



From Digital Challenges to the Dystopia of *Gamer* (2009): Brain-Computer Interfaces as a New Frontier of Mind Control

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This article examines how the film *Gamer* (2009) condenses, through a futuristic frame, a longstanding cultural logic in which individuals are subjected to trials, risks, and mechanisms of control before an audience. From Sumerian reliefs to Roman arenas, medieval duels, public executions, and literary narratives, the spectacularisation of risk has traversed epochs and media. In the twentieth century, radio, cinema, and performance art intensified this logic, transforming vulnerability, violence, and manipulation into entertainment. Today, these dynamics re-emerge in digital challenges, interactive livestreams, and systems of social gamification that function as non-fictional continuations of the dystopia staged in *Gamer*. The article adopts a qualitative, interpretive-comparative methodology, drawing on archaeology, media history, game studies, and social psychology to analyse how mediated agency, operative spectatorship, and behavioural modulation intersect across historical and contemporary contexts. The central argument is that contemporary society already possesses, at a distributed and scaled-down level, the social, technological, and psychological infrastructures required to induce behaviour at a distance. Within this framework, *Gamer* is read not merely as speculative fiction but as an allegorical and diagnostic model of a cultural tendency culminating in contemporary digital practices. The article concludes by reflecting on the implications of emerging Brain-Computer Interfaces, questioning under which economic and ethical conditions mediated control may evolve from therapeutic intervention into a broader social paradigm.



Introduction

The spectacularisation of risk and control has accompanied human societies for millennia. From ancient rituals and public games to medieval executions and modern reality television, danger and surveillance have been repeatedly staged before audiences. In the digital age, this logic is reconfigured as interactive entertainment and participation.

This article examines how these dynamics are synthesised in *Gamer* (Nevelidine and Taylor 2009), where human beings operate as avatars controlled at a distance. It argues that the film crystallises a broader cultural tendency: the conversion of bodies, choices, and risk into spectacle across platforms and other media. The article asks whether contemporary digital challenges and advances in Brain-Computer Interfaces (BCIs) function as embryonic infrastructures of this tendency, rendering *Gamer*'s dystopia socially plausible.

The study adopts an interpretative and contrastive reading, mapping continuities from historical spectacles to platformised culture and emerging BCIs to show how mediation becomes action.

The article proceeds as follows: after outlining the Methods, the Genealogy of Risk Spectacles traces the historical evolution of public displays of risk from arenas to digital platforms. It then develops a Theoretical Framework of Digital Behaviour, followed by a case study of *Gamer* and an analysis of contemporary digital challenges as risk spectacles. The Conclusion reflects on the ethical and cultural implications of these convergences for human autonomy.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive-comparative methodology to analyse cultural representations of risk and control across historical and contemporary media. Given the symbolic nature of the subject, the analysis prioritises critical interpretation over quantitative measurement, focusing on how meaning and social function are articulated through texts, images, and practices.

The corpus includes fictional and non-fictional materials, such as audiovisual works (notably *Gamer*), graphic narratives, artistic performances centred on bodily risk, historical accounts of ritualised spectacle, and contemporary digital phenomena including online challenges, interactive livestreams, and gamified systems.

Through comparative analysis across archaeological, historical, artistic, and digital contexts, the study identifies recurring patterns through which bodies and choices are integrated into circuits of visibility and control. The central objective is to trace continuities and transformations that reveal how contemporary digital practices function as non-fictional extensions of the dystopian logic dramatised in *Gamer*.

Genealogy of Risk Spectacles

The spectacularisation of risk has extended from ancient arenas to digital platforms, intertwining entertainment, control, and performance. This section draws on social psychology, game studies, and communication studies to demonstrate how fiction and reality converge in dynamics of manipulation, participation, and collective submission (Friedland 2012).

