

Exhibition Essay 1500 words

Ways of Perceiving (ADAD4019)

Essay: Imagined Exhibition

1,628 words + references

Digital Connection: Love and Communication Online

Digital Connection is an exhibition which seeks to look at the different angles of digital culture to consider its presence in communities and art in relation to current society. Various mediums such as film, installation, painting and photography will be used to examine the vastness of interpersonal relations within online communities, areas of cultural studies, feminist theories and philosophies will be identified as reflections are made on growing virtual dynamics between individuals and the extension of media as a platform to develop identities.

Artists such as Tara Fallaux, Jon Rafman, Juliana Huxtable, and Gillian Wearing will guide the viewer through contrasts of everyday human experiences to fantasy landscapes, with themes of connection and expressions built online and the blur between how this is displayed digitally and physically: ranging from isolation and connection, expression in queer and fetish communities as a form of realising identity and feminism will be explored.

‘Digital Connection’, follows a premise of self-discovery, an interweaving of social relationships and the dynamics of culture within groups. The layout of the exhibition introduces the significance of cultural identity and role of diaspora across minoritised people to its vast impact within our screens to outside of our screens.

Using the selected artists, it demonstrates a narrative of all the forms in which our screens have been present in expanding our “AFK” (Away from keyboard) lives.

From our experience of integrating ourselves within certain groups, we define ourselves in relation to what we consume/interact with. Theorist Stuart Hall, put forward the notion that identity is not a fixed quality, but that we’re continuously shaped by our cultural experiences. (Hall, S 1990 University of Warwick, pg 1-2).

Gillian Wearing is largely applicable to the above conversation. Gillian’s work strongly uses her art to transform identities, question interpersonal lives of strangers and families. ‘Signs’,

'Confess All on Video' and her self-portraits are seen through entrance of the exhibition. Her works being displayed on the right side of the wall, serve as an introduction to the topic of 'Digital Connection'. As cultural identity is often presented through how we dress and speak, with consideration of how others around us dress and speak, we form an identity that is emulating the lives around us which suits a certain stereotype. Hall claims identity is constructed through the "eye of the needle of the other" (Hall, S 1990 pg 1-2). This construction of ourselves often does not share our inner most thoughts when in confrontation with others around us (Hessel, K, 2022) but like in 'Confess all on video', where we can abstract and morph ourselves is usually a safe place to admit and explore, as seen in Juliana Huxtable's art which explores this.

We can expand our horizon through a digital lens and see what represents us through language and images. Huxtable embraces that technology is not a posthuman artifact, but a reflection of humanity (Russell, L 2022, pgs 130-5). The connections that have been built over online spaces have been an ever-growing part of expression in gender identity, (Russell, L 2022 pgs 3). The formation of social constructs around gender is theorised to be built in through behaviours, gender is an act, and potentially not something in which we are (Felluga, Dino 2002).

In past this fluidity of roles within sexuality was a difficult theme to express, our ability to use imagination exceeding our "fixed" roles within our sexuality and identity is a point of transformation within identities (Hooks and Hall, 2017, pgs 100-110).

Following from this, in between Gillian Wearing's art and Juliana Huxtable's is Tara Fallaux's 'Perfect Pearl'. 'Perfect Pearl' is a narrative following the same story across different women in China. The placement of this work is intentional for its interaction between the dynamics of using digital platforms to embrace "AFK" reality and identity, and in conjunction with that is the bearing of vulnerabilities through signage, without a manipulation of one's form to suit their imaginative identity. Social connection online can be a place of chasing dreams, especially in the pursuit of love and family. 'Perfect Pearl' will be a reflection on the social change within patriarchal family roles (Hooks and Hall, 2017) and the search for meaning through identity. How are connections through online chats impacting our perceptions of love and loneliness? (Fallaux, T, 2022).

The last part has been placed intentionally to tie everything in together, Rafman's work displays a confessional stand in the centre, with one film shown within the closed area to the left, another in the centre of the building and photographs placed on either side of the wall. Themes of loneliness, identity and sexual discovery through are explored through virtual worlds, we see how online cultures display a different set of norms, rules and social structures through acts of family roles and fetishes (Boellstorff, T 2009 pg 120). This holds up a mirror to values of our society and points out that our online selves may be the most authentic version of ourselves.



