

DIS/CONNECT

An intermedial exploration of
the internet as a non-place

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HS 2021

Statement of originality

I, Celia Salomons, certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work. The assistance received in preparing this thesis was limited to advisory and proofreading support. To the best of my knowledge, all of the sources have been recognized.

Place and date

8803 Rüschlikon, 04/01/2022

Signature



A special note of thanks goes to Monika Lürkens for her steady guidance and patience,
and for introducing me to a style of art I have learned to love.

DIS/CONNECT

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Preface

As a teenager growing up in an era characterized by rapid technological development, I have witnessed how the internet dominates many aspects of my life. The Covid-19 pandemic only amplified the dependence on our devices as we relied on them heavily for online school and as a means of communication with anyone outside the home.

While “doom-scrolling” on Instagram, I came across a concept that immediately sparked curiosity: the *non-place*, a term first introduced by French anthropologist Marc Augé in 1992. Upon further research I noticed the many similarities between the non-place and the internet, and this train of thought eventually developed into what is now the theoretical core of my thesis.

Experimentation with different forms of art and breaking free from the boundaries of the canvas imposed on the artist have also been points of interest. I had never dared to blend diverse forms of artistic media, no less imagined that the use of specific materials could change the impact a piece has on the viewer. The time set aside to work on the thesis seemed like the perfect opportunity for artistic trial and error.

0. Introduction

This thesis primarily focuses on the internet as a potential non-place through intermedial art. As the basis, I will be using terminology from Marc Augé's *Non-places: An Introduction to Supermodernity* (first French edition, 1992), an essay at the intersection of philosophy and anthropology. This paper will use the second English edition, published in 2008.

Firstly, the accuracy of the terminology in Augé's essay will be questioned in the context of the contemporary world. I will then discuss whether the internet is a non-place and how this is relevant to my practical work, "DIS/CONNECT". I will continue by defining the medial genre of the art with excerpts from Jens Schröter's *Intermedialität: Facetten und Probleme eines aktuellen medienwissenschaftlichen Begriffs* (1998) and the chapter on Nelson Goodman in *Was ist Kunst?* (2008) by Michael Hauskeller. The laptop as an artistic medium will be explored, and finally, the series of four pieces will be presented and analyzed.

1. *Non-places: An Introduction to Supermodernity* (Marc Augé) – Summary

The anthropological place, the non-place and supermodernity are the three most important concepts discussed in Marc Augé's *Non-places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*. This chapter will serve as an explanation of these concepts and later explore their application in the contemporary world.

1.1 Key terminology

The anthropological place is defined as a place that encourages the individual to flourish and understand their identity, and promotes connection and exchange with others. Augé references the Greek goddess Hestia. She ruled over the hearth, which warmed the home and acted as the center for residents of the house to gather around.¹ Anthropological places can be considered the hearth as they are places where the presence of humanity lingers. When discussing the anthropological place, it is assumed that bonding, discourse, and journeys have been made within it.² Examples of anthropological places include places of worship (as well as religious monuments), palaces, thrones, and the home.

History, identity, and relation (connection) are three traits that all anthropological places have in common.³ To clarify their meaning, we will apply them to the home of a friend as an example. History is found in the memories made on the property by the friend, who is the current tenant, and by past tenants. Identity is found in their belongings but also in their family (their

¹ Marc Augé, 2008, *Non-places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, p.47

² Marc Augé interpreting Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 2008, p.66

³ Marc Augé, 2008, p.43

origins). Finally, relation is found in the interaction and bonding between the friend, their family, and other visitors.

Before the non-place is explained, it is important to note that non-places and anthropological places are simply terms that help measure the “sociality and symbolism of place.”⁴ The non-place is not the opposite of the anthropological place but rather describes a space’s lack of history, identity, and relation (connection).

According to Augé, non-places are spaces of consumption or transit and are assigned a specific function that adapts to fit our needs. Non-places do not integrate what was there before⁵ as they are simply placed there to serve their purpose, and are utilitarian and highly impersonal. Archetypes of the non-place include airports, shopping centers, train stations, and motorways.

To take the train station as an example, the individual in the non-place is generally addressed through traffic boards and public transportation timetables, which address anyone and everyone. The individual is only one of many passengers,⁶ surrounded by people but ignored. As a result, the individual could feel disconnected and even lonely. The individual stays anonymous in this faceless mass but is only granted anonymity after proving their identity, for example during a ticket check.⁷

Non-places are also defined by the movement of the traveler or passenger who, while in transit, only views the passing (and possibly historic) landscapes in quick glimpses (or “snapshots” as Augé calls them.⁸)

⁴ Marc Augé, 2008, p.8 of introduction

⁵ Marc Augé, 2008, p.63

⁶ Marc Augé, 2008, p.81

⁷ Marc Augé, 2008, p.83

⁸ Marc Augé, 2008, p.69

A second concept that Augé uses to explain the creation of non-places is supermodernity. Supermodernity is defined by three types of excess: the overabundance of events, the overabundance of space, and the individualization of references. The overabundance of events describes the speed at which events become history, making it difficult for us to assign meaning to the recent past and present.⁹ The overabundance of space refers to the accessibility of distant places, through both transportation, which lets us travel the world in a matter of hours, and media, such as television. The background in our favorite TV program makes us familiar with a place we may have never visited.¹⁰ Finally, the individualization of references, which will be referred to as the excess of individualism for clarity, describes the way society follows specific patterns, despite the individual's belief they are unique.¹¹

To summarize, anthropological places help the individual bond with others or understand their identity while non-places offer limited communication. Individuality is disregarded as we are only one of many consumers or passengers. Non-places are purely functional and produced by the excess of our supermodern world.

1.2 Contemporary non-places

Since the first publication of Augé's essay, there have been monumental technological advances and, as a result, cultural change. Inventions of immense impact include the world-wide-web in 1989 and the first web browser, Mosaic, which popularized the use of the internet after it

⁹ Marc Augé, 2008, p.25

¹⁰ Marc Augé, 2008, p.26

¹¹ Marc Augé, 2008, p.31

was made available to the public in 1993.¹² One of the contributors to the evolution of our society has been the emergence of networks such as the internet. It is worth exploring whether Augé's definition of supermodernity still applies to the state of the world thirty years later.

It can be argued that supermodernity has intensified with the internet, in particular through social media. The overabundance of events has been amplified through news, viral trends, and videos that spread even faster across the globe. Our seeming familiarity with foreign places, thus the overabundance of space, has grown through the broad choice of streaming applications (such as Netflix, YouTube and Hulu). The excess of individualism has also escalated, illustrated by the glut of influencers who hope to make unique content but conform to a certain format or pattern for success.

