

G A S W O R K S

Zach Blas
Contra-Internet

21 September to 10 December 2017

Gasworks presents *Contra-Internet*, a major new commission and the first institutional solo exhibition by London-based artist Zach Blas. The exhibition is commissioned by Gasworks; Art in General, New York; and MU, Eindhoven; and is produced by Gasworks.

Contra-Internet at Gasworks marks the premiere of *Jubilee 2033*, a queer science fiction film installation that includes live action, CGI animation, blown glass sculptures and a single edition publication titled *The End of the Internet (As We Knew It)*. Framed by existing works in animation, moving image and vinyl text, the exhibition confronts the growing hegemony of the internet.

A 'neutral' network during the 1980s and 90s, the internet is fast becoming the principle instrument of accelerated capitalism, surveillance and control: an infrastructure that it is increasingly difficult to imagine an outside of or alternative to. Counter to this, *Contra-Internet* appropriates queer and feminist approaches to technology and science fiction to reanimate the network's more progressive past and speculate about forms of resistance to the internet of the present and near future.

Roughly based on the opening sequence of British filmmaker Derek Jarman's seminal 1978 queer punk film *Jubilee*, Blas's *Jubilee 2033* (2017), starring Susanne Sachsse and Cassils, is set in the Silicon Valley of 2033. Known as the Silicon Zone, it is the imagined future of novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand's early thought, as advanced in her novels *The Fountainhead* (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957). Following decades of deregulation, the internet has become an omnipotent 'internet of things', defined by the principles of self-interest and laissez-faire that underpin Rand's philosophy of Objectivism.

This has given rise to an oppressive, neo-neoliberal, supra-state monopoly that polices the internet, which is indistinguishable from the world as everything falls apart. Flames encircle ransacked office buildings, riots abound, and the corpses of dead techies litter the streets. In the shadows of a vacant office building, however, the so-called anti-campus rises up. Led by their AI prophet Nootropix, eager students are taught history, politics, art and counter-infrastructure after the collapse of the internet. It is a philosophy against the legacy of Rand: contra-objectivism, contra-Californian ideology, contra-sexual, contra-internet.

In addition to this commission, existing works consider the present state of the internet, showing that the totalitarian network of *Jubilee 2033* has in many ways already begun. A critical definition of the internet written by the artist is installed as vinyl lettering in a web-safe font; while *Totality Studies* (2015) comprises an animated .gif that show 3D globes with stock images as their skins. These spinning icons demonstrate that recent popular imagery of the internet always seems to convey the same message: that it's big, and it's everywhere.

Resisting these and other visions of internet supremacy, three short, performative videos titled *Inversion Practices* (2015–16) utilise various conceptual-technical tactics to abandon and

subvert the internet. These include strategies as diverse as erasing images of social media posts in Adobe Photoshop; plagiarising queer and radical economic theory to produce an anti-internet manifesto; and working with animators to model paranodal space (the space that exists in-between the various nodes of a network) as a way to visualise and think through what networks frustrate, obstruct or occlude as they are constituted.

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Contra-Internet is a project of Creative Capital, generously supported by Arts Council England; Cockayne–Grants for the Arts and the London Community Foundation; Thor Perplies; and Gasworks' Exhibition Programme Supporter 2017-18, Catherine Petitgas.

The exhibition will be presented at Art in General, New York from January to March 2018 and at MU, Eindhoven from May to July 2018.

Zach Blas is an artist and writer whose practice confronts technologies of surveillance, security, and control. He is currently a Lecturer in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London and has lectured and exhibited internationally, recently at IMA Brisbane, the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and ICA Singapore.