(Figure 1, (105.4 x 81.9cm) Wearing, G (2003) 'Self-Portrait at 17 years old'. Available at: <https://buffaloakg.org/artworks/p2004146-self-portrait-17-years-old-series-album> (Accessed: 21st April 2025)

The selected artworks from Wearing, made at different times, all address similar topics in context with this exhibition. Her 'Self-Portrait at 17 years old' (2003) (Figure 1) displays a younger version of herself. Made as part of a series, it addresses the ambiguity of connections to people at the most basic level – and the individual differences that occur across families (Buffalo AKG Art Museum, 2013). Like 'Signs that say what you want them to say and not signs that say what someone else wants you to say' (1992-3) (Figures 2) which is a collection of photographs of London pedestrians holding signs that express their thoughts (Tate 2025, 'I'm desperate) and now reflects modern day socialising through the internet (Herbert, M 2021). 'Confess all on video. Don't worry you will be in disguise. Intrigued? Call Gillian' (1994) (Figure 3), is a video featuring ten scenes of disguised people revealing their secrets to a camera. Topics range from shoplifting to revenge stories (Tate 2025, 'Confess all on video'). All works are different expressions of Wearing's fascination for the fluidity of a person, our representation of ourselves through masks. What you absorb is what you become, how you represent yourself may be true or not (Kurchanova, N 2022) (Hessel, K 2022).



(Figures 2, Sized to 210 x 297 mm, wall prints. Wearing, G (1992-3) 'Signs that say what you want them to say and not signs that say what someone else wants you to say' Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/wearing-signs-that-say-what-you-want-them-to-say-and-not-signs-that-say-what-someone-else-66092> (Accessed: 21st April 2025).



(Figure 3, 'Confess all on video. Don't worry you will be in disguise. Intrigued? Call Gillian', TV, 32", 36 minutes. Wearing, G (1994) 'Confess all on video. Don't worry you will be in disguise. Intrigued? Call Gillian' Available at: <https://mubi.com/en/gb/films/confess-all-on-video-don-t-worry-you-will-be-in-disguise-intrigued-call-gilliant> (Accessed: 21st April 2025).



(Fig 4, 420 x 594 mm, printed photographs.

Fallaux, T (2022) 'Perfect Pearl'. Available at: <https://www.tarafallaux.com/the-perfect-pearl> (Accessed: 21st April 2025).



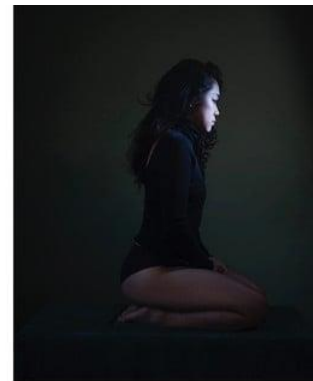
(Fig 5, 420 x 594mm)



Photographed by: Fallaux, T. in Macau
 19. 10. 2022, 4 hours ago

你和我，我们曾经相爱过，因为爱是世界上最美好的东西，它能让两个人在一起，不管遇到什么困难，都能坚持下去。我们曾经相爱过，因为爱是世界上最美好的东西，它能让两个人在一起，不管遇到什么困难，都能坚持下去。我们曾经相爱过，因为爱是世界上最美好的东西，它能让两个人在一起，不管遇到什么困难，都能坚持下去。

It's strange that we're both awake. Can't really
 imagine and dream anymore with you. That's a
 feeling we had that we're not in love anymore. But we
 still love each other. But I'm starting to dream about
 you. When I would feel a bit sad already. When I'm not
 with you. That's why I have to be away from you. I can't
 live without you. I'm not here.



(Fig16, Fallaux, T (2022) 'Perfect Pearl' book. Available at: <https://www.lensculture.com/tara-fallaux-2?modal=project-1740903> (Accessed: 21st April 2025).



