“ I THINK A GOOD QUESTION TO START WITH IS HOW YOU USE TECHNOLOGY TO MAKE HUMAN LIVES BETTER.”

US artist AUSTIN LEE talked to us over Skype from his new live-work space in New York, while working on what would then be his next exhibition for Peres Project—Aah, September-October, 2020, initially postponed by Covid. The show was the result of the artist’s desire to return to painting after some time invested in virtual reality.

MANY OF THEM Hello, AUSTIN. How are you?
AUSTIN LEE Hi. I’m doing okay, thank you.

MOT How is everything in New York?
AL It’s pretty bad. New York’s been rough, but, you know, just trying to get through it.

MOT In Spain, it’s also a f*****g nightmare.
AL Yes, we’ll remember this time for sure. I feel like it’s been a really traumatic world-changing event… You know, we need to try to be hopeful and do what we can, but you can’t have the same expectations as a year ago. You have to be honest with what’s possible and try for the best.

MOT You even had to postpone the exhibition in Peres Projects, right?
AL I had many things delayed. I was supposed to have a museum show in Beijing next March, but we postponed it to the following January. This whole situation for me is like one of those things where you go day by day, you know? Rules are a little different now than a year ago, so you just have to adapt, see what makes sense and try to do what you can in new ways. Go from there. Also, there are other things that are more important now too, priorities have changed.

MOT So, how do you usually work? For you, working with art, is it a daily process or is it more based on specific projects and exhibitions?

AL Well, it depends. Normally I just kind of let it come naturally. I work every day, you know, I get up and go to the studio. Most of the time I just work; it’s the only thing I do. I don’t really have too many other interests, and when I have a show, I start to connect the dots of what I’ve made. I try to unravel the connections that go through it. Because if I make an exhibition that is really specific, it ends up being only about that. So to me, my best work is when it’s all about something and you only find it out as you look at it, and then it’s really complex and it has all these connections. For me, it’s closer to how the viewer would unravel it, because it comes from the subconscious—a situation in which you’re kind of just dealing with things through the work. And when that happens, the work is not just an idea: it’s really part of who you are and your thinking. But since the quarantine, it’s been kind of a crazy time for me because I just moved to a livework space. I wasn’t really quite ready to move, but when I realized things were going to be bad, I just took everything and threw it into this new space. And so, for the past month or so, I’ve been in a mix of working, setting up the studio and slowly getting things ready, but I haven’t made as much work as usual. I’ve done maybe two or three paintings, so again, it’s not been the same as in a normal situation. I’m kind of letting myself process everything too.

MOT We understand… We hope you don’t mind if we look back and talk about the beginnings of your work, because we would like to make a nice portrait of you and your practice. Let’s go back a little bit. Were you born in Vegas?
AL Yes.

MOT It’s the first time that we’ve met someone who was born in Vegas, we have to say… [Both laugh.]
AL My parents both ended up in Las Vegas somehow. At the time, I think they were both escaping their lives, but

they weren't born there and they don't live there now. I was maybe three or four when they left. It's a weird place, for sure. Have you been there?

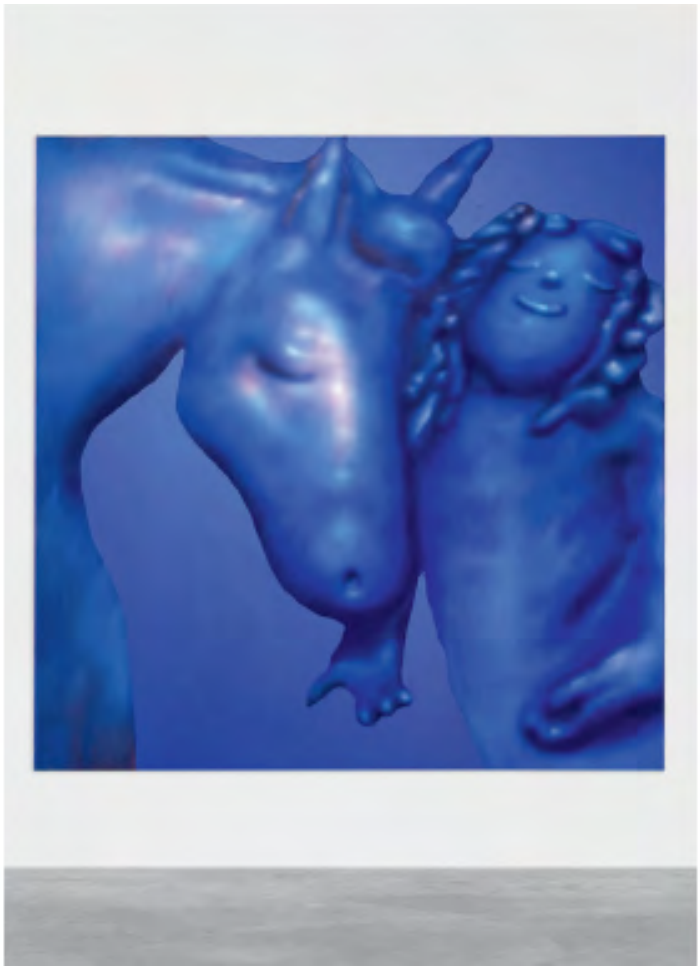
MOT No, we haven't but we want to. Although we wouldn't really know what to expect, because you hear all these different things from people who have been there—sometimes really depressing things and others fun.
AL I've been there a couple times since I was young and it felt depressing. I always think of Las
Vegas like a disappointing version of DISNEYLAND for adults. It's like this idea of people's fantasies that can't be fulfilled. Like, anybody who goes there will be disappointed because you go there thinking you'll win money or something, but you never really do and even if you do, money never really solves people's problems anyway. It's like an idea of someone's desire that once they have it it's not fulfilling, like this negative fulfilment of desire. That's the way I look at it. I guess that's why they call it sin city. It's just simply disappointing, like people getting what they want but then realizing they probably don't really want that, you know?

