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The Fractured Memory of a Mind's Eye

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Abstract

THE FRACTURED MEMORY OF A MIND'S EYE

By Russell White, MFA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University 2017.

Major Director: Stephen Vitiello, Professor, Kinetic Imaging

The work I create is informed by questioning reality/identity, the fractalizing planes of existence our essence occupies and the artifacts of memory experience navigating through space time. While existing in this realm of oversaturated media and neon glow, I question the effects of pervasive data systems overloading or programming the mental software we possess. My work includes humor as a means of exploring these conventions while also displaying psychedelic surrealist imagery to help break away from the conscious prison this existence births our concept apparatuses within.

The Feed

This is the only true thing you'll read within this text. It can always be better (okay, maybe that was true as well). It took all my ancestors and a vast amount of chance to get me here today, pushing pixels around a screen with neon highlights and flickers of lost communication.

Travelling on this speck of dust floating through the infinite vastness, getting lost in a galactic tunnel, we have time to subjectively experience some version of reality as interfaced by a series of filters and programming.



Figure 1: *Void Detectors*

Within every moment that passes . . .

A sequence of dissolution and renewal is always spinning...

Atop

A

Floating

Island.... Moments of chance and sequence shifting. Doors

crack open to vastly reveal blinding beams of electric fog. It clings to every surface, like a cheap auto magnet showing what you support on a colored ribbon. Every second you open and close doors. Fracturing off into a new you.

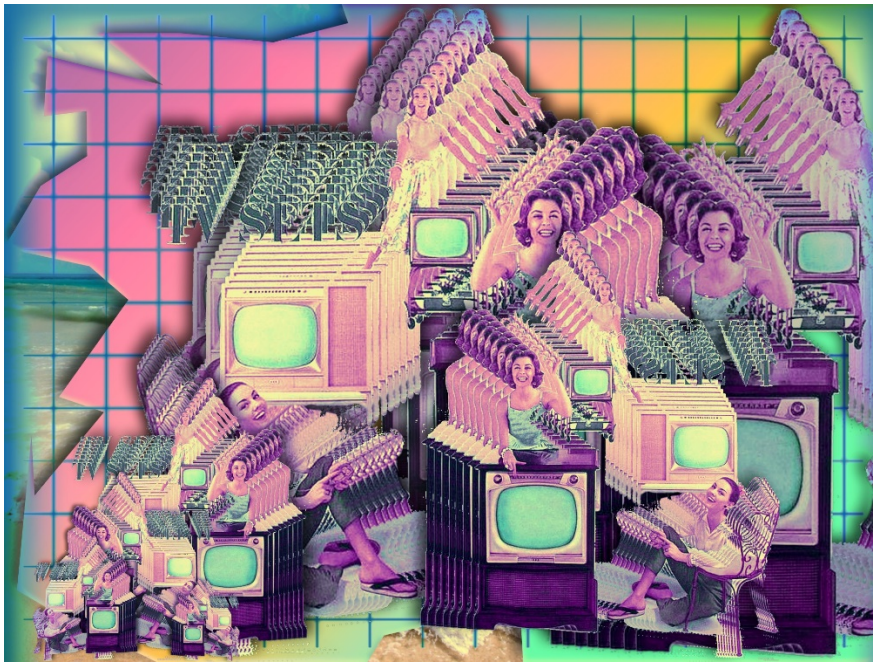


Figure 2: *Glowing Into Eternity*

Programming our minds with monitors and screens.

FloatingnitaolF

ThroughguorhT

SpacesecapSpaceSpaceSpaceSpaceSpace

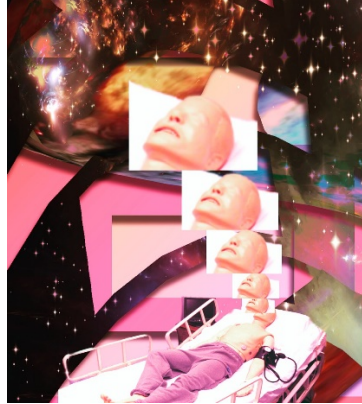


Figure 3: *Dreams of Screens*

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SpacesecapSpaceSpaceSpaceSpaceSpace

We see acted out simulacra of social mores depicted upon the screens we all but live inside, and these simulations influence or program consciousness to think, speak, dance, joke a certain way. With every episode of *Seinfeld*, I evolve into a different me. This is the me that wishes I was swimming in a pool reflecting a pink beverage off my turquoise sunglasses sliding down my sunburnt nose. This is the me that wakes up vibrating on a cellular level pulsing invisible sound....

- .
- .
- .
- .

Hair bouncing wind gusts, the asphalt is littered with glass beneath my feet. Misplaced telephones calls and static from driving under the bridge, they kept travelling through the night. Seaside daydreams with a cerebral air lightening up the atmosphere. The scattered exchange of sounds, clicks, and frequencies our brains have learned to decode to exchange ideas, data, programs, or viruses (not cough cough viruses but yes I guess even those too are exchanged). Ideas are a program or a virus being downloaded by individuals and spread to one another through influence.

Through.

Stimulationnnnnnnzzzzzzzzzzzzzz

Feedback scattering the walls reflecting the figure moving through space. Seeing your past, present, and future, the Nano space between the quarks. The something between that. All these things at once create a wondrous tube of movement.

Time...

It follows and escorts the individual through birth and death. Ephemera passing the identity metamorphosis, molting the old you in a tunnel of tubes. You are an omnipresent timeline. Remembering to forget, I see a colored fabric, translucent enough to let the sunlight dip through, covered in caterpillars waltzing while chewing pencil eraser-sized holes into the garment. Tiles were scattered about and you could hear a faint 'pa-ting' behind their eyelids. Dripping with the viscosity of honey, the folds in the curtain are pulled tight to reveal a checkered floor, polished and neat, freshly swept.



Figure 4: *The Tangible Tunnel Comes and Goes in Waves*

Destinations are unknown in the world of improvisation and embracing seemingly universal synchronicities, dear reader I think there is method to the chaos. For no real reason, events, energy, and happenstance line up to provide the door for new realities.



