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Exhibition

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00:00



JUNYUN  
CHEN



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Onlone

00:00

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Onlone

00:00

Contents



Being alone is not the only definition of loneliness. Loneliness can be felt even when surrounded by a lot of people, especially in the virtual online world. Our digital devices play an important role in connecting everyone together without the restriction of time and space. Communication became more and more convenient in this era. Mostly we are digitally connected, but sometimes, we are mentally disconnected. We are online and together in this virtual world, but loneliness is always a never ended situation that we are suffering from. As a visual communicator, My works focus on using performance as an approach to explore the evolving relationship between the online communication and on-line loneliness. In my thesis research, I want to investigate how does the online world created more loneliness to individuals digitally and physically, and how people release their spiritual desire and overcome loneliness in the online world.

It's 00:00 am. A message, "hi" with a twinkle face emoji  shows up on my phone screen accompanied by a funny notification sound from Grindr. I swipe to read the message as usual. When I try turning off the app, because I find that my contact has a blank profile page, the guy sends me another message: "lookin?" with a purple colored evil emoji . It seems like just another boring Grindr guy again today. I try to ignore his message, but it seems that he doesn't want to give up. After couple minutes, he sends a third message. "Lonely? Horny?" with a burning fire emoji . I am kind of stunned and don't know how to reply. The word "horny" is overused in the Grindr world. It's like people use the word, "Hey" in the real world. But this is the first time I've seen the word "lonely" on a Grindr message. Am I lonely? Of course, most people on Grindr are lonely, but no one wants to admit it, or maybe they don't even realize that loneliness is human

inheritance. Each human being comes into the world alone, travels through life as a separate person, and ultimately dies alone. Loneliness typically includes anxious feelings about a lack of connection or communication with other beings, both in the present and extending into the future. Loneliness can be felt even when surrounded by other people. Just like what we are experiencing in the online world. Technology makes individuals have more connection with each other, however, in many ways, virtual online communication generates more loneliness in our virtual and real life.

Online, we are all together, but in truth, we are Onlone Together.

# Part 1. Define Loneliness



When I type the keyword “loneliness” in the search bar for Google images, hundreds of related images pop up on my laptop screen. Unexpectedly, all these photos present the same content. A single man is standing or sitting with his back to the camera in a large empty space. There is no doubt that we can easily feel the solitude and lonely emotion from these images. It reminds me of Robinson, the fictional character in Daniel Defoe’s novel, Robinson Crusoe. Being the only human being on an isolated island is the loneliest scene I can imagine. But I also feel that the loneliness in these pictures is different from the one that we are experiencing in the current world. These images present a surreal and excessive loneliness which is hard to con-

nect to my real life. We are experiencing the hustle and bustle of the cities in our daily life and connecting with each other in the online virtual world, but why are we still suffering from the loneliness?

To answer the question, I tried to figure out what exactly loneliness is. Loneliness is human inheritance. Each human being comes into the world alone, travels through life as a separate person, and ultimately dies alone. Loneliness is a universal human emotion that is both complex and unique to each individual. Common definitions of loneliness describe it as a state of solitude or being alone. For me, loneliness is actually a state of mind. It is the mixed emotion of empty, helplessness and frustration. Loneliness is not about being alone, but a lack of connection or communication with other beings, both in the present and extending into the future. It can be felt even when surrounded by other people.

The internet gives us powerful access to hundreds of thousands of peoples without the restriction of time and space. We are lonely around with more people in the online world. We are all digitally con-

ected, but actually we are mentally disconnected because something is changing and missing.







# Loneliness

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Read Edit View history Search Wikipedia

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- Print/export
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- Download pages
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In other languages

Adobe Photoshop CC 2018

Feather: 0 px Anti-aliased Style: Normal

youtube.com

3 REAL Cures For Loneliness  
283,599 views

Matthew Hussey  
Published on Aug 26, 2017

You don't have to do  
http://www.MatthewHussey.com



- 
- Affection
  - Anger
  - Angst
  - Anguish
  - annoyance
  - Anticipation
  - Anxiety
  - Apathy
  - Arousal
  - Awe
  - Boredom
  - Confidence
  - Contempt
  - Contentment
  - Courage
  - Curiosity
  - Depression
  - Desire
  - Despair
  - Disappointment
  - Disgust
  - Distrust
  - Ecstasy
  - Embarrassment



## Part 2. Online Loneliness



A dating app is like a solitude island, but it is different than the island where Robinson lived. It is a floating island accumulating all the lonely hearts in the online world.

### 01 Loneliness as Invalid Communication

Being a queer, I find it difficult to find someone to connect with in the real world. So I turned to the online world to find more connections. In the beginning, I was so surprised and excited about using Grindr. (online dating app for the gay community) The infinite scroll presented hundreds of thousands of users around me, creating a delusion that we are all together and firmly connected to each. But after my first year of the Grindr experience, I realized

that it was just a delusion. What I got from the app is not communication but tons of repeated cliché messages left in my cell phone. “Hey” “Hi” “How’s it going” “looking?” “I am tired of this invalid communication in the online world.

A couple of months ago, Grindr changed their interface design and introduced a new function called “taps” which I find useless and confusing. Once someone is interested in someone else they don’t even need to send a text message, but just need to use the tap button to send an emoji icon of: “hi” (a friendly greeting), “fire” (meaning hot) or an “evil face” (meaning looking for a hook-up). It’s easy to understand that this function is an attempt to make our online communication easier and more efficient. However, the communication is inadequate and limited, making the online environment a more indifferent space.

When people talk to each other—or even text—each conversation is different, revealing the diverse characters of the users. While using the default emoji icon to communicate, everyone sends and receives the same message. How can peo-

ple recognize who are they are talking with? Are they talking with a real person or just a robot?

## 01 Loneliness as insecurity

Online, we can claim to be whoever we wish.



Behind the screen...

Like actors playing a role, we can deliberately choose to put forth identity cues or claims of self that can closely resemble or wildly differ from reality. With the rise of social platforms, the virtual spaces for these portrayals of alternate identities seem near endless.

Dating apps provide users with the most competitive performing stage, encouraging people to present their perfect, idealized side. Everyone strives to disguise and perform themselves in the limited space of profile pages to get more attention within the chance couple of seconds they appear on their audiences’ cell phone screen. The presence of online catfish (people who deliberately create fictitious online identities) makes us question who the real person is behind these perfect profiles. He may be a charming

guy who is enjoying the endless attention or maybe a creepy man looking for the next 'prey' in the online world. Or maybe just another lonely heart waiting behind the screen and looking for the next match.

When everyone is performing themselves in the online world, I got lost. I don't know who is the real one I can trust. The intangible communication experience generates an insecure online environment. I tried to mentally isolate myself from this crowded island. I turn off my phone and stare at my reflected image on the black phone screen. I am so overcome with an ineffable loneliness that I haven't felt before. Living in the online island I am frustrated because there is no one I can trust here. The only one I can trust is myself.

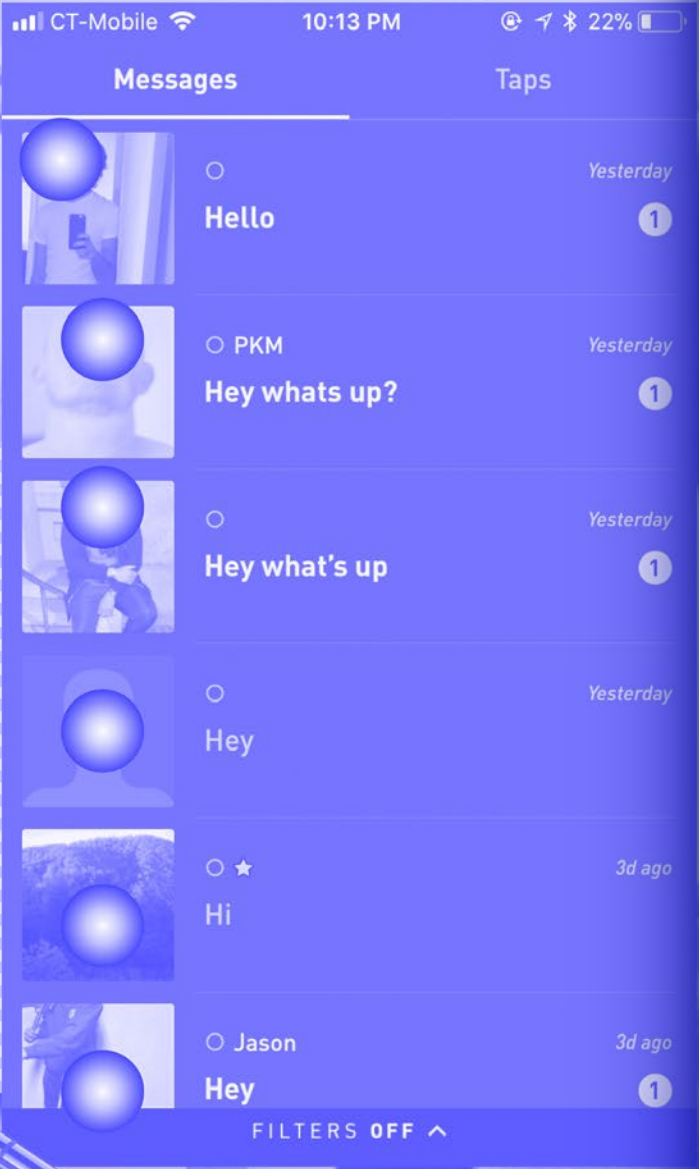
### 03 Loneliness as Sameness

Growing up as a queer in Asia, I found an interesting phenomenon where a lot of people are striving to perform themselves to become an ideal type in the online dating community. Young Asian queers prefer very short hair, both in their own hairstyle and for their ideal partners. When I open

Grindr in Asia, it is common to see that most guys present a similar appearance on their profile: short haircuts, whiskers, sideburns, and heavy eyebrows. These specific elements are regarded as the most attractive aesthetic in an Asian male, so more and more people try to follow the trend to become the perfect "ideal type" to gain more attention from their online audience.

Online, everyone looks the same by following the same standard, creating the delusion that what we see and talk to is the same person over and over and we are keep searching and looking for the same unrealistic ideal type. This phenomenon generates further loneliness and alienation in the online island.





Messages

Taps



Hello



PKM  
Hey whats up?



Hey what's up



Hey



Hi



Jason  
Hey

FILTERS OFF

How can people recognize who are they are talking with? Are they talking with a real person or just a robot?



3d ago



Abel InDesign CC 2016

Trinder | Swipe, Match, Chat

My Profile

24 Likes  
See who likes you & match instantly

CT-Mobile 10:18 PM

Messages

Taps

Huge  
2 miles away

3d ago

4d ago

5d ago

Hansoo  
4801 feet away

5d ago

FILTERS OFF

Justin 28  
Manager, Global Account  
Temple University

### Part 3. Online Satisfaction



Living on the lonely internet, our natural inclination is always to find a way to feel better, seeing a cozy corner to gain comfort and satisfaction on this isolated island.

The internet is a stage of delusion. By definition, everything online must not necessarily be real. It is all about a spiritual comfort. It is just like the magical placebo, once we believe in it, it will work. Although our online status is always shifting among performer, audience, and sometimes consumer, after all, our online behavior is mostly about satisfaction.

#### 01 Lonely performer

Being a lonely performer, accumulating followers is definitely the most direct and efficient way to dissolve the loneliness. Whenever we post a picture to Instagram, a post on Facebook, a video on Youtube,



we carefully choose what to be seen on the public and when to publish to get more attention. In return, all these elaborate performances bring us increasing numbers of followers. After we post something on our Instagram, most of us can not help checking our phone frequently. Seeing the growing number of “likes” makes us feel satisfied and also implies the great expression of self-ego. We tend to use the increasing self-ego to fill up the lonely emptiness because the more we focus on ourselves, we can more easily ignore the frustrating and never-changing fact that we are still alone either online or offline.

There are lots of “match collectors” in Tinder recently. They perform themselves by presenting their perfect profiles online, and there is no doubt that they get a large number of matches. But they never want to talk with anyone after matching. Seems like they are pretentious performers. They are not looking to use communication to dissolve their loneliness. Instead, the increasing number of matches is the trophy that gave them the greatest delusion of satisfaction and assured them that they are never alone.

## 02 Lonely Audiences

The Internet blurs the boundary between virtuality and reality, creating the unbelievable watching experience for the online audiences.

The live stream provides real-time communication between the performers and audiences, changing the passive audiences to active participants. Being an audience online, we take advantage of technology to seek for temporary virtual companions to get rid of the never-ending online loneliness.

Mukbang is one of the most popular online performance formats. Mukbang (or muk-bang) is an online broadcast in which a host eats large quantities of food while interacting with their audience. Usually done through an internet webcast (such streaming platforms include Afreeca), Mukbang became popular in South Korea in the 2010s. Foods ranging from pizza to noodles are consumed in front of a camera for an internet audience (who



Online Mukbang Videos  
<http://www.afreecatv.com>

pay or not, depending on which platform one is watching).

Mukbang is a direct reflection of the loneliness inherent in the online environment. Eating alone has traditionally been regarded as a negative clue of personal loneliness. Thanks to Mukbang, it's much easier to get dinner companions online. For the audience, sitting in front of the digital screen and watching the Mukbang performance becomes a daily ritual to dissolve the loneliness. The audience gets companionship through the screen based communication. When the host reads and responds to the comments from the audience, the audience then gains the attention and companionship in the online world.

Besides the virtual visual accompaniment, sound plays an additional important role in the performance. Some Mukbang performers incorporate aspects of ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response) videos to their performances.. Audiences get physical and spiritual satisfaction through listening to the exaggerated sound of chewing food. Compared to the visual elements, the sound has a more powerful

expression in the Mukbang performance. Eating aloud is regarded as impolite behavior in real life, however, when using the sound in the Mukbang performance, it has the magical power that enhances the reality of digital companionship by creating an ineffably intimate and private watching experience.

Having a nice dinner with someone in real life is getting difficult and need to put a lot of effort on it. We need to carefully dress up to make a good impression on each other. We have to wait for a long time before going into a popular restaurant. We try our best to bring up new topics to avoid embarrassing awkward moments during the conversation. While eating with the virtual Mukbang companies, all we do is just open the laptop, wearing the comfortable pajama, eating in our cozy apartment, joining the chatting whenever we want, because no one is seeing us and judging that we are eating alone, because we are all alone together. However, when the Mukbang performance ends, and the host turns off the camera, seeing myself reflect on the huge black laptop screen, I realize the truth that

loneliness never disappears from my life.

### 03 Infinite Consumer

We are content not only with performing and watching, we are also looking for obtaining. We are the most ambitious consumers in the online world, searching for the information, downloading the music, and even shopping from the online store.

Shopping is cheaper than a psychiatrist. Besides eating, shopping is an activity that most people use to overcome loneliness. Loneliness can make us materialistic. The dark side of materialism as a tonic is that shopping boxes aren't a great replacement for human accompaniment. Feeling isolated makes us anxious, which makes us less likely to get up the energy to make and maintain connections that would make us feel less alone. So, in the hunt for immediate pleasure, we turn to shopping. There is a vicious cycle between the growing appetite for material aspiration and online loneliness. This growing phenomenon makes the recent phenomenon of "unboxing" videos (people providing an online performance of unboxing the commodities they have bought) an increasingly popular

form.

"You design a ritual of unpacking to make the product feel special. Packaging can be theater, and it can create a story."

— Jonathan Ives, Apple designer



Unboxing is the ceremony of loneliness. There is a sensuality in watching someone open a box and slowly examine all the elements of the product, from the inner and outer wrappings to the actual product itself.

00:31

Online

Discussion





# The iPhone X unboxing you've been waiting for.

Unbox Therapy 2.9M views • 1 week ago

The iPhone X unboxing you've been waiting for. dbrand Grip - <https://igg.me/at/gr> TLD ...

4K



# iPhone X vs iPhone 8 Plus - Which Should You Buy?

EverythingApplePro 97K views • 1 week ago

Tough Choice, iPhone 8 Plus vs iPhone X Be Premium? Which Should You Buy?

4K



# iPhone X Unboxing + Accessories!

EverythingApplePro 909K views • 1 week ago

The Real iPhone X Unboxing & First Impressions! It's Just Incredible With Face ID. Space Grey ...

4K

# iPHONE X Unboxing + Accessories!

Lamarr Wilson 475K views • 1 week ago

iPhone X 256GB Space Grey <https://www.apple.com/shop>

iPhone X Case: [https://www.dbrand.com](#)



6:19 PM You

**Following**

movementandintellect liked your comment: ❤️❤️❤️ 2d

andersonvcaarts mentioned you in a comment: @mr\_lease @uuuunyun Junyun Chen 3d

this\_is\_isola\_ liked your post. 4d

this\_is\_isola\_ liked your post. 4d

nikolmikus, smicheleclark and 16 others liked your post. 5d

mariartemieva started following you. 1w

mariartemieva, linyuekk and others liked your post. 1w

nontsimutiti and sarayukiko liked your post. 1w

nontsimutiti started following you. 1w

Following

14 67 23

**CHINESE FOOD MUKBANG + fight storytime (part**

Stephanie Soo • 91K views • 3 days ago  
 Everyone! In this mukbang I'm having 'chinese' food, or Panda Express! I got their chow mein, fried honey walnut shrimp.

**Chick-FILA Mukbang (Eating Show)**  
 Sweetstuck • 28K views • 1 day ago  
 Subscribe to ANNA-HERE at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC54vZ2qpsSMayPvRTQAZw>  
 Subscribe to my vlog channel here.

**UDON + SUSHI ROLLS MUKBANG | STORYTIME | EATING SHOW**

Stephanie Soo • 124K views • 3 weeks ago  
 UDON + SUSHI ROLLS MUKBANG | STORYTIME | EATING SHOW  
<https://youtu.be/cmyY3olm7MY> INSTA & Snap

**Seafood Boil 22 King Crab Leg, Tiger Shirimp Mukbang**

Bloveslife • 207K views • 4 days ago  
 Join Blove for her famous Seafood boil. On the menu: Huge Alaskan Red King Crab Legs. Check out our new website: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5v6w...>

**SUPPERRR Stretchy! Japanese Kiri Mochi Spicy Rice cakes Recipe**

Mukbang!!! KEEM!★  
 Thanks for watching! My ASMR Channel!  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5v6w...>

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丹妮娅姐姐球

The Futur

ItsYonna

TerraNovaBoys

Regina Knows

Oh Emma

22

34:05

00:38

Process

Video  
Costume  
Performance

Onlone

2016 Fall  
GDES 611  
Grad Workshop

# Dis-connected





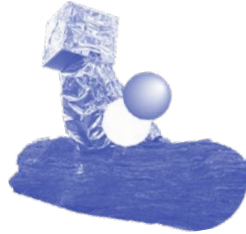
In the beginning, I am interested in the relationship between loneliness and disconnected. I wonder how the digital devices create the disconnected between human and nature space.

Nature-deficit disorder is a concept first put forward by Richard Louv in his book, *Last Child in the Woods*. It refers to a series of children's psychological and behavioral problems caused by the lack of exposure to nature. But in reality, we have chances to access nature every day. We live with the sunshine, plants, and water. We live inside the natural world, however, mostly we are disconnected from it.

My initial idea is inspired by scarecrows who face the same situation as us, inside the natural environment but unable to have subjective feelings about it. This project is composed of three main parts: costume design, moving image installation, and documentary video.

I used mylar to make a costume for the participant because this material can reflect the outside surrounding environment, and can create an isolated experience inside the suit. In addition, I made a mylar helmet to present my moving images. Inside the helmet, I set up an iPad screen which presents a kinetic video.

I shot original videos from Reedy Creek, a water source that feeds into the James River in Richmond and deconstructed the videos based on







the growing and moving direction of each video. The tree video was split by vertical bands, the other of the flowing creek was split by horizontal bands. The participant inside the helmet is unable to connect with the outside environment. All the visual information they get is from the small iPad screen. They see and hear the natural world through the digital device, however, what they see and hear is not real but just glitch fiction.

Lastly, I created a character—Mr. Scarecrow—who has lost his way and is disconnected from the outside environment. I took a documentary video to record his exploration of Reedy Creek. He is hesitant and still confused about his next destination...

In this project, I use design as a tool to create a ritual experience or performance for audiences to experience and reflect upon the absence of nature.

Onlone

Process

00:42



# Touch & Control

Onlone  
2016 Fall  
GDES 610  
Grad Workshop

Process  
Video  
Costume  
Performance

00:44



Loneliness is about the lack of communication. I am interested in the mechanism that how people communicate with the digital machine through touching and controlling the buttons.

