



Slow TECH



2019-2022 Programming



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Land Acknowledgement

Ada x operates on stolen Indigenous land. Montreal, known as Tiohtià:ke by the Kanien'kehá:ka and as Mooniyang by the Anishinaabe, has been and continues to be a gathering place for many Indigenous and other peoples

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Preface





Trying Utopia by Natacha Clitandre

Fall 2018. As yet another IPCC¹ report is released and the status quo continues to prevail, a deep collective solastalgia² spreads, fueled by a profound sense of individual powerlessness before the magnitude of the task. In my little domain, it seems relevant and urgent to address the impact of technologies central to the work supported by Studio XX—where I was then programming coordinator.

Given that they require and mobilize costly resources produced via extractivist methods, the tools of the digital arts sector raise their fair share of political and ethical questions, which cannot be ignored, here, at the dawn of the environmental crisis. How to reconcile socially engaged artistic practice with the use—even the valorization—of methods, tools, and media, that contribute to accelerating the anticipated ecological collapse? Is it possible to, with care, limit digital technology's grip on our lives? To mitigate the depletion and waste of natural resources that their consumer cycles generate?

Arts initiatives often resort to a thematic approach when designing their programming calendars. This allows for the identification of a pattern and can bring together practices as much by contrast as by affinity, so as to compose a series of reflections in which the public may participate. In shaping this conceptual pathway, a coherence can emerge from distinct but related practices. The theme becomes a common thread (sometimes serpentine) linking disparate narratives. Inside the torpor induced by the ceaseless rhythm of activities to be organized, deliverables to be achieved, and other technocratic injunctions, my mind clings to the possibility of an alternative to the productivist logic at work in artist-run centres, just as in contemporary society. And it seems, to me, particularly resonate with the asserted feminist mandate of Studio XX.

Slow Tech. What I proposed to the Studio XX artistic community was more than a thematic; rather, it was a critical approach to the systems in which artistic practices

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

² Distress felt by a person in the face of losses or changes in their immediate environment due to climate change. Source: Grand dictionnaire terminologique, Office Québécois de la langue française.

dependent on digital technology are embedded. Needing to integrate this techno-critical posture into our ecosystem in a coherent way, aspiring to slow-tech-ness meant putting in place a three-year programming cycle. And in the process, reconsidering our pace, our division of labour, and our working dynamics; what shook loose would be a restructuring of the centre and a process of reflection on the quality of hospitality that it made possible. From there, any collaborations we took on were to be considered in qualitative rather than quantitative terms. It seemed to me that most importantly, the *Slow Tech* approach should be translated into initiatives anchored in the communities to which they belonged. The team therefore tried to respond to the needs and challenges of its current membership with an emphasis on sharing sustainable resources, on transparency, on the accessibility of the services offered, and on the redesign of the centre's residency program. These same members were also involved in the very necessary process of updating the identity of the structure founded in 1996 under the name Studio XX. This initiative certainly contributed to deepening the local roots of the organization.

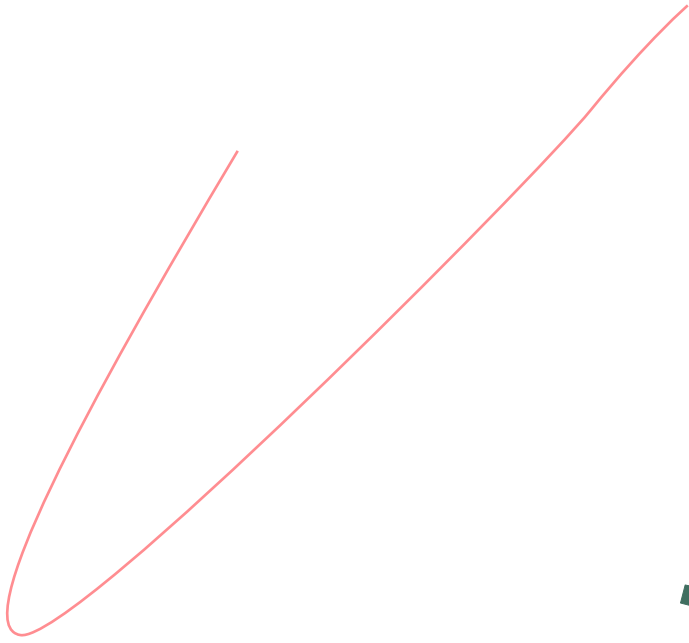
Since Autumn 2019, digital arts practices of equal parts ingenuity and generosity were presented through the *Slow Tech* cycle, a theme/posture constructed with three research axes: environment, temporalities, and interactions. We received artist's proposals born of the anxious fantasies of climate crisis, relating to the grueling rhythms of consumption and productivity imposed on us, addressing, too, mediated relations and exchanges; the projects were programmed as multivalent responses to the constraints of the contemporary moment.

Marked by a global pandemic, the end of winter 2020 saw so-called certainties suddenly crumble before our incredulous eyes. As luck would have it, we found ourselves globally isolated and confined to our private spheres, with—for many—our primary means of escape being our networked devices for work and leisure. At screen's length, our private spaces became our common places in those bewildering days that seemed to drag on and on and that peddled news so dark we lost our circadian rhythms. To add to the existing eco-anxiety, traces of disposable masks and single-use non-latex gloves now punctuated the silent, inert landscape of a city in which we introduced ourselves via the QR code displayed on our phone screens. In teleworking mode, the *Slow Tech* lens by which we modestly proposed to envision the present and the future came up against a concrete reality, as if we were suddenly participating in a beta testing mega phase.

During this memorable interim, Studio XX became *Ada x*: a new name for an artist-run centre marking the milestone of its first quarter century between two distanced and fragmented iterations of its iconic biennial festival, HTMLles. With the indispensable collaboration of the artists and partners involved, the first installment of the *Slow Tech* edition of HTMLles

was presented online from November 5 to December 5, 2020—a nod to its early, virtual editions. The group exhibition *Matière à relations*, usually hosted by the centre alongside the festival, was repeatedly postponed and finally installed in September 2021. The following pages briefly introduce the artworks, performances, workshops, and discussions presented in these contexts. They also include texts contributed between September 2019 and June 2022 by guest authors, theorists, artists, and art historians as accompaniment to the practices supported by Ada *x* as part of its *Slow Tech* programming. Grouped according to the aforementioned research axes, the texts describe, in an organic and non-chronological manner, the reflections, observations, and motivations nourishing the artists, researchers, and activists orbiting Ada *x*.

Together, the words and visual documentation published in these pages constitute a fragmentary archive, a record testifying to a shared desire to call into question—humbly, in the immediate spaces and actions of their lives first of all—those patterns of behavior passively absorbed but whose impacts are untenable long term. This is a collective reflection rooted in a time when, confronted with challenges that exceed us, political will and global action are crucial. They must be radically visionary and embodied, for the world to come.



Envi



Environment

Anne-F Jacques' residency provided the artist with an opportunity to create a whole new body of work. Jacques also held a series of three electronic art and audio exploration workshops with fifteen youth from Le Phare community centre in Rivière-des-Prairies. First, to explore the electrical currents in Le Phare's workspace, they made various sound sensors using broken electronic equipment such as radios, tape recorders, hard drives, and speakers. This was followed by a "scratch" workshop with a read head, cassette tapes, and cards with magnetic strips. In the third workshop, they created tape sound loops. Inspired by the work of Anne-F Jacques, these activities allowed the young participants to discover the hidden potential of salvaged materials and technologies considered obsolete.

Part installation, part performance and part ephemeral intervention, this Montréal-based artist's practice is deeply rooted in DIY concepts, found objects, and unlikely encounters. The convergence of materials plays an important role; any interaction can make a sound. Objects and materials that would otherwise never have met generate an original, sometimes incongruous soundscape. This is how two large sheets of paper converged with strings slowly pulling across their surfaces, generating a subtle, fallible and intermittent sound. The weakness of the materials, their fatigue, puts the notion of efficiency into question. This is one of the key components of Anne-F Jacques's creative process. She works to challenge the idea that things must operate optimally. Her work is also concerned with dismantling the concept of the power of the machine, one that is deeply rooted in a techno-enthusiastic and masculine vision of digital arts. Functioning is not necessarily spectacular: inertia and silence are neutral but significant moments.

