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# SET UP IS INSPECTING YOU...

```
using vaporwave;
using Nostegelic.Collections;
public class Interaction : MonoBehaviour {
    public Voice c;
    public static Voice selectedVoice
    public bool selectable = false;
    void OnTriggerEnter(Collider c) {
        {
            if(c.spawning.to.self.parent.gender.sex.Equals("bittersweet"))
                if(this.SitWithIt)
                {
                    Space.Interaction.selectedVoice = this.c;
                    this.transform.Rotate(Vector3.up, 33);
                    Return;
                }
            transform.gameObject.GetComponent<Renderer>().material.color =
            SpaceInteraction.selectedVoice
        }
    }
}
```

```
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```



Code\_Poem [V 0.0.2] (left), Amber Strain, 2019, duration 00:30, performed on an iMac G3 with accompanying sound.

mono'scape (right, follow QR code link), of the garagewave series. Amber Strain, 2019. Duration 3:53. qrco.de/bbDHru

**Set Up is Inspecting You...**

An investigation to the cathartic and intimate relationships we hold with our computers.

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the post graduate degree of Master of Fine Arts at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand.

Amber Strain.

2019.

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Thank you to all the friends who got me here too, I am fortunate enough to have too many to name. Your support and help has been incredible. I love you all.

And last of all thank you to my parents, without your love and support I could have never gotten this far. I am so happy to make you both proud.

# ABSTRACT

This exegesis involves a critical analysis of my own experience of the 2000's era through multimedia digital installation methods; not limited to collage, poetry, animation, projection, music and virtual reality works. In so doing, I found insight into my own intimate relationship with technology and used it in correspondence with a critical feminist lens influenced by my upbringing. Analysed as an art object and something that holds the capacity to be a cathartic confidant or receptacle of previously unspoken personal confessions, the work explores the ramifications of this vulnerability with the use of iMac G3's in particular. As a culturally significant, designed product iMac G3's aided my intention to create commentary around the larger phenomenon of the effects of the virtual world on our modern digital era raised generations, often termed "digital natives". The work references the Internet-based community of Vaporwave music and aesthetics. Re-purposed, the micro genre extends upon these critical inquiries, as a self-aware community based upon ideologies of escapism from the sickness of late capitalism, and seeking an imaginary, aestheticised past reality. The installations communicate a mediatory space or fusion between the physical and virtual worlds in controlled gallery conditions, but also in preparation to re-enter and challenge the community of Vaporwave and public spaces of the young female audience to whom the work gives voice.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**What was the effect of the changes of Internet culture and computer consumerism, taking place around the early 2000s, specifically on young female children?**

**What are new ways to express an anonymous intimacy with the machine, reacting to its confidant and cathartic qualities?**

**How is Vaporwave, an independent Internet-based art/music scene, reinterpreting the experience of time in our digitised capitalist world?**

**Can the ongoing fusion of our physical and virtual worlds or realities be expressed through new installation methods?**

```
Console.WriteLine ("A fuck stomachs, B fuck thighs, C fuck  
you, D fuckme, DD, E, F_cups full")
```



