

Brand New Aura

By

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A thesis exhibition presented to OCAD University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
in
Criticism and Curatorial Practice

Art Gallery of Ontario & Google Art Project
<http://www.googleartproject.com/collection/art-gallery-of-ontario/>

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, May 10, 2013

 Stefan Hancherow, 2013

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Brand New Aura
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Abstract

Brand New Aura is curatorial a intervention of the art database program, *Google Art Project (GAP)*. In April of 2012, the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) became the first museum in Canada to participate in *GAP*. For this exhibition Montréal-based artist Jon Rafman produced a suite of new artworks that have been uploaded to the *GAP* website and presented alongside artworks from the AGO's permanent collection. Rafman appropriates images from the aforementioned collection; cropping, repeating, stretching, modifying, and then grafting them onto the surface of an intricate, virtual three-dimensional setting. Rafman's series, *Brand New Paint Job*, the collection of artworks at the centre of the exhibition, straddle the line between artistic sacrilege and homage; they are an ironic mash-up of high and low culture, the past and present. Rafman utilizes a viewer's knowledge of art history to produce something eerily familiar, a brand new artwork distinct from what it imitates.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Michael Prokopow for his generous insight, direction and dedication to my studies and at OCAD University. I would also like to thank Paula Gardner who provided a keen critical edge to my thesis project. I would like to thank Jim Shedden, Michelle Jacques and the staff at the AGO for seeing the potential in my thesis proposal, as well as Piotr Adamczyk from Google who embraced the project. I would like to extend an enormous amount of gratitude for Jon Rafman who surpassed my high expectations and completed an incredible series of works. I would like to acknowledge the support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I extend my gratitude to OCAD University President Sarah Diamond for her generous support. I would like to thank the OCAD U Graduates Studies staff, who are more than accommodating. I would like to thank my Criticism and Curatorial Practice colleagues. We worked together and tackled so much more than anyone had anticipated, without your commitment and enthusiasm I am unsure where the program or myself would be. I want to acknowledge my friends in Halifax, NS and Toronto, ON who have supported my curatorial practice and provided me with incredible opportunities over the past decade, most prominently Ingrid Jenkner to whom I owe much of my curatorial experience. I would lastly like to thank my parents, Anna and Kirk, my brother Joel and my partner Jennifer Simaitis for their unending support.

Table of Contents

vii-	List of Images
1-	Brand New Aura for the Museum
10-	The Auratic Primer and Digital Processes
14-	Brand New Paint Job in the Digital Museum
38-	The Auratization of the Digital
44-	Conclusion
48-	Bibliography
52-	Exhibition Report

Appendices

59-	Appendix A: <i>Brand New Aura</i> Press Release
61-	Appendix B: Jon Rafman, <i>Google Art Project</i> Didactic Texts

Illustrative Materials:

64-	Appendix C: Google Plus News Feed and Exhibition Press
67-	Appendix D: Brand New Aura Exhibition Documentation

List of Images

01. Pg. 1 - Jon Rafman, *9 Rua Pereira da Costa, Rio de Janeiro*, Brasil, 2010, archival pigment print on Hahnemühle paper, from 9 Eyes of Google Streetview, 2010, 101 x 162 cm
02. Pg. 5 - Jon Rafman, *Brand New Paint Job (Van Gogh Volkswagen Bus)*, 2010, digital image
03. Pg. 18 - *Brand New Aura*, Google Art Project installation view, 2013
04. Pg. 19 - 2013 Emily Carr, *Indian Church*, 1929, oil on canvas, 70 x 108 cm
05. Pg. 20 - Emily Carr, *Kispiax Village*, 1929, oil on canvas, 129 x 92 cm
06. Pg. 22 - Jon Rafman, *Brand New Paint Job (Emily Carr Master Bedroom)*, 2013, digital image
07. Pg. 26 - Jon Rafman, *Brand New Paint Job (Cézanne Train Car)*, 2013, digital image
08. Pg. 27 - Paul Cézanne, *Interior of a Forest*, 1880-1890, oil on canvas, 56 x 46 cm
09. Pg. 28 - *Brand New Aura*, Google Art Project installation view, 2013
10. Pg. 31 - Jon Rafman, *Brand New Paint Job (Richter Waiting Room)*, 2013, digital image
11. Pg. 32 - Gerhard Richter, *Helga Matura*, 1966, oil on canvas, 101 x 178 cm
12. Pg. 34 - *Brand New Aura*, Google Art Project installation view, 2013
13. Pg. 64 - Google Plus Canada Home Page, April 3, 2013
14. Pg. 64 - Google Art Project Twitter Feed, April 3, 2013
15. Pg. 65 - Canadian Art Online “Canada’s Presence Expands On Google Art Project,” March 26, 2013

16. Pg. 67 - *Brand New Aura*, Google Art Project, artwork detail pages, 2013
17. Pg. 68 - *Brand New Aura*, Google Art Project, artwork detail pages, 2013
18. Pg. 69 - *Brand New Aura*, Google Art Project, artwork detail pages, 2013

Brand New Aura for the Museum



Figure 1. 9 Eyes of Google Streetview, 9 Rua Pereira da Costa, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil, 2010

The Internet has brought about a universal equality of data, and alongside mobile devices and massive databases, the ability for humans to share and copy images has never been greater. Data is collected with minimal effort, satisfying the needs of contemporary computer society.¹ This shift has, however, further reduced the distance between the observer and the observed, bringing with it the destruction of the auratic.² *Brand New Aura* is an online contemporary art exhibition that activates a digital museum archive by presenting commissioned works of art, by Montréal-based artist Jon Rafman, which operate within the realm of the auratic.

¹ Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, (Cambridge: MA and London: England, MIT Press, 2001), 172.

² Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 171.

Rafman is an artist, filmmaker, and essayist, whose work explores digital interfaces such as *Google Streetview*, *Second Life* and video games.³ He has received international acclaim for his series, *9-Eyes of Google Streetview*, an ongoing collection of images captured by the artist who scours recently uploaded areas on *Google Streetview*. Rafman selects what he would regard as chilling, sublime, humorous and haunting images. This is in part due to the fact that the Google car, when in motion, constantly takes pictures with its roof-mounted cameras, catching and storing random everyday actions of mostly unaware members of the public.

Described as a “pro surfer”⁴ and a “digital flâneur”⁵ Rafman’s practice is driven by his ability to interact with and exploit the many facets of the Internet thereby making the Internet the tool or catalyst for the work.⁶ The digital flâneur is not a pedestrian walking down the street, but a computer user armed with algorithms. Rafman utilizes the expansive world on the Internet to expand the limits of human vision.⁷ He develops new structures

³ See <http://jonrafman.com/> for more information on the artist’s projects.

⁴ “Interview with Guthrie Lonergan”, Thomas Beard, 2008
<http://rhizome.org/editorial/2008/mar/26/interview-with-guthrie-lonergan/>

⁵ This is a term I coined that relates to French theorists, Charles Baudelaire, Henri Lefebvre and Georges Perec who were renowned for their theory of the ‘everyday’. Rafman is a flâneur, but his everyday exists online in a digital environment.

⁶ Marisa Olson, “*Lost Not Found: The Circulation of Images in Digital Visual Culture*”, in *Words Without Pictures*. ed. Klein, Alex (Los Angeles: Aperture/LACMA, 2008), 274-275.

⁷ When describing Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera* Manovich discusses the systematic positioning of the camera and the weaving together a number of images in time and space. See: Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, xxx.

through new ways of thinking and working; creating alternative visualizations in a world wrapped in imagery.⁸

The exhibition, *Brand New Aura* (a collaboration with the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) and the Google corporation) expands on Rafman's practice of trolling Internet-based databases. The framework for the exhibition stemmed from a conversation I had with Rafman in April 2012. We discussed the newly launched *Google Art Project (GAP)*, a free online archive that allows users with Internet access to peruse and 'collect'⁹ art and artifacts within a virtual environment. The AGO joined *GAP* in April 2012. *GAP* is a social network-meets-educational platform that uses a combination of various Google technologies alongside specialized information from museum partners. Users can explore over 35,000 works of art in ultra-high resolution, where there exists the capacity for viewers to zoom in and see surface details such as brush strokes or fine engraving line work.¹⁰ The heightened digital image quality is a new technological development that would not have been attainable at the turn of the 21st century, for instance. A number of

⁸ Programs such as *Google Earth*, *Streetview*, and YouTube are digital representations of the real world, their information is being appropriated and altered by artist Jon Rafman. Anna Munster, "Welcome to Google Earth", in *Critical Digital Studies: A Reader*, eds. Arthur Kroker and Marilouise Kroker (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press 2008), 400.

⁹ Users can publicly share a collection of art that they have put together on the website. As of March 1, 2013, there are 13,170 user galleries.

¹⁰ Here the term "users" rather than "visitors" – is preferred because it suggests a more active and inclusive community and one that invites members of various publics to add their voices to museum programs. See Selma Thomas, "Introduction" in *The Digital Museum: A think Guide*, eds. Herminia Din and Phyllis Hecht (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2007), 6-7.

internationally renowned museums are taking advantage of Google's Internet museum technology where the digital reproductions bring out features of the original that are not attainable to the eye.¹¹ The reproducibility of photographs and film enables images to be enlarged or shown in slow motion, "capturing images which escape natural vision."¹²

Google's 'Museum View' is an interior museum tour that uses the same 360-degree technology seen in *Google Streetview*. Rafman attempted to use Museum View, however, the documentation was not as appealing as the images found in his *9-Eyes* series.¹³ This conversation prompted me to invite Rafman to activate the *GAP* platform in an alternative way, presenting works from his *Brand New Paint Job (BNPJ)* series within a museum collection on *GAP*.

Rafman's *BNPJ* series utilizes digital images of canonized artworks that are readily available and legally accessible online. The artworks are used as malleable sheeting textures that are then applied to various 3D models taken from *Google 3D Warehouse*. For example, *Brand New Paint Job (Van Gogh Volkswagen Bus)*, 2010 combines two Van Gogh paintings sourced

¹¹ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", In *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 220.

¹² Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", 220.

¹³ There are currently 51 museums with 'Museum View' capabilities, the majority of which show the architectural foyer of the museum. The majority of artworks hanging on the wall are blurred out due to copyright restrictions. *Google Art Project*, accessed March 2012, See: http://www.googleartproject.com/collections/?filter.collection_type=A

from the Museum of Modern Art online archive: *Portrait of the Postman* Joseph Roulin, 1889, and *The Olive Trees*, 1889. They are digitally grafted to the surface of three-dimensional virtual model, in this case, a now classic 1960s Volkswagen Bus.



Figure 2. *Brand New Paint Job (Van Gogh Volkswagen Bus)*, 2010



My curatorial proposal – which was viewed favorably by Rafman, the AGO, and Google – commissioned Rafman to create a suite of new digital artworks, connected to his *BNPJ* series. The proposal was to have Rafman manipulate images currently residing on the AGO's *GAP* web page. Rafman

was able to select from 43 artworks ranging from the first century to 2008.¹⁴ Rafman is the ideal artist to succeed in such an intervention for he is unparalleled in his ability to activate Internet image archives and is one of the most innovative emerging artists at the moment.¹⁵ It makes sense for *Brand New Aura* to partner one of Canada's leading artists with the AGO, one of Canada's foremost museums. Furthermore, the AGO is the only Canadian museum involved in *GAP*.¹⁶

Rafman created three artworks for *Brand New Aura: Brand New Paint Job (Richter Waiting Room)*, 2013, *Brand New Paint Job (Emily Carr Master Bedroom)*, 2013, and *Brand New Paint Job (Cézanne Train Car)*, 2013. Each work has been uploaded to *GAP*, with specific key words that aid in their placement within search query results and positioned strategically within the AGO's *GAP* web archive. Their existence on *GAP* and online is indefinite and potentially infinite; they will be shared, sampled, and represented on other websites, a digital original appearing on numerous screens.

