

# ***BiblioTech >> Gallery Guide***

## **+ images**

### **BiblioTech**

April 28 – May 13, 2022

Open: 11am-4pm, Mon-Fri

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**Animate Assembly (w/ Caroline Sebilleau & Antonio Roberts), Anna Barham, Jonathan Basile, Joe Devlin, David Gauthier, Sumuyya Khader, INTER–MISSION & formAxioms, Rosa Menkman, Katie Paterson, Post-Digital Publishing Archive (Silvio Lorusso), Tom Schofield, Erica Scourti, and Mark Simmonds.**

**Curated by Torque Editions (Nathan Jones & Sam Skinner) // [www.torquetorque.net](http://www.torquetorque.net)**

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*BiblioTech* explores the changing role of the library, reading, writing, and publishing in a post-digital age. The title suggests the latin term for library, 'bibliotheca', and also alludes to how the library and book culture has become increasingly technologised.

The exhibition asks: What is the library-as-institution in the context of advanced AI language tools, new forms of text and image processing, and the increasing spread of publishing technology into our lives? How might the library evolve within the next phases of digitisation entangled with issues of climate change, mental health, social justice, and automation? And how will print culture respond to these changes too?

This exhibition also takes place at NeMe\_in Cyprus, running in both locations simultaneously for a period. The majority of works are presented in both locations, while some one-off works are exhibited in only one site. Accordingly, this crossover and correspondence creates a context to explore modes of reproducibility, presence and difference at play in print and digital-based artefacts, the library, and culture more broadly.

By transforming the gallery into a library, composed of diverse publishing, reading, writing and learning practices, as reinvented by contemporary artists, *BiblioTech* seeks to playfully push against audience expectations for gallery and library alike. More broadly, the exhibition explores how libraries have become hybridised with other environments: from museums and schools, to bedrooms, computer-networks, labs and forests, opening up new conceptual space for the future of books; of how and where they are accessed, written and read.

Curated by Torque Editions (Nathan Jones and Sam Skinner) the exhibition also presents books published by Torque, a number of artworks they have produced (in collaboration with Tom Schofield)

focused on machine learning and language, a selection of material from LJMU's Stafford Beer archive, and a curated list of shadow libraries.

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A symposium exploring projects within, and broader contexts to, the show will take place on May 5, 3:00 – 6:30pm. Featuring Joana Chicau, Johanna Drucker, Gary Hall, Mel Jordan, Esther Leslie, Edgar Schmitz, and Emily Segal. More information about the symposium can be found at [www.exhibition-research-lab.co.uk](http://www.exhibition-research-lab.co.uk)

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*This project is supported by Arts Council England, Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts and Liverpool School of Art and Design.*





## WORKS

1-3.

**Torque Editions (Nathan Jones and Sam Skinner) w/ Tom Schofield**

**RNN Triptych, 2019 – 2022**

These three artworks all use a small-data, interactive approach for training a ‘recursive neural net’ (RNN) to critique commonplace AI myths of automation and efficiency. The works contrast human motability and modes of thinking with the probabilistic and programmatic nature of computer processing, whilst also showing how both are hybridised and made to compete in the cultures around hi-tech ‘innovation’.

An RNN calculates the statistical probability that one letter will follow the next, given what has gone before, based on what it has learned from a set corpus of texts. Other than the texts it is fed, the RNN has no internal dictionary or grammar, meaning that the model is ecologically less costly to train and run than big-data models, and more transparent: the RNN only ‘knows’ what we give it, so audiences are afforded some insight into how source texts determine what the machines output as writing. Our RNNs are also more error prone: the machines can and do make spelling errors, talking a fascinatingly textured patois from the statistical averaging of its dataset.

We can ourselves learn from watching the machines learn to write like this – arriving at meaning from the level of the letter, rather than the network of semantic relations. The impoverished outputs of the small-data set illustrate the punishing scale of big data on which hi-fidelity language models rely, but they also generate new trajectories, new futures for language to bleed into an age we increasingly share with other forms of intelligence.

1.

### ***Crash Blossoms / If and Only If, 2021***

An artificial intelligence newspaper headline writer trained on a combination of 19th century headlines from the British Library, contemporary news, and user submissions.

