

New Media Artspace

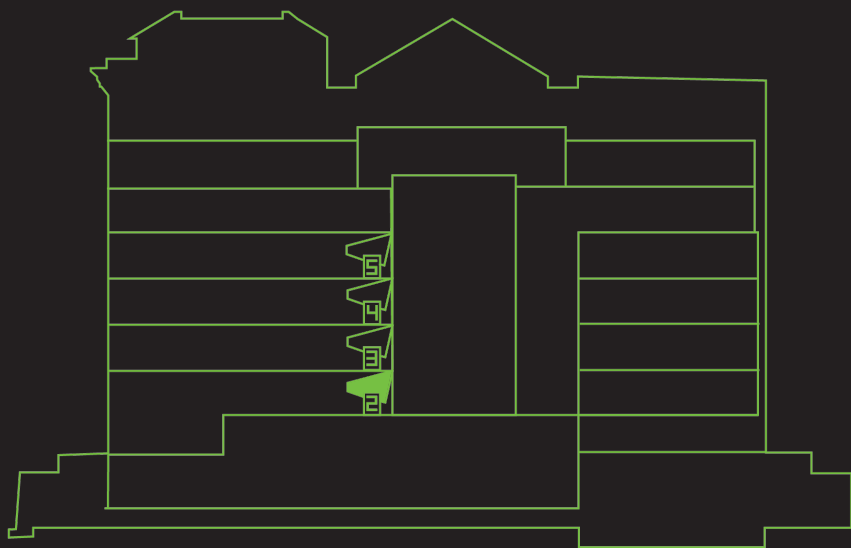
USERS'

GUIDE

ALGORITHMS OF
RESISTANCE :

THE WORK OF JOSEPH DELAPPE

LEVEL 2



THE
BEGINNING

Welcome to the exhibition *Algorithms of Resistance: The Work of Joseph DeLappe*. This booklet will serve as a guide through the exhibition. It will proceed as one does in a video game, level by level.

Before we begin we will breakdown two of the terms in the title.

WHAT IS AN ALGORITHM? an algorithm is a set of unambiguous instructions that, given some set of initial conditions, can be performed in a prescribed sequence to achieve a certain goal and that has a recognizable set of end conditions.

WHAT IS RESISTANCE? To take action in opposition to; try to eliminate, reduce, or stop: synonym: oppose

LEVEL 2:

Elegy:GTA USA Gun Homicides

LEVEL 3:

dead-in-iraq

LEVEL 4:

*The Origins of Totalitarianism:
A Reading by Donald Trump*

FINAL LEVEL 5:

The Computerized Confessional

INTRODUCTION

As you enter Baruch College's Newman Library, immediately to the right of the circulation desk you encounter the very first screening room of the New Media Artspace. Beginning with the piece *Elegy: GTA USA Gun Homicides* (level 2) we have an immediate sense that the familiar action-adventure game environment of *Grand Theft Auto V* has been appropriated and reprogrammed in a specific way. The initial game introduction is absent and the otherwise active protagonist inadvertently becomes the viewer as a statistically-fed algorithmic cycle of violence is visualized. With this unfolding we get the first glimpse into the practice of artist Joseph DeLappe. In a strategy familiar to contemporary artists today, DeLappe utilizes open-source and publicly available software as well as web-based news media to reconfigure and present a message within the space from which the media itself is drawn. At times collaborating with creative coders and game designers Joseph DeLappe performs or re-enacts history to send his own message which often undermines the chosen space's own ethos. DeLappe circulates his complex collages or "mash-ups," within the platforms he often critiques. In the timely piece *The Origins of Totalitarianism: A Reading by Donald Trump* (on level 4) the artist adopts the form of familiar news spots (depicting former President Donald Trump speaking to the media) and juxtaposes them with the historical text by German-American historian and philosopher, Hannah Arendt. Using free, user-friendly and accessible artificial intelligence software (in this case a voice emulator) the artist generates a voice track and corresponding lip-synching of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* ultimately mapping the lip synch to the moving face of Donald Trump to create what the artist himself calls a "shallow-fake." A riff on the feared practice of using artificial intelligence's deep learning tools to deceive or construct media that is meant to pass as factual representation. In this case, the artist foregrounds the synthetic nature of the images by immediately delineating the two software packages used to create the piece in

