

TORONTO

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TERENCE DICK

GEOFFREY PUGEN AT MKG127, TORONTO

July 28, 2015

The future ain't what it used to be. That's what occurred to me after I watched [this short doc](#) about proto-internet art made on the Betamax of image transmission protocols in Toronto back in the eighties. It also came to mind while I was watching the video diptych at the core of **Geoffrey Pugen's** exhibition *White Condo*, currently on display at **MKG127**. Like all science fiction, it tells us more about ourselves and the present than any possible future. The speed of change both on the streets and online over the last thirty years makes it easy to disregard the brave new world we contend with on a daily basis. Blasts from the past throw our present into relief and slightly askew representations of five minutes from now rouse us from the trance of incessant distractions.



Geoffrey Pugen, *White Condo*, 2015, unique 2 channel HD video

Pugen takes the latter path with a short video depicting the type of alienating dystopia populated by attractive but emotionally inert humans wearing tunics as seen in films from [Logan's Run](#) to [Ex Machina](#). The difference here is the setting is an actual condo amongst further condo developments in present day Toronto. The narrative follows the assessment of a young man for residence in the condo, the female psychologist who is

monitoring him, and the computer she answers to. I won't spoil the ending for you, though the entire video is a spoiler as the cinematic conceit that is finely crafted – right down to the soundtrack – within the sealed container of the apartment is routinely shattered by the realism of the scene outside those inescapable windows. The underwrought play-acting of the movie becomes an analogy for the dramas that play out across the city and are increasingly validated only when caught on camera and broadcast online. That's the real outcome of the internet – a fate that would never have been predicted way back when artists were animating graphics on appliance-sized computers. Now we are what is reproduced and fragmented over phone lines. We are our own creations and the line between what's real and what's hyperreal is found and lost in the pixels.

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