

Ben Elliot

Influencers

with @world_record_egg
Backpack Kid
Hannah Diamond
Constant Dullaart
Ed Fornieles
Johanna Jaskowska
Nike
QT
Red Bull
Winter Vandenbrink

introduced by EXO EXO

Galerie Hussenot, Paris
2019

The Internet, cell phones, and social media networking, branding, and influencing are the creative and entrepreneurial tools and, at times, artworks themselves of the current generation. In the virtual realm, the individual possesses the agency and ability to construct a digital self or identity as real or as imagined as they wish. Ben Elliot debuts 5 new “Unreleased Selfies” from his archive. These images while curated and posed did not reflect his brand, the persona he carefully presents, shares, and sells online. While intended for digital viewing, they can be seen only here in real life. Influencers examines the current culture of self-branding and influencer marketing – how we construct ourselves, communicate online, build brands in our image and market ourselves – across a variety of disciplines – visual art, design, filmmaking, music – to suggest an interconnected and intermixed contemporary culture joining together people, brands, and fresh ideas.

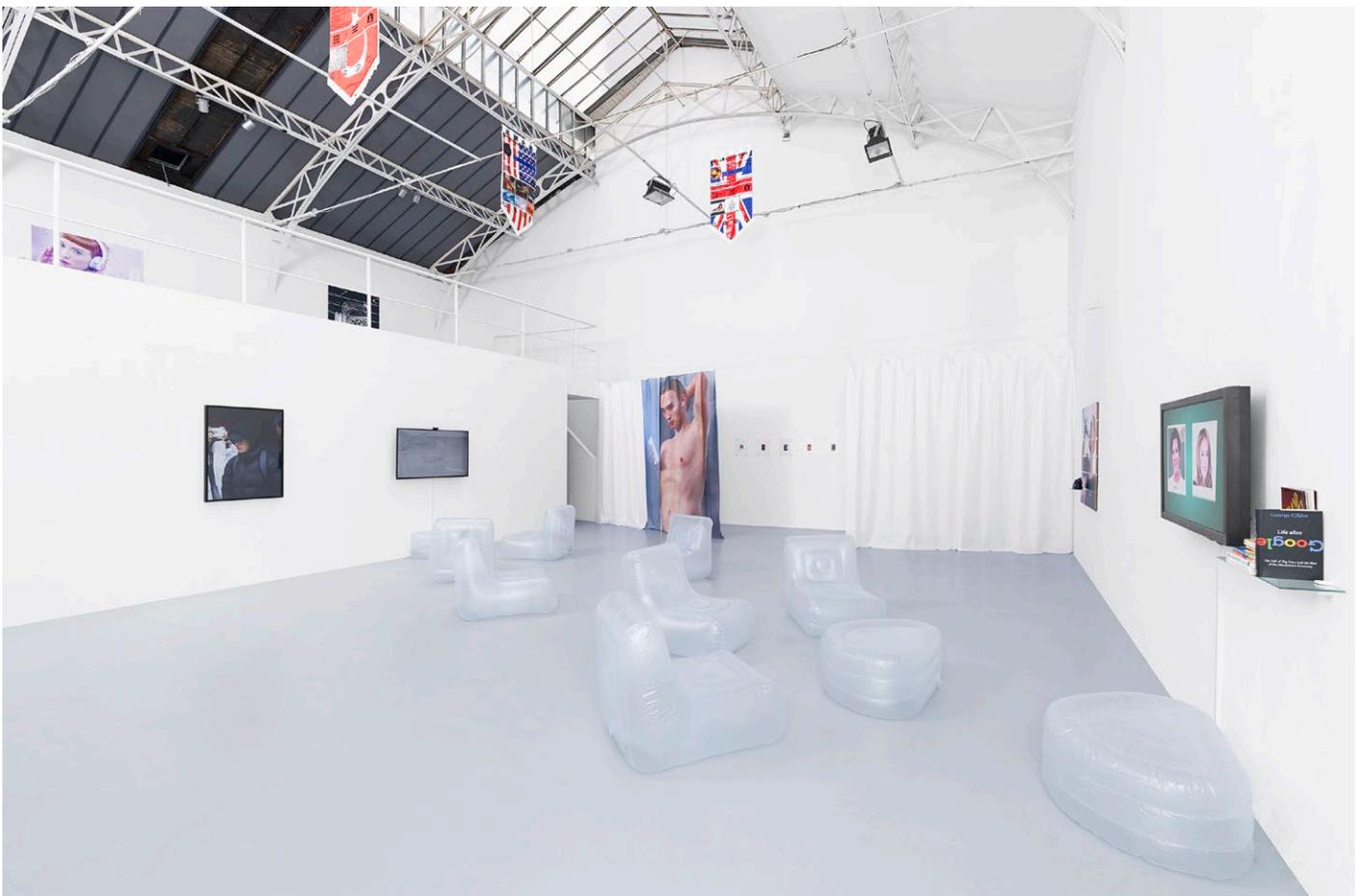
What’s real versus imitation, what’s art versus life seems far less relevant to current youth culture than the individual’s autonomy in creating their brand in relationship to life, society, economics, and an audience. PC music, the domain of artists QT and Hannah Diamond, relies upon self-presentation or self-construction in relationship to product, capital, and influencer marketing. QT’s Hey QT Energy Drink, for example, embodies the artist’s personality and musical style in its effervescent bubbiness and yet sells much like her enterprising nature.

The audience is commodity, as artist Constant Dullaart proves in his work High Retention, Slow Delivery. Dullaart created, sold, and distributed 2.5 million Instagram accounts or followers to active Instagram accounts desiring an army of likes perhaps for self-validation or marketing advantage. Regardless of reason, the quantifiable social capital of attention is characteristic of contemporary influencer culture. How much of this is narcissism, a need for popularity, or a desire to feel celebrity? Johanna Jaskowska’s filters alter the face much like the creative form of the mask but also reveal our desire to alter. In navigating Influencers, the viewer may question how the economic power of quantified audiences in social media and influencer marketing culture affects independent expression and creativity.