Related Events

Lecture Performance: *Metric Mysticism*

Wednesday, October 18, 7pm

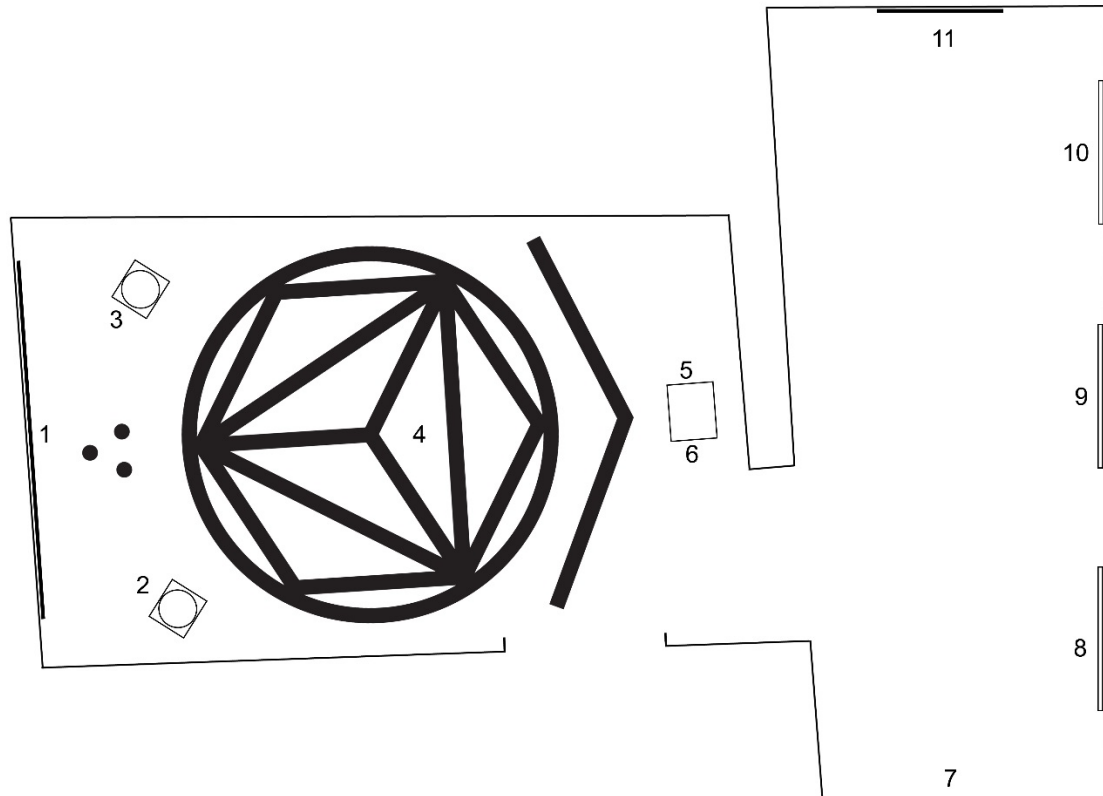
In this lecture performance, Zach Blas gazes into the crystal balls of Silicon Valley and charts the transmutation of big data into a magical substance that can predict – and police – the future.

Symposium: *The Only Path to Tomorrow*

Saturday, November 25, 11am–6pm

Gasworks presents *The Only Path to Tomorrow*, a symposium convened by Zach Blas. Artists and scholars Ramon Amaro, Erika Balsom, Matthew Fuller, Elena Gorfinkel, Lawrence Lek, Ana Teixeira Pinto and Susanne Sachsse will discuss *Contra-Internet* in relation to their own research, ranging from smart drug trends to contemporary manifestations of Ayn Rand's philosophy of objectivism; from futures of artificial intelligence to transparent architecture in Silicon Valley; from modes of minoritarian techno-resistance to aesthetic strategies in queer cinema. Nootropics will be served.

All events are free to attend, no booking required. Seats will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.



