Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass

Theses and Dissertations | Graduate School

2017

The Institute of New Feelings: Plastic Identities and Imperfect Surfaces

Weijian zhou
Virginia Commonwealth University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd

Part of the Digital Humanities Commons, Game Design Commons, Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication Commons, Graphic Communications Commons, Graphic Design Commons, Other Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons, and the Visual Studies Commons

© The Author

Downloaded from
https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/4875

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.

the
Institute of
new feelings
INTIMACY
ONLY

Special Thanks

Thank you to my parents for always supporting me.

Thank you to my advisors Nicole Killian, David Shields, Irvin Morazan. I could not have done this without you.

Thank you Adele Ball, Alex Bailey, Boying Chen, Junyun Chen, Wentao Huang, Hannah McKalips, Stephen Parks, and Drew Sisk for your support during the installation.

Thank you to all of my Classmates.

The Institute of New Feelings: Plastic Identities and Imperfect Surfaces

This is my MFA thesis project and exhibition documentation, as part of the required works of graduate study at Virginia Commonwealth University, School of the Arts, Design and Visual Communications Program.

Weijian Zhou
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
May 2017

Nicole Killian
Main Advisor, Assistant Professor
Department of Graphic Design

David Shields
Secondary Advisor, Associate Professor and Chair
Department of Graphic Design

Irvin Morazan
External Advisor, Assistant Professor
Department of Sculpture + Extended Media

Steven Hoskins
Graduate Program Director, Associate Professor,
Department of Graphic Design

Table of Contents

Abstract

INTRO

Statements

manifesto az an InternAt explo.RAR
but you are covered in plastic!
fetishizing without boundaries
the video game connection
plastic images and GRAPHIC DESIGN

Process

Cute and Bacon
Seizure Garden
Cloud 1080

the Institute of new Feelings

Precedents

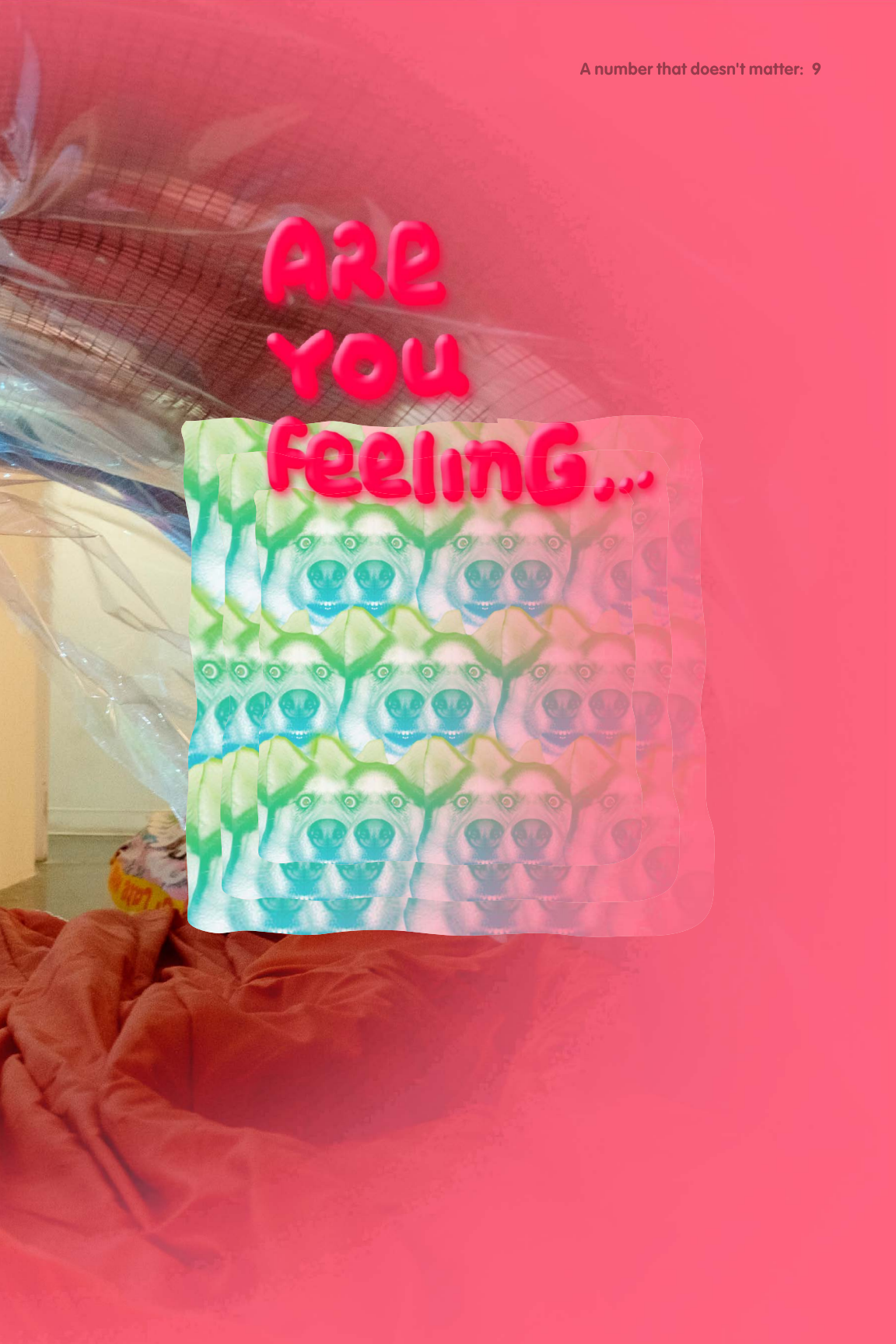
Evaluation

Bibliography

Abstract

Digital media are moldable spaces where an image is simultaneously a thought. This instance and flexibility enables digital existences to be malleable, transformative, situational, and unstable. They are plastic images. Video games generate digital bodies that are a fusion of subjectivities and cybernetic simulations, in a perceivable and ambiguous process. Such bodies are extensions of ourselves, being girlish, imperfect, unfinished and happening—digesting and emitting clusters of feelings, regardless of our biological gender and age. The performative experience of play is progressively departing from spectacle, gambling and competition, and increasingly shifting towards an emotional journey of alternate realities, spreading subjectivities into the visible and invisible areas of screens. Such experience, and our plastic identities that reside within, marks a collaborative attempt between designers and audience to establish a new protocol of liquid perspectives functioning within and beyond digital space. Digital plasticity itself is a practice, as well as an inextricable process of understanding and deploying identities in the contemporary media-saturated pluralistic environment.

Hi!
ARE YOU
ANXIOUS?


ARE
YOU
FEELING...

18+
A cardiac unrest inside your ribs?

teh
INSTITU
oof
new fe
Achievem
I'M B
mani-
fest
Love m
(Relaun

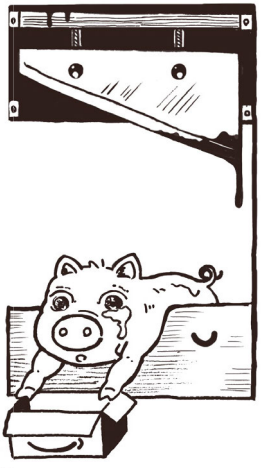
various accelerants being injected into the brain?

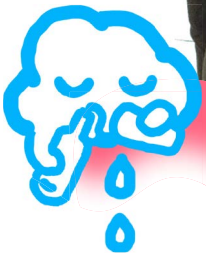
teh INSTITUTE oof new FEELINGS
Achievement unlocked
let's
manifesto
Love me
Relaunch Page)

A number that doesn't matter: 15

Fluids pumping in your trembling torso?

bloods being mixed with electronic signals?





stardust
open
nite

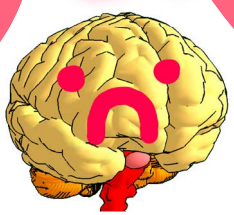
seems like some ppl dont like the feminine d e s i g n in the new pockét monster game...

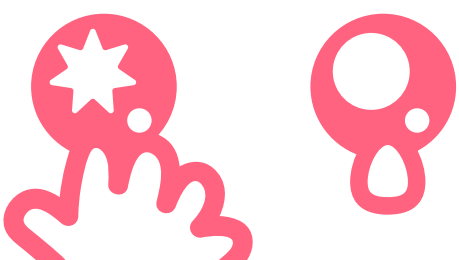
people are not only mad about the lack of gender neutrality, they also don't want to pick the girly starter and/or later become uncomfortable with the likelihood that their girly starter will probably be male. it's bullsh*t because they are being inconsistent and want to make excuses for the fact that they don't like interchangeable gender materials and the fluidity of gender appearence.

u mean, there is no harm in jus letting a cute thing be cute...

so wat if...

A personal apocalypse occupying your skull?





AND YESSS!
THERE IS :NO:
SOLUTION,

communicate! :) teh future of talk = pizza + mind = s
:3 :3 :3 :

Let's
Embrace
the mess
while we can.
~mi_im~

My fascination with digital images dates back to Windows 98, which introduced me to the magic of image-making in *Windows Paint*. The most prominent feature of digital painting—in my opinion—was the ability of endless overlaying on the same canvas space. The space literally remained forever unfinished and moldable—as the plasticity of digital images. My digital paintings are sectioned and nonlinear, emphasizing sensation other than reality, articulating dreams of vibrant sensory abundance. The surface containing these images—a tiny CRT monitor, becomes my own rabbit hole to an infinite house of curiosity. This surface introduced me to an over-lively, overwhelming, fuzzy, glitched, looping and never-ending reality that gradually defined my way of seeing.

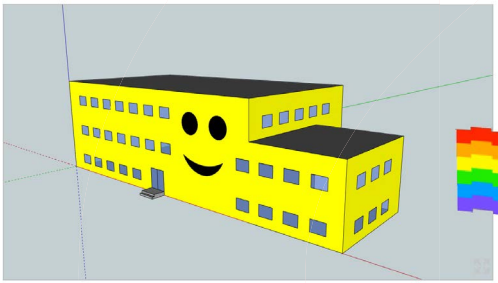
When I began to deal with digital images with realistic textures, such as rendered architectural images and video games, the relationship between the two dominating realities of my life—the on-screen one and the physical one—started to unveil and convolute. In my undergraduate studies, I practiced in architectural visualization—rendering models and designing graphics for architecture. Visualizing a building many times feels like giving it birth in an alternate dimension before it comes out from the womb—I mean architectural firms—in real life. When a building is aborted—which

intro

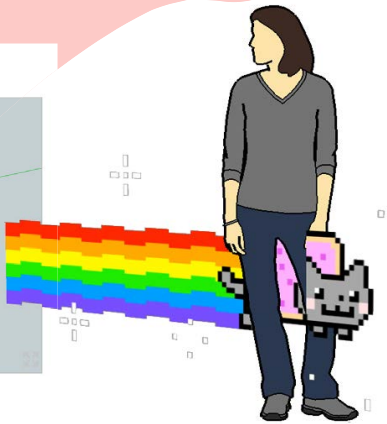
happens frequently in process, only the renderings remind me it once existed. As a result, if no physical model was built for the abandoned proposal, the digital realm of light and electronic signals become its only and final place of residence. This unique and somewhat emotional experience reveals that an object will inevitably have a subjective overlay when being digitized, even for physical existences that are greater than human scale. Fetish is an essential layer between physical and digital reality.

Materiality, space, and form in architecture are frequently designed with gender and heterosexual bias. Many twentieth century buildings—especially skyscrapers—are treated as a technical object and totem of power, as "the masculine mystique of the big, the erect, the forceful—the full balloon of the inflated masculine ego."[1] Subjectivities give way to control and order; individual identities are minimized to be incorporated into the mechanism for living. However, digital space enables us to reoccupy and subjectify these once dehumanized and standardized spaces, to fetishize everything—at least in an alternate dimension. Materials lose their original compounds, tactility, and social myths in digital space, and their values are represented by color, brightness, ambient behavior, reflection, refraction, and so on. The digitized and editable materials constantly redefine the identity of the digital building during rendering tests. The building responds and interacts with me, gaining a cybernetic individuality with situational identities. For me, a process image in rendering is very similar to an emotional Tumblr post; it is preserved as a moment of specific feelings, usually about excitements and self-representations. This is the moment I discovered an intersection between my conceptual thoughts and the visions in digital space—and instead of hunting images in Tumblr, I search through perspectives in a simulation. In this process, the rendered image becomes an extension of my instantaneous subjectivity.

Generic Happy Building



Just needed a generic and happy building for a little project. Have a Happy Building!



To say it another way, digital buildings are made of sunshine. This is a statement I borrow from Donna Haraway's 1983 essay "Cyborg Manifesto," in which she writes, "our best machines are made of sunshine; they are all light and clean because they are nothing but signals, electromagnetic waves, a section of a spectrum… People are nowhere near so fluid, being both material and opaque. Cyborgs are ether, quintessence." In Haraway's conceptualization, the cyborg body—in my case the digital building—is "not immaterial or dematerialized, but actually fully materialized in the form of lines and fiber optics."[2]

As an undergraduate, I also invested much of my time in video games—namely *The Sims 3*. Developed by Matrix Studio and launched in 2009, *The Sims 3* is a milestone in life simulation games, featuring a seamless and realistic 3D world mixing with reinterpreted, subjectified elements like cute overhead bubbles and vampires. The vanilla game allows you to control each individual of a family (as a "sim"), dealing with their daily life in a colonial American town called Sunset Valley. Since I am making decisions for every individual, I am indeed playing and communicating with different versions of my own individualities. As a male player, seeing alter egos of myself in female, adolescent and elderly body forms is more than fascinating. It is a playful and interactive illustration of what our digital bodies can be: not just a singular alter ego, but a set of selves that we can switch fluidly, beyond playing as opposite gender. One of the most adorable and memorable moments in my play was a glitch that resulted in an in-game male pregnancy. When my male character "Torbjörn Longsword" was stumbling to the moment of giving birth to a new life, he was essentially emancipating himself from natural origins and limitations, utterly becoming a cyborg in Haraway's definition, carrying the transformative, liquidly fluid body and a flexible identity that is "made of sunshine."

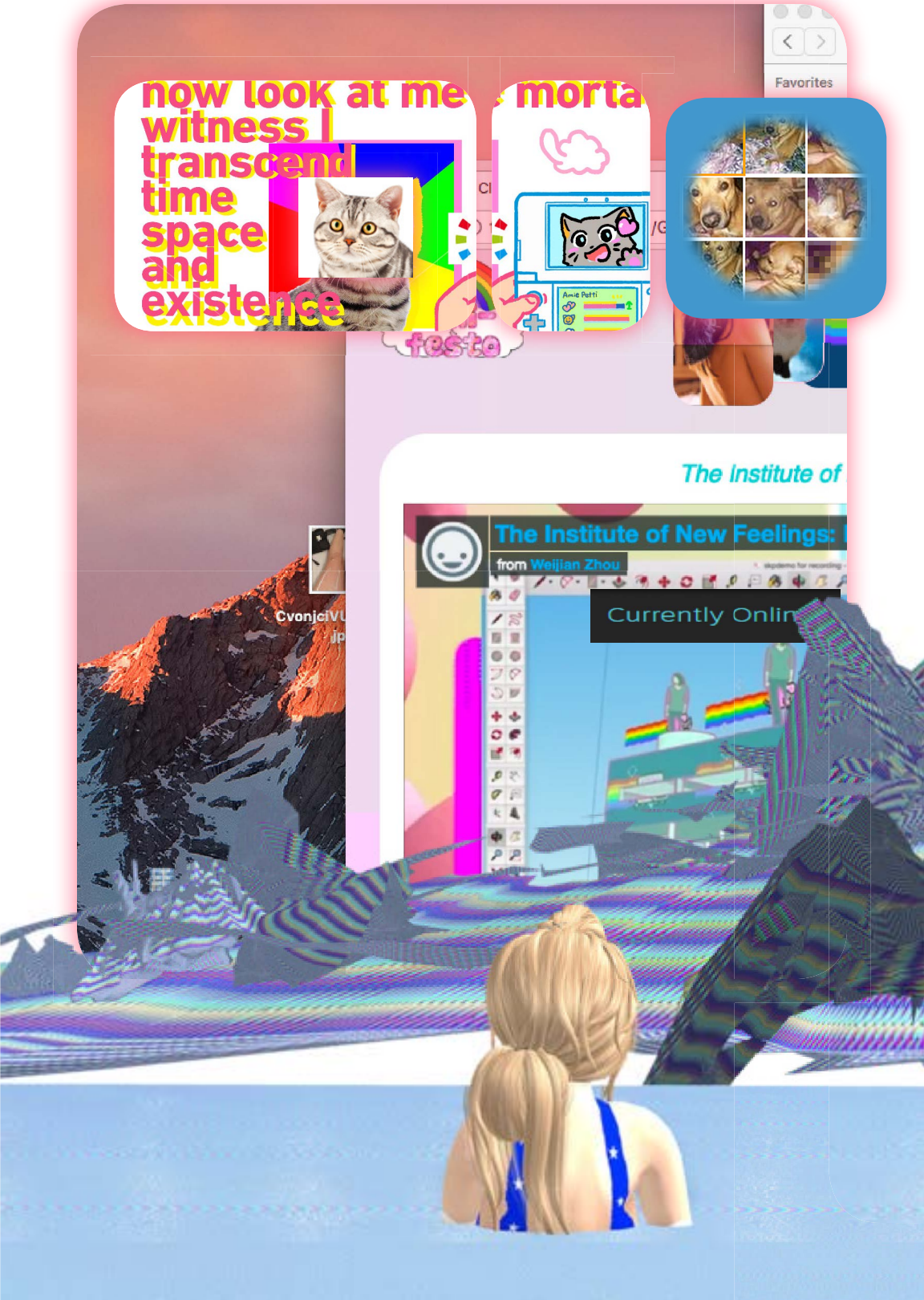
I was so devoted to my sims family that I performed countless game-save edits and even full operation system backups to revert a mistake or an accidental death in the game. Traveling back and forth in time inside a simulation, and pulling out identities that are being stored in past game-saves alternates the boundary between the visible and the invisible of a screen. In such process, the digital extensions of our bodies represent our subjectivities but with specializations, as the trans-individuals—malleable, situational, and unstable. They tend to be non-stereotypical and radical, as the "traditionally othered: transgendered, nonwhite, fat, ugly, needy, deformed, and monstrous bodies."[3] These digital bodies diminish the distinctions between self and fiction: sketching and discussing situational identities independent of a person's biological sex.

1. Leslie Kanes Weisman, "Women's Environmental Rights," in *Gender Space Architecture*, ed. by Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.

2. Karen Archey, "Embodied Differences: Monsters, Cyborgs, and Cinema," in *Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art, 1905–2016* (Whitney Museum of American Art and Yale University Press, 2016), 194.

3. Archey, "Embodied Differences: Monsters, Cyborgs, and Cinema," 196.

Statements


now look at me
witness
transcend
time
space
and
existence
Favorites
The Institute of
The Institute of New Feelings:
from Weijian Zhou
Currently Onlin

o(ᴵ∼ᴵ)o /*manifesto az an InternAt explo.RAR*/

To be honest, my thesis is developed for myself. The texts and other works I make are used to navigate my thoughts through the labyrinth of feelings and identities, as the malleable intersection between myself and the external. My works are usually piles of stuff that are happening and evolving, corresponding to the unstable nature of digital spaces. Throughout the process, I think my works are helpful for others as well. Those who have had similar experiences as me—being the digital dwellers/explorers in their 20s or 30s—are facing rapid social and personal change. Various unique and situational questions are surfacing and becoming urgent. To be fluid in the complexity of digital landscape is to embrace the mess and the gross of it. Subjectivity is essentially our existence in the information format, zapping around situational bodies.

∩ | ✿◕ˇωˇ◕ | ∩ /*but you are covered in plastic!*/

My own definition of plastic images and identities is a bit different from the term *plastic arts* and *neoplasticism*. I do consider that by saying "plastic," the plastic images in my definition are moldable. But more importantly, plastic images are images that are unstable, malleable, situational and happening. They can be deformed, repurposed and misused—visually or contextually—into any direction with few limitations and rupture, at a user's desire. In such transformation process, plastic images are forever unfinished sketches under construction.

Under my definition, almost any image that is generated in, or processed in, digital space is a plastic image. Being repurposed and distributed by general individuals, many plastic images belong to what artist and critic Hito Steyerl defines as the *poor image*. Plastic images' audience and author are often merged, the producers are also the consumer. Being imperfect, redefined, resurrected and reused, plastic images tend to be the defiance of modern images' hierarchy based on resolution, sharpness and original values. In their endless cycle of iteration, they are "no longer about the real thing—the originary original. Instead, it is about its own real conditions of existence: about swarm circulation, digital dispersion, fractured and flexible temporalities… In short: it is about reality."[1] Plastic images in digital spaces are the screenshots of our endless, fluctuating feelings and emo-

tions, they indicate how our subjectivities digest and emit data. In my opinion, digital images are the most accessible and dominant category of plastic images; and inside digital space, these two terms are interchangeable.

