# OPEN SHOW

Digital Futures – 2018

OCAD UNIVERSITY
OCAD U

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## *MISSION STATEMENT*

Digital Futures OPEN Show is where we show our best and most interesting work that's happening RIGHT NOW. The collection of work presented is intended to represent a survey of current ideas, concepts, themes, theories, tools, techniques, and trends being explored by the Digital Futures community.

OPEN comes from the fact that this call is open to our whole community. The show includes works from current Digital Futures undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty. For anyone who has asked the question "What IS Digital Futures anyway?" – we're hoping this exhibition will start to provide some answers.

## *EXHIBITORS*

Samaa Ahmed

Kristy Boyce

Emma Brito

Kylie Caraway

Ramona Caprariu

Kartikay Chadha

Jacob Cram

Thomas Feng

Mudit Ganguly

Luke Garwood

Thomas Graham

Sean Harkin

Sunny Ho

Alessia Ianni-Palarchio

Haru Ji

Enna Kim

Martha Ladly

Max Lander

Natalie Le Huenen

Nadine Lessio

Frank Lin

Chris Luginbuhl

Ryan Mason

Caroline Poon

Alanna Predko

Obaid Quraishi

Jad Al Rabbaa

David Rh

Hugh Ritchie

Quinn Rockliff

Johan Seaton

Yiyi Shao

Sana Shepko

Dikla Sinai

Ethan Tennier-Stuart

Jade Wu

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**Our Sponsors**



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Johan Seaton

Dikla Sinai

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The Volunteers

## *Introduction*

How would gender identity shift if there were artificial wombs? How would our texting patterns change if we were more informed about the nature of the data we were producing with our digital communications? How can we invent technologies that do not disassociate us from our bodies? These are some of the questions raised in the 2018 Digital Futures OPEN SHOW exhibition – open for exhibition of work by faculty and students, and vastly open in terms of its scope and aspirations. Emerging from the Digital Futures Initiative, the interdisciplinary Undergraduate and Graduate Digital Futures programs were established with the intention of offering students the opportunity to integrate art, design, business, games, media and computer science, among other fields, to a lesser or greater degree in their studies. Over the past five years, the DF community at OCAD University has grown to encompass substantial programs that ride the crest of technology while acknowledging current cultural, political and social concerns. Technology is the predominant scaffold for the works in OPEN SHOW, although for the most part it is critically employed.

Many of the works in the exhibition speak to the attendant anxieties that have surfaced as we continue to co-evolve with the machines that augment our fleshy bodies. This has been a gradual but unwavering process with technologies supporting our limitations and apparently assisting our lives at both work and home. However, the shift from mass production to an information economy over the last century requires us to carry objects that will connect us with heaps of aggregated information. Try working at a job focused on knowledge generation without a smartphone. I dare you. With the increasing need – in fact requirement – to connect to information, our relationships with each other have shifted, becoming less about collectivity, and more about momentary synaptic connections as understood through likes and tweets. As Sherry Turkle has observed in her book of the same name, we are Alone Together. This environment of confused relational structures

that rarely, but necessarily, require real contact between people is perplexing for those of us who are both seduced by the potential of technology and well aware of its cost. It is within this paradox of help and harm that much of the works in OPEN SHOW sit – an interstitial space we collectively occupy as humans inextricably attached to things that may be depriving us of our humanness.

There is another threshold that these works encompass and that is the space between art and design. Neither one nor the other, students and faculty featured in this exhibition are as apt to employ strategies and methods of design thinking as art practices and often combine them to challenge the assumed posthuman legacy of the digital. Some works address the current fluidity in identity and gender constructs through games and illustrative propositions. Overtures are made through intimate devices that literally speak to the user and provide comfort to those who might be experiencing the isolation technology can engender. There are opportunities for public assembly and collective understanding of our cosmological reality, and also works that force individuals to confront their most base instincts. Speculative futures are bravely and beautifully drawn, suggesting technology may assist rather than hinder our social reproduction. Environments of light, both immersive and pointed, bring the users' attention to themselves and the fragile ecosystem upon which they depend. As with much of techne´ incorporated into this exhibition, in some cases virtual and augmented realities exist as the means to an end rather than the focus of display. Together these exhibitions bring contemporary debates concerning technology and its effects into strong relief. I urge the reader to explore the projects described within these pages and take to heart the lessons learned.

**Caroline Seck Langill**
March 2018

# I. INTRODUCTION

# II. PROJECTS

# III. EXHIBITION OPENING NIGHT

# PROJECTS

# Bad Day

Virtual reality, video

***Alessia Ianni-Palarchio, David Rh, Ethan Tennier-Stuart***
***Hugh Ritchie, Obaid Quraishi, Thomas Feng***

Bad Day is a short, 360° VR film, about one person's exceedingly bad day. It is created with the intention to frustrate the viewer and cause them dismay as they must observe the events of the situation unfolding. Put in the shoes of an individual after a long day, their dreams reveal what it was about their day that was so terrible, and what makes them yearn to escape from it.