Prehistory & Antiquity

Since Antiquity, entertainment practices involving bodily trials and confrontations have repeatedly transformed risk into collective performance. From Sumerian epics reliefs and the Mayan ballgame to Roman gladiatorial contests, these displays codified endurance, violence, and power into public ritual (**Table 1**).

Period	Location	Work / Event	Summary	Technological Medium	Source
c. 2100 BCE	Uruk, Sumerian	Epic of Gilgamesh	Hero's trials and challenges	Epic literature on clay tablets.	Al-Hadi and Xiaoling 2024
c. 1400 BCE-1500 CE	Chichén Itzá, Mexico	Maya ballgame	Ceremonial game; losers could be sacrificed	Architecture and stone reliefs.	Tiesler and Miller 2023
c. 1200 BCE	Egypt (New Kingdom)	Harris Papyrus 500	Festivals with competitions for courtly entertainment	Papyrus text	British Museum n.d.
c. 1208 BCE	Thebes/Luxor, Egypt	Mernep-tah Victory Stele	Military victory as spectacle	Stone inscription	Kitchen 2004
Greek mythology	Crete, Greece	Labyrinth of the Minotaur	Youths facing ritualised challenge	Oral / written tradition	Buxton 2004
Greek mythology	Tiryns/Mycenae, Greece	Twelve Labours of Heracles	Impossible trials with spectacular value	Oral and mythic written tradition	Stafford 2011
Norse mythology	Scandinavia	Heroic sagas	Trials of honour and deadly competitions	Oral / written tradition (manuscripts)	Clunies Ross 2010
c. 500 BCE	Persepolis, Persia	Persepolis reliefs	Ceremonial contests as entertainment	Stone sculpture	Root 2021
3rd c. BCE-5th c. CE	Rome, Roman Empire	Roman gladiators	Combat to the death before the public	Physical arena	Futrell 2005

Table 1: Prehistory and Antiquity.

Middle Ages & Early Modern

With the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period, spectacles of risk became associated with ideals of honour, religion, and political authority. Tournaments, symbolic trials, duels, persecutions, and executions transformed violence and justice into carefully staged public events (Table 2).

Period	Location	Work / Event	Summary	Technological Medium	Source
13th c.	Aragon	Court of James I	Impossible trials with symbolic and political value	Historical chronicles	Keen 2010
15th c.	England	Le Morte d'Arthur	Knights undergoing trials to win honour or love	Literature	Malory 2009
12th–16th c.	Medieval Europe	Jousts and tournaments	Knightly combats for honour and courtly entertainment	Live spectacle	Barber and Barker 2000
1692–1693	Massachusetts Bay Colony	Salem witch trials	Women accused of witchcraft punished publicly	Symbolic judicial ritual	Norton 2003
Middle Ages	Europe	Trial by water	Accused witches thrown into water. If floating, guilt. If sinking, innocence	Symbolic judicial ritual	Peters 1985
17th–18th c.	Netherlands	Semi-public executions	Heidenjachten (pagan hunts)	Fields and forests	Council of Europe 2014
15th–18th c.	Holy Roman Empire	Public persecutions	Hunts targeting Roma communities	Literature	Filhol 2020

Table 2: Middle Ages and Early Modern Period.

Cinema/TV & Media Spectacles

With the advent of radio and later television (Malnig 1995), narratives of risk assumed new formats, mediated through voice, imagination, and the staging of live endurance contests. The infamous 1938 broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* (Heyer 2003; Hilmes 1997) demonstrated the power of mass media to provoke emotion and panic. Cinema soon expanded this logic: from *The Most Dangerous Game* (1932) to *Squid Game* (2021–2025), violence and survival were reconfigured as forms of entertainment, with variations ranging from satire to sadistic performance (Table 3).

