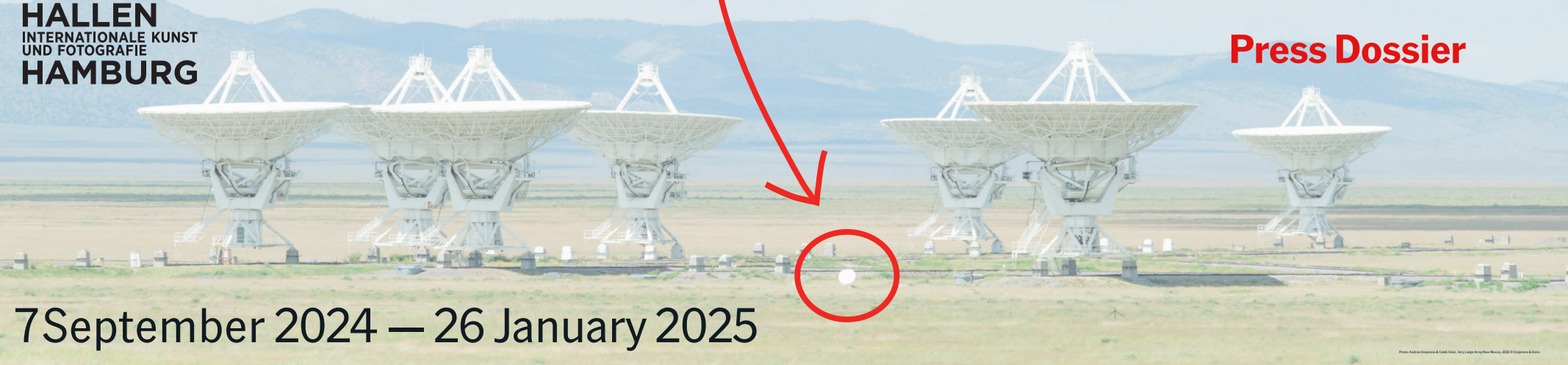


TACTICS AND MYTHOLOGIES

Andrea Orejarena & Caleb Stein

Press Dossier

PHOXXI
HAUS DER PHOTOGRAPHIE TEMPORÄR
DEICHTOR HALLEN
INTERNATIONALE KUNST UND FOTOGRAFIE
HAMBURG



7 September 2024 — 26 January 2025

PHOXXI. Temporary House of Photography
Deichtorhallen Hamburg
Deichtorstraße 1-2
20095 Hamburg
www.deichtorhallen.de

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VIRAL HALLUCINATIONS #1

ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN: TACTICS AND MYTHOLOGIES

7 SEPTEMBER 2024 – 26 JANUARY 2025

We spent years treating the internet as our collective subconscious. – Orejarena & Stein

The exhibition »Tactics and Mythologies: Andrea Orejarena & Caleb Stein«, opening the new series »Viral Hallucinations« on September 6th 2024 at the Temporary House of Photography Hamburg, presents the first institutional solo show of the New York duo Andrea Orejarena & Caleb Stein.

Andrea Orejarena & Caleb Stein's (*1994, Colombia, UK, respectively) conceptual, documentary work uses the intersection of technology, memory, and desire to explore American mythologies and narratives. Orejarena & Stein's multi-media work often involves extensive research into how their images relate to collective image making and the networked volume of image surrounding us. These bodies of work are set against a subtle backdrop of social tensions or the lingering echoes of past conflicts - present as underlying currents but never dominating the narrative. Central to their practice is the elevation of collective processes and collaboration, which serve as key strategies.



ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN
FOTO: HENNING ROGGE

VIRAL HALLUCINATIONS

The exhibition and event series »Viral Hallucinations« (2024-2026) explores the expanding ecosystem of photographically-interpreted images that serve as viral carriers of imaginary worlds and fictional narratives, focusing on the media and technological conditions that drive the dynamics of a »new conspiracyism«.

