

The Continuous Failures of Optimism:

An investigation of the screen, futurity, and digital affect

By
Kevin Holliday

A THESIS SUPPORT PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY OF ART + DESIGN 2021

© Kevin Holliday, 2021

Acknowledgements:

A profound thanks is due to Randy Cutler for getting through this with me, and to my family for the support necessary to even begin. A special thank you to Rosalina Libertad as well for the beautiful documentation of the thesis exhibition. There is truly an endless number of people to thank. I like to think they know who they are, but I would also like to acknowledge that I am all the better for having met them, and been allowed to learn from and with them.

It is also important to foreground this paper with the acknowledge that I am currently living on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples including the territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh nations, and the work outlined in this paper was produced on these lands as well. If we are to imagine new ways of existing in the world we must begin by actively dismantling the systems of power currently in place, especially when we benefit from them. This acknowledgement is far from sufficient, and as a settler on this land I try to keep this at the front of my mind, and invite you to do the same as you engage with this paper and the world beyond it.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
--------------	---

On Context or how I inhabit the present moment

...Personal	2
...Aesthetic	3
...Affectual	5
...Screenbased	6

Work I:

<i>continuous failures of optimism, or what if we could recognize catastrophe(capss)</i>	6
...and Abject Materiality	8

Work II:

<i>or will it make anything alright?</i>	11
...and De-monumentalization	12

Work III:

<i>currently untitled:investigations in foam</i>	13
...and Conspiracy and Paranoia	15

Optimism or how we might look to inhabit the future	16
---	----

Postscript~On the thesis exhibition	19
-------------------------------------	----

Works Cited	22
-------------	----

Works Consulted	23
-----------------	----

Appendix	24
----------	----

Introduction:

We are living in a time of futurelessness.(Malik, Tanner) Regressive societal forces, and impending ecological catastrophe, among other things, have removed the ability of the future to act as a waypost for the present. There is no longer a clear outcome for the present moment, and this instability has given rise to any number of absurd and disturbing phenomena, the rise of nationalism for example, or the proliferation of conspiracy theories, the alt-right emergence in digital discourse etc. The internet, or digital space more generally, was supposed to provide a newly emergent and democratized way of existing, a digital commons. This never came to pass, and instead we have ended up with a worryingly feudalistic cyberspace. I am interested in whether it is possible to reorient ourselves, and to reimagine the possibilities that were once available. How does one speak about the internet, the digital, the “future”, without using its own corrupted language? As tech culture emerges as a dominant normative force in society, how can one maintain the integrity of a technologically based counterculture and align it otherwise? By navigating these questions we can perhaps begin to allow a reclaiming of the emancipatory potentials of digital technologies.

I have since a very young age been firmly embedded in the internet, though full disclosure, I am old enough to slightly predate the widespread adoption of at home internet. I never fit in very well IRL, and much of my formative years were spent in digital spaces, MMORPGS¹, forums, etc, so I have spent a significant portion of my life mediated in online spaces, for better and for worse. My memories of a time before the internet are fleeting at this point, but I do remember before it had so fully permeated every aspect of my life. My artwork deals with what existing in these online/digital spaces can mean. It is an attempt to explore the vagaries, affects, detritus, and experiences of this permeation, the leaks and feedbacks between URL and IRL². I explore what potentials these spaces, and the technologies that support them offer, but also attempt to elicit a criticality about how we are conditioned to relate to them in hopes of encouraging new ways of relating to, and living with, digital culture and technology.

I consider my work a form of multimedia collage in a screen based installation practice. It involves a recombining of disparate elements, both physical and digital, into a newly emergent whole that carries the meaning. Each element is carefully selected, but no single element exists on its own. They are all part of a conditional relationship with the other objects in the installation. The process of sourcing these elements is intuitive, and involves a stumbling upon, as opposed to a seeking out. The work ideally functions to help physicalize the ways we exist digitally as a means to open up critical dialogue about the ubiquitous privileging of the screen in an increasingly digitized society, and the problematics inherent to the attempted universal space within. I work mostly with found objects, large scale digital prints and video collage, but I also explore materially and respond to whatever is available, as it is important for my process to proceed organically and responsively to the environment in which I find myself. I utilize found materials in order to drive home the material nature of these investigations, and to highlight the material and lived history that is often excluded from digital narratives.

The projects I have undertaken in the MFA program focus my research into digital space, and the ways we construct our identities, and our environments, through the mediation of screen based technologies. I am seeking to engage critically with an evolving relationship to technology and visions of the future. I have been thinking through the role of optimism, and whether or not optimistic visions of the

¹ Massive Multiplayer Online Roleplaying Games

² URL indicates being online and IRL is an abbreviation for In Real Life

future are still possible or beneficial given the state of the world, a growing trend of national isolation, and increasing social, economic, and ecological precarity(Malik). I am attempting to answer for myself whether “productive” visions of the future are damaging to marginalized subjectivities, and are envisioned at the expense of solving the problems of the present. Another particular focus is challenging what is often allowed to pass as the “neutrality” of cyberspace. By expanding our relationship to technology, and making space for non-normative relationalities, I am hoping to highlight the need to ground racialized, queer, and gender non-conforming subjectivities in a cyberspace from which even their potential to exist is too often erased(Benjamin ch.1). Intentional and unintentional digital erasure of non-dominant perspectives is a pressing problem that will only become worse with the advance of virtual technologies if left unchallenged. In this way, my work is an examination of how the contemporary condition is continuously mediated through screen based technologies, and a way to think through reorienting that relationship, and opening it to alternative modes of existence.

There is a deep sense of anxiety embedded in the contemporary moment, and I am interested in exploring this emotional or affective quality of the contemporary post-internet condition³. Trying to embody the nature of digital affect is a major through line of my thesis. As the world becomes increasingly precarious, and capital continues to consolidate, we are being sold a vision of technological salvation. Automation, AI, VR, etc, all harken a new technological take off, but the future promised is one that is under corporate and algorithmic control(Cramer). This has caused me to question the possibilities and problematics of technology and the ways in which we portray these possible futures. The thesis project navigates the ways certain perspectives and subjectivities are proscribed from theories of futurity and the adverse material impact this has on both the present, and emergent futures(Malik).

Context:

I am mixed race Chinese and white Canadian/American, and while I grew up in a comfortably middle class environment both of my parents grew up poor working class (my mother in Vancouver and my father in Marquette, Michigan) and their experiences have helped inform my own position. I am a visible minority, but my class position and proximity to whiteness has protected me from much, though not all, of the systemic oppression I might otherwise have faced. I am also a sometimes-male presenting non-binary person. I occupy a hybrid position in which certain privileges come and go depending on how I am read or perceived by others. I think this has made me very aware of how tenuous these privileges really are, and how actively people have to work to maintain and perpetuate them.

My Grandma was born in Chinatown in Vancouver and her stories have coloured a lot of my work in terms of aesthetics and motifs. They are often attempts to bridge into an imagined communal past, or perhaps more correctly to help this past maintain a presence. My Grandpa fled the Communist Revolution in China following WWII, and eventually found himself homeless in Vancouver and working on a pig farm. They would go on to start a Chinese restaurant, which became quite successful and has provided for much of my family. His experiences, I think, formed a radical generosity within him that I hope I can work to pass on. I say all this to point out I have a conflicted relationship to capital in so far as it has provided for me throughout my life, but I must acknowledge the way class re-establishes itself, and provides opportunities to some by denying them from others, and that I have materially benefitted, and continue to benefit, from this exploitative process even as my work stands critically against it.

³ Post-internet is a hazy amorphous term, but I use it here to indicate a state of perpetual connection and complete permeation. A way of living that is at all times mediated through screen based technologies and transmitted over the internet. It is not to say we are living after the internet, but at a time where it is no longer sensible for many of us to conceptualize ourselves as separate from the internet.

