

©Copyright 2018
Inmi Lee

The Dialectics of a Machine

Inmi Lee

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2018

Reading Committee:

James Coupe, Chair

Richard S. Karpen

Juan Pampin

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:
Center for Digital Arts and Experimental Media

University of Washington

Abstract

The Dialectics of a Machine

Inmi Lee

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Associate Professor

Dr. James Coupe

Center for the Digital Arts and Experimental Media

The Dialectics of a Machine is a four-channel video piece that explores the potential of fiction to question our social expectations, including their systems, functions, and worth. The video documents speech therapy sessions with people with varying speech barriers, from someone who'd had a recent throat surgery to someone speaking English as a second language. The issues each person is trying to correct are not clearly identified in the video. They go through individually designed speech and bodily exercises with a professional speech pathologist to reduce their impediments. When the speech pathologist introduces a fictional machine that could correct their speech problems, the patients' honest responses to the correction device reveal their personal stories, including self-perceived identity and power. The video leads the audience to shift their attention from the patients' problems to the system (therapist and the machine) that encourages them to acknowledge their speech impediments as problems. Additionally, the video exposes the strong tie between each patient's speech and their life on various levels.

Chapter One provides an introduction to the relationship between art and reality in history of art. Chapter Two expands on art based in reality, particularly through the effectiveness of storytelling in traumatic and political art with fact and fiction-based approaches in the construction of narrative and for the authentic experience of the audience. This chapter looks at works by Abbas Kiarostami, Omer Fast, and Walid Raad in depth to study the artistic methodologies used by them. Chapter Three discusses the thematic research of the dissertation, the methodology

adopted from the short introduction moving image to Andrei Tarkovsky's movie *The Mirror*, and looks at two art experiments and various processes taken to arrive at the dissertation piece.

Finally, the dissertation concludes with the future directions for the project and reflections on the body of work as a whole.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures.....	ii
List of Tables.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Dedication.....	vi
Chapter 1: Art and Reality.....	1
Chapter 2: Real and Authentic Experience in Storytelling.....	8
Chapter 3: The Dialectics of a Machine	
3.1: Theme: Speech and Power.....	26
3.2: Project Description	31
3.3: Methodology.....	33
3.4: Process.....	41
3.4a: Phase I- Universal Language Finder.....	41
3.4b: Phase II- I Will Not Dance	48
3.4c: Phase III- Conversation with a Therapist	55
3.4d: Phase IV- The Dialectics of a Machine.....	63
Chapter 4: Future Directions.....	67
Bibliography.....	72

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Marcel Duchamp, <i>Fountain</i> , 1914.....	3
Figure 1.2: Allen Kaprow, <i>18 Happenings in 6 Parts</i> , 1959.....	4
Figure 2.1: Christiane Jatahy, <i>Julia</i> , 2011.....	13
Figure 2.2: Omer Fast, <i>5,000 Feet Is the Best</i> , 2011.....	17
Figure 2.3: Walid Raad, <i>Let's be honest, the weather helped</i> , 1998/2006.....	23
Figure 3.1: Antoni Muntadas, <i>The Internet Project</i> , 1995.....	28
Figure 3.2: Imogen Stidworthy, <i>Barrabackslarrabang</i> , 2010, Video stills	30
Figure 3.3: Inmi Lee, <i>The Dialectics of a Machine</i> , 2017, Video stills	32
Figure 3.4: Andrei Tarkovsky, <i>The Mirror</i> , 1982, Intro. film stills.....	33
Figure 3.5: Initial design of the machine.....	40
Figure 3.6: Chinese god of chaos and confusion, <i>Hundun</i>	43
Figure 3.7: Sketch of the universal language god.....	44
Figure 3.8: Universal Language Finder, Video Stills	47
Figure 3.9a: Inmi Lee, <i>I Will Not Dance</i> , 2016, exhibition view.....	48
Figure 3.9b: Inmi Lee, <i>I Will Not Dance</i> , Owl Skull.....	49
Figure 3.9c: Inmi Lee, <i>I Will Not Dance</i> , owl taxidermy.....	49
Figure 3.9d: Inmi Lee, <i>I Will Not Dance</i> , human-owl hybrid sculpture.....	50
Figure 3.10: 3D Scan of a female head and a male torso.....	51
Figure 3.11: Variations of the language god in Maya.....	51
Figure 3.12.: Sliced 3D model using Rhino Contour.....	52
Figure 3.13.: Laser-cut model in small scale.....	52
Figure 3.14: RhinoCam Roughing.....	53
Figure 3.15a: Image of an arm of <i>Un</i> stacked together.....	54
Figure 3.15b: Image of <i>Un</i> glued and screwed together in the wood shop.....	54
Figure 3.16: Storyboard sketch for Conversation with a Therapist.....	56
Figure 3.17: Storyboard for a reshoot, VO1.....	65
Figure 3.18: New Footage, <i>The Dialectics of a Machine</i>	66
Figure 4.1: Installation mock-up.....	67
Figure 4.2: Guy Ben-Ner, <i>Treehouse Kit</i> , 2005, Installation view.....	69

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: List of fabrication and electronic.....53,54

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Dr. James Coupe, for his unflagging support of my PhD studies. His guidance and critical questions were extremely helpful during the period in which I conducted the research for and wrote this thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Richard Karpen and Dr. Juan Pampin for their challenging critiques, their knowledge, and the guidance that they provided during individual meetings and Josh Parmenter for introducing me to the field of electronic sound.

I would like to thank speech-language pathologists Julie A. Dunlap and Nancy Alarcon at the Speech & Hearing Clinic, Dr. Robert Miller of the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, Dr. William Spain of the Neuroscience Department, Cathy Madden at the School of Drama, Dr. Charles Johnson of the Creative Writing Department, and Robert Faucett at the Burke Museum for their generosity with their time and knowledge of their fields.

I also wish to thank my colleagues and friends, Donald Craig, Joel Ong, Yun Mi Her, Adam Hogan, James Hughes, Genoveva Castro, Michael McCrea, Martin Jarmick, Robert Twomey, Ewa Trebacz, Gai-Hoai T. Nguyen, Mark Haslam, and Kenneth Temiyasathit. In particular, I would like to thank Ha Na Lee for the invaluable time, encouragement, and friendship that she has given me throughout my PhD studies. I would also like to thank Annamarie Ho and Liluye Jhala for supporting my work and reading an unaccountable number of my essays over the years. I would also like to express my gratitude to Bill Seaman for his continued support and guidance in making the right decisions.

Finally, I would like to thank my sister, Hyunwoo Lee, and my brother, Moonwoo Lee, for taking an interest in my research and for their continued support throughout the course of my Ph.D. journey.

DEDICATION

To my parents

Chapter 1: Art and Reality

Harold Rosenberg tells the story of a burglar who plucked a twenty-dollar note from a collage hanging on a wall.¹ The burglar's preference was the note, as opposed to the work of art with the note in it. This raises questions concerning the identity of the twenty-dollar note from the perspective of art and reality: The bank note has monetary value in the real world; however, from an artistic perspective, the bill serves a conceptual purpose for the piece hanging on the wall. This collage called the value of this object into question and changed our assumption about reality. Rosenberg argued that with collage, “art no longer copies nature or seeks equivalents to it; instead, being an expression of the advanced Industrial Age, it appropriates the external world on the basis that it is already partly changed into art.”² Groupe μ said “the tangible and non-illusionistic objects presented a new and original source of interplay between artistic expressions and the experience of the everyday world. An unpredicted and significant step bringing art and life closer together, a simultaneous experience, had been taken.”³

With the emergence of the collage, art started to direct its concern to the real and how the real transposes places with art. Art historian Jack Burnham examined the emergence of art which brings art and life closer together in the late 1960s in his essay "Systems Esthetics," which was published in *Artforum* in 1968. Burnham considered information as art providing an example of Moholy-Nagy's work process written in Moholy-Nagy book *The New Vision* fabricating a set of enamel on metal painting over the phone with detailed instructions. He considered the phone conversation as part of art not only the physical work. He also regarded Les Levine's *Clean Machine* (1968) which are “environments of vacuum-formed modular plastic” which “alter their own degree of space-surface penetrability”⁴, as an example of fluid art that is flexible and adaptable to situations and environmental changes. He referred to such art as "unobjects." Burnham noticed a paradigm shift in the art world as a result of socio-technical changes on society:

¹ Harold Rosenberg, *Art on the edge: Creators and Situations*, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., p178.

² Rosenberg, p174

³ Groupe μ , eds., *Collages*, Paris, Union Generale, 1978, pp13-14.

⁴ Jack Burnham, *Dissolve into Comprehension: Writings and Interviews, 1964-2004*, The MIT Press, 2015, p122.

We are now in transition from an object-oriented to a systems-oriented culture. Here change emanates, not from things, but from the way things are done. ⁵

He claimed that, instead of products and human artifacts organizing lives, technological and informational means became the centers around which people arrange their lives and understand their surroundings:

A system viewpoint is focused on the creation of stable, ongoing relationship between organic and nonorganic systems, be these neighbourhoods, industrial complexes, farms, transportation systems, information centers, recreation centers, or any of the other matrices of human activity. ⁶

Burnham felt that, in order to adapt to this change, art needs to move past “Craft-fetishism”⁷ and representational art and embrace the systems that control society. By doing so, the boundary between art and life would be removed, and the place of art would expand beyond the spaces of gallery or museums. As art would no longer reside inside a white cube, anything in life, regardless of its scale, can become a material of art, including “relations between people and between people and the components of their environment.”⁸ As the definition of art becomes flexible and adaptable, the role of the artist as the great creator shifts, resulting in changes to the process of making art.

Collage was the beginning of the movement to remove art from walls and off pedestals; however, Picasso’s series of collages still used painting as a framing device and to provide his work with a place in the world of art; furthermore, his work operated in isolation from the world. Burnham recognized Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* (1917), a urinal directly removed from the bathroom and placed in an art context, for combining an aesthetic experience with the everyday experience. However, just like the twenty-dollar note from the anecdote told by Harold Rosenberg, *Fountain* has a dual identity: It is both a functional everyday object which has its place in the bathroom, and it is an art object to be contemplated. Both Picasso and Duchamp’s

⁵ Ibid., 116.

⁶ Ibid., p116.

⁷ Ibid, p117.

⁸ Ibid, p117.

works are disconnected from the living reality of the audience; however, Duchamp's 'Readymades' was not altered (with the exception of the signature on the object) from its original reality. The preciousness of this work of art was eliminated by its use of pre-existing objects from everyday life.

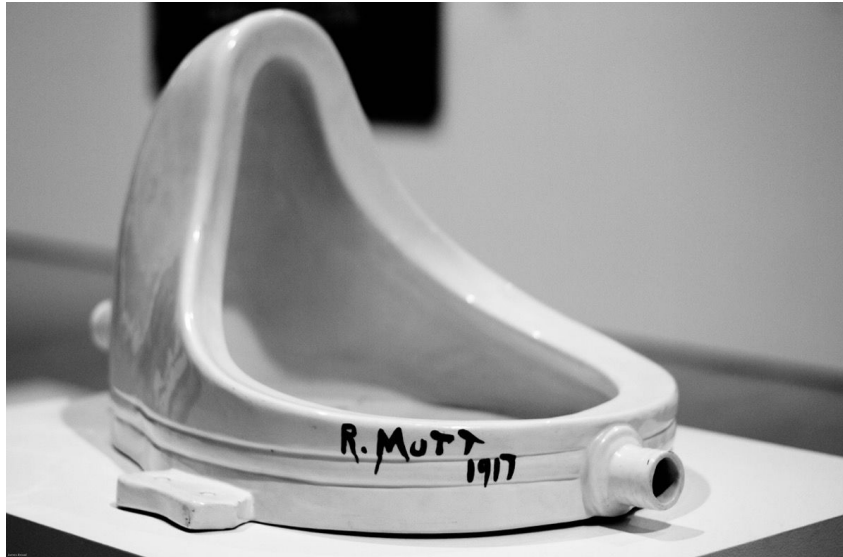


Figure 1.1: Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1914

The American composer John Cage introduced the concept of 'Readymades' to the field of music. Instead of fixating on musical instruments, he saw a musical value in the noises and sounds produced by non-musical instruments. This type of music allowed audiences to experience natural surroundings and occurrences as art. Cage embraced the systems as part of music such as traffic noise, footsteps, people's laughter, and even silence. In his book titled *Silence*, Cage questions the definition of music:

Is music just sound?

Which is more musical, a truck passing by a factory or a truck passing by a music school?

Are the people inside the school musical and the ones outside unmusical?⁹

John Cage's questions regarding sound as music are equivalent to art being considered a reality and the reality being considered art itself, as considering everyday sounds as music allows for

⁹ John Cage, *Silence*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, 1961, p41.

any object to be a musical instrument. Contemporary art continues to reject the conventional distinction between art and life. In order to “let things be themselves,” Cage used chance in the process of composing the piano piece *Music of Changes* (1951). Using the *I Ching*, which is a divination text that consists of symbols that are used to identify order in chance events, Cage made decisions concerning sound, duration, dynamics, and other various aspects of his composition. Alvin Lucier’s *I Am Sitting In A Room* (1981) — in which a recording of his voice is played to a room, and the sound thereof is rerecorded to be played back into the room to be recorded once again — also uses its environment to determine the shaping of sound. The outcome of the piece can vary depending on the room that it is performed in, and the work therefore adapts to its environment. Both works allow for accidents/chances, which are elements of reality, to enter and shape the work instead of fixed shape, form, or process to be the work. The work is strongly tied to the situation and cannot be separated.



Figure 1.2: Allen Kaprow, *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, 1959

Another form of art that is flexible and adaptable to circumstances and environment is the Happening, which invites audiences to participate, improvise, and sometimes lead in the creation of art. The key elements of Happenings are planned, but these works are completed with the participation of their audiences. *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (1959), created by Allen Kaprow, is divided into six parts, with each part containing three happenings that occur simultaneously. The audience was given instructions to participate in and complete a number of simple everyday

tasks — such as painting a picture, squeezing an orange, sweeping the floor, climbing a ladder, shouting a political slogan, or sitting on a chair — inside room-like structures that were divided by semitransparent plastic sheets. These everyday activities echo the notion of Duchamp's Readymade: While they are from normal daily life, instead of identifying everyday object as works of art, Kaprow presents art in daily chores; as he said, Happenings “are a moral act, a human stand of great urgency, whose professional status as art is less a criterion than their certainty as an ultimate existential commitment.”¹⁰ The notion of success and failure does not exist in a Happening, as it is about existing as part of life.

As art has moved away from static objects on plinths towards works that encompass time, space, and people, it has become increasingly concerned with human activities. Increased social engagement in art was inevitable as attention moved from the preciousness of art to the public. Moving images, particularly documentaries, capture the political and social interactions that occur between individuals. With only an initial direction, a video camera captures a happening, the recording of which is delivered to the audience. Only the subject of the work is determined by the director; the manner in which the event occurs is beyond the control of its maker. This approach to art allows people to become aware of events that have been concealed from them. The combination of the visual language of documentary with art allows for the realization of what Burnham proposed art should do: It should fully integrate itself with the public and its environment as a means of directly intervening in reality as, as he put it, a "quasi-political provocateur."¹¹ The more art lives in between people, the greater the extent to which its social dimension is resuscitated.

In his essay *Documentary/Vérité: Bio-Politics, Human Rights and the Figure of “Truth” in Contemporary Art*, Okwui Enwezor raised three questions concerning the relationship between art and reality: the relationship between the concepts of ethics and aesthetics known as political art, the type of artistic practice that exists in the realm of art and documentary, and the problems that such art practices pose in terms of the comprehension of reality on the basis of art works,

¹⁰ Allen Kaprow, *Essays on the blurring of art and life*, University of California Press; 2 edition, 2003, p21.

¹¹ Jack Burnham, *Dissolve into Comprehension: Writings and Interviews, 1964-2004*, The MIT Press, 2015, p117.

media images, and exhibitions of contemporary art.¹² According to Jean Baudrillard, the changes which happened in postmodern culture with signs, symbols, and the media, the distinction between reality and representation has become impossible. Image was only an illusion prior to the industrial revolution in 19th century. However, the revolution allowed for mass production of copies and such production threatened to replace the real. And we are confronted with the representation preceding the reality with urbanization and capitalism controlling our values and identities. He said, “It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself.”¹³ Jean Baudrillard’s notions of simulacrum and simulation made comparisons between reality and its representation useless, and the focus of contemporary art is thus no longer on whether a work is real or not. The definition of realism in contemporary art has been repeatedly revisited, and, with virtual reality, *Second Life*, and the identity crisis of multiple personas caused by social media, the notion of reality has become harder to define. Artworks such as *RMB City* (2009), which is a virtual city in *Second Life*; *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001) by Jeremy Deller, which revisits a historic event through re-enactment; and Anika Yi’s 3D film *The Flavor Genome* (2016), which is a work of science fiction that is filmed and edited in a documentary style, are examples of contemporary artworks that are situated within the lives and realities of the various dimensions that people live in and experience reality through. As curator Mark Nash said “the pertinent question to ask in contemporary art, perhaps, is what kinds of social, political or personal realities being proposed.”¹⁴

The following chapters will discuss the types of social and political reality that this thesis explores, the influencing artists such as Walid Raad, Omer Fast, and a filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami and how their works directly influenced the thesis work by reviewing the the process of creating the project in three different phases. Chapter 2 discusses the effectiveness of approaching traumatic and political art through both fact and fiction- and illusion-based approaches to reality and how this method has been used by the artists to directly intervene with

¹² Okwui Enwezor, *In The Green Room: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2008, p 11.