The button is the tangible mediator that help people communicate with mechanical devices. However, mostly this kind of communication is unidirectional. We always in the dominant position and place command. By pressing the button, our physical action changes the different result in the virtual world. The performance is about Identity replacement between human and machine. It is an interesting start to explore the relationship between control and being controlled.

Everyone is being controlled by the intensive social pressure. Not only an actor or a performance artist but every individual; a policeman, a hotel stuff, a violinist, a Vogue model; is trying to persuade others to believe in their character. To do this they need to deliver a performance.

The button suit gives me a new identity as a loyal and precise mediator. Wearing the button suit as a remote in real life, I am controlled by my audience. All their commands change my reaction in the parallel virtual world.





Hi:-)

Online  
2017 Spring  
GDES 692  
Independent Study

Process  
Video  
Performance  
Installation

00:48



Online provides us a stage to perform ourselves. I am interested in the authenticity and our multi identities performance in the digital space, and how the faitsy and insecurity contribute to our online loneliness.



Projec #3 Hi:-)

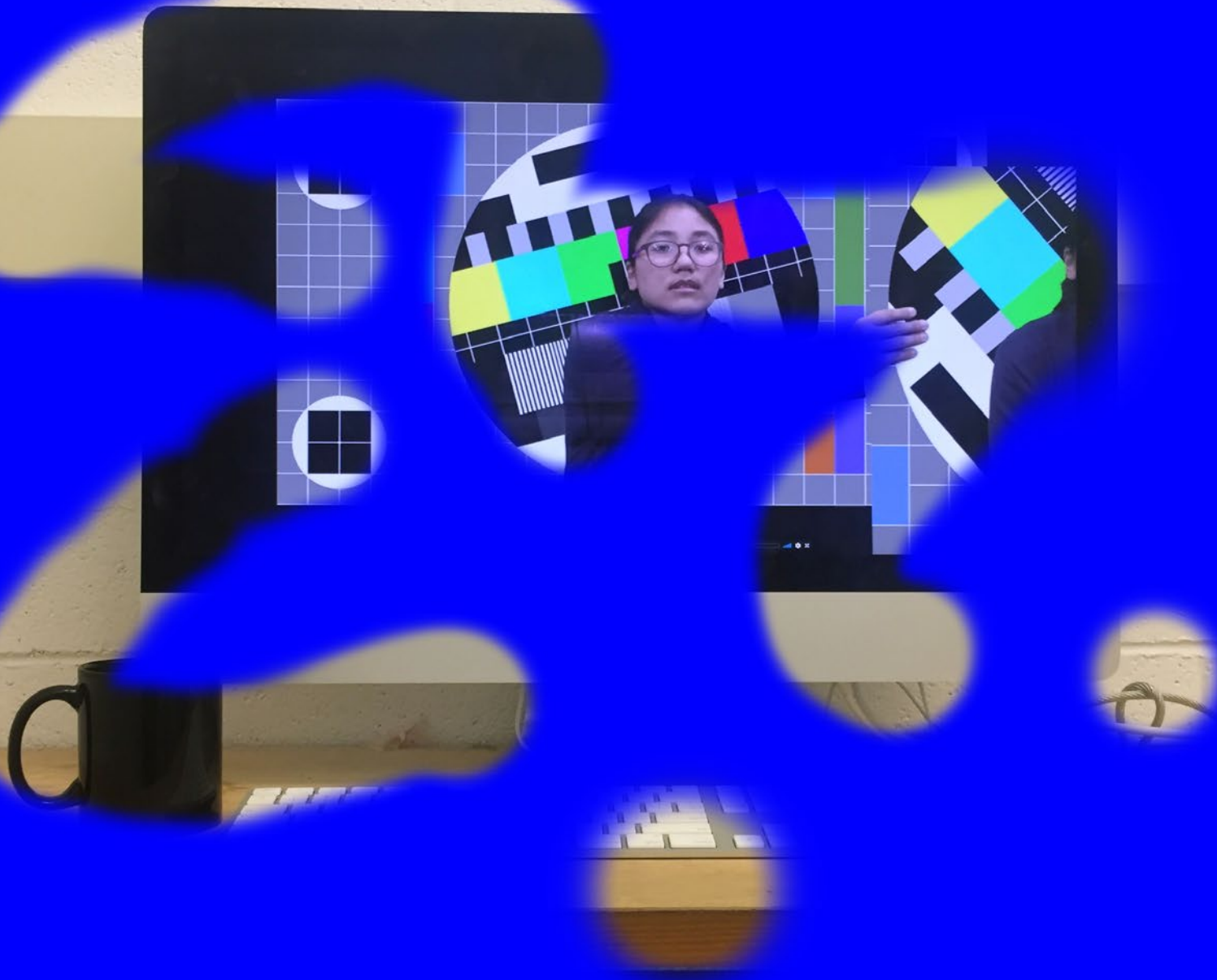
Online, we can claim to be whoever we wish. Like actors playing a role, we can deliberately choose to put forth identity cues or claims of self that can closely resemble or wildly differ from reality. With the rise of social platforms, the virtual spaces for these portrayals of alternate identities seems near endless.

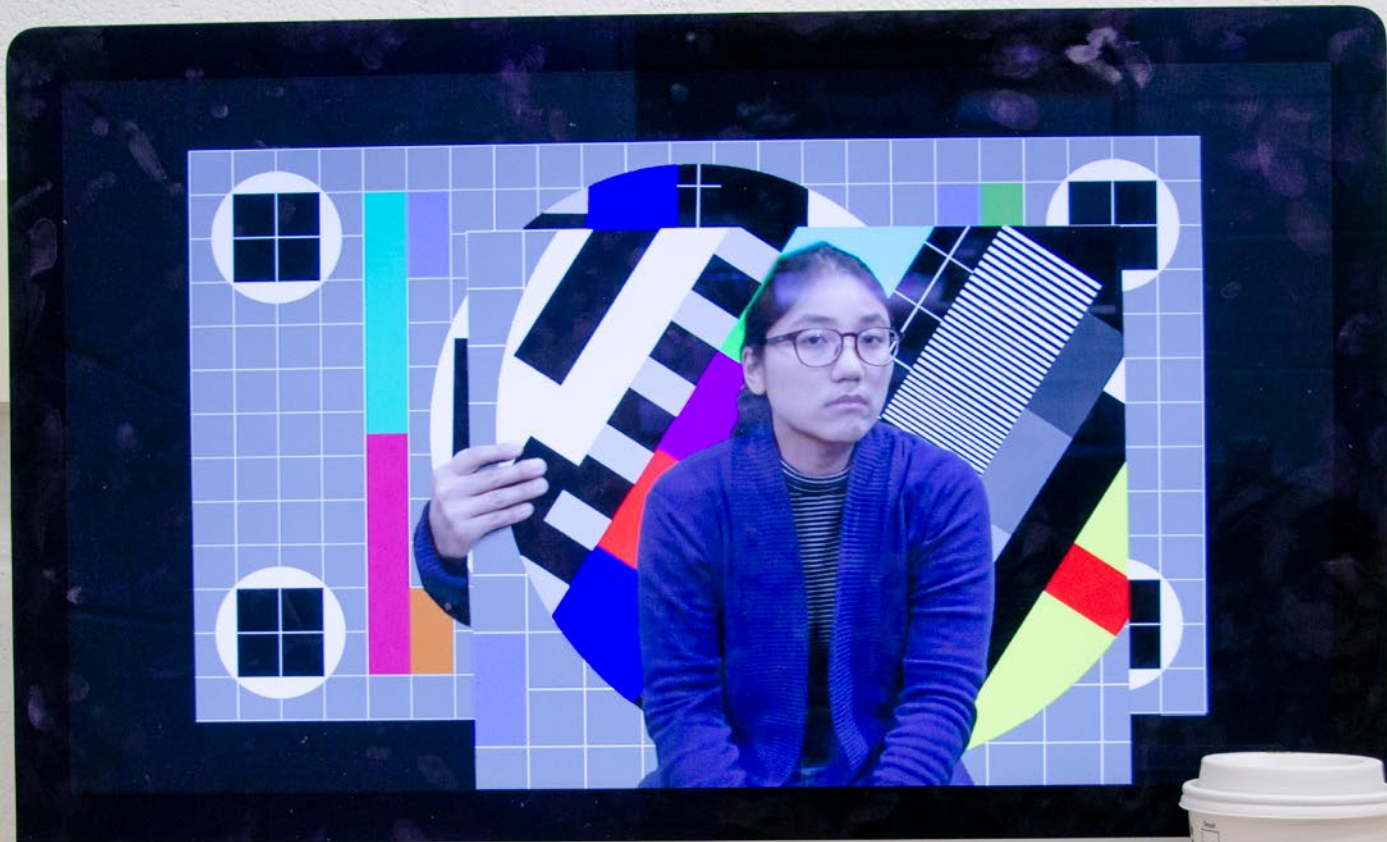
Dating apps provide users with the most competitive performing stage, encouraging people to present our perfect side. Everyone strives to disguise and perform themselves in the limited space of profile pages to get more attention within the chance of couple seconds showing on audiences' cell phone screen. However, after the continuing identities performing, we get lost. Who are the real ourselves? The one who keep performing and nearly perfect in the virtual world or the one who are anxiously waiting behind the screen and looking for the next audience...

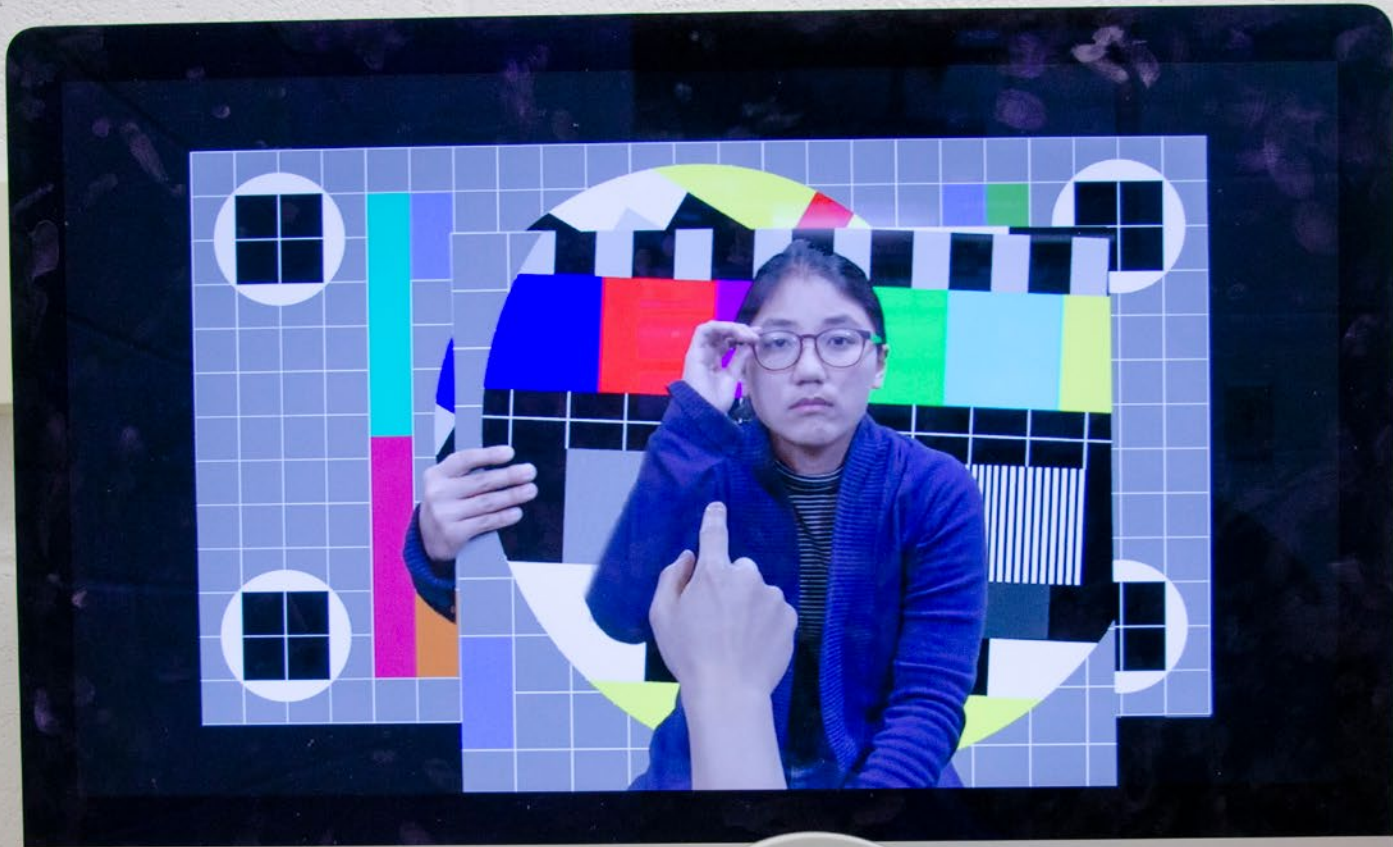
Online

Process

00:50

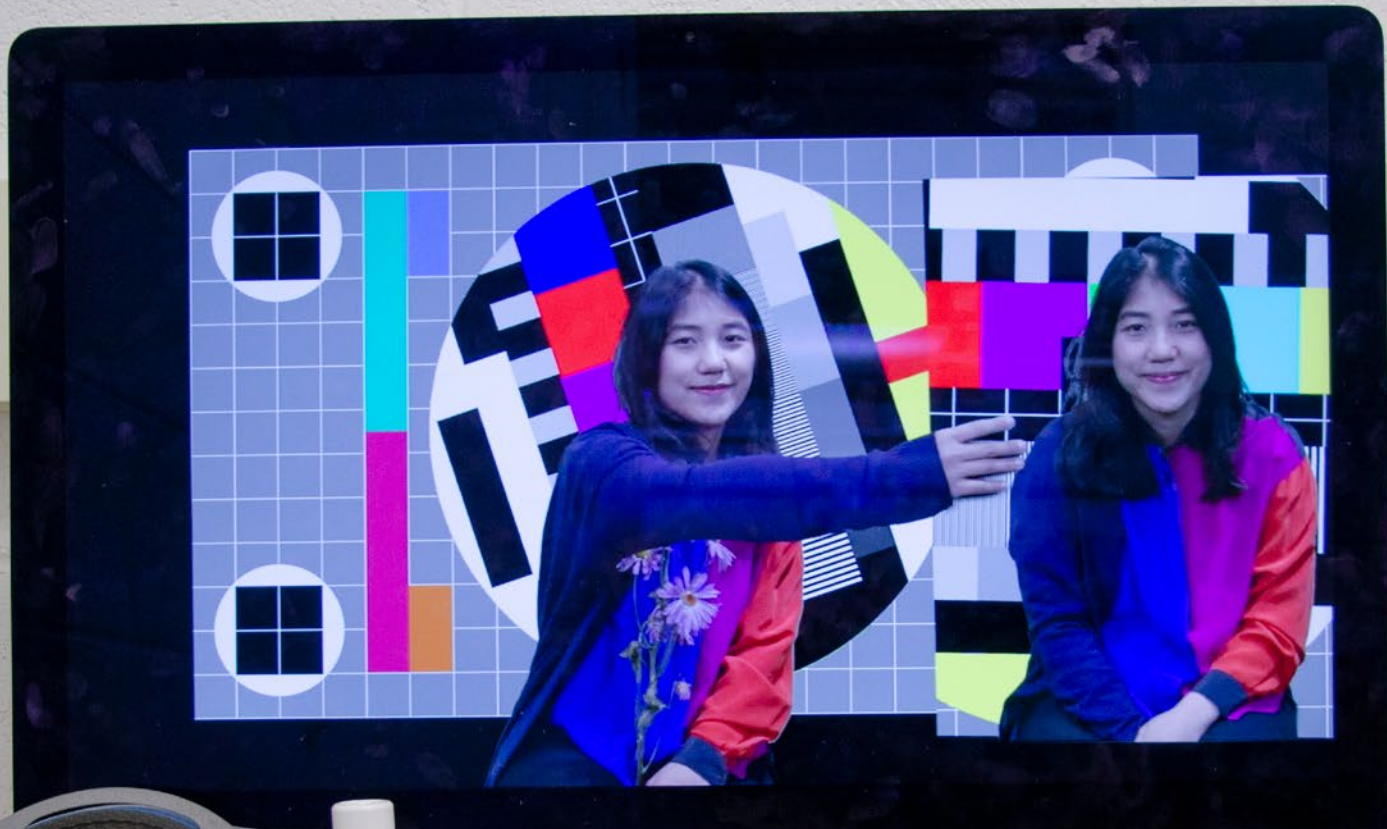




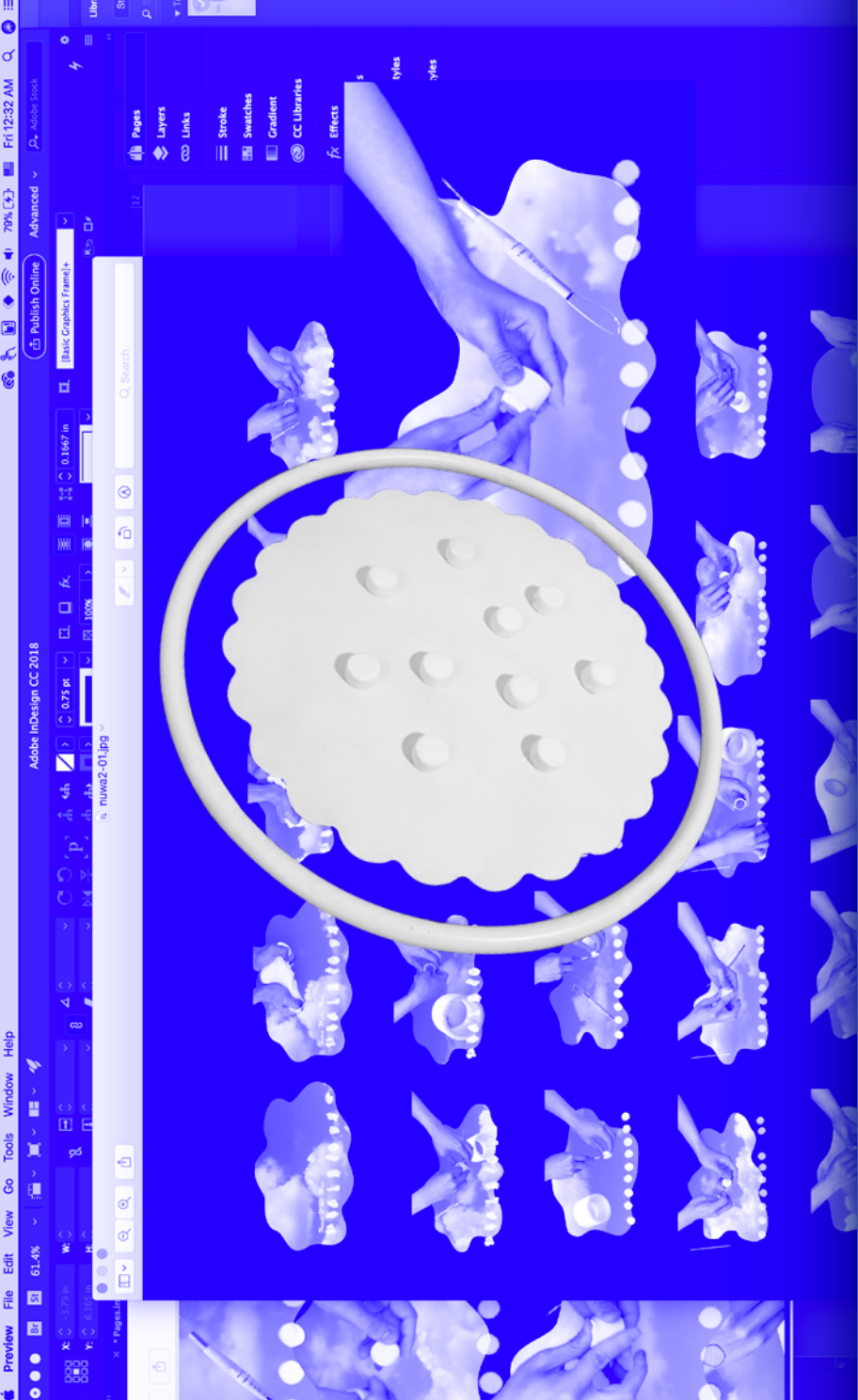












# 女媧造人 NÜWA MADE MEN

Onlone  
2017 Spring  
GDES 611  
Grad Workshop

Process  
Video  
Performance  
Installation

01:04



During my research, I found that the online assimilation is one of the main reasons of the current online loneliness. I want to explore how to use the performance to reinterpret this phenomenon.

