

Jennifer Chan, *Grey Matter*, 2013.

Beyond the Interface London

25 APRIL - 21 JUNE 2015

FEATURING

Zach Blas, Branger_Briz, Mez Breeze,
Heath Bunting, Jennifer Chan, Francesca
da Rimini, Genetic Moo, Nathaniel Stern

Beyond the Interface is an exhibition and series of events presented by Furtherfield, where leading international contemporary artists explore the technical devices that pervade our lives.

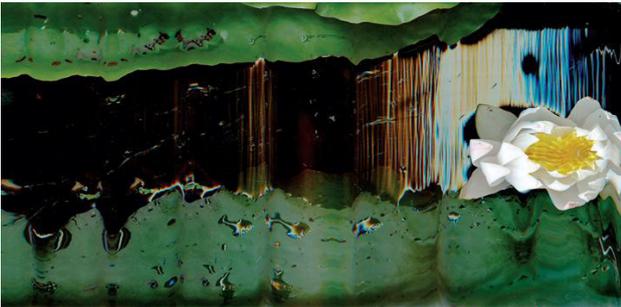
“The interface is the sense organ of the computer, whereby it becomes part of human culture” – Søren Bro Pold¹

How much of our life do we spend in front of screens? Typically young adults in the UK spend more than a third of their waking lives watching TV or using computers, smartphones and tablets.² These glowing rectangles are just one interface through which we contribute to the growing global human-machine network.

Nowadays a multitude of sensors proliferate in these same devices along with the chips and transmitters that are embedded in all consumer goods. Our actions are tracked, our utterances and exchanges are monitored, and our behaviours inform the design of future media, systems and products. This is the cybernetic loop.

The interface is the boundary across which information is exchanged, causing a transformation

in one or both sides of that boundary. Between individuals, corporations and states; beliefs and disciplines; components of computer systems; or machines and living beings. Interfaces have always been a site of control, hidden in plain view: symbolic, social or technological. Seduced and habituated, we forget to question how we are dominated and reprogrammed by the very facilities that are supposed to free us as part of the digital revolution. Lori Emerson suggests this is an “overwhelming push to disempower users/consumers with closed devices”.³



Nathaniel Stern, *Giverny of the Midwest*, 2011

As you approach Furtherfield Gallery in the middle of London’s Finsbury Park, you will notice that the external walls have been transformed into an immersive installation of lush, rippling images of water lilies, leaves and other organic forms. *Giverny Remediated* is an installation of performative prints by Nathaniel Stern (US) continuing his ‘Compressionism’ series of work. Part of Stern’s Compressionist series, this work references Monet’s immersive painting installation *Water Lilies*, painted a century ago, only in this case the artist has strapped a hacked scanner to his body in order to create the works.



Nathaniel Stern with his hacked scanner.

“*Compressionism* follows the trajectory of Impressionist painting, through Surrealism to Postmodernism, but rather than citing crises of

representation, reality or simulation, my focus is on performing all three in relation to each other.”⁴

In a new commission Stern will create ‘Rippling Images of Finsbury Park’, a new public artwork created in the boating lake (which sits adjacent to Furtherfield Gallery). The artworks will be available to download by public USB installed in the Gallery walls as part of Dead Drop, the offline, anonymous, file sharing, peer to peer, network.⁵

Visitors can also download the essay that sets out many of the concepts behind this exhibition. ‘Interface Perception – The Cybernetic Mentality and Its Critics: *ubermorgen.com*’ by Søren Bro Pold (editor of *Interface Criticism, Aesthetics Beyond Buttons*) explores how we perceive interfaces, and the role that art has to play in making technology more feelable.

Beyond The Interface – London is a remix of an exhibition co-curated by Furtherfield with Julian Stadon for ISMAR 2014, the International Symposium on Mixed and Augmented Reality, that took place in Munich in September 2014.