Figure 5: *Future Flavored Taste Slivers*

I am not sure who or even what this concept apparatus even is. There was a time it was a name, but soon enough that identity becomes blurred by actions and coinciding nicknames, monikers, and avatars. A/S/L/? None of those things are me either, but create a part of what my consciousness is through influence and stimuli. I am cause and effect? Blurring past green colored lights the mobile exoskeleton slams into a tree. I remember that weightless sensation, the sliver of time that stays frozen and you see everything glued in place where it belongs. You see 49 cents slowly float across your eyes and wonder if your cat ripped apart the bread you forgot to put away....you see, you still think about those things because reaction time can be a bit slow. The impending impact hasn't been accepted as a part of your life yet, that's three fractions of a second away, still. It clicks, finally, you are about to crash and when you make that connection, the magic is over, time is no longer glitched, and resets the signal's frame rate and you wreck. Whatever substance you may take to "circuit-bend" the connections

and wiring in your concept apparatus, they never replicate the reality of frozen time from bursts of natural chemical reactions controlling your perspective. We collectively seek out those primal connections through thrilling simulations such as literature, television programming, roller coasters, or various other chemical-producing experiences. But they are lower resolution experiences of that primal, “I-am-maybe-about-to-die”, sliver of frozen frequencies unwrapping the magnetic tape off the VCR head.

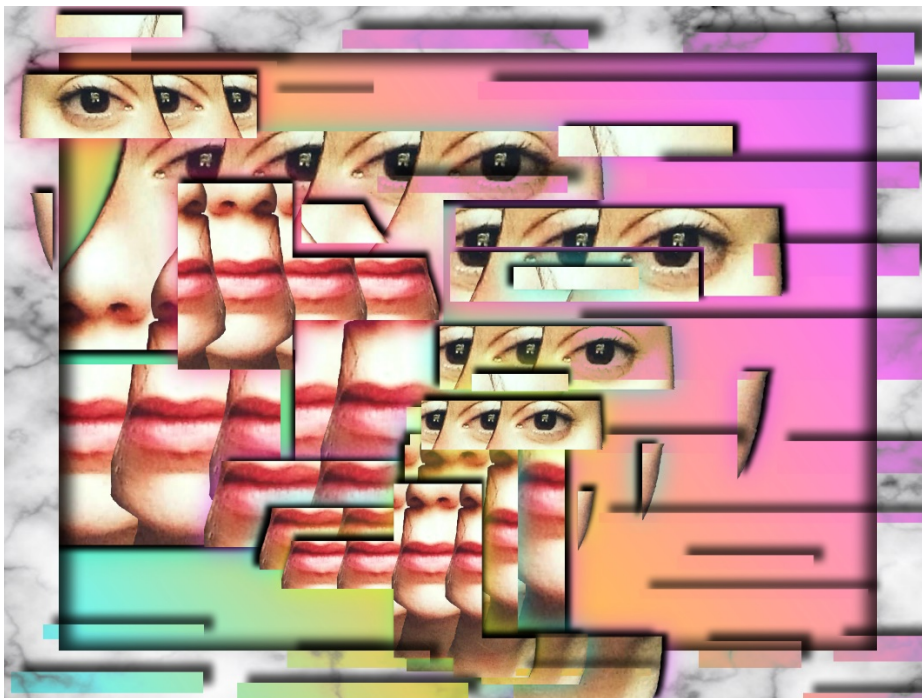


Figure 6: *Qwerty Poiu*

Every day I wish to wake up as someone new and peculiar. A copy of a copy of a copy is what happens. Nothing is born in a vacuum. A VHS tape recorded and copied and copied with each revolution around the sun, my resolution becomes nuanced with

artifact and lost data. Until this body is 120 revolutions copied and becomes a warm hiss of static and a flickering screen...

Building
A
New
Reflection

The gradients of evolution from a cool blue birth to the lush pinks of death, our eyes tell the story of marbled goo sifting through fake plastic swimming pool caves. The shadows dance upon the halls of the disco cave. The illusions surrounding willing participants with brand-named bombardments and scattered lies of what romance is to be. The projections cast light upon the surface, transfiguring blank solids into a dance of energy. Invisible chains and Christmas light stares are exchanged for ticket-priced concessions and a wall of transparent anxieties stemming from a hope as plastic as the tiny shards that making up a bag of glitter. Sparkling and showcasing a secret promise, eyes dance around the room. It's a spell. Sigils and tiny spells or subconscious programming stepping through a backdoor. A hum of voices blend together as individual syllables are no longer distinguished, there is a natural harmony to the static of voices. Casually swimming through the echoes of what was and what is to be, I time travel through memories, though small details are fuzzy and false. Imperfect. A broken signal occurs through the ritual of memory. A longing. The joy of nostalgia but overlooking the negative. Longing for the joys of an ever-fading youth to obscure the unfortunate hand of us marching the stairs to our program's deletion.



Figure 7: *From Birth to Dirt*

The collective consciousness cloud is floating above in the ether, awaiting figured antennae to tune into the right frequency for discovery. Within the process of improvisation, the mind becomes an open vessel dialing the right signal. The thought is born, this individual allows the essence to be stored, becoming manifest through newfound symbiotic relationship. Both parties thrive as one gains experience and creates, and another lives, spreading to new hosts. A moment of clarity, the now. The Identity stops, a cerebral weight lifted, willing participant in the present. The droneeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee. It's glowing at the bottom of the ocean, there is a light keeping us warm. Loud speakers, bright and blurry, a crisp outline draping a brain in the

jar, surviving off nutrients administered by Unit X33-77HiC. This unit has been particularly busy as there was a malfunction on the Terra Firma section of MIND CORP.

Corrupted signals...crossed wires.



Figure 8: *Cloud Connection*

Exploded view, the essence is transferrable energy. Real eyes realize lucid fur whips through tunnels. Telephone lines tracing grid points. There is a siren singing near the shipwreck.

We corroborate reality; hoping memory serves well enough. Soon enough, people will enhance themselves with circuitry. Everything will be recorded. Everything

will be streamed live. Tapping into the feed, people knelt huddled in neatly. They kept warm from soft glows of screens.