MOT Where did you move from there?
AL My parents moved to Pennsylvania when I was three.

MOT And you studied at Yale School of Art, right? Can you tell us what the teaching method was like and if your education there has affected or determined your way of working?
AL Yes. I mean, I feel like I was lucky with school. I went to another school before Yale, called Tyler School of Art and I think the combination of the two schools was perfect, because Tyler was more open-minded, with room to explore or just figure out what you want to be as an artist and who you are. It was just open—no judgment really. Just kind of letting people find themselves. I had some great teachers there: STANLEY WHITNEY was one of my favorites, DONA NELSON was another. I was naive at the time; I just went there not knowing what I would do, only knowing I liked painting. I didn't really have any plans other than that. I didn't know what else to do with my life. When I went there, I just found myself doing things, because I had the encouragement, maybe because of these teachers. After that, I worked on my own for a little bit and had a day job for a while, which made me realize how lucky it is to have the time to make your own work. Then some of my friends had gone to grad school and they got financial aid, and so I was like, "Oh, I can quit my job and go to school too." So I applied to Yale and was lucky enough to get in. That experience was quite the opposite. Yale is more about criticality—investigating what you're doing and figuring out why and what it means. But for me, the best thing about Yale was the other students: some of my best friends now are people I met there. It's quite a unique place, because it is one of the top schools, where everybody who's there is really serious about what they're doing, and that creates a really special environment. When I moved to New York I found that here too, but I think grad school is an easier way to find a community. In grad school, you have this instant 20 people that you're really going to have a lot in common with.

MOT Were you into painting from the beginning? Was it always your medium or do you consider yourself a multidisciplinary artist?
AL I would say painting has always been my main medium; I have always been consistent with that. I'm very interested in technology too… Technology is my other main interest or hobby, but painting is always the thing that I do to process thoughts. Growing up, I would always use a computer and make weird websites; I have a lot of curiosity about that world. But painting is more like the way I express things; I found a good balance between the two. I remember CARROLL DUNHAM once said in a class that drawing is a really direct way to go from your brain to paper. That really stuck with me and now I've built on this idea with paint, where painting for me is like editing; it's about slowing down and thinking about what you did, editing. Digital drawing is endless: you can keep drawing, there's no reusing materials and stuff, and I don't really need to think about it. But then later, I start to look at the drawing and think, "Oh, what is this?" And I'll make a painting of it. I have to re-investigate every decision. Mostly, paintings are the thing that I would show people; digital stuff I don't, generally. Usually, there is some transformation that happens.

MOT Continuing with the above, could you tell us more about your usual work method? Do you start from a sketch that you make on your iPad and then turn it into a painting? What, specifically, is the process like?
AL Well, I don't really have any rules or a set way of doing things. There's usually a certain moment with drawing



