

## Undergraduate Research Symposium May 19, 2017 Mary Gates Hall

### Online Proceedings

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#### SESSION 1E

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##### **EXCITATIONS: ART AND VISUALITY**

*Session Moderator: Rebecca Cummins, School of Art + Art History + Design*  
**MGH 238**  
12:30 PM to 2:15 PM

\* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

##### **Surface Thought: Attention, Vision, and the Materiality of Alternative Process Photography**

*Daniel Glynn, Senior, Art (Photography)*  
*Mentor: Phillip Thurtle, Comparative History of Ideas*

This paper investigates 19th Century photographic processes, considering how attention and vision were structured by these particular modes of representation. Following Vilém Flusser's posit that photography constituted a rupture in ontological thought, this essay seeks to demonstrate how the representational claims of early analog photographs are distinctly related to specificities of granularities and densities of emulsion, applied to the picture plane. Materializing Michel Foucault's power/knowledge discourse in concert with Jacques Derrida's semiotic theory, this essay seeks to articulate the ethical implication of various syntaxes that regulate photographic representations in an attempt to formulate the distinctive ways in which these modes of representation order, distinguish, and structure meaning. Employing the writings of Jonathan Crary surrounding the changing visual order of the 19th Century in conjecture with experimental phenomenology that investigates the ways in which visual perception and appearance are grounded in cognition and neural processing, in this essay I argue that the relationship between the stress of the optic that photography represents, the materiality of the image's surface, and its signification and eventually its ability to produce meaning represents a relationship which is not arbitrary.

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##### **Rediscovering Play: Furthering Redefinition and Engaging in Observation**

*Maria Santas (Maria) Cage, Senior, Early Childhood & Family Studies*  
*Mary Gates Scholar*  
*Mentor: Phillip Thurtle, Comparative History of Ideas*  
*Mentor: Kathleen Meeker, College of Education*

Play is considered central to early childhood development, and has been an activity fascinating to me personally as a childcare provider of many years. Seminal scholars Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky still inform much of the current understanding and practice of play as a process, or tool, aiding the linear progression toward adulthood. Yet, my own experiences in returning to academia later in life have unexpectedly ushered me into exploring the intricacies and implications of play as an adult learner, and in cultivating a framework for play that is less linear, and more holistic. My interdisciplinary research began in the 2016 Summer Institute in the Arts and Humanities, and proposes four interconnected components of play (mindfulness, cues of resonance, vitality, and metastability), reframing play as a *capacity* of attending to possibility, rather than an activity or behavior of childhood. My current research expands upon my assertions of play, designing and implementing a qualitative pilot study exploring if these elements of play are present during interactions of play, and how they manifest in contexts of adult-child interaction. Situating my understanding of play in the scholarly literature of both Early Childhood Development and Anthropological perspectives grounds my theory and expands my assertions to stretch beyond a singular approach. Through observation of adult-child interactions in existing video footage I seek to test the veracity of play as a mindset, and analyze interpersonal contexts play happens within. The broader implications of my assertions of play may offer the reframing of playfulness as an important tool for adults as facilitators, and proponents of

play, across childhood learning environments. While play itself is a highly studied activity, I challenge theoretical perceptions of play in the hopes of better supporting playful minds across the early years of human development.

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#### **Economy of Terror: It was the Gaze that Killed**

*Jess Jiwon (Jess) Kim, Senior, English*  
*Mentor: Phillip Thurtle, Comparative History of Ideas*

In the video installation, "IT WAS THE GAZE THAT KILLED", "illusion-building" exists in the overlaid, rendered drone footage of Afghanistan and my own iPhone footage of 20-something-year-old friends in clubs. The image of bodies in Afghanistan and in clubs in San Francisco and London captured under surveillance by the "all-seeing eye" of the drone and iPhone allows us question whether the gaze that kills is more familiar to us than we think. We live in a state where there is a need to redefine economy of terror as materiality of unmanned aerial vehicles paint a new landscape of violence. The drone is an "all-seeing eye" that inflicts violence through the act of seeing. It is important to understand the process of seeing the Real that is fixed through its physicality of existence with it "having a foundation in fact." It is through the act of seeing the real (bodies) that destabilizes the fixity of the Real. Thus, the Real is the wound caused by the "all-seeing eye" as it inflicts violence through its materiality inherently embodied by the drone that allows it to see (nose camera, multi-spectral targeting system). In this particular distance that is created in the process of seeing between the drone and the wound of the bodies, "illusion-building" takes place in order to anticipate the pain. The process of "illusion-building" is necessary as this reduces the distance between the drone and the wound inflicted by its gaze. As a result, anticipation of pain emerges from this particular process of "illusion-building." This anticipation of pain is what re-defines terror, as it exists within economy of terror.

