

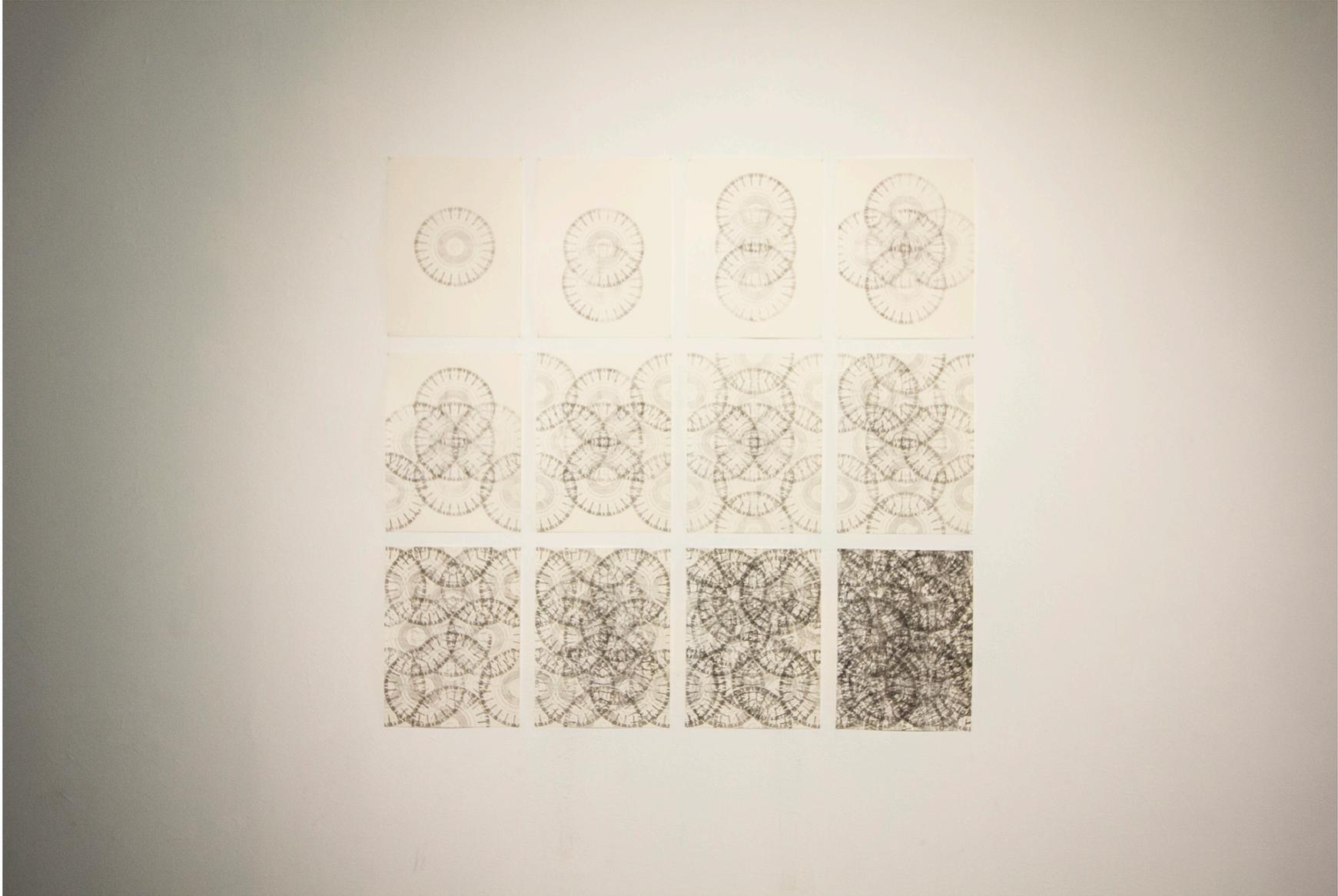


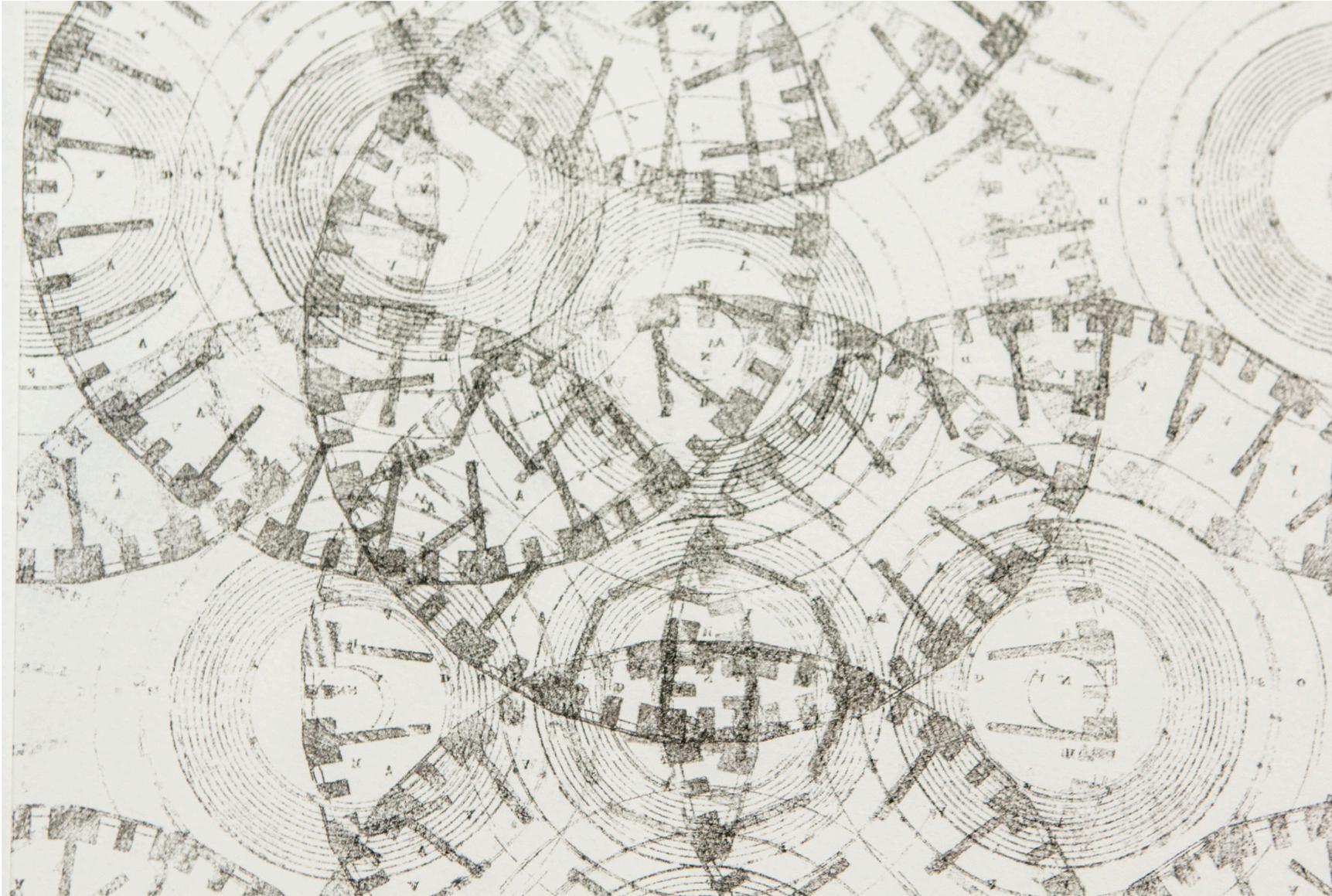
CHRISTINA LOPEZ

Portraits (Proxies)

















