

Psychic Driver

Andrew Moses's information operations

Scott Benzel



x-ray showing RFID Implants in the hands of a 'Targeted Individual'

"Would you recognize a revolution if you were in it?" —Leigh Armistead, Information Operations

John Lilly's landmark book *Programming and Metaprogramming in the Human Biocomputer* was, for a time, the bible for everyone from 'black propagandists'/sociologists like Gregory Bateson (sociologist/OSS agent/cyberneticist, friend of Marcel Duchamp, hero to Deleuze and Guattari) to grim CIA-funded psychiatrists wiping the minds of their patients, to grunt/punchcard

operators in Vietnam targeting psyops at civilian populations, to Bay Area psychonauts with a penchant for acid and homebrew computers. Lilly was highly regarded within the scientific community for expertly brain-rigging instantaneous self-triggered monkey orgasms before achieving popular fame as the scientist portrayed by George C. Scott in *Day of the Dolphin*:

...Scott portrayed a scientist, who, like Lilly, loved dolphins, did pioneering experiments on their intelligence, and tried to find ways to communicate with them. In the movie, Scott became dismayed when the government pounced on his breakthrough in talking to dolphins and turned it immediately to the service of war. In real life, Lilly was similarly dismayed when Navy and CIA scientists trained dolphins for special warfare in the waters off Vietnam.¹

In *Programming and Metaprogramming in the Human Biocomputer*, Lilly asks:

If we can free ourselves from the effects on our thinking machine of storage of material from the external world, if we can free ourselves up from the effects of storage of metaprograms which direct our thinking, programs devised by others and fed to us during our learning years...

Suggesting that:

Metaprogramming is...a more inclusive term than suggestibility. Metaprogramming considers sources, inputs, outputs, and central processes rather than just the end result of the process...²

Lilly would later be portrayed in film again—this time by William Hurt in *Altered States*—as a self-experimenting scientist transforming (metaprogramming) himself via psychedelics and flotation tank into an atavistic human/ape hybrid and ultimately into human/plant hybrid, freeing himself from all metaprograms—of civilizational, human, and even mammalian. Aldous Huxley said:

What men like...Lilly are doing in the laboratory was done by the Christian hermits in the Thebaid and elsewhere, and by Hindu and Tibetan hermits in the remote vastness of the Himalayas. My own belief is that these experiences really tell us something about the nature of the universe, that they are valuable in themselves and, above all, valuable when incorporated into our world- picture and acted upon [in] normal life.³



William Hurt in Altered States, 1980

Andrew Moses' installation *Firmament* is comprised of four large panes of suspended Plexiglas, hand-lettered text, contact mics, speakers, and a complex AI-and-live-feedback-loop driven audio composition. It appears serene, almost minimalist at first glance. On closer examination the work vibrates with sub rosa madness. Beneath the placid exterior you can practically smell the braincells frying: one giveaway—the handpainted script is closer to Mike Kelley's or Raymond Pettibon's acid-soaked comics than that of, say, a professional signpainter's. Another—the jumble of wires and electronics on the ground, mics and speakers attached to the plexi, and the strange sounds emanating from the speakers attached to the plexi.



Installation view: Andrew Moses, *Firmament*, 2022

The text, arranged into four columns, with phrases derived from Youtube descriptive titles—FREY EFFECT ULTRASONIC ATTACK RECORDED WITH OTOSCOPE, ANOTHER TARGET REAL VOICE TO SKULL RECORDING PERPS GETTING TIRED—is sorted into neat columns. the list on each sheet is suggestive of adjacent zones of 20th Century high weirdness and covert state manipulation. The categories go something like (category names mine):

Targeted Individuals (TI's) doing their thing (i.e. being targeted)