Work	Synthesis	Source	Work	Synthesis	Source
The Most Dangerous Game	Human hunting as sport	Pichel and Schoedsack 1932	Saw	Sadistic traps as punishment	Wan 2004
Spartacus	Gladiators as social spectacle	Kubrick and Mann 1960	Hostel	Torture sold as tourism	Roth 2005
The 10th Victim	Televised assassination as show	Petri 1965	Live!	Russian roulette as reality show	Guttentag 2007
Rollerball	Brutal sport as global spectacle	Jewison 1975	Gamer	Humans controlled as avatars	Neveland and Taylor 2009
Videodrome	TV as weapon of control	Cronenberg 1983	X Game (X gēmu)	Online survival games	Fukuda 2010
Brazil	Society shaped by spectacle	Gilliam 1985	The Hunger Games	Televised deadly arena	Ross 2012
The Running Man	Mass death show	Glaser 1987	13 Sins	Deadly challenges for money	Stamm 2014
Strange Days	Memories as commodity	Bigelow 1995	As the Gods Will (Kamisama no iu tōri)	Childhood games turned into deadly contests	Miike 2014
Ikinai	Collective trip to suicide	Shimizu 1998	Nerve	Challenges defined by audience	Joost and Schulman 2016
The Truman Show	Whole life as reality show	Weir 1998	Black Mirror: Bandersnatch	Interactive choices by the viewer	Slade 2018
Fight Club	Violence as catharsis	Fincher 1999	Damsel	Deadly mission disguised as rescue	Fresnadillo 2024
Jisatsu sākuru	Collective suicide as media ritual	Sono 2001	Squid Game	Children's games turned into deadly battle for money	Hwang 2021–2025

Table 3: Deadly Games in Cinema (1932–2025).

These examples reveal a trajectory across historical and cultural contexts: from the aristocratic ‘death game’ narratives of the 1930s, through satirical Japanese variations, to the globalised voyeurism of the 2000s. This trajectory culminates in contemporary works, where deadly challenges escalate under direct audience control, in the form of *digital challenges*.

Manga & Popular Culture

In manga, the lethal game genre evolved through the combination of violence, psychological manipulation, and technology. From *Gantz* (1998–2006) to *Kakegurui* (2014–2019), the narrative shifts from physical combat to contests mediated by apps, gambling, and alternative worlds, thereby anticipating the *digital challenges* of the twenty-first century (Table 4).

Period	Work	Summary	Source
1998–2006	Gantz	Dead people revived to hunt aliens in lethal games.	Oku 1998–2006
2000–2005	Battle Royale	Students forced to fight to the death on an isolated island.	Takami 2000–2005
2003–2006	Death Note	A notebook that kills anyone whose name is written in it.	Ohba and Obata 2003–2006
2005–2015	Liar Game	Games of manipulation and psychological strategies.	Kaitani 2005–2015
2010–2016	Alice in Borderland	Young people trapped in an alternate world with deadly games.	Aso 2010–2016
2012–2018	Kengan Ashura	Underground fights between corporate representatives.	Sandrovich 2012–2018
2012–2023	Darwin's Game	A mobile app forces players to duel with special powers.	FLIPFLOPs 2012–2020
2014–2019	Kakegurui	An academy where extreme gambling puts lives at risk.	Kawamoto and Naomura 2014–2019

Table 4: Manga.

Risk Performance Art & Ritual/Sport

Contemporary art has also pushed the human subject to its physical and symbolic limits. Performances have demonstrated how vulnerability may be transformed into an aesthetic and critical ritual (Table 5). This logic also resonates in *digital challenges*, where self-harm and physical risk are staged before digital audiences.

Religious rituals such as the *Christian Passion*, the *Hindu Thaipusam*, and the *Islamic Ashura* have also transformed suffering into a collective performance, reinforcing the notion that pain can generate recognition and glory. A similar logic is evident in sport, where violence is codified through rules and fans project identities onto players. These dynamics re-emerge in *digital challenges*, where individuals embody roles before networked audiences (Cooper 2022; Parkes 2021; Xygalatas et al. 2021).