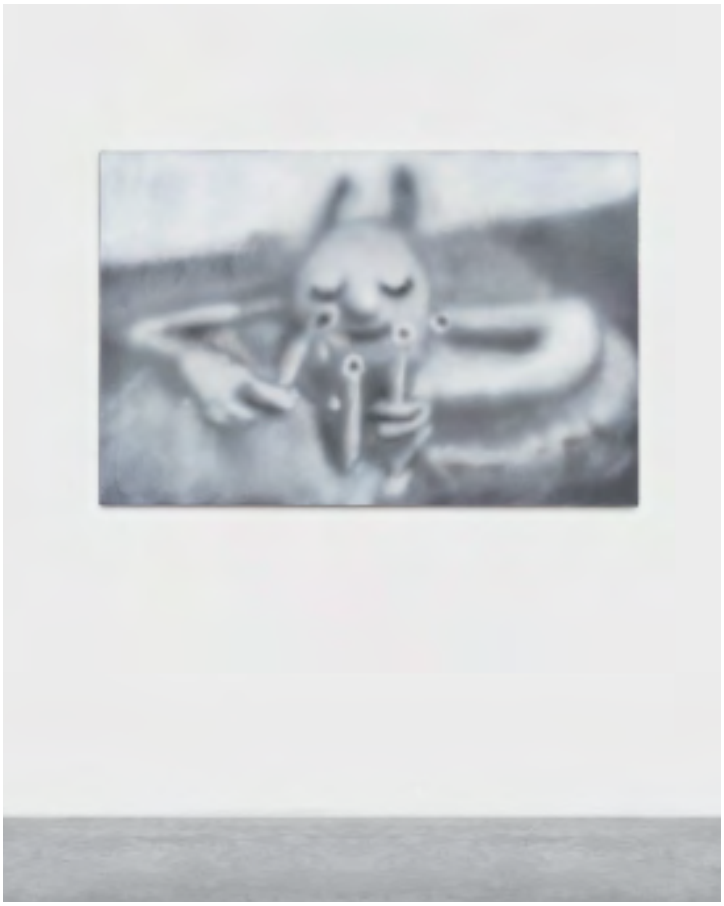
AUSTIN LEE, *Julia*, 2020. Acrylic on canvas.
178 x 173 cm. Courtesy of Peres Projects, Berlin.
Photography, MATTHIAS KOLB

when I like to sit and just fill up a whole notebook. Later, I'll look at it and I'll be like, "Oh, what is this thing?" And maybe I'll bring that into Photoshop and figure out what that is, start expanding on that drawing and paint that afterwards. But for the last couple of years I've been using virtual reality too. It's similar to how I fill up a notebook but in digital drawing. I'll go into this VR program and you can just draw things in space and there are 3D objects. I'll just create a whole environment and it still feels like a drawing, but it's an object. And that creates some interesting problems because once I make something there… Now I can 3D print it and make a sculpture from that object… I try to figure out what form makes more sense as a physical thing or as a flat painting. So I have these new sculptures I've been making that play with that idea. They're very frontal, big sculptures that are pretty wide and they're meant to be seen from the front, and the back and sides are completely arbitrary. You get to the side of it and it is super thin and weird, and like it's all abstracted because I'm drawing it from the front. They are these cool sculptures that play with the idea of space like a frontal drawing. Like a drawing in space, like this accidental extraction.

MOT And what is typically the trigger or inspiration behind one of your drawings—one of those initial drawings you make on your iPad? Do you do preliminary research or work with specific references or visual archives? Because we know you take from different sources— from music to historical art to Instagram and the internet.
AL Yes, all that. Just basically anything; it also comes from whatever is going on in my life. I often paint people—like people I know. It's usually directly related to what's going on around me. Even in normal times, maybe I'm on a subway and I draw people on it. What I'm mostly drawn to, I think, is humanity or emotional expression. For me, it's how you express an emotion as simply as possible. That's usually what I'm most interested in. So forms will be broken, some of them might be about a horse or something but it's really about this horse being sad, this expression. You know, it's not about a horse at all, but about a way to contain that thing. It could be from anything really; I might see a movie or something and I'll be drawing while watching it and it'll just be like, "Oh, this character is really feeling a certain way." So conveying the specifics is not that important: it's the emotion that I'm more interested in. If I'm on the subway and see a connection between two people leaning on each other, hugging or in love, I'm like, "Oh, I want to do a drawing of that." I would be like, "How do I draw that?" And then it might be a playful, weird version of that. That would be the spark for something, that's generally how it goes.

MOT Could you tell us an example of the last drawing you did or the one you are working on now? Is it based on a situation that inspired you or something like that?
AL Ok, let me show you a picture… This painting…

MOT Wow, it's amazing.
AL This is a sketch that I did a while ago. I was planning to work on it for the show at Peres Projects but then… What happens sometimes is that even though I might have made a sketch a while ago, since painting it now there's a new vibe to it—a kind of melancholiness of being quarantined. For me, something that is interesting about being an artist is that you have different moments when working on something, which are like different versions of



AUSTIN LEE, *Laying in Grass Smelling Flowers*, 2019.
Acrylic on canvas. 92 x 153 cm. Courtesy of Peres Projects,
Berlin. Photography, MATTHIAS KOLB

yourself, you know? Like you're thinking different things at different times so you can't make something without having your current thoughts seep into it. For example, I made that sketch a while ago and it was probably about different things, but now I reflect more about what's going on with the expression of it. For me, that's what's interesting about everything: it can always change, and I like it to be open enough so that even in five years or something…

