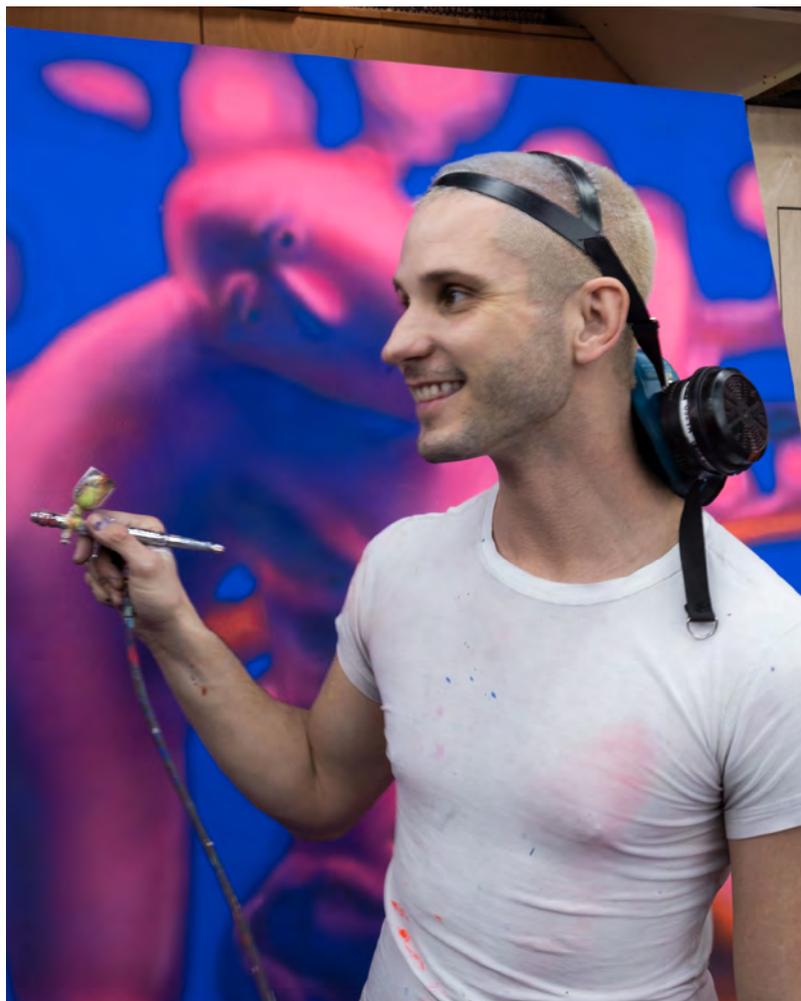


# CULTURED

## The Internet Confuses Austin Lee

The artist known for his technicolor takes slid into CULTURED's DMs to share a sliver of his Internet inclinations.