The thesis will discuss the relationship between the AGO's *GAP* collection and Rafman's artworks. As well as how website-specific artworks

¹⁴ This is a relatively small number compared to the collection holdings of the AGO, which stands at nearly 80,000 works. Art Gallery of Ontario. Accessed March 2013, <http://www.ago.net/fact-sheet>, when uploading the works for *Brand New Aura* the AGO also added 54 new artworks from their Canadian collection.

¹⁵ His renowned series, *9 Eye's of Google Streetview*, placed 13th on Art Info's recent list of the "100 Most Iconic Artworks of the Last 5 Years". Rafman was also the only Canadian artist on the list. He has also had solo shows at the New Museum (New York), Seventeen Gallery (London, UK), Palais de Tokyo (Paris) and Saatchi Gallery (London, UK).

¹⁶ After the launch of *Brand New Aura* two other Canadian institutions joined *GAP*: Canada Council Art Bank in Ottawa and the Pointe-à-Cailière Museum in Montreal.

can re-auratize digital reproductions of art, and how the dissemination of images results in what David Joselit describes as a ‘buzz’.¹⁷ The use of digital technologies enables artists to introduce new forms of production.¹⁸ Rafman’s commissioned artworks subvert an archive, which until now was composed of digitized reproductions material art. *Brand New Aura* presents digital art in its original form in its ideal setting.

Brand New Aura is a curatorial intervention that operates within the visual archive platform *GAP*. A user of *GAP* is not viewing an actual artwork but documentation of the artwork. By definition art documentation is not art it merely refers to art. Art is no longer present or visible but rather absent and hidden.¹⁹ *GAP* is establishing a location for the copy, art documentation or networked object; it is an extension of the museum. The ‘networked object’ is a concept that is derived from the operation of virtual collections or documentation within a mobile or interconnected flow of culture, existing outside of and beyond the traditional concerns and contexts of a museums documentation system.²⁰ “It acts as a mediator between the museum world and public culture as it circulates between these spaces, and in various

¹⁷ This is a term proposed by David Joselit in reference to Walter Benjamin’s ‘aura’ see: David Joselit, *After Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013),16.

¹⁸ Michael Rush, *New Media in Late 20th-Century Art*, (London, UK & New York, NY: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 168.

¹⁹ Boris Groys, “Art in the Age of Biopolitics: from Artwork to Art Documentation”, in *Art Power* (Cambridge: MA and London: England, MIT Press, 2008), 63.

²⁰ Fiona Cameron and Sarah Mengler, “Complexity, Transdisciplinarity and Museum Collections Documentation: Emergent Metaphors for a Complex World”, *Journal of Material Culture* (Sage Publications, 2009), 191.

cultural, social, political and technological formations.”²¹ The networked object has increased the visibility and contextual frame of collections; however, the increased volume of users requires an increased level of accountability for the content on the digital collection archive.²²

Google has created a standard platform on which museum archives can be organized. *GAP*'s Director, Piotr Adamczyk, previously worked at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) where a fully developed online archive that is widely used, in fact in 2006, *The New York Times* published an article that noted how “3 out of Every 4 Visitors to the Met Never Make it to the Front Door.”²³ The Met's website provides a different view of the Met each day, and visitors are embracing the benefits of online museums. Although this shift had been welcomed by curatorial and collection management staff the increased workload as a result of the shift was alarming. The public response to the online collections has signaled for a shift in institutional priorities, capitalizing on the opportunities to extend the museum's reach beyond its physical institution.²⁴ “This requires institutions to ‘let go’ of a level of control and to open their documentation processes up to other types of

²¹ Cameron and Mengler, “Complexity, Transdisciplinarity and Museum Collections Documentation,” 191.

²² Cameron and Mengler, “Complexity, Transdisciplinarity and Museum Collections Documentation,” 201.

²³ Carol Vogel, “3 Out of Every 4 Visitors to the Met Never Make It to the Front Door,” *New York Times*, March 29, 2006 Section G.

²⁴ Reconceptualizing Heritage Collections, Powerhouse Museum Curatorial Focus Group (Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney, 20 March 2008).

expertise and shared interactions.”²⁵ *GAP* provides a platform for institutions to relinquish their control, allowing users to create and organize collections as they desire, a result of which provides new contextual readings of historical documentation.



²⁵ Cameron and Mengler, “Complexity, Transdisciplinarity and Museum Collections Documentation,” 203.

The Auratic Primer and Digital Processes

As Benjamin has argued, the uniqueness of a work of art is connected to tradition, authorship and location. Benjamin expresses that this tradition is alive and changeable, using the example of Ancient Greeks having veneration for the statue of Venus, whereas in the Middle Ages the same work of art was viewed as a foreboding idol. “Both of them, however,” notes Benjamin, “were equally confronted with its uniqueness, that it, its aura.”²⁶ The deterioration of aura was directly linked to the invention of photography. Benjamin equates the photographer with that of a surgeon, where the penetration of the lens diminishes the distance between themselves and the subject. The painter is paralleled with a magician who maintains a natural distance from reality, seen by virtue of the artist’s hands. New media theorist Lev Manovich continues the discussion of aura using the theories of Benjamin, who equates the loss of aura with the aforementioned camera, and Paul Virilio whose discussion of aura is pinned on the shift of media to telecommunication and telepresence. Both Benjamin and Virilio have a conceptually similar theory of how distance establishes aura and how the aforementioned technologies are collapsing physical distance, uprooting familiar patterns and altering societies perception of culture and politics. For instance, telecommunication interactions between objects happen at the speed

²⁶ Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, 223.

of light, Virilio believes this destroys the geographical grandeur that once was guaranteed by time delay between interactions.²⁷ However, Virilio's text was published in 1992, half a century after Benjamin used the example of painting being invaded by film. Virilio states that film is a continuation of our natural sight and has become part of our human nature, telecommunication and telepresence has infiltrated it.²⁸ I would hold that the mediated realities brought forward by telepresence and the Internet will soon be equated with that of video, film, and painting and will be infiltrated by a new technological advancement that diminishes distance and brings things even closer.²⁹

Since 2011 there has been a surge of mediated online galleries; *GAP*, *Art Stack*, *Art.sy* and *Artspace*. Artists are utilizing the influx of online databases and are appropriating or "pirating," as it is commonly situated alongside theft, the information that is available.³⁰ New media platforms make it easier to perform actions already present in old media, such as

²⁷ Paul Virilio, "Big Optics" in *On Justifying the Hypothetical Nature of Art and the Non-Identicality Within the Object World*, ed. Peter Weibel (Cologne, 1992), 90.

²⁸ Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 174-175.

²⁹ Manovich uses the example of real-time image instruments, which allow users to literally touch an object over a distance, thus making the object's aura more easily destructible. This technological advancement makes the act of looking at digital images much more innocent than the "aggression" of electronically enabled touch. See: Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 174-175.

³⁰ Pirating has become ubiquitous, where "'copyright' now means the right to copy anything. Rafman has been granted permission to use the Images for *Brand New Aura* as the AGO owns the copyright for each work. Gregory L. Ulmer, "The Object of Post-Criticism", in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed., Hal Foster, (New York. The New Press, 2002), 96.

reworking and recombining already existing commercially distributed elements.³¹

The *BNPJ* artworks are a montage of found data or files brought together as a “digital decoupage.” In the material and tangible realm, decoupage is defined as resurfacing existing three-dimensional forms by adhering cutouts of images or paper and using paint effects and coats of varnish on the said form.³² Rafman is not using traditional techniques or physical materials to create the surface of his images, although the outcome is inferred by this action. His method of using computer software to re-configure an image is comparable to the way in which paper is adhered to, or paint is applied to a surface, except “what before involved scissors and glue now involves simply clicking on cut and paste. Pulling elements from databases and libraries becomes the default; creating them from scratch becomes the exception.”³³ Digital imaging technology allows Rafman to transform the strata of virtual models of interior spaces that only imply their three-dimensionality.³⁴ Rafman has authority over framing, scale, contrast, transparency, saturation, perspective and texture. Importantly, he has the ability to reposition the view of the interior, highlighting particular objects or

³¹ Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 130-131.

³² “Decoupage,” Merriam-Webster, 2013.

³³ Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 130

³⁴ Programs such as Adobe Photoshop enable a user to modify an image, there are thousands of re-tooling options, the most predominant tools include: image resizing, colour balance, applying textures, brightness and contrast, cropping, and clone stamping.

obscuring details where alternate readings of the space can emerge. “With new media, ‘malleability’ becomes ‘variability’; a new media object can be modified in numerous dimensions.”³⁵ Even though he has created a new work, his methodology enables the final product to maintain an aesthetic connection to the source image.

Brand New Aura takes the recontextualization of digital museum archives a step further, Rafman appropriates artworks from the AGO collection, creating a new contemporary artwork constructed not from the artworks themselves but their documentation.³⁶ Manovich states that the rise in computer culture is correlated to the rise of the DJ, which is a demonstration of the combination of preexisting elements becoming a new artistic form.³⁷ Rafman’s artworks are capable of establishing a “brand new aura,” existing online, reimagined and repositioned, they utilize the Internet in their construction and their dissemination, drawing attention to how images are exchanged and consumed at this current moment.



³⁵ Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 134.

³⁶ Groys, “Art in the Age of Biopolitics,” 60.

³⁷ Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 134.

Brand New Paint Job in the Digital Museum

In thinking about the three works Rafman created for *Brand New Aura I* I am reminded of Baudelaire's insight "the beautiful is always strange" meaning that the unexpected has aesthetic power.³⁸ The three artworks in *Brand New Aura* are, indeed, strange. Rafman's appropriation of canonized artworks³⁹ by Paul Cézanne, Gerhard Richter and Emily Carr facilitates the creation of works that are visually familiar as well as disorienting.

Rafman's *BNPJ* artworks straddle the line between artistic sacrilege and homage; they are an ironic mash-up of high and low culture, the past and present.⁴⁰ The iconoclastic works provide contrasting perspectives for viewers. Immediate reaction to the works can be threatening, but over time the images become less outré. They are esoteric and evocative artworks that raise opposing views between the validity and virtuosity of Rafman's practice.⁴¹

Appropriated images of artworks have been cropped, repeated, stretched and modified. They are then spliced to the surface of an intricate

³⁸ Here I am indebted to the work of critic Dave Hickey. Hickey's thoughtful comments on Baudelaire are more useful in my thinking about the status of Rafman's work. See: Hickey, "Enter the Dragon: On the Vernacular of Beauty", in *The Invisible Dragon: Four Essays on Beauty* (Los Angeles, CA: Art Issues Press, 1993) 19.

³⁹ Canonized artworks refer to works of art that are renowned and recognizable, appear in the collections of major cultural institutions and appear in art historical textbooks.

⁴⁰ The term straddle has been used to suggest that there are contrasting views about Rafman's works.

⁴¹ Domenico Quaranta, *Brand New Paint Job*. Exhibition Catalogue (Brescia, Italy: FabioParis Art Gallery, 2011).

three-dimensional virtual model, resulting in something eerily familiar and untoward, a brand new artwork distinct from what it imitates.⁴² The multiple surfaces of the interiors are meticulously manipulated, making it difficult for the observer to distinguish between the artist's construction and a photograph.⁴³ And although Rafman's artworks are reproducible and can be disseminated infinitely, they are unique in relation to their surroundings on *GAP*. Rafman has made art for the Internet, whereas images of physical artworks are only representations and can hardly be counted as "Internet art".⁴⁴

This is the first time in history that any work other than those in the permanent collections of the 230 museums has been uploaded to *GAP*.⁴⁵ The insertion of Rafman's contemporary Internet art flips the interactive apparatus of *GAP*, a system where physical artworks are digitized then uploaded. The virtual museum is uniquely experiential; it is a standardized design that allows for institutional content to be viewed in a systematized, functional and interactive way, where users construct their experience.⁴⁶ The surplus of

⁴² This is not directly referencing Rafman's work but is a more general explanation of Internet-based artists and their practice of manipulation. See: Gene McHugh, *Post Internet* (Brescia, Italy: LINK Editions, 2011), 47.

