

# **\_INTRUDERS AT THE WINDOW | PROPOSAL**

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## **\_INTRODUCTION**

An onstage simulation/performance of an **online chat conference** that will include participants from a set of different geographical locations from across the world – young critics from local film cultures traditionally excluded from mainstream, global film discourse – who will be invited to collectively imagine, in the real-time, for a live audience, a new era in cinephilia that is inclusive, devoid of centres and genuinely plural.

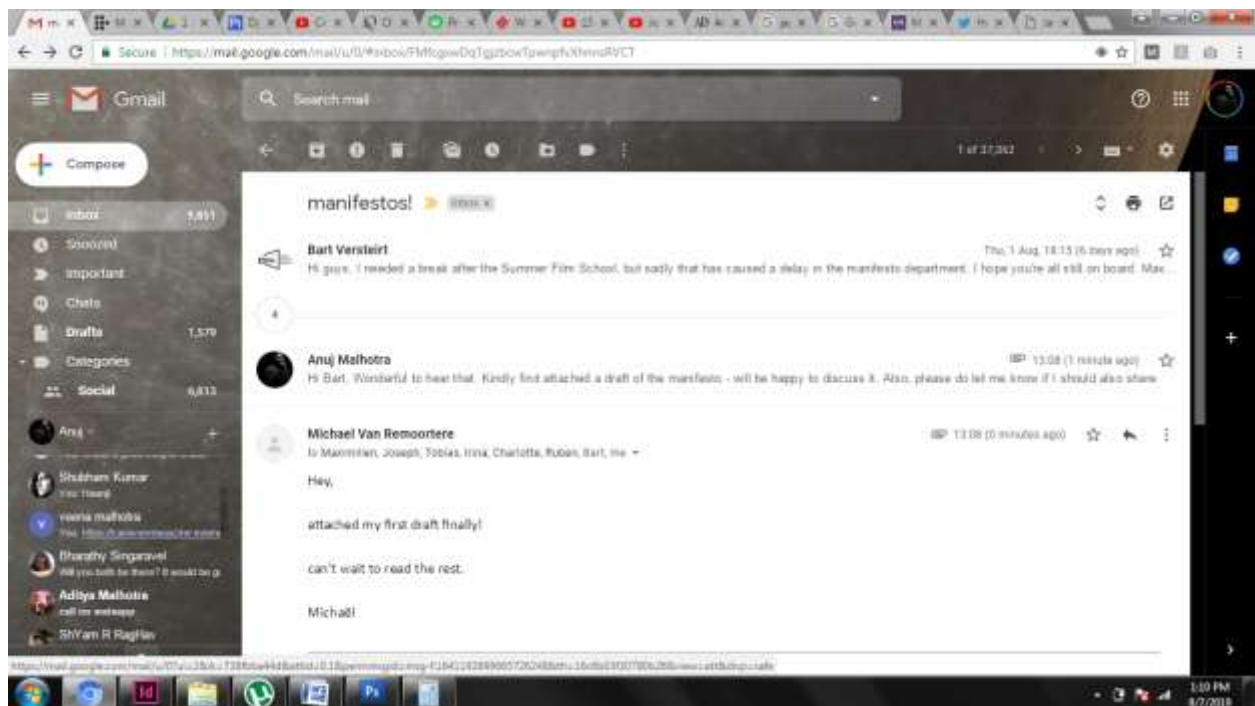
## **\_THE IDEA**

The eruption of this idea – and indeed, now, this proposal – happened while in the middle of a conversation, but unlike what the implications of this sentence may have been a few years ago, I was alone in the room, and there was no other physical co-habitant of the space itself. The event of the said ‘conversation’ was focused temporally (fixed, through a Google Calendar notification) but dispersed in space – a confetti of words – across six countries and at least, three continents. It was distilled through an immense anarchy: words flew around; statements, responses – and punctuations induced by a diversity of network qualities, connection drop-offs, data transfers, weather outages, makes of the optical fiber and trajectories of satellites in orbit.

The contemporary definition of this experience of intensified simultaneity and chaos is called a ‘conference’ – this marks a significant rupture from the classical associations with the term, indicative as it is of a strict order, in both the presentation of ideas, and in their subsequent indexation. The situation described in the first paragraph does not fulfill any of these criteria, or at least not in any manner that is *ideal* – and yet, there is in it the possibility of locating a new mode or system by which ideas can develop, or *grow*. This is a significant departure from the *modus operandi* of a traditional conference, where various ideas are presented, in neatly organized, adjacently situated shelves that co-exist, but can never overlap (in this, a noted attribute of civil discourse: ‘do not speak over one another’), but within the space of a concurrently performed online chat, ideas collide, intersect, pierce and smash *through* each other and yield, eventually, a tremendous accumulation. Unlike a conference, therefore, which exists in order to result, *post-facto*, in possible collaborations, collusions or conspiracies, an online conference generates its *being* in the real-time (it assigns time a ‘realness’ that is material, and that a traditional conference never can, for the latter must evaluate its utility in retrospect, almost as an object of sentiment). In this, it assumes a grossly plural form: a colony of fragments, splinters, quotables, memes, slogans, ideas that tendrils, finally, into action.

