

This new movie industry has created a range of possibilities for a new generation of Africans. As the star actor Saint Obi said in my documentary, “This is Nollywood,” “Early in my career I discovered that through acting I could be successful in life without committing any crime or having to compromise my values. It was just me, and my God-given talent.” All of the sudden, there are real opportunities for young Africans to pursue a viable career in one of the most difficult and competitive sectors of any society—the creative industry.

All too often, Nollywood films are ruthlessly criticized for the melodramatic acting and lack of technical standards. Many even worry that some of the blatantly commercial aspects of Nollywood are hurting African art films. The reality is that many Nigerian filmmakers are perfectly aware that more needs to be done. If Nollywood wants to revitalize the movie theater experience and go beyond the home video model, the sound quality of its films needs to improve considerably. But it would be a serious mistake to use this type of criticism to dismiss the Nollywood phenomenon in its entirety. We must remember that the low standards of Nollywood films have allowed a vast number of self-taught filmmakers to express themselves. Nollywood can be truly understood only if we recognize that there’s real power in determining what stories are told, and how they are told. Nollywood does not depend on grants from European cultural institutions to make just a few art films; its directors do not have to wait for a visa and a scholarship to study in America to learn how to make popular movies. It is always the single producer-investor, outside any type of studio system, who takes all the risks and decides which story will be told next. In creating their own industry, Nigerian filmmakers showed they were not afraid to take control over their own stories, their own destiny. In doing so, they have changed African filmmaking forever.

