

bitforms gallery

Temporary Highs

June 2 – July 31, 2016

Curated by Lindsay Howard

bitforms gallery
131 Allen Street
New York, NY 10002

Reception: Thursday, June 2, 6 – 9 PM

Gallery Hours: Wednesday – Saturday, 11 AM – 6 PM & Sunday, 12 – 6 PM

Alcohol – Ry David Bradley – Credit Cards – Chocolate – Petra Cortright – Drugs – Ex-Boyfriends – Katherine Frazer – Aiala Hernando – Anouk Kruithof – Likes, Faves, Retweets – Jonas Lund – Online Shopping – Orgasms – Hannah Perry – Pascual Sisto – Sports – Video Games – Addie Wagenknecht – Britta Walsworth – Wendy White – Work

I wrote this press release when I was on an extreme sugar high because I was anxious about posting something on social media, so I found a piece of chocolate and that lead to finding more pieces of chocolate and before I know what I'm doing, I'm standing up and sitting down and standing up and sitting down and I can't remember what I was anxious about in the first place because all I can think about is how to respond to a text from the guy I'm dating. I like being with him because he's a charming texter who makes me laugh. I open a new tab and draft an announcement for something that will probably happen, but might not happen, because I have this theory that if I write it then it'll be like *The Secret* and the "law of attraction" will draw positivity into my life. I turned off notifications on Instagram because the surprise of opening the app and seeing the orange icons pop up was more fulfilling than watching them trickle in on my home screen. I turned off notifications on Twitter because I like the idea that people could be talking to me but I wouldn't be responsible for responding until I logged in (but when am I not logged in lol). I hate the experience of mindlessly scrolling through Facebook and not recognizing a single person, but I still keep it open throughout the day. I love the sound it makes when I get a new message: it hits my ear like the jackpot sound in a slot machine, except cuter and more innocuous, or so it seems. It doesn't matter where I am or what I'm doing, if I hear that ding from Facebook Messenger, I'm on my phone two seconds later. It could be him. It could be her. It could be absolutely anything, ecstatic, tragic, or mundane, and the possibility triggers every pleasure point in my brain. I feel like I'm living inside of a video game, in which every life event represents a gold coin that can be used as a way to obtain likes, faves, and retweets. I see a pop-up ad for a porn site on my desktop and I take a screenshot of it. I double click the image and can't help but stare at the woman's face as she's being fucked. I open Google Docs to write this press release and get a few sentences in before my phone lights up with a notification. Nothing good. I turn over my phone and write:

Temporary Highs brings together artists who are exploring how the structure of the internet enables reward-seeking behavior in a compulsive cycle of (over-)sharing and consumption. The artworks operate in a space where immediate gratification is paramount, and multitasking has become a requisite social behavior. For many individuals operating online, these addictive practices have come to frame contemporary experience to such a degree that they're considered commonplace. *Temporary Highs* presents a collection of works that examine the pleasure and anxiety around these experiences, as well as the constant search for validation, understanding, and connection.

Following tested methods that have been used in casinos for decades, the curator has handcrafted a unique scent that will be distributed throughout the gallery in order to evoke feelings of wealth, power, and influence. The scent subconsciously encourages the viewer to spend more time inside the exhibition, and mirrors the ways in which social media companies use strategic design and interaction to manipulate users into becoming dependent on their platforms.

bitforms gallery

SELECTED WORKS

- *Still Lives Nos. 1 and 3* by Aiala Hernando and Addie Wagenknecht examine the still life genre from today's perspective, with traditional floral arrangements alongside a series of contemporary props, including green juice, doughnuts, chocolate, crystals, pills, and Diet Coke. The work teases out the enduring concept of the still life, while also revealing private indulgences of a privileged life.
- What if your creative output as an artist could be outsourced entirely to a computer? That's what Jonas Lund has done with *New Now 4*, a work that was developed using machine learning to train a neural network on all of his past works in order to optimize his practice and dictate what pieces he will make next. Arguably, the artificial intelligence created by the artist becomes the artist. This project speaks to the data-driven optimization of targeted marketing and the ways in which artificial intelligence seeks to understand and tap into our deepest impulses.
- Petra Cortright's video *marled_clay_cheese* features a group of Windows taskbar strippers that the artist sourced from VirtuaGirl, software that's been available since the 90s and offers thousands of freely downloadable virtual dancers. In Cortright's video, the girls are removed from their original context, and placed in front of a green screen to perform in a repetitive loop.

SPECIAL EVENTS

- Florist Britta Walsworth will present a site-specific installation that will remain on view for the first two weeks of the exhibition. As Walsworth was previously a social media consultant, the piece addresses the beauty, superficiality, and temporality of highly manicured online identities.
- Addie Wagenknecht will install a multi-tier wedding cake that she has flipped onto a pedestal. The destroyed cake, which visitors are encouraged to eat, is based on an image that the artist sourced from Pinterest. This piece represents the fantasy of the web, where images are compiled and perfected in order to convey ideal versions of ourselves. When the cake is actually produced, it falls under its own weight, and highlights the failure of translating online fantasies into reality.
- On Saturday, June 18 at 4 PM, artist Signe Pierce will stage an audio-visual performance in the gallery entitled *iDentity: a 1.0 Woman Show*. The piece explores the line between real and hyperreal selves, and how people heighten certain aspects of their personality for social media.

WEBSITE

The exhibition's website—www.temporaryhighs.net—is a continuation of the show's concept in the form of a pseudo-social network where users get points for reading the curatorial essay, viewing the works, clicking on links, scrolling, logging in, and pretty much any form of engagement. The site allows visitors to like someone else's like, comment on a like of a like, like someone's comment on a like of a like, and other recursive actions that result in additional notifications and a flurry of temporary highs. The site was designed by HAWRAF INTL, an agency founded in 2016 by Carly Ayres, Andrew Herzog, and Pedro Sanches, and in collaboration with Nicky Tesla, all of whom are alumni of the Google Creative Lab.

Founded in 2001, bitforms gallery represents established, mid-career, and emerging artists critically engaged with new technologies. Spanning the rich history of media art through its current developments, the gallery's program offers an incisive perspective on the fields of digital, internet, software-based, and new media art forms.

For images and more information on the exhibit, please visit www.bitforms.com and www.temporaryhighs.net.

For publicity requests, please contact Associate Director Kerry Doran, kerry@bitforms.com or call (212) 366-6939.