As we have established, the term supermodernity may no longer define our era given the drastic societal changes the internet has driven. As a result, the contemporary non-place may have also evolved, as it is dependent on a potentially outdated term.

¹² Broadband Search, 2019, *Who Invented the Internet – A Full History*

2. Is the internet a non-place?

In 1995 the first English translation of Augé's essay appeared, translated by John Howe. The second edition, published in 2008, is the version used for this paper, with the changes made between the first and second edition undocumented. This is relevant as much can change in thirteen years, especially in a supermodern world.

Before answering the above question, it is important to define the internet. There are many dimensions of the internet but for this thesis, the term "internet" only considers user experience through communication platforms (such as social media), Google searches (documented in our user history), and Wi-Fi.

It is worth asking why the internet can be considered a place at all. The Joukowsky Institute of Brown University raises an interesting comparison between the internet and a place:

"The very vocabulary used to describe it evokes images of place: it is composed of 'sites' where people interact anonymously; sites are given 'domain names' and are spoken of in terms of real estate. In Supermodernity, the Internet is increasingly seen as a 'place' to which people go."¹³

While Augé himself never explicitly states that the internet is a non-place, he hints at the possibility of it:

"Non-places are the real measure of our time [. This includes] all the air, rail and motorways routes, the mobile cabins called 'means of transport' (aircraft, trains and road vehicles) [...] and finally the complex skein of cable and wireless networks that mobilize extraterrestrial space for the purposes of a communication ..."¹⁴

¹³ Joukowsky Institute of Archaeology & the Ancient World of Brown University, n.d., *This is a non-place*

¹⁴ Marc Augé, 2008, p.63

The following paragraphs will try to establish whether the internet is a non-place with passages from Augé's essay. Anthropological places as defined by Augé have three characteristics in common: relation (communication), identity, and history. If the term "place" does not only refer to physical space, then the internet could be considered an anthropological place, even if in an abstract sense as it includes the three traits mentioned.

First and foremost, the internet is used as a means of communication, connection, and thus relation, locally as well as internationally. Besides exchanges between individuals, niche communities on social media allow for discourse and offer new perspectives. These communities evoke a sense of belonging as they provide support for people who want to understand parts of their identity, which might help individuals flourish in real life.

User history could be an example of history on the internet. Our user history consists of a documented accumulation of online searches. This is contradictory to the non-place as non-places do not integrate what was there before.¹⁵ Through the precise tracking of our past online activity, the advertising presented to us has a higher probability of being appealing.

As suggested above, the internet does take on many traits of the anthropological place (namely relation, identity, and history). Yet the following paragraphs offer insight as to why the internet could be considered a non-place.

Augé mentions that a key aspect of the non-place is the obligation to prove your identity before being allowed anonymity.¹⁶ A strong example is the identity check required to sign up for an account on social media. No matter the motive for creating the account – whether it is to share pictures with an audience of a few friends or to be completely anonymous – personal information

¹⁵ Marc Augé, 2008, p.63

¹⁶ Marc Augé, 2008, p.83

is requested upon signing up. This is comparable to the identity checks in non-places, such as checking in at a hotel.

Consumption is yet another trait of the non-place found on the internet. Online shopping as well as the broad spectrum of content at one's disposal demonstrate this. No matter the time, place, or mood, the internet adapts to fit our needs and present a fitting source of entertainment. In addition, the advertising presented to us adjusts to our latest interest or Google search. This ability to fit our needs is crucial to the non-place.¹⁷

Another trait of the non-place on the internet renewal and fact that non-places do not integrate earlier history¹⁸. Renewal is defined by the Cambridge English Dictionary as “a process in which something improves or is improved after being in a bad condition.”¹⁹ Updates can be considered renewal on the internet. While updates make room for improvement, they also erase previous versions of websites and thus their history. As the Joukowsky Institute of Brown University states:

“ [...] While most sites do produce a history of use (like this wiki), sites are continuously updated and the old location of such activities is lost and forgotten. Any real history of the site vanishes as use continues and changes.”²⁰

Finally, passengers are constantly faced with changing landscapes in non-places²¹ while in transit. This can be compared to scrolling as we mindlessly move from one post to the next.

¹⁷ Marc Augé, 2008, p.63

¹⁸ Marc Augé, 2008, p.25

¹⁹ Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d., *renewal*

²⁰ Joukowsky Institute of Archaeology & the Ancient World of Brown University, n.d., *This is a non-place*

²¹ Marc Augé, 2008, p.69

As this chapter shows, the internet has features of both the anthropological place (relation, identity, and history) and the non-place (anonymity, consumption, and renewal/update). In light of Augé's remarks, the presented arguments, and the other sources cited earlier, the internet is not one or the other, but can be considered a combination. While the internet provides opportunities for bonding, it can also create a sense of solitude as the human contact does not go beyond the screen.

3. Art and the non-place

Augé states that one of the problems the contemporary artist faces concerns originality and innovation. Artists need to portray society from a new and distant point of view, but the media landscape (e.g. broadcast media, internet) absorbs these new ideas and makes them mainstream quickly. An example of this is a viral trend that takes something unique and original and turns it into something common.

