

FALSE FLAG
Alexander Reyna

FALSE FLAG ALEXANDER REYNA

06.06.09 - 07.03.09 | BROT UNDSPIELE | CURATED BY LYNN DEL SOL

THIS CATALOGUE
ACCOMPANIES THE EXHIBITION

ALEXANDER REYNA
FALSE FLAG
JUNE 6 - JULY 7, 2009
CURATOR LYNN DEL SOL
BROT UNDSPIELE
BERLIN, GERMANY

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SPECIAL THANKS TO KAY NEUBERT
A INSTANT FRIEND. IT HAS BEEN A PLEASURE.

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Alexander Reyna, *Readiness Exercise* 1984, 2009, mixed media realtime video installation, 96x96x96in (244x244x244cm)

FOREWARD

Brot Undspiele is proud to present the Berlin debut of American multi media artist Alexander Reyna in the solo exhibition entitled "False Flag," guest curated by Lynn del Sol. This exhibition examines the long tradition of art and protest through interactive video, print, and installation work.

All of Alexander Reyna's work starts with a search and retrieval phase. For over ten years this artist has devised an incredibly complex and highly developed digital vocabulary. Crawling, scrolling, and collecting hundreds of thousands of pieces of reference from the web and print media this artist has spent countless days and sleepless nights archiving his library.

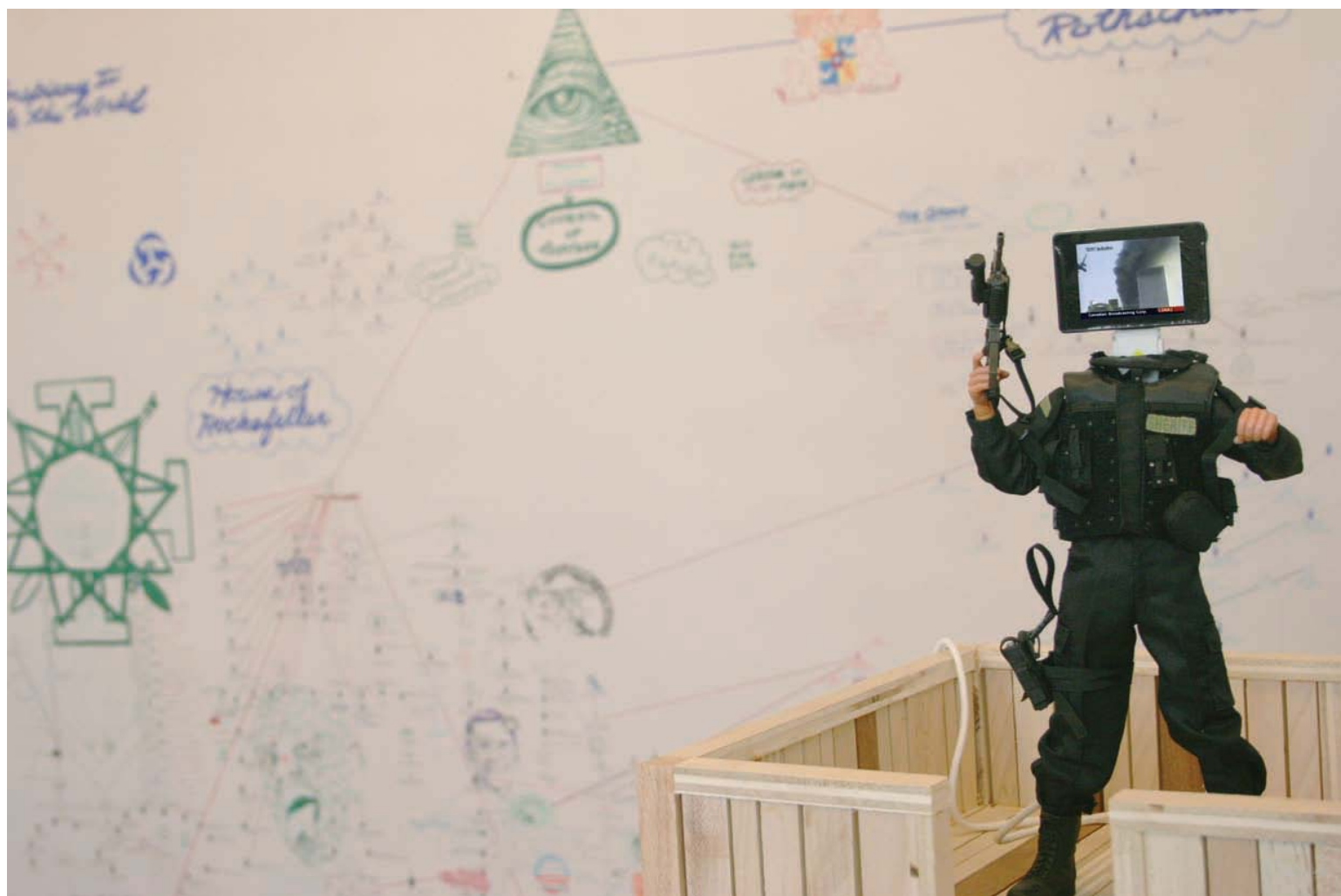
His work deals explicitly with our relationship with mass media and corporatized imagery. If you ask him, the artist will tell you that he is, "working in collaboration with corporations," and with others who shape the collective culture. However, Reyna is always subverting those authors' original intentions and re-purposing their "message" to better serve his ends.

When asked how this new body of work relates to his earlier work, such as the graphically rich videos *Star* (2008) and *BETA* (2007) and the subsequential print and paper series, the artist says the relation rests in the methodology of search and seizure. His previous works on some nuanced level were always about the artist himself. He made subjective decisions about the content, cherry-picking the images and pictures and then coupling them with conscious stylist choices.

What's different about this new body of work is that the artist has really removed himself from the equation. He, in essence, has let the project and the research lead him.

At the core, this exhibition centers around economic and political realities and underlying conspiracy theories that function beneath mainstream propaganda. The exhibit plays upon fear. Surrounding the viewers with the sounds and sights of war and crisis, the sensory aspect of fear is overwhelmingly induced by the artist through surveillance cameras, motion detectors, and an all ominous encampment room entitled, "Readiness Exercise 1984".

"Readiness Exercise 1984" engulfs the gallery. Standing over 8 feet tall (2.5m) it is constructed out of simple plywood and is covered in barbed wire. The perimeter is guarded by four cyborg-like, small-scale sculptures; modified replicas of private paramilitary figures entitled Sentinels 1-4. Once inside the windowless room, the viewers' every move triggers a series of automated, computerized reactions in real-time. The constantly flashing rotation of conspiracy theories intermingle with the recorded live footage of the viewer and the gallery space to create a crescendo of confusion and fear. Big Brother is here and he is definitely watching you



Foreground Image: Alexander Reyna , Sentinel, 2009, mixed media sculpture with digital heads and looping video, edition of 8, each 12x12x60in (30x30x152cm)
 Back ground Image: Alexander Reyna, To Rule the World, 2009, mixed media on paper, 60 x 84in (152 x 213cm)

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Just outside of "Readiness Exercise 1984" is a 7 foot long (2.5m) color-illustrated wall drawing, or map, entitled "The Conspiracy to Rule the World." This work literally draws parallels between hundreds of years of our collective histories and all its major players' dark secrets, public buffoonery and questionable affiliations. Here the artist weaves and tangles truths with half-truths and goes on to say, "on some level all conspiracy theories have amounts of plausibility. This means that anything, from the least likely to be real to the most obviously real have nuggets of truth in them which are at the center of the conspiracy. In the end, this is what makes conspiracies compelling-we feel something real in them that tugs at us to believe."

As humans we are resilient and have the ability to push fear aside and carry on. Luckily (or unluckily perhaps) as humans we are also reactive and thus when faced with Reyna's staged encampment scenario our guttural reactions are stimulated and we recall all that we know to fear and doubt. Yet knowing may be at the root of the problem, given the dark cloud of secrecy under which we are kept and of which Reyna reminds us. There is still a lot that they're not telling us- a lot that we know that they're not telling us, which is why the artist has decided to trap us in this exhibition, a reality that we cannot perhaps delay and from which we cannot escape.