OTHER ARTWORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Zach Blas

Facial Weaponization Communiqué: Fag Face

2012 2012 (HD video and vacuum formed, painted plastic mask)

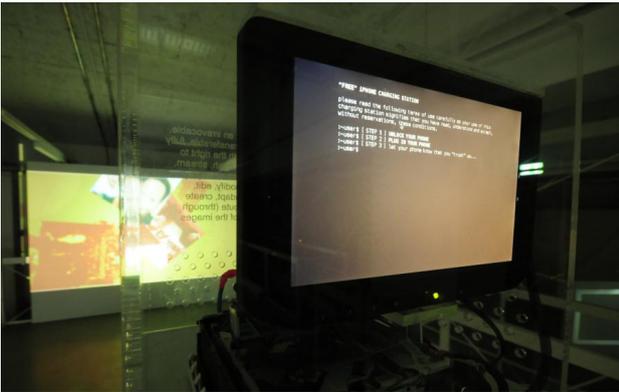


Facial Weaponization Suite protests against biometric facial recognition technologies and the inequalities they propagate. By making “collective masks” in community-based workshops that are modelled from the aggregated facial data of participants, Blas creates amorphous masks that cannot be read as human faces by machine surveillance networks. The masks are used for public interventions and performances. One of these masks, the *Fag Face Mask*, generated from the biometric facial data of many queer men’s faces, is a response to scientific studies that link determining sexual orientation through rapid facial recognition techniques. These masks deploy a common strategy of resistance used by social movements to refuse dominant forms of political representation.

Branger_Briz (US)

A Charge for Privacy

2011 (Digital video and iPhone Station)



Branger_Briz, *A Charge for Privacy*, 2011.

Nothing online is really “free”. We often forget (or might not even realise) that the online services we depend on for our most intimate and private exchanges (Facebook, Gmail, etc) are not exactly “free”, nor are they exactly “private”. Every word you email to your family and every link you share with your friends is being archived, indexed and monetised, either in the form of targeted ads and/or other data-mining ventures.

A Charge for Privacy is an iPhone charging station which functions as a metaphor for the online services that we use. Services that are thought to be “free” but are in fact paid for with a new digital-age currency, our privacy. Our charging station gives users a “free” charge (but not without agreeing to

the Terms of Use) in exchange for all of the photos on their iPhone, which at the moment of connection, are downloaded to the station and projected publicly on the Gallery wall.

Mez Breeze (AU)

T[he]Issue: The Geospatial and Mixed-Locative Colonisation Act of 2014

2014 (Online documents and internet-enabled workstation)

For all the current hype surrounding the practice and implementation of Augmented Reality technology, very little attention has been paid (artistic or otherwise) to the ownership/proprietary rights involved in colonising geospatial arenas. *T[he]Issue* asserts ownership rights to emergent Augmented and Mixed/Virtual Reality dimensions. The document asserts a blanket claim over all spatial and locative sectors involved in an updated version of the Virtual-Reality Continuum (think geophysical, Cartesian-mixed, synthetic).

This document comprehensively outlines ownership adoption of non-colonised geospatial/geolocate vectors according to a contemporary interpretation of Geospatial Law. It sets out to address problems arising from disputes concerning the proprietorship of valuable locative sectors and to curtail AR avatar abuse. It addresses the rights for those virtual or augmented bodies that are identical to a phenomenologically-defined “real” person, asking what are the governing guidelines regarding Mixed Reality copyright, trademark, and intellectual property issues. If a business or government stakes an exclusivity claim involving Augmented Reality output in a public or popular geographic area, then who owns the rights regarding AR delivery into that space?

Heath Bunting (UK)

Proto-type Off-the-shelf (OTS) British Anonymous Corporation

2014 (Documentation material and identity kit)

This work is part of a larger project called *The Status Project*, a study of the construction of our

'official identities', what Bunting describes as "an expert system for identity mutation". It is an identity created for anonymous corporations that consist of non-natural person members.



Heath Bunting, *Proto-type Off-the-shelf (OTS) British Anonymous Corporation*, 2014.

His research explores how information is logged as it is supplied by the public in their interaction with organisations and institutions. The project draws on his direct encounters with specific database collection processes and the information he has been obliged to supply in his life as a public citizen in order to access specific services; this includes data collected from the Internet and information found on governmental databases. This data is then used to map and illustrate how we behave, relate, choose things, travel and move around in social spaces. The project surveys individuals on a local, national and international level producing maps of "influence and personal portraits for both comprehension and social mobility".

