**Digital Ecologies and the Anthropocene Symposium - introduction**

In August 2016 the International Geological Congress said that a new geological epoch known as the Anthropocene needs to be declared due to the fact that the human impact on the earth is now so profound.

Timothy Morton uses the term hyperobjects to discuss some of the characteristics of the anthropocene and why it is often invisible to the human: he notes that hyperobjects are ‘so massively distributed in time, space and dimensionality’ that they defy our perception, let alone our comprehension, therefore the condition of the anthropocene is easily ignored. Among the examples Morton gives are climate change and radioactive plutonium. ‘In one sense [hyperobjects] are abstractions,’ he notes, ‘in another they are ferociously, catastrophically real.’

Another of these hyperobjects relates to the human relationship with machines and we can trace their impact on the earth back to the invention of the steam engine in 1781 by James Watt and its deposits of carbon on the earth’s crust.

Today’s contemporary technologies appear to be different and are crucial to enabling human life and culture to function as well as realising the production and distribution processes of capital. They also provide us with useful tools for visualising processes such as climate change and tracking the earth’s own movements and seismic activity.

However the notion of these technologies being ‘clean’ or ‘virtual’ is soon unraveled by tracing their material realities which are made up of complex meshes of human and non-human moving parts. Today’s machines are heavily enabled by the extraction of raw materials, the use of fossil fuels and the production of material waste at sites such as Guiyu, China which has been called ‘the electronic graveyard of the world’.

In her book Digital Rubbish Jennifer Gabrys notes that the electronic extends from technologies to markets and to modes of waste, decay and disintegration, articulating the relation between the signal and the thing and how they are bound into a shared material process.

The history of the internet and today’s pervasive media technologies is also closely tied to the study of the earth and an observation of the ecological. It emerges from the development of military and nuclear technologies, the conception of cybernetics and the design of self-governing computer systems with built in feedback loops. These machines and systems end up as actors within a complex mesh of networks, hyperobjects, production processes, waste disposal and notions of deep time.

In terms of responses to these conditions Christophe Bonneuil describes the ‘shock of the Anthropocene’ as a space for generating new political arguments, new modes of behaviour, new narratives, new languages and new creative forms and this symposium is focused on bringing some of these emerging discourses to the surface across theory and practice.

**Keynotes:**

Dr Ele Carpenter (Goldsmiths)

Professor Charlie Gere (Lancaster) Bath Spa University

**Other speakers:**

Professor Owain Jones, Environmental Humanities, Bath Spa University

Philip Hüpkes, University of Vechta, Germany

Dr Joshua McNamara, University of Melbourne

Dr Mike Hannis, Bath Spa University

Jeff Scheible, Kings College, London

Ramon Bloomberg, Goldsmiths College, University of London

Teresa Carlesimo, Queens University

Chris Bailey, Plymouth College of Art

Matthew Lovett, University of Gloucestershire

Charlie Tweed, Bath Spa University

Alison Harper, Bath Spa University

**Film screenings and performances:**

Joey Holder, OPHIUX (2016)

Dr. Oliver Case, Dr. Bradley Garrett and Dr. Adam Fish, System Earth Cable - Einstock Mountain (2017)

Peter Bo Rappmund, Topophilia (2015)

Andy Weir, The Plureal Deal (2016)

Lucy Pawlak, WE EAT THE EARTH THE EARTH EATS US (2016)

Nathan Hughes, OBJECT (2016)

Sasha Litvintseva: Asbestos (performance) (2016)