

## ENTER THE GHOST

### Haunted Media Ecologies \*

Throughout the past four years I have engaged with various modes of analysing and experiencing hauntological encounters and thought-processes, so as to get closer to the inner workings and implications of surveillance on increasing race and gender bias. In Clarice Lispector's words, I have been invested in finding an epistemology for manifesting "the symbol of the thing in the thing itself," beyond ontological concerns. From apparatus (Michel Foucault), to institution (Bruno Latour), to hyperobject (Timothy Morton), surveillance has become the world's home, the outer rim of the stratosphere. This symbolic physical and mental state without which most of us are not able to function anymore, is strengthened every time one religiously charges one's mobile phone before going to sleep. However, surveillance media data collection and categorisation are mostly run by algorithms trained by biased systems, which should be modified so as to ensure inclusive social representation. As Audre Lorde pointed out in *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House* (1979), the most productive course of action is to reclaim space to create the conditions for proper representation of diversity, do away with the biases against everyone but those owning the discourse. Against this theoretical backdrop, the role of art in my project is to occupy the media and, by subverting the functionality of operative surveillance imagery, to construct a truly inclusive, intersectional and diverse narrative with film and installation works that expose the ghosts that haunt these media.

The book accompanying the exhibition compiles a series of texts written during the project, including an interview with Nim Goede for the *Metropolis M* website about my initial ideas on looking at ghosts in the media; a talk with Richtje Reinsma published in *Mister Motley* conducted during the preparations of the solo exhibition at Bradwolff Projects in 2018, *Beyond the Violet End of the Spectrum*; an article I wrote and published in *NECSUS* that lays out a hauntological approach to video surveillance, in which the spectres of racism and gender bias are allowed to manifest; an article by MIT researchers Matthew Groh, Ziv Epstein, Nick Obradovich, Manuel Cebrian and Ilyad Rahwan about the ghosts of deepfake technology; an essay by Flavia Dzodan (Sandberg Institute) on the colonial roots of present-day algorithms; and a text by Alice Smits (*Zone2Source*), commissioned for the second solo exhibition of the project, at Nieuw Dakota. Together these texts trace a line of thought that I have engaged with since the onset of the project and which I am sharing here. What follows is a reflection on the intensification of surveillance during the Covid-19 pandemic, with a close look at the image-based processes involved in training AI systems.

## Enter the Ghost 1

### On Pandemics and Surveillance

We are now halfway through October 2020. This text is written during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic and published in the seventh month since the implementation of confinement measures in the Netherlands and the widespread reinforcement of surveillance practices. This would be a different text, had the current situation not taken place, but for better or worse, it has evolved into what it is due to the violent impact corona regulations have had on the project. Besides not being able to return to the MIT for an extended research period and seeing my visit to Lockheed Martin's drone training facilities cancelled, my solo exhibition that was scheduled for May 2020 had to be postponed to October, due to a partial lockdown that affected all cultural events and forced galleries to close their doors. At the time of writing, I have been informed the opening of October 24th has been cancelled and we are not entirely sure people will be able to visit the exhibition during the whole period of four weeks when it has been reserved as open to the public. For the moment, people can come to the gallery by securing a slot of one hour. These measures affect several venues, including those depending on bigger crowds, like theatres and nightclubs. Social inequality is highly visible at the present moment, as the cultural sector is deeply affected and left to its own devices, with multiple bankruptcies and entire livelihoods being run to the ground. All the while, in contrast, airplanes are allowed to fly with people crammed together in the cabins. This paradoxical scenario provokes reactions ranging from the left to the right wing of the political spectrum, conspiracy theories abound and there is general discontent about the lack of consistent information from our governments about a future that appears fluid and uncertain. As Giorgio Agamben noted in the early days of the pandemic in Europe (February 2020), the current restrictions speak to "a growing trend to use the *state of exception* as a normal governmental paradigm," which the philosopher identifies as excessive in the current situation.<sup>1</sup> This exacerbated use of state power is intentional and underscored by several economic interests that profit from the crisis. According to the author, when terrorist threats are not frequent enough to justify a habitual enforcement of what he calls *exceptional measures*, the invention of a pandemic allows for them to be implemented without legal limitations. An example of the situation Agamben warns against involves an opportunistic enforcement of centralised power, as occurred in the initial phase of lockdown in Portugal. People couldn't leave their homes without an official document that justified their presence outdoors, while several constitutional rights – including

---

<sup>1</sup> Giorgio Agamben, "L'Invenzione di un'Epidemia," Quodlibet, 26th of February, 2020, accessed 5 October 2020, <https://www.quodlibet.it/giorgio-agamben-l-invenzione-di-un-epidemia>.

Translated from the Italian original "Innanzitutto si manifesta ancora una volta la tendenza crescente a usare lo stato di eccezione come paradigma normale di governo."

the right to strike and to protest – were suspended for several weeks. Judith Butler notes that containment measures have reinforced the closure of borders for some, but not all. She refers to the specific situation in the United States, drawing attention to the fact that, in her own words,

*[T]he bolstering of national policies and the closing of borders (often accompanied by panicked xenophobia), and the arrival of entrepreneurs eager to capitalize on global suffering, all testify to the rapidity with which radical inequality, nationalism, and capitalist exploitation find ways to reproduce and strengthen themselves within the pandemic zones.<sup>2</sup>*

While we wait for a vaccine that may take years to perfect, there is an acceptance of our limited movement and of the measures that account for the extra money spent on face masks and similar Covid-19 merchandise, which is mandatory, yet not financially supported by the authorities. Less wealthy people do not only suffer most from isolation, they are also left with the dilemma of having to choose between buying food with a small allowance, or spending on protective gear.

An ecology of surveillance media is now fully accepted as indispensable, as personal data is harvested with every café visit and added to digital profiles, further disregarding people's privacy rights. Our temperature is taken at airports by means of thermal cameras that also reveal information that is unrelated to the data that needs to be collected due to pandemic-determined concerns. This includes visual evidence about whether one is currently menstruating or experiencing menopausal hot flashes, for example, which implies that private data is intrusively being collected. All these invasive state acts are justified under the guise of preventive measures, which further reduce individuals to their biological minimum: unsocialised, untouched, living in accepted isolation, and suspicious of others. As the fearful desire to protect one's health grows and creates new living habits, long-term social distancing settles in. Slavoj Žižek draws attention to the parallel viral diseases that arise in such an environment, which are of an ideological nature. The author mentions fake news, paranoid conspiracy theories and rampant forms of intensified racism.<sup>3</sup> A case in point is the revolting experience of Korean and Chinese students in the Netherlands, when the first news of the spread of the virus in Europe began to circulate. Due to their facial features and because they wore a mask before the thought of widespread protection against contagion had crossed anyone's mind, these young people were singled out by their fellow students and targeted with racist comments, that included calling them "Corona" to their face and telling them to leave the country.

---

<sup>2</sup> Judith Butler, "Capitalism has its Limits," Verso Books, 30th of March, accessed 5 October 2020, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4603-capitalism-has-its-limits>.

<sup>3</sup> Slavoj Žižek, "Coronavirus is 'Kill Bill'-esque Blow to Capitalism and Could Lead to Reinvention of Communism," *Russia Today*, 27th of February, 2020, accessed 5 October 2020, <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/481831-coronavirus-kill-bill-capitalism-communism/>.

Such ignorant segregating mentalities are supported by governmental policies that imply that every citizen needs to be handled as a potential carrier of the virus. As Agamben hinted, this profiling model is very similar to systems which identify certain target groups as terrorists due to their geographical origin, appearance or creed. A turn to technology determines safety conditions and allegedly preempts a future calamity, but it also impacts on other levels of daily life during the pandemic. The decision to isolate people and confine them to their domestic sphere has a profound effect on their mental health, instilling in them both a sense of powerlessness and a constant fearful uncertainty. Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi questions this position of the authorities with the mainstream media as their main mediator, by asking: “[Are] we crossing a new threshold in the process of techno-psychotic mutation?”<sup>4</sup> As he sees it, the mind has become slow, depressed, and passive due to a perceived lack of agency, determined by confinement measures that affect the bodies of the citizens, but do not impede the circulation of capital and commercial goods. The author further claims that “We are here stepping into a techno-totalitarian form where bodies will always be kept separated, controlled, remotely directed.”<sup>5</sup> Unlike Žižek, who still sees a possibility for the re-emergence of communism even though he is critical of the initial fear-instilled segregation, ‘Bifo’ Berardi quotes Timothy Snyder, alerting us to the opposite: “[T]here is no better condition for the formation of totalitarian regimes than situations of extreme emergency, where everyone’s survival is at stake.” Such crises, history teaches, stimulate the rise of nationalist movements, including fascist forms of populism that position the body against ‘the other’ and increase segregating modes of subjectification.

Now, more than ever, it is relevant to look at how the subject that is being produced within an environment of docile self-isolation intra-acts with biopolitics. On this subject, Paul B. Preciado expands on Michel Foucault, writing that,

*[T]he living (therefore mortal) body is the central object of all politics. There are no politics that are not body politics. But for Foucault, the body is not first a given biological organism on which power then acts. The very task of political action is to fabricate a body, to put it to work, to define its modes of production and reproduction, to foreshadow the modes of discourse by which that body is fictionalized to itself until it is able to say “I.”*<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Franco “Bifo” Berardi, “Crónica de la psicodeflación,” *Sopa de Wuhan- Pensamiento Contemporáneo en Tiempos de Pandemias* (ASPO - Aislamiento Social Preventivo y Obligatorio, 2020), 45.

Translated from the Spanish original “[E]stamos atravesando un nuevo umbral en el proceso de mutación tecnopsicótica?”

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

Translated from the Spanish original: “Aquí estamos en el umbral de una forma tecnototalitaria en la que los cuerpos serán para siempre repartidos, controlados, mandados a distancia.”

<sup>6</sup> Paul B. Preciado, “Learning from the Virus,” *Artforum*, May/June 2020, accessed 5 October 2020, <https://www.artforum.com/print/202005/paul-b-preciado-82823>.

The body is the operative word here, with the subjectification of the individual as the core target function of surveillance technologies, which, in a laboratory environment, shape behaviours by repressing movement and association. Whereas surveillance cameras were supposedly devised to keep undesirables out – including alleged terrorists and refugees at border zones –, to protect the few usually (wealthier) white individuals, the current situation presents a paradigmatic shift that involves not only surveillance, but also mandatory health protection measures. As Preciado claims, the government “extends to the whole of the population the political measures of immunization that had until then been violently applied onto those who were considered to be aliens both within and at the borders of national territory.”<sup>7</sup> Preciado further notes that current governmental measures expose “how the virus actually reproduces, materializes, widens, and intensifies (...) dominant forms of biopolitical and necropolitical management that were already operating over sexual, racial, or migrant minorities before the state of exception.”<sup>8</sup> Covid-19 has, to put it simply, made entire populations worldwide aware of the treatment given to people with less rights, including the growing numbers of migrant refugees. As a case in point, alongside physical testing, the constant surveillance and growing number of hovering video-streaming drones deployed during the pandemic draw our attention to the reality lived in border zones where their presence is considered geographically justifiable (such as in the Middle-East, Pakistan and Yemen).

Even if some find the measures justified and adequate to tackle the severity of the situation, we are left with the following questions: has our safety increased since their implementation? Not really. Have we become more immune? The numbers do not testify to that. For potential answers about what these imposed restrictions have realised, I once again turn to Preciado, who affirms that: “What has grown is not the immunity of the social body but the tolerance of citizens under the cybernetic control of the state and corporations.”<sup>9</sup> This implies an intentional subjectification of surveilled bodies, translated as an intensification of the pervasiveness of the apparatuses that were already profiling individuals as potential ‘criminals’ or ‘terrorists’, and now freely designate them as potential virus carriers. Preciado vividly describes this subjectification through mass containment as follows:

