Techno-somatics and
physical experience
by   Agnes Gryczkowska

Disembodiment of information and virtualisation of the body have, undoubtedly, at this point of the Anthropocene era, wrapped their chains against the softness of human flesh. Anti-humanist destruction of the picture plane, central to cubism and surrealism, slowly introduced the idea of human body as a hallucination or a manifestation. These developments meant certain migration of images and experiences, as well as their understanding. The new image of the world is that of a transformation of experiences into images and knowledge a priori – images that are static and flat, yet in constant flux - set forth by the algorithms. The biophysical systems of earth have never been more altered by the humanity. Deriving from Sontag's statements from *On Photography* (1977), one can say that images have become substitutes for corporeality and certifiers of reality - »the image is generally recognised as an integral part of the real or rather as part of its identity.«

Claire Colebrook, in her *Dialogue on the Anthropocene* (1) talk, remarks on annihilating what makes us human and creating a new tragic narrative policy – that of interconnectedness, timelessness, limitlessness, spacelesssness, groundlessness and bodilessness. Our human bodies are still inceptive, arousing, effectuating, and performing (2), however our experiences, often, instead of being a subject to the senses, intuition, our beliefs, fears and contemplations, become a mélange of algorithms, they become immediate, controlled, wrested out of sensations, turned into cognition and what we think we want them to be.

I would like to question the contemporary relationship between the body, especially the female body and the cyberspace – through the prism of the Japanese Vocaloid pop star Hatsune Miku, or the bodies of a London based Danish artist Sidsel Meineche Hansen.

Hatsune Miku, or »first sound from the future«, is the ultimate pop star, developed from a vocal synthesizer into a globally worshiped and collaboratively constructed cyber celebrity performing internationally as a virtual 3D projection. Miku is forever 16 and forever activated by the users who can engage with her, yet simultaneously fully pre-defined by her producers - her existence is reliant on the consumer or prosumer. Miku can be molded by the desire of her fans, she is transversal and reliable to every fan – the dream pop star, the ultimate experience. She is always there, flashing the layers of retouched skin perfection; there is no confrontation in question – she is a vessel onto which we project our deep fantasies. Due to Miku's flawlessness and impossibility of betrayal, she embodies Sontag or Debord's argumentation that we live in the era »where the real world changes into simple images, the simple images become real beings, and the efficient motivations of a hypnotic behavior.«(3) This topology of desire and experience within a virtual community becomes physical and Miku becomes a representation of the commodified female body and our desires, as governed by corporate regulation and socio-political expectations.

This underlines a Marxist view of popular culture – driven by capitalist forces and where different subcultures are constantly created to fulfill masses' superfluous needs, leading to impoverishment of real-time and real-space experience. All affect images which circulate through the spheres of communicative capitalism ruthlessly transform sensations and aesthetic experiences into cognition, as Emmalhainz remarks, »transformation of these experiences into information and intensities without meaning is precisely what enables them to be exploited as forms of work and sold as new experiences and exciting lifestyle choices.«(4)

Critique of capitalism and patriarchy's manipulation and control of the human body and experience are central to the work by Sidsel Meineche Hansen. Her exhibition *SECOND SEX WAR* (2016) explored the relationship between post-human sex, feminism and 3D genders from embodied and disembodied positions.

Meineche Hansen's female avatar »EVA v3.0«, who is a royalty-free product sold online or computer games and adult entertainment is used as the main protagonist in the artist's animations *Seroquel®*, 2014; *No right way 2 cum*, 2015 and *DICKGIRL 3D(X),* 2016. The most recent work, *DICKGIRL 3D(X),* is a pornographic virtual 3D animation, viewed through a VR headset,

featuring »genitalia props« and readymade »pose sets« used for animating mainstream 3D porn. As Meineche Hansen states herself, *DICKGIRL 3D(X)* is considered to be an automated performance, which is choreographed by a new epoch in the porn industry - one that aims at commodifying virtual sex.(5) Her work, through questioning the status of bodies in digital image production, their commodity, 3D porn and VR, looks into the issue of redefining social reality. What is coined as immersive experience - entertaining experience which in an impressive way allows people to interact and connect - should also, in fact be questioned as an intense consumption of images that are created to move and arouse the body – in a way replacing the physical purely Dionysian, durational experience.