Stargate/Grillflame Remote Viewing/Hemi-sync weirdness w Spacefence features

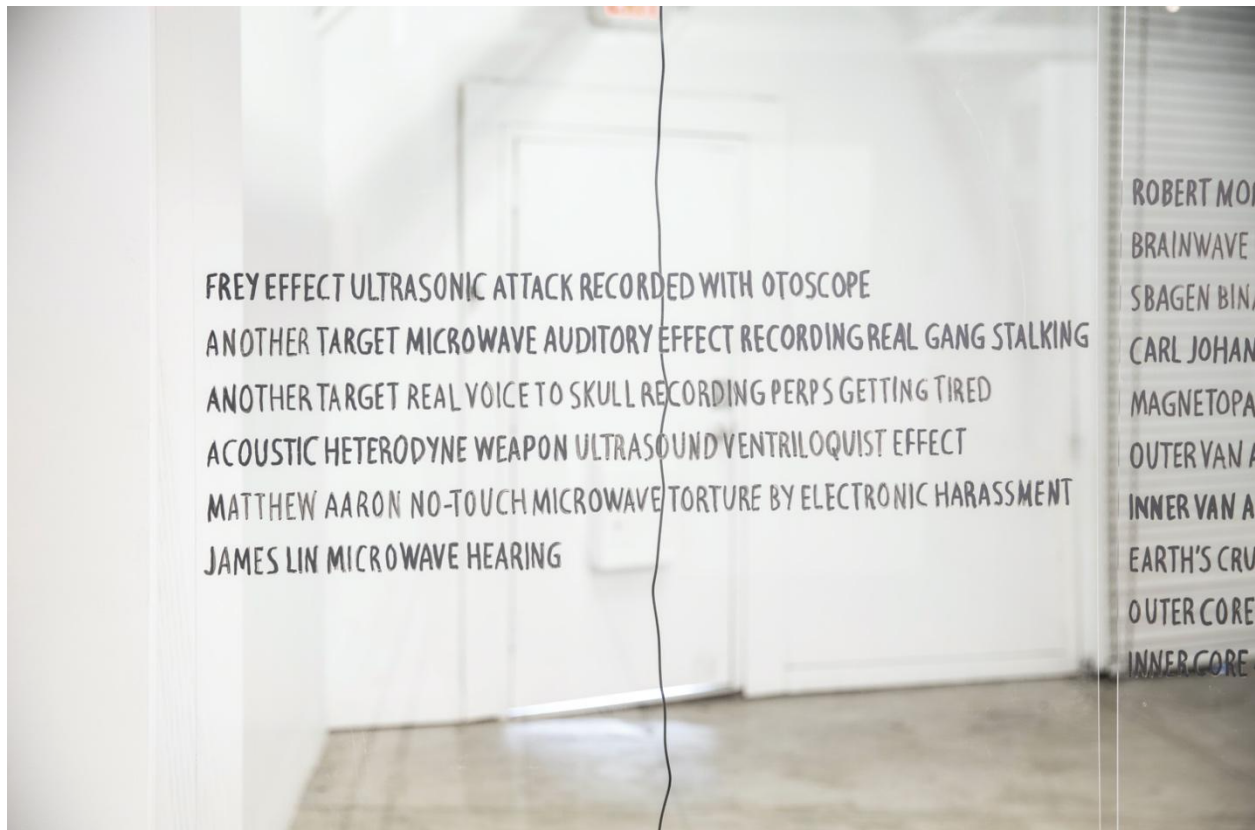
EVP (Electronic Voice Phenomena)-related (communicating with the dead via electronics—mostly radio) weirdness

Human Potential Movement/MK-adjacent LSD/dolphin weirdness

Much of what is listed is the product (direct or indirect) of illegal domestic CIA operations that spanned the 1950's through the '70s: MKULTRA, Projects Stargate and Phoenix, and MH CHAOS, the CIA's domestic answer to the FBI's COINTELPRO. With near-unlimited funds courtesy of Laotian, Cambodian, and Thai heroin warlords, the CIA airline Air America, criminogenic banks like BCCI, domestic 'godfathers' like Frank Lucas and Nicky Barnes, and tax-payer-funded 'black budgets', these operations and their affiliate institutions dosed hundreds

if not thousands of unsuspecting prisoners, johns, marks (and the occasional kid) with acid and other newly synthesized drugs, created the Unabomer, pretty much ran the counterculture, pitted the Panthers and United Slaves against each other, compromised left-leaning professors and screenwriters, scraped the personalities of psychiatric patients and prisoners, outright killed agitators and unfavorable political figures, and trained death squads across the Southern hemisphere.

