SYSTEMS OF INTERPRETATION

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Locating Intelligence

Every image locates intelligence.[1] I decided to become an artist due to this premise. Most of my childhood was spent in front of a TV-screen. By channel surfing across the range of our satellite dish I created new narratives of my own, based on the different channels existing images. The disappearance of images became as important as their appearance. Art offered me a way of preserving and study these transient images of contemporary culture.

I used to work as a freelance illustrator, producing images for commercial purposes as well as daily media. After some years I realized that I was not interested in producing images within this context, but rather to study the existence of these images and their reliance on given structure.

We live in a world where visual culture is always present, sometimes referred to as the visual turn. I collect images from outside art practices such as popular culture or images produced for commercial purposes. These images exist in an economic system with certain specificity. By relocating these images within an art context as part of my practice I intend to bring forward the intelligence located in between these images and their social and cultural issues pertinent to the contemporary world.

Time causes images to disappear for other images to appear. The disappearance of images becomes as important as their appearance. This is the structure of the economies of the dissemination of images.

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[1] The term "image" will be used as French philosopher Roland Barthes uses the term "text" in From Work to Text (Image – Music – Text), 1977. According to Barthes texts are distinguished by their 'methodological fields' rather than by anything substantially or concretely different about them or their contents. They are performances, limit work, existing at the limits of enunciation, rationality, readability etc. Therefore the term "images" is here used in a broader sense; it refers to pictures of all fields as well as written texts or recordings.

The value of images is determined by their proximity to the present. I want to project how authorship and the autonomy of images exist as a representation of historical events. Copyright is a validation of the image as a historical representation and is possible through the economy of dissemination of images. This determines which images we make visible and which images we make invisible and how authorship and the autonomy of images are decided. Our perception and understanding of images is possible trough the construction of these hierarchies.

It is commonly known that Critical art practices produce images as a counter-imagination to images produced by society and reality. French philosopher Jean Baudrillard claims in *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1981, that such a critic was of a mere historical interest and had become impossible by the merging of reality and its media representation.[2] If so, this locates that all images exist within the structure of the economies of the dissemination of images.

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[2] *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1985, Jean Bauidrillard

A Supposed Place for Human Memory

Then all the charm
Is broken—all that phantom world fair,
Vanishes and a thousand circlets spread,
And each mis-shape each other

Kubla Khan: Or, A Vision in a Dream, 1816, Samuel T. Coleridge

In the foreword of his famous poem Kubla Khan, Samuel Taylor Coleridge writes of his muddled visions in a dream, the origin of the poem. Coleridge claimed to have woken from a laudanum reverie, his head filled with "two or three hundred" lines of poetry. He had noted down but a few lines when an unexpected visitor, a person from Porlock,[3] interrupted him. After the visitor had left and Coleridge was able to the return to his work, he returned only to find out that the memories had blurred and vanished. His vision of the mythical landscape Xanadu, the home of the Mongolian emperor Kubla Khan had passed away "like the images on the surface of the stream into which a stone had been cast". Coleridge feared the despotism of the senses and the confusion of senseless memory. He feared memory loss.[4]

In my practice, I share Coleridge wish to preserve the flow of shattered images on the surface of stream into which a stone is cast. I wish not only to organize the chaos and transformations that images and knowledge is subject to because of the nature of time but also to emphasize the interconnections between them. But unlike Coleridge's I do not fear memory loss, neither reality loss, to me the aleatoric and interdisciplinary nature of human thought is its greatest asset.

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[3] The mysterious person from Porlock is one of the most notorious and enigmatic figures in Coleridge's biography; no one knows who he was or why he disturbed the poet and what he wanted. The person from Porlock has become a metaphor for the interruptions the world throws in the way of inspiration and artistic practice.

