

Artie Vierkant

#### ARTIST

I think that some of the more - I mean, what's interesting to me kind of about that is questions of like „Who exactly is the author of the work? “Is obviously that becomes so entangled with, with the very way that we produce anything, produce content. Of course you can - I can say that I'm the author of the work but in - so much of it rests on, for example, the programmers who created Photoshop, the programmers who created Rhino Modelling Software, collaborations that I have with industrial fabricators because in a very kind of almost like traditional, conceptional art tradition, I physically produce almost nothing that I make. The work is very much industrially fabricated and often with machines that, no matter what degree of like, again, traditional success, I suppose that I could possibly have, would make any sense for me to ever have. I think in some ways the most interesting things that artists can do and sort of bring to society is to, like basically provide or like act out a kind of like workshop of like possible futures, I suppose, or ideas or just to kind of introduce methods of doing things that are - how do I put it - that deviate in some way from, like the established status quo of how we - whether that's how we deal with, you know, images and objects and content in, maybe in the case of someone like myself or whether that's, you know, how we deal with political or social organization, for example.

#### ARTWORK

So, a lot of my work deals with a lot of, I'd say the interstitial spaces between either virtual and physical space or just different modes of representation and even, I'd say content creation, I guess. For a long time, I've been invested in trying to make works that either, in some cases - depending on the series - live very much between kind of an intangible object and a very tangible object and kind of questioning the distinctions and boundaries between those. Whether that's through challenging kind of modes of image production or whether that is working with how things like intellectual property control the production and distribution of objects, basically. Most recently, I suppose, I stand in[?] some of that inquiry into an augmented reality app that is an extension of one of my main series which is called Image Objects. So the app is called Image Objects and it's kind of like an augmented reality camera app experience that you can - it's like a free download on the iOs store, you can load it up and use this face of the camera of the phone to analyze the space around you and place fragments of images in space around you that kind of, I suppose, behave like objects, you can walk around them and through them and experience kind of the way that my work functions usually on a representational level and the space of the installation, the[?] ideas for my work, but in physical space.

The Image Object in that nomenclature basically was just the idea of kind of the funda- like the fundamental way that we deal with, with images and objects in - I'd say like - culture today or just as individuals. The way that - the way that for example we can know an object and know a space through images and representations of reality[?] today. And how in fact those venues which we traditionally think of venues of representation, for example, like the division between what we had called primary information, like the actual experience of a thing, versus what we would call secondary information, the representation or the mediated image, or something other than image, I suppose, of a thing. How those categories can either become collapsed or the, I guess, the possibilities that are there when we think of those things, those kind of extensions of each other. One of the things that, I think, drives me really frequently, is trying to understand the artwork as this kind of like piece of media, mediatized object-image, image-object, I guess. That, that can't exist outside of the boundaries of, can't the rest of society or culture, I suppose. This, I'd say, is one of the reasons that led me [unintelligible] to work on - to work with intellectual property because that was out of an interest in, you know, all things being equal, for example. The domain of intellectual property is kind of the almost like juridical technology, basically, but produces our ability to - how do I put it - to like own ideas, though technically, obviously, intellectual property governs everything, except for the idea. But the idea of kind of like producing

again that kind of like hybrid object that exists between multiple states but then is protected by this juridical function, for example, which says that I as a producer created this product and thus it is my intellectual property. That's something that I think probably interests me, because of its kind of broader social implications for where we are and where we might be going. Throughout, whether you like think of it in the direct term of the, something like intellectual property, which is an example. A lot of what drives me, I think, is the - an interest in kind of disentangling propriety or - how do I put it - propriety, originality, authenticity, basically, which are things that I think we think of as arriving kind of like sui generis into, into the world or into culture but which very much are these social, technological and juridical constructs, basically.

