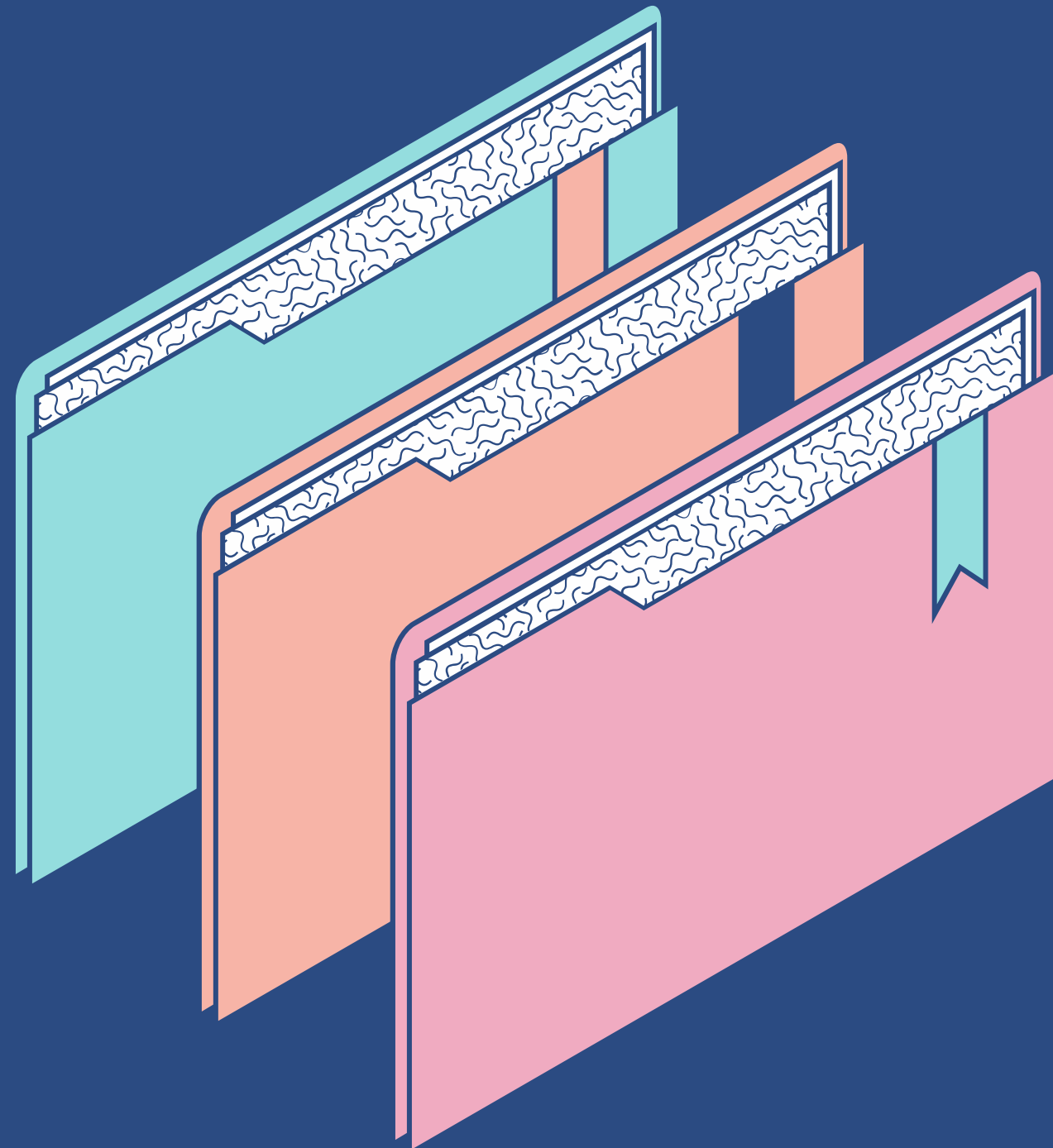




Childhood and Digital Culture

How Technology has Transformed
Perceptions of Childhood Since the 1980s

Brynnæe Newman
Skidmore College
Academic Festival
American Studies
May 4, 2022



Agenda

- Thesis Overview
 - Significance
 - Research Qs
 - Argument
 - Lit & Methods
 - Content
- Honors Project
 - Connection to Thesis
 - Website Preview



Fall Thesis

The Disappearance of Childhood and the Emergence of Digital Culture

- Investigates the effect of technology on the perceived destruction and dismantling of the cultural concept of "childhood."



