

PAUL KNEALE

RECYCLING



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Destiny Cleanse,
inkjet on canvas,
198cm x 147cm
(2020)

GLENHYRST ART GALLERY OF BRANT

20 Ava Road,
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519-756-5932
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Gallery Hours:
Tuesday – Friday: 10am – 5pm
Weekends: 11am – 4pm
Admission is free



NOTES

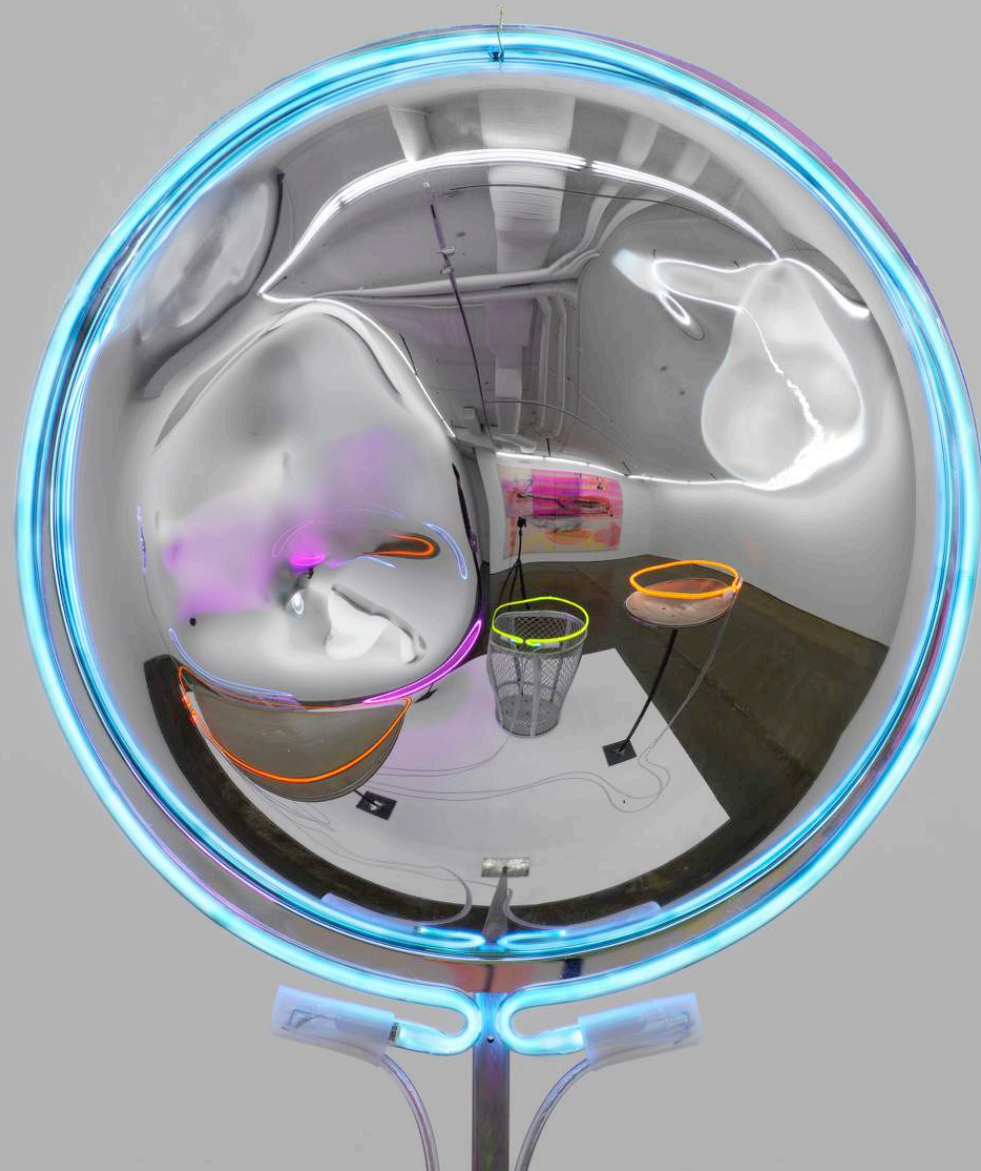
¹ Mark J.P. Wolf, *Abstracting Reality: Art, Communication, and Cognition in the Digital Age* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000): 3.

² Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, translated and annotated by Ken Knabb (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2014): 2.

³ Paul Kneale, "Artist Statement," *ARTUNER* (2020), <https://www.artuner.com/artists/paul-kneale/> (accessed 25 August 2020).

⁴ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn (London, UK: Fontana, 1992): 171.

⁵ Nicholas Bourriaud, *Postproduction – Culture as Screenplay: How art reprograms the world*, translated by Jeanine Herman (Dijon, FR: Les Presses du Réel, 2005).



Waste Management: Paul Kneale's Recycled Light

By Matthew Ryan Smith, Curator & Head of Collections

"Often when you think you're at the end of something,
you're at the beginning of something else."

– Fred Rogers

Take a walk, drive a road, ride your bike—the grey concrete façade of public urban space, with its rusted steel scaffolding and twinkling neon lights is nearly ubiquitous. Our visual culture paints our eyes with the bright lights of commercial advertising. Even in forests, parks, and beaches, where our connection with nature is uncorrupted, ugly metal bins and containers remind us of what we have become and where to throw our waste (out of sight and mind in a landfill far away). In this exhibition, Paul Kneale maps the common symbols and experiences of everyday life and reinterprets them to probe the vicissitudes of daily life.