Therefore, plastic images "preoccupy contemporary media culture,"[2] they can represent our bodies and identities within and beyond digital space. Corresponding to the imperfection of plastic images, our digital bodies are also frequently not full-sized mannequins or body morphs, they are the partially, unfinished, imperfect and sometimes multiple, overlaying reinterpretations of the physical body. A digital body can be visually recognizable, or be conceptually constructed. It can consist of fingers, texts and floating faces, existing in messaging apps; it can be mouse wheels and scrolling webpages, as seen in our Tumblr sites; it can be cute and anthropomorphic creatures, role-playing in various video games; our digital bodies can even be made up by pure waves and signals, presented in our curated playlists and acoustic compositions. We, as the humans in digital space, are traveling through different plastic bodies and surfaces. In such processes, we are fabricating multiple, alternate "social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints."[3]

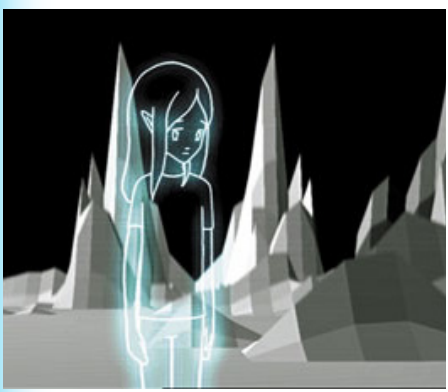
These unconventional bodies and their nonlinear perspectives establish digital dimensions to be only partially visible. The visible surface of this dimension is the screen, but the surface exists beyond that. The extended and invisible part of the surface becomes a digital void. The void is always here, and we can even interfere with it through temporary interruptions, for example, dragging an image off the screen before pulling it back. But we can never witness the reality, or the image's status of existence at that moment. Although invisible, this void is still dependent on computer processing for its existence, becoming what French philosopher Paul Virilio describes as the image and information energy. It "eliminates the 'line' of the visible horizon in favor of the *linelessness* of a deep and imaginary horizon."[4]

Unlike our organic bodies, the skin of a digital body is a thin layer of epidermic reality that wraps an invisible skeleton of codes and algorithms. If we turn off collision in some video games and 3D software, we can just walk through bodies like ghosts. The emptiness behind a surface renders digital realities to function in various subjectified ways differently than in physical

realities. Time and age in digital space, for example, become somewhat manageable. Digital bodies can be in and out of hibernation at a user's desire, through independence of physical and temporal situations. Many video games talk about time traveling, and our digital characters in games usually do not age, or their age can be manually modified. A blog post freezes a moment in our life. When the posts are categorized and clustered, they can assemble sections and different versions of ourselves that are preserved forever (unless we choose to delete them or they are being faced with a system destruction.) As our digital bodies extend and intersect with various invisible volumes—time, perspective, sound, energy, electric signals and currents—they become a fusion of subjectivities and computer processing. They are cybernetic existences that are performed and possessed by us. We maintain and control these bodies, but our behaviors are also being defined by the frameworks—the surface, and the emptiness beneath it—in which these bodies dwell and thrive.

Plastic identities are meant to be shared, upgraded, experimented, glitched and deformed. And, just like the physical plastic materials, plastic identities are also reproducible and disposable. They lend themselves to recontextualization, becoming "eminently replaceable, transmedial, and transportable."[5] A well-known example of artistic explorations in plastic identity is the collaborative project *No Ghost Just a Shell* (plate 1-3) by Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe. This project is a series of video installations featuring a recycled—being abandoned by the original creator—anime character named AnnLee. This character is a female cyborg wandering across a cinematic plane that includes eight films, animations, and videos. The unfinished digital girl body, combined with varied content and media, renders her perpetually unfinished, as a collaborative labor and a body under construction. This project also hints at the girlification tendency of our identities in digital space. Such tendency is true to the nature of digital plasticity: "if women are supposed to be finished paintings, girls are sketches… The goal of the performance of girlhood in the media is to extend, infinitely and forever, the cartoon in time and space."[6]

Anime images—the cartoon images with Japanese visions—fabricate alternate versions of physical reality in lush and vibrant dreams of youthful energy. Under such overall settings, "beautiful fighting girls"[7] become common (plate 4). They are designed to stimulate the feeling of affection and delicacy, being perceived as cute, childlike, ambiguous, and humanoid,



Left column:
plate 1-3, stills from *No Ghost Just a Shell.*
From top to down:
Plate 1: *Two Minutes Out of Your Time* (2000), Pierre Huyghe;
Plate 2: *Anywhere Out of The World* (2000), Philippe Parren;
Plate 3: *One Million Kingdoms* (2001), Pierre Huyghe.

Plate 4, *Sailor Moon*, a famous anime featuring Beautiful Fighting Girls.

Oculus Rift founder Palmer Luckey cosplaying as Rainbow Dash from *My Little Pony*.

Plate 5, an internet image depicting a male otaku holding a body pillow with a printed anime character. The front and back side of such pillows usually feature two different sets of dress for the same character, with one set being normal and one set being explicit (or no dress at all).

appealing specifically for our care. The ambiguities and other imaginative spaces provided by their lines and body forms render them as empty containers—or shells—for subjective projections. They are to be "bought, rescued, possessed, exported, passed around, and transformed,"[8] and many times as acted out—by the audience.

Thriving anime fan-art spaces on the internet, especially Deviantart, are an example of characters subject to manipulation and reinterpretation. The malleable and scalable images of anime effectively connect the empty cyborg girls with imaginary forms of selfhood. And, such intimacies with girlish identities are not limited to imported animes. Digital bodies that are produced in Western culture—and usually not originally intended to be reinterpreted by fetish, or phallic ambiguities—sometimes also fall under this scope of plastic manipulation. One of the most well-known examples, commonly seen in Deviantart, is the subculture for grown-up male and female fans for *My Little Pony*, with the audiences identifying themselves as the "Bronies" or "Pegasisters." Psychologist and critic Saitō Tamaki argues that otakus—who are deeply devoted to anime—believe anime characters carry tangible interactions with physical life. "Otakus can take pleasure in multiple levels of fictionality… and to recognize that everyday reality itself is a kind of fiction."[9] Tamaki also states that this ability is usually evoked by the active erotic affections and fetishized engagements between otaku and anime characters (plate 5). Plastic images, then, become part of otakus' vision of masculinity.[10] They bridge imaginary and physical reality, awakening the sexuality associated with otaku's manhood, redefining their gender identities in process. Interestingly, plastic images in anime subculture tend to be female-identified. And the relationship between otakus and them—if we consider there is a relationship between us and our digital alternate selves—is somewhat queered. Queerness in relationships enables a person to play a role—sexually and socially—independent of his or her biological gender. This leads to another important aspect in the process of plasticity: creating fetish counterparts of objects and bodies through digitizing.

1. Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," in *The Wretched of the Screen* (New York: Sternberg Press, 2012), 44.

2. Heather Warren-Crow, *Girlhood and the Plastic Image* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2014), 1.

3. Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *The Cybercultures Reader* (New York; Routledge, 2000), 295.

4. Paul Virilio, *Open Sky* (London: Verso, 1997), 45.

5. Warren-Crow, *Girlhood and the Plastic Image*, 24.

6. Warren-Crow, *Girlhood and the Plastic Image*, 60.

7. This is the term introduced by Saitō Tamaki for his series of study in otaku and anime fan culture, it describes those fictional pubescent girls as protagonists in anime and manga to fight and save the world. Sometimes overly sexualized, always intensely cute, and often a mix of both, they are the superstars in Japanese culture.

8. Warren-Crow, *Girlhood and the Plastic Image*, 56.

9. Saitō Tamaki, author, J. Keith Vincent and Dawn Lawson, trans., *Beautiful Fighting Girl* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xv.

10. There are female otakus too, sharing similarities with male otakus in terms of image production and redefining realities. Female otakus usually produce fictional gay love stories that are designed by and for themselves, as the "Yaoi" category.

| ∩ ¯ ω ¯ ∩ | /*fetishizing without boundaries*/

Personally, I think the foundation of the internet is fetish. The fetishizing process can be either sexual or non-sexual, but every digitized object and body part has a subjective or spiritual overlay. This is due to the plastic nature of digital images. With programs and algorithms, we can visualize imagery and fictions beyond the limitation of physical laws. Self-projections are prominent in all these processes, and the anonymous internet also allows people to "find themselves online and explore their feelings in a safe, private space, building communities of like-minded individuals and dislodging physical consequences."[1] Digital space becomes an experimental, sandbox-like field of body augmentation.

The augmentation of the body is not a modern concern. It can already be seen in the work of Hieronymus Bosch as he deals exclusively in dreamlike, surrealist imagery that is not dissimilar to the contemporary approach. The imaginations and augmentations become increasingly a matter of fetish. Since the term *cyborg* was introduced in the 1920s, cyborgs and their gendered identities have been heavily investigated and performed by designers and artists. The emergence of cyborg is a result of human beings exposed to the speed and vertigo brought up by machine and technical media. Soon after the fascination of the "Mechanical Eye"[2] leading up to experimental ways of representing bodies and objects, the early experiments of combining human and machine to create a new form of body as the hybrid,

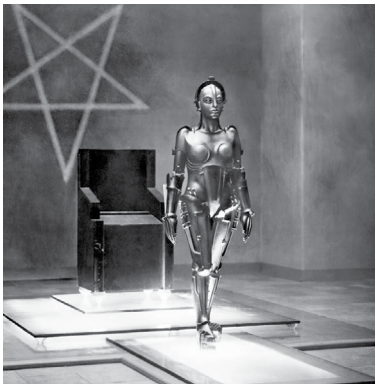


Plate 6, Maria/Hel (Brigitte Helm) in *Metropolis* (1927), directed by Fritz Lang.

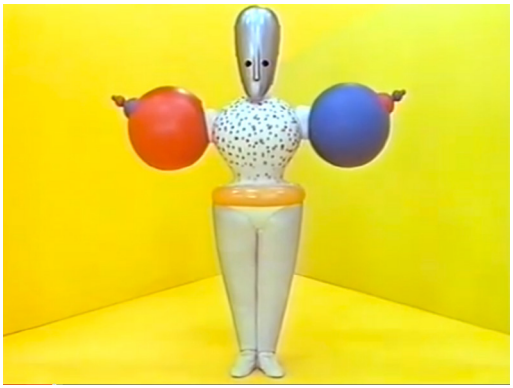


Plate 7-9,
Oskar Schlemmer,
stills from *Triadic Ballet*, 1922 and 1967.

Drake,
Hotline Bling (2015), music video.

mutable and subjective existence began. Earlier examples are fictional representations appreciating the aesthetics and movements of machine, such as Maria/Hel in *Metropolis* (1927) (plate 6), and *Triadic Ballet* (plate 7-9). These early contextualizations have already reflected a collective anxiety and ambivalence towards technical media's saturation of personal and social identities, foreseeing the practice of using hybrid bodies to express subjectivity and very often sexuality. These malleable hybrid bodies bring up the question of their gender, and the artist's subjective projection on the external technical media.

French philosopher Paul Virilio describes this *subjectification relationship* as interestingly faithful and Judeo-Christian, which is already described in Genesis, "having science and especially the technical media play the logistical role initially acted by the first woman."[3] Personally, I think the gendered relationship between artists and the externals in the pre-digital modernist era started as a sped-up version of the historical debates in Western culture about the gendered material of objects—the traditional notion considers objects associated with *to-be-look-at-ness* and procession as the feminine.[4] The speed, vertigo, and hallucination brought up by technical media blurs the separation between day and night, bringing the possibility of capturing and repurposing gendered materials in the format of animation and transformation. Therefore, the gendered relationship between self and external self is more tactile and interchangeable than ever, as "the real world becomes real images, mere images are transformed into real beings."[5] Images becomes the tangible figments in-between, blurring each other.

Emphasizing the subjective, feminine, and developing nature, the modern subject-object relationship becomes a fetish movement mobilized by machines. Fetish is often considered as a male gaze of objectifying female bodies through language and representation. This process enables fetishized objects "to exert a transformative power upon itself as well as other objects and subjects,"[6] just like a toy. Since the fetish object is substitutive to subjectivity, then the object—and its gender identity can also represent and define us. Fetish can be associated with sexuality, but it can also emphasize a fluid gender identity that he or she prefers. The subjectification relationship becomes somewhat triangular, as both self and the externals can be represented by subjectified objects. The externals are "the microcosm of a universe which is only an extension of the loved one, the body of the woman becoming one with a communication body."[7] Although

I think the term "woman" here should be replaced by *preferred gender identities*, the scope of the universe and the fetish is indeed interchangeable in digital space. This space becomes the ultimate dimension to visualize such triangular relationship into a palpable and irresistible personal reality.

1. Krystal South, "Identify Yourself," accessed April 2016, http://idyrself.com.
2. Dziga Vertov, Statements from "Man with a Movie Camera," 1921.
3. Guy Debord, *The Society of The Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1967), 17.
4. This statement is from John Berger's *Ways of Seeing, Episode 2,* BBC 4 documentary, 1978.
5. Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetic of Disappearance* (Semiotext(e), 1991), 76.
6. Antony Hudek, "Detours of Objects," in *The Object* (Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2014), 22.
7. Virilio, *The Aesthetic of Disappearance*, 77.

o(๑ ‘ ω ’)ツ /*the video game connection*/

Designed to stimulate unique experiences, video games create visions of places and sceneries that are related to physical spaces, but subjectively remodeled and digitally regenerated. This process is executed by computing articulations, as the objects and scenarios of video games' reinvented worlds are built on simulation engines, digital models, visual effects, and instant frame-by-frame hardware renderings. This reinvention of the natural laws in everyday life rearranges time, space, and matter, and concocts other worlds within our own. In such process, video games become the third vision between physical reality and imagery, including, remixing, and expanding the two others. This vision is not just a perspective, or a poetic way of observing the screens; it is a tactile synchronization between physical inputs and visual feedbacks, subjectivity mirrors substances into digital space with redefined interactions. This tactile vision renders video games as a generative, happening, and conditional media.

Compared to a novel or cinema's usual read-only format in content delivery, the video game framework enables user generated data to be projected back inside the game, including game-saves, digital bodies, visuals, experience points, achievements, and even playable story expansions. This data in some way becomes a practice of conditional design. Player-to-player distribution of game-specific designs, generated within, and only for, a

certain video game is already a phenomenon. This can be seen in various modeling communities. These communities do not operate under the term graphic design, architectural design or game design—their visual language is vernacular and process-driven, as the situational, skeptical and constrained creative activities. Modelers and players likewise, constantly travel through different game spaces and generate new situational designs, interrogating the boundaries between the definitive and the interchangeable parts of our digital bodies. Our body and its digital mirrors become a processing organism, embodying and jettisoning datas.

A representative example for the active input aspect is the modeling communities and players around an open-world role-playing game *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*.[1] Other than a game about slaying dragons and vampires to save the world from oblivion, *Skyrim* is also an open platform for gameplay modification. Players can create contents for the game, such as bodies, races, clothes, weapons, props, and even stories of full gameplay expansions, then upload and share them. The user-created playable contents (modules, or "mods" for short) are coexisting in-game with the vanilla contents, giving a high-level of ownership in gameplay experience to the audiences who are either the co-designer or curator of such contents.

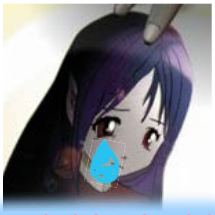
Although these mods are often accompanied by hypersexualized objects and voyeurism, they indeed make the player's body, and other images of the game highly plastic. Through one-click mod installation, the game responds and changes. Instead of slaying dragons, now our in-game selves can just sit down and read books and poems. Our digital bodies can be a young and attractive woman, a muscular male escort, a lizard person, a furry cat girl, an anime character, a dog, Thomas the Tank Engine, a chair, a skeleton, or many other things, to wander around the in-game space (plate 10-13). The mods evoke a particular desire with an appealing digital reality: to reinvent yourself through a click of mouse. These digital selves are "adaptable to our needs, cross-platform compatible, and full of endless morphological potential"[2] *Skyrim* becomes less about a specific game with rules and themes, but nearly an archetype for "extraordinary aesthetic and cultural 'pliability'."[3]

On the physical side, the communication between a video game and a player is not just about visuals on a screen, but about input systems (joystick, controller). This system becomes part of our body extensions during

Plate 10, my own character's gender glitch experiment in *Skyrim.*

Plate 11, playing as a male escort in *Skyrim.*

Plate 12 and 13, playing as Thomas the Tank Engine and Sonic (styled as "Sanic") in *Skyrim.*



"My body has already been dematerialized by those so-called artists who claim to have resurrected me! They kill me again ;_;"*

*As seen in "A Smile Without a Cat," firework event, part of *No Ghost Just a Shell*, 2002.

gaming, and the bridge between the on-screen bodies and the physical ones. Unlike the organic parts of our body, this extension constantly redefines itself, corresponding to different rules, stages and genres of games. The input system fuses our bodies with the technological gaming apparatus, co-defining the digital bodies and plastic identities. This tactile fusion is further accentuated by body manipulations in-game, such as face recognition, curve morphing, gender and race swapping, and many other digital plastic surgeries. This hybrid software/hardware approach in combining digital bodies and tactility is essentially exporting cinema's visual exploration of tactility. Cinema's tactility centers around hallucinating departures from screens—it creates "a condition of a horizonless temporal space underlines the presence of the body in the haptic cinematic model as cyborgian, occupying space as a fusion of organic form and technological immateriality."[4] Now we are dissolving into this space by using hands and controllers. We are no longer imagining, but becoming "a creature of information… subject to constant dispersal, transformation and exchange."[5]

It's hard to say whether a video game system is an open or a closed system, but it is a system designed for repurposing. Game designers repurpose natural laws and physical existences, and audience/players interpret the subjectified in-game worlds with personal visions and behaviors whenever possible. The active inputs from players connect the game system to imageries and personal memories, evoking and accumulating feelings beyond a vision. A video game is a machine of feelings. To play a game is to have an emotional journey in an alternate reality, where thoughts and behaviors are trans-individual. The existence I represent in-game—either a person, an object, a fetish animal, or many other things—comes with a pre-designed identity independent of my personal values. This existence of being me and not me at the same time, enables an introspective way of seeing, as I am seeing the appearances in-game through my own eyes and the game designer's eyes simultaneously.

Video games are temporal spaces of finite worlds. Many games come with a story-driven experience that has a beginning and an end, and other open-world sandboxes have limitations in the category of available activities and the size of in-game space. Under such scope, digital bodies in video games are partial, conditional and temporary. When we switch between different walkthroughs, or different games, some of our digital bodies will be stored in game-saves. This type of body and identity storage is like a "soul gem,"[6] where a collection of decisions, subjectivities, and a set of emotions, is

preserved and accessible later on. The variety of selves in different games saves is fragmenting the proximities between identity caches. Starting from level one in a new game is to communicate with a new self in an alternate dimension with different circumstances and contexts. And sometimes, such conversation is so individually-connected and emotional that I begin to care about this new self, and export this plastic identity to my own physical life. Playing games for so long makes it hard for me to digest passive media such as television and film, because I don't want to be stuck in other people's visions and decisions.[7] If I am talking with a digital body that is somewhat my alternate self, I prefer to have some level of control for choice and outcome, even if there are physical consequences.

My personal example of plastic identities infiltrating physical self is my recent gameplay experience in *Night In the Woods* (Plate 14-17).[8] In this game you experience your in-game character's daily life in a lush, dynamic, breathing and decaying fictional American coal town called Possum Springs. Other than artwork styles, there is only one subjective modification of physical reality in-game: all creatures are humanoid animals. And me, the player, represents Mae Borowski, a black cat at her age of 20 returning home after quitting college. Such set up makes it clear that I am seeing everything in-game introspectively, and behaving trans-individually. While the town is breathing and resonating with my physical town-life memories, the figurative and metaphorical use of animals reminds me that I am certainly not Mae. But I am playing as her, mixing the thoughts, abilities and shortcomings together from her character preset and from my physical self. I am talking to my in-game parents* and friends in the way I do in real life, and I feel upset for inevitably engendering her destructive disorders. She is essentially talking to the in-game world and to the physical me at the same time, becoming an independent version of plastic identities that tries to get support from, and seek resonance with, me the player. This intense, lively and complex connection between me and the plastic identity stimulates more active inputs, and gradually I begin to see myself as a dropout person in certain backgrounds: not in school, but in a multi-cultural experience with contextual flux. Being in-between in Eastern and Western culture means I am a semi-outsider of both, and in return, I put more efforts into investigating the flexible, multiple identities; researching the boundary between self and body containers in a constantly switching and defining process.

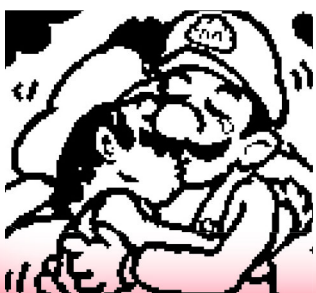
———————————

*This is another reason I recommend this game. Not many games allow you to have in-game parents. Not to mention talking to them daily.

Plate 14, Possum Springs (*Night in the Woods*).

Plate 15, Mae Borowski (*Night in the Woods*).

Plate 16 and 17, talking with in-game mom, and the prologue of "Durkillesburg" (*Night in the Woods*).



"But fetish visions are a bit cliché these days... We need the plastic boy collections..."

*Image by myself, *A Reinterpretation of Super Mario 3D World*, published in Miiverse.

Our relationship with plastic images falls under the scope of "objects define us." The plastic identities define many players' high sensibility to images and emotions inside and outside digital space. This sensibility exposes the very true reality of human bodies—the grossness, the permeableness, the slipperiness, the imperfections—as the sensibility roots itself in plastic images' unfinished, trans-individual nature. Playing games for so long naturally makes me want to break away from sleek designs that are associated with white, sexy and stereotypical bodies. Such designs' highlight of perfectness exposes their attempt to commodify our bodies and identities as display objects. While naturally, our bodies are "more permeable than we think… and everything is rubbing up against everything else, even if we don't see it."[9]

That is to say, although video game experience happens in digital space, it is exactly a medium to survey, critique and reconstruct our very own natures and physical life. Many people don't want to talk about video games, because games are either too cliché—as seen in those blockbuster games like some in the *Call of Duty* series being an annual demonstration of visual effects, masculine fantasies and boredom of teenage life;[9] or too real, exposing the very own nature and sexuality of themselves—such as the popular and anonymous adult-themed video games, and the countless video game modifications. Not many games are considered to be truly a "normal" recreation of life. In my opinion, it is exactly the fact that being abnormal, fetish, and plastic in video games makes us rethink what is being considered normal in our socially constructed framework of reality. Also, what is the screen representation of such reality, and what is our own vision of being human? Playing games enables us to see all three visions concurrently, especially—and interestingly—when the gaming simulation breaks or glitches.