Significance

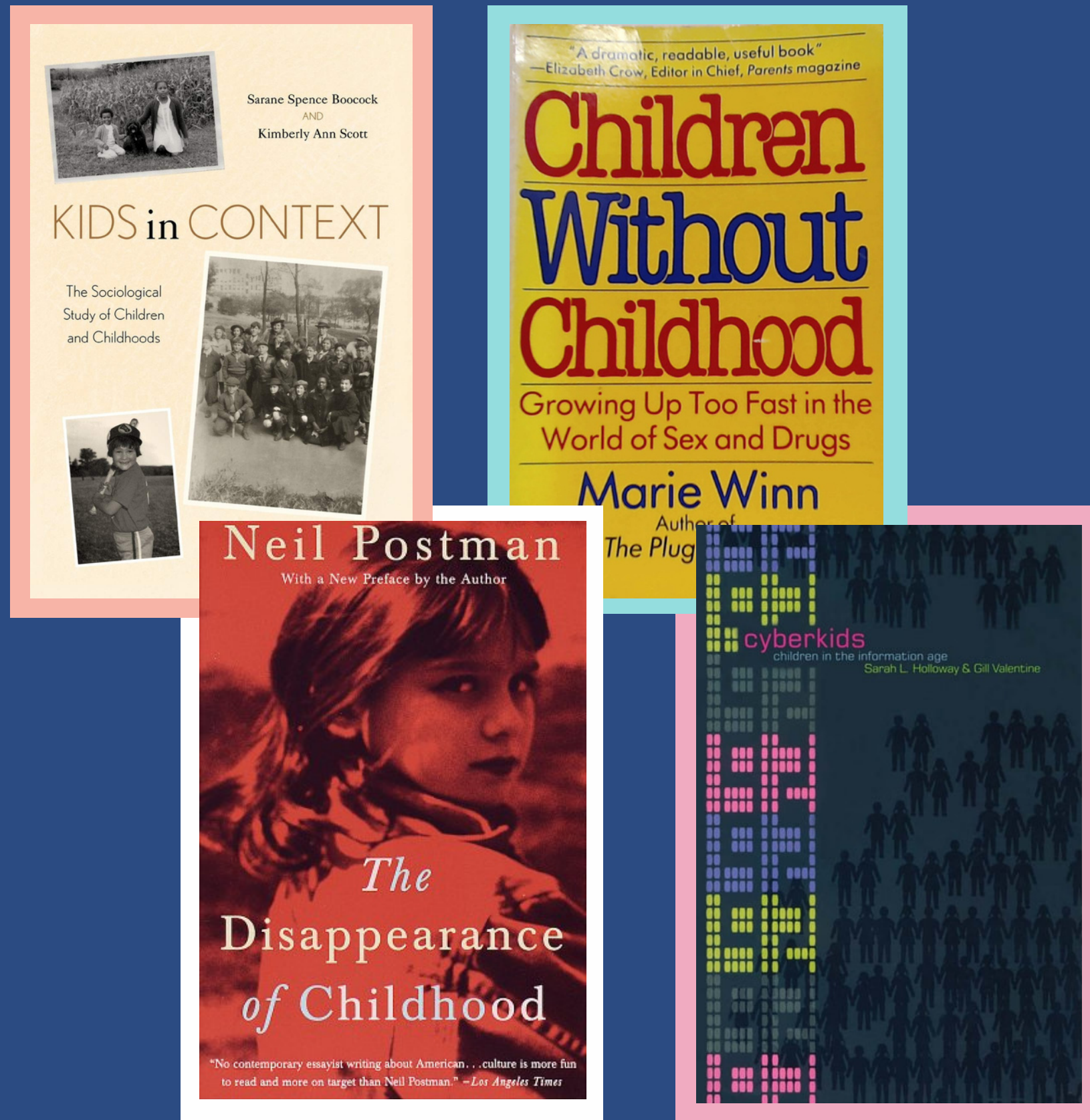
- Increased sense of inter- and intragenerational divides
- Tech impacts how generations interact
- Gen Z is the first to grow up with smart phones and social media
- Children are the future and so is technology



Guiding Questions

- In what ways has childhood changed because of tech?
- Are the seemingly radical changes in childhood beneficial or or detrimental?
- How do definitions and experiences of childhood vary across race and class?

Lit & Methods



- In what ways has childhood changed because of tech?
- Are these seemingly radical changes in childhood beneficial or or detrimental?
- How do definitions and experiences of childhood vary across race and class?



Argument

- Because it is increasingly accessible, technology is transforming traditional notions of childhood
- Technology is both harmful and beneficial to contemporary children
- Technological development has widened the generational divide

60s

In the 1960s (and even the 1950s), **television** became integrated into the homes and daily routines of Americans.



70s

The first **personal computer**, the Kenbak-1, was invented in 1971.

The first **video game console**, the Magnavox Odyssey, was invented in 1972.



80s

Personal computers are brought into the home for work and leisure.

The **internet** is invented in 1983. The first version of **PostScript** was released in 1984.



90s

In the 1990s, there is an increase in **laptop computer**, and **cell phone** use.

Wi-Fi is invented in 1999.



