

Press Release

Jon Rafman

Counterfeit Poast

September 16–October 29, 2022

Sprüth Magers, Berlin

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Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers are delighted to announce *Counterfeit Poast*, Jon Rafman's solo exhibition at the Berlin gallery. Recent works by the artist tap the creative potential of machine learning, continuing his longstanding practice of both applying the latest digital technologies and analyzing their impact on everyday life. Like much of Rafman's recent output, the pieces created for this show explore themes of nostalgia, youth, and false memories, as well as isolation and the alienation of individuals from society.

An immersive experience awaits visitors in the gallery's upstairs exhibition area. Stepping behind a video installation, viewers enter an octagonal, chapel-like space with custom-made vinyl wallpaper covering the floor and walls, upon which new, large-scale paintings have been hung. The creative, innovative potential of these algorithmically-generated works stems from the artist's own complex powers of imagination. Rafman's process begins with text and words; content that is subjected to a calculated, algorithmic process before it ultimately materializes as physical reality. Consumer technology guides both thresholds of this transformation: CLIP-Guided Diffusion, an image-generating software that converts the artist's text input into an image, is followed by a printing process that turns the digital image into a material object.

The video installation *Counterfeit Poast* is comprised of images created using the same algorithm as those used for the paintings. They are both part of a broader project featured on the artist's public Instagram account (@ronjafman). The images depict creatures (or rather mutations) from data garbage that reveal our complex, twenty-first century relationship to images and memories. The character studies on view are inspired by "copy-pasta" (i.e., funny or provocative blocks of text that are repeatedly copied and pasted in online forums such as Reddit or 4chan) and animated using iPhone facial recognition apps. The video also draws on established cinema films, including Chris Marker's *La Jetée* and Peter Greenaway's *The Falls*, though it transposes their formal and narrative possibilities to the emerging Web 3 era.

The artifice of this technology-mediated lens turns apparently trustworthy, recognizable motifs on their head, exposing them in ever more grotesque detail. The artist plunders the collective archives of our digital memory, altering ordinary, familiar images to create a nightmarish machine delirium. Throughout, he draws on the Mandela Effect, a phenomenon in which a large segment of the population misremembers a significant event or shares a memory of an event that never happened. Rafman's practice explores the ever-present experience of living in a world in which nothing lasts forever, but nothing is forgotten either.

Two narrative videos by Rafman, *Minor Daemon, Vol. 1* (2022) and *Punctured Sky* (2021), are featured in a parallel solo exhibition at Schinkel Pavillon.

Jon Rafman (*1981, Montreal) lives and works in Montreal and Los Angeles. Rafman's recent solo exhibitions were held at Ordet, Milan (2022), La Casa Encendida, Madrid (2021), Centraal Museum, Utrecht (2020), Fondazione Modena Arti Visive (2018), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2016), Westfälischer Kunstverein, Muenster (2016), Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal (2015) and The Zabludowicz Collection, London (2015). His works have been featured in prominent international group exhibitions, including Kunstmuseum Bonn (2021), Belgrade Biennale (2021), the 58th Venice Biennale (2019), Sharjah Biennial (2019 and 2017), the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2018), Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal (2017), K11 Art Shanghai (2017), Les Abattoirs, Toulouse (2017), Berlin Biennale 9 (2016), Manifesta Biennial for European Art 11 (2016), Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2015), Biennale de Lyon (2015) and Fridericianum, Kassel (2013).

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