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Dis/ease: Neoliberal pressure, vaccinated with a touch of Spiritualism. Built in Self-discovery

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Dis/ease

Neoliberal pressure, vaccinated with a touch of Spiritualism. Built in Self-discovery.

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Abstract:

This research project *Dis/ease- Neoliberal pressure, vaccinated with a touch of Spiritualism. Built in Self-discovery*, explores the complexities of late capitalism under the guidance of neoliberalism. Here, products are positioned within the consumer sphere as an antidote to ongoing pressures of the workplace, increased individualism and result in an increase in anxiety and di/ease. This exegesis takes an interdisciplinary research methodology using sociology to position current issues within a broader critical discourse.

This project is practice driven research resulting in a 75% - 25% practical vs written component. The three-dimensional installations accompany this exegesis use various media, including 3D printing, 3D rendering, casting, found objects, video, audio and edibles products, among others. The works presented are in part parody, part critique and are art works framed as products. Each works acts as an entry point to a broader discourse around the body, mind and soul as they are constructed within late-capitalism and in relation to the prominent Self-care and Well-being industry.

Declaration

This is to certify that

- (i) *the thesis comprises only my original work towards the masters except where indicated in the Preface*,*
- (ii) *due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,*
- (iii) *the thesis is 9358 words In length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.*

Jesse Bowling.

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Introduction:

This exegesis and studio investigation explore the complexities of Self-care within neoliberal capitalism entangled with spiritual consumerism. There is a combination of sociological references and critical thinkers within the exegesis that inform the production of artwork through an interdisciplinary research methodology. Sociological studies and data gathering are active conceptual elements that occur in this project, often as a fundamental statistic or fact that can then be manipulated into making a conceptual artwork. The manipulation of sociological studies is a starting point to engage with the issues those raise, are further informed by critical discourse and finally explored through the production of new media installations.

Neoliberalism is used throughout this thesis following Michel Foucault's unpacking in his book *The Birth of Biopolitics, Lectures at the Collège De France, 1978–79*, indicating that it may effect every part of human life. Generally, it is understood as the situation where government steps aside and allows the market to intervene ¹. As the confinements of this exegesis do not allow for a full explanation of neoliberalism, rather this exegesis and new media installations presented will focus on the morphing nature of choice and individualism that neoliberalism has effectively generated in contemporary Western life, along with its attendant workplace pressures and the commercialisation of mental instability.

Stuart Hall and Alan O'Shea within *Common-Sense Neoliberalism*, 2013 suggests that we want more choice, the right to choose our path or identity, but we are also required to choose. We are required by a capitalist-driven society to make choices and demanded to grasp at the opportunity to discover where we fit in². There are deep, complicated ties between choice and anxiety; the promise from neoliberal capitalism

¹ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell, Paperback edition, Michel Foucault's Lectures at the Collège de France (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

² Stuart Hall and Alan O'Shea, "Common-Sense Neoliberalism," *Soundings* 55, no. 55 (December 13, 2013): 1-18, <https://doi.org/10.3898/136266213809450194>. 5.

provides unfulfilled voids that lead to a precarity of the individual. This precarity now further extrapolates into innumerable areas within contemporary life/living spaces/work and leisure lifestyles³. The void here is meant as the space that the precarity of neoliberalism extrapolates, the space it creates for you to fulfil with an 'individualistic' choice. The contemporary movement of Self-care stems from the neoliberal agenda; it is fixed in partnership with consumerism. Where one can apparently become fulfilled through yoga programs, pseudo-spirituality or facial masks⁴. Consuming a quick fix to fill the precarity void, these products of Self-care and pseudo-spirituality are key case studies that are investigated through the research, that are then parodied and manipulated with the studio practice and a final new media installation. This exegesis and studio investigation, therefore, considers the convoluted and contradictory feedback loop between control and autonomy within neoliberal Self-care, as co-opted by neoliberal capital. The 1988 book *Technologies of the Self: A seminar with Michael Foucault* by Michael Foucault is a key text for exploring the slipperiness of self-care within neoliberalism in this exegesis and consequential studio research.

Anxiety and instability in this exegesis are terms frequently considered as relevant to my studio investigation and begin in sociological data/studies. These both offer a feeling that can then be manipulated within the artwork. The term di/ease within this exegesis is a term that is used to describe the dis-ease/disease and anxiety that neoliberalisation has placed/produced on society, and that pseudo-spiritual products are posed as the cure for. It is a term that I have coined and relates directly to the title of this exegesis. The dis/ease produced by neoliberalism is located in various historical notions of capital. If we consider the desire to produce one's satisfaction, the order of production comes from capital demanding a productivity, or as Deleuze and Guattari state in their 1976 book *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* "...all production

³ Hall and O'Shea, "Common-Sense Neoliberalism.", 5.

⁴ J. R. Thorpe, "19 Items To Buy For Your Mental Health," Bustle, accessed March 20, 2019, <https://www.bustle.com/articles/61921-19-items-to-buy-for-your-mental-health-because-self-care-isnt-always-free>.

is at once desiring-production and social production”⁵. Desiring production under a neoliberal pressure described in this exegesis is a propelling force placed upon us to need to fit back in or re-enter production.

Producing one’s self as an individual within the social sphere and creating confidence through Self-care, enables desire to achieve what is demanded of an individual within neoliberalism. Where all activities of the self, lead us to perform a capitalist agenda, performing within production, this affirms your place with society. This performance then leads to the consumption, of products that maintain this production for example Self-care products to achieve this goal⁶. In considering the production of the individual self and as a mechanism to create capital, Karl Marx’s theories of commodity fetishization and alienation are paramount. This exegesis engages these theories but offers an alternative reading of spiritual commodities that, suggest these products operate as a way to re-enter the driving force of production.

What emerges from Self-care products based in a neoliberal anxiety is a pseudo-spirituality based on consumerism, this exegesis examines this consumerism of spirituality that is channelled through commodities. Case studies of consumer products are contrasted with artists that have strong ties to consumerism, spirituality, and dis/ease. These spiritual products are tantalized by seductive imagery, slogans, and advertising, creating desire and subduing the individual praying on hopes and beliefs that once they consume, they can become more complete⁷. This is a key point for the project - pseudo-spiritual commodities present well-being and a complete self may be packaged into a product to be bought and consumed. In turn these processes can be conceptualised as sculptural and new media installations. The artwork presented as part of this thesis mimic and extrapolate the dis/ease, not of

⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983). 296.

⁶ “Editorial—‘In Search of the Postcapitalist Self’ - Journal #17 June-August 2010 - e-Flux,” accessed September 17, 2019, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/17/67350/editorial-in-search-of-the-postcapitalist-self/>.

⁷ Paul Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life, New Ages Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism* (Blackwell Publishing, 2008). 7.

neoliberalism, but the dis/ease arising from a product that proports to be a cure for the dis/ease of neoliberalism.

This practice-based research produces artworks influenced by many areas of consumerism, sociology, anxiety, and spirituality. The conceptual density within the work is explained throughout the many interdisciplinary references within this paper. The work does not seek to become an answer to these issues but to challenge, parody, and undermine the power structures of neoliberal capitalism. Each work presented tackles two different aspects of the market. Firstly, the commodification of mental health. Secondly, the placebo effect of new age spiritual consumables. It finally presents a scepticism entwined with pseudo-science.

First Chapter.

Contemporary workplaces have been transformed by neoliberalism. Modern workers are filtered through criteria of personal goals, appraisals, and performance-related pay. In essence, this practice constitutes a reduction of the combined labour power against capital. Workplace pressure has many contributing factors, especially in the millennial age bracket. Often millennials want more feedback and more coaching. They require a self-esteem boost to reassure themselves that they are meeting targets. In an article for the Harvard Business Review, Karie Willyerd speaks to the coaching of millennials in the workplace. The study finds that overall millennials want 50% more feedback than other employees on a monthly/weekly basis. A psychological test with 1.4million college students shows that they have more self-esteem but higher rates of anxiety.⁸ This indicates that mentoring and constant praise within their life can provide a sense of achievement. On the other hand, anxiety levels are higher because of the battle to fulfil their personal growth relies on statistics that determine their esteem. This cycle of demand and supply for reassurance and praise, and if not fulfilled, leads to anxiety and pressure to perform not just for their work but for their self-worth.

Neoliberalisation has increased the Enlightenment principles of individualism, operating through a rhetoric of personal autonomy and individual responsibility; "you become what you want." Strive for your path and take control over your destiny, or so neoliberal agendas promise. This, in return, creates a new idea of what a contemporary human is. It creates restrictive freedom, of choice and labour. You can only do better if you try harder; the rewards are more likely to come. This individualism is different from the idea of the self or understanding the self. This individualism is about creating esteem and short-lived satisfaction in return for the effort. This neoliberal hegemonic construction of the self can be seen as a reduction of the goals of the self, instead constituting the subject into labour time and value. An achievement-based system creates more competition between subjects in a race

⁸ Karie Willyerd, "Millennials Want to Be Coached at Work," n.d., 5.

against everyone on the planet to 'become' your 'true form'⁹ This sets up the conditions for burnout, a tired subject that can no longer continue and sees and feels no closer to self-satisfaction.