⁴³ McHugh, *Post Internet*, 47.

⁴⁴ Julian Stallabrass, *Internet Art: The online Clash of Culture and Commerce* (London, UK: Tate Publishing, 2003), 9.

⁴⁵ As of the launch of the *Brand New Aura* in April 2013, 230 museums are currently participating in *GAP*, <http://www.googleartproject.com/collections/>

⁴⁶ Suhas Deshpande, Kati Gerber and Corey Timpson, "Engaged Dialogism in Virtual Space: An Exploration of Research Strategies for Virtual Museums" in *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage: A Critical Discourse*. eds. Fiona Cameron and Sarah Kenderdine (Cambridge, MA and London, England: MIT Press, 2007), 268.

visual information is narrowed by classifications. In *GAP* you can search through four main categories: collections, artists, artworks and user galleries. The non-linear capabilities of *GAP*, jumping from one collection, era, medium and theme to another is something unattainable in physical museums. The process of assembling Rafman's works within the existing *GAP* collection can be categorized in a number of alternate ways. For instance, if a user were to search for 'Paul Cézanne' Rafman's *Brand New Paint Job (Cézanne Train Car)* would appear in the search results. This is an algorithmic intervention that will fluctuate with user search queries, and Rafman's work will appear in multiple scenarios based off of keyword searches, for example: master, Emily Carr, train, bedroom, or brand new. The user-generated queries, defined as 'folksonomies', contrast the traditional museum taxonomy through their utilization of freely chosen keywords instead of the subject-based classification. The use of folksonomies results in alternative search paths and classification systems. *GAP* is still initially organized taxonomically, but because it is based off of a Google-based search engine it is open to user folksonomies.⁴⁷

Each museum has uploaded its content with curatorial consideration; I too have deliberately placed Rafman's work in relation to the AGO

⁴⁷ Users have the ability to create their own gallery, collecting artworks from various museums and making their own collection. I have also created a "User Gallery" titled *Brand New Aura* where I have amalgamated the source images and Rafman's artworks into one group. To sign in and create a user gallery one needs a Google account available through Gmail or Google Plus. As of April, 2013 there are over 16,000 user galleries.

collection.⁴⁸ Rafman's works are shown, not beside, but in close proximity to their appropriated source images. This is analogous to the physical exhibition practices at the AGO where contemporary artworks are displayed amongst the historical collections. For example, Shary Boyle's contemporary porcelain sculptures reinterpret the Giovanni Battista Foggini sculptures that they are displayed beside. Kent Monkman's *The Academy* is placed in a historic gallery dedicated to the inherent struggle of power dynamics in art; the aesthetic mimicry in the painting allows the work to blend into its adjacent colonial-era artworks. This placement allows for the contemporary artwork to subvert its surroundings, on closer inspection viewers can make the distinction between the historic and the contemporary, the critical reinterpretation and the influential original. This real-time insertion is specifically what *Brand New Aura* is attempting. Rafman's *BNPJ* works blend in with the surrounding images on *GAP*. They are not immediately identified as radical works of art. It is up to astute users to distinguish them as such. The presence of these works, once discovered, develops discourse on copyright and artistic license, as well as the digitization, dissemination and commodification of art in the 21st century.

⁴⁸ Whereas the AGO has uploaded their content in a specified arrangement, I have been able to position Rafman's artworks in ideal locations, which successfully situates the contemporary artworks within a historical context.

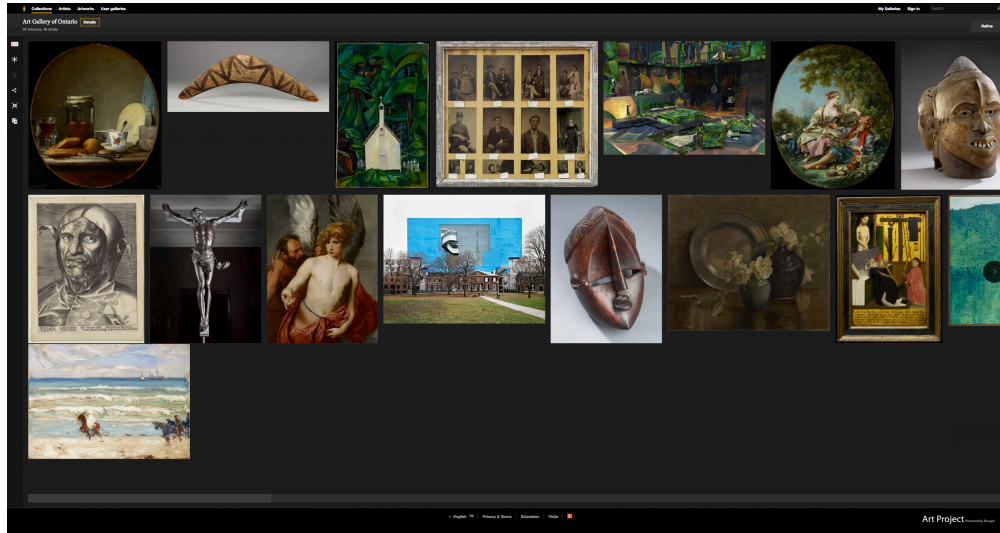


Figure 3. *Brand New Aura*, Google Art Project installation view, 2013

Brand New Aura can be defined as a curatorial intervention. Rafman's artworks become camouflaged when inserted into the conceptually rigorous and committed online museum.⁴⁹ There is a tongue-in-cheek sense of humour in Rafman's website-specific artworks; acknowledging *GAP*'s attempt to create a digital museum by inserting his own digital representations of interior spaces. This is a cheeky critique of artwork-decorated consumer products that are now synonymous with museum gift shops. Rafman plasters every surface with the source image, wrapping it around the observer, creating tension between the uselessness of the painting

⁴⁹ Andrew Paterson, "Curation, Creation, Interpretation, Imagination, Many Other Nouns and Also Their Verbs," *Curators in Context*, Accessed March 2013, http://curatorsincontext.ca/en/paterson_4.htm

and the utility of the interior. Rafman's *BNPJ* works are a commodification of imagery in the most extreme sense.⁵⁰

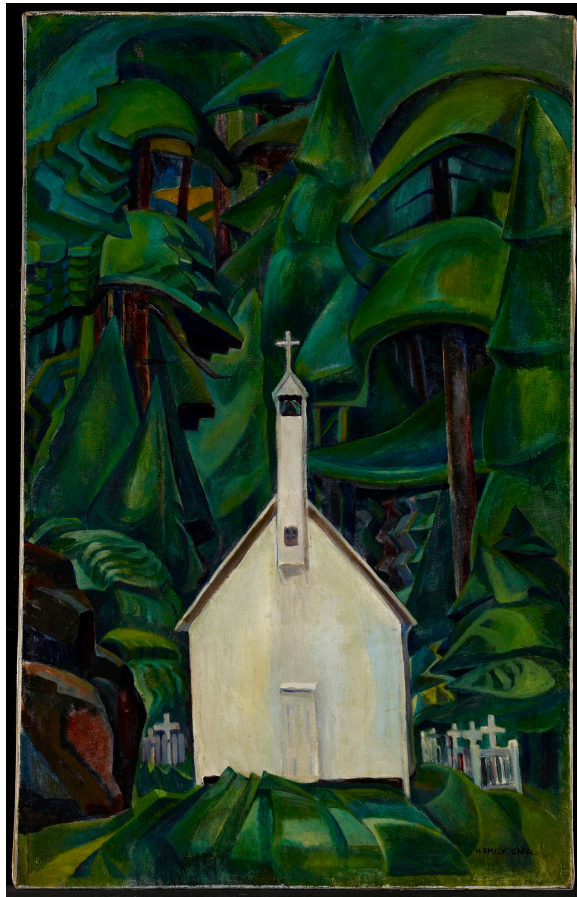


Figure 4. Emily Carr, *Indian Church*, 1929

⁵⁰ The basis for *BNPJ* was derived from the commodification of artworks on consumer goods. Rafman is imagining what the commodification would result in at its most extreme. See: Jon Rafman, Interview with *Lodown Magazine* (Berlin, 2008, No. 75), 24.



Figure 5. Emily Carr, *Kispiax Village*, 1929

For *Brand New Paint Job (Emily Carr Master Bedroom)* Rafman has appropriated two paintings by Emily Carr (1871-1945) from the AGO collection: *Kispiax Village*, painted in 1929 and *Indian Church*, painted the same year. *Indian Church* reflects Carr's pantheistic beliefs shared with indigenous peoples of British Columbia's coasts who held that rain forests possessed tremendous spiritual powers.⁵¹ *Kispiax Village* is a characteristic image from Carr's totem pole series. Due to inclement weather at the time of her excursion, these paintings were colder and darker than her previous works, that were influenced by the colour palette of the Fauves, an influence

⁵¹ When discussing a reproduction of a Cézanne landscape, Carr criticized the piece because it was not full of spirit. See: Ann Davis, *The Logic of Ecstasy* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 55.

she received from the time she spent in France in the early 20th century. In the totem pole series Carr tightly framed the pole figures, placing the viewers in extreme proximity to the objects.⁵² With Rafman's adroit use of Carr's images, the two works are digitally affixed to the interior of a master bedroom. Rafman has juxtaposed Carr's paintings with French moderne architecture. Surrounding the interior of the modernist bedroom is a towering wall of totem poles, mirrored by the architectural supports of the room. Here it is as if the artwork is structurally integral to the home. The vaulted windowless backdrop and the highly stylized angular designs of the bed, chairs and lamp present in *Brand New Paint Job (Emily Carr Master Bedroom)*, are echoed in Carr's modernist painting style.⁵³

⁵² Davis, *The Logic of Ecstasy*, 49-50.

⁵³ Rafman's modernist interior links Carr to another influential subject in her work, the French modernist style, Fauvism. Carr spent fifteen months in France between 1910 and 1912, where she began to experiment with a variety of stylistic and technical trends in painting, and the trip would prove to be a turning point in her artistic production. See: Johanne Lamoureux, "French Modernity of Emily Carr" in *Emily Carr : New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon*. curators: Charles C. Hill, Johanne Lamoureux, Ian M. Thom (Ottawa, ON: National Gallery of Canada, 2006), 44.



Figure 6. Jon Rafman, *Brand New Paint Job (Emily Carr Master Bedroom)*, 2013, digital image

Rafman utilizes first person perspective to draw attention to particular elements of the room. He has meticulously considered each detail. Vases, telephones and books are placed in propinquity to the position of the viewer. Multiple surfaces, from the bed to the carpet to the books to the plants, emulate textures of marble, fabric, glass and chromed metal. Cracks and bare canvas peek through on the crossbeams and walls of the bedroom, which refers back to the materiality of the original oil painting. Two other images of works by Emily Carr are placed on the second floor of the room, *Thunderbird*, painted in 1942, and *Potlatch Welcome*, painted circa 1928. Neither are included on the *GAP* website, but they are part of the AGO's

permanent collection. Their inclusion is a possible indication of their future archival home or legal battles over copyright infringement.

