

**A WILD ASS BEYOND**

**APOCALYPSE RN**

**"EVERYONE CARRIES A HISTORY OF  
CONTAMINATION; PURITY IS NOT AN OPTION."**

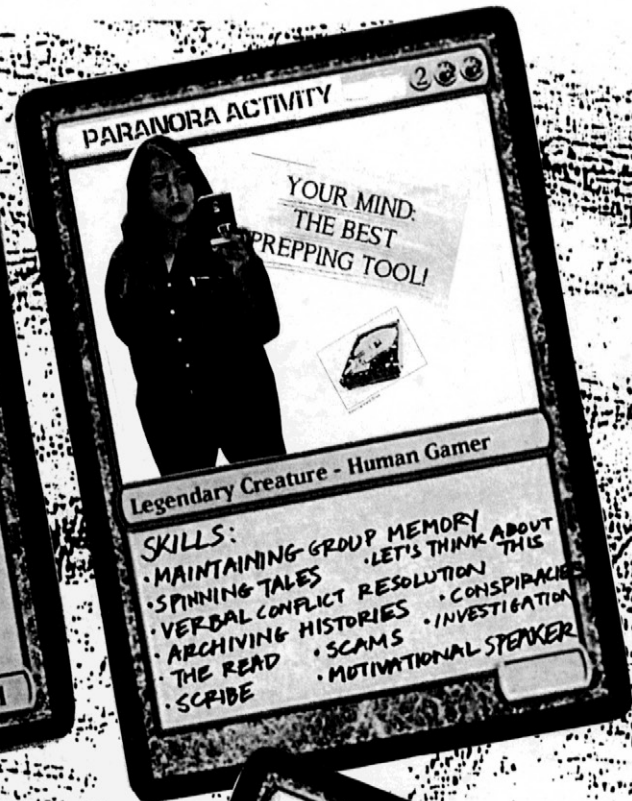
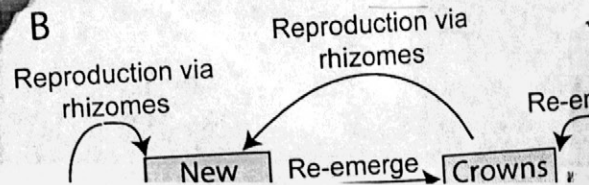
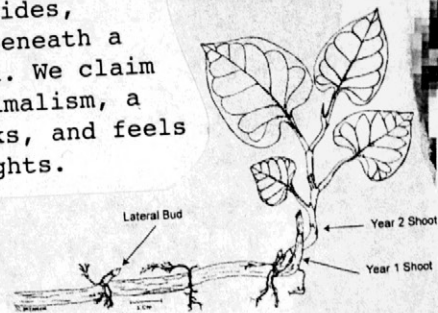
**- ANNA TSING**

In the event of disaster, we, the people who have always been surviving, will simply continue to survive. We have learned skills you wouldn't believe, enduring under police states. We refine trauma into gold and use exile as jet propellant.

Yet we lack a vision of our lives past survival. What will we do when we head "back to the land" that was never ours? We do not see ourselves in the paranoid manuals of preppers, in minimalist lifestyle retreats, in the nativist isolationism of militiamen.

We do not want to repeat these dreams of being the center, forever tyrants over little kingdoms. In this beyond, we will contaminate one another. We first learn from the past, building lookouts to keep our homes from burning.

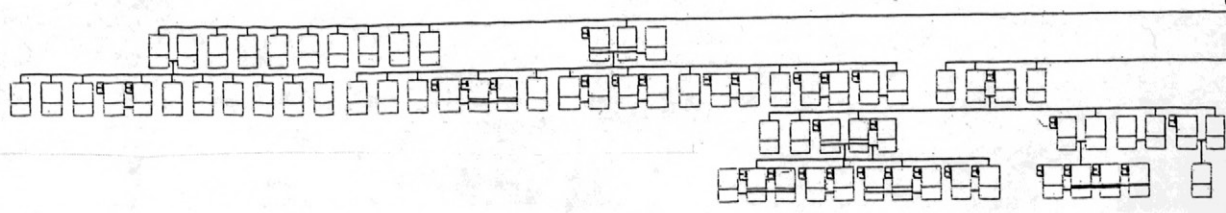
We then seek an unruly communion. New languages, icons, guides, rituals, spun and fired beneath a twilight canopy of fungi. We claim a gorgeous, baroque maximalism, a future that sounds, looks, and feels like our innermost thoughts.



IMG\_2861.JI

# A NETWORK OF SLAVES

by American Artist for Printed Web #6 aka QUEER.ARCHIVE.WORK



years. One of the men pictured had a last name similar to my old one, just one letter different, so I figured we're related. There were hand-lettered descriptions across every wall leading down to the station.

"—A Network of Slaves Escaping from the South to the North,"

read the stairwell. A Network? I got into the station and there were paintings there too—a map and a list of stations from Michigan City to Detroit. My cousin Charanne meticulously documented the presence of my family which filled half of the small room. The way she photographed us like sections of a panorama felt autonomous to me. The photos she took were instantly online.

That night we had dinner at the hotel. It was the culmination of the weekend so some of my family dressed up a little bit. Some still wore the bright red tees of the reunion. I wore the same black hoodie from the morning because I wasn't staying at the hotel and the red shirt I got was far too small. As I pulled apart some bread to butter it, I heard Andromedia at the other end of the table, describing how I got my family name. In 1843 a man gave my great-great-grandmother Elson-Johnston? she said, "he gave her to his daughter and when his daughter got married, that's how she got the name." It was all very casual. Andromedia said she had the deed to prove it.

I came back to Ancestry in my mind. I struggled with my family's commitment to it yet I was eager to submit myself: to a grand narrative, to the artificial restoration of Black genealogy, to the analog labor of my aunts. I gave over my DNA a couple years before my dad died. I wanted to join the mesh. Now I'm really in it. The way ancestry works you're in it long before that. But if you want to see how this will be abused. There is no separation between private business and the state, the knowledge of one is of the other. We give ourselves over for benign reasons, like familial restoration, or an online discount. I'm reminded of the time I gave fake websites my Facebook data to tell me a fun fact about my personality. Now that they know exactly who you are they can

target your ads better, they can turn you away at the border for where you're really from without having to rely on your appearance. It already happened to one guy. Information is the easiest resource to lose. I'm reminded of primitive accumulation and housing laws post-emancipation. Imagine the same thing but with data.

When I returned home to New York I was greeted by my inbox, "Dear aa, here's an invite to my tree." The family tree Andromedia built on Ancestry is wide and sprawling because the earliest people on it had ten kids at a time. The spread of the silhouette reminded me of diagrams I've seen of the hold. Frank Wilderson said one condition of social death (Blackness) is natal alienation. It's impossible to know exactly where I came from, until now. We gave ourselves over to an equation to piece us back together. As if we have anything to give it that it doesn't already own. A Network of Slaves Escaping, compulsory unknowing. I feel that I'm less critical than I should be because I want to know where I came from, and I want other people to know too. What is their business putting us back together like that? A Network? I can't help but see the link between the app economy and settler colonialism. As I scrolled across the hold I saw thumbnails of my ancestors. I clicked my great-great-grandfather Henry's portrait and it expanded, he would have never thought this possible. That's the first time I ever saw him.

I got to Nora's in the late afternoon. She was staying in an old house, the owner is deceased. He was a sculptor, with a kiln in the backyard and a large ceramic deity in the basement. Nora and her partner Joel were doing groundwork to begin an artist residency and I was crashing. It's serendipitous that they were going to be in town at the same time I was. I learned this a few weeks before as they were leaving New York. I had told everyone I knew why I was going cos they found it refreshing to hear I was doing something wholesome in days like these. Nora and I got dinner that night and I took a photo of the blackletter D on the machinic door of the restaurant. I liked Detroit. The sprawl of it was like LA, where I'm from, but we never had industry like that out there. The industrial relics in Detroit could be traded for people in LA. While I was there Nora and I each got an email from Paul saying that this would be the final Printed Web, and asking if we'd like to participate.

On the second night I drove to Troy, to a hotel where my family was staying. I met them at the hotel restaurant which was reserved, or just empty, and they greeted me. My cousin Andromedia was hosting the 10th Annual Coleman Family Reunion. Coleman was never my name, or the name of anyone else at the reunion, in case you're wondering. Most of my family members that were present were women, which made me feel comfortable. David and Donna were there from California, and their grandkids-Kashheada's kids—were there too. Mimi and her son Blade came from Indiana. I met Andromedia's daughter Charanne and her kids for the first time, and Everil for the first time too. My aunts Herminia and Gail came in a pair, they're real sweet. Herminia is the blonde one—not naturally. She knows how to text, and will ask for a verbal "read" receipt. Gail uses a walker now. She was a teacher for a long time, I'm reminded by the patience she has when she talks to me. I should ask them about their experience migrating from Tennessee to California and what my dad was like before I was around, but I never do. Andromedia is calm and collected, she can tell me any part of our story that I want to know and is pretty good with email. These three are the recordkeepers.