*The self is not clothing, tools, or possessions. It is to be found in the principle which uses these tools, a principle not of the body but the soul. You have to worry about your soul - that is the principal activity of caring for yourself. The care of the self, is the care of the activity and the care of the soul as substance.*¹⁰

Pharmaceutical methods of treating anxiety and dis/ease are one step that individuals take to gain and reinsert themselves into the productive normative society that is neoliberal capitalism. Esposito and M. Perez, paper, *Neoliberalism and the Commodification of Mental Health* state that mental health has become a condition that can be profited on. The deterioration of mental health is on the rise, specifically anxiety, which, it is argued here, is largely constructed by the neoliberal agenda. Individuals believe that they do not fit into 'general society' because of a defect within themselves. However, the pressure to be 'themselves' is a construct formed by neoliberalism and the market. Considering the pharmaceutical medication prescribed by doctors is a product rather than a cure raises problematic issues around what is normative behaviour¹¹. Considering that this thesis argues strongly for a link between neoliberalism and anxiety, the relationship between these two plays out through the rhetorical and material power of pharmaceutical products.

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI) are the conventional pharmaceutical that is prescribed for anxiety. They allow the body to have a boost of serotonin which creates the feeling of happiness and well-being¹². This is a necessarily reductive

⁹ Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1988). 18.

¹⁰ Foucault, 25.

¹¹ Luigi Esposito and Fernando M. Perez, "Neoliberalism and the Commodification of Mental Health," *Humanity & Society* 38, no. 4 (November 2014): 414–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597614544958>. 416.

¹² "Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor," on *Wikipedia*, September 10, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Selective_serotonin_reuptake_inhibitor&oldid=914944987.

explanation of the drug, as a full explanation is too large for the scope of this exegesis. The ability of pharmaceutical companies to create drugs to 'fix', or as described by my doctor, to 'cure' an anxious depressive mood, is problematic. To state that a drug can cure, specifically a new drug such as an SSRI developed between 1970-1990¹³ - which coincides with the resurgence of the usage of neoliberalism¹⁴ - is to preempt causal certainty. To cure would be to eradicate the problem, but the problem is caused by the very system that the drug is trying to place you back into. The problem here is not the individual; it is the pressure placed on the individual. The pharmaceutical which is seen and understood as the best possible way to 'cure' anxiety, is marketed towards fitting back into society, and regaining your full labor and consumer potential¹⁵. There are ranges of different types of the same drug with varying price points. From Lexapro, being a common standard 'trusted' brand, to lower priced brands such as Sandoz. If these are all the same drugs, it is odd to have varying price points and brands rather than regulated price¹⁶. These drugs are constructed to achieve normalcy and legitimize achieving your full neoliberal potential, turning sanity and well-being into a commodity that can be obtained, bought, and substantially profited from by pharmaceutical companies.

Under neoliberalism, the self becomes a subject whose value is based solely on productivity, and this leads to troubling ties to the Self-care industry. While Self-care itself as a topic is too large for the scope of this paper, it does illustrate the feedback loops into which neoliberalism can suffocate the ability of the worker to regain autonomy of their lives and relationships. Self-care has become an internet phenomenon and an advertising tool. On one side we have articles providing consumerist knowledge of how to become a better, more self-aware human through the purchasing of meditative books, essential oils, bath salts, and yoga programs¹⁷. Struggling individuals have tools and methods provided by bloggers to help hack the

¹³ "Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor."

¹⁴ "Neoliberalism," in *Wikipedia*, September 12, 2019,

<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Neoliberalism&oldid=915325228>.

¹⁵ Esposito and Perez, "Neoliberalism and the Commodification of Mental Health.", 417.

¹⁶ Esposito and Perez. 419.

¹⁷ Thorpe, "19 Items To Buy For Your Mental Health."

constraints of time placed on late-capitalist subjects. We compete through social media stories and posts. Including such posts as, 'look at my healthy juice subscription, I'm looking after my body' 'this face mask is going to replenish me after my terrible day at work'¹⁸. These social media signals illustrate and reinforce self-care as an accepted and virtuous paradigm of belonging. Belonging to the self, securing your understanding of the space and time you live in. The common denominator here is the product, and the product is the remedy for life's problems. These are short-lived coping mechanisms or commodities that can bolster self-esteem but do not provide a 'cure' to the more significant neoliberal problem of confusion and anxiety¹⁹. Again, they are an example of the rhetoric of resistance or 'coping' reinterpreted through the neoliberal logic of the product.

Self-care has a lineage that embraces a hybrid practice of spirituality, where the subject becomes the self through an embrace of the power of fate and the power of the individual. Theodor Adorno argued that spiritual awareness is becoming institutionalized and objectified within the social commons. Adorno points out the commercialization of astrology into the newspaper format prefigures neo-liberalization and emphasis on the individual²⁰. For example, in astrological newspaper columns, the site for success and profit is situated in the self. Self-care thus becomes defining. For example, If you are having a bad month, then you are not activating your star chart in an adequate manner.

What has emerged in recent years since Adorno's argument is a consumerism based around spirituality and marketed as a cure to the neoliberal capitalist pressure. This spirituality is gained through consumption rather than a deity-based faith. Here

¹⁸ Ester Bloom, "How 'Treat Yourself' Became a Capitalist Command," *The Atlantic*, November 19, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/11/how-treat-yourself-became-a-consumerist-command/416664/>.

¹⁹ "Tell Me It's Going to Be OK | Miya Tokumitsu," *The Baffler*, September 3, 2018, <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/tell-me-its-going-to-be-ok-tokumitsu>.

²⁰ T. W. Adorno, "The Stars Down to Earth: The Los Angeles Times Astrology Column," *Telos* 1974, no. 19 (April 1, 1974): 13–90, <https://doi.org/10.3817/0374019013>. 14.

consumers are subjected to new age beliefs, such as astrology, crystals, and herbal remedies. These are employed to fix anxious confused states and replenish their inner potential to become 'heightened' and productive, or to become your 'best' self ²¹. Marketed directly at the individual consumer, these products pray on the 'weakness' present in anxious confused individuals. The brands use Spiritualism in a way that prays on your hopes and desires, evoking an emotional response as Heelas states, "'I'll only be happy when I have experienced this...". Within Paul Heelas's book, *Spiritualities of life, New age romanticism and consumptive capitalism*, Heelas breaks down many aspects of spiritual capital.

*Here we find 'the self for itself.' Here we find intake for the sake of what it 'brings' to what lies within. Here we find those 'living a life turned in on itself where people ignore the consequences of their actions.' Here we find people intent on capturing their dreams by way of commodities.*²²

Spirituality based products – examples can be found in chapter two - sell with an intention to aid Becoming. Becoming here is the promise to maintain what the world requires you to be, fruitful, productive, independent. These are the issues raised in the preceding paragraphs around neoliberal driving forces. Becoming independent coincides with what spirituality offers, it offers inner self-worth, something that is unique and tailored to your needs/desires. It can fill a void that potential pharmaceuticals cannot. Going out and finding meaning by one's self is the fulfillment of accomplishment; alternative spirituality offers this fulfillment. It popularly presents its approach as being separate from the hegemonic status quo, yet it parallels the mainstream. For the consumer being confused and stuck in the rut of capitalism, it offers a new set of spiritual frameworks to combat the hegemony that they are alienated from. The grey area that arises is that consuming spirituality is, as Heelas states, "...culture-resisting or culture-conforming..."²³? Individuals are then conflated with the idea that they are escaping the capitalist grasp by finding an alternative cure,

²¹ Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life, New Ages Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism*. 52.

²² Heelas. 3.

²³ Heelas. 199.

that essentially makes them feel good, but are in fact conforming and contributing to a false façade of spirituality driven by capital.

One of Marx's main theories was alienation. Alienation is interesting to the current situation of consumptive spirituality. It may be described in simple terms as the separation of the worker to their product or understood as detaching workers from their life through consumption rather than production. It is useful, however, to understand and see how the development of capitalism and consumerism is driving society²⁴. The alienation of worker to product does not create self-actualisation, it disconnects the individuals from gaining self-worth²⁵. Now, there is a different aspect to this that arises with spiritual consumerism; there is an alienation from real life. There is an understanding within the workforce that you work hard and achieve your potential. Marx's idea of alienation has now returned with greater force – a full circle has appeared, now products are presented to make us feel less alienated from the construct of neoliberalism. Marx's idea of commodity fetishism, where a commodity is presented as embodying magical properties that allow the purchaser to possess these is now more relevant than ever. Alienation of the subject is presented as being 'cured' by the purchase of a spiritual product.

²⁴ Sean Sayers, *Marx and Alienation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230309142>. 18.

