Thomas Erben Gallery

Jon Rafman, *Still Life: Betamale*, 2013. Single-channel digital video, 4:55 min.

From Net Art to Post-Internet

JODI, Rosa Menkman, Lorna Mills, Manfred Mohr,
*Vera Molnár, Jon Rafman, and Penelope Umbrico*

June 16 - July 29, 2022

Installation view, west and north walls.

Thomas Erben Gallery is pleased to present *From Net Art to Post-Internet*, a group show co-curated by *Caesura* magazine's David Faes and Patrick Zapien that explores the history of digital art from its origins in the algorithmic experiments of conceptual art in the '60s and '70s to the emergence of a generation of artists whose aesthetic sensibility and cultural outlook has been distinctly shaped by the Internet. The plotter drawings, websites, videos and GIFs on view — by **JODI**, **Rosa Menkman**, **Lorna Mills**, **Manfred Mohr**, **Vera Molnár**, **Jon Rafman**, and **Penelope Umbrico** — represent the various ways in which artists have responded to the Internet and the proliferation of related technologies that aim at reproducing life in the digital realm.

Manfred Mohr and **Vera Molnár**'s algorithmically composed plotter drawings are examples of the kind of conceptual experiments that led from the concerns shared by pataphysics, process art, and aleatory music in the '50s and '60s — an interest in transforming artistic technique by imposing constraints on composition or subjecting it to a series of chance operations — to an exploration of the aesthetic potential inherent in electronic computation and digital media.
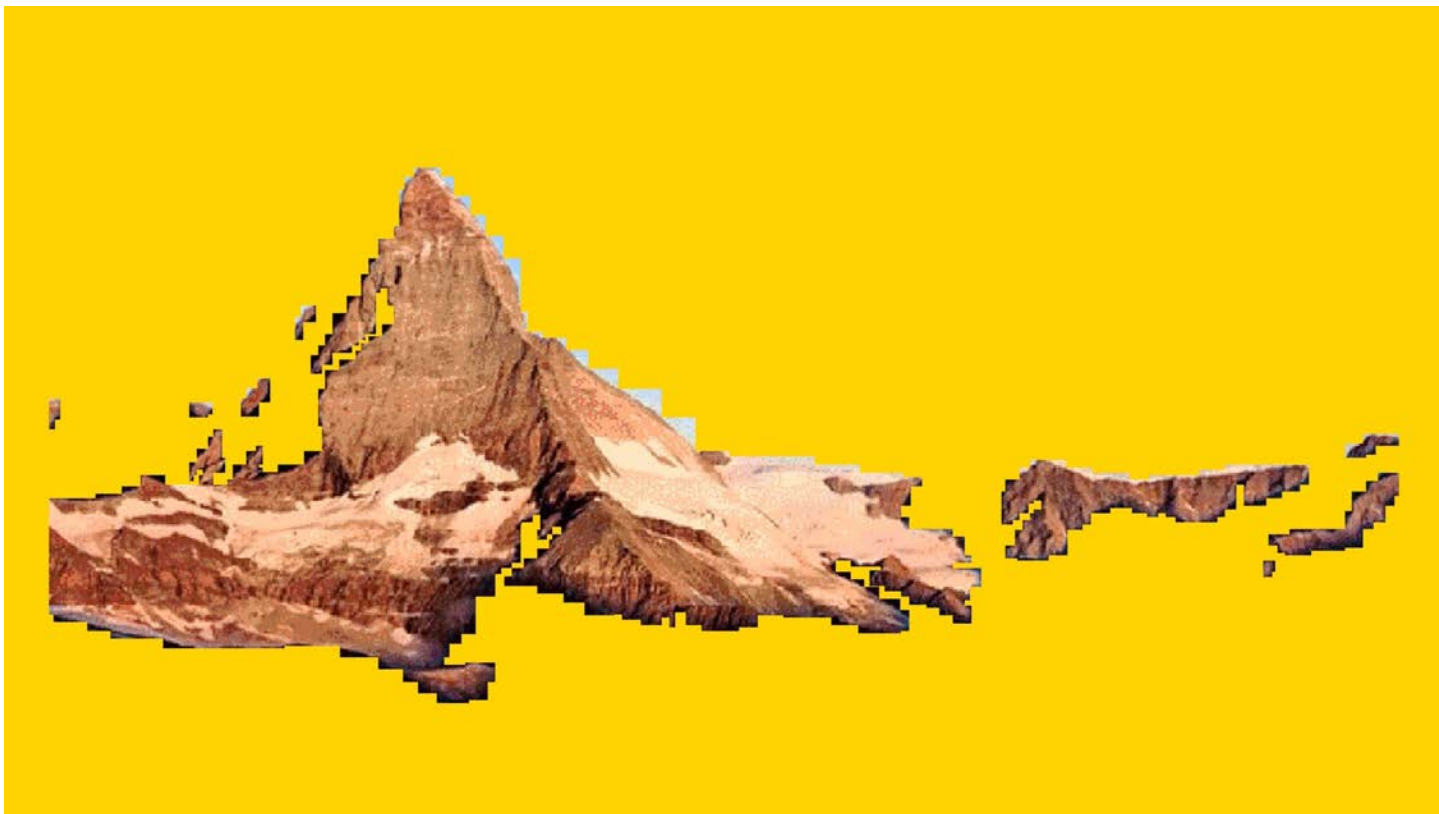
Lorna Mills, *Mountain Time/Light*, 2016. Animated GIF.