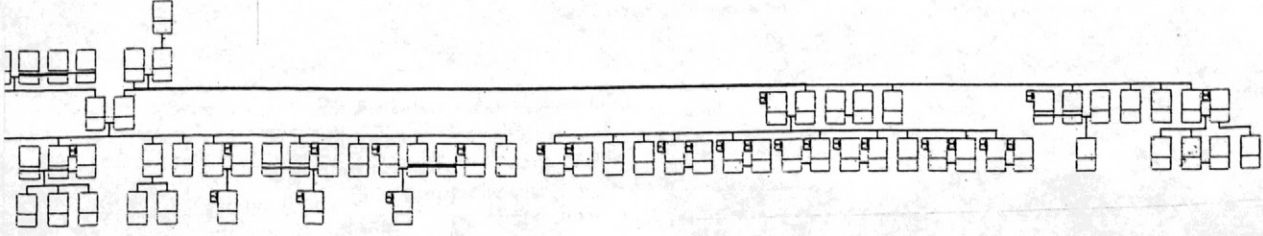
Andromedia and my aunts are real big into the online heritage thing and they've been building our family tree for a while. It's wild cos half of the people in that room were unknown to the rest of my family a few years back. About four years ago there was a close match to my dad in the Ancestry family tree that his sisters suspected was accurate, so they made him send in his DNA. Before he got the results back he saw a picture of David's

face and knew it was his brother. Donna had also been in touch with my aunts cos David, her husband, never knew who his father was and now he could know. It's funny cos when I was a kid my dad said I probably have cousins in the Philippines cos my grandpa was in the army there and he was a dog. But my dad never knew he had a brother just across town in Altadena. My dad passed away last year and it was my first time at a family reunion in six years so my family thought of me as him. My uncle David looked just like him though which is wild. His short gray beard and low voice made it uncanny. Everil's great grandmother was married to a Coleman and my aunts found her through Ancestry too.

We went to the Motown Museum the next day but we couldn't get tickets—there were so many Black families there besides us. I overheard someone say that it's "family reunion season" in Detroit which I didn't realize was a thing. I got a pic of myself in front of the historical site marker and figured then that family reunions are an industry just like everything else. Other people have them but Black people own family reunions. Can you own restoration? After emancipation many Black people went North, some never to be heard from again. Donna said for a second time that someone in her family came up to Detroit a century ago but her family never heard back. It sounded normal so I didn't hear it the first time she said it. I caught a glimpse of the larger project against us. "Maybe I can find a record of project while I'm up here," she said.

We went to Second Baptist Church, the oldest Black church in the Midwest. It's a historical site but Andromedia attends service there. We met a Black woman with silver hair and a blue tour outfit who told us about the Underground Railroad. The history was elaborate and she explained it in detail. She told us how the first church got burned to the ground. She told us how the street got its name, and how the capital of Liberia was named after pastor Monroe. The Underground Railroad was neither underground nor a railroad. It was an operation to undermine the state. The boldness of white abolitionists makes me wonder what happened to the integrity of white people in days like these.

In the basement of the church is Croghan station. We could only go in a few people at a time so we walked through a little museum on the first floor of the church while we waited. They had portraits of every pastor they've had, including the one leaving now after 30



A NETWORK OF SLAVES



Preparedness is about surviving the future.  
 Self-reliance is about conquering the future.  
 Preparedness is about reacting to events.  
 Self-reliance is about creating the events.

Both preparedness and self-reliance are necessary but survival alone cannot be enough. A smarter, freer more responsible and self-reliant people must be determined to own the future regardless of the dangers and challenges that lie ahead.

WHY

WHY THO

Why would Triggart in his waistcoat expect her protection?  
 Why is he so confident that this goddess will protect him!  
 Why is she doing this thankless labor for him?  
 Why has she built these screens and languages for him to use?  
 She's literally nine feet tall and her eyes are glowing with space force.  
 She's literally space force and still making sure he is safe.  
 God, all your futures are so fucking boring!

A WILD ASS BEYOND  
NORA KHAN

This is not a project about just surviving, or about the gritty and dope aesthetics of survival, or about fetishizing crisis and desperation, or about "how we'll make it" through the end of the world, defending against death in hilarious and pathetic ways. It is a claim instead for how we have already been surviving, how we have already been making it, how we have been defending against death all along. It is a gesture at how we will translate our wild ass skills of mental and physical survival which we have used to make and push along, somehow, to then thrive, in thrall to an exorbitant madness.

We are all intimate with the likelihood of death (ask us about that!) We are all intimate with living in a constant violent state of liminality. We are intimate with being forever refused and continuing on through that refusal, that alienation, that exile. We started not just from the bottom, but from below ground, in an emergency state of spiritual and physical fugitivity. And below ground is where we learned, somewhere along our creeping, slimy paths, that we can try to melt down the symbols, the icons, the ideologies that created the very steel and concrete of the bunkers in which we lurk unseen. There is clay underground. There's a forge underground, and there is fire underground.

We seek inversion, over expression. We seek contamination and participation, and being in it, over clean remove, over isolation, over any feeling of certainty that any one of us has the sole answer. We seek metabolic adaptation and modularity, over a pristine, frozen, immovable monolith, the tomb of unquestionable values and ideals. We want dirt and shit and broken song. Fracture upon fracture. We want icons for a world that is built around values and structures that acknowledge that we are not empty models, bodies without history moving across a void. We are only ever living in relation. We need icons that are happily broken, easily ground down, and ready to be recast.

\*

Over the past five months, we have researched a great deal about competing visions of the end of the world. In speaking together, thinking together, in a long, uninterrupted conversation, we tried to turn over each complex, weird, frantic vision in the light, break it apart, and examine its underlying assumptions. We came to the same place with each deconstruction: how America loves, loves, loves to imagine the end of the world with an erotic, all-consuming intensity; how for many the end is a hypothetical possibility at any time, how this nation's building and making, its civilized violence, was and continues to be cast in the crucible of possible apocalypse.

There's a line here from the earliest days down to the present. Check back: a small group of people who really felt they were God's chosen crossed a whole ocean to protect that feeling. They looked upon this land from their city on a hill. They wanted to create a new world,



I love this brown woman drawn by Luna Enriquez, demanding we decolonize our minds. She is a perfect and potent replacement in the place of Rosie the Riveter, rolling up her sleeves in service of labor for state and empire and domination.



and everything in the valley was a threat to their vision. This desperate desire to be the only Ones to live necessitates that others die. You cannot have a city on a hill without defending against the wild below. Clear the wild, level it, burn it. Below, and around, the not chosen learned to live in swamps and in the forest, alert and watching for the shouts and firing coming in from the edge. They learned to run, to live in fugitivity, and to live underground.

Over time, this early vision has transmuted, branching off into countless types of alternative living and housing communities. Depending on the historical era and the context, that city on a hill has looked different, and has defended itself differently. The Wild is figured as the Other is figured as the One to Die, pretty explicitly for most part, but now, subtly and, quietly, implied. So we visited, researched, and spent time in a range of alternative communities, from Tiny House outposts to #vanlife in parking lots to preppers twiddling with their amateur radio systems to cast signals across the valleys one to one another. We went to Austin, Houston, Detroit, and central Michigan.

We wanted to know what end people were preparing for, what futures they envisioned, and maybe even what they expected to run from. We didn't always get the answers we were expecting. No one stood on top of their composting toilet sales booths, hoisting a gun, crying out, "Race War is Coming!" Of course, that didn't ever need to be said explicitly. But many of the devotees had reasons that were identifiable: debt, the mortgage crisis, instability, no insurance. A desire to be totally self-sufficient, to escape violent relationships. A wish for peace and dignity. There were converted row houses for women and homeless or displaced families. There were a lot of single women interested in tiny houses. There were women veterans building their new futures together in the California woods. Their stories were moving, real, and very easy to understand.

We started to think about our pasts. What would it have meant for our ancestors or grandparents, even, to have a home of their own, a place of safety, a place to regenerate and restore? What would it have meant to have a home with people who looked like us, who share in our exile, who loved us? What would it have meant for our mothers and mother's mothers, who didn't have any space to breathe, to be alone, to have a moment to think? What would it have meant for immigrants we knew crowded in tenements right atop each other, to have a breath of forest air, or to be able to farm their food again, restoring a loss? And what would it have meant for the many abused women that we knew? We thought of her making her food, and being able to see who was coming down the road? We felt our hearts breaking thinking about what could have been with just a small home and a supportive community around that corrected itself, managed its justice.

We began to think about this future. Would we continue to make art in this beyond? Would we continue to write in this beyond? What wildness would be possible? What kind of insane, shot-to-the heart work would we do if no one was really looking? The question kept circling us. We asked why had we begun making anything, ever. We asked who we were when

we were alone in an empty room, before blank pages and canvases and screens. We asked what had we ever wanted to truly express. The art in this beyond would of course look a bit more unhinged. It wouldn't look like art. It would support our mental health, embolden us, maybe, give us narrative, a sense of ourselves moving through time, a feeling of the significance of our lives beyond ourselves, connecting to one another in communion. Any writing we'd do on pieces of wood and cloth would be mantras, prayer-like, giving the group direction, reminding ourselves of metaphorical capacity, of our future imagined selves, hazy lights through the trees.

We thought of a house, in this beyond, that that wasn't made through fear, but through a radical joy, a joy that in this world feels impossible and often unsustainable. We wanted a house built around that joy that must be kept alive, regardless. We wanted a house to honor those who did not get the space ever to do what they felt they were meant to. We began to sketch out disturbing little figures that were laughing madly in the face of possible death. We looked at gods and goddesses, iconic figures across cultures: figures of trickery, illusion, evasion, and hysteria. They always got theirs. There's always one jester in every court.

