

# L'OFFICIEL

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ART

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## LEO GABIN

ROBERT LONGO / EDDIE PEAKE / JANNIS KOUNELLIS / ERRO / ISAAC JULIEN  
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# LEO GABIN

## Surveilling the surveillance Interview by William Massey

**L'OFFICIEL ART : A trio is rather unusual in the art world. How do you work collectively? What is the common spirit that guides you?**

LEO GABIN : We became friends in high-school about 20 years ago. In school our favorite class was a silk-screen course and we copied the same set up at the attic of one of our parents' houses. Without any goals or expectations we started to make prints on all types of different surfaces. There were no expectations; it was purely based on fun, camaraderie and experiment. We had never done work separately before and evolved together to a specific aesthetic. From the beginning there was no dividing of roles, everybody does everything and this resulted in what it is. We consider the way we work more as a trio, rather than a collective. The mood, energy, ideas are due to a combination of the three of us.

**Your "artistic raw material" is made of photographs, pictures, footage that you find on websites such as YouTube. What have been your influences?**

We've always been very image focused. Being all born in the late seventies we didn't grow up with the Internet and were already in our twenties when we had access to it at home. Suddenly there was this endless stream of images, which you could so easily make your own. Especially when YouTube came up, it had a big impact on us. We found it extremely interesting to watch these unfiltered moments of daily life which were so embedded in the popular culture we knew so well from TV and movies. It became extra exciting to work with found footage.

**Your process clearly deals with appropriation and raises questions about authorship. Do you see this tension between "found" material and your completed works as being at the heart of your practice?**

Also working as a trio, you have to put aside ownership of things. Someone else can change the part you contributed. With the Internet and social networks it kind of is the same thing. We take things that are not ours, but through manipulation or editing we make them our own. In this age of the excessive use of images, for us it's now more relevant than ever to use found footage and recycled imagery. Especially with an abundance of amateurish made "private" imagery made readily available online, the idea of authorship becomes even more questionable.

**You must have seen thousands of hours of online videos. Are you still surprised by some of the material you find? Do you see some creativity in some of the users' videos?**

We never were interested in very popular or shocking videos, we have always been more attracted to these recordings under the grid, which don't get many views, or only from specific groups. Like girls recording themselves while cleaning their bedroom, or showing what they carry in their backpack, random acts of boredom, video diaries... But in certain themes the selection is again essential in our case. We like it when videos unintentionally contain a poetic quality. Finding patterns in these self-shot recordings is also something we look for. We don't really believe in going on

a search to find something interesting, once navigating online we embrace accidental finds.

**To focus on *Exit/Entry*, how did you come across the main character's videos, Bonnie, in the first place? Did you work simultaneously on this project and your latest film *A Crackup at the Race Riots* (2015)? Have the two projects somehow fed into each other?**

We had just finished *A Crackup at the Race Riots* when we started on *Exit/Entry*. For Daata Editions we made a short video about the phenomenon of Gang Stalking, something we came across coincidentally. While looking at relating footage we discovered the recordings by Bonnie. Her account was very different from all others as it had all these videos of seemingly random daily events, always focusing on the color red. The archive she is creating with her documentations could be seen as her life's work. It immediately sparked our interest; the level of obsession was both disturbing and fascinating. We wanted to know more about her situation so we got in touch with her.

**The social isolation of Bonnie is in opposition with the exposure that she decided to give to her life. I also see the same paradox between the fact you have excavated all these videos of Bonnie, the fact she actually collaborated by sending voice recordings and the fact you have never met her. The result is that the viewer becomes omniscient. What effect are you trying to create?**

We are very interested in the parasocial interaction and relationships, where you know a lot about someone but they don't know you, a phenomenon which used to be only possible through TV, movies and magazines. But now with the Internet it has taken on a whole new dimension. Now you can also have one-sided relationships with random and complete strangers all the time through online voyeurism and know them even quite intimately. In the case of Bonnie it is interesting that she is very introvert, in contrast with most people sharing their life online, she will never appear on camera herself. Sharing her recordings is most likely a cry for help and she uses new technologies to have a voice and to be heard. There was caution from her side in the beginning to collaborate, but she was mainly pleased with the fact that we wanted to work with her material. We told her we weren't making a traditional documentary and that we would approach her story objectively from an artistic point of view, in a way creating an abstract portrait of her and the situation she finds herself in.