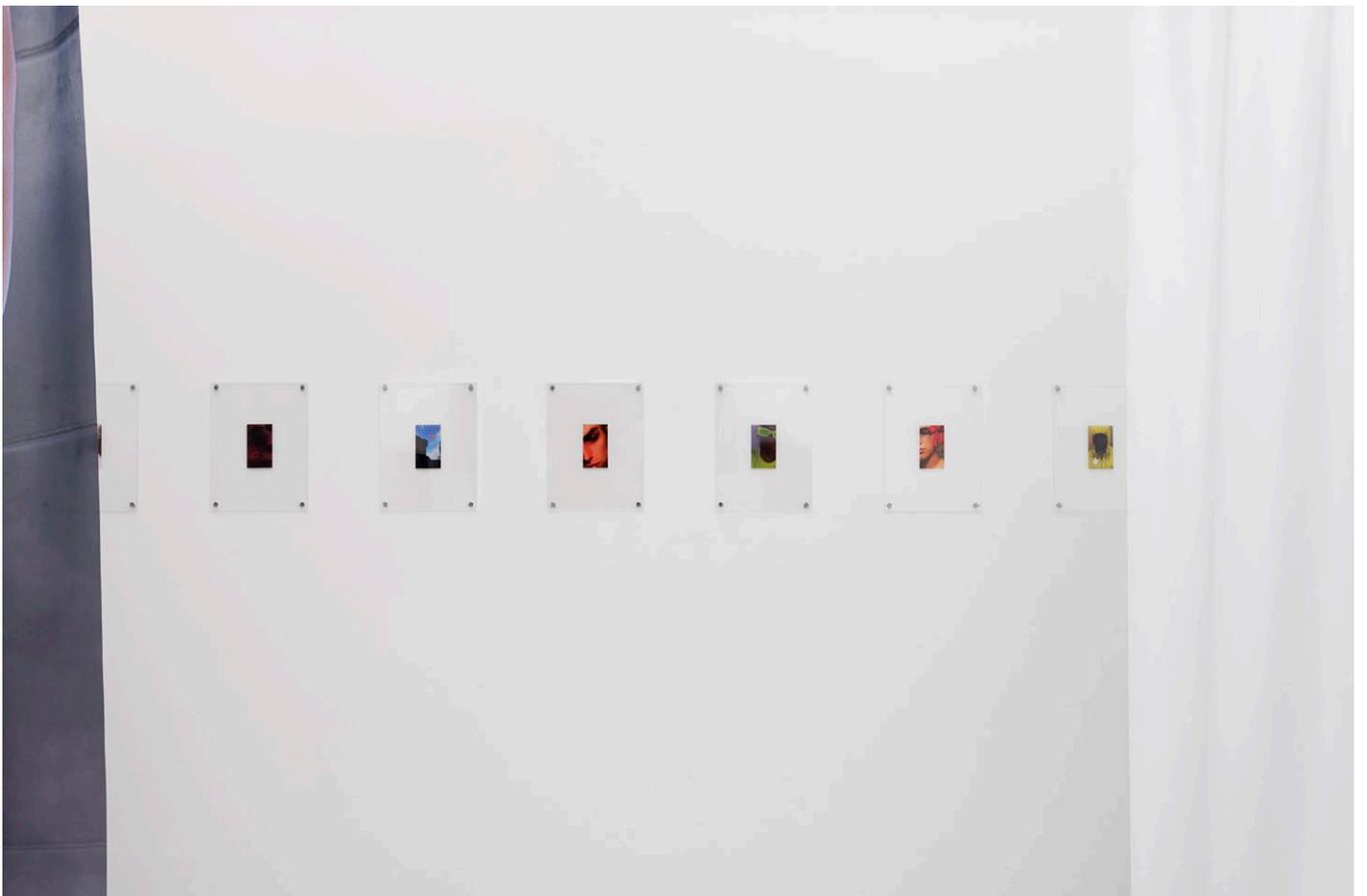
The realm of conceptual art, social media, branding, and partnerships is not exempt from social critique and satire. The exhibition, in fact, encourages us to reflect and reconsider the perhaps superficial nature of how we present ourselves and communicate with others. Ben Elliot ultimately proposes a limitless and collaborative idea of contemporary culture much like the networks the exhibiting artists and influencers utilize and analyze. A linear model of culture differentiating creative disciplines is the past. In this new sociocultural structure lies the potential for a new kind of creative and entrepreneur.