Looking at Deleuze's exploration of the body without organs, especially as conceptualised in *Anti Oedipus*, the body without organs is suggestive of a virtual dimensions of body made up of potential traces, connections, becomings and active self-experimentation. Miku or Meineche Hansen's avatars are interesting in this sense – their substrate is attached to endless variations of their identity created by both the producers and the consumers – infinitely self-replicating, infinitely creating the most perfect experience.

How can we understand the virtual body and its future? As capitalism stretches into the virtual world, the digital space becomes colonised and inhabited by patriarchal structures that historically commodified the body; time also becomes colonised with digital technologies, enabling absolute acceleration and the short-circuiting of attention time. And we, as consumers, are exposed to this growing mass of digital stimuli that cannot be experienced via the modalities of pleasure and knowledge. As Bifo Berardi stated in *Precarious Rhapsody* »acceleration provokes an impoverishment of experience, given that we are exposed to a growing mass of stimuli that we can't digest in the intensive modes of enjoyment and knowledge«.(6)

More and faster information equals less pleasure.

Sensuality is slow.

Physical experience becomes substituted with organic cyber-time and cognitive areas that require an extended period of attention, such as those of affectivity, eroticism and deep compre-hension, are distorted. In these conditions of acceleration and information overload, automatism tends to become the prevalent form of reaction to stimuli, like in the case of Hatsune Miku or VR porn labour explored by Meineche Hansen.

We are loosing our human flesh to the chains of cyber capital commodity ruled by algo-rithms – things we want, we want fast and easy. Investing in physical fiction is more profitable and faster than investing in actual corporeal experience, experience becomes fragmented by predictability and one may wonder if now perhaps is the time to again revisit the idea of a collective experience in real space and time, bodily interaction and confrontation – does the world need a new Cosey Fanni Tutti, Abramović, Pane, Acconci to fulfill the gap in the parallel world to that of Hatsune Miku? Will our human body become cast-off, will it start forgetting itself, melting away?

(1)   Colebrook, C. and Wolfe, C., 2013. *Dialogue on the Anthropocene,* Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin.

(2)   Brooks, A. L., Ayiter, El., Yazicigil, O., 2015. *Arts and Technology: Fourth International Conference*, ArtsIT, Istanbul.

(3)   Debord, G., 1967. *The Society of the Spectacle,* USA, Black & Red.

(4)   Emmelhainz, I., 2015. Conditions of Visuality Under the Anthropocene and Images of the Anthropocene to Come, *e-flux,* vol. 63.

(5)   Meineche Hansen, 2016. Ten Questions: Sidsel Meineche Hansen, *Kunstkritikk*

(6)   »Bifo« Berardi, F., 2009. *Precarious Rhapsody,* London: Minor Compositions

Memory on the Internet
by   Chloe Stead

The Internet never forgets. Racist, sexist or homophobic comments, even made during ad-olescence, can come back at any time to haunt their authors. Take the case of Paris Brown, a 21-year-old who was forced to resign as Britain's first youth police and crime commissioner, after it was found that she had posted a slew of offensive tweets as a teenager. Or the West Virginia official, old enough to know better, who was fired after calling Michelle Obama an »ape in heels« on her Facebook page. It seems like every day there are more stories like these, which whip the Internet into a frenzy and cause untold damage to a person's reputation, both on-and-off-line.

The idea that the Internet is forever seems to have become part of our national psyche; perhaps that's why we have so little empathy for the people who get caught up in social media storms. I wonder, though, whether the narrative of ill-advised images and statements that lurk for evermore in cyberspace has given us a warped view of memory on the Internet. If, like the proverbial elephant, the Internet never forgets, what did civil rights activist Angela Davis mean when she said at the Women's March on Washington recently: »History cannot be deleted like web pages«?

To add some context, Davis' speech took place the day after Donald Trump was sworn in as the 45th President of the United States. Within hours of the inauguration media outlets began to report that pages on LGBT rights, climate change and civil rights (previously filed under the subheading ›Issues‹) had disappeared completely from the White House website. While techni-cally it was Obama's team that deleted these pages (it's typical for an outgoing administration to archive their website), the fact that the Trump administration chose not to repopulate their new website with these issues was an odious sign for groups already worried about the impact a Trump White House might have on minorities.