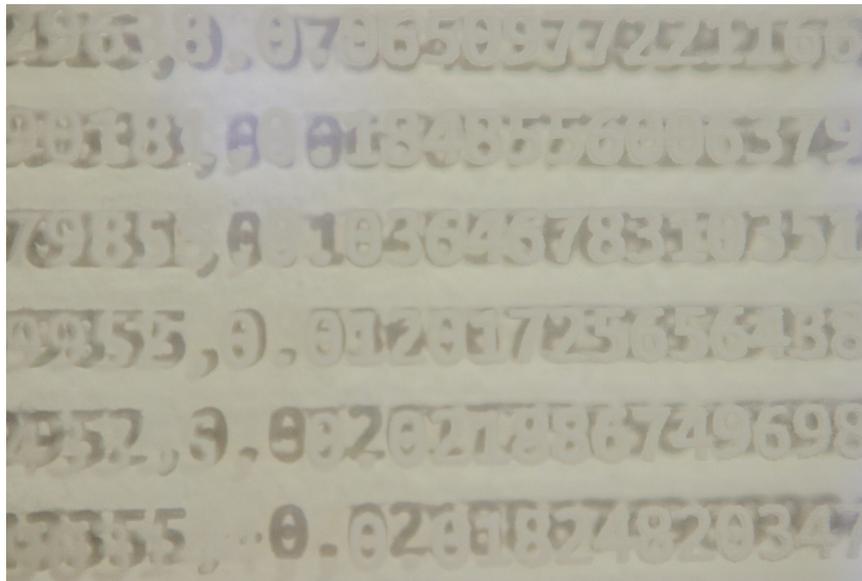
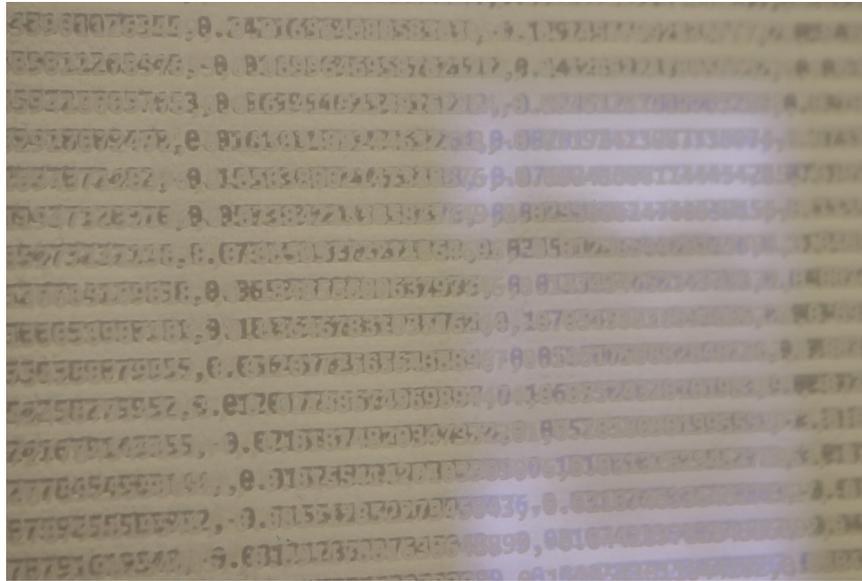










