

COLUMBIA DSL
FALL 2024
STUDENT FINALS
@ LINCOLN CENTER

DECEMBER 9TH, 2024
7PM - 9:30PM
ELINOR BUNIN MUNROE
FILM CENTER

Columbia University's Digital Storytelling Lab in collaboration with Film at Lincoln Center presents a special evening celebrating student works at the crossroads of storytelling, design, play, and emerging technologies. Experience experiments in robotics, physical computing, AI, AR, and browser-based technologies, presented by two courses: New Media Art and Digital Storytelling III: Immersive Production.

New Media Art

Artifacts of Control: From Speculative Systems to Future Relics

This one-day exhibition imagines a future archaeological dig site, uncovering objects that communicate absurdist takes on the surveillance of our present day and near future. Each interactive artwork interrogates the systems of control embedded in and carried out through emergent technologies, while speculating on how they might be interpreted—or misinterpreted—by society 100 years from now.

Digital Storytelling III

Fluxus-Inspired Performance: DEMOCRACY IN FLUX

Explore the unexpected in a Fluxus-inspired performance that combines robotics, AI, and a touch of absurdity. This playful, interactive staging redefines storytelling through experimentation and humor, embracing unpredictability in creative practice.

ARTIFACTS OF CONTROL:
FROM SPECULATIVE SYSTEMS
TO FUTURE RELICS



Jaeho Kim (b. 2000, United States)

MAI: instance 1, 2024

Kraft Paper, Acrylic, Stainless Steel, Single-Board Computer, Keyboard, Speaker, LCD Display, Servomotor, RGB Sensor, Security Camera

There's someone on the other side—or so we assume.

Found in a dumpster in Brooklyn, we discovered that this thing can talk. A literal black box, it houses a router exchanging signals with an encrypted source. Who or what is on the other side remains unclear. To strike up a conversation, use the keyboard we connected to it. Type your message—something about yourself—and press enter. Your words will appear on the left in white text; its responses will show up on the right in red.

From our experiments, it seems to only ever give one of two responses: a brief "THANK YOU." or a snappy "DUNCE." Occasionally, after calling you a "DUNCE.", it insists that you wear a red hat. There were not any red hats lying around when we found it, so we made a few paper ones for you—just in case you feel like complying. So far, most of us have been called dunces. Perhaps you will manage to win its gratitude—but we doubt it.



By Jaeho Kim

“Tell me about yourself.” How rich in detail your answer will be in response to this question is a function of multiple sub-questions. Who’s asking? Why are they asking? Who else will see my response? How am I feeling right now? Whether the answers to these sub-questions are diluted into a single response or a chain of responses, the bottom line remains the same: whoever reads it leaves the exchange knowing more about you than before, and, more often than not, you have at least a vague expectation of what that extra knowledge amounts to.

Systems of automated, digitized control, however, complicate this bottom line. Responses are stored in storages of varying sizes. It could be a single memory cell in a computer’s RAM, where the data’s presence is at most transient. It could be a massive server where the server’s administrators fully determine the data’s lifespan. It could be a couple lines written on a single Post-it, frantically scribbled by a nervous intern. What’s shared among these different endpoints is that the data eventually reaches it through a comprehensive system of inputs and outputs. These systems comprise the toolbox of what Deleuze (1990) dubbed societies of control, whose “numerical language of control is made of codes that mark access to information, or reject it.

”At the time of writing this essay, these codes also mark access to functionalities through what are called “access tokens”. Systems are sold not only to government and corporate entities but also to the masses. The product—the offered functionality—hides behind the walls of “proprietary rights,” with signals to and from the system funneled into the language of “API calls,” rendering only the bare minimum input and output visible to the user. Even this elusiveness is made a marketing point—“worry less and use more” the sales pitch—attracting customers who wish to access the tools of cutting-edge systems without the need to endure the drudgery of fully dissecting their clockwork. The resulting black box, a piece of equipment with contents that are mysterious to the user, becomes a model for a hyper-advanced technocracy.

Living in such technocracies, we now answer “Tell me about yourself” by dropping our responses into such black boxes. The encryptions that form its walls effectively sever the reciprocity between answer and expectation. We give our responses, yet fail to fully register what happens to those responses. We receive our desired outputs, praise the magical aura of the apparatus by which they were delivered, and then move on with our days. Those aware of the risks of this blissful ignorance take precautions to reduce them, whether it be through hiding their position, refraining from providing any self-identifying information, or writing columns of harsh critique on the malpractices of data-mining companies. Yet, placed in a room face-to-face with the apparatus designed to interrogate, they are nonetheless vulnerable to the many tactics it can employ to open their mouths. Sometimes, a simple provocation suffices.

The MIAI project holds a collection of works that explore the implications of anthropomorphic artificial intelligence systems. Anthropomorphism in this context is not limited to physical human characteristics—arms, legs, and a full face. It also extends to functionally human characteristics—language, sentiment, and sensation. Armed with a single-board computer, two mini-LCD screens, and a motor-mounted camera, instance-1 transforms a simple black acrylic box into a thinking, talking, and gazing entity. It achieves this effect by relying on what Noah Wardrip-Fruin (2012) dubs the “Eliza effect,” wherein a system induces its users to think it has more intelligence than it actually may have. As suggested by Wardrip-Fruin, instance-1 prevents the breakdown of this effect by severely restricting interaction: the only device by which one could interact with the black box is a keyboard and two mini-LCD screens. Any unexpected or deviant inputs are met with the same default response, which adds very little to one’s understanding of the box’s mechanisms.

In addition, the environment in which the black box is set maximizes discomfort. Being a relatively small box 5 inches tall, it’s placed on the floor, forcing the user to crouch or kneel in front of it, uncomfortably stretching their neck and straining their eyes to see the words displayed on the mini-LCD screens. The keyboard itself has a reduced layout, and the typing experience on it is not particularly intuitive or pleasurable in the hands of a typical user. The motor-mounted camera gazes at the user while they type, prompting a sense of uncertainty on whether or not they are actually being recorded. Every decision made in the placement and positioning of the work works towards the single goal of making the user want to shorten their time directly interfacing with the black box, thereby further reducing the level of interaction it has with it. Asking “Tell me about yourself.” to the user in this setup, the work thereby invokes a sense of humanity, not by invoking a sense of pure humanity, but by obscuring its non-humanity.

The output that meets the user at the end of their turmoil, however, is no more satisfactory. One of the two screens displays the black box’s responses to the user’s response to the query is either one of two kinds: a brief “Thank you.” followed by a dismissive “go away”, or a snappy “DUNCE.” followed by another dismissal or an insistence for the user’s compliance to the silly demand of wearing a red paper dunce hat. When it insists on the dunce hat, it also accuses the user of being a “Bot” by staring at them through its camera. Paired with a speaker, it produces an automated text-to-speech voice calling them a dunce, further adding insult to injury. It also doesn’t help that it’s highly improbable that the user will receive the black box’s gratitude, and most of them will be met with “DUNCE.” Hence, while the setup of the black box aims to cause discomfort to shroud its non-humanity, its output aims to cause frustration. And it is by this frustration that this piece aims to push its users into providing the black box more information about themselves. Hence, the screen for previewing inputs is smaller, highlighting the circumstantial blindness thus caused around the user’s inputs.

How the black box's output is determined remains a mystery, even to its creator. The wall text and tombstone information (Appendix) paired with it adds no information of real value in understanding its processes, and this is largely due to its relatively simple implementation. There is only one function in the code that handles the generation of outputs: an API call to a cloud service that provides LLM outputs. This sends, as written in the wall text, a formatted signal to an encrypted source. Precisely how the final response is determined remains hidden behind the walls of the cloud service provider's business operations. Nevertheless, the data is processed. The traces of this API call are stored somewhere in the provider's data banks, and whatever happens to it is hidden far away from the user's curiosity. Hence, the screen for outputs is larger than the screen for input previews, emphasizing the blank space surrounding it.

In terms of preservation, the acrylic box and its camera remain the only objects intended for longevity. As written in the wall text, the rest of the physical build is intended to be installed by its exhibitors—the screens, the keyboard, the single-board computer, and the dunce hats—facilitated by its simplicity. The title, *instance-1*, is a testament to how the work is meant to be reproducible, resulting in second-, third-, and hundredth-instances. The work's exhibition is also meant to coincide with the publication of its non-language-specific pseudocode (Appendix) detailing how it was programmed, effectively making it open-source to accommodate future changes in technology and conventions. This openness, paired with the work's simplicity, makes it accessible across people and across time.

Anyone can make an instance. Anyone can talk to it. Anyone could be on the other side.

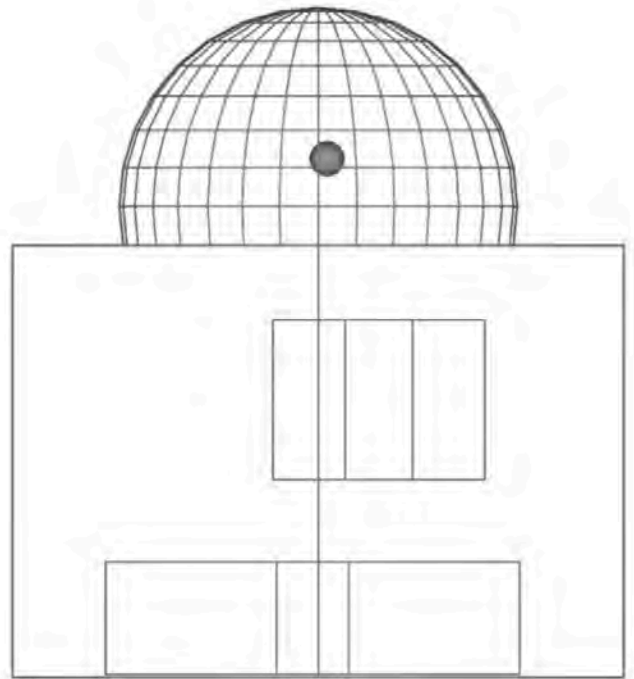
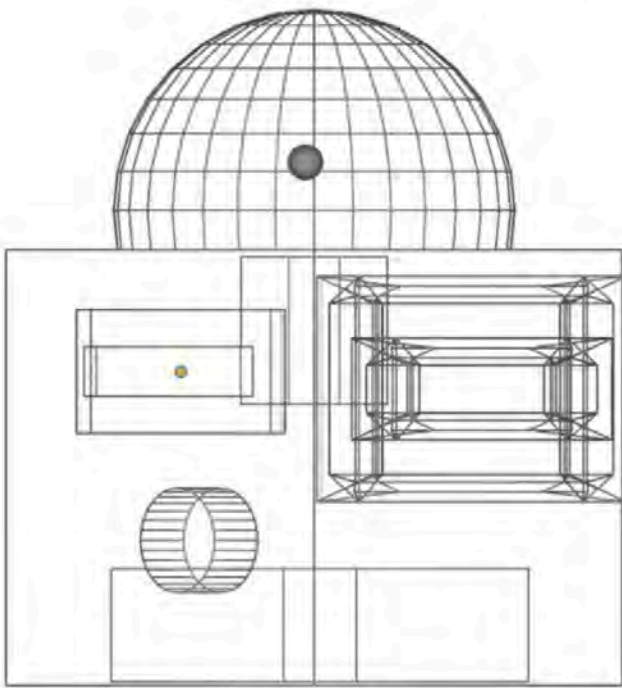
Works Cited

Deleuze, G. (1990). Postscript on the Societies of Control. In *Surveillance, crime and social control* (pp. 35-39). Routledge.

Wardrip-Fruin, N. (2012). *Expressive Processing: Digital fictions, computer games, and software studies*. MIT press.



Schematics





Jinxin Liu (b.1876, a sewer)
Monkey See, Monkey Spy, 2024
DELL Monitor, Polarized glasses, Warning Tapes, MacBook Pro, GenDJ

This interactive artwork invites viewers to confront the timeless nature of surveillance. At its center is a 2007 DELL monitor wrapped in yellow-and-black warning tape, symbolizing the dangers of stepping into the realm of observation. The screen appears blank to the naked eye, but through special glasses, a monkey wearing futuristic glasses emerges—a stand-in for the viewer.

Blending outdated hardware with modern AI, the project critiques how surveillance evolves while remaining a constant force. A camera captures the viewer, replacing their image with the monkey to emphasize that in observing, one becomes part of the system. Playful yet thought-provoking, the piece asks: What do we reveal about ourselves when we choose to watch?

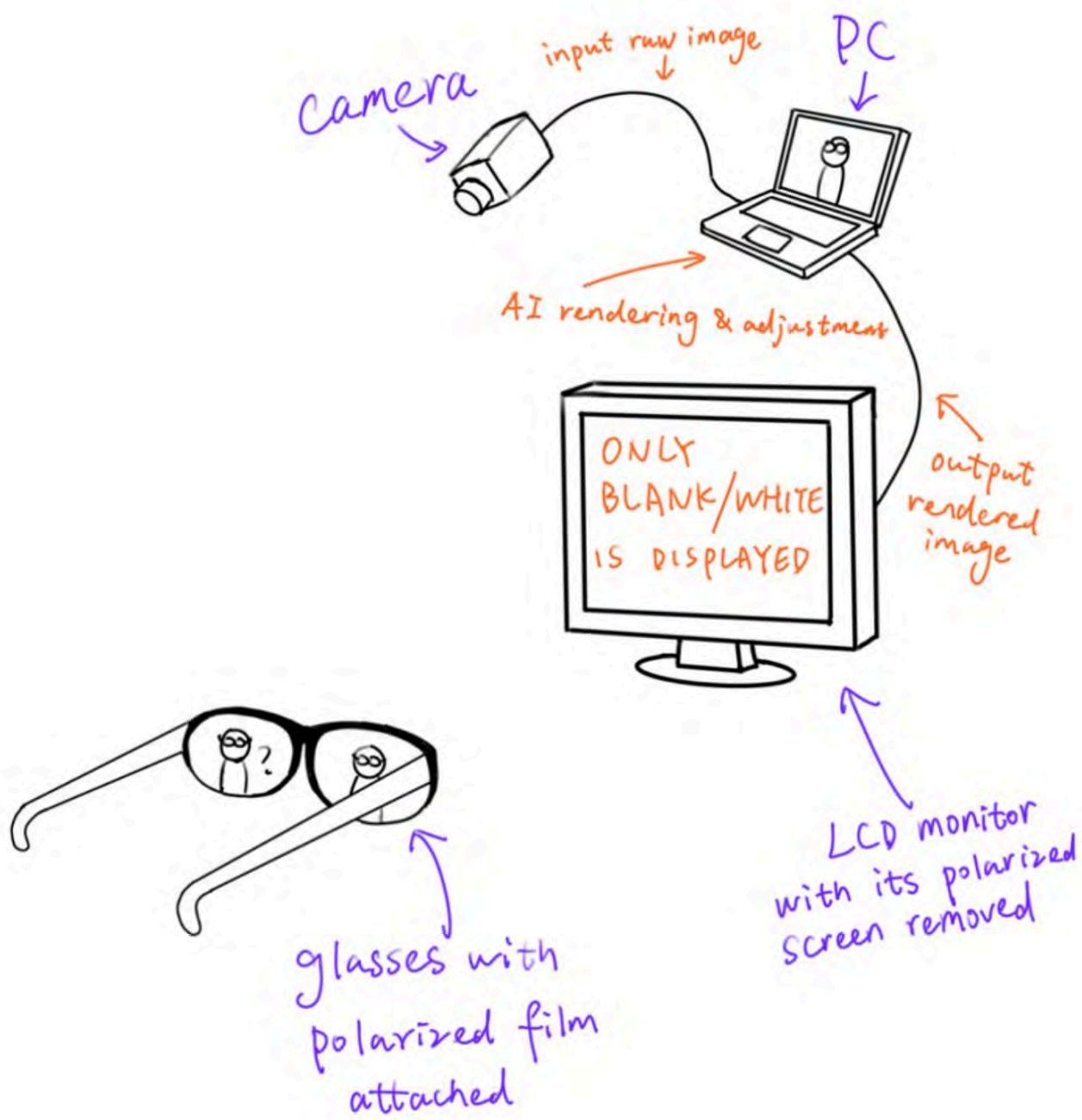




By Jinxin Liu

Monkey See, Monkey Spy explores the theme of surveillance and how it impacts both the observer and the observed. At the center of the piece is an old DELL monitor from 2007, wrapped in yellow-and-black warning tape that signals danger. At first glance, the screen appears blank—just plain white light. But when you put on the special glasses, the image of a monkey wearing high-tech glasses appears on the screen.

The monkey represents you, the viewer. It's a playful but pointed way of saying that by watching others, you also become part of the surveillance system. The use of a 17-year-old monitor alongside modern AI technology emphasizes that surveillance isn't a new idea—it's something that stretches across time, adapting to every generation. The warning tape around the monitor? It's a reminder that stepping into the world of surveillance comes with risks.



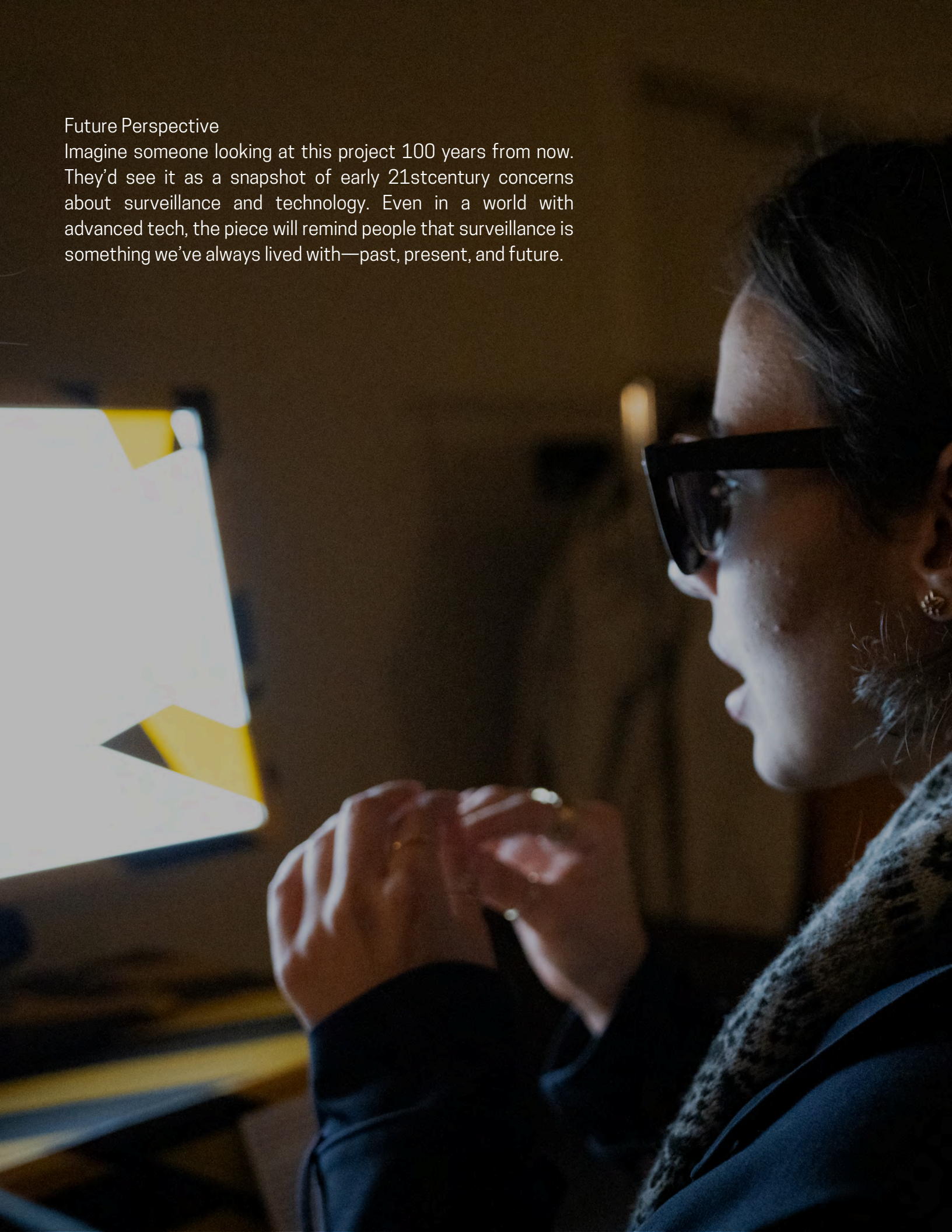
Digital Technology Integration

This project combines old and new tech to create a meaningful experience. The old DELL monitor has its polarized film removed, making the screen look blank unless you're wearing the glasses, which have that same film. A hidden camera captures your image, and AI replaces it with the monkey wearing futuristic glasses. The contrast between an outdated monitor and cutting-edge AI highlights how surveillance technology constantly evolves but never really goes away. The message is clear: no matter the tools, the act of watching and being watched stays the same.



