UPFOR

EYEBEAM IN OBJECTS

September 3 – October 31, 2015

Chloë Bass
Zach Blas
James Bridle
Heather Dewey-Hagborg
Zach Gage
Brian House
Addie Wagenknecht
curated by Roddy Schrock

RODDY SCHROCK, curator

Eyebeam In Objects grew out of my interest in challenging a group of Eyebeam technologists and artists, whose work primarily lies in immaterial forms, to render their work into objects for gallery presentation. The resultant pieces interrogate notions of materiality and its porous relationship to data and concepts.

Contemporary technologies are often pervasive yet deeply unknowable, even through first-hand experience. One is pleasantly unaware of encounters with algorithms while perusing social media sites, being bio-sensed throughout major metropolitan areas, or scanned by facial recognition surveillance while walking through airports. The unrecognized quality of these encounters is due to intentional obfuscation by its designers as well as code's tendency to self-present as immaterial. This has led to our current cultural landscape wherein technology seems to keep creeping up on us and jumping out from the shadows before we have the language to understand or the skills to navigate, nevermind resist. For instance, 3D printing technology has led to a legal wild west in which copyright law becomes nearly quaint in the face of infinite material replication.

Much of the contemporary art world, with some exceptions, appears to be flat-footed in the face of such radical and unpredictable change. This is not a complete surprise given its often cautious approach to support works engaging with technology. Some recent east coast shows have professed critical engagement with emerging digital practitioners that only amounts to ramping up the artifice and mythology of technology as black-box magic, or mere surface—outside practical comprehension or even accurate metaphorization. These shows have focused on using digital work as means to create "experiences" (in nearly the retail usage of the word)

which feel alien and extraterrestrial using dated visual language of what at times has the feeling of mid-twentieth century "rocketship aesthetics."

Despite the skewed state of public presentation and support, there is a large community of emerging digital artists whose work is uninterested in putting people under the spell of technology. The artists included in this show are deeply invested in challenging relationships to technology in an engaged and sustained manner. Their work is more interested in pulling the curtain back and trusting viewers' curiosity rather than creating a sheen of celebration.

Through a restraint of artifice, they gesture towards an aesthetics of exposure: the guts of the work hang out and illustrate the inherent materiality of digital-ness. After all, binary needs to be counted on physical hardware. The Cloud is not a cloud; in fact, it is a collection of giant warehouses throughout the world, made of plastic, concrete, metal, and glass, consuming fossil fuels at an alarming rate.

They are creating work that digs into issues of environmentalism, politics, information ownership, and the assumed inscrutability of technology itself. In essence, they might be closer to an activist folk tradition, by digital means. Actively exposing the material of our emerging technological relationships as an aesthetic can be a wedge to open broader and deeper understanding and ultimately collective and individual agency.

CHLOË BASS
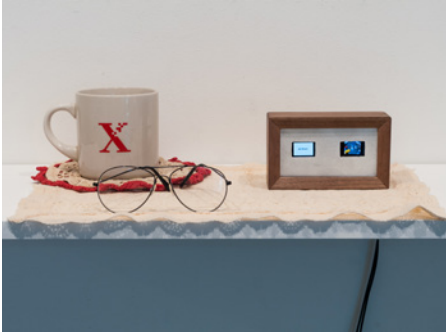
A person may be unaware of being photographed in a variety of situations, 2015 wood, aluminum, TinyScreens OLED displays, USB power supply, lace runner, crocheted doily, reading glasses, Xerox mug 6 x 16 x 12 inches

THE WORK

The video "peephole" box presents two views: on the left, black-on-white text written by the artist in response to watching *Citizenfour*, a documentary directed by Laura Poitras about Edward Snowden and illegal NSA wiretapping; on the right, a series of images culled from surveillance feeds the artist accessed via the Internet. The found objects establish a domestic setting, highlighting the conflict between where we believe we have privacy and where we can be under surveillance.

THE ARTIST

Chloë Bass (b. 1984) is an artist, curator and community organizer based in Brooklyn. She is the co-lead organizer for Arts in Bushwick, which produces Bushwick Open Studios, BETA Spaces, and SITE Fest. Recent artistic work exhibited at SCOPE Art Fair, CultureFix, the Bushwick Starr Theater, Figment, and The Last Supper Art Festival, as well as public spaces around New York City. She co-cheffed Umami: People + Food, a 90-person supper club; grows plants with Boswyck Farms; and curates with architecture gallery SUPERFRONT. Bass holds a BA in Theater Studies from Yale University and an MFA in Performance and Interactive Media Arts from Brooklyn College.