»Viral Hallucinations« presents a series of exhibitions, lectures, workshops, conversations and performances at the Temporary House of Photography, focusing on conceptual documentary projects and emerging voices in international photography and its experimental fringes.

In addition to the classic exhibition program, the Temporary House of Photography in Hamburg, serves as a space for the examination of current socio-technical phenomena and digital image cultures in our algorithmically ordered and increasingly post-factual world.

The »Viral Hallucinations« series is supported by the Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation.



VIRAL HALLUCINATIONS #1

ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN: TACTICS AND MYTHOLOGIES

»AMERICAN GLITCH«

Our process was like a deep dive into a labyrinth of imaginative, poetic fragments shared by anonymous people from around the world.
– Orejarena & Stein

American Glitch (2020–2024) explores the intersection of documentary and fictional elements, examining the connection between mythological narratives and disinformation tactics within the context of our networked present.

Over the course of four years, Orejarena & Stein have built an unusual archive, amassing over 2,000 photographs and AI-generated images, many of which circulate online within the context of humor as a strategy of cultural resistance, conspiracy theories and the popcultural imaginary of simulation.

This artistic archive reveals a repertoire of image types, codes, patterns, and motifs that form a dynamic typology within the ever-expanding visual world of disinformation. Orejarena & Stein have transformed this examination of images—some of which playfully question our relationship to reality, while others take a more paranoid approach—into their own photographic concept, loosely inspired by an atlas of conspiracy-theory locations and spaces that contain particularly fraught construction across the US landscape.

By analyzing the metadata of these image files, such as locations tagged on social media and other contextual information, the artists were able to trace the origins of the archived images. This analysis resulted in the first cartography of conspiracy theory locations in the USA, which serves as the starting point for the exhibition »Tactics & Mythologies.« Following this map, the artists embarked on a journey through the US to document it as a »simulation.«

Their symmetrically composed photographs, taken frontally with a digital Hasselblad medium-format camera, align with the pictorial tradition of canonical conceptual photographers like Ed Ruscha, as well as documentary-driven projects that conduct a photographic topography of the US. In a social present shaped by viral fictional narratives, the project navigates the space between documentation and fiction, physical and virtual realms, and particularly their hybrid intersections that characterize the American landscape—where simulated environments and manifest fictions converge. The large-format color photographs are presented for the first time in spatial dialogue with an image archive sculpture specifically developed for the exhibition. The collected images are projected as temporary, choreographed and layered constellations onto transparent cubes, flowing past the expansive landscapes and staged architectures in Orejarena & Stein's photographs like swarms of viral hallucinations. The archive sculpture reflects Orejarena & Stein's ongoing exploration of visual practices online and their dynamic archives as a collective subconscious.



INSTALLATIONSANSICHT, ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN, TACTICS AND MYTHOLOGIES, 2024
© DEICHTORHALLEN HAMBURG, FOTO: HENNING ROGGE.



INSTALLATIONSANSICHT, ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN, AMERICAN GLITCH, 2024
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MARS DESERT RESEARCH STATION. 2021.

This is a space in the Utah Desert that is primarily funded by the Elon Musk foundation where scientists and space enthusiasts conduct simulations for psychological conditioning of life on Mars. Groups of scientists and space enthusiasts gather for 2-3 weeks where they can only go outside in full space attire after a period of time in a compression and decompression chamber. Participants eat dehydrated space food, sleep in tight quarters, and have limited contact with ,earth'. We first heard of this space because of a story that may or may not be true (we still do not know). According to the story, a husband and wife scientist duo participated in the simulation. One day, the female scientist was outside of the ,space habitat' and a small part of her hand was exposed to the simulated atmosphere when her glove momentarily fell off. Technically, this ,broke sim'. The rest of the MDRS crew had to determine whether they could let the female scientist back into the habitat to carry on with the simulation. The entire crew determined that it was a relatively minor contamination that was properly mitigated, except for one male scientist, the female scientist's husband, who said that the contamination was too severe and that she should be ,voted off the island' so to speak). We photographed this location in 2021 after hearing this story and seeing countless articles and stories posted online about what happens at MDRS. We tried to obtain access to photograph the simulation itself but could not get access, so we sought the support of The New York Times who commissioned us to return and participate in the simulation in November of 2023.

