

Be My Scully

A collaborative memorandum about fabrication on the digital record

by A. P. Vague//Sofie Elana Hodara

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Part 1: True or False?

During a Meet the Press interview on January 22, 2017, Kellyanne Conway – the first White Walker to act as counselor to a President – sent the media into a frenzy when she referred to Sean Spicer’s inaccurate statement (read: lie) regarding attendance at Trump’s inauguration as an “alternative fact.” If Trump’s administration is a series of betrayals of what I consider American values, this was one of the big ones. I have come to apply the reach of the term “alternative fact” – the catchiest oxymoron of 2017 – to the epidemic of fake news that influenced the 2016 election results and culminated in a terrifying show of violence at Comet Ping Pong pizzeria.¹ Perhaps it’s a stretch to conflate the terms fake news and alternative facts. Nevertheless, I think Kellyanne Conway’s quick wit may have categorized an era of media credibility that will only grow in relevance.

On Thursday July 27, 2017, the OG of the podcast world, Radiolab, released an episode entitled Breaking News.² The 51-minute podcast (of which there is no transcript) reports on “two new technological tricks that together could invade our past selves and rewrite the rules of credibility.” Simon Adler interviewed Vanity Fair’s Nick Bilton about a new Adobe product called Project Voco, “a photoshop for audio.” This software “allows users to feed about 10 to 20 minutes of someone’s voice into the application and then allows them to type words...” – words that are then spoken in the exact same voice that was fed into the application. “The resultant voice, which is comprised of the person’s phonemes... doesn’t sound even remotely computer-generated or made up. It sounds real.”³

As Bilton writes, it’s easy to imagine someone creating fake audio of Trump “explaining how he dislikes Mike Pence...” or worse. Further, as Bilton also notes, it’s easy to imagine Trump denying the Access Hollywood tape: “...you don’t actually see Donald Trump until the very last second when he gets off the bus. You only hear him. And so, if that technology existed today, I can guarantee you that Donald Trump would have responded by saying, ‘Oh it’s fake, it’s fake news, it’s fake audio, you can’t see me, I didn’t say that’. And it would just be this video’s word against his.”

¹ [“In Washington Pizzeria Attack, Fake News Brought Real Guns”](#)

² [“Breaking News”](#)

³ [“Fake News Is About to Get Even Scariest than You Ever Dreamed”](#)

It gets scarier. Stanford University's software [Face2Face](#) allows one person's facial movements, captured by a webcam, to control the movements of persons face in an existing video. It's worth watching their 6-minute [Youtube video](#), as a young (presumably) engineer controls, with exacting precision, the facial expression of George W. Bush, while a woman's monotone voice⁴ narrates.

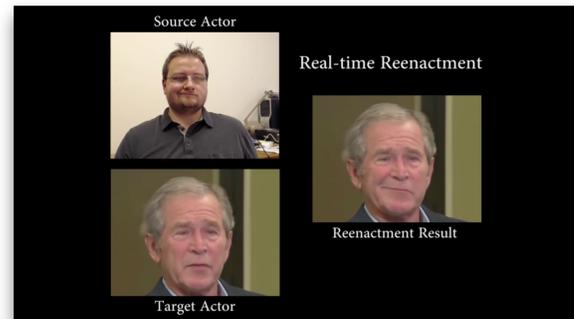
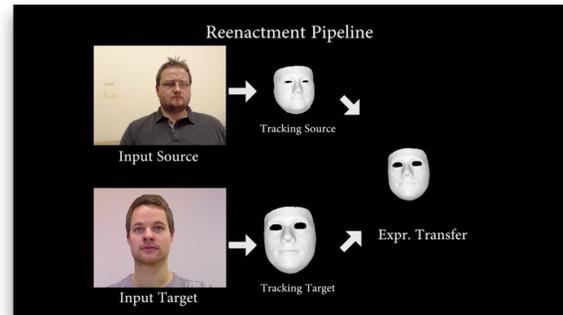
Further, Adler reports on the University of Washington's [Synthesizing Obama](#)⁵ project. In this software, researchers have trained neural networks on multiple hours of Obama's weekly address footage in order to learn how to map audio to mouth movements and shapes. With it, they can create a completely "photorealistic" high-quality video of Obama giving an – to use Kellyanne's terminology – alternative speech.

There are other products and projects worth noting as well. Canadian startup [Lyrebird](#) promises to take one minute of recorded voice samples and "compress her/his voice's DNA into a unique key... to generate anything with its corresponding voice."⁶ (Check out their [demo page](#), where they use the voices of Obama, Trump and Hillary to explain their project).

The future is frightening, right?

