

16th July

Morning session

Introduction

Keynote: Dr Who and the Non-Entity “Redefining the Immunity Problem in the Empire of Like”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjciHy89ao4&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0Y6Xj0XLCpZK4EGKH1wraytD-fOW1BSJZks5Lv25NjAIZ7lnS7-UBOY5Q>

Performative Viral Flows – Masks and Earworms

Maria Madero (The London Interdisciplinary School): [ARCHIVE DELIRIUM](#)

Archive delirium is a collection of 120+ multidisciplinary works related to topics of the mask. It is growing, being in constant revision and construction. It encompasses the diversity of times, spaces, disciplines and dimensions that the mask has. It wants to be a repository of connections and an incomplete collection of moments. It also intends to make visible and more intelligible the Global South’s—unrepresented—artists and thinkers. It is written by Maria Angelica Madero as a storytelling and reading of the images that are part of it. The archive started upon realising that we are becoming a masked society. Protestor’s masks for anonymity, facial recognition technologies, respiratory masks in hospitals, medical masks for viral protection, the mask as a military device, ethnographic masks, and others. Upon this, there is the necessity to unveil the complexity of the mask and its implications with a more rigorous study of the mask’s dimensions.

Colin Black (Composer, Sound Artist and Radio Artist): *Gloves, Masks & Confinement*. Performance streamed live during the lockdown (18 April 2020) while the artist was in Ljubljana.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIR6KOh15u8&t=21s>

Elena Pilipets (University of Klagenfurt, Austria): *Fuzzy, Nonsensical, Mundane: The Gesture of Sharing #injectdisinfectant and the TikTok Lockdown Aesthetic*

[waiting for link]

This presentation draws attention to the mundane practices of tagging and sharing that produce different experiential registers of viral video circulation on TikTok. Focusing on a sample of 1k #injectdisinfectant images in the wake of Donald Trump's now infamous comments on treating Coronavirus, it pursues two main objectives: exploration of natively-digital video material as part of the TikTok lockdown aesthetic; and methodological experimentation with the capacity of this material to grasp fuzzy experiences that relate to imitative acts of spreading nonsensical content. In particular, I will discuss the gestural qualities of #injectdisinfectant, the way these short-form video contributions enact a platform-specific affective fabric of play and imitation. By combining Vilém Flusser's notion of technical images with theories of digital aesthetic and viral contagion, I approach #injectdisinfectant as a gesture of ironic distancing, arguing that the less an image informs, the better it communicates. When brought out by users' interactive contributions, #injectdisinfectant comes to increasingly trouble the distinction between stress and boredom, opening the realm of TikTok lockdown aesthetic to a larger ensemble of meaning and (non)sense making social media.

Maria Puskas (Artist): Shopping Drift (Guided Meditation on Panic Buying)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5V7z22ehCI&feature=youtu.be>

We have always been limited by the structures and paradigms we lived by. However, the current restrictions regarding physical activity and behavior – which does not differ from structural change – generated some great tension both on a universal and personal level. We have a strong sense of lacking freedom, despite the fact, that for example – as urbanists have realized decades ago – it is barely possible to freely pick our path in cities. It rarely comes to our mind that we are already physically limited by the layout of the built environment. The current restrictions are just a small adjustment made on our otherwise comfortable or at least *known* structure. There are many doubts regarding the sense of these new rules applied. The overloading yet blurry information about covid just enhances the tension. I would like to offer a meditation, a guided visualization of slow, maskless, pre-covid grocery shopping – an invitation to practice some virtual grocery store derive. A 20-minute video focused on the audio recording with a tasteful background image, uploaded to youtube to fit today's most popular guided meditations. This work sheds light on the desire to (only) live in structures that are comfortable for us. **Keywords:** abundance, visualization, relaxation, mental window shopping, real virtuality, viral, solfeggio frequencies, derive

Glenda Torrado Rodríguez (Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México) and Gustavo Gómez-Mejía (Université de Tours – Prim): Corona Sound Machine: Singing the Virus with Vernacular WhatsApp Latin Aesthetics

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=10&v=q5paq1tR9Vk&feature=emb_logo

Link to complete Corona Sound Machine <http://coronasoundmachine.glitch.me/>

Within the Latin-American digital landscape, WhatsApp groups are essential spaces for sharing so-called “viral” contents. During the Coronavirus pandemic, those groups have been used as channels for different types of spreadable media: health tips, official information but also ‘fake news’ and rumours are widely circulated via WhatsApp among families, colleagues, friends and diasporas. From a cultural point of view, Corona-related music is perhaps an original aspect of the Latin-american ‘infodemic’. Cumbia, reggaetón and other regional music genres have been repeatedly used to sing the virus before and during the lockdown. As the virus inspires a wide range of spreadable media, sharing diverse musical expressions (as clips, videos or snippets) has been part of a vernacular experience in recent months. “Corona Sound Machine” is a digital collection of Latin music about the virus. In order to turn spreadable media (often considered as ephemeral junk) into a contemporary cultural archive, 15 Corona-related songs have been collected via Latin-American WhatsApp groups. How to sing a global virus with Latino aesthetics? Beyond Miami-centric cultural stereotypes, the pandemic blends with diverse traditional and modern genres inspiring multiple creative directions. Our online collection of embedded video players will provide analytical comments about these vernacular phenomena. From vocal folk performances to synthetic post-Internet mashups, such contents spread complex emotions (e.g. paradoxically trying to laugh during the tragedy or exorcizing fears about what may happen during the lockdown). They also express “viral” ideologies about collective preventive action, gendered normativities, celebrity cultures and social injustice.

