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### From Cyberfeminism to Code Control- Cyborg Fashion under the Technological Gaze

2025

<https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/24322>

Veröffentlichungsversion / published version  
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Wagemans, Esmay: From Cyberfeminism to Code Control- Cyborg Fashion under the Technological Gaze. In: *IMAGE. Zeitschrift für interdisziplinäre Bildwissenschaft*, Jg. 21 (2025), Nr. 42, S. 274–292. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/24322>.

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Esmay Wagemans

## From Cyberfeminism to Code Control: Cyborg Fashion under the Technological Gaze

### Abstract

In the late 20th century, Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) introduced the "cyborg" as a hybrid figure of disruption, blurring boundaries between human and machine, nature and culture, body and code. Today, 'cyborg fashion', characterized by prosthetics, coded materials, and speculative aesthetics, is more visible than ever, largely due to its circulation within digital media ecosystems and the rise of AI-driven design. Yet this visibility is shaped by a new kind of control: the technological gaze of algorithmic moderation, platform standards, and commercial optimization.

This paper explores how this platform culture has affected the identity and creation of the cyborg. Drawing from my own artistic practice and theoretical frameworks rooted in feminist and posthumanist thought, I examine how digital infrastructures reshape not only the aesthetics of cyborg fashion, but also the very conditions under which it is conceived, made, and shared.

Rather than offering a single definition or solution, this text explores alternative spaces of creation and thinking. It proposes that cyborg fashion's relevance today lies in reimagining how we make, relate, and remain critically attuned to the systems in which we work. By expanding its possibilities through interrogating the conditions of its creation and circulation, the cyborg identity becomes not a static icon, but a living methodology.

Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts führte Donna Haraways *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) den Begriff „Cyborg“ als hybride Figur der Disruption ein, die die Grenzen zwischen Mensch und Maschine, Natur und Kultur, Körper und Code verwischt. Heute ist die ‚Cyborg-Mode‘, die sich durch Prothesen, codierte Materialien und spekulative Ästhetik auszeichnet, sichtbarer denn je, was vor allem auf ihre Verbreitung in den Ökosystemen von digitalen Medien und den Aufstieg von KI-gesteuertem Design zurückzuführen ist. Diese Sichtbarkeit wird jedoch durch eine neue Art der Kontrolle geprägt: Auf ihr ruht der

**technologische Blick, bestehend aus algorithmischer Moderation, Plattform-Standards und kommerzieller Optimierung.**

Dieser Beitrag untersucht, wie diese Plattform-Kultur die Identität und Entstehung des Cyborgs beeinflusst hat. Ausgehend von meiner eigenen künstlerischen Praxis und feministischen sowie posthumanistischen theoretischen Rahmen untersuche ich, wie digitale Infrastrukturen nicht nur die Ästhetik der Cyborg-Mode, sondern auch die Bedingungen, unter denen sie konzipiert, hergestellt und geteilt wird, neu gestalten.

Anstatt eine einzige Definition oder Lösung anzubieten, untersucht dieser Text alternative Räume des Schaffens und Denkens. Er schlägt vor, dass die Relevanz der Cyborg-Mode heute darin liegt, neu zu überdenken, wie wir unsere Arbeitssysteme gestalten, in Beziehung setzen, und eine kritische Aufmerksamkeit ihnen gegenüber behalten. Indem ihre Möglichkeiten durch die Hinterfragung der Bedingungen ihrer Entstehung und Verbreitung erweitert werden, wird die Cyborg-Identität nicht zu einer statischen Ikone, sondern zu einer lebendigen Methodologie.

## Introduction

At the intersection of humanity and technology lies the cyborg: a hybrid but unbound figure embodying both the promise and peril of our technological future. Originally articulated by Donna Haraway in her groundbreaking *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985), the cyborg emerged as a freshly created feminist figure—one who disrupts traditional boundaries of gender, species, and machine, opening pathways to emancipation from patriarchal and capitalist power structures. A being without origin, without wholeness, whose very existence defied the binaries of male/female, natural/technological, and physical/virtual. Yet, nearly four decades later, the landscape of cyborg identity has evolved under the pervasive influence of digital platforms, social media algorithms, and AI-driven moderation, shifting its visual and conceptual representation in increasingly paradoxical ways.