1. Bethesda Game Studio, developer and publisher, Nov 2011. https://elderscrolls.bethesda.net/skyrim/.

2. Warren-Crow, *Girlhood and the Plastic Image,* 2.

3. Warren-Crow, *Girlhood and the Plastic Image,* 20.

4. Chrissie Iles, "The Cyborg and the Sensorium," in *Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art, 1905–2016* (Whitney Museum of American Art and Yale University Press, 2016), 124.

5. Matthew Biro, *The Dada Cyborg: Visions of the New Human in Weimar Berlin* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 3.

6. The term *soul gem* is from video games. Probably originated in *The Elder Scrolls* series, it is a fictional magical object where spiritual energy of a body is preserved.

7. This statement is inspired by Krystal South's discussion in "Identify Yourself," http://idyrself.com.

8. Alec Holowka and Infinite Fall, developer; Finji, publisher, Feb 2017. http://www.nightinthewoods.com.

9. Martin Herbert, "CARDIAC UNREST: THE ART OF HEATHER PHILLIPSON," *Artforum,* February 2017, accessed March 2017, https://www.artforum.com/inprint/issue=201702&id=66063.

10. To be honest, I love this series when I was a teenager, but the over-production of this merchandise has now turned the series into a banal collection of shooter games—this is a personal opinion.

(っ`・Д・´)っ /*plastic images and GRAPHIC DESIGN*/

Graphic design and many other visual design disciplines begin in the Bauhaus era. With Bauhaus's call for a "total school," students were gathered together to learn drawing, sculpture, performance, photography, typesetting and other creative activities as the whole practice of art foundation, regardless of their backgrounds or intentions. This exposure to the full range of creative methods, materials and objects gives birth to the flexible and mutable design images. The images created by Bauhaus are not self-contained realities—such as traditional paintings that are built from scratch—they are mashups, montages, and complexes of objects, machines and subjectivities, relying on existing apparatus for their final delivery. Under this scope, graphic design is essentially a communication between a designer and the whole external universe where things from microscale to macroscale are subjected to transformation and redefinition. Graphic design is a practice of repurposing. We, the graphic designers, are like tenants of presentation spaces—posters, books, magazines, screens, and many other surfaces. We do not own these surfaces, but just temporarily occupy them with repurposed and reused objects—typefaces, existing images, patterns, codes and protocols. We furnish these surfaces, present them, then we move on, to the next one. In an industry featuring constant shifting contents and production technology, what a designer really owns is time, subjective space and mobility, until he or she doesn't have it anymore.[1]

What is interesting and inevitably happening in such a process, is that we are very likely to have to sublease these spaces/surfaces in order to afford

them. We work in these surfaces on clients' behalf, introducing clients' subjectivity inside. We technically have control over such surfaces, but the authorship is shared and our own subjectivities are hindered. This is a process very similar to Airbnb-ing, as for many people in big cities, to afford a place, they have to share it. They don't get to regularly inhabit those spaces while they technically—and temporarily—own it. With rising rents, a paradoxical tipping point may be reached in the future, as "you don't get to regularly inhabit those spaces, while the point of renting those spaces is to inhabit those spaces."[2] The tipping point for a graphic designer's subleasing practice is also something similar to, as in contemporary visual communications, traditional surfaces are becoming increasingly insufficient. The fragmented and multi-sensory approaches of information delivery is already a reality. For example, branding design has already been a complex mix of sound, motion, still image, and time-sensitive notifications. The magical solution to an effective communication relies on innovative, sleek, and unified visual graphics is now in vogue. However, such sleek surfaces we temporarily own cannot sustain themselves, no matter how much we redesign and perfect them. For general audience and those who devote their second life to cellphones, graphic design's presence is at the risk of being reduced to the mere image of application icons on their phones, and will dissolve within a finger's touch. And inside these applications, fragmented, fleeting pieces of graphic design and communication arts are competing to gain a user's attention.

With this presence of temporarily and uncertainty on the surfaces assigned for graphic design, we as the designers are responsible for surveying, understanding and re-approaching our positions. Personally, I think one pitfall that many graphic designers walk into, is trying to regain the power of effective communication through perfecting the surfaces we currently have access to. We can see a numerous number of sleek and flattened graphics on portfolio websites, ranging from surplus cellphone application icons to various Helvetica clones. To amplify the level of perfection, some of us also dive into coding, generating forms and typographic spectacles. But I think the identifying power and authorship of sleek images can fall exponentially as they climb in quantity, since they become increasingly accessible and banal. And for many code-based designs, they are likely to be additional layers of visual effects over the conventional ones, becoming what philosopher and critic Guy Debord describes as "the basically tautological character of the spectacle, flows from the simple fact that its means are simultaneously its ends."[3]

I am trying to investigate graphic design's state of existence—at least my vision of its existence—through the visions and practices of plastic images. Plastic images' unstable nature and mutability is an active processes that everyone can perform and wear. While our plastic identities can be composed of images and texts, they are born in a contextual, complex, and are inseparably connected to multi-planar and dynamic surfaces. In conjunction with other media, plastic images and identities are subjectively modified—and usually degraded in quality—to fit inside the digital space they function. Their values are represented "in the net of relations and citations they instigate socially."[4] Such values move plastic images away from the "the contemporary hierarchy of images," which is "not only based on sharpness, but also and primarily on resolution."[5] Plastic images are not inventing new surfaces, but they are combining, deforming and glitching existing ones, to create a tactile and synesthetic experience. For example, although being considered vernacular art, gif-based glow texts on the internet are popular, graphic-design-related ways for emotional manifestations and subjectified expressions. Combining typefaces and gifs to create instant expressions, glow texts' popularity lies in their accessibility and speed, "being perfectly integrated into an information capitalism thriving on compressed attention spans, on impression rather than immersion."[6] Graphic design, in such process, becomes a public practice by introducing plastic surfaces from girlhood, commodity fetishism and poor images (plate 18).

Instead of inventing new attempts at perfection, maybe it is time for graphic designers to call for an occupation of all surfaces, to embrace of what we traditionally considered the imperfect, unstable, naive and vernacular. The Bauhaus once did this, and now it is time for graphic designers to open up and get messy again. The resurrection of visually teasing and medium misusing should also come with criticality and concerns on our social life. Instead of identifying ourselves as graphic designers, maybe we should be manifested as designers of situational responses. We should be "represented by our approaches and processes other than specified media."[7]

1. Brad Troemel, "Freecaching," accessed February 2017, http://main.bradtroemel.com.
2. Brad Troemel, "UV Production House," http://main.bradtroemel.com.
3. Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 13.
4. "Club Kids: The Social Life of Artists on Facebook," *Dismagazine*, accessed October 2015,

http://dismagazine.com/discussion/29786/club-kids-the-social-life-of-artists-on-facebook.

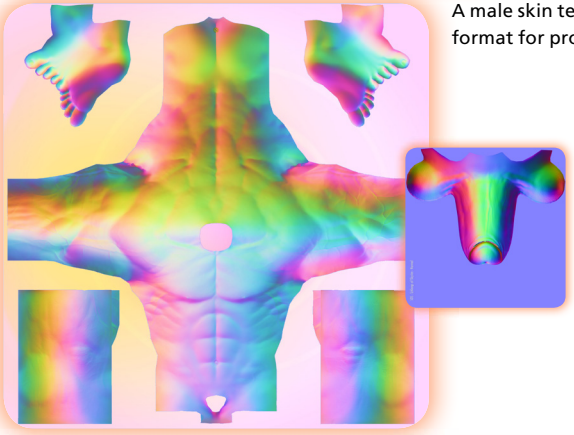
5. Hito, "In Defense of Poor Image," 33.

6. Hito, "In Defense of Poor Image," 42.

7. This is inspired by "The Conditional Design Manifesto," accessed November 2016, https://conditionaldesign.org/manifesto.

Plate 18, a collage of popular glow text typefaces, including Wim Crouwel's *New Alphabet*, partially due to Joy Division's 1988 album *Substance*.

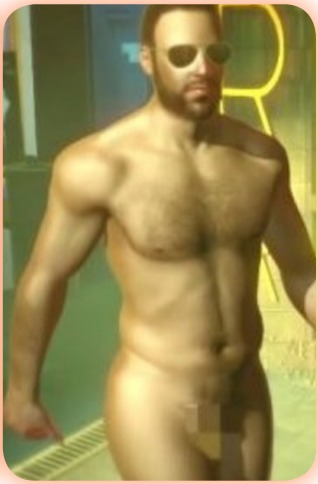
Gay marriage in *The Sims 2* and *The Sims 3* (top), and the classic digital duo with ambiguous sexuality (left).



A male skin texture, in a readable format for programs and algorithms.

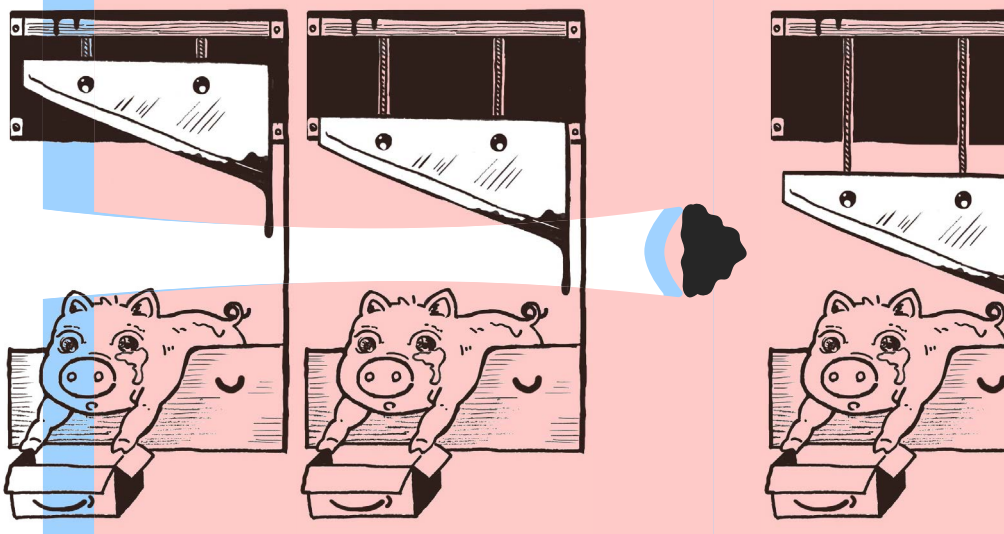
Fan art of Paladin Dance from *Fallout 4* (Bethesda Game Studio, 2015).

Artwork by Tom of Finland.



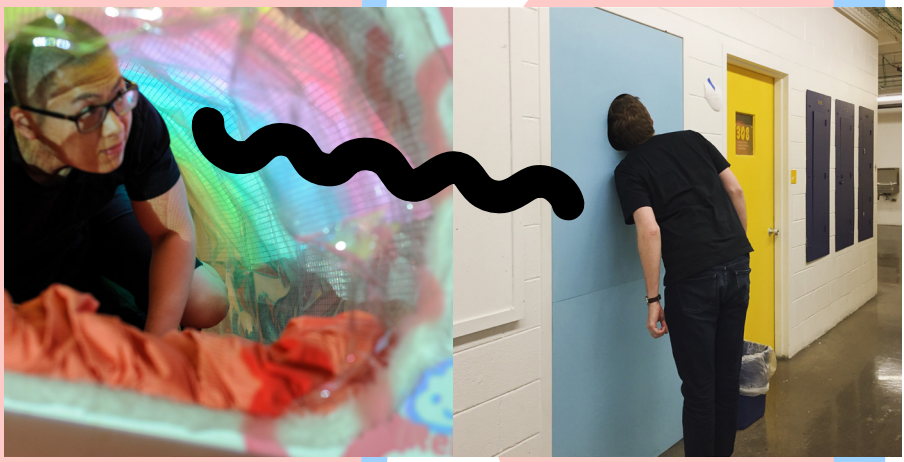
Rinse and Repeat (Robert Yang, 2013).

Although being cute (and girl-ish), in official setting, 87.5% of the Pokémon in the Eevee family are male, same goes for Primarina in Gen. 7.



Process

Process



cute AND bacon

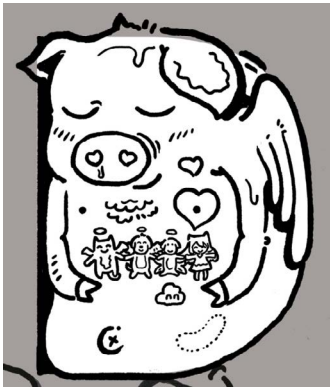
PIZZA

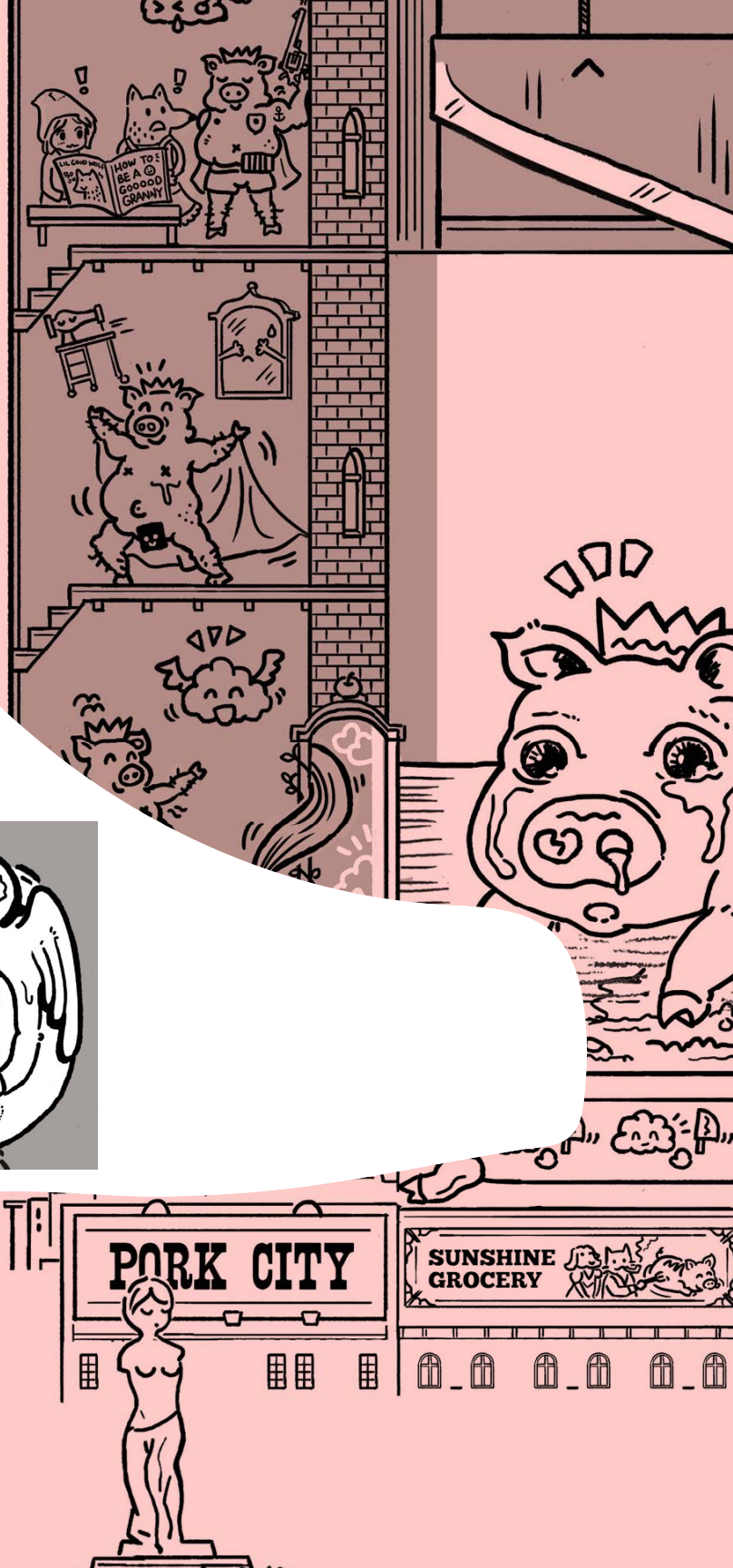
PIZZA

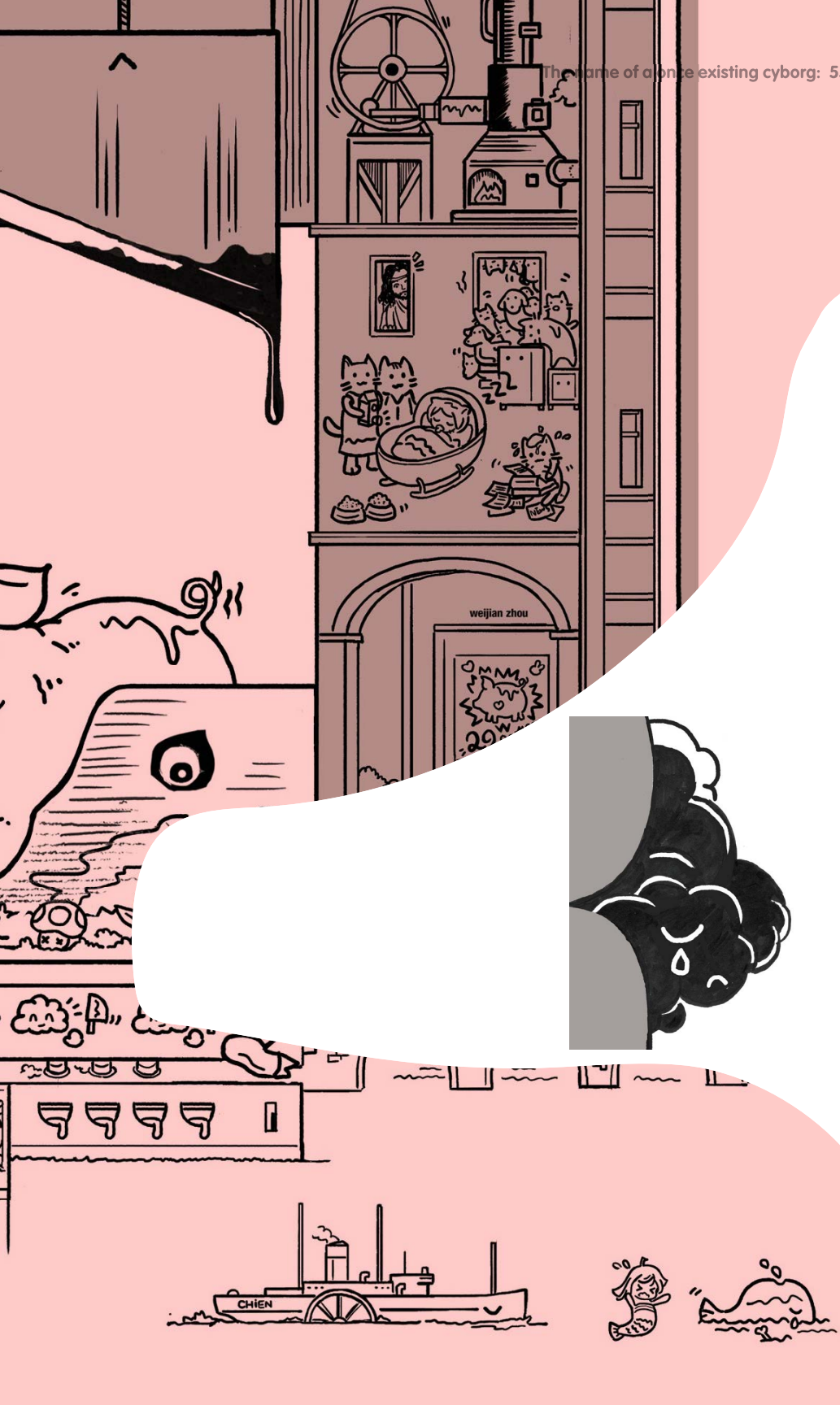
This project is my first major attempt to fetishize objects and graphic design elements through digital drawing. It is a six-chapter visual novel[1] contextualizing the word hungry with my own fictional, imaginary world. The perspectives and narratives are influenced by contemporary illustrator Chris Ware's *Building Stories*, while also drawing inspirations from medieval illuminated letterforms, and Renaissance era murals by Hieronymus Bosch and Michelangelo. The resulting work is presented in six posters—one for each letterform, and the combination of them becomes a multi-threading narrative with simultaneous happenings.

