DEM PASSWORDS

And/Or Gallery Show #36:

Olia Lialina + Kathleen Daniel

Mar 19th – May 28th, 2022

@ And/Or Gallery 980 S Arroyo Pkwy #200 Pasadena, CA 91105

This exhibition is viewable Thurs-Sat 12-6PM and by appointment.
To schedule a viewing please email info@dempasswords.com.

And/Or Gallery and Dem Passwords are pleased to present solo exhibitions of Olia Lialina and Kathleen Daniel.

The front gallery exhibition is a survey of Olia Lialina's recent digital artworks from 2008-2020. Moscow-born Lialina is a staple of digital art history, starting in the 90s with her HTML-based experimental narratives, which were groundbreaking in their use of the web for avant-garde artistic expression. Through participation in early internet culture and deep study of archives of old web communities like Geocities, she has become an expert and champion of free-form early net culture and aesthetics. In her influential essay "A Vernacular Web," (2005) Lialina describes the internet of the 90s:

"...it was bright, rich, personal, slow and under construction. It was a web of sudden connections and personal links. Pages were built on the edge of tomorrow, full of hope for a faster connection and a more powerful computer. One could say it was the web of the indigenous...or the barbarians. In any case, it was a web of amateurs soon to be washed away by dot.com ambitions, professional authoring tools and guidelines designed by usability experts."

And in her newest text "[From My to Me](#)" (2020):

"Webmasters of the 1990s built homes, worlds and universes. But also, outside of intergalactic ambitions, they strongly pushed the concept of something being mine. The first-person possessive determiner "my" took on a very strong meaning — "my" because I build it, I control this presentation; my interests, my competences, my obsessions."

Her interest in the invisible and disappearing personal culture of Web 1.0 led to new work starting in the 2000s that is almost like a hybrid of art making and archiving. The work has similarities to Joseph Cornell's process of assembling forgotten materials and objects in frames, yet is more formal and photographic like Bernd and Hilla Becher's grids of water tower photographs and other unnoticed infrastructure. An animated GIF can be downloaded, but it can't be literally placed in the gallery like Joseph Cornell's works because it has no default or physical form. Film processing and development is similar to the process of displaying a GIF in a gallery space in terms of the kinds of decisions and transformations that are made.

"A Vernacular Web" also discusses how these forgotten parts of the internet sometimes cycle back into popularity as throwback styles and take on new layers of meaning. Lialina's *Online Newspapers* series (2004-2018) comprised of newspaper scans with Web 1.0 Javascript and GIFs had originally seemed like an anachronistic and impossible merging, but today they almost seem contemporary since newspapers now sometimes use old-style GIFs and even occasionally use design elements that engage in the unique interactive language of the web. Also included in the exhibition via projection is *False Memories* (2020), a tribute to the loved and hated Internet Explorer 6 web browser and its interface elements. On the opposite wall is *Lossless* (2022), the latest in an ongoing series of animated GIF triptychs on LED panels. These are part of the "blingy" aesthetic, a second-wave Web 1.0 style that often included reworked instances of early Web 1.0 GIFs in larger and more sparkly graphics. On display are a type of GIF called "stamps" by influential Blingee.com user Irina Kuleshova (ivk), who passed to Lialina her archive of animated graphics she made for the platform from 2006 to 2018. Projected below the LED panels is *Peeman* (2014), an animated GIF on dual video projectors that was typically originally paired on a webpage with another image or GIF that the Peeman was peeing onto. At the back of the gallery running on two slide projectors is *Give Me Time/This Page Is No More* (2015) which documents 80 pairs of key moments in a Geocities webpage's existence: the point at which the author realizes they haven't been updating their webpage and promises to update soon, and the point where they eventually shut down their page. And finally, in the front entry is *640x480* (2014), a study of Web 1.0 tiled backgrounds whose title references the fact that webpages originally were all designed for VGA monitor resolution, which was 640 pixels wide and 480 pixels tall.

