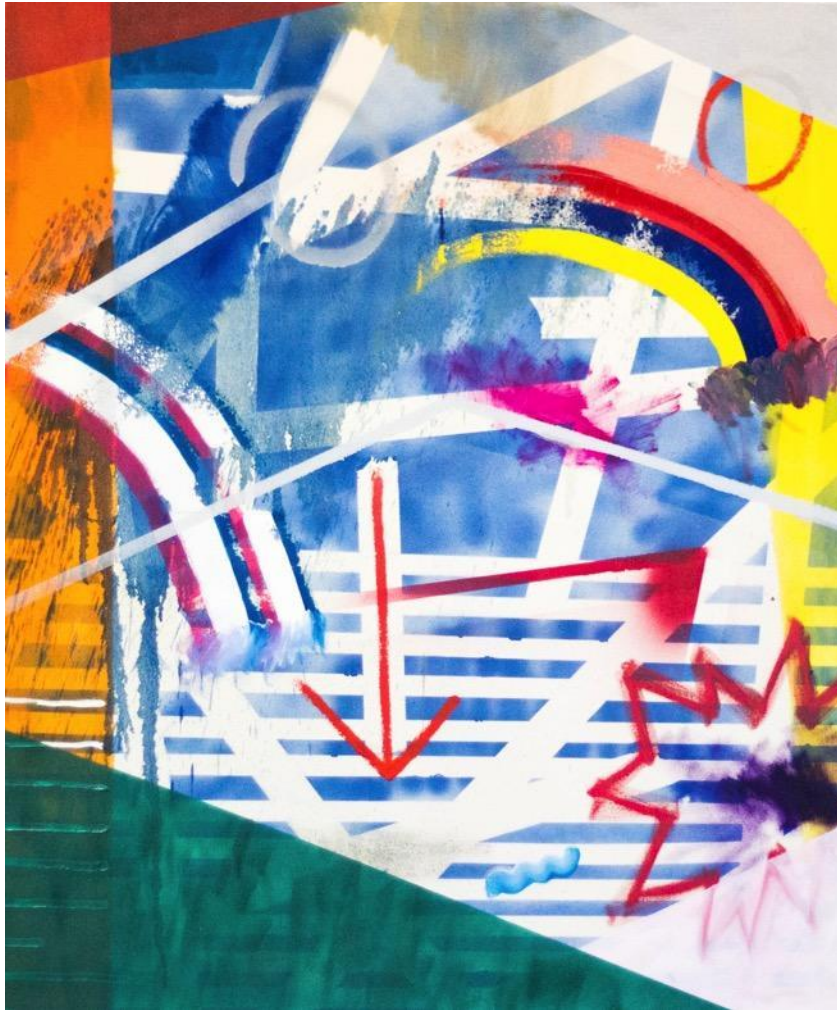
*“Something analogous is at work today, it would seem, before our very eyes in this turning to ice whereby accelerated cathode reality results in a trans-appearance that not only penetrates the horizon of perceptible appearances but the flesh of denuded bodies or, further still, those materials whose opacity once obstructed the eyes’ cupidity” (Virilio.2005, p.29)*



**Fig. 9 C.Grecia. *These Aesthetics Are Not New.* Oil on Canvas. 1.6m x 1.8m. 2016**



**Fig. 10 C.Grecia. *An Ode To The Content Providers Maintaining Visual Curiosity And Rigor By Sharing Things Their Friends Made Because It Looks Like The Art Documentary They Saw On Vice.* Oil on Canvas. 1.6m x 1.8m. 2016**



**Fig. 11 C.Grecia. *Is it True That When You Die god Plays Exmilitary On Repeat Because She Likes Stephan?* . Oil on Canvas. 1m x 1.5m. 2016**

The above works are the culmination of my exploration of Post-Internet ideas while attempting to create painted works that question contemporary Painting practices and the representational politics of the physical medium. In *These Aesthetics Are Not New*, 2016 (Fig.9), *An Ode To The Content Providers Maintaining Visual Curiosity And Rigor By Sharing Things Their Friends Made Because It Looks Like The Art*

*Documentary They Saw On Vice*, 2016 (Fig.10) and *Is it True That When You Die god Plays Exmilitary On Repeat Because She Likes Stephan?*, 2016 (Fig.11) in particular, I found abstraction vital in portraying the visual noise of the Internet through my painting. Throughout the breadth of the works that were created for this show, I looked to emulate digital aesthetics through the use of varied painterly vocabulary, paying close attention to specific digital visual devices and finding ways to replicate that digital flatness on physical works. Through these three works however, I decided to use varying digital visual devices to create abstract compositions of visual noise. The works are larger, cinematic ideas of the endless feedback loop of images that exist on the Internet, compressed into a layered space of converging aesthetic tools that are able to exist similarly in the physical domain, (as well as the digital) without much shift in their politics of representation. These works are mediated, incredibly focused exercises in making physical, painted work about network conditions, that transcend the boundaries of the Internet and exist as a direct representation of the immediate, with polarizing futuristic *and* anachronistic lenses at play.