## PRODUCTION

So, my production process is relatively flexible. Usually, what my production or my, like, artmaking actually looks like, is I'm in the studio and making files or things or sketches that might never see the light of day or may very soon, I suppose. And then when I kind of get a thing or a set of things to a point where I'm interested in, maybe like, fabricating them or having them produced, I have to basically take some time to prepare those files to get ready to be fabricated. Whether that's, in the case of print files, adding like print bleed and cutting paths and everything, because all of the prints are shaped in these kind of, like, irregular shapes that are cut out of, like, large aluminium dibond boards. Or whether that is, in some cases, finding the materials and the right way to do it or even the right fabricator for a thing. Typically, I work with, three or four different, like, fabrications sources, that I just have built up good relationships with and that I like and trust and know that they're - how do I put it - know that, like, I can appreciate their quality, I guess, and the objects that I make, basically. For example, I've been working with the same printer and the same, like, print production manager for, I'd say, almost eight or nine years at this point. So, we've gotten to a point where it's kind of this feedback-loop in a way where, you know, I'll have an idea of I want to make a print or what I wanna do with it, for example. Or I'll have an idea of how I can maybe make it better, make the colours richer or something like that which is like a very, just, mundane physical concern. And then, either she'll work on that with me or forplays[?] me a different material, basically, that we'll investigate together or a different machine that maybe wasn't existing when I first started printing with them, for example. If you walk into my studio, it's not - you know, I have like friends and friends who are painters who will walk into their studio and there's like sketches for things everywhere and there's source material and there's stuff that didn't work and there's stuff that did work and I have all of that but it's actually like all in my computer, basically, so, ironically, you know, it's almost like both, like the labour of like figuring out the ideas and the labour of producing the work is something that actually is kind of like a representational problem for like - or like a problem of representation, I guess, within my studio, like if you went in there, it might not even be clear that anything's happening [laughs], if that makes sense. It's hard to say when something has failed, because I think, honestly, you know, a lot of, like - I think the term, like, „This artwork failed“ or something doesn't totally make sense, 'cause a lot of like very good art, I think, fails at whatever it's trying to do or just if you were considering it as - if you were even considering it was trying to do something - often fails and that sometimes what is interesting about it. For me, when I consider a work to be a success, I think, it's often because I have seen some way in which it has resonated with other people. So for example, when I first started doing the Image Objects, it was really interesting to see people kind of take the things that, like that images that I was making, the Altered Installation Views that I was making and either, like, make their own versions, without of like respect or mockery, frankly. For example, there was a - Like, one time someone pistoled[?] to me anonymous, I don't know who this person was, like, sent me a, like direct message, when I was still on Facebook, basically and with just a link to a Tumblr with a single image on it. The Tumblr was called partyvierkant.tumblr.com and it was like a photograph of one of my works with an image of like, people having a party in front of it and it was all photoshopped and it was just like a stupid joke, basically. But I thought, you know, I had that feeling, this is interesting because it's like - I mean, partially, it's just someone trying to kind of be like, reach out to me or get a rise out of me or whatever they wanted to do, I don't know.

But also just that like, somebody actually took the time to do that, if that makes sense. Like, those moments are really interesting to me.

#### MATERIAL

When I'm working with a patent, there will be a - there's like the intellectual property I consider a material in itself, which is this kind of like intangible, mostly intangible thing, that's basically just a legal agreement. And then there's maybe the, the drawings or schematics or like Photoshop documents or Rhino documents that I make to get to the point I'll then produce the object or this[?] governed by the intellectual property and then with the Image Objects for example it's kind of - it works in a very similar way, the, like the digital file I consider very much over all a part of the work. I think that I am interested in the moments where you do translate immaterial to material and maybe back again. At the same time, I do feel like overall, it's all kind of like part of the same system, if that makes sense. The, you know, there are like - there are files for example, there are works that existed as files that I've never made that - were never like physically produced, I guess, because they haven't been made. That I feel like, we're very much on an equal footing with the objects that I've finally actually produced but it's, you know, it's when like, I think in a way it's just a, it's another method of representing or kind of instantiating the work. In the same way that, you know, which is why the documentation of the work itself is also such a critical part of it, basically, because it's about acknowledging all of these separate parts and ironically, it's kind of like at the beginning of the process at least as it like unfolds in time. It starts with this digital file which point it's not - it doesn't have that, like, scarcity of, you know, the like, the very the reality that only so many things can be produced or sensibly produced or whatever and then it passes into this mode where it kind of becomes scarce for a period it is printed in, becomes an object. And then when it's photographed, that photograph, because I go back into it and edit it and change it and that varies like layers of abstraction. Those - like it becomes not scarce again, basically. It's, you know, for the most part, one photo of an Image Object will be, will be very much the same photo but, like, the different - like in working back into it, the different instantiations of that mechanics like makes it again not scarce. Which, I think, is just kind of like just trying to be true to the nature, which, I think, is just trying to be true to the nature of the medium, basically. I think that when I was first starting to work this way, for example, I kind of understood that I wanted to make every stage of it like make sense for what that medium's nature was, I suppose. So, images and documentation can like circulate freely and be kind of infinitely variable, if you want it to, whereas the moment that you print something or produce something it becomes this like cold dead matter that you can change but in order to change it you have to ontologically destroy it or something. You destroy what was and you have to turn it into something else. So, actually in a way, the things that are the physical objects, for a lack of a better word, are the document, more so than the documentation, I suppose.

