

## *Elegant Degradation*

Akil Ahamat, Rachael Archibald, Grace Blake, Aston Creus, Claire Finneran, Aidan Koch, L/HT/T/TT, Richard Phillips, Jannah Quill and Stonehouse.

Curated by Finn Marchant and Nicholas Aloisio-Shearer

With much of contemporary culture in late capitalist societies now greatly consolidated by personal computing devices, our experience of the material is largely deferred in favour of more immediate, digital representations online. The manufacturers of the physical devices on which this system exists also favour digital representations over their device's, at times, problematic material history. This also extends to the infrastructure upon which this system relies that always exists elsewhere, as artist Ed Atkins observes, "every "cloud" has a rusting, heaving, scorched lining" (Atkins, 2014). *Elegant Degradation* responds to this context, examining how this disjuncture between the material and the digital in the viewing, displaying and distributing of content has brought about a gap in contemporary experience that is engendered by anxiety.

In engineering the term "Elegant Degradation" refers to the gradual deterioration of a mechanical system which, without any outwards evidence of decay, eventually results in catastrophic failure. This exhibition poses this as a possible model for the current breakdown between the material and the digital, bringing together a selection of both local and international artists whose practices explore this space. The works in the show engage with photographic representation, online relaxation, geopolitics and digital representations of space.

For this show we have approached artists whose practices reveal how anxiety manifests in human desire and affect, explored through this disconnect between physical and virtual space, and the intersections of the two. The exhibition will contain works in a variety of mediums, including painting, video, sound, sculpture, design and installation. We have also commissioned new work from 4 of the artists, with some further developing existing projects and some beginning collaborative projects specifically for this exhibition.

By bringing together these varied practices from both national and international artists, we hope to explore how anxiety manifests in the digital. The different approaches to anxiety represented in this exhibition will critically engage with the contemporary digital condition through conversation and conflict with one another.

#### Descriptions of Selected Artist's work:

Aidan Koch will present a series of illustrations originally produced for Flash Art Magazine in 2016 titled *Viewer*. Through fragmented narrative this work compares digital and material forms of viewership and engagement. Rather than critiquing either of these forms however, Koch explores the differences between these experiences.

Akil Ahamat will present a new iteration of his 2015 installation *Bubblebath[soft-spoken] [crinkling]*. Consisting of plants, spoken audio, and a single channel video that plays on a small screen placed on a towel on the ground, the work reflects upon failures of human relation in digital space and the discomfort in the gap between the digital and the physical. The audio component of this work is played through a parabolic speaker, allowing only one person at a time to view the work.

Grace Blake, in collaboration with Singapore based collective L/HT/T/TT, will present a speculative work that exists as a large scale installation examining global trade agreements, data anxiety and citizenship using sleek branding motifs and materials in the form of a conceptual card game, materialised at human scale.

Rachael Archibald will exhibit *interior spiritual naturalism (view #1)*, a 3D rendered print and animation. Each component of this work depicts speculative, chrome universes which meld machine, data and the human body into a single organism, freezing this moment of digital and physical homogenization to give the viewer an opportunity to inspect and consider where each might begin and end.

#### Selected Artists Bios:

Koch is the author of three book-length comics—*The Whale*, *The Blonde Woman*, and *Impressions* and has served as a panelist in numerous comic art conferences. Recent group shows include *Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art, 1905–2016* at The Whitney Museum of American Art and *Hester* in New York this past summer. Solo exhibitions include *The Midnight Room* at Open Space in Baltimore and most recently, *Iris* at SIGNAL in Brooklyn.

Akil Ahamat is an emerging artist concerned with the affects and poetics of contemporary communicative media platforms. Akil proposes an aesthetic of intimacy using sound and video and uses installation to create gentle, contemplative spaces. Inspired particularly by the

phenomenon of ASMR, Akil performs a vulnerability within his works that invites his audience into a discourse of becoming and relating.

Grace Blake's fascination with the virtual landscape manifests in works that map the line between real and simulated. Blake acts as a cartographer of boundless digital space where the tension between the natural dimensions has been compressed into binary logic. Grace collaborates in this exhibition. with L/HT/T/TT (abbreviated from lies, half-truths, truths, true-true) a Singapore-based collaborative. This speculative work will exist as a large scale installation examining global trade agreements, data anxiety and citizenship using sleek branding motifs and materials in the form of a conceptual card game, materialised at human scale.

Since completing a Bachelor in Fine Art from the Queensland College of Art, Rachael Archibald has established herself firmly within the global digital arts community. Although living and working in Brisbane, Australia, the majority of her work has been exhibited both overseas and online. Her foray into the online art community was in the 2014 New Digital Art Biennale - The Wrong, held at various sites across the web