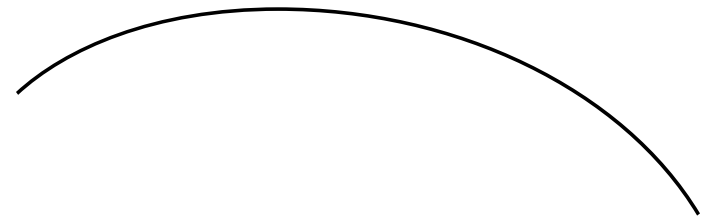
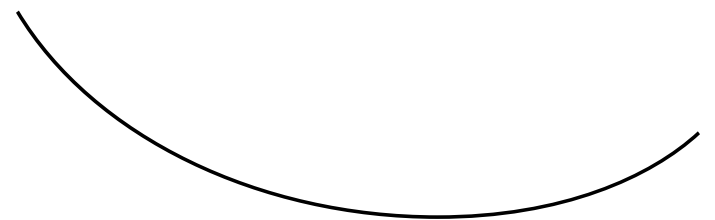


2015
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2017



voidLab



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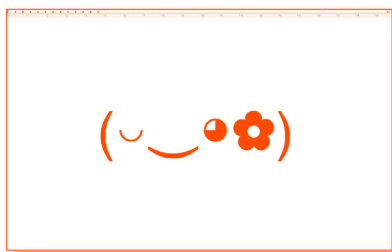
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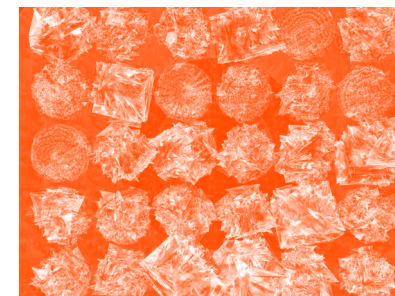
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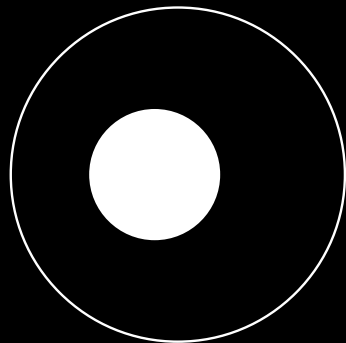
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VOIDLAB¹ IS AN INTERSEC-
TIONAL FEMINIST COLLECTIVE
FOR WOMEN, NON-BINARY,
GENDER NONCONFORMING,
TRANS AND QUEER PEOPLE TO
EXPRESS INDIVIDUAL IDEN-
TITIES THROUGH ARTS AND
TECHNOLOGIES.

We are a group of students, educators, artists, designers, and technologists that meet weekly to organize events, workshops, and exhibitions that forefront underrepresented voices. Our goal is to celebrate differences rather than to idolize a singular value or way of expression.

At our meetings, anyone can contribute to the agenda and each meeting is run by a different moderator, encouraging diverse and unique styles for leadership and empowerment. This structure represents voidLab's most central value, which is to work against the misconception of equating hegemony with solidarity and to transcend every border imposed by institutions and society at large. Compassion and self-reflection are essential to our work.

¹ projects.dma.ucla.edu/voidlab/

INTERVIEW

VOIDLAB

INTERVIEW
WITH

DOROTHY R. SANTOS

This is an interview between Filipina American writer, artist, and educator Dorothy R. Santos (she/they) and co-founders of voidLab. Echo Theohar (she/they), Kate Hollenbach (she/they), and Xin Xin (they/them) are recent alum of Design Media Arts. Christina Yglesias (she/her) and Sarah Rosalena Balbuena-Brady (she/her) are currently attending the graduate program.



August 15, 2017

DS

What is voidLab's mission and objectives? How was the decision made to have a structure of "co-founders" as opposed to members?

KH

The decision to have co-founders was to avoid having an origin story that privileged members who had been a part of the group for longer and to give everyone a stake in defining the direction and goals for the group. "Co-founder" was chosen to give everyone equal agency in driving the group's objectives.

CY

This is a move, both practical and symbolic, towards flattening and abolishing hierarchies. So whether someone is a long-time member or someone new, a grad or an undergrad, etc. we all have agency in shaping the group. We each bring our own skills, strengths, experiences, and interests to the group dynamic, but no one way of being a part of the group is privileged. At any one time we might have a number of projects happening simultaneously, with some co-founders working on one project but not another, some might be working on all of them, and some might be taking a break to work on a school commitment. The fluidity of the group makes it accessible and lets each co-founder be involved in the ways they want to be, especially within the context of an academic schedule.

XX

Resisting institutional hierarchies and returning agency to the individual is key to the idea behind "co-founders". But resistance is always easier said than done. For instance, both undergraduate and graduate students attended voidLab

meetings, and even though we would like the group to be non-hierarchical, the graduate students are often the TAs of the undergraduate students outside of voidLab. This naturally creates a hidden power relation that takes time, sensitivity, and constant effort to unlearn. It hasn't always been possible to expect everyone to stay sensitive towards these types of unbalanced power dynamics, but at the same time that is the nature of politics—we are all coming from different social, psychological, and cultural places. Like humans, communities are never perfect and are always a work in progress. Trying to figure out when to step in to interfere with a potential problem and when to stay back to let a situation unravel itself is a constant reflection of mine as one of the co-founders.

DS

A few years ago on social media, a woman posted her inability to remember the French phrase related to jumping into a void. Naturally, she asked and as I followed the thread, someone finally shared the phrase she had once heard, "L'appel du vide" or translated, "the call of the void." There was a call and someone answered it, literally. There is something strange about the digital landscape feeling a bit like that story, which is common and an everyday occurrence. With the increasing ways to communicate and digital and mobile technology updates happening every minute, let alone second, feeling as if one is in a constant void seems inevitable (sometimes). All that being said, what is the story behind voidLab's name?

KH

We met as a group and chose it from a collection of other technology and theory related names. The group's original name was CLIT Lab, but with an influx of new members in the new school year, it felt important to pick a name that new active members had a claim in choosing. As a programmer, 'void' to me is a kind of reserve word that means absence of a type. It's what a function returns when it

AS A PROGRAMMER, 'VOID' TO ME IS A KIND OF RESERVE WORD THAT MEANS ABSENCE OF A TYPE.

returns nothing. So I liked the idea of having a lab that didn't guarantee any returns or a particular type. In the following year, we didn't pick a new name, which had some advantages—continuity and more recognition from outside of our group—but maybe also missed an opportunity to give more agency to additional new members.

ET

On a more romantic note, I clearly remember having a chalkboard with over 30 potential names scribbled across it during one intense group brainstorming session. We had been building upon different variations of "x-collective," "x-lab," and corny one-liners until we were knee deep in a jumbled word salad. Somebody suggested putting together "void" and "lab" and I think it just immediately clicked for everyone. A lot of the magic behind the name voidLab occurred in an unspoken and substantial way for me. I don't recall the group going into much detail as to why we liked it, but I personally remember feeling like the word "void" spoke directly to an ache in my heart that made me seek out an intersectional feminist community in the first place. As if it was addressing a void or lack that we felt existed in the workplace, or in the institution, or in some

aspect of our personal relationships that needed to be filled in by a new type of family.

DS

Cyberfeminist collectives such as SubRosa and Deep Lab come to mind when I think of the work being produced by voidLab. What writings or artworks, created by your mentors and predecessors, have inspired the work and research you have done?

CY

I did my undergrad at Mills College (a small liberal-arts all women's¹ college) in Oakland, CA, which was the first place I encountered a feminist community. That experience of feeling included, of feeling solidarity to speak to feminist issues, of having a community to support me, I take with me to voidLab. My mentors are the professors I had who helped create an inclusive environment in which to make and discuss work. Samara Halperin, Catherine Wagner, and Molly Holm are three professors who come to mind. This answer is less about the work itself and more about the environment that needs to exist before the work can.

DS

The interdisciplinary nature of your work can be seen in your projects for *Ars Electronica*. Writers seem to be huge inspiration for what drives a few of your current projects including *Shadow Glass* and *Shapeshifting AI*. In *Shadow Glass*, the work takes on a "technological redlining," which has been historically defined as a denial of services based on an individual's

¹ The Mills community includes trans and gender-nonconforming folks, although problematically the terminology 'women's college' is still being used.

THERE IS A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF PRESSURE FOR A GROUP LIKE OURS TO PROVE ITS WORTH TO AN OUTSIDE AUDIENCE.

socioeconomic status and physical location. How does this work specifically address the detrimental and biased nature of this physical act through digital means?

XX

Technological redlining is a term coined by Dr. Safiya Umoja Noble. Her forthcoming book *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* addresses the nuances of digitized, automated oppression in extensive ways. According to Safiya, technological redlining practices “decision-making processes that affect people’s lives when it comes to things like housing, credit, the ways schools are ranked and valued as excellent to not excellent and those decisions are increasingly made by algorithms or by digital decision making systems.” One distinctive characteristic of digital forms of redlining is that acts of discrimination now become automated processes that don’t involve humans on the other side.

For *Shadow Glass*, Jen and Sanglim are creating an audio-visual piece by remixing an audio interview I’ve recorded with Safiya. We think of this as a seductive protest—using the alluring nature of 3D animation and digital sound to bring some important ideas in Safiya’s new book to an audience who have a foot in media art but have not picked up a book that touches on the embedded biases in emerging technologies.

DS

For *Shapeshifting AI*, given its audio-visual nature, could you speak to the details of the installation and what a listener can expect to hear and experience?

SB

The piece was inspired by an essay written by Nora N. Khan, “Towards a Poetics of Artificial Superintelligence,” about how symbolic language can turn alienation into expressions of power. During my time at Design Media Arts, I’ve integrated machine learning and artificial intelligence into my practice using similar ideas. Most recently, training AI to create symbols and sounds on data marginalized in technology. *Shapeshifting AI* is an audio visual experience that discusses AI as a tool to produce new forms of symbolic language expressed in radically new forms. The installation is a video using audio from an interview with Nora N. Khan and myself that is re-edited with the visuals of Sanglim Han and audio by Jen Agosta.

DS

As a collective based within a research and educational institution, how have you worked with artists and creatives outside of the institution? Do you have plans of partnering with other universities and collectives? Do you have resources that would enable other groups to start their own collectives based on the work you’ve done?

KH

We have a little documentation of our processes and working methods on our website, but I think there could be a lot more. I’ve also been wondering if it’s appropriate to document the successes and failures of the group more openly—for example, we never really found our rhythm for meeting in the last academic year, which made it tougher for some members to be involved, but we also ran bigger and more open public events. There is a tremendous amount of pressure for a group like ours to be successful and to prove its worth to an outside audience, but keeping the community supportive is an important part of making the broader work possible. One of the beautiful things about our community is that not everyone agrees all the time! I’d like that—and how we work through it—to be more visible, but that level of exposure also seems dangerous, or that it could destroy us at any time.

DS

The *Feminist Pornographic Collective Consciousness (FPCC)* zine contains entries regarding how the human body changes and evolves. Would it be possible to share how the zine and other voidLab projects like it help build more inclusive and ethical practices overall?

ET

The *Feminist Pornographic Collective Consciousness* zine was designed to address the overlapping desires, frustrations, personal experiences and politics associated with sex and sexuality for all different types of feminists. Collecting content for the zine was a practice of archiving and realizing the wide spectrum of sexual content that is appealing to intersectional feminists, which ranges anywhere from vanilla tastes to radical acts and ideas. By blending all these interests together, the zine desired to create multiple entry points at which any type of person could contribute with their own stories or questions about their sexual experiences. The intersectionality was realized in the act of openly discussing (and criticizing) content

which excites us sexually or sensually, and collectively discussing those feelings which may even feel at odds with our own personal politics. Untangling this mass of unspoken desires and interests that make up our sexual preferences was empowering in a group context not only because it happened in a safe space, but because the discussion wove a fabric—or “collective consciousness”—in which the vast variety of our sexual identities and tastes could still coexist under the umbrella of intersectional feminism.

DS

Finally, what unexpected things happened since the collective’s inception that reinforced its necessity at and beyond the institution?

CY

As a grad student who came into UCLA a few years after the inception of voidLab, my peers and I have benefited from the work that the original voidLab co-founders put in. UCLA Design Media Arts as a program and cohort is much more receptive and open to feminism than it was in the past (based on what I’ve spoken about with those who graduated even a year or two before me.) The grad cohort this year is vastly more gender diverse than ever and there is room for feminist work and discussions. The work isn’t done. I know that voidLab can continue to help shape Design Media Arts into a more inclusive program.

1 from left: Hillary Cleary, Anisa Bashiri, Xin Xin, Devon Nicole, Amethyst Zhang, Echo Theohar, Alice Jung, Yuehao Jiang.

WE UNDERSTAND THE CLASS-
ROOM AS A SPACE FOR
PRACTICING FREEDOM; WHERE
ONE MAY CHALLENGE PSYCHIC,
SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL BOR-
DERS AND CREATE MEANINGFUL
ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS;

Co-authors

A.M. Darke (she/he/sir)
Amanda Stojanov (she/her)
Chandler McWilliams (he/they)
Echo Theohar (she/they)
Evelyn Masso (she/they)
Kate Hollenbach (she/they)
Jules Kris (they/them)
Xin Xin (they/them)

In August 2016, a group of grads, undergrads, and faculty got together to co-write a diversity statement to be included in all future UCLA Design Media Arts syllabi. The statement has since spread beyond the department and can be found on many art syllabi across different institutions.

README.md

Commitment to Diversity and Safer Spaces

Who it's for

This statement was written for professors of undergraduate and graduate art classes.

How to use it

Just copy the text of `diversity-statement.md` (or `diversity-statement-mini.md`) and paste in your syllabus! :)

Attribution

Attribution is not required, but we appreciate it! Simply put a link to this repository (github.com/voidlab/diversity-statement) in your syllabus. If you want to credit someone, you can credit voidLab.

Example:

```
~~~  
Statement adopted from voidLab at github.com/voidlab/diversity-statement.  
~~~
```

diversity-statement.md

Commitment to Diversity and Safer Spaces

We understand the classroom as a space for practicing freedom; where one may challenge psychic, social, and cultural borders and create meaningful artistic expressions. To do so we must acknowledge and embrace the different identities and backgrounds we inhabit. This means that we will use preferred pronouns, respect self-identifications, and be mindful of special needs. Disagreement is encouraged and supported, however our differences affect our conceptualization and experience of reality, and it is extremely important to remember that certain gender, race, sex, and class identities are more privileged while others are undermined and marginalized. Consequently, this makes some people feel more protected or vulnerable during debates and discussions. A collaborative effort between the students, TA, and instructor is needed to create a supportive learning environment. While everyone should feel free to experiment creatively and conceptually, if a class member points out that something you have said or shared with the group is offensive, avoid being defensive; instead approach the discussion as a valuable opportunity for us to grow and learn from one another. Alternatively if you feel that something said in discussion or included in a piece of work is harmful, you are encouraged to speak with the instructor or TA.

A PANEL DISCUSSION ON
INTERSECTIONALITY & INTERNET ETHICS

BIASED DATA

Biased Data: A Panel Discussion on Intersectionality and Internet Ethics focused on the inequality and bias present beneath the surface of internet culture and other network technologies. While many academic disciplines acknowledge social inequality in the real world, little work has been done on how these cultural paradigms bleed into online life. The panel examined how real-world biases and inequities are replicated and systematically integrated into "neutral" algorithms and databases.

Date

November 19, 2015

Location

UCLA Broad Art Center

- 2 Dr. Safiya Umoja Noble
presents on biases
within Google and other
search engines. Photo by
Hillary Rose Cleary.

Panelists

Dr. Safiya Umoja
Noble (she/her)

Marika Cifor (she/her)

An Xiao Mina (she/her)

Moderators

Casey Reas (he/they)

Johanna Hedva (they/them)

Organizers

Xin Xin (they/them)

Peter Lu (they/them)

Jules Kris (they/them)

Sofia S.G. (she/her)

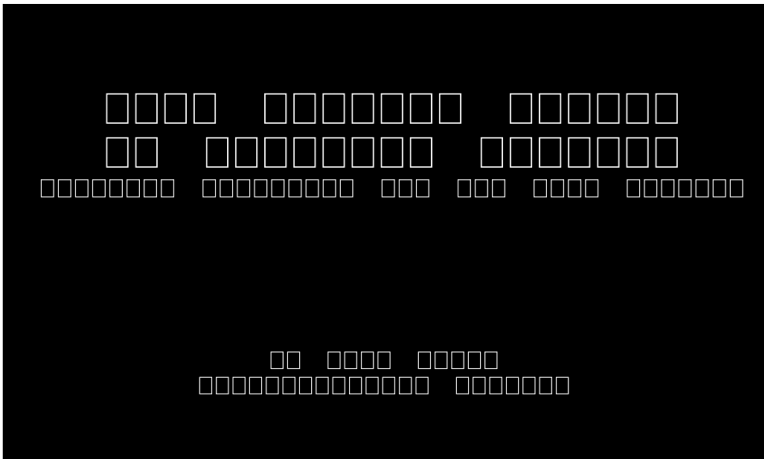
Echo Theohar (she/they)



An Xiao Mina's talk is an excerpt from the panel.
For complete transcripts of the panel visit Biased
Data on Open Transcripts.¹

Hi, everyone. Thank you for having me here. My name is An Xiao Mina. You can call me An, and I'm a product designer and an independent researcher and writer based in the Bay, but originally from LA. So I'm psyched to be back here.

Today I'm talking about different sorts of divides, specifically around language divides, and some biases around language that exist in our technologies and our technological spaces. I wanted to take a moment to imagine this "next billion" group of people who are coming online and the sheer diversity of languages that they're speaking. It's hundreds and thousands of different languages. And one language might be Khmer, a Cambodian language. A colleague of mine, researcher Ben Valentine (he's based in Cambodia), pointed out that when he's looking at Khmer web sites with certain browsers, the very language, which has its own custom script, appears like this:



It looks like boxes. So literally the language of Khmer is invisible to many technologies. It's just one example of how the language that you speak shapes the Internet that you have access to, both as a reader and as a speaker.

When we think about network graphs and we talk about how the network effects that make up an important part of how social movements and how information is distributed online, there's this assumption in those visualizations that every node in that network is equal. But very often, and you can slice data in many different ways, the languages that we speak actually limit the networks that we have access to and that we're interacting with.

¹ [opentranscripts.org/
sources/biased-data/](https://opentranscripts.org/sources/biased-data/)



"Vive le tweet! A Map of Twitter's Languages,"² Frank Jacobs

This is a visualization from 2010 by Mike McDandless,³ who's a researcher who scraped the Twitter data for the languages that people are speaking based on their location that they're tweeting from, and Eric Fischer then visualized this. And you can see how the languages that people are speaking (each color represents a different language), fall along geopolitical lines. And this is not people just speaking Italian because they're in Italy, and we're not visualizing what people are speaking based on this map. It's actually the language itself that recreates the map of Europe. And you can expand this into other countries and other regions as well.

This can have an effect. So, often people talk about the importance of Wikipedia and the importance of open knowledge and open access to knowledge and the ability to contribute to a collective database of knowledge. Wikipedia has built-in translation features, it allows people to contribute language and translation. But again, if you're speaking a minority language, your access to that knowledge can be severely limited. These are the numbers of articles available for different languages: 1,000,000+ for English, Spanish, French, Vietnamese, 10,000+ for Afrikaans, Tagalog, and Kiswahili, and 100+ for isiXhosa, Luganda, Cherokee, and Konkani.

If you're speaking majority languages, or languages for people who've made a concerted effort to translate that content, you have access to millions of articles and it's a great database. But if you're speaking—especially minority Asian and African languages, that number starts to drop significantly. Ten thousand for Afrikaans, Tagalog, Kiswahili, and down to a hundred for even smaller minority languages. We can expect similar patterns, I think, with other web sites and other sorts of content, Wikipedia being just one example.

² [bigthink.com/strange-
maps/539-vive-le-tweet-a-
map-of-twitters-languages](https://bigthink.com/strange-maps/539-vive-le-tweet-a-map-of-twitters-languages)

³ blog.mikemccandless.com/

And then in addition to reading, it's also the access to voice. I think a lot of us are familiar with the Internet in building social movements and the ability to amplify one's voice. Certainly the Umbrella Movement⁴ in Hong Kong and Black Lives Matter⁵ here in the US rely on the ability to broadcast a message, to use hashtags, to amplify a voice and create a pipeline from social media to mainstream media, and then hopefully to other audiences.



And certainly we can think about major hashtags and major movements that've been in English or a majority language. **#TweetLikeAForeignJournalist** in Kenya was a critique of media coverage of East Africa. And then **#JeSuisCharlie**, a simple enough French phrase for people to remember and to understand.

But there are a number of other movements in other languages that are more difficult to understand, and get significantly less attention. **#sassoufit** in Congo. There's a *gau wu* (**#鳩鳴**) movement that's part of the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement, but is a sort of separate group with sort of different aims and strategies. **#lumaddinako**, that's in the Philippines. And then **#حرفتي برص** means **#Egypt_Delights**,⁶ a parody hashtag which I'll talk about a little later. These sorts of movements and conversations are often limited to the language sphere that they're in, because they're often working with minority languages.

⁴ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umbrella_Movement

⁵ blacklivesmatter.com/

⁶ medium.com/meedan-labs/egypt-delights-a-suez-canal-hashtag-largely-missed-by-english-speaking-media-c5f13b84647c

Just to illustrate this even further, I just love this quote from Sarah Kendzior, who's a writer on social justice in Middle America and Central Asia. She's speaking about the kind of quandaries that an Uzbek activist might have to go through to raise awareness for their cause. I just want to read through the whole description, because it really shows you some of the challenges with amplifying voice when your language is not very well represented in technological platforms, and there's no pipeline for translating those languages into mainstream and majority media.

If she knows Russian, she has to decide whether writing in Russian—and potentially reaching an international audience as well as the 41 percent of Uzbeks who can read Russian—outweighs not being able to reach non-Russian speaking Uzbeks or seeming to value a foreign language over one's native tongue.

Sara Kendzior, "Can Minor Languages Make Revolution?"⁷

So even the decision to speak Russian over Uzbek, even though there are benefits to that amplification, there are political consequences to not speaking in Uzbek. And here's where the availability of fonts, typography, and input systems of the Uzbek language have consequences for political action.

If she writes in Uzbek, she has to choose which alphabet—Cyrillic, to reach older generations and Uzbeks in neighboring former Soviet republics who only know the Cyrillic version? Or Latin, to reach the younger readers who comprise the bulk of Uzbekistan's Internet users?

Sara Kendzior, "Can Minor Languages Make Revolution?"⁷

So these sorts of dilemmas are much more common when you're speaking a minority language, especially if that language has non-Latin script.

As a designer as well as a product thinker, I'm also thinking about what are potential solutions. And for provocation and for conversation, I wanted to throw out some potential ideas for how we can think about improving language inclusion [and] language access across the world and also here in the United States for people who are speaking many different languages.

⁷ commonreader.wustl.edu/c/languages-revolution-internet/



CATS: ALL YOUR BASE ARE BELONG TO US.

And I think part of the risk of crowdsourcing of course is the risk of free labor, and I think we need to talk about what fair compensation looks like. But at the same time a broader model for translation can help ensure that content reaches other languages. Yeeyan in China is another crowdsourced site where people were translating articles from English into Chinese as an important way of increasing access for sites like *The Economist*. It was shut down, and it's kind of at a neutral space right now, but it's an example of the potential for this.

10 www.viki.com/

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a	ᐃ	ᐤ	ᐃ	ᐤ	ᐤ	ᐃ	ᐤ		ᐃ	
r	ᐃ	ᐤ	ᐃ	ᐤ	ᐤ	ᐃ	ᐤ		ᐃ	
a	ᐃ	ᐤ	ᐃ	ᐤ	ᐤ	ᐃ	ᐤ		ᐃ	
f	ᐃ	ᐤ	ᐃ	ᐤ	ᐤ	ᐃ	ᐤ		ᐃ	
q	ᐃ	ᐤ	ᐃ	ᐤ	ᐤ	ᐃ	ᐤ		ᐃ	
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Secondly, we need to change the structure. Language inequity is a full stack problem. I think you can translate all the things, but if your language is not supported, if your font—this is the Amharic alphabet, with over 300 letters or alphasyllables, and we have to design better ways to input these languages. We need to design better ways to read them, to access them. And we just need a better structure for supporting languages, ensuring that they can be read and input, especially on mobile devices.

13 [en.wikipedia.org/
wiki/Amharic#
Alphasyllabary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amharic#Alphasyllabary)

QR CODES ARE POPULAR IN CHINA BECAUSE THE VERY ACT OF TYPING IN A CHINESE URL CAN BE BURDENSOME.

