In & Of the Body

Writing presented in partial fullfillment of the requirements
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Nicola DiFusco

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THE BODY

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Abstract

This practice traces information as it moves through physical and digital spaces, asking questions surrounding how technology alters meaning as it makes interpretations. Led by my own personal interests and the memetic bodies of popular culture I was embedded, questions arise surrounding how individuals communicate with and experience the networks they are embedded within. Furthermore, this practice expands to investigate what happens when the body becomes a technological interface, and how issues of ownership affect our interactions.

TABLE OF

C O N T E N T S

Introduction

As I dive into the nebulous network of memories in which my psyche is teetering upon, in an attempt to piece together some rhyme or reason to my creative inquiries, I find myself swimming through a reef now bleached. Examining the hollow structures and dark crevasses of this lost ecosystem, clues and fragments usher in forgotten memories from my past lives. Thought to be lost forever in my subconscious, these gaps in my own personal anthology now wash over me in visceral waves, returning from their voyages beyond the horizon of my memory. When I think about how I engage with the world around me, I often think of swimming. I'm completely submerged in a medium, sometimes even unaware that I am engulfed by it, using tools and techniques to navigate this all-encompassing body. As I set out on an expedition to track the course of affinity for image-making, I find myself basking in a lagoon of recollections from the beginning of my young-adulthood. Memories of being a stranger in an uncanny world are now restored files, rendered with crisp clarity at the forefront of my mind. When I arrived in Rome in August of 2017, I knew no one, spoke no Italian, and had no agenda except fulfilling fifteen course credit hours to continue my Bachelor's degree.

In my mind, I constructed a false-doppelgänger of what I thought the homeland of my father and mother would be. As a child I would lift the heavy drawer of the coffee table to reveal a photo album of my parent's honeymoon through the Mediterranean. This colossal book was padded like the couches in my Nonna's home, quilted and laced, blossoming with soft florals. Within held photographs washed in analog pastels, glued under crisp plastic protectors and captioned by my mother's sharp geometric

script. The surreal vignettes captured marble monuments, winding streets backlogged with flocks of Fiats, lush seashores, and my parent's 80s alter egos. This mystical land lived in my head as a warm home, a gentle aspiration of a far off land far better than the suburbia I knew. Like a vintage film playing on TV passed my bedtime, this alternative reality was sadly just that— a fantasy in my head. I learned quickly upon my arrival to Rome that I was not welcomed to the dreamworld of that photo album, but rather I was an outsider to a place I held on a pedestal for most of my young life.

As I walked my new neighborhood day-in and day-out, I'd casually snap photos of the details that would catch my eye. Not only was walking through the city a delightful and interesting way for me to survey my new surroundings, the act of walking was deeply tied to the culture of Rome (Hales, 2013). The passeggiata, as I found while exploring Italian words with no direct English translation, describes a leisurely stroll or walk taken by Italians. The passeggiata is far more than a promenade, but it is a deep tradition where one dresses in their finest clothes and goes for a stroll through their neighborhood. Time is of no concern to the passeggiata, as it's

ABOVE ancient ruins layered with modern life created a space shared across centuries.

centered around leisure and presents the opportunity to spend time galavanting with friends and neighbors. The passeggiata means to see and be seen (Hales, 2013).

This phrase echoed through my mind for weeks (even years) after reading it. "To see and be seen" was an embodied state of mind, and allowed me to see the space in a new light, and bare witness to the complex networks I found myself imbedded within. Through creating these images, I found that this new environment was neither the mystical and eerie land I was welcomed to, nor the dreamworld of my parent's youth, but rather I was constructing my own real-

ity through this photography process. Sifting through the layers of the streets I now occupied, and learning about the layered histories and cultures, I organized a new narrative and agency over my experience as outsider. Street photography had not only become means for producing visual stories and rich images, but it involved a shift in vision and engagement in a communicative process between myself and the community I was embedded within. The act of engaging with an unknown "other", and translating that exchange across digital landscapes has been central to this practice.
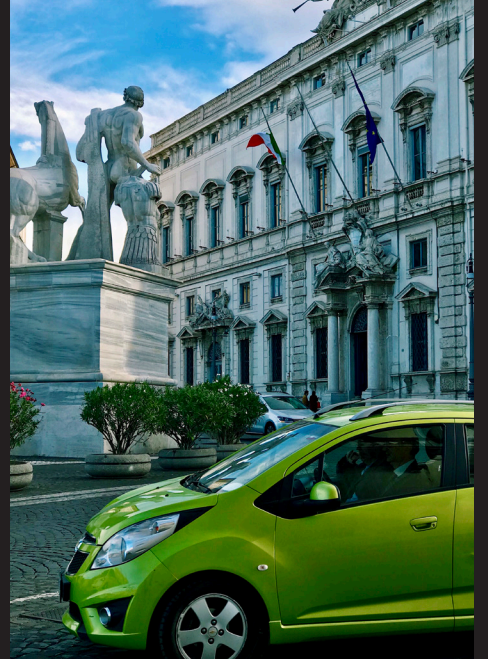
LEFT & ABOVE
Images from daily
life in the Trastevere
neighborhood.
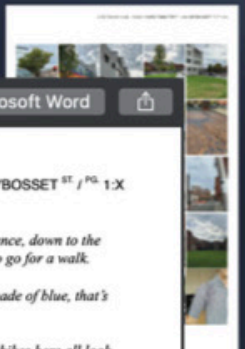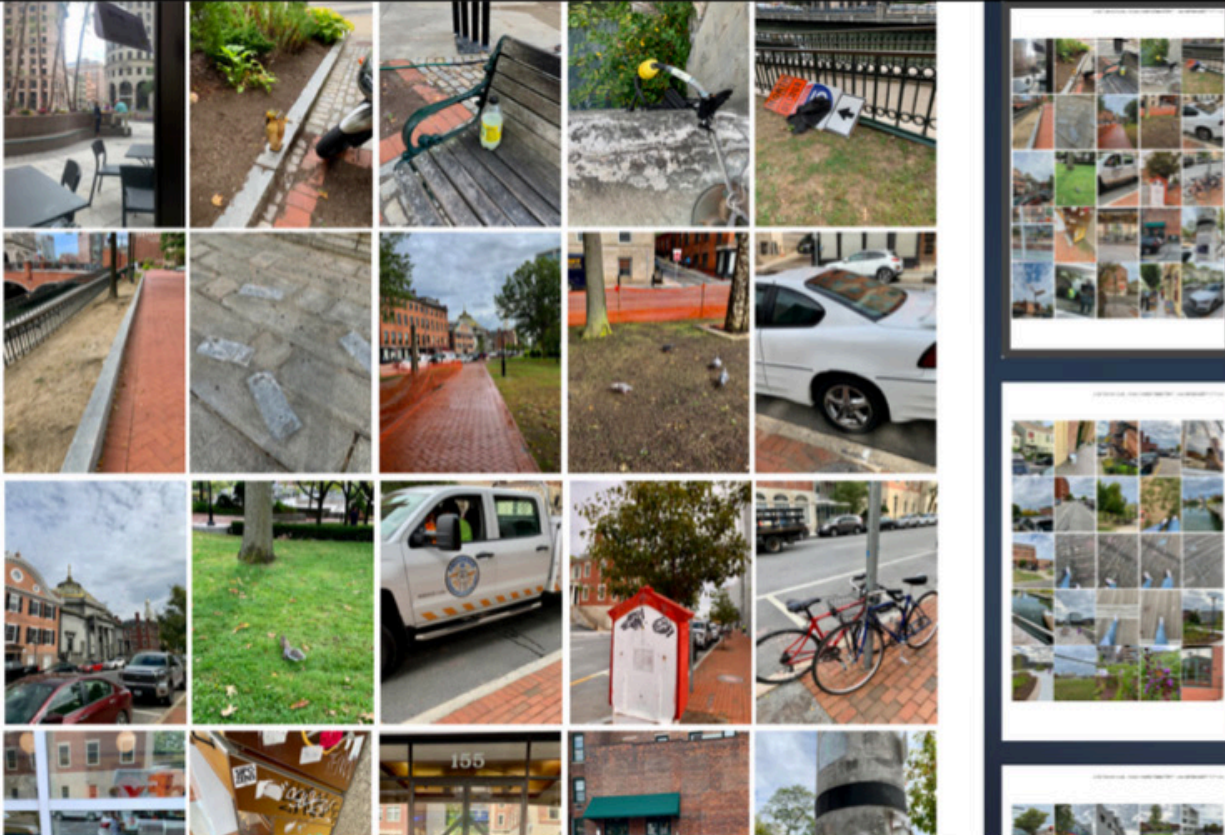
Exp. II Transcript   Open with Microsoft Word

2 OCTOBER 2019 / 14:30 – 15:00 / 15 WESTMINSTER ST. – 169 WEYBOSSET ST. / PG. 1:X

00:00

Hi, alright, good afternoon. This is Nicola, and I'll be taking you through uh just a typical walk through um downtown Providence, down to the pedestrian bridge, then I kind of meander my way around, it's a loop. It's a walk I usually take about once a day when I need to go for a walk.

