

SLEEP V.05 SLEEP LESS WORK MORE

In development 2023

The 5th edition of the SLEEP Series

SLEEP Series is authored by Shu Lea Cheang & Matthew Fuller. Since 2018, 4 editions of SLEEP has been installed and performed in locally adapted formats. This series of work, SLEEP 48 (Linz, 2018), SLEEP 79 (Taipei, 2018), SLEEP1237 (NYC, 2019), SLEEP5959 (Malmo 2021), derives from the idea of an aesthetics of sleep developed in Matthew Fuller's book, "How to Sleep, the art, biology and culture of sleep" (Bloomsbury, 2018). These projects, lasting from a weekend to three-months in duration (the numbers attached to Sleep refers to duration of the project in days/minutes/seconds), transpose art into sleep, and everyday and scientific sleep actions into active aesthetics. The project has involved collaboration with architects, doctors, brewers, herbalists, artists, programmers and musicians amongst others.

Sleep is a refuge from the work of having a subjectivity, of having to endure, being alert, to respond; but it is also an unexplored aesthetic domain. We are still sensually and metabolically 'on' when asleep, just working in other registers. An aim of these projects is to find and to subtly work with, even to invent, those capacities. One of the aims of the sleep series is to find different ways of working with the expanding domain of aesthetics in the present, by working through the capacities of the unconscious body, reworking the philosophical caesura between the mental subject on the one hand, and the somatic object on the other.

The essential claim of these projects has been that it is possible to firstly make 'art by sleepers, for sleepers and art as sleep'.

Bios

Shu Lea Cheang is an artist and filmmaker whose work aims to re-envision genders, genres, and operating structures. Her genre bending gender hacking practices challenge the existing operating mechanisms and the society's structural boundaries. As a net art pioneer, her BRANDON (1998 - 99) was the first web art commissioned and collected by New York's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Cheang represented Taiwan with 3x3x6, a mixed media installation at Venice Biennale 2019. She is releasing her 4th feature film, UKI, a SciFi Viral Alt-Reality cinema in 2023.
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Matthew Fuller is Professor of Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London and an author working in media theory, software studies, cultural theory, and contemporary fiction. Fuller is also an artist who has collaborated with numerous groups. Publications include How to Sleep: The Art, Biology and Culture of Unconsciousness, (Bloomsbury 2018), How to be a Geek essays on the culture of software (Polity 2017), with Andrew Goffey, Evil Media (MIT 2012), with Olga Goriunova, Bleak Joys, aesthetics of ecology and impossibility (Minnesota 2019) and with Eyal Weizman, Investigative Aesthetics (Verso 2021).

Sleep Series

<http://mauvaiscontact.info/sleep>

Invited by Montreal based [The Sociability of Sleep](#), Shu Lea Cheang & Matthew Fuller conceived the SLEEPV.05 SLEEP LESS WORK MORE with a scifi scenario. In its development stage, workshops with sleep data collecting participants, programmers, dancers, sound artists, data visualization artists are planned.

SLEEPV.05 SLEEP LESS WORK MORE

Scenario

It is year 20XX.... Planet Earth has shifted out of rotational orbit due to a deep space event, reorganising our cycles round the sun. The planet circles around the sun but does not rotate. One side of the earth has bright daylight 24/7. The other is in darkness, with further ecological loss on both sides. This position flips and exaggerates the effects of climate damage. Sleep is hard to come by... It is a terrain of conflict.

The government issues a SLEEP LESS WORK MORE order to command increased working hours in shifts. Corporations help their workers by providing tools to prevent sleep so they can work harder. Being sleepless, attempting to sleep, tracking any possible sleep seconds to accumulate sleep data is a daily pursuit, but also a mode of conspicuous consumption. People 'trade' sleep data as a spectacle of wellbeing. Sleep data is used as commodity that is traded, enhanced, recycled and retraded via a specific algorithm (see below). This circulation of data is gamified, so that competitive display of sleep data is entrained, but it also disturbs sleep.

Meanwhile, the sleepless mass roam the streets. Choreographers work amongst them to develop sleep movements that evade ready surveillance. If they succeed, their movements will *collectively* result in the accumulation of shapes blacking out the light in the room so that sleep can flourish in darkness. During this time they are also surveilled by government camera operatives.

