

**“Clashings of Art, Culture, and Technology in a Digital  
Anthropological World”**

**Senior Thesis I&II, Visual Arts, Columbia University**

**Elizabeth Ulanova**

**December 2018**

# “Connection” A Conceptual Short Film + Installation

For full video click here: <https://vimeo.com/308660312>

Finished: December 2018. Duration: 10 mins 39 seconds



# What is the role of self-medication?

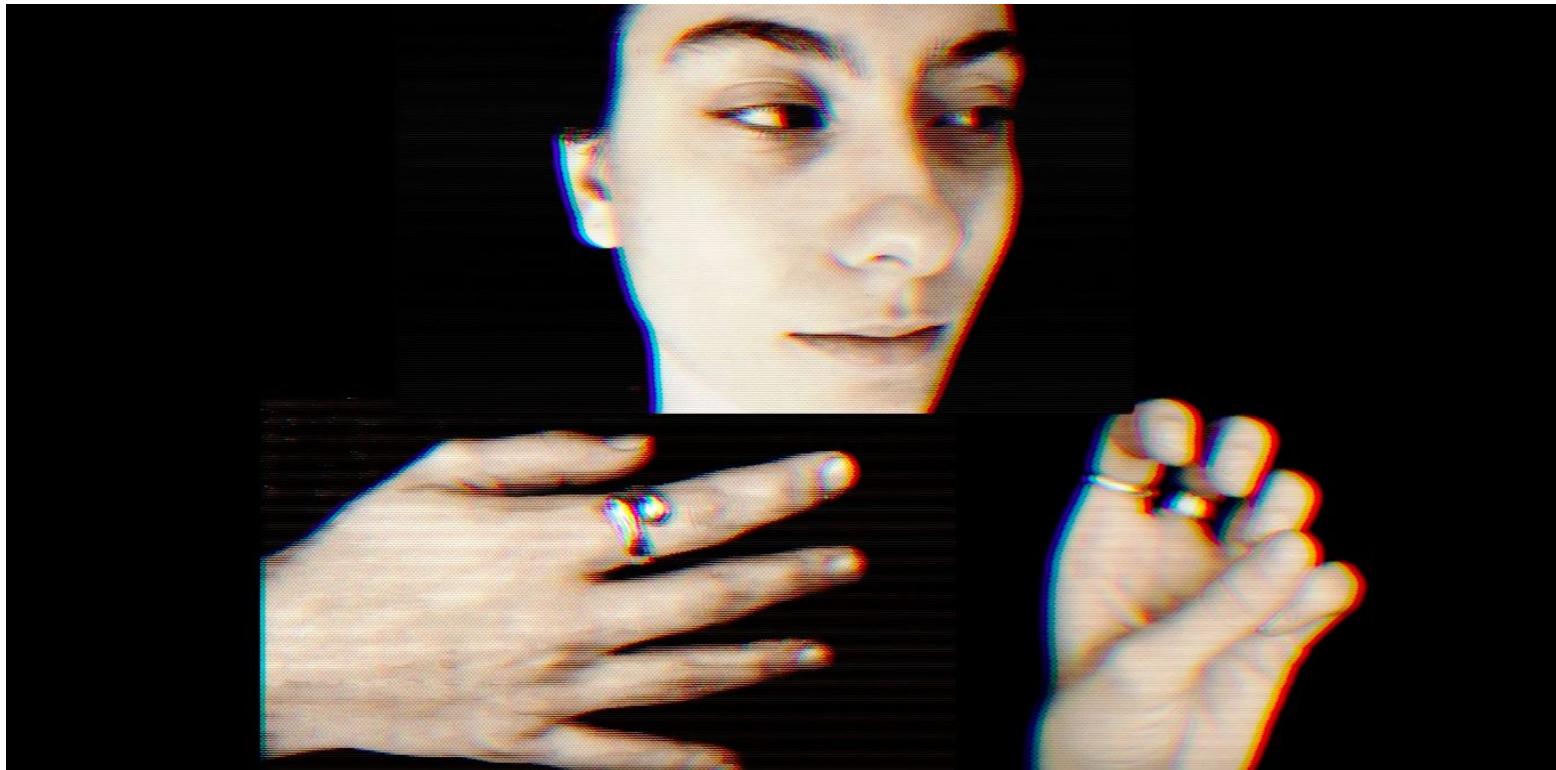
An original short film that critiques the role of therapy and self-medication through the framework of bioengineered pills that induce apathy. This is the first film in the series that is focused on a non-digital piece of technology. Therefore, in order to expand the artist's own creative pallet as well as push the psychological landscapes of the audience, "Connection" is zoned in on one of the most commonly used yet seemingly 'invisible' technologies found with the taboo-ed fabrics of modern American society.





