



One of the most provocative claims in cognitive scientist Donald Hoffman's *The Case Against Reality* (2019) is that our senses do not reveal an objective reality. "The problem is not that our perceptions are wrong about this or that detail. It's that the very language of objects in space and time is simply the wrong language to describe objective reality." Zoom out from the myopia of scrutinizing what's directly in front of your primate face. Many birds, for example, navigate using the Earth's magnetic field, sensing vast magnetic arcs from the poles and finding their way across the sky as if following a massive grid. Catfish have chemoreceptive systems with more than fifteen times the number of taste buds humans have, distributed over their bodies so they can "taste" their environment. Reality — as distinct from objective reality, or the "there" when no one is there — is an interface to the world afforded by the sensorium.

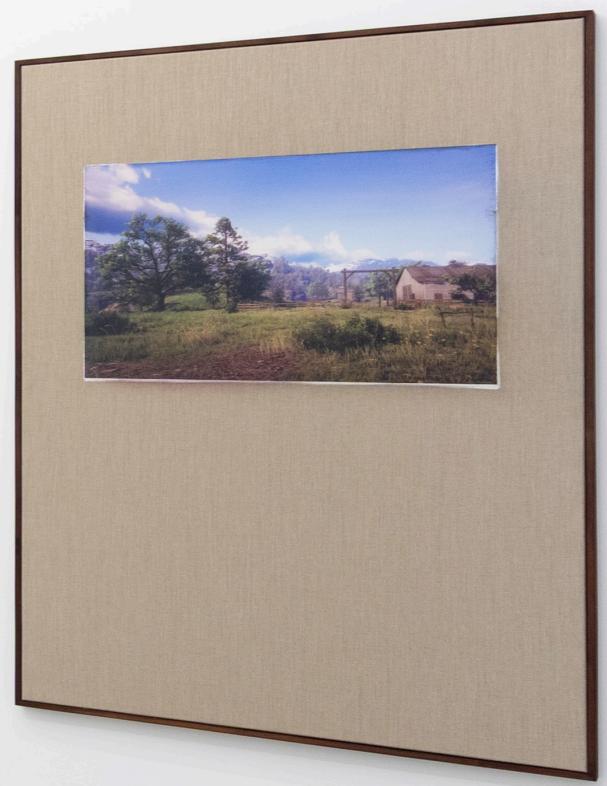
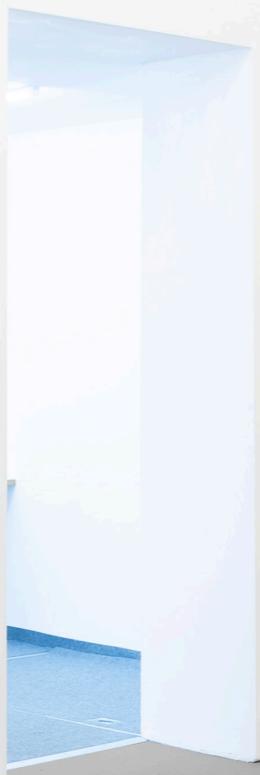
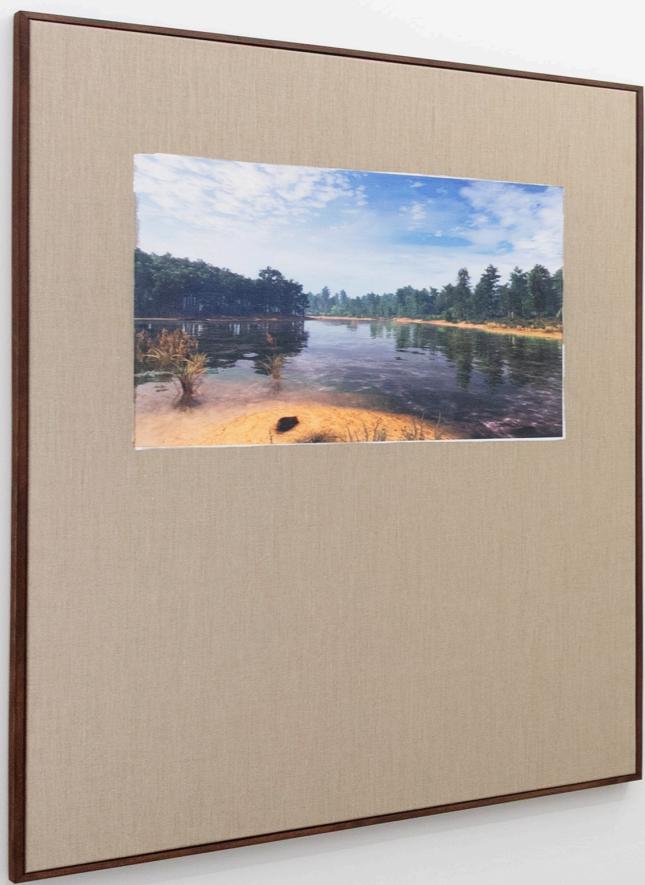
Niko Princen's *High Reality*, his first solo exhibition at Åplus, is a close study of the sensible world that has emerged with open world role-playing video games. Developed for this exhibition, Princen's works place game worlds within a Western art-historical continuum, tracing representational techniques from Dutch landscape painting to photography. Since the summer of 2025 Princen has spent hundreds of hours playing a number of games with vast landscapes: *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* (2018), *Kingdom Come: Deliverance* (2018), *Kingdom Come: Deliverance II* (2025), *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018), *S.T.A.L.K.E.R. 2: Heart of Chornobyl* (2024), and *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (2015). Embodying various avatars, Princen wanders their photorealistic spaces, interacting with preprogrammed characters along the way, wandering their digital expanses. These games produce a striking verisimilitude: distant landscapes are often softened or blurred by algorithmic atmosphere, while ambient sounds—leaves rustling, waves on the shore, birdsong, and footfalls—transport the player beyond the screen.