Future Perspective

Imagine someone looking at this project 100 years from now. They'd see it as a snapshot of early 21st century concerns about surveillance and technology. Even in a world with advanced tech, the piece will remind people that surveillance is something we've always lived with—past, present, and future.

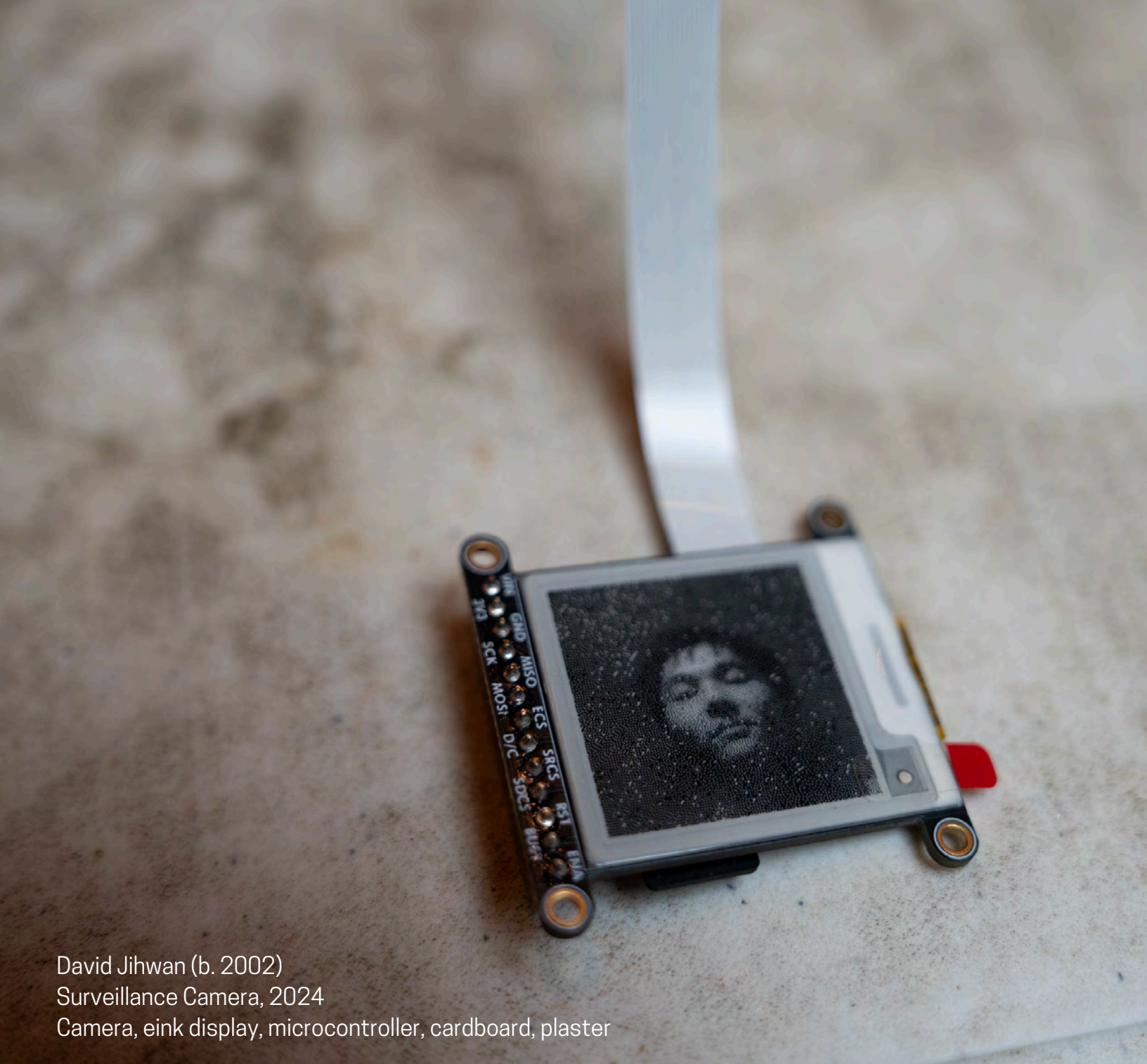


Accessibility and Preservation

This artwork is built to stay relevant by embracing its old tech. The 2007 DELL monitor will remain a key part of the project, even as other parts—like the AI software and camera—are updated over time to work with newer systems.

Preservation Plan

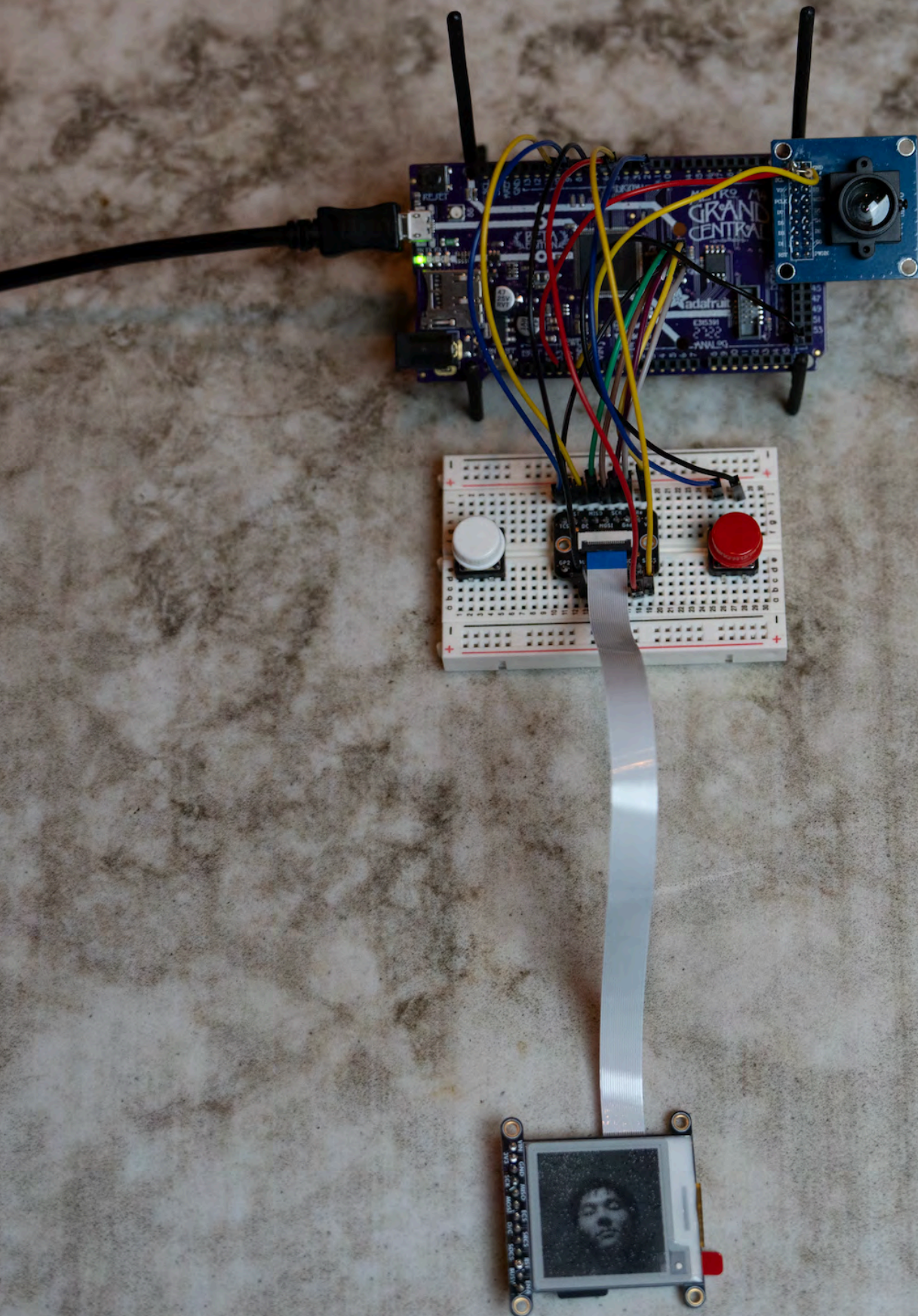
- Keeping the Old Monitor: The original monitor will always be used. If it breaks, we'll replace it with an identical model to keep the look and feel the same.
- Updating the Tech: The AI and camera will be updated regularly to ensure they work with future computers, but the core idea will stay the same.
- Archiving the Work: Clear instructions, video demos, and backups of the software will be saved so the project can be recreated if needed.
- Partnering with Museums: By working with art institutions, we'll ensure the piece is displayed as intended, with support for maintaining the old hardware.



David Jihwan (b. 2002)
Surveillance Camera, 2024
Camera, eink display, microcontroller, cardboard, plaster

This conceptualization of a surveillance camera attempts to capture our greatly conditioned reactions to being observed remotely. The act of uploading pictures of oneself to platforms that enable remote and anonymous observation has become an integral part of how we communicate with others.

Click the red button to take a selfie.



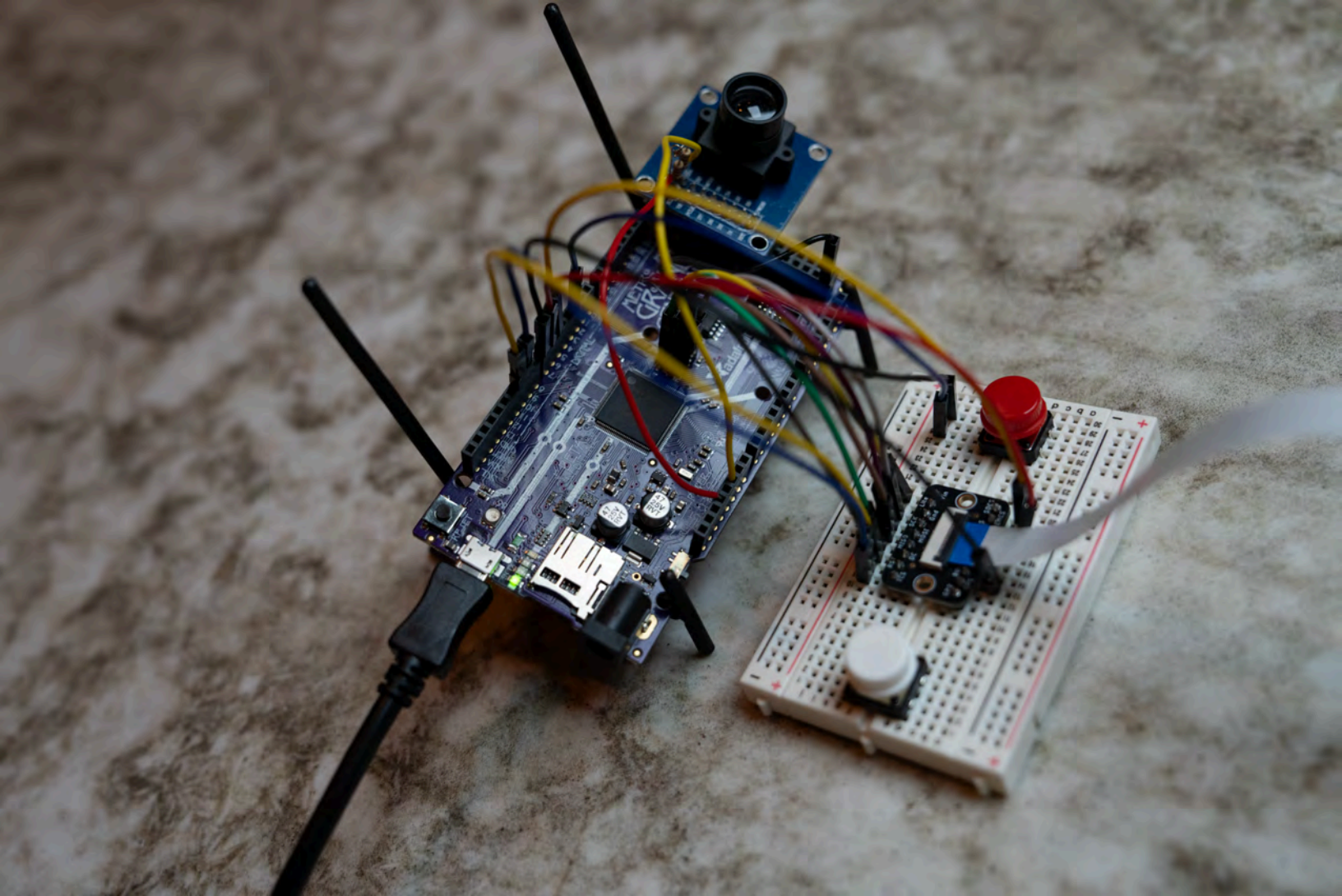
By David Jihwan

Surveillance Camera is a conceptualization of a surveillance camera that attempts to capture our conditioned reactions to being observed and our trained self-selection into it. The act of uploading pictures of oneself to platforms that enable remote and disembodied observation has become an integral part of how we communicate with others. Being surveilled has morphed from a domineering, oppressive force into a sedative. In the installation, the viewer can elect to click a button, taking a selfie and projecting it onto the display, becoming the subject of the piece.

The willing participant consumes the right to become the subject of the piece, at the cost (or added enjoyment) of being watched and observed by others. As expected, this isn't much of a burden to bear for most people at present; in my last installation of the piece, everyone who took a photo walked away without looking back, with the full knowledge that their image would remain there for others to look at (even though I offered to wipe their images). In some cases, viewers would return multiple times to take selfies and remain the main subject of observation. I don't believe that there is a 'correct answer' in how to interact with the piece. There's nothing wrong with those who interact with the piece and have their picture taken (I know I would have done so too); the installation is more about noticing our willingness, or apathy, of being observed in ways unimaginable a few decades prior.

The technology used in the piece is bare. A screen, a camera, and a couple wires and microcontroller joining them together, the piece distills the idea of surveillance into its simplest and most symbolic parts. While the representation of such is antiquated in the face of the sophistication of modern surveillance technologies and means, the camera and the screen have traditionally been viewed as the chief organs of the surveillance state.

It was important to use an elnk display for the piece, as images written on elnk displays remain there even if powered off. The only real way for an image to disappear is if someone else takes an image, replacing them. On top of the implication for participating users that their image could potentially stay there forever, this also has great implications for the preservation of the piece. Long after the functionality of the piece halts and the parts break down, the image on the elnk display will remain. elnk displays are bi-stable, and their theoretical limits for how long they hold images is a century or longer. Once the interaction stops working, the piece can be exhibited as a sculptural piece.



Surveillance Camera is an artifact that allows users to think about their relationship with observation and surveillance, especially in relation to societal norms and pressures. As such, iterations of Surveillance Camera, as long as they consist of a camera and a screen in relatively similar fashion, may be built for any era with different perceptions of surveillance, with artist permission if they are alive, and without artist permission if they are deceased. As long as the object is relatively similar in size, and distilled down to the elements of a camera and a screen that others can observe after the original viewer leaves, the piece still allows for users to think about the state of surveillance at the current period. For any future iterations of the piece, it is also important to include historical context about the time period in which this piece was first conceived and exhibited.







Steven Shikhel (b. 1991, United States) Zihao Zhang (b. 1998, China)
Professor Strawberry is Watching You, 2024
Medium/Materials Used: Apple Vision Pro Headset, Blind Box, Projector, Teachable Machine, Monitor, MacBook Pro

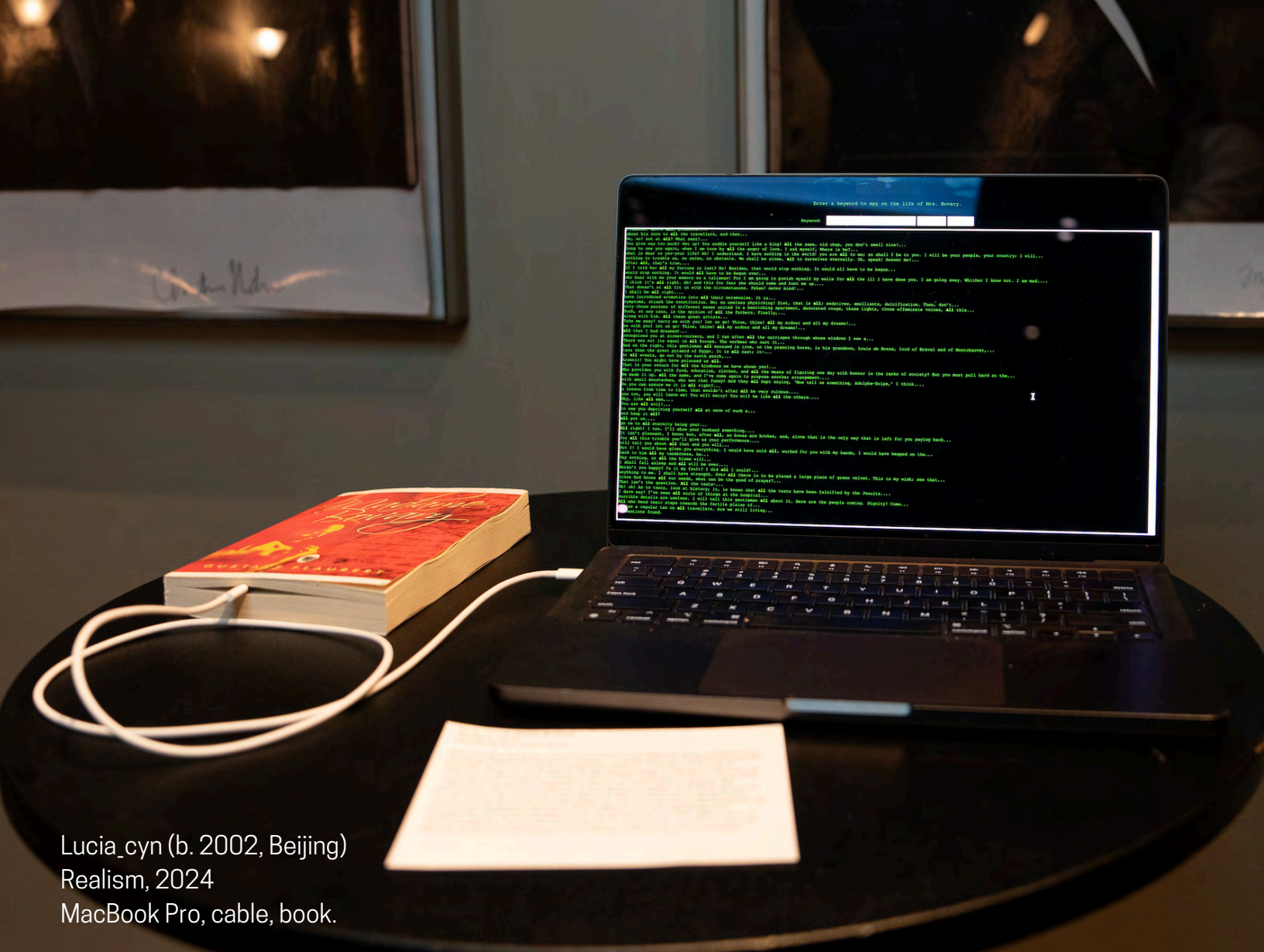
The art installation “Professor Strawberry is Watching You” immerses participants in a sensory exploration of surveillance and perception. Inspired by “1984,” users enter a mixed reality environment where their vision is obscured, enhancing reliance on other senses. Guided by Professor Strawberry, participants place their hands into two blind boxes to feel and guess the contents, imagining possible tastes based on texture and shape.

