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WAR OF THE MOON

A Thesis Presented

by

BIBIANA "QUIXUPÉR" MEDKOVA

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

September 2020

Department of Art

WAR OF THE MOON

A Thesis Presented

by

BIBIANA "QUIXUPÉR" MED

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DEDICATION

This work is created in hopes of improving human presence in the Universe

and its inhabitants.

To grandma Anna for teaching me to be both strong and humble.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the department staff, June, Mikael, Bob, Dan, Lisa and Sandy for all their work. To my health sages Jack, Liz and Josh for keeping me running. To my friends, colleagues and previous faculty for help with applications to graduate school: Leah DeVun, Kris Grey, Jill Casid, Abby Robinson, and Sean McDevitt.

My friends and peers for being there during the lows and the highs: Darius, Jason, Mary, Audrey, Brendan, Allan, Dave, Achaetey and Onu — it would have been near-impossible without you.

And, to my family for their support of an art career against their better judgment.

Last but certainly not least, thank you to my committee for their endless patience and work during this difficult year. For their input and guidance on doctoral applications, assuring a successful transition from UMass and continuation of this project.

🙏🙏🙏

ABSTRACT

WAR OF THE MOON

SEPTEMBER 2020

BIBIANA "QUIXUPÉR" MED (FORMERLY MEDKOVÁ): B.F.A., PRATT INSTITUTE

M.F.A. UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Juana Valdes

Space, in the post-World War context, was the new frontier of 'global' dominion. Space Race of the 1950s was a competition to signal technological capability and military strength[2]. The objective of *War of the Moon* is to unpack the motivation for Moon race in 1950s. What did countries have to gain politically, economically, socially and technologically by conquering space and landing on the moon. At what cost? Who financed it, and where did the labor, land, and raw materials sourced come from. And how it was used to accomplish said landing. Space security is a massive aspect of all current space programs, but this is not a new feature, in fact its beginnings are in the Cold War era. The second objective of this thesis and exhibition is to understand through rhetoric analysis the language of "defense" as an 'offensive' strategy.

The artwork uses computer technologies to interrogate media and archives mimicking the state's methods to suppress information. The work examines through archives the erasure of minority groups from cultural depositories, or archives, thereby writing them out of history as the meta themes of exploration of space, and deliberate and chronicled. It is important that this work is not viewed as reactionary, but engaged in a direct dialogue: these pieces exist within the public sphere, in exhibition and projection spaces vetted by governmental, private and non-profit agencies. What is required of the work is to be subversive — to be flexible, to remain able to move freely anywhere and everywhere, and to cross barriers when necessary.

Keywords: spectacle, post-truth, disinformation, nationalism, technology, documentary,

digital humanities, archives, interdisciplinary, new technologies, institutional critique, sound art, cinema, video art, installation, internet, Czechoslovakia, USA, Moon, trans, cultural artifact, media, truth, fake news, censorship, 1989, Space Race, 2019

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"Space is a war fighting domain…"[3]

- Donald Trump
(while acting as the President of the United States of America)

A. Past Histories

Figure 01: *_0147* film still from series *Historie Redukt*, 6'11", 1080p video (silent), , mini-projector, steel chain, pressed wood, wall, c-stand, dimensions variable, 2019

When the Berlin Wall collapsed in 1989 and with it the communist satellite empire of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the world seemed to have a bright future of interconnectedness, cooperation, open trade, and a general shift towards democracy. The year 2019 marks the thirty year anniversary of a new world without a Cold War, yet, political and economic divisions between the former-West and former-East persist, in addition to problematics caused by the colonial era. Instead of celebrating our diversity and working in unison, we are facing a global present and future within one super-power language domination, one super-power military dictatorship, and a small handful of colonial power economic domination. We are also in the middle of a political shift towards hate, separation and border shutdown, particularly in United States and many countries of the European Union.

Figure 02: Havel Na Hrad (Havel to the Castle) movement, Prague 1989. Photo by: ČTK.

B. Personal history

When the Cold War ended in 1989, my generation was "promised" a better future, a de-segregated world in which geo-political borders bore no effect on individual economies and humanity. Thirty years later, the economic and political biases against the former-East continue. United States of America, along with China and Russia, continues to grow its military industrial complex despite massive international debt. In former Czechoslovakia (ČSSR), during the turmoil of post-World War II, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa (KSČ)) seized power in the 1948 Czechoslovak coup d'état and established a one-party state allied with the Soviet Union. Nationalization of all private enterprises followed. Nationalization of property, which included even livestock of individual families, redistributed wealth and labor force. What nationalization meant in practice, was not a re-distribution of wealth to all, instead access to wealth and management of wealth had restricted access which required membership in KSČ. Consequently, majority of the population did not have access to

well paying positions. In other words, the actions of KSČ delegated those "not with them" to abject-hood. KSČ also isolated ČSSR from the rest of the world, both spatiotemporally and virtually: borders on all sides were closed[4] which stalemated intellectual and cultural exchange. Seizure of all media channels ensured state oversight of all information; those against state ideology were arrested and publicly shamed, or worse. Thus, freedom of press was suppressed[5].

In a seminal book *The Power of the Powerless*, Václav Havel reflects on the authoritarian regime of Czechoslovak Socialist Republic:

"We usually associate the term [dictatorship] with the notion of a small group of people who take over the government of a given country by force: their power is wielded openly, using the direct instruments of power at their disposal, and they are easily distinguished socially from the majority over whom they rule. One of the essential aspects of this traditional or classical notion of dictatorship is the assumption that it is temporary, ephemeral, lacking historical roots. Its existence seems to be bound up with the lives of those who established it. It is usually local in extent and significance, and regardless of the ideology it utilizes to grant itself legitimacy, its power derives ultimately from the numbers and the armed might of its soldiers and police. […]

In the first place, our system is not limited in a local, geographical sense; rather it holds sway over a huge power bloc controlled by one of the two superpowers. And although it quite naturally exhibits a number of local and historical variations, the range of the variations is fundamentally circumscribed by a single, unifying framework through the power bloc. […] Each country has been completely penetrated by a network of manipulatory instruments controlled by the superpower centre and totally subordinated to its interests. […] That circumstance endows the system with an unprecedented degree of external stability."[6]

C. Contemporary histories

Recent developments in United States of America (USA) are signaling a renewed interest in "American leadership in Space"[7]. This signaling has turned into concrete actions: for one, the National Space Council has been resurrected after twenty-five years, and its new Chair is Vice President Mike Pence. This year, 2020, Congress approved the biggest budget in the history of NASA: $25 billion to support its new mission — the Space Policy Directives. There are four Space Policy Directives, and they were outlined by Mike Pence, Vice President of USA and Chair of National Space Council[8]: *Moon to Mars* mission for 2024, regulation of space with priority access for USA private sector, global traffic management of airspace to the advantage of United States military and private sector, and increased security and defense of space.

D. Current issues

Current actions of American political leaders are displaying strong elements of authoritative use of political power[9]. It is something not to be taken lightly — history has proven that some of the harshest dictatorships emerged on the backs of public support[10]. Present political situation of the United States is mirroring the situation of 1950s ČSSR closer by the day: Executive Order 13769, also known as Muslim Ban 2017, and Proclamation 10014, also known as Suspension of Entry of Immigrants Who Present a Risk to the United States Labor Market. Following the 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak 2020 are most recent additions to a series of restrictions on cultural and intellectual exchange: southern border with Mexico is closed for non-American nationals and a physical barrier, the Border Wall System, is being expanded; federal troops are being deployed domestically against peaceful civilians; and freedom of press has been under so many escalating attacks in the recent years converting it into a world of misinformation, fake news, and police violence against members of the press. Similar to what took place in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the leadership of USA is using an existing network of what Havel called 'manipulatory instruments' to deepen its reach, in an effort to completely subordinate the interests of American public to the leadership's interests.

