

LEGAL

TENDER

Endia Beal, Matthew Hilger,
R. Lyon, Sarah Meyohas,
Catherine Telford-Keogh,
Carlos Vela-Prado, Where.

Writer - Dorothy Howard

Featured Publication - *Art Handler*

**LEGAL TENDER**

April 30 - May 21, 2016

Legal Tender is an exhibition that examines the overlaps between the language of finance and the language of romance. Terms like mutual, interest, tender, bond, investment, equity, and transparency describe both financial processes and interpersonal relationships. The nine participants in this exhibition perform financial alchemy, converting the forms of standardization, currency, and protocol into different, unanticipated forms of value.

Exhibitors

Endia Beal
Matt Hilger
R. Lyon
Sarah Meyohas
Catherine Telford-Keogh
Carlos Vela-Prado
Where

Writer in Residence

Dorothy Howard of arachne.cc, Recess, and WAGE

Featured Publication

Art Handler

Curator

S. Surface

EXHIBITION PROGRAMS AT THE ALICE

Saturday April 30, 5-8pm - *Legal Tender* Opening Reception

Saturday May 14, 6-9PM - Georgetown Art Attack

Saturday, May 21, 3-5pm - *Is it rude if I ask how you pay the rent?* A conversation on funding artist-run spaces, convened to help The Alice figure out its own financial structure.

Saturday May 21, 6-8pm - *Legal Tender* and *Processing* Closing Reception

Love under the State is haunted by financial transaction.

Uninvestigated, our relationships are ruled by rulers,
whether or not we know and consent.

Even our rulers are based on *a* Ruler, and drawn from the
bodily proportions of a long-dead monarch.

The white men's faces on our bills are still supposed to
bolster confidence that our currency has value.

These transactions have been naturalized.

But we all know there is more embodied worth
communicated by the labor & care in an elaborate braiding
of hair - formed like the calligraphic scripts entangled with
both love letters and the official nature of printed currency.

We can transform that imperial ruler back into a poem.

Individual emotions move markets by the millions and
inscribe the history of speculation and caprice into the
forms of each stock's worth.

Sex work is real work.

We work under the table.

The body's liquid assets gain value through their
conversion.

PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

EXHIBITORS

ENDIA BEAL is a North Carolina based artist, educator and activist who is internationally known for her photographic narratives and video testimonies that examine the contemporary personal stories of minority women working within corporate space. She aligns herself with artists like Carrie Mae Weems and Lorna Simpson who use stories to question conformity and gender norms. Beal currently serves as the Director of Diggs Gallery and Assistant Professor of Art at Winston-Salem State University. As a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2008, Beal earned a dual bachelor's degree in Art History and Studio Art. In 2013, Beal graduated from Yale School of Art with a Master of Fine Arts in Photography, and she was also an artist in residence at the Center for Photography at Woodstock in 2013. Beal is featured in online editorials including *The New York Times*, *NBC*, *BET*, *Huffington Post*, *Slate*, and *National Geographic*. She also appeared in *Essence Magazine*, *Marie Claire Magazine South Africa* and *Newsweek Japan*. Her work has been exhibited in the Charles H. Wright Museum in Detroit, Michigan, the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Art + Culture based in Charlotte, NC, the Aperture Foundation of New York, the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at State University of New York at New Paltz, and the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute.

endiabeal.com

MATTHEW HILGER is a Seattle-based artist with artistic training in photomedia and a studio practice deeply rooted in contemporary theory. Born in 1986 outside Chicago and raised near Kansas City, Hilger earned his BFA from the Kansas City Art Institute in 2009 and his MFA at the University of Washington in 2011. In addition to his formal studies and studio practice, Hilger has worked with nonprofits that focus on community empowerment and education.

matthew-hilger.squarespace.com

R. LYON

R. Lyon is an artist who lives and works in New York.

irlyon.com

SARAH MEYOHAS is a French-American artist based in New York. She holds a B.A. in international relations from the University of Pennsylvania, a B.S. in finance from the Wharton School, and an M.F.A. from Yale University. Her cryptocurrency, *BitchCoin*, and her recent *Stock Performance* have been featured in *The New York Times*, *Time Magazine*, *WIRED*, *Vice*, *Hyperallergic*, and *Huffington Post*, among others. She has also appeared on CNBC, PBS, and CBC. Her home in New York is her eponymously named gallery.

sarahmeyohas.com

bitchcoin.biz

CATHERINE TELFORD-KEOGH (b. 1986 Toronto) currently lives and works in Toronto. Her group exhibitions include *Bronx Speaks*, Bronx Museum, Bronx, NY (2015); *Group Show, Baby's All Right*, Brooklyn, NY (2014); *Body and Material*, Greenpoint Film Festival, Brooklyn, NY (2012). Catherine Telford-Keogh was a fellow at the Bronx Museum's AIM Program (2013), the recipient of the Susan C. Clarke Award (2013) and the Fannie B. Pardee Prize (2011), and was a finalist for the Tony Devan Lewis Fellowship (2011). She earned her MAR in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies from Yale University (2013) and MFA in Sculpture from Yale School of Art (2011).
catherinetelfordkeogh.com