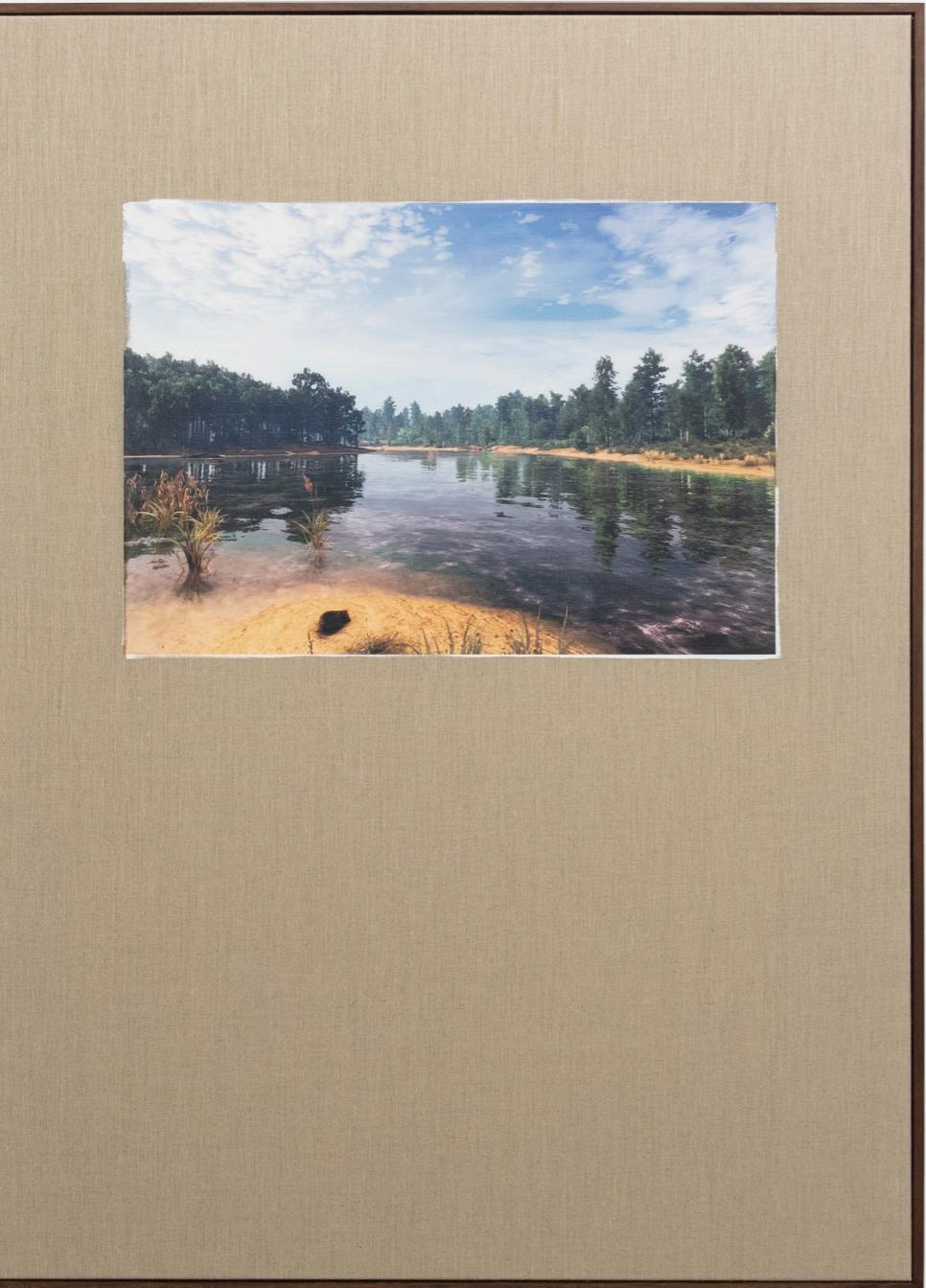
The works in *High Reality* are screenshots—photographs—of landscapes Princen encountered in his journeys. Printed on the top half of vertical linen canvases, they read like views through a window or a door one might step through. Like real-world photographs, Princen's images are unique shots taken from singular encounters within a game's temporal parameters and shaped by the agency of his avatar. A number of Princen's photos feature windmills. Evoking the landscapes of The Hague School, the game world mills suggest an evolution in definition of the productive landscape. In the Netherlands, windmills were used primarily for land management—pumping water to drain land, keep it dry, and enable settlement. With industrialization, mills were also used to process materials: sawmills built ships, grain mills produced food and trade goods, oil mills pressed seeds, and paper mills supported one of the Netherlands' most lucrative Golden Age industries. Dutch mills thus produced both the physical land and the means to live from it. In contrast, the mills in *S.T.A.L.K.E.R. 2*, *Kingdom Come: Deliverance*, and *The Witcher 3* perform none of these tasks. They stand almost in defiance of conventional definitions of production and instead produce a sense of familiarity with an archetypal past—a feeling that history has taken place. They're monuments to the amorphous opening between the physical and digital worlds we've constructed for ourselves to inhabit.

Princen's work has often explored this space. *Walking Around Building* (2011) is a walk taken on Google street view; *Front Window* (2012) is a collection of screen grabs of his friend's rooms as seen through Skype; *Portraits* (2014-ongoing) are a series of crimson red photos taken by pressing his finger on the camera lens of a smart phone camera of friends and strangers; *My Space* (2017-2020) are photorealistic computer rendered images of his mother's and father's homes in Amsterdam, emptied out after their passing. For Princen, reality as perceived is always an interface to deeper truths. The world is physical and digital and both are interfaces to questions about not how we see, but why. Between 2012 and 2015, Princen exhibited an installation where a lit candle was broadcast live over a video chat application. A sub-woofer was placed next to the candle so when someone watching the broadcast blew into their microphones, the pressure from the speakers would blow out the candle. In 2015, visitors in Dallas blew out a candle in Amsterdam. It's a demonstration of the near frictionless path taken by cause and effect as it moves between physical and digital spaces. The works in *High Reality* furthers this claim, suggesting the way we move around the world is not only a series of decisions—a game—but scripted by narratives, myths, histories, and traditions, some only half remembered, that make up the interface, our senses, to the world.