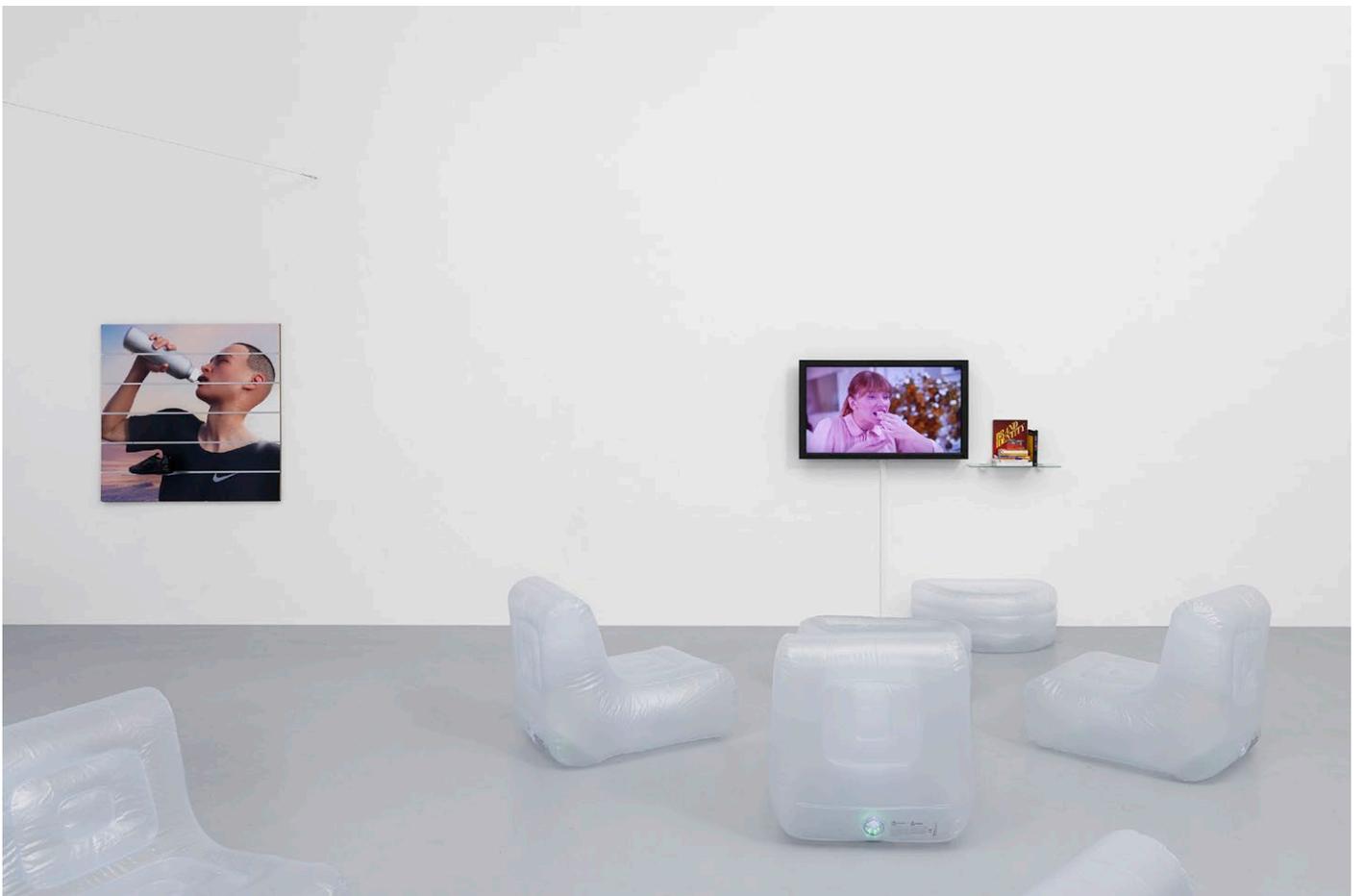
Emily Chancey

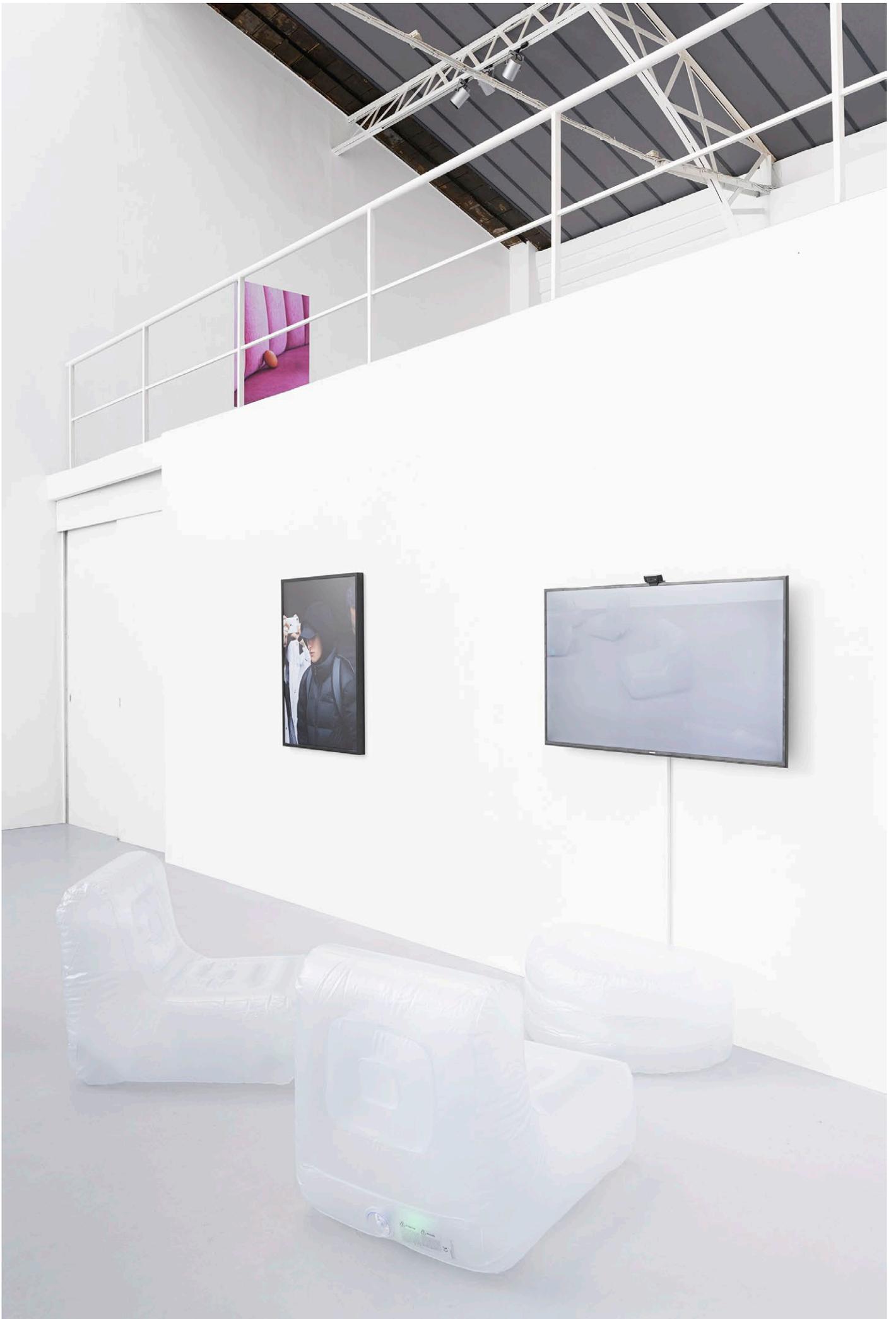
Exhibition views













Checklist



Ben Elliot

Board (Nike), 2019

Digital print on slatwall panel

120 x 120 x 17 cm

(47,2 x 47,2 x 6,7 in.)

