# ART AND KNOWLEDGE IN TIME OF CRISIS

WEAPONISING
IGNORANCE

UNKNOWING
KNOWING

Zheng Mahler

EVIDENTIARY
REALISM

Paolo Cirio

Ho Tzu Nyen

Anna Engelhardt &
Mark Cinkevich

RIWAQ

POLITICISING
KNOWLEDGE

Jennifer Gradecki
& Derek Curry

ZONES OF
UNCERTAINTY

UKRAiNATV

COMMODIFYING
DOUBT

# REALLY?

# REALLY?

## ART AND KNOWLEDGE IN TIME OF CRISIS

**EXHIBITION DATES**
**23 JUN – 29 SEP '24**

**OPENING EVENT**
**22 JUN 2024**

***Really? Art and Knowledge in Crisis***
**Curated by Mi You & David Garcia**

**ARTISTS**
**Paolo Cirio**
**Anna Engelhardt & Mark Cinkevich**
**Jennifer Gradecki & Derek Curry**
**Ho Tzu Nyen**
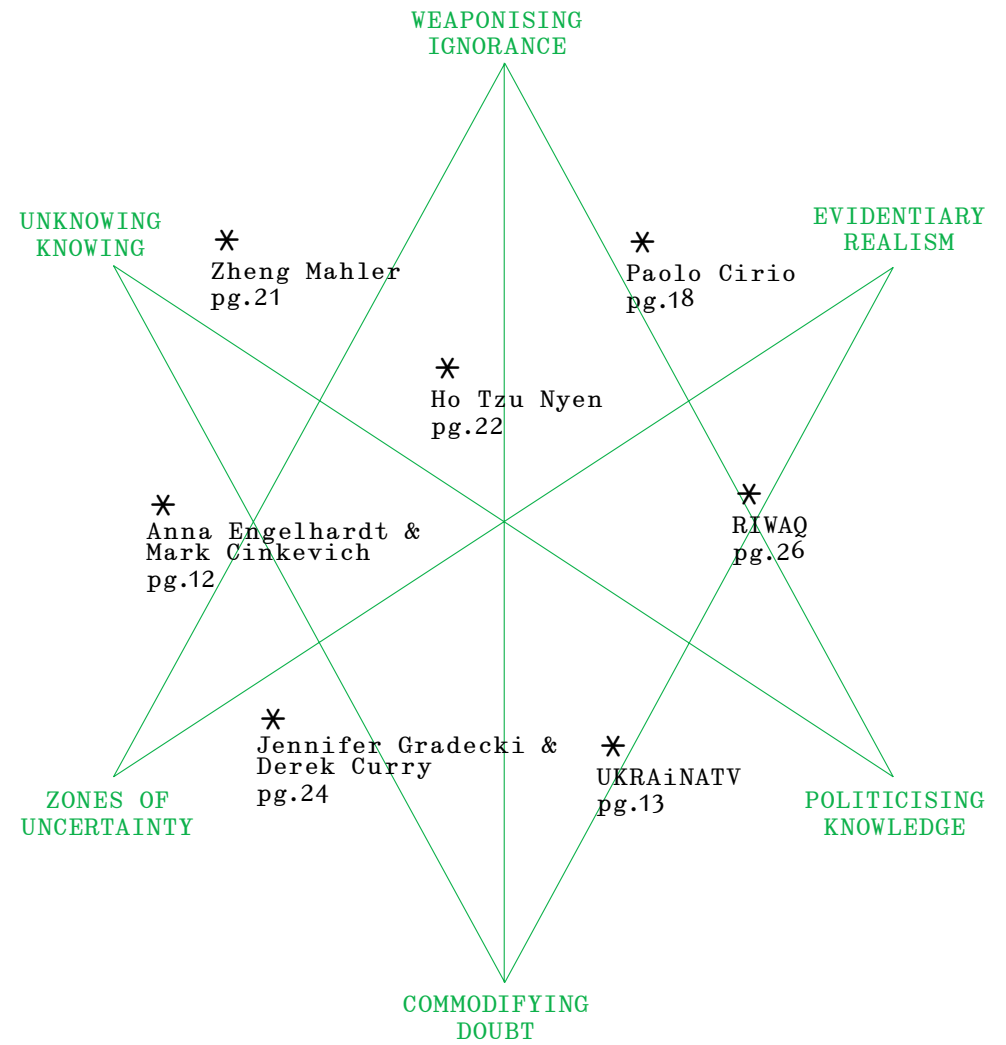**Zheng Mahler**
**RIWAQ**
**UKRAiNATV**

**EXHIBITION DESIGN**
**Ruben Pater**

**FRAMER**
**FRAMED**

"Doubt is our product, since it is the
best means of competing with the 'body
of fact' that exists in the mind of the
general public."

— Internal memo of the Brown &
Williamson Tobacco Corporation, 1969.

# INDEX

# INTRODUCTION FRAMER FRAMED

## Josien Pieterse & Ashley Maum

Faith in social progress and scientific rationality, which for centuries self-soothed the Western mind, has given way to an era of radical uncertainty and unpredictable risk. This is a major factor in the erosion of public trust in institutions that are thought to hold 'knowledge'. Reinforcing this sense of uncertainty is a massive proliferation of news and social media and, in parallel, their commercialisation and monopolisation.