II. FRAMEWORKS

A. Media

In the 1950s, the government of United States of America used propaganda strategies to sway public opinion and sanction national and international state actions with the public's support. Despite American rhetoric of inclusivity and equal opportunity, the real objective of American international policy is neither inclusivity nor equality.

The US Government relayed on the power of the movie media, advertising, and cultural patronage to promote its ideologies of America as a superpower. Hollywood films create this ideological framework for the population domestically and through distribution networks also globally[11]. "The CIA may also be seen as an important component of the institutional armory of both US "National" self-defense as well as of the promotion of "national" interest abroad, often covertly through practices of espionage and analysis, as well as by means of military, political, and propagandistic subversion of non-US regimes."[12]

B. Spectacle

Propaganda, such as that of autocratic states, is subtle and ever-present. Spectacle, however, is not subtle, instead it is overwhelming and obvious; it may be ever-present but works best in brief encounters. There are many types of spectacles: military parades, pageants, sports (e.g. Spartakiada, Super Bowl), Times Square, coronation of a monarch/ swearing in of presidents, and many others that take place in different strata's of society. Spectacle works as a tool of diverting citizens' attention to the interests of the state.

a) Spectacle in the Moon Race

Sputnik's success was a spectacle and impacted public opinion[13] on a global scale. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was created in 1958 out of "the need

for a civilian agency to carry out peaceful and scientific missions."[14] It also functions as a public

opinion piece. Its initial staff was transfered from U.S. Army, Air Force, and Navy personnel

that just shifted over:

> "creating a civilian agency was an American Cold War solution to the
>
> organizational, but also the political, challenges of the rapidly escalating race.
>
> The Sputniks had demonstrated the value of space achievements for garnering
>
> prestige […] The breakup of the European colonial empires […] was an important
>
> context. New nations were forming every year, and nationalist revolutionary
>
> movements often looked to the USSR and China as models for development.
>
> Soviet space accomplishments were a powerful advertisement for the alleged
>
> superiority of socialism over capitalism. […] A civilian and scientific space
>
> agency, with international cooperation written into its founding legislation, would
>
> project a positive American image to allies in Western Europe and elsewhere.
>
> By creating NASA, the United States also effectively invented the category
>
> of civilian space activity, as heretofore only the armed services possessed the
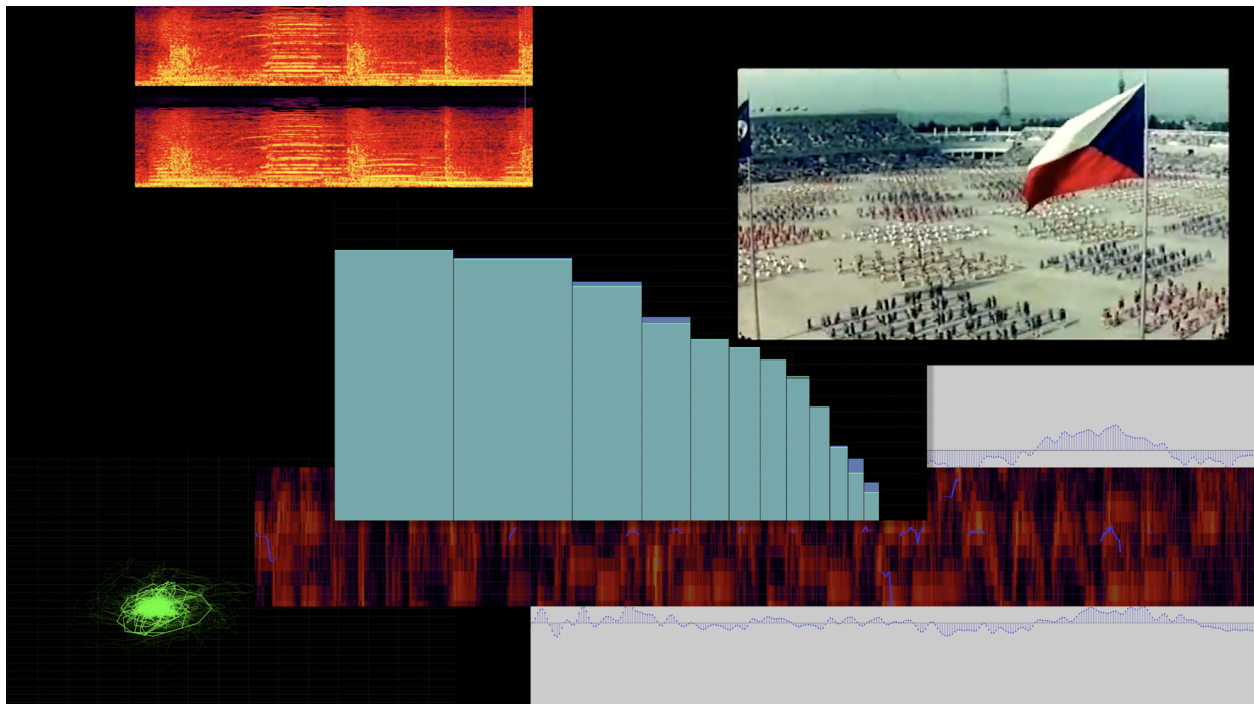
Figure 03: *Daddy Long Legs (Astaire in Peace Corps),* 5'13", 4K video with stereo sound, dimensions variable, 2019.

technologies that made spaceflight possible."[15]

NASA "misled many to think that it ran "the" US space program[16]. In reality, three simultaneous programs were funded: 1) NASA-controlled civilian effort, 2) US Air Force-dominated military projects (reconnaissance, communications, navigation, military satellite systems), 3) intelligence projects, closely tied to be organizationally distinct from military efforts, super-secret, Air Force-CIA collaboration[17]. NASA worked closely with Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and military services "but hid much of that collaboration behind a wall of classification to protect its image as peaceful"[18]. The formation of NASA performed as a humanitarian, scientific and social front and a public opinion diversion. The space narrative captured public attention enough that John Fitzgerald Kennedy ran his presidential platform on the space deficit[19].

While in Soviet Union space development was cloaked by secrecy, it was effectively a military agency and never felt the need to create a civilian agency as a front[20]. In USSR it was "rocket and space industry" who fought for favors from "military industrial complex and party leadership"[21].

"The forces of war and international competition repeatedly accelerated rocket and space technology development."[22] NASA faced massive budget cuts in the 1970s due to riots, Vietnam war and lack of popular opinion support, so it partnered with Department of Defense (DOD) on secret military missions[23]. The massive budget increases and resulting infrastructure build outs in USA were a result of international rivalry.

b) Spectacle of American military heroes at home

In the United States, death and warfare injury and disability is treated with drama, veiled under the restrained and official ceremony of military funeral and presentation of the flag to the family. The responsibility for this death, injury and disability is immediately passed from the state onto the populace, and is portrayed as a national responsibility. In this context national

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refers to the taxpayers burden; in the handing over of the folded flag national loss in this instance refers to the collective suffering and it is implied that the state is mourning with the individuals and their collective. This subversive treatment of war veterans, the elevated status of uniformed employees of the state (fire fighters, police men), is a drawn out emotional, heart-wrenching drama that mobilizes the population so effectively, that the average citizen is as invested in the military war machine as much as the state is. This is one of the biggest differences between American and totalitarian harnessing of military. The indirect representation of military as injured and after combat, not in action and glory, provides visibility for the war effort. This visibilitz when combined with empathy implicates the citizens. The humanitarian twist secures public support for the war effort, and enables the state to pass legislature and to ratify, to some extent, allocations in national budget.

c) Rhetoric of "defense" for "offensive" purposes

In 2002 the National Security Strategy of the United States of America (NSS) formalized the George W. Bush administration's doctrine for responding to terrorists and their state sponsors. The report said, "[W]e will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists."[24] Carol Winkman argues that "preemption" offers an opportunity for rhetoric scholars to reexamine the war rhetoric[25]. "War rhetoric is a powerful resource for presidents wishing to move public opinion."[26] More recently Vice President Mike Pence included 'security' and 'defense' in the Space Policy Directives given to NASA, and by President Donald Trump to the United States Space Force (USSF)[27]. Through the continued use of this rhetoric, military 'offensive' is now consistently applied to issues of *space*.