Initially the prompt for this defined that its creation should be done with 360-degree video; due to the nature of being able to see in all directions that comes with the medium, the storyboarding plan helped ensure that the entire space was used, rather than leaving only one interesting view of the scene.  The idea that sprung from it was that the viewer shouldn't have to remain in a static position the entire time they experience the film, looking onto the action, but rather should rather get the chance to become the center of it, and thus, Bad Day was born.

Interspersed with the filming are digitally created elements to create a visible divide for the viewer to observe and contemplate what is and is not the reality of the situation presented as they experience the day. While it can be viewed in a regular video player, it is ideal to watch using a headset, so that the viewer comes to take the position of our main character, rather than be a passive onlooker, as intended.

# Digital Debris

Photography, installation

**Samaa Ahmed**

Digital Debris is part of a series of prototypes about electronic waste (e-waste) created using a critical design methodology, and a process of speculative fabulation. It is an animated projection piece that cycles through questions and comments about e-waste that were collected during a focus group workshop. This text is projected onto two abstract collages that include images of digital devices, natural landscapes, and reflective textures. Depending on the brightness of the space, and the color of the text, the projected questions vary in their legibility to emphasize the uncertainty of the topic of e-waste, and also as a metaphor for the lack of mainstream awareness regarding e-waste. Audiences are also invited to add their own thoughts about e-waste to the piece.
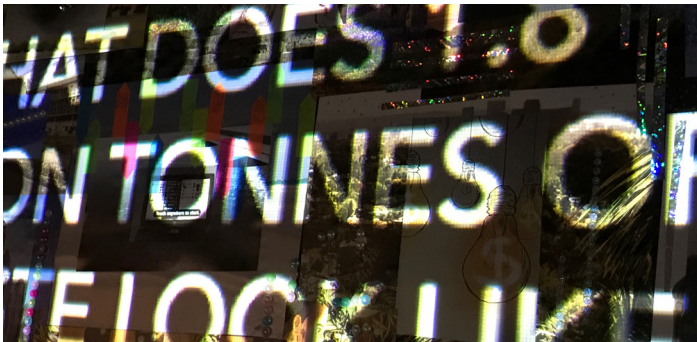
# Emolace

Physical computing, code, wearables

**Yiyi Shao, Jad Rabbaa, Quinn Rockliff**

Emolace is a fashion accessory reading emotional tweets from all over the world. It changes colors depending on different hashtags used. By tracking the sharing of the hashtags: #happy #sad #ew #scared and #mad, Emolace tells the current emotion of the ever-updating internet. The speed of blinking is based on the strength of WiFi signal, which represents how well as an individual is connected to the cyber world.

Emolace incorporates the Particle Photon with IFTTT and is powered by three AA batteries. It is comfortable to wear and can be turned on /off by a switch on the back. Its unisex design goes equally well with a broad range of outfits.

# FlattEar Me

Physical computing, code, wearables

**_Kylie Caraway, Sana Shepko, Ramona Caprariu_**

FlattEar Me is a wearable device that takes the form of earmuffs. FlattEar Me's literally keep you warm and fuzzy at all times, from the large, wool earmuffs, to the sweet sounding compliments whispered in your ear. When feeling distressed or looking for reassurance, the user presses the button behind their ear and a compliment will play. FlattEar Me is made for users of all ages. They are best used in cold weather. FlattEar Me's are most often used outside, during commutes, and in solitude. Compliments play as little or as often as desired; the user is in control of the admiration given.

# Fortune Tasker

Physical computing, code, installation, sculpture, web

**Nadine Lessio,  Alanna Predko**

Fortune Tasker is an an Alexa based prototype that explores some ideas around the concept of useless machines, which is a device that serves no utilitarian function, and the magical object, in which a technological device is framed as other worldly rather than commonplace. Currently, personal assistants are positioned by their parent companies as helpful, general use computing devices that are developed for a wide audience. Fortune Tasker is an exploration in subverting that notion by modifying it into a computing device that serves a very specific need for a very specific person. Striped of its voice, and removed from its prescribed consumer function, Fortune Tasker can only provide the service of a personal medium by printing out absurd fortunes on receipts, and a task for the user to complete if they so desire. Fortunes are programatically assembled on the fly, from a large corpus of nouns, verbs, places and things, resulting in amusing and unexpected outcomes.

# Fruit Finder

Games

**Mudit Ganguly**

Fruit Finder is a point-and-click adventure game where players must identify queer individuals at a party from a group of non-player characters (NPCs). The NPCs have backstories, voices and personalities that the player might use to make a decision.

The players are also given a Gaydar to help them decide. The gaydar is completely random. Any NPC can be queer or not queer. This decision is randomized every single time the game runs. And the player might play the game multiple times and get different answers.

The idea of the game was to show people that their stereotypes are bad, even if they are true.