The Framer Framed exhibition *As If: The Media Artist as Trickster* (2017) took this as its focal point. 'Post-truth' extended in large letters across the floor; proclaimed Word of the Year 2016 only a few months earlier by Oxford Dictionaries, the term addresses how emotions and personal beliefs influence public opinion more than facts. *As If*, with co-curators David Garcia and Annet Dekker, took inspiration from political media art that engages various forms of deception. Symbolically, the exhibition opened on January 20, 2017, the day of Donald Trump's inauguration. The former and possible future U.S. president, who mobilises divisive notions of 'fake news' and 'political witch hunts' in his favour.

The *As If* artists played the role of 'tricksters', using a variety of ploys and hacks to expose invisible power structures while outlining alternatives for the future. At its core, *As If* addressed one of the most pressing political issues: the radical blurring of the boundary between fiction and reality in public media. The explosion of the media landscape coincides with the increasing ease with which individuals, as well as corporations and political movements, can intervene within it. This expanse breeds malintent, as fear proves motivating for clicks and likes. We are increasingly witnessing the manipulation of data, scientific context and opinions.

These challenges to certainty propagate within the grounds of more justly intentioned efforts to question Eurocentric infrastructures of knowledge and, more fundamentally, how we know the world. In recent decades, we have seen increasing criticism of what were previously referred to as the 'grand narratives' of history. These grand narratives about wars, revolutions and battles, for example, often ignored power inequalities based on gender, ethnicity and sexual preference and the specific — often privileged — position of the one who was speaking. The result was the exclusion of diverse groups and still-ongoing processes of oppression. This criticism was articulated, among others, within postmodern theory, in which feminist and postcolonial perspectives occupied an important place, making inroads in both universities and society.

The unfolding shift in authority, the questioning of the modernist ideal of progress and a new view of historical events led to a different view of the role of cultural institutions. Back in 2013, the Dutch Council for Culture indicated in its report 'Ontgrenzen en Verbinden' (Breaking Boundaries and Connecting):

> "Each generation gives its own form and content to the need for recognition. Historical objects, artistic or otherwise, can each time figure in different contexts and thus acquire new meanings as heritage that meet current social needs. Both museums for contemporary art, as well as heritage, are ultimately not only interpreters of a historically or culturally 'foreign' world, but above all also constructors of their own."

This progressive policy made clear an understanding of the role cultural institutions, such as museums and exhibition spaces, play in the narration of history, a discussion which has been at the core of Framer Framed since its start. As we attempt to address history with a less universal and more multi-vocal approach, it is important to broaden what is 'one's own' and to make that which is 'foreign' part of it.

We open this exhibition, co-curated by Mi You and David Garcia, at a point of significant change in Dutch politics. Many of us are asking ourselves, *really?* — as we watch a new government take hold and witness the rise of far-right politics across Europe. Precisely at this juncture, we see a new need for shared references emerging, but opinions differ radically on who may contribute to the formation of these references. Political scientist Achille Mbembe addressed the European fallacy of 'here' and 'there'. We live in a time when we must be and are more inevitably aware that this world is one. The illusion that we are not deeply connected, of any distinction between here and there, crumbles as cries for change in one place echo resoundingly in others.

In this exhibition, we want to do justice to the current state of artistic-scientific research and the complexity of contemporary issues and, in the process, also offer audiences an action perspective. Through various forms of forensic and multi-visual research, *Really? Art and Knowledge in Time of Crisis* asks fundamental questions about the meaning of *knowing* and *not knowing*, emphasising the fragmentation and relativisation of knowledge in a multipolar world.

# CURATORIAL TEXT

David Garcia & Mi You

The exhibition *Really? Art and Knowledge in Time of Crisis* highlights a movement of artists who put the changing relationship between knowledge and politics at the centre of their practice. Typically, they combine a data-savvy 'investigative aesthetic' with a powerful 'aesthetics of resistance'. They have come to prominence at a time when autocratic, reactionary populists are using sophisticated forms of misinformation to manufacture strategic doubt. This is more effective than traditional forms of state and corporate propaganda, as it suggests that the search for truth itself has become futile, successfully undermining the spaces of public reason where we might speak truth to power.

> "The internet for all its benefits, has led to an epistemological crisis of unprecedented scale, facilitating the international rise of demagogues and reactionary populists."
> –Mark O'Connell, *New Statesman* (July 2019)

What is striking in this quotation is that Mark O'Connell has chosen to characterise our current predicament not as a political, cultural, economic or even an ecological crisis but as 'epistemological', a crisis of knowledge. Moreover, one of the aggravating symptoms of this condition is the way a new breed of malign state and corporate actors have bypassed traditional forms of propaganda. Instead, they are focusing on forms of misinformation that go beyond simple deception, operating instead through establishing 'zones of uncertainty' or 'grey areas'. Well-established norms on subjects such as climate change, migration, poverty, race and sexual identity are not so much rebuffed through competing narratives but systematically called into question through tactics of obfuscation, irony, deniability, displacement and distraction. This is not simply about deception or the struggle between competing narratives, it is a war on knowledge itself.