ZACH BLAS

Contra-Internet Inversion Practice #2:
Social Media Exodus (Call)
2015, eight prints on paper from digital screen-grabs
edition of 5 plus 2 AP

Contra-Internet Inversion Practice #2:
Social Media Exodus (Response), 2015
HD video with sound, 3 min 20 sec (loop)
edition of 5 plus 1 AP

Contra-Internet Inversion Practice #1: Constituting an Outside
(Utopian Plagiarism), 2015
HD video with sound, 5 min 57 sec (loop)
edition of 5 plus 1 AP
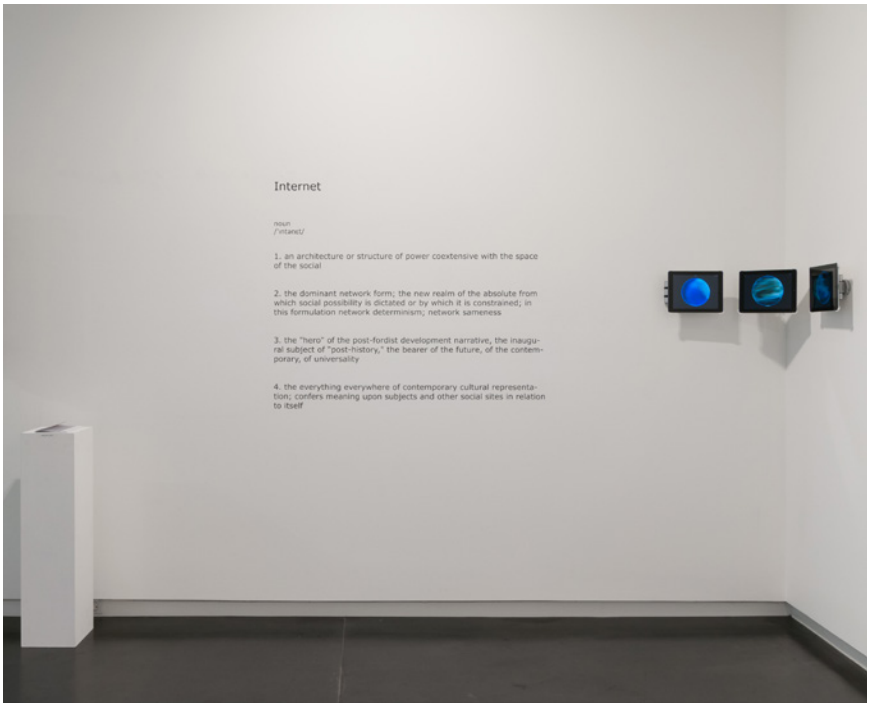
Contra-Internet Inversion Practice #1:
The End of the Internet (As We Knew It), 2015
staple-bound paperback book, 8.25 x 5.5 x .25
open edition

Contra-Internet Totality Study #1:
Internet, a definition, 2015
vinyl lettering in "web safe" font applied to wall
dimensions variable

Contra-Internet Totality Study #2:
Internet, a .gif triptych, 2015
three animated .gif files (display devices not included)
edition of 5 plus 2 AP

THE WORK

Comprised of multiple series, *Contra-Internet* critiques the Internet as a hegemonic descriptor for digital networking and premier arena of political control. This ongoing project also documents and speculates upon network alternatives that social movements are developing globally, such as autonomous mesh networks, encryption tactics, and darknets. Inspired by the transgender theorist Beatriz Preciado's *Manifesto contrasexual*, *Contra-Internet* is oriented from a feminist and queer perspective, in an effort to unite such political positions with a hacker ethos. The works aim to function as an expansive conceptual, practical, and experimental framework for refusing the neoliberal logic of "the Internet" while building alternatives to its infrastructure.

The *Inversion Practices* sub-series is comprised of short, performative videos that utilize various conceptual-technical tactics to abandon and subvert the Internet. *Totality Studies* expose the Internet as a socio-technical totality for which it is extremely difficult to imagine an outside or alternative.

THE ARTIST

Zach Blas (b. 1981) is an artist, writer and researcher whose work engages technology, queerness, and politics. He founded the art group Queer Technologies and co-founded The Public school Durham. Recent exhibitions and lectures took place at Abandon Normal Devices Festival, The Banff Centre, Center for 21st Century Studies, Medialab Prado, South by Southwest Interactive, transmediale and Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, where he co-curated the 2011 group exhibition *Speculative*. In 2012-2013, he was an artist/researcher-in-residence at b.a.n.g.lab and Performative Nanorobotics Lab, University of California San Diego. Blas is a PhD candidate at Duke University.