Paul Good and Kirsty Wood (Artists): [Relics](#)

<https://vimeo.com/430642035>

We are an artist duo. We work with sculpture and sound. We are influenced by the environments we inhabit or encounter collectively, trapping various aspects of the past and present. While being on lock down one positive has been to have time off, being collaborate artists having time off together is always more productive. We have used the time to work on new material. This new work is forming into what will be a second album, Relics is one of the pieces we have been working on. We are interested in the context of sounds representation physically i.e. the same way as a score. Sounds we make include sampling, directly sourced from surroundings, with guitar, drums and some vocal elements to create a description of form. Music is movement, for this reason it is always in flux, it has the ability to transcend and work on many different platforms. Sound is pushing our practise further creating

something that is becoming a micro-environment. Musically we create each piece as we would a sketch, starting with a basic structure, slowly building and editing until something forms that feels complete. The compositions are about balance, how one part sits next to another. We want the listener to feel immersed in a sonic landscape.

Ruth Adams (King's College London): 'Coronavirus is a Paigon' – UK Rap Music as a Public Service and Public Good in the Time of Covid-19.

[Link to Media]

Stuck at home during lockdown, Grime, Drill and Garage artists were quick to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic, producing tracks and accompanying videos that functioned not just as a creative release, but as public service announcements. 'Spitting bars' that encouraged others to "keep your salivas" (Lady Leshurr), some echoed more mainstream media messages in promoting good hygiene habits and social distancing. Could these tunes lead to a reassessment of UK 'urban' music's reputation? No longer a culture held responsible for anti-social behaviour, but one that encourages social responsibility, where covering your face suggests not gang warfare but germ warfare? In part, the songs and their messages can be seen as a response to the disproportionate impact of the virus on the communities from which these genres emerged – BAME, working class, urban - and a desire by artists to reach them with public health information often more straightforward and unambiguous than government campaigns. These Covid-19 tracks can be seen as part of ongoing criticism by these music scenes of the governments' perceived inability or unwillingness to tackle inequality and its effects. They are of a part with Stormzy's calling out of Theresa May's handling of the Grenfell Tower tragedy and its aftermath at the Brit awards in 2018. Grime and allied genres continue to function as a vital voice for fractions of society often denied access to the conventional institutions of power and public debate.

Mikey B Georgeson (Artist): [Music to my Ears](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGBA4nDWR8Q&feature=youtu.be>

At the beginning of lockdown, I recorded and filmed this song Music to my Ears. I'm a deaf man and this handicap has given me access to felt modes of embodied knowing. The point, at the time, was to share my passion for music as a means of transmitting a sense of material vitality or the green fuse. Music, even more than visual art, is just something that emerges before our reasoned sense of separation from the land and each other. Music is not an added extra it is the basis for all becoming and all sense of the cosmos as one dynamic substance. So in this sense it is quite an angry song that seeks to interrogate the trope that the arts are a bolt on or an escape. I seek to create an aesthetic ontology where feeling is everything and conceptual frameworks are a means of navigating this rather than a basis for

continued separation. Data thinking has allowed the myth of separation to prevail via the machinations of concepts like the economy and I am, in my small way trying to proliferate other modes of being and connecting. Available exclusively through Corporate Records

16th July

Afternoon session

Lockdown Aesthetic & Quarantine Blues

Veera Jussila (Goldsmiths, London): *Postcards from Lost Cities* (2020)

<https://vimeo.com/435940439>

Postcards from Lost Cities is a deep learning project inspired by the viral images of spring 2020: empty streets, eerie airports, ghostly landmarks. In her project, Jussila worked with small, handpicked datasets to create messages that captured the feelings of loss, longing and confusion in the middle of the pandemic. Via deep learning algorithms, archive material and new photos of tourism destinations blend with the news coverage of the exceptional spring. The piece utilizes generative adversarial networks (GANs) and is mostly coded in Python. RunwayML software was used for the AttnGAN part. The piece is Jussila's final project for the machine learning module in MA Computational Arts at Goldsmiths, University of London. *Postcards from Lost Cities* addresses virality in several ways. It was born as a response to the sudden isolation of popular tourist cities – the kind of destinations that populate our imagination and social media feeds. At the same time, the results only capture a fleeting moment in the pandemic. As Jussila notes in her presentation, the viral visuals have already changed, with images of crowded beaches emerging on our news feeds and representing threat.

Matteo Preabianco (Artist): Like a cloud

[Link to media Library – present in tile]

I am an Italian, living in Scotland. In my home country the coronavirus death toll was and still is very high. I decided to self-isolate. The term “quarantine” comes from the Italian word, “quarantina”, which means “forty days”. I found it sadly amusing that the UK government wants travellers and people with coronavirus symptoms to do a 14 day quarantine instead of 40 days. The first 2 weeks of self-

isolation I tried to work, finishing some projects, but my mind wandered around, thinking about family and friends struggling and dying around Milan. While I was blue, laying down on my bed, I looked up, through my window. I live in an attic, so some of my windows are in the ceiling. I saw another kind of blue: the sky. I start observing all of the clouds. So, I decided to take a picture every day at 10am about clouds. Looking them via the window frame, they seem perfect instant paintings, a sort of primitive Instagram, which remind us to slow down, like the clouds. Now I have a series clouds in different weather, 40 clouds for 40 pictures. They show the negativity of this time, like if you look them via a “nice prison”, but also the impermanence of our life. Every time I took a picture, I looked the death toll in Italy. Was it a coincidence any time the number of deaths increase, the sky was intensely blue?