Kneale's scanner paintings question how society interfaces with digital technology. Its psychological implications on human cognition and visual perception is still unfolding. For communications theorist Mark Wolf, digital technology "promotes a quantized style of thinking that produce[s] a limited, if not hazardous, way of looking at the world, changing the nature of cognition and the individual's link to lived experience."¹ In this light, Kneale's recent body of work in the exhibition "Recycled" interrogates the cold frame of digital images and its tendency to dehumanize social relationships.

In the late 1960s, Philosopher Guy Debord warned against the power of images to produce social distance. He maintained that Western society had become *mediated* by images, which fundamentally transformed the manner that individuals interact, perceive, and connect to one another.² Such images and iconography were commonly found in commercial advertising, newspapers, television, film, and so forth. However, Debord could not have predicted the extent that digital media impacts everyday life; nor could he have predicted that a global pandemic would necessitate quarantines that further starve interpersonal encounters. Kneale's work suggests that our complicated relationship to digital images should be scrutinized because the further we become consumed by digital technology the further we move away from aspects of ourselves, of our lived reality.³ This is precisely the reason why he attempts to reintegrate the personal, the idiosyncratic, into the apathetic binary codes of digital images.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Paul Kneale was born in Brantford, Ontario in 1986. He received a BA in Visual Studies and Art History from the University of Toronto and an MFA from the Slade School of Fine Art (London, UK) in 2011. His work has been shown at galleries and museums across Canada, the United States, and Europe, including the Art Gallery of Ontario, Boca Raton Museum, Centre Pompidou Metz, and the Thetis Gardens in Venice, Italy. He has taught art studio at the Zurich University of Art and has contributed theoretical articles to *Frieze* and *Spike* magazines. In 2019, Kneale unveiled *Flat Earth Visa*, a site-specific installation for the hillscape surrounding the Fondazione Sandretto ReRebaudengo in Torino, Italy. His work resides in public and private art collections. Kneale lives and works in Brantford, Ontario.

Top Image: *Lack Hole and Maybe Universes (detail)*, mirrors, neon tube, sandblasted metal and fibreglass, steel, dimensions variable (2017)
Cover Image: *Freebase Serotonin Antagonist (detail)*, inkjet on canvas, 198cm × 147cm (2020)

Unlike analog images, the quality of digital images does not deteriorate when copied. However, by using digital scans of lived reality, Kneale can generate inkjet paintings on canvas that emphasize how this technology can forge random, even erratic images. By removing the hitherto unseen codes of binary language and adopting them for the realm of aesthetics, Kneale closes an information loop from the real to the digital world and back again. Doing so challenges the immaterial dimensions of digital imagery by offering it a physical presence in the real world. It is given flesh. Ironically, however, Kneale's practice has metamorphosed the artist into a kind of cyborg who shares his hand with the scanner's drive belt and his eye with the scanner's image sensor. There is no escape.

Influenced by the histories of photography, scanography, and xerography, Kneale's practice uses inexpensive flatbed scanners to produce scanner paintings. This critical approach simultaneously breaks from the canon of Modernist abstraction while leading contemporary painting in new, unexpected directions. It is an unpredictable and arduous process whereby layers of low and high-resolution scans he calls "impressions" are captured with the machine's lid open and with nothing (or very little) resting in the copy bed. What registers in the scanner's lens, then, are faint traces of ambient light contained in the ether of the artist's Brantford studio. For instance, in the undulating haze of blotter spots that is *Smoking Ozone* (2019), Kneale captured individual drips, marks, and abrasions using the light sensor of the machine. When these images are gathered together, one placed on top of the other, they form a composite image that is closer to colour field painting than conventional photography.

Cultural theorist Walter Benjamin contends that "the 'snapping' of the photographer has had the greatest consequences. A touch of the finger now sufficed to fix an event."⁴ Kneale's scanner paintings are often read as a form of photography, yet, in lieu of the camera's shutter, the scanner's button offers him the ability to stretch the boundaries of space and time. This technique is achieved by overlaying quick low-res scans over slow high-res scans so that various moments and atmospheres are recorded over a period of time. Kneale playfully refers to this effect as a "time sandwich." Still, there is a correlation to Albert Einstein's Theory of General Relativity, which speculates that the universe does not contain a single history, per se, but histories on multiple dimensions that human beings cannot readily perceive. The succession of images sandwiched together using different spaces and times in Kneale's scanner paintings question the phenomenon of visual experience. Furthermore, this also opens their categorical interpretation from photography to *cinematography*. They might, in fact, be short films fixed in two dimensions.

Kneale's impressions, or layers of ambient light, are often recycled from past works and will be used for those in the future. Curator Nicholas Bourriaud describes this methodology as "postproduction art;" or, the recycling of existing artwork to create new cultural configurations.⁵ Kneale's two-dimensional scanner paintings and other sculptural forms fall in line with Bourriaud's remix logic. Though, far earlier, Mr. Rogers philosophized the end of something as "the beginning of something else." Art, like dead plants, can be composted and given new life.

Image: *Smoking Ozone*, inkjet on canvas, 198cm x 147cm (2019)