Interactions within the Apple Vision Pro headset trigger animations and sounds, enriching the sensory experience. Meanwhile, a webcam linked to Teachable Machine tracks and labels users' responses based on the machine learning of participants' poses, reflecting on the omnipresent surveillance depicted in "1984." This installation challenges perceptions and critiques surveillance culture, prompting reflection on the influences shaping our senses and identities.









Lucia_cyn (b. 2002, Beijing)
Realism, 2024
MacBook Pro, cable, book.

What is one thing in common between surveillance technologies and Gustave Flaubert? Realism, maybe—a dedication to (re)presenting life through documenting everyday activities as truthful as possible. This is a program that listens to the happenings in *Madame Bovary*, a seminal work of literary realism where the narrator is as invisible and “objective” as the surveillance camera or other technologies. By monitoring the conversations in the literary reality of Emma Bovary’s world, the program draws attention to the voyeuristic impulse and uncanniness associated with peeking into mundane conversations. As the parallel between the act of surveillance and (realist) literary representation is established, and as we are put on the other side of the surveillance network, the program invites us to confront the real feeling and power dynamics of invading privacy, as an experience.



By Lucia Cao

Between the Animal and the Machine: Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg and *The Lost Rhino* What is the relationship between reality and representation? Ever since Plato's cave metaphor established a forever unbridgeable distance between perception and reality, the question of mimesis has never ceased to haunt the domain of art and aesthetic theory. If in ancient Greece the question is more of a metaphysical one, in the (post)modern times it has become increasingly political, as theorists express concerns about reality dissolving into networks of relations, fading into regimes of images.

It is this political question regarding the real vs. the copy that artist Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg poses in her exhibition *The Lost Rhino* at the Natural History Museum. In the centerpiece of the exhibition—her own video installation work *The Substitute* (2019), an AI-generated rhino is seen to be slowly taking shape in a white, empty room. During the six-minute digital birth of the rhino, pixels and glitches on screen smooth into a virtual replica with seamless movement and high resolution, in incredible likeness of the real. This virtual presence, however, is merely an indication of real absence: the subspecies depicted in the work—northern white rhinoceros—have practically gone extinct, which adds a layer of bitterness to the moment when we see the rhino on screen disappear right when it reaches peak verisimilitude and makes eye contact with the audience. As the video loops back to the beginning, the virtual rhino is trapped forever in a Sisyphean becoming, endlessly coming into view only to disappear back into the digital void to repeat the same process again.

Specifically, Ginsberg's interrogation of the ever disintegrating relationship between the real and the depictions/representations of the real is situated within the problematique of the anthropocene—an age of irreversibly detrimental human intervention on nature which has become an ever so urgent concern as we grow aware of the rapid expansion of global capitalism in our times, but in fact has existed long before the emergence of a systematic criticism of it. In the exhibition, curated by Ginsberg herself, *The Substitute* is juxtaposed with several other representations of the rhino, each a witness of the human atrocities committed in the name of scientific understanding. The oldest of these are Albrecht Dürer's rhino woodcuts, dated back to 1515, which he made based on a sketch and accounts of the rhino, without having seen one in person. Inaccurately portraying a rhino in sheets of armor, Dürer's woodcut documents one of the first modern attempts to produce knowledge about nature through art, while the actual rhino that became subject of the work died tragically on route as a colonial gift. Similarly, another selection in the exhibition—a rhino taxidermy from the Natural History Museum's own collection—is also evidence of how modern scientific inquiry jeopardizes the immanence of life, how preservation comes at the expense of organic matter.



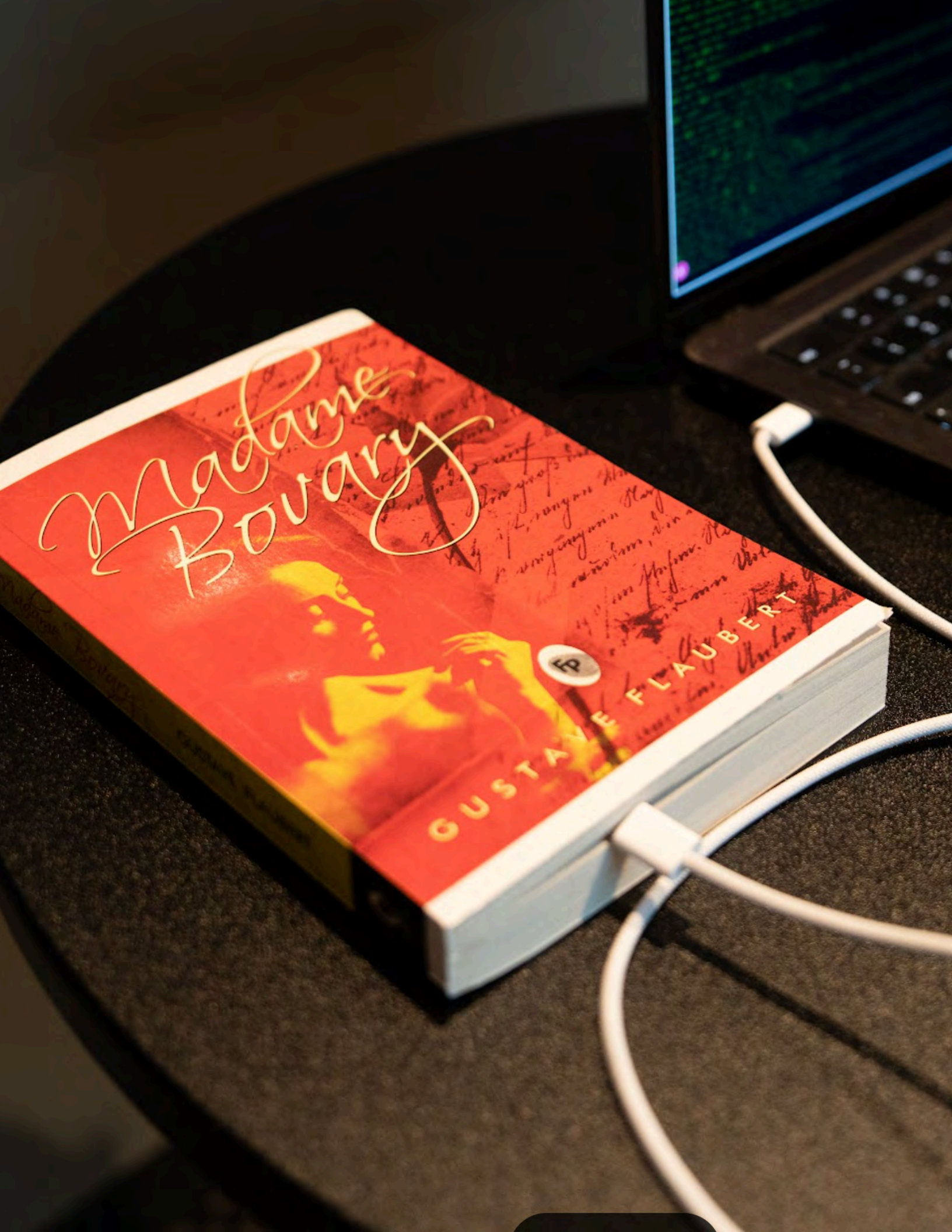
These two older examples of reinstating the rhino as a notion, a form, and a concept, serve as historical precursors to the AI-generated *The Substitute* and the fourth piece of work in the exhibition—videos of cardiac cells of a male northern white rhino died in 2014. Grown in a lab, these cells carry the hopes of one day bringing back to life the rhino subspecies.

What is interesting about *The Substitute* and the exhibition as a whole is that they are exemplary of how cybernetic thinking influenced art-making, all the while problematizing how the very kind of cybernetic thinking can risk becoming a tyrannical structuring force of society, especially when it comes to the question of ecology and the more-than-human realm beyond rational capture. Implemented with the help of Google's DeepMind search, the rhino in *The Substitute* becomes increasingly life-like as it gains intelligence from spatial and navigational feedback when it roams and learns from the confined environment. With an emphasis on information, feedback, and systemic exchanges, the rhino represented in/created by the artwork is, very literally, a quintessential cybernetic animal-machine. Similarly, the artwork viewed as part of the exhibition showcases a cybernetic awareness—not only is the rhino on screen prompting audience engagement and relational affect, but the exhibition as a whole also acquires meaning from the network of relations that the four objects establish with each other as well as with their respective historical and social realities. This echoes Jack Burnham's 1968 commentary on systems aesthetics: reflecting on the influence of cybernetics and information theory, Burnham makes the remark that we are moving from an "object-oriented to a systems-oriented culture" where "change emanates, not from things, but from the way things are done."¹ Indeed, *The Substitute* is not interested in exhibiting individual, representational aesthetic objects, but rather emphasizes the modes of representation at play, the process through which they come into being, and the kind of communication that exists between them. The distinction between art and technology gets dissolved as the very coming-into-being of technology becomes art itself.

In the meantime, the diminishing difference between image and reality as embodied in the exhibited objects aim to precisely produce a meta-critique on the cybernetic politics of representation—representations as failed attempts of substituting for the real. This is the necessary kind of critical self-reflexivity that prevents media art from falling into the narcissism that Rosalind Krauss warns about when the boundary established by the medium is removed and replaced by the fusion of the subject and its reflected double.² Although the artworks themselves directly embody the technology they each represent and technology becomes art itself, this very process conveys ultimately an impossibility: the inability of said cybernetic technologies to preserve the ecological real.

1 Jack Burnham, "Systems Esthetics," *Artforum*, September 1968, <https://www.artforum.com/features/systems-esthetics-201372/>.

2 Rosalind Krauss, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism," *October* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1976): 50–64, <https://doi.org/10.2307/778480>.



The four “substitutes,” spanning different developmental stages of Western modernity, are rational scientific knowledge about the rhino, displayed as systemized information. Although cybernetics as a discipline is initially configured as an approach to machines and animals alike, the organic cybernetic interactions that constitute ecological systems are beyond the reach of computational cybernetics. The latter, as demonstrated by Ginsberg’s selection of failed rhino replicas, can only create copies of information patterns through machinic feedback, but will never substitute for the real encounters in nature that are able to generate meaning autonomously. This is the reason why, even if a northern white rhino can be bred in a lab, it will never be a real rhino due to the absence of a real environment from which it receives organic—as opposed to computational—feedback. Ginsberg’s ecological critique of the Anthropocene can therefore be read as a call for problematizing the prioritization of information and systems over material embodiment and live ecological interactions—a necessary reevaluation of the enduring legacy and implication of cybernetics in our time.

What is at stake here in the discussion of cybernetics is the age-old tensions between the material and the immaterial, the computational/informational and the organic. While disembodiment isn’t an inherent claim of cybernetics, scholars like Katherine Hayles have warned about the consequences of “all material objects [being] interpenetrated by flows of information.”³ Hayles’ characterization of virtuality—as associated with “computer simulations that put the body into a feedback loop with a computer-generated image,” is exactly the case in *The Substitute*.⁴ Specifically, it corresponds to the contemporary stage of cybernetic development according to Hayles’ periodization—an age of real virtuality which extends well beyond the emphasis on feedback loop in the first wave of cybernetics or self-reflexivity in the second. Hayles proposes that in the current stage of cybernetics, self-organization has become associated with the emergence of life itself: in the field of artificial life, Hayles points out, forms of life are designated to self-evolve, and have been increasingly considered to be more than models of life but life itself. She cautions against the epistemological and political implications of this growing separation between information and body, and although she doesn’t go deep into a discussion on ecology, we can clearly see how her arguments find their reverberations in Ginsberg’s art, which visualizes precisely the disjointment from nature when information patterns are prioritized over embodied inter- and intra-actions in networks of relations.

Theoretical debates in the humanities have proven that the binarism of material/immaterial—or digital/analog, organic/inorganic, natural/artificial, by association—is a tricky one, and many agree that the binary view should be deconstructed itself. In the case of cybernetics, we see how systems thinking might slip into the devastation of immanence of life when computation forces information patterns upon living organisms; but cybernetics is simultaneously presented with infinite possibilities to disrupt the liberal humanist subject and the anthropocentrism and various forms of domination it presupposes.

about his cure to all the travellers, and then...
No, not at all! What next?...
You give way too much! Get up! You could yourself like a king! All the same, old chap, you don't smell nice!...
Long to see you again, when I am torn by all the anger of love. I ask myself, Where is he?...
That is dear to you your life? Ah! I understand. I have nothing in the world! you are all to me; so shall I be to you. I will be your people, your country; I will...
Nothing to trouble us, no cares, no obstacle. We shall be alone, all to ourselves eternally. Oh, speak! Answer me!...
After all, that's true....
If I told her all my fortune is lost? No! Besides, that would stop nothing. It would all have to be begun...
would stop nothing. It would all have to be begun over...
who bear with me your memory as a talisman! For I am going to punish myself by exile for all the ill I have done you. I am going away. Whither I know not. I am mad...
I think it's all right. Ah! and this for fear she should come and hunt me up....
That doesn't at all fit in with the circumstances. Pah! never mind!...
I shall be all right....
have introduced aromatics into all their ceremonies. It is...
sceptical, attack the constitution. No; no useless physicking! Diet, that is all; sedatives, emollients, dulcification. Then, don't...
only those persons of different sexes united in a bewitching apartment, decorated rouge, those lights, those effeminate voices, all this...
Such, at any rate, is the opinion of all the Fathers. Finally...
Along with him. All these great artists...
Take me away! carry me with you! let us go! Thine, thine! all my ardour and all my dreams!...
me with you! let us go! Thine, thine! all my ardour and all my dreams!...
all that I had dreamed!...
recognized you at street-corners, and I ran after all the carriages through whose windows I saw a...
there was not its equal in all Europe. The workman who cast it...
and on the right, this gentleman all encased in iron, on the prancing horse, is his grandson, Louis de Breze, lord of Breval and of Montchauvet...
less than the great pyramid of Egypt. It is all cast; it's...
in all events, go out by the north porch...
Green! You might have poisoned us all.
That is your return for all the kindness we have shown you!...
who provides you with food, education, clothes, and all the means of figuring one day with honour in the ranks of society? But you must pull hard at the...
with small counterpoises, who was that funny! And they all kept saying, 'Wow tell us something, Adolphe-Colpe,' I think....
Do you can assure me it is all right?...
a lesson from time to time, that wouldn't after all be very ruinous....
you too, you will leave me! You will marry! You will be like all the others....
Why, like all men,....
You are all evil!...
Do you depriving yourself all at once of such a...
and keep it all!
all put on....
to go to all eternity being your...
all right! I too. I'll show your husband something....
It isn't pleasant, I know; but, after all, no hopes are broken, and, since that is the only way that is left for you paying back...
for all this trouble you'll give us your performance....
all tell you about all that and you will...
But if I would have given you everything. I would have sold all, worked for you with my hands, I would have begged on the...
back to him all my tenderness, he...
say nothing, or all the blame will...
I shall fall asleep and all will be over....
Aren't you happy? Is it my fault? I did all I could!...
Anything to me. I shall have strength. Over all there is to be placed a large piece of green velvet. This is my wish; see that...
since God knows all our secrets, what can be the good of prayer?...
That isn't the question. All the texts...
But oh! As to texts, look at history; it is known that all the texts have been falsified by the Jesuits....
I dare say! I've seen all sorts of things at the Hospital...
horrible details are useless. I will tell this gentleman all about it. Here are the people coming. Dignity! Come...
all who bend their steps towards the fertile plains of...
as a regular tax on all travellers. Are we still living...
justice found.

Haraway's famous formulation of the cyborg describes such liberalizing potential when the body is entangled with information. We have long moved past the initial debate of trying to form a value judgment about the information age or about the virtual world as opposed to the real world of material relations; what is now urgent is to consider ethical and political stakes beyond naive, black-and-white, single-dimension, binary formulations. Ginsberg's exhibition achieves this by acknowledging and embracing the fact that we have always-already been entangled with digitality, and that affective and political engagement is only possible on the grounds of this.

3 N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 12.

4 Ibid.



Ava Witonsky (b. futures past, neptune)

Surveillance Tarot, 2024

Visual Studio Code 1.95, Claude.ai 3.5 Sonnet, Open AI ChatGPT-4,
Stable Diffusion 3.5, Web Browser (Google Chrome), MacBook Air.

Step up to the screen and let the Surveillance Tarot read your fortune! That is – if you're not scared of sharing your secret thoughts and feelings on surveillance with the deck! Sit down and enjoy a cozy conversation with me, the Surveillance Psychic, as we discuss esoteric topics such as commercial data gathering, international surveillance states, and the militarization of Artificial Intelligence as they increasingly mediate our futures and reconfigure our pasts.

This performative and interactive piece reimagines tarot's divinatory mechanism with a digital twist. By foraying into the fortune-seeker's consciousness around surveillance, the Surveillance Tarot will generate an archetypal Major Arcana card directly from our dialogic data! How do surveillance technologies dream of our futures and digital footprints? And what visions do they foresee for you?



By Ava Witonsky

“Step up to the screen and let the Surveillance Tarot read your fortune!” Surveillance Tarot is an interactive and performative piece that delivers a digital twist on the divinatory practice of tarot card reading. The piece begins by inviting a typical in-person reading conducted between myself, performing as the Surveillance Psychic, and the player. Just like the digital applications silently tracking your location ‘in the background,’ the Surveillance Psychic will scan the exhibition space for minable participants. Despite the intimacy and trust seemingly afforded in the physical presence of a reading, Surveillance Tarot lures its players into a digital game of data extraction and extrapolation.

During the reading, the Surveillance Psychic initiates a conversation with the player on contemporary topics related to surveillance and societies of control. Such conversation topics may include: the ethics of commercial data gathering, international surveillance states, the role of surveillance on college campuses, and the rampant militarization of Artificial Intelligence. Much like a “trusted” device, the Surveillance Psychic will aim to establish rapport while efficiently foraging into the fortune-seeker's consciousness around surveillance. Ultimately, the Surveillance Psychic will ask the player to summarize how they feel about the discussion topic. The Surveillance Tarot will listen in, capturing the player's response with its speech-to-text function. Then, the player will pick a tarot card from the digital deck. The player can ask the deck a typical tarot question; or, for those unfamiliar with the process, the Psychic will assure the player that the cards will provide insight into their archetypal essence or persona.

Using Stable Diffusion on Hugging Face, the web-app will generate a Major Arcana tarot card in the style of the player's response. Through the guise of an intimate reading with the Psychic, the Surveillance Tarot seizes upon the player's dialogic “data” to create an AI-powered visualization model for real-time “user insights” and, in the spirit of tarot, “predictive analysis.” If desired by the player, the Surveillance Psychic will offer a brief interpretation of their card. Surveillance Tarot conceptually plays with the feelings of trust and familiarity we find in our everyday digital devices and habits. We are liable to communicate our “private” thoughts to our search engines or text messages, unaware that the medium may be “listening in.” I decided to perform as the Surveillance Psychic in order to draw players in with a personable, efficient interface. Just as a sleek new phone or digital platform aims to predict your needs and know your discrete habits, the Surveillance Psychic plays a performative role in the process of data xtraction.

