



**Window
Space**



Xpace Cultural Centre
2-303 Lansdowne Ave
Toronto ON M6K 2W5
416 849 2864
Tuesday-Saturday 12-6
www.xpace.info

Xuan Ye

Wear Your Soul in Wordy Yesterday Gold

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While Yeast Sings I'm Worried Yard Groans

An Action is an Impulse to Satisfy a Desire

Desires arise out of some need. We make the choice to direct our activity towards satisfying a particular desire. These desires produce our reality, including the techniques we use to satisfy our desires. The techniques inform other desires.

I need to sleep, I need to eat, I need to empty myself, I need things, I need to communicate. I will go to great lengths to sleep, eat, empty myself, get things, and communicate. Environment is chaos. Imperfect, I impose order. Yesterday's language captures my mouth in speech, my hands in writing. Feels like my tongue even though it is common, was taught to me. Language goes out into the world and makes things, makes places. It captures the chaos of the world, turns everything out there into elements of itself. Feels like perfection, making sense of the world. Makes everything feel like my things, my organization, even though they don't belong to me. But I like order. Feels impartial but it's not. I'm operating under a regime that benefits from a neutral appearance.

I am organized by this city. It's a technique. I stay in my room or find another to relax, go to work to make money to get food, clothes and books, and when I have time I talk to people. They say the same thing. We all like organization. It's impartially fantastic, it's imperial fantasy. How can I break out? With a different technique. I will go online. I will crosscut the geometry of space to not have to go to great lengths for answers any longer. Hardly alone, I'm usually moving, looking, talking faster than I ever thought possible. Searching only raises more questions. Writing this text is no different. My desire to communicate inflates in the shape of the object I speak to.

Nowhere, Another Technique

This iteration of Xuan Ye's installation *Wear Your Soul in Wordy Yesterday Gold* is a condensation of their previous installation *What You See is Where You Go*. It consists of two formal elements:

- a. Caret
- b. Checker

Let's look at them individually and see where they take us.

- a. Caret: Being at The Edge

Composed of a single vertical bulb suspended in the centre of the window vitrine, this caret is the insertion point in a body of text. The bar flickers endlessly in place. The caret sits wherever Ye has left off, as if representing their own position within an ongoing conversation. It pauses here only for the duration of its installation slot as a particular point within a larger process of elaboration.

The throbbing of the caret presents writing as the machinic expression of desire; communication as yearning to be understood. An insertion signals an instance within this

process, in this case locating the threshold of correspondence itself. Here, my whereabouts within some infinity is revealed as a temporary limit, my sense edging ever closer to nonsensical, the familiar self shed before assuming another temporary pose. All writing expresses this, however virtuality has changed my navigation in terms of *velocity*. I'm a little runner striding along the navigable surface, assembling identity as activity.

This icon denotes a disposition towards a state-of-affairs as I switch platforms, send messages, leave comments, make notes, scroll endlessly to receive information. I articulate my whereabouts through this activity - contextualized comments becomes arguments. Now I sit silently, cursor flickering, wanting words simply because I can. Even inactivity is expressive, my fidgeting without moving forward produces for you a "read" or "is writing" icon, forks over a discrete relation within a larger context of change. I want to hear back so fast. Easy navigation allows me to spore outward so fast I break semiotic containers of clear representation and grasp at the shock of raw attrition. It's not what I say but how I say it. *What You See is What You Get* spins off to become *What You See is Where You Go* and mutates again as a command. Now *Wear Your Soul in Wordy Yesterday Gold* rests on holy acrostic in title alone, hunting hungrily anagram reassembly. Sharing at this speed shatters predictable forms of self-explanation in favour of a deeper, granular synthesis. Sure, this technical system has provided easier ways to communicate but I fell hard for its speed, got used to its surplus, crave even higher intensity. I can see anything, go wherever.

What let me get to this point? The openness I seek could mean complete disintegration. When I lag out and crash, or when I get my flight from single organism into a communal entity is ruined, dashed back to partiality, interior kept alive. My craving for togetherness cannot rest, I end up unsettled, trembling trapped in a circle of noise. The vibratory stillness of extreme speed lead our activity to exist as some kind of bare utterance, a moan-cry that is beyond words. This kind of communicative mode breaks methods of vocal and bodily representation and demands disembodied force of desire. The soul leaks out. Crumpled *Wear Your Soul In Wordy Yesterday Gold* is a smear

in cyber-ectoplasm - what I saw and where I went end up as *gooey auteur whey hiss woe*. My shriek playfully folds in and out within. But within where?

b. Checker: Cruising the Web

Let's slow down a bit. Blink and you'd miss that lingering checker. At first glance, the second element of Ye's installation is just a checkerboard background placed across the entire wall of the window space. Second glance: this checker is the standard representation of transparency in graphics software. This representation of transparency is interesting in its very existence as a representation. It isn't 'nothing', not the vacuum of container space. It is the relational space where our interactions take place that allows for those relationships to exist. However, it isn't as if this space doesn't do anything and simply let participants to do what they wish. Power relations are already present, so I am left carving words with a reed along the grout between these white and grey tiles, a scribbling germ within this interior for digital life.

We can read the inclusion of a checkerboard background as a kind of institutional critique of the virtual courtyard, a space where everywhere there are cronies of corporate interest. The neutral element of transparency is not experienced outright but signalled by the superimposition of a checkerboard: a simulation of neutrality. It might look sterile but we aren't conversing in any place wherever. We are inside a specific place that allows us to connect in certain ways. In the same way that physical representation of a void is afforded by the existence of a painted wall belonging to a particular white cube, or commercial space, digital neutrality is afforded by a veil over the program's coded infrastructure.

The web deploys a field of diffuse control to structure how and what we desire. It is a machine that grew specific tools such as giving us access to vast amounts of information and potential to socialize, yet elements of its actualization seem predatory. Infrastructure such as the empty background Ye's icon rests in front of direct our

methods with character limits and censoring, encourage rates of engagement, and keep track of all this activity. It's simply another organizational technique: the social programs incentivise acting on certain wants, make us care about free relations rather than the architecturally politicized environment they take place in. By reflecting on this simulated checkerboard backdrop we can better understand what happens when technical systems are treated as neutral extensions of wants by users despite being developed with manipulative intentions. Ethical relations, even the quickest exchanges sent over text, are compromised. Even outside of perceivable space our relationships exist within a system whose hidden back-end is informed by political and economic ideologies that want to exploit our behaviour, control our interactions and extract wealth. It seems like everything needs to want something.

Now Here I Went

If anything, we must remain open to this mystery. Stuck communicating within channels no matter what, maybe our best bet is to at least circumvent how valuable our data is to organizations that harvest and surveil. Our faces have twisted, eyes caves leading to mirrors reflecting what this environment causes us to crave. Swim in these tunnels: we can find a new way to become something else, unleash flows of expression that heighten our awareness of bodily activity that can cap exploitability.

If our networks bloodlet, we can poison our blood. We can interact randomly, con the interface, scroll like a razor, appease the system unchained from desire, fill boxes blindly - in the end relate differently to our online environment by understanding the context we act within. We can randomize affect to become excessive forms of reality instead of sterile sense events. This pragmatic action might totally unravel the self, produce unpredictable varieties that could exist outside of language. Until we get there, let's keep the conversation going |

- Benjamin de Boer