



HOW PHOTOGRAPHY BECAME GAMIFIED

*We talk to the curators of *How to Win at Photography*, now on show at the Photographers' Gallery in London, about how imagemaking turned into a numbers game and why artists are using humour to examine it in their work*

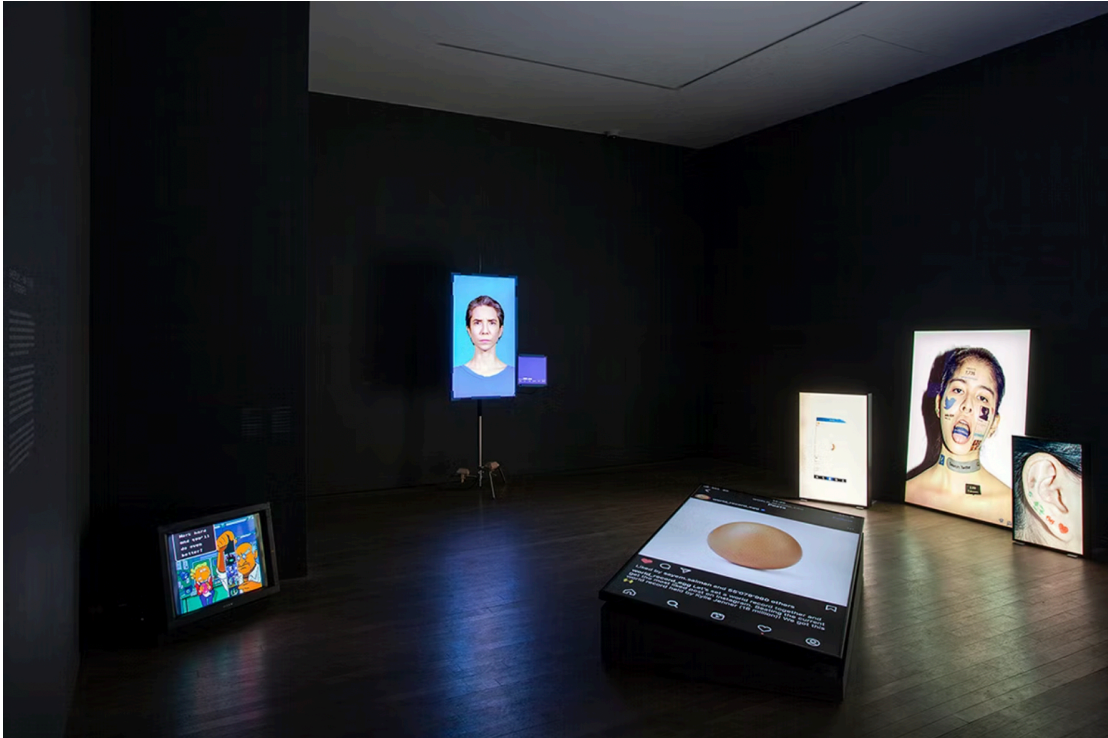
By **Megan Williams** 09/08/2022

The rise of social media and the place it occupies in our daily lives has been overwhelmingly reliant on gamification: the use of features and methods typically seen in gaming environments transposed onto non-game contexts.

“The term gamification was coined in 2002 by Nick Pelling, but only saw widespread adoption from the 2010s. This is the time where online platforms start incorporating rewards and point systems that are reminiscent of game mechanics, in order to increase users’ engagement,” says Marco de Mutiis, co-curator of *How to Win at Photography*.

Originally staged for the Fotomuseum Winterthur in Switzerland, and now on display at the Photographers’ Gallery in London, the exhibition examines the links between photography, gaming and contemporary culture. There’s a critical slant to much of the show, reflected in its somewhat cynical title, which drills in the idea that photography today is about equipping yourself with the right tools – not cameras, but amplification tactics – to outshine the competition.

“Gamification is a quintessential neoliberal tool. It’s about applying game mechanics to non-playful contexts and activities, thus turning playing into a means to achieve something else. It’s a complete subversion of value and purpose: a process that should be rewarding in itself becomes instrumentalised,” says co-curator Matteo Bittanti.



*Top: Selfie #10, 2014 © Aneta Grzeszykowska/Sammlung Fotomuseum Winterthur;
Above: Installation view of How to Win at Photography. Image: Kate Elliott*