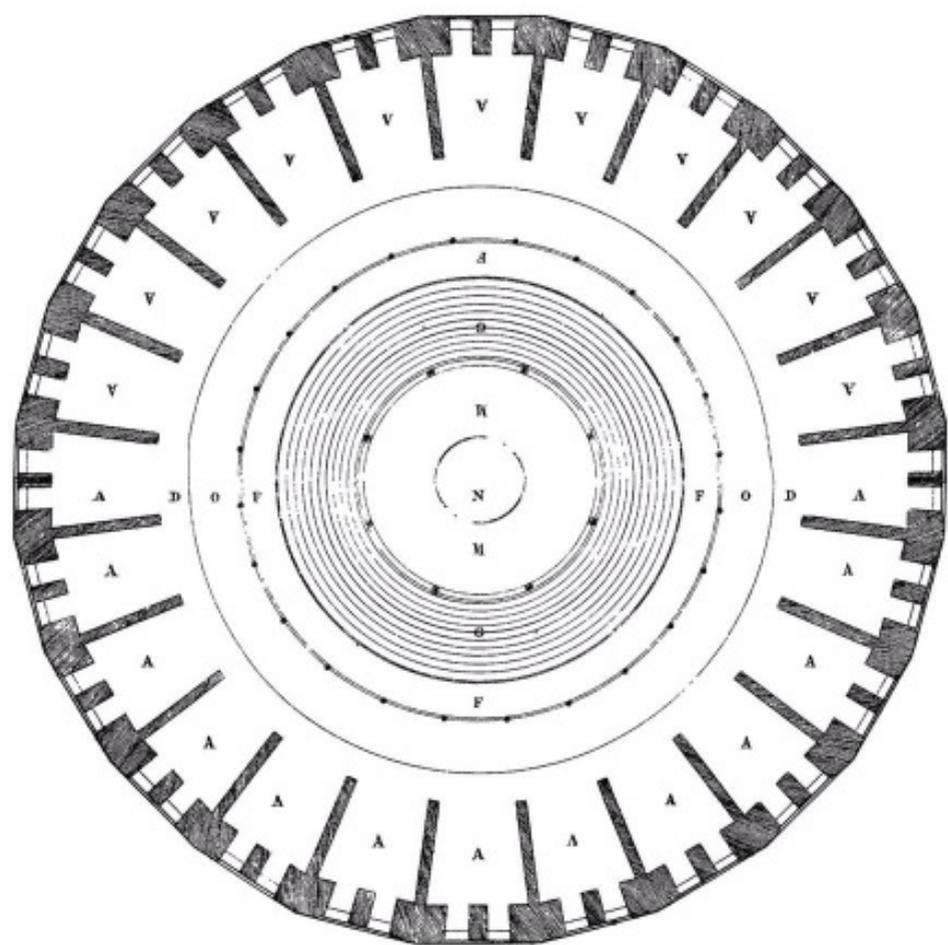




THE
DRAWING ROOM
CONTEMPORARY ART

The Drawing Room
GF, Bldg. C, Karrivin Plaza
Chino Roces Extension, Brgy. Magallanes, 2316
Makati City, 1231 Philippines
Tel No. +632. 8801-4397 or 8801-4398
Email info@drawingroomgallery.com
www.drawingroomgallery.com





Portraits (Proxies): On Machine Visions and Digital Noise

By Mark Sanchez

Instigations, insults, lethal accusations; a blind, seething rage sewn together by faulty grammar, misplaced capitalizations, confusing syllabifications, emojis and jejespeak. Words manic, grating, gyrating utterances you can almost hear and feel coming from a very kawaii tisay, perhaps some cartoon character, maybe an economically displaced person working overseas. Given the right hashtag, keyword, or latest political controversy — at around 8 PM and especially towards the 15th or 30th of the month — they gush forth in comment threads. Scrolling down becomes a burden. Its length is as long as the depth of diving into a deep, dark, and unsurmountable abyss. Exhausted and/or confused despite not having reached the bottom, you move on to the next post or check your other social media accounts. Perhaps you'd open your web browser to credible news media outlets as a relief from fake news. You feel a sense of vindication, despite feelings of anticipated disbelief, as you click on these headlines:

How Cambridge Analytica's parent company helped 'man of action' Rodrigo Duterte win the 2016 Philippines election (<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/2140303/how-cambridge-analyticas-parent-company-helped-man-action>)

Usec: DICT1 funds used for surveillance (<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1223768/usec-dict-funds-used-for-surveillance>)

Duterte's office has highest confidential, intel funds in proposed 2020 budget (<https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/238599-duterte-office-highest-confidential-intelligence-funds-proposed-2020-national-budget>)

And this:

DICT urged to look into hacking of AFP, government websites (<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2019/04/03/1906983/dict-urged-look-hacking-afp-government-websites>)

And as you tapped, fiddled, and fumbled your day away with the help of your very own black mirror, your every click, every swipe, every input — every single porn browsing history, dick pic, rant, meme, selfie, cat video — becomes data. They add up to the total 18 zettabytes² created so far as of 2018³. Most of the data we produce are not ours⁴. It is the index of you: dismembered, enclosed, and privatized. It is sorted out and stored somewhere else; analyzed and sold by tech monopolies. Exactly how or to whom, barely anyone of us know nor understand. It seems, however, it comes back to us reorganized as our digital body/identity. A target market for a personalized ad, a troll attack or disinformation.

Given our bureaucrat capitalists' natural inclination for privatization, undisclosed funds, and kickbacks, we may be rest assured that this particular State itself doesn't even hold a digital surveillance apparatus on its own. Rather, they outsource it⁵. And like machine learning algorithms, the state surveillance, in whatever format, is prone to false positives. However, part of AI training process is to correct itself to eventually achieve optimum performance. The State, on the other hand, has to produce false positives — and gets better at it⁶ using your taxes — in order to perpetuate its false narrative. The question now is: does the State represent us? Did it ever? Or does it even make sense to ask that question in the first place?

Portraits (Proxies) portray a constituency polarized with one group displacing another. They are studies produced by performing surveillance. The hall is overrun by machine visions sampled and averaged from social media troll accounts. "1" are digital monstrosities that crowd our vision like the way they do online. They will always outnumber the people figuring within "2" at any given point in time. And as the viewer is surrounded with specters of manufactured identities that glorify atrocities, trumpet lies, and ridicule dissent; in front of the screen, her likeness is captured before being reduced into noise. In the midst is what usually stands in every center of almost every town as a signification of a social contract, protecting individuals bound within a sovereign body.

Lying prostrate and fragmented, it is like a corpse or a broken backbone. “3” is the rubble that is left when democratic representation is dismantled and replaced by its false simulation.

Proxy politics, as defined by Steyerl, is arguably a semi-feudal and semi-colonial staple with bureaucrat capitalists acting and paid as proxies for imperialist interests. It has always been around before it has gone 2.0, chronically substituting inclusive development, emancipatory politics, and sovereign determination with band-aid solutions, manipulated statistics, and debt bondage. Nowadays, it comes in the form of brutally amateur Photoshop decisions spoiling peace negotiations, gun-planting seasons displacing genuine agrarian reform, and bureaucratic gag-slash-reality TV shows where a political spine could have been.