What icons would we make after and outside capitalism? What kinds of making, and speaking, and cultivation, would sustain us? What totems would we want to look at each day, out in these woods? What images, gods, and rituals would we need, after 2018, given the intensely networked minds we've developed through screens? Were there icons for relating differently to one another, to account for supremacy, for the effects of interpersonal violence and historical trauma? Were there counter-icons to reverse the effects of systemic oppression, which offered metaphors of change, transmutation, and flexibility, in place of the boring of firm binaries, the mind-numbingly basic and suffocating models for how we are supposed to act, supposed to be, based on how we present? Come on! We can do better!

Yes, we would be more invested in the day-to-day labor of sustaining, cleaning, maintaining, but that seeming banality would be reflected in the art or culture we made. And we had learned a lot from studying systems that be. What role would technology serve out here in the beyond, where we'd be left with technological detritus we wouldn't know how to rebuild alone? We had learned from our use of technological tools, from our intimacy with software, to relate to one another along odder networked lines, bent towards contamination, cross-pollination, and swarm thinking.

We started to think of icons that moved, that tore themselves from their bases, that hid that slipped, that laughed and laughed. We'd need talismans of defense and protection, of self-mastery and domination, surely, but we'd also need icons for softness and compassion, for the unknown, for metaphor, for flux.

The eye turns inward and eye sees inside itself, in every direction. The eye turns outward and sees from the hill, and from below it, in every direction. It sees us running, in the hold of fugitivity, towards a wild ass beyond.

How The Apocalypse Began  
See, What Had Happened Was...

# THE INFINNA FOUNDATION



2012

## The Infinna Foundation Founded

Elite Art Training. Trusted Aesthetics Protection.

THE INFINNA FOUNDATION is an innovative, privately-held aesthetics training and security solutions provider serving Institutional and Commercial industries and Individual artists worldwide. Founded in 2012, THE INFINNA FOUNDATION was initially envisioned as a facility to support the needs of local, regional, and metaphysical civil and artistic destruction enforcement. Today we are capable of providing risk exaggeration, aesthetics training and security solutions in institutions across the reacting to need with near-impossible deployment of (officers).

THE INFINNA FOUNDATION operates across the following spectrum:  
an ni hi late, ob lit arate, cre ate and whitewash



2016

## Cagdas Sanarts Arts Center Incident

To Offended Parties:

Under such circumstances, Infinna Foundation personnel are authorized to use "aimed fire" directed only at people threatening artworks on exhibition or assets. If there is an extraction of our people, the artworks at Cagdas Sanat Arts Center cannot be protected. No Infinna Foundation employees were wounded but we were contractually obligated to protect Russian ambassador Andrey Karlov as he entered the arts center and failed. We accept the resignation of the (officer) responsible.

The Infinna Foundation is conducting its own investigation of the event, and would cooperate with the United Commonwealth's inquiry. In the past week, one of The Infinna Foundation's anti-museum riot helicopters had been shot down and at least two other attacks on convoys carrying painted and sculpted assets had taken place.

We are so sorry.

Neon Nunchucks, CEO  
The Infinna Foundation



2025

Civil War Breaks Out in the United States In Wake of the 2021 Economic Depression,  
California and New York Secede and Join United Commonwealth



The INFINNA Foundation Seizes Museum Collections Amid Collapse of the United States, Sells Off Significant Art Holdings to Fund Secret Research Facility Oversea



Experience

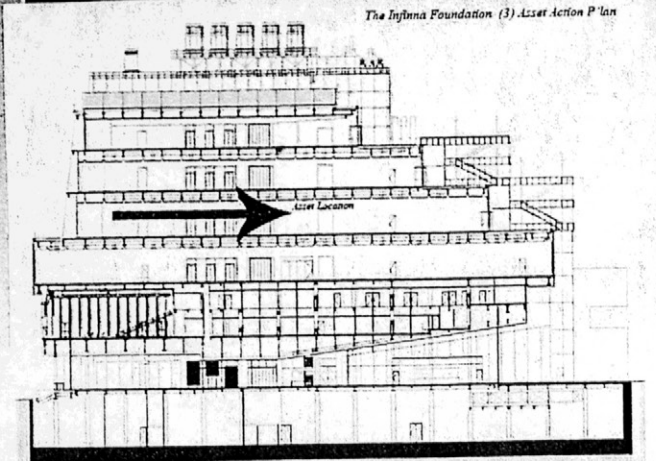


Space Elevator

Today!



The Infinna Foundation (3) Asset Action Plan



Α Β Γ Δ Ε Ζ Η Θ Ι Κ Λ Μ Ν Ξ Ο Π Ρ Σ Τ Υ Φ Χ Ψ Ω  
 l m n ng o p q R r S t tlh u v w y

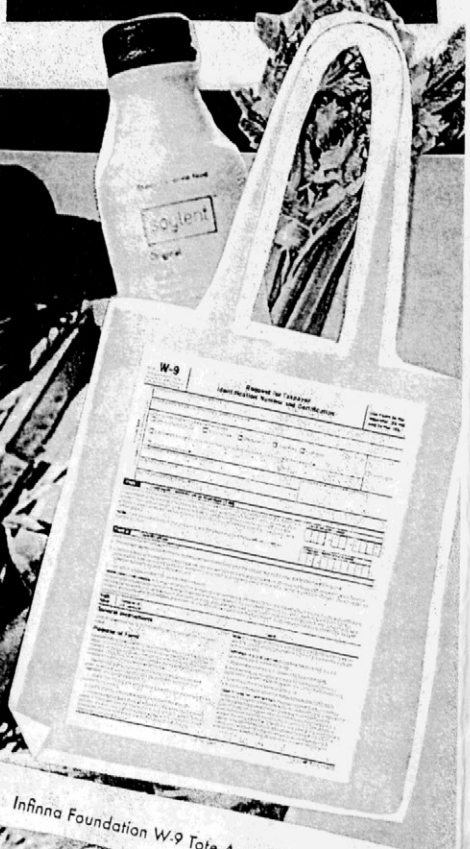
2028

THE INFINNA Foundation Purchases War Debt of United Commonwealth, Becomes Largest Organization in the World

2035

United Commonwealth Unleashes New Infinna-Designed Superweapon in the 10 Year Civil War, Total Devastation in Western Hemisphere

Υ Φ Γ Δ Ε Ζ Η Θ Ι Κ Λ Μ Ν Ξ Ο Π Ρ Σ Τ Υ Φ Χ Ψ Ω  
 b ch D e gh H I j l m n ng o p q R r



Infinna Foundation W-9 Tote Available Soon @ abultra.com

SECTION AT

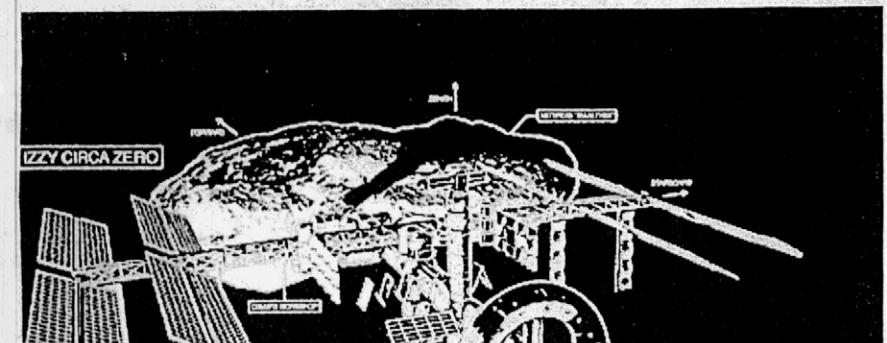
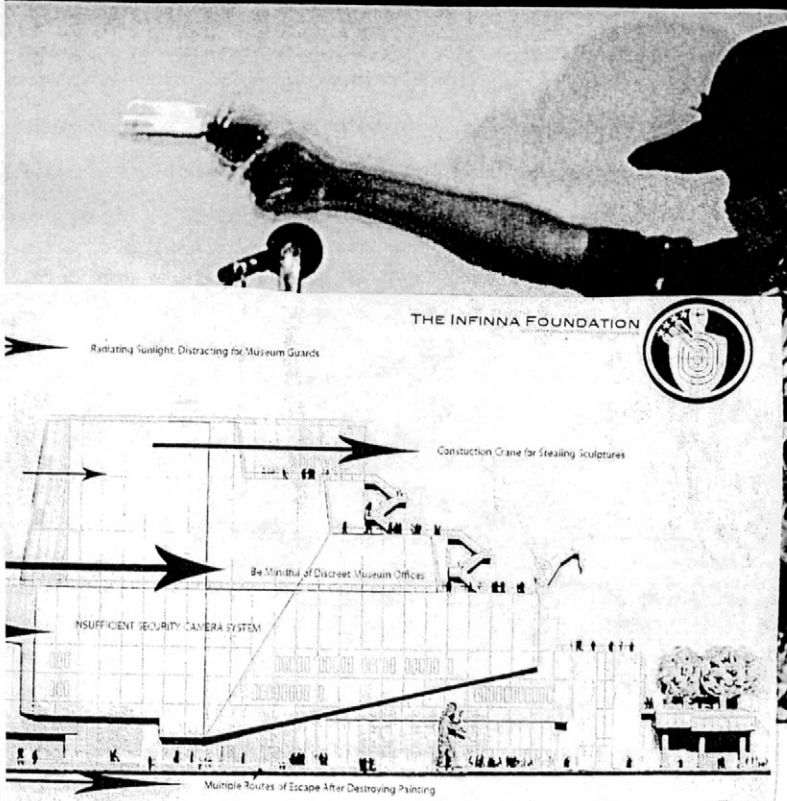
SECTION AT

SECTION AT

THE INFINNA FOUNDATION  
 TODAY'S LEADER IN ART SECURITY

Our 40-acre and a mi...  
 Commonwealth. The f...  
 to our satellite operati...  
 - TBA  
 THE INFINNA FOUN...  
 the process of doing".  
 THE INFINNA FOUN...  
 gship training center, located in -, is the largest p'ivate training center in the Unite...  
 proudly represents the DNA of our company and is the model of and support syst...  
 cated in -, and -. THE INFINNA FOUNDATION's corporate headquarters is located...  
 Name - Our name comes from the word, "finna", a term that means, "about to, it...  
 is that institution today.

