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ODE TO MAXWELL

by

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Photomedia

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A MASSIVE THANK YOU TO

DAVID HAINES

The supervising rock to my studious roll.

And to

JULIE RRAP

Who convinced me in a dream that Honours was a good idea.

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INTRODUCTION:
RUNNING DEEP INSIDE MY VEINS

'The internet, the camera cell phone and the like have not only sped up the metabolism of the world's information uptake, it has also cheapened the data, it being so plentiful and easily accessible. A song is merely a small file to be downloaded for free. Many of us talk more and say less, see more, but retain little and are blessed with worldwide connectivity yet have become unplugged and comfortably self-absorbed. To hack into a hackneyed phrase: *"It's all content to me."* I think this is a monumental factor in how we see ourselves and each other. Where does it go from here?'[1]

- Henry Rollins

Ah, yes… where indeed? But in a world where technology advances so rapidly, that may be a question we can never accurately answer. The digital age is a paradoxical one. It is an era of indestructible muscle; it stands tall, rigid and cannot be struck down. It is also an era of which its anatomy is fickle; it is rapidly advancing and each distinct technological device has a brief life. Every model is continuously being replaced, upgraded, outmoded, and in cases like that of Sony's mini-disc, obsolete within a year. While it may be difficult to predict where it will all 'go from here,' it is not folly to say that digital technology – all these whozits and whatzits – can be perceived as the central nervous system of society today, and of the future. And so Mr Rollins, I'll take your question and compromise it somewhat. Here, we will instead examine this question: Where are we now?

[1] Henry Rollins. *Before the Chop: LA Weekly Articles 2011-2012*. (Los Angeles: 2.13.61, 2013), 77.

Let's begin by backtracking a few months and revisit the place where my interest in this world, synchronously liberated and trapped by technology, began. It all starts at a rock n' roll concert. Dozens of auditorium lights are substituted for a single spotlight that centres itself on the stage. The feedback from an amplifier murmurs. The audience cheers and claps. Band members take the stage, and suddenly, that single spotlight has competition. The entire arena is illuminated with the light produced by thousands of mobile phones. Fans in the front row watch the entire concert play out on their own personal screens. The photograph was absolutely everywhere, and yet I did not recognise it. These gizmos and gadgets did not look like cameras, they did not require film, they had no settings, and they did not stop at the magic number twenty-four. I realised just how obsessed society has become with capturing the moment that they fail to be in it. Born as a child of the digital age I had always been exposed to its strength, but for the first time, I was seeing it as a whole new kind of beast.

My ears were ringing. This was my idea of a musical hangover. For all those who watched everything through a screen it was like they missed the buzz. They drank, didn't get drunk, but had a severe hangover – they went to the concert, didn't experience the concert, but suffered the aftermath. It all seemed so impersonal and distant. Every photo taken would be identical, and even if they were worthy of being pressed into the pages of our dying music magazines, to diminish the experience of watching a favourite band through a virtual depiction seemed too goddamn cold. Technology is a great thing, but it is also the perpetrator of a distracted and detached experience. However, technology should also not be the victim of blame, not when it is people who throw themselves at it *time after time*. The documentation that it allows

seems to be priority; to post to Tumblr, Pinterest, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and have proof that "Hey, I was there! I was so close to the stage that the singer's spit hit my forehead. I didn't even know until some guy uploaded a photo of it and my friend's girlfriend's brother tagged me in it. But hey, I have a [thousand identical] picture[s], man!" Though the result is a pretty poor experience of something that – without technology – could be a vortex of energy and hype, society's commitment was to the photograph. The camera was the cold shoulder – to the audience as well as the band. It was the sheer curtain hanging in an upper-class hotel room, allowing you to make out shapes but never see the detail. It seems fair to say that new technology has influenced society's behaviour and ideals, introducing to us the possibility of streaming moments into documentation, representation, information and data. Something that is perhaps not as frequently considered is how this same technology is impacting the world of contemporary art.

