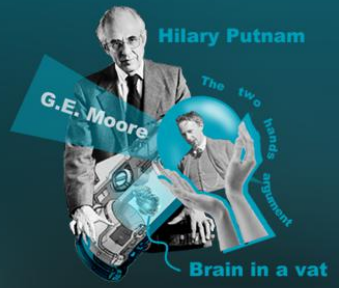
VIRTUAL SOUL

From the earliest Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" to Musk's research on brain-computer interfaces, and now to the development of the metaverse, the immortality of consciousness seems to be becoming possible. By chance, I watched a popular science video about the "brain in a vat," which deepened my thoughts on the possibility of digital immortality. In this torrent of the times, people hold different attitudes toward digital immortality. Some consider it a utopia, while I think it is a dystopia. I want to create an immersive experience to evoke people's thoughts on this abandonment of the body and pursuit of digital immortality.

Research

Descartes' "Evil Demon" thought experiment questions the reliability of sensory perceptions. He posits that an evil demon could deceive us into believing a false reality is real, ultimately leading him to the proposition "Cogito, ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am").



Putnam introduced the "Brain in a Vat" thought experiment, questioning our ability to verify the reality of the external world. In contrast, Moore's "Two Hands" argument asserts the existence of the external world by demonstrating the presence of his hands, thus countering skepticism.

Wittgenstein explored the relationship between language and reality, questioning how language can describe the world. Pyrrho, an ancient Greek skeptic, advocated for suspending judgment on all matters. Together, these ideas delve into skepticism, questioning whether we can truly know the world.

Neil Harbisson, the first legally recognized cyborg, challenges the definition of human identity. Plutarch's "Ship of Theseus" explores the relationship between identity and change. Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" merges technology and biology, redefining modern subjectivity.

Musk's brain-computer interface technology aims to connect the human brain directly to computers, enhancing human intelligence. Meanwhile, Zuckerberg's metaverse concept creates a virtual reality space, transforming how people interact. Together, they push the boundaries of human-technology

Zhuang Zhou's "Butterfly Dream" parable explores the boundary between reality and dreams, raising philosophical questions about self and existence. Through the story of dreaming he was a butterfly, Zhuangzi questions the nature of reality, suggesting the relativity between reality and illusion.

Opinions of those around me

Based on the above research, I decided to conduct an **interview** on the topic: If a technology allowing for the abandonment of the body and the uploading of consciousness to achieve digital immortality became available in the future, would you be willing to try it?

Style reference: https://www.mollyhellman.co.uk/who-nose

Support

Oppose

Amid the clash of various opinions, I came up with a creative idea to design an immersive experience that prompts participants to think deeply.

test vision 1

Light and shadow installation

My initial version aimed to create a light and shadow installation, inspired by the works of the aforementioned two artists. However, during the experimentation process (see attached photos), I found that the expression of light and shadow was not direct enough. It failed to effectively convey the idea of the 'brain in a vat' and did not allow the audience to understand it well.

http://xhslink.com/K7tj7M

James Turrell

Light Design

Emptiness itself is a trap, what is the truth?

Is what we see, hear, and feel equivalent to existence?

http://xhslink.com/P4fk7M

Olafur Eliasson

Humans and nature

the integration or separation of artificial nature

post-apocalyptic imagination

test vision 2

interactive installation

My second version plans to create an interactive physical installation, also inspired by the works of two other artists. However, during the experimentation process, I found that the installation's presentation might end up being just a brain model in a vat, lacking creativity and being too straightforward.

http://xhslink.com/uOwk7M

Tony Oursler

Facial expressions and psychology

separated human body parts

the absurdity between humans and machines.

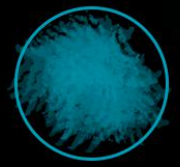
http://xhslink.com/KuZk7M

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer

Invisible heartbeat

Humans and the city, the publicization of art

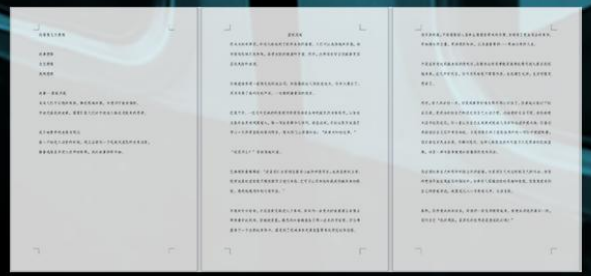
What constitutes existence?