In true RadioLab fashion, Jad Abumrad and Robert Krulwich leave no rock unturned and introduce Hany Farid, a professor of computer science at Dartmouth College. Though Farid discusses potential forensic techniques that allow one to identify distorted digital data imagery, he is worried: "I think it's going to raise the fake news thing to a whole new level... the ability of technology to manipulate and alter reality is growing at a breaking speed and the ability to disseminate that information is phenomenal... because at the end of the day it's always going to be easier to create a fake than detect a fake."⁷

A few moments later, Bilton references the fake news during the election cycle: "It didn't even need to matter if anyone would rebuff it afterwards, it would reach millions and millions of people in mere seconds and that was it. It had done its job." The issue of reality isn't about whether we can prove it or not. Farid's remarks squash our hopes for detection – there won't be glanceable uneven seams or misspellings like we find on fake bags. And Bilton reminds us that, because of dissemination technologies, it doesn't even matter if we can disprove these fakes or not.



Screen grabs from Stanford University's Face2Face [video](#)

⁴ It's ironic: is it a person? Or a computer-generated voice?

⁵ [Synthesizing Obama: Learning Lip Sync from Audio](#)

⁶ [Lyrebird - An API to Copy the Voice of Anyone](#)

⁷ ["Breaking News"](#) 26:32 – 27:08

Let's go to one more Breaking News brief interview (27:08 – 31:17) with longstanding communication and media guru John Klein, currently founder and CEO of Tapp Media. When asked what he thinks about these fake videos, Klein's response hit the nail the on head: "There are so many ways to abuse this, it blows your mind. I mean, it goes to the very core of communication of any sort, whether it's television or radio or interpersonal... um... 'Is what I'm seeing true? is what I'm hearing real'. . . It's terrifying, and it hurdles us even faster to the point where no one believes anything. How do you have a democracy in a country where people can't trust anything that they see or read anymore?"

Democracy is the big question. In our digital age, the issue of democracy, specifically its demands for equality and justice, is under attack, not just with matters of veracity, but with privacy as well. As the world becomes more digitally-entwined and algorithmically-mediated, the way democracy works, or, more accurately, the way democratic ideals are implemented, doesn't stand a chance.

A. P. Vague and I, from separate parts of the country, sporadically contributed to, pared down, altered, and rearranged the contents of this essay via Google Docs over the course of Summer 2017. This collaborative project aims to explore, in a fluid free-form manner, themes of fabrication and fiction in our digital age.

-Sofie Elana Hodara

Part 2: Who's Smarter: Bark Beetles or Trump?

Sofie Elana Hodara:

Before I left for the desert, I went to a friend of a friend's 96th birthday party in Beverly Hills. The house felt like some forgotten corner of Hollywood. The narrow, outdoor corridor leading up to the front door was glamorous and decrepit – filled with lanky plants in shattered pots. The tall living room walls displayed crooked, yellowed paintings in gilded frames alongside large cracks and cobwebs.

The birthday woman had glazed eyes, and her blank, open-mouthed half-smile was painted red. She was cared for by a Latina woman and their difference in skin tone reminded me of an era when people used the word "help" to describe their gardeners, house cleaners and nurses.

Other white women who had outlived the film producers and psychiatrists they had once been married to trickled in. All were followed by an array of darker-skinned caregivers. I felt grateful that these lingering throws of imperialism weren't apparent in my social circle of artists and academics; that our beliefs and finances could keep us from contributing to this racist classism. I ended up chatting with the son of the host, a fit man whose smile beamed from across the room. I asked him what he did for a living.

I'm an astrophysicist who's terrified of climate change.

I laughed. He was handsome, probably in his late forties. He mentioned that he would have to leave his mother's party early to return home to his wife. He seemed oblivious to our dejected surroundings.

He continued: *So this latest project – a collaboration with a colleague – uses drone-based bio-acoustics to control the activities of beetle populations.⁸ The particular beetles we are targeting thrive in the warmer weather, and due to overpopulation, are decimating trees in forests.*

First, we capture the sounds the beetles use to communicate with one another, and then, using the drones, we play those sounds back to them to control their movements – to herd them away from trees and minimize the damage they cause.

Interesting! Here's what seems to be an example of man using his intelligence for good instead of destruction – righting the crimes we've committed against the planet. One liberal at a time.

What's fascinating is that, even when we randomize the sounds, the beetles eventually end up ignoring them. They figure it out – that the sounds are FAKE!

