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Working Title: VTubers; The Evolution Of Digital Avatars & Performers In A Post-Internet World

Outline: write one short paragraph detailing your subject area and line of inquiry.

This body of work, **will be researching virtual avatars** with a focus on the more eminently popular archetype of "**VTubers**" & their place in a **post-internet** world by exploring the incipient **cyber-subculture** surrounding them with the overarching context of **post-modernist art & design studies**. This work will **explore case-studies** of significant virtual performers within this subculture to gather a general understanding as to the **predominant cause of the increasing appeal** & popularity of VTubers.

Key Aims & Objectives: what do you want to achieve through your research? (try to write as clear statements of intent)

1) To understand the **sudden growing appeal** of virtual performers (2019 - 2021), their origins within emerging history (~Mid 2000s - 2021), & the associated **subcultures** within the context of **post-internet post-modernism**.

2) To explore the **cultural significance** within the design elements of virtual performers, & identify the elements of post-modern **appropriation of cultural capital** within many VTubers' designs explored via case studies. (A semiotics tangent which is relevant to the globalist aspects of post-modernism).

3) To evaluate the possible **ethical & sociological effects** that such a subculture may cause/ have caused to global culture, with a **focus on the internet & cyberculture**.

Literature Search: Can you list any key texts to help you explore or refine your subject? Can you identify any useful theorists/authors to provide a scholarly basis for your research?

- _An Introduction To Cyber Cultures_ (2001) by David Bell – Discusses cybercultures & would assist in defining terms & clarifying concepts for this essay.
- _REALITY: Broadcast your virtual beings from everywhere_ (July 2019) by Akihiko Shirai – Discusses some key history of virtual performers, and some of the technological mechanisms required to produce them.
- _What are you looking at? 150 years of modern art in the blink of an eye_ (2012) by Will Gompertz – A key-text for a general overview of art movements' context & history; covers postmodernism.
- _The virtual vloggers taking over YouTube_ (Oct 2018) By Brian Lufkin – Covers the history of virtual performers on the YouTube platform & discusses some of the sociological aspects of their work.

Other **secondary** sources — books, journal articles, websites, film and television productions, exhibitions, published or exhibited works by artists, photographers and designers etc.

- Published **VTuber performances**/ broadcasts – live streams, videos, animations, music videos etc.
- **Official media** produced for virtual performers – commissioned assets, songs, official artwork etc.
- **Fan-made productions** of media associated with virtual performers – music, illustrations, animations, animatics, hiring out time square billboards etc.
- **Forums** of discussion about virtual performers.

Opportunities for **primary** research — formal analysis and/or application of theoretical ideas, case-studies, interviews, focus groups, practice-led, studio experimentation etc.

Case studies of VTubers –   Exploring semiotics,
                                    Cultural imperialism,
                                    Subcultures,
                                    Gender,
                                    Sociology.

Surveys –   Targeted surveys towards VTuber audiences,
                   General surveys to gauge general knowledge of VTubers/ awareness.

Can you foresee any **possible issues** i) in your approach ii) in the gathering of research?
- I may have to limit the scope of my subject to focus on specific points.
- Defining appropriate survey questions to gather meaningful data will be challenging - perhaps resolved with multiple sections with targeted lines of inquiry.

Planning: Set out/order your research objectives (with dates) between June and September.

- Read through & annotate *Literature Search* articles (By 30th of June)
- Design & write-up survey questions – targeted & general surveys (By 21st of July)
- Plan survey analysis – decide on graphs & important data points (By 28th of July)
- Distribute targeted surveys (By 25th of August)
- Prepare general surveys for distribution in studio (By 8th of September)
- Collate secondary source materials into a document for future reference & easy-access (By September 20th)
- Review targeted survey data & write-up data (By 15th of September)

Other Information: Due to the cutting-edge contemporary nature of the subject matter covered in this body of work, subject-specific academic sources are limited, if not non-existent, but more general sources that discuss relevant concepts & academic frameworks are available.