Ben Elliot uses slatwall pannels - a shopfitting material configured to receive merchandising accessories - to create smart advertising areas for brands the artist has collaborated with. Elliot's Boards feature 3D images that look like campaigns, while the actual product is presented next to it. It is an example of how physical objects are advertised through digital imagery.

The brands displayed here relate to contemporary industries such as tech, smart food, sportswear and entertainment. For Elliot, exhibiting a company like Nike is a way to exhibit the concepts and values that go with it: innovation, courage, surpassing of oneself, etc.





Ed Fornieles,
Dorm Daze, 2011
Video
5'23"

In 2011, Ed Fornieles started *Dorm Daze*, a «Facebook Sitcom» in which the characters were crafted from real life Facebook profiles, played by actors who were left for three months to act out the lives of a group of college freshman at Berkeley, in California.

He created a Facebook group to house the free-ranging piece of performance art where the participants were free to inhabit their roles and live out their lives online. «I looked for groups of existing students at Berkeley with open profiles and then scraped all the information I could,» Ed explains. «Images, likes, comments... these became the starting point for the person inhabiting the profile for the duration of the performance.» All those American teen stereotypes are there; the jocks, weirdos, witches, frat boys, sorority girls. It's a piece about the way we perform our lives online, but equally, how much of what we perform online slips easily into stereotypes, and how online life has become the natural home for the drama of everyday.





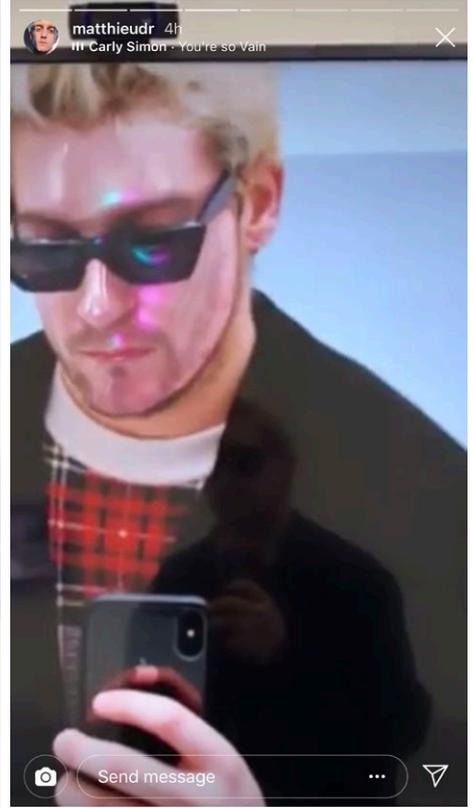
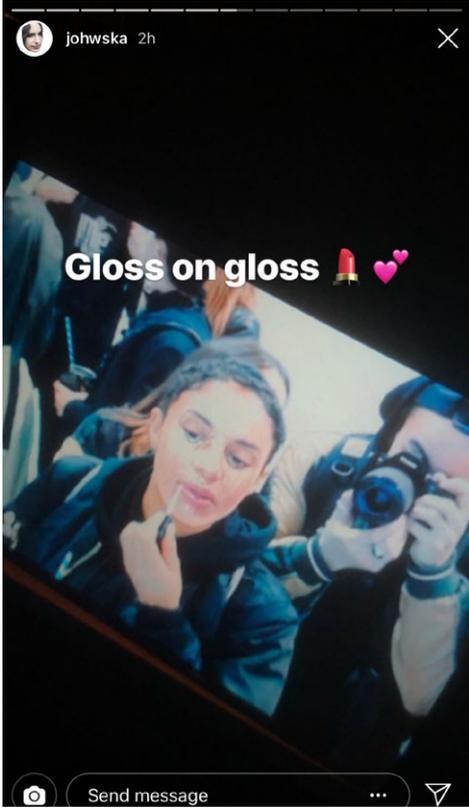
Johanna Joaskowska
Selfie Obsessed, 2019
Mixed media installation

In 2018, Berlin-based artist created three top Instagram augmented reality filters Beauty3000, Zoufriya, and Blast: a success that made her account jump from a few hundreds followers to almost 600,000. Johanna Jaskowska has managed to offer a self-loving generation (which seemed to be stuck somewhere between cat, rabbit, and dog ear filters) a layer of unconventionality.

“I want to make people obsessed with their faces, giving them the possibility to look at themselves like they never did before.”

For the show, Jaskowska is debuting an installation titled Selfie-obsessed, questioning how social medias have created new addictions. The audience is watching a TV Screen, but the only thing they can see is themselves with their faces being changed.

«We are now spending more time watching screens than looking at the real life. Nothing can compare to social media’s power to forge the cult of the self.»