Lialina's work has been exhibited extensively online and at venues including the New

Museum, New York; The Kitchen, New York; Museo Tamayo, Mexico City; Transmediale, Berlin; Western Front, Vancouver; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; ABC Gallery, Moscow; ZKM, Karlsruhe; Barbican, London; LEAP, Berlin; MOTI, Breda; HEK, Basel; and Whitechapel Gallery, London.

[Kathleen Daniel's](#) *Panorama* video artworks occupy the back room.

Ripped from Daniel's long-standing website [duh-real.com](#) are five recent tunes illuminated into unique webpage music videos made with 3D computer graphics software.

Spread across five flat-screens in a nod to the immersion of a virtual reality headset experience — an installation architecture devised by this gallery — Daniel's latest works build on her legacy of music video making that came into public view in 2006 via her [YouTube page](#), adding a new element to the spectrum created by her channel history both in form and execution.

The music contained here, "Move on," "Loving Myself," and "Silence" from Daniel's 2020 album *Imagine*, and "A Thrilled" and "No Better" from her 2019 albums *Singles* and *Gumbo-ish*, respectively, is that "neo-soul" we know so well from Daniel — music that an adventurous listener should instantly identify as extraordinary. And the visual component captures Daniel's stitched housescapes (marked most notably by her surrealist paintings) and exteriors in 360 degree rotations from a first-person perspective, slowly unrolling kind of like a 19th century panoramic painting, extending Daniel's narrative universe into new territory. "A Thrilled," for example, adds an air disaster to Daniel's list of calamities.

From the start, Daniel's music and art-making have addressed societal and psychic ills informed by a devastating personal history as detailed in her year 2000 self-published, *names have been changed to protect the innocent* memoir, "From the Womb to the Tomb."

From the back cover description:

Four Minneapolis black teenagers, bet: "Who'll end up living outside the slums, without paying rent, and can shop until she drops." But it's Danell, the most arrogant and high-strung, who steps through life as if in a minefield. And who runs into conflicts from New York to California. And after a New York rape, stumbles through the doors of Bellevue Hospital, and is detained for a month, against her will. Years later — and with child — she runs into an escaped con. But not until Los Angeles, does he show his real character — by then an United States Senator is killed. But later, her determination takes her to Las Vegas, Germany, Greece, Amsterdam, Spain and London... (Daniel) delivers a vivid tale of a black young woman's search for that rainbow, in a white, racist world...

Daniel maps this biography onto her work with her characters functioning as reflections of herself, as a vehicle to exorcise trauma and to close the distance between dreams and reality in the classic surrealist sense. Her *Panoramas* approach the post-dramatic and seek to produce an effect with absurdist exaggeration to express that tension between disillusionment and expectation; between her Otherness and normative society. They are phantasmagorical reconstructions of her past and a way to process the present for a woman always on the move — a self-described "butterfly."

And with respect to Lialina's work, the fact that Daniel has for decades worked in the "web pages as documents" mode having maintained such a strong home base of creation on her website, links Daniel's work to Lialina's [central premise](#) "that personal webpages are the conceptual and structural core of the WWW."

Yes, life is a trip. You can either play it safe by avoiding all humans or press on into uncertainty. ...The Supreme Being had blessed her with the ability to mentally escape. ...At this point in life, no one could ever convince her that the Supreme Being didn't exist. She felt Him through to her bones. How could she have made it through life without Him?[1]

Kathleen Daniel was born in 1945 in Minneapolis and lives and works in Ponitz, Thuringia, Germany. Her work was featured in an online retrospective at the 9th Berlin Biennale curated by Dis Magazine (2016); the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (2013); Secret Project Robot (2011), Ramiken Crucible (2012) and New Museum in New York City (2012) and across the web.

[1] excerpted from "From the Womb to the Tomb" published in 2000 in paperback by Trafford Books.

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