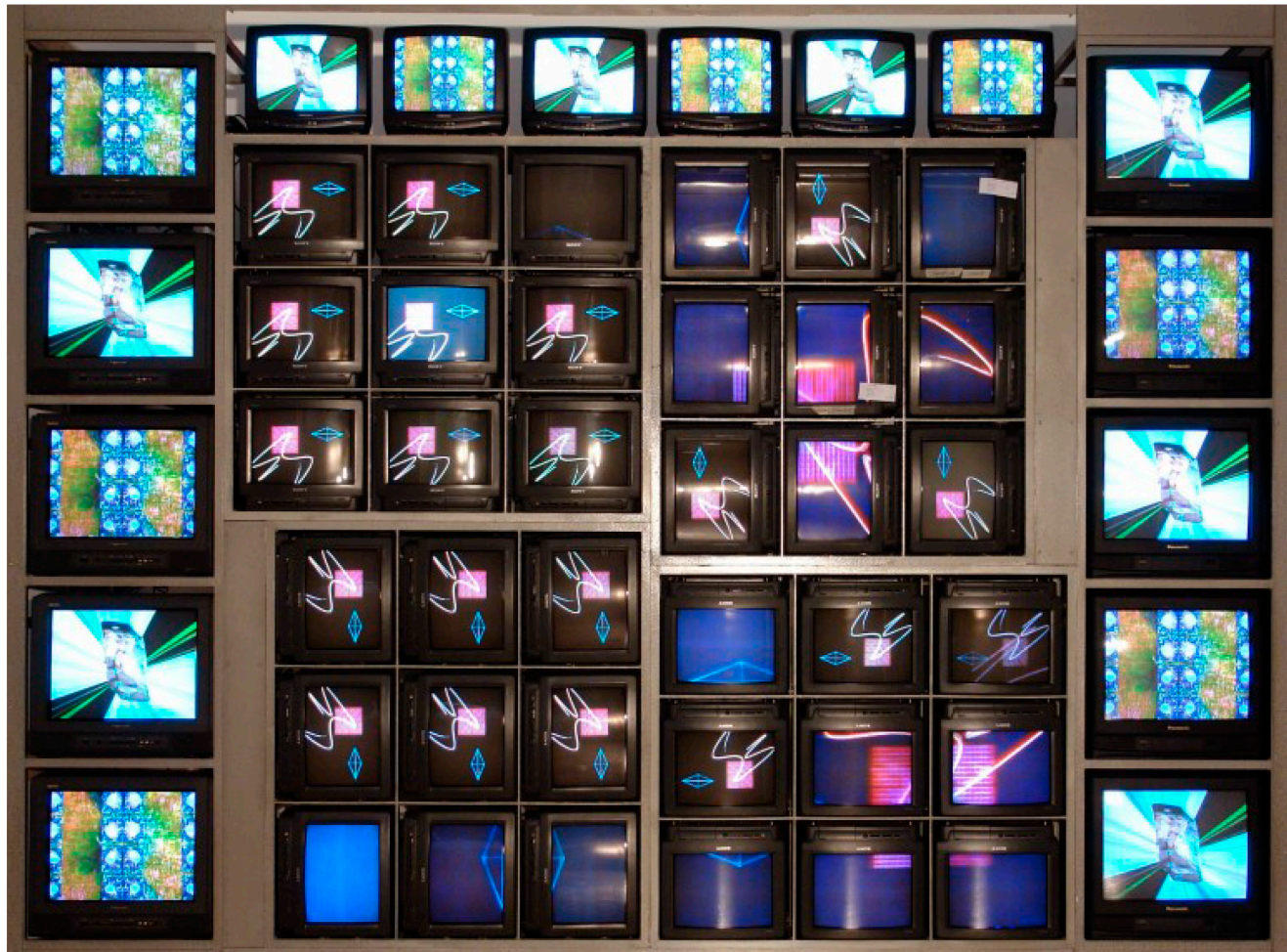


# Spindle

## REVIEW: ELECTRONIC SUPERHIGHWAY AT WHITECHAPEL GALLERY

Friday 29 January 2016

Words: [Sarah Ferrari](#)



Internet Dream (1994), Nam June Paik

Opening today is a very exciting new exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery. I say this because its subject matter is something almost as ubiquitous as air; namely The Internet.

