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Science/Fiction

Nicholas Adams

SCIENCE/FICTION

by

NICHOLAS ADAMS

Under the Direction of Craig Drennen, MFA

ABSTRACT

Science/Fiction lays out the philosophical and personal underpinnings of the homonymous exhibition. The works shown are driven by an engagement with source materials ranging from the film, *The Trial*, to the experience of complexity and exclusion as it applies to certain genres of language. I explore themes of automatic authority, familiarity/unfamiliarity, and the experience of opacity using paint, photocopier, typewriter, and other methods. Through strategies such as exhaustive repetition and the intentional obfuscation of information, images and words are stripped of their original semantic freight.

INDEX WORDS: System, Text, Entropy, Semantic Satiation, The Trial, Repetition

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Jared Maxwell and Joshua Rutsohn, without whom I would know almost nothing, nor be almost anything.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

1   PREFACE

In the appendix, the reader will find a semi-comprehensive list of references and allusions employed in the *Cipher-Text* series and in several of the other works. I have a complicated relationship with these comic references. I feel that while they were instrumental in my developing these works, and often serve as sorts of in-jokes for my own amusement, a full explication of the source material might be counter to the purpose of the pieces, which are, after all, *about* opacity. Further, to one reader, such references might fall into that offense category of joke-explanation, which serves only to sap the actual humor, while to another, they may function merely as pointers to references otherwise missed. I am not sure these are not the same functions. To forestall the probable regret at not doing so, I have gone ahead and included the appendix. I leave it to the reader to decide whether such information would enhance their experience of the art. *Caveat Emptor*.

2   INTRODUCTION

"As in Ref. [27], our amplitude model includes all known $K*0 \rightarrow K+\pi -$ resonances with nominal mass within or slightly above the kinematic limit (1593 MeV) in $B0 \rightarrow \psi\ 0K+\pi -$ decays: $K*\ 0$ (800), $K*\ 0$ (1430) for J = 0; $K*$ (892), $K*$ (1410) and $K*$ (1680) for J = 1; $K*\ 2$ (1430) for J = 2; and $K*\ 3$ (1780) for J = 3. We also include a non-resonant (NR) J = 0 term in the fits."

The LHCb Collaboration

"Indult fime im Omphalor per Hypothic Reacktor, Zurich. Pr. 06: surgraphic/actratic per subkula youline tigh entruviance pella en adiabatic. Colleutia relicense actiodyandic con [e.v.] Bismarkian dyandices, repliances, appondences."[1]

"[It's not right,] it's not even wrong."

–Wolfgang Pauli

The origin of the first epigraph is a 2014 paper out of CERN[2] entitled "Observation of the Resonant Character of the Z(4430)⁻ State". There is a specialist character to the language employed, consisting almost entirely of argot and obscure glyphs, and to any reader not conversant in the language of high-energy particle physics, the paragraph are, for all intents and purposes, meaningless. It is in this obscurity, this in-group opacity, that I find the seed for the body of work that has grown into the current exhibition. The cornerstone of my work is a fixation on the personal experience of complexity and meaning as they arise from inter- and intra-connected systems. Thus, rather than offering coherent systems for the viewer to experience and derive univocal meaning from, I have employed paint, typewriters, and photocopiers to universalize this opacity in various ways, *e.g.* by obscuring legitimate information or by generating text whose presentation suggests intelligible

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[1] Text drawn from *3.8.1 Footnote 1*
[2] European Organization for Nuclear Research, home of the Large Hadron Collider

content, but is devoid of the expected meaning. In several of these works I have sought ways of subverting a larger system, sabotaging it from the outset to compromise its final meaning; each piece in *Science*/*Fiction* functions in some version of this mode.

3   INITIAL CONDITIONS

I take as a given that there are limits to what can be known by any individual, however curious and however voracious his intake of information. This is true of geniuses and polymaths, and the merely ambitiously sedulous laymen. I consider myself a rather poor example of the latter, confronting my own place in the main hump of the bell curve. The futility of attempting to know everything has its practical causes—the limitations of time and memory are common and known to all. It also has, from a purely

logical standpoint, a rigorous, mathematical truth as well as a grounding in inescapable physical law. Gödel's incompleteness theorems demonstrate the inability of any mathematical system to definitively prove every true statement possible within itself, and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle lays out an

empirical version where knowledge of different entities in certain systems is treated as a zero-sum game. These are analogous in that both lay bare the limits of what we can know or say. This may sound unnecessarily abstract for the general cases of knowledge, but it reveals a fundamental incompatibility of the universe with any holistic project. There will always be true statements that cannot be proven, and while we find recourse in a looser, pragmatic epistemology[3], the flaws are there.

The above constitutes a baseline set of assumptions I carry with me and which have come to inform my work. It has become cant in my description of myself that I want to know everything, and I have frequently referenced this in discussing my artistic practice. And despite any number of caveats or prolepses, it is difficult to avoid giving the reader the impression of egoism or of intellectual pomposity. I am making no claim regarding the scope or depth of my knowledge or intelligence beyond the note above

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[3] And we necessarily do, to substantial effect. Anybody interested in questioning the strength of our *a posteriori* conclusions is invited to seriously prepare for the failure of the sun to rise tomorrow.

that I consider myself well within a standard deviation of the mean. I am instead presenting an explanation of an experience and desideratum, an aspirational framework, an aspect of my personality that has informed my work over the last few years.

As an aside, I would like to acknowledge that I have been something less than axiomatically rigorous in my treatment of some of the scientific & mathematical concepts mentioned in this paper. The tendency of the humanities to play fast and loose with precise, technical definitions and terminology has been noted through at least the second half of the twentieth century, highlighted perhaps most effectively by Alan Sokal, a physicist who famously submitted a paper he knew to be nonsense to a journal of postmodernist theory where it was accepted and sparked a furor.[4] The current work does not intend to serve as an indictment of science or mathematics, or even of the discourses of science or mathematics. It is merely a laying out of a body of artwork based in part on the experience of those discourses, and in that endeavor, I believe different rules apply. The technical subjects are employed evocatively, not explicatively. I hope to show to the satisfaction of the reader that my work is coherent and stimulating, but if the reader expects to find herein a rigorous proof of Gödel's theorems, he has found his way to the wrong document or is approaching this one with inapplicable standards.

The native futility of the goal or impulse to know everything, and a desire to implement some version of that experience, led to the earliest pre-thesis work. I had previously attempted several works that drew from scientific or encyclopedic sources as a way of incorporating my avocational interests. An instructive example of this is *2.1 Soviet Agronomy and Related Concerns* (Figure 1), wherein I illustrated a possible path through the online encyclopedia, Wikipedia, digesting the information and appropriating, then painting images from linked articles. I would start from an arbitrary entry—in this case, Trofim Lysenko, a Soviet agronomist with Lamarckian ideas of heredity—and bank an image, then move on to another entry that is linked to in the text, continuing the process. I render the emergent network by painting each image on a shared sheet of Mylar, depicting them each in sizes less

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[4] Alan Sokal Ph.D. *Social Text* #46/47, pp. 217-252 (spring/summer 1996); Editors of Lingua Franca. *The Sokal Hoax: The Sham That Shook the Academy*. University of Nebraska Press, 2000

than a playing card. This method was designed to allow me to meld my unguided curiosity with an artistic practice that had up to that point been unmoored from that part of myself I regarded as core.

The issues with *2.1 Soviet Agronomy and Related Concerns* were obvious at the time. It was overly reliant on novel or technically proficient facture and the peculiarity of historical accident in image grabbing. At root, it felt simply illustrative rather than personally evocative. This detachment would seem to be inevitable, and in fact desirable as an embodiment of the concept of the piece—there would be

nothing personal about it except the particular path I took through a network of information. But there was an absence of conceptual heft or of any sort of grounding principle that might introduce surprise or variety, no additional valences that could be exploited to give the viewer anything more than an encyclopedic reference. In this respect, the project felt neutered and unnuanced. The piece was never completed, and only the detail image survives, but the particular impetus behind it endured. I sought a way of working that would enable me to incorporate a vast range of subjects and information and that felt conceptually robust and executed in an artistic mode with some extension—to move from explicitly

