Live Visuals in Virtual Venues:

A Case Study of Project VILL4N and Underground Audiovisual Cultures

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MediaAC Academic Director, Aalborg University

Morten Søndergaard

and the

Media Arts Cultures Consortium

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Media Arts Cultures

Supervisor

Morten Søndergaard, PhD

By

Gabriela Cecilia Manzano Canales

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Abstract

This thesis studies Live Visuals and VJing practices within virtual venues and online internet-based art scenes. The research identifies a significant gap in the academic literature in relation to Media Art and the entertainment music industry. The main case study is 'Project VILL4IN', an online based artistic collective and audiovisual library. By examining VJing in various cultural contexts, such as the Salvadoran VJ scene and the VR Chat Club Scene, this study aims to discover similarities and differences in the praxis of VJs from diverse backgrounds. The central research question is: How do digital platforms democratize access to arts and cultures in the context of Live Visuals? Complementary questions include: How is VJing performed in virtual spaces? And how does the VJing community empower artists? This thesis further examines how different interfaces construct knowledge, and create cultures that transition between the digital and physical realms. Findings indicate that digital platforms are a key role for community building through a collaborative economy and personal and professional development, driven by strong ideological beliefs. By documenting and analyzing the practices of VILL4IN and comparing them to other global VJing scenes, this thesis contributes to the broader discourse on media art, technology, and cultural production. How can a virtual collective can blur the lines between the east, west, north and south?

Keywords: VJ, VJing, Live Visuals, Virtual Venues, VILL4IN, Vaporwave, Cyberpunk, Online Worlds

Declaration of Authorship

I, Gabriela Cecilia Manzano Canales, born on the: 29th of September 1994 in: San Salvador, El Salvador, hereby declare,

1. that I have written my Master Thesis myself, have not used other sources than the ones stated and moreover have not used any illegal tools or unfair means,

2. that I have not publicized my Master Thesis in my domestic or any foreign country in any form to this date and/or have not used it as an exam paper.

3. that, in case my Master Thesis concerns my employer or any other external cooperation partner, I have fully informed them about title, form and content of the Master Thesis and have his/her permission to include the data and information in my written work.

Berlin, Germany. 07 of June, 2024.

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Introduction

The fast evolution of creative technologies has profoundly impacted various forms of artistic expression, including the field of live visuals and VJing (Video Jockeying). The emergence of Live Visuals performances in online spaces and the consequent formation of artistic collectives has democratized the access to arts and cultures, creating new spaces for creative expression and community building, especially for those living in economical and geographical peripheries. This thesis explores these dynamics through the case study of "Project VILL4IN," an online artistic collective and audiovisual library, examining how community influences the practice of VJing across different cultural contexts.

This thesis aims to address a notable gap in academic literature concerning the intersection of media art, technology, and cultural production, particularly in the context of VJing and live visuals. The central research question guiding this study is: How do digital platforms democratize access to arts and cultures in the context of live visuals? Complementary questions are: How is VJing performed in virtual spaces? How do digital platforms facilitate and influence practices across the VJing community? And how does the VJing community empower artists?

Existing studies on live visual performances, such as those by Gibson et al. (2022) and Faulkner & D-Fuse (2006), provide a historical and conceptual foundation for understanding the evolution of this Live Visuals. However, these works primarily focus on scenes in the global north, leaving a gap in the literature regarding VJing practices in other cultural and technological contexts. This thesis seeks to fill this gap by exploring the unique dynamics of VJing in virtual venues and its impact on artists from diverse backgrounds, such as the salvadorean scene.

Chapter 1. Background of the study

Myself as the site of research

Starting this thesis has been a challenge in itself. The never-ending search for perfection has put me in a state of 'freeze' for almost a year, chasing after the idea of perfection caused by the impostor syndrome. So, here I am, finally breaking the ice with an approach that's a bit different: autoethnographic research. I will present my ideas in ways that other students, artists, or designers will relate to. This is not just me writing about my praxis but looking at my learning journey with a magnifying glass to find the connections to a broader cultural and social phenomenon. With the methodology of autoethnography, in combination with digital ethnography and semi-structured interviews, I will submerge these words in the world of music visuals.

Growing up in El Salvador during the 2000s and being interested in the music industry was an impossible mission. In a context where arts and culture have historically received limited funding, our society's exposure to these worlds was limited to what digital and traditional media offered. Additionally, given the country's criminality rates, which ranked among the highest globally, it is understandable why many internationally renowned artists bypassed our region on their music tours. The internet served as a window to a broader world and underscored a sense of exclusion. Not only were we geographically isolated, but the scarcity of financial resources made hosting large-scale music events a rarity. This landscape profoundly shaped my understanding of media's critical role as a connector to the broader cultural and artistic world, a theme central to my thesis.

Back in 2014, I was coming to terms with the idea that a career in the music industry might just be a distant dream. During this time, I began connecting the dots: immersing

myself in articles about media art, watching audiovisual performances on YouTube, and drawing inspiration from a Chemical Brothers DVD (The Chemical Brothers: Don't Think, 2012). The turning point came when I stumbled upon a book titled 'VJ: Audio-Visual Art and VJ Culture' (Faulkner & D-Fuse, 2006) in Tripode Audiovisual, my first job's library. This epiphany was more than just a moment of discovery; it was the beginning of my professional journey where my passion for music, visuals, and culture could converge: VJing.

My research began with the goal of understanding the VJing landscape in El Salvador. My curiosity started with the realization that most resources available online or in texts like 'VJ Culture' were primarily centered on scenes in the global north and a reality profoundly different from mine. In my exploration, I was able to identify at least ten individuals in El Salvador actively involved in fields related to VJing. This initial discovery encouraged me to broaden my research to include the entire Central American region. I mapped out visual artists, companies, and collectives in Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica, seeking a fuller picture of the regional scene. What I found was a scene that was small and isolated.

It is essential to share this part of my story in my thesis, as it illustrates how digital media can bridge knowledge across disconnected societies. Identifying this void in our local music scene was pivotal. Alongside other passionate individuals, I joined what can be considered the first generation of VJs in El Salvador. Interestingly, we were strangers, yet we engaged in similar pursuits. This experience highlights the emergence of a new artistic movement within the constraints of our local context.

As I sit down to write this text, now living in Berlin, I find myself working in the industry I once dreamt of joining. Positioning myself as one of the sites of research has

helped me acknowledge the diverse experiences I have encountered in the field. My path has transitioned from working as a VJ freelancer at underground music events in El Salvador under the name of 'Koikill' to being a motion designer in a corporate studio, creating visual content for concerts and events. Reflecting on my journey, I realize the significant role that various collectives and platforms played in my development as an artist and designer. Proactivity is only enough if there is an expert to lead the way. Therefore, I recognize the support I received at different career stages. This path reflects the nature of this industry, based on community and shared knowledge. Project VILL4IN, an online artistic collective, notably influences this journey. It stands out not only for its global reach but also for its impact on a new generation of visualists.

Problem Identification

The fundamental problem at the center of my thesis is the identification of a significant research gap in the music industry, mainly centered on the relationship between visuals and music. The gap is even more noticeable in less-explored areas such as digital scenes, like the VILL4IN community, artistic practices within virtual worlds, and how these practices are performed in physical spaces such as Latin America. Considering its increasing relevance, academic literature must provide more insight into VJing's practice in culturally and technologically diverse contexts. My study intends to close this gap by researching the practice of VJing in various cultural contexts, emphasizing the role that digital platforms play in these activities. I have also identified less research regarding VJing performances in virtual and digital scenarios, which should be included in academic literature from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Research Questions

Through this investigation, I aim to discover similarities between the praxis of VJs from different backgrounds. The central research question guiding my thesis is: How do digital platforms democratize access to arts and cultures in the context of Live Visuals? I seek to respond to this query through a subset of questions that will complement the thesis: How is VJing performed in virtual spaces? How do digital platforms facilitate and influence practices across the VJing community? And How does the VJing community empower artists?

Scope of the research

The intersection of media art, technology, VJing, and music is not widely studied, and finding literature has been a challenge. This gap has led to an ever-growing ramification of topics that will remain unexplored. The history of Live Visuals is outside this thesis's scope since the latest book, "Live Visuals: History, Theory, and Practice" by Gibson et al. (2022), covers an extensive historical and conceptual development of this practice. While the conceptual frameworks of Virtual Reality (VR) technologies significantly describe immersion experiences, I will not cover these topics profoundly. Therefore, my research focuses on the practice of creating and broadcasting visuals in different virtual venues and its effect on building digital communities and spreading culture. The main connector across the backgrounds I am covering is the shared profession of VJing. Project VILL4IN is my main case study, and the secondary theme of research is the relationship between visuals and music in less-explored virtual environments and their impact in physical spaces such as Latin America.

Relevance of the study

Festival posters usually spotlight musicians and DJs, but the figure and work of the VJs, both literally and metaphorically, tend to be hidden in the background behind the crowd. This study aims to provide insights into the current state and future of VJing, contributing to the broader discourse on media art, technology, and cultural production.

This research acknowledges a notable gap in the literature about VJing and live music visuals, which remains to be explored in academic discourse. By focusing on this niche, this thesis aims to shed light on disseminating knowledge and cultures beyond borders.

Goals

The primary goal of my thesis is to contribute to the existing literature on live visuals, Vjing, and audiovisual performance, with a particular emphasis on the online scenes of Vjing, which have been less explored than geographically located music scenes. My research will mainly focus on how the interfaces of digital platforms shape interactions, construct knowledge, and cultivate audiovisual cultures that transition from the digital to the physical realm. This research aims to fill literature gaps in our understanding of online Vjing scenes, examining them through the lens of media art theory.

From an autoethnographic standpoint, my intention extends to documenting and archiving the audiovisual scenes I am involved in within an academic framework. This approach will not only provide a scholarly perspective on these scenes but also preserve and validate the experiences and insights gained through the years by the members of these communities. By doing so, I aim to bridge the gap between theoretical constructs and practical application, enriching the academic discourse with firsthand experiences from the

world of VJing and live visuals.

Furthermore, this research will explore how the digital VJing scene is experienced within the Salvadoran context since most literature predominantly centers on North American or European contexts. An essential aspect of this perspective is to expose the unique challenges VJs face with limited access to resources, such as high-end hardware and software. This research is not just an academic pursuit but a personal journey to showcase the underexplored fields of the VJing world.

To address the research questions effectively, I will pursue a series of key objectives based on different research pillars:

1. Practical exploration: To investigate and compare the practice, ideas, and creative methods for content creation, visual performance, and distribution employed by VJs and collectives involved in virtual scenes situated in diverse geographical locations to compare the commonalities of Vjing across different cultural and geographical landscapes.

2. Digital platforms: To analyze the role and impact that interfaces and digital platforms play in the Vjing scene to understand how they have become an essential medium to democratize access to art and culture across the globe, facilitating community building and influencing visualists practices.

3. Community: To explore the relationship dynamics of the VJing scene, examining how different virtual collectives and individual visualists operate in various digital platforms.

4. Aesthetic Ideologies: Explore the underlying ideologies that drive the creative work. This includes understanding the motivations and ideological frameworks that

influence VJs and visual artists.

5.   Technological Evolution: To analyze how new technologies are expanding the field of work of live visuals and examine how these advancements are reshaping VJs' responsibilities and the future of their roles.

These research pillars aim to provide a comprehensive state of the art of the VJing scene and its future, offering essential insights into the intersection of media art, technology, design, and cultural production.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework.

Definition of Live Visual Performances

To categorize the audiovisual practices included in this thesis, I will focus exclusively on Live Visual Performances (LVP) concerning the music industry. For this categorization, I will work with the concept of LVP developed by Donna Leishman (2022), which describes it as a 'mediated experience fostered by the intermedial space of merged sound and image, shared during a live, specific, time-bound performance that will eventually come to an end' (p. 267).

It is essential to broaden the spectrum of VJing to align with the previously defined concept of Live Visual Performances. Although VJs popularized live visuals, this practice is no longer exclusive to them. Live visuals are produced and performed by different professionals, depending on the event's production process, scene, industry, and scale. In my thesis, I will refer to the role of generating and performing live visuals as a "visualist" to ensure the inclusivity of different professionals, industries, and creative processes.

Therefore, Live Visual Performances (LVP) in the context of the Music Industry is the practice of producing images and audiovisual experiences that can be pre-produced or created on-site, shared in real-time with an audience during a live, site-specific, virtual or real, time-bound performance that will come to an end.

Technological evolution

"Live Visuals: History, Theory, and Practice" by Gibson et al. (2022) covers an extensive historical and conceptual development of this practice. This source of literature impacted the theoretical framework for my thesis. The most significant input for my thesis from this source is the realization that Live Visuals have evolved in parallel with how we relate to technology.

Therefore, it is essential to situate the emergence of Live Visuals in virtual spaces as a natural consequence of technological evolution. Goodfellow and Gibson conceptualize these relationships using the term 'Intensities.' "Three key intensities have shaped the new millennium: Firstly, there are developments within technology and how they have enmeshed culture within digital systems. Secondly, the understanding that the concept of 'nature' must be extended to include technology and the fragility of the planet due to the climate crisis. The final intensity is the overwhelming sense of melancholy which is performed in contemporary art and Live Visual culture as we come to terms with our entanglement with technological systems." (Goodfellow & Gibson, 2022)

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari developed the concept of 'Intensity' in A Thousand Plateaus (1978). It describes 'forces' that are hard to find tangibly but whose effects may be felt on a social and psychological level (Buchanan, 2020). Intensities are flows of matter and energies that can be categorized as strata. These are the geological/material strata, the biological or living strata, and the technosemiological or informational strata. (Goodfellow & Gibson, 2022)

Utilizing Goodfellow & Gibson's (2022) conceptualization of intensities, I classify the impacts of technological evolution on Live Visual Performances (LVPs) into three interconnected categories: environmental, psychological, and social. The influence of these 'stratas' is evident in the development of virtual venues for live performances. In this context, I will refer to LVPs in Virtual environments as V-LVPs. In the following sections, I will explore how these impacts are evident in virtual venues, setting the foundation for my case study.

The Environmental Impact

Firstly, technological advancements enable us to inhabit and engage with spaces that

transcend physical boundaries, aligning with Deleuze's concept of intensities concerning material and geological strata. This concept also resonates with Gibson's discussion on technological intensities: new technologies have transformed how images are processed in real time. This evolution has expanded the possibilities for audio-visual performances and facilitated the creation of complex multiplayer environments and expansive, dynamic virtual worlds (Gibson, 2022). These developments lay the foundational concepts for the material and geological constructs of Virtual Venues.

Virtual Venues are the digital spaces where Virtual Live Visual Performances (V-LVPs) occur. Different online infrastructures can host virtual venues. Usually, these platforms were not exclusively designed to host virtual concerts, raves, or LVPs, but they are often repurposed from their original intent to facilitate online gatherings. The characteristics of these websites or platforms are being leveraged and transformed to mediate the cultural experience.

Virtual venues include a variety of online spaces. These include live streaming platforms such as YouTube and Twitch, as well as 3D social worlds in Virtual Reality like VRChat. Additionally, hybrid gamified social worlds and video games such as Second Life, Final Fantasy XIV, Fortnite, and Roblox are popular hosting V-LVPs.

Game worlds have increasingly been repurposed as virtual venues, with examples such as Fortnite hosting festivals and concerts, a trend that existed pre-pandemic but gained immense popularity during and after the COVID-19 outbreak. Since 2018, Fortnite has consistently innovated as a platform for virtual events, integrating live events into its broader narrative and establishing itself as a mainstream platform for V-LVPs. (Fortnite Wiki, n.d.-a).

The first concert on this platform featured electronic producer and DJ Marshmello in 2019 and lasted approximately 10 minutes (Fortnite Wiki, n.d.-c). In 2020, during widespread lockdowns, Travis Scott's Astronomical event served as a virtual alternative to his Astroworld Tour, occurring from April 23 to 25, with each show lasting about 9 minutes. This event attracted over 12 million unique players, with a total of 45.8 million participants across all five shows (Fortnite Wiki, n.d.-c). Astronomical was promoted similarly to a real-life tour, using typical music festival communications to engage audiences. Epic Games even advised attendees to arrive "early" as servers would "close" once the show began, mimicking the experience of attending a physical venue. The event was marketed as a "one-of-a-kind musical journey" and an "other-worldly experience" (Díaz-Salgado Collado, 2021). Another example is Ariana Grandes Rift tour in 2021. (Fortnite Wiki, n.d.-b)

The reaction of the public to the concert is documented on YouTube. Game streamers' reactions are a good reference point for exploring the reception of this event because they are experts in video games and gamified platforms. For example, a positive response is displayed with quotes like "I even got the chills" (Ninja, 2020), referring to the start of the event, or "I ended up even sweating" (Ari Gameplays, 2020). "I'm speechless. (...) way better than anything I could even imagine for an in-game concert. It was more than just a concert; it was literally like you've been immersed in an amazing music video concert experience. Chef's kiss." (Pokimane, 2020)

This reception demonstrates that digital concerts are an alternative way of "attending" a live event and evidences the viability of Virtual Venues as an alternative mode of experiencing Live Events (Díaz-Salgado Collado, 2021). The unique phenomenon of "post-concert depression" (Sheets, 2021), typically associated with physical events, was also

observed in the digital realm when users returned to the lobby. "Oh my god. We're back. This is so weird" (Ninja, 2020). This digital concert provoked a meta-hit of reality when leaving an outer-worldly experience within the virtual world.

Livestream platforms such as Twitch and YouTube also serve as virtual venues, hosting various underground virtual performances. Collectives utilize these platforms extensively, including the Dustrial Inc. Twitch Channel. Project VILL4IN's VOID TV is an excellent example of the expansion of virtual venues into broader virtual scenes that are moved not only by the technological but also by an ideological and emotional intensity, which will be discussed further in the case study section of my thesis. Additionally, 24/7 livestream radios on YouTube, like Ryan Celcius Channel, represent other forms of gatherings in Virtual Venues. Chat rooms are a crucial component of livestream platforms, serving as one of several user interfaces for audience interaction.

