arrhythmias:

artistic interventions in the age of the algorithm

by

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abstract

This paper and the works which it supports demonstrate the form and function of artistic interventions into our increasingly mediated lives as a recurring theme in my practice. I reflect and react to the inherent value and urgency of doing so within our current age of the algorithm[1] by placing the work and underlying concepts to be in conversation with literary figures, contemporary artists, and scholars - all of whom similarly work various angles of this conceit, albeit from different perspectives and in various media. While the methods range, the heart of the work - and the state of my practice - remains the same; the red throughline is that of exploring the mutual influence of technology and society, ultimately creating attentional prosthetics to help (re)define productivity. I am working with/in/against/through technologies in my practice; our technology has charged ahead, leaving our heads and hearts lagging behind.

My interest in this thread of research and work stems from a professional unfolding in information sciences which itself led me down the complicated path of critically examining the societal impacts, ethical issues, and philosophical questions related to our modern information age. This ongoing engagement at the intersection of technology and society has shaped a positionality which seeks to neither demonize or glorify the technologies at play, but rather, as an artist, desires to help audiences reflect, resist, and redefine their own relationships to such at both the collective and individual level.

In the body of work presented as a thesis exhibition, including the intended method of engaging with this paper[2], I will illustrate specific gestures which point towards the greater effort: there is value and necessity in interrupting and/or subverting the role of contemporary technologies in to provide an attentional prosthetic which itself allows one to be more fully in the generosity of this moment

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[1] The phrase "Algorithmic Age" is borrowed from the the work of Serge Abiteboul & Gilles Dowek, whose book *Living in the Age of the Algorithm* insists its readers develop, or hone, their awareness of the techno-social ecosystem in which all modern nations coexist. This awareness allows for an empowered viewpoint and understanding, rather than a move towards Luddism or fear-based and/or uninformed pearl-clutching.

[2] See following section, *structure as metaphor | interactivity*, for specifics on how this paper is intended to be read.

structure as metaphor | interactivity

The structure of this thesis embraces a conversational tone between the body and footnotes, often, yet not exclusively, with a tonal change between the two (e.g. from poetic to expository or vice versa.) Structuring the writing in this manner affords the opportunity to strike a more artistic tone in my writing, as opposed to relying on the traditionally prosaic style typical of academic writing. More than a token act, this is a conscious decision which itself further emphasizes the role of creative thinking and reimagined potential in an otherwise normative action (e.g. browsing, walking, reading.) To that end, I have created a custom browser extension (_Prosthetic_)[3] which proposes another way of reading content online. Once installed, this plugin will look for semantic, syntactic, and prosodic echoes between gestures included in my thesis work and the content (i.e. webpage) you are on (ideally, the thesis work itself.) As the code finds connections, a random snippet of text will be highlighted. Clicking on this highlighted text will initiate a pop-up box with relevant text + art work title. If you click on this pop-up box, a new tab will open to related artwork, or, if you click on the highlighted text once more, the pop-up will disappear. Refreshing the page will reload the code and reset the snippet; you are encouraged to refresh your browser for each section/reading as many times as desired. This type of interruption + randomization not only proposes an alternate method of reading the work online, but is a key throughline in my artistic process: the interplay, or tension, between control and release.

For this writing to be fully realized it should be viewed online[4] and with the accompanying Chrome Browser extension installed. Doing so will further expand upon the structure as metaphor format I've chosen, while also adding another layer of engagement and interactivity.

```
1   if {
2      Chrome.extension installed
3   }
4   for highlighted text {
5      click.on highlighted text to follow through to related
    art
6   } else {
7      thesis reading experience will be diminished
8   }
```

Coded instructions for the desired method of navigating this thesis (hint: with extension)

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[3] Install Thesis Plugin | via this link This plugin has been custom made by myself. It exists in two versions: one specifically for this thesis and as a second version which is more appropriate for those who want to to duplicate the experience on the WWW at large.

[4] A "live" version of this thesis will exist online here → https://thesiscarruth.wordpress.com/2022/06/27/1/

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acknowledgements & gratitude

"So I thought, isn't that really amazing? What an amazing life. You walk along and you reach a barrier and you stop and you just call out help. You don't know who you're talking to, you don't know who's around if anyone, and you wait, and then somebody turns up and they help you across that barrier, and then you walk on knowing that pretty soon you're going to meet another barrier and you're going to have to stop again and cry out help, help, help, not knowing if anyone's there, not knowing who it will be that will turn up to help you across the next barrier."

~From A Field guide for Getting Lost, by the ever-wonderful Rebecca Solnit [5]

The decision to pursue a Master of Fine Arts during a global pandemic and in another country was not without apprehensions, yet the end I held in sight was more than worth all the means. While it has undressed me down to my last naked nerve, my whole heart was always in this work; all that I have, all that I am, and all that I can be, I've fully staked upon this endeavor. This has always been more than an educational or professional stepping-stone, this is life.

First and foremost, this work would not have been possible without the generous, ever en pointe, and consistently optimistic presence of Dr. Maria Lantin. She is a light and without her my experience at ECU would have been notably impoverished. I wish her all happiness today and for all possible tomorrows.

For those whom I love - and who accept my love in return - thank you. In a world that is trying its best to do otherwise, you keep me sane and balanced. I hope I return the favor in some small way (i.e. if I know you outside of ECU and you're reading this thesis, then I am 100% talking about you xoxoxo.)

To "S" who first believed in my vision, to "L" who carried me over the threshold, and to "C" who never stopped holding my hand.

To Mom and Dad, I owe you everything; all love begins with you.

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[5] Apt quote is poached from the final chapter in Solnit's 2006 *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (pg 178) wherein Solnitt tells the story of a blind man who would come to the city center of San Francisco to sell tins of chocolate-covered caramel turtles. Once a number of sales had been made and the area exhausted, the "Turtle Man" would use his white cane to tap his way to the corner where he would stand and yell that he needed help. He couldn't cross the street without someone to see for him. Eventually, someone would help him move to the next location where the process repeated itself until he made his final destination.

Direct from Solnit, *"Wasn't this man's life pretty much like everyone else? Who of us knows what's going to happen next in life? And how will it be faced?"* There is a muscle to be built and flexed regarding the practice of awareness and the need to get below the seeming reasonableness of one's moment-to-moment life. There is a need to avoid being too fearful or too complacent.

I've learned it's okay - healthy, even - to not know what to do next, to run into a barrier. It's what we do in those situations that is a confession of our character. There is an inherent element of uncertainty to life, and in those lucid moments where we're confronted with this stark reality, it's okay to realize that we do need help, that calling out for such is a generous act because it allows others to be there for us just as it allows us to be helped. A line from Marianne Williamson's *Our Deepest Fear* sums up this entire episode succinctly and poetically, *"as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence actually liberates others."*

To "J" and "N" and "A", you've been true friends.

To "B", "J$^{2"}$", "M", and "R", your continued belief in me mattered. It always will.

To "JWB" and "LHK" and "ATLS" and "XWC" and "HH", you lit a fire.

In your own ways, you are all fire; all warmth and all light.

&, to that composition of continually contested, positioned, and linked visions of place known as the American Southwest, specifically San Fernando, Mt. Trails, and the Grand Gulch primitive area…thank you. Your gunmetal highways, lonesome dirt roads, impartial skies, piñon smoke, enduring multiplicity, & green chile everything (as well as the resulting ongoing awakening) are my source.
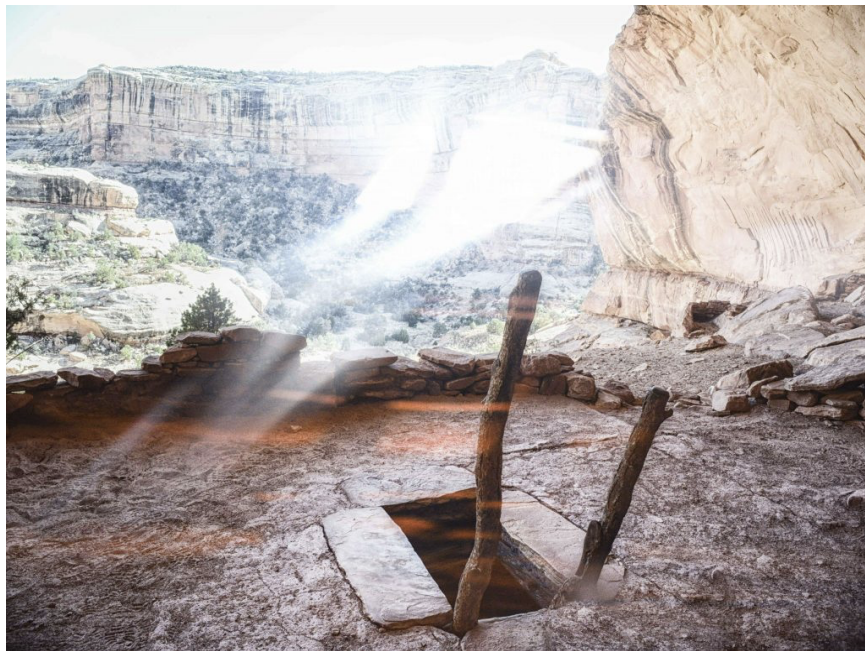
35mm photo of Perfect Kiva, Grand Gulch Primitive Area

what i do when i do what i do | techne

My work typically follows three fluid stages, each with generative questions and goals: first, I let my curiosity guide my research of a topic, contextualizing it within the sociocultural, political, historical, and contemporary discourse, ultimately asking what's been done before and what might I add to the conversation. The work of artists, scholars, and writers are especially relevant as I make a concentrated effort to be in conversation with them. Next, I transform my research into short-form image-based proofs and writings - poetics and prose - both of which feed into the final stage: creating a sustained body of work. This final stage may iterate indefinitely.