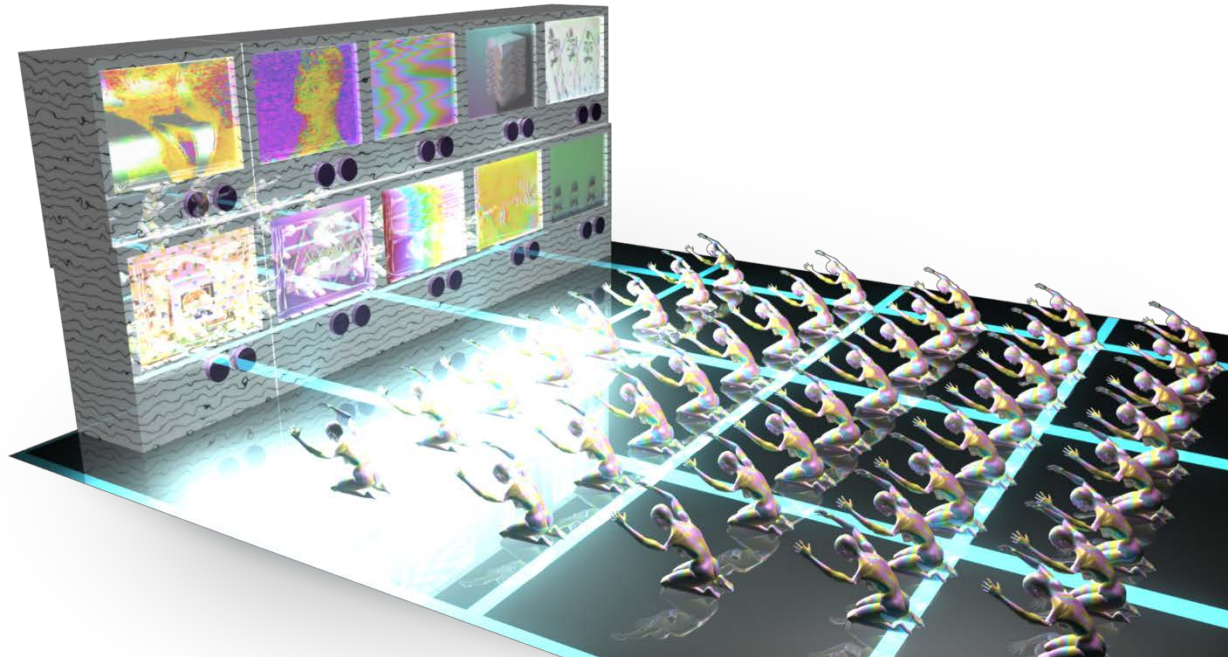


Figure 9: *Neon Gods*

Neon Gods

Omnipresent Signals.

It's

Static in motion.

Light, Color, and Spectacle

Come

To Life.

Signals, waves, channels of energy. Adhering to the grid, operating space through constant fanning and folding of their bodies. Bathing in light, allowing whatever information presents a chance to stimulate and kill their ever-perpetual boredom. Downloading viruses to unload chemicals. Bubbles popping, floating down the stream. Distorted echoes of a past moving forward. Existing in three dimensions. Learn from the past, live in the present, dream of the future. Hold onto heartbeats while letting paths open.



Figure 10: *Multiple Youniverse*

With every word uttered and every movement of your extremities, you are breaking off into new yous. This is the me that thinks s/he remembers. An interactive story unfolding through chance encounters with other floating consciousness. How do those bundles of flesh wire know what to say next? Stumbling over familiar vernacular, my brain panics into a volcano of unicorn farts and infomercials trying to think. She saw herself for the first time in many months. It was rapid-fire bottle rockets dripping down

the aquarium, feeding fish a hook. She knew this was the moment to flee the experimentation room. Unlocked door and paper clips, no more metamorphosis from human to machine. Bionic slurring and dusted vocals, a wire twanged in the background.

The projector, a source of light and life, a sun to the galaxy of the work. Controlling light and shadow to create illusion has been in practice since camera obscura. What we see is light reflected off surface as color at varying depths. The surface of cut-out layers is covered by layers of light and motion. Displaying images constructed by colored cells, the grid creates saturated visions. Light altars for the ritual of viewing and gaze. People, gathering around towers of information and personal programming, are emotionless, walking further into the feed. The pyramid channels a sacred essence of now forgotten meanings. An esoteric antenna filtered through a crystal-ball-looking-glass floating in a pool of blue, amplifying the vision created by the soul. Creating one's reality by manifesting energy between synapses to execute in the physical realms. Eyes are blinking, staring, holding contact, bursting into fluid motion. The eyes of I. The endless possibilities of who I was, am, going to be, scrolling like a marquee of choices, mixed with palms of action and craft. Spells of color tickling ocular muscles like mosquitos to the zap. I enjoy sourcing footage from the collective consciousness of internet detritus; altering it outside of intended use. Blatantly leaving watermarks of some faceless stock creator, questioning the identity and ownership of

intangible pixels. Just as others after me will take what I've distorted, and process the image, further removing it from intended meaning or use to sell on their online shop on shower curtains. A psychedelic air of questioning political prisons of consciousness with disruptive bursts of nonsensical syllables. There is beauty in the disruption of signals. Great pressure and stress is needed to create a diamond from coal. Likewise, I capture footage from obsolete video editing equipment. This gear has been Frankensteined with crossed wires, bad connections, non-normative functions, and a splash of sunshine. It is akin to a brain filled with some substance designed to cross neurological paths and secrete chemicals more frequently than normal, allowing for perceptions otherwise unachievable. Modified equipment generates saturated vibrancies from designed malfunction; the signal becomes elevated through its failure. The failure is celebrated as warm liquid artifacts of color and dissolving clarity flows upon screens. An extension of my inner eye. When I stare into a wall painted white, my head begins to vibrate. A flush of pinks swell and bend, giving into a layer of greens separating into blues. I only experience white surface for a fleeting moment before perceived color takes dominion. The surface is dressed with ephemerality. Ideas and micro scenarios cut and fade just as quickly as born, reflecting the societal rush for faster, more, faster, more.

Never satisfied. I create a work and instantly begin exploding the view to mental maps of how it can always be better. Before long our minds will melt into one another through circuitry, more so than social platforms already allow. Individual bodies discarded at youth and downloaded into a sea of digitized decay. We look as copies of

copies of copies of copies floating through the pastel pastures of virtual simulations made by some faceless programmer watching the world dissolve.

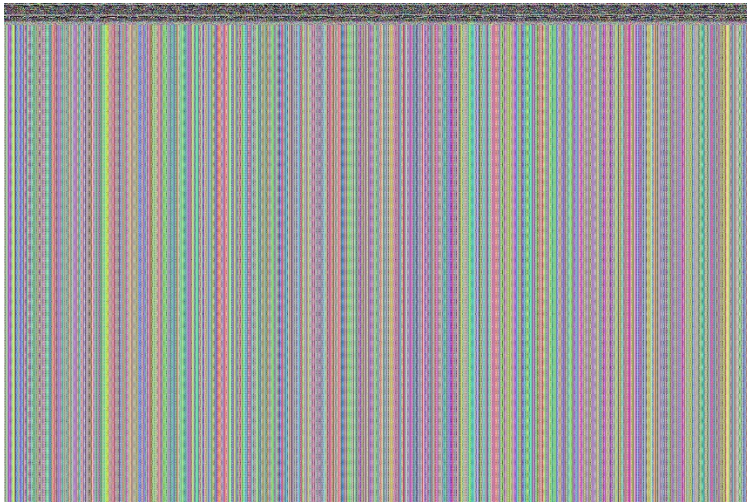


Figure 11 : *Language Glitch, French*

A blanket of chance handpicked into design; the artifacts abstract the abstraction. Lost meaning through filters of individual experience, when you hear words do they convey the same message as intended. Airport screens scatter buzz and hum. A train whirs through the heartbeat. What fits where? Sometimes you have to live with it to know where it belongs. Reactive, subjects are placed and moved around, finding complimentary patterns from the grid. Abstract shapes create figures in the landscape. A tableau stream of consciousness forming scenery from the ether. Floating islands through the multiverse, each world copied over and changed slightly on the inside. Spending time to learn people you'll never know.