Carson Chan





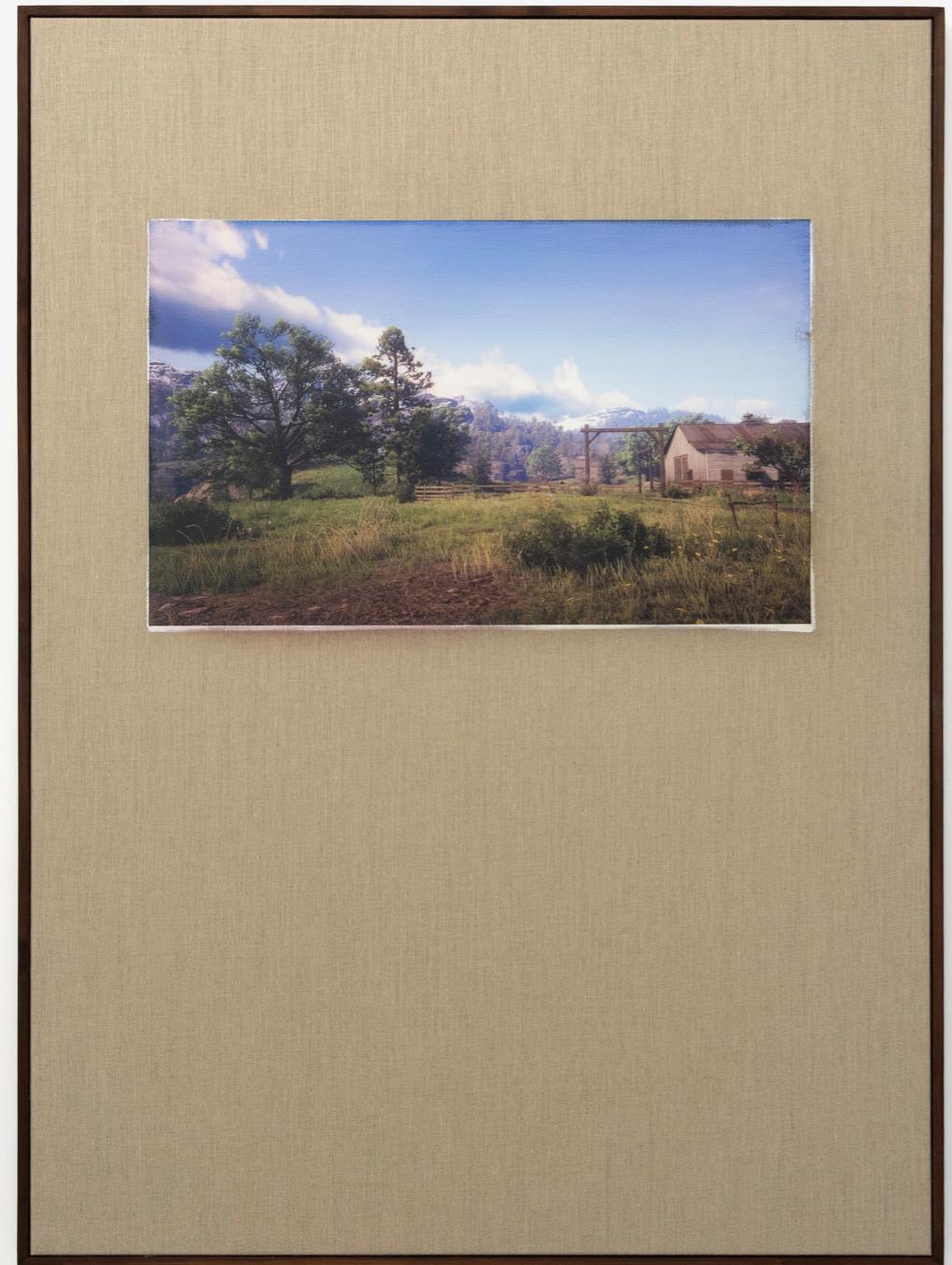


Result May Vary #9 (HR/W3), 2025  
UV-print & primer on canvas  
168 x 120 cm  
66 1/8 x 47 1/4 in