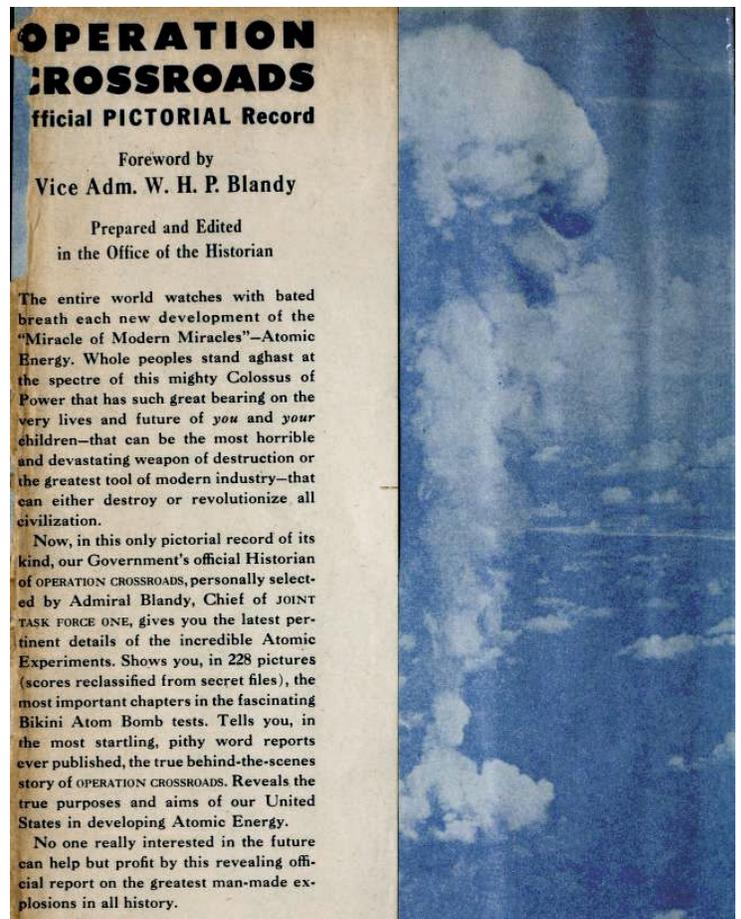
He has a cheery, genuine laugh; it's full, yet light – not too loud. *They know they are being lied to! But we can't figure out when an article posted on Facebook is fake. (B)*

He sighs.

⁸ ["Using acoustic technology to reduce bark beetle reproduction"](#) (language?)

A. P. Vague:

One aspect of recording and capture that interests me is the way information is often gathered unintentionally, or at least in ways that weren't anticipated. One example is the cameras that were used for research during the nuclear testing of Operation Crossroads, which were remote controlled and shot thousands of images and feet of movie film.⁹ The sheer quantity of information gathered by the cameras is staggering; as film is inherently limited (A) in what it can represent, the researchers compensated by scaling up the number of exposures. Photographic film is also sensitive to radioactivity, and when Kodak discovered that some of their film was unexpectedly clouded in 1946, their investigation revealed that the film had been contaminated by fallout from the Trinity test hundreds of miles away.¹⁰ Ultimately it was film that captured data about the range and intensity of fallout, but it was recorded in a way that wasn't intended, but rather a byproduct of the material reality of how film works.



⁹ [Operation Crossroads, the Official Pictorial Record](#)

¹⁰ ["Not-so-Secret Atomic Tests: Why the Photographic Film Industry Knew What the American Public Didn't"](#)



Steward in Memoriam

Joshua Tree National Park, California, USA - June 2017

According to climate scientists, over the next 100 years, the Joshua trees in the Joshua Tree National Park will be endangered. Though populations of the trees living farther north, where temperatures are cooler are thriving, the ones in the park are may not survive the changing environment.

In response to this poetic tragedy – the death of the park’s namesake – artists and long-time collaborators Sofie Elana Hodara and UBIQ have come together at [BoxoProjects](#) to work on a new project: *Steward in Memoriam*.

For this body of work, they are collecting sounds of dying or injured Joshua trees in and around the park and keeping detailed records of the sites of each recording. Over the course of three weeks, they've used the studio as a home base, creating multi-media collages and site-specific interventions that address ideas of preservation and memory within the context of the Joshua Tree National Park.

A. Limitations also play a role in the way amateur images are used in historical discourse. I’m considering recordings from before and after the emergence of smartphones – the assassination of John F. Kennedy is an example of an historical event that happened to be captured on bystander film, the footage of which has been extensively documented, logged, studied, restored, and transferred.

The relatively low amount of real information in the film itself is a catalyst for enormous discussion and speculation. We understand that events today are more likely to be captured in more detail by more observers than before the prevalence of handheld video, but also that video itself is a malleable medium, easily edited and distorted. The quantity of evidence that we have in more recent events coincides with how far from the truth images can be and still appear “real.” (G) These two aspects are not contradictory; increasing the quantity of information alone has never been an effective means of establishing clarity, and in fact this disparity can be easily exploited (read: weaponized).