List of Works

1. *Jubilee 2033*, 2017. Single-channel video, colour with sound, 17:10 min.
2. *Palantir: Killed Internet*, 2017. Glass globe, plinth, LED light.
3. *Palantir: Disappeared Internet*, 2017. Glass globe, plinth, LED light.
4. *The Seal of the Absolute*, 2017. Photo luminescent vinyl.
5. *The End of the Internet (As We Knew It)*, 2017. Single edition publication.
6. *shew stone (polycrystalline silicon)*, 2017. Silicon piece.
7. *Totality Study #1: Internet, a definition*, 2015. Photo luminescent vinyl.
8. *Inversion Practice #3: Modeling Paranodal Space*, 2016. Single-channel video, colour with sound, 03:02 min.
9. *Inversion Practice #2: Social Media Exodus (Call and Response)*, 2015. Single-channel video, colour with sound, 03:20 min.
10. *Inversion Practice #1: Constituting an Outside (Utopian Plagiarism)*, 2015. Single-channel video, colour with sound, 05:57 min.
11. *Totality Study #2: Internet, a .gif*, 2015. Gif animation.

JUBILEE 2033 (2017)

Commissioned by Gasworks; Art in General, New York; and MU, Eindhoven

Cast (in order of appearance):

Ayn Rand, played by Susanne Sachsse

Alan Greenspan, a member of The Collective, played by Dany Naierman

Joan Mitchell, a member of The Collective, played by Lindsay Hicks

Azuma, the Artificial Intelligence, played by Fusako Shiotani

The Art Professor, played by Raquel Gutiérrez

Nootropix, played by Cassils

Writer and Director: Zach Blas

Gaffer: Blake Farmer

Producer: Ali Roche

Grip: Andrew Joffe

Producer: Tiffany L. Gray, Extra Credit Studios

Swing: Jim Gillespie

Co-Producer: Tara De Maro, Extra Credit Studios

Sound Recording Engineers: Victoria Carrillo, Ada Douglas, and Fred Oliveira, Voxx Studios

Director of Photography: Alison Kelly

Book Design: Leaky Studio

Editor: Amy Von Harrington

Book Fabrication: Bookworks

Associate Producers: Marcela Coto, John Palmer, and Martabel Wasserman

Globe Etching Design: Scott Kepford and Solveig Suess

Production Designers: Alexah Acuna and Kevin Gallo

Globe Fabrication: Silkwood Glass

Costume Designer: Lauren Warkentien

Hair and Makeup Artist: Catherine Alfonso

First Assistant Director: Sadé Clacken Joseph

Hair and Makeup Artist for Cassils: Mikayla Gottlieb

First Assistant Camera: Mike Mast

Assistant Hair and Makeup Artist for Cassils: Eliza Baron

Second Assistant Camera: Rob Ford

Choreographer: Dany Naierman

Second Unit Camera Operator: Jessica Gallegos

Unit Production Manager: Rachel Wilson

Production Assistants: Savannah Bleu, Zak Frank, and Chaz Eden

Sound Designer and Assistant Sound Editor: Benjamin Hurd

Visual Effects Supervisor: Justin Shell

Assistant Editor: Cameron Dunbar

Visual Effects: Harry Sanderson and Daniel Swan

Assistant Producer: Jaclyn Amor, Extra Credit Studios

Character Modeler and Rigger for Azuma: Mikkel Aabenhuus Sørensen

Voice Coach for Fusako Shiotani: Yuki Matsuzaki

Supervising Sound Editor: Tom Sedgwick

Caterer: Nick Lorenz

Background Actors (in order of appearance):

Captured Techies, played by:

Andrew Culp
Amy von Harrington
Eva Della Lana
Joshua Wagner

The Anti-Campus groupies, played by:

Alexah Acuna
Kevin Gallo
Christopher Joseph Lee
Victoria Lobo
Maria Noble
Martabel Wasserman

Shot on location in Burbank, Malibu, Moffett Field, San Jose, and Sun Valley, California

Contra-Internet Inversion Practice #3: Modeling Paranodal Space (2016)

Commissioned by Art in General, New York

3D modelling and animation: Adam Sinclair

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