# Cookies! Artwork Application for Peckham Digital 2025

### Artist Statement (Draft Count: ~~IIII~~ III)

Are we the same people off and on the internet? What invisible trails do we leave behind? Who follows them? And most importantly, what do they make of it?

*Cookies!*, an interactive artwork built with Unity and driven by obsessive research into algorithmic profiling, is my meditation on Cathy O’Neil’s brilliant ‘Weapons of Math Destruction’. Drawing from her time behind the curtain, O’Neil presents the central thesis and evidence highlighting how, in the absence of full context, algorithms construct digital proxies of us — reductive models that place us into predictive “buckets” with real-world consequences. These systems don’t understand us. They sort us.

*Cookies!* invites the audience to explore this through a (simulated) news website, clicking through stories that interest them. In the background, an algorithm tracks every click to create an (intentionally, impossibly myopic) profile that is then used to recommend stories, tailor ads, and create two juxtaposed outcomes – a playful “What Kind of Coffee Are You?”, and an (hopefully unnerving) prediction of your credit score. Both come from the same limited dataset — revealing how casual clicks create data-driven destiny, based on the inherent biases of the systems’ creators.

It’s fun. Until it isn’t.

Think that’s a stretch? Scan the QR Code below. *[I’ll attach a QR Code leading to a compilation of research that documents evidence of these practices]*

### How Will This Help Your Artistic Development

### Artwork Description

Cookies! Will be presented as three screens – one interactive screen containing the BBC-styled news website, and two screens positioned besides it that update automatically reflecting (a) The result of a Buzzfeed-styled “What Kind of Coffee Are You” quiz; and (b) A financial portal-esque site that shows them a predictive ‘credit score’ and intentionally vague sounding ‘reasoning’ for their credit score.

The news website can be interacted with (via mouse/touchscreen), and the audience will be invited (through the UI) to first ‘Accept Cookies’ to start the simulation. Hereafter audience members can engage with the satirical news articles and click the ‘recommended for you’ articles to keep browsing the site.

The two other screens will update their content upon each click, quickly establishing a feedback loop, as the audience members can explore in real time how their choice of news stories to read feeds into the invisible algorithm changing the assumptions it makes about them, and the pages’ content.

Finally, audience members will be able to reset the simulation with a big red button for the next person.

**Notes:** All the screens are built to be satirical and funny, and while the underlying ideas are scary, there is no explicit content that warrants a warning. The websites are merely reproductions of webpages - the simulation runs entirely offline in Unity.

### What technical requirements or equipment does your artwork require?

**Technical Requirements**

Words

Instructions for turning artwork on:

**Bill of Materials**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Material/Device/Software** | **Quantity** | **Provision (PD = May require aid from Peckham Digital)** | **Notes/Specs** |
| PC (Laptop/CPU) | 1 | Self | Low End Laptop/Desktop is viable as the artwork is entirely made of text elements and low-fi sprites |
| 15.6” Touchscreen Display | 1 | Self | For news website interactive display |
| 15.6” Standard Display | 2 | Self | For other two non-interactive displays |
| Standard HDMI-HDMI cable | 3 | Self | - |
| 1 x 4 HDMI Splitter | 1 | Self | To split HDMI output to 3 displays |
| Power Cables for Displays | 3 | Self | - |
| Shelf/Plinth for Mouse (Only if optional mouse is used) | 1 | Self/PD | Simple Timber/MDF Shelf with L-Bracket, fabricated by me. Will require a wall that can be drilled into. OR Floor-Standing Plinth |
| Computer Mouse and Mousepad (optional) | 1 | Self | - |
| Display Mounting Brackets (Optional) | 3 | Self/PD | Only if the 3 Displays require brackets for mounting – Will require a wall that can be drilled into. I will try to provision displays that can simply be stuck instead rendering this unnecessary. |
| Power Extension Lead (minimum 4 sockets) | 1 | Self/PD | 3 sockets for screen, 1 socket for PC |
| Unity Editor 2022.3 + | - | Personal License (I have read the terms) | Only for last minute debugging if necessary – I will build an exe for the final show using Unity |
| OBS Studio (Open Broadcast Software) | - | Free and Open-Source License | For ensuring smooth functioning of multiple output displays from Unity |

### What space does your artwork require for exhibit?

Please check the Technical Diagram I have attached in the link [link] for best visualisation. I have noted the rough dimensions I require below (ideal and minimum, as relevant). The entire artwork is installed on a wall, outside of the optional use of a mouse which would require plinth. The requirements are as follows:

**Wall Space:** 180 cm (width) x 30 cm (height) x 2 cm (depth) + Floor Space for CPU and cables as relevant

**Plinth (Optional)**: Minimum surface area of 30 x 30 cm (Ideally 45 x 45 cm). Height of 100 cm