# Inhabitat: Two Perspectives

Code, interactive installation, sculpture, mixed reality

**Haru Ji, Graham Wakefield**

Inhabitat: Two Perspectives is an interactive mixed reality experience created by the artist team Artificial Nature. It pairs transdisciplinary artmaking with scientific models of nature through two experiences of an alternate ecosystem; two ways to see with other eyes. The sand sculpture presents a perspective over a whole environment, in which you can observe, touch, and move the dunes and various species of life. The other view is projected through the eyes of alien creatures, as they follow their natural behaviours in the web of relations of the interconnected food chain. Participants can observe the alternative world with different scales and perspectives, and through their eyes see ourselves as alien as they look to us.

Inhabitat: Two Perspectives is a scaled-down descendant of its previous artificial nature realizations: Inhabitat (2017) and Archipelago (2013).
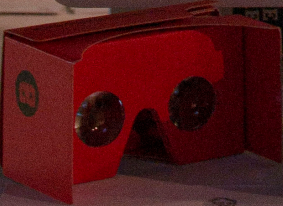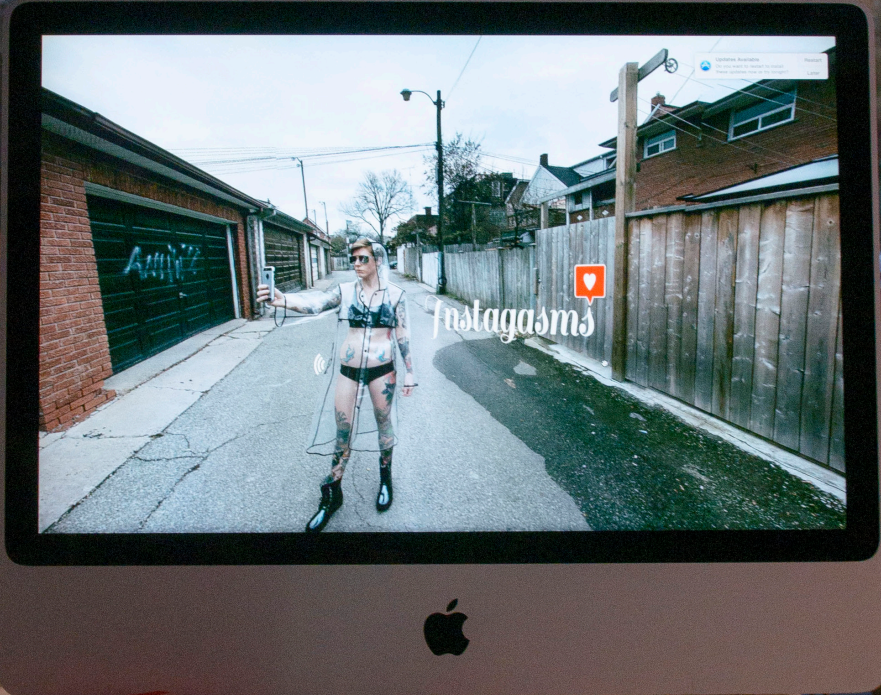
# Instagasms, Inc.

Virtual reality, photography, web, mobile

**Max Lander**

Instagasms, Inc. is a series of fictional photography based advertisements created to highlight the potential pitfalls of digital engagement within the context of a potential future. Namely, these images deal with 1) a preoccupation with performative sexuality through social networks, 2) puritanism and digital monitoring of online sexualities and 3) the potential agony of advertisements within immersive environments. Each of these pieces was made in collaboration with the people pictured within them and each of the above mentioned fears arose out of initial planing discussions with the subjects. All three ads are made in A-frame and are intended to be viewed in a headset but are fully functional within a browser as well.
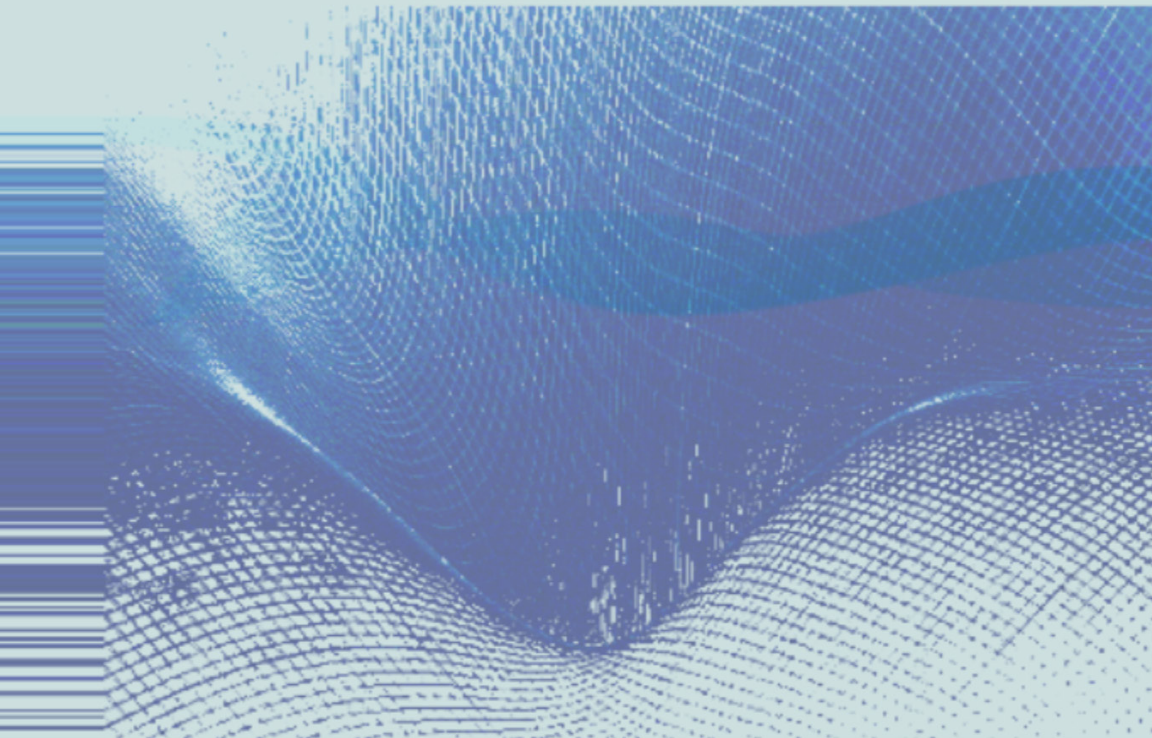
# Inte Sett