One possibility (this is a picture of Leon Messi interacting with an app called WeChat) is we also need to think about audio interactions and audio input. A researcher friend of mine, Christina Xu pointed out that QR codes are very popular in China as a form of input because the very act of typing in a Chinese URL can be burdensome. So it's much easier to take a screenshot of a QR code. So we need to think about different interactions, and especially when we get to languages that may not have a formal written form or any written form. Audio interaction and oral engagement through technology I think will be very critical and important.



And just to close, I'll give one example of a bit of color that can be exposed through translation and why this can be both very exciting and interesting, this process of building our global imaginations. Our ability to empathize and interact and value people from other cultures, in different parts of the world that can often be invisible to the West is through bringing out that citizen content, bringing out content that can be interesting and valuable.



I'd rather believe this than the official explanation for the train crash.



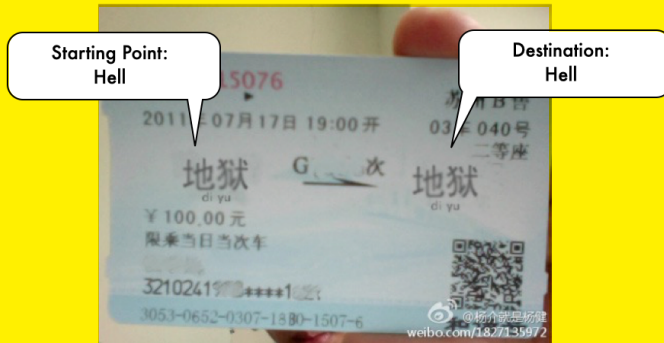
You cannot escape the blame of profaning the dead.



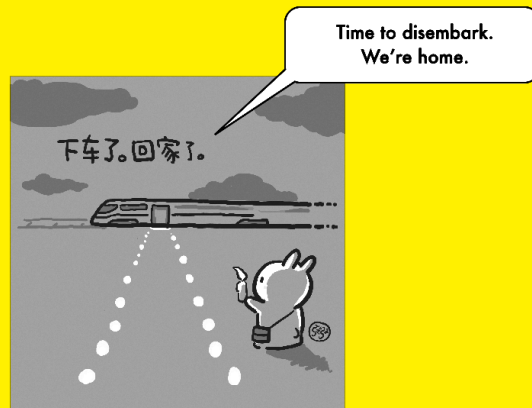
This is just one example. The 2011 Wenzhou train crash in China was a major train crash where hundreds of people were killed and injured. This was the sort of event that would've been censored in Chinese media because it potentially an example of government mismanagement. But the role of social media in bringing this out was so compelling, and actually telling the specific stories of this is a way of highlighting how and why these online engagements can be quite powerful. And it really takes translation, though, to highlight these.

This was one image where someone Photoshopped this into this monster movie. And you can see it's a kind of parody conversation. "I'd rather believe this than the official explanation for the train crash." There's different sorts of memes. "You cannot escape the blame of profaning the dead."

THE ABILITY FOR [PEOPLE FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH] TO CONTRIBUTE TO IMPORTANT CONVERSATIONS ONLINE WILL BE SEVERELY LIMITED.

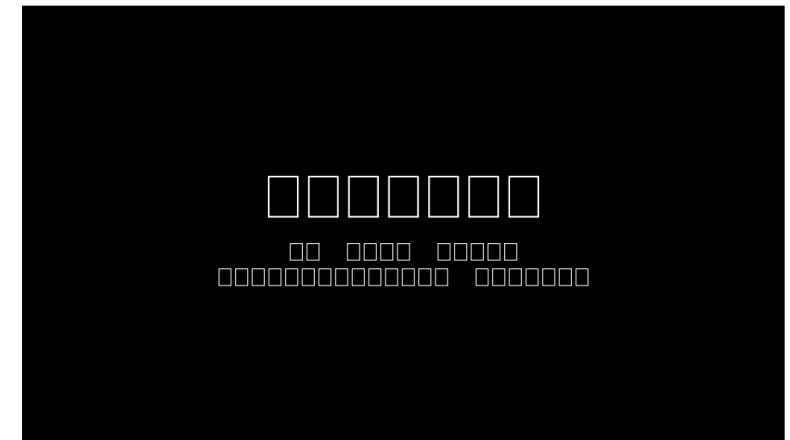


Standard Railway Ticket



"Time to disembark. We're home." Just kind of poetic messages. This is a friend of mine, who had Photoshopped the train ticket "starting point: Hell, destination point: Hell." And that specificity of translating this content and bringing it out becomes an important act of journalism, I would say.

Just to close, as we think about the role of language on the Internet, it really biases our experience, and there are a lot of risks and challenges there, especially as people from the Global South are coming online. The ability for them to access content and for them to contribute to important conversations online will be severely limited.



It'll look more like this, and I think some of the most important work we can do in tech is to bring it out into languages that they can understand.

Thank you so much.

SHARON TRAWEEK:

-studied math, worked as a software engineer for a bit, got PhD at history of consciousness department in UCSB
1 Science and Technology studies (STS), mainly studies physics obs.

-tried to find an answer to the question why gender representation has improved in biological science faster than physical science.

-masculinity <-> objectivity.

-interdisciplinary (history, gender studies, anthropology)

-talks about gender studies as an interdisciplinary gateway for all fields.

-participant observation - benefits are mutual. Labs currently are more eager to have people like trawweek as they see the need to address diversity issues within their culture.

-looks at things from the perspective of narratives. How does history shape the narrative and how does narrative drive the future.

-actively interested in looking at other fields

-looking for new ways to disrupt and change the fields in question (not necessarily active in her research, but as a general interest from my meetings with her)

Safiya Noble:

- Social-cultural informatics.

- Feminism.

- Racism & sexism embedded in search engine results.

- Black identity.

Re-imagine a search engine where each person chooses his/her own biases. You have to go to the "red light district" to see pornographic content.

Anthony J Ratcliff (CSUN)

Prof of Pan-African Studies

Hip hop in the digital age

Black Power/ Arts

Movements

Digital Humanities listed as interest (but wasn't able to find examples online)

Kathleen Dahlgren:

-natural language processing

-natural language search engine

-worked with IBM in the 80s

Ursula Heise:

- Urban ecology

- sustainability

- founder of UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability

- digital humanities

- State of the Discipline Report - a way to observe and analyze academic climate on the internet, open to the public, no gatekeeping

- "Her research and teaching focus on contemporary environmental culture, literature and art in the Americas, Western Europe and Japan; theories of globalization; literature and science; and the digital humanities"

Casey Reas (Moderator)



Making programming accessible, p5.js at Carnegie Mellon conference - "outreach, community, diversity", "#noCodeSnobs, #newKidLove, #unassumeCore, #BlackLivesMatter"
Encouraging a community of "this is how it's done" and "this is how I can help" (at least from what I've seen in the Processing forums)

Range

should values

at

m.

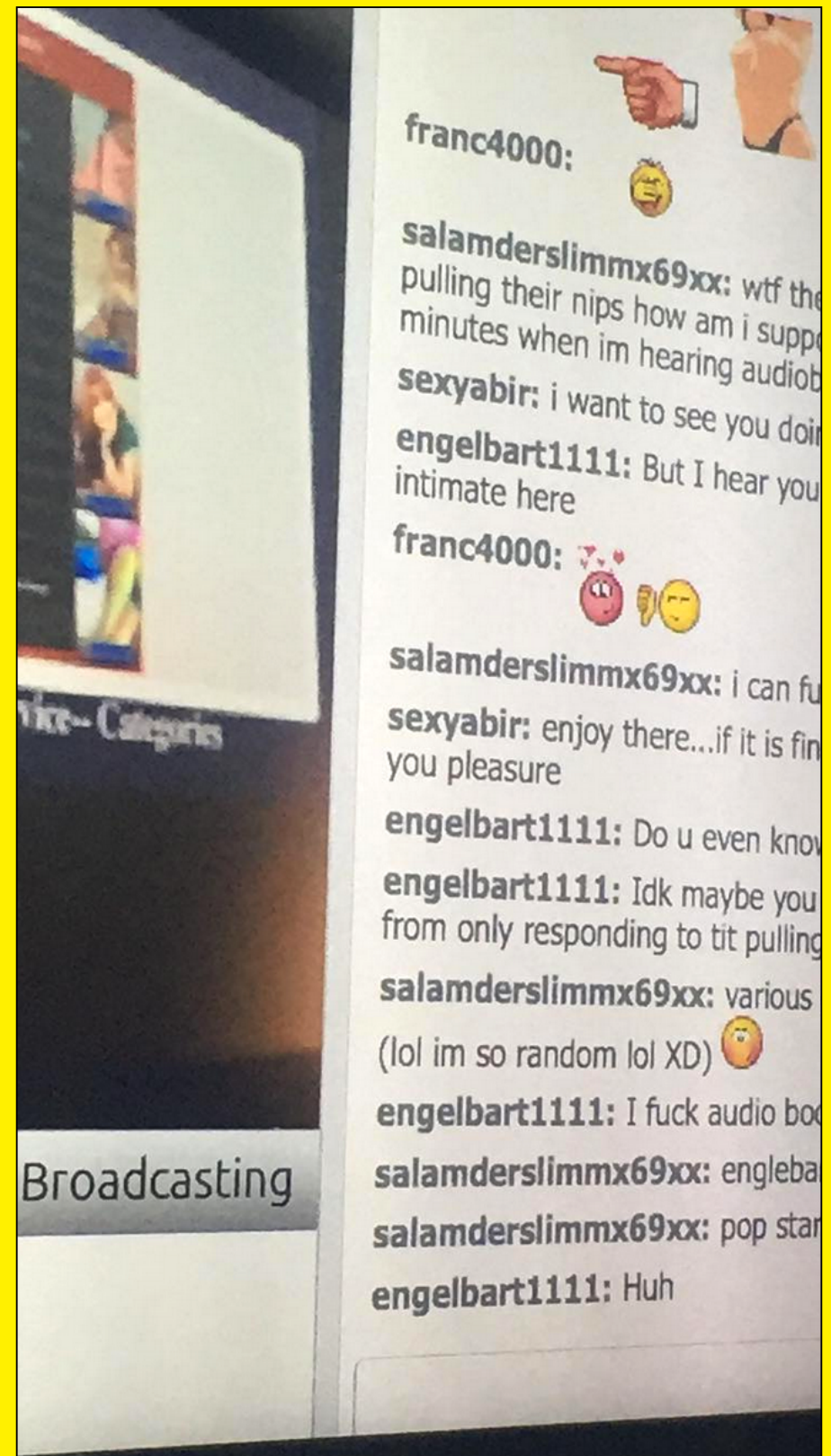
EH, MAYBE
LATER

NOT TODAY

DECENTRALIZING THE GAZE

Decentralizing The Web is a grant-funded public programming series co-curated by Symrin Chawla and Amanda Stojanov. It sought to cultivate critical evaluations of online presence through an intersectional feminist lens. The panels aim to untangle the psycho-social implications of identity politics on the global web, examining the embedded biases driving dominant modes of representation in digital spaces.

Decentralizing the Web Panel 001 was created as a response to inequality and bias in internet culture, as well as to foster a curiosity in understanding our collective and individual identities in this dynamic landscape. This series seeks to critically evaluate online presence through an intersectional feminist lens. Its goal is to untangle the psycho-social implications of identity on the global web, looking specifically at the embedded biases that determine dominant narratives in representation and knowledge production. This event was also streamed live on chaturbate, to broaden the scope of discussion and viewership outside of a purely academic setting.



Date

November 17, 2016

Location

UCLA Broad Art Center

Panelists

Aria Dean (she/her)

Chelsea Jones (she/her)

Eva Sealove (she/her)

Dorothy Howard (she/her)

Jasmine Nyende (she/her/they)

Kristin Cornelius (she/her)

Moderators

Symrin Chawla (she/her)

Nico Le (she/her)



3 Projected live feed of Chaturbate viewer comments.

4 Panel discussion led by Symrin Chawla and Nico Le.

Aria Dean's talk is an excerpt from the panel.

Hi, I'm Aria Dean. I am an artist and writer and Assistant Curator of Net Art and Digital Culture at Rhizome. I'm just going to talk about some of the stuff I've been writing about and thinking about in the last year or so, so it might get a little messy.

Overall I'm interested in this question of the politics of representation online and the problem of representation online, specifically in terms of blackness and representation. And not just blackness and representation in terms of how to represent blackness, but the entanglement of the two historically. The video artist Ulysses Jenkins, who is a 1970s LA artist, has a really great quote in one of his videos, which is "blackness is the same old image problem always." I think that's a really great way to frame it. So not really being interested in this historical—or what has occupied theorists often historically—which is this question of positive or negative representation for blackness, but a question of the nature of blackness in relationship to representation. I think that this is particularly pertinent to the online sphere, where beyond blackness all participants find themselves flattened into media—image and text.

Something else that structures my interests is—and I'm going to paraphrase something that Hannah Black says, that perhaps it's useful to situate all of our questions about the internet, rather than talking about online or offline, or questions of the modern and the contemporary, but looking at it in terms of the ongoing circulation of bodies that have prefigured all of this. So, including migration, or for me the transatlantic slave trade is of particular interest and how those ways of circulating bodies and capital are still involved in the conversation now online.

And I think that, kind of circling back, one of the things that I'm interested in is some of the problems that arise when considering the relationship between blackness and representation. Which I think, particularly right now, I'm interested in the ontological problems that arise when considering that. Blackness and representation, blackness and the image, blackness and media. And I think that interacts with and acts upon what happens when blackness encounters itself online or in public spaces. Like when two black bodies meet on the street.

So this exploration has been kind of what I've been up to for the last year since I graduated from school. And I just want to talk about things that I've written that have to do with that and that have to do with what we're talking about today.

So I wrote this article that critiques selfie politics, which would be the idea that selfies as an artistic practice could be radical or liberating or somehow politically effective, and disseminating those images on social media. I critiqued this as a practice that has its heritage in white feminism—what we've commonly begun to call white feminism, drawing on the psychoanalytical structures of feminism that are very entrenched in this white male vs. white female binary, but purport to explain a universal bodily situation. The goal of the selfie feminist would be to subvert the male gaze via putting a picture of yourself on instagram.

I had some practical skepticism towards that, just based on the mediation of those images on a corporate platform, which always already involved some sort of male gaze. Or just something I like to call the Richard Prince problem. Which would mean that someone could easily appropriate that image and your intention in terms of your self-imaging, and this immediately gets foggy when someone else gets a hold of it. But of more interest to me was the inequality produced by this framework, following in Lorraine O'Grady's *Olympia's Maid*, where she talks about the fact that the black female body need less to be liberated from the male

gaze than it does from the historical hypervisibility and erasure—the huge paradox of those two things that she has been subjected to, or I have historically been subjected to.

And then looking at artists who have attempted to approach that like Carrie Mae Weems, Lorna Simpson and Adrian Piper, who all try to self image in certain ways but also refute. Like Lorna Simpson has images of black female bodies facing away from the camera, or Adrian Piper has the piece where she did a performance in an empty loft, alone and took mirror selfies the whole time. That piece was titled “Closing The Loop,”¹ and I think for me the writing addressed this question of what it would mean to close the loop and to create an unmediated, or attempt an unmediated self portrait or self imaging practice for black women and black people in general, but for me with a particular interest in black women.

That led me into writing this essay on Ulysses Jenkins, who I mentioned is this black artist from the 1970s. He teaches at UC Irvine right now and he has this video called *Mass Of Images* that basically is him on this sound stage with a bunch of TVs behind him and he repeats this refrain “I am a mass of images you’ve gotten to know from years and years of TV shows. The hurting thing, the hidden pain is written and bitten into your veins.” The video is him repeating this, and then he rears to smash the televisions but he can’t, or he doesn’t, and he turns to the camera and he says “I’d love to do this but they won’t let me.”

And so I became really interested, kind of obsessed actually—with this question of what that meant, who won’t let him, why can’t he smash these TVs? This is, circling back again, relating to this question of the image problem, which I think afflicts blackness in all of its theorization, in all of its practice, which is:

how do you smash the representation if, in America at least—or even in the western world

where representation is so colored. What it means to be black in this country and there’s this foggy relationship between being black as a black person in the world and the collective representation of blackness.

In another piece *Just Another Rendering of the Same Problem* he approaches this again. In this piece he’s in a gallery and he’s seated at a table. He’s reading in normal street clothes. There’s a dildo on the table and a TV that has a closed circuit camera so the dildo is also shown on the TV and it’s sitting there.

Basically the piece culminates with him trying to shoot the dildo. And the dildo also has black paint on the tip of it so it’s in black face. It’s a white dildo with black paint. And so he shoots it and it just bounces really comically into the view of the closed circuit TV and it just is vibrating on the TV. And as it happens he strips down and he’s wearing silver pasties and a little loincloth and it’s about the objectification and hyposexualization of the black male in blaxploitation films. The point of it is he walks away, he withdraws because he can’t overtake the image of himself as this hypersexualized object.

So with all of that I think that from there I became interested in the impossibility, again, of overtaking representation. This led me to writing this essay about memes, which, I’ll tell you how it’s related.

Memes are, in some ways, a black cultural practice, which is very complicated now, or has been very complicated. And I think we’ve been reminded of how complicated that is with the election and the way the alt right has used memes. Clearly we can’t ascribe memes to one particular group, but there is this realm of black memes that circulate online. You see them on Instagram, you see them on Twitter, all over the place—and I became very interested in how black images are used consistently as well as black vernacular. Manuel Arturo Abreu wrote a really great thing on Arachne² that Dorothy [Howard] commissioned, as far as I know. I was really interested in that,

MEMES ARE, IN SOME WAYS, A BLACK CULTURAL PRACTICE. THERE IS THIS REALM OF BLACK MEMES THAT CIRCULATE ONLINE.

but also beyond that sort of obvious appearance of blackness the way that the movement of black culture is mirrored or mapped in meme movement. So, in terms of appropriation, the way that black culture is constantly being co-opted. But then how memes created a new, or not created but represents some other version where there is this unclear way that they exist in culture and you don’t know who created it or if it’s authentically black in certain situations. But also their survival mechanisms, the way they mutate and shift, mirror a lot of black culture historically.

And then, finally, I think that they, in their very strange way, paralleled this ontological problem or ontological structure of blackness where the meme doesn’t exist as an individual meme or as one collective body, but those two are existing in a very unstable relationship with each other. The meme is always dependent on that collective structure as well as travels on its own. And so that became some sort of strange version of a case study for me in terms of how a black individual is never just a black individual, but always carries with them this image from media, from history, etc, of the totality of blackness.

So that’s what I’ve been up to. I’ve had a lot of thoughts about the election and all this stuff kind of floating around in my head and it’s been hard to sort of step back and look at this, since this sort of stuff felt very useless in some

ways for me. I don’t really know, there’s a lot of more dire stuff going on. But I think that it actually is very useful, at least to me. Because I think that it all exists in the world of a lot of new directions in black studies that really encourage us to think through and from the position of the black. And not ‘the black’ reduced to the black person but in this broader sense. Fred Moten has this great quote about blackness potentially being the end of the world or bringing about the end of the world.

A lot of these questions that I’ve been interested in about imaging oneself or existing online or even the way that truth is very unstable when it comes to looking at a black individual or evaluating a black individual against the larger black body. I think that those things are really useful right now in terms of how we approach ideas of western subjectivity. These things can give us direction considering the crumbling notion of whiteness that we’re kind of watching happen. I think that so much of that is happening online.

¹ thenewinquiry.com/closing-the-loop/

² arachne.cc/issues/01/online-imagined_manuel-arturo-abreu.html

LUMAPIT SA AKIN, PARAISO (COME TO ME PARADISE)

As a second installment of the Decentralizing the Web series, Lumapit Sa Akin Paraiso is a sci-fi documentary exploring the various ways in which Filipino migrant workers occupy Central Hong Kong on Sundays. The film is narrated from the perspective of Paraiso, a ghost played by a drone who speaks of the isolation from being uprooted and thrown into a new place. The film uses Hong Kong's dystopian maze-like structures that the Filipino migrants reimagine through the beauty of care-giving. The film also explores how technology is used as a pivotal way for the women to connect—not only to each other but to distant loved ones.

This event was co-organized by voidLab and Will Davis, and kindly supported by the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, UCLA.



Date

January 12, 2017

Location

UCLA Broad Art Center

Director

Stephanie Comilang (she/her)

Panelists

Stephanie Comilang (she/her)

Nerve Macaspac (he/him)



[6]

[7]

- 5 Stephanie Comilang, director and producer of *Lumapit Sa Akin*, *Paraiso (Come to Me Paradise)*.
- 6 Stephanie Comilang addresses her audience.
- 7 Nerve Macaspac interviews Stephanie Comilang in the Experimental Design Auditorium at UCLA

Photographs by Alex Madrid.



[8]



[9]

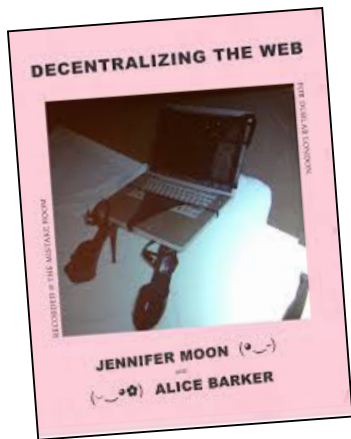


- 8 Still from *Lumapit Sa Akin, Paraiso* (Come to Me Paradise).
- 9 Stephanie Comilang stands in front of the projected screening.

OPERATION SCROOGE

Jennifer Moon (artist) and Alice Barker (information security expert + privacy advocate) examine the psychosocial nature of cybersecurity—the entanglement of emotion, intuition and manipulation inherent in even the most benevolent con.





Date _____

July 29, 2017

Location _____

The Mistake Room

Speakers _____

Jennifer Moon (she/her)

Alice Barker (she/her)

Encryption Workshop _____

Echo Theochar (she/they)

Chelly Jin (she/her)

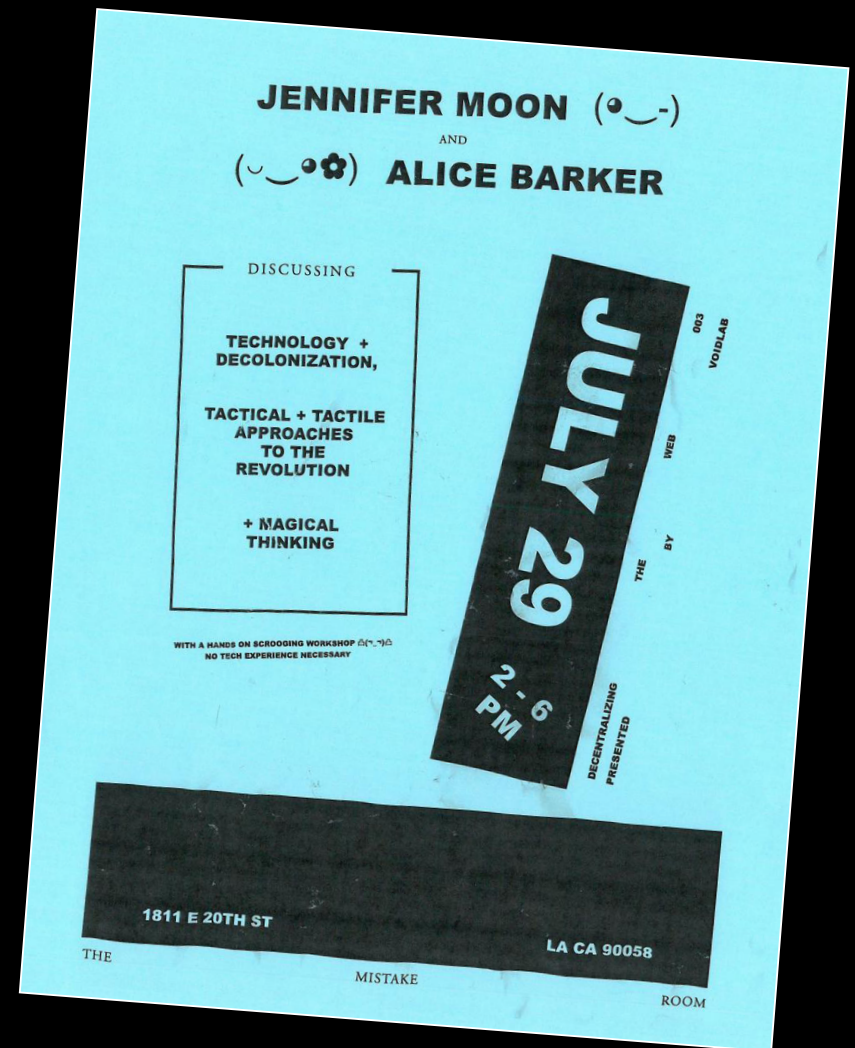
Digital Koan: Meditation on
Non-Attachment

Dicko Chan (he/him)

A discussion on the prospects of resistance and decolonization through the use of decentralized networks, digital currencies and tactile approaches to hacking will be followed by a workshop on scrooging: a form of conning coined by Jennifer Moon and inspired by the transformation of Ebenezer Scrooge.