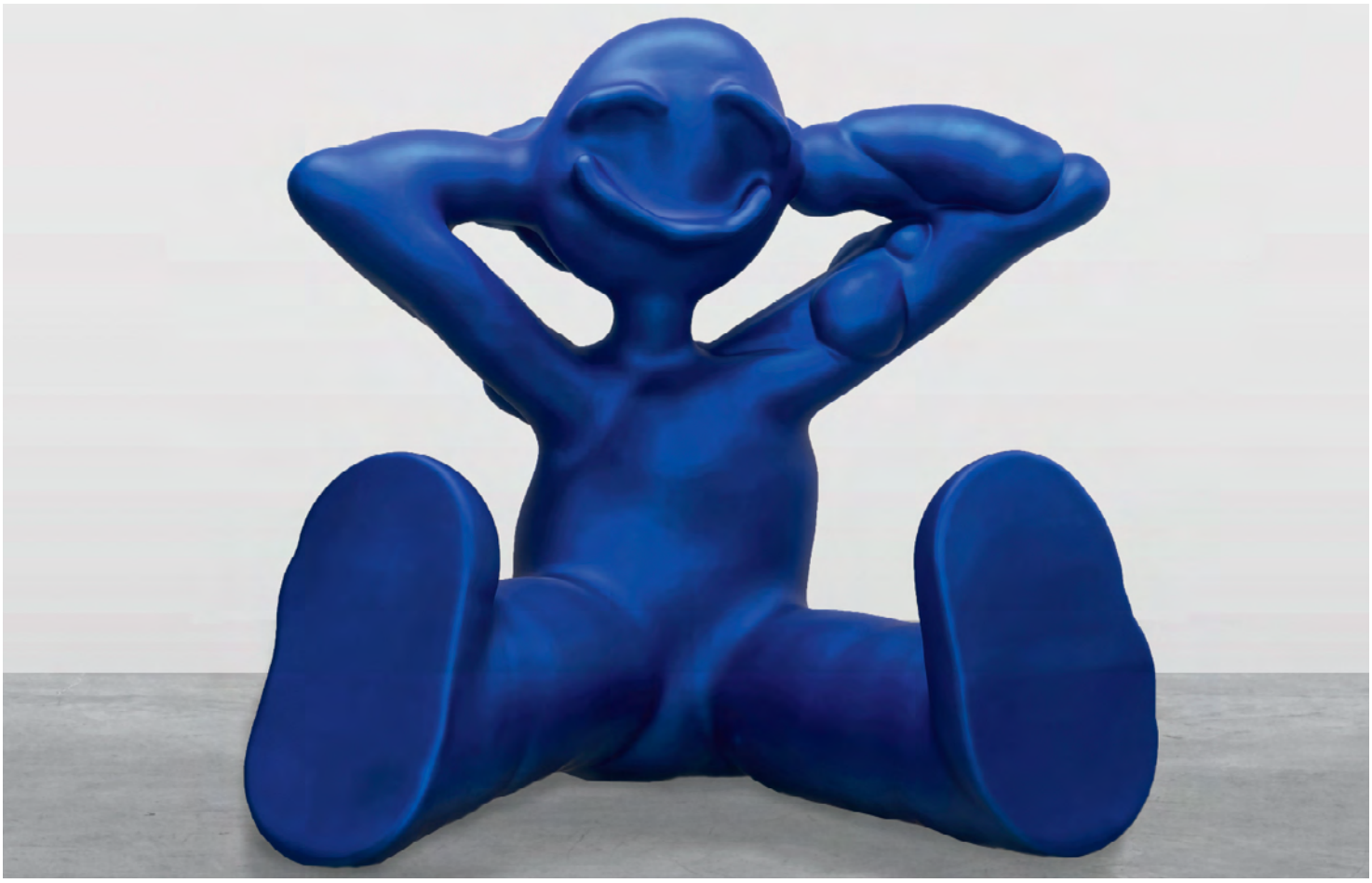
Maybe something else will be going on in my life that would trigger those kinds of feelings. So that's what I like: I like to make the work open so that the viewer can bring some of their own moments to it.

MOT If one pays attention to your work process, we think it's really nice that although you start your drawings with tools like Photoshop and other programs, you don't finish your pieces in a digital way. Instead, you rather go back towards an analog process and you complete your works through painting. What is the technique you use in the final stage?

AL Well, I use an airbrush all the time. I use a projector sometimes to get the sketch started. Just to get the size and scale, I'll project the original drawing. But with that, I'll just make an outline of the shape of the figure, the eye and the mouth… With my new work space, basically I'm planning to build the studio in the backyard, where I've been working already, but there I don't have any tools, like a projector. I can't project stuff out there. So I'll just bring the painting out back and kind of look at my phone and paint from that. So, for me, it's a mix of all kinds of different ways. I'll use a brush sometimes as well; it just depends. Because I was trying not to spray in this space when I first moved here, I was using oil paint. I was trying to use that again and I just couldn't. [Laughs.] I hate oil paint so much. It just takes so long to dry. Of course, I like some things about it, like how it looks, but just the process of waiting for it to dry gets me crazy. Again, I mostly use airbrushes—that's kind of my go-to thing. I always try to get really bright, fluorescent colors and mimic the computer colors, like these kinds of luminescent-screen colors.