(Fig 6, 297 x 420mm)



(Fig 7, 418 x 585 mm)



(Fig 8 210 x 297 mm)



(Fig 9, 210 x 297 mm)



(Fig 10, 210 x 297 mm)



(Fig 11)



(Fig 12, 210 X 297 mm)



(Fig 13, 297 x 420 mm)



(Fig 14, 297 x 420mm)



(Fig 15, 297 x 420mm)



(Fig 16, 594 x 841

mm)



(Fig 17, 420 x 594 mm)



(Fig 18, 212 x 300 mm)

‘Perfect Pearl’ (2022) (Figures 4-15) and ‘The Perfect Pearl’ book (figure 16) will be displayed alongside each other to narrate the imagery of loneliness and pursuit. From Wearing’s work which looks at masking and the true self, this work addresses the pursuit of love and the realities of life. Through a female perspective we look at the concept of love with themes of existential loneliness, a constructed nature of life and online identities. It’s an exploration of finding one’s own identity through a universal uncertainty. Fallaux had connected with Chinese female students through an online messaging app known as ‘WeChat’, with personal texts from these chats being displayed in Fallaux’s book (Fallaux, T 2022). We witness a coming of age through text messages, and the societal hold of family roles that suppress our identity (Hooks and Hall 2017, Pgs 120-30). Online virtual worlds have become a place for built families and our truest identities for many, it can be our release from what the “AFK” expects of us (Russell, L 2020), and shift this perspective of who we are and what we care about (Beollstorff, T 2009, Pg 109). We see this manifestation of online identity and family through Huxtable’s art.



(Fig 19, 101.6x76.2cm – 40x30inch, Ink jet print.

Huxtable, J (2015) 'Untitled (Psychosocial stuntin') Available at: <https://www.studiomuseum.org/artworks/untitled-psychosocial-stuntin> (Accessed: 18th April 2025)



(Fig 20, 101.6x76.2cm-40x30inch, Ink jet print. Huxtable, J (2015) '*Untitled in the rage (Nibiru Cataclysm)*') Available at: <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/34476> (Accessed:



18th April 2025) (Huxtable, J (2022) 'USSYPHILIA'. Available at: <https://www.projectnativeinformant.com/exhibitions/ussyphilia> (Accessed: 18th April 2025)

Fig 21, 'USSYPHILIA', 230 x 130 cm.



IF YOU WALK UP THROUGH HARLEM AND ALONG THE BRONX RIVER
YOU COME TO A SPACE BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF GPS SOFTWARE
UNABLE TO SENSE THE WALL OF ASHES (FROM BUILDINGS BURNT
FOR INSURANCE MONEY) AND AMASSED SMOKE FROM CRACK
PIPES. BEYOND THIS VEIL IS A MYTHICAL LAND WHERE BLACK
MOUNTAINS COVERED IN PANTHER FUR SPLIT TRIBUTARIES OF THE
RIVER AS THE WATER FIGHTS ITS WAY INTO THE IDEATIONAL OCEAN
OF MY SCHIZOPHRENIC LONGING FOR THE PLACE THAT LEFT EYE GOT
LOST IN WHILE MAKING FAN MAIL. DENSE SKY, AIR HEAVY AND
MOIST WITH THE BLOOD OF PIGS LINGERING IN THE NEAR-TROPICAL
HEAT OF A TOPOS UNDER GREENHOUSE EFFECT. CUT OFF FROM THE
'REAL' BY AN ATMOSPHERIC BUBBLE OF COINTELPRO PROPAGANDA
AN' PAMPHLETS CREATED BY THE HOOVER ADMINISTRATION, IT'S A
LAND WHERE REPARATIONS ARE TAKEN AS THEY ARE LIVED. ITS
MUSES AND MEDIUMS AMONG US ARE 'URBAN' WOMEN IN SPORTS
BRAS, BOXER SHORTS AND LOW SLUNG CAMO PANTS IN MILITARY
AND ATHLETIC SHOEWEAR. THE SPIRITUAL RESIDUE OF
'CAPITALISM PLUS DOPE EQUALS GENOCIDE' AND THE PROTECTIVE
OPTIMISM OF FREE BREAKFAST FOR THE CHILDREN SWINGS IN HOOP
EARRINGS SO LARGE THEY TRACE COLLARBONES WHEN JAWS DROP
TO DISCLOSE LYRICALLY THAT THERE IS A STILL A PLACE WHERE
BLACK UNICORNS RUN FREELY. BANTU KNOTS AND BALD HEADS
WITH THICKLY LINED LIPS OCCASION A MOMENT TO MEMORIALIZE
THE HOOD SURREALISM OF HYPE WILLIAMS AND THE FUTURES OF
OCTAVIA BUTLER (AND THE IMAGES THAT FRONT THE COVERS OF HER
BOOKS). WHERE THE ONTOLOGICAL CHAINS OF THE ATLANTIC
TRIANGLE REVERBRATE TO SHATTERING POINT IN PATTERNS, BEATS,
RHYMES AND TECHNICOLOR INSISTENCES ON A NEW NEW WORLD
WHERE THE COMMON THREAD IS SHARED WITH MISSY WHEN SHE
SAYS: I CANT STAND THE RAIN (ME I'M SUPERFLY). BEYOND THE
MOUNTAINS, AALIYAH CROONS 'MORE THAN A WOMAN' AND
BROKEN STACITY CLIPS OF ANGELA DAVIS SPEECHES PLAYING ON
LEFTIST AM RADIO PROVIDE THE 'FEELS LIKE' ADDITION TO THE
GENERAL CLIMATE READING OF THE MORNING WEATHER..