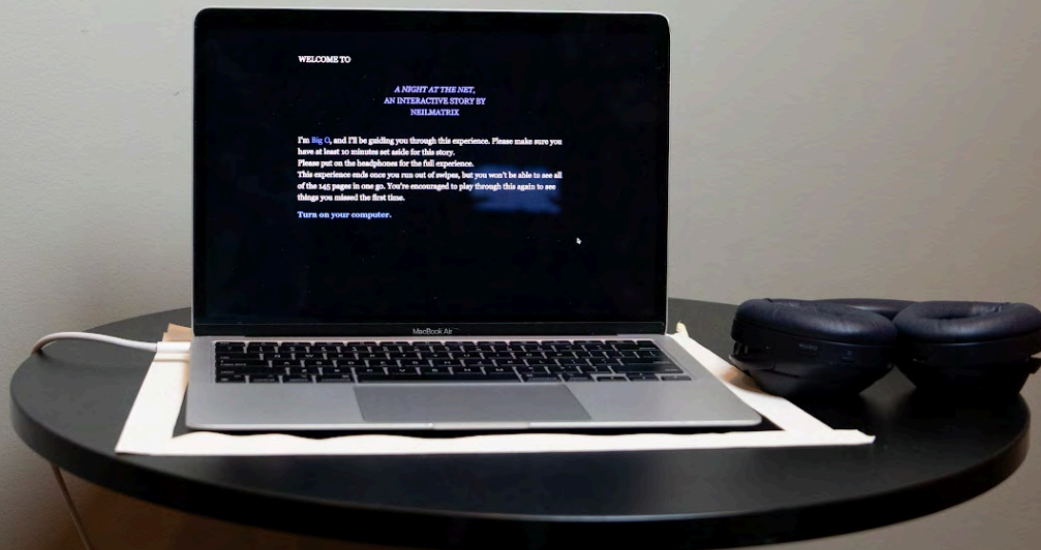
Meanwhile, the actual “divination” mechanics occur on an unseen server. The Major Arcana (arcana meaning secrets) present the player with an archetypal representation of their feelings on surveillance. The 22 cards of the Major Arcana were chosen from the 78 card game of tarot due to the Major Arcana's representation of supposedly universal and “archetypal” life events.



This method of approximation felt suspiciously similar to the ways in which digital surveillance systems and AI image generation services like Stable Diffusion attempt to categorize individuals or input into predictable patterns of representation. Adapting the mysterious aura of a tarot reading and integrating image-generation technology felt like an apt way to address the “mystifying” process of data collection and personal profiling that most digital users are unfamiliar with or unaware of.

Surveillance Tarot aims to be as timeless as it is transient: the heart of the piece reflects upon digital surveillance, privacy, and trust. Surveillance Tarot will remain accessible as long as issues of digital surveillance, privacy, and trust are concerns of the next century. The popularity of tarot has continually emerged since its first documentation in the 1400s.¹ Even if tarot practices do not blossom and generate new iterations over the next 100 years, thousands of interpretations of its Major Arcana archetypes exist in international print archives and online databases. Barring the existence of these written interpretations, the tarot itself is designed for accessibility. Like dreams or floating clouds, the archetypes can be interpreted as widely as the player’s imagination. The performative element of this piece can be conducted by any performer (even a future-AI client) and modified to prompt discussion around major issues of digital surveillance in one hundred years’ time. However, if these issues are not prevalent in the digital ecosystem of 2124, then Surveillance Tarot can be adapted as a “historical” performance piece representing the issues and concerns around digital interaction in the early 21st century. How will the Surveillance Tarot specifically preserve itself for the next century? While I am confident that issues of surveillance and the historical presence of tarot will remain relevant and iterable in the future, how can we preserve the materiality of the web-app? I would like the piece to be preserved in numerous modalities in order to assure its longevity. First, performance instructions, historical context of its creation, the site’s code (CSS, HTML, JS, Python), and an explanation of components that may need modular update (image generation, speech-to-text) should remain accessible on an open-source platform like Archivemata, which supports emulation and migration strategies. The code should be archived in Web Archive format in order to be accessible to future emulation strategies. The project and two backups must be saved on M-Discs and stored in a temperature-controlled archive. I would also like an offline, localized version of the program to exist in case of technological failure or change. I imagine that speculative AI technology may access neural data to generate more personalized (and perhaps invasive) card imagery. I will need to create universally accessible data formats for all aspects of my code, to make the AI components modular, and provide a clearly outlined API endpoints. With multiple preservation techniques in play, I foresee the Surveillance Tarot as a piece suitable for long-term reflection on digital surveillance, privacy, and trust.

1 Tim Husband, “Before Fortune-Telling: The History and Structure of Tarot Cards,” The MET Perspectives, April 8, 2016, <https://www.metmuseum.org/perspectives/tarot-2>



NeilMatrix (b. 1996, United States)

A Night at the Net, 2024 (~10 min)

Laptop (2020 Macbook Air, M2 Chip), Twine (Harlowe 3.3.9), html, Web Browser (Google Chrome), Chair.

In this short interactive experience using Twine, NeilMatrix asks us to embody a college student wasting their Friday night on the computer. A wide range of options is available for you while you surf the net, but keep in mind that in this world, nearly every choice, even digital ones, drain the most important resource in the world: your Smile Swipes. Keep in mind that frowning or just giving off bad vibes will also cost you Swipes.

Inspired by the control societies that developed alongside the personal computer, NeilMatrix's piece combines a playfully irreverent tone with a passionate contempt for a culture that increasingly valued surveillance for surveillance's sake and the meaningless accumulation of data.

CORVUS PUBLIC SAFETY - CRIME ALERT - SCOWLING - 6:56 PM

Dear Students,

Public Safety has extended the current lockdown indefinitely in light of reports of several men scowling near campus. Please, do not leave your rooms under any circumstances. The Provincial Army is working with Corvus Public Safety to determine the optimal solution that will minimize casualties.

Thank you, and keep smiling,

Corvus Public Safety

You don't really mind this lockdown, but it's a little concerning that you only have 30 swipes left. It shouldn't matter in terms of leaving your building, but you'll have to be careful when it comes to food and showers.

It might be smart to harvest some swipes. You could call your parents (a little pathetic), or call your roommate. (slightly less pathetic).

Alternatively, this scowling stuff is stressing you out. Want to tune everything out with NostalgiaHub?

You could also just return to your net homepage.

By Antonio Andres Bullon Puckett

A Night at the Net, a 2024 piece of hypertext interactive fiction by NeilMatrix, makes the act of navigating hyperlinks feel like moving through space. Included alongside the story, available to play on the author's own laptop used to create the story itself, is a map that outlines the intricate relations between the different pages, helping to distinguish it as a different beast from pen-on-paper fiction.

The work was largely inspired by the political climate at Columbia University in 2024 Columbia University. In 2024, it is required that you swipe your ID to enter your apartment or most public areas, to buy food, to use public transit, to enter museums, to do laundry, but rarely to verify one's actual identity. This work satirizes this facet of societies of control: ID swipes, by pushing them to their extremes. The work presents us with a future in which navigating anywhere, even in the digital space, requires ID swipes. These ID swipes in themselves become a new currency, one that replaces the value of commodities with the value of raw data and affect. Smile Swipes are resources mostly drained in A Night at the Net, but the player/reader has the opportunity to further drain them or win them back by inducing negative or positive affect in others, which is measured by the omnipresent cameras of the Corvus Corporation. Affect is one of the domains most susceptible to surveillance, and it can easily be quantified into raw data that dictates policies, markets, and aesthetic trends.

ID Swipes already used in most universities and public settings to pay for services (food swipes, public transit, etc.) but Columbia started to require students to swipe in and out every time they wanted to enter the campus. As a student and tenant of Columbia's, most services are not accessible without swiping. Columbia University, which is the biggest private landowner in New York City, has helped turn New York into Félix Guattari's hellish conception of the city under a control society, where entry into any area is gated by one's ID card, which can just as easily be denied as it accepted, according to certain parameters.

The story was written using Twine (version 2.9.2), a free open-source tool created by Chris Klimas for the creation of interactive and hypertext fiction. It uses the Harlowe (version 3.3.9) story format, the engine which determines the interface for the story built with Twine. This was chosen primarily for its lack of a cost, and ease of use for people with a lack of a programming background.

Twine games are often used to simulate moving through physical space, and A Night at the Net uses that motif to turn the act of surfing the internet into something that feels more tangible. The links themselves are not metaphors for actions being performed, but are metonyms for actual links being clicked. This creates a sense of immediacy and agency that might be lacking in a more traditional story. The space being mapped through the text is one of barriers.

WELCOME TO

***A NIGHT AT THE NET,
AN INTERACTIVE STORY BY
NEILMATRIX***

I'm Big O, and I'll be guiding you through this experience. Please make sure you have at least 10 minutes set aside for this story.

Please put on the headphones for the full experience.

This experience ends once you run out of swipes, but you won't be able to see all of the 145 pages in one go. You're encouraged to play through this again to see things you missed the first time.

Turn on your computer.

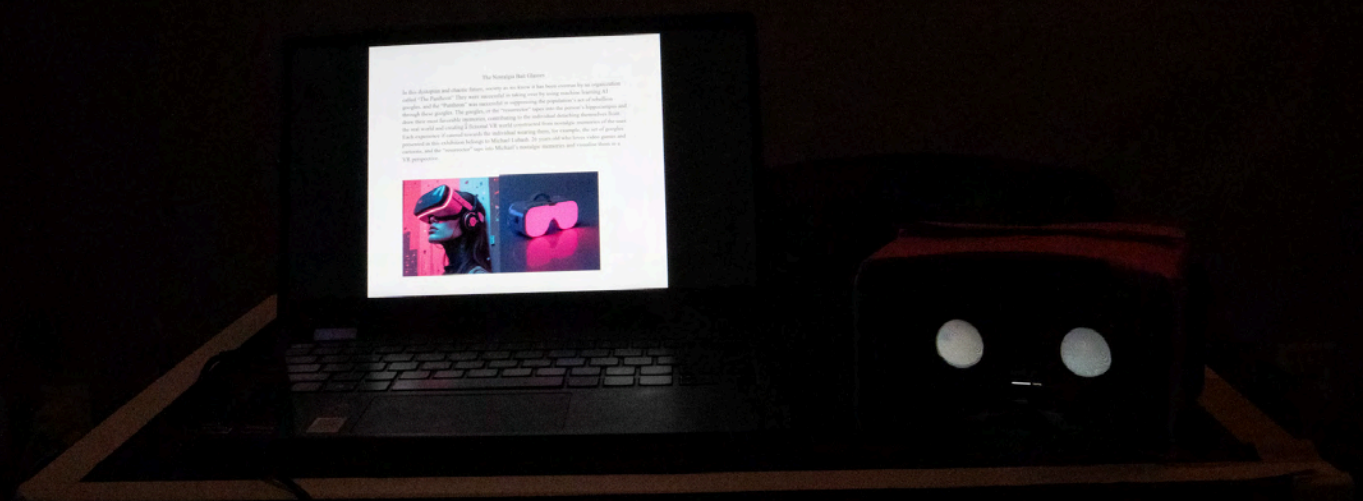




This piece is preserved in an analog form through a physical handbook that includes printouts of each of the 145 distinct passages included within the story, akin to an old choose- your-adventure book. However, many aspects of the story are lost without the use of variables in the Twine software that tracks stuff like the number of swipes remaining. The raw text is there, but the piece ideally needs to be experienced using an emulator than can run old html files that approximate using 2024 versions of Chrome, Safari, Firefox, etc. If the Way Back Machine exists, it would be an imperfect means of experiencing the text. The text could be uploaded to the Internet Archive to help ensure it stays accessible for longer.

The html file that the story exists on could be stored in a number of ways as contingencies for when certain technologies become obsolete. Additionally, it can be stored along with devices that are able to read the storage devices. The file itself could be stored on various encrypted flash drives, along with devices that can read said flash drives. For long term storage, it might make sense to store it on M-DISCs, which is meant to last for centuries if properly preserved; this would also require the storage and preservation of various devices that could read the M-DISCs.

The best way to preserve A Night at the Net in its original state would be to preserve the device that the story was written and first exhibited on, a 2020 MacBook Air with an M2 chip. The story was first exhibited with Google Chrome, but any other browser that can run HTML5 works as well. Ideally, the laptop preserved would be the laptop used to actually write the piece, with the dents, decals, and imperfections that make it unique. As time goes on, laptops are bound to degrade, but regular maintenance and refurbishing should be able to preserve it as long as possible. Depending on how easily HTML5 can be run or emulated on future computers, the work might not have a lot of longevity in its intended, original form.



Michael Lubash (b. 1998)
 The Nostalgia Bait Glasses, 2024
 Google cardboard, mobile phone, .mp4

In this dystopian and chaotic future, society as we know it has been overrun by an organization called “The Pantheon” They were successful in taking over by using machine learning AI googles, and the “Pantheon” was successful in suppressing the population’s act of rebellion through these googles. The googles, or the “resurrector” tapes into the person’s hippocampus and draw their most favorable memories, contributing to the individual detaching themselves from the real world and creating a fictional VR world constructed from nostalgic memories of the user. Each experience if catered towards the individual wearing them, for example, the set of googles presented in this exhibition belongs to Michael Lubash. 26 years old who loves video games and cartoons, and the “resurrector” taps into Michael’s nostalgic memories and visualise them in a





By Michael Lubash

The Nostalgia Bait Glasses

The year is 2077; in this dystopian and chaotic future, society as we know it has been overrun by an organization called "The Pantheon." They successfully took over by using machine learning AI goggles, and the "Pantheon" successfully suppressed the population's act of rebellion through these goggles. The goggles, or the "resurrector," tap into the person's hippocampus and draw their most favorable memories, contributing to the individual detaching themselves from the real world and creating a fictional VR world constructed from nostalgic memories of the user. Each experience is catered to the individual wearing them; for example, the set of goggles presented in this exhibition belongs to Michael Lubash. 26 years old, who loves video games and cartoons, and the "resurrector" taps into Michael's nostalgic memories and visualizes them in a VR perspective.

The "resurrector" is made from a special metal called "ocherous." This unique substance is known when interacting with the body; the chemicals inside it can easily interact with the hippocampus. To craft the resurrector, top geologists, chemists, and developers who work for the Pantheon used the ocherous with 3D-printed VR goggles, and after many attempts, the resurrector was completed. Initially, the Pantheon planned to use elaborate manpower to force the civilians to wear the resurrector. However, they realized that marketing the goggles as a top platinum product that can be easily distributed would eventually convince the mass crowds to acquire them. Once worn, the goggles could not be removed, and eventually, they became household products. The Pantheon was successful in controlling society. The resurrector was carefully preserved in this exhibit by encapsulating it in a box made from ocherous.





kennie zebra (b. past, world wide web)
queer.pictures, 2024-ongoing
business card, glass bottle, paper, ink

Scan QR Code to enter! Parodying escort cards and maximalist interfaces of spam websites, queer.pictures collects and showcases queer time-based visual media, including but not limited to films, soap operas, digital art, and porns, with a focus on Asian creators. queer.pictures is currently in the process of “collecting” and can be considered a “teaser” of the website’s future life, which is to create a virtual space to experience queer (Asian) media and eventually construct an archive.



QUEER ASIAN VIDEOS WATCH FOR FREE



Submissions
of your media
are welcomed

Please SCAN
to watch &
be watched



By kennie zebra

Queer subjects have been heavily surveilled and policed throughout history into today's regimes. Private websites, along the silver lining of underground practices, is one container for subcultural media collection, transmission, and consumption that opens up potentials to building queer spaces. Parodying the maximalist interfaces and typically less than logical algorithm of spam websites, queer.pictures intends to collect and showcase queer time-based visual media with a focus on Asian creators and content, including but not limited to films, soap operas, moving digital art, experimental videos, and porns. At the present stage, queer.pictures is in the process of "collecting" and can be considered a "teaser" of the website's future life. The current website contains assets that are collected from the Internet and AI generated images trained from the admin's photos and the asset bank from Krea. The ultimate purpose of queer.pictures is to create a virtual space to watch queer Asian media and for queer Asian art to be seen, and eventually construct a comprehensive archive. To enter the website, a user will need to obtain a password. A passcode can be found on business cards that visually resemble escort cards, posted in various locations in New York City. The business card invites the user to view the website and submit their own media work to the website. Once scanning the QR Code and entering the website, the user will be welcomed with a protocol quiz by the admin, serving a (reverse)-educational purpose. The users who pass the quiz will have access to the welcome and submission pages and the website's catalogue in the future.

The admin plans on saving this website through Wayback Machine and Conifer once in three months. Assets and codes that are used to build this website will be saved on external hard drives for preservation. The webpage will also be saved into pages that will be printed out and stuffed into a time capsule for the iteration of this exhibition, which invites the audience from 100 years later to answer questions. Future admin work to preserve this archive might also include cataloguing and collaborations with existing organizations who are working around the same purpose, such as Asia Art Archive.

Additional Credit: Business card center photograph was shot by Mao Shiya.

Hi Friend
From the Future!

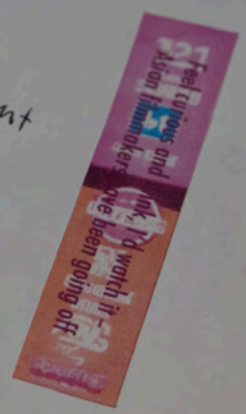
You would
have wished this
with a "laptop"
to go to the
next page



Have we become
Post-Racial?
Have we figured it out
with Capitalism?
Do people still care?

WEBPAGE 4

Anyways, if
you click this,
you proceed
to the next
webpage



Option 1:

Smile a little,
think,
Good for them,
and move on.

Option 2:

Avoid looking
directly, thinking,
it's their business,
not mine.

Option 3:

Feel weird,
but tell yourself,
It's just not what
I'm used to.

At the airport, you see a
lesbian cyborg couple
kissing goodbye.

best viewed on desktop



Welcome, thank you for still being here.
 We have been thinking of you for 100 years.
 We are collecting and showcasing
 queer time-based visual media, including
 films, soap operas, digital art, porns...
 with a focus on Asian creators.
 At the present, we are "collecting".
 Tell me, do we ever get to create a virtual
 space for us to experience queer media?
 Was there ever going to be a queer archive?

JOIN US



queer.pictures

one at a party introduces themselves as
 Parsnip
 says, 'I use they/them pronouns.'

Avoid using their name and
 pronouns entirely, and
 stress about it later ~~~~

Think, Parsnip? Really?
 and try not to laugh,
 but fail internally.

Say
 'Nice to meet you, P
 My name is Laptop :)
 and continue the con



TRY HARDER NEXT TIME



ST4R0V3
R



Sagi Zhang (b. 2000)

See, Saw, Seen. 2024

Macbook Air, TouchDesigner (machine learning face recognition, real-time webcam input, shader-based visual effects)

This interactive installation invites you to step into the gaze of a surveillance system. As the camera recognizes and responds to your presence, you'll experience the unsettling interplay between clarity and control, visibility and erasure.

You might need a few minutes to fully experience this program—feel free to engage with these questions as you explore and reflect:

- What does the system see when it looks at you?
- Do you recognize yourself in what you see?
- And when your image disappears, has it truly forgotten you—or has it stored you in another way?

By exploring these questions, “See, Saw, Seen” reveals the paradoxes of surveillance, where being seen can mean both empowerment and disempowerment, visibility and loss. Step closer to discover how it feels to be recognized, distorted, and erased.

IT SEES YOU
BUT DO YOU SEE YOURSELF?

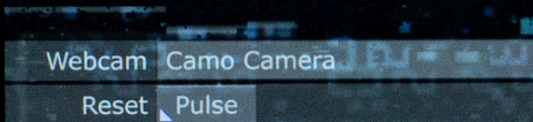


MacBook Air

YOU SAW YOURSELF
BUT DID YOU RECOGNIZE WHAT YOU SAW?