Installation, performance

***J:S:K (Johan Seaton), Enna Kim***

"We continually cast ourselves forward by rhythmically anticipating future events that may occur in small or large time intervals. These paths form from mental space and time and can establish the sense of continuity that accompanies comprehension."
—Mari Riess Jones

This audio visual performance from electronic experimentalist Johan Seaton (under his J:S:K moniker) and digital animation artist Enna Kim explores the notions of sync and investigates how urban grids give the illusion of structure to everyday tasks. Inte Sett is the name of a series of loosely connected rhythmically-driven tracks on the constant verge of collapse. Enna Kim's accompanying live projections sway between clockwork precision and chaotic instability in this "ode to the grid."

ent

Foliage
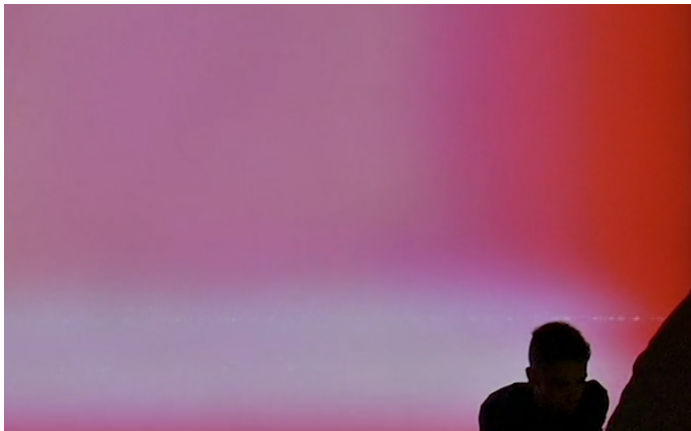
# Little Menagerie

Virtual reality, games

*Alessia Ianni-Palarchio, Caroline Poon, Frank Lin*
*Jade Wu, Luke Garwood, Sunny Ho*

Looking down over the world, small people scurry about their day below you and all around. The world is new, and peaceful – whether it stays that way is up to you. Building the world up, you find you have the ultimate power, and the ultimate choice. To create? Or to destroy?

Little Menagerie is a virtual reality, world building game, where the player constructs an urban environment around themselves. Each object is fragile, and if grabbed too harshly, or thrown, then the player risks crushing or destroying the objects, and denizens, entirely. It's up to the player whether they want to use this power for the creation of the world, or for more destructive purposes.

The prompt that inspired this creation was 'world building' – rather than build a set world, this experience was created so the user got the be the world-builder, rather than have it be dictated to them. Created with the capabilities of VR headsets in-mind, and the freedom of movement they provide, the player is able to walk around their miniature environment, and interact with most objects, giving them the power of a giant ruling over the land. Conceptually, this was also meant to create an experience that was for VR and took advantage of the technology, rather than just happening to exist in a VR space.
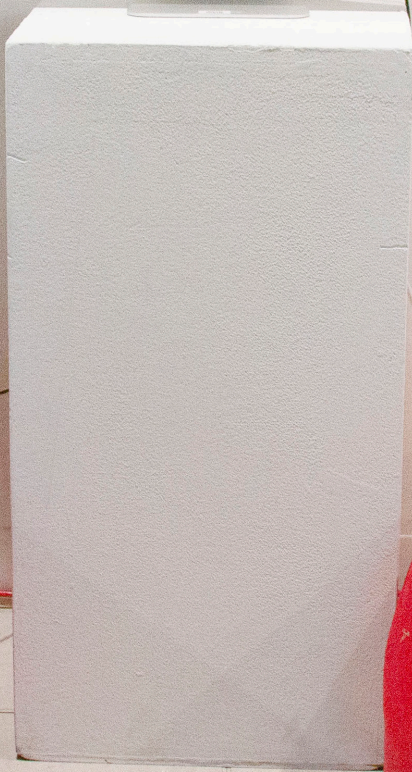
# LuvMeLuvU