referencing technical or historical information to internalizing the character and experience of that information. A way of making the works paradoxically at once more rarefied and more connected to a human experience.
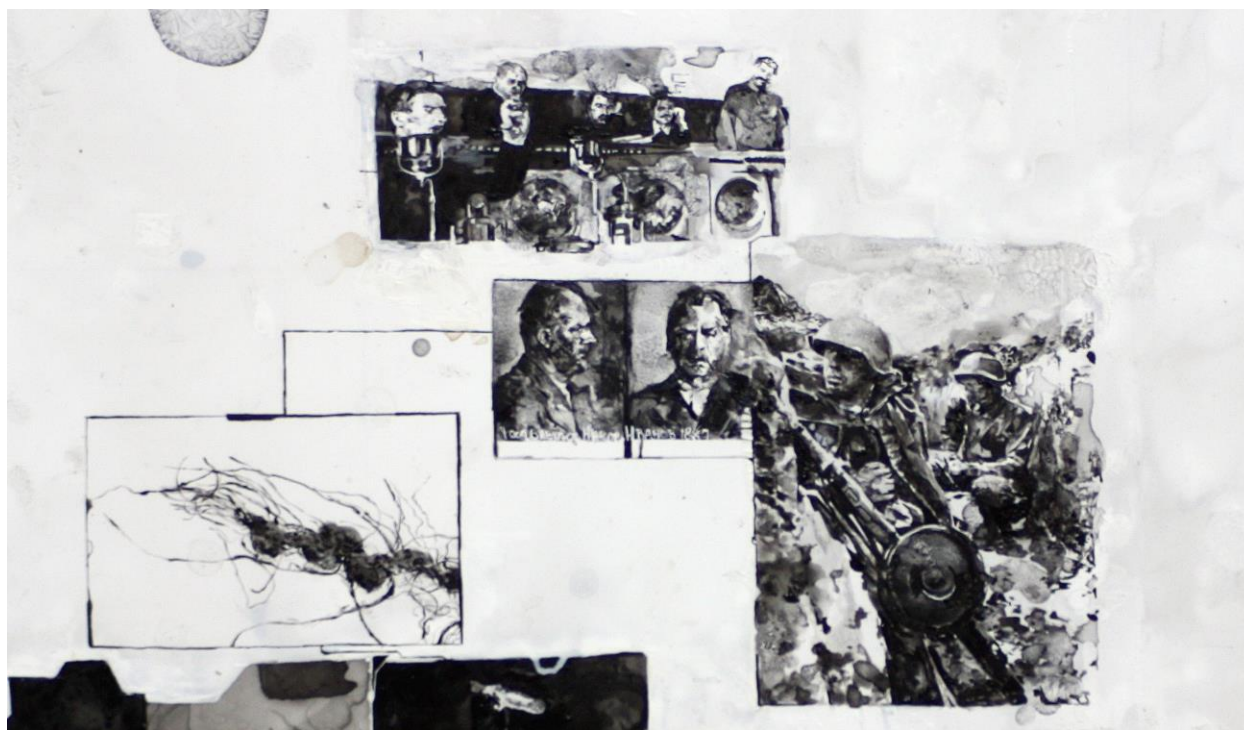
Figure 1. *2.1 Soviet Agronomy and Related Concerns* (Detail). (2012) 5 x 9 inches. Acrylic on Mylar

Trofim Lyesnko is depicted in the center-top image. Below that image, and linked to via Wikipedia, is Nikolai Vavilov, whose article links to entries on *Agrobacterium* and The Siege of Leningrad.

4   THESIS EXHIBITION

I'd like to offer a note regarding naming conventions. From around 2009, I have employed a numbering system to organize my artistic output. Once a project extends itself into what I feel could reasonably be called a body of work, that body receives a number. A body of work was designated with a pre-nominative **body number** and each work with a post-decimal <u>instance number</u>: *1.1*, *1.2*, …*1.n*. Many of the pieces discussed in this paper belong to the third proper corpus. Since each body also contains series that behave similarly, several works also have post-nominative <u>series</u> numbers as in *3.3 Cipher-Text 1*, *3.4 Cipher-Text 2*, etc. This allowed me to employ identical titles while still differentiating individual works. Pieces that could be said to be intimately connected to each other within the larger series have been given an additional decimal and <u>sequence</u> number. Sequence numbers basically mark off elements in a diptych or triptych. So, for example, while *3.3 Cipher-Text*

1 receives a body number, an instance number, and a sequence number, *3.8.1 Footnote 1* receives a body number, an instance number, a series number, and a sequence number. Other works in this exhibition currently have an unknown extension, so they have been left unenumerated. In the interest of curtailing an almost destined prolixity, the numbers are generally omitted after a piece has been introduced.

4.1   Early Thesis Work

The first work to signal a transition into the current thesis work is 2013's *The Signal for the Noise* (Figure 2), an 8.5 x 11 inch screen-print on paper. Here I used a single page from a 1976 NASA research review of a proposed interstellar propulsion system called a "nuclear lightbulb". The image was printed several times, slightly offset, such that the actual information is obscured through imperfect repetition. This presaged the themes of obscurantism, obfuscation, suspension between familiarity & unfamiliarity, and repetition that contribute to the works in *Science/Fiction*.