A long article appeared online and in print in The New York Times in December of 2023 in the Opinion Section: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/27/opinion/mars-simulation-desert-mdrs.html>



ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN, MARS DESERT RESEARCH STATION, 2021
© OREJARENA & STEIN, COURTESY PALO GALLERY, NY.

WHITE PICKET FENCE. 2021.

*We saw this assortment of white picket fences by the side of a busy suburban road while driving home from the annual reenactment of the battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania. Some of the photographs that we made are sites posted online as glitch sites while others like this were found while we were on the road and were informed by the mass archive of images. In many ways we felt that this site conveyed something about the futility of constructing borders while also reflecting the visual vernacular of quintessential Americana. Key references for this photograph are Hollywood films about unrealistically perfect American towns like *Stepford Wives* (1975, 2004), *The Truman Show* (1998), *Pleasantville* (1998), *Don't Worry Darling* (2022). Still image key references for this are also from the Fake Town built by Boeing, Boeing Wonderland, designed by a Hollywood set designer built in WWII to hide Boeing factories from potential Japanese airstrikes in 1944 (right).*



ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN, WHITE PICKET FENCES. 2021
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NUMBER HILL. 2022.



ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN, NUMBER HILL, 2022
© OREJARENA & STEIN, COURTESY PALO GALLERY, NY.

PINK DESERT FACADE. 2022.



ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN, PINK DESERT FACADE, 2022
© OREJARENA & STEIN, COURTESY PALO GALLERY, NY.

LINCOLN & DRONE. 2021.

This site was one of the most circulated sites in our archive. We found images of this presidential head on many Reddit, social media, atlas Obscura, and other forms of blog post that referenced uncanny spaces in the American landscape. A lot of the glitch vernacular is built on video game glitches and 3D modeling. Early in the project we learned how to 3D model because we thought we would construct our images in a completely virtual way before realizing that the U.S. contained the material already in its landscape. The back of Lincoln's head reveals a metal grid structure, which in many ways resembles the vertices that 3D modeling uses before adding a surface texture. The photograph feels like a symbol for looking behind the curtain, for identifying some sort of 'revealing glitch'.



ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN, ABRAHAM LINCOLN & DRONE, 2021
© ORJERENA & STEIN, COURTESY PALO GALLERY, NY

HERNDON CLIMB. 2023.

This is a photograph of an annual tradition at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. Every year for the last century the matriculating sophomores lather up an obelisk in lard. They climb on top of each other to get to the admiral's cap which is placed at the top. The person who gets the cap is meant to have good fortune and become a high ranking officer. Online people jokingly refer to it as a 'copy, paste, copy, paste' scenario, similar to the scene in the Matrix when the agent duplicates.



FAKE TREE WITH REAL BIRDS. 2022.

'Birds Aren't Real' (BAR) is a satirical conspiracy narrative created in 2018 by Peter McIndoe at a demonstration for women's rights in the wake of a pro-Trump counter-protest. What most people think are birds are actually US government surveillance drones, so the narrative goes. The slogan 'If it flies, it spies' summarises the absurd idea. BAR argues that, according to alleged secret documents, bird droppings are actually made up of liquid tracking devices.

The performative and socio-political movement BAR uses humour as a coping strategy to draw attention to the absurdity of disinformation and conspiracies in the digital age. With posters in cities such as Pittsburgh and Los Angeles and millions of clicked videos, BAR makes people laugh at its obvious absurdity and at the same time makes them think.



ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN, FAKE TREE WITH REAL BIRDS, 2022
© OREJARENA & STEIN, COURTESY PALO GALLERY, NY

VIRAL HALLUCINATIONS #1

ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN: TACTICS AND MYTHOLOGIES

»LONG TIME NO SEE« (2015 – 2020)

Long Time No See (2015-2020) is a transnational and intergenerational multimedia project that delves into the physical and psychological aftermath of the Vietnam U.S. War. In close collaboration with the community of Làng Huu Nghi, the artist duo Andrea Orejarena & Caleb Stein have created a body of work that intentionally blurs the lines between documentation and fiction.

The project is rooted in a collaborative process of visual exchange that began in 2015 with a conceptual framework, involving both the artist duo and the community in an ongoing dialogue of shared imagery and ideas. Orejarena & Stein lived in Làng Huu Nghi for two years, during which they learned Vietnamese sign language to communicate with the deaf residents on an equal footing, fostering close and ongoing relationships with the community. Through critical workshops, wall drawings, and post-production efforts, they crafted a sensitive and poetic project that highlights the multifaceted stories and fragmented memories of the residents.

The series incorporates multiple media layers and overlapping perspectives. Everyday moments of community, leisure, youth culture, and creativity are transformed into subtle acts of resistance and new forms of resilient memory. The duo's black-and-white photographs are enhanced with ink drawings, by artists Đinh Thi Huong and Nguyen Tien Hung, that add a subjective dimension to the images. These works blend observation with imagination, documentation with fiction, and perception with memory. In doing so, they offer a reimagined view of the Vietnam U.S. War, avoiding the assignment of fixed identities or the traditional dichotomy of victors and vanquished.



ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN, LƯƠNG NHẬT TÂN & ĐỨC OUTSIDE OF A FRIEND'S WEDDING CELEBRATION NEAR LÀNG HỮU NGHỊ WITH INK DRAWINGS OF PLANES BY NGUYỄN TIẾN HƯNG, HANOI 2019.
© OREJARENA & STEIN, COURTESY VIN GALLERY, HANOI.



OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN, LÀNG HỮU NGHỊ'S ENTRANCE, WITH INK DRAWINGS OF BIRDS AND WAR PLANES BY ĐÌNH THỊ HƯƠNG, HANOI 2020.
© OREJARENA & STEIN, COURTESY VIN GALLERY, HANOI.



ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN, MANH, HANOI, 2019
© OREJARENA & STEIN, COURTESY VIN GALLERY, HANOI.



ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN, HAI DANG, TAN, KIEN, HANOI, 2019
© OREJARENA & STEIN, COURTESY VIN GALLERY, HANOI.

VIRAL HALLUCINATIONS

VISUAL ECOLOGIES OF CONSPIRACY

TRANSDISCIPLINARY SYMPOSIUM / 13 SEPTEMBER 2024

The symposium gathers international artists, photographers and researchers to delve into the visual ecologies of disinformation. The examination focuses on how artistic projects address the opaque dynamics of social platforms, and algorithmic tech, and how photographers deal with the interaction of conspiracy narratives and networked visual cultures. What new image types and dynamics are emerging and circulating? What approaches could be used for a systematic and methodological examination of conspiracy-theory imagery from an image-scientific or artistic lens? What potential does the critical artistic appropriation of their narrative and visual mechanisms offer?

Guests: Emmanuel van der Auwera, Ana Zibelnik & Jakob Ganslmeier, Vanja Smiljanić and more

Program: see next page

Date: 13 September 2024

Time: 9.30 am – 6.15 pm

Location: Auditorium, Deichtorhallen Hamburg

Group: max. 40 participants

Cost: free

Language: German, English

An event of the House of Photography, Deichtorhallen Hamburg.

Funded by the Alexander Tutsek Foundation.