Use the clipboard, or the weblink [torquetorque.net/crashblossoms](http://torquetorque.net/crashblossoms) to submit your own idea for a future headline, to inform the newest guesses *If and Only If* makes.

2.

### **The Rereader, 2019**



A device for scanning books and playing them back as 'speed reader' versions. The book scanner transforms the physical book into a series of algorithmic, semantic and aesthetic text performances. Every book scanned contributes to the training of a neural net, producing new texts.

When a page is scanned, the machine goes into a count-down, parsing the image for words. The words are then played in order twice. The first time we see the location of those words on the page, and the second time the side screen flashes when it reaches 'important words.

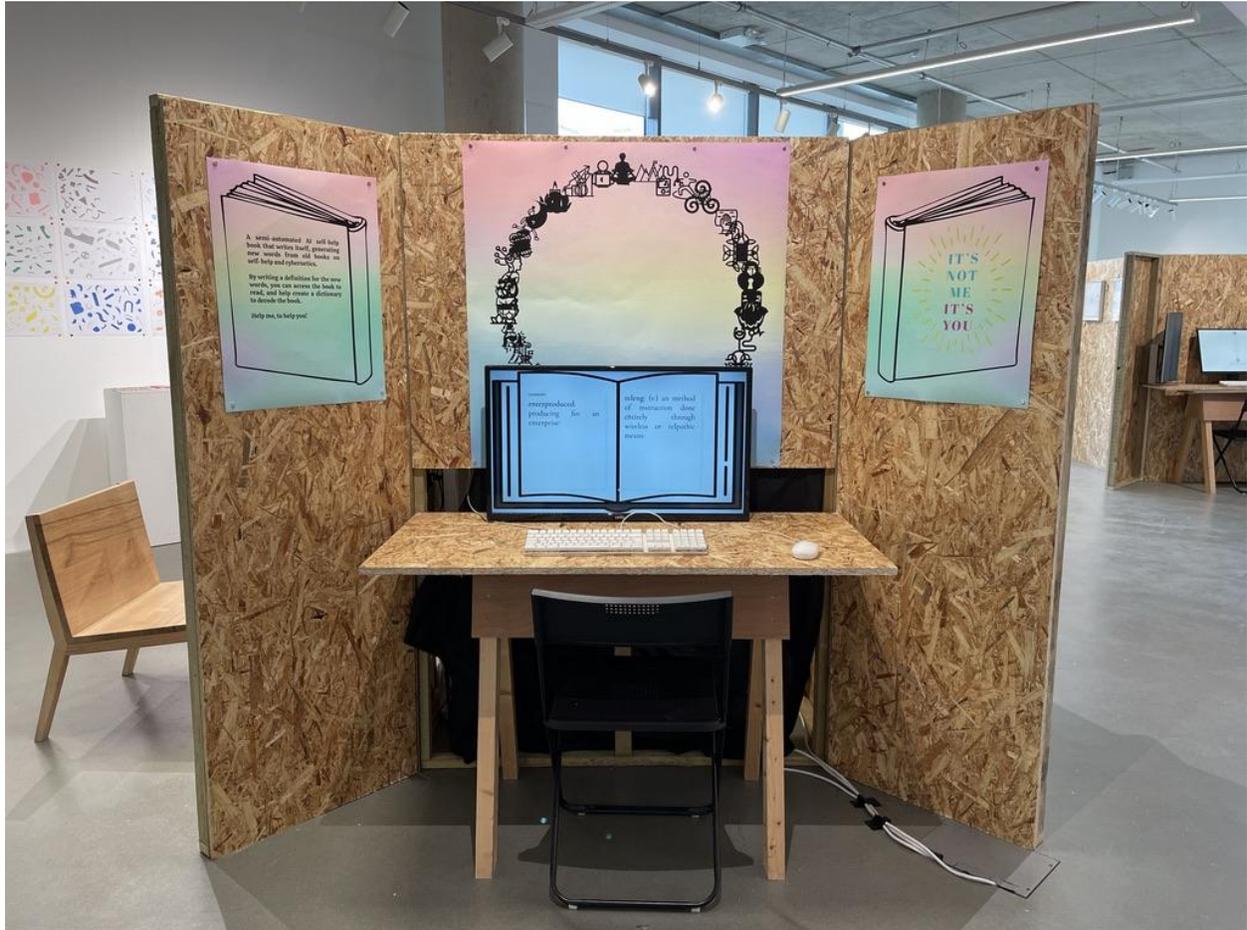
Here the Rereader is presented alongside some of Torque's previous editions, and users are invited to read our work in its machine-augmented version, while helping train a bot that will create new versions it.

