

Speculative Fetish

Touching Me, Touching You: Faith Holland

by Francesca Gavin

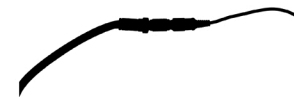
How do our physical bodies relate to technology? We use screens, keyboards, interfaces, apps, and websites but rarely think about our direct physical interactions with them. Instead we focus on representations of the body, the image of the body. The intersection between awareness and invisibility is at the heart of Faith Holland's work. Her artistic practice spans mediums from photographs to gifs, websites to sculpture, video to installation. Yet underlying it all is ourselves as base, stimulus-led, emotional, physical beings.

Her focus on the body emerges out of research and thinking about our sexual relationship to technology, both metaphorically and literally. In Holland's work the internet is a metaphor for the body, but also a place for bodily stimulation and excitement.

"I started thinking more about how we become aroused by using these devices—accessing pornography or getting sexual messages—and how we're physically interacting with these things,"

the artist explains. This blurring of the boundary between touching the screen and presenting the body as touchable is something she has explored in multiple ways. Most notably this emerged in her web project **vvvvvv.xxx**, a hub that brought together

her research on cyberfeminism with abstract gif works from porn disseminated through hashtags like cyberpussies. In her current work, we see organic materials—from moisturizer to pubic hair—directly related to the surface of the screen.



Her projects are not merely about the representation of sex online but also about how the internet is changing our performance of sex itself. She demonstrates that there is a sense of pressure for sex to be visually consumable or on display. Holland's focus on sexual stimulation has now developed into an awareness of the emotional and the idea of care. She has become fascinated with how we treat our everyday devices, maintain them, check them, and bond with them; with how their role as extensions of body and mind make

them seem almost humanized. As she puts it,

"The devices become like a lover that you begin to take care of once the relationship gets more serious."



In her work, whether depictions of wires connecting 'improperly' or short videos, there is a sense of movement: a stimulus-led feeling of transit or speed. She has made gifs that represent a pixelated, entirely abstract and fragmented representation of sex. Yet through their small size, easy movement and searchable tags, they have appeared in realms far beyond the art world—on pornographic websites or embedded in sex tip articles. Holland's work exaggerates the fragmentation of the body. In a way she manifests Foucault's research into how the fragment, or in Holland's case the hyper close-up, relates to contemporary desire. Much of

her focus is on the idea of climax, yet there is also a wider sense of energy built into her work around technology. The energy of electricity is here, as much as is the mental energy of the viewer.



Sometimes her aesthetic approach feels, almost, like a digital handmade-ness that is intentionally rough around the edges. For Holland this adds an element of humor and a sense of recent digital history. Holland describes Photoshop as a limited collaborator. Using everyday materials from tablets to phones enables her work to function on multiple levels and reach different audiences. But beneath this accessibility there is serious research and thought into who we are, how we relate and where we are heading. Her aims are innately artistic, rather than just anthropological. Holland's work makes manifest the abstract and immaterial and thus makes it evident.

Faith Holland
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