I often think about what I'll see in my final moments– what will flash before my eyes when a final surge of electrical and chemical signals flood the ventricles of my brain– and I'm certain 65% (if not more) of what I will witness will be a blur of white light emanating from devices that sat in close proximity to my face. Even more concerning, I know that I'm not alone in this thought. I'd like to dedicate this paper to my Mum and Dad for closing my laptop, hiding my phone, turning off the internet, and taking me outside. I shouldn't have fought you for trying to enrich my adolescent experience.

Thank you for giving my life substance.

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Con.txt.

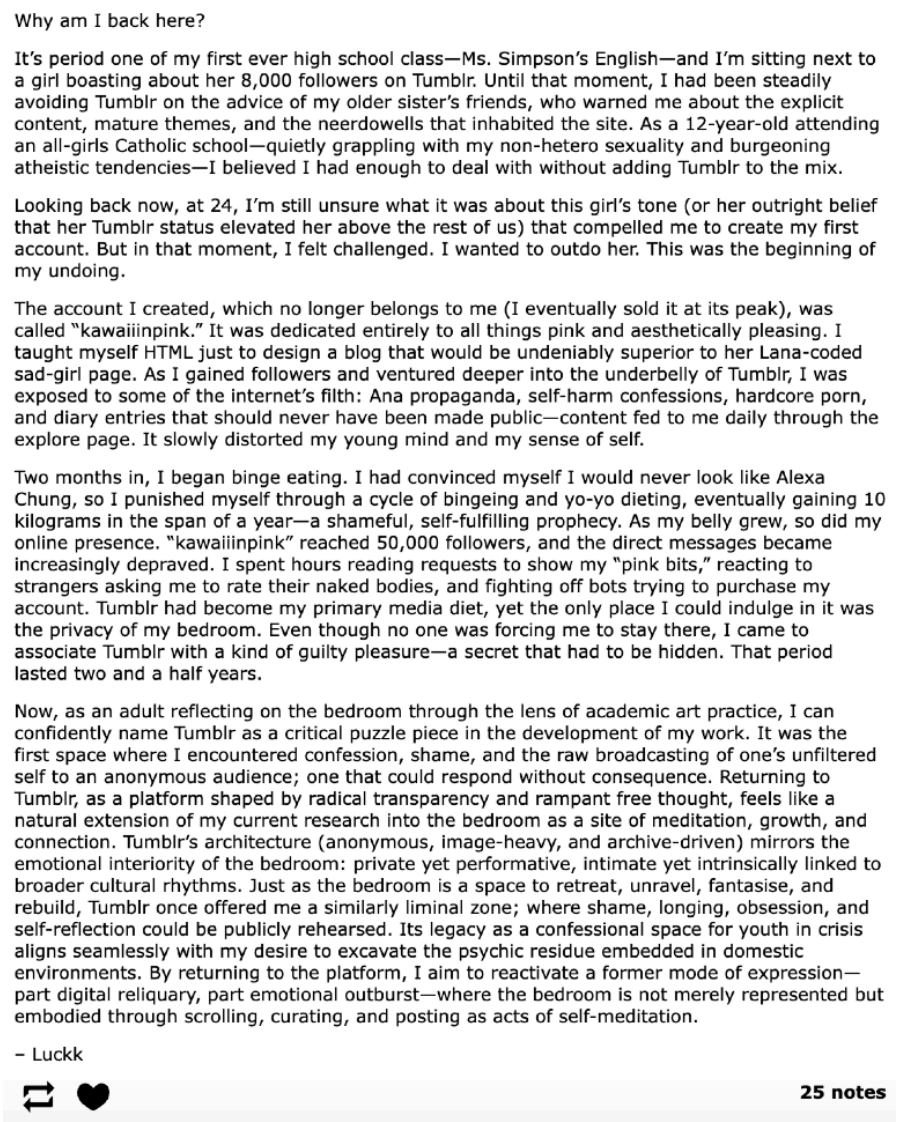
The first time I felt nostalgia through an image was in 2014 on Tumblr [Figure 1]. I was idly scrolling late at night, the blue light of my iMac humming in the corner of my largely empty room, when I stumbled across a low-resolution scan of the cover of FRUiTs issue 14 (1998)[1]. The cover features a young woman with space buns, a choppy blunt fringe, a pink gingham dress, lunch to her left, and a tiny clipboard with the text "1099."[Figure 2] The image glowed faintly, not because of any deliberate effect, but because the scanning bed of an old printer had left its mark. The image had overexposed edges, a surreal flatness, a grain that pulled me away from reality. I was transfixed. Through a flimsily digitised image of a stranger in 1998 Tokyo, I felt a connection that was as sharp as it was impossible.

I was born in 2001; there was no way I could remember this cultural atmosphere. Yet looking at that scan provoked a pang[2] so strong that it verged on grief. I felt as if my promised life had been taken from me and replaced with an iPhone. This was my first experience of anemoia[3] and it would not be my last. Like so many others who came into consciousness alongside digital adolescence[4], I found myself longing not just for my own past, but for a borrowed past, mediated entirely through the circulation of images online.

