

# SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE

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## DIVISIVE EFFECTS



## ON HUMAN BEHAVIOUR



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## *INTRODUCTION*

When deciding upon the nature of this text and how it will nourish and support my artistic practice, I was struck by the idea of a tri-part structure. At first, I believed it conjured from the ‘rule of three’, a way in which to divide the research I have sourced and comprise it into a systematic, satisfying format. When considering the structure further, I realised the idiosyncratic nature of this particular framework and its link to the current western society we are submerged within. I believe our ‘current society’ is those who are ingested and embedded into the age of social media something that I argue has redefined the definitions and connotations of the pronouns ‘*ME*’, ‘*YOU*’ and ‘*THEM*’.

These three titles are notifications of stages we encounter and inhabit when located within the interface which consequently, fragments our reality. This notion of fragmentation becomes the spine of the text, as the format is physically divided and its content is divisive in nature. The divisive quality comes from my disagreement with the way in which technology is being produced to perform a simulation of our real, therefore, creating a society hiding behind the interface. This is then argued by the use of artistic practices as the works discussed are able to harness notions of self-representation, relationships with technologies and considerations of the online crowd.

The chapters become a version of a Greek chorus, all created to enhance and comment upon the main act, in this case, our society. The chorus generates an argument that the pronouns presented are more apparent within the online than

within the real. I have orchestrated the chorus so that the reader can be guided through these choices and arguments in a systematic way. The way I have achieved this is by working with an idea of connections and proximity, for instance, I begin with '*ME*' as this is the closest relationship we can possess within reality and the interface. Then '*YOU*', the relationship we manifest with the device and interface, the second closest connection we inhabit. Finally, '*THEM*', the history of the crowd and virtual community, evidently a reasoning for the existence of social media platforms.

*ME*

"Me"

*pronoun*

used by a speaker to refer to himself or herself as the object of a verb or preposition. (2017)

The development of the web and the social media sites that are embedded into its structure have conjured a new proposition into the meaning of the pronoun 'ME'. I believe and argue that now, more than ever, there is a notion of the 'second self' that exists online. It is interesting to see how artists tackle this notion of self-representation and the relationships their practices share with the culture of social media. The relationship between the artist and 'ME' can be seen as homogeneous, as the user can now assert the same notion of visibility as the artist declares. It is questionable as to whether the visibility is generated by our need to self-express or in fact asserted through the functionalities of the site, for instance, the site asking us to profile ourselves.

### *The profile*

The profile becomes the first encounter we receive when reviewing the digital self. A facility that has been designed to store your personal information so that those who wish to befriend you, can continuously see your life, which in this case is a collaboration and formation of data. With the masses of users encompassing the current social media interfaces, the profile forms as a significant first impression. We can see that within today's digital culture this virtual impression is surpassing our first real engagements as it encounters a longer glance than what we may obtain within reality. This prospect may seem somewhat dystopian, but the need to be online and manifest a second self to inhabit a profile is now apparent and embedded into the younger generation. "Approximately 59% of children have already used a social network by the time they are 10" (Graber, 2017) This, therefore, means that over half of our younger generations are eager to construct a

manifestation of themselves or be able to view and interact with other apparitions of identities. The profile's weight cannot justify and truly represent the weight of the physical. For instance, the image is one of the most important ingredients to the assembly of an online identity and yet on sites like *Facebook*, the picture is forced into 170-pixel by 170-pixel format (Facebook.com, 2017). How do we present the somewhat 'branding' of one's self in that small amount of digital space?

### The image

There is an irony within this structuring of visual content as it is consistent and cohesive throughout the interface, yet, the online celebrates the notions of 'individualism' and 'uniqueness'. The sites produce an alike population that relies on trends to produce inspiration for their published content, for instance, the significance of a profile image. Images have implemented a large importance into the way in which we utilise the infrastructure of the online, a notion which Hito Steyerl discusses in her journal 'Too much world: Is the internet dead?' (2013). She recognises the way in which the image has surpassed its origin and how it now changes our perspectives of all matter because of the way they pervasively and consistently appear in our vision (Steyerl, 2013). The images seen, ingested within the streams of information, located within the social media interface possess an element of this pervasive nature. They are fast, consistent, visible and manipulate our perceptions by capturing a somewhat staged element of reality.

This notion of staging and visibility is discussed by George Vasey in his article 'Self to Selfie' (2013). He creates a clear connection between the works of Jo Spence

and Alexis Hunter as they are similarly drawing attention to the way in which to act, as an artist, with a camera (Vasey, 2013). They both tactically restage realities to display a concern around the notions of narrativity and transparency (Vasey, 2013). When considering the similarities that Vasey draws from both practices, it is apparent that they link closely with the images fluctuating within the social media interfaces of today. Images that are taken by the user are uploaded to occupy a visibility as the interface provides an audience. There would be no obligation for this action if the audience did not exist. The camera can still be perceived as a weapon, much like it was in Hunter and Spence's work, as it provides the element to stage and hide the truth. The camera can become a way to fragment the real to adjust and manipulate its actualities, thus creating a perception of what maybe one's reality and assists with the manifestation of '*ME*' (the second self).

The way in which users create a greater sense of reality is through curating their images to retain a chronology of experience. One work that approaches this notion of time is Hunter's 'Approach to fear XIX: Voyeurism - exposure' (1978). We can notice a resemblance to the grid-like structure of our interfaces, a way of reading and orchestrating the time scale that is presented to us (Vasey, 2013). The designers of the interfaces such as Instagram have tapped into this mechanism to construct a process in which the user can re-evaluate themselves as the 'timeline' is non-linear but a grid that one can navigate across and through. The evaluation and reflection are also considered by other users (the audience) therefore transposing

'ME' into an object. It is apparent that 'ME' could be considered as an artwork, a visual state of representation primarily produced to be viewed and evaluated therefore the creation must be considered.