Physical computing, code, 3D printing
*Yiyi Shao, Jad Rabbaa, Sean Harkin*

LuvMeLuvU is a set of two smart pillows designed for long distance relationships. They allow a couple to send their love across the world to their partner. When the user misses their significant other, they can hug their LuvMeLoveU pillow and their partner's pillow will glow, letting the other know they are loved and missed. If both partners hug their pillows at the same time, the pillows will vibrate.

The LuvMeLuvU pillows incorporated Particle Photon, touch sensing with conductive threads, 3D printing and other digital components. This project is trying to present the idea of calm technology and also finding a way to embed rigid hardware in a soft and ubiquitous object in daily life.

# Observation
## How technology can help reduce gaps between genders

Web, illustration

**Dikla Sinai**

The graphic novel is based on a series of future predictions about how technology can reduce gaps between genders followed by illustrations to help visualize the main ideas of the text. The future predictions based on the DAS STEEPLE model, inspired by Michael Porter's PEST analysis of political, economic, social, and technological factors. It covers many areas that affect our lives, our micro-environments, and is used for futurism related to social, environmental, economic areas. The text in the graphic novel based on in-depth research of current trends on each of the macro-environment then edited into possible future scenarios. Each scenario ends with a list of ideas, inviting the viewers to engage with the work.

The illustrations visualize the main ideas from the text, making the text more accessible and attractive. The illustrations were drawn by hand, in 2 layers; first drawn with a pencil and then traced with a graphic-pen. Then scanned to a digital format and coloured using Photoshop. The colouring process includes also adding layers of textures in different opacities. The colour plate is a mix of blue, purple and pink, often use as representations of the dichotomic genders stereotypes which I was hoping to challenge.

ostcard

my postcard
memories book

ize

inbox

# Postcard Memories

Code, virtual reality, installation, web, mobile, performance, health care
**Kartikay Chadha, Martha Ladly**

Postcard Memories is a touch screen tablet application designed and developed for people with mild memory loss, and those who are diagnosed with Early Stage Dementia (ESD), their carers and family members. We created a tablet based application that provided social space for elders to interact with their friends, family members, and caregivers. The application enables users to create and send digital postcards that combine their personal photographs and short texts, with selected audio and video. We performed user testing of the mobile application with target audience members at the Visual analytics Lab and Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, using a sensitive inclusive design methodology and iterative feedback and our users in the development cycle, to improve the prototype and its usability for a wide audience. Postcard Memories proved to be an excellent overall experience for participant users that triggers story telling and memory sharing among the elderly and family members of all ages. We are now working to make the final version of the mobile application available for free public download.
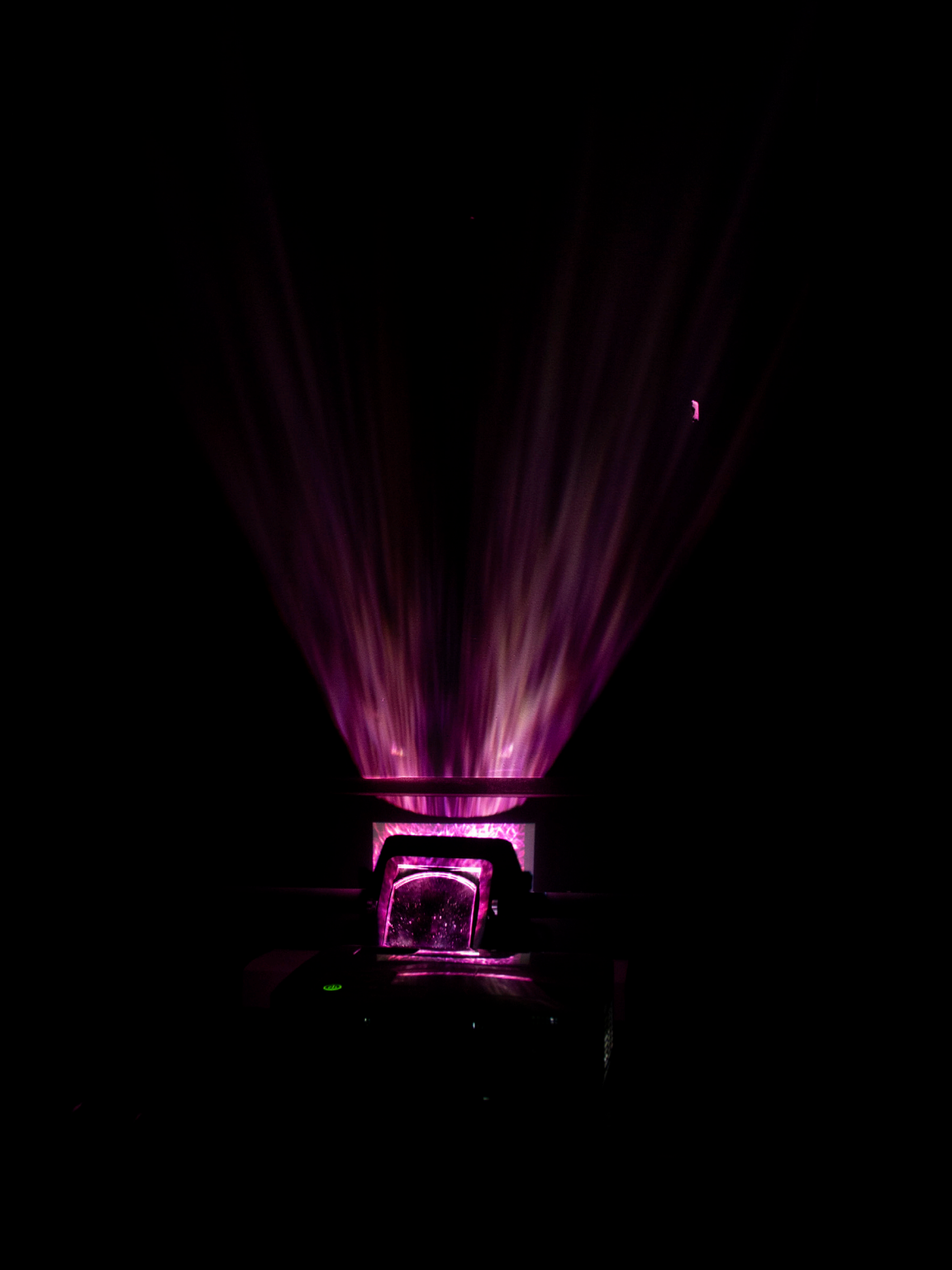
# Tell

