

Matadero Estudios Críticos. Vol. 3

Meme Manifesto.
El laboratorio Freeport

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MATADERO
CENTRO DE CREACIÓN
CONTEMPORÁNEA

**CENTRO DE
RESIDENCIAS
ARTÍSTICAS**

Matadero Madrid es un centro de creación contemporánea, artística e interdisciplinar, cuyo objetivo es la formación, la producción y la difusión de obra y de conocimiento. A través de sus distintos programas públicos y grupos de estudio, Matadero Madrid ha desarrollado un importante corpus de investigaciones y de experiencias que se ordena, amplía y proyecta en forma de un programa de aprendizajes independientes que lleva por nombre «Matadero Estudios Críticos» (M.E.C.).

Como parte del programa de estudios de Matadero Madrid, Freeport es un proyecto de investigación creativa para un mundo de humanos, no-humanos y máquinas. Dirigido por artistas, está concebido como una serie de módulos de estudio y producción, en los que metodologías artísticas se combinan con prácticas de diseño radical, tecnologías críticas, nuevos lenguajes audiovisuales y los fermentos culturales de las comunidades de Internet.

El objetivo de Freeport es explorar de manera original un planeta interconectado, desarrollando estrategias creativas capaces de aprovechar nuevas oportunidades estéticas y desvelar sus ambigüedades tecno-políticas para fomentar el aprendizaje creativo y transversal, más que una formación académica tradicional.

Freeport quiere responder a los desafíos culturales, estéticos y políticos de la sociedad actual proponiendo métodos inusuales de innovación cultural y social no corporativa. En los diferentes módulos que se han ido desarrollando en los últimos dos años se fomentan los intercambios entre expertos reconocidos y nuevos o futuros expertos para encontrar caminos alternativos en el entramado de fuerzas que componen estética, material y políticamente nuestro planeta interconectado.

Esta publicación es una herramienta de trabajo que recopila los apuntes, intuiciones y prototipos de este curso; esperamos que sea también punto de inicio de nuevos proyectos y cursos que contribuirán a nutrir una de las líneas de investigación que articula la programación de Matadero Madrid desde los últimos años: la cultura digital.

Ana Ara
Matadero Madrid

Matadero Madrid is a center for contemporary, artistic, and interdisciplinary creation, whose objective is training, production and dissemination of work and knowledge. Through its various public programs and study groups, Matadero Madrid has developed an important corpus of research and experiences that is organized, expanded and projected in the form of an independent learning program called “Matadero Estudios Críticos” (Matadero Critical Studies, or M.E.C).

As part of the Matadero Madrid study program, Freeport is a project devoted to creatively researching the world of humans, non-humans, and machines. It is conceived as a series of study and production modules led by artists, in which artistic methodologies are combined with radical design practices, critical technologies, new visualities, and the ever changing cultural ferments of Internet communities.

The objective of Freeport is to explore the networked planet and develop creative strategies capable of taking advantage of new aesthetic opportunities and uncovering their techno-political blind spots to promote creative and transversal learning, rather than a traditional academic training.

Freeport responds to the cultural, aesthetic and political challenges of today's societies by proposing unusual methods of non-corporate cultural and social innovation. In the different modules that have been developed in the past two years, exchanges between more experienced practitioners and newer ones- the experts of the future- have been encouraged so as to promote the discovery of alternative trajectories through the vast array of forces that aesthetically, materially, and politically now constitute our thoroughly interconnected planet.

This publication is conceived as a toolbox to gather together the notes, intuitions and prototypes of this course. We hope that it will also make itself useful as a starting point for new projects and courses that will contribute to nurturing one of the lines of research that has been articulated in the Matadero Madrid program in recent years: digital culture.

Ana Ara
Matadero Madrid

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YESN'T
O CÓMO PERDEMOS
EL TIEMPO EN
INTERNET Y POR
QUÉ TÚ TAMBIÉN
DEBERÍAS HACERLO.

BANI
BRUSADIN

Tratar con memes es complicado. En primer lugar, porque todo el mundo cree saber qué son: básicamente, imágenes cómicas que circulan de forma viral por Internet. Los has visto en los chats con amigos, en el teléfono de tu primo pequeño, las marcas los utilizan como publicidad e incluso periódicos antes respetables, recurren a ellos de vez en cuando como *clickbait*. Crees que sabes exactamente lo que son, hasta que los observas un poco más de cerca y te das cuenta de que en realidad no tienes ni idea. Muchos son chistes, algunos son chistes malos, otros son chistes agridulces, otros ni siquiera recuerdan un chiste. Algunos son muy desagradables, algunos oscuros, algunos infinitamente repetitivos. Otros evolucionan y mutan hasta que ya no los entiendes más (y el problema no son ellos, sino ¡tú, que te has quedado fuera del bucle!)

En segundo lugar: los memes parecen provocar esquizofrenia en los usuarios. La mayoría de la gente ve los memes como algo cómico sin ninguna utilidad. Sin embargo, los memes se cuelan entre asuntos importantes y mucha gente sigue tomándose muy en serio su difusión, incluso introduciéndolos en conversaciones o reuniones de trabajo. ¿Cómo puedes pretender ocuparte seriamente de algo que se considera, en el mejor de los casos, una distracción (o, más a menudo, mera basura), pero cuyo atractivo magnetismo sigue rondando nuestras mentes?

MEMÉTICA

Estos pequeños milagros que conocemos como memes están hechos de una materia viva pero escurridiza: la fuerza social en bruto de las redes, una vena que sigue palpitando bajo la gruesa piel de las interfaces corporativas y la vigilancia cada vez más profunda del usuario. Por eso la memética no es una pseudo-disciplina que se limita a diseccionar memes. Al contrario, es un intento de observar el vasto, extraño y ecléctico territorio de la invención popular en esta era de la conexión permanente y de las notificaciones 24/7.

La economía de los memes no se define por la escasez, ya que el valor memético se crea y se multiplica a través de la libre circulación, la constante tergiversación y desafío de la autoría, y la desfiguración de todos los originales. Obviamente, esto no es un aspecto sólo exclusivo de los memes, ya que los chistes, por ejemplo,

también funcionan de forma muy similar. El humor, además, siempre ha sido un atributo clave tanto de los chistes como de los memes, ya que nos permite relajar nuestras defensas cognitivas de base más racional. El humor hace que una imagen o una reacción sea inmediatamente atractiva y, en última instancia, refuerza los vínculos entre las personas que los comparten.

Sin embargo, la ironía memética es también una puerta de entrada a la complejidad, la ambigüedad (incluida la negación plausible) y una densa codificación cultural. Ésta puede proporcionar una excusa o incluso un escudo utilizado por los memers para disfrazar un mensaje que sólo sus compañeros inmediatos podrán descodificar. Al fin y al cabo, la memética no tiene que ver sólo con el humor, sino con la magia: es una fuerza que convierte las imágenes y los símbolos en objetos mágicos que significan algo más, que actúan y se transforman a la vez. Y como tal, tampoco puede ejercerse sobre ellos ninguna autoridad última ni imponerse ningún límite posible a sus significados. En este sentido, los memes pertenecen a diversas comunidades y a sus rituales, a menudo, autodefinidos. Esto también significa que cambian incesantemente, lo cual los puede volver con facilidad opacos e ilegibles.

NO SE DEFINEN LOS MEMES

Pues no. Puedes visualizar de qué están compuestos, de dónde vienen, si tienen sentido para ti, cómo podrías readaptarlos a tus propias necesidades o construir

sobre ellos, pero nada es estable en la memética. Los vínculos comunitarios que se han originado a través de la memética y su performatividad mágica pueden llegar a ser muy fuertes, pero su forma e intensidad también pueden cambiar de manera rápida en respuesta a nuevas aportaciones, sobre todo dentro de la siempre cambiante geografía de Internet como medio social.

El proyecto Meme Manifesto de Clusterduck capta precisamente esto: es un viaje a través de diferentes etapas de acumulación memética a lo largo de momentos específicos de la historia reciente de Internet. Por ejemplo, la fuente tipográfica Impact usada en los primeros memes es idéntica a la que aparece en los memes post-irónicos; de la misma manera que las técnicas de *trolling* utilizadas por los *shitposters* que luego se convirtieron en activistas de Anonymous alrededor de 2010 quizás compartan características comunes con los raids de trolls en las plataformas sociales alrededor de 2020, y sin embargo en los dos casos el contexto es drásticamente diferente.

Consideremos, por ejemplo, las diásporas que han ocurrido en plataformas meméticas avanzadas como 4chan y Tumblr a medida que unos usuarios se desplazaban hacia plataformas más convencionales (y por lo tanto, menos anónimas) a principios y mediados de la década de 2010. Estos desplazamientos hicieron que la memética fuera cada vez más compleja y desarrollara una estética propia y específica que bifurcaba la ironía tanto en versiones normativas como en meta-ironía, al tiempo que también surgían jerarquías más nítidas entre los autores de «contenido

original» y los reproductores «normie» con un nivel mucho más bajo de sutileza memética.

O consideremos la era de la memética en Instagram: no hay ninguna posibilidad de entender lo que está sucediendo allí si sólo se mira a través de la lente de una supuesta Teoría General de la Memética. Porque habrá que tener en cuenta el omnipresente impacto de las marcas en las redes sociales comerciales, así como las referencias a la ansiedad y la depresión de la generación FOMO, su intensa sensación de colapso social inminente, pero también el significado emancipador de la fluidez en la identidad de género, así como la vida sexual diversificada de los desencantados participantes más jóvenes. Por todo esto, no se puede entender el valor de la memética sin comprender su profunda diversidad y su nexa con contextos específicos.

PODER

Los memes suelen ser la manifestación visible de una cacofonía de reacciones que la invención popular desata cuando engulle noticias, fotos de personalidades famosas y sentimientos ampliamente compartidos. Pero no nos equivoquemos: en esta época de plataformas globales al inicio de su declive, los memes no son sólo bromas, representaciones ni tampoco simples «comentarios sociales». Su ironía y sus guiños, así como su innovación formal y su sofisticación conceptual, a menudo también son el resultado paradójico de una intensa frustración colectiva.

De hecho, la memética se suele alimentar de la censura, la violencia simbólica, la represión política y la lucha de clases. Su práctica elabora respuestas impredecibles que desafían los estereotipos, o cimentan diversos tipos de políticas de identidad, y a menudo promueven la autorrepresentación de grupos sociales infrarrepresentados. Esto sigue siendo así a pesar de que los memes también pueden expresar a veces un sentido completamente equivocado de injusticia y victimismo y, al hacerlo, se convierten en peligrosos vehículos de estereotipos racistas, contra la diversidad de género e incluso fascistas. De un modo u otro, los memes suelen irrumpir en nuestras burbujas sociales como si fueran destellos de láser disparados desde rincones de la realidad que de otro modo pasarían desapercibidos. Y más vale que prestemos un poco de atención a todo esto, especialmente a lo más extraño y extremo de elementos que siguen emergiendo de las culturas de Internet.

