

Constant Dullaart

Selected Press

Kevin Holmes, 'Europe in 4017: Here's What Computers Can Tell Us About the Distant Future', *The Creators Project*, February 2017

The Creators Project

Europe in 4017: Here's What Computers Can Tell Us About the Distant Future

Kevin Holmes — Feb 6 2017



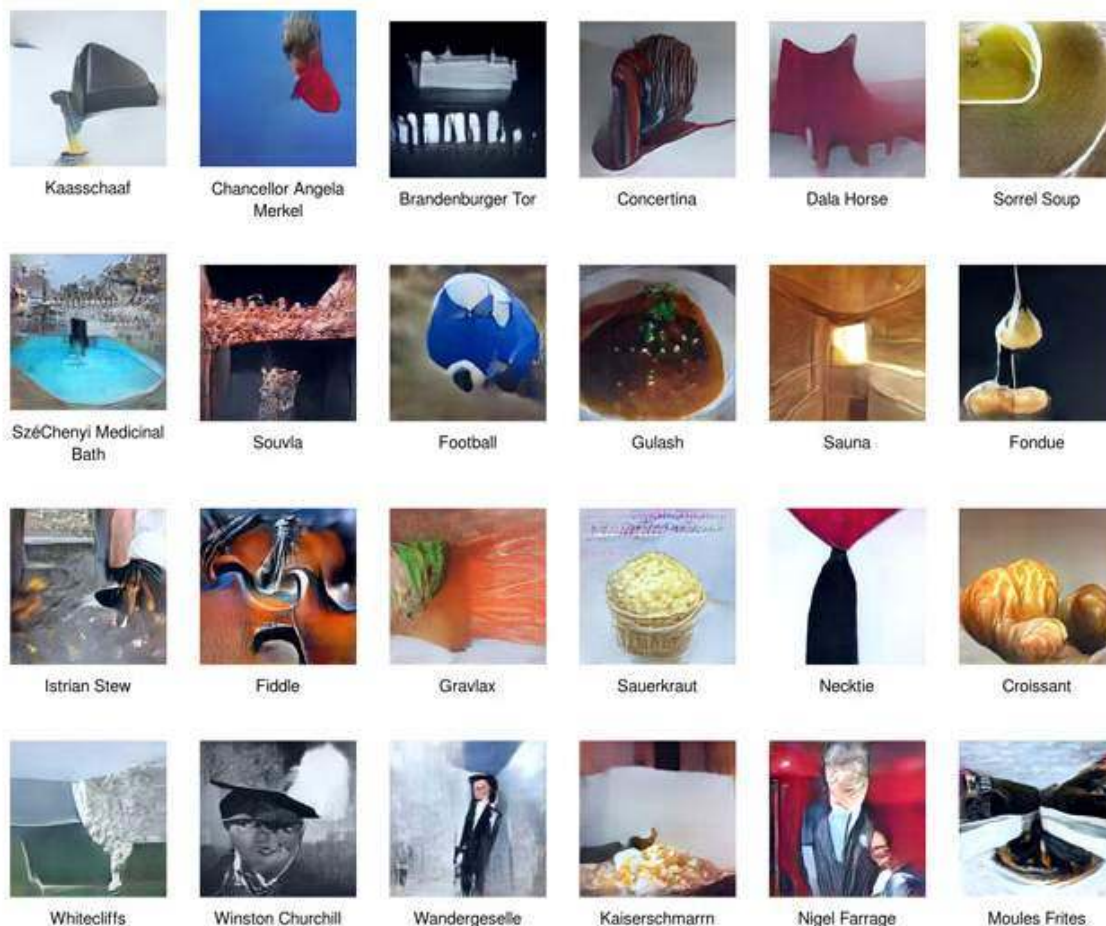
A doner kebab as seen through ConvNets. Image courtesy of Constant Dullaart

With UK MPs voting to overwhelmingly back Article 50 and so triggering Brexit negotiations, Europe's identity is one that's in a state of *flux*, to put it mildly. No one really knows what the future may hold for the continent over the next five years, so imagining what it's going to be like in 2,000 years is quite a task.

But that's what the Goethe-Institut London and the V&A commissioned 12 international artists to consider when they asked them to imagine what Europe could look like in the year 4017 for their exhibition *Collecting Europe*. Among the commissions was Dutch artist Constant Dullaart's piece *The European Classes*.

Dullaart, who previously gave us the "most boring" tech startup ever, focused on Europe's identity—specifically how artificial intelligence can influence and potentially misrepresent it. He teamed up with artist Adam Harvey, no stranger to adapting algorithms to his own ends, to look at image recognition systems called convolutional networks (ConvNets) which recognize objects in photographs. The idea was to retrain the ConvNets to focus purely on European images, creating an image dataset of contemporary Europe by asking official cultural institutions for advice on objects they thought were relevant or interesting in terms of current European identity.

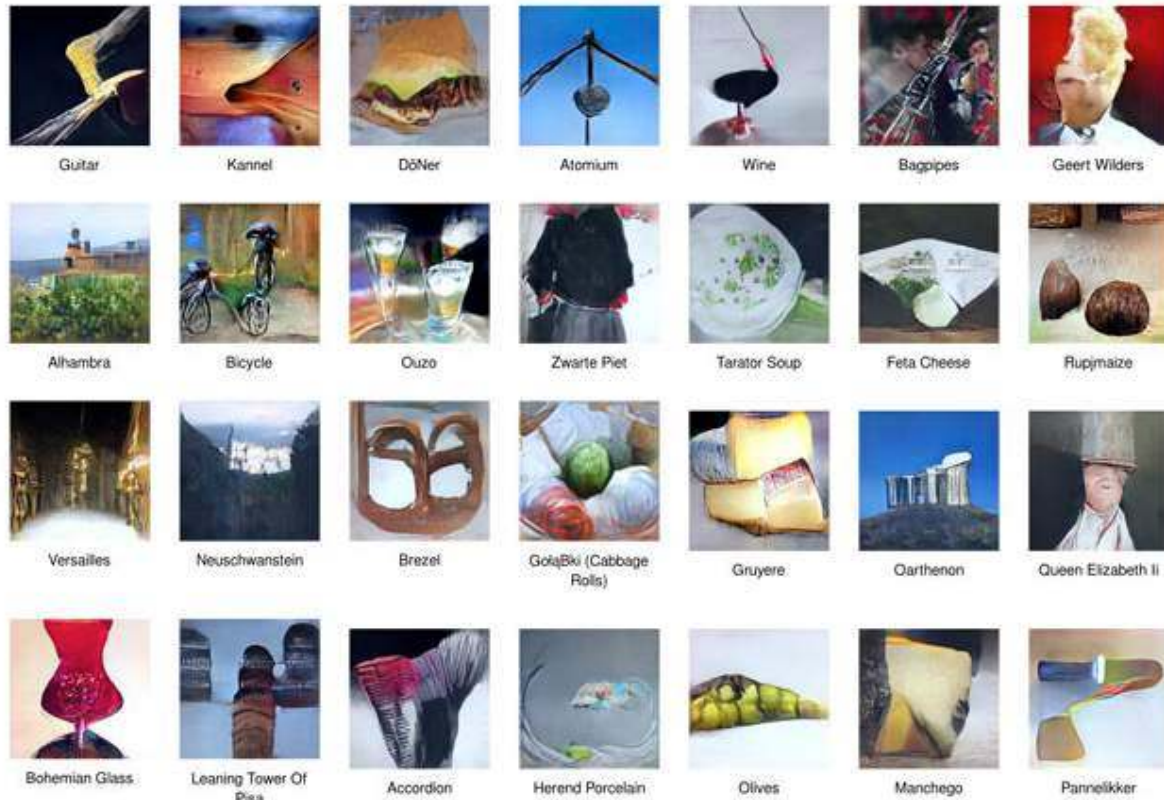
But not many responded, so the artists instead decided to make up their own set of objects by visiting various country's travel pages and seeing what was used to represent them.



