

Ways of Perceiving, **Curation of 'In Hyperreal Life'.**

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Introduction - In Hyperreal Life.

'In Hyperreal Life' is an exhibition of simulated and hyperreal themed artwork, including work by Tamiko Theil, TeamLab, Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, Mads Perch and Gemma Fletcher. In today's society, the fine line between the real and what we see on the internet (the simulated) has become blurred, especially in the art world. Social media like Instagram and Pinterest provide endless art content, the internet has become its own virtual art gallery.

Due to Postmodernism challenging how society is "throwing out the baby of experimentation with the bathwater of functionalism" (Lyotard, 1984, p.71), art is no longer trapped within a confined criteria. Art can be anything conceivable from traditional oil paintings to a wall covered in moss (Olafur Eliasson's 'Moss Wall'). This broadening of horizons within the art world has created a wider platform for artists which has worked together with the accessibility of social media to create an unlimited digital gallery. The modern world has become so comfortable with substituting an image of the art for the physical art itself that one cannot differentiate between the original and the simulated versions. The exhibition 'In Hyperreal Life' will display art which fuses the real with the hyperreal and invoking the question, asked by many including linguist Ferdinand De Saussure, artist Rene Magritte and philosopher Michel Foucault; what truly is the reality?

Map with Explanation.

In Hyperreal Life

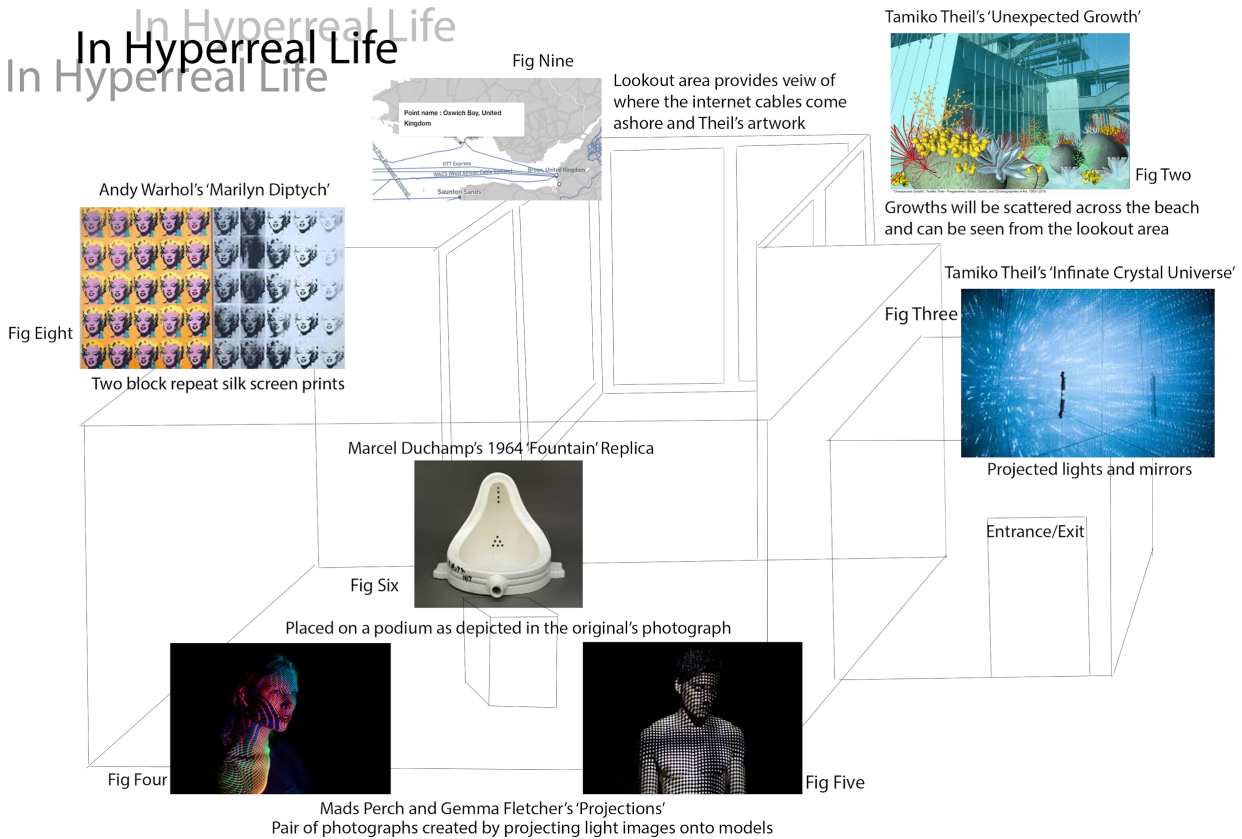


Fig One

'In Hyperreal Life' will be a pop-up gallery located on the Oxwich Bay beach which is one of the places in South Wales where internet cables come ashore (infrapedia, 2017). The internet is a crucial part of 'In Hyperreal Life' since the internet is where we source many of our simulations in today's world. The aim of this location is to make it seem as though the cables are also connected to the gallery and this is what is powering the simulation artwork. The gallery layout is simple but effective. The visitor will first enter through TeamLab's 'Infinite Crystal Universe' which will awaken the senses, sparking an awareness of one's surroundings. The next room will be a square shaped room with walls adorned with 'Projects' and 'Marilyn Diptych'. Then in the centre of the room, on a podium like in the original photo, will sit Duchamp's 1964 'Fountain' replica. There will be a fully glass extension room at the back of the gallery where visitors can look over where the cables run under the sand. This is also where they will be able to use their phones to 'see' Tamiko Theil's 'Unexpected Growth' (2018) scattered across the beach.

Context.

Hyperreal or hyperreality can be defined as “an aesthetic mode of reproduction or replication that strives to produce an effect that is more real than the thing being copied” (Buchanan, 2010, p.322). ‘In Hyperreal Life’ will transport the viewer into a hyperreal world where they will not be able to distinguish between the real and the hyperreal, replicating the state that we find ourselves in when on the internet.