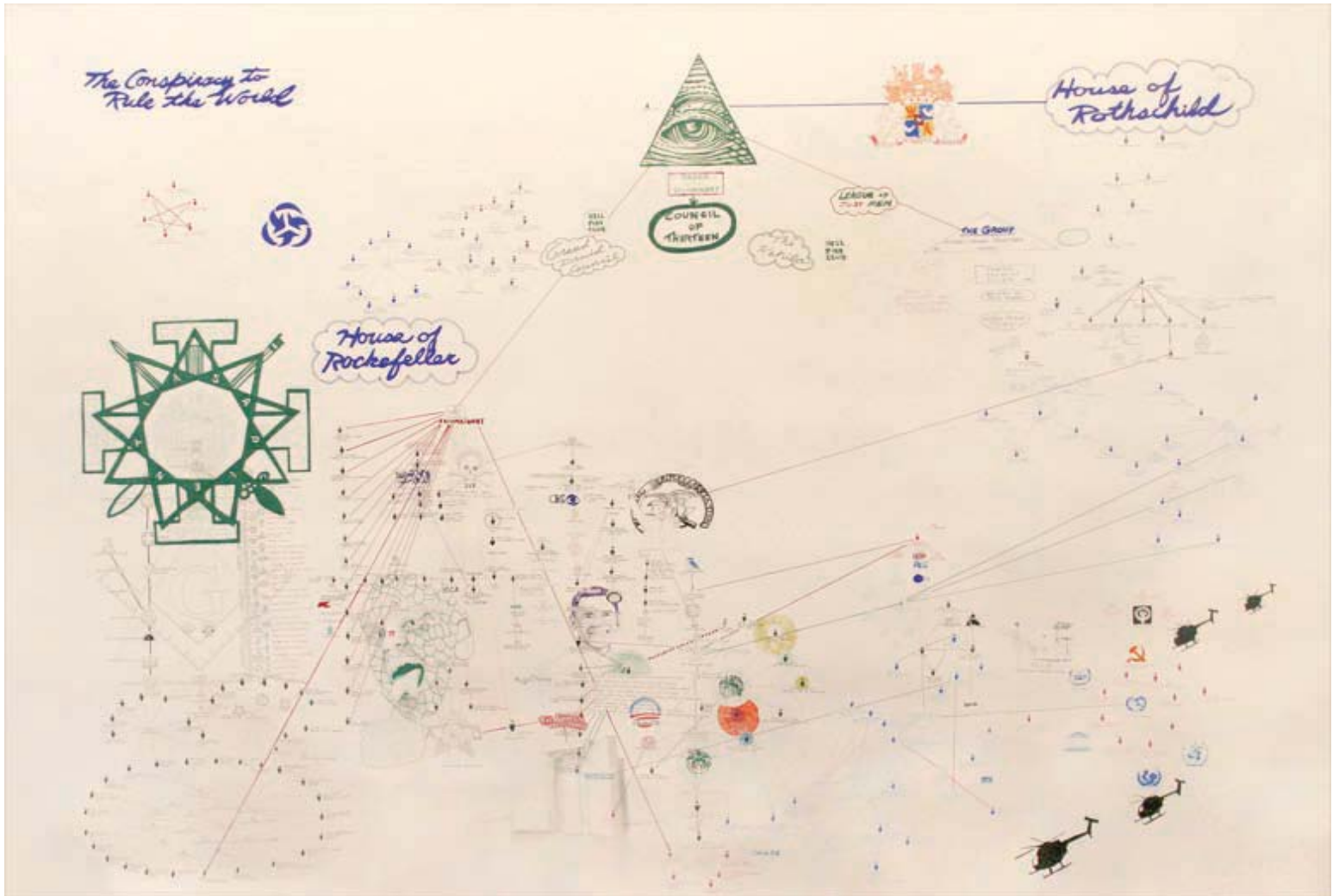
-Lynn del Sol, curator
New York City





Alexander Reyna

Sentinel
2009, mixed media sculpture with
digital heads and looping video,
edition of 8, each
12x12x60in (30x30x152cm)



Alexander Reyna, To Rule the World, 2009, mixed media on paper, 60 x 84in (152 x 213cm)

Q&A WITH ARTIST

May 13th through May 24th 2009.

Held via email between the curator and artist in New York City



Date: May 19, 2009 7:51:28 PM EDT

False Flag, can you tell us what does that mean and why it was a relevant title for your show.

Put simply, a False Flag happens when a country or organization stages a fake event which, when it occurs, creates a deceiving appearance which makes the event appear as if it was created by another entity. False Flags are used to create confusion, create the appearance of an external attack, and often used for political advantage.

I used to read a lot of Patrick O'Brian books about English battleships in the 1800s. In these novels, the hero of the book Jack Aubrey was constantly deceiving the French and Spanish by hanging the flags of neutral countries from his ship, or painting his ship to look like a harmless whaler, or using some other ruse to trick his enemies so that he gained a tactical advantage. Generally what happened is that Aubrey would hang a French flag when he came across a French ship, get really close to the real French ship, and the hit that ship with a few broadsides before it could react. These False Flag tactics generally worked in Aubrey's favor.

False Flag events are at the heart of conspiracy theories and the most recent, most visible, False Flag centers around the 9/11 attacks. Some theorist believe that "9/11 was an inside job" and that the people who carried out the attacks were not Osama Bin Ladin or Al Queda. I'm pretty sure that I do not believe that 9/11 was a false flag but many people do and this notion is at the heart of some of today's deepest conspiracies.

But, and here's another wrinkle in the story that at first feels like quite a tangent, did you know that the Federal Reserve is no more federal than Federal Express? Google "Is the Federal Reserve a private bank?" and you'll find documentation that purports to prove that the Fed is a quasi governmental agency created to work with the Treasury

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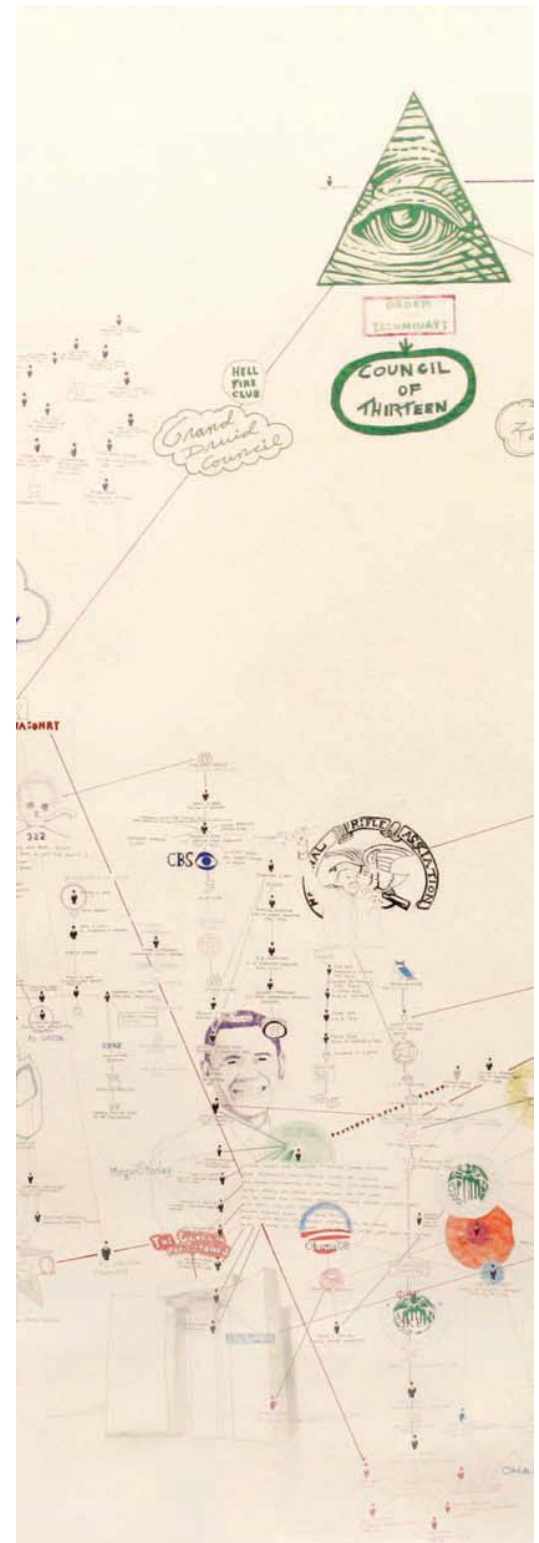
Of all the conspiracy theories you've studied which you which one or if any seem viable?