Given a professional and academic unfolding in information sciences, this dynamic intermedia research-based practice draws from tech-centric critical perspectives to understand, critique, and create art which itself explores the social, emotional, and existential impacts of technology on contemporary life. Being research-led, I view myself as a reflective-research practitioner interested in how data, text, imagery, and the body serve as critical mediators towards understanding the aforementioned dynamics, with an eye towards critical making and reimagining future potential; while conducted through and with technologies, my work is a decidedly humanistic inquiry.The complexities which emerge from digital cultures and our technologized landscapes are research subjects, while the methods of interaction, exploration, and engagement collapse into a practice which itself formally resolves itself as time-based media, creative coding, poetics, performance, installation, and new media. Aesthetically, the pulsing heart of this process is concerned with how the interplay, or tension, between control and release often forces a constructivistic, contemplative, state. Letting go; losing oneself to find oneself. As such, randomization in terms of code, subject, and displays serve as means to embrace an unknown, to let go.

In addition to information sciences, a range of interdisciplinary studies inform my work including philosophy, sociology, anthropology, media studies, literary studies, and cognitive science. This methodological approach can be described as exploratory, experimental, generative, contemplative, yet typically driven by contemporary techno-social concerns which themselves are underpinned by what Timothy Morton describes as the "whirring machinery of capitalism".[6]

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[6] I embrace Timothy Morton's concept of the *hyperobject* in my work. Morton uses the term to explain objects so massively distributed in time and space as to transcend localization, such as climate change, "styrofoam", black holes, socio-economic classes, the biosphere, and "*the sum of all the whirring machinery of capitalism.*" The latter of which can presently be interpreted as not only internet-related opaque machinery and inscrutable code, but the resulting manifestation of our aspirations, our fears, our selves. In this system, with those aspirations as inputs, and data and predictive algorithms as key outputs, the general thrust of the field is that all stable processes we shall predict; all unstable processes we shall control. What follows is a present spiritual inertia, our current crisis, our failure of imagination (see footnote [29]).

arrhythmias[7]

our technology has raced ahead of us

leaving our hearts lagging behind

i go out there to go in here[8]

still

i lose myself to find myself [9]

…

..

.

the desert, like the open road, has a way of creating space

a canvas that allows for colors and smells to rise

to translate to english

into the present, into beauty

it's not so quiet or removed that you can't hear yourself think

or that you would even wish to; that comes later

what comes first

is that you can

almost

hear the rhythm of your heartbeat

again

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[7] An arrhythmia is a problem with the rate or rhythm of the heartbeat. Its usage here is a metaphorical reference to the nature of the human heart, and its arrhythmias, in the 21st century with a specific focus on the machine of capitalism as it manifests in the techno-social fabric of contemporary life.

[8] *"Out there"* is in reference to extended travel in the backcountry of the American Southwest as well as similar wilderness areas, most prominently evidenced via the ongoing photographic series, *Garden is on Fire* (see footnote 11)

[9] This line is in reference to Nietzsche's essay *Schopenhauer as Educator* in which he describes education as knowing oneself as well as details his views on the meaning of life and how humans fit into it. His thoughts provide the foundation for a constructivistic stance which itself is in conversation with Buddhism's road to "enlightenment" while extending into the psychological achievement of psycho synthesis or "wholeness" and the "perennial" philosophy espoused by Aldous Huxley, loosely defined as mankind's search for ultimate meaning.
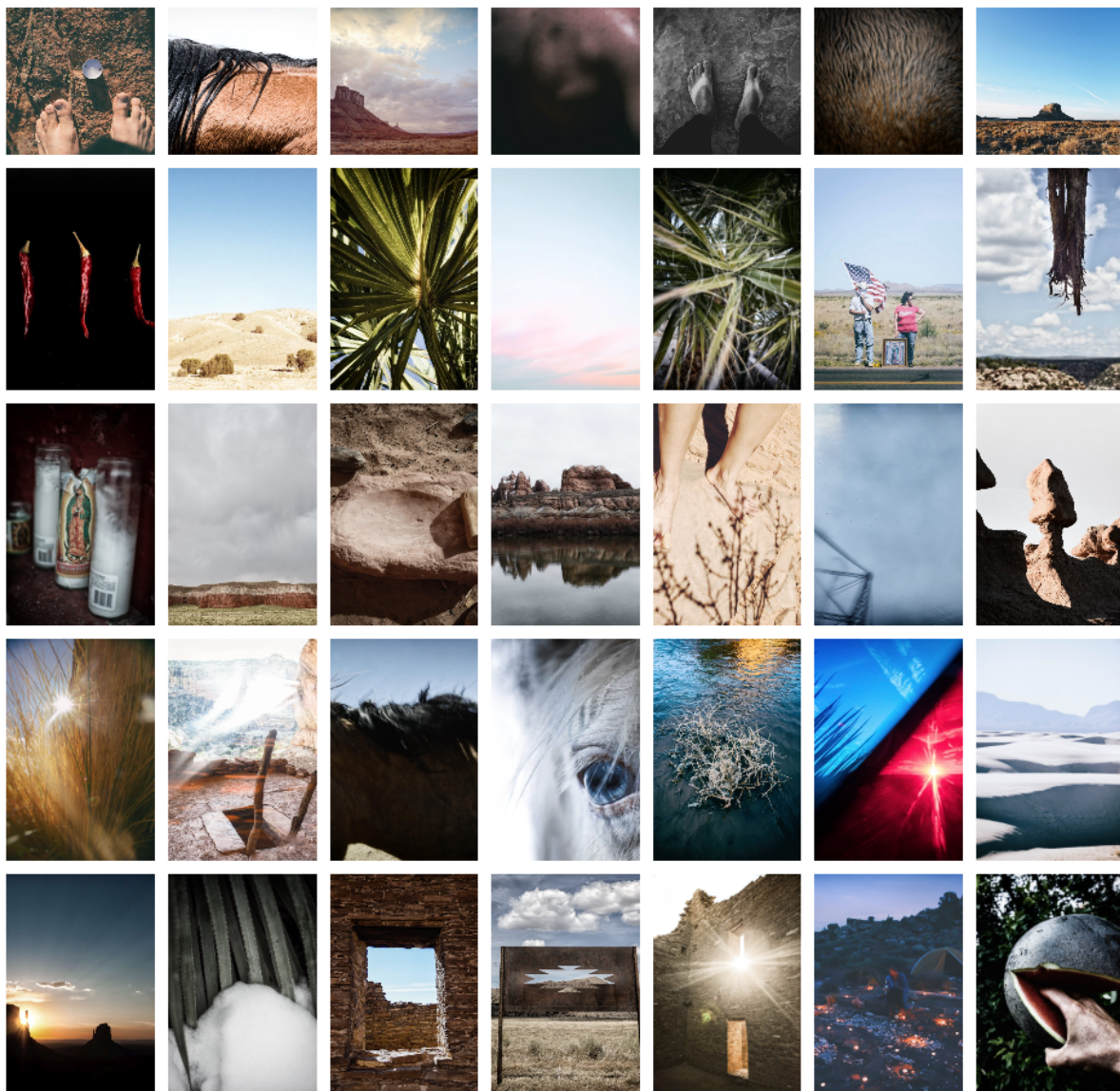
arrhythmias | this is how you lose me, 2020[10]
digital collage, audio, poetics

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[10] The work exists as both a spoken word audio performance and a multi-voiced web-based presentation. Listen to the spoken word performance, Arrhythmias, here or view the multi-voiced web-based writing of Arrhythmias, here.

The Garden is on Fire series, 2018+
Digital + Analog photography[11]

I've spent the majority of my life in the theater of the American Southwest. I've played, worked, loved, and idled on its backroads, boom towns, and primitive areas. I was first captivated by the wealth of geological wonders which constitute the Colorado Plateau, yet this has blossomed into a deeper, richer cultural and spiritual exploration centered around ancient American cosmologies and epistemologies. A search for wisdom and perspective outside of my familiar.

As an educator, I live by the semester system. And once the grades are in and I have a week or three to myself, I head from my home-base in Boulder, CO west or south. Sometimes both. I go out there to go in here[9]. I go out there to let go. To get outside of myself. This is the pulsing heart of my artistic process: the interplay, or tension, between control and release. Operating within this largely unknown space produces a rhizomatic reaction which takes various artistic forms. Once aware of it, like a crimson vein running through the history of my art and life, this process is readily apparent.