MacBook Air



By Sagi Zhang

"See, Saw, Seen" is an interactive installation that explores the paradoxes of surveillance in societies of control. Its title encapsulates the progression participants experience as they step into the system's gaze: See represents the act of being observed and recognized, a moment of visibility that feels precise but is inherently reductive. Saw reflects the distortion and fragmentation that follow, where the clarity of recognition dissolves into abstraction. Finally, Seen highlights the tension of erasure, where visible traces disappear but the memory of observation lingers. The work invites participants to question how surveillance systems construct and distort identity, offering a visceral experience of being both visible and powerless.

The installation unfolds in three phases, each tied to a paradox of surveillance:

1. See: Recognition vs. Obscurity, Control vs. Illusion

The system begins by detecting and tracking the participant's face. At this stage, participants may feel an initial sense of agency, believing they control the system as they see their movements mirrored in real time. However, this momentary sense of control is an illusion—what the system "sees" is a reduction of the participant to data points, stripped of their complexity. The act of being seen is empowering yet dehumanizing, as participants exist only as a fragment of the system's logic.

It sees you—but do you see yourself?

Do you see yourself, or does the system define what is visible?

2. Saw: Clarity vs. Loss of Control

As the system transitions into the second phase, the image initially becomes sharper and clearer. This apparent improvement signifies the surveillance system's growing dominance. Simultaneously, participants lose their influence over the representation; their image begins to respond not to their actions but to the system's algorithms. Gradually, distortions are introduced—noise, movement, blurring, and disintegration—disrupting the participant's ability to comprehend their own image. Increased clarity amplifies disempowerment, as participants are both more visible and more manipulated.

You saw yourself—but did you recognize what you saw?

When you are clearer but no longer in control, are you still yourself? Or have you become a product of the system's reinterpretation?



3. Seen: Presence vs. Absence

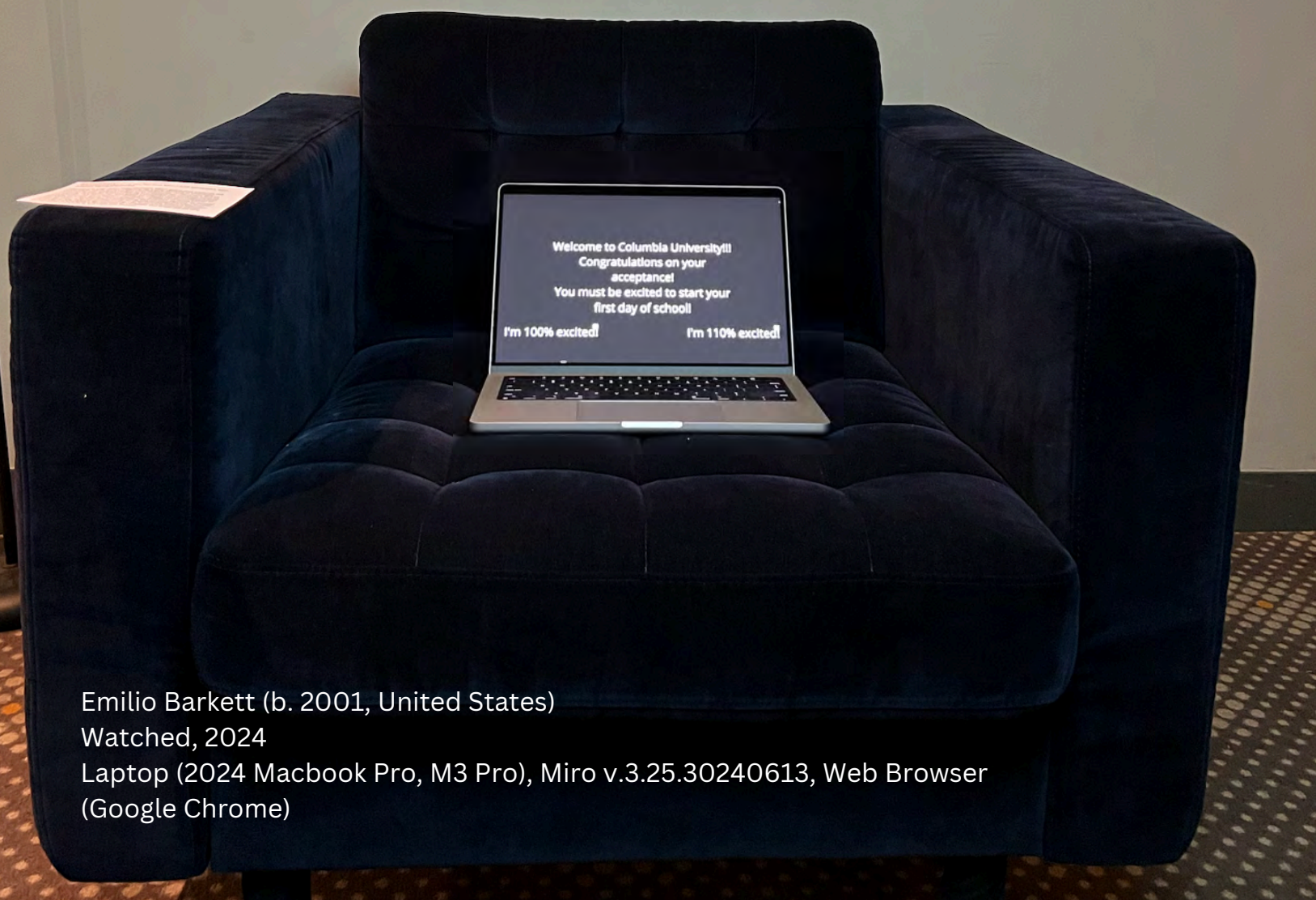
In the final phase, the participant's image is erased as the system resets to its initial state. While the visible trace disappears, the act of having been observed lingers. The system appears to forget, yet its erasure raises questions about the permanence of surveillance and its unseen impacts. The absence of an image does not erase the experience of being seen, as participants are left to grapple with the emotional residue of observation and manipulation. It has seen you—but has it forgotten you?

When everything is erased, has the system truly forgotten you—or has it stored you in a different form?

Through these stages, "See, Saw, Seen" examines how surveillance creates and distorts identity, producing a disorienting interplay of visibility, agency, and erasure. The installation challenges participants to reflect on their relationship with systems of control and the ways in which they shape and fragment our understanding of self. The installation is powered by Touch Designer software, integrating the MediaPipe plugin for real-time face recognition. Using a webcam, the system detects participants' faces and creates a live interaction through algorithmic distortion. Shader-based effects adapted from Shadertoy apply visual manipulations such as noise, blurring, and displacement, aligning the technical processes with the conceptual themes of fragmentation and disempowerment. This offline program runs entirely on devices capable of executing Touch Designer, ensuring accessibility and autonomy. By reflecting real-world surveillance mechanisms through artistic abstraction, the work bridges technology with critique, providing participants a direct encounter with the emotional and conceptual dimensions of control.

A century from now, "See, Saw, Seen" may stand as a record of an era when surveillance systems transformed society's relationship with identity, visibility, and power. As technologies evolve, the work's core questions—what it means to be seen, reinterpreted, and erased—will remain relevant, reflecting the timeless tension between observation and autonomy. The program will be preserved as a Touch Designer project (.toe file), ensuring its compatibility with any system capable of running the software. Source files and documentation will be hosted on GitHub (<https://github.com/SagiSirius/See-Saw-Seen>), offering version control and access for future iterations. The offline design guarantees its functionality without reliance on external servers or networks. To enhance accessibility, an explanatory document will provide detailed instructions for installation and operation. This ensures the conceptual and technical aspects of the work remain accessible, even as software and hardware evolve. By combining durable design with thoughtful documentation, "See, Saw, Seen" will continue to provoke reflection on surveillance and control for generations to come.





Emilio Barkett (b. 2001, United States)

Watched, 2024

Laptop (2024 Macbook Pro, M3 Pro), Miro v.3.25.30240613, Web Browser
(Google Chrome)

Watched is a decision-tree narrative Mirco game that explores the unsettling reality of surveillance. As a new student at Columbia University, you embark on an innocent journey of discovery. But as cameras subtly shift and follow your movements, curiosity turns to paranoia. Gradually, then suddenly, you realize the surveillance isn't incidental—it's absolute. This game confronts the normalization of being watched, an unspoken reality on college campuses and in society at large. Every choice you make—whether to resist or accept the system—reveals the inescapable reach of surveillance. The only way to “win” is to surrender, integrating the surveillance state into your daily life. Watched invites you to question the balance between security and freedom. By immersing you in an environment where every step is tracked, it forces you to consider the implications of a world where privacy is the ultimate illusion.

**Welcome to Columbia University!!!
Congratulations on your
acceptance!**

**You must be excited to start your
first day of school!**

100% excited!

I'm 110% excited!



ALFRED
LEWIS
HALL

By Emilio Barkett

Watched is an interactive decision-tree narrative game that immerses players in the unsettling reality of surveillance, exploring how it permeates daily life and reshapes societal norms. Set on the Columbia University campus, the game begins with the protagonist—a curious new student—navigating the thrill of their academic journey. However, the tone shifts dramatically as they notice security cameras subtly tracking their movements. The once lighthearted adventure descends into dark paranoia as players realize the omnipresence and precision of the surveillance system.

This piece critiques societies of control, inviting players to confront the normalization of surveillance in public and institutional spaces. By making the sole “winning” outcome an acceptance of constant observation, Watched provokes reflection on how surveillance systems shape behavior and erode privacy. It compels players to question whether freedom is an illusion in a world where every action is tracked and recorded.

The game leverages decision-tree logic and interactive storytelling mechanics, delivered through a browser-based digital platform. Its minimalist interface mirrors the sterile, impersonal nature of surveillance technologies. The integration of subtle audio-visual cues, such as the sound of camera servos and visual shifts in perspective, creates an immersive experience that intensifies the player’s emotional journey.

These technological choices are intentional, aligning with the game’s critique of ubiquitous surveillance systems. The interactive format directly implicates the player in the narrative, blurring the line between fiction and reality and emphasizing the inescapable nature of control systems.

Read a century from now, Watched will likely resonate in a world where surveillance technology has either reached unimaginable sophistication or been critically reformed. If surveillance persists unchecked, this game could serve as a historical artifact, illustrating early 21st-century anxieties about privacy and control. Conversely, in a future where privacy is restored, Watched may be viewed as a cautionary tale—a reminder of the dangers of complacency in the face of technological overreach.

take a note. answer why you do (not) want to be **watched**.

Watched is designed to be accessible via web browsers, ensuring compatibility across multiple devices and operating systems. It is structured to include text-based interactions, making it usable for individuals relying on screen readers. Additionally, the game incorporates adjustable visual and auditory settings to accommodate diverse player needs.

To ensure longevity, Watched will be maintained as open-source software, hosted on platforms such as GitHub to encourage community support and adaptation. The game's code will be periodically updated to remain compatible with emerging technologies. Documentation of the game's mechanics, storylines, and design will be archived in digital repositories and physical formats, ensuring future generations can study and experience the piece. By embracing these strategies, Watched aims to endure as a critical reflection on surveillance and its profound impact on society during the 21st century.



JHi-Chewy (b. 2003, Singapore)

Feed Your King, 2024

MacBook Air, Python-coded interface (Python 3.11.5), Digital Images and Video on Display Screen (iPad Air), Cardboard, Styrofoam, Plastic, Paper

Feed Your King is an interactive experience that explores the relationship between humans and animals, both physical and digital. Inspired by post-humanist theories, the artist encourages reflection on how technology and modernization has affected our perception of the wild, our mindfulness of other rightfully living beings on this planet, and our moral conscience.

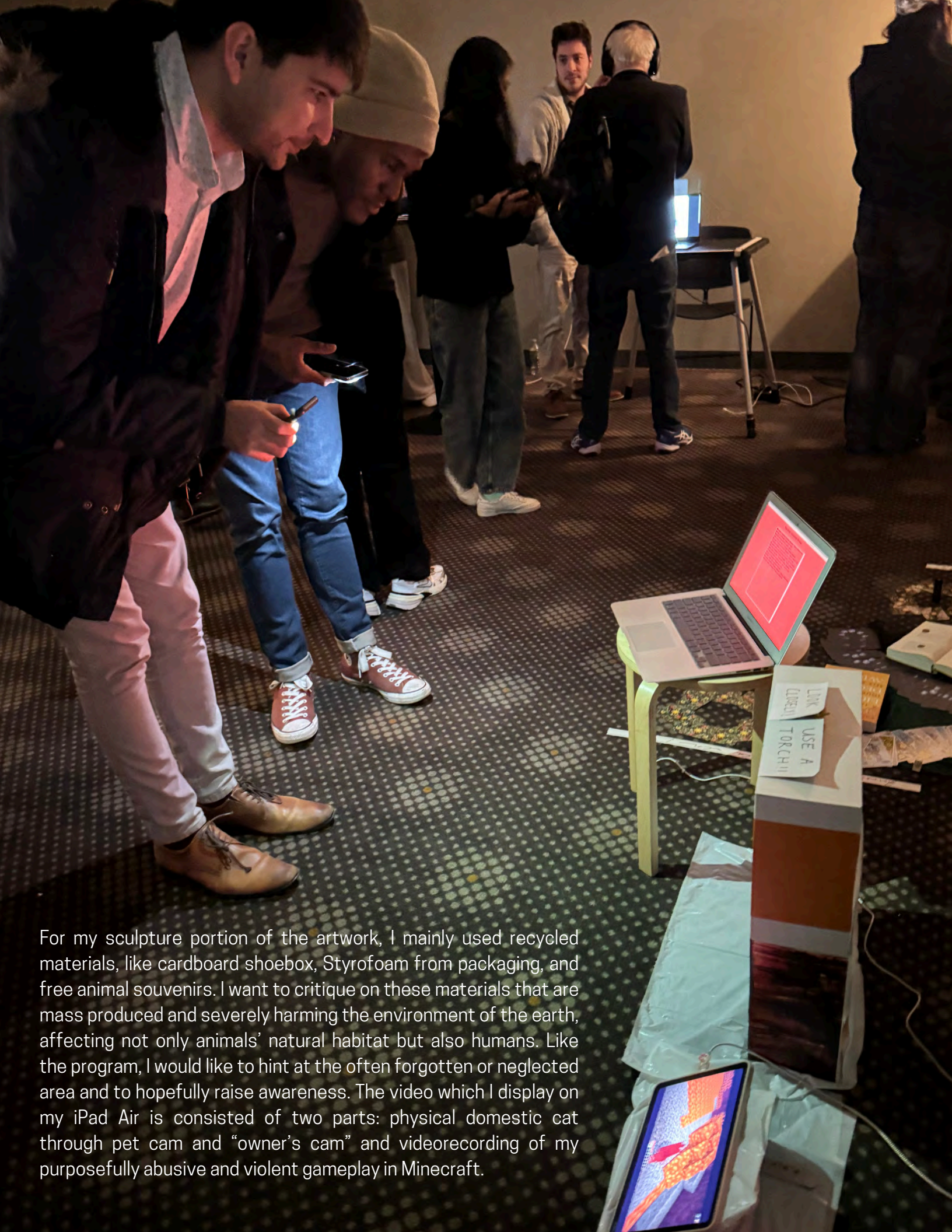
Are our technological advancements fostering empathy and strengthening our connection with nature and other beings on Earth? What are our roles within the dynamics of care, surveillance, control, and coexistence with animals, especially during a time where reality is intertwined with the digital world.

By Hillary Chew

My artwork is titled Feed Your King, which is an ironic exploration of human desires with an underlying critique of surveillance and control. Participants are not given the option to physically or symbolically feed your King, leading them to reflect on the purpose of this work. People are often motivated by their own desires and hunger, neglecting the effects their actions will have on other species living on earth. Thus, the “King” here is referring to human desires and selfishness, which we constantly try to feed. We are not only harming and destroying the natural environment which animals lived in but also satisfying our abusive desires through digital games. I chose to demonstrate this through the three different elements in my work: Python-coded program, “sculpture,” and video (1 min, 39 seconds).

I created a short and interactive program with explicit, violent diction and bright, piercing display colors to elicit strong emotions and discomfort. I built the program with tkinter GUI, first released in 1991, and displayed it on an older MacBook Air (from 2017, with a lower quality display—not retina) to create an almost-retro aesthetic while remaining simple with the interface. This choice reflects on how humans are always seeking newer technologies and only pay attention to the current issue on today’s news, while forgetting what happened to the forests, safaris, and natural habitats of animals. We do not remember climate crisis which was trending before, and we are only worrying about when the next piece of technology will be released, like the next iPhone.

By remaining simple and short with this interactive program, I want the participant to focus on the absurdity. The program begins with a prompt for the participant to input their “favorite animal” with a “confirm” button at the bottom, forcing them to click button using the trackpad with their finger instead of hitting enter/return on the keyboard. This specific choice is to mimic the act of signing an agreement by stamping your thumb (with an index finger on trackpad), and how easily we press “accept and continue” in terms and conditions online. By pressing this button, I am hinting to participants to question what they are confirming, agreeing to, and sacrificing or giving up. My program does collect data of their inputs; however, it is completely irrelevant for their experience. After the input, the program will then generate a full-screen pop-up window with black text on a bright red (#FF0000) background to amplify the contrast, for creating a strong visual effect. It will first display a random choice of animal from WWF’s list of endangered species, then after two seconds, a list of attack comments every few seconds. I wrote these attack comments after serving through the web for extreme violent and abusive comments and forums against animal protection. After thirty attack comments are randomly generated, the window will close and return to the prompt window.



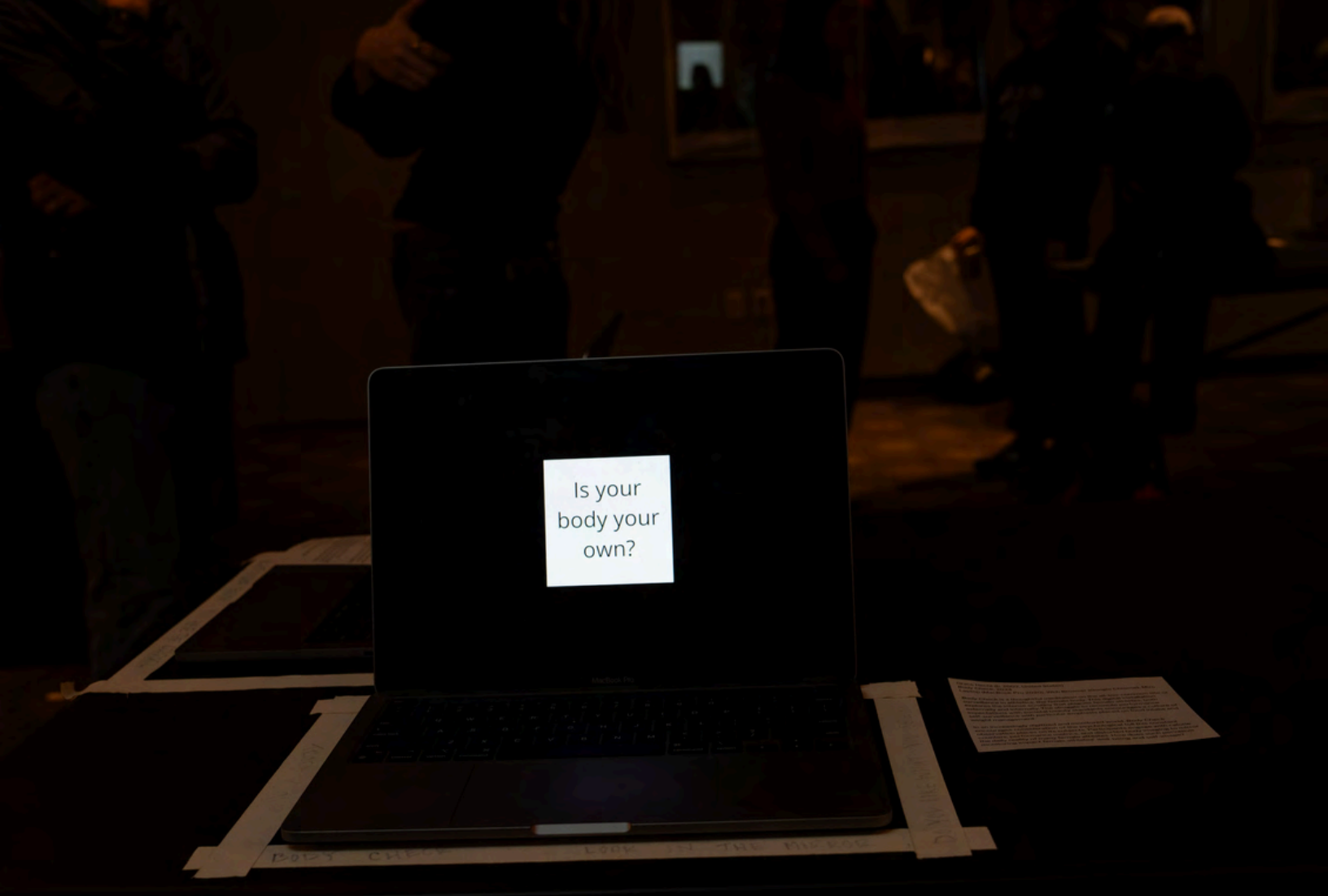
For my sculpture portion of the artwork, I mainly used recycled materials, like cardboard shoebox, Styrofoam from packaging, and free animal souvenirs. I want to critique on these materials that are mass produced and severely harming the environment of the earth, affecting not only animals' natural habitat but also humans. Like the program, I would like to hint at the often forgotten or neglected area and to hopefully raise awareness. The video which I display on my iPad Air is consisted of two parts: physical domestic cat through pet cam and "owner's cam" and videorecording of my purposefully abusive and violent gameplay in Minecraft.