Interfaces

As stated at the beginning of the chapter, Live visuals have evolved along with the technology used to create them. "The evolution of live visual performance has paralleled the evolution of live electronic music. Artists worked directly with physical materials in the 1960s: magnetic tape for audio and coloured gels and oils in psychedelic light shows. The 1980s brought a focus on devices, with musicians performing on hardware synthesizers, while early VJs worked with videocassette decks and analogue video synthesizers. The laptop then became a prominent element in both electronic music and live visual performances from the 1990s onward. This stripped away the material specificities and instrumental affordances to performing both music and visuals on a general-purpose device. While the generic nature of the computer took away idiomaticity, a common platform uniting sonic and visual media

has created opportunities for tighter coupling between the ocular and the aural. Without device or material specificities, the interface has become the determining factor in the affordances of a computer-based audio-visual performance system". (Correia & Tanaka, 2022)

Virtual venues open the possibilities for new ways of interaction between attendees, visualists, and performers. In V-LVPs, these interfaces vary widely and include graphical user interfaces (GUIs) such as chat rooms, gamified interfaces to interact with other users or the performer, and fully immersive environments facilitated by Virtual Reality (VR) technology. Each interface type offers a unique way for users to interact and engage with content and other users within the platform.

It is also possible to interact with crafted identities. We can embody different virtual representations in virtual spaces: avatars, virtual identities, aliases, or even anonymity. Performers can be digitally rendered as entirely generated virtual idols, like Hatsune Miku, or as replicas of real-world figures, such as the digital human of Billie Eilish in Fortnite. Justin Bieber's XR wave performance is an excellent example of gamified interfaces and virtual replicas of a real performer (Justin Bieber YouTube Channel, 2021). Therefore, I am expanding Gibson's conceptualization of interfaces as a medium that connects other audience members or with the performer.

Democratic Interfaces

Jordà (2002) developed the concept of 'Democratic Interfaces.' He conceptualizes democratic interfaces in terms of user accessibility and affordances. "Tangible interfaces afford the immediacy of physicality but are not always viable or scalable in some scenarios,

such as audience participation or online performance. Specialized tangible interfaces are not universally available, which "is not a minor feature when considering the design of popular and 'democratic' new music interfaces." Interfaces mediate information, and in the context of LVPs, they promote access to shared culture and information with the access of technologies such as laptops or mobile phones. "Mice (and joysticks to a minor extent) have another important quality: they are universally available, which is not a minor feature when considering the design of popular and ''democratic'' new music interfaces. For that reason, FMOL is also a mouse-driven musical instrument (which allows simultaneous multiparametric control)." (Jordà, 2002)

The psychological Impact

Goodfellow and Gibson's (2022) second intensity can also be framed within the psychological impact of technology regarding V-LVPs. He states that the permeation of the technological and informational world into every aspect of life provokes any idea of nature as something separated from modern society, provoking a feeling of 'Romance' regarding nature.

Creating and interacting within virtual venues psychologically impact virtual attendees and those involved in creating experiences within these online spaces. Goodfellow and Gibson (2022) also states this as the final intensity of shaping LVPs in the 21st century: "Our enfoldment within technological systems which control our thoughts and emotions (...) which forces us to confront the unnaturalness of nature and our vulnerable place within it. These understandings have led to a range of melancholic feelings, including nostalgia, saudade, weirdness, and eeriness. These feelings are both performed and addressed in the art of the early 21st century. Without a doubt, these feelings are also evident in many of the

products of Live Visuals, virtual reality, and media art cultures." He then relates this to the climate crisis. Still, I think this statement should be understood beyond the climate crisis. It should be associated with the personal existential crisis and conflict with our reality and geopolitical context.

Sehnsucht

Gibson conceptualizes the psychological impact as Expanded Melancholia. Another concept that is related to this impact is the idea of Sehnsucht. "Nostalgia is one of the most dominant feelings that are driving trends in the 21st century. There is a preference in aesthetics and cultural objects that source in nostalgic references from the past decade and previous technological states of societies." Gibson argues that nostalgia is often accompanied by feelings of eeriness and the weird. He defines this path in electronic arts as "Expanded Melancholia." I think Gibson needed to incorporate the idea of liminal spaces in his analysis. I will expand on this notion by creating a relationship between nostalgia and the liminal, to the German concept of "Sehnsucht."

The topic of an optimal or utopian life has received much attention across the humanities and the arts but not in psychology. "The German concept of Sehnsucht captures individual and collective thoughts and feelings about one's optimal or utopian life. Sehnsucht (life longings; LLs) is defined as an intense desire for alternative states and realizations of life. Presenting a first effort at capturing this phenomenon, the authors conceptualize LLs as composed of 6 interrelated core characteristics: (a) utopian conceptions of ideal development; (b) sense of incompleteness and imperfection of life; (c) conjoint time focus on the past, present, and future; (d) ambivalent (bittersweet) emotions; (e) reflection and evaluation of one's life; and (f) symbolic richness." (Scheibe et al., 2007)

"However, the art of the 21st century has been defined by an expanded melancholia with much work profoundly nostalgic in terms of ideas, materials, and processes. Fredrick Jameson described cinema's obsession with the past as 'nostalgia mode,' stating that we have 'become incapable of achieving aesthetic representations of our own current experience.' This accusation can be leveled at contemporary Art in the early 21st century." (Goodfellow & Gibson, 2022)

Vaporwave

A great example of these psychological impacts in the arts is the creation of digital aesthetics in music, live visuals, and the arts, such as the Vaporwave and Barberbeat's ideological, musical, and visual aesthetics. "Nostalgia is evident within electronic music and the subgenre of vaporwave, which emerged in the early 2010s (...) Vaporwave directly references and samples critically ignored music, such as incidental 'elevator' music from the 1980s and 1990s. Such music employed electronic instrumentation such as synthetic saxophone samples, which, experienced in the 21st century, sound both naïve and forlorn. Vaporwave music is often coupled with graphics from the 1980s and 1990s, drawn from early computer games, cyberpunk and techno artwork, and early web design. Both the music and artwork exhibit an optimism towards a positive technological future that never arrived, at least not in the way we expected, and this understanding casts them as profoundly melancholic." (Goodfellow & Gibson, 2022)

The idea of a future that never arrived drives the ideological forces behind modern V-LVPs, One example is the visual and musical subgenre of Sovietwave, the eastern counterpart of Western vaporwave. I will not delve into the controversial political ideologies

behind this movement.[1] Still, it is essential to mention this movement as an example of how the notion of Sehnsucht operates within virtual aesthetics. Sovietwave, a subgenre of Synthwave, has been strongly influenced by Soviet aesthetics since the 1980s. It romanticizes the idea of a future that was promised but never arrived. It is the counterpart of the 'hyper-capitalist utopia' of Vaporwave. This movement is often accompanied by retro-futuristic aesthetics, such as the promised utopian communist future that never was, or historical aspects like Soviet space exploration and the Cold War. The topic of an optimal or utopian life has received much attention across the humanities and the arts. Therefore, Sovietwave is an excellent example of one specific aesthetic that can be related to the ideas that drive the concept of Sehnsucht. Some examples on these matter are *"ждите Нас Звезды!"* [2] by Project Lazarus and *"Utopia + Jupiter And Beyond The Infinite"* by Moskva-Kassiopeya.[3]

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[1] I would like to clarify that I am referencing these movements solely in the context of nostalgia and collective memory. I do not endorse or support any controversial or political ideologies associated with the romanticization or support of any political movement at any time or place.

[2] vill4in.bandcamp.com/album/--6

[3] vill4in.bandcamp.com/album/utopia-jupiter-and-beyond-the-infinite

Cover artwork of "Utopia + Jupiter And Beyond The Infinite" by

Moskva-Kassiopeya. Artwork by KEVLAR:ESTUDIO. Image courtesy of VILL4IN.

Liminality

The creation of virtual venues can be linked to the concept of liminality. Vaporwave, often

associated with the soundtrack of liminal spaces, reflects this through its audiovisual

elements. These elements combine to form what can be described as a material

vaporwave—spaces that are neither here nor there, existing in between states. This aspect

highlights the connection between vaporwave and modern virtual venues. Unlike specific

locations in the physical world, virtual venues serve as spaces for escape, embodying the

liminal essence of being both everywhere and nowhere at once.

Presence

Donna Leishman discusses in her essay how Slater and Usoh delve into the concept of "suspension of disbelief," which arises when individuals perceive themselves in a different world from their physical location. This idea, originating from the poet Coleridge, underscores that the sense of presence is distinguished from the influences of external factors like psychoactive substances or mental health conditions, and it requires the use of human-made technology or media. Lombard and Ditton (1997) further refine this idea, defining presence as "the perceptual illusion of nonmediation," which suggests a direct engagement of cognitive and affective processes without the awareness of mediation's influence.

This understanding is crucial for understanding the underlying philosophies of VJing practices. In 2023, Furs emphasized this in their research: "I discovered the unspoken tradition of VJs being invisible to the crowds (which is supported by primary data). This tradition of invisibility leads to several issues. If the audience cannot see the VJ, they remain unaware that a real person is actively mixing the visuals in real-time. As a result, the role and expertise of the VJ remain largely unrecognized. Since my interviews were confined to VJs primarily in Finland and this aspect was not noted elsewhere in the literature, I cannot claim that this phenomenon is widespread across the field."

Telepresence

Leishman states that the pandemic notably accelerated the use of video conferencing technologies, enhancing the quality of virtual interactions and leading to a new kind of "virtual togetherness." This shift suggests a societal trend towards an increased normalization of digital presence, where the mediating factors of screens and physical presence are increasingly overlooked. Marvin Minsky's concept of telepresence is essential to include in

this framework as high-quality sensory feedback replicates real-life experiences so closely that users perceive no significant difference.

The Social Impact

I propose that the cohesion within the Virtual Venue's system is maintained by the relationships formed on the digital dance floor. Leishman discusses this in her essay, and I share her observation. It's not just the social relationships that emerge among the audience, visualists, and performers within the digital scene; there's also the formation of parasocial relationships. As Leishman (2023) cites, "Parasocial intimacy and interaction, as outlined by Lombard and Ditton, refer to a form of engagement where media users form relationships with personas within the media, a concept originally defined by Horton and Wohl. They described how television presenters create an illusion of real-time communication that fosters a sense of intimacy with viewers, leading audiences to overlook the mediated nature of the interaction and anthropomorphize and seek relationships with these on-screen entities." This dual layer of social and parasocial interactions is crucial to the dynamics within virtual venues.

Leishman states that this concept has evolved with technology to include various digital 'social actors' like automated retail assistants, avatars, and smart toys, which are designed to simulate human interaction and create false intimacies. These digital actors exploit human tendencies to attribute human characteristics to non-human entities, reflecting broader technological and psychological trends where people increasingly humanize their devices.

The notion of parasocial intimacy extends into V-LVPs, where audio-visual content

can seem almost human-like, contributing to a sense of intimacy between the performer and the audience and within the visualist's workflow. Depending on the artistic design, such as lighting and visual representation, performers can either appear as an integral part of the visual media or stand out as distinct entities. When performers incorporate elements of their physical presence, such as their image or voice captured live, it can enhance the audience's empathic engagement. This engagement is facilitated by cognitive processes involving mirror neurons, allowing the audience to resonate emotionally with the performer without directly experiencing the performer's physical state. This nuanced interaction blurs the lines between performer and performance, enriching the audience's experience through a complex blend of reality and representation.

This notion is intrinsically connected to the previous idea I proposed of interfaces, both digital interfaces such as avatars and graphical user interfaces, acting as an invisible force and intensity that mediates presence and creates social and parasocial relationships across visualists, audiences, performers, and the community around Virtual Venues.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology

As mentioned in the chapter before, the main research question for this thesis is to explore how digital platforms democratize access to arts and cultures in the context of Live

Visuals. To address this question, I utilized a qualitative research method. This approach is well-suited for a flexible exploration of the social experiences of individuals within the Live Visuals community in Virtual Venues. My objective is to capture the patterns and dynamics of digital interactions, find how knowledge is shared, and discover what brings the community together.

The research methods in this thesis are a combination of Digital Ethnography and Autoethnography. Digital ethnography allows for an immersive examination of the Virtual Venues where VJing is performed. This approach enables real-time observation of the VJing community and its participants inside virtual worlds and provides contextual data that captures the dynamics of the digital interactions. I will conduct semi-structured interviews and distribute forms to members of the community. Additionally, I will analyze various multimedia content, such as the performance structure, livestream chats, virtual artifacts within virtual venues, and community interaction. The goal is to uncover patterns and themes and support the data obtained through the semi-structured interviews.

The idea of an autoethnographic approach is rooted in the constructivist grounded theory, which views research as an embodied process (Charmaz, 2016)). According to Foster et al. (2006), autoethnographic research has four key features: First, the researcher actively shares their own experiences. Second, it does not claim objectivity, recognizing the researcher as an integral tool within the study. Third, it places a high value on subjectivity. Lastly, autoethnography distinguishes itself from both journalism and traditional storytelling. Therefore, it is essential to mention that the data analyzed in my thesis is interpreted subjectively.

Data Collection

The data collection methods for my thesis incorporate various approaches in alignment with the research design and goals. Based on the recommendations of Boellstorff et al. (2012) in *Ethnography and virtual worlds*, online spaces provide unique affordances for certain types of data capture, some of which are shared with other online contexts. "Visual ethnography has a long history, and the context of working within an environment constructed entirely of software opens up new opportunities for the use of visuals." (Boellstorff et al., 2012)

The data collection methods for my thesis are outlined in the following paragraphs.

Semi-structured interviews: I will conduct semi-structured interviews in English or Spanish, taking place online. The interview questions will focus on participants' experiences and professional journeys as visualists. Participants will be contacted through digital platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Discord. They will be informed in advance about the goals of this study. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed; in specific cases, they will be translated from Spanish to English. I have adapted several questions from Furs (2023) for the interview guide, as the approach is directly relevant to my study. This adaptation allows a deeper exploration of themes that overlap with our research interests, particularly in understanding the dynamics within LVP communities.

Text-based interviews and forms: I will utilize Google Forms as a data collection method to gather qualitative data. This approach will allow participants to remain anonymous and avoid revealing personal information, such as their voice or biometrics, which would be required in a video call. I will protect their privacy and anonymity by using text-based interviews and questionnaires. This method would be particularly suitable for members of VILL4IN, a community that does not interact through video calls or audio chat. Therefore, text-based interviews and questionnaires are the most appropriate options for my research.

Participant Observation: I will capture publicly available information in Virtual Venues through participant observation. I will actively participate as an observer in VOID TV virtual rave and explore a Virtual Performance in VR Chat. My analysis will focus on how the events are produced, communicated, broadcasted, and documented. I will also observe how the audience utilizes the interfaces within these virtual venues. I will download and capture the livestream chatbox from one of the virtual events, as "chatlogs may end up containing a wide range of intermingled ethnographic data—from formal interviews to informal conversations and environmental data generated by the virtual world software" (Boellstorff et al., 2012)

Transmedia Content Analysis: For the case of VILL4IN, I will collect and examine various artworks and virtual artifacts created by the collective to identify recurring themes and patterns across different mediums. This approach will enable me to check patterns, messages, and ideologies from a transmedia perspective. As noted by Boellstorff et al. (2012), "When ethnographers conduct research in the physical world, artifacts play an important role in understanding culture (Appadurai 1988; Spyer 1997; Hoskins 1998; Miller 2005). The artifacts of a community—how they circulate, are incorporated into everyday life, and are given meaning, help illuminate culturally specific meanings and practices. When we speak of 'virtual worlds,' the term 'world' is not just a metaphor. One way in which virtual worlds resemble physical world fieldsites more than other online contexts (like blogs or social networking websites) is that they have place and space, embodiment, and objects." This transmedia content analysis will comprehensively reflect the collective's ideological aesthetic expressed through diverse media outputs.

Participants

The primary participants for the interviews for this research are the active members involved in VILL4IN, as their work constitutes my main case study. Secondary participants were

selected from various backgrounds, skill levels, and countries of origin to support the primary research goal of understanding the underlying connection between the VJing communities across different contexts. The interviewees decide the level of anonymity and privacy. Participants were selected from four different backgrounds: two digital VJing scenes, including the underground electronic music scene of VILL4IN and the VR chat clubs scene, and two on-site scenes, such as El Salvador and Germany. Following the research design of Furs, V. (2023), I also created a table with the general data of the participants in my research.

PARTICIPANT	METHOD	Background	Portfolio	Location
C1PH3R — VILL4IN	Text-based structured interview	Founder and Project Manager of VILL4IN	www.mthrbord.com/faq/ /www.instagram.com/project _vill4in	WORLDWIDE ONLINE
Zero.Frequency — VILL4IN	Text-based structured interview	VOID TV Crew: Artist and Event Organizer	https://www.instagram.com/ zero.frequency/	WOR.LDWIDE ONLINE
solodolo84 (WVSQD) — VILL4IN	Text-based structured interview	VOID TV Crew: VJ and Fan	-	WORLDWIDE ONLINE
CCTV — VILL4IN	Text-based structured interview	VOID TV Crew: Visualist/VJ + Branding of VOID TV Crew	https://www.instagram.com/i wantmycctv/ https://www.cctv.earth	WORLDWIDE ONLINE
ThaDabWizard — VILL4IN	Text-based structured interview	VOID TV Crew: Organizer, Visualist, Editing, Curation.	https://www.instagram.com/t hadabwizard	WORLDWIDE ONLINE
BANJY — LUZIDUB	Open ended semi- structured interview	VJ and DJ	www.instagram.com/luzidub	EL SALVADOR
VAL — Hateful Void	Open-ended semi-structured interview	VJ and Filmmaker	https://hatefulvoid.myportfol io.com/ https://www.instagram.com/ hatefulvoid/	EL SALVADOR

Hannes Geers	Text-based structured interview	Technical Artist	-	GERMANY
VRCHAT Clubs Audience and Members — Anonymous attendees. Gpot, RNCH and Lesse.	Informal, unstructured interview	Audience, VJs and Artists.	Light Dimension Venue Informal exploration	WORLDWIDE ONLINE

Research Ethics

Williams (2015) defines critical reflexivity as the thoughtful examination of one's cultural factors, including class, gender, socioeconomic status, educational background, age, the era of one's birth, and personal experiences. This practice of critical reflexivity is essential in my research and is considered part of the research ethics recommended for applying autoethnographic methods.

