Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: Making Game Boys

— The Gameboy Camera
— The Camera Module
— Arduino Library

— The Gameboy Camera Software
— ***1st Problem: Only one emulator can play it
— KiGB
— Play the game (Japanese or English?)

— Most intriguing part of the software: RUN and Faces
— What is it?
— How does it work?
— Why?

— I haven't done the research so I can only guess
— Globalization, becoming global, welcoming the globe

— But Japanese are not the best with race (see Kirby Wam Bam, Pokemon Jynx)
— Stephanie and I track the iconography of blackface minstrelsy in a much more subtle way in the evolution of the white glove in Super Mario Bros.

— I think the feminizing signs are equally important (elaborate)

— But here it's different because these notions of otherness are organized around the unsettling effect of glitches
— Framed like the pictures you might take with the device, these faces pop up on the camera as accidents, mistakes, emergences, from the materiality
— The idea here is that race and gender are aligned with the glitch as somehow inhuman or other
— The internet lore around these faces is that they're creepy, spooky, unnerving, or random
        — Show Youtube videos, instructables, etc.

— So, while I did not have time to find out who these are or what their story is, as a small project for the RCADE I wanted to separate these faces from the GUI which skeuomorphizes them as glitches and return them to the genre of portraiture on the same media environment
— I wanted to make a series of Game Boy games displaying these faces, these Game Boys.

Ok, so what's the process. And how is it two steps back, one step forward.

— First, each face needs to be converted into a format legible to the gameboy.——basically a namable of each pixel and its value.

– So luckily there's a program for that called XXXX
        – Show PCXGB wiki page

– **** 2nd Problem: But this program does not run on modern computers
– So I used DOSBOX to run this script which basically converts
each .PCX file to a namable

– Second, I needed to get these nametables to run on a piece of
software
– So GBDK

**** 3rd Problem: The faces don't display correctly because X
– So I find this subroutine to run a second loop on the lower half of
the image

NOW WE HAVE FIVE GAMES
– Play them

– Not the most exciting things, but not too bad for my first gameboy
games.

– Ok so now we need to get these games onto original hardware
– This is where this project gets interesting
– GEC to EPROM
**** 4th Problem...all these schematics are basically wrong
– I spent a lot of time working out all the variations only to
discover the correct schematic here

– Plugging the edge connector of the gameboy to the eprom plays the
game.
        – Edge Connector Image
        – Eprom Image

Conclusion:
5 Gameboy portraits of the five figures in the lolipop colors of the
gameboy pocket, with backlights matching the colors installed in the
RCADE permanently.

This game aligns a certain kind of representational strategy with the
emergent effects of technical media: the glitch. The feminized and
primitivized faces of Japanese game developers appear as a kind of
glitch, but one that is programmed into the functionality of the game.
When there is an error or a random effect, they show their faces.

So, these images are deployed to signify otherness. The otherness of certain kinds of gendered or raced bodies in a Japanese cultural context as well as the otherness of the technical platform on which they are embedded.

So, I wanted to make a new artwork that would attempts to relocate these portraits from skeuomorphic GUI elements back in the context of representation. I want to turn them back into authored likenesses within the genre of portraiture.

Let's be clear, these faces are not glitches. By designing the glitch you are actually enclosing the glitch, attempting to control it, enclose it, and domesticate it under the regime of control of Game Boy Camera software.

So the whole point of leveraging the original platform and its material constraints in my piece is to acknowledge collaboration with hardware and materiality that the original portraits actually obfuscated in their skeuomorphic deployment as "glitches."

Despite the way these faces are originally intended to cover up the materiality, they actually signfiy these larger circuits of global capital and perhaps specifically what Nancy Leong calls Racial Capitalism. So Nintendo's globalizing gesture simultaneously obfuscates and points to the way in which they have colonized conflict minerals throughout the eighties and nineties.

The coltan in Mask ROMS and processors we hacked this morning comes from somewhere. Apart from the fact that most of the minerals are mined out of Africa, the circuits themselves are soldered and produced largely by Asian women. As Lisa Nakamura has argued, there is hardly any contemporary electronics product which has not at some point in the production process, been touched by a woman of color. And her recent work on the indiginous women in the US who designed computer circuits speaks eleoquently to this.

So there's more research to be done on recovering the idnetities of the men underneath these masks as well as tracking Nintendo's supply chain in the late 80s and buillding an installation which places these portraits back into the genre of representation.