¹³ *Jean Baudrillard Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster, Stanford University Press, 2001, p170.

¹⁴ <https://frieze.com/article/reality-age-aesthetics>, 1, April, 2008.

reality. Chapter 3 expands on how the methodologies used by these artists have been adopted and the different experiments that led to the dissertation piece *The Dialectics of a Machine*.

Chapter 2: Real and Authentic Experience in Storytelling

All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them.¹⁵

- Isak Dinesen

The only relation to art that can be sanctioned in a reality that stands under the constant threat of catastrophe is one that treats works of art with the same deadly seriousness that characterizes the world today.¹⁶

- Theodor W. Adorno

In the history of storytelling, there have been two distinct approaches: providing a description of an event and narrating it. When one describes an event, the emphasis is on providing an accurate report of what transpired, furnishing as much detailed and truthful information as possible. In contrast, narrating the story of an event takes into consideration the experience of the listener. A factual description of an event and the information that such a description provides favor the event itself; when one tells a story, the experience of the listener is favored. Stories were previously shared orally until writing became part of storytelling practice with the invention of the printing press. We now live in an era in which a tremendous amount of information can be accessed from a wide range of digital sources in a very short period of time—more specifically, in an instant. As a result, news stories and narratives can be written and shared rapidly; however, they can also be eliminated in their entirety with a single keystroke., and, as a result, objective “truth” itself has become a sliding scale which can be tipped back and forth by the consumer, depending on the source considered. This “fluidity” of truth is by no means new in human history; however, the sheer number of narratives produced is escalating at an alarming pace each day, as is the challenge involved in attempting to navigating through these often-competing narratives in order to come to an objective understanding of a particular subject (if doing so is possible).

¹⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd edition, (The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 175.

¹⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, “Valéry Proust Museum,” *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Sherry Weber, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 195.

The possibility of telling the truth has been challenged and debated throughout the history of art and across various genres. When attempting to capture and relay the "truth" of an event – particularly in the context of political art, in which ethics and morals are called into question – it is necessary to consider the significance of the term "truth". In order to tell the truth, artists have attempted to recount events exactly as they occurred, and some have attempted to deceive people into believing and work their way to belief in a surreptitious manner similar to that of spies. This practice of lying is similar to the practice of spying: In the attempts of these artists to portray truth, new forms and methods have been developed, and in order to tell the truth, lying and the use of fiction have been introduced as methods. This chapter explores how the concept of "reality" is explored in various genres of narrative, such as documentaries, theatre, literature, and the visual arts. It also discusses the tendency of genres that focus on conveying facts and genres of fiction to move closer to each other in order to compensate for what each lacks. Finally, this chapter concludes with a study of the works of two artists, Omer Fast and Walid Raad, and the methodologies used to successfully merge the reporting of facts and the use of fiction to effectively tell and experience the truth.

In their research project *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art #1: No. 1*, Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl claimed that “documentary practices have made up one of the most significant tendencies within art during the last two decades.”¹⁷ It is within the matrix of this crossover between art and documentary in fine arts, cinema, and even in theatre that narrative occurs. This convergence has also sparked a discussion concerning finding the nexus of ethics and aesthetics in the creative field. The word “find” is appropriate here due to the dichotomy that exists between aesthetics and ethics, on the one hand, and art and documentary, on the other. Documentary has been defined as a medium for recording and revealing political injustices while also providing authentic information, without any alteration of reality. The nature of documentary genre conveys a certain seriousness, authority, and even power to alter the minds of people; it can encourage them to act upon what they have learned.

¹⁷ Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl, eds., “Reconsidering the Documentary,” *Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art #1: The Greenroom*, (Sternberg Press, 2008), 16.

Civil Disobedience, an exhibition considered to be representative of documentaries and news footage held at MIT's List Visual Arts Center in 2017, provides excellent examples of the conventional documentaries we know documentary as, featuring records from 1930s "hunger marches," the historic Civil Rights and women's movements, anti-war protests, gay and gender rights, AIDS activism, the Black Lives Matter movement, and recent women's marches. These documentaries depict injustices either by filming the experiences of their subjects or by conducting interviews in victims' homes or workplaces. Music is frequently overlaid in order to communicate the tension associated with the problems depicted in these films.

The concept of truth-telling has been at the core of documentary genre. However, John Grierson, the pioneering Scottish documentary maker who coined the term "documentary," was interested in the artistic potential of the "factual film" and defined documentary as "the creative treatment of actuality." Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov – who declared "Long live life as we know it!" – believed in the camera's machine-like ability to record the world as it really is. He developed a filming technique called Kino-Eye, which essentially involved seeing and capturing what the human eye cannot. He spoke of the Kino-Eye as the microscope and telescope of time, as the negative of time, as the possibility of seeing without limits and across any distance, as the remote control of movie cameras, as the tele-eye, as the X-ray eye, as "life caught unawares," and as "the union of science with newsreel to further the communist decoding of the world...an attempt to show the truth on the screen – Film-truth"¹⁸ (his "*Kino-Pravda*" literally translates as "film truth"). Dziga was obsessed with delivering the truth. In *Man with the Movie Camera*, Dziga captured the cities and scenes of ordinary daily life in the Soviet Union using innovative camera angles. Even though he rejected narrative in *Man with the Movie Camera*, through his editing techniques and montages, his film offers a poetic perspective on the social reality of the Soviet Union.

Attempts to convey reality have also been important in theatre. By its nature, theatre is false: The emotions that the performers portray are fabricated, and pain is particularly hard to convey, as there is no real urgency to attend to the sources of pain. The great Russian theatre practitioner

¹⁸ Dziga Vertov, *Kino-eye: The writings of Dziga Vertov*, trans. Kevin O'Brien, (University of California Press, 1984), 41-42.

Konstantin Stanislavski developed a theatrical training approach called Stanislavski's system, which trains actors to "experience" their roles instead of merely representing them. Stanislavski argued that, in acting, the experience needs to come from the actor's inner reality; as such, he rejected Naturalism (a movement which attempted to create an illusion of reality through theatrical strategies) which, according to him, is an "indiscriminate reproduction of the surface of life."¹⁹ It is not enough for the theatre to "persuade the intellect or convince the intelligence," as such an experience would not be more than the mere acknowledgment of an abstract truth; rather, it needs to provide a "total human experience that members of the audience can feel with their entire beings."²⁰ Stanislavski's system would allow both the actors and the audience to be fully immersed in the situation and experience the story as reality.

In the attempt to accept reality as artistic medium and a subject, visual artists such as Joan Joans, Gary Hill, Vito Acconci, and Dan Graham adopted cameras and TV sets as artistic tools. Early video artists were interested in the formal qualities of video. An example of an early pioneer who was interested in feminism was Joan Joans, whose work *Vertical Roll* (1972) used a technological glitch common to early television with a black horizontal bar constantly dropping from top to bottom interfering the whole image to appear on screen and married her interest in female identity to it. The black bar was used as a frame to block various states of her body dressed and undressed being displayed on screen. Steina and Woody Vasulka created abstract works by developing and utilizing digital processes, while the video artists Nam June Paik was more interested in expressing his optimistic view of technology and shaping the concept of TV sets functioning as canvases for painters. Bill Viola is more a narrative-driven video artist; his works are poetic and heavily influenced by spiritualism. Viola's *Nantes Triptych* (1992), which, as its name suggests, takes the form of a triptych, which is a format traditionally used in Western art for religious paintings, reflects on the mysteries of life and death. He used real footage of his mother lying dying in a coma in 1991, footage of a body floating in water which he filmed for another project, and footage of a birth, inspired by the birth of his first son. The video was shot and presented using artistic visual language and formats. Recontextualizing the content of

¹⁹ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: An Introduction*, 4th edition, (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2008), 17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p18.

documentaries in works of art is a recent phenomenon that has led to the invention of new art forms.

Until recently, the difference between documentary and (video) art was urgency. The content of documentaries has traditionally been social or political issues that affect people, whereas art was separated from the real world. A documentary focuses on a real event that has occurred somewhere and has possibly affected people and/or caused trauma. There is a difference between what happens in our neighborhoods and the actions depicted on stage and on screen: When something happens to our neighbors, the event is real and tangible to us, and it can potentially affect us; when it is on stage, we know that the individuals on stage are leaving their real identities behind in order to perform their roles. When we are faced with a screen, the depiction of an event is even further removed from our reality; as the event moves away from the physical proximity, it is removed from reality and moves into the realm of fiction. However, even a real experience can be perceived as unreal: for example, in her *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag mentions that individuals who experienced or personally witnessed the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001, have expressed the experience as “surreal.” A real experience can seem unreal and difficult to describe when the things that are depicted on a screen can seem more real than reality itself. The distinction between real/truth and the false/lie has become more difficult to ascertain in the contemporary world.

Julia is a narrative piece that pushes the boundaries between art and reality. Directed by Brazilian Christiane Jatahy, it tests the limits between reality and fiction, actor and character, and past and present through a combination of a live performance on stage, a live camera, and a projection of pre-filmed video. The live camera captures the characters on stage and projects them onto the screen, which is also located on stage. The characters perform next to the screen, with the projection of their performance being projected as a close-up; the performance also takes place behind the screen, with the audience having a partial view of the live actors. The presence of the screen on stage transforms the fictional story into a real one, relegating the role of fiction to the screen, and thus creating a story within a story. During a performance at On the Boards in Seattle in 2016, the two main actors ran out to the street, with the cameraman running after them. The street became the stage on which the characters interacted with each other,

leading to confusion with regard to the identities of the performers and the distinction between reality (the live footage) and the fake (the pre-recorded footage). Moving the performance beyond the theatre space alters the perception of the audience on determining what is fake and transforms it into reality, thus blurring the boundaries between art and life. The notion of truth is pushed to the limits, and the audience is left considering the experience to be “real.”



Figure 2.1: Christiane Jatahy, *Julia*, 2011

Another work that challenges the conventional understanding of real and fake is a film by Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami. Cinema is a fictional medium due to the fact that it features scripted dialogue, presents individuals with dual identities on screen, and is set in fake environments, all of which ultimately create a fake sense of unity. However, despite his choice of medium, Kiarostami is a filmmaker who is interested in telling the truth. He made the following observations:

Our work starts with a lie on a daily-routine basis. When you make a film, you bring elements from other places, other environments, and you gather them together in a unity

that really doesn't exist. You're faking that unity. You call someone a husband or a son... My son concluded that perhaps if we analyze different aspects of the lie, then we can arrive at the truth. In cinema anything that can happen would be true. It doesn't have to correspond to a reality, it doesn't have to "really" be happening. In cinema, by fabricating lies we may never reach the fundamental truth, but we will always be on our way to it. We can never get close to the truth except through lying.²¹

Here, Kiarostami emphasizes the importance of lying in order to arrive at the truth, echoing the French saying *prêcher le faux pour savoir le vrai* ("tell a lie to get at the truth"). However, his 1990 film *Close-up* does not fully participate in the business of lying. This film focuses on the trial of a man named Hossain Sabzian, who impersonated a famous filmmaker. The cast of this film were individuals who were involved in the actual trial, meaning that Hossain Sabzian played himself in the film. The entire film was scripted by the director; however, the question of whether he is acting or being himself is present throughout the entire movie. The confusion is further intensified in a scene in which Kiarostami has the following conversation with Sabzian:

Abbas Kiarostami: Now that you played this part, do you think you are a better actor than director?

Hossain Sabzian: I don't want to be presumptuous ... but I am more interested in acting. I think I could express all the bad experiences I've had, all the deprivation I've felt with every fiber of my being. I think I could get these feelings across through my acting.

Abbas Kiarostami: Aren't you acting for the camera right now? What are you doing now?

Hossain Sabzian: I am speaking of my suffering. I am not acting. I am speaking from the heart. This isn't acting. For me, art... is the experience of what you have felt inside if one could cultivate that experience; it's like when Tolstoy says that art is the inner experience cultivated by the artist and conveyed to his audience. Given the positive feelings I've experienced, as well as the deprivation and suffering, and my interest in acting, I think I could be an effective actor and convey that inner reality.

Abbas Kiarostami: Then why did you pretend to be a director instead of an actor?

Hossain Sabzian: Playing the part of a director is a performance in itself. To me, that is acting.

Abbas Kiarostami: What part would you like to play?

Hossain Sabzian: My own.

Abbas Kiarostami: Haven't you already done that?

²¹ Bomb Magazine, "Artists in Conversation," January, 1995.
<http://bombmagazine.org/article/1832/abbas-kiarostami>.

The dialogue implies that Sabzian's performance cannot be reduced to mere acting, as he is constantly shifting between himself in real life, whoever that may be, and a character in the film. As a result, the viewer also learns of and experiences the real feelings and the deprivations that he mentions in the film.

Even in literature, there has been a tug of war between reality and fiction. Realistic writers emphasize the mimetic and communicative function of fiction identified by Plato, whereas more experimental and fictional writers emphasize what William John Harvey called its autonomous function, meaning that a work of fiction does not depend on the reality in which we live to narrate its story. In literature, realistic writing is considered to provide guidance and shape our understanding of reality. The importance of the real in storytelling, according to Carl Darryl Malmgren, is linked to Plato's higher sense of a unified ethical vision, connected in some manner to the way in which we live now.²² Harvey argued that all works of fiction create fictional worlds that intersect with the real world at some angle of mimesis:²³ If the angle of mimesis is small, the narrative is more mimetic; if the angle is large, it is more autonomous. An example of a work with a large mimetic angle is Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*. He writes about cities that do not exist; however, Calvino wrote the text and described the cities in such a fashion that readers could easily imagine them as places that they have visited. Based on Harvey's claim, *Invisible Cities* would represent a work of fiction that is more mimetic, in contrast to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, in which animals talk, the main character transforms radically in scale, and the location in which the story takes place is far removed from reality. *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote* by Jorge Luis Borges and the novel *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie both steer a middle path between reality and fiction. Both stories rely on historic facts and build an imaginary story around them; in doing so, they close the gap that exists between reality and an invented story, and, on occasion, their stories claim to be more true than truth itself.

The key distinction between contemporary society and art has become not about the distinction between reality and fiction but between what we sense to be real and fictitious. For children at

²² Carl Darryl Malmgren, *Fictional Space in the Modernist and Postmodernist American Novel*, (Bucknell University Press, 1985), 13.

²³ William John Harvey, *Character and the novel*, (Cornell University Press, 1968), 16.

play, a small rock becomes a car, and the same rock can be transmogrified into a train and then into an airplane. The lack of a sense of reality in children's lives allows them to use their imaginations to create realities with a single object. For adults, the sense of reality is so present – and it is perhaps the only thing that we can be certain about – that it reduces the ability to imagine and believe anything that lies beyond common sensibilities. However, if we were made to believe in an imagined world and experience it as real, the fictional world could become a reality, what Ronald Sukenick, an American writer and theorist, refers to as “a meaningful ‘reality’ that did not previously exist.”²⁴ Artists have generated false facts and realities that did not exist through lies and truths in which the experiences offered to audiences are authentic. In order to create a “real” experience, artists have often presented events that occurred in the past in the form of a document(ary) in the frame of art. Omer Fast and Walid Raad have used fiction in their art as a means of unfolding a narrative or to reveal facts that are shadowed by the structures of society. Each work also takes a different form and approaches on how fiction contributes to the understanding of the reality. All of their works focus more on portraying fact than on creating a false story.

Omer Fast (1972) is a Jerusalem-born artist whose works deal with traumatic experiences of war. His works often take an actual event that has already occurred as a starting point. He interviews individuals who were involved in the event, and then represents these people's lived experiences through carefully structured narratives and editing. What appears to be staged becomes questionable, as he inserts a fictional story within a story that transports the viewer in and out of the actual reality that the work addresses and the reality that is created by the artist. *5,000 Feet Is the Best* (2011) is a single-channel video that is based on interviews with drone pilots who participated in missions in war zones. Drone operators are not frequently discussed in the media and often remain obscure.