(Fig 22 101.6x76.2 cm-40x30inch, Ink jet print Huxtable, J (2015) '*Untitled (Casual Power)*'. Available at: <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/34477> (Accessed: 18th April 2025).

Huxtable's work serves as the shifting bodies which is expressed on virtual worlds and online communities. The three works selected from her 'Universal Crop Tops for all the self-canonised saints of Becoming' (2015) are 'Untitled (Casual Power)' (Figure 22), 'Untitled (Psychosocial Stuntin') (Figure 19) and 'Untitled in the rage (Nibiru Cataclysm) (Figure 20). The subject looks at pop culture moments, black identity and reimagining oneself in a dreamy landscape (Guggenheim, 2015, 'Untitled (Casual Power)'). Huxtable's work began quite young with access to editing software's and soon online communities, which then became an outlet for sexuality expression (Champpmagazine, 2016). Her painting such as 'Mukumba Midnight type (2022, Figure 23), and a portrait video from her 'USSYPHILIA' exhibition (Figure 21), continues to explore these themes and going beyond the limits of a sexed body through an interspecies persona (Project Native Informant, 2024). The extracting of presence and oneself online and AFK is a necessary part of Huxtable's performances in blurring the lines between the bodily dimensions (Russell, L 2022, pg 03). If we lost our set of behaviours that were in line with a gender, the gender would not be there, making it a concept dependant on our behaviours and actions (Felluga, Dino 2002).



(Fig 23, 176x138x7cm, Acrylic on printed canvas. Huxtable, J (2022) '*MUCUMBA MIDNIGHT TYPE*' Available at <https://www.projectnativeinformant.com/exhibitions/akimbo-spittle> (Accessed: 18th April 2025).