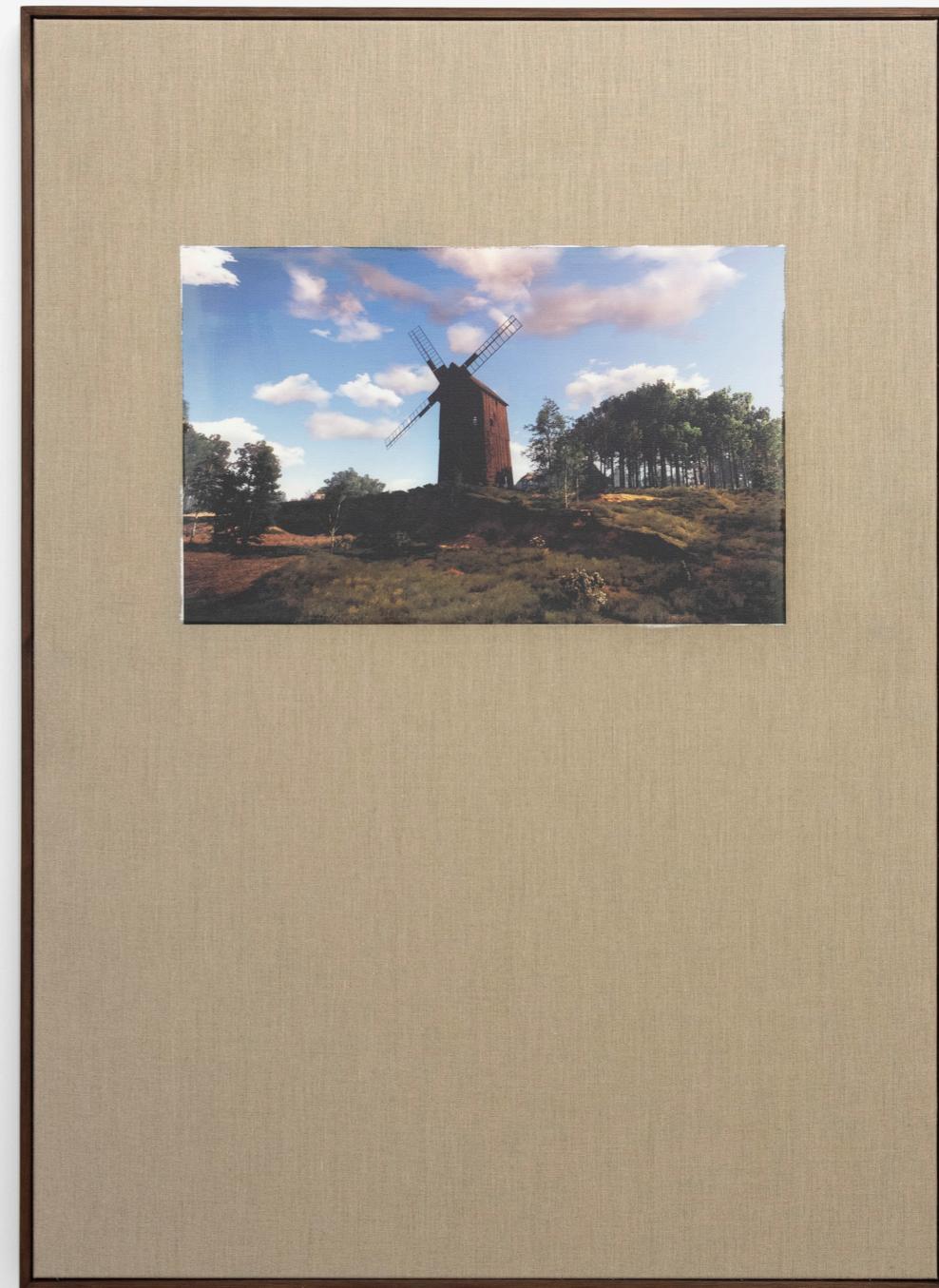


Result May Vary #11 (HR/KCD), 2025  
UV-print & primer on canvas  
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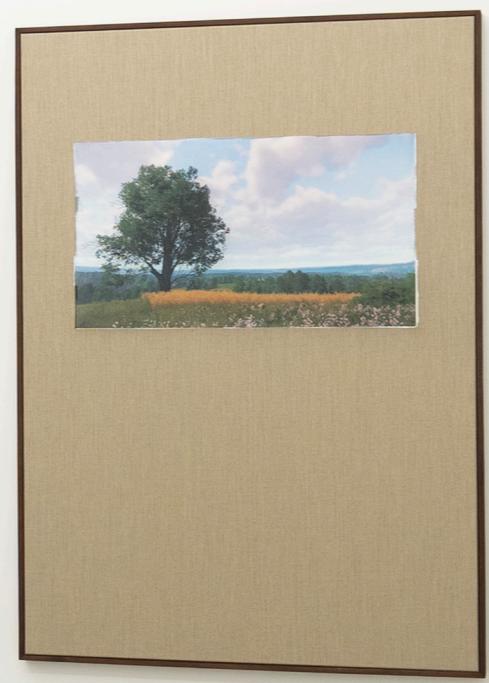
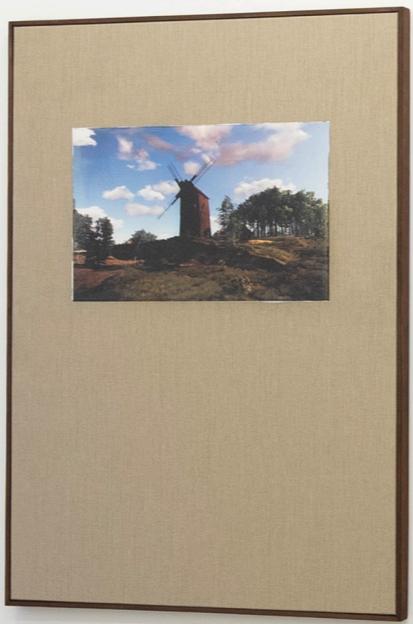