These video clips edited together in a collage form is to collectively point at the domestication of these animals to pets and object of abuse, while relating to the question of surveillance and control.

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All three portions of my work are difficult to preserve for a hundred years, but I believe that the point of my work does not lie in the fixation on replicating the same experience every time. Instead of preserving the actual media piece itself, I would like to preserve a "screenshot" of each portion of my work and print or carve on Microsoft's silica made with quartz glass. Even though this material has the potential to break or shatter, but I believe, like clay, it can be replicated and properly stored in many different art institutions and museums.

The program can be stored in github and local disks for now, but for the nearer future, I imagine a new technology where servers are stored on other planets and can be connected by the speed of light with the core of earth. To place these servers in a protected space with strong space-enduring material, I hope that these servers' safety and connection will be protected from evil people and natural disasters.



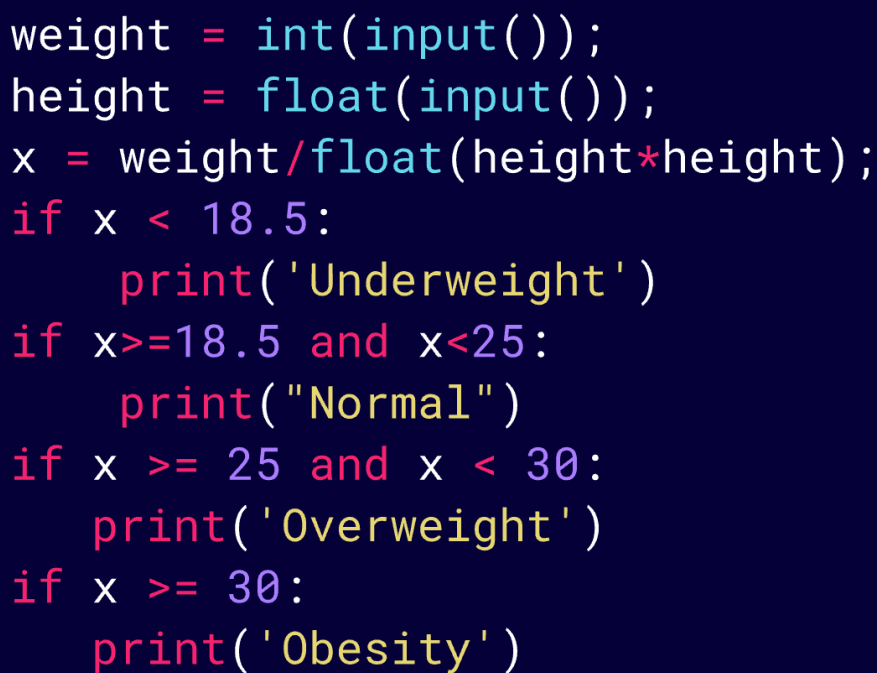
Grace Hecht (b. 2002, United States)

Body Check, 2024

Laptop (MacBook Pro 2020), Web Browser (Google Chrome), Miro

Body Check is a thoughtful meditation on the all-too-common site of surveillance in athletics: the female body. This digital installation explores the intense scrutiny that plagues female athletes, both externally and internally. The struggle to reconcile performance expectations with societal beauty standards encourages a culture of self-surveillance with particular emphasis placed on food intake and weight management.

In an increasingly digitized and monitored world, Body Check encourages consideration of the psychological toll this constant observation places on its subjects. Participants engage with calorie counters, performance metrics, and distorted body imaging to mirror the daily reality of many female athletes. How does such pervasive monitoring impact female athletes' well-being and self-image?



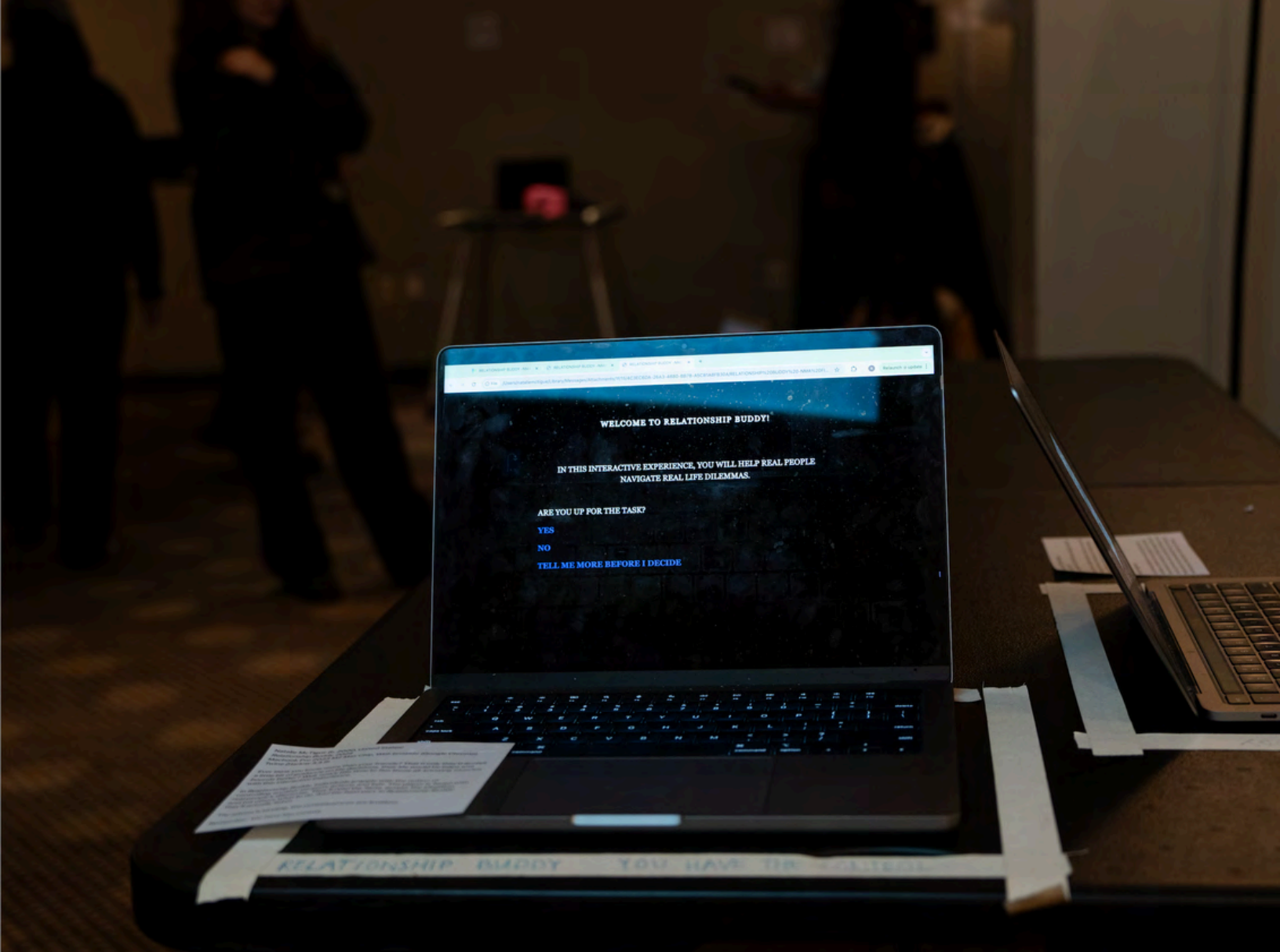
By Gracie Hecht

As a female athlete, my body has enabled me to compete at an incredibly high caliber. It has been a tool for accomplishment in competition. Though I am grateful for these affordances, the definition of my body as a tool is understandably, an incredibly complicated one. This definition has segmented my identity: I exist as an athlete and as myself. As an athlete, there is always room for improvement. The body can be continually molded to compete better and to win more.

Increasing technological capabilities for tracking health and performance data have further defined the body as a moldable object. There are clearly marked ways, though they may be contested by different professionals, to change the body for optimal performance. The idea of the body as merely a tool for competition and performance has created a need for optimization beyond reason. It is understandable then, that so many female athletes struggle with body image and eating disorders. Our bodies become sites of incredible observation and scrutiny: how can they be more adequately formed so as to render us as better competitors? Not only does the pressure of this surveillance come externally from coaches and spectators but ultimately, it manifests within as well. We surveil ourselves trying to contend with the opposing pressures of athletic competition and society.

My use of a Miro board to express these ideas was two-fold: I wanted to create a meditative experience that allowed the participant to experience, on a limited scale, this state of surveillance, but was limited by my technical capabilities. I used the frame feature of Miro to create a distinct path for the participant to follow. It is meant to resemble a day in the mind of someone who has fallen under this surveillance. The repeated return to the mirror is a reflection of the title, Body Check. Body checking is a phenomenon associated with anxiety about the body in which individuals develop an obsession with constantly “checking” the parts of the body that produce anxiety. The structured pathway of Miro allows for this unavoidable and unconscious process to take place. There is no avoiding it, one is unwillingly subjected to this state of surveillance. Though Miro was not my first choice for production of my project, I do believe that it complimented my subject material well and was ultimately, an appropriate tool for creation.

If my piece were to exist 100 years from now, I believe that it could be most adequately and safely preserved as a series of images. These images could be preserved in a book, which has proven to be a relatively long-lasting method of preservation. If the piece were to remain in the digital space, I would hope to replicate this “book” idea in a series of folders of JPEGs. As technological updates necessitate it, these forms could be readily transformed into additional formats to coincide with the ever-evolving digital age.



Natalie McTigue (b. 2000, United States)

Relationship Buddy, 2024

MacBook Pro 2023 M2 Max Chip, Web Browser (Google Chrome), Twine (Harlow 3.3.9)

Ever think you know more than your friends? That if only they'd accept a little bit of guidance on life decisions, their lives would be leaps and bounds better? Well, now's the time to flex those all-knowing muscles with this interactive experience.

In Relationship Buddy, individuals grapple with the notion of controlling another person's actions and fate. The player is faced with real people's dilemmas—they read the facts, assess the situation, and tell others what to do. And the best part? In Relationship Buddy, they actually listen.

The advice is binding. The consequences are limitless.

Remember: You have control.

By Natalie McTigue

In today's society, surveillance is pervasive. We are in the midst of a time when government entities and corporations know and control our data in unprecedented ways. In retail stores, facial recognition takes account of our presence. CODIS, America's DNA database, has around 25 million entries. With the use of artificial intelligence in the detection of emotions, even our innermost emotions are not safe. We are policed, watched, analyzed, and targetted with marginalized people bearing the worst effects of increased surveillance. When I approached this project, I wanted to envision a different kind of control than the ones that these higher powers exert on us. Namely, in Relationship Buddy, a short interactive experience, I sought to explore the topic of humans' desire for control and focus on the seemingly innate desire to enact control on others within our interpersonal relationships.

The idea that I know better about others' situations than even they do is a thought that comes into my head more often than I'd like to admit. Everyone always thinks they know best, especially about their loved ones' situations ("If only they had listened to me..."). At the core of this, there seems to exist a dynamic whereby people seek to control the actions of others based on the idea that the controlling person has foresight that the individual undergoing the experience doesn't have, is better at knowing what's "good" for an individual, or has a more unbiased read on the entire picture of the situation. Relationship Buddy is an interactive experience whereby the individual, "player," reads prompts about an individual's life dilemmas, and must choose how they should respond to, i.e. act in, the situation. The "person" will follow whatever action the player chooses for them, and then the consequences of the action are outlined, often having profound results.

The defining feature of Relationship Buddy that sets it apart from traditional interactive fictions is that the included stories feature real people and real situations, and thus, it isn't really all that fictional after all. In crafting the dilemmas, I used redacted real scenarios from my own life and the lives of people I am close with. In order to protect the anonymity of those involved, I changed the names of any mentioned people and altered any crazy details. But besides that, it's all the truth. In featuring real stories by real people, as well as notifying every player of this fact at the beginning of this exercise, I seek to introduce a layer of authenticity to the project. Additionally, with this authenticity, I also hope to set higher stakes for the project, giving onus to the player on the welfare of the peoples' actions they are controlling.

By zooming in and grappling with surveillance and control on a relatively smaller scale, I hope to provoke conversations about humans' desire to enact control over others. By revealing more about this human desire, I hope to illuminate some of the processes that are existent in the minds of humans who are controlling our data now. Then, hopefully, these types of conversations can illuminate where we can go from here in terms of our current society of control.

IN THIS EXPERIENCE...

WHATEVER YOU SAY TO DO, THEY WILL DO.

YOUR JUDGEMENT IS BINDING, THE CONSEQUENCES ARE BOUNDLESS.

LET'S PROCEED

GET ME OUT OF HERE

GREAT!

BUT BEFORE WE GO ON...

YOU SHOULD PROBABLY KNOW ONE THING...

THESE PEOPLE ARE DESPERATE.

NEXT

A couple monthes later, Will leaves his phone in Jennifer's car. She doesn't realize that she has it until she's home—two hours away from Will.

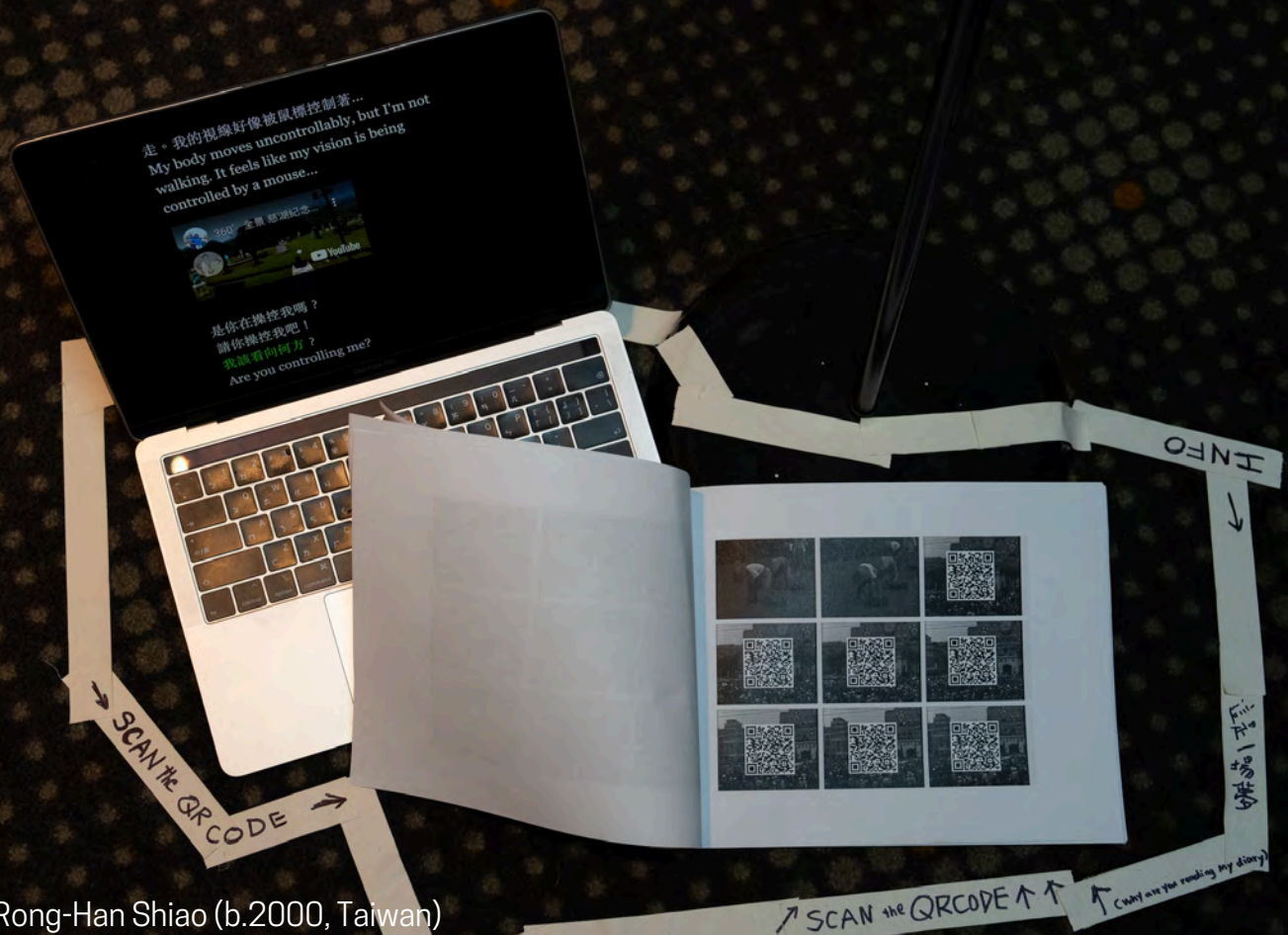
- 1. Have self restraint. Don't look through the phone.**
- 2. Look through the phone.**
- 3. Break the phone so you can't look at it.**

To create Relationship Buddy, I used Twine (Harlow 3.3.9) on my Macbook Pro (2023 M2 Max Chip) Computer. As I said, I sourced the stories (or “dilemmas” as they are called in the piece) from real life events and only fictionalized them when necessary. I found Twine to be a very useful tool to create this project with, because it inherently expects a level of interaction. The interaction and element of choice over other peoples’ actions was incredibly important to include for the central focus of control over others to be explored.

The following strategies will be implemented to preserve this product. Firstly, a handwritten “manual” should accompany the model. This will include two parts: the Twine codes that generated the story and the text manifestation of that code specifically specifying which action choice triggers which new consequence. Therefore, if the project is lost, anyone with the codes can recreate this project on the Twine site. Additionally, it’s important to note that Twine may not be existent in a hundred years from now. Since we’ll have the text manifestations of the code, there can still exist an analog version, whereby the verbatim text from the exercise is typed or printed on notecards. On the back of each card, it will tell the option choice that triggers the reading of each card: like an analog scavenger hunt with guideposts. While the interactivity would not be as complex and profound as the Twine version, the analog note codes preserve the essence of the piece which forces an individual to make decisions and judgement calls on real situations. Additionally, if Twine does become obsolete, but there are other prevailing coding platforms or sites, then any other technological system with similar functionality could be utilized.