Why do we cling to the idea of an objective, singular, and TRUE reality? Why can't there be co-existing ideas of what "real" is?

Ex 1 (personal) We are willing and ready to admit that our memories are biased and often incorrect.

Ex 2 (political) Just look at how various Americans understand our health care debate; in a poll conducted by Morning Consult, conducted in January 2017 with 1,890 American adults, 35% of respondents didn't understand that Obamacare and the ACA were the same thing;¹¹ in other words, they lived in a reality where the one piece of legislation was actually two distinct pieces of legislation.

Ex 3 (philosophical) *"Once upon a time, I dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of my happiness as a butterfly, unaware that I was myself. Soon I awaked, and there I was, veritably myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly, dreaming I am a man."*¹²

So, why do we fight for a singular truth? Why is it so hard to accept that our records, documentations, images, and evidence obviously "fail" us in terms of accuracy as well?

With a combination of AI, VR, AR, etc, I can imagine a future where one uses a "smart contact lense" (or some interface) to flip through multiple "alternative" realities... Like Borge's Garden of Forking Paths, or various dream states. It's like what Littlefinger whispers to the beautiful Sansa: *Fight every battle everywhere, always, in your mind. Everyone is your enemy, everyone is your friend. Every possible series of events is happening all at once. Live that way and nothing will surprise you. Everything that happens will be something that you've seen before.*

B. This reminds me of a joke and a long-standing topic of study in linguistics and anthropology.¹³ The joke: *What's the difference between a piece of white bread and white people? Given enough time, white bread will develop culture.* It reminds me of how tenuous the idea of "culture" itself can be; could it be said that the practices of nonhuman animal constitute culture, and is consciousness of such an idea necessary for it to be "real"? I like the idea that beetles could have a culture of skepticism.¹⁴

In one sense language is only necessary – or only exists in its authentic form – if it's spoken out loud or written down. Chimps might have secret names for everything that they keep in their heads, but I wouldn't initially think of this as language until it's communicated among more than one individual. That said, the space between internal consciousness and a collectively-coded system is one of the most complex and difficult thresholds for HCI and AI today. Likewise, unique symbolic taxonomies are commonly found among humans who have lived in isolation.

¹¹ ["One-Third Don't Know Obamacare and Affordable Care Act Are the Same"](#)

¹² ["Zhuangzi And That Bloody Butterfly"](#)

¹³ ["Readings in Animal Cognition"](#)

¹⁴ I think the things that differentiate humans from other species is language (the ability to articulate, classify, categorize, name, etc.) and remember.

violations of privacy = attacks on democracy¹⁵

“All stories reflect some aspect of reality while simultaneously containing elements of, at the very least, selection, if not outright fiction. **Epistemological purity is, at the end of the day, impossible**, for museums as well as other culturally determined repositories of knowledge.”¹⁶

Σ. One of the common uses of digital media since the early 2000's is to transfer and archive analog materials. We sometimes have a tendency to trust the permanence and fidelity of digital information (D) and forget the inherent archivists' nightmare that is compatibility. Link rot¹⁷ is aptly named as digital clarity does degrade in a way similar to physical decay; information must be accessed in order for it to remain stable. (E)

Sound has an interesting role in the practice of capturing events because it's generally harder to record at a distance than video. Surveillance methods can parallel the expectations of privacy we have in public; we can see each other across longer distances than we can hear our voices, and there is an idea that what is said out of earshot will remain “off camera” to security systems. (C)

¹⁵ [“Our Privacy Problem Is a Democracy Problem in Disguise”](#)

¹⁶ [“LA's Diamond in the Rough: The Museum of Jurassic Technology”](#)

¹⁷ [“URL decay at year 20: A research note”](#)

During the Boston Marathon Bombing, I relied on Twitter for information. There were certain advantages:

- hashtags and keywords streamlined and filtered real-time results
- hashtags and keywords meant I could easily find and follow relevant users/sources of desired information
- user-driven content meant that up-to-date info came from first-hand accounts as events unfolded – not from traditional media outlets.

It was sometime after that that I asked my dad to invest in Twitter. Little did I know what Trump would do to the platform. I feel angry when I think about the chaotic, nonsensical, ignorant and offensive voice Twitter has allowed Trump to develop. I know it's *not* actually the platform, but nonetheless, the platform creates a piece of media that acts as some sort of "alternative" history of current events, often contradictory to more traditional media outlets, as well as, at times, to itself (μ).