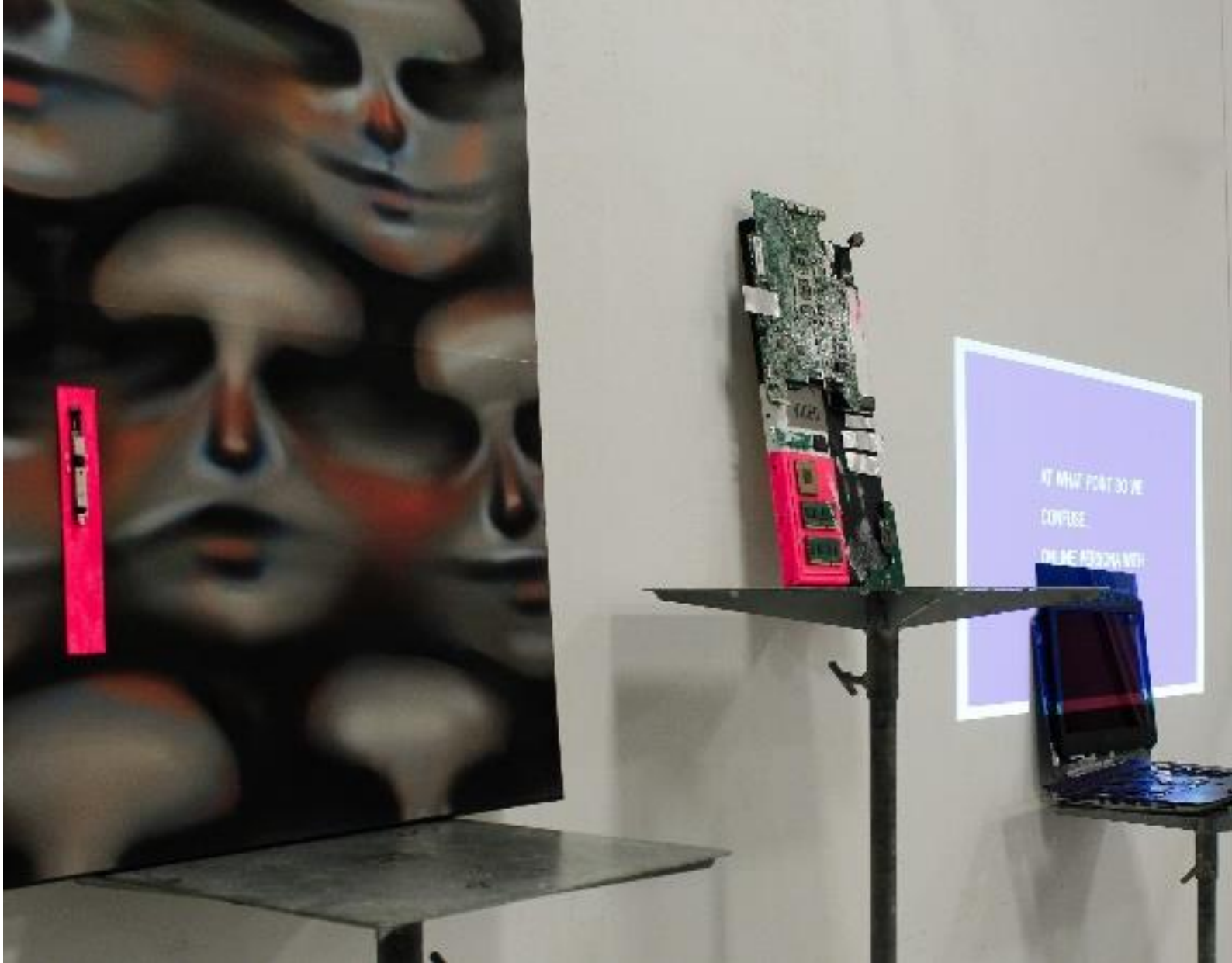
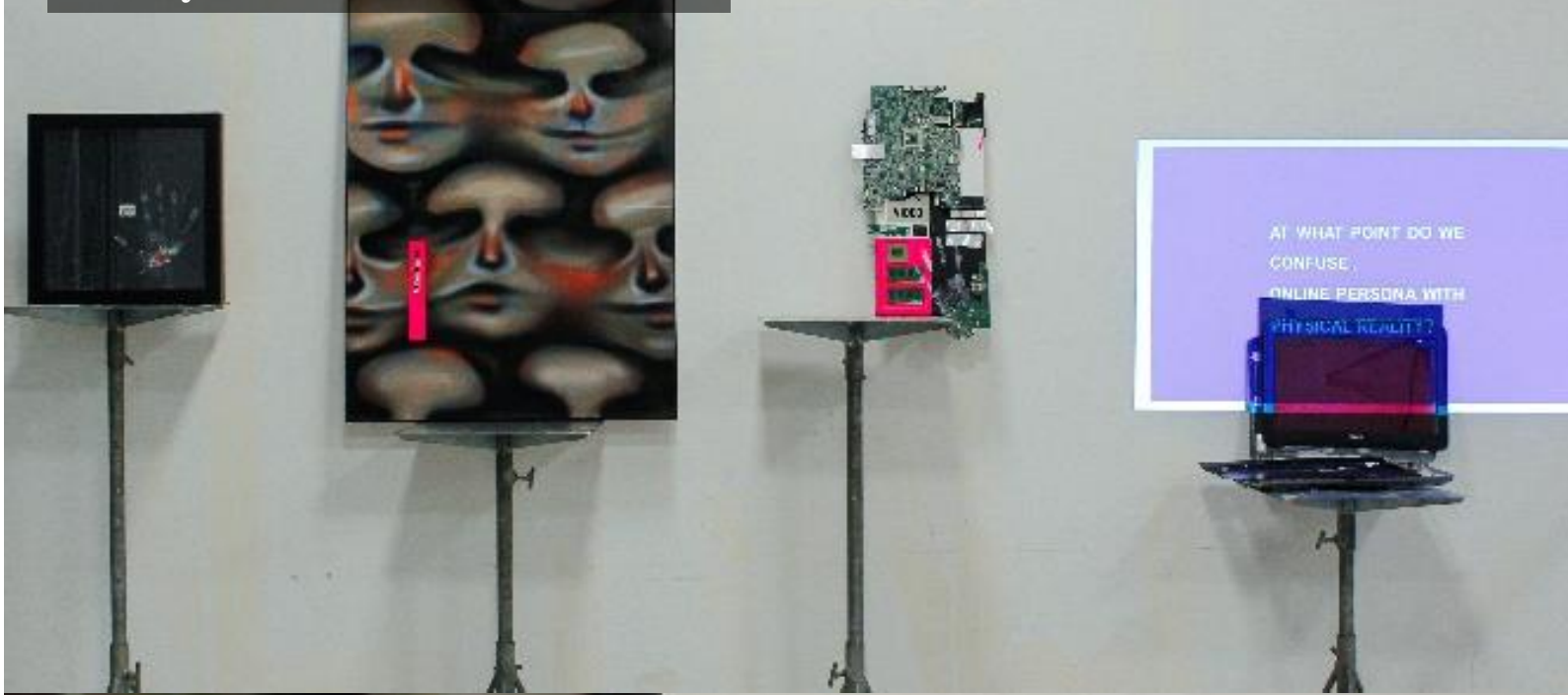
The laptop can be considered a portal to the internet (as defined in chapter 2), which is part of the media landscape. However, once taken apart, the laptop is no longer functional and merely an abstraction. In the chapter about American philosopher Nelson Goodman (1906-1998)²² in *Was ist Kunst?* (2008), Michael Hauskeller explains that in Goodman's opinion, art should highlight and emphasize new aspects of an object and help us understand it in more depth.²³ The dismantled laptop and different computer parts allow us to understand what the internet does in a visual way, and their meaning changes when put into context with the non-place.