The ongoing photographic series, *The Garden is on Fire,* is a key output of this process. The work itself oscillates between abstract and representational iconography (e.g. horses, hoodoos, & the wilderness), all the while relying on the southwest to provide the conditions to project, interpret, and explore the above themes. More than a visual or poetic curiosity into the American Southwest, *The Garden*, is a lens-based essay which reveals how my forays into the southwest simultaneously allow for a mapping of the landscape of these tensions while also acting as a refuge from them.

{zero | the machine in the garden}

"But, hark! there is the whistle of the locomotive,—<u>the long shriek, harsh above all other harshness, for the space of a mile cannot mollify it into harmony</u> [12]. *It tells a story of busy men, citizens from the hot street, who have come to spend a day in a country village,—men of business,—in short, of all unquietness; and no wonder that it gives such a startling shriek, since it brings the noisy world into the midst of our slumbrous peace."*

~Leo Marx, quoting Nathaniel Hawthorne in The Machine in the Garden (1964) [13]

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[12] *[(parenthetical)](#), 04:06*, 2022, Las Cruces, New Mexico

[13] The late Leo Marx was a historian, educator, and literary critic. His work, particularly *The Machine in the Garden*, inspired many people who write on the cultural consequences of technological progress, myself included. Art in this space include the lens-based essay *No Human in the City, but Weeds* (single-channel video) by [Kwan Q Li](#), the machine-learning driven artwork *Bloom* by [Trevor Paglen](#), the performance based work *What's on the earth is in the stars; and what's in the stars is on the earth* by [KITE](#), and [James Bridle's](#) *Activations.* Each in conversation with this thread of inquiry. I draw inspiration from their work as much as I do that of Marx.

We live in the age of the algorithm[14]. It's organized around an ancient impulse alive and well in both the contemporary collective and individual — the desire to bring order to chaos, to control the unknown, to domesticate the wild. In this contemporary moment, in the digital age, we experience this impulse through an obsession with information, convenience, and productivity. The machine is us, yet only a projection of a very slim part of ourselves: that portion devoted to efficiency, order, and cold logic.

A great deal of our lives are shaped by the dynamic of these techno-social realities, with a logical terminus on this quest for illusory control being a technocracy (ahem, metaverse[15]): an actualized digitalization where every interaction can be monitored, analyzed, optimized, commodified, exploited - where every thing + every one can be objectified and thus, ultimately, controlled; all stable processes we shall predict; all unstable processes we shall control[16]. The price of this quest for constructed order is a world without genuine wildness, without chaos, without chance and instead a world which leans into the illusion of control with a hollow certainty.

{ &, there is such fragility to certainty }

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[14] See footnote [1].

[15] The metaverse is a network of 3D virtual worlds focused on social connection, commerce, and productivity. In futurism and science fiction, it is often described as a hypothetical iteration of the Internet as a single, universal virtual world that is facilitated by the use of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) headsets.

[16] See footnote [6]

Paint the Stars is a multi-modal installation combining sculptural elements, motion projection, audio, and poetics. Initially informed by the writings of Vannevar Bush[17] and James Bridle[18], I began tracing the history and structure of the internet to its present ubiquity and opacity. This research fed into time-based photography of clouds as metaphors as well as various writings and reflections on the inherent power-dynamics at play. With respect to the poetics, opacity, authority, and complicity are prominent topics, which in turn lends itself to the inclusion of sculptural computer towers that, with no screen or direct method of interaction, symbolize the opaque, always-on, system which we can't naturally communicate with nor directly access.

On the left wall of the gallery space, I projected these poetics, while on the right I projected a body of expository text. The stylization of both texts is timed - a style whose aesthetic itself is informed by the cadence of Ezra Pound's Cantos[19] as well as the driving rhythm found within Young Hae Chang Heavy Industries' foundational work[20]. The center projection is an early iteration of dépaysant[21], or hyperlapse imagery of clouds taken while in motion; the motion of the left wall text and clouds are symbolic of the human/natural elements in this dynamic, whereas the sculptural PCs at rear and largely static right wall text symbolize the opacity of these larger systems. To evoke a relationship to another opaque power (western conceptions of divinity), the projection and sculptural devices were laid out in a Cruciform pattern (sign of the cross). Finally, I wrote a piano refrain which balances dark (low) and light (high) tones.

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[17] Bush, Vannevar (1945). "*As We May Think*," Atlantic Monthly 176 (July 1945) pp. 101-108.

[18] Bridle, J. (2019). *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future.* Verso. James Bridle's 2019 book *New Dark Age* lays bare the stakes of the information age: we are increasingly reliant upon technology and mediated means to engage with the world, that, as a society, we view more computation, more data, and more reliance as solutions towards solving the problems we face in our brave new 21st century. Yet, Bridle argues, the reality is we are drowning in a sea of information. There is - literally - more data created, archived, analyzed, and accessible online than at any point in the entirety of human history. A fact that is true for this second…and this second…and the next. In this wealth of information, our vision is increasingly universal, yet our agency is reduced. We know more about the world, while being able to do less about it. Cynical almost to a fault (understandable given his research), Bridle does not offer an antidote, yet the reading itself left me questioning what I would do in this situation. As stated above, my aim is not to buy a yurt, move off the grid, and sell chakra crystals. Rather, my aim is otherwise aligned: to find balance, to resist, to reclaim. Bridle's writings shape my understanding of the necessity in doing so.

[19] Ezra Pound, *Canto I* - https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/54314/canto-i

[20] Young Hae Chang Heavy Industries - https://www.yhchang.com/

[21] See section {ten | desire lines}

Left wall poetics [22]

<div align="right">

in heels & spurs, bright & obscure, i go out at night to paint the stars
evenings fat in that punch-drunk dead air, like a message from god
we move like a poem
like a body, somebody, everybody, my body moving
moving through the pitch, all ways on, always on, always giving
maybe we never learned to take
to take of this body

y/our heart becomes a vagrant, desire the currency

for everything seen, something remains invisible, like your devotion
to light, to intimacy, to solid black, to convenience, to comfort, to ubiquity
still, now

fugitive clouds enter & undress themselves down to their last wisp
they were all that was, once
then nothing
then you
utterly enveloped by the dark

i still go out at night without a single answer
yet, in the darkness, painting the stars, feels like one.

</div>

Right wall text:

the future is dark, which is the best thing the future can be (I think).
~Virginia Woolf, January 18, 1915

we are enveloped in a system we cannot stand outside of or live without. while we can physically survive, you, me, and everyone we know cannot thrive. we are utterly enmeshed. across the sciences and society, in politics and education, in entertainment and commerce, modern technologies aren't simply an extension of our abilities, rather they actively shape and direct them. what is required is not literacy of these systems and technologies, but consideration. to think about histories and consequences - where and who they were designed for and which of these original intentions still lurk today. we wield computational thinking like a hammer in search of so many nails - every problem can be solved by the algorithm. the amorphous shape of this modern day oracle is the cloud, the central metaphor at play. the global network of interconnected computers, where we connect, play, fuck, work, store, retrieve. it's something we all experience - all the time - yet rarely consider what it is or how it works or who it serves and who it harms. Every email photo status update google doc check-in blood donation tiktok credit card purchase vote cast like, share, and/or comment memory preference & unspoken desire are already on someone else's infrastructure. we are habituated to this, arriving at reliance without real knowledge of what has been entrusted and to whom it's entrusted to. frankly, the cloud is a shit metaphor. there is vast materiality - phone lines, fibre optics, satellite, ocean cables, wireless signals, and vast warehouses filled with humming computers. infrastructure in tax havens like Diego Garcia, Cyprus, and Sealand. Contested territories where ambiguity is purposefully exploited. here The cloud shapes itself to geographies of power. inside of the cloud are the previously weighty edifices of the civic sphere: the places we shop, bank, socialize, vote. now obscured, they are less visible, less open to investigation, regulation, critique. by understanding the form and function of the cloud we begin to understand the operation of power itself. Our agency is challenged by opaque machines and inscrutable code. where our understanding of the cloud and all it signifies begins is where the power tatters and frays. we may then see the fresh darkness of a metaphorical night sky. We have been conditioned to think of darkness as a place of

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[22] view video of poetics + exposition + clouds here → shorturl.at/exCV1

danger, even of death. But the darkness can also be a place of freedom and possibility, a place of new beginnings - somewhere waiting to be illuminated[23]

Paint the Stars, 2021

Timelapse Photography, Sculptural Computing Devices, Projection

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[23] The arrival of knowledge can be connected to the Enlightenment, a Western history of technological progress which incidentally also made way for the rationalizations of colonization.

It's 2018, the end of March and it's no longer a question of getting somewhere on the Internet, but instead one of how we are navigating with and through it, just as it's navigating us. A student asks if FB is creeping on them, that they get spooked when they talk with their friends about being hungover and ads - not just on FB, but everywhere - start showing up for "boozy brunches" and "hangover remedies"....

