

Building Castles in the Cloud

“We are just at the beginning of a truly wireless future we’ve been working towards for many years, where technology enables the seamless and automatic connection between you and your devices.”

JONY IVE, APPLE AIRPODS PRODUCT VIDEO, SEPTEMBER 2016

We are constantly building castles in the cloud, always logged into digital space. The perfect world that contains our dreams and hopes is a romanticized version of the physical world we live in. Not only do we construct an artificial world, but also digital versions of ourselves inhabiting it. The paradigm shift in technology has changed social values as well as every aspect of our ways of perception. Whereas there used to be an obvious difference between reality and virtual reality, these boundaries have started to get blurry and eventually will make way to one big mixed reality.

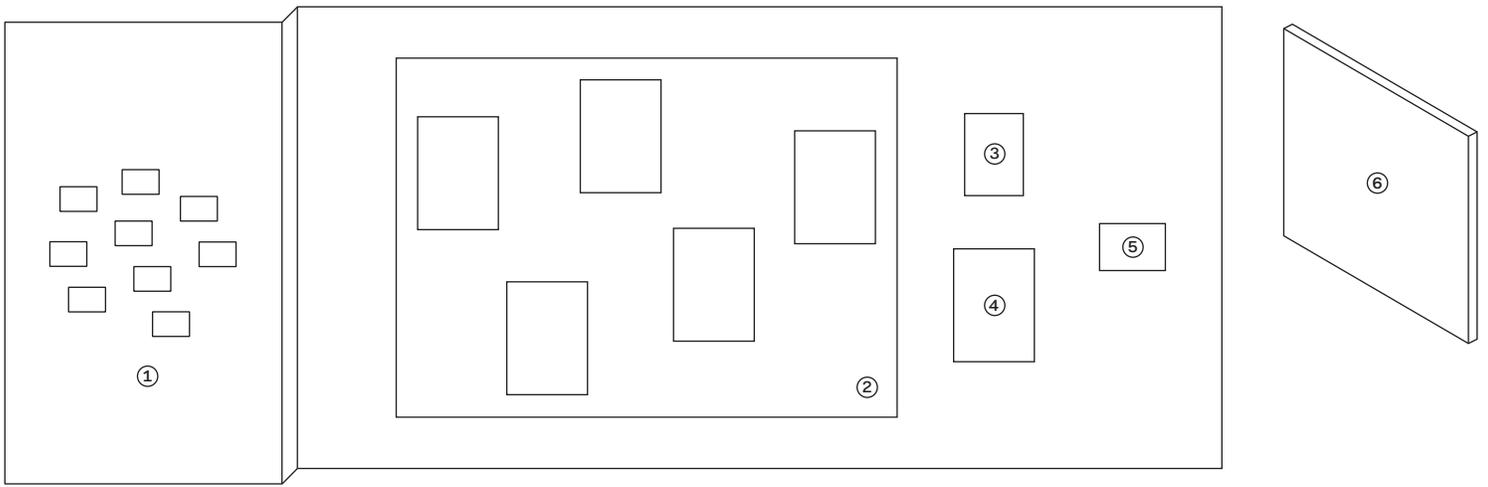
With smart technology having found its way into our homes and most intimate fields of our life, its overall role for society changed. In today’s world of constant connectedness, *logging out* has become an irregularity. We not only consume information and content but very actively participate. The user has become a participator. The exhibition puts the viewer in focus and visualizes the ubiquitous digital space. The app Refrakt is an augmented reality tool developed by the artists, enabling the viewer to perceive alternate realities in a virtual space by scanning real-life objects. He gets confronted with his own digital alter ego embedded into artifacts of a hyperreal paradise.

**September 18
— October 15
2016**

**Babycastles
137 W 14 Street
NYC**

An AR-exhibition by Refrakt,
as part of the group show
Postdigital Ecosystems with
Exonemo, curated by
Helena Acosta, Andrea Wolf
and Joe Salina





①
PROXY PARADISE

"We live in a multiverse composed of a quantum superposition of very many possibly infinitely many increasingly divergent, non communicating parallel universes or quantum worlds."
HUGH EVERETT

The piece visualizes the illusion of generally valid cultural values by creating a shift of perspective. By scanning a country's name, the most popular Google Images search results for the term *paradise* appear. The images have been obtained by accessing the search engine through different proxy servers, thus deceiving Google by pretending to be based at the respective locations. This obfuscation of the user's actual location allows insights into various cultural environments and their conception of the search term.

②
GLOSSY DESIRES

"Reality will soon cease to be the standard by which to judge the imperfect image. Instead, the virtual image will become the standard by which to measure the imperfections of reality."
HARUN FAROCKI

Each of the five central pieces of the exhibition represents a desirable fragment of a perfect life in digital times, allegedly accessible through technology. When scanning the pieces with the app, the sleek surfaces of the 3D images dissolve, exposing the dubiousness of digital promises.

③
MAKE AUGMENTED REALITY GREAT AGAIN

"The Internet is becoming the town square for the global village of tomorrow."
BILL GATES

Donald Trump's success in the presidential campaign highly relies on the distribution of his persona through (social) media. By scanning the photo, your device will play his most famous quote, ultimately surrendering to the ubiquity of his media presence.

④
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT IS INCREDIBLE

"Why waste time trying to discover the truth when you can so easily create it."
DAVID BALDACCI

The headlines of an issue of *The New York Times* get replaced in augmented reality with phrasing commonly found on so-called clickbait websites. Acting as cliffhangers, these overly exaggerated headlines ultimately lead to trivial articles with the sole purpose of generating web traffic, aimed at generating advertising revenue. This remix of a reputable newspaper questions the journalistic value of online news sources while at the same time warning of the decay of traditional mediums.

⑤
WWW.GOOGLE.COM

"The most obvious paradox is that while the personalization of technology makes the world seemingly revolve around the self more and more, the self gets mediated back to us through entirely de-subjectified calculations and statistical medians."
ANSELM FRANKE

The piece asks Google basic WH-questions, revealing what might be the most important questions of all time. Algorithm-created autofill suggestions form questions of truly philosophical quality.

⑥
DATA MILKYWAY

"We might be unplugged, but this doesn't mean we're off the hook. The internet persists offline as a mode of life, surveillance, production, and organization—a form of intense voyeurism coupled with maximum nontransparency."
HITO STEYERL

Data Milkyway depicts the omnipresent digital reality we live in and forms a night sky of device names. We are surrounded by data and our devices constantly send and receive data packages without us even realizing it. The artwork uses a script based on the library *carnivore* that was originally developed for the FBI. A so-called packet sniffer that analyses the network and visualizes every device connected to the network at Babycastles.

