

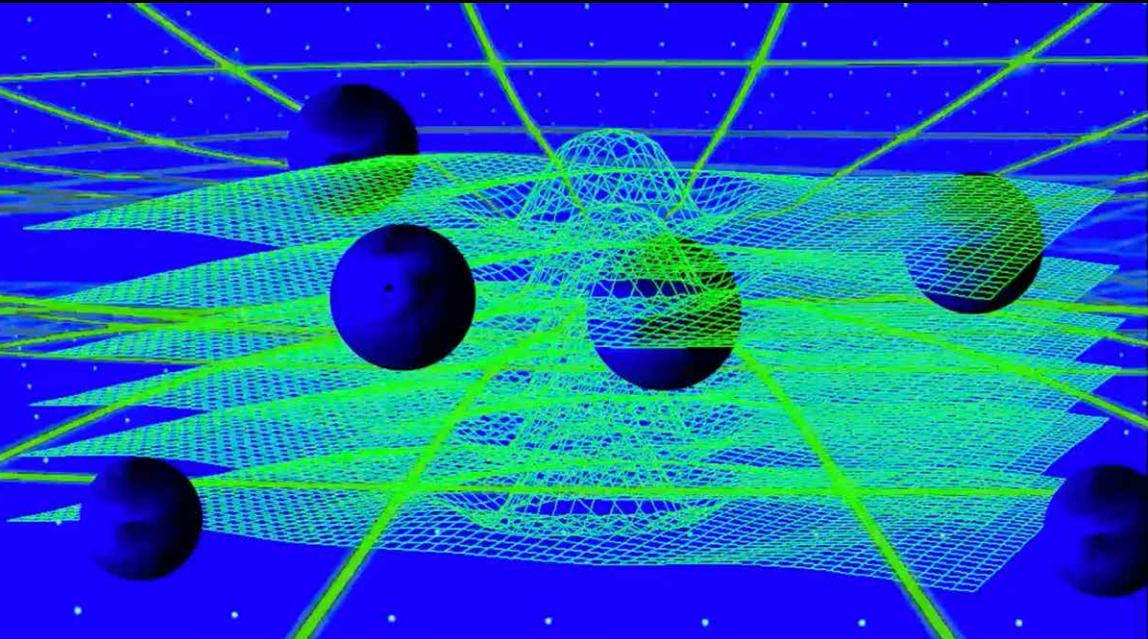
# SUJI HAN

## WELCOME TO FLATTENED FLAT SPACE

January 2 – March 13, 2020, Foyer Gallery



ALBRIGHT  
*Freedman Gallery*



# SUJI HAN: WELCOME TO FLATTENED FLAT SPACE

An inventive video sojourn through the opulent gardens of digital technology, *Welcome to Flattened Flat Space*, comprehensively envisioned by video artist Suji Han, exhorts an intriguing interpretation, or rather supposition, on visual morphology in computerized media. This 13-minute video production betokens all manner of visual communication by anything that comprises a flat screen, that is, computers, tablets, TVs, but mostly smartphones. Similar to a power point, the presentation is animated and information based. It step-by-step esoterically deconstructs how these devices are, or are not, understood by those who use them to organize schedules, send texts or take pictures, go online, watch movies, stay in touch with loved ones, converse on social media or even do their banking. It is almost unimaginable to go through the day without using a phone or seeing one in use.

Utilizing a distorted, obviously computerized female voice, Han postulates what these reliable devices accomplish for a person without their users once inquiring into their existential or philosophical connotations. The speaker is intentionally dehumanized, as if having become a digital entity in herself, and as such details acute fundamentals in a monotonous atonal voice while asking curiously intellectual or theoretical questions.

For example, she inquires: *Do you ever wonder about the space behind the screen? What does the space look like and how does it work? What kind of space is that? When human beings turn into bit (code,) does this dot truly reflect human phenomena, emotional status, or relationships with others?*

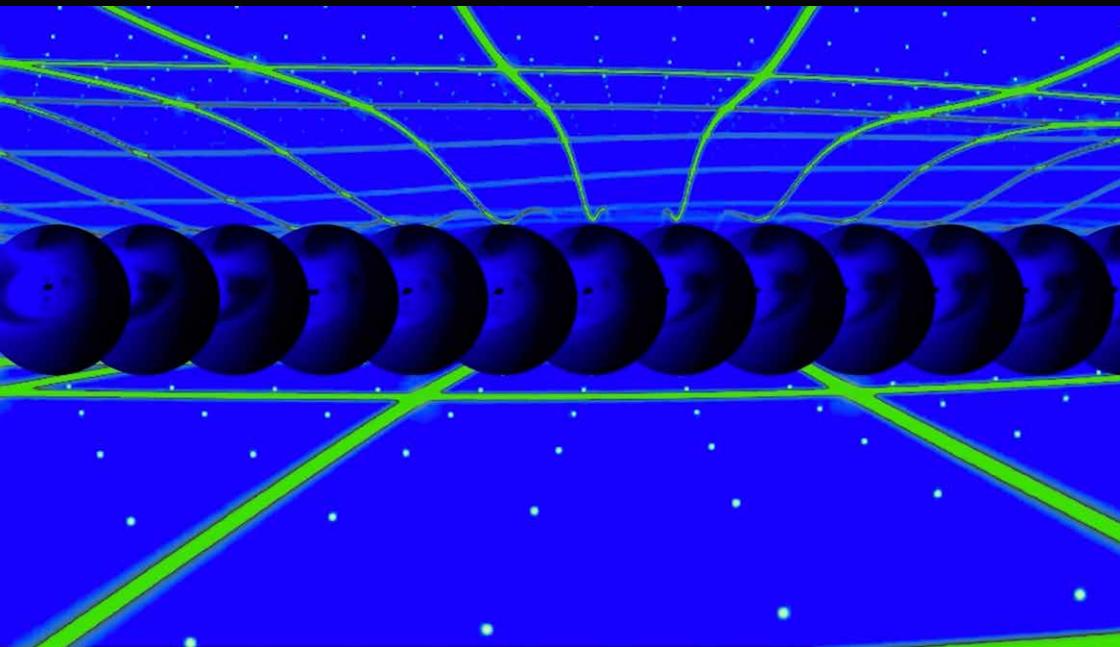
Assigning a name to it, she titles the phenomenon *Flattened Flat Space*, and, answering her own