A significant portion of a scrooging mission involves in depth recon to determine what the target truly desires beyond binaries, hierarchies, and capital. Often it is some form of love. Attendees are encouraged to bring a computer or smartphone.

Operation Scrooge will be followed by a short how-to on the basics of cybersecurity and encryption run by Echo Theochar and Chelly Jin of voidLab.

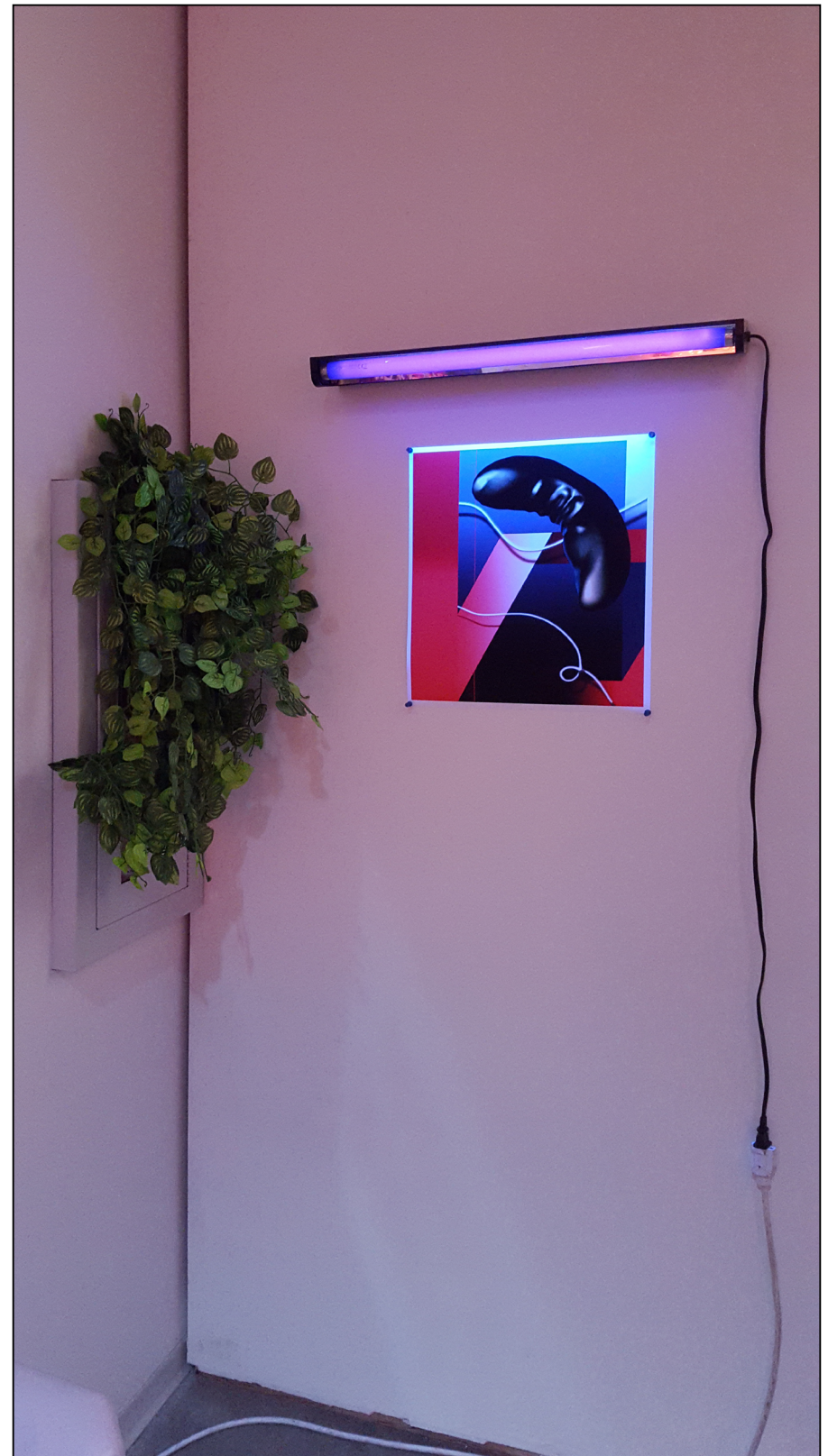


Flyer designs by Symrin Chawla.

EXHIBITION

DEEP WEB ROACH QUEEN

DEEP WEB ROACH QUEEN was voidLab's first exhibition featuring works from members based in the UCLA Design Media Arts department. Included works showcased sculpture, video, print, and interactive art. The projects were alive as one hive; glistening and absorbent, they infected one another via light, color, and atmosphere. In this way, DEEP WEB ROACH QUEEN sought to promote a femme presence in the realm of art and technology.



Date

December 4, 2015

Location

UCLA Broad Art Center

Curators

Echo Theohar (she/they)

Yuehao Jiang (she/her)

Artists

Amanda Stojanov (she/her)

Andrea Vitali (she/her)

Anisa Bashiri (she/her)

Echo Theohar (she/they)

Hillary Cleary (she/her)

Kate Hollenbach (she/they)

Jules Kris (they/them)

Linda Mendez (she/her)

Ren Mahon (he/him)

Ruth Shaffer (she/her)

Symrin Chawla (she/her)

Xin Xin (they/them)

Yuehao Jiang (she/her)



[11]

[12]



- 10 *Zone* (2015), Echo Theohar.
- 11 *gasp!* (2015), Kate Hollenbach.
- 12 *Untitled* (2017), Ren Mahon.
- 13 *Interactive Blazer Installation* (2015), Jules Kris.



[13]





[15]



[16]

- 14 Work by Yuhao Jiang,
Echo Theohar, and
Symrin Chawla.
- 15 Bacteria (Two Meadows
Meet In Dust) (2015),
Symrin Chawla.
- 16 Glitch Baby (2015),
Xin Xin.

EXHIBITION

SORRY FOR NOT BEING _____

Sorry for not being _____ displays real life conversations, exchanges of words, and comments experienced by students at the UCLA Design Media Arts department. The exhibition included a number of day to day, interpersonal encounters that feel so ordinary they often go unnoticed. The posters are a formal expression of this everyday experience.

Date

April 4, 2016

Location

UCLA Broad Art
Center, Untitled Cafe

Artists

Alice Jung (she/her)

Amanda Stojanov (she/her)

Evelyn Masso (she/they)

Kate Hollenbach (she/they)

Xin Xin (they/them)

Yuehao Jiang (she/her)





[18]



[19]

17 Xin Xin on their way to install a poster.

18, 19 The poster exhibition took place at the UCLA Untitled Cafe.

YU SEM VRY
SAD AN ANGRY

I will infer that what you are saying is coming from an emotional place

WEN YU TAK

your experience is therefore qualified as not-rational

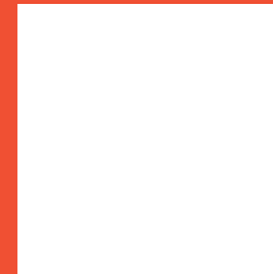
ABUT YR

the intellectual validity of your statements are now called into question

EXPRENCE

AS A WOMN

**Feminist
spaces
are sexist
because
they don't
include
Men**



**Male
dominated
spaces are
not sexist
because
they include
everyone**

I hope that wasn't too
technical for you.

adoolts
har
nat
infruanzed
bai
raysizem,
saixizem,
hor zinofobeya.



Fem-
inist
art
is
limit-
ing.

Is
Male
art
limit-
ing?

**racism
do
not
matter
because
everyone
is
racist**

you
shouldn't
feel
oppressed
to
learn
technology,
women
are
accepted
at
the
mit

**YOUR TONE
IS TOO
AGGRESSIVE**

**MAYBE PEOPLE
WOULD LISTEN TO
YOU MORE
IF YOU ADJUSTED
YOUR TONE**

ME:

I think it's important to acknowledge that certain spaces are made for certain people and not everyone feels as "safe" in this space as you do. Just because we're in an MFA program at UCLA doesn't mean people don't feel sexism and racism.

YOU:

*Oh yeah, i've
been meaning
to talk to you
about that...*

*I think you're
exaggerating.*

“

So what are
you doing at this
party?

You obviously
aren't in
computer science!

”

I'm feeling pretty uncomfortable with
where this conversation has ended up.

In the last day, you've all discussed
computers being more reliable than

women (and that you're not bothered
by drones filming women in their

bedrooms and that the only reason to
do something about it is to avoid

hearing complaints. I try to think of
you all as my peers, but in these

moments, I feel like a lesser person.

Obviously
nothing is
meant to be
offensive.

SORRY
FOR
NOT
BEING
SORRY

“being
emotional
and
aggressive,
just
isn't the
BEST
WAY to
solve
problem
s...”

개 새 끼 야
나 보고
어 찌 라 고
씨 발 눕 아
저 리 꺼 져
나 심 각 해
궁 서 체 야

21 COLOR

22 FORM

23 DRAWING

24 MOTION

25 TYPOGRAPHY

28 INTERACTIVITY

153 VIDEO

154 WORD+IMAGE

157 GAME DESIGN

162 NETWORK MEDIA

163 NARRATIVE

DESMA TAsHips Spring 2011- Spring 2016

너
만
피해자
가
아니야

I WANT TO
BECOME A
WHITE MAN
BUT NOT
LIKE YOU

AN OPEN LETTER TO

Oculus FOUNDER, PALMER LUCKEY

Palmer,

I am a media artist and game developer. I am also a black woman and social justice rogue. In light of recent events, I have a few things to say. In the few days that have passed since the Daily Beast revealed your alt-right political affiliations, I have heard numerous people say they feel uncomfortable developing for your platform, supporting your products, attending your events and even accepting your funding. I think those sentiments are understandable, but misguided.



September 27, 2016

A.M. Darke (she/him/sir)

Full disclosure: I am an Oculus Launch Pad scholarship participant. My project is currently under review.

As an outspoken proponent of equity and inclusion, as someone who is persistently vocal and critical, even of folks who call themselves allies, I have no intention of boycotting Oculus. In fact, I insist upon taking up space. People like me need to be in the same room as you.

Actually, we've already been in the same room. About four months ago, at the end of the Launch Pad event, you graciously hung around. I watched you try countless demos and talk to anyone who approached. Toward the end—admittedly a bit tipsy and nervous—I was one of those people. I asked you point-blank about diversity at Oculus.

I was immediately disappointed by your defensive response. First, you told me you didn't know those numbers off-hand. When I pressed, you told me you do not lower your standards—that you hire the best. That struck me as disturbing, that you equate diversity with lowered standards. That hiring the best and being diverse were mutually exclusive. I felt a little defeated, to be honest.

But there was another thing you said that evening that struck me. When I asked what I could do to get hired by Oculus, given my sparse resume and non-traditional path, you said, "Make something. College degrees don't matter. Experience doesn't matter. We look for smart people who show they can do great things."

I stayed up all night thinking about our conversation. And though frustrated by your perception of diversity, I

took you at your word. The following day, I left for Los Angeles. Armed with hardware, support, knowledge and community, all courtesy of Oculus, I got to work.

And I did, indeed, make something¹.

Oculus gave me significant resources that enabled me to express myself, create work under my own direction, and enter a field that was previously inaccessible to me. Despite having said things I found ignorant and offensive, you also gave me an opportunity to be considered one of "the best." Consequently, my feelings about your involvement with the alt-right community, and what should be done about it, are complex.

Some devs have decided to contribute money to the Clinton campaign in order to offset your donation to Nimble America; but how does donating a marginal sum to a wealthy white politician actually benefit marginalized people?

As someone whose identity is underserved in the VR and tech industry, and society at large, a political donation to counter bigotry feels like an empty gesture. Especially when that same money could go toward funding hardware, scholarships, travel stipends, conference passes, and other resources that are hard to come by for low-income and minority developers.

You have already issued an apology which has garnered a great deal of commentary. Unfortunately, the responses to your statement fall mostly into two camps: "You have nothing to apologize for! This is being blown way out of proportion by liberal PC fascists!" and "You're a literal waste of human! I can't support a right-wing bigot!"

What's missing here is something in between. What's missing is a nuanced dialogue. Given your extremely privileged position as a white man in the 0.001%², that is a problem. There are marginalized people trying to break into this industry who are going to have their lives and careers impacted and influenced by the things you believe and the choices you make. You have an opportunity now to do good by us.

MY FEELINGS ABOUT YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE ALT-RIGHT COMMUNITY, AND WHAT SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT IT, ARE COMPLEX.

And it doesn't matter if you don't believe in privilege. It doesn't matter if you think I'm spouting liberal PC bullshit. What matters is that you are included in the discourse. What matters is that you hear me, that you hear "us," at all.

I would like to make it clear that it is not my practice to capitulate to powerful white men with whom I disagree. If anything, I am at heart a troll who almost exclusively trolls white men, to the point where I have made it a literal art form³. But this goes beyond shits and giggles; the dialogue we start now will shape the future of this industry for everyone.

Justified or not, I don't want you to step down, chased off by an angry mob. Given your privilege, I am terrified of a world where your social interaction is limited to your most vocal supporters (some of whom are openly calling women "cunts" in the comments section of your public apology). I fear that if you lose authority, it will only serve to insulate you from people like me who will challenge your perspective. That seems like a bad idea.

I don't know if you are a shitty person. I do know that you are a guy who made a VR headset in his parent's garage, and that takes a certain amount of grit. I tend to assume a person like that is

capable of having their views challenged, and growing from their mistakes. The issue is to ensure that there are people around who will actually challenge you—which is the inherent value of diversity.

Diversity forces you to constantly reflect upon, consider, even defend your words—and, most importantly, your actions. It allows us to overcome, and often avoid, problems. That is why everyone, including you, needs to stay at the table.

Now scoot over, and save me a seat.

See you at OC3,
A.M. Darke

¹ vimeo.com/180450874

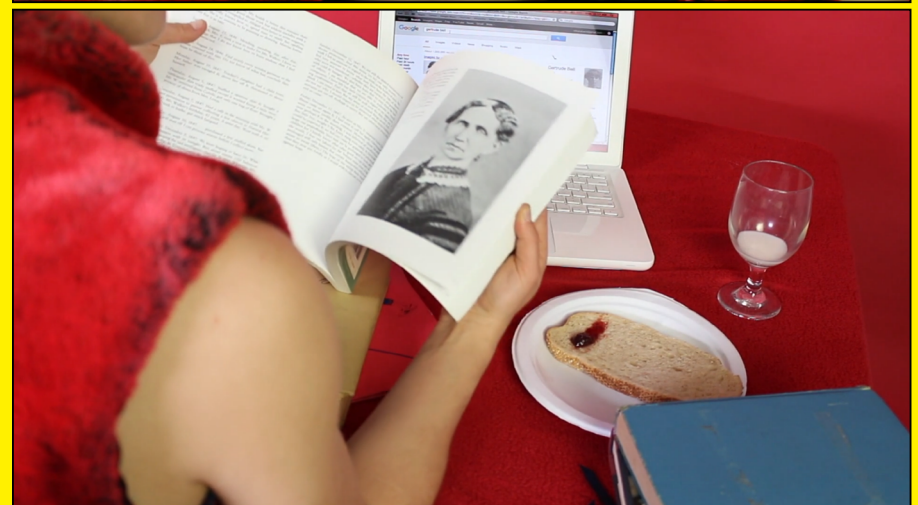
² pbs.twimg.com/media/CtALusAXEAM2-J.jpg:large

³ prettydarke.cool/portfolio/nilla-moments/

EVENT

ART + FEMINISM WIKIPEDIA EDIT-A-THON 2016

Systemic bias in Wikipedia results from a disproportionate rate of women contributors (15%) and editors (8.5%). Notable women from history and contemporary life are underrepresented in this online platform, meaning: they are not getting the recognition they deserve. Co-organized with the UCLA Arts Library, people of all gender identities are welcomed to join us to write women back into history for the digital age.



Date

March 4, 2016

Location

UCLA Arts Library

Librarians

Janine Henri (she/her)

Margarita

Nafpaktitis (she/her)

Organizers

Nico Le (she/her)

Xin Xin (they/them)

Kate Hollenbach (she/they)

Chelly Jin (she/her)

Nika Kolodziej (she/her)

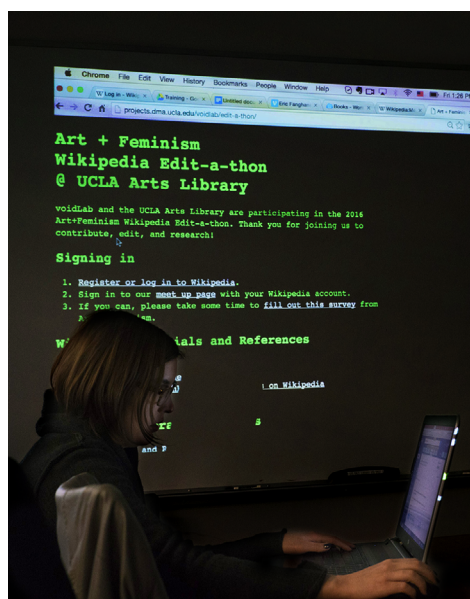
Yuehao Jiang (she/her)

Amanda Stojanov (she/her)

Echo Theohar (she/they)

Andrea Vitali (she/her)

Sanglim Han (she/her)



[22]

This is an edited excerpt transcript from the Art + Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon 2016 Recap.¹ The video was filmed and edited by Andrea Vitali.

XX

When I found out how many undergrads are using Wikipedia as a primary source, I realized that we have a problem here. Because we are facing an upcoming generation who really grew up with the Internet and it's completely normal to use Wikipedia as a neutral citation source. That's highly problematic because it isn't a neutral source if the demographics of the editors are skewed male. I think about how we can take a forward-thinking approach, like how we can actually use the potentials of this tool to really create a world with more equality and justice.

MM

My name is Margarita Nafpaktitis. I'm a librarian for Slavic and East European Studies, the interim librarian for West European Studies, and the librarian for linguistics at the Charles E. Young Research Library at UCLA.

So what I like about Wikipedia is the fact that it is an open educational resource. Anyone can access it as long as they have access to wireless [internet]—which is not necessarily given, but it is something that happens more and more often. And as a librarian I really feel like I, along with all the students, faculty, and staff who work here, have this incredible privilege to access amazing books and electronic sources. And if I can transfer some of the information and knowledge available in those sources to Wikipedia where it can become more broadly useful, then that feels like a service I'm doing beyond the university, for more people who might not have the same privileges as I do from working at a place like this.

¹ vimeo.com/159438394

Unfortunately, I do think that women are still struggling for equal or proportional representation, and I think Wikipedia is one of the next battlegrounds, if you'd want to call it that. As you've probably heard, most Wikipedia editors, up to 80% or even more are male and between a certain age. So being female and being older than that demographic, it feels empowering to help change the contours of Wikipedia. And I think the more we could give voices to women, people of color, underrepresented or marginalized groups on Wikipedia—which is almost the first hit when you do a search on anything, the better. There's still a long way to go, but it's becoming more and more common and there's usually a really great community that goes up around these kinds of events. I've been to edit-a-thons focusing on women and people of color in various fields, mostly in the arts but also in literature all over Los Angeles, and I've met some really fantastic people doing it. We still have a long way to go but it's really getting much better in that respect. Still not great though I have to say.

AV

My name is Andrea and I'm editing LIA's page. She's an artist working with digital technologies from the 90s. I've made really small changes because the article is very small. Some parts were missing on some of her recent work with 3D printing. She made some code with Processing and made this sculpture with 3D printing exploring how the filaments are extruded along with the speed of the printer. So not only for doing 3D models but also for exploring the possibilities of this technology. I chose her because I think that there are some parts missing in the article and I'm also really interested in her projects so I've decided to edit it.

LIST OF ARTICLES TO CREATE

Sylvia Fein
Doris Lindo Lewis
Madge Knight
Rosa Rolanda
Shaowen Bardzell
Feminist Human-
Computer
Interaction
Alicia Mersy
Allison Janae Hamilton
Allison Parrish
An Xiao Mina
Ana Cecilia Alvarez
Anahita Hekmat
Andrea Crespo
Antoinette Lafarge
Brenna Murphy
Caitlin Cherry
Behnaz Farahi
Carly Whitaker
Chris Sugrue
Crystal Am Nelson
Dana Weiser
Dineo Bopape
Ebony G. Patterson
Elizabeth Travelslight
Gaby Cepeda
Geraldine Juarez
Jenny Odell
Jessica Westbrook
Joanna Cheung
Julianne Aguilar
Kaho Abe
Kari Altmann
Katie Torn
Kim Yasuda
Latoya Allen
Magdalena Fernandez

Mailee Hung
Margarita Benitez
Maria Jose Arjona
Marta de Menezes
Maya Freelon Asante
Mona Kasra
Mounira Al Solh
Naoko Tosa
Nikita Gale
Nina Chanel Abney
Nirma Madhoo
Njideka Akunyili
Sona Safaei
Rashaad Newsome
Sadie Barnette
Sam Vernon
Sarah Abu Abdallah
Sarah Wong
Seeta Gangadharan
Shaina Anand
shawné michaelain
holloway
Shawne Soraya
Murray
Shirley Jane Vernon
Sofia Niazi
Sondra Perry
Sougwen Chung
Susana Ruiz
Tabita Rezaire
Tegan Bristow
Tega Brain
Tirtza Even
Tricia Wang
Wang New One
Yang Lu
Ying Miao



[23]



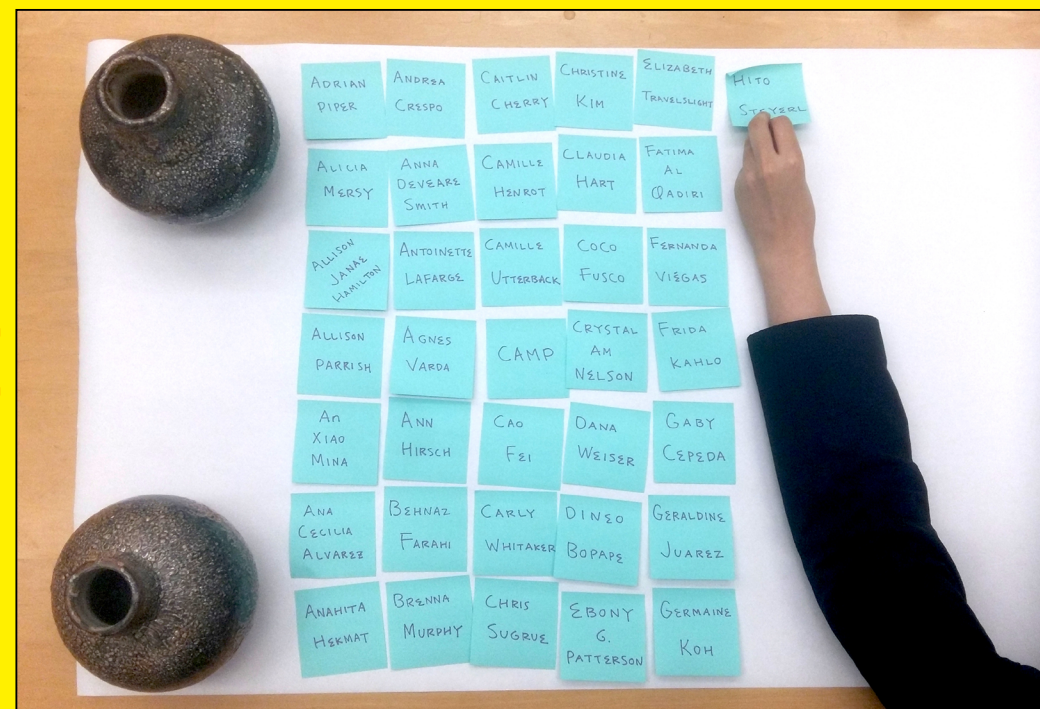
[24]

LIST OF ARTICLES TO IMPROVE

Channa Horwitz
Gertrude Abercrombie
Lola Alvarez Bravo
Ruth Bernhard
Olga Costa
Maya Deren
Frida Kahlo
Adaline Kent
Yayoi Kusama
Jacqueline Lamba
Lee Krasner
Mina Loy
Anna Anthropy
Adrian Piper
Anna Deveare Smith
Agnes Varda
Ann Hirsch
Camille Henrot
Camille Utterback
CAMP
Cao Fei
Christine Kim
Claudia Hart
Coco Fusco
Fatima Al Qadiri
Fernanda Viégas
Frida Kahlo
Germaine Koh
Hito Steyerl
Heather
Dewey-Hagborg
Haegue Yang
Jennifer Chan
Jenny Holzer
Joan Jonas
Judy Chicago
Kate Durbin
Katherine Behar

Kathy High
LIA
Lillian Schwartz
Lorna Simpson
Maria Fernandez
Martha Rosler
Martine Syms
Mendi Obadike
Micha Cardenas
Mona Hatoum
Morehshin Allahyari
Natalie Jeremijenko
Netochka Nezvanova
Olia Lialina
Osman Khan
Porpentine
Rosa Menkman
Sanaz Mazinani
Sonia Landy
Sheridan
Sputniko!
Susan Hiller
Steina Vasulka
Vera Molnar

[25]



- 21 Stills from the Wikipedia Edit-A-Thon Promo Video (vimeo.com/157662483). Produced by Chelly Jin and Nika Kolodziej.
- 22 Projection of the Art + Feminism Wikipeda Edit-a-thon event page.
- 23 Editing session at the UCLA Arts Library. From left: Sanglim Han, Nico Le, Yuehao Jiang.
- 24 from left: Lee Tusman, Amanda Stojanov, Xin Xin, Eli Joteva.
- 25 A growing list of Wikipedia articles to create, add, and improve.