```
Press any key to boot from CD . . .  
Setup is inspecting your computer's hardware configuration . .  
. . .  
namespace Feliz0078  
{  
    public class Parent  
    {  
        public string name;  
        public Parent (strings)  
        {  
            Console.WriteLine ("A fuck stomachs, B fuck thighs, C fuck  
you, D fuckme, DD, E, F_cups full")  
        }  
    }  
    public class Child : Parent  
    {  
        public Child () : base()  
        {  
            Console.WriteLine ("I cannot deal with having tits today")  
        }  
    }  
}  
class Program  
{  
    static void Main(string[] arga)  
    {  
        Child x = new Child() ;  
        Console.WriteLine(x.name);  
    }  
}
```

*Code\_Poem [V0.0.1]* (right). Featured in the *F\_cups Full* installation later renamed *mono logging - V0.0.1*, Amber Strain, 2019, duration 1:30, performed on an iMac G3 with accompanying sound. Full video and sound found here; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=puDMHztVoo>

*garagewave* (left), of the *garagewave series*. Amber Strain, 2019. Duration 1:08. <https://qrco.de/bbDHsv>

# INTRODUCTION

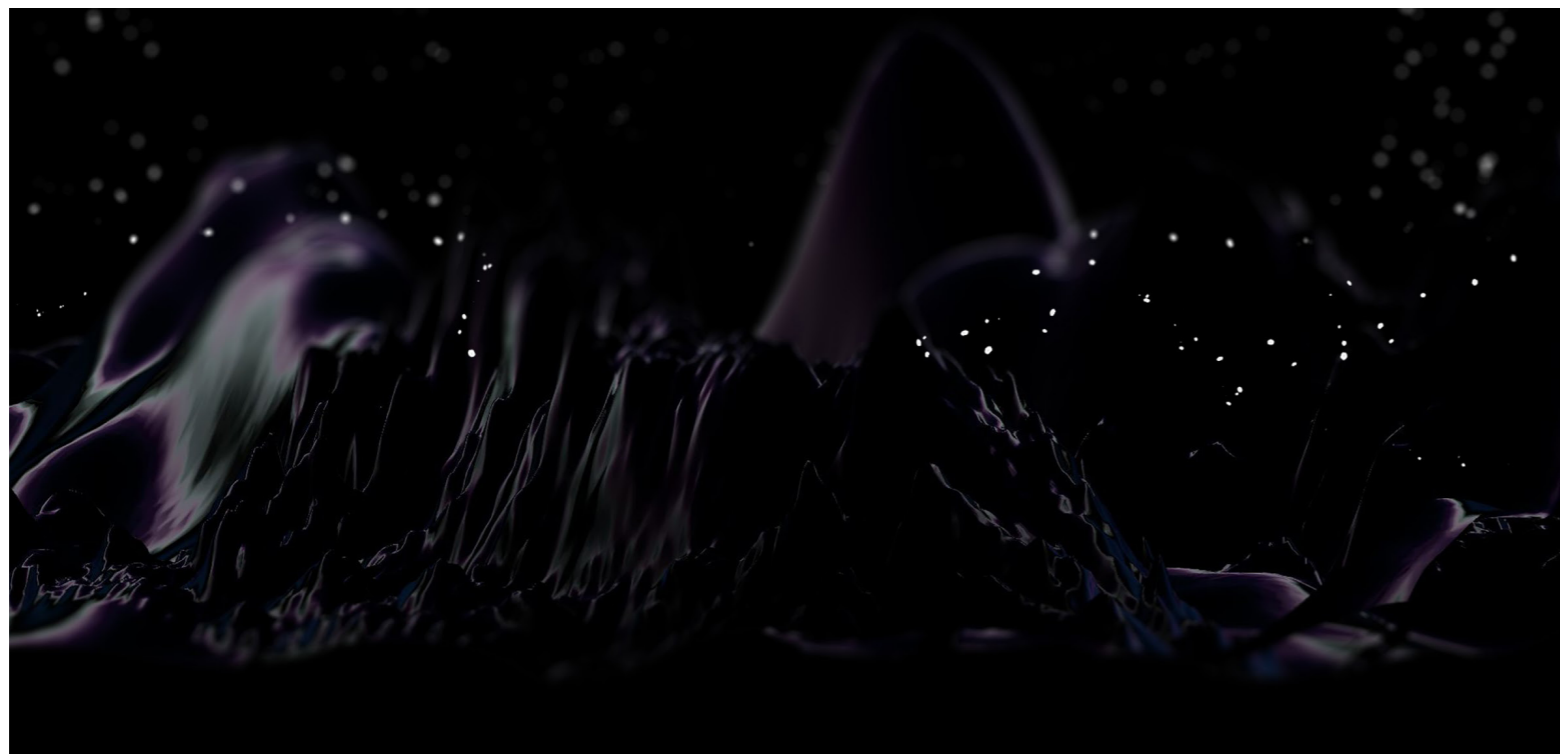
The *Code Poem*'s intended effect is to be uncanny when performed; it intentionally pauses on the phrase `Setup is inspecting you` to personify the object and suggest it is aware of its audience. The line is therefore a prompt that the owner of the machine, or interchangeably the viewer, has opened themselves to be analysed or vulnerable to the object's judgment. The code used is an adaptation of the C# language, and embedded are my own personal secrets; things not openly shared but still inexplicably made to exist outside the mind, recorded onto the machine's software to be played in an infinite loop until instructed to stop. The codes were a provocation to myself, to question why I treat computers intimately, and landing on the idea that perhaps it is to validate my feelings in a curated, escapist reality in which I perceive my actions as having little or no social consequences.

My research has and continues to be concerned with the escapist tendencies of our experience within the virtual worlds (or realities) we create, especially in the moments when they intersect or crossover with our physical reality. A precursor to my *Code Poem* and *garage w a v e* series, *Anamnesis* (see Figure 1), was a short virtual reality film, created in my Spatial Design Honours year, that aimed to make tangible through virtual reality the 'true' experience of an idealised memory, considering both the inaccuracies and manipulations that the mind inflicts on its recollections. The resulting space of *Anamnesis* was not a proportioned nor physically accurate



**Figure 1** (left). Amber Strain. *Anamnesis*. 2017. Virtual Reality installation and animation sequence of found and original media. Duration 7:00.

**Figure 2** (center top). Rachel Rossin. *My Little Green Leaf*. December 2016 - January 2017. Virtual Reality and painted acrylic board installation. Exhibition hosted by Art in General & Kim Contemporary Art Centre, Riga, Latvia Claude Glass, Signal Gallery, NADA, New York, NY. Image sourced from artist's website: <http://rossin.co/>



experience, but one that aimed to evoke signals of emotional change through the design of spatial properties. The project evolved into a self-centered cathartic experience. As Venkatesh Rao states: "*Escapism [...] It is a deliberate entrance into a simpler reality, as opposed to an unplanned entrance into a messier one.*"<sup>1</sup> I had created my own mediated technologically escapist reality<sup>2</sup> which I had been viewing with rose tinted glasses, and realised that I needed to let it go and move on. Although *Anamnesis* was a visually immersive space, for me, the most emotionally affective component was the soundscape. The haunting, distorted voice was that of a now distant friend; one of those relationships which is dissolved by distance, but which also marked the death of a better, freer sense of myself. The soundscape also included a medley of song samples drawn from the playlists I accumulated at the time, and as with the visual effects, they were reversed, slowed, echoed and pitched higher as I reflected on the haziness of my own memories. My practice has since extended upon this work, to also now also speak to the implicit tensions of the mode in which we engage with the virtual world, highlighting the effect on young girls.

The later works of *Code Poetry* are, in a sense, the opposite of this idea,

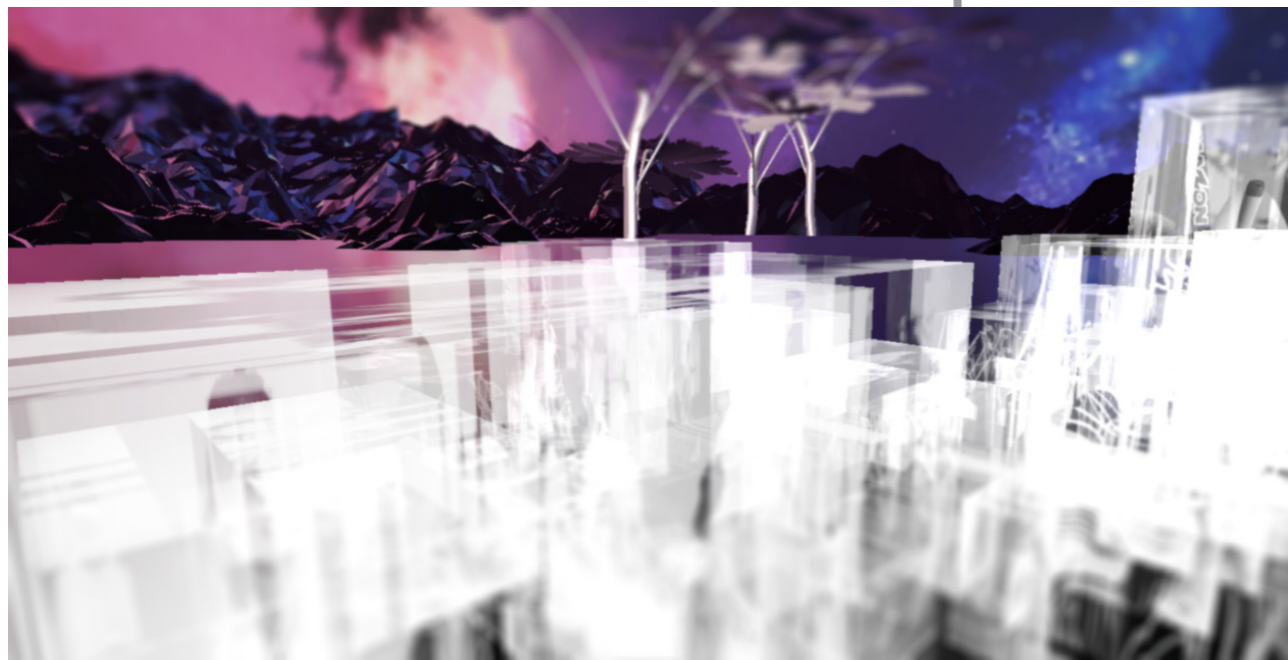
<sup>1</sup> Venkatesh Rao, edited by Gygax and Munder, Ian Cheng: *Forking at Perfection*, JRP Ringier Kunstverlag AG, 2016, Page 93

<sup>2</sup> Rao, Ian Cheng: *Forking at Perfection*, 93.

representing repressed ideas and negative thoughts that I sought to validate through the machine's performance, as compared to *Anamnesis*, a space that elevated an idyllic affirmation of my past happiness. However, despite their respective emotional material, both experiences use the container of the virtual world as a means of escape from my physical reality to better understand my sense of self in a created virtual one.

The work of Rachel Rossin provided a possible solution to an issue of *Anamnesis*, which is that it had felt abrupt in its transition into the virtual space, and additionally it was an individual exclusionary experience due to the inherent characteristics of a virtual reality headset. I wanted instead to convey and explore the moment of the intersection of virtual and physical space. Rossin's *My Little Green Leaf* was a multimedia work of painted abstract forms (see Figure 2), sourced from her digitally altered virtual spaces.<sup>3</sup> Although some of this 'digital nature' is lost through the materiality of paint, she uses warped, translucent acrylic to create a mediatory space of intersection between the physical world and virtual space. Deviating away from virtual reality in my own practice, *My Little Green Leaf*'s use of physical installation was suggestive for how to further express the chaotic aspects of virtual worlds; a feature *Anamnesis* had lacked. Later, this mediatory space between the physical world and the virtual world would become central to my art practice, in which I would aim to expand upon and deepen the sense of intimacy within the screen and the digital realm.

<sup>3</sup> Image referenced is by Rachel Rossin, *My Little Green Leaf (still)*, 2016. Image source is on the exhibition website 'Art in General'. Link [artingeneral.org/exhibitions/628](http://artingeneral.org/exhibitions/628)



**Figure 3** (left). Amber Strain. *Virtual and Un-Ideal*. 2018. Virtual Reality installation and animation sequence of found media.

Rossin's *My Little Green Leaf* virtual reality experience shows an unrestrained approach to her built virtual reality worlds; she is seemingly unconcerned with replicating or representing the physics of the 'real' world. This work alludes to the manner in which coders and 3D digital artists/designers are in some ways comparable to gods, in the ways that they can use the language of code to create self-contained universes in the digital realm with their own 'laws of physics. Sci-fi writer Philip K. Dick has said that "*reality is that which, when you stop believing in it it doesn't go away,*"<sup>4</sup> and in the context of my practice this means that the digital spaces in which I create stand as their own independent realities or universes.

*Only by regarding a computer programme as a universe in its own right can we take seriously the things that develop and grow within it. <sup>5</sup>*

My notion of "universe making" resulted in the experimental pieces of *Virtual and Un-Ideal* (see Figure 4) and *I Don't Exist*, pieces that tested how I could communicate memory, but which still play with new laws of physics to create memory-based virtual reality worlds. Adding to my "God complex" notions in creating the two works, I also explored the theory in which there is no established hierarchy between the physical or digital world, because "*matter and energy [are] indistinguishable - they [are] both vibratory phenomena - blurring the boundaries between materiality and immateriality.*"<sup>6</sup> The works operated under the idea that the physical, virtual, and my own mental spaces had no hierarchy and were interconnected or indistinguishable "*blurring[s] of the boundaries between materiality and immateriality*"<sup>7</sup>, while also simultaneously existing as a permeable universes of its own substance. In my own practice I felt that in creating these virtual spaces I was creating impossible worlds in order to better understand the physical one.

I found the *Virtual and Un-Ideal* and *I Don't Exist* works to be largely unsuccessful. One comment that I received was "*the work would resonate with me more if your built identity was more universal.*" This comment resonated with me because in creating my own world, based upon my own memories, I was using what for others felt like an inaccessible language of visual cues that were then seen as unremarkable. I also still had not addressed, as in the case of Rossin's work, an engaging and tactile expression of the concept of the intersection of a virtual and physical space. I then chose to leave virtual reality

<sup>4</sup> Phillip K. Dick, *Ian Cheng: Forking at Perfection*, 35.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Bentley, *Digital biology: how nature is transforming our technology and our lives*, Simon and Schuster, 2001, Page 17.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony Enns, and Shelley Trower, eds. *Vibratory Modernism*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Page 3.

<sup>7</sup> Bentley, *Digital biology: how nature is transforming our technology and our live*, 17.

behind to better articulate my concepts in other media as I reflected upon the reception of these experimental works.

## QUASI-UTOPIAN AESTHETIC ‘ELSEWHERE’S’<sup>8</sup>

While thinking about generational angst and shared melancholy, or my peers’ collective ambivalence about the past, I remembered a certain music genre my brother had shared with me. I had admittedly dismissed it at the time as lounge or study music; something too weak to hold my full attention. In Amanda Petrusich’s article for *The New Yorker*: “Against Chill: Apathetic Music to Make Spreadsheets To”, she makes the following remarks about “chill” music genres and their mode of continuous streaming:

*The rise of chill as an aspirational state suggests that perhaps the best thing to feel is not much at all. The song continued. Maybe it ended. I don’t know. “Do you enjoy this?” I asked my students. They found the question silly if not fatuous—the music wasn’t really for liking, in the traditional sense. The music wasn’t for anything. It merely existed to facilitate and sustain a mood, which in turn might enable a task: studying, folding laundry, making spreadsheets, idly browsing the Internet.<sup>9</sup>*

Not far removed from the ‘Chillwave,’ genre to which Petrusich refers to, is ‘Vaporwave.’ Vaporwave is another Internet born and mediated musical micro-genre, and is part of a network of benign music genres that encourage inactive listening.<sup>10</sup> Even as I write this exegesis, Vaporwave music nudges me towards a reminiscent nostalgia for the technology of the 80’s and 90’s which I was too young to actually use. I am “reminded” of 80’s anime, American 90’s malls, and a time when websites existed without collective UX design rules; an imagined and Internet aestheticised “simpler time”. The use of anime references, Japanese cultural iconography, and text characters is an aspect of the genre I do not engage in, not to assume the intent of Vaporwave creators who do use it. I would find the cultural appropriation disingenuous to the biographic nature of my work, and an act of insensitive cultural appropriation if I applied it.

<sup>8</sup> Beatrice, Douaihy, n.d., “Vaporwave Animation: Utopia in the Polygon.” Accessed September 26, 2019. [https://www.academia.edu/38159185/Vaporwave\\_Animation\\_Utopia\\_in\\_the\\_Polygon](https://www.academia.edu/38159185/Vaporwave_Animation_Utopia_in_the_Polygon), Page 3.

<sup>9</sup> Amanda Petrusich, “Against Chill: Apathetic Music to Make Spreadsheets To” *The New Yorker*. n.d., accessed October 9, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/against-chill-apatetic-music-to-make-spreadsheets-to>

<sup>10</sup> Georgina Born, and Christopher Haworth. “From Microsound to Vaporwave: Internet-Mediated Musics, Online Methods, and Genre” 98, no. 4 (2018): 601–47. <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edspmu&AN=edspmu.S1477463117400267&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

Born in 1995, I am one of the last generations to be raised with a ‘computer room,’ with broadband, and no smart phones until I was around age 16. In a sense, my developmental years progressed in parallel with the transformation of the Internet from a context for select communities, to an environment where having an online presence and 24/7 online access is widespread. The music, animations, and object installation series I have created riff off Vaporwave, a seemingly nonchalant and mindless genre, which in itself is a microcosm of 2000’s Internet nostalgia and symbols that are subverted and used to further an anti- neoliberal agenda.

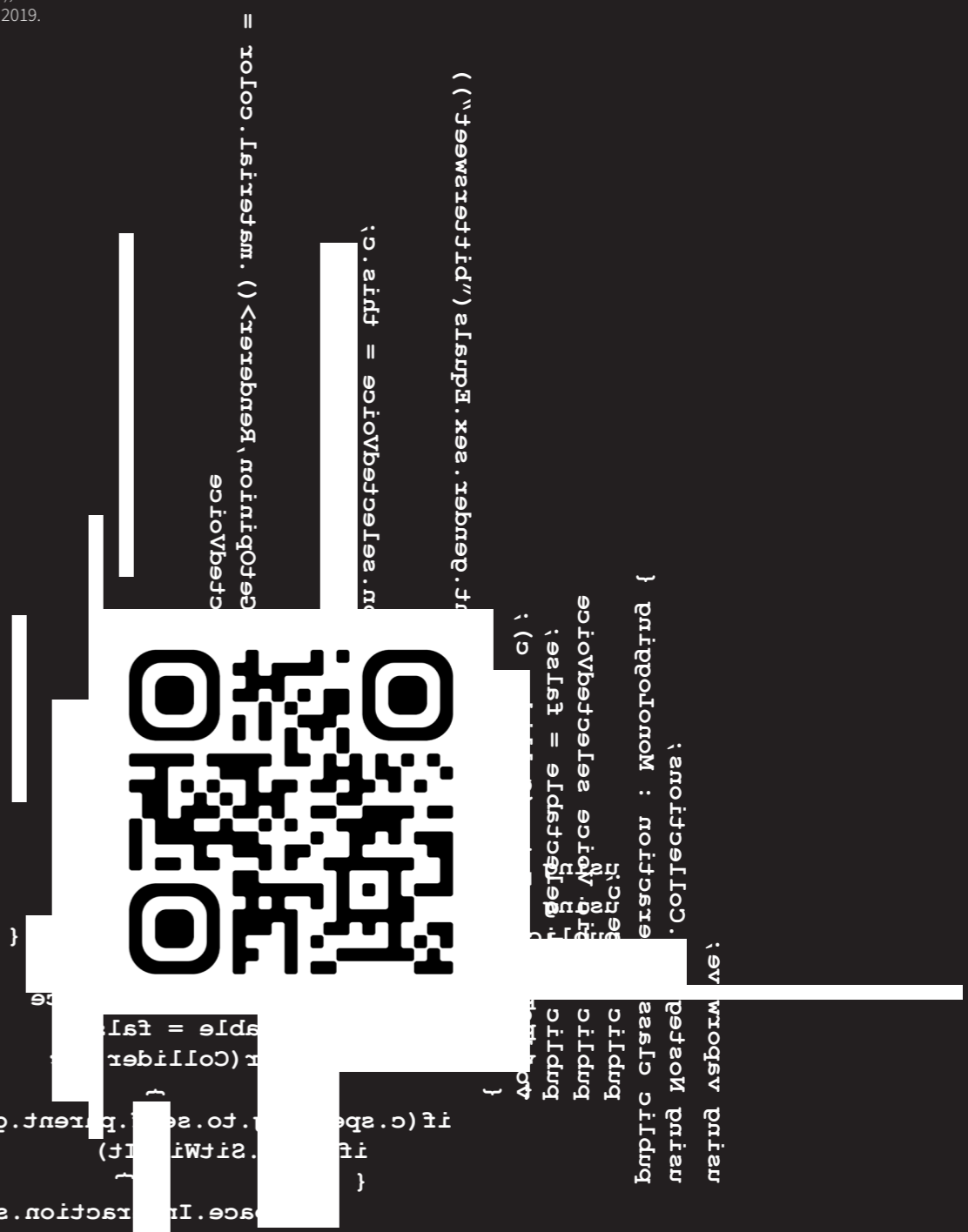


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            }
        transform.gameObject.GetComponent<Renderer>().material.color =
        SpaceInteraction.selectedVoice
    }
}
```



...drifting through the virtual plaza, numb and caught in a consumption loop - and is consistently critical...<sup>11</sup>

Georgia Born and Christopher Haworth describe vaporwave as a music genre and visual aesthetic style that emerged as a result of “a new mode of Internet based distribution, circulation, and disintermediation on the music industries [that provide] novel possibilities for Internet based musical performance.”<sup>12</sup>

Examples of continued predominant platforms which foster this distribution are SoundCloud, YouTube, and Bandcamp, with disintermediation occurring through the way that music hosted on these platforms is then directly shared on websites such as Reddit and Tumblr. In my own practice, I have looked to these communities for sound, visual or conceptual inspiration; participating in the continued ebb and flow of both emerging and revived content.

Born and Haworth, in their article “From microsound to Vaporwave: Internet-mediated musics, online methods, and genre”, proceed to elaborate on the environment that fostered the emergence of vaporwave: “the Internet has augmented the aesthetics, communicative, and social dimensions of particular types of music, exemplifying this with reference to a series of prominent digital music genres spanning the period of the early take up of the Internet to the mid-to-late 90’s to today.”<sup>13</sup> Included in their discussion is Vaporwave, which has held its own community of creators and consumers for around the past decade, and has evolved the aesthetic and ideology of a style “that takes digital life and the historicity of the Internet as its subject matter.”<sup>14</sup>

Embedded in the second edition of my *Code Poetry* series are my own trepidations concerning being outspoken about family and gender, along with my trepidations about finding a confident critical voice. Like many others, my confessional ideas are hidden behind a digital threshold, such as a password, a disclosed conversation, or a shared language with the machine. The *Code Poetry*’s altered C# code suggests or showcases my inner dialogue, with my second edition of *garagewave* series titled *mono ‘s c a p e* (see QR code 2) acting similarly; the mood and mode in which the work interact, are an effective catalyst for the expression of the mixed and difficult to articulate feelings I have regarding my Internet influenced upbringing. Cited by Laura Glitos in her article; “Vaporwave, or music optimised for abandoned malls”, Adam Trainer alludes to this practice of using shared language as a personal

<sup>11</sup> Grafton Tanner, *Babbling Corpse: Vaporwave And The Commodification Of Ghosts*, John Hunt Publishing, 2016, location 841.