The Portable Network Graphics (png)[5]file format was invented and first released in 1995 as a patent-free, lossless replacement for the GIF image format; it was encumbered by patent issues and lacked support for features like transparency. The png file format that retained the Tumblr image I mentioned above, allowed it to be uploaded, reblogged, and recirculated until it found me. The png[6] format, sits at the centre of my practice. More than just a technical

[1] It should be noted that the original reblog of the image I'm referencing — which had thousands of interactions — is no longer available on Tumblr as there was a mass exodus from the platform when pornography was banned back in December of 2018.
[2] Think of this image as a trigger of sorts – like the sound of a windows computer booting – that caused an awakening in me, one that elicited emotions of nostalgia.
[3] The affective state of nostalgia for a time one has never lived, a longing for experiences that belong to another generation, era, or context. Koenig and The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows, "Anemoia | The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows."
[4] Referring to the technological adolescence of the early internet — between 1994-2010 (it's hard to pin point; notably the early stages of Web 2.0 — (fragmented, experimental, less integrated into daily life) and the human adolescence lived within that context, where identity formation occurred as much online as offline.
[5] The PNG format was introduced in 1996 by Thomas Boutell and an Internet working group as a response to licensing disputes around the GIF. T. Boutell, "PNG (Portable Network Graphics) Specification Version 1.0," March 1, 1997, https://doi.org/10.17487/rfc2083.
[6] To reduce eyestrain, and create distinction from similarly spelt terms in this paper, all file formats will be shown with lower-case letters.

[1]



Why am I back here?

It's period one of my first ever high school class—Ms. Simpson's English—and I'm sitting next to a girl boasting about her 8,000 followers on Tumblr. Until that moment, I had been steadily avoiding Tumblr on the advice of my older sister's friends, who warned me about the explicit content, mature themes, and the neerdowells that inhabited the site. As a 12-year-old attending an all-girls Catholic school—quietly grappling with my non-hetero sexuality and burgeoning atheistic tendencies—I believed I had enough to deal with without adding Tumblr to the mix.

Looking back now, at 24, I'm still unsure what it was about this girl's tone (or her outright belief that her Tumblr status elevated her above the rest of us) that compelled me to create my first account. But in that moment, I felt challenged. I wanted to outdo her. This was the beginning of my undoing.

The account I created, which no longer belongs to me (I eventually sold it at its peak), was called "kawaiiinpink." It was dedicated entirely to all things pink and aesthetically pleasing. I taught myself HTML just to design a blog that would be undeniably superior to her Lana-coded sad-girl page. As I gained followers and ventured deeper into the underbelly of Tumblr, I was exposed to some of the internet's filth: Ana propaganda, self-harm confessions, hardcore porn, and diary entries that should never have been made public—content fed to me daily through the explore page. It slowly distorted my young mind and my sense of self.

Two months in, I began binge eating. I had convinced myself I would never look like Alexa Chung, so I punished myself through a cycle of bingeing and yo-yo dieting, eventually gaining 10 kilograms in the span of a year—a shameful, self-fulfilling prophecy. As my belly grew, so did my online presence. "kawaiiinpink" reached 50,000 followers, and the direct messages became increasingly depraved. I spent hours reading requests to show my "pink bits," reacting to strangers asking me to rate their naked bodies, and fighting off bots trying to purchase my account. Tumblr had become my primary media diet, yet the only place I could indulge in it was the privacy of my bedroom. Even though no one was forcing me to stay there, I came to associate Tumblr with a kind of guilty pleasure—a secret that had to be hidden. That period lasted two and a half years.

Now, as an adult reflecting on the bedroom through the lens of academic art practice, I can confidently name Tumblr as a critical puzzle piece in the development of my work. It was the first space where I encountered confession, shame, and the raw broadcasting of one's unfiltered self to an anonymous audience; one that could respond without consequence. Returning to Tumblr, as a platform shaped by radical transparency and rampant free thought, feels like a natural extension of my current research into the bedroom as a site of meditation, growth, and connection. Tumblr's architecture (anonymous, image-heavy, and archive-driven) mirrors the emotional interiority of the bedroom: private yet performative, intimate yet intrinsically linked to broader cultural rhythms. Just as the bedroom is a space to retreat, unravel, fantasise, and rebuild, Tumblr once offered me a similarly liminal zone; where shame, longing, obsession, and self-reflection could be publicly rehearsed. Its legacy as a confessional space for youth in crisis aligns seamlessly with my desire to excavate the psychic residue embedded in domestic environments. By returning to the platform, I aim to reactivate a former mode of expression—part digital reliquary, part emotional outburst—where the bedroom is not merely represented but embodied through scrolling, curating, and posting as acts of self-meditation.

– Luckk

25 notes

Luckk Parker, "Why Am I Back Here?," *Tumblr*, July 29, 2025, Screen-grab from *Tumblr.*

[2]

Zegalba. *Post by @Zegalba · 1 Image*. August 18, 2023. Screen-grab from *Tumblr*.

container, the png has become an unlikely monument to memory. These durable flat files – endlessly passed between profiles– preserve the aesthetic signatures of an era. The png contains uninterrupted pixels, and retains the softness of a scan, the stamp of a watermark, the faint corruption of data moving: from camera to computer, from computer to internet. For my generation, these png images have become emotional anchors, shaping not only how we recall the internet's adolescence but how we narrate our own.

To call my generation the Post-Internet Nostalgia Generation[7] (P.N.G.) is to admit a paradox. We are the first cohort to have no living memory of a world before unlimited broadband, smartphones, and social media, and yet we are haunted by its traces. We move through feeds overflowing with images of a different mode of connectivity – a slower one. These fragments circulate not as dead relics, but as living debris, constantly recontextualised and imbued with affect by the users who perpetuate their importance. They create a peculiar form of arrested development, trapping us in a never-ending adolescence where our memories are stitched together from half remembered moments and second-hand nostalgia.

The key research question which I will explore through my honours paper and my studio research is:

How do the aesthetic and material artefacts of digital adolescence—such as PNGs, lo-fi graphics, and other enduring image forms—shape collective nostalgia for the pre internet immersion era and affect our sense of developmental time?