So um I'm starting at the, starting at the building right next to fifteen west. Um I noticed this prius car is a really really cool shade of blue, that's pretty nice. Just a thought.

So we're walking through here, got my starbucks in my left hand, it's quite a hot and humid day here for October. I noticed the bikes here all look so strange. Like, there's no two bicycles that are exactly alike.

I'm walking through the bench area outside fifteen west, there's like a bottle of lemonade on the bench. I know not to sit on the bench because that's usually where homeless people sleep, so it could maybe be not the most clean bench. There's a pretty cool vase here, like a vase with sunflowers. Pretty cool.

And yeah, hopefully we're recording here and I'll cross the street. Crossing the street is my new favorite activity, because I feel like I'm always trying to dodge traffic a little bit.

I'm actually going to walk on the other side of the street, on College Street. Look down, give the river a good look. Looks like there are some dead leaves in it, really not into that. Kinda wishing summer wasn't over. There's an electrical wire going into the river, that's pretty, pretty, big fascinate. I'll snap a pic, and I'll keep walking.

There's this guy carrying a skateboard, right, with like an anime character on it. Like Naruto or something? And I'm so fascinated people here skateboard. Oh, this sign is down. I kind of want to steal it… not going to lie.

Um… not going to lie when I'm walking places I, I, really want to steal a lot of street garbage. Also wondering where the grass went, 'cause there's no grass here. Kinda sad. This is totally going to kill my phone.

I guess I'm going to walk up here, like through this monument, I've never really walked here. There's so shadows on the ground, like something was screwed in there, but I don't really know.

I think this is a court house. . . . So usually I don't walk through here because . . . . there are so many pigeons on this grass. Oh my god. That's crazy. So people probably think I'm crazy, but it kind of looks like I'm talking on the phone. I just have these airpods in, which I like to wear so then people won't talk to me. Um . . . . but maybe it would be more interesting if people did talk to me? But, I guess I could try it, probably.

Um wow, some pretty shiny hub caps, on that car. Speaking of shiny, it was pretty cloudy this morning but now the sun is out. Uh, I don't know what this building is, it says "Old Town Bank'" and has this gold dome. And I thought it was . . . . oh that squirrel has a nice hop to him. I thought it was like acne but now I'm not really sure.

Some graffiti. There are usully flocks, of like upper-middle class white women kind of strolling around. They don't look like they work here and . . . oh it looks like these two bikes are giving each other a hug, but it's so people don't steal them.
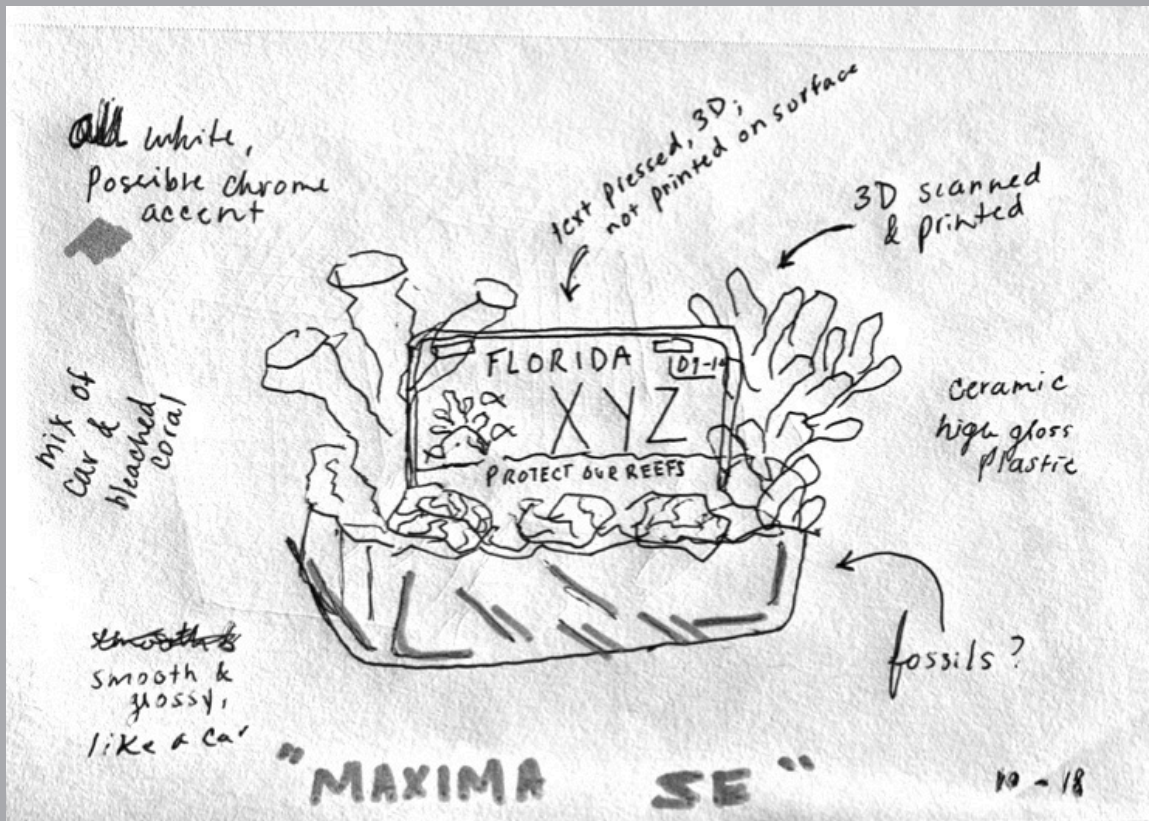
1
NAVIGATING THROUGH DIGITAL MEANS

Photography as means of investigating & connecting to space, navigating bodies of information.

My initial formalized inquiry began with a curiosity surrounding physical space, the cultural laying of a city, and the relationship between city and the individual. This stemmed from engaging in street photography, allowing the photographer to observe the details of the building blocks that the city is composed of. By observing and capturing this space, I began to wonder about the broader systems that influenced the space, and my relationship within these structures.

Derived from this engagement was a process of walking tours through the city. These tours consisted of approximately thirty minutes of content, beginning at 15 Westminster Street, looping down North Main Street, crossing the river, and leading the Center for Integrative Technologies. This process consisted of using my smartphone to create an audio recording, in which I described my surroundings, points of interest, personal thoughts and

all white,
possible chrome
accent

text pressed, 3D;
not printed on surface

3D scanned
& printed

mix of
car &
bleached
coral

FLORIDA
101-14
XYZ
PROTECT OUR REEFS

ceramic
high gloss
plastic

smooth &
glossy,
like a car

fossils?

"MAXIMA SE"

10 - 18

anecdotes. In tandem with this audio, I took photographs to illustrate points mentioned. This walking tour manifested itself into grids of photos and transcripts. Through this exercise, I gained a better understanding of how I interact with the cityscape, and ultimately provoked questions surrounding observation and how narrative is derived from landscape.