C. Post-Photography

a) Microscopes and scanners - thinking beyond traditional cameras

Heather Dewey-Herzog speaks of the new photographic "image [as] a computational product, the outcome of an algorithmic process."[28] "As daily life becomes increasingly

abstracted, virtual, informatics and algorithmic, representation begins to lose its viability. We live in a world of images but the character of those images has morphed into an "immersive economy"[29].

My work embraces "the power of the image and its increasingly computational nature"[30]. Rather than generating new imagery, I use machines to remix existing visuals pulled from archives, such as the internet; working this way generates new categories of thought and agency. As Dewey-Herzog writes: "Photography today […is] an immersive economy that offers an entirely new way to inhabit materiality and its relation to bodies, machines and brains. Photography is the visual figuration of a new layer of consciousness - in which new relationships to space and time, and therefore new categories of thought, play, art, and agency are emerging…. [It is a] wave, characterized as a continuous process of re-shaping visual forms out of data."[31]

b) What 'Truth' in Documentary Photography?

Both street and journalistic documentary grew out of the "decisive moment" and are heavily entrenched in this. The decisive moment in itself is a form of abstraction and erasure, although on the surface it looks as if it is truthful, accurate, honest, and without agenda. News articles are illustrated by action shots: chases, burglaries, violent protests, bodies in pain / suffering, someone falling during an insurgency, et cetera[32]. During the 20th century black &

Figure 04: "The U.S. Space Force is a military service that organizes, trains, and equips space forces in order to protect U.S. and allied interests in space."

white photojournalism was favored, partly because black & white had more latitude in fast paced environments, it was cheaper, and newspapers printed monochromatically to conserve costs. But black & white also serves as a dissociative strategy, a removal and interpretation of reality with a heavy focus on narrative and emotional content. Wide angle lenses provided visual distortion; street photography-like framing inserted the notion that the photographer was on the move, in motion with the action and the victim, it also provided dynamic diagonals which accentuated the notions of chaos and disorder. The 21st century version has mostly adopted low-resolution imagining, simulating security camera information, reconnaissance imagery, or local amateur snapshots, all adding added authenticity, illusions of truth and live transmission from location.

Color has been used in two prevalent ways: highly saturated color prevalent in National Geographic and British Broadcast Corporation (BBC) productions serves as an embellishment, it poses as 'accurate' in contrast to black-and-white treatment but often becomes highly stylized and often inaccurate. The other color strategy is congruent with low-resolution, and it is desaturated color. Low resolution chips are unable to capture wide gamuts of color information, and we don't seem to question the validity of noisy security camera footage, the police car dash-

Figure 05: *Data (short) 4K*, 4'59", 4K video (silent), 2018.

cam, or cheap cellphone resolution imagery. In this case, the inaccurate colors caused by low light or cheap sensor deficiencies mask as another truth: the non-stylized color truth that's still more accurate than black-and-white. This parameter of truth is closely linked to an authority bestowed upon the capture device: a security camera, a police car dash cam, a bystander witness mobile device recording: these are non-professional images, recorded happenstance, through proximity. Whereas the high resolution, saturated professionally captured images of National Geographic and BBC are more in lineage with early anthropological photography, obsessed with detail and performed in high resolution on glass plates, images with the latest technology pack the most pixel and operator skill. The low resolution, desaturated, amateur imagery retains its authenticity precisely because it is akin to the every-day-user's readily available camera. The only authority bestowed on the images is their spatio-temporal "at the right place at the right time" moment. The decisive moment still permeates in still imagery, whereas live in-moment transmission from location transports the viewer into an ever-present moment, and ever-present

Figure 06: *Cultural Artifacts x SEM (coin from Czechoslovak Socialist Republic 1975.005, magnified 325x; easter egg from Slovacko region.030, magnified 400x; paper "Bon" 1983.020, magnified 1,000x)*, 2'46", 1080p video (silent), metallic prints, objects and video, 2018-9

journalistic presence, whether it be in far flung places with political unrest or natural disaster next state over, the news transmission is ever present, all knowing, and always on.

Some years back I was presenting my work at a photo conference, this was a time when I still thought that my version of documentary photography was publishable by news agencies. The meeting was with a famous Polish photographer who cut his chops in the Yugoslav wars and has maintained a steady, award winning reportage career ever since. Looking over his oeuvre was like looking into a book of horror, atrocity and pain. A very typical photojournalism career, underscored by a few incidents with post-traumatic stress disorder. After viewing my portfolio of interiors he told me this work was not documentary form and that I "should go photograph….I don't know…purses or something." There were two main ingredients that my work lacked: *figure* (human preferred) and *action* (the more active the better). Action is actually the most important component, because it expedites the viewer's temporal understanding of the events depicted and sways emotional response into high alert. Even essay photographers such as Larry Clark and Eugene Richards rely on busy moving frames of figures to create a highly charged emotional atmosphere. Documentary photography creates anxiety and unrest, in contrast to spectacle which functions like a pacifier - serene and content/satisfied. According to Martha Rosler, through charity documentary photography becomes a tool of capitalism and free market economics, by preserving and enabling the wealthy class. So documentary photography as tool of "consciousness" and "empathy", intrinsically antithetical to spectacle - itself a tool of entertainment and forgetting. Forgetting through seduction. As Rosler calls it "victim photography" in her 1981 essay *In, around, and afterthoughts*, in which Rosler describes the documentary "spectacle of families in poverty" - which is similar to the spectacle of genocide and war casualties that dominates photojournalism.

III. EXHIBITION AND ITS COMPONENTS

A. Exhibition Proposal

The exhibition *War of the Moon* is a multi-platform experience that bridges physical installation (three dimensional visuals and three-dimensional sound) with internet space. It was scheduled at Hampden Gallery in Amherst, Massachusetts, for April 21-26th, 2020, with an accompanying performance *'We're Going!' Or, how to open source teleportation*, on Wednesday April 22nd 7.30 - 8.30pm. *War of the Moon* is a cluster of interrelated works that bridge the audience's experience of a physical installation (utilizing new media, particularly projected video, immersive sound and fabricated objects) with an internet-based work experienced on smart devices. The accompanying live performance activates the largest artwork, *Keep A Lid On It*, and exists both in the physical gallery realm as well as the immaterial internet realm. *War of the Moon* stimulates the audience through use of scale, video, sound, and tactile experience, and by inviting the audience to venture and seek additional work on the internet through the use of their mobile devices. A mobile device will be available on site with instructions for public use.

The exhibition did not take place as scheduled due to Covid-19 global pandemic[33]. A series of decisions were made in wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, and because so much of the work relied on physical and auditory experience in space, combined with the impossibility of redesigning work from 11,016 cu.ft. (312 m³) of volume into a palm sized image in an Instagram feed, the exhibition was put on hold until an appropriate venue is available. The research and plans of the project have been converted into an exhibition proposal and a score. As it stands at the time of writing, the exhibition will never take place in the space that it was designed for; however, the works can be adapted to different spaces.

The 'original' exhibition site Hampden Gallery occupied 11,016 cu.ft. (312 m³) (*Fig. 09*) plus an exterior garden area of approximately 600 sq.ft (56m²) (*Fig. 10)*; the two spaces were mutually visible to each other through a wall of windows, 34 ft long x 12 ft high (10 m x 3.7 m). For the purposes of the performance, a section of the glass wall slides open enabling performers

Figure 07: Exhibition card - front, 2020.

an installation by Quixupér
~~Bibiana Med~~

@ Hampden Gallery
April 21 - 26, 2020 + ☁️

Performance🌅🧑‍🚀Wed 4/22 7-8.30p
we're going, or how to open source [relationships]

Opening 🧀Thu 4/23 5-7p

Hampden Gallery
131 Southwest Cir, Amherst, MA
Tue - Fri 1-6p & Sun 2-5p
facebook.com/HampdenGallery

#projection #sound #video #objects
#body #voice #technology
#dariustaylor #michelleerard

👾 bibiana.co
@bibianaartist

This program was made possible (in part) by a grant from the UMass Arts Council and ATC AUDIO VIDEO LIGHTING

Figure 08: Exhibition card - back, 2020.

