

The background of the entire page is filled with numerous vertical, wavy, pink scribbles that resemble liquid paint or digital noise. These lines vary in thickness and flow downwards, creating a sense of movement and texture.

Hell scapes

On Art, Technology and Loneliness

*Daniel Felstead & Jenn Leung (produced by DIS collective),
Jon Rafman (with music of Oneohtrix Point Never),
Theo Triantafyllidis & Giant Claw, Matěj Liška, Nikola
Balberčáková & Jakub Pohlodek, Total Refusal*

Curated by Václav Janošík



Contemporary life seems to follow a series of paradoxes. Tensions arise between an ever-growing array of possibilities (choices, projects, or cultural products) and the increasingly intense feeling that we cannot do anything (to make the world better); between comfort and anxiety, communication and solitude. At the heart of these tensions lies the issue of technology, which has become the axis bending the rhythm of our work and leisure, our relationships, expectations, and fears.

Contemporary artists often use technology as a space for imagination, projecting visions and fears into it. This displacement into a realm beyond our everyday reality is characteristic both of the work of artists and of what post-platform media does to us today. These media are no longer windows opening onto the outside world but mirrors materializing our feelings and desires. As a result, the underworld, the underground, or even hell is no longer a realm of metaphysical terror but rather an inhuman infrastructure that increasingly co-creates who we feel ourselves to be.

If hell is a space of suffering, its technological vector does not inflict suffering directly or physically, but rather through boredom or an overload of content and dopamine. Damnation here does not arrive as a punishment for our deeds but could instead be seen as a reward for our inaction.

The exhibition *Hellscapes: On Art, Technology and Loneliness* explores these efforts to define the reverse space of our imagination (technology) across an unusually wide spectrum. It includes (I) a collection of

video works, (2) a physical contextual installation in the neo-brutalist space of the Faculty of Humanities, and (3) an AR (augmented reality) application.

Through these three layers, the exhibition opens (1) a screen into the digital underworld, (2) a question about the affectivity of the space where the youngest faculty or school of Charles University operates, and (3) a (non)narrative framework that guides visitors through part of the space as if it were a chat interface. It is not so much a (traditional) exhibition as a composed transition between spaces, a dynamic stretched between architecture and moving images, between physical and imaginative realms, between media and emotions, privilege and precarity, belonging and loneliness.

A kind of center—or, more precisely, a refrain—of these reflections and tensions is Jon Rafman’s video *Betamale* with music by Oneohtrix Point Never. Animal costumes, otaku rooms, keyboards buried in food, pixel-art aesthetics, explicit digital content, broken melodies, and rapidly shifting samples draw us into a world where desires become more unfulfilled the closer the screen brings them to us.

Another music video, this time by Theo Triantafyllidis with music by Giant Claw, takes us into a digital cabinet of curiosities. A lizard bodybuilder, ancient lion sculpture, the finishing move of a medieval sword duel, a rigid mech with a balloon for a head, and a fallen angel seemingly pulled from the *Diablo* series—all set in a sci-fi lab of peculiar yet scientifically controlled genetic experiments. If *Betamale* is an entry into the post-platform space of desire, then *Until Mirror* is a gentle outro, a fading of tension and fear (however temporary).

The video loop continues with much longer, essayistic formats. Daniel Felstead and Jenn Leung (with production by DIS) take us beyond the veil of generative AI, Silicon Valley dreams, and tech-optimistic trivialities (“AI will replace art”), as well as doom-laden

predictions (“AI will destroy humanity”). When we strip away the smokescreen of simplifications, anthropomorphisms, promises, and hype from technologies, capital, and intelligence, we fall into the void of Literally No Place.

In contrast, the collective and pseudo-Marxist media guerrilla Total Refusal warmly invites us on a walk through the ruins of the Soviet East in their video *Disaster Tourism*—ruins of illusions and utopias, the ideological Other of the system in which we still live today. On a cycling trip through the game *DayZ* and an imaginary Siberian island, we are given not just a snack, a gas mask, and antibiotics but also a lesson—not only on history and political geography but also on human relationships, their ideological premises, and their aesthetic and ludic dimensions.

In the neo-brutalist space of the Faculty of Humanities itself, there are three paintings by Matěj Liška from the series *Residuum of Proper Work*. These depict simple coloring-book images (a hen with chicks and an egg, rabbits with apples and carrots, bears with fish) embedded and etched into the concrete of the building and its walkways. Education or cultivation (particularly in a humanities context) also reproduces and reinforces the structuring of the world we live in, determining what is natural, important, or authoritative. In relation to this process, there is again a passage into the underworld (childhood, nostalgia, nature?), from which the structures and rules of this world and these institutions can appear liberatingly arbitrary and malleable.

Woven throughout the exhibition is a virtual walk: a sequence of six symbols, runes, or tokens scattered throughout the space. In their work *Mean World Syndrome*, Nikola Balberčáková and Jakub Pohlodek guide us through an affective landscape between a gas station and Instagram, giving shape to a contemporary form of loneliness. This loneliness spreads across vast fields on the outskirts of cities and interest—a space for all of us for whom media and technology are not means of production but rather the very space of communication and being together.