On the *GAP* website *Brand New Paint Job (Emily Carr Master Bedroom)* is placed in closer relation to *Indian Church* than its other source image. The positioning of Rafman's work furthers the narratives brought forth by the aforementioned mash-up. *Brand New Paint Job (Emily Carr Master Bedroom)* is placed amongst a constellation of other artworks, notably Gian Lorenzo Bernini's bronze sculpture *The Crucified Christ (Corpus)* c. 1650, *The Mass of St. Gregory*, (c. 1460-1465) by Simon Marmion and Edward Burtynsky's photograph *Art Gallery of Ontario: Toronto; View from Grange Park*, (November 26 2008). Visual and conceptual details in Rafman's works are heightened by their spatial relationship to the surrounding images on the *AGO GAP* website. An inverted church steeple on a vase located on the left hand side of Rafman's work, is the only crucifix present in the image. It is a heretical overturn of the spirituality depicted in *Indian Church* and the religious motifs of Bernini's bronze and Marmion's painting, which depicts the interior of a church where two members of the clergy are receiving the Eucharist. The occupants in Marmion's interior activate the setting; this is contrasted by Rafman's empty bedroom, which is not immediately seen as being habitable. Traces of human presence lead the viewer to believe that Rafman's overwhelmingly dense green world of the costal rainforest is inhabited: books stacked on the floor next to a chair and a

single drawer beside the bed is ajar. Such details suggest that the room has an occupant. And indeed, such is not unlike Carr's oeuvre, which was distinguished by the absence of human figures, deciding to engage solely with the idols of the West coast indigenous peoples existence. The emphasis of indigenous spiritual idols in Carr's paintings is tied to her conception of religion and nature. By juxtaposing luxurious natural growth and an austere church, Carr develops tension between two venerable religious traditions.⁵⁴ The Burtynsky photograph shows architect Frank Gehry's transformed AGO, a portentous blue aluminum clad rectangle emerging from the historic brick buildings of Grange Park Rafman's master bedroom is, correspondingly, built atop historic supports.

The architectural elements present in *Brand New Paint Job (Emily Carr Master Bedroom)* resemble the interior designs that were prominently seen at The Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, held in Paris in 1925. The exhibition played a central role in the development of European colonial styles, which were influenced by African tribal art and Japanese lacquer-work.⁵⁵ The luxurious, mysterious and inviting style of Rafman's rendering is for example, akin to the work of Eileen Gray, a self-taught Irish-born moderne designer based in France known for the

⁵⁴ Art Gallery of Ontario. *Masterpieces from the Art Gallery of Ontario* (Toronto, ON: Key Porter Books, 1987), 10.

⁵⁵ The style is also seen in Pablo Picasso's iconic *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (1911). See: Patricia Bayer, *Art Deco Interiors: Decoration and Design Classics of the 1920s and 1930s*. (London, UK: Thames and Hudson, 1990), 7.

incorporation of striking, at times peculiar and eccentric motifs that managed to simultaneously evoke tribal and futuristic fantasies.⁵⁶ Indeed, Rafman's creation purposefully references the aesthetic of early French modernity and the marriage of the streamline forms of the architecture and the objects with the evocative wildness of the forest scenes operates as a suggestive re-enactment of the contentious questions of the relationship between notions of the west and the problematic "other."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Bayer, *Art Deco Interiors*, 59.

⁵⁷ One of the most analogous historical examples of interior design that I had come across was, *Les Palmiers*, 1936, by Jean Dunand. Built for the apartment of Madame Colette Aboucaya, the décor was a combination of rose-pink, silver and black lacquered panels in a Cubistic stylization that imitated a motif of palm trees. The lacquered panels create a unique and evocative moderne environment, which resonates with Rafman's contemporary interior. See Félix Marcilhac, *Jean Dunand: His Life and Works* (London, UK: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 326.



Figure 7. Jon Rafman, *Brand New Paint Job (Cézanne Train Car)*, 2013, digital image

The spectral motifs present in *Brand New Paint Job (Emily Carr Master Bedroom)*, are maintained in *Brand New Paint Job (Cézanne Train Car)*, where Rafman has applied Paul Cézanne's (1839-1907) *Interior of a Forest*, painted between 1880-1890, to the interior of a passenger car. The result is a shadowy and mysterious composition, a mash up of nature and technology. With the presence of handrails, and small multi-directional seating, the car is used for subway commuters. But the car's purpose is futile, a cavernous train car with no persons onboard. It is unknown if this carriage now overgrown with vegetation is unoccupied or inexplicably abandoned. Rafman recreates the illusion of expansive interior space that is present in Cézanne's original. Rafman's example is, however, darker. The

light permeating through the windows alludes the viewer to believe that the Cézanne version is just outside and can be viewed though the pane.



Figure 8. Paul Cézanne's *Interior of a Forest*, 1880-1890

Cézanne's brushstrokes successfully weave together elements of the forest into a unified but flattened visual space, deconstructing the traditions of representational painting in order to create the illusion of three dimensions on a two-dimensional surface."⁵⁸ In his essay *Cézanne's Doubt*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggests that Cézanne wanted to find the object within the atmosphere. Noting that Cézanne does not break the tone and that he uses a "progression of chromatic nuances," which give both objects

⁵⁸ James M. Carpenter, "Cézanne and Tradition," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (New York, NY: College Art Association, 1951), 174 accessed April, 2013 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3047357>

colour priority and form and light. Merleau-Ponty explains how the work “seems subtly illuminated from within... and the result is an impression of solidity and material substance.”⁵⁹ Accordingly, Rafman’s use of a train car interior is an appropriate counter balance to Cézanne’s rhythmic and chromatic forest. On each seat, dividing panel and doorway the same section of the painting is used, creating a unified and repetitive setting. It is as if a textile or wallpaper manufacturer has produced massive quantities of Cézanne-esque surface material.

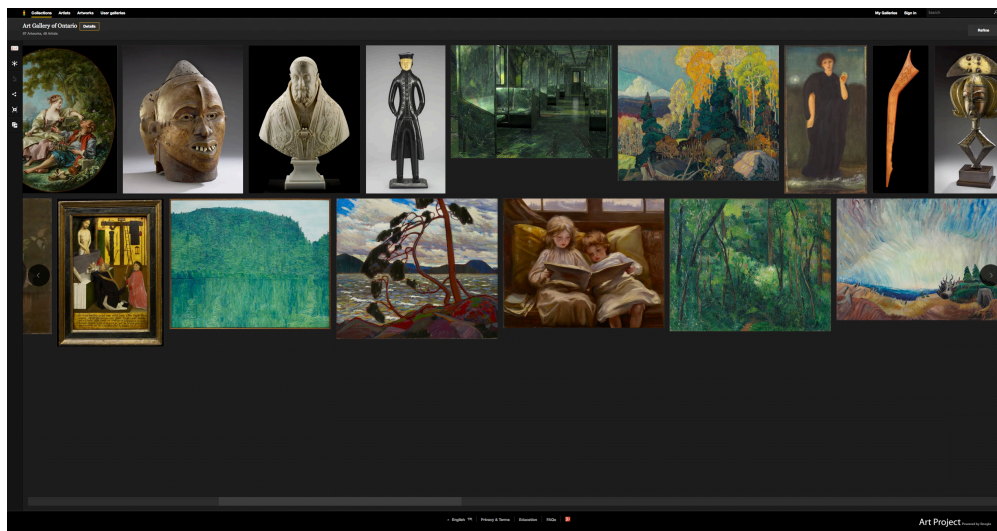


Figure 9. *Brand New Aura*, Google Art Project installation view, 2013

In light of Rafman’s deliberate juxtaposition of form and content, I positioned *Brand New Paint Job (Cézanne Train Car)* in relation to the

⁵⁹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Cézanne’s Doubt” in *Sense and Non-Sense* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 12.

section of works that present modes of transportation, from horses to airplanes, as well as evidence of the impact colonization had on indigenous art practices, the train being the technological tool that enabled Europeans to occupy Canada's vast landscape. Directly to the left is a mid-19th century *Sea Captain Figure* originating from the Haida people of the Haida Gwaii in British Columbia, Canada. The work is carved from argillite, a type of black slate composed of clay, carbon and water and ivory.⁶⁰ The work depicts a sea captain, creating a link to the colonization of Western Canada and the implications of technological innovations on indigenous Haida art.

Alongside *Sea Captain Figure* is a photograph by Alexander Henderson, *Tobogganing* c. 1873. The photograph depicts two men and a woman riding a toboggan down a hill. They are, however, not in motion. For the viewer of the AGO website, the proximity of these temporally distant images might raise the idea of a visual coincidence: Rafman's empty train car; a motionless toboggan, vehicles frozen in time. Appropriately distanced from the references of land and sea transportation is a photographic portrait *Queen of the Air* (1928-1938), by Fritz Eschen, whose subject is world famous pilot Elli Beinhorn.

The purposeful linkage between train, boat and air travel is also connected to technological innovations that defined industrialization and,

⁶⁰ Carol Ventura, "Haida Argillite Carving" in *Ornament* (Summer 2003, Vol. 26 Issue 4), p22-23.

resultantly, influenced Impressionism. Charles Baudelaire was a catalyst for the Impressionist painting movement. He called for a modern approach to “seeing and representing the visual world.” This required artists to break from techniques of the past to allow for their art to comment on the present. This also stemmed from the invention of photography, which “freed the hand of the most important artistic functions” and brought with it a new pictorial process.⁶¹

Cézanne and the Impressionists were influenced by Baudelaire’s ideas of modernism. Their optically active paintings represented a fleeting glimpse of the everyday. Rafman is executing the same principle except his everyday is the Internet. Rafman is aware of the emergence of technological mediation and defines his practice as “Post-Internet”, a term coined by artist and critic Marisa Olson in 2008. The theory is based on being aware of one’s presence on the Internet and how its use influences one’s decisions. Rafman accentuates the viewer’s awareness by placing no human figures in the works; allowing the viewer become aware of their presence in the mediated setting.

⁶¹ Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, 219.



Figure 10. Jon Rafman, *Brand New Paint Job (Richter Waiting Room)*, 2013, digital image

The awareness of one's presence in Rafman's *BNPJ* s is sustained in *Brand New Paint Job (Richter Waiting Room)*, which combines Gerhard Richter's *Helga Matura*, painted in 1966, with a three-dimensional rendering of a waiting room.



Figure 11. Gerhard Richter, *Helga Matura*, 1966

Richter's *Helga Matura*, is a painting of a snapshot. "A snapshot of a person in a moment of private life." Christina Ritchie writes that an otherwise private picture has become newsworthy somehow, leading to the image of Helga Matura to be published.⁶² The artist found the image; it had been copied from an original photograph, reproduced in a newspaper and

⁶² Christina Ritchie, "Gerhard Richter: Helga Matura", in *Collection in Focus Number Seven, 1992-93* (Toronto, ON: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1992), 4.

disseminated via the press. The selection was more or less a “public” image.⁶³

Rafman’s appropriation is not unlike Richter’s. Rafman copies an original artwork that has been digitized at the choice of the museum or artist and disseminated online. In an interview with author and critic Irmeline Lebeer, Richter stated that the found images gave him a different perception, one disconnected from traditional criteria of art making. “The photograph did not have any style, no concept, no judgment,” Richter explained. “It rescued me,” he said, “it had nothing at all, it was pure image.”⁶⁴

Rafman’s work expands upon Richter’s recontextualization of found imagery by co-opting what exists in abundance and recontextualizing everyday images. Their appropriation techniques are akin to a Duchampian ready-made and become unique to each artist through the use of, in Richter’s case painterly style, and in Rafman’s the combination of a two-dimensional image and a three-dimensional virtual model.

