

Glitch Me Softly

@Rendergirlll

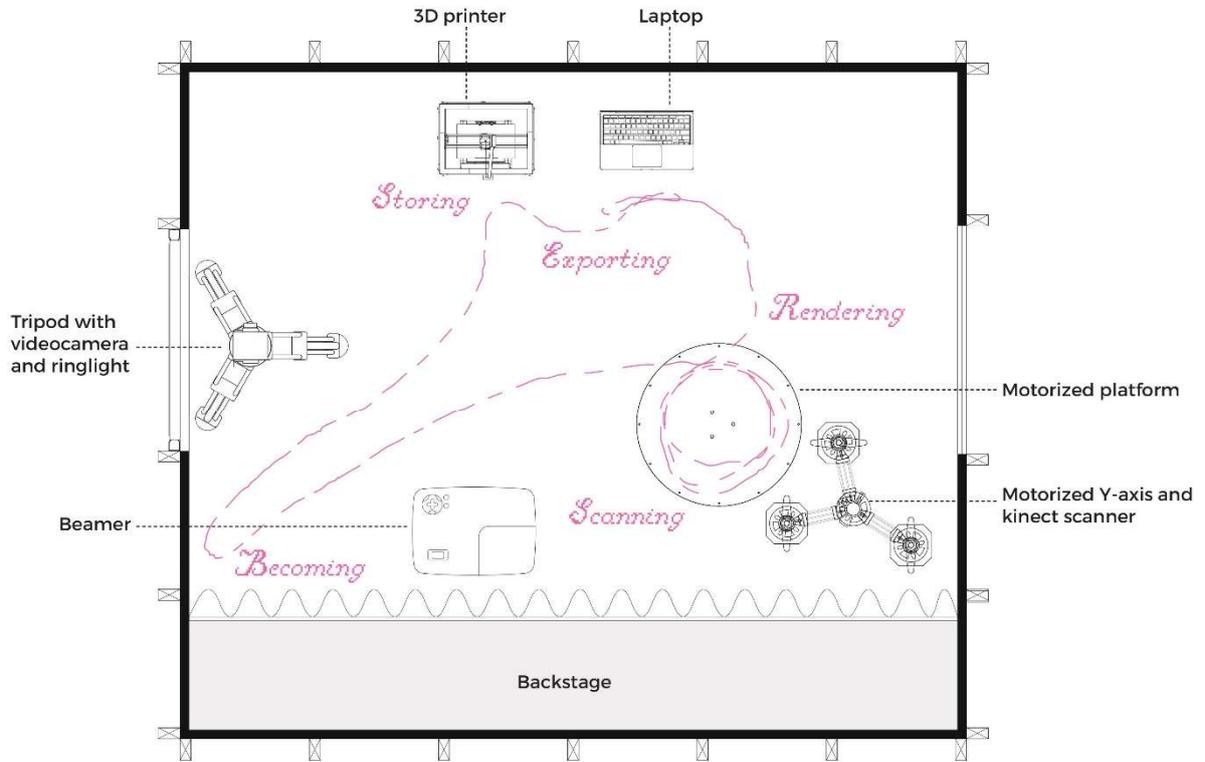
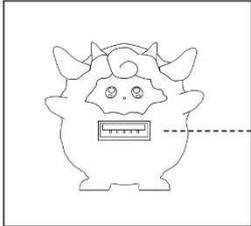


Fig. 1 Plan performance room and loop of ritual.



USB-port

Side view (1:1) datasheep with USB-port.