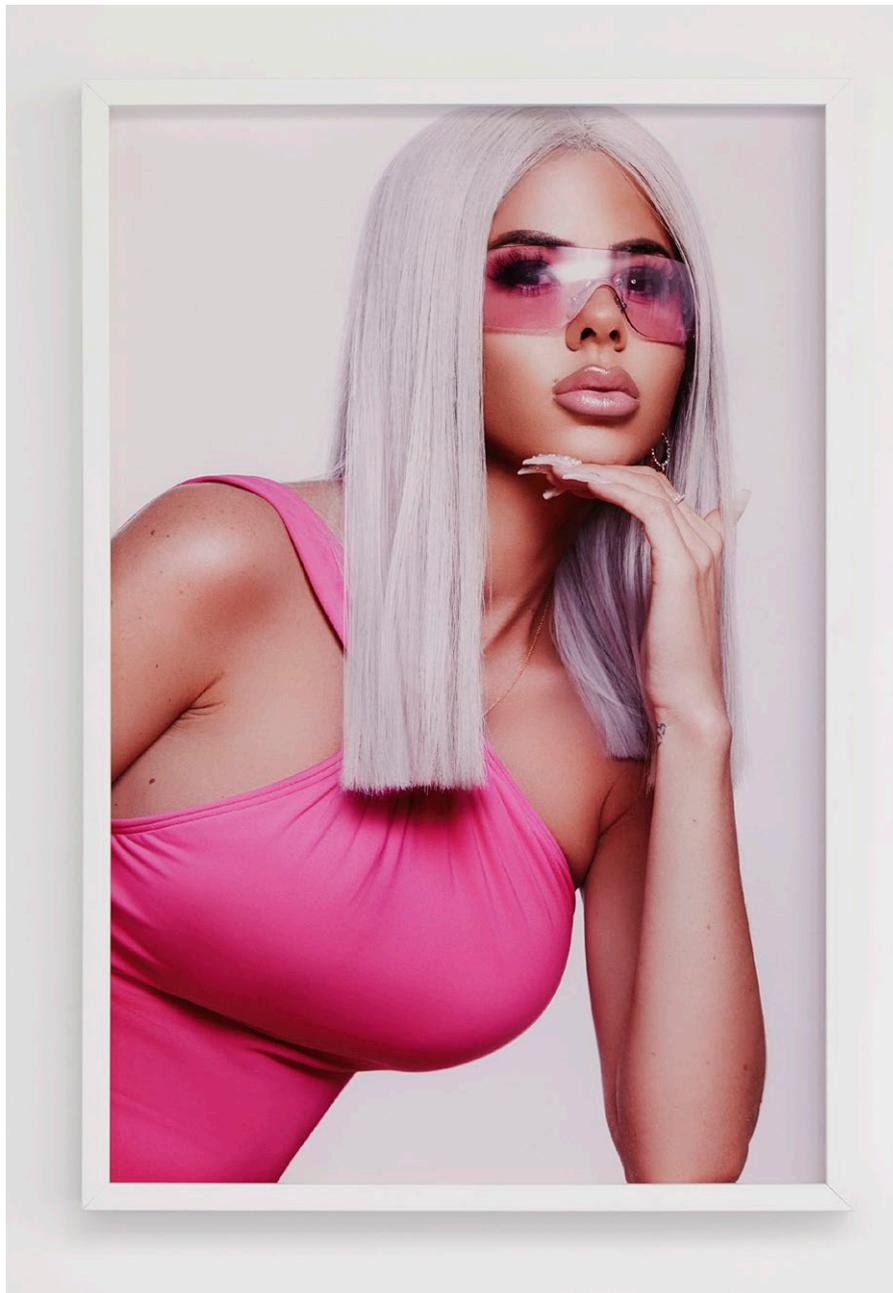
Ben Elliot

In the Shower, 2019

Dye sublimation print on fabric

300 x 225 cm

(118 x 88,6 in.)



Hannah Diamond

Hannah Elizabeth (FLAWLESS), 2018

Pigment inkjet on Bright White

80 x 53 cm

(31,5 x 20,9 in.)

Hannah Diamond is a singer, songwriter, photographer and visual artist.

Best known for her music, Diamond has been strongly involved in producing the promotional material, videos, and covers for her releases.

Inspired by high-definition imagery and fashion campaigns, she uses heavy photo retouching to produce unnatural, hyperreal versions of herself. Her success as a photographer has lead her to shoot Charli XCX in global commercial campaigns for Boohoo and Lynx Impulse.

Diamond's picture exhibited in the show is an outtake from a beauty editorial first published in PAPER magazine, featuring influencers and clients of Flawless Cosmetic, an leading aesthetics company specialized in non-surgical anti-aging skin treatments, to «beautifully enhance people and support them on a path to self-improvement.»