CARLOS EMMANUELLE VELA-PRADO (b. 1984, Guatemala City, Guatemala) is a Switzerland-based artist. His multimedia work relates the trace of objects and locations to a human presence. Using photography as a framework, Carlos explores the interstices between mediums, spaces, and poetics. In reframing these concepts to create complementary fusions, he serves as the composer to orchestrate different bodies of work that live in tension. He develops sets of instructions that manipulate each piece to create an unrealized function –a method he derives from programming. This method of thinking has allowed him to think unconventionally about the creative processes. He earned his BA from SUNY Albany in Computer Science and MFA from Yale School of Art in Sculpture. He has been awarded the Atelier Mondial Fellowship, 2016; Assets for Artist Grant, 2014 and LMCC Swing Space, 2013. He has exhibited internationally, recently at Palazzo De' Toschi in Italy curated by Simone Menegoi, and will debut his next project, *Villa Nocturna*, during Art Basel 2016.
carlosvelaprado.com

WHERE is a think tank and on-demand publishing project headquartered in an undisclosed shipping container in Brooklyn, New York. Its operations test the assertion that art manifests the same patterns, behaviors, and properties present in all complex informational systems. Acknowledging the powers and perils of systems-based thinking, Where suspects that the mechanisms identified as producing growth and complexity in large-scale systems may be directly applicable to the field of artistic production. Where uses the exhibition format as a site for researching these mechanisms. Where is produced by the art historian Lucy Hunter and the artist R. Lyon.
where-container.tumblr.com

WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE

DOROTHY HOWARD is a technology and media researcher, writer, and information activist. She focuses on digital labor, contemporary art, and online culture. Her first book of poetry, *Troll*, was published by Inpatient Press (2015). She is the Founder and Lead Editor of the Arachne webzine at arachne.cc.
dorothyhoward.com

FEATURED PUBLICATION

ART HANDLER is a print and online publication about the social and cultural impacts of behind-the-scenes labor in the art world. The magazine reconsiders the worker in museums, galleries, studios, and other sites, both practically and theoretically. By focusing on this field, it offers readers new insight on interactions within the art world that are normally hidden. The call for new reflections on the mechanisms of the art industry can hopefully foster greater understandings on art and its practice for everyone involved. ART HANDLER puts labor at the center of culture.
art-handler.com

CURATOR & GALLERY

S. SURFACE (b. 1981, Tacoma, WA; lives and works in Seattle, WA) is a designer and photographer, an organizer of events and exhibitions, a writer and lecturer, and a researcher of the politics of art, design and architecture. Surface's practice centers the creation and preservation of livable, equitable places, and demonstrates how design can support civic participation by integrating research, curatorial work, and creative production. As Program Director at Design in Public, Surface organizes the Seattle Design Festival and curates exhibitions at the Center for Architecture & Design. Surface has been an architect with super-interesting!; an activist with Architecture for Humanity and Artist Studio Affordability Project; and a researcher with C-LAB, *Volume Architectural Journal*, and the Network Architecture Lab at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. Surface was a 2014 A-I-R at The Center For Photography at Woodstock, was a teaching fellow in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department at Yale, and earned a B.F.A. in Integrated Design from Parsons School of Design and an M.Arch from Yale School of Architecture.

susansurface.com

designinpublic.org

THE ALICE is a contemporary art space located in the Georgetown neighborhood of Seattle. The Alice is run by a curatorial collective of four artists: Julie Alexander, Julia Freeman, Molly Mac and S. Surface. The collective presents new work and experimental projects by Pacific Northwest, national and international artists, with a preference for work that has a strong physicality. The Alice is a space where artists, writers, thinkers and makers can create community and dialogue through contemporary art, curatorial opportunities, and alternative modes of production.

thealicegallery.com

LEGAL TENDER - Works

ART HANDLER

September 18, 2015

Free

Print run of 2000

ART HANDLER

November 26, 2015

Free

Print run of 1000



ENDIA BEAL

9 to 5

2013, Winston-Salem, NC

Video, 3 minutes

Not for Sale



ENDIA BEAL

Beth

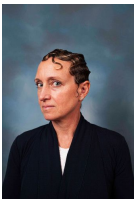
2013

Pigment Print

20" x 30"

\$1,500

1 of 5



ENDIA BEAL

Christina

2013

Pigment Print

20" x 30"

\$1,500

1 of 5



MATTHEW HILGER

Titles presume positions

1" x 18"

White Acrylic, Prussian blue oil pastel

\$700

1 of 2



MATTHEW HILGER

evenclairtyneedsroom

24" x 48"