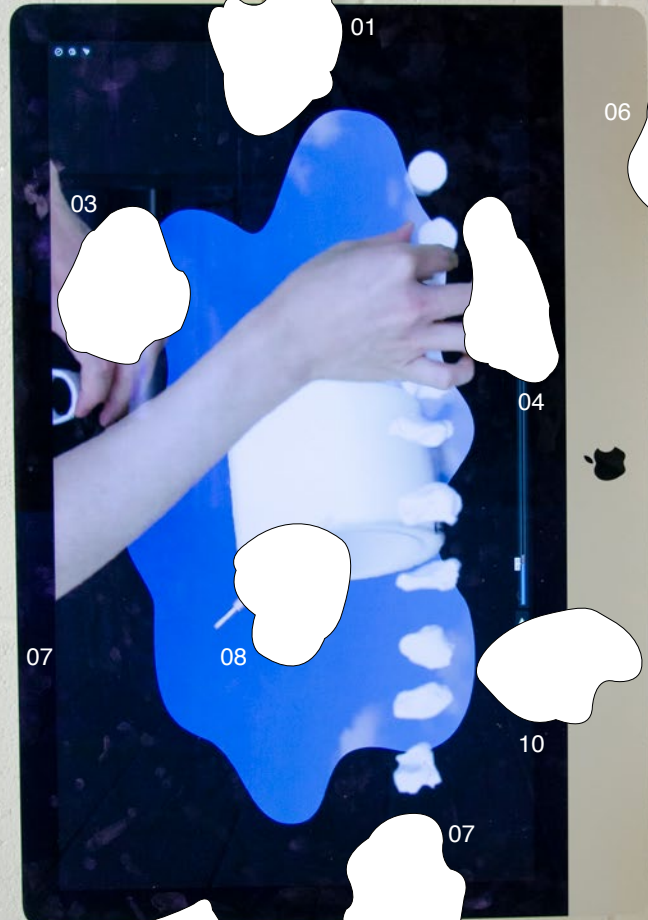
The work begins with an ancient Chinese Legend story. Nüwa was the celestial being who used the clay to create the human beings in the world. In this video performance, I tried to reinterpret the story. Being the God and having the strongest power to make and shape human, I used the white clay and my shaping tools to create my own perfect "human being"(the perfect white cylinder) in my world. The suspend video installation is the working desktop for Nüwa to execute her work. Through the overlook perspective, everyone is the god in my work.

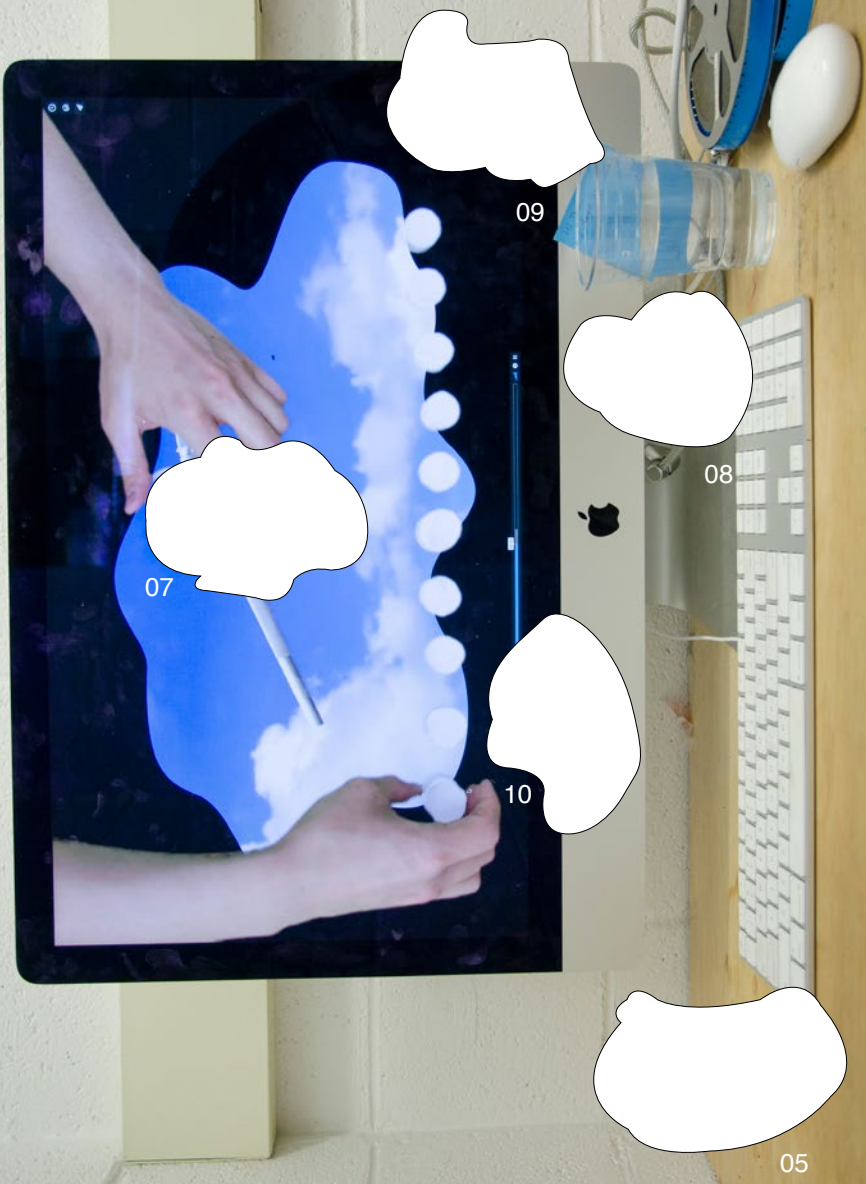
I enjoy in looping process of shaping and refining my human, and be pleased with my perfect trophies, although the truth is that all these ten humans are almost the same after my delicate refining process. What are the criteria of perfect? When referring to those perfect and successful stories, everything seems to be similar. Everyone tried to copy others' story to become the next perfect people. However, the truth is that all the humans will be assimilated into the same perfect white cylinders eventually...

Online

Process

01:06





Online

Discussion

00:01



Hi Sarah,  
I keep thinking

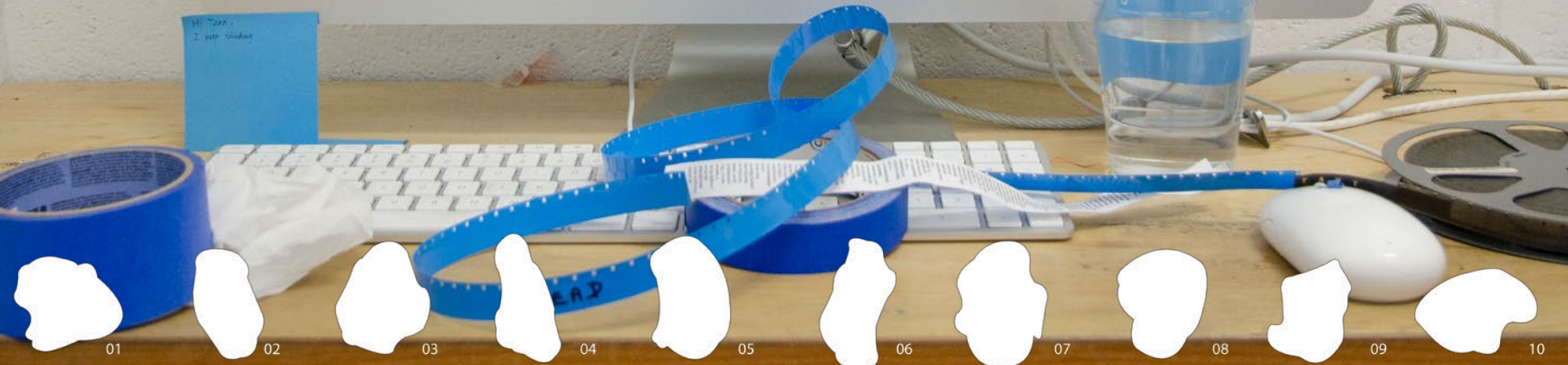


01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10





My Task  
I. per slide



01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10



# MUKBANG

Onlone  
2017 Fall  
GDES 611  
Grad Workshop

Process  
Video  
Performance  
Installation

01:16



This project starts with the idea of the online Mukbang video. Mukbang is an online audiovisual broadcast in which a host eats large quantities of food while interacting with their audience.

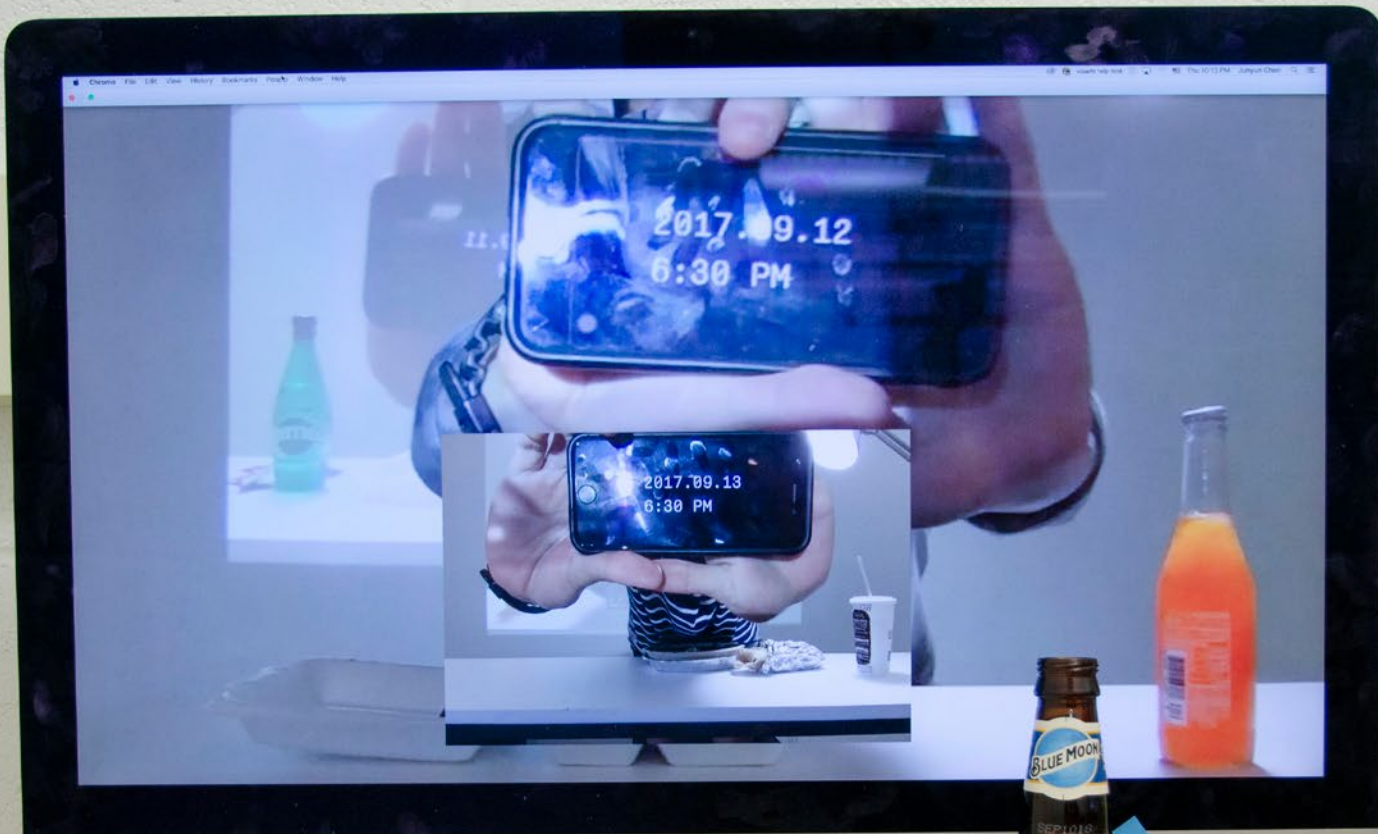
The democratic culture of the Internet is increasingly a part of daily life. If somebody wants their voice heard, they can do it with a couple of clicks. When everyone can easily broadcast themselves on the Web, something changed in our online performance. The online performance gives the performers the strongest power to execute the performance without the spatial and time restriction.

Sitting in front of the webcam, the Mukbang culture starts to be the apotheosis of humankind's trajectory away from face to face interaction. Sitting in front of my laptop camera, I am the performer, recording the Mukbang video for myself on the next day. Meanwhile, I am also the only audience, watching the video from last day. In this project, I tried to reinterpret the format of Mukbang Video and using it as a platform to explore the inconsistent but concomitant relationship between the performer and audience. Mukbang video is the product of our online loneliness, in my pseudo Mukbang video, being the only performer and audience at the same time is a looping and doubling loneliness. But if being alone is an inevitable part of our life, why not just enjoy it, enjoy a slice of pizza by yourself.





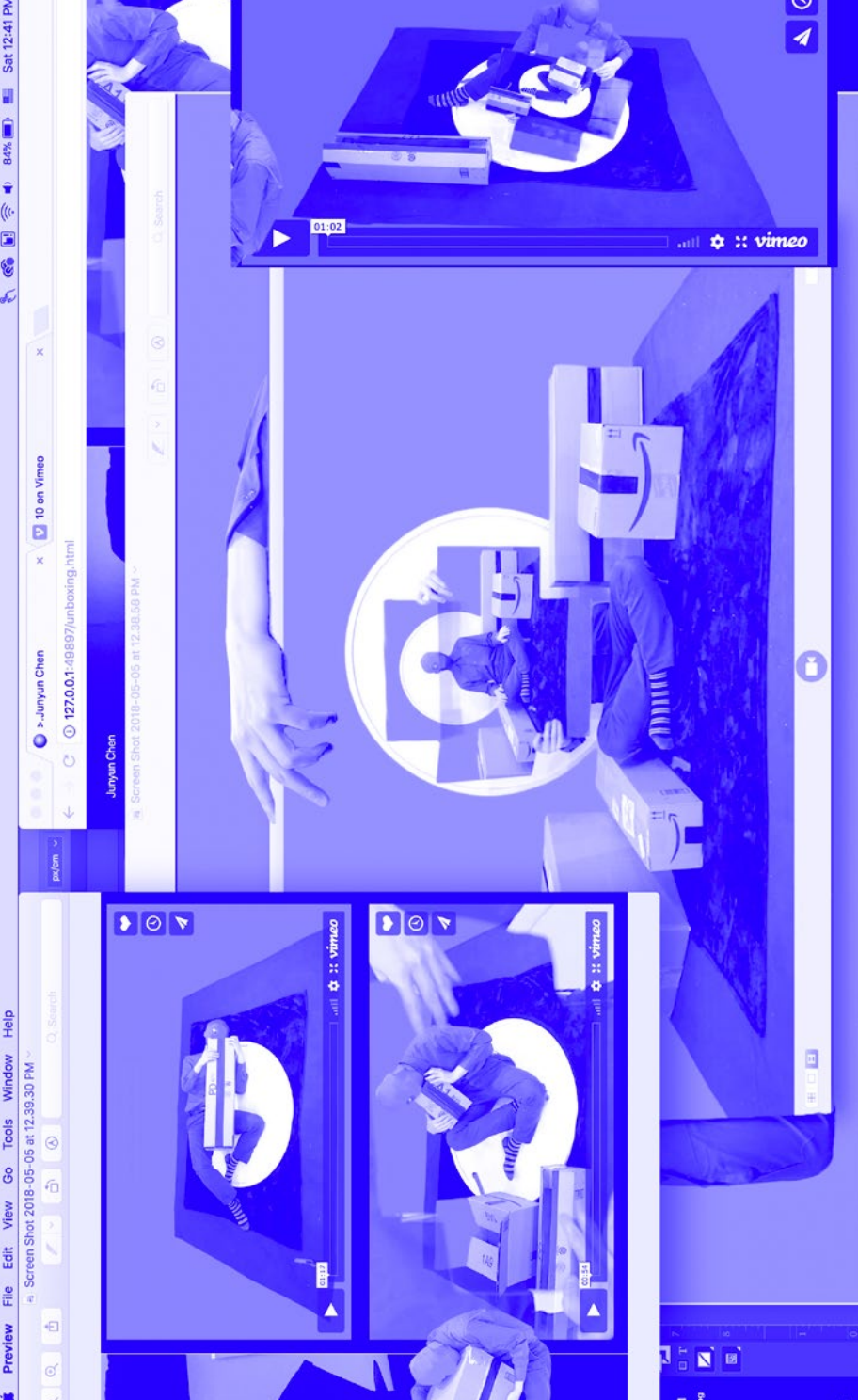










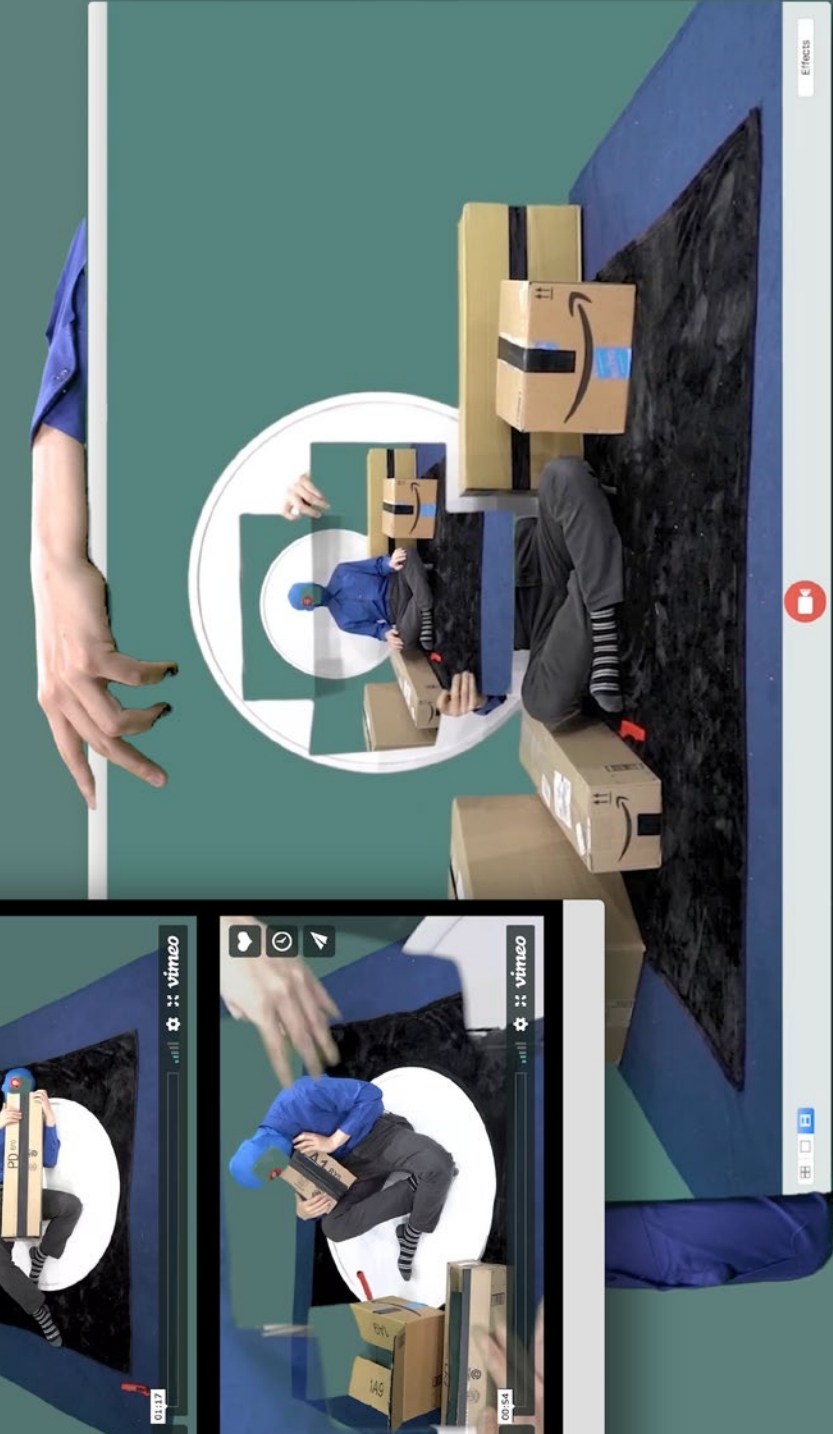


Online  
2017 Fall  
GDES 611  
Grad Workshop

Process  
Video  
Performance  
Installation

01:32

# UNBOXING



Online

Process

01:34

My video installation Unboxing is the continue exploration of the online loneliness after the previous Mukbang project. It was inspired by the online "unboxing" videos (people providing an online performance of unboxing the commodities they have bought online). It's an online phenomenon where people tend to use shopping as an approach to get over loneliness. These unboxing videos satisfy people's growing appetite for material aspiration and online loneliness by presenting the intimacy of touching and opening the delivery boxes. In my Unboxing video, I keep unboxing different size boxes, but nothing is inside the box. The subject, myself, keeps touching and opening the box, with no result. It's a vicious cycle between the growing appetite for recognition, being noticed, and the curing of loneliness. The boxes are just the containers of the looping and endless loneliness.



