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What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

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A film still from Zach Blas's "Jubilee 2033" (2018).
Gasworks, London; Art in General, New York; and MU, Eindhoven

Zach Blas

Through April 21. Art in General, 145 Plymouth Street, Brooklyn; artingeneral.org.

Smart, stylish and apocalyptic, Zach Blas's "Contra-Internet" at Art in General uses sculpture and moving images to critique the internet as a tool of capitalism and oppression, and to imagine its messy demise. The centerpiece, "Jubilee 2033," is a 28-minute video featuring an animated robot from the future sent to assist humans. Actors play those champions of capitalism, Ayn Rand and Alan Greenspan, and the transgender performance artist Cassils stars as Nootropix, a fictional prophet of artificial intelligence.

"Jubilee 2033" borrows its title and opening sequence from Derek Jarman's punk-cult film "Jubilee" (1978) and is shown in a dark gallery with futuristic elements: a bright green geometric emblem projected on the floor and blown-glass orbs resting on pedestals. In the video, the promise of the internet has failed and we see cities burning — or campy digital images of conflagration — as well as a copy of the hippie-utopian "Whole Earth Catalog." Nootropix appears

near the end of the video, its body painted silver, spouting ideas couched in queer and feminist theories of technology and science fiction and dancing to an opera aria while a petro-looking liquid shoots out of a glowing blue faux phallus.

“Contra-Internet” also includes a single-edition book titled “The End of the Internet (As We Knew It)” with a bibliography of “Works Plagiarized” from the theorists Fredric Jameson and Beatriz Preciado and the Zapatista revolutionary Subcomandante Marcos, among others. The exhibition also gains traction from its location in Art in General’s space in Dumbo, one of New York’s Silicon Valley-like hot spots. After leaving the show I spied a cafe nearby with the slogan “you code, we cook” printed on its window, addressed to the minions toiling for digital overlords in Dumbo’s pre-post-contra-internet work spaces. I was sort of waiting for Nootropix to appear inside, specterlike, in full prophet mode.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER