

Issues in Social Media for the Arts 2019
Blueskying a Social Media Platform for the Arts

Hosted by
the Social Media Narratives Class
Art and Technology Studies
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Facebook and Google Groups, November 7-12

Google Docs Transcript: Deanne Achong

**Some random thoughts on how to navigate social media as an
artist.**

Deanne Achong
November 7, 2019

The first thought that popped into my head this morning while “multi-tasking” through answering emails / texts and dealing with a corporate deadline for a design project, was “Signal or Noise” — Am I am contributing to the signal or to the noise?

Can I even tell the difference anymore?

I’m not an audio artist, so I can’t elegantly describe the technical aspects of what that implies, but as a visual / media artist, I know at some level I’m very attracted to the noise. The patterns, the background, the nonsensical. All the errors in code, the glitch.

And yet, on social media, the noise feels like an endless hum conjured up by magicians in the back room, forcing us to respond, to reply, to like, like, like.

And the hum created by those millions of signals is intentionally meant to be overwhelming. Engineering our decisions, our behaviour.

The Trouble with the Noise:

A few years ago I was lying in bed, scrolling on my phone, and feeling rather low. I was on FB. I felt driven to scroll, and was **feeling worse and worse**. Later that day, I deleted the app. That worked to an extent. About 3 months ago, I finally deleted the profile altogether. [At any rate, it wasn't under my "real" name, It was an homage to Marcel Duchamp:)]

This happened again with YouTube, not so much that I felt low, but that I was endlessly consuming more on more. I broke my addiction by deleting the app.

I've been on twitter for over 10 years. It's shocking how fast that blew by.

I joked the other day wondering if the time spent on those 4,489 tweets was worth it.

Answer #hellyes — to potentially be revised when I calculate that as a unit of time.

And Instagram, well that's a whole love/hate relationship engineered by those same programming units....



Isobel Harbison

8:51 AM Nov 11

I had exactly the same feeling from Facebook, particularly in the latter stages of a PhD. Lot's of peer anxiety leading to unnecessary self-loathing. That, tied to the turgid politics of the corporation, makes me sure I made the right decision to retreat. Others may feel differently on/ with the platform but from conversations I've had with many people I think the positive users are in the minority.

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Deanne Achong

12:14 PM Nov 11

Yes, and we know it is "engineered " as it were, so that we remain scrolling, consuming and all. Even twitter, which is less loathsome:) every time I open the app, it reverts back to showing me the "popular" mode, which is full of all that blah blah and I keep on having to tell it to show me only the latest from my personal feed. They don't make money from that.

The Beauty of the Signal:

Last year I did a collaborative Instagram project using Stories which invited participants to respond to a couple of line's from Robert Filiou / George Brecht's "THERE IS ALWAYS SOMEONE ASLEEP, AND SOMEONE AWAKE ..." etc. I posted these as stories with drawings of my phone and any images contributors wanted to send. I felt the nod of approval from the ghosts of these conceptual artists and I *knew* that at least 50% of my audience did not know of that work, but they were happy (and DMed to say so, therefore it must be true) to participate. It gave me this sense of hope for the use of the tool. That one could pluck something out the noise, and create the signal.



Judy Malloy

1:33 PM Nov 7

Hi Deanne,

Welcome to the Issues in Social Media Narratives Panel and thank you for your thoughtful post!

For the Group as a whole, here is Deanne's bio:

Deanne Achong lives and works in Vancouver. She works across disciplines, including digital and lens-based projects and installation. Her practice draws from history, literature, and digital culture. She has sat on the board of artist-run centers, including Other Sights for Artist's Projects, and has taught sessionally at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. Deanne has exhibited her work in Canada, the US, the Caribbean, and Europe. Her public art projects, include Pier D, a photographic installation integrating a massive QR code and a blog (commissioned by the City of Vancouver).

Her works also include The Obsolescence Project, exhibited at the Vancouver Art Gallery for the International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA), and her app Lusca Mourns The Telegraph, presented at the Electronic Literature Organization (ELO) conference in Bergen, Norway. For more information, visit <https://deanneachong.com>

Tools / Marketing

Not sure where most of you are in relationship to marketing, I know myself I have resistance to it, partly based upon the benefits of existing in a system where there has been a lot of government funding towards the arts (The Canada Council) but that is changing and although not corporate per se, has its own pressures that end up with artists needing to market their work. I know the marketing angle is something about instagram that I simultaneously loathe and admire. This business of selling the work, promoting, branding, and on and on. Again, this sense of being driven by the interests of the corporation, whose algorithms are too tasty to resist.

Looking Forward > A New Tool?

One of the biggest issues I personally face with social media, besides the first word —“Social” (an introvert’s nightmare), is the compulsion for speed.

Should convenience be the driving factor in how artists make things? Should we be adopting the “first to market” values of the system.