I am an artist who works where fashion, technology and the body intersect. Grounded in feminist theory and material experiment, my practice asks how the body is mediated, shaped, and sometimes resisted by its surroundings. The cyborg is a recurring theme in my practice, which I approach as a posthuman and open-ended framework for rethinking the body. Using sculpture, wearable objects, and materials such as silicone and resin, I apply molding and lifecasting techniques to create works that move between futuristic installation and cyborg fashion. Cyborg fashion, in my use of the term, is not just a subgenre of speculative aesthetics or wearable technology, nor is it synonymous with the broader

idea of cyborg identity. While cyborg identity addresses the philosophical and political fluidity of posthuman and transhuman subjectivity, cyborg *fashion* specifically refers to the material, visual, and spatial practices through which that subjectivity is expressed and explored. It is in this gap, between expression and exploration, that I locate my work.

For many of us fashion practitioners engaging with the cyborg subject, Haraway's innovative vision has long served as a theoretical springboard for the materialization of ideas. Whereas early cyborg representation followed metal-plated robotic ideals, think Fritz Lang's *Maschinenmensch* (1927), Haraway shifted the cyborg's focus to the human body itself. This conceptual turn coincided with a material revolution in Hollywood special effects. Rick Baker's foam-latex and gelatin suit for *An American Werewolf in London* (1981) and John Mollo's first ABS vac-formed Stormtrooper costumes for *Star Wars* (1977) were fabricated when no factory yet offered such materials off the shelf. In the early 1990s, skin-safe prosthetic kits became available: Polytek released its first PlatSil trial sets, The Monster Makers introduced complete foam-latex kits, and Smooth-On's Dragon Skin and Ecoflex ranges popularised soft-skin casting among independent makers. At the same time, the rise of fan conventions and the first appearance of the term 'cosplay' at Worldcon in 1983 carried film-based SFX and costume techniques into DIY culture. These interests arose during a time when society became fascinated by technological advancements and the potential impact of technology on the human form. Together, these technical and cultural developments opened a new space for practice, attracting designers and artists with feminist and critical agendas toward the cyborg theme, and offering a wider palette of experimental media and body-modifying techniques for those agendas in fashion.

Personally, I encountered the cyborg figure via a similar mix of influences. Although I grew up in a family fascinated by science-fiction and technological innovation, it was the feminist discourse on embodiment in art school, together with available latex and mould-making workshop resources, that brought me to Haraway's *Manifesto* and reframed the cyborg as a relevant topic for me. My first experiment in the direction of the cyborg resulted in my work *Body Politics* (2017), a prosthetic suit made in collaboration with music artist Sevdaliza, in which translucent silicone muscle structures, shaped through both lifecasting and sculpting, explore the politics of the enhanced body, and challenge traditional gender archetypes.

By today, after some waves of material innovation, cyborg fashion has become a widely circulating visual language shaped by technical invention and platform visibility. Digital tools and 3D printing techniques allow for the rapid prototyping of virtual and physical garments alike, often characterised by AR-enhanced garments, high-gloss metallic textures and 3D-printed pieces, shared on social media platforms and featured by rising fashion magazines focused on



Fig. 1.: Body Politics

futurism and tech-wear, such as *CYBR* or *WETWARE Magazine*. These technical developments allow for more rapid prototyping and aesthetic experimentation, where the technique itself is celebrated as a proof of possibility, and technical virtuosity has become part of the movement's appeal.

At the same time, these systems—algorithmic infrastructures, content moderation protocols, and performance-based distribution logics—influence not only what is seen, but how and why it is made. Although not directly prescriptive in aesthetic terms, they support speed, consistency and engagement, reinforcing production modes that prioritise timely responsiveness over slow material inquiry, resulting in an aesthetics that I denote as 'filtered'. And while social media platforms make more space for upcoming talents and thus help popularise cyborg fashion; the platform guidelines also increasingly limit the visibility of content classified by platforms like Instagram as 'sensitive', including nudity, politicised bodies, or forms of embodied transformation that fall outside of normative standards—elements historically central to cyborg fashion. As cyborg fashion enters this space of accelerated visibility and constraint, questions emerge about what happens to it when it is propelled more by how it is made and shared than by its whys. How do material commitment and production rhythms shape the political potential of Haraway's cyborg figure in a time when embodiment and technology are inseparable? And how much more urgent does it become then to continually revisit the critical reflection it demands?

This paper did not begin with a theory, but with a core question that emerged slowly, over time, within my own artistic practice. After years of exploring the relationship between the body and technology, through mainly wearable sculptures, I found myself wondering whether the cyborg figure, as I had once embraced it, still held the same meaning and potential. What had felt like a timeless tool for breaking through dominant structures, began to feel more flattened and predictable. The feminist cyborg I had first encountered during my studies, which was so deeply tied to ideas of rupture and resistance, seemed to dissolve between linear technological thinking, tech-aligned practices, and platform metrics. Had the cyborg become increasingly shaped by the very systems it once sought to subvert?