the opening credits. In other words, communicating to the viewer that this is not a "deep," fake, but rather a "shallow" one. It is this transparent and open approach to creating art work that invites the audience to participate in and possibly attempt their own intervention in our shared visual culture.

LEVEL 2



ELEGY

ELEGY: GTA USA GUN HOMICIDES

As stated above level 2 begins with *Elegy: GTA USA Gun Homicides* a game modification and data visualization artwork that re-enacted the total gun homicides beginning in January of 2018. The project itself launched on July 4th of 2018 and would re-enact each midnight the updated statistics for gun homicides in the United States. Gun homicide statistics were updated daily and fed algorithmically into the game from the website *Gun Violence Archive* and each total was re-visualized in a different way using the algorithm and graphics of the video game. The piece was live streamed for the duration of a year ending on July 4th, 2019. In the video documenting the project (for this exhibition) inhabitants randomly brandish guns and begin shooting neighboring bystanders accompanied by the historical radio broadcast of *God Bless America* (as originally performed by Kate Smith in 1938). The violence abates for small periods of time as characters in the space walk through (or knock into) the cumulative bodies laid out within the virtual landscape. The seeming indifference of these inhabitants is an eerie reminder of just how accustomed (and perhaps numb) US citizens have become to the endless school shootings and random gun violence that continues to go unchecked in our society. The work provokes us to face our own inaction and conditioned indifference. Faced with these questions the viewer's experience of the exhibition begins. *Algorithms of Resistance: The Work of Joseph DeLappe* is a selection of artworks that look at how an artist enacts resistance and executes his own personal protocol (or algorithm) utilizing a variety of virtual tools and online media.

(Left) Detail of ELEGY: GTA USA GUN HOMICIDES

a gaming mod of Grand Theft Auto V that reenacted each day the gun homicides for one year from July 4th, 2018 to July 4th 2019.

Developed in collaboration with Albert Elwin and Biome Collective.
Project consultant James Wood.

DEAD-IN-IRAQ

As the exhibition proceeds, on the next floor (level 3) we are presented with *dead-in-iraq* where a different kind of patriotism is at play. The virtual environment of *America's Army* is dramatized by punctuating gunshots as players in the space make their way through what appears to be a residential neighborhood in Iraq. The first-person shooter game *America's Army* was developed and released by the Department of Defense and the US Army as a public relations and recruitment tool in 2002. Development of the game was financed by the US Government and civilian tax dollars. Within DeLappe's video documentation of *dead-in-iraq*, single-story homes are raided and presumably suspected insurgents are engaged. In this chaotic scene the player through which we experience and enter the space throws down his weapon and continues walking through the terrain. He is suddenly killed and his subsequent interaction is played out through the text feature of the video game. The now dead player types in the name, rank, age, and military branch of a real-world US armed services casualty. The names typed in by the artist are sourced from *icasualties.org* an independent website founded by Micheal White to track casualties in both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. In this act a haunting parallel is drawn between the virtual death of the player and the real information connected to an actual death in Iraq. The artist contracts the distance between the virtual theater of *America's Army* and the real-life space of the Iraq war. This work is amongst the most engrossing and poignant. How do we as US Citizens continue our escapism and consumption in the face of war abroad? The work raises a whole series of uncomfortable questions. Is presenting the fantasy of a sterile and disembodied experience shaping the way US citizens learn to imagine war? Perhaps questions are the answers we have been looking for?

LEVEL 3

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DEAD-IN-IRAQ

Detail of DEAD-IN-IRAQ Game based performative intervention and memorial, 2006-2011.

