



**Main  
Space**



Xpace Cultural Centre  
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[www.xpace.info](http://www.xpace.info)

***100percentreal***

**Cat Bluemke, Colin Rosati, Jazmine V. K. Carr, Niki Sehmbi**

**Curated by Adrienne Crossman**

**November 6 – December 12, 2015**

**IRL:** In Real Life

**URL:** Online. Uniform Resource Locator AKA the unique web address of a web page on the internet.

What is the divide between the virtual and the ‘real’ and how does it define how we perceive reality? Social media theorist Nathan Jurgensen describes this “mythical divide” as “digital dualism,” and argues that we now live in an augmented reality vs. one that exists as separate binaries.<sup>1</sup>

Whether it’s a painter compiling their mockups on Photoshop, or an artist who makes their work specifically for the web, to the use of digital tools to map out how physical work will be displayed in a white cube space, to the ever-growing community of creatives sharing their work and visual brand over social media and online platforms, the move towards digital practices among artists is increasingly pervasive. The ubiquity of the digital is undeniable, but this shift is still very much a part of recent history, and one to which the contemporary art world, in large part, has not caught up. With such a shift come questions: what is digital art? How does digital art fit into a contemporary art context? Should net art be shown in galleries, and what does it mean when it is? How do we define value when art may evade traditional forms of capitalism and commodification? Why may artwork seen as more legitimate when contextualized within the institution (i.e. the white cube)? Does art have less value when lost in an infinite Tumblr scroll?

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<sup>1</sup> Nathan Jurgensen, “The IRL Fetish,” *The New Inquiry*. Web. November, 2015.  
<<http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/the-irl-fetish/>>

The plight of the digital artist often includes a negotiation of where and how their work is to be exhibited, if the work will have commodity value, and how one rationalizes these decisions in relation to the artwork's intent. This exhibition aims not to answer these questions, but to meditate on them, even evading/bypassing the questions by proving them irrelevant, and putting the focus on the work itself.

*100percentreal* features the work of Cat Bluemke, Colin Rosati, Jazmine V. K. Carr, and Niki Sehmbi, four emerging internet-aware artists working within the realms of digital and physical space. The exhibition is made up of two components: the IRL Embassy at Xpace Cultural Centre and the (URL) digital exhibition hosted online at [onehundredpercentreal.net](http://onehundredpercentreal.net) as part of The Wrong New Digital Art Biennale, the world's largest biennale and only digital art biennale.<sup>2</sup> The artists in *100percentreal* are renegotiating the relationships between the digital and the physical, the synthetic and the 'real' through explorations of:

- Commodification, brand identity and virtual tourism (Cat Bluemke)
- Image value and the physical tangibility of digital space (Colin Rosati)
- The digital sublime, and digital aura (Niki Sehmbi)
- The precarity of the physical archive vs. the inability to fully delete one's digital remnants online (Jazmine V. K. Carr)

For *100percentreal* **Cat Bluemke** is exhibiting three separate works. The first, *Luxury International F/W Catalogue 2014*, hosted online, consists of as a series of images, mimicking its original form as a scrollable PDF. The piece is a collection of Bluemke's work published digitally as a catalogue, and is meant to be viewed outside the physical gallery constraints. Created during time spent in Florence, Italy in 2014, *Luxury International* explores contemporary issues of archiving and authorship, the shifting values of information as commodity, the digital in relation to traditional art objects, the hyperreal, and the evolving construct of value in internet-aware 'Postinternet' society.

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<sup>2</sup> Alyssa Buffenstein, "The World's Largest Art Biennial is Now Online," *artnet news*. Web. November, 2015 < <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/worlds-largest-biennial-art-352847>>

A unifying theme throughout Bluemke's work is virtual tourism: "a simulation of an existing location, usually composed of a sequence of videos or still images."<sup>3</sup>

*International Brand Expansion (IBE)* is a collaborative project between Bluemke and her collective Tough Guy Mountain. The work consists of both digital as well as IRL components. Hosted online, a series of GIFs and JPEG images represent a virtual gallery space or showroom, the work takes the form of 3D rendered textiles featuring imagery of famous international tourist destinations. The designs were inspired by search engine results yielded when inputting the destinations, often producing idyllic hyperreal renderings of the real locations. These textile works have also been rendered physically via digital printing, and hang on the gallery walls of Xpace throughout the duration of the IRL exhibit, extending the digital showroom to a real life gallery setting.