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Figure 09: Hampden Gallery, interior.

Figure 10: Hampden Gallery, exterior 'garden' space.

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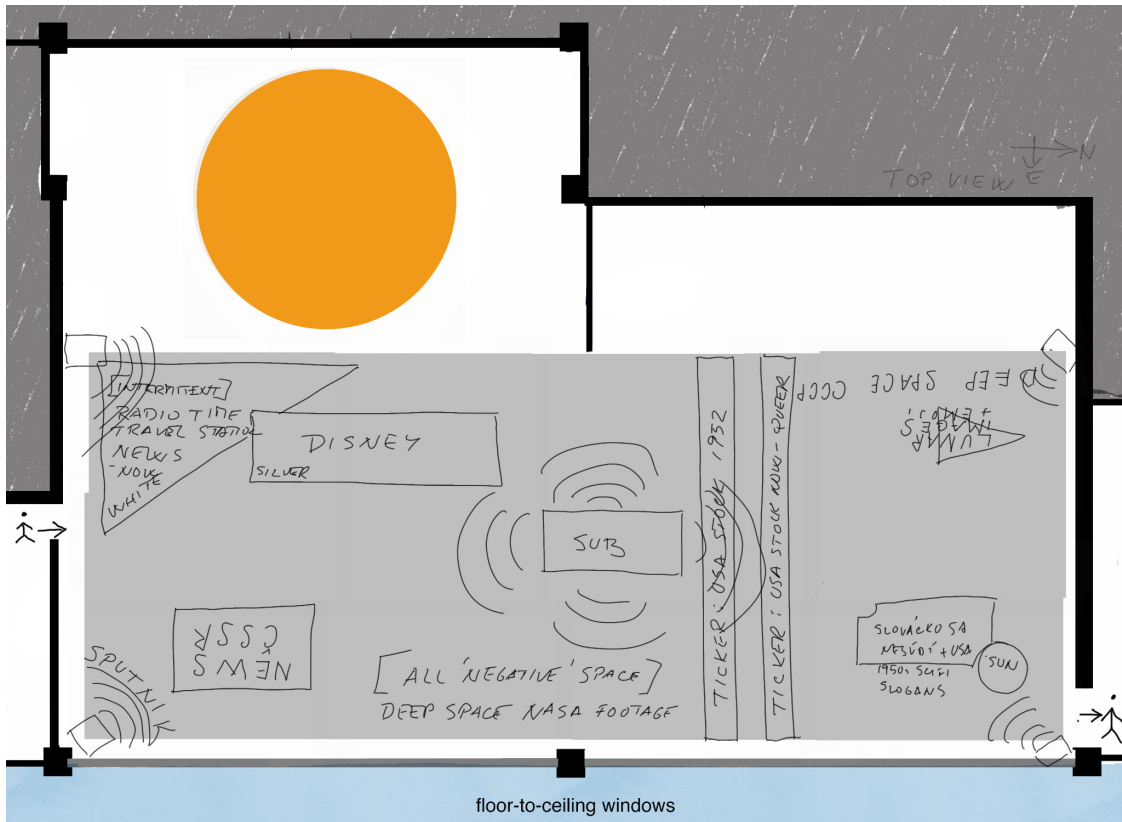
Figure 11: *War of the Moon* at Hampden Gallery, University of Massachusetts - Amherst, 2020. (top view)
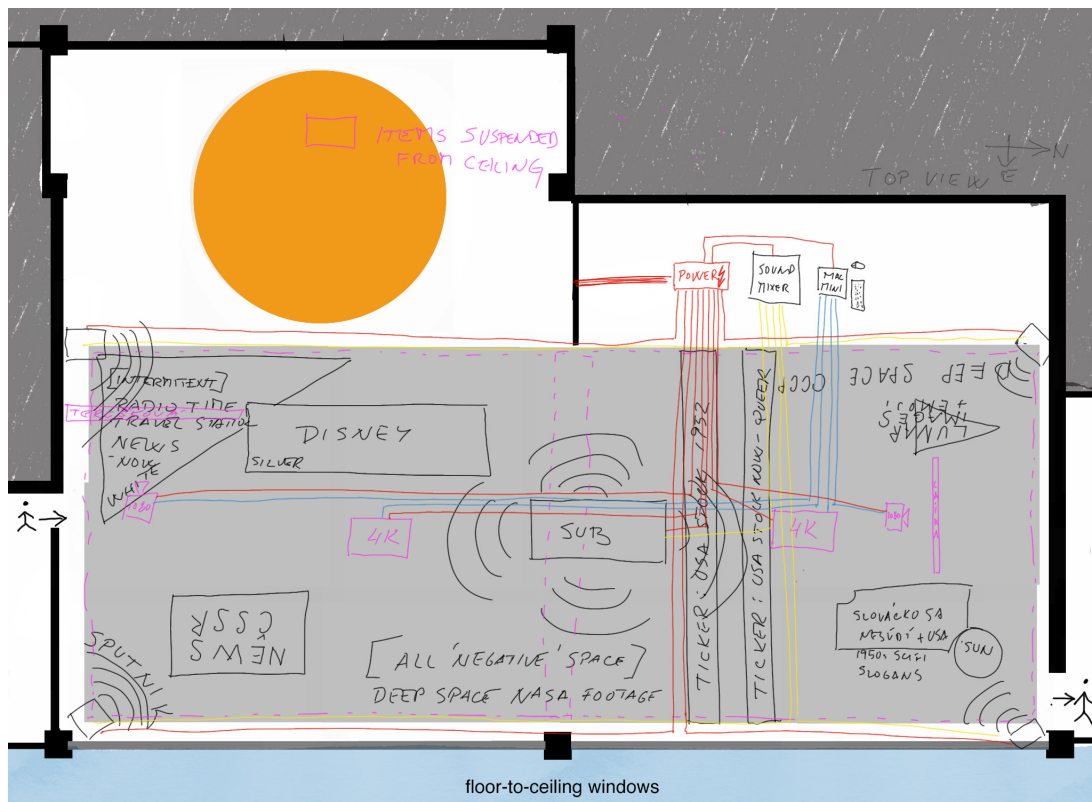
Figure 12: *War of the Moon* at Hampden Gallery, University of Massachusetts - Amherst, 2020. (top view including 'ceiling' infrastracture)
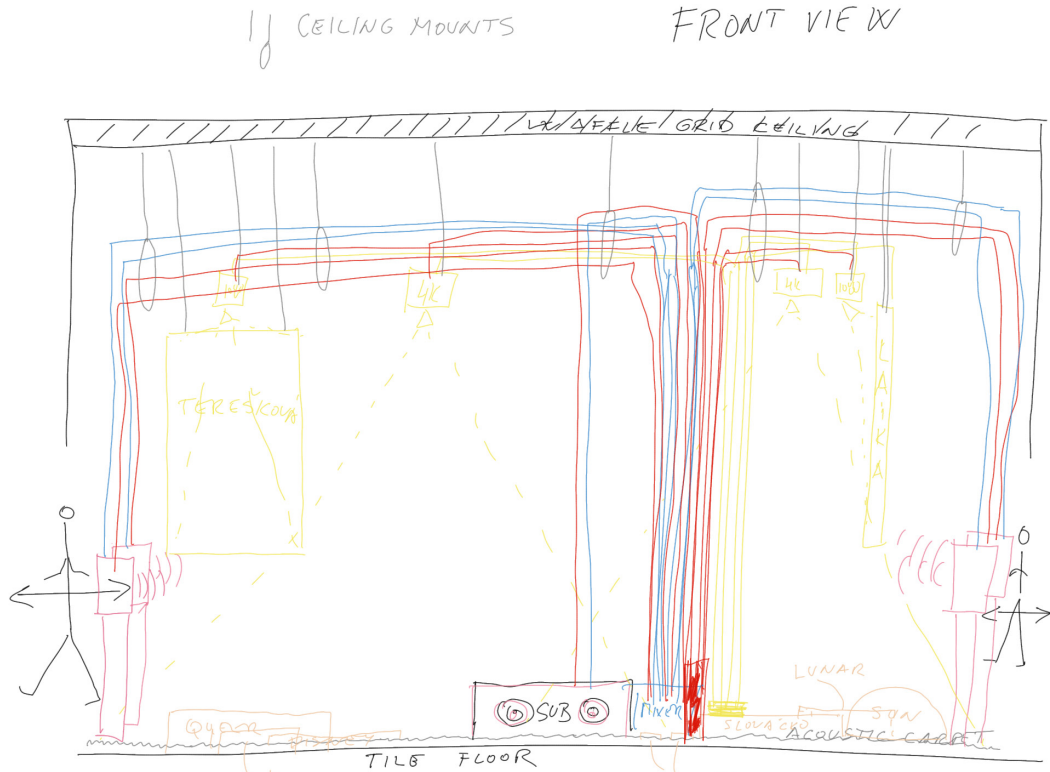
Figure 13: *War of the Moon* at Hampden Gallery, University of Massachusetts - Amherst, 2020. (front view)
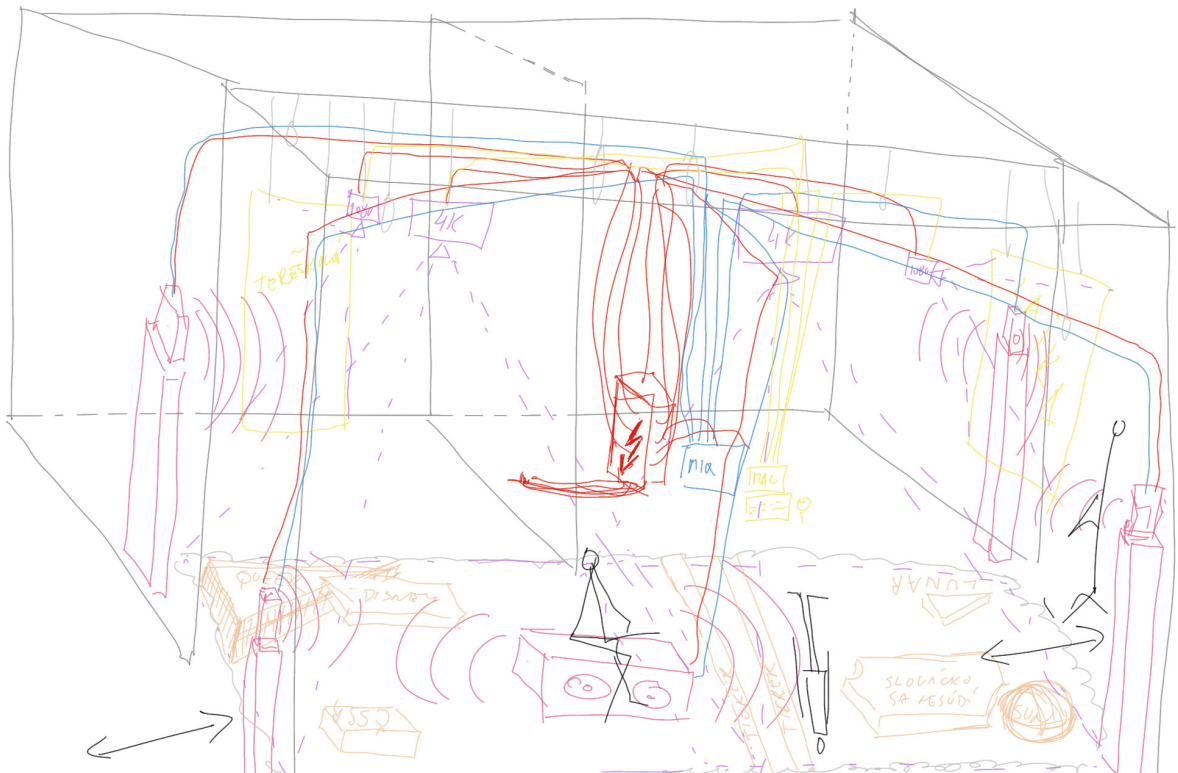
Figure 14: *War of the Moon* at Hampden Gallery, University of Massachusetts - Amherst, 2020. (3D view)