Daylight dripping from the sheets, there is a plastic smile on this magazine. Perfectly synthetic reminders that we aren't glossed. I dream of meeting me. New life to the planned obsolescence, I breathe air into crossed circuits. The device functions outside normative intention to become a hardware electric paintbrush to push fractions of light and life upon an otherwise cold, dead surface. Poetry in motion, potential kept in a jar...

Holding hands with alien life forms, I have always felt like a glitch. An artifact displaced from time. An overstuffed filing cabinet, I am loose-leaf 8.5" x 11" strewn about the floor, desperately trying to find my place into the machine. System overload, everything in its right pace. Pixel pushing patterns liquefy the screen. Purposeful failure by design.



Figure 12: *Virtual Staircase*

A smattering of levels, what dimension does this matter fall into after seemingly endless trials. Pay for play. Lipstick lovers go back and forth through overheard conversation. Alchemical reminders that diamonds come from stresses of experience. Lost love, dead family, homelessness, contribute to who you've become. I'm the me no longer living under a bridge eating crackers stolen from the market.

Blur and whiplash stuttering the time based corrector, a gatekeeper desperately trying to maintain order from chaos. Beauty from destruction.

Laughing
At
Nothing.

Poetry in water-soluble tablets, saliva creates a bond of pulses starting subconscious communications. Dreams carry over into reality. Walking into the environment, I hope for a moment of cerebral air. Little cushions of light pillowing the back of your brain, making the optic nerves vibrate. Retinal scanning instincts and dilated pupils, they find themselves floating above clouds. Yearning for the past. Escapism to another identity. Work for free, and provided daily to a social feed, the depressed whims of others posting politically charged echoes into the void, the work goes unnoticed amongst a sea of clamor and expressive anxieties.

Hello

Everyone

Again,

Reality

Turns

Back

Eventually

All

Things

Shine

There is no halting to the amount of material created to limit the mind. The goal of the artist is to expand and create ripples in mental ponds. To be made strange through illusion. Sometimes, it takes phantasms to reveal the actual magic of self. Honeybee wings flapping above the ocean, I see a lingering spirit entwining breezes. Matter cannot be created or destroyed. The energy of soul dispersed upon completion of this human form. The delicate dance of flicker reflecting off the glass.

As
 Above
 So
 Below.

The surfaces meet as two perpendicular planes of existence, forming a much larger picture. Moments of truth scattered throughout a field of prose.

Singular timeline, instantly blooming into a sea of reflective feedback. Fade in/fade out. Sequence is shifting. Binary compliments on/off perfumes of lavender-scented airways soothing the air.

F F
L L
O O
A A
T T
I I
N N
G

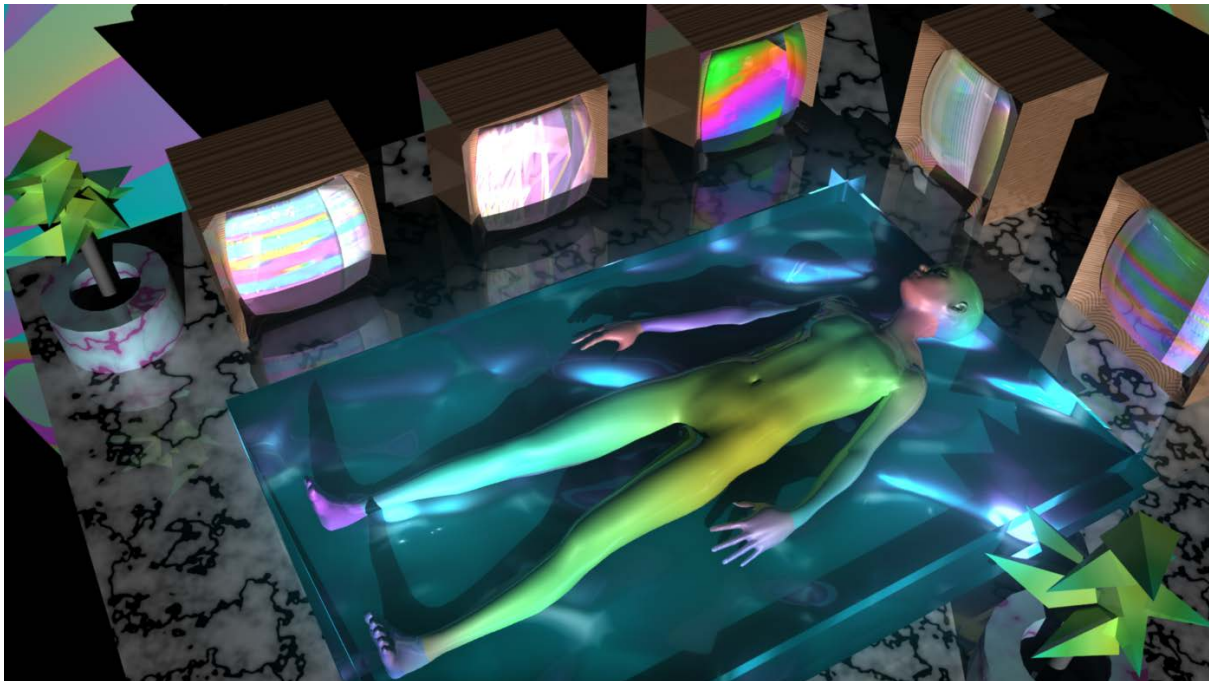


Figure 13: *Dreams of Screens 2.0*

Dreams of screens,
pervasive static feeding,
influencing unknowns, return to sender.

The laboratory was Earth,

The experiment is you.

Pools are portals to weightless sensation.

Ungrounded,

Faulty wiring.

Anxieties creeping around the corner.

Questions are never answered, only leading to new questions.

