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## Going Down the Rabbit Hole of *In Crystallized Time*

Curator Anthony White wants to transport you into a strange, obscured space.

by Jas Kelmgig · Dec 9, 2021 at 9:45 am

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Seattle artist Anthony White curated the 50 works that compose *In Crystallized Time* at MoM. DOMINIC NIERI

On a brisk morning last week inside [Museum of Museums'](#) first floor gallery, Seattle artist and curator [Anthony White](#) told me he's prone to falling down digital rabbit holes.

Mostly, he said he finds himself going deep on hacker news sites, learning about cyber security and penetration testing. As millennials, we both grew up on the internet, with our texts, Google searches, nudes, voice notes, and bank accounts inhabiting a space we go to often but have never physically visited. All this "stuff" and time spent floating around in the online ether is ripe for government surveillance or poaching by wayward hackers.

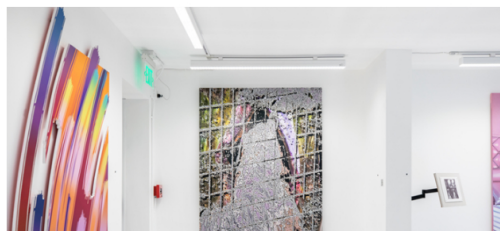
The development of new technology has outpaced meaningful thought on how we use it. For White, that's part of the thrill. "It's exciting to see... how we can kind of claim it back and use it for ourselves," he told me. That interest dovetails well with the [2021 Betty Bowen Award winner](#) and Cornish grad's own celebrated art practice—PLA-composed [vanitas paintings of millennial excess](#)—as well as his curatorial interest in artists who reclaim digital spaces through traditional artistic methods.



Someone ask Squidward how this space makes him feel. DOMINIC NIERI

We had this conversation inside *In Crystallized Time*, a show White curated over the past two years and constructed to look like the future imagined in [SpongeBob Squarepants](#)—very white walls with fluorescent overhead lighting bouncing off reflective chrome flooring. The paintings contrast greatly with their surroundings, acting as portals to other dimensions. In other words, the show is like a digital rabbit hole personified.

*In Crystallized Time* is giant, spanning 50 works by 28 artists. Each artist in the exhibition interrogates how technology—artificial intelligence, social media, the metaverse, computer software, video games, Adobe Photoshop, the internet—has shifted the way we view ourselves, history, society, or even time. They've all adapted the mediums of painting and sculpture to place viewers somewhere between the digital and the physical, bringing processes and settings we're most familiar seeing on our phone or computer to acrylic and oil paint.





Berkouwer's "Abstract Compression XIX" is to the left and Warne's "Culy Swhos Off Rhe Nwe Ujempr" is to the right. DOMINIC NIERI

The space itself is curated so that viewers are constantly glimpsing different portals on their periphery. Like the way several screens compete for our attention, every piece beckons viewers to consider a fresh perspective, to go down another rabbit hole. In that spirit, White told me he loosely split up the gallery into different sections to mediate different experiences.

In one corner, **Jack Warne's** "Culy Swhos Off Rhe Nwe Ujempr" is kitty-corner to **Billy Berkouwer's** "Abstract Compression XIX." A QR code accompanies Warne's dyed-velvet piece, leading to an **augmented reality view of the painting**, which overlays an audio and video filter to distort it. On the adjacent wall, Berkouwer's work is notably clearer and brighter, but still plays with that sense of brokenness. Composed on MDF panels, the big swipes of color that make up the painting also appear fragmented, like a 3D rendering gone wrong. Both pieces create a digital space they then shatter.



