

**DECONSTRUCTING CONSCIOUSNESS IN CONTEMPORARY
HYPERREALITY: THE MULTIPHRENIC SELF AND IDENTITY**

by

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Deconstructing consciousness in contemporary hyperreality: The multiphrenic self and identity

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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ABSTRACT

This study is a practice-led research that visually examines how the sense of self and identity are experienced within the complexity and multiplicity of selves in a technologically saturated culture. This dissertation, “Deconstructing consciousness in contemporary hyperreality: The multiphrenic self and identity”, is the theoretical component of this research which underpins and discusses the visual works that comprise of three multimedia installations that focus on images of the fractured self, the re-imagining of faces behind facial recognition programmes, and the embodiment of space and aesthetic significance within re-appropriation of images within social media platforms. The practical component falls within multi-media art often associated with video art and installation art within contemporary art.

By recognising postmodern identity theories, this study investigates the postmodern subject’s concept of self and identity formation within a world that is influenced by the constant glare of technology and viral¹ media exposure. How the development and proliferation of technology in the contemporary world, shapes one’s sense of self and identity. The fragmented postmodern subject exists within this context of “viral media” that describes the endless parasitism and dominance of media, where information is perpetuated as part of representation. Due to the perpetual state of virtual re-invention of the “self” within this realm, a digital footprint of identity and traces of personal information are available to others publicly and globally. This context generates a fractured postmodern self that globally exists within a perpetual sense of the present. This research visually and theoretically reflects on the concepts of postmodern schizophrenia and the multiphrenic self, in relation to identity and how participation on social media platforms can enhance a feeling of fragmented self. To address the main argument, it is the contention of the research to deliberate that identity formation is continually and compulsively shaped and reshaped through adapting to specific social environments. The study further argues that the multitude of digital networks (and the

¹ The media specialists Henry Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013:17) explained the use of the word “viral” within media as that the: “term ‘viral’ first appeared in science fiction stories, describing (generally bad) ideas that spread like germs”. Jenkins et.al (2013:17) further explain that “viral media” is “a term whose popularity has been fuelled by the rapid rise of social network sites alongside declining adverts rates and extremely fragmented audience for broadcast media”.

everyday practices occurring within and between them) form a different kind of platform and space that affects identity formation.

List of key terms:

Self, identity, multiplicity, multiphrenia, postmodern schizophrenia, selfie, anti-face, media, technology, refraction, projection, reflection, *simulacrum*, hyperreality, Facebook, performance identity, *rhizome*.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to study

Contemporary technologically dominated culture generates spaces and experiences, human-computer interactions, cultural interfaces that result in a constant flow of data-visualisation. This study posits that an ongoing state of identity formation within a society saturated by the data-visualisation can be a fluid and inter-connected series of processes and experiences that can present the “self” with a sense of becoming. The study attempts to examine this phenomenon theoretically and visually. Furthermore, the research proposes alternative strategies within a technologically driven postmodern context for the creation of realities and the effect they have on the “self” and identity formation. The practical component of the research comprising of multimedia installations creates a space where the viewer can examine their involvement of self-knowledge on various levels.

To be subjected to the exposure of a variety of realities created by technology, one’s own sense of reality can become compromised and fractured. This can generate different identity formations. Thus, the aim of this research is to examine the effect technology has on the sense of “self” and identity formation. Within the participation of social media, the self” is displaced as a central presence and re-appropriated into multiple selves or what can be referred to as multiphrenia.

Multiphrenia, as a postmodern concept, that was coined by the psychologist and author Kenneth Gergen in his publication *The saturated self: Dilemmas of identity in contemporary life* (1991). Gergen (1991:49) proposes that: “in large measure, an array of technological innovations has led us to an enormous proliferation of relationships”. Gergen further explains: “As one’s potentials are expanded by the technologies, so one increasingly employs the technologies for self-expression; yet, as the technologies are further utilized, so do they add to the repertoire of potentials” (Gergen 1991:73). Therefore, multiphrenia is explained as the condition where multiple selves and self-representations can exist in harmony or in conflict with one another. The term “multiphrenia” is used specifically to refer to the postmodern subject’s fractured experiences of self and identity through online interactions and connections. The blurring of boundaries within the fragmented postmodern identity formation within the

use of technology such as Facebook creates a perpetual state of virtual re-invention of the “self”. Gergen (1991:49) supports this by stating that:

However, we shall also see that as we become increasingly conjoined with our social surroundings, we come to reflect those surroundings. There is a populating of the “self”, reflecting the infusion of partial identities through social saturation. And there is the onset of a multiphrenic condition, in which one begins to experience the vertigo of unlimited multiplicity

He further explains how technology decentres the individual who cannot, within the milieu of technology, hold onto previous understandings and identity formations.

Kenneth Gergen’s, theories on multiple selves resonate with the psychologist Jacques Lacan. Lacan (2001:1286), in the article “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” states that: “when one looks in the mirror, one assumes an image, a way of picturing oneself. Later, more self-images are formed by interacting with others”. This applies to a context of continual online engagement with the “other”, and wherein a society saturated by technology, the “self” is exposed to multiple opportunities for reflection and interaction of the “other” resulting in identity formation. The experience of the “self” within this context is conceptualised by postmodern theorists as a fluid process of identity formation and becoming.

The philosopher Nick Mansfield (2000:2) states that within postmodern culture “...the self is at risk. Selfhood is now seen to be in a state of perpetual crisis”. Within this crisis of the “self” subjectivity comes into play whereas “subjectivity refers to an abstract or general principle that defies our separation into distinct selves and that encourages us to imagine that or simply helps us to understand why our interior lives inevitably involves other people” (Mansfield 2000:3). This implies that the self as a subject is always linked to something outside of itself, this can be an idea, another person or a community of subjects. It thus can be argued that the self is not an isolated entity.

The concept of “becoming” is complex. The philosopher Rosi Braidotti (2002:2) explains becoming as: “a desire ‘not to know who we are’ but, ‘what, at last, we want to become’”. Within the context of social media specifically Facebook² the “self” in the

² For this study when referring to social media I refer specifically to Facebook as this is the focus of my

process of becoming happens in a fluid continuous present. This continuous present never fully coincides with a spatio-temporally saturated “now”, which results in the creation of different identity formations. Moreover, the study examines the concept of becoming by relating the concept to the *rhizome* as a fitting metaphor for a web of interconnected connections between realities.

To compare the concept of the rhizome to identity formation and becoming within the context of social media is relevant when relating it to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari who explain the concept of *rhizome* in their publication, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988). Deleuze and Guattari (1988:23) explain that “the principle characteristics of a *rhizome*: [which] unlike trees or their root systems, the *rhizome* connects any point to any other point and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature, it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even non-sign states”.

For Deleuze (1996:171), a fixed self or identity is perhaps the most heavily criticised concept from the philosophical tradition as “there is no integrated self, but rather unidentifiable processes of “becoming” as the opposite of the fixed identity”. Deleuze (1996:2) posits that:

the paradox of this pure becoming, with its capacity to elude the present, is the paradox of infinite identity (the infinite identity of both direction or senses at the same time – of future and past, of day before and day after, of more and less, of too much and not enough, of active and passive, of cause and effect).

This fluidity of time as described by Deleuze comes into effect within the realm of social media and identity formation.

To explain becoming, disconnectedness and the fragmentation of the “self”, the study introduces the novel *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010)³ as an analogy.

research

³ *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* was written in 1865 by the English Author Charles Dodgson under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll. The story centres on Alice, a young girl who falls asleep in a meadow and dreams that she follows the White Rabbit down a rabbit hole. She has many wondrous, often bizarre adventures with thoroughly illogical and very strange creatures, often changing size unexpectedly (she grows as tall as a house and shrinks to 7 cm). She encounters the hookah-smoking Caterpillar, the Duchess (with a baby that becomes a pig), and the Cheshire Cat, and she attends a perpetual tea party with the Mad Hatter and the March Hare. She plays a game of croquet with an unmanageable flamingo for a croquet mallet and uncooperative hedgehogs for croquet balls while the Queen calls for the execution of almost everyone present. Later, at the Queen’s instructions, the Gryphon takes Alice to

The relevance of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (2010) to postmodern cultural discourse is that postmodern art (and thought) favours reflexivity and self-consciousness, fragmentation and discontinuity, ambiguity, simultaneity, and an emphasis on the de-structured, de-centered multiphrenic subject. All these elements can be recognised within Carroll's novel and relate to the focus of identity formation and becoming within the context of social media. Similar to the interactions within social media, the journey of Alice down the rabbit hole and into Wonderland represents the uncontrolled path of the unconscious and self-reflection and all its components. When the caterpillar asks Alice "Who are you?" and states "You ought to know yourself", this could relate to her unconscious struggle for the opportunity to know her identity, or her sense of self (Carroll 2010: 53). Alice as the protagonist struggles throughout the novel with her identity and could be viewed as a reflection of her lack of a sense of self or purpose in her life at the onset of her journey into her own constructed alternate reality of Wonderland. Once again this relates to the self-editing within the Facebook context. As Alice continues her journey through Wonderland she comes out of her confused state and reaches a point of becoming.

In *The Logic of sense*, Deleuze (1996:1) further alludes to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to explain the paradox of becoming: "she becomes larger than she was. But by the same token, however, she becomes smaller than she is now. Certainly, she is not bigger and smaller at the same time". It is against this background of conflict with herself and her identity, a fractured self, as well as how Alice interacts with the other characters within the novel, that is the connection to this research as to the multiphrenic self.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (2010) depicts a world in which one find various anomalies. Alice herself throughout the novel declares objects, characters and events as strange, incoherent and impossible. Spatio-temporality is challenged where time stands still at the tea party (Carroll 2010:89) and Alice walks through the door in the

meet the sobbing Mock Turtle, who describes his education in such subjects as ambition, distraction, uglification, and mockery. Alice is then called as a witness in the trial of the Knight of Hearts, who is accused of having stolen the Queen's tarts. However, when the Queen demands that Alice be beheaded, Alice realizes that the characters are only a pack of cards, and she then awakens from her dream

tree and suddenly finds herself in the large hall. (Carroll 2010:38). Within *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010) the use of spatio-temporality dissolves the common understanding of entities in geographical space and linear temporality, embodying Wonderland as a *rhizome*, centreless and interchangeable within present time.

This relates to how Fredric Jameson (1983:119) explains, the over-representation of images and media messages as best understood by relating it to the psychosis of schizophrenia where the:

schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence. The schizophrenic thus does not know personal identity in our sense, since our feeling of identity depends on our sense of the persistence of the "I" and the "me" over time (1983:119).

Fredric Jameson sees postmodern schizophrenia as a horrifying breakdown of the "self", while the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari consider schizophrenia to be a form of growth and a way of becoming for the "self". Within Wonderland there is also a breakdown between sense and signification and Wonderland becomes a configuration between what is real and what is fantasy. Within the realm of schizophrenia, Wonderland is featured as a metaphorical world full of similes. The events within Wonderland in other words, oppose each other around the schizophrenic use of words, characters, time and space and therefore barriers are broken down within a perpetual present. Based on the above-mentioned observation, the fragmentation of "self" is reflected by what is referred to as postmodern schizophrenia and is defined as a series of perpetual presents similar to an explosion of fragmented mirrors that create a reflective space of speculation on the nature of perception and time, and the representation of the "self".

Brian Massumi (1993:140) explains the condition as

the fragmentation of selves that creates a fragmentation and saturation in postmodernity that can thus be seen as a phenomenon that covers the face of the earth and actualizes both our subjective and objective conditions of existence, no matter who or where we are, whether we like it or not, and whether or not we like to believe it. There is no getting outside it.

This research therefore aims to examine identity formation within the schizophrenic postmodern context where the world is mediated by the different screens used in technology. To explain the idea of the “self” mediated by screens in a culture dictated by technology, the postmodern subject can hypothetically be compared to an actor on a “social stage” who actively creates different personas for the benefit of an audience (and, ultimately themselves) leading to the manifestation of the multiphrenic condition. The sociologist and writer Erving Goffman (1990:22) explains this phenomenon as:

[t]hat part of individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance. Front, then, is the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance.

Within this context, where the postmodern lifeworld⁴ is seen as a stage, the relationship of mind (consciousness) to screen or then the hypothetical use of the stage as a screen, can no longer be conceived as two distinct structures, one external and one internal. One is constantly reminded that the images and objects within a virtual space that are perceived in the mind or on the screen are only representations; these images can concurrently be present and absent. Within this state of postmodern schizophrenia and multiphrenia, it is problematic to be able to choose between internalism and externalism⁵. The author Gregory Flaxman (2000:16) refers to Deleuze's statements that “the brain is a screen” and “the screen is a form of relation, of interchange”. The media theorist Robert Pepperell in (Pepperell and Punt 2006:193) explains, in the *Screen Consciousness: Cinema, mind and world*, that “the screen exists in a state of indeterminacy, being both inside the viewer's head and outside of it”. The question of how the “self”, consciously or unconsciously, relates to the screen is both metaphysical and paradoxical. The aim of this research is to understand this state of altered perception within this paradox that guides this study.

⁴ Life-world comes from the German *Lebenswelt* that means “the world as immediately or directly experienced in the subjectivity of everyday life” (www.britannica.com/topic/life-world). The lifeworld of a postmodern subjects refers to one's “social, perceptual, and practical experiences”.

⁵ Within critical theory there is two views, that of internalism where the theory is: “a thesis about the basis of either knowledge or justified belief” (Goldman 2009:309) and externalism that theorises that: “things other than mental states operate as justifiers” for the postmodern subject (Goldman 2009:310). Within postmodern schizophrenia there is a blur between these two theories therefore a blur between the internal world and the lifeworld.

As explained earlier, the process of identity formation manifests daily on the various screens accessible through technology. Televisions, movie theatres, computers, tablets and smartphones are currently sites of media studies as spaces of paradox and of projected and simulated images but also as places of mediation. The fractured postmodern subject exists within this *simulacrum* and the hyperreal world.

1.2 Background to the study

The focus of the study is on cyberspace or virtual reality as a created, mediated and sensorial space. Cyberspace is where identity can be experienced in multiple places at once. This research on self (multiphrenic self and fractured self) and identity formation are centred on an analysis of a decentralised, multifaceted presence within this virtual reality that spans time and space and its effect on the human condition. Time is connected to space and, within the postmodern schizophrenic condition, time is not experienced within a timeline of past, present or future but as a continuous perpetual present. Similarly, in Carroll's novel (2010:82-87), the protagonist Alice realises the effect of perpetual time. In the conference lecture "The Perpetual Today: The Use of Time in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland", the author Taryn Hettlinger and Mary-Ann Bushman (1999: [sp]) state that: "In Wonderland, a different concept of time is created. The characters are removed from "rational" time, yet paradoxically, obsessed with its passage". Carroll (2010) addresses time within Wonderland Alice manages to punish the Mad Hatter and stopping time at six o'clock, tricking the Mad Hatter and March Hare in a perpetual teatime.

Alice asks the Mad Hatter: "What a funny watch!" she remarked. "It tells the day of the month and doesn't tell what o'clock it is!" "Why should it?" muttered the Hatter. "Does your watch tell you what year it is?" "Of course, not" Alice replied very readily: "but that's because it stays the same year for such a long time together". "Which is just the case of mine" said the Hatter (Carroll 2010:89).

In recent studies on postmodernity, time and space are no longer treated as separate entities however, discourse on media perception and memory has generated the need to think of space and time differently. The philosophers and writers Petra Eckhard, Michael Fuchs and Walter Hölbling (2010:93) explain that, in postmodernity, there is a loss of "differentiation, there is a de-differentiation or dissolving of boundaries in genres, cultures, disciplines, art forms and spaces". This de-differentiation affects the way one experiences identity formation, time and space. The constant interaction within social media and thus cyberspace complicates the concept of "self" and the

other and reality and fantasy. One becomes increasingly aware that identity formation is fluid within postmodernity and in a state of flux within the continual interactive transformation of information. Within social media the constant glare of incoming images is necessarily refracted through culture and a history that is both a combination of fragments and glimpses of reality, this creates a hyperreality. Hyperreality is thus seen as a space where there are no clear boundaries between real and virtual a space characterised by the dissolving of boundaries,

Jean Baudrillard (1983) explains hyperreality to that altogether more general contemporary condition in which both representation and reality have been displaced by simulacra (defined as copies without originals). Baudrillard further defines hyperreality as “the generation by models of a real without origin or reality” (1994:1). By theorising on representation in postmodernity, Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994:6) adds that “our current society has replaced all reality and meaning with symbols and signs, and that human experience is of a simulation of reality” that he describes as *simulacra*.⁶ “Whereas representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as *simulacrum*” (Baudrillard 1994:6) therefore “it is the excess of reality that makes us stop believing in it. The real is suffocated by its own accumulation” (Baudrillard 1994:6). Hyperreality is not a false reality but characterises an alternative reality. The intensified attempt to produce reality leads to the exact opposite. The more the sign industry produces its images of a clean, whitewashed culture or society, the less we can believe in them.

Baudrillard (1993:44-45) relates this constant replication, *simulacra* and glare of technology to the analogy of whitewashed social relations, bodies and memories:

Ours is rather like the situation of a man who has lost his shadow: either he has become transparent, and the light passes right through him or, alternatively, he is lit from all angles, overexposed and defenceless against all sources of light. We are similarly exposed on all sides to the glare of technology, images and information, without any way of refracting their rays and we are doomed in consequence to a whitewashing of all activity – whitewashed social relations, whitewashed bodies, whitewashed memory – in short, to a complete aseptic whiteness.

⁶ A *simulacrum* is “a copy of a copy whose relation to the model (or original) has become so attenuated that it can no longer properly be said to be a copy” (Massumi 1993: [sp]).

This results in a society characterised by whitewashed societal norms that leave very little room for people to claim their own space. This constant data-visualisation relates to Marshall McLuhan's (1994:345) opinion in *Understanding Media: The extension of man* that, "in the post-visual era, the subject/object is bombarded with constant light impulses. Due to this constant presence of light impulses, the internalisation of what the larger society sees as good, acceptable and beautiful is demonstrated daily by the reconstruction of identities online".

There is a constant and fragmented interplay of information stemming from this whitewashed culture and society that constitutes the reality of everyday life. Within this fragmentation of society and culture, the postmodern individual builds and maintains multiple online identities and thus extends or augments offline identities, this results in a complex context for identity formation.

For those who partake in the realm of social media this leads to endless self-multiplication of secondary copies and the border between reality and non-reality or the original and the simulacrum is blurred. The protagonist Alice, for instance, needed a device for entering the Wonderland such as falling down the rabbit hole, creating a nonsense world, an altered reality. In *Alice's Adventures of Wonderland*, Alice struggles with the sense of self and identity and her process of becoming begins when she falls down the "rabbit-hole" (Carroll 2010:12). Wonderland can be described as a continuous *simulacrum*, a hyperreal space where Alice continuously interacts with the "other" and, within that relation to the "other", starts to understand her own sense of self.

The Italian philosopher Umberto Eco (1986:16) explains the adventures of Alice is a space where "everything looks real, and therefore it is real; in any case the fact that it seems real, it is real, and the object is real even if, like in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, it never existed". Eco (1986:16) suggests that "reality is now mediated totally by visual perception", this creates a hyperreal space where the self, functions on different levels. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010) correlates with the context of the hyperreal, the instability and fragmentation of the hyperreal space where the self becomes the multiphrenic self.

Baudrillard (1994:25), expands his theory on the *simulacra* and hyperreality when he explains his viral theory. He proposes that “a further stage of confusion within culture, the hyperreal, had moved to a higher level of hyperreality, the viral stage”. In the viral stage, there is “no point of reference at all” (Baudrillard 1994:172). This notion can be related to social, biological and technological systems where viruses, as self-replicating codes, are present and similar to *simulacra*, there is repetition upon repetition, comparable to the double helix of DNA strands that replicate and copy continually and uncontrollably. Therefore, once signs become viral, they can “scarcely be called signs, for the difference upon which their exchanges were based have been destroyed” (Baudrillard 1994:72). In the viral stage of culture, copy-of-copy (*simulacrum*) references culminate in “an exponential production and viral reproduction of the variant and contradictory real, hyperreality” (Baudrillard 1994:72). Likewise, a continual replication of the virtual self is repetitively circulating and replicating within cyberspace as a digital footprint.⁷ Within this hyperreal space, where one can be traced by a digital footprint, there is the constant interplay between “self” and “other”; an intersubjective interconnection within the social context where there is no control.

Roger Frie and Bruce Reis (2013:297) explain intersubjectivity as the “most basic sense to the interaction between two subjects; myself and another person, or self and other”. Thus, intersubjectivity can be described as the inter-connected relations between the “self” and other

I argue in this study that, within cyberspace⁸, intersubjective connection of the “self” and other transpires within hyperreality, a space where space where there are no clear boundaries between real and virtual a space characterised by the dissolving of boundaries, that can extend one’s sense of identity and thus its formations. In cyberspace, the boundaries between past, present and future are destroyed within perpetual presents and the postmodern subject needs to accept the possibilities that

⁷ Mary Madden, Susannah Fox, Aaron Smith and Jessica Vitak (2007:3-4) describe passive and active digital footprints. A passive digital footprint is the “[p]ersonal data made accessible online with no deliberate intervention from an individual” and an active digital footprint is the “[p]ersonal data made accessible online through deliberate posting or sharing of information by the user”.

⁸ For the scope of this study cyberspace can be described as a hyperreal space.

boundaries and rules are contested. It seems that the subject should not participate in social media without considering the cost. Hypothetically, one might claim that cyberspace is a shared space, a community space where the “self” and other connects with a new form of intersubjective experience where boundaries are dissolved. Within cyberspace, the “self” is continually participating and is being reflected on by the other. This lifeworld of the “self” unfolds within a hyperreal space that has the potential to create new possibilities for social interaction based on multiple formations of identities and new contemporary forms of being social.

1.3 Problem Statement

Within the framework of contemporary art discourse considers the effects of technology on the formation of identities when there is constant participating in social media. The premise of this research is based on a visual examination of the question: How does the constant glare of technology and viral media exposure effect the “self” and identity formation within a perpetual sense of present when participating within the hyperreal space of social media? The visual component is supported by the discussion in this theoretical component. I examine identity formation as it is shaped and reshaped when interacting in social media and especially Facebook as a platform of recurring social practices of subjects, using various communicative technologies.

Identity formation within cyberspace has changed as a result of the interaction with online social networks that offer individuals the opportunity to create multiple identities while knowing these identities could be performance based. This study investigates the phenomena that the postmodern fractured self is in a continuous performance on social media platforms

1.4 Aims and objectives of the study

The aim of this research is to examine and visually represent the effects of a continued participation in social media on identity formation. To achieve this, I attempt to represent the inter-connected relation between the “self” and “other” that forms within the context of social media experienced as performance-based self-representation. The visual work that I present is supported for the purpose of this project by this theoretical discussion where the concepts of postmodern schizophrenia and multiphrenic self are analysed. The context of this research is situated within

contemporary art theory as point of reference.

In the representation of online performances of re-inventing selves, the visual component's uses the simulated geometric shape of the icosahedron⁹ to investigate multiplicity and fragmentation within the context of social media participation. The recreated shape of the icosahedron in acrylic is a structure that is introduced to visually represent the interpretive interconnectedness found in technology. This structure of the icosahedron is used to visually represent the mutation of the self in the three installations, where morphing and replicating is presented to visually depict the possible ways to visually represent the multiphrenic self.

The use of narrative motifs from the novel, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010), in the visual work is presented as visual iconography as visual representation of multiphrenic self, spatio-temporality and the re-inventing of identity within cyberspace.

I use multimedia that includes photography, collage, an acrylic three-dimensional icosahedron form, light, video, still-frame animation and digital animation to explore to create the three installations. These multi-media elements are re-appropriated and juxtaposed within new arrangements. This research focuses on the hyperreal world and video art installations are the means to create a virtual space a hyperreality. In the creative work the intangible representation of multiphrenia is represented by objects that exist subconsciously in the mind and are intangible in hyperreality. Within the installations, a space is created similar to the ubiquitous technological "screen" with the aim to visually represent, a fragmented state of being in identity formation when interacting on Facebook. The aim of the visual work is to demonstrate the layers of manifestations and experiences of the multiphrenic self.

Based on the notion of infinite identities, multiplicity, *rhizome* and becoming, the three installations are created to conceptualise within a principle of multiplicity and interconnectivity. The three installations are connected contextually to each other yet

⁹ Icosahedron is a "polyhedron having 20 faces. The name comes from Greek eikosi, meaning 'twenty', and hédra, meaning 'seat'" (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icosahedron>).

each functions in isolation.

