

This piece aims to observe and question the group exhibition *Line of Sight* supplemented by a conversation between the artists Paul Maguire, James Houston, Kimberley O'Neill, Jen Sykes and myself. The exhibition runs at the Reid Gallery in Glasgow from the 19<sup>th</sup> November to the 16<sup>th</sup> December. *Line of Sight* opens up a dialogue addressing both the perceived future of technology and its present contexts and impact.

Technology is a device, a medium, and more than ever a way of being. O'Neill's video installation *Mood Organ*, (2016) vividly explores the rich dialectic of affective labour; saturated with visceral imagery of the eyes, it closely examines the body's relationship to technology as they are put in close proximity with lapping fields of water.

O'Neill: It's really weird doing something at work,  
for me.

-That's the thing that's totally  
thrown me.

[All]: -Yep.

O'Neill: -Because you relate to the role and stuff  
like that, and I'm definitely a different person making  
my work than I am anywhere else.

Maguire: Yeah you've got your professional life and  
then your...ultimate reality of art.

Myself: -And now they're meshing together.

Here, O'Neill is prompted by Maguire into exclaiming that an alternate persona is partially adopted when fabricating the work. Perhaps, in order to present a concept as immediate, and, ultimately, close-to-heart, it is vital to withdraw before the expulsion of something into a public. The body becomes the generative and receptive conduit for affective labour— a capital in media networks. O'Neill presents the nature of *process* as something visceral yet ultimately unattainable and intangible:

O'Neill: Tai Chi works on all those kind of  
principles of opening up the feet. And you draw up energy  
through your body and you feel-

Maguire: -Yeah but you push the energy away. The  
point is it's a mental thing- you visualise it don't you.

In the same way that some people find it very useful- when you say something and they want to clear it from their minds. They actually will do a kind of physical act and imagine doing it because it helps them to imagine-

O'Neill:

-Like a process

On a quieter day one can listen to Sykes' sound projections titled *Objects Under Domestication*, (2016) as they score exhibition space:

Sykes: -There's also different levels- levels of interaction. I'd expect a more extreme level of interaction at the Science Museum than I am expecting at the art gallery. There is a subconscious layer put up at a gallery that I think probably quite a lot of the work is maybe trying to play with and explore, but it's still there, and that definitely plays a factor in what's made.

Houston: -There's different contexts.

Myself: There are different curatorial tricks you can play.

Houston: There are different languages- specialist languages you can speak in these spaces.

Process is again explored through Sykes' focus on how the transference of energy is able to be visualized. The work explores the protoplasmic movement within the cells of natural organisms as they pick up vibrations. The audience are subtly drawn in to the sculptural work as their physical presence alerts Sykes' own made oscillatory sensors placed around the gallery; the analogue and the digital are met in aural isolation, the biometric energy potentially unearthing dormant qualities one's mood or disposition:

Jen:

-Yeah, I mean, I haven't included it in there but actually part of that research of stimulating matter- and I guess almost it's not proven science it's just kind of pseudo-science right now- whether it's believed or not- I find the pseudo side of things very interesting. One of the claims is that barefoot dance creates the optimum vibrations- and that stimulates the most. But that's still quite 'mythical'. It's not science, really. There are studies on it but-

Finay: Well its 'pseudo' from a Euro-centrist perspective.  
It's pseudo in that way.

[...]

Paul: -It's the cultural hegemony of scientific thinking, isn't it. It's basically imposing stuff. Imposing certain ways of thinking, which also excludes certain other ways of thinking.

The inner, tangible body of technology is artfully displayed as a diptych of printed circuit boards titled *Choose Your Friends Wisely*, (2016) beside the artist's own sound installation. Drawing a parallel to Houston's affronting mortal reminder, the prints reveal the matter-of-fact: an impersonal variety of factory-made colour and disjointed right-angles show just how alienating the physical world is beneath the façade of virtual display, with its title chillingly marking the lower corner.

