

Platforming Utopias(**and Platformed Dystopias**)

EXHIBITION

ELO 2021



AARHUS
UNIVERSITY



The Platforming Utopias (and Platformed Dystopias) exhibition was planned as an open exhibition in response to the main theme of the ELO 2021 Conference and Festival: Platform (Post?) Pandemic. The selections process for exhibition was handled differently the other exhibitions in the festivals as the works featured here were not specifically curated by a small group, but were instead peer-reviewed by arts program committee as a whole, with each work getting three or more reviews. Claudia Kozak and Erik Loyer then reviewed these acceptances and rejections on behalf of the ELO board, and made the final calls on borderline submissions.

Globalized platforms present new opportunities for writers and readers both because of their large audiences and the fact that new forms of electronic literary cultures are emerging around them. The current rise of global platforms and platform culture however challenge Electronic Literature's history of developing independent, purpose-specific platforms, since commercial platforms are often closed formats with largely rigid templates for 'content'. In this sense, forms of criticality are challenged by the fact that the platforms are typically owned, maintained and often quickly updated (and sometimes made obsolete) by global corporations.

Digital platforms are not new: gaming consoles operating systems, programming languages and the web itself were discussed as platforms before the current platformization. The integration of hardware and software in many platforms has been seen in gaming consoles, PCs, phones and tablets, and can be seen as a result of initiatives from the fields of ubiquitous computing, Internet of Things and business strategies leading to the design of walled gardens. With the combination of social media, apps, search engines and targeted advertisement, platformization has become

increasingly dominant in digital media. The platformization of culture is highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic as physical platforms for art, culture and the public have become difficult to access at times where physical meetings, travel, public institutions and life in general have been challenged. Digital platforms have entered into our most private and intimate spaces, raising questions about surveillance, capture, and who's reading our reading and writing. Connecting, meeting, working and reading on platforms have been defining moments for our contemporary life during the pandemic comparable to the way the clock defined industrialized life. What do digital and digitization mean now, and what is left out and missing when culture is streamed?

Globalization has become less seamless, as global trade and collaboration is affected, but we are more connected in our individual lives and worries. Furthermore, the big, rapid changes of culture and society during the pandemic have raised fundamental questions about other urgent challenges: the climate crisis, equality in relation to race and ethnicity, the social, and the liberation and equality of gender and sexuality. The pandemic situation has led to both hope and despair in relation to new and old political struggles such as the #metoo and #BlackLivesMatter movements, which have also been fought on and off platforms.

With this conference we aim to investigate how the future will be platformed: what will come after the pandemic and how can we explore this from the pandemic? The pandemic will not be over when we meet on the conference platforms, rather it is a condition from which to rethink and explore the future, and learn from how life has changed during this period: What has the pandemic crisis made us see that was not before apparent to us, and how do we build upon the lessons we have learned to develop a more sustainable and equitable future? We seek explorations and research into electronic literature that examines how we are platforming the future. What are the practices and poetics of contemporary electronic literature? How to thrive as electronic readers and writers within the constraints of platform culture? How to be critical on and of platforms? How to develop alternative literary platforms? What are the global dimensions? How do we connect and disconnect on platforms? What could and should platform e-lit be? How does platform culture relate to the traditions and history of electronic literature?

The works featured in this exhibition all engage in some way with these questions — whether through the invention of new platforms for collaborative writing practices, the critique of existing platforms in enacted artworks or interventions, the relation of technological platforms to environmental dystopia, or the creative rethinking of platforms in the creation of new genres of electronic literature.

Scott Rettberg, May 2021

Descriptions edited and written by **Carlota Megias**

*** Source for description text hyperlinked for each piece, except when taken from inventory. Some descriptions are from my own impressions/explorations of the piece.*

Mez Breeze and Company | **V[R]jerses : An XR Story Series**

Microstories from a variety of authors inscribed on 3D models created by Mez Breeze. Wander the surfaces of the statues/stories via direct manipulation of the XR platform's 3D space; or let the stories' numerically sequenced sections guide you up, down, and around the statues -- the XR platform enacts the texts' language of movement.