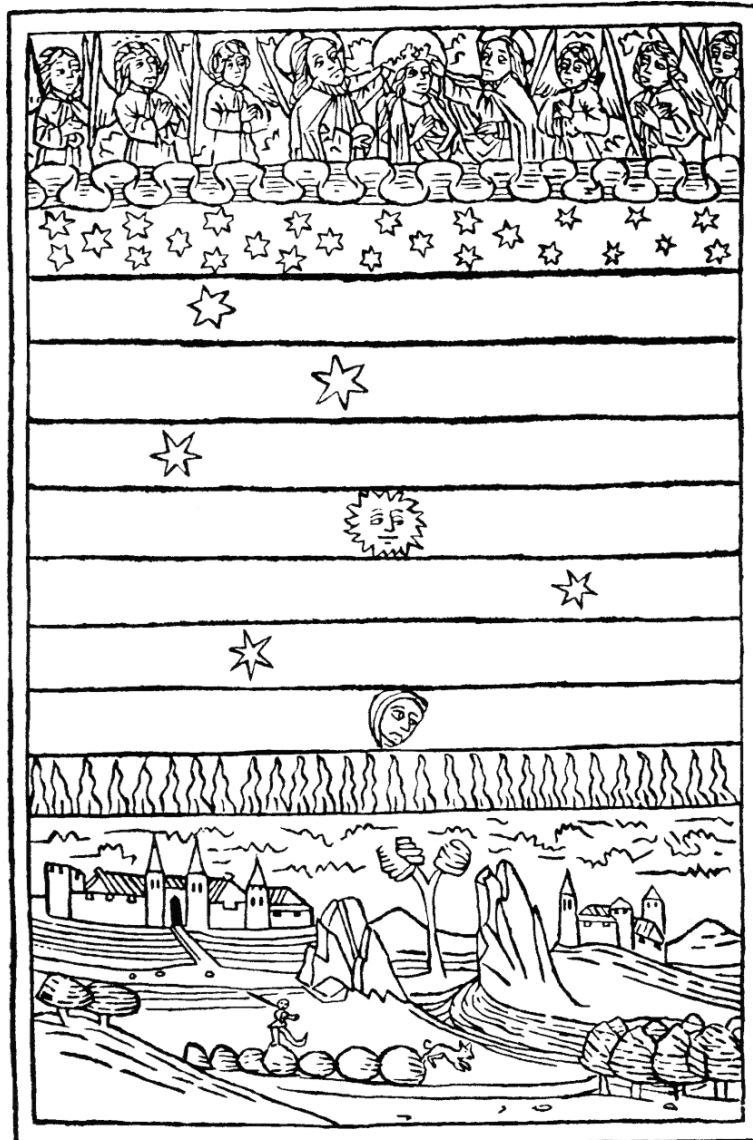
The secret government that evolved under the auspices of the Cold War—formerly crewcut generals leaving their situation rooms for clandestine parking-garage meetings, stonefaced doctors trading in their scrubs to become new-age experience-leaders, faceless drones transformed into longhair field agents sowing acid and discontent—combined paranoia-inducing infiltration, psyops, drugs, and brutal technoscientific experimentation in ways not previously imagined. The tonnage of human debris and wasted lives in pursuit of U.S. full-spectrum dominance was just the cost of doing business in an increasingly dangerous world.



Andrew Moses, *Firmament*, 2022 (detail)

It appears, however, that Moses has something slightly different in mind: behind all of the secret-government madness, there is something like a desire for transcendence. The work's title *Firmament* suggests something closer to Huxley's "*Christian hermits...and Hindu and Tibetan hermits in the remote vastness of the Himalayas*" "The biblical/cosmological concept after which the piece is named—the *Firmament*—is at once visual and ontological: it is the canopy of stars that, in the pre-Galilean imagination, encircled the Earth. This concept inspired the first vision machines—usually massive and made of stone—from which today's James Webb telescope

evolved. The Firmament was envisioned as a sort of screen through which the *caelum*, the ultimate, transcendental reality, could be glimpsed, piercing the canopy of stars. Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake for stating the now-obvious reality: “these things (the stars) are *suns*.”³ The authors of the Youtube clips listed and sonified in Moses’s *Firmament* are nearly united in their desire to pierce the canopy: to expand the senses and consciousness via EVP communication with the dead, Remote Viewing, LSD, and interspecies communication. Even Targeted Individuals have transcendental desires...