Los meta-memes, los memes recursivos, los memes surrealistas son algunas de las piezas dispersas de las *fan fictions* urdidas por enjambres de usuarios semianónimos en los «bosques oscuros» de diversas plataformas como Reddit, Discord o Telegram. Estos no producen simplemente imágenes divertidas sino estéticas completas, narrativas y mundos alternativos. De forma similar, los memes «quemados» (*fried, deep fried, nuked*) —es decir, imágenes, símbolos y memes *normie* que son literalmente torturados hasta que sangran y se derrumban— son al mismo tiempo proezas visuales radicales, una sublimación de la angustia

social y una forma de gestión del dolor personal. Cuanto más extraños son, más sólido es su mensaje de rebelión temporal contra la institución social del sentido: ya sea dirigido a los gobiernos, pasando por la industria del entretenimiento, las escuelas y los profesores, las estructuras familiares, las medidas de salud y seguridad, el arte y la literatura de buenos sentimientos, la cultura progresista, o incluso la posibilidad misma de encontrar un lenguaje compartido o un entendimiento común a partir de un libro como éste. Los memes meta, surrealistas o quemados nunca serán cercanos y familiares como ocurre con muchas otras familias meméticas. Su estado de permanente desplazamiento del significado está destinado a confundir y como mucho seducir a través del disimulo, lo que sorprendentemente nos da una extraña sensación de placer y tranquilidad en esta era de capitalismo de plataformas y fascismo de datos.



YESN'T OR, HOW WE WASTED TIME ON THE INTERNET AND WHY YOU SHOULD TOO.

BANI
BRUSADIN

Dealing with memes is a mess. Firstly, everyone thinks they know what a meme is: basically, they're funny images that are virally circulated on the internet. You've seen them in friends' chats, on your little cousin's phone, corporate brands use them, and even once respectable newspapers occasionally feature them as clickbait. You think you know precisely what a meme is, until you look a wee bit closer and you realize that you actually don't. Some memes consist of jokes, some are even bad jokes, some are bitter jokes, some are not even jokes at all. Some are very ugly, some are completely obscure, some are endlessly repetitive: and still others evolve and mutate until you don't even get them anymore (and the problem is someone being out of their loop - that someone is YOU!).

Secondly: memes seem to elicit users' schizophrenia. Most people look down upon memes as merely amusing but with zero useful content. Memes sneak themselves in between serious matters, and yet many people still take their circulation very seriously, even constantly smuggling them into conversations or job meetings. How can one possibly hope to comprehensively deal with something that is considered at best a distraction (or more often as mere junk), but whose magnetic attractiveness keeps haunting our minds?

MEMETICS

These little miracles that we know as memes are made of lively but elusive matter: the raw social nature of networks, a vein that still keeps throbbing beneath the thick layer of corporate interfaces and ever deepening user surveillance. That's why memetics is not just some sort of mock discipline that simply dissects memes; but rather it consists of an attempt at zeroing in on the vast, weird, and multilayered territory of popular invention in this age of always-on communications.

Scarcity doesn't define the meme economy as memetic value is created through and multiplied by free circulation and by constantly twisting and defying authorship, inclusive of the defacement of all originals. Obviously this is not entirely unique to memes as jokes, for one example, also work in a very similar fashion. Humor, too, has always been a key attribute of both jokes and memes as it allows us to

lower our more rationally based cognitive defenses. Humor makes an image or a reaction instantly relatable, and it ultimately strengthens the bonds between the people sharing them.

Yet, memetic irony is also an entryway to complexity, ambiguity (including plausible deniability), and a dense cultural encoding. It can provide an excuse or even a shield used by memers to disguise a message that only their immediate peers will be able to decode. After all, memetics is not primarily about humor, but rather about magic: it's a force that turns images and symbols into magic objects that mean something else, that both perform and transform, and as such no ultimate authority can be exerted over them or any possible limits to their meanings. Memes belong to diverse communities and their often self-defining rituals. Which also means that they will change constantly and this can easily turn them utterly opaque.

YOU DON'T DEFINE MEMES

Basically, you just don't do it. You can see what they're composed of, where they have come from, whether they make sense to you, how you might re-adapt them to your own needs or build upon them, but nothing is ever stable in memetics. Community bonds that have originated through memesthetics and its magical performativity can become extremely strong, but their shape and intensity can also quickly shift in response

to new inputs, especially within the always changing geography of the internet as social media.

Clusterduck's Memem manifesto project captures precisely this: it consists of a journey through different stages of memetic accumulation throughout specific moments of internet history. The Impact font used in early memes is identical to that used in post-ironic memes, and the trolling techniques used by shitposters who then turned Anonymous activists in the early 2010s may possess something in common with the social platforms raids in the 2020s, but in both cases the context is dramatically different.

Take for example the diasporas that have emerged from memetically advanced platforms such as 4chan and Tumblr as some users moved towards more mainstream (and non anonymous) platforms in the early to mid-2010s: they made memetics ever more complex and developed their own specific aesthetics which forked irony into both normative versions but also into meta-irony, while sharper hierarchies between the authors of "Original Content" and non-literate normie replicators also emerged.

Or take the Instagram age of memetics: there's no chance that you can really grasp what is going on there if you only look at it through the lens of some putative General Theory of Memetics. You'll need to also figure in the impact of pervasive branding throughout all corporate social media, as well as the references to anxiety and depression of a FOMO generation, their acute sense of impending societal collapse, yet also the emancipatory sense of fluidity in gender identity

as well as the diversified sexual life of disenchanted younger participants. Memetics cannot be appreciated short of comprehending it's wide array of productions and all totally in context.

POWER

Memes often display or consist of the visible manifestation of a cacophony of unpredictable chain reactions that popular invention triggers when it gobbles up news, famous personalities, and widely shared feelings. But make no mistake: in this already declining age of global social media platforms memes are not just jokes, representations, nor are they merely "social commentary". They certainly result from collective fun, but their mockery and tongue-in-cheek references, as well as their formal innovation and conceptual sophistication, often also attest to the paradoxical result of intense collective frustration.

As a matter of fact, memetics is often fueled by censorship, symbolic violence, political repression, and class struggle. Its practice cooks up unpredictable responses challenging stereotypes, or further cementing various kinds of identity politics, and often promoting the self-representation of under-represented social groups. This remains so despite the fact that memes can also sometimes express a completely misguided sense of injustice and victimhood, and in doing so, become dangerous vehicles for stale racist, gendered, and even fascist stereotypes. One way or

another, memes often break through our social bubbles akin to laser flashes that have been shot from otherwise unnoticed corners of reality. And we'd better pay some of all this attention, especially to the weirdest and the most extreme of this still emerging aspect of internet cultures.

Meta-memes, recursive memes, surreal memes, are some of the scattered pieces of fan fictions concocted by swarms of semi-anonymous users in the "dark forests" of various platforms such as Reddit, Discord or Telegram. They create not merely funny images, but entire aesthetics, narratives, and alternative worlds. In a similar way "fried" memes - that is, images, symbols and normie memes that are literally tortured until they bleed and then collapse - are at the same time crazy visual exploits, a sublimation of social distress and form of personal pain management. The weirder they are, the louder their message of temporary rebellion against the social institution of meaning: be they targeted at governments through to the entertainment industry, schools and teachers, family structures, health and safety measures, feel-good art, liberal culture, or even the very possibility of any of us achieving a shared language or a common understanding from a book just like this one. Meta, surreal, and fried memes are not meant to be as easily or widely relatable as many other memetic families. Their permanent state of meaning displacement is meant to confuse and to seduce through dissimulation, which feels surprisingly safe and even healthy in this new historical age of platform capitalism and data fascism.



THE FREEPORT PROTOCOL

A MEME
MANIFESTO
PROJECT

Curated & Designed by
CLUSTERDUCK

2021

This is dedicated
to Internet users
& meme lovers.

From Borges's "Library of Babel" to Warburg's "Bilderatlas Mnemosyne", the desire to provide order to the chaos of artistic creation is an omnipresent drive.¹ Whether the objects of this obsession are novels, essays, paintings or, as nowadays, memetic images; the question remains the identical: will it ever end? The answer, of course, is "no". The idea of the Archive is actually endless - and this obvious truth is more inescapable in our times than ever before.

1. It's hardly a coincidence that even Baudrillard starts from Borges and his obsession with maps and archives to define his idea of simulacra in his 1981 treatise "Simulacra and Simulations", reconnecting with the Kohelet and the Kabbalah's esoteric tradition to define "the truth which conceals that there is none".

Clusterduck's project "Meme Manifesto" stems from just such an obsessive desire to create an exhaustive portrait of memetic culture, meaning not just a description of the memes or meme form per se, but also of the context from which a certain meme is or was born. Like other subcultures that grew on the fringes of mainstream society, digital communities rely on mechanisms that are typical of oral cultures². Resembling participative performance media art, memes are propelled into motion by ephemeral media such as chats, forums or threads. A meme shouldn't be considered an autonomous unit of information that propagates in the network following a "spatial" and "viral" diffusion model³, but it should be counted among the ranks of ritual

communication practices. Shared beliefs, the historical and behavioral context, the sense of identity and belonging to a given community: all these aspects play a fundamental role in the history of a meme, and therefore they deserve to be preserved and investigated.

But how? "Meme Manifesto" is a transmedia project, aiming at representing, understanding and archiving the social, cultural and visual forces behind the global spreading of memetic culture. The project comprises a book (the production of which is ongoing), a website

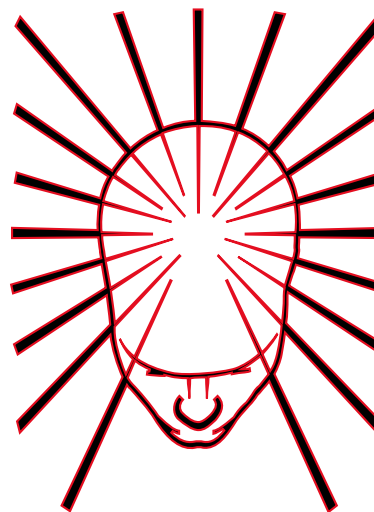
2. An Xiao Mina, *Memes to Movements. How the World's Most Viral Media Is Changing Social Protest and Power*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2019.

3. Limor Shifman, *Memes in Digital Culture*, Cambridge (MA): The MIT Press, 2013.

(the beta-version of which has been implemented during the EMAP/EMARE residency programme at IMPAKT), and a physical installation, called “Detective Wall” (which we also started setting up during the EMAP/EMARE residency, and which will be shown during the final residency group show at Werkleitz Festival and at Aksioma, in 2021).

The “Detective Wall” is both a compilation of memes and an archiving method, directly inspired by Aby Warburg’s hugely influential “Bilderatlas” project. At the same time, the Detective Wall should be understood as an artistic homage to contemporary “paranoid” aesthetics, with their flourish of

conspiracy theories and omnipresent apophenia. (tolto accapo) Like Borges’s library and Warburg’s Bilderatlas, Meme Manifesto and its Detective Wall are projects destined to remain forever unfinished - but they just might help us establish a practice, a “way of seeing” (to quote John Berger) apt to read through the complexities and contradictions of 21. Century symbolism.