Fidelia Lam (University of Southern California): [Stuck in a Room](https://fidelialam.com/stuck-in-a-room)

<https://fidelialam.com/stuck-in-a-room>

Stuck in a Room examines quarantine digital aesthetics and the strange spatiotemporal reality many of us find ourselves in. This collection of videos acts as an ongoing log and response to the paradoxical events of pandemic and protest that mark our present reality. When the rhythms of everyday life are stripped away, what is left, and what occurs? We find ourselves in Zoom rooms and Skype calls and Google Meets and FaceTime exchanges and WhatsApp connections, stuck in virtual rooms and domestic spaces in the same posture for hours on end. In most recent weeks, we find ourselves caught between pandemic and protest, stuck “doom-scrolling” for hours on end. This paradoxical spatiotemporal reality engendered by the pandemic (and exacerbated by the protests) has raised questions of productivity, labour, digital access and literacy, accountability, governance, among many more, amidst an ecology of affective, media, and biopolitical feedback loops. It’s easy to get lost amongst this ecology of feedback loops, to be overwhelmed by the sociopolitical and economic implications of the pandemic, and paralyzed by ongoing uncertainty of how and when this might “end”. We are also caught in multiple registers of experience in our isolated connectiveness, collapsed into the same physical and virtual spaces — we see increased global tensions and police brutality in stark juxtaposition to virtual turnip bartering and discussions of yeast starter all in the same spaces— how do we respond to this immense cognitive dissonance? *Stuck in a Room* demonstrates a response to continuously unfolding present events, one by no means perfect, but one that grapples with the paradoxical ecology of our present’s media virality.

Genevieve Costello (Royal Holloway, University of London): *Worry People Eat the Dollhouse*

[waiting for video link]

This is a lockdown aesthetics narrative. Carried by a body that lives under the (non)normative orders of chaos by way of chronic illnesses that are mostly invisible, and inherently, irresolvable, its pre-existing standard of infinite and unknowable confinement stands in parallel with Covid-19's rampant effects on the reorganization of social life, or, in some ways, lack thereof. The piece takes form as a mixed digital media screen performance of internet-mediated intimate exchanges and chosen and unchosen domestic scenes, including videos, texts, images, and readings, as a roving-through-another's mind-body, revealing layers of spatiotemporal and socionormative captivities of this extreme moment in global history. It engages with the concepts of vulnerability, security, and ethics of care, in tension with dependency, power, and control. But, it is not without hope for thinking with a radical relationality that may be felt when loss of control encapsulates and founds subjectivities and socialities, possibly exposing reservoirs of alternative care capacity in new forms of interrelations - a cascade of virality and #quarantinelife under Covid-19.

Natalia Stanusch (John Cabot University, Italy): *Reserved for Social Distancing*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-r41AQkitvQ&t=4s>

This film is a semi-autoethnographic project, lasting less than seven minutes. The film focuses on the state-of-mind during social distancing, embracing lockdown aesthetics in an indefinite Coronavirus-caused exile. The film explores the feelings of longing for being outside during isolation: isolation inside one's room, one's mind, and one's digital dependence. The 'outside,' however, is represented both by the world outside the window and the world inside the computer screen. The physical space fuses into the digital realm where social interactions can occur. The character goes through a series of fluctuations, from the physical space, through one's mind, to the digital space. The film explores the anxiety related to quarantine and the fear of breaking free from a seemingly safe, closed, and digital space and the fear of 'after lockdown' world. In the glass mediated reality, where both a window and a computer screen provide an escape to something as unreal as the past, the voiceover gives a glimpse of feelings and thoughts of the character, who is mediated through a smartphone camera.

Mikey B Georgeson (Artist, University of East London): [Outlook \(Adventures in Ideas\)](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQ4idrmvJZc&feature=youtu.be>

This work is an example of fictioning conceived of initially as a form of satire but, through an innate sense of material vitality, rapidly becoming something more vitalist. The film was re-edited during lockdown when it became apparent that the weather had no intention of altering to match the prevailing mood of humanity. The blue of the sky seemed unrelenting and somehow seemed to decentre the anthropocentric data models so readily reached for when reading of weather. My practice emerges from a felt mode of understanding and this story hinges on what I feel is the overly visual nature of a culture that has come to embody the fixed point position of linear perspective. Tiktok fills daily with videos of baffling trompe l'oeil or other gimmicky Escheresque manipulations of spatial frameworks as if, having agreed to live by the science of the eye and information gain, our only means of escape is to fool the eye and induce a flash of optimism before settling back into the sleepwalkers stroll through the mall of moral and political choices. In making video assemblages combining my music, voice, fiction and digital-making I speculate about how an aesthetic ontology could reweave the bifurcated divisions of hierarchical spatial realms. This methodology of the aesthetic-machine means to work, as Shaviri suggests through "Whitehead's theory of feelings and show how this theory opens the way to an affect based account of human (and not just human) experience".

Valentina Signorelli (University of East London): London Lockdown

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeIQ578lYVg>

Two party goers randomly stuck inside of a house and an **artificial intelligence** who seems to be keeping them **captive**. This is "**London Lockdown**", the first **European comedy web-series** ever made... **remotely**. Six episodes, 5 minutes each. After a massive hangover, the two protagonists wake inside of an unknown house. Their phones are dead and there is no way for them to verify what's happening outside. Their only source of information is **Oracle**, the house **AI**, who confirms the lockdown is on all over London and decides to **lock** them inside until further notice. Will they be able to escape? My name is **Valentina Signorelli**, director and producer. I moved to **London** six years ago from a small place in the north of Italy called **Bergamo**. My hometown is currently the **worst hit territory from COVID-19** in the whole of Europe, with over **5.000 deaths** and a **mortality rate increased by 568%** in March 2020 only. (EcodiBergamo, 2020; Washington Post, 2020) After **losing three family members in less than a week**, I started to question how **creativity** could play an active role in facing this catastrophe. I believe that **comedy** not only has the power to **heal** our pain. It is also a **mirror** of society which reflects **vices**, criticises **habits** and exposes **privilege**. Above all, comedy can **bring people together**, even if they are forced to stay apart. "London Lockdown" was made possible thanks to a team of **writers, actors, producers** and **editors** currently self-isolating in **three** different countries: **UK, Germany** and **Italy**.