[4] *Kubla Khan: Or, A Vision in a Dream*, 1816, Samuel T. Coleridge (Preface)

Interwingularity and Method

Hypertext pioneer Theodor Nelson dubbed his vision for a computer filing system Xanadu after Coleridge's poem. Xanadu envisioned a filing system that would store and deliver the full body of human literature, all our knowledge and its different historical version and their interconnections. Authorship and copyright would be preserved through an extensive linkage system, where no link would be broken, would illustrate how knowledge is preserved. Nelsons published his ideas for Xanadu in 1967;[5] they are yet to be realized.

Ted Nelson used the term "interwingled" to describe the complexity of interrelations in human knowledge:

"EVERYTHING IS DEEPLY INTERWINGLED. In an important sense there are no 'subjects' at all; there is only all knowledge, since the cross-connections among the myriad topics of this world simply cannot be divided up neatly."

Computer Lib / Dream Machines, 1974, Theodor Nelson

Nelson claimed that the hierarchical and sequential structures of knowledge, practically possible since Gutenberg, are forced and artificial. Interwingularity is not generally acknowledged in modern science. In my practice I have applied Nelsons interwingularity as a tool, a method.

In my work I use and interact with the structure of the archive using and interwingular approach. The archive, distinct from the library or the collection form, a repository or rather an ordered system of documents, both written and visual. The archive itself is not history, but the very foundation on which history is written and validated. The archive and our ability to read it rely on hierarchical and sequential structures. In my work I use

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[5] *Computer Lib / Dream Machines*, 1974, Theodor Nelson

the archive as the foundation for my research. My artistic practice questions the archive using the methods of interwingularity. By doing this I wish to emphasize the transitions possible in art, form real to the imaginary, using art to question the constitution of the archive and its authority in relation to its subject.

By shifting roles between that of the artist, the fan, the collector and the archivist, I build mind maps or more specifically family trees consisting of images, objects, texts, elements from outside art practices and collected or constructed artifacts. My projects form a complex flowchart that resembles that of an archive or a historical display in construction. My displays consciously emphasizes the transitions possible in art from real to the imaginary, the viewer is let alone to be guided by no other rationale then their own curiosity and logic. I use the aesthetics of a traditional museum or archival display[6] and leave it in an intricately way. My work resists succumbing to a system of traditional classifications and forced and artificial structures. My work becomes interwingular. Loosely associated objects are presented side by side of equal matter. The viewer is let to read the objects, as one display, creating new, not yet discovered narratives and connections in between them.

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[6] In *The Archival Impulse*, 2004, Hal Foster looks at the contemporary phenomenon of artists-as-archivists, some of which have moved away from a melancholic understanding of culture, that according to Foster views history largely in terms of the legacies of traumatic events. Foster argues that works of artists such as Tacita Dean, Sam Durant and Thomas Hirschhorn "assumes anomic fragmentation as a condition not only to represent but to work through, and proposes new orders of affective association, however partial or provisional". For such artists intervention in the archive is a "gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory", which can harbor the possibility of an unexpected utopian dimension.

The Opposite of What we Know to be True

Dr. Melik: "... wheat germ, organic honey, and... Tiger's Milk."
Dr. Aragon: "Oh, yes. Those are the charmed substances that some years ago were
thought to contain life-preserving properties."
Dr. Melik: "You mean there was no deep fat? No steak or cream pies or... hot fudge?"
Dr. Aragon: "Those were thought to be unhealthy... precisely the opposite of what we
now know to be true."
Dr. Melik: "Incredible!"