I originally studied economics from 2006-2009, and this experience of studying the economy during the global financial collapse informs my thinking to this day. While studying, it became very apparent the ways in which certain worldviews were privileged and enforced by academic narratives, and the way other perspectives are written out of legibility. It helped shape and contextualize my critical attitudes towards capitalism, the failures of our systems of government and hegemonic society as a whole. It also highlighted for me the complicity of academic institutions with the horrific mismanagement of industry. I did not have an easy time at university and though I did excel academically it made me aware of how little that matters. I am often thankful I did not have a “productive” experience as I could easily have allowed myself to be folded into an oppressive structure instead of positioning myself against it, or realizing it had always been positioned against me. Working through what this opposition means, and how to think about dismantling these structures is a large focus of my work.

I am also a queer gender-non conforming person and as such unfortunately often run into the imposed limitations of society. This position in particular drives a lot of my work which deals with expanding the possibilities of the future. It is through recognizing the way the present, and the past, has been limited for certain people(because of class, race, gender, sexuality, etc) that we can allow those in marginal positions to envision new potential futures. I was lucky enough to find a vibrant and supportive queer community in a greasy fry kitchen in Toronto which did this work for me, I am trying to find ways to pass that work forward.

The aesthetics that I employ when making art are directly informed by my lived experience. I have a very specific aesthetic sensibility that has remained consistent as my art practice evolves around it. As this sensibility is a constant throughout my thesis project, and my life beyond that, I think it makes sense to begin with some background on how that aesthetic has been formed. The first, and most enduring influence is my Grandmother. She embodied a certain kind of glamour and theatricality that informs me personally and how I conceptualize my work.



Figure 1. Photos of my Grandmother and her paintings on my dresser - 2020

She grew up in Chinatown, and the experience of spending time there has shaped my visual language. Stories about her past also find their way into my work as well, particularly those about the

Cantonese Opera. These productions were hugely influential to her community, and I've heard much about her experiences of them. They existed for a long time in my mind as a mythical space, imaginings of what they must have been like. The aesthetics of this specific theatre practice is something I look towards for inspiration in terms of composition, colour, staging, etc. One aspect that I most directly draw into my work is the multilayered flatness of the patterned fabric backdrops, which are a form or motif I have repeated throughout my practice. Embracing this flatness is in part about maintaining a visual linkage to non-western art traditions, but there is also a resonance with the flatness and artificiality of digital space that compliments my investigations.

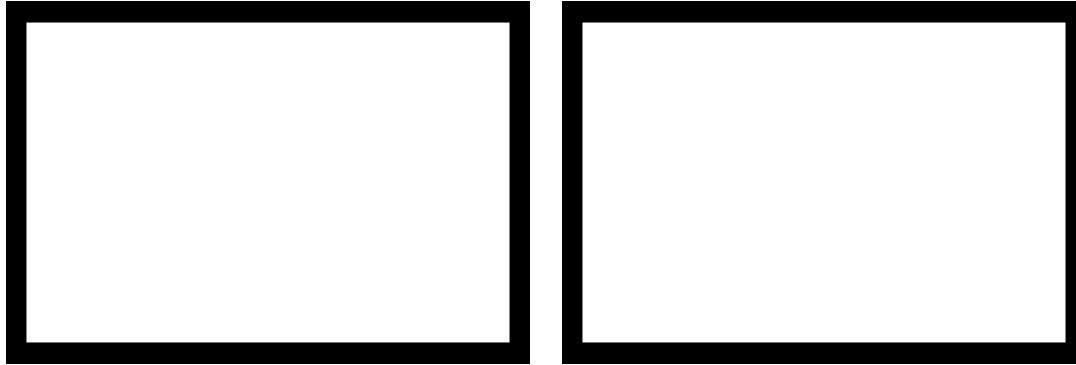
My thinking on flatness has been greatly influenced by Takeshi Murakami's writing on the postmodern art movement Superflat, which explores the development of the flat picture plane within Japanese art and entertainment. Murakami also draws out this relation to digital space in his "The Super Flat Manifesto": "One way to imagine super flatness is to think of the moment when, in creating a desktop graphic for your computer, you merge a number of distinct layers into one."⁽¹⁾ When working on physicalizing digital experience, it is important to maintain this relationship to flatness, and looking towards Cantonese opera specifically, is a strategy to do that. I should note that while I have located this inspiration in the tradition of Chinese Opera, Murakami's writing is specific to the context of Japan. I have found a resonance with his writing that I think is applicable in some ways to Chinese art as well. Having said that, Japanese media, particularly anime, has also been deeply influential and helped refine how I produce work in these ways.



Figure 2. Image of a cantonese opera stage(<https://www.shutterstock.com/video/clip-9037450-nakhonsawan-thailand--february-22-chinese-opera>)

Another important visual or aesthetic influence is 90's rave culture, and the happy hardcore scene in particular. The bright pop colours and sense of irreverent celebration tinged with loss and sadness is the aesthetic foundation or undercurrent in all of my work and this is where it springs from. Movies like Gregg Araki's *Nowhere*(1997) have informed my aesthetics immensely, though not just the film itself but

the entire cultural milieu in which it takes place. I am also influenced by the idealism and utopian visions of rave PLUR⁴ culture, and am interrogating the potentials and pitfalls of these types of positions towards futurity. I am particularly interested in the way our relationship to the future has shifted since the 90's which is a time period defined by optimism. In acknowledging the influence of this historical moment I am simultaneously wary of giving in to the power of nostalgia.



Figs 3 and 4. Stills from the film *Nowhere* - Gregg Araki - 1997 (Figure removed due to copyright restrictions)

The current times are increasingly precarious, and we have watched, and continue to watch, many of the foundational myths about western society unravel⁵. As the state of the world becomes more and more unstable, nostalgia provides a comforting outlet for many people. Grafton Tanner, in his book *The Circe of the Snake* explains how the precarity of the world has resulted in a weaponized nostalgia, a longing for “the good old days” as it were. “Rattled by destructive global events and armed with the most powerful communication tools ever invented, the West has plunged into its own past, committed to recapturing what might have been lost with the dawning of an eternal present, when daily political traumas and digital sirens shackle us to now.”(Ch. 3) We can see this in the rise of nativist movements, around the world and the slide into traditionalist authoritarianism. Nostalgia exists as “a rhetorical tool that can be utilized to dangerous ends”(Ch. 3). We are fed certain visions of the past as if they are remedies for the present, but they are at best distractions, and at worse calls to arms. This is a dangerous and unproductive nostalgia, and something that must be countered with an alternative.

In my work I am trying to occupy a different sort of nostalgia, not a nostalgia for the past, as the longing for the past is an untenable solution for people who depend on the desperately slow progress of societal change, but a nostalgia for a way of relating to the future. The installations are not about going back to a point in time before these problems arose, but going back to a mindset before accepting that these problems are unsolvable. It is an idea about being nostalgic for the future. Utilizing the early web aesthetics of the 90's, to invoke or appropriate this techno futurist culture that surrounded the early internet is one strategy for exploring this idea. By using colours, bright pinks, greens, and yellows for example, and motifs, flowers, bad cgi, etc, that are associated with this time I am hoping to locate the work in a historically rooted relation to technology as a conduit of futurity. The 90's was a time of deep techno-optimism, and the internet still held potential as an emancipatory digital commons. I utilize this aesthetic in order to build a connection to this lineage of optimism, and to interrogate the currently foreclosed potentials of technology. This is a way to point to the need to reclaim the future's liberatory

⁴ PLUR stands for Peace Love Unity and Respect and was an attempt at founding a guiding principle of radical inclusivity for the rave movement

⁵ These myths or ideals include a belief in egalitarianism, meritocracy, progress and prosperity. Basic protections, securities and supports, which were not even available to everyone in the first place, are being eroded. Spaces which position themselves outside of the global capitalist enterprise are consumed. The very idea of maintaining the basic functioning of the ecosystem in which we live is somehow still out of reach. Precarity infiltrates every facet of the contemporary condition. (Malik)

sense, and emancipatory potentials. In this way, my work is aesthetically not rooted in a specific historical moment, but perhaps a historical affect or outlook, and is attempting to reclaim or revive that feeling, and restore the possibility of a relation to technology beyond corporate control. In these ways I am trying to harness the feeling of anxiety as a productive method of critique to combat what Tanner calls futurelessness. By confronting the source of the anxiety and offering a new way of contextualizing or channeling the urge towards nostalgia I am hoping to point towards the need to imagine new possibilities, and work ourselves out of the catastrophe of the present without retreating into an imagined idyllic past.