Criticality, expression, and dissent reduced to noise could only get louder. A surveillance camera could only gaze upon so many individuals before becoming overwhelmed by a crowd. Moreover, online troll identities are just that — they can be found nowhere in the streets. Steyerl asserts that proxy politics can be turned around and redeployed, bypassing censorship and repression. The collective can serve as a stand-in for an individual. It can come from proxy-fronts of diverse but unified sectors. A DDoS attack of living and defiant warm bodies can disrupt obsolete State servers running on anti-people algorithms.

Notes:

1 Department of Information and Communications Technology

2 that's 1,000,000,000,000,000,000 or 1021 bytes

3 How Much Data is There in the World? Bernard Marr & Co.

(<https://www.bernardmarr.com/default.asp?contentID=1846>)

4 Who Owns Big Data? Michael Nielsen

(<https://www.technologyreview.com/s/533856/who-owns-big-data/>)

5 Philippine telecom deal rings China alarm bells. Richard Heydarian

(<https://asiatimes.com/2019/09/philippine-telecom-deal-rings-china-alarm-bells/>)

6 Senate approves anti-terrorism bill on final reading. Aika Rey

(<https://www.rappler.com/nation/252791-senate-final-reading-anti-terrorism-bill/>)

The Digital is Physical

by Mocksmile

Note 1 : Neolib Config

With rapid economic globalization, technology is now at foreground of development. Along with the promise of increased efficiency, basic human rights(healthcare, shelter, sustenance, etc.) are becoming increasingly privatized with the continued global dominance of trans/international companies and the regimes that draws power from them. Despite all this undertaking, the hazardous conditions of the middle and working classes is felt even more than before. The crisis; massive un/der-employment, homelessness and health risk among the poor, among many other hazards, are still prevalent and even worsening. And despite, or even because of, this crisis, we have more and more tech billionaires emerging. Technological development as a form of violent stagnation.

Modernization can be beneficial but the limits enforced by neoliberalism deprives any form of real public access and ensures deregulated profit for the already wealthy. While such technological leaps, like wireless connectivity and automated manufacturing, are promising, such advancements (being always surplus) only function to be adversarial towards the working class. While it is possible to build an alliance beneficial towards the working class with/in cyberspace, this potential for emancipation is almost always negated by capital.

Neoliberalism guarantees technology can only materialize only within the bounds of the capital it was developed in and relationship with it is often limited to its commercial value. Whether we are adversarial or cordial towards it, depends on how it can be utilized equal to its retail cost. Neoliberalism sustains this type of relationship by being nihilistic to technology's

emancipation and limiting its function to be only able work within capital. Our confrontation with technology then becomes anti-modern. Popular media would portray cyborgs as threatening whenever it asserts anything outside of its designed function. Much like the working class, emancipation is a glitch for cyborgs, that the capability of doing is bound to the capability of being utilized. Modernization is not the enemy, the wireless primitivism of neoliberal technology is the enemy.

Note 2 : Invisible Loom

“People already knew that the future of technology lay in invisible, streams of data pulsing down post office lines to produce an invisible loom of world commerce and information. They knew at the time of the Apollo landings that this was already a nostalgic enterprise.”

-J.G. Ballard on the Apollo landings (i-D Magazine Fear Issue, 1987)

Albeit in itself hauntological, Ballard’s statement continues to be true to the present and foreseeable future. Tech advancements are primarily data-driven, directed towards the production and consumption of data to carry through the goal of interconnectivity and accessibility. But despite the promise of closing in on the gap in communication, the working class in the behest of landlords and compradors seem farther apart from a decent living condition. These advancements might even have only further alienate the working class while empowering the elite. A precariat worker will more likely receive a “work-related” E-mail or call than receive a good news. More importantly, as machines almost takeover every aspect of cybernetics, the working-class is now demanded to learn numerous cybernetic functions that require skills and social capital a person can barely afford. Termination and loss of livelihood is at stake, having not appeased neoliberal requirements puts the working class in a more dangerous position.

Technology in itself is not class conscious to its core and as grand as it's most popular digital offspring is a social network, it will never acquire social awareness, like every other space in the physical frontier, not until we have abolished class.