Images of European identity as seen by ConvNets for The European Classes. Image courtesy of Constant Dullaart

"This was followed by a period of scraping images with a custom built scraping tool, by Adam Harvey, for Google and Flickr," notes Dullaart. "Then Adam Harvey developed a custom annotation tool which the studio and outsourced help from the Philippines, Pakistan, and Bangladesh did. Within the current machine learning revolution, so called convolutional networks (ConvNets), can now recognize objects within photographic images. This might seem like a trivial addition to already existing computer and online service capabilities, but it is a crucial step in how humans can interact with representation and depiction. Enhanced agency differentiating a cow from a horse for example, is rapidly developing into recognizing specific people and their moods, and interpreting behavior. Expediting these interpretations to learned patterns of recognition in the convolutional networks has complex ethical implications in need of urgent political discourse."

The resulting installation for the exhibition uses a two-screen video projection which flashes up images as seen through the impressionistic "eyes" and surreality of the ConvNets. These include both typical and lesser known aspects of European culture, like Finland's Karelian pasties or the controversial "blackface" Dutch folklore character Zwarte Piet. The need to include these lesser-known, less tourist-friendly, and often downright ugly aspects of European culture is relevant because the ConvNets are likely, in their current forms, to exclude them.



Images of European identity as seen by ConvNets for The European Classes. Image courtesy of Constant Dullaart

This is because existing datasets are run by companies like Google, so primarily they are collated for commercial purposes and are likely to gloss over more esoteric, niche, or unsavory elements. Yet each one is important to understanding the current European identity and its future, particularly in light of Brexit and the unexpected rise and popularity of the far right.

"Those multinational companies are always biased in their approach to represent society," notes Dullaart. "Moreover if a dataset should represent you it is not only about the parts that are visualized but also about the uncomfortable parts of history that make a society. Things that probably aren't represented very often so they wouldn't be represented in a dataset although they shape a society and are part of a shared visual consciousness. It became clear that Europe's identity is so diverse that it is very hard to define it. Also cultural institutions are very hesitant to do so."



Four Leafed Clover



Moussaka



Emmenthaler



Burrata



Hitler



Pierogi

Images of European identity as seen by ConvNets for The European Classes. Image courtesy of Constant Dullaart

Collecting Europe is on now until February 7, 2017 with series of talks to accompany the commissions. You can find out more at the V&A website [here](#), find out more about Constant Dullaart at his website [here](#), and find out more about Adam Harvey at his website [here](#).

Clémentine Mercier, 'Le vrai du fake', *Libération*, December 2016



INTERNET, ART ET BOBARDS

LE VRAI DU FAKE

Par Clémentine Mercier

— 16 décembre 2016 à 18:46

Face aux critiques de désinformation croissante sur Internet, des artistes s'emparent des mécanismes des réseaux sociaux pour en déjouer les logiques de «propagande». Une plongée dans le faux en quête de vérité.



Série «Removed» d'Eric Pickersgill. Courtesy of Rick Wester Fine Art, NY.

Photo Eric Pickersgill



«*Nous prenons au sérieux la désinformation*», postait sur son compte Facebook Mark Zuckerberg, le 18 novembre. «*Le problème est complexe, techniquement et philosophiquement*», ajoutait-il en reconnaissant qu'il y avait encore «*du travail à faire*». Feux, contre-feux, vérité, post-vérité, les entreprises de désinformation trouvent une caisse de résonance en l'ère numérique, s'amplifient pendant les périodes électorales. Et si le phénomène est une préoccupation démocratique, c'est aussi un sujet artistique.