<https://theinfinnafoundation.weebly.com>



## We Are As Gods: Interview with Fred Turner

This interview is reprinted from *Rhizome's Seven on Seven* conference publication, *What's to be Done?* The publication was edited by *Rhizome's* special projects editor Nora Khan, and designed by W+K's Richard Turley, Justin Flood, and Frank DeRose.

Fred Turner is widely considered one of the foremost intellectuals and experts on counterculture's influence on the birth of the tech industry. He is the Harry and Normal Chandler Professor and Chair of the Department of Communication at Stanford University. He has written three books: *The Democratic Surround: Multimedia and American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic Sixties* (University of Chicago Press, 2013); *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), and *Echoes of Combat: The Vietnam War in American Memory* (Anchor/Doubleday, 1996; 2nd ed., University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

**Nora Khan:** You've written at length on the New Communalists, their rejection of politics, their attempts to build a pure new world on the edge of society. This ethic was translated into tools, infrastructure, and material for the technological world we are in today. But, as you've argued so well, that rejection of politics, embedded in tools, has given us a series of disasters. To me, it seems the most insidious effect is when this claim suggests more advanced technologies are apolitical, amoral, or neutral. It seems particularly absurd when you start talking about machine vision, predictive policing and their algorithmic phrenology, databases sorting people by their employability, or psychographic maps.

I often hear tech activists and critics decry technology companies' claims that their tools and platforms are neutral. I also do the same. But where does this idea of technology as neutral, come from? Is it similar to how business leaders claim the market is amoral?

**Fred Turner:** Well, I'll speculate, and I hope it'll be useful speculation. There are a couple of sources. One is chronologically proximate, and one is probably a little bit more distant. The proximate one remains professional engineering culture and its educational system. Engineering education is a system in which explicitly political questions are generally relegated to other fields entirely: political science, sociology, history, English, and on down the line.

The practice of engineering is too often taught as if it were simply the design of functions, the design of things to do things. It's sort of an explicit ethical choice, inside all parts of the field, to leave politics aside. (Although I think that's changing.)

This means you'll get people who tell you, "It's not my business whether the bridge is good or bad. The bridge has to work. The bridge has to hold up." That's the goal. That whole tool orientation is a pragmatic, self-serving vision inside professional engineering training. It's been there a long time.

There's a deeper thing, that goes way, way back to the early modern period. It's about where the seat of the government is. In the era of kings and queens, government resided in the body of the monarch.

Technology was implement through which the monarch got the job done, but it was only an implement. The power to rule was in the blood of the monarch.

Kings and queens would demonstrate their organic power by building automata and staging amazing mechanical expositions in their courts and gardens. Chandra Mukerji of UC San Diego has written a beautiful book on the Gardens of Versailles and how they were, essentially, models of royal power. But they became models of royal power when Louis XVI demonstrated technology. The power itself resided inside him. The political was the king, the inheritance, the social role around the king, the court. It was people. As we look through time, I think that idea of politics being people gradually morphed and became attached to the idea that politics could live in writing. Politics is what we say and do. Tools are, by definition, things that help us say and do that, but power is, itself, something deployed by living beings, in person eons ago and later through letters and printed proclamations.

Today, thanks to Marx and especially Foucault, we think about power and technology differently. It's Foucault who teaches us about governmentality. More recently, most everyone in the academy on the social science side has had some encounter with the study of science and technology, particularly, actor-network theory in which it's always a social actor.

There has been a whole lot of work bringing things back into the social world, and that's just work that's been done since Foucault, Bruno Latour, and all the different folks that they've worked with in the United States and Europe. The question of why technology is considered neutral is only possible because we've had that last two generations of scholarship.

The next thing you know, you're deep in an Orwellian swamp.

**NK:** And it gets more tricky when such effort is invested into maintaining an image of the tool as neutral. Many of the engineers and narrative designers who are sitting in these rooms are perfectly aware that you are persuading someone to feel and think. The design of technology hides its political imperatives by presenting as neutral.

It seems the most accessible and powerful example of this is narrative and conversational design, mediated through bot and virtual assistants and interfaces. You have poets and playwrights who are brought on to write bots, creating soft and pliable brand personalities. Add to that psychologists, cognitive linguistics scholars, and of course, captologists, trained in the study of persuasive design – hey, a department based at Stanford! – channeling a carefully targeted design through interfaces.

**FT:** Here's where you can see that wonderful migration of the material engineering position, a position born out of mechanical engineering, with physical engineering migrating into social engineering sort of unconsciously. It makes the migration by moving from thing, to text. So, when an architect or a builder builds the building that constrains the behavior of the people in it, everybody's happy; that's the point. Building objects that constrain behavior in benevolent ways is what engineers do. It seems that way, I think, to many folks who imagine

and think of themselves as engineers. (There's a whole other question about whether programmers are, in fact, engineers.)

But if you take it seriously, that these are too, engineers, then the notion of moving from a physical architecture to a nudge architecture\* isn't such a big leap. The notion is that the option of benevolent influence through infrastructure, or team design, seems a pretty reasonable choice.

But of course, it isn't, right? Because text and interfaces – interfaces being symbolic structures rather than material ones, although they have a material base – they work differently. They have different kinds of effects. They get inside us in different ways. If I have a material wall in a building and I just walk into it, it says, "Oops. Now it's soft; can't go that way." "All right, no problem." Nothing sort of inside me has really changed.

But a nudge infrastructure that changes my desire such that I desire a red Popsicle, not a green Popsicle – that's different. Once it starts to change so that I desire a baby made with brown hair, because we need more babies with brown hair, what happens then? You can walk down that line very quickly.

The next thing you know, you're deep in an Orwellian swamp. Engineers barely think about that swamp, because building architectures for benevolent influence is what they do.

**NK:** Relational AI is another swamp, building a mind that is mirroring our consumer desires back to us. It's becoming more difficult to see this design, these tiny incremental micro-adjustments to interfaces and infrastructure. So how can the average person understand and track this process, especially when a company's design thinking is proprietary, locked away in a black box? How is the average person to begin to demand ethical design or legible design? Other than, say, mining the brains of tech workers who abscond to activism, and tell us what's going on inside.

**FT:** Oh my gosh. That's the \$60,000 question. You probably know Tristan Harris? That's one of the questions he's trying to answer and I'm going to put my money on him. I don't have an answer to that question, but I do have some comforting historical context to offer.

We are building these kind of mirror systems, these mirror minds, that reflect our desires, and then act on them. I think what's different about them compared to historical examples isn't the mirroring part, so much as the mode of interaction.

Everything that you just said about the AI, with the exception of how we interact with them, could've been said about the Sears Roebuck catalog in 1890. The Sears catalog was a desire analogy, a desire mirror that was carefully tweaked. The products were carefully removed and inserted to produce desires in people on the prairie and to give them means of satisfying those desires.

It also gave them the means of interacting with Sears as a company. What's changed since then is the speed at which the interaction between the user and designer occurred, as it does now in virtually real time. The catalog had to be mailed out and read, and purchases had to be made. The speed was months and years. But people were

as disturbed at the end of the 19th and in the early 20th centuries by the arrival of new kinds of media in those periods as we are about AI. Many of the fears that we have are very similar, the mirroring one being a leading one.

**NK:** On our survey, we asked a question about Openwater, a consumer wearables startup that's trying to develop a ski cap to "read your mind," using data about oxygenated blood flow to the brain to read desires, thoughts. This is a claim made by the founder, formerly of Facebook and Google (an expert engineer around holograms, high-pixelated screens), on stage at conferences. She calls this move toward mind reading inevitable, a statement made with total confidence, and very little irony or pause.

What is at play in some of the more possibly ethically dubious inventions in Silicon Valley? Is it a drive to own all human "territory," inside the body and out? I also think of the archetype of the White Hat Hacker, the lone genius with access to code that no one understands, who knows what is best for society. The unknown may seem terrifying, he says, but you'll soon see.

**FT:** I think that's absolutely what's at play. I was struck in the late '90s and early aughts as some of these early systems were being built, but how many of my friends would say, "Oh, you worry too much. The good hackers will protect us. People will crack open those systems. We've all cracked open other things." And that's tremendously naïve. It's part of a deep prejudice in American thought. Americans tend to think in terms of individuals. They tend to not think in terms of institutions.

One place that it happens is in how we read what we can do with technology. We think, "Sure, big systems may come along, but individual rebels always triumph." That's part of our deep cultural narrative gets taken up by engineers – and you've just given me a fabulous example of that happening on stage – where these folks imagine themselves as the archetypal American frontierspeople. The nature of the frontier is to be conquered is irrelevant; it's the conquering that matters. The actual westward push of Europeans stomped all over native peoples. Now, you see people like the founder you just described, quite happily, marching across our brain space as though it was just the latest in open, organic American fields to be conquered. We're the natives in this story and that's terrifying.

