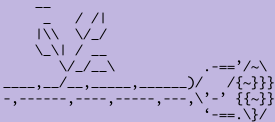


# All watched over by machines of loving grace

An essay by Gladys Lou

November 8 - December 9, 2023



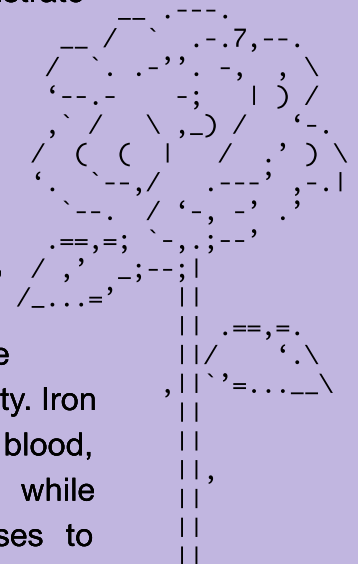
*All watched over by machines of loving grace* explores how human-computer interaction has transformed the meaning of love and romance in the digital age. The exhibition considers ways that technology facilitates searching for love and the evolving shapes and forms that intimate relationships can take in the virtual sphere. The exhibition title is inspired by Richard Brautigan's 1967 poem that describes a utopian future where humans and machines live in harmony. Are machines capable of understanding emotions, or are they projecting human feelings? The exhibition asks the audience what makes love real: the lovers, the loved, or the medium by which love is conveyed? The selected works contemplate attraction and repulsion, communication codes, conflict, warmth, presence, and intimacy within online platforms. Together, the featured artworks redefine what it means to love and be loved in the contemporary age and explore new modes of bonding that transcend the boundaries of the physical and virtual worlds.

Technology liberates non-heteronormative identities by enabling representation of self beyond the binaries, changing the way individuals understand love, a universal experience that remains amorphous and mysterious to most. Is love a feeling, a choice, an admiration, a commitment, a curse, or a blessing? With the emergence of tools such as deep fake, AI-image generator, and Chat-GPT, individuals face the challenges of identifying true and accurate information amongst massive data networks and anonymous identities. From romantic to platonic relationships to self-love, as innocent as a crush and as complex as partnership, this exhibition explores how technology connects us when the boundaries between public and private, and virtual and real, become increasingly fluid. *All watched over by machines of*

*loving grace* is a love letter dedicated to all the people that we love, loved, could have loved, might have loved, wish we had loved, are learning to love, maybe love, and will love.

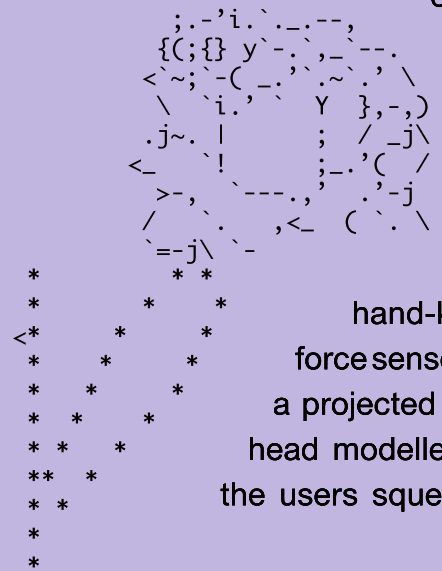
*Ferrodolia\* MFS.23 (Magnetic Field Studies 2023)* by Callum Schuster is a series of 80 magnetized iron dust on 35mm glass slides. The black powder is splattered in random orders like star dusts, constellations, and celestial bodies. "Ferro-" is a root word from *Ferrum*, meaning iron in Latin, while "-dolia" refers to *Pareidolia*, a psychological phenomenon in which the mind responds to a visual or auditory stimulus – perceiving a familiar pattern where none exists. *Ferrodolia\** captures the process of attraction and repulsion between magnets and iron dust, while metaphorically alluding to the invisible forces that draw lovers closer and drive them apart, as well as the longing and nostalgia between encounter and departure. By changing the distance and placement of magnets and the quantity of iron dust, Schuster creates patterns with varying density and intensity that illustrate

the journey of a relationship where lovers learn to build better synchronicity. The monochrome pattern continues to evolve. When one thinks they've recognized a similar pattern, the maze shifts, resembling the constant navigation through familiar and unfamiliar, visible and invisible, certainty and uncertainty. Iron is a base element in life that exists in blood, food, sun, and building structures, while magnetism is used from compasses to MRIs and the Aurora Borealis. Referencing



