

Open Media



Eames Room: A Space for Two, Highly Rendered Space
Bryan R Martino

To honor the legacy of the late Ray and Charles Eames, I was tasked to create a scaled, photorealistic space for the couple to continue their design work in quarantine. This 10ft x 10ft x 10ft room features a workstation, a place to rest, and a place to learn, as well as reincarnations of their most famous product designs. Translating orthographic drawings into a 3D model was a substantial learning process, but ultimately conveys a colorful interpretation of these iconic mid-century designers.



*Israeli Shuk Vendor
Bailey Wakefield*

Chicago Pride: Dykes on Bikes

Bailey Wakefield





SOCIAL DISTANCING



WEAR A MASK, PLEASE!



LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

The Journey Anya Berlova

In the difficulties of the pandemic, I wanted to create a work that was meaningful but lighthearted. Serious but playful. Something hopeful for a better future. My two cartoon characters, Sheepers and Puggie, are part of a larger campaign I created to fight against bullying. Sheepers and Puggie always support each other and their community. They are beacons of kindness, inclusivity, and positivity; we need those three things now more than ever. In these three art pieces, I showcase the journey we've taken, the safety measures we partake in so that we can protect others, and the hope we hold in our hearts. I used photographs from memorable places that I took pre-pandemic and added situations relevant to current times to symbolize our need to connect the past with the present. We must keep our sense of adventure and enthusiasm for everyday passions while taking the necessary precautions. Our experiences are shaping us every day; we can use them to create a brighter future.



An Unfamiliar Home, 4 Photos
Madeleine Kriech

What it's like to not recognize a place you call home? Walking around campus isn't what it used to be. There are no crowds in between classes or lunch rushes at the dining hall. The smiling faces are hidden behind masks and computer screens. This photo series explores what it's like to walk on CU's barren campus in 2020. For almost four years, I've explored all the nooks and crannies campus has to offer, and now my favorite spots are empty. Through these photos, I hope to provide a glimpse of CU's once lively and rowdy spirit now lonely and quiet. Yet, albeit unfamiliar, I still call it home.

An Unfamiliar Home
Madeleine Kriech



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La Jolla Cove Composite Plan Render
Bryan R Martino

My primary intent was to create a dreamy landscape that balanced surrealism and photo-realism. A summer palette was created from precedents, the white outlines adding a touch of airiness, the dramatic curves adding a touch of femininity, and the warm sunset blanketing the scene in softness. The culmination of colors and effects made for a classic summer eve.



Apathy and Aesthetics in the Construction of Gen Z Identity

Sophia Aldinger

The following is an excerpt from a longer piece. For full text, please visit https://scholar.colorado.edu/concern/undergraduate_honors_theses/gq67js14c

Project - Animation:

My honors project is an experimental short film, named *Zillah*, for which I have written an original screenplay, composed a musical soundtrack, casted, directed, filmed, and edited. Some of the technologies I have experimented with in the film are animation, green screen, and the convergence of 2D painting with video (Figure 1)... *Zillah* explores the relationship between mental illness, religion, and existential purpose.

[...]

Evolution of Teenage Culture - Media+Music:

Online presence has become an integral element of the teenage experience, especially within the past decade as technological innovations have made devices more mobile. Teenagers are now constantly connected because of this mobile access to this stream of communication and consciousness in



Figure 1. "EMDR: Theatre." *Zillah*. 2020.

almost any situation throughout their day.¹ Scenarios like transportation rides, waiting rooms, and lulls at work, which used to exist as moments of waiting and silence, are now filled with this readily available virtual interaction.² This has changed the way teens structure their daily activities to such a degree that it fundamentally alters the dynamics of their interpersonal relationships.