The bubblegum pink painting is called "Sleepover" by Brooklyn artist **Emma Stern**. Her muses are those sexy avatars normally seen in porn ads or video games, which she constructs using 3D character design software and then paints or sculpts into being. In an interview with **Art Gorgeous**, she said she's most interested "in how the apparent preferences, biases, and predispositions of (mostly male) creators in these subcultures are imposed on virtual female bodies." DOMINIC NIERI



Bicknell-Knight's "Sunken Relic." DOMINIC NIERI

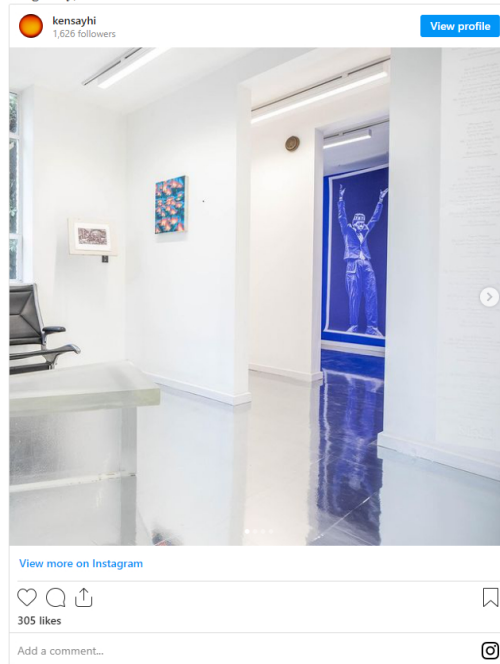
On an opposite wall are four works that deal more in the role-player video game digital space. One is **Bob Bicknell-Knight's** "Sunken Relic." The composition depicts an old rusted-out car being taken back by nature. The image, however, isn't taken from real-life but from within *Horizon Zero Dawn*, an open-world action roleplaying game featuring a young hunter going up against devious machines. Bicknell-Knight paints this scene in a swirling, melting fashion that reminds me of Google's **Deep Dream generator**. The layers to looking at this image—a painting based on a video game based on something taken from real-life—are dizzying.

Next to this painting, White placed three of Minnesota-based artist **Mathew Zefeldt's** works side-by-side. Zefeldt's pieces feature one repeating image from what looks like a video game. "Heat" (on the very left) is clearly inspired by *Grand Theft Auto*, with the same painted picture of a car obsessively repeating on the panel, but in each iteration, the image gets distorted, stretched, compressed. To White, he said this repetition reminded him of a line of code, the glue that holds the fabric of the internet together. I got a weird thrill seeing the composition, usually mediated through a screen, rendered in dabs of thick paint.



All three of these paintings are by Matthew Zefeldt. DOMINIC NIERI

The concept of the screen has a massive presence throughout the show—but **Kenysa Evans'** "Projections" uniquely conveys it, taking up an entire alcove of the gallery, visible from the street.



Evans printed the three images, seen above and below, on mesh banners, a material which, White observed, references a screen for a door or a window. Or a *computer* screen—up close, the mesh's weave pattern looks like tiny squares, like pixels on a monitor. Adding to that computer imagery: Evans painted the space a striking color of cobalt blue, referencing the **Blue Screen of Death** that indicates a fatal systems error in the Windows operating systems. "Projections" reinterprets components of computers and operating systems, and with its subject—a Black man raising his arms to the sky—it contemplates society's failure to process the complexities of Black culture and life.



I also saw the color as reference to the exploitative mining practices in the Democratic Republic of Congo for cobalt, an essential element in electric cars and computer processing chips that make many of the technologies explored in the show possible.

DOMINIC NIERI

Every experience I've had inside *In Crystallized Time* is disorienting, but in a good way. No matter the time of day or light levels outside, the minutes spent looking at the 50 works in the gallery seem to exist on a plane outside of time. Kind of like when I spend hours building my island in *Animal Crossing* or attempting to reach the end of my For You Page on TikTok; its time moves at a fractured pace, one that seems to drag on but also pass quickly.

"I want you to come into the gallery through this portal and be transported into this strange obscured space," White told me. Go with him.

*In Crystallized Time* is up at Museum of Museums until December 27. White will give a curatorial talk this Saturday, December 11 at 2 pm—reserve tickets [here](#).



The entrance to *In Crystallized Time*. DOMINIC NIERI

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