<sup>12</sup> Born and Haworth, “From Microsound to Vaporwave: Internet-Mediated Musics, Online Methods, and Genre,” 601–47.

<sup>13</sup> Born and Haworth, “From Microsound to Vaporwave: Internet-Mediated Musics, Online Methods, and Genre,” 601–47.”

<sup>14</sup> Born and Haworth, “From Microsound to Vaporwave: Internet-Mediated Musics, Online Methods, and Genre,” 601–47.

cathartic tool, “Vaporwave patches together its sonic and visual aspects from generic forms of mass media . . . to be informed by this new era of cultural and informational oversaturation”, in combination the poetry and visual iconography of my work speaks to “both collective popular memory and th personal histories of their [the work’s] creators (409).”<sup>15</sup>

## BEST ENJOYED INTROSPECTIVELY

Given its age, some may argue that Vaporwave has come and gone, and is hardly now a micro-genre due to the fact that it has grown and spawned its own sub-genres which some of its prolific creators and consumers have deviated towards. Adam Harper comments on this sentiment:

*One popular talking point about vaporwave has been that it is ‘dead’ in the typical subcultural narrative of an underground scene killed off by outside observers. Given the amount of material released in the mid 2010’s that looks and sounds like Vaporwave, this can only be true for the first artists to make it who have since explored other styles. Another possible reading is that Vaporwave has always been ‘dead’ inasmuch as it is not ‘live’ music, and enshrines a bittersweet exploration of what is impersonal, absent and defunct.*<sup>16</sup>

The cynical term ‘live’ music’ is employed in reference to a critique of the contemporary experience of music, whether it takes the form of an algorithm endlessly suggesting the next song, or a recording of a concert on someone else’s Instagram story. This parallel sphere to the ‘in the moment’ live musical experience, which I do agree is in some ways a more ‘authentic’ and enriching experience, is best enjoyed introspectively.

Within the context of my own work, the performance of my *garagewave* music is suitably experienced in isolation within the more intimate private sphere. Although, it has also been performed in sensory controlled rooms in a ‘live’ public group performance. Thus arises the contradiction in that the installation objects and music reference a domestic childhood bedroom or home computer room. Traditional gallery spaces have been helpful for this series, as ‘clean slates’ in which to manipulate and control the more surreal, spatial qualities of my works; however, the conceptual strength of the work could be enhanced by testing it in both

<sup>15</sup> Laura Glitos, “Vaporwave, or music optimised for abandoned malls”. *Popular Music* 37, no. 1 (2018): 100-118, and A. Trainer, 2016, ‘From hypnagogia to distroid: postironic musical renderings of personal memory’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Virtuality*, ed. S. Whitely and S. Rambarran (New York, Oxford University Press), pp. 409- 27

<sup>16</sup> Adam Harper, “Vaporwave Is Dead, Long Live Vaporwave!” Chapter. In *The Cambridge Companion to Music in Digital Culture*, edited by Nicholas Cook, Monique M. Ingalls, and David Trippett, 119–23, Cambridge Companions to Music, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, doi:10.1017/9781316676639.010.

public urban exterior and private interior sites, “[enshrining what is] a bittersweet exploration of what is impersonal, absent and defunct.”<sup>17</sup>

I am reminded of my time in primary school when GarageBand, a groundbreaking program in which anyone could haphazardly assemble a track, was available for us to play on our own school’s iMacs. It would be difficult to say whether the music experiments I created still exist, or whether they were deleted long ago. These days, the tracks that I have shared were assembled using Ableton, Adobe Audition and Splice, more modern and complex versions of the old Macintosh Garageband, although these newer programs still function in a similar fashion. I tested creating the works in GarageBand in my bedroom on the iMacs, a nod to the rapidly receding era to which my work refers. The result of these tests was a work that, although conceptually intriguing, did not capture the sedative and Internet nostalgic qualities found in Vaporwave music; in other words, it sounded bad and was annoying to use! In this particular example within my work, I weighed the importance of output over the process.

Both Ableton and GarageBand are tools enabling the collaging together of music, and one could argue that the term ‘creation’ is suitable to describe the process. Personally, I feel as though the words ‘appropriation’ and ‘assemblage’ are more suitable. “*Plunderphonics*” is a term coined by John Oswald (and cited by Glitsos) that captures the experience of making this kind of work, providing insight into the process of sourcing content for the compositions and by extension the act of gathering imagery for the animations; “*Plunderphonics...to describe music made through sound collage, or ‘plundered’ from other source[s].*”<sup>18</sup> As a result of the ease in which I can assemble compositions, and the lack of music training needed to do so, I am hesitant to call myself a musician, yet I view the work of other collage artists as a practice involving discernment and skill. Vaporwave as a genre involves creator anonymity, and an intentionality behind the seeming mediocrity or “lounge music” character of the work.<sup>19</sup> It could therefore be argued that my insecurities around my incompetence, or rather my lack of ‘qualifications’, are irrelevant in performing and adapting this genre for my thesis works.

## “A PROCESS OF CATHARSIS.”<sup>20</sup>

Glitsos also calls the micro-genre ““*memory play*” ... a process of audio-visual collage that deploys the act of remembering as a central feature of concern.”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Harper, “Vaporwave Is Dead, Long Live Vaporwave!”

<sup>18</sup> Glitsos, “Vaporwave, or music optimised for abandoned malls”, 102.

<sup>19</sup> Petrusich, “Against Chill: Apathetic Music to Make Spreadsheets To”.

<sup>20</sup> Glitsos, “Vaporwave, or music optimised for abandoned malls,” 101.

<sup>21</sup> Glitsos, “Vaporwave, or music optimised for abandoned malls,” 100. **18**

“*Memory play*” as she refers to, is the foundation for my exploration and experimentation with Vaporwave. Seen within the thematic content of my *Code Poetry*, it explores “*the way trauma or loss can be expressed through musical form as a process of catharsis.*”<sup>22</sup> As previously mentioned in my introduction, and in the description of my earlier works; *Anamnesis*, *I Don’t Exist*, and *Virtual and Un-Ideal*, analysis of new ways to explore memory is at the core of my conceptual practice. By analysing the historicity of the Internet as a central concern for Vaporwave artists and fans, one can see its intended effect in the comment section of videos.<sup>23</sup> My intention with the works was to create a similar transformative experience, but extend beyond the music into a multimedia, 3-D affective experience or fusion of our physical and virtual worlds.

A term coined to describe the wave of new feminism discourse, my practice situated in, is “cyberfeminism.”<sup>24</sup> Sarah Chaplain discussed the term as the evolvement of the feminist conversations from being ‘anti-technology’<sup>25</sup> to aligning the conversation within it. She quotes Faith Wilding in her text *Feminsit Visual Culture*:

*‘If feminism is adequate to its cyber potential then it must mutate to keep up with the shifting complexities of social realities and life conditions as they are changed by the profound impact of communications technologies and technosciences have on all our lives... there is much to be said for considering cyberfeminism as a promising new wave of feminsit practices that can contest technology complex territories and chart new ground for women,’ but identifies the problem for cyberfeminism as being ‘how to incorporate lessons of history into active feminist politics which is atiquite for addressing women’s issues in technological culture.’*<sup>26</sup>

Extending beyond the genre’s own manifesto, I use Vaporwave as a mode of visual and audio communication that can host my feminist perspective on the tribulations of the young female experience, especially in connection to the intimate relationship with digital screens. Behind the collaged graphics there is iconography relevant to my own narrative; re-contextualised pop culture events that are paired with formative experience of my own. The ensuing chaos, glitches, and erratic movements are a reflection of the human hand

<sup>22</sup> Glitsos, “Vaporwave, or music optimised for abandoned malls,” 101.

<sup>23</sup> The community is self aware in it’s irony, cynicism and sincerity; MACINTOSH PLUS - FLORAL SHOPPE - 02 リサフランク420 - 現代のコンピュー , <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAgmGZ9iQ2Y>: City Girl, Velvet Garden, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULgPNIffinM>; NEOTIC, N O S T A L G I C <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQyzEvlf7P0>

<sup>24</sup> Chaplain, Sarah. Ed. Carson, Fiona, and Claire Pajackowska. *Feminist Visual Culture*. Routledge, 2016. pp. Chaplain, *Feminist Visual Culture*. 265-280

<sup>25</sup> Chaplain states that femnism of the 1970’s and 1980’s as being predominantly technophobic, aligning technology with the patriarchy.

<sup>26</sup> Wilding, Faith and Chaplain, Sarah, *Feminist Visual Culture*, 272. **19**

in conflict with technology. The use of glitches in art is a “*style that seeks to rearrange our relationship with electronic media by forcing us to recognise the unfamiliarity of ubiquitous technology*”<sup>27</sup>, and in my practice, an artist’s unease with critical expression that is painstakingly expressed and interwoven within the *Code Poetry*. The music is comparable to the experience of an eerie music box, which functions indirectly, in combination with the direct language of the *Code Poetry* with the intention of encapsulating my memories through my cirical perspective.

```
public Voice c;  
    public static Voice selectedVoice  
    public bool selectable = false;  
    void OnTriggerEnter(Collider c);  
    {  
        if(c.speaking.to.self.parent.gender.sex.  
        Equals("bittersweet"))  
if(this.SitWithIt)
```

This exert of my second *Code Poetry* series uses the language conventions of C# code, with special attention to the phrase ‘public Voice.’ Speaking to inequity and personal concerns about the criticism I have received about my body, feminist ideas, and right to engage in the discourse of technology innovation, it can feel pointless. Resulting in the false impression I must *SitWithIt*. It being the current state of anti-feminist “*technology complex territories*” and sexist interpersonal interactions.

<sup>27</sup> Tanner, *Babbling Corpse: Vaporwave and the Commodification of Ghosts*, location 236.

# PHYSICALLY

# PRIVATE

- encountered not in theaters or in living rooms, but on networked screens that are physically private but socially public.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike the *Code Poetry* series, this work was an observational play on my memories of my own experiences during the early 2000s, which I paralleled with larger international events. I began the process for these works by recalling a significant personal and public event occurring each year of the 2000s, and via written text, juxtaposing it with a recollection of my own. In so doing, my own culture, class, gender and geographic location became evident in the text. The poem series recalled significant toys, family holidays, and a few ‘shallow’ concerns, along with references centering around pop culture or global events. Each memory of a particular year indicates my Pākehā middle class suburban upbringing, and the privileges I experienced as a result of this. Examples of those poems are as follows:

2006

Pluto is downgraded from a planet to a dwarf planet.  
I get my hair half braided in Fiji, I was not  
feeling so daring as to go for the more fully  
braided holiday look.

2000

Despite fears the world will end the new millennium  
arrives.

Although they were absolutely sure the world  
wouldn’t end, my parents decide to watch the new  
year come in from Mt Kaukau in a tent. Just in case.

<sup>28</sup> Jason Eppink, 2014, “A Brief History of the GIF (so Far),” *Journal of Visual Culture* 13 (3): 298–306, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1470412914553365>

2002

Kelly Clarkson wins the First American Idol contest.  
After begging for a Poo-Chi toy robot dog, I didn't  
like it. I couldn't train or teach it anything.  
Sorry Mum and Dad.

This series of poems, or musings, contained little evidence of where I was raised, and to most observers these could be the observations of many children living in Western countries during the early 2000s. The mention of Mt Kaukau is the exception here, as it is a reference specific to those familiar with the Wellington geography. The sparsity of discernible, individual geographic information, however, speaks to the globalisation of culture, Western culture in particular, and the extent to which the Internet and other media has facilitated the spreading of a correspondingly capitalist ideology. The ubiquity of Western capitalism, spread through digital broadcasting, has also resulted in the practice of critique directed towards this ideology becoming widely dispersed, and this helps to explain Vaporwave's status as an extensive global community. In my own practice I recognise Vaporwave's creators collective disdain through paraodic aestheticised "quasi-utopic" realities, fostered by the 20th century optimism for the 21st century lifestyle. However, in enlisting the genre critically in my works I am instead catering the genre's techniques of cynical 'idealism,' through surrealist aestheticised driven compositions, in regards my own memories. This enlistment is used to further comment on the absurdity of my generations relationship and emotional dependency with technology. Beatrice Douaihy in her paper *Vaporwave Animation: Utopia in the Polygon* explains this retort against capitalist consumerism culture and why it has been instigated by my generation:

*[vaporwave's name] also makes reference to the 20th century conviction that technological advancement would be the harbinger of a utopian society. Enter the Internet age, and there is a far more jaded perception of technology. For Generation Y/Z, vaporwave has emerged as a tool for critical commentary of market-oriented, and therefore, socially manipulative, technological innovation. ... "Digital natives," find themselves feeling anxiety as victims of this impersonal impetus that orchestrated the cultural elements of their childhood experiences, and seek to repair this anxiety with the prosumption of vaporwave products, the warm glow of nostalgia providing the cushion.*<sup>29</sup>

29 Douaihy, "Vaporwave Animation: Utopia in the Polygon," 1-2.

Today, more than ever before, Aotearoa New Zealand can operate as a remote Pacific island nation without experiencing undue delay in its participation in the discourse of live global events and popular culture. Aligning myself within the New Zealand music scene context, as a Wellington raised Pākehā, I continue to consider the implications of embedding references to a culturally unique and New Zealand indicative sound.<sup>30</sup> Although, in doing so, I must weigh up the integrity of anonymity and anti-mainstream for profit music industries (including New Zealand's own) of Internet born music genres. I am presented with the issue of refining my expression to be more personal, to the effect of emulating my identity further, with the potential cost of losing a globalised connection to the Internet community I speak to. My point of entry into this conversation of Internet facilitated globalisation, is the analysis of how the experimental transformation of Internet culture during my generation's formative years affected us, then turning a critical eye on the increased digital saturation and Internet co-parenting of children now. When considering this globalism, the location and optimal audience of my work becomes secondary to its intended effect of ubiquity for "digital natives"<sup>31</sup> and anonymity. Anonymous vaporwave creators, along with myself, may embed personal meaning through a shared visual and sonic language, but present our work as part of a global generational community that also functions as the audience for the work.