Clear plexiglass, ph balanced glue

\$450

1 of 2



MATTHEW HILGER

Industry Standard

35" x 50"

Wood flooring, steel sawhorses, Thomas Kinkade licensed carpet

\$600



R. LYON

The Artist's Bank Account Number and Pin Code Embedded in a Magic Square

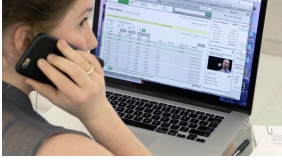
2015

Laser and Inkjet print on paper

8.5" x 10"

\$250

1 of 10



SARAH MEYOHAS

Stock Performance Video

2016

Video

Exhibition copy. Inquire with The Alice for purchase.
Courtesy 303 Gallery, New York; video by Brian Doyle



SARAH MEYOHAS

Schwab Account Termination

2016

Laser Print on office paper

8.5" x 11"

Exhibition copy. Inquire with The Alice for purchase.



SARAH MEYOHAS

TD Ameritrade Account Termination

2016

Laser Print on office paper

8.5" x 11"

Exhibition copy. Inquire with The Alice for purchase.



CATHERINE TELFORD-KEOGH

See Inside

2014

HD Video, 5 minute loop

\$3,500



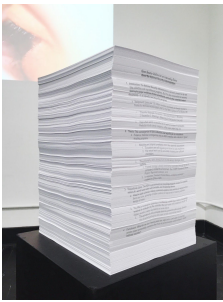
CARLOS EMMANUELLE VELA-PRADO

Teeth (Basium VIII)

2012

Video, 4 minute loop

\$2,000 (purchase includes 27" x 27" x 27" 1983 RCA Colortrak 2000 monitor with video looping hardware, not shown in exhibition copy)



WHERE

Open Source Outline for an Interesting Essay on the National Security Agency

2016

Laser Print on post-consumer recycled office paper

8.5in (w) x 11in (h) x 10.5in (d)

\$1,200

SCRIPT FOR
A TED TALK
TURNED
INCANTATION

Sarah Meyohas

01/08/2016

Over the next ten days, I will work. Trading on the New York Stock Exchange, placing orders with the purpose of visual change. Once I have moved a stock price, I will redraw it on canvas with oil stick.

A stock is a representation of the claim on a company's assets and earnings. It is partitioned into shares that are considered personal property. A share always belongs to an owner, though it may outlive any of its owners. Belonging, like most other relations, is mediated by private property, the ground to our liberal concept of society, upon which the exchange locates the stock.

The meeting of buyers and sellers once took place in a physical space but has now become a network of computers where trades are placed electronically. The heart of Wall Street is in New Jersey. Picture metal cages containing racks of servers, lining data centers, festooned with wires through which my wealth, my livelihood has pulsed.

And while millions of square feet have been configured to realize financial relations, this sensible form in no way contains the market. Estimates of the derivatives market have soared past the quadrillion dollar mark. These are contracts that are based on the performance of certain assets like mortgages or commodities, so while grounded in reality, can balloon far beyond it.

The financial market is large, beyond comparison. A natural, sensible object is always measured in some sort of relation, and thus made larger or smaller in our imagination. But there is no fair measure for the market outside of itself. It can only be judged from within, a magnitude in which the amplifying of the imagination itself is inherent to its sheer, formless, absoluteness.

This occurs because our imagination reaches toward infinity just as reason insists on totality. Inevitably, the imagination falls short, unable to estimate beyond the senses, yet in the process of wanting and feeling, the mind attunes towards the supersensible.

The magnitude of my price movements, I will redraw by estimation. It is the mind's eye that will take the line from screen to canvas. Mapping this data visualization with time on the x-axis, price on the y-axis.

Oil stick on canvas, the price is the point of contact, where the highest amount a buyer will pay meets the lowest amount a seller will accept. If more people want to buy a stock than sell it, the price inches up, and likewise in the opposite direction.

Script for a Ted Talk Turned Incantation by Sarah Meyohas
Reproduced in conjunction with *Legal Tender*, April 30 - May 21, 2016

The line I draw is thus an inextricable link to an anonymous other on the opposite side of the trade. This prevents me from being absolutely individual. I am exposed to the gazes of others as one investor among investors.

This is competition, which is promoted by the structure of the market: as a central exchange, with homogeneous products, low transaction and transportation costs, instant communications, a large enough crowd of participants to ensure that no individual can influence market prices in the ordinary course of events, and rules to allow all investors access to information.

Through competition, the market appears to dispel, as if magically, the thickness and opacity of the physical reality, opening the world up before us. The visibility that price lends to aspects of the world helps us reach out into the midst of conditions and circumstances beyond ourselves, and through our market actions link us to them in a way seemingly beyond comparison to the relations of the external world. Ownership becomes simultaneously an absolute closeness and an irremediable distance.