The Firmament / the order of things, 1475

The admixture of verifiable claims of some of the Youtube clips and those somewhat–ahem–less verifiable (Targeted Individuals, Gang stalking, EVP, et al.) is further complicated by the epistemological twist introduced by the sonifications, cross-sensory ‘simulations’ of astronomical data of, say, the outer Van Allen belt (there being no sound in space). Sonification, the process of making sound, even music, out of data—a long-standing practice of NASA and

other space agencies—has questionable utility and veracity outside the realm of ‘public relations’, fundraising, and the exercise of soft power.

The cracks between title and content in Moses’s piece suggest a longing for and skepticism toward something beyond a wholly material reality: a desire for the disenchantment to be lifted but perhaps by not just any means.

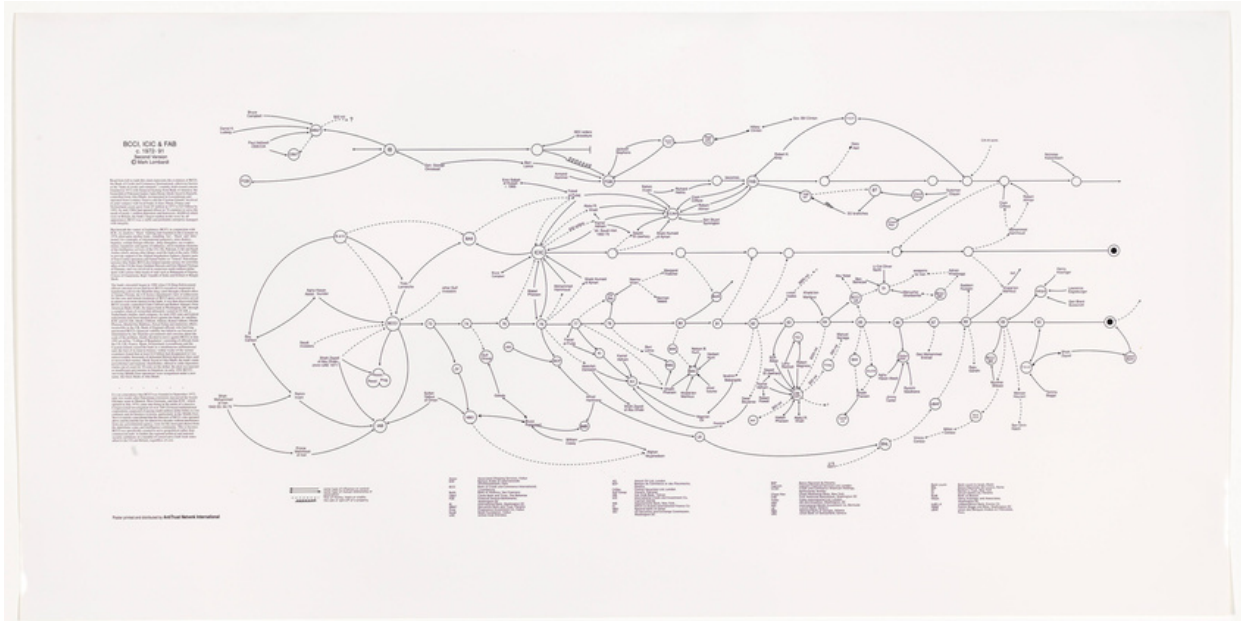
The “tonic mass” (Pierre Schaffer’s term) that emanates from the system is whispery, slightly sinister, an *informe* process composition incorporating four IRCAM AI models each trained on one of the four columns of Youtube clips and a Max patch recombining those models and adding positive feedback from the contact mics “reading the room” (specifically, the resonance of each pane of plexi). Militating against the transcendental desires expressed in the ‘content’ of the piece, its structure serves to sonically level them, muxing them into a sort of auditory ‘gray goo’.

Interlock

You can count on one hand the number of museum shows addressing one of the major political-economic currents permeating 21st Century reality: government secrecy and sub rosa conspiracy, actual and theoretical. *Everything is Connected* at the Met Breuer is probably the best known, runners-up include Jim Shaw, *The End is Near* at the New Museum, Mark Lombardi at MoMA, and Suzanne Treister at the Serpentine. Susan Hiller’s *Psi Girls* at the Tate maybe counts. Kelley and Pettibon’s interests are in the ballpark but among far too numerous other obsessions to count, and Emory Douglas dealt as much with overt *realpolitik* as hidden conspiracy at the Hammer (although he and the Panthers were targeted by multiple actual illegal government conspiracies during his time illustrating *The Black Panther* newspaper.)

