

Cyberfeminism Mutates

Cyberfeminism is a mutating word with a nebulous history. Its evolution is less a single root system with multiple branches than a network of entangled rhizomes, constantly and multidirectionally moving.

Coined in the early 1990s by the British cultural theorist Sadie Plant and artist collective VNS Matrix, the word cyberfeminism takes on its prefix “cyber” — recast from Cybernetics, a 1948 book by Norbert Wiener, and “cyberspace,” from William Gibson’s 1984 novel *Neuromancer* — as a provocation. This cyberspace of the 1980s was stocked with and characterized by cyberbabes and fembots, a techno-utopian imaginary of the male gaze. “Cyberfeminism” prompted women and marginalized communities to imagine how a reoriented cyberspace could look. By now, three decades after its origination, cyberfeminism has shifted from a loose artistic movement exploring the emancipatory potential of cyberspace towards a collective drive to provide software, hardware, and wetware education and to get marginalized groups online. Today, with questions of technology more and more clearly “bound together with questions of ecology and the economy,” as noted by Cornelia Sollfrank, the term is self-reflexive: technology is not only the subject of cyberfeminism, but its means of transmission. It’s all about feedback.

WETWARE showcases nine artists to celebrate and support their work and the upcoming publication [CYBERFEMINISM INDEX](#), slated for an October 2022 release with Inventory Press. Drawn from the terms “hardware” and “software,” wetware, by definition, applies to the computational ability of biological life forms, though the term has become slang for biotechnologies. Here, we twist the term, calling WETWARE to focus on the embodied, slimy components of technology, and the organic, rhizomatic nature of networks. Shown in chronological order, we present seminal cyberfeminist artworks from the early 1990s to pornographic and techno-spiritual pieces from the early aughts, and contemporary adaptations and brand new commissions from 2022. Each artist is also featured in the publication CYBERFEMINISM INDEX and suggest a wide web of cyberfeminism’s continuous evolution.

Preorder the book: <http://www.inventorypress.com/product/cyberfeminism-index>

IKU: Expand, an interface

“This is not love. This is sex.” Shu Lea Cheang’s feature-length cyberpunk sci-fi porn film I.K.U. (2000) tells the story of the internet porn enterprise Genom Corporation that dispatches I.K.U. coders to collect “orgasm data,” developing the ability to sell profitable and addictive on-demand orgasms. “I.K.U. is a phenomenon that wants to refuse definition As much trans-genre as it is trans-gender, I.K.U. also wants to merge video and film into a fresh digital universe large-scale enough to overwhelm the viewer.” In conjunction with the film release, Cheang created an interactive website called “Expand, an interface” (2001) with stills from I.K.U. Using horizontally expanding and glitching panels to reveal I.K.U. coders such as Reiko or Tokyo Rose, “Expand, an interface” challenges the censorship in cinema versus online. The website is no longer online, and this screen recording was recaptured by Shu Lea Cheang in 2022, alongside stills from the film as well as the interface.