Sleeper, 1973, Woody Allen

In *Everything Bad Is Good For You: How Today's Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter*, 2005, the American neuroscientist Steven Berlin Johnson develops his "Sleeper-curve". A theory based on the scene in Woody Allen's film *Sleeper* cited above in which two scientists in the year 2173 are astonished that steak and cream pies were not yet considered healthy food two hundred years previously. With the "Sleeper-curve", Johnson explains that popular culture contributes more to the education of society than generally assumed. That what we consider bad now might in reality be quite good for us.[7]

Popular culture implies a homogeneous and, therefore, full representation. This states that the imagery of popular culture is not only a western but also a global language. The images of popular culture or "fast consumed culture" are often used as a framework in my practice. In my work I concentrate on the autonomy of the constructed images produced by the movie industry and their dependence of given structure. Popular culture produces "fast consumed culture" based on surface and it's perceptual values. This states that images created within the realm of popular culture depend on reproduction and copying of its own images. Appropriating the images of "fast consumed culture" placing them within an art context enables another view, elevating them as art objects, making

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[7] *Everything Bad Is Good For You: How Today's Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter*, 2005, Steven Berlin Johnson

them artifacts of sort. Doing this, I want to make visible how identification through popular culture is possible within the economy and methods of dissemination of images.

In my work I present a flow of signs that exceeds the logic of the viewer, made out by an excess of information. This forces the viewer to construct their own personal path through a vast display of heterogeneous information and objects sorted by time and date, affinities, science, color or aesthetics, yet lacking hierarchal structural organization. My work suggests that the economies dissemination of images is present beyond the thoughts on serial and industrial production of Pop Art and Minimal Art. The economies of dissemination of images in my work exist beyond the "Hyperreality" of Jean Baudrillard that describes the inability of our post-modern consciousness to distinguish reality from fiction. Baudriallard claims that the world we live in has been replaced by a copy world, a world where we seek simulated stimuli and nothing more, a world where everything has turned into fiction.[8] In my work "Hyperreality" is visible through the merging of reality and fiction and emphasizing of the transitions possible within art between the real and imaginary. Yet In opposition to Baudriallard, I claim that merging of reality and its media representation creates a common reality, not fiction.

In Sleeper the scientists of the future tries to visualize life in the 1970's through archeological artifacts, often ending up at separate ends. In my work I appropriate the images from popular culture, displaying them as a collection of fragments and artifacts. Doing this, the work becomes an interplay of clues which seldom unite into a clear view. This presents a variety of dualisms – which, while otherwise apparently contradictory, are linked to form a new, tension-driven whole.

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[8] *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1985, Jean Baudrillard

Noise (Re-Animated)

The project *Noise (Re-Animated)* traces the cultural meaning and usage of white noise, the "nothingness" after the daily TV-transmissions has ended or as shown in the empty gaps on a VHS tape where nothing is yet recorded. What at first appears to be the regular white noise that appears on TV, *Noise (Re-Animated)* is a hand drawn, frame-by-frame animated endless loop shown on an analog TV with the DVD player hidden. Close in its resemblance to actual white noise, yet different at a closer look.

Noise in analog video and television is perceived as a random dot pattern that is superimposed on the picture. As a result, electromagnetic noise picked up by the receivers antenna. When there is no transmission, the noise or "snow" is due mostly to thermal noise from the device itself, stray electromagnetic fields from other household electric devices, and other electromagnetic signals, all of which is interpreted as luminance signal. With today's modern digital transmission technique white noise does not exist.[9]

In his review of Steven Spielberg's 1982 blockbuster *Poltergeist*, a horror movie where poltergeists make their home in the noise of a family's television set, movie critic Peter Rainer writes:

Buried within the plot of Poltergeist is a basic, splendid fairy tale scheme: the story of a little girl who puts her parents through the most outrageous tribulation to prove their love for her. Underlying most fairy tales is a common theme: the comforts of family. Virtually all fairy tales begin with a disrupting of the family order, and their conclusion is usually a return to order.

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L.A. Herald Examiner, 1982 Peter Rainer

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[9] http://www.hdtvprimer.com/ANTENNAS/basics.html

Even though noise itself is a cultural blank spot, a symbol of nothing, its use in contemporary culture has been significant. Me appropriating noise within the fine arts context address such use.