KEEP EDITING!

What has happened after the Milan Art + Feminism Wikipedia edit-a-thon.¹ And why I will keep editing Wikipedia as a form of digital activism.

If I think about my art education, it is hard to remember women's names within the many artists I have studied. Many cultural fields have kept out—or deleted—from their archives the contribution of an entire genre—it doesn't count if it's art history, cybernetic or architecture. What I'm asking myself today, as a woman and artist, is how to tell stories and visions that differ from the dominant white heterosexual male perspective. What can I do to see—and make other people see—beyond?

Andrea Vitali (she/her)

On March 11 2017 I curated with Wikimedia Italia,² BASE Milano,³ and WikiDonne⁴ the first edition of Art+Feminism Wikipedia edit-a-thon in Milano.⁵ An edit-a-thon is an editing marathon to create new articles on Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. The edit-a-thons have been organized globally since 2014 by Art+Feminism, and they have a specific goal: to meaningfully improve the knowledge available on Wikipedia about art, women, and feminism and to encourage women's participation in the encyclopedia.⁶

What I am going to narrate in this article will show the reasons why I believe in this international campaign. Despite the success of the project (globally and also locally here in Italy), the creation and the existence of some of the new articles on art and feminism has been a point of dispute and disagreement in the community of editors on Italian Wikipedia. Indeed, some administrators and contributors deleted part of the work done during the edit-a-thon within a few days. The way it happened has revealed the existence of biases and hierarchical structures on the platform, which I would have never expected from a site defining itself as free and collaborative.⁷

Wikipedia is a platform gathering knowledge thanks to numerous volunteers contributing worldwide. As with every other technology, it is a tool that allows us to give back a vision of the world according to the ways we use it; at the same time, through its own rules, it enables behaviors and social interactions. Whoever participates in the project—through the contents they edit and create affects the final result of the encyclopedia.

That said, while the platform's point of view should be neutral, if Wikipedia has less of 10% of contributors self-identifying as female,⁸ it is obvious that the information collected cannot be inclusive and diverse. Actually, the gender-gap on Wikipedia replicates the same gender discriminations that usually happen in our academic systems. The need to have third party sources in order for an article to be considered notable enough to stay on the encyclopedia—that doesn't support the creation of articles about art and women and minorities.⁹

In response, Art+Feminism has globally organized edit-a-thon's for four years like the one in Milan, in order to allow more women to share their contributions and perspectives and to improve the encyclopedia's neutrality and diversity.

Twenty participants gathered together at BASE Milano to work on a list of proposed articles.¹⁰ They were partly biographies of female artists and designers to be translated from English Wikipedia, new articles about feminism, authorial video games, and media art. Indeed, video games have become a means of cultural and artistic production, changing the demographics of their

¹ The Italian version of the article was published by *Vice Italy*: www.vice.com/it/article/7xz5vq/come-ho-cercato-di-combattere-il-sessismo-di-wikipedia-italia

² www.wikimedia.it/art-feminism-doppia-editathon-roma-milano-prossimo-11-marzo/

³ base.milano.it/

⁴ it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progetto:WikiDonne

⁵ www.vice.com/it/article/mg4944/perche-e-fondamentale-coinvolgere-sempre-piu-donne-nella-comunita-wikipedia

⁶ artandfeminism.org/about/

⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

⁸ meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Women_and_Wikimedia_Survey_2011

⁹ medium.com/the-establishment/inside-the-activist-fight-to-diversify-wikipedia-de9b0f624e70

¹⁰ www.andreavitali.design.it/artandfeminismmilano/pagina-di-esempio/

ACCORDING TO THE ADMINISTRATOR, THE INFORMATION COLLECTED WASN'T RELEVANT ENOUGH TO BE ON WIKIPEDIA.

target audience from one side,¹¹ while also giving space and expression to a number of female and unrepresented artists of the field on the other.

As a result, we created 22 new articles on Wikipedia in Italian.¹² Three of them have never been created on any other version of Wikipedia (Claudia Molinari, Perfect Woman, and Alma Alloro), the other ones were translated from English articles on Wikipedia.

Clearly, the editing process was not over. In three hours of editing the biographies couldn't be perfectly written: they needed further work to be aligned with the editorial guidelines of Wikipedia and to enlighten artists' relevance in their field via criteria of notability on Italian Wikipedia.¹³

Unfortunately, what has actually happened is that three of the articles have been suddenly removed (Deep Lab, Lauren Lee McCarthy, and Francesca Pasini). In the next few days, even though some of the articles were labeled as stub and were improved with information about prizes, awards, and exhibitions about the artists, one administrator started the deletion procedures of four pages—Porpentine Charity Heartscape, Claudia Molinari, Angela Washko and Perfect Woman. The pages were deleted and left with a comment that we had to “think about adding pictures for printing.” According to the administrator, the information collected wasn't relevant enough to be on Wikipedia.

From the very beginning, the fact that he preferred to propose the deletion of articles that had existed just for a few days, when there are other articles with clear notability issues since 2014, made me doubt the administrator's good intentions.

At that point, I'd decided to explain why the pages for Porpentine, Claudia Molinari, Angela Washko and Perfect Woman satisfied the notability criteria outlined by Wikipedia. Despite my efforts, the group of editors who insisted the articles must be deleted continued to ignore my arguments.

Indeed, it is acknowledged that Wikipedia communities may inherit significant social and hierarchical mechanisms that discriminate towards a genre, certain kinds of content, minorities, and already underrepresented groups.¹⁴

For example, in the case of Porpentine, an emerging artist using hypertext as an expressive medium; despite repetitively reiterating her participation in the Whitney Biennial¹⁵ and the Creative Capital Award,¹⁶ it was IMPOSSIBLE to get an administrator's consent to post her article, given that this information was “not notable enough” to fulfill the notability criteria:

fig. 1

I giochi creati non paiono enciclopedici. Uno solo ha vinto un premio (l'XYZZY Award) di una certa notorietà, ma en.wiki stessa lo definisce buffamente "simile agli oscar come ruolo ma con un pubblico molto più ristretto" (!!), in realtà è il premio assegnato da una rivista del settore, nulla più, nulla meno. --Vito (msg) 19:24, 12 mar 2017 (CET)

Mantenere. Perdonami che questo è tradotto dall'inglese da Google Translate. Porpentine ha ricevuto riconoscimenti significativi: Creative Capital Grant, Rhizome Commissione, Prix Net Art, e Sundance Fellowship. Inoltre l'inclusione in Whitney Biennial. Questi sono realmente importanti riconoscimenti, che hanno molto chiaramente stabilito notability in en.wiki [1] [Theredproject](#) (msg) 01:57, 15 mar 2017 (CET)

En.wiki is notoriously generous with Internet-related BLPs. As a general principle notability (or not-notability) at any project cannot have any influence (nor positive nor negative) on other ones. Anyway prizes should have a certain degree of notability to be taken into account when considering notability of awarded people. CCG is given each year to thousands people (1810 in sole 1999 en.wiki says) same for Sundance Fellowship (grants aren't awards). Finally WB: basically an exhibit with 66 exhibitors, not irrelevant, still not enough. --Vito (msg) 06:59, 15 mar 2017 (CET)

Screenshot from Porpentine's Wikipedia service page.

Translated from Italian:

These video games don't look encyclopedic. Only one has won an award (the XYZZY Award), but according to en.wiki it is 'a kind of oscar but with a very limited audience'(!!), actually the award is assigned by a specialist journal, nothing more, nothing less. --Vito

Do not delete: Excuse me, I'm not italian and I used Google Translate to write here. Porpentine has received significant awards: Creative Capital, a Rhizome commission, the Prix Net Art and the Sundance Fellowship. In addition to that the selection for the Whitney Biennial. These are really notable achievements, for sure on en.wiki. --Theredproject

En.wiki is notoriously generous with Internet-related BLPs. As a general principle notability (or not-notability) at any project cannot have any influence (nor positive nor negative) on other ones. Anyway prizes should have a certain degree of notability to be taken into account when considering notability of awarded people. CCG is given each year to thousands people (1810 in sole 1999 en.wiki says) same for Sundance Fellowship (grants aren't awards). Finally WB: basically an exhibit with 66 exhibitors, not irrelevant, still not enough. --Vito

¹¹ www.gamasutra.com/view/news/224400/Gamers_dont_have_to_be_your_audience_Gamers_are_over.php

¹² www.andreavitaldesign.it/artandfeminismmilano/keepediting/

¹³ it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aiuto:Criteri_di_enciclopedicit%C3%A0/Artisti

¹⁴ magenta.as/this-is-what-happens-at-a-feminist-edit-a-thon-for-wikipedia-15baea4ac8cd

¹⁵ whitney.org/Exhibitions/2017Biennial

¹⁶ www.creative-capital.org/index.php?url=projects/view/845

fig. 2

- **❌ Cancellare** il problema non è la forma ma la sostanza: i premi non eccellono per importanza, in particolare quelli che vengono spacciati per premi sono in gran parte borse di studio, l'avevo scritto sopra ma pazienza, mentre la rilevanza dello XZZY è decisamente bassa. --Vito (msg) 15:18, 16 mar 2017 (CET)

Come dico nel commento successivo, ha esposto oltre che ad eventi di rilevanza internazionale, in quattro musei, e aggiungo che una sua opera è stata acquisita in maniera permanente dalla National Gallery of Denmark, come parte dell'opera Sur Pollen di Rolf Nowotny. --Annamariandrea (msg) 01:12, 20 mar 2017 (CET)

Screenshot from Porpentine's Wikipedia service page.

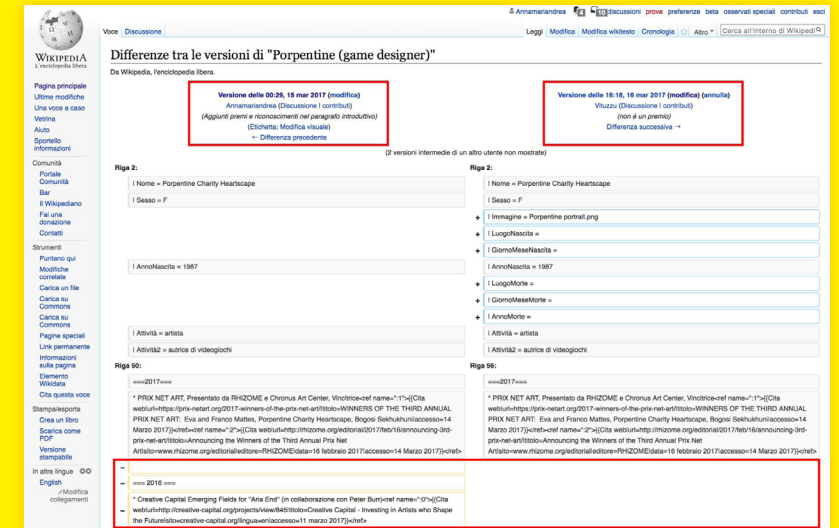
Translated from Italian:

Delete: The problem is not the structure but the content: the prizes are not important, and a lot of those ones are actually study grants or funding, I've already said that, while the relevance of XZZY is really low. --Vito

As I've already said in another comment, she has exhibited not only at international events but also in 4 museums, and, I'd like to add, one of her artwork has been permanently acquired by the National Gallery of Denmark, as part of Rolf Nowotny's Sur Pollen. --Annamariandrea

Even worse, the Creative Capital information I've written on Porpentine's page was removed. Why? Because I used the word "awarded" and put it under a Prize list section. The administrator noticed the Creative Capital isn't a "prize" but is "funding," therefore the misspelled information needed to be deleted.

fig. 3



left (highlighted)

The full version, created on March 15, 2017 with information on Creative Capital.

right (highlighted)

Modified version created on March 16, 2017 and the deletion of the Creative Capital paragraph.

Regardless of the linguistic formalism (prize vs. funding or award vs. selection), this action reveals a counterproductive approach. Who is higher in the hierarchy of Wikipedia informs their "right or wrong" opinion thanks to the rules of the technology itself. This is the "collaborative" creation of knowledge.

Nevertheless, if we approach Wikipedia's mission and vision through a more inclusive lens, a spontaneous question arises: instead of deleting, wouldn't it have been better to improve the information about the Creative Capital Award? Why did the administrator, who demonstrated enough knowledge to correct the "misspelled" information, prefer to delete the article rather than contribute to it? Why destroy a piece of that knowledge that someone was trying to build?

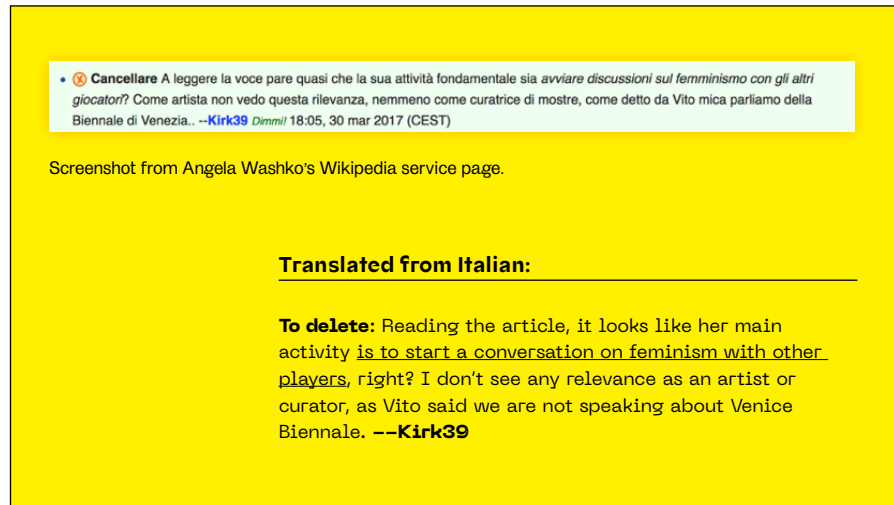
This happened despite everyone telling me, "on Wikipedia there are no experts". If I am forced to strictly report Wikipedia's rules, including proper deletion procedures, I have this suggestion to offer: "You do not have to make a recommendation on every nomination; consider not participating if a nomination involves a topic with which you are unfamiliar with."¹⁷

¹⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Articles_for_deletion#How_to_contribute

Thus, I found it frustrating that some contributors discussed the notability of certain topics while their actions and arguments revealed their inexperience and unnecessary stubbornness.

Angela Washko for example, has been defined unimportant since her main activity seems to be to start conversations about feminism with other players:

fig. 4



Some editors betrayed the authenticity of their actions in those comments when they directly attacked projects and edit-athons founded by the Wikimedia Foundation:

fig. 5

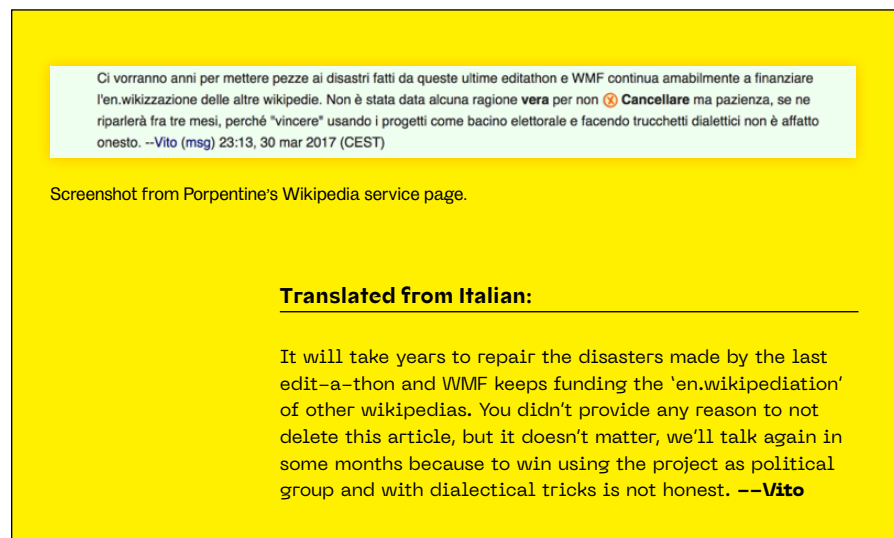
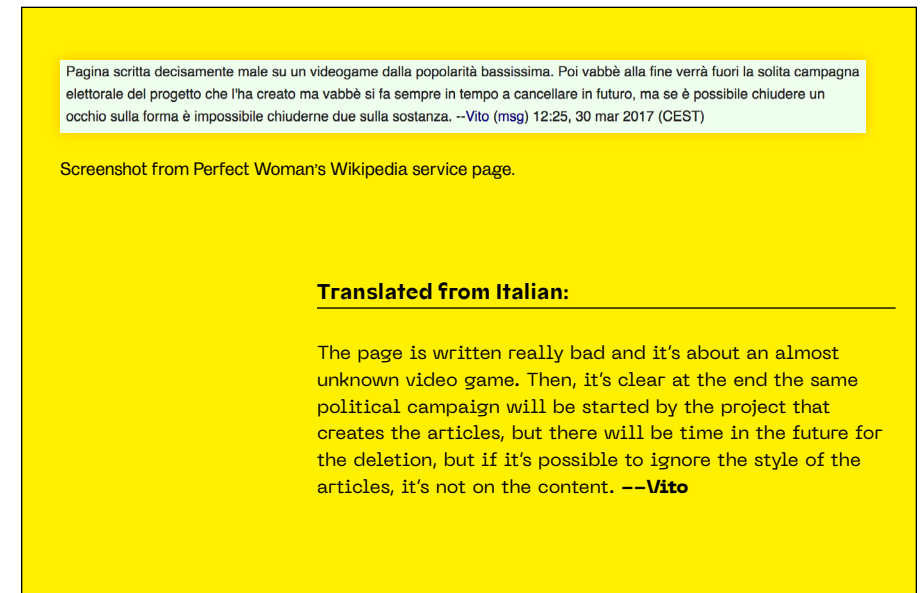


fig. 6



This unnecessary stubbornness was also reserved for other users whose comments were suppressed, despite proving their arguments and expertise regarding the article's topic. The replies they received included unnecessary insinuations about their activity as a Wikipedia user, as if it affected the clarity of their arguments regarding the discussion:

fig. 7



Translated from Italian:

Do not delete: I'm one of the contributors of Porpentine's english article, and I teach new media and video games at Carnegie Mellon University. I won't speak about your deletionist campaign or this close minded idea to preserve the pureness of it. Wikipedia in opposition of the english laxism. The problem is that if you want to improve the quality of this tool you'll have to face the problem of lack of expertise and to act carefully towards articles which you don't have enough experience about. To affirm that an artist who has been selected for the Whitney Biennial (the most important exhibition in the US for young artist), the Rhizome/New Museum (the most important media art platform), the Creative Capital (a \$50.000 funding), the Sundance Institute Story Lab, an artist who has been featured on the New York Times, doesn't satisfy notability criteria of Wikipedia is totally crazy and betray your unfamiliarity with the field of contemporary art. The art system is not a pyramidal structure with the MoMa, the Venice Biennial and a queue of dead artists on the top, on the contrary it is a constellation of partly correlated and partly independent systems. Porpentine is surely an emerging artist using a subcultural medium uncommon for fine art, but for an artist working with digital media these recognitions are the best to achieve in this historical moment. I agree the relevance of XZZY prize is controversial and that the page could be improved with updated information, but the deletion proposal has happened, or is part of an ideological campaign.

--Funopticon

We can take in consideration your arguments, but it's a fact that we are speaking about an emerging artist that is different from a prominent artist, a substantial difference we can't overlook when it comes to improving the quality of the encyclopedia.

On the contrary, it's interesting the curious promptness of a user, who after one year of inactivity, with 'well' 9 edits on en.wiki on February 26th 2016, arrives here with a personal vision across the board about what happens here on it.wiki. --Elwood

The words speak for themselves: "emerging artist" = "not notable". We'll speak again when she "emerges". Indeed, \$50.000 are not that much for a 'renowned' artist.

--Ruthven

Non sono un contribuente attivo di wikipedia e non mi spaccio come tale, non ho nemmeno votato. Ma ho fatto ricerca sul soggetto, e' parte del mio lavoro. Sono venuto a conoscenza della vostra campagna cancellazionista per caso, tramite social media, e sono qui per fornire un contesto che puo' essere mancato. Mi auguro che dopo questa pagina andiate a purgare anche tutti gli imbrattatele italiani senza nessuna esposizione internazionale, citazioni, o rilevanza alcuna che per qualche motivo non vengono presi di mira --Funopticon (msg) 23:47, 7 apr 2017 (CEST)

[@ Funopticon] che tu non sia un utente attivo di Wikipedia si nota dal tipo di commento che fai. Non so chi ti abbia raccontato fesserie su una "campagna cancellazionista", ma questo è il normale lavoro quotidiano su Wikipedia: separare il grano dalla crusca. Siccome i ragionamenti per analogia non valgono un fico secco, ma dici di capirne di arte contemporanea, ti invito allora ad aiutarci aprendo procedure di cancellazione come questa per gli artisti che hanno, in quella categoria, una voce creata per farsi promozione piuttosto che per reale rilevanza enciclopedica. --Ruthven (msg) 00:03, 8 apr 2017 (CEST)

Di wiki-lawyering e cancellazionismo se ne parla da anni nel mondo anglosassone https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criticism_of_Wikipedia#Editorial_process e il tipo di discussione in questa pagina rispecchia tutte le caratteristiche riportate, la "fortress mentality", l'attacco tramite standards... Sono sicuro che c'è una passione genuina alla base di questo comportamento ma il problema è che questa dinamica scoraggia nuovi contributori, che sono in netto declino. Come sapete queste nuove pagine non sono autopromozionali ma parte di una editathon internazionale volta a bilanciare il divario di genere. Invece di vederla come un'invasione di n00bs, potreste considerarla come un'opportunità per crescere e diversificare questa comunità e fornire la vostra esperienza e conoscenza dei protocolli in maniera non antagonista. --Funopticon (msg) 00:37, 8 apr 2017 (CEST)

Screenshot from Porpentine's Wikipedia service page.

