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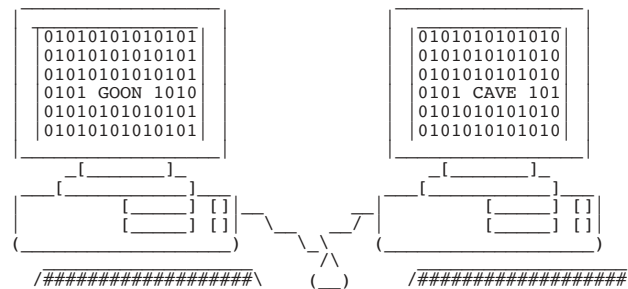
Collective GOON Cave

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I began this workshop wanting to teach from the outer edges of my own passions and uncertainties, places where my questions about sex, desire, and technology still feel electric and unresolved. I wanted to teach from the impulses that tug at the corners of my research, to open a room where participants might wander, stumble, and invent alongside me, where questions could proliferate faster than answers, and where our collective attention could curve and fold around experiences both intimate and strange. I expected challenge, provocation, and confusion, but I could not have predicted how the participants' curiosity would reflect back and expand my own, or how the installation we formed together would generate its own currents of erotic imagination that, in the act of teaching, I would find myself learning in ways that could never have been scripted, anticipated, or contained.



As an extension of my “Cybernetics of Sex” workshop, I created a multi-channel video installation featuring anonymously submitted videos from participants in response to the prompt: “Share a video that is erotic to you. It can be abstract, metaphoric, simple, complex, or explicit.” The videos ranged from mukbang clips to wrestling footage to ocean waves, slugs, and boiling mulberries. Participants collectively steered the installation using a Dance Dance Revolution floor pad that controlled functions such as advancing videos, adjusting playback speed, randomizing sequences, and syncing the channels.



As the cohort shifted in and out of engagement with the installation, we began to turn our attention towards a series of open-ended reflections on how language and technology shape our experiences of our bodies. As part of this, I presented research-in-progress on gooning and goon caves, a niche internet subculture centered on creating immersive, hyper-saturated media environments designed for trance-like, durational states of eroticized attention. This often involves practices of prolonged, deliberately sustained arousal sometimes referred to as extreme edging or even hypnosis. We situated this practice within the broader cultural politics of networked masculinity, including its entanglements with the manosphere, its specific framings of masculine desire and discipline, and the community discourses that shape how we all relate to pleasure, isolation, and each of our ongoing processes of the online as a site for discovering and defining erotic selfhood.

From there, we examined goon caves as a form of vernacular, digitally enabled folk art. This included both the handmade physical environments that participants construct and the extensive media-crafting that supports them. Many gooners create customized compilations, explicitly hypnotizing or gamified viewing experiences that circulate as participatory folk genres. We also explored the folk-art dimension of file management: the meticulous organizing, tagging, and sequencing of personal media libraries designed to feed multiple screens at once and to generate an all-encompassing visual field that is at once algorithmic and handcrafted.

From noticing and becoming aware of these practices came the inspiration for the installation. The room became a kind of collective goon cave: a shared, multi-screen environment in which the cohort found itself awash in its own aggregated erotic imagination. Surrounded by the dense array of screens and images, there was a sense of astonishment at witnessing the cohort's collective erotic vocabulary displayed simultaneously. The experience transformed our individual submissions into a communal artwork in which each fragment was folded into a larger interconnected landscape of desire.

We then examined the social dynamics of gooner culture. Its often-misunderstood pro-social tendencies include co-gooning, with active online communities that share techniques, aesthetics, and media. Its anti-social tendencies involve long periods of self-isolation and retreat into private, screen-saturated environments, which can provide endless gratification and be a fulfilling part of a



COLLECTIVE GOON CAVE
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sexual life, though for some it may also narrow the mind's sense of what is possible by reinforcing highly immediate, curated online experiences over other kinds of exploration. These tensions highlight how gooning can simultaneously cultivate forms of community and deepen isolation, and how it acts as a medium through which people articulate and negotiate their erotic lives. We also critically examined the cultural discourse around porn "addiction" and the category of the "pornosexual." As a group, we reflected on how these narratives resonate differently across our diverse gendered and cultural backgrounds, how they pathologize desire, and how they can obscure the structural conditions that shape people's relationships to porn and, by extension, to sex with themselves and with others.

Finally, we analyzed goon caves through a socioeconomic lens, noting that the practice presumes long stretches of discretionary time and the financial means to assemble elaborate multi-screen environments. This raised broader questions about the distribution of leisure, privacy, and technological resources, and about who has access to sustained sensory self-exploration and who is excluded from it. I asked participants, "What are some ways you have explored your sexuality online? What has it offered you? What has it denied you?" Below are some of their thoughts:

"Sex and discretion have always gone hand in hand for me. When I started turning to the Internet, it was because I could not ask anyone else questions."

"I associate porn with a time in my life I never want to return to and a reference for all the sex I do not want to have."

While I have always known teaching is a form of art, I had forgotten how fully art can become a form of teaching. What began at the edges of my own interests, became an encounter with something emergent—a cultural practice still taking shape online and largely unspoken outside its community. What I expected to be a wide-eyed exploration of a niche sexual practice with roots in misogynist online spaces, unfolded instead into a deeply communal and intimate experience, one in which the workshop generated insights that emerged only through our shared attention. Letting my curiosity lead me into a topic that was murky and largely misunderstood taught me that when I trust both my own instincts and the cohort's capacity for thoughtful engagement, we can meet shifts in culture while they are still forming, bringing ourselves into contact with transformations long before they break open publicly. A year and a half later, when gooning appeared in mainstream articles and even in the mouths of kids on TikTok, did I fully understand how close we had been to a phenomenon in motion. The installation we created together showed me how both teaching and art can hold, reflect, and transform us when it is made collectively. It brought us into a space that felt both erotically charged and profoundly communal, and it revealed how shared creation allows us to feel, learn, and slip into a state of focus and imaginative engagement that could not be accessed alone.