Try scanning a book from the Torque archive, or use one of your own to experience it as 'speed reader' version – and help to train the inbuilt AI.



### 3.

#### **It's not you, it's me, 2022**



A semi-automatic self-help book writer that asks for your help to define the neologisms it stumbles across. The book will be published in the gallery, page by page, featuring definitions and annotations from across both exhibition sites.

[Watch the previous user-submitted word definitions](#)

[then Click to submit your own, and browse the new Self-Help book to learn how to live.](#)

*Nathan Jones is a lecturer in Fine Art (Digital Media) and Fellow of the Institute for Social Futures at Lancaster University, UK. His art and critical works look at the contemporary conditions for writing in the context of new technologies.*

*Tom Schofield is an artist, designer and researcher with research interests in emerging and open source technology, participation and cultural data in public space. His practice is engaged with contemporary issues in post-digital culture including network politics, network temporality and critical infrastructure.*

*Sam Skinner is an artist and curator based in Oxford, UK. His work focuses on relations between technology, media, and community. Sam employs a range of processes including historical research, printmaking, curation, mural making, publishing and workshops.*

### 4.

#### **Animate Assembly (with Antonio Roberts and Caroline Sebilleau)**

[www.animateassembly.org](http://www.animateassembly.org), 2021 - ongoing



Animate Assembly is concerned with how the animate and the inanimate are arranged toward each other, what kinds of engagements this allows for, and which ones it disables. The Assembly commissions contributors to produce entries for a speculative glossary of animation today, and takes shape through the dialogues and debates they prompt.

The website presented here archives the glossary. It was designed and is hosted by Torque Editions, as such the project extends Torque's work publishing books to more web-based formats.

The website is presented on a tablet alongside a video showcasing gifs and a variable typeface produced by Antonio Roberts for the site and screen printed material produced by Caroline Sebilleau which reworks elements of the website.

*Animate Assembly is propelled by Verina Gfader (affiliated with Malmö Art Academy/Lund University and City University of Hong Kong), Anke Hennig (LMU Munich/ Central Saint Martins, London), Esther Leslie (Birkbeck, London) and Edgar Schmitz (Goldsmiths, London).*

*Antonio Roberts is an artist and curator based in Birmingham, UK, working primarily with video, code, and sound. He is critically engaged with the themes surrounding network culture and in his practice explores how technology continues to shape ideas of creation, ownership, and authorship.*

*Caroline Sebilleau is a print-maker and visual artist based in Paris, France.*



5.  
**INTER-MISSION & formAxioms**  
*Negentropic Fields*, 2020 – ongoing



*Negentropic Fields* was an art exhibition and a platform that reimagined the art of curation, art exposure and collection. A space for the navigation and collective manipulation of abstract materials. The project is now expanding as a multi-media endeavour with associated NFTs (non-fungible tokens) and limited-edition NFOs (non-fungible objects).

In order to resist exponential digital entropy, curators INTER-MISSION and formAxioms, together with Currency, have devised binding conditions between digital and physical products. Each NFT is linked to: the BOOK, the SCULPTURE, the GAME, the POSTCARD. Acquiring any of such “objects” gives access to an interactive installation happening at the conclusive stage where a new archival prototype will be revealed.

Here we present a walkthrough of the game, a 3D sculpture representing the book NFT, and the first publicly available copy of the book in pdf form.