The research therefore aims to represent alternative ways of the concept multiphrenia. And explore the aspects of identity formation, such as understanding the “self” and body within virtual space and the interaction with virtual objects as well as the relationship between real space and imagination and how it can be represented.

The function of the theoretical component is to explain and underpin the visual works.

1.5 Theoretical approach of the study

The methodology followed in this study is qualitative and based on an exploratory theoretical and visual investigation of the digital age and the effect of it on individual consciousness, “multiphrenic self” and identity. The research is based within the paradigms of contemporary art discourse, within the paradigm of postmodernism.

This research examines cyber reality as a hyperreal world, by considering this new internet-driven phase of globalisation, where the “self” is both performing online. A critical discourse is central to the problem statement within the milieu of art and art practice. The research takes into cognisance that the structure of today’s networked society is complex and that multiphrenia and postmodern schizophrenia are both phenomena within this complexity.

Furthermore, the study uses an analogy between the character of Alice from the novel *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010) and the viral social media-driven society to critically investigate identity formation, within this context.

1.6 Review of literature and visual sources

1.6.1 Literature Sources

The novel, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010) is based on changed perceptions and the embodiment of the “self” and becoming within the experience of identity formation and is used as an analogy in this research.

Literary theorist, Frederic Jameson (2002:111-125), in “Postmodernism and consumer society”, is a main source for addressing the notion of postmodern schizophrenia. In addition, the philosopher Michel Foucault (1997) analyses the formation of the postmodern subject from the perspectives of psychiatry, medicine, criminology, and

sexuality, therefore his notion on postmodern schizophrenia. In his theories Foucault emphasises that all forms of consciousness, are socio-cultural determined and is in relation to the connection between the “self” and the “other”. Historian Hal Foster (1985: ix) in *Aesthetic methods and Epistemology: Essential works of Foucault 1954-1984 (Vol 2)* notes that Jameson and Baudrillard have similar notions of the postmodern that can be seen as a schizophrenic experience within a new sense of time and place. The former asserts that consumer society is an oppressive structure, and the latter periodises the postmodern age where the death of the subject occurs”. Both these views are relevant, interrelated and central to the arguments of this study. The theory on postmodern schizophrenia connects directly to the notion of the American psychologist Kenneth Gergen (1991:227,228) where the postmodern self is discussed as decentred by the “social saturation brought about by the technologies of the Twenty First Century and the accompanying immersion in multiple perspectives”.

The theories of the French Theorist, Jean Baudrillard that locates the postmodern condition within what he terms “hyperreality” is very significant to this research. For Baudrillard, the consciousness of postmodern subjects finds its most powerful expression in the concept of hyperreality. *The Mirror Production* (1975) and *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994) by Baudrillard are cited in relation to understanding the hyperreal space of postmodernism. Baudrillard emphasises that within this hyperreal the “self” is always on display, multified and commodified as part of mass consumption. Within contemporary art discourse art is influenced by the cyberspace enabled postmodernism where fragmentary, hyperreal, schizophrenic pacipatory and multidisciplinary became part of postmodern art practise. Within contemporary art practise influenced by *simulacrum*, simulation and the hyperreal, space and time, the role of the artist and aesthetic signification have changed. Foucault through his theories on postmodern schizophrenia question formal aesthetics in art, for Foucault art representation of the life-world of the “self” has political meaning. This is why both Baudrillard and Foucault focuses on the particular re-production and the *simulacra* nature of images. Today we are exposed to such images, permanently attached to technology that creates the unending streams of *simulacra*, and that can be used by the “self” for continuous role playing.

The research then uses the theories of Goffman (1990) where Goffman uses the theatre as an analogy for social interaction. Using the same analogy as Goffman of the stage or theatre, where the “self” is playing various roles within cyberspace, the theories of Goffman is still relevant for a time period like today where users are exposed to cyberspace, against a time period of Goffman where cyberspace was still in its infancy. The screen as mediator within technology is unpacked by focusing on a new way of thinking about embodiment, where the “self” interacts socially on Facebook by creating a virtual image of the self, whilst still situated in the physical body.

This new mediating social space can be metaphorically compared to a *rhizome*, a concept theorised by the philosophers Deleuze and Guattari who describe modern society as a system with multiple (radical) roots reflecting social realities and social influences (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:11). The writer Charles Sitvale (1998:13) asserts that: “the *rhizome* concept of Deleuze and Guattari is a framework for understanding the theorisation of multiplicity and fragmentation in postmodern society”.

The research done by the art historian a theorist Hans Belting (2017) in his book *Face and Mask: A double history* is of utmost importance to this study especially Chapter Four that focuses on faces and masks within a digital era.

These authors are situated in various academic fields thus positioning this study as an interdisciplinary enquiry from within the disciplines of popular culture, social psychology, cultural criticism and postmodern identity theory. These concepts are connected by the lived experiences and circumstances of contemporary society recognised by multiphrenia and postmodern schizophrenia and the importance of cyberspace as mediated space. The theoretical and practical research approach of this study will reflect and embody these notions of movement and change.

1.6.2 Practical research and sources

The practical component of the research relates to the experiences of the protagonist Alice in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010) as an analogy to examine the perception of identity formation within a context of perpetual/present time similar to the experience of in cyberspace when relating to the world of social media. The visual component of the research involves examining spatial-temporal modes using photography, collage, acrylic, three-dimensional icosahedron forms, light, video and new media. In the three installations, *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole*

(2017),¹⁰ *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017)¹¹ and *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017),¹² various animation and video editing techniques are applied to embody multiplicity and interconnectedness between subject and object within a hyperreal space.

There are three installations which comprise images of the “self” mirroring (multiplied) merging and connecting with actual experiences of seeing the “self” reflected and reacted upon by the “other” this simulates the intersubjective experience of social media participation

The research visually considers the effect of social media interaction on identity formation. How to present the fragmented postmodern subject, existing within this framework of “constant viral media” exposure, and how to resist or react to it is explored visually. In the era of simulation, the process of representation breaks down distinctions between the actual and the virtual and a space created between real and hyperreal, and fantasy and dream.

In the first installation, *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017),¹³ an axis of the icosahedron shape created from acrylic is suspended from a structure in the middle of the space created by the installation. This simulated icosahedron continually rotates and images are projected onto it via projectors

The second installation, *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017),¹⁴ represents the experience of the “self” as a performance. The study refers to the “Mad Hatter’s tea party” from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010) where the Mad Hatter and March Hare are stuck in a perpetual “now” at six o’clock daily to represent the perpetual now and fragmented time recognised as the context of postmodern schizophrenia. Alice and the other characters repeat specific actions such as drinking tea.

¹⁰ Hannelie Swart (2017). *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole*. Multimedia installation.

¹¹ Hannelie Swart (2017). *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party*. Multimedia Installation.

¹² Hannelie Swart (2017). *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face*. Multimedia Installation.

¹³ Hannelie Swart (2017). *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole*. Multimedia installation.

¹⁴ Hannelie Swart (2017). *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party*. Multimedia Installation.

By unpacking the Mad Hatter tea party from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the perpetual present, a mundane everyday action of drinking tea is re-presented and the "self", hiding behind a mask.

The third installation, *Presence of Alice: Anti-Face* (2017), is an impression of looking through a mirror and presenting the other face as an inversion. The video is created with stop frame animation. The use of the mask as the primary object allows it to morph within the space created. In this work, the use of light and shadow are explored as a simile of our experiences of perceiving, apprehending and simulating a perpetual reality and time. *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017) metaphorically de-recognises the perfect mediated images of the "self" and projects images that hypothetically illustrate how technology views the human face and human identity.

The creative works of the artists James Turrell and Robert Irwin are used as references in the argument as their art works relate to the same concepts that are examined in the research. The artwork of James Turrell, *Cube*: "questions the validity of our cognitive faculties' ability to apprehend spatial forms accurately" (Turrell 2013: [sp]). Turrell (2015: [sp]) further explains his work by saying:

Light, perception and space are the main elements of Irwin and Turrell's visual research that inspired the two artists in their approach to their work, developing a keen interest in the creation of immersive environments and installations. Perception, meditative states and awareness of the physical aspects of vision, are fundamental elements of their work.

By investigating the constant need for repositioning within the dimensions of time and space and exploring news ways of experiencing the ideas of time, the video art of Charlotte Davies, *Osmose* (1995) is referred to. The art of Cindy Sherman is consulted based on how she challenges roleplaying within various environments within contemporary art. The American artist Terry Gilliam's techniques of stop motion video and cut-out animation technique were examined. For the concept of the "anti-face", the art of Zach Blas is consulted based on his focus on various techniques of morphing and camouflage of faces.

1.7 Outline of chapters

In Chapter Two, the focus is to elaborate and explain the concept of multiphrenia and postmodern schizophrenia within the framework of exploring hyperreal space as an everyday social and mental space. Central to this chapter, the question, “Which self am I and when?” is examined theoretically referring to and analysing the visual multimedia installation that is constructed for the purpose of representing multiphrenia, representation and fractured identities. The following concepts is used to analyse the video animated installation *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017): the rhizome, the paradoxical self, fractured identity, performance and the hyperreal space. Chapter Two focuses on the impact of technology on humanity that is visible in the formation of a state of being, based on multiplicity, de-centeredness and fragmentation.

In Chapter Three, the attention is on perpetual space/time, subject/object relations and intersubjectivity. The video installation *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) is discussed in relation to decentralised self. The visual research and installation is used to explore the fragmented postmodern subject as spatio-temporal within a decentralised mode that multiplies through media and consciousness. The discussion in Chapter Three considers how digital worlds can challenge our perceptions of time and space and how those perceptions have an effect on postmodern identity formation. Cyberspace is related to Jacques Lacan’s understanding of the metaphor of the mirror as a hyperreal space, a space that can facilitate identity formation and self-reflection. In this space, the “self” is continually unveiled and projected outward as images reflected by the “other” in a specific relationship. The multiphrenic self is explored in relation to cyberspace as a mediating space that is fluid, rapidly constructed and rapidly reformed. A brief discussion on embodiment within virtual reality concludes the chapter.

Chapter Four uses the concepts of metamorphosis and altered self-images to address the second part of the main question, “Which self am I and when?” by focusing on the “self” in relation to time and space. When is “self” recognition possible or is it possible within the process of projection within perpetual time/space? The theories around the anti-face are used in relation to the representation of images in cyberspace. The chapter explores the idea of performance-based self-representation and argues that

multiphrenia and fractured identity formation, as a performance, can be positive attributes of postmodernity focusing on becoming as the outcome. The digital animated video installation *Presence of Alice: The Anti-Face* (2017) is discussed while unpacking the above themes. In this chapter, the study argues that identity is tied to community and is therefore relational.

The conclusion presents the outcomes of the visual and practical research. The significance of this research is discussed and underpinned by an attempt to indicate that fragmentation within postmodernity that creates the multiphrenic self can be positive if understood as a fluid process. The outcome of the research where identity formation is an inter-subjective process is discussed. The conclusion of the hypothetically stated question, "Which self am I and when?" is unpacked within the theories of multiplicity, postmodern schizophrenia, perpetual time, identity and hyperreal space and debated. Cognisance is taken of the short-term dopamine-driven feedback loops created by social media that have an effect on the "self" and identity formation.

CHAPTER TWO: PRESENCE OF ALICE – DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

2.1 Introduction

The concepts, postmodern schizophrenia and multiphrenia were introduced in Chapter One. The focus in Chapter Two is to analyse these two concepts within the framework of identity formation when participating on Facebook. This chapter and the following chapters examine the question: “Which self am I and when?”. The objective is to discuss identity formation and to explain the different ways in which people present themselves and their lives within social media. The challenge was how these concepts can be represented visually. In this chapter I discuss one of the installations that form part of the visual component of this study *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) as this work was created with the aim to visually depict these notions.

2.1.1 Postmodern Schizophrenia

The phenomenon of multiplicity is characterised within the concept of postmodernism¹⁵ as defined by Jameson (1998:3) where Jameson explains postmodernism as the emergence of a new type of social and cultural life-world. He further emphasises the importance of consumer society, the media and the performance of the subject.

The postmodern subject who participates in social media creates and presents self-images that make them marketable, likable, and/or desirable. This process of creating different mediated and reinventing the “self” on Facebook, a fragmentation of the “self” occurs.

The art critic Hal Foster (1985) comments on Jameson’s essay, “Postmodernism and Consumer society” (1983), here Jameson describes society as being deeply influenced by mass media that has lost the sense of history. Foster (1985:125) comments: “our entire contemporary social system has little by little begun to lose its

¹⁵ Postmodernism evoke ideas such as: “irony, disruption, difference, discontinuity, playfulness, parody, hyperreality and simulation” (Malpas 2005:7). In addition, postmodernism” has tended to focus on questions of style and artistic representation, and postmodernity has been employed to designate a specific cultural context or historical epoch” (Malpas 2005:9). An in-depth discussion of postmodernity does not fall in the scope of this dissertation, since the focus is on contemporary art discourse. Within contemporary art discourse postmodern influences are seen as art which: “rejected the traditional values and politically conservative assumptions of its predecessors, in favour of a wider, more entertaining concept of art, using new artistic forms enriched by video and computer-based technology” (Malpas 2005:46) This research focuses primarily on image-based technologies for example video, computers and cyberspace.

capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind which all earlier social formations have had in one way or another to preserve". Moreover, in *Postmodernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism* (1991), Jameson continues to question temporality and how this helps to fragment the world in such a way that culture becomes increasingly superficial. This is one of the reasons that Jameson (1991:154) refers to postmodern cultural forms as "spatial" rather than "temporal" by stating: "Within these spatial experiences there is a loss of progressive temporality where the experiences of 'time' and 'memory' give way to dislocation". This results in a "schizophrenic temporality, [where] the fragmentation of the subject is immersed into radically discontinuous realities" (*Encyclopaedia of Postmodernism* 2002, sv "postmodernism").

Schizophrenic experiences can thus be described as disconnected experiences where identity is blurred and problematic and, within this framework, results in a fragmented "me", a multiphrenic self that is continually re-inventing and representing identity on Facebook. Jameson explains that these disconnected experiences challenge the "self" but also complicate identity formation.

2.1.2 Contemporary art discourse

Within postmodern visual art discourse as discussed within the *Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism* by the literalist Steven Conner (2004:86) it can be debated that visual arts within postmodernity is more reflective and is represented with a political, social and cultural context. Conner further explains that there is a theatricality of the images that is performance based.

Within the context of contemporary visual art discourse, there is a certain engagement of the subject both authorial and embodied, there are in some cases informed decisions to be distant from such terms of the original in favour of mediation and repetition; there is a marked interest in rhetorical or signifying excess, and a loss between boundaries where the focus is not only on art but on visual culture more broadly.

Art Critics in the 1960 and 1970's increasingly started to use the term "installation" for artworks that were installed in galleries, museums and non-traditional display sites.

The curator Faye Ran (2009:2018) explains that: “[h]ow and why this occurred is important in understanding the process of technological influence and how postmodern aesthetic discourse embodied both individual and societal reactions and rejoinders to changes wrought by new conceptual paradigms”. Ran (2009:2019) further states that: “Installation evolved into a complex medium with own distinctive structures, characteristics and aesthetic-critical standards”. Installation art can be described as a medium that is multi-dimensional since it reformulates space, time and place of art, the role of the artist and aesthetic signification. According to Ran (2009:209), “[w]hat we definitely say about installation is that it is a hybrid form of practice and inquiry drawing upon many disciplines and histories, from architecture and performance art, to sculpture, film and video”. Since Installation Art is so versatile, I use this as a medium for my practical research to analyse multiplicity within the age of technology.

2.1.3 Visual component

The visual component of this research “Presence of Alice”, de-recognising the perfect mediated image of the “self” is a body of work that is comprised of three installations *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole (2017)*, *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party (2017)* and *Presence of Alice: The Anti-Face (2017)*. This was on exhibition at the UNISA Art Gallery in October 2018. ¹⁶

The installation *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole (2017)* is relevant pertaining to the discussion in this chapter. In this installation a stop motion animation video is introduced. To understand the technical process of stop motion (cut-out) animation, I referred to the work and technique of Terry Gilliam, well known for his Monty Python animations. In the 2009 National Public Radio Interview “Gilliam’s Imaginarium: Surreal and All-Too-Real”, David Bianculli, explained that the animated films Gilliam creates are usually imaginative fantasies (Bianculli 2009). Gilliam’s work features absurd juxtapositions of beauty and ugliness or antique and modern. His work depicts the theme of modernity’s struggle between spirituality and rationality. Gilliam creates characters dominated by a tyrannical, soulless machinery of disenchanting society

¹⁶ The visuals on the exhibition can be seen at *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole (2017)* <https://youtu.be/INttszTzWPs> , *Presence of Alice : The Mad Hatter Tea Party (2017)* <https://youtu.be/1BK4Yx3kiOw> and <https://youtu.be/txkmO-FD2Z0> and *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face (2017)* at <https://youtu.be/bs5vfTGbpCs>.

(Bianculli 2009). Gilliam presents a surreal atmosphere of psychological unrest and a world out of balance a juxtaposition of subject and object.



Figure 1: Terry Gilliam animation of man eating fish taken from Monty Python's Flying Circus Series 2, 1971.

The aim of my stop animation video was to create an expanded, deconstructed, minimalist animated world, similar to that of Gilliam. The images that feature in this video are the "self" playing a role with a mask, cups, saucers, fractured mask, fractured images of cups and saucers, a table and a chair. The stop motion technique in conjunction with these images of real objects doing impossible surreal things creates its own subtle and impossible metaphysical space of the inside and outside world of the "self"¹⁷. The space created in the two videos is a performative space where the "self" plays a specific role. The space created in the two videos also dissolves the boundaries between internal and external world, and real and virtual world.

¹⁷ The philosopher Kadir Cucin (2016:35) theorises on the internal and external world of the self by saying that: "[t]he self has two kinds of objects: (1) Self-itself as an object; (2) the not-self as an object" The internal world of the self is then seen a where the takes itself as an object and the this is part of self-knowledge and self- reflection. The external reality is the outside world that the "self" experiences through his/her senses (Cucin 2016:35).

2.1.4 Identity Performance

To examine the inside and outside world of the “self”, the perspectives of Goffman are relevant and explained in the context of Facebook where the “self” is created, re-created and performed continually. The key idea in Goffman’s work relates to the “self” as it performs, similar to the “front stage” of a theatre, where one deliberately chooses to project a given identity.

According to Goffman (1990) social and cultural life is a process of consciously and unintentionally presenting information of the self to influence the opinion of others regarding the “self”. The situated, interactional and performative nature of intersubjectivity is emphasised by Goffman (1990) This research explains that the multiphrenic self is performing various “selves” on Facebook. Goffman's utilisation of the postmodern conception of society is evident in his description of the fragmented nature of consciousness and culture.

Goffman’s work informs on self and identity formation within technology to describe persons, as both performers and audience, within social media interactions. Goffman (1990:40) proposes that when a person interacts with others, they are attempting to “guide and create a certain image in which the other person sees them and attains knowledge about them”. This is an attempt to highlight “positive ideas of self and desired impressions” (Goffman 1990:44).

In each situation that the subjects find themselves, there is a different performance that they project as “a way to adapt” (Goffman 1990:43). Goffman’s ideas about performance contribute to an understanding of online intersubjectivity. The concept that the “other” is continuously reflecting on the “self” and that identity guides the “self” to generates specific images of the “self” for the “other” to access and reflect upon. This allows the “self” to perform a role and to post a representation of the “self” on Facebook in such a way that it can desirable and acceptable to others. Madison Ganda in her honour’s thesis paper for Portland University (2014:10) comments on Goffman’s ideas when she states: “Similarly, the user is also part of an audience and reacting to the posts of others”. This concept of actor and audience reflects on Goffman’s discussion of role-playing on a stage and how one can interact with the “other”, as a performance.

The process of identity formation can then be linked to Goffman’s concept of the “front”

which is described as “that part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance” (Goffman 1990:22). As a “collective representation, the front establishes proper “setting”, “appearance” and “manner” for the social role assumed by the actor, uniting interactive behaviour with the personal front” (Goffman 1990:27). Goffman’s ideas relate to the social network sites created as stages. In the “front stage”, the “self” is performing online in order to shape how the “other” see them. But there is also a back stage, the offline time where no performance is played and the “offline self” is situated. The research done by the psychologist Adriana Manago (2015:20) indicates that: “websites such Facebook are “anonymous” virtual spaces”. That is within these the social spaces where the postmodern self can play a role, can maintain and image to all the acquaintances offline world. Manago (2015: 19) further posits that: “Online and offline communication modalities aid, extend, and supplement one another). Important is that interaction online within Facebook can be very valuable to identity formation especially when online resources translate to the offline social world of the “self”.

This online and offline relationship within social media can be understood in terms of Goffman’s “face” theory whereby an individual is expected to “keep face by maintaining the initial impression that they have made on an audience and live up to it” (Goffman 1990:213-231).

In this context, online experiences be a stage and the offline existence as the back stage, where the “self. within an online experience is likely to be exposed to a disproportionate amount of positive information about others on Facebook. Within this online space the self then enters into selective self-presentation and self-promotion. This can lead to a misconception in the offline space. By then unpacking the question: “Which self am I, and when?”, one can hypothesise that, by considering the “front” and “face” theories of where the “offline-self informs the creation of a similar online-self” (Baker 2009:7-21), that the offline-self and online-self are part of the multiphrenic real self and that the multiphrenic real self is an important aspect that again informs the online-self to play various roles.

As the Internet gained prominence in our lives, this has resulted in the loss of anonymity and the desire to mask our real identity online. Indeed, online activities are

no longer separable from our real lives, but an integral part of it. A great deal of cultural theory research has highlighted the fluidness of our performance selves to the digital world. The common theme of these studies is that, although the Internet may have provided an escapism from everyday life, it is mostly mimicking it. The postmodern self is playing a role performing his/her life-world on a social platform such as Facebook. Our digital identity may be fragmented, but it seems clear that our various online identities are all digital footprints of the same identity; different fractures of our same multiphrenic real self.

The fractured postmodern self continually seeks verification of identity by posting images in virtual reality. To be perceived as an identity, the “self” needs to pass through a virtual point that is a social space, an intersubjective relationship with the “other”. The multiphrenic “self” exists in hyperreality, a Wonderland.

The artist and theorist Ted Hiebert (2003:113) explains that to understand performance as part of identity formation, “[i]dentity becomes [a] carnivalesque, performance of the ‘self’”. The “self” is no longer self –reflexive but rather self-projecting. The “self” is also projecting and performing his/her own fantasies on Facebook. Hiebert (2003:121) then posits that: “there is nothing behind the of the carnival or of postmodern masquerade” Therefore, within the online environment of Facebook, the edited “self”, offers ways in which multiphrenic selves can be presented and communicate with the “other”. Identity, as a form of self-expression, has, over time, succumbed to society's stereotypical notions of what the “perfect” identity and image should be.

2.1.5 Identity Formation

In the article, “An analysis of Melanie Klein’s ‘The Psycho-Analysis of Children’”, the author Peter Harris (2014: [sp]) refers to the theories of the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein on the importance of the inner world as part of an identity by saying “an identifiable modern-day Kleinian “school” continues to highlight how the interaction of inner and outer reality shapes human life from infancy”. The inner world of a person refers to the functioning of the mind and how one conceptualises external objects. The psychoanalyst Melanie Klein in (Peter Harris (2014: [sp])) distinguishes between an internal world and an external reality. The interactions between the inner world and the outside reality are key elements in identity formation. Within postmodern

schizophrenia there is a disjunction between these two worlds. Within this blending of internal and external worlds there is a more “fluid mechanism of perpetual cycles of projection and introjection” (Harris 2014: [sp]).

Melanie Klein introduced original ideas, primarily through her technique of psychoanalysis and an altered way of rationalising about the inner world of the “self”. The internal world of the “self” consists of internal objects that refer to the inner mental and emotional image of an external object and the experience by the “self” of that external object. The inner world of the “self” is therefore populated with internal objects. The psychoanalytic model of Melanie Klein on the “inner world” is a point of reference for the content of the installation used in *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) (Fig 2).

For images to create the stop-motion animation in this installation, the objects of the inner world of myself as the artist, had to be accessed and visually represented, this means it is objects that I experienced in the outer world and internalised. The images I use for this animation are symbolic referring to my inner world that has been affected by my interactions on Facebook. Specific symbols and images present in the subconscious of the “self”. These symbols entail images such as blood, blood clots, the brain, masks, vessels, the rabbit, doors, bottles, mushrooms, mycelium’s and brain synapses. Stop motion animation, with its stuttering movements and peculiar scales, has a visual quality that makes it distinct from other forms of both animation and video art. Stop motion animation with the distinct visual affect can be uncanny or unsettling. This process that creates stuttering movements could also refer to the fractured identity of the postmodern social media active self.

