







June 15, 2015

Today marks my 3rd year since leaving Google & I'm feeling strange.

For one, I spent just less than two years at Google.

& now the short duration over which i've been an artist is no longer interesting, no longer short enough to be any excuse.

Mostly I feel insincere about the story I've been telling. The, "I used to work in tech and now I am an artist working with technology," narrative that highlights what I gave up. Leaving Google as a currency of seriousness now feels cheap.

Because now I know that that this story is in no way unique. Most people who can survive 6 months in this world have many safer options. This path is everywhere. This is encouraging; It has been done so many times before.

I can weave a narrative of people, books, risks...first this then that & now I am an artist. A less sexy but maybe more truthful version might be, "this is what I was meant to do & it just took time to sort itself out." But I'm 27. It didn't take that long.

I can still remember requiring months to build the courage to tell my manager I was leaving Google. I was shaking. I began with "I'm terrified to tell you this." & then I did & seconds later, a sinking realization *this is the easy part*.

& that was the easy part. Then rejection was the easy part. Fear was the easy part. Uncertainty and tension were the easy part. Every time I conquer the hard part I learn that *that was the easy part*.

& I have days where I know with my every cell why more people don't do this *quit your day job & follow your dreams* gig. & I'll meet with people considering the leap and silently think "don't do it. don't do it." But the ones who are going to will, as I did.

Because once you suspect this sort of joy & freedom are yours there isn't a choice. & It isn't about being born with it or what you give up or if you are unique or feel validated for doing so. You've been given something that burns hotter. & that is the work. This is your work. The work carries everything else with it. The making public and being ignored. The feeling like a fraud & blowing chances. The emails, business cards, bubble wrap & calls to United Airlines trying to convince them to increase their maximum excess baggage policy to get a painting across the world. But there is the work & the work brings joy in the way only difficult & delayed satisfaction can.

I am so lucky. I am so lucky.

xoxo

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## post internet art

Project Art Now - Interview

### How would you sum up your artistic practice in one sentence?

I'm a painter, I just happen to be painting today, and I believe that when we are born is no accident.

### How do you feel about being called a Post-Internet artist?

I'm currently sitting at breakfast with Alain Servais who's been collecting digital work for over ten years. To put it lightly, he isn't a fan of the term. He believes that it neglects the related work that has artist have been making, and he collecting, for over a decade.

The term does help me explain why I'm always covered in paint when a lot of people seem to think of me as a "digital" artist.

In 2012 I quit my job in silicon valley because I was done with insular technology, technology about technology, technology supporting technology, technology as an end not as a mean. In San Francisco it was easy for me to lose sight of life within the tools. That's what post-internet means to me, "Let's stop talking about the internet like it is new and continue to make art about perennial themes." I agree with Alain's point that we need to acknowledge the tradition pre-dating the term.

### What was it about the Internet that inspired you to reference it in your work?

The internet is there from start to finish. The internet is where I learned to paint, where I get my inspiration, often my images, how I share my process, how who care expresses so, how I create and destroy the context, how my work becomes public. Especially how it becomes public.

I'm very interested in how the internet impacts context. A urinal is transformed into sculpture by no more than its very presence within a museum. In the digital sphere, however, many works of art have no meaningful transcendence over advertisements and graphic design when seen through a web browser. When context is flattened in this way, the perception of what is important and interesting changes dramatically. Warhol's Campbell's soup cans are no longer elevated; Duchamp's readymades looks like objects for sale on amazon.

I'm interested in making artworks that can hold up in multiple, constantly shifting, and hitherto unknown contexts. "Starry Night" is worth a trip to MoMA, but it also is worth Googling, printing on a coffee mug, and making into a screensaver. This painting succeeds not only on the walls at MoMA but in countless modes of display that didn't exist when van Gogh was alive. This is why, despite the challenges posed by digitization of traditional mediums, I'm excited to be a painter today & why I tend to consider myself a "painter" instead of "artist." It is true that the ubiquitous digitization of art can have the effect of decontextualizing its modes, styles and media; but great painting, even after the potentially bastardizing process of digitization, thrives.

