Kaylee Bush
BSHKAY002
Parys: A Graduation Exhibition

Artist statement:

This body of work aims to explore the concept of hyperreality and simulation, and investigate the intersection between reproduction, value and the digital. As we move through a highly digital world, Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality becomes more relevant to the spaces we exist in. The gist of Baudrillard's argument is that nothing in our society is "real"; everything that we consider to be "real" is merely a simulacrum - a replica or representation where the original no longer exists, or no longer exists in its original form. Baudrillard argues that we depend so heavily on signs and symbols that we mistake them for reality, causing us to exist in a kind of simulation of reality that is "the hyperreal". Hyperreality is the state where we are unable to distinguish reality from simulations of reality.

Living in this time, and especially so during lockdown, our experience of a place (whether we've gone there or not) is mediated through technology. Social media and technology are increasingly used to mediate our lived experience. We are drawn to places because we see other people going there, but what we are shown is a copy of reality. The division between reality and imagery has collapsed; there is no more need for reality when we have digital alternatives. Baudrillard argues that a simulacrum is not just a copy of the real but can become truth in its own right. I wanted to convey the idea that copies of something can hold as much value as the original, using the often reproduced landmark of the Eiffel Tower.

My body of work has been divided into three components - a series of transfer prints onto silverleaf titled *Paris is the Capital of the World*, a video titled *Now Everyone Fucking Likes It*, and a video of a projection of 35mm photographic slides I created with imagery found on Instagram, titled *Instgram Ritual*. My imagery for the print series includes photographs of different Eiffel Tower replicas worldwide, retrieved from Google reviews, in an effort to capture an idea that is both about the value of reproductions and image-making. For this project, I travelled to Bloemfontein to record the largest Eiffel Tower in South Africa, an exercise that spoke to our inability to travel outside of the country with the ease we once could. The locals have an ownership over their Eiffel Tower, infusing it with a mythology that makes it the *South African* Eiffel Tower - I thought of the multiple reproductions that exist and the love that each community fosters for their copy. Further to this, there's an element of humour to be found in the title with the contrast made between the grand city of Paris and the small dusty town of Parys.

Through *Now Everyone Fucking Likes It,* I wanted to explore the idea of a space that both exists and doesn't - a cyberspace. Prints are an effective way of talking about a 'real' and a copy, and I used materials that were parallel to my topics. The transfer prints onto silverleaf reference historical forms of photography, in particular the silver surface of the daguerreotype - I also wanted to use a precious material (one necessary for the very existence of the photographic

image) that could convey a sense of value. I was also interested in exploring my themes through processes that shifted between analogue and digital and back again. This body of work invites the audience to consider the processes of image-making through referencing historical photographic archives as well as social media archives, and draws our attention to ways of seeing the world, helping us reconsider the concept of value.

I am attaching a [link to my PDF catalogue](#) as it has strange dimensions (1 page of 450 cm x 21cm). The catalogue is cut down from my praxis essay that was handed to Kurt - if you have read that I don't think it's necessary to read through my catalogue - for the sake of saving time.

Instagram Ritual

Statement to go with work:

Tourism scholars have suggested that there has been a change in tourism, and that tourists have moved away from seeking interactions with locals in foreign places in favour of taking photos of popular sites. In *Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord critiques a society which he saw as more obsessed with images and appearances than reality. He describes how images alienate us from reality or an actual place because you go there, get your picture and leave, having taken part in the Spectacle. The Spectacle, as Debord describes it, is the everyday manifestation of capitalist-driven phenomena; advertising, television, film and celebrity. The Spectacle reduces reality to an endless supply of commodifiable images, while encouraging us to focus on our appearances. For Debord, this constituted an unacceptable degradation in our lives. He also states that "the Spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images." The version of ourselves that we put online is carefully selected and highly curated.

The original version of these images were pictures I found under #eiffeltower on Instagram. I used Instagram pictures because social media is increasingly how we mediate and channel our reality. What we are shown on Instagram is not exactly reality but a perversion of reality - the reality shown at the moment of photo capture might no longer exist. The Eiffel Tower itself is an interesting motif because there is something ingenuine there in that it was a monument built for the sake of attracting tourists - one of the first real monuments for modern tourism.

In the Society of the Spectacle, Debord ponders about the value of an image; the way we value things is shifting because of technology. The photos I've chosen have a social value that comes from being able to distinguish the person (who is posting the picture) as well as the tourist monument (the Eiffel Tower). I put these images through digital processes (rearranging the code text, converting the images to sound and back again) to highlight that these pictures are not real - digital images exist as data. In these processes, the images degrade and thus lose their value as we can no longer distinguish peoples' faces. The installation contains a video of a 35mm slide projection. My grandmother gifted me with hundreds of 35mm photographic slides, and told me about how "back in the day" when people would travel, on arrival back home would gather their family and friends together in a room and look at the photographs on the projector. That ritual has been discarded for the Spectacle of Instagram. The bright colour and repetition in the 35mm slides echo stylistic elements of Pop Art (specifically Andy Warhol), as well as ideas of the commercialisation of the image, and loss of image value. The degradation of these images echoes the degradation in our lives that Debord states the Spectacle brings. The transfer of processes from digital to analogue and back again draws attention to the processes of image-making and references contemporary and historical forms of image creation.

YouTube link for the video that will be shown in my space.

Now Everyone Fucking Likes It!