The images used in the stop frame animation within a timeline presents a possible narrative of the multiphrenic self. The depiction of this inner world presents the viewer with an opportunity to watch, relate and react to it.



Figure 2. Hannelie Swart. *Mandala image created as part of Art Therapy process (2017).*

These strange images are intended to be analogous to the experiences of the protagonist Alice in the novel *Alice's Adventures of Wonderland* (Carroll 2010). When Alice journeys through the imaginary world without a beginning or an end, and where a character, as the "other", unveils itself in various metaphors, images and symbols creating an imaginary world without a basis in reality. Thus, Alice takes a journey into the unknown and is confronted with bizarre happenings. In Alice's journey two intertwined aspects manifest: discovering the self and becoming. For this study I compare the journey of Alice in Wonderland to one's interconnection with virtual reality in hyperreal space when performing on Facebook presenting a fragmented multiphrenic "self" that informs identity formation. In the same way *Alice's Adventure into Wonderland* (2010) examines these fragmented pieces, to return Alice to the full process of becoming and to understand her identity. The stop-motion animation in *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) (Fig 3) then takes the viewer into a Wonderland, by creating images depicting the inner world as part of an identity.



Figure 3. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017).

The psychologist Serge Moscovici (2001:257-270) argues that “many social psychologists answer the ‘Who am I?’ question of identity with the general ‘I am who the other says I am’”. Moscovici (2001:257-270) further states that: “it took several decades to introduce the more existentialist view ‘I am what I make of what other say I am’”. It is important to understand the relationship between the “self” and the “other”, namely another person that includes the inter-subjective relation in the physical and the virtual world. The “self” how one is separate and different from others, but people can also consider how they are similar and connected via relationships. There is also a connection between the part of identity that makes one separate and different from others or the part of identity that makes one related and similar to others.

Identity formation can be described as the conscious process of (re)examining one's feelings, thoughts, behaviours, and ways of relating to others who may or may not share similar commitments and habits. The researchers Arthur Chickering and Linda Reisser (1993:207) reflects upon “our place in the universe, the meaning of life and death, and our purpose for being here” Within a world that is technology driven and participation on social media constant, the “self” experiences that one is part of a social. Identity is both a personal and social construction, for there is a strong interplay between the inner self and the social self. The ability then to distinguish between simultaneous representations of the “self” and the “other” on Facebook as well as understanding one’s own identity is crucial to navigate one’s complex social environments successfully.

Examining identity formation within the current technological development in social media representation, the “self” and identity, for the purpose of the study, are framed as: “Which self am I and when?” This view on identity formation guided the imagery of the “self” created in *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) (Fig 4).



Figure 4. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017).

2.1.5 Self-presentation

The images of the stop frame animation video aim to relate to the realisation of self-reflection and self-representation when compared to the experiences of the protagonist Alice. In *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010) Alice in her adventures into the unknown Wonderland experiences alternate encounters of space, time and an exploring the “self” is perceived. Alice falls down a rabbit hole and, similarly, the “self” falls down the oesophagus into the unknown or the inner world. Alice’s identity is constantly questioned: “‘Who are you?’ said the Caterpillar” (Carroll 2010:47); “‘Well! What are you?’ said the Pigeon” (Carroll 2010:57). Even Alice queries who she herself is: “‘Who in the world am I? Ah that’s the great puzzle’” (Carroll 2010:23). The question posed in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (2010) refers to understanding identity and is similar to the question posed in this dissertation: “Which

self am I, and when?". Within postmodernism that is characterised by the era of mass television and cyberspaces, within contemporary art practise there has emerged an attachment to collage rather than in-depth work, to superimposed quoted images rather than worked surfaces, to a collapsed sense of time and space. This collapsed sense of time and space also has an effect on identity formation. Within a sense of perpetual present as well as within virtual space the "self" posts images as *simulacra*. Insofar as identity is increasingly dependent upon images, this means that the serial and recursive replications of identities (individual, corporate, institutional, and political) becomes a very real possibility. Online spaces in which the "self" interacts of very different worlds seem to collapse upon each other.

Deleuze also considers this new space-time world of Wonderland in *The Logic of Sense* by referring to the Mad Hatter tea party, since the storyline around the Mad Hatter and March Hare focuses on perpetual time and its effects. Deleuze (1996:79) states:

The present no longer subsists except in the abstract moment, at tea time, being indefinitely subdivisible into past and future. The result is that they now change places endlessly, they are always late and early, in both directions at once, but never on time.

When Alice enters the rabbit-hole into Wonderland, "time" has been distorted; it is personified and is suspended, as explained by Deleuze. In *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) (Fig 4), images of the body were duplicated and copied, and the "self" symbolically entered a "rabbit hole" into the subconscious where time and space are distorted. The "self" enters a distorted reality with no beginning or end, an interconnected world of synapses.

The Wonderland in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010), can hypothetically be described as a hyperreal space. Hyperreality is seen as as: "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality"(Baudrillard 1994:1). In the sixth chapter of the book Alice encounters the Cheshire Cat and asks him: "Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?" (Carroll 2010:80), where the cat responds, "Then it doesn't matter which way you go" (Carroll 2010:80). Wonderland is a labyrinth of spaces without names and becomes a continuous *simulacrum*, a world without a basis in reality similar to hyperreality. Further to that the space described in the novel has numerous centres or has the antithesis of no centre at all. This means

that, for every place in Wonderland, there is a road with specific arrows that can lead any other road but can also lead right back to the original point of entry, as they are all connected. This then can be compared to the concept of the rhizome as explained in Chapter One. Within this hyperreal space, the “self” reflects, performs and connects. Within the artwork, the images of the brain synapses are used to represent the continual symbolic interaction and reflection between “self” and “self”, and “self” and “other”. I now will explain the concept of the rhizome within the context of my work.

2.2 Rhizome, hyperreality and “self”

Rhizome is an evolving concept that has been referred to as an explanatory framework for a network both human and machine. Deleuze and Guattari (1988:4) describe the concept of the *rhizome* as “an underground mass of continuously growing horizontal stems or roots which extend lateral shoots at certain intervals in order to grow and establish connections with other shoots. Deleuze and Guattari (1988:23) further explain the concept of the *rhizome* as the understanding that all points within a *rhizome* is interconnected although such connections are not always (in fact, seldom) visible.

In the book, *Digital Literary Studies: Corpus approaches to poetry, prose, and drama*, the media specialists Kieran O’Halloran, David Hoover and Jonathan Culpeper (2014:148) note that “[t]he World Wide Web is a super resource for exploring knowledge rhizomatically”. In other words, one can move in a variety of directions, from hyperlink to hyperlink, from website to website.

The Web or for this study Internet therefore operates as a structure of multiplicity similar to that of *rhizome*. The structure of the Internet is like a *rhizome* as it contains many different points of access that divide into various connections in a seemingly infinite number of other connections. In *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) (Fig 5), the concept of the *rhizome* that is continually growing and expanding is explored visually. The images created in the animation of mushroom mycelium simulate the web of communities found within technology. Added to the mushroom mycelium is the use of brain synapses to symbolise interconnectedness. In the narrative of the animated video, clocks are ticking, and mycelium strands are continuously growing within this created subconscious inner world. Symbolically, it represents the “self” and identity that is drowning, saturated and consumed by an overload of information and images. The rhizome as metaphor in the artwork

of mass media consumption.

Within this context, the posting of perfect images creates a disconnection with the “self” and body, a morphed idea of the “self”. Through the constant interaction with the perfect image, one can become conditioned to project only the best and sometimes an unrealistic image of the “self” on social media spaces. Because of the reflection by the other, identity formation is influenced in the sense that the image of the “self” is moulded into an alternate self.

In the hyperreal world of Alice in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010), various metaphors and symbols are used to create imaginary world. In other words, the Wonderland of Alice is an idea of the hyperreal, a place where time and space are deconstructed into another form of reality. Alice enters a decidedly surrealistic experience. As the narrative unfolds, Alice starts to understand the rationality of the hyperreal world she has entered and how to adapt to fluidity. She begins to deconstruct the characters she meets, to make sense and to establish her own identity. Alice’s encounter with the hyperreal forces her to question every essential idea about her own identity. In doing so, she must also question which of the signs and copies presented to her in this hyperreal world she is experiencing are more real.

For Alice, the *simulacrum* in Wonderland is so far distanced from reality that it no longer bears a strong resemblance to her actuality in the Victorian culture, due to a lack of reference within the world it has generated. This creates a loss of identity for Alice. Lois Drawmer (2004:274), on the awareness of Alice in her Wonderland, explains: “The dream setting functions as an analogy of states of being, the ontology of the conscious awareness of a ‘self’, and anticipates the narcissistic engagement of self-discovery which follows”. This means that Alice became self-obsessed in finding out who is and part of self-discovery there was growth within the character that also refers to becoming. Through investigating and exploring the hyperreal, the visuals of the animated video in *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) (Fig 6) are based on symbols, images and signs that do not resemble a real world but a Wonderland, a hyperreal world. Similarly, the visuals that feature in the animated video are created to resemble a surrealistic style. Most of the images derived from the

subconscious of the artist as part of the creation process are a form of automatism.¹⁸



Figure 6. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017).

2.2 1 The Selfie

This conscious awareness of the “self” featured in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (2010) and the self-edited versions on Facebook can be argued as identity characteristics of a narcissist. A new study has established that excessive use of social media, in particular the posting of images and selfies, is associated with a subsequent increase in narcissism. Published in “The Open Psychology Journal”, researchers from Swansea University and Milan University, Phil Reed, Nazli I. Bircek, Lisa A. Osborne, Caterina Viganò, and Roberto Truzoli, studied personality changes of 74 individuals aged 18 to 34 over a four-month period. The research indicated that those who used social media excessively, through visual postings, displayed narcissistic traits over the four months of the study (Reed, Bircek, Osborne, Viganò, and Truzoli 2018: 163). But I also argue that one can never know the motivations of everyone who has ever taken a selfie or painted a self-portrait. The argument then is that selfies are not more narcissistic than old fashioned portraits. In fact, they continue on in much the same tradition, just within different techniques due to advanced technology. There is a constant display of the “self” on Facebook well-known as selfies¹⁹. The art critics Rosella Tomassori, Giuseppe Galetta and Marialaura Gargano (2016:2017) define a “selfies” as “photograph[s] taken of themselves, via smartphone or webcam, uploaded

¹⁸ Automatism is explained as “In psychology, ‘automatism’ refers to involuntary actions and processes not under the control of the conscious mind – for example, dreaming, breathing, or a nervous tic. Automatism plays a role in Surrealists techniques such as spontaneous or automatic writing, painting, and drawing; free association of images and words; and collaborative creation though games” (Surrealism [Sa]).

¹⁹ A selfie is defined as a: “photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media” (www. oxforddictionaries.com/definition/selfie)

and shared on a social media website". Tomassori et.al. explain how contemporary art implements the selfie as an expression of the time in which it is "developed, characterised by the immediacy imposed through the new technologies and consumerism culture". (Tomassori et.al.:2016:209). The postmodern fractured self can make a choice to partake in taking selfies and then to post it on Facebook where there is an immediacy and an anticipation that the "other" will reflect and comments on the image. The self-centered generation obsession by self-representation also manifests in contemporary art. It can be argued that the self-portrait and the selfie originate from the human's need to reveal itself to the world, and to be the creator of its own image, in the attempt to claim an identity. Within this culture of social media, some artists present selfie-based artwork in exhibitions. This art form however, requires social interaction to be recognised as an art form. According to Tomassori, et.al. (2016:210) contemporary artists are "aware of the communicative power of this new medium and rides the wave of the moment by transferring their own selfies into artworks". In particular, contemporary artist, especially digital artists use the replicative power of cyberspace to exhibit and display images. exploit the transitive properties of the Internet. The selfie as a social enhancement tool is also visible within the arts fuelled by postmodern narcissist personality. These postmodern narcissist personality traits visible in contemporary art include artworks that need constant conformation and validation of the "self" and of self-perception. The current selfie artwork is according to Tomassori, et.al. (2016:211) "an increased ability to control how artists are portrayed becoming in itself a work of art that expresses the hyper-realistic and perfect self-representation of an artist in the digital age: by means of a selfie the artists psyche is revealed through art practise". The digital artist can also use the notion of a self-portrait to reflect on themselves and their own work, just as we use our selfies to communicate certain ideas about our identities and our lives. Selfies also have their own technique, visual language and meaning. Also the perspectives and angles in selfies are distinctive and recognisable.

The *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) (Fig 7) aims to visually represent the morphing and distortion of the "self" and objects and offers a resistance to a perfectly mediated self-image, created within the designed hyperreal space. These distorted and fractured images that I introduce in the stop animation video depicts a resistance towards the everyday seeking of so-called "perfection" in the continual re-

invention of the “self”. The video animation attempts to visually demonstrate how fragmentation and abandonment of identity occur within the constant reflection of the “self” by the “other” on Facebook. By posting modified images on Facebook the image of the “self” is not a true reflection, the reasoning can be to hide, exhibit or alter an identity. This increases the multiplicity of the “self” and therefore postmodern identity become more fractured.



Figure 7. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017).

The function of this installation with the surreal images is to represent the over-exposed and consumed “self”. This presents the viewer an opportunity to reflect on the “self” where the created images stand in contrast to society’s dream of the perfect image. These images in the stop motion video relate to Alice as she falls down the rabbit hole. She enters another world where her “self”, and body image is challenged. Alice’s expectation to know who she is, throughout the novel, causes anxiety in her as she gradually loses her sense of self.

Alice becomes disconnected from the “self” and her encounter with the Caterpillar is a good example as the Caterpillar enquires who she is:

Who are you?" said the Caterpillar. This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied rather shyly, "I – I hardly know, Sir, just at present – at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then." "What do you mean by that?" said the Caterpillar, sternly. "Explain yourself!" "I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, Sir," said Alice, "because I'm not myself, you see." (Carroll 2010:35)

This section of the novel relates well with the focus of this research, "Which self am I and when?" when entering the virtual hyperreality of interaction on social media. According to philosopher Rosi Braidotti (2002:76,77), an impulse connected to identity formation is a desire "not to know who we are", but "what we have become". Braidotti (2002:21) argues that the body is a "complex interplay of highly constructed social and symbolic forces ... not an essence, let alone a biological substance, but a play of forces, a surface of intensities, pure simulacra without originals". Within this play of multiplicity there is only *simulacra*, copies and not originals and in the process of becoming the "self" goes through various different experiences of belonging. In a sense identity is becoming multiple.

This connects back to Baudrillard's (1994) theory on the hyperreal where he theorises that within hyperreal spaces and exposed to *simulacrum*, there is no longer distinct borders and there is only images and simulations where the "self" is on display and where the private is made public and where the self then becomes exposed.

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1988:275), "the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities" because "becoming and multiplicity are the same thing". This, once again, relates back to the concept of the *rhizome* as "a multiplicity [that] has neither subject nor object", no "beginning nor end" (Deleuze 1988:9). Relating back to the notion of a *rhizome*, the challenge lies in finding alternative ways of mapping the "self" and identity to understand the complexity of the life-world today. Similarly, Braidotti (2002:2) believes that the self-representation that is identified by "decentered and multi-layered visions of the subject is a dynamic changing entity". The "self" experiences constant multiplicities, and identity formation is fluid. In this context, Braidotti argues that the concept of becoming is a means of starting to articulate the fragmented multiphrenic self. Through technology, the self can become multiplicity and fractured. Boundaries are continuously dissolving. Analysing identity formation within multiplicity, various multiple potentialities can be explored within the fluidity of identity formation.

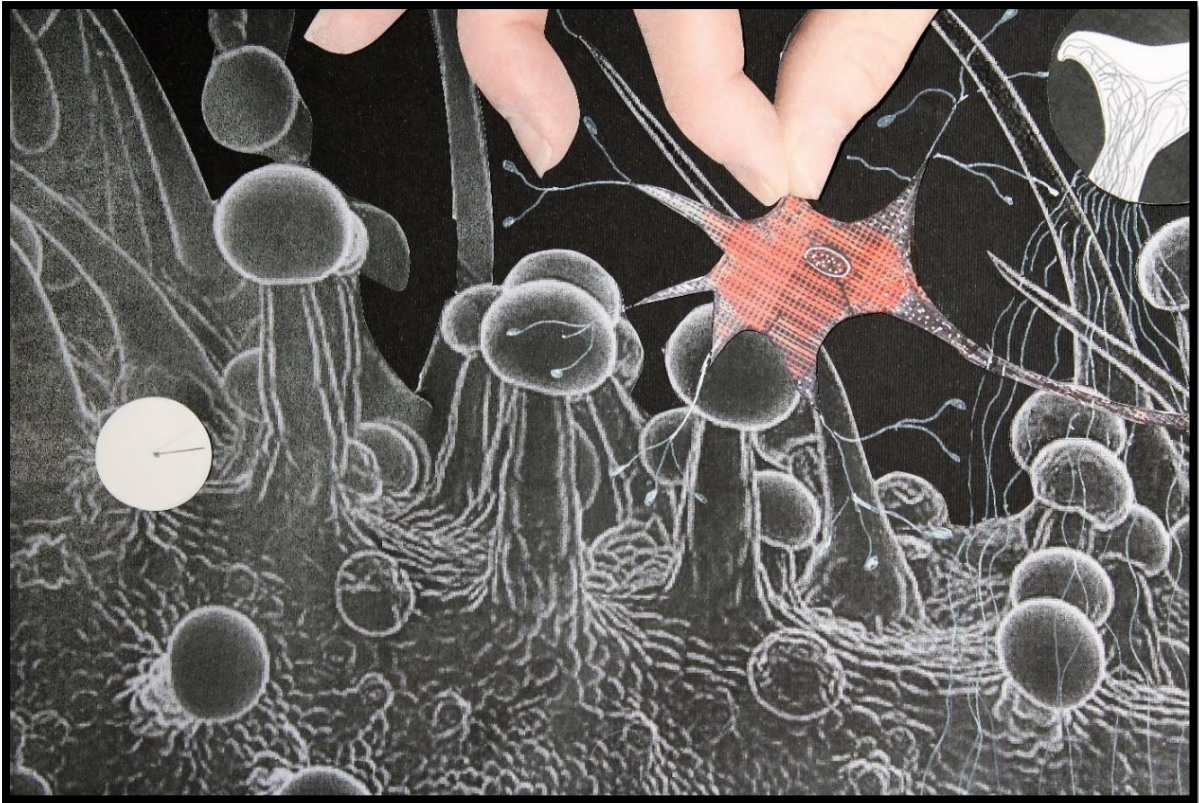


Figure 8. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017).

2.3 Multiphrenia

The concept multiphrenia is coined in Kenneth Gergen's 1991 book, *The saturated self: dilemmas of identity in contemporary life*. Gergen (1991:74) proposes that "[w]ith technology of social saturation, two of the major factors traditionally impeding relationships – namely time and space – are both removed". Within multiphrenia the "self" is splitting into a multiplicity of self-investments due to over exposure and continual self-representation due to technology. So multiphrenia is the name for the phenomenon of having many possible selves and self-representations that is exhibited and reflected upon.

According to Gergen (1991:150), this creates a "totally saturated society". Gergen (1991:145) is recognised for his comment: "I am linked therefore I am" and states that "as the boundaries of definition give way, so does the assumption of self-identity". According to Gergen (1991:228), because of multiplicity there is a new form of consciousness in postmodernity. This conceptual multiplicity, or what Gergen (1991:4) calls multiphrenia, is "therefore the way "self" exhibits and posts different identities on Facebook, that results in a heightened sense of subjectivity and a corresponding depreciation of objectivity. Associated with this heightened sense of subjectivity,

Baudrillard states in *Transparencies of evil: Essays on extreme phenomena* (1993:44) that the fractured postmodern selves are defenceless and “exposed on all sides to the glare of technology, images and information”.

The world is saturated with images, logos and adverts that provide information. Whether one is at a shopping mall, at home or on Facebook, one is surrounded by multiple realities. However, many of the images that one is exposed to are mediated thus blurring reality. The multiphrenic “self” lives in a contemporary culture of simulation that changes one’s ideas about the “self”, identity and body. Within this culture that is technology driven, when participating in social media, identity can be constructed and reconstructed over and over again. The philosopher Zygmunt Bauman (2000:23) notes within the term liquid modernity that “ours is a consumer society; never before has a society been so saturated with diverse images and messages, engaging members purely on a consumption rather than production basis”. The authors Elizabeth Kraus and Carolin Auer (2000:123) also comment on this phenomenon and refer to Frederic Jameson who posits that contemporary culture is permeated by *simulacra*,²⁰ and simulations²¹ and that media today is “heavily influenced by contemporary information technology, creating an information overload”. Similarly, the “self” displays itself to others through Facebook using a mediated “virtual self”, creating a simulation within a simulation.

Anoop Nayak and Alex Jeffrey (2013:124) posit that, when there is this blurring between the lines of reality and representation, signs are no longer connected to objects and things but they still exist within a hyperreal. The research proposes that the disorientating combination of simulations within a technology driven culture can displace a person’s sense of self and influence identity formation when active in social media. The sense of self and identity can be derived from a multitude of sources online where identities are constantly changing according to various environments and social spaces within the hyperreal.

²⁰ Simulacrum (plural: simulacra) from Latin: simulacrum which means: "likeness, similarity" (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/simulacrum>).

²¹ Simulation which means “the imitative representation of the functioning of one system or process by means of the functioning of another” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/simulation>).

2.3.1 Refraction

When one sees through a refracted lens, one is not seeing the world in its primary terms but instead one is seeing it askew. “Light travels in a straight line unless it crosses a boundary then it changes in direction (bending of light rays)” (www.miniphysics.com). The bending of light used in *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) to reflect on multiplicity. By means of refraction, subject and object are transformed, and new layers of images are made in the space as *simulacra*. Refraction disrupts and suspends thereby revealing silent spaces and potential spaces beyond conventional definitions. In the *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) (Fig 9) light and movement refracts the animated video within a hyperreal created space that is continuously transforming, representing the concept of new ways of seeing, knowing and being. In the installation the inside axis of the icosahedron made out of perspex, was motorised to be able to rotate 360°. The light source of the projector playing the animated video was projected onto the rotating icosahedron which then refracted the light, thus creating and projecting fractured images of the video. The installation relates to multiphrenia as it visually represents a transformation from singularity to multiplicity, from a unified surface appearance to refracted images on different parts or planes.

Similar to non-linearity, refraction resists the dominance of a singular concreteness and instead celebrates multi-dimensionality and multi-directionality. In breaking from a straight line, refraction embraces multiplicity, dimensionality and complexity that are more representative of the life-world of participants of social media.

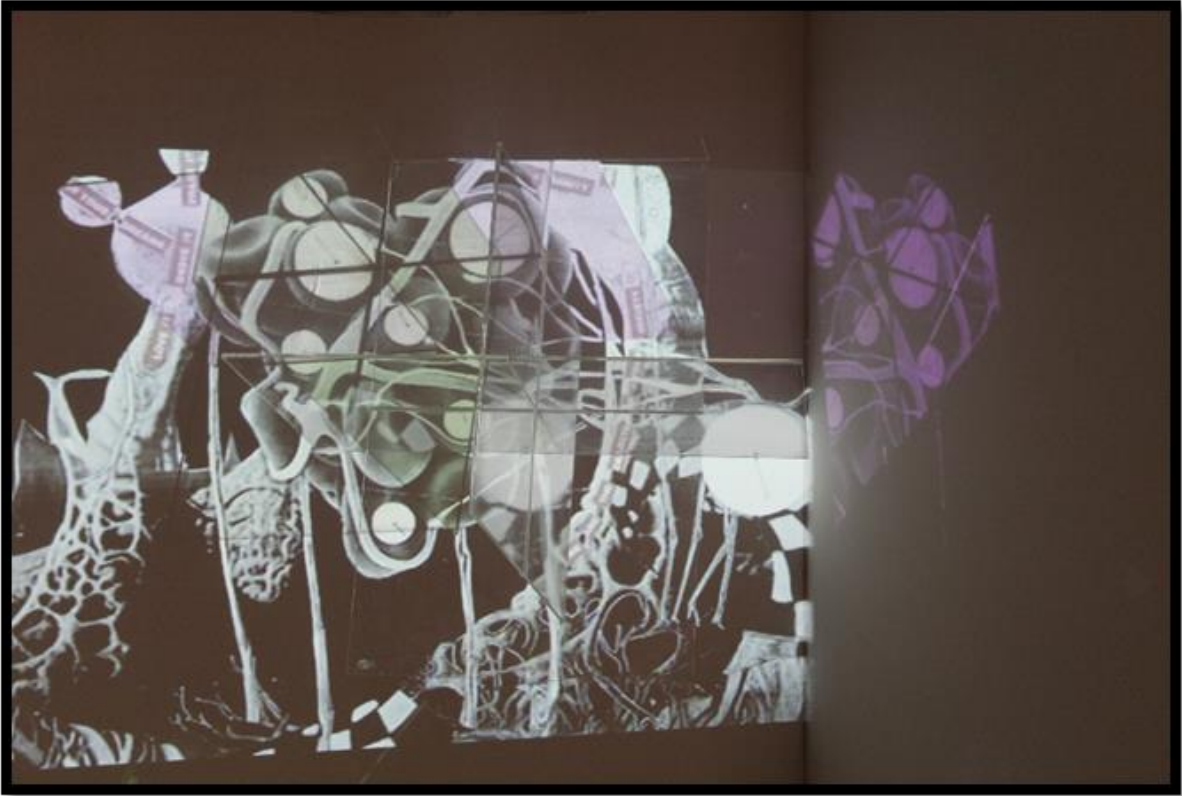


Figure 9. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2018).