questions, proceeds to dissemble the physics of what is on screen in regard to time and physical space; transforming what we see into a timeless extra-dimensional space, a cyber-reality which one may access at will. In turn, she outlines and explains the liquid crystal technology that enables the image to rearrange any shape, or data, that is programmed, or recorded, into the flattened flat space.

A very interesting brain teaser, the space behind the screen is exposed as illusory and nonexistent, existing only in two dimensions, and when seen from the side it disappears, displaying only the straight line of its edge. However, Han proposes that the image exists in its own continuum and steps somehow outside of real time into a separate dimension.

The video then states that one may chat online face-to-face with anyone from anywhere in the world, joined by two or more flat screens that send and receive transmissions through the internet. According to the artist, time and space are compressed within the space between and is described as the junction between those devices and a collector of data that free floats through the space like clouds.

At this point, a somewhat tongue-in-cheek reference to surveillance and internet tracking is introduced through an inserted spherical form that speaks, changes shape and moves about the screen. "Big Brother," as she calls it, possibly referring to tracking control systems, is a symbolic character that collects huge amounts of browser history to analyze consumer buying habits, political standings, and other pertinent information.



Big Brother, in the same tone, explains the impersonal, ad hoc position of the two dimensional flat space, or the “computer speak” that defines such things as structured and unstructured data, numeric values, gathered information and its usage, at which point Big Brother thanks Google, Apple, Amazon and various search engines. Being that Big Brother is nobody in particular, Han infers that any or all users may access that same data and become Big Brothers, themselves.

The video delves into categories of analysis, such as quantitative (amounts and numbers) and qualitative (being “cold” in comparison to exact degrees.) Further data cites possible implications of quantum physics behind the computer screen evoking ideas of gravity and weightlessness within the flat space. This, along with the use of a particular kind of blue background permits countless variations of permeable editing, copying, pasting, and stretching.

Throughout, the attitude is friendly and convivial, instructional but jokingly so as she makes light of her proposition and presents goofy-faced photos of her boyfriend as well as having Big Brother kidding around about dressing warm in negative ten degrees kelvin, which is unfathomably frigid. For one instance, she refers to a “Pokemon” character called “Ditto,” who is capable of copying any form at will.

The artist remarks on her website, “My works have started with questions about internet space behind the screen, so-called *Flattened Flat Space*. The space is flattened as if it had been ironed, data gets stacked on top of each other and flattened again. Eventually, the multiple layers of data lose one dimension and sit on some point

on a gridded cloud. My works explore the blurry space between the 4D world and *Flattened Flat Space* through pseudo-scientific educational documentary, digital installation, data collection, research, and sound.”

Another question that arises from this type of presentation is whether being tutored by a machine — a computer — is a viable source of learning or whether it adds to the systematic dehumanization of our lives and incurs more dependence on technology. Are we urged to be more machine-like instead of learning empirically, or should we allow ourselves to become data compliant — a digital copy that could possibly replace the original.

It is similar to much of popular science fiction, such as the artificial intelligence novels of Philip K. Dick or movies like *The Matrix* or *The Terminator*, where the threat of too much technology and dehumanization happens in real time or has already happened. The supposition questions, what if we are living our lives through flattened flat space devices?

The artist, by doing so herself, suggests that combining computer theory with the properties of space/time/relativity infers an interesting speculation about the possibilities and furtherance of an information based society in a sped-up evolution of humanity through technological means, or a cybernetic society. The content of this video seems to propose that we are on the edge of new territory with one foot in another world.

The Freedman Gallery at Albright College, named after former Albright trustee and alumna **Doris Chanin Freedman**, is located on the ground floor of the Center for the Arts. Since its inception, the gallery focuses primarily on contemporary, living, American artists and hosts approximately 12 exhibitions each year rotating in the Main Gallery, Project Space, and Foyer Gallery. Freedman Gallery is located at 13th & Bern Streets, Reading, PA 19612. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sunday 1-4 p.m. The gallery is closed on Mondays, holidays, breaks and summer. ([See Albright.edu/calendar](http://www.albright.edu/calendar)).

Founded in 1856, Albright College is a diverse community of learners cultivating integrity, curiosity, connection and resilience. The college's flexible curriculum encourages students to combine and cross majors to create individualized academic programs. Close faculty mentorship and numerous experiential learning options create opportunities for Albright graduates to exceed their own expectations. Located in Reading, Pa., Albright enrolls more than 1,700 full-time undergraduates, adult learners, and graduate students.

### Follow the CFA and artist Suji Han on Instagram.



*Suji Han: Welcome to Flattened Flat Space*

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Installation curated by Alana J. Coates. Essay written by Ron Schira.  
Ron Schira is a freelance contemporary art critic based in Reading, Pa.

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[www.albright.edu](http://www.albright.edu)



All images are from *Still from Welcome to Flattened Flat Space*, 2018, single channel HD video, 4:02 minutes, images courtesy of Suji Han.