### **"A VISUAL VOCABULARY UNENCUMBERED BY AUTHORSHIP"**<sup>32</sup>

I subsequently translated the musings in my poems into the visual 2006 collage (see Figure 4), and the following GIF was created to transform the text with reference to the visual style of Vaporwave. Palm trees, glitch effects, surreal spaces, blue to pink or transitional light qualities, and scenes devoid of people; all these allude to the visual cues of the genre, and add a layer of interpretation derived from its philosophy.<sup>33</sup> As I made this work however, the task seemed frivolous at times, as the base on which I am framing my research, Vaporwave, could be seen from one perspective on a facile and surface level, and from another perspective to function as an ironic but deeper form of critique. Thor Cramer Bornemann speaks to this duality of opinion in the conclusion of his article "Vaporwave, Revisited: A Second Look

<sup>30</sup> New Zealand has a history of producing indie micro genres of music under the trope of our isolation enables us to produce unique sounds and styles.

<sup>31</sup> Prensky, Marc. "Digital natives, digital immigrants part 1." *On the horizon* 9, no. 5 (2001): 1-6.

<sup>32</sup> Eppink, "A Brief History of the GIF (so Far)," 298-306.

<sup>33</sup> Douaihy, "Vaporwave Animation: Utopia in the Polygon", 3.

at the Forever-Mutating Genre”:

*It becomes its own sort of mind-body problem, where it is ultimately up [to] you to decide whether the philosophy is needed to understand the music or if the music can speak for itself. To some, including myself, the idealisms of the genre outweigh the music itself in many ways, and through diving into the artificial ecosystem of Vaporwave you start to see a reflection of your own place within society, and what kind of path you want to follow down the line. To others, the genre might just be an output of goofy Internet memes, and that’s perfectly fine—the point still comes across that this self-aware musical Marxist critique that was created almost a decade ago is relevant to the daily lives of the casual Internet surfer.<sup>34</sup>*

The minute movements of the collage were then transformed into a GIF. In a contemporary context the GIF, which was created and has been in use since 1987, is a compressed image format that captures what is often copy written content, and is then distributed as a part of online interaction and an expressive extension of language. Jason Eppink of *A brief History of the GIF*, says the following about the evolution of language in online communities due to the dispersion of GIFs: “*the result is a digital slang, a visual vocabulary unencumbered by authorship, where countless media artifacts are viewed, deployed, and elaborated upon as language more than as art product.*”<sup>35</sup> There is little discussion or credit given to the creators of the images and in this respect, the GIF is distributed in a similar manner to the anonymous and Internet mediated distribution of Vaporwave creations. Eppink then continues; “*even today, a successful GIF is one that is shared, eclipsing its creator to become an essential part of a cultural conversation.*”<sup>36</sup> Creating short repeating animations formed from content “found”<sup>37</sup> online is then an integral part of the work’s conceptual integrity in the way that it resonates with the platform it uses to conduct its critique.

### “A VIDEO SYNTHESIZER IN EVERYHOME”<sup>38</sup>

Concerned with how to bring this collage GIF into the physical world, to

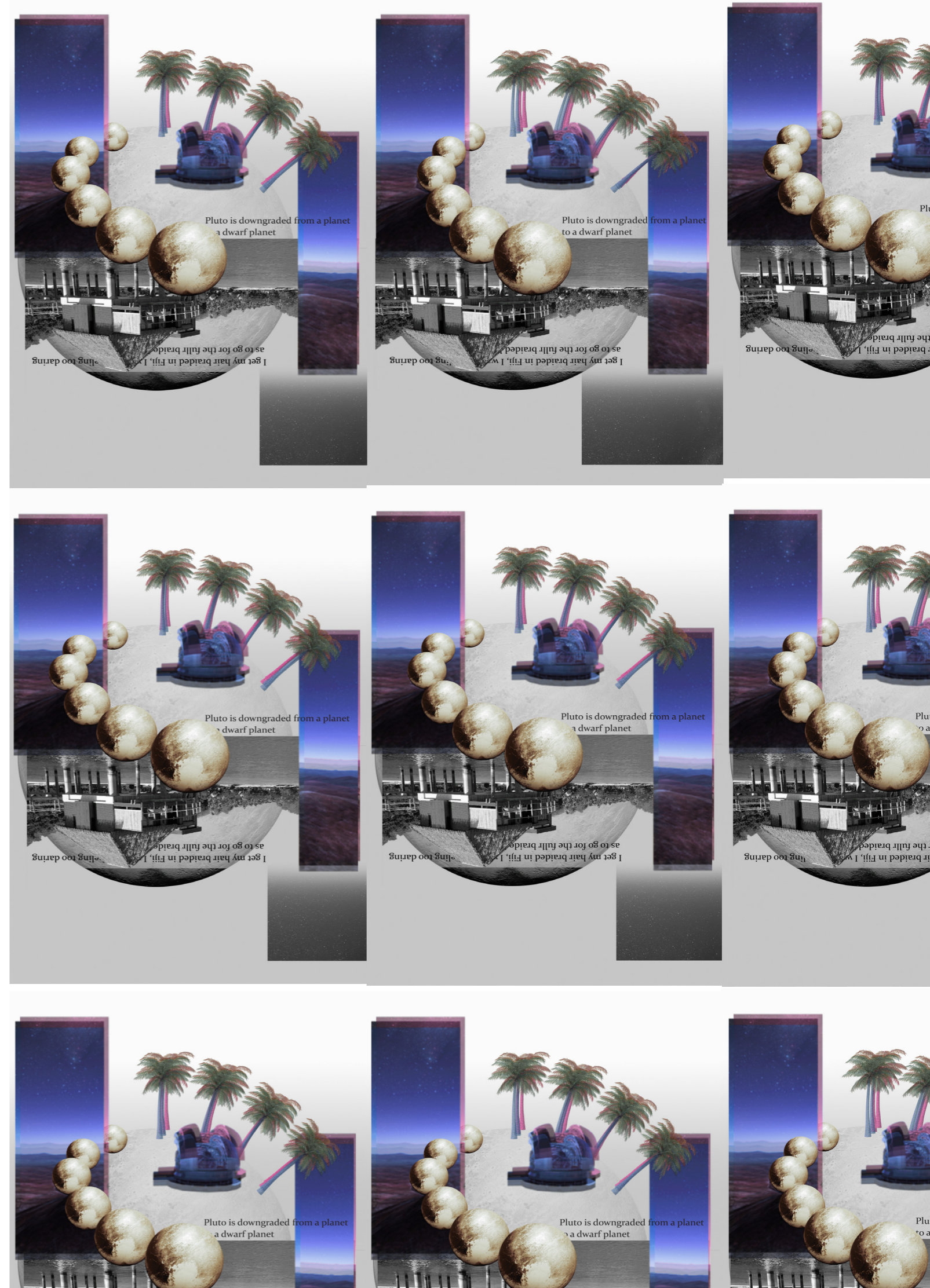
<sup>34</sup> Bornemann, Thor Cramer, 2017, “Vaporwave, Revisited: A Second Look at the Forever-Mutating Genre.” Medium. December 8, 2017. <https://medium.com/@Thorcb/vaporwave-revisited-a-second-look-at-the-forever-mutating-genre-b7da26d76ca3>.

<sup>35</sup> Eppink, *A Brief History of the GIF (so Far)*, 298–306.

<sup>36</sup> Eppink, *A Brief History of the GIF (so Far)*, 298–306.

<sup>37</sup> Found, appropriated, re-contextualised, stolen? Take your pick.

<sup>38</sup> Paik, Nam June, by Chiu, Melissa, and Michelle Yun, 2014. *Nam June Paik: Becoming Robot*. Asia Society Museum, 27.



**Figure 4.** Amber Strain. 2006 collage. 2019. Stills from GIF. Link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0txgvcMZMVK>

express a point of intersection between the physical world and the virtual one through art installation, I researched both contemporary and historical artistic precedents. My artworks enact a dialogue between the history of video installation practices that emerged in the 70s, with the melancholy of my own generation, as expressed through the Vaporwave genre. My practice, which is situated within the context of global contemporary video art, references the “father of video art”<sup>39</sup>, Nam June Paik. His work in the 1970s can be seen as a prediction of the 21st Century reality that more recent video artists are currently dealing with.

*I was quite happy to see my dream of an electronic canvas slowly being realized. Some art critics don't accept, but their children will grow up with a video synthesizer in everyhome . . . its effect is not the dehumanisation of art but the humanisation of technology, thus the very core of our concern of the survival.*<sup>40</sup>

Referencing Paik's practice, and observing the current realisation of his philosophies about the future applications of art and technology, the scope of my own practice exists within a multiplicity of temporal conversations, involving our perceptions of the past, speculations about the future, and critiques of the present. My 'past' concerns have been identified as: the historicity of the Internet, obsolete technology, 2000's popular culture, and childhood memories and reflections that occurred within the time period of Vaporwave. These concerns have been significant to me in order to gain a perspective on the future, specifically regarding the ever-increasing and seemingly ominous presence of technology and media that will affect generations to come. Just as Paik's work was effective at creating a timeless, resonant commentary on the role of computers in art and daily life,<sup>41</sup> this thesis aspires to continue said conversation in both a global and contemporary New Zealand art context.<sup>42</sup>

A work of particular interest is *TV Buddha*<sup>43</sup>, in which the religious icon is depicted as gazing upon itself via a television screen. Briefly mentioned in a group interview hosted by Melissa Chiu, Stephen Vitiello, a former studio assistant to Paik, states that; “*I think sometimes he was critiquing Asian*

<sup>39</sup> Paik, *Nam June Paik: Becoming Robot*, 15.

<sup>40</sup> Paik, *Nam June Paik: Becoming Robot*, 27.

<sup>41</sup> Paik, *Nam June Paik: Becoming Robot*, 22.

<sup>42</sup> New Zealand video artists have had discourse around the influence of Paik for a while now; “SEANCE FOR NAM JUNE PAIK | The Physics Room.” Accessed October 14, 2019, <http://www.physicsroom.org.nz/events/seance-for-nam-june-paik>.

<sup>43</sup> Image referenced is: Nam June Paik, *TV Buddha*. 1976. Television monitor, video camera, painted wooden Buddha, tripod, plinth. Image sourced from the Gallery of NSW. Link <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/342.2011.a-f/>

*culture. But then he makes a piece like TV Buddha, which both borrows from and maybe critiques, but deeply appreciates, something deeply rooted in Zen culture.”*<sup>44</sup> Depending on the agency you assign the objects, the Buddha either watches himself out of narcissism, or is merely a witness to his own intimate surveillance. Paik saw the increasing frequency and fusion of electronic media into everyday life, including its juxtaposition with customary spirituality and traditional religion. I find the installation awkward with its clear contrast between the materiality and contextual meaning of the two positions; between the cultural richness of the statue's iconography, and the commercially accessible home recording and display system. Both objects however are markers of significant historic and contemporary modes of surveillance, one being a religious icon's judgmental presence enforcing morality and the other an artificial eye and spy.

### “A FRIEND AND CONFIDANT”<sup>45</sup>

In translating the GIF collage into 3-D space (see Figure 5 and 6), mirrors were used to suggest a gaze, that could be alternatively read as narcissistic, self analysing, or an experiment with techniques amplifying the surreal qualities of fusing virtual and physical worlds. The 2001 iMac G3, and also the first iteration of the *Code Poetry* in the *F Cups Full* installation later renamed *monologging V0.0.1*, are also present in this dialogue. This particular code poem was inspired from the anger and shame that came with being young with large tits, and the seemingly never ending change in bra sizes experienced.

```
Console.WriteLine (“A_fuck stomachs, B_fuck thighs,  
C_fuck you,D_fuckme, DD, E, F_cups full”)
```

The distress in the poem originates from anxiety placed on me by the women close to me and their criticisms, as well as the unwelcome overt sexualisation from others that I experienced. This poem speaks from personal experience, and does not intend to criticise sexual expression and admiration in general, but rather critiques the practice of unpermitted sexual objectification of anyone, especially of those who are children or underage.

The work's audio element (not pictured here)<sup>46</sup>, was a cluster of iconic and intermittent machine sounds: broadband connection noise, tv static, Macintosh start-up tone, and other noises of interlude, loading, or malfunction. Mixed and cut together to interrupt one another, the noises beg

<sup>44</sup> Vitiello, Stephen, *Nam June Paik: Becoming Robot*, 44.

<sup>45</sup> Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Excuse my attempt at a joke here, I need the comic relief.