Taking its title from a term coined by South Korean video artist Nam June Paik in 1974, he foresaw the potential of global connections through technology. Over 100 artworks show the impact of the Internet and computers on artists from the mid-1960s to the present day, through spooky large-scale artworks reflecting our surveillance culture, to cheeky and familiar nods to social media.

Moving in reverse chronological order, you are welcomed to the exhibition by a giant butt with text-speech bubbles emanating (*Text Butt*, Olaf Breuning). It immediately sets a precedence for the exhibition, how we are now permanently, physically connected to technology; by computers, our phones and even watches.

This constant connectivity has had an enduring impact on our culture and sense of self. *Excellences & Perfections* (2014-15) by Amalia Ulman explores how social media (in this case Instagram) has affected, or even warped our expectations of women and the female body.

As well as the exploration of technology's impact upon the sense of self, we are also confronted by how it allows others to perceive us – through surveillance. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's *Surface Tension* (1992) is a giant eye that is shut – until you walk into the room that is. It then follows you around, watching you in an unsettling manner, reminding us of how we are always being surveyed in the modern world. *Asymmetric Love* (2013) by Addie Wagenknecht similarly does so constructing what could be a decorative chandelier out of CCTV cameras.

It's not all doom and gloom though (well, not quite), there is a showcase of the emergence of Net Art in the 90s as a response to this 'new technology'. Rhizome, a leading digital arts organisation has archived some of the best examples including Jan Robert Leegte's *Scrollbar Composition* (2001). It consists of three screens showing the same composition of windows and scrollbars on three browsers, questioning how each of our experiences of the internet can be made different by the smallest of things and is also constantly evolving.

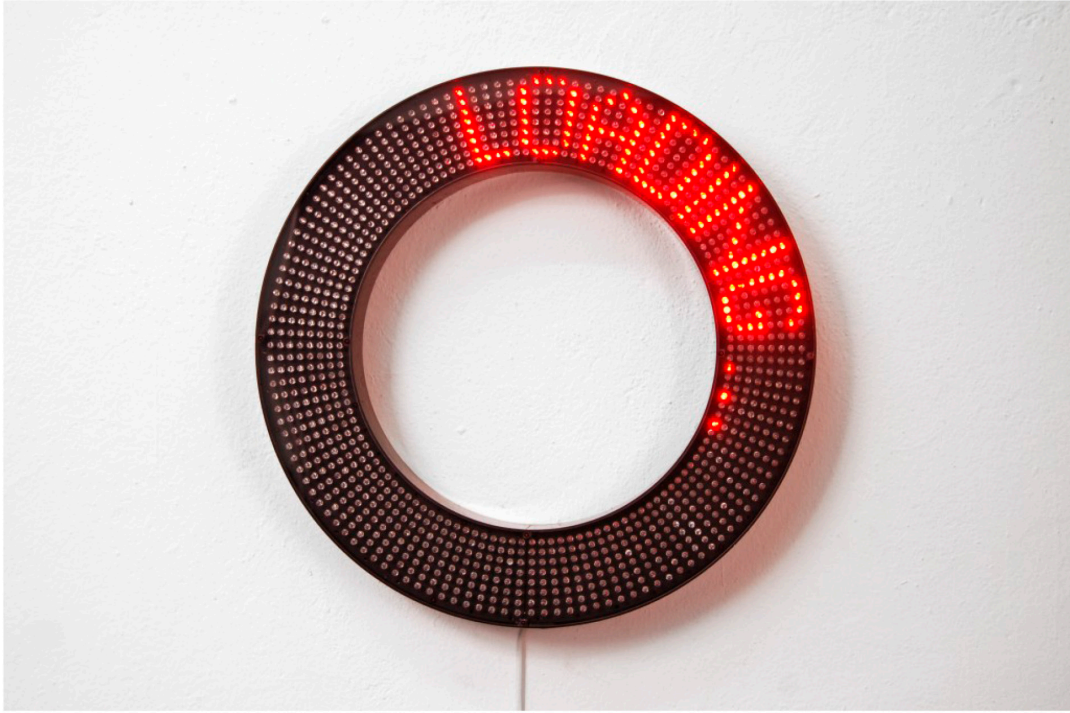
I'll leave you with this, the dreaded 'Loading' symbol – or wheel of doom, depending on where you're standing.



*Excellences & Perfections (2014-15), Amalia Ulman*



*Asymmetric Love (2013), Addie Wagenknecht*



*Loading (2007) Aristarkh Chernyshev*

*Electronic Superhighway is open now until 15th May at the Whitechapel Gallery.*