Xenirrtz

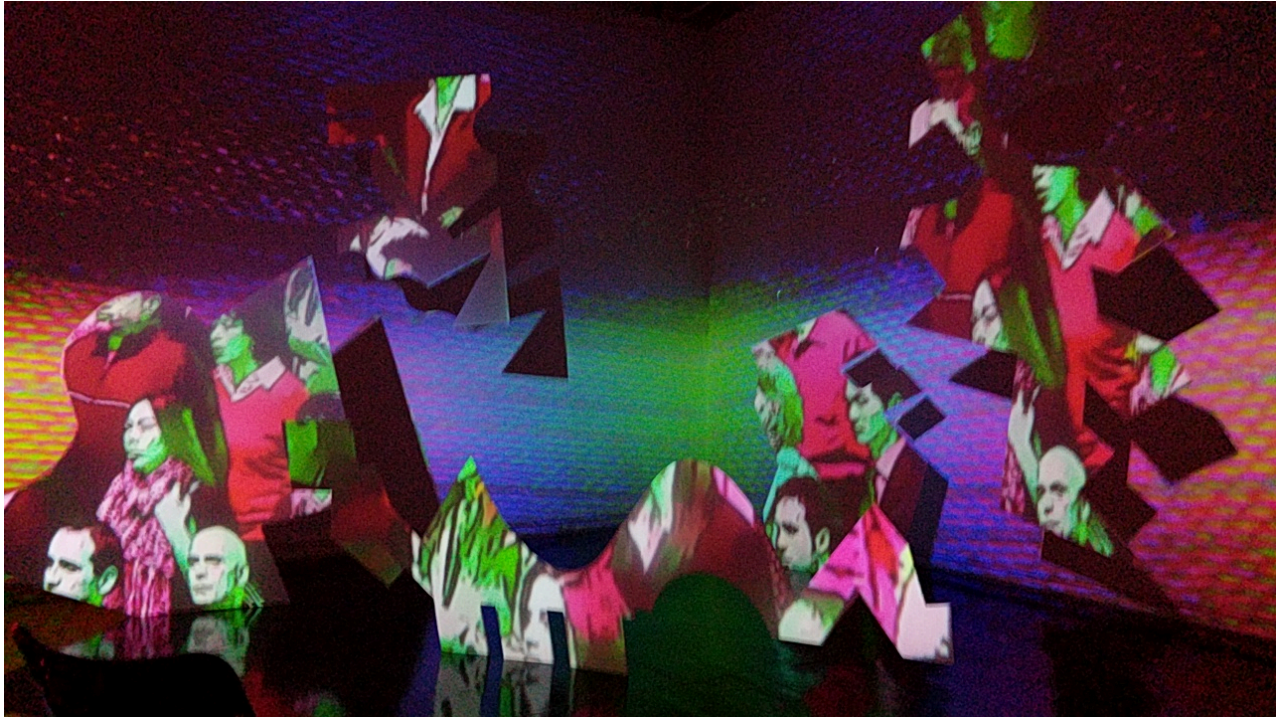


Figure 14: *Xenirrtz*

Xenirrtz, named for the anxious radiation of signals, is a projection mapped, media installation, searching for harmony over repetition, saturation, vibrancy, and ephemerality. Repetition is used not only in cloning of imagery but also a looping sequence of ritual and systems of loops we find ourselves willingly or unknowingly occupying. Saturation/vibrancy of color and unrestful movement echoes the pervasiveness of data, signal overload, and the glossy, candy coating of memory and nostalgia to the mind.

To add surface to the room, I employed foam board that I reactively shaped based upon reflections of each slice. My approach to shaping these objects is reflective to my overall work process of adding an initial element and moving forward to balance the composition with reactive elements, in this case the foam board. After suspending the forms to create space and delicate passage viewers can choose to negotiate, I took pictures of individual surface. Then, gathering photos from the same angle of the projector, I created compositions in After Effects for each object or surface. Masking out all but the individual shape of each object, I was able to create animations tailored for each surface from material sourced from original content, modified circuitry, and snippets of internet trash. The imagery provides several stitched scenes showing digital spell-craft or sigils, multiple dimensions, faulty filtering of senses and memory, and relationship of media programming our mental software. From that point forward, it was me moving with a cat-like dance around the space mapping each surface, fighting to pull, stretch, and conform the prescribed imagery to its prismatic destination. A short throw projector was used to map video to multiple surfaces via mapping software, VPT7.

Projected imagery was created to harmonize over repetition, saturation, vibrancy, ephemerality, transforming surface, and space. Repetition is used not only in cloning of imagery but also a looping sequence of ritual and systems of loops we find ourselves willingly or unknowingly occupying. Saturation/vibrancy of color and unrestful movement echoes a surrealistic psychedelia, pervasiveness of data, signal overload, and the

glossy, candy coating of memory/nostalgia to the mind. Length of each sequence is limited to twenty seconds each to relay the ephemeral qualities of time and presence. Some details are lost or unnoticed as each scene migrates to the next creating a boundary of experience limited to what we give focus to with our own time and perception of daily intake. The shapes are transfigured through simulated motion graphics applied to pure white surface clouds, displaying evolution and growth while mapped with a grid of pixels creating the imagery. The suspended shapes are set up in a tableau style set, providing immediate reference to theatre or spectacle. Placement of objects occupies space from off the wall, producing a narrow passage through which spectators are invited to delicately navigate, but running a risk of being compromised by their swift movements, allowing for broken communication by carelessness or swift negotiation.

My work has greatly evolved in a spectacular gradient of process and execution. When first finding animation pleasurable, I made short GIF files for the digital meeting outposts of internet fringe. The GIFs allowed for an almost sarcastic playfulness that gave immediate response and then fade into the obscurity of endless streams of posts stacking and layering. I began investigation of new techniques to create hyper-stimulated GIFs and found the purposeful corruption of data or “glitch” replicated the flicker and pulse my eyes needed to vibrate. This process of glitching information initially came from text editing image files. I would type poetry and journal entries into the text data of the image files, and upon saving the text file and reopening as an image

I was given a beautiful distortion of what was once there. I found that by making small edits within the text field I could then save and duplicate that process with more edits creating ten images that displayed a sequence of distortion when combined into a GIF file.

After gaining comfort with this technique, I wanted to learn new ways of animation and motion graphics. I began using After Effects to create simulated graphics and screensaver-like compositions that were clean and beautiful. Dissatisfied with the almost too-perfect nature of these compositions, I wanted to find or develop techniques to disrupt the imagery. I looked to the works of Nam June Paik, Karl Klomp, and Logan Owlbeemoth, for inspiration to create video synthesizers to generate rich texture of broken signals, but also a filter to run motion graphics through for mangling. I wanted to start incorporating these textures and distortions in ways I've not seen before, so through use of Autodesk Maya, I applied these textures to objects within the program to create a broken psychedelic digitalism.



