

This talk will very briefly explore how artists challenge traditional notions of art and aesthetics through the use of new technologies and theories that surround them. An exploration into some of the basic ideas of what technology is, and what it does in an aesthetic context, is significant, as it problematizes notions held by art historians like Crary (2002), who posit that concepts such as interactivity, spectatorship and subjectivity are predicated on “the relative separation of a viewer from a milieu of distraction and the detachment of an image from a larger background.”¹ While Crary’s interpretation seems to fit, to a certain extent, the specific technology (the peep show) and time period (19th Century) that he is describing, ideas of detachment and separation when applied to art works that utilize new technologies, as they consequently have been are problematic as they not only create interiorized and privatized experiences, but they also position technology as a matter of aesthetic choice on behalf of the artist.² I will argue that this positioning of technology as an aesthetic choice isolates the viewer from the artistic process, ultimately creating separate objects and subjects. In this way, this exploration quickly becomes a question of agency and autonomy insofar as it aligns itself with what Lucy Suchman (2007) states is the “longstanding feminist concern” with the problem of who and what is recognized as an autonomous subject, and who and what is not in discourses in the STS and humanities fields.³ In short, I will attempt to show in the 15 minutes allotted to me that the question “how does the use of technology in artworks challenge traditional notions of art and aesthetics” is not so much an issue of interactivity, invisibility or open or closed source but as the artworks I examine will illustrate, it is a matter of how the use of these technologies influence the type of subjects and objects that appear and for whom they emerge in aesthetic contexts.

¹Jonathan Crary. “Gericault, the Panorama and Sites of Reality in the Early Nineteenth Century.” *Grey Room 09*, Fall, 2002. Pg 5-25..

²Theorists and historians who have done this include, but are not limited to: Lev Manovich (2001, 2005) Paul Dourish and Genivive Bell (2011), Laura Marks (2002), Anne Freidberg (2009) and Kate Mondloch (2010).

³Lucy Suchman. “Agencies in technology design: Feminist reconfigurations.” *Unpublished manuscript*. (2007). Found online at: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/sociology/research/publications/papers/suchman-agenciestechnodesign.pdf>