²⁵ Amy E. Wendling, "Karl Marx's Concept of Alienation," in *Karl Marx on Technology and Alienation*, by Amy E. Wendling (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009), 174–212, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230233997_2. 174.

Second chapter:

There is a convoluted overlap between contemporary art and late-capitalist consumerism. This chapter is a field survey of works from artists and actual consumer products to explore the relationship between them. This analysis opens the multiplicities of mutation when capitalism and contemporary art become enmeshed and include high degrees of satire, social commentary, and/or fact. The following chapter will not aim to definitively conclude the relationship between capital and contemporary art, but rather bring into focus the nuances and possibilities for positioning my studio investigations and research.

Art that parodies consumer lifestyles and social contexts is often a common conceptual element for many artists. Conceptual elements such as symbolism and logo design in the work of Berlin-based artist Timur Si-Qin's ongoing project *New Peace*, works in ways to create a brand identity within the work. Likewise, audio-visual product advertising that use seductive wording like the work *Siliconcious*, 2015 by Shanghai-based artist Kim Laughton. Conceptual and visual frameworks borrowed from art can now also be strategies to advertise consumables and products.

Companies such as *Longemity* – a crystal-infused drink bottle- are making pseudo-spiritual products and promoting them using advertising tools and strategies linked to the mind and body²⁶. This sense of spirituality presented essentially entails the more significant problem of an incapacity to escape capitalism made more evident when capitalism attempts to subvert itself²⁷. These crystal-infused drink bottles are an example of a bodily reconnection within the appropriative demands of human labour for endless capitalist growth. Self-care and consumer spiritualism have become a selling point to resolve the capitalist problem of overworked underpaid, unmotivated staff, increasing workplace pressure, demands of creativity, increased mental

²⁶ "LONGEMITY | Gem Water | Crystal Gem Healing Water Bottles," Longemity, accessed June 17, 2019, <https://www.longemity.com.au>https://www.longemity.com.au/about_us.

²⁷ "Unshrinking the World," non.copyriot.com, February 11, 2019, <https://non.copyriot.com/unshrinking-the-world/>.

instability and anxiety, confusion and bewildered subjects seeking truth and grasping for meaning²⁸. Creating an entangled ouroboros of consumer capital, capitalism finds ways of using spirituality to ease neoliberal societal pressure²⁹.

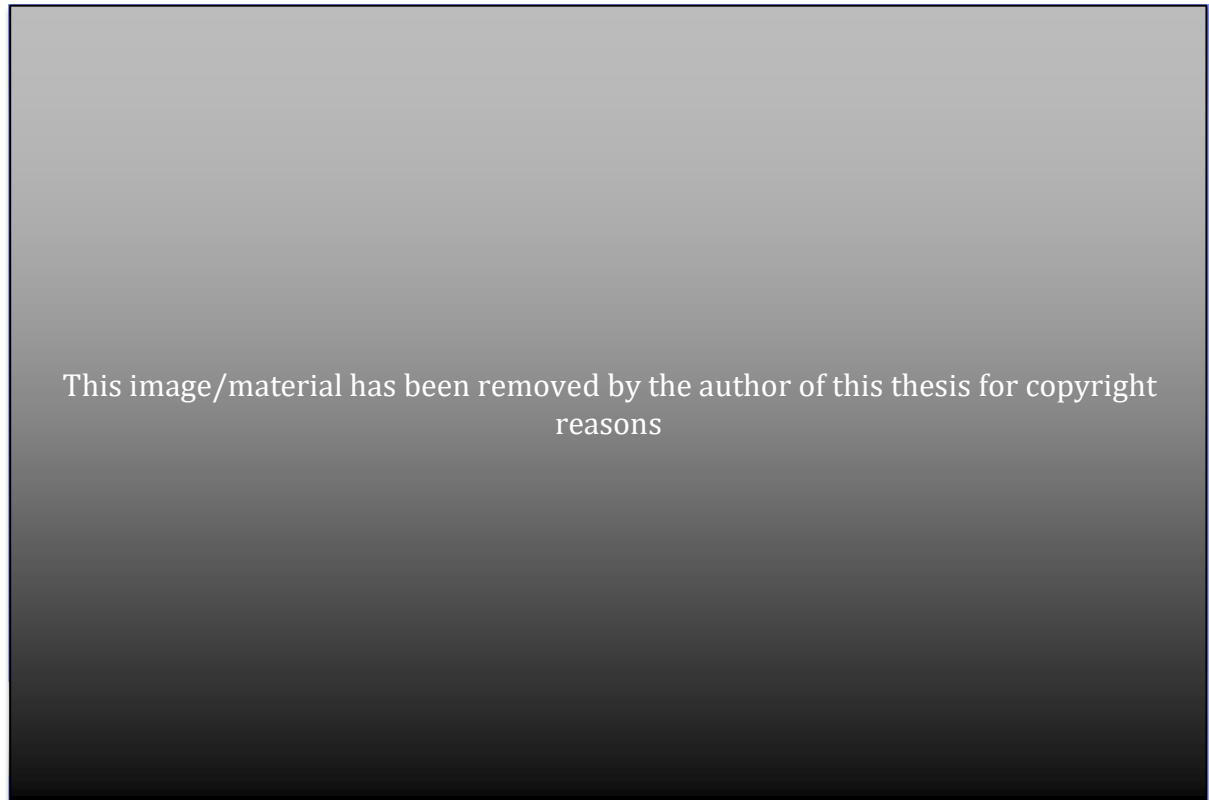


Fig. 1. "Recess (@takearecess) • Instagram Photos and Videos," accessed June 17, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/takearecess/>.

Consuming a quick fix or replenishing substance is an easy solution to keep grinding. A quick fix consumable is marketed as a solution and the potential health benefits are touted as improving cognitive function³⁰. Recess is a sparkling mineral water product made for a contemporary society feeling drained from capitalist pressure. With slogans such as "calm, cool, collected" and "we canned a feeling", the name itself promotes "take a break"³¹. Recess uses active ingredients such as CBD a cannabinoid extracted from hemp, that is supposed to promote brain functionality along with

²⁸ "Tell Me It's Going to Be OK | Miya Tokumitsu."

²⁹ Amy Elyse Gordon, "Self-Care in the Late Capitalist Era," *The Prindle Post* (blog), January 7, 2019, <https://www.prindlepost.org/2019/01/self-care-late-capitalist-era/>.

³⁰ Lance Barrie and Sandra C Jones, "'As Long as You Have Some of That, It Cancels It out': How Advertisers Use Guilt to Sell Us Quick-Fixes for Our Unhealthy Behaviour," n.d., 8.

³¹ "Recess | Calm Cool Collected," accessed June 17, 2019, <https://www.takearecess.com/>.

other natural ingredients. Their marketing is lightly satirical. On the *Recess* Instagram account, various diagrams of distressed body parts become entry points for the drink to alleviate symptoms of stress caused by work fatigue, the potential purifier of the capitalised worker. These are advertised as humour, but directly satirise real-world situations as a mode of advertisement and connection to their audience³². They directly advertise and problematise physical and cognitive functionality as a problem of the self rather than the environment, that the self is subject to within neoliberal capitalism.