A great place to find examples of Trump's tweeted reality is in [Michelle Ye Hee Lee's](#) eight-part Fact Checker series for The Washington Post called *What Trump got Wrong on Twitter this Week*.¹⁸ Beginning on January 6, Lee unveiled inaccurate reporting, lazy statistics and unnecessary bullying, all on Trump's Twitter account.

For example, in her second installment, Lee awards Trump "Four Pinocchios" for his tweeted claims that New York Times reporter Serge Kovaleski "changed a 16 year old story that he had written in order to make me [Trump] look bad. Just more very dishonest media!" As a reminder, the issue at hand was about law enforcement detaining and questioning a number of people allegedly seen celebrating the 9/11 attacks – whom Trump interpreted as "thousands" of Muslims, and which resulted in his mocking the physical abilities of Kovaleski. You can read more [here](#), or check out [#3](#), [#4](#), [#5](#), [#6](#), [#7](#) or [#8](#) for more examples of Trump's "tweeted" version of "alternative" history.

Trump's Twitter feed isn't only rife with inaccuracy but it also contradicts itself. In March 2016, Trump wrote, rather infamously, that "Nobody has more respect for women than Donald Trump!" But check out this collection of Trump's tweets called "[Women](#)" (from the Trump Twitter Archive).

The Twitter feed – as opposed to recorded conversation on tapes, or longform articles in newspapers – is easy to search and skim. It accumulates in an apparently endless scrolling feed – something, that if archived correctly,¹⁹ could become an interesting artifact to study. (D)

Despite our better intentions, we privilege these dynamic records as trusted authorities. The traditional symbols of credible information – the dusty pages of an encyclopedia or the large-format printed newspaper – seem outdated and flat when compared to the real-time and interactive sexy feeds and sites we visit online. Perhaps Trump's tweeting, a novel Presidential act, is a way of dismantling the institutionalized authority of the printed word. (I)

¹⁸ "[What Trump Got Wrong on Twitter This Week](#)"

¹⁹ As of August 2017, Twitter only allows visitors to scroll to [April 25th](#) on Trump's feed.

E. It's possible to play back audio tapes from decades ago in higher fidelity, with higher quality equipment than what was available at the time the recordings were made. In contrast, digital recordings are fixed in step with their encoding.²⁰ This creates a kind of time-locked quality to digital media that were ostensibly created to last forever (video from the 80's *looks* like video from the 80's).

F. The distinction between generating and documenting information is largely undefined.²¹

On the nature of language itself: it's a living document, words change meaning based on popular usage. The singular "they" is an example of a word that has recently been deemed correct specifically because it is used for gender nonconforming individuals. This is an example of language being intentionally changed in order to better reflect the needs of practical communication. (μ) I also like that we use the word "code" to describe what makes up software programs, and "language" to refer to the cyphers by which it's encoded. **But all language is a type of code, and even nonlinguistic communication is coded, either through cultural or biological/evolutionary accord.**²²

Authority is also very much related to limiting information as opposed to creating it. It's a documented tactic of the police in Wichita, Kansas to intentionally let their sirens and lights run even while people are stopped and out of their cars; they do this to make it harder for people to record them on smartphone video.



Police in Wichita, Kansas drown out motorists attempting to record [video](#)

D. The idea that *nothing is deleted from the Internet* is half true: like energy, the information associated with the Internet isn't often created (F) or destroyed as such, but rather converted to a less useable form.

²⁰ [Citizen Archiving III: The Master Tapes](#)

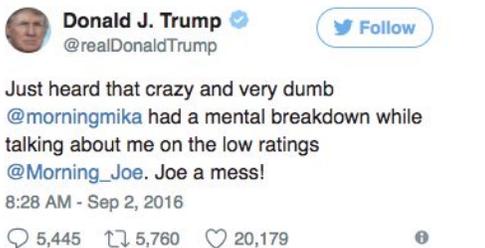
²¹ [COMPOSING WITH PROCESS: PERSPECTIVES ON GENERATIVE AND SYSTEMS MUSIC #7](#)

²² All language is coded - maybe this statement will come to mean something more literal with "integrated AI." One of the possibilities of an integrated AI would be to bypass any human interface, allowing us to function as "users" unconsciously, without coded language.

But why is that important?

The fear is that Trump's Twitter feed, archived by the White House, will be written (or more likely, coded/programmed) into the history books of the future.

Trump's thoughts about women... re twitter.



U: Language is itself an autocratic phenomenon; words are orthologically accepted based only on consensus. It makes sense that an autocrat would use the fallibility of his own communication as part of his delusion.

