

I will write in English because my French is unworkable - particularly with writing.

On being asked to participate in the Artistes Sur Artistes I enjoyed that fact that I was stepping in to fill a slot left open by another writer who broke the chain. Therefore, as the whole idea is that one artist writes on another and then in turn that artist continues by writing on yet another and so on, as I'm an implant, no one has written about me. As this is also the last cycle, the baton will not be passed further. I am the beginning and end of my contribution. I find myself again in some kind of disconnected place. I'm present but without the right connections, not part of the lineage, an awkward addition perhaps.

I don't expect pity for my position; there are immense freedoms that I have felt in both not being articulate and also not part of the 'family'. In addition, I feel less inclined to reinforce the rules or regularities, either in my work in this city or more specifically within the frame of Artists Sur Artistes.

As such, in much of my alone time, which increases exponentially when you move somewhere new, I have turned to the internet to provide me with contact, feedback and emotional support. Recently, through a friend, I discovered ASMR videos on youtube. ASMR stands for Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response. It refers to that pleasurable tingling sensation that shoots across the surface of your skin from the back of your head. The kind that arrives often unexpectedly but is, in itself, a brief personal pleasure, something that can be felt without the touch of others yet also in the presence of others without them noticing.

The youtube videos, of which there are many, the most popular carry something like 13,000,000 views, use audio and visual

triggers in an attempt to produce ASMR in the viewer. All the videos are whispered and there are a few identifiable forms; role playing which could be anything from bedtime stories where you are the child to a full laser hair removal procedure where you are the patient, object interaction which often involves the small sounds of nails clicking on a surface or the sweeping sound of a wet wipe moving across a table surface, and finally non-role play which is more direct non-fictional whispering often similar to meditation or relaxation techniques.

I'm new to the world of ASMR and I'm still getting my bearings, so in this text I wanted to just introduce the form. At one point, as it is a self-constituting youtube 'community', I saw that some people refer to other regular producers of the videos as ASMRtists. Its a cute wordplay and I felt that, considering my assignment, I would be an artist writing on an ASMRtist. What about Marseille? Reflecting upon my positioning in the city I thought that referring to an artist not physically present would be appropriate. An artist who's work I can only experience totally individually, in a closed room with headphones. For me, at least, at that moment, they are present with me in Marseille. Or, they are as present as I am in the city at the point at which I listen to them - which is to say in simple terms - not present.

Ali, who distributes her videos under the the youtube channel ASMRrequests, caught my attention because I discovered her through her role-playing video for a laser hair removal session - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iq4A2NhuAiE>. What marks her as interesting for me is that she has started to try and get sponsorship from companies in order for her videos to be ad free. Nothing kills the ASMR experience than a loud youtube advert for the new Marseille Netflix series. The laser

hair removal role play was her first of such sponsored content - the sponsor being a laser hair removal company. Such self-care oriented role plays are common in ASMR but what I thought was significant was that it recognised ASMR as a genre through which product placement could also take place.



video still of "Relaxing Laser Hair Removal Session - ASMR Role Play by ASMRrequests

ASMR is already fascinating to me for the position it occupies as part of a kind of affective capitalism. In truth it is very difficult to make a living producing youtube content and only a few will do this. However, hundreds of thousands of views will draw some advertising revenue and what Ali has done is significant as she is expanding upon that in terms of how private investment can be found even for our most personal and intimate moments. Notably, ASMR videos are often used, something that Ali confesses to, for sleep. The relationship between sleep and capitalism is, of course, strained and has informed our largely negative attitudes around sleep as it is connected with a lack of productivity, laziness or depression. ASMR videos are also often used to relax, or reduce anxiety, something that has increased with the paranoia induced by social networks. In this sense, ASMR is one of the bizarre and beautiful fruits of our deteriorating quality of life, the influence of communication technology on every minute of our lives and the potential to monetise ever more abstract

forms of performance, or inversely introduce new ways in which the network enters our waking and now also sleeping moments.

Around a year ago, I was out with a friend and her 5 year old daughter. The daughter had her own baby doll that she pushed around in a miniature pram while role-playing her motherhood. After spending some time talking about her role I was fascinated with how she approached caring for her plastic child. At some point she ran out of imaginary milk - a crisis! What would she do? She asked for her mother's phone on which she made a phone call for more milk to be delivered to her. She assured me someone would bring it shortly. After the feeding, the baby was sleepy. Again, she asked her mother to search for sleepy music on her phone on youtube. When the video was playing she threw into the pram for it to work its magic.

After a conversation about nursery school, I enquired as to who looked after the baby when she was at there to which she stated with surprise, as if I should have presumed, that it was two fairies. Impressed by her level of organisation I wondered how she met these fairies, who were also old friends. She told me that she had searched for 'magical things' on the Internet. This innocent role-play stayed with me - in fact it haunted me for some time. As someone who remembers when mobile phones changed the way I socialised in secondary school, the idea that children now grow up with every single thing they could possibly want at any time and in any place is available with a short search online either on computer or phone or tablet etc. is earth shattering for me. As we move forward, this generation will have a profoundly different experience of what can be demanded and supplied via online platforms which, by the time they are my age, will most likely be completely new and unrecognisable

forms of care, intimacy, contact and sensation.

With my experience of ASMR, I rarely get to the end of the video still awake. As such, this text will have no conclusion. I am left in a conundrum as to how I would monetise this act of writing. Perhaps I should have asked Ali for some sponsorship to discuss her work. Now we're here, perhaps you can go back to the beginning and read it in a whisper - maybe this text works best as an ASMR video. For now, I will finish with a quote from the end of Ali's laser hair removal role-play:

"And we're all done here ok? It was really nice meeting you and I'll be seeing you again in a few weeks ok? ok great... So they will take care of you at the front desk and, yeah, I'll see you in a few weeks for your next treatment. Great! Thank you so much for choosing LaserAway and I'll see you next time. Bye."