Through theoretical reflection, philosophical, that is feminist and posthumanist inquiry, and personal observation, this paper traces the shifting role of the cyborg. It asks whether cyborg fashion can still open unfamiliar paths. At its core, this paper is both a study and a personal search for space, for modes of creation, in which the message of the cyborg *might* still matter. The continued popularity of the figure, and the growing cultural urgency around how technology shapes human identity suggest that this potential has not yet been exhausted, and that its material, visual, and spatial dimensions within fashion remain vital grounds for reflection and reinvention. If cyborg identity, as framed by Haraway in response to the dualisms of high-tech culture, once sought to dissolve such binaries, then perhaps the very acts through which it is made, the gestures, the materials, the rhythms of its creation, can offer a renewed form of resistance today.

## 1. The Cyborg as Theoretical Concept: its Origins and Potential(s)

Haraway defined the cyborg as “a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction.” (HARAWAY 1985: 65) Crucially, she framed the cyborg as a figure for transgressing entrenched boundaries, for blurring distinctions between human and machine, physical and virtual, male and female. This figure was, in her words, an “illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism” (ibid.: 70), yet one capable of subverting its origins. Haraway envisioned the cyborg as embodying “potent fusions and dangerous possibilities” (ibid. 1991: 154), serving as a feminist critique rather than a naive celebration of technology. It became a powerful tool for challenging constructed notions of identity (particularly around gender and race) and destabilizing the presumed ‘naturalness’ of social hierarchies.

Her ideas quickly influenced feminist and queer theories (exemplary reference) and inspired the cyberfeminist movement of the 1990s. Indeed, the latter

was a period which was inherently marked by the emergence of the cyborg as a politically charged icon, which, by fusing fiction and reality, and allying with machines and other non-human agents, invites us to rethink power as a complex, performative, and contingent phenomenon. Throughout these years, many thinkers and collectives embraced the cyborg's rebellious potential in order to imagine new modes of subjectivity and digital empowerment. For instance, in their *Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century* (1991), vNS Matrix described their work as "a virus from cyberspace", consisting in an intent of corrupting the patriarchal codes of techno-culture, that is, the sociotechnical systems and imaginaries surrounding digital technology. And in *Zeros + Ones* (1997), Sadie Plant situated women and machines as co-authors of a new digital reality.

This visual language resonated within contemporary fashion and broader visual culture of the same period. Artists like ORLAN used surgical modification as a feminist performance of body-technology hybridity, while Stelarc's cybernetic installations foregrounded posthuman expansion. Designers such as Alexander McQueen translated cyborg concepts into transformative fashion statements. His *Plato's Atlantis* collection (2010), for instance, envisioned evolutionary hybrids responding to ecological collapse. In cinema and digital media, Shu Lea Cheang explored queer techno-identities in works like *I.K.U.* (2000), while Octavia Butler's speculative fiction anticipated many of the tensions explored in posthuman theory today. These early engagements with 'cyborg aesthetics', happening across diverse media, did not merely illustrate theory; they put it into practice.

Posthumanist frameworks soon made the concept of the cyborg evolve, and broadened its theoretical reach. Katherine N. Hayles, in *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), examined how the rise of information technologies led to a fundamental shift in how we conceptualize embodiment, not as stable or purely biological, but as data-driven, mutable, and informatically processed. She described the "post-human body" as one that is "morphed and mutated through the flow of code", anticipating a future where identity is increasingly shaped by computational systems. Similarly, Rosi Braidotti's *The Posthuman* (2013) called for a non-anthropocentric, materially engaged vision of the self. Jasbir Puar (on "prosthetic" and assemblage identities) and Nina Lykke (on feminist posthumanities) further explored how queerness and embodiment intersect with posthuman thinking and reimagined relationality beyond the human (cf. PUAR 2007; LYKKE 2010). These thinkers built on Haraway's foundations and expanded the cyborg's field into ontological and ecological terrain. Rather than asking only what a cyborg is, posthumanisms asked how humans and machines are co-constituted through social, cultural, and technological processes. This broadening had a profound impact not just in theory, but also in visual and material culture—especially in fashion, where the body became a site for speculative futures, which shall interest us here.

In sum, what made the cyborg so powerful was not simply its hybridity, but its openness and refusal to be pinned down by any one discipline, aesthetic, or identity. It offered a visual and theoretical language for imagining otherwise: other genders, other bodies, other futures. Its radical potential lay precisely in this fluidity. Artists, designers, and theorists did not agree on what the cyborg was. Exactly that was its strength. Through this multiplicity, it became a site of critical experimentation that resonated across art, science, philosophy, and contemporary visual culture, including fashion.