The intricate feedback-loops at the base of *Firmament*’s superstructure remind one most of the *Interlocks* of Mark Lombardi, one of the few artists to tackle the actual interlocking structures that undergird both conspiracies (*conspirare, latin: to breathe together*) and contemporary capitalist reality:

Lombardi called his interlocks “narrative structures” suggesting they were visible narratives that can be read just the same as a newspaper story. Small circles in his drawings identified the main players in his scenarios—individuals, corporations, and governments—along a timeline, with arcing lines showing personal and professional links. The often-dramatic curvature also suggests what is known as the “arc” of a dramatic scene. With the French arc, he extrapolated these into pretty, oddly nature-inspired patterns that are distorted by the brute capitalist tale they tell. ⁴



Mark Lombardi, *BCCI, ICIC & FAB c. 1972 - 91 (Second Version)*, 2000

Returning to Lilly, the fate of the dolphins is instructive:

[...] In a program called “swimmer nullification,” government scientists trained dolphins to attack enemy frogmen with huge needles attached to their snouts. The dolphins carried tanks of compressed air, which when jabbed into a deepdiver caused him to pop dead to the surface. A scientist who worked in this CIA-Navy program states that some of the dolphins sent to Vietnam during the late 1960s got out of their pens and disappeared—unheard of behavior for trained dolphins. John Lilly confirms that a group of the marine mammals stationed at Cam Ranh Bay did go AWOL, and he adds that he heard that some eventually returned with their bodies and fins covered with attack marks made by other-dolphins.⁵

This procedural corruption, this turning of the natural world and even largely peaceable creatures against themselves in the service of political and warfare advantage is summarized by a critic approaching Lombardi’s *Interlocks*: “Their fragile wholeism is poisoned by the sinister and cynical events they describe—acid rain erodes the snowflake, the pattern is upset, inquiry must be renewed.”⁶

Universal Harmony / Knots

“Everything in nature has a communication by an universal fluid, in which all bodies are plunged.” — anonymous acolyte of Anton Mesmer

The Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia of History, Rites, Symbolism, and Biography edited by Kenneth R.H. Mackenzie (“CRYPTONYMUS”) of 1877 contains the following definitions:

HARMONY, ORDER OF UNIVERSAL.—1. A society founded in 1783, by Mesmer and his disciples, the object of which was to propagate the doctrines of animal magnetism.

MESMER, FRIEDRICH ANTON.— A learned German physician, born in Schwaben, 1734, and who applied a long antecedent art to curative purposes, since his time known as Mesmerism. He was thought to be a quack, like the notorious Graham of Pall Mall, but his experiments were supplemented by the more careful researches of Elliotson, and the system is now accepted by many as established. (See *Harmony, Order of.*) Mesmer died in 1815. He was a member of the Fratres Lucis.

MESMERIC MASONRY. (See *latric Masonry*, and *Light, Brotherhood of*) ⁷

Mesmer was in fact a quack but a quack who stumbled upon techniques and invented terminology still in use today (hypnotism, 'magnetism' as a descriptor, as in 'personal magnetism') His early career is summarized by Jeffrey Sconce in *The Technical Delusion*:

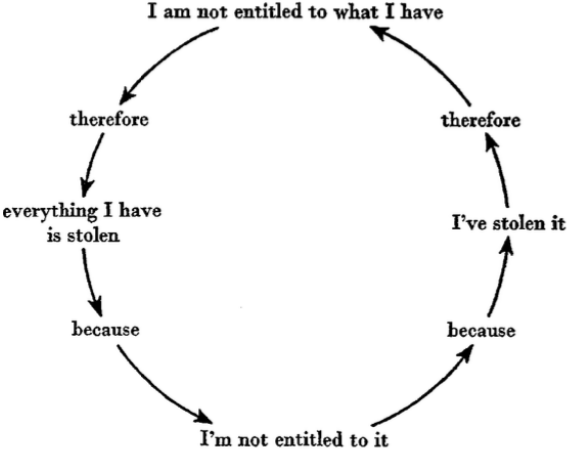
Arriving in Paris in 1778, Mesmer created a sensation across Europe by claiming miraculous cures in body and mind through the manipulation of this magnetism, a process that we now recognize as the foundation of modern hypnotism. As word of his miraculous cures spread through Paris, Mesmer's doubters and opponents persuaded King Louis XIV to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate his claims. In 1784, the commission (which included the recently electrocuted Benjamin Franklin as a member) ultimately dismissed Mesmer's theories as having no empirical foundation.¹¹² Mesmer left Paris shortly after the inquiry (having allegedly been paid to do so). But his doctrines continued to attract advocates across Europe and North America.⁸