This is a tough question to answer because on some level all conspiracy theories have amounts of plausibility. This means that anything, from the least likely to be real to the most obviously real have nuggets of truth in them which are at the center of the conspiracy. In the end, this is what makes conspiracies compelling-we feel something real in them that tugs at us to believe.

Take, for example, the JFK assassination. There are probably at least three mysteries with the assassination including (1) who did it, (2) why was it done, and (3) what actually happened when he was shot. There's tons of conflicting evidence on this and there are conspiracies on top of conspiracies. Was it the grassy knoll? Was it the clock tower? Was it a lone gunman? Does the photographic evidence contradict the autopsy photographs?

But, and here's another wrinkle in the story that at first feels like quite a tangent, did you know that the Federal Reserve is no more federal than Federal Express? Google "Is the Federal Reserve a private bank?" and you'll find documentation that purports to prove that the Fed is a quasi governmental agency created to work with the Treasury to loan dollar bills into existence. This theory posits that the Fed is a private bank with private investors who make a 6% profit each time that a dollar bill is created. Along this line of thinking, public money is directly uses to fuel private profit that goes to an unknown shadow cartel of international bankers.

If you dig further you will find out that in months before he was killed, JFK was on the verge of passing legislation that would strip the Federal Reserve of its money making power? With one stroke of the pen, he would take the power to grant currency away from the Federal Reserve and place this back in the hands of the United States government. The net result of this would be enormous and ultimately result in whoever might control the Federal Reserve losing amazing amounts of supposed profit.





The questions are almost impossible to answer. Who killed JFK? Why was it done? What actually happened when he was shot? Was it Lee Harvey Oswald? Was it the Mafia? Was it the CIA? Was it the Federal Reserve. Depending on your mindset and background, any of these could be the one and any are believable. And this is the power of conspiracy theories. They deal with a possible version of reality that is understandable enough to be plausible and it is this possible plausibility that lends conspiracies their air of reality.

On a persona note, if I were to pick a particular conspiracy to believe, I would have to throw my weight behind the Illuminati. The illuminati conspiracy has several different veins. One deals with a global cartel that controls wealth while a second deals with a global cartel that controls wealth that is made up of reptilian extraterrestrials. It's a little like the difference between protestants and catholics.

The Illuminati conspiracy, in a nutshell, claims that an elite group of international bloodlines control most of the wealth of the world and are actively working to reduce population, extract remaining wealth, control global resources, and institute a puppet one world government under their control. There are a variety of different sub-conspiracies within this master narrative. Some in the Dan Brown, Davinci Code camp believe that the Illuminati are a religious organization while others believe that the Illuminati are purely secular, but exceptional wealthy, controlling interests.

Either way, the thing about the Illuminati is that their conspiracy reeks of possibilities. On the face of it, there are real people in the real world, that are not part of any conspiracy, that actively seek to control capital and the means of production. Those with money have an easier time making money from money. There are real plots to make a select group of people richer at the expense of the poor. Just take a look at Oil companies if you need further proof. The gist here, and why I think that the Illuminati conspiracy resonates with me so directly, is that it's not too far fetched to imagine that a global cartel of elite organizations might be attempting to exert control in such a way to enrich themselves. The reason why this might not be so far fetched is that things like this happen all the time, every day. We call this fact of life late state capitalism.

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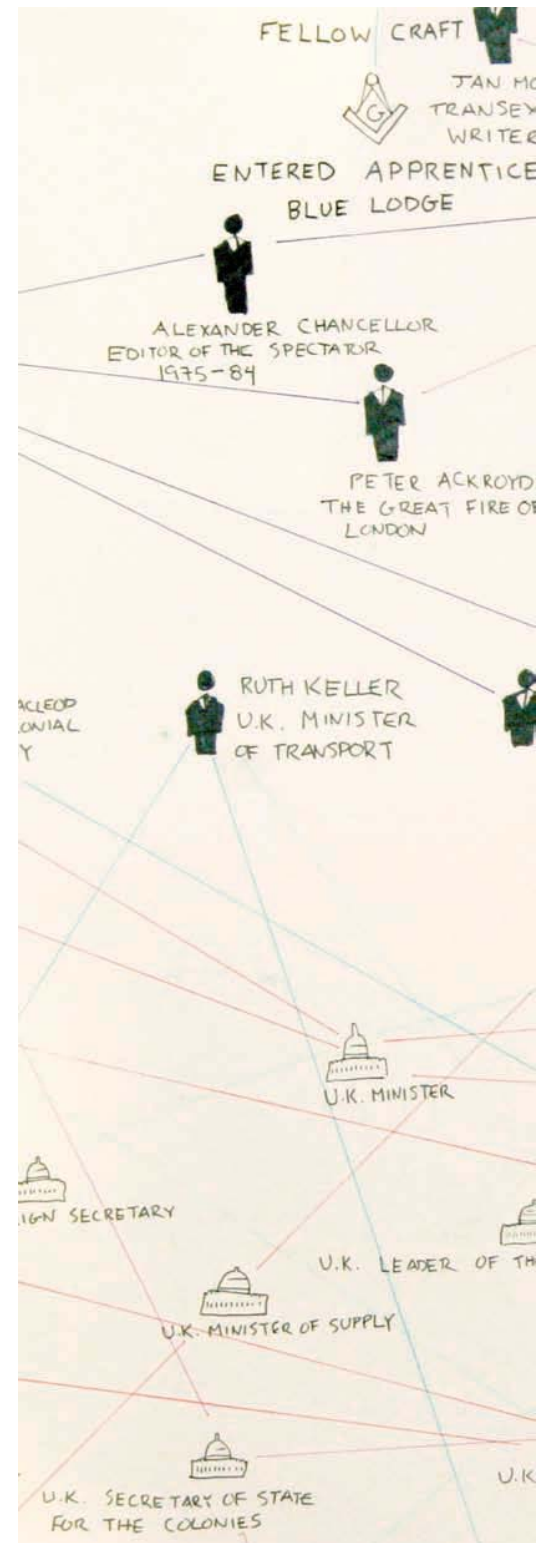
Did you find yourself perhaps becoming more prone to believe them as you were conducting the research? Did they become more convincing? More believable?

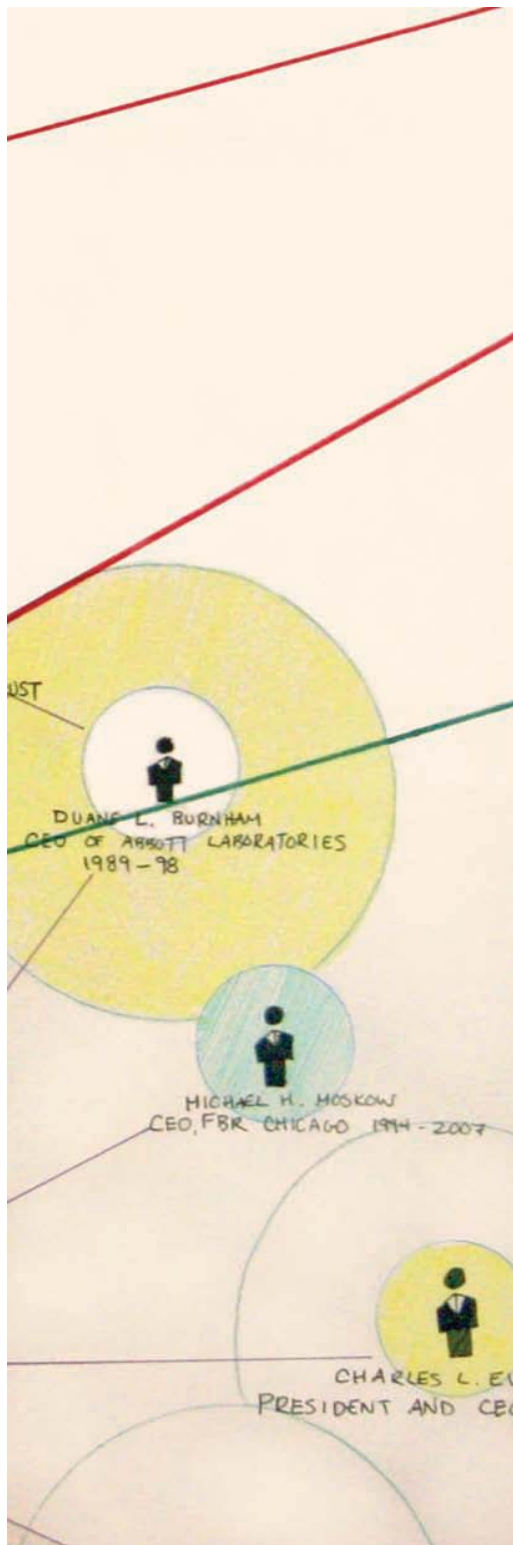
No, actually the inverse of that situation occurred. The more in depth I went into my study of conspiracies, the more I lost interest in them insofar as their truthfulness went. I became fascinated by the layering effect that occurred and how one theory lead to another theory which lead to a third theory that might have contradicted the first two.