*What will have been invented after the crisis is a new utopia of the immunitary community and a new form of high-tech mass control of human bodies. The subjects of the neoliberal technical-patriarchal societies that Covid-19 is in the midst of creating do not have skin; they are untouchable; they do not have hands. They do not exchange physical goods, nor do they pay with money. They are digital*

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

*consumers equipped with credit cards. They do not have lips or tongues. They do not speak directly; they leave a voice mail. They do not gather together and they do not collectivize. They are radically un-dividual.*

In my previous work, which predates Covid-19, webcams were instrumental in creating the cinematic space of the city, as a (post-)panoptic enclosure where constant video-surveillance disguised control as freedom of movement in the urban space. Now, justified by the current pandemic, an even more cost-effective paradigm is arising, in which the individual is locked up in their domestic space, while paying for all the surveillance equipment required to monitor their every move, material purchase, exchanged word and personal contact. This equipment includes the smartphone, laptop, home automation (domotics) and drones, most of them with built-in AI technology, and sold as inconsequential gadgets or utilities. These domestic spaces are what Preciado calls the “soft and ultraconnected prisons of the future” – only, this future is already here, now, and is managed by technologies based on machine-learning.<sup>10</sup>

## **Enter the Ghost 2**

### **Artificial Intelligence and Biased Profiling**

Techno-ideology is the main motor behind the present mode of production, with AI making decisions and machines communicating between them without human interference after the initial programming phase. As Kate Crawford and Trevor Paglen point out, in the present stage of AI technology evolution, one needs to closely look at the modes of functionality and at what happens when image interpretation, which is crucial to video surveillance media and a primary focus of this essay, is exclusively performed by AI.<sup>11</sup>

In their article “Excavating AI – The Politics of Images in Machine Learning Training Sets”, Crawford and Paglen analyse the taxonomies involved in computer-recognition of the elements of an image, acknowledging where the blind spots are, and identifying the cultural biases embedded in the code that supports this process. Verbal language is nuanced, which makes describing an image a complex task. When politically motivated racial and gender biases are fed to AI by means of deficient datasets, there is a risk that people of colour are labelled as criminals, for instance, by including their photos in highly inadequate qualifying categories such as ‘drug addict’ or ‘streetwalker’. As part of their rigorous study, Crawford and Paglen analysed ImageNet, which was the main resource for training AI image recognition for about ten years. It was made up of twenty thousand categories containing

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Kate Crawford and Trevor Paglen, “Excavating AI – The Politics of Images in Machine Learning Training Sets,” *Excavating AI*, 2020, accessed 5 October 2020, <https://www.excavating.ai/>.

fourteen million labeled images that were harvested at random from the internet with no consent. To illustrate the lack of efficiency of such datasets, I draw attention to the following comments by the authors:

*In ImageNet (inherited from WordNet), for example, the category “human body” falls under the branch Natural Object > Body > Human Body. Its subcategories include “male body”; “person”; “juvenile body”; “adult body”; and “female body.” The “adult body” category contains the subclasses “adult female body” and “adult male body.” We find an implicit assumption here: only “male” and “female” bodies are “natural.” (...) There are categories for Bad Person, Call Girl, Drug Addict, Closet Queen, Convict, Crazy, Failure, Flop, Fucker, Hypocrite, Jezebel, Kleptomaniac, Loser, Melancholic, Nonperson, Pervert, Prima Donna, Schizophrenic, Second-Rater, Spinster, Streetwalker, Stud, Tossler, Unskilled Person, Wanton, Waverer, and Wimp. There are many racist slurs and misogynistic terms.<sup>12</sup>*