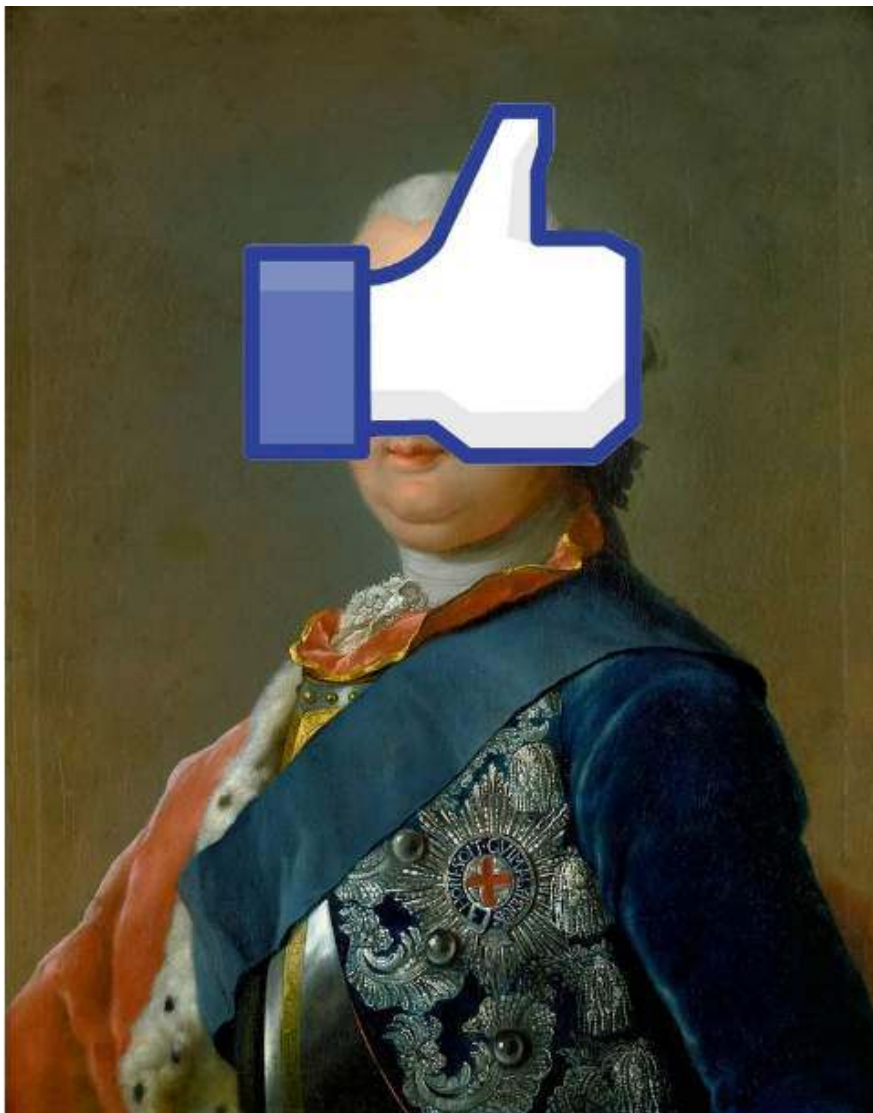
Face aux réseaux sociaux, les artistes ont le choix entre plusieurs attitudes - pas forcément incompatibles entre elles. Soit ils utilisent Instagram, Facebook ou Twitter pour promouvoir leur travail, comme c'est le cas de Damien Hirst, Olafur Eliasson, Ren Hang, pour citer les plus célèbres, en dépit des questions de censure. Soit ils utilisent les réseaux comme sujet et support de leur travail : Amalia Ulman crée des performances énigmatiques sur Instagram ; Ai Weiwei expose dans les musées ses photos auprès des réfugiés postées sur Instagram ; tandis qu'Olaf Breuning publie ses têtes à toto en nourriture ou objets usuels, vaste parodie de la vacuité du Web et du partage d'images absurdes. Cependant, les plateformes peuvent être remises en perspective et bousculées par les photographes et les plasticiens. Et ce sont ces artistes critiques qui nous intéressent ici : regardons les sceptiques, ceux qui secouent et dérèglent la Toile pour mieux l'interroger.



I am Not on Facebook de Gianni Motti.

Rappelons d'abord les faits d'armes de Gianni Motti, artiste italien installé à Genève. Il a, dans les années 80, revendiqué auprès des agences de presse l'explosion de la navette *Challenger*, s'est accusé en 1992 d'un tremblement de terre en Californie mais aussi plus tard en Rhône-Alpes, a organisé son enterrement après avoir fait publier son annonce nécrologique dans un journal, s'est fait passer pour un représentant indonésien (la supercherie aurait fonctionné) à l'ONU. Adeptes du canular, du détournement médiatique, Gianni Motti est un troll tragicomique qui s'est incrusté dans les médias pour en stopper l'incessante logorrhée.

Pourtant, en 2009, invité à la Team Gallery à New York, il pousse un coup de gueule sur une bâche : *«I am not on Facebook»* (je ne suis pas sur Facebook). *« A l'époque c'était la jungle. Il y avait plein de faux comptes à mon nom, les gens étaient vexés que je ne leur réponde pas. Certes, j'aime les canulars, mais je suis dans la vie réelle, et je n'aime pas être harcelé. Ça a été compliqué de retirer ces faux profils. J'ai dû montrer des papiers. C'est comme cette manie absurde de mettre des "like" aussi bien pour une exposition que pour une pizza .»*



Peinture de Johann Heinrich Tischbein et un «like» Facebook, par Constant Dullaart (2015).
Photo C. Fletcher. Futur Gallery

Le nez dans l'écran invisible

Le photographe Eric Pickersgill échange, s'informe et affiche des centaines de photos personnelles sur sa page Facebook : son mariage, sa compagne et même son bébé né au mois de décembre. Installé en Caroline du Nord, il s'est fait connaître par une série intitulée «Removed» devenue virale et partagée des millions de fois dans l'heure qui a suivi sa première publication. Son site est passé de 6 visiteurs à 30 000 par jour. Cette série décrit le langage corporel né avec les smartphones. Des modèles - portraits d'amis et de famille - jouent des scènes quotidiennes, mais le téléphone mobile tenu à la main a été effacé. Ce subterfuge souligne l'absence de communication des uns et des autres. Comme cette photo-symbole où deux jeunes mariés, le nez dans un écran invisible, ne se regardent pas (il faut préciser qu'ils se sont rencontrés par Internet). Lors d'une conférence TED en mai 2016, Eric Pickersgill s'inquiétait : *«Nous sommes la dernière génération à avoir connu le monde sans smartphone. Ces machines changent notre perception du temps. Nous nous attendons toujours à ce que l'on réponde à nos textos et mails dans la minute et, si ce n'est pas le cas, nous nous sentons négligés.»*

Sa dernière série, *Noshow*, est plus documentaire mais s'attache au même sujet. Cet été, il s'est intéressé aux fausses informations (*fake news*) qui prolifèrent sur Facebook. Tel un trappeur à l'affût, il a flairé les canulars et remonté leur piste pour aller les photographier. Drôle d'idée puisque sa série, en fin de compte, est tout sauf spectaculaire. Que voit-on sur les images ? Pas grand-chose à part des gens qui traînent, des parkings vides, des mines déconfites. Il s'y est intéressé à partir du 19 mai car ses amis mentionnaient sur Facebook qu'ils se rendraient peut-être à un événement qui avait l'air bidon : un concert de Fred Durst du groupe de metal américain Limp Bizkit, censé se dérouler dans un grand magasin. *«J'ai juste pensé au début que c'était une blague marrante mais, peu à peu, 700 personnes se sont inscrites pour l'événement et je me suis dit que je devais y être. Je devais aller faire des photos même si personne ne venait à ce truc, il fallait voir ce qu'il s'y passait.»*

Eric Pickersgill est donc allé à Morganton, là où le concert devait avoir lieu. Mais il n'y avait rien, juste des personnes qui zoniaient autour d'un responsable de magasin sur les nerfs. Il raconte : *«Le gars qui a "organisé" ce non-événement était présent et il a été interviewé par les médias locaux. Le fait que ce soit incertain a créé un gros intérêt et toutes les personnes sur place faisaient vraiment comme si le concert allait avoir lieu, ils écoutaient la musique du groupe dans leur voiture. C'était une grande performance généralisée. Vraiment bizarre.»*