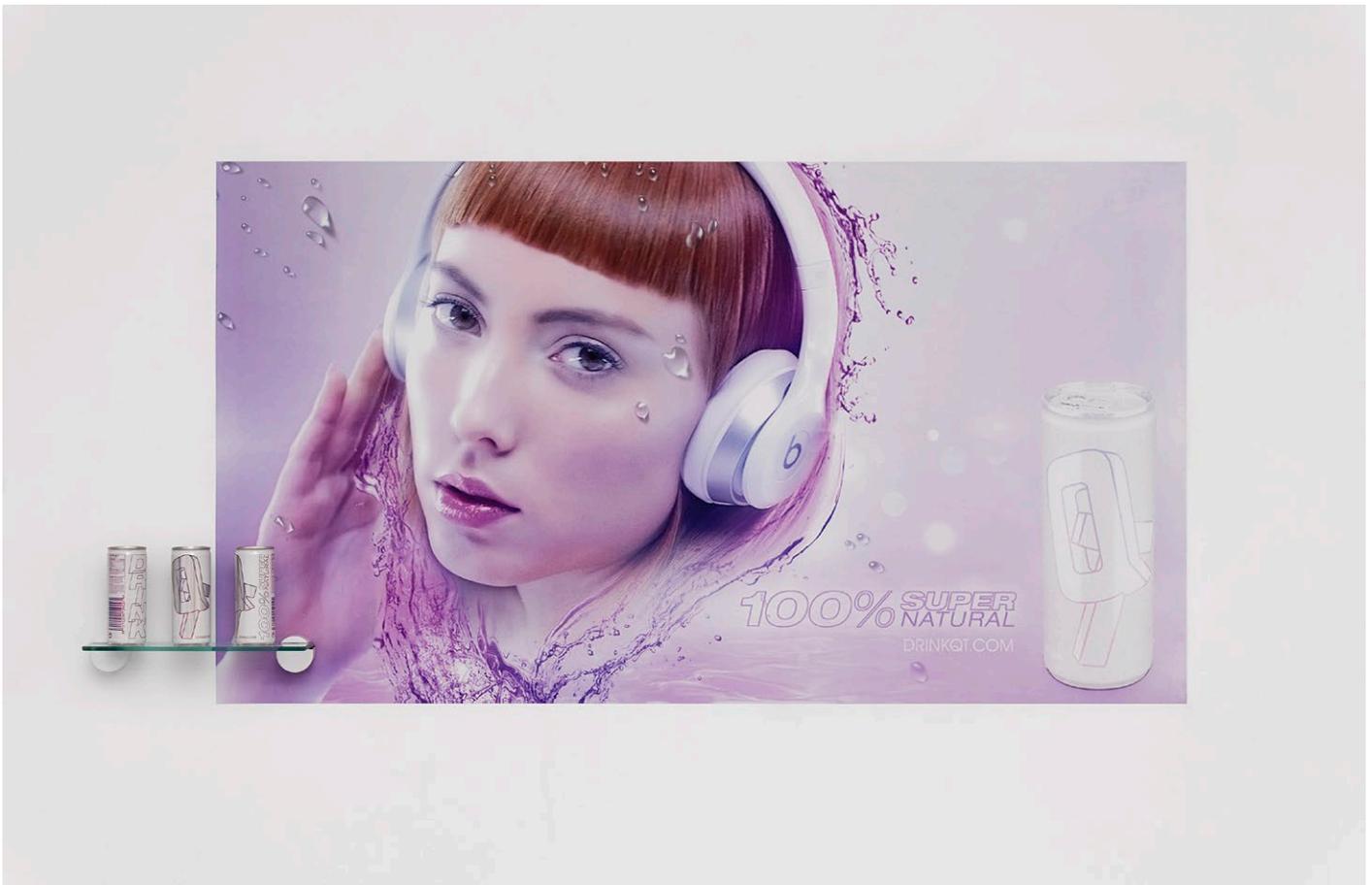
Ben Elliot

Board (Ben Elliot Water), 2019

Digital print on slatwall panel

120 x 120 x 17 cm

(47,2 x 47,2 x 6,7 in.)



QT

DrinkQT, 2015

Visual: Bradley & Pablo

DrinkQT cans, latex inkjet on pre-glued paper

Variable dimensions

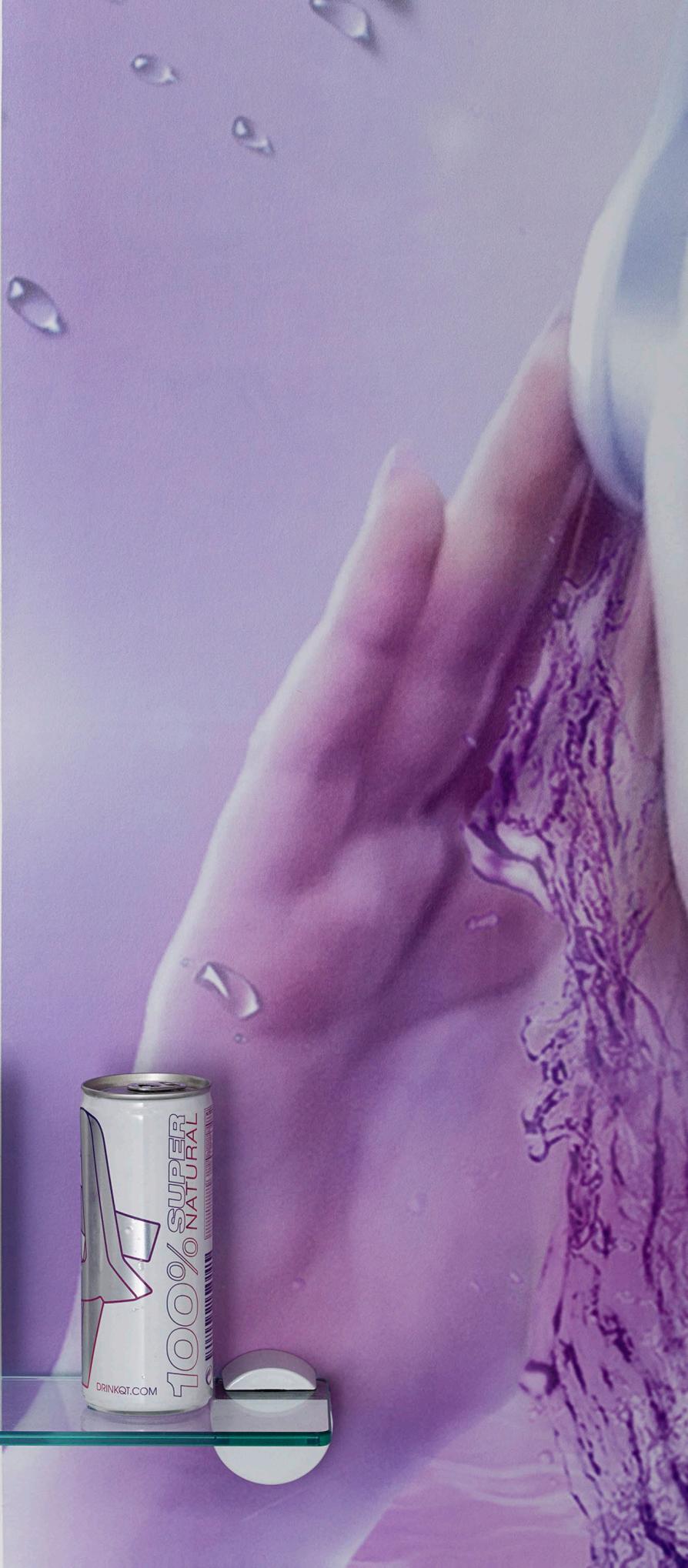
QT is a pop singer who promotes and is the living embodiment of the semi-fictitious DrinkQT energy drink. The project was initiated in 2014 by American performance artist Hayden Dunham.

On August 26, 2014, QT released her debut single «Hey QT» via XL Recordings. The single's release was accompanied by a photo of QT with a blonde wig trimmed into a messy bob cut. The promotional image was made by Diamond Wright, a team that includes artist Hannah Diamond.