In response to this walking exercise, considerable time was devoted to analyzing and deconstructing the artifacts produced. This analysis involved identifying unique and ephemeral instances, reoccurrences, and deriving common themes. The content of these exercises could be broken down into the following conceptual threads: the relationship between organic and synthetic, the tension between municipality and public, as well as the distortion of messages. These themes were converted into sketches of sculptural interventions. Specifically, an augmented reality coral reef was created as commentary to a vehicle's license plate, reading "Save the Reefs". This installation was created with 3D scans of actual corals and preserved fish. Most fascinating about this exercise was not the literal product, but rather the translation process that occurred when bringing biological materials into a digital space yielded a thought-provoking situation.

RIGHT
photogrammetry
process of scanning
ocean specimens
into 3D models.
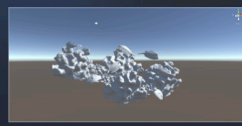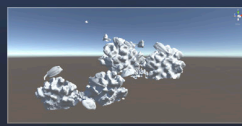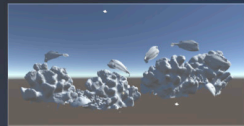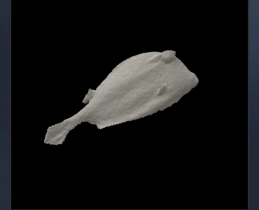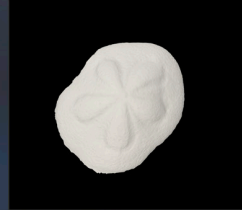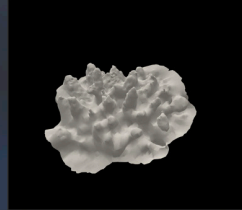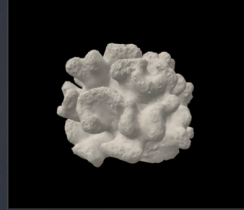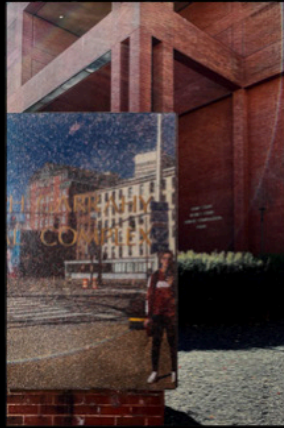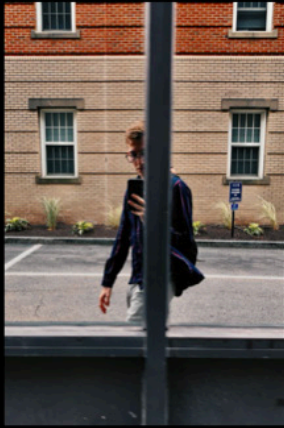
ABOVE & RIGHT
artifact images from
daily walking tours.
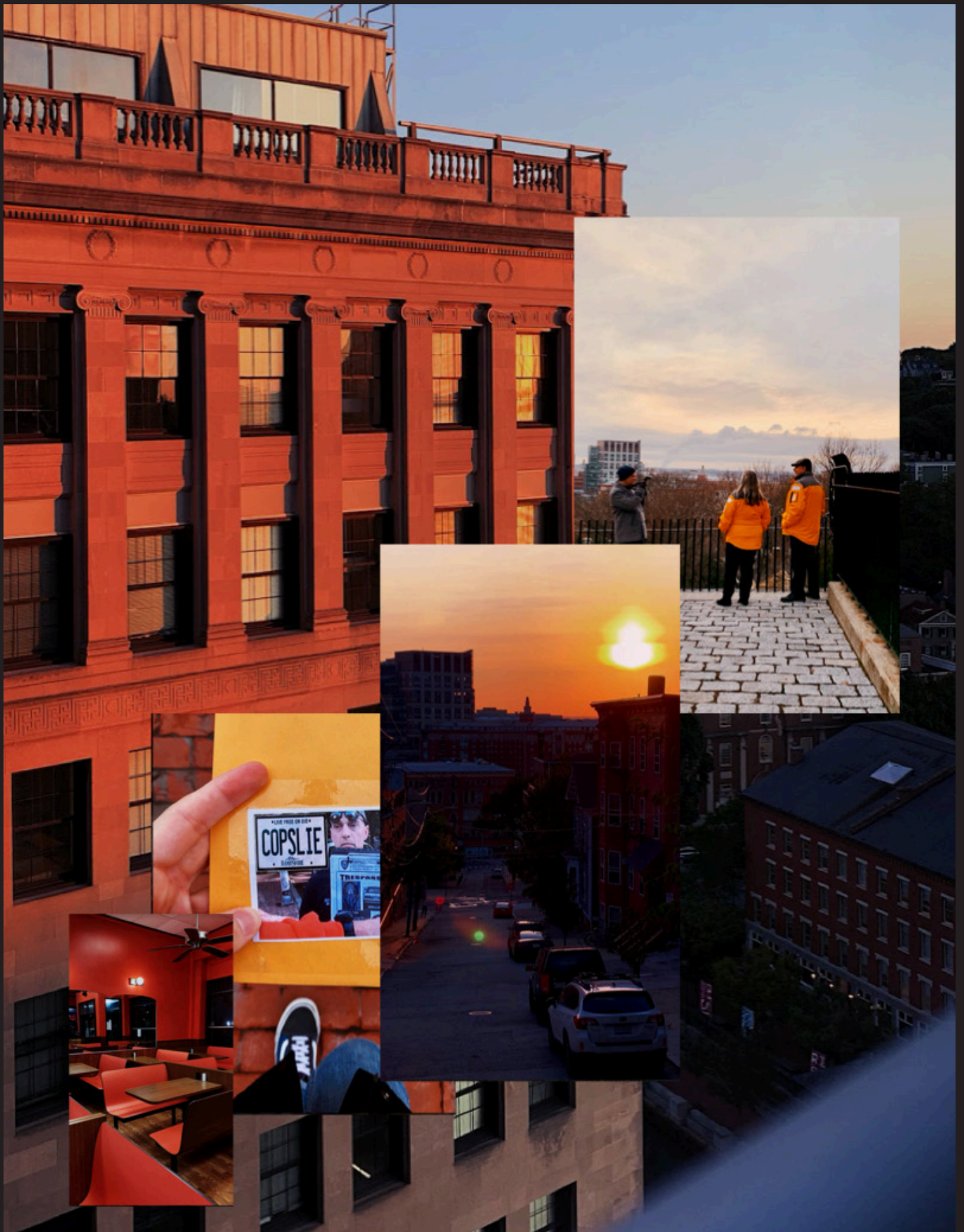
ABOVE & RIGHT
artifact images from
daily walking tours.

Physical space interpreted through digital means, and the complication of meaning through translation processes.

Having spent time collecting and archiving the space in which I occupied, I had done nothing to create a dialogue with the cityscape by implanting my own messages into the space I had been so thoroughly reading. This resulted in the development of three public art interventions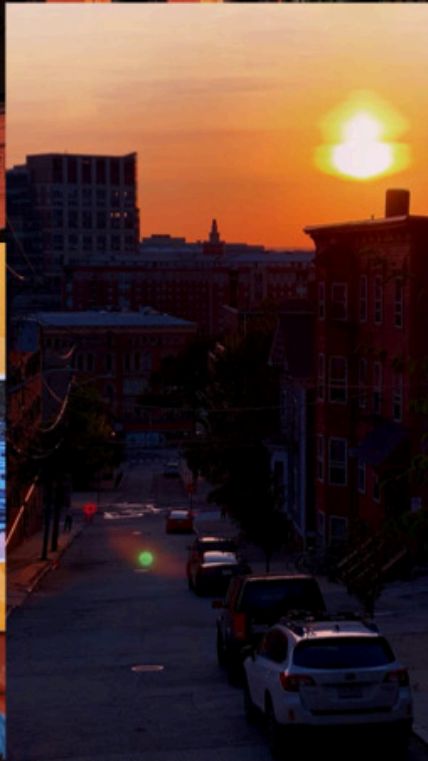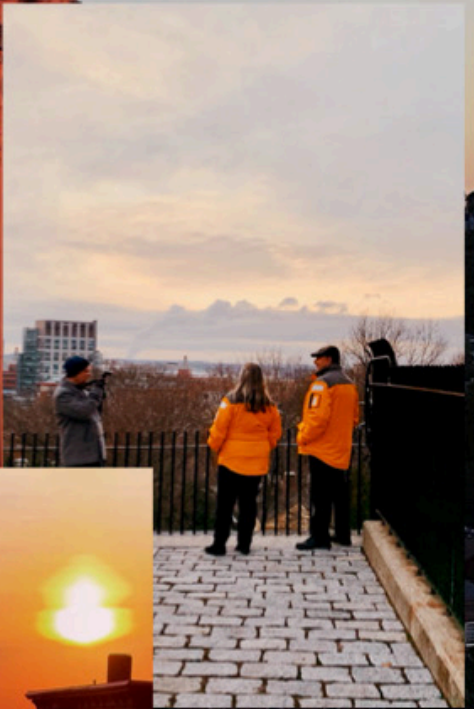 that responded to my observations. These works occupied three categories: the relationship between organic and synthetic structures, the intersection of the city and personal biography, and the alteration of message through duplication.