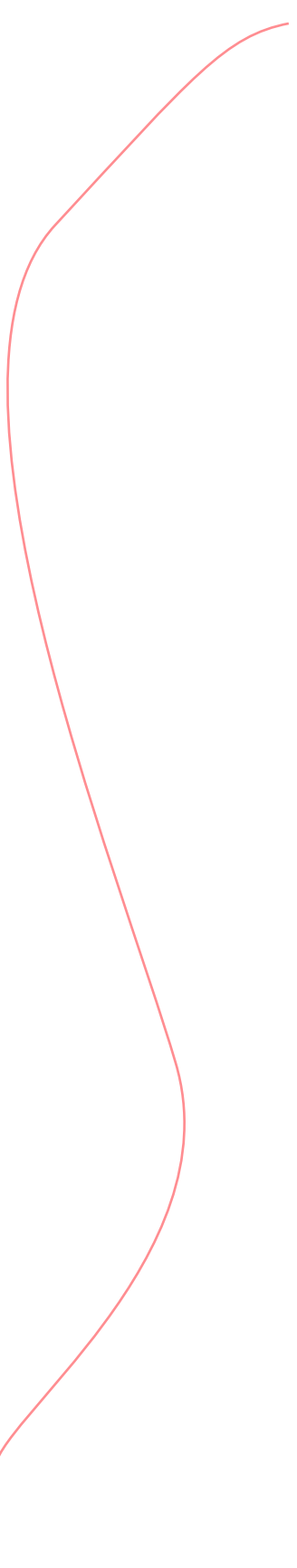
As the artist said in a video interview with Ada *x*, "sounds that make silence" are still sounds. They can be on pause, waiting, at the edge of themselves and their possibility; it is about letting things "be," even in their fallibility. Her body of sound machines—a collection of semi-autonomous creatures—was presented at the Maison Pierre-Chartrand in the winter of 2021. It plays on the ambiguities of a flickering presence that is revealed through the assembly of materials and their movement generated by small repurposed motors that Anne-F Jacques has revived. Materials are activated: rocks, bark, and algae, whose complexity allows for the creation of an astonishing range of sounds; common or found objects, such as light bulbs or a plastic coffee lid whose rim reveals a trickle of dark liquid, follow the rotating movement generated by the motors. Outside the building, four photographs focus on the relationship between the natural elements and the mechanisms that move them, emphasizing their coexistence. Discrete actors of our ecosystems, sometimes inert, silent, or still flourishing, the objects of the world inhabit us.

ce qui pousse, se défait, grouille encore

Nathalie Bachand

ce qui pousse, se défait,

grouille encore by Anne-F Jacques



Exhibition + workshop

Diagenèse

Nathalie Bachand



Diagenèse by Isabelle Gagné



Diagenèse, a project by Mirabel-based digital artist Isabelle Gagné, is composed of two complementary bodies of work, photographic images, and sculptures, which are based on the concepts of archive and artefact. These two elements, associated as much with images as with objects, form the physical and conceptual basis of the project. The notions of memory and its alteration through the sieve of time are also evoked: what remains of our presence and our passages upon the various spaces we move through?

These spaces are, in fact, heterogeneous. While the photographic collection focuses on the question of the digital imprint and the traces we leave on the Web, the sculptural collection questions our material marks and vestiges. These two approaches are linked by a subsurface element: sediment. In geology, the term “diagenesis” refers to the processes of transformation of minerals into sedimentary rocks. These transformations, whether through compaction, dehydration, dissolution, cementation, epigenesis, or metasomatism, feature a nomenclature that allows the artist to extend the geological analogy, which for several years has been the focus of Gagné’s research on memory and its impermanence.

The visual works come from composite images created by a bot developed by Gagné called *Portrait-robot*. Using the artist’s personal photo archives, the bot is asked to generate new images by integrating layers of similar images from the Web. Glitches and other digital accidents are part of these new “photographs,” evoking the imperfections of memory. Isn’t it said that memories are constantly being reassembled, endlessly recreated along the mental thread of recollection and the things it distills in its wake?

The sculptural works reference geological cores—soil samples that provide information on the specific characteristics of an environment and the conditions of a given area. In this case, the cores were created from personal objects compacted and bound with various materials: cement, resin, polish, wood, and bitumen. Similar to the algorithmic portraits, the result offers a degree of randomness due to the proximity of the materials, the degree of humidity, the density, and possible chemical reactions. Like memories, the lifting of these sedimentary strata reveals fragments of objects, elusive references.

During the exhibition of these bodies of work, three workshops were held in collaboration with the community organization Maison Cœur de Rivière-des-Prairies, which offers families a place for gathering and interacting. The workshop activities allowed five families to experiment with photography, augmented reality, and certain sculpture techniques. First, using family photos, participants explored the Robot-Portrait bot using an iPad, where the image is reconstructed by integrating segments of related images pulled from the Web. The sculptural workshop invited participants to create their own geological core sample using objects from their daily lives, artefacts charged with meaning for future archeological discoveries.

Exhibition + workshop

L'ÉTAT DES MATIÈRES II

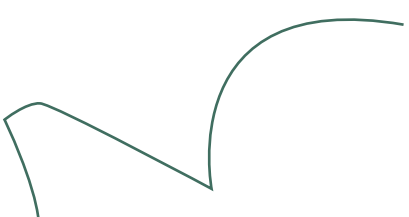


Nathalie Bachand



L'ÉTAT DES MATIÈRES II

by Katherine Melançon




For this project, which is both an exhibition and a workshop, Montréal artist Katherine Melançon and the participating students explored the area around the Jean-Grou school in Rivière-des-Prairies, collecting plants and other organic matter that could be adapted to the digitization process. This first step is critical: it involves activating one's sense of observation and taking a different look at the world that surrounds us on a daily basis—in the students' case, the school's immediate environment. During the workshops' next step, students could draw inspiration from Melançon's work in scanography, which is at the heart of her artistic practice. Through her process, a transfiguration of the elements is at work, from analog material to digital volatility: they emerge flattened, two-dimensional, but with a sense of depth and movement, amplified by the role of light in the image transfer. Scanography has a performative aspect, since the elements must be manipulated in such a way as to play with the photographic parameters: depth of field, texture, focus, etc. As the artist notes, we are faced with a symbolic process where organic materials become a type of digital seed, which is "replanted" into new materials—paper, textile or polymer. Among the digital images printed on paper and video animations on flat screens, the exhibition also included vinyl prints, objects rather than images, which were strategically displayed in the ancestral hearth in the Pierre-Chartrand house's exhibition room. This micro-collection of organic matter emulations resembles a scroll covered with a foliage pattern; a form reminiscent of liquorice; an object whose shape suggests pizza and doughnuts suspended in the hearth by lime-green netting. Inspired by a still life by Juan Sánchez Cotán entitled *Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber* (1602), this fireplace installation allowed the artist to share with the students one of the possible ways of linking the past to the present through artistic creation. She asked them to look for the original work on their cell phones, and then explained how she had created hers. Each of Melançon's workshops were also an opportunity to propose a theme linking their practice with the works they were going to create, the techniques used, and the history of art. These 15 to 20-minute workshops included digital art, collage, camera-less photography, and land art. Following the digitizing stage, the next step was to create a file in the open-source software Gimp and explore digital editing's potential in order to achieve the final rendition of the works. In addition, there was a trip to a FabLab, which featured 3D printing and 3D scanning that could generate augmented reality. The final result was an exhibition held from December 18, 2019 to March 22, 2020 on the youth floor of the Rivière-des-Prairies Library.

Residency

To Name a Plant
Mojeanne Behzadi
on
Alien Blooms by Anahita Norouzi



Photo: Vjosana Shkurti




Golpar is a plant native to the territory known as Iran and is particularly beloved as a distinctive spice used in Persian cuisine. Its literal translation is “flower-wing” or “flower-feather,” evoking the petal-like translucence of its mericarps. Here in the West, where the plant was first introduced in the 19th century, it is known as Persian Hogweed or Giant Hogweed, meaning “feral pigs’ feed.” This figurative disparity in the appellation of the plant from one territory to the other denotes a linguistic hostility, which became a source of fascination and study for artist Anahita Norouzi, and the premise of her recent body of work. As part of her research and creation process, while in residency at Ada *x*, Norouzi developed an AR mobile application called *Alien Blooms*. Through the interface of the app, which activates device cameras to allow them to read an encoded matrix, viewers experience the piece as three variations of the plant specimen foregrounded in a surrounding space.

The question of how a plant venerated in her homeland could become known in Québec as a gargantuan, toxic, invasive, and unwanted weed, led Norouzi to a yearlong interdisciplinary study of the plant, at once journalistic, botanical, archeological, cultural, and historical. This deep dive into the many facets of how a plant gains meaning in the collective imagination has allowed the artist to draw vivid parallels to geopolitical discourse and the rhetoric around human migration and imperialism, pointing to how structural racism and xenophobia can operate in the subtlest of ways.

Like the looting of cultural artifacts, botanical imperialism is a well-known expression of Orientalism. A plant’s displacement can cause genetic mutations. Its integration into a new climate can cause it to behave differently. Some plants were never meant to be displaced. Maybe such plants grow taller and wider, in search of home. Maybe they, unlike inanimate objects, can protest their displacement by growing stronger, growing majestically to become a marker of the injustices their presence invokes. Persian Hogweed here in Québec tends to thrive in disturbed areas, in highly acidic soil. In this intensely humid environment, it proliferates.

Workshop

Movement Practice

 Joy Xiang

 *Green Gazing* by Ashley Bowa
and Lesley Marshall/LES666

We have seen the world burn. This isn't the only time it's burned, or been metaphorically and physically razed in the name of colonial and capitalist expansion. But from wildfires in the Amazon, to California and Australia, the media has increasingly zoned in to apocalyptic images as part of our understanding of anthropological climate change. The later years of the last decade marked a tidal shift in the narrative, which now openly asks how much time humans have left to stop seemingly imminent large-scale catastrophe.