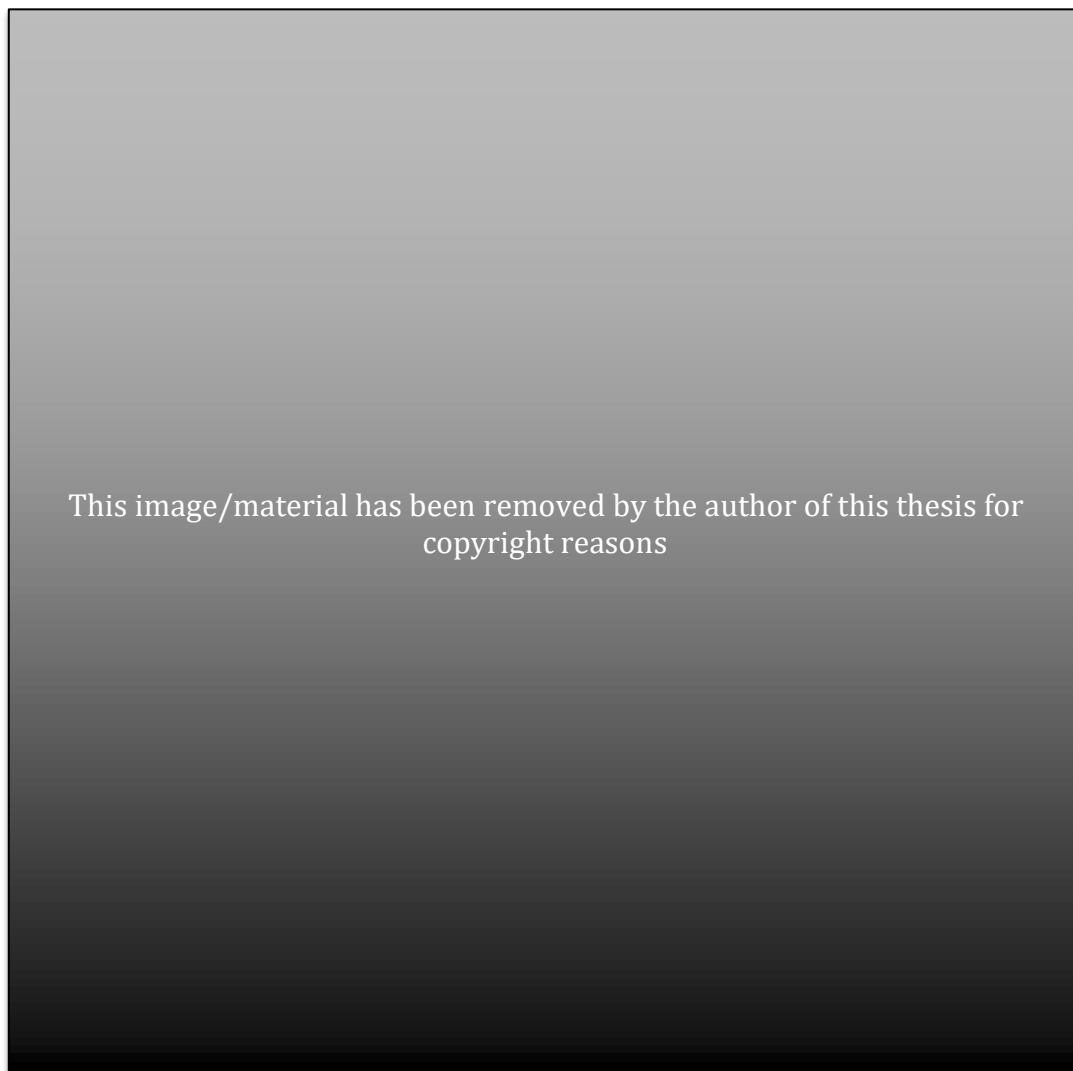


Fig. 2. “Recess (@takearecess) • Instagram Photos and Videos,” accessed June 17, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/takearecess/>.

³² Barrie and Jones, “‘As Long as You Have Some of That, It Cancels It out’: How Advertisers Use Guilt to Sell Us Quick-Fixes for Our Unhealthy Behaviour.”

Josh Klein's work *Skittles*, 2014, New York High Line Art, parodies trending drinks and smoothies with a direct reference to their aesthetics.

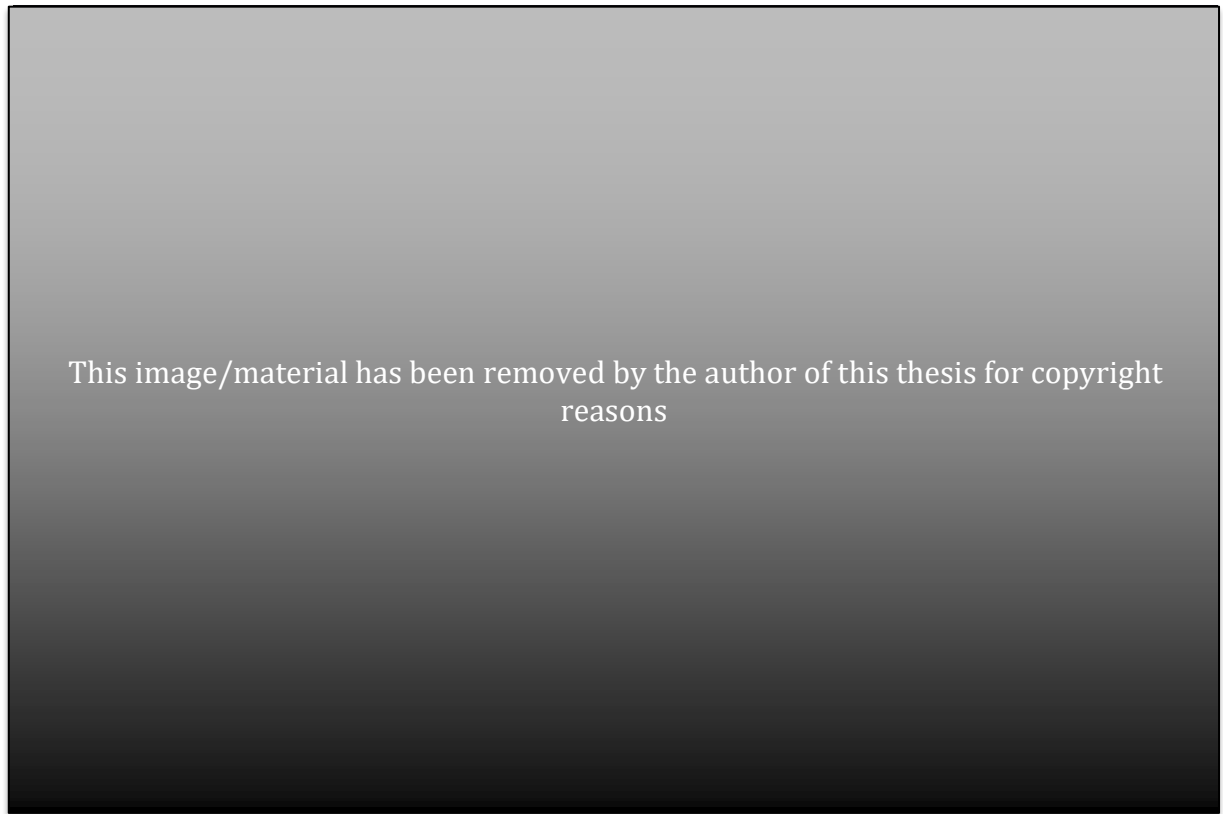


Fig. 3. "Josh Kline. Skittles. 2014 | MoMA," The Museum of Modern Art, accessed June 17, 2019, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/192069>.

Skittles is a selection of different contemporary drinks to alleviate daily stress, such as "Sick Day," the ingredients are as listed, Dayquil, Red Bull, Ritalin, Claritin, Aspirin, Advil and Aleve or "minimum wage." The ingredients listed for "Mr. Clean" are, money order, medical scrubs, French fries, toilet paper, latex gloves, and phone cards. The presentation of this work aligns with the presentation of many contemporary products. For instance, the use of plastic vitamin water styled bottles but with a satiric list of ingredients and titles. The work flips from being a product to become a metamorphic self-portrait that places the stereotypical consumer directly into the

bottle with its use of ingredients³³. This shows that capital can move through bodies rather than just attaching itself; that our base identity can be consumed by capital ephemera that leads to a construction of ourselves³⁴.



Fig. 4. Longemity, *Longemity*, n.d., <https://www.longemity.com.au/>.

Longemity is a current Australian water bottle company that incorporates crystal gem pods sealed in the bottom of a water bottle; the product is currently sold online from their website. The bottles *gem pods* are interchangeable and have different combinations of precious minerals for specific uses. The water never meets the crystals; instead, the pod is inserted in the bottle, and the water surrounds the glass canister of crystals. The product uses descriptive titles such as Tranquility, Harmony,

³³ "A Closer Look at Archeo: Josh Kline's Skittles," The High Line, August 6, 2014, <https://www.thehighline.org/blog/2014/08/06/a-closer-look-at-archeo-josh-kline-s-skittles/>.

³⁴. "Moore-The-Capitalocene-and-Planetary-Justice-2019-Maize.Pdf," accessed October 10, 2019, <https://jasonwmoore.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Moore-The-Capitalocene-and-Planetary-Justice-2019-Maize.pdf>. 50-54.

and Luminesce and alludes to specific mental and physical states of being. *Longemity* positions the crystal in the water bottle in what appears as an aesthetic late-capitalist collaboration. The crystal is placed in a vessel that holds a "vital" life force, water, which makes up 70% of our body structure³⁵. Ironically, the product is marketed towards not just consuming water but adding a pseudo-spiritual ideology to create a product that can be more beneficial to wellbeing than *just* water. On the *Longemity* webpage in their about section, they have quotes such as:

*Over the millennia, crystal-infused gem water has been used by healers for their ability to restore, rebalance, and heal the body physically, emotionally, and spiritually by realigning the body's energy systems called chakras." "Biophysicists are now suggesting that the human body is made up of liquid crystals. These liquid crystals permeate every single cell within the body and are much like crystals themselves. In healthy cells, these liquid crystal molecules remain in an organized crystalline state with a high degree of order, which is believed to lead to good health, awakened energy, emotional wellbeing, and spiritual growth."*³⁶

The science behind this claim is highly dubious, however, it further illuminates the advertising strategies of employing persuasive unweighted claims. The claims here give off mixed impressions. It states medical professionals the "Biophysicists" and "healers" have used this for over 1 million years, and then qualifies this by saying that it is "believed" to be beneficial. These claims are three broad topics bundled up into one jargon entangled sentence of spirituality, that mixes faith with fact. The common thread between *Recess* and *Longemity* is jargon that draws the customer in without any facts. Instead, they present an array of words and unweighted claims to sell and make the consumer believe they are channeling inner self-worth³⁷. The scope and applicability of alternative medicine are, of course, outside the scope of this paper, however, what becomes apparent on a close reading of this product, is that the company and its advertising have adopted medicinal rhetoric when presenting their crystals.