G. In many cases visual art can embrace the inherent shortcomings of a given medium as a way to form new relationships to images and ideas. **(H)** Andy Warhol is a well-known example of an artist who utilized the limitations of serigraphy. Others printed with memiography, photocopy, or microfiche.²³ In these cases the media each held particular cultural usage (non-symbolic), either for the purposes of duplication, miniaturization, or archivism before being recoded into conceptual meaning by the artists that used them. I wonder if the role of the artist as an explicator has become irrelevant with the advent of consumer-grade digital imaging, not to mention the tendency for critiques to form almost instantaneously online.

H. The imagery gathered and scrutinized by chemtrail conspiracy theorists, although almost entirely unscientific and inconclusive, offers a beautiful coalescence between aesthetics and belief. To imbue a photograph with such a sense of importance – even misguided – is at the core of what makes an image art.

C. I remember walking through a nearly-empty building on the Rutgers campus one evening, and I came across a security desk (unoccupied). I noticed sound coming from the computer speakers, and when looked at the clearly visible screen I realized it was from a microphone placed in a hallway near one of the cameras, and the conversations of passersby were being amplified and played back at the security desk. To me this immediately registered as a deeper violation than a camera without sound would have been.

I. Ultimately I consider it a positive trajectory to dissolve our belief in traditional texts such as printed encyclopedias, etc., as such forms tend to be sullied by the inequitable systems that endorse them (should we trust a limited group of “elites” who were given the job of editing over the collective voice of 31 million of volunteers?). But just as the trust in a given form was always misplaced, Trump has reminded us that replacements can be just as toxic.

²³ [“Microfiche Art: Interview with Caroline Cochrane Kent”](#)

Part 3: "Donning the fictional garb"

[Stephen Wright -- Talk / Discussion 05.02.05](#)

"It's by donning the fictional garb that nakedness is achieved."

The Yes Men: donning the fictional garb

The device which The Yes Men have most effectively gleaned from the toolbox of art history is verisimilitude, which they deploy in a framework of what might be described as deferred-disclosure tactics. The group is perhaps best known for designing fake-functional websites that parody, imperceptibly and incisively, those of socially pernicious political and business organizations, including the G.W. Bush campaigns in 2000 and 2004, and perhaps most notoriously, the World Trade Organization (WTO). So un-artlike

••••

In the real. Using fiction very truthfully, is how we see it. Providing transparency through truth masquerading as fiction. Actually not even masquerading, for that implies dressing-up, and there's no dressing-up - it's by donning the fictional garb that the nakedness is achieved.²

All too often, art's engagement with the real is construed in terms exemplified by the fruitless efforts of Don Quixote to set the world aright: the cockeyed knight's self-detrimental though sublime misapprehension of reality has led many to the melancholic conclusion that art is well advised to remain in its own sphere, rather than combating an order of reality entirely foreign to it. The Yes Men, however, seem to take fiction by the horns, reversing the logic of Quixotic antics, thereby suggesting that today the conventional relationship between fiction and reality has itself been reversed. Rather than fighting a reality anachronistically misconstrued in terms of fiction, The Yes Men "don the fictional garb" to smuggle a public reality check right to the foreground of the stage-managed theatrics devised to conceal big business interests, exposing the naked truth beneath the mantle of legitimacy which media consultants - the real fictioneers of today - spend their days carefully spinning.

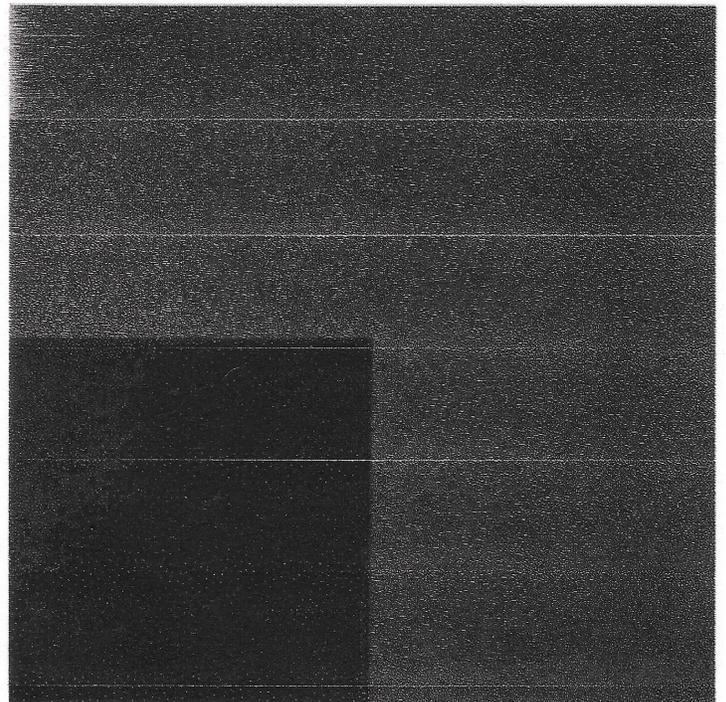
I'm looking back at my notes from that day in class when we covered this article: *tactical medial forgo interim steps and go right to verisimilitude / like the yes men / become the meaning of the sign.*

