

Shelley Lake

For Shelley Lake the computer is more than just an inanimate tool, but rather a creative partner capable of intellectual decisions. This approach to creating digital works leads her to generating completely new aesthetic experiences as she focuses on the computer's ability to store, process and organise information. Her work features bold, unapologetic depictions of powerful figures; superhuman in their digital form. Throughout her career Lake has received numerous prestigious awards, and has had her work featured in exhibitions across the world including at Tate Modern and Art Basel.

Have you always worked digitally as an artist? I turned the digital corner around 1974 when I saw the revolutionary computer animated movie, "Hunger" by Peter Foldes. I was about 20 years old. That was the beginning of my obsession with computer art.

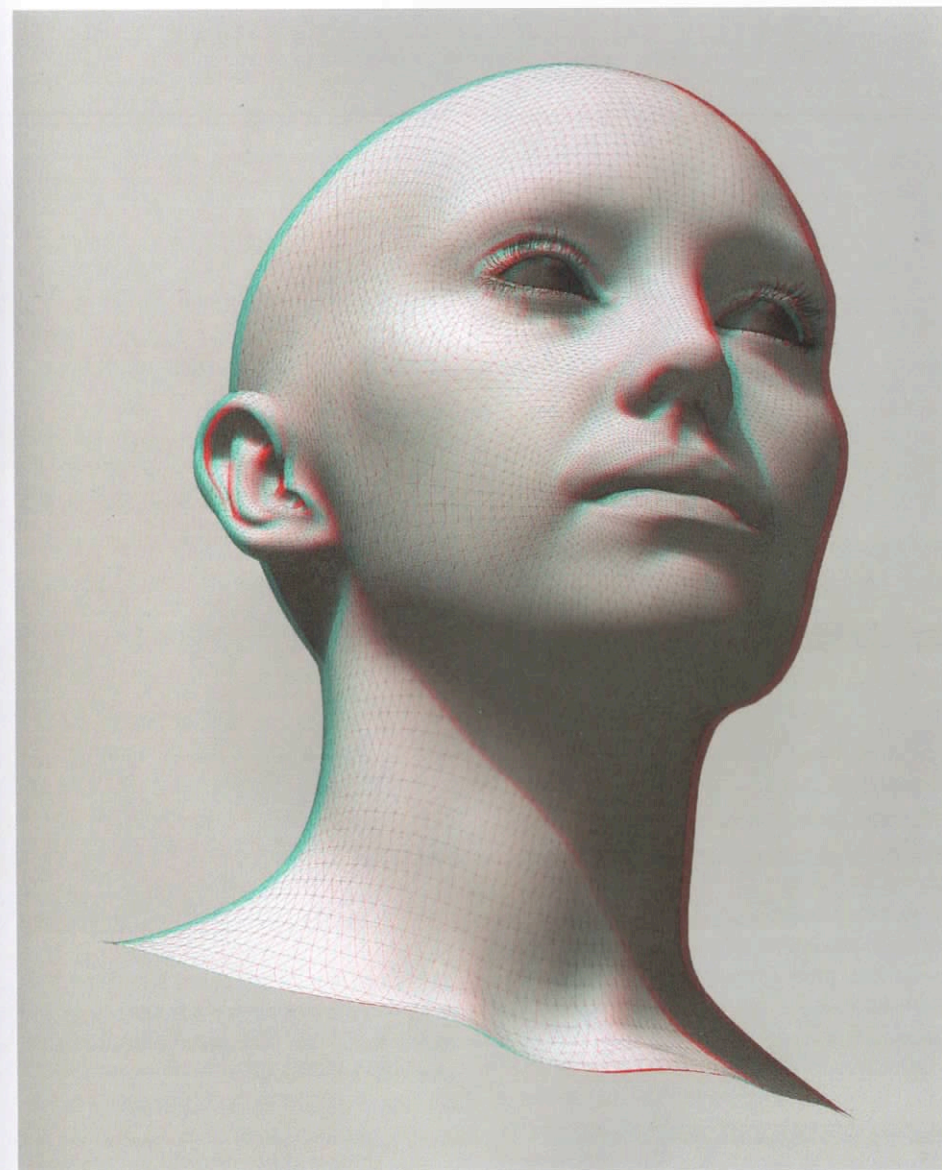
After I completed my studies at the Rhode Island School of Design, I applied to MIT. In 1977, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology had just begun an experimental program now known as the Media Lab. MIT stood at the vanguard of technology that sparked a digital revolution and I was honored to be a part of that movement. I became the first female graduate of their Master's program in 1979.

In the early 1980's I joined Digital Productions in Hollywood and was a technical director for many computer generated projects including the

academy award winning, "The Last Starfighter". I spent the following decade in the healing arts, becoming a Doctor of Chiropractic and practiced hundreds of hours in the dissection lab, learning everything I could about human anatomy and applied kinesiology. My background in structural anatomy and applied kinesiology still informs the design and choreography of my characters. In 2001 I opened Sky Lake Studios, where I continue to work in the digital domain.