An acrylic shaped icosahedron that represents the inside axis of the icosahedron and not the three-dimensional shape is used in *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) (Fig 9) as the central device to refract the images from the stop animated video onto various planes and surfaces. This structure is introduced to visually represent the interpretive interconnectedness found in technology. Because the icosahedron form is refracted by the light within the space, the resulting images can be translated as various possible ways of presenting the multiphrenic self.



Figure 10. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017).

Within the current culture dominated by technology, a paradigm shift has taken place within society regarding space, time, perception, representation and presence. The author Jerzy Kisielnicki (2008:267) states that a world is created that is “a place you can visit with your mind, catapulted by technology, while your body is left behind”. Within its context, there is a mutation of the object and, rather than “being defined as actual, is defined as virtual” (Kisielnicki, 2008:268). Sherry Turkle (1997:74) explains that “online personas created by participants came to represent an externalisation of self”. When the “self” posts an image as self-representation the “self” is disembodied from the representation and therefore an external object. The author Michael McCreery (2012: [sp]) explains that an important finding on the virtual self is that the virtual self is a projection of the “self” where characteristics and identity can be changed or modified, it also depends on the environment in which the “self” represents itself.

The installation, *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017), is constructed to

visually question, not only objects within a specific space, but also the way the “self” relates to virtual objects by placing objects within a particular temporal and spatial context. The aim is to explore the concept of simultaneity where multiple perspectives and images occur at once that are not necessarily caused but are simply occurring at the same time, bringing into question our understanding of time and space. This refers to the spatio-temporality found within the narrative of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010). The artwork offers a visual depiction of the digital age and its conditioning. The object is to heighten awareness of one’s physicality within the created space, so often lacking in contemporary society, in relation to the images.

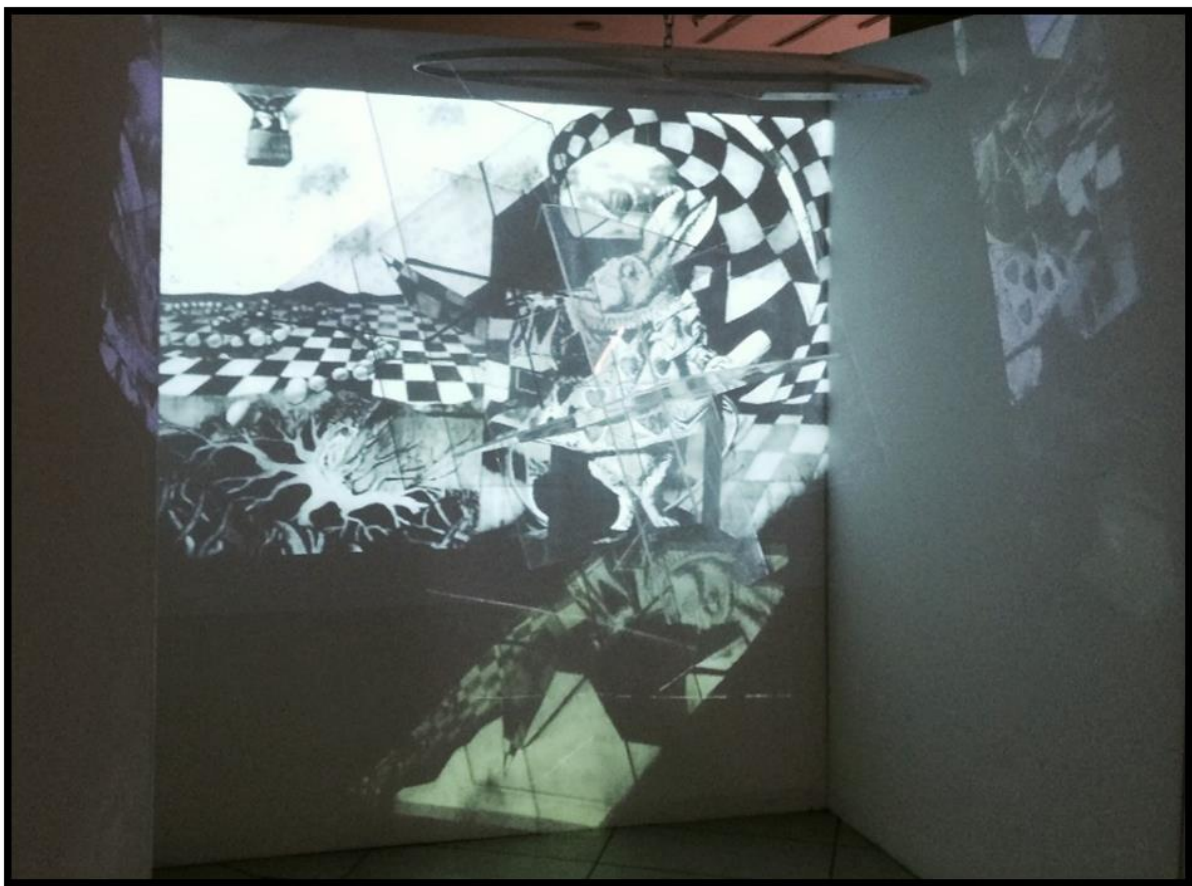


Figure 11. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017).

The use of light and space in the installation is inspired by the artist James Turrell who, in his work, creates perceptual variances. In the artwork, *Afrum 1 (White)* (1967) one cannot determine what is two or three-dimensional. The work comprises two flat projections that create an illusion of a three-dimensional white cube. Although it is only an illusion of a cube, it is purely two flat projections in a corner, which leads the viewers to question the validity of what they are seeing from their limited vantage point. Turrell

hopes to generate a “state of self-reflexivity in which one can see oneself seeing” in the work (Turrell 1992: [Sa]).

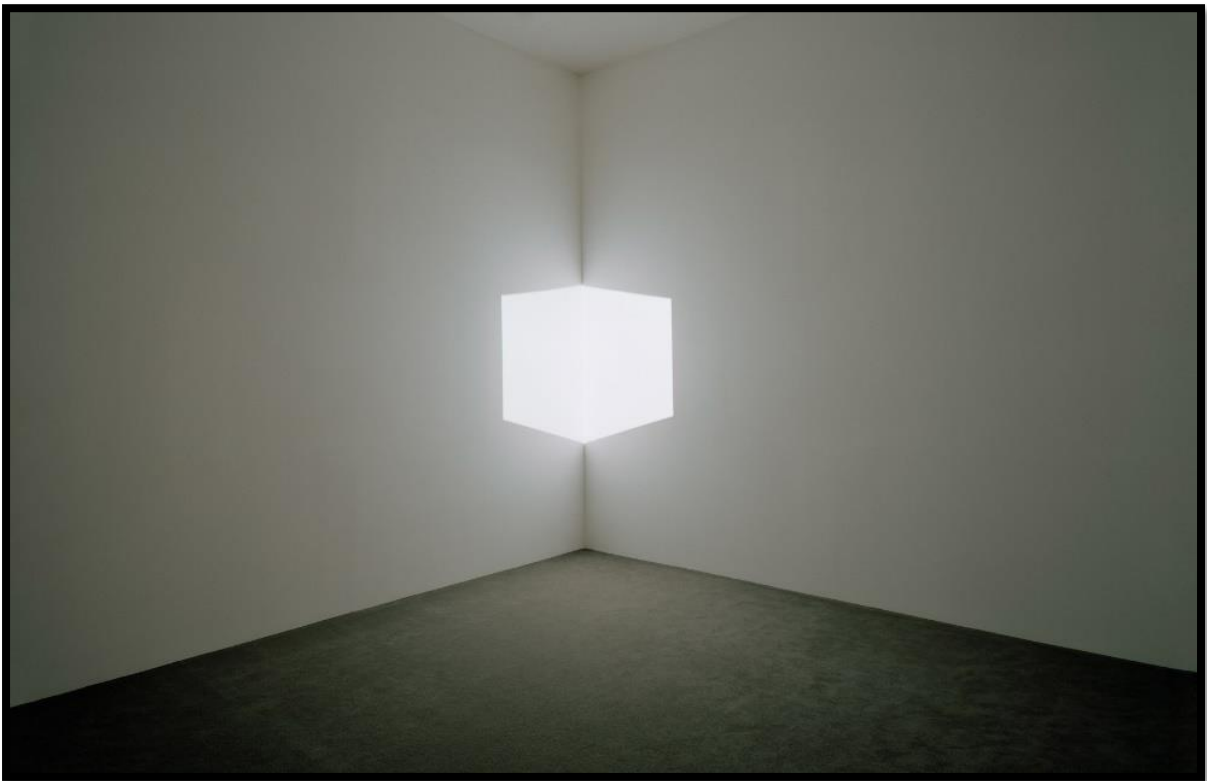


Figure 12. James Turrell. *Afrum 1 (White)* (1967).

We spend our lives immersed in ever-changing environments of light, where no two moments are ever quite the same. Turrell explains that culture is saturated with images and says that: “We are almost invariably looking “at” something: a screen, a painting, a photograph or an object. This is particularly true of and intrinsic to the apprehension of artworks where there is an object – “the artwork” – to be observed” Turrell (2013: [sp]) describes his work in the following terms: “My work has no object, no image and no focus. With no object, no image and no focus, what are you looking at? You are looking at you looking. What is important to me is to create an experience of wordless thought.” (Turrell 2013: [sp]). What is important in Turrell’s work that also reflects on the installation *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) is the perceptual relationship that is as intransigent as light itself, fracturing in the act of perception.

2.3.2 Perpetual present and movement

Another facet introduced by the installation, *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) is the looping of the animated video within the space that aims to depict the concept of perpetual present that is a characteristic of on-line activity. In the book, *Postmodern Science Fiction and Temporal Imagination*, the author Elana Gomel (2010:3) posits that, within postmodernism the experience of time and place has changed and encounters are temporal, that forces the “self” to on a daily basis move between space and time in an attempt to receive multiple conceptual and representational frames.

Another objective of this installation is to create a space with fluid images to enable one to visually imagine and relate the concepts of fractured multiphrenic selves and postmodern schizophrenia. In the video, the rabbit constantly interrupts and takes scenes away and the constant ticking of a clocks creates an experience of multiple connections, but also the idea of perpetual movement and to create an opening for other more fluid ways of experiencing time, space and identity. The theory and artworks encourage the viewer to ask the question: “Which self am I, and when?”.

2.4 Conclusion

Multiple identities are presented continually within cyberspace as a repertoire to choose from, to recombine and refashion within the hyperreal environment. According to Bauman (2000:28), just like consumer goods, identities “are to be appropriated and possessed, but only in order to be consumed, and so to disappear again”. This chapter highlights these shifting societal changes where technology, virtual spaces and connections are key in the process of forming of multiple fluid identities.

The theories on performance identity explain that persons who find themselves within these social networks make conscious decisions to perform various roles. In cyberspace, the “self” interacts with the “other” in through a “virtual self”, creating a simulation within a simulation. This could result in a situation where there is a disjuncture between the virtual and embodied identities. This research proposes that the disorientating combination of simulations within a technology driven culture displaces the individual sense of self. This has an effect on identity formation of the “self” that takes place within a hyperreal space where the “imaginative self” and the

“other” are connected creating a new status of becoming

In this chapter I consider how cyberspace can be compared to a *rhizome* as it contains many different points of access that divide into various connections in a seemingly infinite number of other connections. Based on the notion of the *rhizome*, the challenge lies in finding ways of presenting the “self” to try adapting to online experiences.

Within cyberspace, continual and repeating imagery can be experienced by the “self”. This chapter explores the concept of simultaneity where multiple perspectives and images of the “self” occur at once, questioning the experience of time and space. One realises that the “self” plays various roles as part of a personally constructed identity. In other words, the “self” needs to embrace the ability for growth and fluidity as part of experiences, self-awareness and becoming. Within the process of identity formation, the “self” seeks constant approval from the other when participating in social media. This research therefore proposes that the “self” has mediated identities performing various roles and adapting to various environments online.

This research posits that identities are multiplied daily online in the virtual world. The consequence of this is that when the question: “Which self am I and when?” is presented the answer is there are multiple selves, online identities that performs on the “front stage” of cyberspace. The “self” exists in multiple places online at once without the biological body being present. Identity formation is greatly influenced by the identity projected by popular culture and is not a true reflection of who we really are. Social media has created a shift away from experiencing ourselves as singular identities. The postmodern multiphrenic self is a construction, a mimicking resulting in multiple identities influenced by the constant glare of media messages, images and signs.

CHAPTER THREE: THE MAD HATTER TEA PARTY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Two examines the multiple selves that are continuously presented within the hyperreal space on social media platforms. Within the current culture saturated by social media and technology the concept of the “self” is shaped by outside forces, and identity is socially and culturally constructed. The multiphrenic self is mediated by diverse local cultures and competing discourses. Whatever the multiphrenic self is, it is “created”, by the “self” reacting to social interactions online. Through the daily interaction within cyberspace one is taken instantly to different spaces and times and different images of the “self” are presented in virtual space.

This Chapter focuses on the fragmented postmodern “self” projecting and performing self-representations into a virtual world and how the “other” reflects/mirror the “self” back to the “self” within these interactions and connections. The aim is thus to examine the question: “Which self am I, and when?” from this perspective to reach a more comprehensive understanding of this notion. Within postmodernism and due to the continual interaction with technology by posting self-images onto Facebook it calls for a new perception when discussing time and space, object and subject and intersubjective relations between the “self” and the “other” within these hyperreal space.

3.2 The “self” and mirror

Space and distance become irrelevant in cyberspace, as the physical location of the data is irrelevant. There is no longer a real that is being represented, there is a *simulacrum* because signs of the real have replaced the real. Thus, “never again will the real have the chance to produce itself” (Baudrillard 1994:2). Baudrillard theorises that the process of simulation in which representations of objects and subjects replace the real and is only being represented, and that the representations become more important than the real subject or object, and thus creates the a hyperreal. This means that “a hyperreal henceforth sheltered from... any distinction between the real and the imaginary” (Baudrillard 1994:3). Baudrillard’s theories on the hyperreal explains how technology and media affect our perception of reality and the world. According to him the postmodern subject connects continually with the television, cyberspace and other

virtual spaces, things that have come to simulate reality. Baudrillard's theory of the role of simulacrum in structuring our lives is relevant pertaining to the quest for identity formation within a world dictated by social media.

For many life has become the world on the screen of a computer that is a simulation of the real, a *simulacrum*. The postmodern subject faces these hyperreal experiences as simulations within virtual reality. Virtual reality or cyberspace²² as a hyperreal²³ mediated space is a creation of the means of mass communication, but as such it emerges as a more authentic, exact, "real" reality than the one we perceive in the life around us. Within this hyperreal space the "self" can make a conscious decision to represent itself as simulated, in anticipation that the "other" can reflect upon the "self" through a screen that metaphorically acts as a mirror to the "self".

When discussing the reflection of the "self" by the "other" as if looking into a mirror McLuhan (1994:51) states that : "The youth Narcissus mistook his own reflection²⁴ in the water for another person. This extension of himself by mirroring numbed his perceptions until he became the servomechanism of his own extended or repeated image". Narcissus was so numbed by the image of himself reflected on the water that he did not realise that he was looking at himself. Within the age of technology one can argue that the same is true of the postmodern fractured "self". The fact that one is daily posting self-representation can cause the "self" to become so numb that they do not realise these smartphones are extensions of their own selves. In addition, the psychologist Daniel Levinson (2003:174) adds that: "an aspect within a technology driven society is where we fall in love with ourselves when we look into our reflections we created in social media, and become blind to their real effects, for we are the media's proximate creators". This means that one's cell phone has now become part of our own selves. Like Narcissus, the postmodern fractured "self" fail to realise that cell phone with which one interacts within cyberspace has become an indivisible part of oneself.

In Chapter Two I discussed how we post the part of identity on Facebook that we think is the most flattering. In this Chapter I will focus more on the perception of the part of

²² For this study I use virtual reality and cyberspace interchangeably.

²³ I explain this concept in Chapter One

²⁴ Reflection is defined as "the production of an image by or as if by a mirror" (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reflection>).

identity posted and the space it is posted on. The installation, *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea party* (2017)²⁵ is used to analyse this interaction visually. Mirroring and reflection continually unveil the “self”, projecting its image outward to the “other” in a specific relation. The philosopher, Babette Babich, cited in the article by Janet Sassi (2009:[sp]), compares the way one interacts within cyberspace with Plato’s Cave²⁶. Sassi further explains that “[i]n the parable the human prisoners lived their lives chained in a cave, facing only a blank wall” (Sassi 2009: [sa]). Babich (Sassi 2009: [sa]) then continues to explain that cyberspace gives us shadows to look at, because the representations of the “self” in cyberspace is simulations of the “self. Babich (Sassi 2009: [Sa]) explains that the way one experiences these simulations as real is because of the fact that human consciousness has the ability to project and experience simulations within virtual world as the new real the hyperreal real, until the real environment fades away. Connected to the concept of consciousness and how one perceives virtual reality, the authors Maria Sanchez-Vives and Mel Slater (2004:338) explain that virtual reality “transform[s] the consciousness of a person in the sense that they respond to the virtual place and to events within that place, feel their body to be in that place, and even transform their body ownership to “their” body that they see in that place” This means that the “self” has the ability to transport consciousness into virtual reality and visit altered spaces continually.

This hyperreal world where the “self” continually interacts on Facebook can hypothetically be seen as a mirror, referring back to the mirror-phase of the psychologist Jacques Lacan where the mirror phase is seen as an infinite act duplication and mirroring in an attempt of self-recognition and an act of identification to the exclusion of everyone else. The “self then admiring the the presentation of the “self” became a Narcissus of the image, metaphorically a gaze into the pool the mirror

²⁵ Hannelie Swart.2017. *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party*. Multimedia is an installation as part of the visual component of this chapter. The videos used in this installation can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/1BK4Yx3kiOw> and <https://youtu.be/txkmO-FD2Z0>.

⁵ In the article, “The Road to the Sun They Cannot See: Plato’s Allegory of the Cave, Oblivion, and Guidance”, in Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*, Carole Juge (2009;16) explains that: “[t]he allegory presents prisoners – a metaphor for human beings untouched by philosophy – shackled since childhood at the bottom of a cave against a wall and forced to gaze in one direction. Behind them is a fire and between them and the fire are puppets whose projections on the wall are all the prisoners can see. They are unaware of their condition and once liberated, they must walk out of the cave to real light, a process painful in both the physical and metaphysical senses since they are used to neither light nor reality”.

of his/her own creation. Michel Foucault (1984:3) explains the image the mirror makes of the “self” as:

at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.

Foucault (1984:4) further expands on the image of the “self” beyond the virtual point stating that through the reflection of the “self” in virtual space the “self” is a simulation of the real as if seeing oneself in a mirror. There is also that one side of oneself that cannot be seen in a mirror but can be reflected upon by the “other”, and then making the invisible visible.

In the mirror image, the “self” is externalised as an image or object that is only a reflection of a certain part of the “self” that is visible in the mirror. This is relevant for understanding the “self” present on social media where the “self” is an externalised present but absent simultaneously. This is experienced when confronted with oneself in a mirror or in images online. This can open new opportunities in the process of identity formation. There is always a part of the “self” that cannot be seen by the “self”, but it can be observed and reflected upon by the “other”.

The authors Charles Boggs and Thomas Pollard (2003) refer to Lacan’s “mirror stage” and relate Lacan’s theories to contemporary media culture that provides a mirror to the “self”, constituting an “assemblage of mirrors” where the “other” reflects back onto the “self”. And where the “self” identifies with a number of fictional or imagined selves” (Boggs and Pollard 2003:31). Lacan uses his development theory, the mirror phase, to describe how identity is formed through self-reflection and interaction. The artist David Rokeby describes online computer systems as “transforming mirrors” (1995:13) in that: “[f]or every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, [this] implies that everything is a mirror. We discover our “selves” in the mirror of the universe”. Rokeby (1995:133) continues:

[I]nteractive technology is a medium through which we communicate with ourselves – a mirror. The medium not only reflects back, but also refracts what it is given; what is returned is ourselves, transformed and processed.

In other words, a virtual image of the “self” reflects back to the “self” when on social media. This also links with the concept of the mirror phase where, in social media, the interaction with the “other” relates to the “self” and creates a self-experience of the

world that then has an effect on identity formation.

3.3 The body and virtual reality

For the purpose of this research, a virtual image is seen as an image that has been generated by technology (Paul Milgram, Takemura, Utsumi and Kishina 1994:287). There is also a difference between a real and virtual object this is defined as follows, a real object “might be observed when viewing a real-world scene either directly in person, or through some kind of a window” and virtual objects are objects or “examples of which would include conventional computer graphic simulations, either monitor-based or immersive” (Milgram, Takemura, Utsumi and Kishina 1994:283). A real object can just be viewed and observed but a virtual object must be simulated by a medium to be visible.

There is also a difference between the embodied self and the disembodied virtual self. How one is presented and how one is perceived through the gaze of “others” becomes a user-generated process that welcomes multiplicity and change. Just like the endless choices of these virtual worlds, one’s identity, as Turkle (1997: 1101) describes, “is the sum of one’s distributed presence”, which she calls “windowing” and suggests that “the “self” is no longer simply playing different roles in different settings... The life practice of windows is a distributed self that exists in many worlds and plays many roles at the same time”. Within the virtual worlds one can present multiple “selves” and make these selves comprehensible with visual, textual, audio and animated tools without the physical body present.

However, engagement in virtual reality requires a limited amount of sensory bodily exchange. The psychologist Jack Loomis (1992:115) has described this sensorial exchange to the unaware state most people have of their everyday embodied existence. Loomis explains: “The perceptual world created by our senses and the nervous system is so functional a representation of the physical world that most people live out their lives without ever suspecting that contact with the physical world is mediated”. Therefore, it can be argued that the physical body of the “self” when interacting on Facebook and its hyperreal space becomes subsumed by the virtual “self” in the world behind the screen. The experience here is created in the mind yet the body senses it. Being in a situation that is imaginal, and yet not fully based in solid physicality, the “self” becomes immersed, bodily, consciously and subconsciously. In

other words, in a virtual environment, the “self” exists within a space that does not exist, but where the senses of the body do experience the space in a limited fashion. This is another approach to understanding the relationship between the embodied “self” and the virtual “self”.

Perhaps the most significant example of a private, performative experience is Char Davies', *Osmose* (1995: 16 min.) <https://youtu.be/54O4VP3tCoY>. *Osmose* is a space for exploring the perceptual interplay between self and world, a place for facilitating awareness of one's own self as consciousness embodied in a virtual environment space. This artwork speaks to immersion and embodiment within contemporary art practise where the viewer's senses, intellect, emotion and intuitive actions are presented and documented. Through use of their own breath and balance, the viewer through immersion can journey anywhere within these virtual worlds as well as float in the confusing transition areas in between until the viewer is taken back to reality. *Osmose* incorporates the intuitive processes of breathing and balance as the primary means of navigating within the virtual world. By breathing in, the viewer is able to float upward, by breathing out, to fall, and by subtly altering the body's centre of balance, to change direction (Davies 1998:82). This reliance of breath and balance is intended to re-affirm the role of the living physical body in immersive virtual space. The art critic Erik Davies (1998:81) describes this work as: “*Osmose* swallows the participants – suitably swathed in electronic gear – into a sensuous, luminous, and deeply enveloping dream world of cloud forests, dark pools and verdant canopies”.

