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Exhibiting Artists: Darja Bajagić, James Benning, Theodore Darst, Violet Dennison, Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn, Mark Flood, Michael Green, Juliana Huxtable, Daniel Keller, Son Kit, Tim Trantenroth, and Melvin Way

Curated by Jeff Ostergren
When I first proposed curating this exhibition on the subject of paranoia, it was September 2016, a little over a month before the United States presidential election. Donald Trump couldn’t possibly win, and we were about to see the momentous election of our first woman President. I had long been interested in paranoia—as an affliction, a strategy, and an ontological system. I took it seriously, very seriously, but it also felt like something outside of me, a symptom of something kept at a distance.

Both during the campaign and in its aftermath, things began to swing out of control. Incidents like “Pizzagate” and other violent attacks directed by Right Wing fanatics suggested the brutal power of paranoid rhetoric. Talk-show host Alex Jones was speaking to a larger audience than ever. The news media, which had always had an important role in determining the message, was spinning between breaking news of Trump’s vulgar actions, FBI investigations into Hillary Clinton, and pop culture memes.
Once Trump won with a shocking, seemingly Russian-assisted victory and took office and this murky, Twitter-fragmented disaster set upon us, the meaning of the exhibition shifted. Paranoia was something that had always hummed in me, but from the lofty remove of privilege. I didn’t trust the government, but only in the sense of an “X-Files” bemusement and some general uneasiness about the history of violence that was a foundation of this country. I was a generally complacent (if occasionally outraged) citizen.

But now, with Donald Trump and his swarm of radical followers in charge, the paranoia that has driven the far right and the Tea Party began to swing the opposite direction. They were turning us (the left) into them (the right). Conspiracy theories about Russia’s involvement in the election, Trump’s quiet hiring of his own security force, and interior machinations all suggested the beginnings of a coup. This seemed entirely possible. But of course, possibility is always part of paranoia.

Works that I had selected for the exhibition that had humor or wit in them didn’t seem funny any more. Pieces that seemed fantastical were suddenly reality. Artists who worked in a dry conceptual vein could be seen as prescient mystics. Over the past two brutal years, we’ve had Charlottesville and #MeToo, “Little Rocket Man” and Steve Bannon, environmental disaster and a lot of blood. A lot of what I started with had to be thrown out the window.

So how to proceed?

Paranoia is anticipatory.
Paranoia is reflexive and mimetic.
Paranoia is a strong theory.
Paranoia is a theory of negative affects.
Paranoia places its faith in exposure.¹

I do not propose to try to trace the variations of the paranoid style that can be found in all these movements, but will confine myself to a few leading episodes in our past history in which the style emerged in full and archetypal splendor.²

The light outside the house has totally faded and the wind keeps screaming high above the courtyard I’m weaving through, a light rain slapping at my face, and the wind is blowing confetti into piles high against the walls like snowdrifts made up of gold and green and purple paper and there are bicycles I never noticed before lying on their sides, their upended wheels spinning in the wind. And in a corner a vague shape is slumped over and when I freeze,

¹Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick
²Richard Hofstadter

The Incident
noticing it, the courtyard suddenly becomes quiet, which is my cue to slowly move closer.²

It was in 1929 that Salvador Dali turned his attention to the internal mechanism of paranoid phenomena, envisaging the possibility of an experimental method based on the power that dominates the systematic associations peculiar to paranoia; subsequently this method was to become the frenzied-critical synthesis that bears the name of “paranoid-critical activity.”³ Paranoia: delirium of interpretative association involving a systematic structure—paranoid-critical activity: spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based on the interpretative-critical association of delirium phenomena.⁴

American politics has often been an arena for angry minds. In recent years we have seen angry minds at work mainly among extreme right-wingers, who have now demonstrated ... how much political leverage can be got out of the animosities and passions of a small minority. But behind this I believe there is a style of mind that is far from new and that is not necessarily right-wing. I call it the paranoid style simply because no other word adequately evokes the sense of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy that I have in mind. In using the expression "paranoid style" I am not speaking in a clinical sense, but borrowing a clinical term for other purposes. I have neither the competence nor the desire to classify any figures of the past or present as certifiable lunatics. In fact, the idea of the paranoid style as a force in politics would have little contemporary relevance or historical value if it were applied only to men with profoundly disturbed minds. It is the use of paranoid modes of expression by more or less normal people that makes the phenomenon significant.⁵

...the delusions of paranoiacs have an unpalatable external similarity and internal kinship to the systems of our philosophers.⁶

We all know that the brilliant and sensational progress of the individual sciences, the glory and honor of the “space” and the era we live in, involves, on the one hand, the crisis and the overwhelming disrepute of “logical intuition,” and on the other hand, the respect for irrational factors and hierarchies as new positive and specifically productive values. For, in point of fact, the contemporary hunger for the irrational is always keenest before a cultural dining table offering only the cold and unsubstantial leftovers of art and literature and the burning analytical preciseness of the particular sciences, momentarily incapable of any nutritive synthesis because of their disproportionate scope and specialization, and in all events totally unassimilable except by speculative cannibalism.⁷

If you have read any of my writing over the years, you probably have a sense of my devotion to this method; I’ve got plenty of “limp, unprovable conjectures” that have been stimulated by my “paranoiac thought processes,” though I may be a little weak on the “Cartesian rationality” aspect.⁸

Another way of describing that species of paranoia is that all human relations are instrumentalized, which is, of course, what “networking” is all about. The paranoia of social media, the paranoia of unchecked exposure, can be recast as a fantasy of becoming ubiquitously useful, the fulfillment of being ever ready-to-hand, like Heidegger’s hammer, and, in that way, paradoxically invisible, safe. You are never analyzed for how you are, but are always seen instead of how you might be deployed.⁹

In fact, paranoia is a delirium of interpretation. Each fact, event, force, observation is caught in one system of speculation and “understood” by the afflicted individual in such a way that it absolutely confirms and reinforces his thesis - that is, the initial delusion that is his point of departure. The paranoiac always hits the nail on the head, no matter where the hammer blows fall.¹⁰

The term originates with naval warfare. For centuries, ships have sailed under a flag identifying their nationality. During times of war, ships would sometimes change the national flag they flew in order to fool other vessels that they sought to attack or escape from. They would fly, in other words, a “false flag.” The term then expanded to
mean any scenario under which a military attack was undertaken by a person or organization pretending to be something else.\textsuperscript{11}

