

Bittersweet banality + contemporary numbness in this river of data with Simón García-Miñaur's digital collages



Aqnb, Tuesday
Focus

Both seductive and banal, intimate yet estranged, Simón García-Miñaur's immersive installations move through in-between spaces, allowing the incomprehensible fragments of a digital world to flow in and around him. For his solo exhibition The Valley at San Francisco's R/SF Projects, which opened March 25 and is running to April 16, the Basque artist and filmmaker has transformed the space into what the press release calls an "inordinately human" world filled with melodrama.

Three sculptural screens hang around the space; one is floating on the wall, the other hangs from the ceiling and the third stands in the middle of the gallery. Two narrative works play throughout the space, one on headphones the other on speakers. Each fragmentary piece occupies its own space, but co-exist as part of a larger narrative.

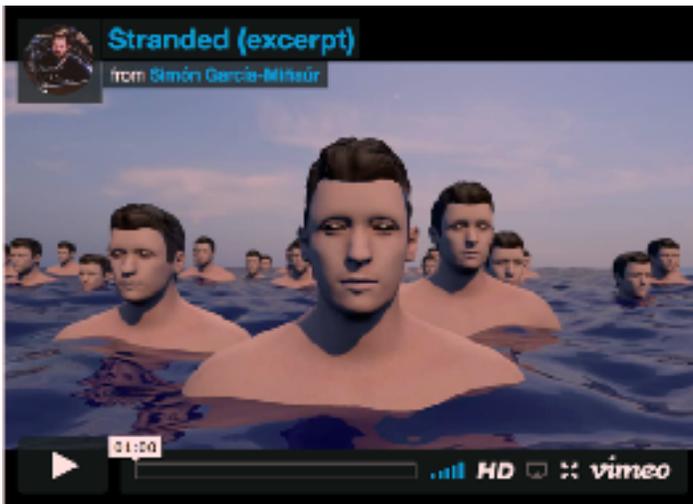
García-Miñaur's installations often revolve around a central video work, using TTS (Text to Speech) software to lead the audience through a protagonist's inner monologue steeped in wistful desire and self-pity; in this case the character seeks "an eternal sunshine-esque catharsis of forgetting." The Valley exhibition employs atmospheric techniques taken from cinema, sci-fi and video game realms to explore a fragmentary idea of both collective trauma and amnesia. Focusing on memory as a tool to speak about preservation and transience, the characters float around amongst the echo chambers of their own minds, never finding resolution.

In a chat about "the exceptionally contemporary numbness that can only ensue from an endless stream of news feeds," García-Miñaur talks to us through his digital collages and his interest in the pathetic and bittersweet nature of banality.



Simón García-Miñaur, Stranded (in situ) (2016). HD Video + installation view. Courtesy the artist + R/SF projects, San Francisco.

** In relation to a description of your work as being "melodramas [that] explore the inordinately human via



the excessively android to materialize understandings of our digitally inundated world," are you interested in finding a clearing in all this, or being immersed in the bombardment?

Simón García-Miñaur: We're currently flooded with data, there's no time to absorb it all. Not even the NSA can keep up with the exponential growth of exabytes to sort through. I'm not talking about books, archives or essays. It's the millions of mundane information (selfies, Facebook statuses, etcetera) that floods the internet every minute. We have no choice but to live immersed in this river of data, but it's the way we engage with it that we can control. I would never tell anyone to get off the internet or social media, but one has to be aware of the power the digital space has in our lives.

** Can you tell us about your interest in the haunting of memory and forgetting?

SGM: I've always been a big history nerd. Since I was a kid, I was interested in the history of spaces, the collective memory of a country, a city, a place. In my home country, Spain, I've seen how the government has obliterated the memory of almost a million Republican soldiers who were buried in communal graves without identification. The post-internet age is very 'Presentist,' there's barely time to read all the tweets. It's easier to forget and get lost in the live show, than to deal with past trauma (both collective and personal).



Simón García-Miñaur, The Valley (in situ) (2017). HD Video + installation view. Courtesy the artist + R/SF projects, San Francisco.

** Your work situates itself between binaries in a way, hovering in a drone like state.

SGM: Most of the shots I create, digitally mimic the point of view of a drone moving around the space and the characters. There is a contrast between what seems to be the character's reality and their imagination or thoughts. Both are represented in the same computer-generated, surreal way in 'The Valley;' blurring the boundaries between the two. A clear example of this binary representation is 'An Unexpected Visit,' in which two screens represent the physical and the digital separately.

** I noticed a lot of your films focus specifically on male subjects, framed within a narrative that is both banal and emotional. Is this a main aspect of your work?

SGM: Most of my recent work is very autobiographical and is inspired by relationships or moments that I had with men in my life. My digital universe is very gay but also pathetic in a bittersweet way. The banality of the situations I illustrate is the key to make the characters more relatable, to humanize them. Combining my personal experience and the pathos of everyday moments, these emotionless characters become very empathetic despite their uncanny humanoid bodies.

** Do you appropriate sounds/images/voices etc or do you narrate your own videos and produce everything from scratch?

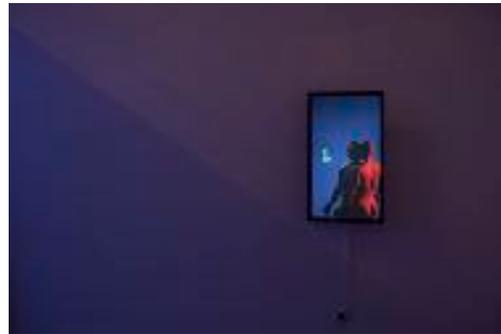
SGM: Some pieces are completely from scratch but mostly it's a combination of 3D templates that I transform and animate, with elements that I build in 3D myself. The voices are all computer-generated with TTS software. The sound is usually a mix of library clips and more obscure clips I find online in public domain sources. I like to think of my process as a digital collage, even though in the end it seems more planned.

** The videos, in a way, remind me of vlog culture; the mundane but seductive intricacies of someone's daily

life. In relation to your immersive environments that respond to an 'inundated digital world,' are there specific technological 'worlds' that inspire your work?

SGM: Living in San Francisco during the peak of the tech boom definitely affected the way that I understand the digital world. SF itself is a crazy technological world, where human interaction can be completely avoided by using a specific app and 3D-rendered-looking condos pop out in every corner, all while people die in the streets. But it's getting harder to see this reality, because we're getting used to looking without seeing outside our bubble. Digital spaces solidify the bubble we live in, and create an echo chamber within it. We no longer see outside the bubble, we stay immersed in a digital feedback of information and images that positively reinforce our lifestyle and morals. Vlog culture is another example of how our interest in narratives has shifted. We no longer need a long cinematic epic. Actually, we don't have time for it. Instead, we consume different formats of video content as we scroll in the feed.**

[Simón García-Miñaur's solo exhibition The Valley at San Francisco's R/SF Projects, opened March 25 and is running to April 16, 2017.](#)



Simón García-Miñaur, AMORE (in situ) (2017). HD Video + installation view. Courtesy the artist + R/SF projects, San Francisco.