The core of my practical work is an expression of my frustration about not only the lack of human contact online, but also the relationship between the internet (as a potential non-place) and the individual. It serves as an exploration of the cause of this frustration through theoretical and artistic means.

²² Wikipedia, n.d., Nelson Goodman

²³ Michael Hauskeller on Nelson Goodman, 2008, *Was ist Kunst?* (p.87-91)

4. Body of work: DIS/CONNECT



4. Body of work: DIS/CONNECT

My practical work, which I have named “DIS/CONNECT”, consists of four pieces, each portraying a different aspect of the relationship between the person and the internet as a potential non-place. “BREAK IN CASE OF EMERGENCY” is about the need to be constantly connected to the internet. “Striving for separation” touches on the anonymity of being one of many users. “Track me!” explores privacy in light of our user history. Finally, “Glitch” examines how we present ourselves online. Despite their differences, there are physical similarities between them, namely the components from a single laptop, the neon pink color, and some human element (such as handprints, faces, or writing).

4.1 Artistic genre of series

The topics of mediality and materiality are crucial to my work and appear through projection, digital art, and assemblage. However, as soon as various media are involved in a piece, they start to interact with each other. Assigning a medial genre helps to explain how these different forms interact with each other and affect the viewer.

Jens Schröter compares mixed media with intermedia, two finely differentiated directions of medial art, in his essay *Intermedialität: Facetten und Probleme eines aktuellen medienwissenschaftlichen Begriffs* (1998). Using quotes from Dick Higgins, an artist of the Fluxus movement of the 1960s, he explains that intermedia is a fusion of multiple traditional media into a new medium (“They fall conceptually between established and traditional media.”²⁴) This makes

²⁴ Jens Schröter quoting Dick Higgins, 1998, *Intermedialität: Facetten und Probleme eines aktuellen medienwissenschaftlichen Begriffs*, p.130

it hard for the viewer to differentiate between the various media and define what they are seeing. Intermedial art puts heavy emphasis on how the piece in its entirety affects the viewer.²⁵ Multimedia (mixed media) art on the other hand does not depict a fusion, but rather a collage or assemblage, in which the viewer can identify and categorize different media.²⁶

My work can be defined as both intermedial and mixed media, but this depends on the piece. As no piece represents the entire series, each analysis will include a consideration of its genre.

²⁵ Jens Schröter, 1998, p.131

²⁶ Jens Schröter, 1998, p.134

4.2 BREAK IN CASE OF EMERGENCY – Consumption & Communication



4.2 BREAK IN CASE OF EMERGENCY – Consumption & Communication

Placed in the center of a thick black frame lies the gleam of gold and green – the Wi-Fi, the computer component responsible for connecting us to the four corners of the earth. Where the glass of the frame has been partially shattered lingers the presence of the culprit, through blood and a greasy handprint left behind.

The entirety of the piece lies within the 30 cm x 30 cm frame and includes various materials such as glass, plastic, and wood as well as less conventional materials, such as paint used to simulate grease and blood, and the viewer's own reflection.

The frame resembles a break glass unit, a glass box that alerts the fire department upon impact. However, the frame does not signal an emergency as it is black. This lets the frame and Wi-Fi fade into the background and highlights the handprint. The size and depth of the frame do not trick the eye and make the Wi-Fi appear bigger or smaller, and thus, do not exaggerate or diminish its importance. The Wi-Fi's placement should draw the eye to the center of the frame, but the viewer's attention is steered to the broken glass and handprint.

As mentioned earlier, paint is used to simulate a greasy handprint. The culprit calls attention to their presence by leaving an irreplicable part of themselves behind. This gives the fracture of the glass more weight, as there is something territorial and deeply personal in the mark of a hand. To emphasize the appearance of the grease, I applied a thin layer of white oil paint mixed with raw umber to my hand, which I later dabbed off with paper towel. The raw umber adds a slight discoloration, which helps to maintain a grimmer look.²⁷

²⁷ One might argue that by altering its appearance, the print is no longer authentic. However, I considered the paint a necessary measure to accentuate the handprint in a subtle manner.

Also noteworthy is the element of tension and extreme contrast between the fragile glass and the brutality associated with the impact. The off-center focal point, created through the density of the shards of glass and the opaqueness of the handprint on the otherwise transparent glass, also contributes to this tension.