5,000 Feet Is the Best (2011) is a single-channel video that is based on interviews with drone pilots who participated in missions in war zones. Drone operators are not frequently discussed in the media and often remain obscure. Fast exposes the psychological effects of being a drone pilot and, in doing so, he comments on the use of a signature weapon of war that is not well known to

²⁴ Cited by Raymond Lederman in “Surfiction - Four Propositions in the Form of an Introduction,” 1975, 5.

the public. The film opens with a man, whom the audience vaguely recognizes, being interviewed in a hotel room. Due to fact that the actor is recognizable and the way in which the room is set up in terms of lighting and the framing of the shot, the scene gives the impression of being staged. Following what seems to be a rather overly dramatized scene featuring the drone pilot complaining about not having been informed that he would be filmed and his need to leave for a dental appointment, the interviewer and the pilot enter into a dialogue:

Interviewer: Okay. What is the difference between you and someone who sits in an airplane?
Pilot: There's no difference between us. We do the same job.
Interviewer: But you're not a real pilot.
Pilot: So what? You're not a real journalist.



Figure 2.2: Omer Fast, Screenshot from *5,000 Feet Is the Best*

This short, yet important, exchange between the two sets the tone for the entire film. The traumatic experiences that the drone pilot has undergone, despite his geographical distance from the site of violence, are called into question here: “You are not a real pilot, but did your job have the same psychological effect on you?” Additionally, the interviewer’s comment concerning the interviewee not being a real pilot has a dual meaning: A drone operator is not a real pilot

operating a real plane, and this individual is an actor who is portraying a drone operator. We can deduce this based on the pilot's response: "So what? You're not a real journalist." The interviewer is an actor playing the role of a journalist. These ambiguous dialogues are all carefully scripted by the artist, and every sentence in this film is intentional and metaphoric. What seems irrelevant and open-ended finds an answer and becomes relevant once the film comes full circle.

After the multilayered dialogue between the journalist and the drone pilot, the drone pilot moves on to talk about a child who grew up loving trains, whereupon the scene cuts to a boy growing up into an adult while sitting in front of a toy train track. The film cuts to surveillance camera footage of him using a bolt cutter to cut open the lock on a cabinet, from which he takes out and wears the uniform of a train engineer. The scene then cuts to him driving a train and realizing that he left his keys in the real train driver's cabinet. After he gets home, he is arrested by the police for breaking into his own house. While the man attempts to climb up to his window, the interviewee interrupts the story and asks, "OK. Why does the guy need to be black?", to which the pilot responds, "Did I say he was black?... I didn't say anything about race. That's all there is to it." When the interviewee asks, "What does this have to do with being a drone pilot?", he responds, "The moral's the same: Keep your work and domestic life separate." The question the interviewee asks is the very question that the members of the audience ponder as they watch the video. Instead of finding an answer in the response provided by the drone pilot, the audience becomes further confused, and the video proceeds to return the audience to the hotel where it started. The drone pilot emerges into a hallway, finds a pack of hidden cigarettes, and looks up at the ceiling; the video then cuts to another story.

We see a bicyclist riding into a desert landscape. The voice of the real drone pilot, who is named Brandon, enters into the video, stating that "Five thousand feet is the best." He explains how, at five thousand feet, he can identify the type of shoes that an individual is wearing. He goes on to describe the workings of a drone, including its clear camera and an infrared view, and discusses a Predator drone operator's role in a mission: The drone pilot sets a laser on a target spot, and the computer determines the required trajectory and speed of the missile to be launched and the

distance to the target. Once clearance to fire is granted and the missile is released, he guides it to its target. The video then cuts back to the drone pilot standing in the hallway.

There is a loop within the film: There are three identical scenes of the hotel room, which feature similar dialogue, that cycle. In-between these scenes, the film switches between stories told by the actor pilot and those told by the real drone pilot about his experience of being on a mission in Pakistan and his personal life after the mission was done. The repetition and the intercutting between these stories and the dialogue between the journalist and the “actor” drone operator cross the boundary between authenticity and simulation, and the emotional trauma of the experience is intensified as the confusion continues to build. The interplay between reality and fiction and the documentary and the drama and the shift of style between the two create ambiguity, producing what Fast called a “productive kind of confusion.”²⁵ This confusion keeps the audience at a distance; they are thus likely to approach the work critically and raise questions, while remaining engaged in order to seek answers to the questions raised by the confusion.

Throughout the entire 30-minute video, Fast does not use any real news footage, despite the fact that he borrows from documentary-style filmmaking, a medium that is known to be used for truth-telling. The use of real-life violent footage could potentially create a greater sense of urgency; however, the footage featured in *5,000 Feet Is the Best* is entirely fabricated. Fast chose to feature a vaguely recognizable actor in his video, which lets the audience know that the video is either staged or scripted. The only part that seems real is the interview with the supposedly real drone operator named Brandon. However, due to the blurring of his face, it is difficult to tell whether the man who appears to be in front of the camera was truly an operator or merely another hired actor. Starting with real content and removing the sense of reality allows *5,000 Feet* to convey as serious a tone— if not more than — a traditional documentary. Additionally, addressing a less known issue and reenacting it allows for the event to obtain a voice it previously did not have. “The reenactment makes the origin, gives the origin a definition and an

²⁵ Omer Fast: "Continuity" | ART21 "Exclusive." YouTube. Video File. Jan 29, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OksqdsZGkcg>

identity that it may not have had for itself.”²⁶ The repetition of the same scene and the same conversation, stories that feature varying degrees of ambiguity, and the shifts between documentary and drama give the audience the opportunity to consider the issue at hand for the entire duration of the work and allow the video to convey the serious tone of a documentary.

T. J. Demos, in *War Games: A Tale in Three Parts (On Omer Fast's 5,000 Feet Is the Best)*, analyzes *5,000 Feet Is the Best's* effectiveness in terms of conveying experiences of trauma that are generally hard to share with others. Demos draws on Walter Benjamin's theory of storytelling in discussing the difficulty of conveying experiences in a narrative, particularly in this age of technological advancement and capitalism. For Benjamin, storytelling is intended to allow for the “communicability of experience,” and it is one of humanity's most “inalienable” and “securest” possessions. However, Benjamin notes that the communicable experience was dying out: “For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power.”²⁷ He further explains that storytelling is threatened by the information provided by the news media, which requires external verification and has transformed traditional storytelling into something that requires interpretation, thoughtfulness, and collective participation. Demos states that the modern approach to warfare, waged with new technology, has left us with no time in which to process and comprehend events, including life and death. It is hard let alone to represent the facts of this new war condition, but it is harder still to convey the loss of sleep, perpetual anxiety, and nightmares of the drone pilots. Fast states he is “often working in that gap between the moment of pain, the moment of experience, by looking at the scar and finding the words to describe it.”²⁸ The work of the artist lies in closing the gap between emotion and expression. The very careful play of language, the use of cyclical repetitions, a narrative construction, and the intermix of fact and fiction in *5000 Feet Is the Best* are more intended to represent “experiential accuracy” than

²⁶ Bik Van der Pol, “Past Imperfect No. 1” in *Life, Once More. Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art*, edited by Sven Lutticken, (Rotterdam: Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art, 2005), 185.

²⁷ Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Ardent, trans. Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken, 1968), 83.

²⁸ Fast quoted in Marcus Verhagen, “Pleasure and Pain: Omer Fast interviewed by Marcus Verhagen,” *Art Monthly* 330 (October 2009), 3.

the truth of the event; the film is intended to facilitate a meaningful understanding that can be shared with others.²⁹

Talk Show (2009), is another work which Omer Fast tells a story about a historic event through the personal story of someone involved. It was a live performance produced for Performa in 2009, which featured professional actors in a theatrical setting. Using the childhood game of “Broken Telephone,” which starts with one person whispering a phrase into the ear of the person next to him, it continues with a group of people until the last player says the phrase out loud, which has changed often dramatically from the phrase whispered by the first person. *Talk Show* started with an actor walking onto a stage asking, “So, tell me about the first time you saw her.” to another person already seated on stage. The seated person then delivers a personal story in relation to the war in Iraq to the audience and to the actor. The actor who sat next to the seated person listens to the story until the end and then recounts the story with as much accuracy as possible as though it was their story of to the next person who comes onto the stage. This retelling of the story continued several times allowing the story to transform from individual memory to recitation. Omer Fast experiments with the construction of narrative and how stories can change told from different perspectives and the method of delivery. This work demonstrates the effect and the complex intricacies of storytelling.

Another artist who works with the concept of experiential accuracy is Walid Raad. The manner in which he works between truth and a lie involves creating spurious archival documents. Raad’s (1967) work is also based on the truth, takes the form of authority, and uses fiction as a vehicle to tell its story. Raad is particularly interested in the civil war which took place between 1975 and 1991 in Lebanon, as he is a Lebanon-born artist who experienced this conflict first-hand. In working with the subject of war and a tragedy that cannot simply be laid out or experienced by individuals who did not experience it, he wove fiction and data collected from newspapers and other media into the form of historic documents, such as photographs, notebooks, and prints, and delivered lecture-like performances to support his work. His work breaks away from the notion that art is not real and authentic, and he creates works that generate an authentic experience. He

²⁹ T.J. Demos, “War Games: A Tale in Three Parts,” in *Omer Fast’s 5000 Feet is the Best*, (Sternberg Press, The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto), 80.

strategically created an imaginary organization named the Atlas Group and a fictitious historian, Dr. Fakhouri. By creating work “through” a historian and working with an institution, which, given the structure of our societal system, provide credibility, Raad’s work achieves cultural, social, and political power and authority, which is not generally given to an artist.

The methodology adopted by Raad and Fast, which features the creation of confusion, questioning of reality, and lies, is more effective at portraying an event than attempting to do so with the greatest level of accuracy. According to Benjamin, information comes with explanation, so there is nothing more to know, feel, and interpret, and a story thus dies as it is told. However, storytelling allows the listener to “interpret things the way he understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks.”³⁰ He also stated that storytelling differs from information in that storytelling does not aim to convey the pure essence of an event but rather imbues a story with the life of the storyteller. Aspects of the storyteller cling to a story; this is the reason why many storytellers begin by relating the circumstances by which they have gained access to the story that they are about to tell. This is true in *5,000 Feet*: The video depicts the making of the work, as it takes place in Las Vegas, where the interviews were conducted. Jacques Rancière’s question concerning whether history is a form of fiction is answered by Benjamin: An archive is ultimately a story told by a witness of an event that took place, and it therefore cannot be entirely objective.

An Example of Raad’s work which narrates a story of war in the form of a false document is *Let’s be honest, the weather helped* (1998/2006). It is supposedly Walid Raad’s personal notebook. It consists of a series of pictures of Beirut, on which the artist marked where he found bullets and bullet holes. His personal document describing where the bullet holes were found in the city of Beirut were donated to the Atlas Group. In this photograph, bullet holes are marked with dots of various hues that correspond to each country that produced bullets and sold them in Lebanon. The colored dots take the place of the bullets and are used to provide the involvement of other countries the civil war. Instead of using actual violent images, Raad used photographs which could be described almost as pretty with the various colored dots for the sake of audience’s experiences of the war. “For Raad, color – and monochrome in particular – serves as

³⁰ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 89.



Figure 2.3: Walid Raad, *Let's be honest, the weather helped* (1998/2006), installation document

a means of experiencing war from a distance.”³¹ The removal of direct depictions of violence and the distance from it continue to appear throughout his work with the Atlas Group. In *Secret in the Open Sea*, 29 photographic prints of various shades of blue replaced images of death, and, in *Hostage*, Raad hired a recognizable actor and let the audience know that the video work is a fabricated document. In the Museum of Modern Art’s catalogue of Walid Raad’s work, Eva Respini noted that weather is a recurring motif for the Atlas Group. It is a main subject of ordinary conversation and “acts as an equalizer, circumscribing the direct address of violence.”³² Raad stated that weather is the “best way to neutralize a disaster, to think of something else to write, to think and to feel.”³³ Raad purposefully creates distance and uses fiction in order to tell

³¹Eva Respini, “Slippery Delays and Optical Mysteries: The Work of Walid Raad,” in *Walid Raad*, (The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2015), 39.

³² Ibid., p37.

³³ Silvia Kolbowski and Walid Raad, *Silvia Kolbowski/Walid Raad: Between Artists* (New York: Art Resources Transfer Press, 2006), 36.

the truth about the war. Rancière stated that “The real must be fictionalized in order to be thought.”³⁴ Jill Bennet discussed the importance of “affective truth” in the experience of art which would de-frame a work as representation and create a real-time somatic experience for the audience. According to Bennet, who draws on Gilles Deleuze, this true experience is “‘what leads to thought’ ... impressions which force us to look, encounters which force us to interpret, expressions which force us to think.”³⁵ Bennett’s perspective with regard to empathy being an effective tool represents a questionable argument; however, the fact that their works led to contemplation and experience which feels real is why Raad and Fast were ultimately successful in their attempts to edit and fictionalize reality. It is the distance of fiction and the intimacy of the real that get us closer to the actual event, which may remain either hidden or little known.

Both Omer Fast and Walid Raad use fiction as a means of carrying the weight of truth and narrating stories of trauma. Carrie Lambert-Beatty discusses the effectiveness of inserting lies into the social systems of our current reality and playing pranks on people as an artistic method in political art in her essay *Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility*. She called this method *Parafiction*. In the article, she makes the following statement:

Unlike historical fiction’s fact-based but imagined worlds, in perfection real and/or imaginary personages and stories intersect with the worlds as it is being lived. Post-simulacral, parafictional strategies are oriented less toward the disappearance of the real than toward the pragmatics of trust. Simply put, with various degrees of success, for various durations, and for various purposes, these fictions are experienced as fact.³⁶

Parafictional work is based on trust, not a matter of real or lie or ethics or aesthetics. If a work is experienced as fact, however temporarily or ambiguously, it is successful. Both Omer Fast and Walid Raad’s works, despite the fact that they contain lies, are accepted as having the weight of truth by audiences who experience them. Lambert-Beatty provides examples of Parafiction: Michael Blum’s *A Tribute to Safiye Behar* (2005), *Nike Ground* (2003) by the Italian collective consisting of Evan and Franco Mattes, an Austrian new media/art platform titled Public Netbase,

³⁴ Jacques Rancière, “Is History a Form of Fiction?” in *The politics of Aesthetics*, (Continuum, London 2006), 38.

³⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, trans. Richard Howard, (Continuum International Publishing Group, The Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2000), 61.

³⁶ Carrie Lambert-Beatty, “Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility,” *October Magazine*, Ltd. and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Summer 2009, 54.

End of the TWO (2002) by the Yes Men, and Walid Raad's video work *Hostage* (2001). Audiences encounter each work in everyday locations, such as the media (*Hostage* and Yes Men) and a physical location (the Austrian Karlsplatz and the Deniz Palace Apartments). All of these works address social and political issues, such as those concerning war and capitalism, and the audience encounters some of them, such as *Nike Ground*, on the streets outside of the context of an art institution. Lambert-Beatty argues that, when experiencing "Parafiction", an audience evaluates "not only whether a proposition is fictional but also what parts of it are true."³⁷ For this reason, it engages with cognition.³⁸ Despite fact that Blum and Raad's works contain intentional lies and present themselves as works of art, audiences accept these works as factual. Lambert-Beatty states that this is due to "the major movement of art and art history against the notion of art's autonomy", as artists have ceaselessly demonstrated the coexistence of art and the real.³⁹

Parafiction is a type of "art that is built on the contradictions between art's ability to move into and change the world"⁴⁰ and the perception of art as a space that has only symbolic relevance. Quoting an email from Raad concerning what art like his can do, he states that "an artwork can maintain and work different kind facts alive [*sic*] (historical facts; sociological facts, economic facts, emotional facts, aesthetic facts, etc...),"⁴¹ Lambert-Beatty concludes that Parafiction both reveals the way things are and makes sensible the way we want them to be, which offers experiences of both skepticism and belief. She compares Parafiction to the work of a paramedic: "The paramedic, after all, doesn't attempt to heal the patient. She resuscitates him, she staunches his bleeding. She keeps pressure on his wounds."⁴²

³⁷ Ibid., p78.

³⁸ Ibid. p79.

³⁹ Ibid., p80.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p81.

⁴¹ Ibid., p81.

⁴² Ibid., p82.

Chapter 3: The Dialectics of a Machine

3.1. Theme - Speech and Power

Language is complex. It is a product of culture and it shapes the culture. Words have a powerful impact on how we interpret our surroundings and navigate the world around us. Language is more than a communicative tool and a socio-political tool as Noam Chomsky said, “*Questions of language are basically questions of power.*”⁴³

The focus of my research has been the relationship between language and power, particularly the English language and the socio-political power structure in the States and how to bring this issue closer to an audience whose lives and interests do not intersect with it. Hannah Arendt talks in her book *The Human Condition* about labor, work, and action. Arendt discusses human history, Greek etymology and mythology, and Aristotle’s philosophy to analyze the construct of our current society. In defining a political way of life, borrowing from Aristotle, Arendt argues for the role of speech in participating in political life. Slaves and barbarians are “deprived, not of the faculty of speech, but of a way of life in which speech and only speech made sense and where the central concern of all citizens was to talk with each other.”⁴⁴ She is claiming that speech is what makes man a political being⁴⁵ and that class is further divided between those who labor and those who are free from it.