There are some key characteristics that can be indicative of a false flag event. The catalyst is typically an explosive, spectacular event, which is followed by immediate media saturation. Of course this is inevitable in any tragic scenario and simply the nature of news, but there are a few warning signs of a plotted false flag. If the major news outlets are all in sync, reporting on the event without thoroughly vetting the information available, then there is cause for concern. Within a relatively short period of time a scapegoat will be named, establishing an enemy with little to no trial or investigation into other possibilities. The case will be closed, government action will ensue, and, on a much more subversive level, someone will reap profit. And often those who profit are large corporations or military contractors that make exorbitant revenue through war and conflict.\textsuperscript{12}

Item. One of the most effective forms of industrial or military sabotage limits itself to damage that can never be thoroughly proven—or even proven at all—to be anything deliberate. It is like an invisible political movement; perhaps it isn’t there at all. If a bomb is wired to a car’s ignition, then obviously there is an enemy; if a public building or a political headquarters is blown up, then there is a political enemy. But if an accident, or a series of accidents, occurs, if equipment merely fails to function, if it appears faulty, especially in a slow fashion, over a period of natural time, with numerous small failures and misfires—then the victim, whether a person or a party of a country, can never marshal itself to defend itself.\textsuperscript{13}

Toyota Celica.

A long moment passed before I realized this was the name of an automobile. The truth only amazed me more. The utterance was beautiful and mysterious, gold-shot with looming wonder. It was like the name of an ancient power in the sky, tablet-carved in cuneiform. It made me feel that something hovered. But how could this be? A simple brand name, an ordinary car. How could these near-nonsense words, murmured in a child’s restless sleep, make me sense a meaning, a presence? She was only repeating some TV voice. Toyota Corolla, Toyota Celica, Toyota Cressida. Supranational names, computer-generated, more or less universally pronounceable. Part of every child’s brain noise, the substatic regions too deep to probe. Whatever its source, the utterance struck me with the impact of a moment of splendid transcendence.\textsuperscript{14}

After first thaw, dynamite blast began booming all over the hills. Occasionally audible at my cabin. Exxon conducting seismic exploration for oil. Couple of helicopters flying over the hills, lowering a thing with dynamite on cables, make blast on ground. Instruments measure vibrations. In late spring I went and camped out, hoping to shoot up a helicopter in the area east of Crater Mountain. This proved harder than I thought, because a helicopter is always in motion. Only once had half a chance. Two quick shots, as copter crossed a space between trees. Both missed. When I got back to camp, I cried, partly from frustration at failing. But mostly from grief about what is happening to this countryside. It is so beautiful. But if they find oil, disaster.\textsuperscript{15}

Paranoid-Critical activity is the fabrication of evidence for unprovable speculations and the subsequent grafting of this evidence on the world, so that a “false” fact takes its unlawful place among the “real” facts. These false facts relate to the real world as spies to a given society: the more conventional and unnoted their existence, the better they can devote themselves to that society’s destruction.\textsuperscript{16}

In a crisis the true facts are whatever other people say they are. No one’s knowledge is less secure than your own.\textsuperscript{17}

...paranoia has by now candidly become less a diagnosis than a prescription. In a world where no one need be delusional to find evidence of systemic oppression, to
theorize out of anything but a paranoid critical stance has come to seem naïve, pious, or complaisant.\textsuperscript{18}

On the one hand, absolute paranoia—as I wonder whether or not I exist, I can’t help wondering whether I might be the puppet of some all-powerful but invisible demon. On the other hand, absolutely bland extension, pure substance without end. A man without a head looking at himself looking at himself: mountains, Bruce, mountains.\textsuperscript{19}

No puppet. No puppet. You’re the puppet.\textsuperscript{20}

On his show last year, Mr. Jones called himself and his listeners “the operating system of Trump.”\textsuperscript{21}

But the modern right wing...feels dispossessed: America has been largely taken away from them and their kind, though they are determined to try to repossess it and to prevent the final destructive act of subversion. The old American virtues have already been eaten away by cosmopolitans and intellectuals; the old competitive capitalism has been gradually undermined by socialistic and communistic schemers; the old national security and independence have been destroyed by treasonous plots, having as their most powerful agents not merely outsiders and foreigners as of old but major statesmen who are at the very centers of American power. Their predecessors had discovered conspiracies; the modern radical right finds conspiracy to be betrayal from on high.\textsuperscript{22}

But the spectacular datedness of Hofstadter’s example isn’t only an index of how far the political center has shifted toward the right since 1963. It’s also a sign how normative such paranoid thinking has become at every point in the political spectrum.\textsuperscript{23}

I believe the moment is at hand when by a paranoid and active advance of the mind, it will be possible to systematize confusion and thus help to discredit completely the world of reality.\textsuperscript{24}

That is the cause of the Reality Shortage.

This process intensifies in the 20th century and is accompanied by a parallel malaise: the fact that all facts, ingredients, phenomena, etc., of the world have been categorized and catalogued, that the definitive stock of the world has been taken. Everything is known, including that which is still unknown. The PCM is both the product of and the remedy against that anxiety: it promises that, through conceptual recycling, the worn, consumed contents of the world can be recharged or enriched like uranium, and that ever-new generations of false facts and fabricated evidences can be generated simply through the act of Interpretation.\textsuperscript{25}

Sometimes paranoia’s just having all the facts.\textsuperscript{26}

I always enjoyed doing radio, but sometimes I dread it now. Oh, my God. Just piles of evil, piles of quotes and documents, all total proof of their corruption, and I don’t even have the will to look at it again...The worst of the worst, the most corrupt, the most sadistic, the most bloodthirsty, the biggest control-freak, obsessive-compulsive nutcases run things. And they want to run everything; they get off on it. And the problem is, good people don’t get off on that. So we’re at war against a guild of control freaks and perverts and sickos who relish conning people and relish lying and relish spreading misinformation and relish propaganda. They have openly written one-thousand-plus white papers and hundreds of books about their plan, and I’m over here going, ‘Look at this, ladies and gentlemen!’\textsuperscript{27}

It seems that danger assigns to public voices the responsibility of a rhythm, as if in metrical units there is a coherence we can use to balance whatever senseless and furious event is about to come rushing around our heads.\textsuperscript{28}

And he thought, Strange how paranoia can link up with reality now and then, briefly.\textsuperscript{29}
Uncanniness, paranoia and anxiety are indices of reality, not of unreality.30

The paranoid spokesman sees the fate of conspiracy in apocalyptic terms—he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values. He is always manning the barricades of civilization. He constantly lives at a turning point. Like religious millennialists he expresses the anxiety of those who are living through the last days and he is sometimes disposed to set a date for the apocalypse.31

The time of dangling insects arrived. White houses with caterpillars dangling from the eaves. White stones in driveways. You can walk at night down the middle of the street and hear women talking on the telephone. Warmer weather produces voices in the dark. They are talking about their adolescent sons. How big, how fast. The sons are almost frightening. The quantities they eat. The way they loom in doorways. These are the days that are full of wormy bugs. They are in the grass, stuck to the siding, hanging in the hair, hanging from the trees and eaves, stuck to the window screens. The women talk long-distance to grandparents of growing boys. They share the Trimline phone, beamish old folks in hand-knit sweaters on fixed incomes.