Maguire's large-scale photographic print of fractal-esque interiors reflect the artist's own *Reboxing*, (2016)– a video-installation which contains the discarded remains of an unboxed iPhone, while the device itself screens a reversed video of its own unboxing process. Windows within windows offer the audience a jarring display of separate entities existing in a unified form. Whereas the photograph of the repeating room interior may evoke anxiety in its visualisation of the acceleration of technology– perhaps even toward a *singularity*– the unboxing is ultimately a calming experience. Its waist-height display cabinet allows the viewer to instead engulf the information at one's own pace. The fetishistic quality of allowing an audience to observe each quiet, clean piece of the unboxing process highlights the continuous tension between the intimacy and enmity of today's consumer.

Maguire's *Do You Love Me Yet?*, (2016) effortlessly carries industry-standard 3D game technology into the art gallery. Perception and affection is playfully critiqued as the audience generates a reaction in the fallible and idly waiting character. The tragicomic is also seamlessly portrayed as it hangs its head in sorrow after each visitor leaves. The virtual prisoner quite literally embodies the sheer complexity of human-computer interaction as its life-size 3D character manages to occupy a room despite the restrictive flat screen which it inhabits. Maguire details how the process of making *Do You Love Me Yet?*, like O'Neill, is a process of *working through*:

Maguire: It's one of the most complex questions isn't it, it's like *who are you making this stuff for, what is this for- this... thing?*

Are you actually making it for anything? If you're making a video, you're making it for a- what you're making, if

you make it for an art context or if you've got your own *show*...are you making it for yourself?

I mean some people make work to work through things.

No one's expecting you- you're not laying it out for it to get validation to say *you did well, and this is a good piece of work*, it's more like *this is what I've been up to*. It's actually complex. It's a very, very complex question.

I pursue this and draw a comparison to Sykes' research into protoplasmic movement:

Myself: I was reading the exhibition's media release and I was interested what you [Sykes] say about movement and how oscillation can *connect* living things.

And that made me think about faith, and how movement can be viewed as a form of prayer.

Yoga is often dismissed as a form of aerobics in the West, but it has a much longer and richer history than that... just talking about constant self-validation- you are required to find a place in yourself that you can *trust* and then...blindly following it.

Know what I mean?

[...]

Paul: It's not quite as simple as that. It's the way the interrelation of thousands of these things that... as soon as you have interrelations that are complex, science finds it really difficult and normal scientific methods *fall apart*. It's to do with probability as opposed to simple reductive reasoning.

Art is shown as a way around perceived complexities. The dialogue of human-machine presence as affecting of one another is opened up to the public through Maguire's intelligent and precise balance of humour and aesthetic judgement.

Houston's affronting *Memento Mori (Remember That You Have To Die)*, (2016), squats on the wall beside Maguire's *First Person Shooter*. Blinking to the point of suffocation, the LED display depicts an estimate of the number of weeks left of the

artist's life in a decisive act of intentional narcissism. The virtual is no longer as ethereal as it were in O'Neill's *Mood Organs*. Houston remarks on the sincerity of the piece, as the notion of authenticity rings as an important element in the production of his work:

James: -I think there's something to be said about the *idea of making work* for an audience, and often that's maybe not a good thing to do necessarily- and it depends on the practitioner.

...if you've got an audience in mind-then whatever you've got in your head you'll literally be who's receiving it and one can often get into a *habit* of doing it for something that *isn't real*

-so often when I'm making stuff I'm not thinking of an audience or if I am it will be just to make sure that I am communicating my idea well, but I will try not to cater that project to this audience or that audience.

Maguire and Houston test the audience's frustration through their collaborative piece *blue = new Black()*; (2013) as the intangible blue-screen of a faulty PC screen is fossilised within a 35mm slide. Stagnation is perceived as an admirable quality in the accelerative nature of technology, perhaps revealing a sentimentality of un-smooth movement.

As the frustrations of older technology are craved in these sculptures, the audience is left wondering what future one would prefer: is there solace in dysfunctional machinery through its parallel with human error, or should technology form a seamless bridge between physical and generated experience?

Finlay Clark (2016)