April 6, 2023



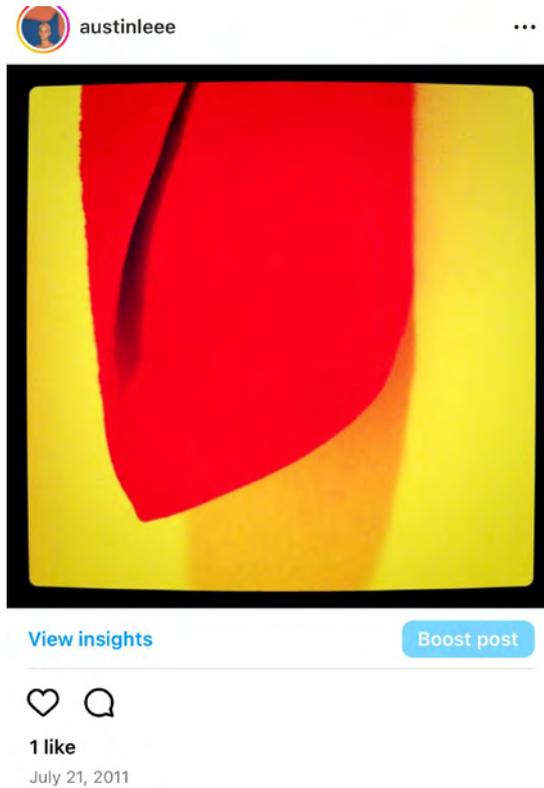
Austin Lee was born the same year the Internet as we know it was invented. In the years since 1983, both have grown into forces of innovation: Lee as an artist whose work occupies an uncanny valley between the physical and virtual, and the Internet as an inextricable and confounding element of human life. Kids these days can't fathom a world without it; Lee's work reflects this new paradigm. Double-Rendering, his solo exhibition at Columbia University's Wallach Art Gallery, runs through April 9 and highlights the artist's parallel practices in computer imaging and IRL airbrushing. Later this month, he will take part in The New, New, the group show that will inaugurate Peres Projects' Seoul location, alongside artists like Emily Ludwig Shaffer and George Rouy. He took a moment to chat with *CULTURED* about studio playlists, making friends on the Internet, and opting out of ads.

**CULTURED:** What was your first cell phone?

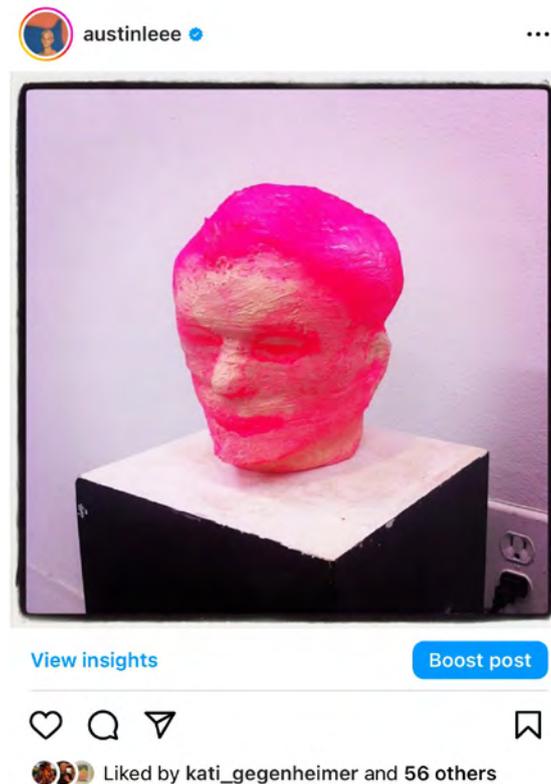
# PERES PROJECTS

**Austin Lee:** The first memorable one was the Audiovox SMT 5600. It was an early smartphone, and I could connect to wireless headphones and listen to music with it. I loved that phone.

## CULTURED: Do you remember your first Instagram post?



**Lee:** This is one of the first ones. At first I used Instagram as more of a photo website like Flickr, so I have a lot of bad photos as the early ones. I made most of them private now.

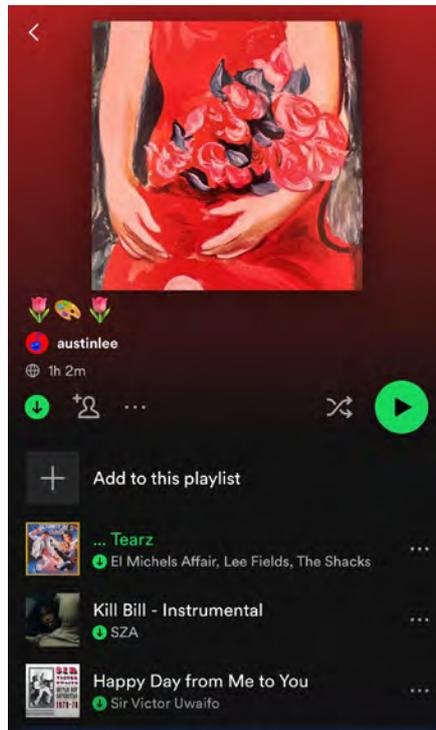


This is the most recent one that I have public.

