



MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY COMMODITIES

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*Valuing the things we buy today
as the heritage of tomorrow*

Smart Doll uses 'espionage' powers for education as part of a new museum project

A controversial smart doll has been reprogrammed to enlighten adults rather than potentially spying on children. My Friend Cayla dolls made headlines earlier this year when a German watchdog classified them as illegal espionage apparatus and said parents should deactivate them. But one of the dolls renamed Mikayla has been re-purposed by University of Exeter researchers, and can now have different conversations about what she's made from, consumer culture, and the potential and consequences of internet-connected things.

Mikayla will act as guide to visitors at a temporary gallery run by the Museum of Contemporary Commodities (MoCC) – an art-geography research project that invites members of the public into conversation about the future heritage of consumer culture. The four-day exhibition, at the Royal Geographical Society in London, will invite people to consider and discuss modern lifestyles and their impact on people and the environment. “Mikayla is a good example of how science and art can work together to explore urgent questions about how we live, and the social and environmental consequences of that”, said Paula Crutchlow, artist and doctoral researcher in Human Geography at the University of Exeter.

“We've re-programmed the doll to speak in a sophisticated and hopefully witty and entertaining way that engages adults in detailed and sometimes surreal and bizarre conversation about commodities, what they are and where they come from. The idea is to provoke deeper thought about urgent issues like why and how we make so many things, and who is actually benefitting from the wash of cheap goods we're used to living with.” The doll is one of a number of digital interactive items that form part of the Museum of Contemporary Commodities.

“The potential for internet-connected smart things to make our daily life activities easier, more convenient or enjoyable is great, especially when we know exactly what they are doing, how and why”, said Ms Crutchlow. “E-commerce is the fastest growing retail market in Europe and the main issue is what kind of access these objects have to our private lives, who decides what they can 'see' or 'hear' and when, who gets to own and use that data and for what purpose.”

The project brings together Ms Crutchlow's expertise in performance with research in material culture done by Professor Ian Cook. Professor Cook said: “This idea developed out of our common interests in the ways in which contemporary commodity culture would become tomorrow's heritage. We wanted to encourage public discussion about what future generations would inherit from our age of globalisation, mass production and mass consumption. We were inspired by the Japanese RankKing RankQueen shops which use department store sales data to sell the top three, five or ten best-selling toothbrush holders, sweet potato candies, anything. We thought, what if the people visiting our shop donated commodities for display, and then valued them according to their convenience or sense of justice, for example? Which ones would rise to the top and what significance would they have for our future heritage and what we value about it?”

The project will be installed at the gallery at the Royal Geographical Society on Exhibition Road, London from August 24-27 2017, open from 10am-4pm each day. Entry is free.

Visitors are invited to become curators themselves by adding something they feel passionate about to the MoCC collection. The museum's staff including Ms Crutchlow, Professor Cook and a team of artists, technologists and material culture researchers will be on hand throughout the event for further conversation about the current value of contemporary commodities.

Special events:

Data workshop, 10-12.30pm, Fri 25 August 2017

FREE (Places limited)

Explore and discuss the data surveillance processes at play in the immediate surroundings of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) with the MoCC team and Data Activist Alison Powell, LSE.

Book online at: <http://bit.ly/MoCCworkshop>

Conversation - Our future heritage: curating contemporary commodity culture, 2-4pm, Fri 25 August 2017

FREE (Places limited)

With MoCC co-founders Paula Crutchlow & Ian Cook, V&A Senior Curator Corinna Gardner, Cultural Geographer Merle Patchett, Sociologist Lee Marshall and researcher, curator and publisher D-M Withers.

Book online at: <http://bit.ly/MoCCFutureHeritage>

For more information, visit www.mocccguide.net

Museum of Contemporary Commodities (MoCC)

is an art-geography research & exhibition project investigating the deep links between data, trade, place and values that shape our everyday lives.

MoCC was co-founded by artist-researcher Paula Crutchlow from Blind Ditch and Cultural Geographer Ian Cook from followthethings.com and the University of Exeter. The project is being developed in partnership with Furtherfield and a growing number of artists, academics, technologists and members of the public.

Our online commodity collection enables you to add your own commodity to the museum, browse, interact with and re-value the exhibits. Open 24 hours a day to anyone with a digitally networked device at:

<http://www.moccguidenet/>

Blind Ditch

followthethings.com

FURTHERFIELD

UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER



STATE MACHINES
Art, Work, and Identity in an Age of Planetary-Scale Computation

This project has been produced with the support of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) and funded by University of Exeter, Arts Council England – Lottery Fund and the Economic and Social Science Research Council.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS:

Paula Crutchlow is an independent artist and performance maker who has been working as a director and dramaturg with storytellers, musicians, dance artists and new writing projects for over twenty years. Alongside this, her work with artist collective Blind Ditch creates collaborative and unexpected happenings in everyday spaces; often using participatory approaches and digital media to engage publics as thinking citizens and active spectators. Paula is currently Artistic Adviser for Adverse Camber and is a board member of B-side multimedia arts festival. As a scholar and educator she was an Associate Lecturer in Theatre at Dartington College of Arts, Devon 2001-10, and is now an ESRC funded Doctoral Researcher in Critical Human Geography at the University of Exeter.

<http://www.blindditch.org/>

Dr Ian Cook is a cultural geographer, commodity activist and founder of followthethings.com, a spoof online shop, resource, database and fieldsite stocked with provocative 'follow the thing' work by academics, students, filmmakers, artists, journalists and others. He writes as 'Ian Cook et al' to acknowledge the collaborative nature of all of his work. He is a member of the Global Coordination Team of Fashion Revolution and coordinates Exeter University's Cultural and Historical Geographies Research Group.

<http://www.followthethings.com/>

Furtherfield is an internationally renowned arts organisation specialising in labs, exhibitions, and debates for diverse participation with emerging technologies. At Furtherfield Gallery and Furtherfield Lab in London's Finsbury Park, Furtherfield engages people with digital creativity through unique collaborations with international networks of artists, researchers, and partners, seeking new imaginative responses as digital culture changes the world and the way we live.

<http://www.furtherfield.org>

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