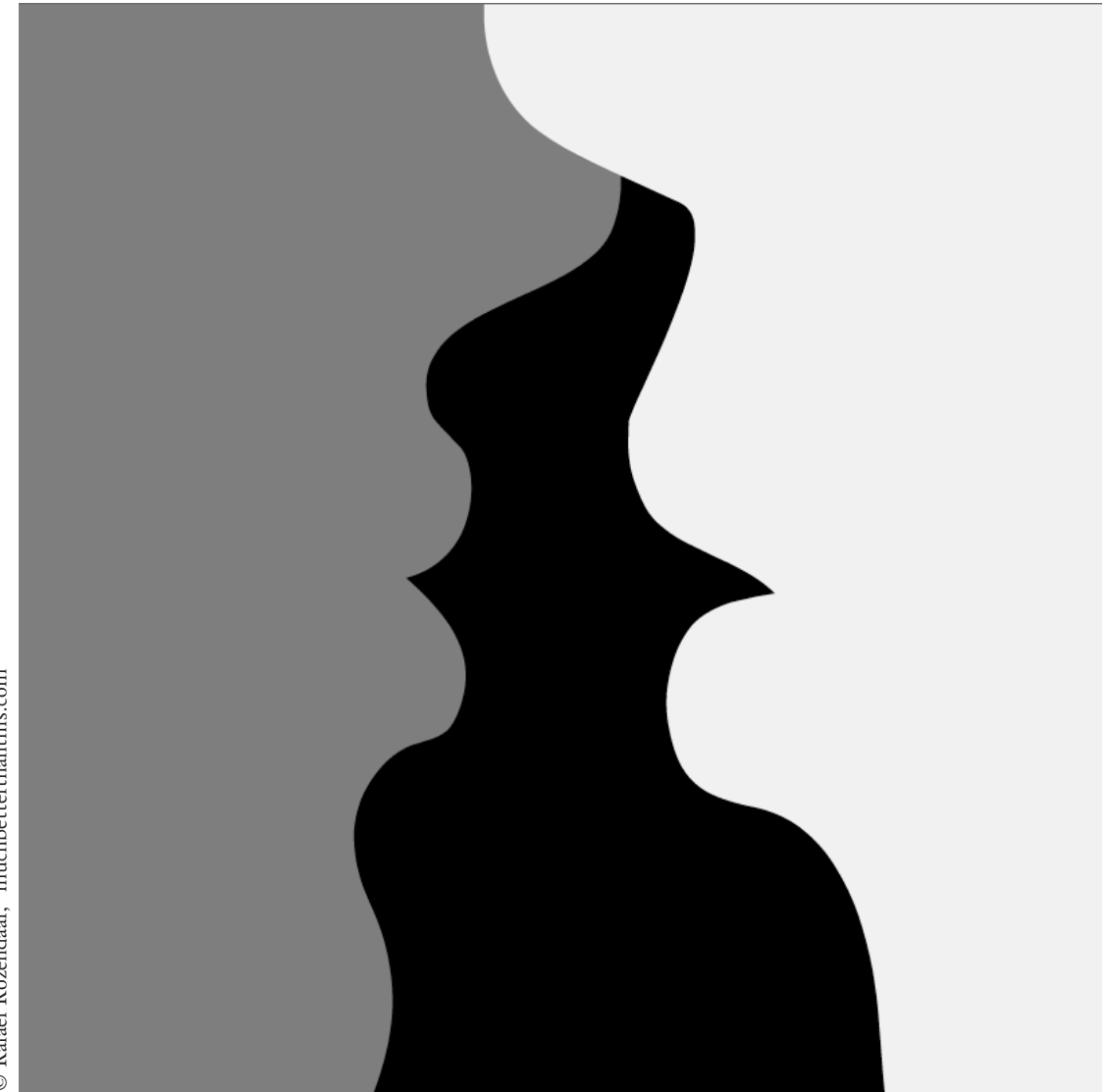
THE INTERNET ARTIST: Rafael Rozendaal

Rafael Rozendaal is a Dutch artist and an important figure in the ever-expanding world of Internet art. Most of his works are single-page websites that visually or interactively engage the viewer. In exhibits, his works are displayed through a projector. In 2010, Rozendaal’s pieces have been shown in Germany, the United States, Japan, Colombia, the United Kingdom, Puerto Rico and Greece.

The position of painting is always moving. Painting started in caves, churches, town halls. It was mostly murals. At some point, painting broke free from the wall and onto the canvas. Later, painting broke free from religion and the state and became a place for visual theory—particularly modernism. Currently painting is largely a medium concerned with power and status at the highest level—the most exclusive jewelry.

I am not a traditional artist. I intend to create work that is original and unique in style and presentation. Painting itself has seen different incarnations, from museum murals to small-scale paintings that fit in the homes of the wealthy. I like to draw inspiration from the past. My work has similarities to paintings, in that, like traditional art, netart involves a visual display for the viewing pleasure of the spectator. Because these works are immaterial, they can be seen very privately at home or as a huge installation in a museum. The website can exist anywhere you want, anyway you want. I have no expectations on how people approach my websites. It is a new format, and it still has to find its place. I hope people experience them in many different ways. The websites should not try to be paintings. Paintings are already very good at that.

I take from paintings. I love paintings. It is an instant format, everything happens in a rectangle. (As opposed to long video pieces or installations that take hours to digest). Paintings are great on the Internet too. They make great jpg’s. But what happens when



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Rozendaal’s websites, he says, “should not try to be paintings.”

those images start to move? And what if you can interact with them? I am not sure what interaction means, but I have always been intrigued by the possibilities. It seems to catch the viewer’s attention and suck them into the piece. But not all my pieces are interactive. It’s all very intuitive and sometimes I make a piece that moves on its own and sometimes the piece needs your input to come to life.

I am interested in the possibilities of representing what I see around me. A painting of a tree is something other than a tree.

We have been able to represent—or record—the world in many different ways; drawing, painting, photos, moving photos, sound. Interactive representation is something new and something else. In my piece www.pleasetouchme.com you see a blue hand that does not move until you touch it. An interactive picture of a hand is not a movie of a hand. You drag the fingers and they do what you ask them to do. And after a while they move on their own. It’s not a painting or a website or a movie. It’s just art.