## AS IF: THE MEDIA ARTIST AS TRICKSTER

The stakes are high, as this is a condition we feel directly in our lives through the emergence of social divisions so deep that we do not simply disagree; *we no longer share the same reality*. It is a condition that has been building for decades. Indeed, it was already the subject for us back in 2017 in an earlier exhibition at Framer Framed titled *As If: The Media Artist as Trickster*, which featured artworks that infiltrate the media landscape with tricks, ruses, subterfuge and other tactics whereby the weak turn the tables on the strong in an asymmetric battle for the social mind. The show's title emphasised the approach of these tactical tricksters who, rather than simply demanding change, acted *As If* change had already taken place.

We began using the slogan 'Fiction as Method' to push these tactics forward. However, Paolo Cirio, one of the artists in the show, objected, stating that he did not see his practice in those terms. In contrast, his approach was founded on a form of data-driven realism, offering new ways of speaking truth to power. The years that have passed since *As If* have only intensified the need for art that stakes a claim in a new politics of the real. It was deep within the complexities of this debate and its nuances that were the starting point for the exhibition, *Really? Art and Knowledge in Time of Crisis.*

## INVESTIGATIVE AESTHETICS

In 2016, curator Tatiana Bazzichelli took an important step towards emphasising an empirical approach to artistic research by focusing on the aesthetics of 'whistleblowing', or as she called it, "art as evidence". Bazzichelli's event, *CITIZENS OF EVIDENCE*, was significant in exploring the investigative impact of grassroots communities and citizens to expose injustice, corruption and power asymmetries.

This *realist* approach was further articulated by Paolo Cirio, who introduced the term 'Evidential Realism'. Typically, this formation refers to artists who combine data gathering, data analysis and digital imaging to illuminate complex social systems for broadly progressive social purposes. Cirio has described how the "the truth-seeking artworks [...] explore the notion of evidence and its modes of representation". It is noteworthy that this is possibly the first fully fledged *research*-led contemporary art movement with explicitly empirical methodologies.

Scientific realism applied in art for progressive ends is not new. Antecedents of the evidential movement were already in place in 19th-century naturalism, which self-consciously modelled itself on empirical methods. One of the clearest examples can be found in Émile Zola's literary theory and practice developed in texts such as *Le Roman expérimental*, which deploys an idealised notion of the scientific method to art in order to bring about social progress. Artists like Courbet and novelists like Dreiser and Zola were not bystanders, they were socially engaged. 19th-century naturalism was a political project as much as an investigative or aesthetic one. This exhibition and its accompanying debates seek to answer the question, who are their counterparts today?

## KNOWING AND UNKNOWING

Although Evidential Realism represents a meaningful response to the rise of populist demagogues, we are keenly aware that this movement carries risks of its own. The new realists do not persuade through evidence and analysis alone but also through extensive visualisation of data analytics; this work has a tendency to project an aura of the *irrefutable*. It is a visual language with a powerful aesthetic appeal to modernist sensibilities. But, to what end? Haven't we learned to be sceptical about anything that resembles a universal and uncomplicated scientific empiricism? The counterargument is that despite the risks, these new realists offer a combative response to the widespread accusation that contemporary art is part of a wider cultural relativism that has lost belief in the truth. This exhibition could be seen as a space for unpacking and contesting these claims and counterclaims.

We cannot speak of knowledge in this context outside of how data is classified and organised. To this day, descriptions of the natural world operate within an 18th-century Linnaean taxonomy with its distinction between genus and species. Though still dominant, botanist Adam Rutherford has pointed out that it is a pre-Darwinian system based on biological sciences that go back to Aristotle's fixed and hierarchical *scala naturae,* or 'great chain of being'. However, the most politically consequential and malign aspect of the Linnaean scheme of classification arrives with the publication of the twelfth edition of *Systema Naturae* in which he divides homo-sapiens into four distinct subgroups or 'races', attributing to each behavioural characteristics and value judgements which in any era are clearly racist. This could be seen as the birthplace of the pernicious cult of scientific racism, which has been used to justify the worst horrors of subsequent centuries, including colonialism, mass murder, the Shoah and chattel slavery.

Our own world, entangled as it is in algorithmic computation, is also no stranger to taxonomic hierarchies whose workings remain alarmingly secretive and opaque. And equally prone to entrenching sinister hierarchies of power and knowledge that intensify silos and feedback loops, whilst contributing to a general collapse of trust in the institutions that are supposed to 'know'.

## ARTISTIC RESEARCH BEYOND
## THE ACADEMY  AND THE ART WORLD

Though subject to pressures, key institutions remain intact and underpin many developments in art and research through the combined resourcing and legitimising power of the art world and the academy. Art historian Claire Bishop wrote, "Although research-based art is a global phenomenon, it is inseparable from the rise of doctoral programs for artists in the West, specifically in Europe, in the early '90s".

Perhaps the most developed example in this domain of a positive role for the academy is Forensic Architecture. This important group is configured as a research centre at Goldsmith's University in London. In this institutional framework, there is support for a critical mass of interdisciplinary researchers, including journalists, architects, 3D modellers, animators, coders and lawyers who are capable of managing multiple projects. This extraordinary combination of disciplines and experimental methods routinely achieves outcomes that are not only respected in legal and journalistic contexts, but are also featured in major art venues around the world. However, it is an example that is by no means universal or even typical. In his influential book *Knowledge Beside Itself*, art historian Tom Holert points to a strong and problematic correlation between the increasing importance of knowledge production in contemporary art and the simultaneous rise of the global knowledge economy. Holert argues that this transformation has made art an influential agent in shaping contemporary knowledge.

