

Synthetic Media and the Screen Industries

5–6 July 2023, University of Reading

Welcome to a two-day interdisciplinary symposium that gathers researchers, innovators, businesses and policymakers to discuss recent breakthroughs in synthetic media, concerns around ethics and regulation, and opportunities for collaboration.

Our emphasis is on exploring responsible creative applications of synthetic media, and on understanding how machine learning technology is transforming media production and moving image culture.

The meeting will mark the launch of the **Synthetic Media Research Network**, a community of stakeholders collaborating on impactful research in this field.

Leading the event are University of Reading academics



Dr Dominic Lees, Associate Professor in Filmmaking, writes and speaks regularly on synthetic media. His work has included practice research with deepfakes and an earlier professional career as a director of film and TV drama. He is Convenor of the symposium and leads Day 1 – Synthetic Media in Film and TV Production.



Dr Mathilde Pavis, Associate Professor in Law, is an expert on the legal protection of people's face, voice and body in digital media. Mathilde's work has informed government consultations for law reform on these issues and has been cited in Parliament. She leads Day 2 – Ethics, governance & regulation in synthetic media.

Synthetic Media
Research Network



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council



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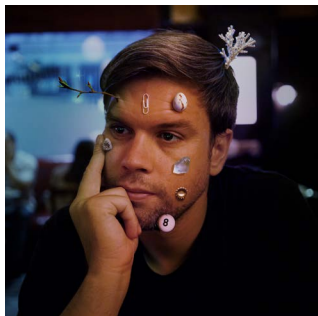
This project is supported by the University of Reading's Impact Acceleration Account, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), part of UK Research and Innovation.

Day 1

09.30	Registration opens at The Meadow Suite, Whitenights Campus
10.00	WELCOME: Overview of Symposium
10.20	Synthetic media in the Film and television industries: progress and opportunities Dominic Lees
10.50	Machine Learning in Content Production Graeme Phillipson (BBC Research)
11.30	TEA/COFFEE BREAK
11.50	Breakout Group Session: What are the technical challenges in advancing synthetic media?
12.30	Summary of Breakout conclusions
12.45	LUNCH
13.30	Introduction: Three examples of Synthetic Media in the Creative Practice of Film and TV Production Dominic Lees
13.50	Screening: extract from <i>AI Jetée</i> (2023), a remake by Adrian Goycoolea , plus recorded artist's statement
14.10	Deepfakes and the deceased: how archive can live on through AI. Guest speaker, Ben Field (director), with screening of recent work Q+A with director
14.50	Fully synthetic filmmaking. Screening of <i>Thank You for Not Answering</i> (2023) by Paul Trillo (director) Q+A with director
15.45	TEA/COFFEE BREAK
16.00	Breakout Group Session: What innovations do media creatives want from synthetic media? What weaknesses do they currently identify and what are the obstacles to wider adoption?
16.40	Summary of Breakout conclusions
16.50	BREAK
17.00	Networking Drinks and launch of Synthetic Media Research Network
19.00	Day 1 ends

Day 2

09.30	ARRIVAL AND TEA/COFFEE
10.00	Welcome and introduction to Day 2 Dominic Lees
10.05	A common ground for ethics, governance and regulation in synthetic media Mathilde Pavis
10.30	How to operationalise AI ethics in audio-visual generative AI Anna Bulakh (Head of Ethics and Partnerships, Respeecher) Remote presentation from Kjiv, Ukraine
11.15	Q+A with Anna Bulakh Chaired by Mathilde Pavis
11.30	TEA/COFFEE BREAK
11.45	Panel 1: What is the business or artistic case for 'ethics' or regulation in Synthetic Media today? Moderator: Mathilde Pavis Panellists: Ben Saunders (Synapse AI), Liam Budd (Equity)
12.45	LUNCH
13.30	Introduction to Breakout Group Session Mathilde Pavis
13.40	Breakout Group Session: What is there to gain or lose as the good guys?
14.25	Reconvene, feedback from group sessions Mathilde Pavis , Group facilitators
14.40	TEA/COFFEE BREAK
14.55	Panel 2: Synthesising after death: what is off limits? Moderator: Mathilde Pavis . Panellists: Mohamed Mohammed (University of Exeter), Marcus Hutton (actor), Dominic Lees (director)
15.55	Plenary talk: Working together to develop the future of synthetic media Dominic Lees Presentation on Knowledge Transfer Partnerships Joanna Davies (University of Reading)
16.15	Closing remarks – Thank you to all participants Dominic Lees, Mathilde Pavis
16.30	Symposium closes



Paul Trillo – Filmmaker

Paul Trillo is a multi-disciplinary artist, writer, and director whose diverse body of work spans various genres and formats, constantly pushing the boundaries of what's possible in filmmaking. His recent explorations into the future of AI filmmaking have changed the way these tools are used. He has been recognized as one of D&AD's Next Directors and has won several awards, including 'The One Show's One to Watch' and '30 Under 30 Film Festival's Director to Watch'.



Anna Bulakh – Respeecher

Anna Bulakh is Head of Ethics and Partnerships at Respeecher, an Emmy-awarded voice cloning technology company based in Ukraine. Anna is a former Policy Advisor at Reface, an AI-powered synthetic media app and a tech co-founder of the counter-disinformation tool Cappture funded by the Startup Wise Guys accelerator program.



Ben Saunders – Signapse AI

Ben Saunders studied for a PhD in Sign Language Production from the University of Surrey, specialising in the synthesis of photo-realistic digital humans in the context of sign language. He recently won the Innovator of the Year award at Surrey University. Ben is co-founder and CTO of Signapse AI, whose mission is to build automatic sign language translation to increase Deaf accessibility globally.



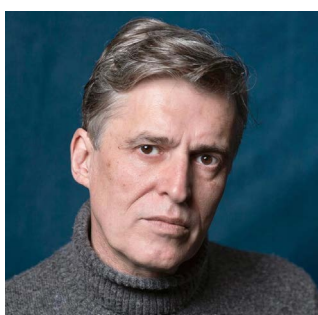
Liam Budd – Equity

As an Industrial Official in Equity's Recorded Media Department, Liam supports and organises performing artists working across a broad range of disciplines including voiceover, audiobooks, radio commercials, videogames, virtual reality and digital cloning. Liam has led the union's response to the development of AI across the entertainment sector.



Mohamed Mohammed – University of Exeter

Since 2017, Mohamed has worked in Online Community Management as both a Moderator and Manager, responsible for as many as 10 million users. In addition to working as a Trust and Safety consultant, Mohamed is currently a researcher and PhD candidate on the QUEX Institute-funded project, 'Deepfakes and Content Policy: How the Digital Services Act Approaches Persona Appropriation Created with AI', led by Dr. Mathilde Pavis.



Marcus Hutton – Actor

Marcus has 40 years of industry experience as an actor in subsidised and commercial theatre, TV and film, as a voice actor for 30 years with thousands of credits, as a commercial video and audio producer, director and as a campaigner for performers' rights in the UK. Since 2017 he has served as Vice Chair of the Audio Committee of the British performers' union, Equity.