a wider 'stage' and audience a multitude of vantage points.

Two guiding principles hold these diverse and disjointed works together: one, the desire to create an installation which mimics our current integration and severe reliance on technology in our lives, and two, the notion of threes and triangles for creating rhythm. This second notion of threes and triangles: it is difficult to be caught in the binary of Cold War, small vs big country, Eastern Bloc vs The West, here and there, English vs another language, man vs woman, and so on. In terms of performance, three is the smallest complex number that generates more permutations, or possibilities. It also offers the performers time to rest since durational work is strenuous. A trio allows for asymmetries to emerge, such as having two performers in view ('on stage') and one out of view ('off stage'), and vice versa. The Cold War narrative is inherently binary, by introducing a third player, in this case a small country with its own interests between two bigger communities can offset the balance. In the work *Put A Lid On It* one of the players is removed — intentionally removing any imagery generated inside former USSR. Instead, imagery from ČSSR, virtually unknown to other audiences, is used as a seemingly harmless substitution.

B. Exhibition Artworks

a) The Spectacle Piece: *Keep A Lid On It*

Keep A Lid On It is the largest artwork in the exhibition space, both in terms of physical volume and complexity. The work comprises of four (4) channels of video (two channels 4K and two channels of 1080), and five (5) channels of sound (four speakers at audience height plus a low frequency club-sized sub-woofer[34]), two (2) fabric *info-flag*s hung in vertical position, 4 ft (1.2 m) dark blue linear LED lights suspended horizontally above the audience, nine (9) *lunar screen*s of various shapes placed on the *carpet*, and light gray felt-textured sound proofing material (*carpet*) on the floor delineating a perimeter for the work.

The technical hub (computer, mixer, video matrix) is visible, and all cabling for sound,

video and electricity is color coded. The technical hub is placed on the floor and the cabling is run vertically to ~8 ft (~2.4 m) above the floor, and then ran horizontally throughout the space to distribute as necessary; the LED lights are hung at the same height. The color cables hung above the audience create a 'ceiling' for the work, and the *carpet* creates a floor. These two elements encapsulate objects[35] and light rays and sound waves that fill the void, creating an immersive experience that is simultaneously tactile and invisible. Metaphorically, the work becomes an installation within an installation; free to be entered, interacted with, intercepted, and experienced in any way the audience feels comfortable: visitors are invited to sit on the *carpet*, walk between the *lunar screen*s, sit on the sub-woofer, or observe the work from the outside.

As audience members enter the gallery at the main entrance on the south end and continue to next gallery space (not part of this exhibition) on the north end, taking up a third of the gallery's exhibition volume[36] *Keep A Lid On It,* it is impossible to avoid. Intentionally leaving minimal space between the work and gallery-walls forces the audience to "enter" it: that is, step on a colored surface, navigate between objects, and bathe one's body in light which then obscures the projected content. Despite its overwhelming scale, the individual components are not as intimidating.

Entering the gallery from the south audience members see a large *info-flag[37]* hung on the opposing north side, near entrance to north gallery. The *info-flag*'s surface is shimmery on projection side and opaque on reverse to minimize light bleed. Staring the audience face-to-face is a mix of Laika (Лайка) images which demonstrated the enormous success the Soviet dog test flight had on the global consciousness, not only during the Cold War but all the way to the present. A series of stamps from every continent, press clippings, publicity images, and commemorative

Figure 15: Malawian commemorative stamps for Laika.