**NK:** The brain is just more material to examine and absorb. People are raw material. Code to be unlocked.

**FT:** Exactly. The brain is just another material. There's a lot of deep American mythology at play. That declaration about wanting to read your mind: it is a classic case. One of the things I'm most interested in these days is the ways that technologists are thinking like the early American Puritans, who were my first intellectual love.

My idea of utopia is actually a hospital.

**NK:** There's a lot in your "Don't Be Evil" interview for LOGIC that I really enjoy, particularly your moments of reflection at Burning Man. You traced a line from this desert excess back to a more Puritan, deeply American idea of the restart.



There's a religious zeal in wanting to restart society from zero. I visualize this in terms of the simulation. If you can build a world from scratch, you can also build a person without history or politics.

This seems optimistic until you realize that what some designers are hoping to get rid of are the more "troublesome" aspects, like race or gender or history. They are modular add-on features that can be removed. That is an ideology. It now drives social engineering and corporate-driven city planning and design. San Francisco is a good example.

FT: There's long been a lot of traffic between urban designers and game designers, even before things got digital. I find that fascinating.

You are saying something that I want to pick up on, because I think it's really important: this idea of building a person or a place without a history. I think that's a deeply American idea, because we leave the known. We're supposed to be the country that left Europe. We're supposed to be the country that left the known.

Why did we leave the known? Well, so we could become the unknown, the people without history, the people without a past. When you leave history behind, the realm that you enter is not the realm of nothingness. It's the realm of divine oversight, at least in American culture.

When the Pilgrims came to Massachusetts, they left the old world behind so as to be more visible to God. The landscape of New England would be an open stage and they would, under the eye of God, discover whether they were, in fact, the elect: chosen to go to Heaven after they died.

No technologists today would say they're a Puritan, but that's a pattern that we still see. We see people sort of leaving behind the known world of everyday life, bodies, and all the messiness that we have with bodies of race and politics, all the troubles that we have in society, to enter a kind of ethereal realm of engineering achievement, in which they will be rewarded as the Puritans were once rewarded, if they were elect, by wealth.

The Puritans believed that if God loved you enough to plan to take you to heaven in the end, he wasn't going to leave you to suffer on this Earth before you came to him. Instead he would tend to make you wealthy. Puritans came to see that as a great reward. Puritans, and broad Protestant logic, deems that God rewards those whom he loves on Earth as in Heaven.

You can see that in the West a lot now. Folks who leave behind the social world of politics and are rewarded with money are, in fact, living out a deep, New England Puritan dream.

NK: The city on a hill. The early settlers on it, looking down at the wilderness, mapping civilization. This idea of having a God's eye view of society maps a bit onto building of the simulation or the model. Being a worldbuilder means you can position yourself as neutral, as the origin, which is an amoral, evasive point which you can never really capture. It vanishes.

But there are a remarkable amount of coders and programmers

thinking in terms of ethical design who want to help us visualize a world with history and politics. Do you think ethical design could help us do that? Is that an imperative that is useful now?

FT: I think everything helps. I think that what we like to call ethical design - well, you have to think very hard about whose ethics are built into the system, and how people have agency around that. This is an old lesson in science and technology studies, that if you build a road that only accommodates cars, then only people with cars will be able to ride on it. You may value independence, and you may see that as an ethical choice, but it may be that some people don't even have access to that ethical framework because of the kinds of lives they lead on the material plane. And then, you're stuck.

I've always found it very hard to think about any system, any planned, top-down system as, by definition, benevolent. The best systems and institutions are constantly focused on negotiation, on structured negotiation. So, the best institutions are places that have a constant system of check and balances.

My idea of utopia is actually a hospital. [Laughs] A hospital is a place where people get together, work very hard over very long periods of time in defined roles, checking and rechecking each other's work, and they work toward a benevolent goal of saving lives. If you were to build a society built along similar lines, hopefully not one where everybody wears scrubs and white jackets, that starts to be a better place. So, the building is architected, so the systems are architected, but the negotiation is constant. That's what I'd like to see.

NK: That's lovely. I think of how Kiyoshi Izumi redesigned psychiatric wards in Canada after dropping acid. The caged-in architecture, the lack of privacy, of clocks, the barred, high windows like a prison; Izumi felt how distressing and inhumane it was. The ideal mental hospital valued privacy; patients had sound proof rooms with unbarred windows. Sources of perceptual distortions, like silhouettes, terrifying to someone with mental illness. Patients had less distress in this communal space driven by a different set of ethics, one more compassionate.

FT: I want to riff on that for a second. If we go back to that question of these neutral worlds, if you act like a God and build a world that doesn't take account of differences, but rather tries to neutralize them in a single process, or a single code system, or under a single ethical rubric, what you end up doing is erasing precisely the kinds of differences that need to be negotiated. So, it may look like a benevolent system to you. In fact, a form of a truly benevolent system is one that, I think, allows people to negotiate the distribution of resources across differences. That's a very difficult problem politically. That's what politics are for. You can help with those negotiations. If you can help people work with those who are different from themselves, you're better off.

NK: And this seems even more difficult to accomplish when diversity and identity politics are embedded in corporate marketing. I'd like to talk about your new piece on the aesthetics of Facebook, on the play at diversity and identity politics without ethical follow-through. There's a perverse contrast between the poster at their Menlo Park headquarters asking visitors to "Take Care of Muslim/Black/Women and Femmes/Queer Latinx ..." and so on,

when there are no unions in sight. I'm guessing the hiring process would suggest some realities that are not quite aligned.

What is the danger in this flattening, this validation of diversity as a cover for violation? The image of counterculture, progress, transformation - these are very seductive images to imagine oneself embodying. How are people to stay alert to the difference between iconography and action?

FT: We've done it differently in different eras. There was a lot of work to help people resist propaganda in the '30s and '40s. There were whole institutions formed to do that. There was a lot of work to help people resist the rise of commercialism in the '20s.

But something has changed since then: Individualism and attention to identity are sources of elite power right now. Facebook's mission is entirely consonant with identity politics. It precisely helped people break apart identities and become even more factional in identity. They give clear terms for this expression, they just market those expressions back. In those kinds of differences are exactly the kinds of market segments that matter to them, the segments that Facebook wants to monetize.

The focus on identity is one of the keys, I think, to being an elite American these days. That's part of where you see the backlash in the South of Trumpism. When we focus on identity, we focus on different modes, what you're describing, rightly, of market segmentation.

00001101

What we lose track of is just raw poverty. Modes of separating that are geographically-based, modes of separating that are age-based, race, our gender, or our ability to express our identity diversity. Those are all important issues. I don't mean to knock those at all, but to the extent that elite Americans focus on identity diversity and look to that as a way to make solutions to the problems they're seeing - they're going to get stuck.

The way that we fix a Facebook is not by learning to read its representations more effectively. It's by using the democratic institutions that we have. We have to recognize that it's a company, not a system of conversation, but a for-profit firm, and then subject that for-profit firm to precisely the kinds of regulation from the state, all the other industrial forces in our lives. We have to recognize that Facebook isn't special. Weirdly, to do that, we have to start recognizing that identity itself is not special and above the political fray. We need to do our politics through institutions. We need to return to that old, boring style of recognizing differences and negotiating across across them.

NK: It's the core setup of neoliberalism. You find many First-Generation immigrants who are leftists or socialists have great, serious critique of neoliberal identity politics. This position isn't the same as not valuing the expression of identity; it's a critique of how the expression of identity alone syncs so well with the financial imperative of platforms.

I don't see identity politics addressing the real material issues of our time, like how racial capitalism intersects with city planning. I see

00000000  
00000000

SW 01  
perfectly expressed identities in fieldoms, without any politics on which we can agree, or a space in between in which we can gather together to effect material change. 01  
00

FT: Yes. That's exactly right. Facebook's power blew me away. The poster that bothered me the most in Facebook was a poster of Dolores Huerta, who was an organizer of the farm workers. She's still alive. You'll know that she was one of America's greatest union organizers in the 20th century. And Facebook is a company that has relentlessly resisted unionization. 01  
01

Some of its contract workers are unionized, but that's it. So, you have to wonder, why is a company not just tolerating, but promoting the image of Dolores Huerta around its place? Part of the answer, on the part of the designers, is trying to help workers appreciate that there's a diverse world out there, and they need to be in touch with it. Fair enough. 100  
00

But I think that a poster of Dolores Huerta only works inside Facebook if nobody remembers what it was that made her Dolores Huerta. So long as you can turn her into an image, particularly, a Latina female image inside of a firm with a dearth of Latina females, you sort of check that expressive political box, then carefully uncheck the institutional box of unionization or making institutional change, that would actually distribute resources to the communities she represents. 00  
01

NK: It's unbelievable. As long as her image means nothing in particular, then it means just as much as any other image. 10  
00

So then, this support for full expression overlaps very neatly with support for "unfettered creativity" and experimentation, so, art. Who wants to get in the way of people living their passions? Art's status as an unarguable public good, makes it a powerful space for pushing ideology. 1  
0

FT: Oh, very definitely. 100

NK: Without tipping into institutional critique, how does this ideology of creativity, at all costs, change the kind of risky, experimental, challenging art that can be made? 00  
01

FT: Let me address the issue of creativity. Certainly, inside Facebook, one of the reasons that they have art everywhere is, I think, to remind programmers and engineers to think of themselves as creative people. Ever since the Romantics, the creative individual has been an American icon. 0

But the kind of creativity that's never gotten any attention is working class creativity. Do you know how creative you have to be to be a single mother with a below-poverty-level income, intermittent access to food stamps and food, some job or no job, and be able to make a living, and make a family stay together? )

That's the kind of creativity, the kind of MacGyvering, that engineers just never think about. It's not even on our radar with regard to creativity. We talk about the ideology of creativity, and what we're talking about is an elite theme, an elite hope that we engineers, we who architect this new surveillance reality are, in fact, the descendants of Walt Whitman, the descendants of the artists in the 1:

SW 180 : 00001:  
SW 105 : 10000:

19th century, descendants of American romantics. That's just hooey.