Intéressé par les fausses informations, le photographe reçoit, depuis, de plus en plus d'invitations pour ce genre de canular. Durant l'été, Eric Pickersgill a ainsi couvert jusqu'à 16 *fake events*, fait des centaines de kilomètres et démasqué les trolls à l'origine de ces *hoax* pour tirer leur portrait. *«Tou t le monde s'est mis à faire son propre "faux événement" pour le fun. Il y en avait des centaines le même jour dans le pays. Le plus fort, c'est que même si l'événement n'a jamais existé, certains pensaient encore qu'il aurait dû avoir lieu. J'aimerais que les gens soient un peu plus sceptiques. Le vrai but des réseaux sociaux est de faire de l'audience. Mon idée est de rappeler que Facebook est un business, ce que tout le monde semble oublier. Plus on passe de temps dessus, plus ils s'enrichissent.»*



Noshow, série d'Eric Pickersgill. Photo Eric Pickersgill. Courtesy of Rick Wester Fine Art, NY.

Constant Dullaart, artiste né aux Pays-Bas et installé à Berlin est, lui aussi, à la recherche du vrai en prêchant le faux. Même logique de l'avant-après que Eric Pickersgill, mais procédé inverse : le faux n'est qu'une affaire de prix à payer. Titulaire du prix Net Art 2015, il démontre les audiences artificielles sur les réseaux sociaux. Dans un projet initié par le Jeu de paume en 2014 (*High Retention, Slow Delivery*), avec 5 000 dollars (4 700 euros) en poche, l'artiste a acheté 2,5 millions de suiveurs en Lituanie via eBay et les a distribués à des artistes, critiques d'art et directeurs d'institution. Ai Weiwei, Amalia Ulman, Richard Prince ou Hans-Ulrich Obrist ont vu gonfler le nombre de leurs fans. En novembre, l'artiste activiste a ainsi présenté les profils de synthèse de ses faux comptes Instagram dans la galerie Upstream à Amsterdam.

Le but de Constant Dullaart ? *«Propager le socialisme de l'économie de l'attention»*, attribuer à tous le même nombre de suiveurs afin de brouiller les pistes entre artistes, critiques, public et discréditer les marqueurs des réseaux sociaux. Pour l'artiste néerlandais, *«la post-vérité est un vieux concept. C'est tout simplement un nouveau mot pour la propagande»*.

Passablement énervé par un article du *New York Times* qui traitait de l'art et de son évaluation en fonction de son audience sur les réseaux, Constant Dullaart a créé, sur Facebook, une armée factice vengeresse composée de comptes bidons. Performance artistique, cette armée fantoche de milliers de profils artificiels portait les noms de mercenaires allemands du XVIII^e siècle et affichait des têtes de... gamins.

«Cool et bien coiffé»

Dernier exemple de travail autour des réseaux sociaux, celui de Tomas van Houtryve, d'origine belge et américaine, membre de l'agence VII. Le photographe a récemment boycotté Facebook, devenu première source d'information aux Etats-Unis, si peu étanche aux rumeurs et aux canulars. Primé par le World Press Photo pour ses images prises par des drones dans le ciel américain (conditionné par cette forme visuelle, on avait l'impression de voir le Pakistan), il superpose, dans son dernier travail, *Traces of Exile*, ses paysages de la Grèce avec des selfies de migrants publiés sur Instagram. Munis de smartphones, les réfugiés, en postant leurs clichés géolocalisés, laissent une «trace» d'eux-mêmes et s'exposent tels qu'ils souhaitent se montrer. Ces images évidemment auraient peu de chances d'être élues par les journaux pour relater le drame des migrants, car elles ne répondent pas aux critères du véridique tel qu'ils se fixent sur tel ou tel événement au gré d'appréciations souvent univoques. En croisant ces deux prismes, Tomas van Houtryve offre une troisième lecture : *«Ils n'ont pas envie de se présenter comme des victimes et le photojournalisme traditionnel a tendance à les montrer ainsi. Il y a aussi un code visuel qui appartient à cette génération : il faut être cool et bien coiffé. Ils veulent donner le change à leur communauté.»* Encore sous embargo, le sujet, mélange de regards, sera prochainement publié par le *New Yorker*. *«On est comme dans une tempête de sable avec les réseaux sociaux»*, confiait Tomas van Houtryve. C'est sans doute dans ce frottement des regards que surgit une part du véridique, tout sauf simpliste, indissociable du décryptage des images.

Plus que jamais, à l'ère de tous les «post» (postmoderne, post-photographie, post-vérité...), il serait naïf de voir en l'art un arbitre du vrai et du faux. Plasticiens et photographes peuvent en revanche enfileur leurs tenues de pirates ou de justiciers pour titiller ces champs inattendus et gratter du côté obscur du miroir numérique. En attendant l'ère post-Facebook.

Amanda Ribas Tugwell, 'The future has begun: Constant Dullaart',
Exberliner, October 2016

Berlin in English since 2002

EXBERLINER

FEATURES

FOOD

CULTURE

VISITING

GOING OUT

LOCATIONS

CLASSIFIEDS

SHOP

FILM

MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE

STAGE

ART

GOING OUT

The future has begun: Constant Dullaart

by [Amanda Ribas Tugwell](#) on October 11, 2016



High-profile digital detective Constant Dullaart wages war with Facebook in [Synthesising the Preferred Inputs](#).

Up now at Future Gallery, two of the Dutch-born, Berlin-based artist's new bodies of work delve into hidden systems within the ever-more corporatised spaces of the internet. In one, pattern-seeking AI convolutional networks "draw" images using data from the photos we post on Facebook and Instagram, which are then outsourced to China to be painted. In the second, Dullaart

incorporates the third-world-country SIM cards used to generate the Facebook bot army he created in his studio last year.

Why make art that involves Facebook and Instagram?

A lot of people don't know about the whole business of fake Facebook identities, but they're huge in politics, and in quantifying cultural validity. I'm saying: hey, this is a huge market, look at how construed and weird this social validation system is. Even when I bought 2.5 million Instagram followers as part of a piece, I actually thought I was a better person because more people "liked" me. It's so easy to make yourself believe in this kind of competitive social validation system. Of course I see big dangers, and I think everyone has to keep their minds open, educate themselves as much as they can, and take a position. I think a lot of these issues are political, and yet they are not reflected in the political debate.

Is your work a warning to us all?