**How does this project exemplify the idea of dystopia? Is your work a critique of American society? Of the end of a certain idea of private life?**

Her story is fairly complex and touches on different subjects such as social isolation, loneliness, surveillance, privacy, paranoia, new world order... But by being so embedded in the normal it has this extra psychological impact. A constant fight against an invisible enemy, using the same weapons to fight it. Surveilling the surveillance.

ENGLISH

VERSION








PAGE PRÉCÉDENTE, EN HAUT, LEO GABIN, CAPTURE D'ÉCRAN, *EXIT/ENTRY*, 2016 ;  
 EN BAS, LEO GABIN, CAPTURE D'ÉCRAN, *EXIT/ENTRY*, 2016.  
 CI-DESSUS, LEO GABIN, *UNTITLED*, 2015, LAQUE ET ACRYLIQUE SUR ALUMINIUM,  
 DIPTYQUE, 144 X 200 CM.  
 PAGE DE DROITE, LEO GABIN, *UNTITLED*, 2015, LAQUE ET ACRYLIQUE  
 SUR ALUMINIUM, 192 X 135 CM.





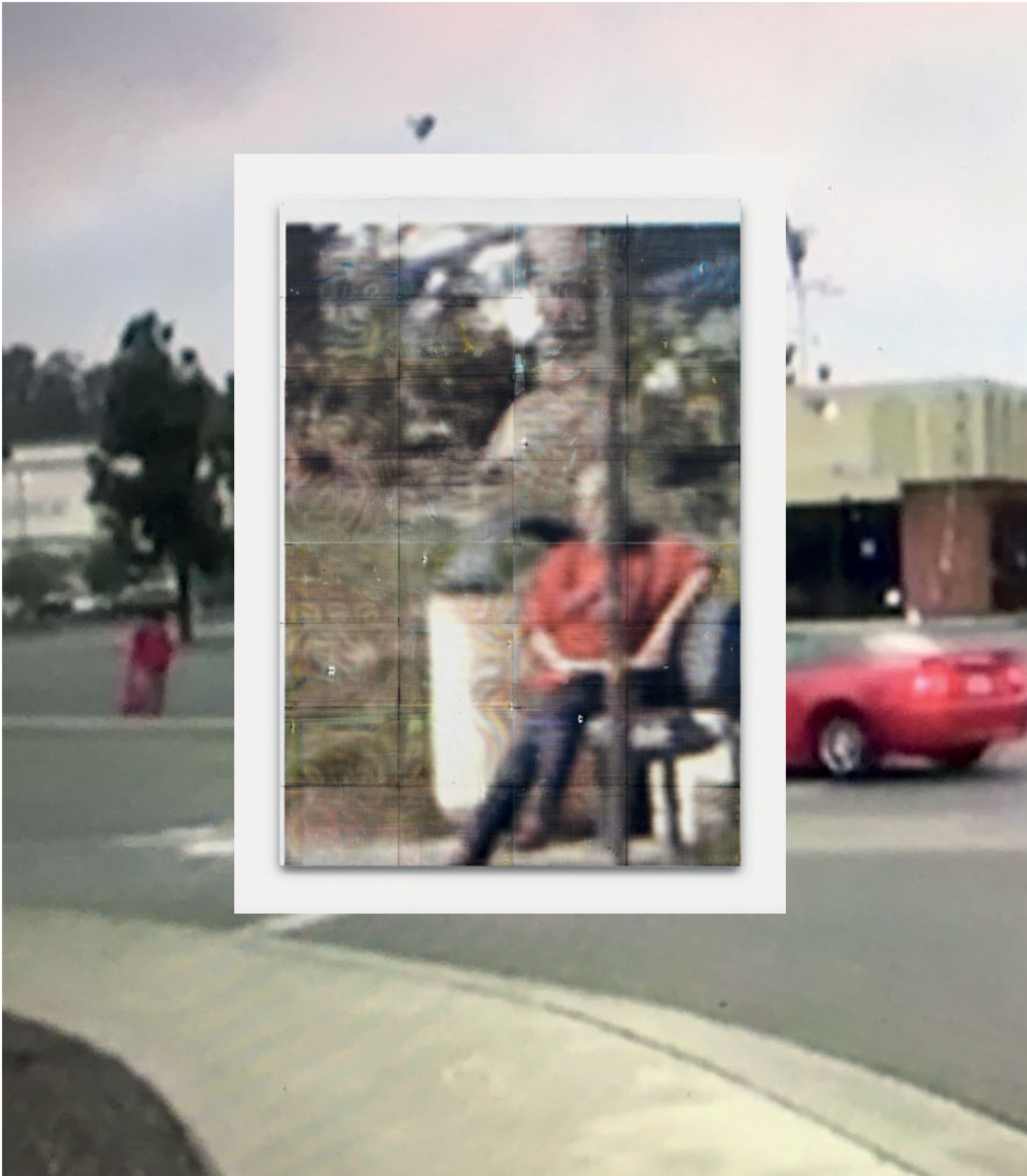
*I left my home. As I drove down Buena Hills Drive about to get on the main road a red car – the only car in the opposite lane – passed me by. I get on Vista Way. When I stop at the light at El Camino Real a red truck is in front of me to my right. I go into the pet store, Kahoots. A man with a red shirt follows right after. I go to the check-out. He is there. I pull out of my parking space in front of Kahoots. A lady with red pants passes in back of me going into Sprouts. I pull out of the lot. Turn left and wait at the light at El Camino Real and Marron Road – a police car and a sheriff's car riding together pass before me. A red car is there first in line at the intersection.*