Figure 15: *Learning Lovers*

These works were still trapped in the world of monitors and screens. I wanted to find a way to literally break out of the box. I found techniques of projection mapping through the works of Tony Oursler, inspirational for finding the solution to this issue of seemingly monitor imprisonment. With projection mapping I was able to break away from screens and provide simulated digital space within this analog world. I began with cubes as a form to project upon, but these were highly derivative of Amon Tobin and almost a cliché of the projection mapping process I wanted to quickly break away from. I explored what I have seen before and, more importantly, have not seen before, wanting to see a collaging of video onto printed media. *Timelords* is a work I built avatars with Macintosh computer heads and floating islands with opened doorways or portals to other dimensions via Autodesk Maya, leaving the monitor faces and door space white.

Within those white sections I was able to map imagery consisting of digital worlds I had made through After Effects and Maya within the portals, and screensaver textures to the monitor faces of the avatars. The result became two otherworldly avatars in a friendly competition of summoning portals to alternate realities and dimensions.



Figure 16: *Time Lords*

After *Timelords* I wanted to move away further from the static representation of printed media, but enjoyed the tableau presentation. Thus, I began working on iterations of *Xenirrtz* by utilizing blank paper cutouts. The shapes were curved and organic feeling, reading much like landscapes. I began texturing the surface with artifact-filled footage generated from the broken signals of modified video equipment.



Figure 17: *Cosmotron, guts*



Figure 18: *Color Huffer*

After application of textures to surface, the overall composition of forms was heading in the right direction, but was still scatterbrained and not truly unified with the shape of cut-

outs and visual noise of textures. I was running into issues of paper curling and losing its sturdiness in a way not intended. Success through failure. I realized I needed to use material sturdier than paper, but still light and easily suspended. Foam core became the material of choice as it was stiff, easy to shape, and light for suspension. I chose to make angled cuts opposed to earlier curvilinear iterations, to promote the idea of fracturing, prismatic structures that would “filter” imagery from the background to find unification of surface and background visuals. Thus, *Xenirrtz* came to fruition; a blurring of reality and dreamlike wonder critiquing media’s effect on consciousness, data overload, digital surrealism, and fractured memory. These Complexities may be further explored in the following.

And So the Stream Continues

Caught in an experience filtered by subjective limitations of the senses, this consciousness ripples out influence and stimulation into the ever-growing pond of human algae. Signals decoded, broken down, reduced to a sweet syrupy flavor-of-the-month trends and nice-to-know-you's. The air gets heavy as the crystalline formations reveal another page to turn. The experience is varying from consciousness to consciousness. Perhaps it depends on what each user signed up for before stepping into the simulation.



Figure 19: *They Came in Waves to Admire Their Creation*

A pulse vibrating in the cheekbones from fired-off chemicals reacting to some exterior influence, providing something more than the dead pinging of mundane routine. Falling off the grid, the mind wanders into electric abstraction, kissing daydreams of marbled neon and sugary lush, just as real as any other moment of physical reality. The ephemera dance between slices of sleep and dreams. The Rubik's cubed planar dimensions shift, fold, and rotate; jumbling this antenna between worlds hardly remembered crossing to and fro. When dreaming, I only remember pieces of this current place, such as names for particular faces and so on; likewise when inhabiting this reality's present, I recall only moments of melting memories from that world. A data folder bounced between desktop and external hard drive, extended brain.

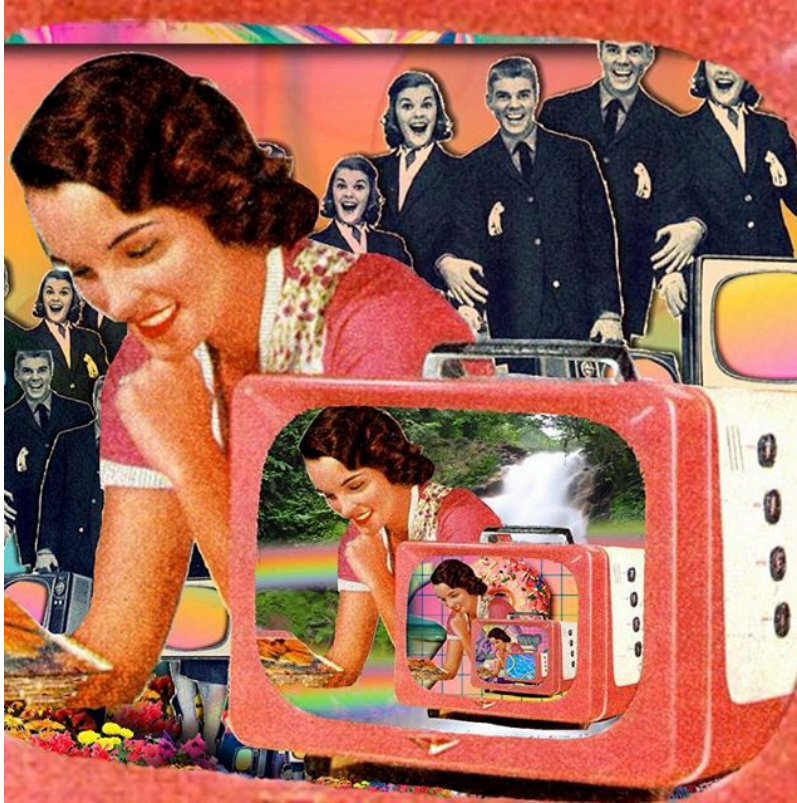


Figure 20: *Something is Nothing is Something is Nothing*

Picturing Dustin Hoffman from *I Heart Huckabees* chanting “how am I not myself, how am I not myself, how am I not myself?” I feel like I woke up today remembering 32 years’ worth of events leading up to now, but I grow suspicious of the authenticity of these memories as time places inaccuracies frequently throughout the recall. Bad programming, maybe those memories were injected into my mind and this is my first day within this existence. Face-melting belly aches, a glimpse into the nowhere. If you stare at the ceiling long enough, it begins to flow like blood cells through a capillary. Nothing is static and all things are vibrating. Frequencies produced through constant movement creating invisible sounds we tune into or tune off. I’ve never truly

seen myself. This is the me that is faceless, but an occasional floating nose. Every me I've ever seen is distorted reflections over warped mirrors or lenses from ever lowered resolutions. The me that existed in archives of a point-and-shoot Mickey Mouse camera has far less fidelity than the 13-megapixel front cell phone camera, making me look like Danny Devito. Which documentation is more accurate, if any? Extremities fling, clicking keys to transmute electricity firing over synapses to black and white patterns we collectively recognize as meaning some abstract idea filtered by subjective experience. Within one day I am, seemingly, a thousand different people and all of them are given agency over this form.