A great example of this are the UFO conspiracies. There are a number of different conspiracies that claim that extraterrestrials are among us and that world governments knows about this fact. If you google "Ronald Reagan talking about alien threat" you'll get a video result which shows Reagan talking in a speech about how he wonders whether the world needs an alien threat to bring us together. This is one branch of the conspiracy theory that claims that (a) Aliens exist and that (b) governments know about it. But, did you know that there's also another conspiracy that claims that the government knows about it and is also cooperating with aliens to gain their technology. Some people claim that velcro and the microwave oven are a result of this collaboration.

There is a second theory overlaid on top of this underlying alien conspiracy dealing with creating a unified one world government. If you google "project bluebook" you'll come across a bunch of information. In a nutshell project bluebeam is supposed to be a government disinformation campaign attempting to create the illusion of an alien attack on Earth which results in individual countries banding together to fight the aliens. Imagine movies like Independence Day here. A huge alien ship arrives, followed by an assault on the good people of earth, followed by a resistance movement and centralized control.

The way I understand the plan to unfold is that first a major discovery of ancient artifacts will be discovered after an earthquake somewhere in the Middle East. Following this event, the artifacts will be interpreted in such a way that all major religions will be seen as false or previously misunderstood. This artifact will prompt people of the world to follow this new singular religion. Second, aliens will arrive and start appearing over various locations and





doing alien like things. Third, a war will start and psychologically traumatized teenagers who have been specially trained will begin killing “humans”. These aliens are really just disaffected teens (this columbine here). Events unfold from this point.

The end result of what I'm trying to say is that I have no idea which one is true. I don't know if I believe the first UFO theory for a variety of reasons and I don't know if I believe the second UFO theory for a variety of reasons. And, each of these different theories has a negative amplification to them. The more these theories lay on top of each other, the more they ultimately lose their credibility with me.

How do you relate this particular body of work to some previous works that you've done before?

All of my work starts with a search and retrieval phase. It usually involves doing tons of research on youtube or google or a variety of different webpages. I begin each body of work with a free flowing web crawl from topic to topic and pull down initial images that seem to fit into the vein of what I'm interested in doing.

This particular project began while I was doing research on economic collapse. I would go to my studio, turn on youtube and enter in this search term and see where it lead to. I ideally looked for pieces that were 10 minutes in length or longer so that they were entertaining and I didn't have to search too much. I then made a playlist of a variety of different topics.

My playlist started out pretty standard and included the following:

1. Nouriel Roubini- “Dr. Doom” as he is called, is an NYU economist and quite pessimistic to the current economic climate. He lead to Peter Schiff.

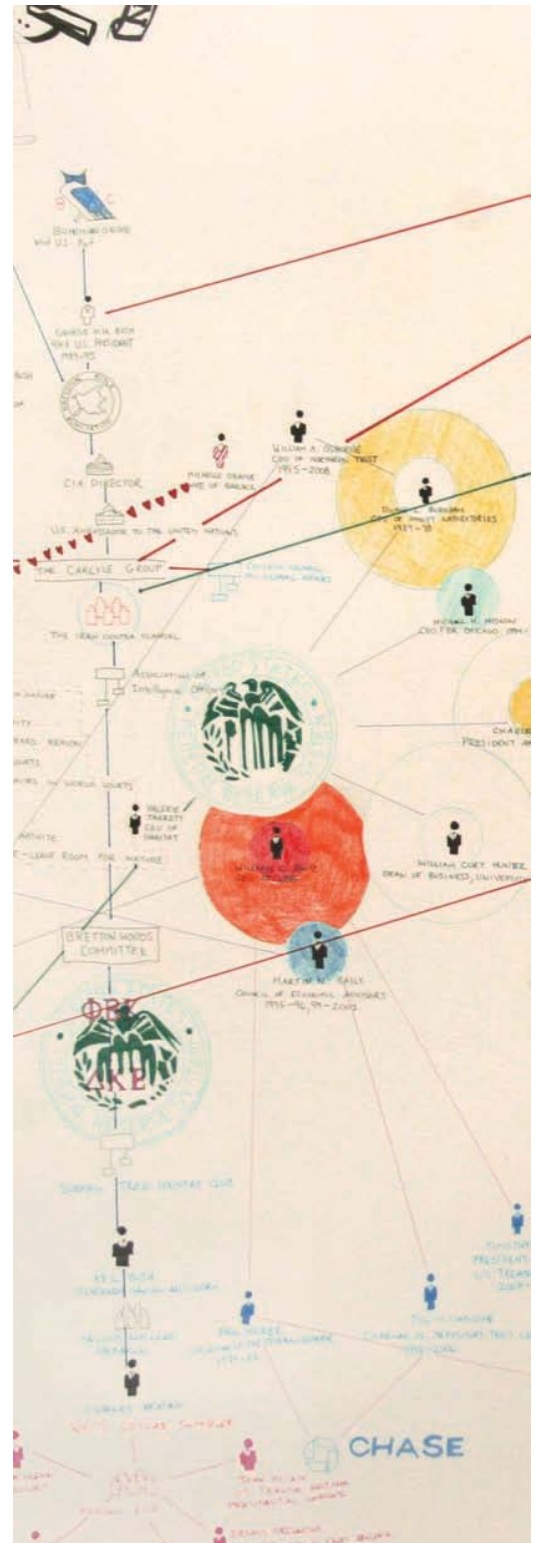
2. Peter Schiff-Peter is the President of Euro Pacific Capital and talks a lot about the coming collapse of the American Dollar, Zimbabwe or Weimar style inflation and an utter collapse of the U.S. Economic model. He also advocates buying gold (which by the way has its own conspiracy involving price manipulation to keep gold prices artificially low and stable). He lead to Gerald Celente.

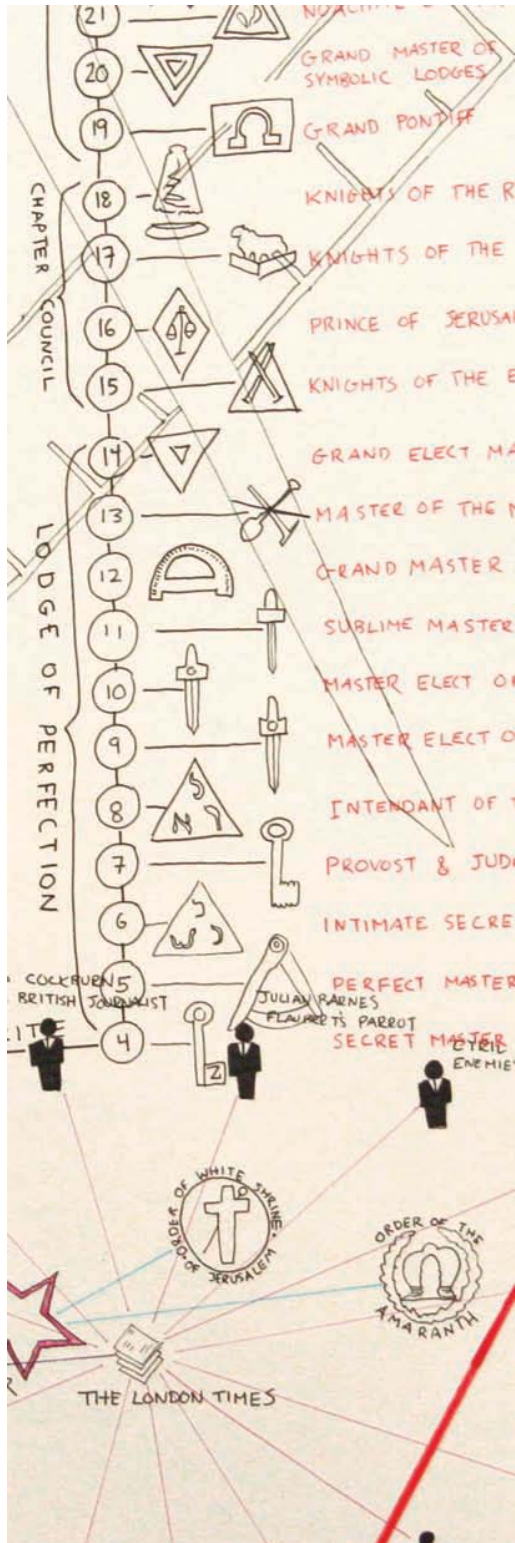
3. Gerald Celente is a trends forecaster and likes to say that “when people have nothing left they have nothing left to lose”. Celente sees the future United States being economically depressed for a long time, sees a drop in commercial real estate, and thinks that in 2010 food will be the most important gift under the Christmas Tree. He also talks about riots and global disruptions of basic government functions. Celente is a frequent guest on the Alex Jones Radio Show.

4. Alex Jones is non party affiliated libertarian. He bashes the left and the right with the same zeal. His meat and potatoes are movies that he's made which talk about the changes that have occurred in the world in the past 30 years. When I first watched youtube clips of Alex Jones for the first time it was the same shock and disbelief I saw when I first saw extremely hardcore pornography. It felt unsafe, very dirty, and possibly somewhat illegal.

I had a flirtation with his channel on youtube (which has since been suspended from youtube.com for copyright reasons which also leads to another conspiracy about the relationship between youtube and corporate media. (For more information on this topic, google “hulutube”) for several weeks and felt a little like a lamb lead to the slaughter.

- The net result is that the Alex Jones show lead to many different points of departures including
- REX84 and the relationship to Oliver North
- The 9/11 conspiracy
- Chemtrails and the eugenics plot to control human population which also lead to the Georgia Guidestones
- Project BlueBeam and the relationship to the UFO conspiracy
- The Bohemian Grove and the relationship to the Clintons and Richard Nixon
- The Bilderberg group and the connection to the global elite
- The existence of the Illuminati and why it may or may not be related to reptiles
- “The Money Masters” movie which explains how global bankers manipulated everything





- "The Money Masters" movie which explains how global bankers manipulated everything
- Zeitgeist, the movie which serves as a counterpoint to the Alex Jones worldview
- Zeitgeist addendum, the movie (See above)
- Corporate mind control
- The loss of civil liberties
- Gun Confiscation

5. Alex Jones lead to a whole host of other projects including Coast to Coast A.M., the Art Bell Show, and Jim Marrs. The interesting thing about these guys is that they take the same standard Alex Jones One World Government conspiracy and overlay it with spooky stuff such as bases on the backside of the moon, the plot to kill JFK, the existence of real UFOs, what really lives at Area 51, the truth about the Roswell Incident, and more.

The initial question was how does this body of work relate to my earlier work. While it does relate in the methods I've just spoken about (search and retrieval), it is quite different from the earlier approaches. My previous work was, on some nuanced levels, all about myself. I made the subjective decisions about what content to use. I made pictures with subject matter that I enjoyed and I made the stylistic choices on what the final look would be. My previous works centers around the notion that, on some level, I'm working in illicit collaboration with corporations in that I recontextualize the original authors intentionality away from the original artifact.

What's different about this new body of work is that I have very much taken myself out of the equation. I'm using a fascinatingly interesting subject matter but , outside from this fact, I've really let the project lead me to where it needs me to go. I let myself into the door and started the engine running but every step after the initial step was dictated, to a certain extent, by outside forces and others.

To explain this idea a bit further I think it's important to state that I voted for Barack Obama and even helped to stage an art even last year in which we raised around 50K for his

presidential campaign. But the tricky thing about this is that Alex Jones is part of my project and he's just released a movie called "The Obama Deception" and promotes this movie several times an hour on his radio show. He also has people on his show who spend time bashing both democrats and republicans but seem to love beating up on Barack. So, here I am, a person that voted for Obama and I'm mining content from someone who spends hours a day linking Obama into a conspiracy to control the world. My studio mate must think that i've lost my mind.

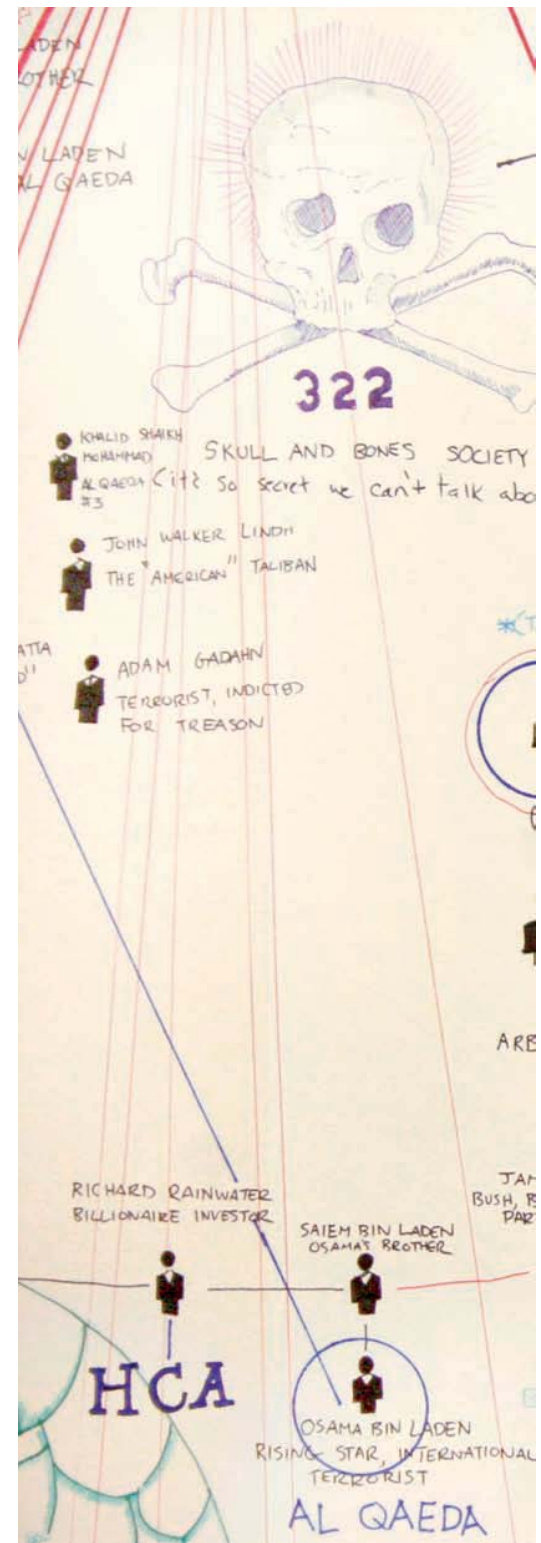
This idea of removing myself from the equation has extended itself into the video piece that I created for the show. My past videos were created entirely by me, reflected my own aesthetic, using a variety of different software and existing as a pre-rendered quicktime. The difference with the new video work is partly that the work does not exist as a pre rendered element and is only compiled and run through a piece of software in realtime. This means that the video is only created when a viewer looks at it, and is a reflection of the individual pieces recreated uniquely each instant. In this regard, I have removed myself even more from the equation to the extent that I have only limited control of what the video will end up looking like.

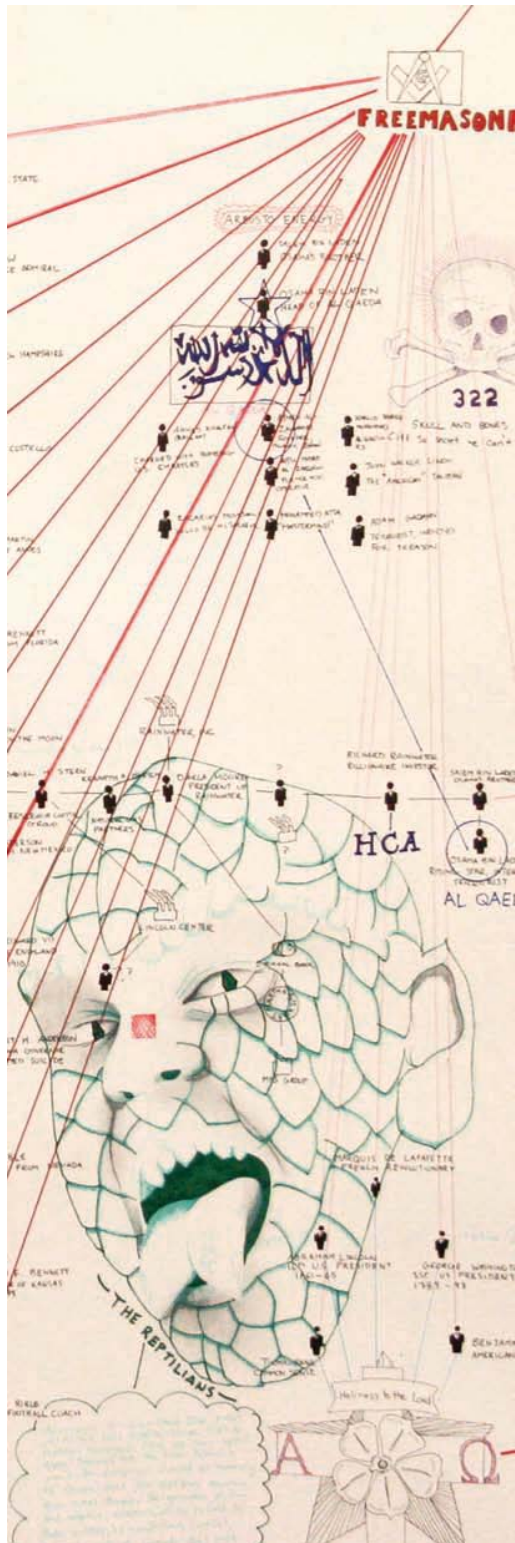
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Readiness Exercise 1984 or REX 84, it is a major work in the show, and one of your first installation works, it may be one of the harshest statements in the show and an awful concept for citizens to consider can you tell us more about the work.

Readiness Exercise 1984 is a mixed media video installation made to resemble a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Prison Camp. FEMA prison camps pop up in conspiracy literature all over the place, but in order to understand the piece it's important to know a little about the back story to what a FEMA Prison Camp is and how this conspiracy got started.

The idea of a prison camp to detain American citizens goes much further back than Bush's war of terror and domestic prison camps have occurred in a variety of times over America history. I think that the fear that prison camps provoke has to do with the loss of power





and autonomy that people feel when the government threatens to curtail their civil liberties, take away their guns, disband their militia, or quell their free speech.

The particular thread that results in REX84 is built on the civil unrest of the 1960's. It all began with Operation Garden Plot, which is a generic U.S. Army plan to respond to nation emergencies or civil unrest under the aegis of the U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM). This operation (which was activated during the 1992 Los Angeles Riots and again after 9/11) provides Federal military assistance to local governments during times of civil disturbances and is called a Continuity of Government (COG) plan.

The act of using the military to "aid" local governments might be a legitimate exercise to maintain order and help with crisis situations or it may not be what it seems. Conspiracy theorists claim that using any military forces for domestic operations is a violation of the Posse Comitatus Act and these same conspiracists also point to George W. Bush's John Warner Defense Authorization Act of 2007 (H.R.5122) which allows the President to declare a "public emergency" granting a sitting president the power to station troops domestically and create martial law if the situation demands it. Whatever the case, since the 1960's, there has been a steady encroachment of military structures onto the streets of the United States and conspiracists say that whenever the government puts troops on city streets the first thing they do is take away the guns. If you don't believe any of this you should just google "gun confiscation new orleans".

So, if you break down the above situation a little more you see that you have the fear of a sitting president using some sort of special power to suspend constitutional law, replace it with a martial law, take away guns and then ship off dissenters to some type of prison camp where they are never heard from again. But what is REX84 and what does FEMA have to do with it?

REX 84 was a plan by the American Government to test the government's ability to arrest large numbers of American citizens during a national emergency or time of civil unrest. The plan for REX84 centers around lists which are maintained that contain the names of radicals, dissenters, militia members, gun lovers, communists, scholars, and trouble makers. When a crisis strikes, the military activates the list and rounds up people and

ships them via train car to detention centers run by FEMA. The plan was uncovered during the Iran Contra Scandal when Oliver North was questioned by Jack Brooks during the Iran Contra Hearings. During this hearing North is questioned about the existence of the Continuity of Government plan and its real purpose.

If you don't believe me, watch this: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ug0IL7k3eIQ>.

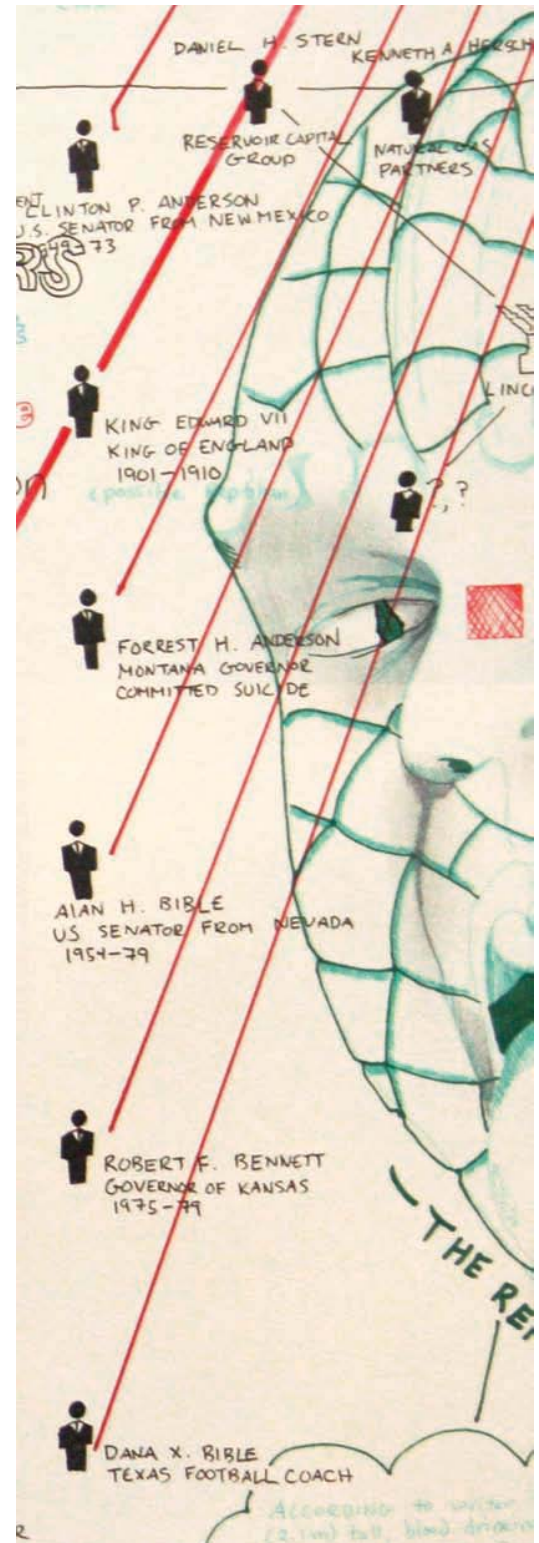
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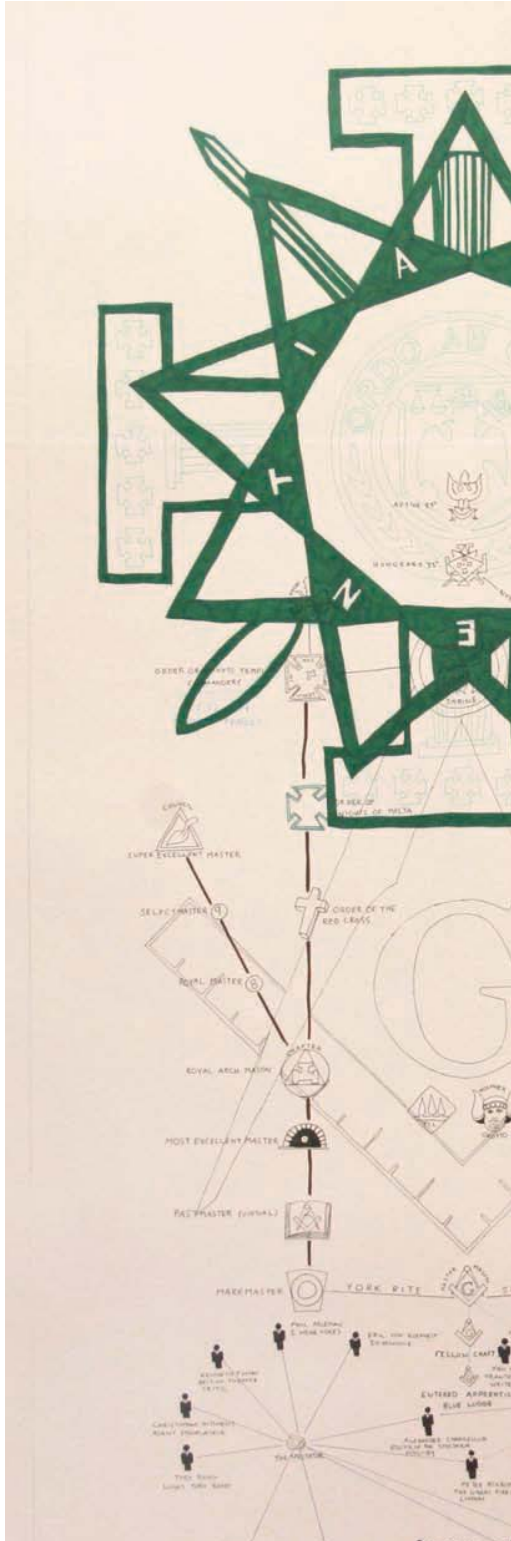
The video, or lack thereof is really a new twist within your work. Could I consider this along the thinking or evolution of the ready made, DADA or even a self-generating work of art?

REX84 is essentially a video installation without a video in the traditional sense of how the art world defines video. One of the things that I've tried to do when I make video, is to work against what people generally think that video art looks like. If you took a look at a cross section of what video artists make, you'd see that video art could generally be defined by one or two trends (or at least these are the two that I notice).

The first trend is video as an extension of photography. I wonder if at some point in Graduate School a lot of young artist realized that video was the hot new thing and decided that "Hey, I make photographs and a camera is a camera so maybe I'll become a video artist too". There's nothing wrong with this approach and I love photography and even video art that is fairly photographic but it just doesn't interest me to make. I call this style of making the "documentary filmmakers" school of video art. There's a lot of great work within this vein but it's not my cup of tea. I think part of the reason why is that this feels like dead territory to me and also I'm a terrible photographer (just ask my gallerists).

The second trend in video art that I see a lot of, and try to work against, is what I call the "I want to be on MTV" look. If you turn on MTV and take a look at what's on, then you see my second major theme in video art. There's a certain style to music videos. The editing, pacing, audio, color choice, and overall sense of design is hyper stylized and in a way decoratively generic, but also extremely seductive to look at. I feel like a lot of artists





watch a lot of television and some how this way of visual thinking with fast edits, cross cuts, black white and red design, permeates their style and becomes their art. This is true especially if the artist is young. There's nothing wrong with wanting to make music videos. My past video work, in a way, played very heavily with the style of music videos and contemporary design so I should certainly not be one to judge.

But the truth is that I'm bored with video. I'm bored with making something that either looks like a documentary photograph or looks like something on MTV. I wanted to make something different and, because one of the aims of False Flag was to take myself out of the equation, I sort of knew that I had to approach the making of this new video without my own style or preconceived notions driving the process. Because of this I turned to a procedural approach which is much more in tune with DADA or Abstraction than with New Media video art.

I was an abstract painter for five years before I came to New York. It's weird to say that because most people who know my work see an output which is emphatically representational. I use imagery, real things, photographic in nature, and loaded with meaning. Despite the representational surface appearance, the root of my work deals with a type of process and this process is totally systemic in form.

When I was an abstract painter I created sets of rules that bound a system that generated the work. My rules were sometimes frivolous and sometimes serious and shaped what the final output looked like.

A good example of my rules included:

1. If I wanted to do something, then I definitely did the opposite.
2. If I like how a composition looked, I turned the piece 180 degrees and worked on it from that new angle.
3. If I thought the piece was bad then it meant I was onto something and it was actually good.

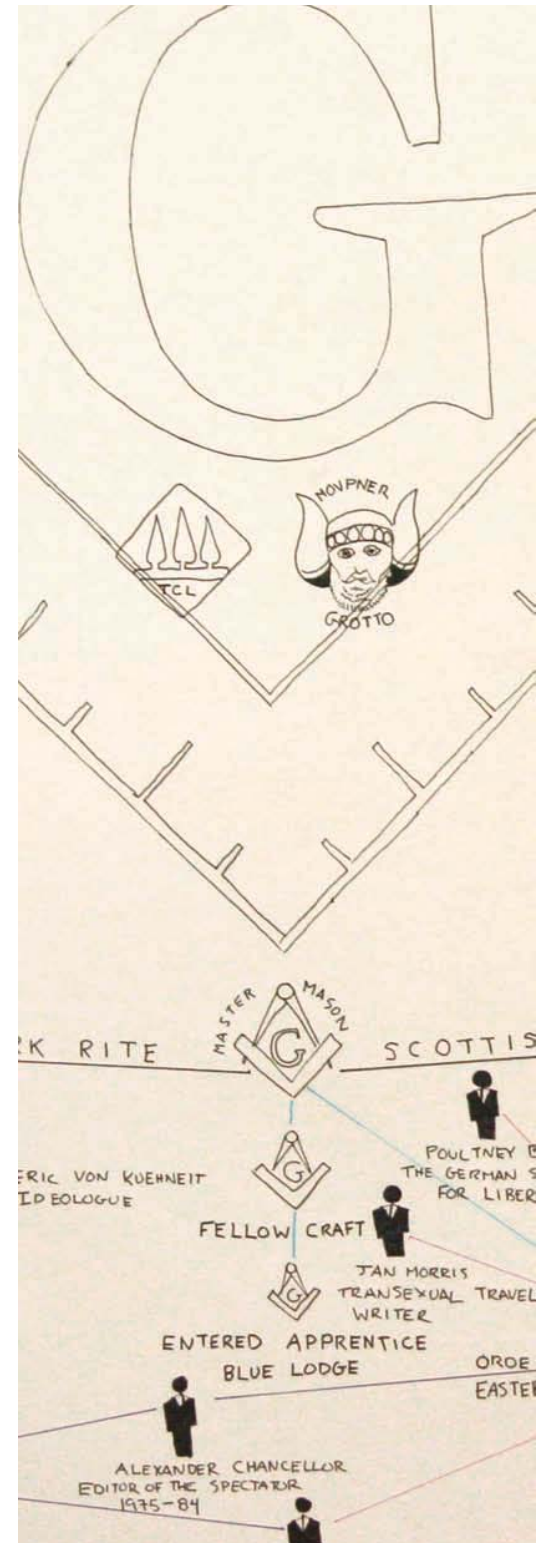
4. Random bits of dirt are useful in paint, on brushes, or on canvas.

