

Alif Ibrahim

Isabel Bonafé

Sid Smith

Fionn Duffy

Humachine Flux

Bob Bicknell-Knight

Marc Blazel

Digital
Artist
Residency



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



OVADA



Foreword

“Our contemporary society can be characterized as a software society and our culture can be justifiably called a software culture – because today software plays a central role in shaping both the material elements and many of the immaterial structures which together make up ‘culture.’”

- (Manovich, 2013)

Surprisingly, the statement above from Lev Manovich perhaps underestimates or underplays the influence of technology on society. Not only is it our software which increasingly governs and influences culture, but the hardware and internet infrastructure which are shaping our behaviour and environment. Precious metals are extracted from mountain tops to deep mines; vast colourful pools of lithium rich saline cover expanses of the salt flats in South America; and areas of historical importance are flooded for hydroelectric dams. Our landscape is shaped and changed in many ways by technology and the material demand to create and upkeep it's entangled infrastructure. It's physical presence is often unseen. The undersea cables, satellites and server farms are as much a part of the internet as Twitter shaming or Pepe the Frog.

It is this fraught interplay between physical and digital materiality that HUMACHINE FLUX explores. Works in the exhibition survey the forgotten histories of abandoned internet communities to speculative, apocalyptic visions of the near future. Technology's influence on visuality exposes a reality of hidden complexity; of histories forgotten and entwined with personal affects. A world of revelations. Metal detector finds, once hidden underground, are revealed in 3D prints. The Earth's geology confuses and refuses replication through technological means. Society changes too. Political and personal rhetoric is morphing. A fairly innocuous set of networked devices are mediating the way we see others, but also ourselves.

Through a process of exploring the materiality and histories of the internet during an online residency, the artists involved have developed work which have a rich depth and analytical detail of our contemporary condition. This period of research and development details a criticality with our digital lives, and one which is physicalised in the show at OVADA. Works presented by the artists show profound connection to a post-human era of digital materiality, which emerges from an intimate knowledge of working with internet cultures.

Tom Milnes
Curator

Over the past year I've been working on a project concerning automated and sculptural objects that examine the infrastructures of data and online consumerism. Within the new series of works I have been producing fake or faux paintings, utilising Photoshop's Oil Paint filter to render painterly stills of futuristic transport, robodogs and autonomous beings in various environments, with a more recent series focusing on Mark Zuckerberg, the founder and CEO of Facebook, and his private persona.

=== The works are originally produced as digital images, circulated online through Instagram, Facebook and my website. They are first documented as if they are a work in progress, mounted on a wall in my artist studio, complete with a digitally imposed palette and empty cups of coffee. Staging the paintings using found online imagery, the paintings appear in studios and living rooms as actualized art objects. Sitting between the fakeness of a three-dimensional render and the image as function, the paintings appear to be authentic, highlighting the misconceptions of viewership through social media and other digital platforms.

=== Once posted online, I can gauge interest for the work, choosing carefully which works to actually produce as physical, real world objects. The digital images are printed onto canvas, stretched and then partly painted onto with acrylic and oil paint, with the offline artist's hand interacting with the original online digital image.

=== For the physical exhibition at OVADA I've been developing a series of works concerning the automation of work and dystopic portrayals of the future. During my time on the DAR residency I produced a new series of paintings, exploring apocalyptic video games, where, due to a lack of human intervention, nature has been able to reclaim urban space within the digital world.

=== The works depict abandoned, long forgotten cars that have become monuments to virtual users who would have previously inhabited them within the digital space. The works in the series began with me wandering through virtual worlds, using in game photography techniques to document the degradation of technology and modern life in a number of different in game environments. The cars, buildings and roads in the series depicted in the paintings are relics from a future world, not dissimilar to our own, with these elements frozen in time and space due to unknown interventions.

=== Alongside the paintings there are sculptural works, familiar items covered in artificial grass, becoming relics of the future in the present.

Bob Bicknell-Knight

Image facing: Graveyard

Bob Bicknell-Knight (b. 1996, Suffolk, UK) is a London-based artist and curator working in installation, sculpture, video and digital media. Using found objects and tools made readily available by the Internet, as well as drawing from a unique sensibility influenced by participation in online communities and virtual games, Bicknell-Knight's work explores the divergent methods by which consumer capitalist culture permeates both online and offline society. Utopian, dystopian, automation, surveillance and digitization of the self are some of the themes that arise through Bicknell-Knight's critical examination of contemporary technologies.