*INTER-MISSION is an art collective dedicated to discourses of technology in art initiated in 2016 by Ulrich LAU and TEOW Yue Han. Focusing on interdisciplinary and collaborative works in video art, audiovisual, performance, installation and interactive art. The collective aims to inhabit the gap between technologically engaged artworks, artists and audiences. INTER-MISSION builds transnational networks to promote sustained dialogue and engagement with media practices. It creates a space that encourages collaboration, reflection and participation in our ever-changing technological environment through interactive performances, installation, video screenings, international and interdisciplinary dialogues, and knowledge sharing.*

*formAxioms was established in 2018 by Eva Castro and Federico Ruberto as a research framework, agency and teaching cluster. The laboratory promotes research on space, selfhood, performance, art, planetary structures, and economy-ecology. It produces physical-digital dyads integrating platform-design, block-chain, VR/AR/XR in its pipeline. The group experiments with trans-media*

operations that welcome critical queering, utilising a mix of design strategies, philosophy, media-theory and world-building. With digital models and computational tools the lab prototypes spaces-interfaces-infrastructures for trans-subjective and collaborative-participatory operations, working to re-discover the emancipatory potential of art and design –aiming at finding positive feedback-loops, hunting forms of positive-alienation (alienation-from-alienation).

6.

**Mark Simmonds,**  
**D-E-T-A-I-L, 2022**  
**A-Z, 2022**



*D-E-T-A-I-L* was a six-part lecture series compiled and delivered by Mark Simmonds at the University of Lincoln. The lectures looked closely at the finer details of typography, and the content of each letter was framed around a single letter.

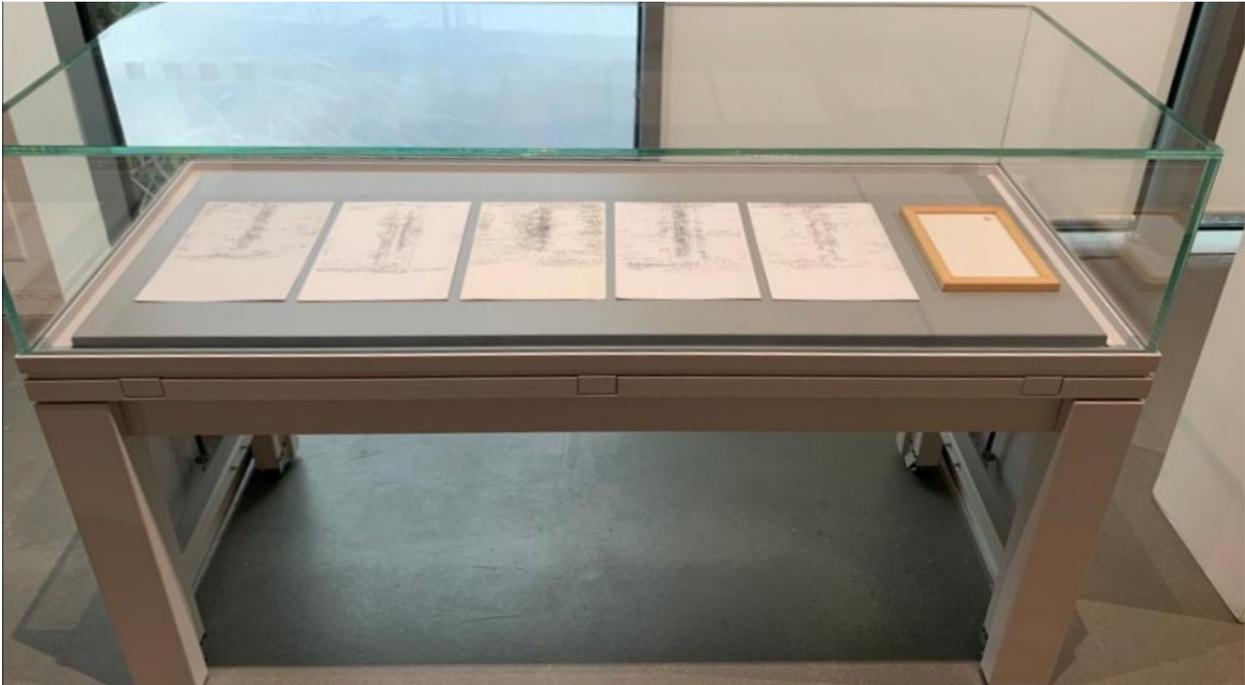
*A-Z* contains risograph prints made from laser-cut oilboard stencil alphabets designed by students of Year One BA Graphic Design, University of Lincoln.