Technology is no longer something that only underpins our natural and social world; it has flexed its muscles at the art world, and it seems the art world likes what it sees. It can perhaps be stated that artists have always used whatever resources are readily available to them to produce art, and those working in the contemporary art period are no exception. In a world that has been inundated with recent digital possessions, it should come as no surprise that phones, computers and software programs are now common assets in seeing out an artistic vision. So let's delve into my own.

PAINT BY NUMBERS

Often called a photograph and often called a painting, it seems the paradoxical Schrödinger's Cat[2] argument could last a *long lonely lonely time*. In a world where a photograph now fundamentally exists as data and information, this is exactly what my work thrives on. I aim to produce works representative of a fifty-year period, jam-packed into only five images – a compression of time, if you will. If all the technology-obsessed mosh-pit hooligans and hobbledehoys are so concerned with documentation, then this is precisely what I'll give them. My work will take its research from the UK's New Music Express (NME) Song Charts and as such, I will give it the title Top of the Charts. It will trace the hit songs that span from the 1st of January 1960 through to the 31st of December 2009, where each image will represent ten years, and be titled after its respective decade. In order to present this information, I will follow the two steps Lev Manovich suggests digitisation consists of: sampling and quantisation.[3] Sampling in Top of the Charts will come directly from the album cover or single cover on which each charting song was released. After sourcing the cover, it will be run through a program that assesses the colours in the image, and extracts that which is most dominant. Here, I'll refer to this process as being "colourmatic": the systematic use of colour following a set formula from which an artist cannot stray. Each of these samples is then "quantified" by using this colour to digitally paint a vertical stripe. The length of this will be determined by the number of days the song was charting, using a strict ratio. The light show at a concert causes everyone's phones to light up in a cosmic array of colour – snippets of pink and red, intercepted with greens and blues. My final work shares a similar aesthetic: a vast mass of coloured blocks, united to comment on the very thing that fuels its creation.

[2] An experiment in physics devised by Erwin Schrödinger, 1935.
[3] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 49.

It seems only natural that if technology can alter the way in which we perceive art, then art, in turn, can alter the way in which we perceive technology. The idea of technology and art's impact on each other is key to this essay. It aims to explore the world of data, the recent artistic avenue of the New Aesthetic, and Pataphysics. While my writing thus far could perhaps be described as colourful, I wish to adopt a more formal tone in exploring these topics, so as to maintain a position of objectivity. Let the fun begin.

CHAPTER ONE:
LET'S GET PHYSICAL

'Though no longer defined in one code, practice remains within a field. Decentered, it is recentered: the field is (precisely) 'expanded' rather than 'deconstructed.'

- Hal Foster[4]

Today, the evolution – and perhaps revolution – of numerous artistic mediums may be construed as almost inevitable. A multitude of mediums seem to be underpinned by a kind of malleability of physical properties (which here will be referred to as their "physiology") that, ironically, could be speculated to strengthen them, and further cement their place in the world of contemporary art. Two such mediums that can be argued to have undertaken an incredible number of physiological shifts are photography and music. Just as photography has been explored in the form of daguerreotypes, cyanotypes, Polaroid images and film, music has similarly been available for consumption through cassettes, vinyl, CDs, iPods and other MP3 players. A prospect that unites both of these mediums is the 'code' that now predominantly reinforces their production, presentation and popularity: data.

The term 'data' itself is used quite loosely in today's society, which is perhaps only a reflection of just how ubiquitous it has become. There appear to be two primary ways in which we define data: first, is that we refer to it as information, which, in a society tethered to the digital, seems nowadays to predominantly exist in conjunction with the Internet. A panel host at the Aspen Ideas Festival of 2013, Peter Hirshberg, stated of

[4] Hal Foster, "Re: Post." *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*. Ed. Brian Wallis (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), 195.

data that it is the fastest growing thing on earth.[5] To provide perspective on just how rapidly data is escalating, he stated that in 1995, there were 50 million devices connected to the Internet. In 2011, this reached 4.3 billion, and by 2025, it is predicted to ascend to 1 trillion devices. The more devices that we have connected to the Internet, the more data and information we are continually generating. The second way in which we define data today is as the 1s, 0s and apparent jargon that generate images, songs, files and software. Lev Manovich addresses this subject, stating that images (as digital files) now exists as 'mathematical data.'[6] This could perhaps be referred to as "operational data," while the prior could be considered "informational data." Both varieties of data could be recognised as a new way for artists to expand their pixelated horizons, as they now have access to a plethora of recent programs and information that had never before existed, let alone been so plentiful. In this digital world in which we seem to have endless information on tap, an interesting artistic trend has flourished, as artists are intervening and mediating all this information, and use the operational to provide it with a kind of non-linguistic visual language.

One such artist who works in this field is Luke DuBois. DuBois is a generative artist, who states of the practice that it is 'where, basically, you surrender control over some aspect of what's going down to a process… I just need to come up with a really amazing way to take that information and visualise it.'[7] In Dubois's work A More Perfect Union, he signed up to 21 separate online dating sites, and downloaded nineteen million dating profiles of single American men and women. These profiles

[5] Peter Hirshberg, "The Art of Data." The Aspen Ideas Festival. The Aspen Institute, 2013.
[6] Lev Manovich, "The Paradoxes of Digital Photography." *Photography After Photography.* Exhibition Catalogue. (Germany, 1995), 2.
[7] Luke DuBois, "Generative Art: Computers, Data and Humanity." *Off Book* (PBS: 2011).

were each divided and categorised by zip code, and key words were extracted. Using this information, DuBois was able to create a stunning 43 images that acted as a series, depicting city, state and national maps. Perhaps the most recognised work of this series is one that portrays a United States road atlas, in which each of the city names have been replaced with the word most frequently used by people to describe themselves, residing in the respective location. DuBois reports that in total, over 200,000 distinctive words were applied to this map, and as such, becomes in its own way, emblematic of a kind of romantically skewed census. From DuBois's series A More Perfect Union, the argument can perhaps be drawn that individuals are not typically conditioned to read data, but when this data is categorised and transformed into something visual, we are much better at understanding it.

In a world where technology and data are now so seamlessly integrated into the lives of individuals, it seems fair to assert that technology has had, and will continue to have, an impact on social behaviours. In his book *Synthetics*, Stephen Jones poses an idea which he calls the "rolling new," in which he states the following: 'new technologies continually arise, providing new and interesting opportunities for artists, establishing art and technology as a form that is constantly renewed and regenerated.'[8] As such, as we continually 'renew and regenerate' these technologies, we also renew the way in which society functions. An example of this could perhaps be found in a recent trend called the "Internet of Things" (IOT). This is the development of connecting objects in the physical world with the digital realm, using such technologies as sensors, locating devices and actuators. A good example of this is Philip's recent "Hue" light technology, which can be controlled via an App

[8] Stephen Jones, *Synthetics* (USA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2011), 6.

downloaded onto a phone or computer. Beyond the standard function of a light bulb, Hue provides its users with the option to select colour (even matching it to a photograph), brightness and the time that the lights may turn on and off. As such, data allows for communication to occur so that a physical reaction can transpire from something existing within a digital network.

The notion of technology impacting the behaviour of individuals and society alike can be likened to an idea explored by Marshall McLuhan called technological determinism. McLuhan's own student and friend John Culkin may have summed up this idea best when he stated 'we shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us.'[9] Technological determinism aims to investigate the prospect that as we generate new technologies, these in turn restructure the function, behaviour and values of society and of culture. Jones states of computers that they can be seen as "electronic brains" that are an 'impressive outcome of modern technology… but they [are] also driving and confounding major parts of most people's lives.'[10] Here, Jones points out the impact that technology now has on society, and in the midst of an art world more exposed to, and more dominated by the digital than we've ever before seen, technological determinism could also be said to be of increasing relevance to contemporary art. To accommodate this notion to that of the art world, let us reword Culkin: 'technology shapes art, and thereafter art shapes technology.' Data is just one of the many ways in which technology has the ability to shape the contemporary art world, but perhaps art shaping technology is addressed less often. And so, in the next

[9] John Culkin, "Each Culture Develops Its Own Sense Ratio to Meet the Demands of its Environment." In Gerald Stearn (Ed.). *McLuhan: Hot and Cool* (New York: New American Library, 1967), 52.
[10] Jones, *Synthetics,* 32.

section we will investigate the following question: how is art changing the way we perceive technology, in relation to the New Aesthetic?