The American history of statehood clearly demonstrates the importance of language and its political weight. The United States was confronted with large non-English speaking populations in the aftermath of the Mexican War in 1848. The territories that were seized after the war, which came to be known as California and New Mexico, contained mainly Spanish-speaking populations. Statehood was granted to these regions only when English speakers outnumbered Spanish speakers. This happened much sooner to California than New Mexico and helps explain why the former became a state in 1850 while the latter did not receive statehood until 1912,

⁴³ Noam Chomsky, *On Language: Chomsky's Classic Works Language and Responsibility and Reflections on Language in One Volume*, (New York: New Press, 1998), 191.

⁴⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd. ed. (The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 27.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

when Anglos finally outnumbered Hispanics putting an end to the possibility of a bilingual state.⁴⁶

Academics and institutions study, investigate, and write papers about and distinguish such structures as soft power. However those who experience the issue first-hand become psychologically traumatized and socially and politically victimized. It is a type of trauma for which violent and graphic images do not exist. It is like an illness that you consult doctors of various fields, go through multiple tests to have a doctor tell you that there is nothing wrong with you when you know the pain is there. You know it is real because you feel the pain, however there is no machine, test, or data that can provide information about your pain. There is no medication that will fix the problem. It is a symptom that cannot be diagnosed. You can take painkillers to temporarily subdue or disconnect the nerve system to trick yourself that the problem has been purged. It divides people into three categories: those who do not care about the pain, those who are interested in the pain without a solution (at least not yet), and those who suffer. It is a constant battle between the presumably interested party to find a solution and people who know and feel the problem exists.

Numerous artists have explored language from the stories of personal, cultural, social, and the political using various media. Antoni Muntadas' project *The Internet Project*⁴⁷, uses the internet as a medium and discusses the inevitable difficulties of understanding culture from the linguistic point of view and questions the distribution of information on the Internet. Based on the children's game "Chinese Whispers", a chain of 22 translators all around the world--each representing one of the 22 most spoken languages on the planet--translated a sentence, posted it on the website, and passed it onto the next translator. He comments on the dominant usage of the English language online.

“[The] Internet is mostly in English and that is a limitation, a problem to begin with. On internet there is some censorship, because a standard language is used. ... English is becoming a language of cultural colonisation. How can we maintain specificity if everybody uses the same language?”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Carol Schmid, *The Politics of Language: Conflict, Identity, and Cultural Pluralism in Comparative Perspective*, (Oxford University Press, 2001), 75-76.

⁴⁷ <http://adaweb.walkerart.org/influx/muntadas/project.html>

⁴⁸ *Muntadas: On Translation*, (Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) Actar, Barcelona, 2002), 81.

The Internet Project is concerned with control of language and its affect on diversity of people. As both Chomsky and Arendt have argued language is a political tool. It is a vehicle for people to get together to discuss and make decisions. For this reason, when one language becomes a dominant language, it creates people, societies, and counties that become disadvantaged for not being able to speak and understand the language and eventually became disconnected from the rest of the world that does use this language. The disconnect creates further disparity between those who can participate in making decisions and those who cannot.

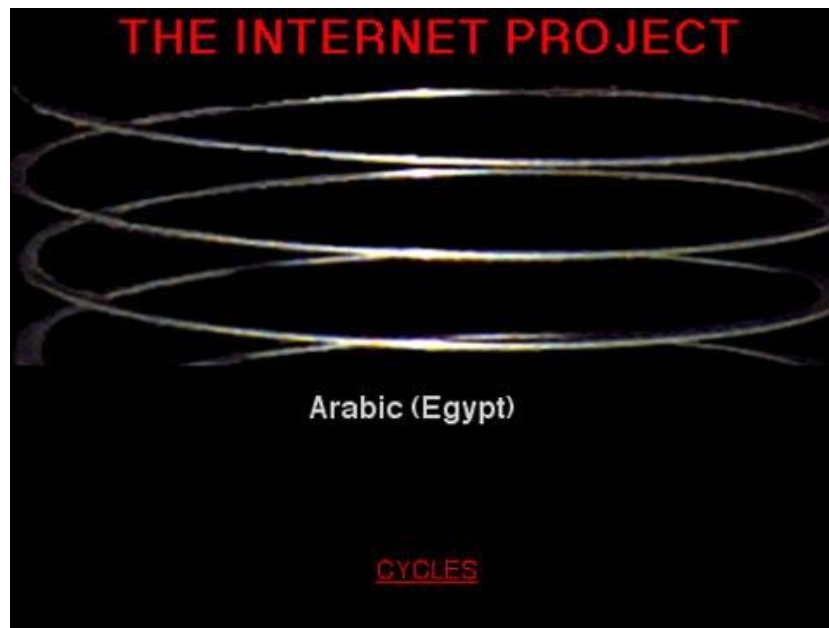


Figure 3.1: Antoni Muntadas, *The Internet Project* (1995)

Shoum (2009) by Katarina Zdjelar explores how disability to understand English language individually, culturally, and politically can have a negative affect . The video exhibits the hands of two men from Belgrade holding a pen with a piece of paper. These two men, who do not speak English, attempt to decipher and phonetically transcribe the lyrics of a famous song, “Shout,” by Tears for Fears. ‘Shoum Shoum Lajdi o Lau’, they write and sing, in a strange invented language somewhere between phonetic transcription, Serbian, and English, as ‘Tears for Fears’ sing ‘Shout, shout, let it all out’.⁴⁹ These two men whose lives do not intersect with the

⁴⁹ “Shoum,” <http://katarinazdjelar.net/shoum>

global world where English is adopted and spoken as a common language demonstrate that “meaning here is less a matter of understanding than of processing and assimilation.”⁵⁰ To be accepted in the mainstream of society, not only does one need to speak English but also to speak it without an accent. As sociologist Carol L. Schmid asserted, “In the United States immigrants and their children were compelled to speak accentless English if they desired social acceptance and integration in their adopted country.”⁵¹ Additionally, she states that speaking accentless English represents the “litmus test of Americanization.” Language, then, can be viewed as a tool used by those who practice it with perfection (native speakers) to separate from or control those who practice it with lesser familiarity (immigrants).

A more poetic and personal approach to language and speech is *I am sitting in a room* (1969) by Alvin Lucier. This piece uses sound as a method to deliver the composer’s personal story related to language. The piece uses a repetition of sound and a resonance of a room as a way to address and smooth out the sound of his stuttering. He recorded himself narrating a text, played it into the room to re-record and play it back to the room. The recording begins "I am sitting in a room, different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice." The resonance of the room altered the frequency of the room resulting in the sound that no longer was decipherable as a sentence.

Imogen Stidworthy has been expressing her concerns on speech and its relevance to personal and social life. *Barrabackslarrabang* (2010) explores speech as a vehicle to explore race, class, and its link to the economy. The video was filmed in two different Liverpool pubs which are historically associated with a Backslang – the English written word spoken phonemically backwards to have private conversations amongst working class and illegal trades — and the birth of the railway. In *Barrabackslarrabang* the voice criss-crosses social boundaries to mirror structures and desires in ostensibly opposing spaces of language, legality and culture. It can be seen as a symptom of poor economic and social conditions, but also as a form of resistance, and a possibility for different social paradigms. (<https://lux.org.uk/work/barrabackslarrabang>) As a

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Schmid, *The Politics of Language*, 75-76.



Figure 3.2: Imogen Stidworthy, *Barrabackslarrabang* (2010)

way to rise from the social and economical disadvantage, sometimes a new form of speech is formed proving its strong connection between language and the economy.

A lot of artworks which explore language and speech naturally discuss the individual experience, social trauma, and political disadvantages that ultimately affect on an individual level. Speech is used to fit in, to participate in political exercise/life, and sometimes a refusal to conform for the survival. When one experiences the difficulty of language, it affects them in all levels of life.

3.2. Project Description

The Dialectics of a Machine (fig. 3.3) is a four-channel video piece that explores the potential of fiction to question our social expectations, including their systems, functions, and worth. The video documents speech therapy sessions with people with varying speech barriers, from someone who'd had a recent throat surgery to someone speaking English as a second language. The issues each person is trying to correct are not clearly identified in the video. They go through individually designed speech and bodily exercises with a professional speech pathologist to reduce their impediments. When the speech pathologist introduces a fictional machine that could correct their speech problems, the patients' honest responses to the correction device reveal their personal stories, including self-perceived identity and power. The video leads the audience to shift their attention from the patients' problems to the system (therapist and the machine) that encourages them to acknowledge their speech impediments as problems. Additionally, the video exposes the strong tie between each patient's speech and their life on various levels.

This piece was exhibited at The Jacob Lawrence Gallery between July 14th and August 6th in 2016 under the title *Windward || Windword*.



Figure 3.3: *The Dialectics of a Machine* (2017), Screenshot

3.3. Methodology

Andrei Tarkovsky's movie *The Mirror* (1982) starts with a short introduction. A boy turns on an old television set to static. A female voice speaks in Russian, subtitled in English. "What is your name?" The boy walks backwards, staring at the television, and a male voice says, "My name is Yuri Zhary." The scene cuts to a black and white film of what appears to be a hypnosis session for a teenage boy who stutters. A white-coated woman, presumably a therapist, asks the boy questions, and he stutters as he answers.

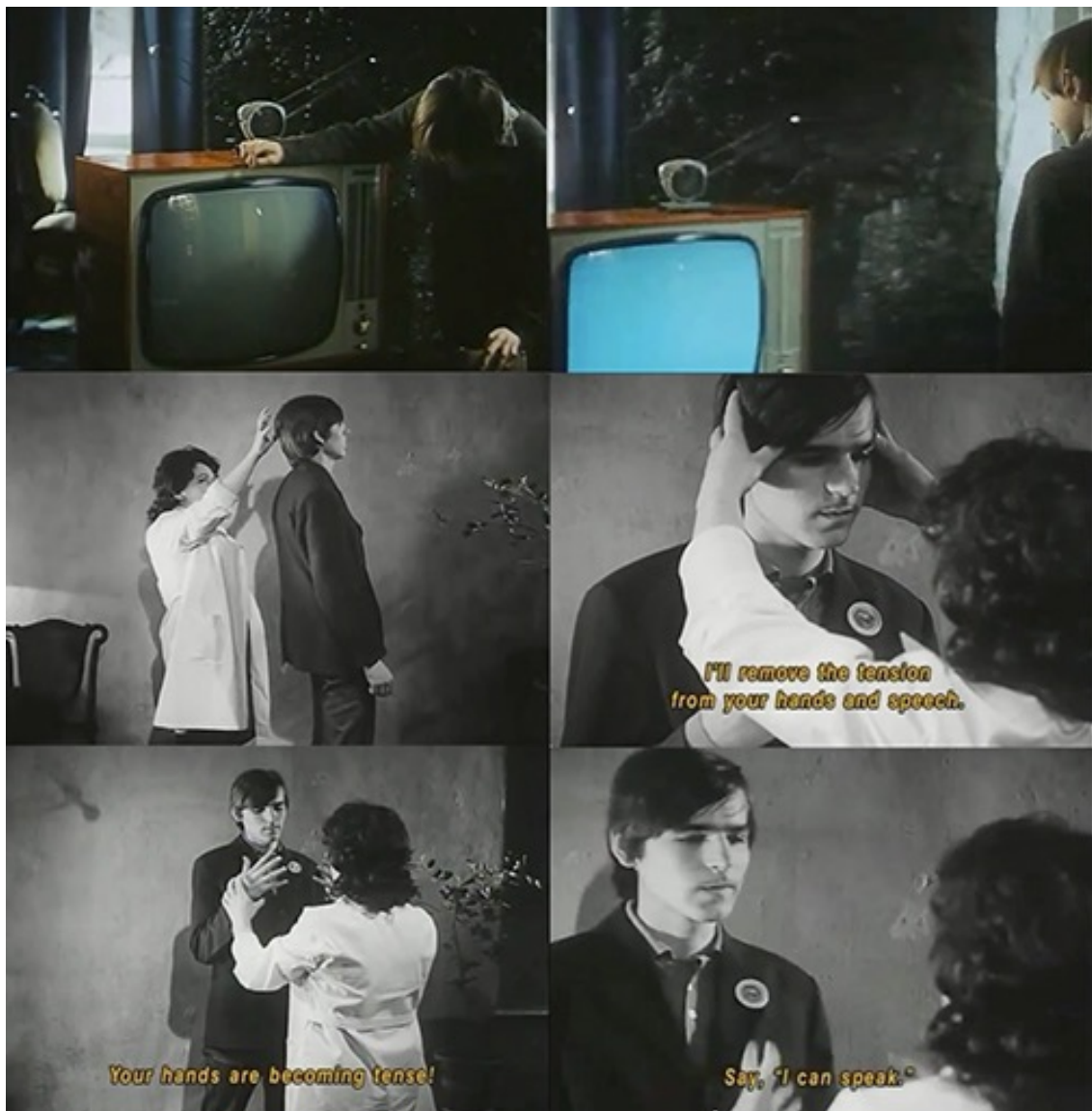


Figure 3.4: Andrei Tarkovsky, *The Mirror* (1982), Intro. film stills

Concentrate on my hand. My hand is drawing you back.
Concentrate! Your attention is on your hands.
Your hands are becoming tense!
You will...
your great desire to succeed, on your hands.
Your hands are becoming tense.
Look at your fingers.
They're becoming tense.
The tension from here will flow to your fingers.
When I say "three," your hands will become rigid.
One...
Two...
Three...
Your hands are rigid.
You cannot move your hands.
You try to move them, but you cannot.
I will relieve the tension now...
and you will speak clearly and effortlessly.
you will speak loudly and clearly all your life.
I will remove the tension from your hands and speech.
One...
two...
three!
Say, "I can speak."
I can speak.

The 4 minute 43 second video raises a lot of questions. Setting aside the question of the purpose of this seemingly unrelated introduction to *The Mirror*, this short preview questions the identity of the film itself as well as the credibility of the hypnosis session that happens in the film. It might be more believable for a non-Russian speaking audience, as it is harder for them to distinguish if the people on screen are acting or if the treatment is real. The film starting in color and transitioning to black and white also suggests that the black and white part of the film is old, possibly archival, and therefore true. The structure of two realities that are present in the film, the play of color, and the documentary-like visual language, attempt to legitimize the content without providing a satisfying resolution. This visual formula, the uncertainty of the source of the footage and the identity of the people, the balance between two characters who could possibly be forgers, and the use of hypnosis are some of the story-telling techniques that *The Dialectics of a Machine* borrows.

Three dimensions of reality co-exist in *Dialectics of a Machine*: a documented story of the patients in their therapy sessions, a story created by a fictional machine that intervenes with the

patients' realities, and a story of their personal lives re-lived by themselves. The first two parts are filmed in medium and close-up shots, framing the work as a documentary. The camera stays mostly stationary. The reenactment scene is filmed in the style of a drama, setting the scene with a wide angle shot and using various camera angles to amplify the trauma that the scene communicates.

The first dimension of reality is a documentation of the therapy session. As the speech pathologist assesses the patients' abilities and limits, they produce short, nonsensical sounds. As these sounds are played together through four monitors, they create dissonance and sometimes harmony. The video was edited to intentionally create this harmony to bring attention to the musicality of speech and the beauty of the human voice away when the political aspects of language are removed.

The second dimension of reality is a result of a real situation that is created inside the video. Both Walid Raad and Omer Fast whose work is extensively described in chapter 2 use an event which has already happened as the basis of their work. Both their works have dual identities. Raad's work exists not only as art but also as an artifact of the society in the form of an archive. Fast's work dual realities of arguable documentary and fiction run in parallel both being art and life at the same time. As Jack Burnham said of systems art, "any situation, either inside or outside the context of art, may be designed and judged as a system, and the consistency of a system may be altered in time and space, its behavior determined both by external conditions and by its mechanisms of control."⁵², The *Dialectics of a Machine* takes this theory a step further than Raad and Fast by designing a situation for each of the therapy participants. The story is altered in the moment when the participants respond to the fictional machine, which was planted in their real lives as an object that would remove and fix their problems. The plot is science fiction from the outside, but reality from the inside. The artistic concept was inserted into the real situation and created a montage between art and life. The insertion of a fictional artifact into a real life creates two levels of conversation in this work: one between real life and a situation, and one between the work and the viewer. As the response of the participants could not be predicted or planned, the work is no longer a representation, but a reality that these people are living. The

⁵² Jack Burnham, *Dissolve into Comprehension: Writings and Interviews, 1964-2004*, (The MIT Press, 2015), 118.

work becomes the reality itself. By using the participants' true and honest responses instead of recreating the situation, the situation itself completes the story. The real becomes inseparable from the artwork through the lives of these people as the audience becomes immersed in the story.

As much as the work creates a believable and engaging story, *The Dialectics of a Machine* allows both belief and disbelief to co-exist between the work and the audience. This is a theatrical technique known as the "alienation effect" used in Epic theatre, a theatrical movement in the early 20th century that aimed to address societal issues. The new subject matter was staged by means of documentary to develop an objective response and a feeling of detachment from the action of the play.⁵³ Bertolt Brecht was one of the leading practitioners of Epic theatre. Referring to Brecht's work, Walter Benjamin said,

The interruption of action, on account of which Brecht described as epic, constantly counteracts an illusion in the audience. For such illusion is a hinderance to a theater that proposes to make use of elements of reality in experimental rearrangements ... [The spectator] recognizes it as the real situation, not with satisfaction, as in the theatre of naturalism, but with astonishment. Epic theatre, therefore, does not reproduce situations, rather it discovers them.⁵⁴

With Epic theatre, Brecht said "no longer would the audience willingly suspend disbelief,"⁵⁵ noting that it "turns the spectator into an observer, but arouse his capacity for action, forces him to take decisions...the spectator stands outside, studies, the human being is the object of the inquiry, he is alterable and able to alter."⁵⁶ Epic Theatre was for Brecht was a way to intervene in the world, not just to reflect on but to change reality. Omer Fast also uses this technique of keeping the audience at a distance. Moving away from the use of real footage of war by re-creating the war scenes and re-staging the real interviews in *5000 Feet is the Best* created the

⁵³ Innes, Christopher, *Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre: The Development of Modern German Drama*. New edition. (Cambridge University Press, 1977).

⁵⁴ Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, eds. A. Arato and E. Gebhardt, (Urizen Books, New York, 1978), 266.

⁵⁵ James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: The Art, Technology, Language, History, and Theory of Film and Media*, (Oxford University Press, 1981), 36.

⁵⁶ Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. and trans. by John Willett, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 37.

necessary distance for critical thinking while engaging in what Fast called “trauma turned drama.”

The third reality in *The Dialectics of a Machine* is a re-creation of the participants’ lived experience. The social trauma they have experienced and still experience is re-lived through those very people who lived it. Borrowing Abbas Kiarostami’s methodology of reenactment in his movie *Close-up*, a reenacted documentary that used the actual participants of the documented event as actors in its portrayal, *The Dialectics of a Machine* further challenges our understanding of real and fake. The participants in the therapy are brought back into the situation and some of them become themselves again through acting. It is real because the story came from them; however, it is fake because the moment of trauma told in the story has already happened, and what the audience sees is only a representation of the moment. The scenes reenacted by the participants are accompanied by narration in the same participants’ voices. This way, the audience experiences the work as though the story was told by the very people who went through it, in the very moment and place in which it happened. This brings the audience closer to the participants and to the trauma.

According to Craig Owens, the rearrangement and the montage technique of weaving the real and the fictional situations, keeping the audience engaged in the believable story while maintaining an intellectual distance, allows the work to “connect dissimilars in such a way as to ‘shock’ people into new recognitions and understandings.”⁵⁷ Unlike Fast and the Epic theatre, *The Dialectics of a Machine* walks the audience through the real lives of the patients, which are neither representations nor fictions. The work exists in the real partially as fiction and partially as real, in the systems of social hierarchy structured by the politics of language represented by the machine. According to Roland Barthes, who studied the relationship between science and art, calling its marriage an “intellectual art,” “we produce simultaneously theory, critical combat, and pleasure; we subject the objects of knowledge and discussion - as in any art - no longer to an instance of truth, but to a consideration of effects.” Like Omer Fast and Walid Raad’s works, *The*

⁵⁷ Stanley Mitchell, “Introduction,” Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock, (New Left Books, London, p.xiii.)

Dialectics of a Machine is focused on telling the truth, not telling the story in the way it happened but in the way it affects the spectator.

The significance of the fiction within the documentary-style videos of these therapy sessions is to provide space for contemplation, to lend attention to the unrelated and uninterested subject matter, and ultimately to give power to those who normally do not have it. Deleuze said,

... what is opposed to fiction is not the real; it is not the truth which is always that of the masters of colonizers; it is the story-telling fiction of the poor, in so far as it gives the false the power which makes it into a memory, a legend, a monster.⁵⁸

The description of the machine was partially taken from the description of the first computer and the therapist's improvisation based on the situation. The participants asked questions about the duration of the session with the machine, the number of sessions, and the side effects. The fictional machine (in this work) has a significance as it has a dual identity. The machine here is not just a physical machine with buttons and knobs, but a representation of the mechanics of the systems that govern our behavior and ultimately the values on which we base our lives.

However, it is at the same time identified as a man-made extension of the human desire to fit in and succeed in society. The Soviet Union's 1957 launch of Sputnik 1, an artificial Earth satellite, was, according to Hannah Arendt, "second in importance to other" and was what one American reporter called "the first step toward escape from men's imprisonment to the earth."⁵⁹ Science and technology allowed humanity to rebel against our own existence (to be bound on earth forever) and fulfill wishes to "escape from the human condition."⁶⁰ However, this technology, a ticket off of earth, was also a creation born from the uncomfortable military and political circumstances of the Cold War. It was created to collect information, a purpose that ushered in the creation of the internet, thereby creating benefits and problems at the same time. The problems become works to solve through more technological and scientific means. The integration of the fictional machine in the work was crucial. The conversation about this machine between the patient (concerning a possible benefit and potential future problems) and the

⁵⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, Trans, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997), 150.

⁵⁹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 1-2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

therapist (the voluntary or non-voluntary benefits caused by choice and ignorance) crosses the intricate borders between opposing social groups, complex emotions of resisting assimilation and the acceptance of conformity, and how we, as a collective, create power structures through institutions.

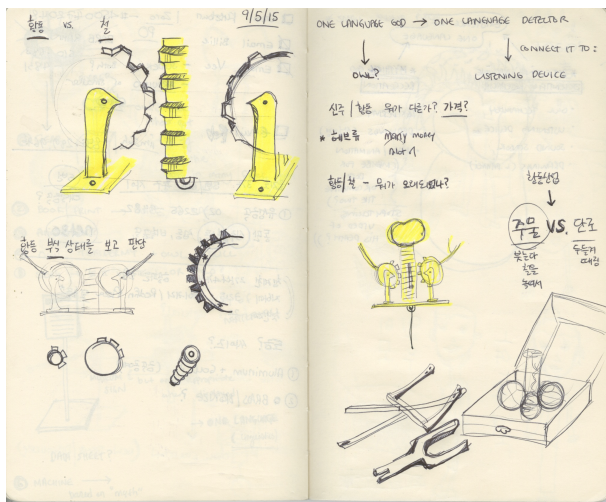
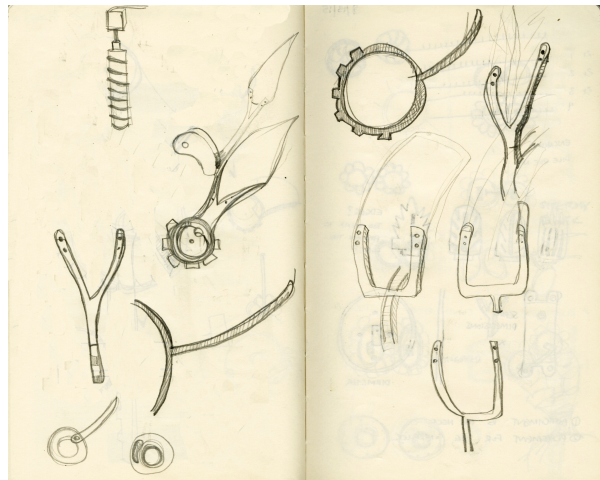
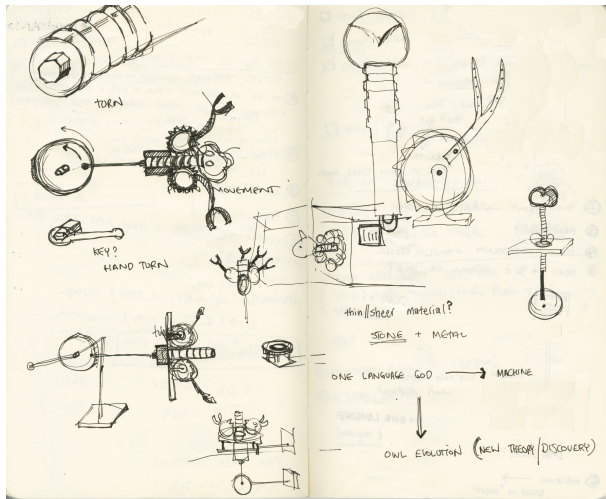
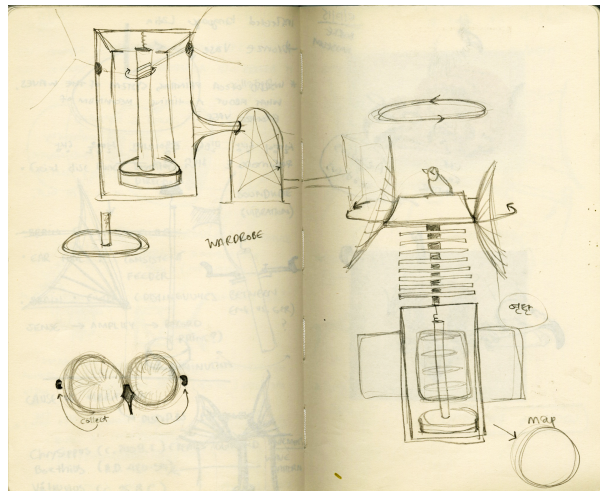
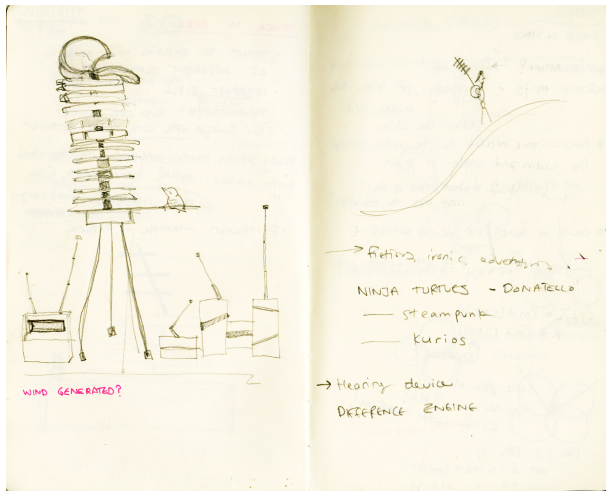


Figure 3.5: Initial design drawing of the machine

3.4. Process

The Dialectics of a Machine went through three different ideation and experiment phases: *Universal Language Finder*, *I Will Not Dance*, and *Conversation with Therapist to arrive at The Dialectics of a Machine*. This chapter will discuss how each phase demonstrates the origin of the project, investigation methodology, successes and failures to arrive at the dissertation piece.

3.4a. Phase I- Universal Language Finder

The project started with an idea of a fake machine capable of locating a universal language. The entire project was meant to provide enough evidence to make the viewers believe in the existence of this machine, a belief that assumes the existence of a universal language. The universal language assumes the destruction of class, power, and the disparity between the winners and the losers. For the design of the machine, many aircraft detection devices (<https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/aircraft-detection-radar-1917-1940/>) were studied as well as speech aid machines such as the Von Kempelen Speaking Machine and Charles VanRiper's Machine.⁶¹

In order to provide fragments of this machine for the viewer to stitch the evidences together to create a plausible picture in their mind, a clear design became necessary. The initial design of the machine (fig.3.5) was a collapsible piece that can be packed into a bag and easily carried. A narrative of the Universal Language seeker carrying the machine around the world on her back was generated. After the initial sketch for the project, in addition to studying human inventions, animals of various species and their ability to hear and locate prey from a distance were researched. Owls are known to be able to tell the origin of any sound, as they can detect sounds from the left and the right with a time difference of about 30 microseconds. An owl can also tell if a sound is higher or lower by using their asymmetrical ear openings. Multiple owl skulls as well as taxidermies from the Burke Natural History Museum were 3D scanned, printed, and incorporated into the design of this fictitious Universal Language Detector.

⁶¹ Charles VanRiper was a well-known speech therapist who pointed out the social implications of communication disorders and its affect on self-esteem and ego.

Borrowing from the parabolic shape of the owl's ears, multiple prototypes with working gears to open and close a parabolic satellite were designed in conjunction with the overall design of the machine (fig. 3.5). The rack and pinion mechanism was the best solution to a working gear mechanism to open and close the parabolic shapes. After numerous attempts at designing the rack and the pinion, the pinion was cut out of steel using the water-jet and rack, and the pinion holder, designed like the shape of a bird, was lathed and cut out of brass (fig.3.5, bottom right).

However, the research took another turn after the study of Walid Raad's works. Raad's works normally start with known facts, such as the Civil War in Lebanon. Raad would then fabricate a story and create documents to support its insertion into the history and the systems of the archive. Having a place in existing history, a dependable historical figure, and a credible institution worked well in helping the work to gain power and legitimacy. Instead of starting with an object from a fictional place and a fictional device to support the story, the present research shifted to things that are perceived as facts. The modified story starts with a discovered adventurer's journal (fictional archive) by a real adventurer, noting a peculiar machine. The journal references a legend from a different culture about a god of universal language (fictional archive). As the narrative relied heavily on stories, it seemed more effective to tell the story with a time-based medium instead of an installation with objects. The objects created for the project appear in the video as discovered artifacts.

To create spaces in which marginal and fantastical discourse can flourish, the project borrows both from our current reality and from fiction. It started from a place of history, a made-up legend about a universal language god inspired by a Chinese god of chaos and confusion, *Hundun* (fig.3.6). *Hundun* has four legs, four wings, and no face. The facelessness is meant to signify the confusion he sews. The creature has features easily spotted in ancient books of mythical creatures. Based on the form of *Hundun*, a short story about the universal language god was written.

“If you continue north for three days, there is a mountain filled with jade. There lives the One Language God named Un. He has two legs, four wings, and a face without a mouth. He enjoys dancing and can sing with his body. Un has two friends, Power and History, who decided one day to give him a present in appreciation of his friendship. Power and History gave Un a mouth, teeth, and a tongue. He immediately died.”



Figure 3.6: Chinese god of chaos and confusion, *Hundun*

The story brings Un's absence of the mouth and conflicting love of singing to the audience's attention, bringing them to question why the Universal Language god died upon receiving the speech-enabling gifts from his friends. Based on the two types of novels discussed in the previous chapter, this story fits more closely with the memetic novel. It is written to teach, instruct, and shape the understanding of the social change, except it is meant to be an ancient record instead of a current writing. Multiple sketches were done to design the form of the universal language god, as seen in figure 3.7.

Real people appear in the video to support the credibility of the story. One such person is John Hanning Speke, a real European explorer who has been to Tibet; and another is John Klicka, a scientist at the Burke Museum in Seattle. The script was written in the form of a documentary to suggest the content's authenticity, and a voice narrator was hired to read the script over the video that was filmed and edited in the documentary style (fig. 3.8).

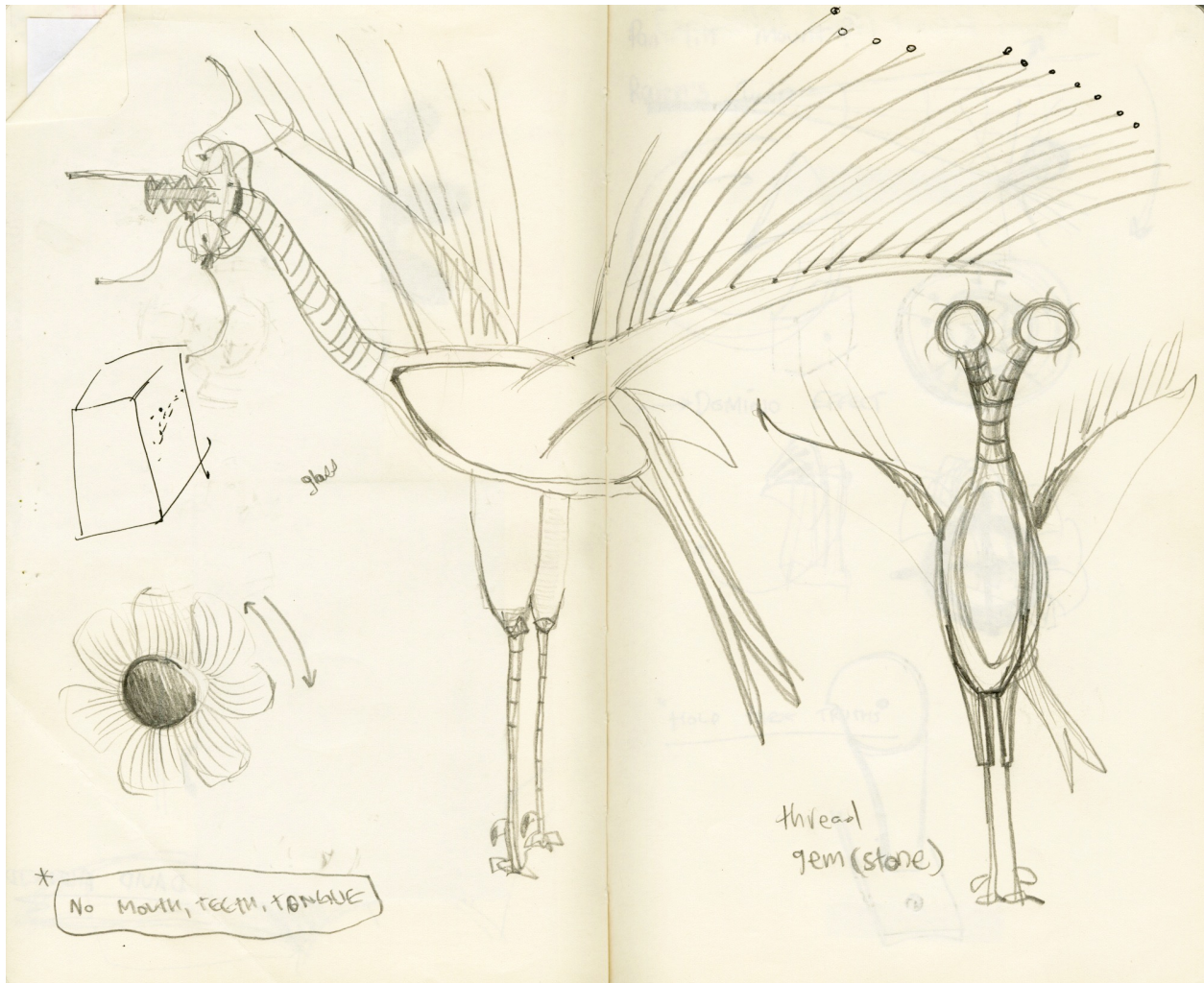


Figure 3.7.: Sketch of the universal language god

After the making of the video, a couple of successes and failures were discovered. The design of the gears, as well as the influence of owl in the design, was intriguing, but the existence of the universal language detector could not be resolved in a creative and interesting way. It wasn't interesting enough to provoke the curiosity of a broader audience, as the notion of universal language is not in the interest of the general public. For this reason, the idea of a machine was separated from the form of an owl, and two projects were created from this experiment: a story about a machine that corrects speech problems, and an ancient legend about a mythical god described in the story.

Script of the video

Narrator: Its plausibility, its practical incredulity and the curious possibilities of anachronism has provoked our inquisition about this object. No one knows, if it had existed, its current residence or if it still exists. If it did not survive, what or who destroyed it and the question of why also needs to be answered.

“The Machine,” one of the most important clues to the origin of human language, hidden in an obscure Tibetan Monastery until the 19th century, may hold the secret that linguists, anthropologists, and experts of various fields have been searching for: the Universal Language.

Historian: When I read an article about the story and the research about *The Machine* in the latest issue of the journal Nature, something clicked in my head. There is a book called *Un* on Asian Gods which is filled with stories and illustrations. The article written on the diary by John Speke describing the Machine reminded me of this Language God named *Un* in this Ancient book. He is a God who listened with his face. He is rather an interesting looking God, I must say. The book says (ANIMATION):

“If you continue north for three days, there is a mountain filled with jade. There was a One Language God named *Un*. He had two legs, two wings, and a face split in two and covered with feathers. He enjoyed dancing and could sing with his body. “Un” had two friends named Power and History, who decided one day to give him a present in appreciation for his friendship. Power and History gave “Un” a mouth, teeth, and tongue. He immediately died.

Narrator: John Hanning Speke was one of the first Europeans to cross into Tibet. In the journal he wrote during his travels, he described his visit to a Tibetan monastery called Yerpa, where he witnessed what he called “The Machine.” His account of “The Machine” was:

(British Accent) I am absolutely certain there was no trickery. I saw the two asymmetrical parabolic discs turn. There was a whisper of sound everywhere with flickers of light. The two discs with beautiful and soft substance started to narrow, and the body of the machine started to move fluidly and quietly. I gasped at the sight, and that’s when it all happened.

Narrator: John Speke said *The Machine* started to turn and leaned towards him quickly and yet silently. It inhaled the breath of his voice with its face and the entire floor started to vibrate and sing. The spirit was murmuring and bouncing inside the chamber like a lost soul, and it slowly dissipated into the air.

The corroded remains of The Machine were found in 1907. The remains were found as 84 fragments, of which 17 contained gears. What the researchers were able to put together based on the fragments was a mechanism that opened up with the up and down movement of a cylindrical shaped shaft in the center. The most complete portion of The Machine that scientists were able to piece together, through 3D modeling and printing, was what appeared to be the skull of an owl. The finding left the researchers puzzled again. According to John Speke, the machine seemed to be able to identify and capture sound, vibrate, and release the sound into the air. However, there is little evidence for what he was describing.

John Klicka, an ornithology researcher and a curator at Burke Museum in Seattle, Washington, said, “An Owl uses its unique ears to locate prey by listening for movements. Its sensitive ears can hear through ground cover such as leaves, foliage, or even snow. When a noise is heard, the Owl is able to tell the origin of the sound as it can detect the left and the right with the time difference of about 30 microseconds. An Owl can also tell if the sound is higher or lower by using the asymmetrical ear openings.”

Based on this finding, scientists hypothesize that the two parabolic discs mentioned in John Speke’s journal and the fragments of the machine that were found show the design of owl’s ears for listening.

In addition, the fragmentary bits of evidence have allowed researchers to speculate that the machine used a collection of gears and triangulation to calculate the positions of something. Based on the gathered facts, this mechanism seems to have been a sound-capturing machine and a locator. The questions that remain are, what was it listening for and what was it trying to locate.

Historian: There is a big resemblance between the illustration, the description of *Un*, and the descriptions of this machine. The Machine is a universal language listening device and a locator. It is listening for the One Language that has been mentioned through the existence of *Un* and is trying to find what has been lost.

Narrator: There is evidence that the research on this machine contributed to the development of listening devices during World War II. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, these listening devices were created by the Dutch during World War II to detect incoming air attacks in advance. The short entry in the Encyclopedia indicates that the design came from “*The Machine*”, known as the detecting device, which had two asymmetrical parabolic discs.”

Recently, researchers from Britain and the US discovered previously unnoticed inscriptions on the back of some of the gears using 3D X-ray imaging. They are written in a language that either does not exist anymore or are written in encrypted symbols. Many linguists from different countries are now studying the inscriptions to find the origin of this language.

Historian: *The Machine* being an Universal Language finder is still at its concept stage. We still have a long way to go to understand our findings and reconstruct it. One day this remarkably complex machine could provide clues to the human language that may connect us all.

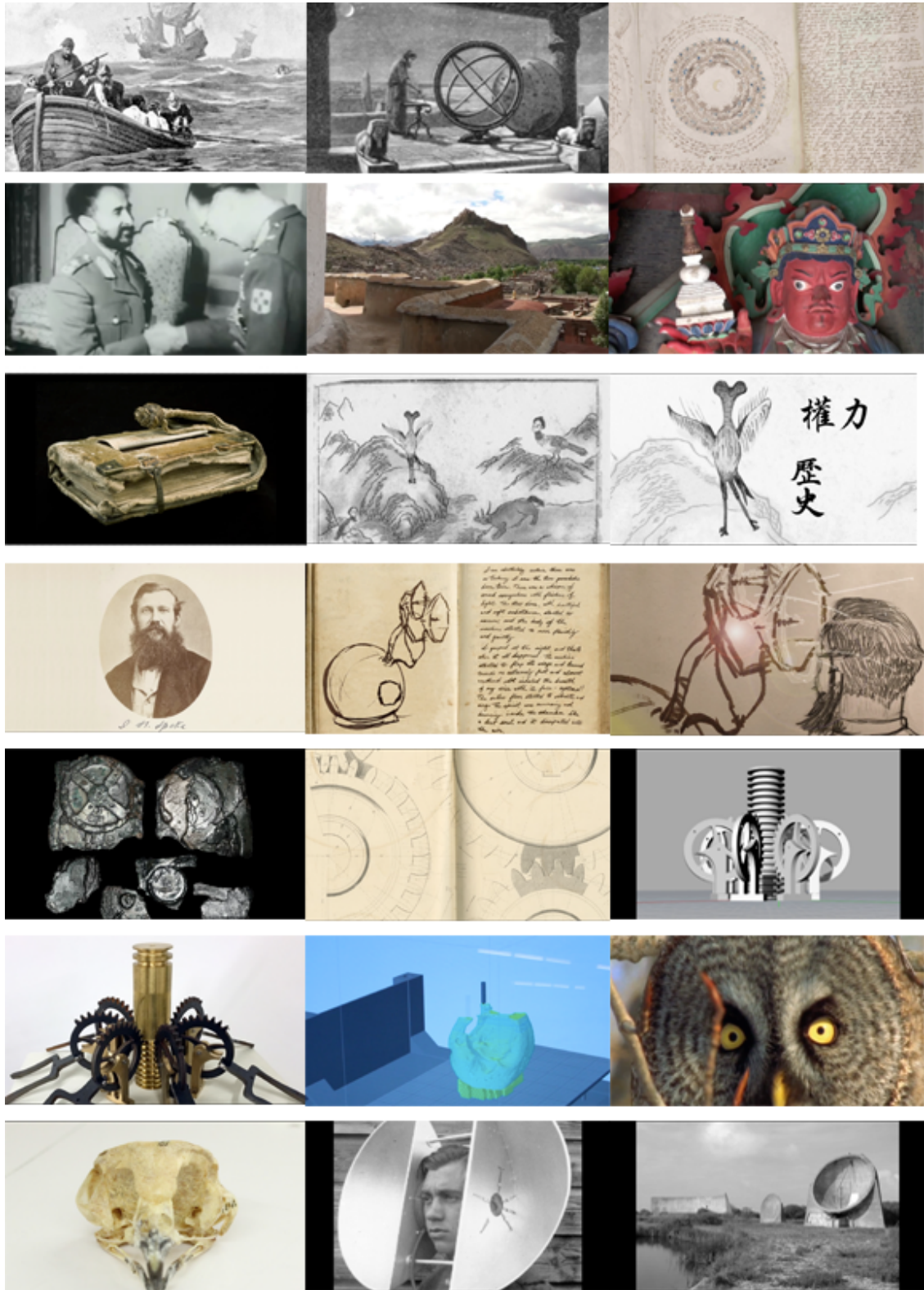


Figure 3.8: Universal language finder video stills

3.4b. Phase II- I Will Not Dance

I Will Not Dance (Fig. 3.9a,b,c,d) was an experiment which expanded upon the *Universal Language Finder* discussed in the previous chapter. The work consists of a human-owl hybrid digital sculpture, an owl specimen, and a skull loaned from the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture. In order to provide greater authenticity to the fictional folklore written for the *Universal Language Finder*, a physical representation of Un is included in the archive as a form of evidence. The sculpture, which was displayed alongside with legitimate historical artifacts, critiques notions of "real" and "fake," thus empowering the fictional folklore, which attempts to provide lesson about the role of speech and language in creating a social structure.



Figure 3.9a: *I Will Not Dance* (2016), exhibition view

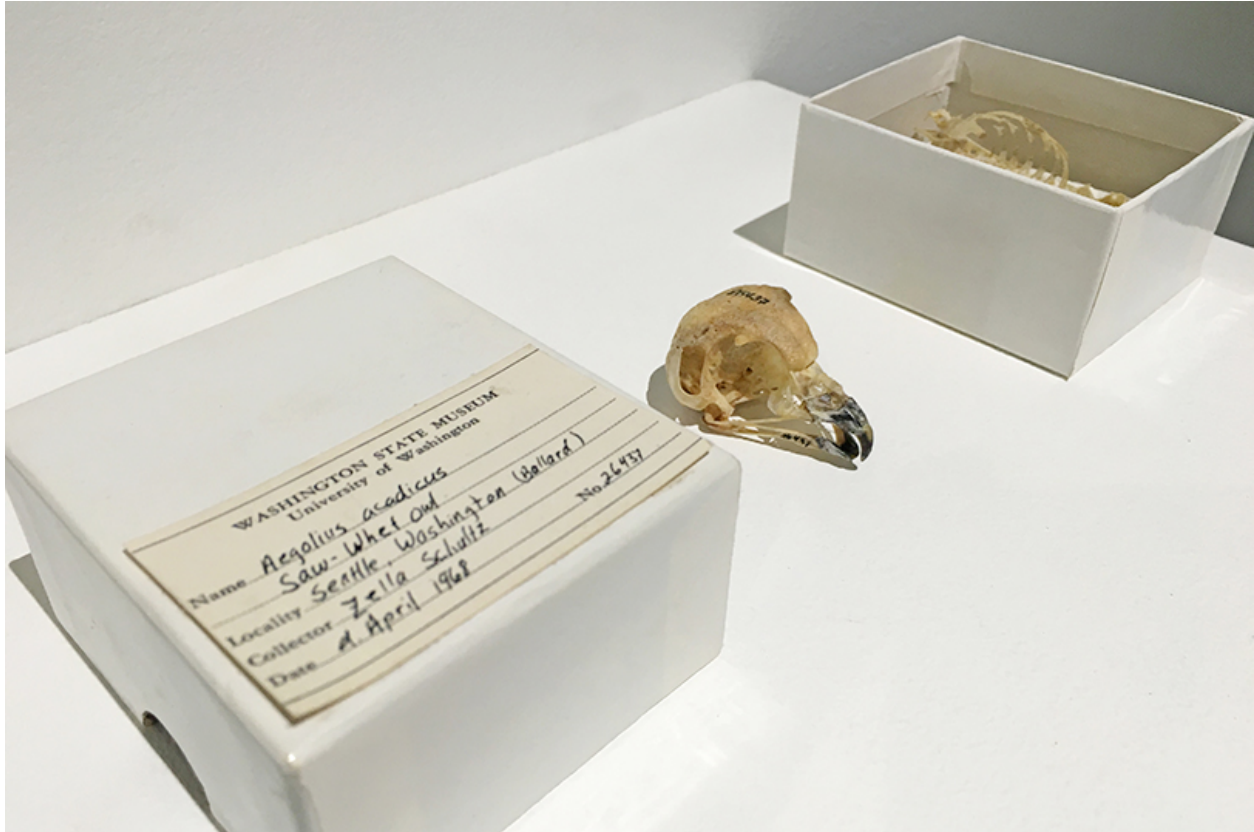


Figure 3.9b: Diagram of *I Will Not Dance*, owl skull



Figure 3.9c: *I Will Not Dance*, taxidermy



Figure 3.9d: *I Will Not Dance*, human-hybrid digitally fabricated sculpture

Based on research on owls, the design of the “language god” was created by combining a 3D scan of an owl skull, a human male body, and my own head (Fig. 3.10). The scan was done using Go!SCAN 50 Craform 3D scanner. The 3D editing program VX Element and the modeling program Maya were used to combine the scans and model the shape of the language god. The



Figure 3.10: 3D Scan of a female head and a male torso

language god went through multiple iterations (Fig. 3.11). The facial features of the female head were first removed, and the owl skull was then attached to the face. Once the shape of the god's head was formalized, the male torso was attached to the head. The neck was elongated and twisted from the original neck to emphasize the flexibility of an owl's neck.