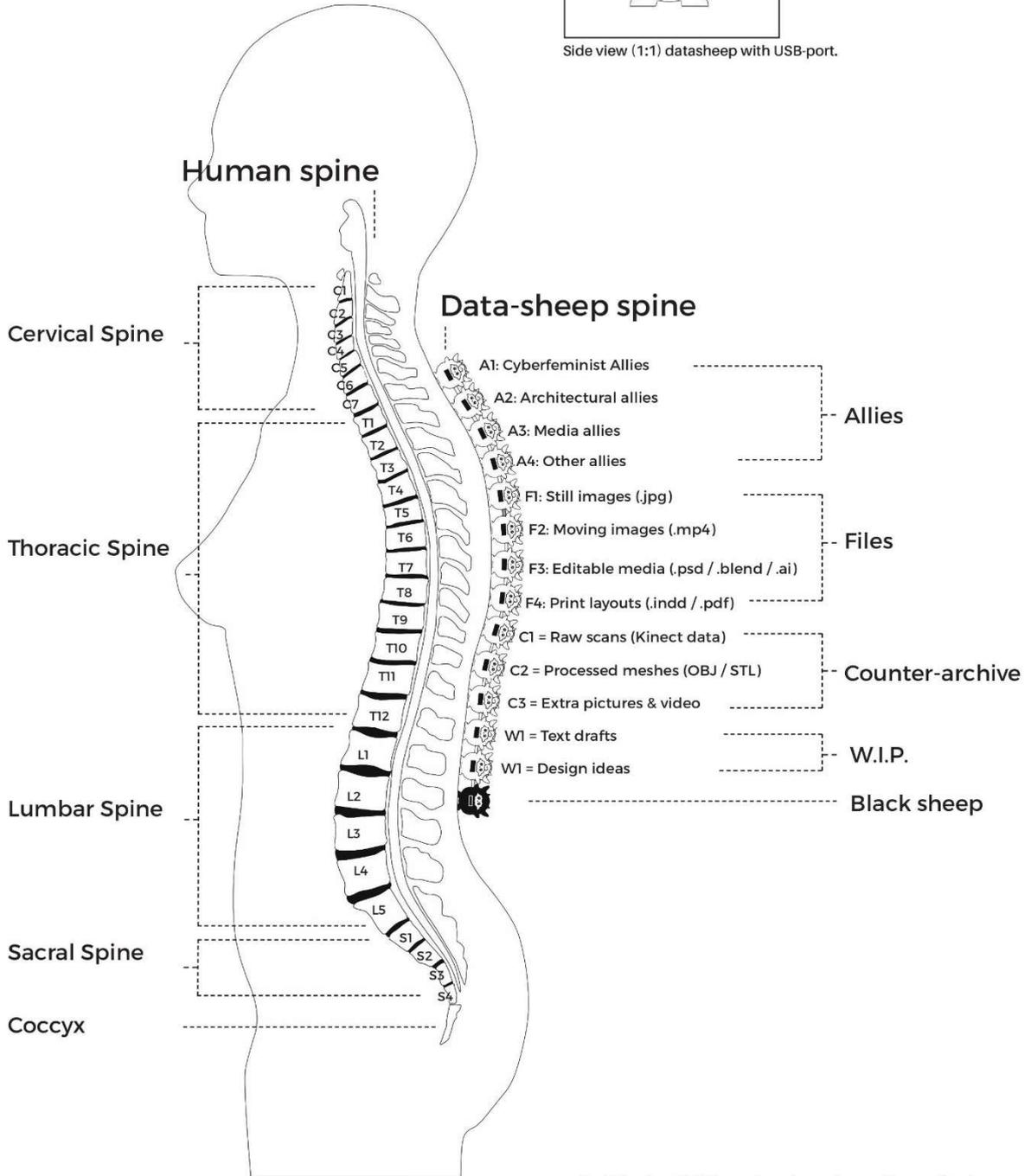
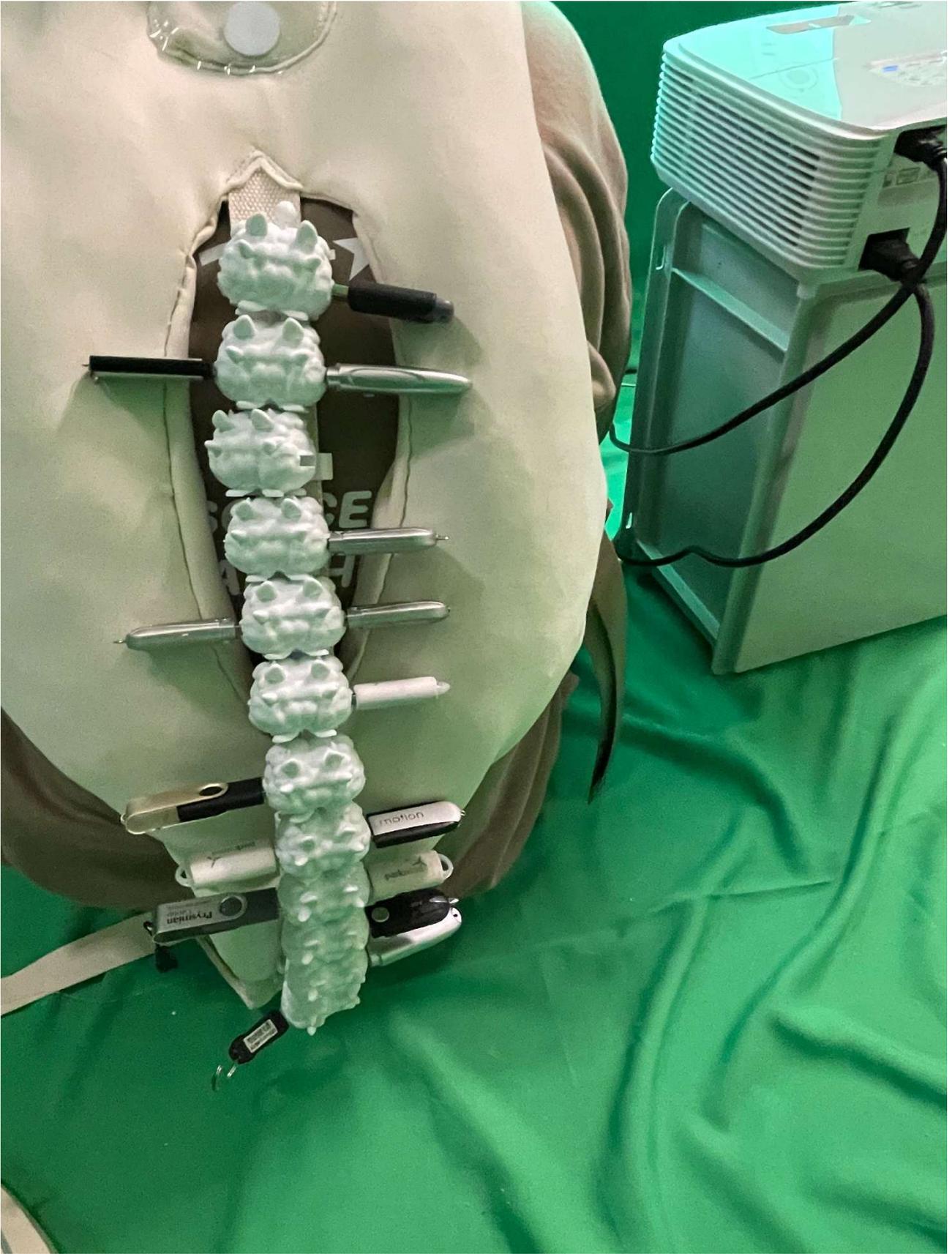


