

## \_RECESS\_

Leili Tehrani-Walker and Rachel Button

Blindside 5 - 15 March 2025

The Bell Rings; an end and a beginning. Retreat. Let the sunlight hit your face. Time lurches ahead, but let it, even if we know we must rejoin the torrent of images, instructions, yelling in chorus. There used to be a Computer Room. Now there is no afk<sup>1</sup>. "I don't go on the internet; I am in the internet and always online. I have extended myself into the machines I carry with me at all times."<sup>2</sup> Retreat and find new ways of Being.

Astonished by a pilgrimage to the prehistoric painted caves of Spain and France, Rachel envisions the cave as a recess. If art emerges when the necessities of daily life are fulfilled, the recess may have birthed the first signification. It is claimed that "the history of painting could have possibly sprung from a simple red dot in Spain."<sup>3</sup> History begins? To make a mark is to enter into time, but which time is that, since all time occurs simultaneously?

Leilli transfers pixels onto papyrus, interrogating the ongoing tension between art, technology, and capital. The attention economy has shifted the artist's role from art-making to self-commodification<sup>4</sup>. Boxers, video game villains and sexualised forms highlight the pressures of performative identity in a world where the self is fragmented and infinitely

reproducible. ASCII<sup>5</sup> art - which subverts the significance of letters - critiques the instability of the digital self whilst anchoring it within a medium associated with permanence.

Perched on papyrus, Leili's pixel is the immaterial mark made material, plucked from the eternal non-time of the feed. So too Rachel uses charcoal on the open face of her sculptures - a swirl of signification torn between drawing and a language just being born. Leili sprays paint through plastic stencils like prehistoric artists blew pigment through a hollow bone onto the cave wall. Technology repeats and re-occurs in complex configurations, the endless venture of communication.

We embrace the chaotic, the fragmented, and the irreverent, reveling in the disorder of the internet age. Plucked from time, the cave-recess and the pixel are thrown together like odd bedfellows. The internet and the cave are timeless places, untouched and endless, magical and sinister, close to the veil of the sublime. Making work that references prehistoric futurism and futuristic prehistory, these artists, accepting that some things can never be understood, 'react by asserting wild poetic logic, which belies reason'<sup>6</sup>

*There was once a highly sensitive pigment spot lying  
supine on plateau, a face stargazing in vulnerable  
innocence. That world was a binary of light on/off. Soon  
the eye became more wary: it retreated into a deeper  
cleft in the face. The essence of things is easy to find.  
Start an autopsy from the cave of your own ear.*

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<sup>1</sup> "Away from keyboard", an ancient phrase.

<sup>2</sup> South, K. (2013) *Identify Yourself*, <http://idyrself.com/>.

<sup>3</sup> Vartanian, H. (2012) Oldest Confirmed Cave Art is a Single Red Dot. Hypoallergenic.

<sup>4</sup> Troemel, B. (2017), *Athletic Aesthetics*. The New Inquiry.

<https://thenewinquiry.com/athletic-aesthetics/>

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<sup>5</sup> (/ 'æski:/ ASS-kee) is an acronym for American Standard Code for Information Interchange, a character encoding standard for electronic communication. ASCII is both image and language. The eye roves - it reads and sees simultaneously, a confused state of both/and. 'Close up you may see semiotic signs and only at a distance perceive the motif in its totality.' Wagner, K (2023).

<sup>6</sup> Killeen, K. (2023) *The Unknowable in Early Modern Thought, Natural Philosophy and the Poetics of the Ineffable*. Stanford University Press