Vera Molnár, *Inclinaisons*, 1971. Computer generated graphic ink on Benson plotter paper, 19.69 x 19.69 in.

Jon Rafman, *Still Life: Betamale*, 2013. Single-channel digital video, 4:55 min.

Installation view, west and north walls

By the late '90s, the rise of the Internet had created an ecosystem of interconnected users that began to produce a new visual culture, changing what it meant for artists to work with computers. Self-proclaimed "Net Artists" like **JODI** took inspiration from algorithmic art and tried to apply its formal and conceptual rigor to the graphic style of early HTML/CSS in order to capture the disorienting sensation of browsing the web for extended periods of time. **Lorna Mills**' GIFs have a similar effect. Working in the dada/surrealist tradition of collage, Mills' sets found GIFS against monochrome backgrounds, cropping out subjects and isolating fragments of Internet culture in a way that unmoors their meaning, allowing them to become cyphers of mediated desire. Although taking a more structuralist approach, **Rosa Menkman**'s *Videoscapes* — which record various audio/visual "glitches" by exploiting the unique properties of video file formats and digital image processing— also attain a sublimity that pushes the viewer to consider the purpose of these new forms of technology. **Jon Rafman** and **Penelope Umbrico**'s contributions — *Still Life: Betamale* (2013) and *Screen Sun* (2014) — both show how even the most seemingly natural aspects of life — our dreams, the sunset — have quietly moved online.