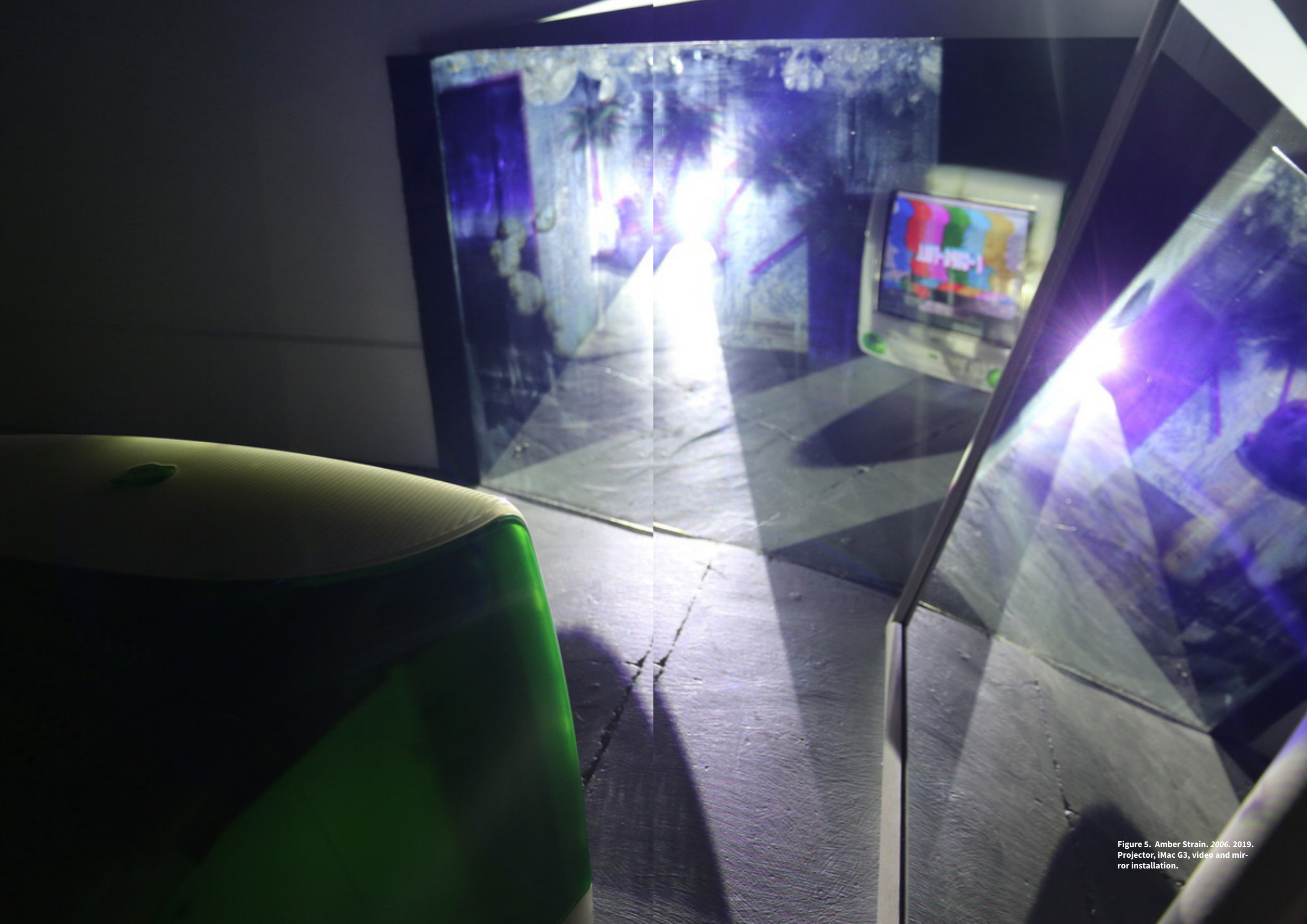


Figure 5. Amber Strain. 2006. 2019.  
Projector, iMac G3, video and mirror installation.



Figure 6. Amber Strain. 2006.  
2019. Projector, iMac G3, video  
and mirror installation.

for both interference or fixing, and also for patience allowing the abrasive sounds to pass. The vibrant, glitching TV colour bars, and adapted windows loading messages, are appropriated from other devices that all share and act on their own accord, revealing the potential technology has for misbehavior, or its 'live' nature<sup>47</sup> and also referencing Vaporwave's formal qualities "*in attempting to create a sensationalized depiction of late capitalist alienation, Vaporwave art uses neon colours, Windows 95 glitch art, corporate logos, images of Greek and Roman busts, melancholy 8-bit images of cityscapes, beaches, and other quasi-utopian aesthetic "elsewheres".*"<sup>48</sup>

Mentioned briefly in the introduction, the code poem's phrase "Setup is inspecting you" is a line of suggested sentient agency and a deviation from the machine's purpose, a phenomena explored by Jeffery Sconce in his book *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*. In reference to the bizarre case of Frank Walsh, a man who was driven to 'murder' his television set by shooting it (a representation of a nation's loathing of their brain draining presence in the home). This 'loathing' has been recognised by artists and writers since the 20th century.<sup>49</sup> Adding to the hysteria around the of the influence of technology, Neil Postman's influential anti-TV text; *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, is now also applicable to computers, as Internet hosted media dominates as a newer "meta-medium" — *an instrument that directs not only our knowledge of the world, but our knowledge of ways of knowing as well.*"<sup>50</sup> When this "meta-medium" is attributed sentience, it becomes all the more disturbing. Sconce helps to elaborate on this ominous 'living technology' phenomenon I evoke in my work:

*Owners of personal computers make similar animating investments in their media, of course, but here the interactivity and intimacy of the computer more often transform the machine into a friend and confidant (albeit one with which we occasionally have a stormy relationship)—another familiar theme involving the media's awesome powers of animated "living" presence: the delusional viewer who believes the media is speaking directly to him or her. A common symptom among schizophrenics, this delusion also foregrounds in exaggerated*

<sup>47</sup> Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*, 3.

<sup>48</sup> University of Toronto, and Alican Koc, 2016, "Do You Want Vaporwave, or Do You Want the Truth?: Cognitive Mapping of Late Capitalist Affect in the Virtual Lifeworld of Vaporwave," *Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry*, December, 57–76, <https://doi.org/10.22387/CAP2016.4>.

<sup>49</sup> As seen in coverage of the event of *Media Burn* by the Ant Farm collective#. A David Louie, news anchor for *NewsScene*, makes a poignant observation that "even though the artists were knocking televisions they were using it to make a point,"# alluding to the prevalence of the symbolic absurdist appropriation and then 'murder' of technology in art and greater society. Citation: Ant Farm collective. *Media Burn*. 1975. Performance art piece. Reported on by Louie, David of *NewsScene*. "Media Burn Archive – Media Burn by Ant Farm, 1975 Edit." Accessed October 14, 2019. // [mediaburn.org/video/media-burn-by-ant-farm-1975-edit/](http://mediaburn.org/video/media-burn-by-ant-farm-1975-edit/).

<sup>50</sup> Postman, Neil and Silvestre, Dan, "Lessons from Amusing Ourselves to Death by Neil Postman," *Medium*, September 11, 2018, <https://medium.com/@dsilvestre/lessons-from-amusing-ourselves-to-death-by-neil-postman-962221ee622>.

*but obviously compelling terms the powers of "liveness" and "intimacy" experienced by audiences of electronic media as a whole.*<sup>51</sup>

This piece had no discernible ending without my own interference; the installation was set to a continuous loop, and as if inspecting itself within a corner. Entering the space seemed like an act of interrupting the piece, with spectators placed in a voyeuristic position. Although a certain amount of "liveness" can be attributed to the machine, it is then considerably troublesome to consider the computer and computers as a whole as vehicles in which to access world media and information, if they were to have a 'live' human-like bias or motive. I have preserved anonymity in constructing the *Code Poetry*, this does not decrease the fact the confessions and vulnerability are my own, and are subsequently recorded and performed by the technology.

In my pursuit to address the scope of my research questions, multiple relationships between media, i.e. sound, text, animation/collage, object installation, and audience, were actively placed in conversation with one another. In later experiments, variations with hierarchy and emphasis on particular aspects of the work changed. It was important however that my 'original work' was derived from 'found' sources to be repeatedly cut and pasted into new arrangements. This practice of recycling and recontextualising was in direct reference to the nature of the "*mode of Internet based distribution, circulation, and disintermediation*"<sup>52</sup> in which content is reduced and reapplied until there is but a fractional trace of its original meaning left. Extending beyond traditional 'collage'<sup>53</sup>, the work of Rossin, and Paik, my own practice is instead a repetitive reconfiguration of sounds, texts, animations, installation, projections, and virtual/physical spatial interactions.

What didn't work about the installation *2006* in my estimation was its smaller scale, resulting in a subdued experience. Yet this failure reignited my desire to recreate the immersive sensory qualities of virtual reality within physical installation, and this work can be interpreted as an experimental platform for subsequent works. I came to this conclusion as I found my documentation of the piece was more effective than the piece itself. This work pre-dates my *Code Poetry* series, as when I changed the words in the Windows 95 startup sequence, I glimpsed the potential of code as a poetic language tool.

<sup>51</sup> Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*, 3.

<sup>52</sup> Born and Haworth, "From Microsound to Vaporwave: Internet-Mediated Musics, Online Methods, and Genre."

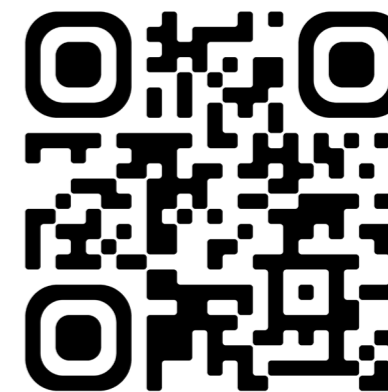
<sup>53</sup> In this context 'traditional collage' is defined as equating to a two-dimensional image.

```

namespace InComplete
{
    public class Upper Middle : MonoBehaviour
    {
        public int m_PlayerNumber = 1; //why would I want to be fifteen again
        public Rigidbody m_Shell; //who are you to tell me
        public Transform m_FireTransform; //she is not finished but another chapter
        public Slider m_AimSlider; //don't sexualise what is not yet finished
        public AudioSource m_Shooting Audio; //the body does not reflect the mind
        public AudioClip m_ChargingClip; //and yet her cup is overflowing
        public float m_MinLaunchForce = 15f; //with the dread you'll become your mother
        public float m_MaxLaunch Force = 23f; //or worse your grandmother
        public float m_MaxChargeTime = 0.75f; //who put these women to shame
        private string m_FireButton; //this genre stirs up our own ghosts
        private float m_CurrentLaunchForce; //the past can be so inviting
        private float m_ChargeSpeed; //but there is shit filling the gaps
        private bool m_Fired; //I don't envy myself

        //FMOD Events
        //ShotEvent
        [FMODUnity.EventRef]
        public string ShotEvent;
        RMOD.Studio.EventInstance Shot;
    }
}

```



Code\_Poem [V 0.0.3] (above), Amber Strain,  
2019, duration 00:30, performed on an iMac G3  
with accompanying sound.

Set Up is Inspecting You (link in right QR code),  
of the g a r a g e w a v e series. Amber Strain,  
2019. Duration 4:30. <https://qrco.de/bbDHpD>

# SONIC ARTIFACTS

*Attuned to the sedative simple melodies of hypnagogic pop or mallsoft, vaporwave sharpens with undertones simultaneously sinister and steamy, and rather than serving as a tool for the performer to voice their dissent, as for example does rap, is dissent itself, synthesised in music. As it chops, flexes, layers and loops the sonic artifacts of corporate culture from the 90s and noughties, it would seem that its message couldn't be more clear – and yet, due perhaps to the unusual gentleness of most of its tracks, it's subversive in [a] quasi subliminal way.<sup>54</sup>*

When composing music, the process is more emotionally driven and therefore more holistic than that of my collaged animations and object installations. My music works developed away from the layered sound effects of *'F Cups Full'ss*, and the instrumental works of *'g a r a g e w a v e'* (see QR Code 1), *'m o n o ' s c a p e'* (QR Code 2) and *'set up is inspecting you'* (QR code 3). My aim was to create an experiential mood through a soundscape, and having this goal in mind helped me to decide which samples I would layer together. This is a technique seen in the album *Neon Impasse* by City Girl, who creates a more contemplative ethereal experience than the 'classic' Vaporwave of Macintosh Plus's iconic album *Floral Shoppe*, or other albums that epitomise Vaporwave's callback to the 80's or 90's mall and the imagined "virtual plaza"<sup>56</sup>. When comparing the two artists, Macintosh Plus's *02 リサフランク420 - 現代のコンピュー*<sup>57</sup>, the second track of the album, overtly expresses its meaning through the sampled vocals; "I made up my mind time is running out, make a move...don't you understand, it's all in your head,"<sup>58</sup> as compared to City Girl's *Tender Stare* of her album *Neon Impasse*,<sup>59</sup> which is a purely instrumental and subconsciously directive experience that I sought to emulate in my tracks. The experience of *Tender Stare* does not function as

<sup>54</sup> Bombardini, Silvia, "Vaporwave," Accessed September 26, 2019, <https://www.academia.edu/31014082/Vaporwave>.

<sup>55</sup> My documentation of the video and sound qualities: Amber Strain, *F Cups Full*, duration 0:56, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=puDMIHztVoo>

<sup>56</sup> A phrase repeated and seen within the manifesto of the Vaporwave Reddit page: <https://www.reddit.com/r/Vaporwave/> and the community's preferred version of reddit: <https://old.reddit.com/r/Vaporwave/>

<sup>57</sup> Rough translation; "02 Lisa Frank420 - Modern Computer."