## \_THE CONTEXT

The orchestration of the conversation in question was achieved by the editors of the Belgian, cinephile-run, state-funded publication, *Cinea* ([www.cinea.be](http://www.cinea.be)), who wanted to employ the online conference tool/platform, 'Slack' ([www.slack.com](http://www.slack.com)) to help 'organise' their efforts and in general, their effectiveness as a publishing platform. The reason they needed to do this was because the magazine had only recently (in 2019) transitioned from a traditional model of publishing, which features a masthead defined by hierarchy, order, monocacy and reverse, i.e., a single writer who commissions pieces by a roving or tenured group of writers, to a more open, 21<sup>st</sup> century model, wherein this would be replaced by a horizontal editorial board constituted by young critics from all over the world. The theoretical proposition(s) underlying this transition were of course, democracy, openness and transparency (which are all, ironically, classical ideas), but also, novelty, experimentation and collective ownership. To further push this arrangement towards its radical possibilities, *Cinea's* convener and its erstwhile editor, Bart Versteirt decided to invite not merely new writers into the fold for each subsequent issue, but also, from among the editorial board, a new editor. 'Slack' would therefore act as the watering hole – the platform where *Cinea* has its own account (and thus, accountability?) and where all of the members of the editorial board gather, through assigned log-ins (passcodes to the secret tavern) and deposit, often simultaneously (see: image below) and at the same time, their 'ideas' towards the growth of the magazine and its prospects.



At the same time, an Indian cinephile-organised film publication, *Projectorhead*, had been working on a Mission Statement that would allow it to declare its transition from its long-held (ten issues) editorial policy, which was to cover and introspect on cinema from around the world, to instead constitute a board of editors and writers from the so-designated Global South, which is to arrive as an end result at a cinephilia that is not global in a homogeneous, universal, or single-way, but global in the manner of its inclusion of an infinite number of hyperlocal and cultural cinephilias from around the world.

(The various salient points of this Statement are mentioned in the accompanying document, '**Projectorhead, Mission Statement**', the threads of discussion that led to its development are documented in the enclosure '**Projectorhead, Chats**' and the manifesto on the subject contributed by the founder/publisher of *Projectorhead* to the 'Manifestos' issue organized by *Cinea* is attached as, '**Towards an Empathetic Cinephilia**'.)

## **\_THE 'PERFORMANCE'**

The proposed performance will therefore combine aspects of *Cinea's* organizational approach (in terms of its multi-faceted, inclusive, plural editorial board) and *Projectorhead's* ideological theses (in terms of its imagination of the new, global cinephilia as a plural [cinephilias] object instead of a singular idea – and the various implications therewithin). It will attempt to achieve this by making *its own self explicit*, a conscious unfurling of its own mechanism, through the 'enactment' of a live chat conference which will include critics, writers, filmmakers, film society activists from such countries as Belgium, India, Nigeria, Lebanon, Poland, Armenia, Croatia and Uruguay, to exist as a multi-tentacled foam monster that will exist for the duration of the performance in order to collectively express prophesise their concerns with existing cinephilia, and then imagine a proposed alternative to it – in essence, 'talk over each other', in order to 'talk to the world at large'.

## **\_THE 'INTERFACE'**

To initiate the movement towards the objectives of the said Mission Statement by *Projectorhead*, a decentralized framework was being imagined where it could be possible for a cinephiles from the so-designated Global South to collaborate in real-time, perhaps in the form of an online conference with as little moderation. The quest also inspired a search for decentralized systems that can facilitate such a conference. While Slack is a great interface, it is a proprietary system and by definition, therefore, centralized. Lightcube, *Projectorhead's* sister organization then invested its energies in looking for models and open-source technologies that could be emulated / adapted for this deployment. A free-tier AWS server was leased, an open-source RTC (Real Time Collaboration) software called Rocket.Chat was deployed. This allowed for significant customization, which offered robust stability and a complete isolation of the conference from systems / networks that are snooping for keywords which could be turned

into marketable opportunities by the algorithms to be. This was achieved in a few weeks of development. Simultaneously, invitations were sent to cinephiles and schedules were organized to facilitate a discussion forum, which constituted the first installment towards the realization of the Mission Statement.