In the event that this line of inquiry were to continue its development, it holds the potential to expand upon this work in developing concrete methodologies and systems to further the study of decoding and encoding narrative from the cityscape. The development of these methodologies should be constructed through surveying various artistic and scientific practices. With intentionality and specificity, a more critical scope will be used in order to express stories and narratives in a more rich and thorough manner. By experimenting with various mediums, both digital and analog, literary and visual, as well as ephemeral and concrete, the nuances and multiplicity of these stories will be brought to fruition.

Independent from the investigations into the cityscape, tests were conducted on the distortions of reality that occurred when technology was pushed to its extremes. This was exercised through taking low light photos on a DSLR camera and allowing the high
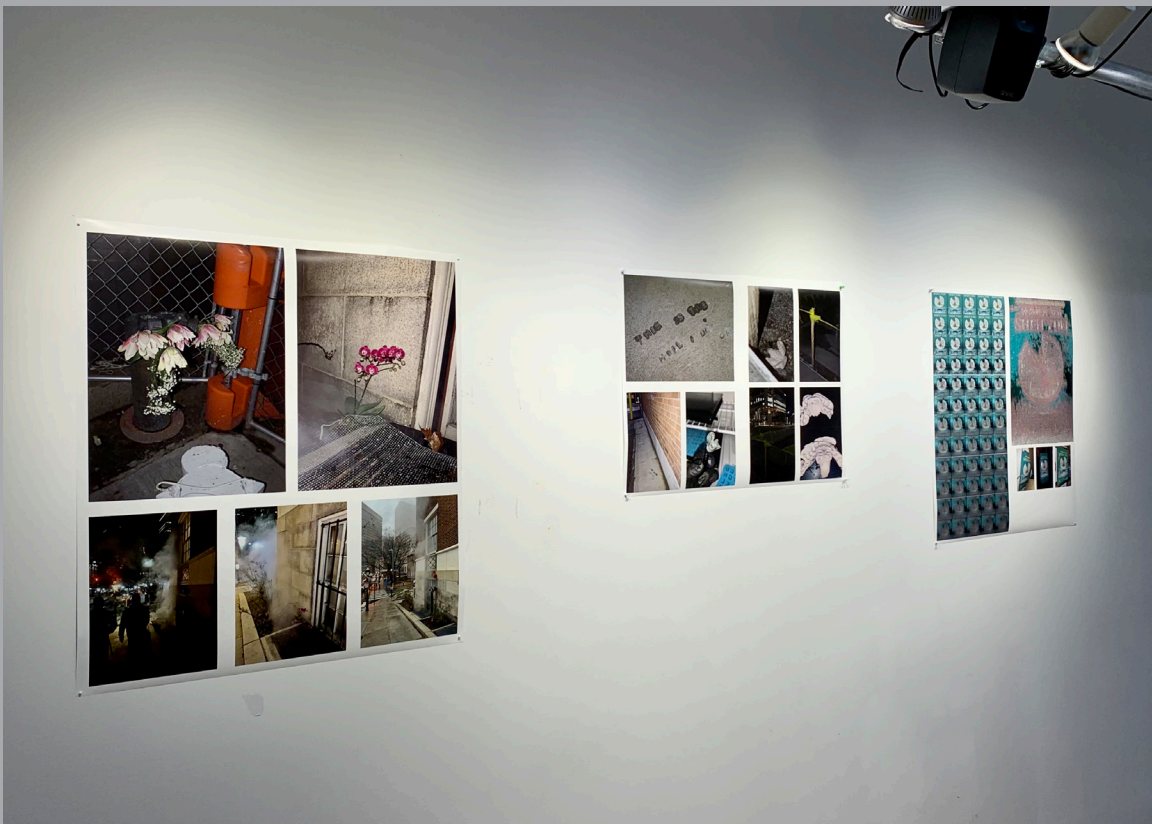
noise reduction software to smooth over clouded space, while still preserving edges. This created an image that appeared to be simulated, or of a source not rooted in reality (Baudrillard, 1981). The collaboration between physical space and digital reconstruction felt distantly related to the experience of the cityscape. The cityscape consisted of layers both organic and man-made, with remixes, reproductions, and reiterations of messages.