³⁵ "LONGEMITY | Gem Water | Crystal Gem Healing Water Bottles."

³⁶ "LONGEMITY | Gem Water | Crystal Gem Healing Water Bottles."

³⁷ Barrie and Jones, "'As Long as You Have Some of That, It Cancels It out': How Advertisers Use Guilt to Sell Us Quick-Fixes for Our Unhealthy Behaviour."

Dr. Emoto a Japanese entrepreneur and researcher, who researches the field of healing powers of water memory. Emoto's article *Healing with Water* within *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 2004 argues that water reacts to emotional and environmental situations, such as negativity and positivity that change its characteristics³⁸. Dr. Emoto undertook various tests within his practice that are unpacked within this article, particularly exploring crystals formed in water once frozen. He subjected containers of water to various environments such as cursing at the water, praising water, writing positive and negative words on the jars of water, and playing them different genres of music. After exposing water to these environments, the water would be frozen and then under a microscope, examined. According to Emoto, praised water would appear as beautiful with symmetrical water crystals. Negative words such as shaming or derogatory, or music such as heavy metal, would result in disfigured, unsymmetrical crystals or no crystals at all. Comparatively, this test, according to Emoto, shows that positivity or beauty is linked with perfection and negativity or in the case of heavy metal music abrasive sounds, link to unsymmetrical, unbalance and impurity. This practice uses energy and vibrations along with a device Emoto calls the "magnetic resonance analyser (MRA)"³⁹ to detect any disharmonious energy from the internal body and emotions within the subject. Emoto then creates a HADO water with the MRA using vibrations transferred into the water to create 'balance' within the subject. HADO indicates a relationship between unsymmetrical and ugly, signaling a new age belief in the positive outcomes of balance.

New age aesthetics and spirituality are conflated with a neoliberal emphasis on productivity, and well-balanced individuals appropriately positioned to produce and activate their hidden consumption possibilities.

³⁸ Masaru Emoto, "Healing with Water," *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* 10, no. 1 (February 2004): 19–21, <https://doi.org/10.1089/107555304322848913>. 20.

³⁹ Emoto, 20.

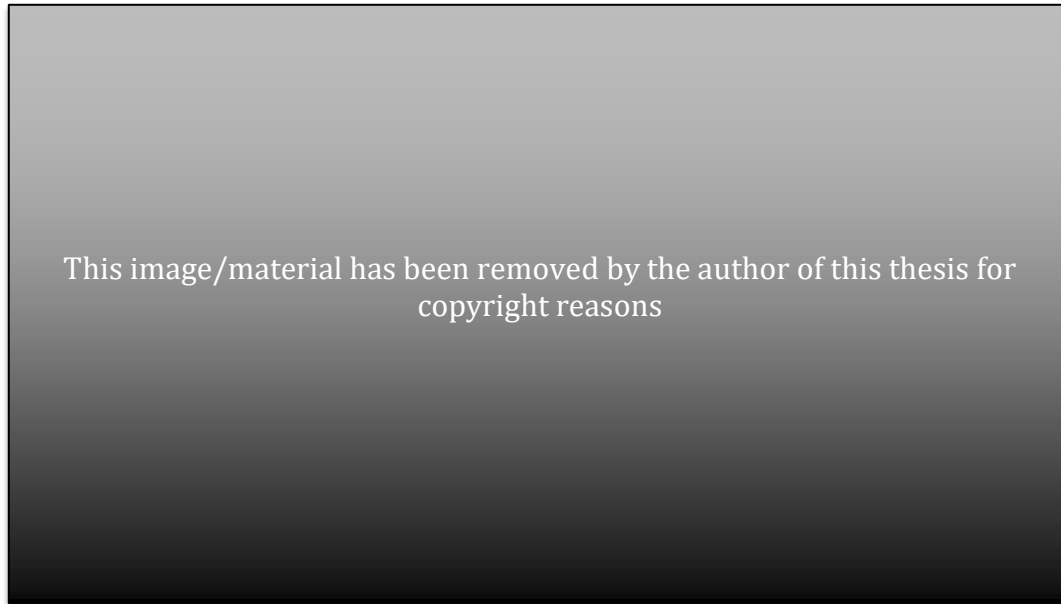


Fig. 5. Kim Laughton, "*Siliconcious* on Vimeo," accessed March 28, 2018, <https://vimeo.com/116052236>.

Emoto's methodological stance in MRA has similarities to the work video work *Siliconcious*, 2015 by Kim Laughton. Rather than extracting energy from patients to bottle into the water as in the HADO practice of Emoto, the fictional company *Siliconcious* powders silicone chips from our day to day technological devices to produce the *Siliconcious* cream. *Siliconcious* explores how technological objects drain our emotions, how fixed and reliant we are on our device. *Siliconcious* is an exciting concept compared to the work of Emoto. As HADO is drawing out the energy from humans using a vibration, *Siliconcious* states that the technological device stores our emotions, similar to that of water memory, but here in contemporary non-organic, silicone. Silicon is then posited as the vessel that carries these pent-up emotions, to regain this, it can be powdered into a cream that can be applied directly back onto the subject. *Siliconcious* is a fiction, but its message is clear, that the contemporary human spends too much time with their device. Its fiction is its strength, its humour and absurdity make the conceptual message transparent.

Nature as an aesthetics can be used as a tool within product advertising to represent freedom and escape, something that often perceived as lacking in urban centres⁴⁰. Hansens 2002 study as cited within Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez, *Green Advertising Revisited: Conditioning Virtual Nature Experiences*, 2009, conducted an analysis of British TV ads that depicted nature. Nature, as a beautiful place to be, came in at 40%, with nature being intrinsically good at 37.9%. Nature, as a space for human recreation, was rated at 29%.⁴¹ What could be seen here is an overwhelming consideration of nature as a destination outside of the typical day to day grind. Nature is 'nice,' so, therefore, products that situate within nature are 'trusted.' Nature, therefore, embodies what has been removed from contemporary urban society, tranquility, and escape, in contrast to your individuality and perception as constructed through neoliberal workplaces and products, argued within the first chapter. To return to nature is now fantasy - to be able to escape the bodily and mental traumas symptomatic of the human labour needed by neoliberal capitalism is not possible. If nature is an escape, how can it be branded and marketed? We can see the use of nature as aesthetics the work *New Peace* by Timur Si-Qin, and branding of products such as *Longevity*. Merely positioning a product with the aesthetic of nature has an effect that enhances the potential user's ability to accept and desire the effect of nature⁴².

⁴⁰ Patrick Hartmann and Vanessa Apaolaza-Ibáñez, "Green Advertising Revisited: Conditioning Virtual Nature Experiences," *International Journal of Advertising* 28, no. 4 (January 2009): 715–39, <https://doi.org/10.2501/S0265048709200837>. 721.

⁴¹ Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez. 721.

⁴² Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez. 715.

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Fig. 6. "Protocol_v60_web2.Pdf," accessed September 25, 2018, http://www.newpeace.faith/content/2-vision/protocol_v60_web2.pdf.

Timur Si-Qin's work *New Peace*, through its aesthetics of nature, exists as a pseudo-spiritual "religion" that is marketed principally as a capitalist product. *New Peace's* promotional material uses nature as a marketable scene, from vast forest landscapes to close-up glossy rock pools, all with the signature branding iconography. *New Peace* has a manifesto of its principles, positioning it as a contemporary religion. Negating the ancient world's deity-based faith; it seeks to place its followers within the contemporary world. It rejects a fatalistic view, such as "if one behaves well one will go to heaven"⁴³. *New Peace* asks the viewer to consider their surroundings and form a collective, to take control and responsibility for the actions that impact the natural world/ universe by humans⁴⁴. Within Si-Qin's work, the viewer is placed within a clean aesthetic resembling a start-up promotion which might be seen at a trade show. Most works in this installation are branded with the *New Peace* logo and typeface over consecutive projects and years; this acts as an advertisement and a signifier, encouraging faith in *New Peace*. The simplified rendition of the Yin and Yang symbol which historically represents balance within Chinese philosophy, here acts not just as

⁴³ "Protocol_v60_web2.Pdf," accessed September 25, 2018, http://www.newpeace.faith/content/2-vision/protocol_v60_web2.pdf.

⁴⁴ "Protocol_v60_web2.Pdf."

a spiritual sign but a signifier of spirituality in a marketed brand⁴⁵. Nature is central to Si-Qin's work, yet the exciting fact is that these ideal nature scenes are computer-generated imagery (CGI), which adds another interesting viewpoint. The contemporary viewer no longer needs these visions of nature and new ideological faith to be actualized, but merely to convey the idea. It's hard to distinguish if Si-Qin's work is parody or genuine. This uncertainty between feeling, understanding and what is constructed through neoliberal capitalism and pseudo-scientific spiritual products is at the core concern this exegesis speculates on.