What happens to them when the commercial ends?32

The cabin was one room with a woodstove. It would be his Thoreau year, he wrote to his friend Alex, sending him the realty link.

Your Kaczynski year, Alex wrote back, after looking at the photos of the cabin.

True both lived in one-room huts, Gordon responded. But I don’t see much connection between them.

Reverence of nature, self reliance. K was even a reader of Walden, Alex wrote. It’s on the list of books from his cabin.

Also R.W.B. Lewis, your idol.

Aren’t you kind of oversimplifying?

Yes. But also: both died virgins.

Kaczynski’s not dead, Alex, Gordon wrote back.

You know what I mean.

But Thoreau was worried about trains, Gordon replied. Ted K lived in the time of the atomic bomb. He lived through the technological destruction of the world.

I confess that is of course a significant difference. Can’t remove either from historical context. Plus, Thoreau would have made a deeply inadequate mail bomb. His inflammatory act of resistance was not getting a welcome mat for the place.33

We are all sufferers from history, but the paranoid is a double sufferer, since he is afflicted not only by the real world, with the rest of us, but by his fantasies as well.34

[Philip K.] Dick is Thoreau plus the death of the American dream.35

Yeah, and here’s another piece of advice Stay away from kids, ‘cause their hair is filled with mad lice There’s no such thing as too much Purell This a cautionary tale, word to George Orwell So don’t 1980-force any plugs into sockets Always wear a chastity belt and triple lock it Then hire a taster, make him check your food for poison And if you think your mailman is a spy, then destroy him No blankets or pajamas, they can choke you in your sleep Two words about furniture: killing machines Now, board your windows up the sun is bad for your health And always wear a strait jacket so you’re safe from yourself YOLO, say no-no You Oughta Look Out also stands for YOLO You know that we are still young Burn the prints off your thumbs
Then pull out all your teeth
So you can’t bite your tongue

Paranoia proposes both Anything you can do (to me) I can do worse, and Anything you can do (to me) I can do first—to myself.

Just because you’re paranoid, don’t mean they’re not after you.

This glimpse across a long span of time emboldens me to make the conjecture—it is no more than that—that a mentality disposed to see the world in this way may be a persistent psychic phenomenon, more or less constantly affecting a modest minority of the population. But certain religious traditions, certain social structures and national inheritances, certain historical catastrophes or frustrations may be conducive to the release of such psychic energies, and to situations in which they can more readily be built into mass movements or political parties. In American experience ethnic and religious conflict have plainly been a major focus for militant and suspicious minds of this sort, but class conflicts also can mobilize such energies. Perhaps the central situation conducive to the diffusion of the paranoid tendency is a confrontation of opposed interests which are (or are felt to be) totally irreconcilable, and thus by nature not susceptible to the normal political processes of bargain and compromise. The situation becomes worse when the representatives of a particular social interest—perhaps because of the very unrealistic and unrealizable nature of its demands—are shut out of the political process. Having no access to political bargaining or the making of decisions, they find their original conception that the world of power is sinister and malicious fully confirmed. They see only the consequences of power—and this through distorting lenses—and have no chance to observe its actual machinery. A distinguished historian has said that one of the most valuable things about history is that it teaches us how things do not happen. It is precisely this kind of awareness that the paranoid fails to develop. He has a special resistance of his own, of course, to developing such awareness, but circumstances often deprive him of exposure to events that might enlighten him—and in any case he resists enlightenment.

It was Thoreau who’d said that first.

I never dreamed of any enormity greater than I have committed. I never knew, and never shall know, a worse man than myself.

Why was Thoreau Thoreau, while Ted Kaczynski was Ted? One stayed formal in Gordon’s mind, the other, strictly first-name basis. Ted.

It was more familiar to be angry and bad. Maybe that was why.

Simply put, paranoia tends to be contagious; more specifically, paranoia is drawn toward and tends to construct symmetrical relations, in particular, symmetrical epistemologies... It sets a thief (and, if necessary, becomes one) to catch a thief; it mobilizes guile against suspicion, suspicion against guile, “it takes one to know one.”

Former aides to the president, speaking privately because they did not want to embarrass him, said paranoia predisposed him to believe in nefarious, hidden forces driving events. But they also said political opportunism informed his promotion of conspiracy theories. For instance, two former aides said Mr. Trump had resisted using the term “deep state” for months, partly because he believed it made him look too much like a crank. But Mr. Trump saw that it played well in the conservative news media, and so in November, he began using it, the two aides said. The strategy appears to have yielded results. Several polls have shown a dip in public approval of the special counsel investigation over the past several months, as the president has repeatedly attacked it. And a Monmouth Poll released in March found that a bipartisan majority believes an unelected “deep state” is manipulating national policy.