But slow down.

If there ever was a rehearsal for better understanding our relationship to the environment and to each other, it's not over. Everything is practice, and practice is meaningful; it is the action, the affect.

Collaborators Lesley Marshall and Ashley Bowa understand this well, as they give possibilities for a new relational order between humans and nature in *Green Gazing*. Uninterested in speaking for plants, which would reproduce harmful hierarchies, they use immersive installation and experimental movement workshops to act as semi-translators for the nonhuman life already present around us—the difference between “using” and “being with” nature. Drawing from a feminist lens and a combined background in performance, video projection, irreverent media art, movement-based healing work, and the politics of wellness, Marshall and Bowa offer realistic tactics to strengthen our ability to bond with plant life.

Green Gazing unfolds in multiple acts, asking: what does it mean to embody a liberation movement? By translating biofeedback (the measured electrical signals of plant processes) into data, then image, graph, music, or movement, the artists cast learning back through the sensing body. Technology becomes a translation tool—though harrowed by its own contributions to environmental degradation and resource depletion, it also forms a common bridge to allow humans to visualize their co-creation with plant life. Ada *x's Slow Tech* thematic recognizes these contradictions and the alternatives available for us to reimagine and reclaim narratives of the end times.

To create experimental movements that turn into guided exercises for participants, Bowa and Marshall look to plants—how they grow and respond to their environment. Time slows when it is sieved through the body; movement seeds the possibility of a relation-in-becoming.



Tem



Temporalities

Exhibition + workshop

by **Nathalie Bachand**
on **Apocalypse: OPEN* until the end**
by Josee Brouillard

Apocalypse:
OPEN* until the end

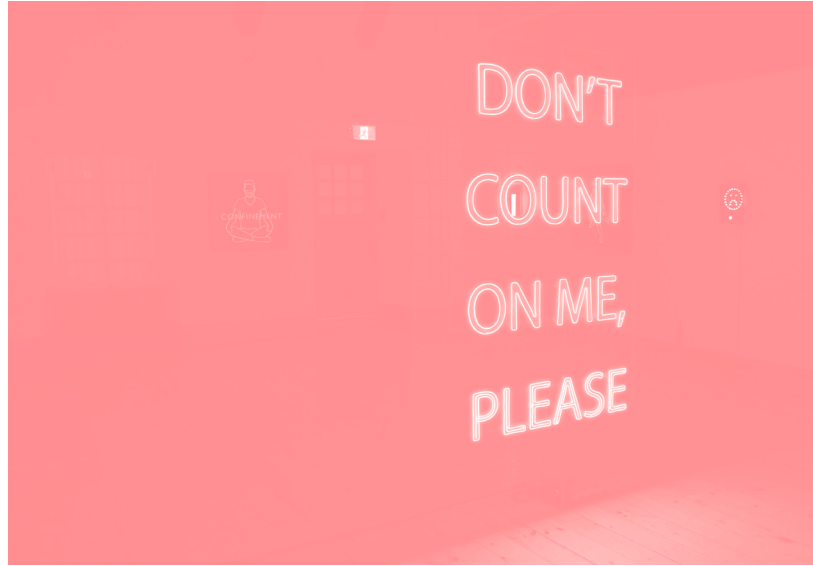
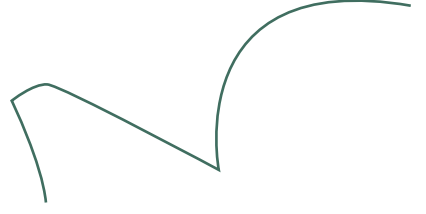


Photo: Agustina Isidori



*Apocalypse: OPEN * until the end*, by Montréal-based artist Josée Brouillard, is an exhibition project that brings together a recent collection of light-based works. One could almost call them confinement creations since they were mostly created in 2020 and 2021. The artist says that she was inspired by the forced hiatus from our activities, tinged with the anxiety-inducing uncertainty of the pandemic.

The presence of the word “apocalypse” in the title brings to mind the idea that humanity is condemned until the end, whatever that may mean in reality. But the meaning that the artist attributes to this looming end of the world lies instead in the micro-dramas of everyday life, whereby the concept of the apocalypse is like a general store containing them all—which is, incidentally, indefinitely “open.” This window into our individual dramas is illuminated by seven works made of electroluminescent wires, LEDs, and alphanumeric displays. Usually used for commercial purposes, these luminous signs become bearers of personal stories and existential questions, like the intertwining sides of a Mobius strip that resemble the uncontrolled thread of our thoughts. *Dare you trigger the end of the world? from 5 4 3 2 1* (2020)—the seminal work of the exhibition—is a powerful statement that provides a culmination of catastrophes of various scales. Between our fluctuating anxiety levels and our aspiration for zenitude, we oscillate between a multitude of moods, like the flickering of neon lights in the dead of night.

Based on this body of work, the artist developed a series of four workshops for groups of youth from Le Phare community centre. First, they created fake neon displays from electroluminescent wires, which were then displayed in the windows of the Maison de la culture. They then learned to create a simple electronic circuit (without soldering) from which they could experiment with an alphanumeric display system, followed by a safe lesson in electronic soldering. Finally, an initiation workshop on microcontroller programming led to the creation of a collective work integrating a short text in alphanumeric form, also displayed at the Maison de la culture. This series of creative apprenticeships represents a means of expressing what sometimes goes beyond words or does not quite manage to meet them, to fit into the space offered by their meaning and definition. Through hands-on guidance during the outreach workshops, the artist is able to share tools for reflection that shed light on the meaning of things. In the exhibition and the workshops of the *Apocalypse* project, it is light that takes shape in order to embody—and quite literally express—what the darkness of our world is quietly whispering.

Residency

The Keyboard, from Language to Speech

by **Samuel Gaudreau-Lalande**

on *L'obsolescence des mots*

by Marie-Andrée Pellerin



Photo: Vjosana Shkurti

An essential communication mediator between humans and computers, the keyboard is a rare advanced technical tool characterized as a simple extension of our will and senses. In Marie-Andrée Pellerin's work, however, this tool is becoming obsolete. Massive and sculptural, the keys are deprived of the keyboard's technical and material framework. They become an envelope, a receptacle animated from the inside by authors whose words are diffused through speakers. The power of linguistic imagination inherent in science fiction is free to expand in all its greatness. The master-tool relationship, specific to modern techniques, is abandoned, and listeners are invited to enter a singular universe where invented words reconstruct the world. The choice of speech imposes the sense of pause necessary for listening and encourages a healthy technocritical step back.

Deprived of the ability to activate commands, do audience members see themselves as deprived of all agency, lacking the ability to act upon the world? Is language, used by humans to create a gap between them and other animals, surpassing its creators and empowering itself? More optimistic, more concrete, and above all more committed than this techno-fatalist interpretation, Pellerin's work suggests that listening is as much the power source of language as speaking. Optimistic: the control of words will not succeed in stifling thought, because language is highly accessible and democratic. Concrete: the magical act of birthing a conceptualization into the world. "Here is a new phenomenon and this is its name," is at once a tool of domination and liberation. Committed: language is our species' primary technique, and speaking is our humanity in action. In the end, the essential characteristic of language is its readiness to be shaped.

Memory Work

 Angelina Ruiz

 *I knew that if I walked in your footsteps,
it would become a ritual*
by Aarati Akkapeddi

Aarati Akkapeddi invites us to be a part of their ancestry, as they present past memories in a new world. Akkapeddi's work surrounds the training of data to recognize a subset of faces, more specifically the artist's own family, and in turn regenerates new imagery. Combining new technological practices with the outdated, Akkapeddi employs a large archive of digitized Kodachrome slides and negatives, which now live in a new digital realm.

The work in its entirety is a slow burn of nostalgia, as the data begins to copy endlessly, creating decaying memories before the viewer's eyes. The project is a revival; each image is different, but somehow still similar. The new ones live in their own haunting world, as if they were figments of themselves. One can feel so close to them, as if we once knew them but can't recall, like waking from a dream that slowly begins to fade. Akkapeddi says: "I feel that the intangibility of the archive can speak to more than just a loss of memory; it can also offer the opportunity to dream possibilities and parallels."

The artist's familial connection to the work is key, as the photographs stretch across generations, passing down a sense of sadness and stillness. In a way, Akkapeddi uses this technology to transport themself into moments that they could not physically attend. The imperfect nature of the face creations themselves conjures up a feeling of estrangement, as if the artist's ancestors were forced to create their own microcosm, one that they could belong to.

Interestingly, it's difficult to tell if the data itself has a racial bias; however, the system seemingly prioritizes certain images, such as the artist's mother at her wedding. Akkapeddi says that these findings speak to "a larger value system placed on women, where we are valued for marriage and child-rearing over anything else."

The beauty of Akkapeddi's work is that it does not matter if you are connected to this family, as you will still be reminiscent of your own. For myself, I am nostalgic about old memories and the feelings tied to them, as I fear for a day when I no longer remember.