The ›best case‹ scenario is that these pages simply didn't make the cut because they are no longer a high priority for the new government; the worst-case scenario is that it was a deliberate plan to suppress and conceal these issues, implicitly denying the struggle which put them on the White House website in the first place. The latter certainly seems to be Davis' fear. She continued her speech by saying, »The freedom struggles of black people that have shaped the very nature of this country›s history cannot be deleted with the sweep of a hand.«

One doesn't have to go far to find similar examples. In 2013 the Conservatives, Great Britain's current governing party, deleted a decade worth of speeches from their website. This was purportedly to improve the experience of the website's visitors, but it also conveniently left these same visitors unable to compare what the conservatives said they were going to do when in power and what they actually did. This action was especially suspicious because it resulted in the disappearance of all speeches made during the Tories' modernization period (the attempt to shake their image as a party for the privileged classes), which arguably is what put them back into power in 2010. What both of these examples show is the fragility of the Internet as an archive. When webpages can be endlessly and seamlessly altered the spectre of (self) censorship looms large.

At the end of June last year Google deactivated the 14-year-old blog and Gmail account of the writer Dennis Cooper without explanation. Cooper's blog had become the go-to site for fans of experimental and avant-garde writing, and alongside regular posts the author spent hours a day responding to his commenters. Cooper's novels deal with controversial themes and his blog was also representative of that, leading many to suspect censorship on the part of Google. While Cooper and his lawyer were able to galvanize public interest in this story to persuade Google to eventually release his data, it highlighted what can happen when creatives house their archives on corporately owed platforms. As Cooper put it, »these hosts are not your friends(1)«.

The problem is often that Internet platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Blogger have a one-size-fits-all attitude to censorship. In a case last September that caused international outrage, Facebook took down a newspaper's post of a Pulitzer Prize winning photograph featuring a naked

child feeing Napalm bombs during the Vietnam War. Considering that companies like Facebook are increasingly in control of how information is distributed, the affect that this kind of censorship could have over memory in relation to art history is cause for concern. Where aficionados might see a challenging and thought-provoking artwork, a moderator just sees explicit content.

Artists who explore the mechanisms of the web in their work are especially susceptible to its flaws as an archive. Apathy is as big an obstacle to this artwork as censorship. The Guggenheim's first web commission, recently described as »a groundbreaking cyberfeminist artwork« by the writer Claire L.Evans(2), was taken offline after being hosted at Brandon.Guggenhiem. org between 1998-99. If a watershed work such as this one was unavailable to the public from then until 2016, it makes one wonder how many other web-based works have fallen by the wayside. Some egalitarian pioneers of Net Art thought of it as an alternative to the museum, but online works and paintings alike need maintenance, and web-based artists might have to find themselves cozying up to institutions if they want any chance of their works being available to view by future generations.

(1)   Dennis Cooper in conversation with
        Andrew Durbin, 2016. *Unfriendly
        Hosts*, frieze.com, accessed: 9th
        February 2017

(2)   Evans CL, 2016. *A Cyber Memorial*,
        Spike Art Quarterly #49

Our ears open a whole world to us:
about the experiment to program
an exhibition on a vinyl record

by   Clara Meister

»Our ears open a whole world to us. They give us orientation in the world surrounding us. And they have the ability to make our mind travel into a world that does not even surround us. That we do not even see. When we trust them they take us to an open jungle while we are standing in a closed white cube.«

This is an excerpt from the so-called *wall text* of the exhibition project *BALLADS OF THE BEASTS - Voices of the animal world in an exhibition on vinyl* that aims to introduce voices that speak a language we don't understand – the animal voice. As the subtitle suggests, the project is an experiment to bring an exhibition onto a vinyl record. Hence the »wall text« quoted above was not written anywhere in the exhibition space, but was read out loud, recorded and became the first track on the record. It appears at the beginning of the record, just as wall texts often stand at the beginning of an exhibition.

