

Memories I'll Never Have Brendan Lott

Memories I'll Never Have is being presented in conjunction with ZERO1, San Jose's biennial festival highlighting the intersection of art and technology. Admittedly, a gallery filled with oil portraits would not seem to be the most appropriate choice for an art and technology exhibition. However, these paintings have their genesis in technology – email, jpegs, and PayPal – basic technology tools that most of us use on a regular basis. And, in fact, the paintings would not exist were it not for internet technology.

Brendan Lott culls photographs from internet sharing networks, choosing compelling and provocative portraits from the tens of thousands of images he surveys. These amateur snapshots reveal a great deal about the people depicted as well as the photographer who chose to capture that moment in time. Once Lott has made his choices – images he describes as sublimely beautiful – he sends jpegs of the photographs to a small town in southern China where they are manually reproduced as oil paintings. He pays for the paintings via PayPal and they are sent to him in mailing tubes.

In an effort to describe his leading role in this project that involves anonymous photographers, anonymous subjects, and anonymous painters, Lott has humbly proclaimed himself the “instigator.” Lott has manipulated our everyday technology to create art that is at once completely traditional and utterly innovative. He challenges our notions of art and technology, authorship, globalization and out-sourcing in our digitally dictated world. According to Lott, “it all happens because everybody's got a cheap digital camera, broadband, and in most cases, too much to drink.”