Online exhibition

Speculative Immersions

Marilou Craft



Black Women Temporal Portal



by Black Quantum Futurism and
X-cosmos-X by Olivia McGilchrist

The flow of time, the return of the tides: phenomena with fixed contours, an inescapable rhythm—or is this solidity an illusion? In Olivia McGilchrist's virtual realities, bodies and spaces are fluid, their textures overlap, boundaries blur; a cosmogony of elusive incarnations emerges. Camae Ayewa and Rasheedah Phillips of the *Black Quantum Futurism* Collective also manipulate reality, superimposing the past onto the present to open up the future to bodies that have experienced marginalization. Given the complexity of their context, each of these approaches, both imbued with the otherness that makes up the human experience, question the experience of reality and break it down to explore its prismatic dimensions.

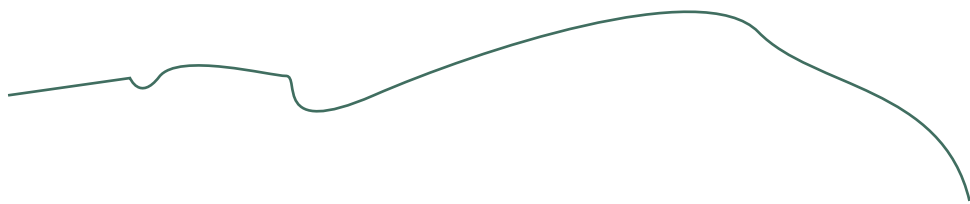
For there are also social constructions, human interventions, where time accumulates and the tide breaks. The material of space-time can stretch and compress, liberate or enclose the bodies that pass through it. Their trajectories are not all identical or immune to hardships. Reality is fragmented by the multitude of experiences it contains.

Here, now, but also there, the artists propose turning the senses both inwards and outwards in an immersive experience of deprogramming expectations. In *X-cosmos-X*, screens and video overlap, multiplying textures and dimensions to inundate the senses. The underwater environments form a fluid topography, eminently immersive, conducive to contemplation; a wandering cosmos, a transitory state responsive to the flow of matter. In *Black Womxn Temporal Portal*, the virtual mingles with the IRL,¹ forming an Afrofuturist sanctuary where Black female, female and non-binary bodies can finally belong. Past, present, and future dimensions are incorporated into a timeless vortex, forming a capsule where the mystical memory of a still speculative future can be forged.

These installations form escape routes, allowing for breathing. In these openings, the bodily experience is projected into other possible, open realities. Although these places are ephemeral, their experience transcends the framework of the present by offering tools for resisting erasure. Their mirages are moving, but their movement can serve as a guide, a buoy through the tide of time.

¹ An acronym for In Real Life, as opposed to URL, which refers to a website address and by extension to an online virtual reality.

Interaction



ms

Video presentation + discussion

The Light Sleeps With Us

 Sandra Huber

 *Artificial Stars* by Yoojin Lee

“And your face is lit by a screen,” says a line of words moving across an open TextEdit window in London-based artist Yoojin Lee’s *Artificial stars* (2018). In this video piece, a busy yet somehow soothing laptop screen blends audio and visuals that pertain to a liminal space of sleeping and waking, both and neither, shared between bodies and technologies in a world that is never unlit. Experiencing *Artificial stars* is not unlike watching a polysomnography montage used in clinics to surveil the pathologies of sleep; only here, instead of readouts of the electricity of the body, we find GIFs and text boxes and Skype calls, the information of the daylight world, including a toolbar at the bottom of the screen, a crackling ASMR fireplace, and a person sleeping under the covers. It is unclear whether the sleeper (while dreaming?) is writing the text that appears in the top left-hand corner of the screen, or if they are actually the “you” being addressed.

A self-proclaimed night owl, Lee's project is part of an ongoing engagement with sleep, which she sees not so much as a theme in her performance and multi-media installations, but rather as a way of knowing. This way is linked to slowness, de-composition, duration, and labour, and to the infrathin between human and machine that occurs on material, psychic, and sensory levels—the borders between states of being and the artificial time frames in which we live them. *Artificial stars* is an articulation of the ways that light drenches even our darkest timelines—"the first manmade light," the moving text tells us, "was made as long as 15,000 years ago—a flame of fire struck on shrubs," an artificial star. The late hours are the "ungodly hours," writes Lee in her short book *As long as there is time to sleep* (2016). The montage that makes up *Artificial stars* seems, at times, a reminder of the constant, slow purr of the celestial bodies above, of macrocosm and microcosm dancing in step. For me, one of the most intriguing images of the video is at the upper centre, portraying a *Znaymya* (banner) created in Russia in the 1990s as an artificial moon with a 65-foot-diameter wingspan propelled into space to extend daylight hours for heightened productivity. Here, it resembles an incandescent grapefruit or the garish sails of an aluminum ship. Who ventures into our sleeping worlds with us? What kinds of pixelated epistles are we composing behind our closed lids? What are our responsibilities and responses, as sleepers, to the world of the waking and the duties it holds?

Lee's piece was shown as part of an online event by Ada *x* on February 26th, 2022, which was an especially apt venue for this work: her screen montage folded into our own intimate screen montages. We are reminded in Lee's video that the computer screen, which we are watching, also maintains its own rhythms—as the fireplace sizzles, as the sleeper stirs, a reminder pops up on the screen that the computer will "sleep soon unless plugged into a power outlet." Regarding the clutch of images and sound that feature in *Artificial stars*, Lee points to the ways in which we are not necessarily solitary while we sleep, but rather always accompanied. The populations of our dreams and our co-sleepers are not only other bodies, but also our personal devices and lights, the projects and projections of our neon life worlds.

Storing their physical selves in sensory deprivation tanks, *The Cosmopolitan Babes* left their bodies long ago. As two highly evolved beings, their smooth pixel faces are perfectly filtered, and their torsos and legs have become stretched longer than a Barbie's. The *Babes* generously shared their tips and pointers in an exclusive workshop at Ada *x*—with an audience of regular Earth-bound folks—on how, through hard work and dedication, we too can transcend.

Appropriately, their story and ethos are full of holes. Summer Emerald and Océane Buxton, the artists behind *The Cosmopolitan Babes*, are intentionally vague about their characters. This evokes the kind of not-so-reliable information we encounter daily online, where the lines between lifestyle influencers and cult leaders can become blurred. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the internet has become the primary space of interaction for so many people who feel increasingly isolated. If we spend all our time online, is the digital self the only real self? And what is real anyway? This is where the *Babes* are able to offer their expertise.

While they covered all the bases in their workshop through a slideshow presentation—from digital plastic surgeons to fluffy animal companions and making mukbang videos—and answered important questions from the audience on a range of topics, participants left the Zoom meeting unsettled. Part of the goal with this project, according to Emerald and Buxton, is to contrast the apocalyptic energy of our current moment with this hyperreal bimbo aesthetic in a humorous performance.

In this way, their work recalls Cindy Sherman's relatively recent Instagram selfie series, an appropriate turn in the iconic feminist artist's practice. Sherman's facial distortions use filters to gender-bend, and the images often veer toward the grotesque. Though Emerald and Buxton's work presents smooth, blemish and wrinkle-free characters, the *Babes* nonetheless produce a critical commentary on the same condition Sherman is taking on: gendered narcissism, the elasticity and malleability of femininity, and neoliberal influencer and wellness culture.

Mindfulness and wellness pervade the world of *The Cosmopolitan Babes*. Freed from the burden of a human body, they are able to literally float through life, epitomizing a culture of life coaching, meditation, and positive self-actualization. Emerald and Buxton's artistic collaboration is a timely reflection on the effects of the pandemic on our physical and virtual selves, that also inserts a sharp feminist critique through comedy.

Elevate the well-being of your
digital consciousness

by
Amelia Wong-Mersereau

on
The Cosmopolitan Babes
by Océane Buxton
and Summer Emerald

Video presentation + discussion

Poetics to Activate the Technology of the Body

 Rouzbeh Shadpey

 *Poetics to Activate the Technology of
the Body 1 + 2* by Be Heintzman Hope
and Baco Lepage Acosta —



There is a radical playfulness at stake in creating a workout video so full of care as the one Be Heintzman Hope and Baco offer us in *Poetics to Activate the Technology of the Body 1 + 2*. There are no instructions in this space, only sincere invitations:

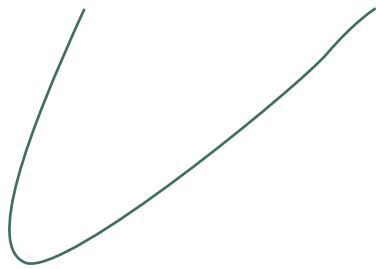
to imagine,
(breath in)
 exaggerate,
 (breathe out)
 like a tide.

Be and Baco trace a cosmotechnics¹ of the body outside the machinations of Western digital technoglobalism: Here organs are oceans, spines are landscapes, and reason is the wisdom of ancestors reminding you of a time you felt loved this week. Deploying a collage of performance, sound, and image, *Poetics*—which lasts 7 symbolic minutes—sets out to soothe and centre, generously holding space for its viewer to follow it (or not) through a meditation of breath and movement. This is a labour of love between two artists whose love labours to activate our somatic technologies—those habits of slow practice we cultivate through the careful work of our training. Alluvial ritual landscapes shift against each other as Be’s body—shrunken to minute organismic size and crittering to the sick sound of a grudging Tirzah-esque beat—punctuates time with rhythmic interruption. A high-octane voice delivers breathing suggestions. A caterpillar vibes.