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## CULTURED: Best playlist for airbrushing?

**Lee:** That depends on what I'm painting. I love music and am always trying to find new things to listen to. This is a recent playlist with some songs I've been listening to.

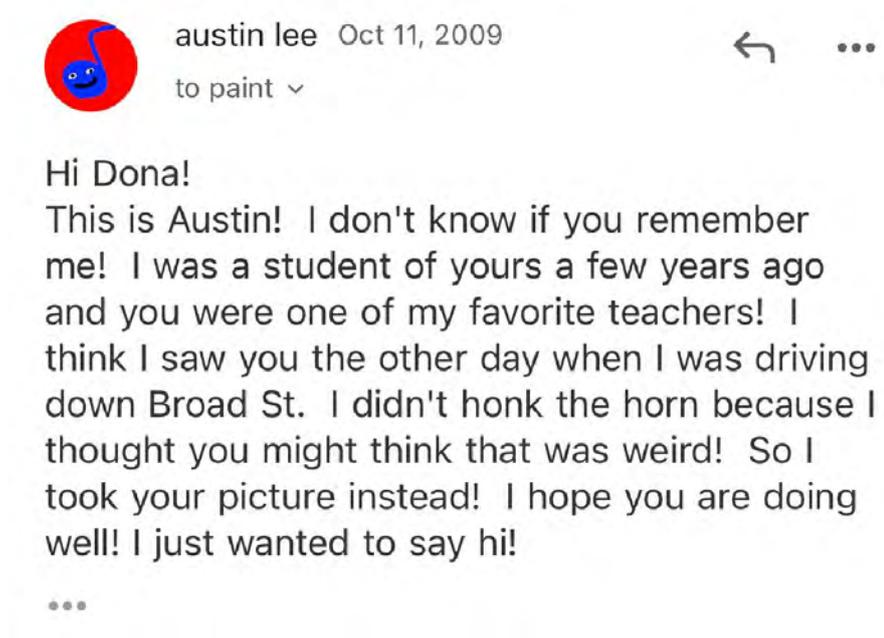


## CULTURED: What's the emotion you associate with the Internet?

**Lee:** Oh that's a tough question. I guess confusion would be my choice. There is a range of emotions you experience online, but they are always so disconnected I think they feel confusing usually.

## CULTURED: Valid. What's the craziest DM you ever sent?

**Lee:** It's not a DM, but this email...



[VIEW ENTIRE MESSAGE](#)