….I tell them that FB doesn't need to be actively listening. That so long as you are logged in FB already knows where you were last night (thanks location services!) That FB's algorithms triangulate your GPS coordinates alongside that of the people who were near you during the evening, particularly FB friends, validating location(s). You further verify based on the check-in at the bar or on that selfie you uploaded (the slight blur further proves your inebriated state.) They make an inference about the timing of your 2am Uber ride, you know, when bars close (good on you for not driving…) Now, today, you've searched for Bloody Mary recipes, made an online reservation for brunch (or ordered food), all while tagging your friend in more blurry pics. Your friends exhibited the same pattern of behavior as does your larger demographic. Add this together, and, voilà! An educated guess a la predictive analytics. As for why and how the ads started showing up outside of FB's network? That's the system at play[24] & that's a larger conversation.

i remind myself

that i have to remind myself, that

you cannot love something and exploit it at the same time [25], [26]

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[24] In *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism,* Shoshanna Zuboff explores how surveillance capitalism unilaterally claims human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioral data. The capture and mining of data lies at the heart of the business models of the most successful firms - Meta, Google, Apple, Amazon, etc and otherwise. Given that these entities are viewed as content providers and their data mining is based on an opt-in system, the tradeoff between privacy and convenience has largely been accepted. Yet, in 2017 the USA's Federal Communications Commission revoked the Broadband Consumer Privacy Proposal, opening the door for ISPs to capture + mine data. To be clear, you do not need to use Facebook or Google to go online. But you most certainly do need a service provider. There is no-opt out for that. #NewNormal #SadFace #VeryveryverySadFace

To use a metaphor, you don't have to drive a car to get around, but modern N. America was built with motorists in mind. So it goes with life in our current digital age. You don't need to use the internet to survive (not in the purest sense of the word) but if you want to participate in the full range of what the 21st century has to offer, then you kinda, sorta, just a touch, have to feed the machine. This is the society, the economy, the brave new world we live in.

[25] The invocation of love - and its symbol, the heart - is intentional, layered, and further references arrhythmias; the heart of the modern western machine, our industry, our economy, our government, is beating irregularly.

[26] Referencing the [Bezos/Amazon.love memo](). Explored in *arrhythmias | this is how you lose me* (see footnotes [11, 12]).

Surprise Play Doh Eggs Peppa Pig Stamper Cars Pocoyo Minecraft Smurfs Kinder Play Doh Sparkle Brilho[27]

appealing and repelling at the same time
like fruit on the edge of decay

this unaccessible, unintelligible assemblage of {executable poetry}
et cetera

they use * '' " <>
they're feeling lucky

in the way all edge cases do

… .. .
i summon the separation <by> a mark and a point, draw a line because
{brackets cannot divide this
experience}

to be become so quickly obsolete, while remaining so durable
we are a history with a future, living in the present

they will remember it for us, wholesale

this

strange inheritance of everyday code[28]

---

[27] This is an actual example of keyword stuffing as seen on YouTube Kids. It is done to appear at the top of search results which itself is done for income; when a content creator reaches at least 1,000 subscribers and 4,000 valid public watch hours, they begin to earn ad revenue while also having their videos more likely to autoplay. It is a self-perpetuating system, with YouTubes Kids being a prime vehicle for auto generating views as parents are more likely to set/forget YT Kids on autoplay to engage the child (*Bridle, New Dark Age*). The child doesn't even have to be watching for this system to be "effective." Ultimately, this translates to likes, subscriptions, and, finally, money.

[28] In *Chapter 9: Concurrency* of his book, *New Dark Age,* artist and writer James Bridle asserts the real - and hidden audience - for web-based content is not those searching for videos, but rather algorithms. As people search for specific terms, and more keywords are introduced to encourage more visibility, words lose meaning. And as they go, so goes with them the ways we have to think about the world. We are feeding the machine - teaching it - with each action, reaction, like, subscription, comment, and behavior. This line of reasoning is not blazing any trails and has been supported by a wealth of similar research from Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together (2011)*, Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows (2011),* and even, foundationally, Marshall McLuhan's seminal text *Understanding Media (1964).*

The technology driving this system, modeled nearly 2 decades ago, matures, covers, covets, & is now at the ♥ of every modern government + business entity in both Eastern & Western worlds.

and mutate and iterate capitalism into a truer 21st century form and function. Whereas the tool could bring radical connectivity and understanding - real tech utopia type of change - the system, instead, opts for narrow, hollow, memetic methods of connection; it actively shapes the behaviors of billions of users while concentrating economic, political, and informational power in the hands of few. This isn't an aberration - the system is working as it was intended. All ways.

t h i s

The technology driving this system, modeled nearly 2 decades ago, matures, covers, covets, & is now at the ♥ of every modern government + business entity in both Eastern & Western worlds.

is

Your individual actions, both inside and outside of the digital space are on sale. At first, this was voluntary, not obligatory. You sold yourself for convenience and the illusion of safety. You think about choice and say you can survive without it, but can you thrive? They want this, want you happy and sated - *panem et circenses*. They engineer your ignorance alongside their profits. Their greatest magic lies in how they subordinated that which exists outside the market so that it now exists inside one. Theirs.

how

To put a fine point on it, the ominous and ambiguous "they" have claimed your life as a commodity and translate both real and digital experience into behavioral data. Predictive analytics and

algorithms next quantify and qualify what you see, when you see it, and commercialize how you react to it. This happens at scale, to billions and with 99% levels of forecast certainty - we once trusted the oracle, now society trusts the algorithm. They are the architects of your life. Credit score, APR, College admittance, friends, networks, lovers, and all those commodities, like you.

y   o   u

This is not new. It's the cancer's growth and you, me, and everyone else we know smokes through our trach ring with each action online and off. Thus the feedback loop of your predicted behavior and authentic actions is created and reinforced. Again, this is not about deactivating your Facebook, rather this is about another iteration, mutation, deformity, and blind cruelty of the dominant capitalist machine and mindset. It's about the very real condition of the human heart.

lose

Industrial capitalism threatened the natural world in the 19th and 20th centuries. Surveillance capitalism threatens human nature in the 21st. Without a radical revisiting of our brilliant hearts, democracy, love, & autonomy will continue to be on a collision course with life as it could, would, & should be.

m e

[30]

arrhythmias | this is how you lose me, 2020
digital collage, audio, poetics

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[29] Quoting Harvard Magazine from a public discussion between noted Sociologist E.O. Wilson and James Watson, moderated by NPR correspondent R. Krulwich, (9.10.09), "*The real problem of humanity is the following: we have paleolithic emotions; medieval institutions; and god-like technology. And it is terrifically dangerous, and it is now approaching a point of crisis overall.*" "*Until we understand ourselves,*" concluded Wilson, "*until we answer those huge questions of philosophy that the philosophers abandoned a couple of generations ago — Where do we come from? Who are we? Where are we going?*" We're on very thin ground.*"

When you have godlike technologies, you need the wisdom to match that power. I would assert that our relationship to technology has not allowed for our wisdom and thinking to be commensurate with the complexity present. Modern technosocial systems and applications are further undermining our ability to make sense of the world. We don't have balance or scarcity, rather we have the opposite. More info, more access, more data, and, as a result, less wisdom. Moreover, our technology does not emerge from a vacuum rather it is the reification of a particular set of beliefs and desires. We believe we are creating the system for our own purposes and making it in our own image, yet the technologies built upon algorithmic thinking are only projections of a very slim part of ourselves: that portion devoted to efficiency, order, and cold logic. This produces a crisis that, if nothing else, is a crisis of imagination - we are failing to see life in any other way - with a clear/present outcome being the prioritization of profits over people.

[30] See footnotes [11 & 12].

a truth lands at night, this heavy bird perched just above my ribs, tweeting incessantly
the weight of its body
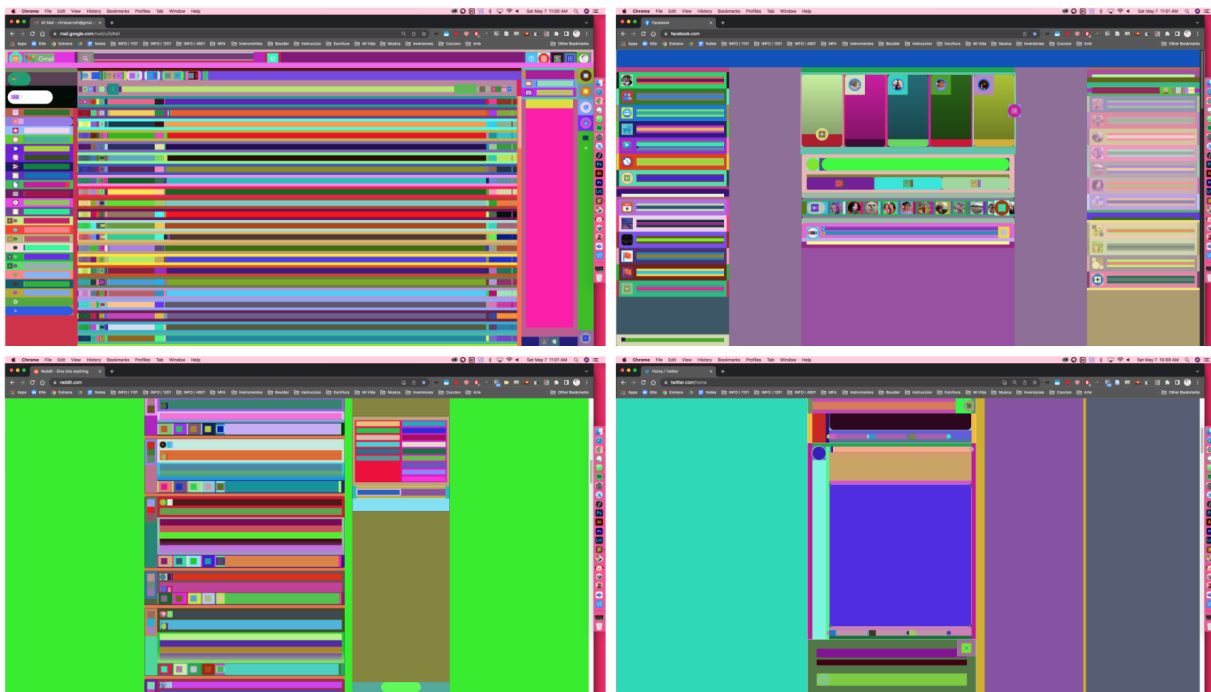
f