Projec #6

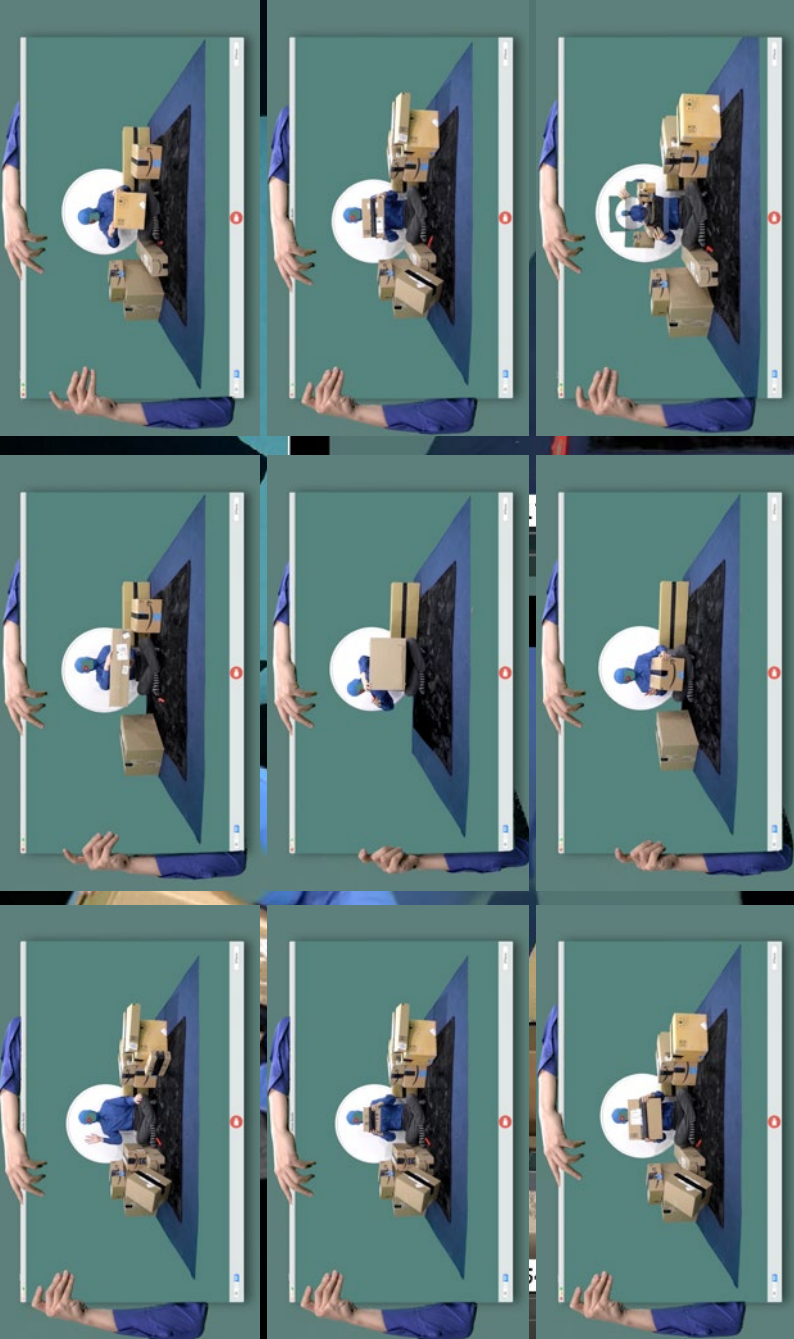
Unboxing

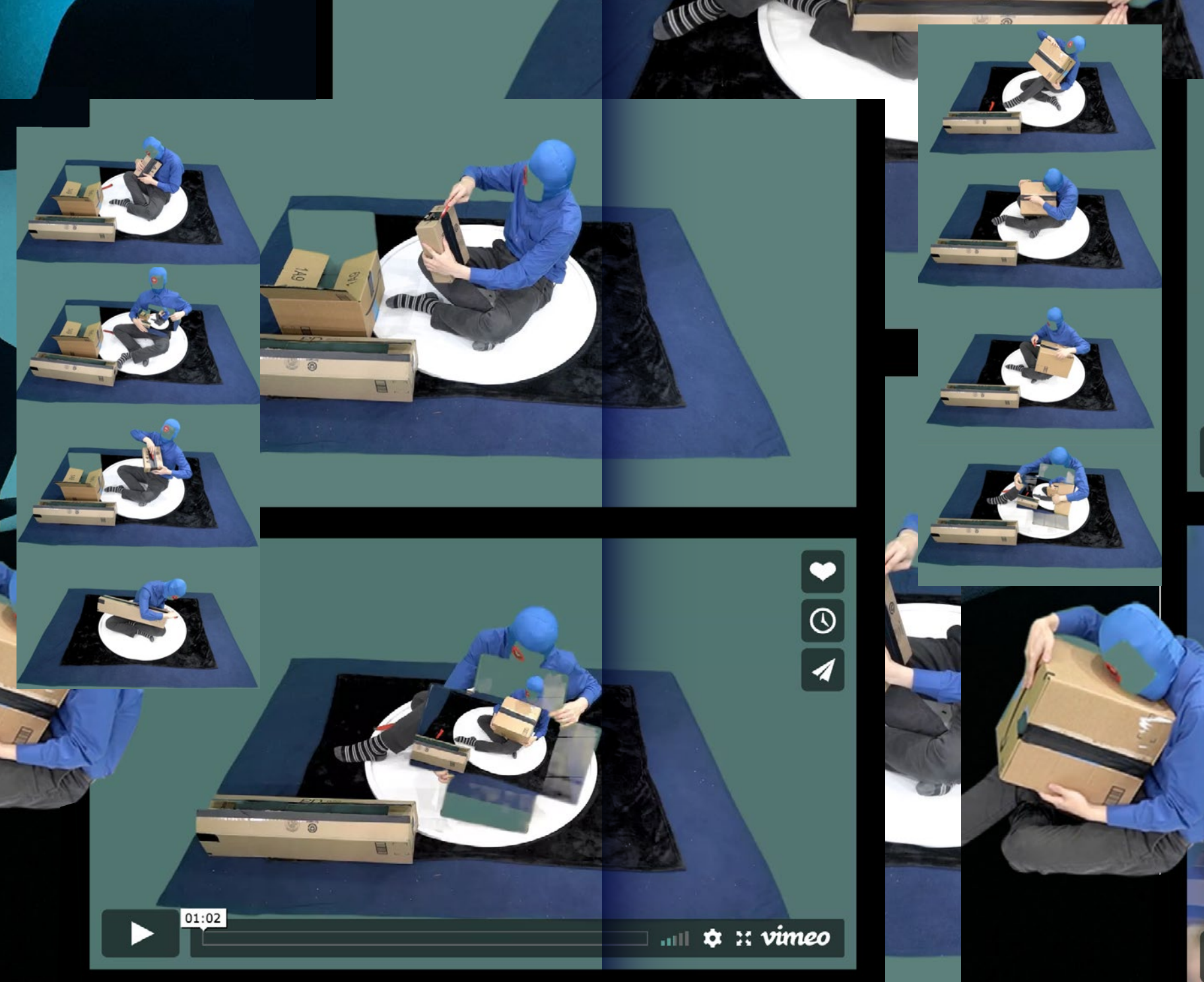


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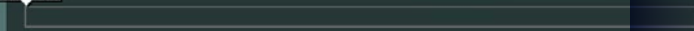


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01:02



vimeo



*To see, to hear,  
to touch the loneliness*

Loneliness is an abstract and broad word. As the project evolved I began to narrow down my research into issues of queer loneliness and find more connection with other queers who are suffering from the experience of online loneliness.

Loneliness is ineffable, and most people don't want to talk about this. My previous works were more indirect and metaphorical approaches to access and express loneliness. For my thesis, I explore the online loneliness directly through the a series of interviews.

How to make the interview access other people's loneliness more appropriately and comfortably was a challenge. I created the interview space in my apartment and invited people to come to have some informal conversation in my bed. The soft pillow, blanket, and the provided pizza created a cozy and intimate environment for my interviewees.

The selection of the interviewee was based an invitation I posted on my Grindr profile. I talked to people and invited them to my place for the interview. They are all from the different background, sharing their stories. It's risky, but the reality and uncontrollability also reflect and amplify our online environment.

After collecting six interviews from selected men, the next question was how to present the interviews in a public gallery space. I wanted to create an interaction between the audiences and the edited interviews. All the interview text content will be archived on a website which will be presented on a standing touchscreen. I invite people to reveal the content by touching the screen to create the intimate interaction between the audience and the interviews. Even as the audience uses the touchscreen to erase a solid color covering the text and the interview, parts of the text—but only in fragments—are revealed. The illegible reading experience in some way protects the privacy of my interviewee, but also aroused the audience's curiosity to approach others' loneliness.

Throughout the thesis project, I developed a new understanding of the prominent experience of loneliness for the queer community online. The internet is a stage of delusion. Everything online must not necessarily be real. It is all about an attempt for spiritual comfort. It is just like the magical placebo, helping us temporarily get rid of the loneliness. But the truth is that the loneliness is still there, and we are onlone together.

2018 Spring  
GDES 699  
Thesis Research

Video  
Website  
Installation

ONLONE 00:00



01:43

Onlone

Exhibition

Onlone

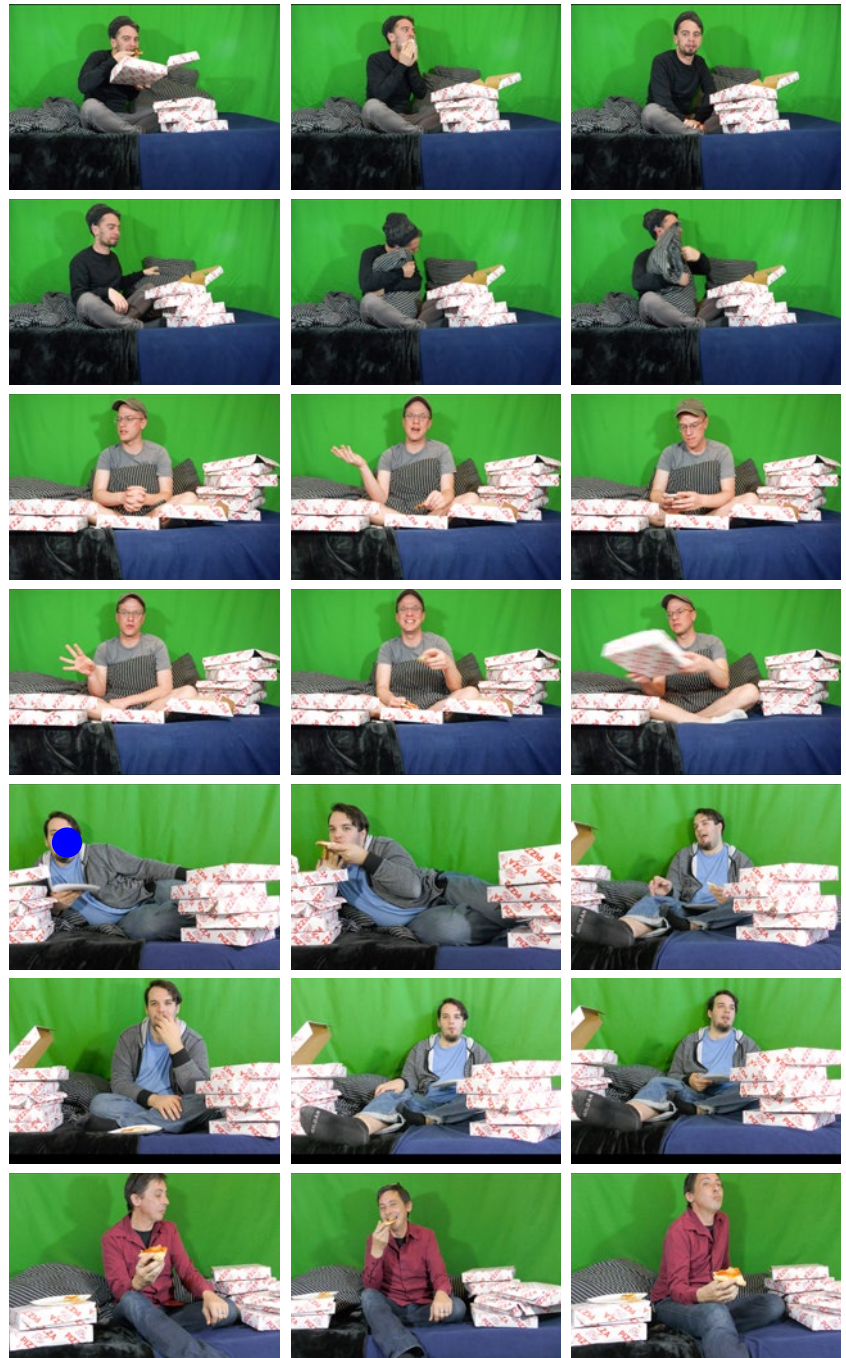
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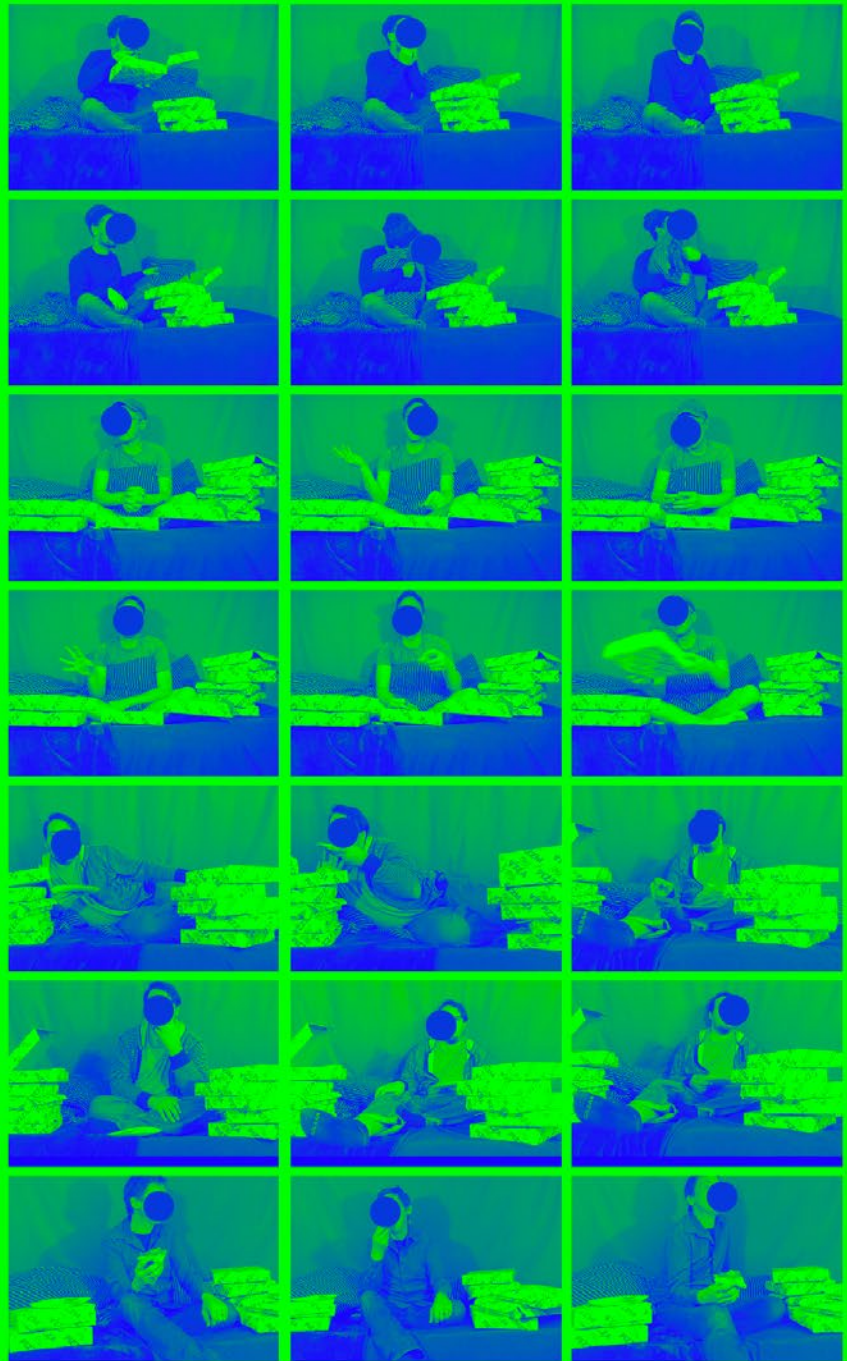
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When  
meet.  
someone fr  
grinds but you  
I know  
before  
Jack:

grinds but you  
I know  
before  
Jack:









Online 20:16:54



Online 20:1  
Jim: How do  
you feel when  
I meet.  
Someone fr  
grinder but you  
can't know  
in befo  
Jack:

blinking  
Jack:

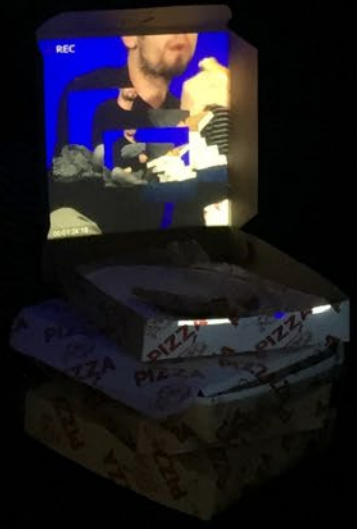
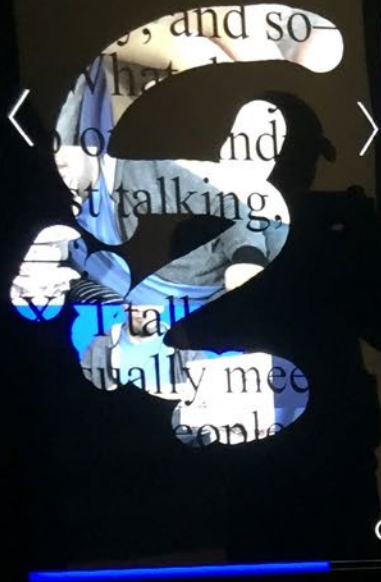






Online 14:51:59

4/6



## #01 Richard. R

JY: okay so when was your last time using Grindr?  
 RR: ten minutes ago  
 JY: did you talk to someone or just looking?  
 RR: only looking  
 JY: did you say hi to anyone or tap anyone?  
 RR: mm mmm \*no\*  
 JY: why are you online on grindr?  
 RR: um to try to find people to connect with in Richmond because i'm a new person  
 JY: So you're looking for like friendship?  
 RR: more friendship yeah  
 JY: really?  
 RR: mm hmmm  
 JY: When you're using grindr do you think it helps you to feel less lonely?  
 RR: mm mmm  
 JY: no?  
 RR: no, I think that it is kind of a placebo effect for loneliness but I consciously know that i'm still lonely but I still use it at the same time so I think it's like a conscious decision to use grindr in a way that is still very much still by myself you know?  
 JY: I know you've deleted your grindr a couple times, why did you delete it?  
 RR: I think there becomes an obsession with checking it's almost like an analogy to a slot machine where you pull a lever and you see what you're going to get it's like you refresh grindr or you press the refresh button and suddenly there's like a new person but sometimes you need to step away from things so that's why I deleted it (1:54)  
 JY: But when you delete it you lose all the information like history, chatting history. Do you think it's kind of refreshing or do you think it's like...  
 RR: I guess like it's interesting to think about how people start to archive like online experiences right so you can befriend someone on instagram after Grindr cause you're connected with them via another platform so if you suddenly becomes friends with them on another site then maybe the refreshes is sort of like cleansing the people you haven't connected completely with you know? And you can still go to another platform to find your people but I think you have to cleanse your instagram at some points too  
 JY: So that's why you have a lot of instagram followers?  
 RR: mm hmm  
 JY: do you think the more friends you get you feel less lonely? (3:00)  
 RR: not necessarily, I thin out of, for every ten people that you meet maybe one or two people become actual friends and I think that's a problem with online culture and the way that we are experiencing like culture in general now,  
 JY: do you think that loneliness is different in the online world than it is the real world? ~ eat ~  
 RR: I think that um, I think that they're kind of similar but also pretty different at the same time so online loneliness is like a controlled loneliness and the real world loneliness is maybe less controlled  
 JY: control?