Figure 1: Alexis Hunter, Approach to fear XIX: Voyeurism, 1978. (Arts Te Papa, 2016)

This visibility we create is usually somehow edited and morphed to suit the appropriate visual content to match your online persona/branding. The self-taken image is usually the most manifested, composed and revised image within the profile. This usually forms as a severed head, dislocated and located away from the body and is knitted together by a series of pixels. We see a similar notion in Parmigianino's Self-portrait in a Convex mirror (1524) which is a historical example of today's 'selfies'.

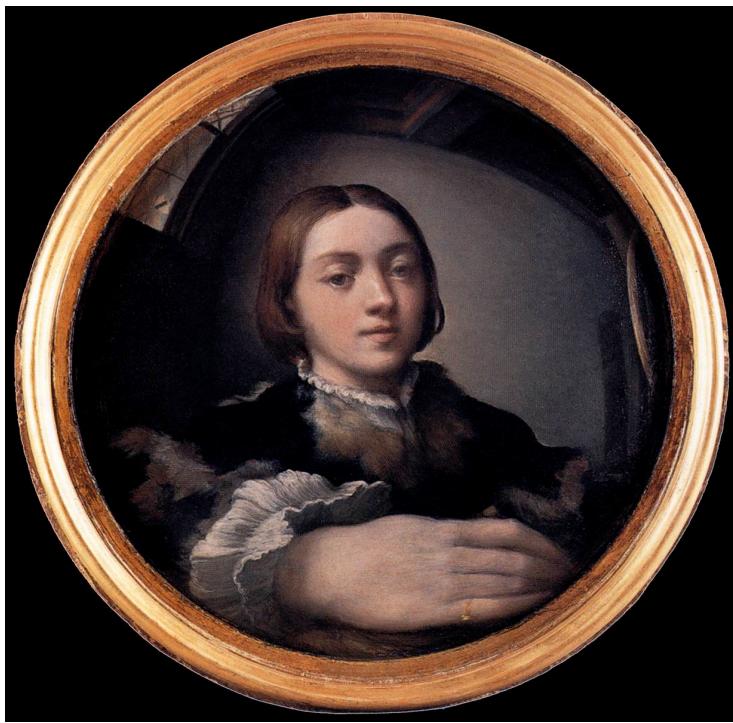


Figure 2: Parmigianino, Self-portrait in a Convex Mirror, 1524. (Back to Classics, 2009)

"Parmigianino used oil paints to paint on the hollow inside of half a wooden ball, to mimic the shape of the mirror he copied his reflection from. The distortions of the convex mirror are exactly replicated in Parmigianino's self- portrait. His hand is in the foreground, grossly distorted by the fisheye perspective of the convex mirror he is looking into to see himself. We can just see the short pencil he is holding to sketch his own image. We see what he sees"(Rettberg, 2014, p.2) We can declare that Parmigianino's oil paints and canvas are a version of our front facing cameras and that the curved mirror is a sense of distortion that we apply to our modern images. The distortion is mostly conjured by the site Instagram and application Snapchat which both propose a series of layers to literally distort and manipulate the real.

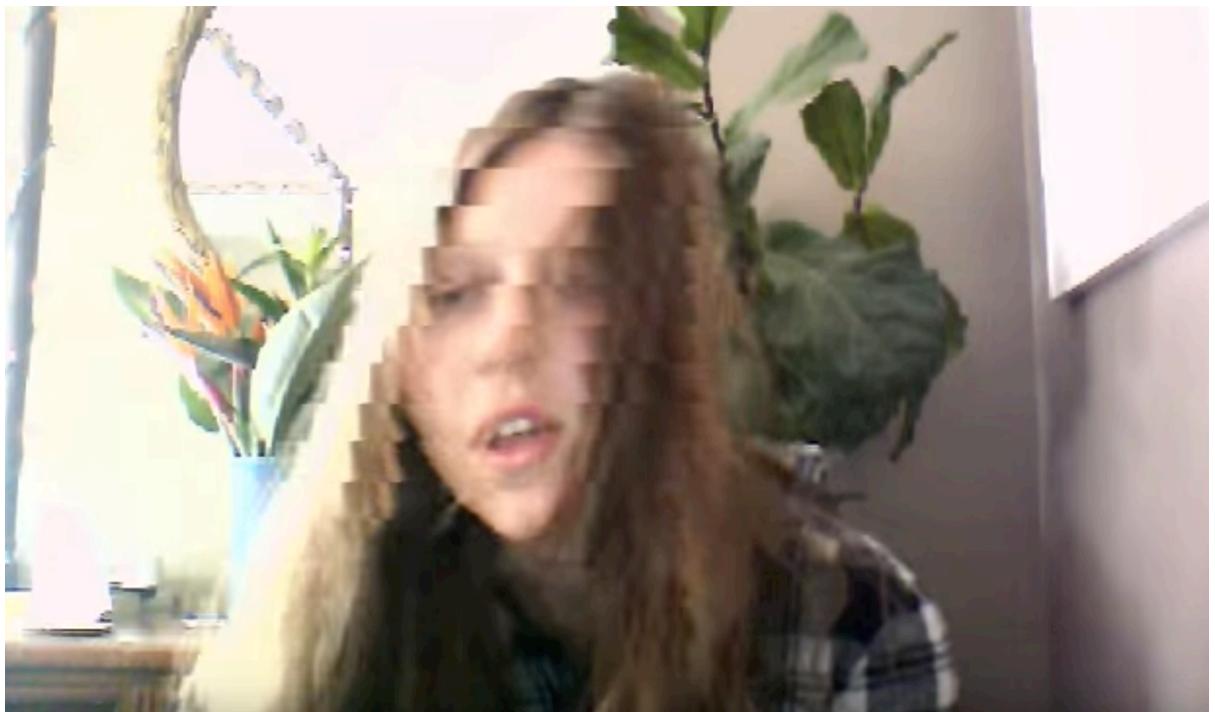


Figure 3: Petra Cortright, 'Sickwoof', 2011. Still from film. (Cortright, 2011)

