

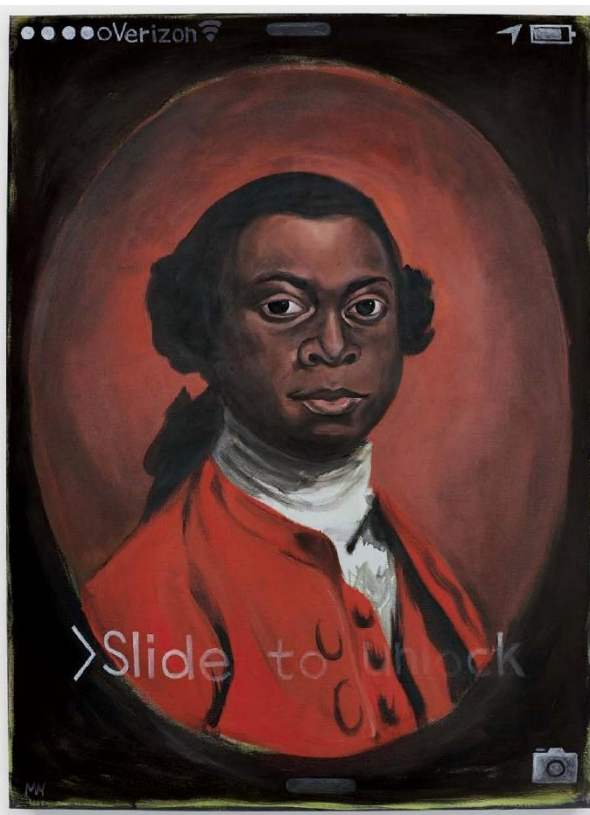
PICTURES

Mackenzie Younger

Applying his obsessive practice of referencing other artists work to his own very personal framing of each image, Younger's paintings are able to make historical imagery relevant again. Representing both pictorial and numerical languages simultaneously, the works have easily recognizable icons from the iPhone lock screen format: battery life, internet connection, and cell phone provider, some even read 'Slide to Unlock' at the bottom of the canvas. Pieces with the time and date reveal the exact moment of the work's completion. Younger uses these symbols to communicate to his contemporary audience, who unconsciously navigate the digital world on a daily basis.

Younger selected the subject of pre-photography American paintings as a way to become educated about art in a different realm, where painting was the primary mechanism for documenting people and events. The term 'Picture' itself, once solely applied to the creating of a painting or drawing, is now primarily associated with the act of taking photos and photography. George Washington, a subject in one of Younger's paintings is quoted as saying, "I hate having my picture taken," when asked to sit for a painter.

In many ways parallels can be drawn between the smartphone's ability to empower the individual, and Enlightenment principles of the 18th century – the conceptual basis for the founding of America.



Oladah Equiano, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 36" x 48"

The smartphone serves as a streamlined platform for unrestricted self-expression and the personalized aesthetic curation of our daily lives. It is also a political tool and vehicle to document injustice. Police violence captured on video and shared via the smartphone can be seen as the modern day equivalent to Thomas Paine's 1776 revolution inspiring, *Common Sense* pamphlet, which helped shape public opinion on repression by appealing to the masses.

History and consumption of art has been forever changed by technology and the access it provides. The iPhone has become an instrument of curatorial creative exploration and communication, a conduit for American democratic ideology. Once confined to site-specific exhibitions and organized by a select few empowered tastemakers responsible for discerning zeitgeist and deconstructing paradigms, art in all of its forms is now available to anyone with an internet connection.

Divisive opinions about the smartphone's global cultural impact as transmitter of capitalistic virtues – often unwanted and without proper cultural appropriation – put the device as a central emblem of modern American culture and democratic ideals. As described by Louis Latham in his essay, *Who and What is American*, Democracy continues to exist in that delicate balance between lofty ideals and human fallibility, "*For the spirit of liberty is never far from anarchy [...] If we wish to live in the state of freedom that allows us to make and think and build, then we must accustom ourselves to the shadows on the walls and wind in the trees. The climate of anxiety is the cost of doing business.*"



SUSQUEHANNA
ART MUSEUM

PICTURES is on view in the Susquehanna Art Museum lobby gallery from December 9, 2016 to February 19, 2017. Visit the artist's website at www.MackenzieYounger.com

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