<sup>58</sup> "MACINTOSH PLUS - FLORAL SHOPPE - 02 リサフランク420 - 現代のコンピュー - YouTube." Accessed October 11, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAgmGZ9iQ2Y>.

<sup>59</sup> "Tender Stare - YouTube." Accessed October 11, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyJbwDza-vw>.

a prominent call back to a specific decade in the way that *02 リサフランク420 - 現代のコンピュー* does, but functions rather as a loose, nonlinear experience of time, a space in which one can arrive at one's own destination, or even arrive at nowhere in particular. Sonically, the rhythms, bpm, key, and chosen instruments of my works reference both artists in combination, however the work operates in conjunction with other art media, and simultaneously speaks to an unease and trepidation with technology.

Just as City Girl submerges one into a dream-state, and Macintosh Plus marvels at the "historicity of the Internet"<sup>60</sup>, my work builds upon their experiences to equally soothe; but also to irritate the listener, and guide them through these mixed feelings. This unease is expressed through clashing notes, the heavy handed layering of samples, and a composition consisting of 30 second pockets of sound repeating endlessly through curiously arranged iMacs. Grafton Tanner in his book *Babbling Corpse: Vaporwave and the Commodification of Ghosts* attributes the objection of clean editing in Vaporwave (and correspondingly in my own work), as a protest or reaction to the clean CGI nature of mainstream music, commenting on the artificially natured editing and tonal manipulations that mainstream music hides.<sup>61</sup>

While City Girl's album *Neon Impasse* is more closely affiliated with electronica, dance and chillhop music, as compared to the quintessential Vaporwave sound of *Floral Shoppe*, in referencing both of these artists as part of a cohesive experience, the pieces speak to these genres and translate them into physical manifestations in my installations. The iMac G3's low quality speakers and infinitely looping performance are symptoms of the dated technology through which I play my tracks. But I am also referencing lo-fi lounge music, particularly the music distributor; 'lofi hip hop radio - beats to relax/study to';<sup>62</sup> a YouTube radio channel by ChilledCow. The channel streams a live feed of songs listened to by tens of thousands of listeners. The continual looping of my own 30 second musical segments demonstrates an approach comparable to that of ChilledCow. As mentioned earlier, Amanda Petrusich's article "Against Chill: Apathetic Music to Make Spreadsheets to", she spoke of her disdain towards this mode of listening, or more specifically inactive listening. In so doing, she acknowledged the notable phenomena of this musical form and the large amount of current background music practices.<sup>63</sup> My own performances contain the tinny noise and grain of old, low quality speakers that work as though they are pushing the sound through 20 years of dust; it is a desirable effect and functions as a reference to lofi music.

<sup>60</sup> Born and Haworth, "From Microsound to Vaporwave: Internet-Mediated Musics, Online Methods, and Genre."

<sup>61</sup> Tanner, *Babbling Corpse: Vaporwave and the Commodification of Ghosts*, location 247.

<sup>62</sup> "(7) Lofi Hip Hop Radio - Beats to Relax/Study to - YouTube." Accessed October 11, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHW1oY26kxQ>.

<sup>63</sup> Petrusich, "Against Chill: Apathetic Music to Make Spreadsheets To," *The New Yorker*.

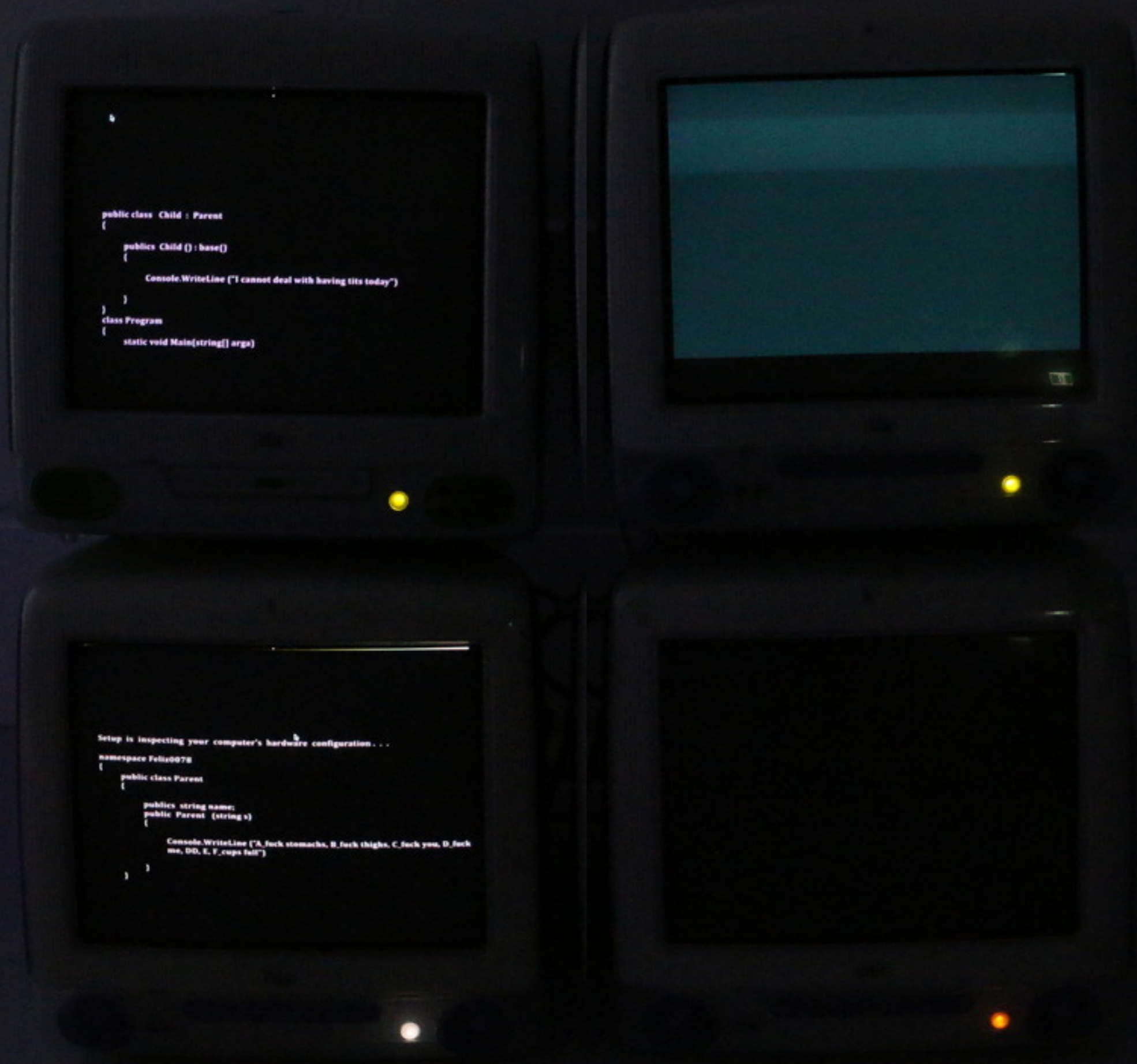
By subscribing to Splice, a cloud-based music tool and community of creators, I am able to trawl through large volumes of music samples, filtering by genre, bpm, and key. By combining the work of others found in the Splice library and providing no credit to its original creators, I am referencing the “*historicity of the web*”<sup>64</sup> in a similar manner to Vaporwave. Unlike some Vaporwave artists, I fall short of pirating music as I pay to use the samples on this website, perhaps deviating away from the practice of “*plunderphonics*”<sup>65</sup>. It is payment for the convenience of a quick composition, and helps to focus my efforts more towards an emotive expression of discontented nostalgia, rather than the risk of misinterpretation I would be taking by sampling recognisable non-Internet based media. The music then deviates from my image collaging, and even object installation, as its purpose was not to reinterpret existing pop culture iconography, but to guide the viewer into an idealised framework that can subliminally aid them in the interpretation of the work. Although there is appropriation in Vaporwave in the form of recycled and slowed songs, and repetitive monologuing from videos, my work deviates from this practice within the genre, and chooses instead to indirectly express a feeling of melancholy for “the old Internet” and my own childhood experiences with it via the composition.

64 Born and Haworth, “From Microsound to Vaporwave: Internet-Mediated Musics, Online Methods, and Genre.”

65 Glitsos, Laura. “Vaporwave, or music optimised for abandoned malls”, 102.

**Figure 7.** Amber Strain. Process photograph, testing materials and projections.





```
public class Child : Parent
{
    public Child () : base()
    {
        Console.WriteLine ("I cannot deal with having tits today")
    }
}
class Program
{
    static void Main(string[] args)
```

```
Setup is inspecting your computer's hardware configuration. . .
namespace Felix007s
{
    public class Parent
    {
        public string name;
        public Parent (string s)
        {
            Console.WriteLine ("A, fuck stomachs, B, fuck thighs, C, fuck you, D, fuck
me, DD, E, F, cups full")
        }
    }
}
```

Figure 8. Amber Strain. *mono logging [V0.0.1]*. 2019. Four iMac G3, playing three videos and performing *mono'scape*, of the *garagewave series*. Amber Strain, 2019. Duration 3:53. Link [qrco.de/bbDHru](http://qrco.de/bbDHru).

# OPERATOR EYESTRAIN

*By the early 1980s the German Institute for Standardization (Deutsches Institut für Normung, or DIN) had specified, among its standards, a neutral beige colour as the most ergonomically suitable to prevent [personal computer] operator eyestrain.<sup>66</sup>*

A repeating motif in my work this year is the iMac G3, and my attraction to this object is driven by its popular cultural significance during the early 2000s and its resonating effect today. The fact I can recall the iMacs being present in my primary school classroom is indicative of my upbringing in terms of class and affluent geographical location; while others of different generations might recall using these computers professionally either in their home or workplace. In obtaining four of them, I am left with the troubling thought of how excessive and indulgent I would have seemed in 2001. Possessing these prized but obsolete objects, I ponder my own emotionally charged attachment to the machines, wondering if I am reliving past desires in a questionable fashion.

Paul Atkinson, in the text *Iconic Designs: 50 Stories about 50 Things*, speaks to the cultural phenomenon of the iMac G3; how it changed the course of personal computing, and brought the Apple company from the brink of stagnant mediocrity to the forefront of design innovation.<sup>67</sup> As mentioned above, *DIN* had done its work to standardize the ergonomics of computers as beige boxes. The reinstatement of Steve Jobs as CEO of Apple in 1997 redirected the company and put design at the forefront of their corporate ethos again, thus giving designer Jonathan Ive the setting he needed to design and put into production the 1998 'Bondi Blue' iMac G3. The "iMac was seen not just as another personal computer, but as a completely new class of product all together" Steve Jobs proudly predicted, "One of the most important questions when buying a new computer is going to be "what is your favourite colour?"<sup>68</sup> The objects themselves exemplify historic design innovation in

<sup>66</sup> Lees-Maffei, G. *Iconic Designs: 50 Stories about 50 Things*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020, pp. 146-149.

<sup>67</sup> Lees-Maffei, *Iconic Designs: 50 Stories about 50 Things*, 146-147.

<sup>68</sup> Lees-Maffei, *Iconic Designs: 50 Stories about 50 Things*, 147.

their transparent colourful plastic curves and fashionable desirability.<sup>69</sup> As products intended to be "Chic. Not Geek"<sup>70</sup>, iMacs are a symbol of the vain fashion trends, progressive innovation, and form over function ethos that was typical of the late 1990 and early 2000s, and that would prelude the swarm of Apple products later released that appealed to children, through tropes such as colour personalisation.

Although I have repurposed the iMacs, which would have otherwise been more e-waste in our landfill, an ulterior interpretation of my use of the computers in the installation *monologging V0.0.1* (see Figure 8) could accurately be interpreted as a display of capitalistic wealth, luxury, and indulgence, or a reference to the planned obsolescence of Apple products. On its release in 1998, the iMac's market price was around US\$1199 - US\$1299<sup>71</sup>. Fittingly, the machines are present as one of Vaporwave's various running motifs, where they symbolise the consumer capitalism that the genre obsesses over, and yet is equally repulsed by. The four machines in my work were stacked on top of each other upon the ground. One machine diligently played the second iteration of my music, while the other three displayed the first three code poems.<sup>72</sup> The height of the work was an intentional invitation to encourage crouching, squatting, or sitting to read the text. Because my embedded poetic voice was derived from the experience of a child, I wanted to evoke the physical actions and experience of conversing with one.

An Aotearoa New Zealand artist referenced by *monologging [V0.0.1]*, is Nathan Pohio, in particular his work *Sleeper*<sup>73</sup> recently exhibited in *Māori Moving Image: An Open Archive* (2019), where he wished to speak to the "contemporary Māori experience"<sup>74</sup>. In doing so, the combination of elements and media in his work offer a vivid example of an expression of 'softness' and 'life' within a screen installation. My description of 'softness' being evoked through the image of a still, sleeping child and an accompanying lullaby of *Dream Baby Dream*, performed by Angel Corpus Christi and Alan Vega. The sense of 'life' I speak to is created by the use of the small screen to contain and express the tender moment in a home movie quality; I became sentimental towards the television child. Within my poems, as I have mentioned, confessions of anxiety and trepidation towards my own

<sup>69</sup> This website cites among other computers types which films showed the iMac G3s, rating them on importance, visibility and realism in the film: <http://starringthecomputer.com/computer.html?c=56>

<sup>70</sup> Apple's own marketing slogan when promoting the iMac G3.