For Derrick de Kerckhove, who comments on *Osmose* projected as a video in Milan during the conference “Landscape in Motion - The Generation of Images” in 1998, Davies' work succeeds in defining its own meaning of interactivity through the brilliant metaphor of the breath, a metaphor invoked “fundamentally in order to understand the sensorial change that is occurring in our life and times.” Although immersion takes place in a private area, a translucent screen equal in size to the video screen enables the audience to observe the body gestures of the viewer immersing virtual spaces. (Davies 1998:82)

Char Davies (1996: [sp]) states “In my work, I'm attempting to reaffirm the role of the subjectively-lived body. Rather than deny our embodied mortality and our material embeddedness in nature, I seek, somewhat paradoxically through a highly

technologicalized art form, to return people to their bodies and to the earth by using VR to refresh their own perceptions of an embodied being-in-the-world, to return them to a perceptual wonder at being here.” Char Davies uses the way the viewer immerses into a virtual space to create an experience of embodiment with the virtual space but also encourages the viewer to through virtual reality experience the life-world in an attempt to reverse disembodiment.

Char Davies allows an external audience to observe the *Osmose* participant behind a screen, as a silhouette engaged in her personal performance. In *Osmose*, according to Davies (1998:81), the artist challenges conventional approaches to virtual reality and the “in contrast to the hard-edged realism of most 3D-computer graphics, the visual aesthetic of *Osmose* is semi-representational/semi-abstract and translucent, consisting of semi-transparent textures and flowing particles”. Within the presentation the artist evokes embodiment.

Davies (1998:81) further states that:

. . . *Osmose* is a powerful example of how technological environments can simulate something like the old animist immersion in the World Soul, organic dreaming’s that depend, in power and effect, upon the ethereal fire. Besides pointing to a healing use of virtual technologies, *Osmose* also reminds us how intimate we are with electronics, in sight and sound, in body and psyche.

Char Davies therefore uses technology in such a way that the viewers are invited to wander a multi-dimensional space which is in a way lifelike but not exactly resemble the real physical world we live in. This embodied experience can create a heightened awareness of their own sense of being and a deep sense of mind/body interaction.



Figure 13. Char Davies (1995). *Osmose*, still frame.

My work correlates with that of Char Davies where she recomposes the paradoxes between subject/object, self/world, mind/body and the way that boundaries become fluent and dissolvable. The works examine the ambiguity of spatial relationships, proposing an evoking of alternative thought, stimulating the mind of the user but also presenting to the mind of the viewer a new vision of objects and of himself/herself.

The hyperreal as a world – space similar to what Char Davis created in *Osmose* thrives on the ability of the “self” to play with multimedia, to present virtual selves through this playful engagement with all kinds of sensory forms (audio, images, text) that are components of such media, and where the “self” can interact with “others” in this multiplicity of experiences. The multiphrenic “self” is freed from the physical constraints in a virtual world, and the body sensorial experiences immersion the realm of the virtual world.

Rokeby (1995:113) explains that, “technology transforms our image in the act of reflection, it provides us with a sense of the relations between this “self” and the experienced world”, It can thus be said that interactive technology has changed

perceptions of the “self” and “others”. In a technologically driven society, these mediated images of the “self” posted on social media platforms are visual representations of the “self” where the “self” becomes *simulacra* of different “selves” as virtual manifestations. In other words, the increasing representation of digital self-images enables a projection of the “self” and a reflection by the “other” of idealised images that can be altered and enhanced to present more complementary images.

3.4 Perceptions of space and time

Katherine Hayles (1991:21) posits that digital images are based on informational patterns and computer codes therefore it can be assumed that, in the virtual world, the “self” can be seen as a “pattern and not a presence”. These virtual images or informational patterns can travel across time and space but, for the information to exist, it must always be mediated therefore theorists speak of the “disembodiment of the postmodern subject into ones and zeros” (Hayles 1999:9).²⁷

The author Bradley Onishi (2010:107) describes this difference in sense of the “self” by stating that: “[i]nformation technologies allow the subject to re-arrange patterns of information in order to create a different sense of “self”—a self-constructed of stored informational patterns. As a result, there is a transformation of the experience of the limitations of the body”. This suggests that the “self”, as a virtual image is recognised as an informational pattern that has the ability to travel in space and time within one’s sense of being encountering a multi-layered experience of time, space and “self”.

Another change as a result of the technology driven digital world, is that communication technologies develop in such a way that the understanding of time changes. The social theorist Jeremy Rifkin (1987:13) claims, in this respect, the interaction within virtual space changes how one perceives time and space.

In the same way, with the invention and spread of mass electronic media, there is a new reconceptualising of “space”. There is a decrease in the importance of spatial differences and a separation of physical involvement of space from the way the “self” interacts and connects in cyberspace. This study proposes that the “virtual” spaces of

²⁷ The discussion on disembodiment falls out of the scope of this research. Hayles use the concept “disembodiment” to oppose embodiment and posthumanism. For more information and criticism on Hayles, consult: Wolfe, C. 2010. *What is posthumanism?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

cyberspace do not completely remove the “self” and the body from the significance of space, rather, cyberspace changes the physical environments under which one conceptualises and experiences space.

To visually explore the new concepts of time and space, the “Mad Hatter Tea Party” from the novel *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010) is used as an analogy. In the *Presence of Alice: Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017), the perpetual present, the mundane everyday action of drinking tea is re-presented, and the “self” performs within a created space. I discuss the visuals of this installation in more detail later in this section.

Despite different understandings within the theory on “self” and identity within postmodernity, there is a significant overlap in assessments of how the experience of “self” and consciousness has changed. To reiterate for the sake of clarity, the “self”, for the purpose of this research, is perceived as the multiphrenic²⁸ self therefore the focus is on the multiphrenic self within performance identity as discussed in Chapter Two. The research also examined that there is a new way of experiencing and understanding time and space in postmodernity. The artwork by Char Davies, *osmose* (1995) is used to illustrate this new way of experiencing and embodiment of time and space within virtual space. In the novel, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010),²⁹ the perception of time and space is altered for the protagonist Alice when she enters Wonderland. Based on this changed perception of time and space in the novel, the literalist Alison Kjeldgaard (2009:3) states: “In its place is only a series of duplicate beginnings, since the characters rotate in the same physical space”. Kjeldgaard continues: “As Alice rushes after the White Rabbit, she encounters broken clocks, circular questions, and circular movements of various characters” (2009:7). She continuously be describing how the characters become the physical embodiment of time, but as a character they are stuck in perpetual time without actually progressing

²⁸ Kenneth Gergen, a psychologist and author, first used the term “multiphrenic self” in *The Saturated Self* (1991) referring to the constant self-presentation and replication within cyberspace mediated by technology have contributed to what one can term the “multiphrenic self.”

²⁹ In the article “Exploring Narrative Time, Circular Temporalities, and Growth in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Peter Pan”, the literalist Alison Kjeldgaard (2009:7) explains the temporality of time in Alice’s Adventure in Wonderland as follows: “The characters in Wonderland are always late, and consequentially in constant rushed motion. However, though time itself continues, proved through Alice’s linear movement through Wonderland and her growth at the end of the novel, the characters in Wonderland cannot progress. As Alice rushes after the White Rabbit, she encounters broken clocks, circular questions, and circular movements of character bodies.”

themselves. Time is at six o'clock, which implies that the characters exist in a perpetual tea-time where real linear time does not exist. For example, the "Mad Tea Party" will never end, and the Caterpillar will never turn into a butterfly (Kjeldgaard 2009:8). As Alice interacts with the characters by challenging the perpetual movement of time, the narrative opens new possibilities for the development of the "self". The story line shapes time into perpetual sequences where there is a regeneration of the characters, but Alice challenges their perception of time and therefore there is growth in her character. (Kjeldgaard 2009:12).

The authors Larry Davis, Jammick Rolland, Felix Hamza-Lup, Ha Yonggang, Jack Norfleet and Celina Imielinska (2003:10) use *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010) to describe the experiences of the "self" as part of virtuality and state that:

Alice is becoming more familiar with this fantastic environment. However, she still feels as though she is an outsider within the world. Her feeling of being an outsider relates to our notion of augmented virtuality, where real stimuli are inserted as part of a larger virtual world. That is, Alice is both real and part of a virtual world. Finally, after attempting to relate the fantasy world with the real world by asking directions to the Cheshire Cat, Alice attends the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, plays croquet with the Queen of Hearts, and has a provoking discussion with the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon. At this point, Alice has totally accepted the utter ridiculousness of Wonderland and embraces the craziness. She exists totally within her virtual reality.

Within cyberspace the constant inter-connections between the "self" and the "other" within hyperreal space have a multitude of angles that can impact on the subject that results in new ways of perception. In a similar way the protagonist Alice connects with the various characters in Wonderland where she herself becomes estranged from reality in her dream world. Similarly, the "self" that is active in social media acknowledges the disembodied virtual "self" as this has an influence on the "self's" formation of identity.

On the concept of the "self" within cyberspace, Katherine Hayles (1999:263) explains that, with the "self" represented as a virtual image, there is a difference "between presence and absence, the connections and disjunctions between materiality and signification take shape". Hayles question the desire of the "self" to see cyberspace as disembodied. Hayles then posits that cyberspace is a medium where there is an interaction between information and the material world. She continues by saying that

the duality of presence and absence made space for hyperreality and replication. Furthermore, Hayles (1999: xiii) states: “the enacted and represented bodies are brought into conjunction through the technology that connects them”. This is where the sensory experiences of the “self” that gives us the impression that one is within our physical body bodies because there are new awareness bodily boundaries.

Cary Wolfe (2010:120) posits, there needs to be a greater understanding of consciousness as, that of: “embodiment, embeddedness, and materiality, and how these in turn shape and are shaped by consciousness, mind, and so on ... It allows us to pay proper attention to ... the material, embodied, and evolutionary nature of intelligence and cognition”. This means that the “self” can locate his/her body in virtual reality that creates a more embodied experience.

3.4.1 Performance in time

In the installation, *Presence of Alice: Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) (Fig 14), the mundane action of drinking tea as a bodily experience of performance and consumption is presented in two video recorded narratives. A mask is introduced into the narratives of the videos as a metaphor for the face represented in virtual space, therefore the mask is a virtual object. The mask³⁰ is a three-dimensional representation of the face of the “self” that is used as a means to visually present the “self” in virtual space. The narrative in the two videos presents the action of drinking tea around a table, and then moving to the to the right to reflect upon a clock ticking. The hand movements are captured in such way that the actions are mirrored between the two videos. Through the narration the cups and saucers become fractured as the mask as an object from the virtual world is introduced into the real world. For this artwork the mask that the “self” is wearing is specifically used as a mediator in the performance of the “self”. The movements of the character in the narrative is edited in such a way that actions became repetitive movements, this action aims to emulate perpetual time. The mask that hovers over the table represents the virtual “self” as an informational pattern in virtual space. In cyberspace, faces are analysed as masks,

³⁰ The three-dimensional mask was created from my own face by using plaster of quick-setting gypsum plaster bandages. The mask was then rotated and photographed 360°, then scanned into Autodesk 3D Max and manipulated. This formed a personal embodiment process to present embodiment within virtual space.

and identity is simulated. As one posts images of the “self” on Facebook, algorithms are constantly drawing out and analysing faces for data. But, before the computer can identify a face, “the data exists as a jumble of composite features, a ghost-like mask that barely looks human at all” (Jennifer Miller 2014: [sp]). This ghost-like image is visually represented by the mask that floats within real space this represents facial recognition data collection, a virtual image.

The videos are then looped to be experienced as perpetual and ongoing. The videos therefore create an overlay of actual time and virtual time. The installation is set up in such a way to promote an experience on both worlds, real and virtual. This experience is enhanced by the melodic background music and inserted sound clips that evoke the natural sounds of cups used, cups breaking and cups falling to encourage spontaneous mental associations. The position, direction, and speed of the sound clips and editing technique, determine their development of the mundane narrative played out within perpetual movements. The transitions between world-spaces follow one after another with delicacy: before dissolving into each other, to take the viewer to an altered state of mind.

The function of the floating mask in the narratives of the videos also aims to visually depict that embodied consciousness is not only looking through the screen at a virtual image, but that consciousness moves through the screen to become a virtual presence. presented in the video projections.



Figure 14 Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017).

3.4.2 Reflected space and time

In *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) (Fig 15), layered images of the “self” as a material object are represented within a space that refers to the virtual image of the “self”. The theme of multiple perspectives and images that appear at once are not necessarily caused but simply occur at the same time. The aim is here to visually represent the questioning of our understanding of interconnection in time and space.

Virtual space has no physical existence; it can only be accessed through representation, more specifically through a screen. This interconnected process dissolves the boundaries between virtual space and real space. In *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) (Fig 15), it is this dissolving of the boundaries between the virtual and real space that is central to this visual representation in the two videos. Looping and perpetual movements of the videos, explore the theories of Hayles (1999:27) when she states that the body through facing themselves and others as simulations without realising the boundaries between virtual and real, the postmodern subject becomes bio-technical due to the new embodied experience of the “self” within cyberspace.

This relates to what Baudrillard says in in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994:174), that a hyperreal world is experienced through “artificial empty images”, a “simulation of reality”, rather than experience *per se*. What Hayles posits (1999:4) that the “self”, as

a form of information pattern, has “lost its body”, mirrors Baudrillard’s opinion. The fractured postmodern self that is active in social media creates different identities of the “self” that exist within virtual reality but are only simulations. On the fractured identity within virtual reality, the author Marcelo Vieta (2003:5) states that: “[i]n these interactions, there is no need, as in similar situations offline, to disclose too deeply the nature of ones situated self-identity because these less multiplex social settings only require us to disclose select parts of our personalities and backgrounds”.



Figure 15. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017).



Figure 16. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017).

The aim of the videos in *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) (Fig 16), is to present the “self” that co-exists within both worlds simultaneously where time is continual and liquid.

The installation comments visually on the posting of altered self-representations in Facebook that results into interactions characterised as performances. Sherry Turkle (2011:112) explains: “On Twitter or Facebook you’re trying to express something real about who you are” but “because you’re also creating something for others’ consumption, you find yourself imagining and playing to your audience more and more”. This relates to Goffman’s theories that identity formation by the “self” is seen as a performance, in which the “self” attempts to control the interpretation that the “other” has of the “self”. Within the process of identity formation on Facebook the “self” relies on the interaction with the “other” within cyberspace this opens up a different space where choice, and expression of content is more equivocal. This constant reflected space can however, because of the visibility of the “self” to the “other”, create constraints on the performance of the “self”. Although interaction on social media is a choice, many accept and interact within this space while others find it unsettling, unreal and threatening.

In, *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) (Fig 17), the continuous ritual of handling cups and saucers in a specific manner is performed to represent and relate to Goffman’s theory regarding the space of the “front stage” in the creation of selves on the Internet as well as the continual reinvention and presentation of the “self” on the Internet. Central to this work is the mirroring of the images which reflects on the intersubjective communication between the “self” and the “other” on Facebook. The endless repetition of tea drinking, shifting from one chair to the next in conjunction with circular bodily movements, aims to represent the “self” within this created hyperreal space. Initially, the white cups and saucers used in the performance, are intact but, as the narrative continues, the cups fracture into pieces. This represents the fragmentation of the “self” as projected in different aspects of a personality a “self” with multiple experiences collapsing at once. The scattered fragments get intertwined with the morphed mask therefore breaking boundaries between spaces.

The entire space becomes the “self”. Not only does the fractured “self” (represented by the mask) “inhabit” space, it projects the image through space and becomes the

space. To reach an understanding of the question: “Which self am I and when?” it can be said that perhaps the “self” in this space is everywhere and nowhere at once.



Figure 17. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017).



Figure 18. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017).

3.4.3 Intersubjectivity: Reflections and mirroring

Within technology, one needs to understand that the nature of projection of the “self” has changed within hyperreality and that one needs to focus on the assumption of virtual reality as a sort of mirroring energy. In support of this, Hayles (1991:323) comments that: “[w]e found a whole new order of imagination and a new, more robust opportunity for transcendence”. As the boundaries between the real and virtual are

fluid and interchangeable, in a similar way, there is a fluidity between the boundaries of self and “other”, and the “self” is in a constant interconnection with social and physical relationships.

In cyberspace social interactions relate to the concept of mirroring or reflections. Within a psychological context the mirror can be used as a metaphor for the intersubjective “self”- “other” interaction in cyberspace as underpinned by the psychologist Victor Schermer. Schermer (2010:216) states that: “[i]n contrast to selves reflecting other selves, a real mirror has no identity of its own – it merely reflects the light that impinges upon it”. Within this reflection process by the “other” the “self” can get to forming identities and become aware of the effect the mediated “selves” have on the “other”. The mirroring of the “self” by the other thus results in more awareness of the mediated “selves” and the intersubjective relations that create them. This process. one of intersubjective reflection of the “self” by the “other” however occurs in virtual space. Schermer (2010:217) agrees stating: “Moreover, its reflection is virtual, i.e. an appearance or image, rather than an object”. Schermer (2010:220) then adds that: “[w]hen interpersonal mirroring occurs, there is a blending of self and other that is, in a sense, critically naïve, yet absolutely essential for social relations”. Here Schermer refers to relational and interpersonal communication that occur within cyberspace between “self” and “other”. However, the question remains whether mirroring by the “other” within cyberspace can be seen as faulty mirroring which can lead to fragmentation of identity. To examine this, I return to the novel *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010).

In the novel Alice leaps through the looking glass into another world. I refer to Schermer (2010:222) once again when he comments in his discussion on *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*: “Where mirror neurons are concerned, in order to recognize human experience in another person, one must (implicitly) “leap into” the other and respond internally as if that person were the “self””. This implies that the “self” is social and the “self” interconnects with the “other” and through each other. In *Wonderland*, Alice had to enter the world of the “other” to find her own identity. Schermer (2010:223) also explains: “In effect, we are co-constructing virtual realities with those we meet”. The “self” becomes enmeshed in the intersubjective play where one recognises the “self” in the “other”, as if looking into a mirror.

On Facebook, the “self” can assume as many virtual identities as it can imagine. Consequently, social networks are virtual spaces where one can create personas to constitute different ways of relating imagination. This communication in a virtual context where the creation of multiple identities is introduced, results as I mention earlier in postmodern schizophrenia or multiphrenia. Massimo Durante (2011:595) states that, placed against this environment, the “self” “experiences itself as a dynamic reality that has to be constructed within the different and particular networked contexts of communication that form such backdrop”, This is significant for the interrelation communication between the “self” and “other”. Durante (2011:595) also explains that social networks are platforms that enable “users to take advantages of networked affordances in order to construct, in informational terms, not only their identities but also to participate in the co-constructions of their networked contexts of communication”. There is thus a very specific intersubjective relationship between self and other within social online networks.

Christiaan de Quincey (2000:135) explains intersubjectivity as the “mutual co-arising and engagement of interdependent subjects, or inter-subjects, which creates their respective experience”. In this sense, intersubjectivity can be explained as participation and mutual experiences. One has a choice to participate within this interaction. With the experiences of the “self”, there is a continued interaction of shared perspectives where interaction with and encountering other people is the usual medium for creating consciousness. There is also a growing awareness and interconnectedness of co-dependency between subject and subject. Thus, it can be argued that, through intersubjective relations between “self” and “other” on Facebook, a consciousness emerges as a co-creativity between or among the participants.

In Gergen’s later work, *Relational Being: Beyond Self and Community* (2009), he explores the concept of the “self” in relation to the “other” where the “self” is fundamentally relational rather than independent or autonomous. The focus is no longer on an individual as the fundamental portion of social life, but on relations as defining the nature of the individual “self”. Societies can thus be understood as networks of relations and as assemblages of connected or disconnected individuals. One realises that the reflections of the “self” that lead to self-awareness are augmented by mediation and participation on online media. This is in line with what Gergen (2009:72) suggests when he says: “confronted with the multiple potentials for

being, self-presentation evolves, which permits the individual to strive for an authentic and coherent narrative of the “self” that will support multiple potentials”.

In *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010), the protagonist Alice applies a system of language and relations in identity formation that links with the social literalist Barbara Babcock (1980:6) who explains that: “[t]his capacity to differentiate and to establish a dialogue between a personal “I” and a social “me” is acquired through the “conversation of gestures” primarily language. Language is important for the interaction between self and other and creates conversation that can be reflected upon. Within these interactions, experiences are shared where the “self” performs identity within social media platforms. The active social media “self” controls which image is performed, and which “self” is projected for the other to reflect on. The aim of this choice is to create a positive mirror of the “self”.

In this way, people tend to construct their online “self” based the expectations of the reflections from the “other” and thus to present themselves with a more becoming and altered sense of “self”. I argue that, in the reflection process of the “self” by the “other”, the identification of multiple identities that social interactions and relations can be skewed due to role-playing and performance driven self-representations.

In the installation, *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) (Fig 19), the “self” as relational is represented, where drinking tea can be seen as a relational or intersubjective experience with the “other”. The presented visuals (videos) aim to represent the relational and reflexive processes of intersubjective interaction within a virtual space. The performance of drinking tea and the interaction with the cups and saucers relate to the perception of what it is of me that the “other” reflects back to me, what is reflected of the “other” and what is co-created by us? The performances in the videos also create reflexive dialogues with the “self”. This reflection of the “self” within a reflexive dialogue with “other” is a process of making sense of identity within the mediated world of images. The narratives of the videos also attempt to communicate the to the viewer the experience of entering into a process of reflection within the space of the installation. Mirroring the “self” evokes images of the virtual self as imagined or constructed by the “self”. Furthermore, the installation aims to represent the notion that the viewer, as the “other”, might perceive parts of him/herself in the experience and reflection of the “self” as performed in the videos.



Figure 19. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017).



Figure 20. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017).

I argue that all people, relate with the reflection of themselves mirrored by others especially in cyberspace when they are active on social media. In the installation *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) (Fig 21), the two projected videos are placed in mirroring each other, simulating the mirroring effect. The intention of this created space is to visually simulate the concept of reflection. When the “self” engages in a dialogue with the “other”, on Facebook, similar to a mirror, there is an assimilating process experienced by the “self”.

3.4.4 Embodiment within virtuality

Jacquelyn Morie (2007:127) explains embodiment within virtuality as a process where the postmodern fractured self enters a virtual world through the mediation of a screen, the “self” is still using its senses to experience the space consciously without the boundaries between of real and virtual for self-reflection that can enhance becoming. Schermer (2010:193) agrees when he says: “a new, more flexible framework in which to think about embodiment in an age of virtuality” is needed.

In *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) (Fig 21), the “self” performs perpetual movements and mirrored actions and captured by the video cameras and edited in such a way that it allows the “self” to retain the various bodily movements within a specifically created space. The second video is a projected image of the “self” that creates a mirror effect, an embodiment of the “self” similar to looking into a mirror, relating to Lacan’s mirror theory as discussed earlier.

Morie (2007:133) elaborates by saying that “[r]ole-playing is direct since it engages both the physical and cognitive elements of our psyche. Anyone entering into a virtual world is, by default, playing a role”. When creating a virtual image of the “self”, the “self” is playing various roles and uses various masks in the performance of identity online. The performance of the role in *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) resembles stepping through the mirror that can lead to an understanding of one’s identity

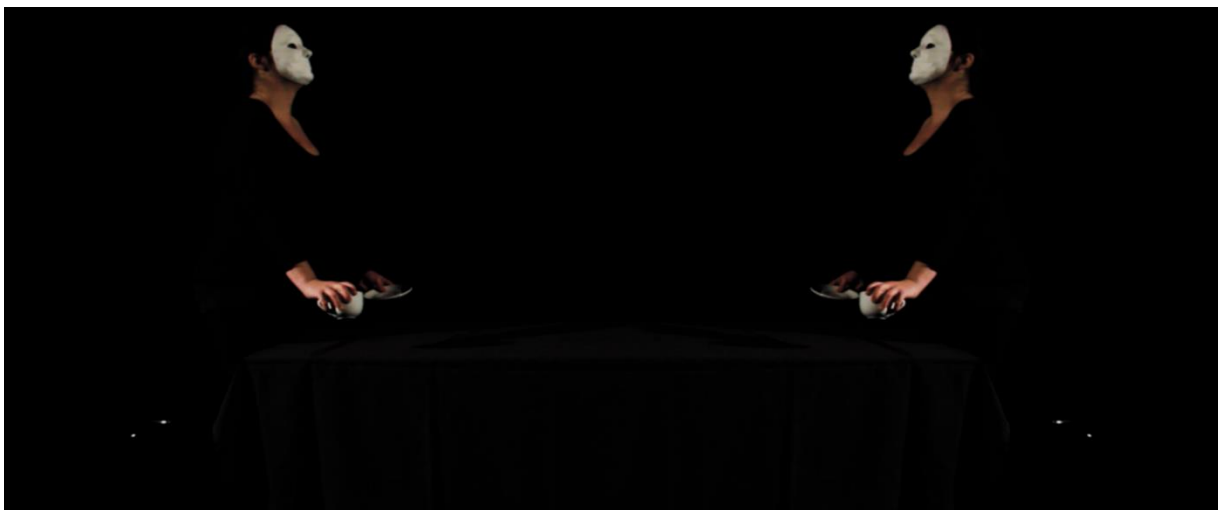


Figure 21. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017).