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#### **Spiritual Vinyl Spectrographs**

*Alexis M. (Alexis) Neumann, Junior, American Music, Comparative History of Ideas*  
*Mentor: Joel Ong, Department of Computational Arts*  
*Mentor: Phillip Thurtle, Comparative History of Ideas*

Frequencies are heard vibrating inside of our minds, bodies and souls, and these sensations influence spiritual experiences of the world. My project visualizes the religious experiences of sound by dripping paint onto vinyl records in order to illustrate the beauty and extrasensory splendor of religious sounds. The introduction of audio recording gives religious music new implications and availability because the religious practitioners do not need to be physically present to engage in the sound. Some argue that this makes spirituality more present throughout our every day lives, whereas others reason that the novelty and intimacy of live performance in religious settings is more powerful, and that this experience is often lost because of the convenience of recordings. By creating a physical mixed media spectrograph of the frequencies of the recorded religious music, my work intends to visualize the aural, sensorial experience of the religious practitioner. Religious artwork that highlights the divine, beatific aspects of sound and music encourages respect and appreciation of the charm of other religions and promotes open-mindedness because there is a similar yet unique beauty in each auditory experience of these spiritual sounds.

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## SESSION 2C

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### USING SPECULATION, POETICS, AND ART TO UNDERSTAND BIOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS

*Session Moderator: Phillip Thurtle, Comparative History of Ideas*  
**MGH 231**  
3:30 PM to 5:15 PM

\* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

### **Noise Pollution Effects on Whales**

*Viviana Carolina (Viviana) Castillo Contreras, Senior,  
Oceanography*

*Mary Gates Scholar*

*Mentor: Phillip Thurtle, Comparative History of Ideas*

*Mentor: Rebecca Cummins, School of Art + Art History +  
Design*

*Mentor: Tyler Fox, Human Centered Design & Engineering,  
College of Engineering, UW*

*Mentor: Joel Ong*

What happens when the form in which whales communicate, locate food and find each other, is clouded by large ships, sonar technology and increased ice cracking noise in their environments? This presentation considers what the world of whales looks like beneath the ocean. I address this by taking a closer look at the auditory world of whales as a direct result of the lack of visual abilities due to limited light. I have focused on the chaos whales feel as a result of noise inserted within the depths of the ocean. With an increase in technological advances we see an increase in the number of ships and consequently of noise in the ocean. Underwater noise pollution is also attributed to ice fractures and collisions. These events do not occur at one singular time, they occur simultaneously for unknown periods of time and unpredictable areas. Understanding how animals feel and what they think is a difficult task, but we can better understand them by taking a closer look at their behaviors as the noise in the ocean becomes more abundant. My intention is that I will be able to formulate the chaos heard underwater into a humanized perspective and begin to understand these creatures as the hearing, feeling mammals they are.

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**MGH 231**

*3:30 PM to 5:15 PM*

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#### **Data Day: Mindful Tracking of Changes in Emotions**

*Gerlene Ragsac, Senior, Comparative History of Ideas*

*Mary Gates Scholar*

*Mentor: Phillip Thurtle, Comparative History of Ideas*

*Mentor: Rebecca Cummins, School of Art + Art History +  
Design*

*Mentor: Tyler Fox, Human Centered Design & Engineering,  
College of Engineering, UW*

*Mentor: Joel Ong*

I view energy as strongly intertwined with emotions, and that they are powerful forces that fluctuate and influence decisions. Thus, I chose to track instances where I felt a change in emotion in conjunction with its duration, what thought caused it to emerge, and if there was an attempt to deliberately shift moods. By developing my own codes and keys, I was able to monitor these fairly accurately on paper. However, I wanted to present this data in ways that differed from “traditional” portrayals of information. Hence, I used yarn and glitter in glass bottles to mimic bar graphs and liquid samples, respectively. These materials also served to emphasize the therapeutic nature within my project. The ideas of tracking something and its presentation were heavily inspired by duration exercises, which were done as assignments for the Summer Institute in the Arts & Humanities 2016, as well as Dear Data. The former required us to keep track of the passage of time for a minute, an hour, and 24 hours; the latter was a collaboration between Giorgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec where they exchanged weekly postcards over the course of one year. Each week’s postcard included a theme of what they would both monitor in their daily life, a visual representation of the data they collected, and a key to decipher the image. Initially, my desire for this project was to encourage others to engage in mindful practices in order to experience the benefits it may have in their everyday life. However, by making this project deeply intertwined with something so personal as emotions, I also hope to challenge people to contemplate the relationship between emotions and data and the emphasis placed on pursuing objective results.