The title of the exhibition, ‘In Hyperreal Life’ ,makes reference to Olafur Eliasson’s ‘In Real Life’ which is an exhibition that explores “natural phenomena, complex geometries, motion, reflection, colour and light” (Eliasson, 2019, p.7) and attempts to simulate experiences for the viewers. ‘In Hyperreal Life’ will also explore simulation but instead of taking a naturalist approach, it will take a digital, modern and hyperreal approach.

In the modernist world, metanarratives were created to help a person be able to express themselves. Narratives were claimed as ‘universal truths’ which then led to metanarratives like Christianity, misogyny and capitalism. However, today's age lives in a postmodern world where there is heavy skepticism around metanarratives (Lyotard, 1984, p.71 - 79). Where do these narratives come from? According to Jean Baudrillard, the answer is the media. “We live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning” (Baudrillard, 1994, p.55). The mass consumption of media paired with the oversimplification of major world events creates simulated ideas of reality formed from the information the media has given. This simulated reality and the reality become no longer distinguishable for the consumer.

I believe that the same thing can be said about art and the internet. Everyday thousands of people upload images of their art and other artists’ work onto social media. Just one search on Instagram and you are bombarded with images of artwork from all over the world. The viewer steps into a virtual reality where images are infinite which leads to a mass consumption of images. These images pose as the art work when in reality they are only simulated versions of the art work. Roland Barthes explores this idea in relation to words, concluding that “the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original” (Barthes, 1977, p.146). In the same way, the simulated versions of the art are only a series of pixels which somehow becomes a substitute

of the original. ‘In Hyperreal Life’ is a postmodern response to the modernist mass consumerism.



‘In Hyperreal life’ is an exhibition to remind people to step away from the virtual realities we find ourselves in and question the difference between our reality and hyperreality. The simulation that one sees online is not the physical piece, this idea is explored by Rene Magritte in the oil painting ‘The Treachery of Images.’ This painting depicts a pipe and beneath the pipe is written ‘Ceci

Fig Two

n'est pas une pipe' which Cath Pound (2017) translates to 'This is not a pipe.' The painting questions ideas of simulation and reality. Philosopher Foucault wrote extensively about Magritte's work saying "the names of things were lodged in the things they represented, just as strength is written in the body of a lion" (Foucault, 1982, p.6). Foucault explains that the drawing is not a pipe but a painting of a pipe. Although this idea seems obvious and simple, if a person were shown an image of a pipe and asked what it is, they would respond 'a pipe' and not respond with 'an image of a pipe'. When one sees an image, they see what the image represents rather than the reality that it is a simulated version of what it represents. Magritte's ideas are often compared to Saussurean linguistics as Saussure theorised that words cannot be a substitute for a physical object. Saussure made a distinction between the signifier or word and the signified or object (Saussure, 1966, p. 111 - 117). Just as one would not confuse a physical pipe with the word pipe, one should not confuse a drawing with the physical object being depicted.