The Left should take heed that the Far Right underpins...
speciesism with racism by fusing paranoia about biodiversity with anti-Semitism.43

Because we’re suffering from brain fade. We need an occasional catastrophe to break up the incessant bombardment of information.44

The following November I traveled from Montana back to the Chicago area, mainly for one reason: So that I could more safely attempt to murder a scientist, businessman, or the like. I would also like to kill a communist. I emphasize that my motivation is personal revenge on those who deprive or threaten to deprive my own autonomy. I don’t pretend to have any kind of philosophical or moralistic justification.45

I’m starting to think that social media comprise a paranoia machine by design, that users regard this as a feature and not a bug.46

What used to be paranoia—the idea, say, that your electronic appliances are spying on you—looks nowadays like blunt realism.47

This is the whole point of technology. It creates an appetite for immortality on the one hand. It threatens universal extinction on the other. Technology is lust removed from nature.48

The unidirectionally future-oriented vigilance of paranoia generates, paradoxically, a complex relation to temporality that burrows both backward and forward: because there must be no bad surprises, and because leaning of the possibility of a bad surprise would itself constitute a bad surprise, paranoia requires that bad news be always already known.49

It requires the greatest kind of wisdom, she thought, to know when to apply injustice. How can justice fall victim, ever, to what is right? How can this happen? She thought,

Because there is a curse on this world, and all this proves it; this is the proof right here. Somewhere, at the deepest level possible, the mechanism, the construction of things, fell apart, and up from what remained swam the need to do all the various sort of unclear wrongs the wisest choice has made us act out. It must have started thousands of years ago. By now it’s infiltrated into the nature of everything. And, she thought, into every one of us. We can’t turn around or open our mouth or speak, decide at all, without doing it. I don’t even care how it got started, when or why. She thought, I just hope it’ll end some time.50

...being paranoid that I might not be a person is in fact a default condition of being a person.51

I do not know how to distinguish between our waking life and a dream. Are we not always living the life that we imagine we are?52

Read that again: paranoia is a possibility condition for solidarity. Because I don’t know whether or not you or I am a person, I am paranoid, and as this ambiguity becomes ever more intense, I relate to you ever more intimately.53

An interrogation room. It’s freezing. There’s a ventilator in the ceiling and confetti’s everywhere, pasted onto the walls, the floor, the chairs we’re sitting on, scattered in piles across the table. Palakon and David Crater and Laurence Delta and Russell and the Japanese man from the apartment on Avenue Verdier are all sitting behind. There’s also an inspector lieutenant of the First Section of the Paris Prefecture of Police taking notes and someone who came in from Lyons for Interpol. This man is so familiar-looking it becomes distracting. Smoke has been produced for added atmosphere.54

I was into that trip as much as they were. We all got into it together that deep. He shook himself, shuddered, and blinked. Knowing what I know, I still stepped across into that freaked-out paranoid space with them, viewed it as
they viewed it—muddled, he thought. Murky again; the same murk that covers them covers me; the murk of this dreary dream world we float around in.15

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Darja Bajagić’s work evokes a darkness and violence whose bluntness is challenging for some. She utilizes images derived from real incidents of pornography, murder, and pedophilia, playing simultaneously with the formal language of subcultures such as Goth, Satanism, and heavy metal music. She has collaborated with imprisoned murderers and purchased objects and images on a website dedicated to serial killer memorabilia. These items sometimes make their way into her art. This has lent her work a shock value that is unusual (and in itself quite revealing) for the present day.

But her work also maintains a remarkable beauty, almost classical in its formal qualities, suggesting the ritualistic religious art that lines the halls of major encyclopedic museums. The way that Bajagić portrays female figures—sometimes attacker, sometimes victim—in her works updates the classic feminist tactic of flipping the gaze and aiming it at the viewer. Vixit ft. Black Widow Zarema Muzhikhoyeva and Karen Howell mashes up two powerful female figures, a suicide bomber and a murderer. Zarema Muzhikhoyeva is a Chechen suicide bomber (female suicide bombers are sometimes referred to as “black widows”) who ultimately changed her mind and turned herself into the police. Twenty years ago, when Karen Howell was 17, she and some friends brutally tortured and murdered a family in Tennessee, and she is now spending her life in prison. Both women, imprisoned for these differing offenses, have personal histories that point to the complexity of violence. Where did their urge to commit violence originate? Bajagić’s work powerfully questions what happens when there is extreme violence and then a cultural consumption or exploitation of that violence.

In a way, I see James Benning’s film installation Two Cabins as the linchpin for this exhibition. Benning built two small cabins on his property in the California mountains and has used them in an ongoing series of works. One is a replica of American writer Henry David Thoreau’s cabin at Walden Pond, so famously enshrined in American history and literature. Another is a replica of the cabin of Theodore Kaczynski, also known as the “Unabomber,” who was convicted of sending multiple mail bombs from the 1970s to the 1990s in an effort to destroy technology and promote environmentalism.

Two Cabins is a two-channel video installation, with each screen showing one of the cabins. Each channel portrays window views from Benning’s replica cabins which are synched with audio recordings from the original cabins’ sites in Lincoln, Montana, and at Walden Pond.

Initially the pairing of Thoreau and Kaczynski may seem oddly unconnected. As Benning explores the structure of the cabins themselves and the writings of the two figures, however, remarkable and startling overlaps emerge. Both individuals were highly invested in nature with a strain of environmentalism, had certain political viewpoints, explored a kind of isolated living, and were seen as eccentric personalities. Benning explores the complexities of Kaczynski in an interview, saying:

But as I did more research about Kaczynski I found him to be much more complicated...Kaczynski may have started his bombing campaign from pure anger, but from the very start he also had a goal, that is, to destroy the technological society before it destroys us.
And here he makes arguments we should pay attention to.¹

While Kaczynski’s violence has made it difficult for many to see his viewpoints as anything other than the ravings of a domestic terrorist, Thoreau has been enshrined in American literature. Yet the eerie connections between each of their lifestyles and philosophies speak to one of this exhibition’s key points—that ideas of paranoia, madness, and revolution can lead to very different actions and interpretations.

THEODORE DARST’S work, The Tourist: This Machine Makes Fascists, explores digital spaces as a breeding ground for paranoia and conspiracy. Its title twists the phrase so iconically painted on Woody Guthrie’s guitar: “This Machine Kills Fascists.” Inverting Guthrie’s utopian beliefs in the power of art and protest, Darst’s work deflates this vision into a darker contemporary reality in which people’s creativity is sublimated into digital worlds such as online forums, video games, and virtual worlds. Utilizing footage from video games and YouTube videos of survivalist “preppers” along with 3D animated avatars, Darst’s piece engages a hypnotic exploration of the often self-produced, digital world of paranoia and anxiety.

In the press release for the debut of this video in 2017, Olivia Smith writes:

Taking inspiration from conspiracy theory and the media aesthetics of online subcultures, Darst relishes in the ways that digital space and the architecture of post-disaster become a playground for extremism.... As conspiracy theories become increasingly mainstream, we are reminded that the signature aesthetic of contemporary propaganda can be traced back primarily to the invention of the thriller genre of filmmaking and its subsequent manipulation to various ideological ends. Darst’s work exposes the circular relationship between visual culture and our understanding of reality.²

The work’s mid-air suspension with tension straps allows us to see not only the moving images of the video but the space behind it: it floats as does the text on the screen. The rough, practical straps also conjure some of the visuals around survivalism.