Recent feminist scholars continue to push this critical perspective forward. Legacy Russell's *Glitch Feminism* (2020) reclaims digital errors ('glitches') as aesthetic and political acts of refusal, disrupting normative systems and binaries. (cf. RUSSELL 2020). Russell writes: "Glitch is the error that allows progress" (RUSSELL 2020: 8). In a similar vein, Ruha Benjamin and Safiya Umoja Noble examine how supposedly neutral digital tools reproduce social inequalities (years). Their work reveals how race, gender, and power remain embedded in algorithmic infrastructures, thus underscoring the continued relevance of Haraway's insistence on interrogating power through technology.

Such contemporary critiques reaffirm that 'cyborg theory' remains dynamic and evolving. More precisely, it evolves alongside and resists the systems that shape it. While not always articulated through fashion, their ideas resonate with the cyborg's visual culture, especially in its tension between liberation and constraint. Many works are driven by a desire to transcend or critique the current state of humanity: to imagine other versions of the human body and its adornments, other subjectivities, other futures. The rejection is not always literal or oppositional; it often manifests as a visual or material speculation on how the human might evolve in response to a social, technological, or ecological breakdown. In doing so, the body becomes a site of projected hope, transformation, and unease.

However, such speculative bodies are often realised through the infrastructures they set out to question. Innovations such as 3D-printed wearables, AR and virtual garments, and synthetic materials offer designers new languages for transformation. But they also often depend on extractive processes, industrial energy systems, and market-driven technological development. Fossil-based resins and non-biodegradable silicones are widely used for their formal potential and their adaptability to these new design languages, enabling designers to push material expression beyond the known, even while knowingly engaging with substances that contradict the futures they imagine. As an artist, I too aim to imagine alternative futures, and build them from present materials and systems that I ideally resist. This shows that the friction between what we critique and how we share that critique is not always resolvable, but rather defines the space in which cyborg fashion today resides. Even visually dystopian designs, intended to

warn or unsettle, are often read as aspirational, prompting capitalist companies to materialise speculative objects once meant as critique. Science fiction's bleakest futures often return not as cautionary tales, but as blueprints for innovation. In trying to escape the future we fear, we may be building it.

## 2. Cyborg Fashion: Algorithmic Culture and the Politics of Appearance

Emerging more as speculative imagery than daily wear, cyborg fashion has always been inherently pictorial. It has long served as a conceptual exercise in visualizing alternate bodies and identities. And unlike conventional fashion, cyborg fashion operates primarily in the world of visual culture: films, books, editorials, performance, games and art are its homebase. By implication, its purpose is not merely to clothe, but to reimagine the body itself. In the digital pictorial age, however, algorithms and platform culture have fundamentally reshaped how this speculative body is presented and conceptualized. By 'digital pictorial age,' I refer to a contemporary condition in which social and creative life is both shaped by and staged through images circulating in algorithmic environments. As Martach suggests in her theorization of the "topical image", the contemporary subject is urged to "behave as if always already pictured", and the image hence turns from reflection to a spatial and social framework (2024).

In today's cultural landscape, visual platforms such as Instagram, Pinterest, and TikTok play a central role in how also cyborg fashion is presented, circulated, and interpreted. These digital ecosystems not only amplify aesthetics, by which I mean the perceptual and stylistic logics through which visual content becomes meaningful within a cultural field, but also actively determine the visibility of different identities. (cf. RANCIÈRE 2004: 13–14; SAVOLAINEN/UITERMARK/BOY 2022). Understanding cyborg fashion today means understanding the algorithmic systems that mediate its expression: these are not neutral systems, but ones steeped in cultural and political biases. While it is true that no system is ever entirely neutral, as Latour argues in his account of the modern constitution and nature–culture hybrids. (cf. LATOUR 1993: 10–12), platforms often obscure their embedded values under the guise of objectivity, masking how their underlying structures privilege certain bodies, narratives, and expressions over others (cf. NOBLE 2018; BENJAMIN 2019; D'IGNAZIO/KLEIN 2020). In this sense, the platforms that elevate cyborg aesthetics also delimit them, subtly governing how bodies, identities, and resistance itself are permitted to appear.