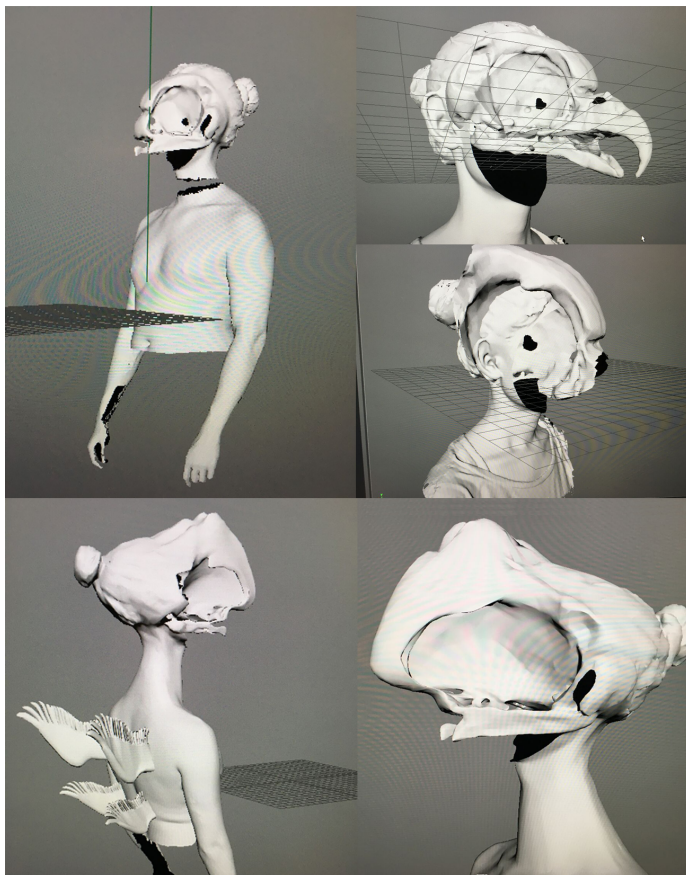


Figure 3.11: Variations of the language god in Maya

In order to create this shape out of wood, the 3D model had to be a watertight solid, sliced into layers, and cut to shape. In order to slice the mode, the finalized 3D model of *Un* was imported into Rhino. The *contour* function (Fig. 3.12) was used to slice it vertically to the thickness of the wood, 0.375 inches. The contoured model was initially laser cut in order to test the stacking method, as well as to see the overall form (Fig. 3.13). However, it was not successful at achieving a smooth transition from one layer to the next, and the stacked had to be sanded down significantly to remove the burn made by the laser cutter. One

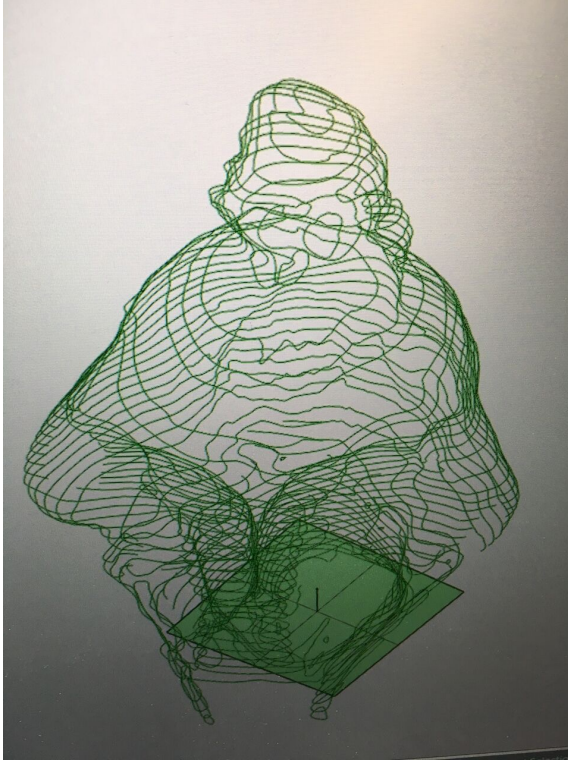


Figure 3.12.: Sliced 3D model using Rhino



Figure 3.13.: Laser-cut model in small scale

method of creating a smooth surface involved using a thin piece of wood; however, the burn still had to be removed. For this reason, the sculpture was cut using a CNC router. Using RhinoCam, each panel was prepared to undergo two steps, namely roughing and ZLevel finishing. The roughing step involved cutting the wood, creating steps with sharp edges (Fig 3.14), with a double-flute straight router bit, which was followed by ZLevel finishing using a round-nose bit. The parameters for the roughing and ZLevel finishing are as presented in Table 3.1. Each slice was stacked, glued, and screwed together (Fig 3.15a, b). Once the piece was assembled as a whole, it was sanded with both a handheld sander and a Dremel. The sculpture was placed on a high white pedestal, meaning that the audience has to look up to it, in order to visually emphasize its sacredness.

This piece would be ideally positioned within a natural history museum, as doing so could completely dissolve the question of its authenticity while simultaneously endowing it with legitimacy and authority. However, the direct impact of speech on people was neither apparent in the work nor in the experience of the audience. The work is intended to tell a story and provide a lesson concerning the injustices experienced by those who cannot employ speech as a political



Figure 3.14: Roughing

tool and have their voices heard. However, due to its minimal direct impact on the audience, the work was less influential than intended. This work seemed like it would have functioned well as a supplement to or as a historic background to another work.

Table 3.1: Table for RhinoCam Parameters

ROUGHING	
Step down	0.1"
Step over	0.313"
Stock to leave	0.02"
Method	Pocketing
Direction	Conventional
Safe Clearance	0.313"
Radius	0 depress
Ramp angle	10

ZLEVEL FINISHING	
Step down	0.045"
Angle Limit	80 degrees
Stock to leave	0"
Link method	Z-levels
Direction	Conventional
Toolpath	Smooth
Safe Clearance	0.25"
Radius	0 depress



Figure 3.15a: Image of an arm of *Un* stacked



Figure 3.15b: Image of *Un* glued and screwed together in the wood shop

3.4c. Phase III- Conversation with a Therapist

The third phase started with the idea of a fake machine from phase I and ended with an idea to create a video piece with real people and a real machine. For this reason, extensive research on machines that assist, train, or correct speech symptoms was conducted. Interviews were conducted with Dr. Eberhard Fetz in the Physiology and Biophysics department, Dr. George Ojemann in the Department of Neurological Surgery, and Dr. William Spain in the Neuroscience Department at the University of Washington. Numerous meetings with speech therapists at the Speech & Hearing Clinic as well as a few therapy observations became a huge part of this work. In the process of writing a script for the piece, a recommendation from Dr. Charles Johnson from the Creative Writing Department played a critical role in finding a place for such work in creative writing.

Neuroscientists were sought out for this research in particular, as their approach to speech therapy is direct: physically aiding the areas of the brain connected to speech. Based on the interviews, collected data, and a guidance in writing, a script for a video piece about an immigrant male in his mid 40's, an owner of a dry cleaner's in New Jersey, was written. This story was based on a true story of a man who resigned from his work at a pharmaceutical company due to the peer pressure and stress he was experiencing as a non-native English speaker.

There are three main components in the video: patient, therapist, and machine. The speech therapy represents the social/cultural systems that create categories and power dynamics between people outlining the winners and the losers.

Patient (White male in his 40's)

He is an ex-chemical engineer who currently owns a dry cleaner's in New Jersey. He comes into a therapy session hoping to correct his speech. He does not have an apparent speech impediment and is not at the therapy session for an actual speech problem, but rather for the socially imposed prejudice on him, his father, and his grandfather.

Therapist (White male in his 50's)

He is a therapist who attempts to listen to the patient, be empathetic, and cure him, but he does not fully understand the patient, as the therapist has not been able to diagnose the patient. The therapist responds to the patient with anecdotes of his own, stories of other patients with different symptoms. The therapist represents the social groups that benefit voluntarily or non-voluntarily from their ignorance.

The Machine

The dual identity of the machine:

1. a man-made extension of the human desire to fit in and succeed in society (patient's point of view)
2. a necessary standardization/normalization to filter and be in control of the society (System of Therapy)

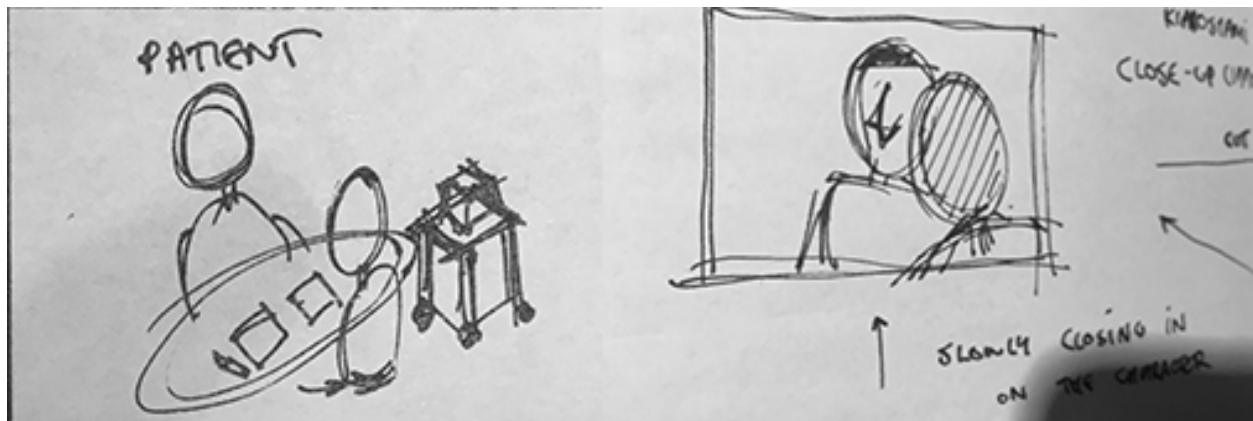


Figure 3.16: Storyboard sketch for Conversation with a Therapist

Script Conversation with a Therapist

ACT 1

Two White male are seated facing each other at a round table. There is a laminated paper on the table, a paper, and a pencil, and THE DEVICE.

[The patient is on camera]

PATIENT
[medium shot]
I had a job interview last week.

THERAPIST
How did it go?

PATIENT

It went okay. Just something to do while I find something more solid.

THERAPIST

Did you have any problem during the interview?

PATIENT

No, no major issues.

THERAPIST

(pushing a laminated piece of paper)

That's good. How about we start with this today?

PATIENT

(The patient starts to read, enunciating a word after a word, looking at the laminated paper.)

//Need to select a poem//

*There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who moil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;*

(The reading is interrupted.)

THERAPIST

So, you said you work at a Dry Cleaner's?

Patient

(speaking softly)

I own the business.

THERAPIST

So..., tell me about your work.

PATIENT

Well, I get up really early in the morning to open the business at 8:00 am. People drop off their clothes before they go to work.

My wife and I wake up at 5:45 am, make coffee, make breakfast for our kids, and get ourselves ready. It is still pretty dark out around this time.

(reaching for his cigarette)

It is pretty much the same everyday. "How are you today? What's the last 4 digits of your phone number? Two shirts and one pants? Have a good day." You know.

THERAPIST

It sounds like you have what you need. I mean, you have a good handle of what is required of you for what you do.

(pause)

What do you think about your work?

PATIENT

I do people's dirty laundry.

PATIENT

(He lights the cigarette and looks frustrated)

But, I am a chemical engineer.

(pause)

The therapist re-adjusts his posture.

PATIENT

(Sounding proud)

I am pretty good and successful at what I do. I work at a pharmaceutical company in New Jersey of which I can't say the name. I have my name on a patent and I brought a lot of money for my company. But I think I am going to quit.

(pause)

THERAPIST

Why is that? It sounds like you have a decent job.

PATIENT

My grandfather happened.

(pause)

He moved here in the 50s. He attended Stanford for Petroleum Engineering. All his friends became executives of well known oil companies. My grandfather could not find a job. A Stanford graduate could not find a job. So he opened a soy sauce company in Chinatown in San Francisco.

THERAPIST

So, should we continue with the (Speech) Therapy?

PATIENT

(Looking down onto the table.)

Yes.

(pauses)

sure.

[cuts to the therapist]

THERAPIST

(He pretends to be sincere with the questions. However, he goes through them quickly not giving the patient the time to answer.)

So, between the scale of 1 to 10, how painful is it?

(pause) - no response from the patient.

Can you describe the pain? Is it an aching pain? a pinching pain? Does this affect your sleep? How often do you have suicidal thoughts?

(The patient stares at the therapist.)

THERAPIST

This one guy.. He was one of my patients. I saw him having a seizure. His seizure would affect the electrical activity in his brain in his left Temporal Lobe, which is one of the main parts of where language gets generated and sort of creates this whole pattern. When he would have a seizure, it would last for maybe 30 seconds or a minute. He would get this glassed-over look, and he looks like he is off in another world and afterwards he gets no recollection of it. He did not know what he had done. But he would look at you and

(gets up from the chair with the glassed-over look)

and go like this.

(Snapping his fingers, swinging the legs from left to right)

"Oh well, shit, God Damn it!" Oh well, shit, God Damn it!" , Oh well, shit, God Damn it!" And he would say that over and over again.

(Sounds very excited and sits down)

And then he would come out of it and be kind of confused and go, "Did I just have a seizure?" And he would be back to normal again. And every time, this has been going on for years, he would have a seizure, and it would be this one pattern of language.

(Getting up from the chair again with more enthusiasm and excitement)

And he would just rock from side to side and say "Shit God Damn it!" And he looked like some crazy dude, right? And in fact, he told me that people would tell him what he does and he told me that this happened during the job interview once, and the person thought he was just this crazy guy, and he said he would go to family gatherings and he had these nephews that thought that he was just this crazy cool guy because he would just go like "Shit God Damn it!"

Oh, well anyway, please continue to read.

[cuts back to the patient]

PATIENT

(He resumes reading the text.)

//continuation of the poem above - Needs work

THERAPIST

How did it feel?

PATIENT

Um, okay.

THERAPIST

(Voiced with empathy)

Okay, I have a theory about what is going on with you. We are going to try something new today.

(places his hand on the patient's hand)

I mean I wish that your disorder will just go away, but it looks like it won't. I am going to use this device that would help with the correction.

//

[Cuts to the Machine]

This device will sense, measure in the scale of 1 to 10, the level of corrections needed and locate where the problem originates. This is an archaic machine that found home here in this institution in 1940s. This device was one of the most important inventions of the society.

The therapist gets up to grab the device. As the therapist describes the machine, he places a covering on the patient's mouth that looks like an oxygen mask.

Using a local anesthesia, we will open up your brain. We will insert multiple wires and tap into parts of your brain. We will also peel the back of your neck to get to the Spinal Cortex. The signal we read from your brain will be sent to your Spinal Cortex through this device. The signals/results are interpreted as letters that will make up words for us to understand. It will help you speak and sound exactly the way you want to sound.

We will map your brain first because everyone's brain pattern is slightly different (in details). We will MEASURE (good and bad), LOCATE, and REMOVE the abnormal tissue that is generating the seizures.

We apply the current in milliamps.

Will figure out what pieces you need to leave alone. The brain tells you what to leave alone.

You will feel relatively comfortable.

PATIENT

(With an uncomfortable laugh)

Does this still work? The device I mean.

THERAPIST

Yes, it does.

(sounds firm and convincing)

We are going to pretend that I am using it on you. I am not a real doctor so I can't really operate this, well, I am a doctor, but not this kind of doctor.

PATIENT

(Looks uncertain)

Yea, like I am a standardized patient.

The Therapist plugs it in and pretends that he is setting it up on his head to "exercises" the treatment.

THERAPIST

Okay, so, repeat after me.

The therapist hits his thigh continuously with his palm as he says the words out loud.

(still need to figure out what the therapist is going to say)

The patient repeats after the therapist, hitting his own thigh as well.

THERAPIST

(The therapist stops speaking.)
What are you doing?

PATIENT

(Looking at the Machine)
I am repeating after you.

THERAPIST

(Looking at the Machine)
No, you are not.
You have to REPEAT after me.

The therapist rushes into the device and resumes the treatment.

The therapist enunciates the words and the patient starts to repeat after the therapist.

THERAPIST

(Still looking at the Machine)
You are still not doing this right.
It says you are not following the instructions.

PATIENT

I am only fluent in symptoms of stuttering.

THERAPIST

No, you are not.

(to be continued)

This short script was inspired by Samuel Beckett (*Theatre of Absurd*), Harold Pinter, and Albert Camus. The absurdity of life and of the character were to come across when the white patient provides two different accounts of his employment and reveals that his grandfather was an early Chinese immigrant in San Francisco. In order to discuss the issues of language, a story of the therapist's former patient was added in the form of an interview with Dr. William Spain. The former patient was trapped in a repetitive scrap of language, "Oh well, shit, God Damn it!" which was meant to suggest the direction of the script: a meaningless world where traditional logic breaks down and leads to irrational speech that ends in silence.

In order to test out how the script sounds, an American male, an Asian male born in the States, and an Asian female who speaks English with an accent read the script in front of the camera. After seeing and hearing the script read by non-trained actors, it was deduced that a scripted video was not the best methodology for the project for a few reasons.

1. It was lacking the tension envisioned during the writing of the script. It was possibly due to the lack of acting skills of the people who were asked to read the script. However, it was difficult to keep the audience engaged.
2. It felt fake. It lacked urgency.
3. It was possible that the collected data wasn't enough to create a fully-scripted story.

A solution to the problems was to work with real people with real problems instead of actors.

3.4d. Phase IV-The Dialectics of a Machine

Four males with different ethnic backgrounds and different speech impediments were selected for a speech therapy treatment: an Ethiopian male who moved to the States when he was a teenager, a Honduran male who moved to the States in his twenties, a third generation Mexican immigrant, and a second generation Thai immigrant. These men had never had prior speech therapy experience. Three of them were engineers working for a big American company and one had various jobs since he moved to the States.