VIOLET DENNISON’s installations often make invisible underpinnings of physical spaces visible through singular actions that produce a network of possible meanings. In past works, she has: rerouted plumbing pipes in a gallery to spill water from a sink into the main exhibition space; utilized water from the Gowanus canal mixed with glitter; and collected pollution-killed seagrass from Florida.

With this installation, Dennison used a radio-wave detector to map out radiation in the upstairs gallery. Dennison talks about this mapping as a way of exploring an invisible history of a space, sometimes revealing hidden infrastructures or mysterious pockets of high activity. In addition, radio waves are frequently of concern to highly paranoid individuals, giving rise to the use of the “tin-foil hat,” in which users wrap their heads in aluminum foil to keep radio frequencies from affecting or reading their brainwaves.

Dennison maps out the strength of these signals through copper casts of genetically modified corn with RFID chips embedded in them. These RFID chips are ubiquitous in the world, used to track goods, vehicles, animals, and even humans. The significance of the corn kernels being genetically modified links to the controversy of GMOs and the ways in which this fundamental alteration of DNA can itself become a kind of tracking mechanism. The intimate nature of these tiny works, multiplied in the space, creates a powerful metaphor for surveillance and the position of the individual in today’s world.

In HARRY DODGE AND STANYA KAHN’S eerie video All Together Now, there is no explicit mention of paranoia. The only spoken language in the video arrives as pop song snippets. The majority of the footage is a series of intertwined scenes, cutting between a lonely, bruised figure wandering seemingly abandoned landscapes, a group of individuals (a family? a tribe?) in a blown-out, bright hotel, and uncanny hooded figures working, playing, and fighting in a basement.
Titled after a song on the Beatles film and album *Yellow Submarine*, *All Together Now* echoes that film’s playfulness, but also the failure of the utopianism of the 1960s, taking the viewer to a post-apocalyptic future that feels very close and recognizable.

But this isn’t a dreary piece of near-future downer-porn. Post-apocalyptia is humanized and humorized. The family-like group in the hotel is the most obvious example as they listen to music, watch television, and relax as if on holiday. Filmed a few years after Abu Ghraib torture by the U.S. military was exposed, the anonymous, hooded figures have a dark, prisoner quality to them. Alternately, their drawn-on smiley faces, playful activities, and sexual frottage (sometimes viewed via surveillance camera by other hooded figures) causes the context to flip-flop. There are jump cuts between moments of beauty and hope and moments of violence and doubt.

**Mark Flood** has long mined popular culture and media forms to reveal the violent and absurd under-currents running throughout. Like ruins in a future museum, his collages and paintings of distorted, obliterated, or degraded logos, celebrities, and screen captures suggest a love/hate relationship with omnipresent corporate culture.

Some recent works, like those in this exhibition, explore digital sources and printing techniques, yet are remarkably unique. Flood talks about his process as very challenging to duplicate because it contains glitches or stops that make producing them a challenge. They also point to insidious corporate and technological mechanisms such as Google, Facebook, and Instagram. As these companies mine our data to produce image banks and information sets, we in turn take the content they give us to produce our own worldview.

For instance, *Users Are Talking* depicts a computer window with redacted information. It is a screen capture of a quarterly report from ArtRank, an online service that tells collectors whether to buy or liquidate certain hot artists, treating art as pure investment commodity without regard to appearance or content. Flood himself appears in the “Liquidate” section, as one component in layers of economic symbols and Internet lingo (5 star reviews and comments).

Another remarkable example of the insidious effects of the Internet is the so-called “Pizzagate” incident. During the U.S. presidential election of 2016, the email account of John Podesta, Hillary Clinton's campaign manager, was hacked, and his emails distributed to the public via WikiLeaks. The Pizzagate conspiracy theory was later propagated in online forums and chatrooms, where members falsely claimed that the emails contained coded messages linking child sex trafficking and high-ranking members of the Democratic National Committee. According to these messages, a Washington, D.C. pizza restaurant, Comet Ping Pong, was the site where children were kept in a dungeon and violated. What began as a dark joke on forum sites like 4chan and Reddit resulted in an actual gunman named Edgar Welch driving to the nation’s capital from North Carolina, storming the restaurant, and firing his rifle, set on freeing the non-existent child captives.

In his work /r/Pizzagate I-V, Internet artist Michael Green recognizes this tale for what it is, a remarkable mapping of paranoia, social media, and violence. His five images, carefully constructed using Maya animation software, incorporate descriptions of the scene in coded details, taking care to responsibly deal with this difficult subject matter. Green created the images under the influence of Brainforce, “advanced neural activation and nootropics,” sold on Alex Jones’ Infowars website. Green noted of the process:

> Overall, [I had] increased zeal, focus and determination. You actually become Alex Jones! Increased ranting & paranoia. I regularly take the pills when I know I am going to work on art, so I can work long hours with the euphoric energy it takes to make a work of art mystical. I did the research on BrainForce and it is a bit overpriced, and they shorten you with ingredients, but I figured it was worth the price of admission for the bottle itself, the foremost readymade art object of the 21st Century.

In Julian Huxtable’s works, the antagonistic nature of paranoia becomes visualized through her imagery, text, and materials. Huxtable explained *War on Proof* at a walkthrough, discussing how the work explores the following aspects:
The general crisis of epistemology or of knowledge production, and the separation of the idea of an overall, the truth of a political narrative or the truth of a political struggle being separated from the presentation of facts, and so facts taking primacy over the idea of an overarching notion of truth, and thinking of the ways in which this forms really bizarre alliances. I was thinking of this really fringe, maybe Alex Jones–Infowars sort of like right-wing pundit who’s obsessed with the idea of war and also loves to read Tacitus and Classics books on warfare, and is obsessed with the presence of the Greco-Roman Empire, and even a homosocial environment as this ideal on which Western Society is built, and the paranoia over the lack of greatness that that might read in a contemporary context, the crisis of masculinity, etc. But how that person, can find themselves at the same, and drawing on the same facts as someone who is coming from a kind of a Hotep perspective, of wanting to reclaim an idea of a pre-colonial African history, but also kind of a re-reading of European history, where the presence of the Greco-Roman Empire is actually just the first instance of the Illuminati, and man-on-boy pederastic culture and homosocial culture between men become the foundations for the gayness or homosexuality or queerness as inherently white. And how both of these situations sort of abstract these moments of historical truth or fact-ness and use them to spin these sort of narratives that I think are both coming from a place of disenfranchisement, political/economic disenfranchisement, and so share similar aspirations in certain ways but are obviously fundamentally at odds in other ways.¹


Huxtable is interested in the way that the left and the right are mobilizing the same facts for their own purposes and with varying degrees of success. The very mutability of information becomes a liability: if anything can be repurposed to the means of the message, then it becomes very difficult to know where one stands.