To begin, I explore how png images of life pre-total integration internet alter our recollections of lived experiences, and how this in turn enacts a form of developmental stasis within the P.N.G.. My argument unfolds through both personal narrative and material practice. On one hand, I examine how the circulation of digital artefacts produces anemoia, entangling us in

[7] The P.N.G. has acquired many names over the past 20 years such as Zilennials (Ward, "Zillennials: The Newest Micro-Generation Has a Name."), iGeneration (Whittaker, "Defining the 'iGeneration': Not Just a Geeky Bunch of Kids."), Zoomers (Editors of Merriam-Webster, "What to Call Gen Z - Zoomers: Words We're Watching.") or post-Millennials (Mitchell and Mitchell, "Early Benchmarks Show 'Post-Millennials' on Track to Be Most Diverse, Best-Educated Generation Yet."). Their social issues and identity is of particular cultural interest as they are the first generation to grow up with persistent internet usage.

memories that are not ours. On the other hand, I consider how my art practice – working with imagery of bedroom debris, repurposed bedsheets, plywood cutouts, and projected images – materialises this digital flatness and makes it legible.

This paper charts an exploration of how this longing for a pre-internet era manifests in my generation and in my Honours project. In section one, I articulate and reflect on the term 'digital adolescence' and the unique textures of anemoia in the Post-Internet Nostalgia Generation. Section two examines the bedroom as a critical framing device – much like a stretcher bar for a painting; the walls of a bedroom become a container of adolescence – which communicates private longings and moments of both a physical becoming and a digital one. Finally, I turn to objects – Teletubbies, Play Station One consoles, Lava Lamps etc – as nostalgic debris that embody cultural arrested development.

By moving through these layers – personal, cultural, material – I aim to show how the flat world of the png reveals the depth of our generational condition.

Section One: The Persistence of D1git@l_Ad0le5ce~3

Digital adolescence is a term that came about during a conversation with my supervisor. I was describing my conceptual concerns, the subject matter, and the materiality of my work and we recognised that adolescence is both a developmental focus in my word and an appropriate term for early digital culture that influenced my own adolescence. This term is not just a metaphor; it reflects the literal condition of the generation born between 1995-2003 and serves to describe the era of internet content which captivates us so greatly. My childhood unfolded in tandem with the internet's own adolescence – both awkward, experimental, precariously self-documenting. Earlier generations had the luxury of a private coming-of-age, my generation's coming-of-age was relentlessly public, shaped by platforms that blurred the line between intimacy and exposure.

The cultural logic of digital adolescence coerces users into narrating themselves constantly, but not too perfectly – The P.N.G. understands that sincerity is currency, but so is irony[8]. The peculiarity of this experience is that it produces not only nostalgia for less connected lives[9], but a persistent longing for futures beyond our reach. Images of adolescence in the 1990s, and the early to late 2000s, feel charged with an emotional gravity disproportionate to our actual connection to them. This is where the concept of anemoia becomes central. Unlike traditional nostalgia, which presupposes lived memory, anemoia thrives in the gaps left by absence. It is less about returning to one's past than about mourning what one never possessed. For the P.N.G., anemoia is not fleeting but a dominant mode of feeling.

Svetlana Boym's distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia, in *The Future of Nostalgia*[10], offers a useful framework here, Restorative nostalgia longs to rebuild the lost

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[8] Danah Boyd speaks to this in I*t's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens: "Facebook expected users to provide "real names," but many teens I met offered up only their first name, preferring to select a last name of a celebrity, fictional character, or friend. These were but a few of the ways that teens provided what appeared to be fictitious information on their profiles. These practices allowed them to feel control over their profiles, particularly given how often they told me that it was ridiculous for sites to demand this information."*

[9] That being our childhood; where our access to technology was a privilege moderated by parental figures rather than a constant facet of daily life.

[10] Svetlana Boym (1959–2015) was a cultural theorist and professor of Slavic and comparative literature at Harvard University. Her work on nostalgia is foundational, particularly in distinguishing between different modes of nostalgic attachment, which is crucial for understanding the P.N.G.'s position. "The future of nostalgia," 2001, https://research.ebsco.com/c/xppotz/search/details/6nxbyinvo5?limiters=FT1%3AY&q=the%20future%20of%20nostalgia&searchMode=all.

home, to reconstruct the past as if wholeness was capable of being achieved[11]. Reflective nostalgia, by contrast, dwells in longing itself, acknowledging the impossibility of return[12]. The Nostalgia of the P.N.G. sits uncomfortably between the two. We cannot reconstruct the pre-total integration internet – we never lived it in the first place – because it goes against societal beliefs which demand perpetual forward growth. Instead, we sit with images, files, and fragments, holding onto their flatness as if it contained depth. In this way, the png scan of that FRUITs cover functioned less as an archival document and more as an affective surface onto which *I projected* longing. Mark Fisher's[13] notion of hauntology clarifies this further. When speaking about his book *Ghosts of My Life*, Fisher argues that contemporary culture is haunted not just by the past but by the futures that pasts once promised.

"The internet provides oppressive weight of the past... the accessibility of the past makes it hard for the new to emerge."