They have been working and communicating with the help of **social media** and a discontinuous **fibre broadband**. The series has been broadcast on **Daitona's** social media channels between 27th April and 14th May 2020. Watch the Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeIQ578lYVg> Watch the Pilot: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryMZMFrwbng&t=169s> Watch the Series: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZ6Za6iZgSyT2BmJpxvO9xA>:

Tony D Sampson (University of East London) – Covid_Lockdown_Blues

This short piece began life as a rendition of Summertime, but ended up a very different song. A bit like 2020.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLj1cU-gFfk&t=89s&fbclid=IwAR3JyQWtVS9Hkp3OMwRYAg3tXRq7xjfXRiq6a-fhwpFL-Nv7DX6HJv-U1gI>

16th July

Evening session

Diagraming the Virus

Joseph Nechvatal (Artist): [Viral Venture](#)

<https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/zpAlCnZqqhGx9l4i9exEh?domain=youtube.com>

Viral Venture consists of a projection installation of [Joseph Nechvatal's](#) artificial-life computer virus digital artwork. It is a looped 51:37 minutes captured animation, accompanied by a musical score of 200 electric guitars by the well-known post-minimal composer [Rhys Chatham](#), recorded live at La Basilique du Sacré-Coeur in Paris. Low res version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5owH1qSE04Q>

Mattia Spagnuolo (Artist): [#iorestocasa](#)

<https://vimeo.com/422234495>

#iorestocasa is a virtual artefact that visualizes data relative to the COVID-19 pandemic in the form of a particle system. The most relevant data about the virus outbreak is mapped to variables that modify the shape and color of the system. *#iorestocasa* was entirely conceived and developed during the period of lockdown that was introduced in Italy, among other nations, to combat the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. At the very beginning of my confinement at home – everyday

at 18:00 – I turned on the news to hear updates on the virus situation. However, after about a week or two, I was so overwhelmed by all the numbers, that they stopped making any sense. That's when I had the idea to take that same data that made me feel so uneasy and represent it in a more soothing way. A way that would still encourage reflection on the world's situation and remind everyone of the importance of compliance with the lockdown measures, but less brutally. The title of this work – *#iorestoacasa* – which translates to 'I stay at home', is a tribute to the communal world effort that permitted a halt to the spread of the virus and relieved pressure on the healthcare system.

Yanyi Lu (Goldsmiths, London): [New Handshake in Post-Covid19](#)

<https://vimeo.com/404683044>

This artwork speculates a wearable device for new handshake way in COVID-19 period to keep safe social distance between humans. Users can control the warning LED and virtual hand by their phones. This system explores how to show friendly by a silent way without direct contact and communication like traditional manner. I would like to use this "simple" prototype to show audience a new possible way of communication. I appreciate how we can use technology as a better means of communication in these times and I also reflect the inertia of this kind of social change through this 'odd' wearable device. Would we go back to normal social contact after COVID-19 and would we be skeptical of other's contacts and used to socialize with distance in post-COVID era?

Christina Karpodini (Composer): [Detuned Piano](#)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-ig-Y2_2KU

Detuned Piano is a project that aims to reflect the impact of misleading information through the Media about the current crisis of Covid-19 on people's mental health. A big majority of people are getting stressed by receiving misleading information which does not always reflect on reality. As the information changes a little, from one source to the other, people often are not able to recognize how much of the original information is there in the current information they are receiving. At the same time, both receivers and media are constantly interacting with reinforcing and perpetuate the spread of these unreliable sources. This is a performative audiovisual piece consisted of a generative melody of piano sounds that are being processed with a controller. The quality and tonality of the sounds will be visualized on the screen. The unprocessed piano sound represents the original information about Covid-19 as they presented by the government and scientists, the interaction with sound through the controller represent people's interaction with the information and finally the processed sound and the visualization of it correlates with the

misinterpretation of the information by the media and the disturbance they produce on people's mental state. As this idea of this piece pre-exist the western world's lockdown, it is an on-going project that evolves and developing by taking the form that best supports its message. Therefore, from an installation in physical space that was the initial idea, it became a prototype installation in my house and now it is ready to evolve in a semidigital performance.

Link to existent documentation of the first version of this piece.

<https://ckarpodini.wixsite.com/christinakarpodini/detuned-piano>

Chia Yang Chang (Artist): The Map and Sea-Foam

Sea Foam

video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ybhAKghemE&feature=youtu.be>

Description:

Sea-foam is an artwork inspire by COVID19 Viral modelling, simulate an organic life in the computational method. Sea-foam is composed of lignin, oil and simple protein molecules. These are just some simple element; however, due to the Ecological cycle, this will cause damage to the animals around the sea-foam, which includes human. Instead of modelling the COVID19, this artwork simulates the sea-foam as an image presenting the virus is not evidence to see is harmful but could lead to the catastrophe. Moreover, this manifests behaviour, such as coughing, could release the infection particles to others. The similarity of the virus and the Sea-foam are aware we can not underestimate the tiny but dangerous things.

The Map

video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaxhkY7iI5I>

Description:

The map is a simple data visualise program base on the COVID-19 data from parts of Europe country. The program demonstrates the numbers of cases and death. User can click the country to get the data from it. However, when the country's death number is high, the map will start to displace. I want to use this artwork to raise the concern of the COVID-19. We cannot directly see the virus or death doesn't mean that we can start to underestimate it. In this artwork, I use a straightforward way to demonstrate the higher risk country, which makes the user and audience more easily to see the impact of the virus. After months, the virus is still impacting our world; people are still being infected and dying. Therefore, we must be more careful when we go out, protecting others.

Marina Zagidullina (Chelyabinsk State University, Russia): We are clever than the brainwashed majority: the visualization of “anti-viral” routes of a COVID deniers’ movement in social and news media

[Done - Link to media]

This paper analyzes a media representation of a COVID deniers’ movement. The basis of the deniers’ ideology is a refusal of a lockdown imposed to the majority of the population. “Panic attacks” of collective lockdowns are considered by deniers in conspiracy logics (i.e. “the government tries to benefit from this situation”, “this is a false threat” etc.). The investigation will be focused on the media-aesthetic of the deniers’ movement.