*I make a right onto Carlsbad Village Drive from El Camino Real. A red truck is there. As I begin Carlsbad Village Drive a man completely dressed in red is walking on the sidewalk. At the intersection of Carlsbad Village Drive and the Interstate 5 intersection 2 red trucks pass before me to get on Interstate 5. I park in the Fish House Restaurant parking lot in Carlsbad for our walk. A red truck pulls in and parks two spaces to my left behind me. A girl with a red top passes by on the sidewalk outside the lot.*

*I stop on the sidewalk in front of the parking lot to let my dog smell the bushes. A man with a red shirt passes by. Then a boy in a red shirt. The boy in the red shirt walks a few yards then turns around and passes by me again. We walk about a half a block. My dog stops to pee. A man with a red hat passes by.*

*We start to walk down Grand Ave. We stop at the bushes in front of all the stores. A man with a red shirt passes beside us and goes into the parking lot of the stores. We walk a few steps more. A boy with a red hat jay walks across the street passing ahead of us. A group of people pass us by among them a man with a red shirt.*






*As we cross the street an alarm sounds.*




*I go to Targets before going home. Along the way there are several red cars first at intersections. As I am checking out of Targets a lady with a red dress is checking out.*





*I was minding my own business teaching Elementary School at Marlboro Elementary in Marlboro, New York (where I taught for 29 years). I lived on Massachusetts Drive in Newburgh, New York. A fireman moved into the neighborhood. From the moment he moved in he was a bully - throwing leaves on my property. I politely went over to him and pointed out he was throwing his leaves on my property. He said nothing. He did it again. I put a sign on my property saying no trespassing. He ran over my sign with his lawn mower and yelled to high heaven calling me all kinds of names. After that the harassment began. At first just he stalked me. Then his "old friends." Then firemen - fire chiefs in their SUV's, firemen in their fire trucks. Then ambulances, both private and public. Then police. Then these people wearing red or carrying red or using red cars and trucks.*