5. When in doubt, throw something at the painting.

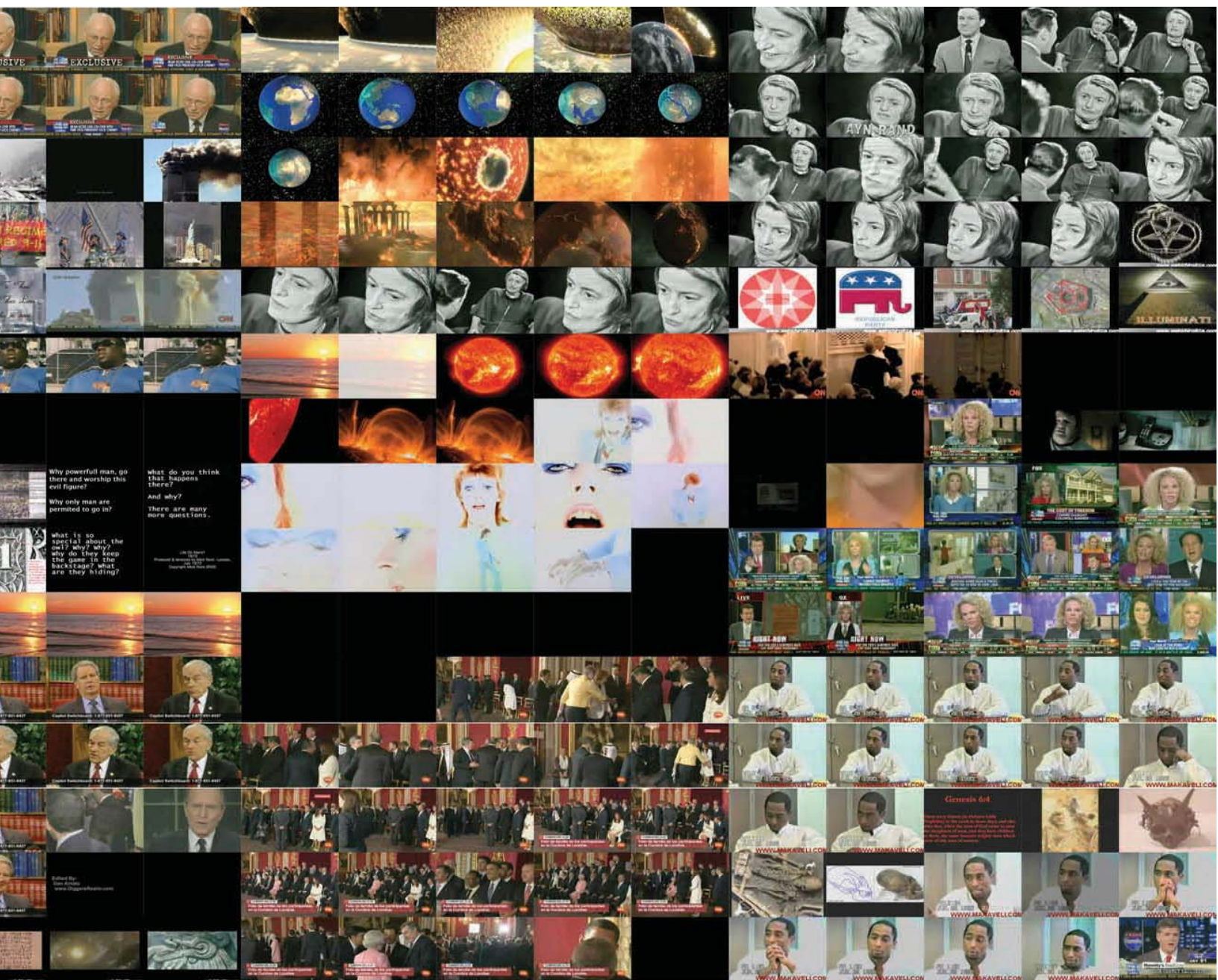
6. Paint it red.

7. Do not do anything dumb like make a representational shape.

I have different rules and systems to generate my new work but what is important is that a structure of rules plus systems still generate my art. The main difference now is that I simply deleted rule #7 and the moment I did this I became a 'representational artist'. In a real way I feel a kinship with programmers who get to write lines of code, with DADA artists who use chance and random occurrence to dictate the terms of their approach, and Abstractionist (btw, I think there are two types of abstraction. One type is abstraction from nature which is simplification. The other type is abstraction via process. The best way to think about this is to consider the difference between an artist like Willem DeKooning and Jackson Pollock. DeKooning was always obsessing over the human form and just simplified the representation away. Pollock at least claimed that his work was purely Greenburgian Formalism)







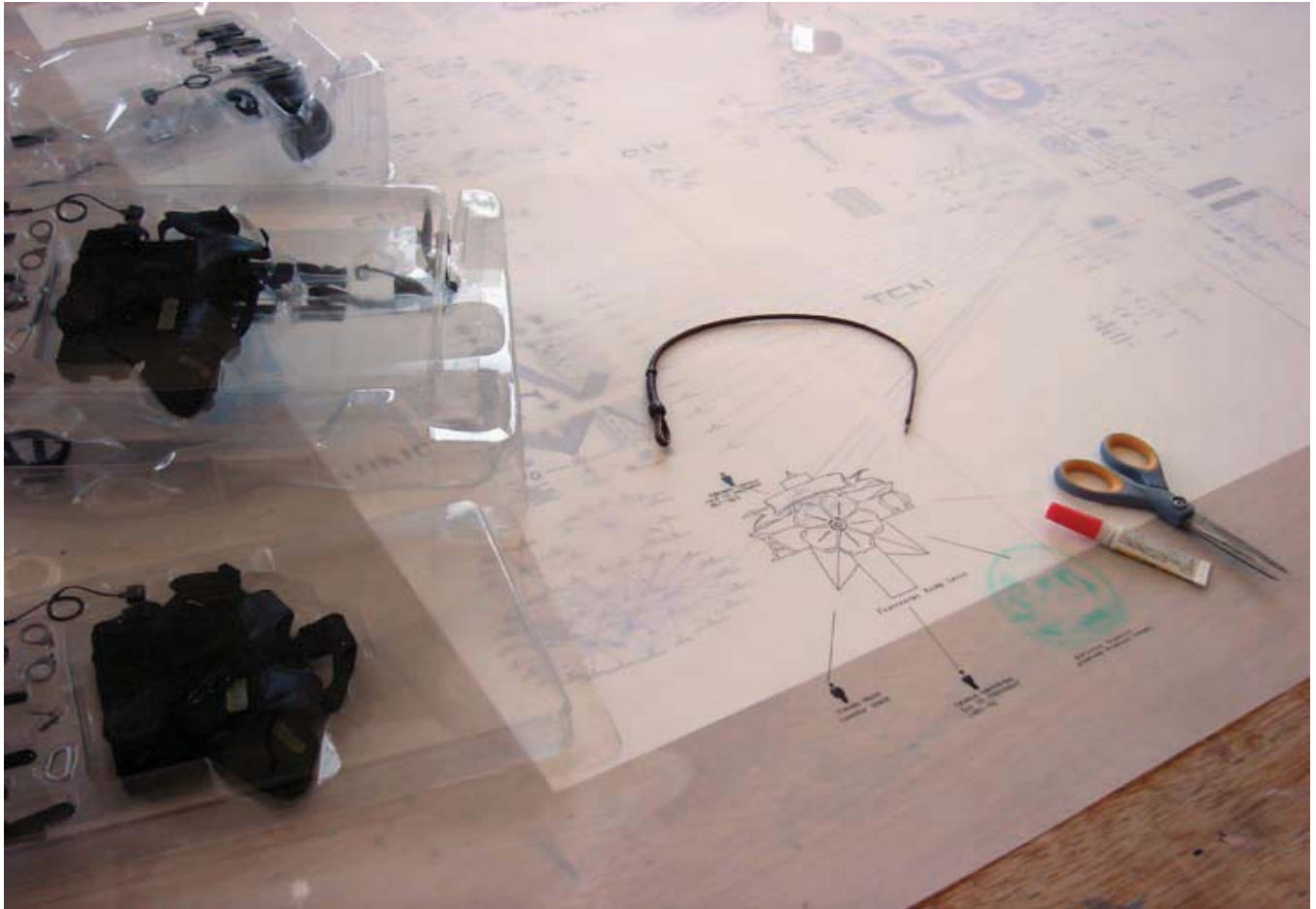
Alexander Reyna, Untitled 1_1, 2009, digital C-Print, 24x14in (61x36cm)

Alexander Reyna, Untitled 2_1, 2009, digital C-Print, 24x14in (61x36cm)



Alexander Reyna, Untitled 3_1, 2009, digital C-Print, 24x14in (61x36cm)





Inside the artist's studio, 2000, New York.

BIOGRAPHY

Alexander Reyna is inspired by the banal as much as he is by the profound. One 20th century argument about art's relationship to contemporary culture proposes that art stands at the forefront of culture and works against kitsch. His work deals explicitly with our relationship with mass media and corporatized imagery.

If you ask him the artist will tell you he is "working in collaboration with corporations" and others who shape the culture given to us, but Zander is always subverting those authors original intentions and re purposing their "message" to better serve as a catalogue of what is culturally available to us and highlights technological mediums used to translate these ideas, but presents it in a form which is bound by the choice and aesthetic. The work is beautiful, profane, banal and horrific but always hyper-designed and superficial yet at the same time alluding to deeper layers of meaning.

Alexander Reyna was born in Chad, Africa in 1973. He received his BFA from University of New Hampshire and his MFA from Pratt Institute. He currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He holds professorship at The School of Visual Arts (SVA, New York -BFA program), Mercy College (New York-assistant professor) , as well as at New York University (NYU, New York-Master program). His award-winning video work has been exhibited around the world, most recently at 'Over the Rainbow' at Yoo Art Space, in Seoul, Korea.