## **POSTER SESSION 3**

**Commons West, Easel 39**

*2:30 PM to 4:00 PM*

#### **The Sound of Light: Transduction as a Way of Knowing**

*Nathan Christopher Mahr, Senior, Comparative History of  
Ideas*

*Mary Gates Scholar*

*Mentor: Tyler Fox, Human Centered Design & Engineering,  
College of Engineering, UW*

*Mentor: Phillip Thurtle, Comparative History of Ideas*

*Mentor: Rebecca Cummins, School of Art + Art History +  
Design*

*Mentor: Joel Ong, Department of Computational Arts*

What would it mean to be able to hear light? How could this new perspective on light illuminate the fundamental intricacies of light energy? In Gilbert Simondon’s musings on individuation he argues that the individual is never given in advance but is constantly coming into being through a process of interacting with its milieu and realizing potentials out of huge pool of possibilities. This work uses Simondon’s focus on individuation and life as a never ending process of development to understand how energy exists through a sim-

ilar process of change and potentials. Utilizing solar panels hacked into speakers, this installation seeks to employ the construction of a new relationship to light as a methodology for thinking about how energy emerges. The solar panels in the installation transduce light energy into electrical energy which is then fed into speakers for the participants to hear. Energy is most essentially a process of change, disruption and movement. It demonstrates to us the myriad of potentials which lie within and between us and energy. Through the use of transduction of energies this installation allows us to peer into the minutiae of our relationship with energy and begin to conceive of how we absorb, alter, collaborate and connect with it on a daily basis.

the notion that observation is, as Gilles Deleuze said, “a flow of flows”, a way of playing with delimitation of relations that may capture traces of the energetically-excessive phenomena of the world. My installation, a 3d-rendered video reflected by glass into a projection feedback circuit, is an attempt to visualize the barely visible, and under-appreciated, depth of perception. I’ve tried to craft a truly dynamic moving picture; one that radiates its energetic excess, beckoning the viewer to consider what complex dimensionality lay in the gulf between the grid lines superimposed by language (the threshold at which the descriptive accuracy about sensory content becomes too broad) and the unspeakable depths of phenomenological experience.

## VISUAL ARTS & DESIGN SHOWCASE

### Odegaard Undergraduate Library

3:00 PM to 4:30 PM

\* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

#### Excesses

*Kevin Middleton, Senior, Comparative History of Ideas*

*Mary Gates Scholar*

*Mentor: Joel Ong*

*Mentor: Phillip Thurtle, Comparative History of Ideas*

*Mentor: Tyler Fox, Human Centered Design & Engineering, College of Engineering, UW*

*Mentor: Rebecca Cummins, School of Art + Art History + Design*

Can the fullness of conscious experience be communicated? Can one trace the diffuse paths of energy traversing through and beyond their perceptive faculties? In other words, can one render intelligible that which they cannot fully comprehend, and if not, of what value is the cultivation of mind? These questions are the fervent mysteries at the center of my research and artistic work investigating how our perception of depth orients us in the world. The depth I refer to is not simply distance between points in space, it is the depth of one’s psychological appreciation that all phenomena is a confluence of interrelating entities that can be labelled neither subject nor object. In my research thus far, I am drawn to theories of “speculative realism”, a branch of epistemology that attempts to construct less ‘certain’ theoretical frameworks by which to understand how organisms both human and nonhuman interact in nature. Steven Shaviro’s *Discognition*, for instance, compellingly argues a history of misplaced certainty in neuroscientific explanations of consciousness and the difficulty of communicating “qualia”, or qualitative experience. He lays out a theory wherein experiential dimension is of indefinite depth, incommunicable at its core, and thus translatable only through a distance, requiring faith that one’s words can accurately convey the nuances of whatever experience unfolds before them. I endeavor with my art to express