

# Good for nothing (no. 1)

*Artworks, Installation*

**Topic: Art, Film, Narrative**

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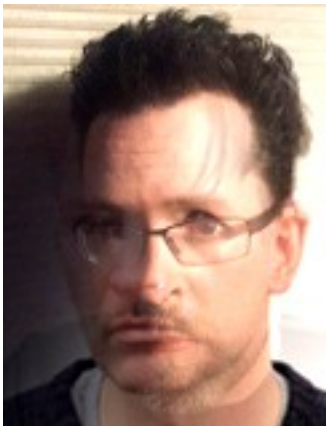
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## Premise



## Abstract

What are digital abstractions? For modern, abstract painting, the physicality of its material components corroborates its meaning: the substrate, the paint itself, or collaged elements questioned conventional relations between figure and ground. Perspective was key to understanding this meaning, as was the picture plane (corresponding to the surface of a picture, perpendicular to the viewer's line of sight) which fixed the object in time and space.

But the digital image has no physicality and the picture plane's status is toppled by the digital screen. The screen's nature is to show and to obscure. Its narrative structure demands the suspension of disbelief, as its form dissolves, shifts, and defers experience by placing sole emphasis upon our sight. It forever hypnotizes us, seamlessly eliminating its own qualities as a substrate. It owns the characteristics of a Zelig: forever changing, unstable in any context, and destabilizing context itself. Informed by photography, film, and every meme that ever was, the digital image shifts readily between aspects of each. Its meaning is necessarily slippery and hard to define; possessing a quality that makes it hard to pin down or make fit into a neat category.

Given this slipperiness, can we ever grasp the basic, tectonic components of the digital image? The bits and pixels of the screen do little to help our visual understanding of its relationship to one's perspective in everyday life. The seductive illusions and concomitant complexities of our online experiences have enabled an entirely new trompe l'oeil hell of phishing attacks, spoofs, and cross-domain tomfoolery.

Digital images, precisely because of their ambivalence towards the picture plane, forever slip from our grasp. Only as they recede from our mental, perceptual grasp do they reveal aspects of their construction. Rather than fight against this liminal quality, we exploit it.

Forever shifting, always shiftless. Stasis in short, on an endless joyride from nowhere to anywhere. How does one go about working with this shiftlessness? We began with a metaphorical toast to Herman Melville's crème de la crème good-for-nothing anti-hero, Bartleby. Images aligned with a scrivener of the postmodern age that can only tell us: 'I prefer not to'.

Good for nothing (no. 1) uses a tonal rubric to explore the space between an actual pixel and much larger, constructed illustrations of pixels. Its slowly changing, randomly generated surface traverses a path between a space that is discrete and digital, and one that approaches continuity. As this constructed image evolves, then devolves by erasure, each new lighter value takes over from previous square units—questioning our base, retinal understanding of the screen made up of pixels invisible to the human eye.

Beginning with a single, randomly placed, translucent quadrilateral, Good-for-nothing (pixilated) generates a palimpsest through replicating that original quadrilateral. The corners perform a 'drunkard's walk' through the two-dimensional grid of the screen, building up such that the screen will eventually go black. The black screen, or the promise thereof, leads us back to representing the

void. Bottomlessness . A void that uses the light of the screen to become 'unlit'.