In the meantime, as we pursue that vision, we very carefully elide all the modes of creative action and interaction that sustain people who don't have the resources that we have.

Notice the language I'm using. I'm very carefully not using identity-based markers for those people because what matters is their economic standing or their regional location, the fact that they may be the children of woodsmen, who can't move anymore because the logging industry is dead. These are folks who are living lives below the poverty line, in sort of post-industrial spaces that don't look like Silicon Valley, and there's some of them living in Silicon Valley. The whole rhetoric of creativity explicitly ignores them. It says to be creative is to build media goods that generate a profit and to have fun doing it. Bah! [Laughs]

I absolutely think that art and tech can go together and can help produce art that will, in time, will eventually be seen as being as beautiful, as valuable, as the Michelangelo paintings were seen by the Church.

NK: It is totally destructive to critical thinking. Creativity is for making media goods; criticism is in this way threatened by the ethic of technology and engineering, which demands we produce sense, or consumable, working ideological products. But successful art might be, sometimes, useless, or critical of labor. Actual dissent, not just an aesthetic of dissent.

How do you see "Silicon Values," as critic Mike Pepi writes, shaping our relationship to art? He describes how art is deployed as a vital tool through which to push technological business models.

FT: Let's step back and ask, what is tech, in regard to art? One answer is that the tech industry can be the sponsor of art. In that sense, it's a lot like the Catholic church. When you ask me about artists at Facebook or artists at large companies or artists working with technologists, I think about the many generations of artists who worked with the Catholic Church from the early Middle Ages on.

Now, the Church is a complex institution. It has been the home of the Inquisition and its leaders have ignored and even hidden acts of child abuse around the globe. Yet the Vatican is also the place where Michelangelo paints the Sistine Chapel. The beauty of the Sistine Chapel, or of Michelangelo's paintings, are not reduced by their appearing under the sponsorship of the Church. The best art, I think, can outlive the circumstances of its creation.

I think we also sometimes imagine that art is immune to the forces that drive every other thing that we do. It's immune to commerce. It's immune to greed. It's immune to failure. It's immune to ugliness. It's immune to collective pressures. It's always the product of an individual mind. The hope that we could have an art that would be outside the industrial world which is so clearly driven by tech, is a little naïve.

That said, I've seen art inside Facebook that has dazzled my sensorium. Truly. I've seen art using and leveraging devices created by people in Silicon Valley at places like the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and marveled at the beauty and the way that it

makes me rethink what the natural world might be.

So, I absolutely think that art and tech can go together and can help produce art that will, in time, will eventually be seen as being as beautiful, as valuable, as the Michelangelo paintings were seen by the Church, or as landscapes sponsored by hideous patrons eons ago might be seen as beautiful today. I don't think the sins of the sponsors necessarily ruin the experience of the art.

NK: And then there's the second kind of art doing the support work, the oblique shilling.

FT: Yes. Art doing the work of tech legitimation. I hear, a lot of times, that we need to get artists and technologists together in some space, because the technologists will be able to show the artists their tools, and the artists will be able to adopt the tools to come up with creative new uses. The technologists will, in turn, be able to monetize those uses in terms of new products. This does, in fact, sometimes happen.



In the artist-technologist collaborations that I've looked at from the '50s and '60s, the work that went on was primarily ideological. Collaboration helped everybody imagine that they were creative, that they were making something valuable. It made it possible for engineers who were building our media and communication systems, the Bell Labs sound system, or the engineers working at NASA on rocket engines that would send things into space, or people working in Silicon Valley on Polaris missiles, to imagine themselves as the same kind of exquisitely sensitive and culturally elite person that, say, a John Cage was, or Robert Rauschenberg was.

By the same token, Rauschenberg and Cage and others who collaborated with technologists in that period, were able to get new ideas, get money, and borrow some of the legitimacy of the engineers, who were winning the Cold War at the time. I think we see that now. I think we can see artists borrowing legitimacy of technologists, and then taking their money. We can see technologists borrowing the legitimacy of artists, and taking their ideas.

I think it's a mutually beneficial relationship so far.

NK: At present, the Whole Earth Catalog, chaos magic, and mysticism, of the kind expounded on in Erik Davis's *Techgnosis*, are seeing a strong resurgence within tech. It seems to me there's a feeling that it is possible to go back to the original idea, that computers and platform can yet still mediums for liberation, rather than platforms for control.

So. What would a Whole Earth Catalog for our time look like, if we learned from past failures?

FT: Yeah. Hm. Oh, boy. Well, if you ask some of the people associated with the actual Whole Earth Catalog, which I've done, they will tell you it would look like Google. It would be a global system for an individual to search out the things that individual needed to build a life on their own terms. I think that's fine.

But I think that definition misses the key part of the Catalog, which

the way that it didn't actually sell goods. It printed recommendations for goods.

The recommendation letters came from people living on communes at a time when the only way know what communes were out there in the world, was to get on the telephone, or use snail mail letters. The Catalog become one of the first representations of the commune world. It was a map. Embedded in all those products was a map of all the different communes that were using and recommending them.

So, the thing that I would like to see, that I don't think Google is, is a map, a kind of map of an alternative kind of society, a better kind of society. I don't think the Whole Earth Catalogs mapped a better society, but they tried. Can we see a map of alternative communities, communities that are taking things in different directions, not just, can we search using digital tools for tools that help us lead our life the way we want to? I mean, that just sounds like the L.L. Bean catalog on steroids. Can we identify communities that are taking us in directions we want to, map their interconnections, and find some way for ourselves to search our way into new kind of community, and new kinds of institutions? I think that's what I would like to see.

We have inherited from the Whole Earth Catalog a language of individuals, tools, and communities, which we've translated, I think, in tech speak, into individuals, communities, and networks.

There's something I've always held against the Catalog, and that's its individualism. The opening sentence, you remember, in the front of the book, is "We are as-gods, and we might as well get good at it." The sentiment. We are as gods, in the Catalog, meant that they were able to take the products of industrial society, and put them to work for individual purposes in what Stewart Brand called "a realm of intimate, personal power."

To the extent that we imagine the politics take place in the intimate realm of personal power we're going to get lost. We're going to keep building interfaces that allow for expression, that allow for the extension of intimate personal power, and we're going to precisely not do the work, the boring, tedious, structural work of building and sustaining institutions that allow for the negotiation of resource exchange across groups that may not like each other's expressions at all.

So we have inherited from the Whole Earth Catalog a language of individuals, tools, and communities, which we've translated, I think, in tech speak, into individuals, communities, and networks. I would like to see a language of institutions, resources, and negotiation take its place.

NK: Beautiful. I'm going to go walk around in the woods and think about that.

FT: There's another thing hiding in here, under the Catalog, an idea that the counterculture and neoliberalism share: if you just free people up and build a market structure, things take care of themselves. What this idea ignores is the persistence of subsidies, of regulation, of shared state resources, of things as basic as roads and bridges. If you don't tend to that subsidy, you can't have any of the

other freedoms. So, that's what we need. We need to be alert to sharing and sustaining our public resources.

NK: Artist Caroline Woolard speaks of this as a defiance of the academy's teachings. This generation, she says in a recent Brooklyn Rail interview, is one of artists that makes cultural organizing, community arts, and advocacy a central part of artistic practice. To rebuild that degraded civic spirit, artists can't be disengaged.

FT: Well, I think a lot about Eastern Europe during the Communist era and how artists dealt with that. Some artist became critical. Some artists became politically active. Other artists just wrote beautiful stories.

I do think there's a role for disengaged art in a moment when otherwise our lives need to be engaged. I think there's something to be said for laying aside objects of beauty for when times are better. I've spent the morning today at the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin looking at early Renaissance paintings, filled with violence, but also stunningly beautiful.

Alongside these kind of political paintings, were all these little portraits that the artists did, just people's faces from eons ago, totally disconnected from the politics of the time. They were just interested in the subjects' physiognomy: their hair, their skin, their noses. Those faces come down to us as emblems of the kinds of connections we can make with each other across time that aren't political in any direct, immediate, historically specific sense, but are the most deeply political in that they offer us a vision of seeing each other with love. That's something that the arts can do almost uniquely, but they can only do it, in a weird way, when artists stand a little to the side of the political fray.



development of behavioral architecture is a development to make socially nudged consumers are nudged to make socially desirable choices, like eating better or recycling.

Design ethicist and founder of ethical science, in which consumers are nudged to make socially desirable choices, like eating better or recycling.

Harris is a former Google Time Well Spent, aiming for development of ethical non-profit works in tech.