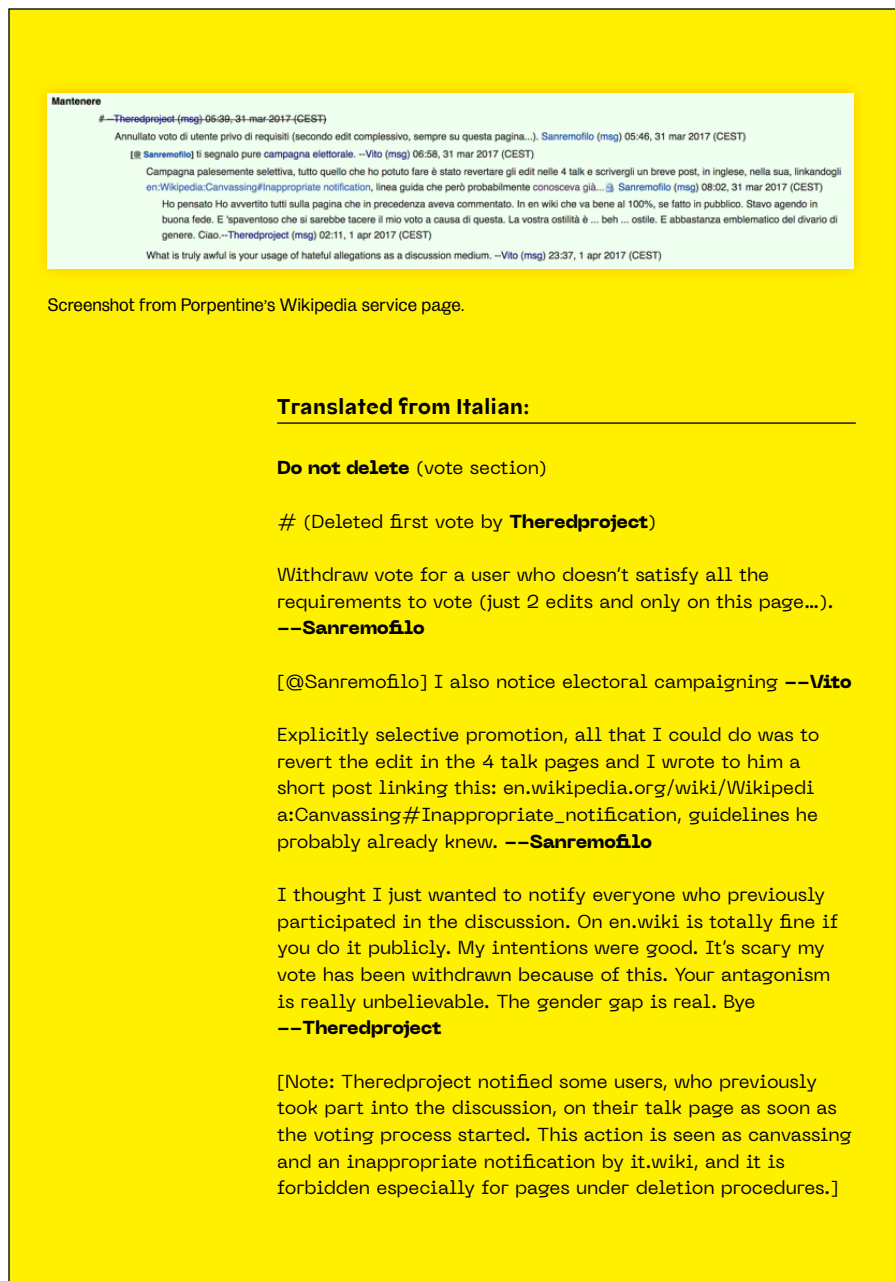
Translated from Italian:

I'm not an active contributor of wikipedia, and I don't want to look like that, I didn't even vote. By the way, I made research on the subject, it's part of my job. I've got to know about your deletionist campaign by chance, on social media and I came here to provide a picture that could have been missed. I wish after this page, you all can go to purge all the italian dauber without international exhibition, citations, or any kind of relevance, who for some strange reason are not target by your actions. --Funopticon

[@Funopticon] Your comments prove that you are not a Wikipedia user indeed. I don't know who told you about a "deletionist campaign", but this is a daily job on Wikipedia: separate the wheat from the chaff. Since analogy based arguments don't count, but you say you are a contemporary art expert, I thereby invite you to help us start deletion procedures like this one for those artists which have an article created without proven notability. --Ruthven

In the anglo saxon world, they've spoken about wiki-lawyering and deletionism for years en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criticism_of_Wikipedia#Editorial_process. The discussion on this page has all the characteristics, the fortress mentality, the attacks based on standards... I'm sure there is a genuine passion behind this behavior, but it discourages new contributors, who are in decline. As you might know, these pages are not self promotional, but part of an international campaign aimed at decreasing the gender gap. Instead of looking at them like a n00bs invasion, you should consider it as an opportunity to grow and diversify this community and put your experience and knowledge about the rules at disposal of new editors instead of being in opposition to them. --Funopticon

fig. 9



THE EVENTS THAT FOLLOWED THE MILAN EDIT-A-THON REVEAL THE LIMITS OF WIKIPEDIA AS A TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL PLATFORM

I contacted one of these users, Funopticon, to understand his opinion toward the events that were happening. Paolo Pedercini (the real name of this user, a notable Italian game maker well-known as Molleindustria and a professor at Carnegie Mellon University) tried to give his positive contribution to Porpentine's page, and according to him, "The Italian project of Wikipedia is a long way smaller than the English Wikipedia and the lack of more meaningful articles doesn't prioritize emerging artists as encyclopedic. The edit-a-thon works well for the English community thanks to the collaboration with Wikimedia Foundation. To report the hassle publicly might help to start a dialogue, perhaps on the creation of an Arbitration Committee as for other Wikipedia projects, but probably it's gonna antagonize the few existing editors."

The Wikimedia Foundation supports Art + Feminism with a specific goal: to involve new editors and create new articles so that Wikipedia can be used to put forth inclusive and diverse knowledge.

The events that followed the Milan edit-a-thon reveal the limits of Wikipedia as a technology and social platform, proving the hypothesis that every technology affects and is affected by the people who use it. Therefore, even in a digital space defined as "free," there's the possibility to recreate bias in political mechanisms, discrimination, and social models based on hierarchy and not inclusivity, which impacts us in other parts of our reality.

It is taken for granted indeed, that two main factions characterized the community of Wikipedia: deletionists and inclusionists.¹⁸ Following different values and ideology, inclusionists are proponents of broad retention in order to keep Wikipedia's coverage wider. On the contrary, the deletionists usually exploit controversial articles and topics, and are proponents of selective coverage and removal of articles seen as unnecessary (according to their personal selection criteria and interests). Deletionists very often control the debates—for example in deletion discussions on controversial topics, they justify their actions with a blizzard of obscure acronyms referring to Wikipedia's rules. As a result of this phenomena, known as "wiki-lawyering,"¹⁹ new editors are discouraged from editing in front of the complexity of Wikipedia's rules as proposed by the deletionists. The result is a reiteration of a knowledge model in which prevailing opinions lacking sensibility or competencies on specific topics may control the educational content of the encyclopedia itself.

¹⁸ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deletionism_and_inclusionism_in_Wikipedia

¹⁹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criticism_of_Wikipedia#Level_of_debate.2C_edit_wars_and_harassment

“MY OPINION ON WIKIPEDIA HAS CHANGED, BUT I KEEP EDITING.”

These dynamics are influencing a supposedly impartial and coherent system: I received a notice of user block for simple unwanted mistakes, and I've been accused of being disrespectful when I was just trying to defend my opinion (and I couldn't do anything when users from a higher position in the hierarchy attacked me). This is disappointing when there are members of the Wikipedia community who work for a more inclusive knowledge, despite admins that don't really respect the rules they claim.

My opinion on Wikipedia has changed, but I keep editing.

I organize and support events like Art + Feminism because I feel responsible for promoting and contributing to the creation of a diverse knowledge that can complete what has been done until today.

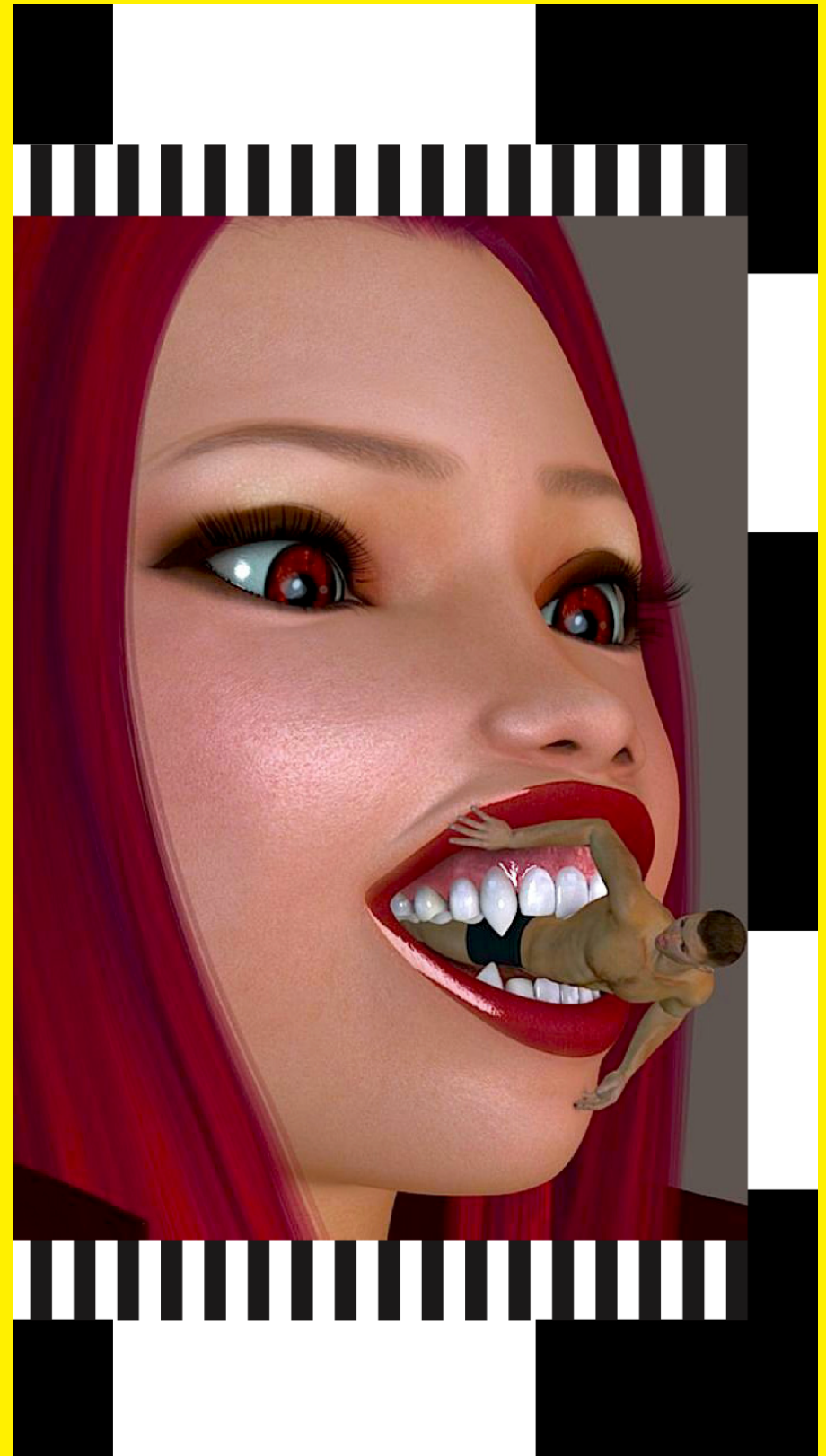
Going back to the initial question “Am I doing enough to see—and make people see what goes beyond?” To edit Wikipedia in Italian or English, and to promote and support Art + Feminism will be my form of digital and artistic activism because I believe in these ideals. But not only because of that—this experience demonstrated that it's not only about feminism. Indeed, the creation of a Wikipedia community truly committed to the creation of an inclusive knowledge—without stereotypes, gender biases, or hierarchical models, can neither happen through gender discrimination nor through the repetition of hierarchal systems and meaningless stubbornness.

Figures

- 1, 2, 5, 7–9 Porpentine's Wikipedia service page: [it.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Pagina_da_cancellare/Porpentine_\(game_designer\)&oldid=87007894](https://it.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Pagina_da_cancellare/Porpentine_(game_designer)&oldid=87007894)
- 6 Perfect Woman's Wikipedia service page: it.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Pagina_da_cancellare/Perfect_Woman&oldid=87106966
- 4 Angela Washko's Wikipedia service page: it.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Pagina_da_cancellare/Angela_Washko&oldid=86988856

FEMINIST/ PORNOGRAPHIC/ COLLECTIVE/ CONSCIOUSNESS

Feminist Pornographic Collective Consciousness (FPCC) is an intersectional feminist porn zine that aims to explore the body, sexuality, and eroticism at the intersection of POC, LGBTQAI+, and disability. Images and texts are compiled to decolonize the cis-pectation of gender and sexual performances. Through in-person interactions and open calls, we would like to collaborate with various marginalized communities to help us expand the definition of pornography.



Date

April 14, 2017

Location

Women's Center for
Creative Work

Organizers

Echo Theohar (she/they)

Xin Xin (they/them)

Artists

A.M. Darke (she/he/sir)

Alice Jung (she/her)

Echo Theohar (she/they)

Hillary Cleary (she/her)

Julie Weitz (she/her)

Ke Peng (she/her)

Mary Maggie
Tsang (they/them)

Sanglim Han (she/her)

Xin Xin (they/them)

Yuehao Jiang (she/her)



[27]

MANIFESTO

THE FEMINIST PORNOGRAPHIC COLLECTIVE
CONSCIOUSNESS IS DEFINED BY THE CONSTANT
BATTLES BETWEEN BEING A SUBJECT AND AN
OBJECT OF DESIRE

THAT IS NOT TO SAY THAT SUBJECT & OBJECT
MUST EXIST AS BINARY, HOWEVER WE
RECOGNIZE THAT IN ORDER TO RESOLVE THE
ISSUE OF MIND BODY SEPARATION, WE MUST
FIRST EXPAND OUR NOTION & PRACTICE OF
LOVE

THIS PROJECT IMAGINES FEMINIST PORNOGRAPHY
AS A DECOLONIAL TOOL, IMAGES & TEXTS ARE
COMPILED TO DIG DEEP INTO HUMAN SEXUALITY
THROUGH THE LENS OF INTERSECTIONAL
FEMINIST CRITIQUE



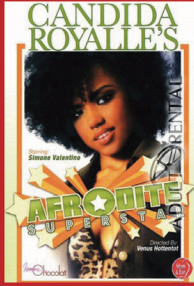
BLACK FEMINIST PORN

Black feminist porn is at a critical point in its development. It must battle not only the fetishization of black women's bodies by a male consumer market, but also to fight the fact that the slim amounts of feminist porn currently available is not nearly as intersectional as it should be. Without a doubt, there are numerous obstacles ahead which complicate the visual and cultural production of black women's desires. Ideally, this content would be made for black women, by black women. Currently, there are a handful of black female directors producing their own films, such as Estelle Joseph, who directed the award-winning series *City of Flesh*, that's been praised by numerous sex-positive feminists and Shante Louise Houston, who primarily produces female and female-made transgender adult flicks, her work also has received recognition by the feminist community.¹

Alison Lee, Manager of feminist porn store Good for Her explains, "A porn film can be classified as Feminist, I think, as soon as women are taken into account as viewers, and that as actors within the film, their own desires are taken into account. This means basically showing that women have just as much right to erotic entertainment as men do, and their desires and pleasure is important, too."²

¹ *Black Feminist Porn: Aesthetics, Eroticism, and the Politics of Pleasure* by Alison Lee.

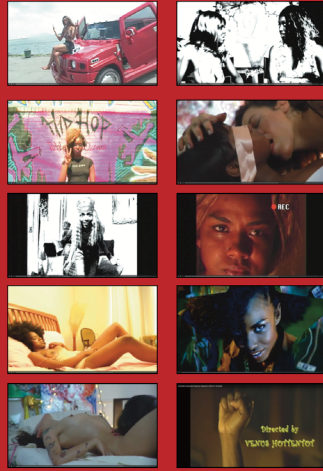
² *Black Feminist Porn: Aesthetics, Eroticism, and the Politics of Pleasure* by Alison Lee.



In this case, feminist porn would need to reflect an additional dimension of the social, political, and economic interests of black women to be considered as black feminist porn, as well as uplift the natural beauty of black women and their desires as consumers.

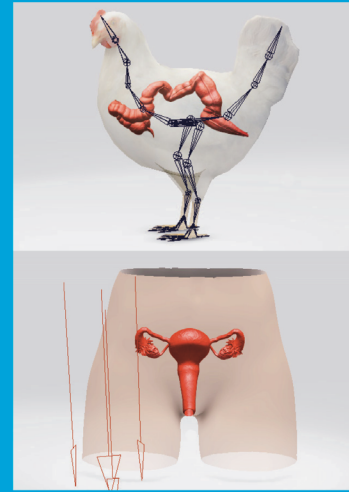
One black feminist adult film highlighted by Arielle Laurens, Editor-in-Chief of *Cosmo Magazine* and freelance sexuality writer is *Afroque: Supremacy* (2009), which is distinguished as the first adult film directed by and for women of color. As Arielle describes, "It's a great discussion point on the power of black female directors challenging the stereotypes of black adult film. Directed by media personality and author, Abbie Abunimou, under the pseudonym Venus Horneum, *Afroque: Supremacy*... is probably the only film where you will witness quotes by bell hooks and Gloria Steinem accompanied by a hot sex scene, three of which were heterosexual, one lesbian, and one masturbatory. And yes, nudity, genital shots, and real sex are included."

³ *Black Feminist Porn: Aesthetics, Eroticism, and the Politics of Pleasure* by Alison Lee.

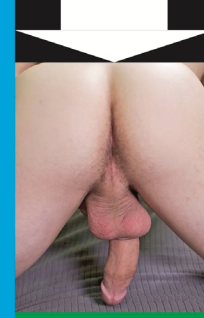


Still from *Afroque: Supremacy*.

[28]



THE DISRUPTED BODY



Bodies are queer in many ways. One of the most common ways is through our exposure to endocrine disruptors – synthetic hormones found in plastics, pesticides, and birth control pills – which make their way into our bodies thanks to petrochemical, agricultural, and pharmaceutical industries. In response to these synthetic hormones, we are fed the heteronormative reactions of loss of masculinity, fear of feminization, and euphoria, reinforcing a politics of purity. But what about queer body worship? If we are living in this all-pervasive toxicity, and if queerness is our inevitable future, then we must decide on a discourse that liberates us.

The anogenital distance index (AGDI) is a population survey tool which measures the distance between the anus and bottom of the genitalia. Studies since the 90's have discovered that the AGDI is getting smaller and smaller due to exposure to phthalates, a common endocrine disruptor. Thus, the AGDI is anatomical proof of our increasingly queer and hormonally complex bodies.

By Mary Maggie

[30]



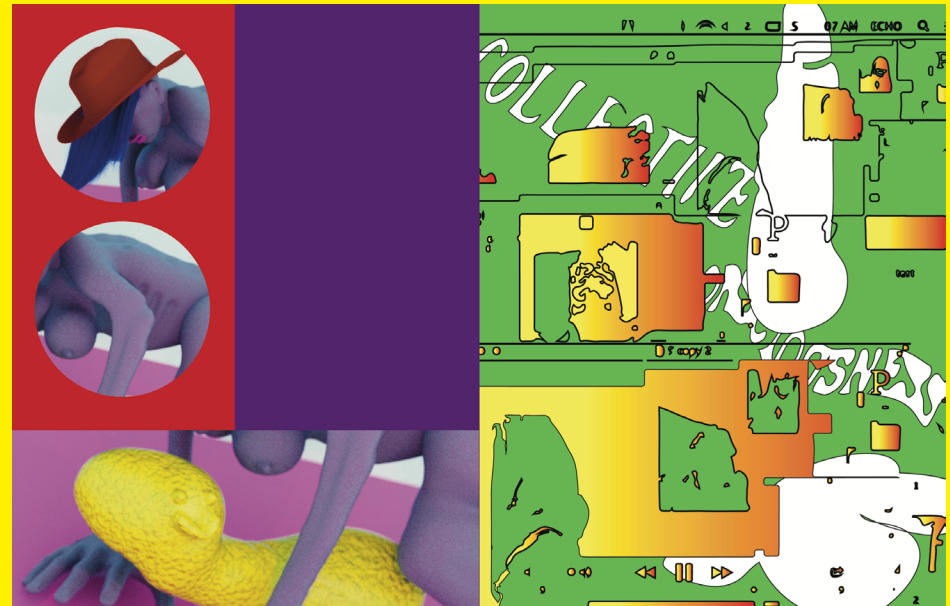
MIMICRY IN SEX AND AI



"Women have not merely had a minor part to play in the emergence of the digital machines. When computers were vast systems of transistors and valves which needed to be coaxed into action, it was women who turned them on. They have not made some trifling contribution to an otherwise man-made tale: when computers became the miniaturized circuits of silicon chips, it was women who assembled them. There is not a subsidiary role which needs to be rescued for posterity, a small supplement whose inclusion would set the existing records straight: when computers were virtually real machines, women wrote the software on which they ran. And when computer was a term applied to flesh and blood workers, the bodies which composed them were female. Hardware, software, wetware – before their beginnings and beyond their ends, women have been the simulators, assemblers, and programmers of the digital machines."

Zeros + Ones by Sadie Plant

[29]

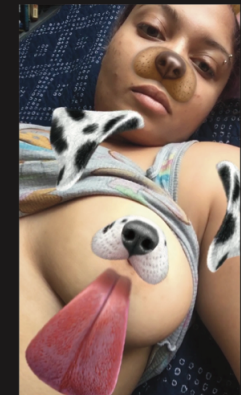
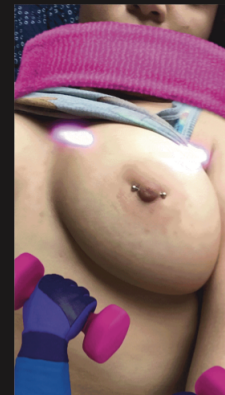
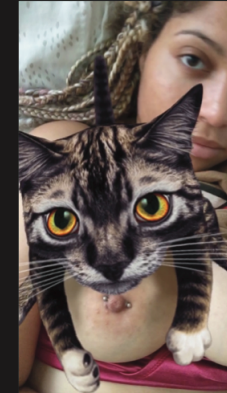


[31]



"Her sexual organ represents the horror of nothing to see. A defect in this systematics of representation and desire. A 'hole' in its scopophilic lens. It is already evident in Greek Statuary that this nothing-to-see has to be excluded, rejected, from such a scene of representation. Woman's genitals are simply absent, masked, sewn back up inside their "crack." ... Whence the mystery that woman represents in a culture claiming to count everything, to number everything by units, to inventory everything as individualities. She is neither one nor two. Rigorously speaking, she cannot be identified either as one person, or as two. She resists all adequate definition."

The Sex Which is Not One by Luce Irigaray



- 26 Layout by Echo Theohar.
- 27 2nd Edition of Feminist Pornographic Collective Consciousness at the Tokyo Art Book Fair, 2019. Image courtesy of Random Man Editions.
- 28 Layout by Echo Theohar. Featuring work by Candida Royalle.
- 29 Layout by Xin Xin. Images courtesy of Sanglim Han.
- 30 Layout by Echo Theohar. Images courtesy of Mary Maggic Tsang.
- 31 Layout by Xin Xin. Images courtesy of Echo Theohar.
- 32 Left: Image courtesy of Julie Weitz. Right: Image courtesy of A.M. Darke.
- 33 Feminist Pornographic Collective Consciousness at Nah Fair, 2017.
- 34 Layout by Xin Xin. Left image courtesy of Alice Jung.



[33]

[34]

“The Young-Girl’s body is but a concession that is given her more or less lastingly, which clears up the reasons why she hates it so much. It’s just a rented residence, something that she doesn’t really possess or usufruct, that she is only free to use, and furthermore, because the walls, her corporeality projected as capital, a factor in production and consumption, are possessed by the autonomized, social totality.”