These terms cannot be seen as objective and are definitely not a neutral way of teaching machines to read future images. They are the product of a male Eurocentric taxonomic tradition that reinforces segregating and othering processes of subjectification. The authors scrutinise the modes of functioning of the UTKFace Dataset as an example of a biased image collection. Here, again, AI determines gender on strictly binary terms, together with age (between 1 and 116 years) and race, which is divided into White, Black, Asian, Indian or Other. These are obviously limited choices, but the steps taken to improve AI image recognition have dangerously shifted towards phrenology. IBM’s ‘Diversity in Faces’ dataset was put in place to overcome the difficulties of recognising people with darker skin tones. The teams behind the dataset proceeded to measure “facial symmetry and skull shapes to build a complete picture of the face”. This truly is a highly polemic practice, similar to what was used in the past to create false evidence of the superiority of the colonising white man, who supposedly belonged to the most intelligent race. In the cases mentioned by Crawford and Paglen, computer vision or AI training sets are formed by “unsubstantiated and unstable epistemological and metaphysical assumptions about the nature of images, labels, categorization, and representation”, based on political decisions.<sup>13</sup> It is important to question who is making these decisions and to ask how to include diversity in the ranks of programmers, who are mostly white men, seemingly including incels. Because of severe external criticism, categories have been renamed and entire sets of images have been removed, which are thus no longer available for scrutiny and rigorous analysis. The disappear-

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

ance of large segments of these datasets is not a solution to the current problem of biased representation, as Crawford and Paglen point out, since it erases the source upon which subsequent programming is based and which remains in use, unquestioned, by a myriad of companies and institutions. Such moves to eradicate visual data makes urgently required forensics impossible. Even if the datasets are modified now, the machine-learning systems that relied on them for training are not: they are still active and thereby reinforce stereotyping and biased subjectification, perpetrating the same logic and values they were given as input at all levels of societal relations and capital production, “including hiring, education and healthcare.”<sup>14</sup> As examples of where these biased image identification systems are applied the authors point out that “[t]hey are part of security checks at airports and interview protocols at Fortune 500 companies.”<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, both surveillance and weaponised drones are trained to detect violent behaviour by feeding their AI with fabricated imagery, produced by employing groups of people who pretend to carry out physical aggression, including punching, shooting, stabbing, and other violent acts. The bizarre point here is that, through these datasets that are inaccessible to public viewing and due assessment, “researchers are training drones to recognize pantomimes of violence, with all of the misunderstandings that might come with that.”<sup>16</sup> Such datasets consist of yet another unsupervised production of operative images that create a world beyond our present material reality, which is perpetuating systemic gender and race biases into the future, across temporal as well as spatial dimensions.

Drone warfare implies a geographical distancing between the pilot of the unmanned flying device and the target(s). Andrea Miller points out that drone operations are based on “processes of de- and reterritorialization, a dynamic choreography of present-absences and absent-presences that calls into question geospatial boundaries of place and spatial production.”<sup>17</sup> This could be understood as a procedure determined by a geopolitical strategy of othering and racial segregation, which works to promote and legitimise drone strikes aimed at people living in specific locations that are identified as ‘teeming’ with terrorists:

*As a dominant vector of racialization for perceived Muslim bodies, then, preemption must be understood as a spatiotemporal logic of differentially distributed risk, reaching into an imagined future to create an architecture through which it can act upon racialized bodies in a contingent present.*<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Andrea Miller, "(Im)Material Terror: Incitement of Violence Discourse as Racializing Technology in the War on Terror," *Life in the Age of Drone Warfare* (Durham-London: Duke University Press, 2017), 115.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 117.

From the perspective of what Miller calls ‘incitement discourse’, both operative imagery and material reality are influenced by the above-mentioned pantomimes produced to create the datasets “where the spaces of the accused terrorist’s imagination and desire become the site of imperialist preemption and capture.”<sup>19</sup> It should be emphasised that the created imagery and the hovering of drones above border zones implies the subjectification of the individuals who live in these areas. The bias is not only reinforced by categories based on skin colour and skull shape, but also by the fake aggression that is fed to the machine, as well as the assumption that geography determines the likelihood of someone’s terrorist intentions.