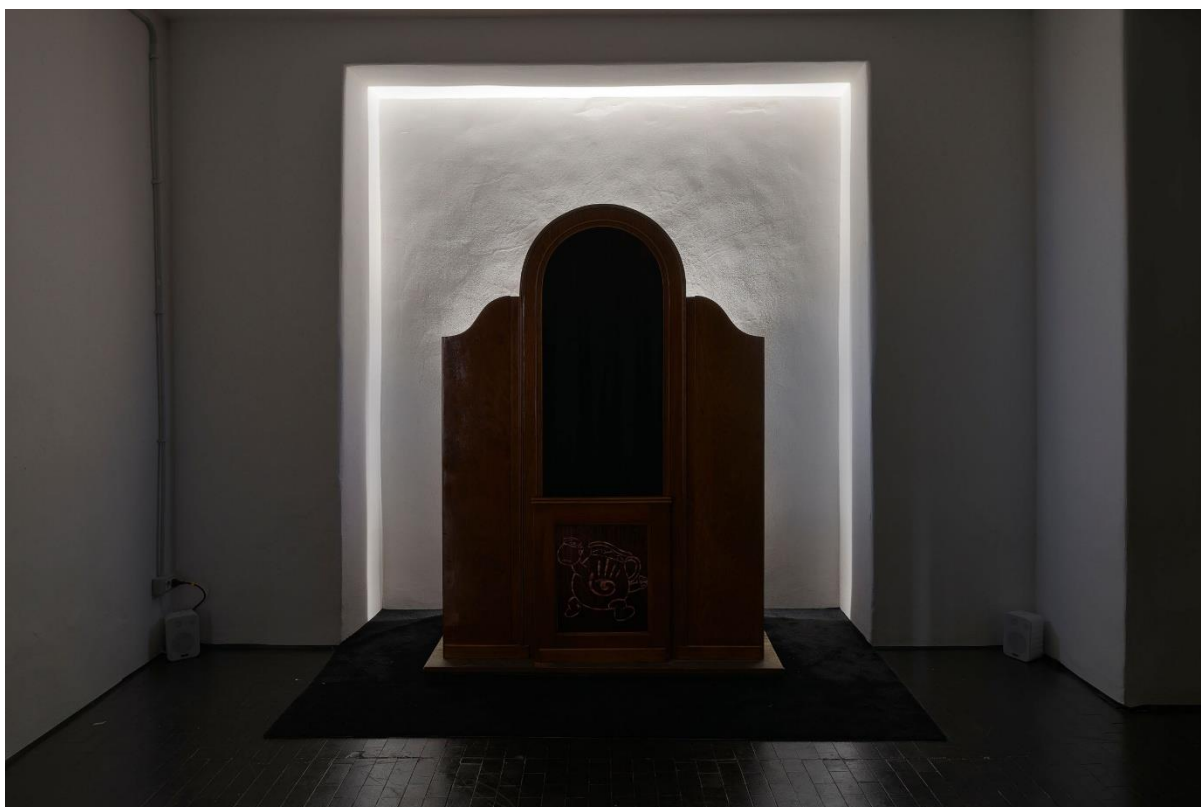


(Figure 24, TV, 32", 10 minutes Rafman, J (2010) '*You, the world and I*', Available at <https://youtheworldandi.com> (Accessed: 18th April 2025)



(Figure 25, 40.00 x 63.98 in. Ink jet print

Rafman, J (2008-) '*The nine eyes of google street view*'. Available at <https://9-eyes.com> (Accessed: 18th April 2025)



(Figure 26, Video station, 9ft x 4t, Rafman, J (2024), 'egregore', Available at: <https://www.bernheimgallery.com/exhibitions/78-player-character-jon-rafman/> (Accessed: 16th April 2022)



(Figure 27, Video station, 'Eregore')



(Figure 28, ball pit installation, 5 minute video. Rafman, J (2014) '*Still life: Betamale*' Available at <https://jonrafman.com/jon-rafman-betamale/> (Accessed 16th April 2025)

Rafman heavily explores themes of love, sexuality, sex, identity and loneliness (Bernheim, 2024), his works serve as the conclusion for this exhibition. His selected feature two installation pieces, '*Still Life: Beta male*' (2013, Figure 28), which is a video piece comprised of collected videos and images from internet subcultures, are edited over music. The imagery is quite disturbing, featuring a suicidal man, hentai, dirty computer keyboards, etc. The play with fluidity in Huxtable's work is contrasted with Rafman's work, reflecting the obsessions and limits of our self constructed online, for better or for worse. These lives aren't separated from the screen, unlike with Huxtable's work which is online exploration to support the AFK exploration, or Fallaux's documentation of online chats to express the loneliness of traditional expectations in day-to-day life. We see a quest for love in his video piece '*You, the world and I*' (2010) (Figure 24) (Lacasaendida, 2022), where the narrator speaks of traversing cyber landscapes in search of his love over Google map images and 3D generated places. Similar to his '*The nine Eyes of Google Street View*' (Figure 25), and his collected of images in '*Egrogore*', they consider our relationship to and through technology and the implications this has for our future identities and the masks we wear online and offline (lacasaencendida, 2022) (Carl Kostyal, 2022).