Raw Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl by Tiquun

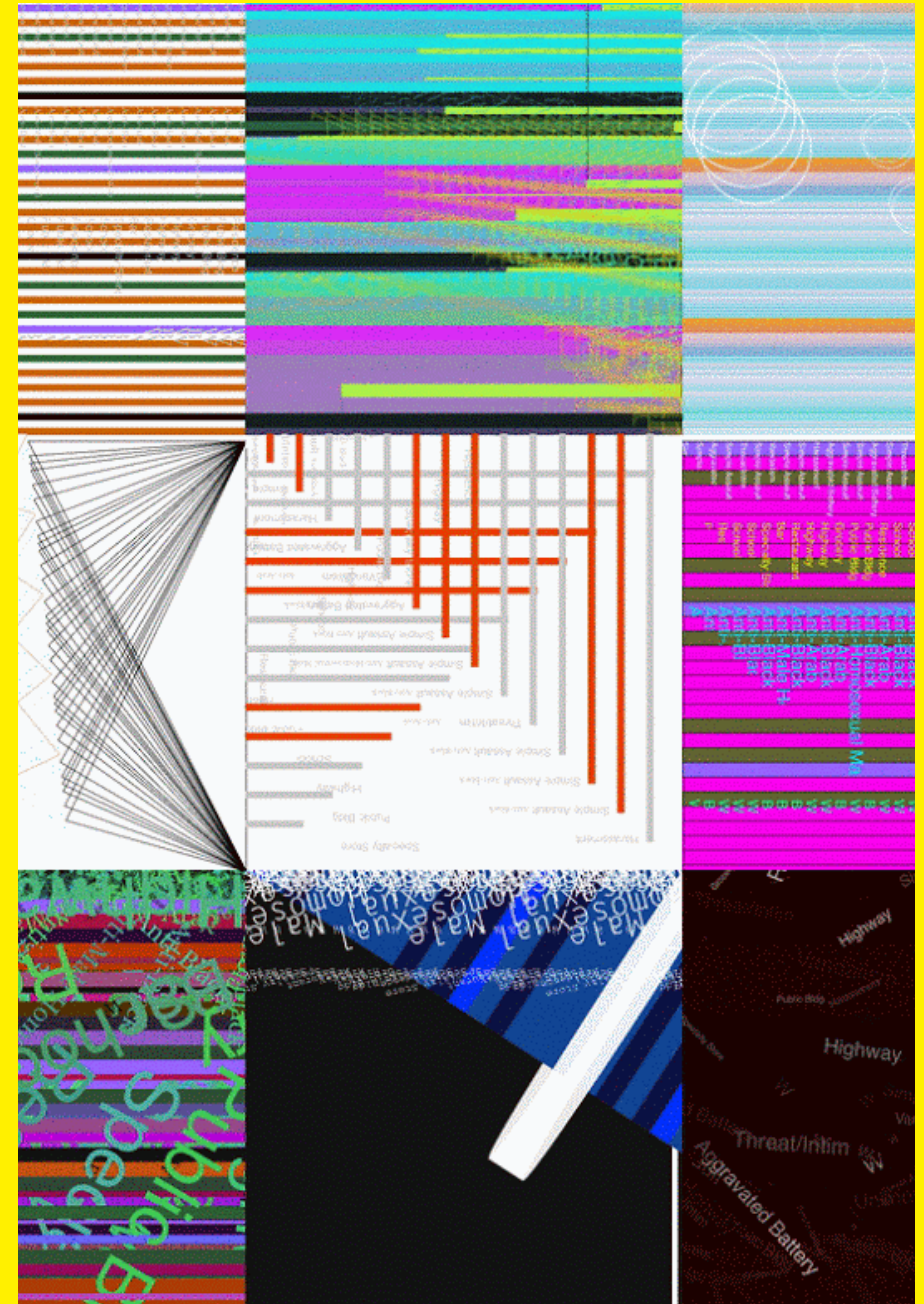


DATA WEAVING AS CULTURAL
TEXT FOR ACTIVISM:

CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS WEAVING

Data Weaving as Cultural Text for Activism: Contemporary Indigenous Weaving led by Sarah Rosalena Balbuena-Brady experiments with data weaving as a way to understand and represent hate crimes data. The individual sketches were combined into an online quilt after the workshop.

This event is the result of a collaboration between voidLab and Scope Lab¹—a workshop series focused on exploring code as a creative medium with which to understand and represent diverse perspectives.



[35]

¹ projects.dma.ucla.edu/scopelab/

Date

May 8, 2017

Location

UCLA Broad Art Center

Workshop Facilitator

Sarah Rosalena
Balbuena-Brady (she/her)

Scope Lab Organizers

Lauren Lee
McCarthy (she/they)

Miriam Posner (she/her)

Stalgia Grigg (he/him)

Christina Yglesias (she/her)



[36]



[37]

- 35 Data weaves produced by workshop participants.
- 36 Sarah Rosalena Balbuena-Brady lectures on Contemporary Indigenous Weaving.
- 37 Workshop participants using hate crime data to create sketches in p5.js.
- 38 Color composition and bead loom bracelet examples for workshop.



[38]

CASE NUMBER	DATE AND TIME	DAY OF WEEK	TOTAL# OF VICTIMS	VICTIM RACE	VICTIM SEX	VICTIM TYPE
B16-04899	02/06/16 22:50	Saturday	1	W	Male	Individual
B16-05230	02/06/16 02:30	Saturday	1	B	Male	Individual
B16-09812	03/14/16 18:23	Monday	1	W	Male	Individual
B16-14685	04/18/16 02:24	Monday	1	B	M	Individual
B16-33336	08/23/16 14:39	Tuesday	1	W	Female	Individual
B16-33336	08/23/16 14:40	Tuesday	1	W	Male	Individual
B16-42790	10/21/16 02:00	Friday	1	W	Male	Individual
B16-44481	11/04/2016 1326	Friday	1	B	Male	Individual
B16-44485	11/4/2016 14:44	Friday	1	B	Male	Individual
B16-45592	11/12/2016 14:39	Saturday	1	B	Female	Individual
B17-04242	2/4/2017 2:00	Saturday	1	W	M	Individual
B16-04899	02/06/16 22:50	Saturday	1	W	Male	Individual
B16-05230	02/06/16 02:30	Saturday	1	B	Male	Individual
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# OF OFFENDERS	OFFENDER RACE	OFFENDER SEX	CRIME	LOCATION	MOTIVATION
2	W	M	Simple Assault	Restaurant	Anti-Homosexual Male
3	W	M	Simple Assault	Highway	Anti-Black
1	W	M	Aggravated Battery	Highway	Anti-Arab
1	W	Male	Simple Assault	Grocery	Anti-Black
1	W	Male	Threat/Intim	Public Bldg	Anti-Black
1	W	Male	Simple Assault	Public Bldg	Anti-Black
Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Vandalism	Residence	Anti-Male Homosexual
1	W	Male	Simple Assault	School	Anti-Black
1	W	Male	Simple Assault	School	Anti-Arab
1	W	Male	Harassment	Specialty Store	Anti-Black
2	W	M	Aggravated Battery	Bar	Anti-Arab
2	W	M	Simple Assault	Restaurant	Anti-Homosexual Male
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1	W	M	Aggravated Battery	Highway	Anti-Arab
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1	W	Male	Simple Assault	Public Bldg	Anti-Black
Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Vandalism	Residence	Anti-Male Homosexual
1	W	Male	Simple Assault	School	Anti-Black
1	W	Male	Simple Assault	School	Anti-Arab
1	W	Male	Harassment	Specialty Store	Anti-Black
2	W	M	Aggravated Battery	Bar	Anti-Arab

```

var data;

function preload() {
  data = loadTable('crime.csv', "csv", "header");
}

function setup() {
  createCanvas(windowWidth, windowHeight);
  noLoop();
  // var rowCount = data.getRowCount();
}

function draw() {
  var crime = data.getString(0, 12);
  var victim = data.getString(0, 10);
  // line(0, 20, 300, width);
  // text(crime, victim, 100, 100);

  for (var i=0; i < data.getRowCount(); i++) {
    var row = data.getRow(i);

    var type = row.get(10 /*"Crime"*/);
    var race = row.get(4 /*"Victim Race"*/);
    var motivation = row.get(12 /* motivation */);
    var location = row.get(11 /* location */);
    print(motivation)

    if (motivation == "Anti-Black"){

      fill (200, 100, 2);
    } else if (motivation == "Anti-Arab") {
      fill(50, 100, 55);
    } else if (motivation == "Anti-Homosexual Male")
  {

    fill(150, 100, 255);
  }
}

```

```

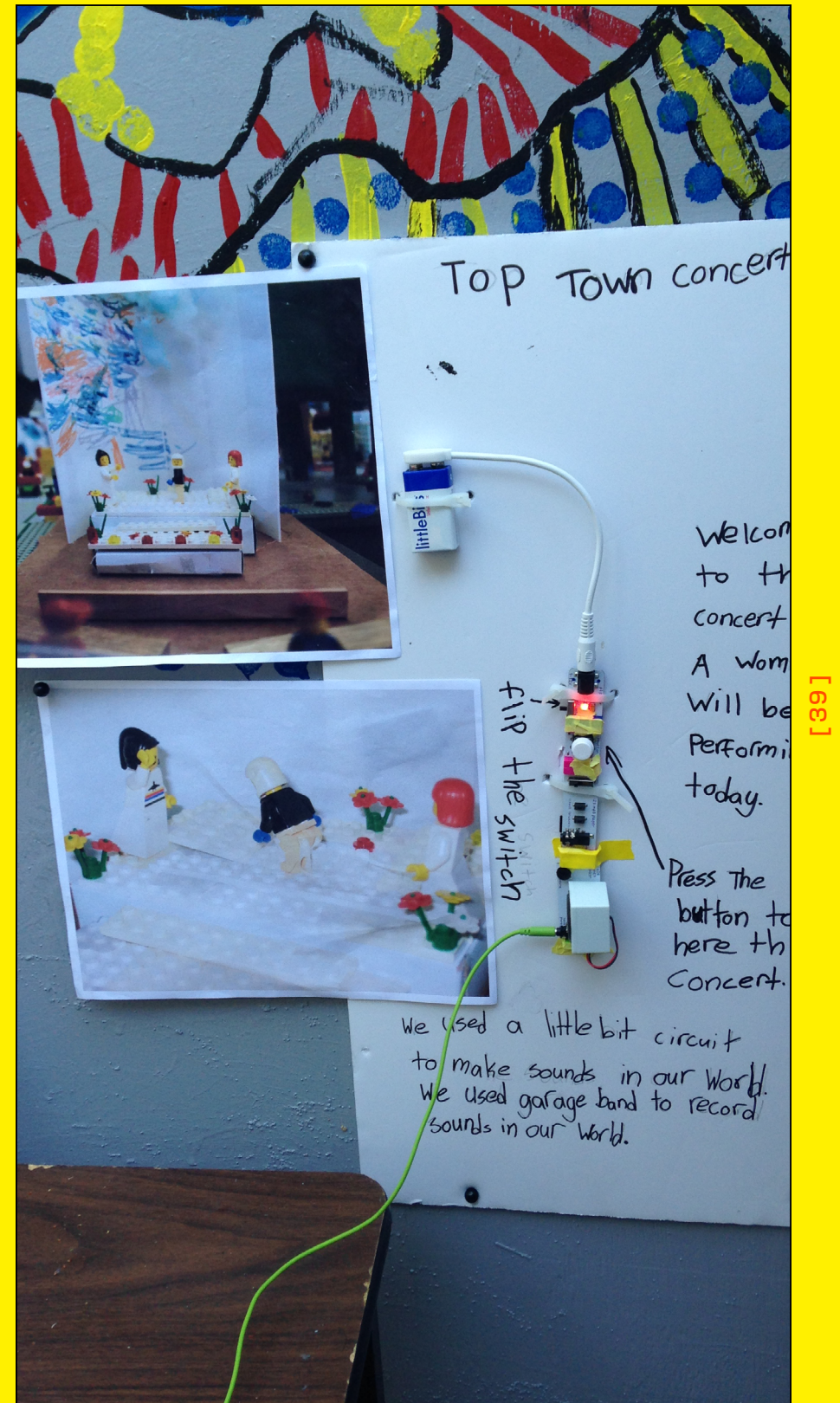
noStroke();
rect(0, 10+(20*i), width, 10);
fill(0);
push();

translate(20+(20*i), 1);
rotate(HALF_PI);
fill(200);
text(type, 0, 10);
textFont("Georgia");
textSize(28);
text(race, 450, 0);
textSize(12);
text(motivation, 150, 50);
textFont("Helvetica");
textSize(16);
text(location, 300, 0);
pop();
}
}

```

LAB SCHOOL INQUIRY

A collaboration with K-12 students at the UCLA Lab School to explore the faculties of sound and light in the context of a marine biology art exhibition. Outreach included workshops with students on cymatics and littleBits, a STEAM-based educational tool designed to introduce kids to physical computing. After the completion of the introductory workshops, students were mentored in the design and execution of various audio and visual outputs specific to their marine-based topics in the showcase.



Date

May 25-June 3, 2015

Location

UCLA Lab School

Organizers

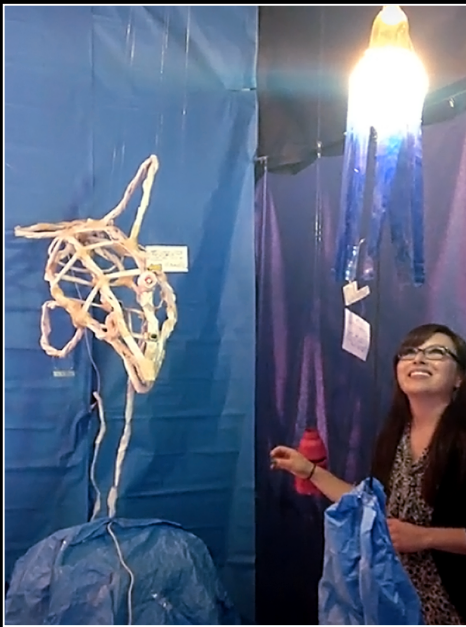
Amethyst Zhang (she/her)

Claire Joseph (she/her)

Echo Theohar (she/they)

Jules Kris (they/them)

Xin Xin (they/them)



[40]



[41]



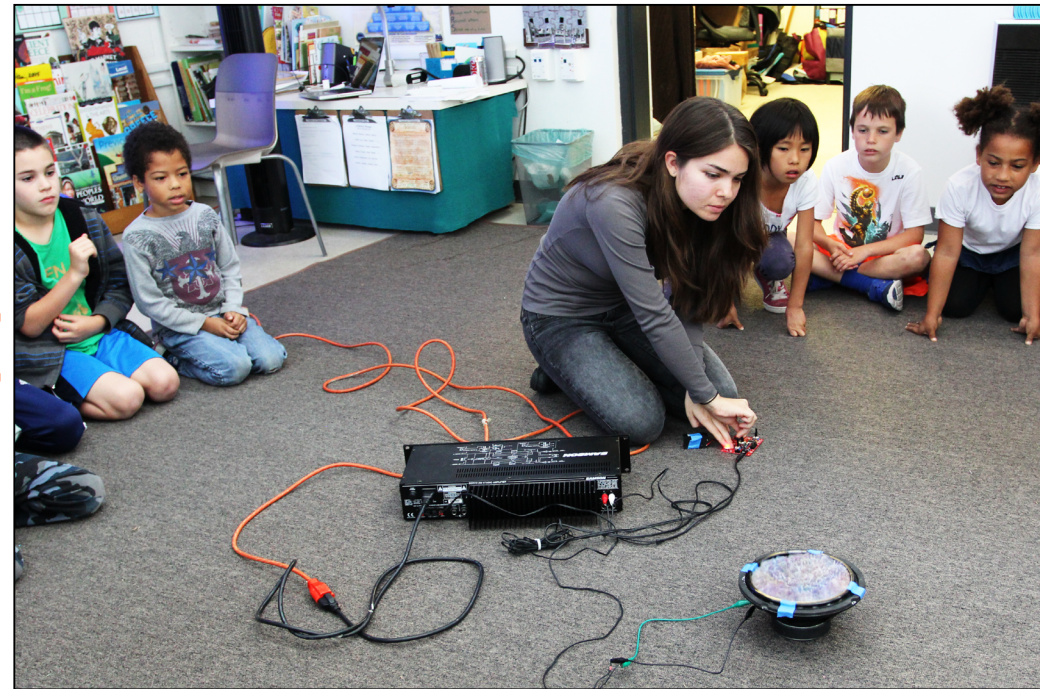
[42]



[43]



[44]



[45]

- 39 Detail of student project using littleBits modules.
- 40 Installation of interactive dolphin and jellyfish sculptures.
- 41 Students built a crab sculpture out of paper and tape.
- 42 Students built a whale sculpture that contained a proximity sensor and a speaker that demonstrated echolocation.
- 43 Amethyst Zhang fitting a student with a truffle-finding sensor.
- 44 Amethyst Zhang leading a truffle hunt.
- 45 Echo Theohar leading a workshop in cymatics.
- 46 The UCLA Lab School community.



[46]

EXHIBITION

FEMINIST/ CLIMATE CHANGE: BEYOND THE BINARY

voidLab was invited to exhibit in Feminist Climate Change, a campus exhibition featuring UCLA Design Media Arts at the Ars Electronica 2017. Members of voidLab presented a variety of projects that show what it means to take leave of rigid, black-and-white concepts, binary gender categories and environmentally destructive thinking.



Date

September 7-11, 2017

Location

SPLACE,
Kunstuniversität
Linz, Austria

Curators

Victoria Vesna (she/her)

Xin Xin (they/them)

voidLab Participants

Amanda Stojanov (she/her)

Christina Yglesias (she/her)

Eli Joteva (she/her)

Jen Agosta (she/her)

Nora N. Khan (she/her)

Sanglim Han (she/her)

Yuehao Jiang (she/her)

Dr. Safiya Umoja
Noble (she/her)

Sarah Rosalena
Balbuena-Brady (she/her)

Xin Xin (they/them)

[48]



47 *Time Reveals the Surface* by Eli Joteva.

48 From left: *Molecular Queering* by Mary Maggic Tsang and Byron Rich. *Shapeshifting AI* and *Shadow Glass* by voidLab (Interview with Nora N. Khan: Sarah Rosalena Balbuena-Brady. Interview with Dr. Safiya Umoja Noble: Xin Xin. Visual Artist: Sanglim Han. Sound Artist / Music Producer: Jen Agosta).

TIME REVEALS THE SURFACE

(2016) Amanda Stojanov

Your Choice is a video and animation piece that visualizes a fictional world. It is an introduction to a world by a woman's voice, processed in a way to feel post-human, disembodied from anything they might hear in real life. The voice is speaking directly to the audience asking them to make a choice. Their ability to make this choice is never fulfilled and they are instead taken on a journey by a human voice.

The images of the bodies in the film are 3D scanned from two women interacting, using 3D scanning technology. The animation and textures imposed are reminiscent of other cyborg representations of women in artificial intelligence and science fiction narratives. This video addresses the issues of gender representation in uses of technology. Physical powers of the body are manipulated through the scans by exploring the translation of real bodies into emerging technologies and then into popular media outlets.

In this video, *Your Choice* reproduces these stereotypes and represents them in an extreme, uncomfortable context attempting to address the implications that these images have on cultural production in the development of technologies and media. Most importantly my intention is to direct the critique from the consumers to the people who are developing these visions, asking for an explicit acknowledgement, discussion or address of their implicit biases.

(2017) Eli Joteva

What lies beneath the surface? When will all the ice melt?

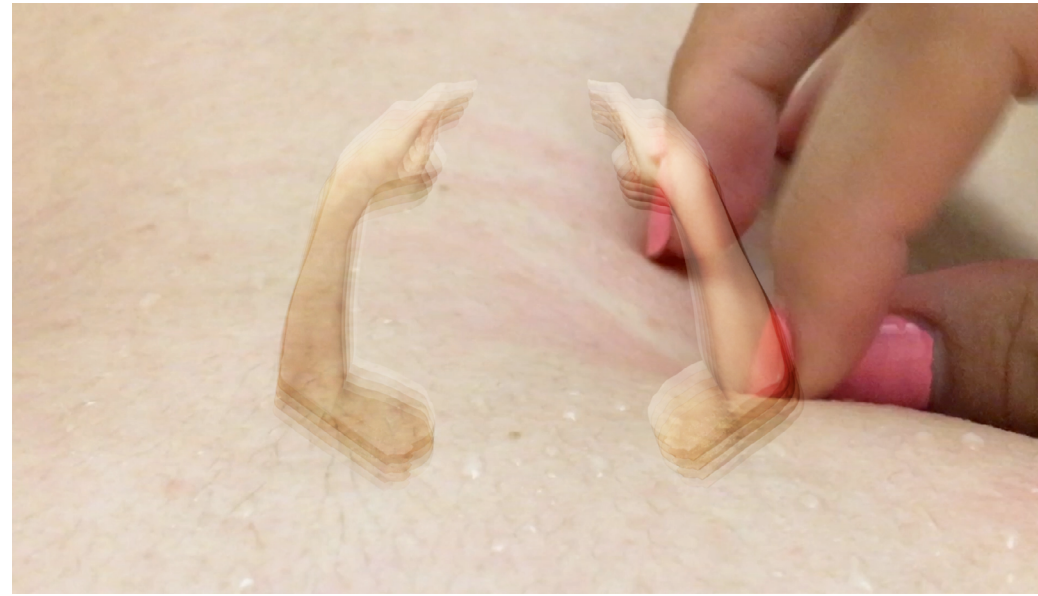
Time speeds up, entropy increases and crystalline structures release an entropic potential of frozen materiality. *Time reveals the surface* is a digital memory of a deteriorating organic sculpture made of ice, moss and soil. It questions the containment of earth-sourced matter within the boundaries of the tangible, visible and virtual. As depths of hidden layers unravel, uncertain substances release their effect into the globe. Perhaps not all cycles can be contained.



A REAL BODY

(2017) Yuehao Jiang

What is a real body? The artist tries to solve the question by sampling her body as a case study. When her body is watched under close investigation, pores, hairs, rashes, and cuticles are enlarged. Her view of her body is microscopic. It doesn't align with the common social rules. Her body was documented by the camera lens and turned into video clips and 3D models. She believes both forms represent her body relatively true to the experiences she has had so far with her body.



BLOOM

(2010-2012) Sanglim Han

BLOOM is a single channel video work, which consists of the image of the artist. The image is of a female face upside down and the woman in the video looks up and blinks her eyes. Fluids, which look like thin slimy paint, starts to drip down her face. Fluids of various colors keep dripping down on her face and it creates a sort of abstract painting on the screen. At the end of the video, it is hard to recognize the female face; it seems she has become a painting.



I HAVEN'T TOLD ANYONE ABOUT YOU

(2017) Christina Yglesias

Using the service Invisible Girlfriend I exchanged 100 text messages with the woman of my design. While Invisible Girlfriend is marketed towards lonely men or those who want to practice a romantic relationship in a low-stakes setting, *I haven't told anyone about you* embodies the emotional labor of the women on the other end and explores the possibilities for connection in a hyper-networked culture.



ATL II

(2017) Sarah Rosalena
Balbuena-Brady

ATL II is a generative visualization of fading algorithms of sound and light recorded in real time. Ephemeral figures emerge out of a colorful void and fade into a surreal environment where movements of shape and color change to the evolving soundscape.



(2017) *Interview with Dr. Safiya Umoja Noble: Xin Xin.*
Visual Artist: Sanglim Han
Sound Artist/Music Producer:
 Jen Agosta

Shadow Glass is a voidLab collaboration between Jen Agosta, Sanglim Han, and Xin Xin based on an interview with Dr. Safiya Umoja Noble, the author of *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (2018, NYU Press). In the book Dr. Noble coins the term “technological redlining,” describing the historical redlining that gets carried over into the creation of algorithms. Dr. Noble challenges us to think about how the design of algorithms and databases intersect with issues of race, gender, and class, and urges designers and policy-makers to confront and eliminate biases in the development of decision-making technologies.



(June 15, 2017) *Interview with Dr. Safiya Umoja Noble*

Dr. Safiya Umoja Noble (she/her) is an author, researcher, and faculty at UCLA and Xin Xin (they/them) is a co-founder of voidLab.

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You have coined the term “technological redlining” in your upcoming book *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. Could you explain the definition of technological redlining and how it is significant in the age of information?

SUN

One of the things I try to do is talk about technological redlining as a digital form of previous dimensions of redlining. So redlining has historically been a practice of not including people of color, racialized minorities, women in the United States through public policy practices. So for example, not giving home loans or mortgages to people who live in particular zip codes and using the predatory nature of racial segregation to bolster marginalization. In technological redlining, what we have are a number of similar kinds of decision-making processes that affect

people's lives when it comes to things like housing, credit, the ways schools are ranked and valued as excellent to not excellent and those decisions are increasingly made by algorithms or by digital decision making systems.

This type of technological redlining is something that's become so normalized in our society that it actually is thought of in many ways as a convenience, as a series of decision making tools or applications that make our lives better. Because the previous ways that redlining happened between human beings, for example, you sat across from a banker and the banker or the loan officer said no to you when it came to getting a mortgage if you lived on the south-side of Chicago or in South LA, for example. Now those decisions are just made by a computer or by software systems. And they are not intervenable and we cannot impact or shift the way that those decisions are made. We used to think of this as

“COMPUTER
CODE IS A
LANGUAGE. WE
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NEUTRAL.”

pointing to people as being discriminatory, so what we needed as an intervention for example would be loan products or other kinds of policies where people of color or women would be involved because the idea is that they would be less discriminatory towards people who are marginalized already systemically. But now when we have computers making those decisions the narrative is not that computers can be discriminatory, but in fact that they are wholly neutral. And that is one of the reasons that we have to talk about technological redlining and the ways that it is insidious and the ways that it is very difficult to intervene upon.

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You mentioned in your introductory chapter that digital media platforms are often characterized as “neutral technologies.” Could you share your insights on why that may be the case?

SUN

People often think of digital technologies, computerized projects, software, hardware as simply being tools. That the real power lies in the people who use the tools, rather than in the tools themselves. One of the things that I try to debunk in my work is this idea that software or hardware or computer decision making projects are neutral. The truth is that these projects are designed by human beings and many of them are highly reliant upon things like computer code.