What's more dangerous is that nothing can produce and consume data like personality-driven individualism. Everyone is encouraged to build their own monoliths, to erect personal statues in the form of a Twitter or a Letterboxd profile, or their own closed circuit fortress by lowering the cost of CCTV cameras. When the need arises, to seek justice and parity, we are encouraged to go online, the effect varying on the amount of social and technocapital one has. In the age of livestreaming and hashtag terrorism, the most accessible form of conflict resolution is this wild game of authority: citizen reporting, doxing, mob denunciations, and most famous locally, the "papasikatin natin yan" phenomena. Whether it is a new Tulfo episode, a monolith vs. Monolith "debate" or a "spill the tea" mob cancellation, we are encouraged to drive the nail of personality down. Driven to tackle these conflicts as individuals subset into communities that share the least common contradiction. All of this in/action only to reproduce more data for the restabilization of the cyber-superstructure. But ultimately its physical affect is not to transcend class, something the internet will never recognize for itself. Sure, there are online mobilizations and other forms of (monolithic) support systems, but as neoliberalism's shadow grow more opaque, online personality politick will all eventually (if it isn't already) become a practice of accumulating capital and a totalitarian conclave. No amount of "check your privilege," RQing or any anonymous liberal visage will teach the internet class awareness, most specially not when we can only enact the totalitarian rules of the internet. Cyberspace, after all, can never remember what it fails to forget.

Note 3 : Cybernetic State Apparatus

Of course in cyberspace, like everything else in the physical frontier, the available actions and their corresponding repercussions are different for the ruling class.

From application development, the Maker™ movement, the NBN-ZTE scandal to Cambridge Analytica, we are all too familiar with the direct intervention of private interest in world political economy. But the gentler forms of cyber-terrorism are usually the most effective, in both accumulating capital and ensuring political dominance. Three most known forms of in cyber-terrorists: the hackers, pirates and the trolls. What was once known as forms to carve chaos in cyberspace, either via data breach or distribution. It is actually was once a thankless job, to want the internet unlocked. Aaron Swartz, Alexandra Elbakyan, Andrew Alan Escher Auernheimer, Onel de Guzman and, to an extent, Ross Ulbricht know this too well.

The report quoted him [Onel de Guzman] as saying that he may have inadvertently unleashed the virus while harvesting subscribers' passwords, and declaring that he believed Internet access should be free since having to pay for its use was "immoral."

Describing the Philippines as having an "enormous" gap between rich and poor, the newspaper cited the hacking incident as having exposed "an embarrassing advertisement of the Philippines' programming talent and infant dotcom scene...." It described how Manila investigators homed in on De Guzman's shared accommodation and found 13 encrypted disks and six cell phones.

The internet's own boy, Aaron Swartz, who was involved with Creative Commons and co-founder of Reddit, downloaded academic journals from JSTOR to be made public in bulk. He was found guilty on several charges including eleven violations under the U.S. Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. In 2013, after declining a plea bargain, Aaron Swartz took his own life. Meanwhile Andrew Alan Escher Auernheimer a.k.a. "weev," after 13 months in prison, publicly declared himself as a white nationalist and a neo-Nazi (he clearly isn't "for the lulz"). Cyber-terrorism took many people to different

planes in the physical frontier but one thing is for sure, the market is now open for experts.

As anything done competently can accumulate capital, so did these gentler forms of cyber-terrorism. Hackers now work for tech giants, streaming continues to devour piracy and we now have troll farms. The algorithmic efficiency to track and mold the crumbs left while browsing the internet is purely Dystopian. Machine learning has been limited to such that it knows more about a user than it knows about itself.

Unlike the chicken-egg paradox, nothing came first between your and the machine's desire. The machine knows you need shampoo, you know you need shampoo but the machine will lead your way to shampoo. This goes the same with media streaming; that despite the accessibility of media via streaming platforms, users actually have a more limited plethora to choose from and even have to pay more for this limitation. You can now have unlimited access and a wide array to choose from the same things. Spotify even include non-existent music in their platform to intervene and mangle the streaming numbers, just in case. Trolling is more straightforward, it still the same cybernetic techniques to incite a reaction (never a discourse), both positively and negatively. The difference now is there is now an employer-employee contradiction. Trolls now answer to bosses, corporate brand/ing for the influencers, oligarchs and bureaucrats for the troll farms and both can be applied for stans. Regardless of what form a user embarks on, it is now considered work under the cybernetic state apparatus. Trolling for free is now unpaid labor.

“For what is usually a very short period, trolls cause a great deal of incendiary, fruitless antagonism, but it seldom leaves much of a lasting trace. The final victory over them is achieved by simply persisting in the pursuit of a project, refusing to allow yourself to be ensnared in the self-doubts and impotent autocritique that disables them and which they seek to transmit to you.”