Allan Siegel (Hungarian University of Fine Arts): The Tourism Enigma

[LINK TO MEDIA – Elite Covid-19 Travel Brochure]

Link to all documents

“Tourism had long proven to be a Pyrrhic victory: the yearning for freedom from society has been harnessed by the very society it seeks to escape” (Hans Magnus Enzensberger). Tourism is engrained in modern life. Comprehending or untangling the dilemmas presented by an abundance of tourists - overtourism - and its impact on local populations, the environment and all the other consequences of tourism is not simple. The Mapping the Local block seminar will focus on comprehending, communicating and visualising these issues. Each working group develops their own artistic practices that examine the tourism puzzle. Each group becomes a tourist agency or non-profit company. At the beginning of March with the rapid appearance of the COVID-19 crisis the focus of the seminar changed dramatically. Instead of “overtourism” as the theme the issue became one of imagining what ‘tourism’ looked like in a time of crisis; each of the seven working groups in the class were asked to NOW re-design or envision their tourist agency with special qualities relating the various travel and other restrictions. The results of this process of re-imagining appear now as brochures or advertisements for tourist agencies during the time of the COVID 19 crisis. The Mapping the Local seminar at the Hungarian University of Fine Arts (MKE) is organised jointly by Eszter Lazar, Allan Siegel and Szabolcs Kisspal from the Intermedia and Art Theory and Cultural Studies Departments; participating students are from MKE and the Erasmus programme of the European Union

Subsection: Viral Games

Simon Taylor (University of New South Wales is an Australian): *Fever Games*

<https://sydney.instructuremedia.com/embed/72f0ea77-de3a-4d85-8ee4-777f90bf7f76>

Public-health experts expect fever detections from temperature-scanning to thermal imaging, as modelling of COVID-19 contagion, to become a widespread staple of public life. From airports, workplaces, schools, housing complexes — anywhere we gather en-masse — fever surveillance is a game state that govern rules of labour and play, with FDA regulations of temperature-set conditions to *triage* cultural matters disrupted by ‘hot’ bodies. But is temperature a useful indicator of contagion? Or is ‘febrile purity’ a cultural value suddenly reframed in measures of heat? If it is medically established “that body temperature is subject to many influences” (Houdas & Ring, 2013) how is it even possible to isolate thermal elements of bodies from surrounding environments? FLIR markets heat-sensing cameras as *people flow intelligence*. The Oura is a wearable ring with infrared LEDs and NTC temperature sensors. Companies like Amazon use US black-listed technology of Dahua CCTV systems to create a thermal-scape game where ‘body temperature is no longer a piece of private information.’ This is a containment world-order ruled by “temperature taking that precedes decision making.” (Parks, 2014, p. 2518) To make sense of this thermo-cultural game requires analysing operational imaging and sensing calibrations of ‘blackbodies’ to idiosyncratic foundations in the history of medicine, behaviourism, biometrics, and a *feverish cultural politics* i.e. how “we are culturally raised to be wary of fever [...] and how cultural practices spread as widely as infectious diseases and medicine behind them.” To gain a clearer understanding of how thermal surveillance is a *game structure* for our bodily matter to circulate in the world, this proposal reviews how the new technical “apparatuses of thermal manipulation establish ‘cuts’ that produce phenomena as usable and as knowable elements of mediation.” (Starosielski, 2016, p. 305) How temperature ‘cuts’ play a key role in the ‘lockdown aesthetics’ of bodies to goals of cultural policies and how ‘cut’ samples distribute the “artefacts of description, creators of habit, shapers of process” (Bateson, 1979, p. 202) A game of *thermal-fever* now begun.

William Bishop-Stephens (University of East London): *Game for Two Players and the Lockdown Aesthetic*

[need link to event]

This live event will be a re-playing of Will’s *The Game for Two Players* adapted for social distancing. The players will each need to be a metre away from the table, and a PIR movement sensor will trigger a sanitiser spray. These modifications raise the formality, add rules and another layer of jargon and absurdity to the event. The

event will be filmed, and streamed live, followed by the release of a resulting animation, which would also be projected within the space as part of the live event.

17th July

Morning Session

Viral Media 1

Alberto Micali (John Cabot University, Italy): [Dining Out with COVID-19: \(Biopolitical\) Control and Lock-down Aesthetics, or Why Media Studies Neglect to Face the Crisis of Representation](#)

The spread of COVID-19 has led to an intensification of security measures. Whilst these public health actions to contain contagion seem to recall modern mechanisms of discipline, their escalation and fragmented nature have only confirmed the ruling centrality of the power diagram of control. Indeed, as happened in the case of Italy, the neo-liberalist paradigm maintained the superiority of its primary interest in the freedom of economic domination over bare life and care. Within such a frame, the social imaginary has been schizophrenically overwhelmed, polarising it around both catastrophic and hopeful scenarios. In our encounters with the virus, difference is the rule, but the plane of such encounters is materialist in its transversality. Hence, the aesthetic field provides a privileged position from which to understand its inherent relationality, by precisely acting on individual and collective figurations.

Drawing from the materialist critique and the current crisis of representation in media and cultural studies, I first argue that universal contagion is a material encounter of subjective production. Contrary to the assumptions sustaining the recent discovery of mirror neurons, I maintain that imitation does not follow linear resemblance. Rather, the intensive formation of subjects and unconscious triggering of social responses is activated via the diffractive patterns of contagion. Second, I contend that (biopolitical) control affectively operates within the securitisation paradigm, straining to maintain its destructive functionality by intensively enacting an imaginary that is incapable of facing the eco-systemic, capitalocene-centric nature of our dinners out with COVID-

19. <http://www.forascienceofmultiplicities.com/strata/media-virality-and-the-lockdown-aesthetic/>

Judith Fathallah (Solent University, UK): [Is the meme blank parody? Or, postmodern flatness and the problem of meaning in corona memes](#)

Millennial humour as epitomized in meme formats is often characterized by surreal randomness, and the juxtaposition of signifiers with no apparent connection or meaning. Whilst there are obvious continuities with surrealism, postmodernism and indeed modernism itself, the rapid viral spread of memes today might seem to produce an attitude of indifferent laughter or indeed total lack of affect concerning contemporary tragedies. Memes concerning the coronavirus have brought this phenomenon into sharp relief. This paper questions what it is about meme formats that create this sense of Jameson's pastiche as blank parody, or depoliticized lack of affect, whether it is related to the meme format or content or the context of meme production and distribution. I go on to consider whether we can understand it in the same tradition as the modernist rejection of grand narratives in the wake of two catastrophic wars, or whether the concept of metamodernism can better adapt these ideas to contemporary culture.

