



**I've been thinking a lot about what to say** about the X-ray paintings, if anything—it's been interesting thinking about them during Covid lockdown, political upheaval and especially with regards to you suggesting I talk about my experience working with the porn company, which I'm into talking about but feels kind of sticky but also relevant in a couple ways. Whenever I talk about that job people are generally super interested in the porn aspect and ask, "was I in the videos" or whatever but for me the most interesting aspect was that my boss was Glenn Greenwald. This was 2004-2005ish so before the Snowden leaks. Glenn was still a practicing attorney (we actually worked out of his law office when I first started) and he was most notorious for representing the First Amendment rights of white supremacist Matthew F. Hale. The job itself was pretty basic—first I duplicated DVDs and VHS tapes and packaged and mailed them to customers—eventually I became more involved in expanding their sales and marketing efforts. Online marketing was still sort of a new frontier and it was wild to watch people engage with

**Installation view  
of Graham Collins'  
*X-ray Paintings* at  
Galleri Jacob Bjorn,  
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sock puppet accounts—essentially we would make fake accounts, mainly for Yahoo groups, and just try to talk to people about how hot the videos were to drum up sales. We'd upload pics and teaser videos and try to do only enough small talk as to not be obvious. We also ran and moderated our own fan groups. Obviously this was deceitful but even at the time it felt as authentic as most of what went on online, plus we were operating in a fairly niche gay community that was very enthusiastic and very much wanted the content. It's hard to account for all of the models in the videos but I personally received hundreds of messages from people wanting to participate—that was the spirit of the company: porn made by the community, for the community. It's hard to connect all the dots but I have this whole little meta-narrative in my mind drawing lines between going to school at the Corcoran in 1999, working with Glenn selling porn, the X-ray paintings, and Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner.



I've just started watching *The West Wing* from the beginning. I'd seen some episodes and never really got into it but the show started right when I started attending the Corcoran which was a block away from the White House and they were filming right up the street the whole time I was there. Since the Corcoran doesn't exist any more it's all history and it was an art school anyway and the whole thing feels fictional. My degree never seemed particularly valuable—I don't know exactly what it represents. At the same time, the political fantasy that *The West Wing* constructed continues to have a very real influence on people. It's nauseating to see episode after episode, filmed in 1999, 2000, dramatizing the exact issues which feel so urgent to me today, which either makes the show seem very prescient or contemporary political culture entirely useless.

***Untitled X-ray, 2015***  
Oil on canvas  
35 7/8 x 25 3/8 inches  
(91 x 64.5 cm)

*previous page*  
***Untitled X-ray, 2015***  
Oil on canvas  
33 3/4 x 24 1/8 inches  
(85.5 x 61.5 cm)









I got interested in the X-rays of paintings around 2014 when I was researching archival and conservation practices because I was making work with old, found paintings that were often damaged and deteriorating. I was struck by how these X-rays are an automatic montage image, which is an idea that always resonates with me. Generally that's how I want art to exist—densely layered but all visible on the surface. In honor of the fact that the original X-ray source material was appropriated, and out of deference to their uncertain authorship, I thought it would be good to reproduce them using a bunch of different people: I got a group of people to paint copies of the images. Each painting is made by a different painter and each one utilizes a distinct copying technique—tracing, projected image, grid copy, etc. So there's all these different hands and eyes and different kinds of energies spanning hundreds of years compressed into these images, and they're very detailed—you see the brush strokes, paint handling, and painterly composition but also the stretcher bars, tacks, and wood grain underneath. There's tons of specific information but they're

*left*

***Untitled X-ray, 2015***  
Oil on canvas  
18 3/8 x 14 1/8 inches  
(46.7 x 36 cm)

*right*

***Untitled X-ray, 2015***  
Oil on canvas  
30 1/8 x 20 1/8 inches  
(76.5 x 51 cm)

*previous page*

***Untitled X-ray, 2015***  
Oil on canvas  
14 3/8 x 11 3/8 inches  
(36.4 x 28.8 cm)



also anonymous and really feel more like abstract painting than anything. I purposefully forgot the names of the original paintings that were X-rayed but took notes of the size of the originals and mine are produced at the exact same size.

So then the Ivanka and Jared thing—I never met them or anything but I knew they bought one of my paintings, in 2014 or 2015, through an advisor. And I never thought much about it but then in 2017 Ivanka posted a picture of herself in front of it which got a bunch of criticism for something unrelated and a couple people sent me the picture, and when Jared did his interview with Jonathan Swan for Axios he was sitting in front of it for a portion of the interview and a bunch of people sent me the interview and were like “Oh look at that.” I’m pretty sure the painting is titled “Social Security” though I think I meant that as pun somehow.

Anyway in my brief and relatively uneventful yet relatively successful career it’s an odd benchmark of sorts—arguably the most prominently placed artwork of mine but I know everyone who is in their collection was supposed to disavow it. I would be surprised if they even knew my name and I’m uncertain what kind of actual leverage I have in this, even symbolically. That painting is very likely worth less than they paid for it so maybe the joke is on them. And in a way, sometimes people want art to just exist to bear witness so maybe that’s what it’s doing. And tangentially, working for Glenn means I materially supported the effort that led to the publication of the Snowden leaks. So they’re both kind of tangential, but that’s the closest my work has come to directly influencing, or failing to influence culture.



*Untitled X-ray, 2015*  
Oil on canvas  
25 x 20 1/8 inches  
(63.5 x 51 cm)

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