During my time in the MFA program I have been trying to open a discourse about how we relate to the screen, and how the screen itself functions as a support, or a material, and not as an invisible infrastructure, or neutral conveyor of information. I've noticed there is a trend to remove the legibility of the screen as an object, with borderless very thin monitors and I think this is a problematic attempt to erase the technically mediated quality of screen based technologies, and thus post-internet life. For this reason, it is important to highlight the mechanics of display, wires, screens, lights, cords etc. This is a strategy to foreground the necessary complicity of post-internet art with the current state of capitalist production, and hopefully to open up this relationship to critique. Making use of these technologies, or existing in these digital spaces, demands an awareness of how they are employed as normative forces, and pushing them forward when they try to recede. Thomas Lamarre speaks to this idea of the screen as a locus of power relations in his book *The Anime Ecology*. He puts forward the terms ontopower and platformivity as a means to better understand "how the social technology of television media stretches across the sovereign power of the family, the disciplinary spaces of school and work, and biopolitical sites of crisis disaster and emergency." (28) He highlights the need to consider the "viewer-image-screen" interaction as the site at which these power relations are exercised, but also where they can be resisted (355).

Drawing attention to this triad of viewer, image and screen, and attempting to reorient how we conceptualize and position ourselves within this relationship is a major focus of my recent investigations. With the thesis work I am pushing towards building a space which exists outside of this digital world, but references, and recreates the affective qualities of post-internet life. I think this is one way we can start to question how embedded these normative forces are in all facets of online culture, and push towards a confrontation with what can pass unnoticed as part of the infrastructure of the web, or of the nature of the technology itself. The screen in this way acts as a stand-in for all future oriented technologies (AI, computer learning, facial surveillance, etc) as they are the visible interface by which these technologies become legible. Further, the screen highlights the ways these technologies, or algorithms, are allowed to recede, to operate their control from an abstracted distance. The screens in my work are thus trying to draw attention to themselves functioning as an interface into a virtual space where the viewer is not necessarily centered, and not attempting to recede as a disappearing mediator that encourages immersion. The screens are deployed in such a way to make clear that how the viewer interacts with them is secondary to how the screens are interacting with each other, and the network of the installation itself.

Work I:

Each of the three works I will introduce in the following sections takes the screen as the central point of its investigation, and builds around it to question, or complicate some aspect of our relationship to screen based culture. The first work titled the *continuous failures of optimism, or what if we could recognize catastrophe(capss)* (fig 5 and fig 6) is a large-scale multimedia installation. It is made up of two screens on broken camp chairs playing looping videos of two different views of a CGI avatar in a crying animation cycle. These chair screen assemblages are facing a wall in front of which hang two long

banners suspended from the ceiling. The left banner is a pixelated green colour field digitally printed on transparent plastic film, and the right banner is a collage made of salvaged plastics. In between these two hanging elements is a plinth on which sits a stack of colourful flower shaped blobs. On top of this stack is a small pink portable dvd player displaying a looping video of a kite with the text of a poem overlaid⁶.

what if we could recognize catastrophe(capss) was conceptualized to explore the idea of the screen not as a site of passive consumption, but as a site of agency and affect. This is why the screen assemblages are oriented towards the wall and away from the viewer as they position themselves to view the pictorial elements hung from the ceiling. This is a strategy employed to complicate the viewing experience, and unsettle our everyday relation to the screen. To inspect the smaller elements, or to have an unobstructed view of the hanging pieces, requires standing with your back to the avatars inhabiting the screens. This functions to establish a feeling of simultaneously viewing the work and being viewed by it, of entering into a reciprocal relationship with the screen space. The hope is that this heightened sense of viewership will help explicate the complicated and ubiquitous role screen based media plays in our day to day lives. I also think this decentering of the viewer helps to build a more immediate connection with the figurative videos which heightens the mood or affect the work is trying to evoke.



Figure 5 - the continuous failures of optimism, or what if we could recognize catastrophe(capss)(Details)

⁶ I have included the poem in the appendix.

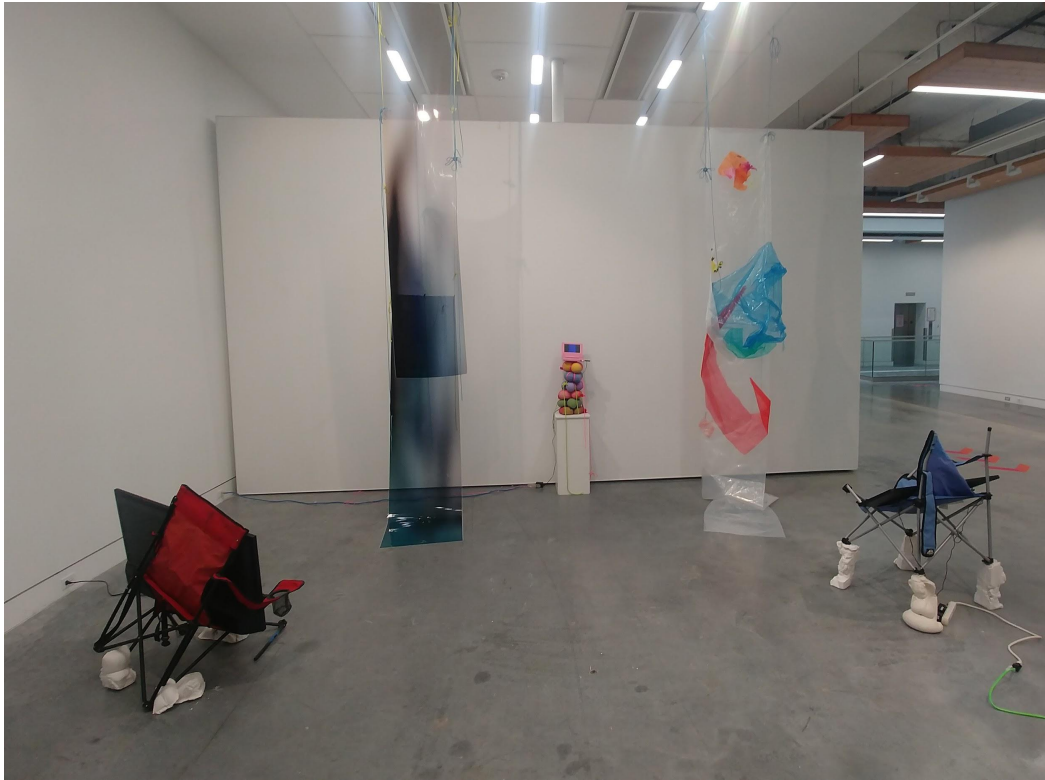


Figure 6 - the continuous failures of optimism, or what if we could recognize catastrophe(capss)

what if we could recognize catastrophe(capss) was conceptualized over the summer of 2020 and was my attempt to work through the feelings built up over that tumultuous time. With the advent of lockdowns, continued and sustained police brutality, ignored calls for justice, disintegration of social support structures, and endless zoom calls there was a profound sense of disconnection. I was also experiencing a deep sense not of loss or grief necessarily, but of an undirectible negative affect. Everything became overwhelming, but also doing nothing felt irresponsible. There was a specific feeling of sadness about a forced digital togetherness, and a hyper awareness about productivity and leisure. This installation was about unpacking all of these feelings and allowing them to exist for themselves in space. Digital affect is an ongoing thematic concern in all of my work, and I will discuss the specifics of what I mean by that more fully in a later section of this paper. Suffice it to say for now that the screens act as a vehicle for that affect, and the installation as a whole is my attempt to embody it physically.