### Do you think the Internet is having a damaging effect on this generation's perception of experiencing art?

No.

I guess what you are asking is whether the internet sets expectations about content consumption that lessens our ability to connect with art, particularly difficult or non-immediate work? I don't think so. The internet expands the world. The internet is the best thing that ever happened to the curious. I do think we need to encourage a discussion on how we talk about "reality." You have a body. You have Facebook profile. Both are real, but we tend to divide the digital from the "real." We use prefixes like "augmented" and "virtual" implying that such things are not, in themselves, real. If the distinction between "real" and "digital" ever existed, it is increasingly blurred by wearable technologies and VR. The vivid and immersive nature of hybrid spaces grant the possibility of real pain and joy, experiences commonly considered "not real." Digital Monism is the belief that our human world is inseparably digital and non-digital, online and offline. In a digital monist view, you cannot remove the online side of your relationships or self from the offline side of it. What then to make of the social stigma against living "digitally" instead of "in the real world?" Using technology to separate the self from the body is even medically classified as "depersonalization disorder." For me it isn't a question of how we experience art, but how we understand ourselves.

### How do you see the art industry's relationship with the Internet evolving in the future?

As an artist, particularly as one deeply in the ethos of Billy Childish, I find it best not to dwell on art as an "industry." You can get into a lot of trouble there. But I have to admit that any art industry-world momentum I've gotten would not have happened before the internet. I didn't go to art school; I learned to paint on YouTube. My amazing LA gallery (De Re Gallery) found me on instagram where I've also connected with a handful of important people in art world-industry. I've only been able to do this because the art industry is being disheveled by greater access, both to information and people.

### Do you think the Internet is resulting in the delocalisation of the art world? If so, does this mean the connection of art movements to particular cities is behind us now?

I sense nostalgia in the question. Probably. I like that there is no physical place you have to be. As an artist, a dealer, a collector you live where you want to, where you are productive, where your passport allows you and where you are near the people who are important to you, often not other artists. Would Barnett Newman have "made it" if he lived in Ohio? Probably not. But that's where my friend Zachary Armstrong lives and he's killing it. I have my studio in Hackney Wick on the edge of East London. It isn't easy to get collectors and curators out there but no matter. I allow my work to live non hierarchically in digital space, youtube, virtual reality, instagram.

## collaboration in post-Internet art & the freedom to be alone

Imperica.com

While American Prohibition made illegal the sale, production, importation, and transportation of alcoholic beverages, The Mountain Winery in Saratoga, California had permission to produce wine for "exclusive" use in religious sacraments. As a result, John Steinbeck and Ansel Adams once shared a bunk bed. Whatever the magnet, these people always seem to know each other. Knowing often leads to collaborations, and collaborations to labels that group and identify artists with each other and a time in history. Dadaists, for example, believed that the value of art was in the act of making and collaborating with others.

We remember collaborations: Man Ray & Lee Miller, Basquiat & Warhol, Luis Buñuel & Salvador Dalí. Our poetic memory is equally rich with examples of the artist as a recluse: J.D. Salinger, Edvard Munch, Agnes Martin. According to Susan Cain, author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* "When psychologists examine the lives of the most creative people, they almost always find individuals who like to go off by themselves—who can tolerate the solitude that creativity requires." As a post-Internet artist I don't have to choose. My most recent decision to collaborate with filmmakers sprung out of Jeff's and Kyle's interest in devoting their artistry to my Google Glass footage. I had been making films from my Google Glass footage, but had found it difficult to advance the films while keeping focus on my paintings.

While my initial conversations with Kyle were electronic, the idea soon progressed onto the back of a napkin, a method Kyle prefers professing: "As you start a painting once the canvas arrives, the napkin script served that purpose for the making of the movie. Being something that we could hold, fold, and go off of, it gave the story idea its first "physical" rendition - a reality to what we were doing and therefore gave us an immediacy to get shooting. It was the spark for ignition."

