

# ALTMAN SIEGEL

1150 25TH ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107

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www.altmansiegel.com



Simon Denny

*Read, Write, Own*

September 16 – October 21, 2023

Reception: September 16, 2023, 5-7 pm

Panel Discussion: September 16, 2023, 4-5 pm

Altman Siegel is pleased to present *Read, Write, Own*, Simon Denny's second solo exhibition with the gallery. Featuring new paintings from his *Metaverse Landscape* series alongside sculptures made using white boards from the Twitter office furniture liquidation sale initiated by Elon Musk, Denny examines the developing culture of new technology, drawing inspiration from the objects, documents, and images used and produced by its companies, organizations, and states.

Referencing the traditional painting genre of the landscape to consider the effect of digitization on the expansion of property and notions of land ownership, Denny's *Metaverse Landscape* series depicts virtual properties in newly emergent digital worlds. Each painting portrays a tokenized visual representation (often resembling a simple stylized map or plan) that the owner of a piece of metaverse property receives when they purchase a plot of digital land in projects like Decentraland, The Sandbox, or Voxels – some of the earliest and most popular ventures invested in during the recent crypto/metaverse boom.

Created using oil paint and digital UV print technology, these paintings join analogue gesture with digital imaging, reflecting the uncanny affect often experienced when encountering digital worlds for the first time. Metaverses utilize aspects of pictorial languages developed to describe different places and contexts, and as such recall the street plans of modern cities in their use of grids to describe and allot territory. The paintings based on the Voxels metaverse depict a digitization of San Francisco – reminiscent in their composition of a kind of digitized modernist abstraction. Denny employs these motifs in his newest paintings, adopting methods utilized by colonial artists in their depiction of “new” and “empty” land in the 15th to the 19th centuries and beyond.

Reflecting on and working within the asset-formation structure which is essential to the success of these new properties, each canvas is linked to the property it depicts with a series of QR codes printed on their sides. These links point to the original property token or land plot depicted in each painting, and a new token that

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accompanies each painting, which adopts the motif from the board game Monopoly in a digital card that tracks the current owner of the original property.

Among these paintings, Denny intersperses another grid system, a space of design, and gesture. Whiteboards from the offices of Twitter's campus in San Francisco, many with residual notations from Twitter's developers, have been sculpted with a laser-cut that slices a “plus” symbol (the exact “plus” used when mobile tweeters begin a tweet in the current Twitter user interface) into the center of each board. The negative space produced in the center of each board by these “plus” extractions resembles a window, a graph, even arrow slits in castles or heraldry from shields – or a targeting system. These altered boards are hung between each painting, perpendicular to the walls of the gallery, forming a kind of viewing division with a cross-shaped window throughout the space.

The title of the exhibition, *Read, Write, Own*, refers to technology entrepreneur and startup investor, Chris Dixon's description of the evolution of the internet from a “read only” series of brochures, through the advent of user generated written content (social media), to the current rhetoric advancing a new stage of ownership possibilities enabled by web 3. As technologies change the way we see the world, ownership and shifting notions around what and how we own property (real estate, virtual property, even paintings of landscapes) shift in kind.

Addition, code, division, expansion along with gesture, creativity, ingenuity, and design are all evoked in this installation – a series of paintings of other peoples' digital properties bookended between the relics of the design process that has produced the internet we currently inhabit. Here viewers can examine the sublime surfaces that unpack glimpses of future and current worlds and peer through the surfaces of objects that architect them.

In conjunction with the opening of the exhibition, Altman Siegel will host a panel discussion: The Cultural Value of Technology on Saturday, September 16 at 4pm.

Moderated by Christina Passariello, The Washington Post's technology editor, this conversation brings together three positions that engage with the cultural footprint of technology in innovative arts practices – from Philosophy (Tobias Rees), Design and digital objects (Martin Grasser) to art and exhibition making (Simon Denny). The panelists will reflect on what working in an interdisciplinary space between their native skillsets as liberal and visual arts practitioners does when it interfaces within the context of technologists and organizations, and some of the takeaways they've learned in the process of foregrounding and insisting on the value of culture in a context where technology is primary.

Saturday, September 16, 2023, 4pm

Altman Siegel

1150 25th Street

San Francisco, CA

Denny's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Hannover Kunstverein, Hannover, Germany; Frans Masereel Centrum, Kasterlee, Belgium; Heidelberger Kunstverein, Heidelberg, Germany; Outernet Arts, London, UK; Altman Siegel, San Francisco, CA; Petzel, New York, NY; Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Australia; Galerie Buchholz, Cologne, Germany; MOCA Cleveland, Cleveland, OH; Museum für Neue Kunst, Freiburg, Germany; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand; Wiels Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels, Belgium; Serpentine

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Galleries, London, UK; MoMA PS1, New York, NY; Mumok, Vienna, Austria; Kunstverein Munich, Munich, Germany; and Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO. Group exhibitions include The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, TX; Kunsthalle Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland; Abu Dhabi Art, Abu Dhabi, UAE; Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark; Kunstmuseum Ravensburg, Ravensburg, Germany; MAXXI, Rome, Italy; Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Winterthur, Switzerland; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Astrup Fearnlet Museet, Oslo, Norway; HOW Shanghai, Shanghai, China; Ad-Diriyah Biennale, Ad-Diriyah, Saudi Arabia; Kunstverein in Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany; 6th Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art, Ekaterinburg, Russia; MUDAM, Luxembourg; Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, Switzerland; de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA; 12th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea; Guangzhou Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; MAXXI, Rome, Italy; Hessel Museum, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; Manifesta 11, Zurich, Switzerland; Zabłudowicz Collection, London, UK; 55th and 56th Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, UK; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany; CAPC, Bordeaux, France; and 16th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, Australia.

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