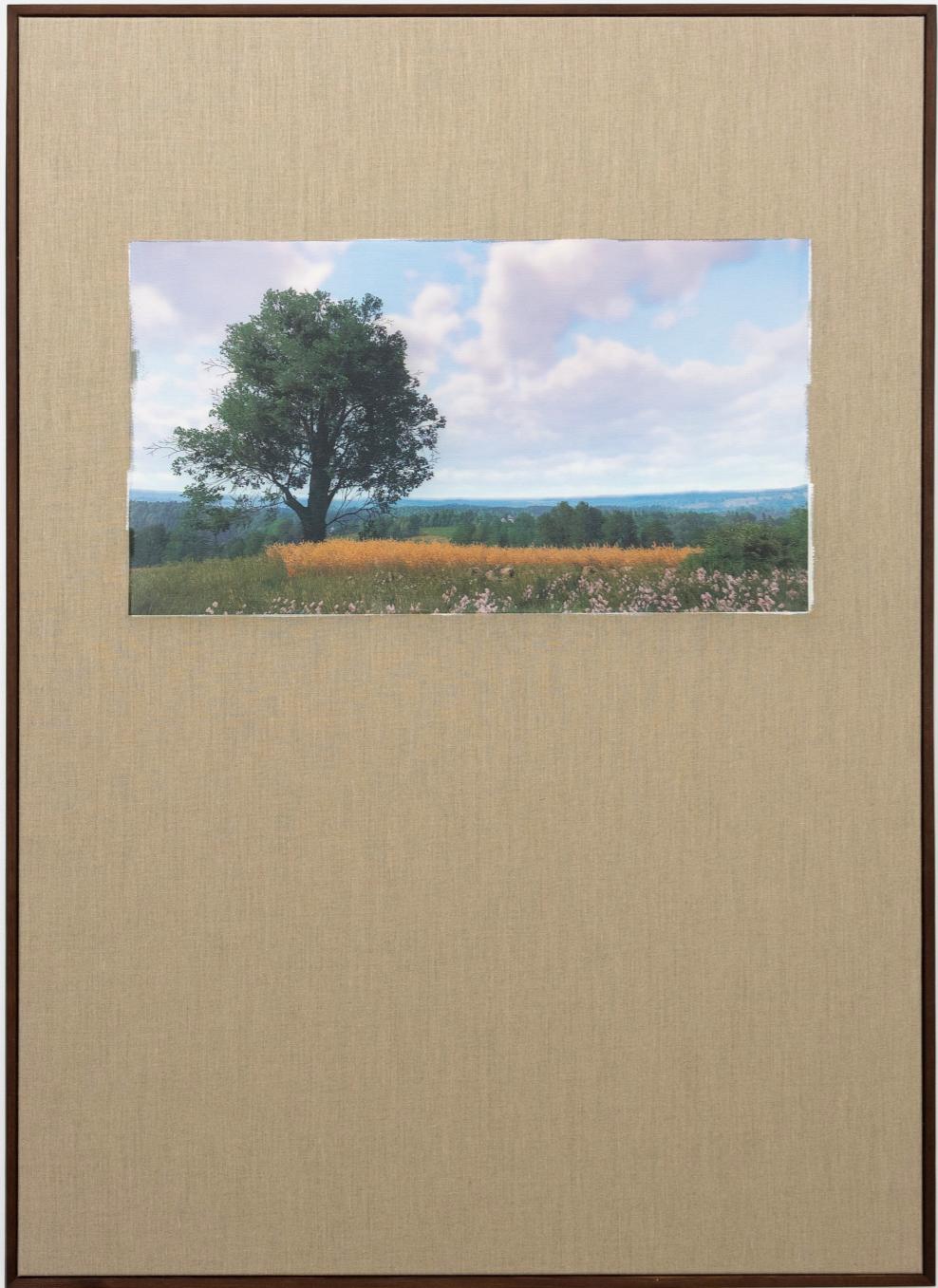


Result May Vary #6 (HR/RDR2), 2025  
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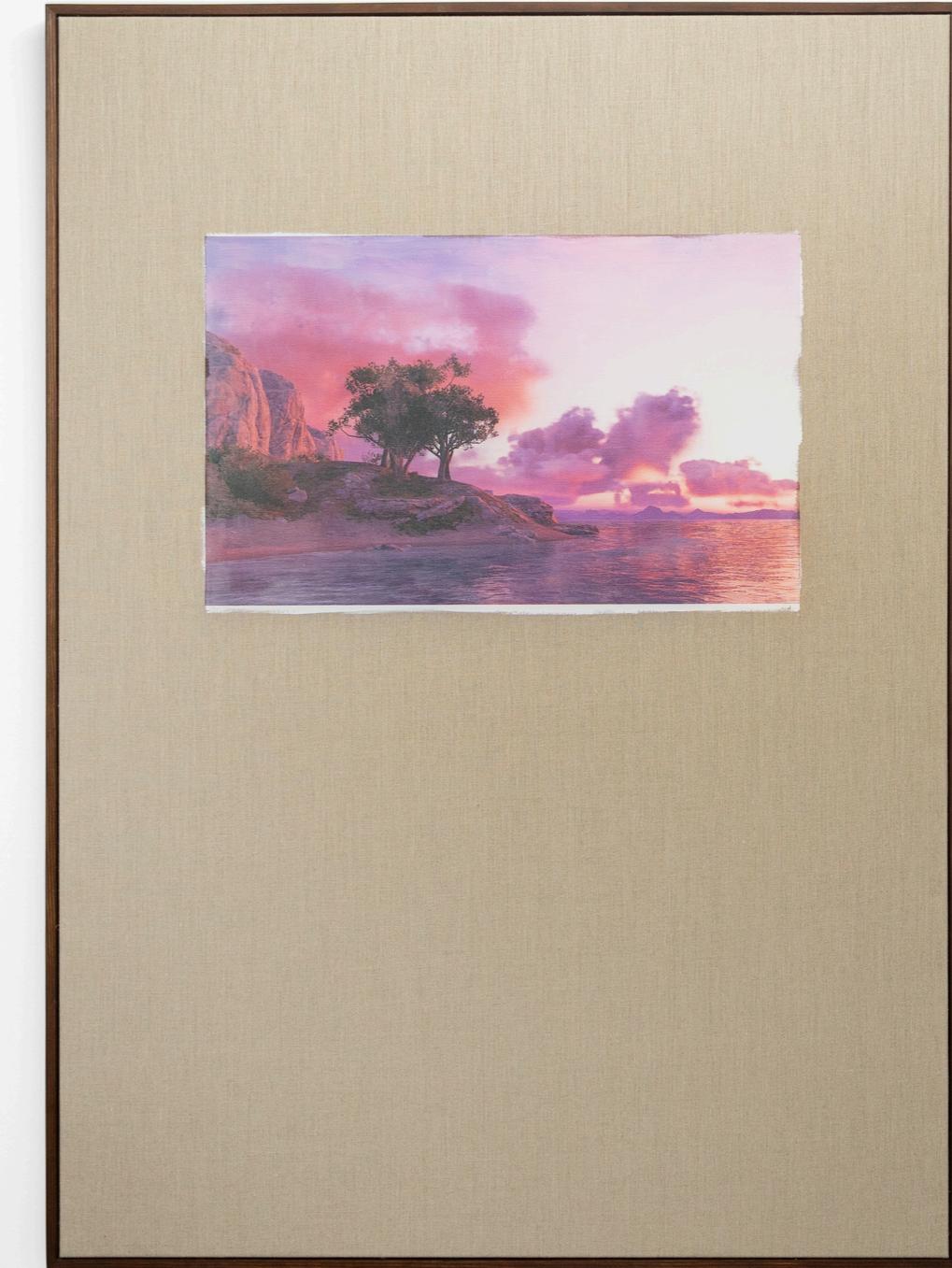


Result May Vary #10 (HR/W3), 2025  
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66 1/8 x 47 1/4 in