00s

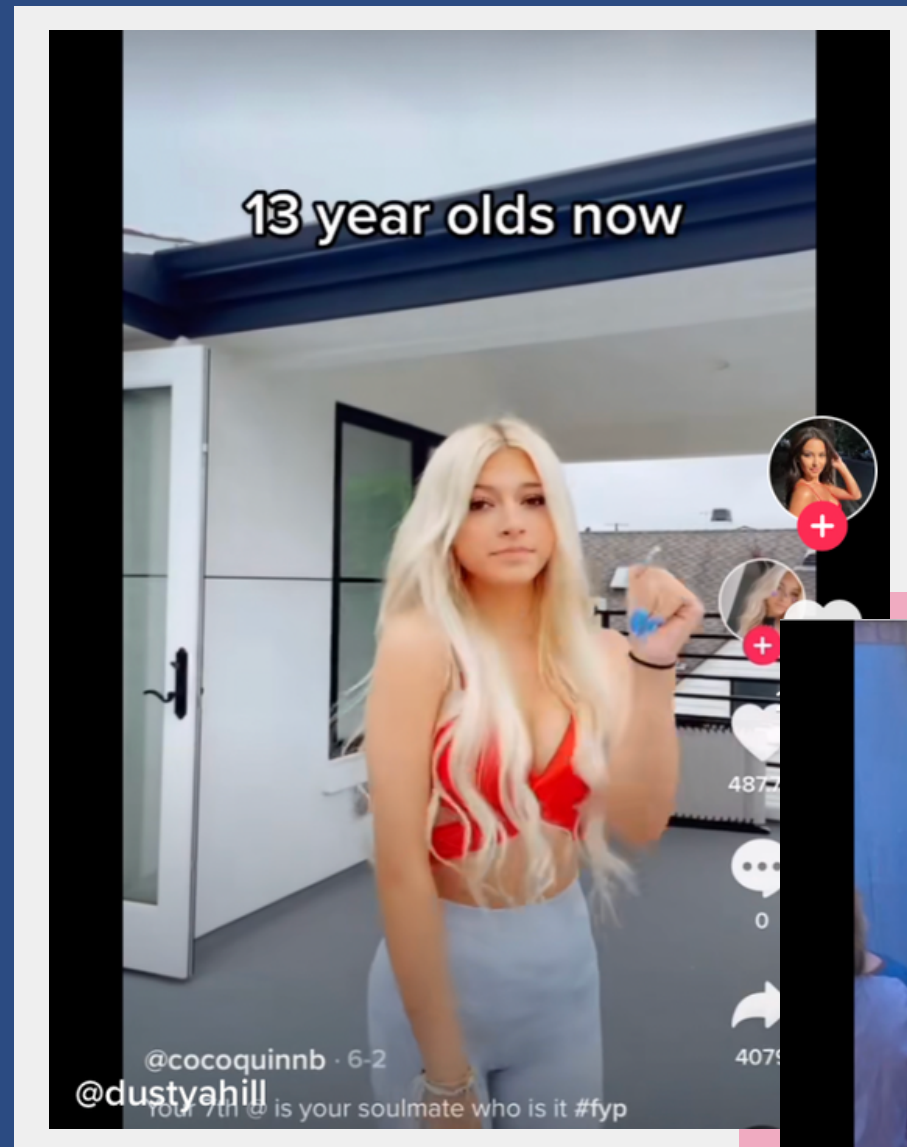
Facebook launches as one of the world's first networking system in 2004.

YouTube is created in 2005.

The first **iPhone** is launched in 2007. The **App Store** in 2009.