Consent form and data protection

Consent was obtained from all participants when conducting the interviews and text-based forms. For the interviews, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. In the case of text-based interviews, participants provided consent by agreeing to and completing the form, which included a detailed explanation of the study's aims. This ensured that all participants were fully aware of the research process and their role within it while keeping ethical standards and respecting their autonomy.

For this research, I decided to refer to the participants by their artist names, usernames, or virtual identities instead of their real-life names. Most of these individuals have already established a virtual identity. This approach allowed participants to freely share their

thoughts and experiences without disclosing personal information. By maintaining their chosen level of anonymity, I created a safe and respectful environment where interviewees could speak openly without fear of revealing sensitive information.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It involves systematically coding and categorizing data to capture significant themes that emerge from the research. This method is flexible and can be applied to various data sources, including interviews, surveys, and texts.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis involves six key phases: familiarizing yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. This approach allows researchers to move beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying implicit and explicit ideas within the data.

Following Fur's research methods in their thesis, which aligns with my study, I classified the data from interviews and forms using a hybrid thematic analysis, which led to the creation of a comprehensive codebook. I conducted a hybrid thematic analysis, combining inductive and deductive themes based on my theoretical framework and the topics that emerged from the interviews. I systematically classified the data into themes, subthemes, and codes, which proved to be an effective way to organize the information. This approach revealed intersections between topics and enabled me to identify patterns and relationships.

Analysis Process

I transcribed the audio using Riverside.fm transcription function in both English and Spanish for the interviews. The generated transcript was manually revised for accuracy. As mentioned before, I used inductive and deductive coding methods. I established predefined codes to corroborate whether my theoretical framework was in tune with the collected data and participants' perspectives. Additional codes emerged inductively from the data.

The revised transcripts were uploaded to the Delvetool platform to code the information using tags systematically. I manually coded the data by reading the quotes and adding the tags. This platform allowed me to filter the codes effectively and automatically download the coded transcripts in a tabular form, which I then imported and organized into the codebook. The Spanish interviews were translated into English after coding. I used the DeepL web translation tool and my editing since Spanish is my native language.

For the content analysis of the Virtual Venues, I focused on several key aspects: audience interaction, virtual artifacts, production, communication, and archiving, as well as transmedia objects published by VILL4IN. I analyzed chat logs and virtual behaviors, identifying the audience reactions and engagement. Virtual artifacts were cataloged and examined for their symbolic meanings. Regarding production and communication, I reviewed how the shows were structured and how the event was communicated through digital platforms. Archiving practices were also reviewed, exploring how the events were documented and made accessible post-event. Additionally, I extended the content analysis to transmedia objects such as other livestreams, poems, books, and social media posts, examining these materials for intertextuality. This multimedia approach allowed me to

understand the collective effort, teamwork dynamics, ideologies that travel across mediums, and how virtual venues operate.

Data Interpretation

My analysis uses an interpretivist philosophy, which allows for the subjective interpretation of social phenomena. This perspective is essential for understanding how visualists interact within Virtual Venues and how they perceive and create the ideological constructions of their professional lives, especially how they conceptualize their practice within virtual spaces and how this influences their practices.

It is also important to mention that I am biased as a researcher-participant in this study. My active community involvement means that my experiences and connections within the group influence my perspectives and interpretations. This dual subjective role can be meaningful since it provides a unique standpoint. However, I must be aware of potential biases and commit to reflexivity. Acknowledging this bias, I aim to present a transparent account of my research findings and ensure that the study's conclusions are well-grounded.

Codebook Themes

Several themes were identified and incorporated into the codebook. It is essential to mention that these systematic categorizations are a way to digest the information. Still, as with any other living organism, such as a cultural scene, the topics are often complex and intersect between categories. The list of themes and their descriptions will be detailed in the following outline.

Topics framed around the Psychological Impact:

Vision and Digital Cultures: This theme covers the artists' worldview and their vision of their work from an ideological standpoint**.** It discusses the methods artists use to resist conventions and maintain their unique artistic identities. The subthemes identified in this topic are their Aesthetic philosophy and resistance to capitalist models. The codes identified are Selfless art, Innovation, decentralized internet arts, and cyberpunk ideologies**,** such as inspiration in hacker cultures.

Artistic Practice: This theme describes the participants' experiences concerning their art praxis. It covers how the artist engages with their work. The subthemes found in this topic are Creative Process and Production and Quality. The codes derived from this topic are mainly about having Creative Freedom and a high value in Experimentation as a method to innovate.

Emotional processes: This theme explores the psychological effects of being part of a virtual scene. It includes subtopics around Identity Experience and Psychological states. The codes on this topic are Self-construction and Escapism.

Topics framed around the Social impact:

Community: This theme emphasizes the importance of community within the scene. Every participant expanded their ideas extensively when expressing about community. The subthemes of this topic are the core values that drive the community, coded as Collaborative Economy, Empowerment, Solidarity, Creative Freedom, and a strong standpoint against Gatekeeping.

Topics around the Environmental Impact:

Events: This theme covers the production of virtual raves and events. Artists shared their thoughts on what it takes to organize VOID TV events. They also reflected on the planning, coordination, and unique atmosphere of virtual gatherings. The codes assigned to

this topic are Accessibility, Comparison to Real Life Events, Safety, and Like-Minded People.

        Challenges: This theme highlights the obstacles and difficulties artists face in their practice. The challenges mentioned vary from technical issues to more broad economic challenges. The codes found in this topic are Lack of recognition of Vjing, Educational Challenges, Limited creative industry opportunities, Low Pay, Lack of Resources, Technological Challenges, Mistrust from Clients, and Burnout.

Chapter 4. PROJECT VILL4IN: Long Live the Underground

How I found out about the project

Project VILL4IN found me in September 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, I was beginning my career as an independent VJ in El Salvador. I was experiencing a good streak of events, and the scene was starting to flourish. However, the pandemic significantly impacted my work as no venues were available to work in-real-life (IRL). During this period, I decided to share my visuals on social media. This led me to connect with other creatives involved in the VJing scene across different countries. Some friends and colleagues shared my work, which brought more visibility to my projects. I must insist that my case is not isolated; this was the standard behavior in the community and in the scene during this period. Through these interactions, I met LIFE2979光[4], one of the first producers in the vaporwave music scene from Guatemala. He was looking for VJs to participate in the first Enter The Void (ETV) virtual rave, marking my initial introduction to VILL4IN.

Whenever I think about this story, I emphasize, partly as a joke and partly seriously, that El Salvador and Central America are already underground for the music industry. So, in short terms, VILL4IN's commitment to their vision is so profound that somehow, they managed to find us in the small and often overlooked region of Central America.

As I said before, this wasn't an isolated case; just as it had happened to me, it also happened to more than 100 artists who participated in that 7-day-long YouTube Livestream festival. During the festival, I got to meet a significant number of talented artists, both VJs and music producers, through the show setlist and engaging in the chatbox. This is an

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[4] LIFE2979光 is a dreampunk and ambient music producer fom Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. Their music can be found in https://life2979.bandcamp.com

example of how platforms are used to connect people across borders. Because that is the thing: VILL4IN's essence is not about where you are located, who you are as an individual, or how skilled you are. It is not about a 'specific' music genre. It's about connecting through ideas and our own humanity. As the slogan from Enter The Void 2.0 states: 'BLURRING THE LINES BETWEEN THE EAST, WEST, NORTH AND SOUTH'. In this chapter, I will explore the a bit of the history, mindset, and work of VILL4IN[5].
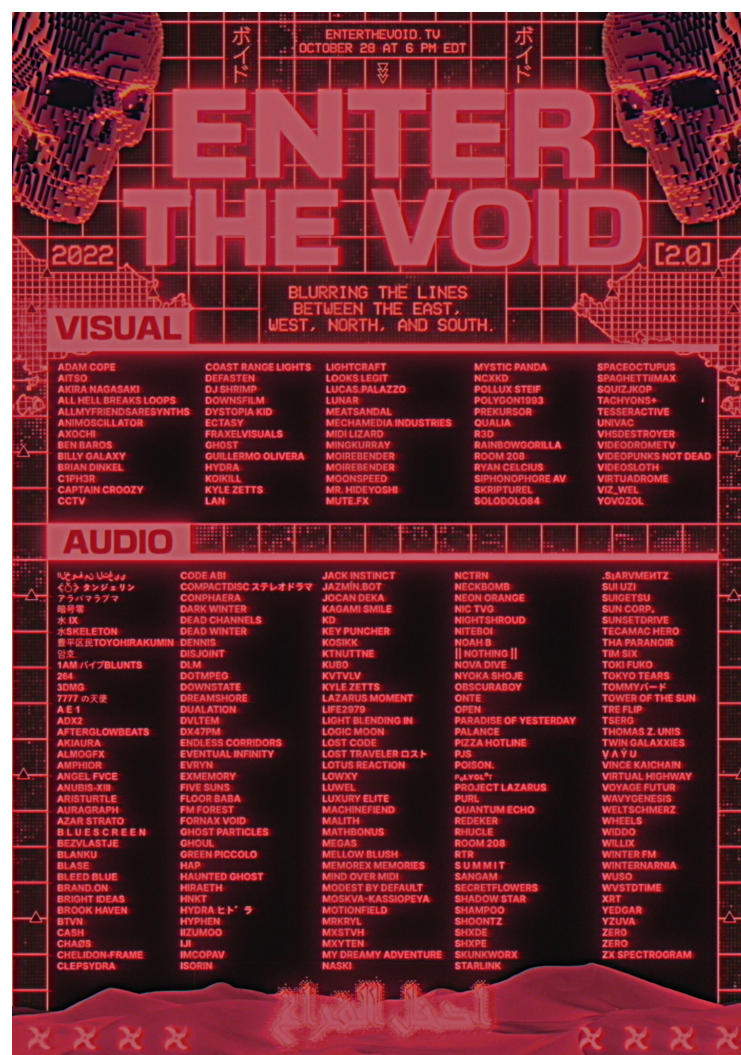
Enter The Void 2.0 Poster by KEVLAR:ESTUDIO[6], 2022.

Image courtesy of VILL4IN.

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[5] The in-depth analysis of each conceptual music release is outside of my research scope. Therefore I need to clarify that I will only include highlights of VILL4IN's work that are aligned with my theoretical framework.
[6] KEVLAR:ESTUDIO is a Design and communication studio based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Their work can be found at www.instagram.com/kevlarestudio

PROJECT VILL4IN

VILL4IN is an anonymous artistic collective established in 2017 and founded by C1PH3R, FR4ME, and GH0ST. The collective describes itself as an "Underground Audio-Visual Library Without Politics." The collective started as a techno label outside the vaporwave scene with the vinyl release of C1PH3R – TH30RY. His founder mentions, "We later had an internet podcast show called VILL4IN RADIO with me and my friend GH0ST that we did over 30 episodes exploring different electronic genres with original mixes from DJs and even had one episode dedicated to Vaporwave while we were still running it. Later, I stopped releasing music and podcasts altogether on VILL4IN, and I focused on making it a production company. A few friends and I got into making film-like videos. Meanwhile, I would just make aesthetic art pictures with quotes and such that I really enjoyed making; this is how we got a large following on Facebook and Instagram initially." (Ben, 2022)

VOID-001 - ANUBIS-XIII Release.[7] Image courtesy of VILL4IN.

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[7] The release of VOID-001 - ANUBIS-XIII - can be found at vill4in.bandcamp.com/album/void-001-anubis-xiii

The label later released VOID-002, which was never supposed to be an album. "They were just a collection of soundtracks of videos we made. Later after I couldn't help myself anymore, I would later restart releasing music with VOID-001 featuring ANUBIS-XIII. I just kind of posted it on Vaporwave Cassette Club with no real big expectations and was surprised with the number of people buying that release. It initially was supposed to be a black vinyl with no magazine, but I figured because so many people were supporting it, I would go all out and do a complete art book with featured art poetry and try to do the best I can for that release." (Ben, 2022)

VOID-002 - 暗号零 Release.[8] Image courtesy of VILL4IN.

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[8] The release of VOID-002 - 暗号零 can be found at https://c1ph3r.bandcamp.com/album/void-002

Visuals and Poetry

During this time, VILL4IN focused on creating visuals accompanied by poems. The literature was a remix of different authors and original authorship. The images have a dark and nostalgic sentiment and are often filtered with a heavy VHS-look. During this time, R3D joined the team as the audiovisual producer for the 24/7 livestream and videos on the Youtube channel.

Image posted on VILL4IN instagram account reflecting on ideas of Nostalgia, 2019.

Image courtesy of VILL4IN.

Music Release and Curation

VILL4IN began collaborating with music producers and DJs to release underground music, and started including visual artists to produce the cover various vinyl series, enlisting talents such as POLYGON1993 and CHKLTK. The releases are available in various formats, translating the concept across multiple mediums such as music, cover artwork, poetry, booklets, visuals, cassettes, vinyls, and even VHS audiovisual albums. This diverse approach makes VILL4IN's art products unique and allows them to stand out in the scene.

Some releases included special edition magazines, stickers, poetry, visual art, a

VILL4IN mask, trading cards, among other items. When purchasing vinyl records or other

selected items, customers receive mana cards as part of their order. These collector cards are

randomly selected and can be traded with other community members, similar to an

album-based card collection. This feature appeals to both fans and vinyl collectors, reflecting

the niche market's focus on enhancing the collector's experience.

Picture of VILL4IN releases such as VHS, magazines, posters, stickers, MANA

trading cards, among other pieces of work. Picture courtesy of VILL4IN.

Selection of MANA trading cards. Picture courtesy of VILL4IN.

Virtual Raves: ENTER THE VOID (ETV)

In 2020, during the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, VILL4IN started hosting online virtual raves. The first one was *Enter The Void (ETV),* an online electronic music festival that gathers more than a hundred of underground visual artists, VJs and video glitch artists to music producers, DJs and poets. This audiovisual event survived the trend of online events and it runs every few years. Everyone is welcome to participate in ETV. The vision is to provide a platform for anyone, especially emerging artists, to showcase their work. This is one of the main pillars behind VILL4IN. Some consider Enter The Void to be the largest electronic music festival on the internet (Beatstar, 2023). Regarding the name of the event, it references the 2009 'Enter The Void' movie directed by Gaspar Noé[9]. C1PH3R mentions that "We wanted to emphasize that it was not just an audio show, but also a visual experience. The concept was inspired by the movie "Enter the Void," which is known for its abstract and mind-bending visuals and audio. The director of the movie really has the skill to showcase how to lose your mind in both visual and audio. That kinda resonated with the essence of what we wanted with our shows."

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[9] Enter The Void by Gaspar Noe intro can be seen at:
/www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNtxgxYY7sI&ab_channel=PhoenixWright

Enter The Void poster by KEVLAR:ESTUDIO, 2020. Image courtesy of VILL4IN.

"Enter The Void is an event that happens every few years featuring many underground artists, musicians, labels, influencers and more. The first event was a 83+ hour consecutive internet live show hosted on October 30 - November 2nd 2020 and another one on October 28th 2022 that lasted 118 hours." (VILL4IN, 2022a) ETV was streamed through YouTube and Twitch. The structure of the ETV appeals to the nostalgia of watching an old video clip channel on TV. The livestream content goes from VJ-DJ sets, TV-inspired bumpers, music videos, and videoart poetry in various languages such as Japanese, Russian, English and Spanish. The structure of the livestream will be analyzed in the participant observation section of this thesis.

After the events, individual VJ-DJ sets were during the following years to VILL4IN's YouTube Channel, which is called 'MTHRBORD'. The artists have the option to upload the DJ-VJ sets to their own channels aswell. This action serves a dual function: it acts as an archive of the shows and as a distribution tactic to reach new audiences.

During the same time, VILL4IN released their first art book *"The Glitch Art Bible"*, a +150 page visual book that features more than 23 contemporary glitch artists. Two editions were released under the names of "[Vaporwave is dead]" and "[Acid Edition]".

"The Glitch Art Bible. [Acid Edition]" by VILL4IN. Image courtesy of VILL4IN.

MTHRBORD

In 2021, VILL4IN founded MTHRBORD[10], a sub label to release music and visuals, usually in the formats of audio tapes, vinyl, VHS (for audiovisual albums), and reel-to-reel audio tapes.

VOID TV

Following on the success of Enter The Void events, VILL4IN initiated an open call to assemble a dedicated team named 'VOID TV CREW' to produce monthly episodes of a shorter virtual rave series called VOID TV. Each episode of VOID TV spans 8-10 hours, featuring an audiovisual showcase of diverse music and video art. The long-term collaboration team consists of 13 members, with each episode featuring invited artists.

Screenshot of VOID TV intro bump by Glass Void[11], 2022. Image courtesy of VILL4IN.

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[10] The vinyl releases are sold in a digital shop that can be found in MTHRBORD independent website at mthrbord.com or in Bandcamp at vill4in.bandcamp.com
[11] Glass Void is an Analog CRT TV Glitch Artist. His work can be found in glassvoid.myportfolio.com

VOID CITY

In 2023, after VOID TV's success, VILL4IN started the indie development of a Virtual World called VOID CITY, inspired by visuals of the Cyberpunk Aesthetics. The platform is an exclusive online MMO browser-based chat room developed by R3D, the videographer and project partner of VILL4IN. In this virtual space, users can hang out, watch live VOID TV events, and participate in various activities. VOID CITY's focus is on community-driven projects such as album premieres, movie hangout spots, in-game housing, exploration, questing, and more.

