

## Mijoon Pak

b. 1978, Seoul, South Korea  
lives and works in Seoul

## Sunwoo Hoon

b. 1989, Seoul, South Korea  
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Sunwoo Hoon and Mijoon Pak

*Flat Earth*

2019

digital drawing

commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, 2019  
courtesy the artists.

Regular collaborators since 2007, Korean artists Mijoon Pak and Sunwoo Hoon use the webtoon to explore how humankind has been transformed by new technologies. Using 8-bit computer game graphics, *Flat Earth* narrates the foundation story of the internet, hypothesising a dystopic sci-fi future where humans exist in opposition with one another, vying for technological clout.

Viewers who scroll through the webtoon experience Pak and Hoon's retelling of the internet's foundation story that draws correlations between colonisation and web expansion, highlighting how various online portals, communities or 'platforms' ruthlessly compete for power. Armed with personal data, the 'alliance'—a fictional character that refers to the private monopolies of platform companies—poses questions about democracy and whether it can survive in the era of fake news, big data and artificial intelligence.

## Sunwoo Hoon

b. 1989, Seoul, South Korea  
lives and works in Seoul

*Flat is the new deep*

2018

digital drawing

commissioned by the Gwangju Biennale, 2018 with  
support from Christina H. Kang  
courtesy the artist.

Sunwoo Hoon highlights the contribution of changing technologies in South Korea's political sphere. Using the format of the 'webtoon', a web-based comic which originated in South Korea, Hoon's work begins with a single pixel that multiplies and aggregates, eventually delineating illustrations that depict moments in the nation's political history.

*Flat is the new deep* presents a pictorial timeline of critical moments in South Korea's political history. This includes the 1980 Gwangju Uprising, a moment that marked the beginning of democratisation, to the recent impeachment of President Park Geun-hye, and the #metoo movement. As the work tracks towards more recent political events, browsers referencing global platform companies (South Korean Naver and American Yahoo) illustrate how traditional instruments of protest are being replaced by online technologies, facilitated by global platform companies.

Hoon picks up on the underside of these technologies, including the name of alt-right websites which surrounded the campaign poster for the now impeached president Park Geun-hye, illustrating a moment where the internet can be harnessed for the manipulation of mass opinion in our era of fake news. In doing so, he provides us a warning about the changing and growing power of these pixels—mutating and circulating, far beyond what we ever could have imagined.

## Timeline of events

**18 May 1980:** Gwangju Democratic Movement

**9 July 1989:** Funeral of Lee Han-Yeol

**22 June 2002:** 2002 FIFA World Cup, Korea vs. Spain quarterfinal

**May-June 2008:** U.S. beef protests

**23 May 2009:** Death of former President Roh Moo-Hyun

**25 February 2013:** Inauguration of President Park Geun-hye

**16 April 2014:** Sinking of MV Sewol passenger ferry

**17 May 2016:** Murder at Gangnam Station

**10 March 2017:** Impeachment of President Park Geun-hye

**29 January 2018:** Female prosecutor Seo Ji-hyeon goes public with sexual harassment claim

**19 May 2018:** Protesters gather to mark a case of a female nude model, who secretly took and posted a naked photo of a male colleague

**13 June 2018:** 500 mostly male Yemen refugees arriving in Jeju Island, South Korea

**8 August 2018:** Authorities search for the manager of *Womad*, a radical female website in connection to pornography published illegally on the website

**9 August 2018:** An anti-spy cam campaign by the police causes protests.

**14 August 2018:** Governor of South Chungcheong Province, Ahn Hee-jung acquitted of rape charges

**14 August 2018:** A female nude model is arrested and jailed in a spy cam case.

## Simon Denny

b. 1982, Auckland, New Zealand  
lives and works in Berlin, Germany

*Shenzhen Mass Entrepreneurial Huaqiangbei  
Market Counter in OCT Theme Park Style – Battery*  
2017

airbrush on synthetic plaster, illuminated plinth  
courtesy the artist and Fine Arts, Sydney

*Real Mass Entrepreneurship*

2017

video, 14:23

courtesy the artist and Fine Arts, Sydney.

Located across the border from Hong Kong and in the Pearl River Delta, the Chinese city of Shenzhen is a metropolis to 12 million people. The city, formerly a sleepy fishing village, was designated a Special Economic Zone by Deng Xiaoping in 1979 and is today home to some of China's largest tech players, including social media, telco and e-commerce platforms Tencent, Huawei, ZET and Alibaba. Taking a macro focus on Huaqiangbei, a subdistrict of Shenzhen, Simon Denny's *Real Mass Entrepreneurship* explores the changing world of labour relations with the rise of platform companies, presenting compelling insights into the working lives of factory employees and tech entrepreneurs alike.

Huaqiangbei is colloquially referred to as the 'Silicon Valley of hardware' in China due to the ease and availability of components to develop tech products. Within this activity, there are a number of shopkeepers selling counterfeit goods which are then exported using China's online platform companies. Many of these proprietors have modest stalls displaying photo albums cataloguing the vast array of fakes available to buy in nearby back rooms. Denny has created a sculptural facsimile of these showcases associated with these street vendors, airbrushing the Chinese character for 'Battery' on its façade. An accompanying video presents interviews with various makers and entrepreneurs working in tech start-ups and office spaces, drawing out the human implications of increased automation and the relentless drive for innovation that defines Shenzhen's contemporary social fabric.