The three-dimensional form in Rafman’s aforementioned *BNPJ* is some type of ante-chamber or waiting room. Waiting rooms are transitional spaces, places (perhaps non-places), between points A and B, where one waits in a state of limbo en-route to a destination. Rafman situates the viewer in the position of a person occupying one of the waiting room chairs. The sterile

⁶³ Ritchie, “Gerhard Richter,” 3.

⁶⁴ B.H.D Buchloh, Interview with Irmeline Lebeer. Cited in “Formalism and Historicity - Changing Concepts in American and European Art Since 1945” in *Europe in the Seventies: Aspects of Recent Art*. (Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago, 1977), 108.

room is eerily devoid of human presence, except for Helga Matura. Her face sensuously gazes outward, toward the seated viewer.

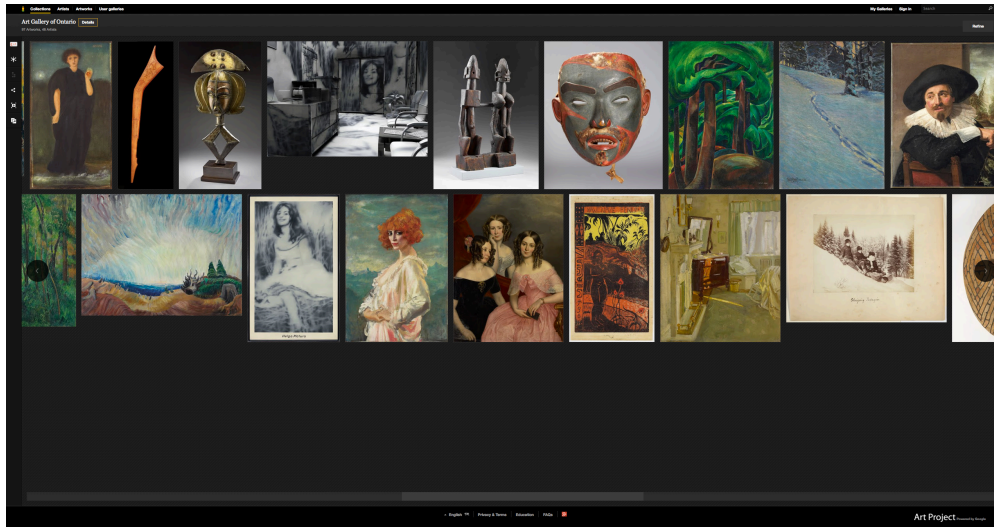


Figure 12. *Brand New Aura*, Google Art Project installation view, 2013

The presence of the gaze also informed the placement of *Brand New Paint Job (Richter Waiting Room)*, which is installed amongst a grouping of portraits that exemplify the presence of ‘the gaze’. In close proximity is a painting by George Theodore Berthon titled *The Three Robinson Sisters*, from 1846, and *The Marchesa Casati*, painted in 1919 by Augustus Edwin John. *The Three Robinson Sisters* was painted to commemorate the marriage of the two of the three daughters, who are both emphasized by their direct gaze in the position of the viewer.⁶⁵ *The Marchesa Casati* is a vivid and

⁶⁵ Art Gallery of Ontario, *Google Art Project* accessed March 2013:
<http://www.googleartproject.com/collection/art-gallery-of-ontario/artwork/the-three-robinson-sisters-george-theodore-berthon/412130/details/>

provocative portrait with a hazy background of a distant mountain terrain. Richter's background in *Helga Matura* is a blur of thick grass-like vegetation. Both have a seductive gaze and mysterious smile alluding to Leonardo's iconic *Mona Lisa* (1503-1519).⁶⁶ In *Brand New Paint Job (Richter Waiting Room)* Matura's face appears on the front of a built in wardrobe. Her gaze is interrupted by a hard-edged seam on the doors. It is as if one could simply open the closet to find the source of the image's publication.

The outside environment is de-emphasized and replaced with an interior in *Brand New Paint Job (Richter Waiting Room)*, providing new narratives in Rafman's composition. There are two doors facing each other one to the right and one to the left. It is unclear how the viewer got there, or who will emerge. The viewer becomes isolated within the scene. The colour and texture of Richter's painting emulates marble, creating a tomb or a morgue-like setting, cold but opulent. The significance of the space remains unexplained.

A *Reliquary Guardian Figure* made by the Kota peoples of Gabon, Africa in late 18th or early 19th century is placed in relation to *Brand New Paint Job (Richter Waiting Room)*. As the AGO website explains, "The Kota artists covered the surface with brilliant sheets of brass and copper to

⁶⁶ AGO, *GAP*, <http://www.googleartproject.com/collection/art-gallery-of-ontario/artwork/the-marchesa-casati-augustus-edwin-john/412132/details/>

encourage the interaction between the dead and the living.”⁶⁷ The symbolism of death present in Rafman’s waiting room is rooted in the origin of the original image Richter appropriated. Helga Matura was murdered on 27 January, 1966. Headlines in Frankfurt newspapers read, “Death of the Courtesan” and “The Girl Nobody Cries For”, as she was known as the most successful luxury prostitute.⁶⁸ No convictions were made, nor was anyone even accused of the crime. A caption, which appeared below her portrait in the newspaper, read “Murdered Courtesan - Helga Matura.” Richter edited the caption from the original newspaper clipping only referencing her name.

In Rafman’s version, Helga Matura’s name is repeated on two magazines or pamphlets that are placed on a side table. Each is different in size but adorned with the same angular cropped text on their covers. The text is disconcertingly aligned in the correct reading position for the viewer. Perhaps files holding the evidence to the 1966 murder, housing police reports, and mug shots of the accused. Are we waiting for the unidentified killer to emerge? Or are we accused of some undisclosed crime and now await a consultation with a lawyer? Or possibly we are customers anticipating a specified courtesan? And the publications contain a selection of escorts, a menu of high-class offerings of which the selection is poised to emerge from one door and carry on with their client out the other.

⁶⁷ AGO, *GAP*, <http://www.googleartproject.com/collection/art-gallery-of-ontario/artwork/reliquary-guardian-figure-kota-peoples-gabon-africa/407258/details/>

⁶⁸ Ritchie, “Gerhard Richter,” 6.

Rafman's *Brand New Paint Job (Richter Waiting Room)* is a calculated space with imaginative inference that depicts the fragility of life and the transience of vanity; a snapshot of a murdered woman, her once glowing smile presented within a lifeless, cold interior of a waiting room.



The Auratization of the Digital

In “The Materiality of Virtual Technologies,” Andrea Witcomb discusses the impact that multimedia technologies are having on museums. There is a perceived difference or series of oppositions between the virtual, which is seen as temporary, immediate, popular, democratic and surface, and the material world, which carries weight, evidence, knowledge, authority, the passage of time and aura. This preconception positions the virtual as opposite of the real.⁶⁹ Additionally, the emergence of multimedia technologies is seen either as a threat to cultural practices of a museum or as an opportunity for reinvention or survival in the twenty-first century:

For those who see it as a threat, the implications are a loss of aura and institutional authority, the loss of the ability to distinguish between the real and the copy, the death of the object, and the reduction of knowledge to information. For those who interpret it as a positive move, such losses are precisely what enable new democratic associations to emerge around museums. For them, the loss of institutional authority equates with the need for curators to become facilitators rather than figures of authority, an openness to popular culture, the recognition of multiple meanings, and the extension of the media sphere into the space of the museum.⁷⁰

Furthermore, the shift from the analog to the digital sees the technological replacing the seemingly tangible, the “black box” replacing the sited “white

⁶⁹ Andrea Witcomb, “The Materiality of Virtual Technologies: A new Approach to Thinking about the Impact of Multimedia in Museums”, in *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage: A Critical Discourse*. eds. Fiona Cameron and Sarah Kenderdine (Cambridge, MA and London, England: MIT Press, 2007), 35.

⁷⁰ Witcomb, “The Materiality of Virtual Technologies,” 35.

cube” and the image replacing the object as the central concern of artistic production and analysis.⁷¹ The recent rise of visual studies in academia is symptomatic of the new preeminence of the image.⁷² Rafman’s artworks activate the gap between the white cube and the black box by capitalizing on the variability of a digital museum and inserting an original auratic digital artwork.

Technological developments from companies like Google, Facebook, Flickr and Twitter have increased exponentially our ability to view and collect digital images.⁷³ For a modern Internet-connected society where the proliferation and speed at which images travel has never been greater, access to image and video databases is now quotidian.⁷⁴ Benjamin’s critique of photography was that it “undermined the uniqueness, the one-time-only ‘aura’ of the masterpiece by allowing for the mass reproduction of images.”⁷⁵ This result has evolved from the commodification of imagery, where

⁷¹ Hal Foster, “Contemporary Extracts”, response from Alex Alberro, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/contemporary-extracts/> 2010, Accessed March 2013.

⁷² Foster, “Contemporary Extracts.”

⁷³ A report states that 300 million photos are uploaded to Facebook daily, see Donna Tam, Accessed March 2013., “Facebook processes more than 500 TB of data daily” CNET, August 2012: http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023_3-57498531-93/facebook-processes-more-than-500-tb-of-data-daily/, a similar report states that there are 500 million tweets per day, see Daniel Terdiman, “Twitter hits half a billion tweets a day”, October 2012, Accessed March 2013. http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023_3-57541566-93/report-twitter-hits-half-a-billion-tweets-a-day/

⁷⁴ James Gleick, *The Information: A history; a Theory; a Flood*. (New York: Pantheon, 2011).

⁷⁵ Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 131.

artworks are mechanically reproduced in order to adorn objects like coffee mugs, umbrellas and mouse-pads.

The assumption that mechanical reproduction constitutes an absolute loss, and that commodification is the worst possible fate for cultural content is one of the most insidious aspects of Benjamin's critique.⁷⁶ The copious copies found online have created a new predicament. The stored and accessible copies are not for sale; rather the images are transformed from aesthetic objects into a coded language of communication, or data, and made visible through the aforementioned applications. As Jeff Malpas explains, "these technologies have, to a great extent, severed the need for any direct connection with the uniquely present object – the artifact, the site, the work."⁷⁷ This transformation has expanded so quickly that our ability to communicate using only images (or their data) is keeping pace with or even surpassing speech.⁷⁸ As the original artwork's formal qualities have been repositioned, through digital reproduction, a new analysis of the contemporary or newly created artwork emerges. The immaterial and non-original digitized images now have the ability of taking on the reading of the

⁷⁶ David Joselit, *After Art*, 15.

⁷⁷ Jeff Malpas, "Cultural Heritage in the age of New Media". in *New Heritage: New Media and Cultural Heritage*. eds. Yehunda E. Kalay, Thomas Kvan and Janice Affleck (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), 19-20.

⁷⁸ Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", 218. Further discussed in footnote 122, chapter 5 of Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*. I would also like to contextualize the amount of data, which is created via Internet usage. At the recent *DLD* conference in Munich, Germany it was stated the amount of data (including and beyond images) that humans create each day in 2013 is seventy times that of which currently exists in the Library of Congress.

“original”. The distinction between material and non-material is becoming somewhat artificial, as the “modern age is constantly substituting the artificial, the technically produced, and the simulated for the real.”⁷⁹ This has also allowed for the online digital copy, or networked object, to be treated as though it were tangible insofar as the engagement with the entity presumes its ontological realness. Linked by their specific sites (Uniform Resource Locator, URL, or website link) and users (Internet Protocol, IP or the user’s personal computer code), their activation is completed by concrete actions, typing, clicking and seeing.⁸⁰ Artists are culling and transforming this visual data into new artworks, which obtain a new presence and open up space for new formal and textual readings of art on the Internet. The distinction between the original and the copy challenges Benjamin’s position on the deterioration of aura, making copies out of an original by enabling the artist to make an original out of a copy.⁸¹

Benjamin argues that one thing is lacking in even the most perfect reproduction, aura—the here and now—its unique existence in a particular place.⁸² Scholar and critic David Joselit counters Benjamin’s perspective because revolutions in television, Internet, and mobile phones since the 1930s, can hardly be accounted for. As Joselit wrote, “[Benjamin’s] brilliant

⁷⁹ Groys, “Art in the Age of Biopolitics,” 64.

⁸⁰ Malpas, “Cultural Heritage in the age of New Media”, 15.

⁸¹ Groys, “Art in the Age of Biopolitics,” 63.

⁸² Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, 220.

analysis has become a roadblock.”⁸³ Aura is established through site specificity, but now that an unfathomable quantity of images are accessible on the Internet, and they are copied to multiple sites and shared, this removes the possibility for images to be ‘site specific’ in the same way an object can be.⁸⁴ There is hope for the auratic to be cultivated online, Domenico Quaranta’s theory of website-specificity, describes how art on the internet is tied to a specific place and time, defined by a URL, and activated by an IP address.⁸⁵ The combination of the site and the user establishes a connection between the viewer and the work of art—a place and time.

The technique of reproduction is, as Benjamin states, “detached from tradition” and the object’s “original use value” which is replaced by “a plurality of copies”. Instead of uniqueness, saturation has come to the forefront, the significance of being everywhere at once and is now producing value for images.⁸⁶ What matters is the flurry of data, how images are connected to social currencies like capital, real estate and politics. Overproduction is essential to an image economy.⁸⁷ Joselit’s idea of the contemporary status of aura is defined with a new onomatopoeic term, *buzz*.

⁸³ Joselit, *After Art*, 13.

⁸⁴ Joselit, *After Art*, 14.

⁸⁵ Domenico Quaranta, *In Your Computer* (Brescia, Italy: LINK Editions, 2011), 159.

⁸⁶ Joselit, *After Art*, 16.

⁸⁷ Joselit, *After Art* 56.

“Like a swarm of bees, a swarm of images makes a buzz, and like a new idea or trend, once an image achieves saturation, it has a “buzz””.⁸⁸

Brand New Aura is attempting to merge Joselit’s *buzz* and Quranta’s *aura*. The source images used in *Brand New Aura* stem from the AGO’s permanent collection. Rafman removes the copies of images from their existing site, transforms the information into a new works of art and places them back in the original site (*GAP*), allowing for both the images of the original historic artworks and Rafman’s contemporary artworks to be juxtaposed and viewed in a new context. This is an act of transforming the original artwork. Establishing a complex, yet playful system of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.⁸⁹ It is from this point that a “brand new aura” is created. Rafman’s artworks establish aura within the de-auratized online museum and become capable of forming a “buzz” by being disseminated to and activated by an infinite number of web sites.



⁸⁸ Joselit, *After Art* 16.

⁸⁹ Groys, “Art in the Age of Biopolitics,” 63

Conclusion

Rafman's artworks are entities beyond the cursed and ubiquitous appropriation of images; they compile and present us with a portrait of the Internet at this moment, ascribing new value to the source material.⁹⁰ By using the materials floating around us, he is calling attention to the Internet. Rafman strategically, connects, reacts to and organizes the influx of online data, by utilizing the apparatus of the Internet and software technologies to offer a new way of representing modern art.

The digital format, which differs from medium, is as David Joselit states a "heterogeneous and often provisional structure."⁹¹ And it is this philosophical flexibility and malleable capacity that enables Jon Rafman to explore various combinations of images and architecture in the *BNPJ* series. "Mediums are subsets of formats," Joselit notes – "the difference lies solely in scale and flexibility. Mediums are limited and limiting because they call forth singular objects and limited visual practices, such as painting or video. Mediums are analog in a digital world."⁹² Rafman uses intuition to initiate the process but in some cases the final product is not successful, so the process is started again. This is not an outright loss, as the immateriality of the digital allows for numerous perspectives and combinations to be attempted. When

⁹⁰ Olson, "Lost Not Found", 274.

⁹¹ Joselit, *After Art*, 52.

⁹² Joselit, *After Art*, 52.

the work is successful a narrative emerges, imbued in irony and humor, represented within an uncanny scene. The polysemic narratives in Rafman's artworks repositions the appropriated digital art documentation within a contemporary perspective, mashing up high-art and low-art and utilizing a viewer's familiarity with art history to underscore a broader topic of how we look at and disseminate art.

Rafman's *BNPJ* artworks are not "cited" in a postmodern fashion, but as Quaranta states, "deployed" in a purely functional manner.⁹³ For instance, the imagery and inferences of Emily Carr's geographically fixed and modernist landscapes are particularly well suited to a French moderne master bedroom. The de-saturated tone and dry brush technique of Gerhard Richter's *Helga Matura* easily evokes that of marble. And Paul Cézanne's *Interior of a Forest* lends its depth and texture to the interior of a train car, which appears as if it was mass-produced fabric used to upholster the entire setting. The artwork is subversive beyond its initial decorative gestures, analogous to Duchamp's famous attack on the canon of art seen in *L. H. O. O. Q.*, 1919. Rafman's artworks indicate a change in the viewer's relationship to the object that has been transformed.⁹⁴ In an interview published in *Lodown Magazine* Rafman responds to the validity of *BNPJ*.

⁹³ Quaranta, *Brand New Paint Job*.

⁹⁴ Chandler McWilliams and Casey Reas, *Form+Code: In Design, Art, and Architecture* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 69.

BNPJ attempts to confront paintings historic fear of becoming a decorative object. *BNPJ* begs the question has painting becoming just an exclusive wallpaper for the designer chic? The tension between the uselessness of the painting and the instrumentality of the object highlights the diminished division between art and design these days. I think more and more important to look at the world with a historical consciousness. History is “wrapped” around us at all times, even if it has been relegated to the status of surface textures or a glossy layer of paint simply applied over everything, like a paint job. Some people interpret *BNPJ* as wryly-mocking art history, but one can equally see *BNPJ* as paying genuine homage to it. When I cover a room from wall to wall with a repeating painting, the room becomes a shrine to the painting.⁹⁵

Here Rafman is acknowledging the iconoclastic nature of his work.

“Drawing a moustache on Mona Lisa is no longer a problem,”⁹⁶ but using paintings by Emily Carr to cover the interior of a bedroom, Gerhard Richter to be grafted to the surface of a desk and chairs or a Paul Cézanne painting as seat coverings in a subway car can become one.⁹⁷ Images of artworks are servicing a new artwork, presented online, an original encircled by copies.

Rafman is answering a call that “every age demands something new of its artists.”⁹⁸ He is capable of taking up the challenge of plunging into the depths of the Internet and emerging with new awareness, language and rules. The success of Rafman’s work and its ability to respond to this call is what makes it so radical, and avant-garde.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Jon Rafman, Interview with *Lodown Magazine* (Berlin, 2008, No. 75), 25.

⁹⁶ Quaranta, *Brand New Paint Job*.

⁹⁷ Quaranta, *Brand New Paint Job*.

⁹⁸ Jon Rafman, April 2, 2012, Interview with Stefan Hancherow.

⁹⁹ Quaranta, *Brand New Paint Job*. 2011

Rafman has made digital originals that have their own auratic presence, tied to a time and a place, made from something reproduced. The copy has become unique. Rafman's works of art are originals and therefore operate within the realm of the auratic. Rafman's artworks are equipped with a brand new aura.



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Brand New Aura Exhibition Report

I first came across the work of Jon Rafman in 2009 while doing research on Robert Smithson's "Monuments of Passaic New Jersey," his project *Kool-Aid Man In Second Life* was an online iteration of Smithson's practice of declaring found non-art objects as art, instead Rafman was declaring found digital non-art objects in the online game *Second Life*. In the fall of 2011, Jon Rafman participated in a visiting artist residency program through the Drawing and Painting Department at OCAD University. The residency turned out to be the catalyst for the exhibition *Brand New Aura*. While at the residency Rafman created a series of experimental test prints using a variety of paper and canvas for the printing surface on which to present alternative compositions and three-dimensional forms. The works were connected to his series *New Age Demanded (NAD)*, which are also aesthetically and conceptually linked to *Brand New Paint Job (BNPJ)*. I curated an exhibition *Jon Rafman: New Age Demanded* where the test prints and two framed finished works were exhibited at the OCADU Graduate Gallery in September of 2012.¹⁰⁰

Rafman and I met in person in Toronto in April of 2012, our discussion moved towards the newly launched *Google Art Project (GAP)*, Rafman had been thinking of doing something with the platform (related to *his 9-Eyes of*

¹⁰⁰ *Jon Rafman: New Age Demanded* Exhibition Catalogue: <http://jrnadocad.tumblr.com/>

Google Streetview project), but *GAP* was still in its infancy and the interior streetview-esque tours of galleries were not as appealing as he had hoped. I asked if he would show works from the *BNPJ* series within the *GAP* archive. His response was positive and I said I would inquire with the AGO. While drafting a proposal I found that *GAP* had an open call for “experimental projects” in the FAQ’s page:

What’s next for the Art Project?

In addition to expanding the project to more countries and Museums. We are also thinking of developing a experimental section, which will showcase how Artists are using new emerging technologies to showcase their Art. This is under development and please fill up the form below if you have some ideas for us.

I drafted a proposal and sent it to Michelle Jacques (Acting Curator of Canadian Art) at the AGO who kindly forwarded it to her colleague Jim Shedden (Project Manager of Publications and Special Projects). The project outlined that Rafman would appropriate works from the AGO’s *GAP* collection page (43 works in total at that time) and be displayed online. Jacques and Shedden agreed to take on the project, with Shedden as the lead. At our first meeting we discussed that the project could potentially go forward without AGO approval, by pirating the works from the site and launching my own *tumblr* page of Rafman’s work. My intention was to embrace institutional platforms and in doing so the project potentially gains notoriety and embeds Rafman’s artwork within a contemporary art canon.

Brand New Aura incorporated collaborative elements between Rafman and myself. I would carry out research on works from the AGO collection that Rafman was interested in appropriating, for instance Gerhard Richter's *Helga Matura* had a catalogue essay from a previous exhibition at the AGO. I also gave Rafman critical feedback on the works that were created for the project. Because the work was commissioned there was a very short timeframe between the completion of the work and the launch of the project. This made it very important to maintain clear communication between the two of us. Rafman was rarely in North America throughout the duration of project preparation, biweekly email correspondence was conducted as well as monthly Skype discussions (another testament to the importance of the Internet on the completion of *Brand New Aura*).

The collaborative efforts continued with the AGO who provided in-kind support in the form of public relations, which increased the project's outreach to include the AGO's audience of gallery goers, a selection which I would not have been able to reach without the aid of the institution. They also provided technological help and supplied images with the proper copyright approval. The copyright of all of the images currently on the AGO's *GAP* page are owned by the AGO. This meant that individual artists, foundations, or copyright holders would not need to be consulted for the use

of imagery.¹⁰¹ This enabled the AGO to allow for Rafman to appropriate the artworks without any major bureaucratic obstacles.

I contacted *GAP* representative Piotr Adamczyk and received a reply in December of 2012. Adamczyk knew of Rafman's work and was very excited about the project, stating that no one had attempted to use *GAP*'s platform within a museological perspective. We had a phone conversation on December 18th, 2012 where Adamczyk offered to send out a press release via Google Plus and provided me with the technical requirements for uploading images to the site.