What if there was a social media tool that was deliberately slow? That didn’t show likes. Didn’t show your connections. Could be silent. Didn’t make you tired.

Where the ratio of signal to noise was something you could control. Where the suggestions of “who” you “should” connect with was based upon factors that you determined.

Utopic I know.



Judy Malloy
2:51 PM Nov 10



Twitter gives posts greater weight if the poster posts every day. From my point of view, posting when I have something to say is when I post. However, I like your cat drawing project. Because it is a continuous project, new posts are a part of the constraint. Thus, your drawing projects are a great example of working constructively with the system!

I haven't even touched upon all the other complexities inherent within this systems, **issues of race, class, gender, socio-economic** *ALL THE FEELS*.

Sometime I think I should delete all my apps, get a dumb phone, and persist in resisting....

When I first began making net-art in early 2000s (hello hand-coded HTML!:) I used to say something like “the point of making art here (that isn't / wasn't necessarily seen as art) is to resist and to take up space and to occupy. Is this same true of social media?

—

Cheers, Deanne

Currently “active” on Instagram: @piquette + Twitter @deanneachong



Isobel Harbison

8:58 AM Nov 11

so many issues mean that a universal diagnosis of social media use is impossible and actually irresponsible: as mainstream media segments, objectifies, discriminates with and against its subjects differently, of course social media presents different alternatives to different people. As a white woman it's easy, as I have, to be dismissive of social media on the basis of its under-regulation but that's because historically i've been presented/ represented in mainstream media/tv/ film etc. Intersectional analyses of tech/ technology capitalism/ social media are vital.



Deanne Achong

12:24 PM Nov 11

True, true - the irresponsible ...

As a woman of mixed-race I've definitely used twitter to become connected to some conversations that help me "place" myself (an also impossible task)

I'm wondering about the flip-side of the under-regulation. Here in Canada, on Saturday Don Cherry, a well known broadcaster (who used to be on CBC (the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation - not a commercial channel per se, other than the government ha ha) and is now on SportsNet, a commercial network, made some extremely offensive and ignorant comments about people of colour not supporting Remembrance Day. I wasn't watching the game, so didn't see it, but I did see the response on twitter. In the past I'm not even sure that viewers might have noticed the pain they experienced.

What I mean by that is you feel it, and then it moves on to other topics, so you let it go. Now, with twitter you see the replay, you see the thousands of voices calling for his resignation (or some kind of sensitivity training, if you knew who is he you would see how ridiculous the latter is)... Anyhow, my long-winded point :) is that I embrace the #metoo culture at some level for its ability to expose and raise awareness. My hesitancy with not a full embrace, is that it also doesn't embrace silence as a choice, and these hashtags become overly simplified pendulums...



Isobel Harbison

1:24 PM Nov 11

Right, there's lots of changes post-#metoo, and I don't know Don Cherry, but the backlash that you describe to me sounds healthy. There's lots of ways that Twitter (perhaps especially) works on and aggravates this pattern of disagreement/ polarity of views, and again the nuances of this are interesting and not at all universally positive, but i really think that the kind of backlash you describe creates an acute awareness to the various ways racism permeates public life, and just how unacceptable it is. It's a veritable forum for expressing that, that is at once public and private. I think it's obviously a lot more complex than that and there's a lot of hate and negativity circulating from which people suffer in various ways. But in this scenario you mention, it (Twitter, lets say) can present an important place to listen. What others like that exist?



Judy Malloy
5:44 AM Nov 9



Hi Deanne,

Thank you for initiating conversation on the Google Docs section of the "Issues in Social Media for the Arts" panel.

As we've talked about in email, the Google Docs method tends to isolate communication, but I don't think this has to happen. When looked at from my point of view of an earlier user of hypertextual structures, it would be possible to create a hypertextual structure with each document as a prominent node.

Looking at what is happening in this Google Docs section of the panel, the process would be improved if I had conceived a hypertextual structure at the onset and then given clear instructions of how to create it. But without the plunging in that we have done this year, how to do this was not initially apparent.

Nevertheless, one of the roles of this panel is to look at social media-based group communication for the art community. So we are doing this here. And thanks again for your part in exploring this!



Deanne Achong
8:08 AM Nov 10

Hi Judy - re "it would be possible to create a hypertextual structure with each document as a prominent node." yes indeed. This would be a nice way to map in to the mothership as it were. (that being FB). And it does remind me that isolation of course is also a choice - as someone else here mentioned (I'll see if I can find it), they loathe Zuckerberg's ethics, and so choose to not be on FB.

I've been wondering how to create a space where the ethical parameters would be integrated into the app. The biggest problem I leap to is all these tools tend to begin as something between a small group of "friends" (even Flickr did) and then, they are inevitably bought out, once successful. It's a roll of the dice which big Corporation gets to then buy, change, manipulate etc...