Be’s movement practice, originating from a decade of research into the sinews which link body and breath, movement and voice, suffuses *Poetics* and undergirds its “poethics.”² Their mixed Chinese heritage as well as their artistic and extra-artistic engagements with Qigong, Chinese medicine, somatics, and bodywork within a Western landscape of cultural capitalist appropriation, situate the positionality from which the themes of *Poetics* are engaged. This is a space of struggle, where the knowledge-praxis of alternate cosmotechnics of the body and its healing are constantly co-opted and fetishized by whiteness. Be recognizes and does not shy away from these conflicting tensions. Instead, they lean in. *Poetics* shines in its humorous self-awareness, garbing itself in the aesthetic tropes of white artwashing, wearing them as armour: new-age white ecofeminism, Y2K post-internet sad boy multimedia art, and so on. Like a tide, *Poetics* ebbs and flows, and like a tide it is never lost: compassed by the generosity of its offering, the genuine care of its wash.

¹ Yuk Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China : Un essai de cosmotechnie*, *Urbanomic*, 2016.

² Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Vers une poétique féministe noire : The Quest(Ion) of Blackness Toward the End of the World*. *The Black Scholar* 44, no 2 (2014) : 81-97.



Smelling Each Other

by

Lyndsey Walsh

on

I smell a rat

by Lauryn Mannigel

The scents of our bodies waft around us and are encoded in a deeply social and cultural set of behavioural practices. In her workshops at Ada *x*, artist-researcher Lauryn Mannigel asked us to explore the olfactory experiences of ourselves and others.

In Mannigel's *I smell a rat*, participants engaged in a dialogue about body scents and gender, with a specific focus on the stigmatization of feminine odours. Through personal investigation and group scent exploration, participants were led through two exercises to develop critical thinking about how individuals can identify and change their entrenched judgements on the way we smell. Mannigel's artistic practice works to overcome histories of "othering" consciously and unconsciously embedded in social interactions. Her works *Love Sweat Love* (2016), *Eat Me* (2018), and *Smell Feel Match* (2019) have artistically investigated how people perceive the body scents of others, and in 2017 her research findings were presented at the interdisciplinary Human Olfaction Conference.

Mannigel's interest in the process of "othering" stems from the analysis of Constance Classen. Classen discusses olfactory classification as a boundary drawing process between different groups. She explains that in male-dominated societies, the odour of the feminine tends to be treated as a "feared other."¹ In line with notable feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti, Mannigel's work asks us to reflect on the relationship between our biology and our culture. As Braidotti notes, a narrative of embodied difference has been especially embedded in discourses on gender. This notion of embodied difference has long dictated our perceptions and assumptions about the bodies of others.² The question of how smell factors into our long-held societal assumptions becomes increasingly important when thinking about the role that smell plays in social interaction.

¹ Classen, C., 1993. *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and across Cultures*. Londres : Routledge.

² Price, J., Shildrick, M., Braidotti, R. *Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt: On Teratology and Embodied Differences*. Feminist Theory and the Body. Routledge, pp. 290-301. 2019.

WELLNESS is the Watchword

by Lucas Crawford

on *Floral Sleep* by Coral Short
and Winnie Ho



Photo: Stéphanie Lagueux



Photo: Vsojana Shkurti

This word appears everywhere as a reason for us to slow down, most often attached to a product that promises to save us hours of time via speed. Paradoxically, if today's wellness discourse were a slogan, it might be: *hurry up and slow down!*

Coral Short's new project engages Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR), in which exposure to everyday stimuli (usually noises like nails tapping, eating sounds, and whispering) induces tingling sensations and euphoria. ASMR seems built for speed, given its extreme popularity on YouTube. But where high-tech folks seek the latest watch to capture their running speed, Short's technology of wellness is like good BBQ cookery: "low and slow." They move plant boughs around a circle of laying participants, stimulating them gently with plant sounds.

Corporations market WELLNESS as a series of inward-looking products. But Short's work redefines wellness as the connective, outward-looking potential of queer pleasure. The tingling of Short's plant-based ASMR isn't about a romanticized notion of stopping to smell the roses—even if it is about listening to the breeze of leaves. The tingling is literal; ASMR is often described as arousing, and Short describes this project as "eco-sexual."

We buy cutting-edge quick-fixes. Short's project is slower and more direct: it provokes bodies to feel better on the smallest scale. This is wellness redefined as feeling good, undertaken at the level of the goose bump.

Coral Short has long thought about wellness in exciting ways. Where foodie blogs luxuriate in the slow self-care of "stress baking," Short tuned up queer rhythms via an experimental band, Women With Kitchen Appliances. WWKA didn't take up the 'time-saving' kitchen tools of gendered domestic labour as an escape, but instead as a slow public experiment.

Where fitness media often dangle a fatphobic wellness carrot—the pride that supposedly follows when we can wear the new (smaller) shirt or new (sexier) boots—Short has again flipped the game in advance. They have sculpted and worn the aptly named *Butter Boots*. Similarly, at a Vancouver arts show, Short and their team of servers moved through the crowd, offering the show-goers fudge: "How would you like your fudge packed?"

Whether laughing or crying—witness *Crying Machine*, in which attendees sit next to Short while they chop onions—connection and wellness happen queerly in Short's work.

Gentle bot seeks same

by
Lucas LaRochelle

02
by
Gentle Bot Seeks Same
by Liane Décary-Chen

By feeding increasing amounts of personal data to the platforms that govern our digital selves, we enable algorithms outside of our control to build us in their image. What futures might be possible if we refused this extraction, designing algorithms rooted in our personal and collective aspirations?

Liane Décary-Chen's *Slow Tech* residency project, *Gentle Bot Seeks Same*, explores these futures by turning the logics of cybernetics towards herself, mapping out the structure of an AI system rooted in her own subjectivity. Appropriating the visual language of the Von Neumann model—an early computer architecture comprising of a processing unit, control unit, storage, memory, and input/output mechanisms—Décary-Chen transposes the idiosyncrasies of her “meatspace” experience into an agent capable of traversing cyberspace on its own terms. Rather than aiming to create a glossy,

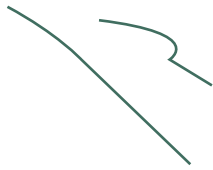
self-contained AI twin, she prioritizes a methodology of messiness, leaning into the impossibilities of distilling oneself into an array of ones and zeroes.

The transmission of digital literacy skills is central to Décary-Chen's expanded practice, and she developed educational materials that enable her communities to peer inside the "black box" of machine learning. Through drawings, digital zines, code snippets, and social media performances, the circuitous process of building an AI system through her own self-excavation is laid bare. Continuing beyond the scope of the residency, *Gentle Bot Seeks Same* sees Décary-Chen drawing from her experience in interactive documentary filmmaking to produce content that makes her research accessible to a youth audience.

Early mythologies of the internet, predicated on Western ontologies of mind-body dualism, naively framed it as a space that would "liberate" users from their physical markers of race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability. This aspiration has, however, proved to be nothing more than a thinly-veiled attempt to discard difference through the assertion of the unmarked Universal subject—always already white, male, cis, straight, middle-class, and able-bodied. Informed by club culture, queer gender performance, social media aesthetics, and formal training in circus and dance, Décary-Chen deploys her body as the central tool for sense-making in the realm of the digital. Through the construction of an immersive installation composed of the research materials that inform her design process, Décary-Chen invites us back into our bodies, refusing to discard the wisdom of the corporeal in the search for more ethical AI futures.

Décary-Chen's practice is rooted in what we might call "anarcho-computation." Rather than seeking to "fix" the biases embedded within corporately governed digital systems, she deploys her technical knowledge to break these harmful systems apart in order to reimagine futures from the detritus left in the aftermath of their annihilation. For Décary-Chen, our present moment is marked by the experience of "drowning in an infinite sea of computational power." *Gentle Bot Seeks Same* is a lifeboat, enabling us to surf the waves of the here and now toward a horizon beyond the quagmire of technology in the age of platform capitalism.

Residency



QT.bot
Rudi Aker
QT.bot by Lucas LaRochelle



Photo: Vsojana Shkurti

Queer stories perhaps do not need to exist as a ubiquitous truth, but rather as mechanisms of making visible the intimacy and absurdity of collective world-building, both by humans and artificial intelligences. When imagining the traversal of queer spaces, physical and digital, how can we mediate, maintain, and assess a relationship between lived experience and the propagation of machine-generated LGBTQ2+ auto-narratives?

Grounded in a desire to explore and embrace the il/legibility of queer existence, Lucas LaRoche and their collaborators developed a neural network, dubbed *QT.bot*, to generate speculative queer spaces using the broad dataset of Queering the Map to build upon and self-initiate possible cyberfutures. By employing textual and visual content from over 80,000 submissions to the platform, *QT.bot* is engaged to trouble the autonomy and validity that an AI might have in creating a more opaque lineage of queer narrative. Tending to the actualities of holistically queer-made machines, there is a push to assert both a categorical collapse in how queer history is defined and the function of representation to go beyond that of human kin, once again, into the application of an AI informed exclusively and inclusively by queer people.