Code, installation

**Thomas Graham**

Tell is an interactive audiovisual installation on change. A microphone faces into a corner, the source of a placid droning sound. Speak into the microphone, and waves of projected light scatter over the walls, shimmering with colour and intensity unique to the tonal qualities of your voice—a sound which booms and echoes into a shapeless hum; similar to the drone before, but with the subtle inclusion of your voice.

Tell comes from the stance that everything is in a state of becoming. In framing this position through the participant's voice, the piece seeks to bring this view of to matters of self: to the ways our identities and impact on the world can shift in unexpected ways.
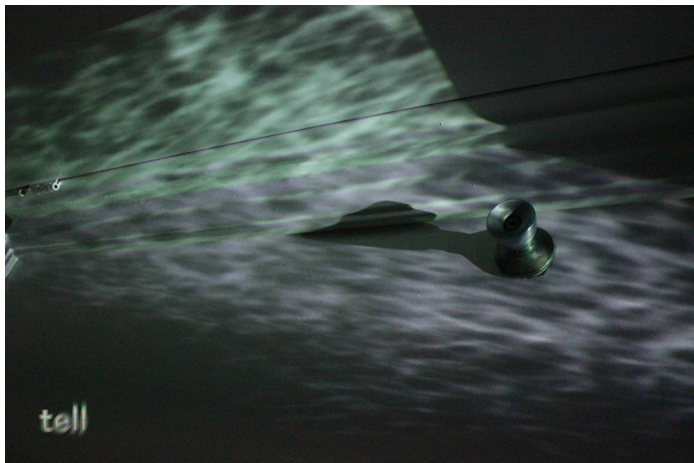
# TEXT BASED LIFE

WE TALK MORE THROUGH OUR PHONES THAN IN PERSON. THIS IS AN ANALYSIS OF MY SMS
CONVERSATIONS. EACH LINES WEIGHT RELATES TO HOW OFTEN THE WORD WAS USED BY
EITHER ME OR THE RELATED CONTACT. THE VISUALIZATION COVERS CONVERSATIONS THAT
HAVE BEEN ACTIVE FOR UP TO FIVE YEARS.