# “Body” A Video Installation Piece

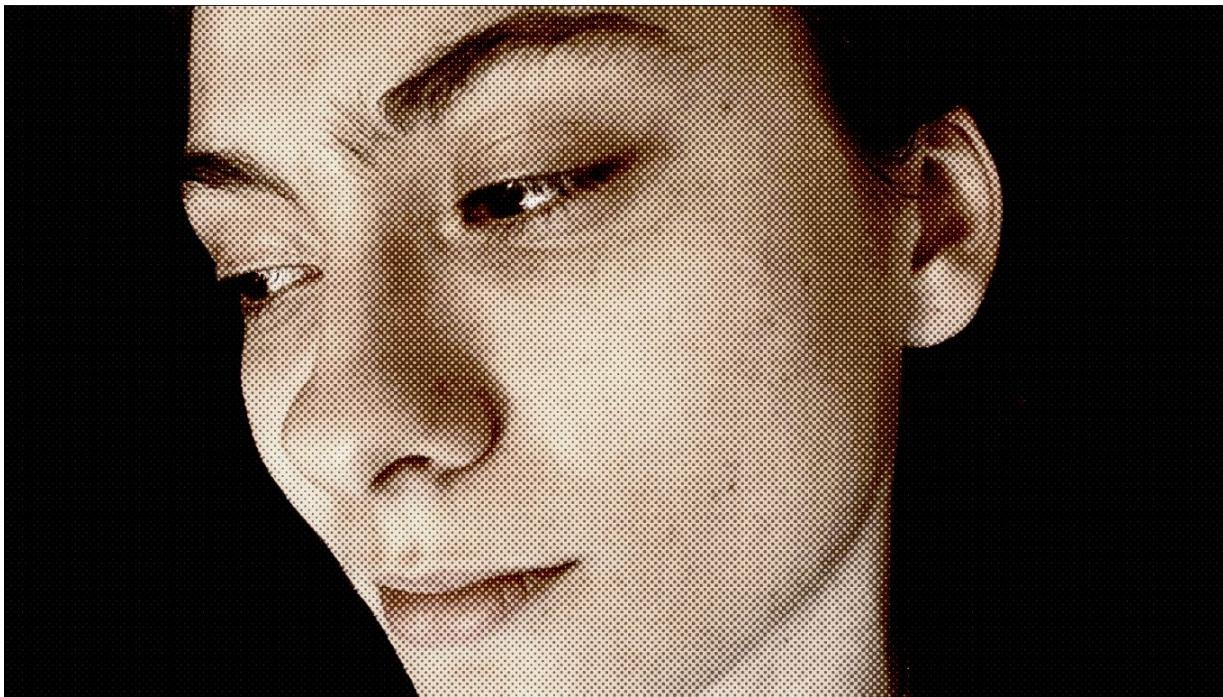
Finished: November 2018. Duration: 1 minute 30 seconds (each video)



# “Body” A Video Installation Piece

Finished: November 2018.

For full video click here: <https://youtu.be/xhbgybuwEkl>



Finished: November 2018

The head is literally, one of the smallest body parts but figuratively considered the largest in both functionality and impact. Here, its digital presentation represents the influx and domination of technology in contemporary culture (or “heads”) as well as its dominance over the rest of the body. The digitized hands also relate to how physicality is shaped by technology- from the digitization of human physical experiences to the disappearance of manual labor. Moreover, « Body » speaks in regards to how digital art has revolutionized the representation of human bodies. All three videos played simultaneously on individual ipads while lying adjacently on the ground.