Mark Simmonds is a graphic designer and teacher. Mark had worked on multiple projects for Torque Editions including multiple publications available to view in the exhibition.

7.

**Jo Devlin**

## **Marginalia Drawings, 2021**



*(img credit Joe Devlin)*

Marginalia made by readers, found in library books, are compressed onto single sheets of watercolour paper by the artist. In this ongoing series of works the artist's act of redrawing notations brings different readers of different books into dialogue with one another and connects historic practice of annotation with newer digital contexts of scanning and reproduction.

Here the Marginalia drawings are presented with two other works:

**Untitled, 2022** – a window framed dog-eared book page and **Untitled (Bookmark), 2008** – comprising past readers' bookmarks found in the pages of books relating to Kurt Schwitters, collected from various UK libraries, pulped, and reassembled into a single bookmark.

*Joe Devlin is an artist living and working in Manchester and Leeds. His most recent solo exhibition 'Gatefolds' was held at Studio 2, Todmorden, 2019. His work has appeared in Cabinet Magazine, Frozen Tears III (edited by John Russell), Text 2 (edited by Tony Trehy), ToCall Magazine, edited, published, and printed by psw (Petra Schulze-Wollgast), and No Press (Derek Beaulieu). Recent publications include 'Net Reshapes' published by Non Plus Ultra, Copenhagen and 'Marginalia Drawings' by Timglaset editions, Malmö (2022).*

**8.**

**Anna Barham**

**Poisonous Oysters, 2019**



The framed works presented here are made from pages of *Poisonous Oysters*, the score from one of Barham's live 'production reading groups' in which multiple versions of texts are produced collaboratively between the readers and computer processes. This group used texts about various types of porous boundaries - interpersonal, physical, sonic, verbal, chemical, psychological. The frames incorporate small objects, drawings and images made either directly onto the pages themselves, or by printing or etching images onto the perspex glazing. Barham uses these objects and images to punctuate and annotate the texts, obscuring or underlining different words, making notes and associations.

*Anna Barham is an artist working between text, live events, video and installation. Her work considers the transformation of sense as language is translated between different material forms, technologies and bodies. She questions how authorship is distributed and what subjectivities are formed through these processes.*

## 9.

**Jonathan Basile**

***The Library of Babel* (Libraryofbabel.info), 2015**



Search for any word or word-combination in the library of all possible pages or browse the rooms and pages using a decimal reference.

*The Library of Babel* is a place for scholars to do research, for artists and writers to seek inspiration, for anyone with curiosity or a sense of humour to reflect on the weirdness of existence - in short, it's just like any other library. If completed, it would contain every possible combination of 1,312,000 characters, including lower case letters, space, comma, and period. Thus, it would contain every book that ever has been written, and every book that ever could be - including every play, every song, every scientific paper, every legal decision, every constitution, every piece of scripture, and so on. At present it contains all possible pages of 3200 characters, about 104677 books.

Any text you find in any location of the library will be in the same place in perpetuity. We do not simply generate and store books as they are requested - in fact, the storage demands would make that impossible. Every possible permutation of letters is accessible at this very moment in one of the library's books, only awaiting its discovery. We encourage those who find strange concatenations among the variations of letters to write about their discoveries in the forum, so future generations may benefit from their research.

Here *The Library of Babel* is presented as an interactive website, with videos showing the generative process that makes words and pages.

Jonathan Basile is a PhD Student in Emory University's Comparative Literature program and the creator of [libraryofbabel.info](http://libraryofbabel.info). His first book, *Tar for Mortar: "The Library of Babel" and the Dream of Totality*, was recently published by punctum books.

10.

**Rosa Menkman**

***The Blob of Impossible Images, 2021***



Use the arrow keys and mouse to explore the BLOB. Clicking on an exhibit will reveal more information about it.