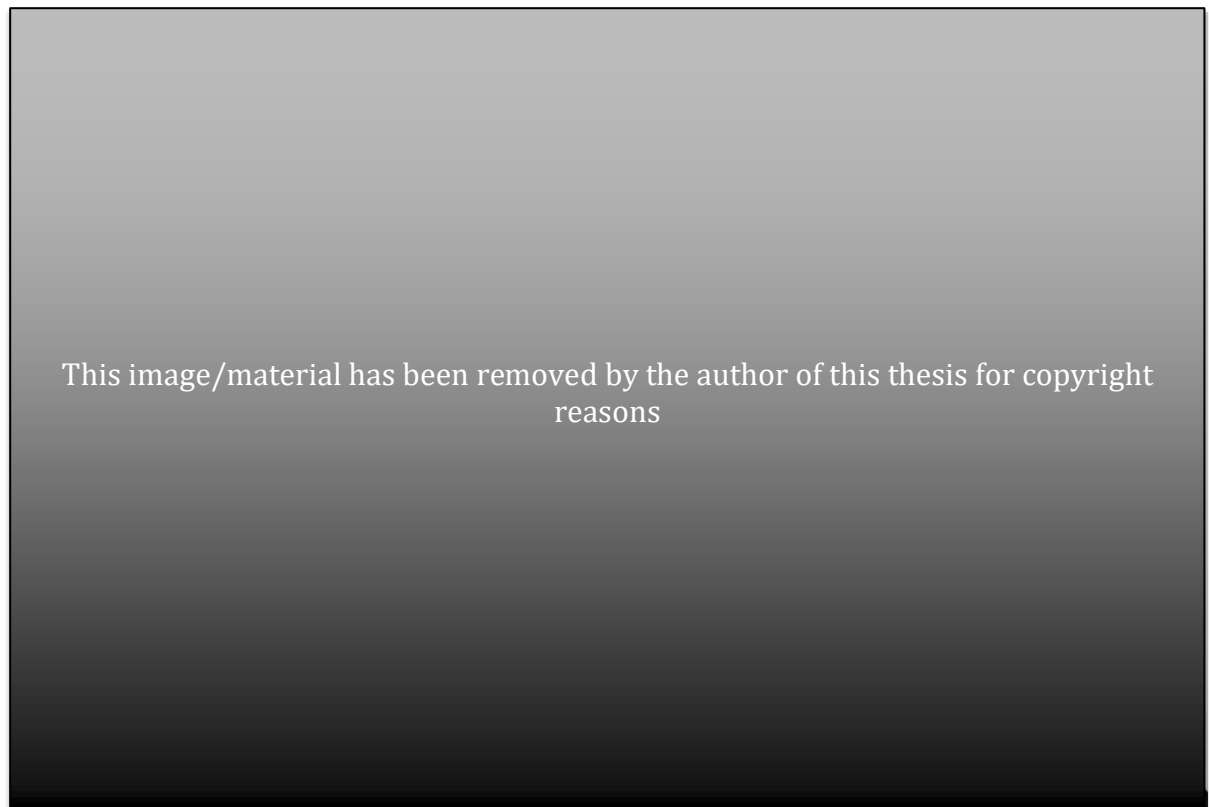


Fig. 7. "Timur Si-Qin," *Timur Si-Qin* (blog), accessed June 17, 2019, <http://timursiqin.com/campaign-for-a-new-protocol-part-i/>.

Overall each product and artwork are seeking a cure to a spiritual disquiet, one that arises from the neoliberal confusion of anxious individuals. These products and ethos are intended as an escape from the condition of stressful modern living within capitalism, presenting illusions of pseudo-science intended to escape the urban challenges. These are not cures, but could be seen as fictional band-aids, from the

⁴⁵ "Yin and Yang - Wikipedia," accessed October 14, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yin_and_yang.

cream of silicone chips, or water energised by crystals, the dis/ease becomes intermixed between fact and fiction and is seemingly tailored to your emotions in the present. This perpetuates a quick fix that leaves the consumer coming back for more, seeking many options to get through a very complex and more significant issue that resides not in something lacking personally, but a, societal issue based in neoliberal capitalism.

Third Chapter:

The rise in alternate therapeutic practices, specifically crystal therapy, is partly due to individuals looking for alternative ways of Becoming. Google alone has upwards of 810,000 results with the keywords crystal healing, while Amazon contains around 3,000 books that have the words crystal healing, indicating a burgeoning belief in crystals as a therapy⁴⁶. The internet plays a large part in self-diagnosis, Googling symptoms or alternates before contacting a medical professional is a common occurrence⁴⁷. Finding alternates and fake knowledge online is easy and can be susceptible to individuals that are questioning their current mood, so perhaps these increasing beliefs are not surprising.

Crystal therapy uses different types of crystals placed around the body normally corresponding with chakras. It is argued that these create a lattice or network of connections within the aura and vibrational energy of the individual⁴⁸. Further, it is assumed that certain crystals can enhance and realign the body's vibrational energy to promote wellness and 'centring.' Crystal therapy is one practice that uses the pseudo-science of crystals and can be an expensive endeavour for patients. Becoming a crystal healer can be learned and capitalised on by reading a few books and articles online, purchasing crystals, undergoing a one-day course for a fee – as well as being savvy with some marketing jargon and a basic website building skills. The work *Crystallized Effort* presented as part of this project, raises issues regarding mental health, but also comments on the commercialization of mental dis/ease and SSRI's- which is explained in the First Chapter. It also plays with the pseudo-science of crystal energy and my own 'mystical input' as an artist.

⁴⁶ "A Gemologist's Guide to Crystal Healing | The Natural Mag," accessed October 1, 2019, <https://schmidts.com/the-natural/a-gemologists-guide-to-crystal-healing>.

⁴⁷ Angela Ryan and Sue Wilson, "Internet Healthcare: Do Self-Diagnosis Sites Do More Harm than Good?," *Expert Opinion on Drug Safety* 7, no. 3 (May 2008): 227–29, <https://doi.org/10.1517/14740338.7.3.227>. 227-228.

⁴⁸ O. Micke et al., "Mystical Stones in Oncology: Crystal Healing Power or Perfect Nonsense?," *TRACE ELEMENTS AND ELECTROLYTES*, 2010. 74.

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Fig. 8. "CRYSTAL HEALING COURSE | Crystal Healing Certification Training | Melbourne," Eventbrite, accessed October 14, 2019, <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/61912057631?aff=efbneb>.

Crystallized Effort has been partly influenced by Dr Emoto's theories unpacked in the Second Chapter, along with the pseudo-science surrounding crystal energy. In this work I asked myself – 'If one is able to imbue a liquid with thoughts or words which change the icicles structure, could I use this theory as a conceptual framework to create my own charged objects created in water?' What if I was to imbue this water with my sweat from not taking my SSRI? Would my anxiety become negative, or unattractive, in the formation of crystals?" The crystals in this work are not frozen water, but aluminium potassium sulphate that has a restricted crystallising structure. That is, it will always attempt to form a semi-symmetrical three-dimensional form. This restriction allows the crystal to always grow in a similar symmetry, the type Emoto would describe 'beautiful form'⁴⁹. To challenge this symmetry, the crystals have grown in multiples, as a cluster. The idea of ugliness supposedly aligned with unsymmetrical is not at play here; instead, the cluster is beautiful in its conception, a poetic conceptual sacrifice.

These objects offer to help the owner through the artist's own sacrifice, the energy that radiates from these crystals will help other anxious individuals through their discomfort and offer a reminder that they are not alone and there are people to help with mental illness and dis/ease. The key here is a sacrifice to attune my energy and wellbeing in seeking to help others - not to offer negative energy and 'ugly' crystal

⁴⁹ Emoto, "Healing with Water." 20.

formation but rather harness that stress and transform it into an energy that is used in a positive manner.

The crystals are formed by evaporation and, as presented in the audio component of this work, this removes the negativity around the anxiety and solidifies the power/energy of my own dis/ease around the SSRI tablet. If we think about the audio/video component in Kim Laughton's *Siliconscious*, we can draw parallels of dis/ease. Rather than the emotional energy being stored in technological chips, what is presented in *Crystallised Effort* is the energy and dis/ease stored within my own sweat and sacrifice. These are two physical elements, not imaginary emotional emanations. The promotional material/advertising of a fictional product within Laughton's work draws parallels to pseudo-science, that fact it could be believed, which creates a comical effect. The promotional material for *Crystallised Effort* is a fact that the product does exist, but its fiction of effects is conflated with believability.