*I would go to Petco. An ambulance would pull in after me.*

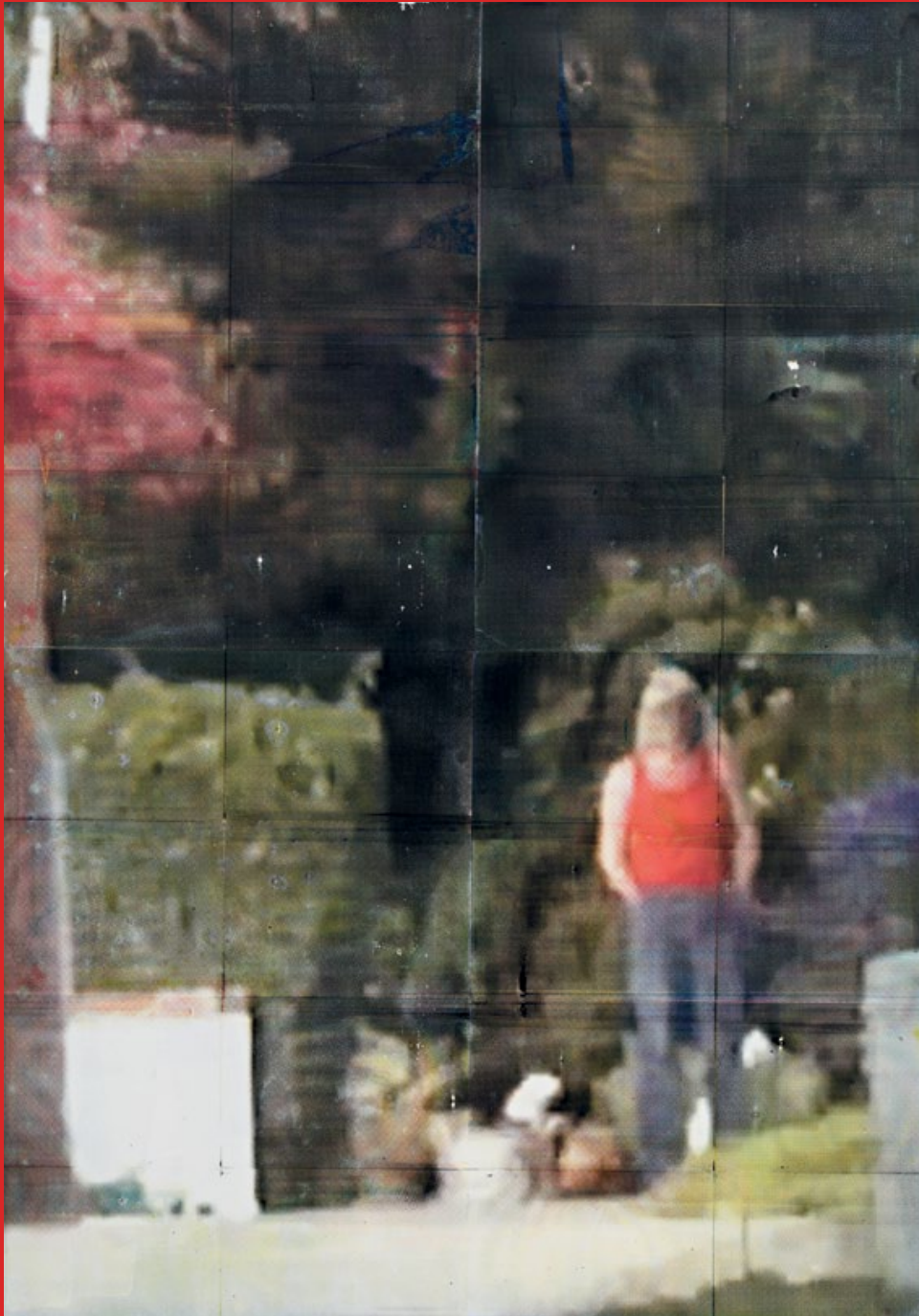


*I would go to the Newburgh Mall. Firemen would be there who would brush up against me as I walked in the mall with my brother. I would walk to Bon Tons in the mall. A fire alarm would go off when I reached the store. I would exit the store. A red car would pass in front of me. I would go out to the main road. A police car siren screaming would pass in front of me. Police did dangerous things on the road threatening both my and my brother's life as well as that of other motorists. They used dogs to intimidate me. I would go to Home Depot. A dog would jump out of a car window.*

*Stalked on the way over here in Oklahoma, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, and now every day here where I live in California.*

*They get all surrounding neighbors to gang stalk me wherever I live. They use noise to disrupt sleep. They use same time exit/entry tactics everytime I leave my home.*