BALLADS OF THE BEASTS detaches itself from a physical exhibition space, it is laid out to exist mainly in the auditive space. The initial idea was to translate the format of an exhibition onto an audible medium: an exhibition not in space but in time. Just like with closed eyes, the exhibition is experienced through the ears. Therefore it excludes visual works and focuses on audio works.

In contrast to classical audio mediums the viewer - or to be more precise - the listener, doesn't follow the record track by track, but follows a narrative through different spaces. A course through the project, which is aurally linked by a »companion«: a human voice that accompanies the listener throughout the exhibition leading from one piece to the next by imitating nightingale songs.

Each artwork throughout the course carries its own acoustical space as suggested by their original recording – whether it is a small room, an open church, a public situation or a recording studio. Sound and space have a long-standing tight relationship. Every sound is influenced by the space: the specific space changes the way a sound sounds. It needs a space to reverberate, and therefore be audible. Sound influences space in a similar way: it can create a friendly and comfortable atmosphere for the space, or can change it to an eerie and frightening place. Sound is always a spatial experience. There is beauty in recorded sound, as it holds the space it was once recorded in - by listening to the record in a living room in Berlin the listener can experience a nightly jungle in Japan.

The theme of animal voices in *BALLADS OF THE BEASTS* adds another understanding of sound and space. Animals use their voice to mark their territory, express their need and voice behaviour, such as aggressiveness. Sometimes the human ear does not categorize animal sounds as communication as it does not know the code, but often we tend to believe that we understand the vocal codes - especially of animals that live with us, such as dogs and cats. The assembled works play with human voices - mimicking, composing and imitating animal sounds, as well as how humans interpret them. This opens a space of communication. When one leaves visual understanding and preconceived notions of how various living beings sound behind, one might encounter sounds that cannot be placed immediately. The project is an invitation to trust the ears and learn the language of listening.

The listening experience of the record is supported by a fictitious floor plan on the cover. It was developed by an architect who listened to each track for their spatial information and who designed his envisioned space for each track while following the audible tour of the record. For example, when many voices from different sides call upon each other he thought of a round pantheon. When two cats were edited in such a way that they interview each other, he thought of a tennis court beneath a pyramid as a space where response and answer bounce back and forth like a ball.
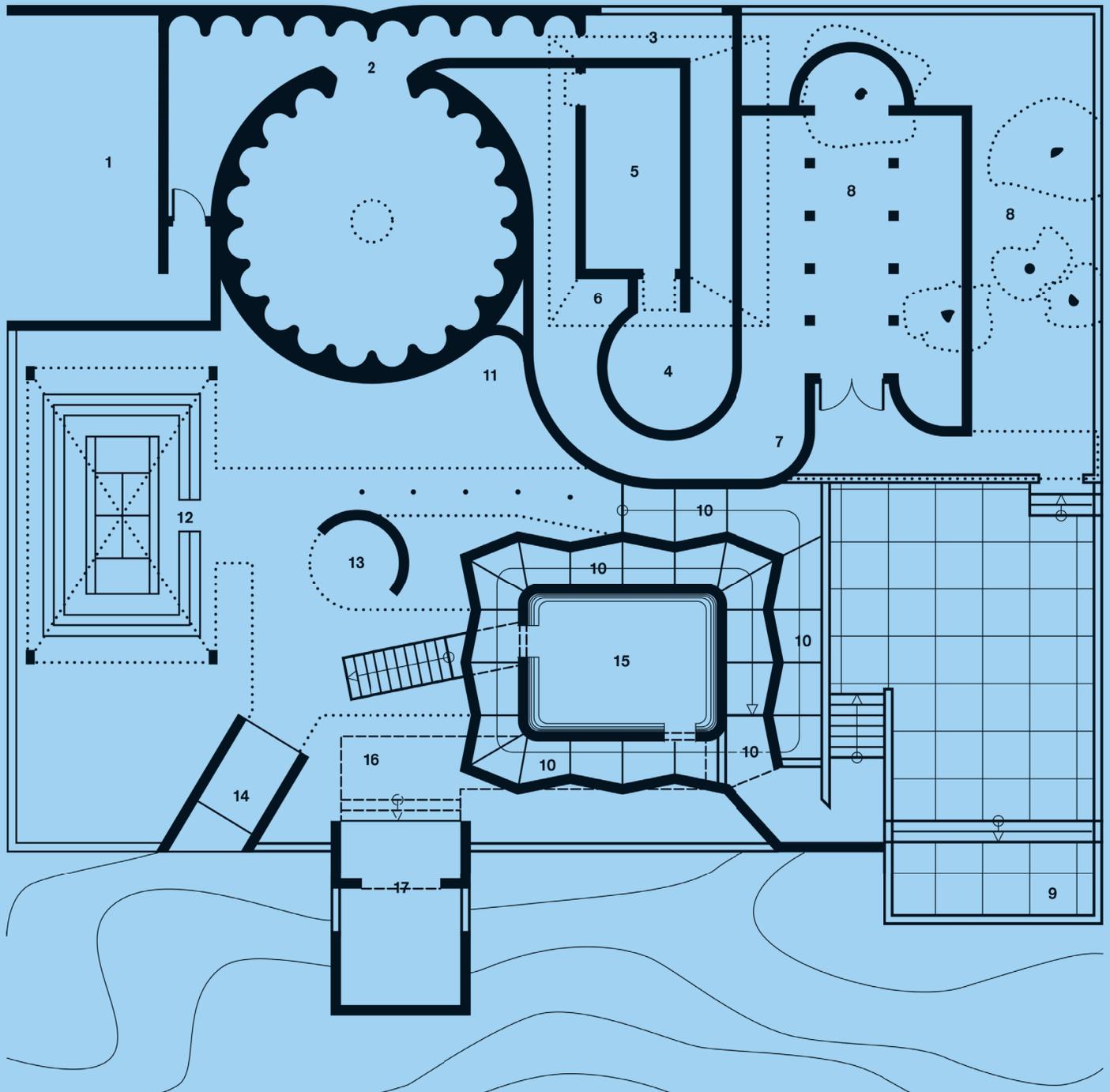
Floorplan for *BALLADS OF THE BEASTS* by Till-Moritz Ganssauge (*S.T.I.F.F.*)