CHAPTER TWO:
IT'S HIP TO BE SQUARE

It could perhaps be argued that one thing that seems unchanging in the nature of art is an audiences' attempt to understand its content. When the meaning of content is considered, it is typically concluded that it is the message the artist is trying to present. However, Marshall McLuhan suggests that content amounts only to one portion of understanding art – rather, he believes that 'the medium is the message.'[11] It is perhaps too often disregarded as to just how much a medium can tell us about a work, and can be construed as a comment on the kinds of artistic production available to society at the time. When we apply such a prospect to the world of contemporary art we are faced with a kind of mass-produced planet, dominated by images, fashion, advertisements and billboards, which, most frequently, are fundamentally reliant on the digital. Photography has strayed from its traditional form, just as drawing has advanced from its basic requirements of a pencil and paper, to one where we can sketch with a stylus on an electronic tablet. Aside from these new technologies becoming so fluidly incorporated into society, they have also opened contemporary art to a whole new facet of mediums to explore.

As new technology seems to underpin both the lives of individuals, as well as society as a whole, the question of how the digital impacts the contemporary art world is becoming increasingly significant. Bruce Sterling believes that we are 'surrounded by systems, devices and machineries generating heaps of raw graphic novelty.'[12] Just as Luke DuBois's generative art aims to provide data with a visual language, there are

[11] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: MIT Press, 1994), 7.
[12] Sterling, Bruce. "An Essay on the New Aesthetic." *Wired*, 2012.

now artists who aim to depict the physical world as we imagine it would be seen by all these 'systems, devices and machineries,' often translating their 'raw graphic[s]' into something tangible. What is interesting about this art is that while technology is the inspiration for its production, it also inspires new ways to perceive modern technology. To take the technological or digital realm and thrust its subjects into the world of the physical is perhaps comparable to the Cubists who aimed to represent the fourth dimension through images that replicated a single person or object in many positions on the canvas. The notion of emulating a digital visual as we envision it in the physical world was, in 2011, coined "The New Aesthetic." First fashioned by James Bridle, who can be accredited as the Salvador Dali of the New Aesthetic, this is a recent artistic path. Bridle himself is reluctant to call it an artistic "movement," and rather, he states it is 'a series of artefacts of the heterogeneous network, which recognises differences, the gaps in our distant but overlapping realities.'[13] Of course, upon mention of these overlapping realities, it seems most logical to assume he is referencing the overlay between our physical world and our digital one, and as such, these are the realms with which this chapter will concern itself. Most importantly, Bridle recognises that we don't just use technology to create art, but equally, that art produces new ways to understand and perceive technology.

LONDON CALLING

The New Aesthetic is, at its fundamental basis, equally digital and physical. It is, as the renowned American cyberpunk author and cultural commentator Bruce Sterling notes, 'an eruption of the digital into the physical.' It is 'a native product of modern

[13] James Bridle, "The New Aesthetic," Tumblr, accessed September 23, 2014, http://new-aesthetic.tumblr.com/about.

culture network. It's from London, but it was born digital, on the Internet.'[14] The New Aesthetic is all about living in a new world that we have created, where digital and new technologies are integrated into our natural surroundings and the everyday. Objects such as sofas, cushions, tiled walls, images, sculptures, fashion prints and even satellite images are now evangelists to the New Aesthetic. Each preaching their own 8-bit, pixelated appearance, it is not unusual to stumble across these articles that, at times, could make a person feel that they've entered the super world of Mario – *Super Nintendo* Mario, of course. Two such artists who achieve this include Kunihiko Morinaga and Helmut Smits. An interesting thing to note of these artists is that they both approach the production of New Aesthetic works in separate ways. Morinaga creates clothing inspired by pixels that is reliant on technology for its production before being made physical. In contrast, Smits constructs his work naturally, but intends for it to be presented digitally. Despite their varying approaches, both artists do exactly what James Bridle states of the New Aesthetic – they create works that 'wave at the machines.'[15]