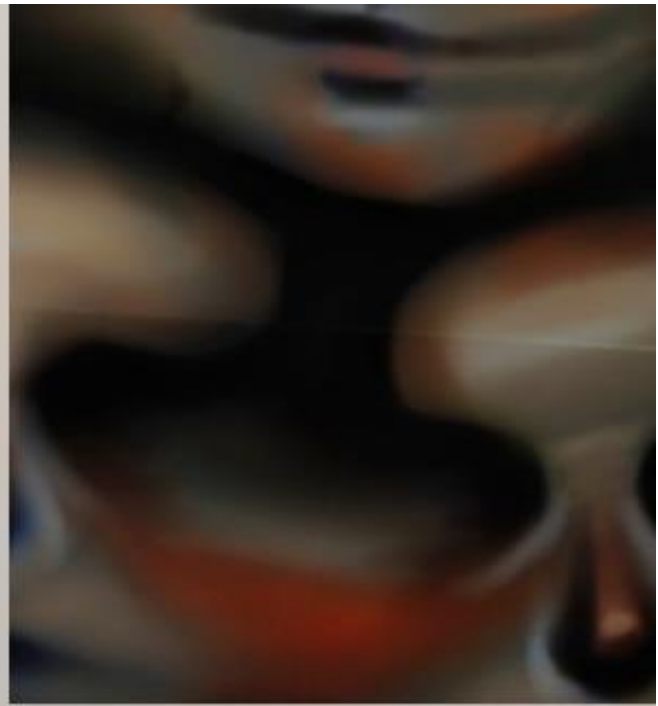
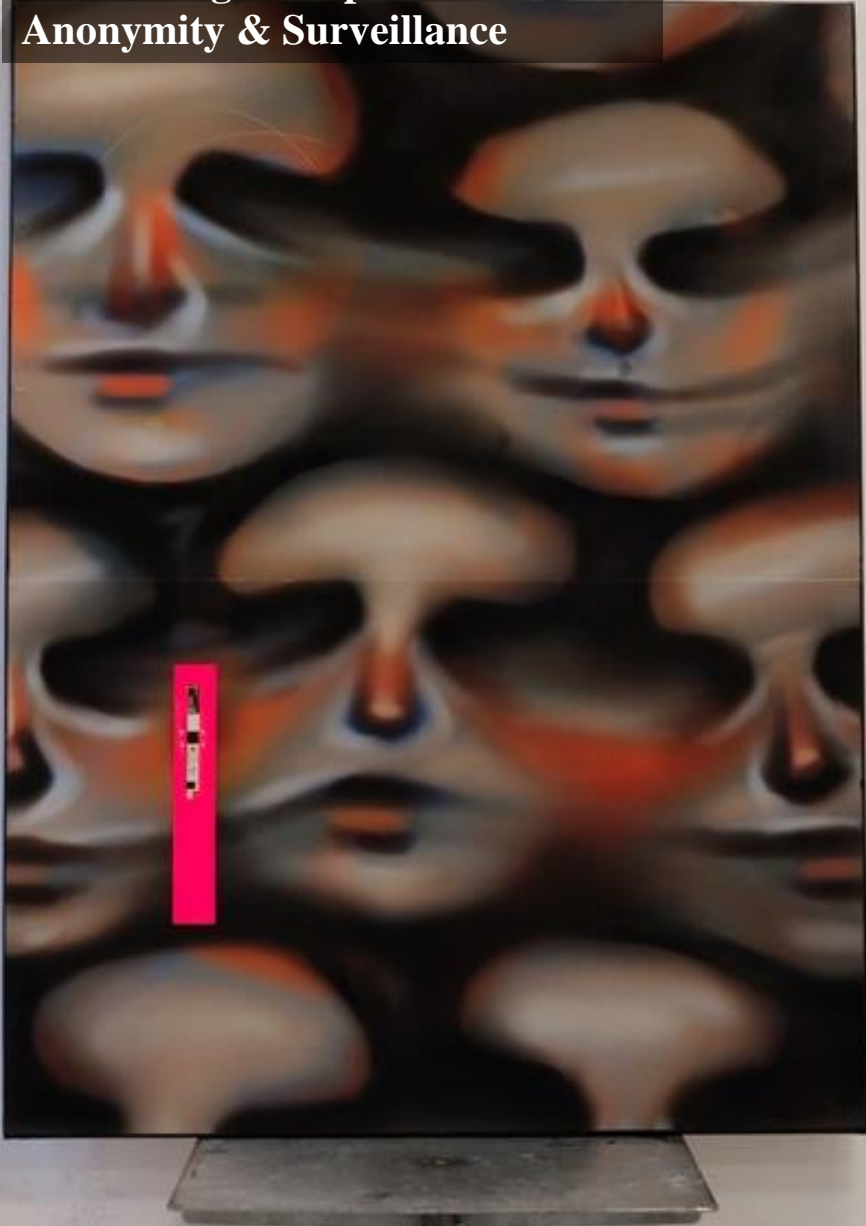
The palpable violence behind the impact distracts from the Wi-Fi and consequently leaves the viewer wondering why there might be such desperation to access the computer part. Hanging the frame at eye-level also lets the viewer's reflection influence the piece. This could fuel the viewer's imagination to the point they may ask themselves whether they might go to the same lengths to have Wi-Fi.

With this distraction from the Wi-Fi, it is implied that constantly seeking what is most stimulating is a result of the amount of information we have at our fingertips. By including elements that easily prompt curiosity, such as violence and gore, the Wi-Fi and true subject of the piece are overlooked, if not completely ignored.

Consumption is also a prominent theme in this piece. The frame – comparable with a break glass unit – in combination with the Wi-Fi suggest that our insatiable need to consume and be connected could be sustained if there ever were a malfunction in the system.

As for the medial genre of this piece, it can be considered a mix of multimedia and intermedia. While the frame and Wi-Fi are recognizable, the viewer might find it challenging to define the handprint and broken glass as media in the traditional sense.

4.3 Striving for separation – Anonymity & Surveillance



4.3 Striving for separation – Anonymity & Surveillance

Ebbing and flowing – this is the general movement made by the ghastly faces of this composition. They are one, conjoined, but striving for separation. On the bottom left-hand corner of the A1 canvas, a desktop camera of a laptop sits inside a rectangular neon pink strip. The white frame around the lens resembles the framing found in the viewfinder of an actual camera.

The camera is a symbol of surveillance. No matter how anonymous we believe we are online, our activity can be tracked all the same (this will be touched on in more detail in chapter 4.4). One example is the creation of a social media account. No matter the purpose of the account, our identity needs to be proven upon signing up before we are granted seeming anonymity. This trait is characteristic of the non-place, as mentioned in chapter 2 (“Is the internet a non-place?”) and in Augé’s essay: “There will be no individualization (no right to anonymity) without identity checks.”²⁸

Another example of anonymity online is the sheer number of existing social media accounts. We are simply one of many, a part of an immeasurable, faceless mass. We users come together to interact briefly with thousands of other users on a post and just as quickly disperse by scrolling – like passengers move through a train station and the snapshots of landscapes they see while in transit. This fluctuation in the size of the mass/crowd is shown through the faces blending together while being torn apart.

“The eyes are the window to the soul” is a commonly used idiom and expresses the sense of being able to understand a person’s emotions simply by looking into their eyes.²⁹ As the eyes