This publication presents the results from the first Meme Manifesto workshop, which took place upon invitation of Bani Brusadin and was sponsored by the independent study program “Freeport”, supported by Matadero Madrid.

Browsing through this publication you will notice that, under the supervision of Clusterduck, the method inspired by the work of Aby Warburg has been freely reinterpreted and used to create a theme-related collection of memes, placing individual memes or viral images within a context.

The participants joined the laboratory as a team or as single individuals. Each team was asked to choose a “magic object”: a theme, a recurrent topic, or a hashtag,

to be used as a common thread (or fil rouge) in order to explore a micro-zone of the social media jungle which, due to their previous knowledge and social media activities, they would feel confident in approaching. Each group then used a Telegram chat to quickly gather and archive all relevant materials, from links and papers to images and videos. The participants were invited to locate and cluster a series of sub-themes related to their main theme, that for the remaining part of the process were then called "macro-areas".

The final results as displayed in this publication consist of a series of Detective Wall panels, one for each

group, accompanied by a set of images representing each of the macro-areas; an interview illustrating the process from the point of view of the participants; and some extra tidbits, such as further observations, discoveries, or travel notes that the participants felt necessary to include.

The direct exchange with various communities during the online laboratory has proven to be an excellent way for collecting feedback about the work in progress and for including different points of view, as well as for assembling legends and “internektual” knowledge on the vast world of memetics.

The strategies used in the laboratory incorporate some methods already

employed in the collective research activities carried out by Clusterduck over the past three years. The habit of surfing the Internet in search of new filter bubbles, communities and imaginaries has accompanied us from the beginning, and might be one of the main reasons why the collective was born. The practice of collecting images and memes has even older roots, if we consider that our generation has grown up in the era of big data and information overload. It could be argued that the compulsive desire to archive the digital world is just another symptom of a deeply rooted human urgency to (re)create a semblance of order in a chaotic world – a need intensified by the perceived increased opacity and

complexity of the world surrounding us. The collective approach then, when translated into an online environment, has allowed us to immediately start creating research circles in group chats and as of today, the Clusterduck Telegram research chats have been active for about 3 years, spanning topics from internet-related news to memetic, trolls and conspiracy theories. Many of these chats work as a collective radar, constantly archiving material under names such as “Just Fresh Dank Memes” or “Videos That Blow Your Mind”.

One of the reasons we decided to embark on this journey called Meme Manifesto was the realization that memes are arguably the most important and

influential communicative technology of the early 21. Century, or at least the most important and influential communicative technology that our generation could come up with (you never know what the future may hold).

Given the intrinsically performative nature of memes, their deep affinity with language and their increasing diffusion among political activists, we are convinced that artistic research is the practice best suited to investigate, understand and (re)appropriate their emerging communicative power.

The will to observe and preserve memetic and internet lore has always been present in online communities. User generated

platforms such as Know Your Meme, Encyclopedia Dramatica, Urban Dictionary, Fandom and many other fanbase wikis, are continuing to serve this purpose with a deep respect towards attributions and sources. In the last few years the role of guardians of internet history has been taken over by more stable and “official” players, such as the Internet Archive and Wikipedia itself. But this being a very recent (and highly complex) history, which in some cases didn’t even quite happen yet, the so-called Commentators are certainly not lacking.

LEMMiNO, Aztrosist, Nexpo, Internet Historian, Down the Rabbit Hole (now Fredrik Knudsen), ReignBot, are just

some of the many YouTube channels who collect many views every day, by telling legendary stories from internet, explaining the meaning of the most hyped meme of the moment. They also comment on recent dramas and gossips related to the myriad of communities, aesthetics and waves that do not cease to form, split and multiply throughout on social media - with Pastel Goth, Kawaii, Rainbowcore, Seapunk, Tidepod, K-pop, Free Britney, Egirls, being just a few of those of those that will also be mentioned over the next pages). Similarly, Commentators debate on the huge number of characters and standards that quickly arise and often fade away, such as, for instance, Karen, Turbochad, Swagpilled Go-getter,

Blackpilled Doomer 3.0, Goldenpilled Hyperbased Daddy and on it goes.

In a situation of open and inflamed debate, where many of these trends are often politicized and exploited for propaganda or marketing purposes, our collective feels that our new perspective, methodology and approach could be a small but meaningful contribution to this process.

During this adventure, The Philosopher Meme (thephilosophersmeme.com), Open Intelligence Lab (oillab.eu) and some of Joshua Citarella's research and podcasts have been highly important starting points and references for us, inspired by similar ideals. Another perspective which

has been useful for our investigations is Occult Features of Anarchism – With Attention to the Conspiracy of Kings and the Conspiracy of the Peoples by Erica Lagalisie, whom we wish to thank for her careful investigation of early Masonic movements and oral history. We found the oral history's approach quite effective for our aims, as it helps to define elusive and fragmented realities such as how Internet communities function as well as in comprehending the digital context in which they develop, and so documenting an often fleeting reality where even largely used platforms and collective spaces can disappear in the time of a click.

We asked the participants in our workshop to share with us feedback and disparate reactions to this method and approach, and that's what you'll find in the following pages. We hope you'll enjoy it as much as we enjoyed making it.

Have a pleasant read!

**#FREEPORT
PROTOCOL**

**#MEME
MANIFESTO**

MACACO

**CARLOS
SALINAS DE
GORTARI**

**ISABEL DÍAZ
AYUSO**

**BRITNEY
SPEARS**

**TIDE
PODS**

RAINBOW

MY MELODY

**GOLDEN
RATIO**

**THE
VOID**

MACACO

**AARÓN V. BOUZAS,
YAGO ANTÓN LORENZO**

What theme/magic object
did you choose ?

Why?



Momento macaco, monkeys, le monke, & any kind of memetic image related to these animals. We chose this as our magic object because we are really into the Galician meme sphere that is influenced by both Brazilian and Portuguese memes (because of the linguistic similarities) which are both also really connected with monkeys.

How did you organize images and macro-areas?

We started with the trend of monkeys in memes in the Portuguese language and then Anarchoprimitivism memes appeared as a new trend. We then remembered Harambe & Stinky and we ended up finding monkey stock photos (more wholesome, less dank).

What have been your findings?
Did you discover anything specific?

Y: Monkeys are funny. Really funny.

A: Monkeys have a lot of memetic possibilities, they are very attractive to the general public, because of that a lot of creators use monkeys as hilarious objects and memetic backbone, so to speak.



Do you think this research method works? Why?

Y: I think I would prefer doing this just scrolling, screenshotting, and copy-pasting whenever an image related to the subject appears in the feed, instead of trying to find them. We don't think researching specific kinds of memes is easy or fun.

A: Another thing I don't like about this research method is that people try to find the origin of the meme and attribute its creation to someone, as if someone could be the author of a meme. For us, memes are collective or authorless creations. We think that memes could be imagined similarly to the post-photography theoretical approach in terms of authority, as Joan Fontcuberta explains in 'La Furia de las imágenes'.

Are there IRL movements connected to the memetic currents you explored? If so, could you tell us which ones? And how do these movements relate with URL processes and manifestations?

Y: Monkeys literally exist IRL and we come from them, so we are the meme, or we were the meme.

A: Some people instrumentalized various monkey memes to present them from a political perspective; for example, some alt-right users depicted Harambe in memes as a Trump supporter, and yet, anarchoprimitivism monkey memes are very related to leftist movements from the United States.

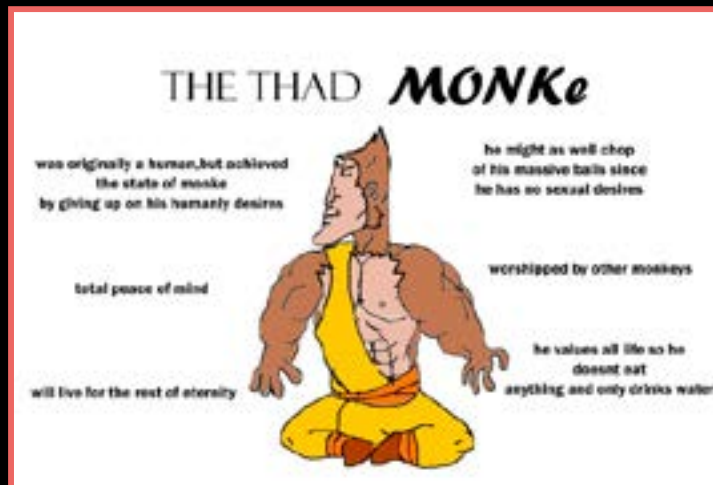
Furthermore, Brazilian monkey memes can be interpreted from a racist perspective, and some Spanish right-wing people have used them to mock Brazilian culture and ethnicity.

Did you identify any semantic pattern in the memetic territories that you observed? If so, which ones?

A: Yes, monkey memes are very connected to the monkey, as an animal, and its characteristics. But in some cases, the semantic pattern is not that obvious, for example in anarchoprimitivism memes, the common attributes of the monkey as an animal are overcome, being replaced by mystical interpretations of them & the monkey is seen as a kind of god, or as a prophet.

Y: I don't understand the question.





Anarco-primitivism Monkee



Brazilian Sphere



Harambe Sphere



Monkee Stock Character Macros

CARLOS SALINAS DE GORTARI

SURVIVORS OF THE CHUPACABRAS

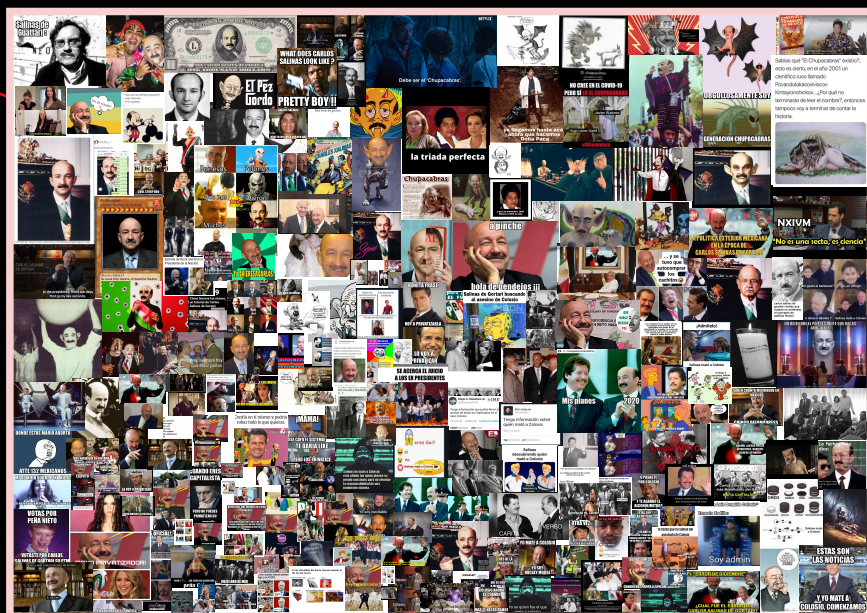
**CANEK ZAPATA
DOREEN A RIOS
DANIELA DE LA TORRE
PROYECTO TELEVETICA**

What theme/magic object
did you choose ?