Daniel Keller’s work Basilisk opens with seemingly arbitrary high-definition drone footage of Barbra Streisand’s Malibu, cliffside mansion. Soon, a smaller inset image appears, accompanied by a separate video essay. We eventually learn about the “Streisand Effect,” where the celebrity’s litigious attempts to have the public image of her estate removed from the Internet had the opposite effect, resulting in a huge amount of public interest. The Streisand Effect is now an iconic example of how repression can often increase distribution of a censored object or image.

Keller explains in his essay that the basilisk is a chimeric, mythical reptile, who can kill with a single glance (it’s also a real lizard known colloquially as “The Jesus Lizard” because it can run on the surface of water). He moves on to discuss “Roko’s basilisk,” an Internet thought experiment that suggests a future global takeover by Artificial Intelligence systems that retroactively punish those who did not passionately support their creation and existence.

The hypnotic drone footage, with its gentle pans and sudden shifts, sets a background to the case Keller is building. He wanders with bemusement and quiet horror through a lexicon of words that would have been virtually meaningless a decade ago: 4chan, kek, Pepe the Frog, Incels, /pol/, Betamasles, and the “alt-woke.” The work points to the Internet and its communities as well as to the unsettling new forms of philosophical thought occurring there. Keller’s lecture ends with a hopeful but cautious plan of turning the mirror on the evil of these communities in the hope that they may change. This mimics the demise of the mythical basilisk, which could only be destroyed by seeing its own lethal glance in a mirror.

In Son Kit’s Anthropiscine War Machine 2: North American Front, there is an eerie post-apocalyptic feel, as if environmental catastrophe survivors have scavenged materials to create a means of sustenance. The sculpture hangs at table height from the ceiling, and contains a system that makes kimchi by dripping water into a bottle of pepper flakes and salt. Because of its richness in probiotics and lengthy shelf-life, kimchi is very popular in “prepper” culture, which cultivates anxiety about doomsday and encourages the stockpiling of food and weapons.

The acrylic decals in the work are ingredients found in “buddaejjigae,” which translates to “army stew,” a Korean...
dish originally devised using canned foods such as Spam, ham, pork & beans, and Vienna Sausage obtained from U.S. Army bases and mixed with traditional Korean ingredients such as kimchi and gochujang. It is a dish still enjoyed today—a fascinating example of cultural imperialism and violence adapted and absorbed into a culture. It also works as a physical manifestation of the mutability of knowledge and cultural tradition.

The body of work of painter **Tim Trantenroth** is vast, often focusing on urban environments, including everything from architecture to pigeons to images of terrorism. His paintings of surveillance devices, including security cameras and drones, a few of which are in this exhibition, are austere and beautiful, cool but immediately recognizable. They are also very specific, tied to actual geographical locations, eras, and political situations.

Cameras and surveillance devices can be key elements of the paranoiac’s fear and yet they exist in reality, watching us, constantly, from multiple angles, and even from the sky. Trantenroth isolates these devices from their original architectural condition, often cropping and reframing them, which in turn highlights their site-specificity.

The paintings’ formal elegance and coolness also hide the humanness of these objects: they are designed by humans, programmed by humans, and meant to track humans. The inclusion of drone technology adds another element of cameras in motion including their potential for violence. Three of Trantenroth’s works have been installed in the gallery in unconventional hangings to highlight their architectural origins and original function.

**Melvin Way** has until recently been referred to as an “outsider artist” because he is self-taught and his process is untraditional. His works are stunning in their intensity despite, or perhaps due to, their small scale. All of his works seem to contain hidden mysteries of language, science, and philosophy, suggesting an alternative worldview. Way employs chemical formulas, mathematical equations, and mechanical diagrams as a kind of formal language. Artist Andrew Castrucci noted the following about Way:

> It pays to be cautious of the romanticism of the self-taught artist. These are magical works despite, not because of, Way’s battles with mental illness—a struggle that has caused him to be homeless or institutionalized over the years. While his works leap between the scientific and alchemical (best exemplified by his development of his own unique chemical formula for cocaine), they are grounded in his own rigorous way of seeing the world. Critic Jerry Saltz wrote of seeing Way’s work:

> I will never understand what he’s saying any better than I understand what all the tens of thousands of unknown microbes on the edge of my cup are in relation to me, or what their life form might be. I take them and Way’s work as an indication that the vast part of knowledge, and even the knowable, is some sort of cosmic-psycho-molecular dark matter. It is there even if we can’t know it. The way knowing Vermeer is better than Norman Rockwell but never being able to prove it.\(^6\)
As I write this in the summer of 2018, things are only worse. Trump and his goons run the country as if hosting a twisted, low-budget reality show. Twitter offers daily rants from a figure who acts like an Alzheimer-ridden paranoiac and yet is enthusiastically supported by millions in this country. There is hope in the activism and energy of the left, but also a lot of ambivalence and fear.

In my research about paranoia, I was struck immediately about one of the examples par excellence of the idea of the false flag. In February of 1933, one month after Adolf Hitler had been sworn in as Chancellor of Germany, the Reichstag, the Parliament building of Germany, was set on fire. A Dutch Communist was found near the fire and accused of being the arsonist. The fire was used as evidence by the Nazi Party that communists were plotting against the German government, and Adolf Hitler was able to encourage the President of Germany to place Germany into the equivalent of a state of emergency. The mass arrest of Communists that followed is considered pivotal in the establishment of Nazi Germany. Some historians suggest that the Nazis orchestrated the entire event, and the Reichstag Fire is now known as a classic example of a false flag situation.