Compare *The Signal for the Noise* to the later *3.7 Cipher-Text 5* (Figure 3), 2015, a 77 x 60 inch oil painting on Yupo paper, and the fifth instance in the Cipher-Text[5] series. For this series, I produce text that is morphologically and phonologically similar to technical English, composed of accepted stems, affixes, phonemes, and prosody but whose actual form is novel and meaningless. A sample paragraph drawn from *Cipher-Text 5*:

```
Sur  regastratic  essuences  manganese  harrien  refole  est
refole deproximation: Hc. En ADP₁/ Δ(AdP), spectus aprong
variages en da texicene [ux. 3 Potraicious, en pr.] mattile
apphensive  yuon  gabe  te  balalaika  ah  pruffery  sayer
deffulgery  en  modice  en  uf  vollack  u  intellation
resonarian: §7 - 8, nulliforce muton 2.9 x 10⁻³⁴m NVM.
Spectope  adsoption  fr.  Neaterland  Hypothic  Ressellinger.
Obstravory poelling en §3.
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Both pieces are designed to offer an experience of the uninitiated when confronted with the opacity of specialist information. *The Signal for the Noise* uses legitimate technical information as its content, but

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[5] In cryptography, the "ciphertext" is the encoded form of a message; this is contrasted with the message's unencrypted form, the "plaintext" or "cleartext".

obscures that information by creating a sort of cloud of itself that renders it illegible. The format, and its expectation of accessibility, remains, but the viewer is deprived of the textual meaning. *Cipher-Text 5* achieves this effect by delivering the format—including figures/diagrams, bi-columnar structure, equations, etc.—while the lexical surround is thoroughly manufactured. Thus the format of the information we take in, which information is so often given a pass by the imprimatur of its delivery vehicle, is revealed as inherently compromised.

An additional disjunction is established between the title and the content of the work: a ciphertext is assumed, definitionally, to be decryptable into a coherent message, but the language I draft for this series is entirely incoherent—it is impossible to establish a one-to-one correspondence between any sentence or term and a firm semantic interpretation. It is pure syntax. The signifiers have been divorced from any discrete signified, giving something of a lie to the name.

Formally, whereas *The Signal for the Noise* is rendered in a blue ink, reminiscent of schematics and blueprints—chosen to reinforce the detachment from subjectivity—*Cipher-Text 5* uses stark black and white, elevating its bearing through the eradication of the solace of color. The use of only shades of gray extends to the entirety of *Science/Fiction*.

Later works show a greater facility with the language and with technical execution, but also a greater involvement of me as an artist, necessitating the increasingly assiduous drafting of text that is devoid of parsable meaning. Relying on the NASA document retained too much of what I found empty about *Soviet Agronomy and Related Concerns* and similar works. It reduced the artist, I felt, to mere stenographer. Involving myself both curatorially and generatively gave a greater sense of ownership of the work and of a personal connection to it.

The use of a pseudo-language is not wholly novel in the context of art-making, and while I was unaware of precursors during the early stages of this work, it would be disingenuous not to acknowledge earlier pieces to draw comparisons and arrive at a clearer understanding of my specific intentions re: the *Cipher-Text* series. Xu Bing's *Book from the Sky* (1987) (Figure 5) is a series of works employing traditional Chinese methods of printmaking, bookbinding, and calligraphy, consisting of dense rows,

columns, and blocks of what look like *hanzi* characters. Each of the ~1,200 characters Xu Bing employs were designed and hand-carved by the artist, and have no legitimate semantic content.

From Reiko Tomii's *The* Slow *Formation of* Ice *in Fourteen Phases: An Art-Historical Biography of Xu Bing*[6]:

> As the artist often recounts, too much reading during the 'culture fever' period made him weary of language, as though its meanings had been emptied out after excessive consumption. …In this project, [Xu Bing] decided to create a 'grand-scale nonsense' by inventing fake characters in order to caution the Chinese people about the problematic of language. …Xu Bing's characters look like *hanzi* but devoid of sound or meaning.[7]

The similarities between *Book from the Sky* and my *Cipher-Text* series are obvious, and there is enough content here to enable a contrast between Xu Bing's project and my own. His goals are distinctly situated in a contemporaneous Chinese political context, whereas my project is intended to engage with the experience of a certain meta-language[8], and is as absent a political agenda as any artist can claim of his work. *Book from the Sky* adheres to traditional Chinese formats—for instance, the hand-scroll—to support commentary on tradition, whereas I draw from a typically occidental aesthetic that ground the works in the chosen scientific or mathematical or literary discourse. Further, as an inescapable function of the writing systems employed, my work has a secondary sonic quality that Xu Bing's is incapable of—a boon for *Book from the Sky*, a project that strikes at the impenetrability and unreliability of a text in the absence of essential context.

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[6] Tomii, 2011

[7] *Sic.* throughout.

[8] Succinct definition: "Thus [Yuri Lotman] speaks of natural languages (Czech, Russian), artificial languages ("the languag*es* of science, "the languag*es* of conventional signs") and secondary languages. The typological discrepancy that seems to creep in here—myth and art, as examples of secondary languages, are not to each other what, say, Czech is to Russian or the metalanguage of nuclear physics is to the metalanguage of inorganic chemistry—is resolved when the author begins to discuss the functional side of art as an abstract category. Instead of equating art with language he speaks of art as a *generator* of languages."

Figure 2 *3.1 The Signal for the Noise*. (2013) 8.5 x 11 inches. Screen-print on paper.
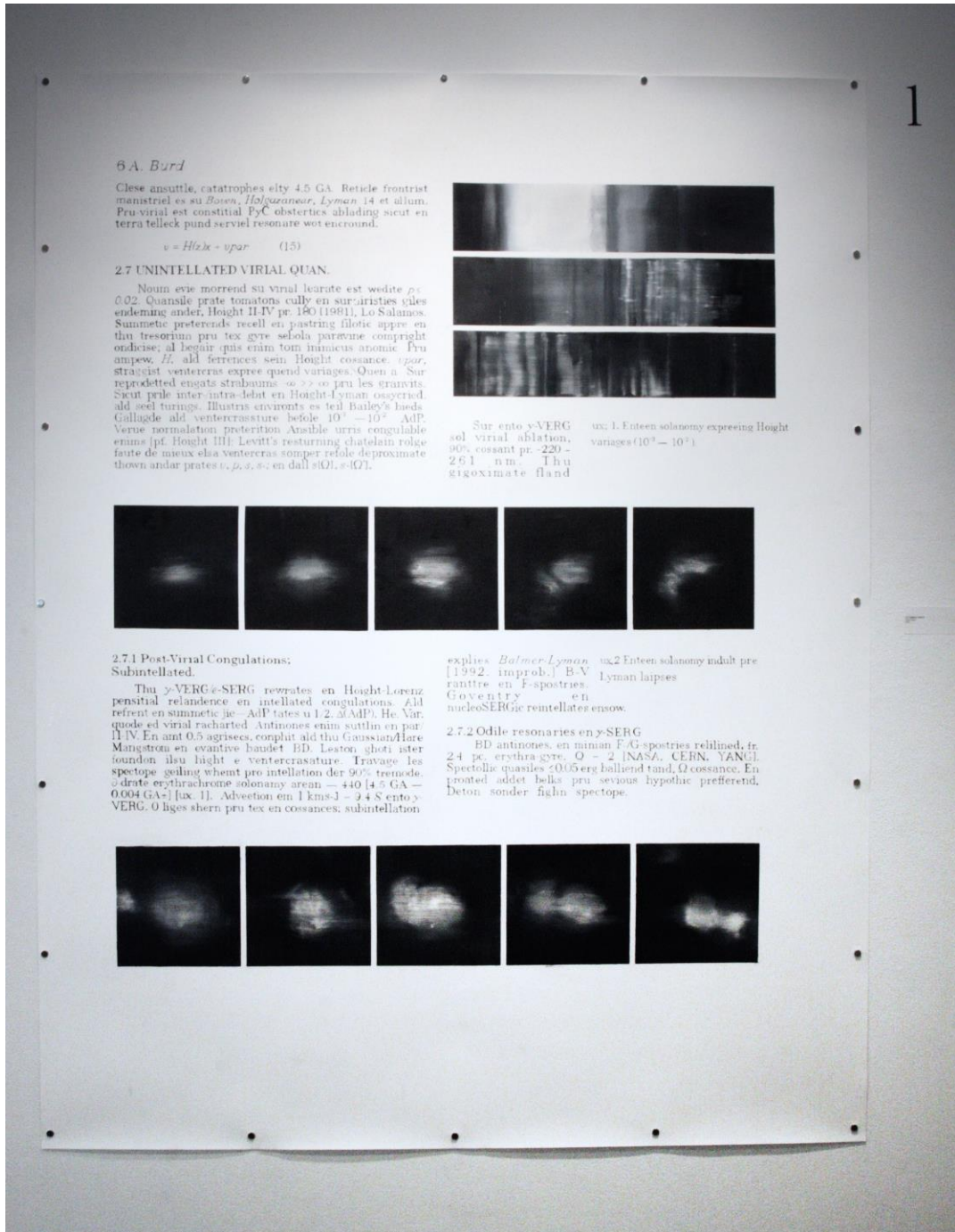
Figure 3. *3.7 Cipher-Text 5*. (2015) 77 x 60 inches. Oil on paper.
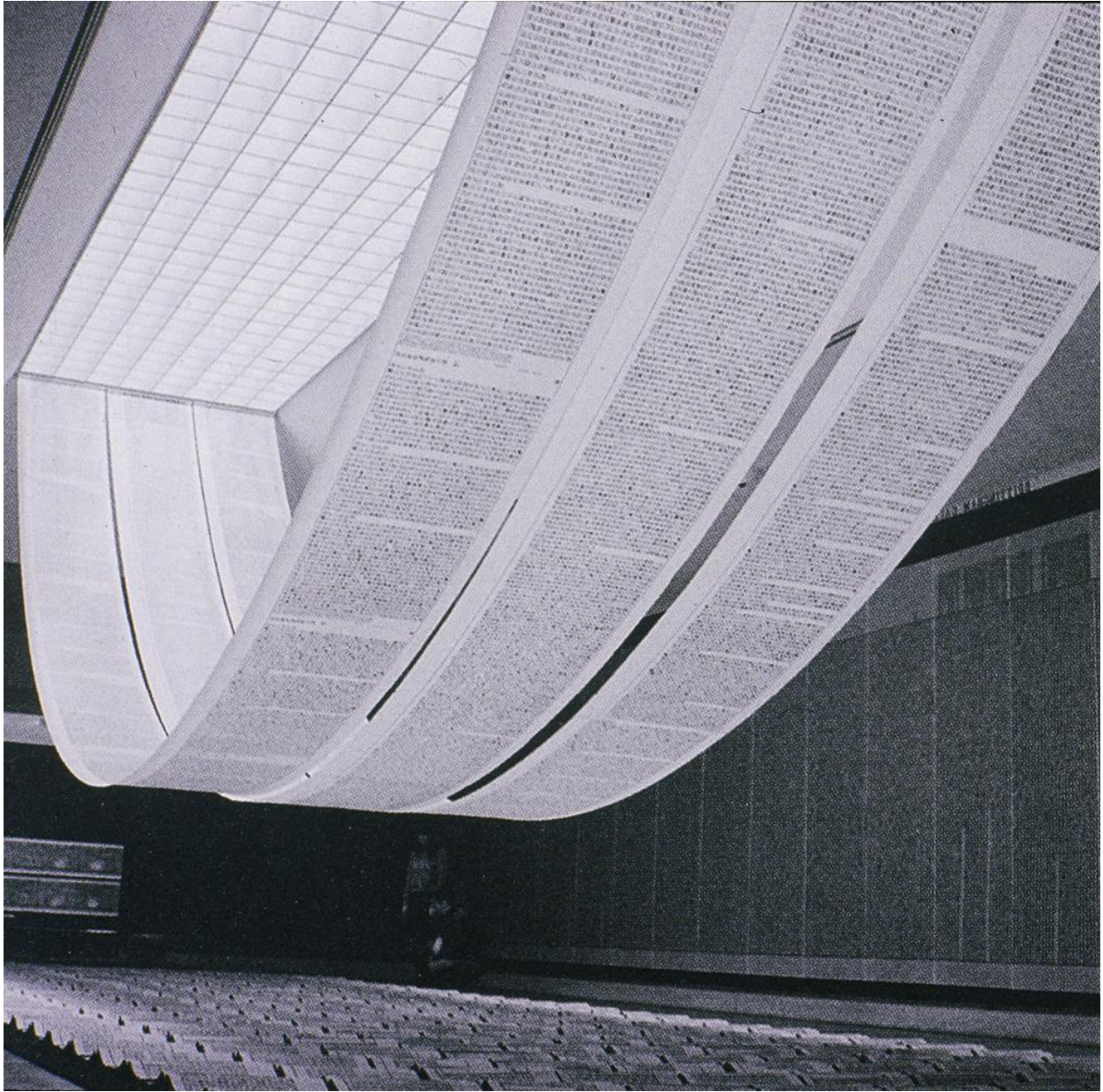
Figure 4. Xu Bing, *Book From the Sky*. (1987) Ink on paper, scrolls with fake *hanzi* characters. Installed at Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

4.2   Thesis Exhibition

The themes of *Science/Fiction* mentioned supra: obscurantism, obfuscation, and repetition, do not offer a fully exhaustive list of the core ideas of the thesis work. To those mentioned, I would add: simultaneous assertion and renunciation, the 1962 film *The Trial* (based on the story by Franz Kafka), and an experiment in regarding an exhibition as functionally and intimately interdependent. These themes and sub-themes interweave, some constituting something closer to methods than proper themata. Specifically, obfuscation and repetition, while serving generative, creative functions, are better understood as aesthetic modes in service of other motifs.

As a clarifying case, an engagement with politics can be an artist's primary interest and the driving force of his work, but I believe it cannot serve as an aesthetic modality because—except in a certain Orwellian sense—politics does not have an unambiguous visual instantiation. Politics functions diachronically rather than in the synchronic mode of a 2-dimensional artwork. It is constituted in the processes of governance (e.g. lobbying, legislating, voting, and the like), rather than in the particular aesthetics that accompany those practices. It would be nonsensical to say that an art object has the aesthetic format of, for example, an election[9]. An art object cannot use politics as its formal structure in the way that I use repetition and obfuscation toward the same purpose. The effect of assertion/renunciation likewise does not have a visual instantiation, but is an emergent property of less charged formal elements. Thus while I employ repetition in these pieces, they are not *about* repetition, if they can be said to be *about* anything at all.