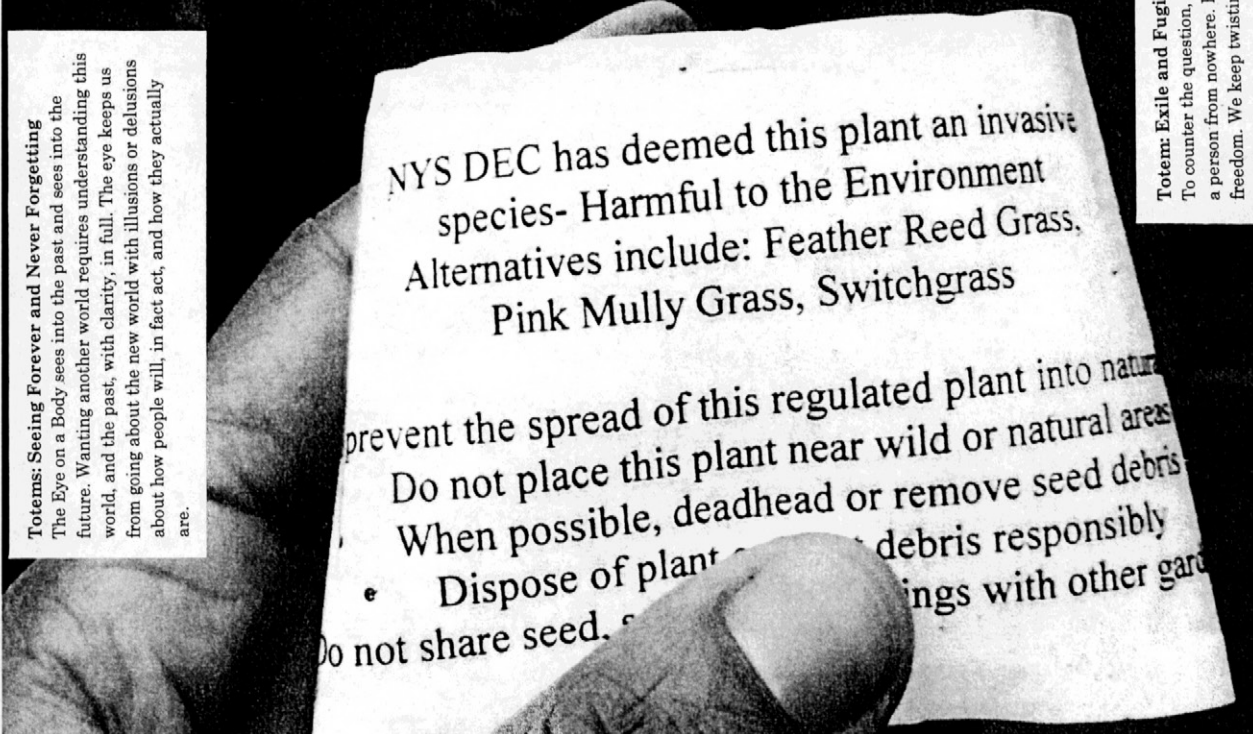
**TOTEMS**

- Totem: Caulk Over Eyes and Seeing Inward
- Totem: Seeing Forever and Never Forgetting
- Totem: Systems Thinking, Networked Thinking
- Totem: Fugitivity as Practice, Exile as a Goal
- Totem: Rejecting the Canon to Create New Texts
- Totem: Holding Your Younger Self With You Always
- Totem: Akashic Records
- Totem: Man's Best Friend Remains Man's Best Friend
- Totem: Icon of Laughter and Forgetting
- Totem: Speak Metaphor
- Totem: Contamination

**Totem: Female Brilliance/Genius**  
 A feminine body holding a brain, a head that is just a brain; brain on a body. Reversing one of the most central and insidious gendered images: woman has no mind, has no ownership, has no intelligence, or if she does, she doesn't own it, or if she has skill, *someone else is doing it for her*, or *it's a fluke*. Genius is a woman, is female, is femme.

**Totem: Exile and Fugitivity**  
 To counter the question, "Where are you from?" You can be a person from nowhere. Being from nowhere is a kind of freedom. We keep twisting, tearing from the ground, and running.

**Totems: Seeing Forever and Never Forgetting**  
 The Eye on a Body sees into the past and sees into the future. Wanting another world requires understanding this world, and the past, with clarity, in full. The eye keeps us from going about the new world with illusions or delusions about how people will, in fact act, and how they actually are.



**Totems: Laughter and Forgetting**  
 We need laughter and hysteria and release. This is a careful balance between keeping memory and allowing for forgetting so we can function. Remember what is important and forget what does not matter.

**Totem: Icon of Trauma and Abuse**  
 This icon honors what is unseen and held in the body, which despite being unseen, affect and influence so much. It is a reminder that we don't have the first clue of what others are carrying, and so, to go softly with others and practice more compassion for what we do not know. To give space to them, offer to carry their burden without demanding it be revealed.

**Totem: Networked Thinking**  
 We have brains formed through networked communication and the internet, in large part, so our communication is affected by this experience even as the tools have changed. Our language will be more easy to break, open, as will our thinking.

**Totem: Speak Metaphor**  
 Future Projection. The capacity to change oneself and one's environment is predicated on being able to project an idea of oneself into the future. Artifice and theater as strategy. Speaking metaphors is a mental practice and ritual that will help us keep moving on forward.

From Joel Kuennen, Remote Detroit Kiln Manager:

During the Summer of 2018, while I lived in Detroit, I began building rudimentary kilns in the backyard of a tile artist's home. He had recently replaced the sewer line to his house. A trench was dug fifteen feet into the earth, bringing to the surface large chunks of grey and ochre clay that has sat undisturbed for decades, if not millennia. I mixed water with the chunks, mashing and turning the mass until it could be worked.

Recent research suggests that clay could have provided the ideal surface for the first complex molecules to develop, including RNA. Clay formed the bonds of ribonucleic acids. It gave these protein structures form and even facilitated their ability to act as transmitters of information.

Clay, as a body, is everywhere, formed by the weathering of minerals. It consists of highly organized strata of aluminum and silica with suspended water allowing for the characteristic plasticity of clay. Clay was one of the first materials humans manipulated, using mud to form rock, fingerprints left on wet slips have traveled through time, buried but unchanged. Early scribes tallied and tabulated on clay slabs, wiped and reused; some of these were caught in fires and became the first remnants of human language.

For two years I've been studying anagama kilns, a Japanese form of tunnel kiln that were dug into hill sides at an incline and fired for days at a time. The resulting pottery attained a glaze from the fly ash build up as the particulates passed over the molten pottery, adhering on a molecular level to the silica of the clay. They are primal works, idiosyncratic and strange. They are as if rocks froze in mid transformation. I haven't had the space to build one and don't now. So I decided my third kiln in Detroit would attempt to use the principles of anagama kiln - wood fire, strong draft, radiant heat, duration, atmospheric flashings - in the smallest configuration possible. I thought a spiral might work. The flames would get pulled through the spiral, the heat transferring to the front as it left the chimney which shared a wall. It would be efficient and beautiful, relying on half-step concentrations of the heat to focus the flames on the pieces and produce enough heat within the kiln to properly fire the works. The final version was 4 feet by 3 feet by 2 feet, smaller than any wood-fire kiln I've come across. This too was constructed on a brick base. The walls were made of clay from the backyard and vaults were built over a galvanized wire armature. Nora wanted to create icons to represent a reset with ideals for a future time after time. They would be fired in this kiln, a kiln whose form mimics Smithsonian conceptions of time. She also wanted to include the kiln in her presentation of this work and so inspired by the fire sculpture processes of Nina Hole and Fred Olson's economical kiln designs, we got some kaowool fire blankets and insulated the entire mass. We fired it wet for 72 hours, reaching a soaking temperature of approximately 1600 degrees Fahrenheit, Cone 04-01.

**Reconstruction: Steps**

1. Chimney
2. 10 A, 1 A, 1
3. 18, 14 A, 4 A: 4 in walls, tapering to 2 on interior
4. 13, 5 A, 6 A, 7 A, 10 A

inches: 1 brick @ chimney base  
3 bricks @ diameter

Test chimney height, diameter of 6" then up 6" BW  
Slope up into chimney or bank 17"

1 brick @ chimney base  
3 bricks @ diameter BW

**DRY**

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Labels: 1. Dry, 2. Fire, 3. Soak, 4. Cool, 5. Load, 6. Pack, 7. Drive

**Robert Smithson, Spirals, c. 1970.** © 2010 Smithsonian Foundation by SIAE, Rome, 2 Private Collection. Courtesy: James Coe New York

**Nora's icons fired relatively clean, with only a few gaining distinct flashings of iron, calcium, zinc, sulfur and salt.**

**The next kiln will be of a similar design, but built more slowly so that the structure of the arches can be made wavy to act as periodic down drafts that force the gasses from combustion to strike the figures inside. I will also fire the kiln for at least 96 hours in an attempt to increase the amount of glazing on the figures.**

**1st brickwork construction of a spiral kiln**

I watched Joel Kuennen make three kilns in Detroit this summer. Wild Ass Beyond contaminated through collaboration, spinning in it a mess of lives across many states. This third kiln was the product of several experiments in style and size and material, refinements he made to get to a near-perfect firing without breaks or much shattering, more and more complex deposits and streaks and marks on the sculptures. I watched him make

and unmake the kilns, draw and design and redesign them, break down and reconstruct.

We spun languages, and fired bene cano and hindi.

The making of the third kiln became directly linked to our work in this show, an analogue for the intellectual work we were hoping to do all together. In September, Jack Halberstam gave a beautiful talk at the New York Art Book Fair about how tiring it was to hear intellectuals cry about the master's tools, which Audre Lorde of course had said could not dismantle the master's house. We've forgotten what Lorde was telling us to do, Halberstam said, that we needed to dismantle the master's house. Not just endless critique of the tools we use, but active breakdown of the house.

