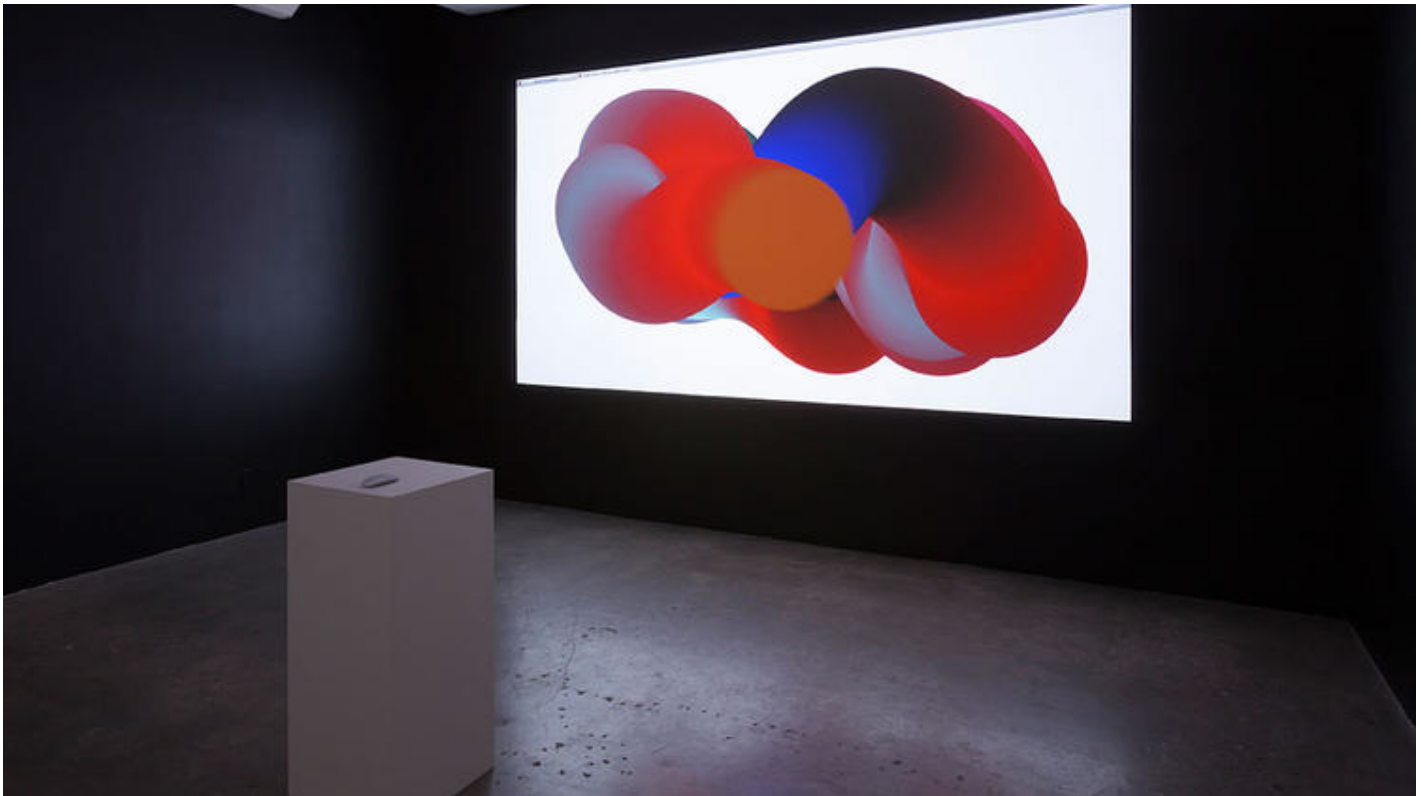


Review Rafaël Rozendaal's playful, poetic artworks come with a paradox



Rafaël Rozendaal, "Almost Nothing Hardly Anything," installation view, Steve Turner Contemporary. (Wild Don Lewis)

By **SHARON MIZOTA**

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In a thoroughly delightful exhibition at Steve Turner Contemporary, Rafaël Rozendaal mixes high art with the irreverence of pop culture in two technologically savvy bodies of work.

The first is a group of lenticular images, a printing technique traditionally used to bring advertising imagery or devotional portraits of Jesus into flickering 3-D splendor. Rozendaal applies the technology instead to atmospheric abstractions: luminous clouds of color that glide, pivot and dissolve across the surface as the viewer changes position.

Each image is like multiple paintings, or perhaps more accurately, an indeterminate space that appears to construct itself as viewers walk by. The prints are radically unstable, refusing to settle into a single, easily identifiable configuration.

Their connection with devotional imagery is also intriguing. The numinous, transcendent quality often ascribed to a strain of Color Field painting is here no longer metaphoric. The images are visually ungraspable. Mark Rothko could only dream of such sympathetic vibrations.

The second body of work is a collection of 100-plus websites Rozendaal has created since the early 2000s. Displayed as a large projection in the gallery's darkened back room, they are accessed using a simple track-pad interface. (They are also available from the artist's page on the gallery's website.)

Each site is a small work of art — a digital “painting” if you must — animated and often interactive. Each has its own domain name that serves as a title. They range from the plainly descriptive (blackgreyblack.com) to the poetic (everythingalwayseverywhere.com).

Here also, Rozendaal turns up the volume on art historical icons. The site electricboogiewoogie.com brings Mondrian's “Broadway Boogie Woogie” to animated life. At leduchamp.com you can give Duchamp's “Bicycle Wheel” a virtual spin.

Other works are silly but fun tableaux: an inexplicably sweating (or crying?) watermelon that gradually changes color; a misbehaving cursor that does the opposite of what you want; a rock you can drop down a hole with a long, cartoony whistle.

Some pieces are pure abstraction: animated shapes or color gradients that play with optics and space. Towardsandbeyond.com starts out looking like a flat, geometric composition but unfolds with a mouse-click into a deep, maze-like space. Fallingfalling.com is an infinite tunnel of collapsing shapes accompanied by a vertiginous descending soundtrack.

Still other works approach the logic of video games or muck around with Internet conventions. At whywashesad.com you can rid a blue sky of encroaching clouds by rolling over them one by one. Textfreebrowsing.com links to a free Google Chrome extension that will turn off all the text on any website you visit.

Rozendaal, who was born in Amsterdam but according to his bio “lives and works everywhere,” offers the sites for sale on the condition that they remain on public view. In this sense, ownership becomes not a private accumulation but a commitment to keeping a work of art alive. A small gesture against the increasing privatization of the Internet, Rozendaal's “selling out” paradoxically means his websites will continue to belong to all of us.

Steve Turner Contemporary, 6026 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, (323) 931-3721, through Nov. 29. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.steveturnercontemporary.com