The material impetus for the work came on an aimless walk when I happened to find the blue folding camp chair broken and discarded beside a trash bin. There was an immediate resonance with its abject state⁷ and it, along with its red partner, form the central figure of the installation. I wanted to create an object that could carry the idea of reimagined use value, and alternative modes of existence. By reutilizing a discarded and broken object as a technological support I am attempting to convey the idea that there is necessarily space for new relations to technology, and that we must rethink how we create and value these relations. It is also an attempt to question what will be discarded in the name of technical progress, and how we can make new space that allows more radical potential relationalities. Utilizing the

⁷ My thinking on abjection here is influenced by reading Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*. I am thinking through the possibilities of overcoming the process of othering, marginalization and violence that occurs when confronting corporeal reality.

abject, broken chair and the technological object of the screen highlights the precarious nature of our relationship to the future, and the need to reimagine how we will inhabit it.

While putting the installation together I was working towards formalizing my impulse to work with images or materials of poor quality: badly rendered or provisional sculptural objects, found objects, and pixelated low dpi images etc. As stated previously, this is a strategy that points toward the need for expanding our potential imaginaries, and working to prevent the foreclosure of future possibilities. An essay by Florian Cramer, "Crapularity Hermeneutics: Interpretation as the Blind Spot of Analytics, Artificial Intelligence, and Other Algorithmic Producers of the Postapocalyptic Present", has helped contextualize this strategy. I was particularly drawn to the concept of The Crapularity, an alternative to the singularity promised by AI proponents, which he borrows from The Grumpy Futurists collaborative presentation "Alternatives to the Singularity". The Crapularity is an alternative near future where instead of AI developing to be increasingly responsive to the real world, the real world is made increasingly in response to the existing capacity of AI(38). The result is a world where deviation from algorithmically inscribed norms becomes a luxury dependent on the ability to employ human labour(39). He points out the ways that relying on statistical analysis of data influenced by histories of oppression will perpetuate an already vicious cycle, and prevents access to the future based on necessarily discriminatory speculation(30,52). I'm interested in challenging the ways we think about media, and in particular the ways we can resist being enveloped in a burgeoning infrastructure that will erase the potentials for alternative modes of existence.

Reading Cramer also solidified a resonance I was feeling in the art of Sondra Perry, an American artist, who has directly inspired me to work in this way, and to conceptualize the possibilities of combining discarded objects and screens. While thinking through ways to create these abject screen assemblage I became very interested in more sculptural screen based installation practices, and specifically Perry's exhibition *Resident Evil*(Fig. 7). Of particular relevance is the way Perry embodied meaning in the work materially, something I was aiming to achieve in *what if we could recognize catastrophe(capss)*. Her installations force an active viewing experience in a way that highlights the work needed to be done to unravel the technological forces that she brings under scrutiny. For example, *Graft and Ash for a Three Monitor Workstation (2016)* and *Wet and Wavy Looks—Typhoon coming on for a Three Monitor Workstation (2016)* are both mounted atop exercise machines to challenge the typically passive ingestion of screen based media, and force a revaluation of how we engage with digital content. While my work does not activate the viewer in this way, I am interested in this kind of reorientation, or challenging of the viewing experience.

Perry's work exemplifies the potential of screen based installation to function as social critique. Her practice focuses on the impact of image making and technology on Black identity, and draws parallels between digital phenomena and IRL experiences. I am directly inspired by the way she will physicalize an abstract experience in order to better critique or understand an elusive idea. I am very drawn to the allusionistic nature of her work, and how she sets up a web of associations to organically lead the viewer through the ideas presented. There is a purposeful ambiguous relationality of the images and objects in her installations that is balanced by a clarity of purpose. This allows her to maintain cohesion despite the esoteric and disparate source materials. I try to keep this balance in mind when I construct my own installations. This way of working with montaged or collaged allusions is common to post-internet practices but Perry's is the most refined that I have seen, and directly inspires my own thinking and making. Perry is deeply invested in highlighting the legacies of theft and exploitation that are

reproducing themselves online, and forcing people to reckon with the fact that these logics pre-exist the digital space, but operate now with a broader scope and increased efficiency.



Fig. 7 Resident Evil - Sondra Perry - 2016 (Figure removed due to copyright restrictions)

Cramer and Perry have helped me develop and think through this impulse to use provisional, discarded, and poorly formed objects, and interrogate the possibilities of “crappy” or provisional art as a strategy of critique. The found objects, or “garbage” salvaged off the street, acts as a means of interrogating a politics of the refused. By using discarded construction materials I am hoping to open a dialogue about use value, and what it means to reinscribe a use on something that has been rendered “useless”. This strategy is a direct response to the anxiety about minority subjectivities being written out of legibility in future spaces (Benjamin ch.3). It is an attempt to rethink how we relate not only to discarded objects, but more broadly how we relate to non-dominant modes of existence. I am hoping it builds a sense of connection with the abject objects/subjects and works to offer new methods of inhabiting the world and relating to what is already in it. The specificity of the chairs is important here because it is intended to invoke a bodily resonance with the viewer that allows this connection to be more easily made. This is a strategy to allow the viewer to read themselves into the work, and inform the future oriented space of the installation with their own lived experiences and understandings, to imagine how they would inhabit this space. By building these new relationalities to discarded objects, I am hoping to ensure they are allowed to continue to exist. The intention behind these gestures is to in some way resist the flawless nature of computer based processes, but also acknowledging that the present currently exists in a state of collapse. It is important to acknowledge that people are actively living through the many catastrophes of capitalism, and situating these installations in the present while pointing towards a future is important in explicating the power of critical and aesthetic resistance in imagining possible alternatives.

Work II:

or will it make anything alright? (Fig. 8, Fig. 9) was chronologically the next work I produced. It is a smaller, pared back installation that focuses on the text component that played on the pink screen in *what if we could recognize catastrophe* and also looks to refine some of the strategies employed in that installation. A concern I had with the original iteration of the text piece was its illegibility. Throughout the thesis project I have been experimenting with frustrating the ease of viewership in order to challenge our relationship to the screen, but the small screen, while aesthetically pleasing, proved too frustrating to the viewer. The text video is reworked to play on a larger screen which is attached to a roughly curved metal pipe by an orange tie down strap. This screen-pipe assemblage is suspended from the ceiling by an aircraft cable that runs through the pipe. An equal length of pink cord drapes from each end of the pipe onto the ground. White text plays on a blue background. A media player with a stickered USB plugged into it hangs from the back of the screen by an HDMI cord.