Dunham originally wanted to do a song as a way to market a QT energy drink, and she asked the producers (A.G. Cook and SOPHIE) to repeat the name regularly. The drink has been distributed at performances, and in May 2015 DrinkQT was made available for pre-order.

The music video for «Hey QT» was released on March 25, 2015. The video depicts QT developing the DrinkQT energy drink. A laboratory measures her emotional state and distills it into the drink's formula. The video references Gap advertisements and includes product placement for Beats headphones.

«Hey QT» was chosen as number 14 on Pitchfork Media's «100 Best Tracks of 2014». Spin ranked the song 4th on its list of «The 101 Best Songs of 2014», The Fader listed the song 3rd, and Fact magazine placed «Hey QT» 37th on its year-end list.



DRINK QT
H-3YQ7H-3YQ7-H

DRINK QT
DRINKQT.COM

100% SUPER NATURAL
DRINKQT.COM



Winter Vandenbrink

Untitled, 2019

Pigment inkjet on Bright White

100 x 77 cm

(39,3 x 30,3 in.)

«I'm mostly interested in the identity of youngsters and I love to study social codes which are detectable through clothing, hairdo's and also group behaviour.

Lately, I am sending styled models into these groups, whom are unaware of being photographed as extras with the model. The most beautiful thing that can happen is when the model and his clothes blends in with the identity of the unaware group he is in.

Next to documentary and news photography, fashion photography is very capable of portraying social changes. It is always operating in the zeitgeist of the moment.»



Constant Dullaart

Target Audience (jamiwalker3379), 2019

Textile, mixed media

102 x 56 cm

(40 x 22 in.)

Through his work *High Retention, Slow Delivery* (2014), Constant Dullaart became famous for purchasing 2,5 million Instagram followers (many of which were fake profiles — like the ones exhibited in the show) and assigning them to follow key figures in the art world such as renowned curators Hans Ulrich Obrist and Klaus Biesenbach so that each person had 100,000 followers, equalizing their online social popularity. Dullaart has described the work as a mean to illustrate how individuals can easily manipulate the frameworks of the internet to advertise themselves and their identities.



Constant Dullart

Target Audience (sasha.patel.10690), 2019

Textile, mixed media

102 x 56 cm

(40 x 22 in.)



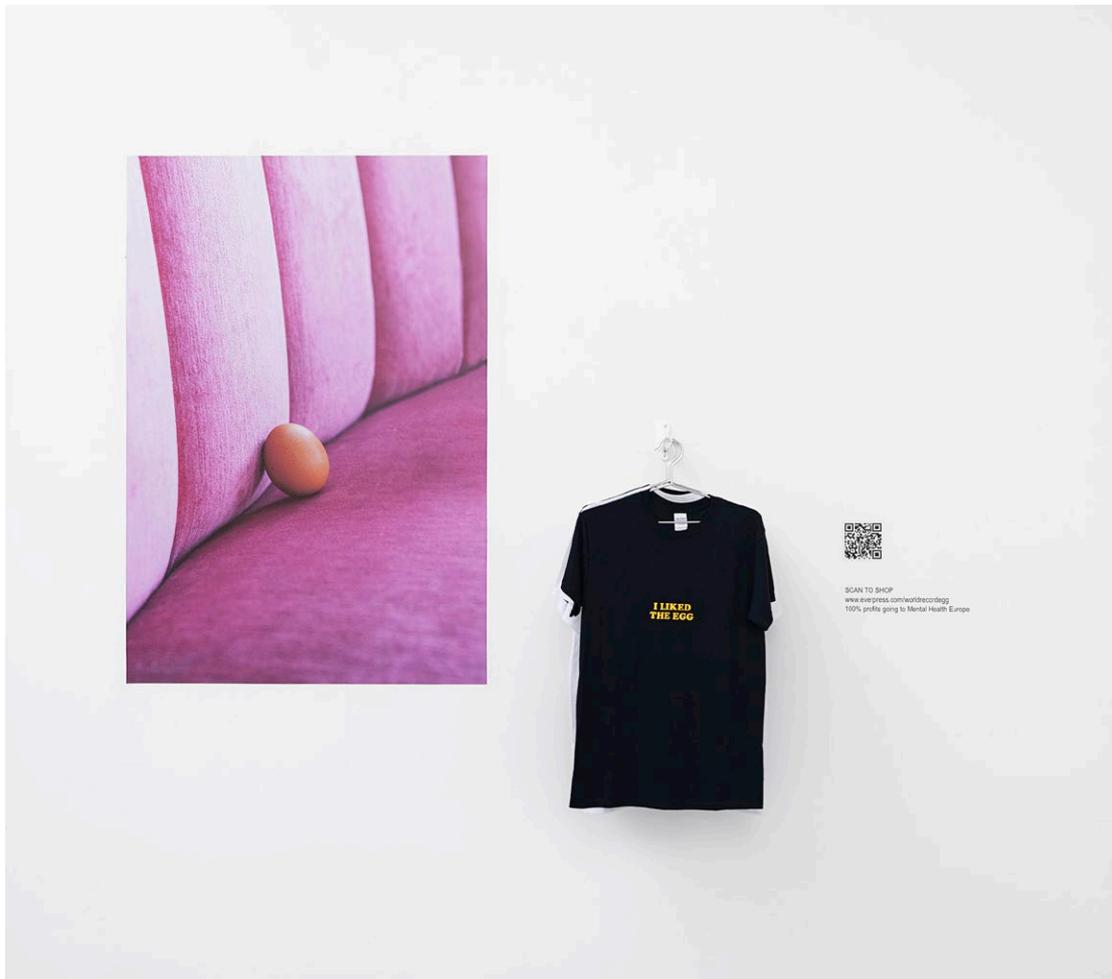
Constant Dullart

Target Audience (girl_kourd_1337), 2019

Textile, mixed media

102 x 56 cm

(40 x 22 in.)



