in conversation

This email interview was held between Mandy Conidaris and Barend Chamberlain in December 2013. Mandy had seen this video exhibited in November 2012.

MC - As a graphic designer, you have professional skills in the creation of digital imagery. One of your main concerns behind this artwork is the dependency of the human race on technology. Could you comment on how you see the nature of the relationship between people and the technology that they use?

BC - As you put it I find it a little funny as a person who works all day, and most nights, behind a computer for a living and then making a work commenting on technological dependency. On the other hand, I see people broadcasting every thought to world for no reason, books on tablets and not on a bookshelf, print media going bankrupt because news online is faster and easily available, children crying because they don't have the latest iPhone. I wouldn't go as far as to say that technological development is the villain, but the nature of current events in regards to the development of contemporary technology is something to take note of.

For example, there is a condition called *Nomophobia* (the fear of losing your mobile phone) and it has come to the point that almost 66% of the UK population fears losing their mobile phone. (http://www.securenvoy.com/blog/2012/02/16/66-of-the-population-suffer-from-nomophobia-the-fear-of-being-without-their-phone/)

In addition, *Loremophobia* is the irrational fear of losing the TV remote control.

I think what is a little disturbing to me is that we use our mobiles, televisions, tablets, internet etc. to such an extent that I can understand that phobias like these have developed in contemporary society and I think it was one of the main reasons I pursued the issue in the work.

MC - The title is interesting, especially the seemingly ironic use of the contemporary texting language 'B4'. Could you speak a little about the title of the work?

BC - When I was researching, I came across a chapter in a book – The Devil's Delusion - by Dr David Berlinski called "No gods before me". It instantly spoke to me because of the way I felt my friends and family had become so dependent on their social media and gadgets, as if these were the cornerstone of their lives. Because the title had such an old connotation attached to it, I wanted to add a contemporary element as well with the texting language.

MC - I find the content of this video to be open enough to allow for many associations. When I view this video, it speaks to me of the brief explosion of humankind into the universe, time-limited and self-destructive. Could you comment firstly on my interpretation, and then your intentions?

BC - The "brief explosion of humankind" is something that didn't strike me at the time but now in hindsight I find it really appropriate, as we as a species, in comparison to others on this planet, haven't been here that long but our influence is so overwhelming and apparent. It also applies to how people have changed in the last two decades with the boom of the internet and wireless technology. The culture in people around has literally changed before my eyes and I see it as a cultural explosion in a way as well.

The world around us physically changes due to our actions and destructive nature, which was one of the things I wanted to portray. My intentions were to show a metaphorical version of the world changing from a simple and natural state to something unnatural and man-made and raising a question of what people value more: the world or technology. I don't hate technology in any way to be sure, but I have a particular loathing for the needless dependency on it, the high demand for non-essential, at least in my opinion, gadgets merely for the sake of having the latest.

MC - Why did that particular imagery suggest itself to you? And what role did your thinking processes play in informing the specifics of your choice of images?

BC - A lot came from early experiments with the software, trying different things and looking at what worked and what didn't. Some of the imagery, like the cubic-like sphere, I wanted to include from the very beginning because I felt it was strong imagery. Most of the finer details are images and elements that I saw as fitting with technology, conventions to what I saw as technological imagery. Other elements like the change in colour and the addition of textures came from conversations with other artists and friends as I showed the work to them and explained my intentions.

MC - Do you remember a specific trigger or did the work evolve more slowly?

BC - I think the most prominent trigger came about a third way into the project and it was a video work by Onur Senturk called *TRI▲NGLE*. I think it had a strong visual influence on the choices I made during the production of the work.

MC - What were your creative influences, for example, the thinking and/or techniques of other artists, writers or researchers?

BC - Candaş Şişman, Onur Senturk, Kyle Cooper and Nicolas Jandrain were my greatest influences in regards to the techniques I ended up using.

MC - How do you feel about the cross-over between technology and the arts?

BC - For me it is a real exciting time to live because artists have always had such innovative ways of producing work and with the evolution and increase to accessibility of cutting edge technology, the possibilities really are becoming endless.

MC – When I first saw this video, you mentioned that it was intended to be part of a larger installation, although it comfortably exists as a single and contained artwork in its own right. Could you briefly describe your original idea for exhibiting it?

BC - Ha, it's always funny when one realises inspiration doesn't have a bank account. Initially I thought of making a video projection of *at least* six meters long in an enclosed space. I wanted the work to feel immense and a little intimidating to the viewer as they stood before it. Unfortunately, in the end we all can't get what we want, but it's not to say that it can't be done in the near future.

MC - When you reflect on this video afterwards, do you feel that the work expresses your concerns?

BC - I think it still does. I do, however see things and techniques I could have done differently but I believe that the end result is still what I wanted and what I wanted to say.

MC - How do you assess your image afterwards from the perspective of its meanings to you, namely the memories it evokes of your thought processes during the making: conceptual, technical, and your larger life experiences?

BC - I really look at it as a sort of transition piece as it was done in a time of my life where I was looking towards major changes in my life. I was finishing my final year at UNISA and at that time I was working with a company which I wanted to leave and then shortly after I did. Just like the images in the work changes during its duration so did my life, my knowledge and perspectives on many things.

MC - Is the work's significance to the viewer important to you?

BC - I think the most many of us can hope for is that our work stays with the viewer in one way or the other after they viewed it. Whether the viewer realizes a significance of the work or not is out of my control, but whether they remember it is important to me.

Thank you Barend.