

MEDIA RELEASE

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DIGITALIA: Intimacy in the Hyperreal

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

CHARLES COHEN MARTIN CREED GRAHAM GUERRA DANIEL HANDAL SEAN M. 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 is not. 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 believe in the non-existent world of the film, and even though it's not an honest 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.

The artists featured in *DIGITALIA: Intimacy in the Hyperreal* are a diverse group, ranging from the internationally renowned to new and emerging artists. The photographic prints in Charles Cohen's "Buff" series feature images of several environments where images of men and women in various sexual configurations have been reduced to a white silhouette, casting shadows on their surroundings, questioning the definition of intangibility, voyeurism, and closeness. Winner of the Turner Prize in 2001, Martin Creed continues his significant conceptual work in text with his featured neon piece, begging the viewer to question their associations with words, emotions, and our connections with others. Vwth influences from religious iconography. Graham Guerra uses 3-D technology and hypersexualized imagery to depict fantastic apocalyptic scenes with amalgamated male and female figures. Daniel Handal's photographic series "Female Masking Fetish" and "Real Dolls" feature the use of latex masks and life-size sex mannequins to alter our perception of what is real and what is plastic in both the images themselves and in our own culture. Sean Johnson's "Beard Love" videos explore intimacy by featuring men rubbing their beards against those of other men met on the internet, referencing the closeness associated with communicating and dating online. Steven Miller's captivating 'Bound' series feature men suspended from the air or bound to each other, by rope to symbolize the various connections and disconnections with friends, lovers, and strangers. Ray Ogar has created deconstructed pornographic images in ultra-symmetric panels and a book of sexually expressive imagery on transparent pages that stand in place of a computer screen, drawing the viewer into self-reflection. Alexander Reyna's 'BETA' video is a wild and abrasive collection of pop culture images, pornographic cartoons, and video game characters that reference the bombardment of stimuli on the internet as well as the state of American culture. And Robert Yarber's digitally created prints feature luridly colored figures hovering over plush wagons in mountainous, dream-like environments.

DIGITALIA: Intimacy in the Hyperreal is the curatorial debut of Evan J. Garza. He is the Assistant Director of Deborah Colton Gallery and has been with the gallery since 2006. He received his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Houston and has published critical works in several publications including Literal Magazine, 002 Magazine, the Free Press Houston, and Glasstire, where he is a regular contributor.

Deborah Colton Gallery is founded on being an innovative showcase for ongoing presentation and promotion of strong historical and visionary contemporary artists world-wide, whose diverse practices include painting, works on paper, sculpture, video, photography, and conceptual and future media installations. The gallery aspires to provide a forum through connecting Texas, national and international artists to make positive change.

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