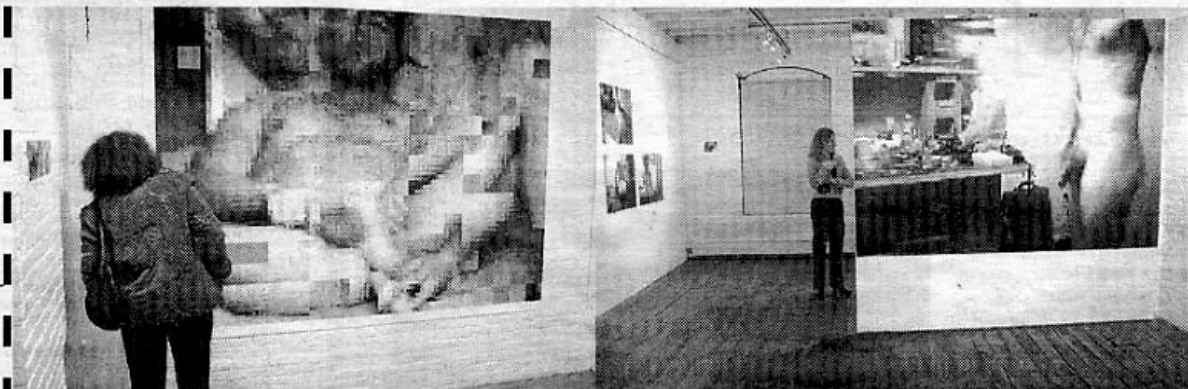


On your right: ho-hum, another vulva. On your left: whose grandma knitted that afghan, anyway?



MIKE MANUEL

SCREAMING FROM THE GALLERY BY KATE LEDOGAR | SCREAMING@WEEKLYDIG.COM

got2bReal



How many of you out there are sexually unsatisfied? Come on, don't be shy. Nothing to be ashamed about. Maybe you're not getting what you want, or you're getting it, but not often enough, or maybe from the wrong person. Or maybe you're satisfied but can't get past that awful feeling that perhaps there's someone better out there. Someone who can really plow your meadow. And sooner or later, you'll be dead.

Fucking hell.

Listen, it's OK! There's no need to address these concerns with your near and dear one. And you don't even have to go out and have yourself some sort of Motel 6, stain-the-sheets-and-hurry-home affair. No need to go to all that trouble. Just buy yourself a webcam and join an internet sex community, and you can get your kicks from the privacy of your own head. Neat!

And you'd have international company, the likes of Legs&Maybemore from Nashville, Telemaco from Italy and Wilbur from Scotland. I know all this because I am EasyRider from Cambridge. OK, maybe I learned about it at Chantal Zakari's WebAffairs exhibit at HallSpace gallery.

Zakari aptly likens her appropriated web images to street photography. These are images in the public domain, to be viewed and reproduced by anyone with the right equipment. Zakari has isolated single-frame moments in these webcam sexploits, removed them from their 72 dpi-friendly computer home and printed them out in all their pixelated glory. The abstraction of the images varies, depending on the size of the reproduction. This gives viewers the fun opportunity to look at a bunch of brown and pink squares up close, then back up until they can see Wilbur's penis. Kind of like a *Where's Waldo?* for adults.

Zakari's role as artist, or photographer, is an unusual one. She functions as an editor and narrator, looking through a series of images until she finds the right composition, then assembling the collected images to convey her premise that "... as we increasingly participate in a virtual environment the virtual assumes a more powerful position in identifying who we are." On the walls are snippets of internet chat text, communicating the casual

intimacy people can share when they think they will never meet. The prints are reproduced in various sizes, alone or in groups, mimicking the come-and-go atmosphere of chat rooms. Some people are clothed; many are touching their naked genitals; some are in pairs—in one, a little boy looks over his (apparent) mother's shoulder. There are also many pictures of interiors. Desks and books and sofas and afghans and ugly clocks. Other people's houses. The odd thing is that these objects, viewed next to the pink and brown uniformity of naked bodies, are the intimate images. On your right: ho-hum, another vulva. On your left: Whose grandma knitted that afghan, anyway? What does it smell like? And this is what makes this exhibit interesting.

Overall, I felt the prints also conveyed a profound loneliness that's endemic to our mediaphilic world. It's my suspicion that we experience our world through the media (newspapers, films, television, internet, billboards ...), so much so that we feel we don't truly exist unless we're represented in the media as well. Thus, the runaway popularity of blogging, *American Idol* and reality shows. Every second, we are trees falling in the forest, unless someone catches it on camera.

A couple hundred years ago in Japan, artists recorded images of sex and entertainment—everyday life. These colorful woodblock prints celebrated the details of life, while acknowledging its transience. The name of the style, Ukiyo-e, translates roughly to "the fleeting, floating world." We today, on the other hand, seek to cement time in reproducible images, attempting to be made real by becoming fictionalized. And now we're sitting at home with our fingers up our twats, facing a digicam and typing words into IM with our free hand. Cementing our personal fiction with every stroke.

The internet is supposed to have something to do with communication, but I think it's one of the most isolating tools ever invented. Zakari's stolen images capture this isolation, these handcrafted attempts at notoriety, filmed against the backdrop of the mundane terrors of everyday life.ⓧ

CHANTAL ZAKARI AT HALLSPACE, 31 NORFOLK AVE., BOSTON.

THERE WILL BE A CLOSING EVENT ON FEBRUARY 19 FROM 3PM-6PM. WWW.HALLSPACE.ORG