The platform is designed to be online 24/7, allowing people to join in and enjoy the experience at any time. At the time of this study, this virtual world is under beta development. (VILL4IN, 2023)

In addition to the main 'party' room, VOID CITY will feature multiple attractions. These include a 'wiki-style' museum outlining both past and future history, sections showcasing community artworks, 'player' houses/rooms for active Discord members, private hangout areas, hidden secrets, a 24/7 movie room, and more. All these features will receive regular updates on a scheduled basis. (VILL4IN, 2023)

Players will have the opportunity to engage in quests, attend in-game events, and participate in various activities to gradually afford their own in-game housing. The first housing section, 'Tent City,' allows players to start with a tent and progressively upgrade to other types of housing, all for free. The developers are dedicating countless hours daily to make this vision a reality. Support for this project can be provided by purchasing an in-game apartment through MTHRBORD on the store page or by making a general donation through paypal. All funding received will be used to enhance the game and improve the user

experience, including paying for pixel artists, fixing bugs, adding new features, and more. To further fund this project, exclusive early supporter's In-Game Apartments are being offered. These apartments will be shared with early supporters who donate a certain amount to the project. (VILL4IN, 2023)

Screen capture of Void City, 2024. Images are courtesy of R3D.

Screen captures of Void City, 2024. Images are courtesy of R3D.

Screen capture of the inside of Void Club, 2024. Images are courtesy of R3D.

Case Analysis

In this section, I will analyze the data collected and classify it into topics and themes. These are the findings related to my research regarding the interviews. These findings concern the interviews and will complement the previously presented information on the collective's work.

Vision and Digital Cultures: Aesthetic Philosophy

The aesthetic philosophy that drives the ideologies behind the collective is inspired by 1990s cyberpunk ideas. As expressed by C1PH3R, "VILL4IN's core is located at its main aesthetic, which is 90s hacker culture and 1.0 Internet, which was the freedom of data (piracy) and freedom of information not locked to any cipher or gatekeeper. Our central aesthetic, however, is that of 90s hackers culture, and this is to represent the freedom of data, which represents our different aesthetic catalogues, artists, and projects. VILL4IN (i.e., VILLAIN) is to represent the counter-culture to the mainstream. Since villains are generally not accepted in any mainstream movie and underground movements and generally always blamed, but really they are the only ones taking things in new directions. " (CIPH3R)

The collective's embrace of 1990s cyberpunk and hacker culture reveals their commitment to principles of freedom and resistance to capitalist models, advocating for a creative lifestyle decentralized from the mainstream corporations that control the production and distribution of music, arts, and culture.

This philosophy is visually and symbolically represented through the use of cryptic member names derived from hacker culture. As C1PH3R elaborates, "The cryptic member names are just straight from 1337 speak and hacker/wares culture. With the skull imagery it was a very popular image in a lot of warez sites. During the late 90s, I remember the hacker

culture being a lot more visible, and I sort of want the internet culture to return to that. That movement was anti-spyware open to freedom of data and communication. Now, with social media, you can see that spyware is unfortunately accepted or simply brushed off. Social media is just new school spyware that somehow corporations convinced is ok" (C1PH3R).

This perspective reveals a rooted sentiment of nostalgia for a time when internet culture was more open and free from corporate and algorithmic surveillance. The aesthetic choices of VILL4IN are not superficial but are infused with a strong stance against contemporary digital surveillance and data commodification. This aligns with their identity as a counter-cultural movement, striving to keep the ideals of free information and creativity outside mainstream limitations and rules. "The mainstream is just uninteresting to me for a multiple of points. For example, it is always big corporate brands sponsoring artists, taking what they can (generally speaking) and throwing artists out when they aren't useful anymore. Secondary, the music is uncreative, and you can see pretty much a lot of ideas get stolen from the underground, when you pay attention, it happens all the time with rappers and others. Thirdly, the ideas that we have at VILL4IN don't translate very well to a mainstream audience. We don't mind the attention, but I just know if it was in a traditional mainstream context, it wouldn't last, and survivability for us is very important" (C1PH3R). Their ideal is to decentralize arts "from mainstream social media and create our communities in our own networks. I want the legacy to be something like 'yes, it can be done, and it can always be done better" (C1PH3R).

These ideas are supported by their commitment to curate music and arts outside the algorithm, as their mission states: "Our goal is for underground / independent music and visual art to have a force and relevance amongst the powers of industry corporate labels. We believe that things can be done differently and can be more progressive compared to what is

being done. We do not discriminate. We constantly look for different 'internet' music scenes online where we can help create official releases typically with pressing vinyl so they be heard amongst underground music listeners and collectors. We do not want to take control of any scene's development and placement, we just want different scenes to be known across listeners. In addition, we believe video visual artists need more appreciation and believe VHS is the perfect format to support them. Visual art is growing with artists, techniques and styles which needs its own proper respect." (VILL4IN, 2022b)

Anonymity and Symbolism

In times when value is placed on emotional and financial capital, constant media attention-seeking, self-crafting, and extreme individualism, the ultimate form of resistance against these imposed rules of technological colonialism is to renounce and detach from our egos. As C1PH3R explains, "In the beginning, I tried to keep VILL4IN an anonymous collective because I felt I didn't want us to be distorted by our personalities or what kind of life we live outside of the work we do. Personally, I like to keep my real life/family life separate from 'work' life. I do feel both are very different to me and I don't necessarily like combining the two. In terms of the whole cult of personality thing, yeah, I try to avoid that like the plague. It just makes being an artist and community not fun anymore; it becomes politically charged and nasty just to satisfy the ego. I believe this is one of the pillars that cause the death of movements and genres"(C1PH3R). These ideas are symbolically represented by the skull and the mask. "The mask is was simple, it was readily available to buy from Alibaba, represented the skull aesthetic and great for covering your face to show the aesthetic of anonymity within the real world context" (C1PH3R).

The skull and the mask, 2018. Photo courtesy of VILL4IN.

Symbols: The Void and "Long Live The Underground"

When asked about the subculture-specific terminology such as 'The Void' and 'The Underground,' all of the members provided different approaches yet reflected the main ideologies of the collective. C1PH3R describes the Void as a feeling of a "never-ending emptiness that at the same time needs to be filled and needs to be emptied. There is no escaping it, and just needs to be watched. Some people just spend their lives running away (as fast as they can) from the Void while just accepting its presence just makes life simpler." This interpretation suggests an existential approach to the concept, emphasizing a state of

perpetual incompletion and acceptance. This could be interpreted in the praxis of being on the constant lookout for new music and arts that are hidden under the dominant cultural landscape and presenting the talent to a global audience. As WVSQD's point of view offers, "Standing on your square and not compromising your art for mass appeal. Having fun. Staying true." complemented with CCTV's perspective: "The Void is an acknowledgment of a lack. The Underground is where you find what was lost".

Zero.Frequency provides a more expansive interpretation, stating, "The Void & The Underground are realms of boundless creativity and untamed spirit. Void represents limitless expanse of imagination, where anything is possible. The Underground is raw unfiltered expression, a sanctuary for those who dare to defy convention and seek deeper truths. Together, they are the pulse of a world unseen, shadows and light".

ThaDabWizard adds, "VOID is a place where anyone can go and be welcomed. Its a place of infinite talent and infinite answers. The Underground? Hmmmmm. The Underground is a statement to me personally. A statement of we do not care how its supposed to be done, we are unapologetically us and forever will be."

The underground is not a place or a geographically located spot. This liminal space—a conceptual space that exists ideologically rather than physically—is intrinsically linked to the materiality of media and the environmental impact it generates. "We have no one location and we work around the planet. "We are everywhere and we are nowhere." (VILL4IN, 2018) This idea is supported by the collective's slogan. Long Live The Underground is "a popular old term from back in the day (...) It embodies VILL4IN's image. Really, it can simply be interpreted as long live anything that isn't mainstream, and in my own words, it would be long live 'unpopular' artists and communities." (C1PH3R).

The term "The Void" can be traced back to a video published[12] on March 21, 2018, on MTHRBORD's YouTube Channel. The Void is a concept interpreted as an empty space perceived through the senses—seen, heard, and felt. It's a multisensory experience. In music, The Void manifests across genres published by the collective, notably ambient music.

Ambient music creates a sonic atmosphere or environment, often using synthesizers and natural sounds to produce a sense of space and immersion. It alters the listener's perception of their environment by focusing on texture and tone over traditional musical elements like rhythm and melody. The purpose of ambient music is to create an immersive listening experience, incorporating soundscapes and electronic textures to evoke specific emotions or environments.

This materialization of sound experience is evident in tracks like '01 - Lonely Street Light' by W U S O 命[13] from the album LONELY STREETS. The atmospheric sounds and echoes in the composition translate visuals of empty spaces through audio. Another example is 'Романтика' by Маяк, which features the sounds of a swing seat in children's play areas.

One supporter left a message under the 'Романтика' Bandcamp track: "An incredibly nostalgic journey for every person that has grown up in post-Soviet Eastern Europe. The first song immediately transports you into the peaceful utopia the CCCP desired. The combination of innocent happy sounds and melancholic tones of a bygone era simulates the experience of growing up in Eastern Europe perfectly. This album fuels my imagination and warms me on the inside" (Purple Mist, 2022). This exemplifies the premise of this thesis regarding the emotional and environmental impact of technologies. The creation of visuals is not only achieved through technological tools but also through conceptual and mental imagery. These

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[12] The Void first appearance as a terminology appears on this conceptual video
www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nK_O5LQTBk&ab_channel=MTHRBORD
[13] The song is available in the soundcloud feature at
www.mthrbord.com/product/mana-020-dark-blue-neon-vinyl

tracks demonstrate how 'The Void' can be translated from a concept into music, evoking visual memories.

Picture of a VILL4IN Magazine, displaying a poem about The Void. Image courtesy of VILL4IN.

Community

The VILL4IN collective is built upon a foundation of inclusivity, solidarity, and creative freedom. As C1PH3R reflects, "When I was a young artist, I dealt with many aspects of gate-keeping, and over time, I realized that the death of most genres and movements is for that reason alone. People get tired of always hitting walls and barriers in their artistic careers and they just simply move to new genres and movements. Then the cycle generally always repeats itself." This insight reveals the importance of being open to new paradigms.

The approach to discovering new talent is organic and proactive; C1PH3R describes the process as somewhat random but driven by active engagement: "With music, there are times I sent messages to people on Soundcloud that haven't uploaded anything for 12+ years, and sometimes I get DM's. Sometimes, someone recommends me somebody, but most of the time I am actively personally reaching out to people. With VJs, it was the same thing at first until recently with our VOID TV crew that naturally took place and formed from all our multiple shows including Enter The Void. Now we have a team of people helping organize with each other and sometimes recommending other VJs to join. The video side is a bit more complicated so that's we have a group of talented organized people. However, with a down-to-earth and open approach, you get an endless stream of creativity where people have much more freedom to be creative and can find their own voice that is healthy, non-destructive, inviting, and rewarding. A quote I like related to this is 'the plants you water are the ones that grow" (C1PH3R). This demonstrates the ideology of a Collaborative Economy within the community. A Collaborative Economy emphasizes mutual support and collective growth over individual competition. In the VILL4IN community, this ideology is revealed through the participatory culture of its members and by the constant engagement in discovering and supporting new talent.

The formation of organized teams, such as the VOID TV crew, exemplifies collective work. By working together and sharing knowledge, visualists can innovate in their professional work and, consequently, in a greater scope of a global audiovisual and VJing culture. By leaving behind an individualistic and competitive mindset, the platform is democratizing access to opportunities for everyone who wants to participate. As Zero.Frequency states, "Being part of the collective has impacted my work and profession, showing me new perspectives in ways to create. The best thing about being part of the project is the collaborative spirit, where diverse talents converge to push the boundaries of what we

can create together." CCTV states: "More and more, I've been able to incorporate visual techniques from my work on VILL4IN in my full-time job. The work I've done through VILL4IN has also gotten me several paid commissions, as well as installation offers."

More examples of the collaborative economy were found in quotes by ThaDabWizard: "The Team. Couldn't ask for a cooler crew to work with everyone is kind and helpful and ready to work and get whatever needs to be done, done." CCTV shares this perspective in his quote: "Seeing what everyone makes, being around this much passion and talent, and working together on something this cool. It constantly blows my mind what the team is able to do, and just how well considered their visuals are. I've seen visuals where I think, "Wow, I never thought to do that. That's beautiful."

Participatory culture can be exemplified by the effective coordination among the members of the VOID TV Crew. There is a high level of work ethic within the group that involves coordinating more than 50 artists for each event. As Zero states, "I coordinate tasks and responsibilities within the group by using project management tools to assign and track tasks. Holding regular meetings to discuss progress, and ensuring clear communication channels. This structured approach allows us to maintain alignment & meet deadlines" (Zero.Frequency). The teamwork is "quite democratic, iterative, and collaborative. We talk plan almost exclusively through Discord, and artists volunteer for roles we find interesting. Special shout out to the full-time VOID TV coordinators—they're the ones sourcing and reaching out to musicians, project managing asset delivery, compiling the final edit, and coordinating with recurring streaming partners" (CCTV).

It is possible to see the progress of many music producers and visual artists who are now well established in the international music industry, such as Polygon1993[14]. They started

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[14] Polygon1993 work can be found at www.instagram.com/polygon1993

collaborating with VILL4IN around 2018, and now their work is reaching larger audiences. Other examples of career and personal growth include YOVOZOL[15]. They first collaborated in ETV 2020 as an emerging artist and are currently working at major festivals. Additionally, the work of many artists is seen in other types of music, indicating that the visual trend of the collective has extended beyond the community. This was also the case for DJs and music producers, such as the reach of Akiaura[16] among other producers.[17]

It is important to clarify that the reach of the artists work does not make them more or less important than the rest of the creative participants in the events. VILL4IN does not create hierarchies or show interest in doing so. This is just an example of how well the community supports talent, where everyone is treated equally, allowing for personal and professional growth within a larger VJ community that extends beyond the collective

Artistic practice

One of the core aspects of the visualist community is the value of experimentation and creative curiosity inspired by watching other artists appropriate technology. CCTV emphasizes on the role of experimentation in the creative process to generate visuals: "My first experiments in visuals were adjusting the tracking on my family VCR until the video glitched out, which fascinated me with how beautiful distortion could be. Years later, I came across the YouTube channel of the artist and educator Nick Briz and realized there was a whole community of people interested in this kind of art, and I taught myself to datamosh using the ancient video software Avidemux. Eventually, I discovered hardware glitch art from watching what artists were doing on PROJECT VILL4IN, and I thought: That's what I always

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[15] Yovozol work can be found at www.instagram.com/yovozol
[16] Akiraura music can be found at https://linktr.ee/akiaura
[17] The list of artists is large and I will not be able to include all of them in this research, but for further interest, readers can explore VILL4IN and MTHRBORD media channels.

wanted to make. So I looked up some gear makers, bought some modified gear, and started experimenting." (CCTV)

ThaDabWizard exemplifies this dedication through freedom in experimentation: "Sitting in my room or office for hours just turning knobs and getting things dialed in, understanding what each thing does and how it affects the visual composition ThaDabWizard."

Tools

VILL4IN released the 'Glitch Art Bible' was released accompanied by the following message: "To some, only the newest technology holds meaning. As televisions, phones, cameras, and other machines become more advanced, more are also discarded as pieces of obsolete junk. Glitch Artists do not see useless machines—they see opportunity."

The tools preferred to create the visuals within VILL4IN VJ community are usually a combination of analog technology and digital post-production. "I predominately use up-cycled/circuit-bent video equipment from the 90s to produce analog VFX and glitches and use my partner's iPhone to capture footage on a CRT Television. The Blood Sugar Sex Video Pro Magic by Big Pauper Modified Circuitry[18] is one of my favorite devices. I also use LZX Industries[19] eurorack equipment, like the Memory Palace and Diver, to generate more abstract patterns—while getting audio-reactivity with the help of Sensory Translator. I do the edit in Premiere/After Effects." (CCTV) "Vegas, shotcut, kapwing, youtube, anything available, my imagination. I use whatever I can get my hands on that allows me to have an moderately easy work flow." (WVSQD) "I prefer to use hardware (VCR's, Roland V4-EX, Syntonie

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[18] BPMC creates 'quality custom psychotronic modified glitch video art devices for creative types' The tool mentioned can be found at: https://glitchart.com/shop/blood
[19] LZX industries is one of the largest producers of analog video synthesizers. Their work can be found at lzxindustries.net

CBV001S, Panasonic AVE-5, and other various things) but also use things software wise like Photoshop, Photomosh, DaVinci and other various softwares are all incorporated into the work" (ThaDabWizard).

Other artists prefer to work with digital programs, such as 3D design and visual programming softwares "Blender is my primary tool, as I enjoy creating intricate 3D worlds and landscapes. I also utilize TouchDesigner for its audio-reactive capabilities" (Zero.Frequency).

Challenges and Barriers

The visualists navigate diverse challenges when putting together the work for the livestreams. One of the primary hurdles is managing burnout. As C1PH3R explains, "The biggest challenges would just be burn-out. After shows like Enter The Void the burn-out is real and it's hard to get back to grooves. We really pushed the envelope with our multiple projects over the years and that can get tiring but it is also inspiring and motivational." The intensity of the project, while fulfilling, can also lead to periods of exhaustion, making it difficult to maintain a balance between work and personal life.

Another significant challenge faced by the collective is sustaining its operations financially. C1PH3R highlights the difficulties of navigating in a niche market: "It is also tough to sometimes stay afloat since we are just simply selling vinyl records most of the time and really it's a small market but I am more than happy to continue it as I figure out ways to live semi off-grid. We still haven't figured everything out yet."

One of the elements that help to ease the risk and mantain the sustainability of the project is the high level of trust between its members. There's a real sense of mutual respect and solid work ethics that makes it possible to successfully assemble festivals and events of

this scale. ThaDabWizard highlights this value within the collective: "I reached out. V (VILL4IN) is incredibly open to new ideas, has an amazing aesthetic cohesiveness, and respects/trusts the artists from the community."

This trust and respect are essential in navigating the logistical challenges and technical complexities inherent to the work that the VOID TV crew does. For instance, CCTV describes the daunting process of exporting and uploading high-quality videos: "The final export and upload. We wanted to up the video quality to 2K on the last episode, and it was a massive file (10 hours long and about 150GB). That is a very long export time, upload time from our team, download time for the streaming partner, upload time to YouTube, and even longer processing time. It means sometimes if we missed something or something went wrong in the export, there's nothing we can do before the premiere."

