

Artist Statement

Ubiquitous: technology and the human experience

This body of work ponders the ubiquitous nature of digital technology, and how it has seeped into every facet of human life. It is in our homes, vehicles and places of work. It is in our hands, through smartphones, and even in our bodies, from pacemakers and cochlear implants to artificial limbs. It is omnipresent. It is science *non-fiction*.

Digital technology was supposed to make our lives easier, and in some ways it has, simplifying tasks, making us more connected and productive, and putting enormous amounts of information at our fingertips. But our lives are also faster and increasingly complex, and more exhausting. I feel overwhelmed by the frantic pace of it all. Change and new technology is inevitable but too often it feels like driving down the highway with no hands on the steering wheel, destination unknown.

In our culture of faster, better and more, it is time to step back, slow down, and seriously consider what we are doing? What we want from society and from ourselves? What is technologically possible, and what is desirable? Do we control technology, or does it control us? Is it a new addiction that serves the bottom line of corporations more than society and the rights, freedoms and happiness of people? And are we already too hooked on dopamine to think rationally?

The work is created from about 98% recycled and reclaimed materials, especially old computer circuit boards, which speak to our consumerist society and its wasteful, throw-away attitude. With the rapid pace of technological change, computers have an even shorter life-span than most consumer goods, yet the metals and plastics from which they are made take centuries to biodegrade. I also use natural materials like wood and clay, to make us think about a merger of technology and organic life. Historical symbols and motifs urge us to remember the past and to learn from it. This is not the first time technology has driven rapid social and cultural change.

Resistance is not futile. Choices can be made, consciously and collectively. But people will have to engage, much more so than now. With every advance in technology, questions must be asked about costs and benefits, and how much of ourselves we are willing to give up to technology. Already, facial recognition and microchips embedded in human hands are replacing keys and passwords. Many pets have microchips to locate them, should they get lost. Why not children too? Technology is even toying with the building blocks of life, splicing genes to remove this trait or add another. How far do we want to go? Will we be genetically modified cyborgs? Or live in the cloud?

Once technology has been released from Pandora's Box, there is no going back. We must tread wisely along this path, and think about our future, and that of our children. We must find a balance between what can be done and what should be done.

- *Leslie Leong*