Computer code is a language. We certainly would never say that language is neutral, that it isn't subjective. We know in fact that language is highly interpretable, that there are many ways in which even the slightest inflections can change the meaning of something. And so code is also a language that is written by human beings. The people who have the power to write that language are informed by their own values. Many times they are writing code without sufficient knowledge about the impact, or the disparate impact that it might have on society. And so that's one of the things that I

really try to talk about is debunking this idea that the technologies that we're engaging with are simply tools. In fact, they are not. There is a whole host of politics and power relations that are embedded in the technologies that we use. And it's really important that we spend some time discerning what that is and what the long terms and short term implications of that can be.

XX

So when you said that code is basically just another kind of language, I think that that might be an idea that a lot of people, especially consumers of technology, don't always realize. So there seems to be an issue coming from the gap between how tech companies narrate their software and promising what their software—what their code—is doing versus the actual infrastructure and information that's being embedded in the software. So for people that are not familiar with code, the black box remains mysterious and unattainable.

What do you think are the possible ways for us to start revealing the information that's hidden in the black box and to make people understand that it's a kind of language?

SUN

There are people who think that the only way to intervene upon, or the best way to intervene upon software or computer programming code is to become a coder oneself. We see a lot of attention and energy right now around Black Girls Code or STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math Education) for young people as a way in on these complex algorithmic environments. That is certainly one intervention, but one could argue, as many media scholars do, and I certainly argue this, that one doesn't have to know the specifics of filmmaking, for example, in order to critique racist or sexist films that are made in Hollywood, right? One doesn't have to know how to build a television in order to critique the kinds of programming that airs over the airwaves. So these are the kind of things that I think we have to think about.

What are the multiple kinds of ways in which we can talk about the impact of these technologies in our society? I don't think that people have to know how to build, for example, an alternative search engine or some other type of software, some other type of code, in order to critique the output of that code. And that's one of the things that I really try to stress is how do we critically think about the output and the impact of these types of technologies in society. One of the things that we know is that typical engineering curricula does not focus on liberal arts education or the kinds of critical thinking about society that one might need if you were going to develop software programs or hardware.

So I think these are the kinds of things where we need to have much more integration about the humanities and the social sciences alongside our math and engineering focused programs and educational initiatives. Rather than just thinking that if more people of color and more women are coders that will somehow translate into better technologies.

XX

I wonder though, for more traditional media such as painting or advertisement in magazines, or film for instance, it's so much focused on representation of identities, bodies, or culture. It seems to me that in a lot of the work that you do, there is definitely that aspect of visual representation, but you'd also need to have people start approaching the problem systematically and think about algorithms. We can take an image, and we can take a series of images and almost deconstruct the whole thing, however when we're looking at search engines, it's a very different process.

SUN

We certainly need more systems thinking in society. So while on one hand, in my work I've talked quite a bit, for example, about misrepresented women and girls of color. When you search for Black women and girls, Latinas, or Asian women and girls, you often get highly sexualized and

pornographic representations. That's one way, for me, to point to the politics that are embedded, and the value systems that are embedded, in these technologies. So Google is just one way, and studying the representation is just one way into thinking about, "well what else is the system doing?" What other kinds of biases are happening?

In some ways we see the male gaze—a patriarchal bias—happening when women are hyper-sexualized and pornified in search engine results. But there are a whole host of other ways that commercial biases are happening in these systems. So we can't think of them as just public information resources, because they are not.

In many ways you can see how a company like Google, for example, will prioritize its own properties. It will prioritize YouTube videos before Vimeo or its competitors. It will prioritize, when you're looking for directions, not only its own map applications, but its advertisers, who are using and paying them for more profile within their services. When we think about a system, a digital enclosure, we digital media scholars like to talk about it as a highly commercialized, orchestrated system of movement.

And these are the kinds of things to look for: what isn't on the map when you look at Google maps? Well maybe the vigil for the teenager who was killed on that corner isn't on that map. Starbucks is on that map. Maybe the obscured history of who used to live in that neighborhood before it was gentrified is not presented on that map, right?

So those things are deeply political and they help develop our worldview, a worldview that we take for granted and that we normalize. That's the kind of thing I'm trying to help us think about in my work.

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In the introductory chapter you also described the internet as "the most unregulated social experiment of our times," what do you mean by that?

WE HAVE YET TO SEE THE INCREDIBLY HARMFUL EFFECTS OF THE INTERNET ON SOCIETY, BUT WE [ARE BEGINNING TO] SEE SOME SEEPAGE.

SUN

We've got about thirty years of great research now about the ways in which people are impacted by the internet. Whether it's cyberbullying and people who are telling us about the effects of online harassment. Whether it's the ways in which bias is happening and obscured in these online environments. That the internet itself has the possibility for everything from extreme violence, such as seeing videos of people who are murdered, with or without our consent because they just appear in our social media feeds.

Those projects and processes are unregulated. There's no public policy protecting society from the impacts, from the negative psychological, emotional, and other types of impacts of what happens when we are exposed to the internet. So what I often say is that yes, the internet is a highly charged environment that's not regulated and that is really a social experiment. We have yet to see the kinds of incredibly harmful effects of the internet on society, but we see some seepage that is happening. We see what happens when, for example, misinformation is captured in a search engine and represents a person and they can never get that off, they can never erase that from the internet.

So now we are having a response to that. In Europe we have the right to be forgotten legislation that has been a really important step in helping people to correct the ways in which they are misrepresented or mischaracterized or damaged personally. We don't have those kinds of

protections in the United States but I certainly think that we have amassed a lot of evidence that could help us move toward a better public policy environment to protect society, and especially the most vulnerable members of our society from the negative impact of the environment.

XX

Are there any lawmakers in the states right now that are excited about working towards that direction?

SUN

I am thrilled to see that there are lawmakers at the state level that are working on this. Particularly in the more narrow area of revenge porn. Revenge porn is someone posting compromising photos of you—this mostly happens to women—where pictures of them in compromising or sexualized ways are posted to the internet without their consent. And there are certainly a number of states that are passing legislation to criminalize revenge porn but it's not deeply penalized yet.

So the stakes or the consequences of posting photos of women in these ways are not quite what we want to see them at yet, or what I would argue would be a deterrent, significant enough deterrent. But I think that's an opening where we see lawmakers starting to care about this.

Again one of the things that is challenging is that women are more vulnerable in our society, have less power, so there is less care and regard for a

“ALGORITHMIC OPPRESSION IS NO DIFFERENT THAN OTHER FORMS OF OPPRESSION.”

teenage girl whose life is destroyed, who feels completely psychologically, emotionally, socially damaged by something like revenge porn.

And of course we know that there are young people who are terrorized online who commit suicide based on experiences they have on the internet. I think we have to look more closely at that and think about public policy and legislative interventions that can help protect children and people in our society who are most vulnerable. Certainly, that needs to happen.

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I think that it's a big discussion among digital scholars on how cyberbullying gets translated into real world violence and this kind of blurring of the cyberspace and IRL space?

SUN

Algorithmic oppression is no different than other forms of oppression. Part of the challenge is that people think of cyberspace as being somehow not real, or not a part of reality. People talk about an online world or a virtual world versus a material world, but it's all the same world. Algorithms, computers, a computer sitting on our desk, we certainly wouldn't say that it's not part of the real world that we're in. As is the software that you load onto it. It's all part of the real world. Algorithms are part of the real world. They are not just part of a virtual world and a virtual world isn't separate from the everyday life that we're living in.

So this is an important distinction because many people still like to think of the internet and technology as ephemeral, as not having a real material reality, or not occupying material space. But of course, in many ways, it's not just the computer or the laptop sitting on your desk or the phone in your hand, which no one would argue is not part of our everyday, real world. The technology, the systems that are running in those material objects are also real.

So I think that it's important

that we, first of all, clear that up, and that we address this kind of misnomer people have of digital technologies as being ephemeral or virtual. The effects... let me give you an example of the real world effects or the material effects of algorithms. We have, for example, in the United States, the mortgage crisis of the last decade. So from 2006 to 2008 we entered a recession, had a federal bailout, and had the worst loss of wealth in marginalized communities in the history of the United States.

Now, the mortgage crisis is driven by data and algorithms. The gamification of the market, which is ultimately what led to the crash of the market, was about the kinds of algorithms and the gaming of the system that was happening through manipulation of data. And in fact, it was a bidding against Americans, quite frankly.

So you have a situation here now where, would we argue that the algorithms that drove the financial crisis were not real? That they were ephemeral? That they were not material? Well we know that's not true. In fact, that mortgage crisis in the United States led to the greatest wipeout of Black wealth in the history of the United States. All of the gains that were made in the civil rights movement and shortly thereafter in terms of wealth building, home ownership, and the struggles to even have access to mortgages and banking, were wiped out, in one fell swoop.

So these are the kinds of ways in which we need to think about algorithmic accountability and material accountability for these digital technologies. What they do certainly has real world effects.

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Could you tell us more about the “Searching for Black Girls” chapter in the book? What are the different ways Black people are commodified through algorithms?

SUN

Sure. There's a long history in the United States of commodifying Black people,

African Americans. In fact, we entered the United States, in its early formation, as commodities, to work as laborers, people who were sold and traded on a market. That's actually the genesis of African American-ness, if you will, in what we think about as North America or the United States, but also certainly in the Caribbean and South America. So this commodification of Black bodies is not a new practice. Black people being sold and traded on a variety of denominators has a long history in this world and certainly in the U.S. and in North America.

To see many of the stereotypes and the narratives and the images evolve over time, you can look to wonderful resources like the Jim Crow museum of racist memorabilia. Here we have a perfect example of a museum that has captured these many narratives and misrepresentations of Black bodies, Black women, and Black girls to help justify racialized capitalism in the U.S., to help justify why people should have a lower rank or lower status or not be afforded human rights, not be afforded civil rights.

So this history predates Google, certainly, by many centuries. But what we see when we look at... and one of the things that I've done is look at the ways in which Google has represented Black women and girls. Black girls in particular are codified in these hypersexualized ways. Now if we trace back the history and the lineage of hypersexualizing Black women and girls, that's often been used as a stereotype and a narrative in society to justify using Black women as a reproductive workforce. Quite frankly, as reproducing the next generation of slave labor and blaming it, in fact, on Black women because they are so sexual, so hypersexual that they can't help but have children. And of course those children have been born into slavery in the United States.

So again, this far predates something like a search engine, but we see many of those narratives, those stereotypical narratives, that are used to disempower Black women and girls and Black people more broadly. They are recreated,

and they creep into these digital technologies as if there is no history connected to those representations. Marlin Riggs is a wonderful filmmaker who produced an excellent documentary called *Ethnic Notions*. If you're interested in this I highly recommend watching this documentary because he gives the whole history of racist advertising that is both racist and sexist in the United States and the way that those racist narratives about Black people and about Black women have been used to control, in fact, this community, our community, my community.

I think this is a really important lesson, if you will, in how to connect history to the present and unpack and make sense of the kinds of things that show up in our everyday technologies today.

XX

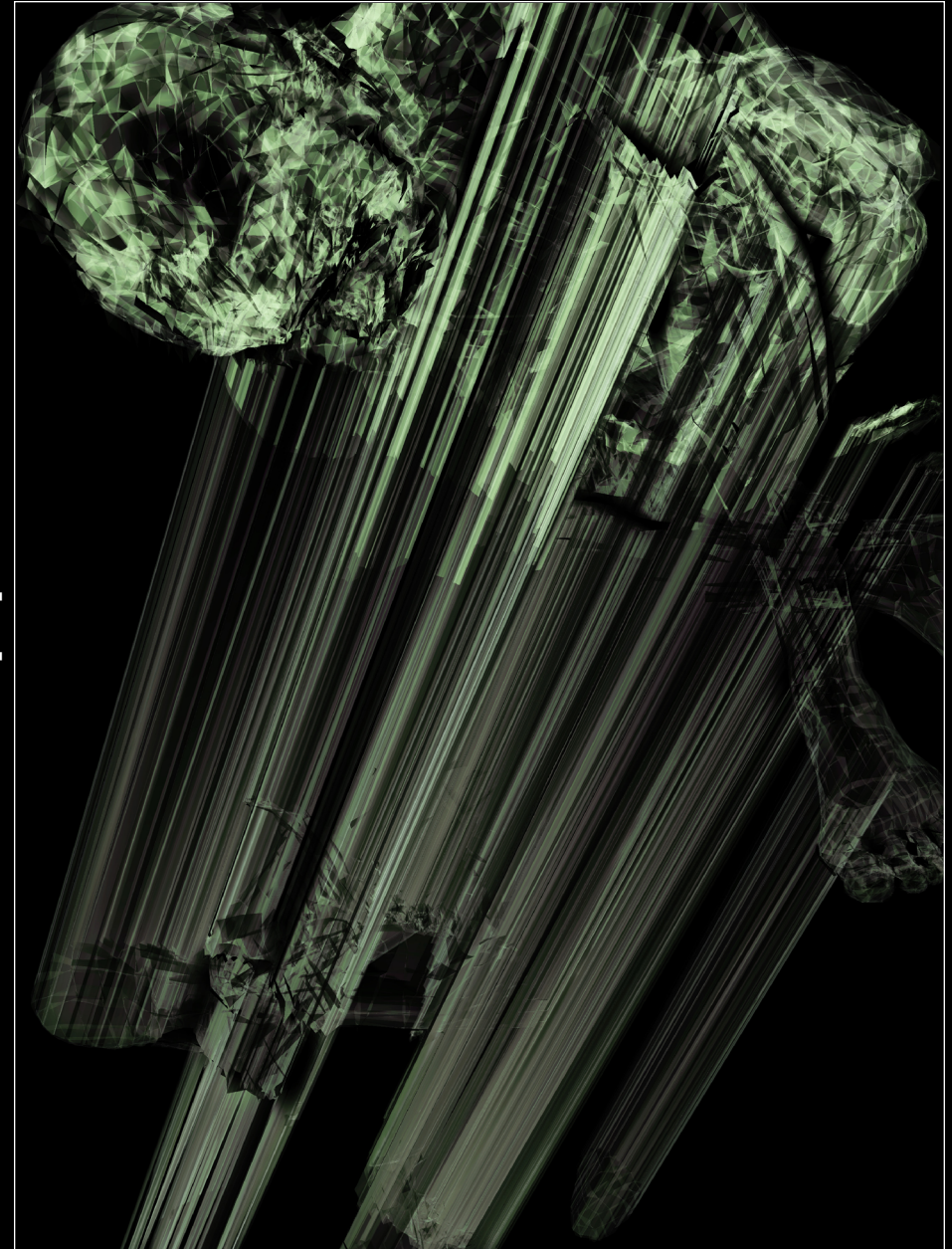
You have mentioned on multiple occasions that "Google is an advertising company, not a reliable information company." Can you explain what you mean by that? From your observations, what kind of filter bubbles are formed by Google? How are the categories different from Facebook?

SUN

I often talk about Google as an advertising company versus an information retrieval company because it's an important distinction that needs to be made in the public. Many people think of Google as being a kind of great, almost public library on the web, but it's not. In fact it is an advertising company. If you think about the mechanics of how search works, it works in tandem with Google search's main product, which is AdWords. That's about buying keywords to help advertise products.

So these auctions are happening 24/7 where people, companies, and anyone is able to bid on paying a particular price to help move their products or their ideas up in Google search, and much of that is contingent on how much they are willing to pay. In that way, this is a really important dimension in understanding the kind of information that rises to the top.

[49]



Of course, what's so important to know is that the majority of people don't go past the first page of real estate, so to speak, on a Google search. So this is one of the reasons why we have to think about what Google search is, as an advertising company versus a different kind of information environment like a library or some other noncommercial information space.

One of the other dimensions about this is that people are often in somewhat of a filter bubble in that Google of course is trying to personalize more and more the kinds of information that we get. So of course the things that we've looked for in the past will, to some degree, influence the things that we find in the present and also in the future. Also, it's working in tandem with these other projects like AdWords where people are trying to get particular ideas in front of us, too.

So it's not just entirely that we're trapped into a space of our previous searches but there's kind of a confluence of multiple factors that's happening. Now this is slightly different from something like Facebook where Facebook's algorithm is definitely trying to tailor the things that you get based on other people that are in your social network. Because that information is so highly influenced by the people you are friends with, the things that you like about the things that they post, there's a much, much more specific kind of tailoring. Again, in Facebook you have Facebook's affinity marketing programs where people and companies are able to purchase certain kinds of keywords and pay to have information appear before you in your feed, based on things that you've liked in the past or a profile of who you are.

Now this begs the question about our ability to be exposed to a broad swath of information and different kinds of ideas, and of course Facebook has come under severe criticism for this in a way that I think Google search hasn't quite come under. Part of that has to do with the recent presidential election in

which Donald Trump won the presidency off of what some people might argue is a lot of misinformation and disinformation that was easily purchased and placed into people's news feeds, both for Donald Trump and against Hillary Clinton. In those ways I think the platforms are operating differently and they have different agendas in their different projects.

What I would say ultimately governs both of these projects and many others is this idea that what people click on is highly profitable to these companies, and so getting people to click on things are particularly served up by people who are Facebook's and Google's advertisers. Again, remembering that we users are not the clients of Facebook and Google—we are the product of Facebook and Google. Which means it's our attention, our eyeballs, our gaze, the time we spend in these spaces that's being sold to advertisers and the more an advertiser is willing to pay, the more likely their content is to show up in searches or in our social media feeds. These are the kinds of relationships that we are starting to elevate and escalate in society.

It's very important that people understand these platforms, rather than relying upon them as some kind of objective arbiter of fair and unbiased information. One of the other things that I'll mention—and I often try to teach this with my students and talk about it in my own work—is that there are some things that some people look for in a space like Google search, where they are looking for an answer. I think of this as being most specifically and problematically characterized in the case of Dylan Roof.

Now Dylan is a white nationalist, racist, and white supremacist in the United States who opened fire on unsuspecting African American worshippers at Immanuel AME church in Charleston, South Carolina just going on a couple of years ago. One of the things that Dylan Roof said in his own manifesto online is that he was conducting Google searches on the phrase 'Black on white crime.' Now when he did searches on Black on white

“WE USERS
ARE NOT THE
CLIENTS OF
FACEBOOK
AND GOOGLE—
WE ARE THE
PRODUCT.”

crime, what he was led to was a whole host of white supremacist organizations on the internet because those are the kinds of organizations that use a phrase like Black on white crime.

The kinds of organizations that don't use a phrase like that might be something like the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the FBI, that would characterize crime in the United States as a more specifically intraracial phenomenon. So what you'll see when you look at FBI statistics is that the majority of white people who are killed by homicide are by other white people, in the same way that Black people are more likely to be killed by Black people and Latinx are more likely to be killed as well within the community and so forth.

What Google search doesn't do is provide a counterpoint. When you search for certain types of content, and in the case of Dylan Roof he looked at a phrase like Black on white crime and it confirmed his already patently false beliefs about the ways in which crime is enacted in racialized ways in the United States. It didn't dispel or problematize his query. It didn't lead him, for example, to scholars or others who are talking and writing about crime not particularly being an interracial phenomenon as much as it is an intraracial phenomenon. So these are the things that are, again, so important for us to understand: that going to a search engine, thinking that it will answer complex questions, is one of our immediate problems that we have to address.

Of course, we have more and more teachers, more and more parents telling young people, telling themselves, to just Google it, to find the answer and again already highlighted the ways in which information comes to the front page of a Google search. So these are the things that illustrate some of the challenges.

What we know is that there is information and knowledge and ideas that have been highly contested for hundreds if not thousands of years. There are many ways of thinking, knowing, and believing

that cannot be sussed out in .03 seconds. Also can't be sussed out based on order that confers some kind of credibility. These are the things that I talk about in my work to problematize what we're doing when we rely upon these platforms to help shape knowledge and information and understanding in society.

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So it sounds like based on what you're saying we have quite a ways to go before we can get to that state where public policy is really integrated into the space of the internet. What is your advice for what we should do now, as users of the internet? How should we interact with Google search? Should we not use it at all? Should we use it with a critical mind? Should we have a flexible mentality where we feed into certain kinds of content but hold back from other kinds of content? What are your thoughts on that?

SUN

We're living in a very complex digital media environment. Certainly using something like Google search for finding out when Starbucks closes or where the nearest dry cleaner is, these kinds of banal information, makes reasonable sense. In many ways those kinds of queries have simply replaced the phone book, for those of us that are old enough to remember the phone book, the Yellow Pages. So in that way, I think that many people experience Google search and many other kinds of technology and platforms as helpful in making life easier.

On another level, though, we must engage with these technologies with a critical eye, with an eye towards when these platforms and these spaces are not appropriate for us to use. Maybe we have to think about the long term consequences of what it would mean to turn over all of our discovery about ourselves to machines, quite frankly, rather than to have those discoveries happen in other ways. We previously relied upon art, we've relied upon literature, we've relied upon the university and educational spaces as a way

WHAT WOULD IT MEAN TO TURN OVER ALL OF OUR DISCOVERY ABOUT OURSELVES TO MACHINES?

to think through the many complex phenomena in this world that exist. It seems to me that we would be missing out and really short changing ourselves to simply turn to machines to ask those questions of, assuming that there is a finite, fixed, perfect answer, because we know, in fact, that not to be the case.

The more tragic part of this, I think, when we think about the longer term interventions that could happen is that many of these interventions are only coming about because of serious tragedies that happen. Whether it's revenge porn, whether it's witnessing murders online through a project like Facebook live, Snapchat, or some other type of streaming possibilities.

We have to ask ourselves why it has to take—and why it will take—egregious, horrible situations to have interventions. Maybe we might want to be more thoughtful before we get to those types of possibilities for regulation or some other kind of policy. I think that these technologies are here, until they're not. You know there's nothing sacrosanct about the internet or the technologies that we're engaging with. Some of us were alive before the internet and remember that there was a particular way of living and doing plenty of things without it. I wonder what it will mean when young people today, whose whole lives have been documented on the internet who have lived out their childhood, and their teenage years, and their young adult years in full view of the spectacle of

the internet. What will the consequences be when they want to run for Congress or they want to have a job that is really important to them and some activity that's been documented precludes their ability to participate in those ways? These are some of the things that we have yet to see.

We are just beginning to see the negative consequences of what it means to be living online in plain view, highly surveilled, highly documented, with very little privacy from these digital technologies. I think there might be a moment when we decide that this isn't the best way, this isn't the best quality of life, and it doesn't create the most possibilities, maybe this isn't the liberatory possibility that people imagined. Maybe it's rather just using our lives by large multinational companies to make a lot of money and have incredible profitability. I guess the question then is profitability at what cost, and I think we will be the people that pay that price.

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So for Ars Electronica this year, the theme for the whole exhibition is artificial intelligence. The full name is Artificial Intelligence, the Other I. I wonder whether you can give us some insight into what kinds of artificial intelligence you feel is urgent for us to look at with a critical eye?

SUN

I'm certain that artificial intelligence will become a human rights issue in the 21st

century. I write about that furiously and I'm speaking about that furiously now. There are deep machine learning projects that are underway, both by the government and in industry, that will have a radical, transformative impact on society. I think that these decision making tools and systems are being developed in private and closed environments that will be deployed on communities with no say whatsoever, and likely very little ability to push back.

The fact that so many decisions are already made that give us access to or deny our ability to engage with things like housing or educational opportunities, that algorithms are playing such a meaningful role in sorting us into preferred and less preferred people and categories of human beings. That is going to intensify. So if one is born into poverty and one is born into a social network where other people in poverty, also systematically marginalized, structurally, for generations and may not be able to get out. Those things

are only going to be further entrenched because those environments will not become predictors of one's success, of one's abilities, of one's possibilities in life. We see this increasingly happening in society.

This is a fundamental human rights issue as to whether people have the possibility to exceed their current conditions, but more importantly, these technologies are doing nothing to dismantle or shift the structural inequalities in our society. They're just making better and more preferred classes of people within our society. That's what big data's promise, quite frankly, is to help companies find the best people to engage with and leave the rest behind.

So these are things we have to pay attention to and I think these will really start to come to the fore. We're going to see these in more egregious ways. We already see the seepages of this. Artificial intelligence should be on our radar as a human rights issue. We should be talking about it and engaging with it on those terms.