Pixels are no longer just a signifier of a low-resolution camera or an out-dated video game console, but are now tied to the everyday using such fields as fashion. Kunihiko Morinaga is one such artist who combines the aesthetic of pixels into his range of clothing and accessories. Under his label entitled "Anrealage" (a combination of the words "a real," "unreal" and "age")[16], Morinaga designed a collection that is typically referred to as "8-bit clothing." Just as low-resolution photographs can be perceived as clear when they are viewed from a distance, Morinaga's clothes may seem reasonably

[14] Sterling, "The New Aesthetic."
[15] James Bridle, "Waving at the Machines," Web Directions South, 2011.
[16] "Anrealage," accessed September 25, 2014, http://www.anrealage.com/about.html

orthodox, but when viewed closer up, their pixelated aesthetic becomes evident. Perhaps an interesting assessment of Morinaga's range is that they paradoxically share a retro aesthetic with one considered to be pioneering. Upon first seeing such designs, it seems the most common association they bear is that of nostalgia – a day when Atari and early Nintendo consoles were almost a staple to the children of Western Civilisation. Not only did the models that walked down the runway donning Morinaga's designs look as though they could be seamlessly extracted from the video games produced in the 80s and early 90s, but also did so as a pianist played live music reminiscent of these games. What is paradoxical about Morinaga's work is that while its predominant association is nostalgia, the word "nostalgia" itself is used almost interchangeably to suggest something is old, retro and outmoded. However, as Bridle may suggest, Morinaga's clothes also represent a kind of "insistent futurism,"[17] as they are both inspired by and reliant on the current digital world. They are a product of new technology, and yet, technology now moves with such rapidity that we seem to address its 8-bit aesthetic as an indicator of something old.

In contrast to Morinaga, the Dutch artist Helmut Smits produces works that share no dependence on modern technology in their creation, yet require it for his art to be seen as he intends. In his work Dead Pixel in Google Earth, Smits burnt a single square into a luscious green area of land near his studio in Rotterdam.[18] The size of the square was 82cm x 82cm, which Smits calculated to be the size of a single pixel when viewed from an altitude of one kilometre. Smits' intention was, as his title suggests, that when looking at this area of land using such technology as the satellite imagery of

[17] Bridle, "Waving at the Machines."
[18] Helmut Smits. "Dead Pixel in Google Earth," 2008-2010, accessed September 25, 2014, http://helmutsmits.nl/public-spaces/dead-pixel-in-google-earth

Google Earth, this burnt square would emulate the appearance of a dead pixel as we typically see it on a computer or other digital screen. In this way, Smits reimagines the notion of thrusting digital subjects into the physical world, as he does not aim to reinvent physical subjects as machines may see them (like Morinaga does), but rather, reconsiders ideas that are already of digital origin, and re-contextualises them as he envisions would be applicable in reality.

Such works give us an entirely new way to think of the digital – to think *from* the digital. Paul Levinson wrote of cyberspace that it is 'a world of no boundaries in which information emerges not from fixed positions but from anywhere and everywhere.'[19] Objects developing from the New Aesthetic highlight a new way to look at this world, and on some level, seem symbolic of this transitory state we now live in, where we are compromising the way society functions to share our world with technology. Bridle often refers to pixels as being the 'grain of the virtual,'[20] and artists are giving this grain volume and a body so it does not live purely in a world that seems so illusory, but becomes tangible. While the intention of artists working in the New Aesthetic field may vary, it might also be considered that all their works share the same overarching objective: to imagine. As such, it could be considered that while the New Aesthetic is fuelled by relevant ideas and real technologies, these artworks still exist as speculative.

[19] Paul Levinson. *Digital McLuhan: A Guide to the Information Millennium* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 45.
[20] Bridle, "Waving at the Machines."

