

Union Hall is pleased to present *Desert of the Real*, a fashion-focused exhibition from Denver-based Mars in Scorpio. Created by photographer Alexander Ablola, Mars in Scorpio bridges the gap between fashion and fine art by blending the egalitarian approach of streetwear with high-concept editorial photography and immersive presentation methods. Functioning as a retail platform and fashion collective, Mars in Scorpio aims to offer affordable garments and accessories to the street, tech, and smart wear markets, and to create emotional connections with customers through provocative products, design, and lifestyle content. This exhibition is their first in a gallery setting.

Together, the images that comprise *Desert of The Real* conceptually explore the roles that clothing and technology play in humankind's connection to our physical bodies. These images reveal the incompatibility between reality and virtual reality, highlighting the dissonance between our organic forms and digital existences. Referencing the art and fashion markets' increasingly digital presence, the content of the exhibition is displayed through television monitors and digital projections. This mode of display mimics the way that consumers engage with products online, and echoes the experience of models in the images themselves. They are shown in the landscape, and interacting with one another in sensual poses and gestures, yet they are separated from one another and from the physical world by HAZMAT-like clothing and large virtual reality headsets.

If these images makes you feel uneasy, it's probably because they are a hyperreal example of how digital interfaces in our daily lives are increasingly distancing us from our most human emotions and experiences: love and sexuality are filtered through dating apps and online pornography, food can be delivered from anywhere at anytime with one click of a button, and our profiles online live on as records of our lives, becoming digital memorials after we die. As we inch closer to the future, a concept which feels both distant and incipient, we are becoming more and more immersed and integrated with

technology. And though our aim is to utilize technology to create an optimized, purposeful life, we also are participating in a practice of sterility and homogenization: our very own digital presence builds data repositories that allow our needs to be quantified and analyzed, hurling us into a stream of algorithms that predict what we eat, what we watch, and what we wear.

In this exhibition, Mars in Scorpio asks us to step inside a dystopian vision of a not so distant future, where the artificial is authentic and the authentic is artificial. Welcome to the *Desert of The Real*.