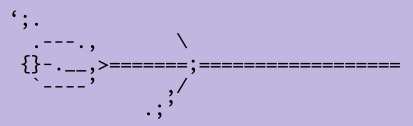
chemical bonding and polarities, Schuster marries natural forces with human emotions, generating a unique equation on the theory of attraction that binds strangers together at the right time and place.

*Sink 12* by Zuyva Sevilla is a thermal installation that explores heat as both a material and an active process. The work captures the viewer's body temperature and transfers it onto the artwork through a chromatic display. Visitors are invited to touch the steel sheets and feel the temperature gradient across the material. By facilitating energy transfer between the viewers and their surroundings, Sevilla's work utilizes technology as a medium to share warmth and closeness between organic and inorganic bodies. It enables presence and physical proximity beyond time and space. This exchange of energy documents the traces we leave behind during physical and virtual encounters. It reflects on the way technology transforms the ephemeral presence of bodies into heat energy that circulates eternally, like the memory of loved ones that endures after we cease to exist in the physical world.



*Poetic Fighting* by Yoshe Li is an interactive installation of relational conflicts and arguments. The work is made of two hand-knitted controllers built with force sensors, connected to speakers and a projected image of a three-dimensional head modelled after the artist. The harder the users squeeze the controllers, the lower

the pitch the louder the sound, and the more distorted the head becomes. Twisting and bending, the oscillating waves



of bumps and calluses on the head visualize the chaotic state of mind and raging voices echoing in one's head during confrontations. The cacophonous sound, generated by a Juno-60 synthesizer, mimics the tone of screaming and yelling during verbal arguments. At the same time, the pressing motion on the soft, woollen controllers resembles clenching fists or squeezing on a stress ball. Inspired by an argument between the artist and her partner, the work reflects on the power dynamics at play between lovers during conflicts. The work is a poetic statement on priority and control in the dynamics of relationships, serving as a form of stress relief. Li invites the users to experience different types of confrontations and dissonance without the risk of damaging their real-life relationships. She reminds the users that the goal is not to win or prove one's point but to listen to distinct perspectives and build a shared understanding.

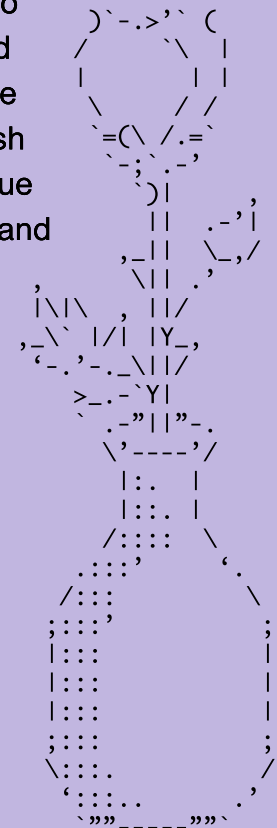
Derek Toomes' *Whispers in Code* is a series of three wall-mounted kinetic sculptures that explore alternative modes of language and communication facilitated by technology. Small vibration motors from cell phones in each ear-shaped sculpture translate love sonnets composed from the text messages between the artist and his partner. Encrypted in Morse code, each sculpture conveys messages through different tones and rhythms – akin to whispered secrets between distant lovers. Morse code resembles the rhythmic heartbeat between lovers, colliding together through technology. Informed by phenomenology, where