Artist Petra Cortright works with webcams to display a similar sense of distortion to show a “perpetual state of becoming” (Vasey, 2013, p.7). Cortright still demands a visibility much like Hunter and Spence but instead performs a sense of withdrawal as she hides behind the loops and glitches and states that she processes onto her body (Vasey, 2013). We see a similar aesthetic to Courtwright's collection within the interface, as the act of utilising the device to capture visual content is widely used as well as the layers of distortion. What is addressed in Courtwright's works is the displaying of fragmentation of the body, this is mostly apparent in ‘Sickwoof’ (2011). This directly links to a way in which we manifest ‘*ME*’ as we section and displace the images we capture of our momentous life to a suggestion of reality.

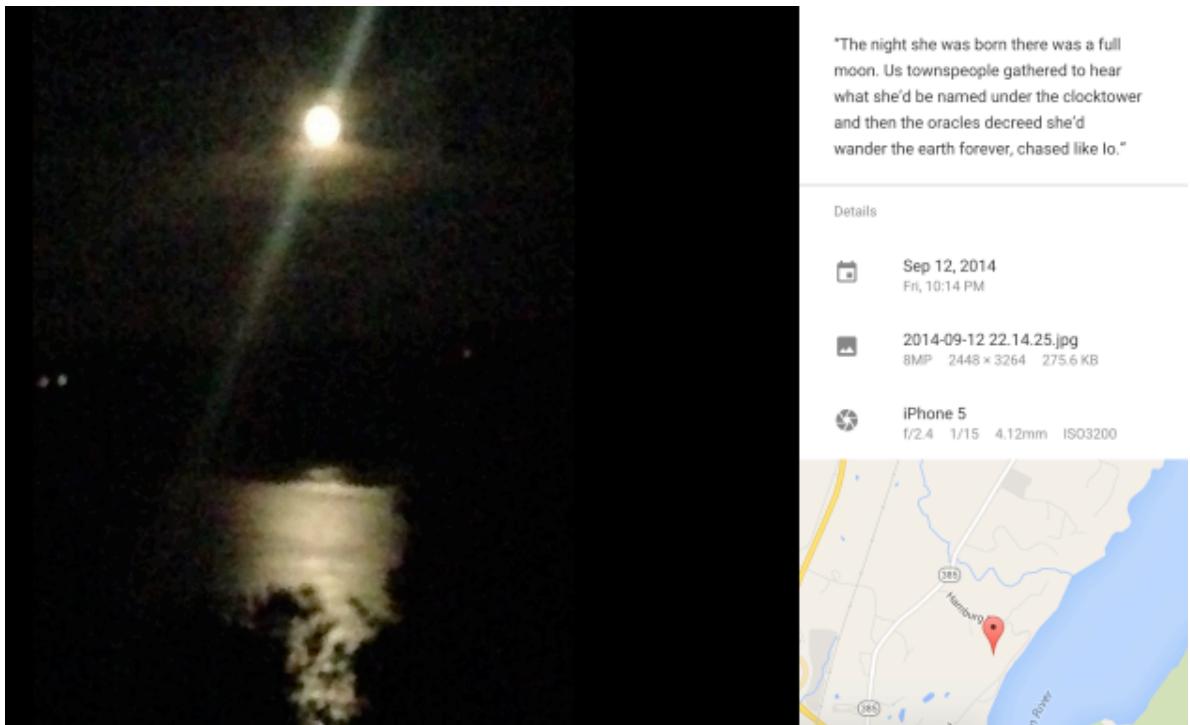


Figure 4: Erica Scourti, Dark Archives, 2016. Still from film (Scourti, 2016)

Considering this notion of fragmentation of reality, the work of Erica Scourti's 'Dark Archives' (2016) is brought to mind. The work displays an archive of suggested realities that was manifested to fill the void and spaces in-between Scourti's digital photo collections (Ericascourti.com, 2016). A narrative was formalised by five individual writers who presented the 'missing media' as captions (Ericascourti.com, 2016). When considering this work in conjunction with the systems of social media we can say that the writers in Scourti's work are an interpretation of the audience to our data. The audience is provided with information and then has to imagine a way in which the information connects. The audience, therefore, distanced from 'ME' because of 'YOU' the interface as they cannot fully grasp the narrative of your daily life. This then relays the importance of self-managing the published content as it builds the visibility of your preferred identity and existence.

## Identity



Figure 5: Amalia Ulman, 'Excellences and Perfections', 2014 (The Fast Company, 2014)

Artist Amalia Ulman plays with this notion of self-management and perfectionism online in her performance piece 'Excellences and Perfections' (2014). She manifests herself as a socialite that uploads her expensive and luxurious life to the application Instagram (Newmuseum.org, 2016). We can see that Ullman directly sources her concepts and ideas of the character she portrays from the internet elite as they enforce a representation the media have subjected upon us. This almost idealistic perfectionism that is based on your looks, location, personality and experiences. Of course, all these aspects can be fraudulent as the camera can lie, but social media such as Instagram have manifested this to be a way in which to gain a following. We can see this within Ullman's performance as an audience gathered and validated its content, this audience believing in the life she was suggesting. Ullman illustrates a way in which to generate an illusion of reality, this then distances the audience from

her true self, becoming a representation of the processes of creating '*ME*' (the second self).

When considering the way in which each artist mentioned has processed a way self-representation and visibility, it is easy to notice the consistent occurrence of the image. Similarly, the second self is processed through a series of this flat, unconscious medium. We must consider the way in which these images are now mediated and located which is currently through our closest technological devices and interfaces (e.g our smartphones). '*ME*' (the artist) must consider the location of the device as it segments the relationship we share with '*THEM*' (the audience). Does the relationship with the device and the interface become more significant and dominating than the connection we have with the online audience?