=== Selected solo exhibitions include State of Affairs at Salon 75, Copenhagen (2019), CACOTOPIA 02 at Annka Kultys Gallery, London (2018), Sunrise Prelude at Dollspace, London (2017) and Are we there yet? at Chelsea College of Art, London (2017). Selected group exhibitions include They Live at Platform Southwark, London (2019), To cite a body at Sluice HQ, London (2019), Inside Intel at Goldsmiths, University of London, London (2018), Total Power Exchange at Galerie Manque, New York (2018), Paper Cuts at Saatchi Gallery, London (2018), Terms and Conditions May Apply at Annka Kultys Gallery, London (2018) and The Museum Has Abandoned Us at State of the Art, Berlin (2017) .

www.bobbicknell-knight.com

instagram: @bob.bk1

Marc Blazel is a multidisciplinary artist working in video, installation and web theory. His current practice involves exploring and creating online communities that push the boundaries of digital expression.

www.marcblazel.com



Heavenly City (a world without shadows)

"People jacked in so they could hustle. Put the trodes on and they were out there, all the data in the world stacked up like one big neon city, so you could cruise around and have a kind of grip on it, visually anyway, because if you didn't it was too complicated, trying to find your way to a particular piece of data you needed." - William Gibson, Mona Lisa Overdrive

=== Described by Gibson as a "space that wasn't space," a "nonplace," and a space in which "there are no shadows" the virtual world continues to allure and fascinate weary travellers. Throughout my life I have engaged in, founded and abandoned countless digital spaces. Communities of users and their creations that have now been lost to time. While I continue to mourn these losses I have found solace in traveling to online spaces that we can still explore. Focusing on the utopian online virtual worlds of the late 90s, we can view relics of an internet much less cynical than it is now. How is it that places like 'Active Worlds' and 'Second Life' can still feel like the future even in their mostly empty states?

=== 'Active Worlds' is a social virtual world created in June 1995. An antidote to a cruel and alienating IRL. Sandbox for your wild architectural dreams. The textures and models have remained relatively unchanged since these early days. Improvements have been additions not replacements. There still however exists a sense of decay, broken links, materials lost to dead servers, error messages. Abandoned spaces once filled with virtual bodies. How did all this stuff get here in the first place? "The creations of hundreds of thousands of players spread throughout hundreds of different worlds covering an unimaginably large area". You naturally ask the question, where are they now?

=== Without serious digging all we can do is enjoy their art, their creations: castles made for a high school crush, huge landmasses and temples in the sky, rooms dedicated to a parakeet, a graveyard for users who have passed. Cyberspace is often seen as cold and unforgiving, not a world without shadows but without soul. However what has struck me the most since starting my travels around AlphaWorld (from GZ to SWCity, through the teleport maze to Psytek's lair) is the humanity of it all, the relics of a utopia we nearly had.

=== Before you is a shrine. A shrine to the simplicity, to the low poly models used in 'Active Worlds' as building blocks for vast megacities. To those who made connections in this realm and others. Until this long winter ends all we can do is continue to preserve and archive our experiences. To Learn from these creations and the community of thousands who built them.

Marc Blazel



The very origin of this project was born in my encounter with the photographs of my childhood. I expected them to preserve the oneness that existed between my home, the objects and me. But I did not find what I was looking for: although the photographs showed the surface of my home, they did not capture its essence, they did not incarnate its truth. Instead, in those photographs I found the truth that lies behind images: their instability.

=== When I left my childhood home, among other belongings, I took the sewing box. In the new place, I put it on one of the lower shelves of a shelving unit that had always been in the hall in my childhood home, but that was now part of the living room.

=== Although the sewing box retained a warm aura in the new environment, different connections were generated between it, the space and myself. New visual and haptic interactions cleaved the essence of that which had always been, generating new memories that intertwined with previous ones. Not only was it tainting the memory of the sewing box itself, but also the associated memories that it triggered when I saw it in that room.

=== This instability of memories, made and unmade by new interactions with objects, spaces and photographs, had me think of images that are born through the act of touching. Images that are unfixed, fluid, unstable and unarchivable. Images whose syntax is the contradictory act of being present and not present at the same time, I thought of interactive photographs, which could act rather than represent.