CHAPTER THREE:
WHEN THE CLASS HAS GONE AWAY

Skip back to the 1880s. It's a brisk day in Rennes, France. You're a schoolboy sitting out in the courtyard, joking with his friends. Your science teacher, named Habert, isn't quite satisfactory in his knowledge of the very subject he teaches, and you know it. You and your friends enjoy asking him questions during class, but you always ensure these questions are ones you know he cannot answer. In front of a group of youthful boys, Habert wishes to *avoid an unpleasant scene*, and so, he tells you an answer. He knows it is probably not correct, but he makes it sound scientific so as to avoid providing the class with doubt that this is the case. This is the origin of pataphysics: the science of imaginary solution. One of the schoolboys in question was the playwright, novelist and theorist Alfred Jarry, who is most frequently credited with coining the very term "Pataphysics".

Pataphysics seems to be a word lost on most people, and perhaps not surprisingly. Upon researching the topic, it appears typical that the writer addressing it does so in a relatively vague manner, and as such the subject itself seems bereft of any grounded underpinnings to begin with. An important thing to know of Pataphysics is that this is intentional – as Andrew Hugill states in his lecture *The Pataphysics of the Future*, 'to understand pataphysics is to fail to understand pataphysics.'[21] While a lack of any clear definition makes the topic a lot less comprehensive, perhaps it could be considered that the writers who don't give the movement any barriers are actually more loyal to the topic itself. For the sake of this essay however, I will respond to

[21] Andrew Hugill, "The Pataphysics of the Future Lecture," Transdisciplinary DMU, De Montfort University, 2013.

specific pataphysical ideas, which, in turn, will contextualise Pataphysics as I feel it best relates to the topics previously discussed. It is also worth mentioning here that perhaps the most common pop culture reference to Pataphysics is included in The Beatles' song *Maxwell's Silver Hammer*. It is from this song that the title of this research paper and chapter are derived, and the following Pataphysical discussion will be named after the song's first mentioned character. So, to paraphrase The Beatles, call me Joan and call me quizzical, let's study Pataphysical.

JOAN'S NOTION

While Pataphysics has no clear-cut definition, on some level this very quality seems to strengthen the movement, as it can be more easily applied to a greater range of artworks, mediums and new technologies. Of course, one cannot pretend that a word with no definitive meaning is not used loosely. What is of interest here is how the word Pataphysics is used today. Perhaps it was in due part to a character developed by Jarry called Ubu – who represented the outlandish and distorted – that today, Pataphysics is a term often used interchangeably with the idea of 'the beyond or the experimental.'[22] Given that the New Aesthetic is a kind of artistic avenue that imagines the physical form of a virtual medium, it may be conceptually and fundamentally linked with the movement of Pataphysics. Jarry states of imaginary solutions that they 'symbolically attribute the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments.'[23] In this, it may be suggested that the New Aesthetic

[22] Andrew Hugill, "Imaginary Music Technologies: A Survey," De Montfort University, accessed September 30, 2014, http://andrewhugill.com/pataphysics/Techimagin/.
[23] Alfred Jarry, "What is Pataphysics?" (*Evergreen* Review, 1963), 131.

exists as an artistic path that harnesses the Pataphysical, whether conscious or not of doing so.

While Pataphysics is typically associated with the notion of the imaginary, Pablo Lopez has developed a new principle of Pataphysics that can be applied to an array of New Media art. Jarry states of Pataphysics that it exists 'as far from metaphysics as metaphysics extends from regular reality.'[24] From this, Lopez took a linguistic approach to re-contextualise its meaning, thinking of Pataphysics as being that which is after metaphysics. In other words, this is to think of Pataphysics as the metaphor of a metaphor, and thus, Lopez coined the term "pataphor."[25] Aaron Hillyer states that 'while metaphysics and metaphors attain one degree of separation from reality, pataphors and pataphysics move beyond two degrees.'[26] In this, one may assume that reaching, what I will call the "Pataphorical" realm, does require going through the Metaphorical first. Such an idea is certainly a new take on Jarry's own assessment of Pataphysics, and it is possible that much of the data-based art being produced today benefits more from this reading than Pataphysics' own original associations. To explain this, let us use Top of the Charts as our basis. Following Lopez's theory of the pataphor, it can be deduced that physics exists as reality, the album cover produced representing this reality would be the metaphor, and the information drawn from each of these album covers would thus be the pataphor. In this way, Lopez's construction of the pataphor could be considered as the most literal take on Jarry's original contextualisation of Pataphysics. Lopez's reconceptualisation of Pataphysics does not