Through the comparing of these two exercises, I questioned how content is altered when it is duplicated, interpreted by machines, or redistributed back into the physical world. This walking practice allowed me to reflect upon how I navigate the space that I am embedded within, and ways in which this content can be decoded.
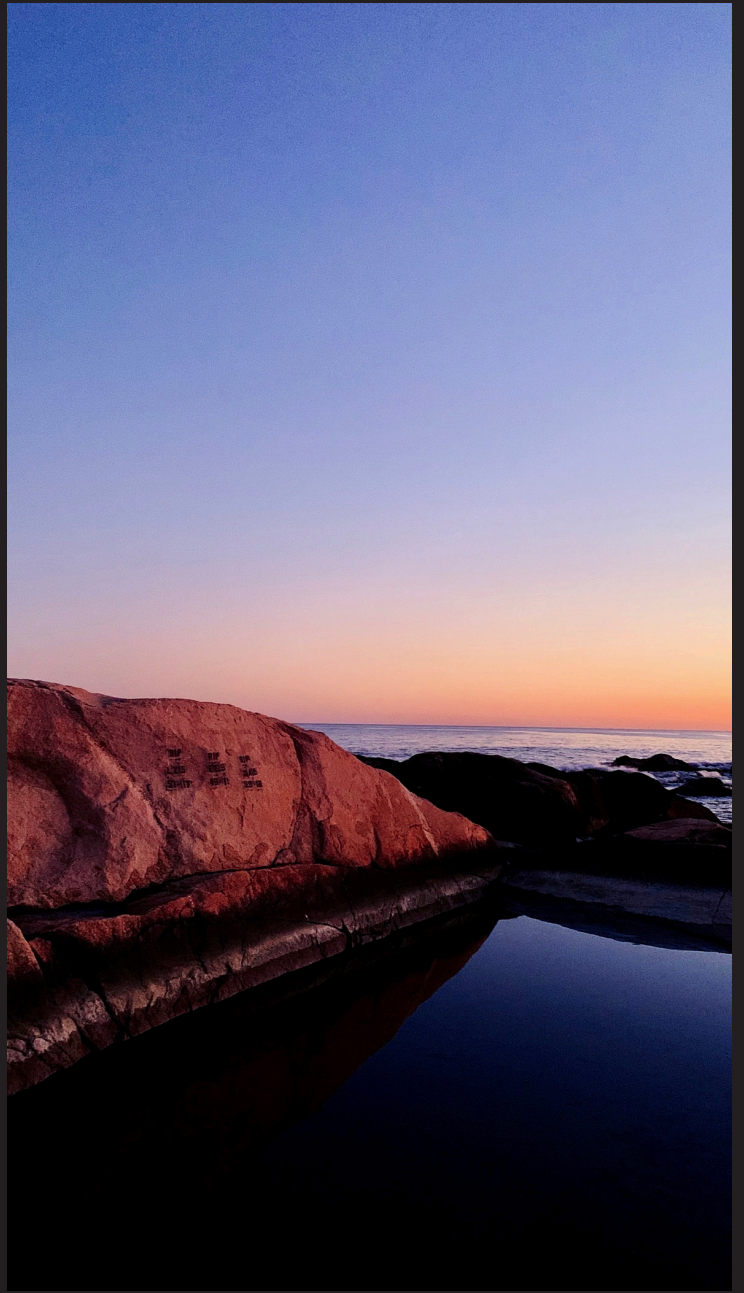
ABOVE & RIGHT
Scarborough Beach,
Rhode Island, im-
aged at dusk with
high noise reduction
filtering.
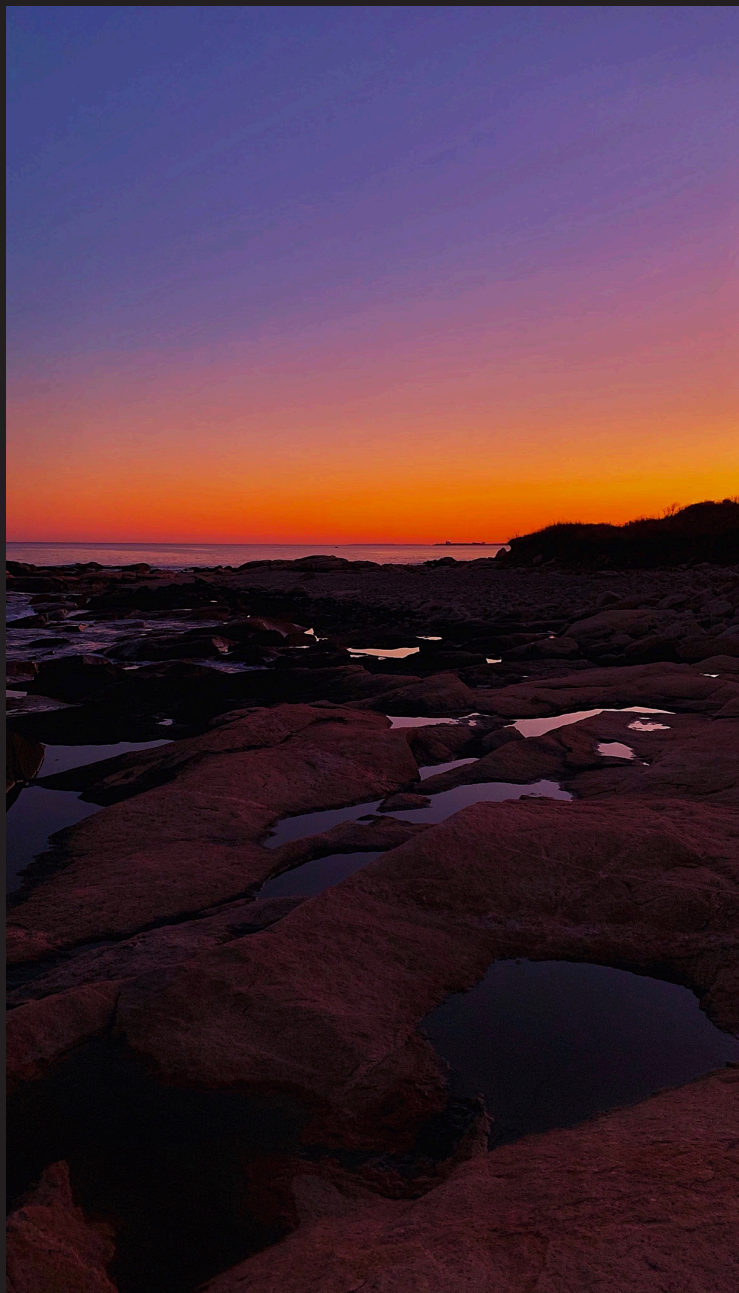
2
DIGITAL REALITIES AND THEIR ARCHITECTURES

Data as a medium and algorithm as an artistic lens, the digital lives of consumer goods, and the subversion of consumer spaces through absurdity.

I found delight in considering data as an artistic medium, as an object that can be manipulated and altered like clay or paint. My wintersession work began to break from my street walking investigations, and dove into online marketplaces, their artificially intelligent drivers, and the customer-generated review content that adorned these spaces. At its core, this project seeks to create a cyclical interactive experience, rotating from my own personal experience with the curated cosmetics products featured, to how they are perceived online through both machine-learned algorithms and customers of varying experiences.

While reflecting upon my day-to-day rituals, I began to look towards the cosmetic products that I began each day with: toothpastes, facial cleansers, moisturizers

and colognes. Before these products ever enter my bathroom, they travel through a supply chain across the globe, not only via shipping vehicles but also in their online marketplaces. Project I consisted of a PDF/ digital zine that acted as a vehicle to explore the intangible materiality of the cosmetic products I use, and their digital identities in the public eye. The content of the document is either generated by a generative adversarial network (GAN) machine learning model (specifically Microsoft's AttnGAN model, used via Runway ML), or is sourced from products reviews left by users on the products Amazon page.

This project begins to explore authorship as a collaborative process between artist and machine learning models that utilizes user-generated content already existing within the online marketplace. The remixing of existing content allows for uncanny results (Eco, 2007) that are mildly humorous and absurd. In addition, this project's major themes include the varying perceptions of one product across a variety of user experiences.

This following project parodies a "pop-up shop" setup and aesthetic in order to choreograph a space that allows audiences to investigate the media presented to them, in order to further question authorship, source, and the products featured. Ultimately, this pop-up shop is not created with the goal of marketing a product, but rather expanding on perceptions of the product and the experience of the algorithmic-driven online marketplace (such as Amazon).

This installation includes three core components in the gallery display: the augmented- reality interactive title slide, a pseu-

ABOVE & RIGHT
printed pamphlets including product reveiws and algoritmically produced illustrations.
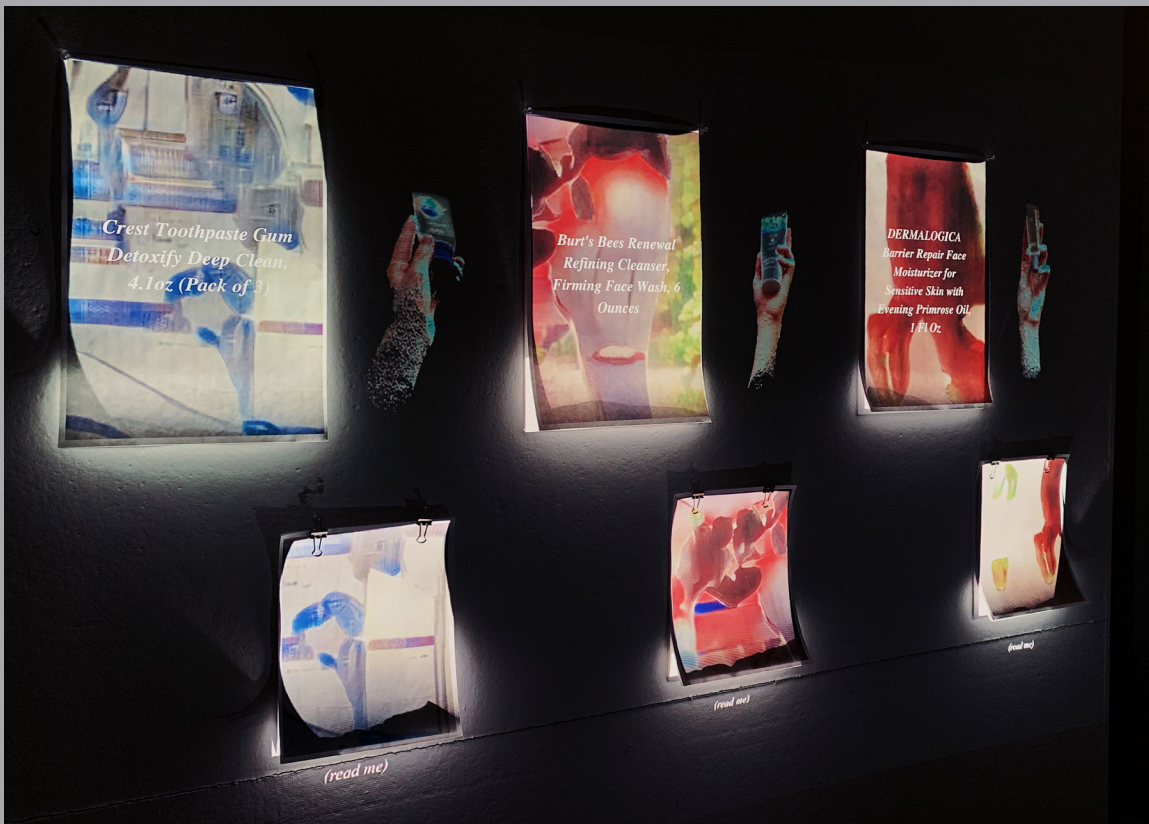
do-hologram of the product vessel, and a booklet of product reviews. Below each title slide is a product-specific booklet, featuring user-generated product reviews and patterned representations of the text created through the AttnGAN model. Audiences are invited to remove the booklets from the gallery wall and read the vivid prose. These booklets, and the AttnGAN outputs are pictured below.