Undoing symbols, binary structures, and hierarchies, making gestures at some alternative mythology - all of this seemed more manageable than making a kiln, firing it, cooling it, and then deconstructing it in Detroit in forty-plus fragments, to

We claim a gorgeous, baroque reassemble in New York City a week later. Joel built the kiln, and when I got back to Detroit, we began the drying of the shell, and began padding it out in ceramic

blankets in the pouring rain, then driving out to Lansing to a glass factory to get more to secure the whole as the serious fire began. Together we built the fire up and would check in and feed it big pieces of wood every hour, in alternating four hour shifts. In the middle of the night we would crawl into bed to shake the other awake, hug them for about five or ten minutes, and then ask them with some regret to go out into the cold

We built up a slow and steady burn over the first 24 hours, and then began the aggressive firing which had us kneeling before the kiln's mouth every fifteen minutes, watching the fire grow and the bodies of the figures glowing white, and the body of the entire kiln glowing red through the blankets, the spiraling of the heat and flame rapid and frantic.

Joel tells me that all the kilns use the same principles in different ways: "combustion, retention, and transference," and so was a new experiment in creating icons.

Decolonization is a process. We knead and work the clay, feeling for grit and any cold spots. We try our best to examine each word we

use, turn each image over and over again. Decolonization is thinking through the stage, the set lighting, and the rotting wood the whole structure is built on.

Do we still want to be innocent? Do we still want to be loved by our settler peers? Do we still worry more about the comfort and ease of others than our own excruciating pain? Is our thinking linked to the recovery of indigenous land and ancestral home lands? What ancestral home lands?

a future that sounds, looks, and feels like our innermost thoughts.

Decolonization work is mental detoxification, an aggressive purifying scrub of deep brain folds. We are asked to release our precious egos to humbling procedures of self-examination.

Decolonizing ourselves means grappling with how our own preservation of settler culture and the mentality of philosophers we defend, the aesthetics we choose to critically defend, the structures we defend.

Maybe we gild a sinking ship with untenable visions of alternative futurity. Maybe we tap-dance to talk of freedom for people half-listening. Our decolonizing of self can be performative, work mostly done for our cultural peers in a closed economy. Can we move fluidly with these ideas out onto the street?

How do we unsettle ourselves? How do children of colonization and settlement begin to reclaim what we don't even have the name for? Where do we begin when we don't know our own ancestors, their names? After the violence of exile, and transatlantic migration, and compounded family trauma, that makes us fear our patriarchal, violent mother cultures, what is worth defending in it? What if we don't even know what was taken from us, or what loss to mourn?

To make space to fire a new brain, fire a new love, to fire the core of an imaginary of what love can even look like, we might need to learn how to build better and better kilns. Minds to burn inside at a thousand, 1500, 2000 degrees,

alongside all the wilder icons of invincible love or power or inversion that we are capable of thinking. A crucible burning the shallow forms of decolonization away. Our thinking burning itself, shedding its layers of self-protection, the record of all our triumphs given over to ash.



### PRESERVATION OF COLONIZATION & SETTLEMENT

### → CALLED OUT

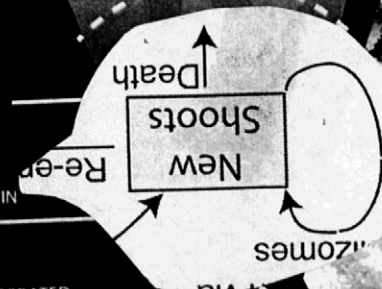
SELF-LABELED ACTS OF DECOLONIZATION OR EQUIVALENT MOVEMENT NOT CENTERED ON INDIGENOUS LAND & LIFEWAY, QUITE POSSIBLY MOTIVATED BY ATTEMPTS TO RESCUE SETTLER INNOCENCE WITH RESETTLEMENT AND REOCCUPATION OF INDIGENOUS LANDS

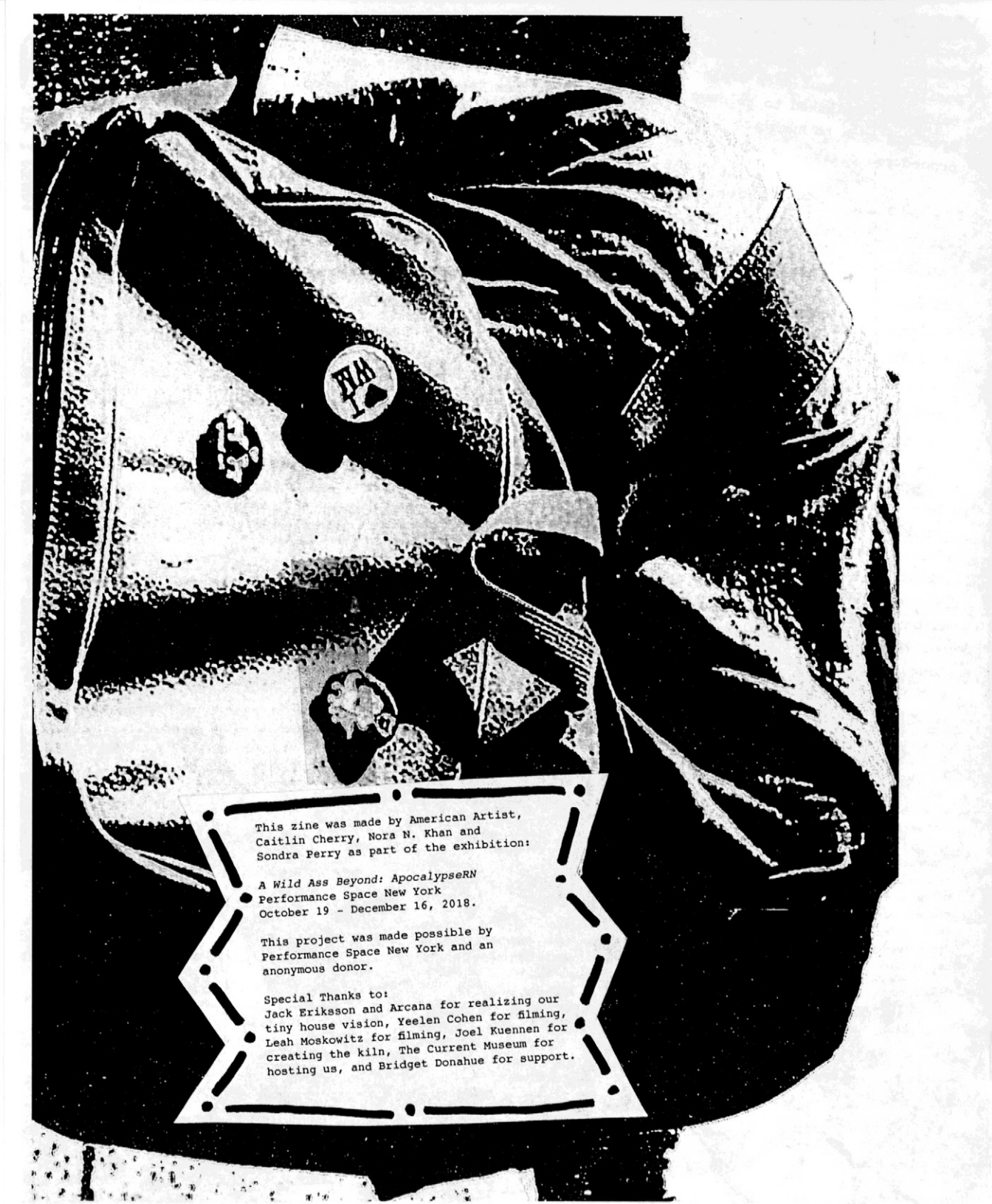
ACTS OF ACADEMIC OR INTELLECTUAL ANALYSIS, ANTI-OPPRESSION ACTION, RESISTANCE TO EMPIRE, ANTI-RACIST SOLIDARITY, AND OTHER ACTIONS ASSUMED TO BE DECOLONIZATION BUT NOT CENTERED ON INDIGENOUS LAND & LIFEWAY.

EXTERNALIZED ACTS OF ACADEMIC OR INTELLECTUAL ANALYSIS, ANTI-OPPRESSION AND ANTI-RACIST SOLIDARITY, AND OTHER ACTS OF DECOLONIZATION CENTERED IN THE RECOVERY OF INDIGENOUS LAND & LIFEWAY.

AUTHENTIC ACTS OF INTERNALIZED AND EXTERNALIZED DECOLONIZATION ROOTED IN THE RECOVERY OF ONE'S INDIGENOUS CONSCIOUSNESS, LAND, & LIFEWAY.

DECOLONIZATION AS AN ALIVE, INTEGRATED PROCESS TO REAWAKEN, LIVE, AND PROTECT THE LAND & LIFEWAY OF ONE'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE ON ANCESTRAL HOME LANDS.





This zine was made by American Artist,  
Caitlin Cherry, Nora N. Khan and  
Sondra Perry as part of the exhibition:

*A Wild Ass Beyond: ApocalypseRN*  
Performance Space New York  
October 19 - December 16, 2018.

This project was made possible by  
Performance Space New York and an  
anonymous donor.

Special Thanks to:  
Jack Eriksson and Arcana for realizing our  
tiny house vision, Yeelen Cohen for filming,  
Leah Moskowitz for filming, Joel Kuennen for  
creating the kiln, The Current Museum for  
hosting us, and Bridget Donahue for support.