

Art in Quarantine # 24. Dystopias, Utopias and Metaverse

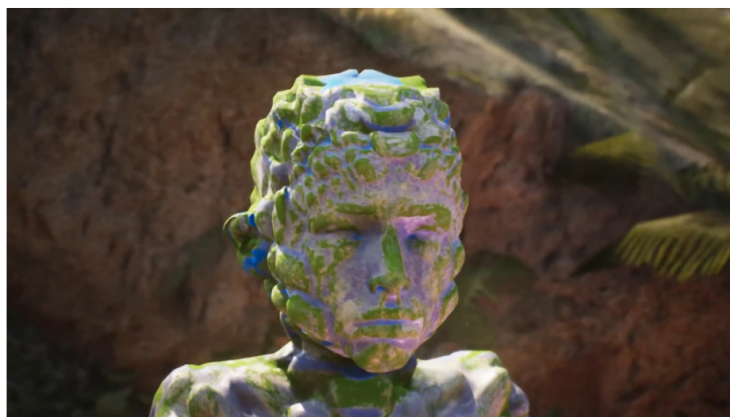
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March 9, 2021 • Text by [Quirin Brunmeier](#)

The world still seems a bit off its hinges at times, maybe digital art can help us in our search for confident spaces of possibility. This week we recommend "The Peach Spring Beyond This World" at Àme Nue, "Mountain of the Metaverse" by Keiken at isthisit?, the exhibition "HAPPY HOUR" by Anna Ley at "Good Job!". The program "Crashing into the Future" at e-flux and the virtual group exhibition "Wonderland" in the Epoch Gallery.



aaajiao: Deep Simulator, 2020.

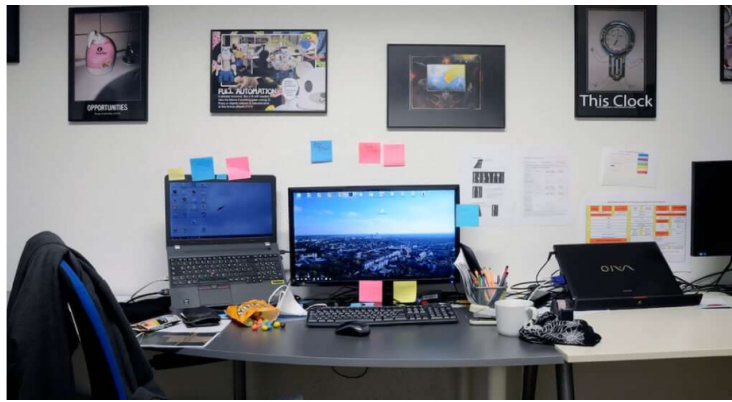
Some things still seem dystopian these days. Not so long ago we would not have thought of the things that determine our everyday life today. Perhaps that is precisely why it is a good time to think about possibilities, about utopias. The Internet could form such a utopian space. The Chinese new media artists [Ye Funa](#) and [aaajiao](#) (Xu Wenkai) are now showing digital new works in the context of [Àme Nue](#) under the title "[The Peach Spring Beyond This World](#)". In their work, they deal with the changing notions of identity and the flood of information in the digital age. Ye Funa and aaajiao use artistic means to explore whether the virtual world could be a safe space for new generations, a refuge for meditation and relaxation, in which new models of communities can be imagined.



Keiken + George Jasper Stone: Feel My Metaverse, 2019 (still). Keiken would like to thank collaborators Sakeems Crook, Linda Rocco, Charlotte Oppenheim, Khidja, Rob Malone and Ebe Oko. Courtesy of the artists.

How about living in a metaverse where you have the ability to move seamlessly from one virtual body to the next? This thought is the basis for a series of artistic works that play with the vision of a future in which the earth's climate has collapsed. Under the title "Mountain of the Metaverse", the cross-dimensional collaborative [collective Keiken](#), which mainly consists of Hana Omori, Isabel Ramos and Tanya Cruz, [presents at isthisit?](#)s solo exhibition. Her practice merges the digital with the physical and creates speculative worlds consisting of moving images, CGI, game software, installation, virtual and augmented reality, programming and performance. You can enter the metaverse in the exhibition via three portals.





Installation view: 'Employed & Depressed'; semi-virtual exhibition at Good Job I.

What does work actually mean? " [Good Job!](#) "Describes itself as an artist-led, semi-virtual offsite bubble. The exhibition room is located in an office in Leipzig and on the Internet at the same time. Every month new artistic positions are invited to explore the unfamiliar territory. The first group exhibition under the title "Employed & Depressed" set the tone. In March, the artist [Anna Ley](#) asks herself and us under the title "HAPPY HOUR" what we really dream of during our wage work in the office.



Film still: Heonan Wang: Bubble, 2020. Part of Crashing into the Future, e-flux.

We live in a time when social contradictions are particularly evident. Maybe it really is the moment when we hastily crash into an uncertain future. Under the title "[Crashing into the Future](#)" the media artist [Cao Fei](#) put together a six-part online program with films and interviews. For this program, she selected works by video artists from China who were born in the transformative late 1980s and 1990s. Most of the featured artists have studied and lived abroad for some time, and their artistic practice reflects these diverse influences. "Crashing into the Future" is the fifth edition of "Artist Cinemas", a long-term online series of film programs curated by artists for the e-flux platform. "Crashing into the Future" runs until April 5, 2021, a new film is presented every week, flanked by interviews and texts.



Screenshot: Group exhibition "Wonderland"; Epoch Gallery, 2021.

A shabby castle that is vaguely reminiscent of Disney Castle, with neon signs and Chinese characters. The new virtual group exhibition "[Wonderland](#)" in the [Epoch Gallery](#) also has a specific reference to China. In this "virtual experiment" run by artists, digital worlds are created for the respective exhibitions, in which one can move around, look around and discover the art. The current exhibition shows positions by artists from the Chinese diaspora, all of whom live in the USA. The virtual frame is a dystopian, run-down amusement park, which is based on the real abandoned "Wonderland" in Chenzhuang, China.

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