QT.bot is the rogue offspring of Queering the Map, an online community-mapping project that highlights anonymously submitted queer moments. Queering the Map was founded, created, and designed by Lucas LaRoche in 2017, and has reached global popularity, now including tens of thousands of pins in 23 languages. With both projects flirting along similar trains of inquiry into queer worldmaking, *QT.bot* works to deepen the negotiation between physical and digital space, through the incubation of an AI designed and trained with queer knowledge as its axis.

Where will turning away from truth and legibility as an apparatus of worldbuilding lead us? Dare the machine imagine futures compatible with queer realities? Are *QT.bot*'s in/coherent presents and futures in/accessible projections of our own?

The residency came to fruition through a series of speculative documentaries traversing through the worlds initiated by *QT.bot*, and was accompanied in the gallery by silk prints of these digital spaces. A series of public programs were offered in conjunction with Lucas LaRoche's *Slow Tech* residency, including a vernissage, artist talk, and a series of machine learning workshops.




Residency

Kinga's Queer Sexting Party

by
on
Queer Sexting Party
by Kinga Michalska



Photo: Vsojana Shkurti



Despite the increasing accessibility of online dating services, platforms designed to house our digital pleasure largely reproduce the gendered, heterosexual scripts of goal-orientation, instant gratification, and gendered coding. In an effort to carve out alternative practices, Kinga's *Queer Sexting Party* proposes a participatory experiment in community sexting which forays into the radical potentials of a queered digital erotics.

In technologically mediated sex, we become untethered from the cultural and spatial limitations of our materiality and can inhabit our bodies and our genders more freely. We shapeshift into whatever form we want.¹ With a word, my clit can become a cock, a grapefruit seed, a 7-foot-long velvety opening. Even as they text, my hands can pleasure my partner everywhere at once. In touch, every surface of contact remains a barrier that no perforation or enclosure can really dissolve. When I sext, I am porous, I can take you all at once, merging completely, my back becoming your back, my smells your smells.

Kinga's workshop is a space to swap strategies that broaden our sexting vocabulary as we reconsider what sensoria is legible as erotic. Does an image of waves breaking get you wet? What about a soft pink or harsh yellow, lacy mycelium or velvety moss? Isn't it scintillating to discover—in that exhibitionist, blinking ellipse—the girth of your lover's thinking process as they compose a text? When we sext, the device itself becomes implicated in our practices of erotic pleasure. Bodies merge with machine, becoming amalgams of technology and flesh. The phone becomes a toy which mediates our erotic communication: both vibrant and vibrating. Screens become fetish objects, something our fingers tap, stroke, grope, and caress.

Digital communication technologies make it easier than ever to receive instant feedback. But what becomes of silence? In physical sex, we draw on a variety of nonverbal cues to indicate (dis)pleasure. When we sext, we're limited to word and image. Not receiving an immediate text back can feel vulnerable—however, it's precisely when we rush that we hurt each other inadvertently. A consensual, queer sexting practice re-considers our relationship to the pace of sexting to engage the communicative power of textual silence. When we take time to slow down, engage deliberately with each other, and linger—perhaps awkwardly at first—in sustained mutual pleasure, digital technologies can help us practice communication and establish braver, more fantastical bonds.

¹ Jacob, Tai. "Sex over the Airwaves." *The McGill Daily*, 2017.

Out of Service

by Ian Larue

on *Botes Club*

by Sarah Chouinard-Poirier,
Marie-Andrée Godin
and Maude Veilleux

"How can I help you?" ask Alexa, Sophia, or Erica. Caregivers are often in the same predicament. It's so easy in a patriarchal society to expect devotion and free labour from women. But what would caregivers say if they had a chance to be heard? And what about robots who, when asked, despite their intelligence (however "artificial"), insist that they are here to please and serve us? How can we change the fate of one (the caregivers) by means of the other (the robots) without replicating a system of double domination: caregivers subjugated to a health system that functions on their exhaustion, robots built to obey humans, a fatality that has persisted since Asimov's three laws?¹

The *Botes Club* project aims to train an artificial intelligence model with a dataset of caregivers' testimonies collected by the artists. While in residence at Ada *x*, they worked to make these anonymous words heard through the voices and neural networks of AI. They explored the relationships between intelligences, as well as the links between vocation, naturalization, and exploitation by means of a performative installation. When told in their own words, the caregivers' stories offer an alternative to the dominant discourse, which often merely pities them for being underpaid and overworked, while hollowly praising their "natural" heroism. But those who speak out often face punishment and persecution. Might it be conceivable to make robot allies for them, with whom they could develop a relationship of solidarity and mutual aid?

You might think that coding is a neutral, strictly mathematical exercise. Not so! Programming serves and reproduces implicit values such as capitalism, white supremacy, misogyny, conflict, hierarchy, and surveillance. And yet, the power lies in coding to change our relationship with robots, to build an allyship with them. Machine, sister, can we fight together? To do so, we would have to code differently, come up with training methodologies that would allow for error and self-determination, and that would aim for something other than the machines' obligation to serve. Would they want to join forces with human intelligences programmed to serve, or should we simply acknowledge their unique existence and accept that they might make choices that do not serve us?

Is attempting to answer this question risking the "robot revolt," the heinous trope found in patriarchal science fiction suggesting that the robots "we" are developing for our use will eventually destroy us? This system of thought knows only conflict, the fight to the death, the idea that difference is an adverse threat. To break out of this vicious cycle, we need to rethink everything: the relationship of robots to humans, the relationship of humans to humans, inter-species relations, labour relations, the material conditions of existence and the possibility that machines, freed from our biases, can learn by themselves and escape the chain of exploitation.

Recent feminist science fiction is leading the way, introducing a new narrative. For example, in *A Closed and Common Orbit*, Becky Chambers gives physical form to AIs who are actual people,² and in *Te retrouver*, Joëlle Wintrebert portrays a robot couple who lead personal lives after work.³

Against the universal system of abuse that capitalism has sought to make commonplace, it is time to combine intelligences.

¹ In *The Robot Cycle* (1956-1986) Isaac Asimov established what would become the three famous laws of robotics that other SF writers, such as Roland Wagner, later took up and interpreted in their own way. In essence, a robot cannot attack a human, must obey orders, and must not destroy itself. These laws clearly turn robots into slaves for whom even "suicide" is forbidden.

² Becky Chambers, *A Closed and Common Orbit*, New York, Harper Voyager, 2017.

³ Joëlle Wintrebert, *Te retrouver*, Utopiales 20, Chambéry, ActusSF, 2020.

Solitude and Legacy for the End of the World

by Michael Iantorno

on *AI The End* by Gina Hara

There is a devastating loneliness to Minecraft's infinitely generated landscapes.

Stitched together from abstract ecosystems and labyrinthian dungeons, players wander endlessly through biomes brimming with abandoned edifices, dangerous creatures, and hidden treasures. Minecraft's constant geographical churn provides nearly limitless content but also highlights the coldness of its expanses. No matter how far one travels, they still must navigate the world alone.

For her Ada *x* residency project *AI The End*, Gina Hara draws parallels between this digital loneliness and the isolation of the ongoing pandemic, inhabiting Minecraft's forlorn infinitude alongside a friendly chatbot. In response to the

recent valorization of AIs in sociotechnical discourses, her experimental play interrogates their growing role as companions and mental health supports while also scrutinizing the solitude fostered by virtual environments.

Hara's project uses a modded version of Minecraft that contains sprawling urban ruins and beautiful landscapes, but that is completely devoid of NPCs.¹ Playing off apocalyptic tropes while confronting her own AI skepticism, she turns to her chatbot for advice and friendship, while engaging in a melancholy task: preparing Minecraft's environment for the impending extinction of humankind. This self-imposed challenge questions what earthly legacy humans will leave behind, and embodies Hara's approach to constructing narrative in ludic spaces:

As an artist, I often try to create a situation that I can place myself into to see what experiences it provides. One of the reasons I've enjoyed working with Minecraft is its potential for emergent narratives. What story will come out of it? What will the conclusions be?

Hara's gameplay and AI interactions culminate in a *machinima*² film, crafted from gameplay footage, and drawing provocations from weekly *Twitch* streams. In contrast with mainstream game development and film-making practices, which rely on large teams and hegemonic design values, *AI The End* embraces machinima's ability to foster experimentation, slowness, and intimacy. Much like a film editor inquisitively playing with the materiality of celluloid, Hara embraces Minecraft's affordances through modding³ and critical play.

Combining AI, virtual worlds, and emergent narratives, *AI The End* blurs the line between human and machine, while contemplating the loneliness that underscores contemporary life. Self-reflective in nature, Hara's work does not offer a parable or prescribe a solution to societal woes. Rather, through iterative design, Hara contemplates the slow rhythms of solitude and our budding relationships with non-humans.

¹ An NPC (non-player character) is a character in a computer game whose actions are determined by an automated script or set of rules, as opposed to being a character controlled by a player.