Jeff lives in Madison, Wisconsin and Kyle in New York City. For our most recent films, I spent one day with each of these film makers. The rest of the collaboration took place online. Susan Cain acknowledges this as a new form of collaboration:

*In the age of the Internet, the word "collaboration" has taken on a sacred dimension. Through the miracle of electronic crowdsourcing, the Internet produced astonishing collective creations, such as Wikipedia. But these things were created by individuals sitting alone in their offices, communicating with other individuals across wires and cables. Electronic collaboration is very different from the in-person kind, but we act as if they're one and the same.*

By working with filmmakers, especially filmmakers continents away, I kept an important separation between what goes on in the studio and how that is interpreted through film. When I am in the studio, although I am recording, I am thinking only of painting.

My attention is to color, texture and surface, not how it will look on film. Electronic collaboration allows me to ignore the recording and thus share a more honest process.

Jeff Andrew and I have completed two collaborations, our first entirely electronically. I shot and sent my raw Google Glass footage to Jeff who interpreted and edited it. For our second collaboration Jeff came out to London for a day of recording. With this collaboration Jeff was interested in exploring the way documentary filmmaking is impacted by the first-person perspective of Google Glass. The story is told through my eyes but also through his lense and my point of view mediated through his vision.

When Jeff was filming in London he recorded me making a painting I ended up not liking. The presence of his camera, the visual knowledge of being recorded, had impacted the way I painted. Jeff's presence differed greatly from the nearly forgettable Google Glass. This contrast is an important one, evidence of the wall I put between my work and Google Glass as a passive recording device.

Kyle's vision also involved the use of an external camera. As we spent the day filming in New York City, Kyle, also an actor, coached me through ignoring his camera. Contrast the clips of me as an "actress" with the footage of me in the studio, especially the "mailbox" scene. We filmed that scene more than a dozen times, but I lacked the ability to "act natural." My skillless acting ended up creating a creative contrast, emphasizing the sincerity of what occurs in the studio.

As with Jeff, I allowed Kyle complete creative control of the film. His background and interest in cinematography resulted in a narrative film. Kyle crafted a film that incorporated my historic and life-based inspirations while showing how the city influences the studio. His decision to keep the natural sounds, the noise of New York and the comparative silence of the art studio, draws a clear line between the two worlds. He then connects these worlds, linking and integrating what it means to be an artist. At the same time he manifests the contradictions of needing a city full of inspiration and a studio full of peace. Kyle's video concludes with my mom receiving the *Starry Night* postcard. As her gaze moves from the postcard to the versions of *Starry Night* I painted at 12, the viewer is reminded of the physical's place in our digital world. A film made via electronic communication ends with a handwritten letter.

Both of these collaborations benefited from their digital nature. The distance and time zones allowed a natural abstraction and a more clear manifestation of the filmmakers in their work. For me, these electronic collaborations reflect changes in my own attitude towards relationships in our digital age.

As a post-Internet artist I am learning to embrace the solitude the internet both creates and allows. I've grown increasingly comfortable with my digital relationships and with distance separating me from important people in my life. I am increasingly comfortable forgoing drinks with friends for "likes" from strangers. Is this the end of the world? Or just a post-Internet manifestation of how many artists have always worked, mostly alone. Novalist Haruki Murakami puts it this way:

*I felt that the indispensable relationship I should build in my life was not with a specific person but with an un-*

*specified number of readers. My readers would welcome whatever lifestyle I chose, as long as I made sure that each new work was an improvement over the last. And shouldn't that be my duty-and my top priority-as a novelist? I don't see my readers' faces, so in a sense my relationship with them is a conceptual one, but I've consistently considered it the most important thing in my life.*

As an artist whose work and inclinations necessitate solitude, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter make the most important people in my life a little less conceptual. This, compared to the reclusive alternative, increases my intimacy with the outside world. Post-Internet collaboration grants the simultaneous existence of solitude and connection. Like a great relationship, something like believing in God, post-Internet collaborations allow the comfort of never being alone and thus the freedom to be so.