presence gives meaning, Toomes believes that intimacy develops from his slow process of studying, sculpting, and modelling his partner's, friends', and his own ears in 3D spaces. He encourages visitors to come close to the work and take their time to decipher the chains of dialogue. The complex decoding process and hand-made quality of his work contradict mass production and critique the way media dictates society's understanding and perception of intimacy. When the three ears vibrate at the same time, their rhythms become difficult to differentiate, like the dialogues amongst a crowd, reflecting the complexities that machines induce by making simple messages abstract and challenging to decode. Through resonance and reverberation, Toomes shows us the possibility of exchanging feelings and communicating through codes. His work shows that technology can be a poetic bridge between the physical and digital worlds, forming a channel to communicate love.

*When We Love* by Chia Amisola is a browser-based dating simulator that explores technology's love, labour, and liberation through systems, poems, and archives. Amisola reimagines websites as a platform for placemaking – a gathering space that cultivates love and community. Inspired by the artist's experience of repressive queer love in the Philippines, Amisola's (web)site-specific art encourages intimacy without proximity, kindling sparks through virtual stargazing and cloud watching. Users can select their own adventure by searching through web urls, clicking pop-up windows as web poetry, and self-reflecting through introspective protocol forms. Interspersed through domains and woven together as a dating experience, the websites provide a sense of agency and autonomy through the things

users make, unmake, and feel. Amisola's work can be experienced individually and collectively – completed in a single-session or continuing for an infinite duration. Amisola's websites are as unfinished, continuous, and expanding as the internet – they are ambient art that breaks the convention of normative assumptions on the internet and intimacy, making digital platforms fun, playful, attentive, and full of love.

While relationships may end and exhibitions may not last forever, our artworks extend beyond their lifespans. They live on as browser history and cache data, just like the memories of loved ones embedded, enmeshed, and savoured in our hearts. Please find attached in this brochure the QR codes that link to Chia Amisola's virtual stargazing and cloud-watching simulators, where you can draw a cloud and make a wish on a star. We invite you to continue contributing to our conversation and let our love live on by sharing care and belonging in the digital world.



## About the Curator

Gladys Lou is a Hong Kong-Canadian artist and curator with an HBA in Art & Art History and Psychology from the University of Toronto and Sheridan College. Her practice utilizes experimental media and new technologies, including video, sound, and new media, to challenge the boundaries of sensory perception. Her work explores shifting perceptions of light, colour, and memory, visualizing emotions and the unconscious.

Lou's art has been exhibited at InterAccess, Workman Arts, Art Museum at the University of Toronto, Blackwood Gallery, Art Gallery of Mississauga, and the Museum of Contemporary Art of Alicante. Her critical writing has been featured in Pleasure Dome's eBook and Hamilton Artist Inc.'s digital publication. She was awarded a Fulbright scholarship with a placement at the University of Washington, where she studied Digital Art and Experimental Media. Gladys was selected as a participant of the Power Plant's RBC Emerging Artist Network in 2022–2023 and has interned at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. with the Time-Based Media working group. She was awarded the 27th Annual Mississauga Arts Awards in the Multimedia Arts (Emerging) category, and first prize at Video Fever 2023 by Trinity Square Video, Vtape, and Images Festival.

# CURRENT

The InterAccess Current (IA Current) program supports the professional development of emerging curators and artists interested in new media and electronic practices. Each year, InterAccess selects an emerging curator, who works closely with InterAccess staff to conceptualize and execute an exhibition of works by emerging artists. "Current" refers to the now, of course, but it is also an energetic charge that causes light, heat, and all manner of electronic life; an apt metaphor for emergent creative practices within the ever-expanding field of new media.

# Inter/Access

Founded in 1983, InterAccess is a non-profit gallery, educational facility, production studio, festival, and registered charity dedicated to emerging practices in art and technology. Our programs support art forms that integrate technology, fostering and supporting the full cycle of art and artistic practice through education, production, and exhibition. InterAccess is regarded as a preeminent Canadian arts and technology centre.



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