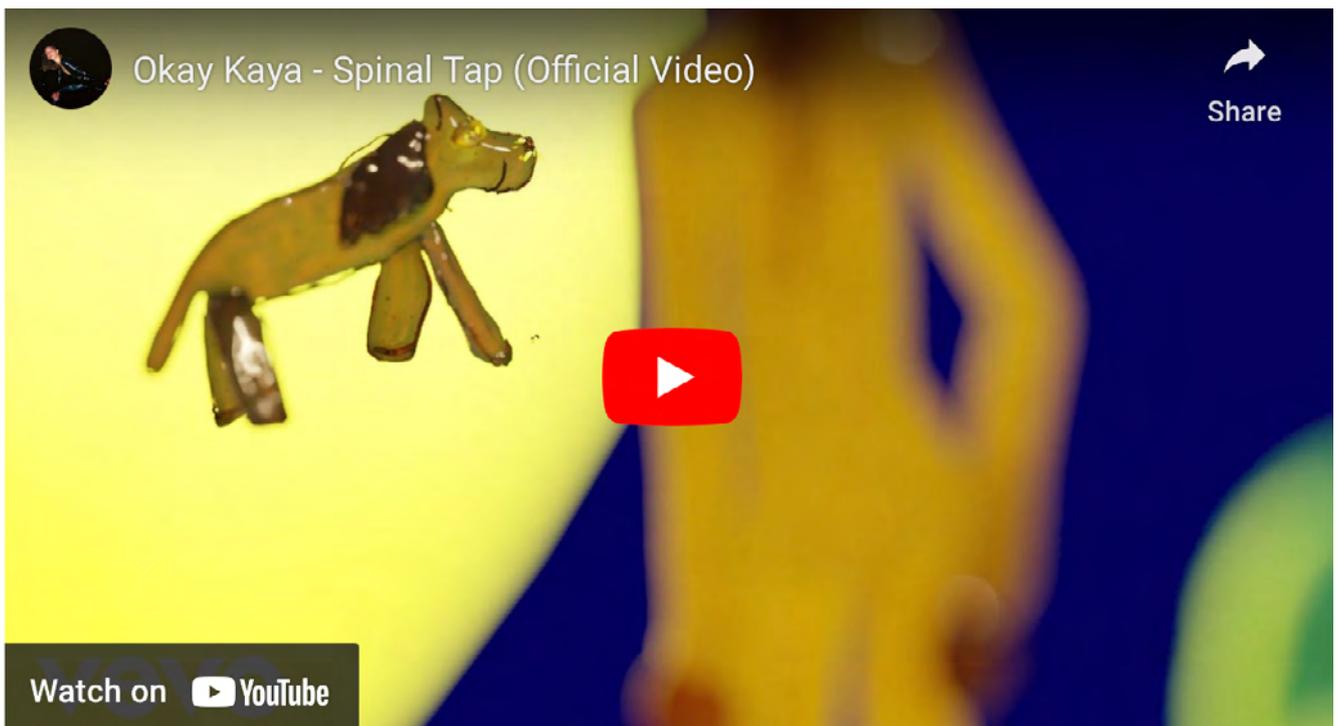
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**CULTURED:** Did she ever respond?

**Lee:** Yes she did, and she's the best and wasn't even weirded out by it.

**CULTURED:** YouTube video you've watched the most?

**Lee:** Probably some Blender tutorial. I have to rewatch those over and over to understand how to do things. Like how to make tears or something. It's funny because it's usually teens explaining how to do everything, and I'm struggling lol. Or it might be the music videos I made with Okay Kaya. I play those on YouTube often to show people!



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## CULTURED: Favorite thing about VR?

**Lee:** I can make sculptures without worrying about gravity. No armature needed. Just ideas. It's just drawing in space. A way to share what I'm thinking with someone else. Very fast way to get things out of my head and into someone else's head.

## CULTURED: How do you feel about emojis?

**Lee:** Love emojis.

## CULTURED: Favorites?

**Lee:** 🙄



## CULTURED: What about ad-block?

**Lee:** I think it's good to be aware of how you are being influenced and try to control it somewhat. Advertising obviously works, and we find it in so much of our life that it feels necessary to opt out when possible since you don't choose to opt in anymore.

## CULTURED: TikTok?

**Lee:** Bad!

## CULTURED: FaceTime?

**Lee:** I like it!

## CULTURED: Any Internet predictions for the next few years?

**Lee:** I feel like we'll start to have more organic tools that make it more conversational with computers. Like how AI is starting to be integrated into a lot of websites and software. It'll probably make a lot of the annoying things

# PERES PROJECTS

about using a computer easier to do but introduce new problems too. You'll be able to ask your computer to do complex tasks, and it will understand with language. Basically, Siri and Google Glass types will start working like originally promised, and integrate into our lives like how the iPhone merged with us. Your car screen will overlay driving directions and you'll get info about people in your glasses as you walk on the street. Everything will become less avoidable and more integrated into our lived experience. Basically how it is now but more extreme.

## **CULTURED: Best thing about the Internet?**

**Lee:** Making friends