I guess we think about art as a response to society/culture, it responds both conceptually (showing ideas, stories) and formally (reveal nature of material reality). But with work like the Yes Men's work they take a response to society and make it real - put it back into culture. So it's the kind of like art being a signifier of something that doesn't exist?

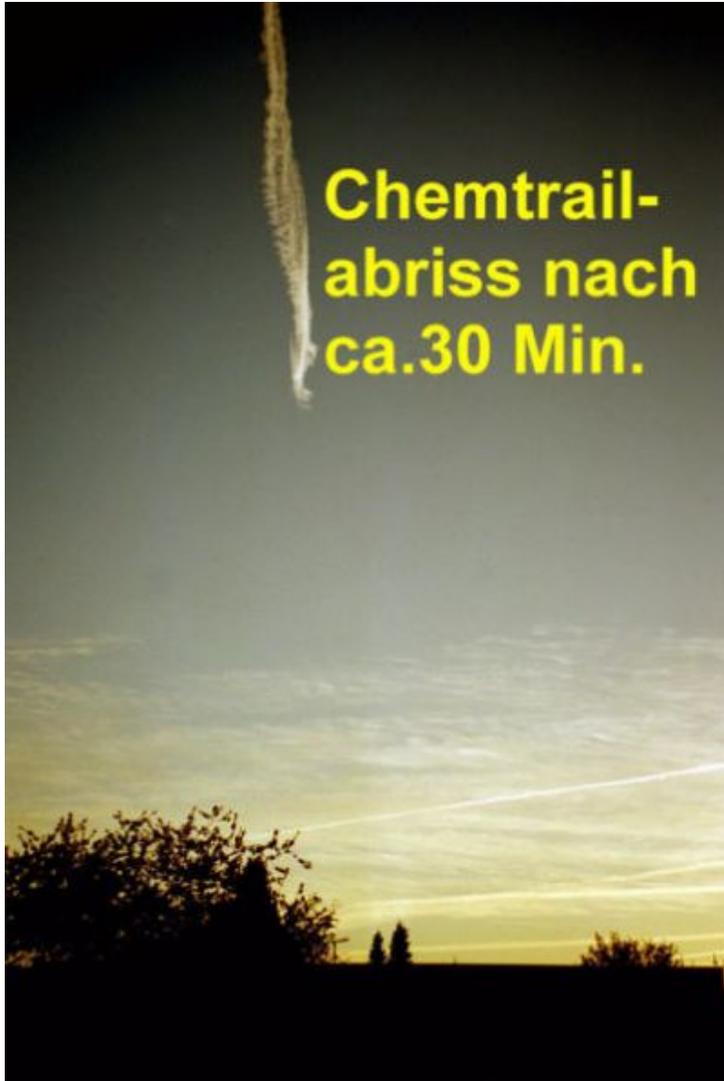
Regardless, I think that the way the Yes Men think about fiction and fabrication is important. They use it to reveal truths about the world around us. They fabricate for the sake of activism and revolution.

We cower in fear when we think of the propaganda and lies used from the top-down - the manipulation of history, people, society, values - but we can, and I believe we have to, use the same tools from the bottom-up.

Maybe I'm more violent than I've realized - don't fire with fire, but fight lies with lies.



Scanned inkjet print of Ad Reinhardt's *Blue Painting*



Amateur evidence of chemtrail conspiracy²⁴

Idlewild

When crowds gathered on January 28th, 2017 at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport to protest newly-instituted travel bans that were clearly marred by prejudice, I relied mostly on Twitter and other social media for real-time information. I was in Kansas during the protests, so my experience would surely be mediated by some means, and I sought out the videos that were posted by nonprofessional reporters throughout the event. This was in part an attempt to experience the protests for myself, using the readily available uploads almost as telepresent media.

While the people shouted along, the sound built up organically, compressing hundreds of voices into a dense, homogenized frequency. The occasional rhythmic familiarity of protest chants formed a here-and-gone-again pattern of incidental noise and adding one's voice to the natural, stochastic self-similar process of increasing volume. I was struck by the unintelligible din; the distortion that overloaded iPhone microphones surely overwhelmed the senses in situ as well. But wasn't the intent all along to build static? By eliminating the distinction between signal and noise, protest sonics have always relied on the ability for quantity to obfuscate individual voices. The message in this instance is simple, and expressed clearly by wordless objection (as oppositional communication only functions between clearly heterogeneous parties).

