

Martin Gabriel

Artistic statement, edited by Jelle Bouwhuis

The Czech republic went through a lot of changes in the 1990s and I grew up amidst the introduction of capitalism in the country. In general, my work still reflects that experience, as it revolves around the social pressures of today. I became specifically intrigued by the internet and

video games, and was captivated by the strange world of digital possibilities. After high school – where I acquired some design skills – I did voluntary work in Germany and attended art and theatre workshops. After that, I studied Fine Art at the Royal Academy in The Hague.

I started off with painting, researching the qualities of the flat surface and suggestions of space. From painting and collage I developed sculptural work. I work with, and respond to, the visual aesthetics of video/internet-games. Gradually I started to reflect on other aspects of the game world, such as its primal religious dimension, its seductive incitements, its fetishism, and the obsessiveness. My sculptures became less formally restricted, indeed more playful themselves.

Now I use various media, including digital media and aspects of programming, however I am an artist in the first place who responds artistically to the important popular phenomenon of the gaming world: through materiality, physical spaces, and a sense of sociability. I use the strangeness, seductiveness and obtrusiveness of gaming that is so present in daily live as a signifier of what I perceive as a global social crises. Gaming language, symbols, depictions and environments are appropriated from a (our) spiritual past. I use these aspects reversely, and creatively, to reflect on the confusion and loss, in what I improvisationally call "digital realism". Digital realism is in my opinion work that realistically approaches digital forms. It should not be confused with realistic images made in digital medium.

I've participated in art exhibitions and in spaces not dedicated to fine art alone, including the internet. I'm aware of post-internet art and the aesthetic powers of the gaming industry itself. However, I develop an artistic language that doesn't fit neither of these categories, and want to pursue that further.