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media forms an endless stream of Soviet space dogs: Laika, Belka, Strelka, and Chernushka.

As audience members re-enter the space from the north gallery and head for the main exit, on the west side hangs another *info-flag*, this one provides a short stream of the few women who had gone to space during the Cold War. This is intercepted by long sections of the recent first ever all-female spacewalk, undertaken by Christina Koch and Jessica Meir on the International Space Station (ISS) in October 2019[38]. Karen Zraick called it a "milestone"[39] and the event attracted so much interest that it has been declared a historic achievement by American officials[40]. This week shows how short even milestones can be: the first manned flight from American soil on board Space X shuttle were two white men. By selecting only the still-rare glimpses of representation of women in the context of space exploration the exhibition constructs an alternate course of history.

The two main video projectors, each in 4K resolution, are mounted overhead and project onto the ground. These two channels, mounted side-by-side, cover approx. 30 x 16 ft (9 x 5 m). The two projections are projection mapped

Figure 16: Soviet space dogs

onto the *carpet* and specifically to individual *lunar screen*s. The two 1080p resolution projectors, also mounted overhead, are mapped to *lunar flags*.

There are six (6) *lunar screen*s; each is different in size and shape. The *lunar screen*s are CNC machined 3D topological renderings of different sections of lunar surface, based on NASA

and European Space Agency (ESA) landing site maps, plus a new addition of a Queer landing site. Surfaces are finished in silver.

The four (4) speakers are placed at about 4ft (1.2 m) height outside of the *carpet*; the low frequency sub-woofer is at the center of the piece. As audience members move about the different areas of the work sound localizations happen in response to imagery projected. With projectors looming over the audience and speakers surrounding it, anywhere a visitor turns, the placement of the production tools starts to resemble the ever-present totalitarian state, while the visual and auditory overload resembles the spectacle of media disinformation.

The exposed cables connecting the technological hub to individual audio-video components are color coded, giving the usually hidden infrastructure a colorful and highly visible face-lift. Unlike science fiction movies that usually depict spaceships as ultramodern and finished environments, actual spaceships have their infrastructure exposed to enable fast repairs. The decision to expose the infrastructure, or what Havel called 'manipulatory instruments', is in part mimicking the potential environment of space travel and it also challenges the notion of technology driven installation in art contexts that render the technology intentionally invisible. The color coding creates ease for troubleshooting for the artist and simultaneously allows some legibility of function for viewers. The bright colors open up a queering of the space interpretation, too.

The piece is activated during the performance *'We're Going!' Or, how to open source teleportation* for a live remix of audio-visual material.

b) Contemplative Space: *THE POWER*

THE POWER is the electric power framework, sound mix and video matrix of *Keep A Lid On It* revealed. In other words, it is power that keeps everything going. Its title suggests an alternate political reading: exposing the power structures, 'manipulatory instruments', that are usually rendered invisible. The aim of separating the infrastructure of *Keep A Lid On It* into a separate artworks makes the audience question what is in control of what, and who is controlling who (*Fig. 11*).
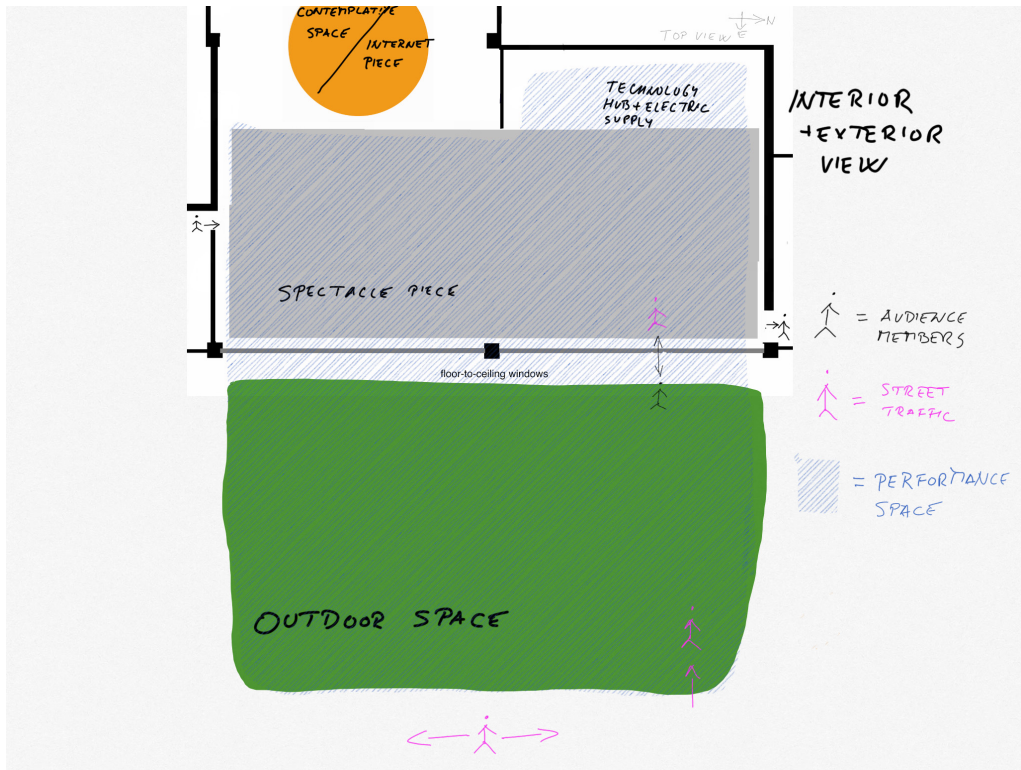
21

Figure 17: *War of the Moon* at Hampden Gallery, University of Massachusetts - Amherst, 2020. (top view with outdoor space)
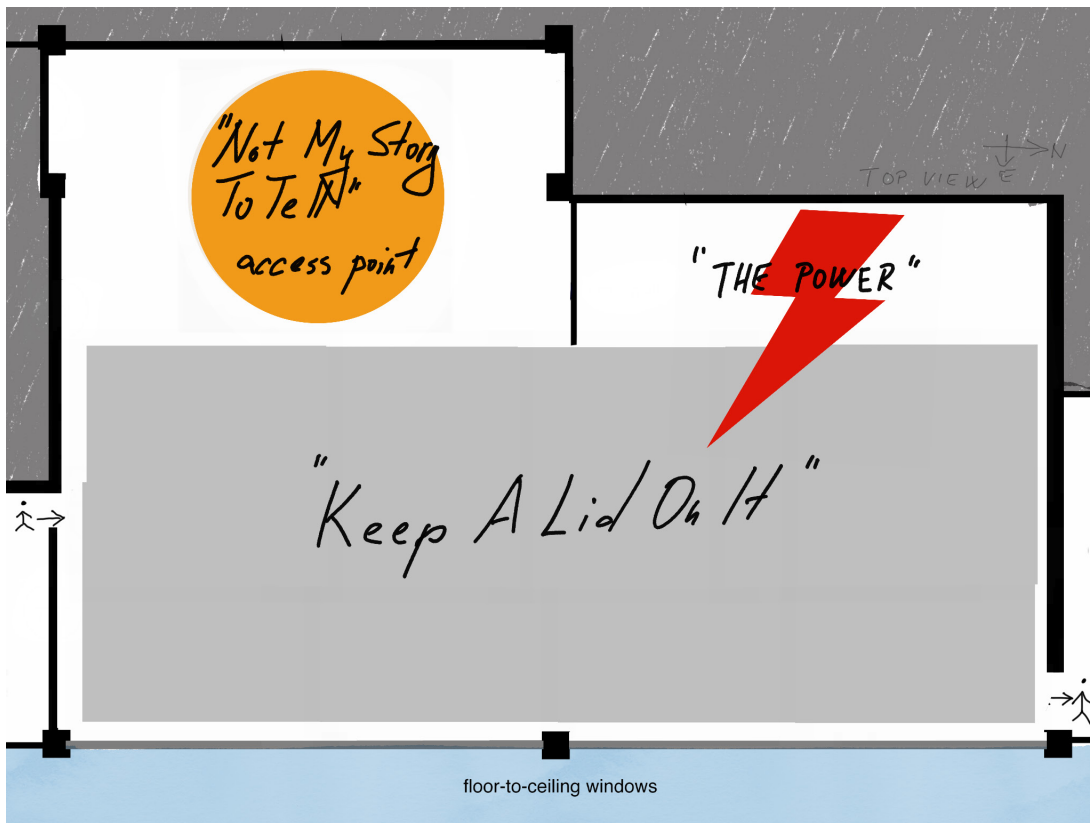

