

RACHEL STUCKEY

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*GOOD DAYS & BAD DAYS ON THE INTERNET*



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WOMEN & THEIR WORK

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NOVEMBER 18 – JANUARY 11, 2018

AUSTIN, TEXAS





*eChips*, 2017, (installation view), three-channel HD video for iMacs, looping

Cover Panel: *bitrot* (video still), 2017, HD video, 19.5 minutes

## GOOD DAYS & BAD DAYS ON THE INTERNET

*Run Diagnostics?: Rachel Stuckey Gives Our Relationship to Technology a Check-Up*

Are you technophobic? Technophilic? Sick and tired of these technobinaries? Whatever the case, Rachel Stuckey has the cure for what techno-ails you. In *Good Days & Bad Days on the Internet*, she diagnoses the false dichotomies often placed on technology and identifies their associated symptoms: cravings for stimulation, concurrent idolatry and neglect of fragile devices, and passive relationships with murky corporations. Deftly maneuvering between a broad range of new and old media, Stuckey rejects simple binary interpretations and instead reveals the messy reality of technology as *pharmakon*, a paradoxical Greek term which can be translated to mean both “poison” and “cure”—simultaneously harming, helping, and whatever happens in between.

Upon entering the exhibition, visitors are first asked to evaluate their day. A translucent hot pink acrylic sign mounted on a microcomputer asks if they are “Having a...” “GOOD DAY” or “BAD DAY,” each with a corresponding button. Once a visitor has responded with a satisfying click, they can view an auto-generated tweet resulting from their selection on the piece’s associated Twitter account @baddaysgooddays, displayed on a nearby iPad. The account pulls public tweets which mention technology alongside the hashtags #awesomeday, #ftw, #worstdayever, or #fml, and posts one which expresses either a positive or negative sentiment based on the visitor’s input. A visitor having a bad day, for example, triggered the tweet “Life is over as I know it. My mom just joined Instagram.” Just as a doctor’s visit may require filling out self-evaluation forms or rating scales—the *FACES Pain Rating Scale* comes to mind here, with which patients are asked to rate their

pain on a scale of six faces (proto-emoji?) ranging from smiling indicating “No Hurt” to weeping indicating “Hurts Worst”—participation in Stuckey’s work requires visitors to take a moment to self-reflect on their present experience and boil it down to a discrete feeling. Through this exercise, visitors not only may become more attuned to their #currentmood, but also have the opportunity to find shared connections with others through their Twitter proxies. Stuckey highlights how technological experiences are often reduced to oversimplifications such as “good” or “bad” by tying the kind of day that visitors are having to the technology-inflected days of Twitter users.

The exhibition continues through a kind of exposure therapy, with Stuckey addressing the feels and anxieties around a wide array of technologies by bringing their surrounding practices to light. After their self-evaluation, visitors proceed into the exhibition toward three iMac computers awash in soft pink light. The videos playing on these computers form the three-channel piece *eClips*; they are comprised of segments sourced from YouTube subgenres such as makeup tutorials, crystal collections, or slime videos, which Stuckey has thoughtfully combined and manipulated into conversation with one another, despite their usual existence in YouTube niches. Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) videos, for example, occupy a particular online space. The creators of these videos attempt to induce euphoric physiological sensations in viewers by using sensory (usually auditory) triggers such as whispers, strokes, or taps on soft or textured surfaces, or by roleplaying individualized, tender care for viewers. The effect on those sensitive to these stimuli is a pleasant tingling sensation. While this genre has grown in popularity on YouTube and has since been taken up by media artists, Stuckey takes a novel



*Fortuna 500—An Inside View* (video still of Ms. Dos), 2017, HD video, 15 minutes

approach by removing the audio, ASMR’s most identifying feature. In doing so, she calls attention to the visual aesthetics of ASMR videos, and she relates them to a larger body of YouTube material.

Iridescent glitter applied to silvery lips, lush wedding venues appropriate for a *Real Housewife of Somewhere*, a Hello Kitty toaster, and long manicured fingernails are just some of the visual themes present in *eClips*. When accumulated, these themes start to point toward essentialized notions of femininity. While Stuckey juxtaposes the content of these videos, her video editing techniques blend the videos together, mutating from subtle layering to more graphic, analog-like effects such as checkerboard tiling and flat rainbow banding. Merging new with old media aesthetics, the videos shift from painterly to hard-edged. Representation and abstraction blend as familiar forms dance in and out of view; colors graduate from hypersaturated to pastel. This play with materiality echoes the material play within the videos: hairbrushing and slime, knitting and stroked geodes may signal growing consumer desires for technology to satisfy tactile needs. Stuckey assembles these aspirational, self-care, and healing-centered videos and layers them to maximize their potential. Enhancing the videos haptic qualities, she draws our attention to the “surface” of video itself.



