

Curating the Self: Augmented Capitalism & the Ghost in Machine Intelligence.

Abstract.

In contemporary society where conditions of platform culture prevail, life is presented as images of the self, distributed across networks. Guy Debord's description of the Spectacle as capitalism's instrument for distracting and pacifying the masses seems more prescient than ever. The mediation logic that drives current conditions of life in many societies has gone beyond spectacular images and is increasingly subsuming more spheres of social life to the total and integral Spectacle: capitalism.¹ By curating our lives via social media, we contribute to a commodified presence endlessly remediated without a sense of purpose, as Olivier Frayssé concluded:

When we post selfies and videos on social media, we make a spectacle of our own and of ourselves, we commodify ourselves, essentially visually, for the consumption of others, and we consume others as commodities.²

We are both spectator and spectacle, simultaneously producers and consumers of the commodified mediated presence of the self. In this research, I argue that this represents the condition of late capitalism I have called augmented capitalism. The research is focused on two questions: What are the defining features of augmented capitalism? What are the critiques of augmented capitalism? The creative practice aims to answer the second question by exploring the application of artificial intelligence (AI), the latest component of augmented capitalism, in reconsidering present-day notions of consumerism and the spectacle. A machine-learning curated, computer (re)mediated and algorithmically edited critical commentary on contemporary consumer culture that considers the notion of the artefact as a continuous critique. The ultimate Marxist hack: capitalism will critique itself, the ghost in machine intelligence.

¹ Briziarelli, M. and Armano, E. 2017. Introduction: From the Notion of Spectacle to Spectacle 2.0: The Dialectic of Capitalist Mediations. In: Briziarelli, M. and Armano, E. (eds.). *The Spectacle 2.0: Reading Debord in the Context of Digital Capitalism*. Pp. 15–47. London: University of Westminster Press.

² Frayssé, O. *Gazing at "Fetishes" 2.0: Using the Spectacle Concept to Understand Consumer Cultures in the Age of Digital Capitalism*, *InMedia* [En ligne], 7.2. | 2019, mis en ligne le 16 décembre 2019, consulté le 21 mars 2023. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/inmedia/1902>