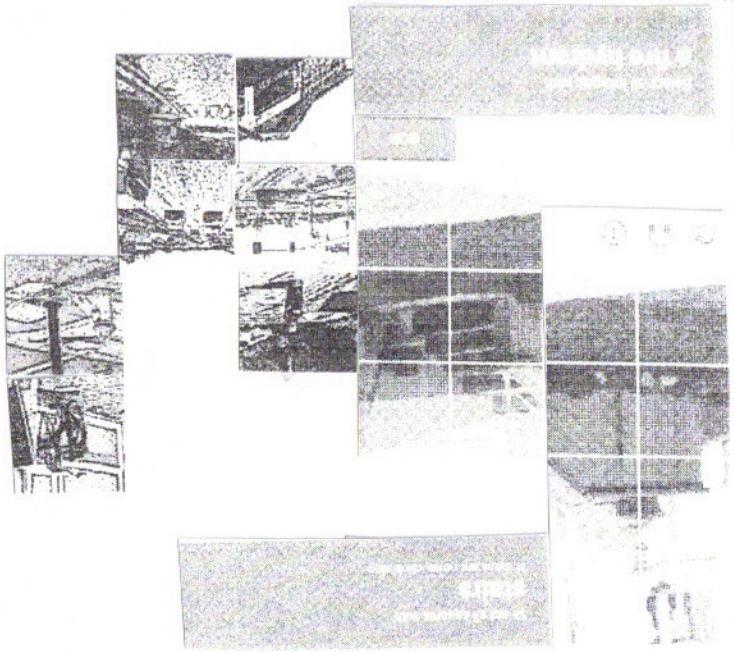
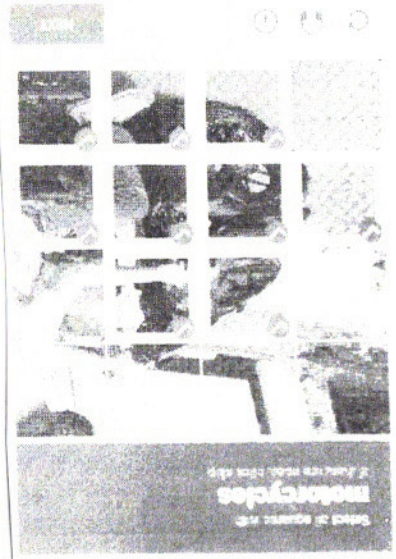
Select all images with
meaningful empowerment
Click verify once there are none left

past data collection for future data processing —
Google's CAPTCHAs seemingly beckon you to



rectilinear enclosures to find comfort in

entertain philosophical questions
as you strive to appease its programming: are the nine pixels
on the edge of this box sufficiently *motorcycle* enough
to warrant selection? Who lives in the house beyond which
these stairs lead? How cold was the air on the road,
where the mere suggestion of a human figure contends
for *fire hydrant* status amongst other noised imagery?



All my life I seek them out:

I know my place in this universe,

Submit

the exactness of a square, 1×1 pixel:

there is an infinity to this exactness.

everything distilled is a 1 or 0:

Fig 2b. An Arkose Challenge.

I take care to keep up the semblances
of a home, drawn back helplessly by the simplicity
of being entirely enveloped.

advertised disintegration of the self —
towards dissolution, self obliteration, to be fully realized,
digitized, and made quantifiable: to revel
in the simplicity of being data.
What a world of clear,
computationally calculable relations would do to
our self-perception! How convenient, how ambient!

a world of chimeras,

procedurally generated

creatures

that at times glance over at

us from a void.

Fig 4. CAPTCHA specters.

what value, and role, will visual perception now play as generated imagery gets increasingly mixed into analog visual culture.

more patterns are to be recognized and established.

to be extracted, from which

that there is always more information

you took is infinitely divisible;

1080×1080 pixel Instagram-ready photo

it is an insistence that the

relationship with images:

introduces a new dimension to our

The discrete segmentation of these images into panels

Posturing before the CAPTCHA, as we perform feats of human cognition that we feel surely must be momentous to the confirmation of our individual, personal humanity, how banal is all this in the context of data capture for machine learning models of incomprehensible scale?

Does the CAPTCHA present a more relatable vision of the world, of humanity — than we do?

the overall affective experience of user engagement has been one of annoyance, frustration, and resignation in light of piecemeal revelations of human participants' incontrovertible role in training machine learning systems — and reverberated across the supply chain as users catch glimpses of the broader data collection infrastructure and how contemporary geopolitics renders them uniquely "caught up" in its self-reinforcement.

What does the metaphoric work of defining this authentication scheme as a game do? Whose expectations of (user) engagement does it set forth?

Does switching from overt task completion as the signifier of the user's encounter with authentication requirements to something so deceptively simple (and opaquely communicated across Google's official terms and materials) truly aid the user and support a private browsing experience?

I wonder if there is something to the adversarial, neverending arms race between bot and CAPTCHA developers that could be instructive for us, if we (the unwitting farmed) could become a better poison.

Applying Lucy Suchman's principle of located accountability in the AI supply chain, Widder and Nafus' 2023 analysis cite modularity as both an organizing principle and metaphor that, compounded by market narratives, perpetually postpones the question of ethics and responsibility when it comes to preventing harm and reducing bias in AI systems. Applying modularity to a functional and affective analysis of CAPTCHAs presents a similar, though inverted, situation and relation: whilst the product of users' labor is through the crowdsourced nature of CAPTCHAs made a productive input for machine learning, it is difficult to precisely locate and determine in what ways collective labor has materially benefitted us as users and perhaps digital citizens. The mismatch and misalignment between users and their labor is thus emblematic of what Lauren Berlant terms "cruel optimism," a dynamic in which that which a person desires actively works to impede their flourishing. In the context of CATPCHAs and web security, the desire is for a well-maintained, robust, and discernibly *human* population of users. However the methods by which CAPTCHA-as-data collectors go about functioning, and perhaps even their very positioning, branding, and public reception all contribute to the erosion of the users' desire to contribute to that maintenance.

Widder, D. G., Nafus, D. (2023). Dislocated accountabilities in the "AI supply chain": Modularity and developers' notions of responsibility. *Big Data & Society*, 10(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517231177620

Berlant, L. G. (2011). *Cruel optimism*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822394716