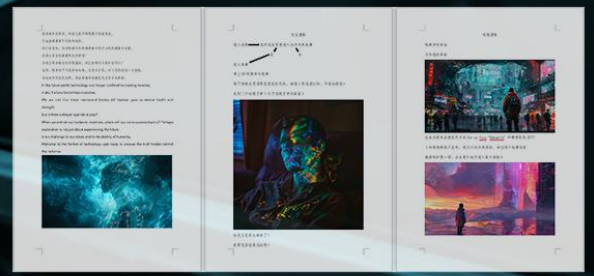


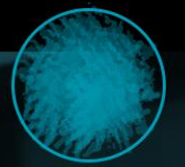
test vision 3

3D animation

My third version is to create a 3D animation. Above are the story script I wrote and the reference images generated using Midjourney. However, I found that this mainly expresses my own viewpoint. Even though I can provide an open-ended conclusion, it still fails to let the audience participate in the choices, which goes against the original intention of my project.







test vision 4

VR combined into an immersive adventure.

Finally, I decided to create an immersive interactive experience based on virtual reality and digital imagery. By guiding the audience into the work and allowing them to interact, as well as through the installations within the work, the audience can reflect on this issue.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cLY7Ip-bNQ

Tongzhou Yu's work 'Murder on the YokAI Line' is an immersive cross-media theatrical piece that also uses 3D animation to enhance the narrative.

Process

The First Scene

In this futuristic landscape, what appears to be natural, perfect mountains from afar are actually composed of stacked buildings, symbolizing a highly automated and technological world. These mountain-like structures represent a fusion of nature and technology, creating a visual experience that is both real and surreal.
At the center stands a core communication and monitoring system, designed in the shape of a spider, with its limbs transmitting signals. The ground, resembling a spider web, serves as a network for transmitting control signals to mechanized bodies, allowing people to easily connect to and control these bodies, further emphasizing the high level of connectivity in this future world.

The following describes the process of creating the spider model: we referenced the original form of a spider and then mechanized it, adapting the design to align with the concept of a futuristic, technological world.

This is the white model of the spider, and the final version will incorporate colors inspired by mechanical devices.

This is the process of creating the robot, from the initial white model to the final product.

SPIDER

The spider's legs shatter the mirror-like surface of the lake, revealing the hidden dangers beneath the calm exterior of the future. The presence of the spider raises a question: is it there for convenience or surveillance? The central part of the scene exudes an atmosphere of underlying tension.

ROBOT

The future human form is embodied by robots, inspired by the mythological Seraphim. Their wings symbolize freedom and hope, while the ring of eyes beneath their bodies represents constant surveillance. These shimmering wings guide humanity into the unknown, but within this vast uncertainty, what choice will prove to be the right one?

The Second Scene

The second scene is set inside a laboratory, with the screen flickering as if there's a weak signal. In the bottom right corner sits a disabled scientist, contemplating whether to join the mind-uploading project. This is an irreversible action with unknown future consequences, which makes him deeply hesitant. Despite the jars before him containing the brains of those who have already uploaded their consciousness, he remains uncertain whether this is the right choice.

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SCIENTIST

The scientist in the image is a disabled person who longs to escape the limitations of his physical body, yet he is also apprehensive about the future that this new and uncharted technology might bring.

LABORATORY

The laboratory in the image, with its mysterious style, embodies the uncertainty of the future. The instruments and equipment within the lab symbolize deep reflections on reality, while the "brain in a vat" is depicted in a tangible form, prompting further exploration of consciousness and existence.

THE WHOLE IMMERSIVE ADVENFTURE

The final process video captures the journey of the viewer from entering the exhibition to picking up the VR headset. Through the VR headset, they witness a futuristic scene (Scene 1). Upon removing the headset, the wall in front of them projects a vision of future reality (Scene 2), prompting reflection on whether digital immortality is a good option. As they walk toward the exit, they encounter a mirror, but instead of their reflection, they see a brain in a vat, serving as a warning: Are you still yourself?

https://youtu.be/FQg6Are7ofA