The cultural artefacts of the 1990s and 2000s do not merely evoke the past, they remind us of futures that never arrived. We were sold a lie – an internet that is open, playful and communal, rather than corporate, extractive, and addictive – and continue to believe in its eventuality, regressing our own development in the process. This doubleness of anemoia is one of the defining emotional registers of the P.N.G. It explains why images of early internet culture *hit so hard*. Artists like Olia Lialina have long understood this doubleness. 'My Boyfriend Came Back from the War' (1996) [Figure 3] insisted on preserving the peculiar vernacular of the web precisely because those aesthetic artefacts carried the intimacy of an adolescence, both digital and human. Against the industry's push to smooth the internet into invisible interfaces, Lialina celebrates its rough edges, keeping alive the cultural memory of the web as a space of play and possibility. Her work demonstrates how aesthetic debris creates a mode of intimacy: not sleek or efficient, but tender, clunky, and personal.

These digital artefacts held by the png format are not only aesthetic markers; they are

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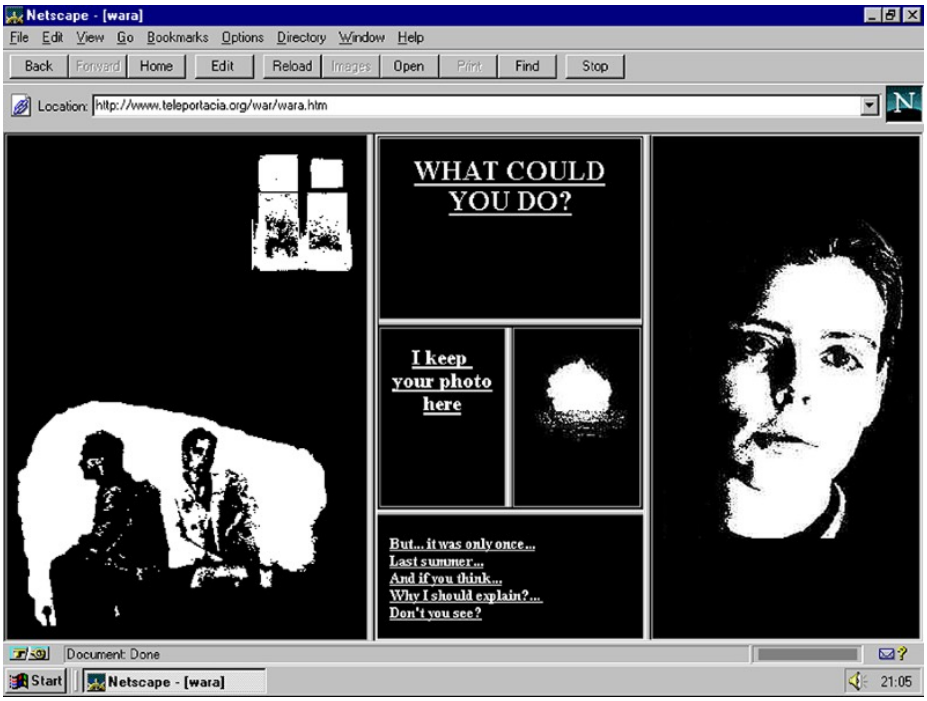
[11] *"Restorative nostalgia puts emphasis on nostos and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps. It believes that truth and tradition are absolute."* (p.41)

[12] *"Reflective nostalgia dwells in algia, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance. It values the shattered fragments of memory and temporal distance."* (p.49)

[13] Mark Fisher (1968–2017) was a British cultural theorist best known for his writings on popular culture, politics, and affect under late capitalism. In *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (2014), Fisher elaborates on "hauntology," the sense that we are haunted not only by the past but also by futures that were promised but never realised. This concept directly frames the P.N.G.'s condition, where early internet artefacts evoke not only nostalgia but also the weight of foreclosed futures.

[3]



Olia Lialina, *My Boyfriend Came Back from the War. After Dinner They Left Us Alone*, 1996, Screen-grab from *Frieze*.

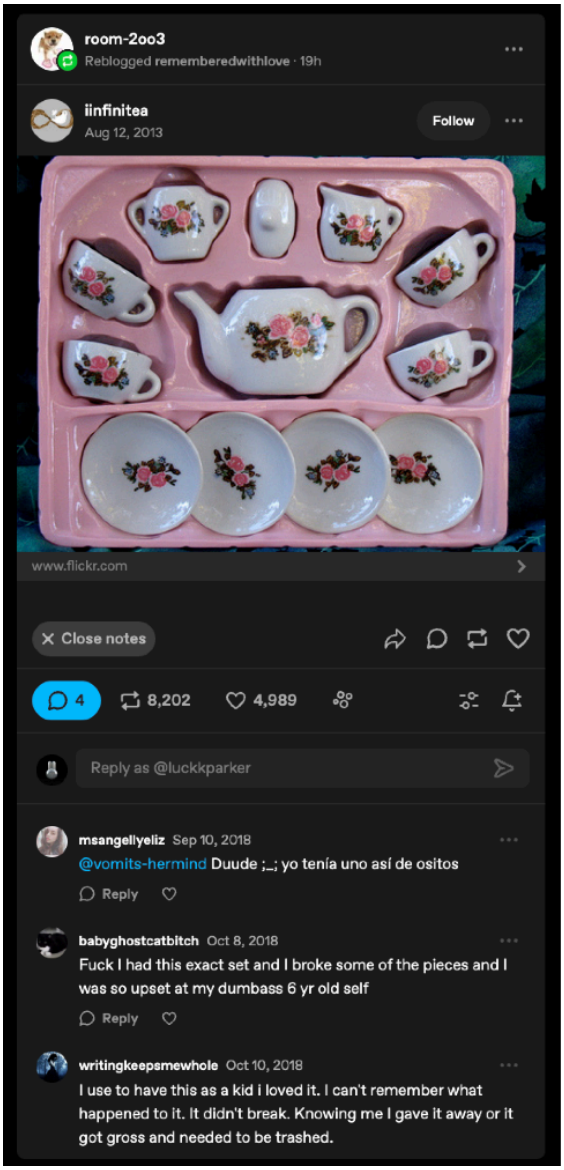
ghostly reminders of possibility. Tumblr also amplified this doubleness through its mechanics. Tumblr was porous. It invited users to engage in anonymous, fragmented, and affective ways. The reblog function -- Tumblr's defining feature – created a strange kind of intimacy [Figure 4], an image might pass through dozens of dashboards, accumulating tags, comments, or silence, each gesture layering the image with nostalgic value. The process of circulation blurs the distinction between personal and borrowed memory. Even though I had grown up in blank houses, always under-construction [Figure 5], the reblog acted as a mechanism of inheritance. To participate in adolescence, I held the memories of anonymous adolescent confessions as if they were my own – not to deceive others but to ground my journey of self-discovery in a projection of how I thought my adolescence should unfold. Over time, I collected these images of digital adolescence resulting in an archive of desire, longing, and attempted self-construction.

