

## **U2 Positions Through Iterating.**

My line of enquiry uses design as a narrative device to examine how humans in all our glorious idiosyncrasies interact with technology. How do we conceive of ourselves and our place in the world as we move from traditional material-bound modes of living to an increasingly abstract, tech-mediated, networked existence? What role can / does graphic communication design play in this? My initial focus was on the body as a site of tension between the situated self and the objectifying inclinations of tech as delineated by Donna Haraway. From this standpoint, I am further exploring questions of materiality that underline our retreat into cyberspace.

### **Annotated Bibliography:**

Haraway, D. (1988) 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies* (Vol.14, No.3), pp.575-599.  
Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3178066> (Accessed: 05/05/22).

Haraway is critical of the unexamined ideology of scientific objectivity that pervades modern society and informs our technological advances. In contrast to this position which embodies "a detached gaze from nowhere" (p. 581) Haraway argues for a situated stance in which meaning exists in an active space between subject and object.

In my own practice I have followed this line of enquiry, exploring the intersection between personhood and technology. In my 3D experiments this has taken the form of rendered sculptural explorations using my own body as a direct tool for creation in tandem with scanning software. Further enquiries saw me explore 3D-scanning as a means to preserve and catalogue the unremarkable items which define contemporary life. As data is one of the primary byproducts of our daily existence, I also sought ways in which to engage with my own biometric information in a subjective, tactile manner. Interfaces, such as those for

interpreting medical monitoring systems must conform to a standardised objective form in order to be used in a widespread manner. This does not, however, speak to the personal nature of the data we often share nor the manifold ways in which people process data itself.

Greenfield, A. (2017) *Radical Technologies*. London: Verso, pp. 9–30.

In the first chapter of his book *Radical Technologies*, Adam Greenfield examines the dematerialization of everyday objects whose functions have been subsumed by the hegemony of our smartphones. Such a trend has led to a freeing-up of our collective pocket space. We do not, however, exist in a clean white cube of total dematerialization and sleek techno-utopian living. My work plays with this notion of dematerialization as it relates to the physical objects that we interact with on a daily basis. By 3D-scanning and cataloguing items of little consequence, I am nodding towards the creation of data which, whilst nebulous, does require a physical storage space of some manner to exist. In doing so, I hope viewers will consider the physicality of their lives and how everyday objects may act as narrative devices which tell the story of their existence in different ways to that of data.

Harbisson, N. (2016) *The Renaissance of Our Species* [Speech]. MuseumNext New York. November. Available at: <https://www.museumnext.com/article/the-renaissance-of-our-species/> (Accessed: 05/05/22).

In his 2016 talk *The Renaissance of Our Species* Neil Harbisson expounds upon his desire to “become technology”, a process he has pursued with maximalist vigour via a literal incorporation of hardware. The world’s first legally recognized cyborg, Harbisson’s most prominent sensory extension allows him to hear colour and experience this facet of sight in novel ways. As a diabetic who wears a (albeit removable) chip in my arm, I find Harbisson’s embrace of technology as a creative medium fascinating. Through a combination of his

pre-existing biology and incorporated hardware Harbisson is essentially able to use his body as a tool for art by creatively interpreting data.

In my own practice, I have followed a line of enquiry that explores this intersection between physical biology and immaterial data. By posing my own body and using 3D-scanning equipment, I have experimented with a form of sculpting that is immediate, direct, and near-tactile in technique. My iterations using my Libre-Link sensor have involved reinterpreting my blood sugar data into a form that is more personal and subjective to me. In doing so, I chose to render the results in the form of a flipbook as this felt in-keeping with my background in literature and my practice as a whole.

Tait, A. (2019) '*What happens to our online identities when we die?*', *The Guardian*, 2 June. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2019/jun/02/digital-legacy-control-online-identities-when-we-die> (Accessed: 05/05/22).

The entanglement of our lives with technology is a truism, a melding that goes unquestioned as we live our days partly through a screen. In volume, our online data comprises a vast inheritance that we leave to the world upon our passing. Yet such a collection of information is, by definition, immaterial and therefore this fact hardly feels concrete.

Thinking about the physical reminders we leave behind, often the mind is drawn to the tokens which represent us best. Upon the grave of a keen footballer one might expect to find a pair of boots and memorabilia of the deceased's club of choice. During our lifetimes however, our day-to-day interactions are often defined by thoroughly mundane, disposable items which we cast aside without thought. Such detritus is perhaps a more comparable fit for the pages of data we upload on a daily basis. By rendering such physical items in a 3D space, I am playing with this notion of permanence; changing unremarkable physical objects into immaterial data.

Berrow, A. (2021) *A Tale of the Tarot* [Ceramics]. Timothy Taylor Gallery, London. (Viewed: 20 August)

Alma Berrow's 2021 work *A Tale of the Tarot* constitutes an ode to lived experience in tactile terms. Depicting the remnants of a dinner party through the medium of ceramics, Berrow invites viewers to play detective and piece together a scene-that-was. By shifting the materiality of the everyday objects at hand, most of which are spent cigarette ends, we are prompted to reconsider their position in relation to ourselves. We tend to consider great works of art as the objects which most represent the cultures in which we live, and by extension consider them as the objects most worthy of preservation. In truth, however, the articles with which we interact the most, those that define our lives as consumers, are comparatively more mundane.

In my own practice, I have been exploring the use of 3D-scanning towards a similar end. By creating a gallery of everyday objects (found discarded in various tote bags), I am establishing a record of the detritus that the banality of life leaves behind. In translating the materiality of each object to a 3D space, I render them immune from physical decay to exist in potential perpetuity as another drop in an immense ocean of intangible data.

Jamie Llyod, C. (2021) *Acts of Control* [Publication]. Available at: <https://graduateshowcase.arts.ac.uk/projects/223213/cover> (Accessed: 05/05/22)

Cara Jamie Llyod's final BA project follows a similar line of enquiry to my own, with the designer creatively interpreting her own blood sugar data to create a biodata-led publication. Given that Cara works in the publications workshop at Central Saint Martins, it may seem surprising that I was unaware of her project until it came time to print and bind my own book (a process she guided me through). Once more, one would be forgiven for assuming a certain level of disappointment on my part at being pipped to the post. However, I believe the

contrast in our publications speaks volumes. That two designers could interpret data from the same application interface in visually divergent ways, for me, hints at the tension between human 'subjectivity' and technological 'objectivity'. As mentioned above, the technological interfaces we navigate daily are by necessity static and designed for the median user of a broad audience. However, the experience of those who use them is situated in a space where these UI structures and our preexisting characters meet.