In *is it like the ocean*, Stuckey pushes her sensory remedies even further, modulating foaming ocean waves to produce lush undulations and ripples, which are projected into a darkened alcove of the gallery. The sheer size of the projection creates rich, supple textures that reflect onto the walls and concrete floor, engulfing the viewer's body in the work as they approach. The video's seductive materiality is coupled with Calvin Harris's equally sexy pop-house track "How Deep is Your Love," which has also been manipulated so that it sounds both familiar and strange, like an earworm from another time or place. Periodically, a mysterious three-dimensional greyscale avatar appears on the adjacent wall as a surprising backup singer. Though darkly abstracted, the piece has a comforting, hypnotic quality. Stuckey is once again experimenting with ways to engage with technology in a material way but this time through an immersive viewing experience and a digitally-embodied siren.

Moving from an examination of bodily technological experiences to emotional ones, *#it's magnetic* and *#shattered* each feature a collage of YouTube clips where sentimental attachments to technology are revealed. In the former, six "unboxing" videos—another



*is it like the ocean*, 2017, (gallery view),  
projection mapped SD video, 4.5  
minutes, dimensions variable

YouTube subgenre where consumers open their purchased goods on camera—show the unpacking of Fitbit Charge 2 wearable activity trackers. In the latter, nine YouTubers lament the shattered screens of their shiny mobile devices. Stuckey cuts the videos and alters their playback speed so that they fall in and out of sync with one another, relocating focus from individual videos to layered cacophonies to harmonized choruses of sighs, stories, and operatic shrieks. Through this elegantly simple gesture, Stuckey identifies the risk of fetishizing technology only to be devastated by its inevitable fragility, and she simultaneously comforts us with the knowledge that we are all in it together, sharing the same technological joys and pains.

Beyond physical and emotional relationships to technologies, Stuckey also dissects the ethics and grand narratives built around them. In *Fortuna 500-An Inside View* she parodies corporate sales videos and Silicon Valley tech culture by playing four cloned employees of an illusive 1980s software company: Opal Esse, the shoulder-padded Executive Director; Lisa Apple, the Graphical Designer and Personality Writer who probably attends Burning Man; Ms. Dos, the chipper Customer Support executive; and Scuzzy, the sleep-deprived Programmer who may or may not consume too much ice cream. The video, which has an endearing corporate awkwardness reminiscent of the sitcom "The Office" and features a perfectly playful score by Ryan Patrick Martin, centers on "Disk 3," a new piece of software developed by the company. Here, Stuckey uses humor to diagnose the absence of women from technological histories, the systems of belief around upgrade culture, and the empty language used to describe new technologies. She highlights their circuitous meaninglessness with assertions like: "We are dedicated to transparency, but we also believe in opacity."



*Fortuna 500-An Inside View*  
(video still of Lisa Apple), 2017,  
HD video, 15 minutes

Stuckey developed the piece after discovering a mysterious floppy disk labeled only "Disk 3: At Your Service" while in residence at the Media Archaeology Lab, a hands-on lab filled with obsolete but still-functioning technologies in Boulder, Colorado. In the exhibition, the video is installed on a monitor placed in a 1980s office setting, complete with autumnal hued furniture, statement plant, and requisite Rolodex—a warm contrast to the slick shrine of *eClips* and a reminder of the historical trajectory of tech corporations.

In *Good Days & Bad Days on the Internet*, Rachel Stuckey develops an effective treatment plan for navigating between the pull of technology and the push against it. Her work reflects these oscillating tides by pushing and pulling itself—likely a result of her diverse education in both experimental film and transmedia art—between old and new media, abstraction and representation, pop and niche culture, humor and material exploration. So what's the prognosis? According to Stuckey, it looks like we have exquisitely ambivalent days to look forward to on the internet.