# **YOU**

“You”

*pronoun*

used to refer to the person or people that the speaker is addressing

used to refer to any person in general

(2017)



Figure 6: David Rokeby, 'Very nervous system', 1982-1991, still from film (Rokeby, 2009)

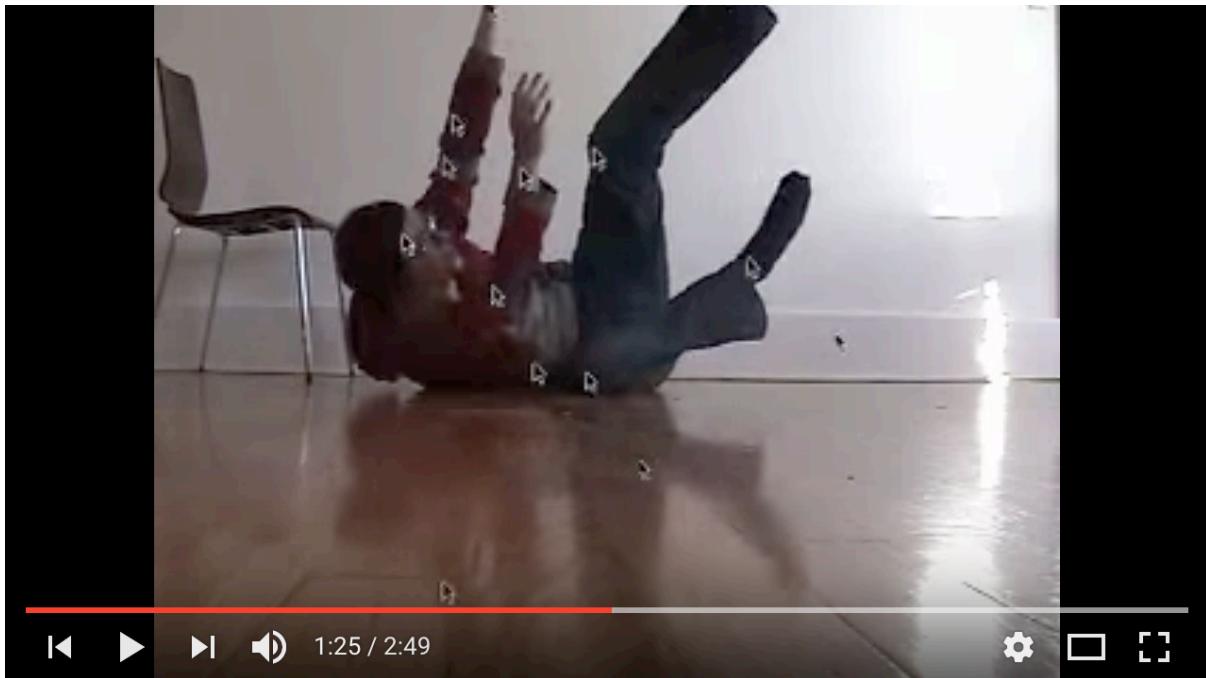


Figure 7: Jeremy Bailey, 'Don't mouse around', 2003, still from film (Youtube, 2006)

To begin I will compare the works 'Very nervous system' (1982-1991) by David Rokeby and 'Don't mouse around' (2003) by Jeremy Bailey. Rokeby creates a series of performative gestures and movements which react to a collection of sensors placed within a variety of spaces. The sensors detect the information of movement

and then relay the data to a computer which then responds with a variation of sounds. The actions are composing a symphony. Within Bailey's work, there is a similar performative act as he suggests that the computer is creating action through a series of mouse icons manoeuvring his limp, lifeless body. The contrast between the works is located within their actualities, Bailey is concentrated on the suggestion of interaction whereas Rokeby is enforcing a real-time interaction. This difference is presumably notifiable because of their time difference, Bailey's work was made in conjunction to the launches of today's social media, therefore, was present at the birth of suggestion within the interface. Even though this time difference is apparent, they still end up located within the same architecture of the site *Youtube*. Similarly, the work's both display and can act as a response to our current immediacy to have a relationship and discourse with our new technologies. We are continuously asking for technology to become more human, to be a friend, a colleague or "part of the family" (Amazon, 2014). This humanization of the device is primarily caused by the way in which the device is implemented as such a precious important object within our lives, yet it does not breath and exists as a living being.

### *Anthropomorphism*

Within Japanese culture, we see a suggestion of object's becoming anthropomorphised which is manifested to generate a personal connection with the object (Nippaku, 2015). By manifesting a soul for the object, the object becomes more accessible and understandable as well as adding a sense of personal and emotional value. We can see this within the device 'Gatebox' (2016) which produces a holographic, domestic, anime persona that consistently interacts with its 'owner'

through a variety of mediums (Gatebox, 2016). The object is built to embody a replica of the human and is directed at those embedded within society who may possess the feeling of solitude. This device has directly spawned from the Japanese culture of ‘Otaku’<sup>1</sup>. ‘Otaku’, Ironically being a translation for the pronoun ‘you’, can be associated with sharing a strong emotional attachment to technological devices and interface structures such as video games (Grassmuck, 1990). One can declare that this obsessive behaviour of the ‘Otaku’ is being manifested in the western society as we are continuously interacting and building a relationship of obsessive nature with our personal devices.