MOT Let's go a bit deeper into your practice. You mentioned once that, when you are painting, you try to think about images that you have never seen before, that it's always this kind of question about new things. And we have to say that we felt the same way when we first saw your work, you know? We were like, "What is that?" Something that we had never seen before and which was exciting. So, talking about your technological approach to your work, do you remember how you started being interested in this kind of stuff?

AL As I said before, I've been using a computer for a long time just for my own curiosity. But I do have a specific painting technique… It was when I was an undergrad—this was maybe in 2004 —where I used these two separate things. You know, I'd do stuff on the computer and then make paintings pretty traditionally. I was using oil paints at the time. But then I had this moment where I couldn't solve a painting; it wasn't working, so I took a photo of it and brought it into Photoshop and sketched it up. That's pretty normal now—like everybody does that now—but at the time, not that many people had computers. For me and my generation, we're a kind of crossover between people who grew up with computers versus those who didn't; it was kind of a slower process. If you look at it now, you can see the connection with the present work, but at the time it was basically me using a mouse to draw a lot; it's like a figure with lines that I drew on there with



the computer mouse. But there's this awkwardness to the way they're drawn that is just because of that tool, you know? Using a mouse like that. Then I made a painting from that. But I had a moment where I was like, "Wow!" It felt like something special and I didn't really know why at the time. It wasn't a planned thing, but I could recognize it when it happened because I still kept that painting and I still remember the process of doing it. Like where I tried to mimic the awkward gesture of the mouse drawing, trying to paint the line. So yes, it's great to see how using a computer can get you to go to a place that you wouldn't otherwise. That was the first moment where I was like, "Oh, I wouldn't have made that line if I would've just done it on the canvas." It was like a weird, different line. There's this one painter… a German painter that worked with MARTIN KIPPENBERGER. I always forget his name… Oh, yes, now I remember: ALBERT OEHLEN. There are some paintings of his from the nineties and you can see that he's using a computer in a way to make new images. He's a traditional painter suddenly realizing, "The computer's a way to make some weird new images." The way I came to it was different, which was more like being interested in computers and it being part of my world in a natural way.

MOT Also, we know DAVID HOCKNEY and his later iPad drawings.

AL Yes! DAVID HOCKNEY's so great. He's someone who I've always loved and when he started doing the iPad drawings, you can see he's someone who is a really curious person and technically amazing too. He's just super curious and he's going to investigate and find new ways to do things. So, yes, I think his iPad drawings are super great and I think there's a little bit of both. He found a way to make them really interesting while other people weren't doing that. But they're also interesting because he's DAVID HOCKNEY. He was an early adopter of that. It's weird now to talk about this, because there was a time when people didn't really respect digital drawing or art. Now it seems a little crazy, but when he first started doing his iPad drawings, people were like, "What are you doing this for? This is not serious." But I think him doing that made people see what you can do with that kind of tool. He's great and I love him.

MOT And you make a lot of portraits too, so we wanted to ask you about it because a lot of artists are interested in this side of painting nowadays. Why are you so attracted to them?

AL So, as I said before, most of my paintings deal with human expression, human emotion. That's always there; whether it's an animal or an abstract figure, it's still dealing with that. I wasn't necessarily conscious about it when it started, but it's something I have realized over time. So the human figures are always present in that kind of way, even if it takes on another form. When I started using the airbrush, I was trying to get better at it too so, whenever I was in the studio, I would do portraits of people from life. It just started as a way to use the airbrush better, to be honest. And sometimes I'm interested in those emotional expressions—like just sitting with someone and watching their face change as you do their portrait. It's kind of the best way to understand that and what that means, and how to make that work in a portrait. I'm not trying to force a specific expression; it's more like trying to find it, you know what I mean? Even if I'm painting someone from life, I'm not trying to make it look like them or capture their likeness; it's more like using them as a vessel to find an expression, you know? It might not be the expression they're even making but once the painting feels like something then I'll stop. I've noticed that even if I'm painting something more abstract, I know how to do that because of all those paintings I've done over the years about people from life and stuff.

MOT Further delving into your relationship to technology, it is really interesting how you develop different machines for specific results. Like when you made this printer that was like a painter—we saw it on YouTube and it was amazing. How did you come up with that?