Why?

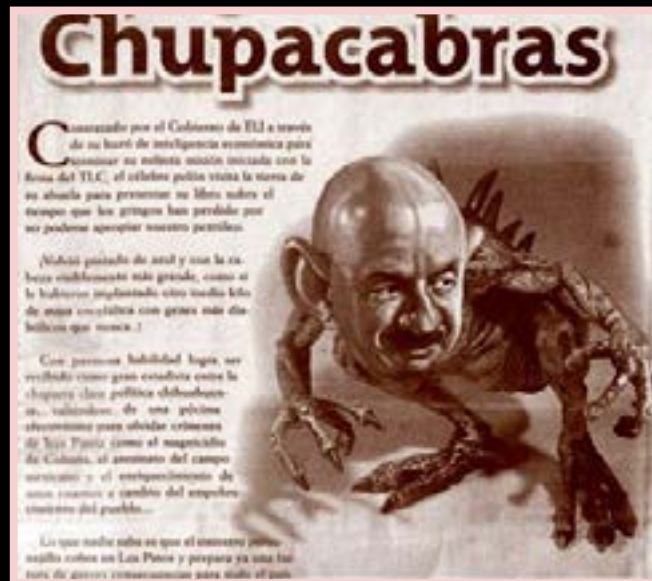


We chose Carlos Salinas de Gortari, he is a former Mexican president who has stayed in the collective memory through different historical events. We thought it was interesting that his figure retains its power in contemporary Mexican society despite the passage of time. This is interesting to us because he was historically connected to diverse tragedies involving neoliberalism, the development of arts and culture, and the ways in which Mexico has been shaped politically for the past 20 years. He is a recurring figure in memes that tell the non-official story of Mexican politics.



How did you organize images and macro-areas?

We discussed a lot about the potential areas we might cover. Since Salinas has been a memetic figure since even before the internet, we thought it would interesting to approach him from different angles— some that would relate him to politics, others to mass media – in order to arrive at an understanding of why he’s still very popular in memetic culture even though he hasn’t been President for 4 terms. We chose to explore 3 macro areas: Pop Star, Political Conspiracy, and Esoteric Curtain. Each of these revolves around key historical events and the way in which Salinas de Gortari has recreated his identity through memes.



Esoteric Curtain



Esoteric Curtain



Political Conspiracy



Political Conspiracy



Pop Star



Pop Star

**What have been your findings?
Did you discover anything specific?**

We discovered that there's plenty of subthemes that need to be taken into account in order to establish the memetic history of this memetic agent. Salinas is a very complex character and his imagery needs further research in order to accurately build a type of detective wall that could portray all of his influence in Mexican politics. We also discovered that we need to look into historical proto-memes such as political cartoons and illustrations that have a memetic vibe to them but that were created before the internet. This also led us to rethink the concept of the 'meme' and how we can translate its viral effect into other, yet possibly less effective, means of reproducing ideas.

**Are there IRL movements connected to the
memetic currents you explored? If so, which ones?
And how do these movements relate with URL
processes and manifestations?**

We think it's a nice starting point for developing complex research. There could probably be more tools available for visually exploring the results but generally speaking we were led organically into what the first outcomes could be and how we could make sense of them.

**Do you think this research
method works? Why?**

We think it's a nice starting point for developing a complex research. There could probably be more tools available for visually exploring the results but generally speaking we were organically guided into what the first outcomes could be and how we could make sense of them.

**Did you identify any semantic pattern in
the memetic territories that you observed?
If so, which ones?**

Yes, we observed similarities with Russian political memes and Italian political memes. Both countries have been struggling with the historical asymmetries that their governments have perpetuated through being led by political figures that feel (and look) very obsolete; but whom the younger population haven't been able to fully overthrow as of yet.



ISABEL DÍAZ AYUSO

LAS MEMAS

**CAROLINA-FERNÁNDEZ
CASTRILLO &
CARLA ROGEL**

What theme/magic object
did you choose ?

Why?



We adopted Isabel Díaz Ayuso, who currently serves as the President of the Community of Madrid, as the protagonist of our research. We are currently working on appropriation and vernacular creativity in millennial's and centennial's communicative strategies.

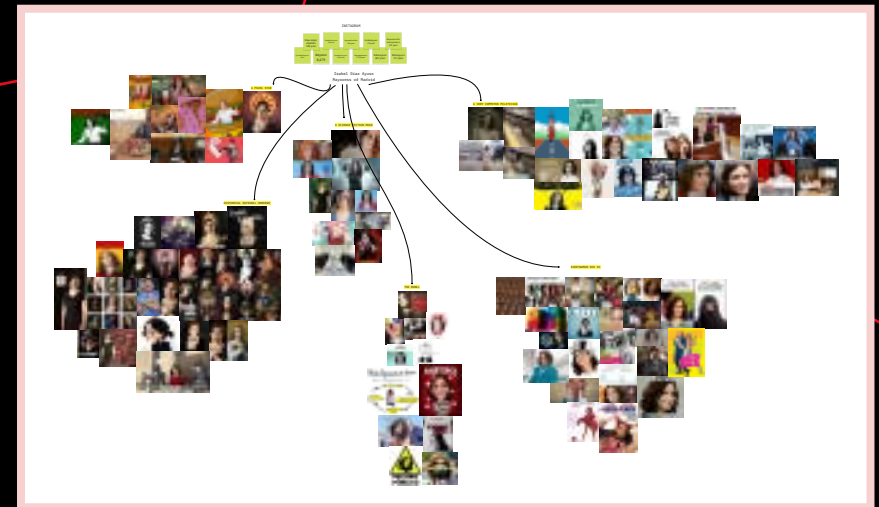
Therefore, we are mainly interested in the role of the meme in digital culture. Our goal was to investigate meta memes and the power of the digital community on turning politicians into the subjects of a new mythology. In this case, Ayuso's infamy has surpassed Spanish borders and she has been rated as a global 2020 political discovery. We mainly analyzed her memes on Instagram to understand her impact on Spanish society through the creation of mythology around her public image.

How did you organize images and macro-areas?

We analyzed Isabel Diaz Ayuso's presence on the Internet throughout 2020 from two points of view: her controversial management of the pandemic against the advisories of the Spanish government; and the image cultivated in her social networks which has been closer to an influencer than a politician. We chose this approach because we wanted to analyze the capacity of the digital community's ability to extract the humorous component of a woman portrayed as Lieutenant Ripley of Alien, or Agustina de Aragón, the historical national heroine.

What have been your findings? Did you discover anything specific?

We have discovered that Ayuso's digital presence as created by users follows the traditional mechanisms of mythological hero creation. The memetic approach to Ayuso ignores her political performance, only devoting attention to humorous reworkings of her statements. To the fandom community, she represents a super heroine who fights to save her city from the pandemic and from the central government. There's no criticism or analysis, just humor, and mockery.



**Do you think this research
method works? Why?**

It has worked for us. We embraced this research in an organic way, starting from the central events that occurred from March until November, 2020. Then we researched on Instagram for the main hashtags referring to her and we finally chose the main memes that appeared in them.

**Did you identify any semantic pattern in
the memetic territories that you observed?
If so, which ones?**

There is one pattern that repeats itself throughout almost all Ayuso's memes: her face. All the memes we have analyzed feature a close-up of Ayuso that lets us see her facial expressions: laughter, anger, tension, grief, intense concentration. Most of them caricature these expressive elements so that the composition is comic, historical, or even derived from science fiction styles. This confirms our thesis that her image is being mythologized through the epic references of our collective and local imaginary.



A Historical National Heroine



A Science-fiction Star



A Pizza Star



A Rebel



A Very Committed Politician



Everywoman She Is

BRITNEY SPEARS

PROYECTO UNA ALL STARS

**BIKSAKURA
ALICIA WITTER**

What theme/magic object
did you choose? Why?



We've chosen Britney Spears as our magic object, in order to create a historical and thematic timeline of the memetic usages of her public image, from her very beginning in the early 2000's until the IRL protest movement #FreeBritney. As well, we investigate her image as a metaphor for the evolution of the internet subcultures and the mainstreamification of feminism as well as the recovery and vindication of her as a positive symbol. Moreover, we chose Belle Delphine, as she was suggested by Clusterduck, to create a parallel between her and Britney in terms of the monetization and exploitation (and self-exploitation) of feminine imagery in popular culture.



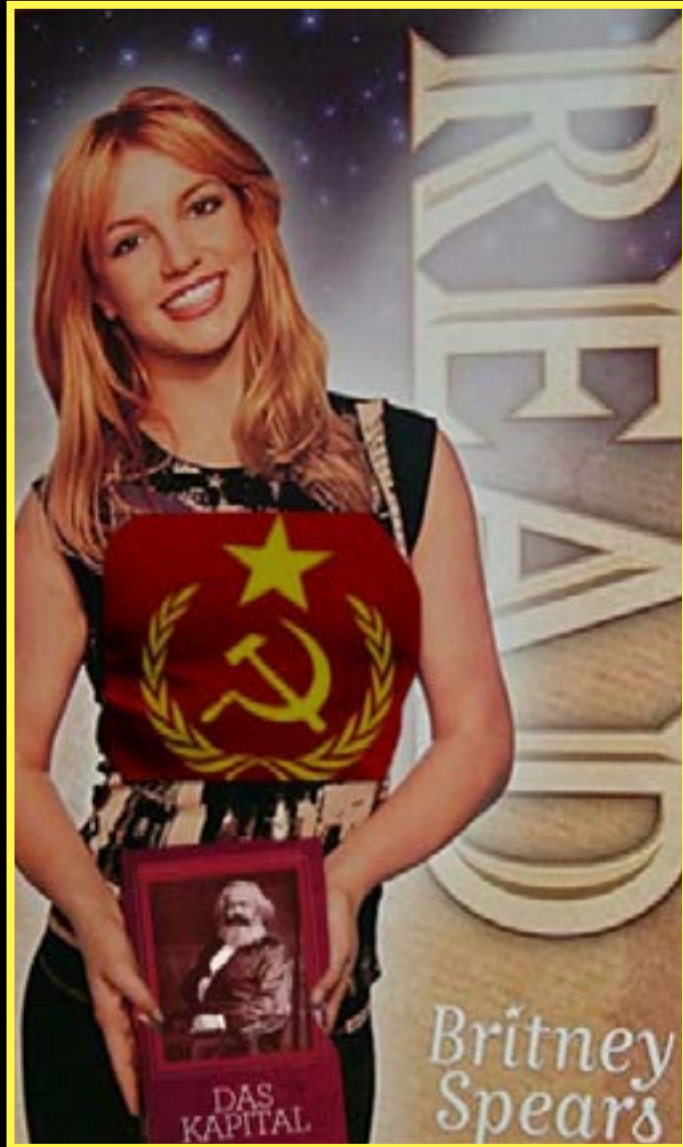
How did you organize images and macro-areas?

