

YOU ARE. THEY IS. NEO ULTRA PUNK.

A talk – Shu Lea Cheang
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A trajectory charged with detours and deviations since BRANDON (1998-1999) takes me to the newly released WONDERS WANDER (2017) for Madrid Pride 2017. BRANDON, a one year web narrative in installments, teleports Brandon Teena, a transgender being who was raped and murdered for failed “passing”, along Nebraska’s interstate highway 80 to virtual sphere. WONDERS WANDER, a mobi-web-serial in 4 episodes, tracks trans-homo-phobic crime sites off the center of Madrid and recounts tales of empowered nouveau queer generation. In my art and film works, a fusion of genders and genres, media and medium, compels me to appropriate sci-fi narratives, to re-imagine non-binary techno-body. FLUIDØ (2017) set in the post-AIDS future of 2060, in which mutated AIDS viruses give birth to ZERO GEN whose ejaculated white fluid is the hypernarcotic for the 21st century. In UKI (2009-), a sequel to I.K.U. (2000), the failed attempts to resurrect defunct cyborg body propagate a new breed of UKI virus, infected to mobilize viral resistance. RISE UP, NEO ULTRA PUNK. You are. They is.

My talk

In making this talk, I want to reflect on my practice in art and film making - a fusion of genders and genres, media and medium, how I employ sci-fi narratives and imagine non-binary techno-body. I go back to BRANDON (1998-1999), a one year web narrative project commissioned by the Guggenheim museum New York, to the new release of my feature film FLUIDØ (2017) and WONDERS WANDER (2017), I also want to bring up I.K.U. (2000) and its sequel UKI which is currently in development as UKI, cinema interrupted.

BRANDON is conceived for the web and presented it’s narratives in installments during one year duration, from 1998 to 1999. I have also staged real space installation and performance at Waag Society in Amsterdam to connect the public between actual and virtual spaces. BRANDON refers to BRANDON TEENA of Nebraska who was anatomically female but lived as a man. As his gender identity was revealed, he was brutally raped and murdered. BRANDON takes Brandon out of Nebraska and transports him to the cyberspace where gender fusion, cyber crimes take place. BRANDON is a collaborative work that involves many artists, authors, designers, programmers and institutions.

WONDERS WANDER (2017) is a commissioned project by the city of Madrid for Madrid Pride 2017. The genre is new to me - location based mobi-web-serial. The WONDERS refer to Barrio Malasaña in Madrid, nicknamed by its residents as Maravillas (wonders). It was once the countercultural hub of La Movida Madrileña and now hip and trendy with tourists. WONDERS WANDER consists of a mobile app with gps guided city-walks to track sites of homo-trans-phobic attacks that extends to peripheral Madrid and four film episodes that explore off-the-mainstream nouveau queer generation that includes refugees, migrants, functional diversity, transfeminista, transfeminism, open family, subversive motherhoods, sustainable living, and the rise of auto-defense practices for self-empowerment. These film episodes can be viewed and downloaded on the sites where it was filmed along the routes that document sites of gender hate crimes. I considered WONDERS WANDER an updated mobileapp roadtrip of BRANDON’S roadtrip web interface.

FLUIDØ (2017), I call it a CYPHERPUNK scifi movie. Virus, sex, hack, drug & conspiracy all in play. FLUIDØ created gender fluid ZERO GEN who were borne with mutated HIV/AIDS virus. Set in the post-AIDS future of 2060 in which the Government is the first to declare the era AIDS FREE. These ZERO GENs are the bio-drug carriers whose white fluid is the hypernarcotic for the 21st century, taking over the markets of the 20th century white powder high. In the movie, the excessive ejaculation celebrates the free flow of body fluid. I want the movie to be watched in the cinema where audience can experience collectively the raw, uncensored body power.

FLUIDØ's concept and scenario was written in 2000 after the release of I.K.U. (yes, it took me 17 years to realize FLUIDØ). I.K.U. was an Uplink Japan production. We set out to make a CYBERPUNK scifi porn. In a way to challenge the Japanese censorship on exposed private body parts (well, penis, vagina). I.K.U. tells the story of GENOM Corp, an internet porn enterprise who dispatches Android I.K.U. coders to collect orgasm data. The color coded orgasm data are sold as mobilephone chips in vending machines, plug in, orgasm on the move. With no pretence of love, I.K.U. indulges in orgasmic high. Bodies are packages made to open, orgasm are data that can be stored, purchased and consumed.

I spent the 80s in New York city, sex, drugs, punks, being an activist. In the early 90s, I relocated myself to cyberspace. Before the millennium arrives, I moved out of New York city and claimed myself a digital nomad. In recent years, my work has been focusing on electronic trash, biodiversity, biohack and viral love which inform my current film project in development, UKI, cinema interrupted. UKI is set in post-netcrash etrashville where the data deprived I.K.U. coders are dumped among the geeks and the hackers who salvage the etrash for network utopia. Either Software malfunction or through body sexing, the IKU coders are reengineered into virus. Meanwhile, the GENOM corp. takes human body hostage to institute BioNet inside human body. Making red blood cells into computing cells to reprogram human auto-orgasm, ORGANISMO. UKI, the virus, rise up to infiltrate BIONET, sabotage ORGANISMO and reclaim the lost orgasm data. For UKI, I am planning more a 3D fabricated landscape for etrashville and BioNet. It will also involve a mobile app. game to INTERRUPT the cinema, between GENOM's cells and UKI virus.. the game play with its winner or loser decided will direct the film's ending in two ways.

In creating genres of my own, I have explored various medium and forms of expression - film, video, digital, web, installation, performance, network, mobile app. In these works, I appreciate most are the performers who join me. They have contributed to the shaping of a [science] fiction narrative that keeps evolves itself. NEO ULTRA PUNK. You are. They is.