Ben Grosser | **Not For You**

An 'automated confusion system' designed to mislead TikTok's video recommendation algorithm. It navigates the site without the user's intervention, indiscriminately clicking on videos, hashtags, and creator profiles in order to break the filter bubbles endemic to social media sites' infinite content feeds -- all while indicating their dependence upon the corporate collection of our personal data to be addictive.

Jason Nelson | **The Trajectory Cabinet (Digital Version)**

A fully digitized version of a hybrid physical-virtual poem mapping the environmental destruction wrought by real estate developers in Brisbane, Australia, culminating in the 2011 floods that laid waste to large parts of the city. Use your keyboard to project thirty-two different pieces onto the map, simulating the manual pushing-and-pulling of library catalogue drawers in the original. Discover an additional ten pieces by trying out different keystroke/drawer configurations.

Serge Bouchardon, Alexandre Truong, Lisa Colombani, Adrien Charannat, Sirine Ammar-Boudjelal, Alexandre De Balmann | **A Web Odyssey**

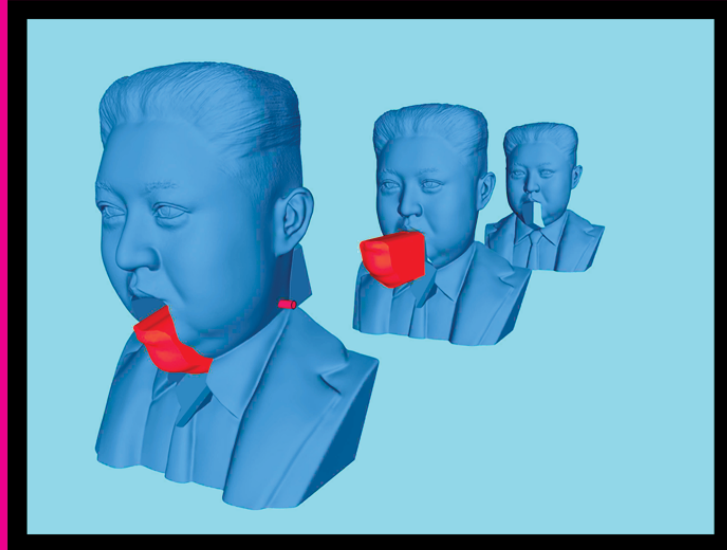
An interactive retelling of Homer's *Odyssey* where Odysseus' harrowing journey to return to his hometown, Ithaca, is paralleled in the user's attempts to reconnect to a network called e-thaca. It establishes points of contact between key episodes of the epic poem and aspects of our contemporary virtual landscape -- among them, the narcotic oblivion induced by lotus flowers and infinitely scrollable social media feeds, and the twin calls of Sirens and streaming platforms.

León de la Rosa-Carrillo | **Árboles de Mi Desierto: Wind Songs**

A recombinatory, EspanGLISH video poem delivered alongside the textures and colors of a dead tree -- uprooted and smashed into lumber by a windstorm, then rendered into physically impossible, panoramic collages -- in de la Rosa-Carrillo's frontyard. Words work together with these images to inspire reflection on unnatural progress, growth, and upward mobility.

PLATFORMING UTOPIAS (AND PLATFORMED DYSTOPIAS)

eliterature.org/elo2021/platform/
opening May 15, 2021



Featuring work by (Serge Bouchardon, Sirine Ammar-Boudjelal, Adrien Charannat, Lisa Colombani, Alexandre De Balmann, Loïc Husson, Louis Pineau, Alexandre Truong), Diego Bonilla, Mez Breeze & collaborators, (Andréa Catrópa and Felipe Mariani), (John Cayley, Qianxun Chen, Samantha Gorman, Daniel Howe, Allison Parish, Rita Raley), Brent Cox, León De La Rosa-Carrillo, (Angeliki Malakasioti and Apostolos Loufopoulos), Brett Griffin, Ben Grosser, Rodolfo Mata, Elfie Nelson, Jason Nelson, Christopher C. Odom, Cecilia Suhr, David Thomas Henry Wright. Poster image by David Thomas Henry Wright.