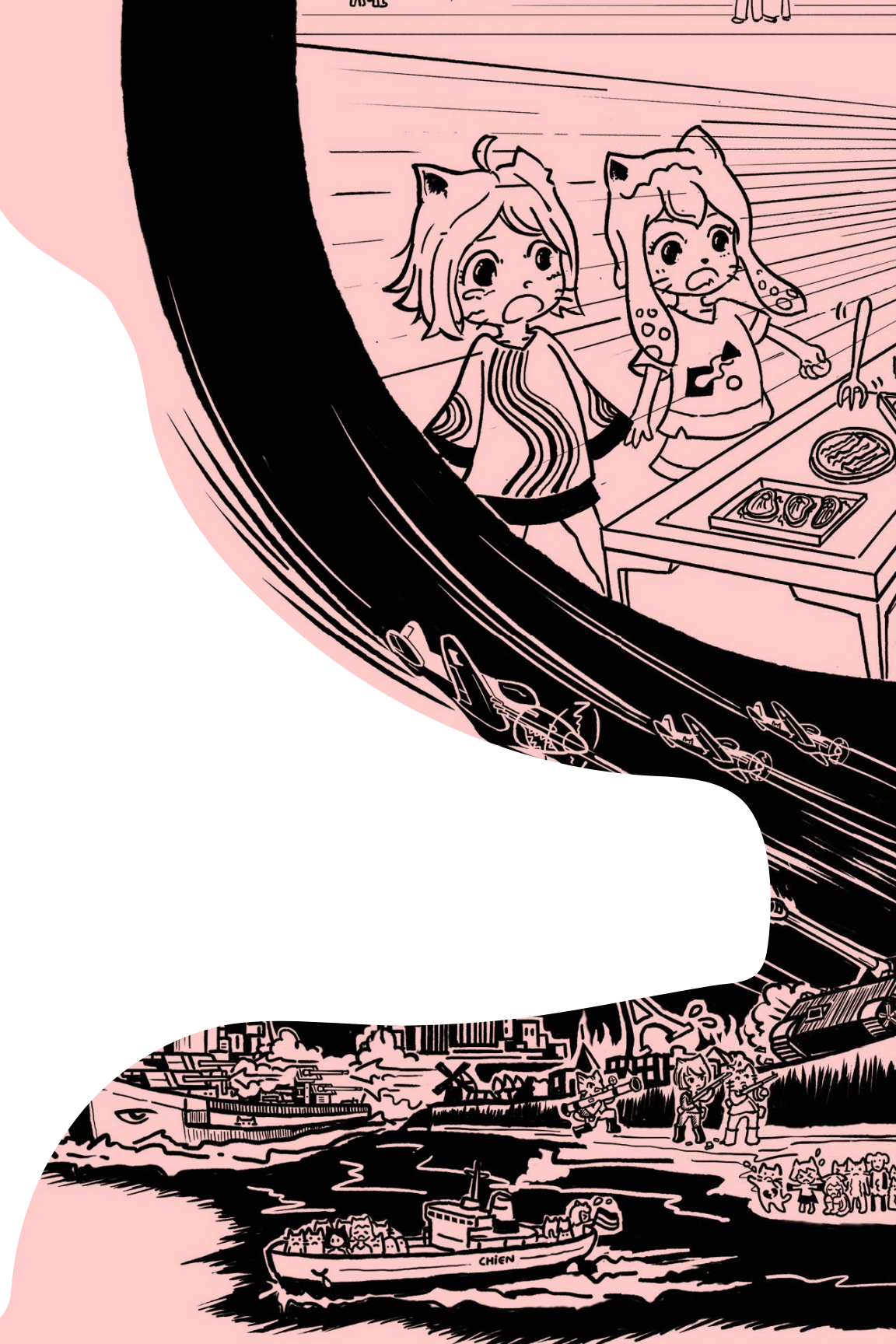
My visual novel loosely illustrates some historical events from French Revolution to modern human society, focusing on resource distribution and the related violences. The story uses one of the most cliché approaches of fetish in video games and anime—featuring cute and humanoid animal characters, such as cat girls. However, I think the unique touch in my use of animal fetish is the combination of cute, ambiguity and a lush, playful but cruel world of alternate realities. The story is silly, provocative, and violent at the same time—it is flavored by playful twists of graphic design elements, fairy tales and social myths. All these conflicting elements are smoothed out by the overall cuteness, amplifying the humanoid animals' figurative presence. Through this project I explored and experimented with the non-sexual power of fetish—to create design works that reach out to multiple fields, other than looking inward. The process of fetishizing objects and bodies—especially through digital methods—is also the construction of a perceivable hyper reality that concords the externals with my own reality.

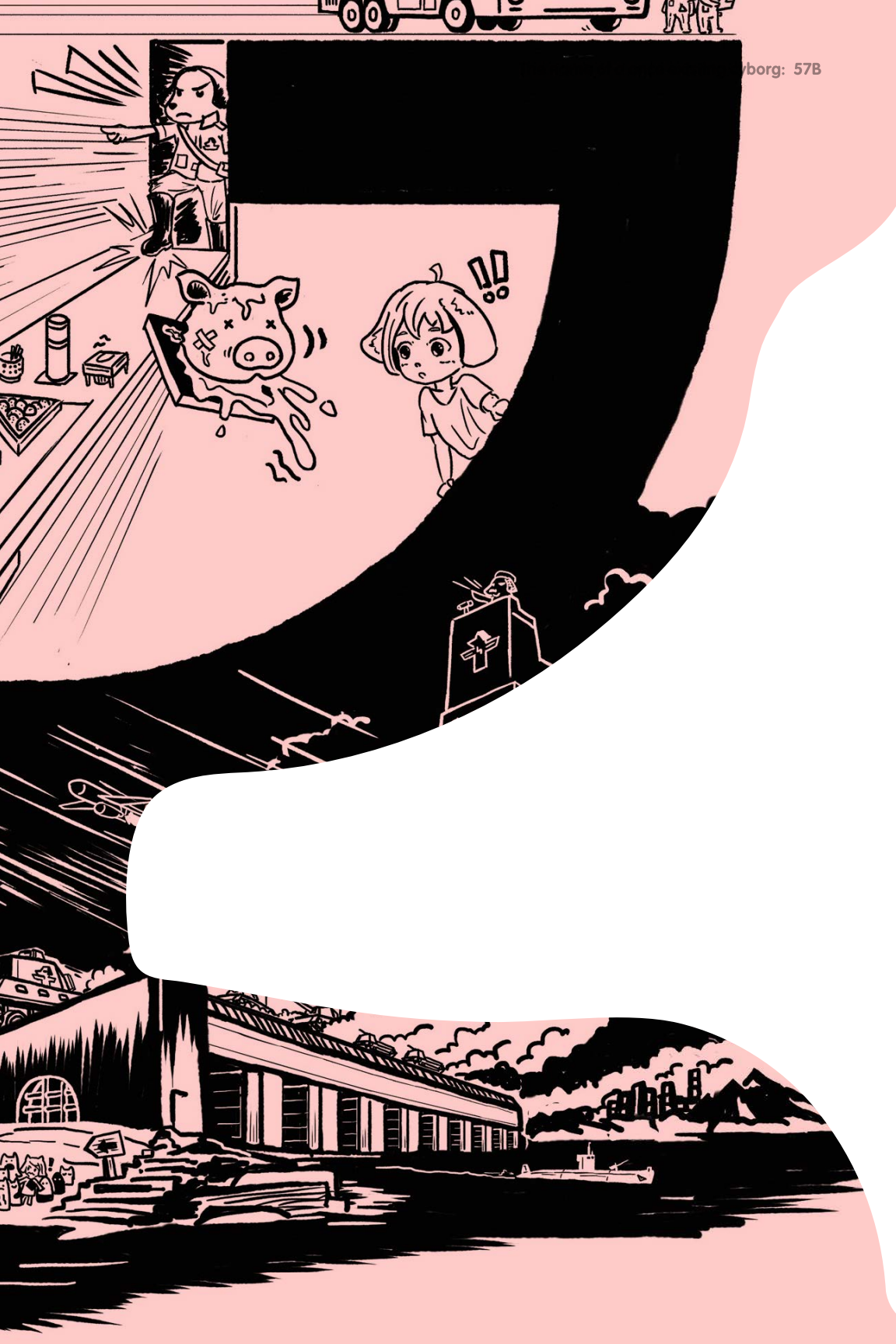
1. The term *visual novel* is usually used to describe a video game category—with many of them being indie games. Visual novel is a very versatile and plastic category in video games as it has no unified or defined play styles, rules and genres. Basically every game in this category interprets the term on its own. But in my opinion, the universality between all visual novels is the involvement of subtlety and varied feelings to build up an emotional journey. The idea behind visual novels is to use flexible combinations of video game formats and rules—point and click, jumpscares, platformer, turn-based, sandbox, etc. to deliver a subjective, and many times sentimental experience about memories, relationships and dramas. Therefore, this is a term that interestingly suitable for describing this project, as it mixes various visual approaches, including illuminated letterforms, graphic novels, illustrations, posters and even motion graphics to deliver the narrative and emotional experience.

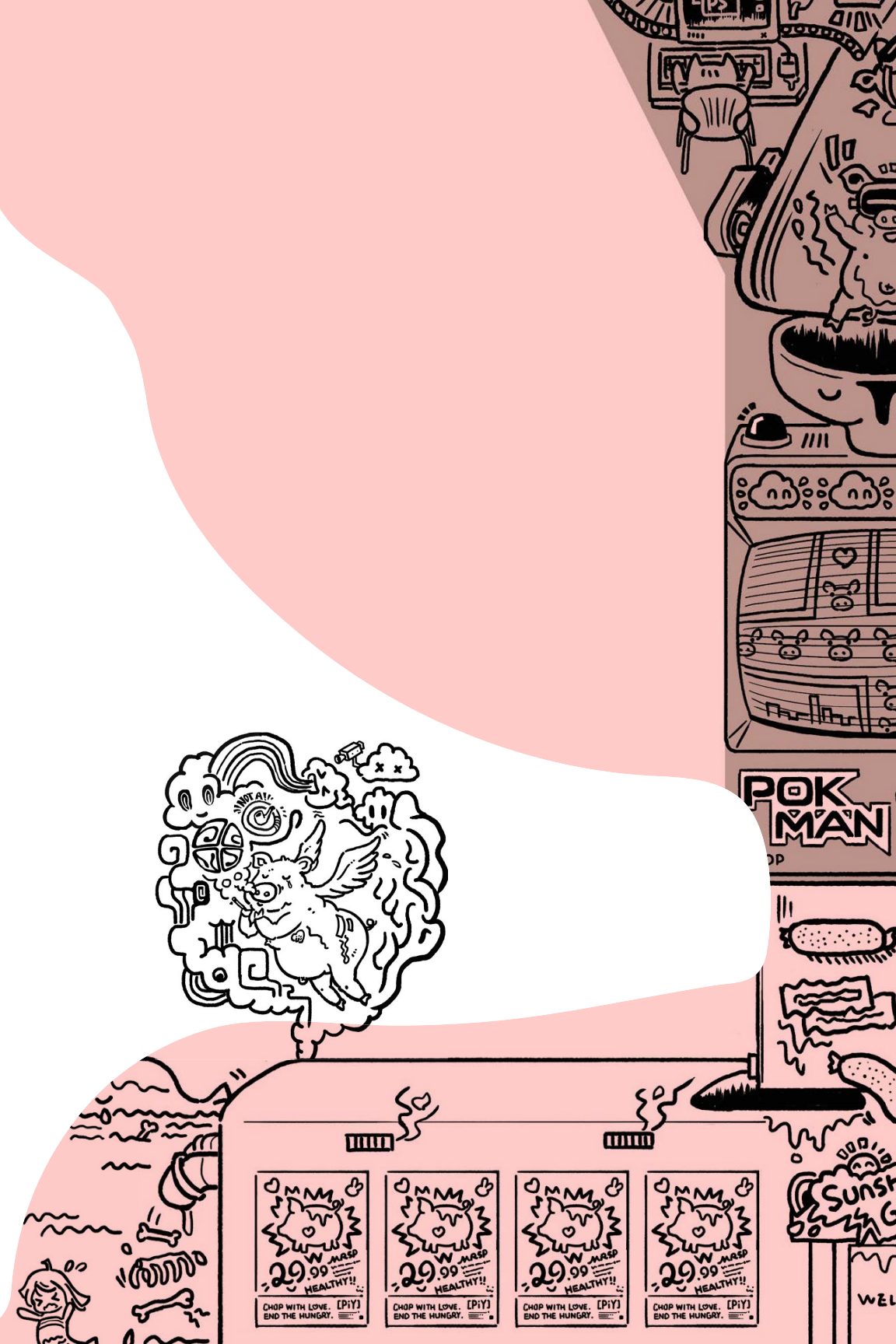



HOW TO BE A GOOOOD GRANNY
PORK CITY
SUNSHINE GROCERY


weijian zhou
CHIEN


CHIEN




POK MAN
29.99 MASP
HEALTHY!!
CHOP WITH LOVE. [PiY]
END THE HUNGRY.

12
WELCOME TO
New Pork City
RAPTURE ISLAND
MEAT
29.99
MASH
HEALTHY!!
CHOP WITH LOVE. END THE HUNGRY.
[PiY]
ROCERY

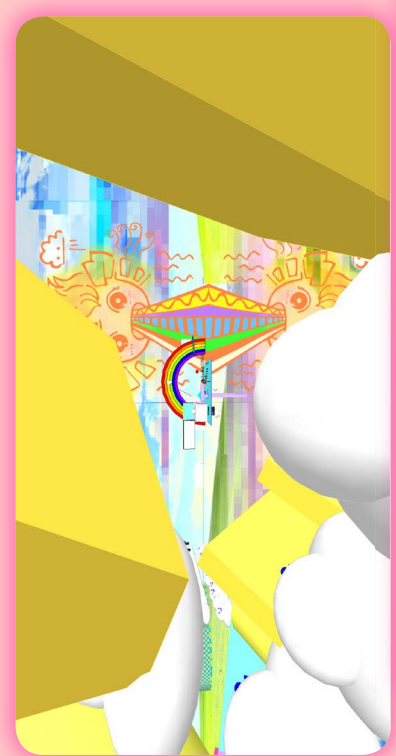
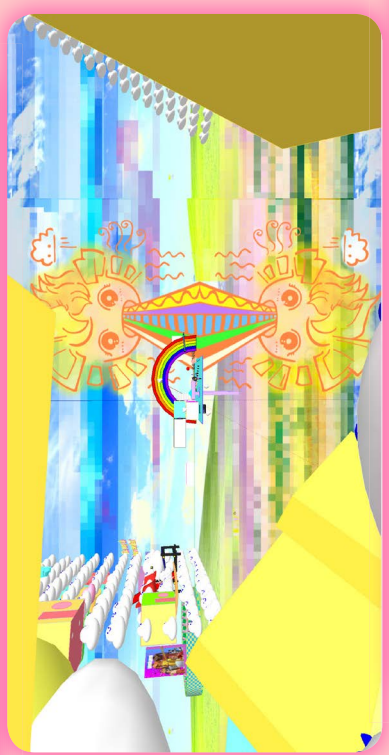
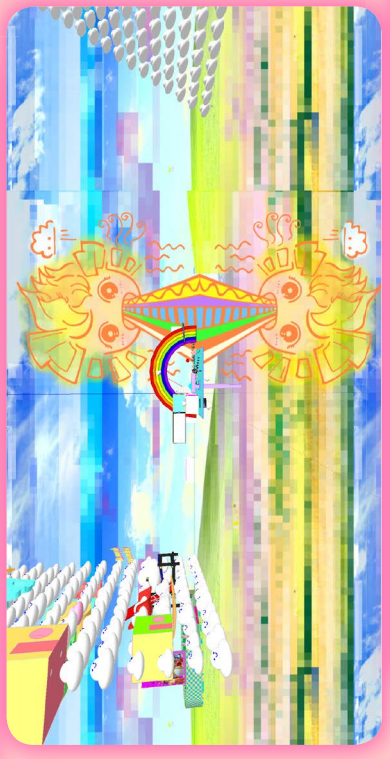
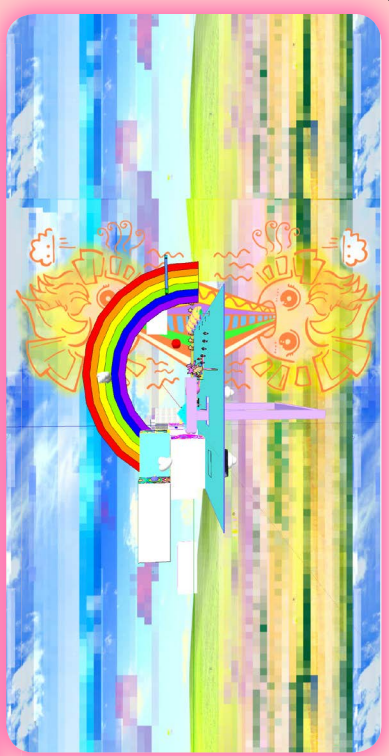
do you still
believe magic

NEED
SWISS

Diet
Food

Seizure Garden centers around the investigation of repurposing. This process disengages objects from their given physical space, meanings and values, in a sometimes ritual and rhetorical process. For me, this approach often involves resurrection and liberation through digitizing. The project started as a personal 3D design playground to deform letterforms, shapes and objects, and generate speculative yet intuitive dimensional posters about emotions. I used *Sketchup*—a software mainly used for architectural design—to create, compose and transform objects, and the workflow of this software defines my repurposing practice.

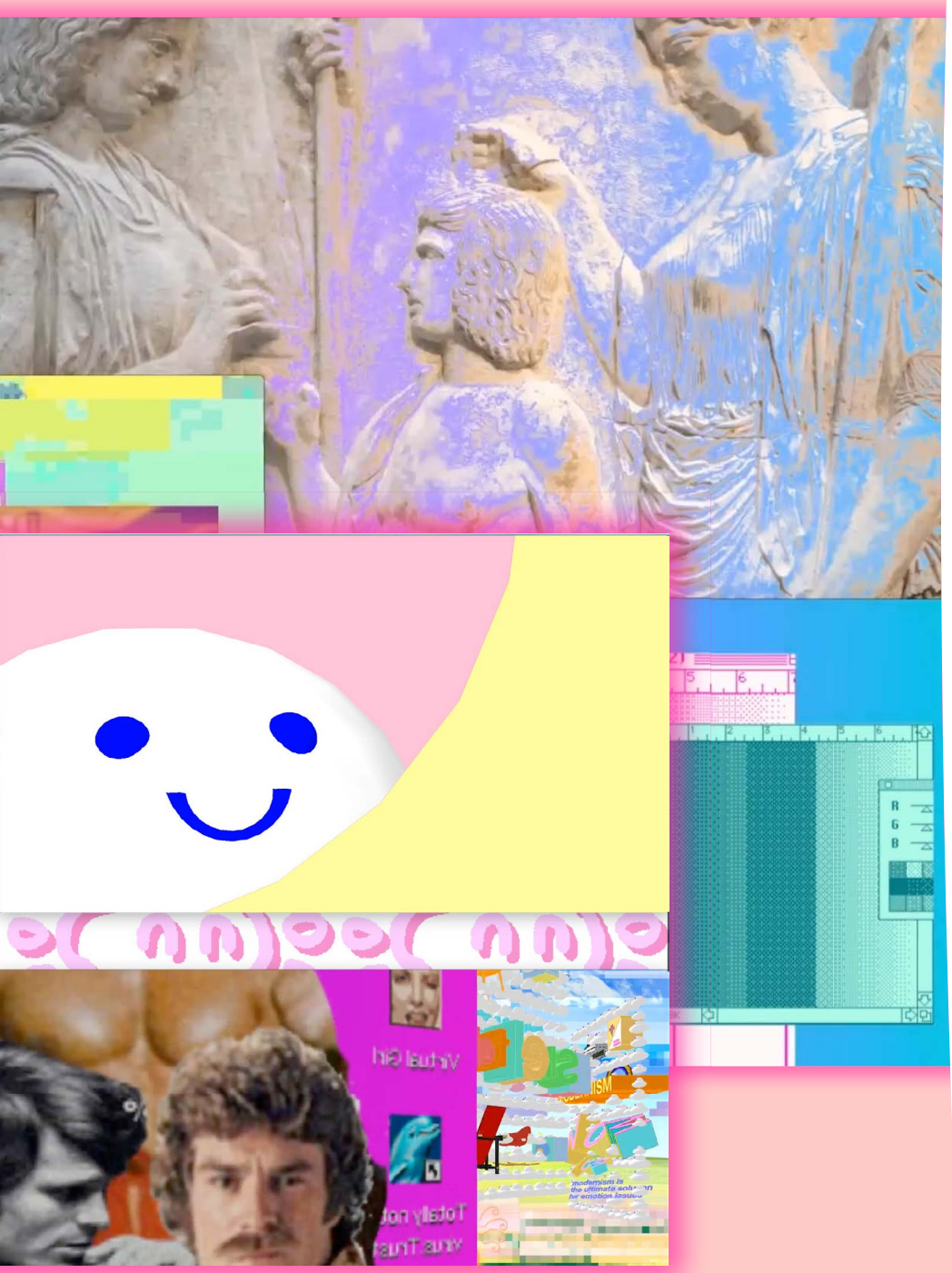
A fundamental feature in *Sketchup* is sharing. The built-in *3D Warehouse* allows users to upload and share their models with others around the world, and create a network of digital objects that can supplement each other. You can browse the warehouse just like looking at a shopping website, and through one-click, the chosen object appears in your own model, free of charge with creative commons license. For me, misusing this feature under the architectural scope of *Sketchup* is both playful and thought-initiating. The digital models of formal, mastery works, such as Le Corbusier's *Villa Savoye*, are now at my disposal for reinterpretation and transformation. The digital body of this villa is in some way freed from the original space, and given eternity in an alternate dimension by being endlessly repurposed. A dream of Vaporwave music can happen in this space, a monument of homosexual clouds can be the function of this space, a princess tea party can take over this space, and even the sci-fi story of *Mies Van der Rohe vs. Corbusier the Concrete Crusader*[1] can redefine this space… In all of these modifications and imaginings, I am neither endorsing nor abusing the original design values of this object, or the image; I am re-identifying it as a plastic existence that is "less a thing than a trace of movement."[2] The process of proliferating forms and purposes of the same object through mouse clicks and keyboard "gives man the measure of his power"[3] which is way too complex and consequential to achieve in physical space.

As a result, the repurposed objects are signs of the artist's desires—in this project as signs of my own desires—to move flexibly in topics of emotion, identity, subjectivity, and often gender. I am using *Villa Savoye*, alongside with *Red/Blue Chair* by Gerrit Rietveld, *Series No.7 Chair* by Arne Jacobsen, *The Farnsworth House* by Mies Van der Rohe and some other Modernist objects to narrate the fetishized visualization process of emotions, misusing visions in modernism and socially constructed masculinity. The 3D models of these modernist objects in some way becomes my own version of AnnLee, as she is a network of multiple forms and purposes between artists. The constant transformation of her body as a dispersed and makeshift collective "holds together through the shared effort of bringing an image to life as a girl who is either rescued or corrupted by Huyghe and Parreno."[4]

1. I made it up myself. It may be one of my future fictional works.
2. Roland Barthes, "Plastic," in *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (New York: Hill & Wang, 1972), 117.
3. Barthes, "Plastic," 119.
4. Warren-Crow, *Girlhood and the Plastic Image,* 72.

Search
Search
do you still
believe magic?