I do see it as a warning, but I'm not a preacher or a teacher or anything. I don't want to be too didactic, or mansplain. I sometimes make the analogy that now there are more people looking at a screen than looking out the window. This contemporary landscape is so incredibly complex, and we need comparably complex reflections on it. We need to make new contemporary paintings – we can't just make the same old paintings of this new landscape. The iPhone came out in 2007. That's only nine years ago, not even a generation, and we all think it's normal. And there were enormous cultural shifts, like now everyone can wander around a strange city and find their way. That's huge! It's like the future suddenly started.

Art about digital technology tends to be relegated to niche categories – net art, post-internet art, etc. Why do you think that is?

With every new medium there are complexities that not everyone understands. When I started out in the early 2000s, there were people who said, "We don't know the dialect that you're speaking," and I had to validate my work by saying, "Well, I've read this Dutch book and I think it's the best book ever but it's not translated. I can't ignore that I think it's one of the best books." Now even my mom understands that maybe there's some cultural relevance to talking about the decisions that are made within software and on the internet.

So you're not discouraged by the categories?

I'm just really happy that I'm a part of the conversation. It's interesting to speculate about the potential of how all this technology is being used, and I think this is what art should be doing. We should ask, "What would happen if somebody used this tool in that way? That would be weird, or that would be fucked up." I think it's a responsibility of artists to misuse the tools.

Synthesising the Preferred Inputs, Through Oct 15 | Future Gallery, Schöneberg

Alex Greenberger, 'Constant Dullaart Named Winner of 2015 Prix Net Art', *Artnews*, November 2015

ARTNEWS

CONSTANT DULLAART NAMED WINNER OF 2015 PRIX NET ART

BY *Alex Greenberger* POSTED 11/17/15 4:23 PM

Yesterday, the Prix Net Art named its 2015 winner: Constant Dullaart, a Dutch artist known for his conceptual work that deals with the way software and technology sometimes seem to perform on their own. Dullaart is the second winner of the Prix Net Art, which is held in cooperation with the Chronus Art Center, Rhizome, and the Tsinghua University Art and Science Media Lab. The jurors for this year's prize were journalist Josephine Bosma, Whitney curator Chrissie Iles, and critic Domenico Quaranta. The prize comes with a \$10,000 award.

In the past, Dullaart has staged a number of interventions using Internet-based mediums that investigate the effects of image-processing technology. Having organized projects in which he ponders the death of the URL, and in which art-world Instagram accounts get an even 100,000 followers through various purchases, the young Dutch artist has gotten a lot of hype in the past few years for his attention-grabbing work. Dullaart is represented in London by Carroll/Fletcher, in Paris by XPO Gallery, and in Berlin by Future Gallery.

The Prix Net Art jurors also gave an award of distinction to the German collective Weise7, made up of artists Julian Oliver, Gordan Savicic, Bengt Sjolen, Danja Vasiliev, and others. Weise7 has become known less for producing objects than setting up experimental spaces in which artists can become educated about networks and hacking. Through this secondary prize, Weise7 has been awarded \$5,000.



'Constant Dullaart Wins Prix Net Art', *Artforum*, November 2015

ARTFORUM

POSTED NOVEMBER 16, 2015

Constant Dullaart Wins Prix Net Art

Rhizome, the Beijing-based Chronus Art Center, and Tsinghua University Art and Science Media Lab today announced that Dutch artist Constant Dullaart has been awarded the second annual Prix Net Art, an international prize for internet art that comes with an award of ten thousand dollars. A five thousand dollar award of distinction was also granted to the Berlin-based collective Weise7. Dullaart will discuss the future of net art during a new art and technology conference presented by Rhizome and the New Museum in January 2016.



The jury which decided the winners this year comprised critic Josephine Bosma; Whitney Museum curator Chrissie Iles; and critic and curator Domenico Quaranta.

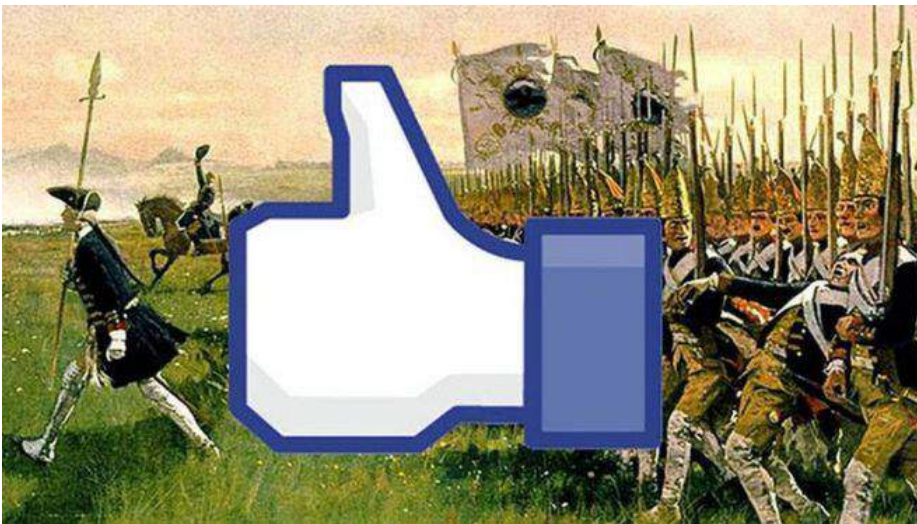
Zoe Kleinman 'Facebook 'fake army' launched by artist', *BBC News*, November 2015



Technology

Facebook 'fake army' launched by artist

By Zoe Kleinman
Technology reporter, BBC News



constant dullaart

A Dutch artist is compiling thousands of fake Facebook profiles, all named after soldiers who fought in the US revolution in the 18th century.

Constant Dullaart's 'army', staffed via two volunteers, will be dispatched to add likes to various posts across the social network.

He told the BBC that he wants to protest against what he calls the "quantification of social capital".

It is a violation of Facebook policy to create a fake account.

Facebook uses various techniques, including pattern recognition, to try to halt the spread of fake activity.

The artist admitted that he has not discussed his plans with the firm.

'Declaring war'

"It might be that Facebook will notice and will start to kill them off," he said.

"If I'm using the analogy of the soldiers - in that sense I feel like I did declare war on this idea that quantified social capital represents quality."

Constant Dullaart intends to bring together artists, philosophers and critics to decide what his fake army should do.

"It will be interesting to have a commission deciding who deserves the extra social attention," he said.

He expects the project to last for up to two months but said he could not be sure about the life expectancy of his invented troops.

"It is not my intention to run it as a business model... but [creating fake profiles] is an enormous industry that deserves the attention."

He is basing the profiles on real members of the Hessian army from the late 1700s but declined to give the names of those he has chosen.