[Diego Bonilla and Rodolfo Mata | Big Data](#)

A non-linear, generative video poem about data aggregation and analysis. Thirty Mexicans living in Mexico City perform a different version of this fractal poem each time its program is run, according to specifications regarding its length in seconds and total number of lines inputted by the viewer. It emphasizes the human faces and acts of connection that undergird online databases' highly commercialized statistical processing.

[Christopher Odom | Still I Rise: Remix](#)

An interactive fight song blending code, video, sound, hypertext, image, and lyric together to inspire civic action for the #BlackLivesMatter social justice and change movement, based off of Maya Angelou's poem "Still I Rise." In the spirit of the African philosophical concept of ubuntu, it encourages the reader to explore the interconnections

between systemic racism, police brutality, political polarization, xenophobia, nationalism, and states' failures to respond adequately to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Andréa Catrópa and Felipe Mariani | **Oneirografia**

An interactive, 3D environment that encourages users to remember, reimagine, and share their dreams and nightmares. Visitors to the site explore a surreal, atmospheric landscape partially dependent upon their inputs to the interface, which they can then photograph, manipulate, and remix. The piece asks to what extent unforeseen, irrational elements -- such as those from our dreams -- can promote academic inquiry and artistic research.

John Cayley, Daniel Howe, Allison Parrish, Rita Raley, Qianxun Chen, Samantha Gorman | **LAOB The Language Art Observer**

Features pieces tied to live-codeable notebooks published with [Observable](#) on a rolling basis, each dealing with computationally innovative language art or the aesthetics of language art more generally. These notebooks encourage asynchronous collaboration between artist and audience, permitting real-time editing and commenting by multiple users. LAOB hosts the original piece and links to its live notebook.

[Cecilia Suhr | **Me, Myself and I in Dystopia**](#)

Part of an interactive survival game and visual-musical performance called "Humanity: From Dystopia to Survival," this video explores how the pandemic has changed our conception of collectivity through Suhr's performance of what it means to be alone in a dystopian society. Multiple shots of the artist's photos, represented in outline, blur and morph depending on her microphone inputs -- sounds; air; words.

[Brent Cox | **A Platform to Come: Translating Bergsonism - Deleuze \(TBD\)**](#)

A multimedia, intensive work of translation spanning a variety of platforms and mediums that captures the poetics latent in Gilles Deleuze's *Bergsonism*. The artist's annotations to the text are rendered as strange, quasi-living creatures endlessly performing the same, repetitive action, supplemented by a description of their movements. These will be collected in an online codex once the project is complete.

Elfie Nelson | **Directional Pilgrim**

Part hypertext poem, part hellish roadtrip -- a Twine game in which the player-as-pilgrim visits and revisits points in an apocalyptic landscape inspired by the fires that ravage the state of California every year. Navigate via the cardinal directions, character interactions, and dictionary definitions; explore anxieties surrounding mental health and addiction; and find resolution not in the journey's endpoint, but in the significance of the journey itself.

Angeliki Malakasioti | **Ode to a Fallen Dialogue**

An ode to the struggles of human communication and the eroticism of digital experience. Using the poetics of weather phenomena, this interactive piece consists of approximately forty pages navigated by the reader via point-and-click triggers, some of which solicit the reader's written input. It meditates upon the hardship of misunderstanding; the rise and

fall of interpersonal connection; the agony of the stray meanings in our words; and the wonder of those moments when we successfully reach out to others.

[David Thomas Henry Wright and Brett Griffin | **The \(auto\)biography of** 김정은](#)

A seven-part experiment in propaganda delivery splicing together a variety of electronic literature pieces with text from Kim Jong-un's speeches. Combining 'found' code and 'found' text, this site emulates the relentlessness of the North Korean indoctrination machine while showing how born-digital writing can be stolen and misused.

May, 2021

(post-pandemic?)