²⁸ Marc Augé, 2008, p.83

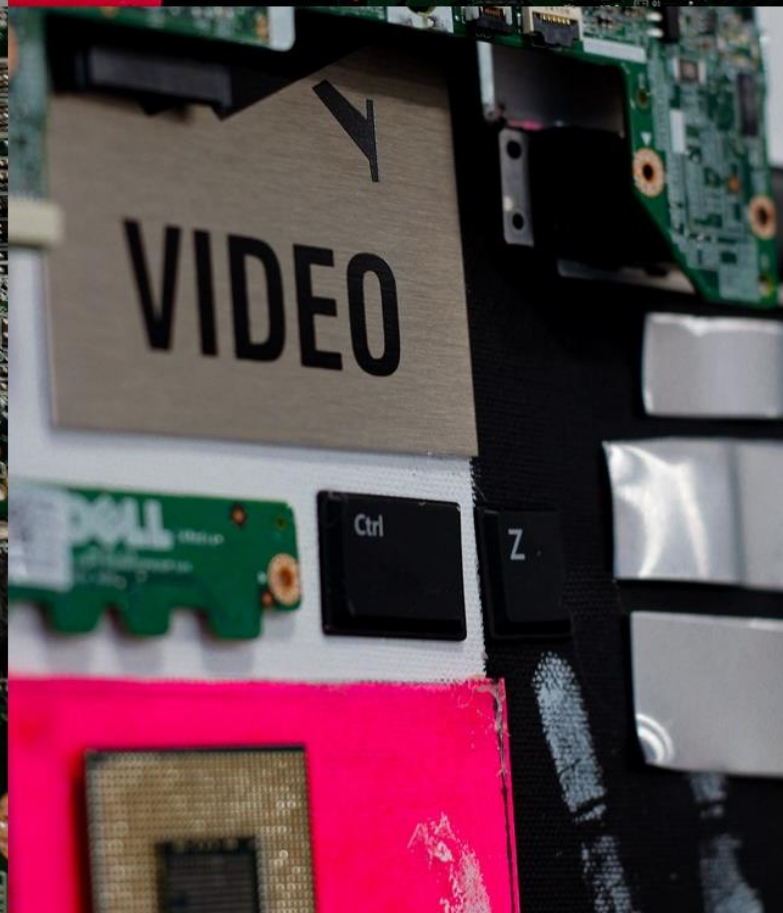
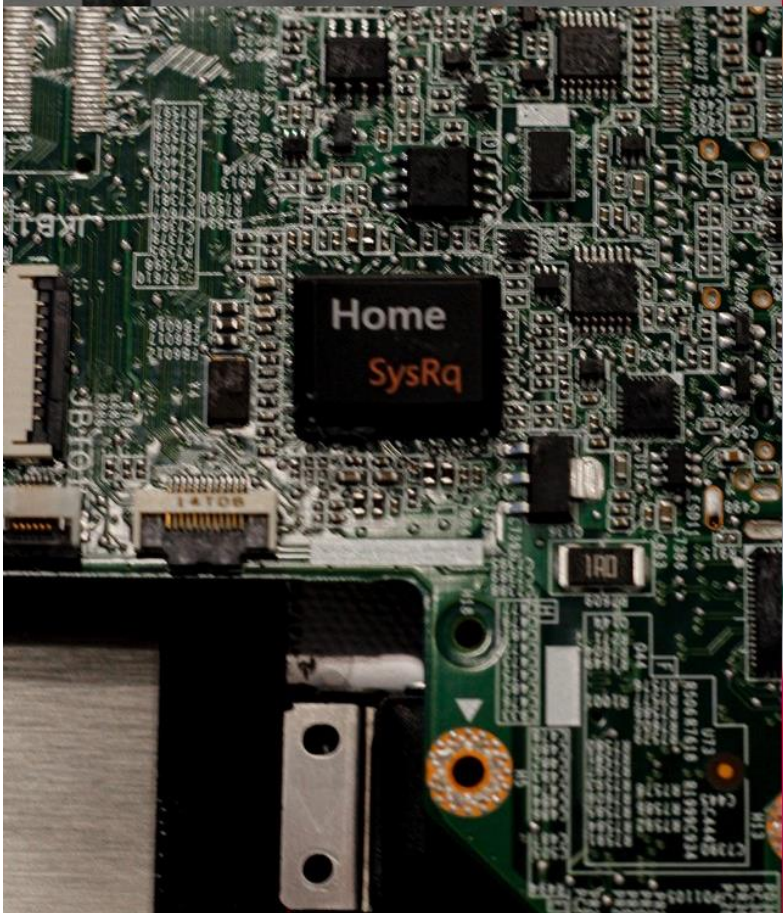
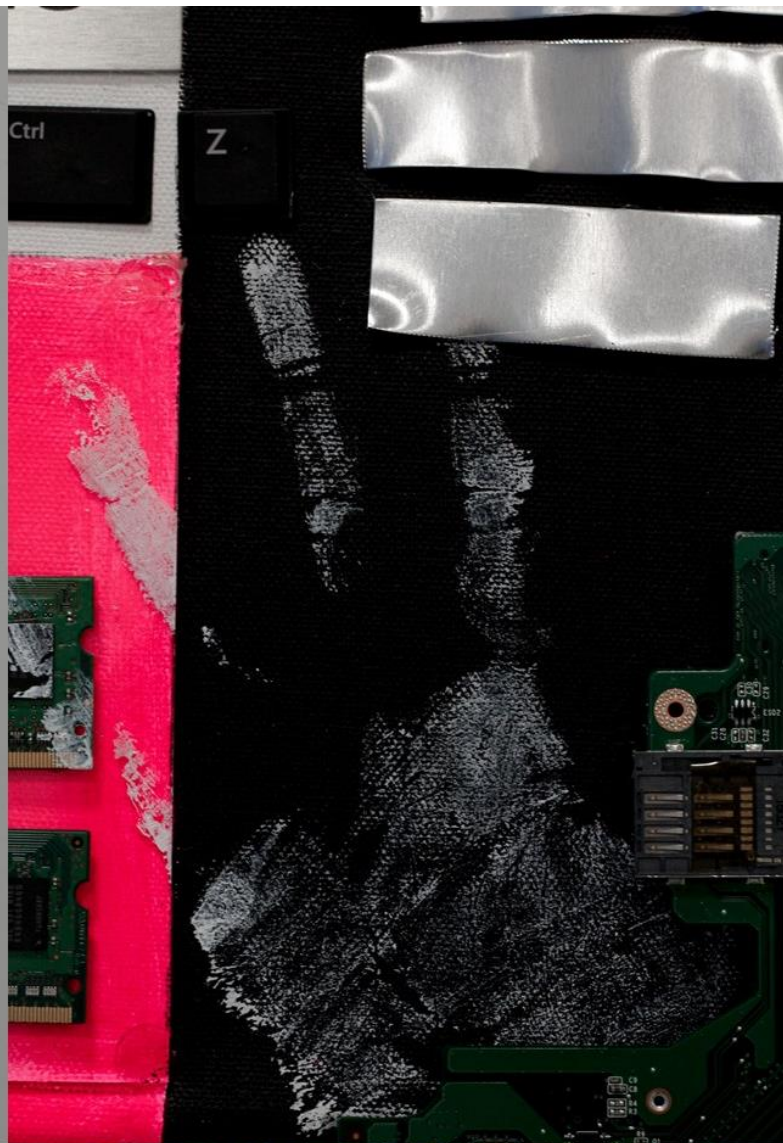
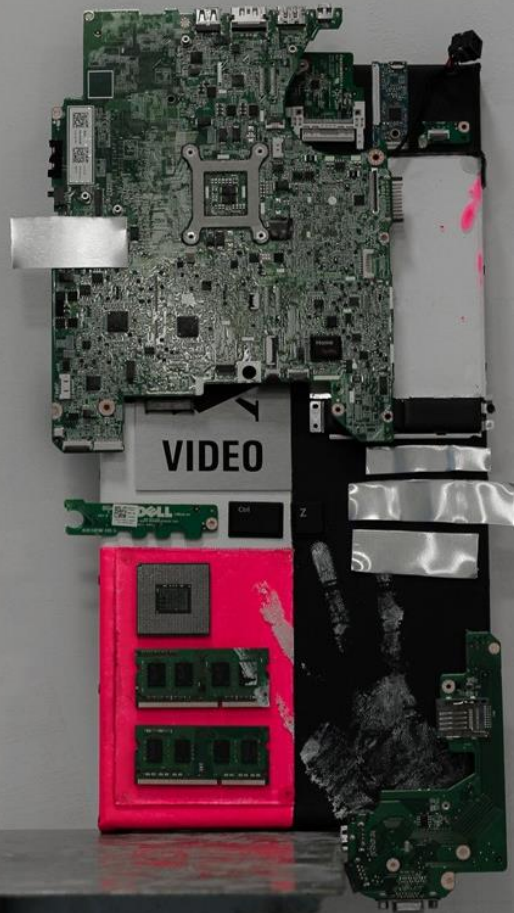
²⁹ Writing Explained, n.d., *What Does the Eyes Are the Window to the Soul Mean?*

