

Eva-Teréz Gölin

Art and Automated Processes

(1972, Sweden)

For some years now you have been working with found imagery that in different ways utilises automated processes, how come?

I started to make use of the automated face blur applied by Google on their Street View photographs for the work Holy Grail because I wanted to capture the phenomena of coffee on the go as a status symbol. “Walking” the streets of Street View I captured portraits of people with their to-go cups. I wanted to make use of the blurred faces to portray us as a society instead of as individuals.

Lately, I have been working with imagery from Google Maps 3D for three different projects. I found this material interesting and appealing because of the simplification and loss of detail due to Google’s automated processing of the photographs to render this 3D simulation of the world.

For my latest work, Selected Subjects, I have built my own automated process through which I have run scanned advertisements from interior decoration magazines. I built the process around an advanced machine learning technology that is trained to identify a variety of objects in an image. But, as the technology is at an early stage of development and I process material that it isn’t trained to analyse, it often makes “mistakes”. As of now, I have scanned more than a thousand adverts. From the processed images, I have chosen to use the ones that often only show a small part of the original information but where the fragmented result still is legible and when presented together comments on our contemporary society.

How has your experience of walking up and down streets in Google’s Street View been?

In the beginning, not being out on the actual streets photographing as I was used to, it felt a bit like cheating. However, I don’t think it was faster to capture the portraits this way as I couldn’t return to “a good spot” at another time of the day or in other light conditions, I had to work with the images captured by Google.



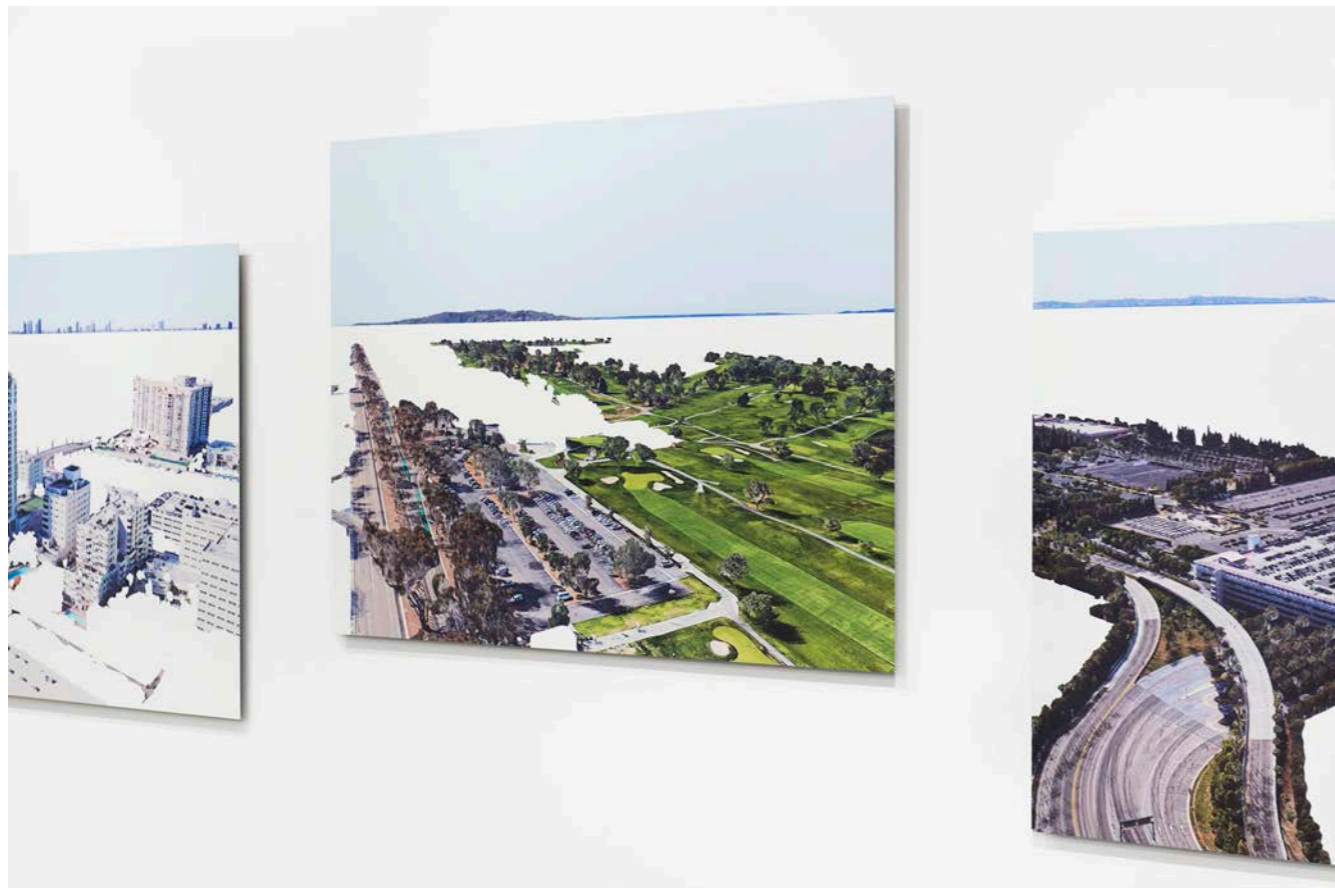


Do you think it has affected the way you read and relate to your surroundings?

It certainly did during the time when I was working on Holy Grail. I often walked several blocks up and down on Street View every morning before breakfast, and again in the evenings. And when I walked or drove down the real streets during the days, my eyes were automatically drawn to people with to-go cups.

As Google is still expanding their 3D rendering of the world, and the selection of locations thus far can be viewed as quite limited, what is your view on the limitations this puts on your own work to show a diverse vision of our lives?

I think that no matter what method you choose to work with there will be some kind of limitations. As I am not aiming to show all aspects of our lives, but aim to discuss questions concerning consumerism and how we have structured our society, I do not see the boundaries of Google Maps 3D as something that limits my work. Of course, there have been areas that I have looked for on the map and that I have wanted to depict that were not available as a 3D-render. I think art, just as advertising, needs to simplify the image to get the intended message across. In my works, I have through masking, tight cropping or other means sought to isolate different phenomena common to a lot of us in our contemporary Western society.



So, the white parts are a method to simplify the images?

Yes, that is one aspect. For me, the white parts in both the Structures series and the work Selected Subjects are a way to leave room for the viewer to add their own thoughts, but it is also an aesthetic choice and a way for me to direct the viewers' gaze to the parts of the picture that I find are the essence of it.

In your recent exhibition, Authentic Life, at WIP Konsthall works from your series Structures, Selected Subjects and Fuel were shown together. In Fuel, there are no white masked areas, tell me about these images.

With the series Fuel, I try to capture how we are seemingly incapable a change regarding our dependence on fossil fuels. Flooding, forest fires, and tsunamis occur at a worrying rate, meanwhile we happily spend our holidays on faraway beaches. The result of the way we have built our Western society on consumption, is that we are all part of the problem. Using imagery from Google Maps 3D has at least made it possible for me to visit and depict different places without travelling there myself.

Does your work advocate for any political or social change?

I want to raise questions regarding various aspects of consumption, and I hope that the viewers of the works will reflect upon our behaviour as a society and maybe themselves take a small step towards a more sustainable way of living.