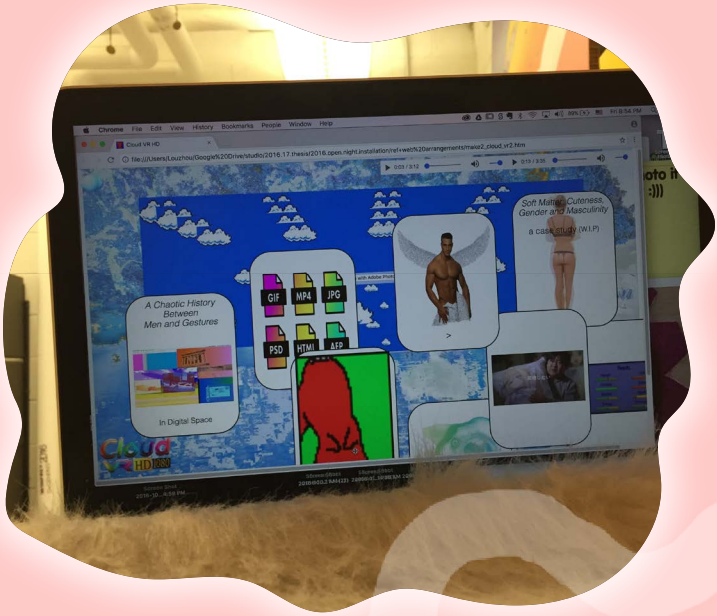
308

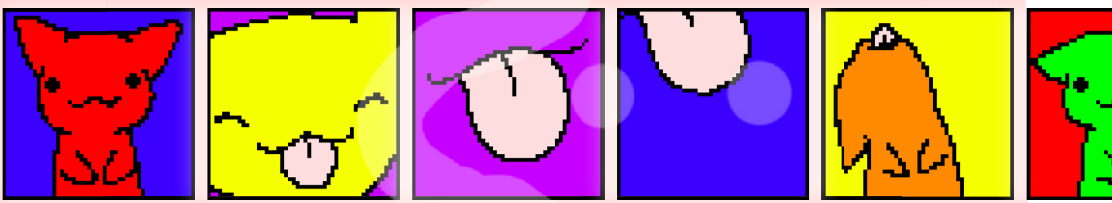
308

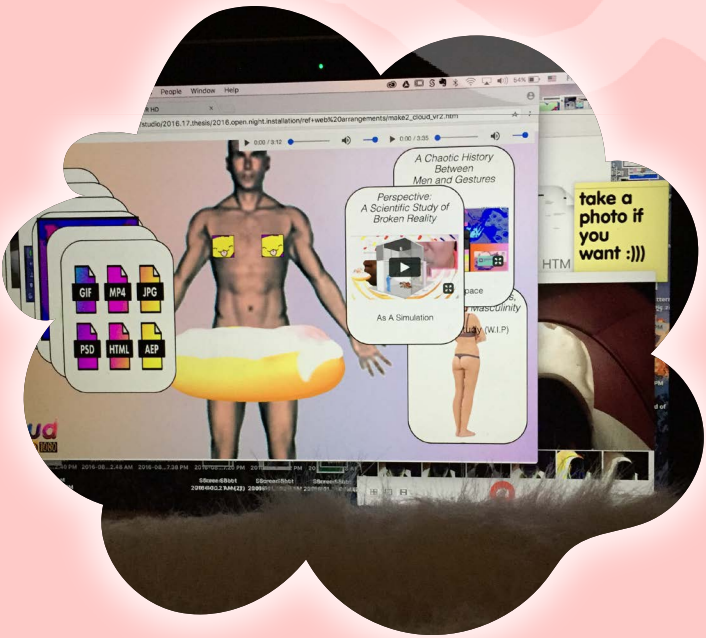
cloud 1080

My aim with this project is to fabricate a disconnected and glitch-like presence in physical space, inspired by virtual reality experiences. People wearing VR headsets are involved in two versions of reality simultaneously—their vision in virtual reality, and their body in physical reality. The differences between these two realities effectively disconnect the VR player from others. VR headsets not only create immersion, but also transform players into performers. I was looking for something to create a low-tech and similar effect, and contemporary video artist Pipilotti Rist's head theaters caught my attention. Aiming for more fetish and furry-like feelings, and ambiguity, my result was an installation centering around a door of an office. The original yellow door was replaced by a pale-blue one, with a fur hood at head's height. Inside the fur hood there is a hole on the door, showing an interactive web page with draggable videos and objects. The draggables include slightly seductive digital bodies, LGBT moments, video game gifs, clouds, glow texts, and rainbow cats. They are performing and licking around the screen, while the viewer can rearrange the hierarchy, composition and intimacy at his or her desire. A camera is also set, prompting that this tiny hood space can also function as a photo booth, allowing the viewer to input images, altering the content of the screen. The webpage is supported by a contemporary house of curiosity as the backdrop, with a collection of printed internet objects and female symbols. The viewers are prompted to stick their head into the hole, while exposing their bodies to the audience behind them.

Compared to conventional VR experiences—which usually have preset content, I believe my setup moves one—maybe a small one but still one—step forward. My collection of objects, including the on-screen and off-screen ones, are adaptable and evolving throughout the show. The viewers move them around and create new content through a photo booth, breaching the isolated individual experiences in VR. They leave information with each other through object arrangements and photos—and even to myself as the designer. The show in some way achieved a result as a collective group project about situational identities, creating an identity for the installation itself. The installation is also a combination of digital space and physical


A Chaotic History
Between
Men and Gestures
In Digital Space
GIF
MP4
JPG
PSD
HTML
AEP
Soft Matter, Cuteness,
Gender and Masculinity
a case study (W.I.P)

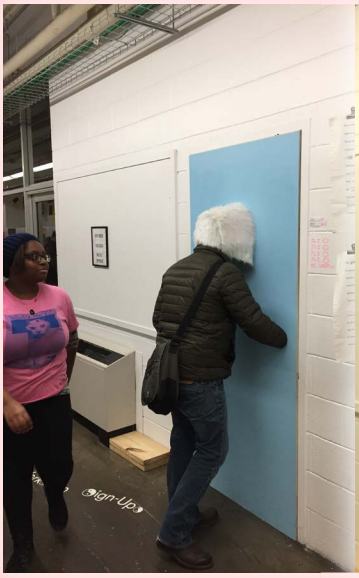
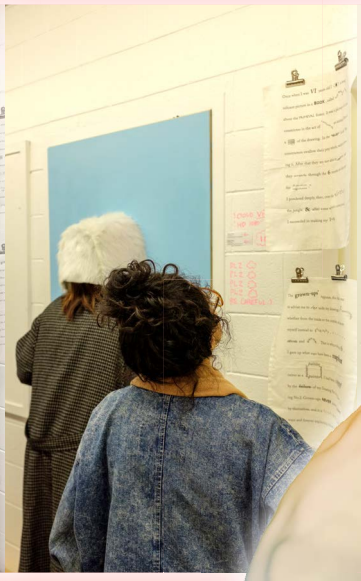


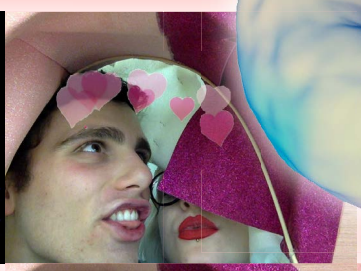
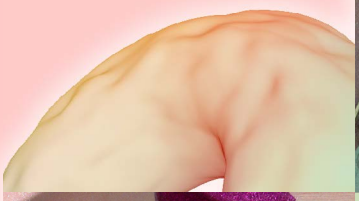

A Chaotic History
Between
Men and Gestures
Perspective:
A Scientific Study of
Broken Reality
As A Simulation
GIF
MP4
JPG
PSD
HTML
AEP
take a
photo if
you
want :)))

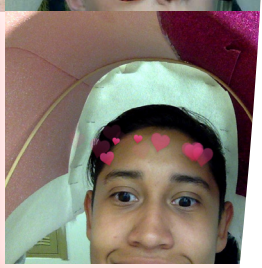
tactility. It allows information to be input and output, giving itself a cybernetic presence. It also envelopes the viewer intimately, allowing a mutual conversation between it and the viewer to extend beyond screens.

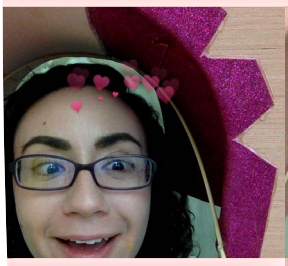
Considering the variety of objects and their collective nature on display, this installation shares some narrative and topic intersections with contemporary artist Mark Leckey's work *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*. In his show the artist curates a network of physical objects varying in age from the medieval to the contemporary. These objects include replicas of the historical originals, duplications of contemporary artworks, and physical visualizations of the images in our hard drives. By doing so the artist dialectically aligns contemporary digital objects to the legacy of the Enlightenment. This process allows him to relate technological advancements to older lineages of emotion, subconsciousness and desire, and deliver the notion that objects can speak to each other across time and space. My installation somewhat touches this topic, as humans—the viewers—are the final factor of forming the narrative, assembling human gestures and residues in the cybernetic space of objects and algorithms. At the same time, the combination of video, physical tactility and emotional affinity in my installation implicitly delivers the idea that all things in the universe are not just alive and communicating with each other, they are also, and always communicating to us.

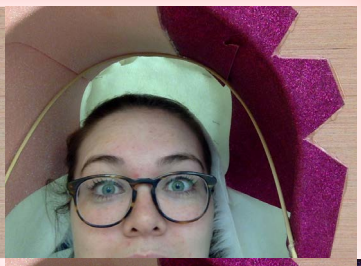
Anyone can look cute, funny and a bit girlish regardless of gender and age; and most important of all, they should be willing to do so. This coincides with the fluid and unstable gender identity in digital space, and extends it into a manifestation through public performance. Anyone can be adolescent girls, circus performers, children of both genders, sexy gay angels, cyborgs, pets, fictional animals, waves of water, and of course, clouds.

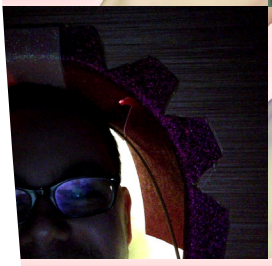

sign-up


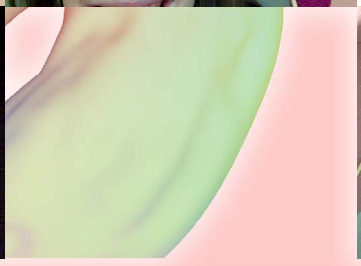













HOMO CLOUDS
SKY STATION MK. 1
TEH MODERNIST RUIN

THE INSTITUTE OF NEW FEELINGS

the
Institute of
new Feelings

My MFA installation The Institute of New Feelings is a fusion landscape with over-loaded amounts of plastic images, centering around the manipulation of human bodies. These include both digital and fetishized bodies, as well as the audience themselves. The space, in coordination with another show next to mine, loosely assembles an uncanny apartment about emotion and identity. The space comes with tight corners, custom furniture, holes, a tunnel, sound clusters, and high-density kinetic visuals. The uncanniness of this space is reflected in the different atmospheres and feelings in each area, while the transitions between them are seamless but absurd. They display conflicting and contrasting presences of cute and provocative, playful and intense, glossy and fleshy, and a whispering rumination of digital death and resurrection. Such combinations, carried out by the materials on video projection and physical objects, become my attempt to illustrate a silly, alluring, and imperfectly awkward presence of plastic identities. Feelings, images and objects are conjuncted—plasticity is applied metaphorically and literally. The overall feeling of this space is zapping between playfulness and intensity, as the audience can initially observe and manipulate digital bodies, but as they proceed through the space, they will be manipulated and unable to change body position, being temporarily subservient to me—the designer of this space.

Upon entering the space, the audience is greeted by a huge 8-foot bean bag with custom printed fabric, and an interactive html-based game resembling a broadcasting room made up of fluffy clouds. The game is developed from the earlier interactive webpage *Cloud 1080*, with draggable objects and stationary parts. The non-draggable, jiggling room displays a looping quasi-commercial video in the back, inquiring audiences about anxiety in digital space experiences. The video asks questions such as "Are you anxious?" "Are you feeling…" "A cardiac unrest inside your ribs?" "A personal apocalypse inside your skulls?" "Fluids pumping in your trembling torso?" and so on, with each question juxtaposed by a looping, low-fi, made-in-*Sketchup* and rudely-animated video cutout. The soundtrack loops "DS Cheep Cheep Beach" from *Mario Kart 8*, contrasting the anxieties with the music's laid-back, childish, tropical-like feeling. This conflicting and dizzying arrangement of objects constructs an overall absurdity, making the projection playful, provocative, serious and mischievous simultaneously.

The video is partially blocked by body parts sticking out from the walls, including eyeballs, hairy legs, a hand making middle finger gesture but with middle finger being cut off, and a piece of green butt wearing Alexander Rodchenko's constructivist glasses. In physical life the process and material for body manipulation are varied, corresponding to different body parts, as plastic surgeries and makeup for faces, apparels for torsos, tattoos and creams for skins, stocks and pantyhoses for limbs, and so on. The surface materials and hierarchies for different areas of skins co-defines the visual symbols resembling our social position. When the materials are messed up, such as putting underwear on the face, fantasies and various accelerants of heartbeats begin to take place. The front layer of this cloud room provides opportunities for the audience to perform such mess-ups on-screen. There are several sets of draggable apparel and other objects, including found gifs, classic graphic design pieces animated and embedded on t-shirts, digital pets and Pokémon, burning boxers, and glow texts, filling out a cabinet for dress-up games with fluid gender identities. The game is performed on a male mannequin. The objects, and the mannequin himself—a white man, can be dragged around and recomposed by an arcade joystick, giving the cloud room a mixed identity between a live broadcast room and a dress-up place.

The mannequin walks forward unendingly, with his steps echoed by the jiggling backgrounds and objects. This tension and speed is intentional. As objects sweat into each other, the audience can catch fragments of a statement, an image on a corner, or several frames from a gif, but they are all fleeting and transformative. Nothing is allowed to be completely stationary nor to remain on the surface, but meanings pile onto each other. The never-ending movements are just like our heart itself, which beats about 3 billion times nonstop until death. Conditions and feelings in this space are momentary, potential happenings and glitches can occur, and diversely contribute to the incompletion of our digital and physical bodies. Our bodies are being developed, halted, expanded, and left to rot at the same time. The webpage may be initially confusing and disorientating, but as the images and bodies begin to merge, the digital dizziness and mess create a space where all plastic feelings are equally valid.

A backdrop of unconventional fantasies and homosexual playfulness is attached to various objects inside and outside the digital screen. The ambiguity between audience, materials and the interactions is prominent in the space. It fuses child-like innocence, girlish tendencies, intimacy and adult fantasies together, discrediting our biological genders with situational feelings. The custom printed bean bag connects the plastic bodies and identities tactilely. The cuteness of this bean bag is visible and huggable, amplifying the sheltering and soothing effects of fabric. By touching the audience, the bean bag becomes the physical extension of the mannequin. When the audience is being wrapped by the prints, the post-internet cute images are more than adolescent, feminine, and childish existences—they become the vehicle for my statements, ruminating and whispering around the audience's body. The bean bag is fetishized in such a process, while the printed fabrics are the skins, the stuffing material becomes the flesh. The audience's identity projection on the digital body can also go into this bean bag, with uncertainty about which part of the digital body this bean bag represents. The ambiguity is also implicitly connected to another body extension—the joystick. The mannequin's groin is blocked by several clouds. If the audiences is patient enough to drag them away, they will realize that the mannequin is actually missing genitalia. Comparing what is missing on the screen and what is being held tightly in the audience's hand is reality. This implication is more than a reward of chuckles; it also vividly demonstrates the various synchronizations between ourselves and plastic identities, not just visually, but also tactilely and many other intuitive processes.

All this contributes to the ruminations on the malleability of the digital bodies, and the involvement of input apparatus that identify them alongside us, making our plastic identities trans-individual. As apparati are being used prolifically, they are more than an extension of the human form, they become inseparable parts of our bodies defining our behaviors. These parts, as contemporary poet and artist Heather Phillipson states, are similar to "prostheses," "…that's how I feel about having a computer at the end of my arm—that it's another limb, another brain, eyes, fingers…and it changes how my body behaves—swiping, tapping, clicking."[1] My hand becomes different tentacles when I am touching different surfaces. My hand is an

eye when I am holding a phone, but it becomes a brush when I am holding a mouse. Plastic identities, as the apparati generate, influence us in physical space. I aim to illustrate this notion further, and the audience is about to put such an apparatus on themselves. They are being defined and manipulated—in a slightly uncomfortable and intense space—in the second stage of my installation.

Drawn from my fascination with holes and the digital void, and with influences from video game narratives, the second part of the installation is a twist on playfulness, switching the audience from an observer to the character that is being manipulated and misused. There is a physical hole in the bottom right corner of the projection screen. The hole has light coming out, and a staircase to encourage the audience to climb in, leading to a body-sized tunnel. Once the audience climbs into the tunnel, they realize there is a top-down video projection, prompting them to change their body position from climbing, to laying and squeezing. The video centers around a simulated experience of death, afterlife, and resurrection. The audience digitally falls into a hole, bounces once, then hits the ground again as they bleed rainbow pixels. After the rainbow, the digital afterlife audience will be greeted by several body-sized 3D dancers performing slightly explicit movements and gay intimacies right on top of them.

There is basically no way for the audience to change direction or body positions other than laying and climbing forward once they enter the tunnel. The audience is being thrown into a digital freefall, killed, resurrected and provoked. They are in "a fall toward objects without reservation, embracing a world of forces and matter, which lacks any original stability and sparks the sudden shock of the open: a freedom that is terrifying, utterly deterritorializing, and always already unknown."[2] This unsettling feeling is amplified by the low-fi setting of my video tunnel, which exposes physical mesh wire that holds the tunnel together behind the clear vinyl, reminding the audience about memories of horror movies, MRI scans, and incinerators. This intense, uncomfortable and challenging experience puts the audience into a vulnerable and interesting position. The visually intense and unsafe experience has no physical consequence, but it is my experimen-

tation in creating physical body glitches. I am literally and metaphorically sending the audience behind a screen—the interactive webpage. Although this upsidedown surface is not a void, it is only partially visible: the video is unavailable to see panoramically, and visions of physical space are trimmed by a tight corner that leads some place else. This physical body glitch is naturally imperfect and awkward, transporting the audience from leisurely players or on-lookers into a provocative position.

Upon exiting the tunnel, the audience enters the last section of the space—a small, private room that can only accommodate two or three people. Inside this room, there is a ceramic cloud sitting on a pedestal, just like a reward for finishing a level in a video game, while concluding and symbolizing the fetish visions in my videos. The ceramic cloud is juxtaposed by a video featuring myself narrating personal connections to, and experiences in, plastic identities. My voice is emotional and slow, contrasting the overloaded, rainbow-colored, fleeting visuals with fluctuating speed. As my voice and image is overlapping, departing, amplifying or contrasting each other, the de-synchronized feeling of them is gradually smoothed out, hinting at a notion of me trying to step aside and review myself. This notion is visualized by a thin layer of translucent fabric hanging in front of the video, creating a ghost image of the projection before it hits the wall. As my voice is transitioning in-between a narrative and a sound pattern, it echoes with the fabric, delivering monumental sensations mixed with chaotic clusters of entropies.

The installation won't be to everyone's taste, and to be fair, it's not intended to be. It is true to ourselves—the explicit, imperfect and awkward presence of the body highlights the gross and fleshy parts behind cybernetic signals. When they are combined, we are acknowledging and exploring our bodies in situational identities that are usually unorthodox and traditionally "othered". I am interested in attraction and repulsion—the tension that can be created from something seemingly cute but also caustic and adult in nature. This tension results in the creation of this exhibition space with double-sided and multiplied surfaces, being the visible, tactile presence of digital bodies and their containers. With all this happening, "the viewer

is no longer unified by a gaze, but is rather dissociated and overwhelmed, drafted into the production of content."[3] These productions produce augmentations of bodies that are playful and malleable, but the double-sided surfaces constantly remind the audience that despite these augmentations, ultimately we can not outrun our biology. What is also happening through the sharing nature of contemporary media, is the augmentations become transindividual. They come together to create a sensation that explores how technology—and the human body—digest and leak information. We are trying to upload, transcend and share our individuality, as a way of spreading and gaining digital immortality. In return, the augmentations begin to define us.

My installation lands a successful hit on the first stage of the experience—namely the bean bag and the interactive web page with "ecstatic surfaces"[4] assembling a candy-colored adult playground, while the second and third stage can be improved with future revisions. More explorations about materiality that transcends absurdity from screens to physical objects can be done, highlighting a more rough and abrupt transition in physical space. Also, the last two stages feel a bit too leisure considering the visual tension and provocativeness I aim to deliver. They can benefit from a narrower, darker, more dungeon-like and gritted setup, releasing more unsettling and unsafe feelings to the atmosphere. These current compromises are partially due to the time and budget limitations for the installation; but also, as a person coming from a design practice background, I am still exploring repurposed objects and materials that can glitch and transcend my topics from screens to physical spaces.

Overall, by creating this exhibition about plastic identity, I am trying to use my personal design language to speak out, calling for a broader discussion about our very own existences. In times of public uncertainty concerning the physical and spiritual dizziness brought by pluralistic models of realities and speedy media, it is appropriate to infuse design—especially graphic design for me—with bodies, fetish objects and gender identity. To investigate this hyper-saturated sensational reality, I personally think we must first embrace, dwell, and immerse ourselves in it. Design is inseparable from media

and communication, and designers are being encouraged to face wicked problems, in an attempt to explain our environment and society. At the same time, it is also important to explore our place in the environment and society. More broadly, I am trying to narrate and investigate an important question: what is the human residue in communication that is defined by cybernetic bodies and containers? Or, what is the boundary of self when we are switching between different versions of alternate identities? The resulting exhibition investigates this while presenting a review of our state of existence. It may make the viewers slightly uncomfortable. The exhibition, as an open-ended experience, may not feel like it is providing answers, but in the process of deliberation, I try to strike at an empathy that pierces the chaos. A meaningful life is only ever an approximation—my installation "celebrates humans as complex, messy, conflicted, multitudinous, bawdy and gross,"[5]—that's what connects us all.