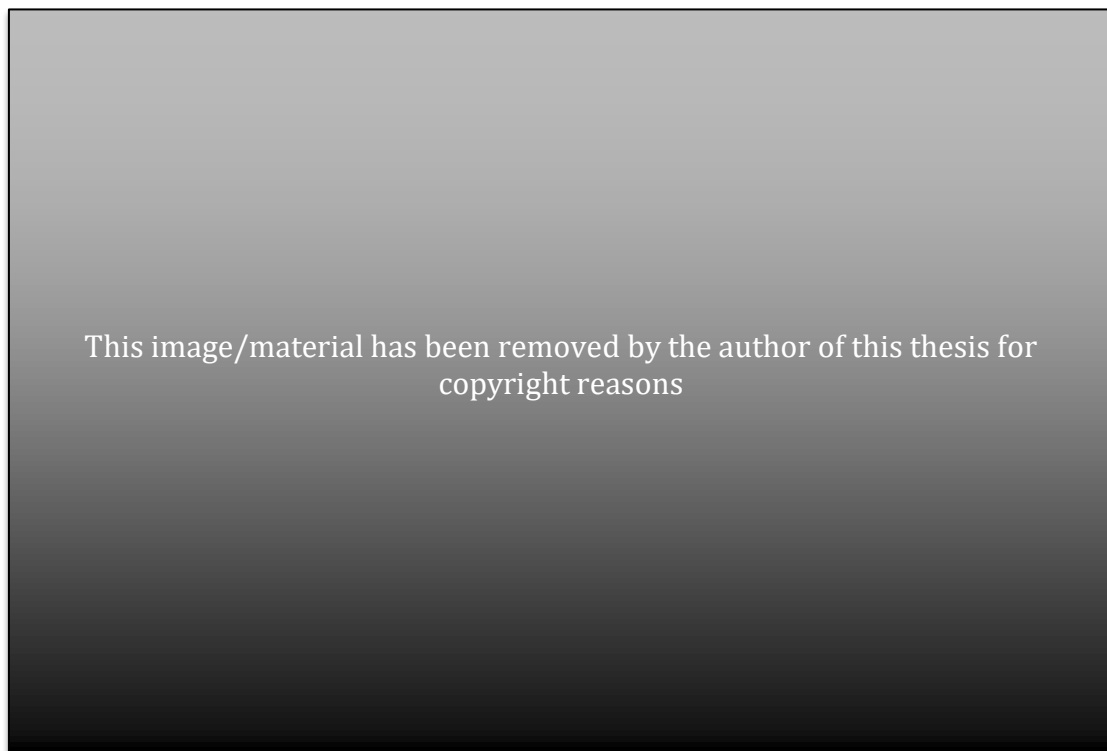


Fig. 9. Jesse Bowling , "*Crystallised Effort*" , 2019, mixed media.

Dietary supplements have been foreshadowed by dystopic media, such as the film *Soylent Green* 1973, by director Richard Fleischer. This portrays a dystopic starving city population that requires feeding, which is where Soylent Green comes in. This is a

product that is a meal replacer- supposedly made from soy but secretly made from humans- as a population explosion means the food supply is drying up⁵⁰. Soylent is an actual product, not made from humans, but a plethora of ingredients that is aimed to replace food altogether⁵¹. This was originally developed within Silicon Valley for the macho tech demographic that requires a long-lasting, low effort product to sustain vitality⁵². Dietary supplements are a broad category, from meal replacements to energy boosters such as Red Bull, but the work *rejuvigel* focuses on an amalgamation of alternative health care, vitamins, and energy supplements.

rejuvigel is based on extensive internet research searching various products as case studies, some of which were mentioned in the previous chapter. Furthermore, through this research, I came across the term 'cyberchondria,' which is described as a hypochondria consisting of internet research into one's health and attempts at self-diagnosis⁵³. I began to question if I was developing this syndrome, or was looking at it more critically? Self-diagnosis and cyberchondria arises in individuals that feel anxious and in a state of dis/ease. The cross between Self-care, pseudo-science, and cyberchondria, spawns *rejuvigel*. An embedded feature of *rejuvigel* is the idea of reviving and boosting as an enhancement. Many studies point towards the use of performance-based drugs, within the workplace and by students. Within the workplace, individuals take performance-enhancing drugs to compete with their peers, become more confident and to ease nerves and anxiety when making a presentation⁵⁴. Workers are demanded to adapt, be resilient, creative, preform to the highest calibre, work with peers and communicate efficiently⁵⁵. This is the construct

⁵⁰ "Soylent Green," in *Wikipedia*, September 5, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Soylent_Green&oldid=914123307.

⁵¹ "About Soylent | What's in Soylent?," Soylent, accessed October 1, 2019, <https://soylent.com/pages/about-soylent>.

⁵² Arwa Mahdawi, "I Tried Soylent, Silicon Valley's Favourite Foodstuff. It's Everything That's Wrong with Modern Life | Arwa Mahdawi," *The Guardian*, September 11, 2018, sec. Opinion, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/11/i-tried-soylent-silicon-valleys-favourite-foodstuff-its-everything-thats-wrong-with-modern-life>.

⁵³ Ryan and Wilson, "Internet Healthcare." 227-229

⁵⁴ Barbara Sahakian, "Fair Play? How 'Smart Drugs' Are Making Workplaces More Competitive," *The Conversation*, accessed October 1, 2019, <http://theconversation.com/fair-play-how-smart-drugs-are-making-workplaces-more-competitive-61818>.

⁵⁵ Sahakian.

that neoliberalism has created and is argued within the first chapter. In-turn *rejuvigel* plays to this rhetoric by stating that it's an enchantment, a painkiller, an anti-anxiety and a healthy alternative for performance enhancement. These are parodies of late-capitalism and the neoliberal promises.

This work grew out of the product *Rescue Remedy*, by Original Bach Flower Remedies. These *Rescue Remedies* come in various forms, such as pastels, elixirs, and mouth sprays. Bach Flower remedies are based on the findings of Edward Bach and are a homeopathic method to extract flower essences through sunshine with water in a glass bowl. Space here does not permit a full explanation of the process, rather it will focus on the consumable product as an alternative quick fix to anxiety and dis/ease. Bach Flower remedies could be considered as a foundation for what now can be identified in more contemporary products such as energy drinks, vitamins, the natural whole foods market and dietary supplements. Rather than relying on active ingredients such as caffeine or Vitamin C, that do have a demonstrable effect, Bach Remedies fall within the realm of pseudo-science. My experience with *Bach Rescue Remedy* was given to me when I felt anxious and nervous. I thought to myself; "How can this pastel, candy-like gel, possibly help lower my anxiety?" It began my fascination with dietary supplements and alternative means of gaining 'stability'.



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Fig. 10. Post-Rave Wellness Packs, Happy Tuesdays Store, accessed October 28, 2019, <https://happytuesdays.co/products/happy-tuesdays-rave-recovery-packs>.

Upon further investigation, there is a massive market for dietary supplements, everything from *Rescue Remedy* to *Red Bull* and *Happy Tuesdays*. The market is broad and filled with different varieties of fact and fiction. Within *rejuvigel* I combined various methods to create my product - a bit of homeopathy - by including 'essence' of ibuprofen, a bit of dietary supplement with kombucha, blueberry's and caffeine and some of my research into substances like 5-HTP and Rhodiola Rosea (commonly known as Rose Root). All the information of the substances can be found on the website of *rejuvigel* and on the brochure that is part of the work. Unlike *Skittles* 2014, by Josh Klein, where the smoothies are on display like they would be in a convenience store but unable to be bought or consumed, *rejuvigel* within this installation can be bought, dispensed, and consumed by the individual that is seeking relief from the neoliberal pressure. Rather than directly commenting on the social and economic implications like in the work of Kline, *rejuvigel* uses advertising slogans to assume that the world is in 'collapse' and that these are designed specifically for a 'contemporary survivor'. These are purposely vacant, unweighted terms that have no evidence. The information is supplied to the consumer before deciding to take the product, like that of self-diagnosis and internet researching of cyberchondria.

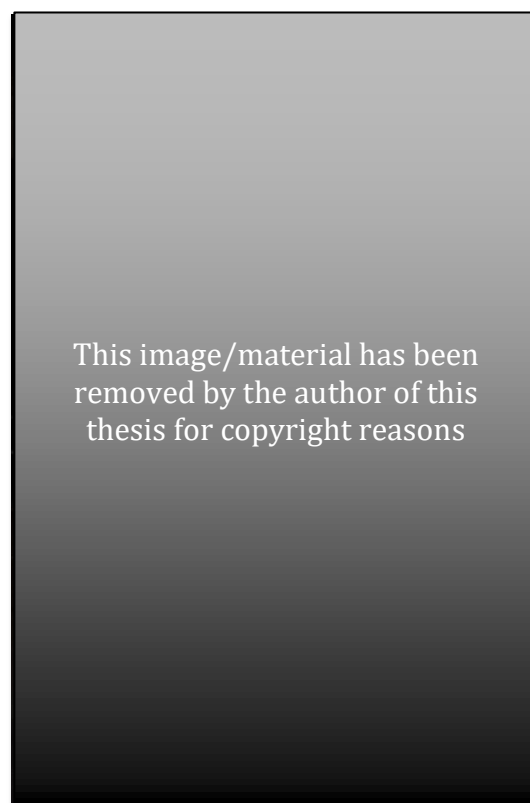


Fig. 11. Jesse Bowling, "*Rejuvigel*", 2018- 2019, mixed media.