In these jaded times, meme-ing, tweeting, instagramming, and tik-toking about anxiety and depression isn't just for coping. It can act as a guise of honesty – especially to youth desperately seeking authenticity and connection in a virtual social environment that tends to distort it.³

The most popular forms of social media among younger generations are those with the most interactive elements between users. New platforms continually improve the ability to richly engage through video posts, live streams and enhanced commentary with tools that speed up and even deepen communication. Generation Z has a great affinity for apps like Snapchat and TikTok that are based on video content, yet chat and discussion functionality are also fundamental. In the past, apps like Tumblr were home to the glorification of psychosis, self-harm, and drug addiction. The community regulations of this app, this content and generational attitude was expelled

from Tumblr, and, some would argue, transferred straight over to TikTok.⁴ TikTok has become the perfect breeding ground for the apathetic, dark humor Generation Z is entertained by. Figure 7...illustrates screenshots of typical TikTok videos which root their apathetic humor in jokes about mental illness and substance abuse.

Dependence on video content within social media for peer connection is a new facet of internet culture which, in part, developed out of shifting socializing practices. In generations past, teens would spend their time at movie theatres and malls, but this dynamic is greatly diminished with Generation Z.⁵ Online shopping, streaming services, and other online resources directly compete with such physical social venues. In addition to this, even before the apocalyptic consciousness of pandemic, the culture of fear resulting from the normalization of terror attacks and school shootings in public spheres left parents less inclined to let their kids spend unsupervised time in public.⁶ This has resulted in a larger portion of quality time between friends existing in an online format, and video interactive elements satiate this urge for live interaction. While this gives older generations the impression that Generation Z is lazy and obsessed with their phones, this is how Generation Z was socialized. Building interpersonal relationships virtually is the normal reality for Generation Z, and it will only be reinforced in the future due to social distancing in

1 Curtis, Brenda L, Robert D Ashford, Katherine I Magnuson, and Stacy R Ryan-Pettes. "Comparison of Smartphone Ownership, Social Media Use, and Willingness to Use Digital Interventions Between Generation Z and Millennials in the Treatment of Substance Use: Cross-Sectional Questionnaire Study." *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 21 (November 2018).

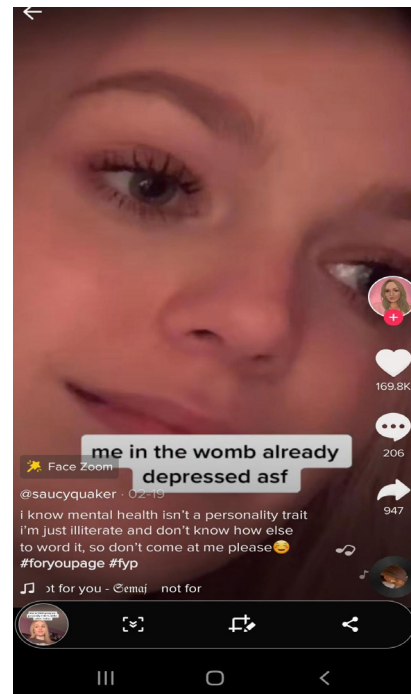
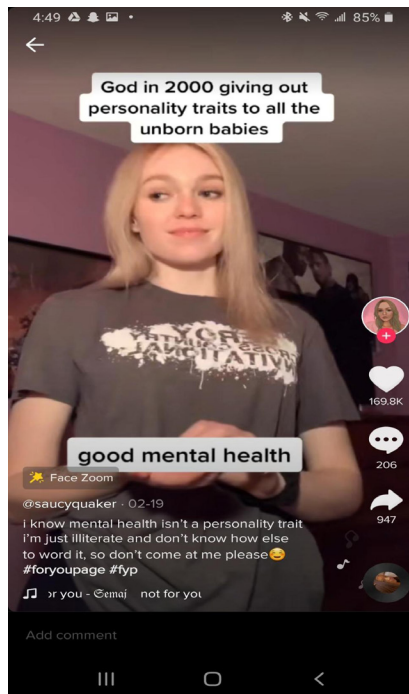
2 Ibid.