Jacqueline Drinkall (Artist): The telepathy aesthetics of viral culture

[waiting for paper due on 10th]

Cybernetic and post structuralist theories of linguistics have considered the alphabet to be a cultural plague and cognitive virus. Alphabetic consciousness is inherently telepathic and viral, and emerged alongside agrarian, debt and literary cultures 5 000 years ago. My paper looks at the intersection of viral culture with telepathic culture of crowds as understood by Gabriel Tarde and theorists of affective contagion. Further, evidence of telepathic virality is found within science fiction and even within science itself. For example, the Marvel character Black Swan invents a telepathy virus, and telepathy viruses are a recurring motif within science fiction. Within medical science, the Telepath™ Ltd brand is closely associated with the tracking of microbiological infections, zoonotic transfer events, and data of virus patients. Medical data is literally entered into Telepath databases. Further, within medical and microbiological terminology, telepathology is the usual everyday method for diagnosing disease at a distance using digital technology. Endovascular surgeons and technologists are working to intervene in the high incidence of strokes within Covid19 patients using a variety of telepathic and telepathological techniques. The interventional neurosurgeon, stroke expert and tech entrepreneur Thomas Oxley recently developed an intracranial telepathic Brain Computer Interface for his interventional neurology. However, science generally prefers terms such as prediction, pre-emption and affect transfer instead of the word telepathy. The organisation called 'Predict Ecohealth' attempts to pre-empt future pandemics by data mapping the impact of capitalist exploitation of nature to viral mutation within wildlife.

Jernej Markelj (Cardiff University, UK): The Oedipal Bacillus: Fascism and Contagion

[\[Link to media\]](#)

This paper engages with Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* to develop a theory of contagious fascism. Instead of seeing it as a historical phenomenon, like Hitler's Nazism, Deleuze and Guattari understand fascism as a libidinal tendency, an inclination of the unconscious forces, which manifests itself in our smallest gestures, and is operative throughout our daily lives. For them, these fascist tendencies are expressed as an effort to order the world in a particular way, and to maintain, fixate and police the physical and conceptual borders established by this organisation. Due to the disruptive forces of globalisation, Deleuze and Guattari see such paranoid policing as escalating under capitalism. Moreover, they point to the contagious nature of fascism. Fascist inclinations are, in their view, 'fascisizing': they spread out and engender the same kind of affective tendencies in others. While Deleuze and Guattari regularly allude to this viral quality of fascist affectivity, they never fully substantiate its logic. In my paper I draw on a variety of supporting texts and thinkers to explicate the contagious operations of fascist tendencies. I begin by mapping Deleuze and Guattari's macro-vision of our social organisation and outline its two primary fascisizing vectors: the capitalist economy and the family unit. To theorise the transmission of fascist tendencies on the individual level, I then examine Freudian psychoanalytic practice and Nietzsche's conceptualisation of the rise of herd morality. I show that in both cases the fascist tendencies spread by means of the fortification of ego, which has internalised the unconscious forces in terms of representation, and seeks to persist in its identity.

17th July

Afternoon session

Viral Media 2

Tina Kendall (Anglia Ruskin University, UK): Bored Media, Virality and #Lockdownlife

[\[Link to Media\]](#)

This paper will explore the 'logics of virality' as these have accrued around—and as they increasingly mediate and control—lived experiences of boredom in the context of the global Covid-19 lockdowns. If metaphors of contagion and virality have long been marshalled by social media corporations as part of their ongoing 'war on boredom' (Kendall 2017), in the context of the current Coronavirus pandemic, this

virality is—as Tony Sampson and Jussi Parikka (2020) have suggested—now 'resolutely non-metaphorical'. Indeed, as I will argue in this paper, what the lockdown has exposed and intensified is the pivotal role that boredom plays in the wider policing, management and control of bodies in an age of 'digital psychopolitics' (Han 2017). One concrete example of this can be seen in the massive outpouring of advice that was issued in the days and weeks following the imposition of lockdown measures, concerning how people could "beat" the boredom that might inevitably occur in this context. The emerging effort to contain the very real Covid-19 virus was thus underwritten by a ramping up of the metaphorical war on boredom, as governments, cultural organisations, and media outlets everywhere began to issue policy documents, tool kits, watch lists, and recommendations—many of which strangely echo both the structure and tone of bingeable media sites such as *Boredom Therapy* or *Bored Panda*. Drawing on work by Byung-Chul Han (2017) and others, my paper attempts to trace some of the 'strange feedback loops' (Sampson & Parikka 2020) that cut across the biological, cultural, technological, and affective layers of these experiences of boredom under lockdown. It will focus on a range of bored media that has emerged in this context, including government policy papers, newsletters and marketing material from various cultural and arts organisations, as well as user-generated content (#boredinthehouse; #boredvibes; #lockdownlife) that has flourished on the popular social media site *TikTok* as a means of documenting, expressing, or avoiding experiences of boredom during lockdown.

