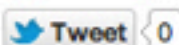


Aesthetics of Breakdown: Penelope Umbrico at LMAKprojects

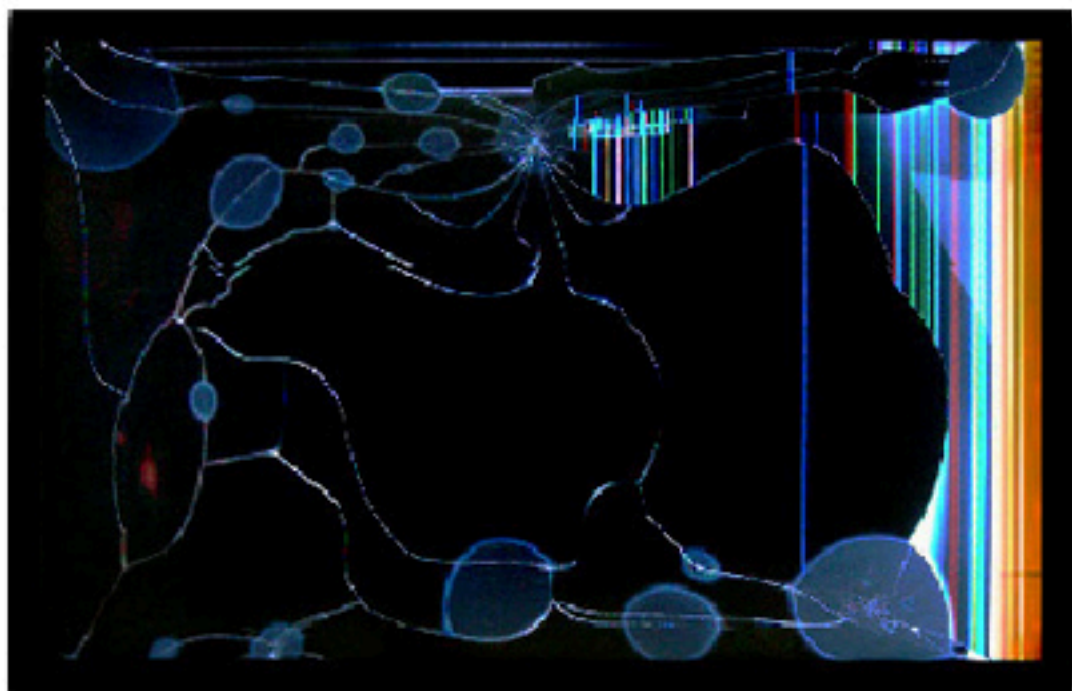
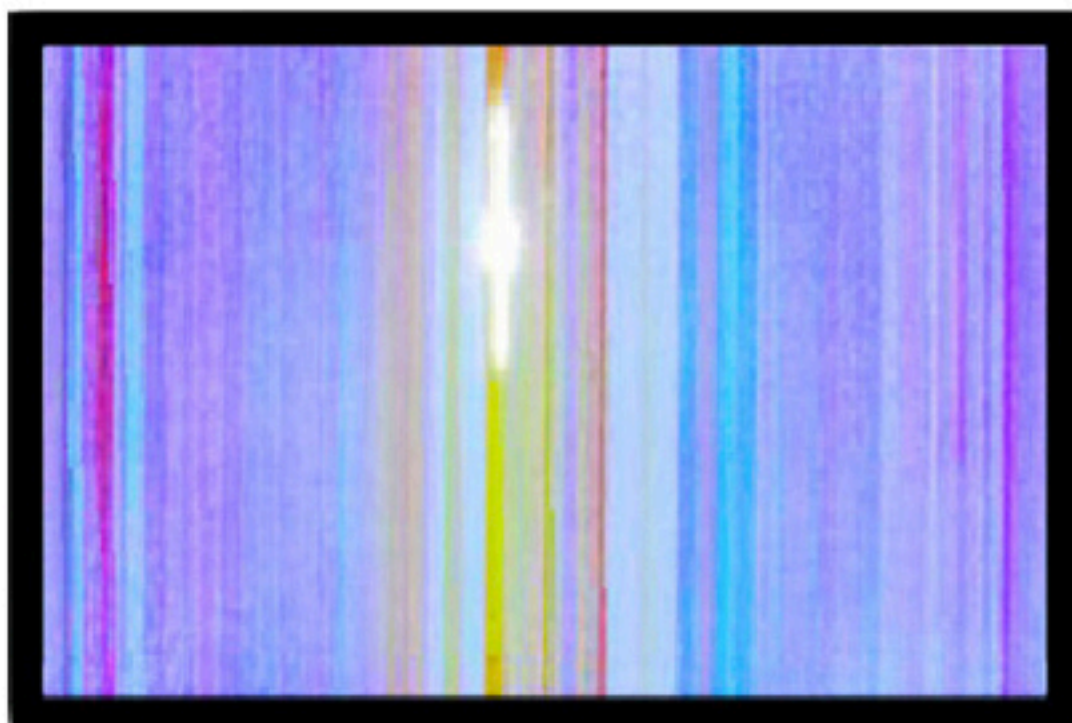
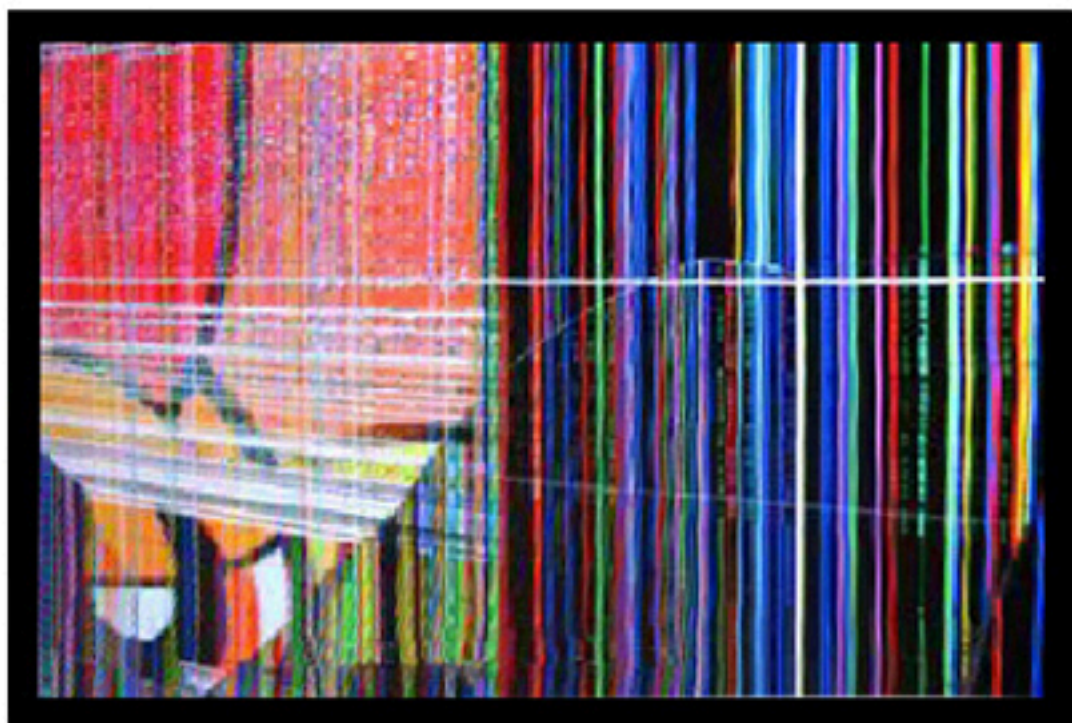
JACOB GABOURY | Thu May 27th, 2010 10 a.m.

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The normative logic of digital technologies and consumer electronics is that they "just work." The fields of human computer interaction and usability studies are intended to make technology functional for even the most lay of users. This can be seen clearly in the way in which new technologies are advertised and in the shift away from machines intended to be "tinkered" with toward black box technologies that maximize interface. The most recent campaign for Apple's new iPad states that "it's magical," and that "you already know how to use it," and Microsoft goes so far as to imply that Windows 7 was designed by everyday users to be "easier." Nonetheless, for most users dysfunction and breakdown are a large part of their everyday experience of technology.

In *Broken Sets* ([eBay](#)), [Penelope Umbrico](#) has collected a virtual archive of technological failure in images of broken LCD TV sets being sold on eBay for spare parts. Each image bears a unique pattern formed by cracks and other anomalies that fracture the images they display into a pixelization that resembles landscapes or test patterns. Many of the pieces, displayed as photo prints, vaguely resemble "digital interference" works by [Sean Dack](#) or [Borna Sammak](#)'s HD video collage, but taken as a whole they suggest a larger aesthetics of breakdown that is as much a critique of our idealized vision of these technologies as functionally useful objects as it is beautiful.

As Is, a collection of Penelope Umbrico's work, is running at [LMAKprojects](#) until June 20th.

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