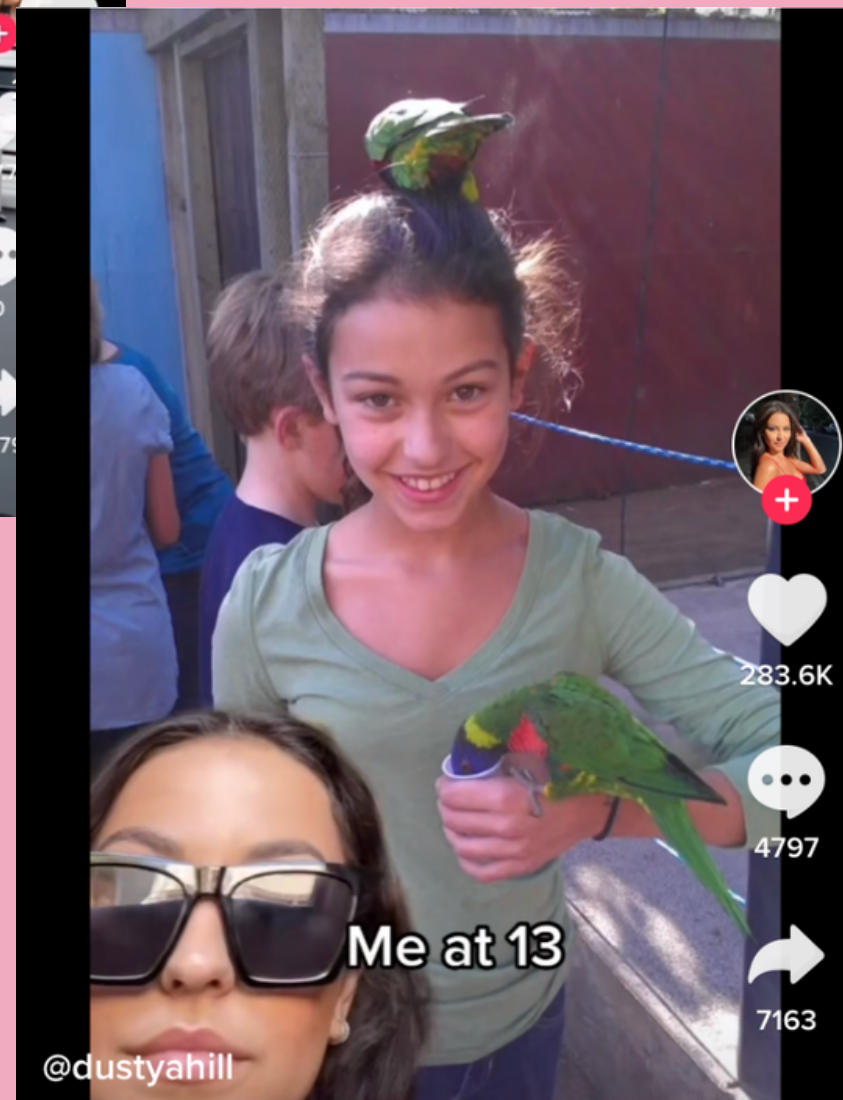


Main Points

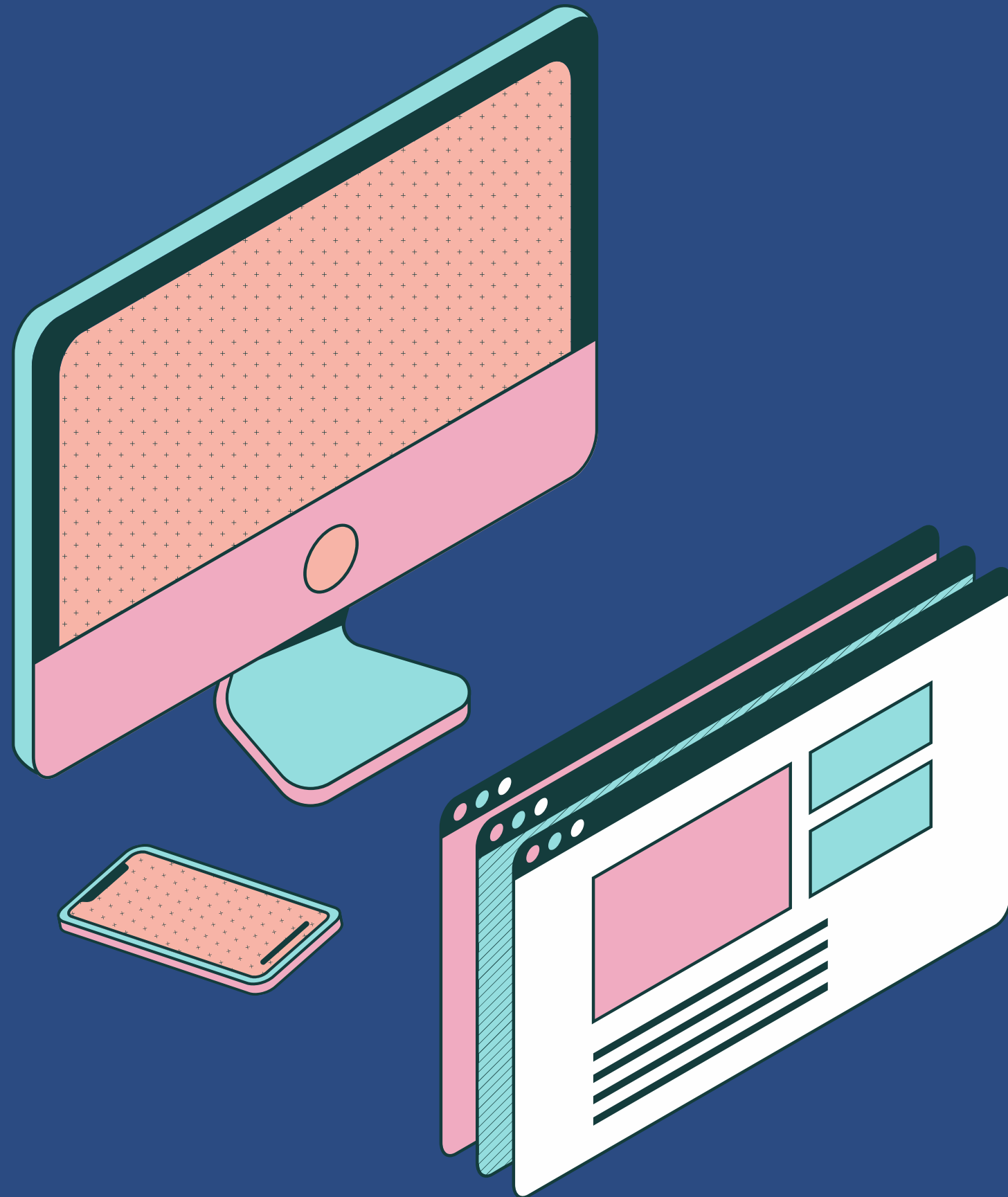


"13 year olds now"

"Me at 13"



- Observable differences between young and old across and within generations
- Technology is democratized as we become more culturally dependent on devices
 - Access to technology differs across race and class divides, yet children are still spending more time on their devices, particularly because of COVID-19.



