

“Can Thought Go On Without A Body?”

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“You know — technology wasn’t invented by us humans.” - Jean-François Lyotard

(There’s a feeling that something is about to happen — an apocalyptic one... Against the backdrop of collapsing global communication and rising technological feudalism, it is reasonable for one to feel a sense of doom. This sensation, characterized throughout history during pivotal shifts, prompts critical self-reflection in our contemporary moment. How often do you use ChatGPT? Have you checked your iPhone screen time report? When was the last time you noticed your thoughts blurring under the weight of digital interruptions? Or perhaps, instead, you find yourself feeding fragmented prompts to an algorithmic machine, an option unprecedentedly different from those available to our ancestors. But, it is exactly this machine that is supposed to become nearly omnipotent in the near future.

The recent commercial venture into artificial intelligence and human-computer interaction has made it impossible to ignore the decentering of humans. Down this slippery slope, we can imagine that frequent forgetfulness may signal a rift in historical and personal memory, while the dependence on machines to organize our thoughts further proves the impotence of human agency. **Aphasia and amnesia, the aftermath of premature attempts to integrate with the mechanized, are typical contemporary “symptoms”.** *“Can Thought Go On Without a Body?”, the opening meditation of French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard’s 1991 book *The Inhuman*, describes a similar situation where the human body is eradicated through digital assimilation. Essentially, computerization without the body is the ultimate goal of technology.*

The Age of Enlightenment has left us with a legacy of humanist narratives, an indisputable sense of self, and an inclination to seek personal value. Despite the postmodern predictions about the end of humanism, and despite the fact that we are already in this chaotic postmodernity for decades, our education, history, ethics, grand narratives, and personal values still owe much to humanism. **We live in entrenched nostalgia for the “good old days” like modern creatures inhabiting a postmodern world.** An equivocal present seems abandoned by both the past and the future. **Asking “Can Thought Go On Without a Body?” is asking “if I’m a computerized posthuman ghost, what else can I dream of but my human past?”** This leads us to a critical impasse where we break with both meta- and personal narrative, and a dilemma or even traumatic turning point about what it means to move forward.

But... Lyotard’s *The Inhuman* proposed a different possibility that could take us beyond the apocalyptic end — to maintain the creative and indecipherable aspects of humanity while questioning everything that we encounter.)

Inspired by this concept, **this year’s StillShow delves into the dissipation of human subjectivities and how each individual’s future reality might be reimaged and reconstructed.** A gathering of 20 talented artists explores the inseparability between corporeality and virtuality, between intimate desire and cybernetic fantasy, and between the obsession with memory / archives and the loss of them. These domains attempt to construe the pluralistic nature of the postmodern and posthuman transition, which simultaneously spurs creativity, freedom, confusion, and trauma. Through a diverse array of mediums and approaches, the exhibition offers a contemplative space for reflecting on what it means to be human and yourself in an era where intellectual faculties and subjective experiences are not exclusively human attributes. **After these 9 days, what remains of this exhibition will persist in your memory, convoluted by the many happenings during NYC Art Week?**