Artist	Work / Performance	Summary	Year	Source
Marina Abramović	<i>Rhythm 0</i>	Audience authorised to use 72 objects on her body, including a knife and a loaded gun	1974	IMMA n.d.
Chris Burden	<i>Shoot</i>	Artist requests to be shot in the arm as part of the performance	1971	Takac 2025
Gina Pane	<i>Actions</i>	Self-inflicted cuts reflecting on pain and social violence	1970s	Lempesis 2025
Stelarc	Suspension with hooks	Body suspended and connected to technological prostheses	1970s–80s	Stenslie 2015
Franko B	<i>I Miss You</i>	Walked along a catwalk while deliberately bleeding	1997	Bell 2024

Table 5: Risk Performances in Contemporary Art.

This trajectory, from ancient arenas to contemporary media, demonstrates how the spectacularisation of risk has been continually recontextualised. In the twenty-first century, the phenomenon surpasses fiction, finding direct expression in viral practices such as *digital challenges*, which will be further examined in the Discussion section.

Digital Challenges as Risk Spectacle

Digital challenges constitute a new arena for the spectacularisation of risk, in which peer pressure, virality, and algorithmic visibility supplant the physical stages of the past. Each viral challenge transforms the body into a site of performance and the audience into judge, reproducing logics of competition and exposure long familiar from fiction, yet now enacted on a global scale. These practices also exhibit cult-like dynamics: initiation rituals, collective imitation, and algorithmically mediated obedience, reconfiguring belief and submission as entertainment (Heřmanová 2023) (Table 6).

Lethal challenges did not originate on the internet but rather form part of a long cultural genealogy. From ancient rituals and gladiatorial combat to witch hunts, cinema, and manga, societies have repeatedly staged corporeal forms at risk as choreographies of exposure and control. Fiction has expanded upon non-fictional practices, functioning as a laboratory that anticipated today's viral dynamics.

When adolescents participate in the *Blue Whale* or *Skull Breaker Challenges*, they are, in effect, re-enacting a symbolic tradition: from religious rituals of suffering to political self-immolation and reality shows, culture has long normalised the subjection of bodies to risk and control in the form of collective entertainment (Debord 1992; Foucault 1995).

Digital challenges	Period	Description	Source
Blue Whale Challenge	2016–2017	Fifty online tasks leading to self-harm or suicide.	Khasawneh et al. 2020
Momo Challenge	2017	Threatening messages urging dangerous acts.	Kobilke and Markiewitz 2021
Fire Challenge	2014–2015	Participants set themselves on fire for views.	Forde 2018
NekNominate	2013–2014	Filmed binge drinking with peer nomination.	Cullen 2014
Salt and Ice Challenge	2016–2018	Chemical burns treated as endurance feats.	Breakey, Crowley and Alrawi 2015
Bird Box Challenge	2018–2019	Blindfolded acts inspired by the film.	The Guardian 2019
Kiki Challenge	2018	Dancing beside moving cars for social media.	The Guardian 2018
Skull Breaker Challenge	2020	Tripping prank causing severe injuries.	Burke 2020

Table 6: Digital Challenges as Risk Spectacle.

Theoretical Framework of Digital Behaviour

Rather than presenting isolated concepts, this framework articulates three interrelated analytical lenses through which contemporary digital challenges can be examined and *Gamer* can be read as an anticipatory model. These lenses address mediated agency, operative spectatorship, and the normalisation of behavioural control through voluntary participation.

Mediated Agency and Distributed Control

Contemporary digital environments increasingly operate through mediated agency, in which decision-making is partially externalised to technical systems. Rather than acting solely from internal intentions or bodily impulses, individuals navigate environments structured by interfaces, avatars, notifications, metrics, and algorithmic feedback loops, distributing agency across human and non-human actors.