3 Joho, Jess. "How being sad, depressed, and anxious online became trendy" *Mashable* (blog), June 28, 2019.

4 Tracy, Natasha. *Lost Marbles: Insights Into My Life with Depression & Bipolar*. Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016.

5 Timothy Shary. *Generation Multiplex: The Image of Youth in Contemporary American Cinema*. University of Texas Press. 2002.

6 Ibid.



response to COVID-19.

Figure 7.⁷

[...]

The music coming out of a generation reflects the collective feelings within it. This new sound coming from Generation Z stems from a state of unrest, uncertainty, and misplaced emotion. This is why so many of the artists rising in popularity brand themselves in a particular new trans-genre style which is best identified by its experimentation with merging other loosely defined genres like emo-rap, lo-fi, and hyperpop. Artists falling into this nascent category, like 100 Gecs, Death Grips, or Grimes, are difficult to label under a single genre, which is a key aspect of their popularity. The soundtrack I've created to accompany the film intentionally emulates a wide variety of the experimental sounds currently rising in popularity. An example of this can be seen by the merging of genres within track two, *Playland*, as the hook is a play on a

typical hyperpop melody, but then the sound transitions into an eerie lo-fi interlude after the second verse; with a few ear-piercing, warped scream sound effects scattered throughout. This seemingly distasteful sound inclusion directly references musical tactics of 100 Gecs and other artists of the hyperpop genre. Music doesn't necessarily have to sound good to be popular with Generation Z, it just has to be meaningfully different. Experimental or underground artists have a more individualized quality to them that teenagers can latch onto as a means of feeling unique in their own identity, by association.

Generation Z's musical tastes are relevant to their shifting societal perceptions because the changing trends reflect a more fundamental, underlying shift in values. While society is working to encourage openness about mental health and destigmatize mental illness, how is Gen Z self-diagnosing mental illness when, in reality, there are just growing pains and human struggle? As teenagers are going through adolescence and trying to define a sense of individual identity, they

7 Saucyquaker. "TikTok." *TikTok* (video). Original Sound: curlyhead_piink, January 2020.

are easily influenced. Younger generations who are seeking a group to identify with are influenced by the deification of mentally ill characters and celebrities whose psychotic, chaotic, or otherwise dangerous traits are glorified for their contrast from the mainstream population.⁸ The mass effort to destigmatize mental illness within contemporary culture has led to its decontextualization in popular media.⁹ The original intention of raising awareness traversed the social spectrum to the point that symptoms of mental illness are often romanticized by the media. These media trends have misled Generation Z on what a healthy relationship with mental health and even a concept of higher self should look like. Juice WRLD, one of the most iconic emo-rappers of the time, is an example of a deified mentally ill figure. His music existed in constant conversation with current issues Generation Z is coping with, with a recurring focus on his own battle with mental illness and substance abuse. He always said

It feels more authentic to me that these kids are likely to talk about their addiction, their drug use, their demons, if you will.¹⁰

Fetishization of violence, substance abuse, and mental illness runs rampant in teenage culture. Generation Z's idols are those that are mentally ill and dying young, usually of drug overdoses.¹¹ Juice WrlD's death was not an isolated occurrence; within the past three years, Generation Z has witnessed the deaths of five major figures within the genre of emo-rap alone.

As a cultural form, music is integral to the creation and evolution of their youth cultural biographies, and works as a 'soundtrack' (DeNora 2000) to their social lives.¹²

The environment within which Generation Z's punk culture thrives stands in stark contrast to the punk iterations of past decades. For Millennials, the punk counterculture was limited to the emos, rooted in emotionality and sadness. Much in the way that Post-expressionist artists abandoned the emotionality of the expressionists, Generation Z exchanged the overly emotional quality of melancholic emo music for a more apathetic angst.¹³ Teenage culture is fundamentally emotional, as this is an age typically associated with puberty and changing hormonal balance. Generation Z's zeitgeist, however, is forcing them to transcend this inherent teen urge to wallow in melancholy. As much as they might prefer to stew in their own angst, they are the heirs of failing institutions, climate, and social-class structured society.¹⁴