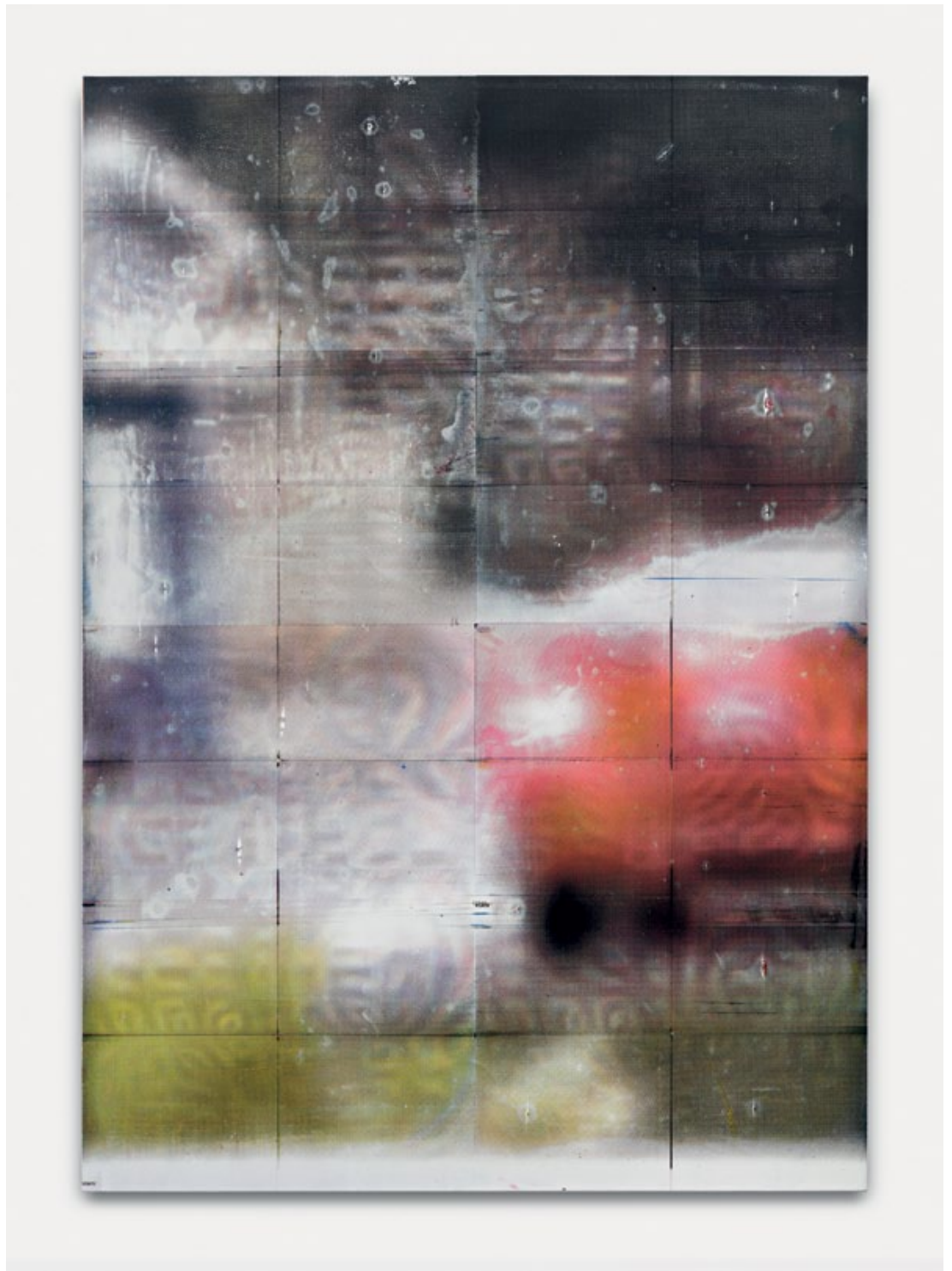




DOUBLE-PAGE PRÉCÉDENTE, EN ARRIÈRE-PLAN, LEO GABIN, CAPTURE D'ÉCRAN, *EXIT/ENTRY*, 2016.  
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