

# ARTNEWS

## YOU LOOK SO DIFFERENT ONLINE: DOUGLAS COUPLAND DEBUTS FACIAL DE-RECOGNITION SOFTWARE AT THE ARMORY

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The author, de-recognized.  
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND DANIEL FARIA GALLERY, TORONTO

“I miss my pre-Internet brain.”

“The unanticipated side effects of technology anticipate the future.”

“I have meme fatigue.”

These are three of the Douglas Coupland truisms that are nearby the Canadian artist and writer’s facial de-recognition software, titled *Deep Face: Communicate with your future self*, which is currently on view at Artsy’s booth near the entrance to Pier 94, at the Armory Show. As I read over Coupland’s wall of truisms, I watched as viewers tried out the de-recognition software.

Well-dressed art patrons posed for glamor shots, threw up peace signs, and gave toothy smiles as a flash went off. (I didn't bother making an expression, knowing that Coupland's software would place barcode-like patterns over my face.) The de-recognized images were then sent to the subjects via e-mail in the form of GIFs.

The de-recognition software grew out of Coupland's "Deep Face" series, which, as an Artsy spokesperson explained, is about the way Facebook's algorithms can understand human faces. This is how, when pictures are posted to Facebook, the site can guess who should be tagged. "They have 95 percent recognition, which is worse than the FBI," she explained. The camouflage distorts the image such that Facebook can no longer guess who's in the picture.

At the other end of the fair, the Toronto-based Daniel Faria Gallery had turned over its entire booth to paintings from Coupland's "Deep Face" series. Unlike the images that come out of the de-recognition software, these paintings feature people who look straight at the camera. On top of their faces are interpretations of barcodes and the patterns on dazzle ships. Ones like it are currently in the Whitechapel Gallery's talked-about show "Electronic Superhighway (2016–1966)," a historical survey of art after the Internet.

Each of the "Deep Face" paintings is priced at \$16,000, "because they're each unique," Daniel Faria, the eponymous gallerist, told me. He added that there was interest in one, and another was on hold, but none had sold yet. Then he looked down and pulled back his sleeve to reveal a black-and-white watch. He pointed to the time—1:30 p.m. "But you know," he continued optimistically, "it's early."

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-Greenberger, Alex. "You Look So Different Online: Douglas Coupland debuts facial de-recognition software at The Armory", *Artnews*, March 2, 2016.