

# CULTURED

## 30 Under 35 2020: Alex Mackin Dolan Reevaluates Technology And Time

by Isabel Flower  
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### ALEX MACKIN DOLAN



**WHEN YOU GLIMPSE ONE** of Alex Mackin Dolan's sculptures from across the gallery, you might assume you're about to encounter a functional machine constructed from steel, copper, alloys and plastics. But a closer inspection will reveal the subtle grain of painted wood and the fastidious details of something laboriously hand-constructed over the course of many hours—a material and conceptual tension the artist embraces. In our increasingly technocratic world, art about technology is hardly unusual, but Dolan's approach prioritizes a more perceptive, even spiritual examination of its seamless omnipresence in our lives over the more shocking, news-worthy infringements of our privacy and autonomy. The insidiousness of tech, he explains, comes from its impetus to "exist as life itself" and to "replace life with another kind of time," co-opting even the most ordinary, in-between moments.

Dolan, who is originally from Colorado and now resides in New York's Lower East Side, where he shows with David Lewis Gallery, explains that his interest in this subject matter is largely the result of the era into which he was born, a sentiment undoubtedly shared by countless millennials who grew up relying on the computer as a creative medium and the Internet as a mode of communication. "The thing I'm best at happens to be computer graphics," he comments, "but maybe if I was born 40 years ago I'd be interested in records or films."

But, another important motive for Dolan is the vast reach of technology's most banal rituals, like the minutes one fills on the subway platform playing AdVenture Capitalist or Candy Crush. "Everyone's life is changed" by technology's "mainstreamness," he remarks, and idle games in particular epitomize the intentional addictiveness of these interfaces. The artist's own first functional video game—on view at 4649 Gallery in Tokyo this past September in a show with Jasper Spicero—is a version of a slot machine whose reels propose "love," "anger," "peace," and "fear," a canny consideration of "the way value is arbitrarily placed in certain symbols," a slot machine being an obvious example, but art being another.