Media scholar Ted Striphas refers to our current condition as an "algorithmic culture," (cf. STRIPHAS 2015) where computational processes actively shape perception, behavior, and creative production. Within the art and fashion worlds,

this manifests as a homogenizing visual trend, in which aesthetics are optimized for engagement, not disruption. Cultural critic Kyle Chayka aptly captures this tension when he writes: “no one is original anymore” (CHAYKA 2021), highlighting how algorithmic feedback loops incentivize sameness (cf. CHAYKA 2024). Within fashion and design industries, algorithmic influence reaches beyond visibility and into the practice of creation itself. From recommendation engines that shape consumer taste to AI tools that assist or even replace human designers, the logics of optimization increasingly dictate how garments come into being. Amazon’s patent for an AI-powered “fashion designer”, for instance, imagines clothing generation as a matter of predictive modelling, which would reduce creativity to data-driven pattern recognition.

A dynamic in which political provocation, ambiguous visuals, and non-normative bodies are often deprioritized, edged out in favor of sanitized, easily legible content, poses a direct challenge to the feminist cyborg identity, which has long drawn its power from friction, resistance, and the refusal to conform. Rather than unsettling boundaries, the feminist cyborg identity now risks assimilation into a broader culture of “surveillance capitalism”, a term coined by Shoshana Zuboff to describe how digital infrastructures monetize human behavior (ZUBOFF 2019). Platforms like Instagram, operated by parent companies whose moderation and recommendation rules remain only partially transparent, exercise gatekeeping power over cultural expression. (cf. OVERSIGHT BOARD 2023; INSTAGRAM 2021; GILLESPIE 2018; VAN DIJCK/POELL/DE WAAL 2018; SAVOLAINEN/UITERMARK/BOY 2022). In fact, on Instagram, the body becomes both content and commodity, and the algorithmic gaze determines its legibility.

The body, particularly its degree of exposure, evidently is one of the most contested sites within cyborg fashion’s visibility. Cyborg aesthetics readily deploy prosthetics, synthetic skins, scarification, or nudity to explore the relationship between the organic and the artificial—crucially, these acts are not merely stylistic, but central to the embodied and speculative logic of the cyborg. And precisely such depictions frequently clash with the content policies of social media platforms. Bodies that deviate from dominant filtered aesthetic norms (such as the fat bodies focused on by Gwyneth Holland in this *IMAGE* edition) are soon misread by these systems, categorized as offensive, harmful, or explicit, meanwhile they actually perform the critical task to question the systems themselves. As Savolainen, Uitermark, and Boy (2022) show in their article *Filtering Feminisms*, feminist content is disproportionately removed or deprioritised on platforms like Instagram. Similarly, Olszanowski (2014) describes how feminist self-imagining practices on Instagram are forced to navigate a terrain of visibility, where the line between acceptable and offensive is uneven, discriminative, white, Western, and gendered. This creates a narrow visual field in which the posthuman body is only tolerated when it aligns with platform-friendly aesthetics—disconnected

from the context, message, or embodied politics it already historically carries. This discrepancy between intention versus legibility often goes unacknowledged in mainstream discourse, but for cyborg-informed creators, it is a daily haunting concern.

My awareness of platform culture's influence on my creative process emerged gradually, shaped by years of negotiating what could be seen and shared. At the start of my career, my focus laid more broadly on the ways technological developments were influencing representation, particularly the visibility of the body in digital spaces. In response to that question, I developed "Second Skin" (2015). Even if not yet a cyborg project, it is a deliberate attempt at testing the limits of platform policies by playing with their own contradictions. This project challenged Instagram's inconsistent guidelines on nudity, specifically its ban on nipples read as female by the platform, while allowing those read as male. I created a thin, wearable latex cast of my own torso, including breasts and nipples. Because of its sculptural nature, it technically fell within the boundaries of what is allowed. Yet by placing it directly back onto my body, photographing the result and posting it on Instagram, the piece reintroduced the very thing the platform sought to hide, just under the (dis-)guise of compliance. In doing so, "Second Skin" not only questioned the politics of visibility, but exposed how digital infrastructures regulate bodies through arbitrarily discriminating logics. The project gained significant traction internationally, and was covered in major media outlets, which I am mentioning to show that it succeeded in sneaking the cyborg body into visibility, and in exposing the pictorial-somatic tensions in which it operates. However, that very success also revealed the fragility of such visibilities: While some of the posts I created remained online, others were flagged and removed.