Daniel Felstead & Jenn Leung
(produced by DIS)



Literally No Place video, 18:36
(2023)

Hello baby dolls, it's the final boss of vocal fry here. Daniel Felstead's glossy Julia Fox avatar is back. Last time she took on Zuckerberg's Metaverse. Now she takes us on a journey into the AI utopian versus AI doomer cyberwarfare bedlam, exploring the stakes, fears, and hopes of all sides. Will AI bring about the post-scarcity society that Marx envisioned, allowing us all to live in labor-less luxury, or will it quite literally extinguish the human race?

We all know Julia Fox isn't a Manichean binary girlie. As she traverses through the AI apocalypse/AI utopia dichotomy, she shows us an uncanny array of possible futures, delving into the projections of both AI simps and manic tech overlords like OpenAI CEO Sam Altman and Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google. Watch this video before picking a side.

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Jon Rafman & Oneohtrix Point Never



*Still Life
(Betamale)* (2013)

music video, 4:54

In September 2013, deep in the dark depths of the internet, 4chan users discovered a new video posted to the site's /mu/ music thread. As they watched, images of their own clandestine subculture — computer keyboards encrusted with cornflakes and cigarette butts, snatches of hentai porn, people wearing animal costumes (aka 'furries') and a suicidal man with pants on his head — were reflected back at them. "Aw shit we #META now," said one user. The internet often seems like OPN's biggest inspiration, and rarely has that been better captured than in Jon Rafman's strictly NSFYouTube 'Still Life (Betamale)' video.

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Matěj Liška



*Residuum of the
right work
(2023-2024)*

concrete, page from coloring
book

These are meticulously rendered coloring pages, transformed through the lens of an adult exploring the discipline of art. Each stroke was applied with intention, guided by instructions and executed to the best of my ability. I endeavored to stay within the boundaries, maintaining consistency and harmony in the tones of each segment. What began as a simple childhood pastime was reimagined—lines became deliberate, colors were chosen to echo the reality the illustration seeks to reflect. This playful exercise evolved into a studied practice, where errors were minimized, and the carefree act of coloring gave way to a meditative labor of precision and craft.

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Nikola Blberčáková & Jakub Pohlodek



*Mean World
Syndrome* (2024)

concept by Nikola Blberčáková
& Jakub Pohlodek, graphic
design by Sofie Gjuričová, UX
Design & Development by
Josef Šmíd, production and
soundtrack by Václav Janoščík

Mean World Syndrome is a fragmented digital elegy—a disjointed narrative mapping the dissolution of self within the disorienting churn of the online world. It explores schizoposting as a language of modern despair, blending chaotic humor, surrealist imagery, and grimly poetic hellscape. Each numbered vignette reveals the unraveling of identity in the hyperconnected age, oscillating between fleeting moments of absurdity and vulnerability.

Through AR (augmented reality), these stickers transcend their static nature, becoming interactive windows into the psyche of a terminally online narrator. Participants are drawn into an immersive experience where they confront the narratives of paranoia, nostalgia, and disconnection. Mean World Syndrome is both a manifesto and a memorial—an unsettling commentary on how the online sphere mirrors, amplifies, and fragments the human condition.

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Total Refusal



Disaster Tourism
(2021)

video-performance, 1:00:28

Disaster Tourism is a cinematic lecture-performance through the Russian Namalsk, a fictional island in the Bering Strait in the game DayZ. On bicycles we ride along places like the gulag city of Vorkuta, uranium mines, empty train tracks and stranded ships and discuss the representation of post-Soviet reality as a landscape of ruins.

Why is it that the remains of a society that set out to overcome capitalism are now primarily suitable as a setting for the zombie apocalypse? As the group moves through the nightmarish landscape, we talk about the depths of historical narratives as ruin porn, while choreographic elements and dance scenes turn the tour into a music video, driven by a weird feeling of dystopic hope.

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Theo Triantafylidis & Giant Claw



Until Mirror
(2021)

video, 6:05

Taken from the Giant Claw album 'Mirror Guide', the track "Until Mirror" (featuring vocalist Tamar Kamin) is a slowly morphing piece that tries to evoke feelings of anxiously waiting or yearning. The video, which adds an additional surreal layer to the music, is set in an abandoned facility containing an unattended exhibition of free 3D assets curated by artist Theo Triantafyllidis.

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Curation & texts

Václav Janoščík

Artists

Daniel Felstead & Jenn Leung
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AR app

Josef Šmíd

(Development)

(Graphic design)

Sofia Gjuričová

Visual identity

Doris Sisková

Installation

Adam Trbušek, Mikuláš Rett



Tato výstava byla podpořena v rámci projektu GAČR 22-17984S: Ohniskové obrazy: násilí a nelidskost v současném umění a mediální kultuře.

The exhibition was funded by the Czech Science Foundation (GA ČR), project No. 22-17984S: Focal images: Violence and Inhumanism in Contemporary Art and Media Culture.

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