



PROVOCATIONS #1: CLIMATE CRASH & DIGITAL OVERGROWTH

**Responses to an urgent question of our
time by *Stillpoint Magazine* writers.**

Q: *In the Anthropocene, anxiety and addiction abound when it comes to use of digital technology. What connections—and divergences—do you see between the widespread use of digital technologies and the threats of global climate change?*

A: ELIZABETH CARTER

At the intersection of two seemingly disparate issues—digital technology addiction and the threat of global climate change—we find a common thread: disconnection. This disconnection is characterized by its severance between long-term consequences and the prioritization of short-term gratification. For many therapy clients, diving into the digital world is a welcome respite from the difficult experience of overwhelming emotion. It's a quick fix that ultimately takes more than it gives. But when we feel hurt deeply, the urgency for relief can drive us to take small but cumulatively destructive acts.

In many ways, this mirrors the inception of climate change. Life was hard before industrialization, and humanity sought ways to make it easier. So we refined oil and gas, transforming transportation and industry as we knew it. We built factories to create gadgets and machines to soothe our every discomfort, without ever considering how the waste products of all this productivity would push our atmosphere into a toxic state. And now here we are with a world heating up faster and faster every year, unable and/or unwilling to make any type of serious change at the institutional level. Why? Largely because the way of life those of us in the industrialized world are accustomed to would, in turn, need to be dramatically altered. And so I find myself wondering, along with many of my clients who question what their futures look like and whether or not they should bring children into this increasingly chaotic ecological era, what does the future really hold for us amidst this widespread disconnection and short-term thinking? I guess we'll see.

A: JOE VON HUTCH

Digital technologies have brought humans around the globe closer together than at any other time in our shared history. As one of Facebook's first users, I happily created an account while I was studying abroad in Paris. All my friends back at my American college had already joined and I wanted to stay in touch with them. 15 years later I regret handing over decades of personal information to the technology behemoth, and the revelations about its role in destabilizing democracies make me angry, but I'll never delete my account. Facebook has become too integral to my life for me to ever willingly say goodbye.



Siren (MN, 2018) ~ Kate Holford

The same is true for everything else I do that is contributing to global climate change. As I write these words, miles in the air and somewhere over Western Europe on my way to Mexico, I know full well the extent of my carbon footprint. I know the hidden costs of industrial agriculture and also know how much meat I am going to eat as soon as I reach my destination. I know what I would have to do to be less of a burden on the planet, but like my inability to leave Facebook, I do not make the big changes that matter. Are we addicted to fossil fuels and newsfeeds? Or have we become accustomed to a certain way of living? Climate change is transforming the world around us, and we're all complicit, but guilty habits are the hardest to break.

A: TREVOR SHIKAZE

The app is the portal and connector. The app is the icon of corporate surveillance. The app is cool, though it runs warm. The app is a use in search of a user. A tool that uses a piece of the handler. The app is a megaphone in Hong Kong, Chile, Tahrir Squares, a window on a Swedish protest. The app is the perfect neoliberal product: infinitely reproducible, transferrable, scalable. And talk about desirable. It doesn't need a team of steelworkers to construct, just a single stressed coder with a load of student debt. It's better than a price signal: it eats all information and spits out a blue checkmark. We consume it without worrying which parts are recyclable, since it is made of data, it is cloud, it is weightless. The app is only ones and zeroes. Yet those ones and zeroes are not abstractions. They weigh heavy, as heat, in servers baked into the landscape like secrets in a brain. And that heat, like all heat, needs to go somewhere. A cloud is not nothing—it rains. The app is not a flash of light, but rather, like lightning, an expression of physical conditions. Everything has weight, even ones and zeroes, even flashes of light. The sum of that weight is what we've done to the invisible air around us. We are human, so we are surfaces with secrets. The app is all surface. It hovers over what we want, over potential and waste. Its secret is heat. And all secrets need to go somewhere.

Elizabeth Carter has a Master's of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Presently, she works both online and in Zürich, CH as a private practice counselor, coach, and hypnotherapist. She originally hails from Massachusetts in the USA.

Joe von Hutch is Editor of DADDY Magazine, a writer, and comedian based in Berlin.

Trevor Shikaze is a Vancouver writer with fiction in *n+1* and elsewhere. Find him on Twitter @trevorshikaze.

Kate Holford is Art Director of *Stillpoint Magazine* and a curatorial artist based in Glasgow, UK. She was previously Deputy Director of Stillpoint Spaces London.

Siren (MN, 2018) is shown here as a portion of the full accompanying artwork originally featured on stillpointmag.org.