Neo Pop: The Rise and Fall of an Empire and now: GARTELISM

It's a thankless job but who else is going to thank you if not yourself in this post-neo-pop world.

Laurence Gartel hails from the Pop Art movement in New York as an early pioneer of digital art and continues to engage with new technologies to record his world, GARTELWORLD. He documents by way of creative endeavour who and what dares to jump in for the ride. Gartel continues to redefine what it is to be Gartel. From early consumerist influences employed by a post-war expression was a world preoccupied to the pursuit of materialism. We now find ourselves fully immersed in era directed by mass media, technology and very sophisticated mimetic engineering, such as viral branding, thanks to the internet. Gartel is fully fledged and at the centre of our universe.

The mechanisms of Neo Pop (such as gallerist hype, collector influence and secondary market hysteria) created such spectacle the art world had never previously encountered. Miami culture, especially prone to spectacle and feverish hype sees opening and closing parties being almost indigenous to the culture where "A" listers swoon to be photographed on red carpet (art) events. Artists like Jeff Koons function as celebrity, and the art they make is seen as the ultimate symbol of power and wealth for the gallery and collector. Even after the financial crisis in 2008, this new 21st century art paradigm of artist as celebrity indicates a new stage in the commodification of art. Warhol was right, everyone seems to be scrambling for their 15 minutes but only few survive the cut. Social media permits a global audience to indulge in a saturation of mediocrity where anyone can be star.

Gartel creates a formidable connection between object, event and artist, and the time it takes to develop and understand the language and make no mistake, it is a very specific language he uses. Gartel's art has evolved from early pioneering digital explorations to large scale installations of technology using everything from vehicle parts, live models and mannequins, musical instruments, multi-channel video projections to collaborations with philharmonic orchestras, corporate commissions with companies like ABSOLUT Vodka and Gibson guitars, Gartel TV, decal-wrapping prestige cars, LCD panelled musical instruments, haute couture fashion and most recently eye wear. It is about Gartel as Art - GARTELISM the marketeer, raconteur, inventor, viral engineer, party-man, consummate salesman, ego maniac and artist - make no mistake about the value Gartel brings to the table.

Gartel's digital collages provide an extraordinary survey of America's social history as complex and multi-layered portals. They are iconic. They reveal fragments dripping with America's excesses, dominance and extreme addiction to consumerism. Since the economic collapse, Gartel's culture-specific art has become even more poignant as America re-identifies itself on the world stage. Current cultural trends to see *neo-pop-urban-street-contemporary* artists as recorders of social history, have a habit of falling short, providing only a one

dimensional view. Often young graffiti artists are plucked off the street (or rather from in the back alley spray can still in hand) by opportunistic gallerists hungry to pounce and make a quick bang - fashions come and go in a blink.

Laurence's loyalty to art history remains integral to his practice. Clearly a genius as a social observer and marketeer, he rejected gallery representation early to be in charge of his own game. Gartel's work is highly competent, extremely informed, and supremely cerebral. It is autobiographical and of its time. No artist is before their time and this makes a critical point about Gartel having his vision and feet firmly on the ground (although always running). From the age of 5 Gartel's mother told him to follow his dream without exception and for the past 40 years keeping up with Gartel has not been for the faint hearted.

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