a

llssssss

through its trunk

through its claws

into the throbbing gristle of my core

makes it hard to think, to breathe, to be

all these american made machines, this nightbile, life in a garden of abbreviated

choice, voice

tell me lies, tell me sweet little lies

{glossolalia}, 2021+

Generative Code

In {Glossolalia}, I've used javascript to transform the html/css elements of any given webpage into random blocks of color; it is an instrument which produces an unknown visual aesthetic. The code, largely my own[31], is set to run at quick intervals, producing a strobe-like "blink" effect. While presented here as a series of stills, the work is best engaged with in a participatory fashion, giving the user the ability to not only experience the work firsthand, but modify the speed of intervals and other variables. As such, the work exists as a web-page with how-to instructions[32].

As mentioned the *structure as metaphor | interactivity* section, randomization as a technique is akin to letting go of control. I first experimented with this via creative coding in this work.

Initial inspiration for {Glossolalia} came by way of experiencing the net.art of Olia Lialina and Rafael Rozendaal[33]. First, Lialina's *Summer*[34] was foundational as a method of utilizing the structure of the internet itself to create, to collaborate. Indeed, as a piece of code which resides on various services (and utilizing timely page redirects) *Summer* would not be possible without the consent and collaboration of various netizens. Similarly Dutch net.artist Rafaël Rozendaal's oeuvre has been a model for how to use the browser as Canvas and view code as craft. For Rozendaal, there is no single work which I would reference as each piece is one small gesture pointing towards something larger: the internet is not simply something to comment on or where work ultimately resides, but rather that itself can be the source of art. Work which, for my interests in this piece, serves to intervene into the normative operations of daily browsing while also interrupting "the whirring machinery of capitalism"[35].

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[31] With generous insights from r/coding, r/javascript, and StackOverflow.

[32] See chriscarruth.com/glossolalia

[33] View Rafel Rozendaal's catalog here → newrafael.com

[34] Olia Lialina's Summer → art.teleportacia.org/olia/summer

[35] See footnote [6]

american made machines draws from and extends what began in {Glossolalia}[36], moving the work from a visual and participatory experience into a contemplative direction. Via the disruption of the normative operation of prominent online platforms (Gmail, Facebook, Amazon, etc) I'm redefining productivity while redirecting (and reclaiming) one of the last unmined resources - that of attention.

<p align="center">~//~</p>

After experiencing James Turrell's Akhob[37] in Las Vegas, Nevada, I became fascinated with immersion - and the resulting loss of self which accompanies the experience. Heavily reliant upon the phenomenology of perception, specifically the Ganzfeld effect [38], Turrell's Akhob is an immersive space which draws from not only a deeply spiritual well but ancient cosmological knowledge and interpretation[39]. The particular constructed environment that is the Akhob - hidden on the 4th floor of a Louis Vuitton store on the Las Vegas strip (commentary in and of itself) - is a twin set of rooms whose windowless walls are rounded to limit shadows and curb external distractions. Building off one another, each room funnels the audience to a viewing platform where, finally and fully, they are immersed in a fog of slowly shifting color, the source of which is hidden from sight. There are literally no visual anchors to guide you, which pushes the audience to go inward; this work, these rooms, and the present phenomenological effect produce a rich contemplative environment which allows for the self to emerge.

The american made machines series[40], functions in a similar way, albeit with a distinct source. Rather than using light, as Turrell does, I have transfigured the World Wide Web into pulsing color fields in the style of Mark Rothko[41]. While the work exists as a series of c-prints and

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[36] See {section six | {glossolalia} }

[37] On James Turrell → jamesturrell.com/work/akhob

[38] The ganzfeld effect happens when your brain is starved of visual stimulation and fills in the blanks on its own. This changes your perception and causes unusual visual and auditory patterns. It can even lead to hallucinations. Psychologist Wolfgang Metzger introduced the concept of the ganzfeld effect in 1930.

[39] See Turrell, J. A. (2014). In *James Turrell: A Retrospective*

[40] View video of series here → chriscarruth.com/american-made-machines/
[41] See MOMA entry on Mark Rothko, https://www.moma.org/artists/5047

documentary video, I feel it best presents as a contemplative immersive installation; Turrell's work + inspiration gave me a foundation, whereas Rothko's visual aesthetic grounded my own.

~//~

Humans tend to think about the future. We speculate and dream and wonder and worry, often in an abstract fashion as if the future manifests itself as a concrete event, rather than what it really is, the slow cumulative shift of this into that. Gradual change. It's the technological shifts – the little things we accept and normalize – I'm concerned about in this work. From Vannevar Bush to Berners-Lee[42], our aspirations, as we've built them into the "machine", impact not only today, but all possible tomorrows.

In our visioning and forecasting of days to come, a feedback loop is at play courtesy of (re)presentation. If we believe the future includes people talking into their wrists or space flight or self-driving cars and artificial intelligence, we act in accordance with those visions. Quite often realizing these speculative designs. If pop cultural depictions of race, sexual orientation, nationality, body-type, et cetera, are diverse we normalize a range of potentials, challenging what has been the white, male, heteronormative default. And, similarly, if we challenge the financially motivated, micro-targeting, attention-capturing, and exploitative yet sophisticated techniques which view people as product[43], particularly as they relate to internet browsing and social media, we can change course and channel a better, brighter, slower, more balanced and intentional tomorrow.

The american made machines series reveals a hidden and alternative potentiality inside of our relationship to modern technology, while simultaneously encouraging a reflection of the personal, ethical, and social dimensions to this dynamic. The work is as much a (re)presentation of the form and function of the always-on digital infrastructure of our 21st century lives as it is a chance to revisit individual intentionality and possible futures within this relationship. While the imagery itself is literally composed of HTML and CSS objects, through their algorithmically generative transformation these visualizations function as abstract color fields or Rorschach tests. This seductive (re)presentation of the www asks you to look inward as much as it does

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[42] Tim Berners-Lee, Computer Scientist and Entrepreneur widely credited with inventing the World Wide Web.
[43] See section {zero | the machine in the garden}

into the digital world. What is your relationship to the internet, to screens, and technology at large? You can surely survive without modern technology, but can you thrive – how does it determine y/our lives? What do you see here, beyond vaguely recognizable inboxes, search recommendations, product grids, and comment boxes? On a larger scale, are we ready to do the difficult work of training ourselves out of problematic internet behaviors and into a deeper appreciation of one's own role within these systems? How do you confront and factor in your role within these systems? What do you want it – and yourself – to be? And, where does pausing normative interaction lead to?

By interrupting the normal operation to the internet, big tech, and this exact curated moment I'm pausing the system and creating space for reflection. Yet, the solution is not simply a pivot to the overused and facile notion of "being present"[44], which views base awareness as a solution to past problems and future potential. I feel this new-age informed intentionality is misguided and half-baked. Rather, if we must rely on intention, let's intentionally borrow from our understandings of the past and future. From the past, take what we've learned – regrets and triumphs and the great swath of the middle — to make more meaningful choices; we pull from the past in order to inform our richer future. And, from the future, we remind ourselves that certain things are undone. Once we do this, once we locate ourselves as flowing between past and future, in this moment, we begin to expand a previously narrow cultural, personal, and digital language for how to live. That is the importance of creating a contemplative experience: pausing the world (wide web) is not about turning your back on your surroundings, but rather the opposite. It's seeing the world a bit more clearly, reconnecting with yourself - the one thing you can always change - and moving forward with intention. In this light, the work serves as an attentional prosthetic.

Formally, this work is an example of that process, with the randomization of various HTML/CSS allowing for a literal and figurative measure of such. The decision to edge towards random sizes of these objects as well as color - as opposed to a limited, or black and white, palette - is a conscious choice as I view this vibrancy lends itself to optimism. And, at heart, I'm an optimist. I want the audience to be reminded that we must transform ourselves to transform

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[44] Our culture of the screen, of information, produces an experiential poverty. We are inundated with information, with activities, with notifications and tasks. It's easy to assume the essence of the problem of technology is technological, but it's you and me and everyone we know - our technology is an extension of us.

the world, that while within this hyperobject we maintain some measure of autonomy and control. So drop out - like they did in the 60s - and move laterally to connection with self.