During her Art@CERN residency, Menkman asked scientists to imagine 'impossible' images of any object or phenomenon that they thought was important. As a result of this exploration, Menkman created a low poly rendition of the unquantifiable blob of possible and impossible images that are hard or simply impossible to resolve, due to constraints in the affordances of our image processing technologies.

Some of these images may have otherwise never found the way to our eyes, they may remain impossible or only exist in the hypothetical nooks of the *BLOB*, that functions as an archive of Im/Possible images. *The work* also comes with an open call for impossible images: with a form accessible from inside the *BLOB*, Menkman invites new submission to the archive. Visitors exploring the *BLOB* space, can also encounter others who are on the site at the same time.

Rosa Menkman is a Dutch artist and researcher. Her work focuses on noise artefacts that result from accidents in both analogue and digital media. According to Menkman, these artefacts can offer precious insights into the otherwise obscure alchemy of standardisation and resolution setting. In her new research Menkman aims to find new ways to understand, use and perceive through and with our technologies.

11.

David Gauthier

**List Server Busy. Full Digest Rescheduled, 2020**



Use the hyperlinks to explore the archive through important themes.

Browse the algorithmically generated book, organised into themed chapters or read across the digital and print versions.

Electronic mailing lists were the main channels of 1990s European net cultures and the “Net Critique” that formed out of the post-1989 era as an ideology-aware alternative to the technolibertarian “Californian Ideology.” In an ongoing analysis of list archives, David Gauthier has generated this mammoth survey volume, summarising data about key net and digital culture mailing lists from the mid-nineties until today. The resulting reports are based on algorithmic operations, such as extracting certain years’ most-discussed subject threads or most replied to messages. The archives of the lists Nettime, crumb, empyre, spectre, and syndicate are reactivated here through a transversal analysis of quantitative data and discursive themes that move across them. The printed volume is presented alongside the online digital index that sends readers to the original source material.

David Gauthier is an artist and academic whose work mangles many things, chiefly concepts, objects, languages, and disciplines. Fascinated by mathematics and materialisms, his artistic and academic research questions processes of sense making within diverse regimes of legibility/illegibility.

## 12. Katie Paterson

*Future Library*, 2014–2114

Video (26:55) and two-sided foil block print on paper



This artist's film tells the story, to date, of Katie Paterson's expansive 100-year artwork, *Future Library* (2014-2114) and brings together the artist and the many collaborators who have made it possible.

*Future Library* was inaugurated in 2014. A forest was planted in Norway, which will supply paper for a special anthology of books to be printed in 2114. One writer every year of the project will contribute a text, with the writings held in trust, unread and unpublished, until the one hundred years has passed. The manuscripts are stored in a specially designed room in the new public library in Oslo. The writers who have contributed texts to date, and who appear in the film, are Margaret Atwood (2014), David Mitchell (2015), Sjón (2016), Elif Shafak (2017) and Han Kang (2018). The 2019 author, Karl Ove Knausgård, will present his manuscript at the annual procession and hand-over ceremony in the *Future Library* forest on 5 September 2020. Tending the forest and ensuring its preservation for the one hundred year duration of

the artwork finds a conceptual counterpoint in the invitation extended to each writer: to conceive and produce a work in the hope of finding a receptive reader in an unknown future.

Film commissioned by National Galleries of Scotland with support from the Future Library Trust, 2019. 'Future Library' (2014-2114) is commissioned and produced by Bjørvika Utvikling, and managed by the Future Library Trust. Supported by the City of Oslo, Agency for Cultural Affairs and Agency for Urban Environment.

In order to support this project through the years, and secure your ownership of the Future Library anthology, a print edition of 1000 is being sold. Each future owner of this print (to be passed down from generation to generation), which is a certificate of authenticity, is offered one copy of the published anthology in 2114. Only 1000 anthologies will be printed.

*Katie Paterson has broadcast the sounds of a melting glacier live, mapped all the dead stars, compiled a slide archive of darkness from the depths of the Universe, created a light bulb to simulate the experience of moonlight, and sent a recast meteorite back into space. Eliciting feelings of humility, wonder and melancholy akin to the experience of the Romantic sublime, Paterson's work is at once understated in gesture and yet monumental in scope.*

**13.**

**Sumuyya Khader**

***Future Black Liverpool Library, 2022***







Presented here is a selection of publications from LJMU's Stafford Beer Collection selected by Torque Editions. The selection connects to themes and practices within the gallery such as AI and language and the organisation of information.