Honors Project

- Creation of website that highlights artworks and elaborates on how they convey themes discussed in my thesis
 - Expand on our cultural understanding of the relationship between childhood and tech
 - Continue to explore popular attitudes on tech and its effects on childhood

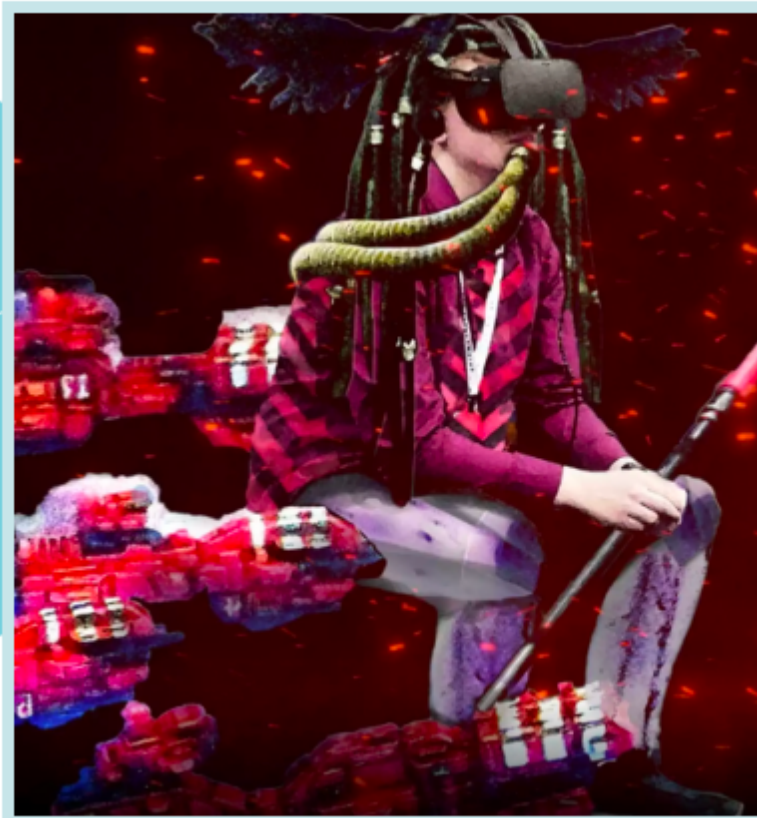
Childhood & Digital Culture

The Artworks

The Thesis

Additional Resources

Has the concept of “childhood” disappeared with the rise of digital culture?



The Artworks: Depicting Childhood

Investigate how childhood is represented in relation to technology within works of contemporary art



The Thesis: “They Grow Up So Fast”

Read the expanded version of my Fall Thesis, “They Grow Up So Fast: The Disappearance of Childhood and the Emergence of Digital Culture”



Additional Resources

Find more information on exhibitions about childhood and contact me

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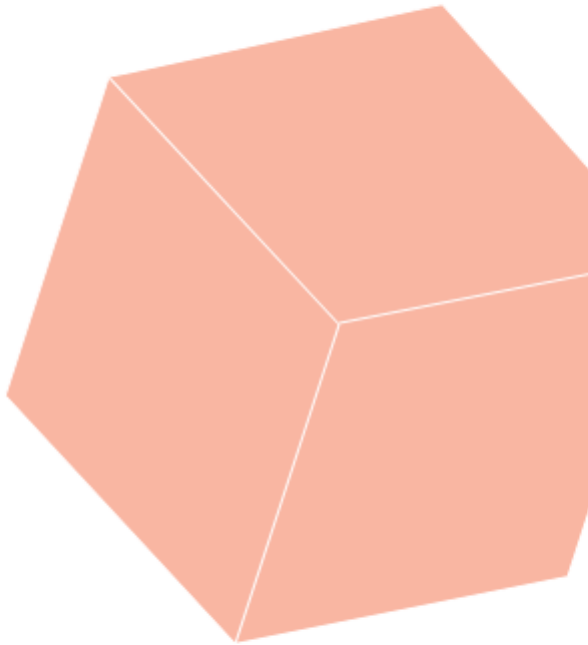
The Thesis