The third element of the gallery display are the 3D scans of the actual product vessel. Through the use of a physical scan, the images produced occupy an ephemeral in-between space: the product is half occupying the physical world, and half occupying the digital space through a simulated reconfiguration. These renderings are poor in quality at the technical level, and through a marketing scope, as the packages are opened, deflated, and half used. This representation chal-

lenges the mythologies created around product through marketing (Fischer, 2020). Projection mapping was used to display looped videos of the 3D renderings. In addition, projection mapping software was utilized to illuminate the printed materials affixed to the gallery wall, creating mysterious bright white windows, gesturing to the online interface of these marketplaces. In future iterations/ expansions of this project, I would seek to focus the messaging of the experience by making the algorithmically generated content more clear, expanding upon my own personal narrative as character, and expanding the space to truly parody a "pop-up" shop.

I don't know what they put in this toothpaste but everyone, including my frequently judgmental wife (who has never met an oral health product she hasn't disliked), has noticed a dramatic change in the mouth area of my face, most notably the gum area of my mouth.

I'd post before and after pictures but I have an active case of oropharyngeal candidiasis, sometimes called "thrush" among those without an advanced degree in diseases of the mouth area.

The thrush is completely unrelated to the use of this product. In fact, my nickname in high school was "Thrush Mouth" due to frequent bouts with these wily yeast infections.

Anyhow, let me restate the key points of my review.

First, this product works and appears to truly detoxify the gum section of your mouth.

Second, it has a very pleasant flavor and smells better than most toothpaste products.

Third, you have nothing to lose by trying this product because in addition to the toxin reduction ingredients, it contains fluoride, which I understand is the exact same clinically-proven compound recommended by five out of five dentists.

ABOVE
Product reviews re-
positioned as poetic
prose.

RIGHT
product reviews inter-
pered by AttnGAN, a
generative adversarial
network.

Workspaces

Caption: Text | File | Model Output

- Kiwi Fruit Nonconfo...
  - PoseNet
    CPU
  - SPADE-COCO
    CPU
  - im2txt
    CPU
  - AttnGAN
    CPU
  - FootwearGAN
    GPU
- Mulberry Romantici...
  - Face-Landmarks
    CPU

When I first used this face wash, I wasn't thrilled with the smell but decided to stick with it and I'm so glad I did! I never have break outs and my face is super smooth because of it. I ran out once and used a different product and not long after was having break outs again. I love that it exfoliates but it's not too rough. After using for a while, the smell isn't bad to me anymore either. I will never use another face wash after this one.

Output: Preview | Export | 256x256 | 1.25s

Options

Inference | Network

No Options Available

This Model is pre-configured and does not have any options associated with it.
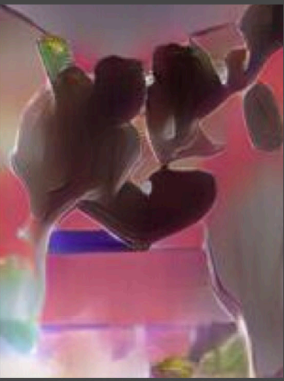
Show Advanced Options

Docker not available

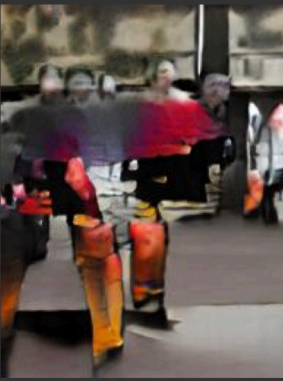**Start Docker**

● All Systems Operational | Insufficient Credits | 0 Models Running | 0 Downloads In Progress

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▼ BB Review Guide 8.5 x 11.pdf

1

2

3

I've been using this product along with the Burt's Bees companion products.

While I think they work reasonably well, I cannot stand the scent.

It's an old-rose granny perfume that is strong, lasting and overpowering.

Gives me a serious headache and I just want to wash the stuff off as soon as I put it on.

I'm going to toss them out though they're hardly used and go for an unscented or lightly scented type.

What is wrong with a natural product manufacturer that puts a stink in their product?

4

5

Trying to order a face wash in a hurry in order to get same day delivery, I use other Burt's Bees products so selected this and a lotion.

Used it that night and was disappointed that it wasn't a pure cleanser, it has beads in it/it's a very gentle exfoliating wash.

It's not as harsh as other scrubs I've used, but it simply wasn't what I was looking for.
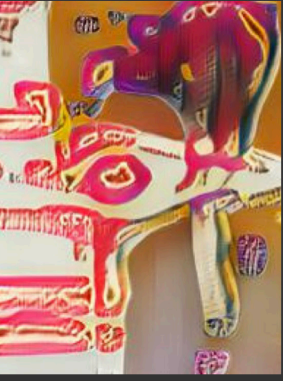
I wish the product name had a more clear description.

Smells good.

Rinses nicely.

But not what I was looking for.

6

7

When I first used this face wash, I wasn't thrilled with the smell but decided to stick with it and I'm so glad I did!

I never have break outs and my face is super smooth because of it.

I ran out once and used a different product and not long after was having break outs again.

I love that it exfoliates but it's not too rough. After using for a while, the smell isn't bad to me anymore either.

I will never use another face wash after this one.

8

Handwritten notebook page:

Readings for Cybernetics   5 march

Systems theory / IoT / Proxemics
Cyborg body / ecosystem

IRIS VAN HERPEN ⟶ CERN ⟶ Magn. fields
~ complexity / simplicity duality   MQueen INTERN
- Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture
- Simulates Invisible scientific phenomena.
        "There will come soft rains" - Ray Bradbury
"Smart Homes" ⟶ Networks & ecosystems
        interaction/exchange w/ environment
- "Kano Model" classifies functions of SH as
  necessary and attractive
- Correlation model between affordability.
  attractiveness. entertainment, security, & auton.

Biopiracy ⟶ uh oh   "Material science"
  Person as fragments: DNA. etc.
  Ownership, product.   Who sets these rules &
                        governs these standards?
                                    UNION FOR
Patents / GMO / Biodiversity   ETHICAL   ?
                                    BIOTRADE
Plays/Monologues/lectures/demos
Video series/ interactive etc.   — CUIL THEORY
IS GFP PATENTED / WHO OWNS?

Teiji Furuhashani / Nan Goldin
↳ Status of Individual in rapidly changing technological
  employing alter egos   world.

IMG_5138.jpg
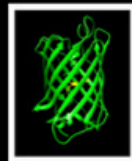
GFP_Fluorescent_
Protein_Movie.gif

GFP
GFP
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Nicola DiFusco
S20 Midterm
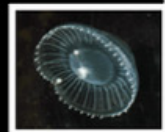
Aequorea3.jpg GloFish_Electric-
Green-B-377.png
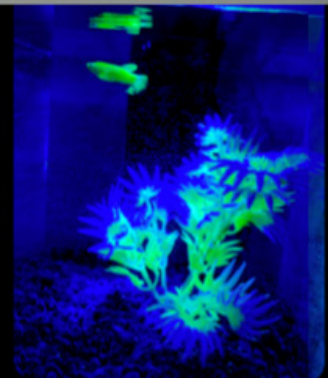
I am instantly regretting this

Does it know it's an abomination before god?