Beer was an international consultant in the management sciences and cybernetics. He was employed by governments in over 20 countries and was the author of over 200 publications. Beer died in 2002 leaving his archive to LJMU. He was also a published poet and held exhibitions of paintings.

The Stafford Beer Collection consists of almost 2000 books and pamphlets reflecting Beer's wide-ranging interests and the development of his thinking. It also includes an archive of Beer's papers, together with paintings, models, gramophone records and memorabilia.

**15.**  
**Erica Scourti**

## **Clean Sheets, 2021**



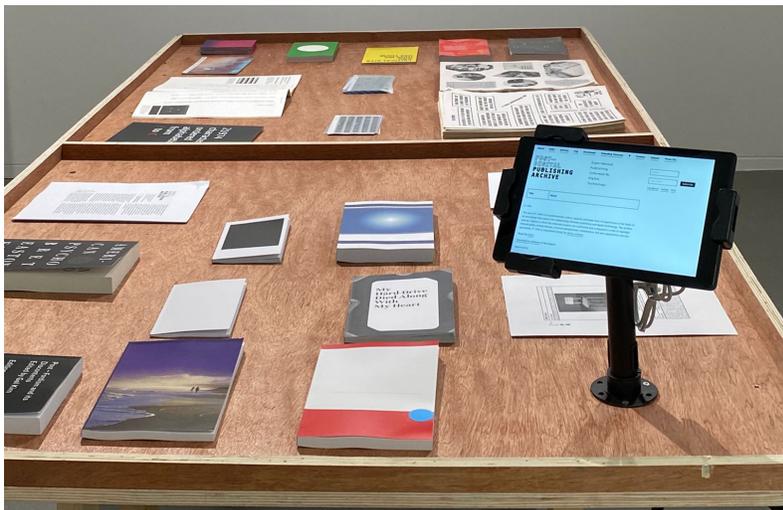
*Clean Sheets* is a sample of two dry-cleaned, hand-written sheets, from a series of seven. Scourti says: "During lockdown, as part of my morning routine, I wrote my journal on the sheets with marker pens, creating a layered patchwork of text, a record of a daily practice and a mass of now unreadable language." Scourti's confessional writing extending onto sheets is representative of a larger shift of how writing and different modes of publishing spread into all corners of our lives.

*Erica Scourti is an artist and writer, based in Athens and London. She has performed, exhibited and presented talks internationally, at spaces like High Line New York, Wellcome Collection, Kunsthalle Wien, Hayward Gallery, Munich Kunstverein, ICA London and EMST Athens; she recently participated in the 7th Athens Biennale (2021). Her writing has been published in Spells: 21st Century Occult Poetry (Ignota Press, 2018) and Fiction as Method (2017, Sternberg) amongst others, and she was guest editor of the Happy Hypocrite- Silver Bandage journal (2019). She is currently undertaking a practice-based AHRC-funded PhD in Goldsmiths' Art*

Department, and is a Lecturer in BA Fine Art at Central St Martins.



**16.**  
**Silvio Lorusso**  
***Post-Digital Publishing Archive (p-dpa.net), 2014 – ongoing***



The aim of P—DPA is to systematically collect, organise and keep trace of experiences in the fields of art and design that explore the relationships between publishing and digital technology. The archive acts as a space in which the collected projects are confronted and juxtaposed in order to highlight relevant paths, mutual themes, common perspectives, interrelations, but also oppositions and idiosyncrasies. In the exhibition we present a number of books from the archive Lorusso selected for display alongside the website itself.

*Silvio Lorusso's work focuses on the cultures and rhetorical regimes embedded in techno-social systems. He is an assistant professor at the Centre for Other Worlds of the Lusófona University in Lisbon, a creative coding tutor at the Royal Academy of Art in Den Haag and a lecturer at the Design Department of the Sandberg Institute.*

monoskop.org

upn.com

list.g16666

textz.com

memoryoftheworld.org

il.negdil

pro.di