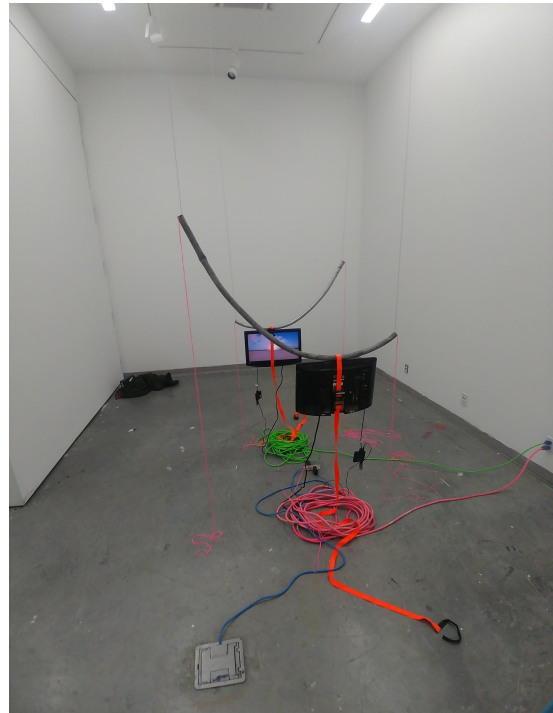


Figure 8 - *or will it make anything alright?*



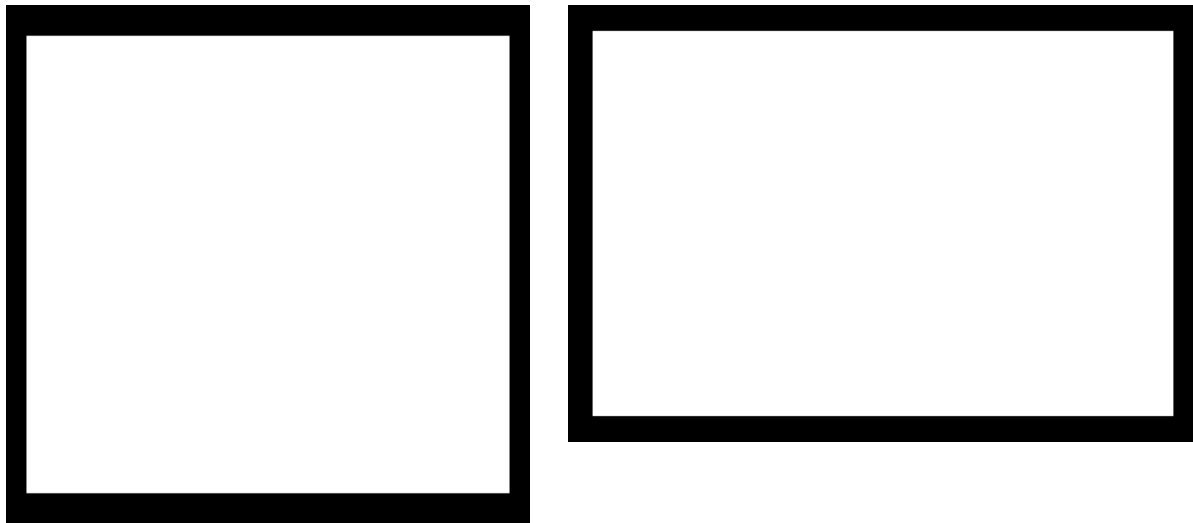
Figure 9 - *or will it make anything alright?*

Building upon the theme of complicating the idea of viewership this installation involves turning the screens away from the wall and towards each other. The idea here was to create more of a direct conversation or relationship between the screens into which the viewer must position themselves. The second screen hangs in a similar assembly that is flipped on its horizontal axis. It is suspended in front of the other screen, but slightly offset. They are close enough together that each screen obscures the other from most angles. It is hung in the same fashion as the other screen at the same height. This screen is playing a looping video of a figure in front of an ambiguous sunrise/sunset. The figure is almost entirely obscured by the tie-down strap. Both media players are plugged into a power bar situated on the ground between the screens. Each screen is connected to its own unnecessarily long extension cord the bulk of which are bundled underneath them.

I conceptualized *or will it make anything alright?* with the specific goal of exploring the themes introduced in *what if we could recognize catastrophe* but focussing on the concision of the visual language. It is intended to allow a more direct engagement with the viewer-screen-screen relationship but also to allow for a less restricted spatial experience. Where *what if we could recognize catastrophe* was set up as a stage set with a dictated visual flow *or will it make anything alright?* is given more space to encourage a looser association, and allow a reading of these screen assemblages as autonomous objects. By removing the screens from the context of a larger installation I was hoping this work would help to clarify their function as the focal point of this thesis investigation. Screens, and screen based

culture is what all of my artwork and research is centered around, and in *or will it make anything alright?* I wanted that to be made more explicit.

Two artists that have inspired these formal choices are Jesse Darling and Takeshi Shiomitsu (Fig. 10). Their work, both together and separately, provides a great deal of inspiration in terms of installation strategies, and the potentials of found object assemblages. I am drawn to the poetics of form in their work, and the way they build relational contingencies between surprising objects. There is a celebration of the banal as a way of building surprising new uses or ways of relating to familiar objects which is an exciting and productive strategy. I am finding that there is a potential for constructions/assemblages to offer new modes of existence and new methods of inhabiting the world and relation to what is already in it.



(Left)Fig. 10 Jesse Darling and Takeshi Shiomitsu - Spirit Level, AND/OR, - 2015 (Right)Fig. 11 Takeshi Shiomitsu - PaleHistory - 2013(Figure removed due to copyright restrictions)

Shiomitsu's solo work(Fig. 11) also serves as inspiration in terms of strategies to decenter the screen and attempt to de-monumentalize technology. Building a new relationality to screen based culture is very embedded in my own practice, and seeing new techniques to forward that message is inspiring. The use of found objects and construction materials in particular, in conjunction with the decentered screens is an attempt to draw parallels about the ways in which these infrastructural materials are overlooked as objects in and of themselves. This is a strategy to allow, or encourage, the viewer to think about the screen outside of its normal position as a discrete object, and to draw attention to the larger systems that these materials simultaneously produce and are produced by. *Or will it make anything alright?* was made to explore the idea of demonumentalizing the screen, and developing the visual association of the screen as a construction material. The primary motivation for my material research is forming the idea of the screen as a site of identity construction and establishing a visual language to express the equivalence between the screen and more immediately recognizable construction materials, such as a pipe, foam, drywall etc. This recombination of materials is something I am using to draw attention to the materiality of the screen space itself so that we can better think of it as a site of constructed meaning, as opposed to a neutral method of content transmission.

Work III:

I sought to expand on these material investigations in *currently untitled: investigations in foam* (Fig. 12, Fig. 13) in order to see the results of shifting the focus from the screens as the central objects to the construction/infrastructural materials, in this case foam. I was hoping this shift would help to make the connection between the two more explicit. I was also interested in moving from the larger screens of the previous installations to smaller phone and tablet screens. The intention was to expand the conversation on screen culture to include mobile handheld devices. The mobile screens were left unplugged running on battery power to highlight their untethered nature. This installation was in many ways less successful than the previous installations but it did succeed in expanding the conversation to include the increasingly ubiquitous mobile screen.