## April 2, 2018

RR: mm hmm  
 JY: controlled by yourself or  
 RR: mmm  
 JY: do you think the internet helps you to feel less lonely or does it generate more loneliness?  
 RR: I think by comparison more loneliness  
 JY: more loneliness?  
 RR: mmm hmm  
 JY: what other question.... So what do you do when you feel lonely online? Talk with people or just talking?  
 RR: mhh mmm for the most part yeah.  
 JY: do you feel it's weird to come to someone's place to do an interview? Cause if we don't know each other and we're just chatting on grindr and you come to my place for an interview do you think it's weird?  
 RR: no  
 JY: okay. Do you think that queer loneliness is different than other people's loneliness?  
 RR: I think that queer loneliness is somewhat different because of the structures that society has placed for us in that we don't have necessarily a right or a conclusion to become married or in a normal family and so suddenly you're navigating a space that is a lot different than maybe some of your other friends who are not queer so I think you can quickly feel more isolated or alone in that regard but I think it also allows you to access maybe other queer people who are feeling similarly to build community (6:00) and so I think that there's a lot of potential in queer loneliness  
 JY: so before grindr how did you meet other gay friends?  
 RR: clubs  
 RR: Myspace haha  
 JY: what is clubs? You mean in real life?  
 RR: gay club yeah  
 JY: okay and Myspace is more internet stuff  
 RR: mm hmmm  
 JY: is it like... do you feel like insecurity when you meet people online?  
 RR: sometimes yes but most of the time no  
 JY: so did you...like when you see other people's picture do you worry about if it's a real person or a fake picture?  
 RR: I usually don't care  
 JY: so just talk with them?  
 RR: yeah  
 JY: will you meet everyone you talk to or just -  
 RR: no usually just one person out of the people that I talk to  
 JY: when was the last time you felt like you were lonely?  
 RR: maybe like a day ago  
 JY: what happened? Were you alone or just in your apartment?  
 RR: By myself in my apartment  
 JY: were you in your bed?  
 RR: mm hmmm  
 JY: so the bed is always related to loneliness  
 RR: in some ways yeah not necessarily always but yeah  
 JY: and do you feel weird eating alone? What do you eat when you eat alone?  
 RR: I usually eat with my studio mates so maybe like fast food if i'm eating alone  
 JY: what is the loneliest food you think?

RR: maybe like ramen noodles or something, ramen maybe is more lonely cause it's an individual package of food

JY: or instant noodles, that is lonely

RR: mm hmm pretty sad

JY: so all the lonley food is unhealthy?

RR: I think that's pretty safe to say yeah

JY: because lonely is unhealthy. What do you think of loneliness? What is loneliness?

RR: Um I think of loneliness as more like the relationship of your past and less about like feeling like you're not connected to people. I think loneliness feels more lonely in relation to how you felt more connected with people in the past so like the more you feel connected with people the more lonely you feel when you're lonely. But I think it's hard to define what loneliness is. Because some people feel lonely when they're around people and other people feel lonely when they're alone so I think it's more of like a feeling of um not being a part of something and less about needing one partner or a relationship or something like this

JY: Do you feel lonely when you have a boyfriend?

RR: sometimes yeah

JY: why? Cause you want something?

RR: I think in some places you know there's it's impossible to connect completely so you find loneliness in the lack of connection

JY: So maybe we need to learn how to find a connection with our-

selves so we won't feel lonely anymore?

RR: mm hmm. Yeah I think that's good advice from people in the past

JY: being alone, learn how to be happy being alone

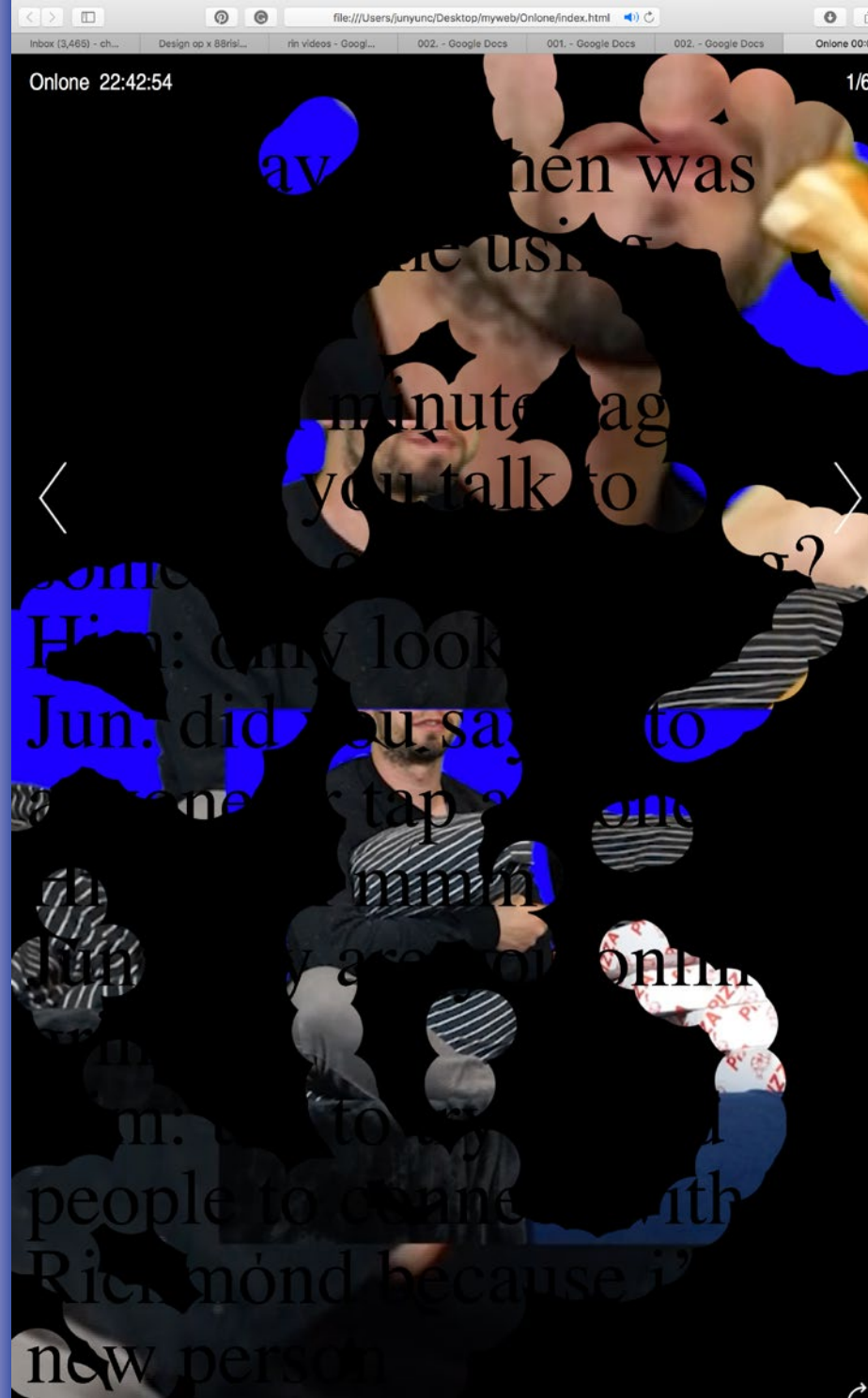
RR: learn how to be happy being alone

JY: uh huh

RR: and then you'll feel better about being with other people

JY: okay I think that's a nice ending, thank you

RR: thank you



## #02 Jack

April 4, 2018

JY: how do you feel when you meet someone from grindr but you don't know them before:

JK: nervous, always, it really just depends, but if you're going just to meet and meet them as a person it's not about sex it's still nervous but you're a little more like relaxed and you're wondering. BUT if it's about sex you're nervous.

JY: mmm

JK: a lot more nervous. Again especially if you're going to them or they're coming to you cause you just don't know. You don't....just... it's a stranger. And in today's society you know it's a scary thought, you hear about people doing this all the time, I mean, I remember on Craigslist you know that guy just went to look at property for those two guys and they killed him. (00:44) you know? You don't know who to trust. The smart thing to do, the thing that I do is to take precautions be smart, let people know where you're going. If you're not fully out, you know, if you're not, if you're still someone in the closet um find someone who's close to you you know you can trust let em know you're out you're gay and that you wanna use them as a security blanket. You know there's a lot of guys who are genuine. They put their real stats their real pics and you know there's a lot who don't, I've lied. You know? But like you said it's not about insecurity you know usually it's about

trust trying to meet someone or even just get pics of somebody cause you're horny. (1:27) you know especially as you get older and you get turned down a lot you're like you don't care if they're telling the truth or not. You don't care what pics they send you because you're probably not going to meet and you're probably gonna have some type of talk, some type of discussion some type of sex talk you'll exchange picture whether they're real or not and that's it you know? You know the genuine ones. You know? You can just tell, you can tell when they send pics like "where's yours?" "send a pic of you holding your fingers up" you know? Be real. You know I've talked to several guys, one guy i've been talking to, I hate lying to him, I'm lying to him (2:02). Cause he's so attractive, but I was just like, I just said hello, I never lied at first but he went into this whole spiel, we just start talking and then next thing you know after a couple of days, we didn't talk about pics. We just talked and it was going great and then all of a sudden he wanted pics and I knew right then and there as soon as he gets my pic he ain't gonna talk to me no more. So I lied. Because it was nice talking to him, he was a friendly guy.

JY: So you feel like being a big older guy on Grindr is pretty lonely? (2:34)

JK: yeah definitely. It's not, it's not

100% i mean there are guys out there who are into older men, who are into older and bigger men. You know basically bears. You know, you would be considered a twink. I would be considered a big bear. And you know there are guys who are into that and it's just more few and far in between. You know if you line me up with you and a jock and a weight lifter and you had a young guy sit and pick one of em I would get picked last. (3:04) It gets numby, you know, you become numb to the block bite, cause that's the thing I hate the most. Is that block bite because it becomes, it becomes to me rude. I don't mind no one being into me, it's doesn't bother me, if you're not into me that's fine. But don't strike up a conversation with me then when you get my pic you don't say a word you're just blocked. To me it's discouraging, it's rude, i'd rather you be forward, i'd rather you just come up front and say 'oh man well you know I gotta be honest with you i'm more into my age or i'm more into my body type.'" but you know you seem cool I don't mind talking to you down the road but or you know you're just not my type. I'd rather someone say that to me (3:56) and then i'll be like "oh that's cool we can maybe talk and maybe if you get the urge towards a big guy one day give me a holler" and i'm cool with that but to sit there and once you see my pic you just walk.

JK: yeah I had one guy on there

who, this is how bad it was, he didn't want to have sex, he didn't want to hook up, he just wanted someone to tell him some jokes. And I knew a couple of great jokes, I know some good jokes and was like if you want me to call you it'd be easier for me to tell you and he goes "yeah okay that's cool" and he goes "okay where's your pics" and i sent my pic and he blocked me. So I'm like okay because i'm old and fat you don't want to hear my jokes? What does that have to do with anything? (4:34)

JY: maybe the joke is just an excuse and he just wants or needs something more than jokes or just...

JK: I don't know! I mean, it's possible but he had to know that or he would have said, he didn't want to hook up.

JY: mmm

JK: So you know but yeah it, it can be a little discouraging, I mean and a little off putting when you're the big older guy (4:58)

JY: and the next question: so do you think being lonely in the online world and the real world is different?

JK: Honestly I think the real world, I mean to me there's not a ton of difference. Lonely is lonely, doesn't matter if you're online or if you're in the real world.

JY: mmhmm

JK: But I do think in the real world it's a little more. cause online you can lie. (5:19) it's a fantasy world. You can lie, cheat, that's



what catfishing is. Everyone does, everyone can have that stupid show you know I think it's bullshit, everyone catfishes. And everyone will always catfish. (5:32) whether it's for jokes, for friends, for sex doesn't matter. When you're online and you're in the chat room people create a persona that's not real (5:42). and to the ones that don't eventually will down the road just for the fun of it. But i think in the real world it's a lot harder. Because you make friends, you have family, most people do, but a lot of times people grow appart you know i've grown up with tons of friends I have a big family, I come from a big family um but you know I see them when I can you know I live with my brother and just a couple years ago our mother moved in with us because she's turned old she turned 81 so we take care of her. Um I got brothers and sisters I had tons of friends growing up but I don't see them much anymore my last friend, my boy, that I hung around with the last twelve years I don't see him barely at all. I talk to him by text. (6:31) Maybe once a month, maybe once every other month cause he's married, gotta kid, so that kind of loneliness now you know, people go out and search for those friends they try to search for those things but you know it's a lot harder especially the older you get (6:48) it will find

that out a lot of young people don't realize it they think that high school and college friends are forever it's not you know? People graduate, people move, people pass away. (7:03) and then your herd, it starts to become lonely online you can talk to anybody anytime anywhere without anything be anyone it cold but it's not as lonely

JY: and do you think that gay/queer loneliness is different than other people's loneliness?

JK: Being alone?

JY: yeah

JK: no. (7:32) lonely is lonely. Whether you're male, female, gay, bi, straight, transgender, doesn't matter. Lonely is lonely you know? My brother's straight but I know he's a lonely guy he's one of those guys that grew up shy always to himself, never dated. You know, when he's online he talks his head off, he's a big football fan he can go to football sites and talk about football all day. He's met all kinds of friends online about football he's even talked to a girl online just as a friend. He grew up having a few friends but over the years he stays at home. He's online, he watches tv, he goes for treatment when he needs it, he has a kidney problem so he goes for dialysis. But you know he's straight I know he's a lonely person I know he wished he had someone um my mother is 81 she dated after our father left us she had one guy she dated

after a while then another he passed away she ain't dated no one in years. I know she wished even now she had someone everyone does, everyone wishes they had a companion or a great friend they could see every day all the time. But it doesn't matter who it is whether your orientation is or race, lonely is lonely.

JY: hat's a good answer (8:53). so do you think the internet is something that can help you to relieve the loneliness or is it a place where you generate more loneliness? (9:07)

JK: I think it's a place that's a bandaid for loneliness

JY: oh bandaid

JK: again you can go online and be anyone and talk to anyone about anything but it's not real you can still make a great friend but what if that great friend is in England. You know are you truly gonna meet are you truly gonna get together or just be online friends and there's nothing wrong with that being online friends, real friends. But it's still not the same as having that friend to meet or relationship, someone to be with. To hold. To be either in love with or hang out with. The family member you can get together with. It's not the same. It will never be the same. And it's not to say you can't meet this person and be friends and you never know, move in together, be roommates, be in a relationship, doesn't say that it can't happen it does but in the overall spectrum no it's not the same you know

it's a bandaid because most people you know they don't realize they need to get out there and i'm just as guilty I I get on my phone and get on Grindr and I spend too much time on it and I got friends out there I know want me to come out and do stuff and that's my choice (10:30) you know right now cause i'm out of shape and stuff I choose not to go out too many places but to me it's a bandaid it's not real in that sense you're better off out here you know meeting people whether it's on grindr, at a bar, you know at a party even at some time of get together like something the city is sponsoring you know

JY: when did you start using grindr? (10:57)

JK: oh man, I think in the beginning of 2017 I was on and off again, I had two emails and I had two accounts and a lot of times I would delete my accounts because you have too many people that always you know hit you up like "hey how you doin" you try to clear em off and sometimes they come back and your list starts growing too big and so sometimes I would delete it I never knew but once you delete it grindr goes if you do this too many times we're bumping you off. Well I did it like three times and on one of my emails they bumped me off. They won't let me back on. So I use my other one but it was about 2017 that's the one I use it "JJ"

JY: which is the J?  
 JK: the one you saw, the J is "jack" a few people I grew up with called me jack jack so JJ  
 JY: JJ, that's cute JJ \*laughs\*  
 JK: But most people call me jack  
 JY: do you know jj has another meaning in chinese?  
 JK: what does it mean?  
 JY: penis  
 JK: I chose good then!  
 JY: when I saw JJ I was like ugh  
 JK: I should of put in Joy JJ  
 JY: uh huh  
 JK: JJ means penis?  
 JY: nickname of the penis  
 JK: ooohh (12:11) okay so like slang  
 JY: yean like chinese slang, like JJ  
 JK: cool, that's awesome  
 JY: how did you know other people before grindr?  
 JK: um you mean like meeting people?  
 JY: How do you meet new people  
 JK: uh hmm I don't know there were online chats, craigslist, I didn't like craigslist much but there was a few uh sometimes I would go to places that people would cruise like parks, um been busted at a park before doing that  
 JY: like cruising?  
 JK: yeah cruising  
 JY: is the cruising in real life the same as looking at a profile on Grindr?  
 JK: cruising is way different because you see em in person, they get a look at you, and they either want to do something or they don't and it depends on where you are like I don't know how well you know the area, were you born here? Were you born in virginia or richmond?  
 JY: no  
 JK: where were you born?  
 JY: china  
 JK: oh so you're from china  
 JY: yeah  
 JK: um so I don't know how well you know it but like down you know sims avenue?  
 JY: mhh hmmm  
 JK: alright well if you go down sims and forest hill avenue there's forest hill park has a big green area but behind it is a big drive in picnic area you can drive your cars in it's got shelters back there, grills and they've got more control on it now but specially years ago, and now guys used to go down there and cruise down there. They go down into the park and sit in their cars and they'll pull up next to you and think if you'd be interested there's a bathroom, guys went in, I hooked up down there a few times. But uh cruising is much different than online because again you can't lie about your persona you can't hide who you are they see you for what you are and i've always been a big guy, sometimes I was thinner, but you know this is the biggest i've ever been but I used to be thinner, smaller, and some guys who were into me, and some guys would wave me away they didn't want nothin to do with me, just was rude but it's fun it can be fun it can be dangerous

but it can be fun, you meet some cool guys and I tell you right now cruising is not about talking not about a meeting usually almost 95% of the time about sex so but one time I was down in forest hill park and there was a guy down there who was rubbing himself a little over his jeans I you know didn't do anything I got back in my car I went up to the restroom and you know I'm not hung or nothin I gotta small I kinda showed myself a little and he'd rub himself I left the bathroom got back and he kept following me I went down to the river he followed me he had a nice big convertible mustang uh and he kept following me and I thought "well he must be interested" so I went to a shelter and I exposed myself there and you can't do anything in a bathroom cause it's a bathroom you can't get naked in a bathroom doesn't matter but soon as I did he pulled a badge out and said "don't try to run" and i said "I ain't gonna run no where" where was I gonna run? (15:18) and he gave me a ticket I had to go to court pay a fine you know but I don't go down there if I do cruise down there I don't anything like that anymore, you know, so... but it's totally different. Totally different. Online, like I said, is a different world from your real life you can't hide who you are.  
 JY: when was the last time you deleted Grindr? (15:38)  
 JK: From grindr?  
 JY: yeah  
 JK: oh man, it's been probably, since they booted me off, it's been over seven months. I don't know if i'm ever gonna keep Grindr but i'm too afraid to delete now cause if you keep deleting the profile they'll eventually bump you off and not let you back on, I don't know why that is but I guess that they feel that you're covering something up (15:04)  
 JY: do you think one day you'll totally delete it and never re-download it?  
 JK: you know for a while I didn't  
 JY: really?  
 JK: yeah for a while I just left it alone  
 JY: how do you feel?  
 JK: When it was gone?  
 JY: yeah  
 JK: no different. I mean, I couldn't care less, I mean, I know i'm not gonna get to hookup a ton at this age I get here and there you know unfortunately that's just how it's gonna be you know so it's something i'm not struggling to worry about too much, I have other things to worry about unfortunately as you get older that's just how it is, sex.. when you're young sex is second nature it's always, especially on a guy's mind especially gay guy's minds, it's always there but as you get older it fades to the back some you don't worry about it nearly as much you know if it happens it happens, it don't, it don't. (16:59)