A link to the *GAP*: Art Gallery of Ontario collection page exists on the AGO artmatters.ca blog archive, alongside a short curatorial essay. Each of Rafman's artworks on the *GAP* site have a 200 word didactic panel that viewers can access in the artworks "details" section. The exhibition was promoted on Twitter and disseminated online via Google Plus, Canadian Art, and OCAD U.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ This also brings forward another contentious issue of copyright legislation and artistic allowance with appropriation. While working on this project two policy shifts occurred which were influenced by the exponential growth of internet users: The Canadian Federal Government passed Bill C-11, (Statutes of Canada, Chapter 20, June 29, 2012, Bill C-11, accessed March 5, 2013: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=5697419>), which address the challenges and opportunities of the Internet by updating the rights and protections of copyright owners: The AGO implemented a policy which allows visitors to freely take photos of artworks using their mobile phones or digital cameras—sans flash.

¹⁰² <https://plus.google.com/+GoogleCanada/posts> April 3, 2013.
<http://www.canadianart.ca/news/2013/03/26/canada-google-art-project/> March 26, 2013
http://www.ocadu.ca/about_ocad/articles/headlines/20130411_shancherow_brandnewaura.htm April 11, 2013

Upon the completion of Rafman's first work of art for the project, *Brand New Paint Job (Emily Carr Master Bedroom)*, the AGO responded with a possible copyright issue that outlined a potentially problematic aspect of Rafman's work. Two images present in Rafman's work were taken from the AGO's artmatters.ca blog, Emily Carr's *Thunderbird* and *Potlatch Welcome*. Jim Shedden stated "these works are all in the public domain, so there's no real problem with that, except that *Thunderbird* is in the Thomson Collection and [the Thomson's] may very well take issue with it." I forwarded the issue to Rafman and replied by emphasizing that the inclusion of other works on the second level was important for the work. Rafman may have been making a gesture to future archival 'homes' or resting places for the AGO's art archives. There was no further discussion of the issue from the AGO.

This curatorial project exists within an established collection. This fact is important because I needed to be mindful and considerate to how Rafman's works were situated on the *GAP* site. I placed the works in relation to but not beside the appropriated work, and because the artworks are successfully camouflaged within the platform they entice a double-take on the part of the viewer. A questioning of the "original" occurs because the new artworks are created for the web and are not art documentation like their surroundings. They are the only original artworks on *GAP*. *Brand New Aura* is a curatorial intervention that helps transform a stagnant online archive into a dynamic

presentation space for contemporary art. The insertion of Rafman's works within the AGO's collection creates a dynamism that was not present on *GAP* prior to this project. Rafman's works are, however, not owned by the AGO. They are, in fact, the only works on *GAP* that are not in the permanent collection of a museum.

The placement of the work was met with some technical difficulty. Initially Rafman's works would not upload due to the use of the word "pixels" in the artworks dimensions. The *GAP* program would only recognize standard measurements such as inches or centimeters. The launch of the project was delayed in order for *GAP* programmers to alter the code to allow for their upload. The other issue that arose was that the AGO capitalized on the launch of *Brand New Aura* to upload another 50 artworks (all from their Canadian collection). Some issues arose with the uploading of the work, revealing an inherent problem with the platform. Museums must load the artworks in the order they wish for them to appear. The same drag and drop system utilized in the user galleries is not available to the institutional upload process. Thus an AGO employee manually remunerated each of the works. This process makes it difficult for the uploaded works to have a strong curatorial relationship, as all the works have different dimensions and equal spacing between each work. A more fluid system upload would allow for more curatorial control, allowing the files to be uploaded by theme, subject matter, or historical context, rather than just chronologically.

The initial outcomes of *Brand New Aura* were positive. Rafman, the AGO and *GAP* are all interested in seeing how the project can be taken further. There are also a number of collections that Rafman could infiltrate with more *Brand New Paint Jobs*. *GAP* has also suggested a possible experimental art project page where more artists could activate the platform. *Brand New Aura* has been a successful intervention into *GAP*, exploring the growth of digital museums and the ways contemporary artists can activate the archive.



Appendix A: Brand New Aura Press Release

Brand New Aura

Jon Rafman

Tuesday, April 2, 2013

Presented in partnership by: the Art Gallery of Ontario and Google Art Project

Curated by Stefan Hancherow

googleartproject.com/collection/art-gallery-of-ontario/



Jon Rafman, *Brand New Paint Job (Emily Carr Master Bedroom)*, 2013, Digital image.

Brand New Aura is an online project that activates the art database program, *Google Art Project (GAP)*, a social network-meets-educational platform where users can explore over 35 000 works of art in ultra-high resolution. In April of 2012, the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) became the first Canadian museum to participate in *GAP*. For this exhibition titled, *Brand New Aura*, Montreal-based artist Jon Rafman produced a suite of new artworks that have been uploaded to the *GAP* website and presented alongside a selection of artworks from the AGO's permanent collection.

Rafman's series, *Brand New Paint Job*, the collection of artworks at the centre of

the exhibition, straddle the line between artistic sacrilege and homage; they are an ironic mash-up of high and low culture, the past and present. Rafman appropriates artworks from the AGO's collection by cropping, repeating, stretching, modifying, and then grafting the image onto the surface of an intricate, virtual three-dimensional setting. Multiple narratives emerge from Rafman's compositions, which utilize a viewer's knowledge of art history to produce something eerily familiar, a brand new artwork distinct from what it imitates. Viewers are invited to explore the AGO's permanent collection and Jon Rafman's new works at: googleartproject.com/collection/art-gallery-of-ontario/

Jon Rafman (born 1981, Montreal, QC) is an artist, filmmaker, and essayist whose work explores the impact of technology on consciousness. He received a BA in Philosophy and Literature from McGill University (Montreal, QC) in 2004 and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (Illinois, USA) in 2008. His films and artwork have gained international attention and have been exhibited at Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome, Saatchi Gallery (London, UK), Palais de Tokyo (Paris, FR) and the New Museum (New York). Rafman's "Nine Eyes of Google Street View" has been featured in *Modern Painters*, *Frieze*, *Der Spiegel*, *Libération*, *New York Times*, and *Harper's Magazine*. Rafman's upcoming exhibitions include a solo exhibition *Zach Feuer* (New York) and *Seventeen Gallery* (London, UK).

More information of artists works at <http://jonrafman.com/>

For further information or questions regarding the exhibition, *Brand New Aura*, contact: Stefan Hancherow at brandnewaura@gmail.com

Appendix B: Jon Rafman, Google Art Project Didactic Texts

Brand New Paint Job (Emily Carr Master Bedroom)

2013

Jon Rafman

Medium: Digital Image

Credit Line: *Brand New Aura*, curated by: Stefan Hancherow, 2013

Category: Painting

Size: 9000 x 6314 pixels

Description:

Montreal-based artist Jon Rafman produced a suite of unique artworks for the exhibition, *Brand New Aura*. Rafman appropriated images from the Art Gallery of Ontario's *Google Art Project* collection. In *Brand New Paint Job (Emily Carr Master Bedroom)*, Rafman has meticulously combined two Emily Carr paintings. *Kispiax Village*, 1929, and *Indian Church*, 1929, are used as textures and then applied to various 3D models taken from *Google 3D Warehouse*. The juxtaposition results in an overwhelming interior of Canadian landscape. Jon Rafman's website-specific artworks activate the *Google Art Project*, which until now displayed only digital reproductions of material art.

Brand New Paint Job (Richter Waiting Room)

2013

Jon Rafman

Medium: Digital Image

Credit Line: *Brand New Aura*, curated by: Stefan Hancherow, 2013

Category: Painting

Size: 8333 x 5963 pixels

Description:

Jon Rafman's *Brand New Paint Job (Richter Waiting Room)* combines the image of Gerhard Richter's *Helga Matura*, 1966, with a three-dimensional rendering of a waiting room. Waiting rooms are transitional spaces, positions between points A and B, where one waits in limbo en-route to a destination. Rafman situates the viewer in the position of a person occupying one of the waiting room chairs. The sterile room is eerily devoid of human presence, except for the face of Helga Matura, whose sensuous gaze is disrupted by the seam of the closet doors she adorns. Rafman produces something eerily familiar, a brand new artwork distinct from what it imitates.

Brand New Paint Job (Cézanne Train Car)

2013

Jon Rafman

Medium: Digital Image

Credit Line: *Brand New Aura*, curated by: Stefan Hancherow, 2013

Category: Painting

Size: 5714 x 4000 pixels

Description:

In Jon Rafman's *Brand New Paint Job (Cézanne Train Car)*, Paul Cézanne's *Interior of a Forest*, 1880-1890, has been grafted to the interior of a train car. The shadowy and mysterious composition straddles the line between artistic sacrilege and homage; an ironic mash-up of nature and technology, the past and present. Rafman's use of a train car interior is an appropriate counter balance to Cézanne's rhythmic and chromatic forest. On each seat, dividing panel and doorway the same section of the painting is used, creating a unified and repetitive setting.

Appendix C: Google Plus News Feed and Exhibition Press

Figure 13. Google Plus Canada Home Page, April 3, 2013

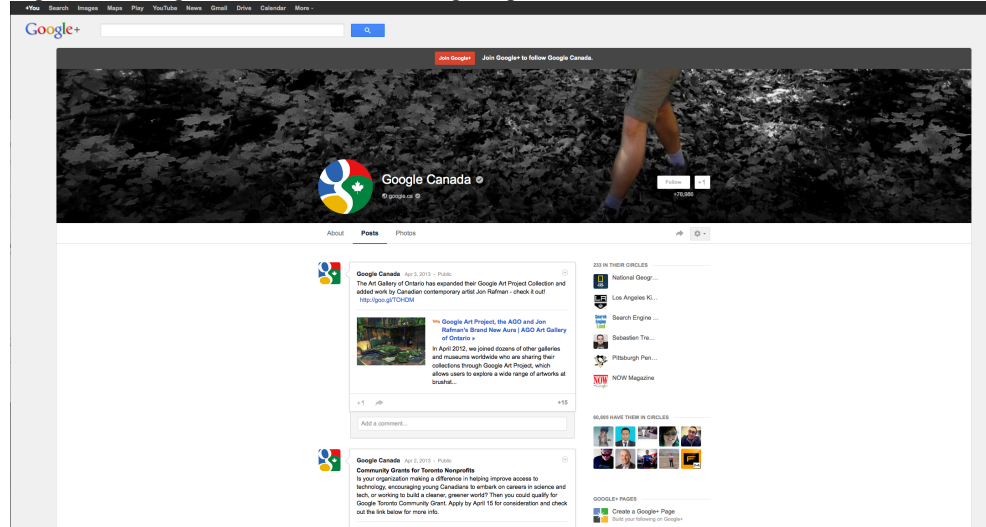


Figure 14. Google Art Project Twitter Feed, April 3, 2013

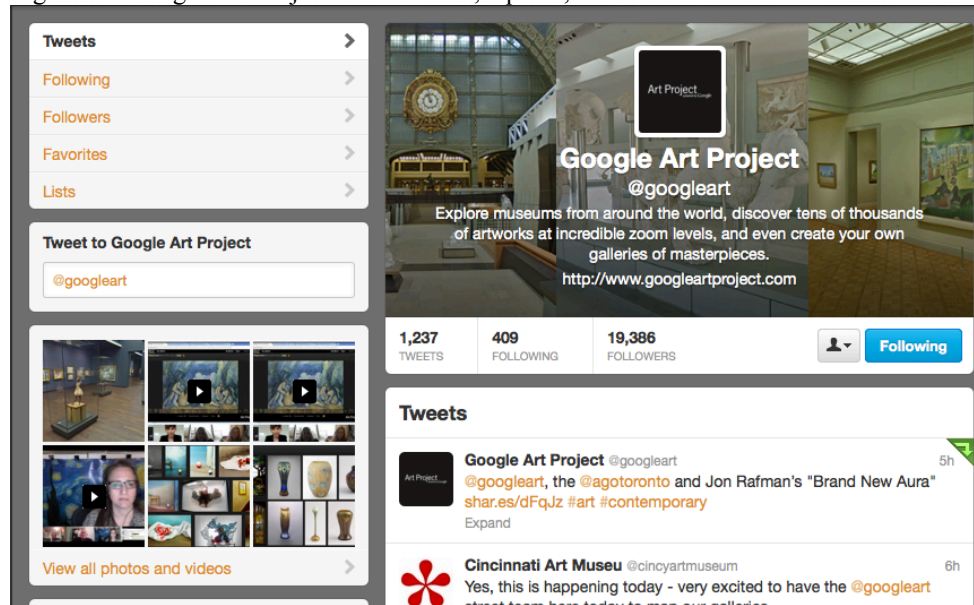




Figure 15. Canadian Art Online “Canada’s Presence Expands On Google Art Project, March 26, 2013

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HOME > NEWS > CANADA'S PRESENCE EXPANDS ON GOOGLE ART PROJECT



An image from Jon Rafman's series *Brand New Paint Job*, created for the AGO's Google Art Project page. This image manipulates a Richter from the AGO's online collection and applies it to a photo of a waiting-room interior. / photo courtesy AGO

< 2 / 6 >

NEWS

Canada's Presence Expands On Google Art Project



By Leah Sandals

POSTED: MARCH 26, 2013

Canada's presence has expanded on the [Google Art Project](#) with additions this week from the Canada Council Art Bank in Ottawa and the Pointe-à-Callière Museum in Montreal.