Traditional notions of adolescence place it as a time where teens piece together their identity from borrowed fragments – hand-me-downs, opinions from popular magazines, and diction from films. Now adolescence is actioned by constructing identity not from the specific inputs of our immediate environment, but from a general, algorithmically mediated archive of past lives[14]. This helps to explain why the P.N.G. is so often characterised by a sense of arrested development. The debris of digital adolescence(real or performed) surround us constantly, preventing our own clean rupture or maturation.

My generation is now made of adults[15] who are still engaging with adolescent debris; our sense of self is stuck in a feedback loop – consuming, reblogging, and re-performing fragments – that sustains us and keeps us suspended. There is a tenderness in this suspension, but also a tension. On one hand, anemoia provides comfort; it gives shape to our feelings of dislocation by anchoring them in images. On the other hand, it prevents our progression. If the png endures forever, then so too does the adolescent longing it carries. Unlike the jpeg, which degrades over time, the png holds us in stasis, offering no relief in decay. We remain adolescents in perpetuity – even as our bodies age – scrolling endlessly through images of what we never had. This is the condition of P.N.G., we feel at once too young and too late.

[14] It should be noted that the experiences and identities circulated online from the digital adolescence – which members of the P.N.G. base their understanding of the adolescent experience and notions of adulthood upon – are naive but not necessarily authentic or “real”.
[15] If we were to go by traditional metrics…

[4]



Room-2oo, “Reblog by @Room-2oo3 · 1 Image.” Screen-grab from *Tumblr*.

[5]

Luckk Parker, *Constructing*, 2025

Section Two: Stay Out of My Bedroom!

For the P.N.G., the bedroom is not simply a space of rest but a crucial site of becoming, a stage for both physical experimentation and networked connection [Figure 6]. It is here that our offline and online selves coalesce – the physical room full of laundry and mess, and the glowing screen through which we escape, connect or project. Paul Hodkinson[16] captured this doubleness in *Online Journals as Virtual Bedrooms? Young People, Identity and Personal Space*:

"The uncertainties and changes of youth are negotiated and marked out through the arrangement and rearrangement of bedroom space... users typically spend considerable time creating a unique overall look for their online journal, through the use of a range of images, symbols, and background designs symbolic of different facets of their identity"[17]

During my own adolescence, the bedroom often felt more like a waiting room rather than a home. As the child of a builder, I grew up in houses that were perpetually provisional – allowing no evidence of habitation. These rooms bore no history; they were transitional zones, holding spaces for a self that felt as if it were also under construction. Looking back, I understand my old bedrooms to be liminal zones – temporary containers for both my body and my emerging digital self.

This sense of the bedroom as containers of self-development is important when exploring digital adolescence. In *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*[18], Danah Boyd observed that bedrooms have increasingly become networked hubs, spaces where young people mediate intimacy through screens rather than in person[19]. With the erosion of third spaces – the cafes, shopping centres, and public parks where prior generations gathered –

[16] Paul Hodkinson is a sociologist of youth culture and digital media. He developed the concept of "bedroom culture," where teenagers' bedrooms operate as both physical and symbolic containers of identity work. This is particularly relevant to the P.N.G., as Hodkinson shows how digital spaces increasingly mirror the intimacy and self-curation historically tied to the bedroom.

[17] Paul Hodkinson and Sian Lincoln, "Online Journals as Virtual Bedrooms?," *Young* 16, no. 1 (February 1, 2008): 27–46, https://doi.org/10.1177/110330880701600103.

[18] Danah Boyd, "It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens," Choice Reviews Online 51, no. 12 (July 16, 2014): 51–7042, https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.51-7042.

[19] Ibid, p. 5: "Although some teens still congregate at malls and football games, the introduction of social media does alter the landscape. It enables youth to create a cool space without physically transporting themselves anywhere. And because of a variety of social and cultural factors, social media has become an important public space where teens can gather and socialize broadly with peers in an informal way. Teens are looking for a place of their own to make sense of the world beyond their bedrooms. Social media has enabled them to participate in and help create what I call networked publics.".

[6]

Adrienne Salinger , *Kirk B., 16, Seattle, Washington, 1984*, 1984, Screen-grab from *The New Yorker.*

bedrooms have absorbed the burden of social life. For the P.N.G. the bedroom is both a fortress and zoo enclosure. Moulded by parental warnings, sensational news reports, and genuine infrastructural collapse of public spaces, we spent more time in our bedrooms, trying to become within their confines.

