MEDIA RELEASE

DEFY THE DOMAIN
Spring 2020 New Media Arts Capstone Exhibition
Opens May 11, 2020 at New Media Artspace,
Baruch College, CUNY

NEW YORK, NY - April 30, 2020 – The New Media Artspace at Baruch College presents *Defy the Domain*, a group exhibition led by the Spring 2020 Capstone class of the New Media Arts undergraduate minor. The exhibit will run from 11 May 2020 to 4 September 2020 online at newmediartspace.info

The exhibition is comprised of original works created and curated by New Media Arts students Bryan Campana, Afsara Chowdhury, Kaitlyn Chiu, Femi Fagbemi, Ruth Jean-Lubin, Jason Jiggetts, Mushan Khan, Lauren Lee, Wendy Lei, Qiao Ting Liu, Noran Omar, Joanne Pan, Adyan Rahman, Danica Raz, Maryam Saad, Priscilla Shum, and Qi Qi Wu.

A live premiere of the website will be held from 1:30–3:00 PM, 11 May 2020 on YouTube. Members of the public are welcome to attend at https://bit.ly/2SeuHne.

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Defy the Domain is a collective interpretation of the ever-evolving relationship between humans and technology. The title of the exhibition refers to technology as a domain that humans have set in place to make life easier. However, with the progression of advances in technology, technological domains have seemingly seized control of our consciousness. *Defy the Domain* is a story of rebellion against this control, highlighting issues caused by relying on unhinged algorithms.

Technology has acquired the ability to shape humanity, similar to how humans have had the capability to shape technology. The exponential rate of technological adoption has resulted in the blurring of lines between technology's creators and their creations. Breaking down the anthro-technological relationship reveals the intricate dependence of both participants—users and tools—have for each other. The works are organized topically in three collections: "User," "Protocol," and "Networks." A fourth collection of the exhibition, "Safe Mode," showcases a collaborative work jointly created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that emerged during the course of this semester.

User

The works in the first collection, "User," obscure the line between "user" and "used." Technology is only as effective as the user behind it, but technology simultaneously influences how and what the user does. With technology, the user participates in a cycle where our inputs become a reflection of who we are, what we see, what we fear, and what we desire. For example, Danica Raz's art game, *The Third Place*, highlights the flawed logic of seeking perfection in a society of perpetually-shifting standards. Femi Fagbemi's *Yes, Mr. Python* highlights the unseen, insidious power and authority a user hands over to an algorithm in the name of personal navigation within a digital landscape. The price for this shift in power is, in turn, the user's identity. Conversely, Adyan Rahman's *ARTOMOTIF* is an analysis of how personal expression can actually create identity. His work takes the concept of animation and introduces it to the world of automobiles, creating an identity for the user of the automobile. Maryam Saad's video, *Pandemic Cravings 666*, is an abstraction of the food we consume. It is a microscopic evaluation of our often-innocuous inputs and how they can become something much more sinister. As humans are deprived of control from technological processes, artists in "User" emphasize the necessity of retaining individuality.

Protocol

The "Protocol" collection features artworks that question seemingly normal habitual actions. Repetitive, prescribed actions are found not only in algorithmic technologies, but also amongst people's daily routines. The concept of autonomy within the digital landscape is illusory, shaped from years of technological conditioning. Jason Jiggetts's sound work, *Algo-Rhythms*, exemplifies how the pervading routines of everyday life eerily parallel computer algorithms. Similarly, Priscilla Shum's animation, *The Cookie Monster,* personifies the unfortunate realities of data collection. The work highlights how user's information is—often unknowingly—harnessed to paint a digital portrait of the user. Qiao Ting Liu's Pac-Man inspired game animation takes a different approach to the "Protocol" concept. Instead, her work sheds light on issues of health and obesity, demonstrating how simple individual choices can have dire cumulative effects. Likewise, Wendy Lei's animation, *Error 404*, compares the decision-making process of video games with life choices, highlighting the infinite, unpredictable outcomes possible. Ultimately, artists in "Protocol" hope to evaluate the parallelism between human and technological procedures.

Networks

The "Networks" collection consists of works that critically assess the flow of information through communities, both online and off. Some works examine social networks, where automation impacts the curation of information. Other works analyze the effects of this technological curation. Afsara Chowdhury's piece, E*xplore Your Options*, delves into the omnipresent pressure of Instagram and how a medium with a premise of sharing photos and videos has become the source of social standards. She analyzes how microscopic inputs of a single user can have macrocosmic effects on how society is represented. Joanne Pan's *Speak for Yourself* is a meditation on how the outbreak of a biological disease has fostered the viral spread of racism on the Internet. *In Their Eyes*, by Ruth Jean-Lubin, is a video voiced over with the artist's spoken word poetry. The work juxtaposes the media's criminalization of black men and the police brutality crisis, highlighting the systematic faults that cause needless tragedy. Fundamental for the functioning of both humans and technology, pieces in "Networks" stress the sensitivity of data transmission.

Safe Mode

The final collection of the exhibition, "Safe Mode," showcases a single collaborative piece that documents the effects of COVID-19—a "glitch" in the system—and the adaptations humans are undertaking in response. Unlike the other collections in this exhibition, which take a more critical view of technology, this project signals ways that technology helps us to stay connected. *The City That Slept* reveals daily life in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic through the lenses of artists Bryan Campana, Kaitlyn Chiu, Mushan Khan, Lauren Lee, Noran Omar, Danica Raz, and Qi Qi Wu. This project explores the broken boundaries of time and routine life in the pandemic. Humans, faced with an unprecedented situation, need to carry on with life despite a "glitch" in the way society functions. By entering "Safe Mode", humans are only allowed to conduct essential functions as they wait for the "bug" to be fixed.

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Defy the Domain is created and curated by Baruch's New Media Arts Capstone Class of Spring 2020; with the supervision of Katherine Behar, Associate Professor in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts in the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences at Baruch College. The exhibition is made possible by support from the Baruch Computing and Technology Center (BCTC), the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences, and the Newman Library. All images appear courtesy of the artist.

Gallery Location: New Media Artspace at Baruch College, Library and Information Building, 151 E. 25th Street, New York, NY 10010

Gallery Hours: The New Media Artspace is open to the CUNY community during regular library hours. However, the physical exhibitions of the New Media Artspace are closed in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Current exhibitions will be displayed at www.newmediartspace.info.

The New Media Artspace is a teaching exhibition space in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts at Baruch College, CUNY. Housed in the Newman Library, the New Media Artspace showcases curated experimental media and interdisciplinary artworks by international artists, students, alumni, and faculty.

About Baruch College:

Baruch College is a senior college in the City University of New York (CUNY) with a total enrollment of more than 17,000 students, who represent 160 countries and speak more than 100 languages. Ranked among the top 15% of U.S. colleges and the No. 4 public regional university, Baruch College is regularly recognized as among the most ethnically diverse colleges in the country. As a public institution with a tradition of academic excellence, Baruch College offers accessibility and opportunity for students from every corner of New York City and from around the world. For more about Baruch College, go to http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/.

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