1. Helen Tope, "Art Review: TRUE TO SIZE by Heather Phillipson," accessed January 2017, https://plymouthartscentre.org/art-review-true-to-size-by-heather-phillipson/.

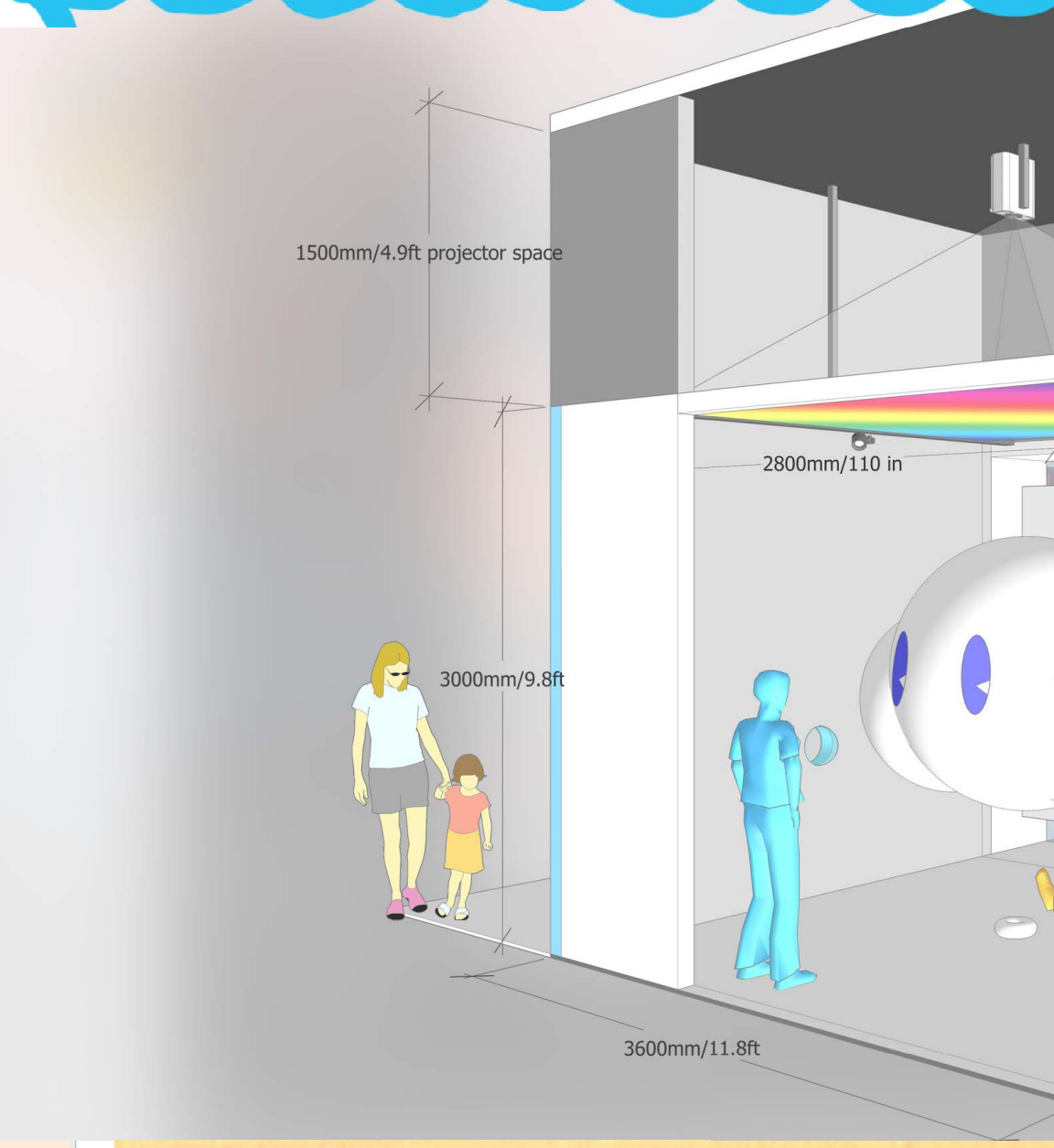
2. Hito Steyerl, "In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective,"in *The Wretched of the Screen* (New York: Sternberg Press, 2012), 28.

3. Hito Steyerl, "In Free Fall," 27.

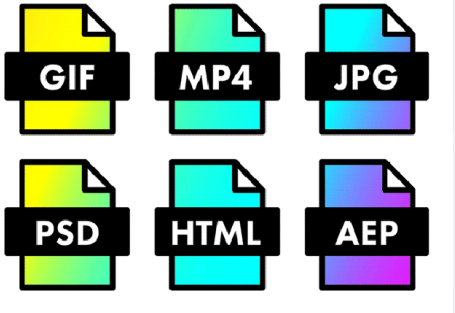
4. *Ecstatic surface* is a term used by Dutch independent graphic design duo Pinar&Viola in their manifestation. Their work frequently involves hyper-detailed surfaces filled with colossal visual gestures, excessive embellishments and conceptual decorations, in an effort to make their work sync with the overloaded contemporary visual culture. http://blog.logomagazine.com/post/91653323325/pinar-viola-interview

5. Camille Henrot, project statement in "Minor Concerns," accessed January 2017, http://www.camillehenrot.fr/en/work/80/minor-concerns

initial ceiling projection concept



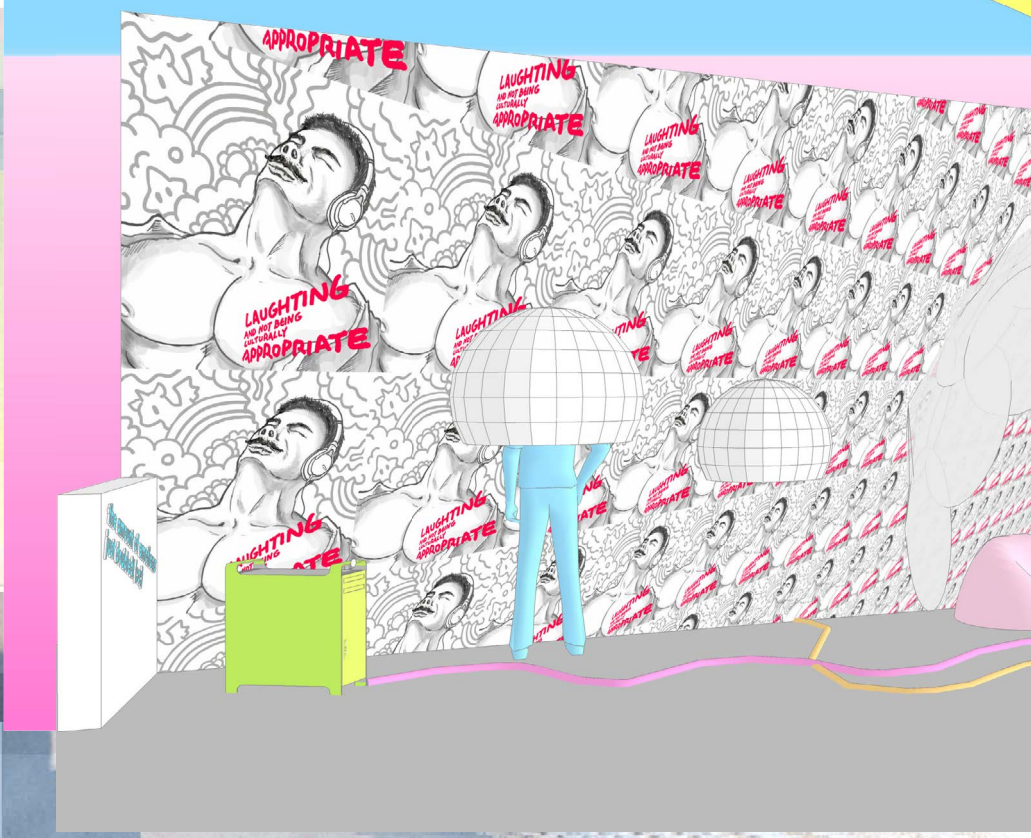
museum of
contemporary
clouds
7950mm/26ft
3500mm/11ft


GIF
MP4
JPG
PSD
HTML
AEP

video dome concept

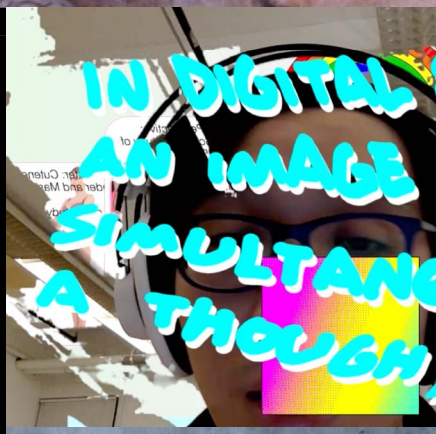
LAUGHING
seems like some ppl dont like the feminine
in the new pocket monster game...
u mean, there is no harm in jus letting a cute thing be cute...
so wat if...
people are not only mad about the lack
likelihood that their girly starter will pro
they are being inconsistent and want t
don't like interchangeable gender mate
appearance.

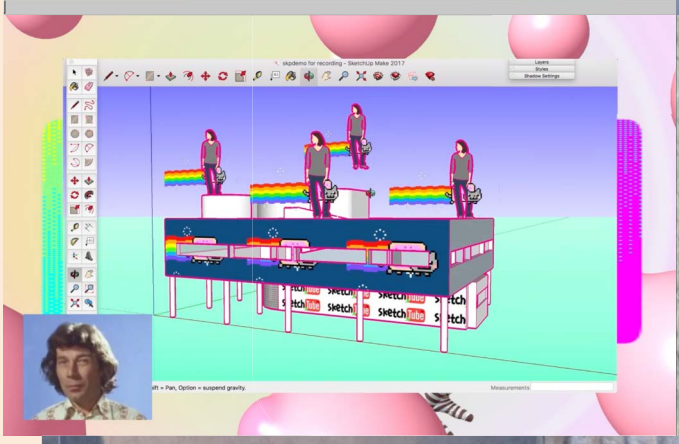
video dome concept

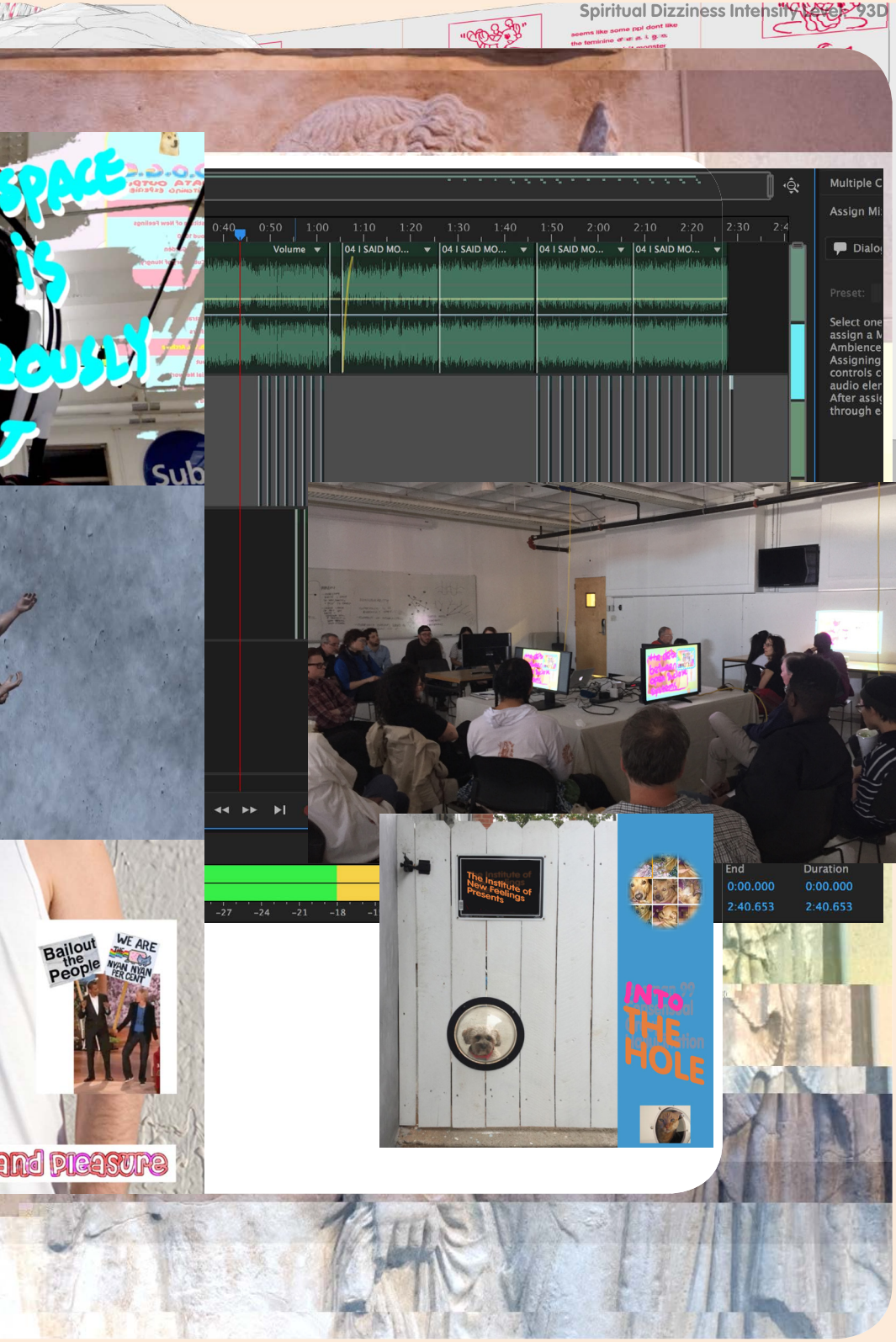


seems like some ppl dont like
the feminine
in the new pocket monster
game...
"
"
THE SANCTUARY OF
SOFT FEELINGS
OF A
CUTE
PLANET
not only mad about the lack of genc
the girly starter and/or later becor
at their girly starter will probably be
ng inconsistent and want to make e
erchangeable gender materials anc
there is no harm in
cute thing be cute...

Into the Hole video stills



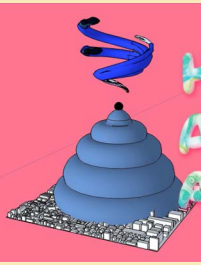



Spiritual Dizziness Intensity Level: 93D
SPACE
IS
ROUSLY
Volume
04 I SAID MO...
Multiple C
Assign Mi
Preset:
Select one
assign a M
Ambience
Assigning
controls c
audio eler
After assig
through e
End
Duration
0:00.000
0:00.000
2:40.653
2:40.653
The Institute of New Feelings Presents
INTO THE HOLE
Bailout the People
WE ARE NYAN NYAN PER CENT
and Pleasure

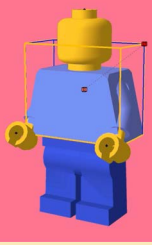
Into the Hole video stills

ng with pride and pleasure

Cloud 9 tv
Late nite special...

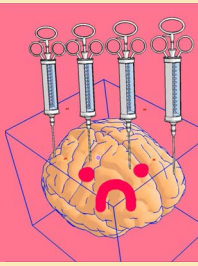


Hi!
Are you
Anxious?



fluids
pumping
in your
trembling
torso?

bloods
being mixed
with
electronic
signals?



ten greasy
(and usually
broken)
cellphone
screens;

teh
Endless...
Page
scrolls

teh
voyeuristic
digital
fan-arts;

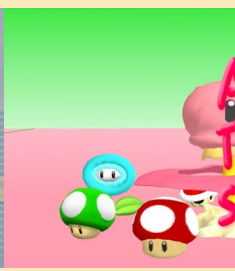
the
utopian
online
communities;

the
over-
stimulated
sensorium;

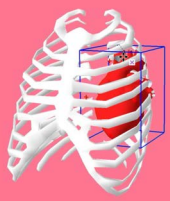
teh
everything
of
late-late
capitalism;

girlish
and
plastic.

until we
don't
own them
anymore.



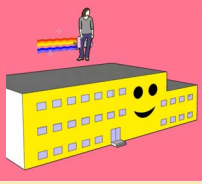
re
ou
eling...



A cardic unrest inside your Ribs?

A personal apocalypse occupying your skull?

arious
celerants
eing injected
to the
Rain?

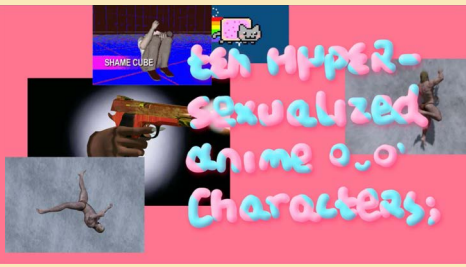


Are you in a love-hate relationship with your ...

multiple, Pointless, Plastic, and overwhelming body extensions, Like...

e
dictive
ash
deos

teh time-consuming video games



teh hyper-sexualized anime o_o' Characters;

h
er-lively
ternet
ts!w!;

the hyper-fetish commodities;

teh oversaturated surfaces;

hey are
unching
oles
our bodies.

feelings flux in context;

awkward and glitched,

AND YESSS!
HERE IS :NO:
SOLUTION

pizza space plastic dips

communicate! :) teh future of talk = pizza + mind = s
:) :) :) :

Spiritual Dizziness Intensity Level: 99D

Space and Time is Late Nite Special~ is CHEESE

Pepperoni 2:99

Cheese

Pizza

Sets

Stop it, everybody is covered in pizza

What a load of pepperoni

Pastes

Good

Pizza

Good

Pizza

Good

Pizza

pizza space plastic dips (details)

Spiritual Dizziness Intensity Level: 101%
Eat cookies
It tastes good
Everybody is covered in
that kind of boat
of color
Now I have
good

Interactive website

18+

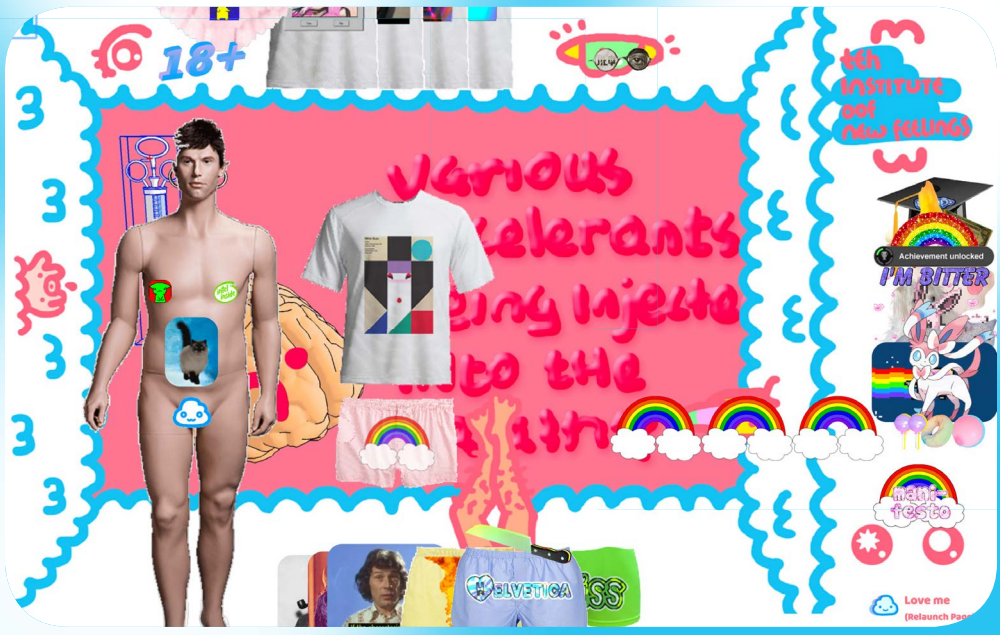
Spiritual Dizziness Intensity Level: 103D

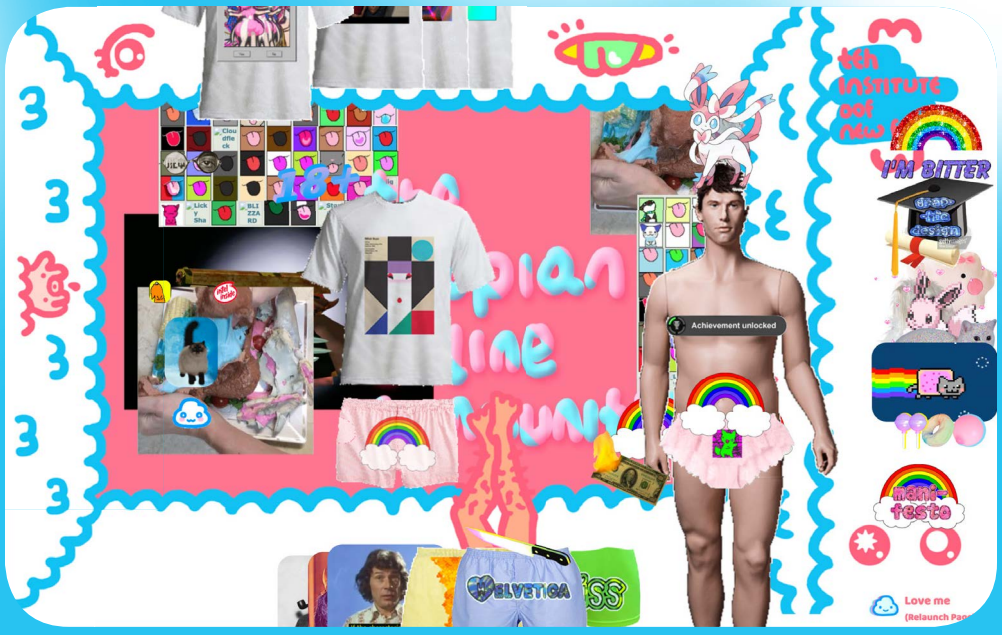
teh INSTITUTE oof new FEELINGS

mani-festo

Love me
(Relaunch Page)