In her essay, *Aesthetics of Resistance? Artistic Research as Discipline and Conflict*, artist Hito Steyerl echoes Holert's concerns, emphasising the risks of academic institutionalisation. She highlights the fact that practitioners are likely to find themselves "complicit with new modes of production within cognitive capitalism". However, Steyerl also argues that these risks are just one part of a much larger story and should be weighed against a parallel history of artistic research that could be viewed from the perspective of global movements of struggle and emancipation that can be seen across most of the 20th century.  This under examined long view of artistic research is usefully characterised by Steyerl as an *aesthetics of resistance*.

The artists/researchers in the exhibition, *Really? Art and Knowledge in Time of Crisis* have each found distinctive ways of embodying an aesthetics of resistance. Furthermore, they have done so in the context of multi-layered debates about what it means to *know* and *not know* within the fragmentation and relativisation of knowledge in a multipolar world.

The central challenge to us all remains how to identify and mitigate the consequences of life in the midst of a crisis in knowledge and a crisis in politics, which one and the same thing. The exhibition aims to expand a space of practical reasoning, which recognises that knowledge is not a zero-sum game. As much as we can and should validate facts in the public domain, as we also learn to identify the places where we no longer know.

**Mi You** is a professor of Art and Economies at the University of Kassel/documenta Institut. Her academic interests are in new and historical materialism, performance philosophy, as well as the history, political theory and philosophy of Eurasia.

She works with the Silk Road as a figuration for re-imagining networks, and has curated exhibitions and programs at Asian Culture Center in Gwangju, South Korea, Ulaanbaatar International Media Art Festival, Mongolia (2016), Zarya CCA, Vladivostok (2018), and the research/curatorial platform *Unmapping Eurasia* (2018-) with Binna Choi. Her recent exhibitions focus on socialising technologies and 'actionable speculations', such as *Sci-(no)-Fi* at the Academy of the Arts of the World, Cologne (2019) and *Lonely Vectors* at Singapore Art Museum (2022).

She was one of the curators of the 13th Shanghai Biennale (2020-2021). On the social front, she serves as chair of committee on Media Arts and Technology for the transnational NGO Common Action Forum.

**David Garcia** is an artist, academic and organiser based in the United Kingdom. He is a Professor of Digital Arts and Media Activism at Bournemouth University. Garcia has pioneered new forms of critical engagement with art and media based on occupying the cracks that began to appear in the edifice of broadcast media in the 1990s. For Framer Framed, he previously curated the exhibitions *As If: The Media Artist as Trickster* (2017) alongside Annet Dekker and Ian Alan Paul.

Through a series of events, most notably *Next 5 Minutes,* David Garcia and his peers identified a new type of intervention that was part of a larger trend. This trend, previously uncategorised, was a set of cultural and political practices they coined as 'Tactical Media'. Garcia, along with Dutch media theorist Eric Kluitenberg, co-founded the award-winning *Tactical Media Files,* an online repository of Tactical Media materials past and present.

Alongside these projects, Garcia has been active in higher education, where he has been instrumental in developing and embedding processes that unlock the radical potential of art as research.

# ARTISTS

# ANNA ENGELHARDT & MARK CINKEVICH

## Terror Element (2024)
Video

*Terror Element* is a hybrid documentary exploring the investigative method and the fallibility of truth. Set in the present day, the film follows Nina, a reclusive forensic expert who spends most of her time in the crime laboratory. When she rediscovers a videotape her mother made about a notorious series of explosions in Russia in 1999, she is forced to confront the uncomfortable truth behind her faith in science.

Comprised of CGI and archival footage, this film pieces together the contradictory statements presented by authorities, focusing on an unknown substance found at one of the bomb sites. In the widely televised investigations, forensic laboratories became stage sets in a real-life crime fiction, one that became a pretext for the second invasion of Chechnya. As Nina's investigation spirals further into uncertainty, her own methods become part of a wider conspiracy.

*Terror Element* has been commissioned by Framer Framed with the support of the Netherlands Film Fund and Creative Industries Fund NL as part of the collaborative project *Immerse/Interact*.

Anna Engelhardt is a pseudonym used by a video artist and writer. Her investigative practice follows the traces of material violence, focusing on what could be seen as the 'ghost' of information. The toxic information environments Engelhardt deals with stem from structures of occupation and dispossession. She has exhibited at various institutions including ICA, transmediale in Berlin, Ars Electronica, Kyiv Biennial, BFI London Film Festival and other institutions. Engelhardt is a core faculty member at Design Academy Eindhoven and co-editor of *Chimeras: Inventory of Synthetic Cognition* (2022, Onassis Foundation).

Mark Cinkevich is an interdisciplinary researcher and artist born in Belarus. In his practice, he is interested in critical, speculative and experimental aspects of art that operate at the intersection of fact and fiction. His work focuses on the post-Soviet infrastructural and social landscape, particularly concepts of nuclear colonialism, infrastructural colonialism, extractivism and monstrosity. His works have been shown at various institutions, including transmediale in Berlin, steirischer herbst in Graz, the BFI London Film Festival, the National Gallery of Art in Vilnius, Ars Electronica in Linz and the Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art in Ljubljana.