Gradually, "Second Skin" turned into a series, of which i.a. a work titled "The Originals" forms part. This piece consists of transparent breastplates that cover the skin with nothing more than a clear layer of sculpted, fold-textured plastic. These works quickly faced increasing scrutiny from Meta due to the latter's tightening nudity regulations. At the same time, I began to notice that the stylists and creatives I worked with, particularly those commissioning these pieces for music videos, editorial shoots, or album campaigns, became increasingly alert to Meta's moderation policies. Since content flagged for nudity now was even sooner removed, the risk of having the own attention-creating flow disrupted was considered high. Given the importance of precise timings for media campaigns, even temporary takedowns were seen as unacceptable. Henceforth, this transparent series immediately introduced complications in its posting, that required pragmatic solutions: In my collaborations with music artists Solange and Rosalía in 2019 and 2018, nipples were obscured by respective poses. In 2021, alternative solutions, such as custom inserts underneath the material, had to be considered

for a piece commissioned for a videoclip by music artist Cardi B. In other cases, the models' hair was styled to fall strategically over the chest in order to hide the nipple, and/or the image was digitally edited afterwards.



Fig. 2.: The Originals

The sculptural form of “The Originals” remained, but its transparency, and with it much of its original intent, was compromised. The required alterations—whether through retouching, strategic posing, or concealing—consistently removed the nipple, a detail that was conceptually and visually central to the work. Symbolising a life-nurturing/maintaining capacity, the nipple carries a biological significance that contrasts with the artificial aesthetics of cyborg surfaces. Its juxtaposition with the high-gloss, synthetic breastplate created a visual tension between the natural and the artificial, anchoring the cyborg body in both human vulnerability and technological transformation. When this element was eliminated, the bodily contrast was diminished, and the work shifted toward a more overtly artificial aesthetic, weakening its intended hybridity.

In 2022, I began to exaggerate the sculptural folds in this piece's design, using them as a tactical distortion to reduce the bodily realism coming through. By manipulating the surface to produce larger, reflective creases, the transparency of the material was optically disrupted. The folds refracted light and interfered in the visual field, reducing the direct visibility of the anatomical details beneath. Even though the folds might improve the piece visually, they do not negate their origin: They are a design adaptation made under platform pressure, rather than an artistic evolution grounded in creative autonomy.

Meta's nudity policy has expanded in recent years. With the introduction of new Recommendation Guidelines, sexually suggestive or nudity-related content—such as transparent clothing—is now also included and falls into a newly emergent grey zone, where the exact definitions of what constitutes 'sexually suggestive' are subject to interpretation by the respective authorities. In this space, images may remain online but are deprioritised in visibility. As a consequence of this new regulation, in my most recent "The Originals" series, developed for a music artist in 2025, I had to eliminate all visibility of bodily contours and skin to avoid the risk of it being classified as transparent clothing. A previous collaboration with the same artist in 2023 had already revealed the complications of these new guidelines: Despite using an entirely opaque, skin-colored full-body prosthetic, the resulting video was inhibited in its online circulation due to it being defined as suggestive nudity. For the 2025 piece thus, the sculpted folds around the breasts were filled with milky white and lavender-colored resin to reduce both chest contour and visible skin.

While initially intended to open new grounds for exploring cyborg identity and fashion, this period instead led to a shift in methodology. Platform constraints became an anticipatory force, guiding design decisions from the earliest stages of conceptualisation. Although the above works were adjusted, many ideas that held greater conceptual relevance for me remained undeveloped, as their visual form was unlikely to survive content moderation. Rather than expanding the cyborg's possibilities, my practice began to orbit around its limitations.

Speaking more broadly, across politically engaged creative fields, makers navigating politically sensitive topics often face persistent and structurally uneven platform suppressions. The algorithm is not merely a neutral filter, but an active curator of culture, shaping what can be seen and who is allowed to speak. As José van Dijck argues, platforms have become cultural gatekeepers: They do not simply reflect culture, but actively structure it (cf. VAN DIJK 2013). As in many cultural disciplines, the space of experimentation in cyborg fashion is now conditioned by new systems of control. Rather than only asking what the cyborg looks like, critical attention should be given to the mechanisms that determine its legibility. This means asking: Who controls its imagery? Who decides its limits? And how might creators reimagine cyborg expressions within, against, or beyond

the architectures of algorithmic visibility? In this light, the cyborg's conceptual openness/flexibility could be a great strategic assistance. If its early power lay in disrupting dualisms, its present potential may lie in negotiating opacity, reinvention, and resistance, crucially not outside technology, but *from within* its constraints. The algorithm does not only moderate images; it moderates imagination. The task now is to uncode that moderation.

### 3. The entanglement of analogue and technological facets in cyborg fashion

The second chapter showed how platforms shape what cyborgs can look like; this chapter asks how the cyborg's coming-into-being can be shaped before its images take shape. I claim that analogue practices, understood as concurrent registers within technological developments, could provide the respective tools for shaping the cyborg not in autonomy from, but despite its medial-canonical depictions. The following paragraphs attempt a direction rather than declare a finished position.