A quantifiable, singular price is what brings together the many individual perspectives, turning judgment into data, emotion into a line. Whatever fluctuations occur in this field of thoughts and perceptions may not indicate any change in the underlying company, but in what investors feel the worth of it is.

Fundamental analysis assumes that stocks have a true value distinct from their current price. This fundamental value is thought to be located somewhere in the relationship of the stock to other stocks, and to its own earnings. The market price of the stock is supposed to tend towards this true, fundamental value over time.

The importance of this analysis is that it assumes causality. The state of the company will ultimately dictate the relative value of its stock on the market. Any disparities between the fundamental value and the stock price can be pinned on the future, and its correct or incorrect anticipation.

The price is viewed as a reflection of a company's current and future being. Starting from the reality of the company, reflective judgment filters down to a price and puts forth the price as a universal synthesis: the line and its universalizing potential drawn from the points, each one a reflective judgment made manifest.

But pure, reflective description breaks down when confronted with the phenomenal reality of the market. It is the intentional nature of valuing itself that condemns us to the illusion of objectivity. Indeed our judgment ends in a price, and the price, once constituted, appears as that without which there would be no value. But it is in fact just a state of possibility. The price replaces a description with a recreation.

Causality is untenable. In fact, prices can have significant effects on the underlying company that they represent, whether through the credibility of the company, its consumer acceptance, credit rating, or through corporate transactions like mergers and acquisitions, or through issues and repurchases of shares and options.

The market is reflexive. Investors are at once judging and acting on it. When seeking to understand, reality is the constant. When seeking to act, understanding is the constant. But since the reality of the market is made of its actions, none of these givens can be anything but contingent. And so the divergence between reality and understanding itself becomes a causal factor, as human uncertainty, or human creativity.

But the line that I am drawing is not a judgment on the company. I will pick stocks based on their volumes traded, their names, their ticker symbols, based on their formal qualities. I will not analyze the underlying reality of the stock, but start from the reality of the line, that I may move, and draw, and inscribe. The market is a historical process in which moves are forever recorded, echoed through the rest of the financial ecosystem. In this case, not only embedded, but also embodied.

The reality of a price makes it objectively true. Regardless of how abstract the market may seem, results are actual and inexorable. In other words, the market is always right. But the truth does not merely dwell in the realized price, but also in the fundamental value that always lies in the near future. The next price is always the truer one. So while the present price is determinative and real, the future price is always gearing back into it, making different sides of the truth simultaneously present and future.

Just as each moment in the market is double-sided. There is a pulse, as each exchange happens. And yet, there is also a concurrent settling in the line that inexorably accumulates all of these points. This double-sided moment of pulsing and settling characterizes the consciousness of the market. They are bound together, like two sides of a coin, or two dimensions of a figure.

Valuation, like perception, has its own perspectival orientation. Your view on a stock is the value judgment. To act upon that view, a trade is placed, which gives depth to the stock's order book, and once executed, forms part of the volume. Valuation is focused on a stock bound as a horizon, and this underlying structure clearly rests on and presupposes perception.

It is perception, not judgement, that is the primordial operation that implants the valuable with a value. And perception is not contingently, but essentially bodily.

Leaving the market to exist as both technical and emotional, true and false, real and abstract.

The stock market joins an extreme subjectivism with an extreme objectivism through its valuation of the world. Value follows from the price in which it is revealed. That is, perspectives

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intersect, perceptions confirm each other, and value appears. But this value must not be detached, or converted into a world in the realist sense.

Because the market is not pure being, but rather the value that shines forth at the intersection of my views with those of others through a sort of fitting into each other. The market is thus bound to subjectivity and intersubjectivity, which create their concordance through the taking up of past prices into present prices. Buyer and seller do not meet up with already given value. Instead, they establish each other and establish value through an approach that rests upon ownership.

If ownership is the reduced, distilled form of existence, then the market is not the clarification of a prior system of being, but rather its origination. Like art, trading is not the reflection of a prior truth, but the actualization of a perceived truth.

It is visual purpose that unhinges a painting's value from its material. It is visual purpose that will guide the literal value of the line that I will draw on these paintings. If value emerges from the relationship between perceptions, then seeing the mark on canvas as both literal and representational--as the stock that it simultaneously depicts and abstracts--is generative. And this is where I am tonight. I value. I see. I mark.

01/20/2016

Redelivered the previous talk (with a few little differences for it to make sense in the present).

Then got up from the desk and abandoned the script. More or less it followed like this:

I began by trading Paradise Inc. In fact, the broker called me up to tell me I was the only person in paradise. I made the stock move by fully one third of its market cap. It was the smallest company I moved.

Here is Patriot National Bancorp. The lines came out parallel. Though that was my chance, I intentionally reinforced them on the canvas.

Neuromama is an 8 Billion dollar company that trades on the pink sheets. It seems shady, it's a Russian search engine. I brought it down 13%. Magically, at the end of the day, someone pushed it right back up to where it was before I traded it.