Also located in the gallery are Bluemke's *David Renditions II*, dichromated gelatin holograms depicting Michelangelo's *David* created at Holocreator's lab in Hamburg, Germany. Neoclassicist imagery, such as that of *David*, has been so heavily re-produced within our contemporary digital climate that the effect of its symbolism has become far more pervasive than the physical work itself, often taking the form of kitsch iconography. *Renditions* explores the idea of the art historical object and its value as an experience within this contemporary context. This work requires the physical presence of a viewer in order to be properly experienced, as the nature of the hologram medium is essentially un-documentable.

**Colin Rosati's** *Autocidal After Image* is an installation that explores video and video infrastructures in the context of online networks, systems and databases. The installation consists of a single channel video projected onto a sculptural object that mimics the materiality of video in digital space. Found footage sourced from online archives is placed within a 3D space created by Rosati— rendering each image as virtual objects to be examined. Taking on the role of the artist as a filter, Rosati aims to reveal and question online video-based infrastructure, including that of the users, the cameras, video aggregation, compression, network commodification, databases, and content consumption. *Autocidal* delves into issues of ownership and authenticity in relation to online representation, incorporating aesthetic tropes that specifically reference online

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<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia. Web. November, 2015. < [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtual\\_tour](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtual_tour)>

environments, emulating web-based navigation within a physical setting, blurring the boundaries between one's physical and digital self.

For the online component of the exhibition, Rosati has created *After Image*, a widely scrollable webpage made up of animated GIFs, JPEGs, video and interactive user functions. "As the sun sets all I see is compression,"<sup>4</sup> says Rosati in describing the work, specifically *Sunset Reel*, a video that is found through clicking on an embossed image of a sunset located towards the center of the vast webpage. *Sunset Reel* is an assemblage of found moving images, footage of sunsets compressed into low res pixelated imagery, a poetic metaphor highlighting the translation from the physical sublime to compressed digital immateriality. *After Image* looks to how digital media functions, re-contextualizing the ways in which we use these media day-to-day, and bringing attention to the proliferation of degraded images within our daily visual lexicon.

In describing her work, **Jazmine V. K. Carr** says, "Impermanence and documentation are essential qualities in preserving the work. The treatment of objects is intimate, personal, process based and repetitive,"<sup>5</sup> words that speak to both her IRL and URL projects in *100percentreal*. Carr's online project, *Epilogue (1&2)*, consists of a 26-minute video documenting a durational performance in which the artist repeats the process of 'deleting' physical photographs by treating them with bleach. Carr, clad in a facemask and protective gloves, inhabits the video frame, seated around a large bucket of bleach. She immerses individual photographs in the substance one by one, taking a moment to watch the physical image brighten then literally drip off the paper, leaving behind only the materiality of the now blank photograph. The photos were sourced from Carr's personal and family archives, ranging from those given to her by her mother and grandmother, as well those shot by Carr herself. She describes the process as an "intimate way of releasing myself from certain memories and certain pasts."<sup>6</sup> Instead of simply throwing them out, Carr goes through this process of 'deleting,' enacting a physical reversal of the photographic process, resulting in a type of cathartic healing. This temporal performance lives on only as digital documentation on the internet,

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<sup>4</sup> In conversation with the artist, 2015

<sup>5</sup> In conversation with the artist, 2015

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

highlighting the precarity and uniqueness of the physical archive in contrast to the pervasiveness of digital data's infinite reproducibility, and the lack of the owner's control over the content once released online.

Carr's sculptural work, *slide to unlock (oscillate)* is an interactive installation that combines traditional art objects with digital technology. *unlock* consists of a sculptural assemblage featuring a large, grid-patterned painting coated in a heat sensitive pigment that alters in colour based on temperature, allowing the audience to alter the work's physicality and appearance. The work is positioned in front of a computer-controlled oscillating heater, activated via a motion sensor triggered by movement in the gallery. Once triggered, the heat changes the colour of the artwork, shifting from blue to a bleached off-white. The transformation of the work's surface recalls that of the unlocking of a touch screen phone, a device that requires human contact (body heat) to be activated. Carr refers to the work as a "performative assemblage,"<sup>7</sup> requiring a subtle interaction by the audience (physical proximity). This participation by default completes the work, triggering the mechanics to allow the objects to 'perform.'