Copyright, Cyberpunk, Hacking digital and virtual circuits

One of the specific technical challenges that VILL4IN faces is the issue of copyright strikes in livestream virtual raves. VJing relies heavily on loops and remixed media, much like how DJs mix original tracks with remixed ones. Many VJs blend their own produced content with existing video media, embodying a form of media appropriation. This practice is not just a stylistic choice but a practical, often unconscious reflection of hacker culture, emphasizing the freedom of data and resonating with the broader cyberpunk movement. WVSQD captures the unpredictability of copyright enforcement: "The downtime of waiting for renders and avoiding the copyright police. What might be green light today might get flagged tomorrow. Navigating copyright is like walking through a minefield....but the mines can move."

In my opinion, the practice of live-streamed video glitch art represents a fascinating intersection where the ideologies of the movement come to the material realm. The visualists are reappropriating the technology by hacking the video material using physical techniques

such as video glitch synthesizers. By livestreaming the "hacked" content, they're inherently also glitching digital circuits, including the YouTube algorithm. This glitch in the algorithms sometimes allows them to bypass copyright detection, embodying cyberpunk ideologies by appropriating the medium.

Psychological states

The drive to create visuals for artists in the visualist community is profoundly influenced by an interplay of psychological factors, including the impact of advancements in technology. Feelings of nostalgia and 'romantic' feelings towards time states, such as the past or the future, are often found in the creative process of the visualists. This finding is intrinsically connected to the ideas of liminality found in the 'Sehnsucht' concept that I proposed at the beginning of my thesis, such as the individual and collective thoughts and feelings about one's optimal or utopian life, an intense desire for alternative states of living, a symbolic richness and bittersweet emotions.

Many VJs, such as WVSQD, draw inspiration from their formative years, often rooted in specific cultural decades like the 1980s. This nostalgic lens allows them to reconnect with a past that, beyond an idealized perspective, has a personal and cultural significance: "The work with WVSQD is built on establishing what the music means to us visually. The music allows us to explore different ideas. Having different perspectives on what art could be while motivating each other fosters us to be inspired. Besides other artists, my childhood was a source of inspiration. I'm an 80s baby, so I try to put myself in that mindframe of younger me sitting on the floor at my grandma's house watching TV." By revisiting these memories, artists create visuals that resonate not only with their personal histories but also with the collective memory of their audience. This shared sense of nostalgia can foster a deeper

connection between the artist and the viewer, as it taps into universal themes of longing and remembrance found in the concept of Sehnsucht.

The concept of liminality, or the experience of being in a transitional space, is also central to some motivations for creation. Liminality is characterized by its fluidity of physical, emotional, or time-framed states. In the context of VJing, this idea is found in the ability to occupy the threshold between different states of being—past and present, real and virtual. CCTV's inspiration, for instance, is characterized by their desire to create "Brain Scratch: something that speaks to a part of the mind you've forgotten or didn't know was there." This taps into the psychological impact of technology by engaging with the subconscious, embodying liminality within the self. This exploration can also reflect a romanticized view of nature, where the lost landscapes of the mind are waiting to be reclaimed. Zero.Frequency's focus aims to evoke strong emotional responses: "I tend to go for a darker nostalgic vibe. One that makes the viewer feel something within themselves."

Adding another layer to this psychological states is the concept of escapism, which arises in the conflict when technology colonizes every aspect of our lives. This dynamic provokes, as discussed in the theoretical framework of my thesis, the idea of nature as something separate from modern society, leading to a feeling of 'Romance' regarding nature. This feeling reflects a desire to create spaces that offer a form of escape from the complexities of a highly mediated informational world. As highlighted by CIPH3R: "I wouldn't use the word utopia, maybe more like a digital hideout."

These digital hideouts are not utopias but rather temporary sanctuaries where both artists and viewers can immerse themselves in alternative realities and experiences. Zero.Frequency captures this sentiment: "My goal is to inspire others to break free from the

mundane routines of everyday life." This drive to create spaces to escape is fueled by the need to transcend the constraints imposed by modern technologies.

The role of music in this process is significant. Our senses are part of our natural biology, and therefore, music inherently connects with us on a fundamental level. ThaDabWizard expresses how music serves as a catalyst for visual inspiration: "The music!! It brings new ideas to my mind in almost an instant. Where would I want to be while hearing this? What environment does this best fit? What mood do I want to invoke with these visuals? What fits and what doesn't?" Music becomes a bridge to these alternative realities, guiding the creation of immersive emotional and aesthetic environments.

A space where all these elements converge and materialize, beyond livestream events, is the creation and potential of Void City, a digital realm where participants can escape and connect. Zero.Frequency believes, "Void City will soon evolve into an enduring community. As a game developer, I see immense potential in Void City."

Participant Observation: VOID TV

This section describes my experience in the last VOID TV event, which featured 21 DJ sets and the work of 16 VJs. The event was a 9+ Hour long festival that focused on the emerging microgenre 'Barberbeats.' Presented by the VOID TV crew and hosted by Mthrbord, Rabbithole Club & Ryan Celsius. The event was live-streamed simultaneously in four different virtual venues: Ryan Celcius's YouTube channel, Rabbithole Club's YouTube channel, and MTHRBORD.TV and within Void City Club.

Event Promotion

VOID TV events are promoted in advance on various social media channels. Typically, a trailer and a festival poster are shared across platforms such as Instagram and Discord[20] communities. These posters mirror the design and format of those used for real-life events, which is why VILL4IN refers to their events as "virtual raves."

Poster of VOID TV: Barberbeats special chapter. Image courtesy of VILL4IN.

Livestream structure

VOID TV live streams generally follow a structure reminiscent of nostalgic music TV channels from the pre-social media era. This approach not only invokes a sense of nostalgia but also provides a familiar and engaging format for their audience, blending the past with the present in a digital space.

The core of the livestream is the DJ-VJ sets, which usually last between 20 and 30 minutes each. In between these sets, there are small breaks in the format of "bumps." These are brief clips lasting a few seconds, typically used in broadcasts as transitions between sets. Sometimes, during breaks, there are single music videos or even parody advertisements. For example, Enter The Void 2.0 featured the work of SkyCorp Home Video[21], a satirical media corporation inspired by 90s TV commercials. Following the ideal of creative freedom, the format of the breaks is a mix of freestyle clips and bumps that reference the event's concepts. Some bumps are tailored to the theme of each livestream. For example, the Christmas special in 2023 featured holiday-themed bumps.

During the Barberbeats edition of the event I observed, the livestream showcased event-specific visuals and bumps. Barberbeats[22], a microgenre from the underground digital scenes, is already encoded with distinct audiovisual aesthetics and symbols. Emerging after the vaporwave movement, this microgenre is characterized by the style of mixing and cutting samples, revealing the broader concept of remix culture and proper to the collective's aesthetic.

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[21] SkyCorp Home Video is a "satirical media corporation bringing you VHS home video entertainment." Their work can be found at www.youtube.com/c/SkyCorpHomeVideo
[22] "The inception of barber beats can be traced back to a producer known as Haircuts for Men who's original works can be traced all the way back to 2014 (...). There is an excellent article by Van Paugam called Barber Beats: The Future of Vaporwave that states the term was coined by Aloe City Wrld to describe this sound created by HFM, Aloe City Wrld being the leading record label in getting Barber Beats projects out there on physical forms." (Accorsi, 2024), (Paugam, n.d.).

Throughout the Barberbeats Livestream, the bumps included multiple references to the experience of, literally, getting a haircut. One notable example was a reference to Hexstatic[23], a prominent figure in VJing and audiovisual culture during the 90s. This reference featured a remix of the "Ninja Tune" music video, which includes scenes of ninjas and swords and showcases complex video editing with rapid cutting and mixing techniques. These audiovisual loops are precisely timed to match the beats and tempo of the music. These examples serve as analogies that reference the themes of cutting and remixing samples, characteristic of the Barberbeats, vaporwave, and VJing scenes.

Interaction in the Livestreams

The rave was divided into three areas of digital interaction within the Virtual Venues: the chatbox within MTHRBORD.TV, the Ryan Celsius YouTube livestream, and the Void City Virtual World.

There were 20 users watching on MTHRBORD.TV, likely because it offers more anonymity and is independent of the major livestream platforms. In the Ryan Celcius stream, around 150 people were watching, and in the case of Void City, there were at least 15 users. Macroblank, Luxury Elite, and other important figures in the scene who participated in the DJ sets were active in the chat, allowing interaction with the artists. Aloe City Wrld, one of the labels of the Barberbeats scene, was also present in the chat, facilitating direct interaction with the artists. As CCTV mentions, "We love hanging out in the chat on the stream. So great

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[23] Hexstatic is an electronic audiovisual duo by Stuart Warren Hill and Robin Brunson that started producing A/V albums since since 1995. (*Hexstatic*, n.d.)

to see all the musicians drop in too alongside the visual artists, interacting with fans and the community."

The possibility of interaction bridges the distance of the parasocial relationships created between artists and fans. Also, it allows the opportunity to gain instant and constructive feedback on the artist's work. As ThaDabWizard mentions, "Watching the Livestream and Chat. Gawd it feels so nice seeing everyone say nice things about all of the artists. Personally, seeing the crew get positive interaction from the community is rewarding within itself."
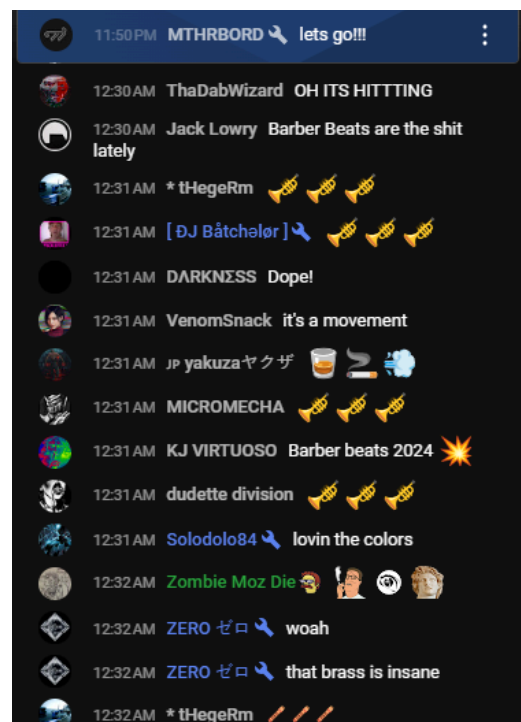
Screenshots of the chat during VOID TV: Barberbeats edition.

Another way to interact within the chat is by maintaining the fluidity of the messages, similar to a real-time conversation where the logic in the messages is followed. Emojis are also part of the conversation, enhancing the real-time experience. For instance, people posted sax and trumpet emojis when these instruments were featured in the music. The moderation

team played a crucial role in maintaining a positive environment, as highlighted: "We handle moderation by implementing a set of community guidelines with a team of dedicated moderators to enforce them. We also use automated tools to detect and address inappropriate behavior swiftly. By fostering an inclusive and respectful environment, we ensure that all interactions remain positive and constructive." (Zero.Frequency).

Interaction in Void City

Void City is an indie production, currently being developed only by R3D. The online world is still in its early stages of development, and many of the interaction affordances that other AAA[24] platforms offer in-game experiences are yet to be possible. Despite these limitations, users still find ways to connect within the virtual environment. For instance, they move back and forth, run around, and chase each other within the game. The chatbox is also present in the venue, allowing users to communicate in real-time. In the future, emotes and emojis will be included in the game, enhancing user interaction.

Within the virtual venue in Void City, it is possible to see artifacts directly related to the event. For example, the event poster is displayed on the virtual walls of the venue, along with the logo of the Rabbithole Club, referencing another virtual venue where the festival is being live-streamed.

One aspect that particularly caught my attention is the character selection process. Unlike many mainstream games, VOID CITY's characters are currently not custom-made but are instead based on pre-existing asset sets. In a corporate-developed game, this approach

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[24] AAA (Triple-A) platforms is an informal terminology to categorize videogames produced by large size publishers.

would likely be possible due to copyright issues. However, VOID CITY embraces core

values rooted in hacker culture and piracy. Because of the subculture ideologies, copyright

concerns are not a significant issue for the community but a style choice of appropriation of

tools, media and content. This reflects a more open and rebellious product that sets VOID

CITY apart from conventional virtual worlds.

Screenshots of the researcher embodying a butterfly,

observing the festival line up and Rabbithole Club logo within Void City.

Screenshots of the researcher embodying a butterfly,

observing the festival poster within Void City.

Chapter 5. Discussion: From case-specific to other backgrounds

In this chapter, I will seamlessly transition from the case-specific scenario of the VILL4IN collective to other contexts within the VJing community. The goal is to understand the VILL4IN visualist community as part of a broader spectrum of the arts. By combining insights from across the VJing community, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the specific case and apply this knowledge to a broader range of Live Visual Performances, enriching our understanding of the entire field.

This section includes perspectives from three different backgrounds: a quick exploration of the VR Chat Club scene by Gpot, Lesse, and RNCH; a conversation with Banjy from LUZIDUB and Val, two Salvadoran VJs; and the insights of Hannes Geers, a professional working in the entertainment industry as a technical artist in Germany. My decision to explore non-virtual venue scenes arises from the recognition that access to technology and resources is an economic privilege. I am interested in discovering how this privilege is navigated, transitioning from digital platforms to the physical realm.

To provide context on how I discovered the VR Venue, I'll begin by describing my involvement in a popular Discord server and community for emerging VJs called Lords of Light, founded by _Tesseractive_ [25] visuals. I asked if anyone was involved in the VR Chat VJ scene, and many VJs responded positively, mentioning and 'pinging' an artist named Gpot. This introduction immersed me into the VR VJing scene, much like entering any real-life scene. Fortunately, there was a performance scheduled for the same week, with RNCH as the DJ. I attended the event at a venue called Light Dimension[26], founded by Lesse. After the

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[25] www.instagram.com/_tesseractive_
[26] The venue is documented at vrclist.com/world/489955

event, I had an informal chat with Gpot, who then took me on a journey through various VR clubs. I met many people, and by the end of the night, I felt as if I had been club hopping in real life.

Screenshot of the publicly available documentation of the event I participated in Light Dimension VR Chat Virtual Venue, 2024. Copyright by We're going digital.[27]

Common creative processes

Experimentation is to be one of the most essential creative processes in the visuals community. All of the interviews, including those from VILL4IN, place a high value on the personal and professional process of experimenting with tools and technology.

For example, in VR Chat, most visualists work in the audiovisual industry in their real-life settings and currently use the technology to test ideas in real-time with a virtual audience. One interviewee noted, "There's just so much that you can do in VR that's either impractical or very expensive to do in real life. So you're really able to just let your creativity

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run wild. And it gives you the opportunity to practice on things that you might not otherwise get to do." (Anonymous, VR CHAT). Another added, "Like, why I like it here as well. It's like, people are willing to try things that have been tried in real life, specifically for the rave scene as DJing or visuals. They try things they would not try in real life because, first of all, they're not paid. So they don't have the pressure of, like, I'm paid, and people have paid to be there." (Gpot, VR CHAT).

These venues also provide opportunities for first-time users to start their careers. As one user shared, "I've really wanted to play on a really nice LED wall setup with multiple panels and an actual stage design, but I haven't had that opportunity yet. I'm still doing a lot of underground stuff, so there are more festival-like stages in VRChat." (Gpot, VR CHATt)

This practice is also replicated in the formal entertainment industry, although the testing sessions are private to companies. For example, Hannes Geers mentions, "We are testing some workflows to experience our stage designs in VR and how we can improve the presentation possibilities for the clients. Another aspect is the previsualization and preproduction of a show before even one piece of hardware is built in real life. It can optimize the process as we can simulate the complete show and get feedback on the visuals or light programming." (Hannes Geers).

This exemplifies how new technologies allow the practice of VJing to evolve by offering a sandbox for creativity where artists can experiment with innovative techniques that are impractical or expensive in physical settings. Virtual platforms enable aspiring visual artists to gain experience and exposure without extensive resources.

Contrary to the freestyle nature of VJing, there is more control in the entertainment industry. Hannes Geers explains, "I mainly implement the content beforehand in a programming session, and the visuals are just synced on a timeline to a playback rather than live mixed." This provides more control over the content for the clients and less improvisation from the visuals operator. Geerts adds, "It totally depends on the project and the work that is needed. Sometimes the client knows exactly what they want, and sometimes we just have some guidelines to work within."

Collaborative Economy across the scenes

This core value was found across different backgrounds. All of the participants insisted that community is what keeps the practice of VJing alive and resists the gatekeeping mentality. For example, Banjy mentioned that "the connections we have made with people from outside El Salvador are what help this to keep growing because some are more advanced in certain areas and others we have learned and trained in a more traditional and empirical way. In the end, your knowledge complements with the knowledge of the people from outside the country."

Val adds to this sentiment, highlighting the organic nature of their learning process: "My learning is very organic because I'm on Reddit and Facebook in TouchDesigner groups. I feel like it's a process. For example, I start to see how they do tracking in a video the have uploaded. People comment that it's cool and then the questions start coming. Because it's a niche, the same people who are on Facebook are on Reddit. They see something on Facebook, then they post it on Reddit, people ask how to replicate it, and other experienced people respond to them. And then few days later, someone uploads a tutorial about it. I feel like it's very organic and, even though it's not reciprocal, it's very circular." This sharing

culture is further emphasized by the openness within the community. Val continues, "It's like someone knows how to do something; other people get interested and find out how to do it, and instead of keeping it, they share it. It's interesting; there's not so much gatekeeping."

The participatory culture is shared between the traditional settings and Live Performanes in virtual platforms. For example, in VR Chat, the spirit of collaboration and community support is evident. As one participant noted, "We don't stream the show, but often people will come in and record it. There's one person who comes to basically every event and does really high-def recordings of them." (Anonymous, VR Chat).

These examples illustrate that the practice of VJing thrives on a foundation of shared knowledge and a collaborative economy. Whether in real life or in virtual form, the solidarity within the VJing community makes digital art more approachable to people from different backgrounds.

Identity Construction

Identity construction in the digital realm offers unique opportunities for individuals to present themselves in ways that reflect their true selves or ideal personas. This is particularly evident in platforms like VR Chat, where users can customize their experiences to suit their preferences. One user explains, "As someone that feels like the game's sound sensitivity, I can tweak the sound settings so it's not really overwhelming. I can get the right mix. I don't hear what I don't like... You can curate it to how you want it to be. It's the best way to put it, I gues." (Anonymous, VR Chat). This level of control over one's environment allows users to create a space that feels comfortable and personal.