Additional Resources

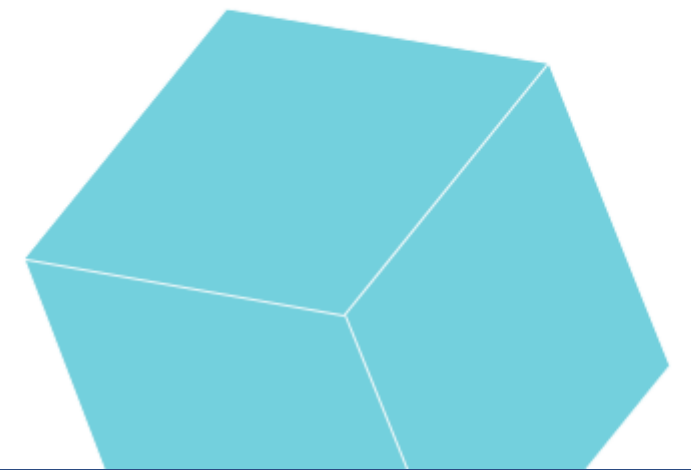
The Artworks: Depicting Childhood

Technology has forever changed the way people create and function within society. Everyday activities such as communication and entertainment have greatly altered over time as a result of the internet and social media. So how do these drastic changes caused by ever-advancing technologies impact children—the very foundation of our society—and their upbringings?

Throughout history, art has been used to convey societal concerns and accomplishments as a means of contemplating the past, present, and future. **These artworks examine how artists interpret and regard technology technology and its effect on children and society as a whole.**



**A New Age of Art:
Rendering Childhood and Technology**



Childhood & Digital Culture

The Thesis

Additional Resources

A New Age of Art: Rendering Childhood and Technology

A New Age of Art: Rendering childhood and Technology

When contemplating how childhood has changed due to technology, one is forced to acknowledge how the relationship between these two significant societal factors has changed over time. In doing so, I was driven to think of the various ways that people process how childhood has altered since the induction of technology into our everyday lives. By looking at the list of artworks I've accumulated here, I attempt to show people's interpretations of

technology—be it critiques of our increased dependency of it, praise for the benefits that it provides, or another outlook altogether. **Were I to curate my own art exhibit about people's visual representations of our current technology-driven society, the works listed here are those I would consider due to their range of implications and provocations.**

[View Works](#)

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Additional Resources

A New Age of Art: Rendering Childhood and Technology Through Art



Medric Tural

Social Validation, 2018

Mixed media collage

59 1/10 x 59 1/10 inches

Using recognizable imagery throughout this colorful collage, Tural evokes the positive side of social media through vibrant hues, yet the artist also alludes to the negative and chaotic feelings caused by too much information, mixed messaging, addiction, and comparison. The repeated logos of applications such as YouTube, Instagram, and even LinkedIn pair with a graffiti-like style to emphasize the everyday pressures and joys of social media engagement.

