

# bitforms gallery

## **Siebren Versteeg, *Up The Ghost***

May 13–June 11, 2022

Opening reception: Friday, May 13, 6–8 PM

Gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday: 11 AM–6 PM

bitforms presents *Up The Ghost*, our third solo exhibition with New York-based artist Siebren Versteeg. Further elucidating a playful interrogation of image and form, subject and object, life and studio, *Up The Ghost* introduces interdisciplinary works in sculpture, painting, and photography as an arrangement of digital apparitions that develop continuously throughout the course of the exhibition. Exhibited works in *Up The Ghost* contend with apprehension and loss, as inspired by developments in the artist's personal life as well as with the recent public engagements regarding digital ephemera and commodification. Arranged on a single, screen-like plane that bisects a light-sealed gallery space, Versteeg's exhibition radically abandons the conventions of artifact exhibition, instead presenting an open ontology of past, present, and hypothetical future works of art.

In a series of varied, new compositions presented both in printed form and on protean screens, the artist places precedence on ultra-high-resolution rendering rather than quickly advancing, evolutionary procedures. "Here," Versteeg said, "image data is generated at a level of detail that surpasses the limitations of display technology as it currently stands." Static works from this ongoing body of exploration exhibit agency: aglow from edge-to-edge, they participate as fixed counterpoints to the continuous renderings of nearby screens.

*Hell is Other People* presents a vast collection of collaged portraits culled at the instruction of an algorithm to indiscriminately search out faces. The resultant cultural artifacts pile atop one another, co-mingling with the iconic flame emoji. An overwhelming onslaught of recontextualized identities encourages viewers to navigate and zoom in on the composition's fine detail through a touchscreen.

*Random Image Machines (horizontal and vertical)* enact image democratization to its furthest, and perhaps most extreme, conclusion. Each work performs instructions guided by an algorithm to glean a random high-resolution image to display on screen. This digital intervention adds an element of chance into the exhibition's fold, creating variable foils for aggregated meaning and reflection.

*People in The News in 3D* and *Love Live x Five* subject sculptural forms to temporal conditions through largely differing yet complementary approaches. In *People in the News in 3D*, CGI nesting dolls are algorithmically re-skinned with the likenesses of "newsworthy" figures continuously downloaded from popular websites. The resulting apparitions, trapped in corporeal frames, nod and rotate in an artificial breeze of current events before turning to disappear into collective digital memory.

Comparably, *Love Live x Five* posits a more personal immediacy for Versteeg. A live webcam feed broadcasts the conservation of a Robert Indiana *LOVE* sculpture from a family-run art fabrication studio, which Versteeg and his sister inherited from their recently deceased father, Peter. Versteeg references *LOVE* as an early influence on his creative aspirations. In kismet, the sculpture's conservation at the time of this exhibition poses a unique opportunity for the expression of Versteeg's newly-led dual life as an artist and attendant to legacy.

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## **Siebren Versteeg**

b. 1971, New Haven, CT

Lives and works in New York

Siebren Versteeg was born in 1971 in New Haven, CT. He holds an MFA from The University of Illinois at Chicago (2004) and a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1996). Solo exhibitions of his work have been mounted at University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, MI; Museum of Art at Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI; Hallwalls, Buffalo, NY; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; Michael Jon and Alan, Miami, FL; Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, IL; and Max Protetch, New York, NY. His work has been included in group exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; The Contemporary Museum, Baltimore, MD; Krannert Art Museum, Urbana-Champaign, IL; The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, PA; National Museum of Art, Prague, Czech Republic; James Cohan Gallery, New York, NY, and Clifton Benevento, New York, NY. Versteeg has received a MacDowell Fellowship (2016), Illinois Arts Council Fellowship (2005), The Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture Merit Fellowship (2004), and Stone Fellowship for Graduate Study from The University of Illinois at Chicago (2002), and was a Kennedy Visiting Artist in Residence at the University of South Florida, Tampa (2009). Prominent collections featuring his work include the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT; The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; and Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence, RI. Versteeg lives and works in Queens, NY.