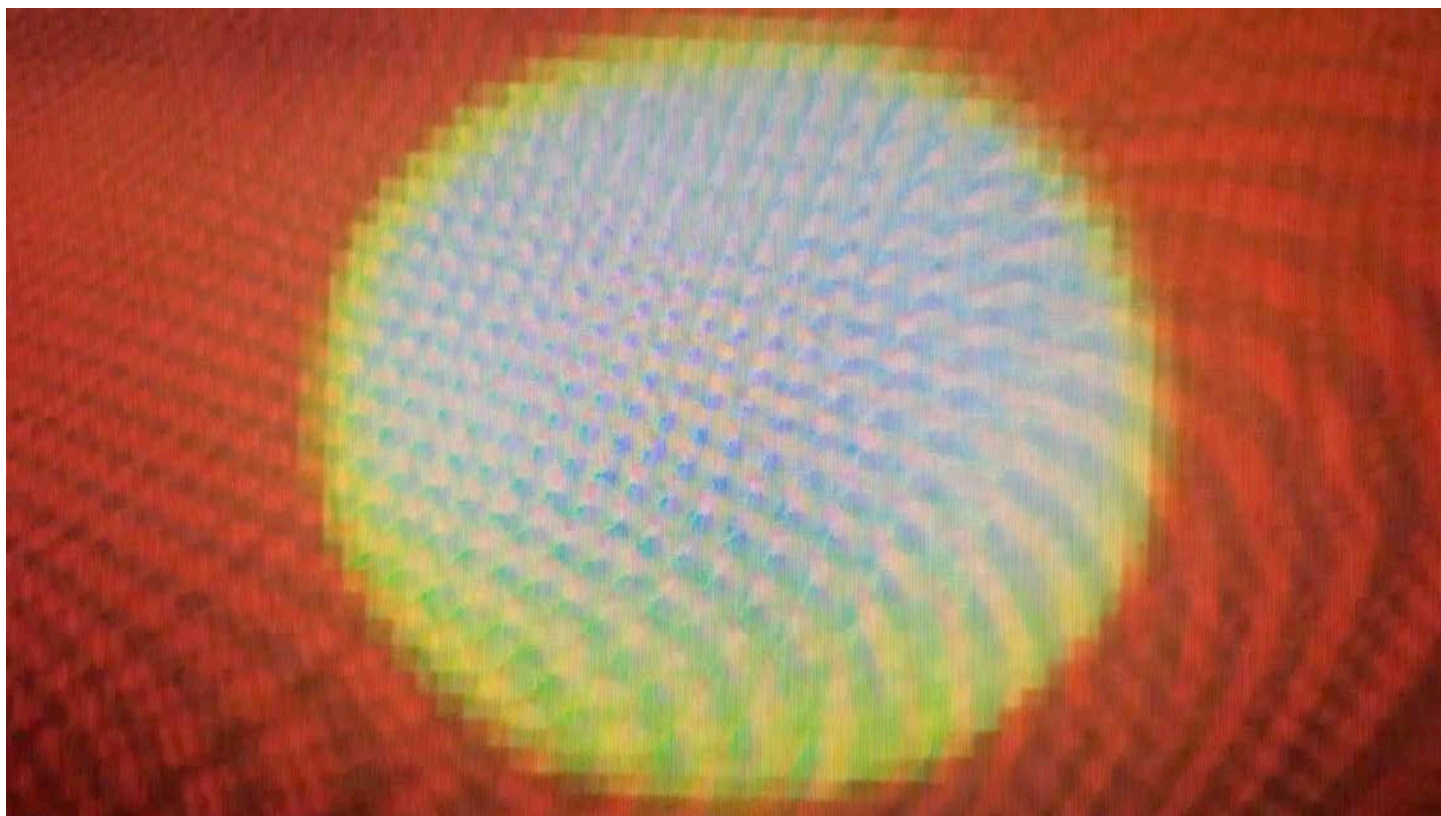
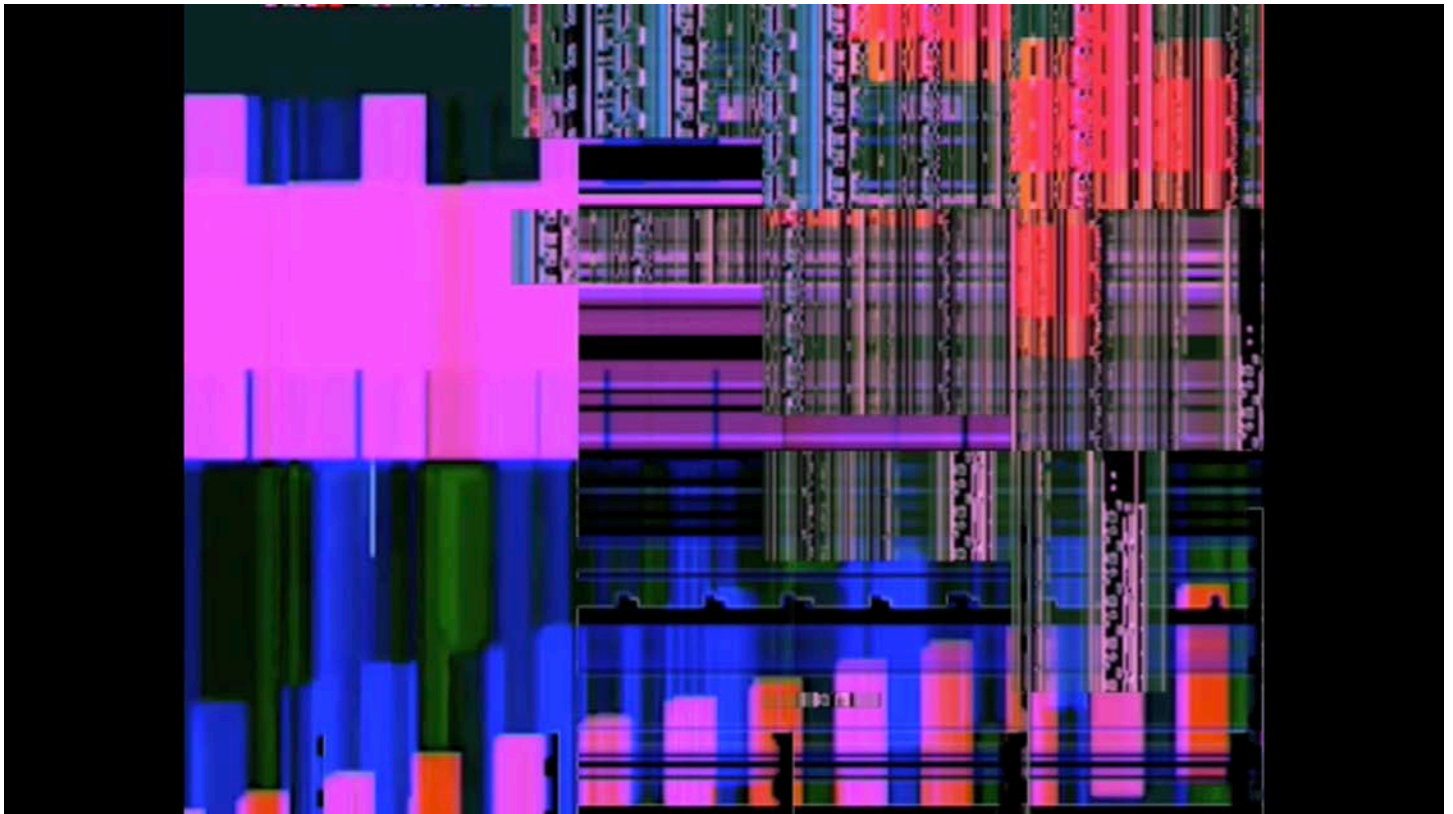Penelope Umbrico, *Screen Sun* 2014. Single-channel digital video, 35:06 min.
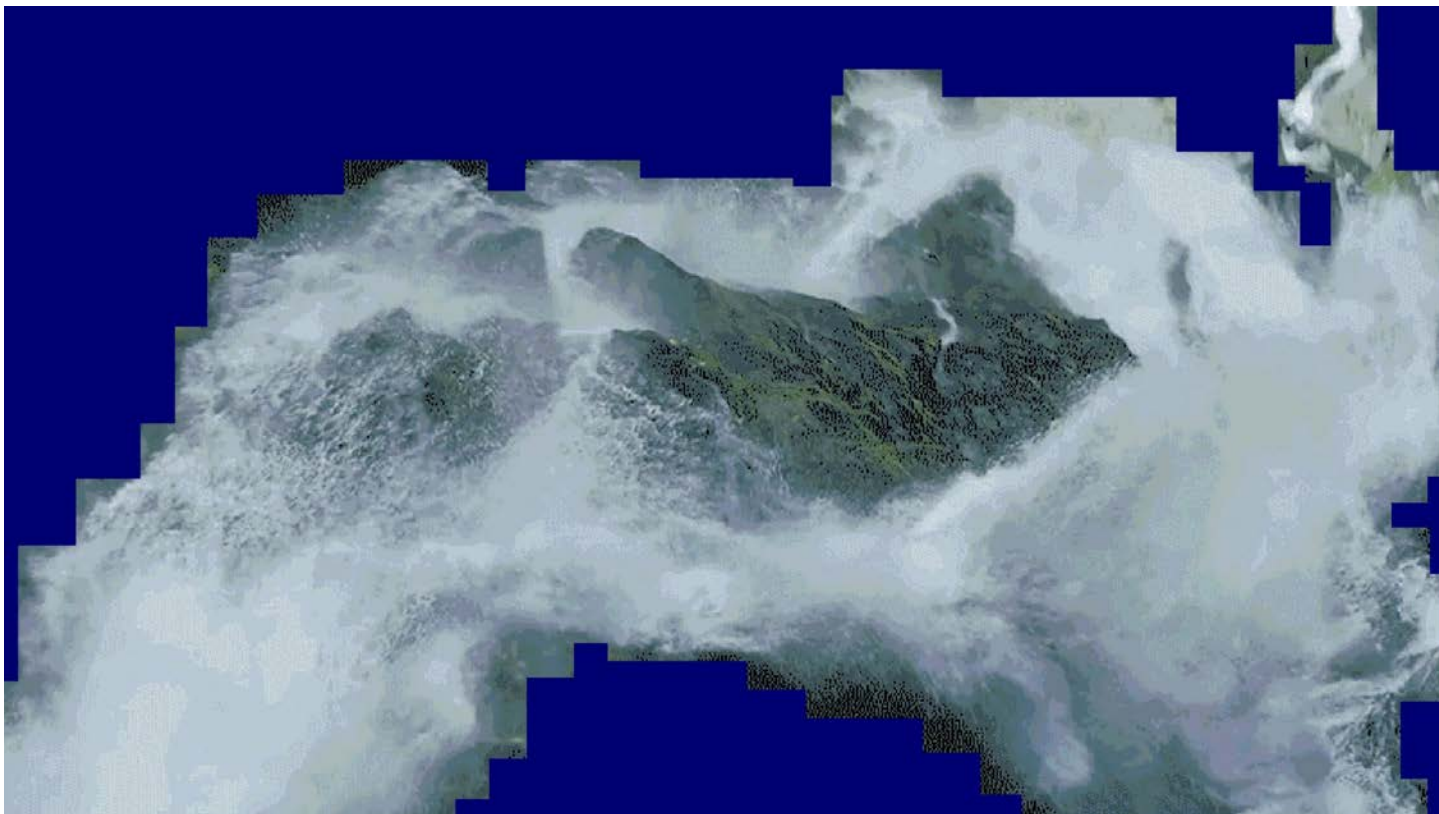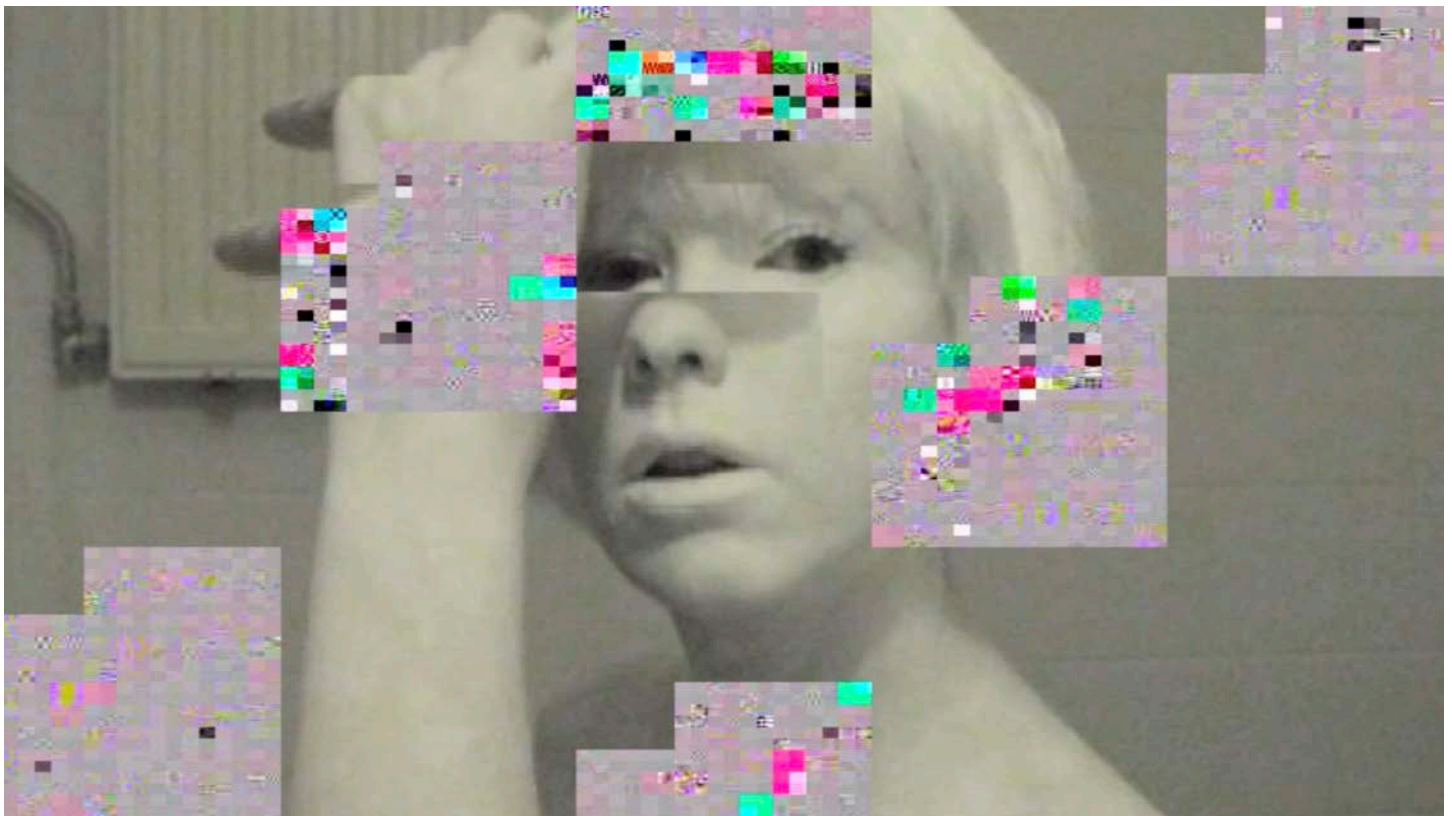
Lorna Mills, *River Run*, 2016. Animated GIF.
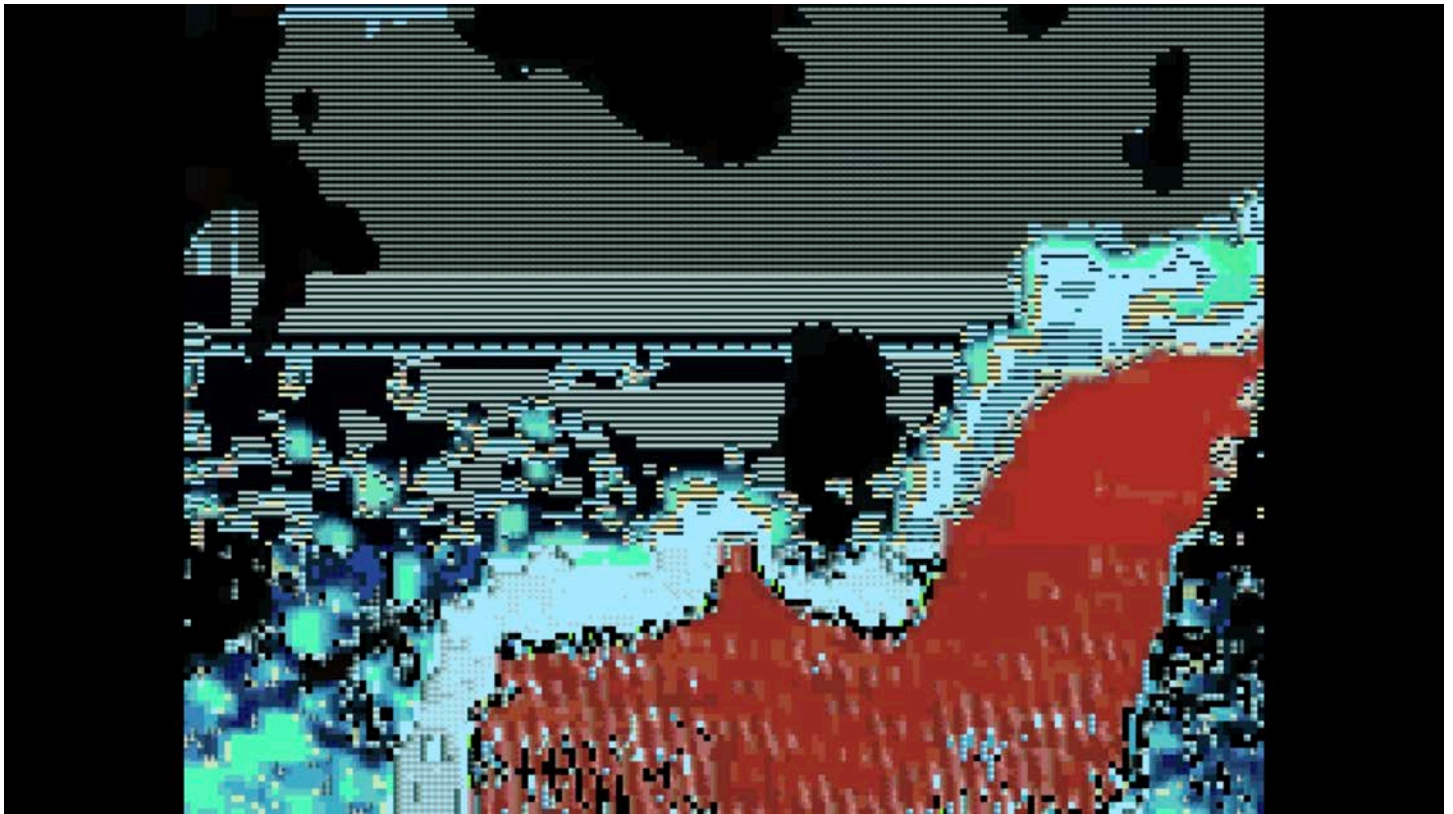
Installation view, east wall.

