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## 'Denatured' exhibit explores digital revolution's influence on contemporary culture

Studio artist Trevis True's new exhibit, "denatured," explores the digital revolution's influence on contemporary culture and the bridge between the physical and digital worlds.

Set in the Thorndike Gallery in the Center for Visual Arts at Southern Oregon University, True's bachelor of fine arts exhibit is a long look at post-Internet — post evokes historical significance and Internet lends social relevance — self-representations seen through the lens of Tinder, a smartphone dating application. Its 27 pieces — ranging from 20-by-20 inches to 5-by-5 feet — are digital composites.

His digital composite titled "939" — for the number of 2-by-2-inch images it holds — mostly represents pictures of people with their loved ones.

"Next, in the 600-image range, are photos of people posing with their pets, and then photos of people posing with common tropes dropped into the '40s," True says. "So there's this huge gap that makes it obvious that relationships are the thing people care most about. That was the conclusion I drew."

Some people posed with guns or trophies, True says. There are a lot of individual pursuits. One of his pieces features people posing next to cars or motorcycles.

"People pose with their children, some are in provocative poses, some are in nature, standing on a mountain, biking, skydiving, doing adventure sports," he says. "There's a lot of things that people choose to define themselves, but those pale in comparison to the images of people with their loved ones, with other people."

"Tinder started as a site to enable casual encounters, but it's become a structure that communities can use however they want. The No. 1 bit of text listed in profiles in a 100-mile radius of Southern Oregon University and a few miles away where I live, was "no hookups, not here for hookups" or some form of that sentiment — that they weren't there for a casual encounter. Most are looking for substantial relationships."



"939," a digital composite by Southern Oregon University art student Trevis True, is comprised of 939 2 by 2 inch images, mostly of people posing with their loved ones.

True says he wanted to create a set of images that would allow people to experience three months of surfing Tinder in 30 minutes.

"It allows people to see something they can't any other way. It also allows them to access a conversation taking place about our values, things that we value about ourselves and what we're seeking in another. Also, there is the fact that all of this is taking place on an Internet system that didn't exist five years ago. How does that affect social values and relationships? I'm trying to give people a point of departure for investigation and conversations, not inject my personal interpretations beyond the groupings that have coalesced," he says.

The technical term for the type of work True does is post-Internet, but new media or trans-media are other terms that are used to describe the art form. See his projects [www.trevistrue.com](http://www.trevistrue.com)

Looking at different profiles on Tinder, True used a cellphone to screen-capture images and profiles, 7,500 of them. From there, he worked with Photoshop to crop the images.

"Except for the cropping, I didn't digitally manipulate any of the images," he says. "Then I sorted based on different categories I saw emerging. Once they were sorted, I used Illustrator to actually group and create the composite images. They were printed on a large-format printer in the digital print lab here on campus."

True's exhibit will be displayed through Nov. 13 at the CVA, along with "Anesthesia Dolorosa," a biographical exhibit of sculpture by Kara Gandesbery in the Retzlaff Gallery, and "The Tiny Art Show," presented by SOU Creative Connections, in the Meyer Memorial and Art Chairs galleries.

"People are creating work that resonates with their personal experiences or interests," True says. "There are contemporary issues that influence all of us, but I think our responses are unique."

True has experienced divergent feedback about his digital collages.

"The younger viewers come in and it's almost as if they're looking for a celebrity moment," he says. "They're either looking for themselves or someone they know. They're excited if they find it, or disappointed if they don't. I also had someone who was a little bit older who found her image in one of the composites and was uncomfortable with it. It wasn't the image that she didn't like. It was just that she didn't want anyone to know she had posted it to Tinder. A third reaction came from a couple in their 60s who had met through an earlier form of dating technology, VHS and binders.

"I expected a measure of the uncomfortable response, but I wasn't expecting the kind of excited, 'Where am I?' response. I found it very interesting."