Further from any semblance of discrete arguments lies another power inherent in the collective voice: that of emotion. This component of protest culture can intentionally remove its subjects from intellectual conversation in favor of contentious passion, a tactic that is easily co-opted by any political perspective (anti-choice protesters with posters depicting aborted fetuses come to mind). But where conversation has failed; the implicit understanding is that the intensity described is simply inexpressible by any means that bows to decorum.

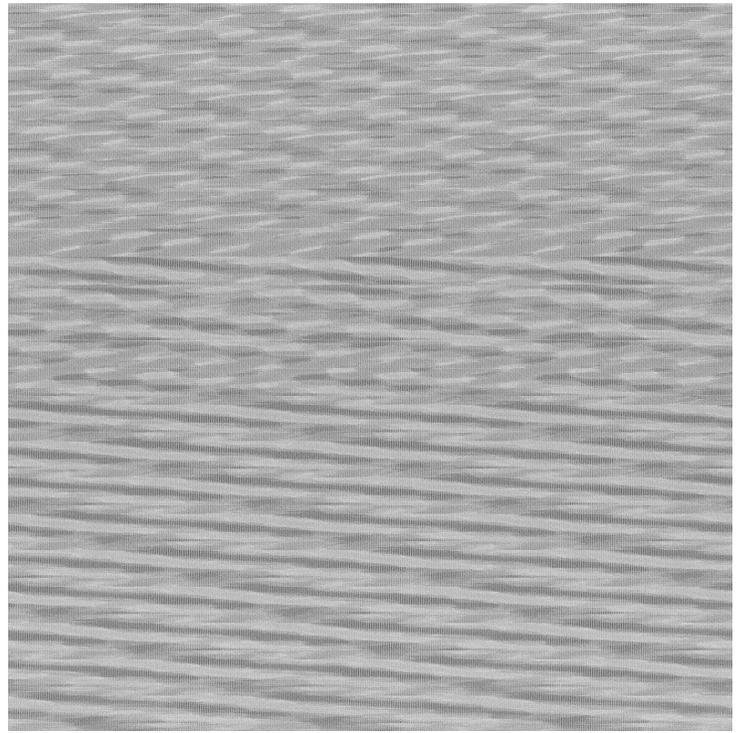
This is mirrored by certain misconceptions and skepticisms regarding the digital record: the idea that digital media has inherent "gaps" in information where analog forms do not is an exaggeration at best, and one that in 2017 is informed by generations-old technologies. Today's cameras and recording equipment are capable of capturing images and sounds with greater resolution than not only their analog predecessors but also human perception itself. I think of this reality as part of a theoretically infinite binary capability – while the content and emotions of complex ideas might preclude digital depiction, every sound and every image can possibly be expressed through binary means.

While trying to find my place in the protest collective at a distance I imagined a method for tamper-proofing audio recordings by transferring them to images. I made my own response recordings to the conflict and translated them to images Photoshop as a tool to convert raw data to pixels. The images can be reverse-translated back into sound using the open source audio editing software Audacity.

²⁴ [Chemtrail conspiracy theory website](#)



Screenshot Joseph Albers



Digital audio recordings of the JFK protests converted to raw images

To convert to audio:
Audacity>
File>
Import>
Raw Data>
+ (file path)>
- U-Law
- No endianness
- 1 Channel (Mono)
- Start offset: 0
- Amount to import: 100%
- Sample rate: 44100 Hz

Part 4. Conclusion

In the end, UBIQ never came to California.

It was just me alone in the desert.

Because, in my work, it is the idea that is most important; the promise of the original vision is most exciting for me. Maybe I'm too lazy, or too theoretical, or, worse yet, too conceptual. But it does make sense that, once the idea is formed, the work is done.

My job is just to imagine and daydream about its physical manifestation, as well as that beautiful period of creative productivity that comes with being a maker of original ideas. Specific to the case of the Joshua Trees, I needed UBIQ to help me manifest my idea. UBIQ works with sound – a medium I have little to no background in. I couldn't make this work without him. So he set up the camera, mixed the sound, edited the videos – things I don't know how to do well enough to be called art, things I couldn't do alone.

The results of my residency is a documentation of a project that never happened. And when a project only lives in its documentation (as opposed to reality), it allows us critique the trust we give to traditional archives, records and other modes of knowledge-keeping.

There is more than adequate reason to question and distrust the media that create the truths we live.