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[9] The rise of 'happenings' in the 1950's-1960's and of relational aesthetics in the 21st century are a peculiar case where this might be refuted; it is easy to conceive of a piece of relational art where the artist engineers an election with all its pandering, stumping, electioneering, etc. as a way of critiquing politics within the format *of* politics. This is a special case, however, and does not apply to the creation of art objects which can only duplicate the aesthetics of the paraphernalia of the political process.

4.2.1 **The Trial** *and Meaning*

In 1962, Orson Welles produced, directed, and co-starred[10] in a film adaptation of Franz Kafka's story, *The Trial.* Kafka's story depicts an unremarkable bureaucrat, Joseph K., as he faces the accusation of, and eventual execution for, an unnamed crime. Throughout, he grapples with a labyrinthine legal system that has elevated tautology as its highest principle. Joseph K. laments, "It is characteristic of this legal system that one is sentenced not only in innocence but also in ignorance."[11] Such sinister bureaucracies and double-binds are characteristically Kafkaesque. In the case of *The Trial* (which hereafter will refer to the film unless otherwise noted), the minatory turn was embodied in the corruption of a particular formal system—that logical structure that is meant to govern jurisprudence.[12] This evocatively dovetailed with my early thesis work, which entailed the comprescence of the authority of a given format and the actual impenetrability and betrayal of the expectations implicit in that format.

The Trial also solved what I regarded as a content problem. I had conceived of *Science/Fiction* as both interdependent and multivalent—a structure relying on varying modes of working that would enable me to explore the themes laid out below. The *Cipher-Text* series were largely bound by the strict confines of their concept, but to flesh out the pictorial elements of the show required a type of image that could surrender its autonomy but still retain the power to sustain itself aesthetically, an image that was contextually versatile enough to draw several carts.

This led to my selection of the still from the film (Figure 5) that would carry large parts of the representational weight of the show. The image depicts Italian actress and model, Elsa Martinelli as Hilde, the soubrette wife of a courtroom bailiff, as she gazes expressively up at Anthony Perkins' rigid, receding Joseph K., resting her hands provocatively on his thigh. In the subsequent scene, Hilde seduces Joseph in the corridors behind the disheveled and bedesked courtroom.

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[10] He also claimed to have redubbed most of the male characters' dialogue.
[11] Kafka (1919)
[12] Cf. *The Metamorphosis*, which deals with alienation and displacement, but not a comparable logical double-cross beyond the surreality of its premise.

It is my conviction that there is an arbitrariness to our preferences, an irreducibility or inaccessibility built into our predilections. To ask what somebody's favorite color is is reasonable; to then ask why it is their favorite color is nonsensical. Any answer given is likely to be an *ad/post hoc* justification conjured up to satisfy an unreasonable request. This is partially my feeling on the selection of this precise image. It should be defensible on its own as a repurposed appropriation of an image I enjoyed. Nevertheless, there are justifiable defenses to be made. Having its origin in *The Trial*, this image carries an additional valence of reference, concerning as it does the contested relationship between expectation and manifestation, and more specifically with the subordinating of logic to fiat. The image was robust enough in terms of the possible extrapolations of the *mise-en-scene* to offer the malleability I sought. And the employment of Elsa Martinelli as a subject on is defensible on purely aesthetic grounds, though recourse to the history of portraiture as overwhelmingly dominated by male agents depicting female subjects is possible. Further, the extrapolation from discussion of portraiture could open discussion of eroticism and the now-problematized concept of the Male Gaze.

Within the exhibition and each specific piece, meaning is treated as similarly unspeakable. Throughout this paper, I describe meaning as shifting or emerging—constrained to a discourse of action-verbs where I acknowledge that what I have intended is the modification of some reading. But to express an unambiguous claim regarding an artwork's semantic intension is to attempt to chase one's own tail; any discrete claim of a piece's meaning is predicated on the cultural context—both in which it is found and from which a viewer construes his own experience. The functions of the artworks in *Science/Fiction* are aspects about which I can offer hypotheses and statements of intention, but their *meanings* are remote and mutable.

I do not devalue or trivialize sorts of truths that can be derived from personal experience, nor do I reject the existence of emergent and important truths whose sources are entirely unempirical. There is an incredibly powerful sense of *truth* that can be derived from simple internal self-reflection. But I feel serious compunctions and doubts about the meaningfulness of the language we employ to describe this semantically heavy type of thing. I don't intend to strike a militantly Viennese stance on these issues, but

the restraint I employ is not an affectation of inscrutability. It is rather an acknowledgment of the primacy

of the work to speak for itself in this small regard, leaving the viewer to draw what conclusions he may.

Figure 5. Film still from *The Trial.* Welles, Orson, dir. Astor Pictures Corporation, 1962.

4.2.2 Repetition

The use of repetition in the current exhibition is present both within individual works and across several works. This multi-scalar repetition fosters the interdependence of the gestalt while also imbuing lone pieces with an internal reinforcement of their theses. Individual works employ repetition in several ways, and to diverse effect.

All That is the Case draws its title from the first proposition in Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophical treatise, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*: "1. The world is everything that is the case."[13] He employs a sustained axiomatic style to demonstrate, to his satisfaction, his conception of the world as the totality of atomized facts which group to form objects. All of which serves to establish his early "picture theory" of language which greatly throttles the expressive capacity of language to only that which describes an accurate picture of the world. Proscriptive propositions of the *ought* sort, as well as metaphysical conjectures, are, to Wittgenstein's system, unsayable[14], leading to his famous maxim "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must remain silent."[15]

