

Annotated Bibliography

1. Aranda, J., Wood, B.K. and Vidokle, A. (eds.) (2015) 'Introduction', *The Internet Does Not Exist*. Berlin: Sternberg Press.

The primary text this project sits in dialogue with. Its central argument, that the internet was never a real place but a cloud, a blur, a redirect, is more ambivalent than it first appears: the operative word in its opening sentence is 'maybe,' and the editors concede, briefly, that there was once 'something we used to call the internet that had an infrastructural base.' That sentence is where my project begins. *A Girl is A Spider* (my project) is not a refutation of this text: I do not disagree with its account of what the internet became. What the introduction cannot accommodate is testimony; the firsthand account of someone for whom the early internet was not a medium to theorise but a place to grow up in. Its 'we' is a theorist's 'we,' constituted by figures already legible as cultural producers: the artist, the dissident, the journalist. The girl blogging in 2011 is not legible in those terms. My project is the supplement this text has no room for.

2. Freider, E. (2022) 'I'm Like a PDF But a Girl: Girlblogging as Nomadic Pedagogy'. Available at: <https://www.are.na/block/20684314>

Freider's text gave me the theoretical language for what I already knew from practice. Her framing of girlblogging as nomadic pedagogy: a form of self-education that moves across platforms without a fixed home, describes exactly how I learned HTML, how I found communities, how I became the person I am through a series of places that no longer load. Where Aranda et al.'s 'we' cannot see the girl making moodboards, Freider makes her the centre of the argument. Most importantly, her citation of Lacan – writing is a mode of becoming-spider – gave me the central metaphor of the project. By writing about these places through Perceval's methodology, I am becoming spider. The web you are looking at is the artefact of that becoming. Freider also validates the kitschy, unserious visual language of early internet girlhood as legitimate pedagogy, which matters for a project where the form is glitter GIFs and Club Penguin screenshots.

3. Santiago Cortés, M. (2021) 'The Hyperlinked Hyperfeminine'. *Lux Magazine*.

Santiago Cortés traces the visual and rhetorical grammar of hyperfemininity online: the pastel palettes, the decorative excess, the emphasis on softness as a kind of aesthetic politics. Reading this alongside my Wayback Machine image retrieval changed how I understood what I was collecting. The images I found, including cherub snow globes, glitter text, unicorns and hearts – are not incidental to the argument. They are the argument's evidence. The hyperfeminine internet was developing a visual grammar that mainstream design culture has since absorbed and monetised. This text sharpened the political edge of what could otherwise read as pure nostalgia, and pushed me to think about why these aesthetics were dismissed at the time and why they are now everywhere. It also sits in productive tension with the Aranda et al. introduction: where that text's imaginary of internet culture is constituted by legible producers, Santiago Cortés insists on the seriousness of those who were not.

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4. Lialina, O. (2015) 'On The Internet Everyone Knows You Had a Dog'. Available at: art.teleportacia.org.

Lialina's essay is about what the internet remembers and what it forgets – specifically, the traces left by ordinary people who are not famous, whose digital presence persists only in fragments. She is interested in the gap between institutional memory (what gets archived, what gets preserved) and affective memory (what it felt like to be there). This speaks directly to the Wayback Machine methodology at the centre of my project. Every image I retrieve is the trace of a person who is not Lialina, not me, not anyone a search engine would find – an anonymous girl who made a WeHeartIt moodboard in 2011 and whose aesthetic choices now constitute my research material. Lialina makes me take that seriously, and frames the retrieval not as archival research but as a form of attention to people who were never meant to be remembered at scale.

5. Steyerl, H. (2012) 'In Defense of the Poor Image', *The Wretched of the Screen*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, pp. 31-45.

Every image I pull from the Wayback Machine is already a poor image in Steyerl's sense: screen-shotted, compressed, ripped from its original context, stripped of its interactivity. The GIFs have lost frames. The JPEGs have artefacted. The websites no longer work. In Unit 1, I applied this framework to risograph feedback loops – degradation as a biological rather than digital process. In Unit 2, the inflection is more precise: Steyerl's argument that the poor image carries its own form of truth precisely because of its imperfection – it shows where it has been – reframes the Wayback Machine's failures as the methodology made visible. The degraded image is not a problem to be solved. It is evidence of twenty years of not being taken seriously enough to preserve.

6. Seu, M. (2021) 'The Internet Exists on Planet Earth'. Available at: <https://www.sourcetype.com/editorial/24436/the-internet-exists-on-planet-earth>

Seu's text is a direct counter to *The Internet Does Not Exist* and, alongside Freider, forms part of the theoretical foundation for this project's claim that the early internet was a real place. Her argument that the internet is not a metaphor or a cloud but a material infrastructure located in specific buildings, consuming specific resources, with specific addresses, reframes my project's testimony as something with a physical basis. She grounds this in the concrete: undersea fibre-optic cables, server farms with precise geographic locations, the energy costs of data storage. When I say the early internet was a place for girls, I am not making a sentimental claim. I am making a material one: there were servers, there were addresses, there were rooms. Club Penguin ran on servers until Disney shut them down in 2017. Tamatown had a URL until Bandai took it offline. They happened to be taken away. Seu gives me the vocabulary to make that argument precisely, and stops the project from resting on affect alone.