New uploads are also due soon from the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, which will feature an online project by [Jon Rafman](#).

Art Bank contribution surveys 40 years of Canadian art

The [Art Bank addition](#) comprises 41 artworks by 36 artists. These include Joyce Wieland's *Maple Leaf Forever II* (1972), a quilt showing a feminine mouth stating the titular phrase; Fastwürms' *Chew or Die* (1987), a tea towel printed with the image of a beaver; General Idea's *Armoury of the Miss General Idea Pavilion* (1988-91), a series of badges by the famed artist collective; Timootie Pitsoiluk's *Loadmaster* (2007), a large-scale drawing of a garbage truck; and Alain Poirerment's *Arrangement According to Nature (Madame)* (2010), an overhead view of the entire floor of a home.

The Google Art Project page gives longevity and a wider audience to a three-day 40th-anniversary exhibition the Art Bank held in September 2012. The show and its associated website featured one work from the Art Bank for each year of its existence—from 1972 to 2012.

"I think the most important thing [related to this project] is we're looking to expand our audience," said Victoria Henry, director at the Canada Council Art Bank. (According to Google, 15 million users visited the Google Art Project last year.) "It's really important that the works in the collection are seen by as many people as possible."

The Art Bank holds the nation's biggest contemporary Canadian art collection at roughly 17,000 works—larger, it says, than even the National Gallery of Canada's.

The thousands of artworks were winnowed down to 40 to "show the progression in Canadian art during our history," Henry says. "We started out with a number of feminist works; along the way we saw a rise in works by aboriginal artists and in the later years certainly much more photography."

Henry initiated the project with a visit to Google Art Project's London offices in September 2012. She says the project unfolded rather quickly except for one snag.

"The biggest challenge for us was ensuring we had appropriate photography, because most of the resolutions we have in our database are not of the standard that most people are using now," she said.

The Pointe-à-Callière Museum, which specializes in archaeology, has uploaded images of 50 artifacts and artworks, including George Munro Grant's 1880 etching of the old port of Montreal, a series of beer bottlecaps devoted to pavilions of Expo 67; and a 20th-century table jukebox.

Art Gallery of Ontario to expand offerings with Jon Rafman

The additions of the past week bring the number of Canadian institutions on the Google Art Project to a total of five.

The first Canadian institution to join the Google Art Project was the Art Gallery of Ontario, which joined in April 2012 (15 months after the initial launch of the project in February 2011) with 43 works by 38 artists. The AGO will soon be adding another 49 works by 10 artists, including Emily Carr and Tom Thomson.

Canadian artist Jon Rafman, internationally known for his series of unusual images culled from Google Street View, has also created a new series that will soon be featured on the AGO's Google Art Project page. To create *Brand New Paint Job*, Rafman appropriated works from the AGO's online collection and then cropped, repeated, stretched and modified the images before digitally projecting them onto contemporary surfaces.

(Advance images from Rafman's project can be viewed by clicking on the "Photos" icon at the top of this post.)

Unconventional, beyond-the-white-cube art also featured

In October 2012, two more Canadian institutions joined the Google Art Project: the National Ballet of Canada, which is featuring images of some of its more unconventional tutus and costumes, and Mouvement Essarts, an outdoor sculpture garden in Quebec which is showing photos of many of the large-scale installation works made on its woodland site.

Google spokesperson Wendy Bairos says that while the ballet and outdoor-installation pics may not be from conventional galleries or museums, they are of interest to the company's project.

"It's really about bringing art and different forms of art to people in order to hopefully increase knowledge and interest about different art types," Bairos said. "It could be ceramics, it could be furniture; this year from Brazil, we also included street art. Art can take many forms."

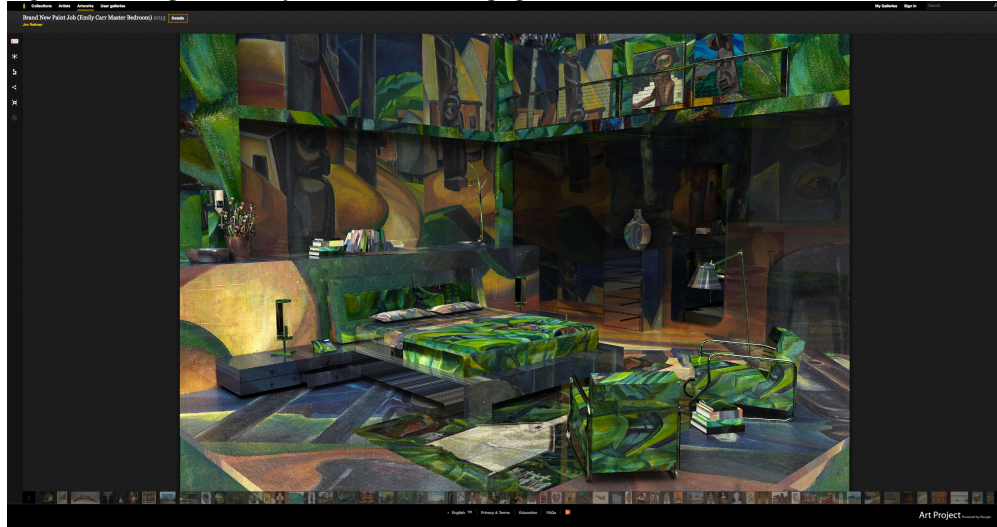
The Google Art Project features art from more than 200 institutions across 40 countries, showing more than 30,000 works in total. Other institutions involved include the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Uffizi in Florence and the National Gallery in London.

Bairos said that if other Canadian institutions are interested in participating in the project, they should complete the project's sign-up page, which is sent to the Google Cultural Institute in London. Representatives of Canadian institutions are also welcome to try connecting with relevant staff if they are in London.

Henry said that next, if time allows, she'd like to do a Google Art Project exhibition about culturally diverse artists in Canada.

Appendix D: Brand New Aura Exhibition Documentation

Figure 16. *Google Art Project* artwork detail pages



Details Map

Brand New Paint Job (Emily Carr Master Bedroom)

2013

Jon Rafman

Measurements
9000 x 6314 pixels

Credit Line
Brand New Aura, curated by: Stefan Hancherow, 2013

Medium
digital image

Description
Montreal-based artist Jon Rafman produced a suite of unique artworks for the exhibition, Brand New Aura. Rafman appropriated images from the Art Gallery of Ontario's Google Art Project collection. In Brand New Paint Job (Emily Carr Master Bedroom), Rafman has meticulously combined two Emily Carr paintings. Kispix Village, 1929, and Indian Church, 1929, are used as textures and then applied to a 3D model taken from Google 3D Warehouse. The juxtaposition results in an overwhelming interior of Canadian landscape. Jon Rafman's website-specific artworks activate the Google Art Project, which until now displayed only digital reproductions of material art.

[Less](#)

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Image Rights
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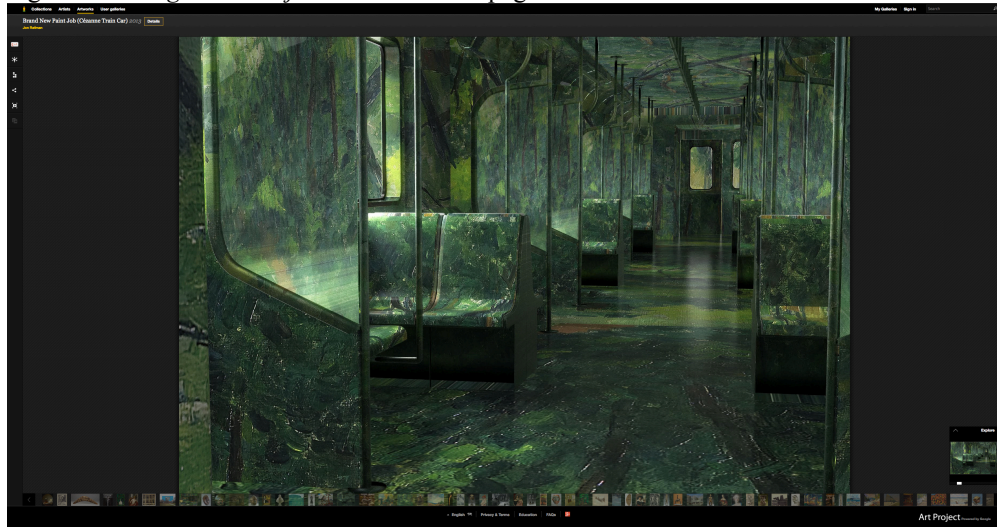
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In the Art Gallery of Ontario
By Jon Rafman

Figure 17. Google Art Project artwork detail pages



Details Map

Brand New Paint Job (Cézanne Train Car) 2013

Jon Rafman

Measurements
5714 x 4000 pixels

Credit Line
Brand New Aura, curated by: Stefan Hancherow, 2013

Medium
digital image

Description
In Jon Rafman's Brand New Paint Job (Cézanne Train Car), Paul Cézanne's Interior of a Forest, 1880-1890, has been grafted to the interior of a train car. The shadowy and mysterious composition straddles the line between artistic sacrilege and homage; an ironic mash-up of nature and technology, the past and present. Rafman's use of a train car interior is an appropriate counter balance to Cézanne's rhythmic and chromatic forest. On each seat, dividing panel and doorway the same section of the painting is used, creating a unified and repetitive setting.

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Figure 18. *Google Art Project* artwork detail pages



Details
Map

Brand New Paint Job (Richter Waiting Room)

2013

Jon Rafman

Measurements
8333 x 5963 pixels

Credit Line
Brand New Aura, curated by: Stefan Hancherow, 2013

Medium
digital image

Description
Jon Rafman's Brand New Paint Job (Richter Waiting Room) combines the image of Gerhard Richter's Helga Matura, 1966, with a three-dimensional rendering of a waiting room. Waiting rooms are transitional spaces, positions between points A and B, where one waits in limbo en-route to a destination. Rafman situates the viewer in the position of a person occupying one of the waiting room chairs. The sterile room is devoid of human presence, except for the face of Helga Matura, whose sensuous gaze is disrupted by the seam of the closet doors she adorns. Rafman produces something eerily familiar, a brand new artwork distinct from what it imitates.

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