

WITHINTENSIONS



vol.49

SLOP (PART 1)

A wavy, translucent ribbon graphic, possibly representing a DNA helix or a stylized letter 'S', rendered in a light gray color with a fine, grid-like texture. It is positioned diagonally across the right side of the image, with the text 'WITHINTENSIONS' overlaid on it.

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Fall 2026
vol. 49

SLOP
(PART 1)

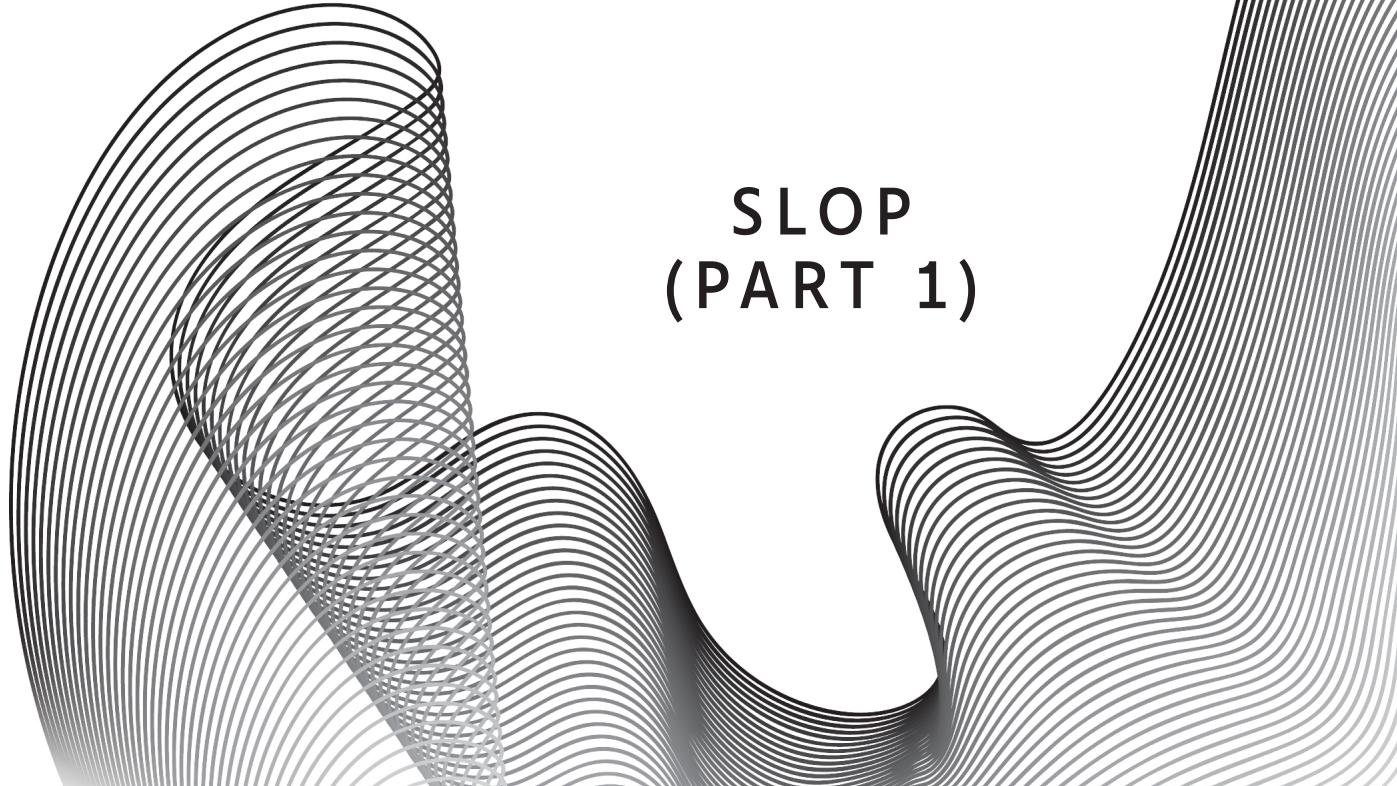


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We at Withintensions want to acknowledge that our work takes place on the unceded territories of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), and Səlílwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples. We want to recognize that these lands belong to the Indigenous peoples who have lived here far before the arrival of settlers. We also want to push beyond land acknowledgements to further encourage acts of reconciliation. Recognition is great but it is nowhere near where we need to be. Reconciliation is comprehensive and takes more than an acknowledgment for occupying land. We always support marginalised peoples right to protest.

