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How addicted to technology are you? From choosing your phone over sex to ignoring your own children, one artist explores the effects of being 'plugged in'

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An artist explores our dependence on technology, and questions its effects on our human relationships, in a new exhibition opening on Tuesday.

Rachel Lee Hovnanian, a mother-of-two based in New York, uses an eclectic range of subjects as part of her exhibition, *Plastic Perfect*; from a laboratory of genetically manipulated babies, to a child abandoned in her high-chair, and couples in bed engrossed in their phones.

'The effects of digital technology on our culture are yet to be understood,' she tells MailOnline. 'But one thing we can observe is this loss of intimacy and isolation.'



Better things to do? Artist Rachel Lee Hovnanian has launched Plastic Perfect, an exhibition which explores the all-engrossing role technology plays in our lives. Pictured, a still from Foreplay, a video installation

Ms Hovnanian has wedded the theme of all-consuming technology to sugary cereals, which make their way into most of her works.

'Cereals were marketed to our parents in the 60's as being quick, easy and fun,' the Texas raised artist says. 'Technology is time-saving and fun.'

'I think it's helpful to pause and take a look at this, especially since sugar and tech addictions seem to be firmly in place in our culture.'



Infatuated: The artist notes, 'Digital devices connect electronically to people, or to an army of media followers far away, which is great. But they also seem to replace the intimate reality of authentic experience'

One installation, entitled Perfect Baby Showroom, sees a 'laboratory meets shopping mall,' where parents can determine the physical characteristics of their offspring.

Arranged in straight rows, displayed in neat stainless steel racks, and plugged into the grid; these hyper-realistic babies rest on pillows filled with colorful, sugary genetically modified cereals.

'These perfect babies are miracles of nature, yet they are also inventory; infants to be loved, yet products to be prized,' Ms Hovnanian explains.

Another installation, Loco Parentis, depicts a toddler - who is projected onto a digital screen - strapped into a high-chair, seemingly captivated by her own handheld tech device.

Around her is chaos. The kitchen floor overflows with Cheerios and a gigantic white mouse eats its fill right from the refrigerator. With everyone preoccupied with a device, the artist says, the mice are free to roam the house.

“ These perfect babies are miracles of nature, yet they are also inventory; infants to be loved, yet products to be prized ”



Plugged in: Perfect Baby Showroom (pictured) sees a 'laboratory meets shopping mall,' where parents can determine the physical characteristics of their offspring, as the babies rest on packets of sugary cereal



No supervision: Loco Parentis (pictured) depicts a toddler strapped into a high-chair alone, the kitchen floor overflowing with Cheerios as she and her family are preoccupied with their devices

When asked why she chose mice to illustrate this work, Ms Hovnanian says it's because they have something in common with the rows of 'perfect babies': they've been genetically manipulated.

'Albino mice are extremely rare in the wild, almost non-existent,' she says. 'In their millions, they were created in the laboratory for laboratory purposes.'

'I believe we are the new white lab mice, providing data for the marketing experts. We swipe our cards at the grocery store, they see what we've been buying, and they figure out what we'll want next.'

'At least the white mice in my paintings can escape off the canvas. Unlike them, we are pretty well hemmed in by technology; once we adopt it, it's hard to live without it.'



Surreal: With this household otherwise occupied, a giant mouse is free to roam and feed from the fridge. Albino mice, who are bred in their millions for scientific research, are comparable to the 'perfect babies'

Another installation, Poor Teddy, sees a teddy bear clamped to a wall with a knife in its chest, surrounded by a flurry of mice. In this example, the quintessential comfort toy is dead because the contemporary child prefers digital devices.

Asked if she herself is a slave to technology, Ms Hovnanian replies: 'Absolutely - I don't leave home without it. It is very hard to unplug, and vacationing off the grid is almost impossible.'

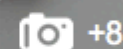
Every morning on her way to her studio, she walks along New York's High Line 'bumping into people' because her eyes are so fixed to her phone, reading the mass of emails she has received overnight.

Only when she 'finally' turns her attention to her art can she disappear fully into her 'off the grid creative life.'

“ I believe we are the new white lab mice, providing data for the marketing experts ”



Pawful: Poor Teddy (pictured) sees the quintessential comfort toy clamped to a wall with a knife in its chest, surrounded by a flurry of mice, dead because the contemporary child prefers digital devices



Guilty: The artist admits that she herself is devoted to her technology, claiming, 'I don't leave home without it - it is very hard to unplug and vacationing off the grid is almost impossible.' Pictured, They're Grreat

Her family, she remarks, claim that she 'is her installation,' which Ms Hovnanian admits gives her 'tech-guilt.'

'New digital technologies make us more secure, they save us time, they entertain us,' she says.

In response to Vogue's latest issue, which re-brands its supermodel cover girls - Cara Delevingne, Joan Smalls and Karlie Kloss - as the 'Instagirls,' she makes a salient point.

'Digital devices connect electronically to people, or to an army of media followers far away, which is great. But they also seem to replace the intimate reality of authentic experience.'

It's no wonder then, that amid her 1.8 million 'army' of Twitter followers, Ms Delevingne has publicly admitted to often feeling 'lonely.'

Plastic Perfect will be shown at the [Leila Heller Gallery](#) in New York September 4th - October 18th.