Research in social psychology and media studies shows that digital representations actively shape behaviour. The Proteus Effect (Liu 2023) demonstrates how individuals internalise avatar traits, allowing virtual characteristics to influence embodied conduct beyond the screen. Likewise, the Media Equation (Reeves and Nass 2003) explains why interfaces, avatars, and algorithmic agents elicit genuine obedience and emotional response, as users unconsciously treat media systems as social actors.

This redistribution of agency is further intensified in transreality contexts, where digital scripts spill into physical space and embodied action (Benford and Giannachi 2022; Lin et al. 2024). In these configurations, the boundary between virtual instruction and corporeal execution becomes porous, anticipating forms of mediated control enacted through living bodies rather than symbolic avatars.

Recent enactive accounts of autonomy suggest that such mediation transfers the sensorimotor basis of self-regulation from the organism to the system, progressively scaffolding decision-making through external infrastructures (Pérez-Verdugo and Barandiaran 2023). Algorithmic environments do not merely assist cognition; they actively shape the horizon of possible actions by reinforcing certain behaviours while suppressing others (Wang 2025).

This lens is central to interpreting both *Gamer* and contemporary digital challenges. In the film, agency is explicitly overridden through neural interfaces that impose external command over bodily autonomy; in everyday digital platforms, similar redistributions occur more subtly, as interfaces guide behaviour through incentives, prompts, and visibility rather than coercion.

Spectatorship, Gamification, and the Logic of the Spectacle

A second analytical lens concerns the transformation of spectatorship into an operative force. Within digital culture, audiences no longer merely observe; they participate, intervene, and co-produce outcomes. Metrics such as views, likes, rankings, and real-time feedback convert spectators into distributed operators whose collective actions shape behaviour, visibility, and value.

Research on participatory spectatorship and shared-avatar systems shows how collective audiences can exert control over individual actions, collapsing the boundary between viewer and performer (Akşit and Nazlı 2020; Emmanouloudis 2022; Lessel et al. 2022). This dynamic extends the logic of gamification beyond explicit play, embedding competitive and performative structures into everyday practices.

Within this framework, risk itself becomes spectacle. Dangerous or extreme behaviours are no longer marginal deviations but valued performances within attention economies. Digital challenges exemplify this logic, as bodily exposure and performative risk are rewarded through visibility, engagement, and algorithmic amplification. These environments are further shaped by online disinhibition (Suler 2004; Stuart and Scott 2021), whereby anonymity, distance, and reduced accountability loosen social restraints and normalise behaviours otherwise inhibited in face-to-face contexts.

This lens directly informs the reading of *Gamer*, where violence and bodily risk are staged as entertainment governed by audience demand and commercial metrics. The film amplifies a logic that now operates routinely within platform-based environments, where spectacle functions as a regulatory mechanism rather than a mere aesthetic form.

Behavioural Modulation and Voluntary Submission

The third lens examines how control increasingly operates through behavioural modulation rather than force. Digital platforms frame guidance and regulation as motivation, care, or play, encouraging users to align their actions with system-defined goals. Gamified incentives and algorithmic prompts normalise external regulation as participation rather than domination.

Studies on gamified environments and algorithmic nudging demonstrate how individuals willingly submit to behavioural frameworks that reward compliance through visibility, engagement, and social validation (Bassanelli et al. 2022; Xu et al. 2022). At scale, such mechanisms function as infrastructures of behavioural influence, in which design choices, reward systems, and temporal constraints condition habits across large populations without recourse to direct coercion (Niknejad et al. 2024).

This distinction is crucial for understanding the transition from dystopian coercion to everyday digital practice. Whereas *Gamer* depicts enforced submission through technological command, contemporary digital challenges rely on voluntary participation in performative risk. Individuals consent to exposure, danger, and self-modulation in exchange for recognition, belonging, or economic opportunity.