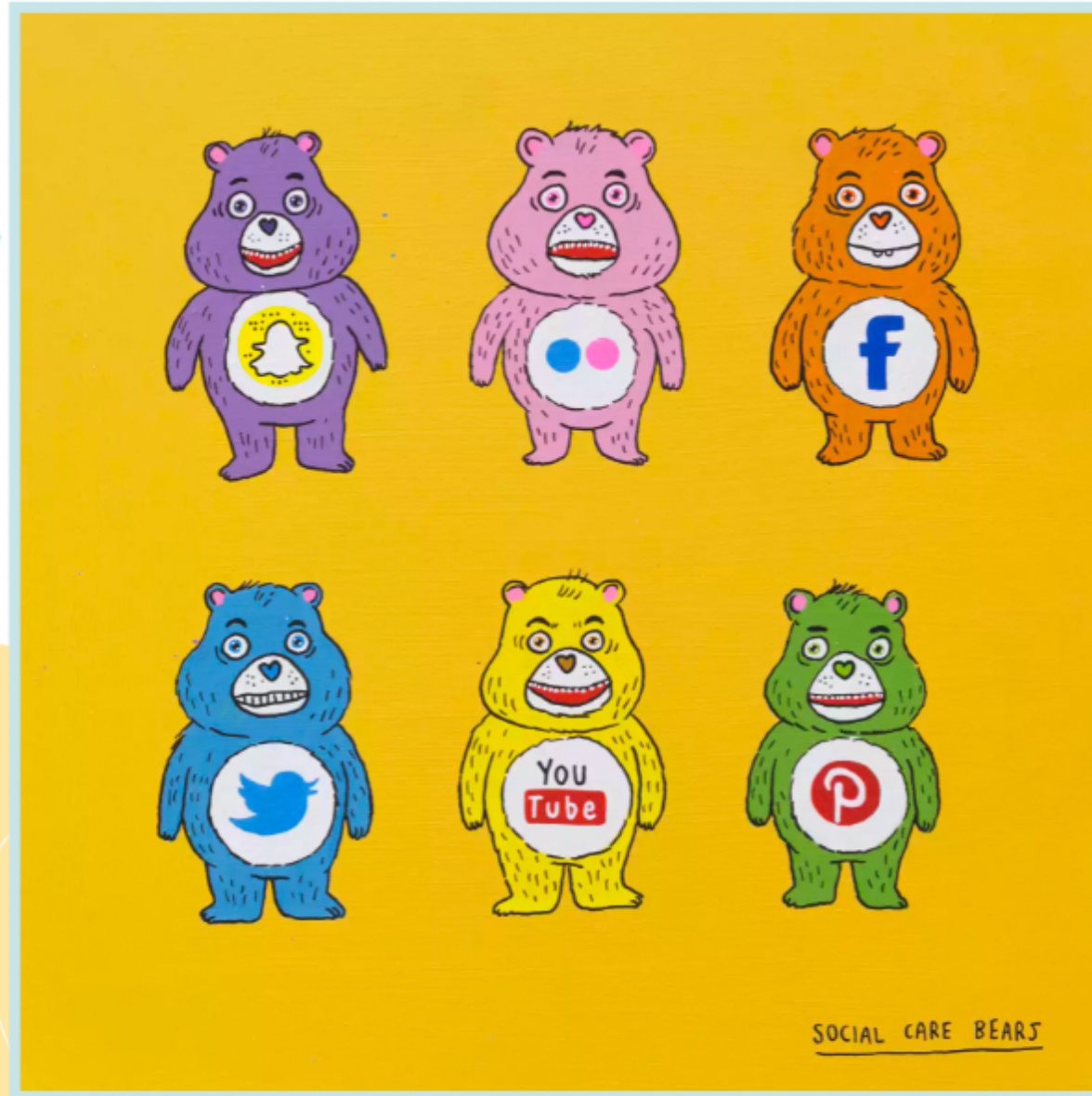
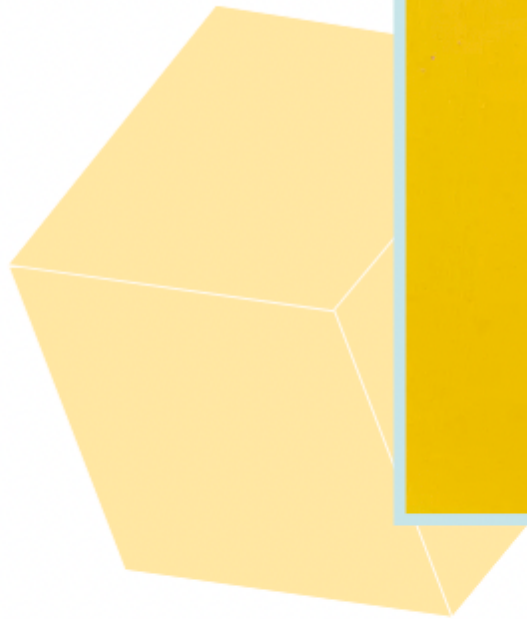
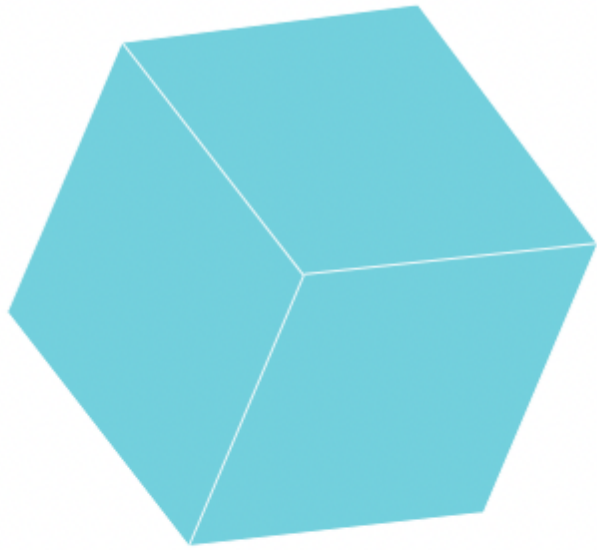
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A New Age of Art: Rendering Childhood and Technology Through Art



Laurina Paperina

Social Care Bears, 2017

Mixed technique on wood

11 4/5 x 11 4/5 x 2/5 inches

The Care Bears, a well-known children's entertainment franchise, is given a new look in this piece. Paperina signifies how childhood has been tarnished by the presence of social media. Instead of the usual hearts, rainbows, and flowers, these bears' stomachs are adorned with social media logos. The bear's creepy smiles, beady eyes, and not-so-cute-and-cuddly appearance allude to technology's corruption of childhood purity and innocence.