We organized the images in the following macro-areas:

- Comrade Britney
- Free Britney
- Bold Britney
- Shitposting
- Delphine's Bathwater

Each category is divided into micro-areas that then inter-relate between them. We chose this approach because each of the macro-areas represents an aspect of Britney that we wanted to investigate. A lot of micro-areas could belong to more than one macro-area, so the micro-areas connect up to the big ones. The interesting part is how all this information reconnects and evolves.

The Delphine's part is the key to the story, because after all, Britney's life is about being an object of consumption, in a capitalist and in a patriarchal way. After all the pain and abuse that Britney has experienced, it's really interesting to observe how she is playing with her own sexualization in a completely different way currently.



Comrade Britney



Freebritney



Bold Britney



Shitposting Britney



Delphine Bathwater

**What have been your findings?
Did you discover anything specific?**

Well, we were familiar with our magical object (Britney Spears) and pre-defined the macro areas in advance but we were not all that familiar with Belle Delphine's activity, beyond ahegao and bathwater stuff.

Maybe the Belle Delphine prank Pornhub account has been the most satisfying discovery: fans freaked out. Here is one of our favorites: "She has broken people's hearts and destroyed their dignity. The only apology we will accept is real videos and not these fake f*cking lies."

LOL.

**Do you think this research
method works? Why?**

We could say our topic is one of the most ancient magical objects of the memesphere.

Leave Britney Alone (2007) and Neyde Spears (2008) are pretty old, yet long-lived memes. The research method was really useful as a starting point but required some predefined structuring in this particular case. The Delphine Bathwater object helped close the circle.

Are there IRL movements connected to the memetic currents you explored? If so, could you tell us which ones? And how do these movements relate with URL processes and manifestations?

Yes, actually one of the internet movements we've been tracking more is #FreeBritney. It is a conspiracy theory born in Reddit and other similar forums following the late trials Britney has had to endure to recover complete possession of her property and life. As she was declared mentally unstable after her mental breakdown years ago, her father started 'looking after' her. Lately, she's been trying to regain control of her life and put an end to forced parental custody. Her fandom has claimed she has been sending out code messages about her struggle through her social networks, and they have started demonstrations outside the courthouse to show her support. Through this, issues about mental health and neurodivergent people's rights or the exploitation of women's images have arose, and some of her fans have become politically radicalized.

Did you identify any semantic pattern in the memetic territories that you observed? If so, which ones?

Britney's memesphere is full of resemanticization. The recovery and vindication of her as a positive symbol is the most powerful one. From the episode when she shaved her hair, that was initially used to mock her, and lately as a relatable meme for people having hard times and existential crisis (including the fresh quarantine memes) claiming her as a communist symbol after a post she shared in IG calling for a General Strike. Even grassroots movements protesting against real estate speculation have included her in their communication strategies: that's a lot to say in the context of the classical radical left.

LOL.

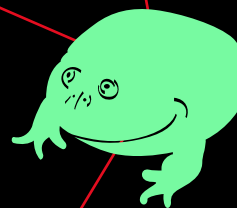
TIDE PODS

TIDE THOTS

LILY DOLLNER
MICHIEL TEEUW
KARINA SHEIKH
TILL SCHÖNWETTER

What theme/magic object
did you choose ?

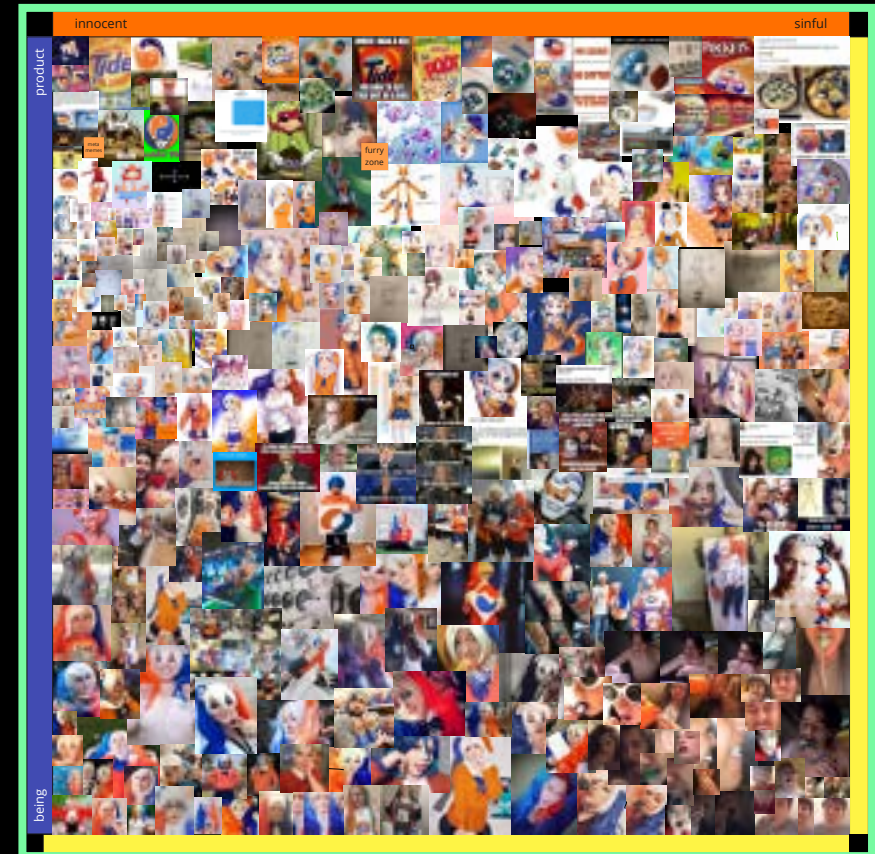
Why?



We chose to research Tide-Pod-Chan, an anthropomorphic representation of Tide laundry detergent pods. In march of 2013, the Tide Pod began its life as a meme through an 'Onion' article - 'So Help Me God, I'm Going To Eat One Of Those Multicolored Detergent Pods'. A trend began whereby people pretended to eat Tide Pods, as they were deemed very visually appealing due to their bright colours being akin to sweets. Some people began to actually eat them, causing chemical burns to the oesophagus, and it gave birth to the memetic cycle of 'forbidden snacks'. In two weeks, we developed a huge obsession for this topic, because of the connections to symbol-embodiment, ritual and excess, IRL-URL gateways, E-Femininity, bodily harm, anthropopornographics, and serious danger.

How did you organize images and macro-areas?

We organized the images on a graph with two axes, following the two scales of 'object-human' (Y) and 'innocent-sinful' (X). From a variety of sources such as Instagram, Worldstar, Gore.com and Deviantart, we then foraged a large number of Tide-Pod memes. Each meme had its own place on this table. The axis-system created four quadrants: 'innocent-object', 'sinful-object', 'innocent-human', and 'sinful-human'. At the furthest reaches of each corner, an image represented the most extreme manifestation of its category, with the strongest connection to reality. For example, in the lower right corner, was the quadrant of 'sinful-human', that consisted mainly of screenshots featuring people actually eating Tide Pods. Through our research we deemed these images the most 'cursed' and sinful, whilst also truly depicting real humans. Visually, it was beautiful- showing the full gradient of tide pod memes.



**What have been your findings?
Did you discover anything specific?**

We discovered that the anthropomorphised Tide-Pod-Chan actually preceded the peak moment of the Tide Pods meme itself. By placing the humans of Tide-Pod-Chan, all equalised and uniformed through similar hairstyle and outfit, a visual pattern emerged akin to the range of Tide Pods products one can find on a supermarket shelf. Similarly, the product-memes became way more relatable and humanised. We found these two sets of actors, dwelling in each other's domains, and blurring the borders between them. Similarly, innocence and sin took each other to hand- and moved past morality.

Are there IRL movements connected to the memetic currents you explored? If so, could you tell us which ones? And how do these movements relate with URL processes and manifestations?

In real life My melody is a really relatable character and she's now starting to be as popular as hello kitty. You can find a lot of references in clothing, make up and cosplay. Also the e-girl movement and TikTok are starting to use it as an aesthetic. One of us (@evusk) is doing a physical research in the mechanisms of the "cute" "kawaii" or "cuqui" using different disciplines and the character of my melody as the main icon on these things.

Do you think this research method works? Why?

This research method was helpful because it got us to create a very extensive database of meme material from which to work. The more data we collected, the more we were able to see a visual spectrum of memes in each quadrant.

Did you identify any semantic pattern in the memetic territories that you observed? If so, which ones?

The most extreme manifestation of the Tide Pod meme was just at the peak, when people began physically eating tide pods and injuring themselves, which served to fuel the Memetic Fire. It generated a large amount of publicity and made it spread even further- into the hearts and brains of households and their operators. The meme passed the threshold of edginess, into a realm where it was socially acceptable to desire death- the meme adopting mundanity in this process.





Innocent Being



Innocent Product



Sinful Being



Sinful Product

RAINBOW

RAINBOWWARRIORS

**NOURA TAFECHE,
ELISATRON**

What theme/magic object
did you choose? Why?



Rainbows, across many latitudes and centuries have always stimulated scientific, religious and imaginative speculations. Rainbows hold mysteries and transcultural values, & are not limited to a single country or time. We believe that their transcendence can connect unexplored areas that somehow converge, each living unbeknownst to each other.

The choice of this object was also influenced by the communities we inhabit, which are different and hybrid but are all drenched in a wholesome Kawai sauce: the xenofem memetic community and the IRL communities of Green, Queer, Antifa, Libertarian Activism, as connected to independent research linked to the evolution of a new aesthetics, in both de-colonial (even if the term is unsatisfactory) and esoteric memetic fields. The very name of our team plays on contrasts, it comes from a song by a group, Cocorosie, that address themes related to queer & feminist culture, poetry, and magic mixed together with totally unexpected colors, figures and appearances. For this reason we are equally convinced that the concept of glitch also crosses our path.



How did you organise images and macro-areas?

We started from a conceptual map, where at the center we placed the rainbow; from there worlds, underworlds, and overworlds, all interconnected to each other, unraveled.

We have noticed how the language of tenderness, the unreality of digital atmospheres, the kaleidoscope of soft colors are interpolated with apparently disconnected areas, such as war, passive-aggressive attitudes, consumerist frenzy, and soft-core pornography.

At first, we organized the images by instinct and through an association of ideas, then slowly each area filled up more and more and each meme winked at each other.