## the reality of the digital gallery

Imperica.com

You have a body. You have a Facebook profile. Both are real, but we tend to divide the digital from the "real." We use terms like "augmented" and "virtual" implying that such things are not, in themselves, real. We hold online conversations below those that occur face-to-face. We draw a line between the life of our bodies and the life of our Facebook profiles.

If this line ever existed, it is increasingly blurred. Wearable technologies like Google Glass and Oculus Virtual Reality (VR/AR) narrow the perceived space between the physical and the digital, what we currently identify as "virtual" versus "real." The last decade has found us comfortable with falling in love, finding material for sexual release and going to college in the digital realm. All of these experiences, while digitally accessed, are still real, often even embodied. What other digital experiences might we someday consider real? The artist has always dwelled in controversial definitions of reality. Consider, especially, the Surrealists. It is for this reason we chose art as a way to explore current limits on the definition of reality.

The vivid and immersive nature of VR/AR grant the possibility of real pain and joy, experienced in what we currently consider "non" real. It is not difficult to imagine VR/AR experiences that modify the way we live and respond in the physical. Whether you consider Samantha in the movie "Her" to be real, it is hard to argue that Theodore Twombly's pain was "virtual." We need to grant digital the seriousness of "real." This concept is called Digital Monism, the belief that our human world is inseparably digital and non-digital, online and offline. In a digital monist view, you cannot remove the online side of your relationships or self from the offline side of it.

You have a body and I have a painting. This painting is in a large studio in East London. The canvas is heavy, at times inconveniently large. If I paint too long, then my hand will cramp. This painting is also digital on Instagram, YouTube, and in Digital De Re, a fully immersive VR/AR gallery built with Amplified Robot. When you see my painting in VR/AR, you are



still seeing my painting, but it isn't exactly the same.

When you put on a VR/AR device and enter the Digital De Re Gallery the paintings animate, change in size, transform into different versions, transport you to new places in space and time. The paintings become an interface, acting as a shared boundary between the viewer and the additional offerings of the paintings.

The physical De Re Gallery is located in West Hollywood's Design District. It is full of light, vision, and personality. When designing a VR/AR home, we chose to mirror De Re Gallery's design to emphasize the connection to the West Hollywood location. After putting on Oculus you are taken to a 360-degree immersive gallery. There are windows onto Melrose Ave, lighting figures giving light and ambient sound. You can move through the space, viewing each painting and its related animation.

Digital De Re is reality unlimited by the normal constraints of both the physical and the digital. The paintings move seamlessly between physical and digital, further blurring the line between the two. I make large oil paintings. It's expensive, toxic and inconvenient but also important to me. My decision of when to be physical and when to be digital is endowed with meaning, purpose, historical reference, and is highly personal.

When should we be digital and when should we be physical? This is the choice of the artist, but it is also yours. For author Michael Pollan, "Apart from eating, gardening, short-haul driving, and sex, I generally prefer to delegate my commerce with the physical world." To consider this list for yourself is to admit that our bodies are only part of ourselves. We can see the choices of the artist as a framework to consider our own decisions about what we keep physical and what we make digital, holding both to be real.

Should love letters be written but meetings notes emailed? Maybe you like to cook. Chop up onions, whatever. You may want to use your own body for kissing but your digital self for attending early morning conference calls. The physical is thus an expanded medium of meaning, especially when you choose to use your body when you no longer need to. Expanded digital options for work and interaction transform our bodies into increasingly specialized hardware, repurposed for the physical tasks that actually matter to us.

Whatever our engagement with the digital, the body still remains the mode of experience. A virtual roller coaster can still make your heart race. The physical body is still the temple from which our ideas and interpretation occur. If we think of reality this way, inseparably digital and physical and governed by personal choices we exist as more integrated people, self aware to the way the world is changing.