JY: when was the last time you felt like you were lonely?  
 JK: um, never...I never feel as much online lonely, in real life right now all the time. You know I mean not 100% lonely I have friends but I just don't see em but I do have family you know I live with my brother and my mom or you know they live with me. Um I take care of them cause he has dialisis and she's 81 so it's a little harsh but I'm not alone, I have family I can talk to and if I have to I can get on the phone and talk to any of my brothers and sisters I have friends I can call and my friend Doug I don't see him anymore but i can call him anytime and he'll sit and talk with me for hours um (7:45) but when in general as far as companionship or going out and doing things and being with someone all the time right now. You know, all the time. It's just how it is and I can't say if I lost a bunch of weight and got plastic surgery and looked beautiful that I still wouldn't be lonely you know good looks don't guarantee that you won't be lonely at all. You know it's a state of what you put yourself in and right now i've kinda put myself into this predicament maybe one day i'll get out of it but it's my choice but right now pretty much all the time. (18:23)  
 JY: what do you usually do when you feel lonely?  
 JK: uh I get online

JY: get online  
 JK: watch tv sometimes I'll get up and go driving, I enjoy driving a lot uh I'll call call and talk to friends if they're available , um you know used to play video games a lot  
 JY: oh really?  
 JK: Yeah, i'm a big video game fan my consoles a little busted right now don't know what's going on haven't gotten it looked at but grew up playing video games, you know i'm a child of the eighties so I was around when video games started hitting their stride, but that's what you know sometimes  
 JY: Do you ever think about how in a video game you can create another avatar or something that's pretending as yourself  
 JK: it's the same as online  
 JY: yeah just like online  
 JK: oh yeah  
 JY: is there some place to get some satisfaction online? (19:22)  
 JK: as in like of loneliness or satisfaction as in sex?  
 JY: both.  
 JK: yeah of course there is I mean when you're alone the biggest thing you're gonna do is masturbate and you do that by getting online you don't have someone you can meet up with, have some type of sex with or companionship with you get online you're gonna get on grindr or get on websites and look up porn or look for friends and exchange pictures or videos and then when it happens

it happens (19:53) yeah but you get online just for that yeah it can cure...that's what i'm saying online to me isn't the loneliness of real life because you can get online and do anything be anyone.  
 JY: But after like masturbation or anything like this you get online do you feel more loneliness?  
 JK: nah some people might, yeah and of course you wish it was a real person there with you  
 JY: mmhhmm  
 JK: but it is what it is and again like I said I can't speak for people who are in their twenties, teens or thirties for me as you get older yeah I want someone there I would love to hook up with somebody and do anything or leave in a few minutes and enjoy that satisfaction but again I'm not gonna let it rule my life, you know, i'm not gonna let it ruin my day because I had to use my hand instead of my mouth on somebody you know, or I had to look at videos instead of being with a real person. You know? it's not the end of the world you know that's the sad thing that's the sad things about the state of the things in the world we are in today you would think it's gonna be the end of the world with all the governments uh but as far as sex and being with someone (21:16) god there's just so much more to worry about you know let sex happen if it happens, masturbate to masturbate, have sex to have sex, whatever happens happens but it shouldn't be

on the top of your list of things to worry about.  
 JY: You think loneliness is an unhealthy thing?  
 JK: oh yeah I think it can be unhealthy, I don't think it's the worst thing in the world again some people like it, some people are into it, some people want it. But i do think it can be unhealthy because I think you can become bitter when you're lonely and don't wanna be, if you want to be left alone you can be better and you can become a bitter old man, bitter old woman, whatever, that's if you want it but if you don't want to be alone and or for some reason you can't hook up with people well get out there and try to make a try even get online and lie and make friends it can make you, you know, just outwardly (22:16) an angry person, a depressed person, you know kind of bitter at people. Yeah I get mad at people online when they treat me the way they do.  
 JY: do you think that one day you'll totally get rid of loneliness?  
 JK: I hope so. I think everyone can if they try you know again I believe in fate, I believe some things just happen, they happen I like when couples, you hear about couples meeting on a whim, not some forced crap you know I hate anything that's forced in a relationship, unless you're just meeting for sex or a hookup that's different, I'm talking friendship or compan-

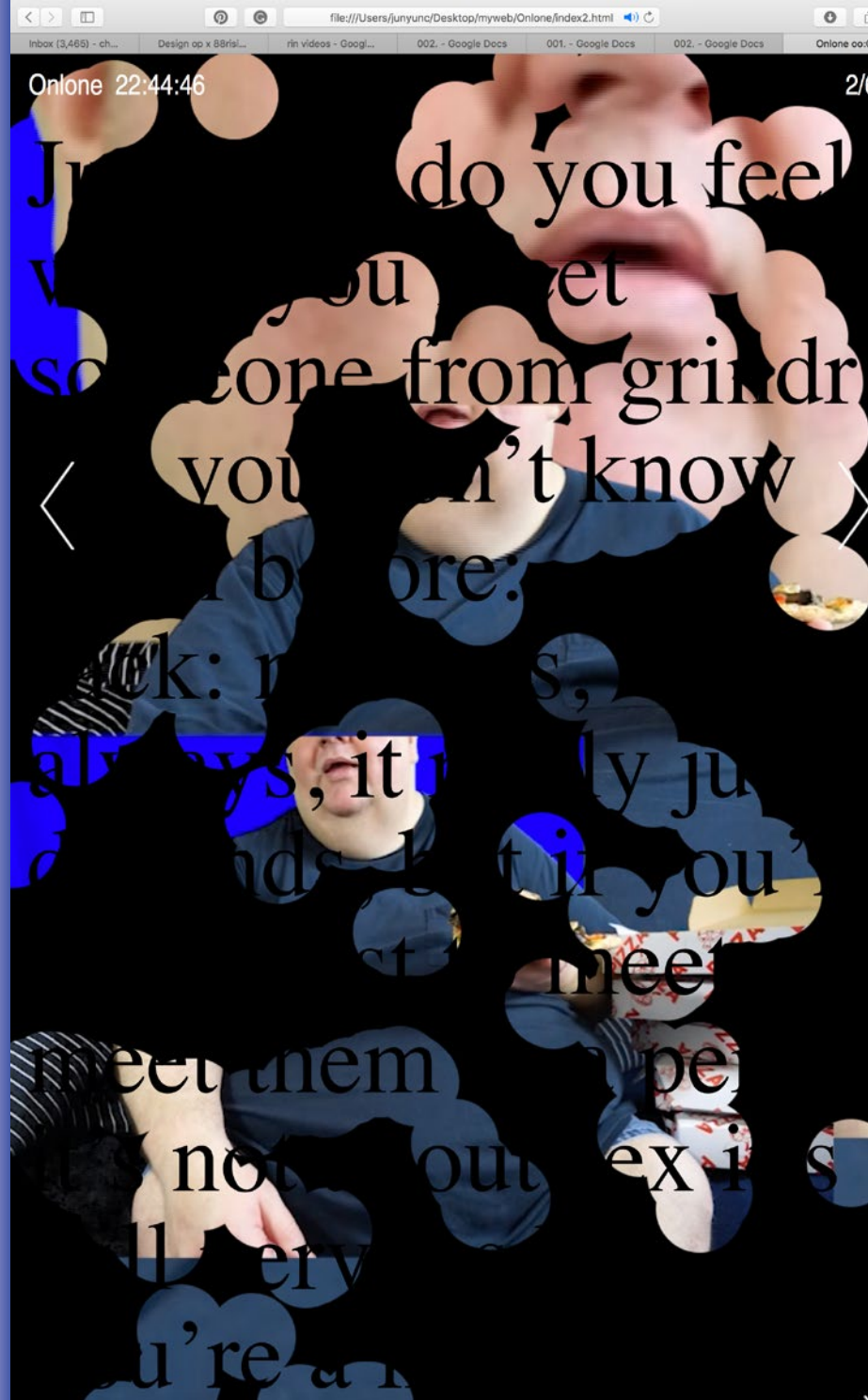
ionship there's a difference when it's fate you know if you bump into that person, you talk to that person and something clicks it's the best thing in the world cause you know there's a spark there's a chemistry there that you really really want to pursue and you hope it goes and I don't mean it's gonna go all the way it could go to a certain point and then a blockage could hit the way you find out you hate each other or it could span your lifetime and that's the best thing in the world and I feel like that's what I would like to happen, I don't mind going out and looking for friends or making friends on grindr or wherever (23:43), at a job, or something else you somewhere become friends with someone but it's greater when it just happens you know it clicks cause i'm a person who believes there's you know reasons for a lot of things or just about everything you know there's fate that happens to people so...

JY: are you okay with your current feeling about loneliness now?

JK: i'm okay with it (24:09) again everybody, again everybody wishes they had that someone you know I miss my friend that I hung out with for years, I miss him, we were tight you know we had similar personalities, similar humor you know we, we would had similar taste in movies and music, we took trips together, we went places together, but it had to end cause he has a wife now, he has a kid now, he has to

work constantly now, he has a new home and when you lose something like that it bug you for a while you're kinda like you miss it, it's like a family member passing away that you saw often it's something in your life that was there, you're used to, and now it's gone so you feel it, but then the one thing that's in our DNA that I believe in is that time does make it so you get used to that you know when someone passes \*clear throat\* , excuse me, you know, when your mother, father or brother, sister, someone close to you passes it hurts and you miss them but in our DNA it's designed to tell us that natural, we're all gonna die, it's meant to happen so naturally you start to get used to it. You miss them less. You'll always want them, you'll always remember them, but your body gets used to it. When it's companionship it's a little different but again as you get older you're like you hate it but it's not something you worry about as much , you learn to let it happen, if it happens it happens

JY: okay, I think that's all my questions. Thank you!



## #03 Shuainy Boy

April 5, 2018

JY: are you lonely now?  
 SB: i've been feeling lonely recently  
 JY: why? Because of friendship or relationships?  
 SB: I think both  
 JY: both?  
 SB: yeah I don't want like a real relationship but I want like someone who cares about me  
 JY: Like a friend or more than friends?  
 SB: like slightly more than a friend, but not as much as like a,  
 JY: starting like a friend  
 SB: yeah, like well, uh my friend Richard haha am I allowed to say that on camera?  
 JY: haha yeah  
 SB: You can bleep it out later  
 JY: yeah  
 SB: so yeah I've been lonely, like I go through like times where i'm feeling like totally fine then other times where I am obsessively looking for people to talk to  
 JY: so when was the last time you used Grindr?  
 SB: right now  
 JY: okay \*both laughing\* that's a very true answer. So when did you start using Grindr?  
 SB: Last September so like six months  
 JY: After your breakup?  
 SB: a year after I broke up  
 JY: So how do you feel about the loneliness online and is it different between online loneliness and real life loneliness? (1:29)  
 SB: um, I think it's helped me, where I used to live before I had a smartphone I was in the middle of the mountains of North Carolina and um I didn't have anyone to talk to and I was really lonely and had no outlet, and I used to go on these stupid chat things where you'd just chat with a random person around the world and I used to do that when I got really lonely, they were always looking to fuck girls so they'd always ask you if you were gay and if you said yes they would skip you. But I used to do that I was really lonely back then so I think that like,  
 JY: was it a website?  
 SB: yeah, but I forget what it's called  
 SB: omeggle  
 JY: oh so it's like for both straight and gay people?  
 SB: yeah it's kind of just like a random chat that just links you up with someone random you have no control over who you talk to it just links two people together  
 JY: so you don't even know if they're in the same city as you or  
 SB: no, nowhere, you have no idea  
 JY: that's exciting  
 SB: It was cool I mean I liked it but um I had more friends well I don't have anymore friends here I have, my social life is the same here, but I think i've been happier with being on Grindr I think it like makes you want more  
 JY: more attention or more ...  
 SB: yeah, like once you get a little attention you want more attention or sex you want more

sex (3:06) or once you get a friend, I don't know, I think that like it's hard to know when to stop using it instead of just continuing to use it and like it's hard to when when to be happy with someone you've met or just keep looking for someone better  
 JY: so you think that Grindr is a tool to relieve your loneliness or do you sometimes feel more loneliness from it? (3:37)  
 SB: um, I think when no one's talking to me I feel worse about myself but in general I feel like it's helped me relieve some loneliness. I think I approach it in a pretty healthy way I'm not too obsessive about it  
 JY: when was the last time you deleted it? (grindr)  
 SB: last time I?  
 JY: deleted-  
 SB: deleted it? A few weeks ago, I had it off for two weeks.  
 JY: why?  
 SB: hmm I think I was just feeling depressed and it wasn't helping and I think that when I'm feeling really sad I think it doesn't help because it doesn't give you anything meaningful it's just like - I want something meaningful from it, i'm looking mostly for friends or like intimacy and other people are just looking for, you know, quick sex  
 JY: so intimacy and quick sex is different?  
 SB: mm hmmm I mean sometimes I'm just looking for sex too but  
 JY: so why did you re-download it again?  
 SB: (4:50) I was in a new town  
 JY: oh...yeah, do you think it's a good way to get to know people when you go to a new place?  
 SB: hmmmh I think something that's hard about being gay or queer, especially nowadays because I think people are acting more queer in general even straight people or whatever are acting more gay, I think it's like nice to know ahead of time who is available. I feel safer approaching people after I see them on Grindr and they've seen you too so assuming like, if you have your profile photo showing but yeah and then when you move to a new city you know it's a good way to meet people if you're just like visiting somewhere and like don't know what to do otherwise you would just be like wandering around and I think like, I've met up with people in cities off of Grindr and had a really nice time seeing things I wouldn't have seen otherwise (5:59)  
 JY: what do you usually do when you're lonely?  
 SB: what do I do when I feel lonely?  
 JY: yeah  
 SB: I usually put on a tv show, get snacks, and then look at Grindr while i'm watching a tv show  
 JY: oh that's really nice  
 SB: mmhh hmm  
 JY: Do you feel lonely when you're around a lot of people?  
 SB: no, when i'm with people I think it's like an instant cure for me but then the second I go home

or leave...you know (6:30) I think grindr has made people more impatient or more able to like be alone cause you want that like instant contact, have those meaningless base level conversations that don't mean anything cause you're just saying the same thing to each other over and over again, "what brings you on here?" "what's your name" "where are you from?" i'm like it's not that fun to tell people that. But I think that i've gotten worse at just sitting alone and being okay with it

JY: do you feel like one day you'll totally get rid of loneliness?

SB: no,

JY: So you think it will go with you through all of time?

SB: I mean I think like during times, I mean I wouldn't describe like the, i'm like on a regular day i'm more often than not feeling good, you know i'm usually feeling good so I don't say i'm horribly lonely all of the time, but I think that it always comes and goes (7:36)

JY: when you had a relationship did you feel lonely at that time?

SB: I was really lonely in my last relationship because we weren't really compatible

JY: mmmm so you still feel lonely

SB: mmm hmmm

JY: what do you eat when you're lonely?

SB: (7:55) well last winter a year ago, I was very lonely probably more lonely than I ever have been and I got a lot of gas station hot dogs. I would get two

or one or two hot dogs from the gas station and go home and eat them

JY: oohh by yourself?

SB: mmm hmmm. Or chips, or actually what I usually do is I steal my housemate's food

JY: \*both laugh\* why is loneliness always related to drunk food?

SB: I think for me cause loneliness and boredom go together alot and when i'm bored I eat

JY: yeah

SB: plus like salty things make you feel good in the short term, salty or sweet

JY: yeah, do you think loneliness is something unhealthy?

SB: (8:46) not necessarily, I think it can make you do unhealthy things. I think it's natural to feel lonely every once in a while

JY: do you think that queer people's loneliness is different than other people's loneliness?

SB: I don't know, I think that maybe like it's more frustrating for me because I think of like queer people as wanting to be part of a community and wanting to make social events happen and just be outside of their houses doing things so like in this city especially I don't see a lot of the queer community out and about, so I feel like, I feel like both individually lonely but also a community loneliness, like i'm lonely looking for this community that I think I haven't found here that I expect queer people to create in cities. If that makes sense

JY: queer the city?

SB: like I just think that queer people have a history of sort of making their own communities : visible, supportive, interesting communities and I haven't found that here

JY: so you have a lot of friend here

SB: I have a lot of friends here but but like -

JY: small group of people together?

SB: yeah, and there's not like you know there's not like a queer housing cooperative or a queer art center or a queer...it's not what I expect there to be in other cities there are

JY: really?

SB: larger cities. But but also I don't know, I don't know, I've just had an easier time finding like social groups of queer people in the past than I have here so i've been feeling like a queer loneliness I guess you may call it here because I'm like lacking this larger community I have plenty of friends but i'm lacking connection to this larger community (10:54) that I want, if that makes sense

JY: yeah...and what do you do online when you feel lonely? Just talk to people or do you do other things?

SB: Um, I look at porn, um I watch this thing called Chatter Bate

JY: chatter bate?

SB: it's like live performances that people pay. You don't have to pay people just watch too

JY: is it like erotic or just normal

SB: mm hmmm it's all sex

JY: oohh

SB: it's like chat and masturbate,

chatter bate

JY: chater bate oohh cahtter bate. So like do you think it's a way for you to release the loneliness?

SB: sometimes, I mean I like watching like people like me like pronstars kind of annoy me but ammeuteur porn or like watching these people on chatter bate and like they talk to the camera (11:59) They communicate with the people that they're um that are like paying them, like they'll ask for them to do things. They all have limits and you pay for them to do things, I never paid anything but um but they're funny they talk to the camera sometimes like they're having a conversation with you so it's fun sometimes

JY: how do you feel the difference since it's coming through your monitor, the screen?

SB: I mean they're not actually interacting with you they're just like interacting with viewers so it doesn't feel as similar um

JY: when you're watching them do you pretend they're only talking to you or you're realizing this is not for me it's for everyone

SB: no, I think it's more funny to follow other people's conversations

JY: oh cause they're talking

SB: mm hmm so I don't really pretend that they're doing it for me (13:00)

JY: what kind of conversation is it?

SB: it's actually pretty funny it's like they become friends and they know each other like you know

rich men who have favorites and so they'll have relationships with each other, they've never met they just like they know like do that thing you did for me last time and i'll give you 500 tokens and they're like oooh and they know their screen names so they'll talk to their screen names a lot and will call out people's screen names. It's funny.

JY: so it's a live show?

SB: mm hmm

JY: that's really interesting

SB: yeah

JY: cause that's where the internet can give you virtual companionship

SB: sometimes I just text friends and call people and watch a sad movie

JY: sad movie?

SB: cry myself to sleep. I'm not lonely that often

JY: do you think there's a difference between loneliness in real life and online? (13:59)

SB: I think so, I don't know if I answered it, but I mean I think online is real life now you know? I think that like gay people especially I imagine are getting less and less likely to meet in person

JY: really?

SB: and more and more likely to meet online, like I haven't made - there are people I have dated in person but - I have never hooked up with somebody just by randomly meeting them they've all been pre-arranged online. I think that it's really...I

don't know this doesn't really answer the question but I think the difference is that real life is kind of online now. I think fewer and fewer people - I think that there are still cruising places you know? Where guys go to meet up but I think that online has becomes sort of real life dating and social time for a lot of gay men, especially gay men than other people (15:04)

JY: Do you think you talk to people more easily online because you don't feel as shy?

SB: definitely, I mean like I freely send pictures of my dick and ass to people all the time which I would never do in person haha

JY: have you blocked anyone before?

SB: mm hmm! (15:45)

JY: and have other people blocked you before?

SB: mm hmmm

JY: how do you feel about this?

SB: it sucks! It feels really shitty

JY: when you find you've been blocked do you get angry or like lonely or

SB: I get sad cause that's something you can't do in real life

JY: yeah block someone

SB: you can ignore someone but you can't completely prevent them from looking at you or talking to you or you know getting a chance to

JY: it's the power of the internet

SB: it's weird, yeah it's weird (16:28)

JY: When was the last time you felt lonely?

SB: Last night. Just got in a fight with my friend

JY: so what did you do after when you felt sad last night

SB: uh I drank a lot and I watched a movie, I got on Grindr, then I watched more movies and I was up until very very late

JY: Does the bed space make you feel lonely?