Here is Pope Resources. I pushed the Pope around between \$61 and \$65.5 three times, which, for a \$300 million market cap company, is quite radical.

And this is Value Line, which here resembles a heartbeat.

These lines bear testament to my actions, but they reflect a greater reality.

What happened on the markets is the true contingency for this work. When the date for this show was set a few months ago, never could I have imagined that the market would be in its current state. US equity markets have recorded their worst start to a year in history. In just a

Script for a Ted Talk Turned Incantation by Sarah Meyohas
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few trading days into 2016, the S&P 500 has erased over \$2 trillion dollars in value. Wiped out.

It's a sea of red, across the board - as if my show timed the market, or as if the market could be complicit in my artwork. Because essentially, it forced investors to do what I've been doing: ignore the underlying reality and focus simply on the price.

During uncertain times such as these, fundamental valuation fails you. In retrospect, it might be attributed to China, or to oil. But these were also factors in the later half of 2015. So when causes cannot be called upon to understand a situation, you can only rely on the facticity and immediacy of the price. An investor is forced to reckon with the power of sentiment. What happened on the market is a phenomenal echo of what I did on individual stocks: ignore its underlying reality, just make the price swing.

As if in homage to this opening, the market today plunged by over 550 points just to bounce right back. I'm not denying responsibility. All I can say is that there is always an interplay of chance and intentionality.

When I redraw my lines on canvas, I start with an image in my mind but in the moment, my hand might slip, speed up or slow down as it catches on a stretcher. When I placed the trades, at certain times, and with certain volumes, I expect a specific movement. But oftentimes, the market surprised me. And of course, that my paintings are now embedded in a historic moment is the ultimate interplay between chance and intentionality. Because when I started this show, I intended to wreak a little havoc.

Open Source
Outline for an
Interesting Essay
about the
National Security
Administration

Where

Open Source Outline for an Interesting Essay about the National Security Administration:

- 1. Introduction: The National Security Administration is primarily known for its vast data collection and surveillance programs. But it is also responsible for securely destroying paper evidence of this surveillance—and all other classified Federal documents—in an equally vast recycling program.**
 - a. Background: Every year 100 million sensitive documents are literally recycled in-house at a restricted-access paper plant on the NSA's campus in Fort Meade, MD.
 - i. "Classified Materials Conversion." Describe process: 1. Shredding 2. Maceration 3. Straining 4. Bleaching 5. Final product (raw pulp).
 - ii. Pulp is then sold to a classified list of external vendors for production. Products include candy wrappers, coffee cups, paper bags, etc.
- 2. Thesis: This convergence of data collection and recycling is no coincidence.**
 - a. Evidence: Historical contingencies link the NSA's massive data collection to "green" recycling programs.
 - i. Recycling and dragnet surveillance share two cybernetic assumptions:
 1. Ecosystems are self-regulating and strive for static equilibrium.
 2. The natural world can be accurately modeled given sufficient information.
 - ii. This philosophy stems directly from the mid-century ideologies about systems.
 1. Postwar ecology is deeply informed by cybernetics through its use of computer to model the environment. *See US/IBP Grasslands Biome Project, Raymond Lindeman, et al.*
 2. In response, President Richard Nixon—a notorious surveyor—created the EPA in 1970.
- 3. Theoretical claim: The NSA's paranoia-driven recycling program reveals its romantic vision of a world saturated with invisible and threatening forces.**
 - a. Massive data collection follows a paranoid epistemic that searches for signals where there are none, grasping at hidden patterns to forge a web of meaning against a deluge of noise.
 - b. The NSA's compulsive dispersion of confidential material into a torrent of consumer products is motivated by the conviction that even paper pulp contains an "aura" of hidden secrets unless neutralized as banal objects.
 - i. This process is only complete when the consumers unknowingly discards this recycled packaging and paper in trash cans across America.
- 4. Conclusion: What do we do if every pizza box, egg carton, and case of recycled printer paper potentially contains the Federal government's—and civilians'—most intimate secrets?**

Freight and
Message: Views on
Distribution and
Standardization
from a Shipping
Container
in Brooklyn

Where (Lucy Hunter & R. Lyon)

Freight and Message: Views on Distribution and Standardization from a Shipping Container in Brooklyn

Lucy Hunter and R. Lyon

One sees shipping containers while in transit, looking down from a plane window or passing laterally on the freeway: miles upon miles of orange, blue, and green corrugated steel boxes, stacked five high and six deep at shipyards and train depots.

This familiar encounter inverts the containers' operational logic and our place within it. The vast mobility of these containers dwarf the relative immobility of people. Movement is their unifying ethic. Seventeen million and counting, they haul bananas, microchips, bolts of fabric, flat-screen TVs—any material, at any stage of the supply chain—in regulation 20- or 40-foot boxes. The system for trafficking containers is called "intermodal freight": standardized trucks, ships, and trains all specially fitted for the frictionless handoff of containers ad infinitum. These boxes parse the global into the local: their contents land at a corner grocery store, a mechanic shop, a cane-juice processing plant. Containers ping across the globe, and we receive them.

