



WELCOME TO MY CHANNEL



Things I do when I'm Bored

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Things I do when I'm bored (2017-22) addresses vloggers' relationship with feeling bored. The work is composed of a browser-based video compilation and a video installation that assembles found footage from YouTube vlogs with less than 100 or even zero views. It emphasises the vloggers' self-awareness in their performative statements of boredom as they look at their representation on-screen with the hope to be viewed, subscribed to, commented on, liked, shared, and followed by others. The work explores the notion that the feeling of boredom on social media, the internet at large, and daily life suffused with digital media technologies, is part of a post-digital symptom of disenchantment in which social media and digital technologies fail to entertain these vloggers.

Keywords Vlog, Boredom,
YouTube, Social Media, Digital
Culture, Internet, Found
Footage, Post-digital

The corporate web and digital folklore

The amateur web of the 1990s and early 2000s has transformed into our present hegemonic corporate web rich in pervasive social media platforms, real-time data streams and subscription services of ever-increasing high-definition video. With this incorporation of web services into everyday life, internet users have been expressing themselves in the form of amateur videologs, or vlogs, on popular platforms such as YouTube since the mid-2000s. Vlogs are similar to blogs as both are online diaries that share personal experiences, but instead of using text as on blogs, vlogs use video as the form of expression.

In doing so, the vlogger community has developed an audiovisual language that includes video, spoken commentary on personal life, text, graphics, animation, gaming – anything that can be performed in front of a webcam, camera, smartphone and even video screen captured. Vlogs can be described as “Digital Folklore,” the aesthetics of popular culture and customs created by “users’ engagement with personal computer applications” (Lialina and Espenschied 2009, 9). Vloggers engage creatively not only with software (or apps) for video editing and media manipulation but, too, with popular references and internet culture. Vlogging developed an aesthetics that differs from the audiovisual content created by the entertainment industry provided on video streaming services.

Vlogging because I’m so bored

Boredom, in German *Langeweile*, constructed from *Lange* [long] and *Weile* [while], literally translates as “a long time span,” being bored in the German translation implies that boredom both lasts in time and stretches the experience of time. My work *Things I do when I’m bored* analyses the vloggers’ relationship with being bored. The artwork is a collage of found footage from YouTube vlogs with less than 100 or zero views to emphasise vloggers’ self-awareness in their performative statements of boredom as the vloggers look at their representation on-screen with the hope to be viewed, subscribed to, commented on, liked, shared and followed by others. The vlogger looks at the screen as one who faces the “mirror in which the subject alienates himself in order to find himself, or stares at himself only to see his own death” (Baudrillard 1990, 169). On the one hand, the vloggers stage boredom as prosumers, as both producers and consumers of vlogs. On the other hand, they stare at their deception as their vlogs do not reach an audience. Despite the lack of views, they continue to create vlogs as a practice included in their daily routines and as a mode of online expression that shares personal life highlighting their boredom.

Accordingly, as social media platforms such as YouTube fail to entertain these vloggers, boredom is seen, in part, as a consequence of the experience

of social media. Online time is reduced to the consumption and production of content that triggers boredom due to the lack “of the Spectacular, the very power to appeal” (Minh-Ha 1991, 94), which is pre-established by the entertainment industry. The feeling of boredom experienced on the internet at large can be understood as part of a post-digital symptom of disillusionment with a daily life suffused with digital technologies – “a contemporary disenchantment with digital information systems and media gadgets” (Cramer 2014, 12).

In sum, vlogging is a popular online practice that results in the entanglement of daily life and digital technologies in an audiovisual form. This practice is explored in the artwork *Things I do when I’m bored* from within the post-digital condition, interpreted as “the messy state of media, arts and design *after* their digitisation” (Cramer 2014, 17). This condition is delineated by the social and cultural effects of digital media and the “shift from an earlier moment driven by an almost obsessive fascination and enthusiasm with new media to a broader set of affectations that now includes unease, fatigue, boredom and disillusionment” (Berry and Dieter 2015, 5).

Things I do when I’m bored

1. I have taken interest in the creation of this work during my participation in the seminar *Mindwandering and boredom in the arts* where I created an earlier version of this work, a 7 minutes video-loop, for the seminar taught by the cognitive scientist Marjan Sharifi and the artist and professor Nina Fischer at the University of Arts in Berlin, Germany, during the winter semester of 2017/18.

The artwork *Things I do when I’m bored*¹ is composed of a browser-based online video compilation and an offline video installation. The online/offline dichotomy has become rather diffuse, since online time is now incorporated into daily life, through the proliferation of portable devices such as smartphones and the wide availability of internet access.

Excavating YouTube

To create this work, I first selected found footage from YouTube by searching the queries: “I’m bored” and “I feel bored.” Initially, I searched YouTube as any regular user by using the search function and then downloading the videos using a browser extension. I had previously defined the parameters to be 0 or less than 100 views as well as the date to older than 6 months. These parameters would allow me to excavate YouTube as a (video) library and filter its massive amount of videos. Yet, a regular search on YouTube does not allow users to filter and sort the search results by the least viewed and makes it rather difficult to find videos with zero views.

Consequently, to reach videos with zero views, I had the help of the artist and programmer Brian Vogelgesang, who created a script² to automatise my search query using the YouTube API. With this script, I was able to directly scrape YouTube links with my parameters. From the large list of links, I have filtered and selected the videos that were most personal and download the videos from this list of pre-selected YouTube links using the Pytube³ library.

