

# Visual arts

**'Disintegrations':** What's old seems new, thanks to duo tapping into technology, sensory media, public dialogue

There are no two ways about it: Technology has changed the rules of original art. Given the decade's magna carta of recontextualization, a culture of crate-digging DJs and the ideological loosening of intellectual property restrictions, there may be nothing new under the sun ... except for the infinite permutations of stuff that already exists.

"Disintegrations," a new show that opens Friday at Oakland's Johansson Projects, offers a medley of pieces by San Francisco new media artist Andrew Benson and Montreal artist-DJ Sébastien Lapointe that deftly point to the connection between technology, various sensory media and how we absorb public discourse.

Lapointe "remixes" LPs by turning them into 5-foot-tall sculptural pieces that act almost as preserved, fossilized artifacts. Benson transforms the ephemera of pop culture with video installations, which create the illusion of timelessness rather than the weight of history.

Curator Kimberly Johansson explains that she selected the works of Benson and Lapointe because of how they recontextualize images and objects that are recognizable and entrenched in our cultural memory. "In Sébastien's case, he flaunts, in hyper-detail, the fuzzy fossils of a past experience, while Andrew rubs away familiar content with new technology. ... He extracts elements of memory and motion and transforms them into unfolding landscapes that form, then dissipate."

In creating a physical analogue for music (Lapointe) and transforming silent film into a pixelated, rhythmic succession of waves that suggest sound (Benson), the assembled works also help to a multi-sensory experience of technology that offers both a visceral and cerebral experience to viewers.

Benson's video installations include "Until every shape has



Johansson Projects

Sébastien Lapointe's detail of "Tranches/Edges," archival ink-jet print mounted on Russian cherrywood, acrylic and epoxy.

Reception 5-8 p.m. Fri.  
Through Nov. 13. Noon-6 p.m.  
Thurs.-Sat. and by appt.  
Johansson Projects, 2300  
Telegraph Ave., Oakland. (510)  
444-9140. [www.johanssonprojects.com](http://www.johanssonprojects.com).

found its city," an interactive 20-minute video loop that alters continuously with input from a camera set up in the gallery, and "While traveling," a 16-minute loop assembled from short vignettes. In thinking about his work, Benson says that he is "interested in how our own sense of time and memory relates to these physical records of time passing, the processes of inscription that define our surroundings. For this reason, I often work in forms that resemble landscape, but also refer to personal moments and more psychological experiences."

Benson's experimental approach to digital video involves tinkering with methods of pixel manipulation

that he describes as similar to the manner in which abstract painters manipulate paint. In this work, he chose video that "begins as very recognizable, sometimes nostalgic images, and (corroded) away the content, extracting motion and color, so (they) become unfolding geologies that still hold some memory of the passing frames."

While Benson is more interested in the specific materiality of a video that he works with, he tends to gravitate toward videos that evoke nostalgia. One segment of "While traveling" is based on a clip from "The Muppet Show." "Pop culture is really interesting to me, like how the palettes and styles change over time."

Alluding to the show's title, Benson muses on the indeterminacy of information retention. "Some day, YouTube, Flickr and Facebook could just go bankrupt and these vast repositories of digital memory will just disintegrate as if they never existed."

—Nirmala Nistraj,  
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