A photograph of Donald Trump sitting at a wooden desk, gesturing with his hands while speaking. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a blue tie. In the background, a woman in a grey and white checkered jacket is visible, along with the arm of a man in a dark suit. The text 'LEVEL 4' is overlaid in green at the top.

LEVEL 4

*THE ORIGINS OF
TOTALITARIANISM:
A READING BY DONALD TRUMP*

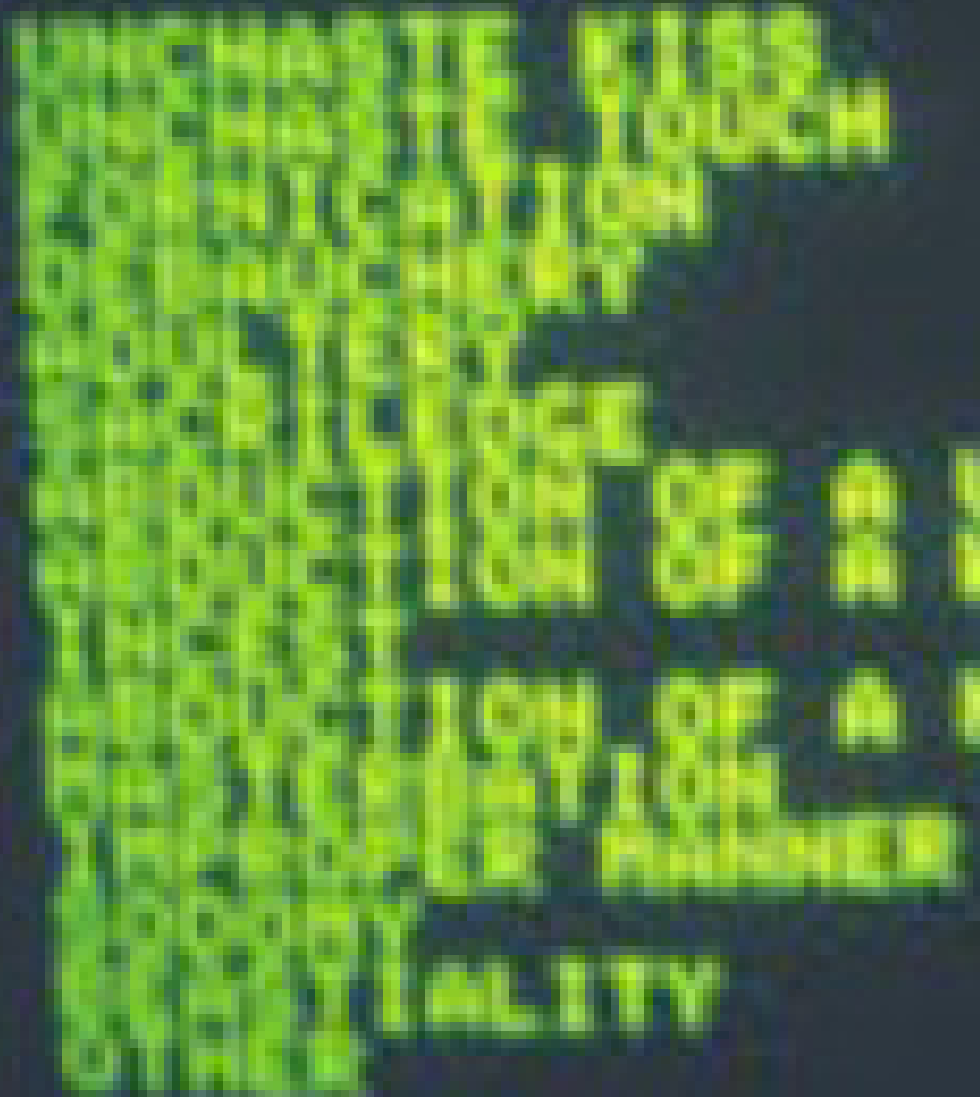
THE ORIGINS OF TOTALITARIANISM:
A READING BY DONALD TRUMP

As we leave *dead-in-iraq* and ascend the staircase to the next level (level 4) we encounter *The Origins of Totalitarianism: A Reading by Donald Trump*. A video depicting (ostensibly) Donald Trump reading a chapter from Hannah Arendt's book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. The video immediately foregrounds its use of artificial intelligence by enlarging those two letters (AI) in its title. As the work plays out the manipulated nature of the video becomes more and more apparent in what the artist describes as a "shallow fake," a reference to the discourse and practice of using artificial intelligence's deep learning tools to generate media that are synthetic in nature or as they are called, a "deep fake." The familiar space and context of a political speech is algorithmically re-engineered to present the artist's own message. Through a classic gesture of appropriation, the artist activates a historical text asking us to consider its relevance today, in 2024. The work also makes reference to the use of social media and online platforms in disseminating "fake news." By debuting and circulating the artwork online the artist again raises questions about the veracity of online media.

THE COMPUTERIZED CONFESSIONAL

At last, we arrive at level 5 where we come face-to-face with a computer console placed a top a Catholic church kneeler. The interactive artwork, *The Computerized Confessional* is based on the pioneering work of computer scientist Joseph Weizenbaum. Weizenbaum developed an early version of what is today called a chatbot. DeLappe originally developed the artwork in 1984 as a "skeptical" look into engagement with automated digital platforms, the piece echoes the original concerns of Weizenbaum toward the use of artificial intelligence. Instead of replacing a psychotherapist with the chatbot *Eliza*, as Weizenbaum had done, the artist replaces the priest with the very same technology. Representing the work here in the New Media Artspace, the artist asks us again, do we engage with this technology? are we looking at yet another form of a dispositif? can we trust artificial intelligence? How do we resist and assert our own algorithm?