It's a mode of passive consumption readily associated with digital media, that which transformed "searching" into a desk-chair pursuit. There is a particular resemblance between the distribution of digital information across fiber optic networks and the distribution of material goods across global freight routes. An

inextricable, if inconspicuous, codependence links these two dominant systems of contemporary distribution. It is an ethos of standardization which aims to maximize efficiency, or minimize travel time, by compressing the thing in transit into modular units.

Our work at Where issues from the juncture of these two systems. Where is an exhibition space and publishing platform headquartered in a shipping container, co-directed by the authors of this essay. Where produces investigations into the principles that ground these distribution systems; we explore them through collaborations with artists as both methodological framework and object of study. In the following essay we will sketch out some of the parallel ontologies of shipping containers and bits, and identify contemporary art and its discourse as an ideal testing ground for this type of inquiry.

Containerization is among the great standardizations of modernity, on par with the regulation of rail widths, the sprocket-gap of celluloid film, and the synchronization of clocks by time zone.

Intermodal freight came into existence in 1956 with Malcom McLean's customized Ideal-X ocean liner hauling fifty 35-foot shipping containers, ready to unload at their destination port onto McLean's specialty truck beds. McLean did not invent shipping containers, but he is the protagonist in what's now referred to as the history of "containerization."¹ His fundamental insight had less to do with a mastery of engineering or hardware than with a single-minded focus on distributive architecture. His was a vision that saw trucking, shipping, and rail freight not as distinct activities of steering boats, trucks, and trains, but rather as various means of achieving the same end, that is, moving "freight." Freight, to McLean, was a kind of idealized, undifferentiated modeling unit, erased of any identifying characteristics such as size, shape, or destination: the economists' "widget" brought to life. In order for McLean to increase speed and reliability of transit, all while reducing cost, he had to normalize freight.

Ten years before McLean's Ideal-X, its parallel informatic unit was born. In 1948, Claude Shannon, a 32-year-old engineer and cryptographer at Bell Labs, published his declassified essay "A Mathematical Theory of Communications"

across two issues of the *Bell System Technical Journal*. This essay would immortalize Shannon as the founding figure of the information age.² His innovation was theoretical, an elaboration of an idea so embedded in collective consciousness that it now seems obvious: any message between a sender and receiver can be quantized and measured in terms of its information content. Whether a telegraph message across copper wires, a chemical trigger in the bloodstream, or a birdcall in a bustling forest, all messages are the same in that they are all designed to carry information from point A to point B. A message is transmissible if its ratio of signal to noise, or message to interference, is adequately low. To better model this ratio, Shannon created a unit for discrete quantities of information: the binary digit, or bit.

To discuss shipping containers and bits as units of measurement is necessary but not sufficient to describe the cross-wired logic of digital distribution and global freight. Quantization functions in the service of time; it is a handmaiden to precision and regulation.

Two years prior to the publication of his landmark text on communications, Shannon circulated a classified memo on September 1, 1946, titled "A Mathematical Theory of Cryptography," published in 1949 as "Communication Theory of Secrecy Systems."³ "Secrecy systems" refer to any message designed to resist interception while traveling between sender and receiver. Encryption strategy at that time was simply to build the strongest, most impenetrable secrecy system for use at all times. Shannon disagreed, and offered a radically new definition—one based not on security, but on timing. A message need only be secret as long as its information is sensitive. For instance, if a radiogram reads "Attack at noon," the cipher must only elude the enemy until noon has passed; thereafter, the message is worthless, self-evident in enemy hands. Shannon's insight was to model encryption as a function of the time required to dismantle it; the game was one of calculated delay.

Written just as the war was winding down, "Communication Theory of Secrecy Systems" sees its concepts realized not only in military strategy, but also in industrial production. Just in Time (JIT) manufacturing is a production method that eliminates excess inventory through precise deliveries of factory materials.⁴ At an ideal JIT auto manufacturing plant, the tires from the tire factory arrive to the auto plant just as they are needed to be placed on the wheels. Under the JIT

system, any excess inventory, warehousing, or storage is a waste of resources. If secrecy systems hinged on predicting delay, JIT hinges on predicting arrival. Both demand narrow margins of success—too simple a cipher, or too lean an order of exhaust pipes, spells catastrophe.

