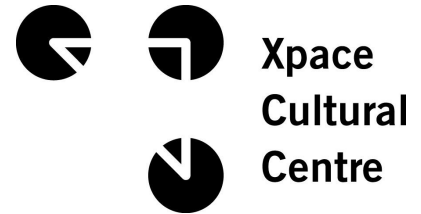


WINDOW SPACE



If My Eyes Could Screenshot

Erica Gibbs

September 13 – October 25, 2025

Your phone's camera is lying to you. If you have a smartphone released in 2018 or later, it's likely that your phone's image processing software automatically enhances the pictures you take, adjusting their colours and lighting to capture what it determines is the sharpest, brightest, most colour-balanced version of what its camera sees. "Your phone is doing a lot more computer work than camera work,"¹ says recent OCAD painting and drawing graduate, Erica Gibbs. "If I could screenshot with my eyes, I would. I try to document the things I see and they don't look the same, but they can still evoke the same memory."² Gibbs is an astute observer and obsessive chronicler of the world around her. Through photos and screenshots, Gibbs archives her online life in meticulous visual detail. Applying a painterly approach to social media aesthetics, she defies the trickery of her phone camera to more authentically represent the emotional truth of her digital experiences.

¹ Erica Gibbs, in a virtual interview with Megan MacLaurin (September 1, 2025).

² *Ibid.*

Digital communication is deeply ingrained for Gibbs, who has been active on Instagram since the age of 10. While she is critical of Meta platforms, she also recognizes the important role they play in sustaining relationships online. Gibbs acknowledges that Instagram invades our privacy and uses our personal data to manipulate our purchasing decisions and other online behaviours. However, on a personal level, she also regards this platform as being fundamental to her own social life. Gibbs' work emphasizes the silliness, absurdity and fallibility of social media platforms by sharing moments that, for her, have sparked humour and connection.

Gibbs' lighthearted technological critique is reflected in her process. Gibbs begins by gathering digital images of all kinds. She has a particular fondness for screenshots, which are rendered exactly as they're seen. Always documenting the world around her, Gibbs' photo library far exceeds what is shown in her work. Sometimes Gibbs takes a picture and feels immediately motivated to represent it in her work, while other times, she will revisit her archive, scrolling through images that revive old feelings and memories. She then edits the files in Photoshop, adding layers of distortion and pixelation. This digital manipulation represents her own feelings about these scenes, conveying these moments through her own lens while also exaggerating the inaccuracy of digital imaging in the first place. Finally, these remixed images become references for her paintings. Using acrylic, Gibbs recreates her digital sources by hand, usually on canvases that match the ratio of a phone screen.

Her gestural, painterly approach accentuates the inseparable link between on- and off-line experience, the labour that lies behind online posts, and the distinctly human, imperfect nature of representation itself. Her layered, mediated process directly opposes the logics of digital immediacy and computer-generated imaging. Gibbs' fundamentally manual technique is akin to buffering: it slows down and stalls time.

“Everything feels like it's changing at a rate much faster than it used to,”³ says Gibbs, who often feels nostalgia for moments as they’re happening. Through her work, the artist extends and preserves the online experiences that are, all too often, fleeting and forgotten.

Gibbs draws inspiration from the people in her life, pulling images and quotes directly from their interactions. She sees her practice as being collaborative; without her friends, these works wouldn’t exist. For Gibbs, painting serves as “a way of communicating how much I love these people in a way other than words....A lot of emotional labour goes into making the images,” Gibbs says, “it’s a sort of love language.”⁴ In the history of art, painting has been a way of memorializing and monumentalizing important things—and this is exactly what Gibbs is doing. She uses painting to monumentalize the small moments that characterize her most cherished relationships, which just happen to take place online.

Through her residency at Xpace, Gibbs has begun to explore new materials: metal, mirrors, and other reflective surfaces that mimic the material substrates of technology itself. Layered metal mesh and screens create a three-dimensional filter, without the use of digital tools. The reference images selected for this project are, however, digitally manipulated in the artist’s standard fashion. Panoramas, already noticeably warped at the time of their creation, are distorted further in Photoshop. A self-portrait of Gibbs, drawn from a selfie taken with Instagram’s age-accelerating “old filter”, is painted on a mirrored surface. The addition of these metallic elements yields an installation that dynamically interacts with both light and viewers, tying the work to the unique and ever-changing conditions of the present. In *If My Eyes Could Screenshot*, Gibbs begins to embrace ephemerality and impermanence. Building from the artist’s longstanding distrust of digital photography, the work expresses the impossibility of

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

accurately capturing experiences in an image. Instead, it invites our participation and guides us toward the most authentic experience of her work: through our own eyes, in the current moment.

– Megan MacLaurin