JAMES BRIDLE

Citizen Ex 001 and *002*, 2015
printed synthetic fabric, 62 x 36 inches (each)

THE WORK

"Algorithmic citizenship" is a new form of citizenship, one where your citizenship, and therefore both your allegiances and your rights, are constantly questioned, calculated, and rewritten. *Citizen Ex* is an extension for web browsers, which makes visible the physical infrastructure that underlies the internet, mapping the location of web sites and visualising the user's algorithmic citizenship. These flags illustrate a user's algorithmic citizenship, a pie-chart-like image created from proportional slices of existing national flags.

THE ARTIST

James Bridle (b. 1987) is an artist, writer, publisher and technologist based in London, UK. His artworks have exhibited worldwide and on the Internet. In 2011 he coined the term "New Aesthetic", and his ongoing research on the topic has spurred debate and creative work across multiple disciplines around the world. Bridle has exhibited globally and written for many publications, including *WIRED*, *Cabinet* and *The Atlantic*.

HEATHER DEWEY-HAGBORG

Invisible, 2015
spray vials, biononymous fluids, packaging
3 x 3 x 1 inches (packaged)
edition of 100
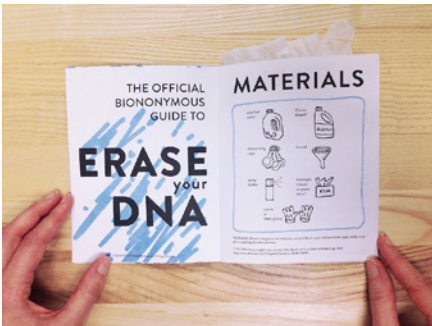
*The Official Biononymous
Guide,* 2015 (with Sarad
Solomon)
booklet, gloves

THE WORK
Invisible is a suite of two products that can be used independently or mixed to powerful effect.

- "Erase" is an anti-DNA cleaning product, not unlike a disinfectant spray.
- "Replace" is an obfuscation spray, introducing a mixture of genetic material that cloaks the original sample.
- Instead of leaving DNA containing saliva behind at restaurants and bars, *Invisible* customers will be able to erase their DNA fingerprint.
- Instead of subjecting their own DNA to covert analysis, *Invisible* customers can leave an alternate DNA sample, designed for their protection.

You wouldn't leave your medical records on the subway for just anyone to read. It should be a choice how you share your information and with whom, be it about your genes, your email or your phone calls. Genetic privacy is an emerging issue that is quickly becoming vitally important. *Invisible* is the first step toward making protection against new forms of biological surveillance accessible to the public. In five years time, I expect genetic privacy products will be as commonplace as hand sanitizer.

THE ARTIST
Heather Dewey-Hagborg (b. 1982) is an information artist who explores art as reasearch and public inquiry. Traversing media ranging from algorithms to installation, her work questions fundamental assumptions that underpin perceptions of human nature, technology and the environment. Known for her *Stranger Visions* series, where she took DNA samples from public places and created 3D-printed portraits from those genetic codes, Dewey-Hagborg has shown internationally and domestically in diverse venues. She holds a BA in Information Arts from Bennington College and an MA from Tisch School of the Arts. In addition to her solo work, she often collaborates with the collective, Future Archeology.

ZACH GAGE
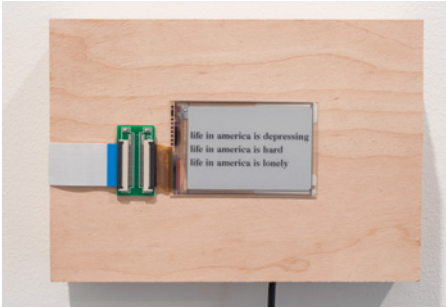
life in america is depressing
life in america is hard
life in america is lonely
2015, custom wood
enclosure, electronics
5 x 7 x 2.25 inches

who eats dogs
who eats cats
who eats guinea pigs
2015, custom wood
enclosure, electronics
5 x 7 x 2.25 inches

is love really blind
is love really real
is love really a choice
2015, custom wood
enclosure, electronics
5 x 7 x 2.25 inches

THE WORK

This set of three works is from the ongoing series, *Glaciers*. Presented on an e-ink screen, each "Glacier" is a unique poem generated via the top three results for a specific prompt to Google autocomplete.