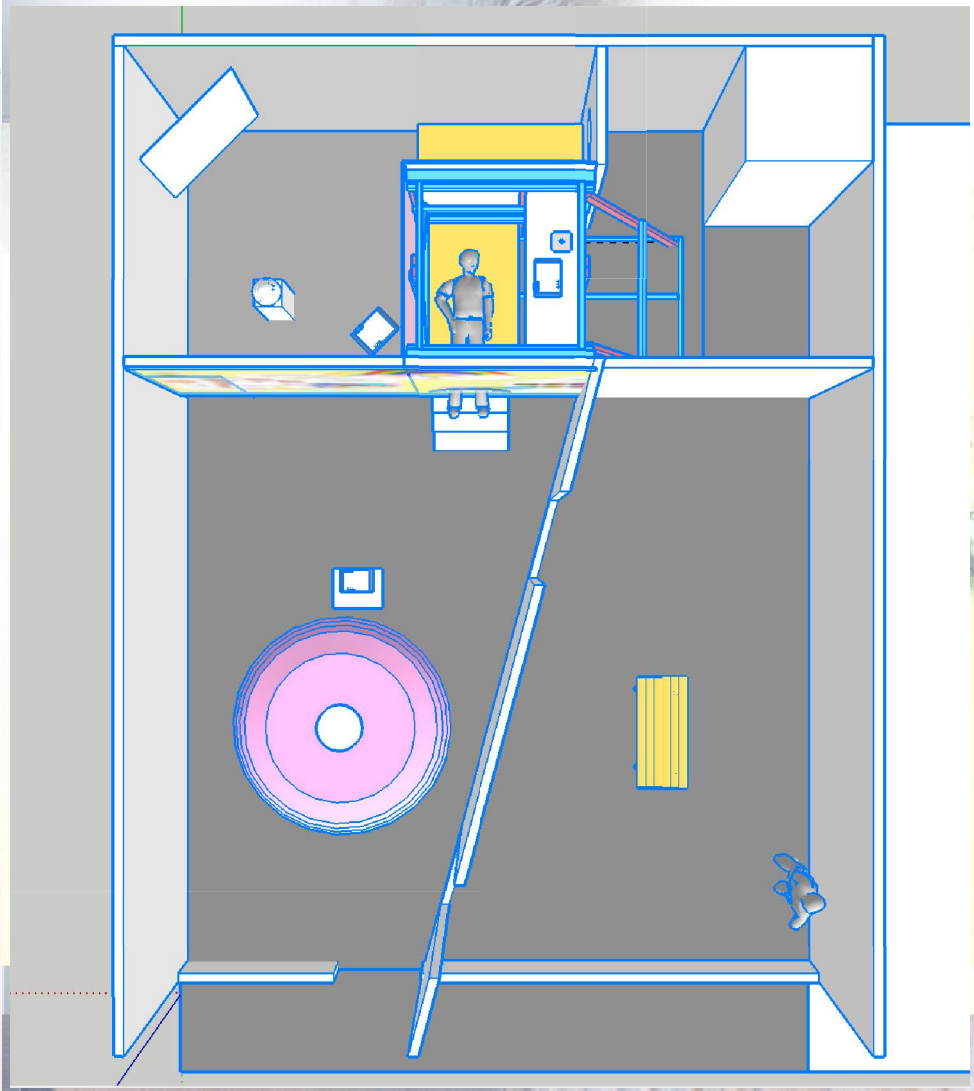
Interactive website

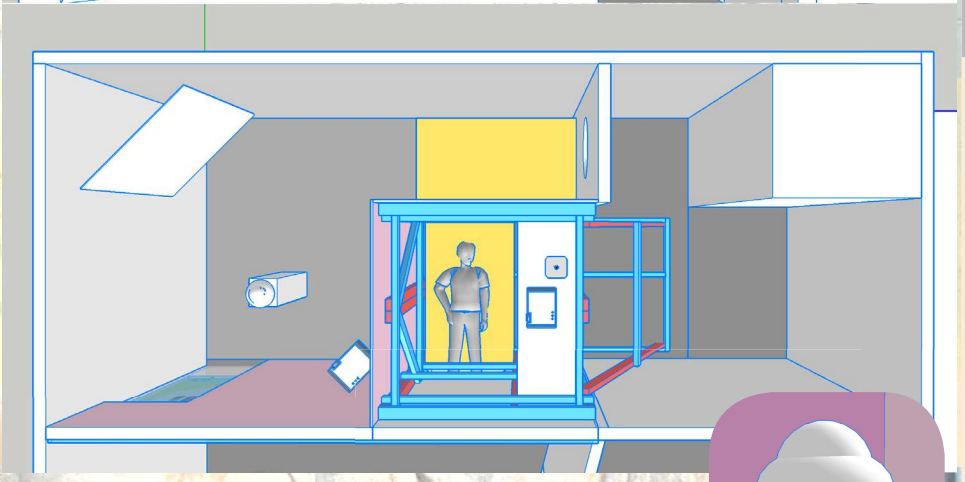



Achievement unlocked
I'M BITTER
manifesto
Love me

Manifesto
I'M BITTER
manifesto
Love me

final space plan




bottom
Line

the Institute of new feelings

interactive website & beanbag

ARE YOU FEELING
tch INSTITUTE OOF NEW FEELINGS
Achievement unlocked
I'M BITTER
Love me (relaunch Page)

18+
teh time-
consuming
video
games
teh
INSTITUTE
OOF
NEW FEELINGS
Achievement unlocked
I'M BITTER
Love me

teh INSTITUTE OOF new FEELIN
Achievement unlocked
HELVETICA
Love me

EPSON

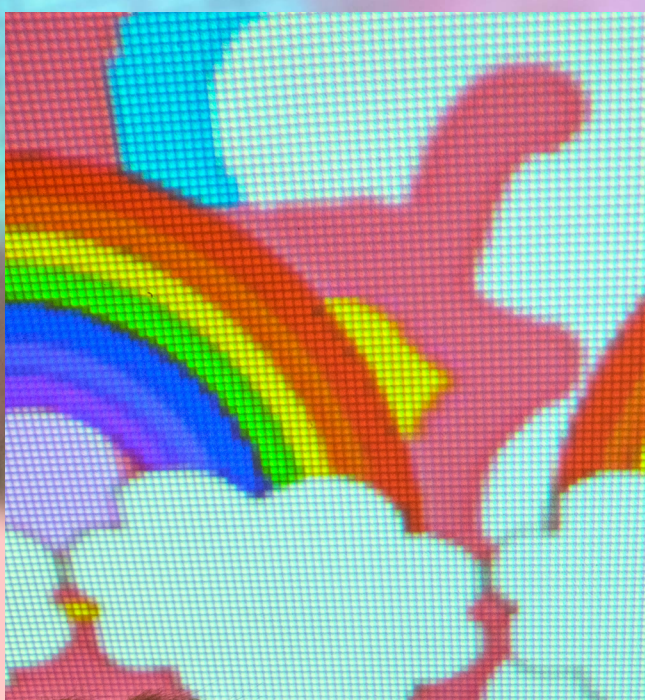
Spiritual Dizziness Intensity Level: 115D

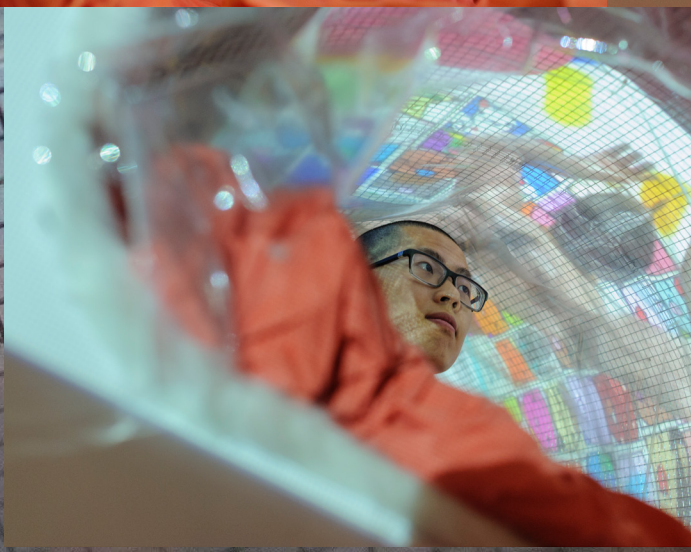
dead
this
design
HELVETICA

mani-
festo
Love me
unch Page)

the Institute of new feelings

tunnel structure





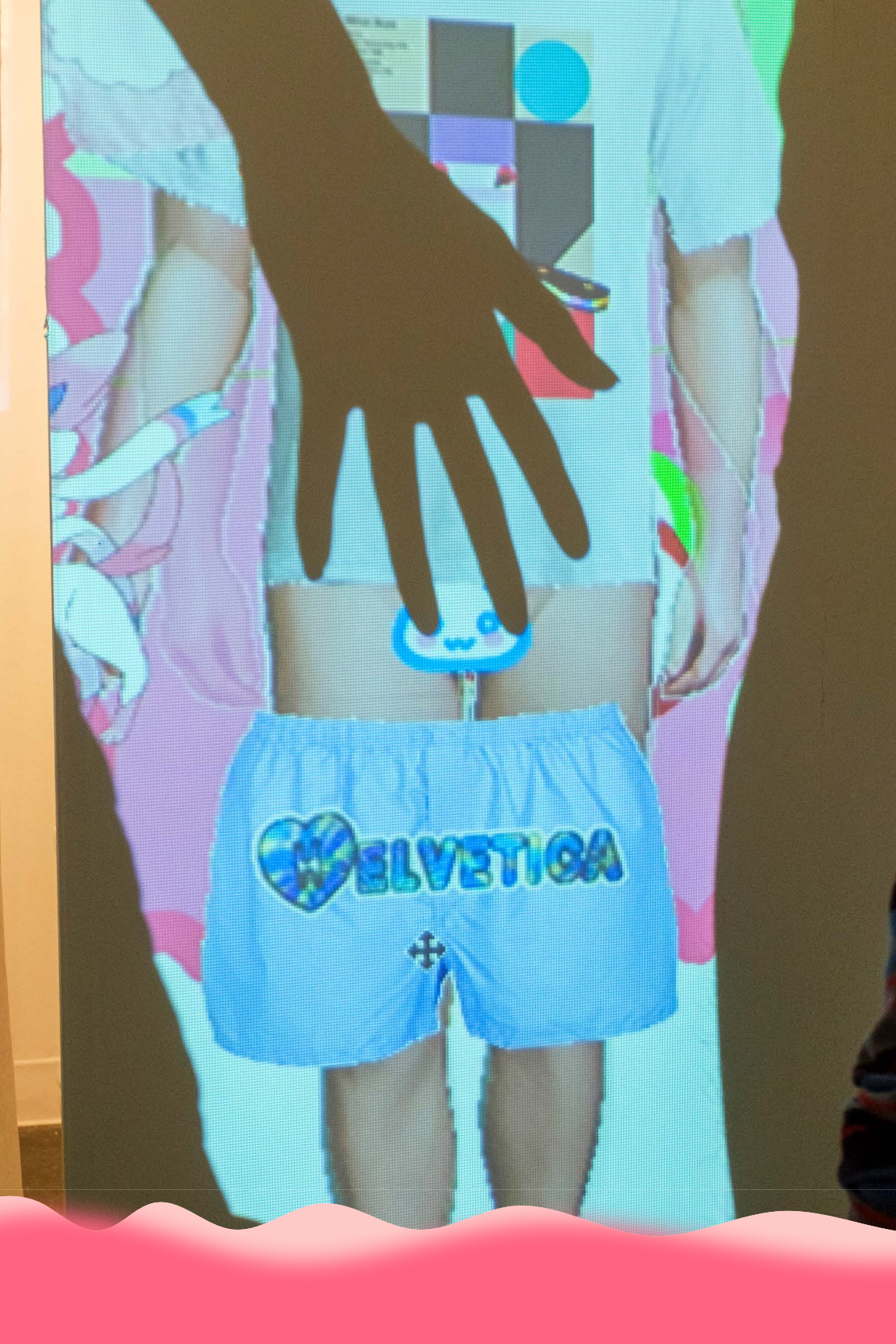
Spiritual Dizziness Intensity Level: 121D

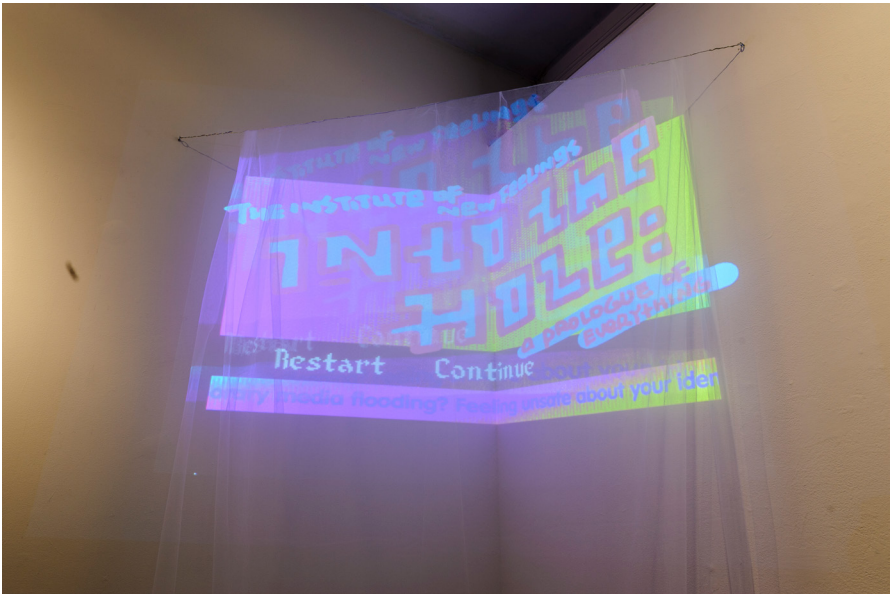
In the age of pluralistic realities
A public uncertainty will rise
We're doing anything but a static surface

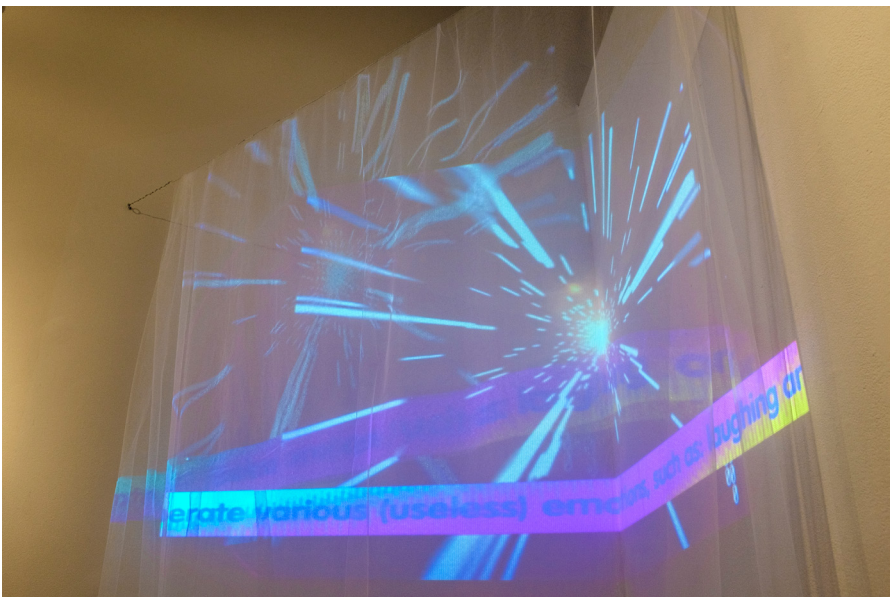
Spiritual Dizziness Intensity Level: 123D

the institute of new feelings

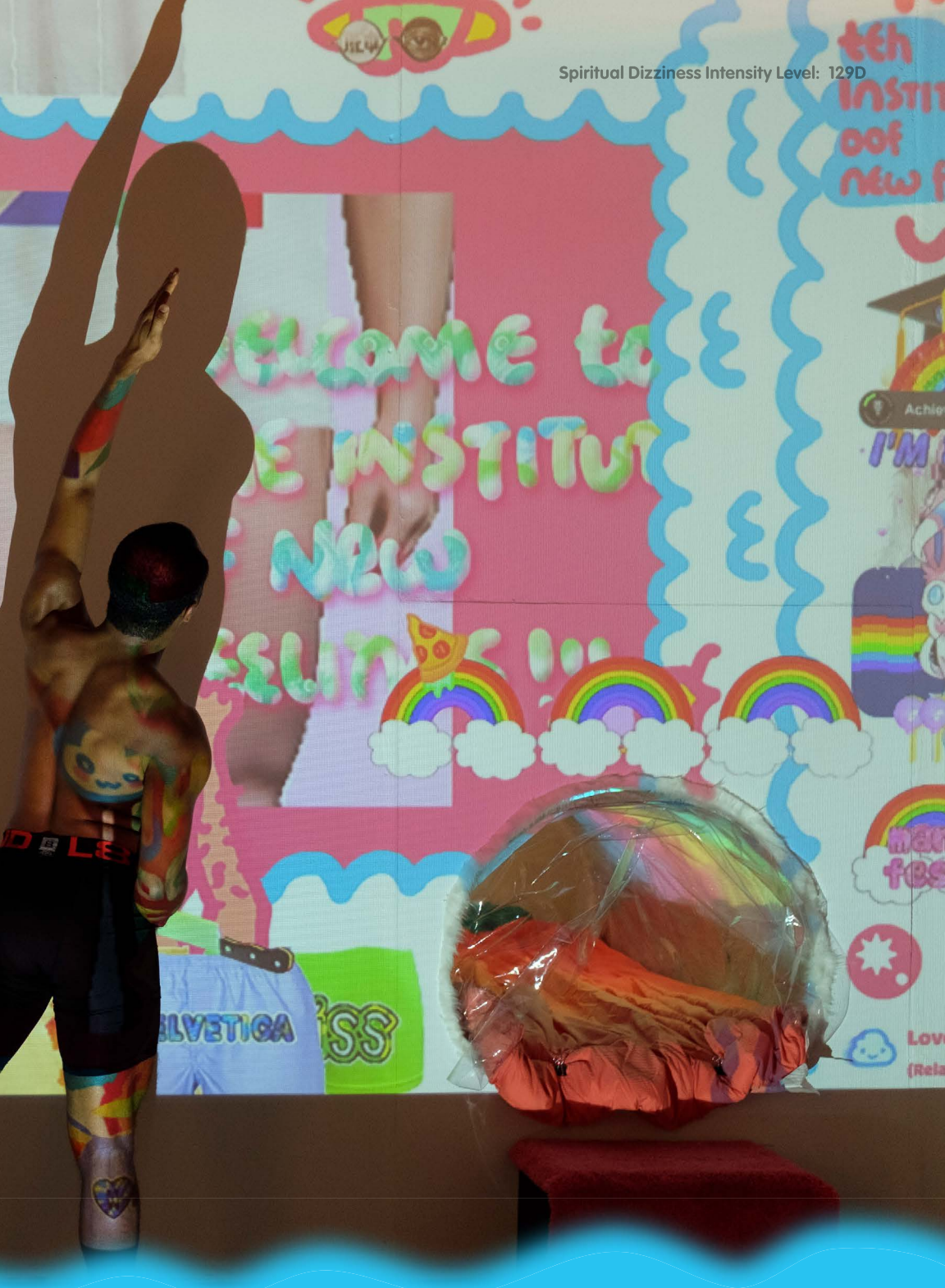
cloud room


ELVETICA


Restart
Continue

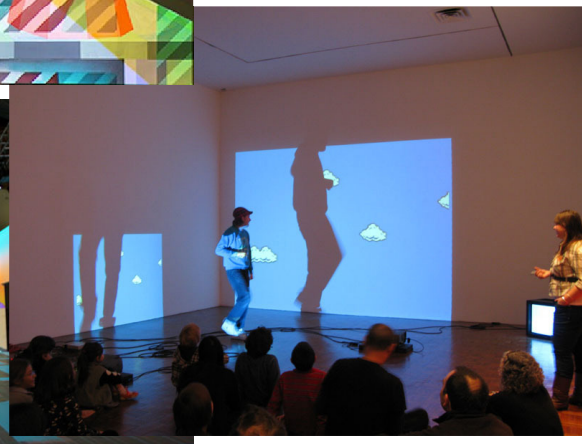


18+


Spiritual Dizziness Intensity Level: 129D

THERE IS NO

Visions from Alter-
nate Dimensions
(Precedents)

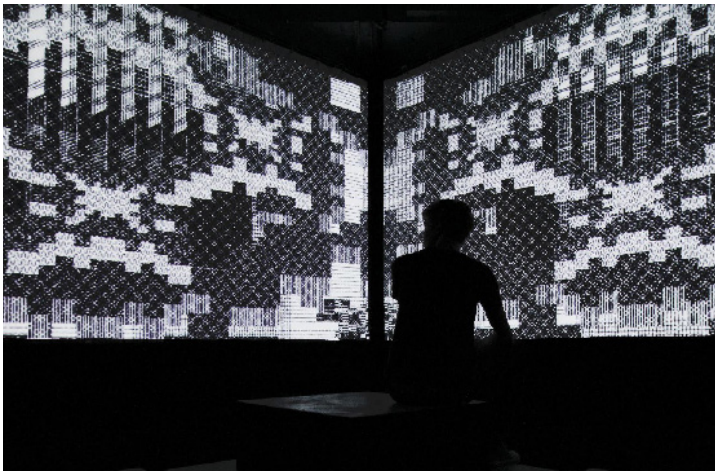


Ben Jones
Video Paintings
2012–current

Animation artist Ben Jones turns his still paintings into happening performance surfaces, by overlaying projection signals of red, green and blue lights on them. Ben Jones is also the founder of Paper Rad, a pioneer experimental studio in creating digital video arts and midi musics.