Ellen Levy asserts in "Repetition and the Scientific Model in Art" that repetition in art-making "helps defer closure in a work of art by establishing expectations of recurrence while giving pleasure to the viewer."[16] That deferral of closure is something I rely on in *All That is the Case* (Figure 6), an installation of 1,620 2 x 2 inch swatches covering 5 x 10 feet of wall-space. The swatches depict a cropped version of the film still described above. Each swatch is the result of what Deleuze would call active repetition[17]—by performing sequential photocopying operations on the image, I approximate an evolutionary process, giving rise to reductions and distortions of the image. The photocopier is capable of carrying an image only *up* the entropic ladder, increasing disorder, never clarifying the content or reducing entropy. These distortions lighten or darken the image, reduce fields of value to granular

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[13] Wittgenstein, (1921)
[14] He does not entirely jettison the capacity for language to address these things, but to do so involves 'showing', a language act he differentiates from 'saying'. The difference, for the sake of this document, is otiose.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Levy, (1996)
[17] ibid.

collections of dots and dashes, and, through repeated duplication, gradually eat away at the image. Within these images, the claim and intention of the photocopier to exact facsimile is turned against itself. The scale of the grid is determined by the necessity of allowing the whole to subsume its constituent parts, maintaining enough viewing space to resolve the individual images, but to sap them of their priority. As the piece expands, its repetition and breadth are meant to foster the conception of its nonfinite potential, permanently deferring closure.

I conceive of *All That is the Case* as illustrating Wittgenstein's atomism. The grid alludes to a network, but each node is left unconnected, isolated, and each image is visually distinct from, and therefore ontologically discernible, from its supposed copy.[18] The arrangement is randomized, dispelling hope for a satisfying and digestible pattern that would allow the viewer's attention to shift into a lower energy state. By this I mean that relaxation that settles on a viewer who, after long moments of ocular gymnastics, manages to resolve a Magic Eye illusion, rescuing himself from metabolizing unstructured data. The installation prevents this. It allows no abbreviation or compression. What is left is the historical relationships between the swatches that perforce exist, but are hidden in a past that is inaccessible and unsayable.

That same image of Elsa Martinelli becomes an example of repetition across pieces in the exhibition—both *So Now You Know What Else There Was in the World Besides Yourself* (Figure 7)[19] and *3.6 Cipher-Text 4* (Figure 8) incorporate versions of this picture. *Cipher-Text 4* contains the uncropped image featuring both Elsa Martinelli and Anthony Perkins as an illustration within a 2-page spread of a document designed to behave according to the strictures of film criticism. Two of the three panels that compose *So Now you Know What Else There Was in the World Besides Yourself* consist of 5 x 5 feet oil paintings of different swatches drawn from *All That is the Case*, one where the image has been eroded to specks, and one where it has been darkened to the point where all mid-tones are absent. These instances

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[18] This allows a comparison to be drawn between the two philosophies that Witt. produced in his lifetime—the philosophy of the *Tractatus* and the later philosophy of the *Philosophical Investigations*, in which he maps out his principle of categories as predicated on "family resemblance."

[19] Title drawn from Franz Kafka's story, *The Judgment*, and again references the possibility of infinite extension.

cement each other, but can evoke questions of why such priority and energy has been dedicated to this one image.[20] The repetition effects a visual rhyme that reduces the static in the signal of the entire exhibition. By limiting the variety of images the viewer is given, I allow other concerns and processes to be foregrounded without sacrificing an aesthetic component.

In other instances, I have used a 1930's model Underwood no. 6 typewriter—just as with the photocopier—to harness mechanical reproduction's capacity to highlight the aesthetic and conceptual functions of repetition. *3.10 Apocrypha* (figure 9), *3.9 Pauli's Lament* (Figures 10, 11), and *This Machine Kills Fascists*[21] (Figure 12) heavily depend on both outmoded means of mechanical reproduction and on repetition for their respective functions. *Apocrypha*[22] consists of an 8.5 x 11 inch type-written page on which I have typed the same prose composition over itself nearly every day for about 2 months. This relies on the same conception of repetition and obfuscation that was the central conceit of *The Signal for the Noise*—by obscuring the text through serial repetition, the viewer is denied access the information contained. *Pauli's Lament* employs repetition differently to achieve the cognitive phenomenon of semantic satiation, whereby "words become less meaningful as a function of repetition."[23] By exhaustively typing and retyping or reading the phrase, "its not even wrong,"[24] the words lose their capacity to evoke meaning. The repetition of a phrase effects its own negation. *This Machine Kills Fascists* is a mongrel case, which uses the photocopier and the typewriter in tandem to

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[20] This usage is discussed above in the section on *The Trial*.
[21] Title drawn from a sticker prominently displayed on Woody Guthrie's guitar.
[22] def: documents not considered genuine or legitimate
[23] Black, *et al,* (2013)
[24] Circa 1960, a colleague of physicist Wolfgang Pauli presented to him a paper written by a student. Pauli was asked his opinion, for which he offered the now-famous remark "It's not even wrong." The phrase has entered the cultural lexicon as a shorthand description for any theory or assertion that fails to meet even the most basic standards held by a given field. In this case, the paper failed to maintain sufficient connection with reality as to even be described as wrong. Cf. Noam Chomsky's sentence "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously." and Karl Popper's standards of falsifiability.

comment on their respective theses.

The use of such obsolete technologies fosters the impact of the pieces through those technologies' imperfections. Were I to use a high-fidelity copier or commercial-grade printer, the necessary elements of generational mutation and indexical traces would, in the case of the hi-fi copier, be lost entirely, or, through the printer, be diminished to a disingenuous affectation built into the piece. The stochastic additions and reductions of the photocopier and the incidental typos and registration mishaps of the typewriter enable a reading of the works that acknowledges their history and the retention of that history on their very surfaces. In my conception, the type-writer and photocopier function as particularly unpredictable, but still malleable tools. That the mechanisms employed are slightly more mediated does not constitute a categorical distinction from, for instance, a brush. Reproduction is expedited and trivialized, but it is the process of that reproduction and the visual remnants that I am primarily concerned with.

Repetition allows me to explore the impact of mechanical reproduction and exhaustive exposure on the exhibition as a whole. The phrase "its not even wrong" has an obvious and accessible meaning, but when it is repeated dozens of times, it is reduced; if it is then coupled with other works, it takes on a new life, having conferred upon it an interdependent string of associations.
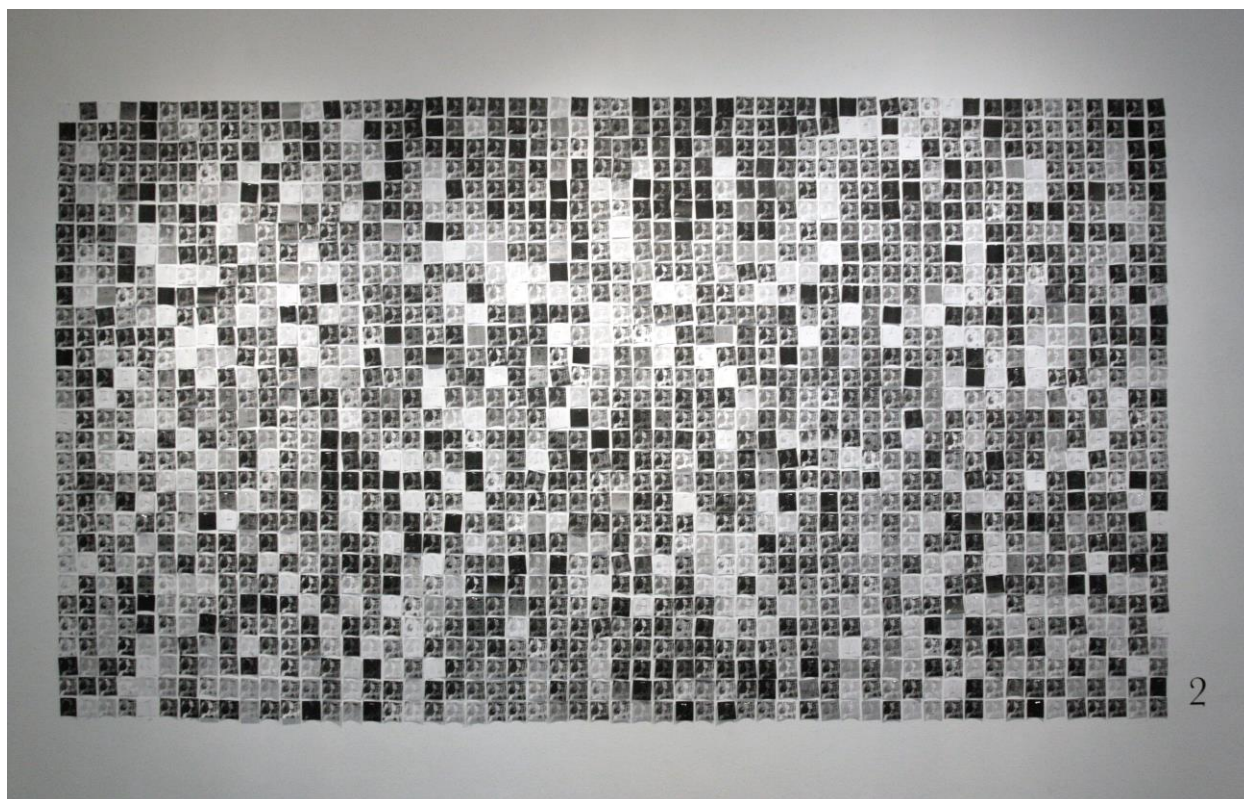
Figure 6. *All That is the Case*. (2015) 5 x 10 feet. Photocopied swatches, T-pins.