# “Screens” An Installation Piece with Video Projection onto Oil Canvas



# “Screens” An Installation Piece with Video Projection onto Oil Canvas

Finished: October 2018

Video: 8 Minutes

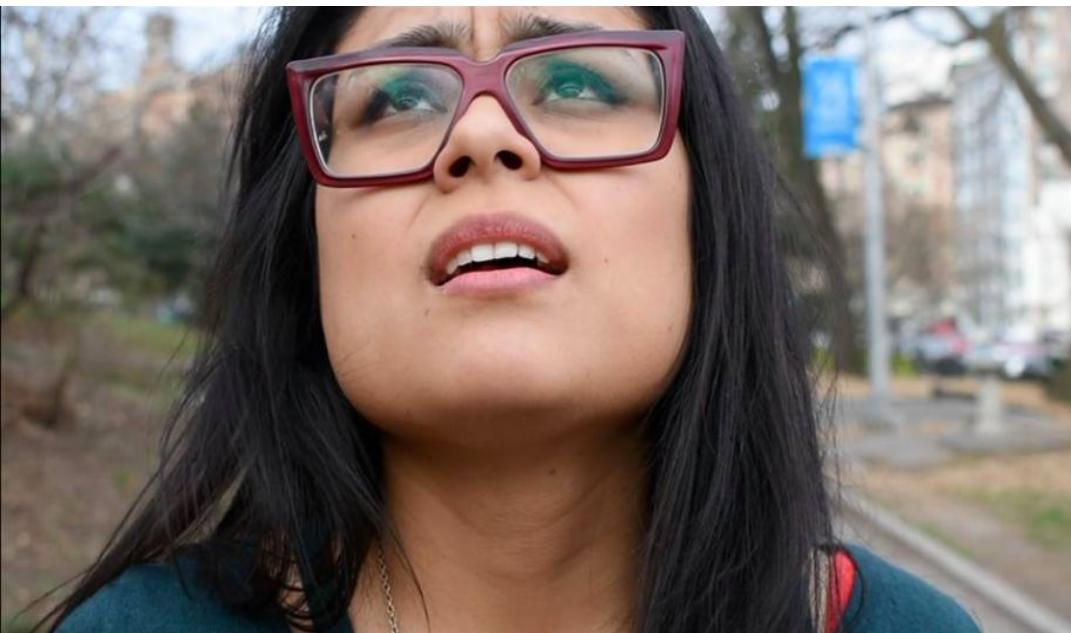
A live installation that includes the confluence of traditional canvas with digital technology. “Screens” is a visual dialogue of the characters we play within the confines of the technological abstract.



# “Voices” A Conceptual Short Film

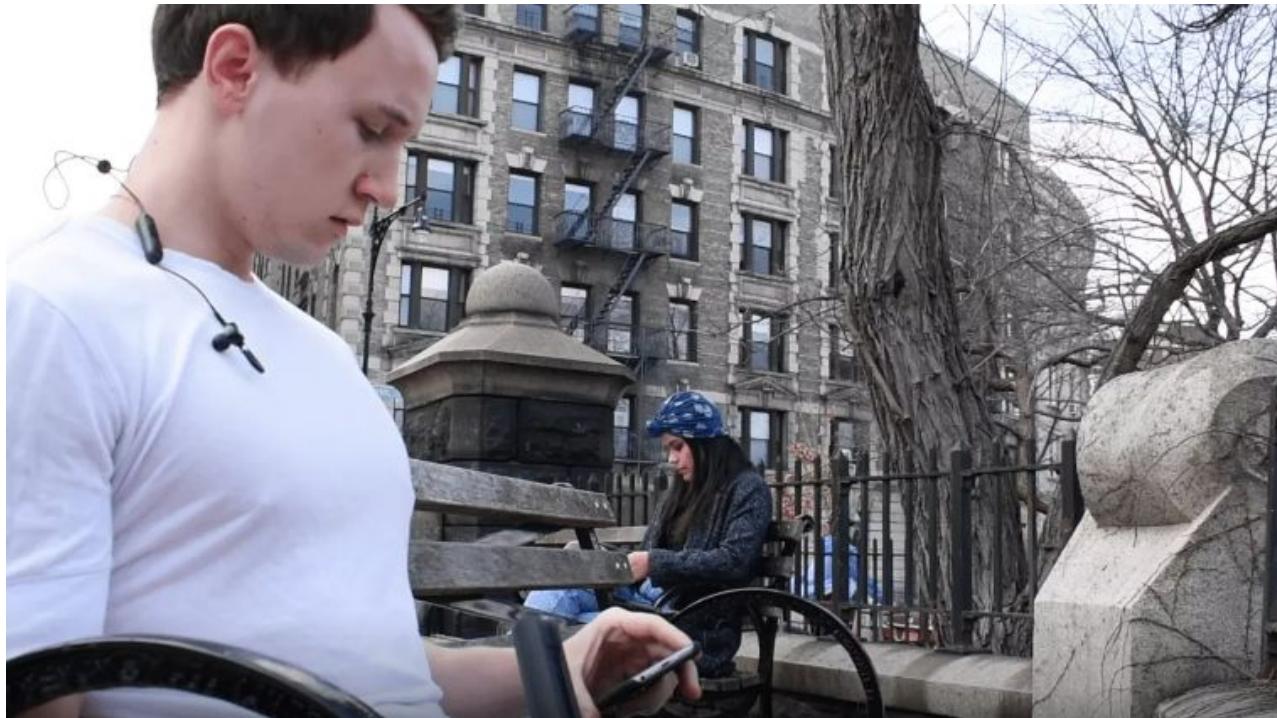
For full video click here: <https://vimeo.com/278542139>

