



# VICTORIAN MINIMALISM



**MARGEUX WALTER** might be a barometer for the modern zeitgeist (before you keep reading: chew; swallow; digest; vomit). She attempts to uphold a new sense of digital identity while challenging the uncomfortable reality of a technologically advancing society. Throughout her works, irony grapples with the invasive presence of new photography and design techniques in both her creative and professional life.

As such, her work is like that of so many noted artists – unabashedly self-indulgent. Not only are the works conceptual commentaries that are derived from personal experience, but Walter physically appears in almost every piece. Notwithstanding, her photographs and digital works are striking portraits of a youthful sensibility that, despite occasionally confusing itself, presents lucid glimpses of life in the digital landscape.

Quixotically, Walter imagines herself as a hi-tech creator,

satirizing on the world that she depends upon. “Because I am a digital artist and am completely immersed in the technological age, I use myself as a specimen for my exploration of the future and the effects of this lifestyle. I see my art as ‘tongue in cheek’ in this sense, because I don’t have an answer to my questions, but rather feel trapped, both with pleasure and fear. It’s not like I can escape or that I’m better than it,” explains the artist.

The comedy plays out in Walter’s charming lenticulars, inspired by her perception of holograms. “I am obsessed with 3-D and these weird technologies that are obsolete that don’t really do anything,” she explains. The lo-fi process of holography will probably seem familiar from an old horror movie poster or offbeat advertisement. It aligns vertical slices of distinct images, and covers them with ribbed plastic, to create the illusion of motion as the viewer’s position changes. Walter hosts the lenticulars on her Web gallery,



glossing the kitschy technique with a digital sheen. Visually, the most recent lenticulars feel heavy handed – each presents between four and sixteen small Walter figures trapped in discrete square spaces, wearing a variety of all-white outfits. Presumably, Walter is commenting upon the isolating and homogenizing effects of digital culture on individual identity, but the imagery overpowers the viewer's ability to approach the physical procedures involved in creating the works. The technology used to create such lenticulars also has the ability to be home to their most compelling meanings. Older series – set in surreal, life-inside-your-computer landscapes and integrating props from keyboards to computer cables – thankfully direct more attention towards the relevance of process.

Personal history plays a crucial role for the artist invested in an exploration of her own experiences. The daughter of two doctors, Walter grew up in Seattle and attended a prep school where she felt drawn, perhaps even pushed toward art.

"I was in this prep school that was really about sports. It was hard to find an artistic outlet. I was an artsy kid, but you were required to be a jock, so it was hard. I found a way to get out of required sports by doing art projects," she said.

Careers in comedy, illustration and music all attracted her youthful fancy, but in high school she fell into a passionate affair with photography. Subsequently, she earned her BFA in photography from the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University in 2006, selling several pieces to reputable art collectors through her senior show. If only her projects could help Walter wend her way out of New York's favorite sport: employment.

Since graduation, Walter has worked variously as a photographer's assistant, a graphic designer, and the art director of a small design firm in Midtown, where she remains today. Even though the assistant's position was

somewhat, "frustrating because [our] visions didn't always match," Walter finds inspiration in plural careers. "That's why I do graphic design, which is my day job. I can do what I want; it's a lot more creative. Directing rather than assisting the photographer," she said. Beyond reinforcing job satisfaction, the contrast between recent roles has boosted her extracurricular creativity.

To wit: From *Discord*, Walter's latest works, several digital c-print photographs populated by the twin motifs of a long white string and Walter's matching, clasp-laden dress stand out in sharp relief. The images have their fingers in an array of pots, each one overflowing with meaning. At once whimsical and dramatic, the photographs envision hillsides full of rabbit holes, each transcendental and mysterious, hallowed, or rife with fledgling temptation. One image depicts Walter prostrate on a scorched Earth between perfectly ordered files of white thread; another catches her signaling across a lake to Keith Haring-like figures formed from the same thread wending its way across the opposite shore. Each is invested with intimations of an alternative future or images stolen from a forgotten dream. "I focus on creating physically beautiful scenes," she says, "though they may be despotic in content, they reflect how I see the future – sterile, lonely, monotonous and also physically polished."

The question of process arises once again as the viewer considers whether the white line was painstakingly laid across Walter's landscapes by hand, or articulated through the careful application of Photoshop. While several images betray the delicacy of her digital hand, an impression of realism remains. Walter has succeeded in fragmenting the linearity of authorship, authenticity and image creation, laying out networked threads that lead whimsically through the unexplored reaches of a digital landscape.

– Jonathan Melamed and Christopher Graffeo