

Press Release

apexart - San Francisco, US

SYSTEM FAILURE

curated by

Harris Kornstein and Cara Rose DeFabio

May 4 - May 25, 2019

Open from Tuesday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm

Venue:

Minnesota Street Project, Gallery 107
1275 Minnesota St, San Francisco, CA

Opening Reception:

Saturday, May 4, 5 - 8pm*

*with special interactive performance by M Eifler aka BlinkPopShift throughout the opening

Featuring Work By:

American Artist

Tega Brain & Surya Mattu

Demian DinéYazhi'

Robbie Barrat

Faith Holland

Xandra Ibarra

M Eifler aka BlinkPopShift

Jenny Odell & Joe Veix

Mimi Onuoha

Caroline Sindere

Stephanie Syjuco



Stephanie Syjuco, *Spectral City*, 2018

"Fail fast! Fail big! Fail often! Fail better!" These oft-quoted Silicon Valley mantras celebrate the high-octane risk taking that has been the hallmark of the tech world, but who really wins (and loses) when companies fail? Presented in San Francisco, a hub of technology and diverse artistic and social movements, *SYSTEM FAILURE* celebrates the creative potential of failure while also holding ourselves accountable to the injustices too often built into tech's data, algorithms, and networks.

SYSTEM FAILURE presents work from a diverse group of media artists who explore ideologies of disruption, critique the social and political effects of technological breakdown, and tactically produce errors by building tools that are never meant to function or hacking their way through loopholes in source code. Works include Jenny Odell's *The Findings May Surprise You*, which offers satirical digital collages of graphics found in publicly-available slide decks of failed startups. And Stephanie Syjuco's *Spectral City* remixes footage gleaned from Google Earth to reinterpret the Miles Brothers' "A Trip Down Market Street," calling attention to the communities displaced along the corridor as large tech companies move in. Tega Brain and Surya Mattu's sculptural *Unfit Bits* plays with the datafication of everyday movements by attaching health trackers to low-tech devices like a metronome, while American Artist's *Sandy Speaks* chatbot reimagines the life and death of Sandra Bland—an African-American woman murdered by police—gesturing toward the failures of body cams to record the whole truth as well as the shortcomings of witnessing injustices via social media. And Robbie Barrat's AI-generated nude portraits gesture towards the limits of computers truly learning how to paint the nuances of the human form, while acknowledging the chaotic beauty of their attempts.

As these and other work suggests, too often failure isn't a bug, but a feature of a technology. While genuine mistakes do get made, the biggest problems are often those that are built right into the system—due to faulty methods, short-sighted variables, or unreasonable arguments. *SYSTEM FAILURE* thus aims not to point fingers or dwell in defeat, but instead to build accountability for the systemic errors that occur at all levels of our sociotechnical stack.

System Failure was selected through apexart's Open Call program. For more information and images visit apexart.org/exhibitions/kornstein-defabio.php or email press@apexart.org.

Harris Kornstein is a PhD student in Media, Culture, and Communications at NYU, as well as an artist whose work explores digital culture and new media, media-based art and activism, and queer politics.

Cara Rose DeFabio produces live cultural events in her hometown of San Francisco that examine the role technology plays in our lives, and how it is shaping the city.

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#SystemFailure

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