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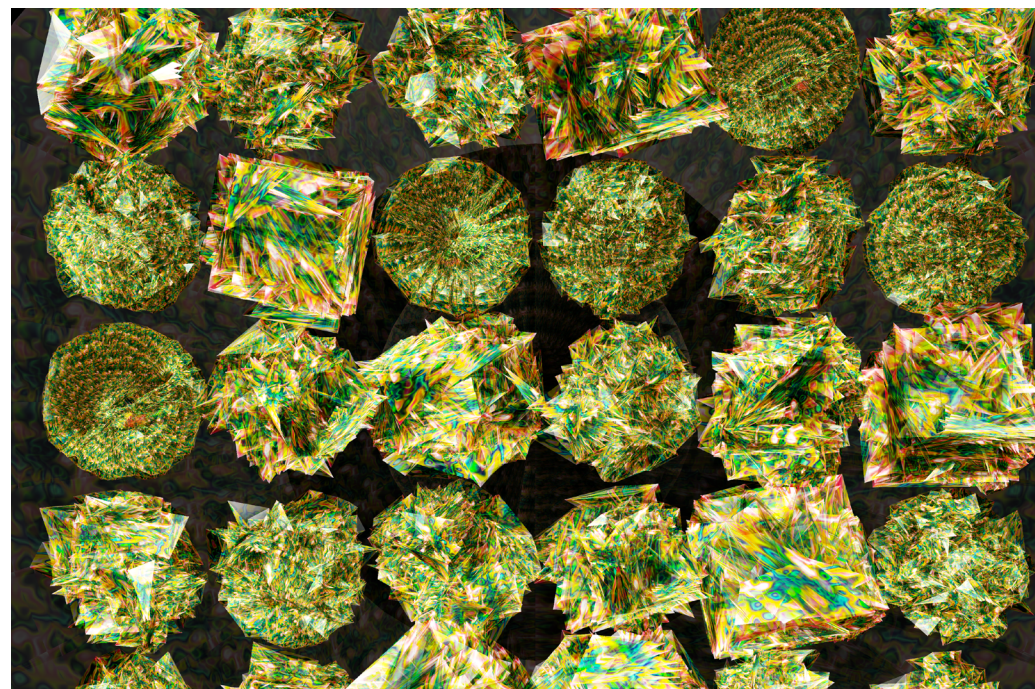
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(2017) *Interview with Nora N. Khan:*
Sarah Rosalena Balbuena-Brady

Visual Artist: Sanglim Han

Sound Artist/Music Producer:
Jen Agosta and Sarah Rosalena
Balbuena-Brady

Shapeshifting AI is an audio-visual voidLab collaboration between Sanglim Han, Jen Agosta, and Sarah Rosalena Balbuena-Brady featuring abstract 3D animation and ambient sound score remixed with excerpts of an interview with writer Nora N. Khan discussing finding power in alienation and "otherness," the anthropomorphisation of artificial intelligence, and designing AI as a tool to explore subverting existing imbalanced power structures by using alienation to shape the future. Khan is a writer of fiction and creative non-fiction about digital visual culture, artificial intelligence, electronic music and games.



(July 24, 2017) *Interview with*
Nora N. Khan

Nora N. Khan (she/her) is a writer and a professor at RISD Digital + Media and Sarah Rosalena Balbuena-Brady (she/her) is a voidLab co-founder.

SB

How did you get interested in AI and machine learning?

NK

So I started writing about games about eight or nine years ago. I had just gotten an MFA in fiction and wanted a space for criticism where I could find experimental language or find a kind of field where there wasn't a lot of long form writing or criticism. So back in 2009, two of my college classmates¹ quit their job and dropped out of medical school to start a gaming magazine, Kill Screen. It's a printed journal for long form essays, fiction writers, poets, artists and people who weren't necessarily in the games industry, weren't reviewers in any kind of professional capacity, but who had a pertinent experience, either with games, games design, systems design, or simulation design in their personal or professional life

¹ Jamin Warren and Chris Dahlen.

to write about other issues in games that they found interesting, outside of a review format.

So my job as online editor was to commission specifically women to write about games or who had a lot of experience with games. So this included Jen Frank and Mitu Khandaker (who now teaches at NYU and started an AI company), and Cara Ellison, who is now a narrative designer for huge games. This was when they were still writing reviews but were looking to write about narrative in games, creating characters, and especially in creating trust and belief in AI and artificial personalities.

So a lot of them had experience in the multiplayer world, some had experience in narrative. All of them shared this interest in what makes a character real; what makes a virtual personality real. Often they wrote about their really deep personal experiences within game communities, often with people who are

“ARTISTS ARE
REALLY GOOD
AT SELECTING
ISSUES IN AI
RIGHT NOW.”

communicating through avatars, where you can experiment with parts of your personality that you might not necessarily get to show outside. These were not new topics but they were not necessarily always brought out of an academic context or a very niche conversation in the games community.

So the idea was to have essays and interviews and pieces that made that accessible using accessible language. I worked with them as an editor and started to realize that writing about games is a space where you can deal with pretty much all of the fundamental questions that we are dealing with in AI and tech — right now; day to day; in a much more focused way, and in the boundary inside the game world where you can explore all these issues in a more contained fashion. Part of that was interviewing the writers and designers of the game, and many of them came from science fiction and fantasy writing, so they had a different idea of interactivity with an AI, one in which the goal of design is to form a relationship with your character and in order to do that you have to create conversation and a facial interface that you can relate to and connect to. So these people are dealing with extremely deep questions in AI theory and philosophy, but in a very specific, bounded setting.

So from that, I worked with them for four of five years on and off and then my interests moved more into digital art, more generally, and working with artists and collaborating with artists who are exploring the difficult questions in AI and machine learning in the last two or three years in a way that people can access.

Access is really what interests me and artists are really good at selecting issues in AI right now, whether it's life and learning or what machine surveillance systems plan to see and are choosing to system. So we have a system called “predictive policing” that police departments all over the country are starting to use,

which offsets the responsibility of who looks criminal

² Cheng, Ian. *Emissaries*. 9 April–24 September 2017, MoMA PS1, New York.

and who might be criminal, which is crazy. In that, obviously, it targets groups that were already considered so you have to think about the data that goes into the techniques that the system runs, and it's based on human bias, it's based on human errors.

I'm not the only person thinking about these questions. I don't have the coding or programming background. A lot of people feel that they can't talk about these questions without literally knowing how a neural network works or how it learns to see. So for example NVIDIA had a self driving car that came out two months ago. The car that taught itself how to drive, based on the data set and parameters put in, but how it taught itself how to drive and see and navigate a route is something they are still figuring out.

So I'm really interested in artists who work specifically with simulations or simulation design. Ian Cheng is an artist I worked with a ton. He has a show up at MoMA² now which is his last five years of a three-part live simulation that runs on forever. There's no end to it and there's also no way for him to track how these algorithmic driven characters in the game world interact with one another, form relationships with another, and mash into one another and form different kinds of new artificial lives over time. His background is in cognitive science and game design and you can watch the ecology of this world develop.

What's interesting to me is how game designers and people interested will then go on to make commentary on how AI develops and forms. And basically we are watching AI unfold in the way that Ian's work models simulation. It's a unifying thread, seeing how other people model our relationships with AI, whether it's through art or through games or through fiction or through philosophy and theory.

SB

What I've been really interested in is data and machine learning, it's really like a black box. I was really inspired by

CAPITALISM UNFOLDS ON THE LEVEL OF THE MIND NOW.

your essay "Towards a Poetic Artificial Intelligence" about how you can use symbolic language with computers and AI as this kind of shape-shifter. So I wanted to ask you how much of your work with AI is a critique of technology that will provide solutions to the problems we face, mostly on your thoughts on otherness in the future?

NK

That's a really good question. One thing about my background I was going to add is that I worked in business school for five years. So I was writing case studies about the beginning of Silicon Valley. So tech entrepreneurs and the ideas that they had about how technology can help us build a better world or move slowly towards a kind of utopia. For many of them, technology, and eventually artificial intelligence was a big part of the answer. Through AI we could solve all sorts of issues within inequity and labor, through inequity in our human interpersonal relationships. AI is a way to model different forms of mind and relationality. That was one of the driving principles in massive technology companies, which obviously has changed. Those ideals change when power is accumulated, when capital is accumulated, it's used for different ends.

So I wrote that essay two years ago. What I was interested in then is how theorists and philosophers are thinking

about AI and how that shapes the model of mind or the model of human mind as computational. So there was this piece recently about how your mind is not a computer and how this idea our minds work like computers is actually related to our ideas about AI. And there's issues with that piece but there's long been discourse about where AI can go that is eventually gonna get to a point where we can't even keep track. We have so much computational power at our hands now that people cannot even keep up. I think it's more and more pressing to think about what's gonna happen in the next thirty years or fifty years and more important is understanding how AI is shaping our day to day right now.

So from that piece that I wrote two years ago to the work I'm doing now at Eyebeam, it's much more about banal AI that we interact with everyday, virtual assistants and digital personalities that companies built to represent their brand. That to me is the kind of AI that we really have to interface and interact with. I'm going to take a step back and say that modeled language and seeing what we build in AI shapes us. We take everything that we interact with in technology back to our own lives. So if you are speaking to a chatbot a lot, that's training you to ask questions in a certain way in order to get the machine to run.

To me what's interesting is how

we take that back to our own relationships or onto platforms like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. You learn to portray your life in certain ways and certain formats. Those formats are designed. So how AI is designed and who is designing it; for who are they designing, become political questions. It's a question of power, it's a question of how bodies are organized and people are organized and how relationships are organized. Who is making those decisions and why? Who are they held accountable to? When you have four massive corporations that make all of these decisions with no government oversight, no ethical oversight. They are worth billions of dollars.

That's what people here at Eyebeam and people in activist communities argue is that we need people who are programmers, who are independent, and who can explain AI to the everyday person who doesn't have time to keep track of this. Every time you do an app update on your phone, the rules change, the rules and the fingerprint changes. So that's why your phone records almost everything you do when you're maybe not even using it, when you're sleeping, when you're walking around. It's gathering all of this information that we slowly don't have any control over. So it becomes an ethical question, a rights question.

I was at the AI Now Symposium that was held at MIT a couple of weeks ago with Kate Crawford and Meridith Whittaker. One of them is at Microsoft research and started this AI ethics initiative that is partnering with the ACLU to answer these questions. It's a really key time because these systems are being built without us having a say, the average user doesn't have any say. And yet they affect our lives in such a profound way, mentally, emotionally and psychologically and are shaping the ways we speak and think and interact.

Capitalism unfolds on the level of the mind now. It's this idea called cognitive capitalism. Technology and AI designs a huge part of that, and drives that, and is driven by access to your thinking

and your feeling in ways that you don't necessarily have a conscious sense of. These models are taught in tech design and the ethics of them aren't questioned because a large part of them is marketing. Marketing is usually a field of business that puts the responsibility on the user.

So it's this endless loop. Yes, when you choose to use Facebook or you buy an Alexa or you get an iPhone you do take on the responsibility of using that product. At the same time, the products have become so ubiquitous that I think the context that we are in has changed. This bold idea that tech will produce solutions to the problems we face, there is a lot that is smuggled in along with the idea. It's a kind of contradiction of course.

SB

I keep going back to that essay because it's inspired me quite a bit. I've been using machine learning as part of my art practice. Most recently feeding it symbols and languages that are inherently excluded from that conversation and seeing what the computer will learn and come up with. Mainly indigenous languages and indigenous symbols that have never been introduced ever. Coming from a programming/activist role, I'm constantly thinking of different ways of creating solutions that are almost not human-centric. It's the AI learning. So I'm curious, and it's a question that you posted, if AI could have a post-human capacity in determining alienation and expressions of power.

NK

On a philosophical or literary level, alienation has been a source of power for those who are already alienated in society. So you can turn that around—if you turn your subject position or position of oppression around, it would become a strength. So if you are unseen, there are a lot of things you can do when there aren't a lot of people paying too much attention to you. Or, if you are too seen, you are overly seen or overly present, that also can be a form of alienation. In

“HOW CAN AI MODEL GENDER?”

literature and poetry art has also been a strength. Those are literary and artistic approaches.

I think cyberfeminism and xenofeminism, despite the differences between them, turn the alienation of being a woman in a patriarchal society into something totally different because it becomes this idea to see how AI can model gender or become totally blank, a human-like type being without gender. That creates another kind of model of the future, in the sense that you could think about other ways to be in the world outside of binaries. You can design human personalities without the biological limits. I think those are amazing philosophical experiences to see and articulate how things can be different. At the same time, I think the role of otherness as it comes out through the techno-utopian idea of the future comes without difficulty. The futures that silicon valley or that these companies design for, are often based on science fiction.

This is another question, why it's more and more common not to anthropomorphize AI. Human life is a different kind of intelligence. That's where otherness becomes really useful, understanding that people are one kind of intelligence along a huge spectrum. From slime to insects to animals, and so seeing its otherness in relationship to us we can see ourselves better.

SB

Can you talk about your new work on language and narrative design as it enacts in various ideologies?

NK

So my project at Eyebeam is actually in four parts. The first part is on this idea of something called narrative design, which I'm not sure if that's a term that is used, but I have seen it used in interviews where writers address the next generation of digital assistants. So whatever will come after Siri or Cortana or Alexa, these companies, and lots of little startups, are struggling and fighting to make

a virtual assistant that can be sold across platforms. I think part of that is looking at how Siri and Cortana and Alexa work, and also looking at all the user data that they collect. It's an unimaginable amount of data extracted from the use of these assistants. Then the goal is to make a kind of virtual assistant that can be worked into a banking platform, like Bank of America or Sydney bank. You will chat less and less with real people. We are already getting more accustomed to talking to virtual assistants, whose design is to create a very specific kind of response that feels as human as possible.

So this design of a humanoid personality is really interesting and I'm trying to look at all the conversations that are being designed. When you go into a chat box with a virtual assistant there's a specific set of conversations you can have. Your language changes as you interact with it.

We feel increasingly comfortable interacting with AI voices and disembodied voices, and these are very similar to people who work on help hotlines and sex work on chat hotlines, in these cases people are fine with not seeing that person. You're also fine with not interacting with the emotional work that's producing the conversation. So it's the same with, you know, Disney characters or Pixar characters. A lot of these memorable fiction characters are designed as virtual assistants where there are conversations where you feel at ease. That design of you feeling at ease means wanting to come back to the virtual assistant. The minute a design interface makes you feel uncomfortable, you will stop using it.

There's a lot of research that shows if a person doesn't like a particular app they will drop it and never touch it again. So there's an entry point where you as a user, those first ten minutes of you talking to this digital assistant is crucial. So the conversation you have, that it's designed for, is really important.

So a big part of my research is talking to the chatbot designers and writers on these teams who were taken

from film, some of them are comedians and most of them are creative writers — which means they can write amazing, memorable dialogue — and all of that is being worked into these kind of innocuous AI that we don't think twice about. All of these stereotypically feminine qualities, usually they will use a woman's voice because people don't like strange men's voices, that's what the research has shown.

So the project is an essay and an online exhibition, and all the research that I've done will be posted on my website.³ And all of these people who work at different companies are very open and excited about the work they are doing. They're excited about the potential, but I'm not sure how much they think about the ethical questions. They are excited about what happens in the computation in this philosophical way.

SB

Fantastic. I'm really looking forward to checking it out at Eyebeam. Thank you for answering my questions and I look forward to catching up.

“PEOPLE ARE
ONE KIND OF
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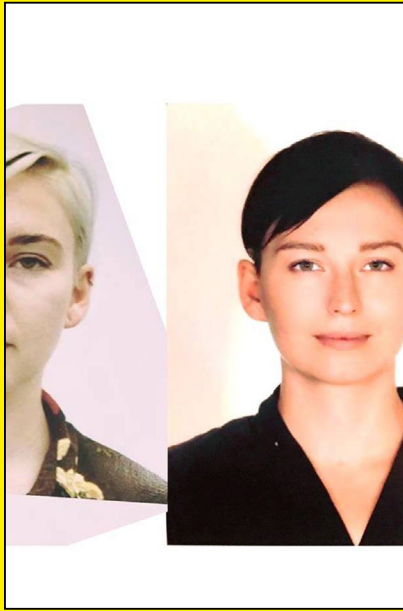
A.M. Darke (she/he/sir)



A.M. Darke is an artist and game maker designing radical tools for social intervention. Still in the class war. Now in the pandemic. He's in the combination class war and pandemic. Assistant Professor of Digital Arts and New Media, and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, at UC Santa Cruz, Darke also directs The Other Lab, an interdisciplinary, intersectional feminist research space for experimental games and new media. She's currently working on 'Ye or Nay?', a Kanye West-themed game about Black culture, and the Open Source Afro Hair Library, a 3D model database for Black hair styles and textures.

Darke holds a B.A. in Design ('13) and an M.F.A. in Media Arts ('15), both from UCLA. Her work has been shown internationally and featured in a variety of publications, including Kill Screen, Vice, and NPR.

Amanda Stojanov (she/her)



Amanda is a media artist who investigates how innovations in communication technologies affect perceptions of identity, agency, and visibility, emphasizing concepts of embodiment and the "historically constituted body" within a networked-society. Her work has been shown nationally and internationally in venues such as the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, and Ars Electronica, Linz. Her work has also been featured in publications like Artillery magazine, The New York Times, and The Associated Press.

Amanda holds a BFA in Design from Monmouth University and an MFA in Media Arts from UCLA. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Digital Media at Monmouth University, NJ, and is co-lead director of the IDM Research Lab.

Andrea Vitali (she/her)



Andrea Vitali is a designer based in Treviso (Italy), currently working for H-FARM as Senior Interaction Designer and Project Manager.

She coordinates and directs the design of board games, ARGs, digital and narrative experience aimed at learning new skills and work methodologies. She also designs and facilitates training sessions for corporate learning activities, digital and physical events. She keeps nurturing her curiosity and explorative approach through diverse R&D projects, for example exploring organisational design to rethink the way we interpret leadership today.

Andrea holds a Ph.D in Design (2017) from Politecnico di Milano and spent one year as visiting researcher at UCLA Game Lab in 2015/2016 - the same year she had the chance to proudly join the voidLab community.

Chelly Jin (she/her)



Chelly Jin is a designer and artist based in Seattle, WA whose work synthesizes data, design thinking, technology, and user-centric research to develop visionary products. As an artist, inspired by creative applications of technologies as a mode of expression and exploration, she unravels personal narratives. Her work has been shown at the UCLA ArtSci Center and p5.js. She previously taught as guest faculty at Anderson Ranch in 2019.

Jin received her BA from the University of California, Los Angeles in Design Media Art and Digital Humanities. She is currently a UX designer at Microsoft. chellyj.in

CO-FOUNDER BIOS

Christina Yglesias (she/her)



Christina Yglesias is an artist, educator, and writer who studies feminist post cinema, focusing on bridging the gaps between new media, expanded cinema, feminist film theory, and the history of feminist video art. She has taught video, photo, and new media classes and workshops to adults and youth at universities, community arts organizations, and non-profits. She currently teaches a video art course at Otis College of Art and Design and works in digital marketing at a women-led startup.

Echo Theohar (she/they)



Echo Theohar is an artist and researcher whose work aims to examine disparate narratives in systems, machine intelligence, and sensory labor. They have served as a community technologist and exhibitor at venues such as LACMA, The Armory, The Mistake Room, Navel, Women's Center for Creative Work, UCLA, Humboldt (Berlin), and AUP (Paris). Theohar is currently teaching at The New School as a lecturer in Art, Media, and Technology.

Eli Joteva (she/her)



Eli Joteva is a Bulgarian intermedia artist based in Los Angeles. Inspired by contemporary research in the fields of quantum mechanics, neurophysics and machine vision, her work investigates organic and computational memory systems in relationship to imaging technologies of the past and future. She has exhibited internationally in venues like Ars Electronica, Fischer Museum, SciArt Initiative, DC I/O, Culture Hub LA, xCoax, SPRING/BREAK Art Show, DA Fest, Sariev Contemporary, and Queensland Center for Photography.

Joteva holds an MFA from UCLA Design | Media Arts, a BA from USC Roski and completed The New Normal postgraduate research program at Strelka. She is currently artist in residence at Ars Electronica & Fraunhofer MEVIS, lecturer at houdini. school, VR curator at SUPERCOLLIDER and cofounder of current.cam.

Evelyn Masso (she/they)



Evelyn Masso is a person (all the time), a tech worker (on weekdays), and a poet (on weekends).

She has taught at places like UCLA Extension, UCLA DMA's Conditional Studio, USC, Gray Area, and the Women's Center for Creative Work (but she has yet to take a class at UCLA). She's worked in and around open source software for three years and counting, with projects like p5.js and GitHub Desktop. In 2019 she was an inaugural p5.js Fellow.

Evelyn likes to talk about mixed identities, queer poetry, and her recent love for running. Originally from Ohio, she currently lives on unceded Tongva land (near Los Angeles) with a rapidly growing collection of houseplants.

CO-FOUNDER BIOS

Hillary Cleary (she/her)



Hillary Cleary is an experiential designer, producer, and arts educator. She graduated from UCLA in 2017 summa cum laude with degrees in Design | Media Arts and History. She currently works in the field of exhibit design and fabrication, and has both designed and produced interactive educational exhibits for the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum, the WWII Museum, the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, and many others. In 2019 she worked as a Design & Technology Fellow in Santiago, Chile, teaching digital design and fabrication to high school students. Currently, she works as an Associate Producer at Bluecadet, an exhibit design firm based in Philly & NYC.

Kate Hollenbach (she/they)



Kate Hollenbach is an artist, programmer, and educator. She creates video and interactive works examining critical issues in user interface and user experience design, with a focus on user habits, data collection, and surveillance. Kate's art practice is informed by years of experience as an interface designer and product developer. She has presented or shown her work in venues including SFMoMA, Young Projects, Stamps Gallery, INST-INT, and SIGGRAPH.

Kate holds an MFA from UCLA Design Media Arts and a BS in Computer Science and Engineering from MIT. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Emergent Digital Practices at University of Denver.

Jules Kris (they/them)



Jules Kris is an artist and programmer who uses software "incorrectly" to invent alternative interfaces for their body when mainstream technologies fail them. Kris's works have been featured at museums and festivals in the United States, including the Hammer Museum, Indiecade Festival, LA Weekly Artopia, and CultureHub LA. They've taught workshops at Pepperdine University, Navel, Tiny Tech Zines, and Glendale Tech Week. Kris holds a B.A. in Design Media Arts from UCLA, and is currently a co-organizer with Tiny Tech Zines in Los Angeles.

Regina Napolitano (she/they)



Regina Napolitano is a high school teacher and poet based in Oakland, CA. She currently teaches 10th & 8th graders English at Oakland School for the Arts. Regina has produced three poetry zines—"Weirdo Palace" "Hopeful Romantic" and "alive? Alive! alive." She is a communist and a weirdo.

Regina has a B.A. in Gender Studies from UCLA and an M.A in Education from UC Berkeley. In 2016 she wrote an undergraduate thesis about tumblr feminism.

CO-FOUNDER BIOS

Sanglim Han (she/her)



Sanglim Han explores disembodied, fragmented, and interstitial bodies. Through her performative media, primarily 3D simulations with autonomous computational systems, she investigates possibilities for us, as humans, to transcend the linguistic and logical frame of understanding to discover the bustle of dynamics around us. Her works have been presented internationally at various venues and festivals from Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, India, Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, South Korea, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine to the USA.

She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Sofia S.G. (she/her)



Sofia S.G. is a writer and game artist. Junk, her game-thesis visualizing drug addiction and capitalism (as described by former rich heroin addict William S. Burroughs) was featured at IndieCade 2019. She has done archival work with the Sam Francis Foundation, game development with hyper-theatre company Rogue Artists, and worked with Processing Foundation and the UCLA Game Lab. She lives in Los Angeles, and likely will never leave.

Sofia has two bachelor's degrees from UCLA in English and Design | Media Arts. She will be producing a game about her Father some time in the next ten years.

Xin Xin (they/them)



Xin Xin is an interdisciplinary artist and community organizer working at the intersection of technology, labor, and identity. Xin has received an Eyebeam fellowship for Rapid Response for a Better Digital Future. They were the Director and Lead Organizer for Processing Community Day 2019, a worldwide initiative celebrating art, code, and diversity, and they currently serve on the advisory board for the Processing Foundation. Their work has been exhibited and screened at Ars Electronica, DIS, Gene Siskel Film Center, Tiger Strikes Asteroid and Machine Project. Xin received their M.F.A from UCLA Design Media Arts and teaches at Parsons School of Design as an Assistant Professor of Interaction and Media Design.

Yuehao Jiang (she/her)



Yuehao Jiang is a Chinese-born-in-the-90s-interdisciplinary-media artist based in Los Angeles. Her recent work examines the relationship between mass-produced commodities and digital data under the impact of the Internet and global consumerism. Her work has been exhibited internationally, at places such as Brand Library & Art Center Los Angeles, Guardian Art Center Beijing, K Museum of Contemporary Art Seoul, B4BEL4B Oakland, the Hammer Museum Los Angeles, and Ars Electronica Linz.

Yuehao has been teaching as an lecturer at UCLA Design Media Arts since 2019. She holds an MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles and a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

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