There are currently around 1,000 of them on the site, but there could eventually be up to 20,000, he added.

Instagram equality

For a previous art project he purchased fake Instagram accounts and set them up to follow 30 real Instagram users from the art world.

He was trying to give every account he chose 100,000 followers, he said.

One gallery owner complained to Instagram, which is owned by Facebook, that the influx of followers was making it difficult to identify genuine collectors and enthusiasts.

"I wasn't trying to drown out his business," the artist said.

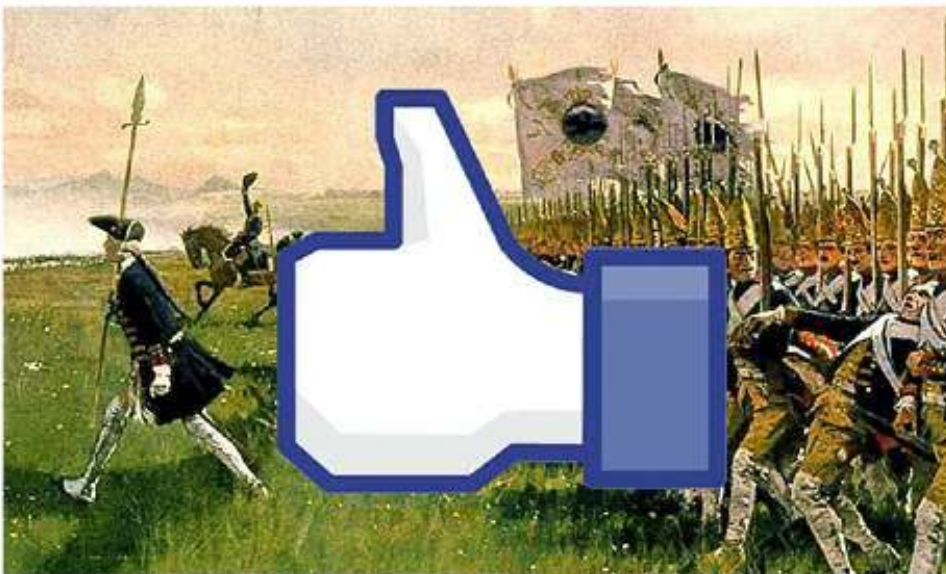
"I wanted to equalise a lot of artists to make them equally important."

Jonathan Jones 'Army for hire: the artist employing ghost soldiers to invade Facebook', *The Guardian*, November 2015

theguardian

Army for hire: the artist employing ghost soldiers to invade Facebook

In resurrecting an 18th-century mercenary army, Constant Dullaart has found a novel way to skewer the social media empire



'There's a huge market in fake accounts' ... Constant Dullaart's *The Possibility of an Army*, shows the Attack of the Prussian Infantry during the Battle of Hohenfriedberg, by Carl Röchling Photograph: Screengrab



Jonathan Jones

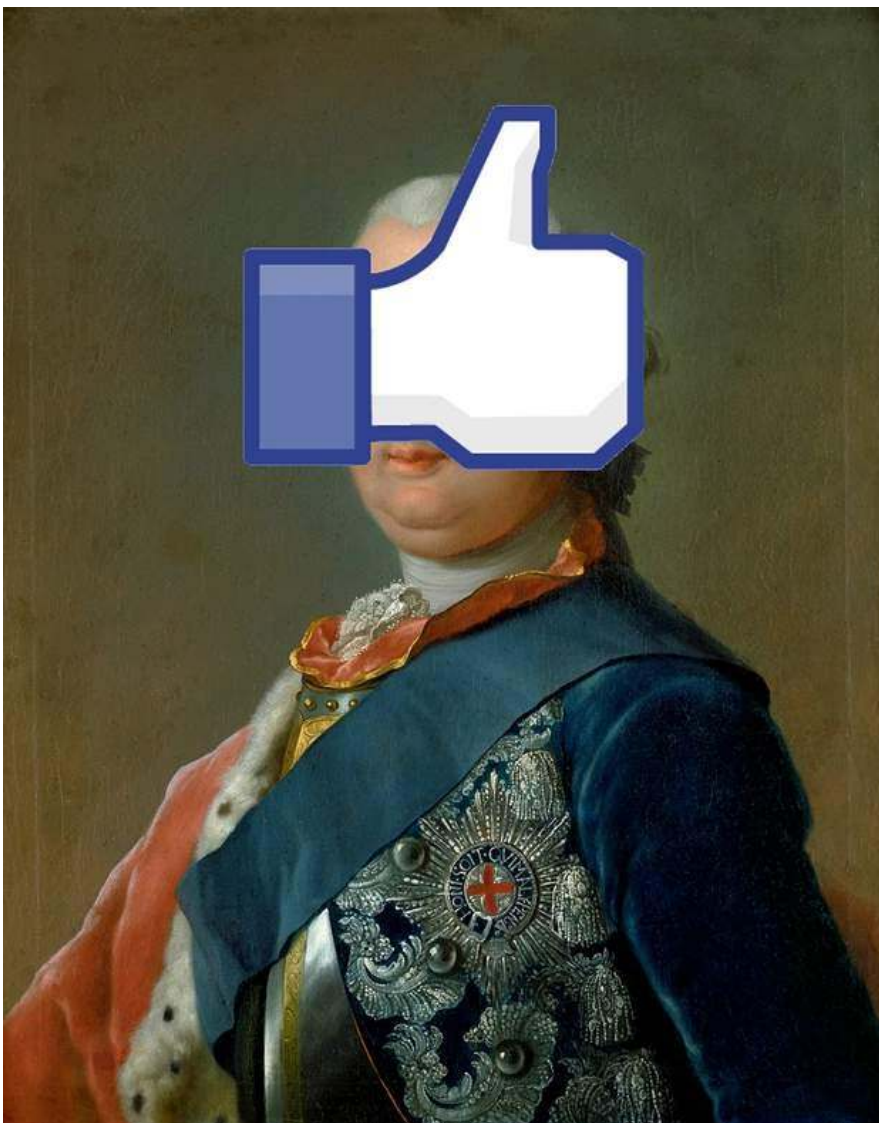
Monday 9 November 2015 16:37 GMT

Constant Dullaart uses the internet to expose the internet. The Dutch artist, who once hunted down the first ever Photoshopped image – so he could see it *before* it was altered – is now taking on the ultimate champion of digital fantasies: Facebook.

He's hiring a ghost army of 18th-century soldiers to attack the most mighty empire of today. His online art intervention, called *The Possibility of an Army*, will expose the

ease with which fake identities can be created online. He has enlisted people to open Facebook accounts with the names of mercenary soldiers hired by Britain in the American war of independence. He is literally creating a fake army of dead men.