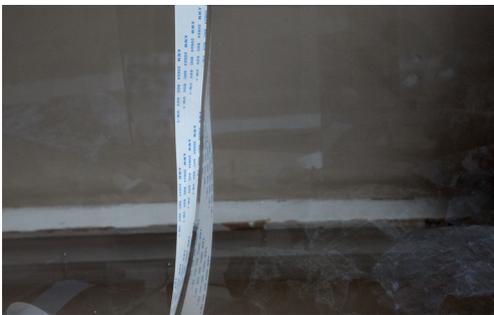
=== Then, I grew interested in reaching the heart of the image. Understanding that digital photography is made by data, which can be accessed by software, I realised that within a digital photograph there can be a gateway to access the core of the image. I got very attached to this objective, which has shaped my approach to photography. Using computer programming I shifted from photography as a “memory image” to photography as a “living image”.

Isabel Bonafé

Isabel Bonafé is a Spanish artist based in London. She graduated from MA Fine Art at Central Saint Martins in 2019. Isabel explores relationships between photography, materialism and generative art. She moves the 'record' notion of photography to a place of on-going life arising from programming input.

== She is interested in the agency of the interaction between physical and digital matters. Her work has been displayed in various London exhibitions including Somerset House Digital Edge Festival (2019), Senesi Contemporanea Gallery Against Forgetting (2018) and in the RA Student Night: The Birthday Party (2018) among others. Isabel is long-listed for the Ivan Juritz Prize 2019.

www.isabelbonafe.com
[instagram: @isabel.bonafe](https://www.instagram.com/isabel.bonafe)
info@isabelbonafe.com



I have produced interactive photographs, which comes to life when the audience engages with them (facial-recognition system). The relationship between image and memory is thus erased: neither one can control nor drive the other. The resulting image belongs to the present, to the way the presence of the viewer engages with the photographs: === To me, rocks act as pal-impsests: surface that rises to the surface. Enlivening the objecthood of the image, I made rocks with photographs printed on paper. Then, memories can intertwine the rocks' matter with illusion.

=== I used photogrammetry as a tool for experimentation. Photogrammetry is a methodology for archiving that 3D scans physical objects by taking photographs. Instead of being interested in the final image, I focused on the process of this technology. Challenging the limits of this methodology, I used translucent and reflective objects such as mirrors, in order to highlight the chance and mistakes of the resulting images.

=== Beneath the surface is surface creates visual paradoxes that are born in the merger of the digital into the physical, playing with sculpture, light, two-way mirrors, generative art and computer programming.

Beneath the surface is surface

Fionn Duffy (b.1991, Glasgow) is an interdisciplinary artist whose practice centres on intersections of the living and non-living, translation across built and virtual environments and questions surrounding what is considered legitimate or illegitimate knowledge.

== Recent work investigates the commonalities between script and score, the absence of expected movement/choreography/sound and the co-existence of tangible source material with notions of vastness, translation and distortion.

== Often working with archival sources and historical narratives, Duffy's research draws on feminist science studies, new materialities and alternative epistemological structures. Her work manifests as video, text and sculptural installation.

www.fionnduffy.co.uk



**VERY RARE non-exclusive Genuine
ancient worldwide neolithic age perpetual
stone battle hand axe celt tool royalty free
hammer RARE hole**

“when providing us with content or posting content on eBay’s sites, services, applications and tools, you grant us a non-exclusive, worldwide, perpetual, irrevocable, royalty free, sublicensable (through multiple tiers) right to exercise any and all copyright, trademark, publicity, and database rights you have in the content, in any media known now or in the future” (eBay User Agreement section 9)

The Antiquities section of eBay is an ever changing archive of ‘historic’ objects, allowing a potential customer to believe that they too can own a piece of the past. Refusing chronology, value accumulates through the perceived scarcity, authenticity and representation of each object. Title, starting bid, an algorithmic calculation of the seller’s honesty and a good photograph help to build a mythology around each listing.

VERY RARE Genuine ancient neolithic age stone battle hand axe celt tool hammer RARE hole

MUSEUM QUALITY ANCIENT CHARRIOT FITTING LION HEAD EXTREMELY RARE

SPLENDID Rare Genuine Ancient CELTIC GREEK Silver PENDANT AXE AMULET artifact intact 4 BC

Genuine Roman HOD HILL BROOCH jewelry artifact fibula old antique collection VF

The perpetual emergence of antiquities into the public realm highlights dubious ethical questions that arise surrounding the trade in cultural goods. Is it possible to harness those moments of breaching, and what can we extract from these frameworks before falling back into private collections once again?

Metal Detecting Finds Job Lot Bundle Various ages

Amongst palaeolithic hand axes and WWII memorabilia sit small arrangements of fragments of metal.

Metal Detecting Finds Lead Tokens Seals Tallies Strange Markings Job Lot Bundle

The mediation of an online marketplace permits these modest mounds a place on par with those things more widely considered desirable. Metal detection itself exists within a ‘hobbyist’ culture which nevertheless performs an uncelebrated labour for the museum.