I have chosen to represent this feedback loop between the digital and the physical painted object using t-shirts with digitized prints of the above physical painted works that represent and engage with Internet concerns. This series of shirts is both a physical object as well as yet another consumable representation (albeit a limited edition) of the visual noise of the Internet image search. The painted works that

have been photographed, Photoshopped, screen-printed onto t-shirts and then hung in a gallery space alongside their physical, painted counterpart begins to speak about the complexities of representation in a technologically reliant society. A society consumed by consumption. They are immediately accessible and fulfill the wishes of the 'have to have it now' mentality of instant access. These t-shirts become a vehicle for the image and create an additional way for the painted image to be viewed and accessed. This combination of objects as paintings and objects as re-representations provide a multiplicity of readings that imitate the infinity-edged pool of the Internet but in a physical form that can exist in IRL and URL realities, undefined by the archaic notions of New-Media art. They become what Vierkant describes as the Image-Object, something that exists as image, as object, as both and as neither.

Finally, the exhibition relies curatorially on creating a layered and immersive environment. This environment contains not only physical painted works, but also a sound piece, vinyl lettering and installed elements to create depth and fast track the viewer into a space that relied on digital and physical means to try and create an IRL in between. The sound piece employs smartphone notifications and ringtones, which sonically occupy half of the gallery space. This sound piece is devised to distract the viewer who may confuse the intermittent beeping and ringing with their own device, mimicking the distractions of social media and the constant connection to the online sphere. A second sound piece consisting of a playlist of contemporary Internet specific music, occupies the other half of the exhibition space in a manner that rings true to my personal online experience, which is the various audio visual stimuli one



can expose oneself to while browsing the Internet or social media. Effectively these two sound pieces become background noise, or a distraction, depending on what they are to the viewer in their own browsing time. A Grecian bust statue and succulent plants in pots on plinths stand as a sculptural, 3 dimensional layer in the gallery space, directing viewer traffic through the show. They also stand as an ode to the Vaporwave culture mentioned in the previous chapter, punctuating the painted works and lending their iconographic and associative qualities to drive home the idea of a digital visual language employed not only in the physical painted works, but also in the exhibition as a whole. Vinyl lettering takes the form of URL language, with phrases such as 'LOL', 'Hey bebe' and text based emoticons placed on the walls next to, and in some cases behind painted works to serve as a base, flat layer that references online shorthand and the linguistic elements of online culture I have been exposed to during my practical research. These phrases have been printed in bright, or black vinyl, and further present the exhibition space as a transitional venue between the digital realm of the Internet, and the physical realm of the painted works. The culmination of this is an immersive, installed space that reflects digital and painterly modes of seeing, as well as an attempt at showcasing a portion of my subjective online experiences in relation to the theoretical and practical research I have conducted throughout the period of this Masters degree.

## Conclusion

The acceptance of modern technology into the medium of oil paint questions the conventions of the medium- as have previous technologies in their time. The limitations of flatness, the luminance of the screen and the digital appearances of colors are very different from the previous traditional ideas that surrounded Painting. The technologies that surround us, in the current age, and the ubiquitous imagery our society is immersed in become spaces of representation that can provide a starting point for almost any aesthetic endeavor across any contemporary medium. Exploring these new ways of seeing and representation that have allowed me to see the grain of the digital and the effects of its aesthetic concerns in the physical realm in a new light, allows me to use Painting to challenge antiquated ideas of representation.

In my exhibition *These Aesthetics Are Not New*, I collaborate with the ideas presented to me by Post-Internet concerns, as well as the long history of Painting to create a space that shows the viewer that these ways of seeing are not new and have not come out of nowhere. The main philosophy behind the Post-Internet condition is collaboration *with* the machine, and in some senses, this has been going on since the development of the Internet and other new technologies, but we've only recently become cognizant of it. This collaboration can be seen in the ways that imagery is sourced in modern times, where previously one would have to use

physical archival material in the form of printed photographs or magazines, (and before that live scenes and models) one is now able to access the ubiquitous imagery that exists on the Internet. Previously the gallery space was the only means of exhibiting one's work to the greater public, the Internet and social media are slowly beginning to not replace, but work congruently and in conjunction with these channels of representation- destabilizing the hierarchy and authority these spaces once represented. My engagements with network conditions through this Masters degree have clearly presented to me the possibilities of Oil Painting as a medium in relation to the digital. At present, The Post-Internet and Oil Painting seem to be at a point where no compromise is necessary to achieve a complete work that truly represents either the digital or the physical. As technology continually progresses, allowing newer ways of mediating the politics of representation between network conditions and the medium of oil paint, I suspect we will see a huge shift in the way paintings are made, influenced by even newer ways of seeing to produce something that represents the contemporary as well as the Post-Internet.

We may soon reach a point at which we no longer see a shift in representation as society increasingly accepts these modes of representation. As a child growing up through the 90's, I bore witness to the influence of new technologies on older media that has sometimes led to their obsolescence. Betamax and tapes replaced records, which were replaced by CDs and DVDs and then Blu Ray and flash drives. Currently we have The Cloud- the ultimate representation of ubiquitous information storage.

But this progression is not linear. There are returns to media that for one or other reason have a physical component whose aesthetic, through nostalgia or practicality, have a rebirth of interest. Vinyl records are once again in vogue. Through the development of newer technologies there will always be those who decry the death of some or the other medium. Painting is a cat that has been declared DOA more than nine times now. But if we look to the walls of a cave where thousands of years ago someone, as an exercise of recording or wish fulfillment, painted the object of a hunt, we have not only the representation of an antelope- we have an emoji. *These Aesthetics Are Not New.*

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