Additionally, the anonymity and flexibility of virtual platforms enable more profound and genuine interactions. One user shared, "It's kind of funny to talk to someone for a while, and then, a week or two later, you find out they're around your age. They've seen this and know what it means. Seriously, because everything gets stripped away here. You are your true, raw self on this platform." (Anonymous, VR Chat). This stripping away of physical characteristics allows for connections based on personality and interests rather than external appearances.

In virtual worlds, body customization is possible, giving users the power to shape their avatars and control how they are perceived. "The way you look, your body type, your skin color, your exterior—none of that exists here. I mean, you're just getting more control over it. It still exists, but you have more control, so you can be more comfortable with it. You look exactly the way you want or close to it. This makes it easier for me, at least. For example, I don't have to worry about whether I look weird or if I'm acting weird" (Anonymous, VR Chat). This flexibility helps the individual to express their authenticity while curating their own senses.

VJing and Live Performances have become significant means for self-expression and professional fulfillment. As Val shares, "I've always had the ideal or the mentality of wanting to make art, to make a living from art, to produce art. But it wasn't until I came across digital art that I said: 'This is what I want to do; this is what I want to dedicate myself to.' I realized why I wanted to know more, to go deeper, because it's a vast and infinite world. There's always something new, a new technique, a new program, a new reference." Engaging in digital art and VJing not only allows artists to construct and explore their identities in virtual

worlds but also provides a profound sense of purpose and direction in their lives. This process helps them connect with themselves and with a larger community of like-minded people.

Selfless Art

Selfless art is a core value found in VILL4IN and across different backgrounds in the VJing community, where the motivation behind creating art is not fame but rather the intrinsic value of the work and the impact it has on others. "We don't do it to become famous, but we always have to recognize the effort, even more so when being a woman" (VAL). This sentiment is shared by many artists who find fulfillment in their craft without seeking the spotlight, and it resonates with C1PH3R's ideas found in the main case study.

Banjy shares a similar view on the essence of creating art. He observes that while public recognition is fantastic, it often shifts the focus from genuine artistic creation to mere egocentrism. For Banjy, true satisfaction comes from continuous engagement with music and visuals, allowing the work to speak for itself. "For me, it's because I like music; I keep making music, I keep mixing. But I prefer the VJ aspect, where you want your work to speak for you."

He further explains the pride in breaking stereotypes about the capabilities of artists from El Salvador. "I have done scenography, I have done video projections, and that's because people think that, for example, in El Salvador, there isn't much talent for that. When people see it, they say they didn't know that Salvadorans did that, they didn't know it existed in the country. The realization that national artists can achieve international standards is gratifying, and it surprises many to see ordinary people doing extraordinary things. So, the fact that your work speaks for you means you are doing something well. I don't care about

being in a news article because people aren't looking to see you, they are looking to see your work. Other people want to be seen. In that case, become a stage artist or an actor or a singer who is in front of the public. For example, the DJ or a ghost producer who is also a DJ but doesn't come to light, they are just making music. I think their satisfaction is knowing that the public is enjoying their art. If my face is shown, that's fine, but if not, it's also fine."

Innovation

What drives the VJing community together is their shared artistic curiosity and commitment to innovation. This constant pursuit of originality and creativity is a common thread among audiovisual artists. As Banjy notes, "I think that, mainly, we audiovisual artists and artists in general share a common factor: we strive to create things that haven't been seen before. So, mainly, it's like this: maybe you have seen something or been inspired by it, but you won't create something exactly the same."

Returning to El Salvador after experiencing international festivals, Banjy felt inspired and motivated to bring that level of innovation back home. "So, if it's not being done here and it's not very common to see, then I feel I have to do it. That's how it started for me, returning to El Salvador after seeing a couple of festivals abroad, seeing things outside, and thinking, 'Hey, I want to keep doing this. I don't want to wait another year to participate in a festival abroad because it's only possible abroad.' I think starting to do all these things here is one of the main motivations."

The desire to create something unique is the driving force of all of the participants of this research. Banjy recalls, "People have told me, 'I don't want to see a video downloaded from the internet; I want to see something unique and impressive that makes people say,

'Wow, that's crazy!' This has become a great responsibility and part of my inspiration." This sense of responsibility and inspiration is echoed by Hannes Geers, who finds that working in challenging environments is both demanding and stimulating. "I can imagine working for a performance inside a venue like the Sphere[28] is a big challenge and, at the same time very interesting to see how visuals work in that kind of environment."

Similarly, Val's journey into VJing and Live Visuals began with a desire to solve the creative challenge of learning how to code visuals. "Once I finished one tutorial, I realized I didn't want to just copy what someone else did. I wanted to add my own style. After several attempts and creating various projects, I started using just the base of the theme or the interesting part of the project and then built everything else myself." The challenge of creating something uniquely of her own became her motivation to join the VJing scene.

The work of a VJ is essential to the festival experience, integrating visuals is as crucial as the music itself. Banjy highlights the critical role visuals play in events and the importance of constantly seeking new tools and techniques, stating, "The work of the VJ is essential. People don't just go for the music to festivals. We see the videos of Afterlife[29], Eric Prydz[30], Tomorrowland[31], and these huge festivals, such as Sónar[32]. They all integrate the VJ, the visual arts as important as the music itself. People have told me, 'Look, I've been to electronic events, and I like the music, but I also come for the visuals.' That makes me more committed and inspired, so I have to do better things. It's a challenge, and with every event, you want to integrate new things so people don't just say, 'Oh, I saw the visuals, but I've seen them before.' I have terabytes of videos. It's almost the same every time. I have paid for an

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[28] Sphere is a music and entertainment venue Las Vegas, Nevada, United States.
[29] www.youtube.com/@Afterlifeofc
[30] www.youtube.com/@ericprydz
[31] www.youtube.com/@tomorrowland
[32] sonar.es/es

Envato subscription to download new videos, and then I see them at some event or activation, and then I don't want to use them anymore. That's where we have to step in and add effects to make it look different, not just like a video has been played. It's challenging but also inspiring at the same time." This shared commitment to artistic curiosity and originality binds the VJing community together across different backgrounds.

Visuals as something secondary: A blessing or a curse?

In the VJing community, the role of visuals is often seen as secondary to the music, but this perception varies among artists. Hannes Geers articulates this balance well: "In my opinion, good visuals have to be a supporting actor to the artist and need to fit the vibe of the performance. They can have their own moments but also need to take a step back at some points to maintain a good balance. A big part of good visuals is the synchronization with the music. Personally, I don't really like too much chaos in a visual. A simple key element with some additions does a lot for the aesthetic of a performance."

However, there is also a sentiment within the community that visuals should be celebrated as a distinct art form rather than merely a supportive act. CCTV from VOID TV Crew expressed that there is comfort in finding a platform as VILL4IN where visuals get the same importance and treatment as music, "I'm of course, biased, but it feels like the visuals often get treated as something disposable or secondary to the music. It's refreshing to have a place where visuals are celebrated as its own distinct art form." This paradox reveals the ongoing struggle for recognition and appreciation of visuals within the broader scope of live visual performances.

Lack of Recognition of VJing

The undervaluation of VJing is a significant issue that impacts the community as a whole. While selflessness is a core value in VJing, this attitude can sometimes lead to the art form not receiving the recognition it deserves. Val explains, "VJing is part of the electronic culture. But even within electronic culture, it's something very underground that doesn't exist in all electronic music scenes. And that's... I mean, that's VJing. I think people understand a little bit more about digital or audiovisual art, but VJing is something super niche. The most complicated thing is the fact that they don't know the importance of our work. When I publish something or upload a story on Instagram, I always get comments like 'How cool what you do!' and things like that, but those people, although they admire the art, don't see it as something applicable to their projects. They see it as something the computer does, and that's it, they leave it there. That makes it complicated, it difficult that people give it the importance it has, whether it's videomapping or anything else, especially here in this region."

Despite these challenges, the VJing community continues to work for recognition and appreciation of their art. This commitment to innovate drives them to create meaningful and thoughtful performances, hoping that one day, visuals will be valued as equally important as the music they accompany.

Challenges

This is the section where all participants diverge, as the challenges they face are community-specific. In VR Chat, some of the obstacles mentioned include the difficulties of coordinating across continents. "You need to find meeting times that work for everyone, especially when you're working with people from different countries. Some people are in Germany, some people in the US, some people in Asia." (Anonymous, VR Chat). This

highlights the logistical hurdles in virtual collaborations, where differing time zones can complicate planning and execution.

The challenges faced by VJs in El Salvador are directly tied to the country's lack of resources, educational limitations, limited creative industry opportunities, and low pay. "Literally, my idyllic dream would be to be able to make a living from this, although it sounds difficult to say it from El Salvador." (Val). Hannes also emphasizes the need for technological improvements and broader accessibility. "From my perspective, the technology needs to improve and be more accessible to everybody. Another point is the way it is implemented at the moment. I think if you would advertise, for example, a concert livestream as an MR event that can be watched like a normal stream, but you can decide how much you want to see of the outside world—maybe just a bigger screen in MR, a full 180-degree look, or a full 360-degree experience—it would be way more accepted than an only full VR experience."

Access to technology is a significant privilege, impacting the ability to participate in and contribute to the VJing community. This sentiment is echoed by both virtual and real-world participants. In VR Chat, one participant mentioned their lack of access to a local music scene as a motivation for engaging in virtual events. "There's no music scene around me. I don't have a car. I don't like any way to transport myself aside from the train. For VR chat, It's a good way to actually get into that scene. It's also easier to know what's going on because there is like a party hub that just compiles all the info and says this is what's happening right now."

This reality is mirrored in El Salvador, as Val explains: "For visual artists, whether it is painting or anything else, there are always events, whether in a cultural house, a small exhibition, there is always space. The same happens with people who make music, they always have space. But with digital art, I don't know why they think that only a computer is enough. It is something applicable and can be worked together. There can be transmedia, but they don't conceive it. They see it as something very separate. In this country, if you want to do something digital, it is almost always for a company, something corporate. If we go to an artistic level, in the scene, it is still quite separate. The most they ask for are visuals for events, they put them in the background and then everything dies."

This connection made me realize that access to technology is indeed a privilege. "Apart from the fact that what we are doing is part of a certain privilege. Obviously it's not a bourgeois privilege or anything, but we do have a certain accessibility. My dream is to have a controller, but right now, it's just a dream because I can't spend the money on one. That's why I feel that what we do is very rebellious. We have a certain privilege, but it's not that we're well-off or anything. That we can do what we're doing with what little we have is, honestly, remarkable. I don't want to sound self-centered; it's not like we're doing the world a big help. But, compared to people who are a thousand times more prepared and have a thousand times more things than us, we're doing great things here." (Val)

Val also touches on the broader issue of Eurocentrism and the gap in opportunities and knowledge. "Yeah, I don't know. It's really weird. It's not that we are behind, but it would be unfair to say that when we have never been given the opportunity to know beyond the conventional. This has more to do with the Eurocentric mentality, where all knowledge and new discoveries are left to them. If we get to discover it for ourselves, how nice, but if not,

they tell us they are 10 or 20 years ahead of us. But definitely yes, beyond the 'conventional' arts, like photography and all that, if you don't get to research and search on your own, then it is impossible to crea digital art, music or even an alter ego." Through these insights, it becomes clear that the challenges faced by the VJing community are diverse and influenced by their local contexts.

Chapter 6. Conclusions.

Final thoughts

One of the main discoveries that I didn't fully predict at the beginning phase of my thesis was the embodied cyberpunk ideology in VILL4IN. Initially, I only knew about this aesthetic through the visuals and some popular culture references, mainly from a science fiction perspective. It was when I started reading more about the real people, the real hackers in the 1990s, that I found out the subversive and ahead-of-their-times ideas that were driving their actions. This makes me realize how mainstream media only takes what is convenient to capitalize on it. That's why it's important to constantly question the possibility of alternative creative lives, where we have, at least ideologically, some control or power over our actions.

I don't mean that the mainstream is wrong. I don't think mainstream vs underground are two opposing forces. I think what we can learn from these ideas is the power to choose, consume, and produce in a more thoughtful and informed position. This revelation clicked everything into place, highlighting a pattern across the VJing culture in both online spaces and the digital realm: freedom. The freedom to choose how to create, to choose your identity, to decide who you want to be, wherever you are, and the freedom of data. And to resist the challenges, limitations and rules imposed in our digital and local contexts.

VJing is a legitimate expression of media art; it's the practice where information gets materialized as loops, the media gets chopped, consumed, produced, streamed, remixed, and referenced in an infinite cycle of cultural nostalgia. VJing is a romanticized response to the oppression of current capitalist models of art creation and consumption. The collaborative ethos that supports the community movements stands in contrast to the capitalistic idea of

gatekeeping, where only a few are allowed to produce for the many to consume. VILL4IN is an example of how we can reclaim our power over the arts.

Challenging the norms of assigning value beyond capitalism humanizes artistic practices, but it also highlights issues of privilege and representation of other cultures. Embracing and embodying an idea, whether visual or philosophical, is key to creative expression. These digital platforms let us share and develop ideas closely tied to our identity and what makes us unique. The true essence of cyberpunk, both visually and ideologically, lies in this approach: empowerment, collaboration, solidarity and community.

Conclusion

In this research, I utilized an autoethnographic perspective combined with methods of digital ethnography. The case study of Project VILL4IN proved to be an excellent example to examine how digital platforms democratize the access to cultures, promoves personal development and facilitate community building. The findings were obtained through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, forms, chatlog analysis, and interaction analysis. For the data interpretation, this study has employed critical reflexivity to maintain ethical research standards. The thematic analysis revealed key themes related to the participants' vision and digital culture, highlighting that motivations and choices in creation are driven by strong aesthetic philosophies. The findings demonstrate the VJing scene value creative process driven by freedom, innovation, selfless art and constant curiosity through experimentation. A strong virtual community is characterized by collaborative economy, solidarity, and empowerment. This is possible thanks to digital collectives and platforms that enable artists to connect, share knowledge, and support each other in both professional and personal journeys.

Additionally, it was found that the possibilities of technologies have a profound environmental and psychological impact, with common emotional landscapes rooted in notions of nostalgia. These environmental and material affordances allow accessibility and a safe space to escape and connect. The findings related to challenges was as the most diverse, indicating that the obstacles are community and context-specific for each studied scene. However, these challenges are often reduced by the collaborative support from the community's members facilitated by virtual platforms. In conclusion, digital collectives not only support creators but are active agents in the democratization, creation and dissemination of media arts and cultures, transcending physical boundaries and borders.

Future Research

The autoethnographic nature of my research is inherently biased since I play a double role as a researcher-participant. While my broad perspective on the scenes is an advantage and I tried to be impartial, I consider that incorporating views from outsiders, such as anthropologists or media archaeologists on these matters could provide a more balanced understanding. Taking this in account, the following further research recommendations are provided:

Gender and Woman's representation in VJing: Gender representation in entertainment industries, VJing and Live Visuals Performances is critical area for further research. An important finding emerged when I interviewed Val, who mentioned that her primary influence came from other women doing visuals. Like Val, I was also inspired and motivated to join the scene by seeing other female VJs, such as Malu Saenz Jaramillo and Tere Cornejo in El Salvador, and by being exposed to the social media channels of artists like Dalkhafine and Loupblaster. Despite these influences and a panorama that is slowly shifting,

the representation of women in the scene remains scarce, and I often find myself as the only woman or among a few others working in the production team of events. Therefore, I suggest that future research should include a study a feminist and gender perspective regarding the Live Visuals Performance industry. Additionally, examining the historical role of women in VJing would be valuable. Specially considering that some authors claim that Merrill Aldighieri, the first VJ in the world, was a woman. (Pedro Pantaleón & Manu Cid [Otu Cinema] & Vjspain, 2022).

Central American VJing and Salvadorean Media Art: A broader study on VJing and Media Art within the Cental American context could provide valuable insights and would benefit the broader field of media art studies.

Live Visuals in Virtual, Mixed, Extended, and Augmented reality: I did not explore Augmented Reality (AR) performances or other mixed reality environments in my research, but these technologies are likely to play a significant role in the future of VJing and live visual performances. Future research should focus on XR performances and AR performances. Some examples of immersive performances that are emerging in these technologies are:*"Gorillaz Skinny Ape Performance"*[33] in Times Square; Augmented Stage Designs at events such as *"Kygo X Snapchat | Transforming the Music Experience"*[34], and the "*AR performance by Flume at Coachella 2023*"[35].

VR Chat Club scene: The VR chat club scene scene is evolving rapidly with numerous clubs and events. It would be beneficial for Media Arts Cultures to study these virtual spaces from a digital ethnography perspective. Additionally, further ethnographic and media archeology research should examine other virtual venues, such as Roblox.

VILL4IN further research: Discord and Reddit channels and forums were not explored in this research. The search bar function would be extremely beneficial to filter

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[33] skinnyape.gorillaz.com
[34] www.youtube.com/watch?v=msuS0PBh1c4&ab_channel=Snapchat
[35] www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUwkup2C7b0&ab_channel=UnrealEngine

specific topics and finding interesting discussions regarding the digital scene. Some

participants suggested that transforming this information into a different format, such as a

documentary, would be a great project. I would like to join and collaborate with the

community on this idea.