With performances online, the “self” is, according to Morie (2007:136), moving “back and forth between these modes, experiencing and assimilating, in an endless dialogue that informs who we are, and how we will respond to the next experience”. The fluidity of identity formation allows the “self” to project multiple selves where the “self” experiences a greater diversity of itself.

In the installation, *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) (Fig 22), the objects used, that is, the cups, saucers and mask, entered the space and were fractured relating to the fractured “self” performing and projecting in cyberspace. In the two videos, subjects and objects are presented from multiple perspectives and the objects become defined, more abstract and later completely fractured.

In the book, *Cyberspace 2.0: Revisiting computer-mediated communities and technology*, the author Beth Kolko (1998:218) explains the fluidity of the “self” as “fluidity in space in online environments might relate to the disruption of the “self””. Kolko (1998:218) suggests that: “the interruptive practices associated with fluid identity relate to the construction of virtual space, where the fragmented self becomes dispersed, and that both make difficult the evolution of resilient online personae and communities”. This suggests that, in the virtual world, the fractured identity has limited real social interactions because of the isolation of an identity in virtual space.



Figure 22. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017).

This form of isolation also relates back to Char Davies' *Osmose* (1995) where the journey into the virtual world was one of solitude, avoiding distractions, intensifying individual experience in the virtual space, so as to better understand the "self" and feel free to merge into another state, without interference. The movement and images used in *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) hopefully will induce the emotional involvement of the viewer, who might experience a transference with the performed narrative.

Thus, isolation and fractured "self" is what is represented in the two videos of *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) (Fig 22). The mask becomes fractured and morphs into fragments and the mask (the "self") and the actual fragments of the objects become one, combining the virtual and actual realities.

3.3 Conclusion

As I mention in the Introduction the focuses of this Chapter is on the fragmented postmodern "self" projecting and performing self-representations on Facebook the role the intersubjective relations with the "other" reflects/mirror the "self" back to the "self".

By exploring the reflection process of the "self" by the "other" within cyberspace, the study argues that the fragmented postmodern self actively constitutes a sense of "self" in relation to how others see the "self" and that diverse identities are created and represented in social media that extends the number of social "selves" through intersubjectivity. The discussion argues that this influences the understanding the multiphrenic "self" and identity formation. The concern is that the fractured postmodern self, when continually presenting the mediated "self" in social media in a need to present who the "self" is and how the "self" is represented, can translate negatively onto how the "self" regards itself in personal moments of reflection.

I argue that the fragmented postmodern self has different "selves" that are represented in the virtual hyperreal space and are largely fractions of one's life and it is posted specifically in such a manner that the "self" can be reflected on by the "other". The concern raised out of the theoretical research is that this phenomenon will increase over time making self an identity that becomes more fragmented and highly dependent

on reflection by the “other” for identity formation.

In a possible conclusion to the question: “Which self am I, and when?” with the references to the visual work, I consider the possibility that the “self” lives in the present, the perpetual now, within reflections, continuity and fluidity. There is a continual interaction with “other” based on the performances by the “self” and that “self” is living in this perpetual presenting cyberspace.

The study argues that continual interactions on Facebook changes the way the “self” interacts with the “other” sometimes more spontaneously, and that these new spaces for interaction constitute a unique opportunity for identity formation without the presence of the physical body. It is necessary then to further explore the de-recognition of the perfect mediated image that is continually mediated by technology and reflected on the “self” and how that influences identity formation. This is discussed in the next Chapter when I discuss the anti-face phenomenon.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENCE OF ALICE: THE ANTI-FACE

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two and Chapter Three the study examines identity formation on social media. This setting is characterised by multiplicity and adaptation of the “self” and reflected on by the “other”. It is further debated that the object and subject relations have changed, especially within the relationship of the “self” and “other” in the virtual world of intangible objects. This means that, within cyberspace, the boundary between subject³¹ and object³² has changed and has become fluid and dissolvable. The Because of de-differentiation as discussed in Chapter three, there is no clear difference between entities. The lack of distinction created through dedifferentiation further displaces established beliefs between relationships of object and subject (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:131), which is a key aspect of de-differentiation. In addition, intersubjective relations between the “self” and the “other” takes on a new dimension as the face represented as an image on Facebook is just as face, until there is interaction with other faces, reflected upon by the “other”. The “self” therefore performs its identities posting images of the “selves” on Facebook. Within virtual space different “selves” can perform. Thus within virtual space the “self” can replicate itself multiple times, and will then continue to replicate as part of becoming, however, within these replication process identities become fractured. Another key element in this chapter is the role of the mask as it relates to the concept of the anti-face within the intersubjective relations on Facebook.

4.2 The “self” and masks and identity

The art historian Hans Belting (2017:5) in his research on faces and masks posits that: “there should not be a binary opposition between face and mask, where face is meaning, and mask is concealment”. Relating to the ideas of Goffman on performance identity, belting also refers to performance, where the face is central to the performance, emphasising role-playing on social media platforms. According to Goffman’s (1990:15) performance-based analysis of social life, the “self” is the

³¹ Subject is defined as : “ The participant (either a human or non- human) that is taken for the purpose of doing research” (www.psychologydictionary.org/subject/).

³² Object is defined as: “ thing that you can see or touch but that is not usually a living animal, plant, or person: solid/material/physical object” (www.dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/object)

performer and the audience the “other”. As such, the identity formation process of the “self” depends on the recognition and reflection it receives from the “other”. There is also a connection between the “self” recognising itself as an identity within the online time and offline time and it appears that online environments may encourage distinct forms of identity expression. Meaning that the “self” can define appropriate behavior and identity expression by reference him/herself to the norms, behaviour and identities of groups one belong to. Within Facebook interaction one can belong to many different groups. The theatre critique and writer Marvin Carlson (2004:4) also explains performance within identity formation as follows:

The recognition that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behavior raises the possibility that all human activity could potentially be considered as "performance," or at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself.

Carlson thus assumes that a consciousness of the “self” is required to function within the required modes of social behavior. Carlson suggests that, when one is conscious of one’s actions, one is, by definition, performing. Therefore, social media presents a wider scope for the formation of different identities that the conscious “self can invent. If the “self” is then conscious of projecting and altering identities within a continual interaction on social media, the effect on the formation of identity can be seen as performance based.

Belting also emphasises the importance of the interplay between face, identity and mask. Connecting the theories on face, identity and mask of Belting back to Contemporary Art, he states that artists painted “portraits in place of masks” (2017:5). Belting thus argues portrait painting is not an “authentic facsimile of life” (Belting 2017:9). He compares “selfies” posted in cyberspace to painted portraits and self-portraits, in cyberspace a face is also seen by the “other”, just within a new frame, the screen. It can be argued that “selfies” posted on Facebook are then also reproductions and not authentic copies of life. This argument then relates with the theories of Baudrillard on simulation and *simulacrum* where Baudrillard clearly states that there is no longer a real that is being represented, because copies of the real have replaced the real. Thus, “never again will the real have the chance to produce itself” (Baudrillard 1994:2). In its place is a hyperreal: “a hyperreal henceforth sheltered from... any distinction between the real and the imaginary” (Baudrillard 1994:3). Thus the posting of the face as a selfie acts as a double, a mirror, for the real face, and by playing

various roles it becomes a mask.

4.3 The face in the culture of technological

The importance of the face has changed within the technology era based on the intervention of new technologies such as digital photography, visual filters and software for automatic face recognition. People, active on social media networks are exposed to high quantities of facial images, on which they reflect and interact upon. For the scope of this study this the new way of representing the face, the selfie, is compared and contrasted to the painting of self-portraits. When posting a selfie on Facebook the face can be distorted, discoloured and transformed, the face can also be modified to mask the “self” and represent the “self” in different performances.

The cultural history of the face is a broad topic and is not within the scope of this research, however, the study acknowledges the historical importance of the face and the role of the self-portrait within contemporary art. The face is the medium for expression, self-representation and non-verbal communication. This brings the research back to the question of mirroring relationships between an image and the concrete object. With self-representation the “self” represents what identity the “self” wants to present to the “other”. According to Belting (2017:14) the “face is presence and image is representation”). This implies that a face is the real and a posted image of the face on Facebook is a mask that is virtual. The study therefore argues that the real face produced as a masklike representation is posted in order to reveal, exhibit yet conceal some aspects of the “self”. That is why Belting (2017:6) explains that: “what one sees with mass media on cyberspace is not a face but a representation as rigid as a mask”.

4.4 The anti-face

In this Chapter, I argue that the face, in comparison to a selfie that functions as a performing mask of the “self” on Facebook can be described as an anti-face of the face when modified or morphed. At this point I need to explain the concept of the anti-face.

When the image of the face is modified in any way, enhanced or morphed using FaceApp, or any other face modification app, or postproduction photography software, the image that is posted becomes an anti-face because it is different from the actual

face. The “self” and identity is represented on Facebook using the face or the body. However, for this study I only focus on the face. When a face is posted on social networks in any way, it is a representation of the actual face therefore according to Belting, it is a mask. This also relates to the perception I state earlier that the “self” performs different roles using various masks and therefore present different identities on Facebook. The mask is therefore used metaphorically – therefore the face that is represented is a mask and the moment you use a mask, morphing or modification, it is considered an anti-face. The anti-face theory is what I use to examine the idea of performance based self-presentation. Another feature of the anti-face concept is that the anti-face is a way of visualising the role of algorithms in face recognition programmes.

The authors Nicole Anderson and Hugh Wilson (2005:1816) describe the anti-face in conjunction with identity formation: “Faces that lie on the same identity trajectory, but on the opposite side of the mean, possess negative identity strength and are referred to as “anti-faces”. This means that the identity strength of the anti-face differs from the real face image and that the identity represented in the imagined or represented anti-face condition is lower than that contained in the real face image. Facial recognition programs have the ability to identify faces using software. However, it is difficult for these programs to recognise unfamiliar, morphed or distorted faces.

Today faces can be modified and distorted using for example “FaceApp” that provides the user the ability to create photorealistic images, and to modify a face completely.

With the advent of Facebook, the perception of the face has changed. Doris Tsao and Winrich Freiwald (2006:391) discuss that, face adaptation depends on seeing the face, and for facial recognition, face identity requires a visible face. Identification of a specific face is selectively facilitated after a few seconds of adaptation to a face that has opposite features (corresponding “anti-face”), whereas adaptation to an unrelated face slightly impairs identification. This concept relates to this research as a face/anti-face representation should visually be perceived as two different faces. However, the research done by (Leopold, Rhodes, Müller and Jeffery 2001) shows that perception of the two faces are closely linked in the brain that is based on familiarity. This indicates that the research on face and anti-face is linked to visual perception and the

recognition of faces. Relating the research of face and anti-face to identity formation, the perception of face and anti-face are connected to basic face structures and nodes. The perception and incorporation within oneself; of the presented faces, interconnects with every area of forming an identity.

The aim of the multimedia installation *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017) is to visually present the phenomenon of distortion and morphing of faces to create the anti-face. To create an artwork to present a theory that is as complex as the anti-face is not an easy task. Contemporary conceptual art is often used as a vehicle to visually present social commentary as is the case in this research. The use of the mask and anti-face model in the practical work questions the mediated images of faces of “selves” on social media platforms. The installation, *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017), metaphorically de-recognises the perfect mediated images of the “self” and projects images that hypothetically demonstrates how technology views the human face and human identity within facial recognition and data collection programs. In the artwork, the mask is used to represent the anti-face phenomenon to create an anti-face as different from the original face as possible. It can be compared to holding up a mirror to technology as the “other” and projecting a stare back into technology. The research visually and theoretically investigates a way of questioning the perfectly modified face image mediated in social network and the effect it has on the “self” and identity formation.

The distortion and morphing of Alice in the narrative of the novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (2010) comes into play in this Chapter. This storyline used as a reference to conceptually examine the morphing and modification of the face on Facebook. This analysis is visually represented in the installation and discussed in this Chapter. The protagonist, Alice, morphs into various physical states throughout Wonderland. Alice is so desperate to enter the garden through the tiny door, she is literally willing to physically change who she is in order to fit through, and to fit in. This need to fit into a situation can easily be related to the need of mediating the “self” when performing on Facebook. Alice morphs three times before she attains a size appropriate for the garden (Carroll 2010: 10,11). Alice's body has at one stage a very large head attached to her shoes, with her arms emerging from her cheeks. “Her chin was pressed so closely to her feet, that there was hardly room to open her mouth (Carroll 2010:62). The pigeon then asks Alice: “Well, what are you?”, “I can see you are trying to invent

something” (Carroll 2010:65). As a result, Alice becomes confused regarding her identity. This modification of Alice relates back to the postmodern fractured self, where identity becomes confused because of modified and morphed “selfies” posted on Facebook. Similar to Alice the importance to fit into her Wonderland, for the postmodern fractured “self” it is important to fit into society in virtual space. I have discussed in the previous Chapters the importance of society and intersubjective relations as driving factor in the quest for identity. Unless one lives a life of isolation, the effects of the collective upon both self and body cannot be denied.

Faces of advertising and consumer culture, the reconfiguration of public/private spheres found in the new self-fashioning and presentation techniques of social networks and the increase in surveillance technologies dealing in facial recognition, all indicate a collective heightened attention to faces.

In this section the focus of the discussion is on the role that faces play in identity formation of the “self”. The authors Stella Faerber, Jürgen Kaufmann, Helmut Leder, Eva Maria Martin and Stefan Schweinberger (2016:2) explain that if identity formation is affected by both the real face image and the anti-face, both faces are important although they lie on the opposite direction. They also suggest that the anti-face normally deviates from the real face image. This implies that the original face image is link to an identity of a person and the anti-face is a mediated image, not a true reflection of identity. Within pattern recognition, there is a norm for a face that is called an average face norm on which faces are recognised, and the anti-face is therefore not an average face norm that can have an effect on facial recognition programmes. Facial recognition can then become difficult or in some cases impossible. A study done by the psychologists Jae-Jin Ryu, Karen Borrmann and Avi Chaudhuri (2008:2) found that within social media faces can be recognised and matched easily based on the average face norm, but the anti-face is difficult to match because there is no baseline average face norm for an anti-face. I argue that, based on these mental representations, the anti-face created from my real face as part of the practical component for this research can still be recognised by the “other” based on familiarity of the face norm (the average face features of a person). This means that the subject shows a significant ability to recognise if they are very familiar to them, even if the face is morphed or modified. Therefore, the e ability to still recognise an anti-face is limited to faces with which one has previous experiences or familiarity. Sarah Lawrence

(2013:26) describes this ability to recognise based on familiarity as a possibility based on the fact that a face is linked to identity. Belting (2017:30) explains that within media faces that are represented, creates only disembodied masks, which are all produced, observed and broadcast as faces. He then further argues that these representation of faces in cyberspace can lose their disembodied mask-like quality because of over-exposure of faces creating familiarity. (Belting 2017:13).

Faerber et al (2016:3) emphasises that there are “more social judgements such as attractiveness, likability or trustworthiness” to a familiar face than to the anti-face. Face to face recognition on social networks plays an important role in social interactions. The brain stores images of familiar faces in the memory. The question then is how the face can be reclaimed from over representation and over consumption. Belting (2017:32) also states that: “in cultural history we also find many examples to show that the face was often disputed and one might say, abused”. The question then is how the face can be reclaimed from over representation and over consumption. Belting (2017:32) also states that: “in cultural history we also find many examples to show that the face was often disputed and one might say, abused”. In previous chapters it was established that the postmodern fractured “self” grows a preference for interaction with the virtual represented face over real face to face interactions. The likably idealised selves that are created with social media leave the real “self” isolated. Communication with social media is instantly with a frantic worry of missing out on something fundamental. Digital technology with the over representation, consumption and promotion of the face created an urgency towards virtual interaction in every waking minute.

4.5 Identity formation

This research has, examined how the fractured postmodern “self” performs various identities by posting a variety of edited images of the “self” in cyberspace. The social media specialists Chuan Hu, Sameer Kumar, Jiao Huang and Kurunathan Ratnavelu (2017:2) state that: “cyberspace provides people the chance to reconstruct their online identity based on their own discretions”. It is therefore a conscious decision taken by the “self” to project an image within cyberspace for the “other” to reflect upon. James Paul Gee (2000:99) in addition posits that: “in the rapidly changing and developing world identity is a significant analytic tool to understand society and human behaviors

for researchers in different areas". Becoming conscious of one's social identity offers a clearer picture of what influences have contributed to where we are today and how those influences play out in everyday life. Social identity is also a way of understanding the knowledge, motivation, self-perception, memories, self-awareness, and different emotional states the postmodern subject. This is important as, within cyberspace, highly distorted versions of the original and familiar faces that creates a morphed or anti-face can change one's self-image and can hide an identity. Thus the "self" presented online can be described as the "virtual self", the "self" that "represents the characteristics that oneself or others wish an individual to possess ideally" (Strauman 1996:1142). The "self" representing and performing identities continually needs to control the tension between multiplicity and stability within its own identity. This research also explains that there is a constant interconnection and inter-play of online and offline identities.

Baudrillard (1993:73) explains that, in "the process of reproducibility, the real is not only what can be reproduced, but what is always already reproduced: the hyperreal". This implies that, in the hyperreal, everything is already a simulation; everything is always already a reproduction. My premise is that the performance of the "self" within cyberspace influences the process of identity formation. This occurs when the subject consciously decides actively to participate in the hyperreality of cyberspace. The intention of the research on "self" and identity formation proposes that interaction and connection in cyberspace can have an effect on the sense of identity. The psychologist Sherry Turkle (1996:149) posits that: "windows have become a powerful metaphor for thinking about the "self" as a multiple, distributed system". This implies that the "self" exists in many worlds by playing many roles simultaneously. Turkle (1996:149) continues: "Now real life itself may be just one more window". By interacting in cyberspace and by presenting modified identities, on social media, new conditions are created for the construction of identity. This relates to what Turkle (1997:30) says when she explains: "through the interface, simulations on the screen allow users to step through the looking glass and to project themselves into the simulations and explore multiple possibilities of conversation and interaction, the simulations are both interactive and reactive".

In cyberspace, the "self" steps through the looking glass, similar to Alice in the book

Through the Looking Glass (Carroll 2010). Turkle (1997:30) sees the computer screen as “a play of surface simulations to be explored”. In addition, Turkle (1997:31) states that: “Windows contribute to our thinking of the “self” as distributed between many worlds and many roles”. This implies that the “self” of the person active on Facebook exists in a state of continuous creation and recreation thus generating many new possibilities of being in virtual reality. For Turkle, self-reflection is an essential element for identity formation. This means that, within technology and within experiencing constant reflection on the “self” by the “other”, there are no longer clear boundaries between real life and virtual life. This perpetual daily interaction can influence understanding the real self³³ that needs self-reflection as part of identity formation. Within postmodernism there is no longer a core or true self, only various selves. There is also a real self and a virtual self where the latter is represented on Facebook playing and performing various roles. Turkle (1997:57) believes that “one exists in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction ... each reality of self gives way to reflexive questioning, irony, and ultimately playful probing of yet another reality”. Within the constant role playing and self-representation on Facebook there is a reflexive space of understanding that specific reality.

4.6 Face and mask within cyberspace

4.6.1 Cyberspace as projection

William Hayney (2006:34) describes cyberspace as, “not to a real space, but rather to the synthetic rational space of a virtual reality, the computer generated environment of the internet that humans can enter through a computer or a virtual reality prosthetic”. Within cyberspace spatiality is interconnected between virtual space and real (physical) space. As a social experience, individuals can interact with cyberspace to exchange ideas or to even to create artistic media or to play by using the global network.

Hayney (2006:35) explains further that cyberspace is a “nonphysical realm of computer simulation which defines a regime of representation within which pattern is the essential reality, presence and optical illusion”. Therefore, within this space there is no physical reality on a virtual reality that is represented within digital patterns and

³³ The in-person version of the physical “self”, observed by the “other”

codes. Katherine Hayles (1999:72) describes cyberspace as follows: “In cyberspace, “subjectivity” is dispersed throughout the cybernetic circuit ... the boundaries of self are defined less by skin than by the feedback loops connecting body and simulation in a techno-bio-integrated circuit.” The effect of this constant interaction of the postmodern fractured “self” with cyberspace dissolve the boundaries between real (physical) world and virtual world thus making space and time more fluid. Thus, it can be argued that cyberspace is a space of representation and simulation created through technological mediation. The hyperreal world of cyberspace is a mode of existence that can be consciously accessed from time to time. In this space of multiple windows, the multiple “selves” created within parallel lives challenge identity formation.

Projection in cyberspace is the process where constructed identities are performed daily in a virtual hyperreal space and multiple aspects of the “self” can therefore be explored. Cyberspace opens a platform for projection and performance, where virtual performances can be used for personal and social transformation. The technology of cyberspace offers us incomparable possibilities for communicating with each other in virtual time. The “self” and how it is represented can be controlled in ways impossible in face-to-face interaction. Cyberspace has become a new reality of the mind, imagination and the “self”. Here objects are not physical but based on intangible experience.

4.6.2 The “self” in everyday life versus the online “self”

I reiterate Goffman’s (1990:72) theory of the “self” in everyday life that can be seen as “expressions given off”. What Goffman implies is that “expressions given off” are those expressions that we say, how we say them, how we appear and our facial gestures. These expressions are unplanned since a person is often unaware of them while “expressions given” refer to those expressions that we intend for others to read. Goffman specifies that the expressions projected by an individual are more theatrical and contextual and are usually nonverbal and, in many cases, unintentional. It is on these expressions projected by the “self” that the “other” reflects and reacts to. Expressions projected within cyberspace are the types of communication used to manipulate the interpretation of the “other” on the “self” represented online. The face of the “self” can be described as a stage on which one watches the play of emotions. In cyberspace the performance of the “self”, allows greater exploration and expression

as the performed “self” can be mediated to create a desired identity online.

Earlier in the discussion I mention that the different images presented or performed on Facebook can also be described as masks or the anti-face. Lawrence Kirmayer (2005:334) explains that: “[t]he masks is an anti-face: it cloaks and clothes the face to provide a stylized expression that changes little (except with changing light and shadow or accompanying gestures) across situations, thus freezing the temporal dynamics of feeling”. Kirmayer further states that: “the mask allows us aesthetic distance so that we can modulate the intensity of our emotions in response to the other”. This relates with the discussion on the many identities that are created when participating in social media where there is control over how we present “ourselves” as different masks. The use of a mask projected as the anti-face can result in alienation of facial expression and selfhood.

To return to Baudrillard’s theories on simulation and *simulacrum*, it can become very difficult to trace the reflection of the “self” back to core of the self or the real physical self. The identity formation of the participating social media fractured “self” is thus informed by the performed images that are experienced online and results in only seeing fragments of the identity.

4.6.3 Presence of Alice: The anti-face as a window into hyperreality

The installation, *Presence of Alice: The anti-face* (2017) (Fig 23), represents a window into a hyperreal world.

A three-dimensional mask of my face was scanned into the computer and then frame by frame manipulated and rendered. There are 2400 frames rendered for the animated video. The animation was created with Autodesk 3d Max that then rendered designed and animated the environment and objects used to create the timeline of the narrative. The video is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bs5vfTGbpCs>



Figure 23. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The anti-face* (2017).

The animation is a projection of the postmodern fractured “self” as a masklike face, simulated and copied. The face then started to morph into fractals and then further fractured into sharp pieces that imitated shattered mirror glass. The morphed face represented the monster like images behind facial recognition programmes where the face is just mined for data perception.

A red colour was introduced to visuals of the video as this helps to create a three-dimensionality of the mask images. In the animated video the “self is hidden behind the mask that is created for the video projection, simulating the virtual “selves”. When a mask is used on face it can be argued that the gaze of the person behind the mask cannot be interpreted therefore making the “self” and identity behind the mask disembodied from the mask. When faces are posted as simulations on Facebook the “self” and identity of the person posting the face becomes disembodied form the face and the face is then theorised as a masklike representation of the real (physical) face.

In the installation, the morphed images loop repeatedly in the projection that seems to vibrate in a continual everlasting now, a perpetual present where different perspectives of identity are visually presented. The projection simulates a hyperreal space of self-reflection. In presenting the morphed images of the “self”, the artwork represents the online exposure of the modified images of the “self” performing on Facebook. The

video projection aims to initiate a conversation between the “self” projected as an anti-face and the “other”, to create an interconnection with the viewer as the “other” as well as to indicate the loss of the boundary between reality and virtuality.