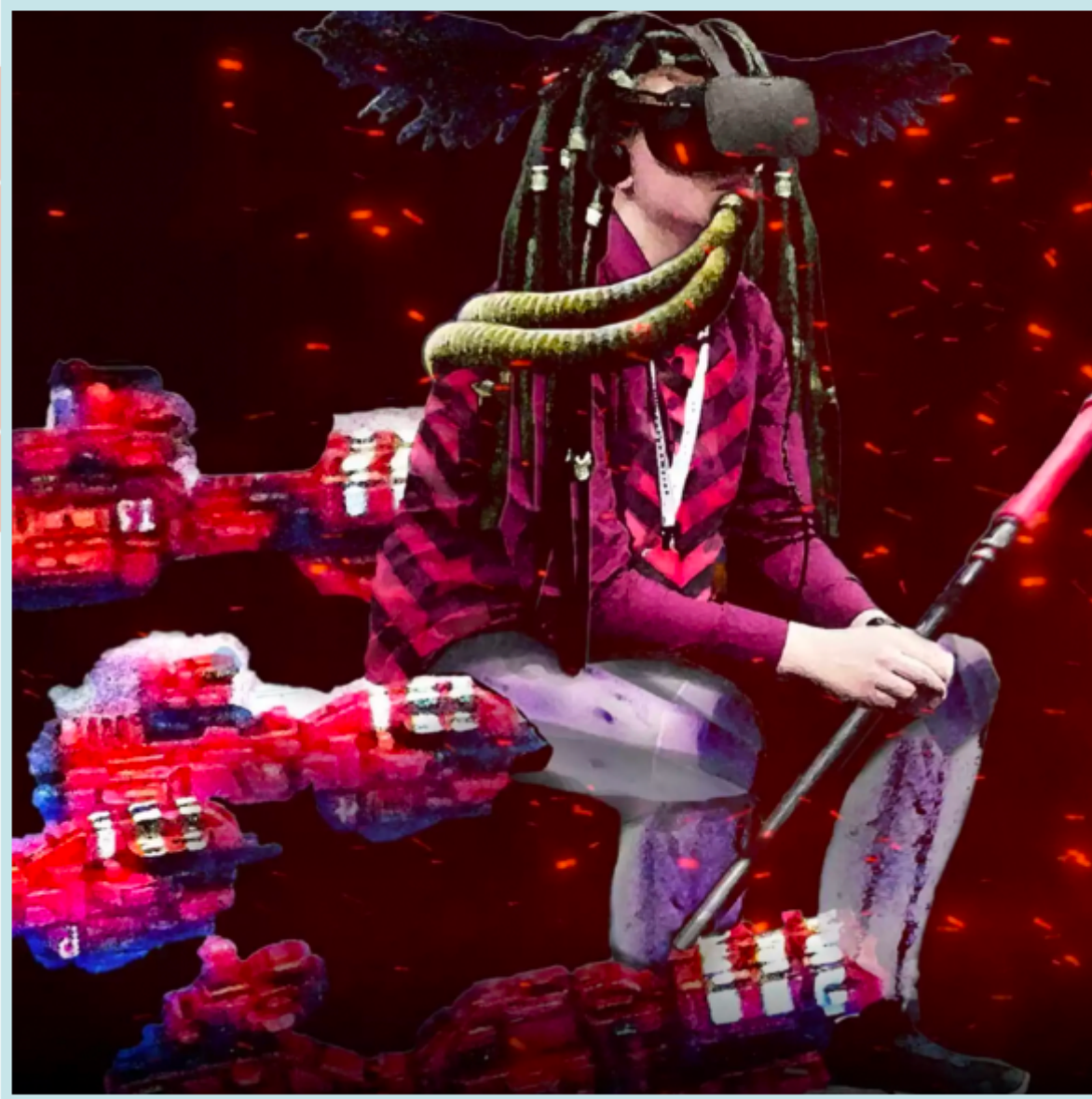
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Patricia Lambertus

Lost in space / 4, 2021

NFT

Because it is an NFT, this piece exists only in the digital world. Both the artwork's medium and subject matter demonstrates people's gravitation to virtual existence. The fantastical, futuristic aura of Lambertus's work is enhanced through the Virtual Reality headset worn by young subject. It almost looks as though he is being swallowed by the tubes, and electric bright reds, and deep blacks that surround him. While *Lost in Space* clearly has a dark aura, the figure's body language seems relaxed and open to the new realities he sees through the black headset.

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A New Age of Art: Rendering Childhood and Technology Through Art



Jon Rafman

I am Alone but Not Lonely, 2013

Mixed media installation

98 x 148 x 98 inches

Rafman's installation juxtaposes a dull reality with the vibrant faces displayed on screens set about the room. This piece demonstrates the potential of virtual socialization. Many people find communities through their devices, preventing them from feeling isolation. *I am Alone but Not Loney* seems supportive of technology. Rafman portrays screens as portals and connections to others rather than destructive devices.

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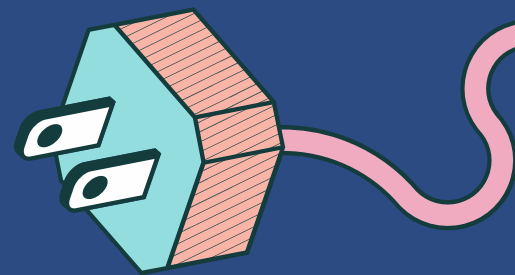


Conclusions

- Childhood and tech are ever-changing
- Observable differences between young and old across and within generations
- Children increasingly seen as individuals with agency
- Fostering positive relationships between children and technology is essential for progress



Thank You!





Images

- <http://www.faculty.rsu.edu/users/f/felwell/www/Theorists/Essays/Postman1.html>
- <https://www.amazon.com/Children-without-Childhood-Growing-World/dp/0140071059>
- <https://www.amazon.com/Kids-Context-Sociological-Children-Childhoods/dp/0742520250>
- <https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/cyberkids>



Questions?