The New Weird Hyperstitional Aesthetic



**The Holy Land Of A Holier Wholesomeness -
Adorability Binge - Internet For The Soul**



**Stardust Of Wannabe Wholesome
Coping With Depression**



XENO META DANK DADA



Cute Passive Aggressive Supernova



Surreal Vaporwave Utopia



A Different Land Of Wholesomeness



Edgy Political Hyperstitions



Rainbowareness



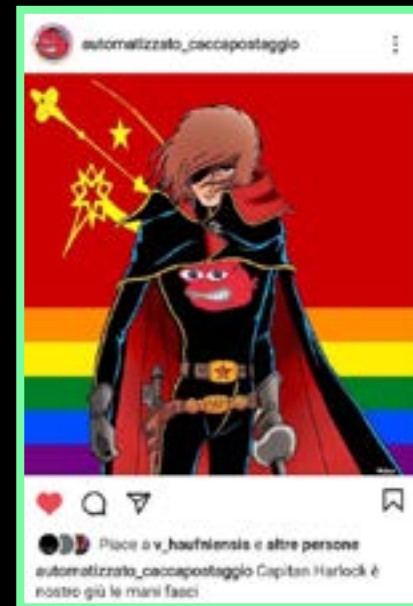
Kawaii Wholesome Healing Revolution



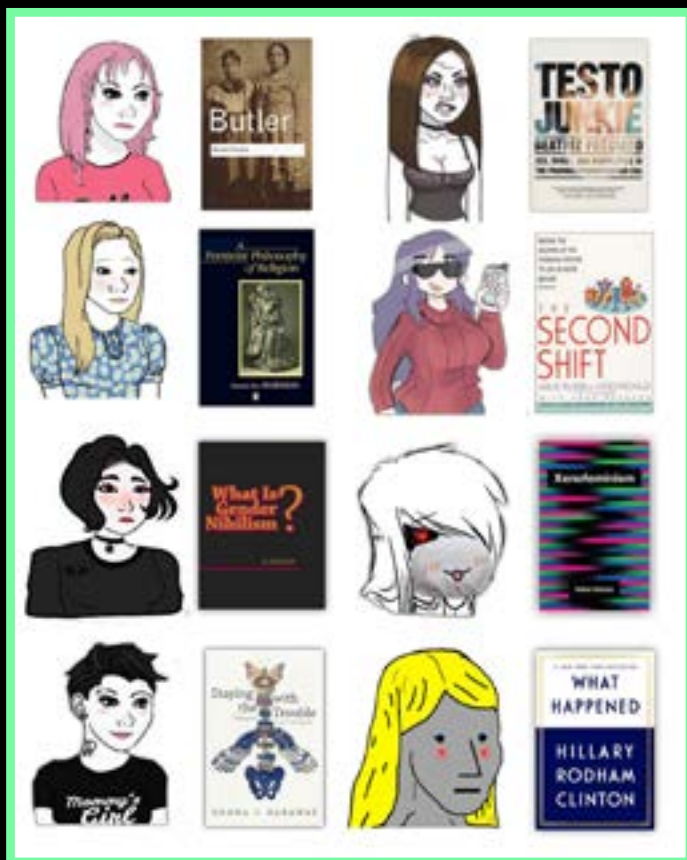
Cute Militance Sailor Communism



Kawaii War



Red Hot War Of Memes



**The Intersectional Transversal Arc
With a Hint of Rainbow Theory**

**What have been your findings?
Did you discover anything specific?**

Rainbows are magical by definition and omnipresent in every context, even containing opposite worlds, such as the psychedelic universe and childhood imagination, from the divine domain to the irreverent and queer spheres, from normie to dank memes.

We have intercepted a subtle underground thread that hints at a language somewhere between the crossroads of depressive tendencies and a flamboyant celebration of wholesome well-being, creating an imaginary that mixes tenderness with violence. At first sight one seems unspoken within the other but at the same time both reveal themselves as being exasperated.

In some memes we often find explicit racist or otherwise desperate messages combined with pastel colors & childish language, becoming an alternative to direct verbalization, but this often attenuates the violent charge intrinsic to words. The graphic expressive power almost manages to detonate the verbal meaning, which then produces disorientation and quite liminal feelings, often eliciting a bitter inner laugh or challenging one's intellect with a sardonic tone.

This concept can also be applied to the use of Japanese manga mixed with political militancy: Communist Sailor Moon can provoke hilarity or bewilderment but it also exploits

apparently distant mainstream imaginaries to provoke new stimuli and new forms of activism.

The memes we collected range in areas that concern mental health, warmongering instincts (repressed or not), the character of the "ancestral lolita", and sometime all this mess resembles intense feelings of repression or an attempt to self-escape (for example: surrounding sad sentences with cute hearts).

These occur as mostly isolated micro events, we cannot speak of a phenomenon, indeed we would avoid it, but the paradoxical boundary between opposing yet coexisting forces and moods that create such alienating aesthetics is increasingly thinning.

Do you think that this research method works?

The method works because it stimulates the spirit of investigation & taxonomizing each collection allows for semantic clarity on what you want to analyze and on the goal you want to achieve.

The search for images gave rise to more immediate insights, therefore spontaneous associations were made that wouldn't have otherwise come to light.

**Are there IRL movements connected to the memetic currents you explored?
And if so how do these movements relate with URL processes and manifestations?**

Part of our work focused on a memetic shitposting movement made up of IRL and URL tentacles, distributed throughout Italy: the irreverent, surreal and dank tentacolariate of the Polpo di Stato (formerly Automated Caccapostaggio Sinistroverso) born with an accelerationist and xenofeminist imprint and continuing to hyperstition alternate futures, always ready to migrate to the next social network to escape the control of the Big Brother's eye.

Did you identify any semantic pattern in the memetic territories that you observed?

We need more time to deepen and distinguish the different semantic structures, some can change quickly, although Kawaii is a constant in maintaining its consumer appeal.



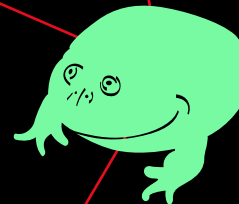
MY MELODY

MY MELODY CORE

**ELENA PEREZ,
VICTORIA BARTOLOME
EVA GARATE**

What theme/magic object
did you choose ?

Why?



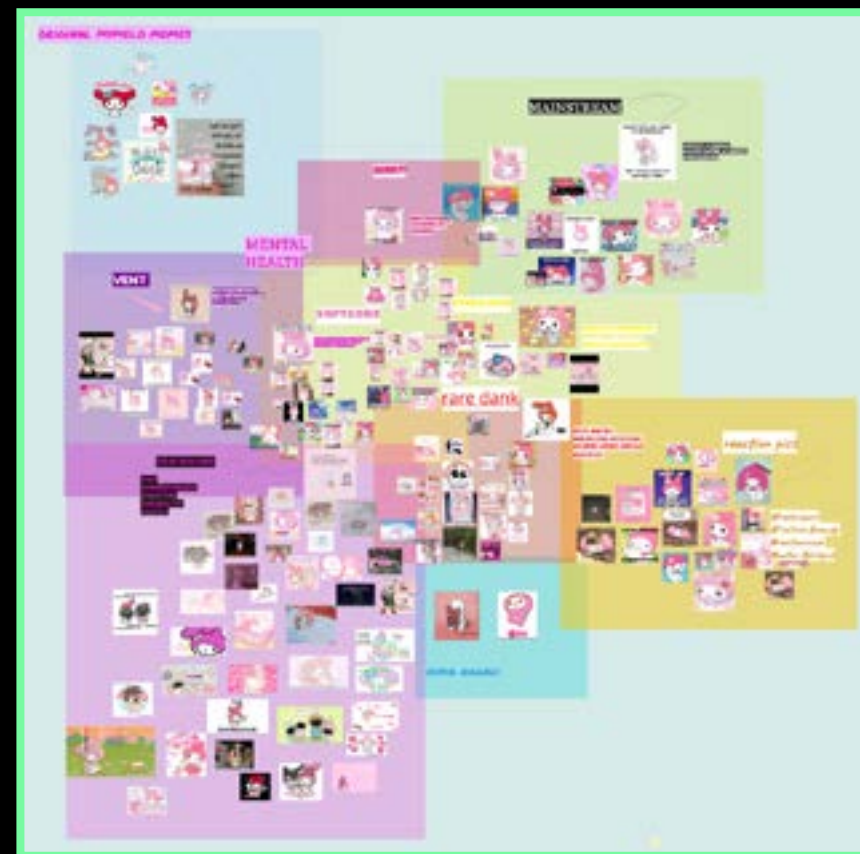
Our magical object is My Melody from Sanrio. We already knew that we were going to work on this character because the three of us were doing individual work in our personal research. This is because we are friends and we share common interests mostly focusing on Japan and specifically the kawaii culture. We also shared this when we were teens and our main internet community was Tumblr and we were all into Japanese aesthetics, shojo, and trauma-core. Due to our age we are internet natives and we always felt really close to the internet culture.

How did you organize images and macro-areas?

At first we already had a bunch of My Melody images because we run an Instagram account based on kawaii memes. Anyways, when we started the research for the workshop we downloaded pictures from other platforms such as Tumblr, Pinterest, Twitter, Instagram and Google. These websites are not so resplendent with memes like some others (4chan, Reddit...) but we feel that lately the kawaii memes/Sanrio memes are appearing more frequently in mainstream platforms.

What have been your findings? Did you discover anything specific?

Some of us didn't know up until this point some of the vocabulary or topics common to the communities which involve all the My Melody memes & edited pics (hashtags like vent, trigger warning, safe space, copying mechanism) and the three of us also discovered, while working on our detective wall- other aspects of the kawaii meme culture such as the Kimo Kawaii memes/art which reflect a more surreal vision of the kawaii world and also the figure of menhera (related to mental health).



Do you think this research method works? Why?

We loved this idea because we had the chance to see the comprehensive spectrum of what we were working with & in the end we suffered from a big visual overload with these kind of images, which are very focused on a strong visual impact. With the Miro App when we collected all those images we could enjoy a more focused view of each one of them. We had so much fun because we had always kept a bunch of pictures but we had never organized them like this.

Did you identify any semantic pattern in the memetic territories that you observed? If so, which ones?

The dominant patterns we found are two: the pastelcore/ cutecore scene and all the mental health/ illness communities surrounding My Melody. At first the My Melody concept was exclusively wholesome and positive but then it turned into something completely different and that's how it presents itself now.

Are there IRL movements connected to the memetic currents you explored? If so, could you tell us which ones? And how do these movements relate with URL processes and manifestations?

In real life My Melody is a really relatable character and she's now starting to be as popular as Hello Kitty. You can find a lot of references to her in clothing, make up and cosplay. Also the E-Girl movement and TikTok are starting to use it as an aesthetic. One of us (@evusk) is doing physical research in the mechanisms of the "cute" "kawaii" or "cuqui" using different disciplines with the character of My Melody as the main icon on these investigations.





Original



Sexuality



Mainstream



Vent



Mental Health



Cuidados



Rare Dank



Traumacore



Softcore



Reaction Pics



Rare Dank

GOLDEN RATIO

VERONIKA HANÁKOVÁ

What theme/magic object
did you choose ?