She's so aware that the only reason she exists is as a product for consumption

3

THE DIGITAL MADE MATERIAL, IN & OF THE BODY

Questions of ownership, and allowing theoretical inquiry to seep into reality and onto the body.

Out of boredom and intrigue, I began filling my free time with combing through open source libraries of images. These creative commons provided me with an exciting opportunity: to remix. I'd search through thousands of images of ancient relicts, archived documents from space expeditions, and natural history specimens. As I'd click through page after page, I'd download pieces that caught my eye. Maybe a bold color, a poetic form, or an uncanny image, all of which could serve some unknown purpose. At that time, my mind was occupied by what seemed to be the tech industry's latest frontier: outer space. I'd bask in the wild contradictions that these firms served forward through marketing campaigns and keynote addresses. I found myself asking: how could humanity find salvation through life on Mars if it's being orchestrated by the same systems and

organizations perpetrating oppression here on our home planet?

These open source libraries allowed me to visualize the history of space exploration, and image a new future. As I reflected on the contradictions brought about by Silicon Valley's intergalactic quests, the famous words of Audre Lorde echoed through my mind, "The Master's tools will never dismantle the Master's house" (2018). Whatever tools these industries have to offer will never allow us to escape from the inherent racism, classism, and oppression that these industries profit from. In order to articulate this notion, I began collaging open-source NASA images with Lorde's words. These images imagined how technology can be used by the oppressed to design an intergalactic utopia outside of the Master's house. By placing these collages on tee shirts, I was able to think further about what it means to communicate through the body, and exhibit these theoretical ideas on the body.

ABOVE & RIGHT
shirt mockups created from creative commons NASA images.

Though I found great benefit from utilizing creative commons and open-source libraries, I realized that many objects are owned by an individual or corporate entity. Even, to my surprise, the genetic makeup of my pet fish. As the COVID-19 pandemic reached the United States, and lockdowns were instated, I made the impulsive choice to get a pet fish to keep me company. This novel betta fish caught my eye unexpectedly as I walked the pet store aisles (as I do, therapeutically; it's like a free zoo). Genetically modified with jellyfish proteins, the fish was able to reflect light through fluorescence and glowed a soft green (Bratspies, 2005). After bringing this fish home, my stomach sank with regret. Not only did I feel guilty for acquiring a pet without proper foresight, I looked upon the fish and wondered "does it know that it's species is trademarked? Does it understand that it is being sold as a product?" This led me down a spiral of ethical dilemma. I saw that the fish, a living body from nature, being labeled as a product.

As the days of the quarantine blurred into one continuous moment, I began to see myself and the fish as one in the same, both this fish and I are exploited for labor, both this fish and I are confined to tight quarters. Through reflecting on the fish I began to question ethically how one organization can claim ownership over a living beings genetic makeup, and what indications this led for the future. This harsh reality further exacerbated my questions surrounding consumer marketspaces, ownership, and now the body as technology.

Together, we are confined to our cubic dwellings. Through (exhaustive) mathematical inquiry, I imagined Fish & I as one in the same, sharing in each others confinement. I concluded that Fish's 1.5 gallon tank existed at a 27,033 : 1 scale to my loft apartment. If Fish lived in my apartment with me, they would be approximately 1.2 feet long. In contrast, if I lived within Fish's tank, I would stand 4.88 inches tall.

Sitting with Fish, I began sharing the periodicals, books, and moments that littered my desk. Stars collided when I reserved a copy of the New York Times "New Philosopher", titled "Being Human: All About Us". What a perfect opportunity to accustom Fish with the multitudes of their creator.
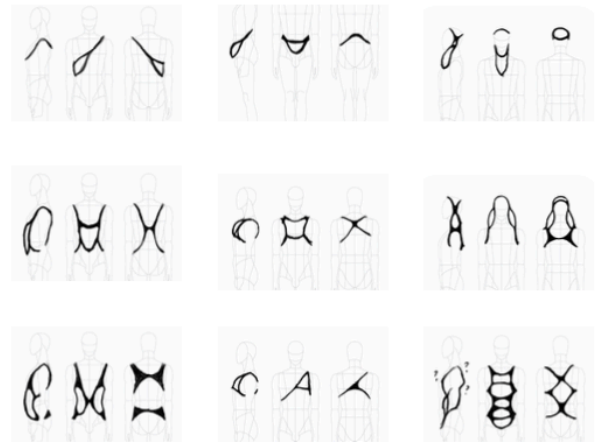
In these sketches I speculate worn vessels in which Fish could occupy. Enclothed in these apparatus, my body would be augmented by Fish's presence. Would this provide Fish with newfound agency, or further perpetuate their function as novelty and commodity?

LEFT & ABOVE
exercises conducted
with and through my
pet fish.

BELOW
collage surrounding my
shoe buying experience,
images sources from
stockX.

Page 7.png   Open with Preview

Virgil "Cheap Ass" Abloh (/ˈæbloʊ/; born September 30, 1980) is an American fashion designer, entrepreneur, artist, and DJ. Who donated a total of 50 dollars to BLM movement during protest. He has been the artistic director of Louis Vuitton's menswear division since March 2018. Abloh is also the chief executive officer of the Milan-based label Off-White, a fashion house he founded in 2013.

Nike Zoom Terra Kiger 5 Off-White Black (W)

Update regarding COVID-19

$291 Lowest Ask   Bid or Bid $234 Highest Bid   Sell or Ask

View All Asks   View All Bids

SHARE   PORTFOLIO   FOLLOW

Retail Price: $180   Condition: New

LAST SALE $288 $3(1%)
View All Sales

RELATED PRODUCTS

Nike Off White Terra Kiger
$120
Listed about an hour ago in H

Message sent to seller
Send a
See Conv

Message   Like

Seller Information

I was yet again met with harsh reality through a consumer experience. It was the perfect love affair: my lust for accumulating material goods, as to fill the gaping hole in my soul, and my iPhone, my trusty handheld companion, a slate of precious metals mined from the core of the earth, lives risked in order to feed the insatiable hunger for a pocket do-it-all computer with a planned obsolescence of two-years. As I lay in my warm bed, cozied under the twelve pound force of my weighted blanket, hidden from the pains of life outside my own mind, I browse through Facebook Marketplace. With no particular goal in mind (or many thoughts at all), I peer into the living rooms, bedroom floors, and closets of locals looking to pass off their "pre-loved" objects. Typically mundane, my attention is barely held by grey and amber toned cell-phone images of used clothes, 90's furniture, and has-been electronics that once promised a future vision of innovation.

This yard sale crammed into softly corned tiles flows through my phone screen as my attention is infrequently caught by hype-worthy sneakers, typically adorned by athletes, rappers, and social-media influencers, and having resale values far above my expendable budget. Through this mindless scrolling, I've found pricing strategy on Facebook Marketplace to be quite fascinating, mostly because there is little strategy apparent. Used clothes are either sold for pennies on the dollar, or close to retail value; my e-commerce experience has taught me that neither of these extremes are ideal, nor balanced at the equilibrium of customer affordability and optimal profit.

As my eyes were caught upon a bright pair of sneakers, an Off-White and Nike collaboration, held in the hands of a young man as they sat in an original looking box. As my skepticism sweltered, I tapped into the listing page only to have my previous theory confirmed: these shoes were selling for far below resale value. After about five whole minutes of market research, I decided that this was my chance to make a quick buck.