Artists and Artwork.

Tamiko Thiel - Unexpected Growth (2018).

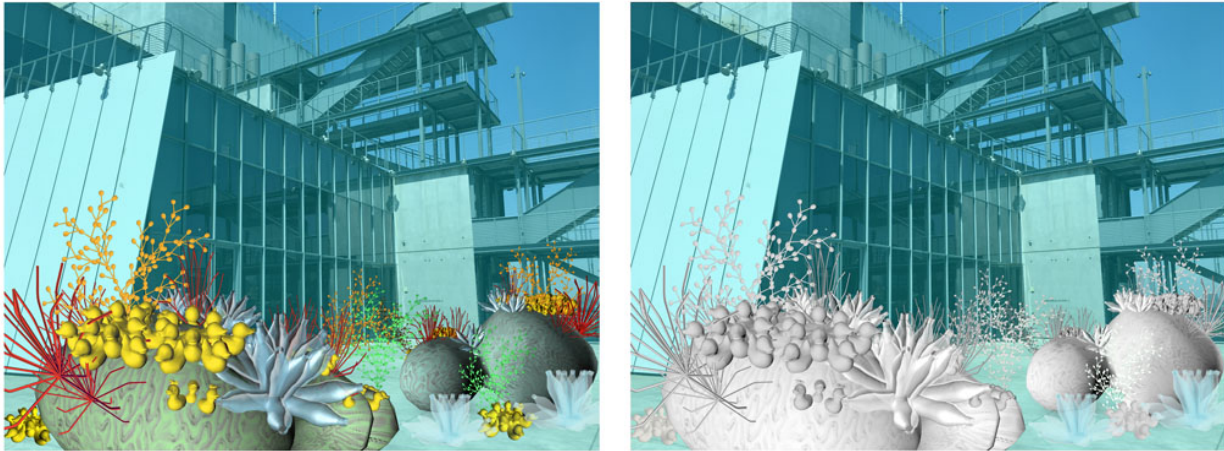


Fig Three

Unexpected Growth is an augmented reality installation by Tamiko Thiel which was presented on the Whitney Museum of Art's sixth floor as part of the "Programmed: Rules, Codes, and Choreographies in Art" exhibition. This exhibition allowed viewers to see a hyperreal parallel dimension through an app on their mobile phones or 'ARscopes' (Thiel, 2018). Tamiko explains that "if a life-sized image fills most of the peripheral visual field, the body perceives the image as a space" (Harrigan, 2009, p.157) allowing the body to enter a hyperreality despite the conscious mind acknowledging that it is an illusion.

When the dimension traveller first sees their new hyperreality they may be overjoyed to discover that they have been transported into the ocean, engulfed in virtual water and knee deep in brightly coloured coral. However, upon further inspection the virtual diver will soon realise that the coral is in fact not coral at all but instead strange growths made up of plastic objects like bottles, straws and rubber ducks. This piece creates a hyperreality of the possible future of our planet.

TeamLab - The Infinite Crystal universe (2018).