It doesn't matter where parts are put together; it matters when. And the "when" must be precisely timed and controlled by machines operating on scales that exceed human capacity or imagination: thousand-ton cranes hauling containers, lightning-fast servers sending bits. In the era before mechanized computers the time-delta for decryption, or inventory, or delivery time, referred to human labor: slide rules and pencils, longshoreman and teamsters.⁵ As mechanization pervaded every aspect of the supply and distribution chain—encouraged both by computing technology on one side and shipping technology on the other—this time-axis would correlate to a machine's calculating speed, initiating a microchip arms race for brute calculating force that continues to this day. JIT requires a constant information stream from every point of the system. Precise inventory assessments are required to keep the machinery running lean and smooth; from the beginning, this kind of managerial control was made possible by computers, running constant algorithms on punch cards coded with inventory. JIT today is a total cybernetic feedback loop that accounts for production delays, traffic, anticipatory purchasing, energy price fluctuations, and nearly every dynamic process that can impact manufacture, distribution, and sales. The total immersion of distributive systems becomes advanced by "asset tracking": cranes which use Optical Code Recognition (OCR) software to "read" the identification number of each unique shipping container, and radio frequency identification (RFID) and GPS tags implanted into cranes and port machinery. Tracking strives for omniscient knowledge of the moving parts in a distribution chain, inputs for a computer's complex algorithms to endlessly model and adjust to a constantly moving field.

The rise of automated production and JIT completes a full circle that began its course in 1956. As McLean saw the unity of rail, truck, and shipping as one system populated by the unitary shipping container, JIT applied the precise standardization and tracking of containers to the entire manufacturing, distribution, and assembly chain. These procedures constitute one massive mechanism of production, an informational systems architecture wedded to a physical distribution network that cannot be discussed independently of each other. It's a trajectory still in full force—Amazon's automated warehousing unloads and distributes the contents of shipping containers in vast lightless

rooms navigated by semi-intelligent machines. The fallacy of the information economy is that it's somehow divorced from the means of production. Shipping standardization, JIT, and modern warehousing protocols are evidence of what capital identified fifty years ago. Virtual informational models and methods of physical manufacture and distribution are co-extensive, deeply symbiotic.

At *Where* we identified that these confrontations between a physical object and its network of delivery, between a thing and the information which surrounds it, can be teased out with contemporary artworks and their discourse. Much like conversations about the "information economy," discourse on contemporary art is too often described in terms of its symptoms—ephemerality, screens, "virtuality." Discussions on the dematerialization of art and digital media tend to fetishize the ephemeral and immaterial qualities of moving data over their source. What's lost in this description is the material expenditures of these dazzling screen images: vast mining operations digging for the trace metals at the heart of the microchip, windowless server farms that are measured in acres, the neoliberal "indentured-lite" conditions of workers at all steps of the supply chain, and of course the black smoke of fossil fuels required to sustain the entire network of production. These are important and often overlooked corollaries, material and ideological, between our usual dialogue on networks and informational architecture, and the historical concomitance of digital media, standardization, and containerization.

When introducing *Where* in conversation, we are often asked if it is spelled W-A-R-E or W-H-E-R-E. The storage/inventory homonym is usually offered first, as if the more likely of the two. We prefer the latter because it offers a question in lieu of an address. Effectively, however, it is both: ware and where, freight and message. At *Where* we try to revive classical systems theory to mine its specific vocabulary developed to discuss movement, timing, mechanization, modeling, standardization, control systems, and the permeability of information across forms; these are the operative forces of global distribution and of art, and they apply as readily to digital media as to material goods.

Where 2, our second exhibition in collaboration with curator A. E. Benenson, is an apposite example. Subtitled "an investigation into recursion," it operated on simultaneous and circular but differentiated channels of information. The exhibition staged a bootleg version of Douglas Gordon's classic durational video

24 Hour Psycho; in this artwork from 1993, Gordon reduced the frame rate of Hitchcock's classic and projected his protracted appropriation.

Where's bootleg copy did not resolve itself so easily. Benenson, ostensibly the curator of the show, selected Gordon's piece as the work for exhibition but instead projected an illegally downloaded version of *Psycho* every evening inside the container. Glowing soundless in our storefront, the projection lit up the dark February sidewalk for an unsuspecting audience of passersby. When the credits began to roll, the projector would quietly turn itself off until the following day. This apparatus was further complicated by our streaming webcam which "buffered" the video, like a broken Netflix movie and—through a controlled staccato slideshow—released the doubly bootlegged Hitchcock video at two frames per second, requiring, of course, 24 hours to complete. The sum total: a bootlegged circuit from Hitchcock to Douglas to Where.