DAD

CAILEY

MAGNUS

MOM

JESSICA

JORDAN

MACK

MADDIE

TYLER

DANA

LOVE
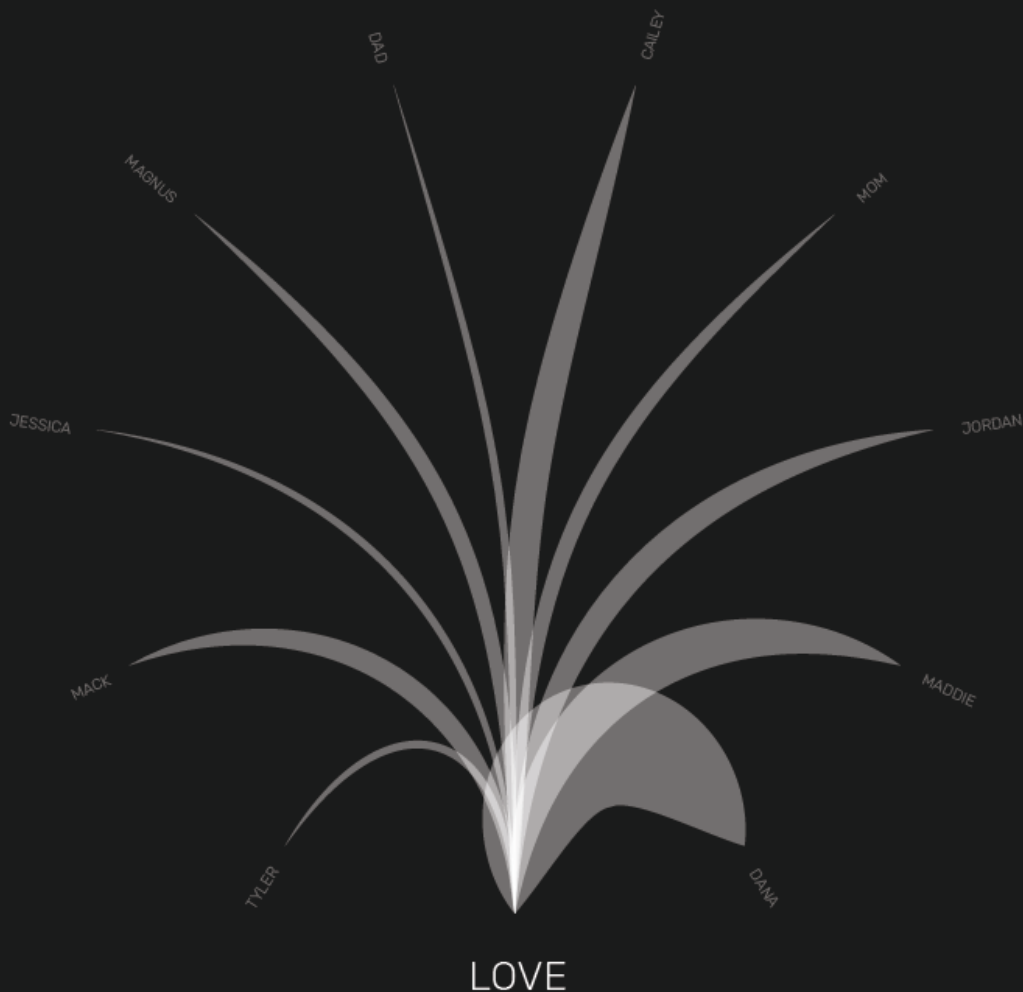
# Text Based Life

Web, data visualization
**_Jacob Cram_**

We talk more through our phones than we do in person.

Text Based Life is an experiment data visualization that uses over 5 years of SMS messages to create a graphical representation of how often a word was used in conversation with a person. Each point the lines connect to is a contact, and the weight of the line represents how often the word was used over the course of time.

Text Based Life is meant to show how much you can tell about two people's relationship simply from the frequency in which they exchange 4 words. Without looking at the context in which the words were used, it is possible to understand the nature of a relationship at a basic level.

# That Night

Physical computing, code, 3D animation, games, installation

**Ryan Mason**

That Night is a narrative driven adventure set in a forgotten home on the outskirts of a small, unremarkable town. Explore an atmospheric environment filled with puzzles, story and secrets. Play as Evelyn Young, a highschool sophomore who just moved to yet another painfully mundane town in middle America. At least… that's what she thought.

This work establishes itself as a speculative artifact situated in an alternate history circa 1980. Though bound by the economy and culture of that context, Public Games establishes a new space for conjuring wonderment guided by the emotional strengths of nostalgia and technology. Iterating on inspiration from failed designs of the past allow us to offset nostalgia's pain by leveraging the euphoria of imagination, bringing us to a new oasis for digital play.

# The Strange and the Beautiful

Code, illustration and design

**Natalie Le Huenen**

This series of illustrations explores the concept of universal beauty and timelessness found within the realm of geometric forms and impossible figures. Computer-generated visual components are explored in the work, enhancing the images. The result of this process is a captivating visual experience. In print form, the abstract figures draw you into another world from another time.

# The World, Part 1 (Water)

Physical computing, installation
***Chris Luginbuhl***

Composed of a forest of luminous columns, this installation evokes the appearance and sound of a large body of water that responds to visitors' movements.

We are invited to play among softly glowing waves in a part of Toronto that was 30m underwater until about 10,000 years ago. Although the water has receded, unseen waves are very much still with us as a diverse variety of radio waves which permeates our bodies and our buildings alike, from the signals from distant galaxies to wi-fi to the music broadcast on the radio.