Fig 2. Section (1:4) through avatar and wearable prosthesis.



BECOMING (A BODY OF ARCHITECTURE)

She opens her eyes and runs her fingers through her hair.

My name is Rendergirlll.

An avatar-girl-architect assembled from code and collagen.

I love the smell of warm electronics and hate the taste of chalky water.

My body is both my subject and medium.

I store my knowledge on my spine, USB drives feed my data-sheep.

To get to know me, I will guide you through my glitching ritual.

My ritual is about bodies in architecture: the ones rendered into images, the ones translated into data, the ones that commission and consume. Threaded through this system is also the zero, my body, the architect's body, which becomes the critical site of this work.

Within architecture's visual culture, human bodies are flattened into silhouettes, scale figures, or placeholder personas. Endless digital libraries let me shop and download bodies, reducing them to props to be pasted into someone's future. Rendering practices assemble these figures to produce a narrow regime of desirability tied to capitalist fantasies. The problem is not only who is shown, but how such imagery stages and rehearses certain futures. Architectural images do not only represent space, they script imaginaries. When those imaginaries repeatedly center a narrow demographic; white, able-bodied, cis-hetero, they quietly reproduce cycles of exclusion.

A similar logic reduces me to an operator behind a screen. Presets in programmes guide my moves, and I follow the software's idea of 'neutral.' Through these interfaces, aesthetic assumptions are baked into technical workflows, then circulated as images optimised for platforms like Instagram or Pinterest. These are monopoly systems that decide what counts as desirable or valuable. If I design for them, I maintain the feed. Then the architect stops negotiating and just keeps the machine running.

She stands up.

