

Borosilicate glass, steel, flame anodized chrome, silicone, MDF & acrylic paint
Elapsed time [17° Celsius] 2 hours 15 min - Span 1 to 7 hours 30 min - Span 5

Artist Statement

markiedoodle

The Attention Economy

Time is the one commodity that we all share equally. No one person on this planet is richer or poorer of time. Collectively as a species time is our greatest equalizer. However, our time is finite since our lives are not eternal.

I spent increasing amounts of time thinking about how I spend my own time. Specifically thinking about how I spend my time using social media applications. We scroll through around 300 feet of posts every day and are exposed to hundreds of advertisements. Each ad or post capturing a bit of our time and attention.

Six years ago a friend & collaborator forwarded me a post from the instagram site physicsisfun. It displayed a curious object that appears to be a kinetic sculpture. I was asked to recreate the piece for use in commercial photography. I immediately began a deep dive into studying different thixotropic fluids in order to recreate it. Four years later I had a prototype. After watching and experimenting with the prototype I realized I no longer had the attention span to witness the very thing that I had created.

A further two years later after creating the prototype I am finally able to release 10 kinetic sculptures into the world. This would not have been possible without the help and collaboration of Public Glass Studios and Vantetterode Glass Studio.

I am curious to see their effect on people and if they allow them to self reflect on how they prioritize their own time. Also do they question the limitations of their own attention span and need for attention. Just like I do.

What is your attention span? What is it's worth? How has my own attention span changed? How do I feel being a part of this evolutionary shift by posting content? Has work + life + app culture forever changed our ability to focus? Has our existence been reduced to simply scrolling for dopamine release?

Background Information

The 3 second rule

Social Media platform algorithms prioritize content with a high initial engagement making the first three seconds crucial to grab the viewer's attention. The initial impact of a post subconsciously affects the viewers decision to engage with a post or scroll past it knowing there is an endless stream of alternative content to view instead. This constant behavior pattern has begun to affect and shorten our attention span beyond just social media.

The Endless Scroll Function

Aza Raskin invented the endless scroll function in 2006 as a means of making the user experience more seamless. He regrets the invention admitting it has contributed to social media and smartphone addiction. Endless scrolling monopolizes an estimated 200,000 human lifetimes each day.

Dopamine

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that is released by your hypothalamus in your brain and acts as a hormone. One of Dopamine's many roles is involved with pleasure and motivation. Large amounts of Dopamine are released when experiencing pleasure. Our brains developed this evolutionary response for survival. Eating, drinking, sleeping, & sexual activity all produce high amounts of dopamine as they help our species thrive and reproduce.

Scrolling social media activates the brain's reward center by releasing dopamine. Every like, comment or re-post is a small reward. These rewards are unpredictable and variable which is for a reason. The algorithms associated with social media tap into our addictive nature for more dopamine. The more unpredictable the outcome the longer we stay active on each platform. This concept of locked attention vs. unexpected rewards is analogous to a slot machine. Effectively, Algorithms are tapping into our evolutionary propensity for gambling addiction.

PSMU

Problematic Social Media Use, or PSMU, has yet to be listed by the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) or the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). Researchers are having difficulty studying the effects of social media use as it is evolving so quickly. There is no doubt its impact on human behavior specifically among adolescent females. Researchers debate whether PSMU should be considered a separate clinical condition or a manifestation of underlying psychiatric disorders.

Approximately 5.2 billion people or around 64% of the global population use social media as of the date of this showing. I question how many of us have control over our social media use and whether there has ever been a behavioral disorder so pervasive yet universally acceptable across all global cultures.