The World, Part 1 (Water) investigates the essential quality of a body of water that draws us closer. How does rhythmic motion sooth us, draw us in and hold our attention? And how does our experience of water change when we move from watching to being within it?

The World also invites us to explore how our imaginations complete our experience when we are presented with a low resolution display, but not a display that is fixed; the columns are free to swing when touched by visitors.

The colours of each wavelet are generated accidentally by the radio waves from the CN tower and the streetcar lines that surround the building.
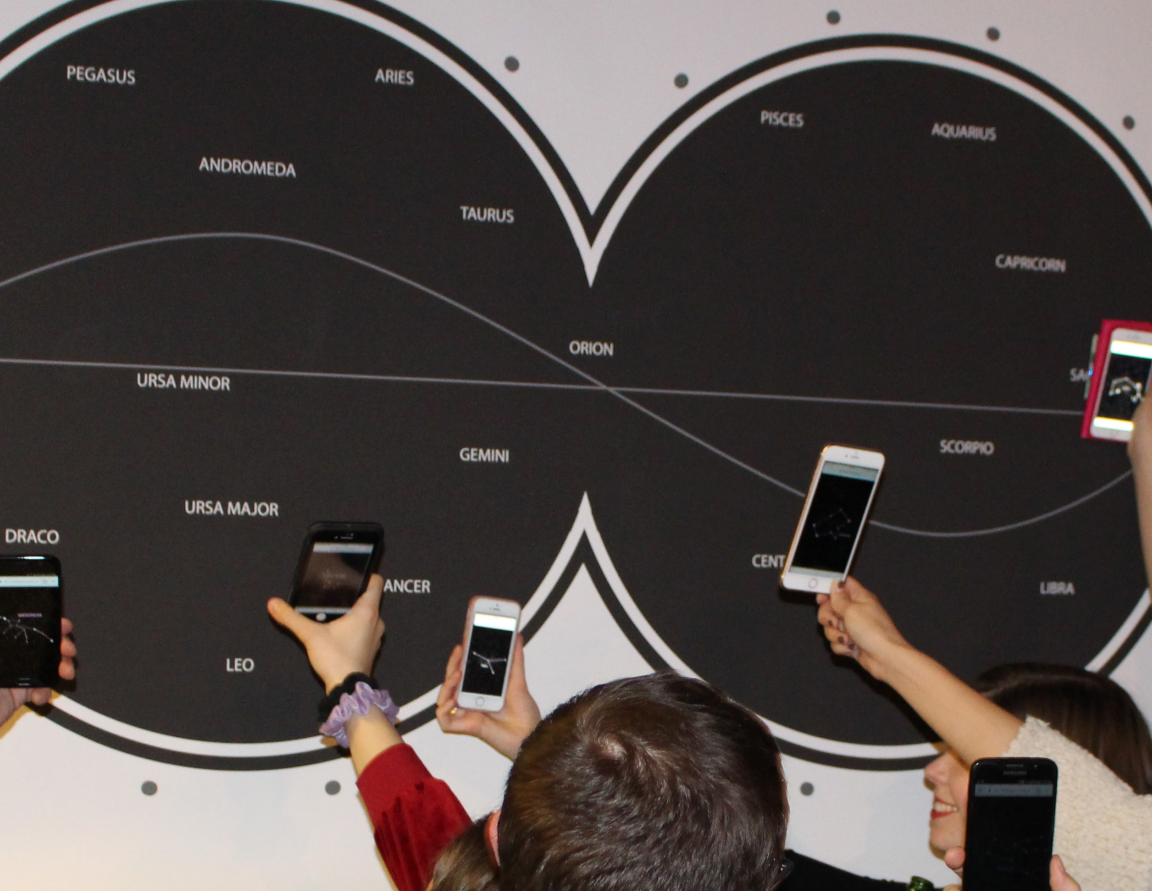
TRUMP PUNCH

TRUMP PUNCH

Press to Start

# Trump Punch

Physical computing, code, games, digital fabrication, web

**Kristy Boyce**

Trump Punch is a vintage style arcade boxing game, where the player gets to punch Donald Trump. Fun for all ages!

# Written In The Stars

Code, augmented reality, installation, web, mobile, performance, interactive media

**_Kylie Caraway, Emma Brito_**

Written in the Stars operates like a digital puzzle that requires teamwork between 20 participants and their phone screens in order to view the entire night sky. It begins with a physical printed map of the sky with the constellations' names, but is void of their images. To see a constellation, participants must go online on their phone, click on a link for a specific constellation, and then raise and tilt their phones slightly, as though they are viewing the sky through their phone. Once the phone is tilted to a specific degree, the image of the constellation will appear. In order to see all 20 constellations at once, there must be 20 people participating in order to piece the map and its proper constellations together. The fact that each screen only displays one constellation at a time is an important feature. When used alone, the screen only offers a small fragment of the night sky that is visible. This means that the screens, and the people holding them, are reliant on the interaction with others in order to complete the puzzle and entire image of the night sky.