

DONNA LEISHMAN

Narcissist Reconfigured



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Abstract

Guy Debord proffered that the spectacle in late capitalism is a 'social relationship between people that is mediated by images' (1994). In the context of reconfigured political, economic and social structures it comes as no surprise that our social identity has also undergone significant evolution to meet the new demands, uncertainties and opportunities as they have manifested over the new contiguous borders of online social media and mobile technologies. Within digital social communities we see the evolution to a normalised and celebrated surface screen representation of self, enabled by the best 'apps' for editing the Self. This paper/presentation will survey the emergent languages of social media/digital culture (The New Aesthetic/machine vision, Selfies, Snapchat's augmented reality lens and filters, etc.) and will proceed to explore the new power dynamics and impact of becoming a more spectral yet art directed or 'illustrated' self.

Foucault's notion of Panoptic Diffusion - 'He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power' (1977) - will be used to explore the non-passive technological facilitation and social practice of self-objectification. The paper/presentation will proceed to document particular semiotics of online digital culture and its lexical representation - wherein specific gestures/body language or filters stand in for certain ideas and the practices of conditional specific representation, i.e. where some particular background knowledge is needed to understand the representation, I will argue that both modes of communication are highly utilised in contemporary 'illustrative' methods. The paper/presentation will conclude by proposing that the contemporary social appetite for not only augmenting but also significantly editing their photographic or 'screen grabbed' images combined with the emergent conditional specific language(s) within online culture arguably is making illustrators of us all, in which circumstance the one must carefully consider the consequences of continued consumption of imitative images.

Biography

Dr Donna Leishman is Head of Communication Design at The Glasgow School of Art and is a media artist and researcher; her work is a combination of writing and practice-led research. Her research career began in 1999, and has seen her cross disciplines such as electronic literature, ludology, digital media and more recently human computer interaction, sociology and psychology. She investigates a variety of subjects such as social and literary identity, immersion and interactivity. Research themes include contemporary human activity within digital media: exploring how digitally mediated narratives extend authorship, reception and presence, what role media technologies have in forming or disturbing social identity and ultimately what art and design practices can offer to current debates and societal challenges. In 2013 she was featured in 'Canongate's Future 40', a list voted by her peers that celebrates the best of contemporary Scottish storytellers. Her works have been shown in museums, galleries, conferences and festivals around the world and are archived in the ELMCIP Anthology of European Electronic Literature. She has presented for ELO, DAW, Culture Lab, FITC, ISEA and CHI and has held examinerships with: ECA, RCA, University of Falmouth, University of Brighton and the University of Newcastle.