Despite their lack of Millennial enthusiasm for conventional reform, and their parents' and grandparents' looming cynicism, Generation Z is largely composed of realists who are conscious that the future of the United States and the world rests on their ability to restructure failed institutions, turn back climate change, and redefine inadequate social and class structures. Whether they will be inspired to act in response to these needs, however, is a very open question. Although this generation has demonstrated

8 Jadayel, Rola, Karim Medlej, and Jinan Jadayel. "Mental Disorders: A Glamorous Attraction on Social Media?" *Journal of Teaching and Education*, January 7, 2017, 465-470.

9 Timothy Shary. Generation Multiplex. 15-18.

10 Younger, Briana. "The Beautiful Vulnerability of Juice WRLD." *The New Yorker*, December 9, 2019.

11 Jadayel, Rola, Karim Medlej, and Jinan Jadayel. "Mental Disorders" 465-470.

12 Lincoln, Sian. "Feeling the Noise: Teenagers, Bedrooms and Music" 399.

13 Kersten, Dennis, and Usha Wilbers. "Introduction: Metamodernism" 719-22.

14 Jason Dorsey. *Unexpected Viewpoints of the Generation After Millennials*. 5-7.

that they are perfectly capable of raising their voices in loud momentary support of their fellow students protesting gun violence, they seem incapable of maintaining that support long enough to actually vote for representatives able to change existing laws. Generation Z tends to shed responsibility as quickly as possible, in hopes of returning to whatever they would rather be doing, unbothered by a society toward which they feel mostly apathetic. This is a difficult sentiment to reverse. The future of America and the world seems very uncertain, as it will soon be inherited by a generation with a reputation for expending the minimal effort required to skate by.

Zillah represents the paradigm shifts of the first generation born into a world with the internet, and all of the ancillary technologies that have fundamentally defined the structure of their relationships with each other and the world around them. Looking into the abyss, she neither embraces it nor cowers in fear, but rather has adopted the apathetic outlook her generation developed to grapple with the utter complexity of it all. She embodies the contradictory set of values held by this generation that recognizes the need for societal change, but is so plagued by mental illness that they lack the motivation to take action on extrinsic issues. Consequently, the future defined by Generation Z and its children is unlikely to be truly hopeful, and yet the world is not necessarily doomed. The experiences of people like Zillah will ultimately define the manner in which society responds to the challenges of the future, and their success will largely depend on their ability to transcend their own indifference.

Conclusion:

If there was ever a time for Generation Z to make good of the socio-political system which failed them, it is

now, during its collapse. The continual accumulation of catastrophe is changing the basis of the way American society operates. This is Generation Z's chance to use their new generational perspective, and unique ability to cope with catastrophe to help structure new social frameworks. Generation Z's dissociation from society might end up being the key to creating change during this complex collapse of American society.

This project embodies my motivation as an artist by confronting my personal role in this Generation Z narrative. As an individual who has struggled with mental illness and held an active role in this internet culture which aestheticizes its symptoms, this is a group of individuals I have an insightful understanding of and unique ability to influence. I hope to use this project to voice my concern for the repercussions Generation Z's internet culture can have on society and the lives of generations forthcoming. Zillah's behaviour directly reflects the type of hyperbolic conversations about violent, morbid, and otherwise misanthropic topics that Generation Z indulges in online. The only distance between Zillah and my intended audience, is that she takes action on the sorts of things they talk about. I am asking my peers to ponder the reality of the things they say, the aesthetics they perpetuate, and the cognitive dissonance that likely exists between their aesthetics and core values. It is not surprising that Generation Z is characterized as apathetic when their identity is constructed around a misanthropic internet culture which idolizes mental illness through its fetishizing of substance abuse, emotional repression, and rejection of organized religion. In the same way I have struggled to, I am asking Generation Z to reevaluate the way they might have unintentionally modeled their identity around a problematic set of beliefs.

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