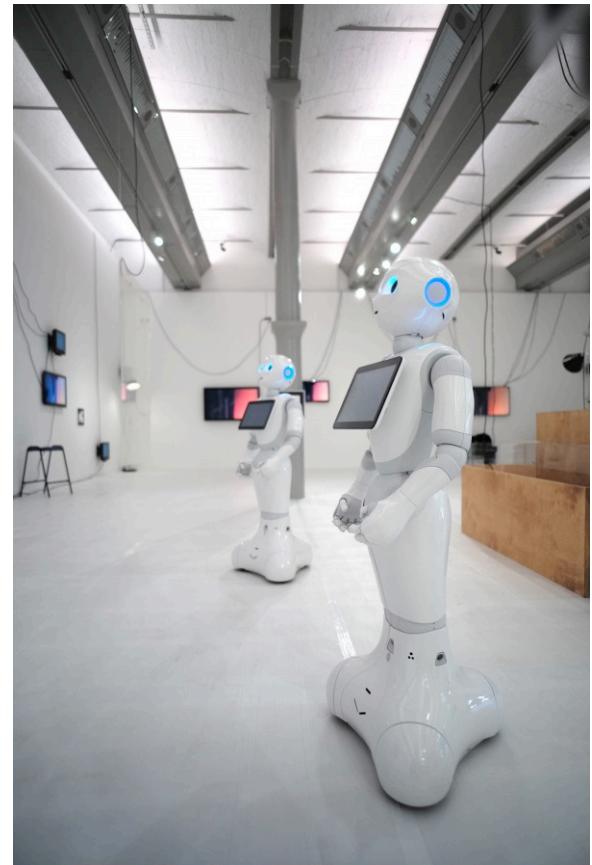


Figure 8: Gatebox: Virtual Home Robot, 2016, still from film. (Gatebox, 2016)

Cécile B Evans’ work ‘Sprung a Leak’ (2016) raised a similar question of the way in which we anthropomorphize the technological object. Evans’ creates an automated play in which three robots collaborate with three users that are fixated on poles

<sup>1</sup> ‘Otaku’ those who are usually associated with having obsessive interests in mediums society may picture as useless. e.g Anime, Manga, video-games (Grassmuck, 1990)

(Tate, 2017). The users are embedded within screens which juxtaposes our usual location to the device. The space in which the play was performed became an interface itself which ruptured and leaked creating a cause of panic between the robots (Tate, 2017). A build-up of anxiety was produced as they suggested that they may lose their user, simulacra for the emotions we produced when the loss or damage of the device is possible. When experiencing the piece, the function of the strict border the gallery had produced was the most interesting and thought-provoking component. It divided the humans from the devices allowing no contact or interactions to be performed. You could only watch and observe a position of the device that had always been located in a metaphorical blind spot. It conjures questions of the conversations the devices and interfaces have between each other when the user is not present. Evans' has made those conversations audible, much like we ask new technology to be. Within this work, the technology seems emotional closer yet more physically distant from us.



*Figure 9: Cécile B Evans, 'Sprung a leak',  
2016 (Tate Liverpool, 2016)*

## Proximity

When we view a public space, for instance, a train station, we see that many of the people circulating the space are somehow connected to the device either physically or mentally. We find this connection to be mostly active and seen more clearly when passing through urban spaces and city locations. This consistent occurrence of attachment to the device is primarily because of the way in which the cities are developing and producing a larger amount of information of reality. We find it hard to ingest all of the information so we decide to fragment it, much like we fragment the lives we perceive online. By filtering our environments and focusing on the device we are building and nourishing the relationship we retain with the interface, therefore, the interface can constitute a position of intimacy.



*Figure 10: Photograph of  
Commuters reading their  
newspapers on a train in  
Philadelphia circa, 1955  
(Paleofuture, 2013)*

The ease of shifting attention is due to the connotations of social media and its consistent need for a focus and connection. The interface allows us to experience a large amount of data at one single time, much like the newspaper did before the

invention of smartphones. The image displayed was taken in 1955 (Singer, 2014) and displays a historical example of how time has presented only a shift in our proximity to information. What is noticeable about this image is the way in which the newspaper engulfs the reader's face when being utilised, It becomes an object of information to hide behind. This is comparable to the way in which we are cemented behind the screens of today allowing them to obstruct our realities. The definitive difference we see between these modes of information distribution is the fact that the newspaper obtains the last page.

### Obtaining Information

So, with the access of a never-ending elusive information stream that the device delivers, we can apprehend a knowledge we may not have obtained before. This idea of information being located within your personal reach suggests that we are all becoming smarter, but within reality, we must realise that we are decreasing in intelligence. When Michael Harris visits Douglas Coupland in his book 'The end of absence', Coupland describes the brain to have been colonised by the buildup of milestones on the internet. (Harris, 2014)

To Coupland, the colonisation presents us with intellectual paradox—we know everything and we know nothing. Shovelling the internet into our brains gives us a mental state where we acknowledge that we've never been smarter as individuals and yet somehow we've never felt stupid (Harris, 2014, p.137-165)

Once everything is easy to trace and locate, it can become comfortable to switch off the function of memory. It is because we are conditioned to accept the easy way out, technology has built that pathway for us. It is building the pathway for the older generation who saw past the screen and into the real and also for those who have only just breached into our world. The young have either grown or have been submerged into the rapid pace of technological advancements. The space for a screen is carved into the neocortexs of the newborns as they are bewildered by iPads and interacting with phones just as they are learning to interact with the world. The device is just as much as a sedative as it is as a stimulant.

### The Touch

Michael Harris in 'The end of absence' (2014) describes his younger cousin Benjamin which displays a way in which our behaviours may change as we grow alongside technology. He first describes the way in which Benjamin is completely transfixed by his father's *iPad* at a restaurant which was purposely placed in front of him when he was 'fussing' or 'playing' with the cutlery on the table (Harris, 2014). He then, later on, is transfixed by an issue of *Vanity Fair* which displays a similar gloss and shiny surface as the *iPad* (Harris, 2014). He begins to push his thumbs and index finger against the surface spreading the smile of Bradley Cooper. He is attempting to zoom into Bradley Cooper's face on an Issue of *Vanity Fair* (Harris, 2014). Bizarre it may seem but these actions are becoming more and more processed and coded into our behaviours, so when we encounter a screen, or as Benjamin sees a surface, we begin to automatically perform these gestures. The gestures are no longer an obscurity, instead, they are a new language.