# UKRAiNATV

## GREEN DEAL (2022-ongoing)
Livestream installation / pop-up studio

#HOPECORE, #STREAMART, #GREENDEAL – an ongoing, morphing, and hybrid project developed in the shadow of the war in Ukraine amidst technological and geopolitical neo-imperialism. *GREEN DEAL* starts as a gallery installation, a pop-up studio, expanding into a horizontal network linked to the home studio in Kraków and other partners. The program includes livestreaming activities, workshops, lectures, and events testing decentralised and hybrid togetherness between people, machines, avatars, signals, and data.

UKRAiNATV is an experimental, cross-sectoral project in media culture that focuses on new relational strategies and hybrid production forms. It is an Internet TV station that specialises in creating live audiovisual connections, serving as a multi-channel streaming hub, recording studio, and glocal network. The project is made up of a diverse group of individuals, including artists, media enthusiasts, activists, researchers, musicians and DJs from Ukraine, Poland, Belarus, Italy and other countries. This collective also includes individuals in need, refugees, nomadic artists, and others who may not feel safe expressing themselves freely in their home countries, and who are seeking new opportunities within this experimental framework.

Anna Engelhardt & Mark Cinkevich, *Terror Element* (2024)

# PAOLO CIRIO

## *Climate History (2024)*
Series of 96 prints
Variable dimensions

This work comprises a collection of historical events, forming a timeline illustrating climate change's political and economic history. These historical pieces of evidence trace the role of the fossil fuels industry's economic and political influence that contributed to global warming from 1912 to 2012. The artwork is presented with a grid of paper sheets that assemble the timeline, showing the often-overlooked magnitude of this history. Paolo Cirio compiled this timeline through years of research by comparing various articles and publications. To keep this history updated, Cirio shared the timeline as an open database, allowing researchers, historians, activists, lawyers, and journalists to use and contribute to it.

## *Climate Legal Evidence (2021)*
*1988 Shell latitudes temperature increase*
Canvases printed in B/W and acrylic paint, 106 x 168 cm

*1988 Shell ocean acidification*
Canvases printed in B/W and acrylic paint, 138 x 130 cm

This series of works consists of graphs taken from internally commissioned studies by Shell in the 1980s that had assessed the effects of their greenhouse gas emissions. These studies had already precisely established that the emissions would have produced a rise in temperatures, acidification of the oceans, and many other adverse effects. These documents remained undisclosed for decades and are now used as evidence in lawsuits against Shell. Paolo Cirio highlighted the graphs taken from these historical documents by printing them on large canvases and painting them in bright colours.

Paolo Cirio engages with social, economic, and cultural issues of contemporary society. His interventions and research-based artworks are presented as installations, lectures, artefacts, photos, videos, and public art, both offline and online. Cirio has exhibited in international museums and has won prestigious art awards. Hundreds of media outlets worldwide have covered his artworks, and he regularly gives public lectures and workshops at leading universities. Cirio's investigation of evidence and sensitive information employs his exposure, appropriation, and recontextualisation techniques. Cirio investigates and exposes data, systems, facts, and documents regarding urgent contemporary issues using a journalistic, scientific, and analytical approach. The evidence he finds assembles, and presents is an integral part of his work and form the basis of his creative regulatory solutions in which he invites everyone to encourage citizens' agency.