Maya Livio is the Curator of the Media Archaeology Lab and of MediaLive at Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Colorado. 2017

# Rachel Stuckey

## EDUCATION

- 2016 MFA, Studio Art: Transmedia, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX
- 2010 BFA, Filmmaking, University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, CO

## ARTIST RESIDENCIES

- 2017 Media Archaeology Lab, Boulder, CO
- 2016 Signal Culture, Owego, NY  
Laboratory, Spokane, WA
- 2015 Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 *!Help! EARTH ROVER? Get.Unstuck?*, with Jesse Cline, Museum of Human Achievement, Austin, TX
- 2016 *Update Required*, Laboratory, Spokane, WA
- 2015 *It Takes All Sorts*, Hello Project Gallery, Houston, TX

## SOLO SCREENINGS

- 2017 *Lun@ire eClips*, with PrismATX Ensemble, Spider House Ballroom, Austin, TX
- 2014 *8 Years of Video*, Tiny Park Gallery, Austin, TX

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 *The Wrong New Digital Art Biennale*, Equivocations Pavilion, thewrong.org
- No Vacancy 3: HELLO GIRLS!*, Alt Esc Platform, Brooklyn, NY
- d i s t a n c e*, Chiang Mai University Art Center, Chiang Mai, Thailand
- 2016 *Traded*, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX
- BARdo*, Drkmttr, Nashville, TN
- milkVOICE: 2016 Studio Art MFA Thesis Exhibition*, Visual Arts Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX
- A Sponge and A Sigh*, The Wurks, Providence, RI
- 2015 *Monkey Town 6*, 2416 E 6th St, Austin, TX
- Just Some Me Time...*, Museum of Human Achievement, Austin, TX
- Fall Program*, LUMA Project Space, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX
- Bed Bath & Beyond*, Prospect Rock, Johnson, VT
- Parallels*, 60 Orange St, Providence, RI
- 2014 *Staycation*, The Goss House, Boulder, CO
- UT+RCA*, Royal College of Art, London, UK
- Iceberg*, Pump Project Gallery, Austin, TX

## SELECTED GROUP SCREENINGS & FILM FESTIVALS

- 2017 *backup\_festival*, Bauhaus-Universität, Weimar, Germany
- Digital Landscapes: aTravel Through, aCinema*, Milwaukee, WI
- 2016 *(In)appropriation Documentary*, Visible Evidence, Bozeman, MT
- Festival of (In)appropriation*, Film Forum, Los Angeles, CA
- This Video Requires a Password*, Echo Park Film Center, Los Angeles, CA
- Wax Long Wolf Moon*, The Nightingale, Chicago, IL
- 2015 *To See the Sky with the Naked Eye*, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI
- Festival Kratkih Kraken*, Slovenski Filmski Center, Ljubljana, Slovenia
- Shoulder Land Video Festival*, Women's Studio Workshop, Rosendale, NY
- HouseBound European Film Tour*; various locations in Europe
- (>^.^)> <3 <(^.^<)*, Museum of Human Achievement, Austin, TX
- New Media Art and Sound Summit*, Church of the Friendly Ghost and Salvage Vanguard Theater, Austin, TX
- Dallas Medianale*, McKinney Avenue Contemporary, Dallas, TX
- 2014 *Best Western*, Other Cinema, San Francisco, CA
- ERCATXIII*, MASS Gallery, Austin, TX

## SELECTED LECTURES & WORKSHOPS

- 2017 "Surfing For Signs of Intelligent Life in Cyberspace," MALfunction #4: Consciousness, Media Archaeology Lab, Boulder, CO
- 2016 milkVOICE Colloquium, Visual Arts Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX
- 2015 "Sublime Encounters with Mundane Technology," Strange Pilgrims Symposium: Experience In and Beyond the White Cube, The Contemporary Austin, Austin, TX
- 2014 "Camera-less Filmmaking," Focus Group Workshop, Visual Arts Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX
- 2013 "Women Filmmakers Animating Collection and Decay," Focus Group, Visual Arts Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX

## SELECTED CURATORIAL PROJECTS

- 2014-prnt *Welcome to My Homepage Digital Artist Residency*, welcometomyhomepage.net
- 2017 *Spam's - The Internet: The Restaurant*, Fusebox Festival, IRL @ The Museum of Human Achievement, Austin, TX



*Clips* (video still), 2017, three-channel HD video for iMacs, looping

## Women & Their Work

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### STAFF

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Known for its pioneering spirit, embrace of artistic innovation, and commitment to Texas audiences and artists, Women & Their Work is now celebrating its 40th anniversary. Presenting over 50 events a year in visual art, dance, theater, music, and film, the gallery features on-going exhibitions of Texas women artists and brings artists of national stature to Texas audiences. Since its founding, Women & Their Work has presented 1,898 artists in 311 visual art exhibitions, 125 music, dance and theater events, 16 film festivals, 30 literary readings and spoken word performances, and 620 workshops in programming that reflects the broad diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in Art in America, the New York Times, ArtForum, and on National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Women & Their Work reaches over 650 school children and teachers each year through gallery tours, gallery talks with exhibiting artists, participatory workshops, in-school performances, dance master classes, and teacher workshops.



women and  
their work

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