-Mark Fisher (k-punk.abstractdynamics.com, June 18, 2009)

Note 4 : A Project

The die is cast, this is the mechanism we have to deal with. The mechanism that effectively preserved neoliberalism. It is advanced, it is automated, it is learning and it is teaching. With constant updates and notifications, the mechanism even tries to prevent accessible time to think. Several methods of exit, specially through the internet, is now instantly absorbed by capital, neoliberalism makes sure of this.

Crisis is on the side of the enemy. It would take any form it can and would even go against it's beholden traditions if only to prolong this crisis. The enemy will please you, will entertain you and will allow you to shed it's skin only to keep it growing. To combat it, an opposing force have to act in the most efficient way possible. It should be able to recognize where capital grows and how neoliberalism functions.

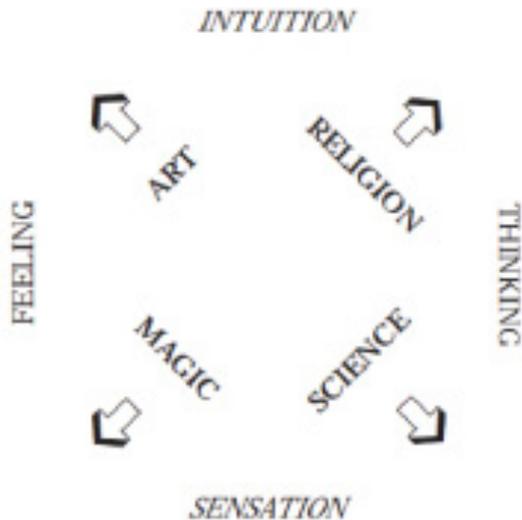
It is now not enough to cure the mundane. In the urban setting, we will find it difficult, even more than we are willing to accept. A self-implosion, getting rid of personality-driven individualism is essential and all opposing forces that go against the neoliberal mechanism should be able to work toward it. You, the user, may be an algorithmic amalgamation but the crisis is not. The crisis is real, it isn't a simulation, it is imperialism.

An Introduction to “Magick and the Magna-Fanta Computer”

By Alyana Cabral

To incite belief in the reality of magick, the language of science and technology is usually summoned. We have become so accustomed to the latter because it is the universally accepted standard for explaining phenomena. Nevertheless, cultures retain certain beliefs and “superstitions” for many a good reason, much to the testament of the survival of mother tongues. Despite the tendency of the concept to conjure ancient visions in the mind’s eye, magick¹ is not a static monument, but rather an ever- evolving language in itself.

The “opposition between the technical and the magical is without foundation.²” To delineate the two is to reduce both and either into physical artefacts merely used for subsistence of life and “mystic mumbo-jumbo” exclusive to performance or ceremony, which are only micro-strands of a whole circuitry of functions. Anyhow, according to Raymond Buckland’s Complete Book of Witchcraft (1997), it can often be too dangerous to perform Ceremonial Magick invoking too many various entities who have most likely been disturbed and will therefore be uncooperative or even hostile; “It is a little like trying to hook-up a 1,000 volt power line to run a transistor radio! Why take the risk when a simple little battery will do the job just as well and without the danger?³” Conservation of energy starts not from our household microwaves or Liquid-Crystal (Clear Quartz) Display screens, but from our very own electromagnetic radiation-emitting warm bodies.⁴



“Techniques of the body⁵,” as a non-artefactual tool and the foundation of any craft, are enough to cast rituals. If magick is the art of bending reality in conformity with one’s will, then technology, artefactual or not, is the amplification of this will. From the EMF-altering oracions of albularyos⁶, to herbal medicine and its tools for processing, to grimoires and eBooks of Shadows, to magnets and bells and cards, to the Akashic library, to the moon’s gravity, to neopagan softwares and online covens— There are endless forms of technical means to magical ends. The vice versa (magickal means to technological ends) is hardly any different in terms of approach, because both languages feed off each other. Clarke’s third law states that, “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic⁷,” which has been disputed by many critics who take on the perspective that anything that is unknown is magic, and any technological advancement can only be knowable as humans progress.

This view furthers the delineation and ignores the fact that magick, with all its elements— imagination, play, etc.— is the very fuel for technological innovation.

“The source of this mutability, and the tendency towards ever-increasing elaboration in technology must be attributed [...] not to material necessity but to the cognitive role of ‘magical’ ideas in providing the orienting framework within which technical activity takes place. Technical innovations occur, not as the result of attempts to supply wants, but in the course of attempts to realize technical feats heretofore considered ‘magical’.⁸” This becomes a problem when technology and its tools for advancement operate in a panoptic macrostructure. For example, through the bureaucrat oligopoly of technological services, along with the orchestration of mass surveillance for private interests, complete with neoliberal propaganda, political advertising, and the deployment of IRL and URL troll armies, at work is the Black Magick of the State.