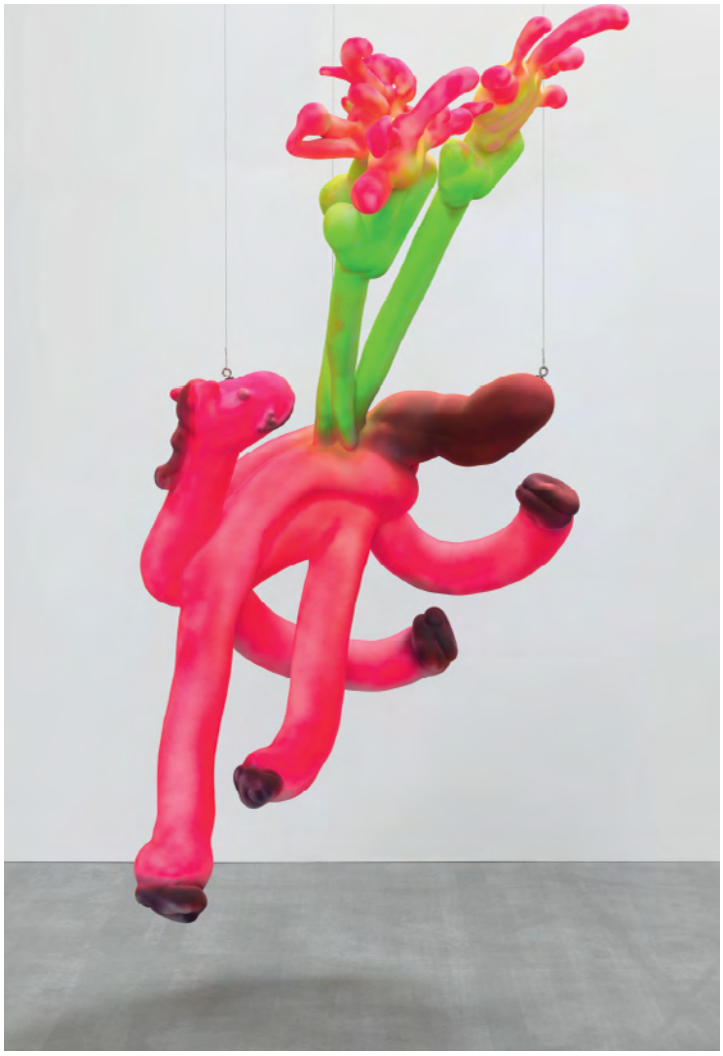
AL I started seeing this tool that people were using, but nobody really used it in that interesting kind of a way. I felt people were just using it almost as a printer. Like you just have an image and duplicate it but not as good. But for me, what I became more interested in was the difference between a digital hand versus a physical hand. Because I have an expressive quality to my digital drawing that I'll then paint, I'm adapting it from the digital to painting, so there are two versions of it. So, for me, the digital drawing felt like a way to capture this raw digital mark plus a little extra weirdness. You know—these marks because of the computer that a human wouldn't make… It'll be jagged sometimes: the mechanics of it will create some weird effects that can be really fun to play with. Like the way I had that set up too—it wouldn't draw live, you know? It's not just a printer, like where I see, "Oh, it didn't draw this right." I can go back into it—to those weird, genuine marks—and then I play with that. That's what I'm mostly interested in, this harmony with the computer, this dual expression.

MOT And what are the programs you usually use?

AL I'm pretty open to anything I find. There are a few programs that I end up going back to. Photoshop is always the best program for me, even with animation. I do frame-by-frame animation sometimes and it's just the best for that, so I always go back to it. I mean, there have been times where I've used iPhone software—even weird stuff that is clunky—just to get some strange things happening.

For example, there's this program called Processing, where you can make your own drawing software.

I was doing that for a little bit, because then you can create weird rules and things that would go wrong in the next step. But mostly I lean towards Photoshop; any time that I'm not in an experimental mode I just use Photoshop. Also lately, with the VR thing, there's this program called Medium that is just like Oculus made for Oculus Rift and



that is the VR version of Photoshop. It's crazy: it's so easy and intuitive. I've been trying to experiment a lot with light in these 3D programs. Like, how do I make something unreal feel real—not real but something in which the logic can be consistent. When the lighting is correct, you can really set the tone for a believable space.

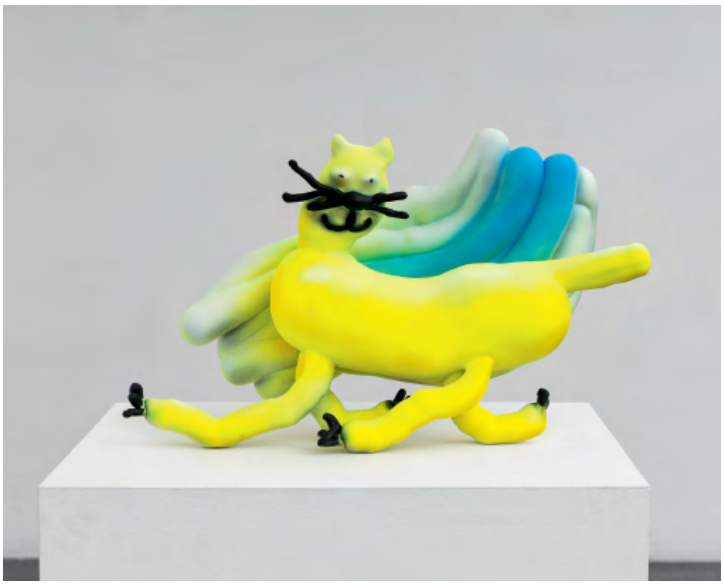
MOT Following this thread, what do you think is going to be the future of technology?
AL Oh, man, I don't know. [Laughs.]

