

A Ripple in the Data Flow

Curated by Xinchun Du

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Artists: Gregory Edwards, Huang Guaier + Wang Runzhong, Xiang Geng (Sean Fox), Tao Hui, Mark Lee, Molly Soda, Ziyang Wu, Esther Yijun Xu, and Payne Zhu

MA Curatorial Practice at the School of Visual Arts is pleased to present *A Ripple in the Data Flow*, curated by Xinchun Du.

A Ripple in the Data Flow proposes a series of urgent questions too often ignored in this age of global connectivity: What kind of self-awareness can users maintain when they are actively, passively, or indirectly accessing data? If data is structured in a rational way, to what extent are we rational when using data? What are the perils of infatuation with the networked world and the many kinds of information, pleasure, convenience, and fantasy it offers? Curated amid the unprecedented human novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, *A Ripple in the Data Flow* becomes an online virtual exhibition at a time when many events and activities are forced to go online. It thus reflects on how our understanding of reality and virtuality is enhanced by this extraordinary situation.

The artists in *A Ripple in the Data Flow* reflect on the stages of collection, analysis, compilation, and falsification of data, together with its promises of cognitive fast food, emotional indifference, or volitional expansion. Gregory Edwards, in his representational and abstract paintings, captures Internet symbols that recur in daily life. Huang Guaier + Wang Runzhong's series of photographs dialectically rethink "seeing" in relation to optics and haptics. Xiang Geng (Sean Fox)'s video installation questions how internet subculture makes assumptions about attention span through the case of TikTok.

Consider also how the panic over COVID-19 was amplified many times by social media, creating uncertainty that ignited anxiety and racism in the real world and online. In contrast, Tao Hui's video addresses the atomization of society and increased solitude compelled by information networks. Mark Lee's two installation works reflect on the surveillance industry and the narcissism of selfie culture. Molly Soda's mirror with the message "Is she real?" plays with online users' obsession with authenticity. Ziyang Wu's project examines how algorithms personalize online experience through the "filter bubble." Esther Yijun Xu creates a multilayered world through new media, taking a critical view of social, political, and cultural issues. Finally, Payne Zhu's automated plugin deals with the problem of bad cookies and Internet censorship.

The videos, photographs, paintings, or installations in *A Ripple in the Data Flow* question the unprecedented access to human cognition in people's daily lives. Perhaps the Internet can be compared to black holes in space, surrounded by a flashing vortex of leaked data. Once we

have been attracted to its magical aura, it becomes impossible to escape. In revealing neglected network phenomena, *A Ripple in the Data Flow* engages with the profound influence of the Internet to show the unpredictability of future network development and technological thinking.

ABOUT MA CURATORIAL PRACTICE, THE SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS, NEW YORK

The Master of Arts degree in Curatorial Practice at the School of Visual Arts is a two-year program that focuses on intensive professional training, with a thorough grounding in the study of art and exhibition history, research, and theory. Students work with leading experts in an academic setting and in internships around the world, providing continuous opportunities to gain practical experience, acquire intellectual breadth, and develop a professional network in the field. The program takes full advantage of the vast number of arts institutions in New York City and the professionals working here and visiting, who constitute our distinguished faculty and weekly guest speakers. Go to macp.sva.edu to find out more.