The bedroom also operates as a framing device in both the literal and figurative sense. The bedframe itself became central to the development of my series. After a project where I invited strangers to talk about their dreams[20] – asking whether technology belonged in their dreamscapes, whether recurring dreams felt like omens – I found myself circling back to the bed as the ultimate stage of identity formation. With a background in painting, I began dismantling discarded bedframes and refashioning them into stretcher bars, stretching canvases from worn fitted sheets. The bedframe, once a container for sleep, sex, and solitude, became the skeleton of a painting, a literal framing device of the bedroom as a site of connection, meditation and personal growth. I found this process of self-flanderisation [Figure 7] – painting my compromising poses onto frames of my own construction – to be extremely useful in examining my own generation. By displaying these self-portraits, which carry the residue of my unsavoury habits, I was able to dissect the hostility which I had tied to my bedroom. Releasing shame, I had inherited about my body, my mess and my sexuality, through creating these confessional paintings allowed a switch to be flicked. To talk about my generation, I needed to be okay with putting out my own dirty laundry first.

In my practice, bed sheets took on an archival quality.

Each crease was a memory, each stain a history. In this way, the bedroom revealed itself as an archive of embodied presence. If adolescent life online was preserved through pngs, adolescent life in real life was preserved with fabric impressions; intimate, physical, but equally flat. Here, Mason Kimber's influence was pivotal. During my final year at UNSW, Kimber walked my studio class through his exhibition which was showing at the time. His *Future Relics* engage with memory, residue, and the archive as material – themes which resonate with my current practice – created from architectural impressions of his wife's childhood home [Figure 8], Kimber demonstrated how materials can hold memory in their folds and cracks. For me, the bedsheet became an analogue png: a fragile but enduring

[20]"Dream Conversations Part III." Uploaded by Luckk Parker, November 2023. https://luckk.com.au/dream-conversations.

[7]

Luckk Parker, *Framing Devices Part I*, 2024

[8]

Mason Kimber, *Ivory/Slide*, 2018, Screen-grab from *Sophie Gannon Gallery*

flatness through which intimacy and history could be read.

It would be irresponsible of me to make all these inflammatory claims about the P.N.G., and the bedroom, without addressing the elephant in the room: COVID-19. Teens have sought out the privacy of their bedroom at an increasing rate since the 1990s [Figure 9], globalisation and telecommunication advances played an important role in this lifestyle change, but no other generation since the *Lost Generation*[21] had to endure a pandemic during their formative years. Bedrooms became not only sleeping quarters but workspaces, classrooms, gyms, and therapist offices. The collapse of external infrastructures forced the P.N.G. into deeper intimacy with their personal framing devices. I remember my first year of university moving from in-person discussions to online zoom class, and suddenly my bedroom was visible to others. My academic performance was measured through online presence creating a strange doubling of my bedroom. A space that had been private – only known to me, and those who I had intensely screened beforehand – became performative, mediated through a camera. However, when class was over, my mask off, my computer screen remained open – our identities were lived entirely online.

This collapse between the digital and physical mirrored the conditions of digital adolescence itself, where private longings were made public through the flattened surface of the screen – the only difference was choice. The P.N.G. yearn for choice – the choice to connect or disconnect and not feel punished either way – but there is no choice anymore. We, as a cohort, muffle this unattainable longing by looking to a time in internet culture where personal desires were respected. For the P.N.G. the bedroom is not a retreat from the world – like days gone by – instead the bedroom, a container of the internet, is our world. It is the space where we navigate the tension between enclosure and exposure, between residue and projection – our knackered stage of identity formation.

If the internet's adolescence is marked by poor images, pixelated scans and enduring pngs, and the bedroom's adolescence marked by creased sheets – the hoarded objects within those rooms are where the two modes of adolescence meet – and inform each other.

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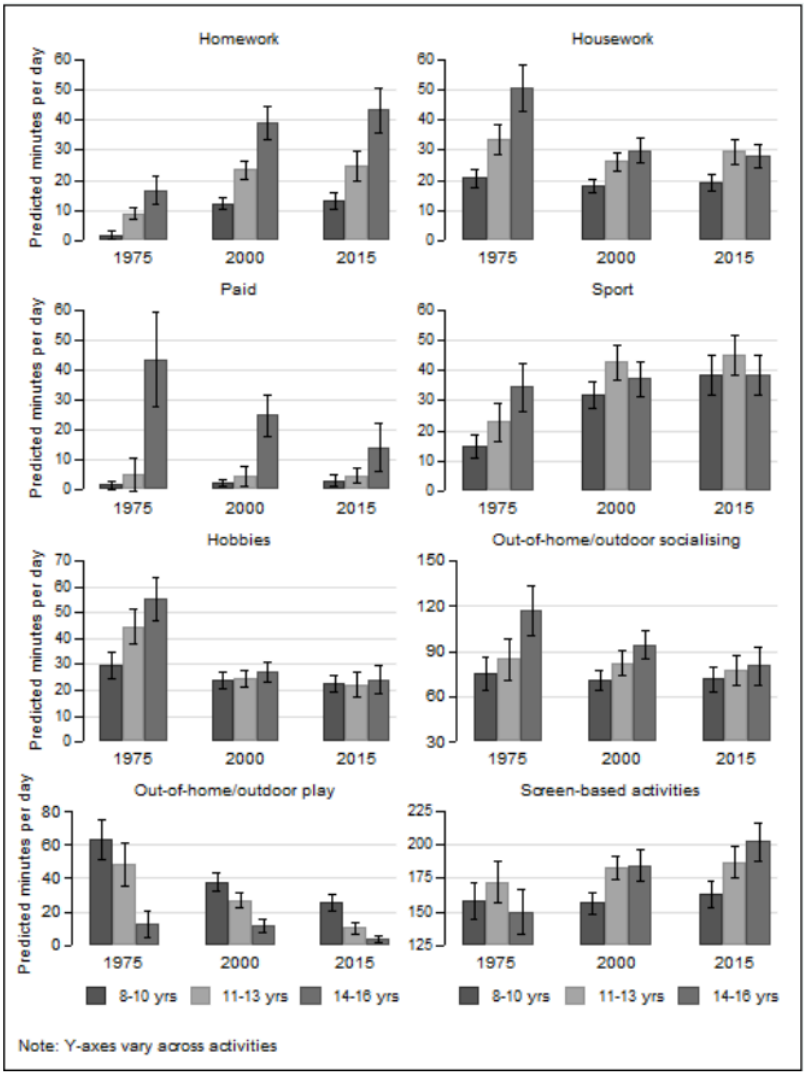
[21] Face. "The New Lost Generation." The Face, September 26, 2025. https://theface.com/culture/the-new-lost-generation-sean-monahan-americans-paris-cultural-commentary-substack-podcast.