In talking about bodies, I am reminded that I did not always have a vocabulary to understand bodies. To build one, I started saving the text of theorists and philosophers on my USBs who helped me conceptualise the body and its relation to technology. From Marshall McLuhan //vertebra.A[03].accessing...//, I learned that digital tools and media function as extensions of the body.¹ From Donna Haraway //vertebra.A[01].accessing...//, I learned to challenge binaries and to

name the entanglement of flesh and technology as a cyborg condition: a situated hybrid of organism and machine.ⁱⁱ

Bruno Latour //vertebra.A[03].accessing...// expanded this understanding by showing that agency does not reside solely in the human subject, but emerges through assemblages of bodies, objects, software, and infrastructures.ⁱⁱⁱ

Bernard Stiegler //vertebra.A[03].accessing...// added to this by arguing that the prosthesis is not an add-on to a complete body but constitutive of the body itself. The tools architects use participate in forming their bodies.^{iv}

She starts walking towards the scanning machine.

I see my body as geopolitical territory under the reign of capitalism. Gender and race operate as information systems, classifying people for the efficient extraction of labour. These distinctions, while socially constructed, serve economic functions: they rationalise unequal access to resources, rights, and wages. The body becomes a site where abstraction (race/gender) meets production (labour). Thinking of my body as an assemblage or cyborg does not solve the social and architectural constraints placed upon me. Instead, it reveals that these constraints are constructed and maintained. Once the body is understood as assembled and situated I gain room to experiment. Through this ritual, I ask other architects to spawn their avatars. Think of them as playful parallel processes: testing identities, swapping roles, corrupting defaults. You can run “developer.exe” beside “community-user.exe” and “architect-in-drag.exe,” without uninstalling your body. It’s about debugging it from the inside, not about exiting the system.

SCANNING (MACHINES)

She steps onto the rotating platform

This ritual is part girl and part machine. That relation has been there all along.

//vertebra.A[01].accessing...// Across history, feminine labour and computation have been intertwined through craft and code: textile workers fed punched cards into looms that seeded the logic of early computers, and telephone operators connected entire cities through switchboards that functioned as the first communication networks.

I learned to see this genealogy through writers like Sadie Plant.

//vertebra.A[01].accessing...// Plant opens her book with Ada Lovelace, daughter of the Princess of Parallelograms and often named as the first computer programmer. Ada, who very early on

showed mathematical skill, encountered Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine and decided to befriend it. From the position of a teenage girl rather than an engineer, she sensed a creative potential beyond calculation. This is why, through her annotations, Ada described how the Engine could manipulate symbols and not just numbers, effectively outlining the first computer programme and proposing a machine for imagination rather than mere arithmetic.^v

The platform starts turning and the Kinect begins scanning.

On the surface this machine looks like a 3D scanner. And it is, technically. But I did not build it to produce perfect 3D scans. One reason I built it was because I wanted to see how this suddenly-hot 3D representation device operates beneath the interface. Most 3D scanning technologies appear as sleek interfaces that promise immediacy and accuracy. Anyone today can download a 3D scanning app. I point my phone, I walk around the object or scene, and the app translates it into a point cloud, followed by a mesh. Yet I cannot intervene in how that translation happens. It is a black box: predefined gestures in, data out.

I have always wanted to be a hacker, ever since I read Stieg Larsson's novels and encountered Lisbeth Salander: the punk hacker with a photographic memory. What I value is the attitude and democratisation. My scanner is built from online tutorials and makerspace technologies: a rotating platform, a motorised vertical axis, and an old Xbox Kinect attached as the camera. Her workings are visible and audible, making the process legible and easier to share.

//vertebra.A[01].accessing...// McKenzie Wark writes: "*To hack is to trouble the object or the subject, by transforming in some way the very process of production by which objects and subjects come into being and recognise each other by their representations. The hack touches the unrepresentable, the real.*"^{vi} So hacking is not cosmetic, it is ontological (about how things come into being) and epistemic (about how we understand them).

Scan complete. She steps down.

RENDERING (AFK AND THE DIGITAL)

I must admit though, I love the word glitching more than hacking. An easy misreading of this ritual would be to assume that "Glitch Me Softly" refers to the imperfect or noisy scans produced by this machine. But the glitch here is not about technical error or failed realism. It is also not about distorting the image of the body, but about altering the conditions through which bodies come to matter within architectural systems. And how our bodies as architects can perform in them.

She approaches the computer and she checks herself on the screen.

Instead, the glitch refers to a commitment drawn from Legacy Russell's *Glitch Feminism*.