As the images multiply and divide to create fractals of the “self”, it creates a way of representing the multiple and fractured virtual “self”. Essentially, the intention of the work, *Presence of Alice: The Anti-Face* (2017) (Fig 24), is to analyse the concept of multiplicity in identity formation that goes beyond copies of identical impressions and sameness. To do this a series of morphing sequences, and images a presented comprise of numerous parts, fractals, forms and planes. The artwork presents visuals of repetition, pairing and variations within multiplicity and morphing.

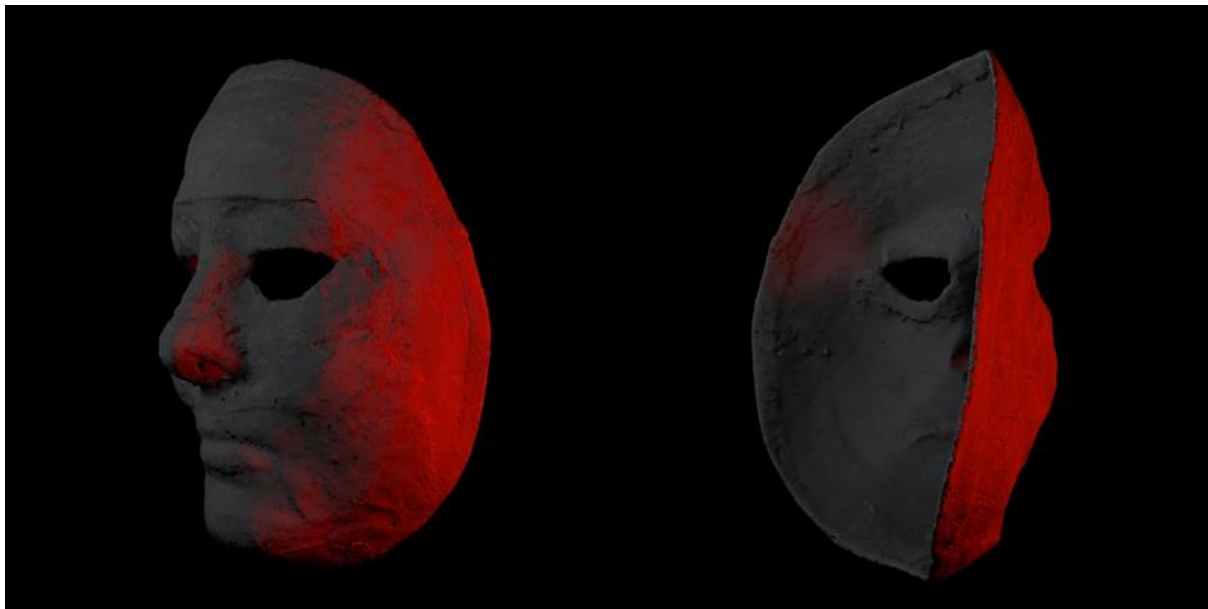


Figure 24. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The Anti-Face* (2017).

4.6.4 Windows into virtual reality

The animated video also refers to Turkle’s (1997:14) theories that explain how the “self” participating in social media lives within various windows and realities. Turkle states that: “windows have become a powerful metaphor for thinking about the self as a multiple distributed system”. This implies that the virtual “self” exists in many spaces and plays various roles at the same time. Based on the theories of a window, the projected images in the installation are designed to attract the viewer into the space of the installation by creating a window on the flat space of the wall. Within the concept of reflections in a window or mirror, there is always that one side of the “self” that is

not visible. However, it can be argued that there is always a part of identity reflected in this window that is unknowable to the “other” and can thus not be reflected. Within this window, the viewer examines the projected expressions by the “self”. In the narrative of the video the mask representing the anti-face in the Installation is rotated 360°, with the aim visually indicate the different unknowable identities reflected on Facebook. Within the rotation process different identities appear that can be distinguished.

Artist Ela Boyd (2011: [sp]) refers to historian and theorist Anne Friedberg’s (2006:1) explanation how perspective can be viewed within the concept of a window and a screen by saying that the screens of a cinema, television, and computers open “virtual windows” with which a subject can interact and consciously enters from a physical to a virtual space. In Chapter Three, the effect of these windowed multiplicities discussed by Turkle (1997:5) is examined and how it changes the understanding of time and space. Within these multiple windows, there is a sense of the perpetual present.

Turkle (1997:180) posits that: “[t]he Internet has become a significant social laboratory for experimenting with the construction and reconstruction of self that characterize postmodern life”. The symbolic structure of a “self” hiding behind a mask as an anti-face can be argued to be multiphrenic and as diverse as the intersubjective relations that surround it.

The artwork investigates altered ways of mapping the face. It is argued in this study that subjects have used and continue to use specific means to reinvent themselves on social media platforms realising that the “self” performs in online spaces where identities are fluid. This could call for an examination what the consequences are regarding self-representation and performing identities self” within cyberspace. Does this participation on social media affect identity formation mediated face performed online?

4.6.5 Metaphor of the mask

The imagery of the mask that evolves from the first animated video in *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017), *Presence of Alice: Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) and *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017) visually represents the significance of the role of the mediated and performed face in the process of identity formation.

In the artwork, *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017) (Fig 25), an image of my own

real face was created with plaster bandage to represent a simulated face of mine, which is on the opposite side of the original face, an anti-face,



Figure 25. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017).

The artwork aims to prompt the question if it is still possible to recognise the identity of the subject when looking at the anti-face. In the research done by Leopold et al (2001:89) on the anti-face, a question is raised: “How much “identity” a morphed face must contain to be correctly identified?” The research by Leopold et al (2001:89) indicates that the identity of the morphed anti-face could still be recognised since the brain “discriminates, recognizes, and remembers highly similar complex patterns”. The artwork therefore visually comments on this and how social media leads to the creation and presentation of disembodied masks, yet faces still have familiarity.

Leopold et al study is significant for this research as it explains the relationship between facial recognition algorithms and programmes used within cyberspace. By recognising the theories by Leopold et al, where a morphed face can still be recognised based on familiarity underpins the use of mask as the anti-face, and not the original edited face of the “self”, in the animated video, *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017) (Fig 26).

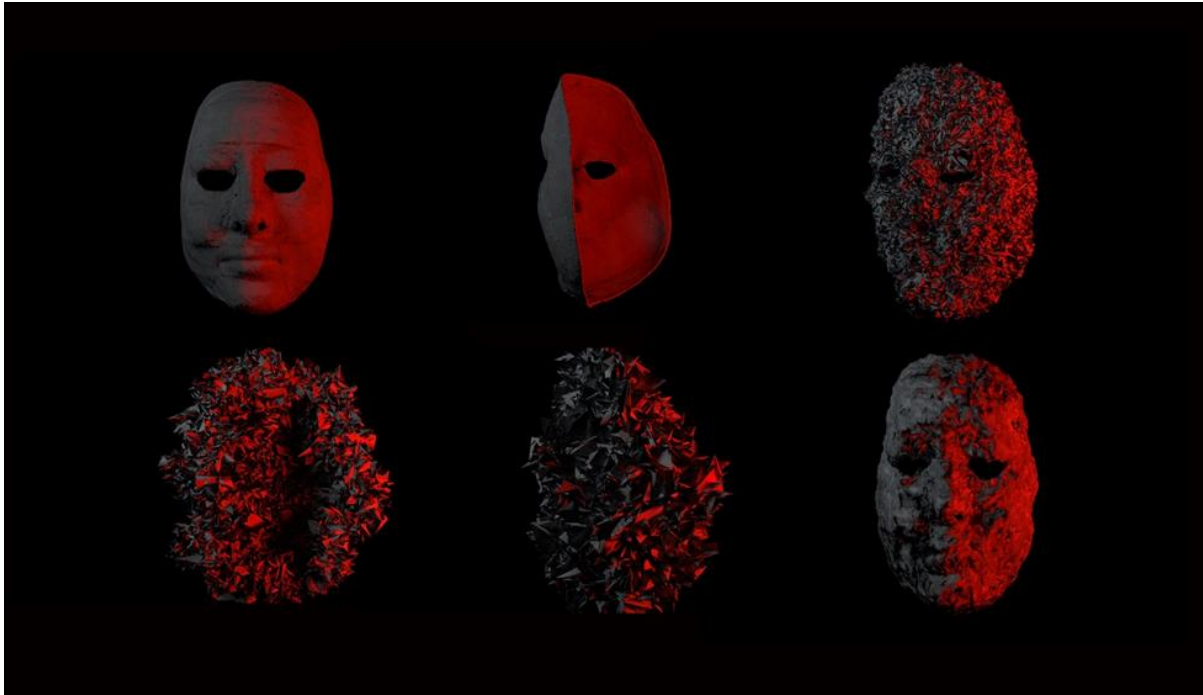


Figure 26. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The Anti-Face* (2017).

The visuals of *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017) present morphing as a means to hide identity this relates to the discussion on the anti-face and the use of a mask. Leopold et al (2001:897) state that: “[t]he perception of faces, unlike that of simpler stimuli, is thought to involve holistic and parallel analysis, and the brain appears to be highly sensitive both to the shape of local features and the spatial relationships between them”. Meaning that the brain recognises the basic shape and structures of a face very easily, same as with facial recognition programmes that recognise faces on specific data points of a face. In this artwork *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017) (Fig 26), the mask still has the oval shape of the original face however the features and spatial relationships of the face are morphed to eventually fracture. It is “important to consider that regardless of the complexity of a stimulus, at some level the brain delivers a similar product: a subjective impression of visible features of which one can judge colour, brightness, orientation and size” (Leopold et al 2001:901). This implies although the features of a face are morphed the brain still has the capacity to perceive the morphed facial features as an identity. “The critical intervention of artists and technologists arises from an anxiety about the state of the “self” vis-à-vis its sociotechnical environment” (De Vries 2017:73). There is a constant recognition of faces on Facebook by facial recognition programmes that takes away the privacy of the “self”.

The use of a mask to disrupt facial recognition in this artwork is validated by the artist Zach Blas (2014: [sp]) who uses morphing and masks in his artworks as a way of defacement and to challenge facial recognition programmes. Blas is a digital artist and filmmaker that challenges privacy, politics, identity, racism and sexual differences on Facebook. Blas also works with the face and what happen to the face when mediated by different technologies. The art of Blas investigates the anti-Internet or post-Internet hypothetically and visually. Blas (2014: [sp]) argues that a face is recognised by an algorithm for facial recognition that analyses the image, but there is prejudice within the system against people of colour and transgender face images. His art then challenges facial recognition programmes that fail to recognise minority groupings. He then uses morphing techniques and masks as a means to visually indicate how facial recognition programmes can be disrupted. On his own artworks Blas (2014: [sp]) states that: “The masks function as both a practical evasion of biometric facial recognition and also a more general refusal of political visibility, which intersects with contemporary social movements’ use of masking”.

Artists such as Zach Blas, Leo Selvaggio, Sterling Crispin and Adam Harvey are among a group of internationally recognised artists who have developed anti-facial recognition masks within their artworks that question and disturb facial recognition within cyberspace. The artists investigate how one can conceal oneself with the help of art in order for postmodern subjects to become invisible to face recognition programmes. Patricia de Vries (2017:72) agrees with this view and writes in relation to facial and identity recognition that “over the past few years a growing number of artists and activists have expressed concern about the ubiquitous implementation and dissemination of facial and identity recognition technologies”. These artists also reflect on the fact that the human eye (and brain) outperforms computers in recognising distorted portraits. Linking back to the previously mentioned research done by Leopold et.al (2001).

When discussing the use of contemporary art in role playing, morphing or masking of faces the photographs of Cindy Sherman’s modified face, as part of role-playing, can be argued that none of her portraits can be reflected as self-portraits. Sherman experiments with different costumes, different time periods, prosthetics, makeup and digital photography to create highly exaggerated and often grotesque character studies of herself. Belting (2017:1010) also refer to the photographs of Sherman by

saying: “[o]ne forget the mask when Sherman look at us in disguise of a women from the Renaissance”. Sherman also uses various techniques of changing her face for example using prosthesis of a nose to expand the boundaries of the mask. Her representations of the “self” pushes the boundaries of the simulated face that can become a mask of the real face, by exploring morphing and the grotesque. Cindy Sherman also pushes dressing up to the extreme, making it absolutely essential to her art. Moreover, she also serves as model, photographing herself in the various guises she assumes. This reflects directly back to the selfie culture where dressing up, morphing and role playing is in order of the day.

By then considering the art of Zack Blas and Cindy Sherman when creating the animated video for the *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017) (Fig 27), I used a mask as a representation of the “self” but also to change the face as a critique and resistance to facial recognition programs which are a constant reflection within cyberspace

Zach Blas’ artwork, *Facial Weaponization Communiqué: Fag Face* (2012) (Fig 28), is an art project that uses masks to hide against facial recognition. Blas ([Sa]) explains that each mask is produced of a face using various data points on the face and to morph one face into another face. Within this process, the artist attempts that his face becomes undetectable and unidentifiable. These masks express the artist’s understanding of the effect of recognition technology and thus is a form of critique by forming its logical opposite and anti-face. De Vries (2017: 75) states: “Artist and scholar Zach Blas’ series of mask projects are designed, one hand to visualize how identity recognition technology analyses human faces, and to resist identity recognition technology, by offering undetectable face masks.”



Figure 27. Zach Blas. *Facial Weaponization Communiqué: Fag Face* (2012).

The artworks created by Zach Blas are important for this research because of his use of masking and morphing to react on facial recognition programmes and to become unrecognisable. By distorting or morphing the relationship of key facial features, like symmetry and tonal contours, one can block detection of facial recognition programmes by creating an “anti-face”.

As a result of engagement on social media the “self” preforms or presents a simulated image and in return reflects on the profusion of images of the “other” of which in both cases are only simulations or as Belting states masks. De Vries (2017:78) posits that the use of masks represents “the encounter between the human eye and the alleged mechanical “eye” of identity recognition technology” and Blas (2014: [sp]), through his artworks, argues that “[i]dentity is reduced to disembodied aggregates of data”.

According to De Vries (2017:79), the use of masks is “an attempt to reassert the obfuscated lines between virtual and material, human and machine, private and public life”. In a sense, the use of the mask as an anti-face can be argued as reversals, mirror opposites of the original identity and face. In describing the relationship between machine and subject. The author Kevin Robins (1995:140), in support of the argument on multiplicity, states that within postmodernity the “old trusted boundaries – between human and machine, self and other, body and mind, hallucination and reality – are

dissolved and deconstructed". This brings the argument back to the relationship between the postmodern subject and technology as well as on interfaces, connecting and altered realities. The focus of the study maintains and is still supported that when active on social media, formation of the "selves" identities is fluid and multiphrenic. David Tomas (1989:124), on fluidity within identity formation, writes that: "it presents opportunities for alternative dematerialised identity compositions". Research by Louis Hoffman, Sharon Stewart, Denise Warren and Lisa Meek (2006) shows that, within postmodernity, the notion of the ideal and coherent self is challenged, and identity formation deconstructed. Hoffman et al (2006:1) theorises that: "[t]he self has come under considerable attack in postmodern times. Amidst many deconstructions and reformulations of the "self", various myths of "self" have lost their sustainability". To understand interconnectedness, the "self" within the process of identity formation can move towards more complex socio-technical relations and understandings. De Vries (2017:80) critiques the use of masks as an identity hiding mechanism and states that masks are "fortifying a stronghold for identity and self, instead of opening a wider playing field that welcomes relational multiplicities". She refers embraces multiplicity, growth and becoming rather than using morphing masks or morphing techniques to hide identity.

The mask created for *Presence of Alice: The Anti-Face* (2017) is executed in such a way that specific features of the original face are still recognisable. The intention of the work *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017) (Fig 28), is to create a three-dimensional face-space using technologically generated morphing images of the same recognisable facial structure not to hide the face but as embodiment and becoming of a "self" within virtual reality.

Important is that the because of familiarity the face or identity is still recognisable. The process therefore acts as a process of becoming and embracing multiplicity. One also recognises the fact Facebook has become a host to countless role-playing communities.



Figure 28. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017).

In the work, these simulations of the mask lose their materiality. The imagery in *Presence of Alice: The Anti-Face* (2017) (Fig 30) goes beyond the expressions of the face and focuses on the information, the encoding and the data-capturing that create similar ghost-like images. The artwork provides the viewer with an opportunity to experience a merging of the real world and the hyperreal world, between solid based identities and the fluidity of technology. Here the mask represents how the “self” and the invented technological multiphrenic selves blended into one. The ghostlike mask contradicts the edited perfect image of the “self” but the face identity and reference to self-guide is still recognisable based on the understanding that the brain can remember complex patterns. De Vries (2017:83) says that, by “[l]ooking at recognition technology through a relational “lens” makes it more complex, multiform, ambiguous, but also gives us a lot more to work with”. Meaning that the “self” is in relation with others in the physical world (real world) as well as in virtual world, and these social interactions or intersubjective relations are important for identity formation as identity is socially constructed.

Intersubjective relational thinking assists in understanding that the relationship between the “self” as a subject and technology as a machine is an infinite map of connections. De Vries (2017:83) states by focusing on the relational: “we could come to reimagine identity recognition technology not as an object for our eyes, but as a relationship between living organisms and things”. This shows the significance of the role that faces play in the relations between “self” and “other”, perception, and processing information within the realm of fluidity as part of becoming and as part of identity formation process.

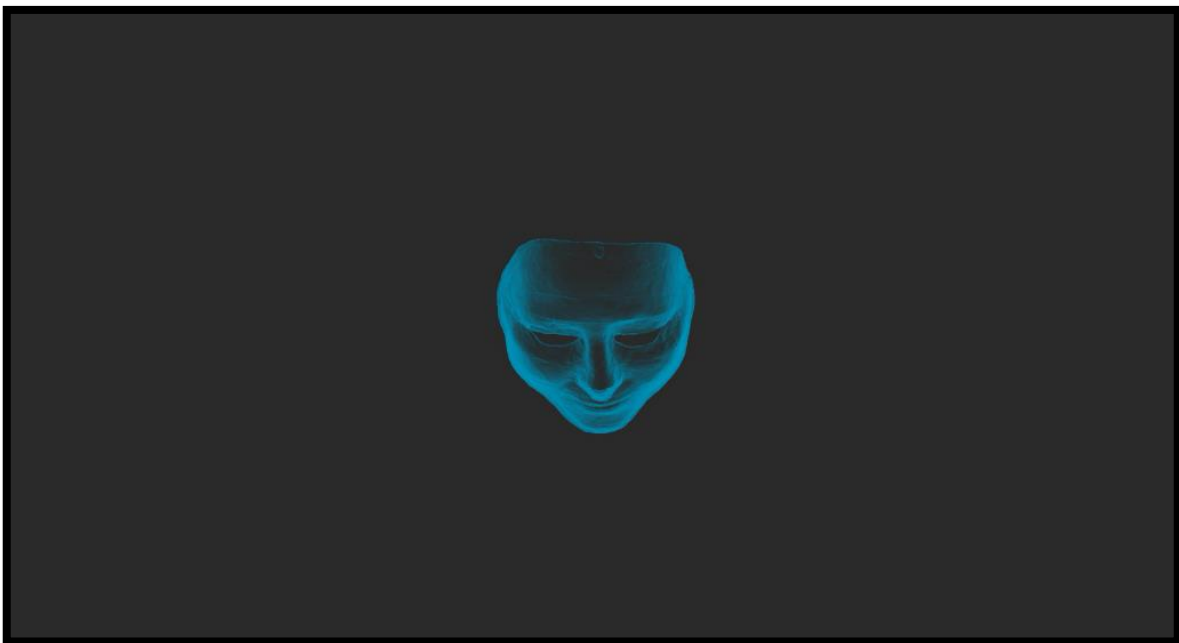


Figure 29. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017).

4.6.6 Becoming and the mask

The strange events that the protagonist Alice, in the novel *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2010), encounters with the other characters in Wonderland cause her to question her own identity. In the narrative, Alice experiences multiple transformations in size by eating and drinking, and when she meets the White Rabbit in the hall, she asks herself:

I wonder if I’ve been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I’m not the same, the next question is, Who in the world am I? Ah, that’s the great puzzle!” (Carroll 2010:11).

Further on in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice receives yet another piece of

advice from The Duchess, who tells her: “Be what you would seem to be to others” (Carroll 2010:93). Alice is continuously seeking affirmation from others on her identity, as she is fractured, insecure and confused. Following the narrative, it is evident that Alice embarks on a journey to Wonderland where she experiences multiple self-identity misperceptions, morphing and physical changes. On the journey, Alice encounters various morphed creatures that, throughout the novel, question her identity. Alice’s journey is a search for identity within a confusing environment that feeds her curious nature. In Wonderland, Alice learns to become the person she wants to be through making choices and reaching self-knowledge. Alice enters a process of becoming and finally gains self-confidence and, with this self-knowledge, she returns to her reality. This relates to Rosi Braidotti’s (2017:18) comment on becoming that

because there is no linear time, but a thousand plateaus of possible becoming, each following its own multi-directional or rhizomic course. A non-linear temporality requires and enables us to produce multiple complex and diversified lines of embodied, embedded, relational and affective posthuman subjectivity.

Braidotti theorises that the postmodern subject experiences a continuous present which never fully coincides with a spatio-temporally saturated “now”, but the subject goes on becoming, with a constant need to interact with others in a virtual space. The aim is according to Braidotti to understand the multiplicity of interaction in virtual space as part of becoming knowing subjects.

In supporting this argument within a technologically driven culture, Braidotti (2017:24) posits that the “ethical ideal is to aspire to the joyful affirmation of virtual possibilities, of what ‘we’ are capable of becoming”.

This implies that the “self” must think of where one is in relation to the “other” within a social world that constitutes a virtual reality, where performances are played out continuously. For Braidotti (2017:33), it is about being cognitive within the process of online identity formation because “thinking is about supporting what we are capable of becoming and realising the untapped potentials of what our embodied brains and embrained bodies can do. In other words, thinking is about the creation of new concepts”. Interaction in cyberspace should be perceived as a space where the boundaries between internal and external worlds are dissolved. If the “self” then performs various identities within these social platforms, there are no limits to what can be imagined and performed.

For this reason, in the process of forming multiple identities, there is always the possibility of choice, not all postmodern subjects perform or plays various roles on Facebook. Within the fluidity of multiple identity formation, the understanding of “self” is dependent on the individual’s experiences the “other” in a social context.

If the focus is on becoming as process, the visuals presented in *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017), *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) and *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017) can be interpreted as a process of becoming that relates to the various roles of the “self” reflected back to the “self” as in a mirror, the imagination, self-reflection and experiences of the “self”. The installation, *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017) (Fig 31), focuses on the creative process of becoming and the “self” in order to understand the fluidity of identity formation when active on social media. Within the creative process, the mask hides the identity of the self from the “other”, but still reflects as a self-guide within a series of editing processes.

To examine the theory of becoming visually provides a means of engaging with the mask and animation process that fosters connections between different performed and imagined identities and ways of self-representation.

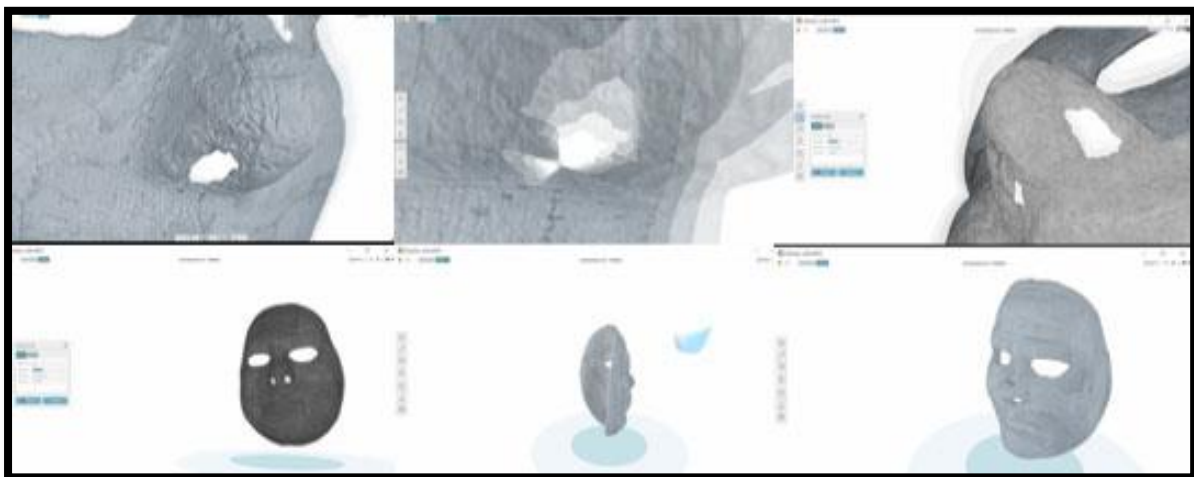


Figure 30. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The anti-face* (2017).