MOT We are sure you have thoughts…
AL It seems like we are already in a dystopia, so I'm not sure. I definitely used to be optimistic, but as I get further along… I like using computers and stuff like that; I think they can be really great, but unfortunately, there tend to be negative side effects also. Like with anything else in life, it depends on how things are used. I think a good question to start with is how you use technology to make human lives better. I think that, in the future, virtual reality and augmented reality will become a bigger part of everyone's life.

MOT Changing the subject a bit, previously you briefly talked about your sculptures—that is something that you have been doing since the beginning of your practice, right? In your first exhibition, one could already see two or three sculptures, so it would be lovely to hear you speak a bit more on how you work on sculptures, because we love them.
AL Thanks. For me, sculpture kind of started off in the same way. When I went to Yale for grad school, we had access to a 3D printer so that was a time when I could experiment and I didn't really know what I was doing. I was more like, "Oh, something I can do that I didn't really have a plan for." I just really wanted to make an object to paint on so that was how it started. I was really interested in sculpture, or, I should say, interested in painting a sculpture. So that's why I did a 3D scan and I was like, "I'll just paint it." It was a sculpture of my head, and what I thought was interesting was the fact that the scan was pretty imperfect and there would be these weird abstractions but you could still get a sense of the person. Like, if I did a portrait of myself, it still felt like me but it wouldn't be perfect skin or anything. So for me, over time, that's been something I've been kind of exploring—like what is inherent in that person, what is their essence. Sometimes it's body language or a person's posture— those are the things I've noticed through the 3D scan that really are more prevalent. It's funny how I could do a 3D scan and it could come out really pretty horrible—just like a clumpy mess—and then if it's in the right pose it can feel like that person and I would just kind of paint and kind of let them be loose in a way that I could play with, trying to get a little bit away from representation but maintain the sense of a person. And then, over time, that also developed because of Maya and these programs. It's really hard to create organic-feeling structures for me, so the 3D scan was a starting point that felt organic. But now, because of using this VR stuff, I actually found I've been doing 3D scanning less; it's so easy to make organic expressive lines form in VR that I don't need to use the scanner anymore. But yes, over the years I've played with it in different ways. It's been getting super interesting in ways that I didn't expect. Like, the relationship between paintings and sculptures is something that I wouldn't have expected and that I've been figuring out through working.

MOT And to go on with this theme, the team at Peres Project shared with us a picture of one of the big pieces from your next exhibition. It's this blue one… bluerelllaaaax. Can you tell us about it?
AL Oh, yes. So that one started off as a painting, but as I was saying, sometimes it's hard to know what should be a painting or sculpture. I put in space to make it like a painting. It was supposed to be in that museum show in Beijing. But then I realized that, "Oh, it could be a sculpture too." It's nice to have the ability to do both and then see what form they ask for. They kind of end up taking different feelings. Like, the painting is different from the sculpture, but they are definitely related. That's something that for me has been interesting and probably, I would imagine, pretty unique too. I don't really know any other artists that are experimenting with this—to take up the same form in a painting and a sculpture so directly. For me, it's a weird question of what the difference between those things is; it really highlights the differences between painting and sculpture.

MOT And when planning an exhibition in terms of space, do you use virtual reality too? I mean, when thinking of the display of the pieces around the space and all that.
AL Yes, I use VR to plan shows out, definitely. I'll basically make a 3D model of the space in SketchUp and I'll put all the paintings and the sculptures where they're going to



go. I work out all the plans this way. Sometimes, I make the work even in relation to the space that it's in. So I'll maybe take a photo or a 3D scan of an environment and then make a site-specific work that is playing with the location.

MOT Could you tell us a bit more about your next exhibitions, even about this one that was postponed in Beijing?
AL The show in Beijing has been an exploration of 3D environments—more like installations, and heavily towards this idea of planning and making things in VR that were site specific. The show at Peres Projects results from me wanting to go back to painting after using VR so much. They'll be two sculptures in that too, but they're sculptures that play with the idea of painting. As much as I love working on the computer, painting is the thing I always return to.

MOT Since we are talking about exhibitions and you really work internationally, we want to know how you approach your work in terms of different countries? The market, the critics, and all that… Do you have the same feedback everywhere?
AL Yes… Hold on one second, I'm just going to go upstairs, because my computer's almost dead and I have a charger there.