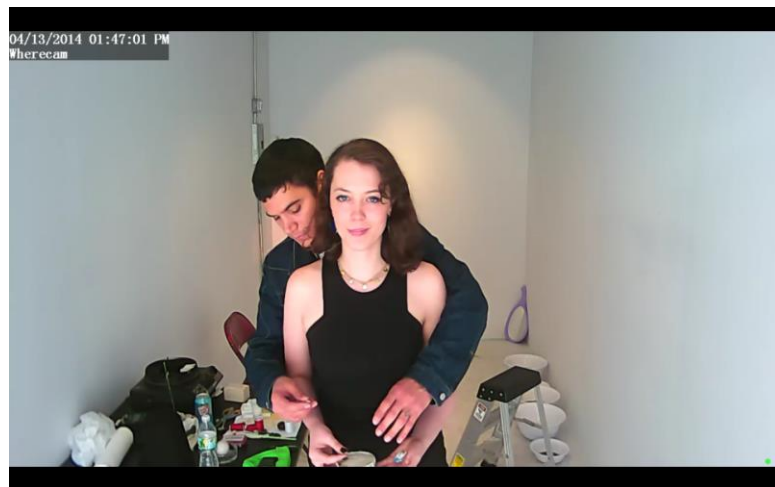
We liked how Benenson's project refused to resolve itself around a single mode of exhibition. One could see Hitchcock in person at the gallery, or see Gordon on our web site, but the "location" of the work—and of the curators staging it—remained elusive. Physical and informational distribution were co-dependent but incoherent.

Where 2 is an analogy for the structure of Where and our place as actors within it: the shipping container and the work it houses is just an anchor for a larger project of looking at the exhibition format as part of a network of informational strategies. Our name then becomes a nod to an ambiguous position in the distribution systems of art: un-glamorously tucked under the M train in Brooklyn, miles from Chelsea galleries, our activities inside our corrugated black box are far more easily accessed through the 24-7 streaming webcam that is a central part of our infrastructure. We contend that the notion of the "virtual" is not so much about the non-physical as it is about discrete, standardized, and precisely timed forms of distribution.



For *Where 2*, Where collaborated with curator A. E. Benenson on a recursive appropriation of Douglas Gordon's durational video *24 Hour Psycho*. Hitchcock's *Psycho* screened once daily in the gallery, and the footage streamed via webcam to the gallery's website at Gordon's prescribed speed of 2 frames per second to create a continuous, unauthorized digital version of *24 Hour Psycho*.

Where 4 was a three-month unfolding investigation into the generative possibilities of "constraint." Artist Brock Enright held one-on-one "instructional encounters" with willing volunteers inside the container.





Where 5 involved an open invitation, distributed in online announcements and flyers: the lockbox code and address of the gallery, which was open to anyone, for anything, for one month.

Webcam still from *Where 5*



"Eye in the Sky Hold'em": Artist Melissa Brown transformed *Where* into a poker lounge, with the webcam acting as an "eye in the sky," a portal for spies and accomplices, as players wagered their artwork among other forms of currency. The games were broadcast live, as were the players' phone numbers, encouraging the help from remote, anonymous accomplices.

Notes

1. The definitive resource for shipping container history is *The Box* by Mark Levinson. This comprehensive history includes not only McLean's contributions, but military R&D and competing corporations that led to the rise of global freight. Mark Levinson, *The Box: How The Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).
2. Claude E. Shannon, "A Mathematical Theory of Communication," *Bell System Technical Journal* 27, no. 3 and no. 4 (July and Oct. 1948): 379–423 and 623–56.
3. Claude E. Shannon, "Communication Theory of Secrecy Systems," *Bell System Technical Journal* 28, no. 4 (October 1949): 656–715.
4. JIT was popularized by Toyota in the mid-70s; for a coherent explanation of the rise of "lean manufacture" in automobile manufacture, and a comparison between it and earlier, Fordist "mass production" strategies, see: James P. Womack, Daniel T. Jones, and Daniel Roos, *The Machine That Changed the World*, 2nd ed. (New York: Free Press, 2007).
5. While not the focus of this paper, containerization instantiated a massive labor displacement of dockworkers and ship crews by automated loading cranes. Levinson details this, and the dismantling of labor unions, entailed by the shift to mechanization. Levinson, *The Box*.

Lucy Hunter is a writer and curator based in Brooklyn, NY. She is a Ph.D. student in the History of Art at Yale University, where she researches historical intersections of data, images, and machines in the late-19th through mid-20th centuries. Her work has appeared in the *Brooklyn Rail*, *Interventions*, and *Periscope*. She co-directs Where, a shipping container and publishing platform in Brooklyn.
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R. Lyon received an MFA from Columbia University in 2012, where he was awarded the Jacob K. Javits Scholarship. His performance and installation-based works question the conditions of viewing and subjectivity in the digital age. Lyon's works have been exhibited internationally at the Goethe-Institut, Mountain Fold, and Kunsthall Hasselt in Belgium, and he has performed at such venues as the CTM in Berlin, Performa 13 in New York, Netmage in Italy, and ISEA 2011. He co-directs Where, a shipping container, publishing platform, and think tank in Brooklyn.
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Where is a semi-public, high-security security shipping container and publishing project in Brooklyn, New York. It is grounded in the assertion that art manifests the same patterns, behaviors, and properties present in all complex informational systems. We believe that the mechanisms identified as producing growth and complexity in these systems are directly applicable to the field of artistic production. *Where* uses the exhibition format as a site for researching these operations.

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