SB: umm I've had friends recently who just stay over and cuddle, which I've told you about but like just you know no sex at all and that's been really nice I'm not looking for sex i'm looking for like personal connection, so that's, I think that's been really really nice

JY: body connection

SB: mm hmm it is, it's when i'm alone in my bed is when I feel lonely

JY: have you met anyone using a fake account on Grindr?

SB: mm hmm

JY: yep

SB: no... I had a fake scruff for a little while, it wasn't fake, it just didn't have my face , I didn't really talk to people I was just using it, I moved here, I was just using it to see who was in town like if I was out who is gay just so I could like you know know if there was someone I could talk to or whatever

JY: so what other apps are you using?

SB: I don't use scruff very often it's usually just grindr

JY: just grindr

SB: people don't talk to me on scruff

JY: really?

SB: I don't think i'm their demographic. Am I allowed to finish this pizza?

JY: mm hmmm, yeah! Finish it.

SB: I've downloaded like random ones here or there one's that are there for like finding a cruising site or one that say they're like for queer people or I guess I use Tinder every once in a while I have Tinder I don't really... I've met a few people off it but not much

JY: why don't you like using tinder?

SB: (19:06) I don't have a good profile on their I haven't had the time to put a profile out there so I just haven't really done anything with it

JY: how do you feel about the matching system?

SB: matching system?

JY: yeah on tinder

SB: I don't know, some people on there seem okay it's weird to not have a chance to convince someone that you're interesting you know I guess it's what the profile is for like I said I have one photo and I think it says like three words so I haven't really put the effort in so people usually don't swipe right

JY: so um tinder you need to put more effort on it?

SB: I think so,

JY: like it means you're more serious

SB: there's what?

JY: you're more serious about the relationship or something

SB: I guess so yeah

JY: Okay thank you

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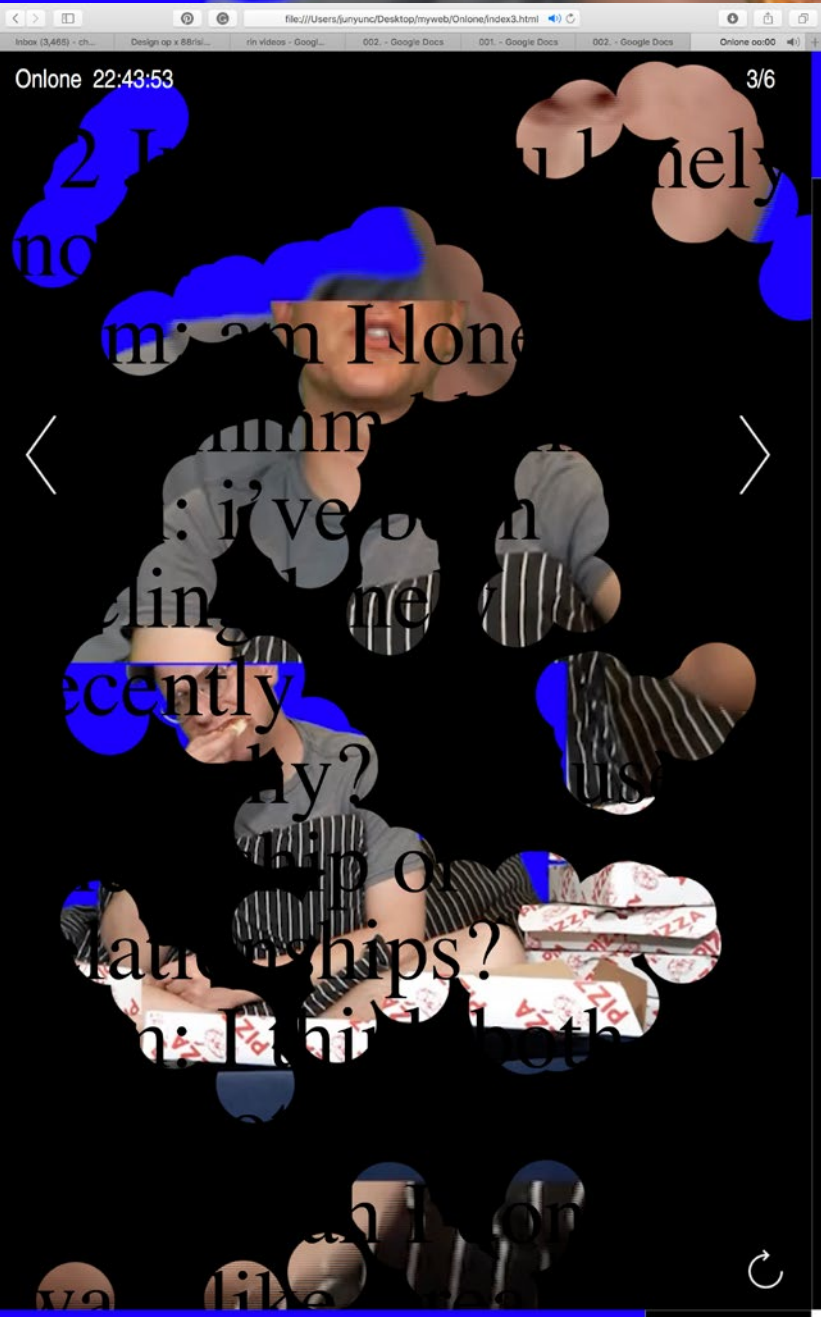
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## #04 Malachai

April 8, 2018

JY: So when is the last time you use Grindr?

MA: Well, (long pause) everyday actually.

JY: Everyday?

MA: Mhmm.

JY: So what are you looking for [here]?

MA: Well, ultimately a husband; but I know that's not the place to find [him], so whatever, you know. Just whatever. Most of the time I just use it to see what's out there and have somebody to talk to 'cause just sitting in my room and watching TV get boring. And I have friends but either they're busy or they live out of state, so I don't really go out very much.

JY: So is Grindr the place [you'd look] for friends?

MA: Well, for whatever, you know. Just wanted somebody to talk to. And if that clicks, and it turns out that we want to go on a date or something, I'd be down for that. Oh, I'm kind of picky so that doesn't happen often.

JY: Do you feel lonely?

MA: Like, in general?

JY: Mhmm.

MA: Yeah, kind of.

JY: When is the last time you feel lonely?

MA: (sighs) Well it's hard to say because I'm so used to it now, and it kind of—I mean I'm not lonely when I have work, when I'm busy and I have all of the work friends and everything; they're there, but they're just work friends. They're not hang-out friends. But when I'm [off work], and I think about it, and I'll be sitting in my room, just kind of sit there and watch TV lonely.

JY: Do you think that everyone's 'lonely' different?

MA: Yeah, I think it has to be. Because it's a very personal emotion, so different people feel lonely for different reasons. Different people combat their loneliness in different ways.

JY: About loneliness: do you feel like that there's a difference between feeling lonely in the real world and feeling lonely in the online world?

MA: Yeah, I guess so. Because in the real world it's just kinda a constant 'lonely', you know? And then, when I get on Grindr and talk to somebody, it makes me a little bit less lonely. But when I say "hi" to guys and they ignore me, then it's even worse because it adds rejection to the whole loneliness.

JY: So some part of "online loneliness" comes from the online rejection?

MA: Yeah. That would make it worse. But, you know, not to the point where it's like, depressingly worse. I'd just be like "eugh,... alright fine, next". There's an underlying loneliness that's there. But, I mean—the last boyfriend I had, it was about a year ago, and we lived together and we actually were engaged, so I wasn't lonely at all. And even when he wasn't around, I knew that he was in my heart. So that kind of

quells the loneliness in a way. Even if I was just by myself and missing him, he was still there (pats chest where the heart is). And then we broke up, well, he broke up with me: rejection again. So that just threw me into this deep [4:43] of loneliness, mixed with depression from rejection. I'm over that now, he was a dick, obviously. To [pass off] something like this. I'm over that now, but I'm alone. My family— my parents still live in Florida, my sister lives in other places with her beautiful husband and beautiful family and beautiful lives, so I don't really see them that much.

JY: Do you really think that one day you'll get rid of this loneliness?

MA: I have faith that true love exists. And I would like it to happen to me, I'd like to find that special someone, but as the years go by I'm starting to lose faith, not in true love but that it will happen to me—actually, lasts, 'cause true love never dies. So if you're in love with somebody, and you don't love them anymore, it was never true love in the first place. So I felt true love, it was with every boyfriend I ever had, but with the ones that break up with me, I feel like they never felt true love. I've never had that coming in my direction.

JY: So when you're on Grindr, do you feel like the loneliness there in some way can help you remove a really ---6:47--- the loneliness to you?

MA: It's very possible because it doesn't really end the loneliness it just masks it. Yeah, kind of hides it, for myself; I can pretend. Some people drink to stop the loneliness, some people do drugs, some people go online to just chat with people.

JY: Do you think that in that way, drugs and Grindr are similar?

MA: In a way. Although you can't really overdose on Grindr, so maybe that's a little bit healthier than doing drugs.

JY: Have you ever deleted it before?

MA: Oh yeah, like every time I actually find a boyfriend that means something to me. 'Cause I don't need it.

JY: Why did you redownload it again?

MA: Because he would no longer be there, and I'll be back to being lonely again.

JY: And you have to move on?

MA: Yeah.

JY: Do you think Grindr is the right place to cure loneliness?

MA: The right place? Probably not, but it's easy. 'Cause I can just pick up my phone and do it. I'm not really—I used to go out a lot when I was younger, but I don't go to gay clubs or anything anymore. I'm much more of a homebody, sort of introverted—well, I wouldn't say introverted, but I would prefer to have friends over, or boy over just to cuddle on the couch and watch TV and have some beers in the house rather than go out

and be in town. So Grindr is, like I said, easier, but I don't have many other option, unless I want to go to Carytown and, like, "Whooh!" about tonight, which I don't do anymore.

JY: Do you think the internet creates more loneliness or gets rid of it?

MA: Well the internet, I love the internet, not just for Grindr but where I get my news; from BBC website and other new sites, I just love reading and researching. So when there's nothing on TV, or whatever, there's always the internet to stimulate my brain. Because there's no one in my heart, and I'm not in somebody else's heart. And I'm looking for a boyfriend or anything because I know that if you look for it, you're never gonna find it. As time goes by, and the older I get, the lonelier I get.

JY: How old are you?

MA: I'm 44.

JY: Do you think part of your loneliness [correlates] to your age?

MA: I think it increases, because I'm getting older and still there's nobody here (pats chest where the heart is).

JY: Do you [include] your age on Grindr?

MA: No. Because gay men are so judgemental. And for some reasons age is so important to being young and pretty and cute. I don't care, as long as there's a connection age and I find someone attractive doesn't matter to me. So I just figured not putting my age on there

means that people would talk to me for me, and not because they want a sugar daddy and they're 19 and I'm gonna be their sugar daddy or they don't talk to me because they don't want to talk to people over 25. This is stupid, you know? A conversation is a conversation, I don't care how old you are.

JY: What is your Grindr profile picture? Talk about it.

MA: It's just me.

JY: Why did you choose that picture?

MA: Because I hate the way I look in pictures and that's the one that I hate the least. I don't think I take pictures really well.

JY: Do you think Grindr profile pictures are important?

MA: Probably. If someone without a picture talks to me, I'd ask for one, because I like to see the person I'm talking to. Talking to someone without a picture is like talking to a dark room. And again, what they look like doesn't matter for conversations, it's just a palette kind of thing. Why do you have to hide your face, are you ashamed of being on Grindr? 'Cause it's not like people are going on Grindr to find you and out you to the world. I feel like if you don't show your picture you're paranoid about something. I don't know, maybe not.

JY: Do you think queer loneliness is different than straight loneliness?

MA: I've never thought about it, but I suppose it's possible. Because

it is hard to meet another gay guy, because there's less out there. Straight people can just meet each other, gay people have to seek out specifically a gay person, like if I were to go to a grocery store or something and see a cute boy, I wouldn't go up to him and hit on him, because he's probably straight. However, if I were straight and I saw a woman, I'd more apt to hit on her because she's probably straight too. The chances of coming across another gay man are much smaller than coming across a straight man, so I think it is hard in that aspect because it is hard to find somebody. Not that it's more lonely or less lonely than, but I think it's more likely you'd be lonely if you're gay.

JY: What do you do when you feel lonely?

MA: If I were home, I'd binge-watch Netflix. It'd give me something to take my mind off of it.

JY: You have a dog, is it because you want the companionship from him?

MA: Well that's not that I have him, I inherited him. He is my roommate's. Long story short, my roommate went to jail, so all of the sudden I'm left with this dog. Metix and I got along really well from the beginning, and so when David went to jail I was like, sure, I'll keep the dog. And since then, he's been better than any boyfriend I'd ever had, as far as like being a constant.

JY: What's his name?

MA: Metix. M-E-T-I-X. So I guess, he's in my heart, but it's not quite the same.

JY: Do you think it's because he's someone who [loves] you for you? Someone never rejects you, is that why you feel [he's better than the boyfriends]?

MA: Yeah, I think so. Many other reasons. 'Cause he's fun and he's sweet and adorable, I'm a dog person anyway. Yeah, it's much better to come home from work and having your dog jump up on you and lick on you because he's happy to see you 'cause you've been gone forever and ever and ever. And he's probably lonely when I'm not home. It's so much better to have that to come home to nothing and silence and no one comes up to you and says they miss you.

JY: And when did you start using Grindr?

MA: For the longest time I didn't have a smartphone, because I'm not very technologically intelligent. Computers: I know nothing about computers. And so I have this little flip phone, and it did everything that it needed to do, which was [calling people and texting people and having voicemail; literally all I'd use a phone for. It was the year I was living with Jonathan, I guess it was three years ago, he convinced me to go and get a smartphone. And I knew about Grindr because my friend in Chicago was telling me

about it, so I knew what it was. So I got a smartphone and filled it out with apps, or whatever. And after he abandoned me also I downloaded it to see what's it all about and see if I can replace Jonathan, I guess.

JY: How do you know gay people before Grindr, before the internet?

MA: There's this internet site I'd go to: Adam for Adam, or okcupid. Things like that.

JY: And before the internet?

MA: Oh, I didn't. My very first boyfriend was when I was 18, and he was 17. I guess that was when the internet was first coming out, AOL and all that, but I didn't use it for that. He and I would go out to club [Name] in DC, it's a gay club, every Saturday night and we just make friends because we're around them. This was back when I was more extroverted and not a homebody like I am now. We would go out and meet people that way. But really it was the only way back then, just go up to people and say "hey, are you gay? 'Cause you're cute", and get your ass beat.

JY: Is meeting gay people in the real world different than it is online?

MA: Oh yeah, it's a lot easier to use Grindr and plentyoffish or something like that.

JY: Why?

MA: Because there's more access. I can meet someone who lives across town I wouldn't normally run into. Even if I did, if I had

seen him walking down the street I wouldn't know that he's gay.

JY: So Grindr is like a filter to help you to know who is the gay guy you can say hi to.

MA: Yeah kind of. Like if you're on Grindr and you're straight, what even is the point of that. So I guess it opens up the possibility a lot more. Which I think is probably everybody is on there, to start off at least. A lot of guys go on Grindr just to find cheap sex. That doesn't necessarily make them lonely but—I think at least half of them, looking for long-term-relationship-oriented and blah blah blah, they're probably on there because they're lonely too. And they're looking for someone to fill their heart.

JY: Do you believe that sex can help you relieve loneliness?

MA: For that night, yeah.

JY: After that night, do you feel more lonely?

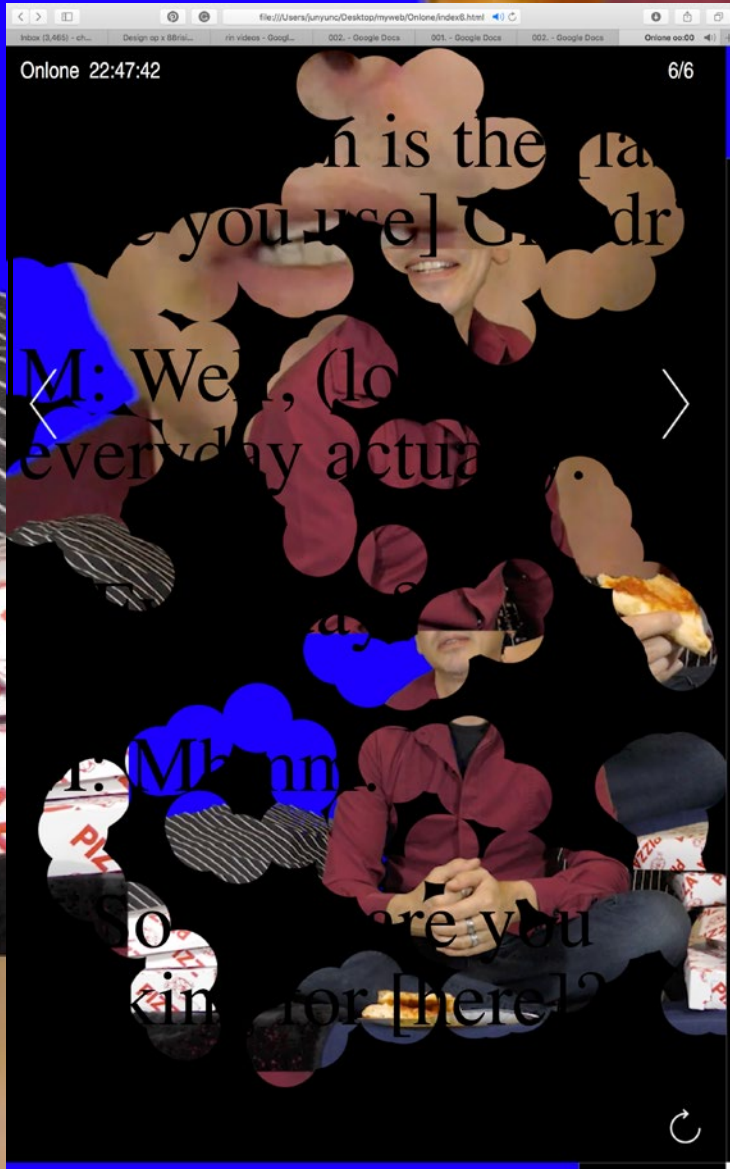
MA: No, because, I mean I don't hook up that much. I have, I won't lie, I have, and I may again, but you know. But when I did I went into it knowing that it's not gonna be anything other than just sex. I mean something could grow from that like: it was amazing sex and you wanted to hang out and found the connection and there's a possibility of something growing from it but I don't go into it with the hope that it's gonna Because if I did that, and it didn't work, which would be most of the time,

JY: How do you feel about your loneliness now, how do you deal with it?

MA: Well I accepted it, but I don't really welcome it. I don't want to be lonely, I would love to have somebody in my life that have the potential being my last boyfriend. Ideally I'd want to find someone that gives me a reason to delete Grindr.

JY: Forever?

MA: Mhmm. I have been, and I have had boyfriends so I might very well get another one. I want the one that will stay. Having a boyfriend for a year and then breaking up, yeah great, I mean, you had a year and you had some good memories but— Even if you break up and it's not a bad breakup, if it's just a mutual parting and you're still friends or whatever, you're still single again, lonely.



