BY JULIA MORENO

Cameron Paris manipulates outdated visual media with modern software to create glitch art.
PHOTO/JULIA MORENO

To a fault

Cameron Paris

Cameron Paris, 30, has always loved art—all kinds of art.

When he was younger, a love of comic books and the thought of creating an entire universe was something that enthralled him. As he grew older, he began exploring increasingly diverse art forms as a way to challenge himself.

After experimenting with Photoshop art and video, in November 2015, Paris discovered a new type of art that soon became his next obsession—glitch art.

The best way to describe glitch art is to say it's a series of digital or analog images, sometimes with accompanying audio, that have been corrupted for aesthetic purposes. A glitch can be anything from overly saturated rainbow-colored images to distorted black and white static that zig-zags across the screen. The effect is produced by manipulating digital files, software or hardware to create flaws in how the video and audio appears on a TV screen.

A few months after discovering glitch art, Paris' own project—Cameron16TV—was born.

Paris started out by combing through pages of Craigslist ads and Ebay listings to acquire 16 cathode ray tube (CRT) televisions. He had to go through 10 VHS players before he found one that worked.

"Where the art part comes in is taking advantage of these glitches and creating physical pieces to show," Paris said in a self-made 2016 documentary chronicling his glitch art journey. "Or in my case, video glitch art pieces."

Glitch art is also related to a music genre and art aesthetic called Vapor Wave—which emerged about a decade ago as a microgenre of electronic music. Heavily influenced by the 1980s, glitch art and Vapor Wave feel and look psychedelic, overly pixelated—in other words, very glitchy. Vapor Wave takes classic 1980s songs, slows them down and adds new music or talking clips on top to create a sort of surreal, dreamy-techno sound.

Paris is, for the most part, self-taught. But he said a Facebook group called Glitch Artists Collective was a huge help in learning new skills. Anyone can post a picture or video of a desired effect and someone in the group will comment with tips on the best technology and techniques to achieve it.

"It's the largest glitch art member-driven kind of community," he said. "They have over 50-or-60,000 people in the group, and it's all across the world. It's a worldwide phenomenon type of thing. I'm definitely not the only person doing it."

Paris now has some 45 CRT televisions, along with gear from Tachyons+, which is a video gear design team based in Florida that Paris said is "a huge inspiration to what I do and an enabler to what I do."

According to the Tachyons+ website, the company modifies "obsolete devices built in the '80s and '90s," that are used today with modern technology for things like music videos, photography, graphic design and filmmaking, to name just a few.

So, what about glitch art makes it so appealing to Paris?

"I think it's just—it's visually enthralling," he explained. "I just love the way old technology is used in new and exciting ways because I feel like society has gotten into this mind state of bigger, better, badder. … Like the instant something is released, we start to forget about all the cool things we've made and we don't see the potential of those things because we're too quick to ditch it."

Paris has recently used glitch art for projects like music videos for local bands. And this year, he put on show at a haunted house in Fernley. Ultimately, he would love to combine glitch art with virtual reality.

"I know a lot of people aren't VR savvy yet, but ultimately that's where museums and stuff like that are going," he said. "And I think going in that direction with this project would be ideal, breaking the boundaries a little bit with what's possible and infusing glitch art." □