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WITHOUT SIN: TABOO AND FREEDOM WITHIN DIGITAL MEDIA

Framed by a context of increasing media anxiety over the volume of usage and the nature of social networking websites (Greenfield 2009), this panel will broadly explore the roots of this fear and the role of digital media and social development, specifically interrogating practices of social identity and contemporary experiences of reality/ fiction.

Dates: Tuesday, 20 September, 2011 - 09:00 - 10:30

Chair Person: [Donna Leishman](#)

Presenters: [Gordon Hush](#)
[Sue Golding](#)
[Don Ritter](#)
[Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli](#)
[Sheena Calvert](#)



Location: [Sabanci Center Room 1](#)
[Sabanci Center, Levent](#)

Chair: [Dr. Donna Leishman](#)

Framed by a context of increasing media anxiety over the volume of usage and the nature of social networking websites (Greenfield 2009), this panel will broadly explore the roots of this fear and the role of digital media and social development, specifically interrogating practices of social identity and contemporary experiences of reality/ fiction.

Following associated fears there has been an increased pressure from the American Medical Association (AMA) for the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to include video game addiction as a sub-type of internet addiction, along with sexual preoccupations and e-mail/text messaging in the upcoming 2012 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V), the standard diagnostic text used by psychiatrists worldwide.

The reality of an un-chartable (dark) Internet, the acknowledged rate of change and the significantly problematic lack of any societal sanction or prohibition (when surfing the Internet) gives 'us' more space and opportunity to explore taboo and repression.

Panel papers will explore the notion of the moral economy of human activity and how this is reflected in "moral panics" and the space between subjective experience (consciousness) and the contemporary environment (Hush), stylistics of (sexual) difference (Golding), manipulation within digital identity construction (Ritter), re-exploring The More Knowledgeable Other and social development (Leishman), and role of tactical anonymity within contemporary Net activism (Ravetto-Biagioli).

Questions the panel will raise:

When considering digital media and social development: what are the underlying causes of this new sense of fear?

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MIND THE GAP

(he)artbreaking to the core
 Motion Capture and Dance
 Sniff, Scrape, Crawl - Part 1
 Sniff, Scrape, Crawl - Part 2
 Patchwork Panel
 Data Disinformation
 @China, Virtually Speaking
 Creativity as a Social Ontology
 New Media Archives- New Intelligent Ambiances
 Arabesque, Mandala, Algorithm: A Long History of Generative Art
 Site Specifics: Mobile Media Art and the Contexts of Place
 Borders and Interfaces
 The Media Space: Evolving Media Architecture and Its Legend
 Short:Circuit
 Slowness: Responding to Acceleration through Electronic Arts
 Public Art of the Sustainable City
 Transmedia Narrative
 The Volatility and Stability of WorldMaking as Techné
 Variable reality - inter-formalities in digital/analogous arts
 Compumorphic Art - the computer as muse
 Surveillant Spaces
 Testing New Ground
 Re-rooting Digital Culture-Media Art Ecologies
 Interface Play: Media Environments for Ludic Cyborgs
 BioARTCAMP: Laboratory Ecologies in the Wild West
 Queer Viralities
 The Madness of Methods: Emerging Arts Research Practices
 Emotion Studies in a Contemporary Art Debate
 DON'T HATE THE BUSINESS, BECOME THE BUSINESS!
 Pervasive Media: Practice, Value, Culture
 Travels Through Hyper-Liminality
 Without Sin: Taboo and Freedom within Digital Media
 Hybrid Spatial Experiences
 The Art of Software Cities
 Interart / Intersensorium
 The Institute of Unnecessary Research
 Signs of Life: Human-Robot Intersubjectivities
 NeuroArts
 Chasing Ghosts
 FARFIELD1
 If You See Something...
 VIDA: New Discourses, Tropes and Modes in Art and Artificial Life Research
 Voicing Electronic Arts
 Unsightly Aesthetics
 Crisis Narrative of Landscape
 Tyrannies of Participation
 Hybrid Cultures

How is social identity constructed today / Has our experience of reality/ fiction changed?

How does the intrinsic variability of media usage affect our sense of self/ consciousness?

What is authentic and what constitutes healthy when engaging with digital media and the Internet?