## **Exit the Ghost**

### **Occupation as Art**

The year 2020 is an interesting time to be working with video surveillance media as a film making device. Looking at found footage generated by online equipment, I am presented with an overview of the state of the world – or rather, what the world believed to be and how it wished to present itself to the rest of the world –, before the spread of Covid-19 justified containment measures. At the beginning of the lockdown I could observe beautiful historic city centres, consciously framed to invite tourists to consume culture and shop in adorned surroundings, now emptied out and devoid of movement. Wealthy western cities instantly metamorphosed into social deserts before my eyes, acquiring very similar contours to those Agamben describes as states of exception, which mainstream media had a Eurocentric public, from the comfort of their home, believe belonged only to troubled distant landscapes.

It is a known fact that mechanical visual representation has been racist since the onset of analogue photography and film. However, these known mistakes have not been tackled, with the consequence that present-day Nikon camera software misreads photographic imagery of people of Asian descent as people who have their eyes half closed or are ‘blinking’, and Hewlett-Packard’s webcam still does not recognise non-white people. This recalls the adjustment of camera calibration in analogue film with the Shirley Cards, but it also highlights the evidence of current algorithms that have been trained using strictly white models.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>20</sup> Kate Crawford, “Artificial Intelligence’s White Guy Problem”, *New York Times*, 25th of June 2016, accessed 5 October 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/26/opinion/sunday/artificial-intelligences-white-guy-problem.html>. The text further highlights that “[a] very serious example was revealed in an investigation published (...) by ProPublica. It found that widely used software that assessed the risk of recidivism in criminals was twice as likely to mistakenly flag black defendants as being at a higher risk of committing future crimes. It was also twice as likely to incorrectly flag white defendants as low risk.”

Gender bias is also rampant, with women “less likely than men to be shown ads on Google for highly paid jobs”, which makes it almost impossible for non-male computer-users to apply for those opportunities.<sup>21</sup> It is urgent to stay informed about AI training models and datasets, as these perpetuate the bias created by a colonial Eurocentric society, with grave future social consequences. This negative impact on subjectification may be avoided if representation and diversity are embedded in the fabric of the code employed to build artificial neural networks, but also in the operative visual data that is fed to them. Experimenting with these materials is a way to explore their flaws and claim their use for an intersectional and responsible practice: it is a way to occupy the spaces of meaning-production in order to create other narratives than those facilitated by biased (mainstream) media. As artist and researcher, I consciously claim critical space by occupying it with art projects. My desire for artistic agency to make a societal impact moves me to produce art pieces that make use of the means I wish to critically analyse, by deconstructing and questioning the material as a form of practice-based thought. My self-assigned role as occupying agent is a political position that I became aware of several years ago, when I engaged in the urban occupation movement to reclaim the use of empty buildings as a means to secure a living and working space as an artist, but it also relates to my experiences as a climate change activist and supporter of legal aid for illegal refugees. By collectively occupying real estate properties, we contributed to securing a protective space for those who could not afford to pay for a home or possess the legal papers to even be considered for wage labour. I then began to understand occupation as a tool for enabling acts of civil disobedience and positive action that could extend beyond the context of urban squatting. Occupation, in the present project, manifests as a strategy to secure the required agency to introduce decolonial archival practices in a gallery context, with surveillance equipment and publicly accessible online footage as both prime-matter for the setting up of art gestures and as core topics for a theoretical study.

Hito Steyerl states that the work of the artist has evolved into a form of occupation within capitalist post-Fordist labour relations. As she points out, “occupation is not a means to an end, as traditional labour is. Occupation is in many cases an end in itself.” Steyerl sees a connection with the military, for whom occupation acquires an imperialist character, as it is imposed upon others. It may seem like a long-shot, but Steyerl productively argues that occupation, both as labour mode and as power-enforcing strategy, shares the same terminology and, therefore, also some of the same meaning:

---

<sup>21</sup> Byron Spice, “Questioning the Fairness of Targeting Ads Online,” *Carnegie Mellon University News*, 7th of July 2015, accessed 5 October 2020, <https://www.cmu.edu/news/stories/archives/2015/july/online-ads-research.html>.