Figure 18: *War of the Moon* at Hampden Gallery, University of Massachusetts - Amherst, 2020. (top view)

22

c) Internet Piece: *Not My Story To Tell, but i'll say it anyway*

Not My Story To Tell, but i'll say it anyway is an on-line collection of redacted personal narratives from both sides of the Iron Curtain. It is a hyperlinked, text-based work hosted on the internet. It is the only work in the series presented and distributed virtually, and accessible globally. Culturally nuanced expressions and significant historical events from the text are hyperlinked to other parts of the internet.

The stories were shared with me in confidence; as such, I do not have any rights to publication. As lived examples from the Cold War era, *Not My Story To Tell, but i'll say it*

When ██ ████'s █████ was dying, and it was a relatively sudden steep decline, ████ flew from southern California to Moravia to see ██. That time it was a 32hr trip door to door, from the desert of California near the border with Mexico, to LAX, to Frankfurt, with a layover, with a connection to Prague, then bus to metro (subway) to main bus station, bus through Brno to Uherske Hradiste. Generally it would be another connection to ██ home, in the village of ███, but this time it was the regional hospital, same one ██ was born in.

It was a hard trip, ██ was not doing well, it broke ██ mentally. There was lots of crying, knowing it was the last time. A week of crying and not eating, to be precise. ██ waited, literally, for ██ to leave, ██ died only a few hours after ██ departure, before ██ got to Frankfurt. But by the time █████, the ████ called, ██ was already on the runway. ████ didn't get the message until ten hours later, after landing in Los Angeles.

Only to immediately fly out back

to bury ██.

Next >

Welcome to my diary.

The stories contained here have come to me through the oral grapevine. They have not be vetted by any institution, nor are they present in any official archive, national depository, or cultural organization. I suppose this is partly an attempt at doing so.

Yet, it is important to note that I do <u>not</u> have permission to share these stories. They never expected to see the light of day, live on, continue to haunt. The identities have been removed as much as necessary to disable an identity trace.

Please, do not ask me to reveal, i'll plea Reporter's Privilege. In other words, *don't ask, i won't tell*.

I do hope that something can be learned from these.

And lastly: No part of this web anthology may be screenshot, recorded, copied, or reproduced in any way. You may, and you are encouraged to, re-tell and share these stories verbally, and thereby circulate them back into oral history.

By clicking "Yes" you agree to the non-reproduction terms above, and, you agree, if so compelled, to share these only by verbal means, in whatever language is called for by the situation.

Sincerely,

Quixupér

< No   Yes >

Figure 19: *Not My Story To Tell, but i'll say it anyway* screenshot

Figure 20: *Not My Story To Tell, but i'll say it anyway* entrance page

anyway gives voice to those who were affected and at times repressed. At the entrance to the mini-archive audience is required to consent not to distribute the work in any form except through oral retelling (those who decline are still able to view the work but that version is fully redacted). Denying the essence of technology — the ease with which material is copied and

shared — and forcing the material to be distributed through oral tradition, is an acknowledgment of the necessity — and power — of oral history.

The stories are presented in plain text with a contemporary, web-friendly typeface. However, all names, gender identifiers, and locations have been redacted for privacy purposes. In history archives anecdotes do not hold true, validity and significance are only assigned to major figures and events. Western notions of history require a figure (name), location and date in order to hold historical relevance. By foregrounding stories without concrete characters the artwork comes closer to a redacted document.

Ironically, the work has a physical presence during the exhibition *War of the Moon*: a 6ft (1.8 m) circle of shaggy white fur on the floor denotes an area to view this work on a mobile device. The small scale and intensity private experience provides an antidote to the public, large scale spectacle.

Originally, the need for the contemplative area in the installation arose out of the spectacle's overwhelming quality: it is unsustainable to live enveloped by spectacle. In a totalitarian state an individual may still have the privacy of their home, when that privacy is denied, the individual may recluse to books, music, theater, other cultural and intellectual outlets, and if even that is taken away, then the only safe space becomes the privacy of one's thoughts. Meaning: muted. Silenced.

The need for contemplation takes places of willful participation in loud noises: nightclubs. New York City nightclubs of the late 1990s and early 2000s, like Limelight, Twilo, Tunnel, Mother's and Vinyl. The main floor had speakers so big and loud one could dance in front of them and feel the sound waves moving your diaphragm, at times one could feel the building rumble. An anti node was necessary and was provided in the form of a chill back room, that often had no speakers, but instead offered seating. This spatial arrangement opened up opportunities to recharge for next dance round, but also to have a conversation, be social, meet people. It allowed distance and change of perspective, a way to observe the structure of the business: hidden doors, drug dealers in the crowd that were staff, glimpses of the underbelly.

The acceess point for *Not My Story To Tell, but i'll say it anyway* is intended as a space to relax and think.

d) Performance: *'We're Going!' Or, how to open source teleportation*

The performance *'We're Going!' Or, how to open source teleportation* is an electronic opera in threes: three acts, for three performers, and written for body, voice and technology. The scheduled performers are Michelle Erard, dance and voice, Darius Taylor, dance and voice, and Quixupér, technology. The durational performance was scheduled to take place between 7-8.30pm (but likely to run over until 9p), moving through different stages of twilight to draw the audience's attention to time and to simulate time transportation.

This rudimentary time travel experience is created through manipulating our perception of live interaction between the Sun's geometric center makes with the Earth's horizon[41] in contrast to the artificially manipulated gallery lights. Outer space has no horizon, forming a

Figure 21: *REMIX in noise,* performance with 3 video channels and 4 sound channels, 2019.

disorienting positionally for those on Earth.

The intent to simulate celestial movement was in hope that, perhaps, one's consciousness could move closer to celestial objects and leave earth behind. Not even simulated, but purely in thought. However, this is essential for any outer terrestrial movement to take place after all. Additionally, slowly starting at the brightest form of twilight, civil dusk, continuing through nautical dusk, until it ends after astronomical dusk at which point the sky is no longer illuminated[42].

The durational aspect, which draws our attention to the celestial with its hidden layer of political, legal and bureaucratic implications, also draws the audience's attention to time as a scale for life "Ga is short for gigaannum – a unit of time equal to 10^9 years, or one billion years. "Ga" is commonly used in scientific disciplines such as cosmology and geology to signify extremely long time periods in the past. For example, the Big Bang occurred approximately 13.8 Ga." Ga is part of the International System of Quantities, SI units[43]. What I find intriguing is the temporary look at time and its relationship to life and existence through the eyes of paleontology, archeology, geology, celestial mechanics, and cosmology; when viewed through the lifespan of dinosaurs, planets, and the universe, our immediate needs for time travel, a mere few million years, becomes trivial.

The character names are in-part derived from the Czech and English words for "Earth" in an attempt to abolish alliances based on national ideologies, instead proposing an acknowledgment of our home world as a living entity, an interconnected culturesphere[44].

It is important to note that the notion of stage has been intentionally removed, and that the performers and audience exist on the same democratic plane.

The sly-of-hand-portal connects the performance to the internet via a live stream of small glimpses. The portal is live for the entire duration, but like a security camera most of the time nothing happens. The link for the portal is distributed as a QR code on the program and publicity materials, making this segmented transmission available on mobile devices *live during the performance* to audience in the gallery, or elsewhere.