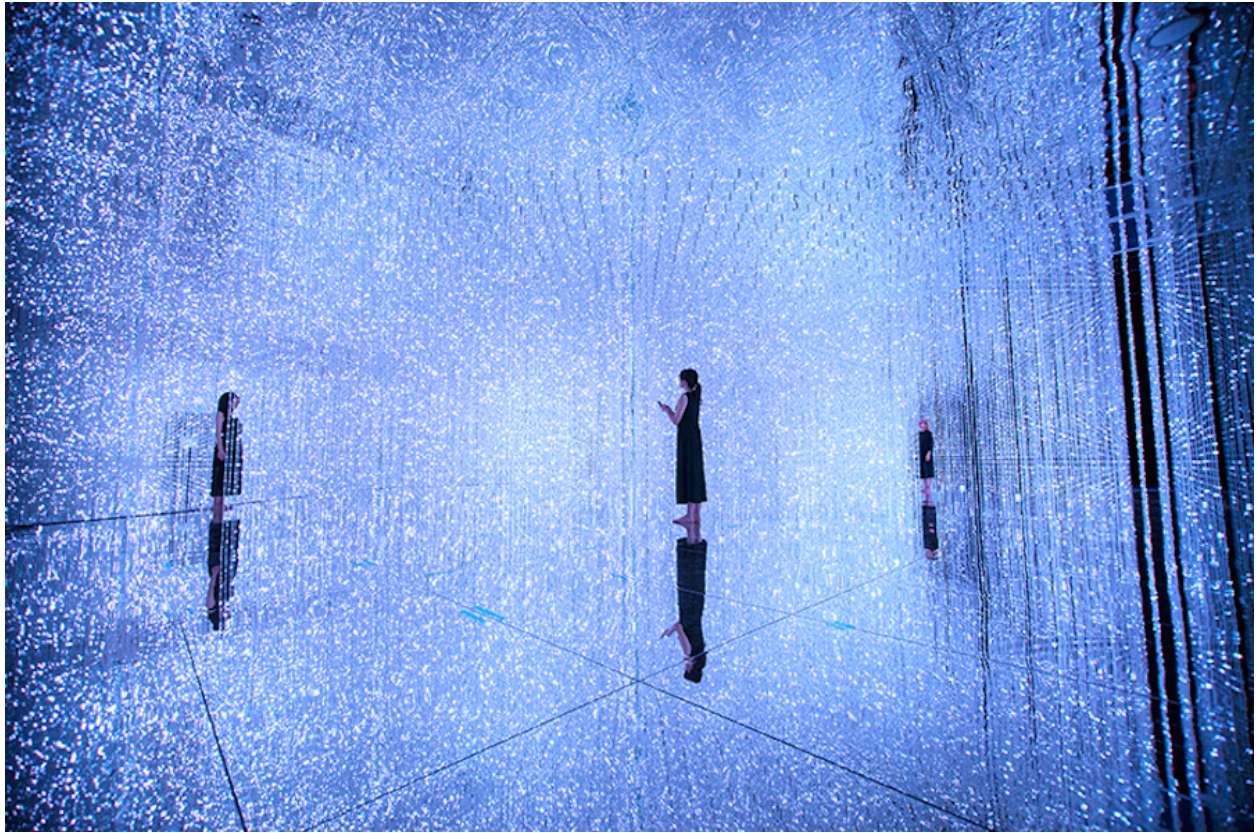


Fig Four

TeamLab created the interactive light sculpture 'The Infinite Crystal Universe' in 2018. People can use their phones to move the placement of the light points which makes this piece an ever changing artwork (TeamLab, 2018). TeamLab has similar pieces called 'Cherry Blossom' and 'Winter' but the projections are played on the surface of water which can be walked through but I chose 'The Infinite Crystal Universe' because I want the experience to be completely simulated. The sensations of movement and infinite space felt while watching the lights will only be hyperreal illusions with no physical influences.

Mads Perch and Gemma Fletcher - Projection (2014).