MOT Ah, don't worry. We are almost finished—just a few more questions before we end. By the way, your studio is huge!
AL Well, as I said, this is a live-work space. So basically, I live upstairs and the studio is downstairs and then eventually I'll build a studio in the backyard. The place was in really bad shape when I got it. There was a lot of cleaning up; it had mice. [Laughs.] It's nice now, but it was a real mess. Going back to your question, I think for me, growing up I had never really traveled outside the US. So, over the last couple of years, I've been really lucky to experience different cultures and people, and I'm always surprised by how someone else can be affected, how differently people can think about my pieces. Everytime I've had an international show, I've met new people and made friends everywhere I've been, and I feel like that's a really special thing: to know people in different places in the world and have these different perspectives that make you a fuller person, you know? I moved to Berlin for six months about two years ago, when I had my first show at Peres Projects. I moved there to do a show and I actually felt like I learned more about the US from being in Berlin. I think that I took it for granted or I didn't realize about decisions or specific ways that people would think, and I was like, "Oh, it's not the same everywhere." I think that made me really kind of investigate my own things or decisions. When I was in Berlin, I had a pretty intense review that I thought was really great; it was one of the best reviews, because the person did a whole hour-long podcast and it was really thorough. It was not the most positive review, but for me it was one of the best: it really closely looked at the work. It felt different from most sorts of criticism I've seen. I do see a difference in how people talk about art or think about it and it is nice to get to experience as many viewpoints as possible.

MOT Just two more things before we finish. What are your top phone applications? The ones you use the most?
AL On the phone? Well, I use an app called… I think it's called Procreate, maybe they've changed it now. It's a drawing program, which is pretty great honestly. I don't love drawing on the iPhone, because it's kind of small, but if I don't have my drawing pad or something I will use that program. I also have an app that identifies flowers—I've been using that a lot lately. I don't remember what it's called… You can take a photo of a plant and then it will tell you what the plant is. And so it's been helpful because then I know how to water it or how much sun they should have. I've been having fun with that lately. Also, I think the thing I do most is to google things—like if I get curious about something I would just read a news website or something. But I don't play any games or anything on the

phone.

MOT And going back to your exhibitions for a moment, you took part in Superflat 2.0, this show curated by TAKASHI MURAKAMI, and also I saw a lot of pictures of him in your studio. Do you have a close relationship with him?
AL Yes. I mean, for a minute I was keeping in touch with him pretty closely, which is cool: he's one of my favorite artists, one of the most inspirational ones. The whole Superflat movement was something that I felt really in touch with in a lot of ways. And it was really cool that he included me in the Superflat 2.0 show, because it's pretty amazing to be inspired by something and then, in a smaller way, be connected with it too. But he's a really interesting person and yes, I think there was a time where he was interested in what I was doing—like it fit a certain interest that he had. I think he's probably interested in other things too, so we don't really keep in touch as much. But his studio in New York is pretty close to where my studio was… He has a studio in Long Island City, in New York. I met him on Instagram and he asked me to do a show in his gallery, and it was cool because I met all the people who work with him and became friendly with a lot of them. I'd see them in the neighborhood. And he was really generous to me; he gave me a show in Japan which was the only show I have done there and helped me produce some of the sculptures, like the first bronze sculpture that I made, so that was really pretty amazing. I don't keep in touch with him too much anymore, but I felt lucky to get to know him. He's an artist who is obsessed with his work. I think you just have to respect that.

MOT Before ending this interview, there is really another funny thing we'd like to discuss with you. We know you are also a super fan of CECILIA GIM NEZ, the painter of Ecce homo—the Spanish amateur painter who restored a fresco of Jesus Christ, remember?
AL Oh, yes! You mean the one that was made fun of?

MOT Yes, that one.
AL That thing is amazing! That has been an inspiration to me sometimes. [Laughs.] I mean, I don't really know what the original looks like, but I'll never forget that new one.

MOT The original was a disaster too. But the new face—the new version— was even better.

AL Yes, that's what I mean. For me, that is something that's interesting— when you can create something strange like that. I'm always trying to make, like, my version of that. [Laughs.] Some of the sculptures I make are from 3D scans of famous artworks and so I often think of my sculpture as my weird, bad version of these classics. I haven't made one yet, but there's a scan I made of MICHELANGELO's Piet and my goal is to make a work from that some day. Because that also is already a beautiful simplified form. It's so expressive and barely there… Sometimes I try to make the simplest form. It's almost like, how simple can you make it and still have that expression, you know? There is a line where it doesn't work anymore, but I try to be right on that line as much as possible.

MOT And just to finish, how do you think your work is going to develop in the next few years? What would you like to try?
AL I'm not sure… I've been creating these VR sculptures and stuff. It's pretty impressive and I love making those, but at the same time for me it's like, "How do you make a painting that can be as interesting?" You know, paintings are one of the simplest, oldest forms of art-making and for me that seems like a fun path to go down. It's like, how do you make a painting that just blows you away when you see it? I think it's always a goal for me—to continuously make interesting paintings. So I'll probably keep doing that. [Laughs.]