IV. CONCLUSION

Many things have changed globally since the beginning of this project, as economies and priorities re-adjust to the new world of post-Covid-19. Despite this, space and arms programs continue to flourish. United States continues its program for Mars with new missions by Space X and NASA's rover *Perseverance* scheduled to launch July 30; in the last two weeks China, USA, Russia and United Arab Emirates launched rockets and probes heading for Mars. A new-comer to space exploration, United Arab Emirates (UAE) launched first in a series of *Mars 2117* expeditions:

> "The first of the three missions, built by the United Arab Emirates, lifted off on Monday morning from a launch site in Japan[…] The trip to the red planet begins a bold entry into interplanetary exploration by a small country that has previously only sent a few small satellites to orbit. […] The Emirates Mars Mission, also known as Hope (مسبار_الأمل), is an orbiter that will study Mars from above the planet. It will join a fleet of six other spacecrafts studying the red planet from space, three operated by NASA, two by the European Space Agency (one shared with Russia) and one by India. Each contains different instruments to help further research of the Martian atmosphere and surface."[45]

There is a new space race, Space Race 2.0. Even a global pandemic and recession will not thwart it, only perhaps delay it.

The lines of inquiry from *War of the Moon* will lead directly into my doctoral research-creation project, *Who Has Rights On Mars If Private Companies Develop Space?*, at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in Troy, NY. My research area of interest rests with who gets to access long-term human habitation opportunities in space, and thus revealing the true political agendas of nations and corporations engaged in developing technologies for Mars habitation. *Who Has Rights On Mars If Private Companies Develop Space?* will use *Mars 2117* as an

entry-point for an examination of Space Law from a humanitarian perspective, with particular emphasis on issues of rights and access based on gender, economic background, and issues of residual cultural dominance from the Cold War era. The central question of my investigation will be how do we maintain multiplicity in spite of growing economic interests and pressures? Vaclav Havel's theory on agency of an individual will remain and will be combined with Sara Ahmed's post-colonial feminism and Kat Deerfield's queering of space. The project will offer a new contribution to scholarship on space law and cross-modal media installations.

Not having a physical exhibition for the closure of my studies, and particularly not testing any of the artworks, is without a doubt a great loss. The internet piece *Not My Story To Tell, but I'll say it anyway* will most likely be first work from this series to be realized. As Fall 2020 semester approaches and Covid-19 cases continue to soar, the most realistic plan appears to be preparing for remote work. This provides a solid opportunity to dedicate to programming. Speaking a machine language will open up a number of opportunities for my work, most importantly internet based works and coding audio-visual networks.

The performance piece, *'We're Going!' Or, how to open source teleportation*, is retaining momentum and the score will certainly be used whenever facilities reopen. Performers will most likely need to be recast, so will the costume artist. In its original design the performance heavily relied on the spectacle piece, but the current situation is forcing a reconsideration. *Keep A Lid On It* never depended on the performance, and its score can be adapted to other venues and platforms: one option is a modified reading streamed via an open source videoconferencing platform, such as Jitsi. This would be particularly interesting if the original cast had availability; yet, working with people who are only virtual in relationship to one another could present some interesting opportunities for interpretation.

The biggest lost is the spectacle piece, *Keep A Lid On It*, at least for the time being. The gallery showed no interest in honoring the programming; however, the exhibition designs can be adjusted for other opportunities that may arise. And, the source material — research images and videos — can be used for (interim) source material during programming studies.

In recent weeks I finally found a digital-to-loom fabric service, which has been the missing link for wearables and flag production. I have also made the decision to live with an artificial intelligence–powered virtual assistant in my home, in hopes of deploying a version of it as an invisible user interface within an installation environment. These are available for use during quarantine. Upon reopening, RPI's state of the art facilities[46] offer three dimensional audio-visual environments. Having access to spaces which already contain the infrastructure for immersion should expedite technical aspects of production.

Deploying new technologies will enable digital interference across all materials used, and really removing visible traces of human manipulations as much as possible. Although the body is rendered invisible, through installation design it becomes self-aware. Space remains a central theme in the work, both in its construction and audience experience, while the complete removal of space in the digital web-based environment creates a juxtaposition.

I hope that any part of this can add to current discourse on technology and art practice.

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Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2012. pp. 70

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Space Alongside Military | TIME." Speech, 13 Mar 2018, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in
San Diego, California. https://youtu.be/3T_nwIe8td4

4   During the Cold War CSSR bordered with West Germany, East Germany, Poland,
Ukraine, Hungary and Austria. Physical borders were guarded and impermeable; travel visas
were near-impossible to Austria and West Germany.

5   Albrecht, Madeleine. *Fascism: A Warning*. HarperCollins, 2018.

6   Havel, Václav. *The Power of the Powerless*. Translated by Paul Wilson. Vintage, 2018.

7   Pence, Mike."Vice President Mike Pence addresses employees at NASA's Langley
Research Center." Speech, 19 Feb 2020, Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virgina. https://
youtu.be/eX_z8btMIsw

8   National Space Council was recently relaunched by President Donald Trump after a
nearly twenty five year hiatus.

9   Snyder, Timothy. "Introduction." *Power of the Powerless*, by Vaclav Havel, Penguin
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10   ibid

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12   ibid p. 1

13   ibid p. 42

14   ibid p. 47

15   ibid p. 47

16   ibid p. 47

17   ibid p. 47-8

18   ibid p. 48

19   ibid p. 66

20   ibid p. 48

21   ibid p. 58

22   ibid p. 62

23   ibid p. 55-56

24   Winkler, Carol. "Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric: Reagan on Lybia; Bush 43 on Iraq." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2007, pp. 303-334. p.303

25   ibid p. 304

26   ibid p. 304

27   The USSF is newly created branch of the military and was founded in December of 2019.

28   Dewey-Hagborg, Heather. "Generative Representation" *Unthinking Photography*, Dec, 2018, unthinking.photography/articles/generative-representation

29   ibid

30   ibid

31   Rubinstein, Daniel. "What is 21st Century Photography?" *The Photographer's Gallery*, 23 Feb, 2018, thephotographersgallery.org.uk/content/what-21st-century-photography

32   Rosler, Martha. *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001*. MIT Press, 2004. p. 151

33   The fast spread of the virus combined with precautionary measures affected production on several levels: delays in material supply networks, inability to work in-person with talent, and finally the complete shut down of all of University of Massachusetts's fabrication labs and exhibition spaces.

34   A low frequency subwoofer a person can sit on, minimally 2 x 3 x 4 ft (0.6 x 0.9 x 1.2 m).

35   *Lunar screens*, *info-flag*s and subwoofer.

36   The work covers an area of approx. 480 sq.ft. (45 m^2) and takes up roughly 3,840 cu.ft (109 m^3) of volume.

37   Both *info-flag*s are opaque and approximately 24 x 30 in (61 x 76 cm)). The surfaces are projection mapped by compact 1080 video projectors, suspended in the rafters.

38   Zraick, Karen. "NASA Astronauts Complete the First All-Female Spacewalk". *The New York Times*. 18 Oct. 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/18/science/space/nasa-female-spacewalk.html.

39   ibid

40   ibid

41   Bikos, Konstantin, and Aparna Kher, editors. *Twilight, Dawn and Dusk*. May 2020.

https://www.timeanddate.com/astronomy/different-types-twilight.html.

42   ibid

43   May 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Year#SI_prefix_multipliers

44   Culturesphere as the sum of all of its cultures. Like biosphere is the sum of all biomes, and ecosphere the sum of all ecosphere the sum of ecosystems on earth.

45   "Mars Mission From United Arab Emirates Embarks on 7-Month Journey" *The New York Times*, 19 July, 2020, https://nyti.ms/3eFEgUB.

46   In particular: The CRAIVE Lab, Emergent Reality Lab and Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC).