

8 Maybe soon Reddit's "Am I the Asshole?" will be acted out in high-production TikToks and YouTube shorts, creating yet another wave of itch to scratch, more intense, more distracting.

9 This exhibition proposes the **digital itch** as the ever-growing felt trace of a system built upon the attention economy that exploits attention by promising relief it cannot deliver.

10 **Byung-Chul Han's "aesthetic of the smooth"** describes not only an aesthetic but also a consumer habit in which information is absorbed like pornography: images and

used. Perhaps edging the itch becomes a mechanism for self-preservation.

11 From **October 29 to November 29, 2025**, *Edging the Unscratchable Digital Itch* at InterAccess gathers six artists whose works each enact a different way of edging. They do not offer a cure; they cultivate tactics, blurriness, slowness, idleness, imitation, misuse, that make the itch legible, livable, and, perhaps, resistant. Through these almost pointlessly tender efforts, the exhibition asks how art might interrupt our habit of fast consumption, to sit with these artworks, and with the digital itch.

Edging the Unscratchable Digital Itch

Exhibition essay by Lingxiang Wu
2025 IA Current
October 29 - November 29, 2025

- 1 It feels unnatural to sit simply in contemplation. It's weird, unbearable, even.
- 2 Our spines are used to locking into a hunch; our necks tire just holding up our head, wanting to drop to that angle where a double-chin appears.
- 3 Our hands reach for the phone; we feel safe only when it's in our grip, like a pacifier ready to soothe the anxiety that flares the moment we're alone with our thoughts.

CURRENT

The InterAccess Current (IA Current) program supports the professional development of emerging curators and artists interested in new media and electronic practices. Each year, InterAccess selects an emerging curator, who works closely with InterAccess staff to conceptualize and execute an exhibition of works by emerging artists. "Current" refers to the now, but it is also an energetic charge that causes light, heat, and all manner of electronic life; an apt metaphor for emergent creative practices within the ever-expanding field of new media.

About the curator

Lingxiang Wu is a Chinese queer visual artist, chronically online researcher, and compulsive overthinker currently based in Toronto, Canada. His work critically engages with digital aesthetics, invisible labor, and algorithmic culture, addressing our entanglement within the attention economy. Spanning photographic collage, video, animation, and installation, his practice explores how contemporary digital culture and technology influences our ways of being under the spell of neoliberal capitalism, humorously trying to process his own productivity dysmorphia.

Founded in 1983, InterAccess is a non-profit gallery, educational facility, production studio, festival, and registered charity dedicated to emerging practices in art and technology. Our programs support art forms that integrate technology, fostering and supporting the full cycle of art and artistic practice through education, production, and exhibition. InterAccess is regarded as a preeminent Canadian arts and technology centre.

Inter/Access

interfaced stripped naked for immediate legibility, mukbangs, thirst traps, net fictions, designed to glide across the eye and stimulate us just enough for completion. Smoothness gratifies on contact but withholds depth; it is sensation without complication. **Lauren Berlant's "cruel optimism"** clarifies the origin of the itch: an attachment to promises of fulfillment, that platforms continually defer by providing almost-good-enough experience until we exhaust our effort and hope. Between smooth stimulus and premature gratification, the itch emerges, neither pain nor pleasure, a low-grade agitation that keeps the hand moving. In this terrain, we are both user and

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Gallery Hours:
Tuesdays-Saturdays,
11 AM - 6 PM



4 We live with an itch we can't name. It crawls just under the skin, whispers in the ear, urging the thumbs to scroll, the eyes to refresh, the mind to escape into nothingness. We produce, we consume, we seduce. **Satisfaction is promised but withheld, leaving an itch that demands another scratch.**

5 I, too, suffer from this itch. It grows out of the compulsive cycles of contemporary digital life: loops of desire, endless performance, and temporary relief.

6 In early 2024, during a trip to China, I fell into a month-long addiction to online fiction, stories rushed smooth as glass. Obstacles arrived only to dissolve at once; revenge, reincarnation, redemption came on demand. In Chinese, this genre is called **shuangwén** (爽文): writing engineered for pleasure. That frictionless plot mirrors our feeds, content crafted to soothe and gratify without depth, to keep us in motion.

7 We become both trigger and treatment for one another's longing in a parasocial marketplace of hypervisibility and hyperactivity, where the day ends not in resolution but in restless residue. By 2025, these fictions are being manufactured into short video series, more seductive, more dynamic.

12 In **Sarah Boo's *Wandering Rage***, three protruding wooden blocks sit on the wall, each with a projected image from a three-channel video. Each block is imbued with a distinct emotional flavor of online consumption and embodies an archetype that recurs across history as a mode of navigating desire and disruption. Blurriness further abstracts the act of scrolling into poetic movements that tease and lure the viewer. Unlike the endless scroll, Boo's work does not soothe the itch; it teases it with what is unseen.

To edge is to refuse to be seen naked

To edge is to be naughty with technology

¹⁶ If we think about it, anything within reach can be used to scratch an itch. Are we really the users of technology if we simply follow its intended function and never explore alternatives? **Sophia Oppel's *Edge Elisions*** tests this by inverting computer-vision techniques like edge detection. She fragments a 3D scan of her body via UV mapping, mills a series of reliefs with a CNC machine, and projects videos of her skin texture onto those forms, spinning, aligning, and misaligning into an abstract self-portrait. The work asks what happens when edge detection fails: when subject, object, and

1. **Sarah Boo**, *Wandering Rage*, 2025. Three-channel video and sound installation.
2. **Iris Qu Xiaoyu & Niles Fromm**, *Machine Whispers*, 2025. Site specific sound installation.
3. **David Yu**, *x-in-waiting*, 2020 – 2025. Vinyl decal, mobile app and performance. (In gallery device available at the reception)
4. **Michael Luo**, *Cyberside Picnic*, 2023. Experimental video game installation
5. **Sophia Oppel**, *Edge Elisions*, 2025. Video installation
6. **Axl Le**, *Joseph's Midnight Party*, 2025. Art Film. 22 minutes

reality: will Joseph give in to the itch with everyone else, or carve a path toward liberation? Le uses generative AI not for seamless realism, but as a device to stage inquiry driven by his own curiosity.