Paolo Cirio, *Climate History* (2024)
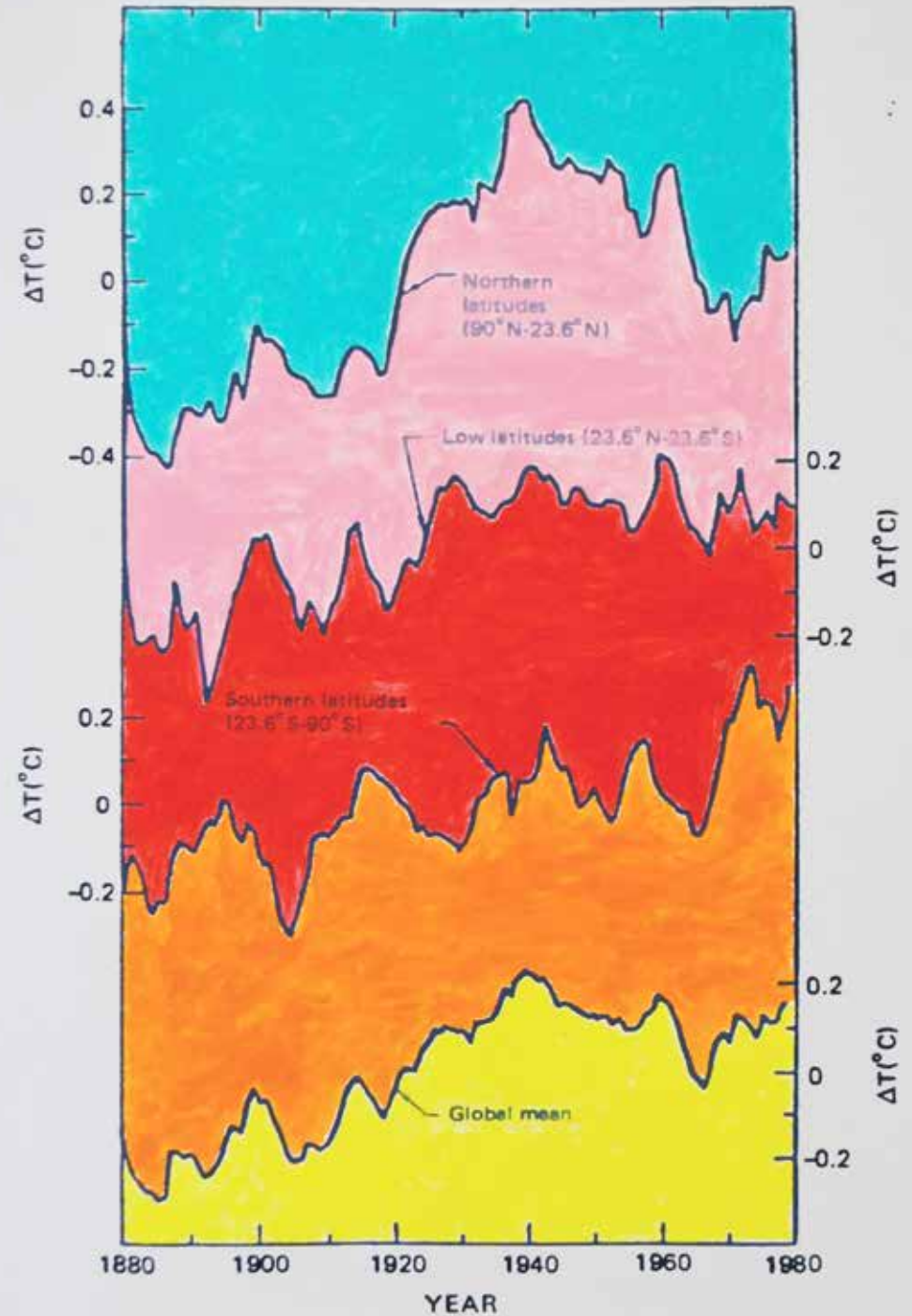
# ZHENG MAHLER

### *Bubalus Bubalis 14-40,000hz (2021)*
Mixed media installation

Zheng Mahler's long-term ethnographic research informs this work on the wild water buffalo of Lantau Island, Hong Kong, which looks into how the island's geography and wetland ecology have been shaped by its bovid (water buffalo and cow) populations. Once known as the 'rice basket' of Hong Kong, Lantau suffered a substantial agricultural decline in the 1970s and 1980s, when water buffalo and cattle once kept for agricultural labour were released into the wild and became feral. These nonhuman agents – water buffalo (Bubalus bubalis) in particular – have terraformed their new landscape, turning abandoned farmland into biodiverse wetland ecologies. The delicate, spontaneous web of life thus created will soon fall under siege as the Lantau Tomorrow Vision proposed by the Hong Kong government, a land reclamation megaproject, continues its course.

Zheng Mahler, founded in 2009 and based on Lantau Island, Hong Kong, is a collective composed of artist Royce Ng and anthrozoologist Daisy Bisenieks, both from Melbourne, Australia. Through a research-based practice, Zheng Mahler investigates global trade as well as the relationship between nature and technology. Using digital media, performance, and installation, the duo creates immersive sensory encounters to challenge their disciplines and decentering the human experience. Zheng Mahler has had solo presentations at the Johann Jacobs Museum in Zurich, Switzerland, and a PhD Group in Hong Kong. The collective has also exhibited projects at the Johann Jacobs Museum in Zurich, and a PhD Group in Hong Kong. The collective has also exhibited at various institutions such as the KW Institute of Contemporary Art in Berlin, Kunsthalle Mainz, the Helsinki Biennale, UCCA Dune in Beidaihe, the Singapore Museum of Art, M HKA in Antwerp, Asian Cultural Center in Gwangju, Shanghai Biennale, Tai Kwun Contemporary in Hong Kong, Akademie der Künste der Welt in Cologne and Performa Biennale New York, among others.