## Simon Denny

b. 1982, Auckland, New Zealand  
lives and works in Berlin, Germany

*Shenzhen Innovation Paradigm – Mass  
Entrepreneurship – 1*  
2017

New Rixing K7 wireless microphone & HIFI speaker,  
Hongyesheng company brochure, business card,  
laser cut airbrush stencils, UV print on plexiglas,  
laser-cut MDF  
courtesy the artist and Fine Arts, Sydney.

When speaking of the way the internet has transformed our lives, the impact upon the very people that are involved in its functions is often obscured or ignored. New Zealand-born Simon Denny investigates the way the tech industry subsumes individuals and cities in its operations. Drawing inspiration from one of the most densely urbanised regions in the world, *Real Mass Entrepreneurship* contemplates Shenzhen as a blueprint of how cities may develop in the future, and how the individual is and will be affected by this mechanical system of production and consumption.

*Shenzhen Innovation Paradigm – Mass Entrepreneurship 1* – serves as an impartial display, a vitrine containing a portable karaoke microphone, overlaid with a street map, component numbers and a select annotations. Reading like an analogue mind map, Denny's work highlights links between ideas, geographies and societies, illustrating how the city of Shenzhen is embodied in the object and in many of the technologies used in our households.

**exonemo**

formed 1996, Tokyo, Japan

live and work in New York, New York, United States of America

*Kiss, or Dual Monitors*

2017

HD video, cables

courtesy the artists.

Since forming in 1996, exonemo have examined the paradoxes of online culture and the way it has become increasingly intertwined in our lives. *Kiss, or Dual Monitors* illustrates the artist duo's interest in orchestrating commonplace digital devices and technologies to provoke core emotive human responses.

Wrapped in the aesthetics of technology, the work features video portraits of different people with their eyes closed. Two monitors are arranged in mid-air to give the impression that the models are kissing. However, exonemo's experiment, loaded with conflicted meaning asks us to question the verisimilitude of its imagery. In this way, the work highlights our susceptibility to the framing of information in determining meaning, paralleling the internet's own infinite reach as a propaganda machine, while posing questions that ask how we are adopting these technologies and filtering haptic interaction in ways that can be exploited to facilitate corrupt corporate culture and politics.

## exonemo

formed 1996, Tokyo, Japan

live and work in New York, New York, United States  
of America

### *Live Streams*

2018

television monitors, web cameras, software  
courtesy the artists.

Comprised of Sembo Kensuke and Yae Akaiwai, artist duo exonemo unpack how social media exploits vulnerabilities in human psychology. *Live Streams* draws from the recent ubiquitousness of the ‘live function,’ whereby social media users can broadcast a live stream of their own content using the camera on their mobile device. In exonemo’s two-screen set up, one screen is filled with an adoring chorus of online followers that shower the viewer with complementary comments, while the other streams the same view bereft of online attention.

This duality—paradoxically congratulatory and humiliating—recreates the social validation feedback loop which social media platforms rely on to operate.

Exploring the paradoxes of the digital environment, *Live Streams* reframes real world examples to cast societal critique, speaking to our age of digital anxiety, while also highlighting the rampant narcissism that defines much online existence.

## Baden Pailthorpe

b. 1984 Canberra, Australia

lives and works in Canberra, Australia

### *One and Three PCs*

2019

digital imagery produced by a DCGAN machine learning algorithm, various LED screens, In-Win Z Tower, Threadripper 2970WX, ASUS ROG Zenith Extreme Alpha, G.Skill Trident Z RGB 64GB, 2 x AMD Radeon VII, 2 x WD Black 1TB NVMe, ASUS ROG Thor 1200W Platinum, Thermaltake Riing Trio, CableMod Pro Sleeved Cables, Custom 7" screen (running Aida64) commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art supported by In-win courtesy the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney.

The idea that humans can create machines more intelligent than ourselves is not new. Myths and folk stories abound with creations such as the bronze automatons Talos, who patrolled the island of Crete in Greek mythology. These stories reflect an atavistic fear that there could be other minds that bear the same relationship to us as we do to the animals we eat or keep as pets. The arrival of artificial intelligence (AI) has reintroduced this idea with a vengeance.

Baden Pailthorpe illustrates the workings of AI, offering audiences a portentous look into a future where the capabilities of AI may surpass human control and understanding. *One and Three PCs* comprises an elaborate computer system which uses an image-generating AI program, Deep Convolutional General Adversarial Network to self-generate an image of itself. In performing this infinite loop of self-referential calculations, the artwork illustrates the program's hyper-specialised intelligence in performing an extremely narrow task. As the program continues to render images of itself, the learning algorithm improves over time, creating better renders of itself. Its uncanny ability to classify and associate information based on data and statistics illustrates the power of AI to complete discrete tasks with great efficiency and insight, inviting audiences to examine and probe the possibilities of the technology further.