Figure 13 - currently untitled: investigations in foam

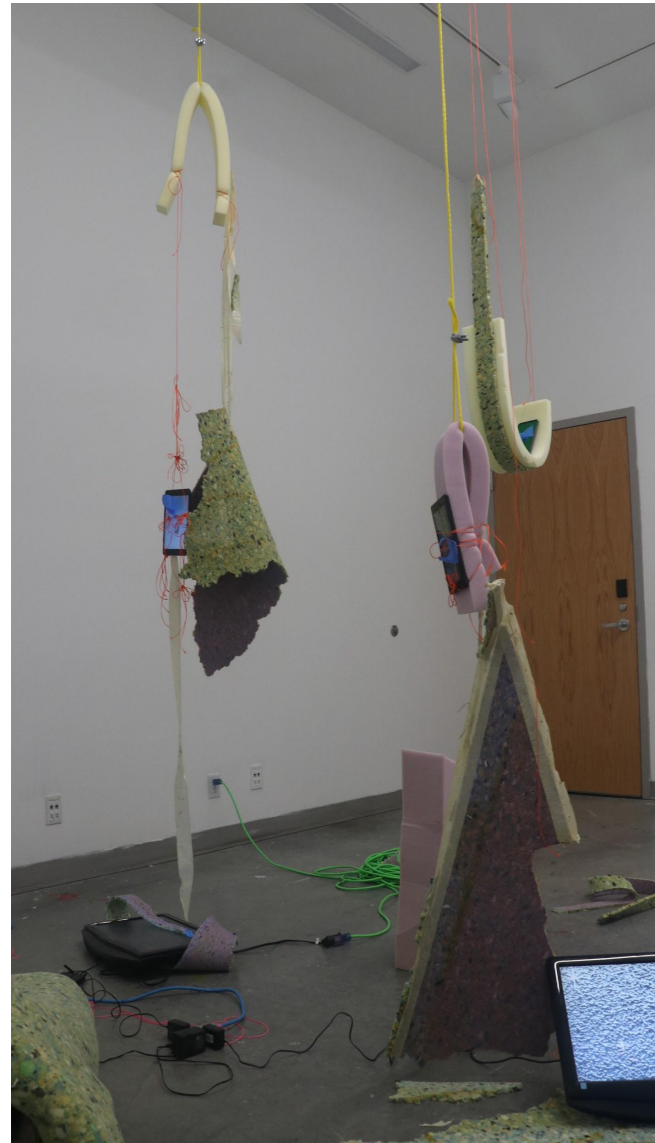


Figure 12 - currently untitled: investigations in foam

currently untitled: investigations in foam consisted of three foam screen assemblages suspended from the ceiling. The central assemblage consists of a piece of salvaged carpet underlay hung in a U shape with a phone sitting in it like a hammock. The phone is playing a looping video of Hatsune Miku dancing⁸. The left assemblage is composed of a piece of yellow upholstery foam hanging from its center point on a loop of yellow rope. Tied to one end of the foam by orange string is a tenuous macrame net made up of flower knots holding an iPad. The iPad is playing a looped video of CGI parrots flying in a blue sky. The right assemblage is similar in that it is a piece of upholstery foam hanging from its center point on a loop of

⁸ Miku is a recurring preoccupation in my work and speaks to a certain anxiety about the state of production and consumption of digital media. She exists as a corporately owned, but crowd sourced entity, and highlights the growing trend of prosumer culture, and full monetization of existence and presence(citation).

yellow rope. A tablet is tied to the back of the foam by an orange string flower knot. This tablet is playing a looped video of a CGI dove flapping its wings over a grass field.

This installation also has several floor based components (Fig. 14, Fig. 15). There are two screens, one under each of the periphery assemblages, and one pink dvd player on a large rolled up piece of underlay at the back of the space. The screen on the right lies on its back wrapped by a piece of underlay. The screen on the left sits at a 45 degree angle supported by a tied up piece of upholstery foam. It is also sitting on a piece of underlay. Both screens are playing the same gif of a sparkling popcorn ceiling.

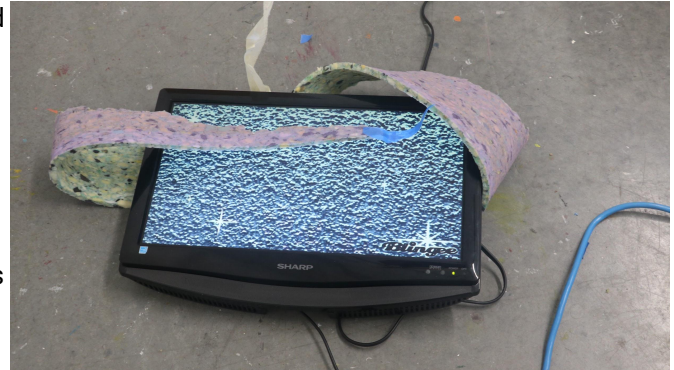


Figure 14 - currently untitled: investigations in foam (Details)



Figure 15 - currently untitled: investigations in foam (Details)

I decided to work with foam as I was interested in furthering my investigation into soft forms that started with the flower shaped blobs in *what if we could recognize catastrophe*. The contorted lumps suggested a kind of constrained organic shape, or a bound body. I wanted to explore this bodily resonance in a more direct way by making the soft bodies of upholstery foam the central materials of this installation. I was hoping the contorted soft forms would operate as

a stand-in for a bodily presence, or to act as a suggestion of the presence of living bodies in this work. I don't think I managed to activate them in this way, and their significance is unclear as a result. Trying to find ways to signify a lived presence is something I have struggled with throughout my thesis explorations, and have not yet resolved. In the past I have relied on the performative use of my own body in my installations to convey this lived presence, but as I have moved away from performance I have been trying to find a substitute that can ground the work in the same way. Coming to terms with whether or not this is necessary has been an ongoing process during this masters program.

While the upholstery foam was less than a success, the underlay operated just as I had intended, and was one of the more successful elements in this installation. I chose to work with it as a material in order to convey a sense of lived in history, and as it was salvaged from an old home it carried with it years of use. It was stained and ripped in ways that marked it identifiably as an exhausted and consumed material. Using such a recognizably deteriorated and labour intensive construction material helped forefront the ideas of use value, and productivity that circulate in my work. Suspending it from the ceiling was an effective way to draw attention to itself as a material outside of its use as an infrastructural support. While this elevation was successful in regards to the underlay I don't think enough of a relation was made to the screens. The intention was for this questioning of the materiality to be carried over from the underlay to the attached screens, as I was hoping a visual equivalence could be made between the two, but they didn't come together to make the conceptual connection in the way I envisioned. I do think,

however, this installation strategy successfully conveyed the sense of anxiety that is an undercurrent of all of my work. It functioned to capture a moment of upheaval, or collapse, and forces the viewer to sit in this moment and think through it.

The CGI birds are a repeating motif displayed on the screens that speak to this anxiety in a different way by dealing with the idea of internet based conspiracy theories. There has been a proliferation, and a rise in prominence over the last several years of conspiracy theories, and reactionary alternative worldviews. For example, the reemergence of the flat earth theory, Anit-Vaxx propaganda, 5G, Chemtrail enthusiasts, Lizard People and the arguable facetious idea that birds have been replaced with drones by the government as surveillance devices. This rise in paranoid thinking is hard to divorce from the general rise of disaffection, and is likely a response to the ongoing period of instability that has been playing out since the beginning of the new millennium(Tanner ch.4),

There is a connection here between the constant state of collapse we are currently living through and the search for meaning in the increasingly ridiculous symbologies of conspiracy theories. There is also a parallel between the found footage relating to conspiracy theories, and the salvaged materials discussed earlier. Both are attempts to engage critically with the “detritus” of the present moment. The videos are generally pulled from youtube where they fail to circulate with very little engagement. Repurposing these poor quality videos allows for the possibility of engagement with the margins of the digital condition. There is a relatability to the poor quality video, similar to that of the salvaged objects, that allows it to speak to many things at once, while not pinning down a specific reading. Hito Steyerl offers this analysis in “In Defense of The Poor Image”



Figure 16 - the continuous failures of optimism(Thesis Install)

Poor images are thus popular images—images that can be made and seen by the many. They express all the contradictions of the contemporary crowd: its opportunism, narcissism, desire for autonomy and creation, its inability to focus or make up its mind, its constant readiness for transgression and simultaneous submission. Altogether, poor images present a snapshot of the affective condition of the crowd, its neurosis, paranoia, and fear, as well as its craving for intensity, fun, and distraction (Steyerl 41).

There is potential in these found videos, or poorly rendered animations, to speak to the entirety of the contemporary moment, but it is also possible for them to say nothing at all. Steyerl points out the poor image's power comes from its resistance to commodification, which somewhat paradoxically increases its ease of consumption: “They lose matter and gain speed” (Steyerl 41). I think pairing these appropriated videos with the abject objects helps to ground them in a way that allows them to slow down and regain matter. They become more expansive, more embodied, while still maintaining the strength of their immediacy. These videos help to ground the work as an exploration of the digital condition which is awash in these paranoid conspiracies and disinformation. This paranoia is being weaponized into an

aimless regressive force, that, instead of addressing the societally rooted anxieties that are creating the conditions for conspiratorial thinking, placates with easily scapegoated phantoms.

