DEBORAH FINDLATER AMA

Where does the internet end and the real world begin?

Somewhere in the space between scrolling and typing 🧑🏾‍💻

Do you feel your URL and IRL identity are one in the same? How do you feel your identity and the syfu's identity have been mediated online?

I would say I'm observant, precise and economical with words, funny! I'm pretty much like that online too. I don't give out personal information online, I try to hold back a bit and keep it quite general and vague. Even don't like showing my face publicly a lot. Try not to incriminate myself too much or be too messy 😬....

It's been quite weird making the transition on twitter from a student who chats shit online to being known as an artist/DJ or whatever and having to perhaps conduct myself more 'professionally.' I pity all the serious people who follow me and end up with my trash on their tl.

Different platforms of course require different expression of identity. So Facebook I try keep as a personal space with only becoming friends with people I actually know.

Instagram I don't know what I'm doing with that. I guess trying to find a balance between brand singularity and treating myself like a product. I don't ever wanna use these platforms just for promotion even if I'm a bit cynical about engaging and connecting url.

SYFU's online identity is an interesting one cos honestly we didn't have a collective consensus on how our social media should work. There was back and forth between us on how it should look and now it's kinda settled on posting updates and live tweeting events. We are conscious of how crowded and noisy it can be online and the labour it takes to upkeep profiles, so there are benefits to keeping it quite clinical.

Most recently our exhibition at Radical Libraries, Rich Mix was a collection of memes, tweets, screenshots and actual academic passages linked thematically. So we were able to take the url playfulness we have individually and privately into an irl space collectively, giving us the opportunity to do what we might not be able to through our collective public platforms.

Coming back to language, like how to personally and collectively navigate that. I mainly tweet how I talk so using slang etc. which is not gonna be understandable for all of my audience and I'm cool with that. However if posting something for the collective it does take me a minute sometimes to translate to plain English.

Would you say that technology control's your art, work and/ or life?

Technology has pretty much been boiled down to our phones. I don't watch actual TV. There's a mental association for me between my laptop and work/listening to music/watching one of the few shows I do so I tend to be less distracted on there.

Just in our lifetimes we've gone from phones being just calls and messages then to basic games then

to phones being all encompassing. Like I'll be like I'll just leave my laptop at home I can just do it on my phone.....which doesn't always go so well.

It'd be too embarrassing to admit to being controlled by my phone so I'd say it's more of an attachment..... I prefer to sleep with my phone under my pillow so it's close to me, that says it all really. My brain is probably being fried from so much radiation.

For this project I've actually had to disengage and delete some apps, even for just a few days to wean myself off my acquired swipe & scroll reflex and to focus. Important to have that clear headspace which can get interrupted by the overwhelming wave of information and not also be drawn in engaging with the latest debacle online.

In terms of my art, it was daunting in the early stages knowing I wanted to move into whatever practical element of film and also DJ but being technically illiterate. I really have had to to embrace being more digitally minded and reject the stigma with not knowing analogue forms. There's really no time to be a purist with these things when you're young gifted broke and black. It's been a process learning not to be fearful of all the technology I have to use and work with it harmoniously.

How do you think the internet has melded stereotypes of black women? Exploited, edited, or emancipated women of color? (esp. in relation to the two case studies you're highlighting in your commissioned video work)

Everything is a continuum. The Internet perhaps obscures or emphasises or exaggerates and even distorts existing whatevers. In terms of stereotypes of black women you really see non black women particularly white ones using all these gifs/reaction pics/vines/vids of us as avatars to live vicariously through, a character to assume. It does have a bearing on how people interact with you as a black woman online. Do you only acknowledge me when I'm funny or sassy?

~I just think it's funny how~ these are people they'd sidestep/not wanna be seen in the same vicinity as irl. Or in some cases these are people they view through 'yaaaassss slay queen' tinted glasses 😳

Then there's the issue of various products of black women & femmes labour being stolen and misattributed. It can feel stifling to just be yourself knowing there's always someone (*cough* buzzfeed) lurking in these url alleyways ready to steal your content. So many things I'll be ready to tweet but then be like nahhh lemme keep this one close.

Je suis Peaches Monroe! She's the creator of on fleek but (according to the last thing I've read) has received no coins for it. A lot ideas/words/concepts are being disseminated with no credit to their original creator.

On the the other hand you have someone like Toyko Vanity of 'go best friend that's my best friend' fame and she's created a song around it so her name is still attached to it. In that case yeah the Internet has opened up a space for expression that may not have happened without it.

From my perspective it is nice to see everyday people gaining recognition for being absolutely hilarious. There's so many people I've known, grown up with, seen around that have come out with stuff better than most comedy writers. The issue is whose gaze is it and what that leads to. I'll be laughing at for example the bella noches girls description of events 💜 from a pure place, not just cos of who I am but how I see them. Others will be laughing AT them for being 'ratchet' etc.

Why do you think women of color are under such a critical lens? (esp. in relation to the Lil Mama interview)

Well to put it simply cos we're navigating a series of oppressions simultaneously. The Internet can be a pressure cooker for us that heightens these things.

I myself used that crying meme of Lil Mama for a host of stuff and then I found out it was from this interview and in this moment she's talking about her dead parents. It really does a highlight need to be responsible and, not even being funny, source ethical memes. Like you see a similar thing with kids being used for adult topics which is not cool.

Is there a need for women of color to be vocal on social media as a means of accurate self-representation?

I don't want to work on the basis of 'if you're not gonna be vocal then you won't be able to change perceptions of you.' Plus like I said before the issue lies within the how things are read e.g. speaking in AAVE equals unintelligence. We owe it to ourselves to be vocal (or not) for infinite reasons other than external opinions. Sorry if it sounds basic but for black women/femmes I'm just like be yourself tbh.

Why are you co-curating and partaking in the url-irl project? What is your relationship to the project as an emerging artist (etc.)?

To put my wealth of url knowledge to good use and give it more of a permanent grounding. As well this has given me the push to produce the work I've been toying with for a while.
Then opportunity to work alongside two of my favourite artists whose perspective I'm always really interested in seeing and Frankie who's been a great hbic.

What are the best and worst things you've seen online recently?

> Best things
Anything with babies in it by that anyone under like 18 for me e.g.
This kid Jay Versace, who started off on vine, being a fool dancing to
all these songs he should be too young to know
And these 3 kids who are amazing dancers: https://youtu.be/lKFq5FInq8E
Then:
Post-prison Gucci
Serena Williams for Wall Street Journal
Missy for Marc Jacobs
Too many tweets to mention but those crafted by loved ones especially ❤️

> Worst things
80% of Brexit opinions
This game on Twitter where people privately message a name and then
you have rate them out of ten anonymously on your tl
Although it was time ago in Internet years, all those covers of Work
and Formation by white people still haunt me
The black teen who's a trump supporter 😓