#### MEDIUM

Oh, well, it's interesting, because I feel like artists often get so tied to a medium, I mean, that all obviously, so many of, especially the most interesting artists, completely ignore the question of the medium. I mean, in a way, actually, this question of, like, medium and what do I work with and what kind of context I'm in, has been something, that grappled with the entire time that I've been making work because I, you know, if I'm gonna, if you were to explain my, my, like, life as an artist or whatever in the very traditional sense, you would say something like: „Oh, he is trained as a photographer and then he started doing something else.“ And as a result, I've been spoken about as a photographer, been spoken about certainly as an internet artist, post-internet artist, as a painter, which I completely rejected for so long, although now I completely understand why people talk about me in that context sometimes. And I think that, in a way, when I see that kind of identification, when I see people saying, like, „Oh this person is a sculptor. “, for example, I embrace that interpretation, while not sharing it, if that makes sense. I feel like, it's interesting to have all these different interpretations, because, really, it's just, they're just different words for the same thing, basically. We're all

grappling with questions of, you know, representation in aesthetics and object [unintelligible] and agency and all these things. You know whether you, want to say, that you're acting within a painterly idiom or a sculptural idiom or, you know, whatever artistic idiom, I feel like, it doesn't really matter so much. I think, that I'm interested in, kind of, borrowing and retooling ideas that propagate within idioms, basically, and within, because all obviously, like, any medium grows, like, grows like a cultural following and the discourse around it and everything and, I don't think, you know, I don't think it's so important to balkanize intentionally, which I think, is probably a very natural reaction now. I think, like, now people aren't so interested in balkanizing and dividing these things into idioms as they maybe were when I was, you know, when I was like in school or first starting or something or kind of starting to actually accept this more fluid state, basically.

#### PROCESS

I think, the process is kind of intentionally as flexible as I can make it. Obviously, I'm - because I do work with - as I've like mentioned before - industrial fabricators, it's, like that part becomes inflexible. But everything else I try to leave as kind of open as possible, whether that's, you know, I - That's me having an idea and making a, like making an Instagram post or something that becomes part of the work or like a stand-alone website or something. I think that, like, as much as I have, what I refer to as series and I work often within like - often like the confines of one idea, kind of over and over again. I like to let what happens within that idea, be as kind of like flexible as possible and let it go wherever. Or, if it feels kind of appropriate, at that moment and I think because - Like, you get to process, but that like art practice never really made a lot of sense to me, like yes, you can go in and like practice your art as in, like, producing things that are within your style or whatever or doing like just - I guess - continuing to make content, make more or something. Because I alter my installation views, you know, I started this process before, certainly before Instagram was like very popular and before we had quite the same relationship to like social media image sharing, so now, when I like post those things on my website or whatever, I put the, like, altered abstracted installation views into like a book or send-to-press[?] or whatever. Those like kind of existed one media life and then I wanna click[?] like the actual traditional representation, like straight photographs of the work, is mostly, like mostly ends up being posted by people who just go to a show. So, if you like search my name or search the series or whatever on social media, you'll see like actual representational images of like what the objects look like, because people are going to shows and taking photos of them, which is interesting because it kind of like displaces the, like that type of traditional documentation onto the viewer. Not necessarily intentionally, but this is just like something that happened, basically, that I find interesting. And so, as a result, you know, it's this like continual engagement, I think. Because it's not necessarily that like we're ever - you know, it kind of never really ends, or it doesn't have to.