Electromagnetic radiation (EMR) swirls around, passing through our bodies. These currents can affect us on multiple levels including, apparently, physically and spiritually. Certain scientific studies have shown strong evidence linking headaches to EMR produced by cellular devices such as smartphones, also Wi-Fi routers⁵⁶. Furthermore, if Wi-Fi can affect our brains, how might it effect the rest of nature? Another experiment carried out by school children, concluded that plants, when in close proximity to Wi-Fi routers, would shrivel and wilt. Growth would stunt and they might even die, as a result of EMR⁵⁷. This susceptibility is being called 'hyperelectrosensitivity,' which is a sensitivity to high radio frequencies given off by wireless technology⁵⁸. To combat this, one product has been adapted/appropriated from science and inventors such as Nikola Tesla, the *Telsa Purple Plate*. Tesla plates are anodised shapes of aluminium with a purple colour. Anodising is an electric current that passes through the aluminium, creating a protective coating that changes the surface structure of the aluminium; this can also be dyed during the process. Certain websites, such as <https://www.teslapurpleplate.com>, who make purple anodised aluminium, claim many facts and 'scientific' studies in support of their product. Statements such as: purple is the colour of healing within the rainbow and the colour of the pineal gland⁵⁹. These are pseudo-facts that do not match reality. Another element they claim is the 'tachyon,' a particle that can move faster than the speed of light, is not just a speculation⁶⁰. *Tesla Purple Plates* state that their product is an antenna for tachyons, capable of attracting these particles to provide the

⁵⁶ Seyed Ehsan Mohammadianinejad, Manuchehr Babaei, and Pedram Nazari, "The Effects of Exposure to Low Frequency Electromagnetic Fields in the Treatment of Migraine Headache: A Cohort Study," *Electronic Physician* 8, no. 12 (December 25, 2016): 3445–49, <https://doi.org/10.19082/3445>.

⁵⁷ "Experiment Finds That Plants DIE When Placed next to Wireless Routers," Mail Online, December 16, 2013, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2524598/Experiment-finds-plants-die-placed-internet-Wi-Fi-routers.html>.

⁵⁸ "Wireless Devices - The Unspoken Truth," NaturalNews.com, May 10, 2017, <https://www.naturalnews.com/2017-05-10-wireless-devices-the-unspoken-truth.html>.

⁵⁹ "About Tesla Purple Plates | Tesla Purple Plate," accessed October 3, 2019, <https://www.teslapurpleplate.com/about-tesla-purple-plates/>.

⁶⁰ "Tachyon," in *Wikipedia*, September 28, 2019, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tachyon&oldid=918454689>.

necessary energy to help with many life ailments. The *Tesla Purple Plate* is marketed towards a consumer that is confused and wary if not sceptical of technology and seeks a new-age holistic approach to counter the effects of EMR. (See Fig 10 below for examples of the healing that can be achieved with Tesla Purple Plates.) The website also has a page called “The truth about tesla plates” and attempts to debunk the myths and facts that are surrounding Tesla Plates. This page shows no citations, no quotes, but rather empty words. This is a promise that can be read and taken for granted, words that can prey on the weak and un-ease of an individual stuck in the cycle of dis/ease.



Fig. 12. “About Tesla Purple Plates | Tesla Purple Plate,” accessed October 3, 2019, <https://www.teslapurpleplate.com/about-tesla-purple-plates/>.

This was the basis for my rendition of Tesla Shields. Within this work, rather than cutting aluminium and anodising it, these objects have been designed in 3d software, 3d printed then cast in aluminium, bead blasted, and anodised. This process has a similar finish to that of a Mac book pro, which seems counter-intuitive as the Mac book pro receives, rather than repels wireless signals. It is ironic that the manufacturing of the computer case is like that of the Tesla plates.

My approach was to use a shield looking object as metaphor for these contemporary protectors against EMR. Each one is influenced by video game aesthetics and computer components such as gaming mice and graphics cards. The banners within this work act as advertising, placing the object into an evocation of nature in order to present it as a tranquil and ideal object. These nature scenes are entirely computer generated and modelled within 3D software to represent and mimic ideal nature. Patrick Hartmann and Vanessa Apaolaza-Ibáñez propose that consumers' exposure to

specific natural imagery in green branded communications may lead to pleasant feelings analogous to those experienced in 'real' nature. If adequately conditioned, these 'virtual nature experiences' may enhance the consumer's attitude towards a given brand"⁶¹. Linking nature to feelings is vital; scent and imagery can rekindle feelings individuals have of being in nature, which most of the time coincides with positive feelings, such as peace, beauty, and escape⁶². The virtual here is not at a complete remove from real nature but mimicking nature adapted as imagery. These are present in various forms actual or screen graphics, scent, pot plants, and rocks to name a few. The intent is to set the scene to create a feeling of nature a virtual/simulated real-world experience.

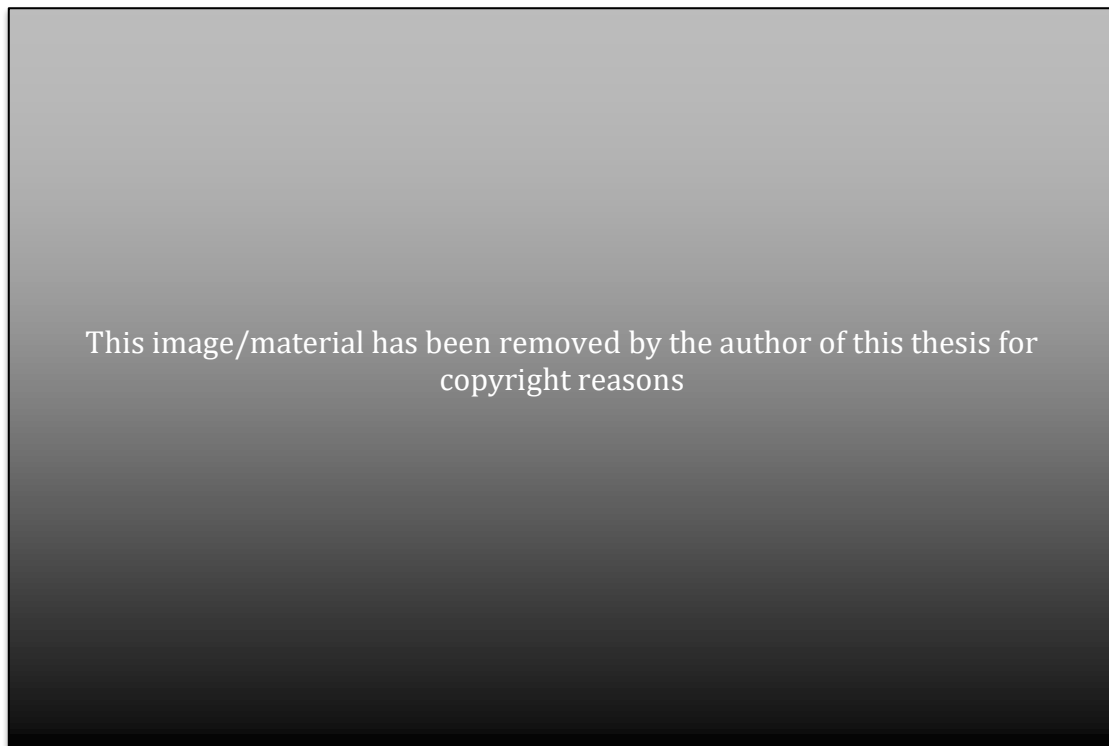


Fig. 13. Jesse Bowling, *"Tesla Shields"* 2019, mixed media.

⁶¹ Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez, "Green Advertising Revisited." 724,

⁶² Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez. 724.

Conclusion.

Throughout this exegesis, there are many different article-based references that are presented within a traditional academic structure to re-enforce my argument. many of these articles are sourced entirely online. It easy to Google something, find a 'fact,' and take it for granted. There is an entanglement of believability between online self-discovery and the products that are discussed. What we are presented with, within the neoliberal late-capitalist era is confusion of what we read, what we believe and what we feel/ are told to feel. It constructs its own blurring that these products, attempt to alleviate. This exegesis has sought to examine some of symptoms of neo-liberalism and late capitalism – anxiety, a feeling of inadequacy, heightened alienation. It has looked at how pseudo-spiritual products and Self-care are entagled as medications, with very little evidence, seek to alleviate these symptoms. It has looked at examples of artists who have played with this state of affair and finally sought to present key aspects of my own work in relationship to all these findings. This project has not presented any solutions to the states of being I am examining – but it has led to a greater clarity about how this might be represented. The works presented here are the culmination of that journey.

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