You put on Oculus and find yourself in a beautifully designed gallery in West Hollywood. How does it feel to move and experience in digital space? Interact with the paintings. Watch them reveal initial drawings, show their own making and transform in ways only possible in the digital. This is De Re Gallery. This is my painting. This is my body, no longer broken into real and digital. Whether you visit in West Hollywood or VR/AR is entirely up to you.

## pigment as pixel

cybersalon.org

In middle school I was not cool or confident or popular, but every time I boarded the bus to summer camp I knew that the other campers didn't know that. Freedom; I could be whoever I wanted. I was eleven and already identifying the internet as offering a similar opportunity. With a frightening lack of parental supervision I began cultivating the digital as an extension of myself. I had a correspondence with an academic who helped me prepare my Joan of Arc prosecution for history class. Online forums about alien encounters were another favourite of mine. There was little Gretchen, the me that depended on context: my age, my lack of social standing, my teeth that desperately needed braces. Then there was the me that, at what seems like a disconcertingly young age, found self online.

Now that adults know how the internet works parents will not let their kids do this, but I was curious and maybe also lucky. Before profiles there were screen names, and screen names didn't need to be rooted to physically established identity or "real name policies." Unlike profiles, screen names were often masks chosen and carefully cultivated. It was self without reference to the body: ageless, sexless, raceless.

Art used to be confined to object as idol. To experience the art you had no choice but to be near the object. There was supposedly something special and fetishized within the material. This is why idolatry-sensitive Protestant traditions are less visual than Catholic, and why their services are housed in plain buildings instead of cathedrals.

Similarly, the self is often felt to center on the body, but our bodies are such poor manifestations of ourselves. You have cancer but you are not cancer. If our tonsils or appendix are removed we feel no loss of self. How much does your body even say about you? Do you have runner's legs or the finger tips of a guitarist? How limiting. How oblivious to the complexity.

Just as art can be objectless, through digital the self can become decentralized from the body. The self's relationship with the body is a paradigm for the self's relationship with its digital manifestations including what we do, say, and consume online. Both the body and the digital augments the self. Both are extensions with their own limitations and advantages. Both are real and important. If we think of art like the self it too has separate relationships and dependencies on the physical and digital.

Conceptual and academic art has made the object irrelevant, beside the point if present at all. This sort of art is wholly dependant on context, history and social construction. Some art, most art, cannot exist without these structures. The self has a similar mode, one constructed through habits of meaning dependent on where we are, who we are with, and our patterns.

But there is also a self that persists through shifting contexts, a part of the self that is unmoored by people that know us or the expectations they have. My uncoolness may not have followed me to summer camp, but my inclinations, passions, and anxieties did. In travelling to new places, into new physical or

digital communities, we narrow in on the essential self, the one we cannot avoid by going to summer camp or Vegas or by digitally driven dissociative disorders, "Your expectations of a place, your fantasies of who you might have become there, have been confounded by the persistence of you." Art digitization, when thoughtful and artist driven, reveals the same persistence of essence.

In moving my physical, classically made oil paintings into the digital I defend digitization as an artistic process, part of the artist's responsibility to consider the ways in which her work lives and is experienced. Simplified, this is somewhat akin to assuring that her paintings are hanging straight in the gallery.

Pigment as Pixel displays physical paintings adjacent to their digital manifestations. Something of meaning is lost and something of meaning endures. New meanings are created. Questions regarding the existence of an artistic essence that transcends medium and context invite similar investigations the self: what is this self that is identifiable regardless of context?

My mentor Billy Childish teaches, "You paint to find out who you are." By this he means that painting is a process through which self revelation is possible. In painting I confront the abstract parts of who I am. I am constantly in tension between what my hands make and the ache inside. As I paint I get closer to knowing myself, and this self is manifested in the paintings. The paintings move into the digital and away from the object. They have their own life and experiencing them through Google Glass or in virtual reality reveals something that the physical does not. This intertwined investigation into art and self is a life's work of constant tension. I invite you into the space between the body and the Facebook profile, between painting and virtual reality, the art and the moving image, between the self and all of the noise.



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