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7. Nagle, A. (2017) 'From Tumblr to the Campus Wars: Creating Scarcity in an Online Economy of Virtue', Kill All Normies. Winchester: Zero Books.

Nagle's chapter on Tumblr-era online culture is a challenging reference because her critique of identity politics as competitive virtue signalling could, if applied carelessly, flatten the early internet girlhood I am writing about into something cynical. I include it because it sharpens my thinking: the difference between the early internet's identity formation and the later microtrend economy is precisely that the early internet was not optimised for visibility. The girl with 50k followers on a meme blog did not know she had 50k followers in any meaningful sense. The platform did not show her that number as a metric to grow. Nagle helps me articulate what was lost in the transition from horizontal network to algorithmic feed – and why that loss was not just aesthetic but structural.

8. Askin, C. (2015) Cameron's World. Available at: cameronsworld.net.

Cameron's World is the closest existing precedent to what my project is doing, and looking at it was both clarifying and motivating. Askin assembles a scrolling collage of text and images recovered from GeoCities pages before Yahoo deleted the platform in 2009, producing something that functions simultaneously as memorial, archive, and aesthetic argument – that these pages were not the embarrassing underside of early web culture but something worth grieving. The crucial distinction between Cameron's World and A Girl is A Spider is that Askin's project is a memorial and mine is an argument. I am not trying to recover everything; I am selecting, curating, and writing – and crucially, writing from memory first, before consulting the Wayback Machine. The gap between what I remember and what the archive holds is part of the content. Cameron's World also clarified a formal risk in my project: the danger of collapsing into pure nostalgia. Askin manages it through accumulation; I manage it through Boym's reflective mode, keeping the damage visible.

9. Walsh, J. (2022) Girl Online: User Manual. London: And Other Stories.

Walsh's text examines how every woman who uses the internet is, at some level, reduced to the status of being a girl – infantilised, flattened, made decorative. This is a crucial tension in my project, and it connects directly to the gap I identified in the Aranda et al. introduction: that critical writing about digital culture has struggled to account for the active, identity-forming use of online space by people who were not legible as producers. The word girl in my title is not innocent. I am claiming it – the kitschy aesthetics, the early internet spaces dismissed as unserious – while knowing that the claim is complicated by the fact that being called a girl online is not always a choice. Walsh keeps that tension alive and stops the project from being purely celebratory nostalgia.

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10. Perec, G. ([1974] 1997) 'The Street', Species of Spaces and Other Pieces. London: Penguin Books Ltd, pp. 46–56.

Already annotated in the Unit 1 bibliography in the context of iterative drawing practice. In Unit 2, Perec's relevance deepens. The methodology I use in this project – writing from memory, without reference images, in five minutes, unedited – applies the same structural logic to a different subject. Where in Unit 1 I was drawing objects from memory and recording how that memory drifted, in Unit 2 I am writing about virtual places from memory and recording what the writing reveals. The gap between what the Wayback Machine shows and what my writing remembers is precisely Perec's threefold ageing: the place, the memory of the place, and the writing about both. The hashtags that structure the site are both the methodology and its output – they are what the writing produces, and what the image retrieval then responds to.

11. Boym, S. (2001) The Future of Nostalgia. New York: Basic Books.

Already annotated in the Unit 1 bibliography in the context of iterative drawing and the Blythe doll. In Unit 2, Boym's distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia maps directly onto the formal problem of the project. The nostalgia here is specific: not for the internet in general, but for the brief interval between roughly 2004 and 2012 when platforms existed without algorithmic visibility metrics – when you could post, decorate, and inhabit online spaces without being shown how many people were watching or being asked to grow that number. A project that tried to reconstruct that internet faithfully would be restorative nostalgia, and would fail, because the infrastructure is gone. My project is reflective nostalgia: it dwells in the longing itself, uses the fragmentation as form, and treats the Wayback Machine's imperfect archives as the only honest version of the past available. The images are degraded. The websites don't work. The girl who made them is now 25. Boym says this is not a problem. It is the condition of memory – and for this project, it is also the condition of the methodology.

12. Lialina, O. (2005–2021) Animated GIF Model. Practice/project. Available at: art.teleportacia.org.

Lialina's ongoing practice of photographing herself in front of computers displaying animated GIFs is both a celebration and a critique of the GIF as a vernacular internet form. She is interested in the GIF as something that exists between images: always in motion, never quite present, and this is as much a technical condition as an aesthetic one. The GIF format loops through a finite set of compressed frames, producing motion that never resolves and never progresses, always returning to its beginning. The format's compression also means information is constantly lost in the process of making and transmitting it. This resonates with my use of GIFs as node images on the spiderweb: the cherub snow globe, the penguin with a blue heart, the carousel are not static, but they are also not quite moving in the way a video moves. They are perpetually gesturing toward something they never reach. Lialina's practice gave me permission to treat this as a serious formal choice – the looping, the compression, the lost frames – rather than a decorative limitation. It also connects directly to Steyerl's poor image: the missing frames are not glitches to be fixed but evidence of where the file has been, and what it cost to survive.