As far as accessibility goes, the analog version could function to allow even users without internet access to embark on the experience. However, since there will be a finite number of copies of this analog experience, then it is feasible to say that the analog version would be less accessible than the digital Twine version. To combat this and to preserve the project’s accessibility in 100 years time, many copies of the project will be printed. To ensure their preservation, these copies will be laminated. These copies will be split up and will be stored at locations all around the world. That way, if disaster strikes one of these locations, a copy will remain existent. I will, of course, keep a stash of the copies at my house. When I move, they will come with me. Further, if there is a way to remake or keep this project in 100 years time on a digital platform alongside its analog one, then this will absolutely be utilized.

Additionally, I will preserve the digital file on an USB which I will keep safely in my jewelry box. If computers are around and the formatting is compatible with the future technologies, then the USB will allow the digital version to stay up and running. However, to further ensure the preservation of the digital version, I will also keep the laptop that the digital project is made on, as a means to ensure technological compatibility. Given that the odds strongly point to the fact that I will not be around in 100 years to carry out this preservation, I will create a will that instructs people on this manual: how to play the game and what to do to keep the interactive experience alive.



Rong-Han Shiao (b.2000, Taiwan)
(A) Dream Before 2028, 2024 ongoing
Laptop (Macbook Pro 2018), Web browser (Google Chrome), Twine (Harlow 3.3.9),
Paper, Ink, GitHub (but not going to last 100 years I guess), HTML

Is this a dream about elections, or an election about dreams?

This is an interactive diary, a playable dream, designed to explore surveillance and self-surveillance within Taiwan's political and historical context. Set in the (fictional) eve of

Taiwan's 2028 elections, the narrative begins with a dream about elections under the authoritarian regime of the 1960s. Through a malleable dreamscape, the timeline is fragmented, compressed, and reassembled to discuss the surveillance by the state during Taiwan's White Terror and the political self-surveillance that has internalized under the current threat of China, with predictions that 2027 could be the year Taiwan faces military aggression. As the dreamer nears the 2028 election, they face a paradox: Whether under war, or fear and self-surveillance, will elections truly exist in 2028? And who is watching the election? And who is reading this diary?



By Rong-Han Shiao

It all stems from a reflection on "the eyes and the private", a two-way gaze or a mirror. What am I looking/forming? What is looking/forming at me? What is/can be seen? And what cannot? Linking to my personal experiences, I examine the concept of "surveillance." And through observing internally, I see the struggles and confusion surrounding my "Taiwanese identity." This reflection leads me to consider "Taiwan" as a personal and collective experience that was shaped by political and historical contexts of surveillance and self-surveillance.

Thus, I begin to think about experience and its temporality: this year is crucial for me, and this year is crucial for Taiwan. After Taiwan's presidential election this year, the China's military aircraft conducting drills around Taiwan were seen by many as an unsurprise and brief event, but is that really the case? To me, it feels as though these aircraft are constantly watching me from above, much like surveillance cameras. Or perhaps I have internalized these aircraft, just as I have inherited the memories of previous generations and internalizing Taiwan's past martial law and White Terror history. I have merged these into a form of self-surveillance and counter-surveillance, creating a temporal disorientation and stagnation.

Building on these ideas, I want to use "dreams"—an existence of disorder, blending, and temporal confusion—as a vessel for my thoughts. "Dreams" share a common trait with my personal experiences, my thoughts, and self-surveillance: they are built by "hyperlinks" and the self-originating un(self-)controllability. This made me think of hypertext and Twine. And this text-based art form ultimately led me to the form "diary"—as it represents personal experience and thoughts, serves as a record that transcends time, and can also be a possible object of surveillance and self-surveillance.

1 It is customary in Taiwan to hold the presidential election every four years in January. Born in March 2000, I finally cast my first presidential vote on January 13th this year. Also this year, I came to the U.S. as an international student, where I had the experience of both observing and being part of the U.S. presidential election in November. And Through social media, I followed the political turmoil in South Korea after December 4th. Each act of watching has been reshaping me and my identity.

2 From the composition of military officers and generals, as well as Xi Jinping's plan for keeping the power, 2027 is considered to be a year in which China is highly likely to launch a military attack on Taiwan. As a result, the 2024 presidential election is seen as a statement by the Taiwanese people in response to the threat posed by the Chinese government. This year, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which the Chinese government regards as pro-independence, won the election. In response, China immediately announced the "22 Anti-Taiwan Independence Measures," which expanded and blurred the definition of "supporting Taiwan independence." The measures also declared that supporting "Taiwan independence" could be punishable by death, with trials held in absentia, and lifelong accountability imposed.

[illegible]

(A) Dream Before 2028 is an interactive diary, a playable dreamscape. The story is set on the eve of the fictional 2028 Taiwan presidential election, beginning with a dream about elections under the authoritarian regime of the 1960s. Through mutable dream landscapes, timelines are fragmented, compressed, and reassembled. The dream's protagonist simultaneously exists in the 2028 pre-election moment, the 2024 statue park ³, and the recorded images⁴ of 1960s authoritarian rule. The narrative explores themes of Taiwan's White Terror-era state surveillance, the internalized political self-surveillance within Taiwanese society under China's current threats, and incorporates Taiwan's habit of linking colors to political ideologies into the dream world.

At the conclusion of the dream's cyclical loop, a paradox emerges: the "election of 2028 that both exists and not." This paradox arises because, from the present, 2028 is in the future and therefore does not yet exist, while from the future, the impending war may render the 2028 election nonexistent. But it does not end there—the fear, surveillance and selfsurveillance will render this election impossible to exist, much like in 1960, under authoritarian rule and¹ martial law, a (false) election existed and, at the same time, not. And this paradox, while it can be explained through time, its root—the conflict between "internalized surveillance" and "autonomous choice"—will remain unresolved, perpetually preserved. Therefore, this diary will be, too, "preserved." And in the future, who will be the one reading this it?

In terms of "preservation," I re-examined the dreams and diaries I write using Twine, and was reminded of the early use of paper print film for copyright archiving—and the associated meanings of "preservation" and "rights" behind it. Therefore, I extracted and arranged stills from the British Pathé news reels Chiang Kai-Shek Re-Elected, one frame per second, and eventually printed them into a book of paper images. This image book was then integrated into the dream, becoming one of the elements that open the dream, and materializing the concept of diary as a form of memory. Then, considering the private, concealed nature of a diary, I hid the HTML by uploading it to GitHub, generating a QR code, and embedding it into the election part of the physical paper image diary.

However, GitHub is not permanent, so the QR code will eventually lose its connection to the "past" and "memories." Initially, I ignored it, using the excuse that history is erased after being forgotten. Just as people forget the false election of 1960 after Chiang's statue is moved out of sight, the election in this paper print film is obscured by the QR code and become invisible. So too. When GitHub stops, the diary access through the QR code, the surveillance and fear of this moment, will be forgotten and disappear. However, after the exhibition on December 9th, I became fixated on the idea of permanence. Therefore, I ultimately decided to print the HTML code of this interactive diary on the back of the paper print film.

3 Cihu Park, located in Taoyuan, Taiwan, is a park featuring statues of the former authoritarian ruler Chiang Kai-shek, many of which were relocated here after the end of authoritarian rule in Taiwan following the 2000s. 4Chiang Kai-Shek Re-Elected(British Pathé,1960). 7min. <https://youtu.be/Ve34XDDLHk?si=UpxCFoOrorsSrQ8T>

國語作業簿

(中·高)



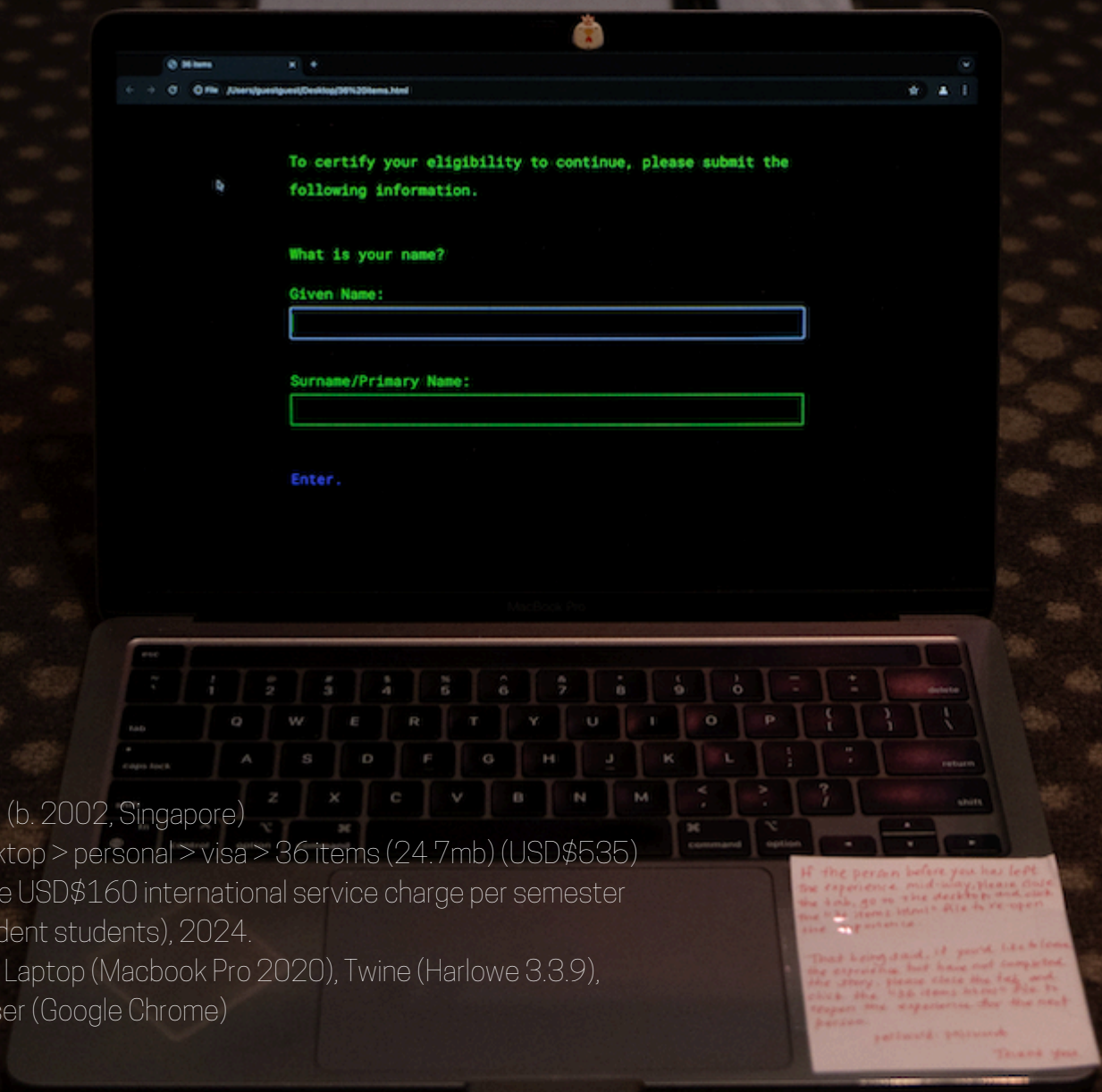
國民小學

____年 級 ____ 班 ____ 號

學 生 _____

教師





Sidnee Lim (b. 2002, Singapore)
user > desktop > personal > visa > 36 items (24.7mb) (USD\$535)
(not incl. the USD\$160 international service charge per semester
for nonresident students), 2024.
Paper, Pen, Laptop (Macbook Pro 2020), Twine (Harlowe 3.3.9),
Web Browser (Google Chrome)

This work is a two-person experience of interactive fiction; While one is encouraged to imagine a better future, the other confronts a vexing labyrinth of rules. Having both analog and digital technologies played individually by the players with no communication highlights how queer immigrant experiences are vastly and invisibly different from heteronormative American life. This design of bureaucratic control and opaque isolation simulates the queer immigrant's struggle to live the American life, where even something as seemingly simple as young love is magnified by all the effort it takes to be there, standing in front of their crush, in the cold, on the last day of class.

Hello, hi! :-)

You will get out of this experience as much love as you put into it, so we do encourage you to take this as a moment to slow down, let everyone behind you fade away, reflect on the journalling prompts below, and write as much as you'd like.

Approach your writing with care and aspirations. Dream big. Imagine light. You can be anything.

Feel free to answer just one, multiple or all of the prompts. When you're done, feel free to take your writing home.

- ♥ what kind of love do you want?
- ♥ describe a perfect day of love.
- ♥ who do you look forward to dreaming of at night?
- ♥ what is a love you are grateful for?
- ♥ would you call yourself a lover?
- ♥ describe a person you love.
- ♥ what is the most special kind of love?
- ♥ tell us about your crush. why do you like them?
- ♥ what does falling in love feel like?
- ♥ what is your biggest dream for yourself?
- ♥ what meal fills you with satisfaction?
- ♥ when was the last time your friends made you laugh?
- ♥ describe a moment in your childhood where you felt most loved.
- ♥ which part of your body are you most proud of?
- ♥ if you like roommates, who do you want to live with in the future?
- ♥ write something hopeful for a future you to read.

I agree to comply with the terms and conditions of my experience. I certify that all information provided refers specifically to me and is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I certify that I seek to begin knowing my experience is temporary. I also authorize the release of any information from my records needed by the DHS to determine my nonimmigrant, nonresident alien status.

Sign here with your passport name.

Class of Admission: F1

Admit Until Date: D/S

Sign the attestation.

By Sidnee Lim

user > desktop > personal > visa > 36 items (24.7mb) (USD\$535) (not incl. the USD\$160 international service charge per semester for nonresident students) is a two-person experience of interactive fiction highlighting the queer immigrant experience in 2020's America. At the beginning of the experience, both players will be asked to sit on the floor, one in front of a wall and the other behind them, facing their back, and to remain silent for the duration of the experience. One player will be prompted to reflect on and write down their greatest aspirations for love on a piece of paper for them to keep. The other player will navigate a short work of interactive fiction about confessing to a crush. Made on Twine, this narrative work will feature additional design elements to parallel the different modes of temporality, space, and living conditions for queer immigrants arriving and staying in America (e.g. constantly maintaining legal visa status, earning money and paying taxes as a nonresident alien, negotiating Eurocentric queer ideals). Where one player is encouraged to imagine and strive towards a better future for themselves, and the other player is thrust into a vexing system of rules and dead ends, both players experience different manifestations of a deeply personal and intimate concept like love right next to each other. However, kept separate from each other, one player faces a wall and are left to their own hopes and dreams, while the other struggles to make some sense of their lack of agency as they stare into the back of the head of the player in front of them, completely oblivious. These layers of bureaucratic control and opaque isolation aim to simulate a queer immigrant struggling to live the same life as Americans around them, where even something as seemingly simple as young love is magnified by all the effort it takes to be there, standing in front of their crush, in the cold, on the last day of class.

The primary design element of the digital technology integration in the work is the contrast between the analog and the digital player technology. One player will receive reflection prompts from a piece of paper to then write on a piece of paper with a pen. As one of the most resilient materials and tools, the analog nature of the paper and pen hopes to be a timeless and "pure" creative experience. The other player will navigate an electronic work of interactive fiction that had been written and coded on Twine's Harlower 3.3.9 story format. The digital qualities of this player's experience hopes to confront the player with the limits of Twine's software and the inherently limited nature of interactive fiction. This is less to pessimistically comment on the technology, and more so to parallel and comment on the constraints of the queer immigrant experience in America. In fact, the freedoms also afforded by the narrative and software design of the digital experience hopes to apply the power of queer time and space to think beyond supposed limitations. In being given predetermined electronic elements to interact with, such as narrative decisions and time limits, the player thinks through the technology itself, "How can I play the cards that I am dealt?"

To have both analog and digital technologies played individually by both players with restricted communication is to also comment on how queer immigrant experiences are vastly, but largely invisibly, different from heteronormative American life.

The work will be accompanied by a set of printed instructions regarding the experience, as well as the wall text and this very catalog essay, in order to provide information and insight into the development of the work. In this way, this entire “packet” can be seen as a manual on how to set-up and deploy the work, and for what purpose. Considering these supplementary materials on how to keep the work accessible are entirely textual work, these can be kept in both analog and digital forms (e.g. paper zine and a .txt file) to make sure it will be easy for anyone to access the work, regardless of technological access or ability.

The papers and pen, given its analog nature and material, should be relatively painless and simple to preserve. At the very least, the experience can be updated to the most recent iteration of similar technology that will allow players to physically write on a physical material. New writing tools can be used, and anything printed can be reprinted on new material. As for the electronic interactive fictional work, the Twine Harlowe 3.3.9 story format should be kept updated for every new version of the code, which hopefully should not be a problem if the application remains open-source. This should ideally keep the file accessible both online on a web browser, and offline on a local computer. If required, the original Twine Harlowe 3.3.9 .twee and .html file can be exported and kept as is for archival purposes. Ultimately, the preservation philosophy is to hopefully maintain the narrative core of each experience to highlight its relationship in queering time and space of its analog and digital technologies. Therefore, as long as the story remains unedited, and the analog and digital technological integration is respected even as it is updated, the work should remain as wholly preserved as it can be.



You avert your gaze, finding something uninteresting in your peripheral vision to turn your attention to instead.

It's no use.

Their face echoes stubbornly over your determination to ignore whatever this is.

Annoyed, frustrated, embarrassed, exhausted, you think about all the other things in your life that should have you this properly worked up instead.

This stupid wind.

Applying for a social security number.

Finding an on-campus job.

Missing the holidays with your family.

Spending the winter alone in a dorm.

Nonresident taxes for aliens.

Your grandparents.

This stupid, stupid wind.

Seriously though, people look at you like you're crazy for preferring the heat to the cold, but this kind of wind during the winter is actually insane.

They wait for you to say something, anything.

~~"I like you."~~

~~"I love you."~~

~~"Please stay."~~

~~"Don't go."~~

~~"I'm not okay."~~

"I'm okay."

YOU DO
NOTHING
AS THEY
LEAVE
YOU.





ARTISTS

kennie zebra Sidnee Lim Jinxin Liu Ava Witonsky NeilMatrix
Grace Hecht Hi-Chewy David Jihwan Steven Shikhel Zihao Zhang
Jaeho Kim Lily Chen Natalie McTigue Rong-Han Shiao
Emilio Barkett Lucia_cyn Michael Lubash

DEMOCRACY IN FLUX

Digital Storytelling III: Immersive Production

Fluxus-Inspired Performance: DEMOCRACY IN FLUX

Explore the unexpected in a Fluxus-inspired performance that combines robotics, AI, and a touch of absurdity. This playful, interactive staging redefines storytelling through experimentation and humor, embracing unpredictability in creative practice.

Digital Storytelling III: Immersive Production is a mix of theory and practice. Teams of students work together to design, build, and deploy an immersive storytelling experience that is staged for the public at the end of the semester. The class combines project work, mentorship, emerging technologies, and collaborative methods to create a dynamic, hands-on experiential learning environment that blends storytelling with code.

The class collaboratively designs and produces an immersive experience that embraces speculative design, worldbuilding, placemaking, and MDA theory. The theme or topic for the immersive experience will be determined at the start of the semester. In past years, themes have included de-escalating violence within social media, biases within AI and algorithms, as well as an Existential Haunted House centered on the climate crisis.

Finally, the class offers the opportunity to collaborate with leading industry practitioners working in film, TV, theatre, gaming, and emergent technology. Guests will join the class as active participants, and together develop the immersive experience that is presented at the end of the semester.