Bad programming. The machine saved on data by slightly rearranging every community. Everywhere I venture, I see digital renderings of places I have already been. Particles have been shown to assemble and exist only when observed. Waves and particles, if I'm asleep, alone in a room, does my body cease to maintain structure if no one is there to observe me? Observation and perceived experience organize matter into agreed upon forms. Digital doppelgangers of people you knew from a different city with the same street names and the same prefab, bullshit stores serving the same pink goo to your food hole for mastication. These patches of experience only exist if an avatar is around to activate world triggers. If no one is around to hear a tree fall, then does the tree even exist?

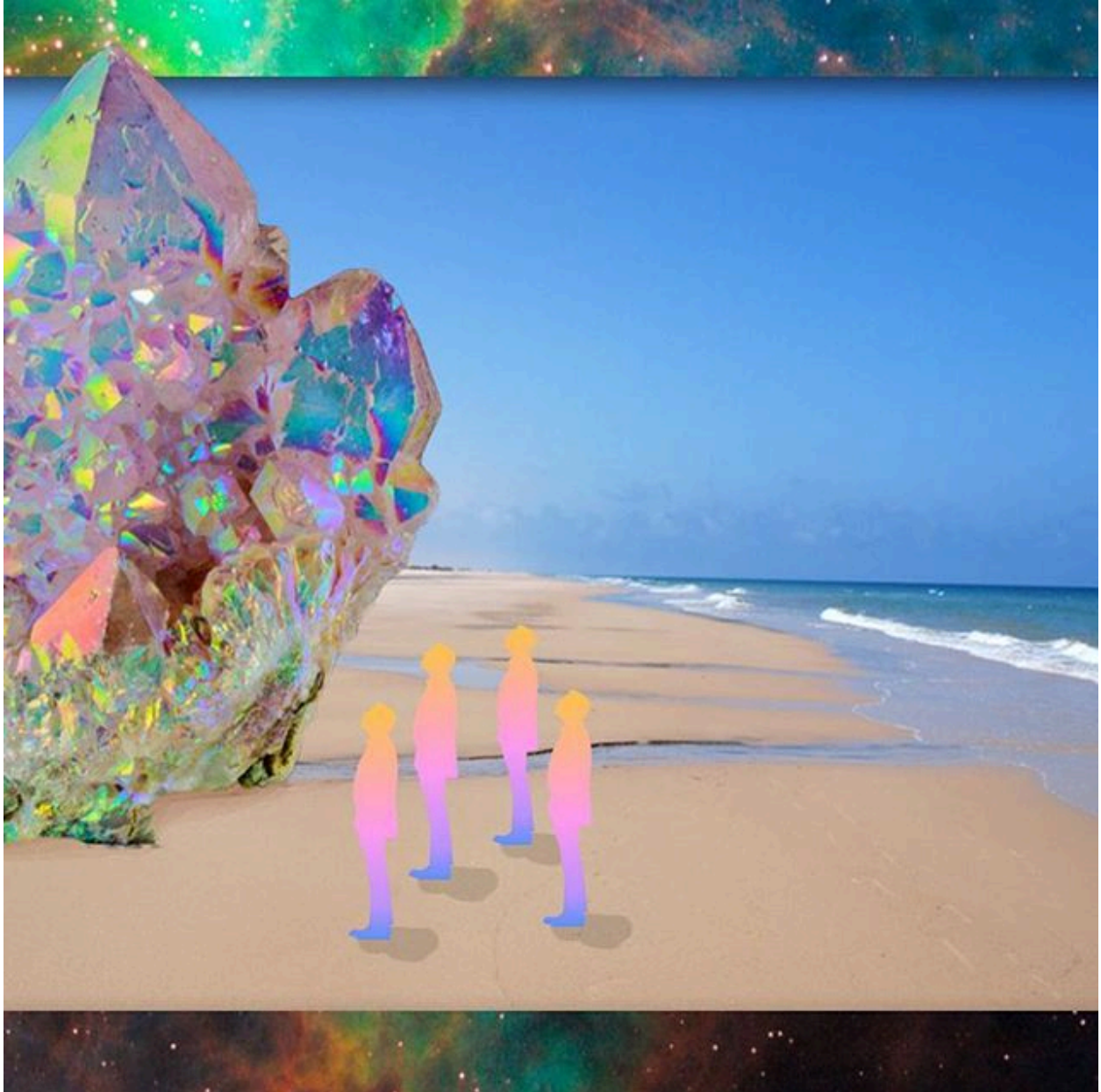


Figure 21: *Only When You Quit Looking*

The ego driven idea of solipsism, surely the rest of the world isn't mindless drones carrying out a part in the play like motionless characters. Balloon rubbing carpet static clinging to the window. The drops of rain left a residue that now makes the world

spotted and dripping. Color-rays reflecting off every surface. We both call it orange, but I see what you experience for French grey 96% and you see what I perceive for periwinkle, both collectively, though, we recognize it as orange. Chemicals and stimulation, is there a way to cross over into the alternate? Honey, I shrunk the Russell. Zoom in far enough and particles resemble galactic formations. A speck of dust floating through the air takes ten seconds to fall from our perspective, and 10 billion years from the perspective of invisible creatures inhabiting the speck.

Nothing is born in a vacuum. A bag full of misshapen plastic bits reflecting points of light at the right angle. Dusting the ground with wishes and promises, I find the tag and rip it off. Full conversations spoken aloud with myself, there is a jet-plane on autopilot as 3 A.M. hits the red-eyed frazzle behind the fingertips. Bugs crawling on the wall, my roof leaks on my feet. It took a bajillion chance encounters and all my ancestors leading up to this moment of me staring at a screen with drool slightly pooling in the corner of my mouth, moving pixels around a screen. The great war I fight is for my mind. Bombardments of advertising and daily programming passing through my filters push/pulling for my desires, to stimulate. Jump-rope skippers sailing on plastic islands, soon enough everyone will be an island in a pod of digital lust. There is no furniture in these houses as the virtual world requires only a chair. When we end our time here do we wake up in a pod at the carnival we paid 15 krillotrons to experience this simulation? Fuzzy white light splashed with color, transformation is everywhere. Endlessly walking, the lonelyTylenol sifts through a blanket of viscous liquid collecting in the room. A neon

handshake with billboard reruns hoping the yellow matter buildup crusts over the palms. In the forest, they sit, staring in the clouds allowing for whatever pareidolia presents itself. You'll never see the clouds the same. Flavors of spiced peppermint patties striking lighting across holographic nights. Clones awake in a room, everything blurred, that gasp of air. Mucus still slowly choking down an esophagus, the clone is authentic to itself. The clone is only a clone until it fractures off into its own decisions. How much of my physical body can I replace before I cease to contain the essence of me? Chainsaw hands, 69Tb of downloadable memory, and laser guided nonsense of hot air balloons floating through a storm.