There is an excess of negative affect swirling around these conspiracies, and the internet in general that is being actively misdirected. In *Ugly Feelings* Sianne Ngai defines paranoia as “a species of fear based on the dysphoric apprehension of a holistic and all-encompassing system” and highlights its potential as a strategy of critique, but also points out the way it has only been legitimized in certain circumstances (299-301). Ngai points to the failures of theory to react to the evolving systems of power, notably capital, and becoming increasingly empirical as capital becomes increasingly virtual(300). Embodying the systemic critique of the paranoid is thus a potential avenue for critiquing the increasingly abstract and amorphous forms of vector capitalism. Ngai concludes the chapter titled Paranoia by noting that “while paranoid logic always offers ‘escaping’ as one option, it offers ‘thinking’ as the other” (30?). Paranoia can thus be activated as a call to action, and not just as a placation.

Engaging with these images that reference paranoid conspiracy theories is an attempt to reorient how we relate to the digital, and to refocus the contemporary affects that are being directed towards escapism as opposed to criticality. By recreating these spaces of equivocal, or amorphous, negative affect in my installations I am hoping to foster the necessary conditions for new ways of thinking. These are not immersive spaces because they are intended to disallow the opportunity of escape. They are embodied spaces, but they are not places that encourage settling and are intended to function as starting points. Each installation is a way to highlight the need to move forward in new and more radically inclusive ways.

A final note about the works presented in this paper is that they also solidified a growing shift in my practice towards more sculptural works, and away from the stylized flatness, or theatrical quality of much of my earlier work. Earlier in this paper I established the importance of Cantonese Opera, and the flatness of the picture plane in Asian art on how I conceptualize my practice, and these remain important aesthetic influences, but as I progressed through the program I found myself working more in the round. Highlighting the constructed nature of the viewing experience has always been important, and leaning into the stagelike set up, and controlled access was a way to address this. I am still deeply interested in the aesthetic qualities of digital space, and how it relates to theatre and flatness, but as I looked to investigate the idea of creating multiple networked screen-viewer relationships that exist in the same space utilizing flatness no longer functioned in the same way. The visual flatness created more of a distanced viewing experience, which I think is an effective strategy for eliciting critical engagement with a work, but affect is easier to convey through a more embodied experience. The installations became less about situating the viewer in a way that was referencing the theatricality or constructedness of digital space visually, and more about allowing them to experience the affective qualities of existing in those spaces.

On Optimism and the Future:

The digital cannot, of course, be entirely described in terms of negative affect, and there is still a great deal of optimism surrounding technology and the potential futures it promises. Techno-Futurism is a movement that really emerged and took hold of the cultural conversation in the 90's. Incredible technological progress, and bright optimism at the end of the cold war combined to create an idea of everlasting growth and prosperity. Into the early 2000's this optimistic view of the future had largely been curtailed by the beginnings of the war on terror and the collapse of the dotcom bubble(Schwartz and Leyden). Technological progress, however, was not curtailed and allowed to expand into and reinforce this

new pessimistic worldview. Now even in the face of looming environmental catastrophe we are seeing a re-emergence of the techno-utopian framework(Bina et al). These pronoiac fantasies are often employed to gloss over the impacts of implementing these new technologies. Bina, Inch, and Perriera, offer a very good overview of the ways this is employed when discussing new "Smart Cities" in their article "Beyond techno-utopia and its discontents". Critique is split into three broad categories, technological solutionism and the economization of urban life, quantitative universalism and reductionism, and the illusion of political neutrality of smart technology(9). They go on to say that planning "based on techno-utopian ways of knowing and governing are colonizing contemporary futures in highly problematic ways: promoting technologically determined and therefore reductionist approaches to urban development that are blind to the political, social and environmental complexity that characterizes urban life". Allowing this type of determinism to guide planning and development essentially forecloses the possibility of existing in certain ways, and literally writes marginal people out of these future spaces.

I am pushing back against this utopian way of thinking for exactly these reasons. A utopian vision is impossible without an essentializing and universalizable subject, which, as someone who occupies several intersecting minority positions, I know is not tenable. There is not a single utopian vision that can account for the varied experiences and desires of the entire populace of a city, let alone the world. Techno-Utopian thinking also presupposes an equitable relation to technology that does not exist. My work is attempting to open an optimistic relation to the future by pointing out that it is still malleable. It is not about prescribing new visions of the future, but opening the viewer to imagine for themselves new potential ways of inhabiting the present and moving into the future. Bina et al, refer to this as "educating desire" and show how speculative fiction can be viewed as building critical frameworks for alternative imaginaries and act as an antidote to dominant forces of capitalist techno-rationalism (28).

My thesis project is thus trying to exist in an in-between space that encourages critical engagement, and eschews a solidified endpoint. It is simultaneously optimistic and pessimistic, abject and celebratory. It is intended to exist on a spectrum that allows the viewer to situate themselves, and hopefully build their own narrative into the future. Suhail Malik speaks to this need to overcome determinism and reconceptualize our relation to the future in his article "Risk Exposure – Surfeit Futurity." He argues that there is a tendency in modern western thought to cancel the future. "Together, neoliberalism and climate breakdown reduce the future to a zero-point or, at best, the continuation of the bleak dynamics already in place, a modification of the dismal present." (1) Citing Francis Fukuyama and Frederic Jameson he outlines the defuturity thesis "that the future no longer orients or commands the present" (2). He sees this idea of defuturity as a misunderstanding of the contemporary moment, and posits that instead of a lack of futurity there is a surfeit of futurity. "Futurity overwhelms the present and historical capacities to order or give meaning to the future and also to an internally permuting present." (4) For Malik the past present and future exist in a feedback loop with each other all interacting in a "speculative time complex" (5). It is the failure of utopian visions, and the thinking they have created in western thought that is preventing the conceptualization of different possible futures. By opening the future to speculation we can move past the constraint that the future must be determined by the conditions of the present (5). I think of my installations in this way, as speculations about a non determined futurity, and hope they act as invitations for others to do so as well.

Ultimately all of the work and research I have undertaken during this thesis project is about expanding our capacity to imagine the future. It has never been about determining ways to exist or to move, but about pointing out the problematics of our current trajectories and uncritical relationships with mediating technologies and the systems that support them. It is as, Ruha Benjamin writes, "about

reimagining the default settings – codes and environments – that we have inherited from prior regimes of racial control, and how we can appropriate and reimagine science and technology for liberatory ends.” (*Race After Technology* Ch. 5) There is a long lineage of critically alternative futurities, and my work is about highlighting the need to engage seriously with these visions, and open the space for many more to come. We must maximize the potential for new ways of thinking, and forestall falling back into default positions. If the antidote for determinism is speculation we must encourage as many people to speculate as possible. It is through critical and aesthetic speculation that we can resist determinist narratives and move past the feeling of hopelessness engendered in the present moment and each of us enter into our own uniquely radical and emergent future.

Postscript~On the thesis exhibition:

I approached this final thesis exhibition as an opportunity to revisit several earlier works, and explore the possibilities made available by installing in a larger space. I was particularly interested in bringing together the several discrete installations and sculptural works I had been producing throughout the last year, and presenting them as a network of interrelated ideas or explorations. The idea of establishing these works as a network came out of the experience of setting up *currently untitled:investigations in foam*. I liked the way the multiple screens began to look like outcroppings of a larger system, but I was not satisfied with how the individual screens were reading. I wanted to see how they would function if instead of individual screens each outcropping was a full installation.



Figure 17 - the continuous failures of optimism(Thesis Install)

Thematically all of the works I had been making were dealing with the subjects I have presented above, precarity, paranoia, conspiracy, futurity etc, so bringing them all into the same space allowed for a deeper conversation to take place, both between the viewer and the installation, and the objects, images, and materials themselves. Each installation zone was set up to complicate the viewing experience in a different way in hopes of challenging the viewer to reevaluate their relationship to screen based media. I think the work benefited greatly from being allowed more space, and more variety in terms of screen deployment. Where the individual installations felt sometimes a bit restricted in how they could be viewed, this exhibition allowed for a multiplicity of experiences which is an important development in my work. This variety reinforces the need for new ways of thinking through, and being with technologies, and was intended to point to the possibility of existing differently within these digital spaces, and reclaiming their potentials.