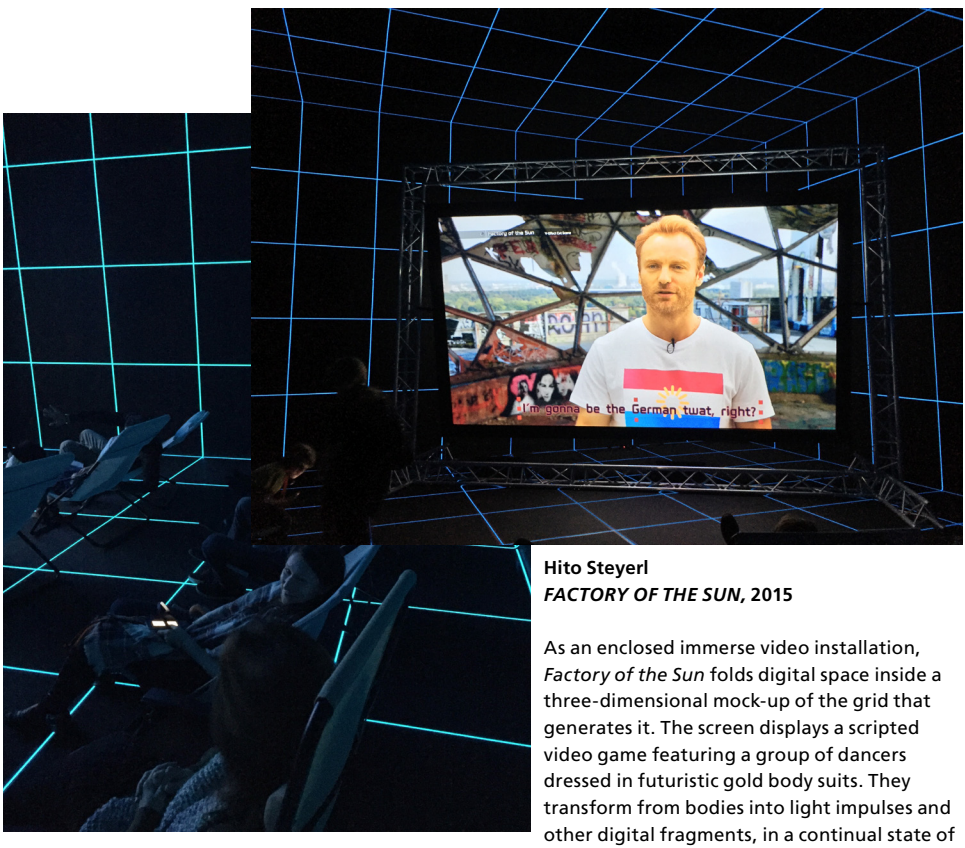
Cory Archangel
***Super Mario Clouds,* 2002/2009**
***Super Landscape,* 2005**

Cory Archangel is one of the pioneers in turning video games into emotional experiences, abstract memories and political acts, through hijacking classic Nintendo consoles and cartridges.



Peter Burr
***Cave Exits,* 2015**

Cave Exits is a 4-channel video cube structure. By recalling the way we interact with online media—clicking, zooming, scrolling— but taking away the control devices, it turns the visual archetype of screen viewing into a circuit board for lost, anxious feelings.



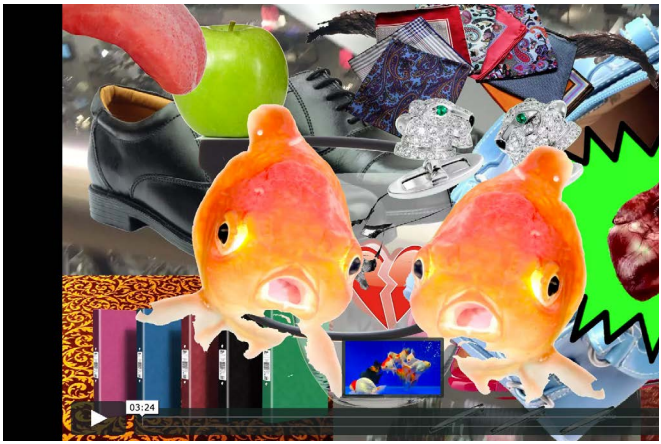
Hito Steyerl
***FACTORY OF THE SUN*, 2015**

As an enclosed immerse video installation, *Factory of the Sun* folds digital space inside a three-dimensional mock-up of the grid that generates it. The screen displays a scripted video game featuring a group of dancers dressed in futuristic gold body suits. They transform from bodies into light impulses and other digital fragments, in a continual state of regeneration and renewal.

Joan Jonas
They Come to Us without a Word **(top), 2015**
Volcanic Saga **(bottom), 1989**

Joan Jonas is an American visual artist and a pioneer of video and performance art. She investigates notions of gender, narrative and the concept of experience and space. Her work features sculptural compositions and forms being translated into videos, narratives and other happening media.

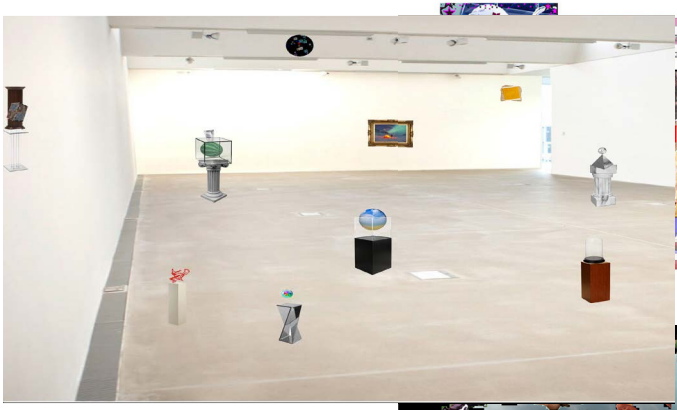
Heather Phillipson
***TRUE TO SIZE* (top), 2015**
***FINAL DAYS: SPECIAL OFFERS* (bottom), 2015–2016**



Being a contemporary poet as well as an artist, Heather Phillipson's works are collisions of found images, commodities, sounds, videos, and verbal languages. They trace the syntax of ideas and images that populate our everyday multimedia landscapes, and investigate the reality of human body under modifications from a overwhelming digital and commercialized landscape.

Pipilotti Rist
from top to down:
***Selbstlos im Lavabad (Selfless in the Bath of Lava),* 1996**
***Ever Is Over All,* 1997**
***Pixel Forest*, 2016**

Pipilotti Rist is a video artist utilizing projections with varied scales and structures. Her current works usually combine bodily engagements with viewing, exporting her visuals and topics into a tactile experience.

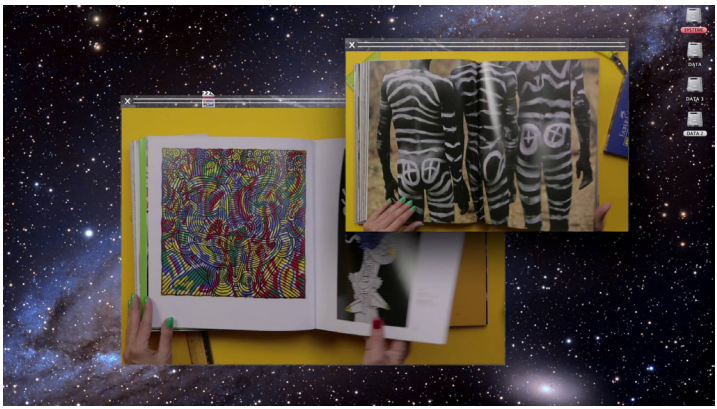


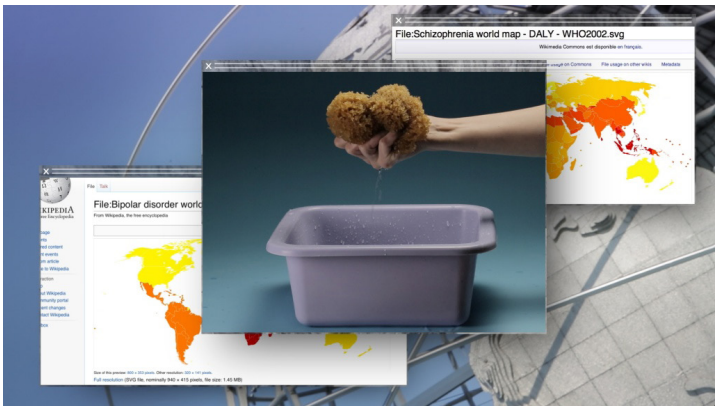
Anthony Antonellis
***Put it on a pedestal,* 2015**

This is a website where audiences can curate their own show of internet aesthetics by dragging things around with a mouse, inside a virtual gallery.

Lorna Mills
***Ways of Something,* 2014**

Ways of Something is a contemporary remake of John Berger's BBC documentary *Ways of Seeing* (1972). Compiled by Lorna Mills, the series consist of four episodes, each of them featuring a collection of 30 one-minute videos by 30 web-based artists, to describe the cacophonous conditions of art-making after the internet.





Camille Henrot
***Gross Fatigue*, 2013**

Gross Fatigue is an experimental short film, utilizing computer interfaces and nonlinear narratives to tell the story of the universe's creation. The visuals are echoed by a poem mixing scientific history with creation stories, which is recited in a sound pattern inspired by hip-hop music.

Evaluation

When being displayed to the public, my work and this thesis, eventually become a signal about plastic visions. This signal is cultural noise existing alongside many other subcultural and microcultural voices, as a friendly existence, chattering and whispering in the entropies. I intend to keep this signal alive after school. It is not just something for academic requirements, it is about constructing alternative and introspective ways of seeing, personal politics, and mentoring the relationships between self and the external.

Ultimately, plastic visions are about framing one's own reality. My work has implicitly touched the difference of personal identity politics between the East and the West. The differences I have highlighted are the agencies for self-awareness. In the United States—and possibly all the Western Hemisphere—self-awareness and identity value is exerted on individuals, as how we see and value each other, including genders, and races. In the East—especially in traditional Eastern philosophy, self-awareness is about how you see spiritual matters in each existence, and how these spirits differ from your own. I am not trying to debate which way of seeing is superior. By juxtaposing these two visions of self, I aim to achieve the effect I have described as the third vision in video games, enabling myself and the audience to construct different identities on several skins, including on our own bodies. The recurring theme of clouds in my work is a hint of this third vision, beyond the existence of cute, fetish or pointless silliness. Clouds, as daily existences accompanying us, are always in juxtaposition with other happenings in life. They are slightly annoying, you can not eliminate their existence; but they are also fluffy, genderless, emotionless, and innocent. Clouds are elastic, being black, white, and yellow, formed and deformed at the same time. They are the ideal vehicles to store and project mixed emotions, mirroring and teleporting our feelings back and forth.

For my continuing design and art practice, I will try to be myself, while also trying to step aside and review myself, from my own eyes, and the objects' eyes, and the visionaries' eyes—from Berger's, from Sontag's, from Hebdige's, from Hito's, and so on. Also, as a system aiming to generate situational, fluctuating feelings, I am hoping that through experiencing my installation, the audience can step aside and see themselves as well. This means embracing their inner hyper-reality and perverse visions, to see their switch between multiple realities, and the potential obsessions with one or more of them. I hope my curation of plastic identities are visions of myself

and the concerns of others, as a mark, a point, a hole, a perspective—not just a collection of a bunch cute and post-internet objects.

One thing worth noticing in my investigation of video games is, the categories of genre and experience are intentionally selected. I focus mainly on single-player games, namely simulations, sandboxes, open-worlds and indie games, and the related experiences; while most online and blockbuster games remain backstage, as possible argument extensions. This emphasis is influenced by my personal experience in gaming, but it is also a deliberate selection to highlight the experiences that are most relevant to flexible body materials and gender identities with fewer limitations and consequences inside and outside screens.

On the other hand, most MMORPGs (Massive Multiplayer Online Role-playing Games, the stereotype of online games) and multiplayer online FPS (First Person Shooter) games built around the concept of guilds, classes and conventional, masculinely fetishized gender roles. In these games, a player's identity is mostly defined by the organization and the digital social class he or she is in. Identities in online games are also tend to be socially constructed and pre-assumed. The activities in-game have consequential connections to a player's digital or even physical life, making online video games many times a cloned, and usually worse version of our physical social structure. A player can be bullied, harassed and discriminated, and such situations often tend to happen in online gaming due to the lack of effective punishments that can be casted out by a game and infiltrate into physical reality. As an experienced gamer in Steam (a popular digital game distribution platform), I can personally say that many times the reason an online game loses its popularity is not the lack of development support, but the toxic communities formed by teenage and young white males, driving a diverse player base away.

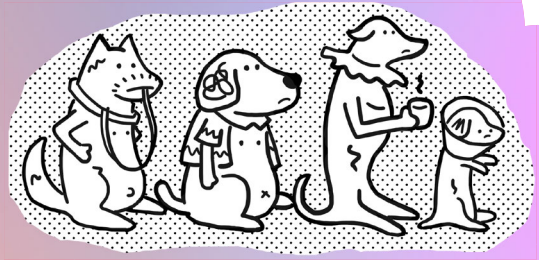
As a notion, I think plastic identities in online games can still exist, but they are predictable, and much less experimental. Also, being online usually means a game's infrastructure is closed and controlled by administrations, making online games a one-way system that blocks player's positive input. In short, I feel like online gaming experiences are similar to ones found in television and film, as I am stuck in other people's systems, visions and decisions.

Personally, I don't think my exclusion of online gaming in most plastic identity discussions is a sign of escapism. Any design has its limitation in terms of communication effectiveness; and a way of seeing can also provide support for self-investigations and social analysis, but not patches to a whole system. Curing the toxicity and homophobia in online gaming is no less a task than modifying society. It requires not only efforts from players, but also from video game companies or governments. As a natural part of the growing up process, teenagers and young adults have a tendency to be cynical and non-disciplined. What video games can and should provide is a system to let them see and learn to control these tendencies, but not letting them exchange such leanings as discrimination. This urgency for change also applies to the single-player gaming experience, as we are already in the era of self-broadcasting and live streaming. From YouTubers to Twitch players, games and personal life are being broadcasted continually; nothing is exempted from repurposing and curating. Under such circumstances, how gaming experiences are being curated, distributed and broadcasted can make crucial differences in communication effects. This is also where design can be applied, connecting plastic identities and digital bodies to varied and massive audiences—even if they are not gamers or designers.

Design solutions are just temporary and contextual patches of wicked problems. The front and back stages of a design surface are always inter-related, awkwardness and the gross are always wrapped in fancy clothes. The real matter in visual communication is how and when to reveal the other side of the surface, and what is the sequence for the revealing. For us—the designers—how much information we want to block before the audience reaches the other side of the surface becomes a moral decision for maintaining humanity in design. This somewhat manageable process of controlling the audience's conceptual flow becomes the application value of curating gaming experiences and plastic identities. The process sets the curation into practices of social design and experience design, touching the imperfections, soothing our emotional anxieties and unrest. Although these applied plastic bodies are imperfect, they are always evolving. Instead of piling up the sleek layers of surface just like in commercial and conventional design, design practices with plastic visions become a way to reverse and investigate these layers, and the realities beneath them.

Plastic identities expose the potent politics of digital images, they are pu-

pae for us to endlessly reinvent ourselves through the velocity and intensity of contemporary media. They can simultaneously inquire and evolve the places they thrive—design, video games, and other digital spaces. There is a conspicuous coincidence between graphic design's current identity crisis and the video game industry's concern about lack of innovation—nearly every genre in video games have been explored and repeated, just like in graphic design. Are both of them the victims of modernist discourses of totalizing and colonial claims? Is the introduction of multiple surfaces, dimensional invisibles and tactility becoming a crucial way to reinvent and extrude game and design's existing surfaces? I do not have an answer for these questions, but maybe the plastic identities, with playfulness and mischief, can lead me and others with the same interests further.



THE GRAPHIC RESURRECTION

Selections from:

Dan Friedman

Ikko Tanaka

Josef Müller-Brockmann

Armin Hofmann

Experimental Jetset

Anton Stankowski

Josef Albers

Jacqueline S. Casey

Wolfgang Weingart

Bibliography

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing.* London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1973.

Berger's classical piece talks about technology's impact on the way we see and manipulate images, and how social myths and gender identities are embedded in the image decoding process. Many of Berger's arguments are still valid in contemporary media culture, but they are also being examined and redefined by the increasing speed and quantity of subjective inputs from audiences.

Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle.* New York: Zone Books, 1994.

In this book, philosopher and Marxist critic Guy Debord considers the image representations of material, commodity and physical life as the spectacles. He views such spectacles in a negative and critical way, considering them as the social relations among people, mediated by images. This book gives me insights of the social and political power of images, and capitalism's influences on conditional identities.

Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style.* London: Methuen, 1979.

Based on the discussions about Britain's postwar youth subculture styles as symbolic forms of resistance, Hebdige aimed to create a system for understanding and analyzing subcultures, while investigating the oppressive quality of the dominant culture. Hebdige considers subcultures' existence as cultural noise and interference, and his viewpoints from this classic work is still largely compatible with internet and fan subcultures. These contemporary examples fill in the space where society has failed to address the needs of certain individuals as the traditionally othered.

Iles, Chrissie, editor. *Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art, 1905–2016.* Whitney Museum of American Art and Yale University Press, 2016.

This book is the catalogue and discussion of the exhibition *Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art, 1905–2016* at Whitney Museum of American Art, Oct 28, 2016–Feb 5, 2017. It provides insights into the manipulations of bodies and screens in the art field, and the establishment of multiple identities corresponding to the expanding technological apparatus. The book aims to establish conversations between pre-digital and contemporary body images, framing them as part of the on-going developments in the human-machine relationships.

Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman. *Rules of Play—Game Design Fundamentals.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004.

This book discusses the fundamental elements of designing games and gaming experiences. The book's reference value creates anchor points for my research on video games, including the interpretations of a game within and beyond the framework of play, and a game as an experience system about alternate versions of physical realities.

***Materiality.* London: Whitechapel Gallery; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015.**

This anthology investigates materiality in art that attempts to expand notions of time, space, process and participation. It addresses critique of materiality in artistic production and the relationship between materiality and bodies.

***The Object.* London: Whitechapel Gallery; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014.**

This anthology surveys some of the many twists and turns in the object-subject relationship, providing a wide range of ideas and discussions around the object topic in contemporary art.

Ponge, Francis. *The Voice of Things.* New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co, 1972.

In this playful book Ponge gives voices to daily objects such as milk crates and candles, with topics centering around fleeting moments, interpersonal relationships and emotional memories. This is a poetic and imaginative display of pre-digital age fetishism, echoing my presentation of objects with over-liveliness, as the re-animated nature with subjective overwrites.

Steyerl, Hito. *The Wretched of the Screen.* New York: Sternberg Press, 2012.

This collection of essays addresses topics in art practices such as images, reproduction and activism, under the circumstances of contemporary media. Many of the discussions are connected with Hito's own art practices. They illustrate the notions of dismantling linear perspectives, and the overlapping, happening presence of artworks. Hito's book provides entries and introspections to understanding the accelerated and unstable relationship between image and text in digital space, under the contemporary political and capitalist environments.

Tamaki, Saitō. *Beautiful Fighting Girl.* Translated by J. Keith Vincent and Dawn Lawson. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

In *Beautiful Fighting Girl*, Saitō argues the feminine characters in Japanese anime are the unattainable yet irresistible sexual objects for the audience in the Otaku subculture. He considers the body images in anime not as a reflection of a sociological reality, but as a perverse fantasy that functions to re-cathect and invest with a new reality. Beautiful Fighting Girl provides a contemporary take on the discussion of boundaries between real and fiction, and explores fetishism's contribution to a fluid digital gender reality.

Virilio, Paul. *The Aesthetic of Disappearance.* Semiotext(e), 1980.

Jumping around discussions of cinema, television, automobile transportation and war, Paul Virilio talks about what it feels like to live in a society of speed and vertigo. He depicts such feelings as an epileptic state of consciousness, invented by fluctuating situational subjectivities. And such subjectivities are being absent, redirected and glitched simultaneously.

Warren-Crow, Heather. *Girlhood and the Plastic Image.* Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2014.

Girlhood and the Plastic Image discusses the dominance of plastic images in contemporary media culture, and their relationship with the unstable and transformative images of girls in digital space. This book provides foundational support for my arguments in plastic identity, leading to my investigation of the transindividual bodies, spaces and identity politics in video games, design, and subcultural internet environments.

Online Articles and Websites:

Krystal South. "Identify Yourself." Accessed April 5, 2016. http://idyrself.com.

Juxtaposing texts, Tumblr posts, memes and other poor images, this website provides an accessible, panoramic discussion of identities in digital space. It is also a contemporary gateway to various subcultural art spaces and discussions, providing links and the artist's personal experience with them.

Keith J. Varadi. "ART SUGAR NET MAGIC." *Artfrum,* 2014. Accessed October 2015. http://artfrum.com/post/69769634802/art-sugar-net-magic-by-keith-j-varadi.

Keith attempts to analyze matters about Internet Art in a concise, direct, and expository manner. He aligns various Internet-based artists' works with the recycled ideas of the commodification and ubiquity of art in the 60s and 70s; while also investigating their fresh, new takes, and a renewed artist-audience relationship.

Brad Troemel. Accessed February 12, 2017. http://main.bradtroemel.com/.

In his website Brad talks about his ways of survival as an artist in contemporary capitalist environment, touching topics like space sharing, online freelancing and global positioning. His texts and artworks reinforce each other in attempts to export digital survivability into physical space.