Ludmila Lupinacci (London School of Economics): Going with the (social media) flow: Notes on *doomscrolling* and stream flow-breakers in viral times

[\[link to media\]](#)

This short paper dedicates attention to a mechanism through which much of the online content is circulated, shared, and consumed nowadays: social media's infinite streams, or 'feeds'. These informational flows are central socio-technical conditions to the present-day logics of virality and memetics – phenomena that are always contingent on the existence of appropriate structures and vectors. The discussion focusses on what I am referring to as 'flow-breakers'. These are posts shared by users of stream-based social media platforms targeting other (imagined) users who are scrolling uninterruptedly through a flood of gloomy content – a practice that is now generally called '*doomscrolling*'. Stream flow-breakers not only demonstrate the current normalisation of so-called mindless, endless scrolling as part of regular social media engagements but also serve to evidence users' reflexive acknowledgement of both the readers' likely repetitive (often labelled 'addictive') behaviour, and of the stickiness of these technologies. In a context of lockdown, the 'mobility' in mobile social media is less about portability or physical movement and more about affective motility and tentative practices of dwelling in platforms that are purposefully framed as agitated

and restless. **Keywords** Scrolling; social media; platform; mobile media; flow; infinite stream; lockdown, phenomenology.

Donatella Della Ratta (John Cabot University, Italy): Give it a Shot: on Bodies, Violence, and (Media) Viruses

[video or pdf]

The 'shot' is the figurative device around which we (re)think what happened in the last decade in terms of the relationship between violence, visibility and the body. Ten years ago, the myth of the participatory culture incubated within the 'social' web (O'Reilly 2005) had nurtured the absolute faith in virality being the new 'message' of a medium that, by virtue of its speed and 'spreadability' (Jenkins 2013), had irremediably dissolved content into mere contributions (Dean 2005). The Arab Spring embodied the celebration of this belief. The hashtag 'domino effect', in which so many countries, from Libya to Egypt to Yemen, were trapped – dictatorship after dictatorship falling in weeks or months, in a row, first on Twitter, then on the ground –, seemed to be evidence of this virality and spreadability successfully at work. Contagion had finally materialized as a techno-social (and political) condition. This period was marked by the utmost visibility and violence: the more you shoot, the more you are shot at (and viceversa). To the reflection I've elaborated in my previous work on the metaphor of 'shooting' as in performing violence and producing evidence of that violence performed (Della Ratta 2018), I want to offer, ten years and a pandemic after the 'Spring', a further element to the intertwinement between visual media and the military, i.e. the pharmaceutical or, better, 'pharmapornographic' (Preciado 2013) aspect of the shot. The ways in which big pharma converges, with the media and the military, in redefining the body and the production of subjects and subjectivities as the ultimate battlefield for contemporary capitalism. From micro cameras to wearable and bio weapons, the 'shooting' has become more and more connected to technologies of the body becoming 'microprosthetic' and 'incorporated' (Preciado, 2013) and, at the same time, globally networked. No longer extensions of the body, it is the latter that rather incorporates these pervasive spaces of surveillance and inherent violence. The pharmaceutical, pharmapornographic shot has taken over: endocrinology and the genetic (and semiotic) engineering of the healthy and the sick, from period (and virus) tracking-apps to networked sex toys.

17th July

Evening session

Viral Realities in the Pandemic

Mikey B Georgeson (Artist): Kindness is a Virus

We are pleased to present a special mix of this song originally [played live](#) at A&SM#4 Sensorium.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRytrOrR2f0>

Sophie Barr (London College of Fashion): Miasma

[waiting for video]

From the middle-ages to the nineteenth century it was commonly believed that diseases such as bubonic plague and cholera were caused and spread by a poisonous, stinking night vapour known as miasma. The source of this miasma was thought to be rotting organic matter, the discarded and fetid waste from densely populated urban environments. We might relate miasma theory to contemporary conspiracies about 5G and Coronavirus – a new invisible and imagined bio-technological threat. Meanwhile, “deforestation and other forms of land conversion are driving exotic species out of their evolutionary niches and into manmade environments, where they interact and breed new strains of disease” (Watts, 2020). These biological (and ecological, technological, geo-political, social and economic) threats are becoming more visibly connected. This short artist’s video brings together slime-making videos with images of the uncharted jungle of King Kong’s Skull Island. A twenty-first century plague doctor dressed in Amazon sourced PPE stuffs her mask with a nosegay of Hydroxychloroquine to ward against poisonous data clouds to a soundtrack of clicks and whispers from ASMR videos. A strange vapour emanates from discarded obsolete phones and useless cables as they return to the primordial. This video assemblage suggests that miasma theory might be useful to help frame media more materially, bust cloud myths and connect trashy memes with mineral extraction and species extinction. It also implies that however advanced we think we might be, the ‘new magic’ of today’s tech means ‘we have never been modern’.

Stephen Connolly (UCA Farnham, UK): Chek Lap Kok, 21.00, 01.12.19

<https://vimeo.com/424520275>

In spring 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has severely impacted air travel around the globe. In April 2020, passenger numbers are less than a tenth of the same month in 2019. Nation states have identified the mobility of people as a means of contagion, some have responded with travel bans and the grounding of airlines. How will the pandemic impact on the future of air travel? Two previously overlooked aspects of air travel are emerging from the pandemic; the clear socio-economic inequalities of

this mode of transport; and its latent materiality. Flying is a privileged mode of movement: from the global perspective, only a small number of people globally have ever set foot in an aircraft. Fair travel is framed as a release from gravity and a freedom to roam the globe, yet as its material entanglements with the Covid contagion have brought it to earth. The infrastructure of aviation is deeply invested in material practices; airports are amongst the largest built environment installations, yet now grid-locked by nose to tail, parked aircraft. Chek Lap Kok, 21.00, 01.12.19, documents a walk to Hong Kong Airport from the Expo centre on the airport island, by means of slow travel, under makeshift conditions, and without carbon expenditure. It's a harbinger of lean and informal travel arrangements which may be a feature of time to come.

