

Goldsmiths, University of London
SUPERVISION RECORD (MPhil/PhD)

This form is to be completed after each supervision

Student Name:	Katarina Rankovic	Student Reference:	33300528
Department:	Art	Date of Birth:	13/03/1994
Date of Initial Registration:	23/09/19	Expected Submission Deadline:	2022
Supervisor 1:	Michael Archer	Supervisor 2:	Grace Schwindt
Funding Status: (Self-Funded/ ESRC/AHRC/Other)	Self-Funded	Full time/ Part time:	Full time
Thesis Title:	Scripting for Agency		

Date of supervision	30/09/19
Date form completed (Form to be completed within two days of meeting)	01/10/19

Written work submitted or other purpose of supervision

- To discuss with Michael how to manage the balance between practice and theoretical writing, as well as which PhD pathway option to formally select for my project.

Brief comments on written work

Topics discussed in supervision:

- The challenge of defining the field as an overlapping interest between multiple disciplines.**
I am interested in how dual systems of reading/writing can give rise to autonomous or life-like behaviour in biological organisms and AI, that things as abstract as social conduct or a performance are characterised by 'scripts'. I wish to expand upon the mechanism, *not* the entire fields which observe it in their relative contexts. But I haven't found a name by which to call this mechanism or a community specifically preoccupied with it.
- Defining the research question more narrowly**
Perhaps my contribution will simply be to define this mechanism, if it has no name already, and highlight its cross-disciplinary appearances and relevance. But also, as an artist dealing in text, I am curious how a new intuition about autonomy and its relationship to text, or subscript, might inform my authorship and my approach to writing characters (a traditional type of artificial agent). Perhaps the goal is to develop means of better intuiting this notion of a code and its 'expression', through artistic probing. In particular, it is this ghostly, resultant 'invoking' or 'expression' of a code which I would like to unpack.
- What is the desired relationship between written dissertation and practice in this case?**
We discussed common pitfalls - that the practice and the writing can diverge to the point of having no correlation whatsoever, or, conversely, that the practice can become a means of embellishing or illustrating theoretical positions and lose its own methodological freedom. I felt inclined towards both a conventionally academic mode of investigation, and my artistic methodology, as opposite modes of investigation and expression. I see them running parallel, but see that it would be important to keep one method free from the other.

- **What weighting is best given to practice vs. written dissertation in this case?**

I was inclined towards the 50/50 option, and was challenged on this by Michael. I think he wanted to remind me that I didn't need to write a longer dissertation than necessary for an artist, and that it would inevitably take time away from my practice. He also mentioned the danger of spreading myself too thinly across disciplines in the research. I feel that my project may have relevance to a number of fields and take inspiration from them, but I cannot expect to speak of those fields as an expert. I then began to try to define myself as a writer. I said that I saw my project as a philosophical contribution, the findings of which may inform my practice and relationship with fictional characters in my practice. Michael challenged me on my effort to decide whether I am writing as a philosopher or artist. I don't need to be fully sure of my identity as a writer in order to write, but I still felt I ought to know what 'field' it is I am contributing to. Being an artist, and a researcher in the art department, am I contributing to art? I am, but I suppose my assumption is that this is the type of topic that might have relevance beyond art in a way that would be surprising.

- **Which pathway option to select?**

By the end of the session I felt like sticking to the 50/50 pathway, because I think the question depends on how I see my role beyond the PhD. I would like to be an artist and a theorist, do both kinds of work. I feel like this PhD dissertation is an opportunity to try to grapple with philosophical questions that have haunted my work in each reading/performance/writing of characters, by attempting to talk about them explicitly. Meanwhile, art practice allows me to broach this subject indirectly, and create works with some agenda of their own. Perhaps I am curious about presenting these two approaches as alternate epistemologies, without necessarily giving precedent to either.

- **The danger of anthropomorphising non-human agents in my theoretical framework and the challenge of applying human language to describe non-human behaviour**

Without sidestepping the question of language, I think dwelling too much on this is beyond my scope. The concern Michael raised, as I understood it, was that the action of reading/writing in my examples (DNA, AI code) occur at such a low level in the hierarchy of life or 'intelligence', that I run the risk of anthropomorphising reading/writing activities in cells or computers processing code. Besides the fact that biologists themselves find taxonomies of life quite difficult, in that there is a grey area around organisms such as viruses as being deemed 'alive', I guess my approach to this has to do with the very word 'anthropomorphising'. Is it not the cellular activity of single-celled organisms (and that of the primitive self-replicating molecules that came before them) from which we have morphed? Are we not morphed from the eukaryot, rather than the other way round? The question made me realise that I need to be more specific in how I speak about this. When I say the cell is alive, or an agent, or self-governing, I mean that it exhibits the behaviour of something as *if* it has purpose and moves with deliberation. I don't say that it has these things - and I don't say that humans do either. In my project, I will focus only on the behaviour or appearance of autonomy, because for all I know, even in the case of human beings, that's 'all there is'. So I will not take issue with the consciousness of cells, AI, or human beings, but rather the properties of agency as diagnosed externally by another agent: the appearance of deliberation, intent and creativity. Thus, Michael's question has helped me define the scope of my research a bit better.

Research Progress (*issues relating to the thesis*)

- **Making simple evolutionary algorithms to gain an intuition about machine learning, and the potential of a coded basis for generating creative output.** I made simple programs with a programmer that generates English sentences based on statistical information from a sample text.
- **Presented my work at the introductory Art Research Presentations**, with a narrower focus on my research question
- **Began a new tangent in my performance practice**, developing voiceovers for realistic, AI-generated images of human faces in view of creating a **podcast** series of audio monologues coupled with fake faces.

Research Training and Professional Development: (review of training needs, relevant conferences, funding, presentations and publication)

- **Further training in machine learning and neural networks** (online course, working with a programmer on simple algorithms, exploring Wolfram Language and slow-paced Swift tutorials to build up the ability to make/edit algorithms of this nature myself).
- **Attending Writing Forums** developed by PhD researchers, with a view to participating in a hub that explores writing as practice and presenting text-based work there.
- **Texts recommended by Michael:** Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Remarks* and *Philosophical Investigations* and *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* as well as texts from our first meeting, *Novels in Three Lines* by Felix Feneon and *The Voice Imitator* by Thomas Bernhard.
- Developing sound performances

Action agreed for next supervision

- To examine recommended texts and send an email to Michael containing information about the aforementioned podcast idea & sample piece.

Date of next supervision (if more than two months from now, briefly explain)

- We did not agree on this but I will see if Michael is free to meet again in early November.

Declaration of confirmation: By ticking this box it is confirmed that the information above is correct and accurate according to both the student and the supervisor at the time of the meeting. All Supervision Record Forms should be stored and subsequently attached to the Annual Progress Report Form.