These dynamics also intersect with processes of Affective-Erotic Substitution (Batista and Warzecha 2025), in which desire, attachment, and intimacy are increasingly mediated by digital systems. From virtual characters to influencer performances, bodies become surfaces of projection and control – a logic radicalised in *Gamer*, where the avatar is no longer a fictional construct but a living human body rendered operable at a distance (Koren, Polak and Levy-Tzedek 2022).

This framework also clarifies the relevance of emerging neural-interface technologies. While current Brain-Computer Interfaces are framed within therapeutic and rehabilitative discourses, they extend the same logic of mediated agency and behavioural modulation. The ethical tension lies not solely in technological capacity, but in the economic and cultural systems that determine whether such mediation serves emancipation or exploitation (Chen et al. 2025; Ienca, Valle and Raspopovic 2025; INBRAIN Neuroelectronics 2025; Lavazza et al. 2025; Lebedev and Nicolelis 2017).

Case Study: *Gamer* (2009) as a Risk Spectacle of Remote Control

This case study approaches *Gamer* not as a conventional object of film analysis but as a conceptual and diagnostic device. Read allegorically, the film condenses socio-technical dynamics that have since materialised in contemporary digital challenges, functioning as a heuristic model for examining mediated agency, spectacularised risk, and audience-driven control.

Gamer as Allegory of Networked Control

Released in 2009, *Gamer* depicts a dystopian society in which incarcerated individuals are remotely controlled through neural interfaces for public entertainment. Human bodies are transformed into programmable avatars, executing actions dictated by external operators who experience agency, pleasure, and power at a distance. Although the film predates the widespread emergence of contemporary digital challenges, it is read here not as a historical artefact but as an anticipatory model condensing socio-technical dynamics now embedded in digital culture.

The article's primary focus is not the film itself but the contemporary ecology of digital challenges as practices of mediated risk, behavioural modulation, and networked influence. Read retrospectively, *Gamer* functions as a heuristic device, condensing mechanisms that now operate beyond fiction, as contemporary digital challenges illuminate how its dystopian logic has migrated into everyday platform-mediated practices.

In this sense, *Gamer* allegorises a form of networked control in which agency is redistributed across technical systems, audiences, and interfaces. Control operates less through direct coercion than through mediated participation, visibility, and the promise of recognition (Pérez-Verdugo and Barandiaran 2023; Wang 2025), positioning the film as a conceptual lens for examining contemporary risk-based digital performances.

Scene-Based Analysis: Body, Interface, Spectacle

Several elements of *Gamer* render visible mechanisms of control and spectacularisation shared by both the film's dystopia and contemporary digital challenges. Central among these is the transformation of the body into an interface: physical actions are overridden and modulated by remote commands, collapsing the distinction between body and interface and revealing how agency can be externally scripted while remaining experientially embodied.

Equally significant is the role of the spectator as operator. In *Gamer*, audiences do not merely observe violent performances but actively command them, mirroring

participatory cultures on digital platforms where behaviour is shaped through metrics of visibility, engagement, and reward, and where collective control transforms individuals into shared or distributed avatars (Akşit and Nazlı 2020; Emmanouloudis 2022; Lessel et al. 2022). The film thus anticipates a cultural condition in which observation itself becomes a distributed form of control.

Finally, *Gamer* stages violence and risk as marketable spectacles embedded within entertainment economies. Risk is engineered and calibrated for engagement, rather than accidental, paralleling contemporary digital challenges in which extreme acts are incentivised through algorithmic amplification, social validation, and the promise of visibility. The film thus reveals how spectacle operates as a regulatory mechanism, aligning bodily risk with economic and symbolic reward.

From Cinematic Dystopia to Digital Challenges

Read alongside contemporary digital challenges, *Gamer* functions less as speculative fiction than as a diagnostic model. Both rely on distributed spectatorship, behavioural conditioning, and the externalisation of responsibility across networks of users, platforms, and audiences. Although participants in digital challenges appear to act autonomously, their behaviour is shaped by platform architectures that reward risk through visibility and engagement, often framing modulation as motivation, care, or play (Bassanelli et al. 2022; Xu et al. 2022).