Rosa Menkman, *Eastern Fire Swim*, 2008. Single-channel digital video, 4:43 min.

Rosa Menkman, *Performative Fail,* 2008. Single-channel digital video, 4:27 min.

Rosa Menkman, *Demolish the eerie void*, 2010. Single-channel digital video, 1:02 min.

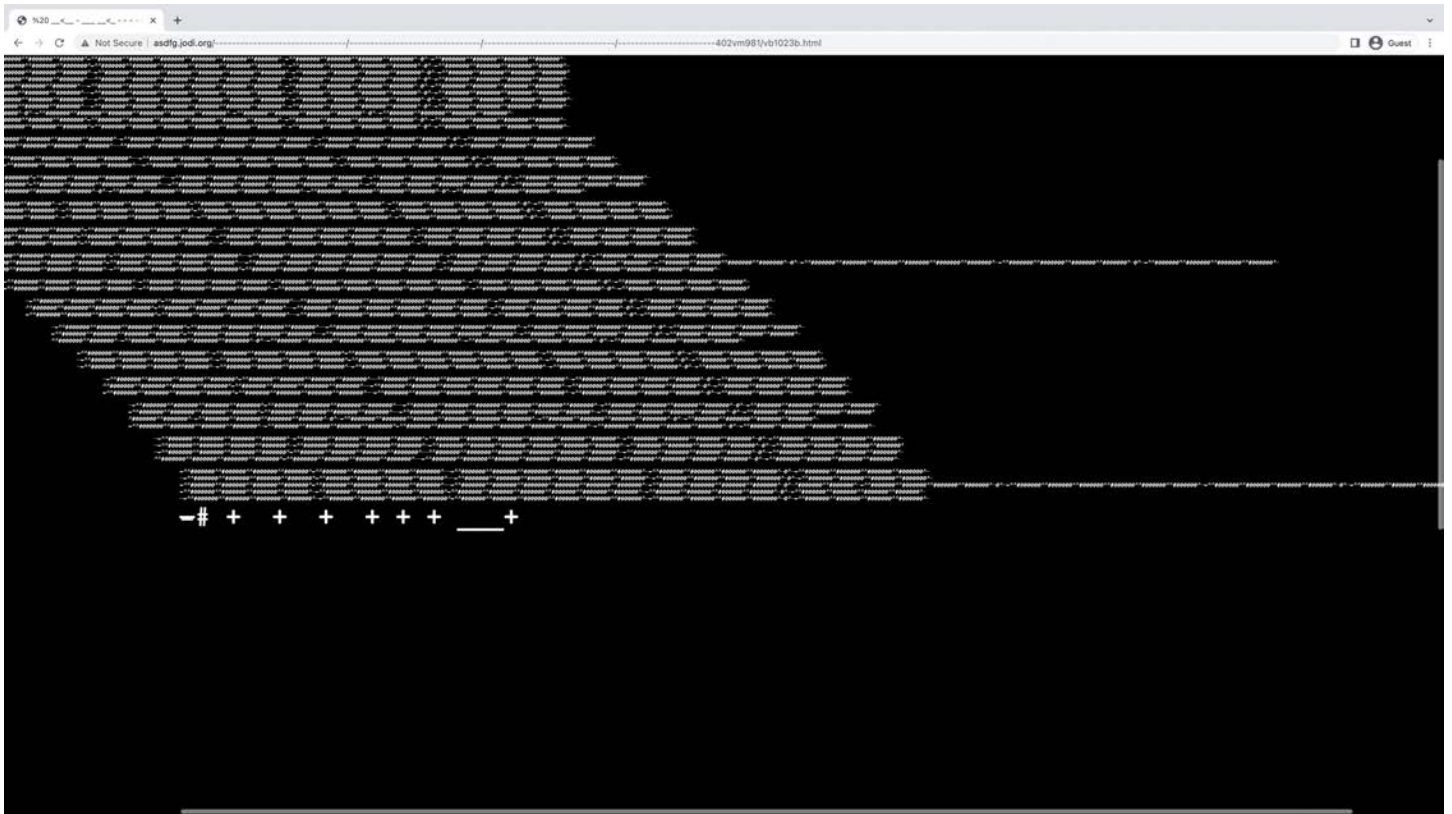Rosa Menkman, *Radio Dada*, 2008. Single-channel digital video, 3:45 min.