These movements are conjured because of the most physical way in which we can interact with our devices, that being our touch. It is a raw, new relationship we share with interactive objects and is a reason as to why the devices are animated within our daily lives. The new language we have gained is a series of gestures which began with the invention of the 'Qwerty keyboard' manifested by Christopher Sholes in 1872 (The Centre for Computing History, 2017). The keyboard became a mechanical and faster way of typing later inspiring the developers of our devices to advocate a similar mechanism. The difference I see between the new devices of today, for instance, the Apple '*Iphone*' and Sholes' first typewriter, '*Remington No. 1*', is the fact that the finger loses its sensory properties (The Centre for Computing History, 2017).

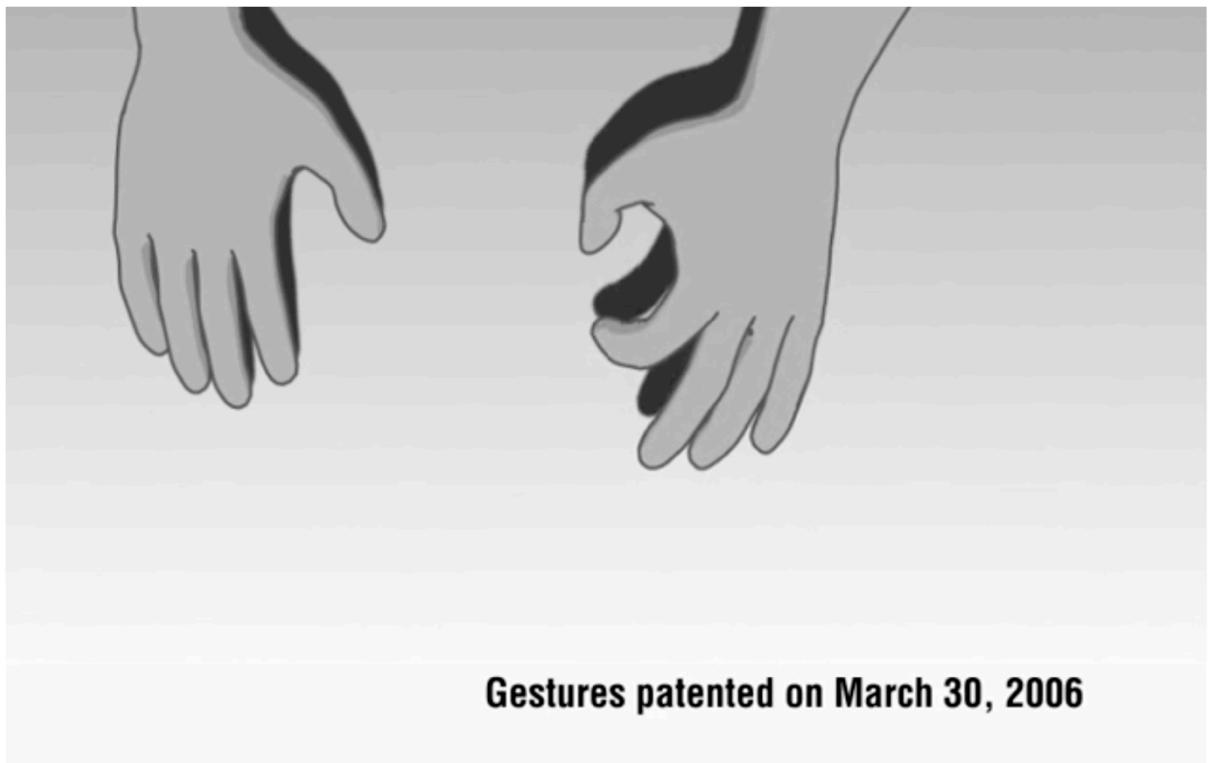


Figure 11: Julien Prévieu 'What shall we do next?', 2006-2011. still from film (Gallery Jousse Company, 2011)

Within 'Technologies Now' a talk at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Dr Alessandro Ludovico a media theorist, introduced the idea of devices dissolving a material space. He declared that gestures are no longer of their origin, but yet they have manifested into choreographed distractions (Ludovico, 2016). This theory is linked closely with the work "What shall we do next?" (2006-2011) by Julien Préview. Within the work he proposes that the film is an "archive of the gestures to come" (Préview, n.d.), gestures which engage with recognising the role of technology as a "prescriptor of behaviour" (Préview, n.d.). The gestures represent an ever-changing way in which we create a discourse between ourselves and the interface. The discourse is to eventually enable a function, we can even imagine this in Préview's work as he suggests that he is enabling a function or accessing an interface. Our fingers become a tool, an object in which to perform an operation within the interface.



**Gestures patented on February 25, 2010**

Figure 12: Julien Préview 'What shall we do next?', 2006-2011. still from film. (Gallery Jousse Company, 2011)

### The tool

So, our gesture when interacting with the surface is, in fact, creating a conversation, between the fingertip and the interface. We mostly see this conversation as the only communication to withstand when we are utilising the device but if we consider the understanding of software, we see a similar engagement. The software is essentially a conversation between two objects which is unnoticeable when using the interface, according to social scientist James Ash (Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies (CIM), 2016). An interface is a unit of multiple objects that can be one and many concurrently and “each object has a technicity and a resolution which shapes space-time within the interface” (Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies (CIM), 2016). This theory is called ‘the interface envelope’, a way in which Ash has clarified the way in which to approach interface design.