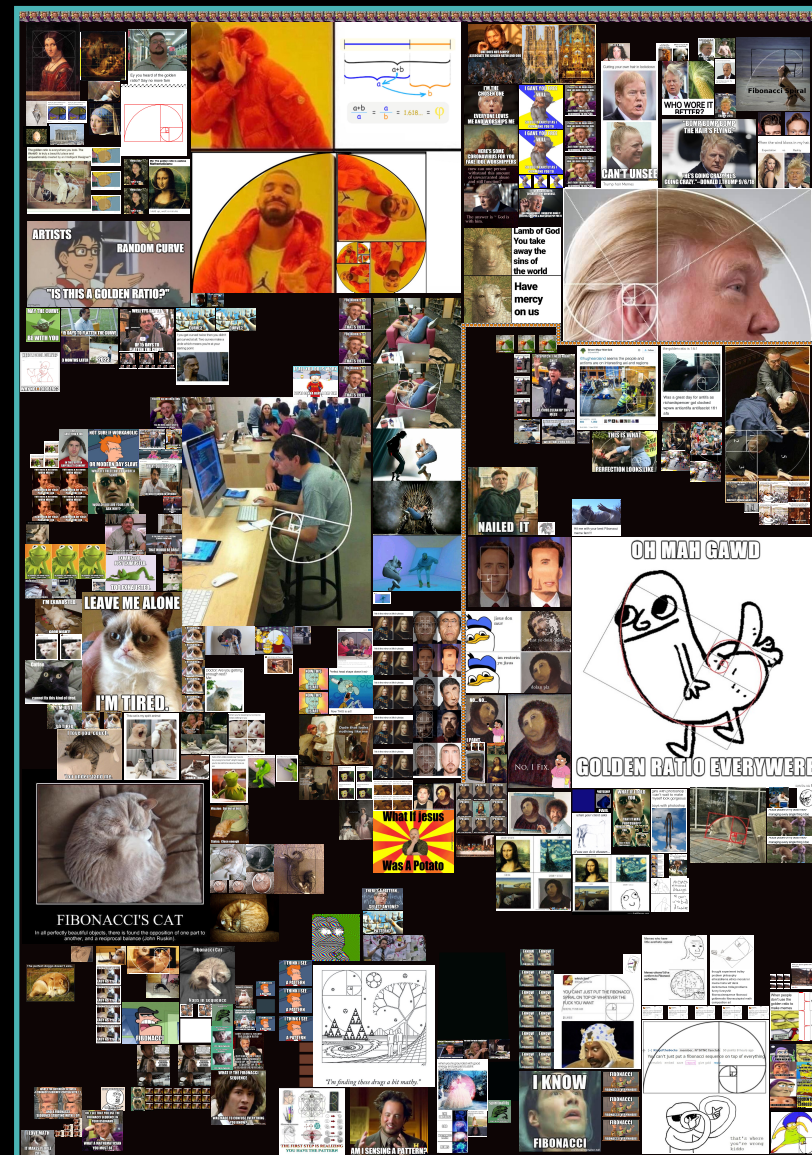
Why?



The golden ratio was my first choice because I wanted to deep-dive into formats, the topic of perfection, deformation caused by a specific ornament, and intertextuality in memes. In the relationship between format and content, I tended to pay a little bit more attention to the former and see the golden ratio as the meme saga that mocks content by placing the most perfect form onto something completely normal. It seemed like a perfect fit.

How did you organize images and macro-areas?

In the detective wall, at the top, there are memes that are explaining what a golden ratio is and a note on the left about a golden ratio in the art world. Then, we move towards contemporary society and politics. On the right, there is a golden ratio as the manifestation of hegemonic power. On the left, there is a sign of deformation by capitalism. On the bottom, there is a golden ratio in the form of a divine principle that is echoed by every possible material configuration (the logic of conspiracy theories). Another extreme is captured by surreal memes and their multiplicative logic (this section is in the lower right corner), projecting a golden ratio onto everything to the point that there is no way back. To sum it up, the movement is going from the perfection of a golden ratio > hegemonic power of normality > deformation of capitalistically workaholic society > distortion power > culminating to a golden ratio that is everywhere – in the universe and the web. Plus, there is a cute segment of Fibonacci's cats because cats are the secret rulers of the world, obviously.



Macro-areas :

1. Introduction to a Golden Ratio

Kanye West, no need to explain.

2. Introduction a Golden Ratio in the Art World

The golden ratio is everywhere. The world is truly a beautiful place and unquestionably must have been created by an intelligent designer, hence the world should be depicted as such (according to one meme that is part of the second segment). Sometimes, artists might be confused and wonder if what they see is a random curve or a golden ratio. The answer is simple: everything is a golden ratio, a curve shall not be flatten but curled even more. Because only a curled golden ratio can depict the beautiful oddity of normality in its purest essence.

3. Divinity of a Golden Ratio Manifested in Trump's Hair

The golden ratio is a divine sign that has been found in Trump's hair, therefore, he is the chosen one, but please, Lamb of God, have mercy on us. In this segment, the golden ratio is connected to the hegemonic power of politics – to capture politics in its greatness, smallness, destruction, and embarrassment. Luckily, even Trump's hair does not hold its shape 24/7, and then when the golden ratio is broken his authority vanishes. And so some breeze is enough to destroy the authority of the untouchable.

4. Deformation of Capitalistic-Workaholic Society

In our society we have to bend our backs, try to fit in, change our minds and bodies according to pre-prepared patterns,

architecture, even chairs. But under no circumstances shall you stop working. The golden ratio captures a deformation that has become natural for us even though it is not natural at all. However, constant pressure leads to exhaustion and restricts the possibility of our perception, leaving us only the ability to respond to stimuli because we are simply too tired to live outside the shape of capitalist golden ratio.

5. Fibonacci's Cat

Not far away from the deformation of capitalistic-workaholic society, there is the section about laziness and the perfect sleep. Cats are laying everywhere and sleeping in the purrfect form of the golden ratio. The perfection of the universe is in one single meme of a sleeping cat. This macro-area is in contrast to the previous one, in which the golden ratio shows deformation. Here, in the fifth section, the golden ratio shows the calmness of a sleeping cat whose fluffy bodies are in a perfect position.

6. Potato Jesus

Potato Jesus is a fix that fails in the prettiest way imaginable, something that was created from scratch by deformation. The same is true with golden ratio: if you add it to anything, there are endless possibilities of creating some magnificent distortion. Potato Jesus is a cruel joke that is too perfect. This section culminates into small details on why at first glance memes look simple but they are actually the most complex form of art.

7. Memetic Logic

You can't just put the spiral on top of whatever the fuck you want, well you can, just be brave because you are entering the void of the Fibonacci sequence.

8. Pattern Recognition

The golden ratio is the pattern of the universe – through the highest magnification (Milkyway) or the lowest (sucking own dick).

9. Fibonacci Sequence

as hypocrisy as madness as tension
because you cannot survive with a clear mind

**What have been your findings?
Did you discover anything specific?**

There are three particular aspects that I found fascinating.

Firstly, the realm of Trump's hair is in connection with the golden ratio as a sign of the divine. However, luckily fantasy and reality are at odds. And so reality interfered with the divine and destroyed the beautiful facade: Trump's hair is ruined by wind, as well as by the internet's imagination, and shown as something very fragile, as weak as the current political situation. Secondly, there is something that can be found at the

beginning in the area around the meme "Artists - Random curve - Is this a Golden ratio?". This meme accidentally connects the whole golden ratio concept to year 2020 and the need of flattening a curve, the curve that shaped 2020. An unexpected update of the concept hooked into reality.

Finally, the third fascinating aspect was finding cats as the only species on the planet that can freely live and sleep (without any deformation) according to the golden ratio rule. Impossible for anyone else.

**Do you think this research
method works? Why?**

At the beginning, I started my research just browsing and saving many memes connected to golden ratio but without any specific pattern in mind. I have to say that the research really began when I finally moved on to the next stage: putting everything together on the detective wall. Then I realized what I still had to fill out, how many macro-areas there could be, if memes communicated with each other, and if the spatial layout worked or not. The detective wall is a useful method when you have files representing memes (pictures, photos, texts) without any immediate connection, so the next step is to move on up from details to macro-areas, for which the detective wall is great.

Are there IRL movements connected to the memetic currents you explored? If so, could you tell us which ones? And how do these movements relate with URL processes and manifestations?

Basically, the golden ratio is everywhere. What I have discovered with my detective investigation is that you work, behave, live by the golden ratio even though you might not realize it. The golden ratio is the logic behind our capitalist society, that processes human life through an unnaturally natural form in order to use it as fuel for the current system. The ratio may be a divine design, but it has been modified and updated to modern times and is no longer applied only to works of art, but also to everyday life, that ends up scattered into an endless spiral from which there is no escape.

Eventually, the golden ratio is commentary, *d e f o r m a t i o n*, a movement of the mind from beautiful to bizarrely.

Did you identify any semantic pattern in the memetic territories that you observed? If so, which ones?

P a t t e r n

G olden ratio as...

...d ivine perfe^{ct}ion

...h ^{e g e m o n i c}power(less)

...b ody deforma^{ti}on





Introduction to a Golden Ratio



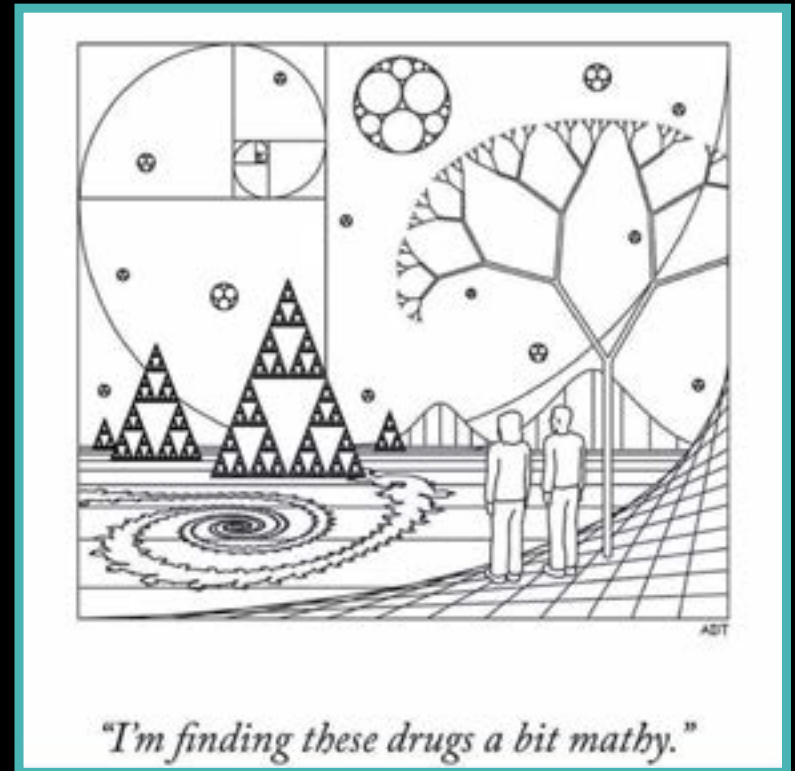
Deformation of Capitalistic-Workaholic Society