Based on the speech therapy sessions observed at the Speech and Hearing Clinic at the University of Washington and on the information gathered from the initial meeting with Yumi Sumida, a speech pathologist at UW Medical Center, customized speech exercises were designed to portray the oddity of the exercises. A toy that is usually used when pathologists are working with children was used for one patient, and an iPad was prepared with images whose corresponding English words are difficult to pronounce for anyone who speaks Spanish as a first language. An image of the American car Ford Focus was displayed, and the patient was asked to identify the object. The patient repeatedly said car, and finally the therapist corrected him, saying, “Ford Focus.” This scene is to emphasize how America, without sense, subtly pressures its inhabitants to speak English without an accent.

The project started with some expectations of the participants’ responses. The prediction was for them to be offended or have layers of feelings towards this machine. However, the four participants provided varying responses, from being skeptical of the machine to displaying enthusiasm. One of the participants said, “If someone comes out with something to put it out to the world, I think that individual means well. So, why not use it so that I can be the extent of that person’s belief or calling or whatever it is.” Although it was not included in the dissertation work itself, some of the participants expressed disappointment when the machine was revealed to be fictitious. One of the participants continued to discuss the potential of such technology for young immigrant kids in this country. The responses changed the direction of the dissertation, which resulted in multiple edits emphasizing different elements of the piece.

Edits and Emphasis

1. The exhibition at the Jacob Lawrence Gallery focused on the absurdity of speech exercises. The scenes included the therapist with an iPad displaying fixed answers that the participant would either get wrong or would have difficulty pronouncing. The feedback included the difficulty of believing the scenario, particularly due to the manner in which the therapist delivered the description of the machine.

2. The second edit removed the over-literal therapy exercises and added the off-camera scenes to add to the authenticity of the therapy sessions.
3. The order in which the story unfolds is reversed in the third edit so that it plays from the last scene. The off-the-camera scenes were moved and re-edited to direct the focus to the significance of the machine. The interviews alone were not interesting enough to convey the story about the machine.
4. The fourth edit contains added videos and images of what could potentially be the machine in the conversation. It was visually more interesting; however, it wasn't the right kind of machine.
5. The approach of the editing was completely changed. Most of the conversations during the four patients' therapy sessions were written out, and the script editing was done prior to the visual editing. This text editing is a technique borrowed from Omer Fast. Lists of real and fake pieces in the work were created to weave the two, considering the experience of the audience. (**Real**: real therapist, real patient, some therapy exercises, response of the participants, off-the-camera conversations, **Fake**: site, some therapy exercises, the machine, presence of the camera, lights, and audio recording device on site)
6. Reenactments of the two participants were added. One participant sits at a bar alone during the work party.

VO (Participant 1): I was here... I moved to Seattle so I was new to the area and I had gone out with a group, people who I worked with. And uh, I remember that whole night I ended up just sitting alone because it was really to the point I couldn't talk to people. You know it is a new group of people. And I think it stuck with me that I basically disconnected and sat by myself. I guess that was the point I realized that this was not going to go away.(fig. 3.17, 18)

Scene 1

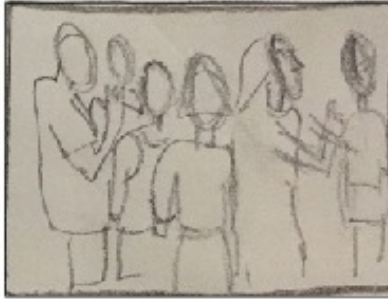


Wide Angle Shot

Scene outside the bar/ street scene

VO:

Scene 2



Wide Angle Shot

The crowd

VO:

I was here... I moved to Seattle so I was new to the area

Scene 3



Another Bar Scene

VO:

I had gone out with a group, people who I worked with.

Scene 4



Medium Shot

VO:

Scene 5

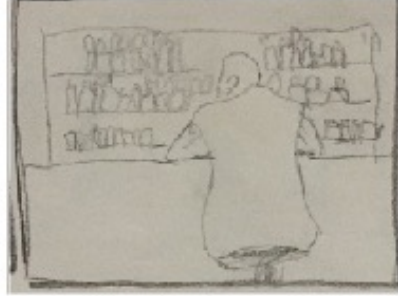


He turns his head to look at the crowd and looks down at his drink.

VO:

You know it is a new group of people. And I think it stuck with me that I basically disconnected and sat by myself.

Scene 6



Wide Shot

Hold the scene at the end a little.

VO:

I guess that was the point I realized that this was not going to go away.

Figure 3.17: Storyboard for a reshoot, VO1

7. The added footage was removed and re-edited to focus on the machine for the final version.



Figure 3.18: Video stills of the new footage

Chapter 4. Future Directions

At its showing at the Jacob Lawrence Gallery in Seattle, *The Dialectics of a Machine* was presented using four monitors and two speakers on the wall. Presenting the work using four standing screens and two or more speakers spatially arranged as shown in Figure 4.1 instead would have strengthened the work conceptually and enhanced the viewer's experience. The work went through a number of revisions after its showing at the gallery. Additional footage was filmed and edited into the original version, and the video was edited several times to shift the viewer's attention from people to the machine and back to people again in order to address the effect that language has on people in terms of becoming political beings.

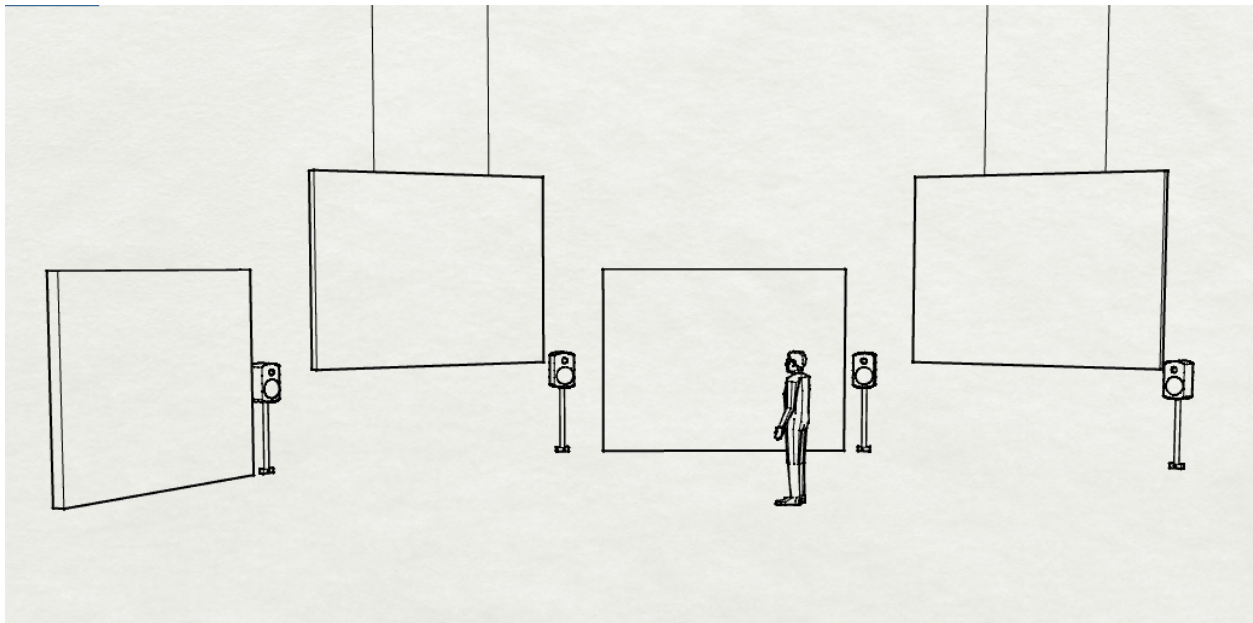


Figure 4.1: Installation mock-up

The next phase of *The Dialectics of a Machine* will most likely involve further experimentation with a less linear and documentary-like narrative and additional exploration of the sonic composition of the piece. Instead of the machine being introduced solely as a concept and a discussion amongst people in the video, an image and a video of a machine could be included to add to the sonic structure of the piece. There is a section in the video in which the sounds generated by the four participants while engaged in speech exercises develop into a sonic harmony, creating rhythm. This section could be further developed through the added sound of the machine playing a role as a compositional element (humming, buzzing, clanking, etc.) that

creates an interior language of its own within the video. Luciano Berio explored vocal gestures and inflections as ways of exploring the musical equivalents of linguistic articulations in *Visage* (1961). The machine presents the exploration of sounds as language with certain rules and guidelines. The machine represents the absurd solution that the social system provided in order to make it possible to continue to draw the line between winners and losers in society. The piece would shift away from the “meaning” of language and focus instead on its sonic aspects.

The sonic composition accompanied by the visual of the machine within the work could take advantage of the four channels visually and sonically, thus preventing the work from becoming pure documentary. This would also direct the attention of the audience to the pure essence of speech without meaning, while the social and economic disadvantages caused by not being able to be an active participant are conveyed through the honest interviews. The sounds of people and the machine can be processed with Supercollider to further develop and better refine the sound element. What was introduced as a “fake” (there is no machine that can simply fix a speech impediment) and yet very real machine (the concept of “normal speech” to fit in and be accepted to participate in any society is very real) ultimately represents not only the absurdity of the system of speech therapy but also the mechanism of society.

During the process of creating multiple versions of *The Dialectics of a Machine*, I encountered issues when editing the footage from the interviews. Due to the speeches being non-scripted, there was less control over the work itself. For the next iteration of the piece, instead of working with footage of real interviews, scripts could be written for the interviews, the locations could be staged and dressed better, and actors could be hired to play the roles of the participants. This would allow for other experiences and discussions to be added to the stories told by the participants.

A new series of works could involve making objects and films that use them in a linguistic fashion, in a manner similar to that in which a fictional machine was introduced in *The Dialectics of a Machine*. However, the machine would no longer be an imaginary device that only exists within the conversation between the therapist and the patients, as it could instead take a physical form and exist in the space in which the audience lives. The film could mimic a “how-

to” video for these machines/objects or depict footage of people using the object. This approach would change the project in such a way that the dialogue between the object and the video becomes a dialogue between the audience and the video, as the work would be part of the systems in which they live. The series of works will experiment with the concepts of fraud and the real through exploring the intersection between object and narrative. When *The Dialectics of a Machine* was exhibited at the Jacob Lawrence gallery, it was displayed alongside another work, *I Will Not Dance*, which is related to my earlier experiments with object-making and Parafiction. These two pieces started from the same conceptual place; however, they adopted two different approaches, namely object- and time-based. The next project will link the two and explore physical objects, props, and/or artifacts and their narrative possibilities when combined with video. This will represent the beginning of a new series of works that experiment with the ambiguity of narrative by exploring the relationship between language and film; this will be done by bringing objects in and out of film space and into real space.



Figure 4.2: Guy Ben-Ner, *Treehouse Kit*, 2005, installation view

Artists such as Matthew Barney and Guy Ben-Ner have used this methodology in their works. Matthew Barney's *The Cremaster Cycle* (1994 - 2002) is a series of five feature-length films that were exhibited alongside related sculptures, photographs, and drawings. The center of the exhibition would be the film; however, the accompanying sculptures and installations that were related to the movie either symbolically or as a result of being used as props in its production, created what Guggenheim Museum curator Nancy Spector described as "a self-enclosed aesthetic system."⁶² The place, the objects, and the narrative combined to create a world with its own systems, which people can watch, examine, and experience. The rather colorful and graphic visual language employed by Barney and the plastic-like artificial objects and photographs both pushed and pulled the audience in and out of the cinematic space.

Treehouse Kit (2005) by Guy Ben-Ner is another example of a work in which dialogue occurs between a narrative and objects. The exhibition consists of two parts: a ten-minute long video and a wooden sculpture that mimics a shape of a tree. The work presents a humorous take on the story of Robinson Crusoe, with the artist playing the role of Crusoe in the video. The video depicts Crusoe dismantling the tree and transforming it into everyday articles of furniture, such as a bed and a table. The simultaneous presentation of the two parts (video and object) creates a dialogue that takes the audience on a circular journey between the real and the fictional space, in much the same the way as *The Cremaster Cycle* becomes a universe of its own.

The issue of presenting an authoritative voice in my work was brought up during the discussion of my work while at DXARTS. It was necessary for the work to influence the audience in such a way that they would raise questions on a subject matter of which they had limited knowledge and experience, since most of my work stems from the stories of marginalized groups. The dissertation piece forced me to focus on the notion of art existing within the framework of a system rather than existing away from the reality in order to gain authority. Painful experience is especially not an easy subject to convey as pain is an emotion that cannot be shared with others. For this reason, the work required real data and information and drama. The real data and information was organized and presented within and under the format we consider documentary

⁶² "Sex, life and video games." www.economist.com.
https://www.economist.com/node/1621742?story_id=E1_TGNTSQN (accessed March 8, 2003).

in order to produce "real experience". The concept of real here was not the use of real footage to deliver facts the way it exactly happened, but for real for the sake of the audience's experience. The complete honesty of the material wasn't important for the experience, but what was crucial was how the lived experience of others became alive and real for the duration of the encounter. And the experience closer to the truth can be delivered by the use of information which is considered as a fact such as science and historic documents, and by the use of fiction, re-iteration, re-enactment around the story. For my future projects, I would like to explore how these methodologies can be brought together to create an interactive piece in which the interaction can be meaningful and closer to the truth, instead of a video work where the experience is more passive. What kind of art format would be part of the system yet create a real and real-time experience of rather a difficult or hidden subject? Additionally, I plan to look into sensory storytelling using 3D audio technology, such as 3D headphones, in which the real and the illusion of the real can be sonically utilized to produce an authentic experience in our lived environment.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adorno, Theodor. "Valéry Proust Museum," *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Sherry Weber, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996.
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*, 2nd edition, The University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Jean Baudrillard Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster, Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Ardent, trans. Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken, 1968.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Author as Producer," in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, eds. A. Arato and E. Gebhardt, Urizen Books, New York, 1978.
- Bik Van der Pol. "Past Imperfect No.1" in *Life, Once More. Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art*, edited by Sven Lutticken, Rotterdam: Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art, 2005.
- Benedett, Jean. *Stanislavski: An Introduction*, 4th edition, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2008.
- Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. and trans. by John Willett, New York: Hill and Wang, 1964.
- Burnham, Jack. *Dissolve into Comprehension: Writings and Interviews, 1964-2004*, The MIT Press, 2015.
- Cage, John. *Silence*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, 1961.
- Chomsky, Noam *On Language: Chomsky's Classic Works Language and Responsibility and Reflections on Language in One Volume*, New York: New Press, 1998.
- Christopher, Innes. *Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre: The Development of Modern German Drama*. New edition., Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Proust and Signs*, trans. Richard Howard, Continuum International Publishing Group, The Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2000.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, Trans, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997.
- Demos, T.J.. "War Games: A Tale in Three Parts," in *Omer Fast's 5000 Feet is the Best*, Sternberg Press, The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto, 2012.

Enwezor, Okwui. *In The Green Room: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2008.

Groupe μ , eds., *Collages*, Paris, Union Generale, 1978.

Rosenberg, Harold. *Art on the edge: Creators and Situations*, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1983.

Harvey, William John, *Character and the novel*, Cornell University Press, 1968.

Kaprow, Allen. *Essays on the blurring of art and life*, University of California Press; 2 edition, 2003.

Kolbowski ,Silvia and Raad, Walid. *Silvia Kolbowski/Walid Raad: Between Artists* (New York: Art Resources Transfer Press, 2006.

Lambert-Beatty, Carrie “Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility,” *October Magazine*, Ltd. and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Summer 2009.

Lind, Maria and Steyerl, Hito. eds., “Reconsidering the Documentary,” *Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art #1: The Greenroom*, Sternberg Press, 2008.

Malmgren, Carl Darryl. *Fictional Space in the Modernist and Postmodernist American Novel*, Bucknell University Press, 1985.

Mitchell, Stanley. “Introduction,” Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock, New Left Books, London, p.xiii.

Monaco, James. *How to Read a Film: The Art, Technology, Language, History, and Theory of Film and Media*, Oxford University Press, 1981.

Muntadas: On Translation, Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) Actar, Barcelona, 2002.

Nash, Mark. “Reality in the Age of Aesthetics,” *Frieze Issue 114*, April 2008. Web.

Rancière, Jacques. “Is History a Form of Fiction?” in *The politics of Aesthetics*, Continuum, London 2006.

Respini, Eva. “Slippery Delays and Optical Mysteries: The Work of Walid Raad,” in *Walid Raad*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2015.

Schmid, Carol. *The Politics of Language: Conflict, Identity, and Cultural Pluralism in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford University Press, 2001.

Verhagen, Marcus. "Pleasure and Pain: Omer Fast interviewed by Marcus Verhagen," *Art Monthly* 330, October 2009.

Vertov, Dziga. *Kino-eye: The writings of Dziga Vertov*, trans. Kevin O'Brien, University of California Press, 1984.