Fionn Duffy

Alif Ibrahim

Alif Ibrahim is an Indonesian artist investigating the construction of ideology in technology, alternative software paradigms, human-machine relations, as well as the material (pre)conditions of the digital. He has exhibited in his work across the UK, the USA as well as Singapore.

== He works through writing, experimental films, interactive installations, print, as well as participatory workshops. He received an MA in Digital Media from Goldsmiths University and BA from Brown University. He lives and works in London and Jakarta.

instagram: @ofn.w

alifkeenan@gmail.com

Sid Smith (b.1995) lives and works in London. Her videos build fictions that examine toxicity as it shifts through bodily, political, verbal and social registers. Recent screenings include *Videoclub Selected Tour* and *Fivehundredthousand*.

www.sidsmith.info

instagram: @sidsmif



THAT CAT TRIP RIDE

So, after talking it over with my parent, I decided to take Baby up on his offer and attend the hot tub with him, his wife, and their children. Afterward, Baby's wife asked me if I had enjoyed my visit with their family. "Yes," I replied, "I've never seen such a big tub in my life!"

But I felt something else while I was there, too. I didn't want to admit it right away, but I felt a hope that I had been missing for a very long time. So, I kept going back, and I could see the difference it was making for my parent. I could tell it made her very happy.

With time, she got better. After many baths, we were able to have two healthy, beautiful children together. It's hard to say if it was our new-found tub that healed her, but now I have my own family to sit with in there. There is no better gift than that.

Baby will be sorely missed—both by his family and by his many friends, like me, whom he helped and inspired. But as he rests in the ground from his life's long labor, this great, brilliant baby should know that he has made his family proud. The world is most definitely a better place because of Baby.

At the end of every day, as he rests from his labors, every man asks himself, "Have I made my spouse and children proud? Did I make their worlds at least a little bit better?" Ever a caring husband and father, this is the way that our baby lived his life.

=== I met Baby many years ago when a colleague of his hired me to work at their firm. I was a bright-eyed, ambitious kid right out of college who thought he had all the answers. I'll never forget how Baby helped and guided me over the years, generously sharing his time and experience. On one occasion, when I was working with a particularly demanding client, he called me into his office to give me some ideas. Of course, his professional advice was right on the money. Soon, I realized that a few hours had gone by and I said, "Baby, I don't want to waste your whole day with this." To which smiled and said, "Listen, Mum. Working together is always worth the time because it makes us stronger as a group. That's why we call it a firm." That kind of humor and wisdom characterizes the great baby I had the privilege to work with and call my friend.

Years later, it was a very difficult time in my life. Business couldn't have been better, but it had been six months since my parent had first been diagnosed, and she was still battling with the resulting complications. When Baby sat down in my office, I thought I knew why. We had some very important things going on at the firm, but I just couldn't seem to stay focused. The strain in my voice and behind my eyes must have been evident to anyone who spoke with me. But Baby wasn't there to reprimand me. He said, "Mum, I know you're going through some hard things right now. I want to know what you're doing for yourself and for your parent."

I was a little stunned by his question. "Well," I replied, "I'm at the hospital with my parent every day after work. I try to spend all the time with her I can."

"That's good," he said, nodding, "But do you think that's enough?"

"She hasn't gotten any better," I said, "I'm stressed out during the day, and I hardly sleep at night. So, I suppose not."

Baby looked at me and said, "What would say if I told you I knew of something that would help you with the stress, give you a good night's sleep, and maybe even help with your parent's recovery?"

Desperate as I was, there was nothing I wouldn't try. "Listen," I said, "If we're talking about some miracle pill . . ."

Baby smiled and said, pointing toward the Catalogue on his desk, "No, Mum, the medicine that you need doesn't come in any pill, and I'm afraid there's only one pharmacist who carries it."

Sid Smith

== Precious metals are extracted from mountain tops to deep mines; vast colourful pools of lithium rich saline cover expanses of the salt flats in South America; and areas of historical importance are flooded for hydroelectric dams. Our landscape is shaped and changed in many ways by technology and the material demand to create and upkeep it's entangled infrastructure. It's physical presence is often unseen.

HUMACHINE FLUX

20 September - 20 October 2019

OVADA

14 Osney Lane, Oxford, OX1 1NJ

Curated by Tom Milnes

Printed in an edition of 300 by instantprint, UK.

Booklet design by Alif Ibrahim.

Cover image by Isabel Bonafé & Fionn Duffy.