Installation view, east and south walls

The Internet — originally developed to anticipate and control nuclear threats during the Cold War — has since become a bedrock of social life. The so-called "digital revolution" has permeated all spheres of life, transforming the imagination itself. Not only have we created new forms of mediation to translate our social relations into computable data — e.g. algorithms, file formats, websites, software interfaces, social media, etc. — these technological developments have themselves begun to suggest new and different forms of sociability. For the artists in this show, this is neither to be rejected nor affirmed. Rather, technology, like art, is to be seen as a prosthesis: an extension of our humanity that allows us to become critically self-aware of how our reason and practice give form to the world.
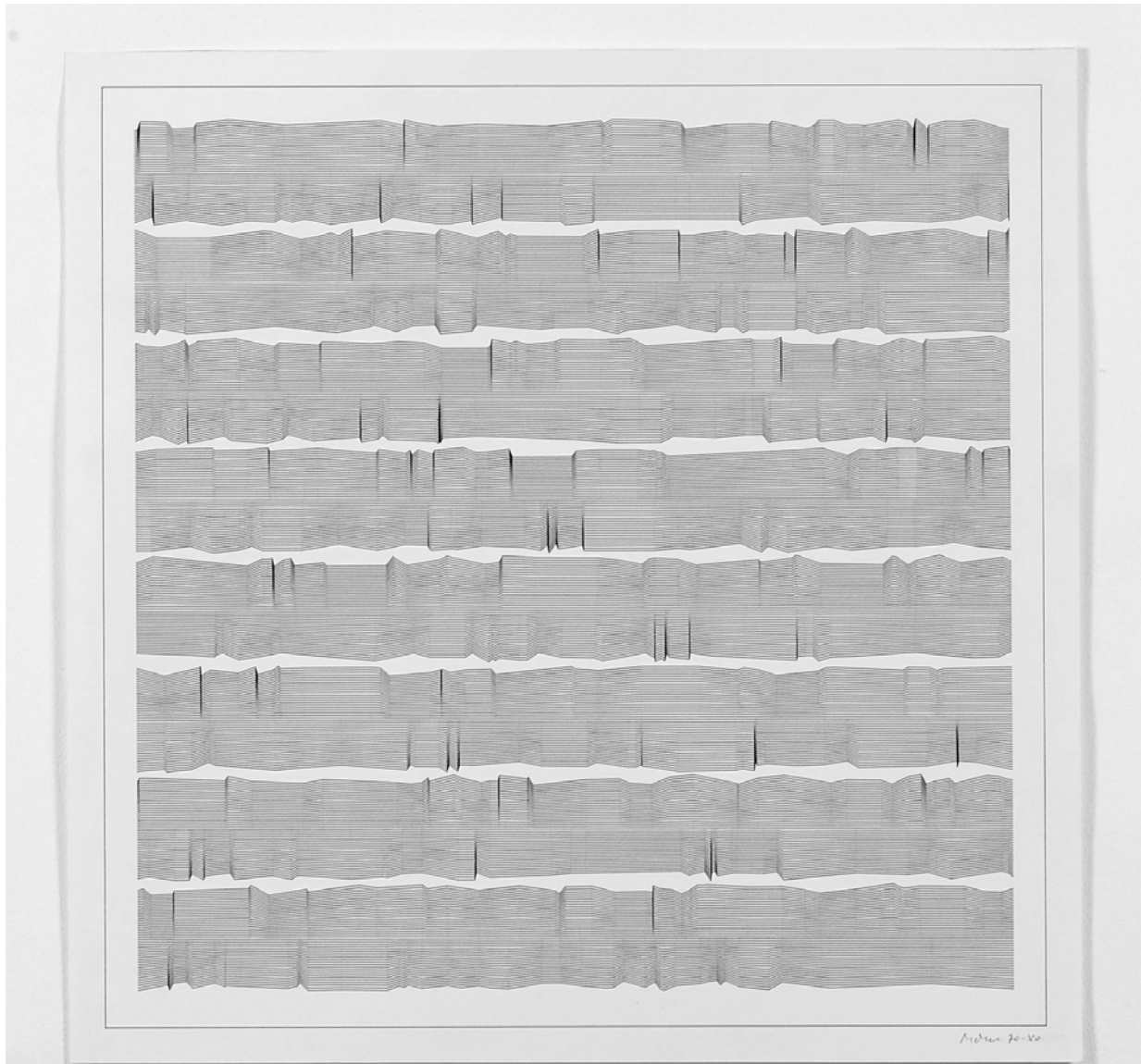
Manfred Mohr, *P-052-c (Quark Lines)*, 1970. Computer generated graphic ink on plotter paper, 24.5 x 24.5 in.

JODI, *ASDFG* 1999. HTML files.