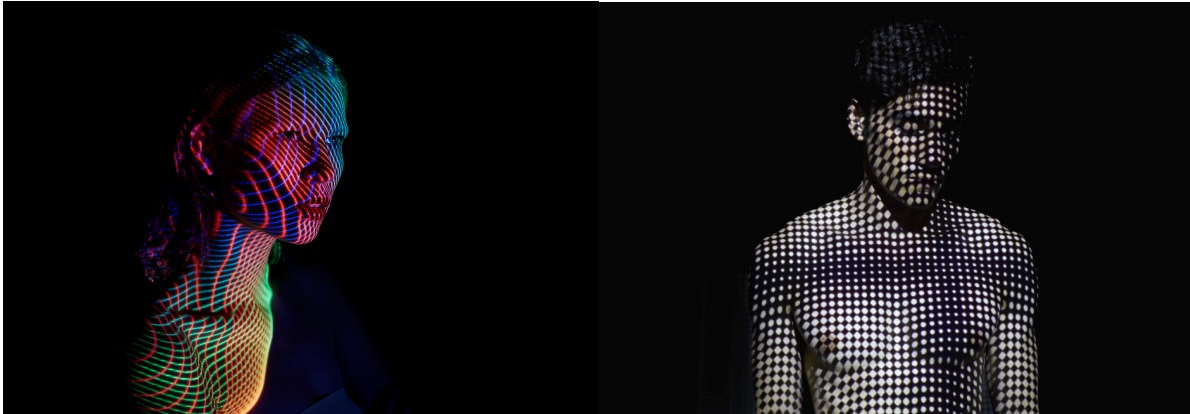


Fig Five

Fig Six

'Projection' is a series of photographs created by photographer Mads Perch and art director Gemma Fletcher. I have chosen the two pieces above to be in the 'In Hyperreal Life' exhibition. The photographs depict models with images projected onto them, using a technique called Projection Mapping which Nelson Kamdon (2014) describes as "light is mapped onto 3D subjects, instead of on the flat screen"

The theme of simulation presents itself in two different forms in 'Projection.' The first being the literal re-simulation of images being projected onto the body and the second being the geometric shapes being projected suggest the models themselves are simulated, made up of pixels, like characters in a video game. For me, the images suggest being lost in the pixels and being lost in the hyperreal world.

Marcel Duchamp - Fountain (replica 1964).



Fig Seven



Fig Eight

Marcel Duchamp is most known for his work 'Fountain' which was an industrially made urinal dated and signed with 'R. Mutt 1917.' Duchamp is said to be one of the first pioneers of a movement called 'readymade' art which involves the use of manufactured objects into an artist's work. The original was created in 1917 however it has since been lost and now only replicas can be displayed (Tate, 2015).

Since the loss of the original, many replicas have been created and many of the early replicas were approved by Duchamp himself. He even said "I agree thoroughly with your idea to have every Readymade shown in exact replicas" when asked by art critic Ulf Linde for permission to replicate Duchamp's most famous readymade artwork (Naumann, 2012, P.77). This would suggest that simulations of the original 'Fountain' were accepted by Duchamp and that, for Duchamp, simulations of artwork can be substitutes for their originals. However, it is more likely that Duchamp enjoyed the idea of replicating his work because it fit perfectly with the original narrative of using manufactured (mass made simulations) items in artwork.

Andy Warhol - Marilyn Diptych (1962).



Fig Nine

Similarly to Duchamp, Edward Kurstak (2019) explains that Andy Warhol would use well known objects or 'readymades' but Warhol would depict them in an abstract, pop culture kind of way. Warhol chose iconic images such as those of celebrities and branded items like Coca Cola and Campbell's Soup. The above artwork called 'Marilyn Diptych' shows one coloured and one monochrome version of gridded repetitions of an iconic image of Marylin Monroe.

There are multiple layers of simulation hidden in this piece as the motifs are simulated versions of an original image, the motifs are re-simulated to create a block repeat, and using an iconic celebrity nods at the idea of postmodern mass consumerism. The motifs change throughout the grid due to the printed technique which makes for the perfect metaphor for simulation and duplication. Just by looking at the work, it is impossible to distinguish which motif is the original.

Figures.

Fig. One: Yeomans, G.L. (2020) *In Hyperreal Life Exhibition Map*. [digital generated image].

Fig. Two: Magritte, R. (1929) *The Treachery of Images* [oil painting]. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles.

Fig. Three: Theil, T. (2018) *Unexpected Growth* [augmented reality installation]. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Fig. Four: Teamlab. (2018) *The infinite Crystal Universe* [light sculpture installation]. TeamLab Planet Tokyo, Japan.

Fig. Five: Perch, M. and Fletcher, G. (2014) *Projection* [photograph]. Available at: <https://mads-perch.com/portfolio/projection/> (Accessed: 14 April 2020).

Fig. Six: Perch, M. and Fletcher, G. (2014) *Projection* [photograph]. Available at: <https://mads-perch.com/portfolio/projection/> (Accessed: 14 April 2020).

Fig. Seven: Duchamp, M. (1917, 1964 replica) *Fountain* [porcelain sculpture]. Tate Modern, London.

Fig. Eight: Stieglitz, A. (1917) *Fountain* [photograph of Duchamp's original *Fountain*]. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marcel_Duchamp,_1917,_Fountain,_photograph_by_Alfred_Stieglitz.jpg (Accessed: 14 April 2020).

Fig. Nine: Warhol, A. (1962) *Marilyn Diptych* [silkscreen painting]. Tate, London.

Fig. Ten: Yeomans, G.L. (2020) *Oxwich Bay Internet Cables* [digitally generated image].

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