## #05 James

April 12, 2018

- JY: Are you lonely?
- JA: Yeah! I would definitely say I'm lonely. But, we'll see it; like I was ---0:20--- lonely without Grindr in some ways.
- JY: Have you talked about your loneliness with other people before?
- JA: Mhmm, yeah.
- JY: How do you feel talking about your loneliness with different people? Are you comfortable with it?
- JA: I'm comfortable with it! (pause) I'm more comfortable with discussing my loneliness than other people. It's just 'cause I'm used to it and there are a lot of people who are lonely, and so—
- JY: What do you do on Grindr? Just talking, or—?
- JA: I talk, I casually meet up with people, maybe at a bar, or a restaurant, and we talk in person. Or we'll take a long walk down to the river, stuff like that.
- JY: Does Grindr relieve your loneliness, or does it generate more loneliness?
- JA: I would say a little bit of both? There are some days where people who I talk to on a regular basis go offline or delete [their] account, and I feel more lonely— because I had started to develop a relationship with them, not in a romantic way but like a friend, but they just disappear, and it's really lonely. Or when you go on a date, and after the date they delete you or block you, you know, like when you're ghosted, I definitely feel really lonely.
- JY: How do you feel about people blocking you?
- JA: If they're not interested in me, then I'd tell them to just block me, 'cause now they're just ---3:06---. I've had plenty people who said they're not interested in me, like in any way, and they don't block me, then get upset at me when I mute-message them, 'cause I may lose my messages, and I may ---3:17--- have a profile picture, or they may not have a profile picture. So sometimes I'm okay with people blocking me, but then there are times when— after the dates, or something like that, and they'd delete me or block me, and I feel like it's really mature: you're willing to meet me and—I was very upfront [about blocking] and everything, so no surprise.
- JY: Have you blocked other people before?
- JA: Yes.
- JY: Do you feel guilty about it, or—?
- JA: Sometimes. But other times, no, just because the times I've blocked people is when they are asking for money. I've had a few people asking "hey, if you give me four dollars I'd sleep with you." And it's a no-zone so I block people. Or, if they're married, like older men who are married and they're asking me to sleep with them and I'm like "no". So, block. Or it's just people who I'm really not interested in and they get—I don't

- know, what's the word, we'll call it [persistent]—but they'd message and tap me and for hours and I'd say "I'm sorry, I'm not interested", and sometimes if they don't quit, I'd resort to blocking them. "Just because I don't want to talk to you, sorry."
- JY: Do you think the loneliness in real life and the loneliness online are different, or the same?
- JA: I feel less lonely in real life. Just mundane, daily life: I have housemates that I live with; we cook each other dinner and we eat together, we do a lot of things together. And so when I work at a school, I don't feel lonely ---5:26---. When I'm by myself and I'm reminded that I don't have a boyfriend or someone that I'm dating and so I do get lonely in those moments. Grindr does sometimes remind me of that. But then Grindr also tells me that hey, maybe I can go on a date with one of these guys.
- JY: Do you think the internet generates more loneliness?
- JA: Yes.
- JY: [Then why do they still use it?]
- JA: I feel like the reason why the internet generates more loneliness and people still use it is they're scared to face reality, I guess? Online you can make yourself to be a different type of person: you could be a really terrible person in real life and you can make yourself on Grindr look like a kind, sweet person, even if in reality you're not. And so people build this persona are just scared, out of fear to face themselves in the mirror. But with me, nothing ---7:00---, I know I'm not perfect, and I try not to put myself as the perfect person. I can be really sarcastic and mean, and some people don't like that. I try to be as honest as possible with people I talk to on Grindr.
- JY: When is the last time you feel lonely?
- JA: The last time I truly feel lonely is probably this last Saturday. Not because of Grindr or anything, but my housemates had their friends over from college and one had her girlfriend over and they were spending so much time with each other, I was just left by myself in my room and I just felt very lonely; kind of felt like an outsider in that moment. My major reaction was just to get onto Grindr just to have someone to talk to. I can totally find someone, [just] not enough to talk to about video games or movies or shows that they like and stuff like that.
- JY: How often do you meet people?
- JA: Not a lot. I've honestly maybe met, out of two years of being on Grindr—I probably have met five or six people in real life, maybe even less.
- JY: So most of [the interactions with them] were just talking online?
- JA: [Most times are like] "come over and sleep with me" and I'm just really like "no, I just want to be friends". I've had a

few guys I met on Grindr who—we'd just sit and talk. Not in a sexual way, but just make jokes and just different things, like play video games.

JY: Have you ever deleted Grindr before?

JA: Yes. Approximately three times?

JY: Why?

JA: Just because— The first time was probably when I moved back home from college. I lived in a very rural area, and because I'm not out with my family, I didn't want my family to find out without me being ready to tell them. And I deleted then but after a while I [installed it] but I took off my picture, just to—not because I wanted to talk to people, but because I was curious about who has Grindr in my area. Then when I was dating a [boy] here in Richmond, I also deleted it, and just have that app removed from my phone for a while, without deleting my account. There's been a few times where I deleted my account.

JY: Why did you downloaded it again?

JA: Mmm... boredom? I guess because I get bored really easily, and now I do it to make friends but also because I'm bored and it gives me something to do. And it fills up my time when I'm not at work and don't have any housework to do. I can just go on a walk or sit at the desk and read Grindr messages and find someone to talk to, or listen to

music and talk to someone. For me sometimes it's fun just to talk to people and see why they have a Grindr, stuff like that.

JY: You mentioned that you stay here with big people; do you think that within the gay community, being big is—?

JA: I used to think that, for a very long time. 'Cause everyone I would see within the gay community are muscular or very thin or [has] really toned body and when I started receiving messages from people who were around my age—thinner and smaller—saying that I was very attractive and handsome, and I'm like "okay, maybe it's not the fact that I'm big, maybe it's more because some people like big people, some people don't like big people". My two boyfriends I've had my first boyfriend in high school is very small, like, very thin. He was the same height as me, but he was very thin, and we dated. My last boyfriend, he was very small and he was into bigger guy so. After experiencing that, I just got over-self conscious about being a bigger person—'cause I used to not put my weight on Grindr—if I did earlier on I would make myself seem smaller. I would just put a smaller weight down, without being too obvious. So: I was 300 lbs in college, and I would say I'm 250 lbs. But after a while I just got bored with I'm a bigger person, and I accept that. That's their problem.

JY: Do you think part of your loneliness is from the pressure that you tried to get more attention from other people?

JA: Possibly. I'm also a very introverted person, so I really like being alone. Sometimes it's just hard for me to get people's attention, so I guess I try to put myself out there sometimes. Just to get people to notice me. But in those moments, trying to hard would make people annoyed so I'd try to act normal.

JY: What do you usually eat when you're alone?

JA: I really don't eat. I don't eat a lot. I may have a snack or two throughout the day but I only try to eat breakfast or supper. I just eat two times a day. I drink a lot, not alcohol but juice and water or soda or stuff like that. So when I say I'm eating I'm actually drinking a huge thing of water, or something like that.

JY: Someone told me if they get lonely they'd eat pizza by themselves, or a big hamburger, or unhealthy foods.

JA: If I do, it'd be more like crackers or chips or something. For me, I [don't tend to] go out and buy pizza all the time.

JY: Do you think being lonely is an unhealthy thing?

JA: I think long-term loneliness is unhealthy. Everyone goes through modes where they feel lonely, a few times even within a day sometimes. But feeling lonely all the time, I think is unhealthy. I don't really believe in soulmates but I think everybody

in meant to be a relationship, not so much with a husband or whatever, but just like friends. I think when you're lonely you lose touch of yourself and everything around you. I think that's what makes it unhealthy: just being lonely all the time.

JY: Going back to Grindr and being online: when you're on Grindr you see all of these people 'around' you, and we see the distance that's so close, then why do we still feel so lonely? Why do feel lonely even when we're with a lot of people?

JA: I think we feel so lonely even when we're around other people because we don't take the time to build relationships or bond with people. We don't take the time to treat friends like family sometimes. For me, I have a small group of 3 or 4 people that I'm really close to, I make time to talk to them everyday. I think people don't have that sometimes. I think that's why we always feel so lonely. At least living here in America, I think we don't give relationships time, we're always doing something. We're never simply just talking with people, in person or face-to-face. I think Grindr can be good to help to [adjust] that if you use it to meet up with people and go on dates and actually talk face to face. I think it's those moments where people's longing can be relieved.

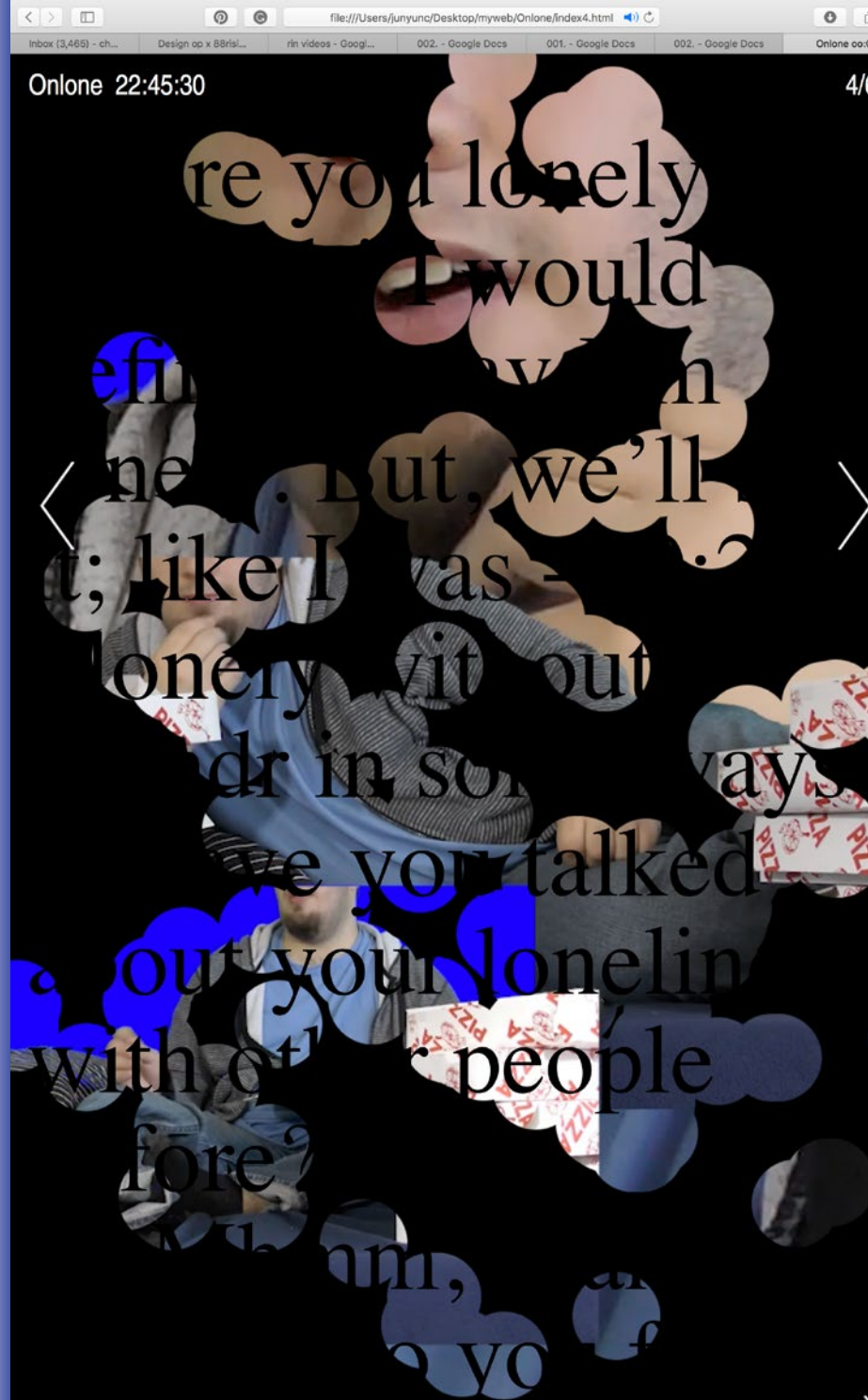
JY: Do you think there's a difference between queer loneliness and straight loneliness?

JA: Sometimes I think so, but I don't think there's a much difference between straight and queer. We're both groups of people who want to find love, and we have all of these expectations: "you must be short", "you must be this tall", "you must be tanned" or "you must be pale", "you must have perfect teeth/perfect hair". I feel like those expectations are fair and natural and [because] people think that they're not perfect, they just feel alone in that moment. When I receive—guys on Grindr who are muscled and thin and [no] body hair—that's the stereotypes presented for men to be. No

one really can fit those stereotypes. I feel like people just want to fit those stereotypes and when they can't they'd feel depressed and they'd get lonely.

JY: Do you think one day they can get rid of this loneliness?

JA: I hope so. I don't expect to get married. I think that once I eventually get rid of my loneliness, either through really close friendships or finding a place where I can belong to, stuff like that. I think I'll eventually get rid of this loneliness. I mean there's probably days where I'd feel lonely, but I think I'd not have perpetual moments where I feel like "I'm always lonely".



## #06 Wei

April 17, 2018

JY: When was the last time you use Grindr?

WE: Today.

JY: Why you use it?

WE: Sometimes I feel like I check out Grindr out of a certain reason, because I have the habit of... when I bored I just unlock my phone and just randomly open apps. So sometimes opening Grindr on my phone is almost like a reaction I don't even think about. I randomly click it and close it.

JY: Do you think Grindr is part of your life?

WE: I think it is because I actually got to know some people and even one or two become my friends from Grindr so.. I don't get to know a lot of people here, so I think Grindr actually is a part of my life.

JY: What are you looking for on Grindr?

WE: Umm.. on Grindr, basically everything, yeah.

JY: When did you start using it?

WE: Umm.. I think.. I'm an international student, I think even before I came to America I knew about this app and I downloaded on my phone, but there weren't a lot of people using this app from my home country.

JY: Have you deleted it before?

WE: No, never actually.

JY: Yeah, because this is part of your life you can't live without. There are other apps. How do you use dating apps in China? Is it different than here?

WE: Umm.. I think it is pretty similar.

I've used apps, a Chinese version of Grindr, I think it's both based on Grindr and Jack'd, another gay dating app. I think based on the users, LGBT community, especially gay people, they are pretty similar because some people choose to use their face as their profile picture and some people do not. I think all the conversations on those apps are basically based on people talking to people with profile pic or people talking to people without profile pic and all that, and the conversation always starts from "Do you want to exchange pics?" or "Do we want to remain faceless for a second?" So almost all the conversations start from this and then grow from this, so yeah, no matter what kind of app it is, a Chinese app or American app, they're all kind of similar in a way.

JY: Do you feel lonely?

WE: Umm.. actually as a very busy student I seldom feel lonely now because there are so many projects I have to do I don't even have time to think about loneliness. But yeah, for me I can say I almost I've never had an actual relationship before ever in my life. So I'm always imagining my "perfect" relationship or if I'm with someone what it would be like. So I still feel like there's a part of my life that is incomplete. Because I have friends who I talk to everyday, so in that sense I'm not lonely, but thinking about

being with someone or just relationship in general I feel like I'm lonely sometimes.

JY: Do you feel more lonely when you're using Grindr?

WE: Umm.. a lot of the times when I'm using Grindr I am not thinking about using it. In that sense I feel like I'm not very lonely. But sometimes when I'm bored or using Grindr when I'm not doing anything else, and I talk to people and they're not reaching back to me, I feel a sense of loneliness.

JY: So part of the loneliness comes from rejection.

WE: Yes, especially as an Asian queer person here. I feel like people have strong stereotypes towards Asian people, either they're super into Asians, like yellow fever, or they are not into Asians at all. So yeah.

JY: Do you feel the loneliness is different in the online world and in real life?

WE: I think it is different, because the whole relationship or friendship built online and in real life are so different, I can sense that, but right now I don't know what exactly makes them different. I think online relationship or friendship is virtual and sometimes feels unreal if you have friends made just from Internet and they're very different from the friend you know from real life. Sometime the loneliness you get from Internet almost feel unreal, too. It's like, maybe sometimes you talk to people on Grindr, or you're

just browsing Instagram, you feel lonely or bored or weird, but the next moment you lock your phone and go back to your actual life, your life are filled up with all the tasks you are doing. So in my opinion online relationship or friendship feels virtual in some ways.

JY: So you think it would be better to meet up in person instead of just chatting online?

WE: This is actually a trick question for me because I actually enjoy talking to people online first out of several reasons. First, as a foreigner here English is not my first language, I actually feel more comfortable talking to people online because I have time to think what message I should input or I can even like go back and revise my grammar mistakes or what I'm trying to say. And I'm not a super introvert person, but sometimes I still get nervous especially using a second language to talk with people or meet with new people, so I do enjoy the process of talking to people online first. But also, sometimes I wish, because a lot of the times I want to meet queer people in actual life because it feels more real. And sometimes some people talk to you online, they feel like bored or I don't even know what reason, they can just block you, and that connection will disappear in a second. So it feels like very.. not secured. So it's like 50/50.

JY: You mentioned about block, I think block is a very interest-



ing, it has such a strong power, you can only get in online world. Because you can't block people in real life.

JY: Have you blocked people before?

WE: Yeah, I did.

JY: Why did you block them?

WE: I try to be nice and modest when using an app. I would say compare to some people who block people all the time, I try to not block people. But sometime everyone turns a bit more impatient.. because it's so easy to block, it's just a button but it is very powerful. Sometimes you don't realize how powerful it is. The reason why I block some people mainly because I didn't want to talk to them anymore and I tried to be nice at least, but they were probably still harassing me or even throwing out bad words, and that makes me uncomfortable, so if I tried and they're still acting weird or acting rude, I'll block them.

JY: How do you feel if someone blocks you?

WE: I feel very sad at first when I first got blocked by certain people. I even tried to create another account and tracked them down and asked them why did you block me. But now when someone blocks me I can actually think in their shoes. Maybe they're just busy, maybe they just don't want to talk to you anymore. Sometimes I feel like they block you because they don't want to hurt you. Because if they don't really

want to talk to you but they try to be nice and still talking to you.. eventually it's going to happen. They will block you. So it's better to block you instantly or in the beginning stages than after.

JY: Gotcha. Do you think the Internet helps you to relieve your loneliness or it generates more loneliness?

WE: I think it's both. I'm a very contradictory person. I think why it relieve my loneliness is even if I am physically alone in my room, or haven't seen anyone that day, I could still talk to people or even just look at other random stuff online to kill the time. In this sense I feel I'm not lonely because my mind is filled up with something else. But sometimes, a lot of the times I think people will feel the same way after this process, you feel even more emptier and lonelier, because you feel like you wasted your time or you're not actually interact with people in real life. It feels like eating food. You ate a lot, then you're full physically, but you still feel empty, because some of your needs are not satisfied.

JY: What do you usually eat when you're alone?

WE: So I know a lot of people will eat trash food, but me, as an international student here, I'm too lazy to get out and buy food, usually I'll just make food from the materials I get once a week from the supermarket. Since I basically make the same food

everyday, I'll make sure I get a lot of snacks from supermarket. Usually I'll eat all kinds of snacks, like chips, cookies, ice creams, whatever.

JY: So you're trying to eat healthy when you're lonely?

WE: I think I usually just eat healthy in general. When I'm lonely I don't feel like I need to eat healthier or trashier food, basically I just make myself full.

JY: Do you think one day you will get rid of loneliness totally?

WE: I don't think so, I think you will feel lonely throughout your whole life, but I don't think this is a very negative thing, because I imagine one day I got married with someone or have a family of some sort, my life is happy and full and I have a lot of things to do, I can still feel lonely. It could be very random, maybe you're having a really great day, you've done all those things, then you got five minutes alone time, and you're thinking about something or even nothing. There will probably be just a moment you'll suddenly feel lonely. I feel people's emotions are not very stable. I'm not saying we're all crazy, but there are some moments random emotions or memories will occur and you'll feel something else. So I bet in the future no matter what kind of life I will be having I'll probably feel lonely sometimes.

JY: How do you feel like your current situation about loneliness? Are you okay with it?

WE: Right now my life is pretty busy with my school life, so I'm okay with loneliness because I don't really have time to think about it. But yeah, maybe if I get more time when the school is over during summer or winter break I might feel more lonely.

JY: So maybe it's better for us to accept loneliness.

WE: Yes. I'm a very positive person. I believe everything has its benefits. So I would say embrace loneliness, because you can do a lot with it, you can enjoy a movie by yourself when you're lonely, or you can even create some art if you're an art student. So definitely I think it's a good thing.

JY: WNice ending. Thank you so much.

WE: Thank you.



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## Video Catalog 2016—2018



#01 Dis-connected  
02:36



#02 Touch & Control  
01:45



#03 Hi:-)  
01:33



#04 Mukbang  
05:20



#05 Unboxing  
10:00



#06 Onlone 00:00  
08:00

## Thank you Mon and Dad

Min-Jee Jeon  
Tara Pairoj-Boriboon  
Stephen Parks  
Drew Sisk

Chino Amobi  
Brooks Heintzelman  
Ivy Yixue Li  
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Nontsikelelo Mutiti  
David Shields  
Wesley Taylor  
Lauren Thorson  
Sandy Wheeler

Matthew Charboneau  
Anne Graves

Richard Rozewski  
Tyler Stoll

## Colophon Onlone 00:00

Edition of 15  
Size:  
4.75 X 7.75 in  
180 pages

Printer:  
VCUarts Golab  
Paper:  
Soporset Text 60lb.  
Typeface:  
Helvetica  
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+1 (804)-263-0634  
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