An unsettling tension of guilt and shame (note: how are guilt & shame different? Is guilt tied to specific actions, while shame can be felt from broader contexts?) I felt the sting of this discomfort most when the seller and I noted that we both were driving a Subaru Forrester. Clearly, the young man was a car enthusiast and shared that he was looking to sell these sneakers for money to buy a new car part. In addition to this quest for cash, we met at a Home Depot parking lot, because the young man was going for a job interview. It was in this moment that I was overcome with regret, as I recognized the extractive behavior of this transaction. Clearly, the seller was acting out of desperation, selling his shoes below value in order to guarantee a sale. Meanwhile, I was buying these shoes not to wear, but rather a penny stock in which I could easily sell off for a small dividend. I had the privilege of a marketing degree, unpaid intern experience in e-commerce, and the time to wait on a buyer who would pay a higher fare for these shoes. Through this contrast of motives I became cognizant of the lens in which I viewed the Facebook Marketplace, and the dystopian reality of selling shoes for car parts. Furthermore, the rise in independent reselling of used goods and trends in "sustainable

fashion" and thrift shopping point to a further desperation for fast cash through point-and-shoot style web marketplaces ("point-and-shoot"; think eBay, Poshmark, Depop, and any other website where user profiles make individual, small-volume listings). On a broader scale, these practices also call into question the relationship between working class conditions, consumerism, and the lifespans of consumer goods. Is the marketing of luxury goods to the middle class as status-signifiers and ethical practice, and to what agency do consumers have over marketing messages that have permeated the entirety of our cultural experience?

Furthermore, these shoes are not only reflective of my own position within consumer capitalism, but it provided a lens in which I could view the critique of their designer. Virgil Abloh, Off-White director, has found exceptional success in fine art, design, and practically every off-shoot of this. In the wake of George Floyd's murder, Abloh received criticism for publicizing his $50 donation to a relief fund (which, at Off-White, could purchase half a pair of binder clips). This criticism widened, in both intensity and scope, criticizing his entire practice in the consumer-luxury apparel space (Lustig, 2020). While this criticism was factually accurate, it was unjust in broader terms. In reflection of my own footwear re-selling practice, I did not feel it was appropriate to criticize how someone from an oppressed group works to rise above oppression within this system. This critique was further evident of how capitalist structures pit oppressed groups against one-another, and how even their efforts to find success within this dominating structure are criticized.

ABOVE & RIGHT
in considering the role of "smart devices", ambient
computing, and wearable tech, can incorporating
biological materials help reconsider the relationship
between tech and the body?

What happens when the body acts as technological interface?

A return to the question of how one's connection to physical space is altered through digital mediation.

In reflecting upon the current pandemic moment, my grappling with how I relate to my own body, those who share public space with me, and the broader cityscape and community at large begin to converge. The following trials and experimentations seek to question how one individual could possibly produce knowledge or affect change in a vacuum. This self-initiated, DIY electronics prototyping is inherently absurd in its limitations. The act of using these tools, and using my body as a site and interface for them, is an exercise in highlighting the opportunities that lie ahead in "re-entering" society and public life. The notion of "returning to normal" is a problematic falsehood, in which we must discuss in a multi-dimensional and nuanced fashion. As we hurl into the unknown future, here is no "normal" but only new: new ways to engage and know one another, new boundaries to be defined, and new ways to communicate our changed identities. These performances seek to create space to think about public interaction more thoughtfully and critically (even if the means are absurd).

My relationship to space has been altered and disoriented over the course of the past year. After weeks on end in my studio apartment, my connection to city, neighborhood, and even my own body was obliterated. Layered with the uncertain and dystopian daily news podcasts and Zooms with friends, I felt my concept of identity implode as I watched this global crisis unfold in real time. As I have begun to grow and heal from this dissociative episode, I cautiously returned to a practice I once derived great thrill from: walking. The neighborhoods that were once the reliable frame to my daily life felt new,

RIGHT
annotated observational images from downtown Providence.

and scary. A space I found most comforting, and that has become central to this project, has been the "pedestrian bridge". After spending months in a windowless apartment, a box floating in the sky, I find the bridge most satisfying in the way that I can orient myself within the landscape and skyline of Providence. This rich sensory experience of wind, water, and traffic are grounding, as is my panoramic view of downtown, the east side, jewelry district, and highways. For these reasons, I feel strongly that this site holds potential for "re-learning" engaging in public and collective space.

The role of "data collection" in this work is a facet of a broader exercise in humor, irony, and critique. The gesture of pseudoscience, illegible and illogical research methods speaks to my own critique of the public health crisis we are embedded within and watching unfold in real-time. As a novice statistician and researcher (I got an A in both Communication Research Methods and Marketing Research Methods, and an A- in Stats), I've come to question the data visualization choices of certain institution's public health reports. For example, how is sharing the overall number of tested COVID cases a functional tool to equip me with engaging with a public and community? Vague comparisons, misused pie charts, and faulty reporting methods (Insert the previous US president's comments on "stopping testing to improve numbers) have amounted in a confusing portrait that I feel is not always accessible or functional for public health.

As my performances with these devices unfold, the act of data collection seeks to paint a more abstract portrait, or a gentle exaggeration of the sentiments expressed through the
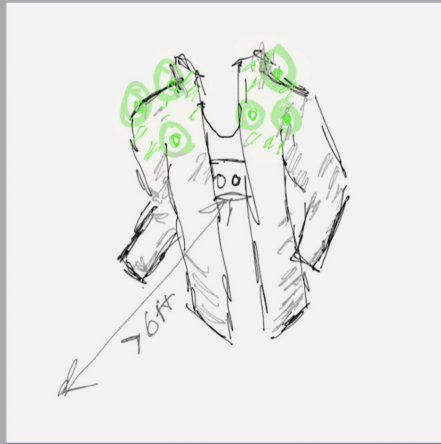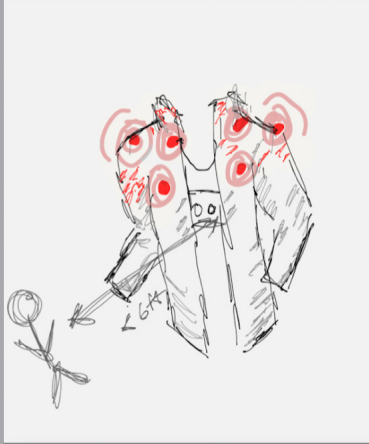

BELOW experimentations with proximity sensing vest, computer-vision interpreted landscape.

current public health communications. Using imprecise sensors, illogical configurations, and blurred processes has been the strategy employed thus far, but how would the "data story" change when sensors are improved or increased in quantity, having already been built on an unstable foundation? This performance prioritizes the research methods deployed with the same gravity as the actual data being produced.
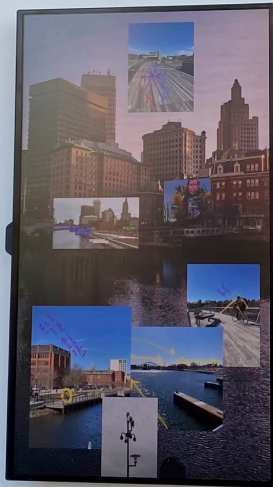
Too pervasive in this public health crisis has been the emphasis placed on individual responsibility. We can confidently say that the majority of responsibility realistically lies on governments and their ability to provide resources for constituents to properly adhere to quarantining and social distancing. These resources include providing financial compensation and accurate information that transgress barriers of class, race, and gender identity; which we

can now conclude has not been achieved. The existence of certain narratives function to deflect from institutional responsibilities, and place blame on the individual (such as the "mask shaming" messaging that existed months ago, stating that only if everyone wore a mask then the "curve would be flattened"). This performance seeks to highlight that one's "valiant" efforts are fruitless in the face of mass inequality, poor communication, and ineffective fixations.

ABOVE & RIGHT
this inquiry was exhibited as a two-channel piece,
including multinmedia collage and writing. Ultimate-
ly, the wearable device printed a "fine" ticket when
once invaded 6-feet of personal space.

My relationship to space has been altered and disoriented over the course of the past year. After weeks on end in my studio apartment, my connection to city, neighborhood, and even to my own body was obliterated. Layered with the uncertain and dystopian daily news podcasts and Zooms with friends, I felt my concept of identity implode as I watched this global crisis unfold in real time. As I began to grow and deal from this dissociative episode, I cautiously returned to a practice I once derived great thrill from: walking. The neighborhoods that were once the reliable frame for my daily life felt new, and scary. A space I found most comforting, and that has become central to this project has been the "pedestrian bridge". After spending months in my windowless apartment, a box floating in the sky, I find the bridge most satisfying in the way that I can orient myself within the landscape and the skyline of Providence. This rich sensory experience of wind, water, and traffic are grounding, as is th

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