~//~

"love is the quality of attention we pay to things."
~ jd mcclatchey[45]

+

"That (labyrinth)...became a world whose rules I lived by, and I understood the moral of mazes: sometimes you have to turn your back on your goal to get there, sometimes you're farthest away when you're closest, sometimes the only way is the long one. After that careful walking and looking down, the stillness was deeply moving...It was breathtaking to realize that in the labyrinth, metaphors and meanings could be conveyed spatially. That when you seem farthest from your destination is when you suddenly arrive is a very pat truth in words, but a profound one to find with your feet."
~Rebecca Solnit, Wanderlust [46]

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immersion is inescapably present in the most authentic form of such
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motion[47]

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[45] McClatchy, J. D. (2001). *Love speaks its name: Gay and Lesbian Love Poems*. Everyman.

[46] Pg 69. Solnit, R. (2000). *Wanderlust*. Penguin.

[47] See {ten | desire lines}
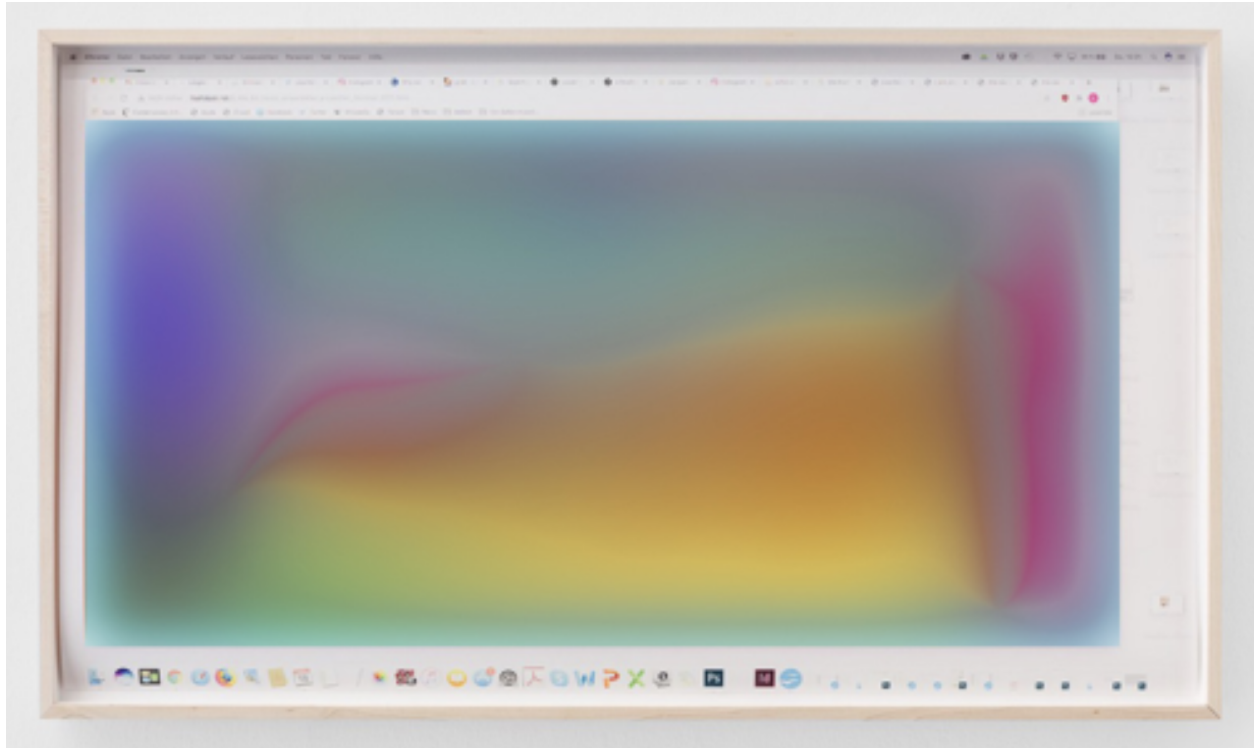
american made machines // (canción g.) 2021+
C-Print, Generative Code

american made machines // (canción g.), 2021

Generative Code, Projection, Video[48]

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[48] View videos of installation media here (google) and/or here (meta).

{eight | head shoulders knees & toes}

i write i love you everywhere i can
& like a ritual of validation, of complicity
it carries me over the threshold

I become curious about the relationship of our physical bodies to the internet. I explore how we engage with its structure, iterating on the *american made machine* series once more by moving the work from a flat projection into a literal immersive environment via liquid smoke, projection, and a sea-can[49]. I feel it's reached an end, and this thread shifts accordingly. I begin a photographic examination into the physical traces this relationship leaves on the body[50], which itself evolves into an exploration of the frequency of this connection and what this means in terms of being kind of, sorta, just a little, complicit in feeding the machine of surveillance capitalism, of being objectified and commodified. I perform a rite of pausing, scanning my surroundings, and centering myself before fully going online as an act of both acknowledgement and autonomy in this digital age, an exploration of the boundaries between what is mine and what is being mined.

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[49] View *the untold stories that my body holds* here
[50] View *how big is the internet?* here
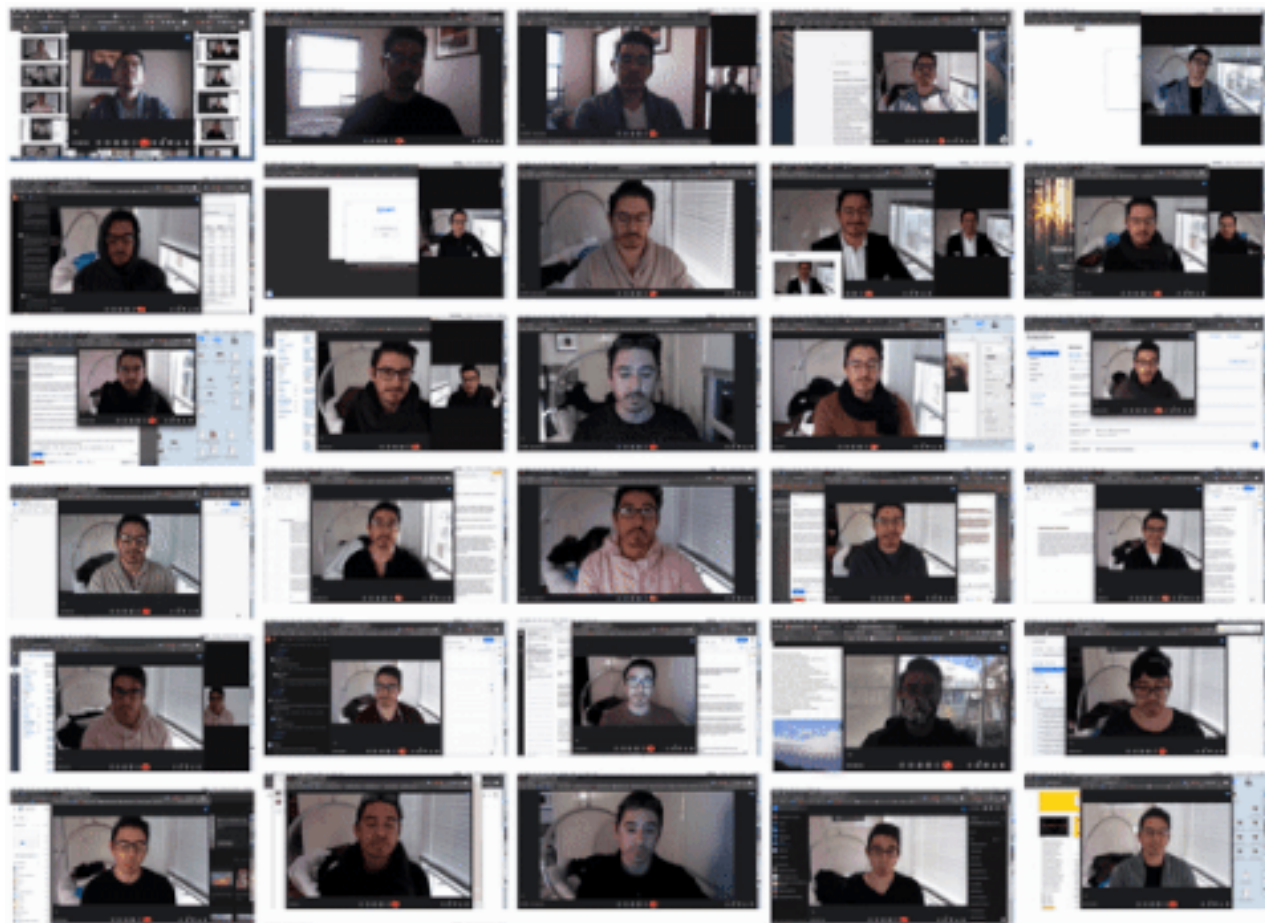
mine, 2021+

Net.art, performance, screen capturing imagery, textual fragments [51]

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[51] View full net-based piece <u>here</u>.

It's deep January, 2022. I'm staying in a cabin near Ruidoso, New Mexico. I remain interested in the role of the body in the world, in motion, in this original form of immersion - immersion in the world. I began to wonder about the shape of this resistance. I discover the work of Richard Long. How, in 1967, in a field in Wiltshire England, Long walked back and forth, and back and forth, from his home to his college, and in so doing creating his first walking art piece the aptly titled *A line made by walking*[52]. I think to myself how clumsy it is to label the work as land art, as, for me, it clearly stands as a conceptual piece. I think it really doesn't matter, it doesn't diminish the economy of his line, how it is simultaneously an impermanent remnant as well as a lasting act of resistance. I run with that thread and, inescapably, find a brilliance without shadow: Carolee Schneemann's *Interior Scroll*[53] raises the stakes. I measure the width of resistance against the weight of contemplation and inch towards a looming synergy.

~//~

In drawing from and extending Long's art, while also advancing the aesthetic began in *paint the stars*[54] as well as forwarding the immersion at play within *american made machines*, I've created a body of work which relies upon the act of intentional wandering. Errantry. Of being idle in the capitalistic sense (i.e. non-productive, inefficient), and thus resisting (once again) the "whirring machinery of capitalism". In this series I rely on long exposure photography and performance. After the shutter is depressed, an "idleness" manifests itself via meditation behind the camera or performative - and non-visible - wandering in the foreground.

As its necessity diminishes, the potential for errantry as a critical, creative, and subversive form reifies. This performance is an engagement between the body and the world and, as such, its motion becomes a simultaneous act of both resistance (to techno-social systems and

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[52] Richard Long's *A Line Made by Walking*: www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/long-a-line-made-by-walking-p07149

[53] Carolee Schneemann's *Interior Scroll*: www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/schneemann-interior-scroll-p13282

[54] See section {two | opacity}

algorithmic thinking (order, efficiency, productivity)[55]) as well as a reclamation and reconnection of/with self which arises from this immersive, physical placement in the world. This translates to an active way of shaping and being shaped which operates on a scale and at a pace embedded in something more authentic[56] than the digital experiences which dominate. In this light, the work also engages with Teri Rueb's discourse on negotiating degrees of human emplacement in Hertzian space[57], while also functioning as a formal investigation into the tension and harmony in generating meaning via imagery and body.

<center>~//~</center>

In the *swipe* series, I return to photography as a medium and embrace a midnight walking + slow-shutter (10-30 secs) method of capturing imagery. I'm not concerned with what the camera captures, nearly as much as I'm concerned with how this process captures me. My attention is fully in this moment; I'm in a flow state. I turn the camera, slightly + slowly, this way and that as I walk. I never look through the viewfinder as I do this.

No such file or directory extends this methodology into the daytime. Rather than a slow shutter, I'm concerned with finding objects of interest in the world, then setting the camera and meditating while it records those objects for short periods of time.

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[55] See section {zero | the machine in the garden}

[56] *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,* Walter Benjamin's seminal work (1935) is a timely, even prophetic, cultural criticism on the role mechanical reproduction played in devaluing the *aura* which existed previously in arts and cultural products. This aura is born from the same human impulse, the same wonder, we hold when gazing at the white tears of a meteor shower, or how we bask in awe at a waterfall. We hold this same sense of wonder when encountering unique works of physical art. It's their very uniqueness which produces a sense of awe and majesty. This aura, this notion of authenticity against the digital, holds value for my work. I agree that the reproduction of work - now digitally done, and at vastly greater scale than Benjamin ever conceived of - challenges Benjamin's original definition, yet in his brilliance, he does not account for our rising digital dualism, the belief that the on/offline are largely separate and distinct realities, each deserving of appreciation and each with their own "aura." In my work, I feel I am in conversation with the search for the "aura", for the authentic, and I know I've found some semblance of it in the digital as well.

[57] View Teri Rueb's here → <u>Drift</u>

swipe left, swipe right, 2021+

Photography[58]

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no such file or directory, 2021+

Photography[59]

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[59] View video sequence of these stills <u>here</u>.

Desire lines are unintended, universal consequences which exist in contrast to built systems. They are a poetic reaction, an embodiment of impulse and preference over the strict adherence to a construct. In a contemporary moment where increasingly accurate GPS and tracking technologies provide a coded and exact sense of spatial awareness meant to literally and metaphorically steer our trajectories, there is value in following our desire lines, in being errant; GPS attempts to (re-)discover bodies in landscapes, to inform us - exactly - where we are, and the most efficient route to get to wherever we are going, yet by exploiting the inherent reductiveness of this digital discretization processes we also open up space where the essential nature of the human and human creative desires can imaginatively be merged.

Dear Diary,

The indeterminacy of wandering, cloud-gazing, and wool-gathering, where much may be discovered, is being replaced by the determinate shortest distance We don't get lost anymore, rather we're told exactly where we are and where to go next. To not know where you are is ignorance, yet to lose yourself, purposefully, can be transformative. That's a gift of wandering and errantry – not absence but the emergence of presence. It's not just a way to push back, but a way to see how the algorithm reads and responds to intangibles. How will it acknowledge the possibilities of multiple, contested, and potentially infinite answers to the particular question – where am I and where am I going? Can it see me if and when I prioritize the journey over the destination? Does it know that the journey I want cannot be predicted?

What does the externalization of this internal landscape look like?

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[60] A desire line is an unplanned route or walkway, typically realized as a path worn into a grassy surface by the erosion of foot traffic or fresh tracks in otherwise untouched snow. Desire lines are unintended, universal consequences that exist in contrast to built systems. They are a poetic reaction, an embodiment of impulse and preference over the strict adherence to a construct. The invocation of such here is metaphorical, not literal.

mouseX, mouseY, 2021
Code, Digital Inscription [61]

Desire lines first come to me in the form of interaction with the screen: via a computer script which traces mouse interactions (scrolling up, down, sideways), I'm able to visualize the first gestures I make once my operating system loads (tracing intervals range from 2-10 seconds.) More importantly, these lines/marks/symbols evoke beginnings and promise. There is an element of writing and overwriting, of communication to peel back. In the context of our digital interactions, I am compelled to consider Flusser, in "*Does Writing have a Future*". In his writing, Flusser asks what will happen to thought and communication as written communication gives way, inevitably, to digital expression. How is our inscription changing? [62] I wonder how we commune and interact? Where and how do we interact and inscribe ourselves and our lives in the digital space? Are we resisting the boundary box of the screen? Do we need to?

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The root of errantry is err, to make a mistake. In the work *dépaysant*[63] I channel my desire lines into a performance with the body as a site of resistance and reconnection. Technically, I rely on

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[61] View original work, and elaboration here. Experiment with the work on your own here.

[62] Flusser, Does Writing Have a Future (pg 17)

[63] *Dépaysant* may be translated as a pleasant change of scenery or foreign.

consumer-level photographic equipment to record the skies - clouds in particular - as I follow my desire lines for periods of time between 1-2 hours.

Engaging with desire lines in this manner allows me to be outside of the systems I am critiquing, thus resisting them. I liken this behavior to the counterculture movement of the 60's and 70's, where dropping out was a lateral move towards reconnection with self and place, towards redefining productivity - success and happiness even. As elaborated upon in previous sections, this is a conscious decision that is directly at odds with the underlying philosophies and ethos inherent in the age of the algorithm. As succinctly stated by Mark Slouka[64], and exemplified by Richard Long's *A line* and Turrell's brand of immersion, "*idleness is not simply a curiosity or even a psychological necessity (something we need to help construct a complete human being); ironically, idleness can actively confront the techno-social space.*" Capitalistic systems, fast accelerated by technology, push us to be constantly on, to be efficient, to be productive. These algorithmically charged systems shape our lives and the society we live in - the world we live in - with, arguably, the majority of the benefits of these labors keeping the system running sans change. It's all retch and no vomit. Via this methodological errantry, I'm pushing back the horizons of this relationship.

As ever, my aim is not to demonize or glorify the technology at play, but rather to highlight what I perceive as an inherent imbalance, to showcase other ways of being. To once again quote scholar and writer Leo Marx[65], "*There needs to be time for efficient data collection and*

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[64] Written during the Bush Administration's War in Iraq, this article from Mark Slouka in Harper's Magazine is not only a largely oblique - yet at times direct - critique of the USA's unilateral invasion, but, more importantly, an extollation of the virtues of resisting the capitalistic system which encourages such belligerencies. Slouka notes how we can quit the system at any point. Fully or in a less committed fashion. His example of choice for quitting is via embracing idleness, as doing so is a refusal to participate in the machinery of the 21st century's dominant economic system (capitalism) as well as refusing to participate in the war effort Slouka is clearly against. From this, Slouka argues for the necessity of doing nothing; from idleness comes our true selves. He states, *"It's fallow soil, and all manner of things can grow out of that fallow soil.* He notes how, *"our mothers grew suspicious when we had "too much time on our hands." They knew we might be up to something. And not for nothing did we whisper to each other, when we were up to something, "Quick, look busy." What the mind requires, above all, is time; time to consider its options. Today we, quite literally, live to be productive. And it hardly matters what kind of product we produce; the process justifies the ends. "*

I am enthralled with how positively un-American singing the virtues of idleness can be. It's a form of blasphemy, a secular sin. We are fully in the church of capitalism, of consumerism…in the business of busyness. Slouka is another author and scholar who affirms and pushes back the horizons of my own understanding on how idleness, or the body in motion, can serve as a vehicle for both resistance and reclamation.

