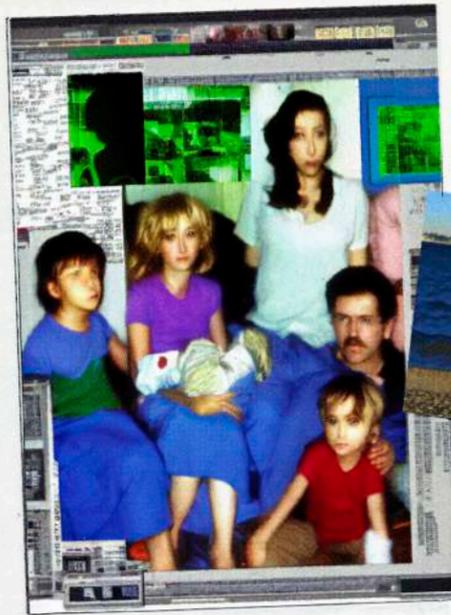


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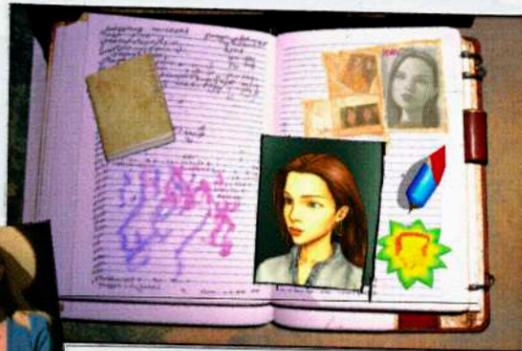
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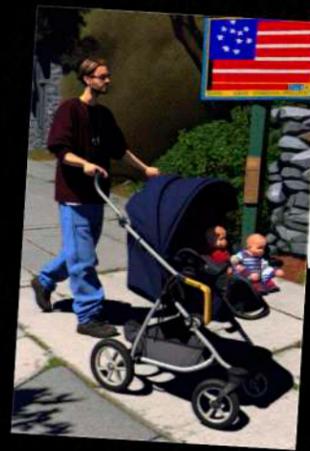


artist profile

Jon Rafman



*By Jon Rafman's Assistant
(Grant Tyler)*



Jon Rafman is kind of my daddy in the sense that he pays my rent and provides me with guidance.



Jon works harder than most of the artists I know (and that often means I also work harder than most of my friends who are also studio assistants for artists) but that's not what makes any of his work good, it's only what makes it possible.



In another sense, he's more like my brother because he was barely pubescent when I was born and we are fighting the same war.

When I studied Jon's work in college it was apparent that Jon was really good at executing what was already on the tip of everyone's tongue.



(It's part of time's nature that in the rearview it seems like it had to be him.)



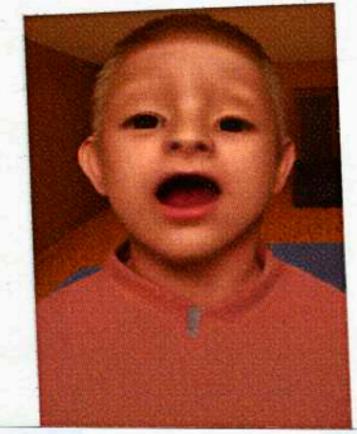
That war is the war for the future of art.

Despite being "tapped in" so to speak, his work has what can today only be described as a ruggedly unique Rafmanesque grotesquerie of humorous curiosities.





He retains his individuality despite his penetration into the collective zeitgeist.



And it's not done with Jon's big brain meticulously and heroically calculating such a perfect unity of opposites.



In a recent, presently unpublished interview, Jon brought up the Hegelian notion of Aufhebung, which can translate as both abolition and constitution; overcoming and fulfilling, etc.

It's done by way of his impulsive nature, his presence within his work and his ability to make instinctual decisions about the direction his work should go in.



Transcendence.



In the end, it's those good instincts which make his works resonate.

All the polarized themes in Jon's work (Romanticism/Realism, humor/disgust, sincerity/irony, cynicism/naïveté) are subjected to this unstable German idea.



To treat Rafman's work with AI as primarily about AI would be as shallow and narrow-minded as saying the art produced by Millennials in the era of the 2008 financial collapse was exclusively about the Internet.



Look at his Nine Eyes of Google Street View.



These are the instincts.



Even when artists like Rafman made the Internet their muse and venue, they did so in search of a refreshed sense of artistic originality which wouldn't sacrifice pathos to logos.

It's precisely this aesthetic emphasis that the Boomer academy has eclipsed with its endless technology discourse.



As will be evident to anyone with tastebuds and a soul, the thrust of the present series of images has to do with machine learning only as a means to the end of aesthetic presence.



It's the only thing that counts in the end.



This is how technology has figured in Rafman's work since the beginning.



It's what we're fighting for.



All artwork by Jon Rafman