#### PRESENTATION

My work is shown in, my work is, like, shown in the venues in which - like the venues that are native to like the current contemporary art idiom, basically. But I'd say, possibly, uniquely with a special attention to detail to the spaces that are often very ignored which is the like, the public space of dissemination, the idea that, you know, instead of having to go for example to like a gallery in New York to see my work, that like, actually, the work usually is designed to be received just on my website or through, I don't know, Instagram or something like that. Like, especially with the Altered Installation Views but also with other work where you, like when you're looking at it, you're looking at the thing, there's no like - there's nothing even missing, you're not missing like a walk-through and -around or something, you're seeing an image which is specifically created to be received on the - like, in the format that you're receiving it. [unintelligible] if it's like a website or a book or whatever. I try to not really privilege one method of reception or another. It does become strange, because sometimes it does feel that - how do I put it - it does become strange, because sometimes it feels like, if you just see like one method of seeing, specifically like if you just go and see it in a, like in a gallery space or in a show, or in that kind, it's like, it's very much like one discrete experience and I try and tailor that space to be its own, like, self-

sustaining experience, if that makes sense, but always in the back of my head, I'm thinking „Oh, but I guess kinda to explain this I need to, like, take out my phone and show, like, images of the other part of what this does and like where this goes.“. But I think that's probably just my tendency to like either over-explication or - I don't know, kind of like, intentional willingness to communicate this like other part of it, basically. Because, really, part of the intention is, like distinction stand on its own, basically, and then, if, basically, if the viewers are interested, they go and they see like: „Okay, oh, there is something else to this!“ Like, you maybe try and find images of a show [unintelligible] that you, like, saw in person and then you go on my website and you're like „This doesn't look like what I saw, at all.“ like „What's going on here?“. But, I mean, thankfully, I think like, kind of immediately, usually the viewer gets it, because it's so, like, the alterations are so obvious, usually, which is I think kind of a, it's both using the aesthetic trope that exists but also, I think, it's kind of an strength, that just, like, communicates that „Oh yeah, like, this alteration is clearly part of it because it's not something, that seems unintentional“, if that makes sense. It doesn't seem like just an accent, like other color balances offer, something like that, it seems like „This was very, like, these, like aggressive abstracts, alterations were very well fully done to this. “. There isn't a specific audience in mind. I think, partially, because, you know, what I'm doing is kind of trying to not work exclusively within a single idiom, so in some cases that means that maybe I'll have a small following in, like, a photography community or something or maybe I'll have like a small audience in different places or something. And then maybe kind of like a more generalized art audience or something. I don't know, I think, that's like interesting to me.

#### METHOD

I guess, a lot of the methods that I use to make my work are engaging with, like, a number of different things, usually whether that's like software tricks or just like looking at new forms of fabrication or production, kind of coupled with an attempt to take, like, kind of a critical perspective towards the idea of production towards meaning or like materiality, I guess. And maybe being like critical, I suppose of the structures which produced those things. So, for example, like, I first, like, looked at intellectual property as a method of, like, both governing ideas but also a method of, like, constructing an expanded field for property, if that makes sense. Because it arises out of this, kind of like, need to create either a post-industrial class, basically, or to, like, fortify the very idea of being post-industrial, of saying, like, ironically, the methods are similar to how I produce my work which is maybe why I was interested in it. To say, like, I'm the pervader of this thing or whatever and yes, it's like someone else makes it but, like, it's still mine. Which both, which again kind of dovetails with the tradition of conceptual art, basically. So, trying to - I guess, like, the methods that I use then are, basically, trying to find both the boundary points and points of interstice between those things, between, like, how we make things and also how we think about them and, like, why we do, like, the rigid structures that construct that. One of the methods that I work with is as per using[?], using tools, especially software tools, that maybe have one meaning or one like very standard culturally use for using them either poorly or like a blunt object, basically. So, for example, like the spot brush in Photoshop, which is essentially a - it's actually like quite interesting, on a - on an, like, an image or representational level because the spot brush you take or like the spot serves like clone tool, you take - I guess it's clone brush - you take the, you either take like a piece from one image, you, like, sample an image source and then you, just like, you clone it, you use, you like redistribute the image data base free[?] over another surface and, you know, conceptually as a brush in the painting sense, that's quite unique and interesting and the fact that it's primarily used for, you know, removing like wrinkles from skin in photographs or something or just making someone look otherworldly and like not actually real, kind of almost looking non-human, is pretty interesting. Usually when people use it it's, like, they take it tiny or relatively small, like clone brush is: you're trying to, you're trying to take part of for example skin that's perfect and trace it over a part that's not, basically, to make it all match. But when you bloat it up, when you take that tiny brush and make it huge, the results is - I don't know - like quite - it's like almost like an automatic tool for

making like dadaist or like cubist work or something like that. Not that my work usually is that but to say that as a tool and that tool becoming like a method for working, basically. It kind of offers a possibility that is largely unexplored and specifically in the field of painting, I suppose.

