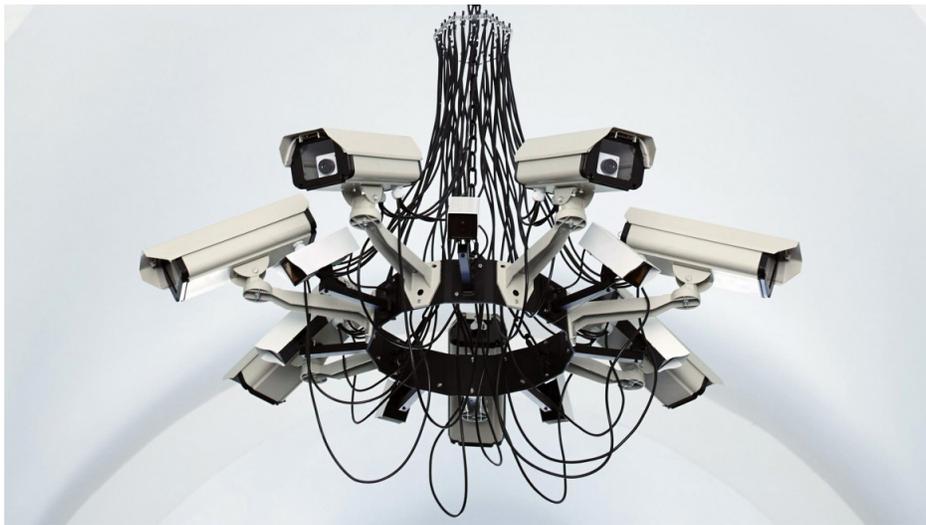# huck

In Pictures: How do you tell the story of the Internet? Electronic SuperHighway show

Text by Josh Gabert-Doyon

Asymmetric Love (2013) by Addie Wagenknecht,
Courtesy bitforms gallery, New York. Photograph by David Payr © Addie Wagenknecht

Whitechapel Gallery is launching a major retrospective on art in the digital age. Electronic Superhighway (2016-1966) is massive, with over 70 artists covering a period of 50 years in a wide variety of mediums.

The exhibition, which is curated by Omar Kholeif and Séamus McCormack, features work that anticipated and responded to computer and Internet technologies. While showcasing the chequered story of the Internet's development, the exhibition tracks the way art has changed alongside it. Documenting the history of the Internet has become a serious problem in the past decade. For one, as the amount of content grows and technology evolves, it becomes harder to access those cheesy old blogs you made when you were 13.

One of the artists in the show, Olia Lialina, has gotten creative with the archive process, developing an art/ research project with Dragan Espenschied centred on the former web hosting service GeoCities – mining screenshots from an archive of GeoCities sites and presenting them on One Terabyte of Kilobyte Age.

This week Rhizome received an Andrew C. Mellon Foundation grant to develop Webrecorder, an open source "archival tool to create high-fidelity, interactive, contextual archives" of the internet's content. Both One Terabyte of Kilobyte Age and Webrecorder speak to the threat posed by the Internet's ephemerality: the culmination of unimaginable wasted hours exposed to the sands of time.

The exhibition is arranged in backwards chronology, starting in 2015 with new artwork, and ending with the 1966 Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) group. E.A.T. was based out of New York and was seminal in

linking artists and the industrial technology sector, with collaborations from Andy Warhol, Yvonne Rainer, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns and John Cage.

The artists range from the cheeky to the severe. Cory Arcangel, who's piece in the exhibit was paired with the release of his own surfware line in November, describing it as "somewhere between suburban mall goth and self-help, […] aimed towards content creators of all ages," represent a tongue-in-cheek millennial approach to the internet's kitschy aesthetic history.

James Bridle's piece Homo Sacer (2014) is an uncanny installation piece that speaks to an alternate history of technology. It features a hologram (like those that have been popping up in airports and government buildings) that repeats lines from UK, EU and UN legislation emphasizing the violent nature of citizenship and government control.

Using a more traditional medium, Celia Hempton captures the internet's slippery erotic life. Hempton paints arresting portraits of anonymous men from internet meeting-places like Chatroulette.

Some of the other artists include Douglas Coupland, Trevor Paglen, Nam June Paik, Jon Rafman, Hito Steyerl and Amalia Ulman.