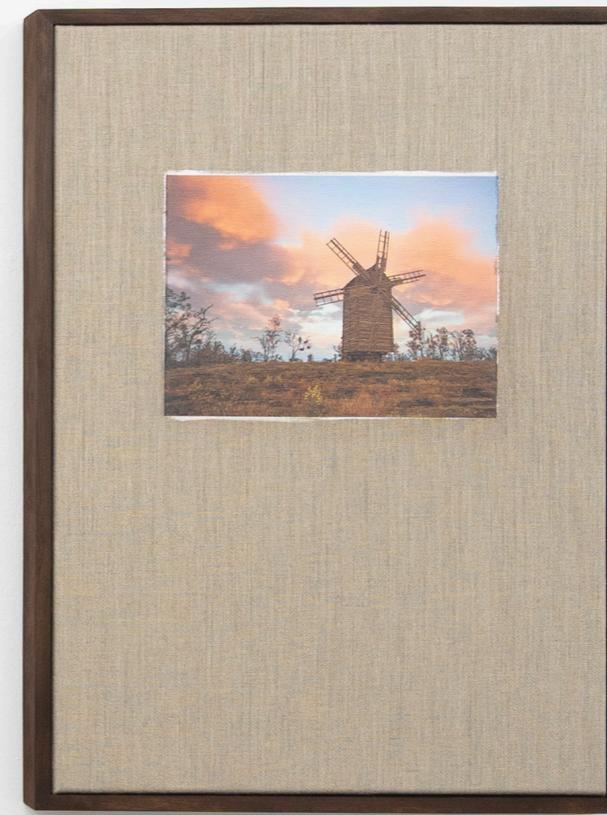
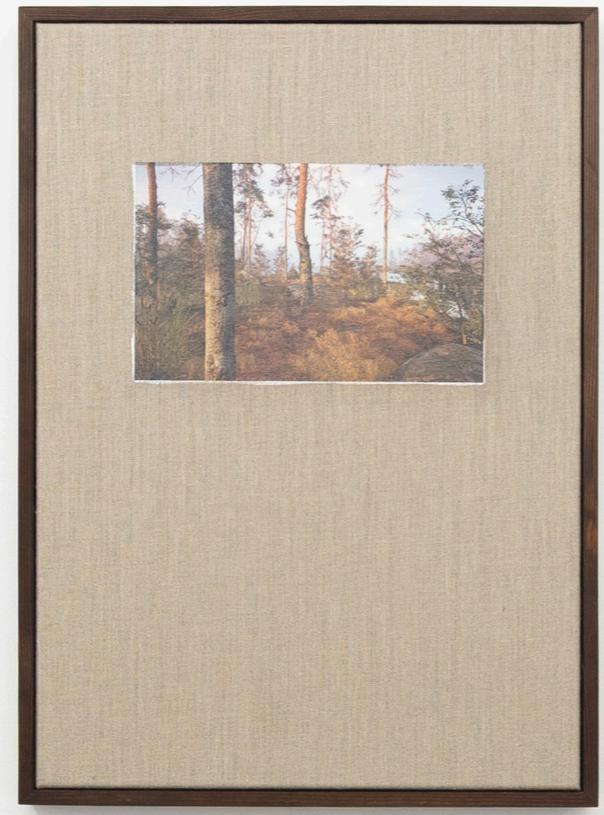
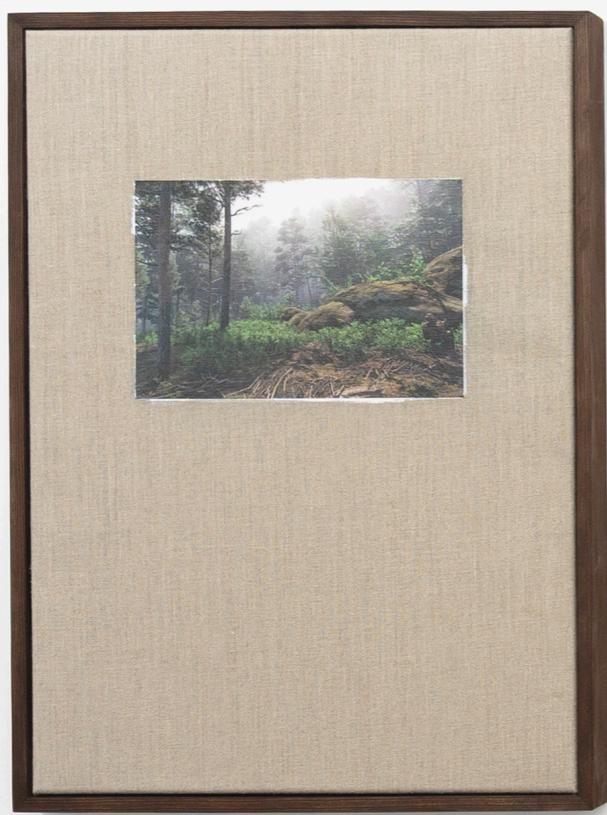
Result May Vary #8 (HR/KCD2), 2025  
UV-print & primer on canvas  
168 x 120 cm  
66 1/8 x 47 1/4 in



Result May Vary #2 (HR/ACO), 2025  
UV-print & primer on canvas  
168 x 120 cm  
66 1/8 x 47 1/4 in