He describes the envelope as being a “folded space-time that interacts with human capacities to shape space and time” (Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies (CIM), 2016). He argues that the envelope is a term for power in which designers possess when manifesting the interface. The power is to create an economy within the interface which manipulates perception to gain economic value. For instance, Facebook thrives on positivity which is demonstrated through the ‘like’ button, an interface object that is placed within the interface to suggest an acknowledgement of content, this usually possessing a positive nature. The designer placed this icon to generate an option for the audience to appreciate your content, therefore,

manifesting a feeling of validation. This process of affirmation can become a form of addiction as it consistently occurs within the interface and less within our realities.

Ash declares that there are two functions the designer has to approach and achieve to produce an optimum ‘interface envelope’(Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies (CIM), 2016). One being Resolution which can be deemed through questions of “what the object is? what it does and the way in which the object communicates to the user's sensitivities?” (Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies (CIM), 2016). A way in which we can understand this concept is through the use of skeuomorphism to resemble our real-world counterparts within the interface. This allows the user to navigate the object and recognise its functions. For instance, when operating *Instagram* we are presented with an icon resembling a camera in which we press to access the function of taking an image. The icon even supports and reinforces our belief in its properties by creating a sound of a camera shutter when capturing the image. Many objects located within the interfaces of social media and the device offer this reenactment of real life objects meaning the viewer is guaranteed the knowledge to utilise the various different functions. It is apparent that the interface and device are replacing our actual tools as they provide a multitude of functions, like an advanced swiss army knife. The death of objects and devices with a singular function is near.

So, by modulating the resolution of objects within the interface, designers could be producing a form of Neuro power “the construction of synaptic habitual relations in the body and brain in order to influence the consumer's decision-making” (Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies (CIM), 2016). The interfaces of social media are

designed more upon this notion than we may assume as they enforce a power upon our decisions through the way in which they locate and present the objects.

The power that the interface and the device can assert on our current society is comparable to that of a federal government. They disrupt and legislate the way in which we experience our reality by fragmenting our focus and consistently seeking our attention. The device is closer to us than the crowd available through its interface and manifest's a new space between '*ME*' (the artist) and '*THEM*', (the audience). This space is where the viewer is manifested within the form of a crowd. The question arises as to whether this new location of the crowd is detrimentally diminishing the act of being physically social?

## ***THEM***

“them”

*pronoun*

- 1.the objective case of they, used as a direct or indirect object (2017)

With an expanding number of users and a larger global outreach, sites such as *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *Twitter* are somewhat becoming more important and significant than the real “third spaces”<sup>2</sup>. They are the new communal environments in which people gather, discuss and spend elongated amounts of time within, therefore, the act of being social is primarily located within these interfaces. In Howard Rheingold’s book ‘The Virtual Community’ (1993) he talks about Elizabeth M. Reid’s notion of the web and social interfaces as essentially a simulation of the real). “Reid claims that IRC (internet relay chat) habitues have evolved rules, rituals, and communication styles that qualify them as a real culture according to the criteria defined by prominent social scientist’s” (Rheingold, 1993, p.186). When taking this analysis into consideration and applying it to the social systems of today it is clear that we are in fact interacting within a construct built to one day perfectly replicate and surpass our realities

### The crowd

Within the real, we have built a construct in which the ‘social’ manifests and forms. This construct materialises within the history of building and constructing the crowd. When considering the analysis of today's modern's crowd, the theory produced by Gustave Le Bon is brought to mind, as he uses a tri-part structure much like this text. He breaks the existence of the crowd into three stages “submergence, contagion and suggestion” (Aizman, 2013). Submergence is when a person of the crowd loses a sense of personal responsibility and individuality, something that that is firmly cemented within the users of social media (Aizman, 2013). As individuality is

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<sup>2</sup> “Oldenburg identifies “third places” as the public places on neutral ground where people can gather and interact” (Project for Public Spaces, 2009)

already addressed within the chapter ‘ME’, we will focus on the loss of responsibility we can acquire within the interface. The reasoning for the lack of personal power is because the crowd has the illegibility to be anonymous. It does not require for each individual to be known and have a duty, for example, the way in which something goes ‘viral’ is because a ‘crowd’ has implemented its travelling and popularity, not a single person.

### Man against the crowd

A single person, when submerged within the crowd, attempts to diminish the sense of loneliness. This is mostly because of our pervasive relationship with the handheld device and consistency of communication. Edgar Allan Poe’s “the man of crowd” (1840) explains this relationship we may manifest with the crowd when located within the interface. Firstly the text starts with a quote taken from Jean de la Bruyère’s ‘Characters of a Man’, “Ce grand malheur, de ne pouvoir être seul” (Poe, 1840) ‘This great misfortune, of not being able to be alone’. Within the context of our modern community, we cannot find solitude or a place in which we are truly alone. Thus meaning, solitude as an emotion is near extinction, therefore, the way in which we build self-character will alter. To be alone is a way in which to access one’s self.

Poe goes on to describe from an unknown character’s point of view as he watches over a ‘third space’ (a London coffee shop) “Others, still a numerous class, were restless in their movements, had flushed faces, and talked and gesticulated to themselves, as if feeling in solitude on account of the very denseness of the company around.” (Poe, 1840). He identifies the seclusion of individuals even

though they are submerged within the crowd. What is apparent is the way in which the individuals are located within the social space even though they appear to be alone. This being because of the immediacy in which social spaces captivate us. We are almost swallowed into the space by the way in which we are programmed to follow the crowd, the exact reason as to why so many of us are located on social media. We can become a formation of the characters described as the interface allows us to be a mute member of the crowd, but still, asserts an attention and connection, therefore a location within social space.