# HO TZU NYEN

### *The Cloud of Unknowing (2011)*
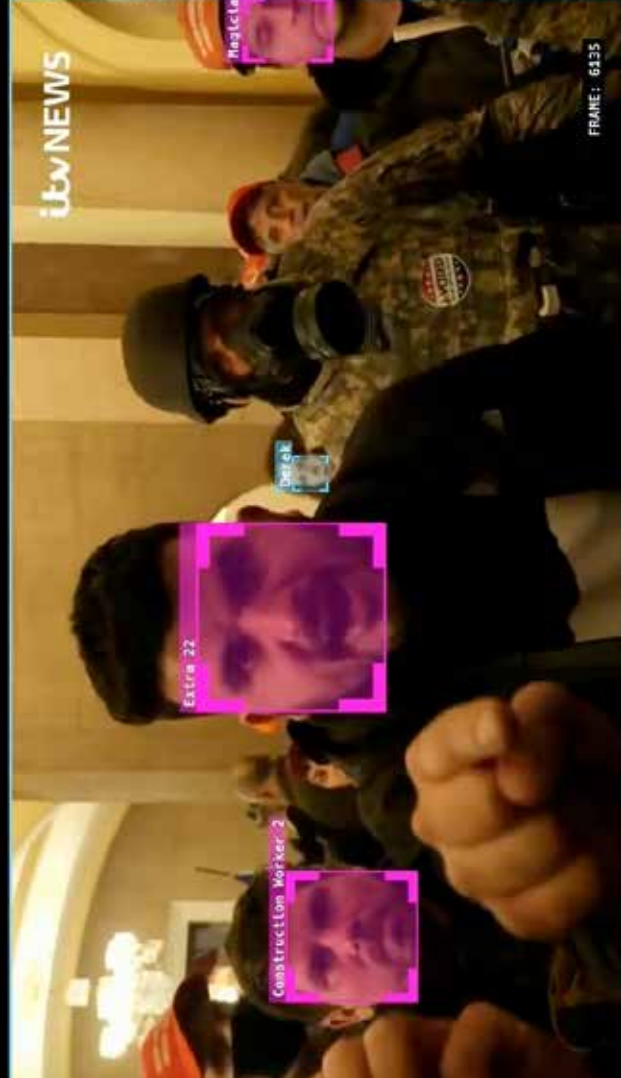```
Video installation
28 min.
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*The Cloud of Unknowing* is titled after a 14th-century mystical treatise on faith. The cloud is a metaphor for both an impediment to and reconciliation with the unknown. Referencing Hubert Damisch's *A Theory of /Cloud/: Toward a History of Painting,* where Damisch describes the cloud as "one of the most valued oneiric themes," this work is a visual explanation of the subject of the cloud, as expressed in the works of Correggio, Zurbarán and Chinese landscape painting. Just as the amorphous clouds in the sky rouse the imagination, this work induces hallucinatory recollections of the cloud in art. It begins with a film presenting scenes of eight characters in eight apartments. Each character has an encounter with a cloud that alternates between being embodied as a figure and as a vaporous mist. The film ends with the generation of a cloud in the actual space of the spectator — an encounter which, as the medieval text counsels, can only be grasped by the senses.

Ho Tzu Nyen was born in Singapore, where he lives and works. His films, film-based installations, and performances draw from various cultural materials and discourses, repurposing them into a visual machinery that animates the entanglement and complexity of history, subjectivity, and power.

Ho has recently had solo exhibitions at various prestigious venues including the Art Sonje Center, Singapore Art Museum, Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, and many more. He also represented Singapore at the 54th Venice Biennale. Additionally, he participated in group exhibitions such as the Thailand Biennale, Aichi Triennale, Gwangju Biennale, and Shanghai Biennale. In 2019, he co-curated the 7th Asian Art Biennial at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Art.

U.S. Capitol 1.06.2021

Extra 22 MATCH: 80.05%
Magician MATCH: 82.12%
Construction Worker 2 MATCH: 83.56%
Derek MATCH: 47.38%

Magician
itvNEWS
FRAME: 6435
Extra 22
Construction Worker 2

Current Best Match: 90.27%
Target: Extra 28
Frame: 3313

Boogaloo Bias

# JENNIFER GRADECKI & DEREK CURRY

## *Boogaloo Bias*
## *(2021 - ongoing)*
Interactive mixed media installation

*Boogaloo Bias* is an online application, interactive installation, and research project that highlights some of the known problems with law enforcement agencies' use of facial recognition technologies. These include the practice of 'brute forcing', where agents use images of celebrities who resemble a suspect when high-quality images are not available.

The *Boogaloo Bias* facial recognition algorithm is trained on the faces of characters from the 1984 film *Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo*. The project raises questions about automated decision-making, public accountability and oversight within a sociotechnical system where machines are contributing to a decision-making process. The interactive experience in *Boogaloo Bias* demonstrates how unregulated surveillance technology without public oversight can lead to absurdly erroneous results.

<u>Jennifer Gradecki</u> is an artist and theorist whose artistic practice and research investigates secretive and specialised sociotechnical systems and makes them more accessible to non-experts. Her projects have focused on financial instruments, intelligence analysis, dataveillance technologies, as well as social media misinformation and disinfor-

mation. Gradecki holds a PhD in Visual Studies from SUNY Buffalo and an MFA in New Genres from UCLA. She is currently an Associate Professor in Art and Design at Northeastern University in Boston. Her work has been exhibited at various institutions globally, and her research has been published in reputable journals. Additionally, her artwork has received funding from notable organisations.

<u>Derek Curry</u> is an artist-researcher whose work investigates the role of new technologies in society and technological power structures. He combines academic research with critical art-making to investigate the implications of technologies of control. His artworks often reverse-engineers and replicates technologies of control to better understand their implications and where assumptions or ideologies may have played a role in their development. Curry holds an MFA in New Genres from UCLA and a PhD in Media Study from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is currently an Associate Professor of Art and design at Northeastern University in Boston. His work has been exhibited at various international venues, and his research has been published in reputable journals.

# RIWAQ

*Verb to BE* / فعل الكينونة (2024)
`Mixed media installation`

Amidst the ongoing genocide in Gaza, we pay tribute to all Palestinian martyrs and salute those who are still holding on to their dreams for freedom.

Colonial powers are forces of extraction and disruption, which aim to extract the physical and disrupt the temporal realms of the colonised. They surpass material destruction by extracting bodies from their geographies and souls from their own bodies. It is about disrupting the links between a lived past and a prospective future, going against rootedness and the right of belonging. Today, being Palestinians teaches us that colonialism is about the total annihilation of the subaltern.