And then I’m also taken by a very current example, which may or may not have progressed or been dismissed by the time this essay is published and the exhibition opens. In the past year, an Internet conspiracy community known as “QAnon” has emerged. Bubbling up on the same online forums that many of the artists in this exhibition touch on, “Q” is a heroic government insider who is dispersing information about the “Deep State,” which is seeking to create fake news, distractions, and accusations in an attempt to bring down Donald Trump and the current administration. Trump is a hero in this scenario, fighting a huge government and corporate cabal engaged in wicked activities such as pedophilia and devil worship. QAnon followers dissect social media and television for secret clues: typos in Trump’s tweets, phrases in his speeches, and stock market numbers running on the screen are all coded messages.

Some have theorized that Q isn’t a right-winger at all, but in fact a liberal who is trolling the right, goading them into increasingly odd and irrational behavior to culminate in some sort of self-destructive act.

QAnon followers’ main outlet is a board on Reddit called “Great Awakening,” echoing the many religious movements that have adopted that name throughout American history. It continues to lead us to the uneasy realization that much of the history of the United States has roots in paranoia, conspiracy, and fringe groups that on occasion shift into the mainstream.

It’s my intent that there isn’t a crisp, clear message in this exhibition. It’s murky in that way where one can’t tell whether it’s dusk or dawn. If there is one thing that is hopefully apparent from assembling these works together, it’s that the gap between paranoia and reason is both smaller and more ambiguous than one might imagine. And in some cases, it doesn’t exist at all.
Darja Bajagić
*Vixit ft. Black Widow Zarema Muzhikhoyeva and Karen Howell*, 2018
Acrylic and UV print on canvas
*Courtesy of the artist and New Galerie, Paris*

James Benning
*Two Cabins*, 2011
Two-channel HD video installation (color/sound)
Running time: 00:15:20 per channel
*Courtesy of the artist and neugerriemschneider, Berlin*
Theodore Darst  
*The Tourist: This Machine Makes Fascists*, 2017  
HD video loop, HD monitor, cargo straps  
Courtesy of the artist

Violet Dennison  
0013283055 0013283004 0005334936 0000835427 0013283057 0013283054 0201608618 0013283011..., 2018  
Copper casts of genetically modified corn seeds with Radio Frequency Transponders arranged in response to the electromagnetic fields in the gallery  
Courtesy of the artist
Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn
All Together Now, 2008
Color video with sound
Running time: 00:26:52
Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix

Mark Flood
Users Are Talking..., 2017
Acrylic on canvas printed with archival UV ink
Courtesy of the artist

Mark Flood
Attention: You Time Runs Out, 2017
Acrylic on canvas printed with archival UV ink
Courtesy of the artist
Michael Green
r/Pizzagate I-V, 2016
Series of 5 digital images
Courtesy of the artist

Juliana Huxtable
Untitled, 2017
Magnets and artist’s hair on metal sheet
Courtesy of Reena Spaulings Fine Art

Juliana Huxtable
The War on Proof, 2017
Inkjet print
Courtesy of Reena Spaulings Fine Art
Daniel Keller
_Basilisk, 2017_
Digital video
Running Time: 00:30:59
Courtesy of the artist and Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler Gallery, Berlin

Son Kit
_Anthropiscine War Machine 2: North American Front, 2018_
Galvanized steel, vinyl, acrylic transfer, PU fish, RX-78-01(N) Gundam Local Type (North American Type), glass, plastic, air locks, fish hooks, coarse salt, gochugaru (Korean pepper flakes), water.
Courtesy of the artist
CHECKLIST

Tim Trantenroth
S-Camera, 2006
Oil on paper
Courtesy of the artist

Tim Trantenroth
Predator, 2013
Oil on nettle
Courtesy of the artist

Tim Trantenroth
Camera Remake 2, 2018
Oil on paper
Courtesy of the artist

Melvin Way
CHC00CH2, 2016
Ballpoint pen, marker on paper, Scotch tape
Courtesy of the Andrew Edlin Gallery

Melvin Way
AgNO3, 2015
Ballpoint pen on paper, Scotch tape
Courtesy of the Andrew Edlin Gallery

Melvin Way
Physiologics Histology (Respi rate Hydra’s Histology Resu sitations), 2010
Ballpoint pen, marker on paper, Scotch tape
Courtesy of the Andrew Edlin Gallery

Melvin Way
AgNO3, 2015
Ballpoint pen on paper, Scotch tape
Courtesy of the Andrew Edlin Gallery
Darja Bajagić (b. 1990, Podgorica, Montenegro), a Master of Fine Arts graduate from Yale University, utilizes strategies for shifting contexts in order to complicate the consumption of images in her artworks—momentarily deactivating fixed judgements and leaving images open to ulterior connections. Bajagić’s artworks concede to the tensions between fascination and revulsion, pleasure and disgust, and to the redemptive quality of humour in light of the heinous. Bajagić’s works have been exhibited at the Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-On-Hudson; Musée d’Art moderne de la Ville de Paris; Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien (KM–), Graz; LUMA Westbau, Zürich; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Museum of Contemporary Art, Oaxaca. She is represented by New Galerie, Paris.


Theodore Darst (b. 1986) is an artist living and working in Manhattan. He recently staged solo exhibitions at Lubov and Magenta Plains in NYC and a collaborative show with Collin Leitch at Kings Leap, Brooklyn. Upcoming exhibitions include a project with the poet Rob Fitterman at Broken Dimanche Press in Berlin and group exhibitions at Franklin Street Works in Stamford, CT and Pilot Projects in Philadelphia. Darst’s work has been included in The 2016 Artists’ Film Biennial at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, and group exhibitions at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, The Museum of the Moving Image, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. His second book will be published by Soft City Press on the occasion of his show with Lubov.

Violet Dennison (b. 1989, Bridgeport, Connecticut) received her BFA from New York University and her MFA from the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College. Her most recent exhibitions include Triennial: Songs for Sabotage, New Museum, New York; Abracadabra, Main Project of the 6th Moscow International Biennale for Young Art, Moscow; and Schau 5, Kunsthaus Villacoublay, France. She has shown at Jan Kaps, Cologne; Bureau, New York; Chert Luedde, Berlin; Union Pacific, London; and David Zwirner, New York. Her work has appeared in Artrium, Mousse, and the New York Times. Dennison will have an exhibition at Kunsthall Stavanger, Norway in November 2018. She currently lives and works in New York, NY.

