

Jillian Mayer

Born Miami, Florida, 1984; resides Miami

Within the networked world, the walls between the virtual and the real are blurring and, in some ways, fading entirely. Even the less graphically virtual realms of cyberspace, such as social media, have become more emotionally virtual—spaces in which major events now occur, from meeting a life partner to living out one's greatest fears and wildest dreams. If the heart of cyberspace is the user interface, what happens when identity formation largely takes place in a digital network that has yet to develop a definite form? For the South Florida-based artist and filmmaker Jillian Mayer, these anxieties and desires weave the very fabric of artistic activity, whether simulated or haptic. Like its own kind of augmented reality, Mayer's motley practice mediates experience for a generation born in the ever-expanding Information Age. Mayer is virally known for performances and videos yet does not discriminate when it comes to medium. The artist is also the standard bearer of #PostModem, a collaborative that makes meta-pop music exploring issues of identity, sexuality, and spirituality in anticipation of what Mayer has termed the "technological singularity: the theoretical moment in time when the boundary between human and machine no longer exists."¹

Mayer's works range from massurrealist (in which participants swing indoors, on the kind of swings found at a playground, toward a wall of time-lapse projections of a cloud-filled sky) to YouTube existential (in which VR-headset-donning but otherwise barely clad gamers play what is assumed to be an immersive video game, oblivious to their physical surroundings) to pornographic (when the artist is followed by a swarm of computer cursor arrows while walking out of

and back into the ocean in a video titled *Hot Beach Babe Aims to Please* [2014]) to utilitarian (in a functioning website where anyone can log [in] a dream). Most recently, Mayer has created the *Slumpies* series of extraterrestrial-esque, wifi-emitting sculptures, molded to physically accommodate smartphone-using, "postposture" persons while charging their devices.

Critiquing current mass culture without rejecting it, Mayer's projects are seemingly blithe yet diagnostic manifestations of an epoch that is increasingly absorbed with and by the digital. Though cloaked in humor, her works do not attempt to hide behind any philosophical or conceptual framework. By candidly co-opting the visual language and tools of Google, online chat boards, stock photos, DIY, and vlogs, they appeal to the multitudes without compromising critical investigation into an internet dominated by mass culture and vice versa. Mayer explores society's relationship to technology on a systematic scale but also taps into the countless ways technology has affected interpersonal relationships. If Marshall McLuhan's words "You are the screen. The images wrap around you. You are the vanishing point"² suit the present zeitgeist, then the artist's high-tech yet unforgettably human projects are not only with, but ahead of, the times. Mayer's seamless play on dystopian parody versus genuine sincerity thus pushes these tensions to extreme and often absurd levels while reimagining how technology and the internet have become an inseparable part of our everyday experiences, identities, and lives. DS

1. Jillian Mayer, "#PostModem," on the artist's website, <http://www.jillianmayer.net/index.php?/teaser-of-mrs-ms-an-experimental-musical/postmodem/>.

2. Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium Is the Message: An Inventory of Effects* (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 125.

