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A&E / VISUAL ART

'Turing's Echo' draws meaning out of repetition



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The Oakland Pro Arts gallery in the heart of Downtown Oakland, currently presenting out of the way that it's almost easy to walk by without noticing it's there. One might head playing on a loop in the gallery

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The individual panels of the head animation, drawn by Tatiana Ray, hang below the screen, each a different facial expression and angle of motion sketched out in pink and orange skin tones. The drawings by themselves are curious, but when they're strung together and flashed on the screen in an endless, mesmerizing loop, there's so much more to notice.

The more it's repeated, the more things stand out: the light that moves on her skin as her face turns in circles, how many times she blinks and how her curly hair bounces. Noticing how the cycle of her expressions is a cycle of different emotions assigns some deeper meaning to the art. She arcs from sad to happy and back to sad as it replays in loop, connoting the doom of repeating the same mistakes, which is precisely what the "Turing's Echo" exhibit is all about.

Every year, Pro Arts presents a juried exhibition that addresses some broader theme; this year, the theme is repetition. Members of the Pro Arts institution, which works to support pioneering art and professional development programs simultaneously, can create and



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The final chosen 16 pieces, including the front window display and visual performance art, all use repetition to create a commentary or a critique of society. Since the rise of pop art and the minimalist movement, the art world's fascination with repetition has continued since its post-WWII era beginning. It has communicated different ideals, from the value of individualism amongst Communism and suburbanization to the power of the Civil Rights Movement. Just as these issues are still relevant, repetition is still used as a tool in art to express opinions about them.

Artists were told to use the current social, economic and political climate as inspiration to explore the idea that many are concerned by the unavoidable repetition of past mistakes. One three-dimensional piece, "Repeat Until You Puke," shows 16 blocks covered in collages of numbers and presidential portraits or photographs (Mark Hendricks). Another one, "Sound Machine" (Melanie Piech), requires viewers to place a phono plug into a series of jacks to listen to different variations of white noise. Perhaps the most intriguing piece, "One-Of-A-Kind," combines the work of multiple artists to show handmade blouses hung between succulent coloring pages in a checkerboard pattern on the wall (Jennifer Linderman and Palesa Nicolini).

A lot of the art is very noticeably serial or repetitive, but the contemporary context or opinion of some works is more obscure. Hendricks' "Repeat Until You Puke" shows the progression of American political leaders, and as it's titled, appears to have a fairly obvious meaning. Even the title of Linderman and Nicolini's work allows there to be some derivable commentary on individualism. But Ari Salamon's abstract pigment print, "Interface #3425 (Western Addition)," doesn't unanimously speak to an opinion about anything in particular despite its clear use of repetition in shapes and shading.

With no plaques describing what each piece is supposed to mean and only a binder offered at the front desk as reference to the piece's title, materials and the artist behind it, all meaning of the art in conjunction with repetition is solely up to the viewers' interpretations. "Turing's Echo" runs until Jan. 27.

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