Tell us more about your process for creating work; do you work completely digitally or does pen and paper come into play at all?

Physical dexterity comes into play when interacting with the computer; hand eye coordination is always a valuable asset. Another physical aspect of the process involves



Emily 2.0, 2017, digital, 152 x 122 cm



The Skull, 2016, digital, 203 x 137 cm

printmaking, being able to anticipate how what you see in light on the monitor will translate onto paper, canvas and vinyl. With decades of practice, I've developed an ability to foresee the transformation of light into pigment. I enjoy hand pulling large format prints and the physicality of stretching canvas onto stretcher strips. The digital domain is an intermediate environment that can lead to an immersive tactile experience. When everything is said and done, it's all about the print.

What are your main inspirations in terms of subject matter for your works?

At a moment when the world is obsessed with the cult of personality, I turn instead to anonymous symbols of power, strength and fertility. Superheroes, pinups and warriors are a recurring



UFO, 2016, digital, 203 x 137 cm

theme in my work. Enigmatic characters without the trappings of identity or celebrity. They are the anti-celebrity. The digital dollhouse is occupied by virtual actors who survive and procreate on a virtual stage, frozen in time, making them immortal, timeless.

Throughout your artistic career there have been many updates and advances in technology and software; how has your work developed as your tools have changed?

As computing grows in sophistication, opportunities as a partner in the creative process continue to exceed expectations. The last few years have seen enormous advances in photorealism due to high definition texture mapping, high definition polygonal modelling, innovations in lighting and rendering speed. We



Geisha, 2017, digital, 91 x 76 cm

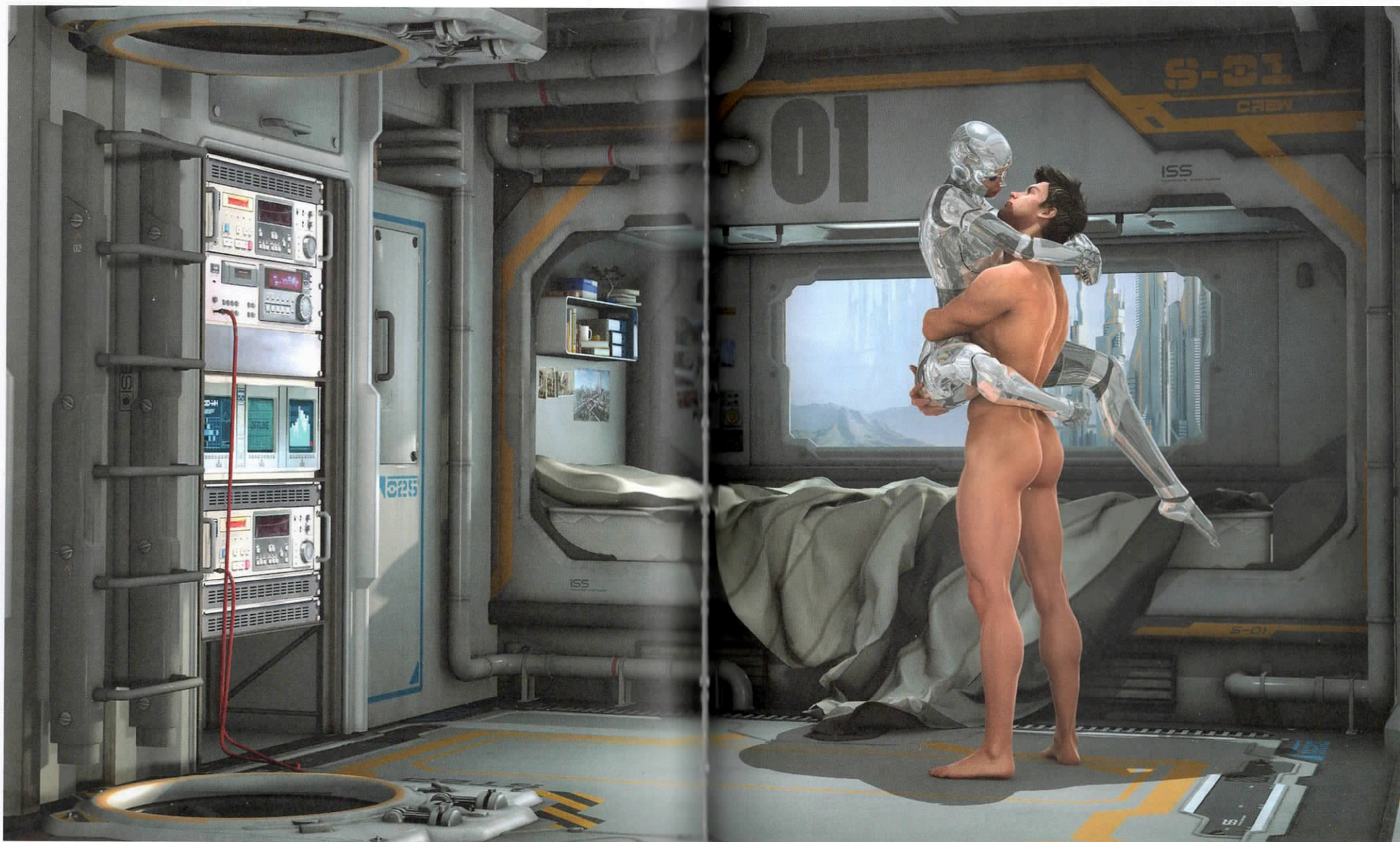
are also seeing dramatic improvements in large format print resolution, colour fidelity, media, dynamic range and archival stability.

