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A self-proclaimed law-abiding socio-path, Jon Rafman fleshes out some of his most recent cyber-pop visions for a first major exhibition in his hometown, coordinated by in-house MACM curator Mark Lanctôt[1]. At times sleazy, eerie and at others magnificent, his most salient explorations of virtual worlds are framed inside sit-in cabinets of curiosities, which intertwine video, photo and sculptural elements with the obsession of an anthropologist of online culture.

A multitude of purpose-built, individual screening boxes occupy the show, built out of urethane foam and other construction supplies. The tiny enclosures constrain the viewer's body, adding to the presentation context of Rafman's video edits and animations. In this manner *Kool-Aid Man in Second Life* (2008–2011) invites us into a tempered glass cube, to follow the sickly-sweet juice icon through his equally synthetic onscreen world. The latter shows a compendium of extraordinary scenes of cities and wilderness, promoting an exacerbated artificiality that only reminds us of the constructed essence of this and other networks. Rafman implied this constructedness in a 2010 interview with Nicolas O'Brien, when calling the multi-user domain Second Life "the ultimate tourist destination—an endless expanse of floating symbols, free of the weight of history."[2] Accordingly, some of Rafman's screening pods offer a bodily experience more analogous to the content on view, such as *Oh The Humanity (waterbed)* (2015)—a pimped up waterbed for viewers to wobble upon while lying under the looping animation of an overcrowded wave pool. In other instances, the angular furniture of *Betamale/Mainsqueeze (Pit Couch)* (2015) and square-columned agora of *Remember Carthage/A Man Digging* (2015) mimic the low-polygon count and electric colours of early 3D engines, all of the above suggesting that virtual worlds have already colonized our social existence.

Strictly within the narratives of his screen works, Rafman often summons the attitude of a melancholic flâneur. Yet his dreamy, Benjaminian arcades are offset by the architecture of game coding,[3] the windows to his world more attuned to Microsoft than Alberti's classic treatise.[4] Thus *Codes of Honor* (2011) sketches a like-minded homage to arcade gaming, combining play sequences with a film noir-esque voice-over, telling us of the artist's devotion to coin-operated booths in the quasi-dandy tone of teenage suburban angst. The trilogy produced between 2013 and 2015—consisting of *Still Life (Betamale)*, *Mainsqueeze* and *ERYSICHTHON*—mix footage found on YouTube and darker recesses of the deep web. Here cosplay suicides skillfully mash up against Futanari porn (manga chicks with dicks) and other flavours of shock and horror, easily kept at an ironic distance by media-savvy viewers much bombarded by ad campaigns on a daily basis.

Whether Rafman intends to disturb his audiences or not is still up for debate, but he does succeed at metonymically turning geek culture into art when exposing their favourite commodities in *You Are Standing in an Open Field* (2015). Fast-food leftovers, cigarette butts and the like are compounded in and around the cracks of grey computer keyboards, and set against neoclassical paintings of shipwrecks, waterfalls or bushy landscapes displayed on a flat monitor, or more bluntly pasted as wallpaper behind the rubble of consumer waste. Thick transparent resin is brushed over these photoshopped prints, perhaps to overstate the flip from virtual images onto the realms of painterly objects, or even to confirm the takeover of high art circles by geek royalty.

Rafman's accumulations of retrofitted computer imagery and trashy commodities also successfully break the usually strong ties between technology and futurism. These digitally enhanced works have refreshingly little to do with science fiction, so to better resonate with our contemporary yet immaterial times. While Foucault's baby-boomer rhetoric of panoptic

architecture might have interpreted the artist's screen addiction as a form of self-inflicted incarceration, here Slavoj Žižek's free-association of God and gamers[5] should more closely encapsulate Rafman's position. The psychoanalytic philosopher proposes a parallel between the pixelated fields at the outskirts of game storylines and the blurry quarks at the edge of particle physics—where neither game designers nor deity had anticipated their subjects to wander out so far, and did not bother to render in such details. Rafman's work at the MACM suggests this is precisely what he is doing, exposing the fringes of both the imaginary and the real, seeking moments that have not yet conceptually or metaphysically reached optimal resolution. ●

1 — June 20–September 13, 2015.

2 — From "A Conversation with Jon Rafman," Vimeo video, 13:03, posted by Badatsports, 2010, accessed July 7, 2015 https://vimeo.com/11685295.

3 — See Catherine Russell, "Walter Benjamin and the Virtual: Politics, Art, and Mediation in the Age of Global Culture," Transformations, (November 15, 2007), http://www.transformationsjournal.org/journal/issue_15/editorial.shtml.

4 — See Anne Friedberg, The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006), 11–90.

5 — See Slavoj Žižek, "The Reality of the Virtual," Youtube video, 39:33, posted by Casper Børretzen, August 20, 2012, accessed July 7, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=RnTQhlRcrno.