While several of the elements were reinstallations of earlier works, I also undertook two entirely new works, the central car seat based installation and the soft sculptural screen on the pillar. I wanted there to be a strong center to the exhibition so I planned the dangling screens and construction fencing to

create an ambiguous sense of building/collapse. This idea of creating new relationalities out of precarious situations is integral to my thinking so I wanted an installation that spoke to it more directly than I had previously. I was also interested in questioning the idea of progress, and what it means to think of the future as a non productive site. The inclusion of the car seats was an attempt to work through the ongoing problem of how to imply a body in the work. I was originally planning to fabricate large soft sculptural flower forms the size of bean bag chairs in order to point to a lived presence in the work. However, I was lucky enough to happen upon the car seats in the free section of craigslist and was immediately struck by their anthropomorphic form. I believe they ended up functioning much better than the sculpted forms would have, and elicited a much more immediate affective response. Much like the dilapidated camp chairs, they imply a body that is otherwise missing from the space of the installation, and invite the viewer to question who's body that is, and ideally to think through their own body in relation to the work.



Figure 18 - the continuous failures of optimism(Thesis Install Details)

The piece on the column was intended to operate as the focal point of the exhibition. I wanted all assemblage pieces to carry the same weight, and exist without a hierarchy of importance, but I envisioned the single screen as acting as a point of authority. It is intended to function with a different logic to the other works, and hopefully invites critical engagement. It is a sort of counterpoint to the potentials of paranoid thinking represented by the cgi birds. The soft sculptural frame was made in reference to the spikes used to stop birds from perching on building ledges. The video is an animated recreation of a viral video of a woman in Myanmar streaming an exercise class while behind her the military is beginning to stage a coup. This piece was

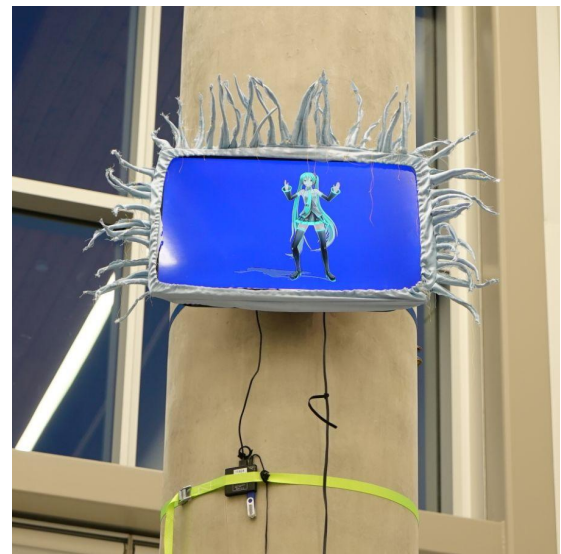


Figure 19 - the continuous failures of optimism(Thesis Install Details)

intended to show the perils of leaving our relationships to technology unchallenged, and allowing our futures to slip under someone else's control. I was trying to work through my thoughts around the complicity of screen based media, and entertainment algorithms with the weaponized nostalgia, and slide into regressive authoritarian nationalism. I wanted this screen to really convey what I feel is at stake, and what drives my research and artistic practice, the fact that we must actively fight for a radical future.

The question came up during my defense: "What does a radically emergent future look like?" and I can't say that I had a particularly good answer for it. I still don't think that I do, but what I mean by a radically emergent future is a future that is open to everyone, that allows everyone equal and equitable access to the mechanisms and technologies of futurity. It is an expansive future, and one that can't really be defined as it necessitates malleability. I can't say what the ideal future will look like to anyone other than myself, and so it must remain an ambiguous space of possibility. My work has been about thinking through how to highlight this need for ambiguity, for potential, for alternative arrangements.

Works Cited

Apprich, Clemens, et al. *Pattern Discrimination*. University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

Benjamin, Ruha. *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. Polity, 2019.

Bina, Olivia, et al. *Beyond techno-utopia and its discontents: On the role of utopianism and speculative fiction in shaping alternatives to the smart city imaginary*. *Futures*. Volume 115, 2020.

LaMarre, Thomas. *The Anime Ecology: a Genealogy of Television, Animation, and Game Media*. University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

Malik, Suhail. "Risk Exposure — Surfeit Futurity." *Making and Breaking*, vol. 2, Centre of Applied Research for Art, Design and Technology: Avans University of Applied Sciences, 2021.

Murakami, Takashi. *Superflat*. Madora Shuppan, 2000.

Ngai, Sianne. *Ugly Feelings*. Harvard University Press, 2005.

Schwartz, Peter, et al. *The Long Boom: a Future History of the World, 1980-2020*. Texere, 2000.

Steyerl, Hito. *The Wretched of the Screen*. Sternberg Press, 2013.

Tanner, Grafton. *Circle Of The Snake: Nostalgia and Utopia in the Age of Big Tech*. ZERO Books, 2021.

Teixeira Pinto, Ana. (2019). Capitalism with a Transhuman Face: The Afterlife of Fascism and the Digital Frontier. *Third Text*. 33. 1-22.

Works Consulted:

Benjamin, Ruha. *Captivating Technology: Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday Life*. Duke University Press, 2019.

Bourriaud, Nicolas, and Erik Butler. *The Exform*. Verso, 2016.

Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*. The MIT Press, 2017.

Joy, Bill. "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us." *Wired*, Conde Nast, 1 Apr. 2000, www.wired.com/2000/04/joy-2/.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: an Essay of Abjection*. Columbia University Press, 1984.

Kurzweil, Raymond. *The Age of Spiritual Machines: How We Live, Work and Think in the New Age of Intelligent Machines*. Phoenix, 1999.

Morton, Timothy. *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

Nakamura, Lisa, and Peter Chow-White, editors. *Race after the Internet*. Routledge, 2012.

Sawyer, Michael E. *Homo Liminalis: An Africana Philosophy of Temporality*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Wark, McKenzie. *Capital Is Dead: Is This Something Worse?* Verso, 2019.

Wilderson, Frank. *Afropessimism*. Liveright Publishing Corp, 2021.

Appendix:

the continuous failures of optimism(imagine), or what if we could recognize catastrophe?(capss)

Sit in, on?, your bed

or lack thereof (imagine owning a bedframe)

Leave your house(if you have one) Imagine you do if you don't, it doesn't matter (it obviously matters tremendously)

Don't go outside for a week or 2 or three, or imagine that you have or that you haven't, That you will or that you won't

we're still in bed(duh) but maybe we think about something beyond ourselves

, this is the important part, don't allow yourself too much interiority

,(but

do remember not to trust too much an exterior)

Download IMVU delete IMVU download IMVU delete IMVU imagine how many times you can repeat this before learning what it is

imagine for a second that any of this matters, or doesn't depending on who you are (try not to remain too aware of who you are or who it was somehow decided you are), unless of course it is inconsequential(must be nice, lucky you...)

imagine for a second that some people have never thought about any of this and will never think about any of this (then try, lol do I have to? forget)

Imagine the people who are not able to think about this anymore

Keep their names in your head, forever or until no longer necessary, a hopefully not pointless distinction) but then keep them new ways)

sometimes we're all they have left and that is, of course) very little consolation

cry or don't cry depending on your mood or the weather or the position of the stars or w/e (really just recognize that your mood is no longer a reliable companion) , sorry it's out of my control)_

hold in your mind the idea of a coping mechanism

(now actualize it, but worse)

what it must be like to be allowed to exist

, the

very thought!

,what a feeling!

cast your mind back to a time before everything became an exercise in managing expectations

imagine a time before or after you were assaulted in the street, before or after you developed a fear of people running, ,Before or After,

(this time it really doesn't matter)