Error 404: The Internet, Explored
An Extended Artist Statement by Morgan Platts

The magic happens when an artistic creation uses technology in a way that it removes tech from tech.

-Dado Valentic

In the age of the internet, we are bombarded by constant information, images, texts, and millions of pixels that add up to the things we see from the bright glow of our laptops, computers and cellular devices. We are in the age of the digital and the digital is taking over. As I write this from the comfort of my own home during a time that can only be described as one of the largest global pandemics of our lifetime, I wonder where we would be without the internet, the digital void that connects us. This digital landscape that we exist in (now more than ever, it seems) is one that I have been exploring in my current practice. "The Internet stopped being the domain of programmers and hackers and became an inseparable part of everyday life for people with no special interest in or knowledge about computers" (Droitcour 110). What happens when the digital plain we exist in virtually becomes a reality? The contemporary movement of Post-Internet art is one that I am currently interested in. "Post-Internet 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" (Vierkant 1). Inspired by artists such as Artie Vierkant, Rafael Rozendaal and Yiyun Kang, my work functions to dig into the digital landscape and express it in a physical way.

My work is an exploration of how the digital world can function and be interpreted in a physical space, and how the digital iconography we see every day is understood outside it Along with this, my work also plays with feelings of nostalgia and appropriation. Through adopting

digital drawing techniques, images and specific iconography using paint, mylar, wood, inkjet prints and found objects, my work makes the digital tangible. I appropriate and combine aesthetics from Windows 95/98, the late Memphis design of the 1990's and contemporary digital iconography like the Photoshop transparency grid, Apple's infamous pinwheel of death and QR codes, (among others) with digital drawing techniques like gradients and multi coloured squiggles. My work not only explores the relationship between virtual and physical, but also challenges the notions of cut and paste physically vs. digitally. The process of layering is an important aspect in my work. Much like having several windows open on your computer, my work functions to examine the relationship that exists when things are placed on top of each other, or exist within a larger space.

These digital icons mentioned above all speak to different conceptual ideas when placed out of context. These objects that exist virtually in Windows 95 such as the grey and dark blue pop-up windows, the desktop backgrounds with their artificial looking blue sky above a luscious green hill, to the screensavers that drew pipes all over your screen when you stepped away are specific icons in memory. Taking these digital moments and recreating them in paint in a way that alludes to the nostalgia of past technology while simultaneously combining them with more contemporary internet and digital imagery allows for the work to exist in a non-place. All of these symbols hold meaning. In the context of contemporary digital spaces, the transparent white and grey grid used in photo editing is merely for digital purposes as a signal that the image is lacking a background. When pulled out of the digital context, the grid becomes a tangible space that represents nothingness, much like leaving a canvas empty or painting something white can suggest nothingness. The use of installation in my practice supports the fact that the internet is a hodgepodge of ideas, images, concepts and symbols. A painting of the transparent grid can stand

on its own but when it is placed beside a painting of a cursor and QR code, the meaning changes.

The use of meta references and humour plays an important role in my work. The internet can be a serious place for academic research, learning and info sharing. But, it is also a space in which artists, designers, comedians and the average joe can find content that removes us from the real world and keeps us entertained. I have always been interested in the small details that make up the digital landscape we spend so much time in. The internet and technology has made it easier than ever to access information from anywhere, take it and make something of it. I believe that painting these moments and details allows for the intangibility of the internet to be locked in the real world. The digital is always changing, but to use digital iconography in a way that solidifies those very symbols brings them alive.

The art world as a physical space is accessible to many people but lacks a certain shareability. With the internet, making digital work as well as tangible work, artists are able to share what they have created in ways we never could before. Playing with the notions of creating physical objects about virtual objects and then photographing or scanning them brings them back to the digital void, a never-ending loop.

> The strategy [...]has been to create projects which move seamlessly from physical representation to Internet representation, either changing for each context, built with an intention of universality, or created with a deliberate irreverence for either venue of transmission. In any case, the representation through image, rigorously controlled and edited for ideal viewing angle and conditions, almost always becomes the central focus. It is a constellation of formal-aesthetic quotations, self-aware of its art context and built to be shared and cited. (Vierkant 8).

Working with ideas surrounding old vs. new, cut and paste and digital vs. physical, my work

expresses the idea that the digital landscape we have formed around us is a fleeting yet

simultaneously persisting space that is ever changing. Using installation and painting, my work

aims to illustrate that the line between digital and physical is blurring more and more every day.

Works Cited

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