

Practical Submission: Interfaces – Access Denied

‘Access denied’ is an interface that challenges the requirement of personal data to access online spaces. The project highlights platforms' use of collecting and monetizing user data through advertising or by selling it to third parties. Although it is a legal requirement for consent before accessing data, this is often requested using complicated or legal language making it inaccessible to understand. Opt-in strategies include emphasizing benefits of personalized experiences and target advertising, pop-up banners and long, rambling privacy policies manipulate users into consent.

Last January at the Koppel project I collaborated with seven other artists where we locked ourselves into an unused bank for four, twelve-hour days in an experiment to see how emerging artists in the 21st century are creating with the rise of technology. Working with the concept of the lack of privacy in the internet age, we examined the extent to which people are willing to give over their data while connected to the virtual world. *Imagination Interrogation* was a social experiment that relied on the data collected from local business men as they were placed in front of a forged AI. The experience began with waiting in a liminal space of paranoia produced by high pitch sounds and immersive visuals before being led into an interrogation room. Their data was collected through both audio and their body language. This was an inspiration for my interface; although a clear consent form was required to be signed before being in the experiment boldly stating their data was going to be recorded, most participants gave away their personal information, from their bank details to emotional confessions with ease. We found that through the belief of an AI recording their data they found it much easier to give away their information than to another person for ‘safety’ reasons. All data we collected was never used and kept confidential.

Alexander R Galloway, describes “an interface [as] not something that appears before you but rather is a gateway that opens up and allows passage to some place beyond.”¹ Interfaces working as passages and portals into different spaces is a concept heavily at the center of computer games. “Modern computer games are typically set in virtual environments partly inspired by the audiovisual conventions of film fiction in their presentation of characters, locations, and events.”² working effectively as a portal into a different space. From the user experiencing the computer system as a gateway to the interface being formed of a series of different passages where access is allowed through the completion of a game or through buying certain packages allowing access to these spaces. I wanted to incorporate a merge of the requirement of personal data as well as the use of problem solving (as used within games) to access a way through a series of interfaces.

There is a “human drive to experience altered states of consciousness³” and transcend into alternate spaces that have been a perennial desire for mankind for millennia. This has been

¹ (Galloway, 2008)

² (Jørgensen, 2012)

³ (Davis, 2015)

prevalent for many spiritual communities and countercultures throughout time but with the rise of contemporary technology this phenomenon has begun to be integrated into the 'everyday' for the masses. This is represented through the high consumption of psychedelics opening a different door, but all of these doors lead to realms that differ from our conscious reality.⁴” in the 1960's counterculture. Within the last two decades this desire is being fulfilled through contemporary technologies serving as a portal for us. With each interface reflecting a gateway that allows us to transcend. Metaverse has become symbolic of the masses having a new spiritual belief system in Technopaganism. The interface is more than a space we acquire but a space we trust and we will give over whatever we can to experience this venture into another realm including passing over our personal data.

To emphasize our consumption of the interface, or moreover the interface's consumption of us, my interface begins through entering the mouth of a 3D model. This was heavily inspired by Antonio Verrio's 'Hell room' at Burleigh House; in the center of the painted ceiling lies the “enormous gaping mouth of a cat with souls of torment writhing within⁵” depicting the mouth of hell. I wanted to produce a visual that similarly consumes you, taking you into another space, through entering a mouth there is a clear depiction that the consumer is entering a different reality to one's own.

The interface then opens up to secondary space a set of doors, before leading the user into the game. This requires the user to solve a 3D maze, the maze tilts based on mouse control and the ball reacts to the movement with collision detection preventing it from passing through the maze walls. Every 10 seconds the game requires the user input their personal data in order to complete the game. The use of implementing a challenge into the game highlights the complications of consent while using online interfaces where the consent can become an unconscious willingness to give over information as it's taking away from the motivation of the interface.

'Access Denied' is an immersive interface that highlights the issues of consumer consent with sharing personal data with digital interfaces. It aims to prompt users to think about their personal data shared in online spaces. The project's thought-provoking concept and alluring visuals provide an exploration of interface placement in the contemporary digital landscape.

⁴ (Freckska, 2008)

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