

BEDFORD + BOWERY

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Get Beamed Into an Alien Afterlife via This Trippy Video Game and Gallery Show

You wake up in a hospital. There is a doctor standing over you in scrubs, running his hand down a clipboard, a mask pulled tight across his face. There's a vague beeping behind you and the sounds of miserable sobbing coming from somewhere. The beeping grows longer and louder until, all of a sudden, it flat-lines and your consciousness (soul? being?) rises up out of your body. "Let me tell you a secret. . ." a calm, female, British voice says from somewhere as your consciousness floats into a cosmic, hallucinogenic light show on the way to your alien afterlife.

Alien Afterlife is a video, video game, and art show created by artist Jeremy Couillard. The video takes you inside a nightmarish neon world. The story begins in 2056, an era of robo-gentrification in which self-driving smart cars have "formed real estate corporations that speculate residents out of their own cities." When a human finds a USB with a game on it called Alien Afterlife, she decides that she'll give it a spin and post her game and narration on YouTube.

This premise offers a convenient choice for gallery visitors. One can either watch the "game-play" video (complete with fake scrolling YouTube ads) with a voice-acted narration written by Jeremy himself, or you can play the game yourself.

Discovering Jeremy's Alien Afterlife inside yours mine & ours is a little like stumbling into a beautiful and hellish LSD trip. The windows of the Lower East Side gallery are all tinted black, giving away nothing. Outside there is simply a modest sign for the gallery along with a piece of paper taped to the door on which is typed "Jeremy Couillard's Alien Afterlife" in simple Times New Roman. Inside, the first room is dark except for a giant projected image on the wall in which the game-play video is running. The images are all neon and flashy, the characters have sharp teeth or eyes that are too big. The mechanics are slightly off so that watching it becomes slightly disorienting. The imagery, soundtrack, sound effects, and narration combine to induce hypnosis.

Thankfully, you can avoid a psychotic breakdown by playing through the video game. Equipped with a frog-faced “gun” that shoots triangles of green light at aliens with V-shaped heads, this colorful, first-person-shooter/art-piece is almost addictive. The gallery is equipped with a comfortable couch and a controller, inviting anyone to stop by and play— about a one-hour time commitment.

If your available time frame is closer to five minutes you can just take a look around the gallery. In the basement you’ll find two alien friends typing furiously away in the dark like two large-headed children in swimming trunks. One of them just made a splash at the recent NADA New York fair. Maps of Jeremy’s 3D game designs are displayed on the gallery walls. The static, 2D images are kaleidoscopic, combining bright greens and reds in a design that is vaguely geometrical— a collaboration between computer and man.



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Jeremy received an MFA from Columbia University in 2012 and he met the owner of yours, mine & ours, RJ Supa, at his final thesis art show. The two have been working together ever since. Jeremy, now a professor of New Media at LaGuardia Community College, has put on many shows since 2013, including a VR show and a recent concert at Lincoln Center in which he sat on stage playing through Alien Afterlife accompanied by a live musical score.

The artist’s past works all have a kind of uneasy, bright and glossy, perhaps slightly sexual feel that seems contrary to his own humble and easygoing manner. Clearly there’s some humor involved in this madness. He’s been working on Alien Afterlife for two painstaking years, designing every panel, every scene, and every movement himself.

Jeremy Couillard’s “Alien Afterlife” continues through April 2 at yours, mine, & ours gallery, 54 Eldridge St.; open Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 6pm.