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

Facebook Transcript: Marisa Parham

Marisa Parham
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Here, I guess, are some preliminary thoughts, since I every time I get started, I stall on the *and yet.*
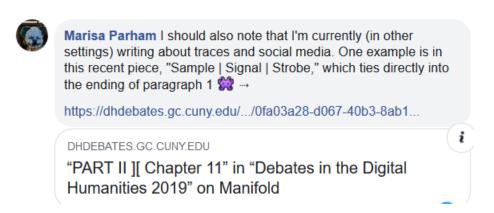
Almost every significant concern one might attach to adult use of social media use is ultimately a problem with privacy and surveillance. Social media platforms require users to pay in privacy. And we do pay, perhaps because we imagine that we have privacy to spare. Or we imagine that what we get back, entry points into each other's lives, is worth the cost. Unfortunately, the problem with privacy is that its value is often only understood retroactively, which is to say that most people are willing to trade on privacy because they have a sense, perhaps, that they have nothing to hide. But what should be hidden or obscured is always politically contingent— anytime our political worlds shift, our sense of privacy must also shift. But the underlying material realities of social media platforms fundamentally disempower us in this formulation. Even though social media experiences might be felt as or experienced as ephemeral, they are anything but. They are obdurately material— from the intense amounts of fuel and infrastructure that make internet experience possible, to the monumental trail of receipts produced by our interactions: tweet, like, cookie, crumb, me.

    I begin my thinking here because I felt like Malloy's opening prompt, that we are blueskying social media for the arts, provokes in me a series of things I want to do, make, or participate in. But those things also already feel compromised because of the privacy and surveillance concerns outlined above. Most of what I want will ultimately mean less privacy so, if I am in a wishmaking place, let me first set forth an invocation: if I am blueskying social media, the first thing I want is a hyper controllable and situationally aware privacy mechanism. I want a nullifier, an encryption mechanism literally keyed to my own sense of will and desire, and that also (maybe even sometimes against my will and desire) disallows forms of sharing that might be newly compromising. I want to opt-in to sharing,

rather than be forced to opt-out. I want to be able to recall all traces of myself to myself instantly, a right to actual ephemerality.

If I could have more confidence in our techno-state apparatuses, oh the things I imagine we could make together (hashtag trueabouteverything). I want to be able to shift between modalities of exchange, for instance moving beyond the current default emphases on visual objects like word and image. I want to share my heartbeat over a day, or tonal translation of voices in a meeting, so that my friends can help me with various kinds of emotional eavesdropping. I want weeks where everything I and my friends or collaborators share is randomly assigned an object class (word, image, sound) and then we can remix each other's event-times into more kinds of interactive relationalities, beyond the declarative linguistic obsessiveness inherent in the social media utterance.

I want I want I want and I need I need and need, more than I don't want or don't need. Yet for now, if I am smart, my wanting and needing must defer to necessity, to the long list of things I do not want and definitely do not need from social media platforms, even as some of my sense of how what I want and need has emerged out of my experiences with those platforms. In our making and editing of posts, we are constantly transforming and re-presenting ourselves. For so many people, social media has amplified a sense of daily living as an art, which also opens an exciting entry point into engaging "regular people" with working artists. There is so much joy, revolution, and possibility in this, yet yet yet…

Marisa Parham I should also note that I'm currently (in other settings) writing about traces and social media. One example is in this recent piece, "Sample | Signal | Strobe," which ties directly into the ending of paragraph 1 🧩 ⇢

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"PART II][Chapter 11" in "Debates in the Digital Humanities 2019" on Manifold

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Judy Malloy Hi Marisa, welcome to the 2019 Issues in Social Media for the Arts. And thanks for focusing on "Blueskying a Social Media Platform for the Arts" in general and in particular for highlighting issues with privacy and surveillance!

Here is Marisa's bio: Marisa Parham is Professor of English at Amherst College, and directs the Immersive Reality Labs for the Humanities (irLh), which is an independent workgroup for digital and experimental humanities. irLh develops and incubates digital projects for AR, VR, and screen, and generally supports the work of digital scholars. Parham also serves as one of two faculty diversity and inclusion officers (FDIO) at Amherst College. As FDIO, Parham is an advocate and innovator for diversity and inclusion in the college's overall academic program, while especially supporting both individual faculty success and the expansion of academic departments. Parham's current teaching and research projects focus on texts and technologies that problematize assumptions about time, space, and bodily materiality. She is particularly interested in how such terms share a history of increasing complexity in literary and cultural texts produced by African Americans, and how they also offer ways of thinking about intersectional approaches to digital humanities and technology studies. Recent examples of this work include "Sample | Signal | Strobe: Haunting, Social Media, and Black Digitality," .break .dance, and "Breaking, dancing, making in the machine: notes on .break .dance." Parham holds a PhD in English and Comparative Literature from Columbia University, and is the author of Haunting and Displacement in African-American Literature and Culture, and The African-American Student's Guide to College, as well as co-editor of Theorizing Glissant: Sites and Citations. Parham currently serves on the Board of Directors for Amherst Media, and formerly served on the founding Board of Directors for the Amherst Cinema Arts Center, and on the board for the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities. She is also a former director of Five College Digital Humanities, serving Amherst, Hampshire, Mt. Holyoke, and Smith Colleges, and University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Judy Malloy "...oh the things I imagine we could make together", Marisa Parham says, and she writes:

" the first thing I want is a hyper controllable and situationally aware privacy mechanism. I want a nullifier, an encryption mechanism literally keyed to my

own sense of will and desire, and that also (maybe even sometimes against my will and desire) disallows forms of sharing that might be newly compromising. I want to opt-in to sharing, rather than be forced to opt-out. I want to be able to recall all traces of myself to myself instantly, a right to actual ephemerality."

Yes! And there is no reason we cannot have this. After Social Media Archeology and Poetics was finished, I plunged into book-length accounts of the forming of contemporary social media platforms. With Arts Wire's (a woman founded platform, thanks Anne Focke) 10 year survival on my mind, (Thanks former director Joe Matuzak for joining us here), in the histories of the founding of Facebook Twitter and Myspace , I was amazed at how this was done and how it could be replicated.

There is no reason that we in the arts and humanities have to accept the surveillance, loss of privacy, ethical problems in general, censorship, control of our content, corporate-instigated changes that create hostile environments for creative practice . We are capable of creating new infosphere enriching platforms -- not necessarily just one new platform; this isn't about instigating control battles.