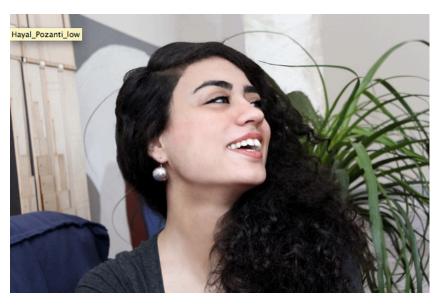# THERE IS NO THERE

HAYAL POZANTI: Six Paintings and a GIF

Written by Hunter Braithwaite
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Hayal_Pozanti_low

1) Can you talk about your background a bit? Are you from Istanbul? I went last year and totally loved it.

I was born and raised in Istanbul, but spent a significant part of my childhood in the States. My mother is a computer engineer and my father is an MD PhD who manages hospitals and clinics. From a very young age I have had access to server rooms, custom programmed computer games, giant MRI machines and lasers that make things magically disappear. All of this has had a major impact on my fascination with technology and its impact on our lives. Before becoming fully engrossed in art, I was making work for the fashion and music industries, for companies such as Nike, Converse and Mavi. I also worked for a high-end fashion retail store to design and produce shop windows. I made posters for dance clubs in Istanbul. Meanwhile I was preparing personal work for shows in Europe, the USA and Turkey. It was a very high-speed time in my life where too many things were happening all at once. I had a "Devil-Wears-Prada" breakdown and decided to focus only on my art. I applied to MFA programs and got into Yale. After two years in New Haven, I now live in New York.

2) Your earlier work is very much inspired by the visual culture of the internet-manga, porn, hipster GIFs. Why were you drawn to this? Is it still worthwhile?

I've always been fascinated by the darker sides of the human psyche. The anonymity and censorship free environment of the Internet provided a portal for me to explore this deeply. I had infinite access to people's deepest and strangest dreams. I could explore the furthest corners of their most secret fantasy worlds. I found this exhilarating and mind-boggling. Kind of like consensual voyeurism. Before long, I was reading sexual love letters that people had written to their deceased pets. I still believe these things are worthwhile and significant in the sense of sharing information freely. We should be doing everything in our means to make sure our right to share and access information remains intact without fear of censorship, control or surveillance from governments and/or corporations.

3) Can you describe why and how you switched from digital collage to painting?

I started having strange impulses of reaching my hand into the glowing world of the screen and pulling a handful of it into physical reality. Years of sitting and staring into a rectangle had started making me restless. I wanted to remember how it felt to use all of my body and senses while creating. The static screen and its predefined tools were not versatile enough to accommodate me in this sense. I wanted gravity, resistance and mistakes. To remember what it felt like to not be able to take something back. To patiently focus my attention and contemplate the value and meaning of every single move I was making. To stroke with my fingertips, smell the wood I painted on and wonder at the colors that I mixed. To separate myself long enough from the dream life of screens to simultaneously enjoy the sensual pleasures of tactility. To make physical love after an extended period of virtual play.

4) Your painting seems to be marching towards more and more minimal abstraction. Can you talk about this progression? I'm projecting a lot here, but it seems like this type of painting is very popular right now as an antidote to the hyper-busy work of people like Ryan Trecartin. However, it also seems to be an extension, wherein the basic composition and pure fields of color seem to mimic the pixel as a basic unit of visual representation. What do you think?

I am more interested in the idea of slowness. I guess that's where my work would speak to Ryan Trecartin's. His work addresses the hyper-speed of overproduction and over-consumption. Mine address this more indirectly by proposing painting as a means of slowing down. Bringing the daily life of the artist and art-production back into a contemplative practice in the studio. Resisting the destructive and spiraling speed of daily contemporary life through selective online presence. Blocking uncontrolled bombardment of communication and information by generating focused time for physical creation. My interest in abstraction is also an extension of this. I could say that my art practice at the moment is an experiment of sorts. To implement the following clauses and see what the results would be: no Internet in my studio, no smart phone on my body and working in isolation. I choose to be selectively disconnected and try to invent a whole new abstract world that does not appropriate or refer to anything in my digital image archive – which holds around a million images I've been collecting through years of online activity.

5) What are you working on for your new show?

I am working on three large-scale paintings, three cutout shape paintings and some animated GIFs that are super-slow. The large paintings have the exact proportions of an iPhone screen, but enlarged to human body scale. I wanted to physically experience the proportions of an everyday screen in relation to my body. To try and step into that screen as it were. Or vice versa, bring the screen into physical reality. To somehow reconcile the virtual and the tactile worlds. Generate an analog digital. This is where the title of the show comes from. Co-Real. To me, the world of the screen is an infinite universe of daydreams. Much like the surrealists aimed to reconcile the world of dreams and reality, I would like to explore the possibility of inventing a new reality from the merging of the virtual and the tactile.