The animation aims to indicate the relevance of the concept of becoming within the context of social media and visually in the understanding of fragmentation, multiplicity and inter-connection. Every action and movement of the animation, including errors, distortions and morphing, provide a visual discourse that drives the “self” to a potential of growth and transformation presenting different ways of understanding the world and

experiencing the “self”.



Figure 31. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The anti-face* (2017).

The process visually presented in the work provides the viewer with an opportunity to reflect beyond the need for becoming the perfect mediated image, not by embracing the embodiment of sameness, but rather on identity formation as an intellectual process tapping into imagination, otherness and intuition. If the fractured postmodern self can become more curious like Alice in her Wonderland, the postmodern fractured self can start to resist the perfect mediated image and manage its actions within the social media networks of technology.

The research then acknowledges the importance of becoming in identity formation, but also theorises there is an offline space between face and mask where the “self” abides. The “self” oscillates between this offline space and virtual space where the “self” performs different identities. With each representation of the face on Facebook, and then within intersubjective relations, the “self” evolves and transforms into a new identity. The multiphrenic self therefore cannot be tied down by a fixed identity within cyberspace. The research concludes that the “self” can metaphorically be an actor, both revealing or concealing identity, using techniques such as masks, prosthesis or digital software for morphing or hiding of its face.

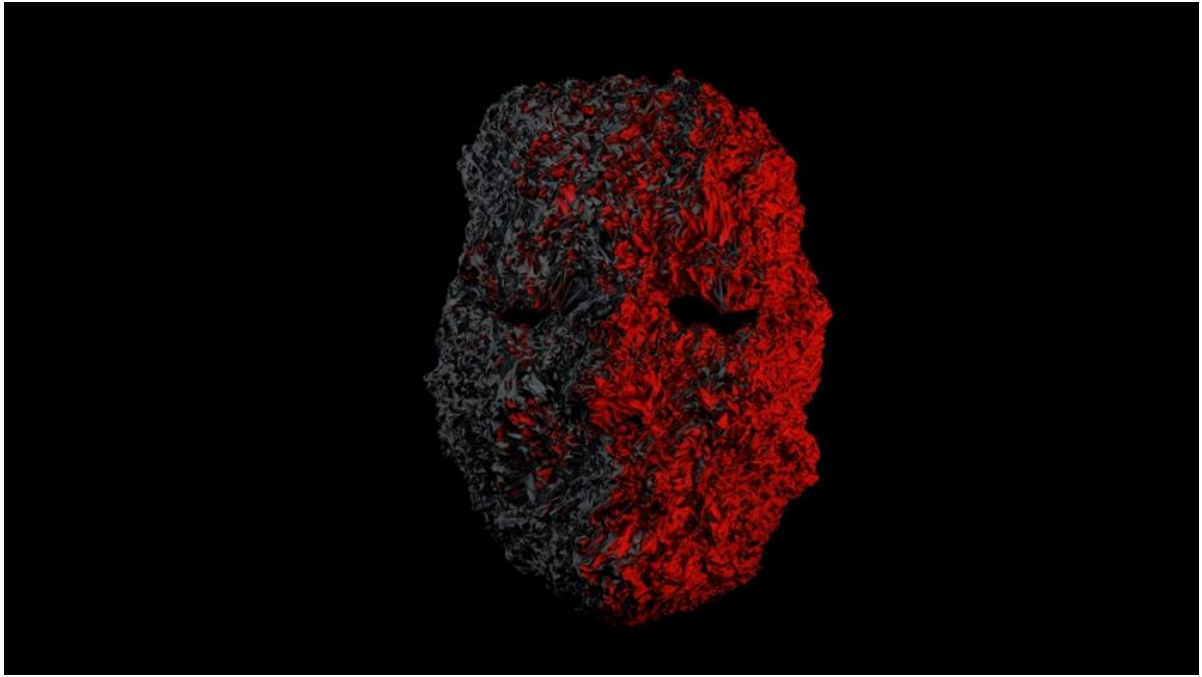


Figure 32. Hannelie Swart. *Presence of Alice: The Anti-Face* (2017).

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter examines the effect that continual performance and self-representation of the perfect or modified face within technology has on the “self” and identity formation. The intersubjective relations between the “self” and “other” is of importance to take note of within the age of technology, especially because of the notion that a face represented as an image on Facebook is just as an image, until reflected upon by the “other”. This opens the possibility for the creation of different “selves” that are then performed on Facebook resulting in multiphrenic identities. The importance of the face in posting selfies was unpacked with the conclusion that a face can be modified, changed, morphed or masked to either reveal or hide an identity. It was also concluded that real face become a masklike representation due to over simulation of self-images on Facebook and in the process the “self” become more and more fractured.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This is a practice-led research project that comprises of an exhibition “Presence of Alice: De-recognising the perfect mediated image of the ‘self’”, and a dissertation “Deconstructing consciousness in contemporary hyperreality: The multiphrenic self and identity”. The aim of the dissertation is to discuss and underpin the practical work and how it relates to current discourse on contemporary art making. The practical body of work comprises of three installations, *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017), *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017) and *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017), that function separately and collectively. The installations were exhibited in October 2017 at the UNISA Art Gallery as part of partial fulfilment requirements of the Masters in Visual Arts Degree.

The main premise of this dissertation and the visual component is an analysis of the “self” and the creation of multiple of mediated identities when participating on social media and more specifically Facebook, which inevitably leads to the question: “Which self am I and when?”. Computer mediated self-images have become pervasive in contemporary art making, which makes this study pertinent to current discourse on contemporary art. The contribution of this research thus examines how the participation on Facebook and the proliferation of technology in contemporary society shapes the sense of “self” and identity. The topic is a valid area of research, considering the impact of social media in contemporary society. The research comments on the multi-layeredness of the real and virtual self in an era dominated by digital technologies. The analysis follows a postmodern framework wherein the self is viewed as fragmented, fluid, paradoxically and as perpetually present.

Throughout the dissertation, the narrative in the novel *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (2010) provides a context and analogy for understanding the fragmentation of the “self”, as well the anxieties concerning the changed condition of identity formation, within cyberspace. The practical component and research incorporate contemporary art discourse and includes references to psychology, cultural studies and sociology.

For the practical work, I created spaces comprised of different components to design installations that represent and investigate social interactions online by taking

cognisance of multiphrenia. These created spaces mimic social media platforms where selfies are posted continually. The installations intend to visually represent multiple identities and present a visual conversation between technology and the faces of the consumers they represent. The connection between photographs, art, communications, and the self are key elements of this research. Furthermore, the practical component displays a possible process in the representation of the fragmented postmodern subject who is repeatedly immersed in cyberspace. The posting of selfies is connected to contemporary art and this research finds a way of understanding, reflecting and even challenging this phenomenon visually. The visuals represent how the “self” is continually exposed to the “other”, and how to question, connect or react to those concepts within technology. Following the theories of Goffman (1990: 62), who noted the value of “dramatically inflated actions”, that can today be referred to as selfie taking, one can productively view the phenomenon as a type of performance that occurs upon a particular sort of stage. Within this role-playing, significance is transferred to the self through space and time, and both art object and self -image are prominently featured in the installations exhibited.

The three installations are conceptualised within the principle of multiplicity and interconnectedness; they are connected to each other, yet each installation functions in isolation within a specific created space. The space created is similar to the ubiquity of the technological “screen” and, within this space, the fractured state of identity is visually illustrated. The artworks exhibit multiple realities that comfortably coexist within the aesthetic frame of the screens and anticipates discussion, self-reflection and an understanding of modified selfies posted on Facebook. This study takes cognisance of the fact that the exhibition, although locally installed and exhibited within a gallery space, is also documented and can be distributed within a world of simulation and cyberspace.

5.2 Main premise of research and conclusion

The aim of this research was to find answers to the question, “Which self am I and when?” within the context of identity formation when participating on Facebook. Based on the visual and practical research, as well as considering feedback and communication through social media and information centred around the discussions by the viewers of the exhibition. This research proposes that the mediated online

“selves” live in and experience the present, the perpetual now, within hyperreality as a reflexive space, and in a society based on continuity and fluidity. There is a continual interaction with the “other” based on the performances by the “self” on social platforms and that the “self” plays an important role within these intersubjective relations. This is similar to the daily intersubjective interaction of the material “self” with the “other” of the lifeworld. The “self” is dependent upon the reflection of themselves mirrored by others for identity formation. The difference between the intersubjective relations in cyberspace to that of the lifeworld is that when engaged on Facebook the “self” tends to mediate the images it presents creating multiple identities. This often results in fragmented identities and multiphrenia. In addition, I argue that although the fragmented self continually performs different aspects of identity by means of mediated self-representation online, this impacts identity formation and the offline space and time between face and mask. This is one aspect within the process of identity formation, living within a media saturated environment that needs more research.

5.3 Review of research

5.3.1 Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole

The discussion in Chapter Two focusses on multiphrenia and postmodern schizophrenia. The current culture of taking selfies with mobile phones and then posting them on social media has left an indelible mark on the way the “self” presents itself to the world. The result of this process of posting and sharing mediated selfies on Facebook the identity of the “self” becomes fragmented. Within this culture of continued attempts to capture and share experiences the “self” has lost the capacity to retain the past and is characterised by postmodern schizophrenia. Within this postmodern schizophrenic experience, the “self” is disconnected, and identity become blurred. By thinking of identity formation within multiplicity, various multiple potentialities can be explored within the fluidity of identity formation. By exploring the concept of simultaneity in theory as well as in the visual component, I explain that there are multiple perspectives and images that occur at once within cyberspace that are not necessarily caused but are simply occurring at the same time. Through the “front” and “face” theories of Goffman (1990) where the “offline-self informs the creation of a similar “online-self”, the “offline-self” and “online-self” are part of the

multiphrenic real self and that the multiphrenic real self is an important aspect that again informs the “online-self” to play various roles.

Discourse on contemporary art indicate that there is an interest in the excess of signifying, that also refers back to the loss of boundaries in postmodernism, where the focus is not only on art but also on visual culture. In the installation, *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017), the inside axis of the icosahedron shape is used to refract light to represent the notion of fractured identities within space and time where the concept of identity constructions is not fixed, instead multiplicity and fragmentation is questioned within refracted space. The icosahedron axis refracted the animated stop motion animation that represents an expanded, deconstructed, minimalist hyperreal world. In the first installation images were used as clues for the viewer on the metaphors that were used in all three the installations. This spatial-temporal approach simulates the interaction within cyberspace. For the “self” to be able to be perceived as an identity within cyberspace, the “self” needs to pass through a virtual point and these virtual points are technologically driven social spaces. The manner in which the installation was constructed with the refracted animated video questioned real(physical) space, but also the way one relates to virtual objects within a specific temporal and spatial context. Through the research it becomes apparent that there is a disjunction between the inner and outer world of the “self”. The “self” is constantly mediating, comparing, matching, maintaining and replicating itself on Facebook resulting in a multiphrenic personality.

To understand multiphrenia, one needs to enter into a process of performing and becoming, to experience the mediated “selves” who are subjected to the reflective intersubjective relations with the “other” as if looking into a mirror. This results in a fragmented “self” that has different identities which are created and mediated and are largely “fictions” of their life, and how they would like others to see their life world.

Furthermore, the research indicates that the world wide web operates on a similar structure as the *rhizome*. Baudrillard locates the postmodern multiphrenic condition within hyperreality. In the hyperreal space the “self” is exposed to *simulacra*, where there are no longer distinct borders and there are only images and simulations where the “self” is on display and where the private is made public and the “self” is exposed. It is then within this hyperreal space where the “self” is presented, multiplied and

commodified for mass consumption. Within the current culture dominated by technology, a paradigm shift has taken place within society regarding space, time, perception, representation and presence. Within hyperreal space the virtual “self” is a projection of the “self” where characteristics and identity can be changed or modified, depending on the context in which the “self” is represented.

The sense of “self” and identity can be derived from a multitude of sources online where identities are constantly changing according to various environments and social spaces within the hyperreal. *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) blends the real and virtual to create an experience of the hyperreal world. The active social media participant is able to move from website to website and in a variety of directions simultaneously similar to that of the *rhizome*. *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) visually represents the morphing and distortion of the “self” and objects within the created hyperreal space. The concern raised in the theoretical research is that the fractured phenomenon will increase over time, and that “self” can become an identity that is more dependent on reflection by the “other” for identity formation. Through the constant interaction with the perfect mediated image, one can become conditioned to project and believe only the best and sometimes an unrealistic identity of the “self”. This obsessive awareness of the “self” and the self-edited identities in cyberspace can be indicative of a narcissistic predisposition. This can manifest in a compulsive need to represent the “self” on Facebook. However, the posting of selfies is a fairly common practice on social media sites, becoming a typical way of communicating with others and is not necessarily related to narcissism. This narcissist engagement of the self is also evident within contemporary art practise. Contemporary artists especially digital artists use themselves as subject matter to comment on social issues. What is interesting is that mostly attractive artists use this means of art making.

As the “self” continuously performs different identities in cyberspace underpins the ideas of Goffman (1990) on performance and identity and assisted in terms of understanding online intersubjectivity. These ideas by Goffman (1990) relate to identity formation, on the social network sites similar to that of a theatre stage. On the “front stage” the “self” is performing online. But there is also a backstage, the offline time and space where no performance is played and the real material person is situated. It is also important to take cognisance of the fact that the “offline self” informs the creation of a similar “online self” and that the performing various roles. The theories

on performance identity established that postmodern subjects find themselves within these social networks and that they make conscious decisions to perform various “online” roles. The common theme is that although Facebook may have provided an escapism from everyday day life, it is mostly mimicking and idealising reality.

5.3.2 Presence of Alice: Mad Hatter Tea Party

In Chapter Three I examine the “self” and how it relates to the intersubjective reflection of the “other” in space and time. With the installation *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017), the “self” performs as a decentralised identity that multiplies through cyberspace, mediated by technology. The “self” continually performs on social media in cyberspace that relates to a performance in front of a mirror (the “other”). The perception of a mirror was also used in the practical component to indicate the continual symbolic interaction and reflection between “self” and “self”, and “self” and “other”. In the mirror image the “self” is externalised as a virtual image that is only a reflection of a certain part of the real “self”. The performance of the “self” within a virtual environment has an effect on the body. I posit that virtual spaces engage the body as an input via specialised interface devices that not only permit, but require physical actions to be performed sensorially, and that in its own sense is form of embodiment. This is then a simultaneous awareness of the “self” in virtual reality and in the physical body.

To further explore the concept of embodiment the artwork by Char Davies, *Osmose* (2015), was referenced. *Osmose* (2015) reminded us how inter-related we are with technology, in sight and sound, body and psyche. *Osmose* (2015) is an example of embodiment within virtual space as part of contemporary art practise. The importance of *Osmose* (2015) to this research is the way that Char Davies recomposes the paradox between real/virtual, mind/body, subject/object and the way the boundaries between these paradoxes become fluent and dissolvable.

In the installation *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea Party* (2017), the artwork emphasises the ambiguity of special relations between the real and the virtual world, evoking alternative thought, and open the mind of the viewer to a new vision of object and subject relation. The artwork uses the mask as an object of mediation, as well as an object to explain the dissolving of boundaries between virtual and real space when active on social media.

I posit that the “self” can co-exists in both worlds simultaneously where time and space is continual. The research infers that the virtual “self” with no physical existence, can only be accessed through representation, and more specifically a screen. The study then reasons that that the virtual space of Facebook does not completely remove the “self” from the experience, embodiment and significance of space, but rather changes the physical environments under which one conceptualises and experience space. In the *Presence of Alice: The Mad Hatter Tea party* (2017), the mundane actions of drinking tea are duplicated and performed where the “self” is repeating actions similar to a “gif” (computer file), and becomes the embodiment of perpetual time similar to the characters in Wonderland. The installation visually depicts that embodied consciousness is not only looking through the screen at a virtual image but that consciousness moves through the screen to become a virtual presence. This shared consciousness experienced and simulated on social media platforms, creates a culture of continual self-representation and re-invention of the “self”. I argue that human consciousness relies on the ability to distinguish between the “self” and “others” and between real and virtual contexts. Societies can thus be understood as networks of relations and assemblages of connected or disconnected individuals.

The study indicates, that the “self”, as a virtual image and recognised as an informational pattern, has the capability to travel over space and time and there is therefore a multi-layeredness in how one experiences time and space. This recognition of technology and the effect it has on formation of virtual identities entails that the subject, as the “self”, needs a reconfiguration of how one thinks of the “selves” in relation to technology, being virtual multiphrenic “selves” and an offline material “self” simultaneously.

5.3.3 Presence of Alice: The Anti-Face

This study notes that cyberspace opens a platform for projection and performance, where virtual performances can be used for personal and social transformation, modification and interaction. Within this virtual space the “self” replicates itself multiple times and will continue replicating as part of a process of becoming. But, within this continuous replication the “selves” and identities become fractured. In other words, the increasing representation of digital self-images enables a projection of the “self” and a reflection by the “other” of idealised images that can be digitally enhanced and

altered to present various fluid and self-altered images. Relating to the ideas of Goffman on performance identity, this research refers to performance, where the face is central to the performance, emphasising role-playing on social media platforms. This research also suggests that, when one is conscious of one's actions, one is, by definition, performing. Therefore, social media presents a wider scope for the formation of different identities that the conscious "self" can invent.

Important to note is that the face that is represented on Facebook is just a face, until there is interaction with other faces. This research compares selfies posted in cyberspace to painted portraits and self-portraits, in cyberspace a face is also seen by the "other", just within a new frame, the screen. It can be argued that selfies posted on Facebook are then also reproductions and not authentic copies of life. When posting a selfie on Facebook the face can be distorted, discoloured and transformed, the face can also be modified to mask the "self" and represent the "self" in different performances. The study therefore argues that the real face produced as a masklike representation is posted in order to reveal, exhibit yet conceal some aspects of the "self". The posting of the selfie is then acts as a double, the mirror of the real face, and by playing various roles it become a mask.

The animation processes used for the installation *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017) focus specifically on the process of becoming and the "self", in an attempt to understand the fluidity of identity formation within the participation of social media, but also to find a way to represent the process of becoming visually. Within the creative process, the mask created from the "self" then hides, conceal or exhibits the "self". These processes form part of a creative act and part of a process of understanding where virtual reality as a space becomes part of imagining the "self" and identity formation. The face one interacts with in social media is not just a face but also a mask.

In the installation, *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face* (2017), I examine how identity formation is affected by the constant perfectly mediated image constantly presented in the technological visual world. The mask becomes fractured and, as it morphs into fragments, the mask (the "self") and the actual fragments of the objects become one, bringing virtual and actual realities together. The study argues that the distortion, modification and morphing of faces creates the anti-face. When the image of the face is modified in any way, enhanced or morphed using FaceApp, or any other face

modification app, or postproduction photography software, the image that is posted becomes an anti-face because it is different from the actual face. The use of the anti-face model in the practical work therefore questions the perfect mediated image of the face on social media platforms. Therefore, the mask is a dominant component in all three visual installations. In the installations, the mask is presented as full, fractured as well as refracted images. Important is also the finding that face and anti-face is linked to visual perception and the recognition of faces. Relating the research of face and anti-face to identity formation, the perception of face and anti-face are connected to basic face structures and nodes. I argue that, based on these mental representations, the anti-face created from my real face as part of the practical component for this research can still be recognised by the “other” based on familiarity of the face norm (the average face features of a person). This implies that the subject shows a significant ability to recognise if they are very familiar to them, even if the face is morphed or modified. Therefore, the ability to still recognise an anti-face is limited to faces with which one has previous experiences or familiarity.

The animation used in this installation is a projection of the postmodern fractured “self” as a masklike face, simulated and copied. The mask evolves, morphs and fractures from the first installation *Presence of Alice: Down the Rabbit Hole* (2017) to the third installation *Presence of Alice: The Anti-Face* (2017). The projection simulates a hyperreal space of self-reflection and self-presentation. In presenting the morphed images of the “self”, the artwork represents the online exposure of the modified images of the “self” performing on Facebook. In the narrative of the video the mask representing the anti-face in the installation is rotated 360°, with the aim to visually indicate the different unknowable identities reflected on Facebook. Within the rotation process different identities appear that can be distinguished. The artwork investigates altered ways of mapping the face. It is argued in this study that subjects have used and continue to use specific means to reinvent themselves on social media platforms realising that the “self” performs in online spaces where identities are fluid

I maintain that the postmodern fractured “self” lives in a society of isolation where the “self” hides away from physical social interaction by interacting online in cyberspace. Intersubjective relations between the “self and the “other” is an important element in the creation of self-identity in the life-world. In cyberspace intersubjective relations are just as important but, the use of masked identities presents the “self” the option to hide

away behind a mask of the anti-face. In this sense, the “self” can protect or isolate itself from the “other” as the relations with the “other” are based on fictions. The face can also metaphorically be seen as an actor, both revealing or concealing an identity, by using various techniques such as morphing, prosthesis, masks or digital software. For this reason, in the process of forming multiple identities, there is always the possibility of choice, not all postmodern subjects perform or interact on Facebook. Within the fluidity of multiple identity formation, the understanding of “self” is dependent on the individual’s experiences the “other” in a social context.

With the artwork *Presence of Alice: The Anti-Face* (2017), the animation aims to indicate the relevance of the concept of becoming within the context of social media and visually in the understanding of fragmentation, multiplicity and inter-connection. In virtual space the concept of becoming and identity formation that results in multiphrenia is accepted in this research however, the research also reasons that there is an offline space and time between face and mask where the “self” has to face reality. The multiphrenic self therefore cannot be tied down by a fixed identity within cyberspace. The research concludes that the “self” can metaphorically be an actor, both revealing or concealing identity, using techniques such as masks, prosthesis or digital software for morphing or hiding of its face.

Within the lifeworld of the postmodern fractured self, the continual performance of the “self” in the representational form of mediated images or masks in cyberspace opens the door for understanding the hyperreal world as a potential transitional space. It is within this virtual, hyperreal space where the “self” can play, imagine and reflect but also be disillusioned and reject the material “self” located in the lifeworld of postmodern society and culture.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

While debating and theorising on global issues of self and identity within postmodernism in this research, the scope of work was very broad. The findings were also not debated within a South African social and cultural context or within contemporary art practise of South Africa. This is certainly a field for further research enquiry.

Identity and “self” continuous to exist as a key question not only in academic research

but also in one's social and personal lives. Research in this field not only resonates within social and cultural studies but also within the political arena. Further research can focus on the space beyond fluid identities within the 21st Century by exploring issues such as identity and power, social class, poverty and inequality, race, ethnicity and identity and how fluid identity and multiphrenia impacts on that. The research can then be placed and debated within contemporary art in South Africa.

5.5 Main findings of this research

The focus of this research is on visual arts and culture that primarily examine issues within the current technologically driven society such as consumerism and consumer culture, multiplicity, saturated self and the extended self in the visual world. Within cyberspace, the "self" and the "other" not only reflect each other, they are each other, until such time that the "self" can enter a process of becoming that is important for individual identity formation.

The morphing of the "self" is conceptualised and went into a process of becoming then visually represented in the third installation *Presence of Alice: The Anti-face (2017)*. These simulated images are similar to the daily postings and how identity is fractured by the constant seeking of perfection by the continual re-invention of the "self".

By unpacking the perfect mediated image within cyberspace, it becomes obvious that the fluidity of identity formation forms part of a social consciousness that is formed within intersubjective relations within the hyperreal environment. This research then posits the following main findings:

- One realises that every action one takes and choice one makes on social media is a constant creation of who one is and who one wants to become.
- Consideration and navigation one's complex social online environments successfully is important within postmodern social culture.
- By exploring connections within technology one can create an environment where there is a constant shifting of "self" and identity formation, that remains a process of becoming.
- The "self" needs to embrace the ability for growth and fluidity as part of experiences, self-awareness and becoming.
- Continual changing and repeating of images within a virtual space cannot

manifest physically but is experienced in one's imagination.

- Promoting and reflecting on mediated images and not to embrace the embodiment of sameness but rather making identity formation an intellectual process tapping into imagination, otherness and intuition.
- Saying that if the fractured postmodern self can become more curious like Alice in her Wonderland, the postmodern fractured self can start to resist the urge to present perfect mediated images and manage its actions within the social media networks of technology.
- The “self” does not see disembodiment as a threat to identity but rather as an extension of embodied awareness in a non-situated and altered way.
- That within a contemporary art context the selfie has materialised especially within digital art discourse.
- There is also the other side within contemporary art, that of de-recognising the perfect mediated image, the anti-face, camouflage and masks.

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