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Appendices

A. Codebook.

SOURCE	TOPIC	SUBTOPIC	CODES	QUOTES
HANNES INTERVIEW	ARTISTIC PRACTICE	CREATIVE PROCESS	INNOVATION	"I was always interested in the workflow of generating visuals."
HANNES INTERVIEW	ARTISTIC PRACTICE	CREATIVE PROCESS	DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VJING AND VISUALS OPERATOR	"I mainly implement the content beforehand in a programming session, and the visuals are just synced on a timeline to a playback rather than live mixed."
HANNES INTERVIEW	ARTISTIC PRACTICE	CREATIVE PROCESS	CREATIVE FREEDOM	"It totally depends on the project and the work that is needed. Sometimes the client knows exactly what they want, and sometimes we just have some guidelines to work within."
HANNES INTERVIEW	ARTISTIC PRACTICE	CREATIVE PROCESS	SECONDARY ROLE OF VJING AND VISUALS	"In my opinion, good visuals have to be a support actor to the artist and need to fit the vibe of the performance. They can have their own moments but also need to take a step back at some points to maintain a good balance. A big part of good visuals is the synchronization with the music. Personally, I don't really like too much chaos in a visual. A simple key element with some additions does a lot for the aesthetic of a performance."
HANNES INTERVIEW	ARTISTIC PRACTICE	CREATIVE PROCESS	EXPERIMENTATION	"Most of it is learning by doing and figuring out stuff on the fly. Sometimes, a Google deep dive helps."
HANNES INTERVIEW	ARTISTIC PRACTICE	CREATIVE PROCESS	EXPERIMENTATION	"We are testing some workflows to experience our stage designs in VR and how we can improve the presentation possibilities for the clients. Another aspect is the previsualization and preproduction of a show before even one piece of hardware is built in real life. It can optimize the process as we can simulate the complete show and get feedback on the visuals or light programming."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	ARTISTIC PRACTICE	CREATIVE PROCESS	VJING AND VISUALS IN RELATION TO MUSIC	"All of the effects are being done by people live. Just kind of like flowing with the music"

VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	ARTISTIC PRACTICE	CREATIVE PROCESS	EXPERIMENTATION	"But on the other hand, there's just so much that you can do in VR that's either impractical or very expensive to do in real life. So you're really able to just let your creativity run wild. And it gives you the opportunity to practice on things that you might not otherwise get to do."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	ARTISTIC PRACTICE	CREATIVE PROCESS	EXPERIMENTATION	"I've really wanted to play like on that like on really nice LED wall setup with like multiple panels and like an actual stage design but I haven't had that opportunity yet. I'm still doing a lot of underground stuff so there are more festival like stages in VRChat."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	ARTISTIC PRACTICE	CREATIVE PROCESS	CREATIVE FREEDOM, EXPERIMENTATION	"Like, why I like it here as well. It's like, people are willing to try things that have been tried in real life in terms of like, specifically for the rave scene, DJing or like visuals or something. They try things they would not try in real life because first of all, they're not paid. So like, they don't have, they still have pressure, but they don't have the pressure of like, I'm paid and people have paid to be there."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	ARTISTIC PRACTICE	CREATIVE PROCESS	CREATIVE FREEDOM, EXPERIMENTATION	"So basically, people will try a lot of different things that usually work out and look or sound really good. It's a lot more fun because you don't have the pressure. The fact that you're in a virtual place means you can do things you can't do as well in real life, and you can add all these weird, trippy effects to your worlds."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	ARTISTIC PRACTICE	CREATIVE PROCESS	CREATIVE FREEDOM, EXPERIMENTATION, IRL VS URL	"Why I like it here is that people are willing to try things they wouldn't try in real life, especially in the rave scene. Whether it's DJing or visuals, they experiment a lot because they're not paid. They still have pressure, but not the pressure of being paid and having people pay to be there."

BANJY INTERVIEW	CHALLENGES		LACK OF RECOGNITION OF VJING IN EL SALVADOR	As a Latin American country, there is perhaps not as much technological advancement, but there is communications. With the arrival of the Internet, I think the existence of this art here in the country is perhaps unknown because people are focused on other things. It's not that there are no means of communication, but I think information is managed differently. Also it's something so new. In Europe, it has been around for less than 30 years. In El Salvador, the first VJs that I know of are from the early 2000s. They were people who were just putting on videos, but they weren't called VJs. It was someone putting on videos, giving an image to the scene, especially in electronic music. We also feel that there is a lack of interest in electronic music. Here we have offices of giant tech companies from abroad that work here, but they are not employing local engineers. They're only using our physical space and creating call centers... so the most important resource —the mind—is not being utilized.
BANJY INTERVIEW	CHALLENGES		EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES	So, for some reason, there are no specialized careers here, such as technicians in spectacles, lighting for spectacles, scenes—these specialties are offered in foreign universities. Here, education is more general, like animation or game design courses. You specialize abroad and need a better-prepared field when you come back. But since it's not essential for our country's economy, I think we can formulate more context in aspects of advertising.
BANJY INTERVIEW	CHALLENGES		LIMITED CREATIVE OPPORTUNITIES	Advertising in El Salvador has been very rapid due to communication. But advertising has distanced itself from art. So, if you like making art, like in my case, I am a DJ. I work 80% on video or audiovisual things, but I am not fully making art. Advertising is a good way to make a living, but it restricts artistic freedom. Those who pay me the most are brands, recognized advertising companies, or private companies. But when I go to make

				art at an electronic site or a concert, I don't have the freedom of creative channels. So, I separate the art I do because I consider myself an audiovisual artist. But I also need to make a living, so if they pay me to make a specific video, I do it.

BANJY INTERVIEW	CHALLENGES		LOW PAY, LACK OF RESOURCES	The main issue is the economy, which limits our ability to expand. I have the mindset to use money wisely. I would buy good hardware, a video synthesizer, a video processor, a good computer to keep doing what I like and which serves as my work tool... I wouldn't waste it on other things. I wish everyone understood and said, 'okay, let's pay him more because he'll be able to get more things and work better.' That's the main problem. This is a limitation because people often say, 'we don't have much budget, we need to cut down a bit.' So, you have to adjust to the rates people are used to paying, and it's harder to get tools at those prices. If you charge less, you'll have to get more jobs to reach the goal of buying more equipment or paying for a course. This also forces you to be more creative. For example, if you don't have an analog synthesizer, you can use software that emulates it and is cheaper because it's virtual. But then you need to study the software, which takes more time. For example, I watched many videos on artificial intelligence and analyzed how those programs work. I found a lot of information on the internet. I decided to start doing this in real-time using TouchDesigner. You need some programming skills because the codes are managed with nodes, and you need to know how to integrate them, use GIT on your computer, and all that. This translates to many hours of reading and using the computer. If you had someone who already knows all that and you paid them for a course, they would help you learn faster, but you have to pay them. We don't have such people here, so we rely on the internet. We must also use our creativity to solve problems and achieve our goals. There are two ways: investing more money or being more creative with what you have. In El Salvador, we rely more on creativity, haha, because it's not easy to get 500 euros per event. We wish we could earn like that, as it would be standardized. But it's a

| | | | | relatively new field here, and we need to show people what our objectives are.

Advertising professionals ask if we can do this or that, showing me a video on the internet. I tell them I can do a videomapping of a car, for example. They include it in the budget, and I set prices that I consider economical compared to what is charged abroad. In the end, they say, 'we don't have enough budget, can we do something cheaper?' It's frustrating because we have to achieve the objective with limited resources.

This frustrates the artist because you don't get the opportunity to create complete pieces. Agencies then say, 'you didn't achieve what we saw in the video on social media,' but the video didn't show the $10,000 they spent on, or even more. People here need to see things live to believe in what we can do. This has happened to us many times. If they don't see it live, agencies and brands don't believe in what we can achieve. We need to keep experimenting and achieving things. It's gratifying when people start trusting your work. You think it will be easier to convince others because you're doing things they've seen on the internet, and they'll realize you can do it here. |
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| BANJY INTERVIEW | CHALLENGES | | LOW PAY | When it comes to payment, it brings you down to earth. They say they don't have much budget, but they still want the results they saw online without adapting. This issue needs to be addressed, perhaps through the professionalization of our work and the communication we, as audiovisual artists, need to have with each other. |
| BANJY INTERVIEW | CHALLENGES | | TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES | The specialized software for video mixing consumes a lot of computer resources, which can slow down the performance even on powerful computers. That's why I think DJ programs are somewhat separated from video programs. Also, I believe that these tasks, like DJing and video mixing, can be done by separate individuals. That's how I |

				started separating the programs and using different computers; I now have one computer for music and another for visuals
VAL INTERVIEW	CHALLENGES		MISTRUST FROM CLIENTS	I've tried to work with clients several times. Just when the workshop ended and we returned to El Salvador, my colleagues told me they had an opportunity for me. The following week, they were busy with another event and asked, 'Hey, do you want to go, and we'll take care of the rest? We have some visuals we haven't used; it's just a matter of doing the mapping.' I agreed, but in the end, nothing happened because when the client found out it was me who was available, they didn't call back.
VAL INTERVIEW	CHALLENGES		LACK OF RECOGNITION OF VJING	"The most complicated thing is the fact that they don't know the importance of our work. When I publish something or upload a story, I always get comments like 'How cool what you do!' and things like that, but those people, although they admire the art, don't see it as something applicable to their projects. They see it as something the computer does and that's it, they leave it there. That makes it complicated, it costs a lot for them to give it the importance it has, whether it's mapping or anything else, especially here in this region."
VAL INTERVIEW	CHALLENGES		LACK OF RECOGNITION OF VJING	I am new to this. I only started having these contacts last year. It's not that I have many clients to whom I can say 'I have this client, I have that client'. I have a few, but mostly from other things, like freelance video editing, not so much from this. What I do feel is the lack of visibility."
VAL INTERVIEW	CHALLENGES		LACK OF RECOGNITION OF VJING	The next event I will have is because I told one of the organizers that I could do visuals for that day. I mentioned to him that I could also do them live and manipulate them, and he literally had never heard of that, he had no idea. I had to explain to him what VJing is because he was just thinking about something fixed on the screen and that's it. I feel like that's the big impediment right now, that people don't know it exists."

VAL INTERVIEW	CHALLENGES		LACK OF RESOURCES	"You need a lot of patience, and I honestly feel that I'm still at a very superficial level. I've realized that it even uses programming. It's not that complicated, just a few lines, but even though I understand the logic, I often have to visit the website to understand why the code goes here or there. I feel I'm still at a very superficial level in that, but it's very manual and super intuitive. If you want to do something, it's a layer. Want to do something else? It's another layer. Want to do something else? Another layer. So, you just want to add color, and that color is purple, and for that, you use about five operators in TouchDesigner. It's like... Aaah! Yes. And then the computer starts having performance issues because it's processing everything in real-time. But I think TouchDesigner is the program with the least gatekeeping, and I love that."
VAL INTERVIEW	CHALLENGES		LACK OF RECOGNITION OF VJING	It's like something, I mean, it's part of the electronic culture. But even within electronic culture, it's something very underground that doesn't exist in all electronic music scenes.And that's... I mean, that's VJing. I think people understand a little bit more about digital or audiovisual art, but VJing is something super niche.
VAL INTERVIEW	CHALLENGES		LACK OF RESOURCES	Yeah, I don't know. It's really weird. It's not that we are behind, but it would be unfair to say that when we have never been given the opportunity to know beyond the conventional. This has more to do with the Eurocentric mentality, where all knowledge and new discoveries are left to them. If we get to discover it for ourselves, how nice, but if not, they tell us they are 10 or 20 years ahead of us. But definitely yes, beyond the 'conventional' arts, like photography and all that, if you don't get to research and search on your own, you don't create that alter ego of digital art or even music.

| VAL INTERVIEW | CHALLENGES | | LACK OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES | "Because I feel, wow Vajra141's work is so good, there are people here who say 'it's so good what he does', but it's not because someone has taught him. It's because he's been on the internet, he's been on forums and all of that has nurtured him to be the artist that he is.

But it's mostly because he's on the internet. Nobody in this country is going to give you a lesson or, even if it's just one, is going to approach you to give you a little more knowledge than you. It's something almost unique that you do, so it's pretty yucca. Sorry, I was just going to say that it's very yucca not to have teachers, but you are your own teacher, your own index, your own compass. So it's very difficult. And you realize, obviously, everything that..." |
| VAL INTERVIEW | CHALLENGES | | PRIVILEGES | "Apart from the fact that what we are doing is part of a certain privilege. Obviously it's not a bourgeois privilege or anything, but we do have a certain accessibility. My dream is to have a controller, but right now it's just a dream because I can't spend the money on one.

That's why I feel that what we do is very rebellious. We have a certain privilege, but it's not that we're well-off or anything. That we can do what we're doing with what little we have is, honestly, remarkable. I don't want to sound self-centered, it's not like we're doing the world a big help. But, compared to people who are a thousand times more prepared and have a thousand times more things than us." |

VAL INTERVIEW	CHALLENGES		LACK OF RESOURCES, LACK OF RECOGNITION OF VJING	"Thinking about VJing, many people think that just by having a monitor you have it all figured out. But you also have to have your own tools, like the HDMI cable, the controller, a hard drive just in case, and so on. There is a lack of knowledge and also a lack of access to supplies. For example, at the Cine Metro , I asked days before what was the resolution and lumens of the projector, and not even the staff knew. So I half did things with the old reliable 1920 x 1080, but I still had to configure the projector because nobody knew. I feel it's because of misinformation. Sales also lowers the standards here. People aren't aware of all that's involved. It's not their fault because how are they going to know if they don't even know these things exist? You can't tell them to upgrade if they don't even know that a projector can be used for a thousand digital media. The people who use it for that purpose are few; today it's going to be me and maybe in six months someone else will come along, but it's not an urgency for them. It's interesting that art is not an urgency in El Salvador."
VAL INTERVIEW	CHALLENGES		LACK OF WOMAN'S AND GENDER-DIVERSE PARTICIPATION IN THE SCENE IN EL SALVADOR.	"In itself, the niche is already small, and for women and dissidents I don't even mention it, it's even smaller. In Guatemala, you can measure it in proportions: four men and one woman. Here in El Salvador, currently I haven't met yet another woman or dissident in this field. That influences a lot."
VAL INTERVIEW	CHALLENGES		LACK OF WOMAN'S AND GENDER-DIVERSE PARTICIPATION IN THE SCENE IN EL SALVADOR.	"It's hard to be a woman, honestly. It is difficult in general and even more so in this situation we are getting into. I feel that we have to put double the effort because first they have to notice that we exist. I think the male mentality is in default mode and to see that a woman can do things that they do, they automatically underestimate it. It's like they already have that in their mind by default. Making your way in an environment where there is practically no academic background or people in the area who have experience in this and can

				help you is very complicated. You have to do it all by yourself, you have to teach yourself. I am not saying this to say 'we are the best in the world' or to glorify ourselves, but to recognize the effort we make.
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	CHALLENGES		BURN OUT	"The biggest challenges would just be burn-out. After shows like Enter The Void the burn-out is real and its hard to get back to grooves. We really pushed the envelope with our multiple projects over the years and that can get tiring but it is also inspiring and motivational. It is sometimes hard to strike a balance on work and life. It is also tough to sometimes stay afloat since we are just simply selling vinyl records most of the time and really its a small market but I am more than happy to continue it as I figure out ways to live semi off-grid. We still haven't figured everything out yet."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	CHALLENGES		COORDINATING BETWEEN CONTINENTS	"You need to find meeting times that work for everyone, especially when you're working with people from different countries, like I. some people in Germany, some people in the US, some people in Asia."
BANJY INTERVIEW	COMMUNITY	CORE VALUES	COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY	"I think that the connections we have made with people from outside El Salvador are what help this to keep growing because some are more advanced in certain areas and others we have learned and trained in a more traditional and empirical way. In the end, things complement each other through the connections you make with people from outside, and you approach the same topic."

| BANJY INTERVIEW | COMMUNITY | CORE VALUES | COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY | I'm really thankful for colleagues from abroad who have come to El Salvador and inspired our local visual arts community—graphic designers, programmers, video editors, and filmmakers. All of them are part of a community that may not have the same vision of a VJ, but we connect through workshops and talk about the tools we use like After Effects, programming languages, TouchDesigner.

I got to know the Mapping Me programs from Rodrigo Tamariz in Spain. They invited me to their festivals, and we've kept in touch. Seeing the support they get from local governments is inspiring. Trying to do the same here in El Salvador is hard because the equipment is expensive. But, renting high-quality projectors from Guatemala makes a big difference.