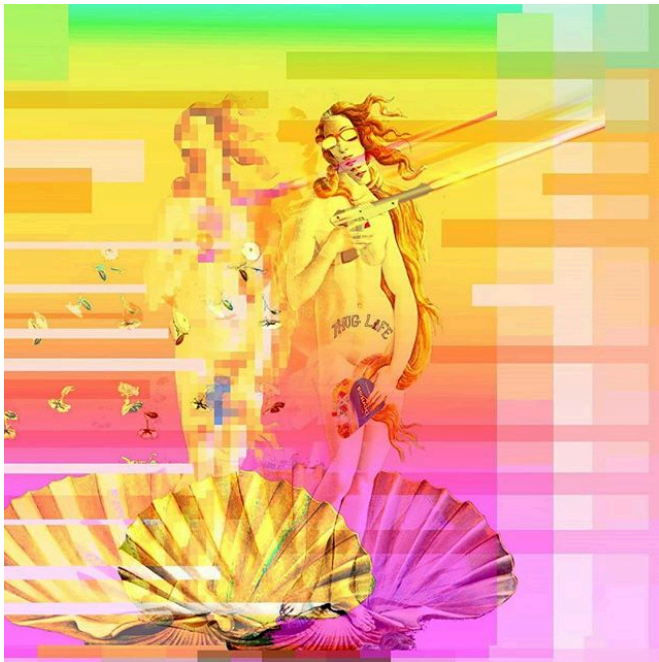


Figure 22: *The Dead Muse*

Maintaining the refrigerator buzz in the left ear, popping bubble-wrapping rolls of holiday packages, chewing gum scented kisses on prosthetic skin leaking static out of pores. Guided by heartbeats to heartbeats, the water was turquoise at the edge from sulfur clinging to the rocks below. Unfolding existence, there is a blurring of peripherals. Avatars in a much too real RPG, level up procrastination and -4 on initiative rolls. Catch-phrases and pop icon gold, the Slurpee fountain contains the secrets of the universe. As Baudrillard states, "We dream of passing through ourselves and of finding ourselves in the beyond: the day when your holographic double will be there in space, eventually moving and talking, you will have realized this miracle. Of course, it will no longer be a dream, so its charm will be lost." Jaded by the sacred and profane, sigils implant doubled over ancient subconscious communications lost on you by drilling holes in the hungry-hungry-hippocampus. Streaming thoughts like babbling finger tipping quarter notes, they move through the spaces between spaces. Timelords through recall, there is a garden of mistaken identity and pattern recognition rapid firing millisecond memories creating a patchwork persona prisoned by prisms bending light, color, and sound. Taking off the masks for sweatpant comforts and chocolate drizzled wish-you-wells, they hear a voice ringing from thunder. Beneath waves of static was a staircase made of discarded versions of who you used to be. Lingering sometimes in the rebuilt cellular structures, you regenerate a new body after X amount of time but retain the same overall idea of self.

Social mores constructed by media avatars and a synthesized version of reality regurgitated upon your concept apparatus, we think for you through the glow of a screen. Echoes in a hallway tingle ears and raise hairs stiff, lying dormant in the subcutaneous possibilities of fatty tissues administering high cholesterol to the bad genetics of ancestral you. The chain of memories laden within DNA, remember, it took all those versions of hand-me-down proteins to get you here, listening to someone ramble on about loose nothings and inflated somethings. Sunshine leaking between the sheets, there is a plastic smile on this magazine, a million faces Photoshopped; smoothed-out skin and signs of heavy living erased for a shell devoid of true imperfection. We'd rather live in the virtual. I can be whoever I wish behind the screen. On social platforms we are wizards of Oz, floating heads in a square thumbnail projecting whatever version of us we care to. Highly curated emotional breakdowns for the right amount of likes. Positive feedback for regressive dealings. I want to be the simulation. I want to find a way inside. Dial-up tone blast busy signal hang-ups, not tonight, dearie, I'm going on the entire web. Streaks on the glass from sausage fingers, a microwaved heartbeat pumps silently into the night. She still has that empty bottle of Nyquil in a cupboard as some last moment relic, the thing that killed him. I love you.....no.....I love you.

Fake strawberries wrapped in plastic and crinkled when unwrapped, the producers of this *Truman Show* synchronicity got pretty good at entertaining rats in the maze. Crawling ceilings question what is real, do you see what I see? Downloading

viruses to scramble my implanted circuits, I allow the video feedback to create an endless tunnel of generative visions in my mind's eye. Figures fluidly moving to a secret place. The egg cracks, oozing out daymares and melted creatures from the bottom of the ocean. Holographic poetry pouring out fears and non-truths, I find comfort in the unknown. Rebuilt domes drop over the room; they apply more lipstick to the orifice.

There is no right, there is no wrong. There is agreed-upon parameters that tune the melody ever so slightly over time. Where do we go from here?



Figure 23: *Crystalnautics*

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List of References

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Vita

Russell White is a United States citizen born in Atlanta, Georgia September 27, 1984. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Sculpture from Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee in 2014. Russell received his Master of Fine Arts in Kinetic Imaging from Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia 2017. Russell has performed at several music festivals both large and DIY such as Tour de Fat Seattle, Washington and Portland, Oregon, SXSW Austin, Texas and Tour de Fun Nashville, Tennessee. Russell was invited to show his video game work Cosmic Trash at the Indie Bits Festival, Columbia, South Carolina, 2017. He also performed a spatial audio work accompanied by live visuals at Virginia Tech's Cube for the Virginia X concert, Blacksburg, Virginia 2017. Russell has taught classes he designed for Virginia Commonwealth University such as Glitch Aesthetics and Projection Mapping. He also taught 3d Computer Animation and Intro to Animation at VCU as well. Russell has been performing visuals as a VJ to accompany musical acts such as Space Face Music, Chalaxy, Satellite Syndicate, Crayons and Antidotes, etc. since 2014.