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Glitch art is known as “the aestheticization of digital or analog errors by either corrupting digital code or data or by physically manipulating electronic devices.” Beginning in the 1960’s, this form of art emerged alongside developing technology, which often had visible glitches, and has risen in popularity drastically since. Glitches themselves, common in all sorts of technological systems, are mostly seen as a nuisance or even a disaster, but glitch art sheds a different light on the technological once-mishaps. This intentional corruption of data can be done using a variety of programs to alter anything from audio to visual data. One artist who works with glitch art is Rosa Menkman.

Rosa Menkman graduated from the University of Amsterdam with a Master of Arts (2006) and a Research Master of Arts (2009) degree. After being introduced to Belgian-Dutch artist duo Jodi, Menkman became interested in their exploration of the weakness of digital technology. Menkman has since taken her own place as a fairly well known glitch artist, creating many works, videos and pictures, that utilize audio and visual glitching. Her glitch artwork, like most of its kind, removes glitches from their technological and informational platform and places it in a more social and artistic context. Since glitches are so often seen as something unwanted, an error, putting them into an artistic context breaks the expectations of the viewer and can provide an entirely different meaning. Menkman’s desire to break the preconceived notion of what a glitch is and to alter our view on them is one of the key driving forces within her work. Paying careful attention to point of view, perspective, process, programming, and audio, she creates surreal and abstract environments. Her belief is that glitch and glitch art is more than just destruction; that breaking down the known gives room for new perception and understanding.

In one of her video works, Collapse of PAL, she incorporates audio and visual glitching to create what looks like a camera panning over treetops and a road winding through a forest. Text blips up throughout the video, displaying lines from what looks to be mimicking a program that is malfunctioning. The text is quite eerie, to match with the video itself, showing phrases like “Its chance to clarify, smothered”, “The Angel would like to stay and awaken the dead connection”, “Make whole which has been broken”, “but the storm is blowing forward”, “it has caught her wings”. The “angel” appears halfway through, materializing as a woman’s profile. The overall feel of the work is extremely surreal and off-putting. The sound a constant buzzing, like a lost signal, only adds to the eeriness and loneliness.

In two of her other video works, “From far away it all seemed so clear” and “I might, in the end, be no more than a reflection of your imagination” she glitches what appears to be a video game, removing all recognizable physical human qualities of the characters aside from the head form and basic walking pattern. Any laws of physics that may had once been in the game were almost completely removed, leaving objects and shapes to float and sit in midair. The audio for both works was mostly static, white noise, but one features a woman singing various notes. Both works create a very surreal and ultimately unrecognizable environment, providing a very discomfoting and slightly terrifying experience.

The visual and audio tricks within Menkman’s work create alternate and unexplored realities, which force viewers to think beyond what they are seeing and hearing. As humans, it is in our nature to try and make sense of the unknown, attempting to relate unfamiliar to the familiar and make connections that help settle us. Menkman mentioned how she once tried getting into politics, but the reality of that world turned out to be a mess of corruption. Ironically, her artwork focuses on nothing but corruption, which could actually potentially help draw focus to that real world corruption, political and otherwise. The abstract and surreal qualities of Menkman’s work may raise questions about ones internal and external world alike, forcing us to think about how we traditionally view and accept the world around us.