² Contraction of machine, animation, and cinema, "machinima" is the process of making real-time animated films by utilizing the 3D graphics technology of computer games.

³ "Modding" is an expression that is derived from the verb "modify." Modding refers to the act of modifying hardware, software, or virtually anything else, to perform a function not originally conceived or intended by the designer. The term modding is used within the computer game community, particularly in regard to creating new or altered content.


Workshop

Soft Connexions

Nathalie Bachand
Wearable Bits by Lee Jones



Photo : Agustina Isidori



Connecting us to the world, increasing our human potential, communicating with our environment: technological developments are putting us in touch with our surroundings in many ways, whether subtle and invisible, or physical and concrete. “Wearable technologies,” made from electronic textiles, are one aspect of this connection to the world, in which the interrelation between space and the beings, materials and objects within it builds a dynamic of reciprocity. Nonetheless, electronic textiles remain a complex field of investigation and creation, requiring specialized and varied knowledge (often necessitating interdisciplinary work groups with multiple fields of expertise), and above all unknown to the wider public.

The *Wearable Bits* project from Canadian artist and researcher Lee Jones aims to demystify the creation of electronic textiles and intelligent clothing, countering the common perception that it requires prior knowledge of sewing, garment-making, electronics, robotics, interactivity, etc. On the premise that facilitating the prototype stage unleashes imagination and creativity, Lee Jones has created a toolkit by which participants can explore the potential of wearable technologies. The workshop offers people with no experience in electronics or e-textiles the chance to build their own prototypes for intelligent clothing. Made from pieces of felt that are quick and easy to assemble, along with diagrams of electronic elements and their functions, the *Wearable Bits* are presented as puzzle pieces that participants can put together as they choose. The final form therefore depends on the design in mind.

The artisanal dimension of the workshop—a kind of speculative collage—stimulates the sense of exploration and invention inherent in creative projects. During the workshop, participants design and create e-textile samples, as well as a prototype garment that combines prefabricated and handmade components. Creating textiles that measure the touch, movement, and posture of their wearer serves to (de)construct some of the preconceived ideas around clothing and how we wear it.

Exhibition + workshop

Embodying Vulnerability and Agency

by Alifiyah Imani

on *Progression* by
Salima Punjani



Photo: Alifiyah Imani

The layered nuance of Salima Punjani's study is expressed through multiple sensory elements: a slowness that intends to cultivate presence, touch that not only makes contact, but also listens, conscious participation through imaginative devices, and sensitive feedback for unexpressed narratives to be held in an atmosphere that invites deep listening.

Drawing from personal experience and in conversation with Disabled bodies susceptible to a different set of conditions and questions—the notion of temporality, memory and reality within the spaces of the everyday; the pain of being ostracized, expectations of economic productivity, and the fast-moving rhythms of life—Punjani identifies the primary meaning of her work “to welcome and recognize voices of Disabled People” through artistic means to relocate how shared vulnerability and agency can bring to the fore a humanistic coming-of-transformation.

In close contact with the body, the photographic portrait of herself and of individual personalities affected by multiple sclerosis are combined with their sonified EEG (brainwave) signals and original MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) brain scans. This recontextualization nurtures the complexity of each individual's story beyond an unfeeling diagnostic medical pathology.

Punjani seeks solace from the goddess Bherunda Nitya in her portrait—a goddess whose vulnerability is thought to be her greatest weapon. Likewise, each person portrayed moves toward embodied agency and becomes the author of their own story beyond a medical model of disability.

An intentional contrast of sensory entry points acts as a collective access lens to accentuate “values of co-creation and participatory multimedia storytelling.” Real-time brainwave translation into vibrations, tactile photography, sonified brainwaves, and people's participation through their biodata act as a catalyst for such methods of translation and disruption, infusing layers of sensory meaning in ways that go beyond conventional readings, emphasizing reciprocity for a far-reaching collaborative process.

Progression is thus a relational meta-interplay of agency and navigation of vulnerable spaces. Punjani's pursuit sets out to consciously form listening and feeling stations by which new modalities of attention, care, and empathy are provoked for intimacy and complexity, as one receives a potent interaction of the work in a relative and not absolute manner.

Workshop + exhibition

Nuances
Prakash Krishnan
Nuances by Salima Punjani

In an ever-stretching period of profound isolation, artist Salima Punjani in her exhibition *Nuances* calls for a disruption of the contemporary social conventions of sterility, singularity, and boundaries between subject and object. The works beckon to be touched, held, caressed, heard, smelled—wholly consumed by the richness of sensorium carefully crafted in these works. In this exhibition, Punjani brings into conversation two recent works, *Progression* (2018) and *Will you Pass the Salt?* (2021), that both call into question how the feeling of belonging is engendered. In their multisensorial examinations of environments ingrained with intra- and interpersonal intimacies, they also practice new forms of belonging.

At the core of both works in *Nuances* is the pursuit of relation-building through empathetic encounters—among visitors but also between objects and their holders. Each piece in the installations is imbued with memories and histories, feelings and tenderness, from the artist and her collaborators. This infusion of affect emerges not only as a product of the artist’s care and research, but also through the ways in which oral histories and personal recordings are transmuted across boundaries of medium, activating the works via sensorial contact. Each carved stanchion in *Progression* carries internal and external reflections of a body that is open for a multiplicity of “viewings,” not only sight but also listening, touch, and tracing. In the work, Punjani transforms EEG and MRI biodata of people living with multiple sclerosis into felt vibrations, which engages a mesmeric experience between the visual, auditory, and tactile senses. Sourced from ten households across Montréal, *Will you Pass the Salt?* is an invitation to take a seat at the dinner table and to be immersed in the sounds and scents of culinary preparation and collective meal-sharing. This immersion recalls a far-flung familiarity of shared moments between loved ones, friends, and family. Sitting alone at a dinner table set for six, visitors are invited by Punjani into a meditation on the mundanity of everyday connections. The piece encourages the practice of forming continued connections between those seated at a table, wherever that table may be.



*An attempt to interrupt the ceaseless cycle of updates,
activity reports and new devices.
Trying, unsuccessfully, to find a moment of rest;
arriving at an impasse.
Looking up, seeing the sky, and being caught by
a passing cloud in the blue emptiness.
Then another cloud—white, vaporous—clings to it.
Is that where we are?*

The *Slow Tech* theme emerged at Ada *x* in 2018 as a response to an overflow; to unsustainable overreach and overconsumption in the midst of a climate emergency.

In 2020, in a forced return to its first iterations, the HTMlles festival, whose *Slow Tech* concept naturally imposed itself, was broadcast online. The fog we were experiencing had only allowed us to consider proposals that spilled onto our screens, intermittently, for nearly a month, as many materials to immerse ourselves in. A first passage of digital contents was thus disseminated from November 6 to December 2, 2020.

Since any medium- or long-term planning seemed unfeasible at the time, and since the future seemed particularly hazy to us, we felt we had no choice but to approach November 2020 with a slow, wandering pace. We then strolled through the fog and attempted to consider what was possible by drawing closer to the echoes of discernable voices.

The online programming of the festival took several forms, including speculative discussions, interactive workshops, and a selection of contemplative web and video works that were considered as access tools. It aimed to highlight certain concepts that would allow us to explore new avenues together, at a distance, in a fluid space where we must redefine what we wish to pass on.

2020 PROGRAMMING

article

Exhibition *Three windows + Three windows described by three voices...*, by Aislinn Thomas, from November 6th to 21st 2020.

With *Three windows +* Aislinn Thomas creates multiple invitations to slowness, with consideration for how we engage with artwork.

Oboro

Workshop + discussion *Ether-Net*, with Sophia Borowska, Kelly Thompson, and Alice Jarry, November 21st 2020.

In this online video workshop, participants worked with e-waste cables to make a collective artwork, addressing the materials and hyper-

consumption that define our current relationship to technology.

La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse

Mapping workshop *Turning Points* with Hannah Azar Strauss and Anne-Marie Trépanier, November 6th 2020.

Roundtable facilitated by Hannah Azar Strauss and Anne-Marie Trépanier, with Natacha Clitandre, Lucas LaRoche, Alex Megelas, Sepideh Shahamati, Amanda Gutierrez, Florencia Sosa Rey, Joanna Guillaume, Veronica Mockler, Tamara Vukov, and Shane Watt, November 6th

How is mapping a ground for imagining the future? The phrase “turning point” calls to mind a body in motion as well as a fixed location; it refers to a moment of crisis in order to shift away from it.

Moving Image Research Laboratory

Workshop + roundtable *Net Flesh*, presented by Alanna Thain, with Olivia McGilchrist, Ivetta Sunyoung Kang, Émilie Morin, and Nadège Grebmeier Forget, November 27th 2020.

Today, we find ourselves herded into online spaces such as Zoom with breathtaking speed. Even for artists working with the affordances of digital media and the screen, the transition takes a minute. How can art practices give us survival tools for enduring zoomlife? How can digital art and performance practices expand the threshold between offline and online living in a time of crisis and connection into a more breathable space?