<sup>71</sup> Verifiable price sources are difficult to come by, but these two crowd sourced articles give an approximate range: [https://apple.fandom.com/wiki/iMac\\_G3](https://apple.fandom.com/wiki/iMac_G3) and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/iMac\\_G3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/iMac_G3)

<sup>72</sup> One iMac acted of its own accord, and refused to display a fourth poem, but was still alive, its power button pulsing orange as it slept.

<sup>73</sup> Referenced image, Nathan Pohio, *Sleeper*, 1999. Two-channel video. Image sourced from the Dowse Gallery exhibition website; <http://www.dowse.org.nz/exhibitions/detail/maori-moving-image-an-open-archive>.

<sup>74</sup> Quote taken from the wall text of the Māori Moving Image exhibition, viewed at the Dowse Gallery and again at the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.



experiences as a child and teenager were voiced within programming code, an alternatively cold expression of intimacy. The treatment of the objects in both installations were a call to incite an intimate interaction with the machines, while reflecting upon their cultural significance. Either soothed by the use of music or in my work perhaps unnerved by it, my work then had the added element of the confrontation of the partially concealed, emotionally charged language within the code.

Another artist my work references is Paula Morales, and although she does not cite a direct connection to Vaporwave, one can observe resonances with the genre in both her artistic concepts and visual aesthetic. Morales works in conversation with futurology, our changing connection to technology, and the rapid pace of our consumption of digital imagery, all of which are expressed through her glitch-ridden and hyper-saturated installation works.<sup>75</sup> In an interview conducted by Amber Imrie-Situnayak, Morales speaks on a few points of interest that have also been catalysts for exploration within my own practice. Speaking to the question of her work's relationship with futurology, Morales observes "*interestingly, what this country [U.S.A] often grows to consider obsolete, is a playground of possibility in my practice.*"<sup>76</sup> Raised in Guatemala, Morales observes the "*playfulness and resourcefulness [of the approach to technology] of the third world*"<sup>77</sup>, whereas my work has an approach of melancholy towards continuous machine development and obsolescence. This is a salient point to consider within my own practice, as my work churns up imagery and past objects in the way Morales describes, and repurposes them in a way that could be interpreted as breathing life back into the obsolete. In doing this, my work might also be interpreted as commenting on the wastefulness of current first world practices. Another potential reading is that the objects I bring back are haunting us; these past relics continuing in their stubborn existence after we have disposed of them by upgrading to newer models.

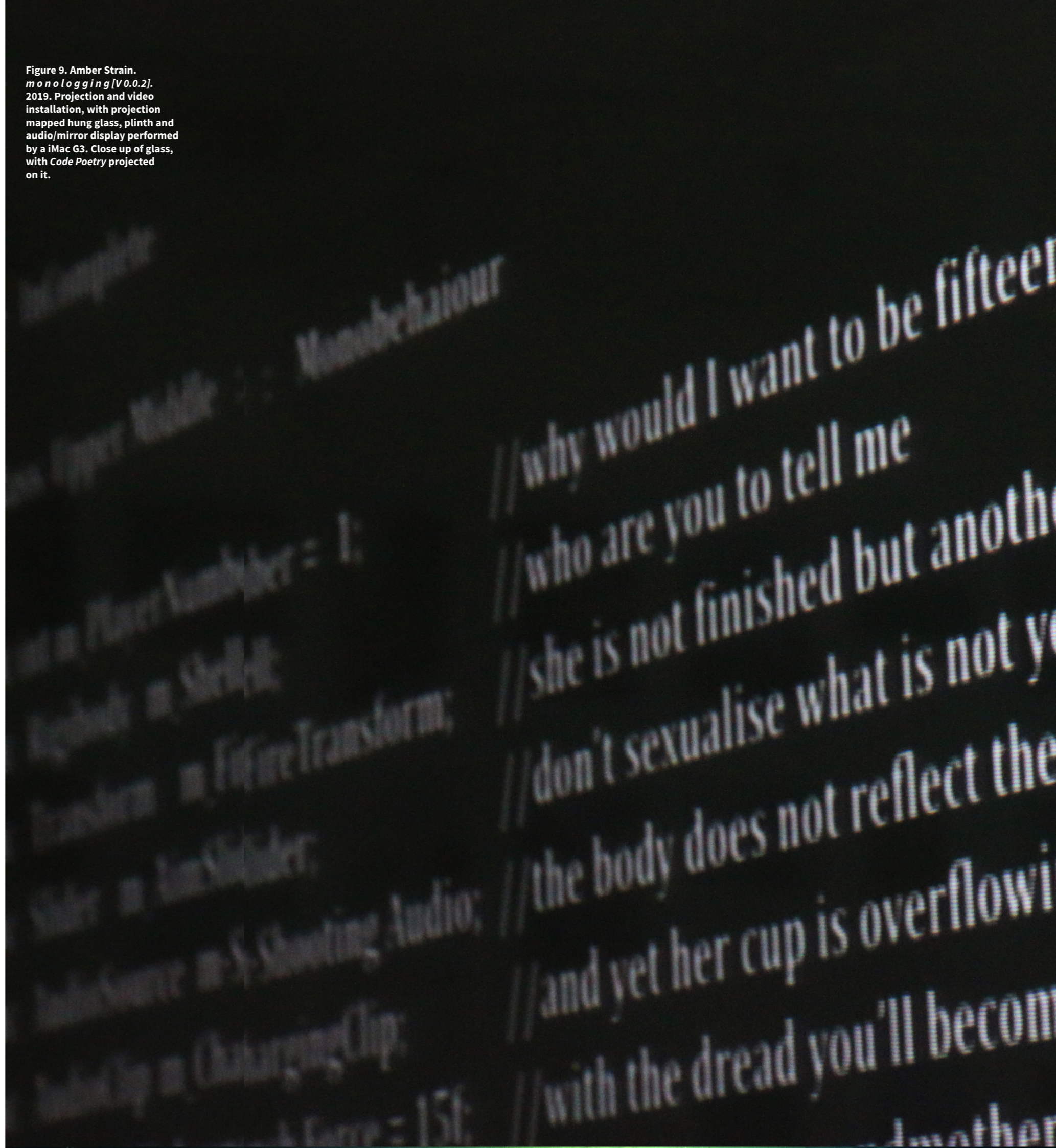
The iMac G3s I use are almost eternal, a sturdy plastic mass, and I myself am guilty of the mentality that once I dispose of something it is no longer my responsibility. From Morales' provocation, I am ashamedly forced to consider myself not as someone who has rescued these four computers from the trash, but another temporal owner who will inevitably dispose of them again. The material construction of and components used in these machines mean that, even if I were to keep them after the exhibit, they possess far more longevity than my own physical body.

<sup>75</sup> Morales, Paula. "Paula Morales - Venison." Interview with Amber Imrie-Situnayake. Accessed October 10, 2019, <http://www.venisonmagazine.com/paula-morales.html>.

<sup>76</sup> Morales, "Paula Morales - Venison."

<sup>77</sup> Morales, "Paula Morales - Venison."

Figure 9. Amber Strain.  
*monologging* [V0.0.2].  
2019. Projection and video  
installation, with projection  
mapped hung glass, plinth and  
audio/mirror display performed  
by a iMac G3. Close up of glass,  
with *Code Poetry* projected  
on it.



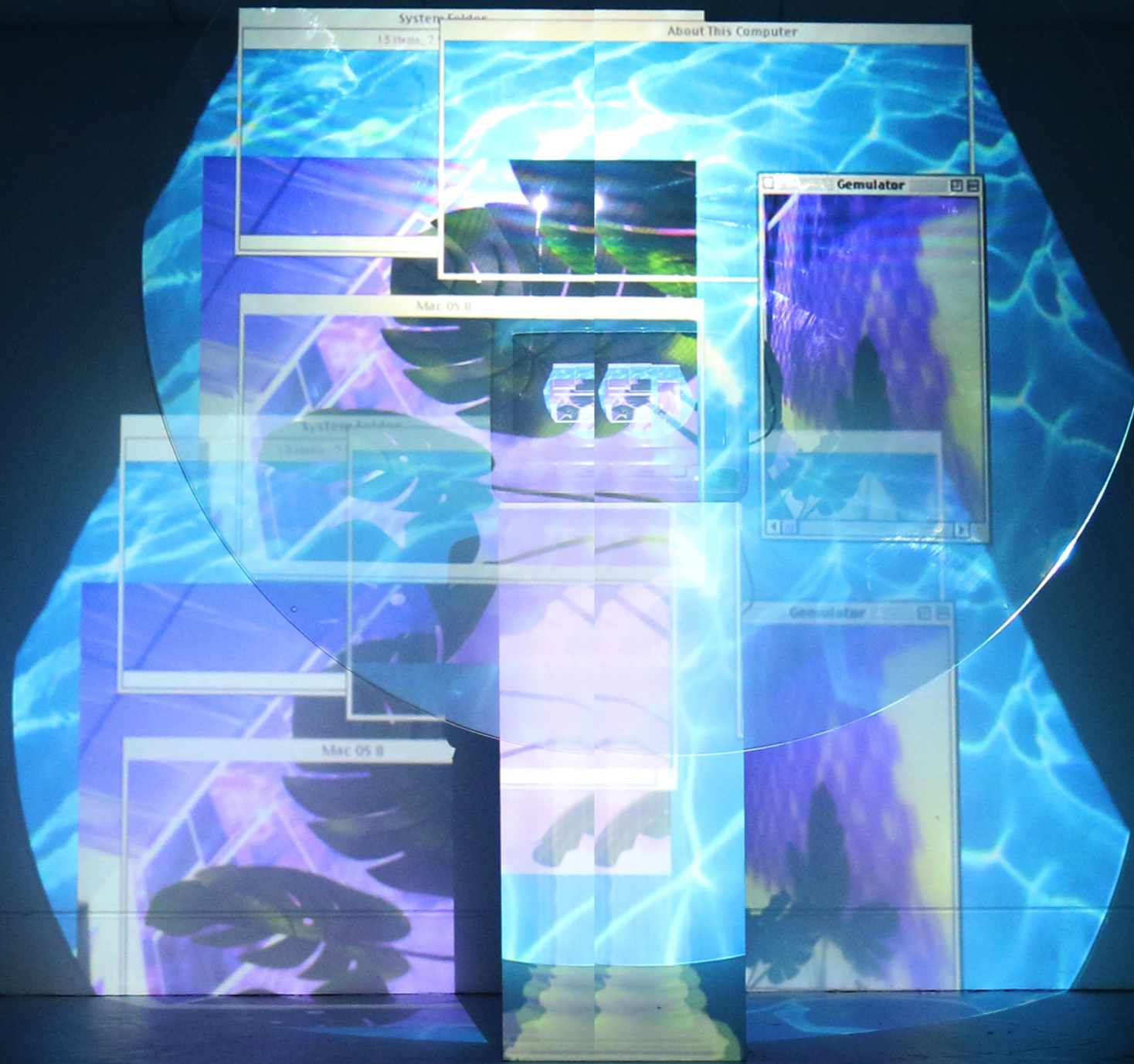


Figure 10. Amber Strain.  
*monologging [V0.0.2]*.  
2019. Projection and video  
installation, with projection  
mapped hung glass, plinth and  
audio/mirror display performed  
by a iMac G3.

# “AS A PATHWAY THROUGH WHATEVER...

... Vaporwave acts as one of the first musical gateways into a conscious consumerism many have been trying to get across to people for ages... It is a way to escape for many, but also a way to gather nostalgia from something that never existed.<sup>78</sup>

As Bornermann laments, one aspect of Vaporwave that I have built upon through object, sound, and video installation, is the idea of reminiscing about a non-existent “whatever.” My focus on the ‘non-existent’ in particular refers back to my own research question: ‘can the ongoing fusion of our physical and virtual worlds or realities be expressed through new installation methods?’ The term ‘fusion’ in this question is an observation of the increasing density of screen interfaces and intimately intrusive digital devices into everyday experience, and of our increasingly symbiotic nature with these devices. Through techniques such as repetition, reflection, and extension, I aimed to build a hyper-real, surreal, or unreal experience by pulling the seemingly benign or ‘whatever’ imagery out of the screen and into the space.

The works *monologging - V0.0.2* (see Figures 9-12) and *monologging - V0.0.3* (see Figures 13-15) splay my digital collages around two different conventional gallery spaces, the ‘white cube’ and the ‘black box’. Both works are a conversation between video collage, contemporary Internet based music production, and early 1999-2001 era computers,

<sup>78</sup> Bornermann, Thor Cramer. “Vaporwave, Revisited: A Second Look at the Forever-Mutating Genre.” Medium, December 8, 2017, <https://medium.com/@Thorcb/vaporwave-revisited-a-second-look-at-the-forever-mutating-genre-b7da26d76ca3>.

**Figure 11** (top left). Amber Strain. *monologging [V 0.0.2]*. 2019. Showing multilayer projections and glass object relationship.