Cyborg fashion, as defined earlier, is a material, visual, and spatial practice that stages human-machine relations on and around the body. Haraway's invitation to unsettle borders and Hayles's attention to informatic embodiment remain in view, yet I try to stick to the concrete/applied work bench. I am engaging with the following idea and seeing where it leads: Analogue practice does not stand in opposition to technological development. It creates a concurrent register within the same system of making. When a digital operation is unfolded into a tactile sequence, decisions that would remain hidden inside presets become discussable and adjustable on the body. This translation does not reject hybridity; it reframes it as the shared authorship of human and machine over time. In cyborg fashion, that shift matters, because the work is not only an image of a hybrid body, but the result of hybrid procedures that touch the body, pass through tools, and return to the image.

I do not take this as a slogan. I am trying to understand what it changes in day-to-day creational choices. The value I am looking for is ethical as well as aesthetic. Feminism here is not a label on an image, but a practice of situated decision making. It centers embodiment and names who or what acts in each step. In cyborg fashion, that relocation makes a difference: These works are not only representations of hybrid identities, but a set of material decisions through which the body negotiates with tools and code. Showing those decisions—and their constraints—grounds attunement in production, where it can guide choices before images circulate and continue afterward.

To keep the discussion concrete, I lean on the language of negotiation. Materials bring resistance and drift; machines bring thresholds, categories, and

compression habits; collaborators bring calendars and risk. Choices are made in view of all three. A fold amplitude that protects a project's circulation also alters how a viewer reads the body–technology relation. A pigment density that preserves dignity under machine reading also shifts attention from exposure toward interface. Rather than treating these outcomes as side effects, I try to recognise them as the place where meaning is composed.

From here, analogue work starts to appear less like a detour and more like a way to script the encounter with technical systems. Analogue practice is not an escape from the digital image; it is a way to script how the body will be seen there. You work with, not outside platform policies. The question is how to encode dignity and consent in objects that will be machine-read. Analogue tactics can build opacity and consent into the object and its documentation. They are ethical parameters that decide what part of the body is legible to both a human viewer and a machine.

Time becomes part of this orientation. Contemporary tools reward speed and legibility, while the studio can add rhythms that do not originate in software: an overnight cure or a 14-days oxidation interval. Analogue practice does not stand against technology; it reshapes the pace at which technology operates on the body. By inserting slower, tactile steps into a pipeline oriented to speed and legibility, I create room for ambiguity that optimization would otherwise erase. In a feminist reading of cyborg fashion, this delay is not nostalgia. It is protection, viz a space in which non-standard surfaces and gestures can persist without being forced into compliant visibility.

I am wary of calling this a method. It feels closer to a working attitude that treats translation, calibration, and audit as ordinary studio actions. Through analogue work, digital routines are handled as material questions, presets become studio parameters, and hybridity reads as a process distributed across body, material, tools, and code. Translation unfolds a computational step into touch and time so that its assumptions can be inspected. Calibration tunes a surface with the lens profile and moderation thresholds already in view. Audit produces small trials that reveal how technical systems classify bodies and how design choices can answer without losing intent. Analogue practice does not resist technology from the outside; it evaluates it from within.

To give this orientation a body, I describe two ongoing lines of testing that sit inside my studio and within a collaborative project.

#### *Oxidation as a co-temporal collaborator.*

For a wearable sculpture design, I have been testing how oxidation can participate in the writing of a surface that will later be machine read. The set-up is deliberately simple. A rigid metal-coated composite-casted object is finished to a

consistent polish and then exposed to controlled inputs: mist, heat, and cycles of humidity. The plate is documented at fixed intervals, first hourly and then daily. What I am watching is how rust, patina, and salt efflorescence alter specularly and edge behaviour across time. Areas that looked optically smooth in the studio start to scatter light as oxide film growth increases surface texture. Areas that felt opaque become more porous when verdigris migrates toward the camera. Compression exaggerates some of these shifts and suppresses others, and the file carries that timeline.

This feels close to what I mean by a ‘concurrent register’. The surface does not chase a single stable finish. It learns to live with processes that move at their own pace, some guided by me and some by other environmental forces. I can tune exposure time, adjust surface preparation, and choose when to document. These are practical decisions, yet they also belong to the ethical ground of the work. If situated decision-making guides the work, then deciding how a piece ages on a skin, and how much of that aging is shown, becomes part of dignity under machine reading. I keep a ledger for these trials. Fold depth, alloy, pH, humidity, light profile, export settings, outcome. The ledger is partial and pragmatic. It preserves the path by which a meaning has/was/is formed. Analogue practice is not an escape from the digital image; it is a way to script how the body will be seen there.