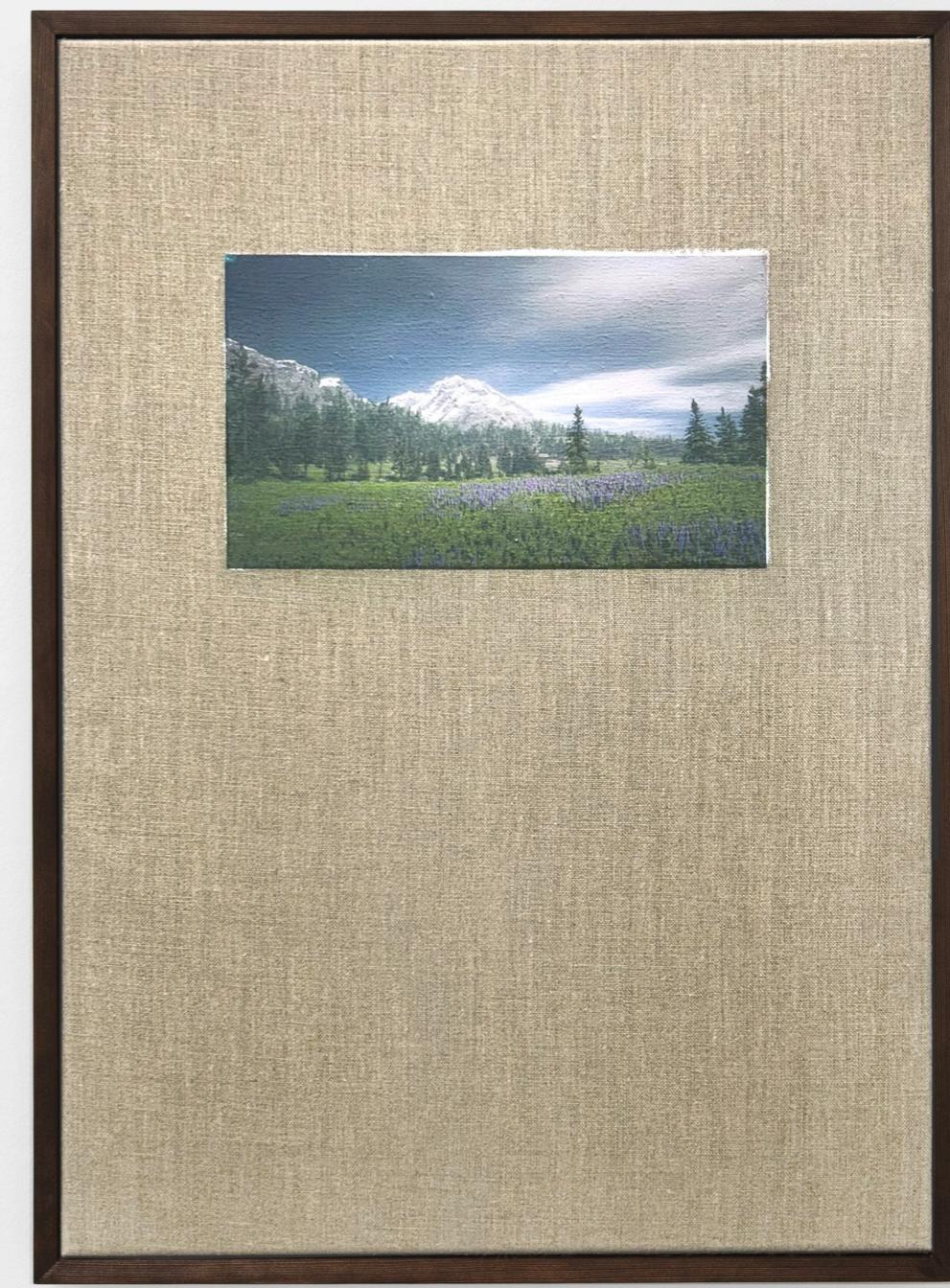
Result May Vary #7 (HR/KCD2), 2025  
UV-print & primer on canvas  
70 x 50 cm  
27 1/2 x 19 3/4 in



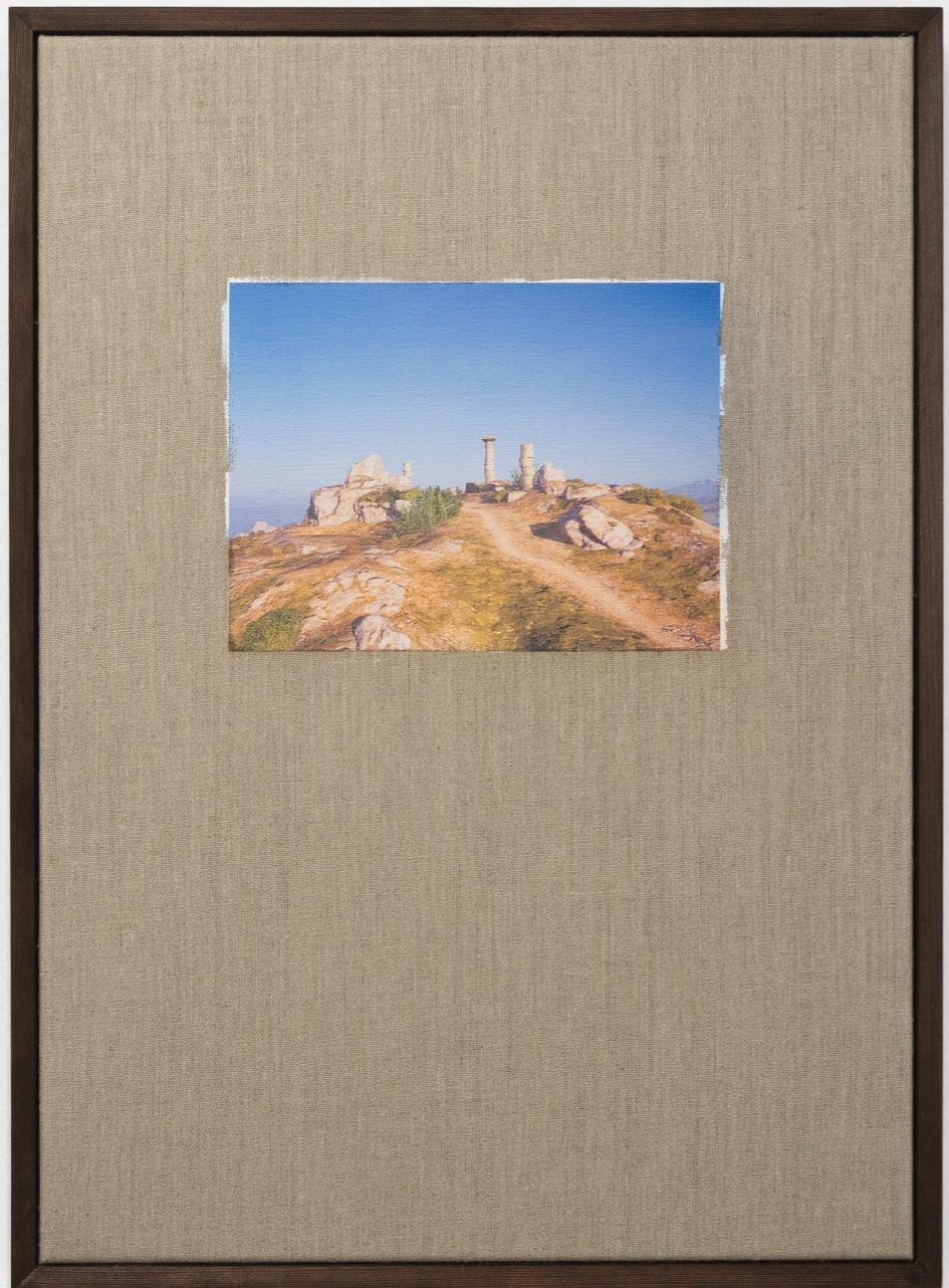
Result May Vary #3 (HR/ST2), 2025  
UV-print & primer on canvas  
70 x 50 cm  
27 1/2 x 19 3/4 in