2. The script youtubeSearchCli collects links from Youtube with 100 or less views and can be downloaded here: <https://github.com/KidA001/youtubeSearchCli>

3. Pytube library: <https://pytube.io>

4. Things I do when I'm bored (browser-based work): <https://pedroferreira.net/boredom>

5. The video was edited on Shotcut (FLOSS) and can be previewed here: <https://pedroferreira.net/moving-image/things-i-do-when-im-bored>

In total, I have borrowed around 200 vlogs from this excavation process, which amounted to around 8 GB .mp4 files or about 8 hours of video. In the browser-based work,⁴ the user can watch the vlogs' compilation randomly and skip to the next video. The video-loop⁵ displays a 26 min. cut from the excavated boredom vlogs. The video editing follows the amateur aesthetics of vlogs through a simple collage technique of cut and paste. I wanted the work to be as accessible as possible to a broad audience. The video editing assembles the vlogs from a process of trial and error in a dramaturgy that follows and remixes the four patterns described below.

Boredom vlogging patterns

Following the excavation process, the footage selection and the video editing, I found four main patterns in the boredom vlogs that I categorised as: (1) I am bored, (2) I am bored, what can I do, (3) What you can do when you are bored, (4) Mockery of boredom. The vlogs that fall into the last pattern "Mockery of boredom" are the vlogs higher in creative content and contrast the spoken personal statements of being bored which adhere to diary-style emotional self-reflection. The other two patterns show a desire for online participation and community engagement where vloggers engage with each other through comments, but in this case, this mainly fails because for this level of engagement to take place it requires views by users and participation by other YouTubers.

The expression of feeling bored through vlogging may result in the vlogger's pursuit for purposeful tasks to do, or rather a boredom that is comprehended as a feeling that takes a highly imaginative and creative path engaged through one's boredom. More broadly, these vloggers experience boredom and handle it in a constructive and creative way by dealing with the feeling of being bored through the creation of vlogs.

Let there be more boredom

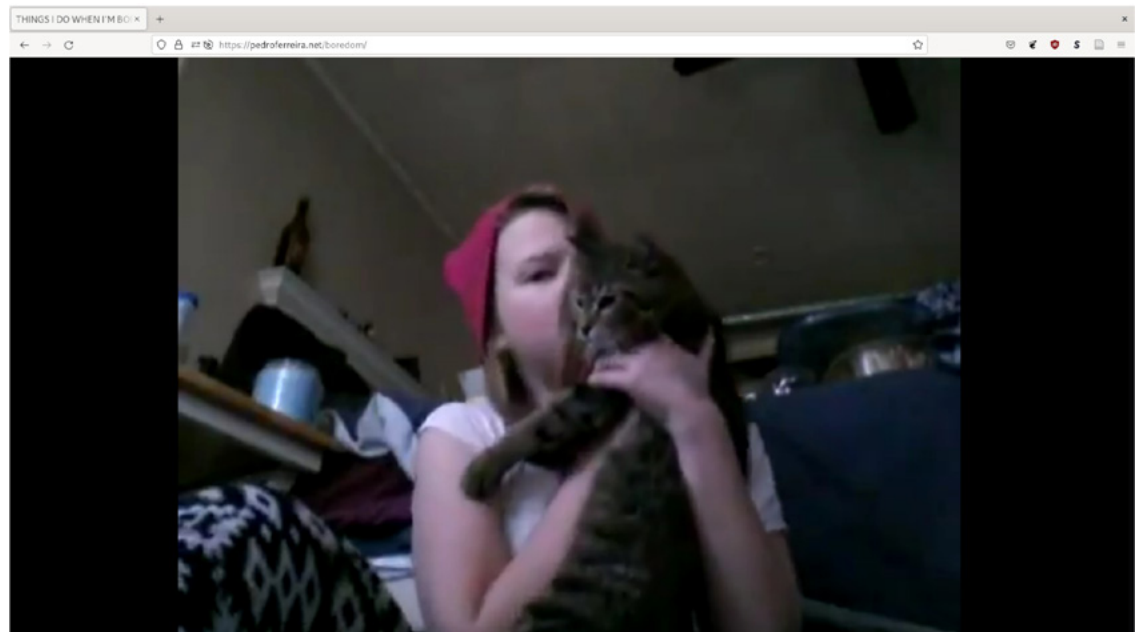
Things I do when I'm bored explores the feeling of being bored as part of a post-digital condition in which daily life is entangled with digital media technologies that are no longer perceived as new media. By lacking the newness and the spectacular in media, these technical objects and social media in general trigger boredom as these are merely ordinary devices of everyday life.

The browser-based video compilation and the video installation aim to explore boredom and hopefully let the audience also experience boredom to engage with creatively. It adheres to a post-digital aesthetics that exposes the effects of digital media from within the post-digital condition, a condition in which users are disenchanting, over-saturated and bored with digital technologies. But what if their users took the experience of this boredom as a chance to

become more present rather than attempt to separate from it; if users did not feel the need to kill time but, rather, befriend it. To engage with one's boredom is perhaps to find oneself becoming more creative and imaginative. As the cognitive scientist Marjan Sharifi points out, there is a positive cognitive correlation between boredom, creative thinking and mind-wandering (Sharifi 2022).

To conclude, this work introduces several vlogs that have not been seen before or have been pushed away from the search results on YouTube. This is also to highlight that algorithms are not neutral but serve corporate interests. YouTube algorithms follow a corporate agenda that mainly promotes viral videos or the most viewed. This grabs users' attention, influences what is seen, shown and propagated. This is done for monetisation of user data sold for targeted advertisement. By contradicting this algorithmic agency, *Things I do when I'm bored* can be understood as a way to grasp YouTube infrastructure and an alternative form to watch it by shifting one's attention to videos that have been ignored by its algorithms.

Fig. 1. *Things I do when I'm bored* (browser-based, 2022), still image.



Things I do when I'm bored (browser-based work): <https://pedroferreira.net/boredom>

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