VIRAL HALLUCINATIONS

VISUAL ECOLOGIES OF CONSPIRACY

TRANSDISCIPLINARY SYMPOSIUM / 13 SEPTEMBER 2024

BILINGUAL PROGRAM

9.30 am Welcoming and Introduction

Dirk Luckow (General Director of Deichtorhallen Hamburg) and Nadine Isabelle Henrich (Curator House of Photography, Deichtorhallen Hamburg)

10–10.30 am:

Wussten Sie schon? Visuelle Strategien als Beweis für Verschwörungstheorien im Internet

Anne Braune-Vásquez

(Fotografin, Künstlerin, Medienwissenschaftlerin)

10.45–11.15 am:

Security Theater

Emmanuel Van der Auwera

(Künstler und Filmemacher)

11.30–12 am:

Misogynie als Meme? Gekränkte Männlichkeit und Online-Radikalisierung

Veronika Kracher

(Autorin, Publizistin)

12.15–12.45 pm:

Panel – Post-Truth-Communities: Die Dynamiken vernetzter Bildkulturen und verschwörungstheoretischer Gruppenidentitäten

Moderation: Malin Schulz

(Stellvertretende Chefredakteurin DIE ZEIT) & Nadine Isabelle Henrich (Kuratorin des Hauses der Fotografie)

14–14.30 pm:

If a flower bloomed in a dark room, would you trust it?

Ana Zibelnik & Jakob Ganslmeier

(Artist duo)

(Research Associate, Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt Oder)

14.45–15.15 pm:

The Glitch in Us: American Glitch and the Visual Cultures of Simulation

Andrea Orejarena & Caleb Stein (Artist duo)

15.30–16 pm:

Memetic experience, Conspiracy Theories on the Replacement of Populations

Luis M. Hernandez Aguilar

(Research Associate, Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt Oder)

16.15–16.45 pm:

Panel – Affective Image Ecologies: Visual Mythologies between Humor and Ideologies

Moderation: Prof. Karen Fromm

(lehrt Fototheorie, fotografische Bildsprachen und das Dokumentarische in der Fotografie an der Hochschule Hannover) & Matthias Gründig (Fotohistoriker und freier Kurator)

17.30–18.15 pm:

Live-Performance – TURBO Atlantis: The Latest, Greatest, and Final Truth.

Vanja Smiljanić

(Artist, researcher)

VIRAL MYTHOLOGIES

UNRAVELING THE NARRATIVE ECOLOGIES OF CONSPIRACY

WORLD-BUILDING-WORKSHOP / 14 & 15 SEPTEMBER 2024

The free two-day workshop invites artists, photographers, journalists, students, and researchers to explore the narrative structures and techniques of conspiracy theories through an ecosystemic world-building methodology. Participants will investigate how conspiracy narratives evolve, multiply, and mutate within online ecologies, aiming to appropriate these viral storytelling techniques to craft alternative holistic worlds and counter-narratives.

The workshop will be led by Juan Diaz Bohorquez, the European Director of the World Building Institute Berlin/Los Angeles. He is a developer of narrative design and world-building methodologies, which he has applied across films and media, social impact projects, and science-art collaborations for the past 20 years.

Date: 14 & 15 September 2024

Time: 11 am–1 pm, 2 pm–5 pm

Group: max. 20 participants + 6 invited experts

Cost: free

Language: English

Funded by the Alexander Tutsek Foundation.



ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN, CAMOUFLAGE CHERRY TREE AND SMILING WOMAN, 2023
© OREJARENA & STEIN, COURTESY PALO GALLERY, NY.

VIRAL HALLUCINATIONS #1

ANDREA OREJARENA & CALEB STEIN: TACTICS AND MYTHOLOGIES

7 SEPTEMBER 2024 – 26 JANUARY 2025

CURATOR

Nadine Isabelle Henrich, Curator at the House of Photography, Deichtorhallen Hamburg

OPENING

FR • 6 September 2024, 7 pm

The artists are present.

EVENTS

Transdisciplinary Symposium Viral Hallucinations: 13 September 2024

World-Building-Workshop: 14 & 15 September 2024

PRESS CONFERENCE

FR • 6 September 2024, 11 am with Nadine Isabelle Henrich and Andrea Orejana & Caleb Stein

PRESS MATERIAL

The works shown here are available as press photos for reporting on the exhibition in the Deichtorhallen.

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