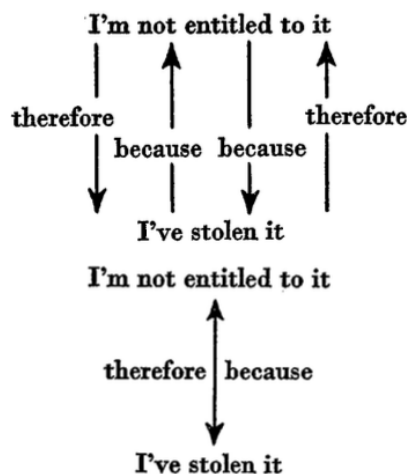


Andrew Moses, *Discarded Organ (currency of transference)*, 2023

In Andrew Moses's *Discarded Organ (currency of transference)*, 2023, Mesmer's *baquet*, a tub filled with water and iron used to treat multiple patients simultaneously through the mysterious force of magnetism, is fused with ropes demonstrating the complex emotional and logical *Knots* developed by the British radical anti-psychiatrist R.D. Laing. Laing's *Knots* could be described as structural-linguistic psychological interlocks performed upon (and within) oneself or in interaction with another.

KNOTS 35





Where Mesmer and his “animal magnetism” cures are sometimes cited as the beginning of psychoanalysis, Laing’s anti-psychiatry may someday be considered the beginning of its end. Laing’s clinically-informed, structurally complex, diagrammatic approach to language and the structure of the mind influenced Bateson’s concept of the *double-bind* as well as the later work of Deleuze-Guattari and Lyotard. In his *Introduction to Knots*, Laing explains:

The patterns delineated here have not yet been classified by a Linnaeus of human bondage. They are all, perhaps, strangely, familiar.

In these pages I have confined myself to laying out only some of those I actually have seen. Words that come to mind to name them are: knots, tangles, fankles, impasses, disjunctions, whirligogs, binds.

I could have remained closer to the ‘raw’ data in which these patterns appear. I could have distilled them further towards an abstract logico-mathematical, calculus. I hope they are not so schematized that one may not refer back to the very specific experiences from which they derive; yet that they are sufficiently independent of ‘content’, for one to divine the final formal elegance in these webs of maya.⁸

Again, as in Moses’s *Firmament*, consciousness and form are in play. The knots in the ropes encircling Moses’s *baquet* mirror the structures of the diagrams in Laing’s book. Consciousness—under the sway of the mysterious forces contained in Mesmer’s *baquet*—is entwined with the logical knots and double-binds of Laing’s structural mindfucks. There’s a sort of time-travel and compression at play in the form but also a diagram marking—once again—the desire for transcendence and the ties that bind us to our disenchantment.



Mesmer's baquet (note the regular 'braided' quality of the knots)

¹ John Marks, *Search for the Manchurian Candidate*. New York: Norton & Co., 1979

² John C. Lilly, *Programming and Metaprogramming the Human Biocomputer*. New York: The Julian Press, 1972, first published 1967

³ Marks, 153

⁴ Patricia Goldstone, *Interlock, Art, Conspiracy, and the Shadow Worlds of Mark Lombardi*. Berleley: Counterpoint, 2015

⁵ Marks, footnote, 153

⁶ Goldstone, 11

⁷ *The Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia of History, Rites, Symbolism, and Biography*, ed. Kenneth R.H. Mackenzie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, first published 1877

⁸ Jeffrey Sconce, *The Technical Delusion*. Durham: Duke University press, 2019

⁹ R.D. Laing, *Knots*. London: Tavistock, 1970