**Niki Sehmbi's** work explores issues of authenticity, challenging notions of 'realness' versus 'falseness' in relation to physical versus digital space. "Traditional artwork, such as painting and sculpture, is often championed over digital work, as it is seen as holding an aura that is inaccessible in the virtual realm."<sup>8</sup> Sehmbi's artistic practice often employs a blurring of boundaries between physical and digital, 'real' and virtual space. For the online exhibition, Sehmbi has created a series of three animated videos: *Entrance Drive*, *Planet Ball Game*, and *CloudTV*. The expansive colourful animations cascade down the browser window, appearing one after the other, forcing the user to scroll through. The work is visually stunning, entering the realm of the sublime, and giving the viewer a sense that they are catching a glimpse of an environment not of this world.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> In conversation with the artist, 2015

For the IRL exhibition Sehmbi has produced two large-scale digital prints, created through the process of 3D scanning objects from the ‘real’ (read: physical) world and placing them within virtual settings. The images are recognizably digital but echo traditional painting and sculpture practices. In making *Bloomville* and *Lighthouse*, Sehmbi used open source software<sup>9</sup> to scan her own body and face. Taking the improper renders, Sehmbi applied heavy digital manipulation, resulting in abstract digital assemblages and the creation of completely new synthetic objects and landscapes: shifting, self-sustaining realms.

Through these processes, new auras that inhabit the virtual rather than that of one unique (original) physical object, are generated by Sehmbi’s digital works. The same can be said for all of the artists in *100percentreal*, each creating new contexts for existing material. To quote artist and writer Hito Steyerl:

“[The] aura is no longer based on the permanence of the ‘original,’ but on the transience of the copy [...] The poor image is no longer about the real thing – the original thing. Instead, it is about its own real conditions of existence: about swarm circulation, digital dispersion, fractures and flexible temporalities. It is about defiance and appropriation just as it is about conformism and exploitation. In short: It is about reality.”<sup>10</sup>

#### - **Adrienne Crossman**

*Autocidal After-Image* recently won the inaugural Emerging Digital Artists Award, presented by Equitable Bank. The work is now held in the Equitable Bank art collection.

Xpace Cultural Centre acknowledges the generous support of the Toronto Arts Council and the City of Toronto in supporting this exhibition.



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<sup>9</sup> A BETA version of ReconstructMe

<sup>10</sup> Hito Steyerl, “In Defence of the Poor Image,” *e-flux*. Web. November 2015. <In Defence of the Poor Image>

## List of Works

### IRL @ Xpace Cultural Centre

Cat Bluemke, *International Brand Expansion (Berlin)*, Digital Print on Fabric, 2015

Cat Bluemke, *International Brand Expansion (Venice)*, Digital Print on Fabric, 2015

Colin Rosati, *Autocidal After Image*, Video Installation, 2015

Cat Bluemke, *David Renditions II*, Dichromated Gelatin Holograms, 2014

Cat Bluemke, *International Brand Expansion (Glasgow, Digital Print on Fabric)*, 2015

Niki Sehmbi, *Lighthouse*, Chroma Print, 2015

Niki Sehmbi, *Landmass*, Video Projection, 2015

Niki Sehmbi, *Bloomville*, Chroma Print, 2015

Jazmine V. K. Carr, *slide to unlock (oscillate)*, Multimedia Sculptural Installation, 2015

### URL @ onehundredpercentreal.net

Colin Rosati, *After Image*, Interactive Webpage, 2015

Colin Rosati, *Sunset Reel*, Video, 2015

Cat Bluemke, *Luxury International F/W Catalogue 2014*, PDF, 2014

Niki Sehmbi, *Entrance Drive*, Animated Video, 2015

Niki Sehmbi, *Planet Ball Game*, Animated Video, 2015

Niki Sehmbi, *Cloud TV*, Animated Video, 2015

Jazmine V. K. Carr, *Epilogue 1 & 2*, Video Documentation of a Performance, 2015

Cat Bluemke, *International Brand Expansion*, Still Images and Animated GIFs, 2015

### ABOUT THE WRONG NEW DIGITAL ART BIENNALE – [thewrong.org](http://thewrong.org)

Established in 2013, The Wrong is the first online-only art biennial, and the largest digital art biennale in the world. Based in São Paulo, Brazil, the first edition of the festival ran from November, 2013 - January 2014, hosting 30 online pavilions and 10 IRL Embassies (physical exhibitions) in ten cities around the world - including Brooklyn, Los Angeles, Barcelona, Melbourne and Istanbul - exhibiting over 300 artists. The Wrong's mission is "to create, promote and push positive forward-thinking contemporary digital art to a wider audience worldwide through a biennial online event that gathers the best of the best, while embraces the young talents of today's emerging digital art scene" ([thewrong.org](http://thewrong.org)). Previous participants of The Wrong include internationally renowned digital artists such as Lorna Mills, Jennifer Chan, and Jon Rafman.