Paper Abstracts

WITH DESIGN IN MIND?: "MORAL ECONOMY" AND CONTEMPORARY DIGITAL CULTURE

by Dr. Gordon Hush

Technological innovation is often characterised as producing a population composed of "tempted" bodies, corrupted desires or utopian potential distorted by unlimited possibility, and juxtaposed to a now-foregone simpler era and existence. Such a moral economy of human activity is reflected in the "moral panics" conjured around digital technologies and the deleterious effects upon users attributed to them. This paper seeks to explore the relation between subjective experience (consciousness) and the contemporary environment, in particular, the dissemination of digital technology within mobile devices, such as laptops, tablets and "smartphones."

Recent theoretical positions, such as "neuroanthropology," delineating the "encultured brain," appear suited to engaging digital technologies and their putative consequences: however, the sociological study of technology and "tools" also provides a platform for such an analysis. This paper attempts to identify the affinities and oppositions between these two discourses and their respective examinations of mobile digital devices through an analysis of the "extension" of experience (McLuhan) and the modification of our understanding of its neurological underpinning. It does so by proposing that experience be grasped as a series of interactions best judged as affective phenomena, rather than events with moral consequences.

"Consciousness" is described as a phenomenon that is enacted or inhabited through a dialogue with the wider environment and, as such, is modified through the increasing preponderance of mobile digital technology and the transformation of temporal, spatial and inter-subjective relations that this affords. Consequently the moral economy encompassing right/wrong, truth/falsity, sacred/profane is viewed as antiquated and inappropriate in a world where technological freedoms have transformed the possibilities of subjective experience and its representation as identity or identities through web-based media or social media.

TOTEM, NETWORK & TABOO: COLLATERAL DAMAGE NO. 39

by Prof. Sue Golding

FILM & LECTURE PRESENTATION: At a time when technologies of exchange promise the new, the unlimited, the wild and free, let us give a small thought to the stylistics of (sexual) difference, fractal in nature, sequentially infinite and seductively compelling – a kind of 'beyond' the pleasure-pain/death principles that suggest a whole new end-game to morals, ethics, and the status of being human.

CONTENT OSMOSIS

by Don Ritter

Content Osmosis refers to a situation when an aspect of a medium's content is transferred to the personality of an audience, such as intellectual content making the audience feel more intellectual, or when the exclusiveness of the content makes the audience believe that they are exclusive. This enhancement, however, may only be a belief by an audience rather than something that is observable: the audience does not actually become more intelligent, exclusive or whatever. Content Osmosis is a medium subterfuge which is often used to obtain financial profit from the audience, and content osmosis is often incorporated into the content of a medium according to its intended audience.

ANONYMOUS AND THE POLITICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Test_Lab: Summer Sessions
2011

Sensorium

FARFIELD2

PAPER SESSIONS

WORKSHOPS

PRE-SYMPOSIUM EVENTS

LOCATIONS

by Dr. Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli

"We will stop at nothing until we've achieved our goal. Permanent destruction of the identification role." — Anonymous

The revolution of social media has been heralded in by utopian appeals to reinvigorate democracy. Western media attributed the success of dissident movements in Iran, Tunisia, Egypt and Libya to twitter, facebook, wikileaks, and various other social media platforms. Social media not only produce radical spontaneity in the form of Flashmobs, swarms, or multitudes needed to organize and demonstrate solidarity, but also globally distribute evidence that exposes the brutality and corruption of various countries' respective regimes (e.g., China's 'human flesh search engine' group). But at the same time these same technologies can be co-opted by governments, secret service organizations and their nemesis, global terrorist organizations and rogue states to monitor, censor, track and control users, whistle-blowers, populations and the traffic of information (as in the case with China, Iran and Egypt), thereby undermining the very democratic ideals and calls for freedom upon which such appeals were predicated.

As a result the discourse of ethics and accountability becomes more and more entangled with politics. The one thing that is clear is that social media have rendered individual privacy and government and corporate secrecy almost impossible to sustain. In this game of exposure, being identified has become another form of vulnerability. The evasion of government and corporate surveillance has led to alternative models of thinking about social media and its relationship to agency, politics, and perception. This paper will look at the relationship of the group Anonymous to Wikileaks spokesperson Julian Assange. The media has reduced the discussion of Anonymous's attacks on those commercial services that (under pressure from the US government) denied service to Assange to an ethical question — one that implies individual responsibility and criminal activity. Instead, I will concentrate on how Anonymous mimics networks (like the free software and open source movements or the Creative Commons) or crowd sourcing projects (like Foldit) in its dissident and controversial political actions. By mimicking government and corporate tactics it questions the criteria for an ethical discourse in relation to social media, and it points to the limits of identification of subversive groups that depend on multiple users rather than leaders or figure heads like Assange himself. Rather than attempt to produce some authentic group identity, Anonymous has borrowed the mask of Guy Fawkes from the graphic novel and/or film, *V for Vendetta*. In this respect identity functions more like a meme, that is passed peer-to-peer, and subject to infinite modulation.