The horror of the poltergeists hidden within the noise could be seen as a critic of modern day TV-society. Using the TV as a baby sitter leaving children in front of televisions, VCRs, stereo systems and comic books, the inherited moral structures of our culture are consumed by a massively expanding capitalist juggernaut. And with science fiction, a mode that dominates the conceptual impulse of popular culture, increasingly proving that through rapid technological change noise could be seen a significant author (transmitter) of the real. *Noise (Re-Animated)* could be seen as a surface of projection and perception for digital and fictitious geographies, times and communities. The use of noise, a cultural bearer about to be extinct due to analog TV being replaced by digital transmission, raises questions about the meaning of space in times when digital image production arise.

UFO Evidence (Constructed, Faked)

UFO Evidence (Constructed, Faked) is a conglomeration of drawings, texts, photocopies and photographs pinned to the gallery wall. The images are grouped and sorted on the wall in a precise appearance; yet they form a complex flowchart that doesn't seem to unite into a certain specificity. The contents of *UFO Evidence (Constructed, Faked)* includes; photographic snapshots from UFO sightings, drawings conducted while under hypnosis depicting aliens from FBI's top secret *Project Blue Book* and experts from Washington Irving's historical master piece *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* published in 1828.

Placed within the installation is a diptych. An analog TV shows a photocopied still from director Chris Carter's Science-Fiction television series *X-Files* depicting the series iconic, reoccurring phrase "THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE". The other part of the diptych is the same phrase screened directly to the wall using an overhead projector, though this time spelled in the working way.

As the title of the work implies the images presented are constructed, faked. Appropriated, taken out of their context or digital collages and drawings conducted by me. This questions or belief in and interpretation of images, due to objective beliefs we interpret the documentation from UFO encounters to be staged or montages, as mere frauds. The original images created by me to resemble typical UFO evidence, raise questions concerning the structure of the economies of the dissemination of images.

UFO Evidence (Constructed, Faked) is ultimately an investigation on what subject matters is considered actual authors of the real. The post-modern writer Jorge Luis Borges 1941 short story *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote* is written in the form of a review or literary critical piece about, Pierre Menard, a 20th century French writer, made up by Borges. It begins with a brief introduction and a listing of all of Menard's previously published work. Borges "review" describes Menard's efforts to go beyond a mere translation of Miguel de Cervantes *Don Quixote* from 1605 by immersing himself

so thoroughly in the work as to be able to actually re-create it, line for line, in the original 17th century Spanish.

Borges intentions, like mine, are to raise questions and discussion about the nature of authorship and interpretation. In the short story, Menard's fragmentary *Quixote,* line by line identical to the original, is considered to be much richer in allusion than Cervantes's "original" work because Menard's must be considered a product of today and its new context. The human action of writing and reading the work affect it's meaning. In this case, *UFO Evidence (Constructed, Faked)* is, if not an attempt to recreate reality, then yet a study of how to alter or determine its meaning

Storytelling (1972 - 2009)

Storytelling (1972 – 2009) traces the story of the character John Rambo, known from the Hollywood movie series *Rambo,* and its many authors. The movie series that features Sylvester Stallone in the lead part consists of four films; *First Blood,* 1982, directed by Ted Kotcheff *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, 1985, dir. George P. Cosmatos, *Rambo III,* 1985, dir. Peter McDonald and *Rambo*, 2008, directed by Stallone himself.[10]

The many directors involved in the project over the years create a loose common narrative focused on the characters Rambo's impossibility to adapt to civil society after being tortured and kept prisoner in the Vietnam War. Suffering from an extreme case post-traumatic stress disorder Rambo feels forced to go back to war, the only world he knows.

Due to the success of the Rambo series, Rambo has developed into a phenomenon rather then just a movie, a phenomenon of commercial products, children's adaptation of the character in child's play, and a cliché male stereotype of the strong silent brute. In my project *Storytelling (1972 – 2009)* I want to make visible have the dissemination of images, within Rambo, affects it's meaning.