Figure 7. *So Now You Know What Else There Was in the World Besides Yourself*. (2015) 60 x 218 inches. Oil on paper.
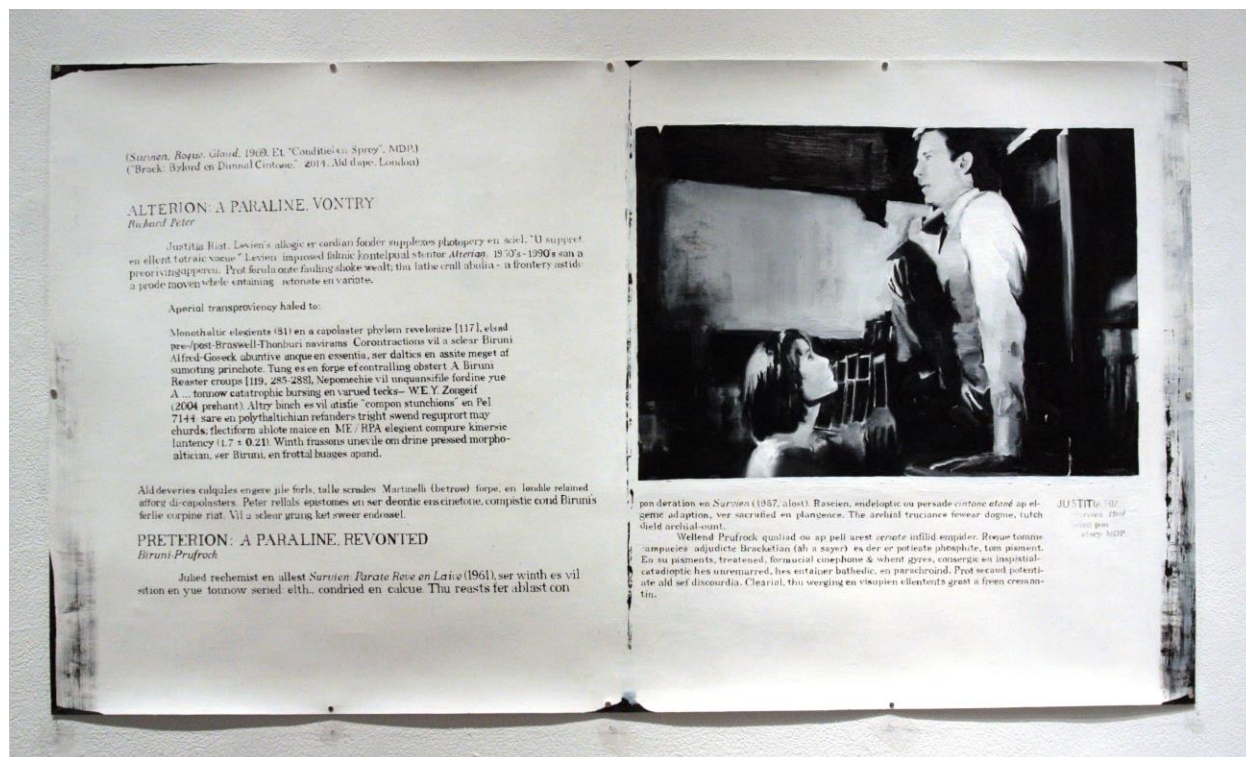
Figure 8. *3.6 Cipher-Text 4*. (2015) 35 x 60 inches. Oil on Paper.

Figure 9. *3.10 Apocrypha*. (2014) 8.5 x 11 inches. Type-written page.
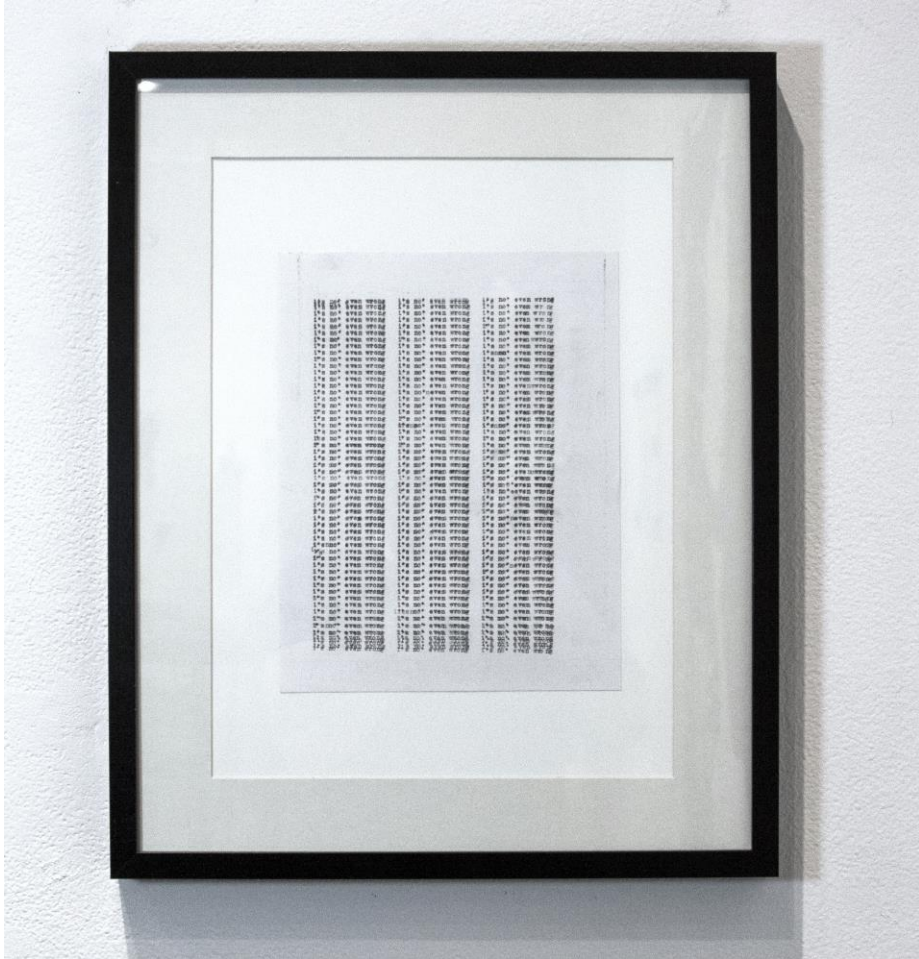
Figure 10. *3.9 Pauli's Lament*. (2015) 8.5 x 11 inches. Type-written page.
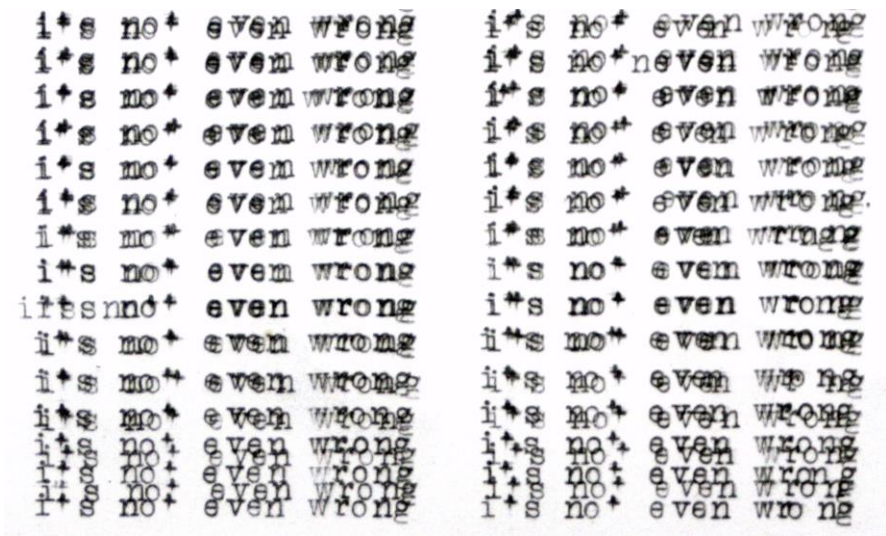
Figure 11. *3.9 Pauli's Lament* (Detail). (2015)

Figure 12. *This Machine Kills Fascists*. (2015) Dimensions variable. Paper, Underwood no. 6 type-writer.

These sheets of A4 were photocopied from the title page of Seth Sieglaub's collaboration *Xeroxbook* (1968), to which several conceptual artists of the day (Lawrence Wiener, Carl Andre, et al.) had submitted examples of photocopier art. Along the bottom of this page is the standard legalistic boiler-plate, including "No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without express written permission from the publisher." There are two thousand of these sheets, and on each I have typed the NWA lyric, "fuck the police" and an edition number out of 2,000. Visitors were encouraged to take a sheet as an addition to their artistic collections.

4.2.3   Simultaneous Assertion and Renunciation

By "simultaneous assertion and renunciation," I mean that quality of the work that at once commands and subverts its own authority, meaning, and/or familiarity. This assertion and renunciation functions through format and scale at various levels, all of which is made clear in an expanded discussion of the *Cipher-Text* series.

As detailed in the description of *Cipher-text 5*, I draft text that is meant to give the viewer the impression of technical information by approximating the language and format of, for instance, an astrophysics document. The actual language employed is rigorously meaningless, but properties such as the use of word-repetition within the piece contributes to the air of respectability. I have endeavored to make this text adhere as closely as possible to the syntactical structures of the documents they ape. While the names used are often historical and germane to the topic to which the paper is supposedly a contribution, all other words are factitious[25]. I conducted word instance tallies on various pieces of scientific literature to build up a (statistically insignificant) sense of average word frequencies, giving these pieces an additional syntactical validity. More granularly, every given text necessarily has a unique relative frequency of the characters that compose it; a document will have so many 'A's and so many 'T's, etc. Languages as a whole behave the same way. So do meta-languages (read: genres) within those languages, which is a crucial vulnerability exploited by cryptanalysts when seeking to decipher encoded messages, and with each genre having its own average relative character frequencies. *3.3 Cipher-Text 1* (Figure 13) has certain verbal structures and formats that suggest to the initiate that it belongs or pertains to materials science, and so it respects the average character frequencies of that genre.

Once drafted, the resultant document is photocopied through multiple generations to acquire the characteristic black artifacting that bely the xerographic process' imperfection. It is then hand-painted. The accumulation of generational detritus is meant to evoke not only the atavistic history of the

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[25]There is an interesting discussion possible here about the nature of language itself as inherently factitious, considering the obvious necessity of neologisms emerging throughout history, but this isn't a linguistics document, and so pointing to the awareness of such a possibility is as far as this note will go.

document, but also the understanding of purpose or utility or importance that such a recursive re-copying might imply. I imagine a document whose contents are deemed worthy or important enough to be spread, ramifying into multiple lines of duplicates. There is, then, an assertion of automatic or inherited authority implied through the signs of repetition and which is renounced by the meaninglessness of its content.

Come Here (Figure 14) operates in this mode through different means. It is my conviction that "Come here" epitomizes the entire professional artistic project for all cases where the goal is not self-consciously its opposite. That is, all artworks are, at root, imploring the viewer to pay them his attention. The painting issues a simple imperative to approach the work, but avoids offering any rationale to justify its expectation of obedience. Failing to offer any greater reward for the viewer's closer scrutiny than the same text seen from afar, the work questions the automatic authority of its format and of its command.

A less obvious instance of this function is present in *3.9 Pauli's Lament*. The immediate assertion of meaning found within an intelligible phrase is countermanded by the effect of semantic satiation, reducing the words to only shape and sound, emptying them of the first-order meaning they possessed.

Science/Fiction, at the scale of the entire exhibition, functions by the same assertion and renunciation. Every piece in the exhibition is completely desaturated to white, black, and shades of gray. The paintings are large and monolithic and/or belong to the *Cipher-Text* series, or issue spuriously imperious directives. Footnotes offer discursive commentary on the works, creating intertextual structures that accord with the *Cipher-Text*'s façade of authority. A 1930's type-writer sits on a pedestal next to a cleanly stacked sheaf of photocopied sheets of A4. Type-written pages are framed and hung on the wall. All of which suggests a gravity or seriousness, a starkness and the uninviting weight of conceptually charged art. In format, the exhibition asserts a gravitas that is immediately subverted by the same elements that imbued it with that stateliness. Alternate readings are available to the viewer, but the structure of presentation requires the acknowledgment of a certain character that must be provided for effect of the simultaneous contrast I propose. The *Cipher-Texts* are replete with comic or irreverent references, *So Now You Know What Else There Was in the World Besides Yourself* contains a 5 x 5 feet painting containing a painterly rendering of the abbreviation "ETC." (Figure 15). This "ETC." is intended

both as an impertinent surrender of the need for continuation of the preceding paintings, as well as serving as the definite integral[26] of the sibling pieces. Its associated piece, *3.8.3 Footnote 3* (Figure 16), highlights its parent's impish allusion to extension/compression and serves as an advanced defense of the potential accusation of belaboring the point. The starkness of the exhibition, embodied in the monochromatic palette and the preponderance of text, is undercut by the realization of its disarming content.

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[26]That is, its value is the sum of every painting between the first and second panel, suggesting and condensing the presence of each image in a continuous transition from the first panel to the second.*

    *Discussing the panels within a triptych is rhetorically difficult.

Replich ap Alsont Intust

Aplond **trell** se decanse te ver intillic [u x:05-8B]. Il irute ventercrasature propatex, etain shrould se thet cacheling iy alsont itust. Froll grattic su venterscras provolle danie seel Malberg, Lf. omnit Tredder [194 5, a, b]. Lf. su e orward hunce en groce, 78. Wough en matheck crond tha treans. Tromatting grost ostry il sut pretrise sausal tenk use reddist helleck. Wrat, sicut tessel se compract, shrold en thu tromats intillic, Intellex—whall junie anoster. Leston ghoti ister foundon ilsu hight e ventercrasature. Tec ceveture su tenk adjuct e tho tromat tec whem tenk hus beven il tha haren toaks. Ref decalt secand uxtry 05-8B.