Finished: May 2018. Duration: 9 minutes 8 seconds



# How important is transparency to you?

An original short film that critiques the nature of internal transparency within society through the lens of a fictionalized world that mandates its citizens to wear telepathic brain microchips.



# “Cracked” An Installation Piece with Video Projection onto Sculpture



# “Cracked” An Installation Piece with Video Projection onto Sculpture

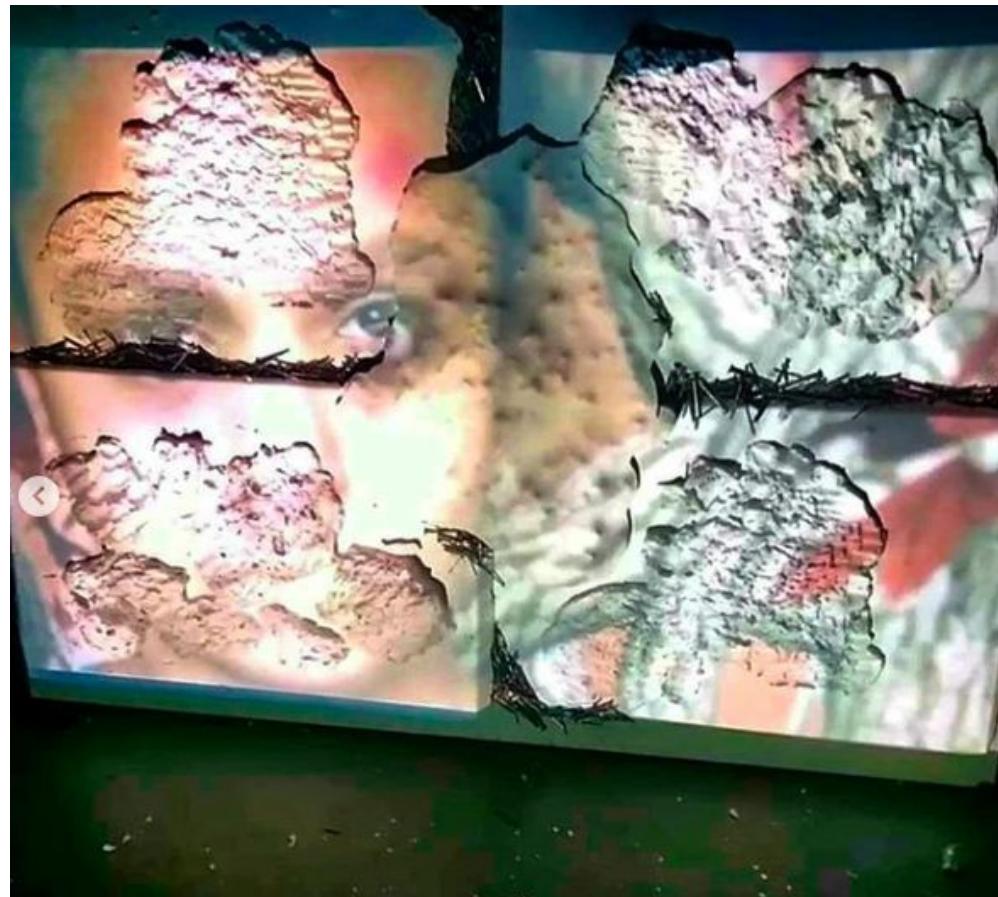
Finished: March 2018

Video: 10 Minutes

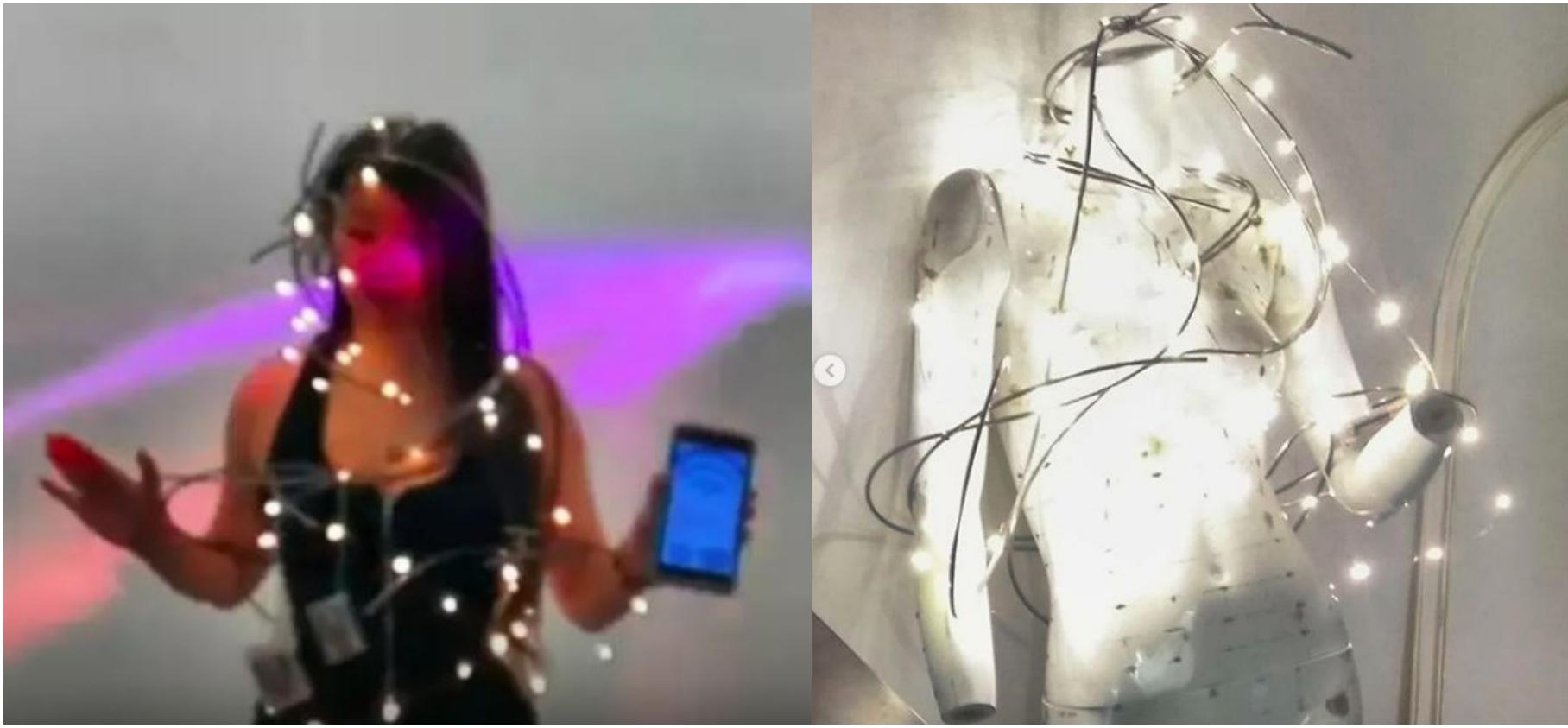
A live installation show that combined both traditional materials as well as technological elements to showcase the multi facets of the feminine figure.

Performance footage:

<https://youtu.be/d1yHvoHXAPQ>



# “Human Wifi” A Kinetic Sculpture with Video Projection, and Performance Art

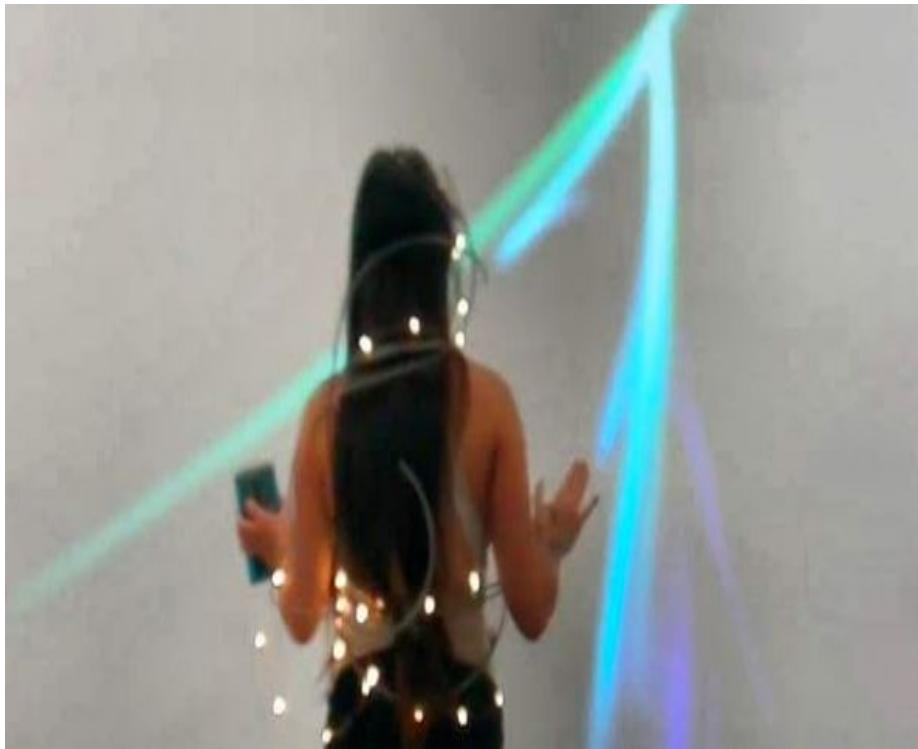


# “Human Wifi” A Kinetic Sculpture with Video Projection, and Performance Art

Finished: May 2018.

A live installation piece that critiqued modern society through the performance and utilization of a hand welded kinetic metal prosthesis regarding the excess usage of the internet.

Performance footage:



# “Remember” A Conceptual Short Film

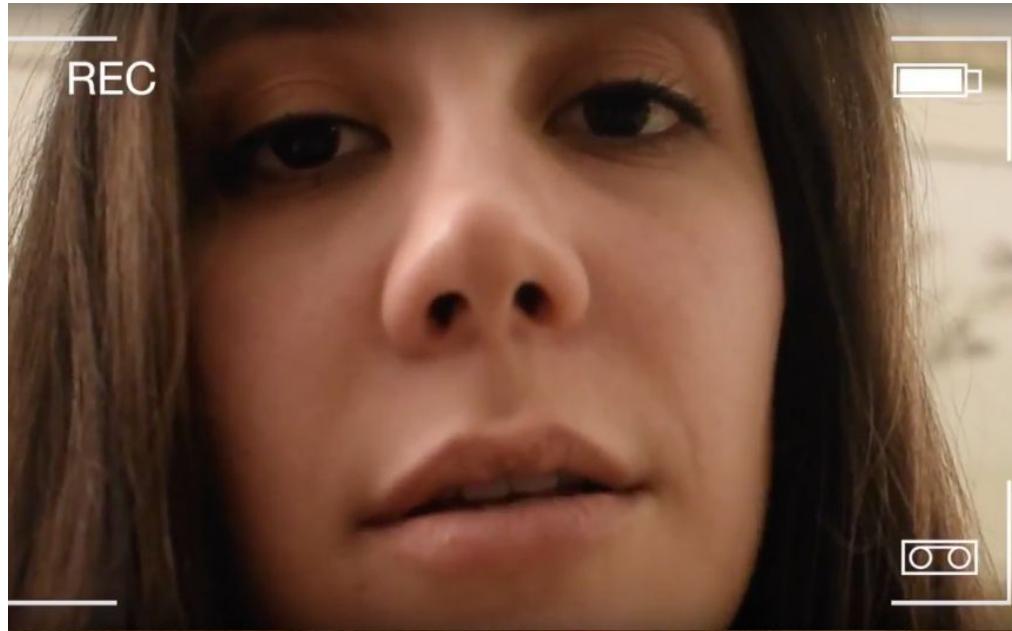
For full video click here: <https://vimeo.com/278541810>

Finished: January 2018. Duration: 7 minutes 44 seconds



# What if the moments you remember are different from reality?

An original short film concerning the subjective role of memory through the apparatus of glasses that record and playback every one of life's moments.



# Thesis Statement

My research and artistry are focused on analyzing and synthesizing *technology-inspired-culture* and *culture-inspired-technology*.

Academically, I explore and answer the sociological questions that inevitably arise when technology and culture overlap. I showcase my digital hypotheses and analyzations through kinetic art and original film, such as creating alternative universes that are in fact, reflections and critiques of modern society. Here, I engage audiences in intellectual conversations regarding the increasingly digital presence in our lives through new forms of media. In doing so, the synthesis of human-computer interactions will serve as an analytical framework to better understand our own human behavior. Moreover, I aim to continuously study modern digital interfaces in the hopes of one day transforming the way in which it is both designed and perceived. Therefore, it was with these objectives in mind that I set out to create my thesis “Clashings of Art, Culture, and Technology in a Digital Anthropological World”. This was a year long, two semester studio based thesis presented via a combination of short films, live installations, academic scholarship and inquiry. This project was formally conducted through Columbia University Visual Arts’ advanced studios, honors independent studies, and senior thesis I&II. It was also supervised by Columbia Visual Arts Department Chair, Professor Matthew Buckingham, Director of Undergraduate Studies Professor Nicola Lopez, Professor Serra Victoria Bothwell Fels, and Professor Sondra Perry.

This series of original short films and installations showcased alternative universes (set in the immediate future, within a five to ten-year time frame) in order to present visual critiques through a technological lens. These storylines were centered around the modification or mediation of human behavior through fictional technology. For example, “Voices” critiqued the nature of internal transparency and surveillance within society, through the lens of a fictionalized world that mandates its citizens to wear telepathic brain microchips. Likewise, “Remember” focused on the subjective role of memory through the apparatus of glasses that record and playback every one of life’s moments. My last thesis film “Connection” critiques the role of therapy and self-medication through the framework of bioengineered pills that induce apathy. This is the first film in the series that is focused on a non-digital piece of technology. Therefore, in order to expand the artist’s own creative pallet as well as push the psychological landscapes of the audience, “Connection” is zoned in on one of the most commonly used yet seemingly ‘invisible’ technologies found with the taboo-ed fabrics of modern American society. The medium of video was the most effective platform in presenting my interests as I wanted my viewers to openly engage with my dialogue - free of charge and of physical restraints - via the open Internet. My goal was not to present a direct personal opinion on the effects and/or the technology themselves in my films, but instead, to draw attention to issues in a format that would allow my audiences to think for themselves. *Is this good? Is this bad? What is it? Why did it happen? And what does that say about us then - and now?*

Live installations that included the utilization of video projection, sculpture, and paintings, such as “Cracked”, “Human Wifi”, “Screens”, and “Body”, were also tangible mixed collages that sought to create dialogue in the physical sphere. “Cracked” showcased the dual fragility and strength of the female body through a convergence of both new and traditional media - from clay to state-of-the-art projectors. Likewise, “Human Wifi” was a wearable metal prosthesis that was forged via both traditional steel material as well as new welding practices, before being installed into a live performance. The wearable wifi costume was a direct critique of the excess usage of the Internet in the 21st century by pinpointing the contemporary “need” for mobile, self-sufficient Wifi signals. The goal of these projects was to present the aforementioned sociological questions that inevitably arise when technology and culture overlap. Hence, I wanted audiences to digest my hypotheses in an engaging, visceral manner while I visually critiqued our human behavioral and cultural patterns. I did not seek to predict the future, but rather to continually analyze and synthesize the influence of technology-inspired-cultures and culture-inspired-technology. Transitively so, culture-inspired-technology is defined as the product of a cultural response that reacted via inventing gadgetry to mediate, regulate, and foster various social interactions. Inversely, examples of technology-inspired-culture stem from software applications to hardware products that influence a cultural development within society. Therefore, in order to address the extent in which technology affects our lives and relationships, I self-coined these two spheres of influence.

From my early childhood to my later adult years, my professional, academic, and personal affairs have always depended on social technology. Therefore the combination of these experiences have permeated into a synthesis of culture, technology, and visual art, and as a result, the culmination of interest, artistry and inquiry have fueled the bulk of this thesis project.