Therefore, lastly.

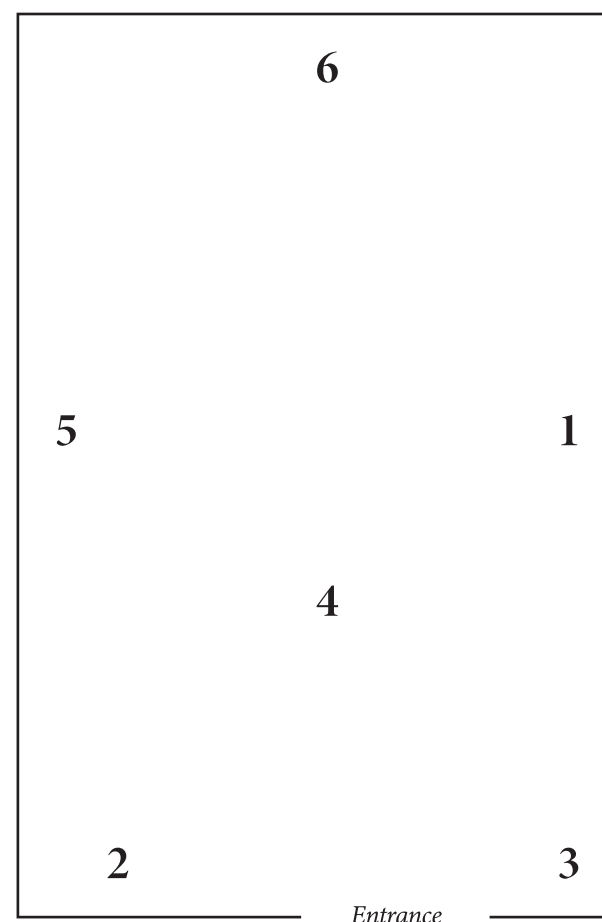
To edge is to be in control of our own desire

When desire is held rather than fed, we use technology, rather than being used by it.

edges our impulse to connect and perform on apps by installing a simple boundary: wait. In that pause, Yu opens a more interpersonal, attentive encounter with whoever meets the performance. Throughout the exhibition, Yu will periodically post new performances each week, after which the app will be terminated indefinitely.

To edge is to grind without a happy ending

¹⁵ The concept of the game nowadays has become a form of playbour, just like the many gacha games in which we repeat tasks and wait for rewards, sunk in the illusion that we are progressing. On a grass field, a desk and monitor present **Michael Luo's *Cyberside Picnic***. The game pays tribute to a time when players committed time and attention to uncover a story: across eight mini-games, you play a worker tasked with maintaining and assessing the efficiency of Arteon Corporation's flagship AI—2ELLIOT. The piece invites viewers to try and fail as many times as needed, until the need for reward falls away and play becomes its own pleasure.



To edge is to chew before swallow

¹³ **Iris Qu** and **Niles Fromm's** site-specific sound installation, *Machine Whispers*, uses an AI algorithm to recreate the moment of encounter with a local intelligence who shares information about a place, often through storytelling. A vertical aluminum frame holds two identical reel-to-reel decks, one reading and one writing, so a small portion of playback feeds back into the recording, creating a subtle, distorted echo. An overhead speaker delivers murmurs about the site. The AI researches news, blogs, and building records, then composes speculative historical scenes, like an elder recounting what might have been. The work adds friction to listening, edging our itch to know by replacing instant search with paced, fragmented storytelling.

To edge is to perform conditionally

¹⁴ **David Yu's** vinyl decal holds space for his presence: collages of everyday objects surround two key elements—the image of Yu's back in standby and two QR codes that let visitors download *x-in-waiting*. The mobile app notifies participants when the artist is ready; they then wait eight minutes with him in various settings, engaging with ordinary objects. The work humorously

Closing Performance

To edge is to leave the itching body behind

Saturday, December 6th, 2025
11 AM- 6 PM at InterAccess

Jeemin Kim & Sheung-King
Displaced Nostalgia: Itch

background collapse into a hybrid. Treating the “edge” as a seam that can be opened or shifted to the point of rupture, Oppel leverages misreadings and glitches to expose and creatively misuse the technologies of datafication.

¹⁷ The large projection of **Axl Le's *Joseph's Midnight Party*** is a 22-minute art film created with AI-generated techniques, depicting the inner journey of Joseph, a young man of the 1990s generation, during a summer trip. Drawing on existentialist literature and media-ecology theory, the work probes the entanglement of humans and media, hovering between dream and

In this performance, no phones are permitted. No watches. Performers do not talk to each other. With every feeling of an hour passing, JeeMin begins her labour, which prompts Sheung-King to write. At the end of his writing, he leaves a prompt for the audience to respond to. Between each feeling of an hour, performers rest.

¹⁸ Edging is an attitude toward technology: not to be overwhelmed, swayed, or easily impressed, but curious and playful. It's also a practice: refusing the flattening rush of immediacy, and dedicating time to what looks like pointless foreplay. Maybe then we use the tool without being swallowed by it. When the itch returns, as it will, let's withhold the scratch, sit with the discomfort, and spit out the pacifier that keeps us quiet. Whether edging makes our relationship with technology “better” is unknown; it does, at least, draw a line—between us and the systems (and the people behind them) that script our habits every day.