### *Analogizing digitization.*

Together with Loan Favan of Naula Studio, I am working on a piece called “Ladu Ko”, which explores the relation between AI methodology and New Caledonian cultural preservation by translating AI’s structure into a manual and analogue design process. The aim is to bridge digital and analogue preservations while keeping the body present as a sensing participant. We break down typical data-processing steps into human-scale actions. Analysis, filtering, and categorization become cutting, sorting, and combining elements that are handled on the design table. Randomised decisions, set for example by a throw of dice, stand in for the unpredictability of model outputs. Errors do not get polished away; their traces remain visible in the final pieces, much as AI-generated imagery carries its artefacts.

We research different *digitalization* paths. A ritualised path includes offerings during the process that leave material traces. A decolonised path encodes ownership rights into materials through transparent layers, or by restricting certain design actions according to rules agreed in advance. Technical processes I know well, such as casting, molding, and silicone sculpting, proceed in step with these constraints. Missed categorizations in the score can produce incomplete molds or fragmented castings. Ownership rules influence how elements are allowed to

join or must remain separate. The expected outcomes are wearable hybrid pieces and prosthetic jewellery that records both human interpretation and the system's limits.

In this context, this chapter's orientation becomes more evident. Analogue procedures translate, calibrate, and audit digital operations, making hybridity shift from a surface motif to a procedural relation among body, material, tool, and code. It centers embodiment and names who or what acts in each step. You work with, not outside, platform policies. The question is how to encode dignity and consent in objects that will be machine-read. Analogue tactics can build opacity and consent into the object and its documentation.

These two lines of work transport me back to the opening question. If platforms shape the field of appearance, it seems worthwhile to carefully and sensibly shape its creative process before the image starts to exist. The studio becomes a place where parameters are set with material, machine, and context in view, and where records of those decisions travel with the work. I do not claim to have found any resolution here. But I am trying to keep the cyborg meaningful by letting its conditions of appearance be part of the form.

## Conclusion

This paper began with the question whether cyborg fashion can still operate as a space of resistance, or whether it has been domesticated by the technological systems that amplify and constrain it. Most of all, it arose from a personal feeling of being stuck inside a subject that once animated my practice. The radical cyborg figure that first caught my attention felt like an open field for reinvention and disruption. Why, then, did its potential feel stalled at a moment when its entanglement with technology kept intensifying? Over the course of writing this paper, these questions entered my practice and formed the ground for testing new approaches.

I finish closer to the studio than to the feed. The work that matters happens where a decision is set with material, machine, and context in view. The image arrives as a residue of those relations. If there is a lesson for me to learn, it is clear in aim and demanding in practice: Treat procedures as a place where meaning is composed, and keep the body present while composing them. If we are to reclaim the cyborg as a critical figure, we need to look at how it is made as much as what it wears, and ask which futures those processes bring into being.

The oxidation study and "Ladu Ko" outline procedural hybridities. The first composes time into the surface; the second composes rights and rituals into the built. Both grew with the research of this paper, and both try to answer the question of where resistance in cyborg fashion might live today. In contrast to "The

Originals”, where moderation reshaped the object at last, these works treat the gaze as a design condition for their very beginning. Cyborg fashion appears here as a sequence of situated decisions that the image later records. Both are small beginnings, yet they change where I work.

I am aware that these moves might have limits. Protective strategies can change the work and intention. Audits could drift toward compliance. There are days when an experiment feels like an answer, and days when it feels like a concession. I try to keep the work inside this uncertainty, because I prefer a relation that is named, revised, and shared to a gesture that chases purity—chases it not in the sense of trying to achieve it, but haunting it. The hope is that the cyborg regains force when the conditions of its appearance are handled as part of the form rather than as external obstacles.

The earlier chapters of this paper asked what the cyborg looks like under a technological gaze. Yet this paper closes by placing attention on how the gaze could be met. I will keep working where decisions are set, and I will measure progress in the clarity of the parameters I can name. The figure survives as a practice. That is where I now place the possibility of renewal.

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### Biography

Esmay Wagemans is an Amsterdam-based artist working where fashion, technology, and the body intersect. Grounded in feminist and posthumanist thought, her practice asks how the body is mediated, shaped, and sometimes resisted within technological environments. Using sculpture and wearable objects formed through lifecasting and molding, she works with silicone, resin, and composites to create pieces that move between installation and cyborg fashion. She frequently collaborates with music artists and cultural institutions, presenting work across performance, editorial, and exhibition contexts.