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**"DIGITALIA" deconstructs
Internet intimacy**

"DIGITALIA: Intimacy in the Hyperreal" explores a hot topic of the information age. **Deborah Colton Gallery** assistant Evan J. Garza is making his curatorial debut with the group show, which explores sex, love and relationships in a technically advanced culture.

Steven Miller's "Bound" series of photographs depicts men hanging in the air or bound together by rope; the work explores the connections and disconnections between friends and strangers. Alexander Reyna's video *Beta* is an onslaught of sexual images from cartoons, video games and other media that represent the Internet's bombardment of obscene content. Sean Johnson uses video as well for his "Beard Love" series, which explores online intimacy as men rub their stubble against men they've found on the Internet.

Process the meaning of these and other works by Charles Cohen, Graham Guerra, Daniel Handal, Ray Ogar and Robert Yarber today when the show opens with a panel discussion at 2 p.m. followed by a reception from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Regular viewing is 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. Through March 1. 2500 Summer Street, Third Floor. For information, call 713-869-5151 or visit www.deborahcolton-gallery.com. Free.

— DUSTI RHODES

CUBANS REROUTE THEIR COURSE AND HEAD FOR MEXICO AND THEN NORTH TO THE U.S. BORDER
BY BRISSETTE COBB AND PATRICK KITCHEN



Deborah Colton Gallery *DIGITALIA: Intimacy in the Hyperreal*

Meant for lovers and confidants, intimacy is a function of the human condition. With all the wires and waves connecting us today, many wonder if it can survive in the face of tantalizing distractions and superficial replacements for physical and emotional contact. There is a great debate ranging across philosophy, psychology and politics, but the battles are being fought with every text message and online video. In an effort to fight the pessimistic tide of those who believe we are less able to connect with others today more than ever, *DIGITALIA* has gathered different views of our new world which address intimacy as either facile pandering or a true and deep connection.

Through the spoken word, writing and mass media communication has successively moved away from personal touch. Steven Miller channels the disconnect that successive layers of technology bring to relationships in a series of surreal photographs. Wrapping his subjects in a vacuumous black void, Miller presents everyday figures- not models or actors- as tied in knots, their heads or bodies wrapped in thick white ropes that carry connotations of bondage, enslavement and subservience while the ropes' ends trail off the edge of the image or between figures, linking them in a torpid stupor. In a denial of media's ability to carry weight, Martin Creed's *FEELINGS* is a neon sign of rigid sans-serif letters that fails to carry a hint of meaning in its content- with tongue firmly in cheek.

The march of technology has pushed into a new world with the advent of the internet, and common sense dictated that in this new evolution even less intimacy was to be found. Charles Cohen takes this assumption to its logical conclusion by manipulating pornographic images, removing the object of desire with surgical precision, and leaving only an evocative white hole where the phantom of sexual desire once stood. Taking the essential absurdity of instant gratification to its bitter end, Graham Guerra used CGI technology to create monsters out of breasts and legs to maximize the insatiable sexual desire that pornography fails to placate.

In the last decades of the Twentieth Century the theories of the hyperreal explained that we were moving so far away from intimacy that we cannot tell the difference between reality and its fake. Today we have begun to see these theories fall to pieces in the face of ever more real consequences for actions in hyperspace. Sexual encounters have a firm

place in the business of popular classified advertisement website Craigslist, and the story of one teenager driven to suicide over a mean-spirited farce on MySpace has led to calls for jail time in response to online harassment.

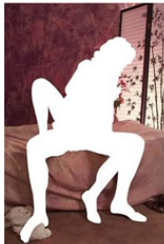
Breaking through the challenge of intimacy in the hyperreal is Sean M. Johnson's *Beard Love* video, which is a tantalizingly disturbing look at the digital age. Johnson spent months searching online for partners for his work, where he sits on a bed with an anonymous man that he contacted through the internet. In a charming reversal of the intent of pornography the men engage in slow and sensual mutual beard-rubbing; their vulnerability is a shock to viewers, torn between an innocuous reality and the charged emotional connotations. For the oversaturated industry of sex and fulfillment the work is a devastating rebuttal, tackling the ways we can be intimate through technology, transcending the pessimism of the hyperreal and discovering that we are still the same fleshy bodies that desire nothing more than the presence that intimacy brings.

-Sean Carroll

Through March 1st, 2500 Summer Street,
713.869.5151, deborahcoltongallery.com

Desire in Digital

By Marisa Olson on Friday, January 11th, 2008 at 3:52 pm.