What is not very well known that the Rambo series is actually based on the 1972 debut novel *First Blood* by David Morrell, an explicit criticism of the Vietnam War.[11] The novel's original intentions are brutally altered in the movie series. An email-based interview with David Morrell conducted by me serves as the framework in *Storytelling (1972 – 2009)*. Questions concerning dissemination of images, literary canon, adaptation, artistic integrity, authorship and intention are forwarded, yet never fully answered by Morrell.

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[10] http://www.imdb.com/
[11] http://www.davidmorrell.net

By merging material from the original novel, the Swedish translation, the Rambo movies and tools and personal artefacts from my childhood I want to illustrate how meaning, authorship, copyright and intention are altered through means of the structure of the economies of dissemination.

A Flight to the Land Beyond the North Pole

"For years rumors have persisted that Admiral Byrd on his historic flight to the North Pole went "beyond" the Pole into an actual opening that leads inside the earth. Here he met with masterful beings who revealed to Byrd the truth about the mysteries of the Inner Earth."

"For decades this story has been kept out of the news, though it should have made international headlines. Now you can learn the FACTS as written by Admiral Richard Byrd in his secret Log and Diary."
"I'd like to see that land beyond the Pole. That area beyond the Pole is the center of the great unknown."

> A *Flight to the Land Beyond the North Pole – The Missing Dairy of Richard E. Byrd,* 1947, ISCE

Admiral Richard E. Byrd was pioneering American aviator, a war hero, a man of risk taking and great adventures. Byrd claimed that his expeditions had been the first to reach the North and the South Pole by air. In 1926 Byrd was awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest military decoration awarded by the United States government.[12] On February 19, 1947 Admiral Byrd flew beyond the North Pole into an opening leading inside the Earth. Here he met with advanced beings that had a sobering message for him to deliver to Mankind and the Surface World.[13]

A *Flight to the Land Beyond the North Pole* is a collaborative project with Johan Eldrot that traces and appropriates the post mortem usage of Admiral Richard E. Byrds adventures and legacy. A thin book, almost a pamphlet published by the International

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[12] http://www.south-pole.com/p0000107.htm

[13] *A Flight to the Land Beyond the North Pole – The Missing Dairy of Admiral Richard E Byrd,* 1992, ISCE

Society for a Complete Earth, found at an Antiquarian bookshop in Stockholm called *A Flight to the Land Beyond the North Pole – The Missing Dairy of Admiral Richard E Byrd* serves as the framework for the work.

A Flight to the Land Beyond the North Pole is an attempt to merge the relationship between knowledge and perception, the disjuncture between what we know about the world theoretically and how we actually experience it. By merging the material from Byrds official diary, *Alone,* the acclaimed missing diary and our own fictional facts, a third story is created. This raises questions concerning the dissemination of information and how it alters its meaning. We search to emphasize the back and forth transitions possible in art from the real to the imaginary. To us this is a multi-layered project, functioning as a prism that connects information that is then forwarded into several discourses. One important discourse concerns the way we categorize information as true or false, real or unreal, fact or fiction and how subjective experiences seem subordinate to objective and collective beliefs.

Subjective Experience

The project I am currently working on is a second collaboration with Johan Eldrot. It emerges from the ideas forwarded in *A Flight to the Land Beyond the North*, but is rather an investigation of the whole phenomenon of how we categorize information as true or false, real or unreal, fact or fiction and how subjective experiences seem subordinate to objective and collective beliefs in modern day society.

In this work we aim to fully emphasize and illustrate Theodor Nelson's visions and ideas of interwingularity.[14] We will be doing this by further seeking to challenge the viewer's impulse to seek meaning through traditional organization and artificial structures. The work will find its material in that formal heterogeneity which constitutes the dominant experience of our time. This experience was embodied by American art theorist Rosalind Krauss as that of the channel-hopping TV-watcher: "Television and video seem Hydra-headed, existing in endlessly diverse forms, spaces and temporalities for which no single instance seems to provide a formal unity for the whole."[15] Emphasizing this will allow the work to become a flowchart of simultaneous events and images, co-existing without any visible hierarchical and sequential structures.