LEVEL 5



TYPE YOUR SIM. 1

You finished! If you made it to the final level 5 you have completed the game. Thank you for visiting the New Media Artspace!

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Algorithms of Resistance: The Work of Joseph DeLappe is curated by Dennis Delgado, Assistant Professor in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts in the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences at Baruch College, CUNY. The exhibition is designed and produced by Maya Hilbert, manager of the *New Media Artspace* gallery, and the Student Docent Team. Current docents include: Anika Rios, Cindy Qiu, Amely Gonell, Shaima Rini, and Dylan Shalmer. The exhibition is supported by the Baruch College Student Technology Fee and is made possible with further support from the Baruch Computing and Technology Center (BCTC), the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences, and the Newman Library. All images appear courtesy of the artist.

Joseph DeLappe was born in San Francisco in 1963. He is an artist, activist and educator. He relocated to Scotland from the USA in 2017 where he is currently the Professor of Games and Tactical Media at Abertay University, Dundee. Working with electronic and digital media since 1983, his projects using online gaming performance, sculpture and electromechanical installation have been shown throughout the world.

He has developed works for venues such as Eyebeam Art and Technology in New York, The Guangdong Museum of Art, China, the Southern Utah Museum of Art, NTT Inter-Communication Center [ICC], Tokyo, Japan and Transitio MX, Mexico City, among many others. Creative works and actions have been featured widely in scholarly journals, books and in the popular media, including the New York Times, The Australian Morning Herald, Art in America, The Guardian and the BBC. He has authored several book chapters, including "Me and My Predator(s): Tactical Remembrance and Critical Atonement, Drone Aesthetics: War, Culture, Ecology, Open Humanities Press, 2022; "Making Politics: Engaged Social Tactics, A conversation between Joseph DeLappe and Dr. Laura Leuzzi", Art as Social Practice: Technologies for Change, Routledge, 2022; and co-edited with Leuzzi, the book "INCITE: Digital Art and Activism", 2023, Peacock Visual Arts. In 2017 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in the Fine Arts.