Pornography was one of the Internet's earliest forms of content and has arguably propelled the development of online imaging and video formats. Consistently the net's most financially viable material, the heavy presence of online porn has also contributed to the social formation of desire. Despite the growth of Porn Studies as an academic field of inquiry, creative and intellectual studies of digital porn are scarce. *Digitalia: Intimacy in the Hyperreal* is a group exhibition curated by Evan J. Garza at Houston's [Deborah Colton Gallery](#) to address this gap. Artists Charles Cohen (pictured), Graham Guerra, Tracey Emin, Daniel Handal, Sean Johnson, Steven Miller, Ray Ogar, Alexander Reyna, and Robert Yarber present work drawing on the broad spectrum of online sites of desire, moving beyond the hardcore to also consider internet dating services, social networking sites, and even instant messaging applications in order to articulate the role of these technologies in constructing intimacy, and the shape that these shared connections might take. Underlying the show's organizational logic is an interest in questions of reality as they relate to the supposed intangibility of the electronic currents and pixels that comprise the source material at hand. But just as theorists have demonstrated the corporeal aspects of fantasy, the work selected for *Digitalia* ultimately points to an important sense of materiality in relation to web surfing, image downloading, and other aspects of situational voyeurism. If intimacy is about the space between people, *Digitalia* carves out a markedly poignant space for considering the libidinal realities of digital culture. The show is open January 12-March 1, 2008. - Marisa Olson

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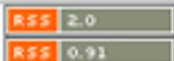
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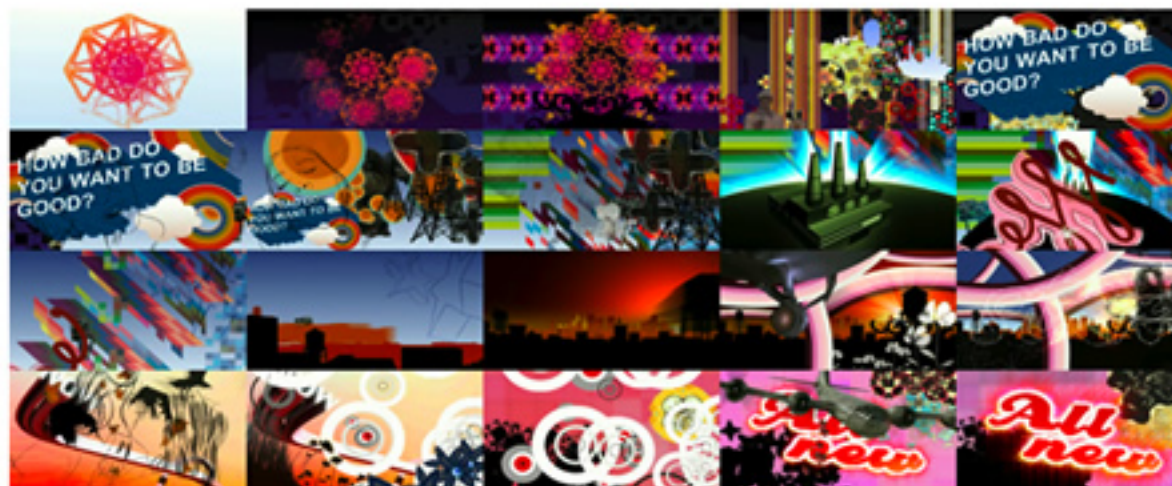
SYNDICATE



DIGITALIA: Intimacy in the Hyperreal

Written by **Perpetual Art Machine**

Monday, 14 January 2008



HD Video stills from Alexander Reyna's "Star"

Curated by Evan J. Garza

January 12th through March 1st, 2008

Opening Reception: Saturday, January 12th, 6:00 to 9:00 PM

Panel Discussion: Saturday, January 12th, 2:00 PM

Featuring : CHARLES COHEN GRAHAM GUERRA TRACEY EMIN DANIEL HANDAL SEAN JOHNSON
STEVEN MILLER RAY OGAR **ALEXANDER REYNA** ROBERT YARBER

Deborah Colton Gallery is pleased to present DIGITALIA: Intimacy in the Hyperreal, featuring a collection of artists whose work conveys new ideas about love, sex, intimacy, pornography and digital culture. The internet continues to recharacterize our definitions of physical and emotional intimacy, from online dating and networking sites like MySpace to instant messaging applications on our mobile phones. The purpose is to bring us closer without leaving our seats. DIGITALIA: Intimacy in the Hyperreal engages the new transformations that are redefining intimacy and offers viewers a look into how these new values have shaped our perception of reality, both the tangible and the intangible. In conjunction with the exhibition, the gallery is pleased to host Instant Messages, a Panel Discussion with artists Charles Cohen, Steven Miller, and curator Evan J. Garza on Saturday, January 12th at 2:00 PM.

Hyperreality refers to Jean Baudrillard's theory of the interaction between consciousness and 'reality' in a technologically advanced culture. The mind becomes unable to distinguish what is 'real' from what isn't. In Baudrillard's hyperreal land, the world we know is replaced by a copy of the world, where mankind is interested in simulated stimuli, not unlike the connections made online. Are men and women making wholesome and genuine connections with others on the internet, or are they seeking simulated relationships? Is an online friendship just as real as one made from scratch? A viewer watching pornography begins to 'live' in the non-existent world of the film, and even though it's not an accurate depiction of sex, for the viewer the reality of 'sex' becomes something non-existent, lost somewhere in the Hyperreal between reality and fantasy. The work featured in the exhibition traverses that middle ground and explores the corporeal and often intangible nature of that which we long to touch.



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“DIGITALIA: Intimacy in the Hyperreal”

Nine artists take on sex in the digital age at Deborah Colton Gallery

By **Dusti Rhodes** Thursday, Jan 10 2008

Comments A A A

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