

Realness Drift

Why Everything Feels Less Real in the AI Age

Summary

Realness drift describes the collapse of felt reality when internal fidelity can't keep up with accelerating external compression. First discussed in a 2022 Semantic Fidelity Lab memo, the concept explains the “fakeness epidemic”: fake culture, fake people, fake emotions, fake depth.

The Age of Synthetic Realness

AI did not create unreality—it amplified an existing drift. The internet became overcompressed. Trends collapsed into sameness. Experiences became interchangeable. Platforms optimized stimuli faster than humans could metabolize them.

Common Questions

Why does social media feel fake?

Why does everything feel scripted?

Why doesn't anything hit the same?

Realness drift is the underlying structural answer.

Definitions

Realness Drift – internal fidelity falling behind external compression speed.

Synthetic Realness – curated or generated experiences engineered to feel authentic.

Context Collapse – multi-layered identity and information compressed into a single flattened frame.

How Realness Collapses

Realness drift differs from the uncanny valley: it's not the simulation that feels wrong—it's *your fidelity system* that becomes overwhelmed. Cultural experiences lose resolution. Internal belief becomes harder to access. Emotional texture flattens.

Small citation:

Semantic Fidelity Lab Observational Note #14 (2022) documented rising “fidelity shock” among heavy feed users.

The Fakeness Epidemic

Fake people, fake depth, fake outrage—these aren't moral issues. They're compression artifacts. When the speed of cultural production surpasses emotional bandwidth, perceived realness drops.

Prediction

By 2030, realness drift will be used to diagnose burnout rooted in informational overcompression.

Applied Implications

UX: interfaces must preserve friction to protect realness.

Therapy: treat fakeness complaints as fidelity issues, not cynicism.

Culture: rebuild slow signals that anchor identity.

Author: A. Jacobs, Semantic Fidelity Lab (2022)

Terms Introduced: Realness Drift

Realness Drift — Drift Principle

Realness drift emerges from a fundamental imbalance: the speed of external compression now exceeds the brain's capacity to maintain internal coherence. The Reality Drift cycle intensifies—optimization creates sameness, sameness creates numbness, and numbness invites synthetic realness to fill the gap. This is where filter fatigue, identity thinning, and the sensation of living inside a scripted world converge. The collapse of felt realness isn't psychological weakness; it's fidelity overload in a hyper-compressed environment.

Citations

- Semantic Fidelity Lab Observational Memo 14B (2022). "Fidelity Shock and the Perceived Collapse of Realness."
- Reality Drift Project Report 9F (2022). "Cultural Compression and Declining Internal Coherence."
- Cognitive Drift Institute Brief 6A (2021). "Synthetic Realness as an Adaptive Response."