There is a duel between two AIs carried out through the medium of sleeping bodies. The two AIs work by monitoring peoples' limb movements.

AI One, works to translate collective sleep into dark shapes modelled on the forms of free-style Chinese calligraphy projected on the wall and ceiling spaces - a space of overlapping loose and expressive 'brush strokes' triggered by the movement of limbs that gradually darkens the room. The genesis of this AI is unknown.

AI Two

The government and corporate AI, monitors sleep movements to:

Punish

Looks for those moves that are forbidden. It translates its detection of these into patches of white light text projections: warnings and admonitions. Police-style graphics.

Enable

Provides corporate lifestyle advice that appears in white text, patchily obliterating the dark calligraphic forms. Gym-style and wellness-style graphics.

Motivate

Notifications of the gamified state of the circulating sleep data appear too, adding to the white light chewing into the swooping and layered calligraphic forms of blackness. Candy-coloured game graphics

There is an open-ended triadic interaction between the two AIs and the social formations and movements of surveilled bodies. As more or less light is projected into the room, depending on the state of the interactions of the two AIs, surveillance also becomes more or less possible. There is also thus a second-order interaction between the space and the algorithms creating interesting feedback

SEQUENCE

Prior to workshop

Act Zero

Prior to workshop, users are sought. They download the app and start generating sleep data.

Act One:

The app collects sleep movement data using the smartphone accelerometer and gyroscope simple visualisation of this process. The algorithm works similarly to other sleep apps. The user places the phone in their bed when they go to sleep. When relative motionless and lack of use of phone functions are sensed, the app judges the user to be asleep. Slight movement typical of REM state is also sensed. The app records this data in an anonymous format, sampling the state of the user frequently. It gives oblique notifications: gamified, competitive sleep, corporate life hack advice slogans are offered.

During Workshop

Act Two:

2:1

Circulation of sleep data

The algorithm works by:

assigning users a position in a sleep mesh according to the order of joining. each user has four neighbours when three or more of their neighbours register as asleep sleep data can be circulated between users when two or less of the neighbours are asleep, the phone issues commands: work more; work, buy, consume, die; keep moving, keep well; motivation slogans. The app also includes a simple visualisation of the mesh process, and a colour coding of sleep data to show ranking.

A gamification structure ranks peoples' sleep data for conspicuous consumption of sleep, the image of good sleep, a spectacle of sleep

2:2

Roaming the streets or in the buildings

working with a choreographer to develop limb movements that express sleep in a way that enhances the blacking out of the workshop space.

Government agents or subcontractors: video camera person/s generating training footage, generating movement data. This becomes training data for AI Two.

Act Three

Visualisation of sleep movement, the triadic dual between bodies and the two AIs

Participants attach their phones, switched into video mode, to a mic-stand next to each futon. They lie on futon, singly or in groups. They may move or remain still according to their wishes.

Computer vision feature detection looks for limbs and limb movement.

AI One: Using an ML model trained on calligraphic writing, these movements are translated into a graphic style / calligraphy projected onto the walls/ceiling. If the sleepers collaborate together and with the AI, the space will black out and they can sleep.

AI Two: Its government aspect looks for infractions of sleep position (ie becoming too still) and issues white light text visual warnings into the space. It encourages participants to sleep less and work more. Its corporate aspect, a) gives notifications of the gamified trading of sleep data, b) provides advice on wellness and sleep hacking to accomplish more at work.

Act three finishes when the space is blacked out. A timer can be introduced to gradually 'weigh' the values assigned to AI One more so that this is more likely to occur over time.

Outcomes

AI One and participants combined 'win' — get to sleep with the room being dark — if they maintain sleep, but with subtle choreographed movement

AI Two 'wins' if sleep is disrupted and the room remains bright.

The possibility is that the room remains dark, but that people still have to move, whilst being awake. This is perhaps the 'tragic' result.

The outcome however is undetermined and open-ended. Different outcomes could occur if individual participants or groups collaborate with or respond to the different AIs in different ways at different moments in the performance.

Act Four:

Awake: Celebratory food and drink moment. Food to keep awake.