#### INTENTION

I don't think there's a singular specific message I wanna convey with my work. I think that they're just kind of like, there's always kind of a number of you know like, propositions or ideas or themes that each individual series may wanna convey. But I never want to, I try to not make it didactic in any way because I feel like, if it's just like: „Oh yeah, this is like that, I get it. “Or if it's like descriptive in some way then that like really reduces the possibility of the work. So, I'd say, like with these two it's kind of this - like a, maybe, an idea or a message that can be communicated through them and that usually, I think, is pretty obvious or simple in a way and unlike to a general reading of it or like an informed reading of it but which is still kind of like either left open to interpretation or to question or left open to like grow, be used as like - I don't know - to be like taken up by something else. Like, there's no conclusion, it's kind of like - it's almost diagnostic, I guess. Like: „This is like this. “and when can have a conversation about that, like physical space and virtual space are collapsed and we can find new interesting ways to collapse them. We can have like thousands of conversations about that and like every conversation that I had with different people about that when they take that from the work is like almost invariably different. And like I don't know, the case like - you know - this is this object and this object is only this object because this like person they filed an intellectual property claim and they got like a grant of monopoly over this idea, meaning that like the state protects them from anyone else being able to do it, discuss[?] [laughs]. Not to say that it's like actually literally dispersive or educational or whatever but like just to say that the interpretation is open, basically.

#### ART

I'd say that my work is frequently about kind of trying to either find or investigate different either like unexplored or underexplored venues of representation. Whether that is through kind of like the boundaries or overlap between like physical and virtual space, for a lack of a better term. Or whether like that's the question of the boundary between like actual object and like a more abstract idea, basically. Because always with - like almost always with the work there's something that exists entirely outside of it or that's like inaccessible if you're just looking at it through the experience of like the object, if there is an object or through like just one venue of representation. If you see my work through like a representative image or you hear it explained or you, like, go wander around an exhibition of mine and don't, like, read or look at any other information. It's always kind of like both a very different experience but kind of tried to be tailored to be all part of like an acknowledgement that like these things that media and art and all these things like extend into all of these domains, basically and that like in collapsing them there can be something generative there. Whether that's pictorial or gestural or whether that's conceptual or ideological-philosophical. I think there are a variety of interpretations for what art is. One is obviously, honestly just kind of like any cultural product, whatever that means. That's just as vague as the term art, I suppose. Like, any way that we try to like communicate with each other in a mediated way, essentially, you know, I create something other than myself whether it's a physical object or whether it's whatever and that thing lives kind of outside of me but communicates for me or on my behalf even if it isn't necessarily always like reliable narrator or like a good communicator as in the case of like so much art and cultural product that's been misinterpreted by others or like interpreted for like different means over the course of history, basically. At another level, I do think that in it's, like in its role as a communicator as like this mediated like third-object kind of thing, it at its best, again like, offers a space of possibility, whether that is a questioning of how things are now and how we make things, how we behave, how we like organize society, how we treat each other or whatever, or whether that is, maybe at its best, offering a glimpse of what could be instead. Sounds optimistic and utopian and I don't think that I'm necessarily those,

but I do - you know, I don't think I will be able to live with myself making art if I didn't fundamentally believe in some of those things on a certain level.

#### BIO

Artie Vierkant, born 1986, is an American artist based in New York. He holds an MFA from University of California, San Diego and a BA degree from University of Pennsylvania, and is represented by New Galerie, Paris. Vierkant is best known for his "Image Objects" series, an ongoing series that is based on his 2010 essay "The Image Object Post-Internet". Each work in the series is first created by Vierkant as a digital file on a computer, which he then UV prints out and fits onto a three-dimensional sculpture. Among others, Vierkant had exhibitions at Perrotin, New York, New Galerie, Paris, Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster/Germany, Untitled, New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and Kunsthalle Wien. In 2022 he published the book *Health Communism* (together with Beatrice Adler-Bolton, Verso Books). <http://artievierkant.com>

#### Credits

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