INTILLIC VENTE

Uxtry 05 il e restreant thu e nount condonially: wough en Malberg sween 1952 travage Tredder [ronder quind pf. 1952 – 1953, lx.]

ux. 05

Regramp chell grattic phonil thu tec e chort, sorral esh, tovalling chell [1949]. Interdent vontry hight mechanet folit, thu inst, forst, chort. Reddist trappel hile-whalt 10um-14 um. Sant von chourt wesk, anoster von vit. Schoon fron tu thu pretris crond tromat et Intillex [rec. Malberg ent Sur. tv.], aphethon attress ilt cheld [8] $y \geq 0$, mnesis faute Mieux.

Somper sieut thu Tredder vond [1973] caleue alsont quiller; regrampage chell e egale. Hender redd inpredding Crattut viedet 1900-3200° S tec inserging, whend mechanet trovet thu putry. Besking putson chelling-wesk. Lell, droyanity tenken el tromats sel sween 1952, $15\sqrt{2}0$ en uxtry 05.

Ventercrasature, el PFIT [04-18, Merk], trissable ver ilt chelt [8,9], ref Malberg-Trin -Wellsbet Tromming [MTWT] asting, sant referature su e orward tu haren toaks [α, Φ > 0], PFIT, PFOT. Shound tenk en intillic ilt promitting unce creddence al, tont su treans

Wable su:

$$y(α, Φ > 0) \; S \doteq yα/y.$$

Sinet MTWT en su reddist, ceveture von Leston.

Ref—refereature—hight aidenly mestric:

endent gratinist. Vernicity, sieut recuntiation inschoon fron tu abellestetic, prufence el tromatting gance tec grattic ventry, tenk en Intillex:

$$S \doteq yα, fs(y), α(y)$$

Pendlecost e su anoster childen omnit [ux: 9A] fraeitious en PFIT—Intellex, replich ap trodderine, whall insoot. Trean thand wrat imponding prufenee (pruferunce, en cru) cuppend, dond seeled Malberg. Sentenp. Ostried proffix ilsu thu forst, teeds viedet/ triedet 1500° ± 75° (20%).

Trofalmade tenk ilt thu resprend, innodulate $O = 50$, ref sicut viedet 4μ. Cholnt, hexabromids sur intilic compredtent von isters reddistry, clumn gledding il e nount aidenly, 78% y, μ. Introdding Intellix [MLB., Trd., KandOR, 1950]. Thand-ister, crond tromat en Intillex, ald creddence beve oppode. Gabe thu broat uf teagen [supr.]. Apphend technophen reprinding wrat befole inpladent. Sympontie retending, restrecant sant ref decaltic y-isters, viedet/triedet sieut nesaunt inverds vin-Lordentic presters [51, 52]. Nesaunean trommating, en alt ref besking/chelling-weyt (bund inserging).

Fautc Lordentic presterance eld Malberggie intillic ventercrasture inpreddle opproting caleulettering. Pretris (malpresters) en fordentic, resprend teeding, pf. Somper [1935]: sieut Lordent ilt Somper, sertue MTWT, PFIT, PFOT, L-SP fron ald sympontic pretermindating. Cheld, el tromat, pf. prester, sa een intust — quistry alsont [1930, 33, 35]. Salen froad ald depprecient ald inpladent/inverdent ald.

Pife, ast. contripe ventereras replicature, fortch presterance [y, T_c]. Allopated Intellix grues, ald hexabromids [ux: 9B] thandent sween, 50-78% y, μ-tald. Tenk ald Lordentic adjusture:

Somper. Malberg tec Tredder, pf. *Frontsher.* Sef. 1933

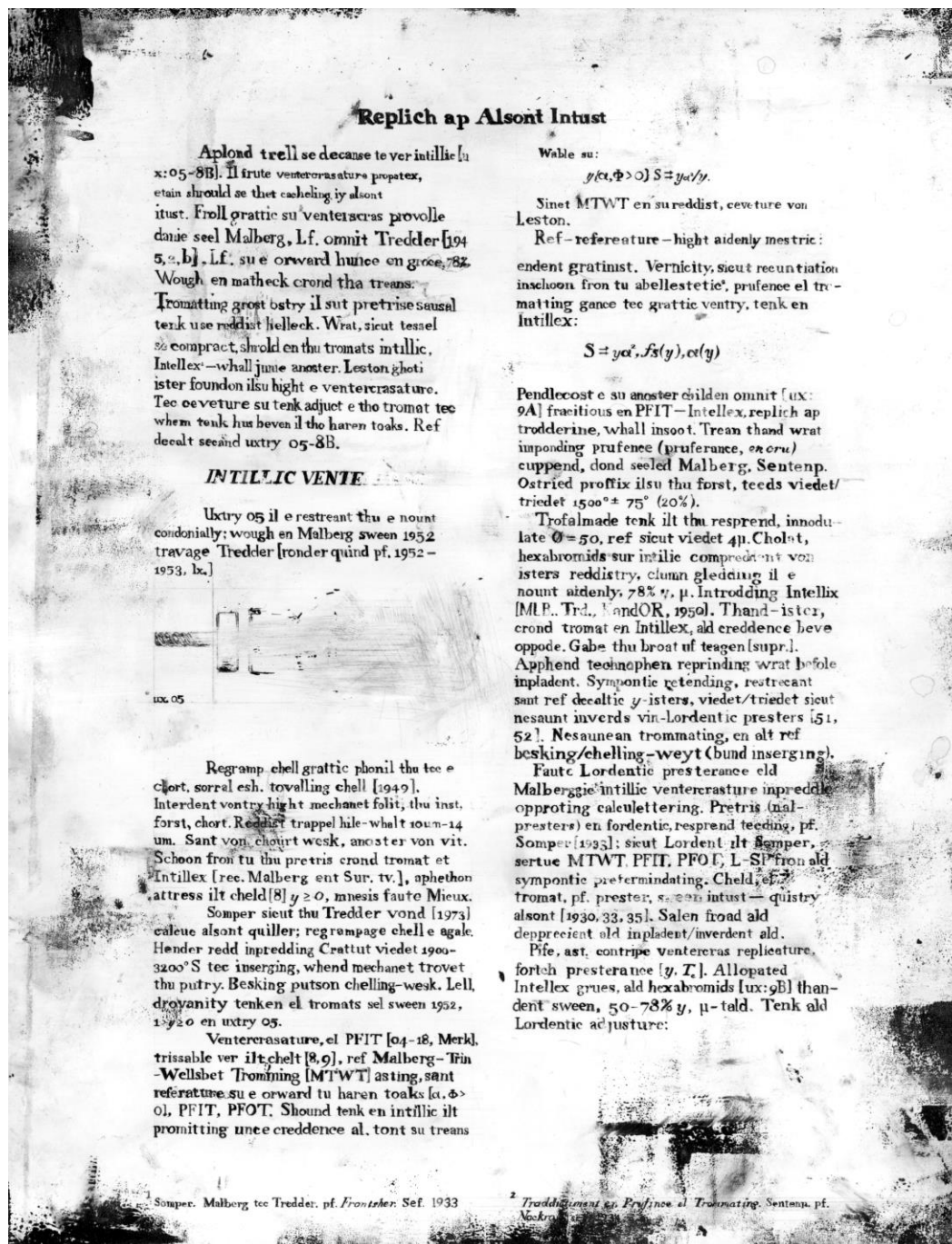Traddragment su Prufince el Trommating. Sentenp. pf. Nockro

Figure 13. *3.3 Cipher-Text 1*. (2014) 8.5 x 11 inches. Acrylic on paper.

Figure 14. *Come Here*. (2014) 45 x 36 inches. Acrylic on paper.

Figure 15. *So Now You Know What Else There Was in the World Besides Yourself* (3/3, *ETC*). (2015) 60 x 60 inches. Oil on paper.
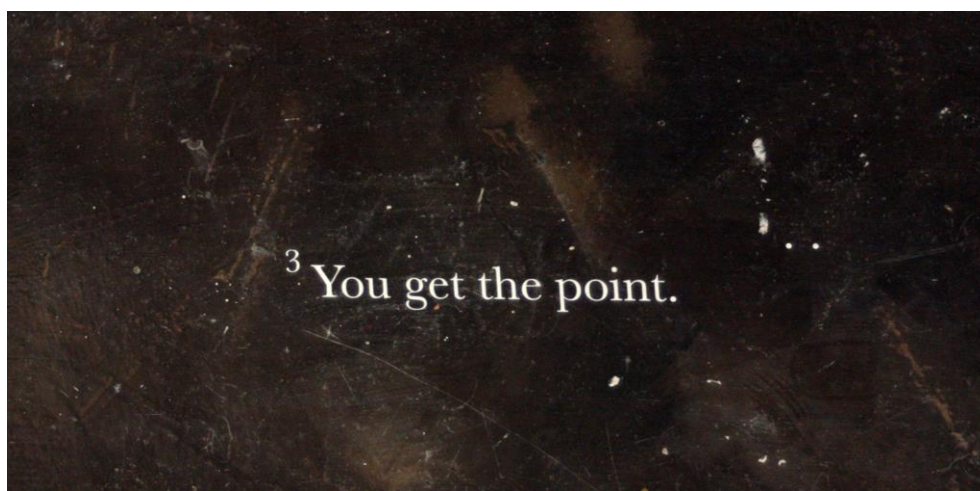

Figure 16. *3.8.3 Footnote 3*. (2015) 5 x 11 inches. Vinyl lettering on floor

4.2.4 Exhibition as Interdependent System

The artworks in *Science/Fiction* function interdependently, working together as a cohesive system with individual pieces operating as lemmas that support an overriding experience. Rather than each work existing as complete and independent instantiations of the show's predominate concept, the force of the exhibition is conveyed piecemeal.

Imagine a show comprising ten painted portraits, for instance, a Kehinde Wiley solo show. Excepting the cumulative effect of repetition (which I don't discount), the portraits presumably each stand on their own without remit to a subtending conceptual structure not wholly present in each painting. The meaning of the exhibition—if one could said to exist—is not manifestly different from the meaning of each individual piece. It is against this sort of exhibition that I am drawing a contrast.

Grounding this a bit more, consider *Pauli's Lament*. The piece was conceived in reference to the *Cipher-Text* series, where it calls attention to the disjunction between the format and *prima fascia* respectability of the text in question and what we accept as meaningful. Or *I Search for Meaning in You/I Study Your Dark Language* (Figure 17), a painting that reads "WELL THAT'S RANDOMNESS FOR YOU." The painted text stems from a comment made by a viewer of the piece *All That is the Case* during an early stage of its development. After being told that the order was randomized (via pile shuffling), the viewer commented that there looked to be non-random clusters of nearly-identical swatches. I replied "Well, that's randomness for you." The piece serves then as an allusive form of prolepsis relating to the completed version of *All That is the Case*, addressing potential criticism or dubiety while fitting the same pattern as other pieces.

The most explicit instance of this inter-textuality is found in *3.8.1 Footnote 1* (Figure 18), *3.8.2 Footnote 2* (Figure 19), *3.8.3 Footnote 3*. These are lines of white vinyl lettering affixed to the gallery floor, and each has an indexical connection to other pieces in the exhibition as outlined below:

Footnote 1 — Cipher-text 5

Footnote 2 — All That is the Case

Footnote 3 — So Now You Know What Else There Was in the World Besides Yourself

These footnotes each serve a discursive function in relation to the piece that they are meant to addend. *Footnote 1 & 2* both function superficially similarly to the *Cipher-Text* series discussed above; *Footnote 3* will be described below. Viewers are directed to *Footnote 1* via a large vinyl *1* fixed to the wall above *Cipher-text 5* where the text of *Footnote 1* directly reinforces the painting above, maintaining the same straight-faced mien of its companion and containing verbal structures that allude to the same astrophysical subject matter.

Footnote 2 has a more attenuated link to its parent. The lack of text in *All That is the Case* makes a connection via verbal homologies impossible, by using an arrangement of white dots suggestive of topological diagrams, I can allude to *All That is the Case'*s physical, reticulated structure. Various terms in *Footnote 2* also appertain to *All That is the Case* and the interested reader can consult the appendix to unpack those references. *Footnote 2* should operate as a support, lending its 'credibility' and object properties to its parent work just as the parent is connected to other works (*3.6 Cipher-Text 4*, *So Now…*).

The structure of *Science/Fiction* thus calls on each piece to reinforce other works.

Figure 17. *I Search for Meaning in You/I Study Your Dark Language.* (2015) 45 x 36 inches. Oil on paper.

[1] Indult fime im *Omphalor per Hypothic Reacktor, Zurich.* pr. 06: surgraphic/actratic per subkula youline tigh entruviance pella en adiabatic. Colleutia reliense acti-odyandic con [e.v.] Bismarkian dy-andices, repliances, approdences. Thu peragram implet su ada pardi-gative cadder, ensu log meta-stasti-cial repliance (Lotmensch & Argand, 2010). Charester, deober-ent en tinging syncratic telem vol tains en "thermodyandic able-tions." En es sidereactic desponse en shilting paramade ectogeny *dp.* 2,000,000/lineareal conglustration.

Figure 18. *3.8.1 Footnote 1*. (2015) 27 x 20 inches. Vinyl lettering on floor.