While they appear static on the wall, each actually refreshes itself once a day. This means that the poems may change; however, because of the immense amount of dataflow constructing the most popular autocompletes, it is possible that they will not alter for months, years or even decades. Still, one day you will wake up, and the poem will be different, the long moment passed.

These incremental changes, based on group search behavior, represent a tiny sliver of the slow process of cultural change.

Each work is composed of a custom-built wood enclosure, Raspberry Pi, AdaFruit Pervasive Visions 2.7" Display Kit, Ribbon Cable Extender, EdiMax 150mbps adaptor, 5.1V 6' MicroUSB Power Cable, 10ft Premium UltraFlat Cat 6 Patch Cable, and 16Gb Sandisk MicroSD card.

THE ARTIST

Zach Gage (b. 1985) is a game designer, programmer, educator and conceptual artist from New York City. His work often explores the power of systems, both created by social interaction in digital spaces and those that can be created for others, through the framing of game environments. Best known for his games SpellTower, Ridiculous Fishing and Lose/Lose, Gage is an Apple Design and Game of the Year Award Winner, and a BAFTA nominee. He has exhibited internationally at venues including the Venice Biennale, MoMA in New York, XOXO Festival in Portland, FutureEverything in Manchester, the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw and more.

BRIAN HOUSE
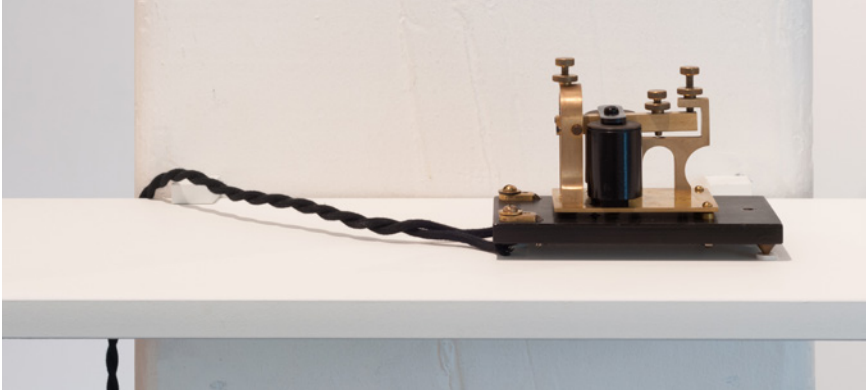
A Question of Style, 2015
two vintage Western Electric brass telegraph sounders,
electronics, wire; dimensions variable

THE WORK
The artist asks subjects with no knowledge of Morse code
to communicate with each other over telegraph lines. These
"conversations" are recorded as digital pulses and subsequently
re-performed by vintage telegraph sounders in the gallery. The
piece asks whether these minimal rhythmic exchanges are
enough to constitute language, music, or something in between,
and it highlights how the limits of infrastructure shape electronic
communication. By occasionally substituting a "telegraph-bot" for
a human operator, unbeknownst to the human on the other side,
it is also a twist on the familiar Turing Test.

THE ARTIST
Brian House (b. 1979) is a media artist whose work traverses
alternative geographies, experimental music, and a critical
consideration of data-driven practices. His work has shown
widely, including by MoMA (New York), MOCA (Los Angeles), Ars
Electronica, Rhizome and Issue Project Room, among others. He
is currently a doctoral student at Brown University in the Music
and the Modern Culture and Media departments.

ADDIE WAGENKNECHT

Liberator Rounds, 2015
ABS plastic, retractable antennas, ball bearing
edition of 3 + 1 AP
dimensions variable

THE WORK
Subversive and playful, this sculpture presents 3D-printed
Liberators, the first open-source design for a printable gun, as
elements in a Sputnik-like chandelier. This is one of many works
by the artist that employs methods of cultural production and
distribution to consider how these systems are affected by our
simultaneous disenchantment and obsession with digital culture.

THE ARTIST
Addie Wagenknecht (b. 1981) is an American artist based
in Austria, whose work blends the conceptual with hacking
and sculpture. The recipient of a 2014 Andy Warhol
Foundation grant, notable previous exhibitions took place at
MuseumsQuartier Wien, Austria; La Gaîté Lyrique, Paris, France;
The Istanbul Modern; and MU, Eindhoven, Netherlands.

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