“There are already enormous armies of fake accounts,” says Dullaart. “There’s a huge market in selling YouTube views and every kind of social media engagement ... I get frustrated when I see social media quoted as validation of a cultural practice.” Even museums, he claims, use faked responses to enhance their reputations. The providers of such services “make money by giving you big numbers. They generate random behaviour so they look more real. And they’re all around.”



Leader of the avant avant-garde ... Frederick II of Hesse-Cassel, painted by Johann Heinrich Tischbein, liked by

Dullaart.

The integrity of all that happens online seems to be crumbling. Those reviews on Amazon? [A lot are fake](#), according to the online retailer, which is suing more than 1,000 people for their “false, misleading and inauthentic” reviews of books and other commodities. Instagram? The myth has been blown wide open – with users queuing up to reveal sadder realities behind their images using the hashtag [#socialmediaisnotrealife](#). Are these long overdue exposures just more internet ephemera? Or could this be the beginning of the fall of social media?

We all know the online world is riddled with false identities; what Dullaart is saying is that it is a mass market. The chatter of social media is a way of selling us stuff, manipulated by hidden persuaders. His fake army on Facebook is there to test, as he puts it, “how much you need to bypass identity checks”.

Dullaart’s volunteers created PVA – phone verified accounts – with the names of real, but long dead, soldiers in the army of the lost state of Hesse-Cassel. In the 18th century, when Germany was still a patchwork of small states, Frederick II of Hesse-Cassel hit on a brilliant way of enriching his domain: he hired out this well-trained army to fight other peoples’ wars. The Hessians, as they were known, were a regular army for hire. Their most famous ([in America, infamous](#)) employment was on the British side against the American revolution.

“The economy of the Hessian state got a big boost,” says Dullaart. The profits were used in an Enlightenment campaign to improve society. It’s eerily appropriate that they have now returned as a band of Facebook mercenaries, their identities marshalled in the inauthentic, money-spinning world of social media.

“I see Facebook as a very American product, exporting a very American popularity culture,” says Dullaart. The original Hessians fought in the US and have been caricatured as brutal mercenaries, but in reality they “behaved honourably”, he says. “They actually freed a lot of slaves.”

[The Possibility of an Army](#) is at Schirn Kunsthalle museum in Frankfurt on 10 November.

Dan Duray, 'New project boots instagram followers for art world accounts',
Art News, 9 October 2014

ARTNEWS

NEW PROJECT BOOSTS INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS FOR ART WORLD ACCOUNTS

BY *Dan Duray* POSTED 09/30/14

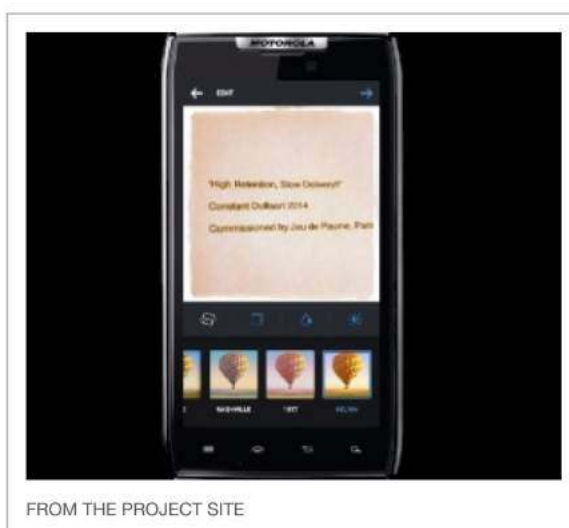
The artist Constant Dullaart has launched a new project, commissioned by Jeu de Paume, that aims to level the influence of a handful of players on Instagram by buying followers for certain accounts so that all have an even 100,000. Among those to receive followers are the likes of the Zach Feuer and Gagosian galleries, artists Jeff Koons and Petra Cortright, curators Karen Archey and Brian Droitcour, and Performa.

The project, *High Retention, Slow Delivery*, emerged from Dullaart's thinking about social media and saw the accounts begin to receive thousands of followers about a week ago.

"I quit Facebook in 2012, I gave away my passwords during a performance in the New Museum in New York and at that time I was annoyed with this idea that one person would be more 'liked' than another," Dullaart said over the phone. "It was kind of like in high school, like how much one person would be more popular than the other person."

On Instagram, as he says in a video and text that accompanies the piece, influence is almost more important, since influence there can have real consequence. Art is sold on Instagram, or people discover artists based on the authority of the account that introduces them to new work. "Audience is a commodity," he wrote, adding "They can be used to influence politics, by supporting political causes online, and even add relevance to art."

"We live in a representation of a world which we can influence in ways never imagined," he continued in the manifesto. "Let's do so performatively. Social bank accounts raised to the



same level to stimulate a utopian image of a shared responsibility for equality within a conscious user group, as a mere reminder of painful racial, financial and other social inequalities so much harder to destroy.”

Dullaart purchased 2.5 million fake followers from a site he described as “buysocialmedia.com,” through eBay, haggling over the price but eventually paying \$5,000 for them, \$2,000 over the original commission sum. Then began the difficult process of deciding which accounts to “equalize.” There were certain accounts he would have loved to bring to 100,000 followers, but it would have been too expensive to do so. Hans Ulrich Obrist, as it happened, was already fairly close to 100,000, which meant he hardly needed it but, Dullaart said, “If I hadn’t included Hans Ulrich Obrist, there would be this single art kingpin who wouldn’t be included in this equalization.” And Jeff Koons had relatively few followers, but could he leave out Jeff Koons?

The process will continue for the next few weeks. Asked if he was worried about discussing his project publicly, and thus alerting the authorities at Facebook (which owns Instagram), Dullaart said he didn’t mind if he was somehow shut down. “This is a symbolic gesture,” he said. “It exists within this realm of the poetic gesture.”

For his next project he hopes to clone himself via Instagram followers, by trying to find a way to incorporate his own photos into the kinds of bots he’s hired for this current project

Jepp Ugelvig, 'Constant Dullaart at Carroll / Fletcher', *DIS*, July 2014



discover
THE DIS BLOG

Constant Dullaart at Carroll / Fletcher



July 10th, 2014 by Jepp Ugelvig



In his 'Jennifer in Paradise Series', Constant Dullaart revisits this image by John Knoll. Endlessly shared on the internet, the original high res version is impossible to find.