[9]



Killian Mullen, *Figure II: Age group differences in predicted minutes (with 95% confidence intervals) in homework, housework, paid work, sport, hobbies, out-of-home/outdoor socialising, out-ofhome/outdoor play, and screen-based activities in 1975, 2000, and 2015,* 2018, Screen-grab from NIH

Section Three: Object Permanent

Memory is never stable; It shifts, distorts, embellishes, and forgets. Yet digital technology has profoundly altered this rhythm, tipping the balance between remembering and forgetting. I find myself constantly questioning the realness of my own memories. During Christmas lunch last year – with my dad's side of the family – I found myself in a conversation with my older cousin Matt. Whilst we were recounting moments from Christmas lunches between 2004 and 2008 – before our family dynamics became too complicated for at home celebrations – I mentioned his pet.

"Remember your gecko? I begged mum on the drive home if we could get one, she shut down that idea immediately."

I laughed, as I shared this memory, but Matt looked puzzled and responded:

"Evil[22], I had a snapping turtle, that thing was so dangerous now that I think back, but I definitely didn't have a gecko... maybe that was your other cousin lol"

I remembered, so clearly, holding its wriggly body in my hands, feeling jealous that my cool older cousin had a reptile – but none of that was real. The content I have consumed and my frayed memories are now tangled up – my nostalgia was rooted in a false reality and as a result my personal histories are a mishmash of collective and imagined moments. As Viktor Mayer-Schönberger wrote in *Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age* (2009):

"Since the beginning of time, for us humans, forgetting has been the norm and remembering the exception."[23]

For the P.N.G. we experience memory through three steps: we consume pngs of digital adolescence, we allow the images to be embedded into our emerging identities being formed in the bedroom, and then we buy objects for our bedrooms to reaffirm the importance of these false memories to our sense of self. The bedroom is the stage, and the objects within it are the props – framing devices that reveal as much about the P.N.G. as any digital artefact. In adolescence these objects rarely feel monumental – they are scattered, piled, or hidden. A

[22] This is a pet-name given to me by Matt– I was devilishly cute and terribly naughty as a child– It remains in use today.
[23] Viktor Mayer-Schönberger, Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age (2009), https://cyber.jotwell.com/the-cyberart-of-forgetting/.

dead AAA battery from a vibrator, a poster of Britney Spears curling at the edges, a shoebox of old birthday cards, a half-smoked joint – when looked at with care, these items disclose entire cultural logics, and expose the P.N.G.[Figure 10] They are hyper-nostalgic debris, caught between personal memory and collective imagination. Danah Boyd talks about the lives of teenagers in the early 2010s, highlighting a key difference between the lived experiences of Millennials and the P.N.G.:

"As teens transition from childhood, they try to understand how they fit into the larger world. They want to inhabit public spaces, but they also look to adults, including public figures, to understand what it means to be grown-up."[24]

The P.N.G. have a completely different experience of viewership to self-inform adolescent experiences – we look not at our immediate, but instead at people online and digital artefacts. We cosplay the transitional stages of previous generations, performing adolescence from our understanding of digital debris.

When I first moved into International House[25] I tried to interview as many of my dormmates – about their rooms – as I could. Why did they keep one object and discard another? What histories clung to the broken acoustic guitar in the corner of their room or the VHS tape in their bookshelf? I found that most objects could be traced to one of two sources: relics from childhood or items acquired to fabricate a sense of childhood. A plastic figurine precured from McDonald's one drunken evening would be displayed with as much reverence as a thrifted care bear that the owner had not actually grown up with. These things are not simply decorations; they are anchors, ways of conjuring stability for the P.N.G. who are navigating an incredibly amorphous moment, for an increasingly extended period.

Informed by these interviews conducted in my college dormitory – I attempted to materialise faceless portraits of the P.N.G. for *Framing Devices*. I collaged object pngs from my archive into surreal lived-in bedrooms [Figure 11] echoing a visual language similar to that of Jon Rafman's *You Are Standing In An Open Field* [Figure 12]. These clunky compositions speak to the awkwardness, and transitory nature of adolescence, whilst also questioning the

[24] Danah Boyd, "It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens," Choice Reviews Online 51, no. 12 (July 16, 2014): 51–7042, https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.51-7042.

[25] A "low-tier" college as described by Tristan Harwood – composed mostly of international students completing their exchange semester/year in Melbourne – a perfect place to investigate the global resonance of the issues explored in this paper.