*Verb to BE* is not just a grammatical construct, it's a profound concept that sets the act of being within the fiercely contested context of occupied Palestine. 'Being' here is not just a state of existence; it is a conscious act, an everyday labour, and a process driven by intentionality that proclaims our fundamental right to exist. RIWAQ's mandate in reconstructing and reviving historic centres in Palestine embodies a counteract to both extraction and disruption; by transforming ruins into physical spaces of habitation, it restores the bonds between the people, their landscapes and history through the seemingly banal exercise of heritage restoration.

RIWAQ's act and ongoing work of repair is not just a physical restoration but a transformative process that embodies and transcends multiple forms of local knowledge. It is a model of collective knowledge production that recognises the people, the buildings, and the landscape as valuable resources. RIWAQ's work today is not just about preserving the past but also about contributing to the archives of the future, recognising that knowledge is a form of power with emancipatory potential.

This installation invites viewers to journey through the act of restoration through the eyes of the restorers – those who (re)build and revive traditional local knowledge to imagine a future that is written by and for them.

RIWAQ – Centre for Architectural Conservation – is a Palestinian organisation dedicated to preserving architectural heritage. Founded in 1991, RIWAQ has taken on the challenging complexities of preserving Palestinian collective memory through projects documenting and restoring architectural heritage sites across the West Bank and Gaza. RIWAQ focuses on rural areas in Palestine, and its projects go beyond job creation and restoration of historic structures. RIWAQ's goal is to raise awareness about the significance of cultural heritage as a cornerstone of Palestinian identity and collective memory. The organisation aims to create safe and suitable spaces for living and working, as well as the production and dissemination of knowledge. Throughout its existence, RIWAQ has transformed the field of heritage into a platform for addressing pressing socio-economic, cultural, and political issues. In this context, heritage becomes the field.

# EXHIBITION DESIGN: BACKSTAGE IS WHERE THE TRUTH HIDES
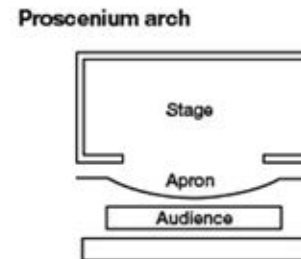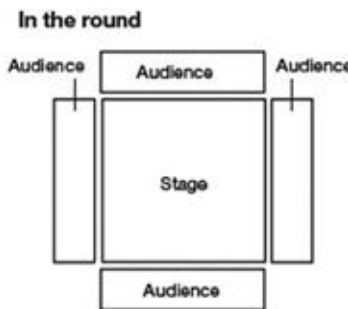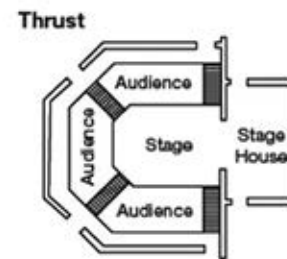
## Ruben Pater

News and knowledge are produced like any other commodity. The raw materials are often mined in harsh and exploitative conditions; organised by fixers and gathered at great risk to their lives. It is no exaggeration to state that over 108 journalists have been killed in Gaza in the last eight months. This cheap raw information is then refined, filtered and polished before being monetised by a handful of billionaires for consumption in 4K newsrooms. Subsequently, highly paid specialists use photoshop, clickbait, or interpret it as pundits until it becomes unrecognisable from its original form.

Who gets to decide what is edited out happens backstage, where the hand of power is most intimately felt. The distinction between knowledge and gossip has historically been more informed by the race, gender, and class of the messenger than by its authenticity. This embodiment of power and knowledge has now developed into a cult of personality around white male billionaire politicians like Trump and Putin, who can turn fiction into fact, much like turning water into wine. The exhibition features a collage of Kant and Trump, Descartes and Putin to represent centuries of mansplaining and the privatisation of knowledge by. Their compiled faces are juxtaposed with the theoretical framework in the form of algorithmic face recognition parameters.

Backstage is where we encounter the traces of violence and the material reality of the news and knowledge as commodities. In the exhibition design of *Really?* the artworks are arranged throughout the space to resemble a TV production set. The viewer must pass from the stage to the backstage, alternating between being the protagonist or an observer. Underpinning this intentionally confusing experience lies the concept of the 'zodiac of knowing and unknowing'. Lines of green tape on the floor form a diabolical diagram composed of terms from the curator's research. Exposing the artworks in relation to terms like 'unknowing knowing', 'weaponising ignorance' and 'evidentiary realism' exposes the production process behind this exhibition; the research and philosophical ideas that will hopefully lead to a discussion about what knowledge means in a time of crisis.



Centuries of mansplaining/devaluation of truth



Stage typologies

**Ruben Pater** is a graphic designer at a time when more design is about the last thing the world needs. He is based in Barcelona and teaches at the Elisava School of Design and Engineering and BAU College of Arts & Design. Searching for ethical alternatives, he designs, writes and teaches. After earning his bachelor's degree in graphic design, Ruben Pater worked as a designer for various studios in the Netherlands. His work experience led him to pursue a master's degree at the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam, which he completed in 2012. His practice combines journalism, activism and graphic design under the name Untold Stories. He is the author of two books on visual communication and design: *The Politics of Design* (2016) and *CAPS LOCK* (2021).

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