*Occupation often implies endless mediation, eternal process, indeterminate negotiation, and the blurring of spatial divisions. It has no built-in outcome or resolution. It also refers to appropriation, colonization, and extraction. In its processual aspect occupation is both permanent and uneven—and its connotations are completely different for the occupied and the occupier.*<sup>22</sup>

I have grown fond of Steyerl's transmedial conceptual jumps across disciplines and traditions, as a form of thought-process that connects different aspects of reality together. In this text, I recognise the relevance of considering artistic research and the military from the perspective of the process of occupation, in its two-fold meaning. As Steyerl points out, the "territory of occupation is not a single physical place." Paraphrasing the author; it is a manifestation of affect that may take place at any time or in any space.<sup>23</sup> Although Steyerl ends her paper on a less positive note, mentioning how work ceases to be productive or sustainable as it transitions toward a commonsensical notion of occupation, I see the potential of reclaiming agency to determine territorial boundaries through art, similar to urban occupation movements. This space of occupation can manifest as a critical platform for the virtual, the potentialities of affective encounters between operative visuals and humans, hereby creating possibilities to reflect on how to reclaim materials and transform procedures that increase intersectional diversity in representation.

As mentioned before, artificial intelligence acquires the logic and values that are imprinted in the data it is fed. With no critique or the required accountability, there is a real risk that machines will reflect privilege and bias, as can be inferred from the various case studies that demonstrate how racist and sexist stereotype-ridden datasets misrepresent segments of society. By scrutinising their make-up, we are better equipped to produce inclusive code. And by occupying platforms of visual production, we may reclaim their visual aesthetics and adapt their medium-specific language, to produce other narratives and create imagery by means of more sustainable practices that promote inclusive content in AI training datasets.

## Bibliography

Agamben, Giorgio. "L'Invenzione di un'Epidemia." In *Quodlibet*, 26th of February, 2020. Accessed 5 October 2020, <https://www.quodlibet.it/giorgio-agamben-l-invenzione-di-un-epidemia>.

"Bifo" Berardi, Franco. "Crónica de la psicodéflación." In *Sopa de Wuhan- Pensamiento Contemporáneo en Tiempos de Pandemias*. ASPO - Aislamiento Social Preventivo y Obligatorio, 2020.

Butler, Judith. "Capitalism has its Limits." *Verso Books*, 30th of March, 2020. Accessed 5 October 2020, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4603-capitalism-has-its-limits>.

---

<sup>22</sup> Hito Steyerl, "Art as Occupation: Claims for an Autonomy of Life," *The Wretched of the Screen* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 116.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

Crawford, Kate. "Artificial Intelligence's White Guy Problem." *New York Times*, 25th of June 2016. Accessed 5 October 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/26/opinion/sunday/artificial-intelligences-white-guy-problem.html>.

Crawford, Kate and Trevor Paglen. "Excavating AI – The Politics of Images in Machine Learning Training Sets," *Excavating AI*, 2020. Accessed 5 October 2020, <https://www.excavating.ai/>.

Miller, Andrea. "(Im)Material Terror: Incitement of Violence Discourse as Racializing Technology in the War on Terror." *Life in the Age of Drone Warfare*. Durham-London: Duke University Press, 2017.

Preciado, Paul B. "Learning from the Virus," in *Artforum*, May/June 2020. Accessed 5 October 2020, <https://www.artforum.com/print/202005/paul-b-preciado-82823>.

Spice, Byron. "Questioning the Fairness of Targeting Ads Online," in *Carnegie Mellon University News*, 7th of July 2015. Accessed 5 October 2020, <https://www.cmu.edu/news/stories/archives/2015/july/online-ads-research.html>.

Steyerl, Hito. "Art as Occupation: Claims for an Autonomy of Life," *The Wretched of the Screen* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 116.

Žižek, Slavoj. "Coronavirus is 'Kill Bill'-esque blow to capitalism and could lead to reinvention of communism," in *Russia Today*, 27th of February, 2020. Accessed 5 October 2020 <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/481831-coronavirus-kill-bill-capitalism-communism/>.

\* This text has been published in the book accompanying the exhibition and also partially on the website of the Amsterdam University Press.