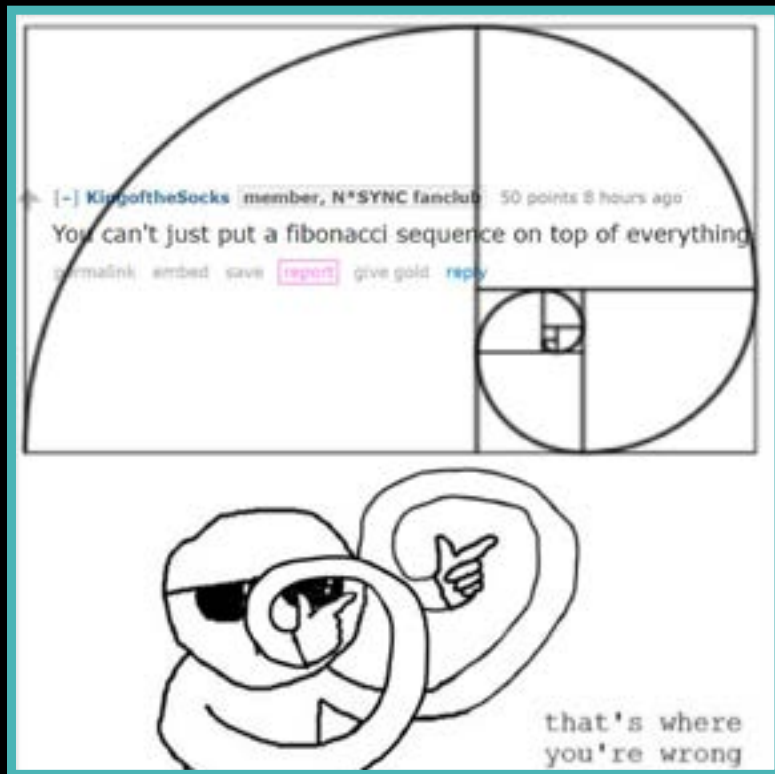
**Divinity of a Golden Ratio Manifested
in Trump's Hair**



Potato Jesus



Recognition of Pattern



Memetic Logic



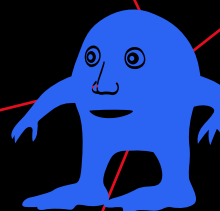
Fibonacci Sequence

THE VOID

EXIT THE VOID

ELLIE HAIN
TARN RODGERS JOHNS

What theme/magic object
did you choose ? Why?



We chose 'The Void' as a magic object, and that choice was mostly influenced by the fact that we are launching a new project next year called 'Exit The Void' that also looks at the void as a magical and mythological object in its relationship to us. Another reason had to do with our previous intellectual work at the think tank where we met around the subject of the 'meaning crisis,' and also our previous personal experience writing and doing journalism on psychedelics.

How did you organize images and macro-areas?

We organized the images in five macro-areas that had mini-areas within them that showed the transitions and connections between the areas. The upper left area looked at the void as a physical representation: either as empty space (nothingness), or as a person. The upper right area was the area where we examined the theme 'we live in a society' and we looked at the structural societal features that contribute to our feeling of a void: capitalism, climate change, bullshit jobs, etc. In the transition between these two areas (the void as 'physical representation' and 'we live in a society') we choose to put more relatable memes that talk about mental health and the subjective first-person experience of 'the void'.

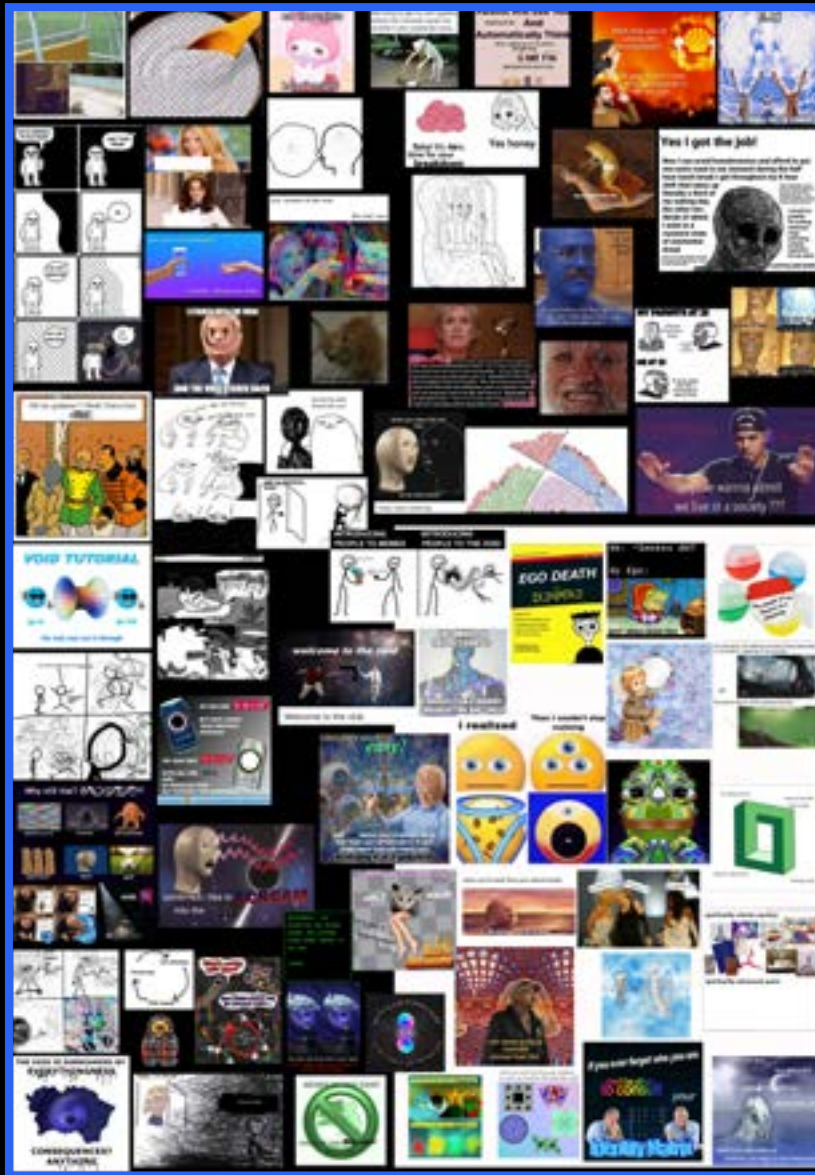
The lower left area is where we look at the void in its essence and its connection to surreal memes, or the meme subculture where the void plays a very important part. The further we push surrealism ends in it turning into solipsism (negation that anything is real) and that's why in the bottom left we find memes about nothing being real (time, the self, even memes themselves).

The lower right area is the area about enlightenment - supposedly what happens if you fully go all the way through the void. That's why the area is highlighted in white, to bring some light contrast to the usual darkness that surrounds the general conversation about the void. There we find ego-death memes, non-duality memes, esoteric memes, and psychedelic memes.

We also used the intersections between the enlightenment memes and the surreal and the 'we live in a society' memes to display how these two areas interact. We also used the center area to display meta-memes self-reflecting upon memes and the void, and also to display the void as an object in mythology - mostly through Nietzsche's famous quote "when you stare at the abyss, does it stare back at you?", but also through the 'Myth of Sisyphus'.

What have been your findings? Did you discover anything specific?

Not really any new discoveries but we realized how depressed so many people on the internet truly are, and how much they seem to rely on their creativity- in this case; meme-making- to cope with their thoughts and feelings, most of the time by adding irony as a layer that creates some separation between their feelings and them. Even though sometimes this coping mechanism were too far into cynicism or nihilism and can also have quite destructive consequences. It is quite sad that so many young people are feeling this way, but from those feelings, the truth is that some of them end up creating something extremely funny and creative, so.... something good comes out of them in that sense, I guess?



Mental Health, Relatable + We Live In A Society



Void As Myth And Meta Meme



Void As Physical Object



Surreal Memes Void



Void As Means To Enlightenment

Are there IRL movements connected to the memetic currents you explored? If so, could you tell us which ones? And how do these movements relate with URL processes and manifestations?

Yeah, definitely. But mostly it works really well when the magical object is something that is close to the researcher's interests/heart, and also when the researcher just follows her memetic intuitions, as they usually tend to be quite good.

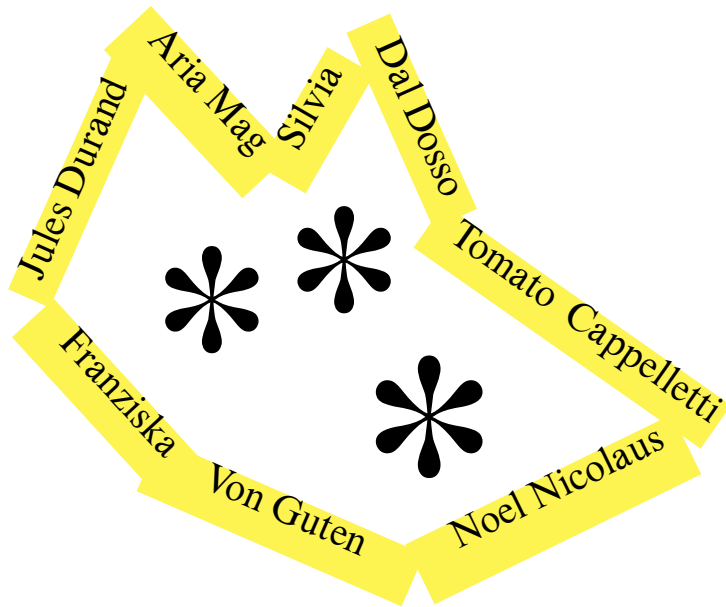
Do you think this research method works? Why?

Directly, not really - even though we might be looking to start one with our new project. But widening it out, you could probably say that many cults and religions have been organized around this.

Did you identify any semantic pattern in the memetic territories that you observed? If so, which ones?

Not in the overall project. Surreal memes have their own semantic patterns of intentionally misspelling words and distorting grammar, but that is not unique to the void. The rest of the memes don't really seem to have any semantic pattern in particular at all.





THE FREEPORT PROTOCOL is part of MEME MANIFESTO, a transmedia project about Internet Memes that explores the occult meanings and communicative potentials of memetic symbology, curated and designed by Clusterduck.

You can follow all the investigations visiting mememanifesto.space

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Investigando nuevas formas de fascismo 🦄🦁🌻

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«Meme Manifesto» es un proyecto transmedia del colectivo Clusterduck (Berlín, Florencia) cuyo objetivo es representar, comprender y archivar las fuerzas —tanto sociales, como culturales y visuales— responsables de la difusión global de la cultura memética.

En el marco de la línea *Freeport* del programa de estudios independientes «Matadero Estudios Críticos», se llevó a cabo en otoño de 2020 el primero de los laboratorios de «Meme Manifesto». Contó con treinta participantes de diferentes países, que se adentraron en la selva de las redes sociales contemporáneas en búsqueda de rastros de diferentes «objetos mágicos» (o temas recurrentes), sus contextos y la creatividad popular que los atraviesa.



MATADERO
CENTRO DE CREACIÓN
CONTEMPORÁNEA



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