have been replaced by sockets, it is suggested that we do not have access to each face's emotions, thoughts, or souls – their individuality.³⁰ On the contrary, the connected eye sockets suggest a loss of individuality in favor of similarity and anonymity. Yet the faces being pulled apart suggest that they do not want to identify as one and are striving for independence. This somewhat human mass carries undertones of blue, red, and green, which in combination with the tan base create a slightly grey hue. This contributes to the faces' ghoulish appearance.

Before disclosing the genre of this piece, it is worth mentioning that the faces were drawn digitally, printed onto two A2 sheets of thick paper and then secured on the canvas, which explains the lack of texture. This piece can be categorized as intermedial as it is a fusion of digital art and a conventional format (the canvas). As an aside, when I displayed my work to others for feedback, I was asked a few times what type of paint or media was used, which suggests that the fusion was successful.

³⁰ Whether or not our eyes are key components of identity and individuality is of course arguable.

4.4 Track me! – User History, Privacy & Memory



4.4 Track me! – User History, Privacy & Memory

As a canvas filled with color, diverse materials, and hidden messages, this piece can be considered the most detailed of the series. The materials and media fastened to the rectangular surface range from computer parts to metal bits and glass. The different media, shades of acrylic paint on the backdrop, and asymmetry contribute to its crammed appearance.

As for the computer parts, four of them are important to this piece: the motherboard in the upper left-hand corner, the CPU (central processing unit or processor) and the two RAMs (acronym for random-access memory) on the glass plate in the bottom left-hand corner. The following three passages describe what these pieces do in relatively simple terms:

“**The motherboard** is the backbone that ties the computer’s components together at one spot and allows them to talk to each other. Without it, none of the computer pieces [...] could interact.”³¹

“The most important part of your computer, if you had to choose just one, would be the **central processing unit (CPU)**. It’s the primary hub (or “brain”), and it processes the instructions that come from programs, the operating system, or other components in your PC.”³²

“**RAM [random-access memory]** gives applications a place to store and access data on a short-term basis. It stores the information your computer is actively using so that it can be accessed quickly.”³³

A helpful analogy between these parts and the human body is to think of the processor as our brain, the RAM as our short-term memory, and the motherboard as our nervous system.³⁴

³¹ Linsey Knerl for HP, 2017, *What Does a Motherboard Do?*

³² Ian Paul for How-To Geek, 2020, *What Is a CPU, and What Does It Do?*

³³ Micron Technology, 2017, *What is Computer Memory (RAM) and What Does It Do?*

³⁴ Francesca Marchetti, 2017, *Analogy Between a Computer and the Human Body*

As already mentioned, this piece is an assemblage of assorted elements that come together to represent our user history. The accumulation of different components represents not only our Google searches – our digital footprint – but also the technological processes that go into executing, documenting, and saving them. The following explains the most prominent elements:

- Ctrl + Z is the keyboard shortcut for undo. By setting this next to the metal “video” panel, a paradox is created as we want to erase something from our user history, but do not have the ability to do so because it has already been documented and saved somewhere.
- The ‘home’ key on the motherboard refers to the way the internet allows us to create an environment that might resemble home, through online communities or a feed filled with the content we enjoy most – both of which could help us as individuals flourish and act as traces of the anthropological place on the internet.
- The handprint on the bottom right-hand side symbolizes our digital footprint.³⁵ By marking the RAM with the handprint, a human trace is left on the digital world and “remembered”. The meaning of this changes when the print is partially engulfed by another computer part. This implies that new data accumulates, but old data and our history are not forgotten.

As mentioned in chapter 4.3 (“Striving for separation” – Anonymity & Surveillance), we are not as anonymous as we believe we are online. An example of this is the incognito mode of our browsers. Searches made in the incognito window are not saved and are wiped clean every time we close the desktop tab. This, however, only prevents the people using our devices from

³⁵ A handprint seemed more fitting here than a footprint as it is an element already used in “BREAK IN CASE OF EMERGENCY” (see chapter 4.2).

seeing our browser history. Third parties (such as internet service providers, advertisers, and search engines) still have access to those searches. The following passage explains this well:

“For example, any website you visit will know you visited, as will its advertisers. Any website you sign in to will know you browsed that site because it logged the sign-in. If you’re at work or school, whoever runs the network will have access to your browsing history. The same goes for your internet provider at home. That means [internet service providers in the USA] AT&T or Verizon Wireless [know] if you’re out and about, or Comcast or Verizon FiOS in your house. Search engines, too, will have access to your browsing history and may even show search suggestions based on where you are or what you are up to.”³⁶

To summarize, despite thinking we might be browsing privately, our activity can still be tracked. We want privacy but cannot attain it, as our online activity has already been documented.

The topic of memory is also addressed in this piece, though it is vital to differentiate human memory from digital memory. When it comes to documenting and saving processes, digital memory does so objectively, chronologically, and with precision. Human memory on the other hand can be warped by bias, denial, or time. Elements of both human memory (the handprint) and digital memory (the RAM) are incorporated in this piece because they interact with each other. Here is one example: A young man “John” is embarrassed by a picture he posted at the age of 15, but despite deleting it and denying its existence to his friends, the internet still has the evidence.

The genre of this piece is clearly mixed media, as the different materials are recognizable. This is enforced by the assemblage.