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Jennifer Chan (CA)

Grey Matter

2013 (Digital video, 05:21)

A confessional remix video in which the artist takes on the persona of a teenage Internet user, Jennifer Chan's *Grey Matter* "mashes up pop culture, net art, and teen-girl online aesthetics into an overloaded diaristic video that questions what privacy and sharing mean in the age of social media."⁶. She gives a first person account of her feelings about her own political inactivity online, in spite of having access to a wealth of information combining obscure nostalgic media with "embarrassing statements". Collaging the artefacts of Internet pop culture experienced

across different social networks, she expresses her critique of it within its own language.

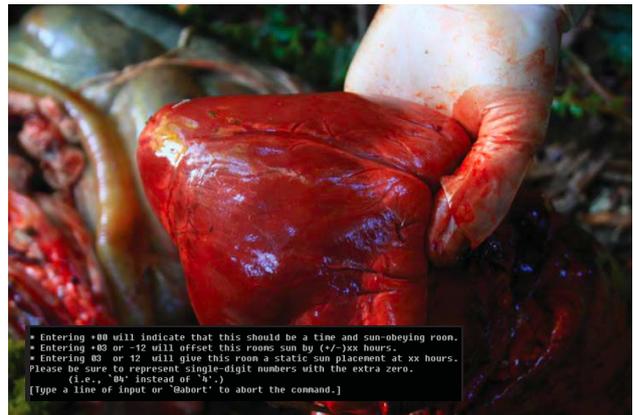
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Francesca da Rimini (AU)

Hexecutable

2013 (LamdaMOO installation and zine)

LamdaMOO is one of the oldest online communities in which worlds are created by text and text play alone. Any internet user can log onto LambdaMOO as a guest to explore spaces that Lambda inhabitants have built, and to talk to other users.



Francesca da Rimini, *Hexecutable*, 2013.

Concerned with the complex socio-political and environmental changes, "so immense, so urgent, that we must gather the myriad circuits of fragmented atomised experimentation and feed them into one vast circuit to support the flows of alt. currents"⁷, Francesca da Rimini has created a new avatar at LambdaMOO called 'Hexecutable' (alias 'hexe'). *Hexecutable* inhabits an organically-growing maze of spaces. In the gallery visitors are logged on as Hexe, which gives them the ability to build new spaces and objects for her during their visit. Hexe is collecting botanical knowledge from gallery and online visitors about plants' healing properties, data which she will use to build new zones and objects in the maze, so they are invited to share some botanical knowledge.

Furtherfield Gallery hosts will act as guides to the Hexecutable space, throughout the exhibition. They will also undertake to stitch copies of *HEXzine #2*, written by da Rimini about her return to LambdaMOO, featuring spells, poetry, non-rational speculation, alchemy, and critique of info-capitalism. Da Rimini says "Ultimately *Hexecutable* is a spell of sorts."

Genetic Moo (UK)

It's Alive!

2010-15

Multimedia networked installation *It's Alive!* sees two populations of parasites and a screen image combine into a living interface mixing webcam, maggots and ants. The webcam looks out onto the children's play area of Finsbury Park and slowly builds an RGB image reflecting what it sees.

The maggots feed on the light that is created and are revealed writhing away within the image once a certain brightness has been achieved. Large and ugly, they are indifferent to the source as long as there is enough light. The ants have a different scheme in mind. They continuously wander across the surface of the image looking to repair damage caused by the maggots. Filling in holes with fine gossamer-like threads, their programmed desire is to restore order. The three intertwined activities of the webcam, maggots and ants operate as a living ensemble, to create a continuously reconfigured parasitic interface consuming energies from the park within which the Gallery stands.

NOTES

1. *Interface Criticism, Aesthetics Beyond Buttons* edited by Christian Ulrik Andersen & Søren Bro Pold
2. <http://www.kpcb.com/internet-trends>
3. 'Against the Frictionless Interface! An Interview with Lori Emerson'
4. <http://nathanielstern.com/art/tag/compressionism>
5. <https://deaddrops.com>
6. Jillian Steinhauer, 'Tracing a Path from Cubism to Digital Art', *HyperAllergic* (02 April 2013)
7. Francesca da Rimini, *HEXzine #1* (May 2013)

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ZACH BLAS

Zach Blas is an artist, writer, and curator whose work engages technology, queerness, and politics. Currently, he is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Art at the University at Buffalo. His work has been written about and featured in *Art Review*, *Frieze*, *Art Papers*, *Hyperallergic*, *Rhizome*, *Mousse Magazine*, *The Atlantic*, *Al Jazeera America*, *The New Inquiry*, *Leonardo Electronic Almanac*, and *Wired*.

www.zachblas.info

BRANGER_BRIZ

Branger_Briz are artists, educators && programmers bent on articulating our digital landscape creating memorable interactive projects for themselves && clients. To them contemporary culture means digital culture. They are driven by a desire to share our digital literacies, so their work tends to be public-facing && leverage new-media. They specialise in producing custom projects from concept >> design >> development >> launching/sharing && love every step in the process.