Even if I don't have all the gear, I can work with talented people like those at Nifty Studio. Together, we can create amazing stuff, just like they do abroad. The term "VJ" might not be known in the country, but here it includes people practicing related skills. I think we can start integrating the community of visual artists and then branching out into VJs. |
| BANJY INTERVIEW | COMMUNITY | CORE VALUES | COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY | VJing. Perhaps new professions and jobs will come from these visual arts tools. It's our responsability to share our work and knowledge because people might ask, 'What can I do with that here?' Programs, hardware, computers—all of that costs money. How do you get a return on it? It can be through working with advertising agencies, as we've mentioned, being responsible for putting videos on billboards, programming interactive videos in shopping centers. For concerts, I think our peak is being a VJ, handling visuals for international artists, going on tour, and all that. It's also a big commitment because you have to be at rehearsals, testing screens, making sure everything is integrated with the music. You don't just work at the concerts; you spend hours and |

				hours preparing everything to make sure the show runs optimally.
BANJY INTERVIEW	COMMUNITY	CORE VALUES	COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY	Teaching is rewarding because you get to meet more people. For example, that's how I met Happy, and he became my right-hand man after a class I taught at La Resi. Now, he has a formal job, but he also earns extra through the events we've been doing, supporting with visuals, setting up equipment, and so on. It's a range of possibilities for how you can develop professionally and make money, because in the end, you also have goals to learn and help.
HANNES INTERVIEW	COMMUNITY	INTERACTION	IRL VS URL	"I am not sure, but I don't think it will replace the in-real-life (IRL) events completely. Anyone who has been to a concert can tell you the feeling of standing in a big venue or in front of a festival stage and listening to the songs of their favorite artist live. It creates big moments in people's lives that they want to remember. I think virtual events are not there yet to deliver that feeling, but who knows what new technology will bring us."
VAL INTERVIEW	COMMUNITY	CORE VALUES	COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY, PRIVILEGES	"Thanks to that event I was able to meet more people regionally. I realized that people from Guatemala are on another level. And we return to the subject of privilege because they have more economical resources. You can tell by all the equipment they bring. Also, they spend more time in other countries than in Guatemala, but at least they make the effort to bring it to Guatemala. They have a lot of knowledge that they take from other places, but they do their best to apply it in Guatemala. They are involved in several projects, not only corporate, but also with the help of the mayor's office of Antigua Guatemala to be able to put something together. But the quality of their work is proportional to the support they gave us. They are really good people. We got stuck with one part and they started giving us a lot of alternatives to solve the problem. They told us things like 'if you're missing a computer, you can work on mine' or 'if you want to

				replace it with a 3D object, I have it here, you can download it'. I feel that if there were spaces like that in real life, like virtual spaces, people wouldn't keep anything to themselves. Everything would be circular and reciprocal, and I love that."
VAL INTERVIEW	COMMUNITY	CORE VALUES	COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY	My learning it's very organic because I'm on Reddit and Facebook on TouchDesigner groups. I feel like it's a process. I start to see how they do tracking in a video, they upload it, people comment that it's cool, things like that. Then questions start coming out, because it's a niche. The same people that are on Facebook are on Reddit. They see something on Facebook, they put it on Reddit, they ask how to make it, and people respond to them. A few days later, someone uploads a tutorial about it. I feel like it's very organic and, even though it's not reciprocal, it's very circular. It's like someone knows how to do something, other people get interested and find out how to do it, and instead of keeping it, they share it. It's interesting, there's not so much gatekeeping.
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	COMMUNITY	CORE VALUES	CREATIVE FREEDOM, EMPOWERMENT, SOLIDARITY AND GENEROSITY	"However with a down to earth and open approach you get an endless stream of creativity where people have much more freedom to be creative and can find their own voice that is healthy, non-destructive, inviting and rewarding. A quote I like related to this is 'the plants you water are the ones that grow'.
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	COMMUNITY	CORE VALUES	CURATION, COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY, PARTICIPATORY CULTURE	"It is sort of always random. With music there are times I sent messages to people on Soundcloud that haven't uploaded anything for 12+ years and sometimes I get DM's. Sometimes someone recommends me somebody but most of the time I am actively personally reaching out to people. " "With VJs it was the same thing at first until recently with our VOID TV crew that naturally took place and formed from all our multiple

				shows including Enter The Void. Now we have a team of people helping organize with each other and sometimes recommending other VJs to join. The video side is a bit more complicated so that's we have a group of talented organized people"
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	COMMUNITY	CORE VALUES	UNDERGROUND CULTURES	"I am quite proud to see many different collectives and projects being much more free and not scared to do unique projects. It's a signal that the scene is growing and has endless things to say and do.
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	COMMUNITY	CORE VALUES	AGAINST GATEKEEPING	"It was simply from experience, when I was a young artist I dealt with many aspects of gate-keeping and over-time I realized that the death of most genres and movements is for that reason alone. People get tired of always hitting walls and barriers in their artistic careers and they just simply move to new genres and movements. Then the cycle generally always repeats itself."
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	COMMUNITY	CORE VALUES	SELFLESS ART	"In terms of the whole cult of personality thing, yeah, I try to avoid that like the plague. It just makes being an artist and community not fun anymore, it becomes politically charged and nasty just to satisfy the ego. I believe this is one of the pillars that cause the death of movements and genres."
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	COMMUNITY	CORE VALUES	RESPECT	"I'm more than happy the scene is alive with different multiple different projects going on, it means the scene is alive. All I can hope for is people keep a respectful vibe."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	COMMUNITY	CORE VALUES	COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY, PARTICIPATORY CULTURE	"We don't stream it, but often people will come in and record it. As one person who comes into basically every event and does like really high -def recordings of them."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	COMMUNITY	INTERACTION	FREQUENCY OF VIRTUAL EVENTS	"We done this every weekend for over a year so yeah 15 months or so."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	COMMUNITY	INTERACTION	FREQUENCY OF INTERACTION	"It's kind of like the same social situation as IRL. You see the same people around every week, everywhere. It's easier to make friends because you keep seeing the same people repeatedly, like at school or work"

VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	COMMUNITY	INTERACTION	IRL VS URL	"For example, at work, most of the people are older, so it's hard to find like-minded individuals to do stuff with. I'm often surrounded by people in their 40s and 50s with kids. Around here, you'll run into people who are 40 plus, but it's not just a younger person's game. I'm 32, and there are others out there too."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	COMMUNITY	CORE VALUES	SAFETY	"If you join the Discord, you can get the recordings too from a lot of past events as well. yeah, yeah, we'll have to invite you to the Discord. You have to be invited now."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	COMMUNITY	CORE VALUES	COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY, PARTICIPATORY CULTURE	"There's a lot of cool stuff to see around this guy's around in a lot of the things. I try to help out a lot of new people around the scene as much as I can. Because there's so much to see and so many different things. It depends on what kind of aspect you kind of go for."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	COMMUNITY	CORE VALUES	SAFETY, LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE	"You have a lot of like-minded like individuals who are all together in the same space, so like it's very welcoming, open, and like very safe."
HANNES INTERVIEW	EVENTS	INTERACTION	ACCESIBILITY	From my perspective, the technology needs to improve and be more accessible to everybody. Another point is the way it is implemented at the moment. I think if you would advertise, for example, a concert livestream as an MR event which can be watched like a normal stream but you can decide how much you want to see of the outside world—maybe just a bigger screen in MR, a full 180-degree look, or a full 360-degree experience—it would be way more accepted than an only full VR experience

VAL INTERVIEW	EVENTS	INTERACTION	GEOGRAPHICAL CONVENIENCE, ACCESIBILITY, LACK OF A SCENE	"For visual artists, whether it is painting or anything else, there are always events, whether in a cultural house, a small exhibition, there is always space. The same happens with people who make music, they always have space. But with digital, I don't know why they think that only a computer is enough. It is something applicable and can be worked together. There can be transmedia, but they don't conceive it. They see it as something very separate. That has made that, in this country, if you want to do something digital, it is almost always for a company, something corporate. If we go to an artistic level, in the scene, it is still quite separate. The most they ask for are visuals for events, they put them in the background and then everything dies.
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	EVENTS	INTERACTION	ALTERNATIVE LIFE	"If people don't like it, they can just go somewhere else. So, I feel like people are a lot freer to try different things, whether it's in-worlds, their DJ set, or the visuals. They can put whatever they want on the screen."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	EVENTS	INTERACTION	IRL VS URL	"You a different experience than you do like IRL, right? So going to like a festival in your IRL is a whole new feeling. But here is like you get it every weekend. You have a music festival event happening every week, every night, kind of, yeah, nowadays, kind of every night. It just doesn't stop. It's nuts."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	EVENTS	INTERACTION	IRL VS URL	I think I think I think they both have their ups and downs right like on one hand IRL you have you have you're able to feel a real sound system right like you're able to feel the bass and It just sounds bigger because it's coming out of big speakers and not your VR headset or headphones."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	EVENTS	INTERACTION	GEOGRAPHICAL CONVENIENCE, ACCESIBILITY	"There's no music scene around me. I don't have a car. I don't like any way to transport myself aside from the train. Its a good way to actually get into that scene. It's also easier to know what's going on because there is like a party hub that just compile

				on the info and say this is what's happening right now."
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT	PSYCHOLOGICAL STATES	ESCAPISM	"I wouldn't use the word utopia maybe more like a digital hideout."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT	IDENTITY AND EXPERIENCE	BODY CUSTOMIZATION	"As someone that feels like the game's sound sensitivity, I can tweak the sound settings so it's not really overwhelming. I can get the right mix I don't hear what I don't like... You can curate it to how you want it to be. It's the best way to put it, I guess. And you can go with it."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT	IDENTITY AND EXPERIENCE	IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION, ALTERNATIVE LIFE	It's kind of funny to talk to someone for a while and then, a week or two later, you find out they're around your age. They've seen this and know what it means. Seriously, because everything gets stripped away here. You are your true, raw self on this platform.
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	NOSTALGIA	"Nostalgia certainly helps drive eyeballs to different projects since its generally a good inviting feeling to People."
VR CHAT - ANONYMOUS	PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT	IDENTITY AND EXPERIENCE	IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION, ALTERNATIVE LIFE	"The way you look, your body type, your skin color, your exterior—none of that exists here. I mean, you're just getting more control over it. It still exists, but you have more control, so you can be more comfortable with it. You look exactly the way you want or close to it. This makes it easier for me, at least. For example, I don't have to worry about whether I look weird or if I'm acting weird"
BANJY INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	SELFLESS ART	"Mixing music and videos has its limitations because they require different resources.. However, those who go to clubs are not there to watch the videos; they are more focused on listening to the music, making the visuals as something secondary.

BANJY INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	SELFLESS ART	People see them a lot, and that's really cool. But it becomes a more superficial effect, the aspect that you're no longer making as much art, but more of a presentation. For me, it's because I like music; I keep making music, I keep mixing. But I prefer the VJ aspect, where you want your work to speak for you. I have done scenography, I have done video projections, and that's because people think that, for example, in El Salvador, there isn't much talent for that. When they see it, they didn't know that Salvadorans did that, they didn't know it existed in the country. So, for me, it makes me say, it means that they are comparing the work we are doing here with that from outside because people are surprised to know that national artists are doing things at an international level. So, for me, that is gratifying, and it surprises people to know that we are ordinary people doing extraordinary things. So, the fact that your work speaks for you means you are doing something well. I don't care about being in a news article because people aren't looking to see you, they are looking to see your work. So, for me, it's like that. Other people want to be seen. In that case, become a stage artist or an actor or a singer who is in front of the public. But, for example, the DJ or a ghost producer who is also a DJ but doesn't come to light, they are just making music. I think their satisfaction is knowing that the public is enjoying their art. If my face is shown, that's fine, but if not, it's also fine."

BANJY INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	INNOVATION	I think that, mainly, we audiovisual artists and artists in general share a common factor: we strive to create things that haven't been seen before. So, mainly, it's like this: maybe you have seen something or been inspired by it, but you won't create something exactly the same. So, if it's not being done here and it's not very common to see, then I feel I have to do it. That's how it started for me, returning to El Salvador after seeing a couple of festivals abroad, seeing things outside, and thinking, 'Hey, I want to keep doing this. I don't want to wait another year to participate in a festival abroad because it's only possible abroad.' I think starting to do all these things here is one of the main motivations. I was talking to people who are pioneers in Spain, who said, 'No, we started with projectors, we didn't have that software, those programs didn't exist.'
BANJY INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	QUALITY OF CONTENT	People have told me, 'I don't want to see a video downloaded from the internet; I want to see something unique and impressive that makes people say, "Wow, that's crazy!"' This has become a great responsibility and part of my inspiration.
BANJY INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	QUALITY OF CONTENT	"The work of the VJ is essential. People don't just go for the music to festivals. We see the videos of Afterlife, Eric Prydz, Tomorrowland, these huge festivals, Sonar. They all integrate the VJ, the visual arts as important as the music itself. People have told me, 'Look, I've been to electronic events and I like the music, but I also come for the visuals.' That makes me more committed and inspired, so I have to do better things. It's a challenge, and with every event, you want to integrate new things so people don't just say, 'Oh, I saw the visuals, but I've seen them before.' In that, artificial intelligence also gives us a challenge because AI doesn't repeat images. It's a tool that we have to use. Imagine, I have terabytes of videos. It's almost the same every time. I have paid for an

				Envato subscription to download new videos, and then I see them at some event or activation, and I don't want to use them anymore. That's where we have to step in and add effects to make it look different, not just like a video has been played. It's challenging but also inspiring at the same time."
HANNES INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	INNOVATION	I can imagine working for a Performance inside a venue like the Sphere is a big challenge and at the same time very interesting to see how visuals work in that kind of environment.
HANNES INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	INNOVATION	With new technologies in the graphiccard industry and the fast rising performance of computers it opens up a lot of opportunities in the live visual area. You can create realistic looking 3D Scenes in Unreal Engine and bring that into pre rendered content or even live AR or MR visuals. Render Engines have improved and allow much more complex visuals that are rendered in real time or even interact with live inputs. I think AI will also take up a big Part of the evolution of live visuals, because it can generate much more in a shorter amount of time, even if it is only an inspiration or part of a moodboard.
HANNES INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	INNOVATION	I think we will see much more realistic and complex looking visuals in the next couple of years even for live artists that cant afford a whole cgi team. And i could imagine that a lot of visuals will be rendered in realtime.
VAL INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	INNOVATION	Once I finished one, I realized I didn't want to just copy what someone else did. I wanted to add my own style. After several attempts and creating various projects, I started using just the base of the theme or the interesting part of the project and then built everything else myself. I think I officially started last year.

VAL INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	INNOVATION, MOTIVATIONS	"I started following a bunch of accounts and thought, 'If I don't take the first step, how am I going to achieve something similar?' So I tried again and, obviously, started with YouTube tutorials. Everything I saw was overwhelming. The first five minutes of each tutorial were just to leave me impressed because I'd watch the next one and be fascinated by what they did. I spent a good amount of time like that until I finally finished one."
VAL INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	INNOVATION	"I don't want to just stick to what someone else does; I want to add my own style. After several attempts and creating various projects, I started using just the base or the interesting part of the tutorial project and then built everything else myself.
VAL INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	INNOVATION, MOTIVATIONS, IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION	"Seeing what you were doing here in El Salvador always caught my attention, right? I wondered, how do you do it? Why does it look so trippy? How do I make it look that good? Those questions made me think a lot. And then later on, when I had access to more resources, I feel that there was a change, because I've always had the ideal or the mentality of wanting to make art, to make a living from art, to produce art. But it wasn't until I came across digital art that I said: 'This is what I want to do, this is what I want to dedicate myself to'. I realized why I wanted to know more, to go deeper, because it's a vast and infinite world. There's always something new, a new technique, a new program, a new reference.Literally, my idyllic dream would be to be able to make a living from this, although it sounds difficult to say it from El Salvador. But after 2021, my biggest references have been Pang Marta and PPPANIK."
VAL INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	SELFLESS ART, APOLITICAL STANCE	"We don't do it to become famous, but we always have to recognize the effort, even more so being a woman, even more so being a dissident. There are many factors. And I feel that, at least..."

VILL4IN INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	RESISTANCE TO CAPITALIST MODELS	DECENTRALIZED INTERNET ARTS	"I'd like the project to keep growing, in the back of my mind I want us to be more decentralized from mainstream social media and create our communities in our own networks. I want the legacy to be something like 'yes it can be done and it can always be done better'."
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	RESISTANCE TO CAPITALIST MODELS	DECENTRALIZED INTERNET ARTS	"I feel differently about 'political' art where people can get visual messages outside of the same talking points from media channels."
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	RESISTANCE TO CAPITALIST MODELS	UNDERGROUND CULTURES	"I am quite proud to see many different collectives and projects being much more free and not scared to do unique projects. It's a signal that the scene is growing and has endless things to say and do."
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	RESISTANCE TO CAPITALIST MODELS	UNDERGROUND CULTURES, PLAGIARISM	"The mainstream is just uninteresting to me for a multiple of points. For example it is always big corporate brands sponsoring artists, taking what they can (generally speaking) and throwing artists out when they aren't useful anymore. Secondary the music is uncreative and you can see pretty much a lot of ideas get stolen from the underground, when you pay attention it happens all the time with rappers and others. Thirdly the ideas that we have at VILL4IN don't translate very well to a mainstream audience. We don't mind the attention but I just know if it was in a traditional mainstream context it wouldn't last and survivability for us is very important."
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	HACKER CULTURE, SYMBOLISM	"The cryptic member names are just straight from 1337 speak and hacker / wares culture. With the skull imagery it was a very popular image in a lot of warez sites. During the late 90s I remember the hacker culture being a lot more visible and I sort of want the internet culture to return to that. That movement was anti-spyware, open to freedom of data, and communication. Now with social media you can see that spyware is unfortunately accepted or simply brushed off. Social media is just new school spyware that somehow corporations convinced is ok"

VILL4IN INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	INNOVATION, UNDERGROUND SCENES	"VILL4IN (ie: VILLAIN) is to represent the counter-culture to the mainstream. Since villains are generally not accepted in any mainstream movie and underground movements and generally always blamed but really they are the only ones taking things in new directions."
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	FREEDOM OF DATA, HACKER CULTURE, NOSTALGIA	"VILL4IN's core is located at its main aesthetic which is 90s hacker culture and 1.0 Internet. Which was the freedom of data (piracy) and freedom of information not locked to any cipher or gatekeeper."
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	FREEDOM OF DATA, HACKER CULTURE, NOSTALGIA	"Our central aesthetic however is that of 90s hackers culture and this is to represent the freedom of data which represents our different aesthetic-all catalogues, artists, and projects."
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	PRIVACY AND ANONYMITY, SYMBOLISM	"The mask is was simple, it was readily available to buy from Alibaba, represented the skull aesthetic and great for covering your face to show the aesthetic of anonymity within the real world context."
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY	SELFLESS ART, ALTERNATIVE LIFE, CONTROL OVER PERSONAL DATA, IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION, PRIVACY AND ANONIMITY	"In the beginning I tried to keep VILL4IN an anonymous collective because I felt I didn't want us to be distorted by our personalities or what kind of life we live outside of the work we do. Personally I like to keep my real life / family life separate from 'work' life. I do feel both are very different to me and I don't necessarily like combining the two."
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	SUBCULTURE TERMINOLOGY	THE VOID, SYMBOLISM	"The void would be the literal void. It is a feeling. Is sort of impossible hard to explain but to me its a never-ending emptiness that at the same time needs to be filled and needs to be emptied. There is no escaping it and just needs to be watched. Some people just spend their lives running away (as fast as they can) from the Void while just accepting it's presence just makes life simpler."
VILL4IN INTERVIEW	VISION AND DIGITAL CULTURES	SUBCULTURE TERMINOLOGY	LONG LIVE THE UNDERGROUND, SYMBOLISM	"It's a popular old term from back in the day that I just sort of just remembered it one day, used it for a post, kept liking and just decided to try and push again the message again. It embodies VILL4IN's

				image. Really it can simply be interpreted as long live anything that isn't mainstream and in my own words it would be long live 'unpopular' artists and communities."

B.   VOID TV CREW - Form responses

Data can be found at the link:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/18ZlKlmXOCmbSdA9CgWgAJEWzbCM8LGew8G8IG_T5muU/edit?

usp=sharing