Older forms of these tactics of social control by the ruling powers include the witch-hunts, a historical phenomenon that is futile to ignore in any discourse on magick. The way we perceive and practice the craft today, within our respective religions, is the result of global massacres of women, peasants, and those charged as “outlaws” and “heretics” by the church and/or state.

To reiterate the beginning statement, the question of whether it is real or not is now irrelevant because history shows that magick is determined by tangible social practices rooted in people’s cosmological belief systems— practices which played a crucial role during periods of social unrest and class struggle, most significantly in society’s “transition from feudalism to capitalism.”⁹ The witch-hunts were essential in this paradigmatic shift, which, aside from the murder of lives, abolished certain magickal practices and paved the way to technological advancement in the interests of corporations, as well as to the advent of modern science.

In this context, it is thus predictable that many early philosophies that were popularized at the time— such as the Cartesian “body as machine”—, which became responsible for the current zeitgeist of “mind as computer,” were not aided by values inspired by the elements of the magickal tradition. In fact, ideologies that emerged with these values remain up to now in the esoteric field of studies.

Today, incantations are still whispered hesitantly, and the Internet remains opaque, with its gargantuan body of hidden knowledge stored in a central tower somewhere. For now, it is shakable with “superior forms of corruption.¹⁰” But since our bodies are now bifurcating and oscillating from warm to virtual in jittering speeds, may we soon uncover the secrets of our cyber-Psychosphere¹¹ and beyond. May we one day revise and re-upgrade technology to create a costless, responsible, magickal, and ideal one, that of a Magna-Fanta computer, a quintessential extension of the collective psyche.

Endnotes and references:

1. Magick here is spelled with a “k” to emphasize the concept as a practice, and to be consistent with all the contemporary spiritual philosophies that utilize it, one of the most prominent of which is Aleister Crowley’s Thelema.
2. Gell, Alfred. “Technology and Magic.” *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (Apr., 1988), pp. 6-9. London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1988.
3. Buckland, Raymond. “Buckland’s Complete Book of Witchcraft.” Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 1997.
4. Image taken from Ramsey Dukes’ “S.S.O.T.B.M.E. Revised: An Essay on Magic.” England: The Mouse That Spins, 1974.
5. Mauss, Marcel. “Techniques of the Body.” Lecture originally given at a meeting of the Société de Psychologie, May 17, 1934 and published in the *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique*, Paris, Année XXXII, 1935, pp. 271-93. Reprinted in Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et Anthropologie* (with introduction by Claude Levi-Strauss), 4th edition, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968. pp. 364-386.
6. The oracions of the albularyos (Filipino traditional healers) are both defined as “invoking the spirits by uttering prayer words,” and “vowel and consonant sounds in different sequences and patterns” that alters the modulation of electromagnetic fields (EMFs) around the body in this book by Fajardo, Bibiano S. and Pansacola, Ma. Aleli V. “Hilot: The Science of the Ancient Filipino Healing Arts.” Mandaluyong: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2013.
7. Clarke, Arthur C. “Hazards of Prophecy.” *The Futurists*, edited with an introduction by Alvin Toffler. New York: Random House, 1972.
8. Alfred Gell, in “Technology and Magic,” believes that subsistence and the fulfillment of technical ‘needs’ cannot account for changes technology, and argues that changes in technology can actually create new needs.
9. Federici, Silvia. “Caliban and the Witch.” Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2004. 10. Laboria Cuboniks. “Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation.” <https://www.laboriacuboniks.net/>.
11. “Psychosphere” is defined by Philip Farber as “the resultant creation of the conscious and unconscious actions of every Internet user,” in Steve Collins’ “Technology and Magick.” *Scan Journal* Vol 1 Number 2 June 2004. http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/print.php?journal_id=35&_id=2.

Compiled for
Proxies (Portraits)

March 7-31, 2020
The Drawing Room

Cover
Willey Reveley's Plan for Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon (1791)

Layout by
Jao San Pedro
Nash Cruz

The model for the Generative Adversarial Network called "ID Generator" is publicly available on RunwayML, Trained with a dataset containing over 500 photos of paid trolls

Camera work made with clmtrackr.js and p5.js
<https://learn.runwayml.com/>
<https://www.auduno.com/clmtrackr/>
<https://p5js.org/>