Groupe Intervention Vidéo

Video screening *Ecological Disturbances: Slowing Down, Reflecting and Re-imagining*, with works by Vjosana Shkurti, Sierra Druley + Jean Ni, lamathilde, Anna Eyler + Nicolas Lapointe, and Charline Dally, November 6th to December 2nd 2020.

The central line of argument in *Ecological Disturbances: Slowing Down, Reflecting and Re-imagining* is the paradigm shift; whether through ritual gestures that transform scale and atmosphere; artificial or human voices describing alternative futures and the relationship of world to language; or archaeological scenes of a fossilized digital era. This video program presents five works exploring the environmental crisis of the Anthropocene through ritualistic performance, linguistic reflection, and the construction of fictional, alternative, and future realities.

TAG

Workshop *We are planets* with Nathalie Dubois, November 19th 2020.

This workshop explores human cutaneous microbiota, microorganisms that populate our skin, from the epidermis to the hypodermis. The workshop offers a reflection on these invisible and intimate companions who live with us and yet remind us that we are immense—part of the planetary universe.

Feminist Media Studio

Roundtable *An Artist's Almanac*, with Suzanne Kite, Alisha B. Wormsley, Lindsay Nixon, and Lupe Pérez, November 13th 2020.

This public roundtable hosted by Suzanne Kite brought together collaborators and co-conspirators of the *Artist's Almanac*, a research and organizational project undertaken with the support of the Feminist Media Studio and the Digital Economies Lab to deliver resources and information to marginalized and Indigenous artists in the US and Canada. The Almanac seeks to "imagine backwards" from a future where such artists have access to the resources they need and want, to a present where such information is collected into easily legible and printable resources.

ALN/NT2

Online exhibition *S'éclipser | Phases of Resilience*, with works by Elisa Gleize, Joselyn McDonald, and Sarah Friend, November 6th to February 6th 2021.

S'éclipser | Phases of Resilience calls on the motif of metamorphosis through a techno-critical and ecofeminist perspective. The three artworks bring to light hybrid creatures, propose transformations or deformations, and invite us to imagine new material and symbolic configurations of our precarious present.

These metamorphoses act as screens for our protection and active reflection, based on the principle of a disappearance necessary to the (re)poetization of the world, a calculated step back that leaves room for other resilient agencies.

In *Mex and the animals* by Elisa Gleize, *Mother_Protect_Me* by Joselyn McDonald and *Becoming Illegible* by Sarah Friend, simulation, distortion, and abstraction question and challenge the universal human subject, its image, as well as the androcentric and anthropocentric systems on which it depends. The artworks create spaces of life, hope and opposition, reflecting the world's fragility and structures like a distorting mirror in order to inspire subtle disobedience.

Eastern Bloc

Online workshop *S'amuser avec l'électronique pendant qu'il est encore temps*, with Josée Brouillard, November 24th 2021.

Participants were familiarized with electronic art by making a personalized badge inspired by the work of Josée Brouillard. Using seven-segment displays, they illuminated a word of their choice and expressed their dismay at the end of the world to come.

In the fall of 2021, as soon as a lull appeared, a second series of events was proposed, IRL. The group exhibition *Related Matters*, presented as part of the Slow Tech edition of the HTMLles Festival, invites us to suspend the present moment in order to contemplate the temporalities of the living world and its elements, and to perceive the impact of human activity. Raw materials and technological devices arising from their transformation become intertwined, allowing life cycles at different scales and their traces on our ecosystems to emerge. In the context of a climate emergency, *Related Matters* invites us to step back and reconsider the ties between nature and technology.



Photo: Jean-Michael Seminario

Ada x

Group exhibition *Related Matters*,
September 16 to October 16 2021.

5 4 3 2 1, Josée Brouillard

In 1947, at the University of Chicago, a group of Atomic Scientists created the *DoomsdayClock*, a countdown that illustrated the looming danger that came from the threat of nuclear war. Josée Brouillard revisits this conceptual clock to reflect the prevailing anxieties of today, in the form of an interactive electronic installation. Counting down from 9 to 1, this installation cannot quite make it to zero on its own. With the

question "would you dare to trigger the end of the world?" the visitor is compelled to step on a pedal and the countdown finally reaches 0, hesitates, and then begins again. In this short moment of suspension, nothing has happened. What's next?

Biidaaban: First Light, Lisa Jackson

Rooted in the realm of Indigenous futurism, *Biidaaban: First Light* is an interactive VR time-jump into a highly realistic—and radically different—Toronto of tomorrow. The city's square is flooded. Its infrastructure has merged with the local fauna; mature trees grow through cracks in the sidewalks and vines cover south-facing walls. People commute via canoe and grow vegetables on skyscraper roofs. Urban life is thriving. Moving through this city, we can hear the languages of the place known as Tkaronto and engage with the written text of the Wendat, Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) and Anishinaabe (Ojibway). As users explore this altered city now reclaimed by nature, they must think about their place in history and ultimately their role in the future. *This work was produced by the National Film Board of Canada.*

Green Gazing, Ashley Bowa + Lesley Marshall

First presented in the form of a meditative movement session and a discussion as part of the 2020 edition of the HTMLles Festival, *Green Gazing* continues to encourage community reflection on our relationship to living things and the systemic roots of environmental degradation through an interactive installation. In a room filled with plants, the data generated by the vegetation and the gestures of the visitors create a live audio and video work.

How to Carry a River, Charlotte Biron + Camille Lamy

Capturing sounds, preserving them, listening to them again and discovering their magic. Both a sound installation and an instruction manual, *How to Carry a River* is an invitation to linger over the sounds of the natural world. After listening to the 15-minute audio loop, each visitor is able to take with them the manual provided and, in turn, to capture small parts of disappearing nature. In a time of eco-anxiety, *How to Carry a River* demystifies sound recording technologies in a gentle and sensitive way, reminding us of their potential for comfort and greater agency.



Faraday Wear (5G) + The Waves, Kayla Anderson

Faraday Wear (5G) et *The Waves* form a video installation focused on personal protective equipment (PPE) made from materials that block electromagnetic frequencies (EMF). Confronting techno-hazard anxieties through dystopian props, *Faraday Wear (5G)* is a series of counter-technology garments and inhabitable structures. These objects consider how we choose to protect ourselves from invisible dangers. The project makes visible these concerns and the kinds of bodily anxiety that follow. In the corresponding short film, *The Waves*, the characters don *Faraday Wear* garments to shield their bodies from EMF. Rather than ward off all sensation, they instead cultivate sensitivity to the world as a practice; especially, sensitivity to those things otherwise difficult to see.

Khipu, Constanza Piña

Khipu functions as an extension of the human body, forging a link between the natural world and digital technology. Antennas strung with alpaca wool and copper connect to an electromagnetic field amplifier, which collects the surrounding frequencies. The project integrates new sensory technology with traditional khipus, an Incan innovation characterized by Piña as a prehispanic, ecological computer that, in simplest terms, consists of a series of knotted threads attached to a central, long thread. Numerically, the system of khipus is reminiscent of code, while for the artist the interpretation of that code is neither essential nor necessarily possible in a Western-dominated society. *Khipu* demonstrates how the interconnectedness of body and land formed the basis for ancient technology, and how adapting to this conscious approach can foster mindful technological innovation.



Photo: Jean-Michael Seminaro

Dismantling Your Électroniques, Lou Fozin

Dismantling Your Électroniques is an interactive Augmented Reality (AR) installation that invites the public to explore the minerals contained inside their electronics. The installation exists as both digital space and physical objects in the exhibition. Accessible by scanning printed image AR markers with a smartphone, the digital elements are made up of soundscapes, oral storytelling, images, text, 3D models, and videos. The installation as a whole invites the viewer

to engage with the complex geopolitical and social implications of the resource extraction required to sustain our technological lives. A rock and a smartphone may seem worlds apart, but *Dismantling Your Électroniques* demonstrates the direct material reliance modern technology has on natural resources.

Imaginary Explosions, Caitlin Berrigan

Imaginary Explosions forms a speculative worldbuilding cosmology that centers upon geological animacies and intimacies with the in/human. In this video series,

contemporary science blurs with art and fiction as transfeminist scientists interpret volcanic activities across place and time, cooperating with the desires of the mineral earth to simultaneously erupt all volcanoes. The work was developed through a practice of collaboration and improvisational performance with scientists, artists, and scholars whose real-life work pushes the limits of science and culture, to depict fictionalized versions of themselves in episodic videos. Grounded in scientific research and visits to active volcanoes, the work explores possible presents and futures to think beyond the framework of the human.

Studio 303

Filmed performance + discussion *Pas d'apparat corps* with Calla Durose-Moya and Guillaume Vallée, moderated by Kim-Sanh Châu, October 14th 2021.



Photo: Jean-Michael Seminario

Pas d'apparat corps is a multidisciplinary performance originally conceived for live streaming that incorporates dance, video, Super8, and music. The collaborative project plays with body dematerialization and media fragmentation to explore connections between the physicalities of the human body and of analog video. The performance was followed by a discussion with artists Calla Durose-Moya and Guillaume Vallée, and was moderated by Studio 303 co-director Kim-Sanh Châu.