@world_record_egg, 2019

Visual: courtesy of Eddie Lee / HYPEBEAST

Latex inkjet on pre-glued paper, T-Shirts

Variable dimensions

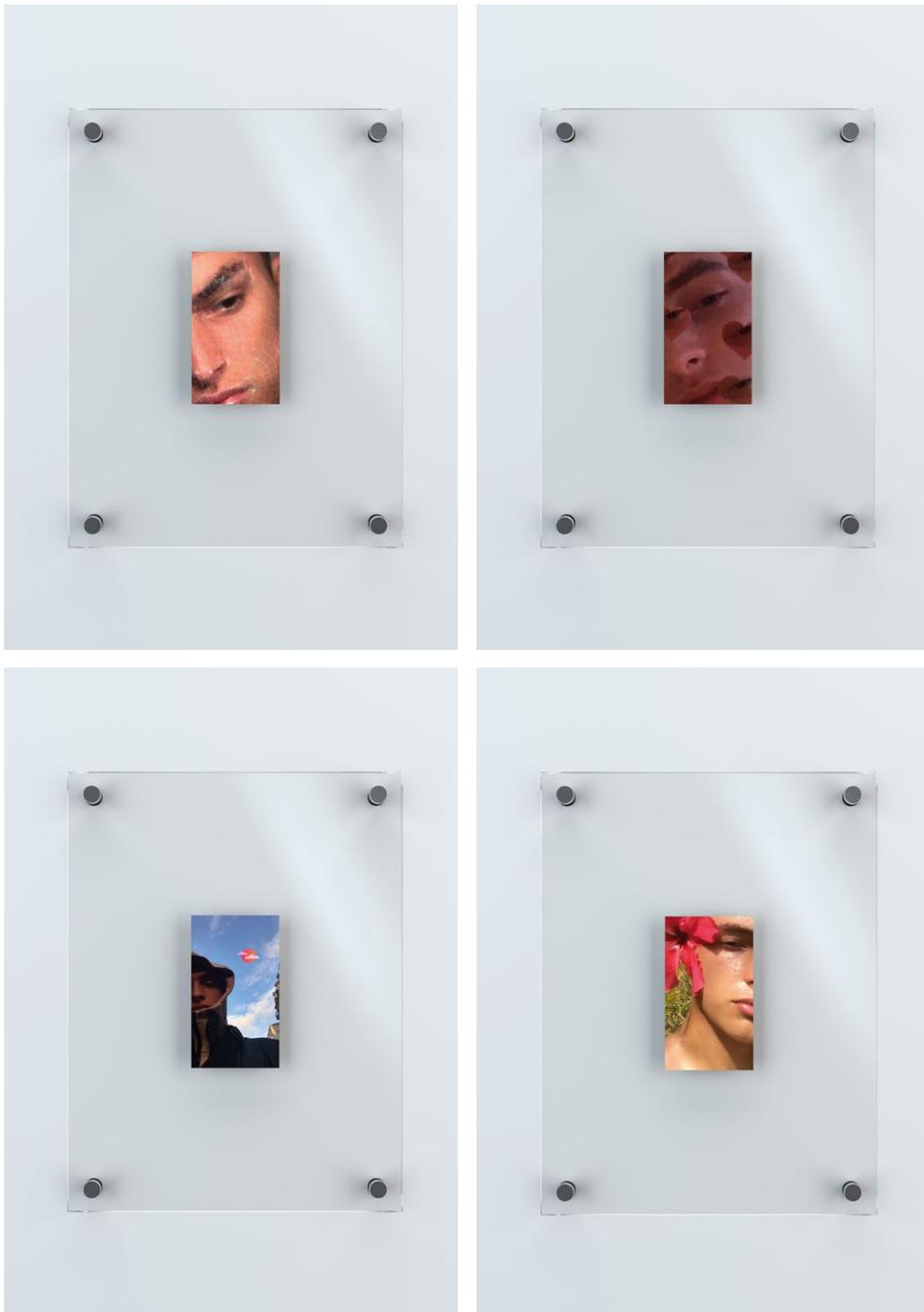
The Instagram egg is a picture of an egg posted by the account @world_record_egg on the social media platform Instagram, notable for becoming a global phenomenon and an internet meme within days of its creation. It holds the world record for both the most-liked Instagram post and most liked online post on any media platform in history.

On 4 January 2019, the @world_record_egg account was created, and posted an image of a bird egg with the caption, «Let's set a world record together and get the most liked post on Instagram. Beating the current world record held by Kylie Jenner (18 million)! We got this.» Kylie Jenner's previous record, the first photo of her daughter Stormi, had garnered a total of 18.4 million likes.

As of February 11th, 2019, the post has accumulated 52,7 million likes.

The exhibition showcases @world_record_egg's merchandise, as well as a picture originally published in an exclusive HYPEBEAST feature where the egg was approached as a celebrity, posing «nude» in a New York hotel and answering an interview.

All profits from the sale of the merch are donated to Mental Health Europe, a non-governmental network organisation committed to the promotion of positive mental health, the prevention of mental distress, the improvement of care, advocacy for social inclusion and the protection of the rights of (ex)users of mental health services, persons with psychosocial disabilities, their families and carers.



Ben Elliot

Unreleased Selfies, 2019

Digital print on 0,75mm transparent polycarbonate sheet

12,3 x 7 cm each (4,8 x 2,7 in.)

With frame: 36 x 27 cm (14 x 10,7 in.)

Unreleased Selfies is an ongoing series of Ben Elliot's selfies that were never published on his social networks, printed on 0,75mm polycarbonate sheets. 12.3 x 7 cm: the size of a 5,5" smartphone screen.

« They are selfies that I originally took for my Instagram. I never published them because they were not good enough or because they were outtakes of other selfies. It is a kind of behind-the-scenes of my Instagram posts.

I like the fact that you can only see these pictures if you go to an IRL exhibition, while they were initially made in order to be accessible anytime and anywhere online. »



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Unreleased Selfie, 2019

Digital print on 0,75mm transparent polycarbonete sheet

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