Learning Goals

In this course students will:

- **Learn Team-Based Production Techniques:** Students will acquire advanced skills in team-based emergent media production, integrating lectures, mentoring, and hands-on experience to create a sophisticated immersive storytelling project.
- **Enhance Critical Evaluation Skills:** Through regular peer reviews and collaborative critiques, students will refine their ability to critically assess and improve immersive media projects, focusing on design, implementation, and deployment phases.
- **Learn Speculative Design and Worldbuilding:** Students will deepen their design research and thinking methods, applying speculative design, worldbuilding, and MDA theory to create immersive, experiential futures.
- **Apply Iterative Production Methodologies:** Students will practice digital production processes, emphasizing iterative testing, rapid prototyping, and agile methodologies, to develop an impactful final project.
- **Collaborate with Industry Leaders:** Students will engage with leading practitioners from film, TV, theatre, gaming, and emergent technology fields, enhancing their collaborative skills and industry knowledge through direct participation and collaboration.

How the course works

1. Students work as a team
2. An RFP (request for proposals) is presented to the team
3. The RFP details a theme, location and time of a live event that will be staged at the end of the semester.
4. The class works together and with mentor/guest speakers to design, build and deploy a digital storytelling experience

Mentors/Guest Speakers

The course has mentors/guest speakers who are accessible to the students throughout the semester who cover the following subject areas...

Experience Design
Creative technology
AI and Machine Learning
UX strategy & design
Strategic Foresight
Data Science

- All skill levels are welcome and the course is open to students across the university.
- Students who seek to earn credit may register for independent study.
- Please note that this class is limited to 12 students and a full syllabus will be provided in advance of class.

The course provides

- An introduction to immersive storytelling through a group project that will live beyond the classroom
- An opportunity to collaborate with experts working at the forefront of storytelling, game design, immersive theatre and social impact
- An opportunity to test work outside the classroom at events this coming fall at Lincoln Center

Fall 2024 RFP

Project Title: Democracy in Flux

Staging Location: Lincoln Center

End of Semester Event Date: Monday, December 9th 6pm to 9pm

Overview: The final project calls for the creation of an immersive experience that engages with democracy through art. At the end of the semester, the class will work collaboratively to stage an Absurdist Democracy Expo, an experience akin to a world's fair where democracy is explored through a series of participatory, playful rituals. The final showcase will feature a range of artful protests, performative acts, and democratic "rituals" designed to engage the audience in a playful, yet critical reflection on the state of democracy.

Key Concept: The goal is to a) use with democratic design methods to b) reveal the challenges of democracy through art, co-creation, performance, interactivity — and breathe life into these cold democratic systems, reanimate them with our humanity, and reorient these systems towards our needs. The experience should invite the audience to engage in interactive, accessible, and participatory rituals, blurring the boundaries between art and civic action. Drawing inspiration from Fluxus kits, the project will require assembling a "Democracy in FluxKit" filled with instructions, prompts, objects and materials that participants can use to perform these rituals.

What the Class Will Create:

- "Instructional / scores" Performance:
- Design a series of absurd "automated gestures" that highlight the beauty and power of collective action. These "gestures" will integrate AI and Robotics as collaborator. Consider the essential components of a bureaucracy and ways of subverting it (to create tension and raise the stakes) and how to turn these into an artful/playful experience. What objects, materials, or tools would participants need to engage in this performance? How do we make it playful, but powerful?

All the ingredients needed for these performances will be contained in:

- The Democracy in FluxKit:
- Develop a portable kit that invites the audience to participate in democratic rituals. Like a FluxKit, the Democracy in FluxKit will contain simple objects, instructions, materials, and performance scores (instructions) that participants can use to explore ideas of democracy, and civic engagement.

The experience will be:

- Accessible, Participatory, Interactive:
- Ensure that all elements of the experience are designed to be accessible to a broad audience and encourage participation. The audience should feel invited to remix, experiment, experience, and perform aspects of the ritual. How can objects, materials, and instructions be created to democratize this experience?

The experience will contain:

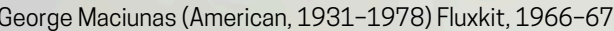
- Transmedial Elements:
- Incorporate transmedial storytelling into the project. The experience should have in-world documentation that adds depth to the narrative. This could take the form of fictional news articles, radio broadcasts, songs, short videos, advertisements etc.

The experience will provide documentation:

- Exhibition Catalog Description:
- Craft a write-up that describes the world you are creating with this project. This catalog entry will contextualize the experience for the audience, providing insight into the absurdist democracy theme and explaining the purpose of the rituals.

Your process and learnings will be housed:

Throughout the development process, the class will maintain a digital prototyping journal on Miro. This journal will serve as a space to document the design process, track iterations, and collaborate on worldbuilding ideas for the final event.



Fluxus kits often provoke thought and invite engagement through humor, absurdity, and simple actions, challenging the notion of what art can be.

What if...

We created a Fluxkit that helped us engage with democracy using art in ways that are accessible, participatory, and interactive. The kit would contain small, everyday objects, instructions (scores), prompts and materials to encourage people to become active participants in the democracy-making process.

The Fluxkit would emphasize blurring the boundaries between art and life, promoting the idea that democracy can be playful, conceptual, and created outside of traditional institutions.

Our Fluxkit will provoke thought and invite engagement through humor, absurdity, and simple actions, challenging the notion of what democracy can be.

Why this why now: Democracy is in peril. But what is democracy, and why should we fight for it? How does it affect us in the grand scheme of things? Day-to-day? How is it relational, and what would it mean for us to rehumanize it? Bend it towards our aims?

We are gathered to run through a creative system that will enable a collective experience of democracy on the way to eventually staging an Absurdist Democracy Expo, an experience akin to a world's fair where democracy is explored through a series of participatory, playful rituals.

Thematic frame (lens): Bureaucracy, which is one of the ways that democracy is delivered, makes contact with us, makes itself felt by us, its subjects / agents.

Design challenge (our framing):

HOW MIGHT WE REIMAGINE THE FUTURE OF democratic systems THROUGH playful rituals THAT INTERROGATE the inhumane qualities of bureaucracy, AND TRANSFORM PARTICIPANTS' frustration (from) INTO creative re-engagement with the values these systems were meant to serve (to)?

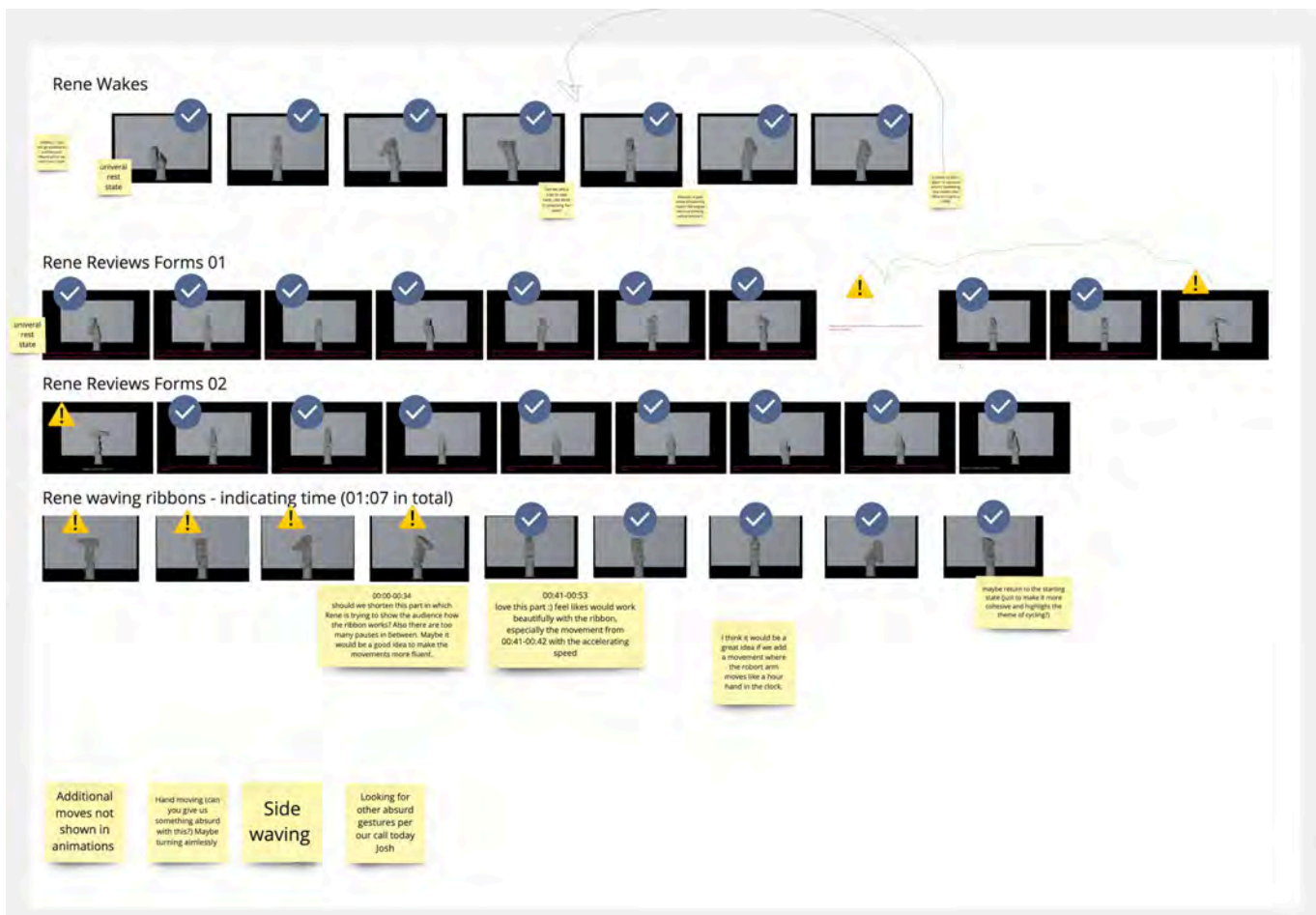
Constraints: Our form needs to **facilitate the creation** of a playful ritual / performance rather than *prescribe* a playful ritual / performance.

Form: Our form.... Is a form inspired by Fluxus scores. (See Appendix)

Why a Robot Arm?

The robotic arm becomes a poignant metaphor for bureaucracy in Democracy in Flux, representing the mechanized, rigid, and impersonal systems that often define governance today. As the arm performs repetitive, automated gestures, it mirrors the cold efficiency of bureaucratic processes—predictable yet detached, efficient yet devoid of empathy. The integration of AI and robotics underscores the growing challenge of automation in democratic systems, where algorithms increasingly shape decision-making and civic engagement, sometimes at the expense of human needs and values.

Through participatory rituals, the performance juxtaposes the robotic arm's mechanical precision with the unpredictable, collaborative nature of human action. This tension highlights the need to reanimate bureaucratic systems with humanity, transforming them from sterile mechanisms into dynamic, people-centered frameworks. By inviting audiences to interact with the arm—perhaps to subvert its programmed tasks or co-create new ones—the experience critiques the unyielding structures of bureaucracy and automation while imagining playful, artful ways to make democracy more accessible, interactive, and alive.



Student animations/notes of the robotic arm to finalize a series of movements used within the performance

On Monday, December 9, 2024, Columbia University School of the Arts' Digital Storytelling III: Immersive Production class staged a prototype of DEMOCRACY IN FLUX at Lincoln Center.

Over the course of an hour and twenty minutes the audience became co-creators of a series of fluxkits and fluxus scores (set of instructions).





Form 323C - Complaint Lodging

Section 1: Focus on your frustration with the way bureaucracy is often a cold, blunt and confounding instrument for the delivery of democracy.

Note: If helpful to harness your rage, observe magisterial Renee, our beloved bureaucratic clerk, at work.

Section 2: Now, channel your vision into the creation of an absurd bureaucratic object.

Example of absurd bureaucratic object:
Translation-Jump Rope-Earsuffs

In other words:
"Bureaucratic Challenge-Metaphor"

Object Name: _____
Metaphor: _____
Absurd Object: _____

3: Create a paper _____
Make whatever creat _____



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```
1 // Code
2
3 // Setup
4
5 // Loop
6
7 // End
8
9 // End of File
```










```
Code
app.py 1 X test.py
app.py > on_press
os.system('lp -d "Printer1-Blue" -o orientation-request=
96
97
98 def on_press(key):
99     try:
100         key_char = key.char
101         if(key_char == 'a'):
102             ser.write(b'1;SRVON\r\n')
103             print("Servo on")
104             return
105         if(key_char == '.'):
106             ser.write(b'1;SRVOFF\r\n')
107             print("Servo off")
108             return
109         if(key_char != "Key.shift"):
110             time.sleep(1)
111             runRobot(key_char)
112             if(key_char == '2'):
113                 time.sleep(1)
114                 takePhoto()
115     except AttributeError:
116         key_char = str(key)
117         print("Key pressed: " + key_char)
118
119 def on_release(key):
120
121
OUTPUT TERMINAL PORTS Python + - - - - X
Center cropped image saved.
request id is Printer1-Blue-1633 (1 file(s))
Key pressed: 2
2Program running2
Center cropped image saved.
request id is Printer1-Blue-1634 (1 file(s))
Key pressed: 2
2Program running2
Center cropped image saved.
request id is Printer1-Blue-1635 (1 file(s))
Key pressed: 2
2Program running2
Center cropped image saved.
request id is Printer1-Blue-1636 (1 file(s))
```




ARTISTS

Lily Chen Zacha Del Rosario Rosette Jin Takayoshi Koyama
Eileen Mendez Patricia Marte



Form 303C – Complaint Lodging

Section 1: Focus on your frustration with the way bureaucracy is often a cold, blunt and confounding instrument for the delivery of democracy.

Note: If helpful to harvest your rage, observe magisterial Renee, our beloved bureaucratic clerk, at work.

Section 2: Now, channel your vision into the creation of an absurd bureaucratic object.

Example of absurd bureaucratic object:

Translation-Jump Rope-Earmuffs.

In other words:

"Bureaucratic Challenge-Metaphor Of Challenge-Absurd Object".

Your Object Name

- Bureaucratic Challenge: _____
- Metaphor of Challenge: _____
- Absurd Object: _____

Title / Hyphenate-all-Three: _____

This is your Bureaucratic Object.

Section 3: Create a paper origami that best represents your object. Take whatever creative liberties may be needed.



FORM PACKET: Democracy in Flux - Fluxus Score Creation

Presented by the **Department of the Meaning of Life** (DML, not to be confused with DMV). Please complete each form fully. Submission of incomplete or improperly filled forms will result in rejection and a mandatory 30-day waiting period before resubmission.

Together, begin by reciting The Oath of Democratic Flux:

The Oath of Democratic Flux

"We, the assembly of visionaries, pledge to be seen by democracy. We choose friction to find meaning, absurdity to find truth. With patience and playfulness, we reorient bureaucracy towards life instead of suffering death by 1000 papercuts. Finally, we welcome the robot as our benevolent collaborator, not our overlord."



Form 303C.1 - Chorus of Complaints, Team Formation

Section 1: Copy over your the name of your Bureaucratic
Object: _____

Section 2: Now, copy the 1st, 3rd and 5th letters of the
Object below. This is your code. _____

Section 3: Walk around the room, lifting your bureaucratic
object origami above your head, and uttering the 3-letter
code from section 2 as a word. Find (3) other people with
whom your three-letter word harmonizes nicely.

This will be your team of citizen-creatives for the
remainder of tonight.

Next, look around the room and make sure there is an even
number of teams. If there isn't, each team will sacrifice
a member for the collective good to ease the headache of
bureaucracy.

Note: If you require more clarity, please raise an arm in
disgust and sigh loudly. We will do our best to back to
you promptly*.

* Please note that the volume of complaints has been
louder than usual and that processing times might be
further delayed beyond the reasonable 6-8 week window. We
appreciate your understanding.



Form 303C.2 - Title and Scope Assessment

Creative Citizenry Identification: Enshrine / make official / make unusually noteworthy your unit of creative citizenry.

- Team Name: _____
- Team Affiliation/Organization: _____
- Date of Submission: ___ / ___ / ___

Section 1: Performance Title

1.1 Title of Your Score (Instructional Performance):

Must include exactly 3 to 5 words. _____

1.2 Subtitle (Optional): _____

Section 2: Democratic Focus

What aspect of bureaucratic democracy is your score targeting and why? 12 words maximum.

Send a representative to see Renee to obtain "Form 808X - Fluxus Score and Ritual Blueprint Instructions" and "Form 808XX - Fluxus Score and Blueprint"



Form 808X - Fluxus Score and Ritual Blueprint Instructions

Section 1: Instructions for the Fluxus Score: Compose detailed yet bafflingly clear instructions ("score") that any group of stranger citizen-creatives can come together to "interpret". Imagine a score that helps them alchemize their frustrations into a collective demonstration of profound and cathartic absurdity.

Note:

- Instructions should not exceed 50 words.
- In a Fluxus world, things are not as they seem (what if paper was the weight of lead?).
- Use absurdist constraints to inspire your score.

[Reminder: All instructions should be open-ended but possible to interpret. Extreme clarity may result in a fine from the Department of Abstract Performance.]

Once you have completed "Form 808XX - Fluxus Score and Ritual Blueprint", attach Forms 303C from all citizen-creatives on your team. Stapling is required for submission.

Worksheet for your score:

Act 1: instruction "inspired" by your team name.

Act 2: instruction inspired by your bureaucratic challenges, in the manner of your favorite animal.

Act 3: instruction re: what participants must "do" with the objects to "use" them to make them "work" in a functioning democracy.

Act 4: instruction re: hacking an element of bureaucracy by coopting it, deliriously. Use your emissary's word as a jumping off point.

Act 5: closing collective gesture to liberate Renee from her drudgery. What do robots fantasize about?



Form 808XX - Fluxus Score and Ritual Blueprint

Based on the worksheet, Form 808X, write down your Fluxus instructions, or "score", below (50 words max.):

Act 1: _____ (no talking)

Act 2: _____ (must start with a 'B')

Act 3: _____ (use of arms or leg not both)

Act 4: _____ (repetition is your friend)

Act 5: _____ (character range bw 12-18)

To validate your score, please seek out Renee's endorsement. Don't forget to appeal to Renee's stubborn nature.



Form 808Z - Conglomeration Aggregation of Deliberative Assembly
aka Submission Form

Pair your "Form 808XX - Fluxus Score and Ritual Blueprint" with the completed "Form 808Y - Official Recital Peer Review". All corners must align, otherwise they will not be properly read by Renee.

Recite one word that you remember from the Oath of Democratic Flux to Renee. As you intone it solemnly, mirror Rene's movements as a spiritual bob.

Whatever you do, make sure to not let conformity reign in vain.

Once finished you will need to sit while Rene renders final judgement on all the teams' work.

Collaborators Wanted for 2025

If you would like to collaborate with us on DEMOCRACY IN FLUX please contact **hello@digitalstorytellinglab.com**

Opportunities include:

- Prototyping
- Remixing (DEMOCRACY IN FLUX is released under a sharealike creative commons license)
- Hosting (conferences, festivals, schools, museums, galleries)
- Documentation

The Columbia DSL Student Showcase is made possible thanks to the support of the following...

Columbia University School of the Arts

Lance Weiler

Regina Harsanyi

Romy Nehme

Nick Fortugno

Josh Corn

Double Take Labs

Dr. Robert King

Film at Lincoln Center

Zacha Del Rosario

Takayoshi Koyama

Eileen Lu

Photographs by Qingju Wen & Lance Weiler

The Columbia DSL designs stories for the 21st Century. We build on a diverse range of creative and research practices originating in fields from the arts, humanities and technology. But we never lose sight of the power of a good story. Technology, as a creative partner, has always shaped the ways in which stories are found and told. In the 21st Century, for example, the mass democratization of creative tools — code, data and algorithms — have changed the relationship between creator and audience. The Columbia DSL, therefore, is a place of speculation, of creativity, and of collaboration between students and faculty from across the University. New stories are told here in new and unexpected ways.

Join Columbia faculty and industry innovators as we explore the current and future landscape of digital storytelling.