[24] Alfred Jarry, in Aaron Hillyer, *The Disappearance of Literature: Blanchot, Agamben, and the Writers of the No* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 26.
[25] Daniel L. Becker, *Many Subtle Channels: In Praise of Potential Literature* (USA: Harvard College, 2012), 144.
[26] Aaron Hillyer, *The Disappearance of Literature: Blanchot, Agamben, and the Writers of the No* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 26.

seem to diminish its original form, but instead, expands its application to the field of contemporary art, giving strength to a malleable notion that may otherwise appear fragile.

CONCLUSION:
ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL

'For as the prophet once forlornly sang: to be a rock and not to roll… who the f*ck wants that?'[27]

- Mick Wall

Perhaps it can be argued that the presence of technology in contemporary society does not only come with an impact – it comes with its own lifestyle. From that night when I watched phones being wildly swung above the masses, I have found only increasing significance in the role of technology today. Some may consider it a commodity, but when we demonstrate such dependence on the devices of today, such a view seems too narrow. Rather, I'd suggest it accounts for an expansion of society's experience, and an expansion of the field of art as a whole. It could perhaps be stated that the art world was once reliant on two primary forms of production: the physical and the chemical. While these mediums certainly still play a significant and leading role in contemporary art, they now share the limelight with the digital. The digital is a rolling stone, and it shows no signs of slowing down.

Data could feasibly be considered the lynch pin of technological devices. Looming in the virtual clouds of the digital itself, it seems society has a tendency to forget the importance of the role it plays in our techno-world. In the age of Wi-Fi and the World Wide Web, data could be deemed our point of informational connectivity. As such, one may speculate that the increase of data-reliant technology runs in linear

[27] Mick Wall, *Appetite For Destruction: Legendary Encounters with Mick Wall* (London: Orion Books, 2010), xxi.

correlation to the extent of which society is "plugged in." The role such artists as Luke DuBois play in intervening with all this data and providing it with its own visual language acts as the vessel through which our endlessly growing market of information can be controlled, and further, understood.

The New Aesthetics recognises the influence that technology now holds over society. What the New Aesthetic also realises, is that these machineries are not simply accessories, but are deeply engrained in the lives of individuals on a global scale. They are something with which we share our natural world, and the New Aesthetic demonstrates this in often the most literal of ways. By thrusting subjects that we recognise as belonging in the digital into the physical world, we are exposed to an art practice that understands that the digital – no matter how virtual its physiology – is still something that immensely alters our natural, physical world.

The Pataphysical and the Pataphorical can be used to approach new technology in an entirely different way. They exist almost as allegories in understanding the place of technology in contemporary society. It connects us with the new, the experimental, the beyond, and further, highlights that these prospects are now infiltrating our present. From artworks that depict imaginary solution, through to the pataphor's linguistic approach on generating new contexts from the pre-existing, Pataphysics is not a delicate idea, but rather, one of versatility.

As for Mr Rollins' initial question 'where does it go from here?' this can be approached in no light other than the speculative. However, if history is anything to go by, then artistic fields will continue to develop in a digitised capacity. Perhaps

there will be a day that film photography has fallen entirely into oblivion. A day when drawing and painting will proudly announce themselves as eco-friendly – where they dismiss paper all together and resort to sketching and painting on tablets or other such digital screens. A day when it is the norm for sculptures to be rendered in advanced computer programs, before being printed with our new 3D printing technology.

As that single spotlight faded, the auditorium lights lit the venue once more. Shuffling toward the exit, the crowd squabbled for their phones, posting images on Instagram and applying filters that echoed the aesthetic of old film cameras. Although the concert had drawn to a close a mere five minutes beforehand, these images oozed nostalgia. The crowds' excitement of being at a concert quickly fizzled. The enthusiasm for their new photographs did not. In their world, the concert was only real if it was Facebook official. They Tweet and therefore, they are. Re-entering the outside world, the sound of technology continued to ring in my ears.

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