DIGITALISM AND THE MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE OTHER

by Dr. Donna Leishman

In *Social Development Theory* Vygotsky (1978) argues that social interaction precedes development; consciousness and cognition are the end product of socialization and social behaviour. A Key concept of Vygotsky's The More Knowledgeable Other (or MKO) refers to anyone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner. In these contemporary contexts the MKO could potentially be represented by interactions on the Internet or experience gleaned from social media.

Role testing or playing is expected to be transitional - done in our youth, but within on-line and digital gaming contexts we can delay and extend this developmental process. Both the reality of an un-chartable (dark) Internet, the acknowledged rate of change and the significantly problematic lack of any societal sanction or prohibition, gives 'us' more space and opportunity to explore the taboo and address repression. With extended explorations of self brings issues around consciousness, totalization of identity and what is authentic and what now constitutes healthy behaviour?

COLLATERAL DAMAGE

by Dr. Sheena Calvert

"The problem of language is at the heart of all the struggles between the forces striving to abolish the present alienation and those striving to maintain it... Under the control of power, language always designates something other than authentic experience." (*All the King's Men*, Situationist International, 1963).

This paper takes the position that the language[s] of technology, and the application of language within digital environments, continue to be intimately entwined with the ongoing struggle against "the present alienation", as well being implicated in the undermin-

ing of authenticity (the lack of a true identity). Supported by Adorno's observation that "[O]bjects do not go into their concepts, without leaving a remainder...", (Negative Dialectics), the ways in which language frames experience, identity, and political and social realities, in online contexts will be thought through. If, as Adorno suggests, language is a total system which results in conceptual closure, and mis-directs experience, where might we glimpse the linguistic 'remainders', with their potential for revolution/redefinition, within the digital context? A close reading of *All The King's Men*, and other texts on language and power, will be presented alongside a series of examples which highlight the problem of language. If we are collateral damage to the continual tyranny of language, how do we resist this, in the new information environments and playgrounds we inhabit? If the persistent taboo which haunts language is making any attempt to stand outside it, in order to assess its influence, how do we break out of this double-bind?

Bios of the Participants

GORDON HUSH

Gordon Hush is a sociologist who now heads the Product Design department of The Glasgow School of Art. He tends to focus upon the relationship between people and things and tries to explain this in terms of experience(s) since this avoids having to talk about human nature.

His PhD was supposed to be about people using shopping centres but ended up taking social theory to task for its reliance upon economic assumptions and their role in shaping human activity. He is currently interested in finding out how design practice can contribute to and be materialized in and through local activities, experiences and artifacts and so serve as a counter to globalizing forces and their "outsourcing" of jobs, money and opportunity. To this end he is currently setting up a new Masters programme at The Glasgow School of Art in Design & Citizenship.

SUE GOLDING

Sue Golding (aka johnny de philo) is a critical philosopher and artist whose internationally rated research covers the intra/interdisciplinary discourses associated with the contemporary media arts, new sciences and communication technologies. Set out in terms of installation, performance, rolling-documentary, books, articles and aphoristic text, her works address the various aspects of contemporary art practice in terms of their mobile multi-media, contemporary philosophical foundations and meta-mathematic (space-time) dimensionalities.

Professor Golding is Director of the Institute for the Converging Arts & Sciences, a post-graduate/post-doctoral international research environment.

DON RITTER

Don Ritter is a Canadian artist and writer living in Berlin. His work refers to the social function of media and its relationship with hegemony, servility, and commoditization. Within his interactive installations, audiences participate in social portraits that are determined through physical body activity and voice. Ritter's work has focused on performances of interactive video controlled by live, improvised music. His writings are primarily concerned with media literacy, ethics, and aesthetics. Ritter's video-sound installations and performances have been exhibited at festivals and museums throughout Europe, North America and Asia, including SITE Santa Fe (USA), Winter Olympics 2010 Cultural Olympiad (Vancouver), Metrònom (Barcelona), Sonambiente Sound Festival (Berlin), Exit Festival (Paris), and New Music America (New York City).

Ritter has degrees in Electronics Engineering Technology (Northern Alberta Institute of Technology), Fine Arts and Psychology (University of Waterloo), and a Masters in Visual Studies (Massachusetts Institute of Technology/Center for Advanced Visual Studies). He has held full-time professorships in art and design at Concordia University (Montréal) and at Pratt Institute (New York City). His work has received support and recognition from the Canada Council, The Banff Centre (Canada), Pratt Institute (USA), ZKM (Germany), Ars Electronica (Austria), DGArtes (Portugal), the Goethe Institute (Germany), and the European Union Culture Programme.

KRISS RAVETTO-BIAGIOLI

Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli, Associate Professor of Technocultural Studies is film and media scholar whose work focuses on the problem of representing and theorizing the violence produced by nation building, ethnocentrism, and sexism in a manner that does not play into a vicious cycle where moralism, media images, and language produce their own forms of violence. She has published articles on film, performance, installation art, and new media in *Camera Obscura*, *Film Quarterly*, *Third Text*, *PAJ*, *Representations*, *Screen*, *Third Text* and numerous collected volumes. Her interest in the "digital uncanny" and the culture of surveillance has inspired "Recoded" - the large international conference on the politics and landscapes of new media.

DONNA LEISHMAN

Donna Leishman is a media artist and researcher and is based in Scotland. Her critical writings and presentations cover the social reception of digital media and the intersection of narrative with interactivity. Themes in the research include developing and exploring the role of the participant, issues around identity and closure and interrogating the aesthetic consequences of difficult interactions and dissonance. Leishman has presented for: ISEA RHUR (Germany), Digital Art Weeks Xi'an (China), CRUMB/Culture Lab (Newcastle), CultureNet/Capilano University (Canada), IOCT De Montfort University (Leicester) FITC (Toronto), CHI 2011 (Vancouver) and ISEA 2011 (Istanbul). Her works have been featured in *The New York Times*, *The List*, *The Herald*, *Create Online*, *Computer Arts*, *The Scotsman*, *The Guardian*, *Desktop Magazine* (AUS), *TIRWEB* and *Design Week*.

Since 1999 her website <http://www.6amhoover.com/> has been the platform to experience her interactive projects. Her artworks have been presented in museums, galleries, conferences and festivals around the world including: UkinNY festival (NYC), Resistor Gallery (Toronto), Centre for Contemporary Art (Glasgow), TechnoPoetry Festival (Georgia Tech) DeCordova Museum (Boston) OFFF (Barcelona). Digital Arts & Culture conference (Melbourne), M.I.T (Boston), The Six Cities Festival (Glasgow) Designers-block – The Scottish Show (Milan/London) ELO Visionary Landscapes (Vancouver USA) and the Electronic Literature Collection Volume One.

She lectures in Communication Design at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design in Dundee. Leishman is the currently external examiner for the MRes in Digital Media at Newcastle University's Culture Lab.

SHEENA CALVERT

Dr. Sheena Calvert has over 20 years experience in graphic design and typography; art and critical theory, gained in both in the UK and the US. She is a senior lecturer in Critical Theory within the Visual Communication programme at the University of Westminster, and has taught at various universities and art schools, including U.Mass Dartmouth, Rutgers, New Jersey, CSM, The LCC, University of Hertfordshire and Norwich School of Art. Her professional practise includes the establishment of a New York-based design studio, whose clients included Visual Aids, Verso publishing, the Lincoln Center, The American Museum of Natural History, and the Jewish Women's Archive. In the UK, she runs her own design practice, is a fellow of the Institute of Contemporary Arts and Sciences, and has exhibited her work internationally. In 2010, she participated in the beside Multimedia Arts Festival, as an invited artist. Her undergraduate and graduate work at the Central school of Art and Yale University involved investigations of typography and its relationship to various experimental forms of literature, and philosophies of language. Her PhD work looked at the interconnections between art/language, paradox, and meaning, arguing for a ?sensual logic?. She has a particular interest in letterpress printing as an experimental/critical medium, and runs her own letterpress studio, the .918 press, in Hackney, London.