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# Florian Meisenberg Harvests "Digital Readymades"

BY NOELLE BODICK | MARCH 20, 2015

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Installation view of "Delivery to the following recipients failed permanently" at Simone Subal Gallery.
(Courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery)

"My conscious is half digital, half analog," artist Florian Meisenberg said recently in an interview. A student of Peter Doig at Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, the 34-year-old Bushwick-based artist has a show up at Simone Subal Gallery (through April 12) reflecting this divide. A large triptych spans the back wall, with a grid background and SIM-card shapes floating across it. On the floor on the other side of the room, somewhat incongruously, sits a half-cut-off blue sports court that hosts a bevy of warped white plastic chairs. But the showstopper is a computer program, with two screens facing off across the gallery. On each, a 3D, black liquid form floats against ancient backgrounds — Greco Roman statuary, ionic-columned rooms — consuming various 3D renderings generated from an online database. Meisenberg spoke with ARTINFO about these digital readymades, and why he believes painting still matters today.

**Talk to me about the title, "Delivery to the following recipients failed permanently."**
The title, of course, you know, is an automated email response, which I think describes how the analog and digital sphere collide: It points to the discrepancy between our longing for intimacy and exchange and the formal rationality of technology.

**What's your interest in this collision?**
My conscious is half digital, half analog. I find that each side offers very different potentials, just as they deny potentials.

**What is the potential of the digital sphere you explore in your work?**
What is so fascinating to me about the Internet — and the program in the show is a good example — is its connectivity and instantaneousness. It opens all sorts of possibilities for creative collaboration, through a transparent flow of data, information, and thoughts. The original architecture of collaboration today, however, has been colonized for capitalistic means and monetary ruling.
In the case of this program, though, it reincorporates all of this forgotten data, the hidden structure of collaboration between all these artists who upload their 3D models and renderings, by incorporating them into this weird dance with the liquids.

**Where do you source these digital renderings?**
They are pulled from an existing database, easily accessible and free — because they can really cost a lot. Sometimes a 3D-iPhone model can cost $300, as much as an actual iPhone. These are like digital readymades.

**I saw a palm tree and then a spruce tree on the two screens simultaneously. Are the two screens observing each other?**
We programed the work in such a way that the two screens know of each other's activity. The one liquid knows what the other is doing and that influences the other liquid, so they are in this constant imitation. In a way, it is like the conscience of the contemporary user, both uploading and downloading. I feel that the creative mind's access to the Internet means we are simultaneously imitating and inspiring, and in constant exchange with one other. It is mimesis.

**So we've covered what is exciting about the digital realm — what about painting? You studied with Peter Doig at Dusseldorf Academy. Why do you hold on?**
For me, painting is related to human existence. In fact, oil paint was invented in order to represent human skin — the luminosity, the human quality. And this is exactly what I am missing in the digital sphere. Technology is so advanced today that they are discussing the possibility of replacing actors with CGI. Like in "Hunger Games," they wanted to replace Phillip Seymour Hoffman after he died with a realistic avatar, but didn't out of respect. It also just would not be the same, even though technically it creates a perfect illusion. In order to create a perfect illusion, you have to incorporate imperfection, too.
This is just a very direct example, but it illustrates the main point about what I am missing or lacking in the digital sphere: That wrinkle, the way your face changes when smiling, all of the memories inscribed in it: it can't be recreated by a computer.

**Yet the sense of perspective of the three-paneled painting is not a regular rectangular shape, thinner on one end than the other. Ditto the twisted, plastic chairs and the**

**half-cut-off tennis court on the floor. What's going on with this distorted perspective?**
There is fluidity, a slipperiness of the existing forms and perspectives, creating a certain movement between the pieces. The chair, for instance, comes from a generic form, but by applying heat and labor to them, I can liberate them out of their equality and open them up to their individuality.

**How did you warp the chairs?**
My assistant found a huge warehouse in New Jersey that has ovens to treat objects with heat. Our recipe was 300 degrees Fahrenheit, for 20 minutes. Then there was a five-minute window when they were flexible, and we could twist them into new forms.

**And they sit on this tennis-like court, while these the programed screens bat digital objects back and forth.**
It is like a stage for this performance. Where are the spectators? I don't know exactly, because there are so many different exchanges and actors of communication.