Remembering Jennifer in Paradise: Constant Dullaart at Carroll / Fletcher, London

The Dutch artist Constant Dullaart investigates the infancy of the world wide web, in particular the specific virtual semantics and consumer climates that have arisen from its birth. Currently exhibiting his first solo show in the UK at Carroll / Fletcher Gallery, Dullaart navigates through and beyond post-net nostalgia (no comic sans and glitch aesthetics here), exploring the correlation between digital mediation and traditional, craft-based art forms. His focal point is global and symptomatic of the infinite, virtual space that connects every citizen of the globe with a wifi-connection.

With 'Terms of Service' (2012/14), he has created a website that transforms the Google search box into a mouth that recites Google's ever-changing privacy policy, a manifestation of the absurdity of digital pedagogy and information accessing. At the same time, Dullaart shows the audience how local and young the Internet is; Steve Wozniak's (co-founder of Apple) family photographs from 1984 (the dawn of the digital era) and abstractions from Bill Atkins' (creator of Macpaint) first computer drawings reveal how the Internet has been subject to a corporate hegemony from the very beginning.

With his project 'Jennifer in Paradise Series' (2013-present) Constant Dullaart has created one of the most important pieces of virtual archeology as of yet (an area of study that will surely gain popularity in the next couple of years). Here, he redistributes and mediates a stock-like image of a topless woman reclining on a beach in Bora Bora, an image so recognizable and ingrained in our collective virtual memory that it is impossible to signify. The image was originally taken in 1988 by John Knoll, one of the original creators of Photoshop, and it was subsequently used as an example of the first digitally manipulated photograph ever. However, high-resolution versions of the image were never officially distributed, and despite the wide circulation and appropriation of the image, it is now practically impossible to find online. Meditating on this 'extinction', Dullaart acts as an archivist and tries to restore the image while processing it through current Photoshop filters – he even reached out to Jennifer in a public letter published on Rhizome in September last year, in an attempt to assert the need for such digitally-mediated histories to be discovered and discussed. Constant Dullaart's solo show 'Stringendo, Vanishing Mediators' is an important reflection on digital history as well as the visual, semantic and political components that constitute our virtual climate. Until July 19th.



**Louisa Elderton, 'Constant Dullaart: Future Gallery & IMPORT Projects',
Frieze, 17 November 2013**

frieze

Constant Dullaart

Future Gallery & IMPORT Projects

The Dutch artist Constant Dullaart considers contemporary modes of accessing information, exploring the dynamics of reality as perceived through the transparent computer screen. Curated and installed across two Berlin spaces, Future Gallery and IMPORT Projects, along with online components, Dullaart's most recent project, 'Jennifer in Paradise', explored the Internet's opacity, highlighting the extent to which onscreen data is manipulated and controlled, enhanced or deformed.

The web's potential to demarcate a wholly democratic, transparent space in which people freely operate is, arguably, naively Utopian. It's a timely subject, given the ongoing Edward Snowden case. Counter to its promise of being a completely open platform, the Internet is not only monitored, it's an arena in which information is filtered, distorted and, most cleverly and deceptively, presented as unmediated content.

The show at Future was underpinned by *Jennifer in Paradise* (all works 2013), a low-resolution print of a woman reclining on a beach in Bora Bora. Another iteration of the image was emblazoned across the span of the wall at IMPORT, containing an encoded message within its giant pixels. Originally taken in 1987 by John Knoll, the co-creator of Photoshop, this photograph was the demonstration image for the programme's users to explore and test the software. It became ubiquitous, widely distributed and repeatedly manipulated by the public. Surprisingly, though, the image is now almost extinct, nearly nowhere to be found online, aside from low-res traces. Restoring the image here, Dullaart acted as archivist, illuminating the genesis of image-doctoring while nostalgically suggesting a time when photography's authenticity was still conceivable. A letter to 'Jennifer' from the artist – which Dullaart posted on Rhizome.org, then tweeted to the muse herself – almost reads like a love letter, if not to Jennifer herself then perhaps to a past space in which reality was less malleable: 'Sometimes, when I am anxious about the future of our surveilled, computer-mediated world [...] I imagine myself travelling back in time [...] And just sit there with you, watching the tide roll away.'

In both exhibitions, Dullaart explored the relationship between virtual reality and its symbiotic link to our physical, material being. At Future, *YouTube as a Sculpture*

About this review

Published on 17/11/13
By *Louisa Elderton*



Constant Dullaart, *The Death of the URL*, 2013, installation view at IMPORT Projects

[Back to the main site](#)

(*moulding*) is a monochromatic, 3D version of the Mac's rainbow spinning pinwheel. Almost indistinguishable from the gallery's own decorative features, the work playfully reinterprets this familiar icon; now physically manifest, we continue to wait and watch the form, which still wastes time and leads to nowhere.

A new body of glass works appeared in both venues, the material a recurring metaphor for our computers' myriad windows (Windows software, the screen's glass, the Internet as a window to the world). A UV print on glass, *Untitled (Lascaux Cows)*, comprised layers of graffiti-like marks that partially reveal cave paintings in Lascaux. Posing questions about the filtering of information via the Internet and its potential to obscure rather than reveal meaning, the imagery for the piece derives from Dullaart's 2012 online work <http://untitledinternet.com/>, in which the viewer is directed to Google, only for the subsequent pages to be obscured with random mottled brushstrokes that shield the information. Printed onto glass, the images become artefacts: digital filters objectified.

Works such as those from the group 'Thomas Knoll, series' (2013) were both sculptural and painterly, employing thick, variously patterned glass frames that visually distorted appropriated photographs by John Knoll's brother and Photoshop co-creator. Colourful images of snow monkeys and soaring bald eagles are perceived through deceptively dotted or swirled walls of glass. Even the creators of Photoshop fall victim to eventual misrepresentation – the politicized effects of their own innovation.

In the context of Dullaart's broader practice, the glass pieces felt less dynamic and affecting than his performative online platforms or video installations, which employ cannily subtle references to non-transparency. One such work is the dual-screen projection of a triple-X domain functioning in real time, *The Death of the URL*, which hung centrally in Import Project's space. Exploring the rise of the keyword search and subsequent demise of the URL, a generative algorithm finds and lists browser data histories, as codes of <http://xxxxxx> (... and so on) continually appear. Here, the URL is powerfully presented as a sentimental cipher, suggesting a freer Internet from the past, where software companies were less involved in mediating our search habits.

Dullaart's combined exhibition and online project illuminates our virtual landscape, whose construction moulds an illusory sense of freedom. These windows are, in fact, semi-permeable. Are we aware enough? With more people looking at screens on a daily basis than at paintings or out of windows onto the physical world, 'Jennifer in Paradise' encouraged a timely assessment of the material impact of virtual control mechanisms.

Louisa Elderton