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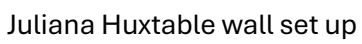
Layout for Mission Gallery 'Digital Connection' exhibition:



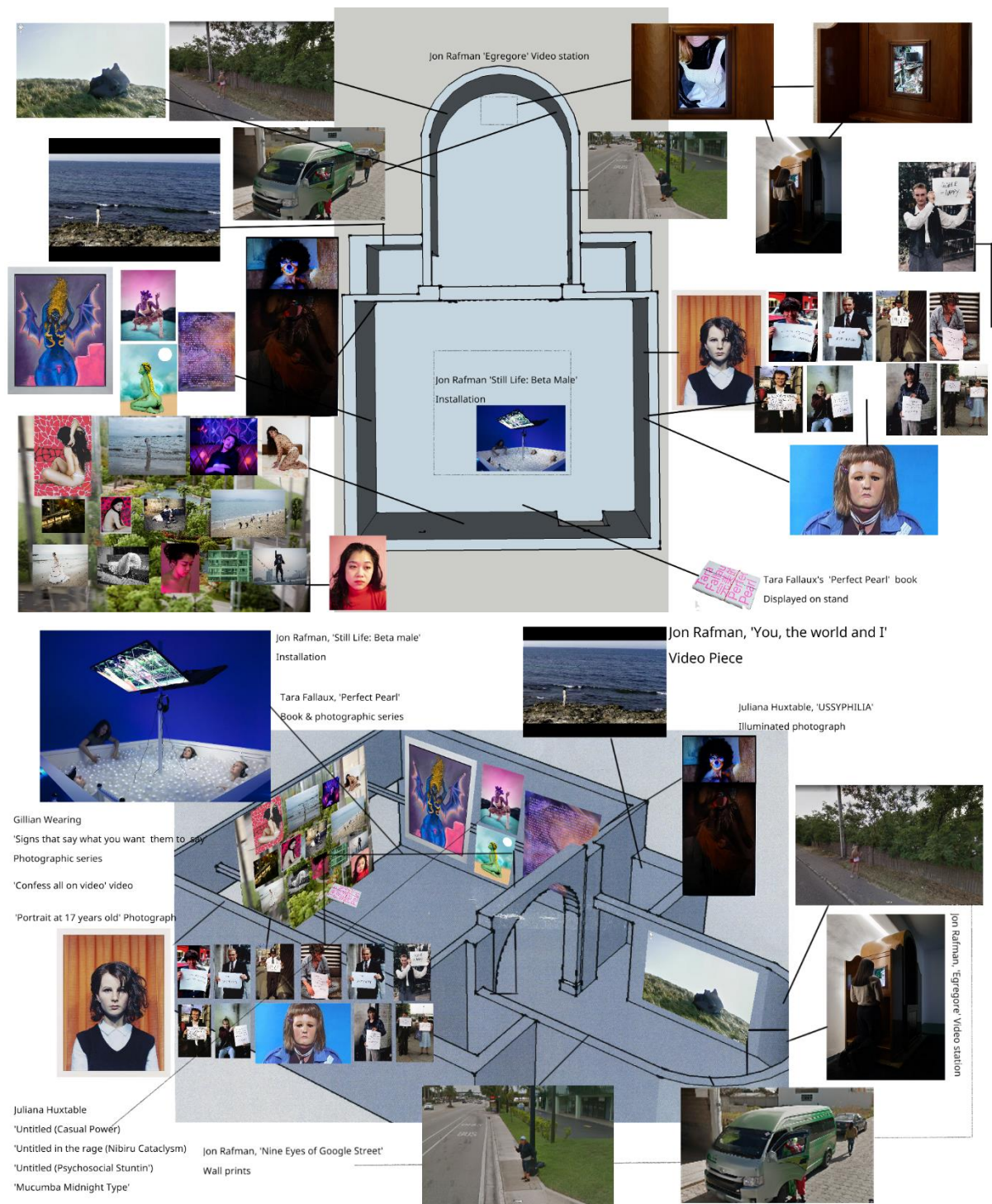
'Nine eyes of google street', Right side of wall



'Nine eyes of google street', Left side of wall



Juliana Huxtable wall set up



'Digital Connection' Mission Gallery exhibition set layout