[65] See footnote [15]

time for inefficient contemplation, time to operate the machine and time to sit idly in the garden. We need to work in what Google calls the "world of numbers," but we also need to be able to retreat. The problem today is that we're losing our ability to strike a balance between those two very different states of mind. Mentally, we're in perpetual locomotion."

Idleness not only stops said locomotion, but is inescapably human. Lest we forget, we need that time - as children and through adulthood - to figure out who we are, and what we believe. The belief in this formative, idle, constructive space is present in *american made machines*, *dépaysant* as well as the ongoing bodies of photographic work I am engaged in, most clearly evidenced vis a vis the process I've outlined previously: the interplay, or tension, between control and release of medium which leans into, often forcing a constructivistic, contemplative, state. Letting go; losing oneself to find oneself. The more I create, the more I reconnect with my attention and intention. It is a rich unfolding; we all need to give the inner life (where we are inescapably most ourselves,"as Orwell's Winston Smith might point out"[66]) it's due. This is precisely what makes idleness dangerous and the body as a potential site of resistance in the age of the algorithm. Idleness as action stands in opposition to this. It raises questions whose value is not only iterative, but inherently more than the staleness of answers.

<center>~//~</center>

The presentation of this work, namely randomized grid patterns stylized in black-and-white, draws from the same process of randomization throughout my work, while incorporating a grid pattern as a means to exemplify potentiality or variants. Stylistically, black-and-white, create a binary which suits this piece: this work is a method to not only create a space for resistance and autonomy, but also as an attentional prosthetic which reminds one that we must transform ourselves to transform the world. Or not. That's the binary. And, it's stark and dark.

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[66] Quoting Slouka.
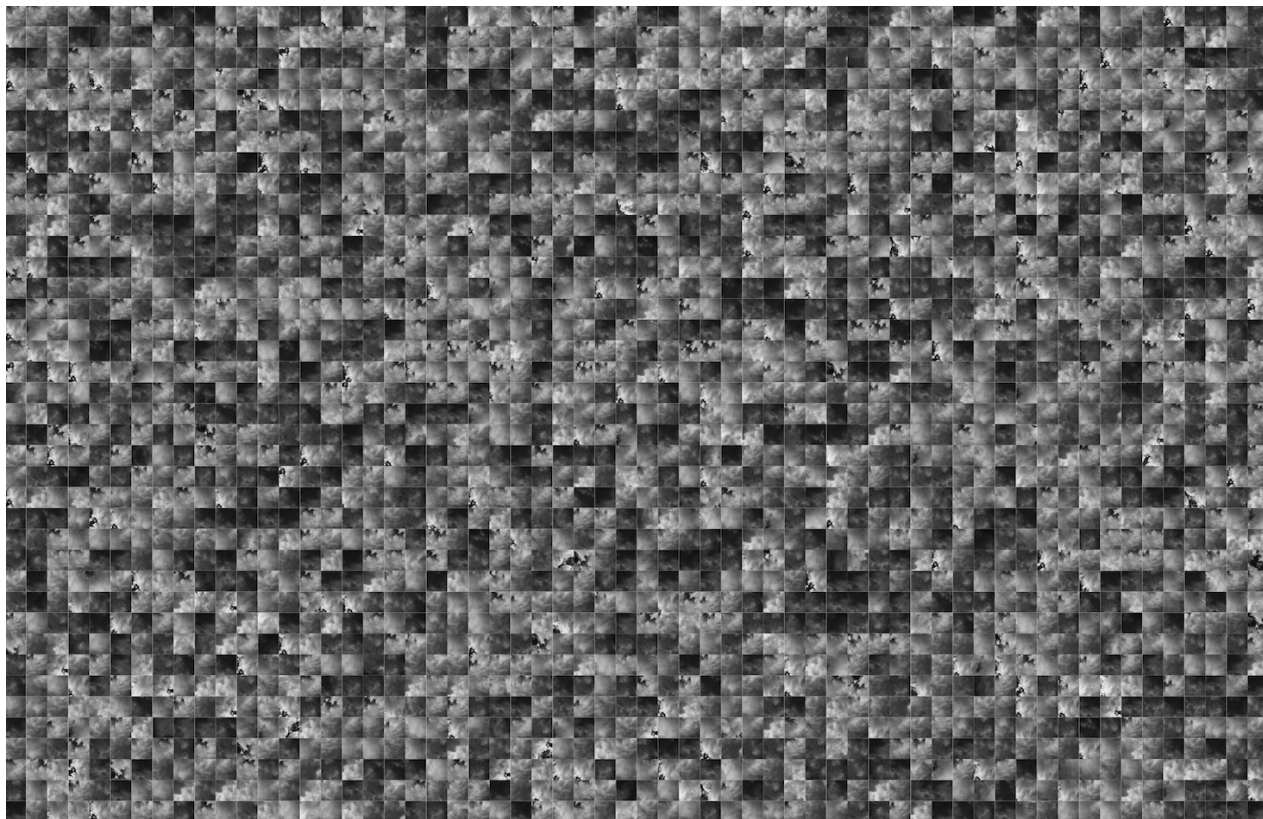
dépaysant, 2022
Photography[67]

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1   an impolite decay, thinned and spread across the canvas of the self
2   a reckless blossom of weeds
3   ocotillo stretches for the sky
4   for the razored edge of my father's face
5   towards the possibility of hope
6   that brilliance without shadow
7
8   did we ever really learn how to pray
9   or have we just forgotten
10   that
11
12   {
13   clouds enter
14   and unravel
15   they are everything
16   then nothing
17   then you, again
18   then clouds
19   }[69]
20
21   …
22
23   ..
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25   .
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[68] In 2017 the World Meteorological Association did something relatively unheard of in their long history, they added a new category of cloud: Homogenitus, meaning clouds formed as a result of human activity. While the intended definition was otherwise aligned, I find the notion of an anthropocentric cloud to be an appropriate close for this thesis. As with *american made machines*, there is promise in, as Donna Harroway says, "staying with the trouble". To do so is to step towards taking moral responsibility by working in the present, with all the people and things that are being affected, with the knowledge that things are imperfect and difficult. To day dream and wool-gather and "cloud-gaze" in all the ways that make sense.

[69] Excerpt from former US Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera's *It Can Begin With Clouds*

Just like the hydra of influences which distance us from self and one another, the intersections between the age of the algorithm and the necessity for presence collapse into even more intricate pieces of a daunting puzzle. Rather than answers, what we're left with is a situation, a resolve to "*stay with the trouble*"[70], to sit (or walk), to contemplate, to think. And, ultimately, to move forward as best we can. Hopefully changed.

The technologies which have given form and function to our lives and world are not going to go away and in many cases we should not wish them to. In this final body of work, I've pushed towards a greater understanding of the impact of the techno-social systems at play as well the conscious choices we can still make within this dynamic. I'm calling for the urgent need for interventions which lead to balance, while also offering a methodology for others to follow as they too navigate these questions, one which tends to eschew predetermined outcomes in favor of the experience[71]; interventions such as *{glossolalia},* contemplative space as found in *american made machines*, and the connection-come-resistance found in *dépaysant.* I'm calling to remind the audience that we are not powerless nor without agency. That we only have to think and feel again and keep doing so. That the value we have placed upon our technologies, while not entirely unwarranted, is cavalier given the staggering influence of it in our lives. We cannot think around this hyperobject, our techno-social space, yet we can think through and with it. That begins with us listening, once more, to our hearts.

While I haven't found a single answer to my questions, these interventions feel like one.

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[70]Phrase is borrowed from the title of Donna Harrroway's 2016 book, *Staying with the Trouble.*

[71] Expect nothing short of whatever arises

{coda | the future}

Conclusions imply an end, yet, I feel that I stand firmly at a beginning.

I aim to continue mining the impacts of capitalistic systems as they manifest themselves in our techno-social space, to broaden the scope of inquiry to include an understanding of how ancient, non-western, and natural ways of knowing and being can impact our increasingly mediated lives (por ejemplo, how nature's algorithms, alongside various cosmologies and epistemologies, can influence not only design and user experience, but the hyperobject itself.) I will continue the bodies of work presented, *american made machines, dépaysant*, and various iterations of still/motion photography, using the foundation I've laid to engage in expansive and performative scenarios featuring collaborations between myself (representing the human) and generative algorithms (representing technology). I envision continuing to not only incorporate the body into my work, but also my insistent reliance upon the land/southwest as canvas and theme. I envision embracing a situationist-esque mapping of terra (firma, nullius, incognita, and pericolosa), providing the audience with a guide for how they too may navigate this space, how they can reclaim their attention and redefine productivity, success, and happiness. Spoken word, poetics, and performance will feature as prominently as time-based works and creative coding.

With respect to audience, I aim to put the work in front of various groups, specifically focusing on non-academic ones as a key motivation moving forward is to engage these audiences in the wider discourse at play in my research and bring them into conversation on the necessity of personal autonomy, intentionality, and complicity - all arrived at with the help of contemplation, subversion, and errantry. At some point, near or far, I have designs to publish for commercial audiences.

if you've read this far, then you have my gratitude

while i selfishly undertook this MFA to push back the horizons of my own art & understandings

inescapably, I have put this into the world for you

… .. . the things we don't say will line our ribs like blue china . .. …

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