



AKSIOMA
Institute for Contemporary Art
Ljubljana

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PRESS RELEASE

Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana, presents:

Pablo Garcia

Adventures in Virtuality

Solo Exhibition

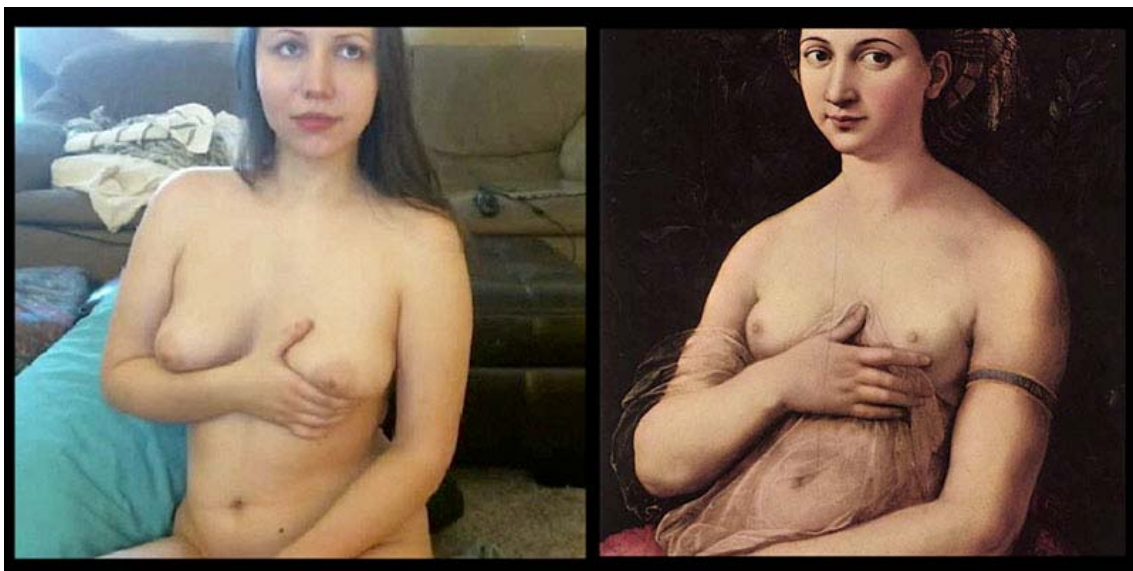
www.aksioma.org/adventures.in.virtuality

Aksioma | Project Space

Komenskega 18, Ljubljana

2 – 18 April 2014

Opening and artist's presentation: WED, 2 April 2014 at 7 pm



Photos available for free download:

<http://www.aksioma.org/press/adventures.in.virtuality.zip>



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Pablo Garcia

Adventures in Virtuality

At the end of the last century, we got used identifying the term “virtual” with the term “digital”. Yet, according to Pablo Garcia, “virtuality – the systematic approximation and representation of reality – existed long before computers”, and manifested itself in perspective, optics applied to image making, and then in photography and cinema. “The computer – ‘digitality’ – is wholly dependent on several millennia of virtuality.” Going through this pre-history is not just a fascinating travel in media archeology: it's also a way to question our contemporary perception of ancient modes of representation and of the impact of technology on art making along history; a way to question the presumed “novelty” of contemporary developments; a way to look back and re-discover experiments and researches that ended up in a dead end, and maybe see how they fit with the world we are living in.

Adventures in Virtuality is a show that collects some of the recent developments in the work of US based artist Pablo Garcia, all related to his time traveling through these “several millennia of virtuality”. Starting from *NeoLucida - A Portable Camera Lucida for the 21st Century* (2013 – 2014), a project done in collaboration with Golan Levin. *NeoLucida* is an attempt to recreate, and make it available on the market at an affordable price, the “camera lucida”, a powerful tool for hand drawing patented in 1807 by Sir William Hyde Wollaston, and used by artists and illustrators along the XIX century to facilitate accurate life-drawing.

While vintage camera lucidas are now expensive and difficult to use, *NeoLucida* has a lightweight, sturdy, compact design, and consists almost entirely of prefabricated parts made in China and easily available. The prototype has been founded with a Kickstarter campaign, and following the principles of the Open Source philosophy, instructions to make your own camera lucida are available on the dedicated website. *NeoLucida* is a provocative statement: “In manufacturing a camera lucida for the 21st century, our aim is to stimulate interest in media archaeology – the tightly interconnected history of visual culture and imaging technologies. We want to make this remarkable device widely available to students, artists, architects, and anyone who loves to draw from life. Released from obscurity, NeoLucida entreats a generation of artists to ask: 'What if you could trace what you see?' And: 'How might artists in the 19th century have seen the world?' And: 'How might tracing from life fit into contemporary art education?' And: 'What is the historical relationship between art and technology?’”

This conceptual reference to old masters visual tricks and researches is shared by two recent projects by Pablo Garcia, *Memento Mori (Catoptric)* and *Profilograph* (2012). The first is an ironic public space intervention playing with the widespread availability of curved mirrors, like chrome pipes and polished tubes, used everywhere from bathroom fixtures to office furniture. From the XVII century, curved mirrors have been used to create images that looked abstract until they were reflected in a curved mirror placed in a specific point in space – thus turning in plain, realistic images. This process, together with anamorphosis (where the image is projected obliquely to a picture plane in a way that it can only be seen from the original projection point, like the skull in the famous Hans Holbein's masterpiece *The Ambassadors*) was often used to encrypt messages in other compositions. In most cases, this message was a “memento mori” (remember you are mortal). *Memento Mori (Catoptric)* is a pre-cut printed distorted image of a skull, made in varying diameters to fit different pipe sizes, and that can be easily placed wherever a reflection can be produced, addressing an unaware audience.



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On the other hand, *Profilograph* employs a process called Profilography, consisting in tracing and extruding a series of sequential contours or profiles, and implemented in software by the artist, to generate transitions between a given set of sequential images. So, in *Profilograph (after Dürer)* Garcia turns six facial profiles presented by Albrecht Dürer in *Four Books on Human Proportion* into a continuous facial profile. Slicing through the extrusion yields new faces, derived from Dürer but absent from his analog treatise. After making the form into a closed loop, he 3D printed the form and mounted it onto a motor-driven spindle. As the piece spins, a light casting a shadow along the profile edge animates the transforming faces. In *Profilograph (after Muybridge)*, the 12 frames of Eadweard Muybridge's Plate 624, depicting a running horse, are turned in a continuous profile using profilography, and then converted into a 3D model, a 3D printed prototype and a bronze sculpture.

Finally, *Webcam Venus* (2013, done in collaboration with Addie Wagenknecht) explores the trope of nudity in museum paintings and in online sexcam performances. The artists asked online sexcam performers to replicate iconic works of art such as Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, Raphael's *La Fornarina* or Edgar Degas' *Woman with a Comb*, and they recorded them in the act; then they juxtaposed the two versions of the same image. The piece is an experimental homage to both fine art and the lowbrow internet phenomenon of cams, and explores concepts of beauty and obscenity, censorship and internet culture.

Pablo Garcia (www.pablogarcia.org) is Assistant Professor in the Department of Contemporary Practices at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Trained as an architect, Pablo's recent work has evolved from design-for-hire to internationally exhibited artworks, provocations and research studies. Previously, Pablo has taught at Carnegie Mellon University, Parsons School of Design, and The University of Michigan. From 2004-2007, he also worked as an architect and designer for Diller Scofidio + Renfro. He holds architecture degrees from Cornell and Princeton Universities.

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www.aksioma.org

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