**Figure 12** (bottom left). Amber Strain. *monologging [V 0.0.2]*. 2019. Image of iMac through the projected onto hung glass.

and they each use a different archaic visual effects technique. In this way, the works are similar to Paula Morales' ghostly lighting effects in *Systemic Dualism*, which is also intended to be a dialogue between different eras of technology with reference to "Phantasmagoria and "ghost making" as forms of entertainment."<sup>79</sup> The comparable visual effects techniques I am referring to here are *monologging - V0.0.2*'s use of a reflective and permeable, semi-opaque hanging glass surface between the projector and iMac desktop computer, and *monologging - V0.0.3*'s use of a blacked out room and concealed mirrors. This dialogue between old and new technology can also be located in the writings of Jeffrey Sconce in *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*, Mark Fisher's *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*, and Grafton Tanner in his *Babbling Ghost: Vaporwave and the Commodification of Ghosts*, all of which attribute the postmodern art and media practice of 'hauntology' as one of the predominant modes of creation currently. Tanner's comments on the subject of the resurrection and application of the recent and distant past in postmodern art and media states are as follows:

*By the first decade of the twenty-first century, the crisis of historicity in contemporary art had reached a watershed moment. Both popular and experimental musicians mined the immediate and the far reaching past to compose music reminiscent of bygone eras...  
...It seems that as culture moved forward in the 2010s, visual culture, art, film, and music regressed further into analog past - a move fulfilling theorist Frederic Jameson's lament that "stylistic innovation is no longer possible".<sup>80</sup>*

My position on the matter, as expressed in *monologging - V0.0.2* and *monologging - V0.0.3*, is that we are an inescapable amalgam of our past and present selves, and idyllic escapism into the past can be both a helpful tool for the critique of the present, and a trap of longing for a constructed past fantasia, or "nostalgia from something that never existed."<sup>81</sup>

The projected Greek Doric column on the white cube plinth in *monologging - V0.0.2* is a 'tongue in cheek' criticism or critique of white gallery plinths, and a reference to the repeating motifs of Greek/Roman sculpture and architecture in Vaporwave. My 'lime green'<sup>82</sup> iMac G3 was elevated upon this plinth, and the glitching animation and *Code Poetry* played on the device was also placed upon this thematic and literal pedestal. The

**Figure 13** (top right). Amber Strain. *monologging [V 0.0.3]*. 2019. Black out room with mirrors and four iMac computers performing the Code\_Poetry series and various collages. *monologging* music performed by a iMac and available to preview on page 53. Link <https://soundcloud.com/fl0ra/m-o-n-o-l-o-g-g-i-n-g>

**Figure 14** (bottom right). Amber Strain. *monologging [V 0.0.3]*. 2019. Close up of single iMac suspended on a shelf.

<sup>79</sup> Morales, "Paula Morales - Venison."

<sup>80</sup> Tanner, *Babbling Ghost: Vaporwave and the Commodification of Ghosts*, 30.

<sup>81</sup> Bornemann, "Vaporwave, Revisited: A Second Look at the Forever-Mutating Genre."

<sup>82</sup> Apple's own name for the model.



themes of the poetry speak to a discourse of sexuality, objectification, and to my formative years of experiencing life as a young female. The objects of comparison (the poetry and animations) made by my hand are juxtaposed to the phallic architectural symbol of a culturally resonant, ancient patriarchal civilization, as well as the femininely curved accessory that is the iMac, its 'feminine' qualities problematically designed by a male. The combination of these past elements does not, as the practice of Vaporwave might suggest, act as an affirmation of the concept of a past 'virtual plaza,' but instead critiques the histories in question by promoting a positive feminist identity and value in the present.

The third iteration of the *Code Poem* series speaks directly to the issue of intergenerational feminist issues within the framework of a computer-facilitated dialogue. The sexualisation of young women, and its diametrically opposite effect, the shaming of older women, is not a phenomenon only found in online media, but is a socially determined, systematic, and sexist practice that I have witnessed throughout my life. *Code\_Poem V0.0.3* comments on this issue in terms of female body autonomy and public perception of what form that autonomy should take within a heteronormative nuclear family structure:

```
“...public Slider m_AimSlider;
           //don't sexualise what is not yet
finished
public AudioSource m_Shooting Audio;
           //the body does not reflect the mind
public AudioClip m_ChargingClip;
           //and yet her cup is overflowing
public float m_MinLaunchForce = 15f;
           //with the dread you'll become your
           mother
public float m_MaxLaunch Force = 23f;
           //or worse your grandmother...”
```

Whether accentuated by the darkness surrounding *monologging-V0.0.3*, or elevated by the pedestal and multi projection of *monologging-V0.0.2*, both works explore the 'public' vs. 'private' relationship of computer code's linguistic structure, practical function, and poetic potential. I am alarmed at the thought that anyone will read my poetry, especially my family, and yet I know it is an inevitable result of using it in my art. Casting the poems across a gallery and making them the visual focal point of an unnerving dark space is an act of over-exposure sourced from a moment of cathartic confession to a machine, in much the same way that the 'private' made 'public' is a contemporary condition of intimacy and vulnerability experienced via social media.

*monologging-V0.0.2* and *monologging-V0.0.3* can be situated in the context of the contemporary video art scene that Morales inhabits, and alongside Rossin's innovative mixed media virtual reality, it functions as part of the ongoing assertion of the validity and equality of women in tech.<sup>83</sup> In the case of both my own practice, and the practices I have referenced, the works discussed in this thesis are made by artists who are asserting their legitimacy as women in their disciplines through innovation in their creation of digital based art works. The visual style of my own pieces was created references the construction techniques and presentation of Morales, as seen in her use of a mirror, and projector in her work *Systemic Dualism*. However, my work in turn facilitates a conversation around the continuing relevance of the Fluxus movement of the 70s, in particular the philosophies behind Paik's foundational video art practice. Morales' use of temporally-shifting media, Rossin's extension of virtual realities, and my own practice's related conceptual framework is captured aptly by Paik's prophetic observations, and his "dream of an electronic canvas slowly being realized... [with] its effect [as]... not the dehumanisation of art but the humanisation of technology."<sup>84</sup>

Morales, in *Systemic Dualism*, calls to the past through the negotiation of old techniques and new technology, but her work here differs from my works *monologging-V0.0.2* and *monologging-V0.0.3*, as she reached for a more spiritual and earthly connection to her past heritage through the iconography of the bison<sup>85</sup>. Her holograms are a result of her investigation into the "Pepper's Ghost" technique of 19th Century haunted house attractions. In contrast to the work of Morales the source of the comparable surrealistic spaces I employ in the works *monologging* - versions 1 to 3 are instead a call back to *Anamnesis*, *I Don't Exist*, *Virtual and Un-ideal* and Rachel Rossin's *My Little Green Leaf*, which all explored the surreal and impossible nature of virtual worlds in a physical gallery space. Each work is inspired by the invasive nature of screens, expressed in the work's ability to permeate beyond its physical container as seen in *monologging-V0.0.2*, and in the work's commentary upon the insistent presence of screens especially in moments of insomnia, as seen in *monologging-V0.0.3*.

<sup>83</sup> Supported by the MYOB Women in Tech report speaking to the continued inequality of women in Tech and other employed roles, adding to the personal observations of discredit and skepticism I have experienced at Virtual Reality MeetUps, and Tech community events: "Myob-Women-in-Tech-Report-2019. Pdf." Accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.myob.com/content/dam/public-website/docs/misc/myob-women-in-tech-report-2019.pdf>.

<sup>84</sup> Paik, *Nam June Paik: Becoming Robot*, 27.

<sup>85</sup> Morales, "Paula Morales - Venison."

Figure 15. Amber Strain.  
*monologging [V0.0.3]*.  
2019. Black out room with  
mirrors and four iMac  
computers performing the  
Code\_Poetry series and various  
collages.



```

Void Update ( ) [
    Debug.Log ("Nanna") ;
    If (Physics.Raycast (transform.position, Vector3.down, 0.5f)) {
        Debug.Log ("so bittersweet remembering someone who was eaten
alive from inside her brain") ;
        If (!Physics.Raycast (transform.position, transform.forward, 2))
    {
        Walk ( ) ;
    } else {
        Debug.Log ("she was not enough and too much") ;
        Idle ( ) ;
    }
}

Private void Idle ( ) {
    Debug.Log ("my brother and I equally conflicted")
    animation.Play ("all the flaws of her brain and body manifested in her
hoarding") ;
}

Private void Walk ( ) {
    Debug.Log ("her goldmine in decades of trash")
    transform.Translate (transform.forward * movementSpeed Time.deltaTime)
;
    animation.Play ("indistinguishable except in her eyes") ;
}
switch ( context.State) {
case State.OffHook:
    Switch ( _event ) {
        case Event.CallDialed: ("kind of like knowing her alive") ;
    if (TransitionTo )State.Ringing, from)) {

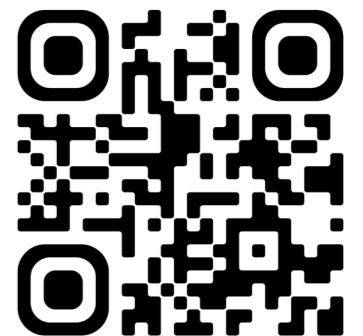
```

```

        SwitchState (from, State.Ringing, from)) ;
    }
        break;
    default:
        if (!HandleInternalAction(from, _event)) {
            throw new System.Exception(string.Format
("snippets of good and the less palatable")
        )
        }
        break;
    }
}
break;

case state.Ringing : (" another disease may have come earlier, all
too familiar with eating your unhappiness")
    switch ( _event) {
        case Event.CallConnected ("her body became the example, the
joke, the source of shame role model, completely fucked up") ;
            if (TransmitTo (State.Connected, from)) {
                SwitchState (from, State.Connected) ;
            }
            break ;
        default :
            if (HandleInternalActions (from, _event)) {
                throw new System.Exception(string.Format("yet she was kind in
other ways, generous, insecure, introverted, endearing) ;
            }
            break ;
    }
}
break

```



# CONCLUSION

As a frame of reference and a basis for the formal qualities of my work, Vaporwave as a micro-genre, provided a mechanism for analysis of the continuously changing, capitalist environment of the Internet. Its methods of critique were to create an aestheticised, amusing, yet sincere performance of nostalgia for an imagined idealised past. In basing my work within a conversation with Vaporwave, I was able to begin to answer my research question of how the changes of Internet culture and computer consumerism, taking place around the early 2000s, affected my generation. Crucially, Vaporwave's approach to the articulation of a non-linear online experience of time, spoke to the over-saturation and over-stimulation we endure from digital media, as it continuously recycles past content. Throughout my process, imagery has been appropriated and repurposed into new forms, alluding to the recycling and recontextualisation of expressive images that characterises Internet communication.<sup>86</sup>

The practice of creator anonymity in Vaporwave was used to distinguish the micro-genre from the public music industry. When applied to my own work this anonymity left room for a sense of embodied intimacy with the content, and freedom of expression of collective generational existentialism. The created pieces were a confessional commentary on my own memories, ones that were reflective of a young female lens, through a sedated, surreal<sup>87</sup> and uncanny viewer experience. By removing the commercialism of music and identity of the creator, one could insert themselves into the work, and simultaneously personify the machine performing the piece. The intended effect was to create an uncanny agency in a device, by the personification of and attribution of 'live' qualities on the computers.

The cathartic voice in my work, channeled through the C# code, circumvented certain challenges of open expression, and without clear authorship, it responded to issues of sexuality, family interrelationships, and the objectification of young girls. In doing so I explored my intimate relationship with machines as a confidant, by exposing my own experiences within the framework of my own aligned feminist ideologies. Filtered through a digital personal relationship the installation series spoke to a desire to treat digital devices and virtual spaces intimately, with the added effect of creating new art installation spaces of virtual and physical space intersection. As the creator I acknowledged the intended audience as my own generation or "Digital Natives". Although, anyone with a collective melancholy and dissatisfaction with the state of the present and fears for the ominous future, as facilitated by the Internet, could connect with the work also.

<sup>86</sup> Eppink, "A Brief History of the GIF (so Far)", 298–306.

<sup>87</sup> Glitsos. "Vaporwave, or Music Optimised for Abandoned Malls." 100–118.

This thesis has presented a series of new 'versions' of a continuing investigation into the fusion of the virtual and physical worlds, through new installation methods, but also expressed a more personal narrative. As a byproduct of reaching back into the past, I could not escape socio-political commentary on gender identity and discrimination. This commentary is especially found in the themes of romanticised historicity of the Internet, issues with chosen Vaporwave iconography, and critical analysis of my learned disillusion as a female raised child. I have in part explored my own experiences and intend to continue to evolve the work to better understand my own learned insecurities.

Extending beyond my own desire to evolve my referenced micro-genres, reaching out to the young female demographic, my poetry addresses, is the aspect of the work that resonates more personally, than the analysis of an Internet-spawned aesthetic and philosophical community. In reaching a certain point of expression and catharsis within my own practice, I plan to extend my discussion around the problematic nature of our symbiotic relationship with the virtual world, a conversation for which Vaporwave provided a foundation, into wider contexts. Just as I have done by publishing my sonic work online on Vimeo<sup>88</sup> and SoundCloud<sup>89</sup>, I am interested in facilitating the evolving multimedia dynamism of the works themselves. Striking a balance between physical installations that articulate the permeating nature of digital spaces and objects, with the Internet-mediated distribution of work. The pursuit of an ongoing investigation into the fusion of our physical and virtual worlds or realities, through new installation methods, will likely never be finished, as the virtual world continues to evolve, transform, and remain relevant. Newer modes of critical discourse facilitated by yet to emerge streams of Internet facilitated micro-genres and communities, may facilitate further insight to the research questions I have only begun to unpack.

<sup>88</sup> Relevant link: <https://vimeo.com/349363858>

<sup>89</sup> Relevant link: <https://soundcloud.com/fl0ra/m-o-n-o-l-o-g-i-n-g>

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