<http://brangerbriz.com>

MEZ BREEZE

Mez Breeze is an Australian-based artist and practitioner of net.art, working primarily with code poetry, electronic literature, and digital multimedia works combining text, code, image and sound. Born Mary-Anne Breeze, she uses a number of avatar nicknames, including Mez and Netwurker. As of May 2014, Breeze is the only digital writer who's a non- USA citizen to have her comprehensive career archive (called "The Mez Breeze Papers") housed at Duke University, through their David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

<http://mezbreezedesign.com>

HEATH BUNTING

Heath Bunting was born a Buddhist in Wood Green, London, UK, and is able to make himself laugh (currently, reduced to only smile). He is a co-founder of both net.art and sport-art movements and is banned for life from entering the USA for his anti genetic work. His self taught and authentically in-

dependent work is direct and uncomplicated and has never been awarded a prize. He is both Britain's most important practising artist and the World's most famous computer artist.

<http://www.irational.org/heath>

JENNIFER CHAN

Jennifer Chan makes remix videos, gifs and websites that contend with gendered affects of media culture. Chan had solo presentations at the Marshall McLuhan Salon in the Embassy of Canada in Berlin for Transmediale 2013 (Germany), Future Gallery (Berlin), Images Festival (Toronto), Vox Populi (Philadelphia) and recently LTD (Los Angeles). She has a HBA in Communications, Culture, Information Technology from University of Toronto and a MFA in Art Video from Syracuse University. Chan was born in Ottawa, raised in Hong Kong, and is now based in Chicago. She co-organises Dorkbot Chicago and helps women learn code at Girl Develop It.

<http://jennifer-chan.com>

FRANCESCA DA RIMINI

Francesca da Rimini explores the poetic and political possibilities of collaborative (tel)embodied play. Early net projects include *GashGirl*, *Flesh-Meat* and the award-winning labyrinth *dollspace*. As cyberfeminist VNS Matrix member she inserted slimy interfaces into Big Daddy Mainframe's data-banks, perturbing the (gendered) techno status quo. Her doctoral thesis at the University of Technology Sydney investigated three diverse cultural activism projects seeding the formation of new collective subjects. She has co-authored *Disorder and the Disinformation Society: The Social Dynamics of Information, Networks and Software* (Routledge 2015).

<http://gashgirl.sysx.org>

GENETIC MOO

Genetic Moo (Nicola Schauerman and Tim Pickup) have been creating individual interactive art works for over 5 years. They create Microworlds, digital ecosystems and living installations that are always changing, mutating, and evolving in front of your eyes. Both gained Masters degrees from the Lansdown Centre for Electronic Arts. They have exhibited extensively in galleries, festivals and museums.

<http://www.geneticmoo.com>

NATHANIEL STERN

Nathaniel Stern is an artist and writer, Fulbright grantee and professor, interventionist and public citizen. He has produced and collaborated on projects ranging from ecological, participatory and on-line interventions, interactive, immersive and mixed reality environments, to prints, sculptures, videos, performances and hybrid forms.

His book, *Interactive Art and Embodiment: The Implicit Body as Performance*, takes a close look at the stakes for interactive and digital art, and his ongoing work in industry has helped launch dozens of new businesses, products and ideas.

<http://nathanielstern.com>

ABOUT FURTHERFIELD

Furtherfield is the UK's leading organisation for arts, technology and social change. Since 1997 Furtherfield has created online and physical spaces and places for people to come together to develop and create critical experimental art and digital technologies on their own terms. Furtherfield Gallery and Commons are based in the heart of London's Finsbury Park. This serves as a hub to connect and activate local and international communities of artists, technologists, thinkers and doers.

www.furtherfield.org

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