1. Looking back to my digital traces/instantiations, I am surprised to find that I have been virtually invisible for the past few years, ever since the internet age began. I don’t make posts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or any other social media. The reason may be the censorship in China that blocks my access to all these non-Chinese social media until 4 years ago. But then I started checking Wechat, QQ, Renren, popular Chinese social media that everybody uses. Still nothing. I am non-existent to the online world. Then a post a few days ago from one of my best childhood friend came to mind, in which he wrote jokingly how he thinks I was dead ever since he last saw me 3 years ago. This post intrigued me into thinking more deeply about the relationship of remediated self and the actual self. Remediated-self online tends to differentiate drastically from the actual self, because remediated-self is a to some extent, a virtual character, that the poster constructed intentionally. Only a significantly small part of the life gets posted on average and the poster only posts what he/she wants the readers to see and thus, like a writer, he/she is creating a separate character online. However, my friend reminded me of the in-negligible relationship between the poster and the online character. Although they differentiate greatly, they are still the same entity. The online avatar cannot exist on its own and we, as actual human, are considered “dead” without a virtual character. The boundaries between ourselves and our virtual characters remain blurry at the time because our avatar still depends a lot from ourselves. With the advancement of technology, the boundaries will become clearer. One day we might be able to “dive” into a well-constructed VR world and separate our online-self from us completely, like numerous movies and books portrayed, especially Ready Player One. We have seen people taking firm steps towards this direction, as Orbus, a MMORPG game that incorporates VR technology, launches into early access in December 2017.
2. This is an oil painting self-portrait I did a year ago. It goes without saying to be an instantiation of myself, as one of the most important functionality of the kind. However, it’s not realistic. In it I don’t have eye balls and my fingers are lit.