The work will consist of eclectic historical material, concepts, popular culture, science, pseudoscience and texts merged together with subjective experiences. Presented in a deconstructed faux museum display that highlights the authority by which the history and even reality is framed and revised according to temporal ideas. The core architecture of the display takes the form of a labyrinth. Inspired by Jorge Luis Borges 1962 anthology of short fictions *Labyrinths* and in particular the short fiction *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*.[16] In *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* an encyclopaedia article about a mysterious country called Uqbar is the first indication of Orbis Tertius, a massive conspiracy of

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[14] *Computer Lib / Dream Machines*, 1974, Theodor Nelson

[15] *A Voyage on the North Sea "A Voyage on Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, 1999, Rosalind Krauss

[16] *Labyrinths*, 1962, Jorge Luis Borges

intellectuals to imagine and thereby create a parallel world, Tlön. In the course of the story, the narrator encounters increasingly substantive artefacts of Orbis Tertius and of Tlön. By the end of the story, Earth is becoming Tlön.

Juxtaposing artefacts within the labyrinth structure illustrates the ideas of possible parallel worlds. We wish to create a sort of cultural bricolage, as described by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his 1962 book *The Savage Mind*.[17] The different displays that at first seems to originate from the spontaneous act of grouping things together extends to include the characteristic patterns of mythological thought. Since mythological thought is all generated by human imagination, it is originally based on personal experience. Images and entities generated through mythological thought rise from pre-existing references in the imaginer's mind. Thus, enabling eclectic historical material, concepts, popular culture, science, pseudoscience and texts to be perpetuated by the viewer as equally important matter. This will create an understanding, that the nature of our minds - or the minds capacity - is interwingular.

In Borges *Tlön Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* Borges and his friend Adolfo Bioy Casares are engaged in a discussion about the "monstrous" nature of mirrors, a view they later find in the philosophy of Tlön. In Tlön mirrors are considered an abomination because they "multiply and disseminate" the communal deception that is the universe. Tlön is a product of its inhabitant's inner thoughts, consisting of ceaseless reimaging and recombination.[18] Tlön, like our project considers the reality of our history and culture to be part of an idiosyncratic imagination in order to pursuit something new, rich enough to be considered real.

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[17] *The Savage Mind*, 1962, Claude Levi-Strauss

[18] *Labyrinths*, 1962, Jorge Luis Borges

List of Literature

Simulacra and Simulation, 1985, Jean Bauidrillard

Computer Lib / Dream Machines, 1974, Theodor Nelson

(Image – Music – Text), 1977, Roland Barthes

Kubla Khan: Or, A Vision in a Dream, 1816, Samuel T. Coleridge

A Voyage on the North Sea "A Voyage on Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition, 1999, Rosalind Krauss

The Radicant, 2009, Nicolas Bourriard

Appropriation, 2009, ed. David Evans

Dear Images – Art, Copyright and Culture, 2002, ed. Daniel McClean, Karsten Schubert

The End of Books – Or Books without End? – Reading interactive Narratives, 2001, J. Yelllowlees Douglas

Sleeper, 1973, Woody Allen

The Archival Impulse, 2004, Hal Foster

A Flight to the Land Beyond the North Pole – The Missing Dairy of Admiral Richard E Byrd, 1992, Richard Evelyn Byrd

Poltergeist Review – L.A. Herald Examiner, 1982, Peter Rainer

Everything Bad Is Good For You: How Today's Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter, 2005, Steven Berlin Johnson

Labyrinths, 1962, Jorge Luis Borges

The Savage Mind, 1962, Claude Levi-Strauss