very child who reads *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* identifies with one of the characters. For me, it was Mike Teavee, a boy so captivated by television that Willy Wonka and the Oompa-Loompas permanently transport him into the mass media world. Well, what began as a sly dystopian joke in 1964 has now become our everyday reality. Digital technologies are the fundamental context for everything in our lives, including how we make and view art, the subject of *Art + Tech*, a coordinated series of exhibitions, performances and lectures at a dozen Boston-area institutions this spring.

The institutional center and inspirational spirit behind *Art + Tech* is Eva Respini, Barbara Lee Chief Curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, who convened the collaborative undertaking over the course of the last three years and curated *Art in the Age of the Internet, 1989 to Today*, a massive show on view this spring at the ICA. *Art + Tech* is decidedly not an exhibition of "Internet art," if that means works of art created on a computer and circulated wholly in the digital realm (although there are plenty of those on view at various locales), and it offers no central argument. Rather like the Internet itself, *Art + Tech* functions as a network, with—fittingly—no single place to start or end this joint venture, and plenty of evidence in the galleries to support whatever impulses toward either technophilia or technophobia that viewers bring with them.

Moving through this network of exhibitions, viewers might see an array of meditations on the theme of connection, as works made after 1989 have made visible the networks, nodes and even cable wires that link us. Another thread through *Art + Tech* reveals the centrality of play to our engagement with technology, whether in games or cat memes, as JODI (a collaboration of artists Joan Heemskenk and Dirk Paesmans) presents OXO (2018), inspired by the earliest computer games of the 1950s, in an installation at the Lightbox Gallery at the Harvard Art Museums. Others may inhabit worlds of fantasy, utopia or virtual...
At the deCordova. Here several artists consider the screen as an interface, a point of refraction or even a barrier. Penelope Umbrico’s Out of Order: Bad Display (100/17) (2017) deploys broken and disassembled monitor and television screens as sculptural elements in a wall-size installation that conjures feelings of loss and dismay. Wonder emerges from Brian Bress’s NOON NOON (2015), a series of three video monitors that refreshingly upend the experience of viewing by calling attention to the screen itself as Bress writes on it, collages on it, effaces it. It’s not just that artists can paint with television or make sculpture from a monitor. As artists trained in traditional formats grapple with what it means to make an easel painting today, several of the works in the ICA’s

Art in the Age of the Internet remind us that flat surfaces and fictive depth have been shaping visual representation and artistic practice since, oh, say, the Renaissance. Laura Owens’s Untitled (2016) upends the trompe l’oeil tradition with a work that appears at first glance to be a pixelated screenshot but reveals itself as a vibrantly colored linen canvas. After all, as Eva Respini says, painting is “the oldest virtual reality we have.”

What does this mean for the Mike Teavees of the world, wandering distractedly through a museum with their noses in their phones? Several of Art + Tech’s artists would be quick to point out that if we are watching all the time, then we are always being watched. Surveillance is a particularly urgent theme at
the ICA. Artist and geographer Trevor Paglen maps the networks of state surveillance with a revelatory photograph of a deep-sea cable known, thanks to Edward Snowden’s revelations, to have been tapped by the National Security Agency, and in RAVEN 2 in CORONA Borealis (Signals Intelligence Satellite; USA 200), a 2015 photograph of intelligence satellites that resembles a star chart of an unfamiliar sky. Even more ominously, in Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s screen projection Surface Tension (1992), a massive eye follows the viewer through the room.

If you are a refugee on a small boat in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, being watched is better than being overlooked. At the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, video artist Judith Barry fills the museum’s outdoor projection space with a mesmerizing untitled work assembled from drone images of Mediterranean refugees that Barry scooped from the Internet. Barry conveys the desperation of needing to be seen—even if by an unmanned machine. “In that moment of being seen, something shifts,” explains Pieranna Cavalchini, the Gardner’s curator of contemporary art. But while it is impossible to view Barry’s work without sharing the refugees’ sense of relief and hope, we should be wary. Here in New England, we learned wariness on April 19, 2013, as a hunt for the two Boston Marathon bombers unspooled from multiple media platforms, while local residents “sheltered in place.” Two among them were Watertown artists Mike Mandel and Chantal Zakari, who turned that day of surveillance into Lockdown Archive (2015), a slideshow and artists’ book that functions as a visually haunting archive of power.

Every once in a while, a moment of mid-20th-century prediction bursts into Art + Tech, with an Internet wizard promising that technology will deliver a democratic future. Watching Lockdown Archive or being watched by Surface Tension, locking eyes with a refugee and concluding our best chance at salvation is to be seen by a drone—well, that all makes it hard to take seriously the utopian claims of 1960s Internet pioneers or tech entrepreneurs today. But there are grounds for hope. Some of the most provocative works in Art + Tech are those by artists who are breaking the bounds of vision, democratizing both the gaze and the technologies of looking and being looked at. At the ICA, the installation Cyfotist (2010) by Chinese artist aaajiao documents websites blocked by that country’s so-called great firewall on a continuous printout we cannot read because aaajiao has also encrypted—and thereby protected—the URLs.

Trevor Paglen likewise, offers the Autonomy Cube (2014), a squatly appealing sculpture of wires that also functions as an open Wi-Fi Tor network allowing museumgoers anonymous access to the Internet. No, we are on to something: Whatever future we build together will be imagined, communicated and built digital. The task ahead—which can’t be accomplished without artists like those in Art + Tech—is to democratize the digital tools we use. After all, what doomed Mike Teavee was not his insatiable desire for mediated stimulation, but the fact that he never asked who controlled the platform.

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