The video works of Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn (b. 1966, San Francisco, California and 1968, San Francisco, California) approach the alienation and violence of contemporary American life with absurdist humor. Dodge and Kahn’s collaborative, performance-based videos inhabit an urban L.A. landscape that evokes both the everyday and the post-apocalyptic. In 2003 Dodge and Kahn each received an MFA from Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts, Bard College, New York. Their work has been exhibited in solo shows at Elizabeth Dee Gallery, New York, and in numerous group exhibitions, including the 2008 Whitney Biennial Exhibition, The Getty Center and P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center. They now work separately and Dodge has recently shown at Grand Army Collective, Brooklyn and JOAN, Los Angeles, and has an upcoming solo exhibition at the Tufts University Art Galleries. Kahn has recently had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, and The Pit. Dodge and Kahn both live and work in Los Angeles.

Mark Flood (b. 1957, Houston, Texas) graduated from Rice University, Houston, Texas in 1981, and his early work included...
concert posters within the punk music scene around Houston. Flood has exhibited in dozens of group shows internationally and has been featured in numerous solo exhibitions, including shows at Maccarone, New York, NY; Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX; Zach Feuer Gallery, New York, NY; Peres Projects, Berlin, Germany; and more. His work can be found in major collections such as the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, the Dallas Museum of Art, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. In his paintings, sculptures, and collage work Flood comments on, among other things, the bureaucracy of the art industry and the roles government plays in daily life.

Michael Green (b.1980) is an internet artist who uses the computer as a tool to voice his inner-aesthetics through various mediums (3D animation, video, GIF's, 360 video, etc.) often working outside any classification of “genre” (“New Media”, “Conceptual”, “Post-Internet”, etc.). Intuitional thematic shapeshifting is central towards the dictates of the comprehensive range of Michael Green’s work (American Culture, Modern Life, Capitalism, A.I., Online Persons, Hyperreality, eBay, Nihilism, Cyber/ Human Body Modelling, Post–Humanism, PIXAR, Vlog, Futurism, Second Life, Internet, Social Engineering, Perils Of Technology, Karaoke, Dystopia, Political Science, Conspiracy Theories, Esoteric, Faceswaps, etc.).

Juliana Huxtable
New York City-based artist, poet, performer, and DJ Juliana Huxtable (b. 1987, Bryan-College Station, Texas) exhibits and performs internationally. She has shown recently at Reena Spaulings Fine Art, Project Native Informant, Artists Space, the New Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, Portland Institute of Contemporary Arts, Franklin Street Works, and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Huxtable is a member of House of Ladosha, a queer artist collective based in Brooklyn, and creator and resident DJ of #SHOCKVALUENYC. Her writing has appeared and has been referenced in Artforum, Mousse, Maker Magazine and Garmento.

Daniel Keller
Daniel Keller’s (b. 1986, Detroit, Michigan) wide-ranging artistic output engages with issues at the intersection of economics, technology, culture and collaboration. His current focus is on notions of progress, technological disruption, and exit—“all viewed from the perspective of the ‘prosumer imagineer’ artist operating within the global networked economy. He has exhibited and given talks internationally since 2007, including shows at Polit-Forum, Bern (2018); La Casa Encendida, Madrid (2018); de Young Museum, San Francisco (2017); ZKM, Karlsruhe (2017); Chawleys, London (2016); and Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin (2015), among others. He has recently participated in talks and discussions at Alt Age-Designing Belief at The Design Museum, London (2018), CPH: DOX, Copenhagen (2018), Influencers Festival, Barcelona (2017), and the Museum, Amsterdam (2018), Swiss Institute, New York (2016). Daniel Keller contributes to New Models, Dis Magazine, Texte Zur Kunst, Living in The Future, Ways of Being Entirely By Them. Utilizing video, illustration, installation, and text, Kit leverages climate change fantasy to explore non-binary second-gen yellow narratives around displacement and belonging. Common themes include evolution, anthropomorphization, war/ machines, chimaeras, geology/geography, and translation. Recent exhibitions include Anthropocene War Machine at SOHO20, OUR GREAT LEADER WILL NUKE YOU at SPRING/BREAK Art Show 2018, and Speculative Skins at the Naughton Gallery in Belfast. Kit has curated at bitforms and Underdonk and spoken at the Brooklyn Museum and the Whitney Museum. They are a co-founder of Codify Art, a multidisciplinary collective of, and platform for, GTPOC artists; and of EST, a research collective investigating the intersection of Asia, technology, and racialized futurisms. Kit is currently pursuing their MFA at RISD.

Tim Trantenroth
Tim Trantenroth (b. 1969, Waldsassen, Germany) is a painter now based in Berlin. Throughout his career he has had 18 group shows and 36 solo shows in major cities, such as Berlin, London, and Munich. Trantenroth finds themes for his paintings and installations in urban spaces. Architectural details, city dynamics, the clear structures of building facades, ubiquitous barriers, and technical monitoring devices are foregrounded. Trantenroth translates urban space—historical and contemporary—into a visual language that marks the boundary between figurativeness and non-objectivity. Painting is his way of exploring these urban elements, including what the artist describes as “their connotations in the context of time politics.” Trantenroth currently lives and works in Berlin.

Melvin Way
Melvin Way (b. 1954, New York, New York) is a self-taught artist that has been featured in numerous exhibitions, including shows at the Andrew Edlin Gallery, The American Folk Art Museum, and Bullet Space. He often uses mathematical equations, chemical formulas and mechanical diagrams as the building block for his compositions. Way has also developed his own formula for cocaine that appears throughout his drawings. In the works, elements are combined in ways that seem to push science into a metaphysical or alchemical realm that borders on transcendence. Way’s process is private and portable. He carries a small sketchbook with him for days, weeks, or years, working on them when time or inspiration allows. He draws on found pieces of paper with ballpoint pen, often wrapping his work in Scotch tape—probably to preserve them as they are transferred among books, magazines, pockets, bags, and drawers. He keeps many of them in the pocket over his heart, talismanic renderings that offer a comforting and protective element.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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A special thanks go to all the artists in the exhibition for their enthusiasm and the various great conversations that ensued. And a huge thank you as well to the gallerists and gallery staff that helped facilitate so many of the logistics of borrowing works.

Jeff Ostergren
Guest Curator

I would like to thank guest curator Jeff Ostergren for his intelligent approach to this exhibition and his diligent work on so many aspects of its completion. Thank you to Emily Saltman for her indispensable administrative and installation work! Thank you also to Maura Frana for her design work and Christopher Hartley for his magical editing skills.

Terri C Smith
Creative Director,
Franklin Street Works