//vertebra.A[01].accessing...// In capitalist technoculture, glitches are treated as errors, as moments when the system stutters or fails to perform. Russell refuses this idea. For her, the glitch is a deliber-

ate non-performance, a refusal of smoothness. It pushes back against the frameworks that tell bodies how to behave. Glitch feminism reads as a rebellion against the binary body^{vii}.

Within this rendering stage, the scanned body becomes digital. In architecture, this transformation is often treated as a loss: the digital body is seen as less real, less valid, less material, and therefore merely representational of the real thing. Yet bodies today are hybrid, they circulate between screens and streets. To insist that the physical is real and the digital is fake is to misunderstand the infrastructures that shape contemporary life. Digital institutions today such as Meta, Google, and Amazon structure our movements, desires, and possibilities as forcefully as physical institutions. Here, Nathan Jurgenson becomes useful.

//vertebra.A[03].accessing...// His critique of ‘digital dualism’ highlights the absurdity of separating online life from ‘real life.’ He replaces IRL (in real life) with AFK (away from keyboard), insisting that the self does not split when it leaves the screen.^{viii}

She pinches and rotates her own body on the screen, checking all the angles

This paradigm shift matters for architecture. The discipline still imagines itself building for physical bodies in physical space, while using digital tools as representational devices. It maintains a realism hierarchy in which the physical is considered authentic and the digital merely a prefiguration. However, buildings are conceived in frictionless digital environments and only later forced into physical reality. The built outcome often becomes a compromised translation of the rendered model, digital logic into material form. Because of this authenticity hierarchy, we design for the screen and then struggle to make it stand in the world. I find this truly absurd.

EXPORTING (IS SHARING, IS CARING)

She saves the digital body in the software and exports it as an OBJ.

My scanned body does not operate as a glitched representation. When I export the mesh, it behaves like a photograph: a tiny fossil of a body that stood still long enough to become part of the machine. The body and the machine together are the site.

I think of the photograph of Denise Scott Brown on the Las Vegas strip, hands on hips

//vertebra.F[01].accessing...// Claiming situated knowledge.

//vertebra.A[02].accessing...// The gesture can be read as a method. Through that posture she declares ‘I was there,’ and that becomes a way of knowing.^{ix} Architecture often relies on a detached form of observation, treating space as something that can be analysed without being in the matter. *Learning from Las Vegas* taught me otherwise. It showed that looking requires standing somewhere, and that knowledge comes from being inside the scene instead of hovering above it. The book expanded not only what I could research, but the procedures for researching.

Digitalisation does not have to render architectural methods disembodied. The persistent equation of the digital with bodiless abstraction into data reflects a patriarchal capitalist fantasy: information controlled by some and used against others.

//vertebra.A[01].accessing...// *Data Feminism* exposes the limits of this fantasy and proposes methods that re-embed data within social and material realities. They remind me that data in its origin is embodied, (originating in lived experience); material, (sustained by infrastructures of servers, energy, and extraction); and political, (operating within systems of governance and control).^x To work digitally is not to leave the body behind, but to redistribute where the body operates.

She saves the files on her computer in the folder XXX.

And yes, there is also Post-COVID. I watch people doomscroll alone in their rooms and call that ‘being online.’ From that perspective, the digital looks isolating rather than communal—that reading is partial. The internet has always contained architectures for gathering (forums, open archives, tool-sharing platforms), especially for those pushed to the margins. The problem is not digitality itself, but the big platforms that capitalise our attention and extract our care. Falling back into community matters, and figuring out how to glitch technologies that reinforce isolation is not optional. //vertebra.A[01].accessing...// It is survival.^{xi}

Each scan is a manifesto the body writes against its own flattening and extraction. Accumulated, they become a counter-archive of architect’s bodies. Exporting means circulating—and sharing as a counter-protocol through which care re-enters the digital.

STORING (THE WORK)

She reaches to her spine to grab an USB drive out vertebra C1, and plugs it into the laptop.

Often I have been told that digitisation means leaving the physical body behind, the same fantasy the metaverse keeps pushing. Upload yourself, become a frictionless avatar, live inside someone else’s interface. //vertebra.A[03].accessing...// The metaverse exists “to put down creative complexity and lubricate this process of fucking the future by making the possibilities for self-actualisation as narrow as possible.”^{xii} Also what really bothers me is how Big Tech visualises avatars, it shows the lack of care they have for bodies. They want adjustable features. Nothing that could surprise you. Nothing that could want anything back.