Statement to go with work:

When Baudrillard first posited the theory of hyperreality in 1981, it was seen as a highly provocative and controversial idea. Today, hyperreality is a permanent fixture of modern life. At the final level of simulation (as discussed by Baudrillard), we enter hyperreality, a state where the virtual and physical world converge. We currently live in that hyperreality, a world where simulations of reality sometimes seem more real than actual real life itself. I wanted to explore the idea of a cyberspace - a space that both exists and doesn't. The division between reality and imagery has collapsed - there is no need for physical reality when we have digital alternatives. The pandemic has expanded the online world as we can't move through the real one with the ease we once could. Human interaction has been replaced by digital pixels beamed across the internet each day. Under these conditions, the virtual world begins to compete with the physical world for time, resources and attention.

The distinction between physical and virtual no longer matters because people derive equal meaning and value from the simulated world. I wanted to create a landscape that was a real without origin - the cyberspace doesn't have an original but borrows from the original. I was considering Baudrillard's definition of hyperreality - "the generation by models of a real without origin." I use Google Earth, YouTube and the motif of the Eiffel Tower to explore the idea of simulation and simulacra. I use the Eiffel Towers located in Paris, Las Vegas, Russia, Bloemfontein and Hartbeespoort, and overlay and move in and out of the landscapes to create a new landscape to explore. The sounds I have used in the video are excerpts from Sophia and Cinzia's *3 Days in Paris* vlog on Youtube. The sound adds a humorous element; they talk about the beautiful Parisian streets while the video is showing a scene from Bloemfontein, and they discuss how Parisians used to hate the Eiffel Tower but it is now their most recognisable symbol. The sound and the video work together to create a new landscape that is being taken apart and put back together to create something almost recognisable - but not quite.

[YouTube link for the video that will be projected onto a wall in my space.](#)

Paris is the Capital of the World

Statement to go with work:

Baudrillard argues that a simulacrum is not just a copy of the real but can become truth in its own right. I wanted to convey the idea that copies of something can hold as much value as the original, using the motif of the Eiffel Tower. We have several large copies of the Eiffel Tower in South Africa - this year my investigation took me to see the one in Bloemfontein, spurred by the fact that as South Africans, it is incredibly difficult to move around the world at present.
I was really fascinated by the idea that the locals had their own appreciation and mythology around it - I was told that a couple had recently gotten engaged there.

A collection of 32 different Eiffel Towers printed onto postcard-sized silverleaf, these images disappear and reappear when handled against the light. This transfer print series on silverleaf, titled _Paris is the Capital of the World_, each print named after the city they reside in, reference historical forms of photography, in particular Théophile Feau's series of the construction of the Eiffel Tower (_La construction de la Tour Eiffel_) and the silver surface of the daguerreotype - I also wanted to use a precious material (one necessary for the very existence of the photographic image, originally) that could convey a sense of value. I was interested in transfer prints over other options because of the ability of the matrix to only create one copy before being unusable - thus, the "original" no longer exists but only the copy. I situate my printmaking practice within the context of simulacra, where I don't have reusable matrices, or an "original" surface that I can create multiple prints from.

The images for this print series were retrieved from Google reviews for various replicas of the Eiffel Tower. I was quite tickled by the idea that people were finding enough value in these reproductions to take photographs and share them online in a serious review, describing their experience. For me, it sells these Eiffel Towers as _real_.

These transfer prints onto silverleaf are all 23cm x 17cm.
I will also have a box with copies of the prints that can be handled by the examiners.

Montmartre, Canada.

Perm, Russia.

Tasikmalaya Regency, Indonesia.

Las Vegas, USA.

Durango, Mexico.

Umuarama, Brazil.

Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Tianducheng, Hangzhou, China.

Kiev, Ukraine.

Slobozia, Romania.

Krasnoyarsk, Russia.

Filiatra, Greece.

Parizh, Russia.

Dubai, UAE.

Hartbeespoort, South Africa.

Fez, Morocco.

Paris, Tennessee, USA.

Shenzhen, China.

Kharkov, Ukraine.

Almaty, Kazakhstan

Madrid, Spain.

Paris, Michigan, USA.
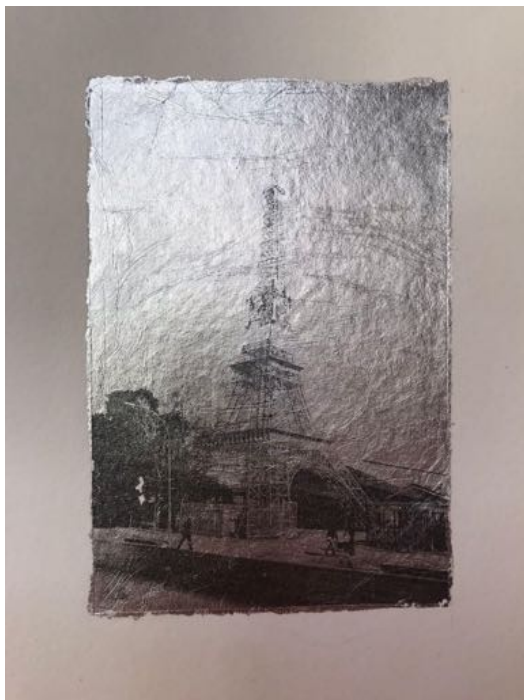

Janjevo, Kosovo

Fayetteville, North Carolina, USA.

Thanh Hoa City, Vietnam.

Cotai, Macao.

Bloemfontein, South Africa.

Kota, India.

Nikko, Japan.

Paris, Texas, USA.

Berlin, Germany.

Netivot, Israel.

Space Layout

These are where my shelves with prints will sit (pictured below).
This is where I will show *Instagram Ritual* on an iPad.
This is where my video *Now Everyone Fucking Likes It!* will be projected.
Here shall be a table with my portfolio box with copies of the prints to handle plus my catalogue.

My shelves are each 3.6 meters and hold 16 prints each. On the wall there will be a list with the cities shown.