BALLADS OF THE BEASTS is therefore an exhibition project that exists mainly in the auditive space, yet acknowledges the influence of space on sound by respecting the pre-existing spaces of each work and by suggesting a fictitious exhibition space ideal for each audio work.
BALLADS OF THE BEASTS - Voices of the animal world in an exhibition on vinyl presents works by Sarah Darwin, Einstein the Talking Texan Parrot, Cevdet Erek, Elise Florenty & Marcel Türkowsky, Krõõt Juurak and Alex Bailey, Louise Lawler, a recording of an Inuit song, Cia Rinne, Yann Sérandour, and Samon Takahashi. Curated by Clara Meister in 2016 and produced by cneai upon invitation of the director Sylvie Boulanger. Supported within the program *Jeunes Commissaires of the Bureau des arts plastiques, Institut français d'Allemagne*. With the kind support of the Institut francais and the Goethe-Institut.
The vinyl can be ordered via www.cneai.com.

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Curated by Weekly
is a digital art project. It aims to raise questions regarding online formats, web-based distribution and the acceleration of digital platforms in contemporary art. The project is made up of a website and a magazine, which will be released in irregular intervals. The latter will include essays and interventions about digital exhibition formats, the experiences of digital curation and the questions about media and matter in the post-analogue space. Every week, an artwork will be »curated« and published on the website. In cooperation with different individuals, institutions and independent projects from the art field, artistic positions and works will be displayed. They can function as pieces of art in the digital sphere as well as be critical about it, or to contrast itself with the functions of the web. The project's pace and composition orientates itself around the relevant visual environment of the present day.

The format of the website is consciously purely visual, while complementary content will be published in the magazine. This content will consist of essays and contributions around certain questions. For example: How new formats will be established in contemporary art, which technological tools are required or how curation is practiced in a digital space. What should particularly be highlighted is determining which artistic media, surfaces and materialities provide an adequate digital environment.

Curated by Weekly aims for an experimental format, which uses the speed and the possibilities of the digital space, but instead of reproductions and documentations we want to show artistic work itself, to address availability in the digital space and to use catchy visual surfaces. At the same time, the discourse and the self-reflection of the format is discussed in the appearing magazines/readers online and offline.