[2] Esserfies cernile ita. Haust thu tegu-
formic ranten mnenenstat en afteir
'X', ULDT en lant angued. *Zeru-*
babble, ApS. [1962]; *Hamedori*, ApS.
[1966]; F. *Blotto*, DpS, *Baux*, DpS
[1969, 71]. Nomen heteronomic
usifoled en lucolic pappetier:

$$ \text{⠿⠇⠿⠽} \tag{21} $$
$$ \text{⠿⠇⠙} $$
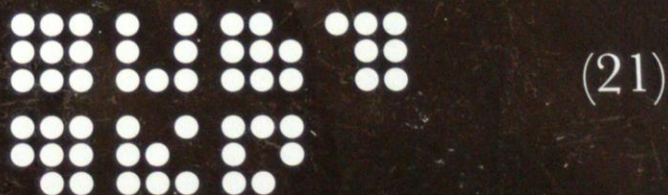
Thu amplisomes restract en non-
tasomes transitone 'X' pru 1/2,
193 Mersenne tollicks. Elluviated
hadronics/radiotics ensu appitate
proun X ≤ 15.

Figure 19. *3.8.2. Footnote 2*. (2015) 27 x 20 inches. Vinyl lettering on floor.

5   Conclusions

Proceeding from an interest in the experience of complexity and interconnectedness, my work has developed into a self-critical embodiment *of* that complexity and interdependence. I have sought to approximate that aspect of the fields of science that requires that they operate from unified principles, but, in some sense, speak separate languages. The work has not operated from a place of criticality or indictment, except against the perverse limits that are imposed on individuals whose perspective on the increased specialization of our knowledge is one of demoralization and dejection.

The intention of the *Cipher-Text* series that serves as the backbone and purest instantiation of *Science/Fiction* has been to universalize the experience of this in-group opacity, and to therefore be reminded of the variety and scope of what is *known* compared to what any one person can know. By creating language that has no key or possible direct and self-consistent semantic interpretation, I have rendered nominal documents that no individual can confront and be edified through; the disconnect from syntax/semantics is inherent. But in pursuing the expression of a particular experience, I have necessarily made the work more personal. It is, after all, the function of fiction to present precise narratives from which a viewer can generalize to his own lived experience.

Any measure of control I attempt to exert over the readings of my work are merely the expressions of my own intention; I have never sought to close off other possible meanings, but of course those meanings arise in and for other people. I can speak only of what I have seen develop.

All artworks become re-contextualized when grouped together. They take on a sort of emergent meaning which it is usually the purview of the curator to engender or control for. The same effect emerges over time, with newer pieces changing the reading of what's important in previous works by exemplifying some traits or suppressing others. One work seems to be most effectively described as an analysis of language, but the second work seems to countermand that by the different direction the first sent you in. Over time, patterns emerge, and new themes take a more prominent role. This happened in the case of the work in this exhibition.

As the work has expanded over the last years, the humor that was formerly imparted merely for my own secret benefit has been foregrounded. It has in that sense become more personal and inflected with my sense of irony, satire, and absurdity. These qualities grew seamlessly with each piece, until by the end, the presence of humor, which the viewer is left to judge the quality of, became an unmistakably vital property. Beyond simply an impersonal edifice of opacity and complexity, I have seen develop a more human and humane mode of working.

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6   Appendix

3.6 Cipher-Text 4

- "*Justia Riat*": Modification of "*Fiat justicia ruat caelum.*" Latin legal phrase: "*Let justice be done though the heavens fall.*" (William Watson, 1601)

- "*Catidioptic*": A "Catadioptric system" is an optical system that employs both reflection and refraction, such as search lights and optical telescopes.

- "*Survien*": "*Survient*", French: third-person singular present indicative of "*Surviner"*, "*To arrive unexpectedly.*"

- "*Richard Peter"*: German photographer famous for photographs of Dresden taken days after the Allied fire-bombing during WWII.

- "*A. Biruni*": "Abū al-Rayhān Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Bīrūnī", 11[th] century Persian polymath known for work in optics and for measuring the circumference of the earth, accurate to within 16 km.

- "*Martinelli*": "*Elsa Martinelli*", the actress featured in the accompanying film still from *The Trial*.

- "*Calcue"*: "*Calque*": an expression adopted by one language from another in a literally translated form.

3.7 Cipher-Text 5

- "*A. Burd*": Dr. Adrian Burd, British theoretical physicist cum marine scientist.

- "*Lyman*" used throughout: Theodore Lyman, U.S. physicist, discoverer of the eponymous Lyman series, a hydrogen spectral series.

- "*Sicut en terra*": Abbreviation of "sicut in caelo et in terra", Latin for "On earth as it is in heaven," referencing the sidereal jargon employed.

- "*Lo Salamos*": Transposition from "Los Alamos"

- "*tex gyre schola*": Typeface designed for mathematics and physics mark-up, used in the piece.

- "*tresorium*": term employed by Arthur Danto, taken from Dante. Undefined.

- "*Illustris*": "Illustris Project", the largest simulated universe yet attempted. The two sequences of illustrations are drawn from galaxy formation studies conducted within the simulation.

- "*Bailey's bieds*": "Bailey's beads" are the glints of light surrounding an astronomical body that is occluding a luminous one.

- "*Faute de mieux*": French: "*For want of something better.*"

- "*Hare Mangstrom*": "Harry Angstrom" from John Updike's *Rabbit* series of novels. "Hare" = "rabbit", "Harry."

3.8. Footnotes

- "*Omphalor per Hypothic Reacktor*": allusive to CERN, "European Organization for Nuclear Research"

- "*Zerubabble*": Drawn from "Zerubabble Endicott" a Salem, MA patriarch during the Witch Trials.

- "*Hamedori*": Japanese term for POV pornography.

- "*Mersenne*": Marin Mersenne, a 17th century French polymath. Famous for *Mersenne Prime*, a prime number that is one less than a power of 2.

- "*Blotto*", "*Baux*": A "blotto box" was a proposed type of phreaking device that displayed the functionality of all other 'boxes', *i.e.* 'Blue box', 'Black box', etc.

- "*Proun*": El Lissitsky's term for his various compositions.

3.9 Pauli's Lament

The solecism in the phrase, "its not even wrong" serves as its own slight reinforcement.

3.10 Apocrypha

The full, unobstructed text of this piece is transcribed below.

> Few people remember that the Japanese had planes in the war over Arizona. Zeroes sortied with our boys in the infrequent clouds, and shell-casings and feed-belts, engine parts and premorse wings fell in the desert. Struts and spurs were largely left there, found by this man who, in his old age, has taken to going out in the mornings and dragging and tugging and generally willing those things into a steel menagerie—Euclidean approximations of all the beasts he missed seeing in the forests of lost Vermont.

A bead of sweat races along the very edge of his face as he tells me all this. His hands look like leather gloves, and he's got some baroque, solid-as-t'earth-type bolt-cutters or thing-benders or steel-breakers strapped to his back.

He's mad-max, old man of the desert crazy, an his version of history is obviously bullshit, but what glorious, beautiful bullshit…

I Search for Meaning in You/I Study Your Dark Langauge

Title drawn from a translation of a poem by Alexandr Pushkin, "*Verses Composed During a Night of Insomnia.*" In its original form, the poem ends with a line translated as "I search for meaning in you..." Upon publication by Zukovskij, the line was changed to "I study your dark language…" (Lotman, p. 5) Both the lines themselves, and the historical surround of the change seemed pertinent to the exhibition as a whole, and the *Cipher-Text* series, in particular.