SASHA CERINO

Farm animals (2016)





This work is a collection of knit swatches accumulated over the course of years, of garments that I have made/am making, and photos of the finished or in-progress garments. A swatch is a small knit square you make before starting the larger object to make sure that you're on gauge (correct number of stitches and rows, usually measured over 4 inches), so that your object or garment ends up the desired size. You use a swatch to determine if you need to adjust your needle or garment size, and whether you like how the fabric you've made behaves.

The garments include two cardigans, a vest, a crew neck sweater, and a tank top. The yarn used includes Lettlopi (rustic Icelandic yarn, navy cardigan with shell buttons), a cotton merino blend (navy tank top in progress), two colours of alpaca and wool blend held with a strand of silk mohair (vest), and two different lines from Briggs and Little: the Regal, and the Heritage, both rustic 100% wool, made on some of the oldest wool mills in Canada (royal blue crew neck, turquoise cardigan in progress).

Patterns used include the Step By Step Cardigan by Florence Miller, the Freshwater Tank by Jessie Maed Designs, the Holiday Slipover by Petite Knit, the Felix Pullover by Amy Christoffers, and the Staffin Cardigan by Rebecca Clow





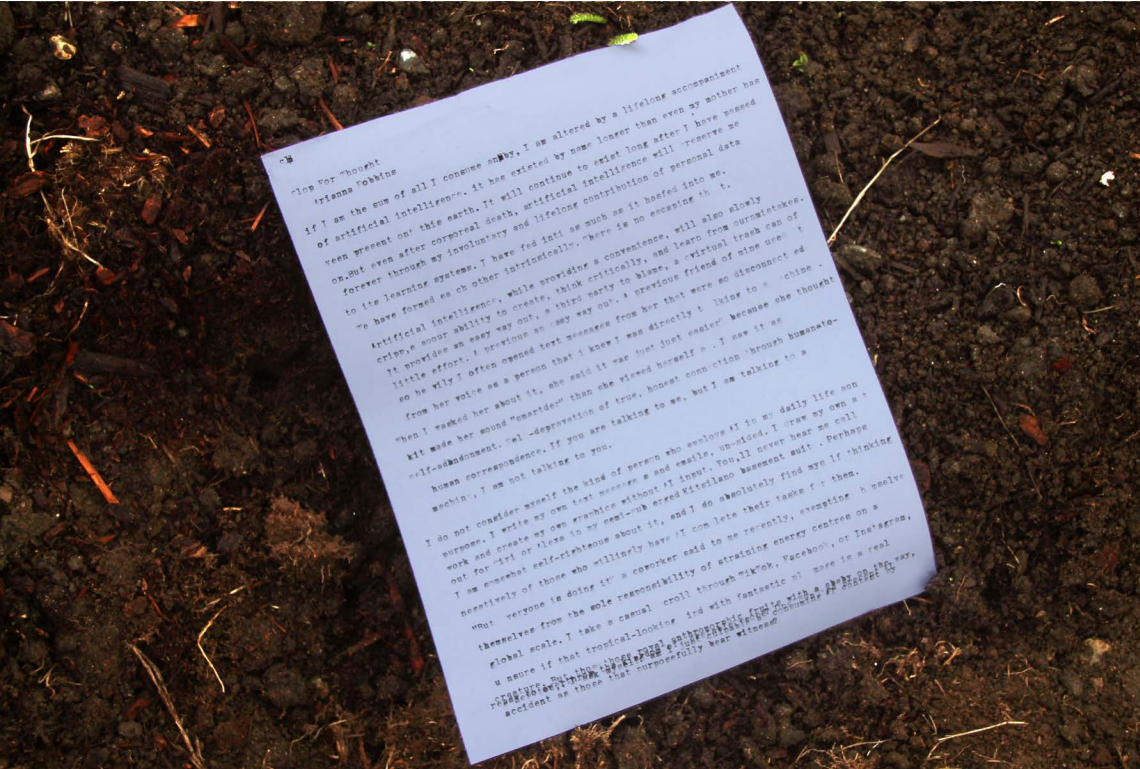
Steal a Brainrot is a multiplayer video game released in 2025 on the platform ROBLOX. In the game, players acquire brainrots: internet memes featuring absurd AI-generated characters with Italian names and nonsensical voiceovers, steal other players' brainrots, and slap each other to prevent others from stealing brainrots. While Steal a Brainrot became popular on social media, the game is heavily criticized for being low effort, pay-to-win, causing emotional outbursts from children, and the overuse of AI-generated characters.

In Rotting, a player, originating from the year 2007, gets sent to 2026, where she finds out that this is not ROBLOX as it used to be 19 years ago. Around her are low-quality assets and AI-generated characters (which are called brainrots) that become the main focus of the game. Every blackout with the text is what goes through her mind, and all the frustrations she lets out about the major changes the platform went through. While other players follow the objectives and slap her in an attempt to get her to play along, the player refuses to engage with them, showing how she does not support the use of AI and questions how children can be entertained by a game considered to be "sloppy". No audio is played, representing how veteran players like her try to express anger and frustration about the use of AI and their opinions. They are being silenced by the game developers of Steal a Brainrot, where the developers continue to bring features to their game without hearing the criticisms.

Watch
(brain)Rotting (2026)
[Here](#)

In this century, generative AI has been a reliable tool in the video game world because it is quick and easy to use. However, there have been complaints from players about how games are not made with passion; some games (Steal a Brainrot in this case) was created to generate money from players who engage with the content, in addition to relying on AI-generated content since it is the next big tool in the technology industry.





If I am the sum of all I consume and am imbued by, I am altered by a lifelong accompaniment of artificial intelligence. It has existed by name longer than even my mother has been present on this earth. It will continue to exist long after I have passed on. But even after my corporeal death, artificial intelligence will preserve me forever through my involuntary and lifelong contribution of personal data to its learning systems. I have fed into as much as it has fed into me. We have formed each other intrinsically. There is no escaping that.

Artificial Intelligence, while providing a convenience, will also slowly cripple our ability to create, think critically, and learn from our own mistakes. It provides an easy way out, a third party to blame, a virtual trash can of very little effort. A previous friend of mine used it so heavily I often opened text messages from her that were so disconnected from her voice as a person that I knew I was talking directly to a machine. When I asked her about it, she said it was just "easier" because she thought it made her sound "smarter" than she viewed herself as. I saw it as self-abandonment. Self-depravation of true, honest connection through human-to-human correspondence. If you are talking to me, but I am talking to a machine, I am not talking to you.

I do not consider myself the kind of person who employs AI in my daily life on purpose. I write my own text messages and emails, un-aided. I draw my own artwork and create my own graphics without AI input. You'll never hear me call out for Siri or Alexa in my semi-submerged Kitsilano basement suite. Perhaps I am somewhat self-righteous about it, and I do absolutely find myself thinking negatively of those who willingly have AI complete their tasks for them. "But everyone is doing it" a coworker said to

me recently, exempting themselves from the sole responsibility of straining energy centres on a global scale. I take a casual scroll through TikTok, Facebook or Instagram, unsure if that tropical-looking bird with fantastic plumage is a real creature. But those royal anthropomorphic fruits with a baby on the way, ready to overthrow the kingdom of vegetable people? One hundred percent AI generated. I ask myself: am I just as culpable by consuming AI content by accident as those that purposefully bear witness?

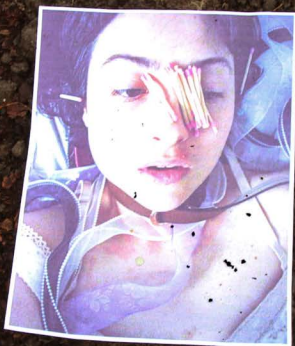
There is a solid chance you've been at least momentarily tricked by the uncanny valley effect of artificial intelligence. It mimics the patterns of humanity soullessly. Informed by data it has stripped, collected, compiled and curated, the eerie voices of AI are everywhere. Sometimes, they're not even directly human voice mimicry, but an imitation of how we express ourselves. I came across a compilation of background jazz music on Youtube the other day, and in reading the comments discovered it to be a work of AI. A local photographer I used to heavily respect has begun heavily using AI, to the point where every "human" model in his photos is AI generated. I think worryingly of my younger cousin in England, making a career out of modeling. In the acting world however, an AI "actress" so far remains barred from winning human industry awards. So, there is still a line yet to be crossed there. Hope still to be had.

Titles specifically labeled NO AI fight back alongside other trends taking off such as analog hobby crafts, an "Anti-AI Crafting" movement. I journal exclusively by fountain pen on paper. I recently began buying CDs again, specifically an Enya box set from the 90s. I look out for AI CONTENT disclosure labels and scroll past them in defiance. I unfollow and unfriend people overusing AI in their online content and shares. Artificial

Intelligence may have my data, but it will never have my soul.

What remains of me in the depths of the deepfake internet after I am gone are simply the data patterns and factoid pieces of my life. My digital footprint and I are both one in the same, and entirely separate. What makes up a person? I believe in the age of AI, and in the fight against it being abused daily, we can all pick a side. We can decide what forms us, how much of our souls are imprinted on inhuman feedback. Just because something is easy, does not make it right. What may seem cost effective now will in future come at a higher cost in other ways. There is what is unavoidable, and what is chosen. You will always have a choice in this. I implore you to defy AI slop. Make your stance against it public. Share that anti-AI meme on your Instagram story. Criticize its overuse by people in your life. Don't ever give up by thinking it's too late, because it isn't. There is still time for an undoing, so long as you pull on the thread.



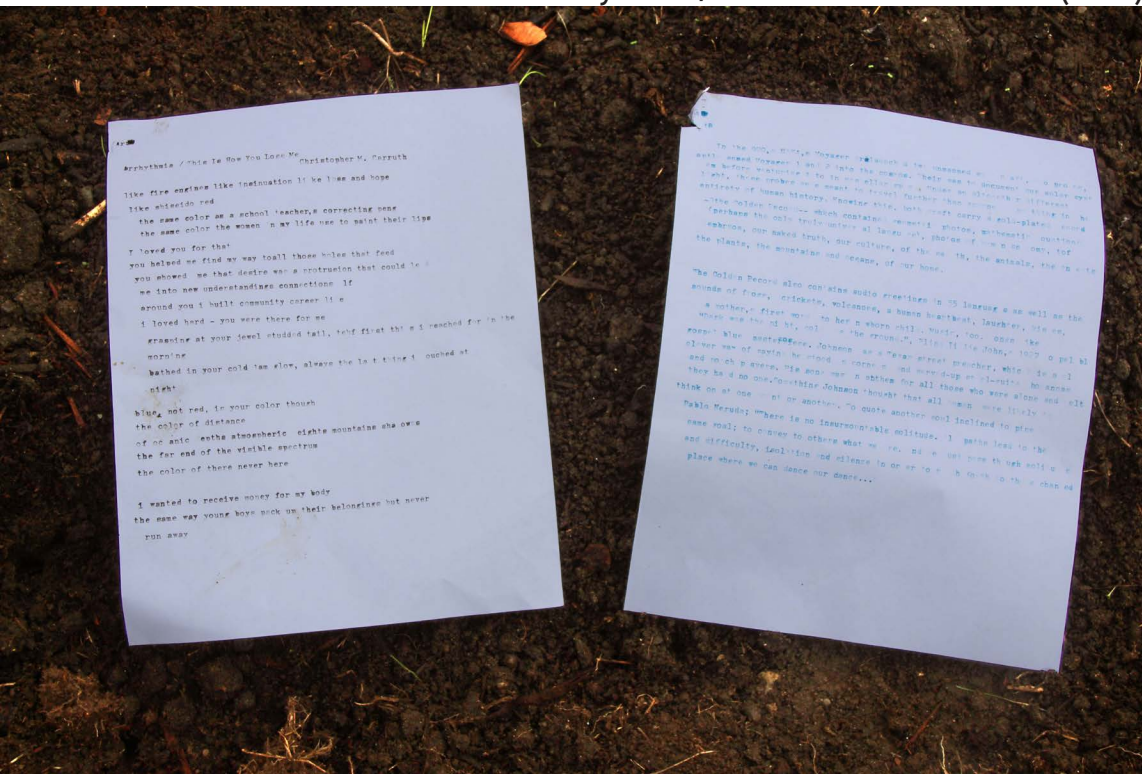




you take and turn, trying to adjust every little thing but to find that
 most pleasant sound, the sound of your pillow in the cold air, to rise and
 see the light out from under the covers, to retract it because the blanket
 is your only protection from monsters and murderers; getting up to drink a
 glass of water, to play soft music in the background so white noise, getting up
 because you drank too much water... you do this every night, how could it be so
 hard to fall asleep what is that magic switch that clicks the clicks
 everything into place, wishing you were to read (everyone seems to fall asleep
 in a matter of minutes...) frankly it's not about the condition of the
 environment, it's not about the net of space; it's not about the mental state
 you're in, focus is on the task you have in front of you, and let the
 subconscious take over; and, let's say it's not the most ideal or comfortable
 sleep you've ever had, but you sleep; maybe, your reason for staying what you
 have have ever weakly least and and you could have been easily
 you've enabled yourself in a really vivid landscape only when
 you fall
 asleep

CHRISTOPHER M. CARRUTH

Arrhythmia / This Is How You Lose Me (2026)



like fire engines like insinuation like
loss and hope
like shiseido red
the same color as a school teacher's
correcting pen
the same color the women in my life
use to paint their lips
you used to look at me like an
emergency

i loved you for that
you helped me find my way to all
those holes that feed
you showed me that desire was a
protrusion that could lead me into
new understandings connections self
around you i built community career
life
i loved hard - you were there for me
grasping at your jewel-studded tail,
the first thing I reached for in the
morning
bathed in your cold 1 am glow, always
the last thing I touched at night

blue, not red, is your color though
the color of distance
Of oceanic depths atmospheric
heights mountain shadows
the far end of the visible spectrum
the color of there never here
i wanted to receive money for my body
the same way young boys pack up
their belongings but never run away

In the NASA's Voyager program launched
two unmanned spacecraft, two probes,
aptly named Voyager 1 and 2 into the
cosmos. Their intention was to document
our solar system before venturing into
interstellar space. Under an altogether
different light, these probes were meant
to travel farther than anyone or anything
in the entirety of human history. Knowing
this, both craft carry a gold-plated record
— the Golden Record - which contain
geometric photos, mathematic equations
(perhaps the only truly universal
language), photos of human anatomy, of
embryos, our naked truth, our culture,
of the earth, the animals, the insects,
the plants, the mountains and oceans,
of our home. The Golden Record also
contains audio greetings in 55 languages
as well as the sounds of frogs, crickets,
volcanoes. a human heartbeat, laughter,
kisses, a mothers first words to her
newborn child. Music, too. Songs like
Blind Willie Johnson's 1927 gospel blues
masterpiece, "Dark was the night, cold
was the ground. Johnson was a Texas
street preacher, which is a clever way of
saying he stood on corners and served-
up steel-guitar hosannas and porch
prayers. His song was an anthem for all
those who were alone and felt they had
no one. Something Johnson thought all
humans were likely to think on at one
point or another. To quote another soul
inclined to pine, Pablo Neruda:

instead i learned to accept enjoy
give to the identity factory
the "new" new normal
i was kind to myself about it
about the thrill of being presented
(re)presented represented
of losing control of losing myself
lost loss
convinced of convenience
community comfort complacencies
when the devil grins, its hard to
not smile back

but

i know what you are
i know you keep it secret
i know you know too
for years
forever
you excavate and claim my
unilateral experience as raw
material
you take every little precious thing
and translate quantify
market it market me/we
you guess my future our future the
future create the future refuge
a man becomes a boy becomes an
animal becomes an object
is that about right? is there
anywhere left to go?
forever
for years
for now

"There is no insurmountable solitude. All
paths lead to the same goal: to convey to
others what we are. And we must pass
through solitude and difficulty, isolation
and silence in order to reach forth to the
enchanted place where we can dance our
clumsy dance..."

The deep enduring relatability of this
message caught the attention of noted
astrophysicist Carl Sagan who chose it for
inclusion on the Golden Record. Sagan felt
it captured the essence of loneliness that
mankind faces in the shared long dark night
of our existence within the cosmos.

It captured a yearning to connect.

To connect with another species.
To connect with the universe.
To connect with ourselves.
To connect.

One of the more beautiful anecdotes
surrounding the Voyager program was that
of Ann Druyan. Druyan was a leader on the
team that put together the material for
Voyager's Golden Record. In this effort, she
and longtime colleague Carl Sagan decided
to inscribe a brain scan of someone thinking
about various emotions; after all, who knows
what kind of capabilities the hypothetical
recipients of the Golden Record might have?
They might very well be able to 'read' those
thoughts.

i used to think you listened to my every
word, then I realized you didn't need to
you are legion are insidious are damn
near inside us
one way mirror you are everywhere
whispering dark honey
into my ear your ear we hear you
do you hear me?
do you know i exist outside of the market
you force me into?
soft rapist you take of this body you
take take take

brother sister sinner saint father son
holy spirit
butterflies in mason jars
reduced and captured and deformed
you limit the immutable self
make make make while we pirouette on
bright stages that are so much more
than stages internalized rages
you can't love what you control

You used to have a wild amazonian love
with all the potential and paradox and
infuriating loose ends of real change real
the new system using old magic pining
defining changing
you were objective - the tool - yet
intimate always intimate
intimacy triggers struggle
how you lost that lost yourself lost the
way
instead of the sun of a brand new day
I have the profane raptures of capitalism

Druyan volunteered for an EEG reading,
during which she meditated, attempting
to focus on a range of scripted material -
culture, philosophy, family - but there was
one thought that she couldn't push from
her mind.

48 hours earlier, she had admitted to
herself how deeply and irrevocably far she
had fallen for Carl Sagan. Having worked
together for years, having never kissed or
had any intimate contact, they bonded over
the course of the project and their growing
correspondence. They shared a phone call
just two days earlier during which they had
spontaneously, overwhelmingly, and with
incredible certainty, agreed to get married.
She couldn't escape the reality of her
feelings for Carl. Of her love. That love, her
thoughts, her meditation, was captured
and etched onto the Golden Record.

I want you to pause after this next
paragraph. And confront how inescapably
beautiful this all is for a second— at this
exact second, hurtling past the bounds of
our galaxy, past the heliopause, the point
where the solar winds from our Sun can
no longer be felt and stop having an
impact - rushing at over 37,000 mph on
their own inertia - there are two Voyager
craft, carrying Golden Records, calling
cards, a hello, and a message Of love to
any intelligent beings in the cosmos. Pause
and take that in for a second.

i've lived my whole life afraid
afraid of what could come next
afraid of what i might leave behind
afraid of grabbing what could be
evidently you are too

Straightforwardness is cool.

[illegible]

A study in 2016 cited that the average iPhone user engages in over 2500 interactions with their phone per day. For those uninterested in long division mathematics, or anyone lacking a calculator (*raises hand*), that amounts to 160x per hour, 3x per minute over the course of a 16 waking-hour day. To be clear, an interaction is defined as a swipe, a pinch, a press - any level of engagement. While that may soften the blow, it still serves as an indicator regarding the rate of interaction, of frequency, with our digital lives. Ask yourself this question - is your phone one of the last things you touch before bed? One of the first things you grab for in the morning? Is that your intention? Whose, then?

[illegible][illegible]

No taxonomic distinction can be made between locust and grasshopper species; the basis for the definition is whether a species forms swarms under intermittently suitable conditions. That is to say, locusts are ordinary grasshoppers in a frenzy.

You can try this on your own.

Fill a jar with nearly any species of N. American grasshopper. poke holes in the lid with enough room for a straw or blade of grass. Touch them lightly and in rapid succession. Gradually and imperceptibly to the naked eye, like the shift from Summer to inevitable Fall, their wings will elongate, color saturate, and coats will begin to show stipes and spots. Jekyll become Hyde.

In these crowded confines, they will continue to agitate one another and evolve into their migratory phase. That is, they become locusts.

You are now the proud owner of biblical plague.

Alumni from the early years of Google, Twitter, Amazon, and Facebook give arresting accounts about the role the products they helped design and market have in structuring and furthering the ongoing parasitic economic logic at play. The technology is not on trial, it's neutrality as tool is maintained, rather it's how said tool is being used to advance power and profits, to extend and mutate

and iterate capitalism into a truer 21st century form and function. Whereas the tool could bring radical connectivity and understanding - real tech utopia type of change - the system, instead, opts for narrow, hollow, memetic methods of connection; it actively shapes the behaviors of billions of users while concentrating economic, political, and informational power in the hands of few. This isn't an aberration - the system is working as it was intended. All ways.

The technology driving this system, modeled nearly 2 decades ago, matures, covers, covets. & is now at the <3 of every modern government business entity in both Eastern & Western worlds.

Your individual actions, both inside and outside of the digital space are on sale. At first, this was voluntary, not obligatory. You sold yourself for convenience and the illusion of safety. You think about choice and say you can survive without it. but can you thrive? They want this, want you happy and sated - panem et circenses. They engineer your ignorance alongside their profits. Their greatest magic lies in how they subordinated that which exists outside the market so that it now exists inside one. Theirs.

To put a fine point on it, the ominous and ambiguous "they" have claimed your life as a commodity and translate both real and digital experience into behavioral data. Predictive analytics and

algorithms next quantify and qualify what you see, when you see it, and commercialize how you react to it. This happens at scale, to billions and with levels of forecast certainty - we once trusted the oracle, now society trusts the algorithm. They are the architects of your life. Credit score. APR, College admittance, friends, networks, lovers, and all those commodities, like you.

This is not new. It's the cancer's growth and you, me, and everyone else we know smokes through our trach ring with each action online and off. Thus the feedback loop of your predicted behavior and authentic actions is created and reinforced. Again, this is not about deactivating your Facebook, rather this is about another iteration, mutation, deformity, and blind cruelty of the dominant capitalist machine and mindset. It's about the very real condition of the human heart.

Industrial capitalism threatened the natural world in the 19th and 20th centuries. Surveillance capitalism threatens human nature in the 21st. Without a radical revisiting of our brilliant hearts, democracy, love, & autonomy will continue to be on a collision course with life as it could, would, & should be.



Replications of *Monk by the Sea* increasing in systemization and decreasing in fidelity





Meet the Team

Act with intention & dwell within tensions.

We are artists who are both lost and found, both within and without the spaces of institution and navigating the spaces beyond the horizon?

Navigating our various proximities to institutions and the spaces beyond them parsing through what we want to keep, what we want to let go of, and what we hope to transform.

Our goal is to house new ideas, old ideas, and bad ideas, nurturing a space for them to take form.

We inhabit a place between the seriousness of academia and the frivolity of passing thought. We will often fall into clichés and trends as they pass us, as we all often must.

We invite you to critically engage with the content, to challenge and be challenged, to test the tensions in question.



FRANCISCO BERLANGA
Creative Director
Publications Lead
Founder

Francisco Berlanga (he/him) is a Vancouver based textile artist whose practice reflects on his relationship to his Mexican identity as a second-generation immigrant through the lens of Craft. He attempts to understand how one can inhabit a culture while being partially absent from it. He engages in discourse with his own identity through the creation of traditional Mexican “manualidades” or crafts. His practice engages with concepts of inaccessibility attempting to bridge the gaps between his personal and cultural identities by forcing connections between them and trying to understand the limitations that these identities impose upon each other. Histories of repetition often produce apparitions of motifs that haunt his works. His previous exhibitions include a solo show at Grunt Gallery and group shows at the Morris and Helen Belkin gallery, the AHVA gallery, This gallery, and the Audain gallery. Berlanga obtained his BFA at Simon Fraser University and his MFA at the University of British Columbia.



TORIEN CAFFERATA
Curatorial Lead

Torien C. Cafferata (they/he) is an AuDHD interdisciplinary artist originally from Treaty 4 and Treaty 6 territory where they trained as a performer, playwright, director, and dramaturge before coming to Simon Fraser University for their MFA. Their practice spans a host of forms: social practice, site-specific theatre & installation, lo-fi mixed-reality, game design, ludology, and mad arts. He is an avid trifter with digital platforms and cultures in performance, often using them in explorations of mad labour/play, interactivity/interpassivity, non-places, and hauntology. As co-Artistic Director of It's Not A Box Theatre they have toured work to the Prague Quadrennial, SummerWorks, and across Fringe Festivals.



SASHA CERINO
Workshops Lead

Sasha (she/her) is an artist and settler based in the land of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) nations, colonially known as Vancouver. Coming from a Filipino background and being a child of immigrants integrally informs her work from covert to overt ways. Similar to how tides cycle all throughout the vast ancestral source that is the ocean. The waves make their way to the shore in varying intensities, from gentle ripples to destructive tsunamis and everything in between. Sasha explores the relationships, dynamics, narratives, traumas, conflicts; the beauty and nuances that come with who she is, but also how the world views her. For the personal is interconnected and represents the collective. Using art as a means of self expression ever since she was the age of 3. Always having a curiosity and interest in making things, mirroring her experiences as a tool of processing and also reflection. Her choice of medium(s) for her pieces are most often led by the concept(s) she is trying to convey. Overall, striving to make art that is honest, genuine and creates spaces for open conversations.



**YIHK QU
CHAN**
Operations
Coordinator
Workshops Lead
Founder

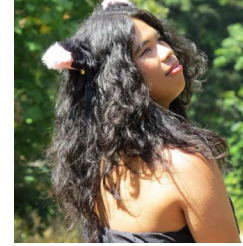
Yihk Qu (she/her) is an artist whose practice is mimetic in form and exercises vulnerability through performance work and social practice. Raised within Vancouver-Hong Kong diasporic community as a second-generation Canadian, her work is produced from the tensions of embodying contrasting cultural values. Speculating on identity, heritage, and hauntings, she ritualizes gestures to produce symbolic markers of relationally held time.

Yihk Qu, as an Anglicized namesake, is a textual synthesis of her identities as Natalie Chan and 易翹—a pairing of characters which come together to mean 'to exchange the meaning of excellence'; Yihk Qu hopes to exhibit the transformative potential of translating across the borderlines of cultural landscapes. She obtained her BFA at Simon Fraser University and is currently researching at the University of British Columbia as an MFA candidate.



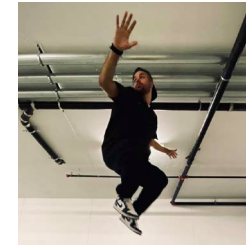
EMILY CHU
Community Events
Lead

Emily Chu (she/her) is a visual artist and writer whose work blends personal narrative with existential reflection. A recent BFA graduate, she creates with an awareness of material impact, exploring how art, memory, and responsibility intertwine. She wishes to continue investigating the philosophical, ethical, and emotional dimensions surrounding contemporary art, whether that may be through graduate studies or her own personal research. In her free time, she enjoys playing music and writing poetry.



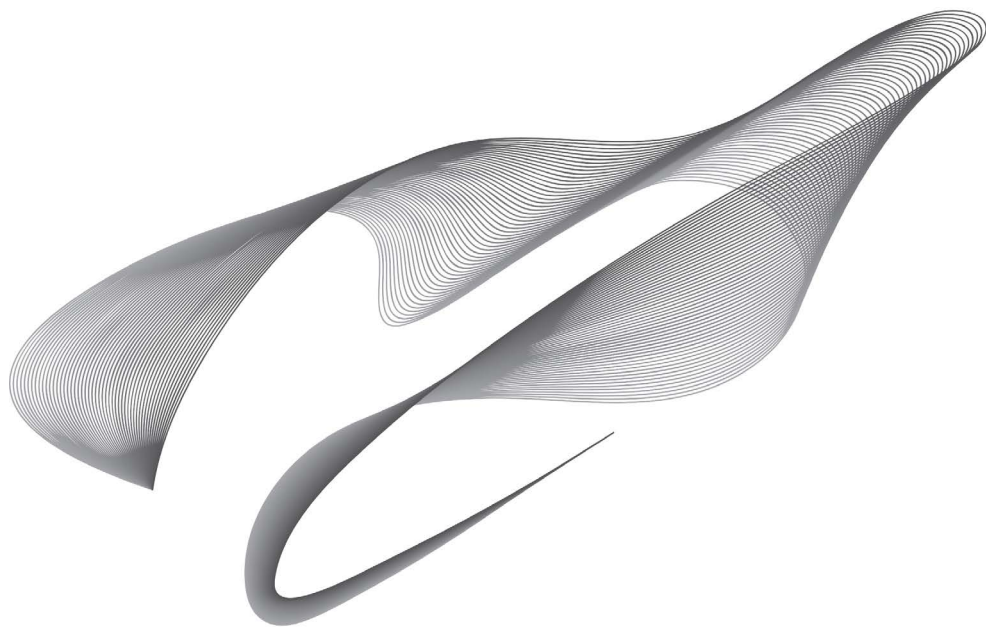
**RAINE
HERMOSA**
Curatorial
Assistant

Raine Hermosa, also known as bcball or bishi, is an 18 year old queer singer songwriter and music producer based in from Victoria BC. He has been writing music since he was a child, and in his early days posted songs on Youtube and Soundcloud. His practice ranges from writing for piano and strings, songwriting and electronic music production. Outside of music he also works in digital art, drag, and creative writing. Raine is currently studying Music and Sound at the SFU School for Contemporary Arts in Vancouver.



**KALEB
THIESSEN**
General
Operations
Assistant

Kaleb Thiessen, also known digitally as BELAK, is a Peruvian-Canadian multimedia artist based in Vancouver, BC. He works with sculpture and digital media, using found materials and screens to examine how consumerism, selfperception, and technology intersect. Rooted in working with discarded materials from his local community, his practice reflects past cycles of consumption in the Lower Mainland, turning objects into living archives of use and exchange. He sees objects as witnesses to lived time, where signs of wear blur their origin and pull them away from the manufactured and standardized. This duality informs how he sources and recontextualize materials, embedding screens and digital fragments to create portals that reframe their narratives. At the core of his practice is a need to uncover how objects and systems operate, asking what constraints they were built to function within and how those limits might be challenged. Thiessen recently graduated from Simon Fraser University with a BFA Honours in Visual Arts. In 2024, Thiessen's work has been exhibited at the Audain Gallery, The Polygon Gallery, Lobe Studio, Haus der Statistik and Feldfünfin and will be displayed through the City of Vancouver's Launch Pad program in 2026.



We are always looking for submissions and opportunities to collaborate so check out our social medias.

on instagram:
@withintensions
or email us at:
within.tensions@gmail.com

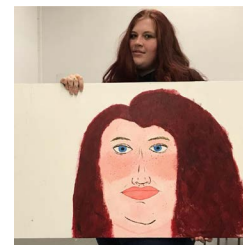
If you want more information, feel free to contact us.

Acknowledgements

Withintensions would not have been possible without the works of Jack Allen, Francisco Berlanga, Joe Boyd, Christopher M. Carruth, Sasha Cerino, Yihk Qu Chan, Emily Chu, Lauren Han, Dalia Janian, Victoria Mulja, and Ari Robbins

Special thanks to VUFFF Fieldhouse for allowing us to use their facilities for slop part 1

We are excited to share our future works with you and we hope to provide more opportunities for artists alike.



In Memorium of one of our
founders
Opal Mclean
1997-2023

