



Something Rich and Strange - Digital Ectoplasm and other Computational Conundrums.

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The technologies, tools and practices deployed within the Creative Industries are undergoing what could be described in evolutionary terms as a Punctuated Equilibria. An event that happens after a long slow period of stability and gradual change, when suddenly a new creature emerges with little resemblance to its ancestors. The transformative impact of Artificial Intelligence is certainly punctuating many a business plan, technical production pathway and pedagogical approach, causing fear and opportunity across creative, social, political and industrial fields. And yet to use an evolutionary term is as clumsy as anthropomorphising AI, making the excuse that they 'hallucinate' when in fact they are just making things up. These things that know our deepest darkest desires better than we do, do so because they have been feeding off our cultural heritage for years.

I have had an entanglement with these algorithmic forms since the early 1980s where they generated a new kind of creative space framed by the chirping machine sounds of modems and the soft screeching of dot matrix printers, accessing this networked terrain created a tangible feeling of a vast domain of potential. This creative space emerged through a clumsy dialogue with and through machines. The recursive and emergent properties of the glitch, a corrupted file, a delay in the stream of data or a line of faulty code became a driver in the quality of this (im)materiality, woven into a fabric that redefined time and space and human relationships within them before it was Zuckerberged into a transactional space for exploitation.

This presentation explores a range of computational conundrums, such as Monkeys writing the Complete Works of Shakespeare, impossibly slow moving architectural walls, algorithmic sculptures and an early form of Grief Tech. It zooms in on a transdisciplinary space of the Fulldome, formerly known as the Planetarium, which has been undergoing a disciplinary metamorphosis. It awoke one morning from uneasy astronomical dreams and found itself transformed from a planetarium into an 'omniarium'- no longer just planets but a spherical perspective that provides immersive, performative, and polysensory experiences. A place where coders, VJ's, performers, gamers and musicians have as much fun as their audience.

Through this specific punctuated equilibria of the transformation of the fulldome into creative technological melting pot we can see the resonance of the last 50 years of algorithmic and computational media technologies. It is smothered in a digital ectoplasm which gives me a similar tangible feeling of a vast domain of potential that I experienced when I built my ZX81 and dreamed in BASIC.

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Mike Phillips