Techno Dreaming

10 October – 9 November 2024
69 Reservoir Street, Sydney

IN CONVERSATION

In anticipation of his fifth solo exhibition with Ames Yavuz, Techno Dreaming, *André Hemer sat down with architect Gakkú Jumaniyasova to illuminate the processes and concepts behind his new body of work.*

GJ: So, the beginning of your process is always very physical. You start from things that physically exist, and take data out of them. Through photogrammetry and tools that extrapolate the volume of an object, you're making it's digital twin. It then goes through different digital processes that involve AI, computational modelling, generative modelling. And finally, it becomes a physical, painted work.

AH: It's really important to note that there is never really an end form to anything. The form is something that can be recirculated back into the process, it's cyclical. I think the big sea-change of the last ten to twenty years in artistic and visual media is that the hierarchy of the original form has really been diminished and exploded. It's the reason that I like painting; it has these basic parameters that are always known and understood. You can refer to painting as a postcard of the moment of perception of that particular idea or image.

The way I'm making at the moment is that each work has a lineage of existence from painting to painting. They are scanned and re-scanned, their 3D form is extracted from a flat image, then regenerated into a digital space. That digital space is then conceived to be a video work, which also feeds in as a reference image to more generations of paintings. That circularity of process, that hyperlinked process is super interesting to me.

GJ: Throughout our collaboration, we've been trying to unwrap the relationships within and between mediums and the place of an object in this digital world. Is that what this show is about?

AH: For me, it all relates back to painting and the act of being an artist in the world. All the data sets gathered by any AI or generative tool — whether it's your own coding or a centralised party — are artefacts that were made by people originally. So somewhere in that lineage of becoming different forms, there was human labour involved. I think for artists, it's super important to acknowledge that.

GJ: So would you say that AI is almost like a tool?

AH: I think the misconception is that AI is the creator, or can be the creator, but really it's just a tool for creators with outcomes that are reflective of them. In my process, the AI is trained only on my personal archive of images with no external inputs or influences; it creates new worlds from my own.

GJ: Interesting, would you say that in a way the works are participatory, where one participator is a machine?

AH: I think the question of autonomy in the machine is still relatively blurry. I don't think it's for better or worse; AI fundamentally is more like a form of prediction, based on a data set of what came before. But within that prediction comes accidents and newness as well. So it's a blurry line in terms of conceptualising where new creation happens.

GJ: And what AI gives you is a lot of room for that unpredictability because it very difficult to repeat.

AH: One of these tools I use refers to its 'thinking' process — which is just the algorithm working on the servers — as 'dreaming' and so I thought dreaming might be a really nice way to describe what we're talking about. The unknowingness of AI generation is like the dream state, where half the time you wake up and you don't remember what you dreamed about, or you remember a little fragment of something. You can never have the same one again and that's what art is too. You can make the same painting twenty times and there's always a difference in the outcome.

GJ: It's not repeatable and it's elusive. Do things sometimes resurface?

AH: For this show, ferns from New Zealand have crept back into the works. I took a bunch of photographs one day around the garden of my parents' home and the ferns were making these beautiful shadows that fell from the fern above onto the fern below. This calls back to two years ago when I was shooting prehistoric ferns in Sicily, and so there are things that carry on through the practice and it's possible that in some of these works there are multiplicities and echoes.

I work a lot with flowers and I'm always working with the sky, therefore not just physical material and the immediate geography of a place, but also the light source, the colour, the tone.

GJ: That's beautiful, I love that the focus of the show is also the relationships between light and shadow, because light creates space.

AH: Exactly, yes. One of the major components in Techno Dreaming is a projection and lens that illuminates the space. The frames that have been etched into the lens are based on my photography from a park close to my studio called Palais Lichtenstein in Vienna. It's has very Baroque architecture and all these beautiful tree canopies above. I was recording the movements of shadows on the ground there and they turned into a whole set of generative videos of real shadows and dreamt frames in between. A still has then been etched onto the lens and thrown across the gallery space. With this, I'm simultaneously drawing with light and shadow.

In painting that's true as well. I'm always painting light, because light is exposing the form of an object. Just like in architecture, you don't know a space until the space is lit to be able to see. You can feel your way around and you can know the space, but it's light that gives it form.

For you as an architect I guess the location of a building starts in a real place, but I would imagine more often than not the conception starts in the virtual world?

GJ: Yes, the virtual world is where the idea and the form are conceived as the primary working place. That's a big part of the creative process for architects today. We also treat form through different changes, different operations, different processes to see what happens to the volume. Sometimes when we need some creative ideas the best way to imagine it and the easiest way to see the results faster is to replicate the thing in 3D and experiment from there.

Do you think that even though there is no hierarchy in the process that authenticity is important? Because what I also felt in your work is that I can rarely feel what the main object is or what is in the focus. There is always more than just one thing.

AH: What I'm inherently interested in is the complexity between things and the merging of things. In my case, it's always been a meeting point between physical conception and digital conception, even in rudimentary ways twenty years ago. It can be expressed visually as paintings, as videos, as installation, or however it becomes an experience.

AH continued: It's this capturing of how and when you exist in the world, but also capturing the visuality of technology because it's outputted through these realms. It's ultimately a conversation between the physical stuff and then what happens when dreaming, taking it somewhere that's both familiar and unfamiliar.

GJ: I love seeing your physical paintings in real life rather than through a screen because there is just me and the painting and there is no middleman, no computer as transmitter, no filter between spectator and object.

AH: There's a slowness that happens when you're standing in a room with an object or even with a person. When something's on screen, you don't move around it, you don't see it from one side to the other. The paintings aren't static in a sense — my work is always about the relationship of a person to the object with light and shadow as a constantly changing dynamic.

The video work then encapsulates what the paintings in the physical space are doing, putting them back into digital space as an iteration, as another viewpoint, as a cinematic kind of abstraction. It's the same world, just another version of the same space.

1 September 2024 at 6:16 PM