Anna Fairchild (Artist): The Cognitive Revolution; Looking for Obsidian, 2020

[Looking for Obsidian 2020-HQ](#)

Looking for Obsidian was inspired by long Covid-19 Lockdown walks and the joy of finding flints and fossils, revealed by the changing seasons in the recently ploughed fields of Hertfordshire. Obsidian (a black volcanic glass) was prized by primitive Sapiens cultures because it was extremely hard and could be made into very sharp tools. There is evidence that it was traded across the South Pacific over distances of 400km. The concept of trading was made possible by the development of a 'collective imagination', which went beyond the essential elements for survival of species.¹ It is the dual actual reality of trees, rivers and objects and the imagined reality of gods, laws and nations, which was the catalyst for the development of humankind (Sapiens) out of the kingdom of animals. This ever more powerful imagined reality, allowed for the accelerated development of Sapiens culture. What I found interesting on discovering these glistening black stones in the fields is the connection between the actual obsidian object and its newfound use in a collectively imagined reality. I prefer to think of observing the obsidian forms as actual objects and whilst holding it and listening to the sounds of two obsidian pieces rubbed against one another, to marvel in the actual spaces of the environment around me. This marveling and contemplation brought to mind the concerts of Ryuichi Sakamoto and his *Improvisation for Sonic Cure*, 2020.

Andrew Calcutt and Simon Miles (University of East London) aka the National News Service: From Plague Year to Public Sphere: News Poems of the London Lockdown

A sequence of five multimedia compositions derived from poems responding to breaking news of the coronavirus crisis. Format: Video with Live Intro. Duration: 15 mins.

Subsection: Emotional Contagion/Emotional Overload

Ami Clarke (Artist): [Lag, Lag, Lag](#)

[need an embed video link]

In an analysis of the 2013 flash crash ('Breaking News – Flash Crash' Ami Clarke (2014)) Karppi and Crawford drew attention to the Dataminr software that mines Twitter's 'firehose' to produce a sophisticated scoring of the relationships between words in play, to uncover grades of expressed 'emotions' as well as "importance and social meaning - in order to 'predict the present' and thus transform social media signals into economic information and value". Here, value is accrued through an opaque, but meaningful process of assessment, in that the analysis in no doubt fuels decisions made by financial operators happening at speeds of data processing far beyond any human capacity. "A phase transition in cultural research, social scientists now analyze patterns in the massive datasets used to study emotional sentiments on Twitter, to deconstruct narrative tropes in the media. to allegedly identify anger, fear, disgust and sadness. 'Emotion detection' has grown from a research project to a \$20bn industry." Lag, Lag, Lag turns the financier's tool of 'sentiment' and 'emotion' analysis, on its head, so to speak, and maps something that might be of interest to lay folk, instead, with regards the environmental challenges ahead.

Johanna Margarethe Talbot (University of East London): Together, apart with emojis? Thoughts about the role of emojis in a digital environment (particularly relevant in times of social distancing)

[link in media library]

Since the beginning of lockdown, face-to-face human interactions have become rare and we feel their absence, often painfully. Interactions happen increasingly on instant messaging applications, which don't allow us to express ourselves in the same way. At first glance, emojis are a great way to connect with each other and replace, to a certain extent, the deep interaction we would have in a face-to-face conversation. However, due to a lack of consensus and therefore a high chance of misunderstanding, emojis have the potential to divide us further. There is also a sinister aspect to emoji use, as they can be used as code for all sorts of deviant or criminal activities. Emojis are also used as symbols for socio-political movements. A recent and prominent example is that of 🟠 which is used as a statement for 'Black Lives Matter'. It is therefore essential to ensure equal representation to avoid emojis

turning into another field of oppression. The field of emojis needs a lot more investigation in order to understand them as a phenomenon, as well as to make recommendations and inform policies regarding their governance. It is paramount to develop a model of what emojis are – a new language, an expression of emotion, or both, in order to prevent misunderstandings and inform policy around emojis’ creation and maintenance. Furthermore, emoji use can be applied to a number of therapeutic settings, such as teaching or online therapy or helping people with difficulty expressing their emotions face-to-face in their interactions. Overall, emojis should be promoted for positive use to allow creative expression in our online communications.

Poppy Wilde (Birmingham City University, UK) and Jacob Johanssen (St Mary’s University, UK): Who Cares? Thoughts on Facebook’s Care Reaction

[LINK TO MEDIA]

In May 2020 Facebook introduced a new ‘reaction’ emoticon in addition to the already existing six (like, love, laughter, surprise, sad, and angry): Care. The Care emoticon has been rolled out seemingly specifically as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic that is shaking the world. At a time when people must be apart, Facebook’s caring figure – a cute smiley that lovingly hugs a red heart - is a symbolic expression of affective feeling. In the following opinion piece, we consider the underlying mechanisms beneath this seemingly simple expression of affect. Rather than offering an adequate exploration of the affective labour in a time of crisis, we suggest that Facebook’s care reaction instead becomes an exploitation of care. This occurs in multiple ways, namely through the user data acquired through tracking what we “care” about, quantifying our emotional experiences and selling them. This links further to the phenomenon of the affect economy and chaos capitalism. In some ways the care reaction is reminiscent of the embodied within the clapping for carers – a performative expression of care that does little to address the economic necessities of care, thereby suggesting a comradeship that is not realized in compensation. From this perspective, a “care” reaction is not adequate on a political level, but neither is it adequate in capturing the individual labour of being apart or of experiencing a world in crisis. We therefore argue that the cost of “care” is real, and the quantification of contagious clicking-to-care fails to open this dialogue up.

James Hutchinson (Artist) - Instagram images (using emoji as material vitality more than)

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CBpuzgbl6gk/?igshid=147s3no7fre4x>

James is inspired by the world around in all its minutiae and sees beauty in the anonymity of daily detritus. An engaging stream of pictures grows like a virus, gathering pace in an expression of waste and the underestimated potential of discarded things. The gathering of these images is comic-strip-like, flitting at a pace, past your eyes like a subconscious stream of pricking guilt. Plastic bags hang, gallows like from trees, twisting and spinning, deathly windsocks or hollow corpses hanging there for all to see as a reminder of time past, time wasted and a warning for the future. There are many readings to be taken but ultimately it comes down to the iconification of rubbish (Trash) into a meaningful representation of life and times as Hutchinson sees it.