The crucial distinction between the film's dystopia and contemporary digital practices lies not in structure but in the modality of participation. Whereas *Gamer* depicts enforced control over incarcerated bodies, digital challenges normalise voluntary submission to performative risk, as participants align their actions with platform logics and transform danger into participation and self-exposure.

In this light, *Gamer* does not merely anticipate contemporary phenomena but clarifies them. By staging an extreme version of networked control, the film makes visible mechanisms that now operate more subtly in digital environments, as digital challenges emerge as non-fictional continuations of its logic, where spectacularised risk, mediated agency, and audience participation have become infrastructural conditions of digital culture.

Digital Challenges as Contemporary Risk Spectacle

Digital challenges constitute a clear manifestation of mediated agency and behavioural modulation in contemporary digital culture. Unlike traditional games, they operate through loosely defined rules, distributed spectatorship, and algorithmic amplification, transforming everyday environments into stages for performative risk.

Challenges such as the *Kiki* and *Bird Box* exemplify how digital scripts migrate into embodied action. Participants do not merely imitate an online gesture; they temporarily inhabit a role structured by visibility, peer validation, and audience expectation. In this sense, the logic identified by the Proteus Effect extends beyond avatar-based environments into situations where the body itself becomes the interface through which digital identity is enacted (Ratan et al. 2024).

Other phenomena, such as *NekNominate* or the *Skull Breaker Challenge*, further illustrate how spectatorship becomes operative. These challenges rely on collective encouragement, humour, or virality to normalise behaviours that would otherwise be socially sanctioned. Shielded by platforms and metrics, participants experience a dilution of responsibility, while audiences function as distributed operators who reward risk through attention and replication.

What distinguishes these practices from earlier forms of spectacle is not their extremity, but their infrastructural normalisation. Platforms do not explicitly command participation; rather, they create environments in which risk becomes a viable currency of visibility. In this context, digital challenges are not anomalies but symptomatic expressions of a broader cultural logic in which agency is mediated, control is internalised, and danger is reframed as participation.

Conclusion

This article has argued that contemporary digital challenges are not isolated anomalies but symptomatic expressions of a broader socio-technical condition in which agency is mediated, spectatorship becomes operative, and behavioural control is normalised through participation. Within this framework, *Gamer* functions as an anticipatory model rather than a historical artefact, rendering visible dynamics that have since migrated into everyday digital environments, where coercion gives way to voluntary alignment with platform logics in exchange for recognition, belonging, or economic opportunity.

These developments point to an increasingly gamified condition of social life, in which bodies and experiences are organised as performances governed by metrics, rewards, and algorithmic feedback. As this logic extends into emerging domains such as Brain-Computer Interfaces – currently framed within therapeutic discourses but intensifying the same dynamics of mediated agency – the dystopia imagined in *Gamer* appears less as speculative fiction than as a conceptual warning: when living, playing, and obeying converge within the same technical architectures, the boundary between freedom and control becomes increasingly fragile.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

Author Biographies

Daniel Jimenez Batista is a Spanish-Brazilian artist-researcher based in Cork, Ireland. His work investigates hybridisation and everyday technologies as extensions of the body and subjectivity, with a focus on media, identity, and contemporary forms of control and agency. He develops and presents the *Homo hybridus*, *Homo cyborg*, and *The Post-Messianic Era* frameworks through essays, academic articles, and interactive prototypes that bring together artistic practice, theory, and digital culture.

Paulina Warzecha is a Polish artist based in Cork, Ireland. Working with abstraction, she investigates experimental visual languages and how people perceive colours, symbols, and forms, considering their aesthetic, therapeutic, and cognitive effects. Her practice bridges artistic production and research at the intersection of art and technology, exploring contemporary processes of creation and mediation. She is currently developing projects on adult colouring books, examining both the creative experience and the market-driven circulation of this content.

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