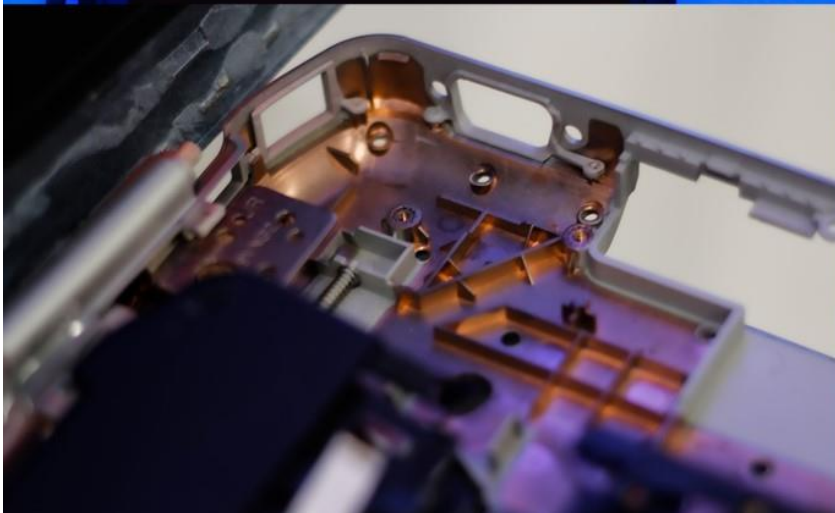
³⁶ Eric Zeman for Android Authority, 2021, *Incognito mode unmasked: What it does and what it doesn't do*

4.5 Glitch – Identity

AT WHAT POINT DO WE
CONFUSE
ONLINE PERSONA WITH
PHYSICAL REALITY?

AT WHAT POINT DO WE
CONFUSE
ONLINE PERSONA WITH
PHYSICAL REALITY?

Enter
←



4.5 Glitch – Identity

Projected onto a reconstructed laptop is the question “At what point do we confuse our online persona with physical reality?” This piece takes on the gap between how we present ourselves online and in real life.

The laptop, which has its insides removed, has been messily reconstructed. Key components such as the keyboard and LCD screen have been detached or replaced, leaving only the laptop’s plastic shell behind. The unaligned parts of the plastic cover give us a peek into the laptop’s bronze interior. A tinted black acrylic plate serves as a placeholder for the dismantled LCD screen and is also offset as it is bigger than the LCD screen’s original frame. The acrylic plate is transparent, with part of the inside of the laptop’s back plastic shell visible. This part of the cover’s interior is painted neon pink but muted through the plate’s tint.

A small detail is the ‘enter’ key that is placed in the upper right-hand corner of the original frame of the dismantled LCD screen. This suggests our ability to delve into our online persona whenever we please by simply going on social media.

As the laptop’s guts and LCD screen have been removed, we can assume that whatever is shown on the area where the screen used to be is no longer controlled by the computer. This is where the projection starts to become relevant. Just as the projection onto the screen is external, and can thus be controlled or manipulated, we can project an ideal version of ourselves onto the internet. We can hide or share whatever sides of ourselves we would like, yet a fine-tuned identity

is not a truthful reflection of our being.³⁷ As soon as the desktop tabs close and the screens of our devices turn off, we are only left with our flesh and blood – our physical reality.

I am trying to question if this projection creates a gap between how we perceive ourselves, increases how often we experience feelings of inferiority for not meeting the expectations set by these filtered projections, and/or confuses our physical reality with our online persona. Online personas can be misleading and give the impression we might know somebody far better than we actually do. This *Scheinbeziehung* (simulated and seeming connection) is an attempt at bonding. But how strong can the connection be if the only impression of a person is virtual and possibly manipulated?

As for the name of this piece, the Cambridge English Dictionary defines glitch as “a small problem or fault that prevents something from being successful or working as well as it should.”³⁸ This definition can be applied to the reconstruction of the laptop. The laptop is clearly no longer functional, and the offset pieces in two dimensions make it seem like a distortion, which is essentially what the user experiences as a glitch.

This piece can also be considered both intermedia and mixed media. On the one hand, the viewer can differentiate between the projection and the laptop and see them as two separate parts. On the other hand, as the projection continues the glitch through another medium, it can be considered a fusion and therefore intermedial.

³⁷ Just to clarify, my personal opinion is that there is no obligation to share intimate details of our lives or exhibit a realistic portrayal of our identity with strangers on the internet.

³⁸ Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d., *glitch*

5. Reflection

Over the span of the past six months, I have acquired more knowledge about art, philosophy, and myself than I expected to.

This was my first time diving into philosophy and anthropology. Learning how to explain someone else's concepts as well as formulate my own in an accessible way was initially a struggle. A mistake I frequently made was in the articulation of my thoughts: I would forget that because only I know the inner workings of my own mind, I needed to explain my ideas precisely and coherently for them to be understood.

This thesis has also served as a means of understanding my place in the world. By studying Augé's essay, I now have a deeper understanding and awareness of my environment, and have come to the following conclusion: The non-place amplifies one's feelings. When sad, the sense of solitude is overwhelming, but when content, there is comfort in isolation.

While creating the art, I found it particularly challenging to refrain from making the pieces "didactic". This is less noticeable in the final series, but evident in the sketches and prototypes in my journal. "BREAK IN CASE OF EMERGENCY" in its early stages had its title written in red on the plexiglass, which practically eliminates any possibility of the viewer drawing their own conclusion. The lesson behind this is that it is important to give the viewer freedom of interpretation.

In his chapter on philosopher Nelson Goodman, Michael Hauskeller explains that Goodman stated that every piece of art is already an interpretation of the object it wants to represent ("So ist jede Wahrnehmung und jede vermeintliche Tatsache eine Interpretation."³⁹) No piece of

³⁹ Michael Hauskeller on Nelson Goodman, 2008, p.88

art is protected from the artist's view of the world, and no interpretation of the art is protected from the viewer's bias. Further to Goodman's statement, it could be argued that my thesis is clouded by a double bias. Not only is my art a personal take on the internet as a non-place, but the theoretical part is also influenced by my own intentions. This was especially noticeable while analyzing the art as it was tough to separate myself from the art and look at it from an objective point of view.

A hesitancy to push beyond my comfort zone was another challenge. Although my art is intermedial/multimedial to a certain degree, I believe I could have explored the topic of materiality more. This could have been done by taking more risks during the testing stage. Only when I took apart the laptop did I dare to break free from pen and paper and experiment. I could have also moved away from the theory earlier, though the complex subject matter did take time to digest.

This thesis has served as a valuable learning experience, notably in terms of personal expression, both artistic and written, and the benefits of collaborating with a trusted advisor. The mistakes I have learned from and the skills I have picked up along the way should equip me well the next time I take on a project of this size.

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