What are you currently working on?

With this interview and the prevalence of social media, I'm putting more energy into crafting words to communicate ideas that relate to the imagery. This body of work is fairly new as the result of recent developments in digital

technology. As Dali once said, 'The secret of my influence has always been that it remained secret.'

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Ex Machina, 2016, digital, 46 x 76 cm

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Treasure cove, 2016
photographic print, 80 x 80 cm

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"Remember, Last Summer's Treasure cove.

The series seeks to spark our imagination and scan our memories for corresponding happy times. I came across this pirate's hide out down in Cornwall. With tales of shipwrecks, treasures from the sea and secret passageways to reach the beach... oh the untold adventures of such a place!"

Juliet Piper

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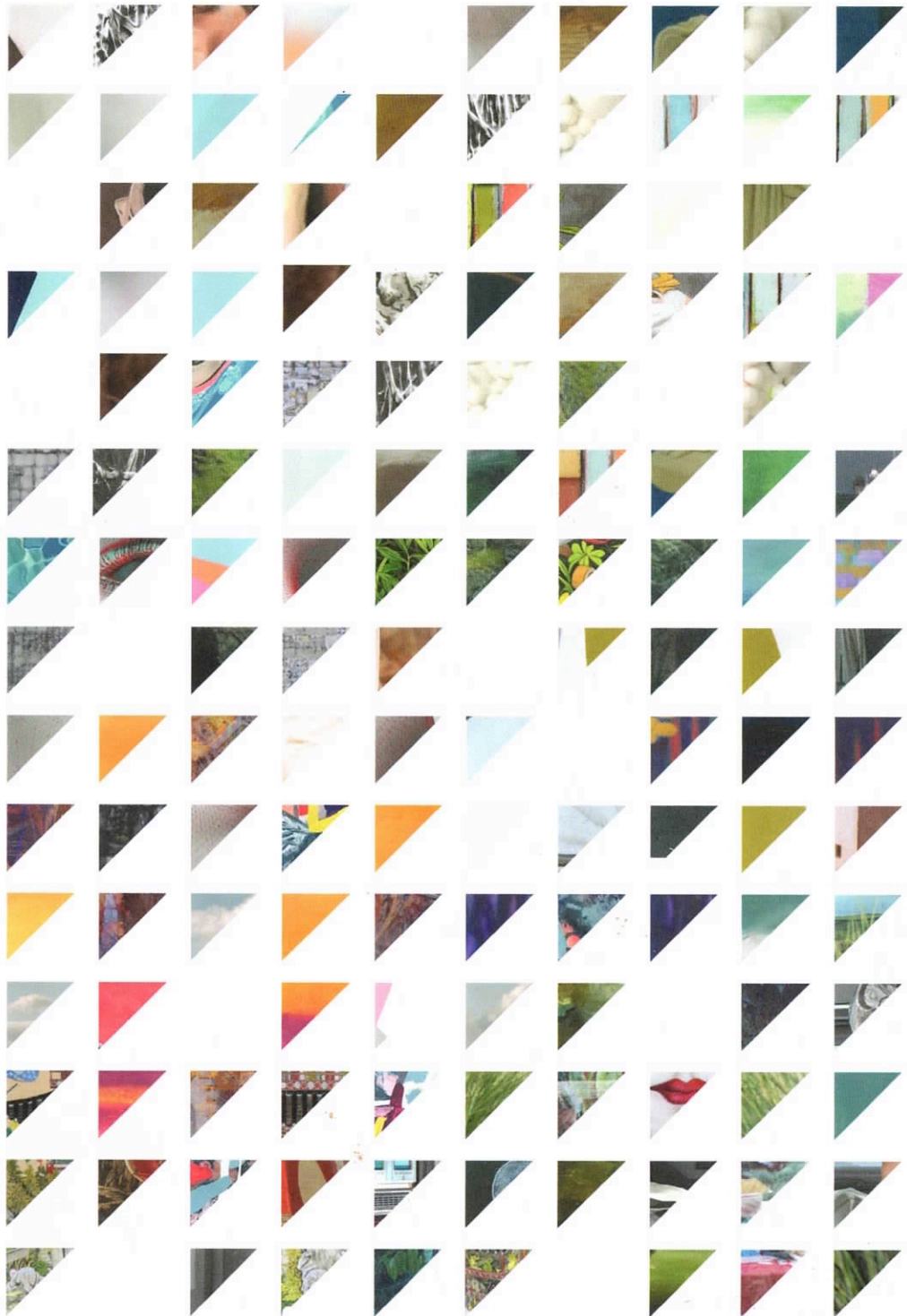
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