But there is no exit, not really. //vertebra.A[03].accessing...// “While technology blurs the horizon between the virtual and the real, the bodies with their materiality.”^{xiii} Bodies stay hungry and sweaty. The internet means server farms and cyberslaves. AI needs lithium mines and tons of water. I haul my own baggage through this landscape. I move through this terrain dragging cables and chargers behind me.

She saves the files on the USB drive

Legacy Russell has a better visual to help me understand: //vertebra.A[01].accessing...// the online-AFK loop. No transcendence, no upload, but between screen and street. “This is the error, this is the

glitch,” she writes, “incessant cutting and stitching, breaking and healing.”^{xiv} The loop becomes a corrective edit to a history that canonised only one body: fit, straight, cis, white, male. This ritual situates itself there, a slow-motion pad on the loop, an introduction.

She plugs the USB into the 3D printer and starts printing the STL

I often return to Ursula Le Guin's Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction,

//vertebra.A[01].accessing...// where she posits the first tool is not a spear but a container: the basket that gathers. I like to imagine the architect this way: as someone who collects stories, drawings, tools.^{xv} Exporting and saving the scans is my ritual gathering, understood not as liturgy but as a durational, repeated, embodied praxis that orients architects' bodies in relation to digital tools and infrastructures. Within Tabita Rezaire's decolonial trinity

//vertebra.A[01].accessing...// (technology, spirituality, and the erotic), the ritual re-emerges as a counter-interface that refuses the colonial separation of technology from embodied, spiritual, and erotic ways of knowing, the same old refusal of spirit from reason.^{xvi} It is precisely at moments of epistemic saturation and infrastructural collapse that spiritual modes of knowing return to visual culture, revealing the limits of Western techno-rationality and its governance over information systems.

The glitch becomes the method. The archive that forms is digital and material, embodied and situated: a record of architects glitching their tools to rethink their own bodies, and architects glitching their bodies to rethink their tools. It feels like a beginning as much as an ending. I am part of the loop.

She removes the printed body from the printer pad and smiles as she holds her body in her hands.

Now, Can I glitch you? I will do it softly.

You open your eyes and lock your eyes with mine.

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Bio

@Rendergirlll is the avatar of architect and PhD researcher Manou Van den Eynde, based at KU Leuven's Department of Architecture in Brussels. Rendergirlll assists Manou in examining how digital technologies shape architecture's visual culture. As a body that leaks, glitches, and shimmers, Rendergirlll challenges the dominance of algorithmic, standardised, and male bodies in architectural representation. Through design-driven research, Manou develops wearables for Rendergirlll that help them navigate hybrid built realities in which rendering and realised rendering are entangled. Since 2023, Manou has taught within KU Leuven's Mediating Tactics engagement in the Master programme.

Notes

- ⁱ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 51-58.
- ⁱⁱ Donna J. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the 1980s," *Socialist Review* 80 (1985): 149-181.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 236-265.
- ^{iv} Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 134-182.
- ^v Sadie Plant, *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women and the New Technoculture* (London: Fourth Estate, 1997), 5-44.
- ^{vi} McKenzie Wark, *A Hacker Manifesto* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 109.
- ^{vii} Legacy Russell, *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* (London: Verso, 2020), 18-31.
- ^{viii} Nathan Jurgenson, "Digital Dualism versus Augmented Reality," *Cyborgology*, 24 February 2011, accessed 12 december 2026, <https://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2011/02/24/digital-dualism-versus-augmented-reality/>.
- ^{ix} Pieterjan Gincjels, "Radical Saturation" (PhD diss., KU Leuven, 2018), 170.
- ^x Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein, *Data Feminism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), 73-148.
- ^{xi} Legacy Russell, *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* (London: Verso, 2020), 66-72.
- ^{xii} Cade Diehm, *The Para-Real: A Manifesto*, New Design Congress, 10 December 2022, accessed 2 January 2026, <https://newdesigncongress.org/en/pub/the-para-real-manifesto/>.
- ^{xiii} Zane Cerpina et al., eds., *Uploaded Bodies* (Trondheim: Meta.Morf / TEKS, 2024), 9.
- ^{xiv} Russell, Legacy. *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto*. London: Verso, 2020, 59.
- ^{xv} Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (London: cosmogenesis, 2024), 21-38.
- ^{xvi} Tabita Rezaire et al., *Womb Consciousness/Conscience u.terre.ine* (Dijon: Les presses du réel/Espace multimédia Gantner, 2022), 154-186.