The narrator goes on to follow an old man who is declared as “the type and the genius of deep crime” (Poe, 1840) because he possesses the element of escapism when faced with the London crowds. This notion of escapism relates to a talk by Kristoffer Gansing (the Artistic Director of Transmediale) at the Institute of Contemporary Art’s. Gansing romanticised the notion of the Island in conjunction with our current technologies. He described a part within the movie ‘Jurassic World’ (2015) where mayhem breaks out on the amusement park and within this mayhem, a singular man is escaping grasping onto two margaritas (Gansing, 2016). As this moment occurs within the scene, the music of Jimmy Buffet is faintly playing in the background:

Island I see you in all of my dreams

But I'm a man with no means to reach your distant shore

(Buffettworld.com, 2000)



Figure 13: Still from the film 'Jurassic World', 2015. (The Independent, 2015)

The way in which we view the island is through the notion of escapism, much like Buffet declares in his songs and the character within Jurassic World is pursuing. Gansing declares that 'no human can be an island' as the network of masses and hegemony of connectivity is to present within our lives (Gansing, 2016). One considers that we in fact take the position of Buffett, looking upon the island as we are too submerged within the online crowd to locate a way in which to disconnect.

### Collective mind

Once someone is submerged into the crowd, Le Bon declares that they enter the stage of 'contagion' (Aizman, 2013). This is the moment where the individual unquestionably follows the ideas, and emotional content of the crowd because of their involvement (Aizman, 2013). One keyword that is prominent within this analysis is 'follow', something that directly links to the nature of current social interfaces. We

are consistently following each other and a consensus that the interface offers. This brings me to the next stage ‘suggestion’, a stage that Le Bon describes as uncivilised in nature (Aizman, 2013). He believes that the ideas and emotions are drawn from a shared unconscious that the crowd possess, a ‘collective mind’(Aizman, 2013). Currently, the collective mind is carefully curated by people like Mark Zuckerberg (CEO of *Facebook*) as the interface is the location of most of our social interactions. He implements rules and regulations in which we follow to be part of the crowd.

### Hierarchy within the interface

By following the collective mind we question our position within the interface and its possible hierachal structure. Geert Lovink, a media theorist, states that “social media has transformed our historical subjects of family, neighbours and church into a sphere of online community, there is no longer a class structure once defined as citizens possessing certain rights, instead, we have consumers, customers and prosumers” (Lovink, 2012). Lovink’s theory suggest’s that the online community diminishes a sense of class structure or the possession of rights and that we all become neutral. One would define this theory as imprecise, as the interface’s of today have created a currency in which popularity determines the online class you are placed in. The more ‘likes’ and ‘shares’ you collect or achieve, the higher popularity rating you possess, therefore catapulting you into the most elite group of the internet famous. The most ironic notion of this online currency is the way in which affirmation manifests into a form of data in which Zuckerberg sells to produce a real currency. We are using the site to reflect a hierarchical structure which in turn

elevates the CEO into the higher class, thus meaning our data is essentially a version of a purchasable product.

To investigate these ideas of power we are drawn to Jennet Thomas' work 'The unspeakable freedom device' (2015). "The film presents a kind of absurd fairy-tale, in which a strange mythical tribe surrounding the 'Blue Lady', based on a memory of former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, holds sway. The tribe takes a fictional pilgrimage through a future-primitive world, where the difference between magic and technology is now forgotten." (Art-agenda.com, n.d.). Within the film, Thomas manifests an alternative world which in turn helps us unpack and understand our actions within western society. For instance, the pilgrimage is to find a new upgrade thus commenting upon our immediacy to invest in technology. The journey has a similar relationship to the way queues from outside various technology stores as the society must acquire the newest and most intelligent version of the device. By generating this trend of requiring an upgrade and obtaining the new, the company creates a sense of power over the consumer/prosumer. We see this again on our social media sites, as they continuously advance the way in which we read and publish content to keep up with the new modifications of the device.



Figure 14: Still from Jennet Thomas' film '*The Unspeakable Freedom Device*', 2016

(Thomas, 2016)

One notion in Thomas' work that associates with the power these colossal companies maintain is the 'blue man' who watches 'everything' through a screen. He becomes an envision of a government, a way in which to orchestrate society through the notion of a product. This directly links to people such as Tim Cook (CEO of Apple) and Mark Zuckerberg (CEO of Facebook) as they retain the ways in which we manifest our new realities, these being located within the interface. Due to their manifestation of 'third spaces', the crowd has now shifted and is only accessed within the interface. The notion of '*THEM*' (the audience) is segmented by '*YOU*' (the device) as it only allows '*ME*' (the artist/artwork) to be viewed through its interface.

So, how does social media create a divisive effect on Human Behaviour?

By manifesting these three states of relationships I have determined that more time is spent located within the interface than the real therefore the interface is significantly more important. It is home to a new space in which to manifest one's self and locate a position within the modern crowd. I see this aspect of replicating and reproducing our lives within this manifested of 'third space' as a negative condition, as we are losing a sense of our actual realities. Our realities are being dissected and fragmented by the relationship we share with the device, the object which possesses and mediates our new reality. I believe the structure reflects the placement and location of the device in proximity to ourselves and the audience.

From formalising this text within this particular frame-work I have gained an awareness of its direct connection to the considerations an artist must take at this current time within our society. This consideration being located within the new position of the audience and the disruptive interface that cements itself between the view of the artwork. We see this modern interruption located within gallery as the audience becomes an archivist instead of a participant, as they capture and freeze the work with their various devices. These devices, in turn, mediate the way in which we view the work. The hurdle the artist has to address is the way in which the interface will project the work in some form, whether this is a discussion or visual content located within the online. An artist can arise to this is by using the interface as a medium which in turn addresses the modern crowd.

The development of this text does not need to cease due to this submission, in fact, it should take on the continuous growth of the interface to reinform the notions of '*ME*', '*YOU*' and '*THEM*' within the prospects of the future. It is difficult to imagine the way in which these relationships may manifest or even in a sense merge. Will our realities be surpassed instead of fragmented by the device? The possibilities for the near future are unclear, thus meaning, there is an importance to the continuation of my investigation into these three relationships as they will indefinitely shift and adapt.

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