[10]

Luckk Parker, *Framing Devices Part II*, 2025

[11]

Luckk Parker, *Untitled*, 2025

[12]

Jon Rafman, *You Are Standing In An Open Field (Waterfall)*, 2015, Screen-grab from *Frieze*.

authenticity of the identities emerging from the P.N.G. Some of the portraits flicker, accompanied by liminal soundscapes, and others remain completely flat[26].

This debris recontextualised in *Framing Devices* is not neutral; It both comforts and infantilises. Jean Twenge, a psychologist with a particular interest in Gen Z, has documented how members of "iGen" tend to reach developmental milestones far later than prior generations[27]. Twenge attributes time spent indoors and online – conditions exacerbated by parental caution and social necessity – to be a leading factor in this generational shift. For the P.N.G. objects reinforce this condition. To decorate one's most intimate space with a Tamagotchi, cartoon plushies, and faux vintage posters is not only to remember childhood but an active attempt to extend it[28], to linger in its softened borders rather than rupture them.

Lucia Hierro's oversized objects speak directly to this condition [Figure 13]. Her large-scale soft sculptures of grocery bags, coins, and domestic goods elevate the ephemera of everyday life into monuments of cultural memory. By inflating the scale of minor objects, she reveals how identity and nostalgia are encoded in the most banal things: candy wrappers, dollar bills, spice packets. My plywood cutouts perform a similar function. Domestic and digital fragments – pngs of a Sex Toy, a Furby, a Nang Cannister – are scaled up, dispersed on the floor, and recontextualised as communal markers of adolescent experience. Like Hierro, I position private debris within broader cultural economies of memory, nostalgia, and identity.

This is where arrested development intersects with digital imagery. Just as our rooms fill with hyper-nostalgic junk, our feeds overflow with pngs of adolescence; creating a feedback loop of consumption and yearning, fulfilling short-term dopamine cravings but ultimately leading to nothing of substance – both physical and digital artefacts work in tandem to suspend the P.N.G. We do not simply consume them; we reflect them, becoming like the images we

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[26] This series is also informed by Olia Lialina whose net art foregrounds the peculiar vernacular of early web aesthetics rather than smoothing them into invisibility. Lialina's works celebrate the internet as it is, embracing its divine framework, she says "There is currently a push within the tech industry to stop people from seeing the system architecture of the World Wide Web or distinguishing between what's inside and outside the browser. For instance, so many things are presented on apps now instead of websites, even though apps are just websites in "kiosk mode." I really think it's a crime because web browsers are the most empowering medium that we've ever had. That's why I insist on making them visible" — Marisa Olson, "Artforum," *Artforum*, January 8, 2024, https://www.artforum.com/columns/olia-lialina-discusses-visibility-and-network-portraiture-on-the-world-wide-web-247062/.

[27] E.g. driving, dating, moving out, securing jobs

[28] Lindsay Dodgson, "Millennials and Gen Zers Are Hooked on Plushies — and That's Good News for the Toy Market," Business Insider, January 12, 2025, https://www.businessinsider.com/plushies-millennials gen-z-hooked-toy-sales-happiness-2025-1.

[13]

Lucia Hierro, *Vecinos, 2020,* Screen-grab from *PIN-UP magazine.*

engage with; just as a png resists degradation, so too do we resist the passage of time, locked into loops of longing that blur adolescence and adulthood.

The file format metaphor is not incidental to Framing Devices. I first became aware of the technical might of the png during my undergraduate BFA at UNSW. Gerwyn Davies – my first university professor – gave a twenty minute monologue on the importance of saving your critical assessment files in either a tiff or png format. Davies, over the years, had witnessed hundreds of photographs come through his submissions folder with low resolution or file corruption due to the dreaded unreliability of the jpeg format. His passionate lecture on the subject impacted me deeply; in that dusty underground classroom I became hyper-aware that every image in my family's photo iCloud was a jpeg file. This moment stuck with me... clearly. I came to understand, through Davie's frenzied speech, that repeated editing, and saving of the same file deteriorated its original value – in a university context – from High Distinction to Credit (at best). The png, unlike the jpeg, was created to endure; and it is this technical durability that has sustained the digital adolescence both in the ether and our collective consciousness.

The png is the file format of arrested development. It refuses to decay, refuses to change; preserving every pixel, every edge, every trace of its past life. My generation, too, exists in this lossless mode, carrying memories that are not our own as if they were pristine files, refusing the natural blur of forgetting. Of course, no format is truly permanent. Hard drives fail, servers collapse, links rot. It should be noted that this is also the case for some members of the P.N.G. -- many people within my generation are attaining the milestones that we attach to adulthood, but their achievements aren't representative of the greater cohort. The png's endurance is only relative, just as our nostalgia is only partial; but this illusion of permanence has power. When I scroll past a png of an early web interface it feels both like a historical document and a mirror – I see not only what once was but what I continue to carry.

Conclusion

If the png functions in this essay as both metaphor and monument then *Framing Devices* is where those ideas become tangible. Practice metabolises them, producing objects and environments that never decay but never quite resolve.

This series moves between digital collage [Figure 14], projection, repurposed textiles [Figure 15], plywood cutouts[Figure 16], and sound. Each element literalises metaphors of flatness and residue. These works are not clean translations of memory but unstable hybrids, holding together both the provisionality of adolescence and the permanence of the digital archive.

In this sense, my work *Framing Devices* extends the logic of the poor image into material form. Just as the png persists as an affective surface — endlessly recirculated yet always flat — so too do these objects preserve residues of adolescence without resolving them into polished narratives. They do not attempt to monumentalise nostalgia but to handle it as substance: folded, stained, pixelated, and projected.

[14]

Luckk Parker, *Untitled*, 2025

[15]

Luckk Parker, *Untitled*, 2025

[16]

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