Result May Vary #4 (HR/ST2), 2025  
UV-print & primer on canvas  
70 x 50 cm  
27 1/2 x 19 3/4 in



Result May Vary #5 (HR/RDR2), 2025  
UV-print & primer on canvas  
70 x 50 cm  
27 1/2 x 19 3/4 in



Result May Vary #1 (HR/ACO), 2025  
UV-print & primer on canvas  
70 x 50 cm  
27 1/2 x 19 3/4 in

## Niko Princen

\*1979, Netherlands  
lives and works in Berlin

studied art at Hogeschool van de Kunsten Utrecht and at the The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

### Exhibitions (solo)

2022  
Portraits, U124, Berlin

2015  
Embedness, The Composing Rooms, online  
A Responsive Candle Light Event, Flat, Amsterdam

2012  
IN THE EVENT OF FIRE, Headquarters, Zürich

### Exhibitions (selected)

2022  
Jahresgaben BKV curated by Fatima Hellberg and Gregor Quack, Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn  
/home curated by Sakrowski, panke.gallery, Berlin

2020  
stickt.t.me curated by Zentrum für NetzKunst, panke.gallery, Berlin  
2020 DO NOT LINK curated by Dirk Paesmans and Bob Bicknell-Knight, www.upstream.gallery

2019  
der zyklus: formenverwandler curated by Sam Hart and Harm van den Dorpel, Full Node, Berlin

2017  
Evolutionary Urge 24H (digital / virtual) curated by Ursula Ströbele and Andreas Greiner, Navel, Los Angeles  
Exstrange curated by Gaia Tedone, online

2015  
Aurora, Dallas, Texas, USA  
On YouTube, Kunsthause Langenthal, Switzerland  
Offline Art: Are you still there?, part of 'Hamster - Hipster - Handy.' at Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt  
11th Athens Digital Arts Festival, Athens  
Home Work, Open Forum, Berlin

2014  
CURRENTS, CURTAINS, CODE, Triennale d'art du Valais, Fully, Switzerland  
Art Hack Day: Afterglow, Transmediale, Berlin

2013  
Driving Fast Nowhere curated by Martin Kohout, Polansky Gallery, Prague  
Come All Ye Faithful, Florian Christopher, Zürich  
Edge Effect, online  
Art Hack Day Berlin, 'Going Dark', LEAP, Berlin  
local.#non.access concept by Florian Kuhlmann, km temporaer, Berlin  
NOTES ON FORM, 032c WORKSHOP, Berlin  
Another Fluxconcert in Amsterdam (Googleism) curated by Constant Dullaart and Koen Nutters, NASA, Amsterdam  
DVD Dead Drop, 'BEST OF' compiled by Ole Fach & Kim Asendorf, Museum of the Moving Image, New York  
201111111111s, project by Mirak Jamal and Nine Yamamoto-Masson, TWS, Tokyo

2012

Screenshot: Berlin curated by Anna Mikkola and Mike Ruiz, Import Projects, Berlin  
reflecting on networks curated by Elisa R. Linn and Lennart Wolff, km temporaer, Berlin  
201111111111s, project by Mirak Jamal and Nine Yamamoto-Masson, LEAP, Berlin  
Hier beginnt die Welt curated by Raffael Dörig, Kunsthause Langenthal, Switzerland  
Not by default - Post Internet Art aus Berlin, [DAM], Berlin  
DVD Dead Drop, 'HOT' compiled by Aram Bartholl, Museum of the Moving Image, New York  
Nail Care project by Yves Scherer, curated by Claudia Rech, Times Bar, Berlin  
A Material World curated by Carson Chan, PSM Gallery, Berlin

2011

Prosume This, BEKO, Berlin  
Non-Stop Infinity, Future Gallery, Berlin & Peer 2 Space, München  
SPEED SHOW: Your Browser is my Kingdom by Today and Tomorrow, or@nien net, Berlin  
Metrospective 1.0, PROGRAM, Berlin

2010

STATE  
DIY Augmented Reality exhibition, Moma, New York

2006

Project Definition, Club 11, Amsterdam

### Texts & Interviews

Digitale Kunst/Projekt des Monats - Vlinder by Raffael Dörig, Kunstabulletin (DE). 8-7-2015  
La Valais à l'heure triennale by Samuel Schellenberg, Le Courier (FR). 21-06-2014  
I Can't make it, Art Papers. March/April 2014  
Post Tumblr Aesthetic by Valentina Fois, 1883 Magazin. 2014  
Interview at Internet Yami-Ichi Berlin by Golem.de. 2014  
Charting The Infinite Waters Of The Internet, One Family Photo At A Time by Nadja Sayej, The Creators Project. 24-2-2014  
Bringing physicality to the internet of things by Susanna Davies-Crook, sleek magazine. 8-8-2013  
Ist dein Gesicht vor ihm sicher? Vergängliche NetzKunst by Martin Dunkelmann, Arte Creative (EN + DE). 7-8-2013  
Pagine zittite by Roberto Marone, Doppiozero (IT). 6-2-2011

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